

Information Bulletin

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Drug-related' property crime in South Australia in 2000

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The Information Bulletin examines statistics relating to selected apprehension reports in 2000 to determine whether official crime statistics show any association between detected property crime and drug offences. It examines the number of apprehension reports in 2000 that have an associated drug charge and identifies the number of discrete individuals apprehended in 2000 who also had a prior drug charge.

A considerable amount of media attention continues to focus on the notion of a causal link between drug use and criminal behaviour. Reports such as that in *The Advertiser* on 15 June 2000, headed “Drugs, theft keep crime rate soaring” maintain levels of public concern about the issue, and reinforce the perception of a strong causative relationship between rises in certain types of crime and an escalation in the presence of illicit drugs within the community.

Official crime statistics for South Australia show that there has in fact been an increase in recorded property crime over the last three years. A common assumption is that this is due to the growing use of drugs and the need for the offenders involved to commit acquisitive property crime in order to support their habit.

A growing body of quantitative and qualitative research in the area supports the existence of a link between drug use and crime. However, the findings also point to a more complex scenario than a simple causal relationship between the two.

Most of the information currently available on the link between drug use and criminal activities has been derived from surveys of either offenders (usually prisoners incarcerated for property offences) or known illicit drug users. These types of studies have a number of limitations, as follows:

- they rely on self-reported information which cannot be confirmed from other sources;
- they may not be representative of all offenders or all drug users;
- they are generally conducted on a one-off basis, with no on-going monitoring; and
- they are not directly comparable because they often use different methodologies.

The DUMA project (Drug Use Monitoring in Australia), currently operating in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia has overcome some of these concerns. It uses a variety of methodologies (including urinalysis and interviews of persons apprehended for property crimes) to examine the relationship between illicit drug use and offending behaviour on a regular (quarterly) basis.

Official crime statistics are another potential source of information. Specifically, if the rise in property crime is due to the need for offenders to support a drug habit, it could be hypothesised that a high proportion of persons apprehended for property crime will also be apprehended and charged with a drug offence, or that many of these individuals will have a prior record of drug offending.

What do official crime statistics tell us?

To determine whether official crime statistics show any association between detected property crime and drug offences, an analysis was conducted on police apprehensions for property crime in South Australia in 2000. This Information Bulletin examines statistics relating to all apprehension reports involving at least one of the following property offences:

- Robbery;
- Burglary and break and enter/criminal trespass¹;
- Receiving and unlawful possession;
- Larceny or illegal use of a motor vehicle;
- Larceny (not of motor vehicle);
- Misappropriation;
- False pretences (including credit/debit cards, cheques).

The Bulletin looks at the data relating to property apprehensions in two ways:

- Firstly, it examines the number of apprehension reports in 2000 that had an associated drug charge.
- Secondly, it identifies the number of discrete individuals apprehended in 2000 for a property crime, and looks at how many had a prior record of apprehension for drugs charges.

¹ The Criminal Law Consolidation (Serious Criminal Trespass) Amendment Act, which came into effect on 25 December 1999, replaced the former *burglary, break and enter* offences with a new category of *serious criminal trespass*.

Section 1 - Apprehension reports

Section 1 provides a summary of apprehensions for the selected property offences in 2000 before going on to outline the findings regarding the number of those apprehensions that also included a drug charge².

Number of apprehensions in 2000 for selected property offences

During 2000 13,532 apprehension reports³ involved at least one of the property offence types listed above.

Table 1 shows that, of these 13,532 apprehension reports, almost half (44.0%) listed, as the most serious property charge, the offence of *larceny* (excluding vehicle theft).⁴ This offence category includes *larceny from the person*, *larceny from shop* and *larceny from a motor vehicle*.

More than one in five apprehensions (21.5%) had a major property charge of *break and enter/criminal trespass*. A further 13.1% involved a major charge relating to vehicle theft or interference, while 12.4% involved *receiving or unlawful possession of stolen goods*.

Robbery was the major property charge in only 3.1% of selected apprehensions, while 6.0% came under the category of *fraud or misappropriation*.

Table 1 Apprehensions for selected property offences by most serious property charge per apprehension: 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2000

Most serious property charge	No	%
Robbery	415	3.1
Break and enter/criminal trespass	2,914	21.5
Fraud/misappropriation	806	6.0
Receiving/unlawful possession	1,678	12.4
Larceny/illegal use of/interfere with vehicle	1,768	13.1
Larceny (excluding vehicle theft)	5,951	44.0
Total	13,532	100.0

Drug offences within the same apprehension

In order to explore the relationship between reported property crime and drug offending, apprehensions involving a selected property offence were analysed to determine whether or not the report also included a drug charge. Overall, only a small proportion (519 or 3.8%) of the 13,532 apprehensions recorded in 2000 included at least one drug offence within the same report. This figure included 339 (3.6%) of the 9,454 adult apprehensions and 180 (4.4%) of the 4,078 juvenile apprehensions.

While juveniles represented 30.1% of all selected property-related apprehensions, they made up 34.7% of all such apprehensions that involved at least one drug offence. However, this may be at least partly due to the fact that juveniles cannot be issued with a cannabis expiation notice. Instead, they must be charged.

Figure 1 identifies the types of reported property offending that were most likely to be associated with a drug offence. This was done through calculating the percentage of apprehensions within each major property charge category that also included a drug charge. Apprehensions where the most serious property charge was *receiving or unlawful possession of stolen goods* were the most likely to also involve a drug offence, with 14.8% of all such apprehensions including at least one drug charge. In

² Drug charges included were *possess and/or use drugs*, *possess implements for drug use*, *fraudulent prescription offences*, *possess for sale/sell drugs*, *produce or manufacture drugs* and *other drug offences*.

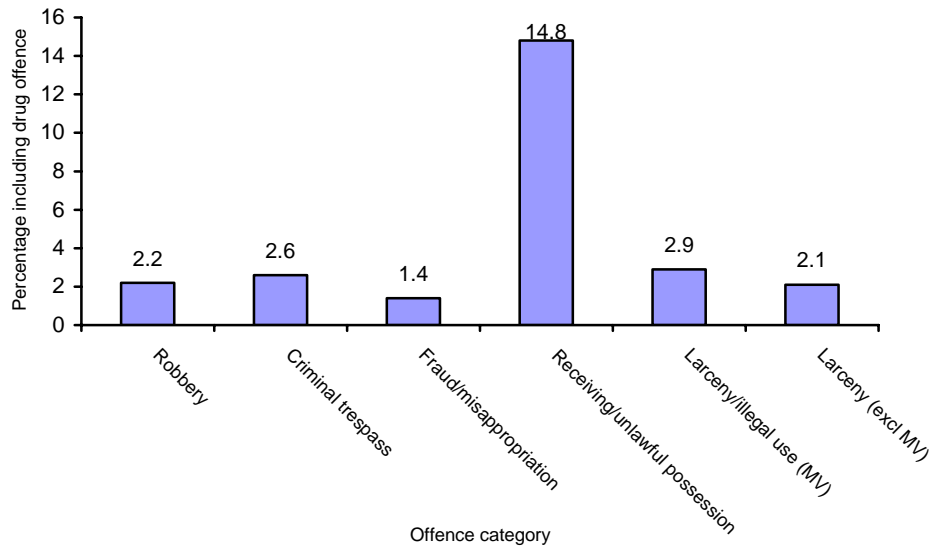
³ It should be noted that these 13,532 apprehensions do not equate to 13,532 unique individuals, since a single individual may be apprehended several times within a calendar year. Statistics relating to discrete individuals apprehended during 2000 are presented later in this paper.

⁴ Calculation of the major charge was based on the property offences only and excluded other offence types within the same apprehension. For instance, an apprehension involving a *criminal trespass* offence could also have included an *offence against the person*, such as a serious assault, which may have constituted the major charge for that apprehension report. However, such offences have not been taken into account for this analysis.

contrast, only 1.4% of apprehensions where the major property charge was *fraud* or *misappropriation* also included a drug offence.

Percentages across the other offence categories were similar, with at least one drug offence included in 2.9% of all apprehensions where the major property charge was *larceny/illegal use/interfere with vehicle*, 2.6% of those involving *break and enter/criminal trespass*, 2.2% of those involving *robbery* and 2.1% of those where the major property charge was *larceny*.

Figure 1 Percentage of apprehensions including drug offence – by major property charge category



Major property charge by drug involvement

Figure 1 looks at each major charge category as a discrete entity, and then considers what proportion of apprehensions within that category had a drug charge included in the same report.

As another way of looking at the relationship, Table 2 profiles the type of property crime involved in those apprehensions where a drug offence was also listed, and compares this with the profile for those apprehensions which did not involve a drug offence. As shown, of the 519 property-related apprehensions where a drug charge was involved, nearly half (47.8%) had *receiving* or *unlawful possession* listed as the most serious charge. A further 24.1% involved the major charge of *larceny* (excluding vehicle theft), while 14.5% involved *break and enter/criminal trespass*. Only a very small proportion of ‘drug’ property-related apprehension reports had a major charge of *robbery* (1.7%).

In contrast, *larceny* (44.8%) and *break and enter/criminal trespass* (21.8%) accounted for a higher percentage of ‘non-drug’ property-related apprehension reports than was the case where a drug offence was included. However, the biggest area of difference was for the major charge of *receiving/unlawful possession*, which made up only 11.0% of ‘non-drug’ apprehensions.

Table 2 Property-related apprehensions: percentage of ‘drug’ and ‘non-drug’ apprehensions by most serious property charge category

Most serious property charge	Property-related apprehensions involving a drug charge		Property-related apprehensions not involving a drug charge	
	No	%	No	%
Robbery	9	1.7	406	3.1
Break and enter/criminal trespass	75	14.5	2,839	21.8
Fraud/misappropriation	11	2.1	795	6.1
Receiving/unlawful possession	248	47.8	1,430	11.0
Larceny/illegal use of/interfere with vehicle	51	9.8	1,717	13.2
Larceny (excluding vehicle theft)	125	24.1	5,826	44.8
Total	519	100.0	13,013	100.0

For those apprehensions where the most serious property charge involved *break and enter/criminal trespass* or *larceny*, the figures were further broken down according to the nature of the charge.

Table 3 shows that, for *break and enter/criminal trespass* offences, over half (54.4%) of those apprehensions which did not include a drug offence occurred within a dwelling, compared with 44.0% of those where a drug charge was also included. Apprehensions with a drug offence included were also slightly more likely to be associated with *criminal trespass* in shops (20.0%) than those where no drug offences were included (15.4%).

Table 3 Property-related apprehensions: percentage of ‘drug’ and ‘non-drug’ apprehensions by type of criminal trespass offence

Criminal trespass offence as major charge	Property-related apprehensions involving a drug charge		Property-related apprehensions not involving a drug charge	
	No	%	No	%
Dwelling	33	44.0	1,544	54.4
Shop	15	20.0	438	15.4
School	7	9.3	228	8.0
Other	20	26.7	629	22.2
All criminal trespass	75	100.0	2,839	100.0

As shown in Table 4, six in ten (60.9%) of the apprehensions for *larceny* that did not involve a drug offence had a major charge of *larceny from shop*, while this offence was the major charge in only 41.6% of apprehensions for *larceny* where a drug offence was also included.

Table 4 Property-related apprehensions: percentage of ‘drug’ and ‘non-drug’ apprehensions by type of larceny offence

Larceny offence as major charge	Property-related apprehensions involving a drug charge		Property-related apprehensions not involving a drug charge	
	No.	%	No.	%
Dwelling	2	1.6	36	0.6
Shop	52	41.6	3,548	60.9
School	25	20.0	624	10.7
Other	46	36.8	1,618	27.8
All criminal trespass	125	100.0	5,826	100.0

Section 2 - Individuals

Individuals apprehended for selected property offences in 2000

The 13,532 apprehension reports involving at least one of the selected property offences in 2000 were linked to 9,186 discrete individuals. Overall, 6,859 or 74.7% of the individuals apprehended were male. Conversely, 2,326 or 25.3% were female.⁵

Of the 9,186 individuals, 6,890 or 75% were linked to only one apprehension report during 2000, 1,288 (14.0%) were linked to two reports, 522 (5.7%) were involved in three apprehension reports and 486 (5.3%) were the subject of four or more reports within the calendar year.

The next part of the analysis looks at the proportion of individuals apprehended in 2000 who had at least one drug charge included in a property-related apprehension. It then looks at the proportion who had a drug charge included in their most recent apprehension, before going on to examine prior reported drug offending for all those apprehended for a property offence in 2000.

Recorded property offending

As could be expected, the higher the number of apprehension reports for a selected property offence which were linked to an individual in 2000, the greater likelihood that at least one report would involve one or more drug offences. While only 3.9% of the individuals with one property apprehension in 2000 also had drug offences listed on that apprehension report, 13.0% of individuals with seven or more reports in 2000 had at least one report involving a drug offence (see Table 5).

Table 5 Percentage of individuals with at least one report including a drug offence, by number of property apprehensions in 2000

'Property-related' apprehension reports per individual	No. individuals	of Individuals with at least one 'drug' apprehension report	
		No.	%
1	6,890	269	3.9
2	1,288	93	7.2
3	522	57	10.9
4	214	25	11.7
5	140	21	15.0
6	63	9	14.3
7 -14	69	9	13.0

Individuals whose most recent apprehension included a drug offence

This part of the analysis considers the most recent property apprehension recorded in 2000 for each of the 9,186 individuals, and looks at whether that report also involved a drug offence. This was found to be the case for only 348 or 3.8% of the 9,186 individuals. By sex, only 4.1% of males and 2.8% of females apprehended on property charges in 2000 also had at least one drug charge included in their most recent report.

Of the 348 individuals who were charged with a drug offence, 18.4% were female (see Table 6). In contrast, of the 9,185 individuals whose most recent apprehension for a selected property offence did not include a drug charge, one quarter (25.6%) were female.

⁵ Sex was unknown for one individual.

Table 6 Sex of individuals apprehended according to whether the most recent apprehension included a drug offence

	Most recent apprehension = 'non-drug' apprehension		Most recent apprehension = 'drug' apprehension		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Males	6,575	74.4	284	81.6	6,859	74.7
Females	2,262	25.6	64	18.4	2,326	25.3
Total	8,837	100.0	348	100.0	9,185	100.0

NB: Sex was unknown for one individual in the 'non-drug' apprehension group

Having divided the individuals into two groups depending on whether the most recent apprehension did or did not involve a drug charge, the analysis then looked at whether or not they had previously been reported for drug offences.

Individuals whose most recent apprehension report in 2000 also included a drug charge were more likely to have had a previous drug charge. As shown in Figure 2, 38.2% of individuals in the 'drug apprehensions' group could be linked to at least one previous drug offence, compared with only 20.6% of those whose most recent apprehension in 2000 did not include a drug charge. Conversely, 61.8% of individuals whose most recent apprehension report included a drug charge had no previous drug charges, compared with 79.4% of those in the 'non-drug' apprehension group.

Figure 2 Percentage of individuals with a previous drug charge – by whether their most recent apprehension included a drug charge

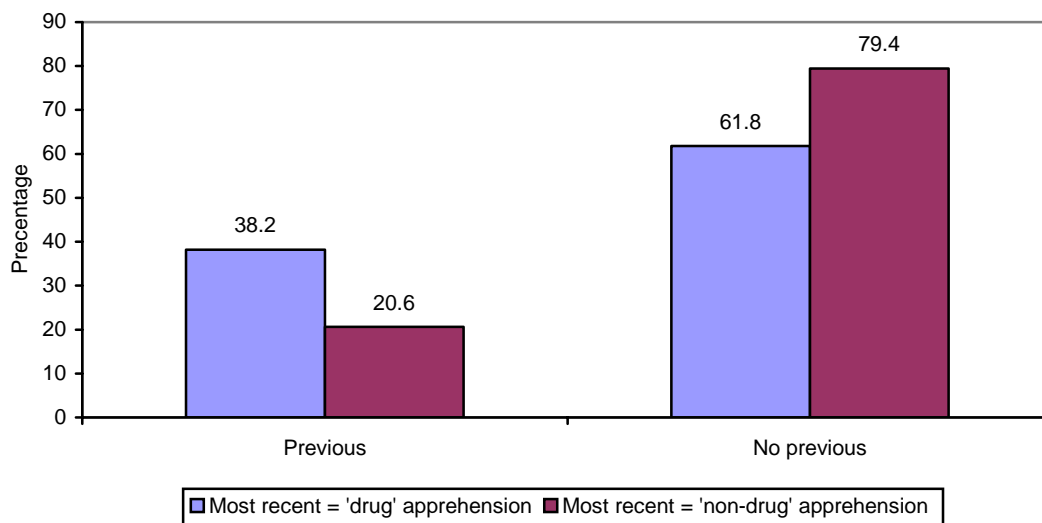
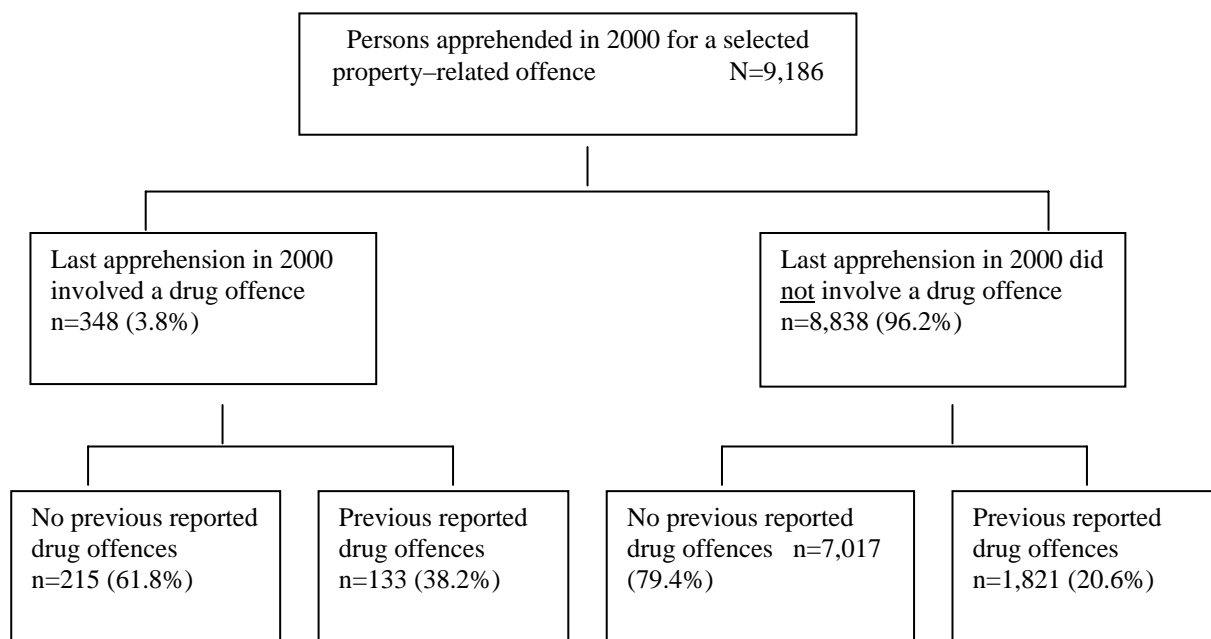


Figure 3 combines the information so far presented on individuals into a single flow diagram. It shows that, in total, of the 9,186 discrete individuals apprehended for a property offence in 2000, less than one quarter (2,169 or 23.7%) either had a drug offence listed on their most recent apprehension report, or had previously been charged with a drug offence. Conversely, over three quarters had neither a current nor a previous drug charge at the time of their most recent property apprehension.

Figure 3 Flow diagram showing previous reported drug offending rates according to whether the most recent apprehension included a drug offence



Number of prior drug charges

Table 6 looks at the number of prior drug offences per individual for those persons apprehended for a property offence in 2000. Although numbers are small, the figures indicate that those whose most recent apprehension included a drug charge were more likely to have multiple previous drug offences, with 5.7% of this group having six or more previously recorded drug offences compared with 1.9% of the ‘non-drug’ apprehensions group.

Table 7 Number of prior drug charges according to whether the most recent apprehension included a drug offence

Number of prior drug charges	Most recent apprehension = ‘Non drug’ apprehension		Most recent apprehension = ‘Drug’ apprehension	
	No	%	No	%
0	7,017	79.4	215	61.8
1	757	8.6	55	15.8
2	436	4.9	27	7.8
3	249	2.8	10	2.9
4	130	1.5	11	3.2
5	78	0.9	10	2.9
6+	171	1.9	20	5.7
Total	8,838	100.0	348	100.0

Prior drug charges by type of offence

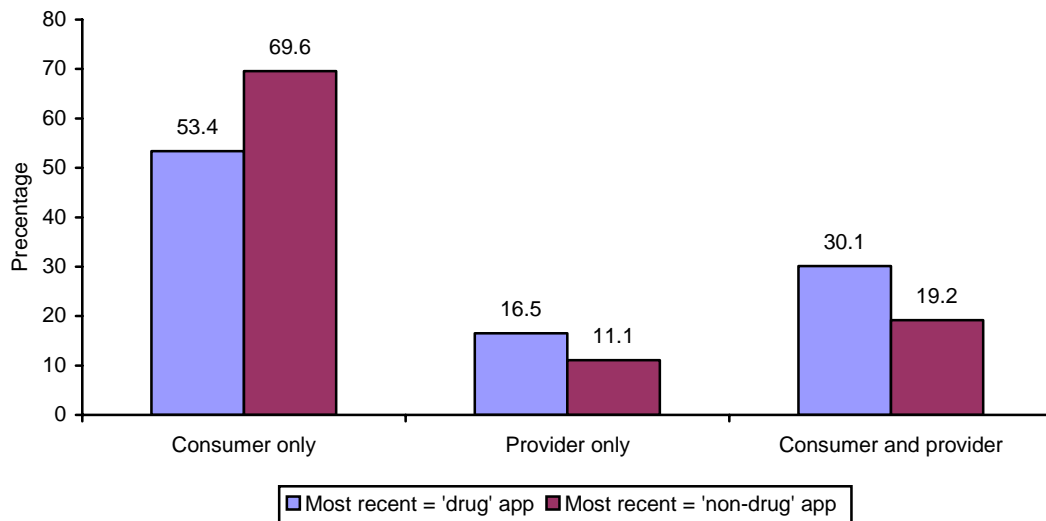
Data relating to individuals apprehended for a selected property offence in 2000 were analysed according to the type of previous drug charges (if any) recorded against them. As indicated earlier, of the 348 individuals whose most recent property apprehension involved a drug offence, 133 also had at least one prior drug charge. In addition, of the 8838 whose most recent apprehension for a property offence did not include a drug charge, 1,821 had a prior drug charge.

This section looks in more detail at these 1,954 individuals with a prior drug charge, to determine the type of drug behaviour they were involved in. In particular, they were classified into one of three categories: 'consumer', 'provider' or 'consumer and provider'.

For instance, a person with a prior report for *possess cannabis* would be assigned to the 'consumer' category, while an individual with one or more previous reports for *possess cannabis for sale* would be assigned to the 'provider' category. Any person with previous charges of *possess cannabis* and *possess cannabis for sale* would be assigned to the 'consumer and provider' category. It should be noted that the figures in the following section relate to **previous** drug apprehensions only. The type of drug offence involved in the most recent property + drug apprehension is not taken into account.

Figure 4 shows that individuals whose most recent apprehension for a property offence included a drug charge were more likely to have previously been reported as providers, or both consumers and providers (46.6%), than were persons whose latest apprehension in 2000 did not include a drug offence (30.3%). Seven in ten (69.6%) of the latter group had previous charges as consumers only, compared to just over half (53.4%) of the 'drug' apprehension group.

Figure 4 Percentage of individuals with previous drug charges - by type of offence



Type of prior drug offences by type of drug

The next two tables show the number of individuals with previous reports for drug charges, according to both the category of offence and the type of drug. Table 8 shows the distribution for those whose most recent offence in 2000 included a drug charge, and Table 9 shows the same statistics for the group whose latest property apprehension did not involve drug offences.

While numbers are small, Table 8 shows that, in the 'drug' apprehension group, half (50.7%) of those previously reported as consumers had offences relating to cannabis only, with those in the 'provider' and 'consumer and provider' categories more likely to have been charged in relation to multiple drugs.

Table 8 Individuals with previous drug apprehensions by type of offence and type of drug – those whose most recent apprehension in 2000 included a drug offence

Type of drug	Consumers		Providers		Consumers and providers	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Cannabis only	36	50.7	9	40.9	8	20.0
Amphetamines only	12	16.9	1	4.5	4	10.0
Opiates only	11	15.5	6	27.3	4	10.0
Multiple drugs	5	7.0	6	27.3	24	60.0
Other only	7	9.9	0	0	0	0.0
Total	71	100.0	22	100.0	40	100.0

For those whose most recent apprehension did not involve a drug offence, but who had at least one previous apprehension as a ‘consumer’, the majority (52.6%) had been previously apprehended for offences relating to cannabis only, as had over two-thirds (70.9%) of those who had previously been reported as a ‘provider’ only (see Table 9). In contrast, over half (52.3%) of those individuals with previous charges as both consumers and providers had been reported for offences involving multiple drugs.

Table 9 Individuals with previous drug apprehensions by type of offence and type of drug – those whose most recent apprehension in 2000 did not include a drug offence

Type of drug	Consumers		Providers		Consumers and providers	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Cannabis only	667	52.6	144	70.9	122	34.9
Amphetamines only	133	10.5	15	7.4	17	4.9
Opiates only	115	9.1	25	12.3	26	7.4
Multiple drugs	244	19.2	8	3.9	183	52.3
Other only	109	8.6	11	5.4	2	0.6
Total	1,268	100.0	203	100.0	350	100.0

The information detailed above is presented graphically in Figures 5 and 6.

Summary

During 2000 13,532 apprehension reports were lodged that involved at least one of the selected property offence types examined in this Briefing Paper.

Overall, only a small proportion (519 or 3.8%) of the 13,532 apprehensions included at least one drug offence listed on the same apprehension report. This figure included 339 (3.6%) of the 9,454 adult apprehensions and 180 (4.4%) of the juvenile apprehensions.

Of all apprehensions where a drug charge was involved nearly half (47.8%) had a major property charge of *receiving* or *unlawful possession*. A further 24.1% were connected with a major charge of *larceny* (excluding vehicle theft), while 14.5% involved *break and enter/criminal trespass*. Only a very small proportion of both ‘drug offence’ and ‘non drug offence’ apprehension reports had a major charge of *robbery* (1.7% and 3.1% respectively).

The 13,532 apprehension reports involving at least one of the selected property offences in 2000 were linked to 9,186 discrete individuals. When the most recent property apprehension for each individual was analysed, 348 or 3.8% also included a drug charge.

The analysis showed that individuals whose most recent apprehension report in 2000 included a drug charge were more likely to have previously been reported for drug charges, with 38.3% of these

individuals able to be linked to at least one previous drug offence, compared with 20.6% of those whose most recent report did not list any drug charges.

In total, of the 9,186 individuals apprehended for a property offence in 2000, 2,169 (23.7%) either had a drug offence listed on their most recent apprehension report, or had previously been charged with a drug offence.

In conclusion, the statistics presented in this Bulletin indicate that the links between apprehensions for property crime and drug offences were not as strong as might be expected, in that only a small proportion (3.8%) of property related apprehensions also included a drug charge. However, the fact that almost a quarter (23.7%) of individuals apprehended for property offences in 2000 were either charged with a drug offence at the same time or had prior drug charges suggests the existence of a more substantial association between the two types of offending.

According to SAPOL, the very low proportion of apprehensions for a property offence that also involved a drug charge can be explained in two main ways. In the first instance, it is unlikely that a heroin dependent property offender will be in possession of that drug at the time of the offence since, by definition, they are offending to enable them to purchase the drug. Once in possession of a drug, they will be looking for the first opportunity to administer it. As a result, even if the police apprehend the offender at a later date, there will be few opportunities for the individual to be caught in possession, unless he/she is also supplying other users. However, it should be noted that this explanation would not apply to all types of illicit drugs, due to differences in the effects of certain drugs and the way they are used. Amphetamines, for example, may motivate a person to offend because they have the effect of inducing short-term feelings of energy, power, strength and self assertion. As a result, amphetamine users may be more likely than heroin users to offend while under the influence. Amphetamine users, like cannabis users, may also be more likely to carry a supply of the substance compared with offenders dependant upon heroin.

Secondly, it should be noted that police have discretion over the charges filed against an alleged offender. It is possible that when an individual is apprehended for an offence such as larceny or serious criminal trespass, but is also in possession of an illicit drug, police choose not to charge that individual with a drug offence because this may be relatively minor compared with the other charge. It may also be the case that the offender has been given a Cannabis Expiation Notice, which would not show up in the data considered here.

Overall then, it is likely that official crime statistics are not able to reflect fully the suspected relationship between drug use and crime, due to the nature of drug related offending.

Figure 5 Individuals whose most recent 'property related' apprehension in 2000 did include a drug charge

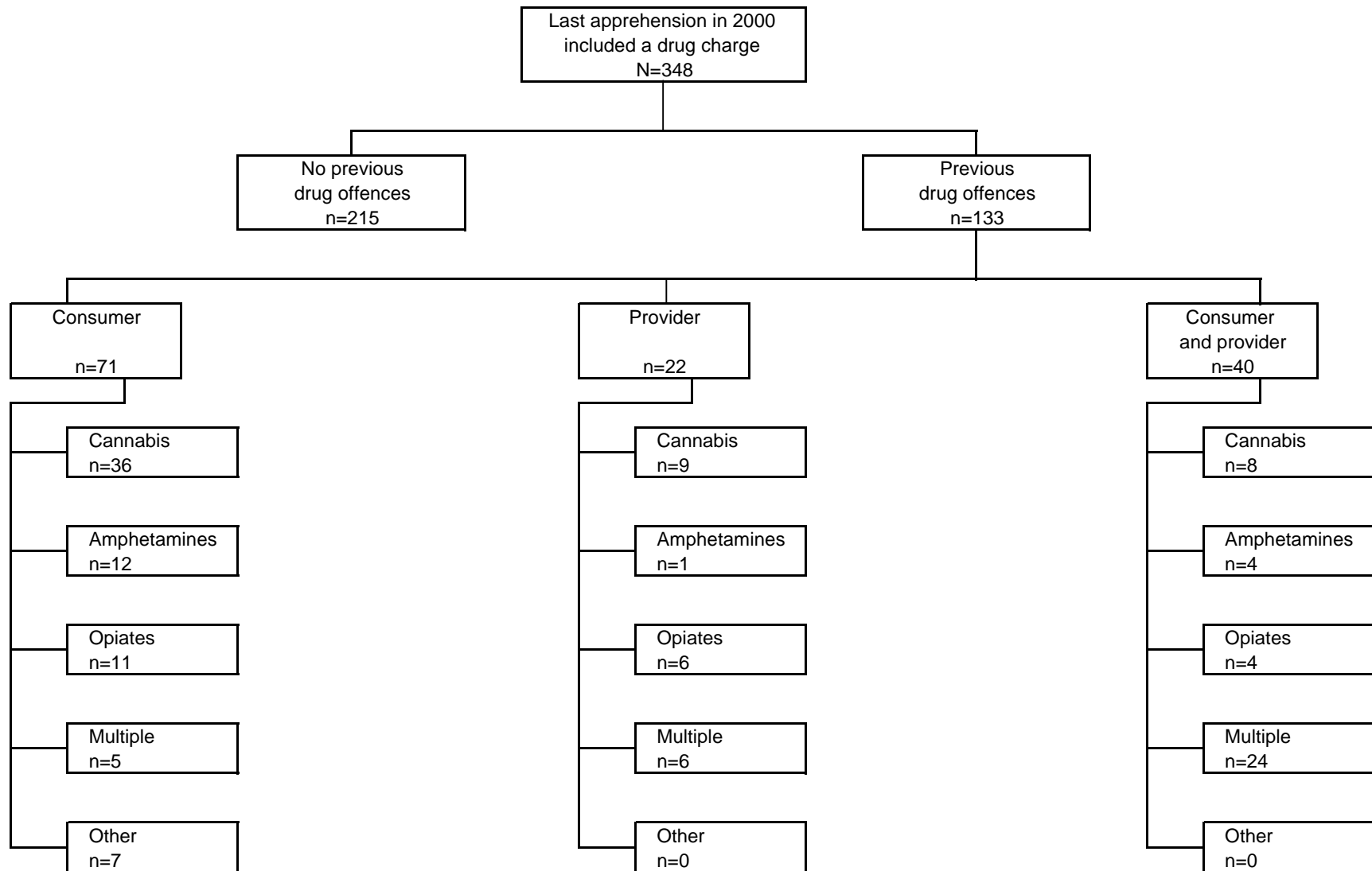


Figure 6 Individuals whose most recent 'property related' apprehension in 2000 did not include a drug charge

