

Drug Use and Offending:

A Study of Female Prisoners in South Australia

DRUG USE CAREERS OF OFFENDERS (DUCO)
IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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STATUTES



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CRIME STATISTICS
AND RESEARCH



Government
of South Australia





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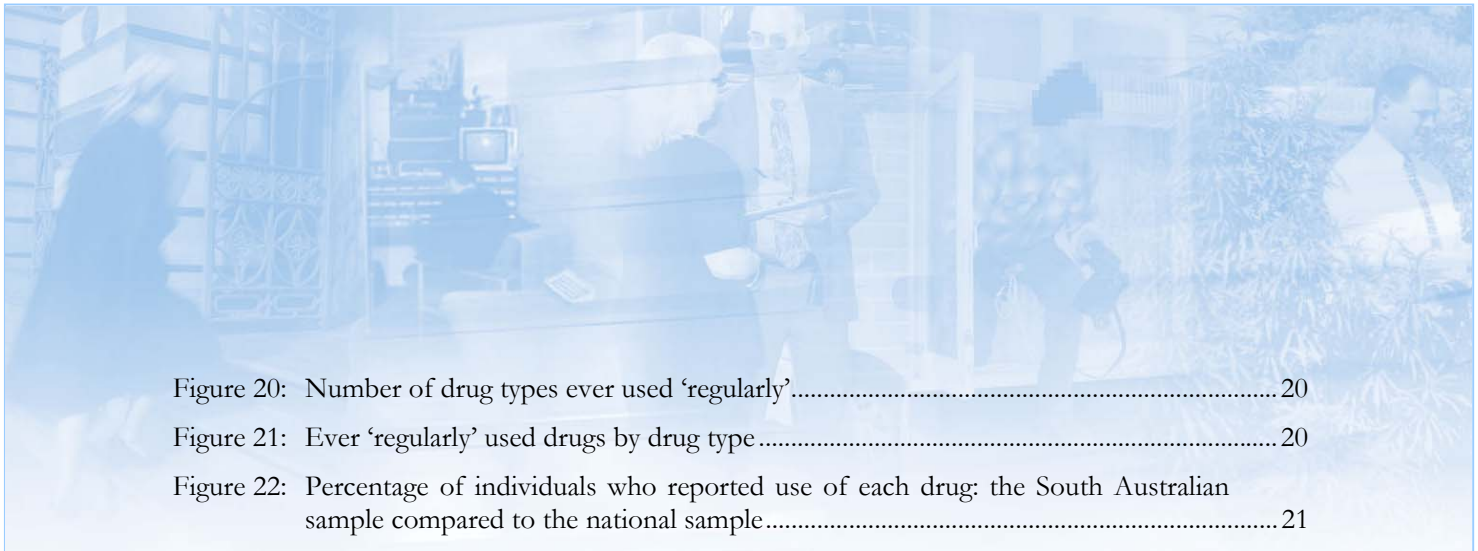


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Drug Use Careers of Offenders (DUCO) project seeks to measure lifetime drug use amongst sentenced prisoners across Australia. Three separate samples were interviewed as part of the project; namely, adult males in 2001, adult females in 2003/04 and juveniles in 2004/05. Both the adult female and juvenile components of this study included South Australian respondents. This report details the results from adult females interviewed in South Australia.

Caution should be exercised when interpreting findings from this report due to the relatively small number of interviews conducted ($n = 42$). For this reason, the majority of analyses presented in this report use frequencies instead of percentages.

Profile of offenders


A total of 42 individuals were interviewed, including nine who were Indigenous. The age of individuals ranged from 19 years to 55 years, with a median of 33.5 years. Around three quarters (32 individuals) reported that they had children, including 12 with three or more. Only around one in five indicated that they had finished Year 12, while a relatively high proportion reported that they were living in a Housing Trust home prior to arrest. Only seven were working full time prior to their arrest, while over four in five indicated that they were receiving some form of welfare or government benefit.

There were 18 individuals who acknowledged that they had previously been in adult detention, excluding remand, while eight reported that they had been in juvenile detention. There were 22 individuals who reported that they were currently imprisoned for a property offence, while 18 were imprisoned for a violent offence. Around one quarter of individuals reported that they were currently sentenced to 10 years or more, while the median time served on their current sentence was just one year.

Two thirds of individuals reported that they had experienced emotional abuse while growing up, while around half indicated that they had experienced physical abuse. Also, around one third reported that they had been victims of child sexual abuse and around one in four had been neglected. In the majority of cases, the perpetrators of this abuse were the individual's parent(s).

When asked about abuses they had experienced as an adult, over three quarters of individuals had also been victims of emotional abuse, while around two thirds reported that they had experienced physical abuse. Also, around one third reported that they had been victims of sexual abuse. The majority of the perpetrators of these types of abuse were their spouses or partners.

Individuals were asked several questions regarding their mental state while growing up. The majority of individuals interviewed were regarded as having mental health issues, including nearly two thirds who reported that they 'often' felt very sad, while half reported that they were 'often' anxious or stressed or that they had arguments or fights. Over three quarters reported that their mental health issues significantly interfered with their lives during the six months prior to arrest. Additionally, around half of the individuals reported that they had been diagnosed with some form of mental health problem.



Drug use

Individuals were asked a variety of questions in relation to their drug use careers. These questions covered such topics as frequency of use, regularity of use, age of first and regular use, money spent on drugs and drug dependence. These questions were asked in relation to specific drug types including amphetamines, benzodiazepines, cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, hallucinogens, heroin, morphine and street methadone.

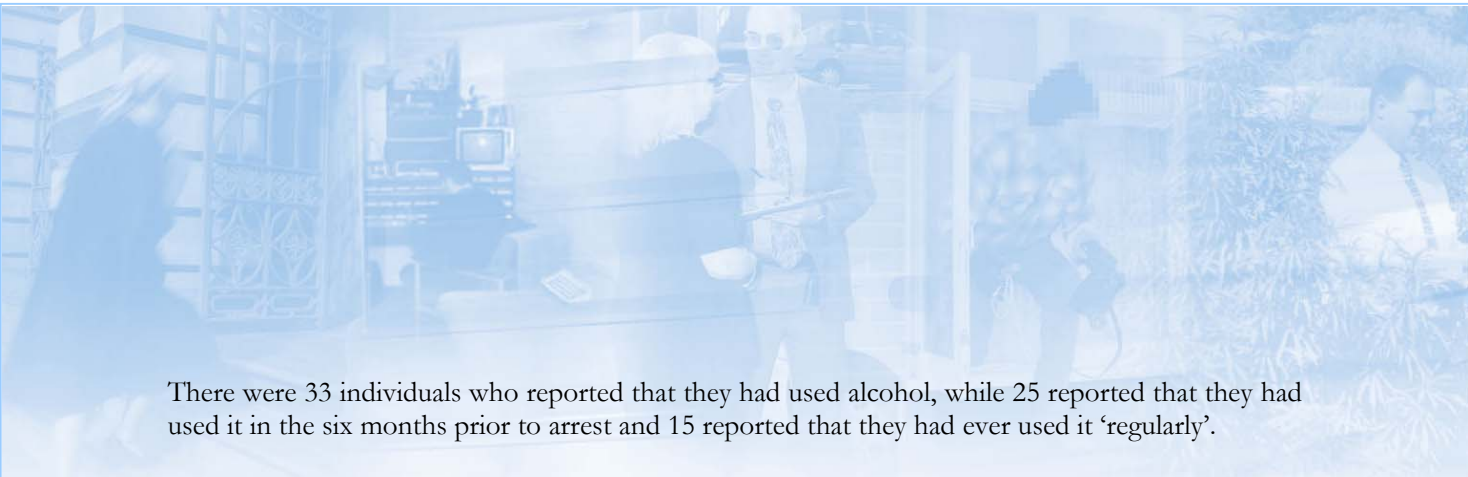
Cannabis was the drug most likely to have been used by individuals (35), to have been used in the six months prior to arrest (25) and to have ever been used 'regularly' (24). Cannabis was also first used and regularly used at a younger median age than other drugs (15 years for each). Moreover, cannabis was also used most frequently, with 19 of the 25 individuals who had used this drug in the six months prior to arrest reporting that they used it at least once per day. This included 16 respondents who reported using it several times a day.

The second drug most likely to be used by individuals was amphetamines, with 30 of the 42 individuals indicating that they had ever used it, 18 individuals who reported using the drug in the six months prior to arrest and 24 who reported that they had used the drug 'regularly'. The median age of first use of amphetamines was 17.5 years, while the median age for 'regular' use was 18.5 years. More individuals reported that they spent money on amphetamines compared to other drugs (15 individuals, including seven who reported spending half or more of their money on the drug). Amphetamines was the drug that was most commonly referred to as 'the drug of choice' by individuals (10).

There were 27 individuals who reported that they had used benzodiazepines, including 14 who used it in the six months prior to arrest and 18 who had ever used it 'regularly'. Of the 27 individuals who had ever used benzodiazepines, five had only used the drug licitly and seven had only used it illicitly. There were 15 individuals who reported that they had been involved in both licit and illicit use of benzodiazepines. Individuals reported first using and first 'regularly' using the drug at a relatively young age (16 years for both). Of the 14 individuals who reported using the drug in the six months prior to arrest, nine reported using it at least once per day, including seven who reported using the drug several times per day.

Around half of the individuals (22) reported using heroin, while 15 reported using it in the six months prior to arrest and 19 reported that they had used the drug 'regularly'. The median age of first heroin use was 18 years, while on average, those who used the drug 'regularly' did so at the age of 16 years. Of the 15 individuals who reported using the drug in the six months prior to arrest, 10 indicated that they used it several times per day and had spent half or more of their money on the drug. A high number (18 of the 22 individuals) who had ever used heroin became regular users within one year, while just three reported that they never became regular users.

Comparisons of the South Australian data with the National results are very difficult due to the low number of individuals interviewed in South Australia. However, the prevalence of drug use amongst South Australia women prisoners appears to be higher than that of those interviewed across Australia as part of the DUCO project, in terms of both lifetime use and use in the six months prior to arrest.



There were 33 individuals who reported that they had used alcohol, while 25 reported that they had used it in the six months prior to arrest and 15 reported that they had ever used it 'regularly'.

Individuals were asked a series of questions relating to both alcohol and drug dependence. Based on these responses, there were six individuals who were regarded as alcohol dependent and 23 individuals who were regarded as drug dependent. Although the type of drug of dependence cannot be identified precisely due to the high level of multiple drug use, nine of these 23 individuals who were drug dependent reported that their drug of choice was amphetamines, while eight indicated that it was heroin.

Over half of the individuals reported that they had ever been in a drug or alcohol treatment program, including 15 who had been in methadone maintenance, ten who had received counselling and nine who had been in a rehabilitation program.

Drugs and crime

Around three quarters of the individuals interviewed (30 out of 42) reported that they had bought drugs at some point in their lives and all of these indicated that they had done so 'regularly', including 26 who reported doing so 500 or more times in their lifetime. All of the individuals reported that police never or rarely found out about these offences.

Over half of the individuals (22 out of 38 who responded to this question) reported that they were 'high' on illegal drugs at the time of committing the offence for which they were presently imprisoned, while 12 individuals reported that they were suffering from withdrawal effects at the time. Also, when asked their reasons for committing this offence, 24 individuals cited issues relating to their drug problem.

Four in five individuals who had ever committed property offences reported that they offended "to support their drug habit", while three in five reported that they were "drunk or high at the time". Similarly, of those individuals who ever committed violent offences, two thirds reported that they were "drunk or high at the time", while over one third reported that they committed the offence to "to get money for their drug habit".

Offending history

Individuals were asked about specific offences that they have committed over their lifetimes regardless of whether the police found out about it. Just under half (18 individuals) reported that they had 'ever' committed break and enter offences, while 15 reported that this became a 'regular' activity. Also, there were 24 individuals who reported that they had 'ever' stolen something, including 15 who reported that they had done so before the age of 15 years. Around half (23 individuals) reported that they had handled stolen goods, most of whom (21 individuals) reported that they went on to 'regularly' commit this offence. The majority of individuals who committed these types of offences indicated that they had done so at least one hundred times and that the police never or rarely found out about them.

While 11 individuals reported that they had committed armed robbery offences, no individuals progressed to 'regularly' committing such offences. The majority of these 11 individuals reported that they committed the offence less than five times and that the police found out about it most of the time or always.



INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings from the South Australian component of the Drug Use Careers of Offenders (DUCO) project. DUCO, a project run by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), seeks to measure drug use amongst sentenced offenders. Three separate populations were interviewed as a part of the DUCO project; namely, adult males in 2001, adult females in 2003/04 and juveniles in 2004/05. While South Australia did not participate in the survey of male prisoners, it was part of the studies that focused on adult female and juvenile prisoners. This report details the findings from the interviews conducted with female prisoners.

DUCO was implemented to explore lifetime drug use and offending amongst incarcerated individuals. The data from DUCO are used:


- to assess the role of treatment both within and outside the correctional system;
- to examine the intersections between drug use patterns and criminal careers; and
- to explore issues concerning links between drug use and crime.

There are few studies around drug use and offending conducted specifically on sentenced prisoners in Australia and these studies have generally focused on a single jurisdiction and have had relatively small sample sizes. This has hindered the capacity of researchers to explore complex relationships between drugs and crime, and has affected the availability of reliable data for policy purposes. DUCO helps to address this gap by providing detailed information on drug use and offending amongst sentenced prisoners, who comprise persistent repeat offenders, involve substantial expenditure in terms of policing, court and prison costs, and are characterised by high rates of drug use.

In 2003, face-to-face interviews were conducted with South Australian women who were incarcerated in the Adelaide Women's Prison. Given the small number of inmates at any one time in this prison (the total capacity is 71), a total census of the prison was attempted. Certain individuals were screened out due to language barriers or being judged as a potential risk to themselves or others. Of the 48 individuals who were approached to be interviewed, 42 agreed to participate and successfully completed the interview. Involvement in the study was entirely voluntary, and periodically during the interview, interviewers asked permission to continue the interview and reminded offenders of their rights to terminate their involvement.

Participants were guaranteed confidentiality and a number of steps were taken so that they could not be identified. For example, unique identifiers were applied to the questionnaires and the data sets. Questionnaires were kept in a closed container with the interviewer at all times and correctional staff were not permitted to read either completed or blank questionnaires.

The questionnaire consisted of three main sections. The first section, Demographics, Family Background and Custodial History, included questions relating to mental health, family violence (as an adult and while growing up) and parental drug and alcohol problems. The second section, Offence History, included questions relating to frequency of offending, age of first and regular offence, and police knowledge of offending for 11 different categories of offences. The final section of the questionnaire, Drugs, included questions relating to frequency of use, dependence,



age of first and regular use, together with prior and current treatment programs for alcohol and nine categories of illicit drugs.

The results of the DUCO project cannot be generalised to all female offenders or all female drug users in South Australia. The sentenced prisoners interviewed through this project represent a very select group, which is likely to be biased toward repeat or chronic offenders and have a lower socio-economic status. They may also differ in their risk-taking behaviour that leads them to come to the attention of police¹.

DUCO is a self-report study and hence, has limitations relating to the willingness of individuals to report sensitive information. Amongst incarcerated individuals, there may be a perception that reporting such information would be self-incriminating. Also, as the questionnaire relates to events that occurred over the individual's lifetime, accuracy of memory may also be a limiting factor. As this report focuses on only the South Australian component of DUCO and has a relatively small sample size (n = 42), the range of statistical analyses outlined in this report are limited. It is difficult to provide meaningful comparisons of different demographic and offender groups within this sample. Because of the small sample size, the majority of results are given as raw numbers, rather than percentages.

The first section of this report details the demographic characteristics of the individuals interviewed, including a summary of the nature of their current sentence. This section also examines the offender's experience of abuse, both as a child and as an adult, and mental health issues. The second section provides an analysis of lifetime drug use, including use in the six months prior to imprisonment and 'regular' drug use. Topics such as age of drug use and drug dependence are also explored, with a specific focus on amphetamines, benzodiazepines, cannabis and heroin. The third section looks at drugs and crime, including individuals' involvement in both buying and selling drugs and their drug use while offending. Property and violent offending is also examined, including the reasons individuals gave for that offending. The age of onset of drug dealing and 'regular' drug dealing is also examined. The final section of this report looks at the specific offences of break and enter, theft, handle stolen goods and armed robbery.

¹ For further information about the National DUCO sample, please refer to Johnson H., 2004. *Drugs and Crime: A Study of Incarcerated Female Offenders*. Research and Public Policy Series No 63. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology

PROFILE OF OFFENDERS

Overview

Table 1 presents an overview of the demographic characteristics of the 42 individuals interviewed, nine of whom identified themselves as Indigenous. The median age was 33.5 years. Most reported that they had children (32 individuals), including 12 who reported having three or more children.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of individuals interviewed

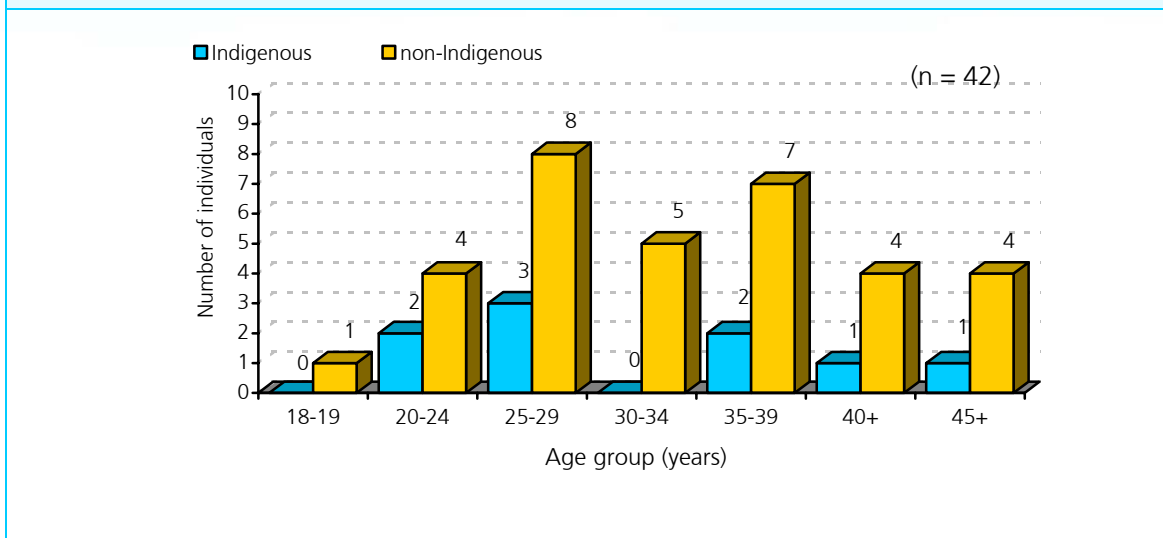
▪ Total number interviewed	42
▪ Indigenous	9
▪ Median age	33.5 years
▪ Have children	32
▪ Have three or more children	12
▪ Currently married or in a defacto relationship	12
▪ Have finished Year 10	28
▪ Have finished Year 12	9
▪ Completed TAFE	16
▪ Lived in Housing Trust home prior to arrest	17
▪ Six months prior to arrest, received money from	
▪ Full/ part time work	7
▪ Welfare/ government benefit	34
▪ Theft/ burglary	10
▪ Drug dealing/ other drug crime	10
▪ Ever been in juvenile detention (not remand)	8
▪ Ever prior been in adult detention (not remand)	18
▪ 'High' on illegal drugs at time of offence for which presently incarcerated	22
▪ Withdrawal symptoms at time of offence for which presently incarcerated	12
▪ Currently incarcerated for a property offence	22
▪ Currently incarcerated for a violent offence	19
▪ Currently sentenced for 10 years or more	11
▪ Currently sentenced to Governor's Pleasure	3
▪ Median time served on current sentence	1 year
▪ Median total time served in juvenile and adult institutions ever	1 year, 10 months
▪ Received a diagnosis for a mental health problem	22
▪ Parent had a drug or alcohol problem while growing up	19
▪ Mother had a drug or alcohol problem	11
▪ Father had a drug or alcohol problem	16
▪ Siblings had a drug or alcohol problem while growing up	7

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Demographics

Figure 1 shows a broad distribution of ages amongst both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals. The peak age for both groups was 25-29 years (11 individuals) followed by 35-39 years (9).

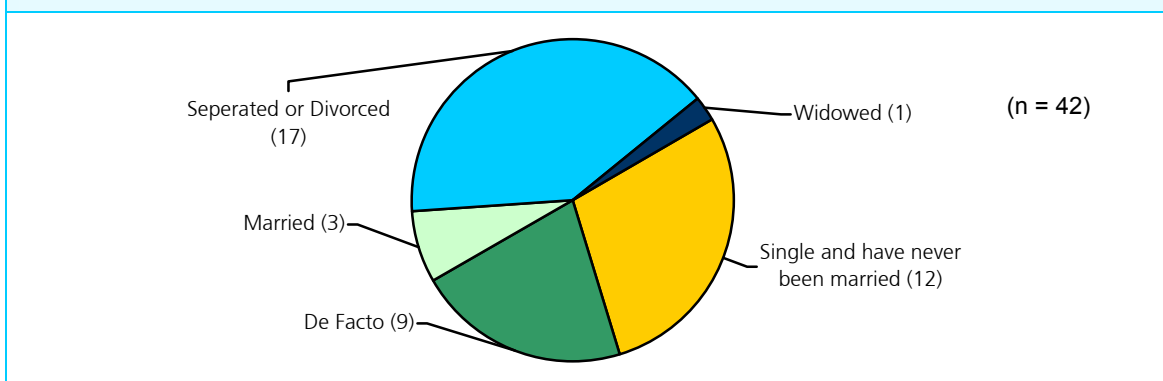
Figure 1: Age distribution of individuals interviewed by Indigenous status



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

As shown in Figure 2, about four in ten of the individuals (17 of 42) reported that they were separated or divorced, while just over one quarter (12) indicated that they were single and had never been married.

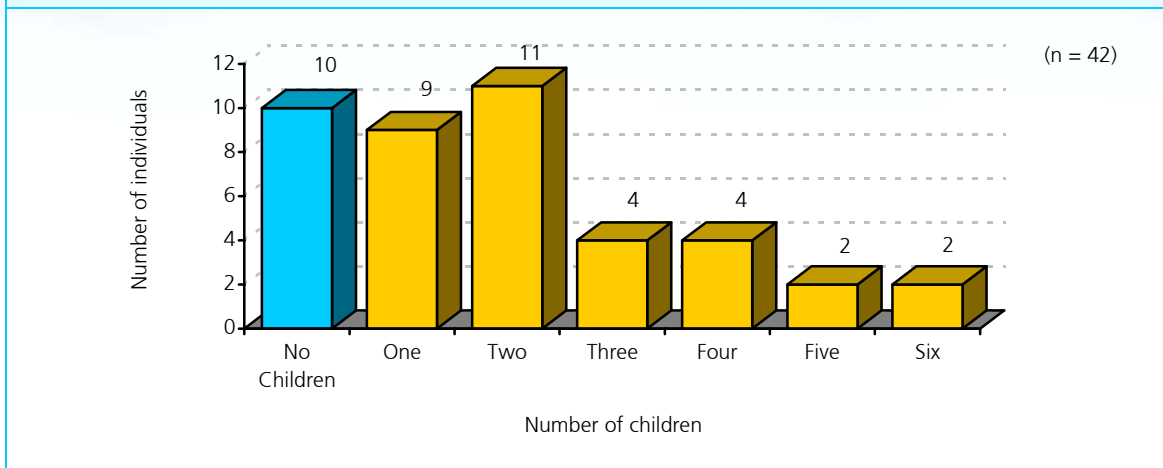
Figure 2: Individuals' current marital status



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Around three quarters of the individuals interviewed reported that they had children. As shown in Figure 3, 20 individuals reported having just one or two children, while 12 individuals reporting having three or more.

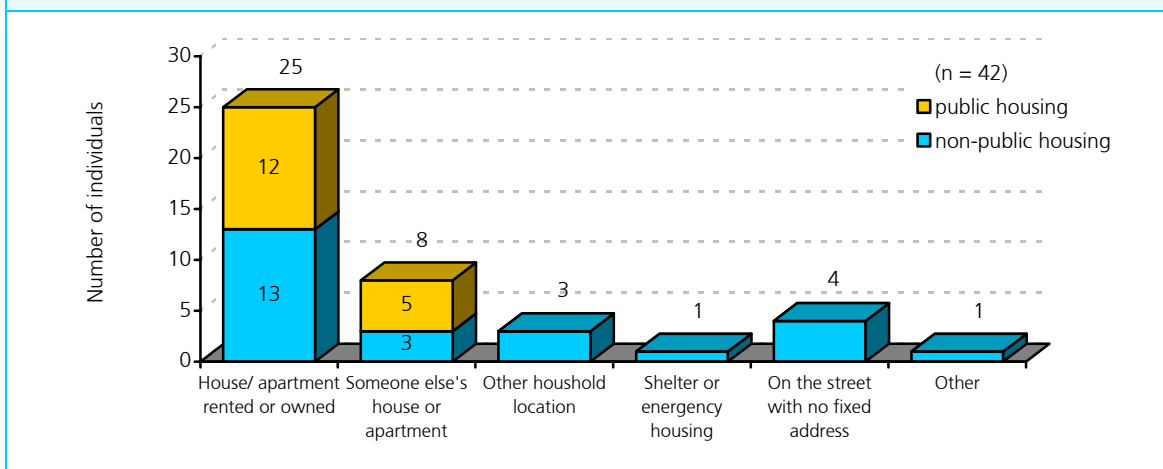
Figure 3: Number of children per individual



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 4 shows the main type of accommodation in which individuals reportedly lived during the six months prior to the offence for which they were currently imprisoned. As shown, 25 reported living in a house that they rented or owned, while eight reported living in somebody else's house. Of these 33 individuals, 17 reported that they were living in public housing. Four respondents reported that they were living on the street with no fixed address, while one was in a shelter or emergency housing.

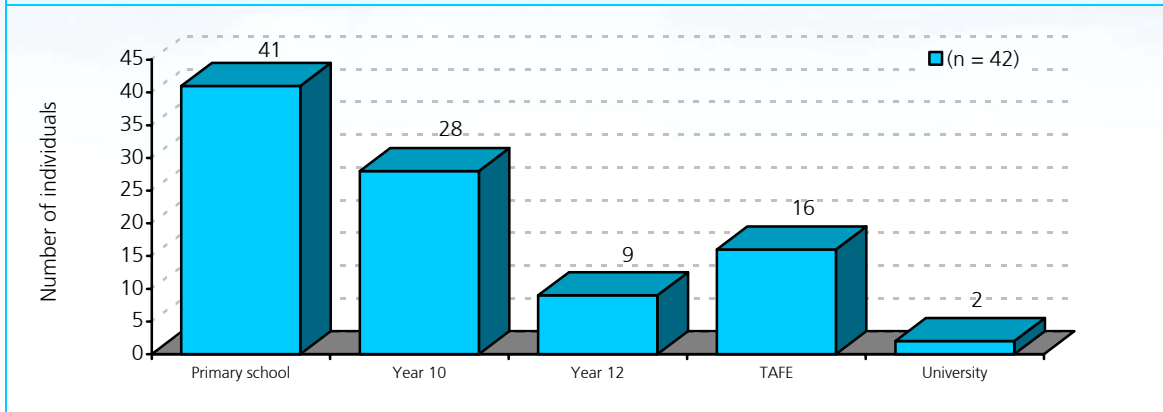
Figure 4: Type of accommodation in which individuals were mainly living during the six months prior to the offence for which they are currently imprisoned.



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 5 shows that all but one individual had completed primary school, while 28 had completed Year 10 and nine completed Year 12. Interestingly, 18 had completed a TAFE or university course.

Figure 5: Education levels that individuals reported they had completed

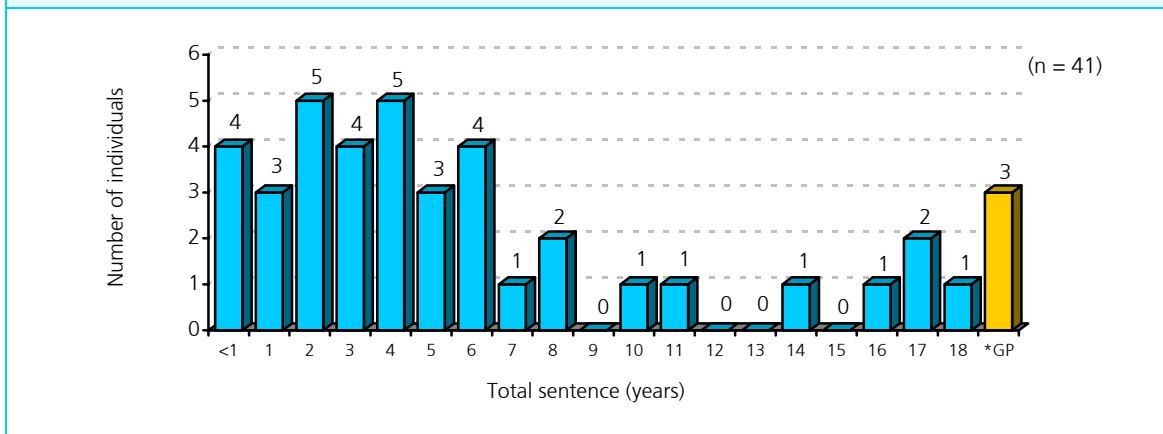


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Current sentence

As shown in Figure 6, the majority of individuals were serving a total sentence of six years or less (28 out of 41 individuals), while four had a sentence longer than fifteen years and three were being held at the Governor's Pleasure².

Figure 6: Length of total current sentence²



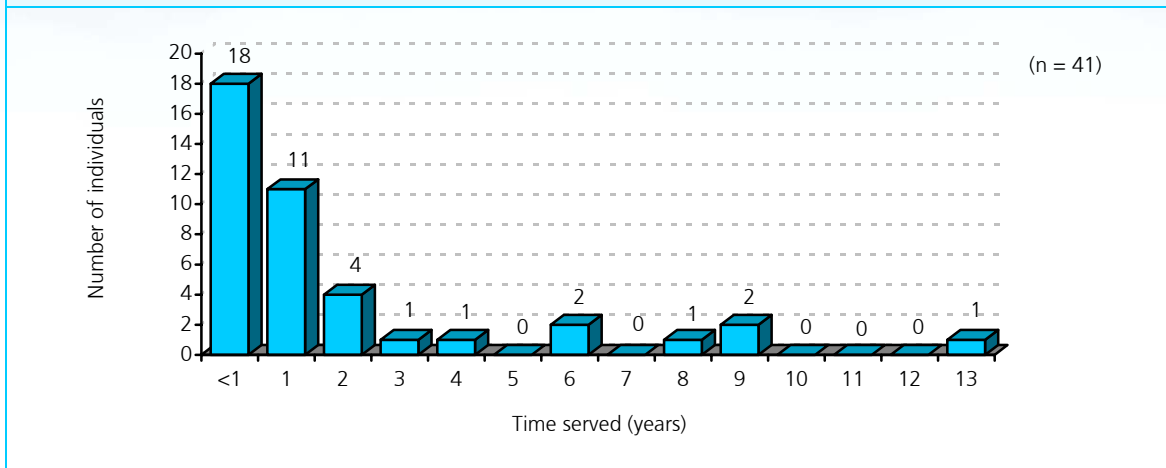
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Note: There was one individual who did not report the length of their current sentence

²*Governor's Pleasure refers to an exercise of crown prerogative in relation to the ongoing detention of persons. Detention orders in such cases are usually indeterminate.

Figure 7 shows the number of years that individuals had actually served on their current sentence. As shown, 18 individuals had served less than one year, while 11 had served one year. Only eight individuals had already served three or more years.

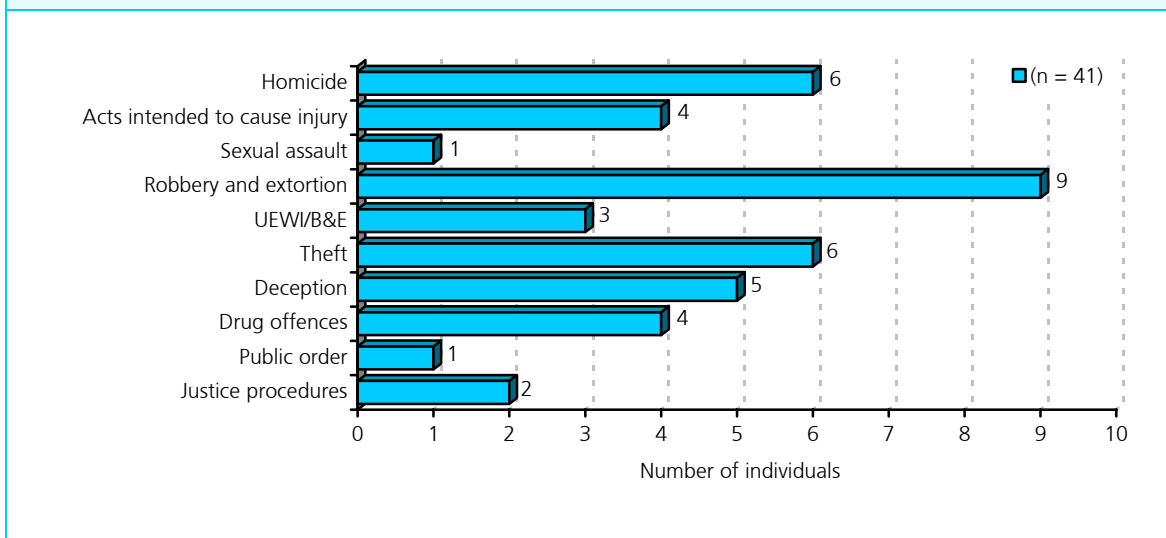
Figure 7: Time served on current sentence



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]
 Note: There was one individual who did not report how much of their current sentence they had served

Figure 8 details the main offence for which individuals were currently imprisoned. As shown, nine were imprisoned for robbery and extortion offences, while six were imprisoned for each of the offences of homicide and theft.

Figure 8: Main offence for which individuals were currently imprisoned



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]
 Note: There was one individual who did not report the main offence for which they are currently incarcerated. If individuals listed two offences, the offence that is higher in the ASOC hierarchy is shown in this analysis.

Experiences of abuse

Individuals were asked a series of questions in relation to both childhood abuse and abuse as an adult. These questions were asked to measure the difference aspects of abuse that the individuals had been victim to.

Childhood abuse

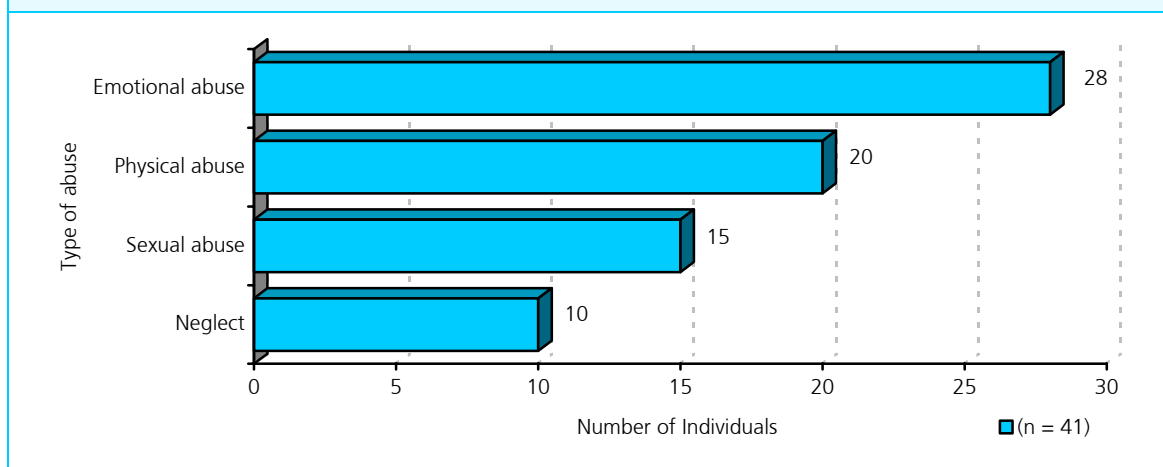
Table 2 shows the questions asked of individuals in relation to four different types of childhood abuse.

Thinking back to when you were growing up, did any of the following things happen to you?	Abuse type
▪ Were you ever made to feel very sad, bad or frightened?	Emotional abuse
▪ Were you ever pushed around, hit, kicked or beaten?	Physical abuse
▪ Were you ever touched or kissed in a way that made you feel uncomfortable or made to do something sexually that you didn't want to do?	Sexual abuse
▪ Were you ever left alone as a child, didn't have enough to eat, or had inadequate clothing?	Neglect

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 9 shows the number of individuals who reported that they had experienced such forms of abuse while growing up. As indicated, 28 individuals reported that they had experienced emotional abuse, while 20 reported that they had experienced physical abuse.

Figure 9: Types of abuse individuals experienced while growing up

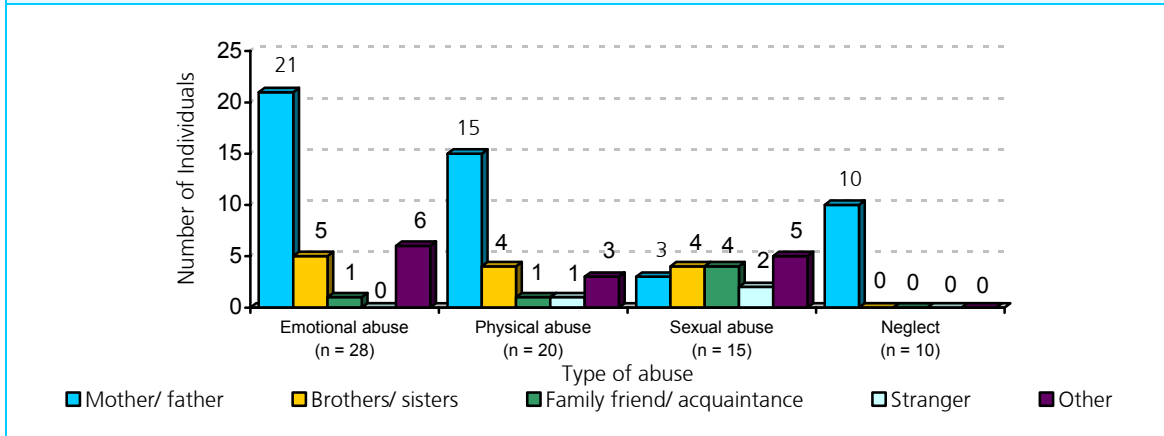


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Note: One individual refused to answer this question.

Figure 10 shows the respondent's relationship to the alleged perpetrators of the incidents of abuse. As shown, three quarters of those individuals who were abused emotionally and physically reported that their mother/father was involved in this abuse. Of those 15 individuals who reported that they had been sexually abused, four reported that this abuse was perpetrated by siblings, while four reported that it was family friends/acquaintances. Of the 10 individuals who reported that they had been neglected while growing up, all attributed this neglect to their parents.

Figure 10: Alleged perpetrators who were involved in incidents of abuse while respondent was growing up



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Abuse as an adult

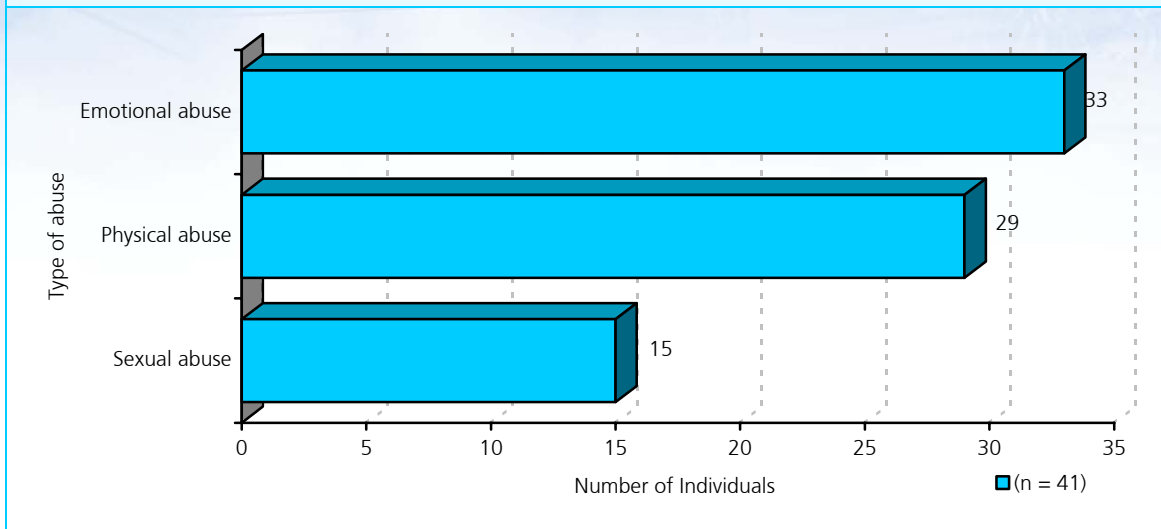
Table 3 shows the questions asked of individuals in relation to three different types of abuse that they may have experienced as an adult.

Table 3: The questions that were asked in relation to abuse as an adult	
As an adult, have any of the following things happen to you?	Abuse type
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were you ever made to feel very sad, bad or frightened? 	Emotional abuse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were you ever pushed around, hit, kicked or beaten? 	Physical abuse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were you ever touched or kissed in a way that made you feel uncomfortable or made to do something sexually that you didn't want to do? 	Sexual abuse

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

As Figure 11 shows, 33 individuals reported that they had experienced emotional abuse, while 29 reported that they had experienced physical abuse as an adult.

Figure 11: Types of abuse individuals experienced as an adult

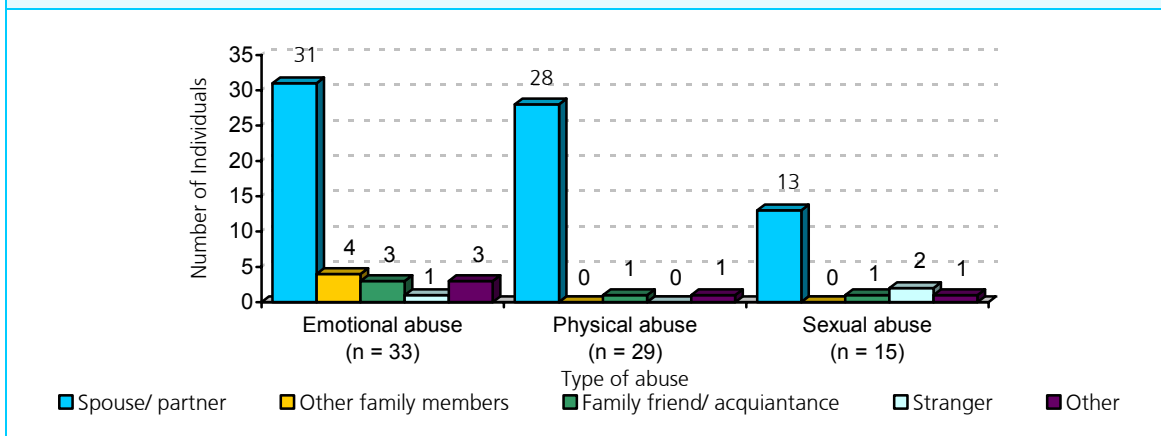


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Note: One individual refused to answer this question.

Of those individuals who had been abused, Figure 12 indicates that nearly all had been abused by their spouse/partner (31 of the 33 who had experienced emotional abuse, 28 of the 29 who experienced physical abuse and 13 of the 15 who had experienced sexual abuse).

Figure 12: Alleged perpetrators who were involved in incidents of abuse when respondent was an adult

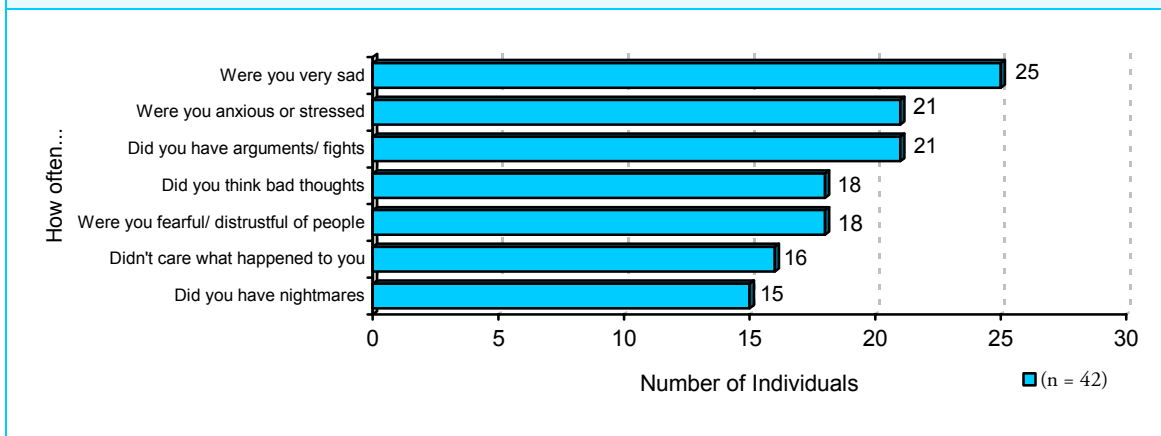


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Emotional and mental health

Individuals were asked a series of questions regarding their mental health while they were growing up. Possible responses to each of these questions were 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes' or 'often'. Figure 13 shows the number of individuals who reported 'often' to each of the questions. As indicated, 25 individuals reported that they were often very sad while growing up, while 21 reported that they were often anxious or stressed, or had arguments/fights.

Figure 13: Number of Individuals who reported that they 'often' had mental health concerns



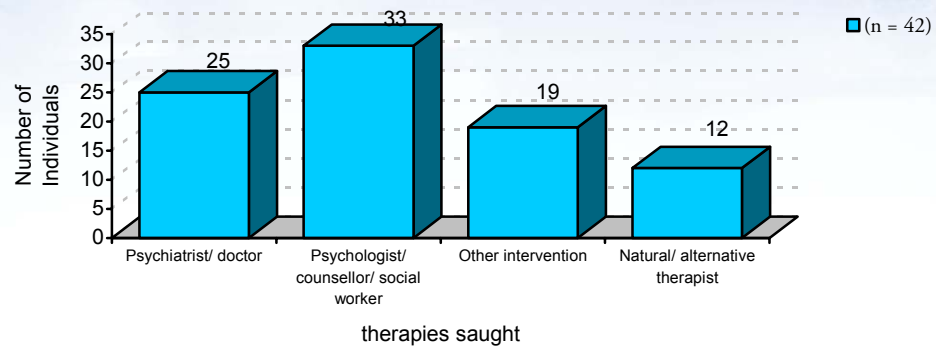
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

There were 32 individuals who reported that at least one of the items listed in Figure 13 had significantly interfered with their life at some stage. There were also 33 individuals who reported that their emotional or mental health status had significantly interfered with their lives during the six months prior to being arrested for the offences for which they were now in prison.

There were 22 individuals who indicated that they had been diagnosed with a mental health problem, including 17 who were diagnosed with some form of depression.

There were 38 individuals who reported that they had sought some form of therapy for a mental health issue. Figure 14 shows that of these 38, 33 individuals reported that they had sought the services of a psychologist, counsellor or social worker.

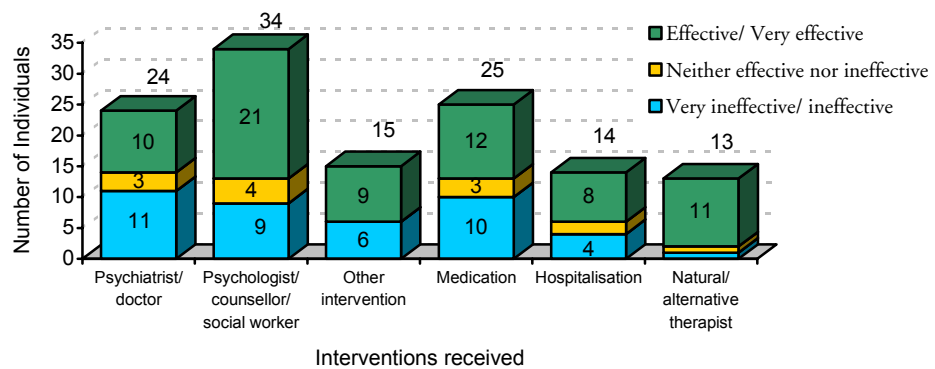
Figure 14: Number of individuals who sought therapy for a mental health problem



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 15 shows the number of individuals who received various types of interventions for mental health problems and their rating of its effectiveness. Overall, 34 individuals received intervention from a psychologist, counsellor or social worker, with 21 of these individuals rating this as effective or very effective.

Figure 15: Number of individuals who received interventions by the individual's rating of the effectiveness of the intervention



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]



Summary

- There was a wide range of ages amongst the individuals interviewed, ranging from 19 years to 55 years. The median age was 33.5 years.
- Around one in five (9 individuals) were Indigenous, while around three quarters of individuals reported that they have children, including 12 who reported having three or more children.
- Two thirds of individuals reported that their current sentence was six years or less. Conversely, there were ten individuals who reported that their current sentence was ten years or more, including three individuals who were being held at the Governor's Pleasure.
- Nine individuals indicated that the main offence for which they were currently imprisoned was a robbery and extortion offence, while six were imprisoned for homicide and six for theft offences.
- Two thirds of individuals reported that they had experienced emotional abuse while growing up, while around half indicated that they had experienced physical abuse. Also, around one third reported that they had been victims of sexual abuse and around one in four had been neglected. In the majority of cases, the perpetrators of these types of abuse were the individual's parent(s).
- Over three quarters of individuals had also been victims of emotional abuse, while around two thirds reported that they had experienced physical abuse as an adult. Also, around one third reported that they had been victims of sexual abuse as an adult. The overwhelming majority of the perpetrators of this type of abuse were their spouses or partners.
- The majority of individuals interviewed were regarded as having mental health issues while they were growing up. Nearly two thirds reported that they 'often' felt very sad, while half reported that they were 'often' anxious or stressed or that they had arguments or fights. Over three quarters of individuals reported that their mental health issues significantly interfered with their lives during the six months prior to arrest.
- Around half of the individuals reported that they had been diagnosed with some form of mental health problem, including over one third who were diagnosed with depression.

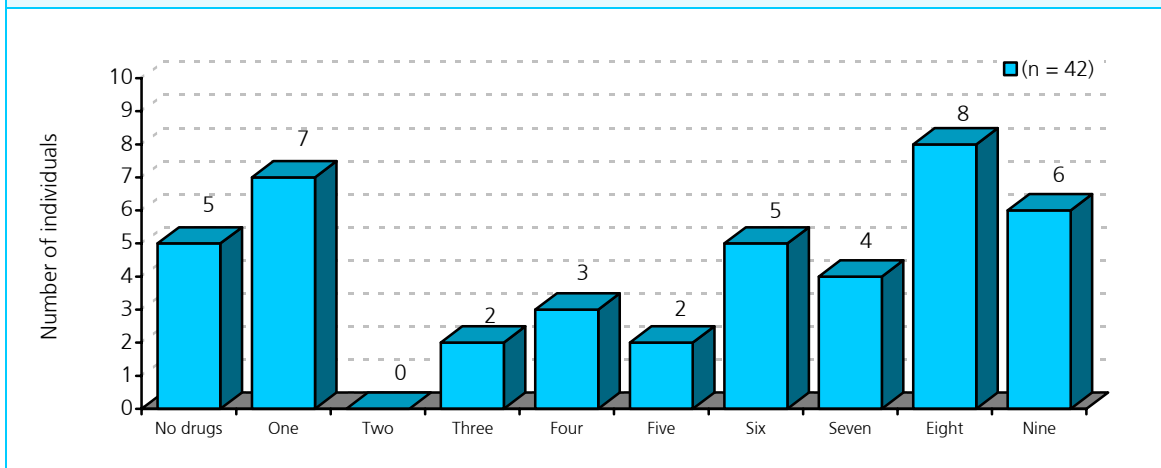
DRUG USE

This section analyses data relating to the individuals' self-reported drug use. Lifetime prevalence, use in the six months prior to arrest and regular use of drugs are investigated, as well as issues such as age of first use and drug dependence. Also included are analyses of each type of drug, focusing on such topics as licit and illicit use, age of first and regular use, and frequency of use. Information on alcohol use is also included, as well as a section on drug and alcohol treatment programs. The final section looks at comparisons of drug use between the South Australian sample and the combined sample from all jurisdictions interviewed as part of the DUCO project.

Overview of drug use

Most individuals reported that they had used drugs at some stage in their lives. As shown in Figure 16, almost nine in ten (37 of the 42 individuals) reported that they had used at least one type of drug, while 30 individuals reported that they had used at least two types of drugs. More than half (23 individuals) reported that they had used at least six types of drugs, while one third (14) had used eight or nine different types.

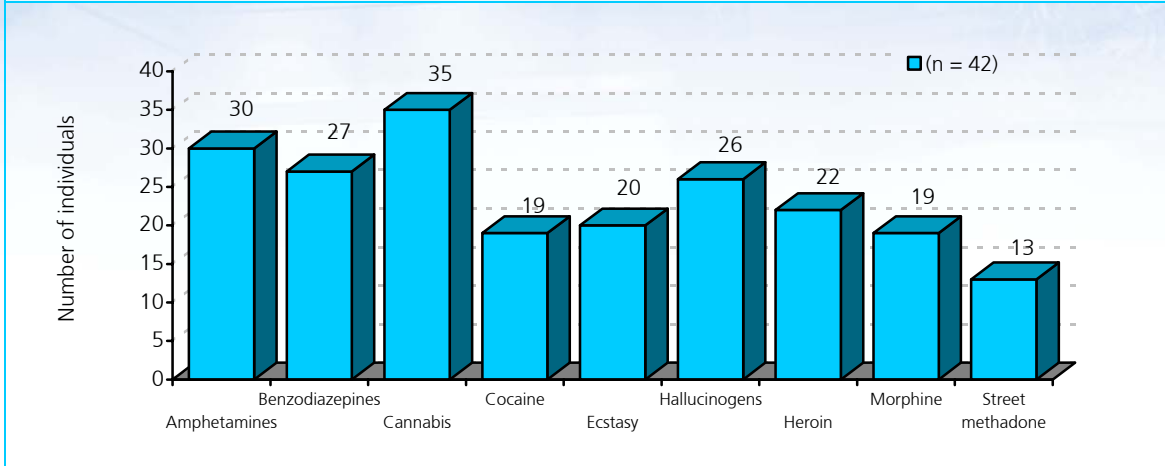
Figure 16: Number of drug types used over lifetime



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 17 shows the types of drugs that individuals reported using over their lifetime. As shown, cannabis was the most common drug used (35 individuals) followed by amphetamines (30). There were 27 individuals who reported using benzodiazepines, while 26 reported using hallucinogens.

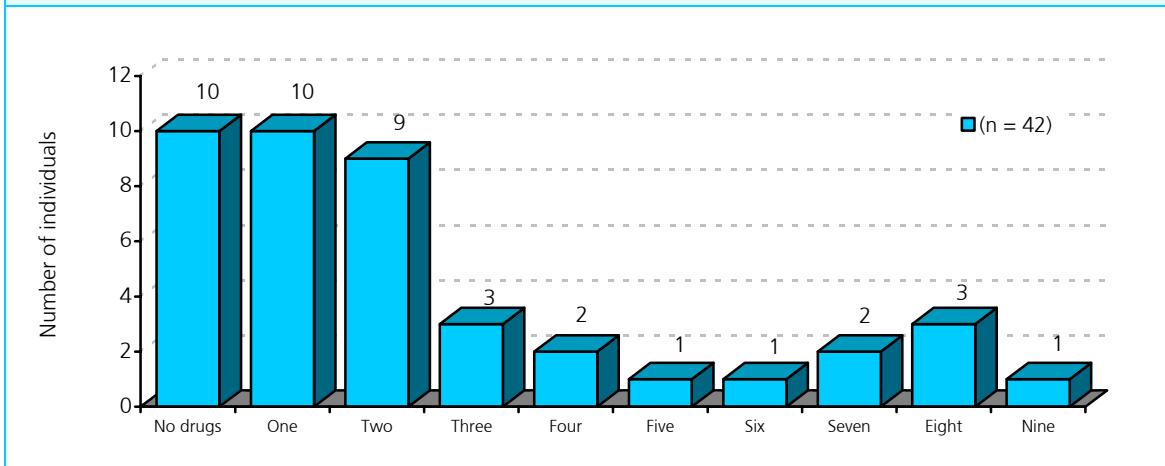
Figure 17: Lifetime prevalence of drug use by drug type



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]
 Note: Includes licit and illicit drug use

Over three quarters (32 of the 42 individuals surveyed) reported using at least one drug in the six months prior to arrest. As shown in Figure 18, 22 individuals reported using multiple types of drugs, while six individuals reported that they had used at least seven or more types of drugs over this period.

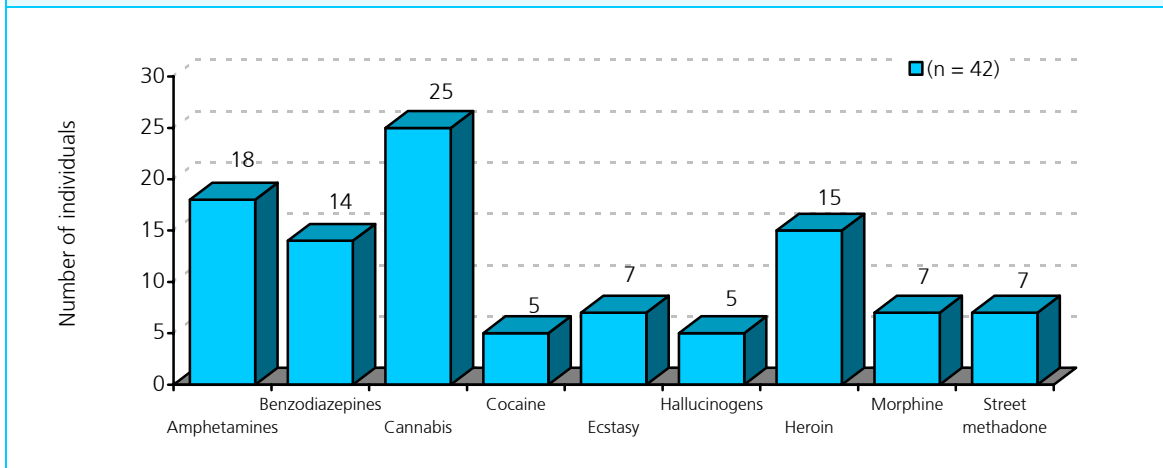
Figure 18: Number of drug types used in the six months prior to arrest



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 19 shows the number of individuals who reported using each type of drug in the six months prior to being arrested. As with lifetime prevalence of drug use, cannabis and amphetamines were reportedly used by the highest number of individuals (25 and 18 respectively). However, the number of individuals reporting heroin and benzodiazepines use in this period was also quite high (15 and 14 respectively) while in contrast, use of hallucinogens and cocaine was comparatively low (five individuals per category).

Figure 19: Drug use in the six months prior to arrest by drug type

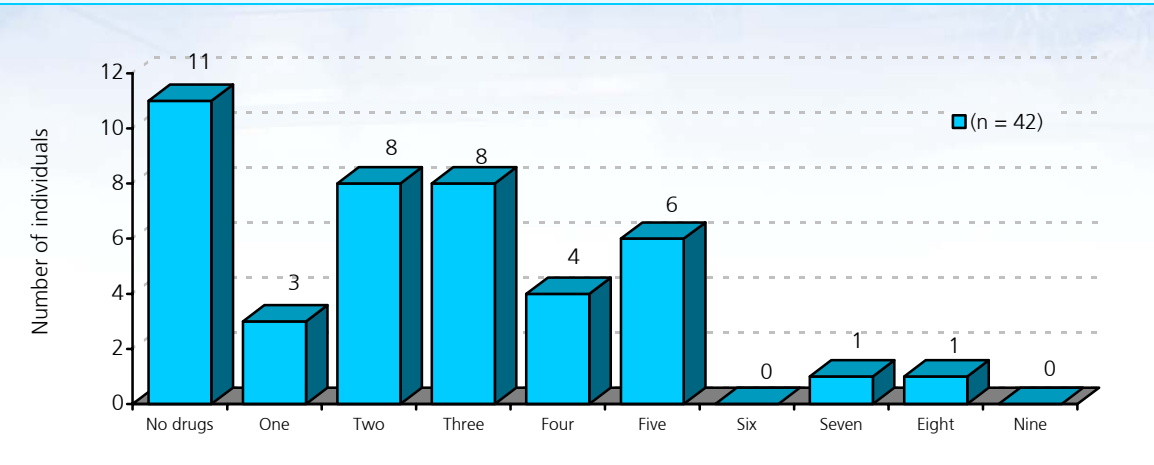


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

In addition to lifetime drug use, and drug use in the six months prior to arrest, individuals were asked whether they used drugs ‘regularly’³. As shown in Figure 20, 31 individuals reported that they had ever used drugs ‘regularly’, including 28 who reported regular use of two or more types of drugs. In contrast, around one quarter (11 individuals) reported that they had never used drugs ‘regularly’, while three individuals reported regular use of only one type of drug.

³ There was no set definition of ‘regular’ drug use.

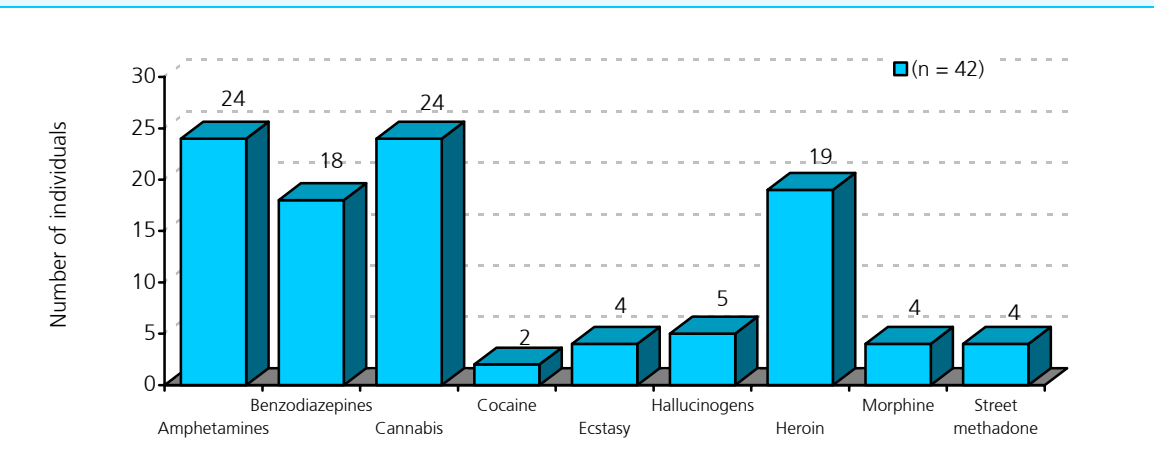
Figure 20: Number of drug types ever used 'regularly'



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 21 shows the type of drugs that individuals reported that they had ever 'regularly' used. Amphetamines and cannabis were identified more than other drugs as having been used 'regularly' (24 individuals each), followed by heroin (19) and benzodiazepines (18).

Figure 21: Ever 'regularly' used drugs by drug type



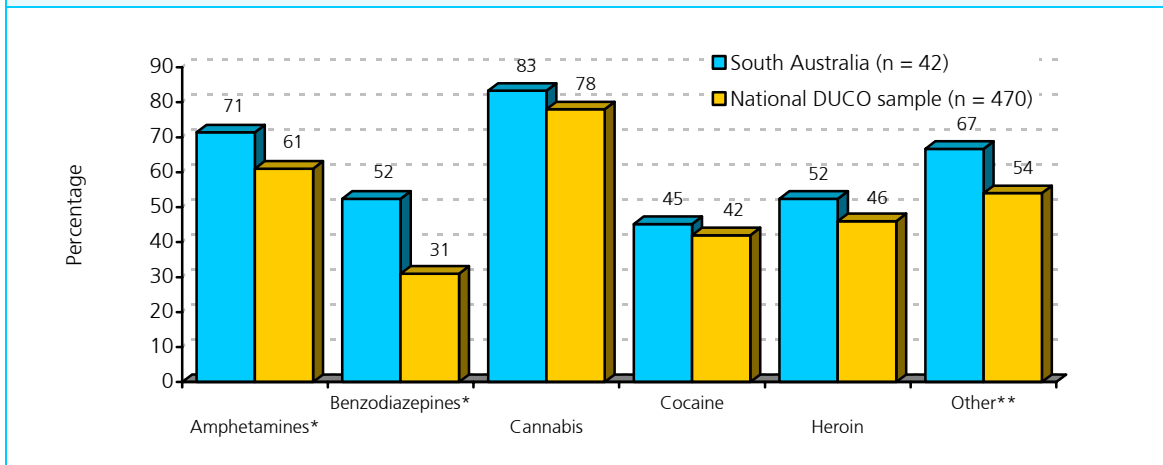
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

National comparisons of reported drug use

As mentioned earlier, the female component of DUCO operated in five other jurisdictions across Australia, including Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory⁴. The following graphs provide a comparison between South Australia and the entire female DUCO sample. Caution should be exercised when interpreting differences in percentages due to the relatively small sample size in South Australia.

Figure 22 shows that a higher percentage of individuals interviewed in South Australia reported having ever used drugs compared to the national DUCO sample. This was the case for each drug type, with the biggest difference observed for benzodiazepines (52% of South Australian respondents compared to 31% nationally) and amphetamines (71% compared to 61%).

Figure 22: Percentage of individuals who reported use of each drug: the South Australian sample compared to the national sample



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

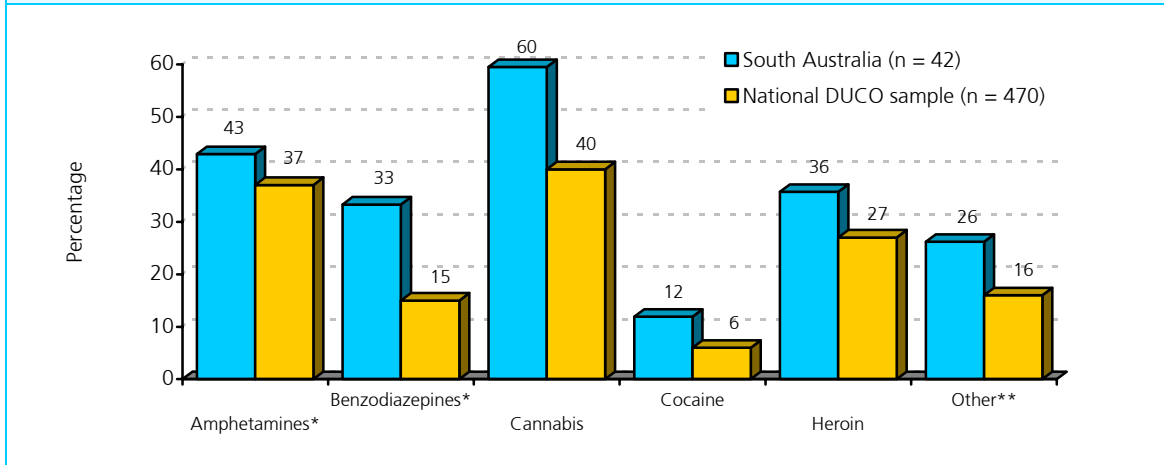
Note: National DUCO sample refers to those individuals who were interviewed in any of the six jurisdictions that the female component of DUCO operated. Note: * Refers to illicit use only ** Includes hallucinogens, ecstasy, street methadone and illicit use of morphine.

Note: Percentages that are calculated using low numbers should be treated with caution

⁴ There was a total of 470 females interviewed in the five jurisdictions across Australia in 2003. For further information, refer to Johnson H., 2004. *Drugs and Crime: A Study of Incarcerated Female Offenders*. Research and public policy series no 63. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology

Similarly, Figure 23 shows that for each of the six drug categories listed, a higher percentage of individuals interviewed in South Australia also reported use of illegal drugs in the six months prior to arrest compared to the national DUCO sample. The size of this difference generally appears to be greater than that reported for use of drugs 'ever'. A higher percentage of individuals interviewed in South Australia reported illegal use of benzodiazepines (33% compared to 15% of the national sample), cannabis (60% compared to 40%) and heroin (36% compared to 27%).

Figure 23: Percentage of individuals who reported use of each drug in the six months prior to arrest: the South Australian sample compared to the national sample



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

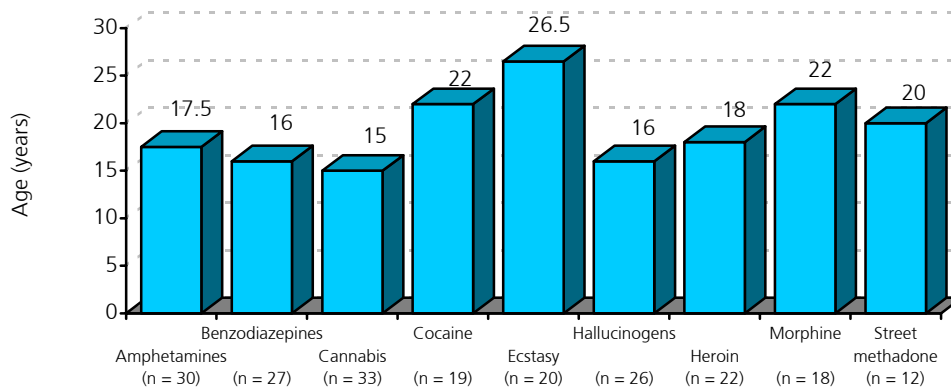
Note: National DUCO sample refers to those individuals who were interviewed in any of the six jurisdictions that the female component of DUCO operated. Note: * Refers to illicit use only ** Includes hallucinogens, ecstasy, street methadone and illicit use of morphine.

Note: Percentages that are calculated using low numbers should be treated with caution

Age of drug use

Individuals were asked at what age they first used and first began 'regularly' using each type of drug. As shown in Figure 24, cannabis was first used at the youngest age (15 years), followed by benzodiazepines and hallucinogens (16 years for each drug). Ecstasy was reportedly first used at the oldest mean age (26.5 years). This may be because this drug was not as readily available when this group was at a younger age and that this drug is usually seen as a 'party' drug and typically used by a different demographic of people.

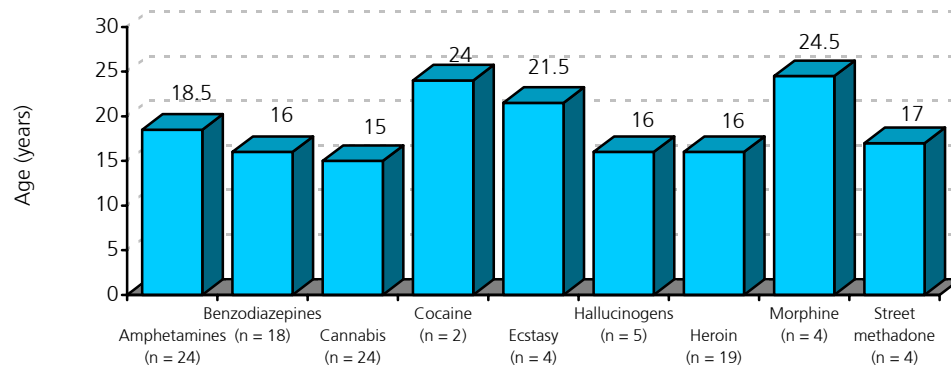
Figure 24: Median age of first use by drug type



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]
 Note: Individuals who did not provide their age at first use are excluded from this analysis

As shown in Figure 25, cannabis was first 'regularly' used at the youngest age (15 years), followed by benzodiazepines, hallucinogens and heroin (16 years for each drug).

Figure 25: Median age of 'regular' use by drug type

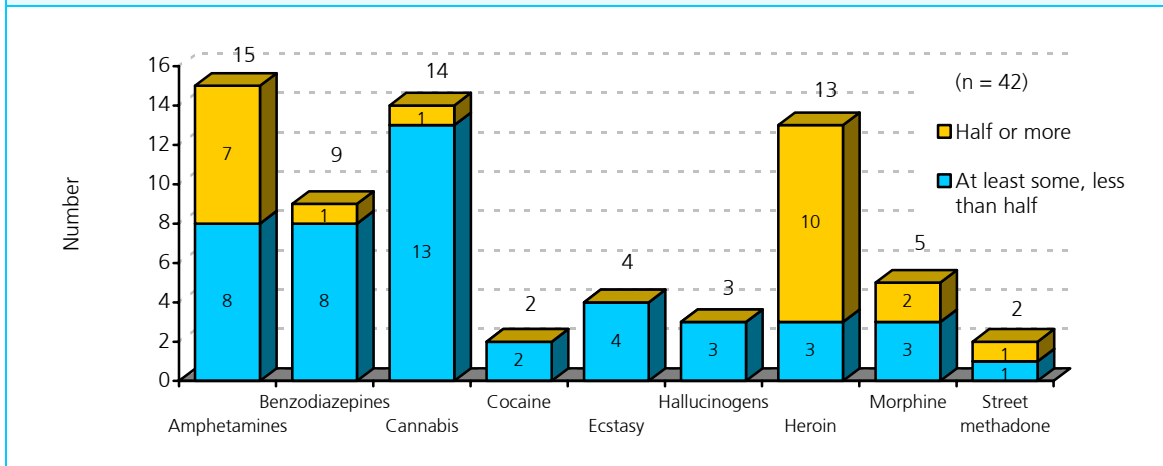


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Money spent on drugs

Figure 26 shows the number of individuals who reported spending at least some money on drugs in the six months prior to arrest, with a further disaggregation provided on those who spent 'some but less than half' compared with 'half or more'. As shown, 15 individuals reported spending at least some money on amphetamines, while 14 reported spending money on cannabis. Of the 13 individuals who reported spending money on heroin, the majority (10) reported spending half or more of their money on the drug.

Figure 26: Proportion of money that individuals spent on drugs during the six months prior to arrest



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Drug dependence

To provide a measure of drug dependency, a set of six questions were asked in relation to both alcohol and drug use in the six months prior to arrest. Individuals who responded positively to three or more questions were regarded as being 'dependent' on alcohol or drugs. As shown in Table 4, six individuals were considered alcohol dependent, while over half (23 individuals) were regarded as drug dependent.

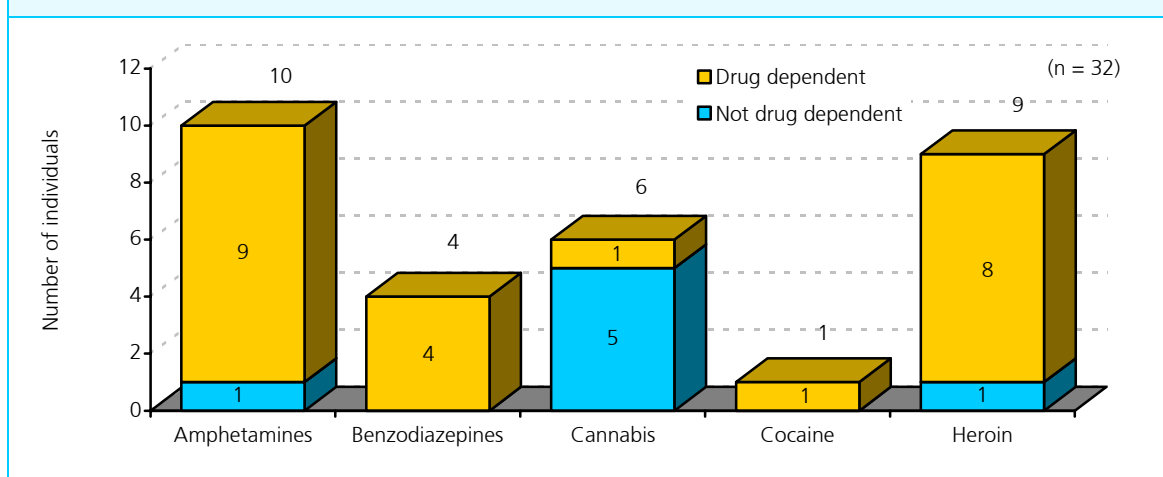
Table 4: Number of Individuals who responded positively to dependency items

	Alcohol	Drugs
▪ Have you spent more time using than intended?	7	21
▪ Have you neglected responsibilities because of use?	6	21
▪ Have you wanted to cut down on use?	5	21
▪ Has anyone objected to your use?	5	21
▪ Have you frequently found yourself thinking about using?	5	25
▪ Have you used to relieve feelings of unhappiness/anger or boredom?	10	24
Dependent ('Yes' to three or more questions)	6	23
Number Interviewed	42	42

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 27 shows the preferred drug of choice of individuals in the six months prior to arrest by whether or not they were classified as drug dependent⁵. As indicated, all but one individual who reported that amphetamines was their drug of choice were regarded as drug dependent. This was also the case for heroin, while all four individuals who reported benzodiazepines as their drug of choice were drug dependent. In contrast, only one of the six individuals who reported that cannabis was their preferred drug was regarded as dependent.

Figure 27: Drug of choice by whether individual was drug dependent



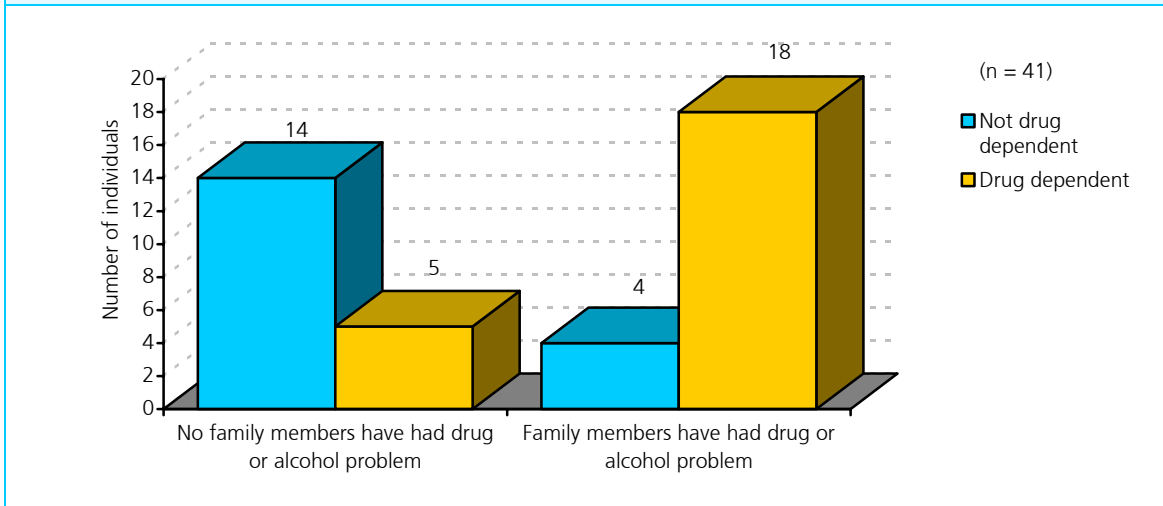
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Note: Only individuals who reported using drugs in the six months prior to arrest were asked their drug of choice.

⁵ It was not possible to determine whether the dependency is for the drug of choice due to the high levels of multiple drug use.

There were 22 individuals who reported that while they were growing up, a member of their family had a drug or alcohol problem. As shown in Figure 28, of these individuals, over three quarters (18) were regarded as drug dependent. In comparison, of the 19 individuals who reported that no members of their family had a drug problem while growing up, only one quarter (5) were regarded as drug dependent.

Figure 28: Number of individuals who were drug dependent by whether their family members had a drug or alcohol problem while the respondent was growing up

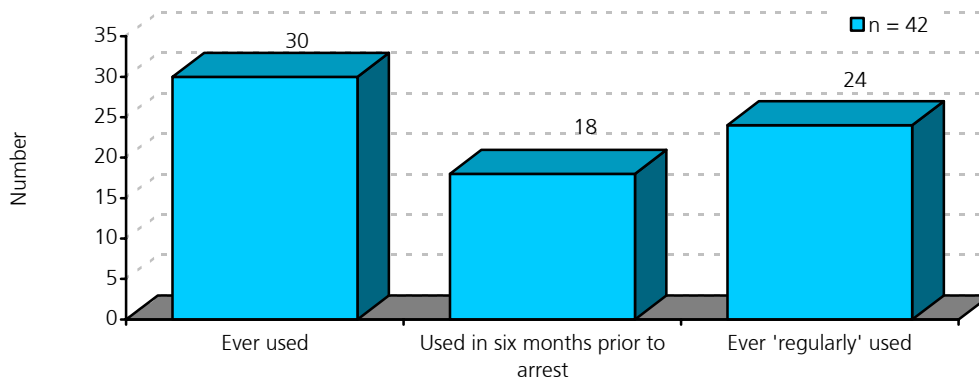


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]
Note: There was one individual who did not report if a family member had a drug problem while growing up.

Amphetamines

As mentioned earlier, 30 individuals reported using amphetamines 'ever', 18 reported using in the six months prior to arrest and 24 reported that they had ever 'regularly' used amphetamines.

Figure 29: Amphetamines use: 'Ever' used, used in six months prior to arrest, or ever 'regularly' used

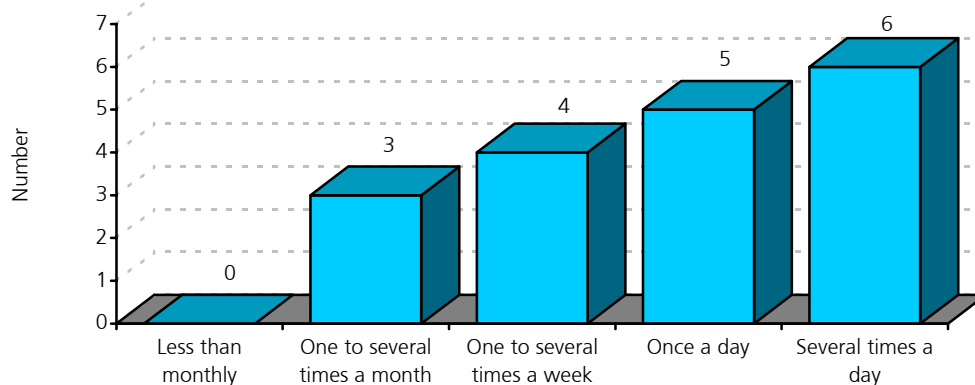


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Of those 30 individuals who reported 'ever' using amphetamines most indicated only illicit use while three individuals reported both licit and illicit use.

As shown in Figure 30, of the 18 individuals who reported using amphetamines in the six months prior to arrest, 11 reported using at least once per day, including six who reported using several times a day.

Figure 30: Amphetamines: Frequency of use in six months prior to arrest

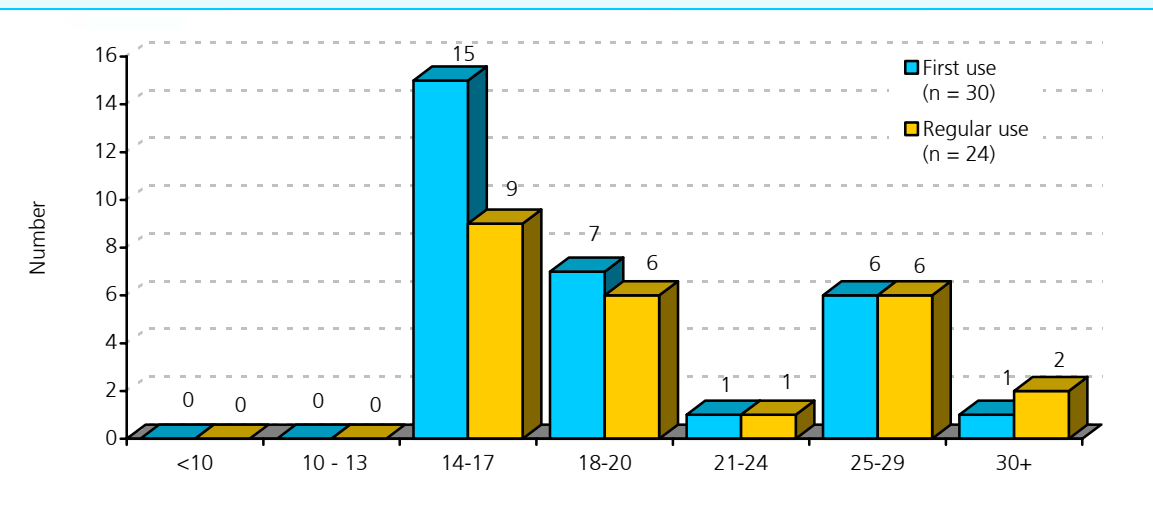


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Age of 'first and 'regular' amphetamines use

Figure 31 shows the age at which individuals reported first using and first 'regularly' using amphetamines. As shown, half of the 30 individuals who reported 'ever' using this drug first used it between the ages of 14 and 17 years, while nine individuals who reported using amphetamines 'regularly' also did so at this age.

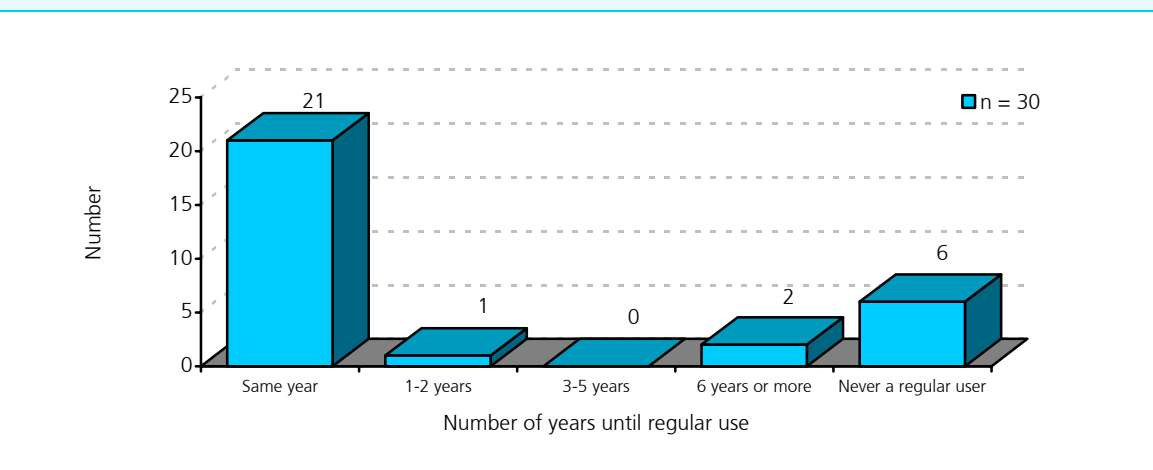
Figure 31 Amphetamines: Age at first use and age at onset of 'regular' use



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

As shown in Figure 32, of the 30 individuals who reported 'ever' using amphetamines, 21 reported beginning 'regular' use of amphetamines within the same year that they first used the drug. Only three individuals reported that they began 'regular' use of amphetamines a year or more after they first used, while six individuals reported that they never became a 'regular' user of amphetamines.

Figure 32: Amphetamines use: Number of years between first and 'regular' use

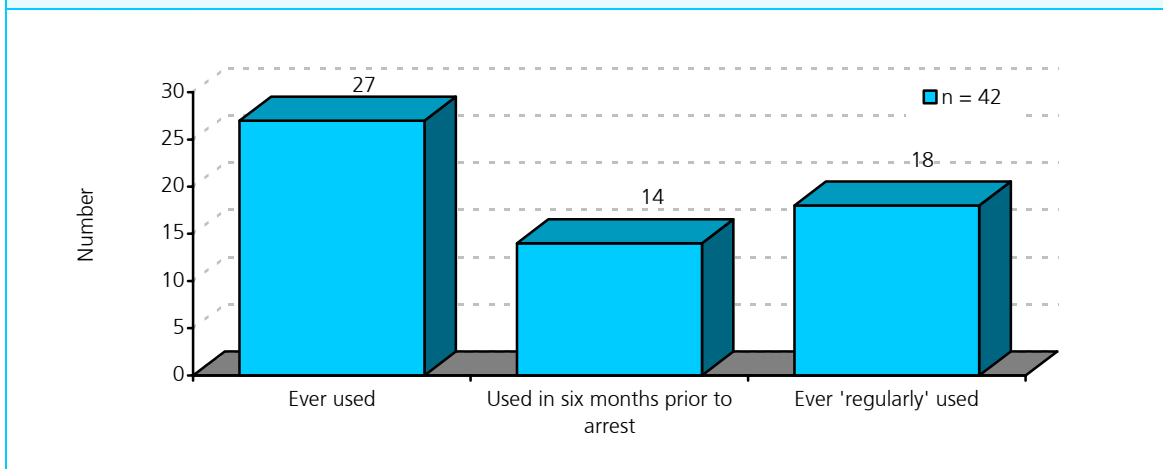


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Benzodiazepines

As mentioned earlier, 27 individuals reported using amphetamines 'ever', while 14 reported using in the six months prior to arrest and 18 reported that they had ever 'regularly' used amphetamines.

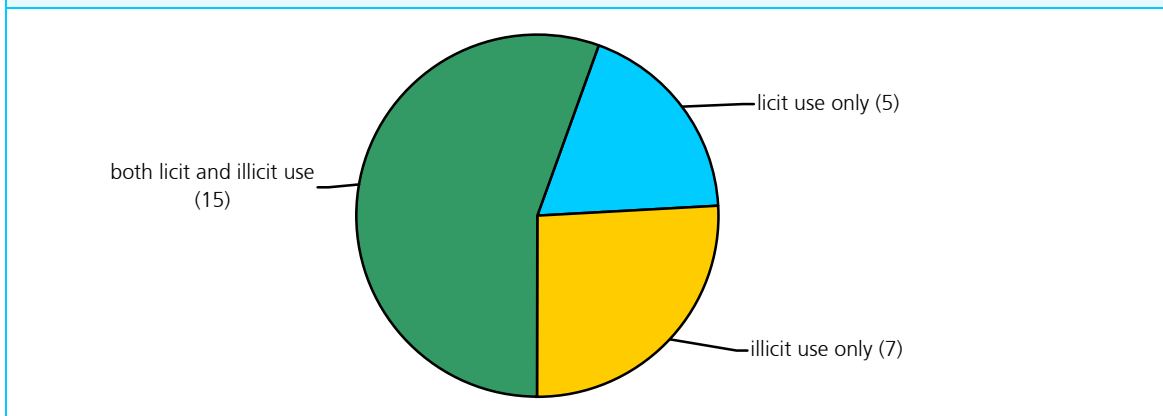
Figure 33: Benzodiazepines use: 'Ever' used, used in six months prior to arrest, or ever 'regularly' used



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 34 shows that of the 27 individuals who reported ever using benzodiazepines, over half reported both licit and illicit use of the drug, while five indicated that they had only used it licitly.

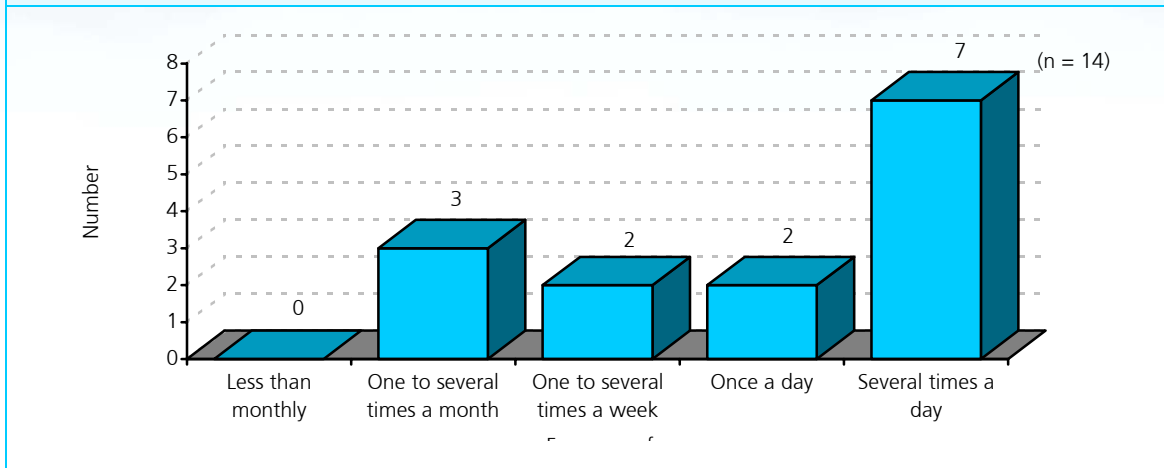
Figure 34: Benzodiazepines: Ever used by licit use or illicit use



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

As shown in Figure 35, of the 14 individuals who reported using benzodiazepines in the six months prior to arrest, seven reported using it several times a day in that period.

Figure 35: Benzodiazepines: Frequency of use in six months prior to arrest

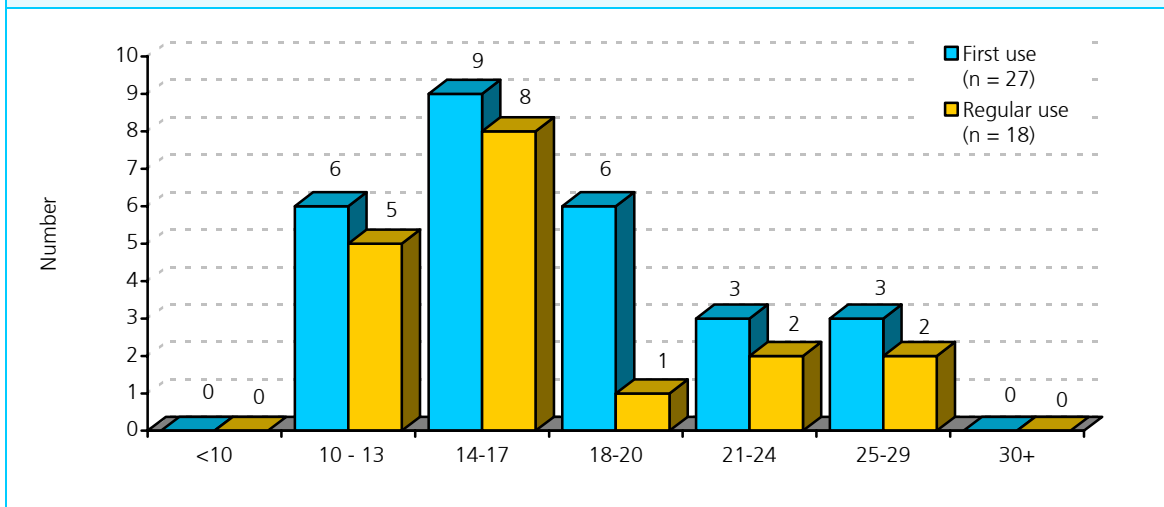


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Age of first and 'regular' benzodiazepines use

Figure 36 shows that, of the 27 individuals who indicated ever using benzodiazepines, one third (9 individuals) reported first use of this drug between the ages of 14 and 17 years, while eight of the 18 'regular' users also reported using benzodiazepines 'regularly' at this age.

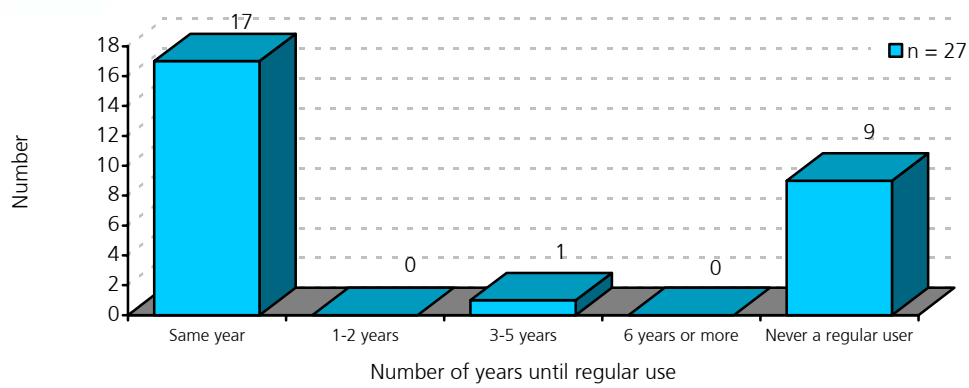
Figure 36: Benzodiazepines: Age at first use and age at onset of 'regular' use



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

As shown in Figure 37, of the 27 individuals who reported 'ever' using benzodiazepines, almost two thirds reported beginning 'regular' use within the same year as first use. Only one individual reported that they began 'regular' use of benzodiazepines more than a year after they first used, while nine individuals reported that they never became a 'regular' user of benzodiazepines.

Figure 37: Benzodiazepines use: Number of years between first and 'regular' use

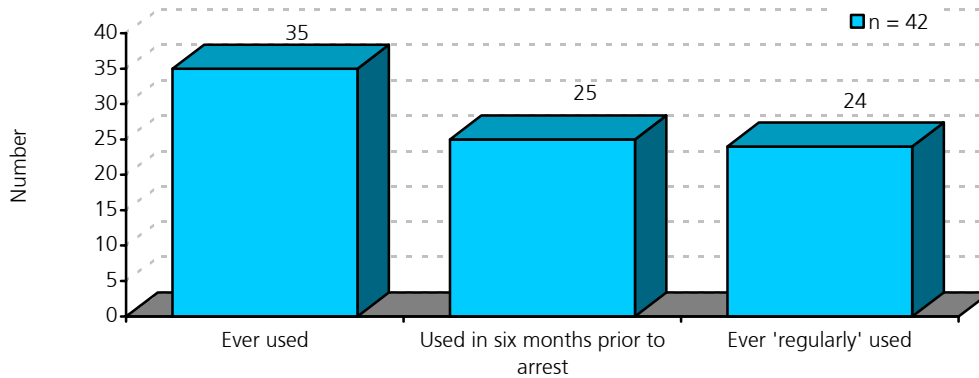


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Cannabis

As shown in Figure 38, 35 individuals reported using cannabis 'ever', while 25 reported using it in the six months prior to arrest and 24 reported that they had ever 'regularly' used cannabis.

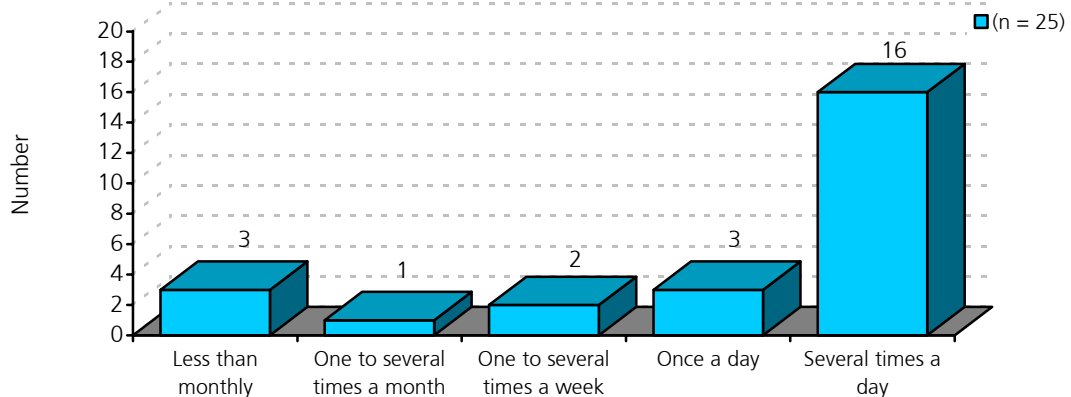
Figure 38: Cannabis use: 'Ever' used, used in six months prior to arrest, or ever 'regularly' used



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

As shown in Figure 39, of the 25 individuals who reported using cannabis in the six months prior to arrest, almost two thirds (16) reported using it several times a day.

Figure 39: Cannabis: Frequency of use in six months prior to arrest

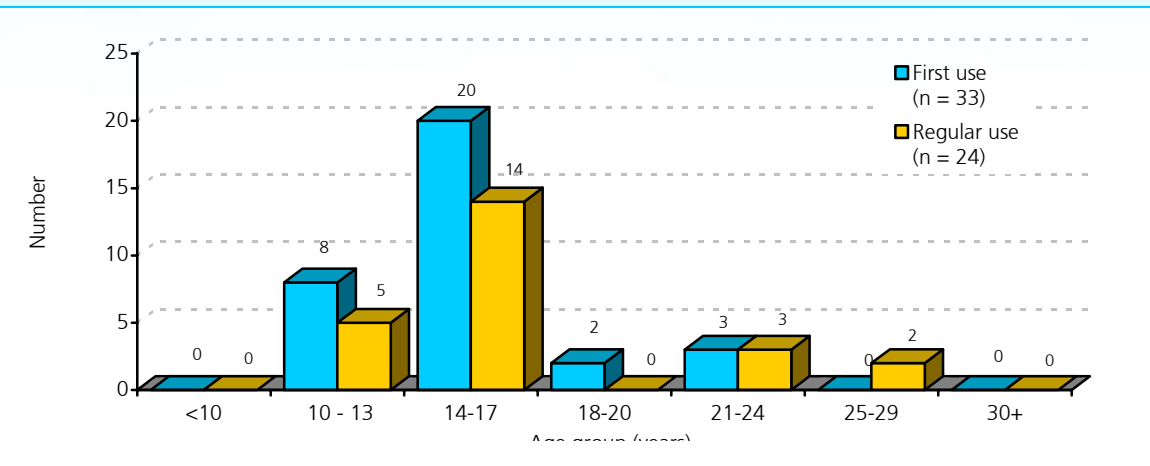


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Age of first and 'regular' cannabis use

Figure 40 shows that the majority of individuals reported both first using and first 'regularly' using cannabis before the age of 18 years (28 out of 33 individuals and 19 out of 24, respectively).

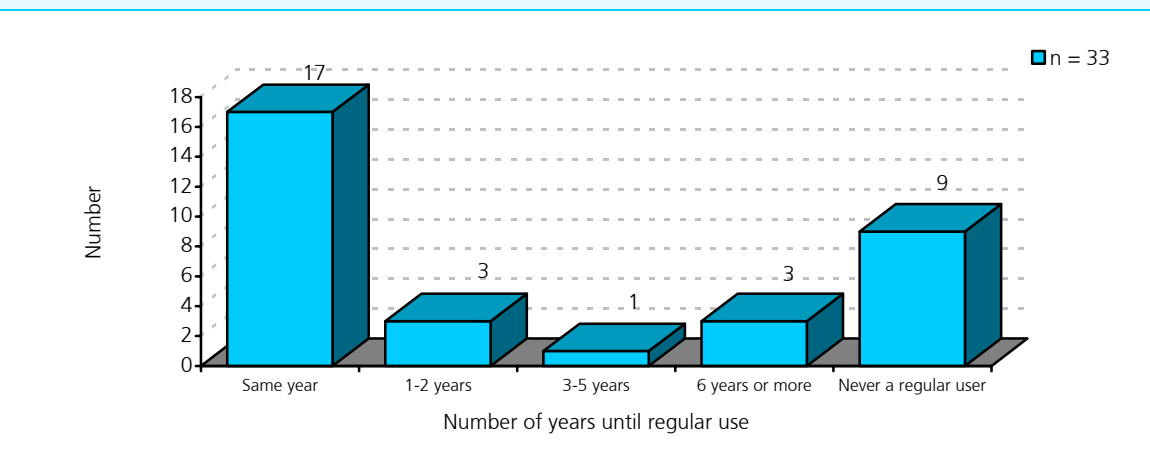
Figure 40: Cannabis: Age at first use and age at onset of 'regular' use



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]
 Note: Two individuals did not report the age at which they first used cannabis

As shown in Figure 41, of the individuals who reported 'ever' using cannabis, just over half reported beginning 'regular' use of the drug within the same year as first use. Seven individuals reported that they began 'regular' use of cannabis a year or more after they first used, while nine individuals reported that they never became a 'regular' user of cannabis.

Figure 41: Cannabis use: Number of years between first and 'regular' use

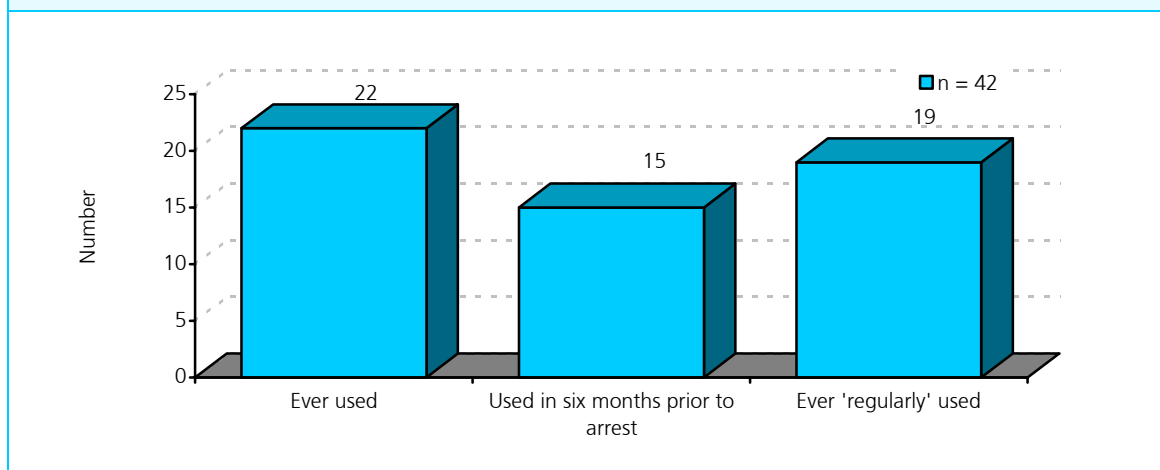


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Heroin

As shown in Figure 42, 22 individuals reported using heroin 'ever', 15 reported using in the six months prior to arrest and 19 reported that they had 'regularly' used heroin.

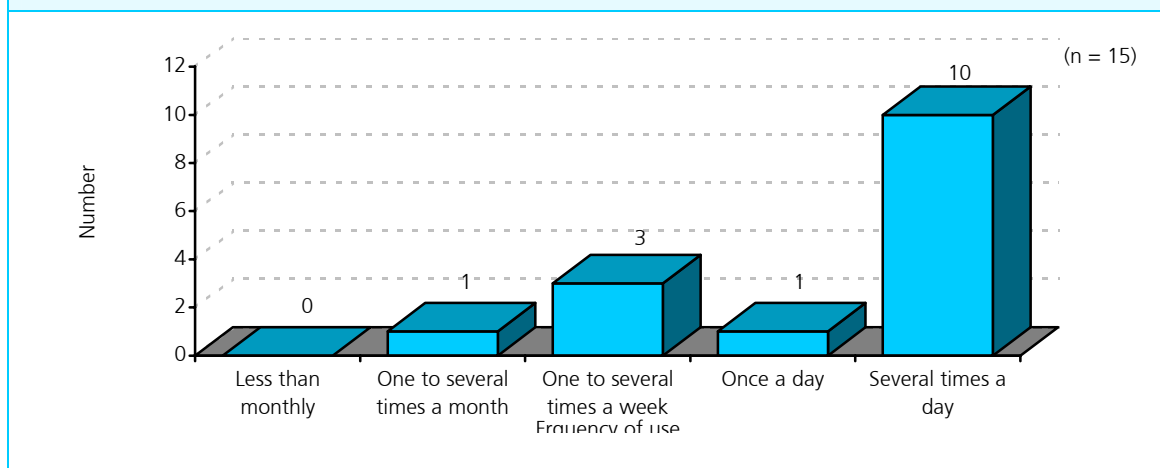
Figure 42: Heroin use: 'Ever' used, used in six months prior to arrest, or ever 'regularly' used



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

As shown in Figure 43, of the 15 individuals who reported using heroin in the six months prior to arrest, 10 reported using it several times a day.

Figure 43: Heroin: Frequency of use in six months prior to arrest

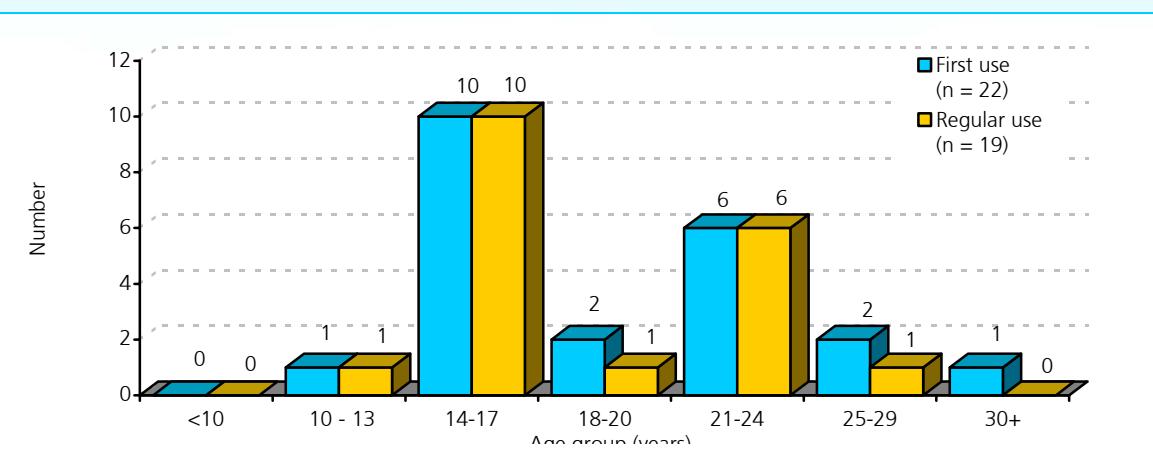


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Age of first and 'regular' heroin use

Figure 44 shows the age at which individuals reported first using and first 'regularly' using heroin. Of the 22 individuals reported ever using heroin, 10 did so between the ages 14 and 17 years. Ten of the 19 regular heroin users also reported first regular use at this age.

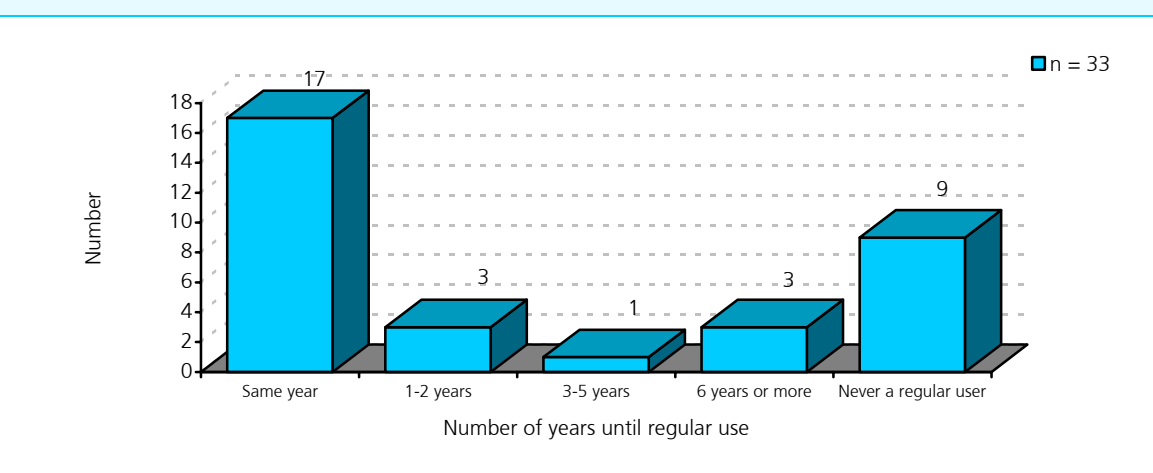
Figure 44: Heroin: Age at first use and age at onset of 'regular' use



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

As shown in Figure 45, of the 22 individuals who reported 'ever' using heroin, 18 reported beginning 'regular' use of heroin within the same year of first use, while only three individuals reported that they never became a 'regular' user of heroin.

Figure 45: Heroin use: Number of years between first and 'regular' use

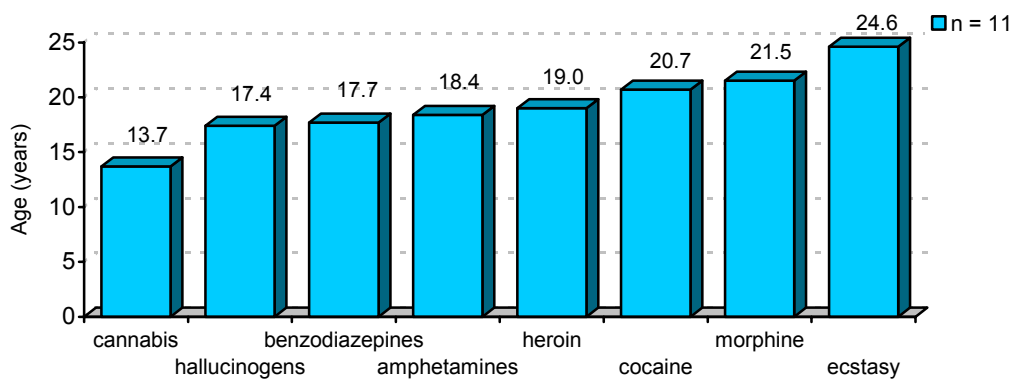


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Pathways of drug use

Figure 46 shows the mean age of first use for each drug type except street methadone. Only the 11 individuals who reported that they had used all of these eight drugs are included in the calculations of the mean ages. As shown, on average, cannabis use occurred first, (13.7 years), while ecstasy was used last (24.6 years).

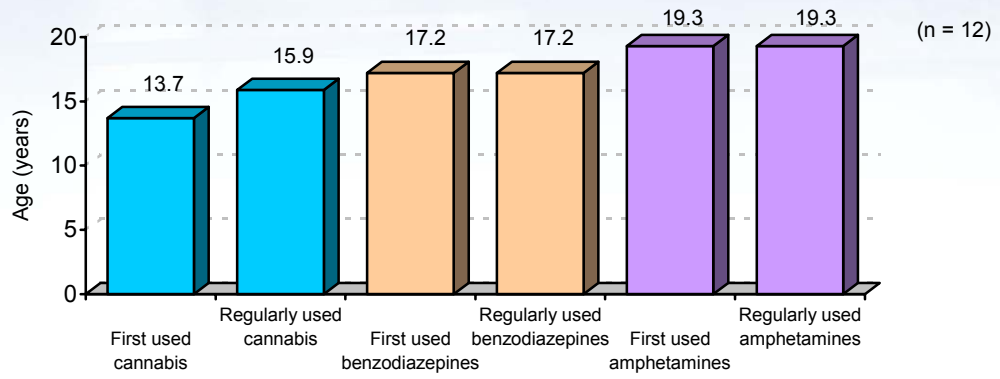
Figure 46: Mean age of first drug use of individuals who had used selected drug types



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 47 shows the mean age at which individuals reported that they first used and first ‘regularly’ used cannabis, benzodiazepines and amphetamines. Only those 12 individuals who reported using each of those drugs ‘regularly’ are included in this analysis. As shown, first use of cannabis occurred at the youngest age (a mean of 13.7 years), followed by benzodiazepines (17.2 years) and amphetamines (19.3 years). Among this sample, there was a two year gap between first and regular use of cannabis, while those who used benzodiazepines and amphetamines began ‘regular’ use of that drug at the same age as first using it.

Figure 47: Mean age of first and 'regular' drug use of individuals who had used selected drug types 'regularly'

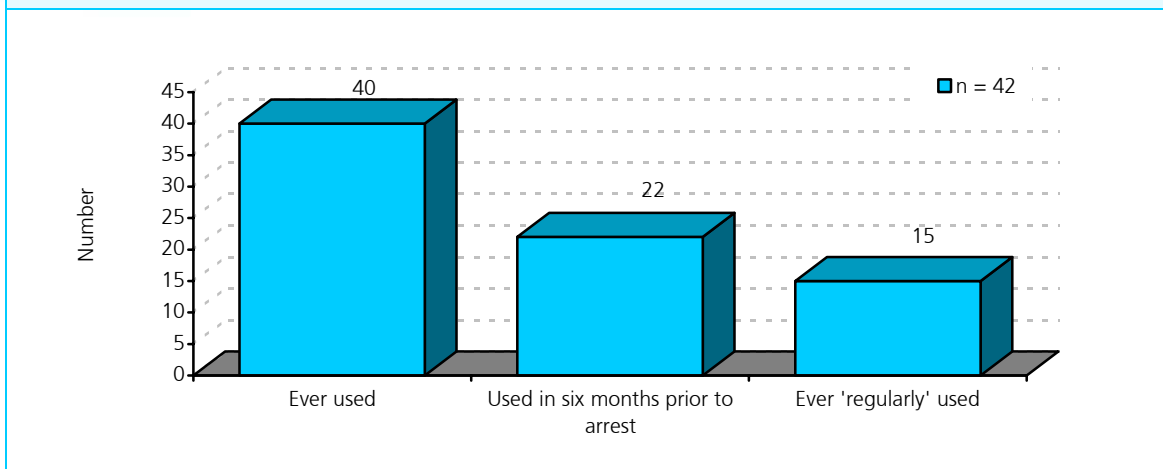


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Alcohol use

As shown in Figure 48, 40 individuals reported that they had used alcohol, while 22 reported using in the six months prior to arrest. There were 15 individuals who reported that they had ever 'regularly' used alcohol.

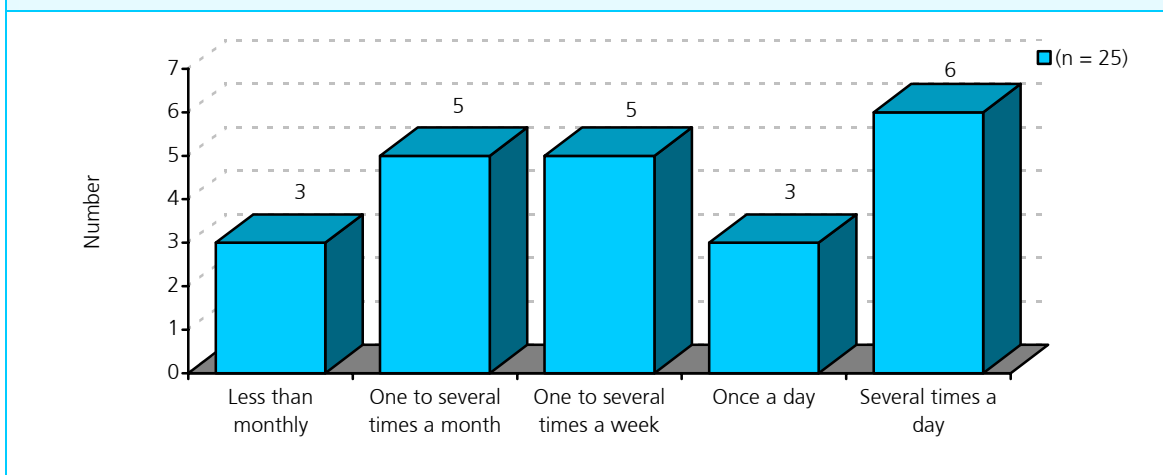
Figure 48: Alcohol use: 'ever' used, used in six months prior to arrest, or ever 'regularly' used



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 49 indicates that, of the 22 individuals who reported using alcohol in the six months prior to arrest, six reported using it several times a day.

Figure 49: Alcohol: Frequency of use in six months prior to arrest

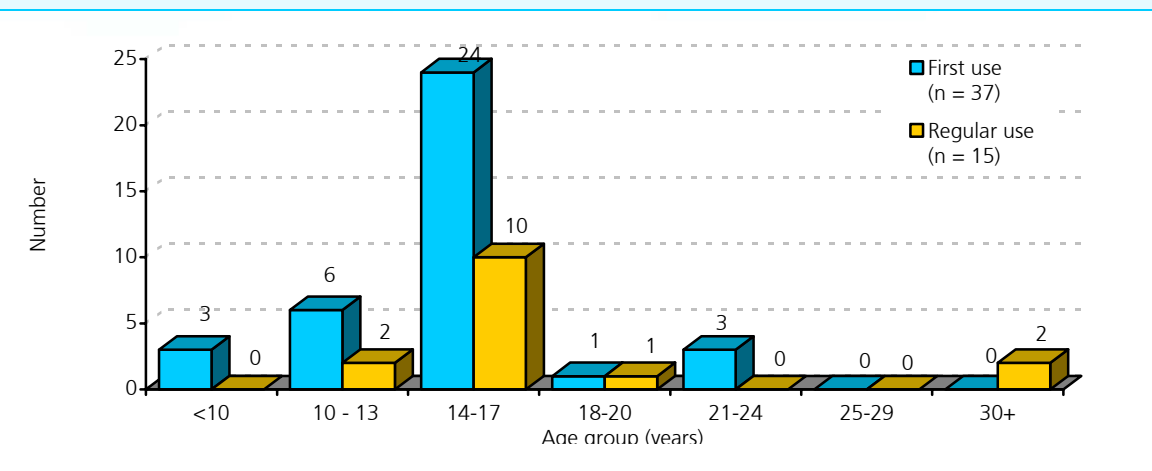


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Age of first and 'regular' alcohol use

Figure 50 shows the age at which individuals reported first using and first 'regularly' using alcohol. As shown, the majority of individuals who reported 'ever' using or 'regularly' using alcohol did so before the age of 18 years (33 out of 37 individuals who ever used alcohol and 12 out of 15 who 'regularly' used alcohol).

Figure 50: Alcohol: Age at first use and age at onset of 'regular' use

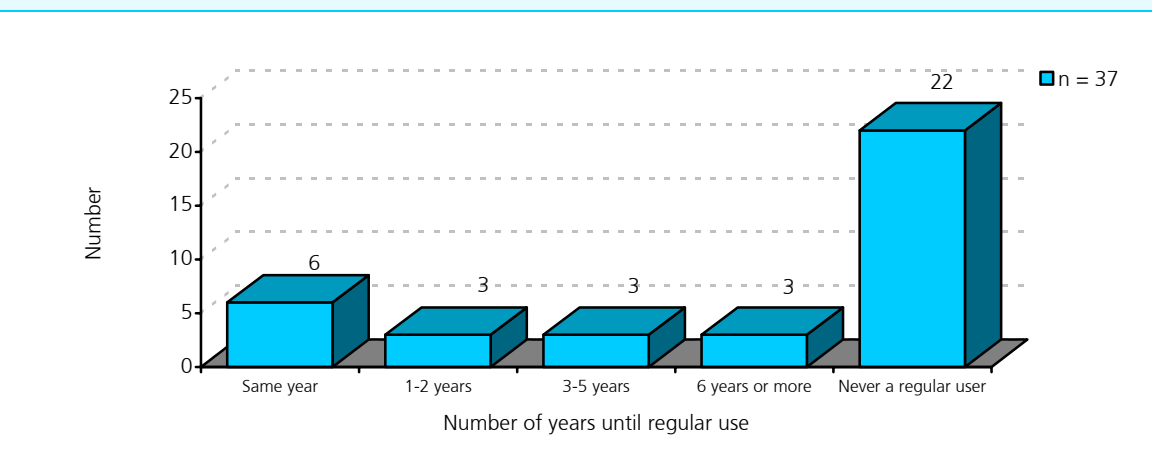


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Note: Three individuals did not report the age at which they first used alcohol

As shown in Figure 51, of the 37 individuals who reported 'ever' using alcohol, six indicating beginning 'regular' use within the same year as first use. There were 22 individuals who reported that they never became a 'regular' user of alcohol.

Figure 51: Alcohol use: Number of years between first and 'regular' use

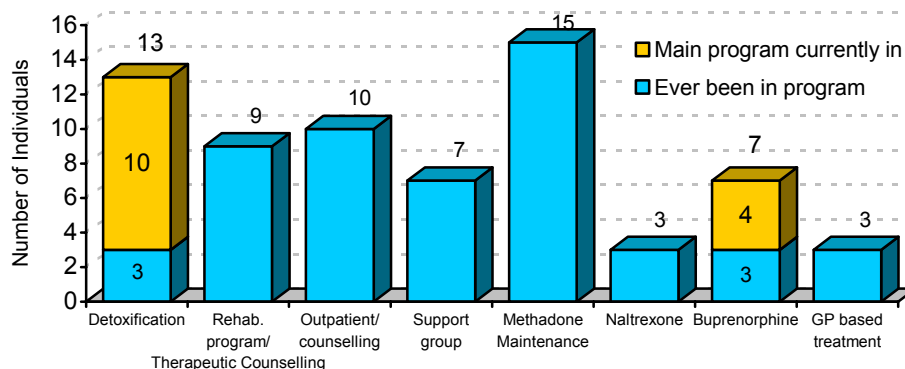


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Drug treatment programs

There were 26 individuals who reported that they had 'ever' been involved in some form of drug or alcohol treatment program, including 14 who reported that they were currently in such a program. Figure 52 shows the types of programs that individuals reported that they had been involved with, as well as the main program that they were currently in. As shown, 15 individuals reported that they had attended a methadone maintenance program at some stage in their lives, although none were currently in such a program. A total of 13 individuals reported that they had undergone detoxification, including 10 who reported that this was the main program that they were currently involved in. Of the 14 individuals who reported that they were currently in a drug or alcohol program, 11 reported that they were being treated for heroin or morphine use.

Figure 52: The number of individuals 'ever' or currently in a treatment program



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

There were 16 individuals who reported that while they were growing up, their father or stepfather had had either a drug or alcohol problem. This included six individuals who reported that their father/stepfather had a drug problem, while the remainder had an alcohol problem only. In addition, 11 individuals reported that their mother/stepmother had a drug or alcohol problem while they were growing up, including five who reported that their mother/stepmother had a drug problem.



Summary

- The overwhelming majority of individuals interviewed reported that they had used at least one drug, while around three quarters reported that they had used at least three different types of drugs over their lifetime.
- The most common drugs 'ever' used by individuals were cannabis, amphetamines, benzodiazepines and heroin. These drugs were also most commonly identified to being used in the six months prior to arrest and being ever used 'regularly'.
- Comparisons of the South Australian data with the National results are very difficult due to the low number of individuals interviewed in South Australia. However, the prevalence of drug use amongst South Australia women prisoners appears to be higher than that of those interviewed across Australia as part of the DUCO project, in terms of both lifetime use and use in the six months prior to arrest.
- Cannabis was the first drug to be used by individuals and the first drug to be 'regularly' used. Benzodiazepines and hallucinogens were the drugs most likely to be used at the next youngest age. Ecstasy was the drug that was first used at the oldest median age.
- Just over one third of individuals reported spending at least some of their money on amphetamines in the six months prior to arrest, half of whom reported spending at least half of their money on the drug. Just under one third of individuals reported that they had spent money on heroin, the majority of whom reported that they spent at least half of their money on that drug.
- Using a six item questionnaire, over half of the individuals were classified as being drug dependent, including nine of the ten individuals who reported that amphetamines was their preferred drug and eight out of nine who indicated that heroin was their preferred drug.
- The majority of individuals whose parents had a drug or alcohol problem while they were growing up were regarded as having a drug problem also.
- Fifteen of the 42 individuals interviewed reported using heroin in the six months prior to arrest. Workers in the field suggested that this figure may be an over representation of heroin use due to individuals being arrested before the heroin drought in Australia occurred. They noted that heroin use in the six months prior to arrest amongst individuals arrested since 2003 would be expected to be lower.
- Nearly all individuals indicated that they had used alcohol at some stage during their lives, including around half who reported using drugs in the six months prior to arrest. The overwhelming majority indicated that their first use and first 'regular' use of alcohol occurred as a juvenile.
- Over half of the individuals reported that they had ever been in a drug or alcohol treatment program, including 15 who had been in methadone maintenance, ten who had received counselling and nine who had been in a rehabilitation program. Thirteen individuals had been in a detoxification program, including ten who were currently receiving that treatment. Also, seven individuals were on a buprenorphine program as a treatment for heroin dependence, including four who reported that they were currently in such a program.

DRUGS AND CRIME

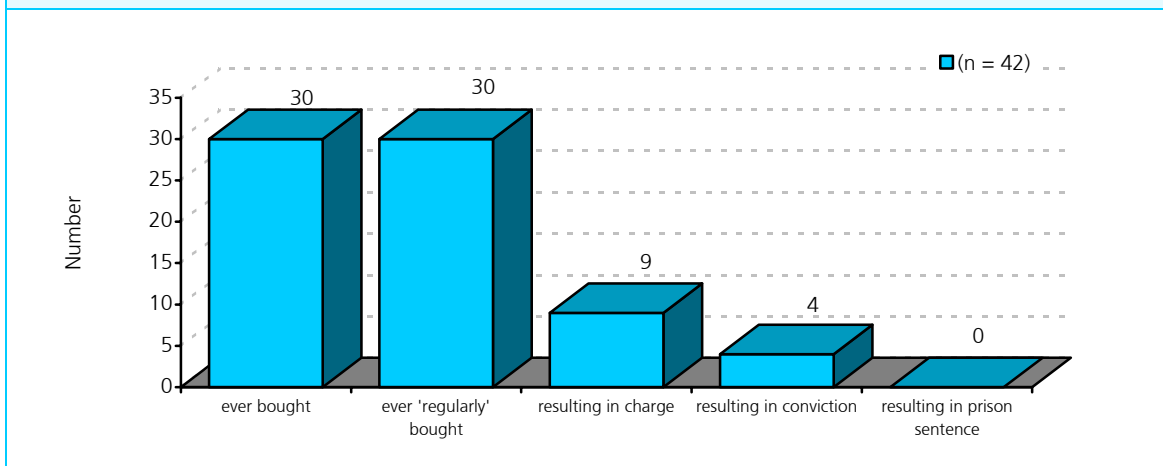
This section looks at the relationship between illegal drug use and crime. Although the number of individuals interviewed in South Australia was too low to do any meaningful comparisons of drug use and offending between groups within the sample, some interesting indicators of the links between drugs and crime are presented. The first two parts focus on the individual's history of both buying and selling illegal drugs, while the third part looks at drug-related offending. The fourth and fifth parts look at violent and property offending respectively, including the reasons individuals attributed to this behaviour. The final part of this section looks at the pathways to drug dealing, including the age of onset of drug using, and buying and selling drugs.

Bought illegal drugs

Figure 53 details the number of individuals who reported that they had ever bought or regularly bought illegal drugs and the number who reported that these offences had resulted in police charges, convictions or prison sentences. As shown, 30 out of the 42 individuals reported that they had both ever and 'regularly' bought illegal drugs. The definition of 'regular' was dependent upon the individual's perception but when asked, 20 reported that this was at least once per day.

There were nine individuals who reported that they had been charged for buying drugs, while four individuals reported they had been convicted. There were no individuals who reported that this had resulted in a prison sentence.

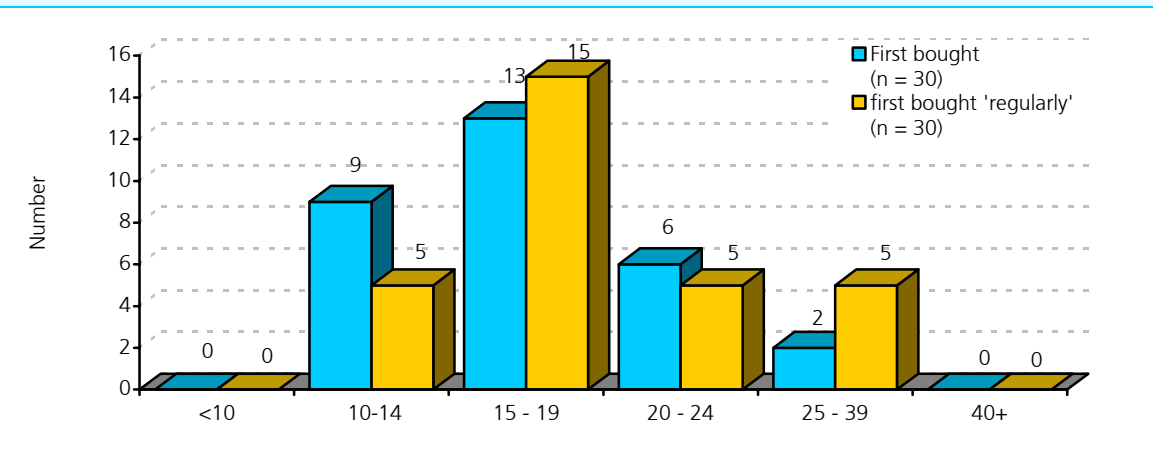
Figure 53: Number of individuals who reported ever buying or ever 'regularly' buying illegal drugs and the number charged, convicted or imprisoned for this offence



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 54 shows the age at which individuals reported that they first bought illegal drugs and the age at which this became a 'regular' activity. As indicated, around one third of individuals reported that they had purchased their first drugs before they turned 15, while almost three quarters had done so before the age of 20 years. For two thirds such purchases had become a regular activity before the age of 20 years.

Figure 54: Bought illegal drugs: Age of first purchase and age this became a 'regular' activity



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

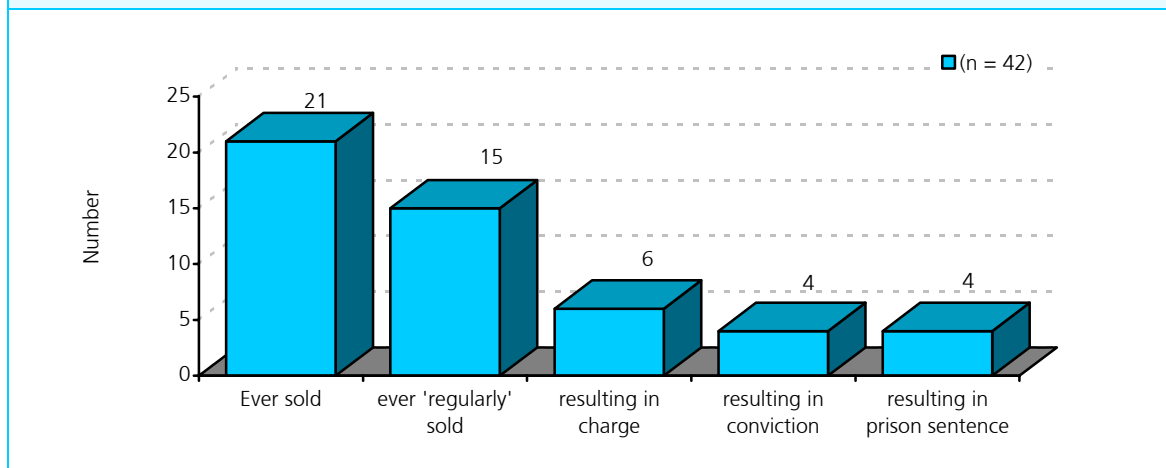
All individuals who had bought drugs reported doing so at least 100 times in their lifetime, while the overwhelming majority reported doing so 500 or more times. All of these individuals reported that the police never or rarely found out about these offences.

Sold illegal drugs

Figure 55 shows the number of individuals who reported that they had ever sold illegal drugs and the number who reported that these offences had resulted in police charges, convictions or prison sentences. As shown, 21 out of the 42 individuals reported that they had ever sold illegal drugs, while 15 reported that they had 'regularly' done so. The definition of 'regular' was dependent upon the individual's perception, but when asked, 12 reported that this was at least once per day.

There were six individuals who reported that they had been charged for selling drugs, including four who reported that this resulted in a conviction and a prison sentence.

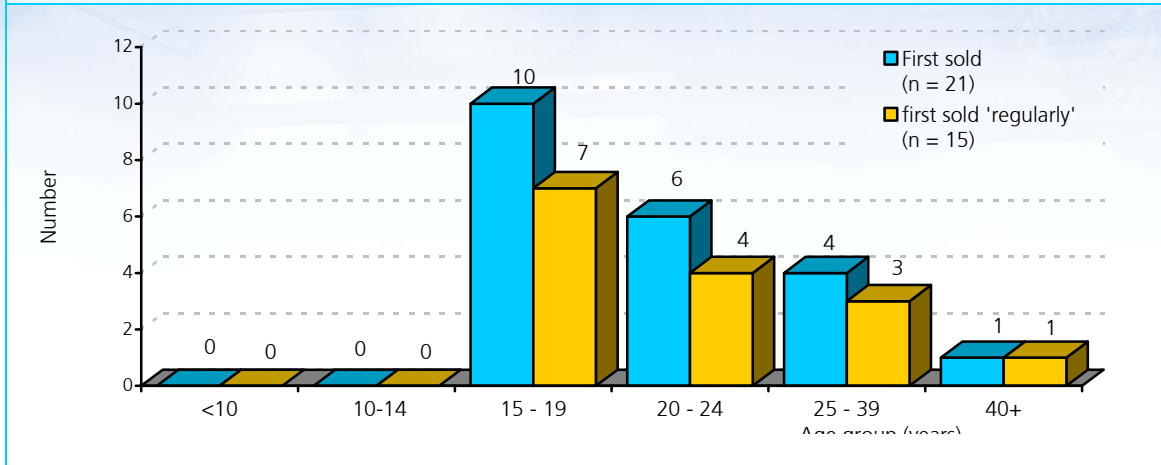
Figure 55: Number of individuals who reported ever selling or ever 'regularly' selling drugs and the number charged, convicted or imprisoned for this offence



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 56 shows the age at which individuals reported that they first sold and first 'regularly' sold illegal drugs. As shown, the peak age group for both starting to sell and 'regularly' selling drugs was 15-19 years.

Figure 56: Sold illegal drugs: Age of first sale and age this became a 'regular' activity



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

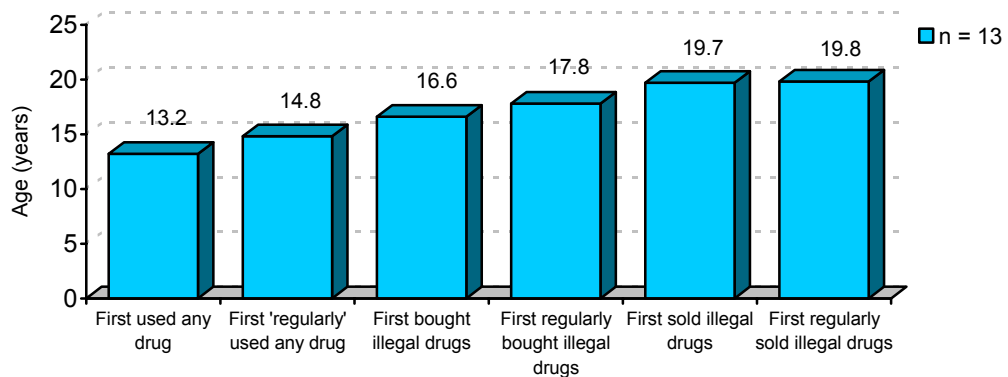
Of the 21 individuals who reported ever selling illegal drugs, 13 indicated that they had done so at least 500 times in their lifetime⁶. All but one of these individuals reported that the police never or rarely found out about these offences.

⁶ Three of the 21 individuals did not report how many times they had sold drugs or report if the police found out about the offence.

Pathways to drug dealing

Figure 57 shows the reported mean age of individuals at the time of their first 'ever' and first 'regular' use of drugs as well as the mean age at which they first started buying and selling drugs. Only the 13 individuals who reported that they had been involved in all of these activities were included in this analysis. While caution should be exercised when interpreting these figures because of the very small numbers involved, it does seem that individuals start with using drugs and then, once the habit is established, they move on to buying drugs and finally selling drugs.

Figure 57: Mean age of first and 'regular' drug use, drug buying and drug selling

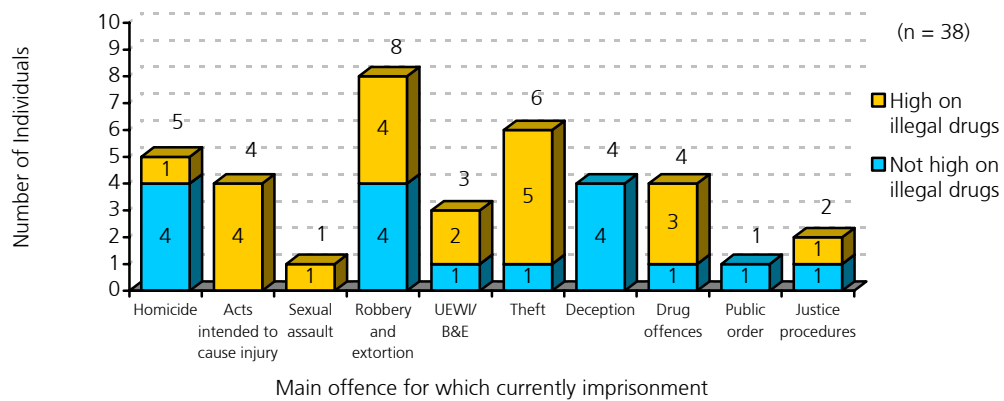


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Drug related offending

Individuals were asked if they were 'high' on illegal drugs at the time of committing the offence for which they were currently in prison. Over half (22 of the 39 individuals⁷) reported that they were. Figure 58 shows the type of offence that they had committed by whether they reported that they were 'high' at the time. As indicated, all four individuals who were currently incarcerated for acts intended to cause injury reported that they were 'high' at the time of offence, as were the majority who committed theft or drug offences.

Figure 58: Main offence for which currently imprisoned by whether individual was 'high' on illegal drugs at the time of committing that offence



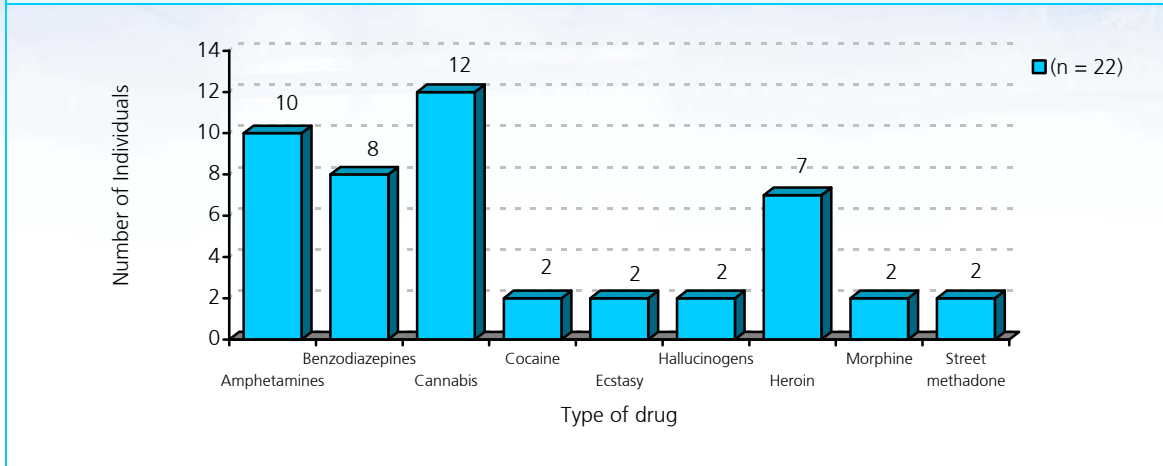
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Note: There was one individual who did not state the main offence for which they are currently incarcerated and three individuals who did not report if they were 'high' at the time of committing the offence. If individuals listed two offences, the offence that is higher in the ASOC hierarchy was used.

Figure 59 shows the types of drugs that individuals reported using before committing the offence for which they were currently imprisoned. Only the 22 individuals who indicated that they were 'high' at the time are included. As shown, 12 individuals reported that they had used cannabis, 10 reported that they had used amphetamines, while eight reported that they had used benzodiazepines.

⁷ There were three individuals who did not indicate if they were 'high' on illegal drugs at the time of committing the offence.

Figure 59: Types of drug that individuals reported that they had been using before committing the offence for which they were currently imprisoned



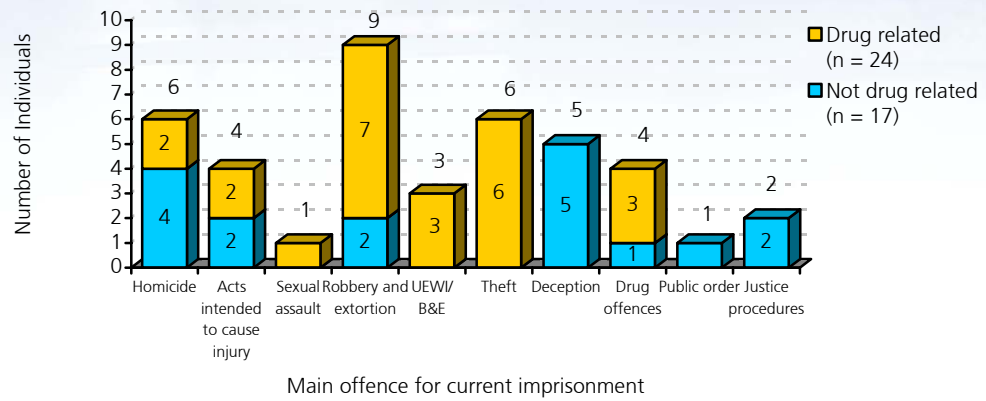
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]
 Note: Individuals were permitted to list multiple types of drug types.

There were also 12 individuals who reported that they were suffering withdrawal effects at the time of committing the offences for which they were currently imprisoned.

Individuals were also asked what they thought was the main reason that they had committed the offences for which they were currently imprisoned. There were 24 individuals who gave reasons which related to their drug problem.

Figure 60 shows the main offence for which individuals were presently imprisoned by whether they reported that the offence was related to their drug problem. As shown, seven of the nine individuals who were imprisoned for a robbery and extortion offence reported that the offence was related to their drug problem, while all of the six individuals imprisoned for theft reported that this offence was related to their drug use.

Figure 60: Main offence for which currently imprisoned by whether it was related to a drug problem



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Note: There was one individual who did not state the main offence for which they are currently incarcerated. If individuals listed two offences, the offence that is higher in the ASOC hierarchy was used.

Drugs and property offences

Individuals were asked how often they had committed any property offences in the six months prior to being arrested for the offence for which they were now in prison. Individuals were asked to include such offences as break and enter, fraud, forgery, theft and shoplifting. As shown in Figure 61, around one third (13 of the 42 individuals) reported that they had committed property offences five to seven days per week in the six months prior to being arrested. Conversely, 11 individuals reported that they had committed no such offences in the past six months, while a further 11 reported that they had never committed any property offences.

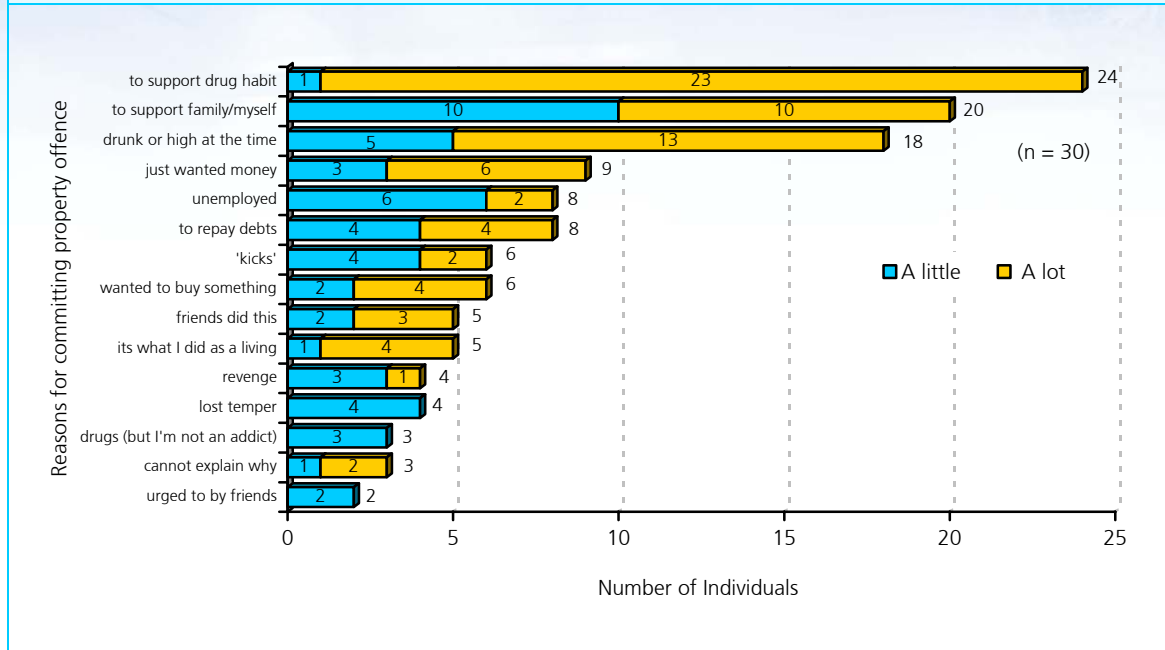
Figure 61: Number of individuals committing property offences in the six months prior to arrest



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Individuals who committed property offences were read a list of reasons that people give to explain why they do certain things. Individuals were asked how much each reason explained why they committed property offences. As shown in Figure 62, 24 individuals cited ‘to support drug habit’ as the reason for their offending, including 23 individuals who reported that this was ‘a lot’ like their reason. The next most common reasons for committing property offences were ‘to support family/myself’ (20 individuals) and ‘I was drunk or high at the time of offence’ (18).

Figure 62: Reasons individuals used to explain why they had ever committed property offences

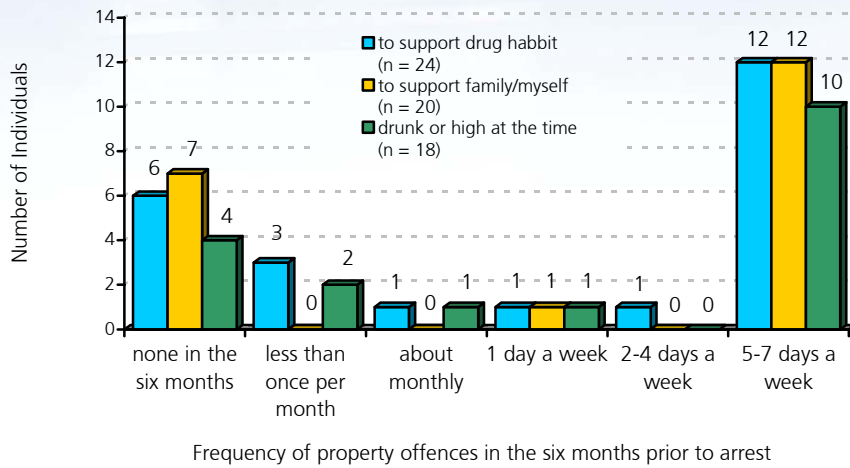


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Note: Only individuals who reported that they had ever committed property offences were required to answer this question. There was one individual who did not report the reasons why they committed property offences

Figure 63 shows the frequency of property offending in the six months prior to arrest broken down by some of the reasons given for committing those offences. As shown, half of the 24 individuals who offended 'to support drug habit', reported committing property offences five to seven days per week. The same frequency of offending was observed for at least half of those who said they committed a property crime 'to support family/myself' or who were 'drunk or high at the time'.

Figure 63: Number of individuals committing property offences in the six months prior to arrest for individuals who gave specific reasons for committing offences

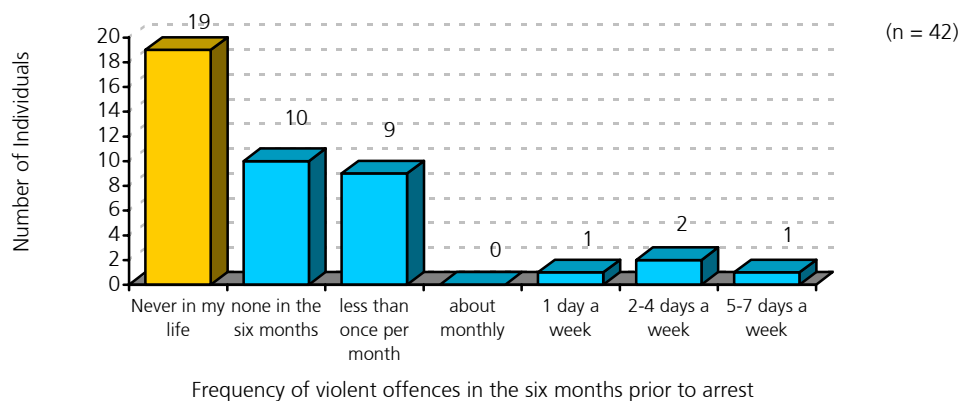


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Drugs and violent offences

Individuals were asked how often they had committed any violent offences in the six months prior to being arrested for the offence for which they were now in prison. Individuals were asked to include such offences as assault and armed or unarmed robbery. As shown in Figure 64, 19 of the 42 individuals reported that they had never committed a violent offence in their lifetime and a further 10 reported that they had not committed any such offence in the past six months. Conversely, four individuals reported that they had committed a violent offence at least weekly in the six months prior to arrest.

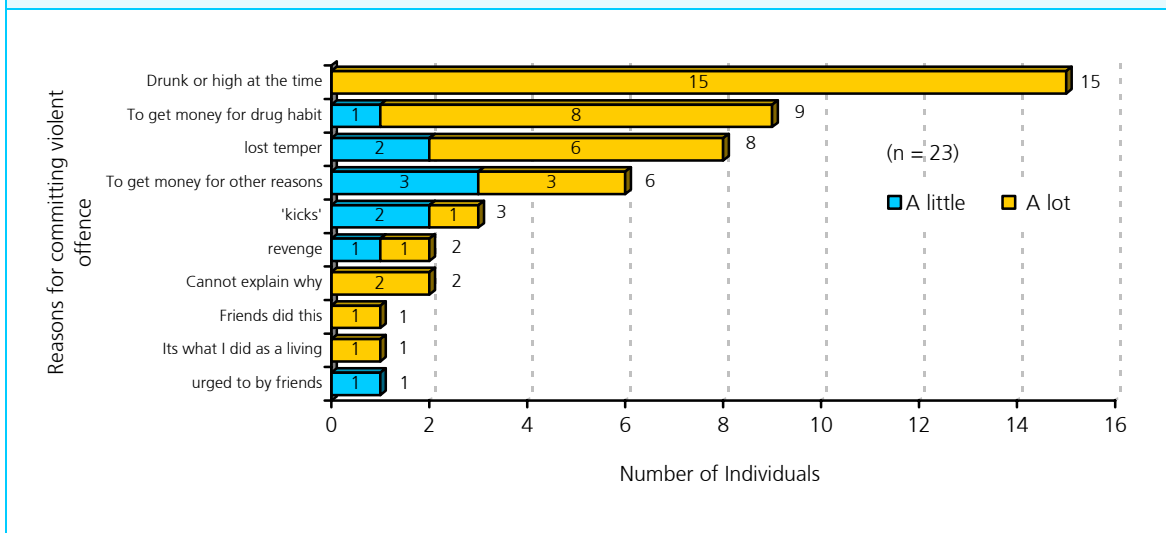
Figure 64: Number of individuals committing violent offences in the six months prior to arrest



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Individuals were given a list of reasons that explain why people do certain things and they were asked to report if each of the reasons were 'not at all', 'a little' or 'a lot' like the ones that they would use to explain why they were violent. As shown in Figure 65, 15 of the 23 individuals reported that being drunk or high at the time was 'a lot' like their reason for committing the offence. There were nine individuals who reported that they committed violent offences to get money for their drug habit, while eight reported that their offending was due to losing their temper.

Figure 65: Reasons individuals used to explain why they had ever committed violent offences



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Note: Only individuals who reported that they had ever committed property offences were required to answer this question.



Summary

- All of the 30 individuals who reported that they had ‘ever’ bought drugs also reported that they had done so on a ‘regular’ basis. The majority of individuals reported that they had bought drugs more than 500 times.
- Around half of the individuals reported that they had ‘ever’ sold illegal drugs, while around one third reported that they had ‘regularly’ sold drugs. The majority of individuals reported that they began this behaviour between the age of 15 and 19 years.
- Around one half of individuals reported that they were ‘high’ on illicit drugs while committing the offence for which they are currently imprisoned. The most common drugs used prior to this offending were cannabis, amphetamines, benzodiazepines and heroin.
- When individuals were asked about the general reasons for committing the offences, over half gave reasons relating to their drug use.
- Three quarters of individuals reported that they had ‘ever’ committed property offences, including 13 individuals who reported committing these offences at least five times per week. Of these individuals, the majority reported that the reason they committed the offence was ‘to support their drug habit’.
- Of the 23 individuals who reported that they had ‘ever’ committed violent offences, 15 reported that they were ‘drunk or high at the time’, while nine reported that they committed to the offence ‘to get money for drug habit’.

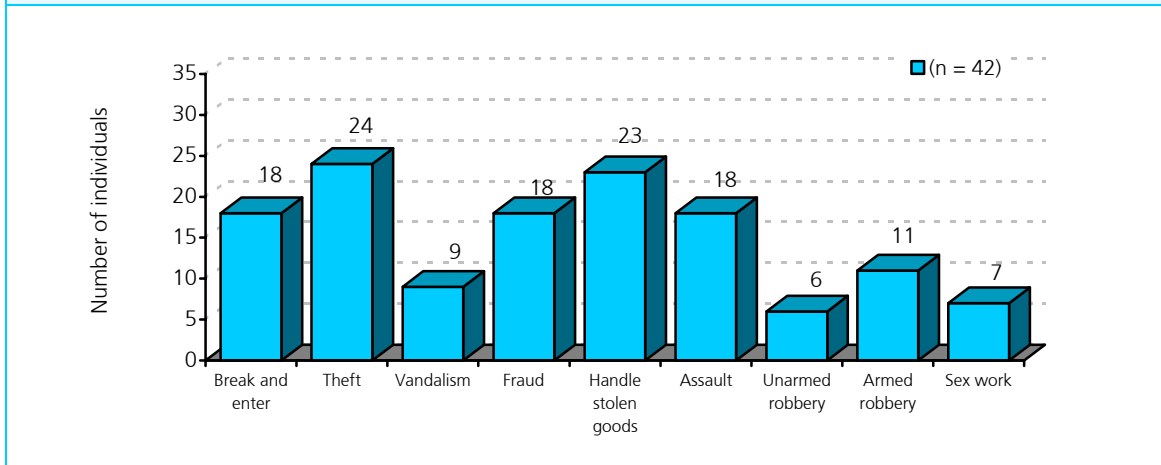
OFFENDING HISTORY

This section looks at the self-reported offending history of individuals for selected offence categories. Although this section is not linked to drug use, it provides an important insight into the individual's involvement in criminal activities.

Overview of offending history

Figure 66 shows the number of individuals who reported that they had committed certain offences regardless of whether the police found out about them. As shown, over half (24 individuals) reported that they had committed theft, while 23 reported that they had handled stolen goods. While there were seven individuals who reported that they had engaged in sex work, this is thought to under-estimate the true level, due to an unwillingness to admit to such offending because of the stigma attached to it.

Figure 66: Lifetime prevalence of offending by offence type



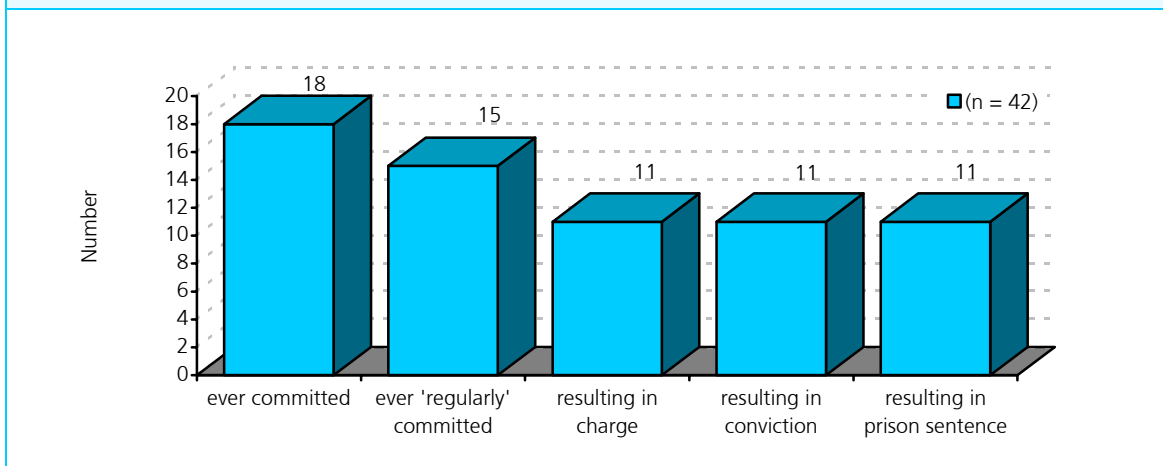
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Break and enter

Figure 67 shows the number of individuals who reported that they had 'ever' or 'ever regularly' committed a break and enter and the number who reported that these offences had resulted in police charges, convictions or prison sentences. As shown, 18 out of the 42 individuals reported that they had 'ever' committed break and enter offences, while 15 reported that they had done so 'regularly'. The definition of 'regular' was dependent upon the individual's perceptions, but when asked, 12 of the 15 prisoners indicated that this was more than once per week.

Eleven individuals reported that they had committed break and enter offences that had resulted in charges, convictions and a prison sentence.

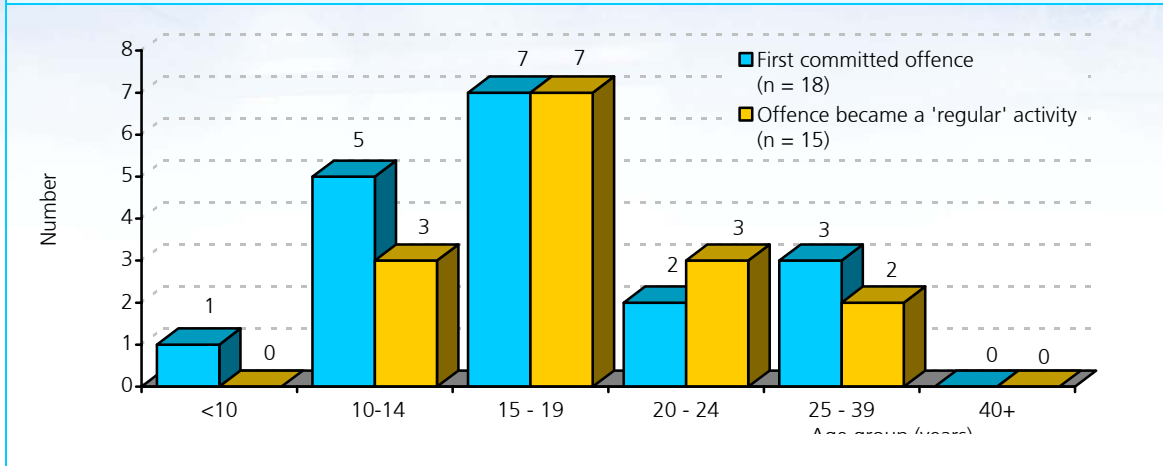
Figure 67: Break and enter: Number of individuals who reported ever committing or ever 'regularly' committing this offence and numbers resulting in a charge, conviction or prison sentence



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 68 describes the age at which individuals reported that they first committed and began to 'regularly' commit break and enter offences. As shown, the peak age group for both first committing and first 'regularly' committing break and enter offences was 15-19 years.

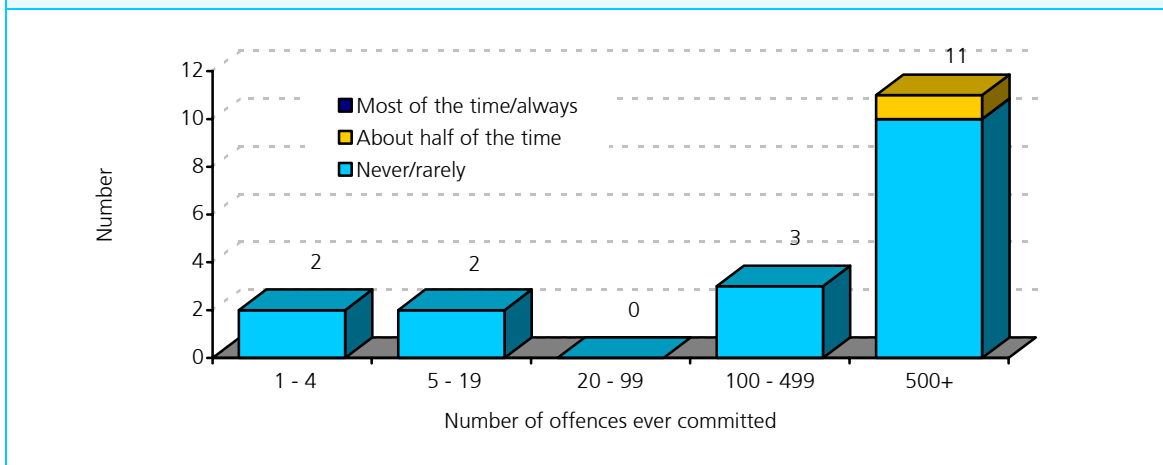
Figure 68: Break and enter: Age of first offence and age offence became a 'regular' activity



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 69 shows the number of offences that individuals reported 'ever' committing by how often the police found out who committed the offence. As shown, 11 of the 18 individuals reported that they had committed 500 or more break and enter offences in their lifetime. All but one of these individuals reported that the police never or rarely found out who committed the offences.

Figure 69: Break and enter: Number of offences ever committed by how often the police found out about it



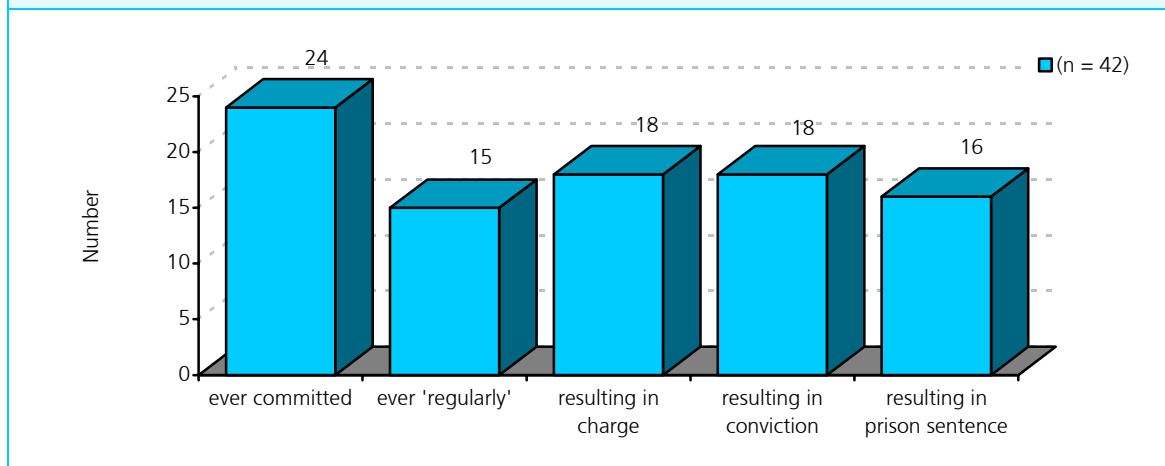
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Theft

Figure 70 shows the number of individuals who reported that they had 'ever' or 'regularly' stolen something from a person or place (including shoplifting) and the number who reported that these offences had resulted in police charges, convictions or prison sentences. As shown, 24 out of the 42 individuals reported that they had committed theft offences, while 15 reported that they had done so 'regularly'. The definition of 'regular' was dependent upon the individual's perception but when asked, 12 of the 15 prisoners reported that this was at least once per week.

Eighteen of these 24 individuals reported that these offences had resulted in charges and convictions, while 16 indicated that this had resulted in a prison sentence.

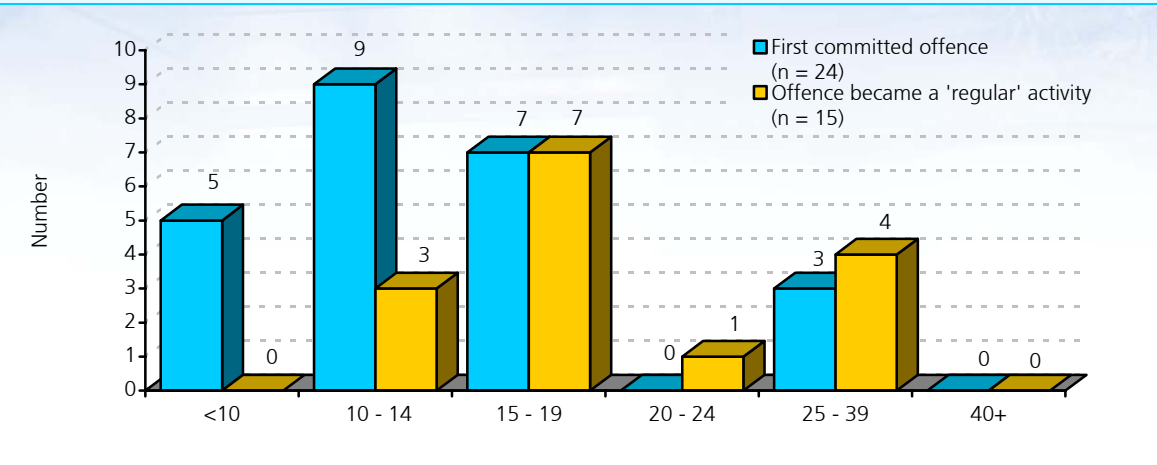
Figure 70: Theft: Number of individuals who reported ever committing, or ever 'regularly' committing this offence and numbers resulting in a charge, conviction or prison sentence



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 71 shows that over half (14 of the 24 individuals) reported committing their first theft before the age of 15 years, while 10 of the 15 individuals who stole 'regularly' reported doing so before the age of 20 years.

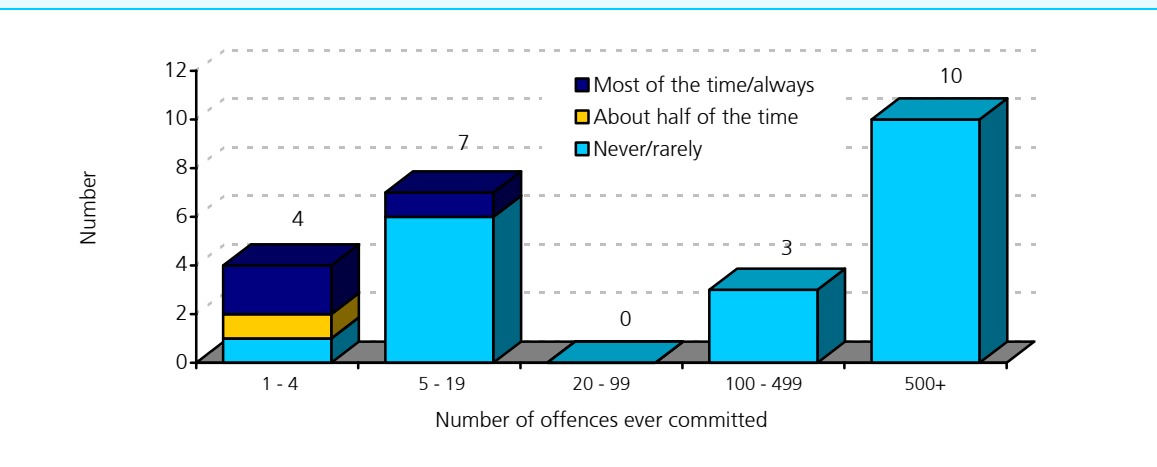
Figure 71: Theft: Age of first offence and age offence became a 'regular' activity



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 72 shows the number of thefts that individuals reported 'ever' committing by how often the police found out who committed the offence. As shown, 10 individuals reported that they had committed 500 or more theft offences in their lifetime and that the police never or rarely found out who was responsible. Three of the four individuals who reported that they had only committed theft on one to four occasions reported that the police found out about these half the time or more frequently.

Figure 72: Theft: Number of offences ever committed by how often the police found out about it



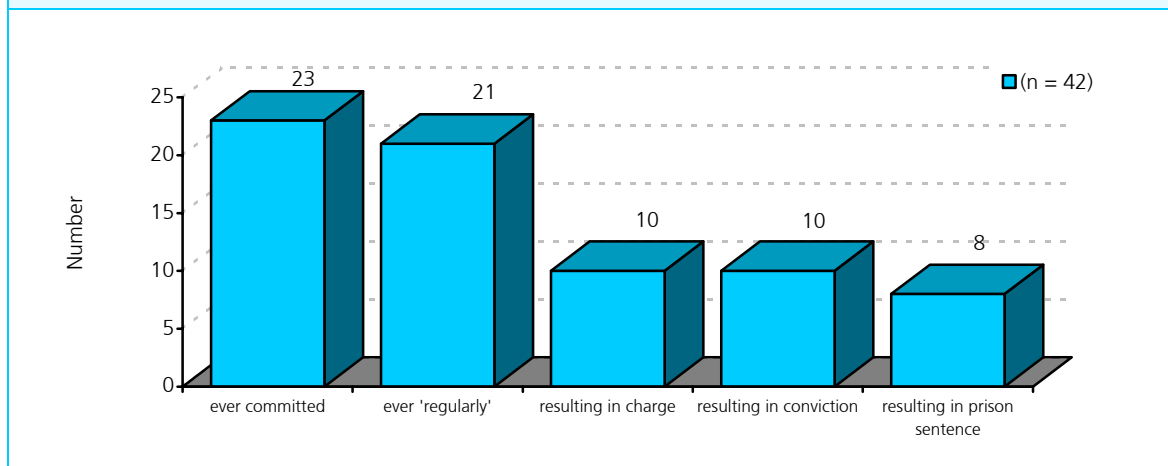
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Handle stolen goods

Figure 73 shows the number of individuals who reported that they had 'ever' or 'regularly' handled stolen goods and the number who reported that these offences resulted in police charges, convictions or prison sentences. As shown, 23 out of the 42 individuals reported that they had handled stolen goods, while 21 reported that they had done so 'regularly'. The definition of 'regular' was dependent upon the individual's perception but when asked, 20 reported that this was once per week or more.

Ten individuals reported that this offence had resulted in charges and convictions, while eight reported that this offence had resulted in a prison sentence.

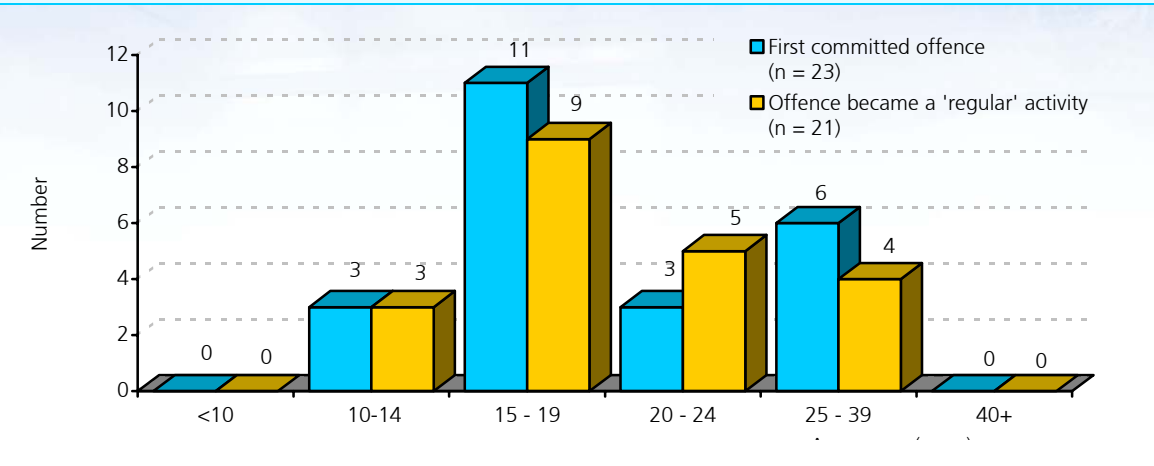
Figure 73: Handle stolen goods: Number of individuals who reported ever committing or ever 'regularly' committing this offence and numbers resulting in a charge, conviction or prison sentence



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 74 shows the age at which individuals reported that they first and 'regularly' handled stolen goods. As shown, the peak age group for both first committing and first 'regularly' handling stolen goods was 15-19 years.

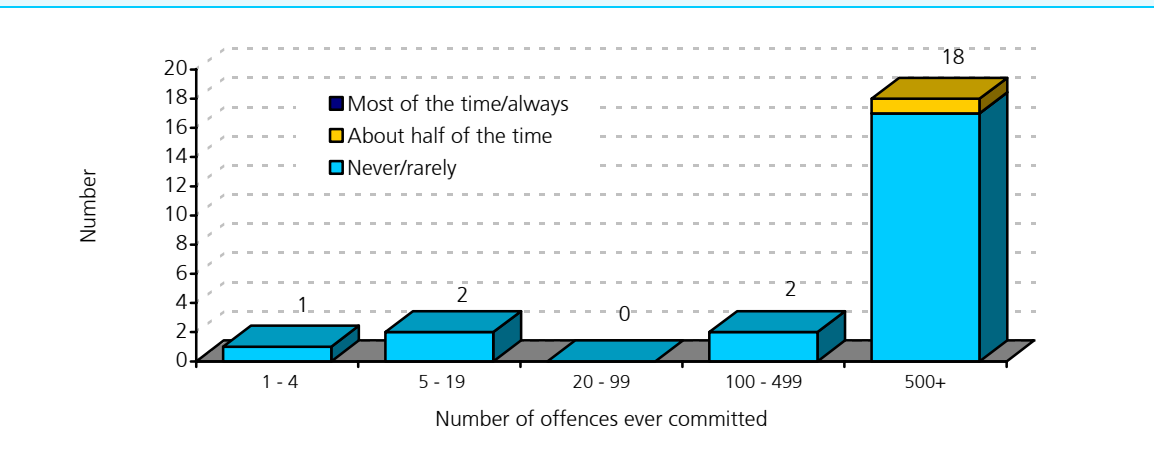
Figure 74: Handle stolen goods: Age of first offence and age offence became a 'regular' activity



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 75 shows the number of handling stolen goods offences ever committed by how often the police found out who committed the offence. As shown, 18 of the 23 individuals who admitted to such behaviour reported that they had committed 500 or more such offences in their lifetime. All but one of the 23 individuals reported that the police never or rarely found out who committed the offences.

Figure 75: Handle stolen goods: Number of offences ever committed by how often the police found out about it

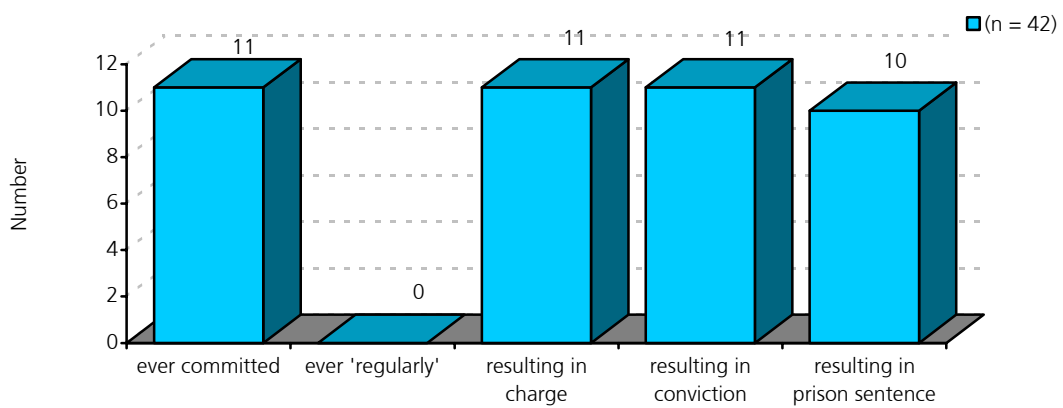


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Armed robbery

Figure 76 shows that 11 of the 42 individuals reported that they had committed armed robbery offences, although no individual had done so 'regularly'. All of these 11 individuals reported that the offence resulted in charges and convictions, while 10 reported that it resulted in a prison sentence.

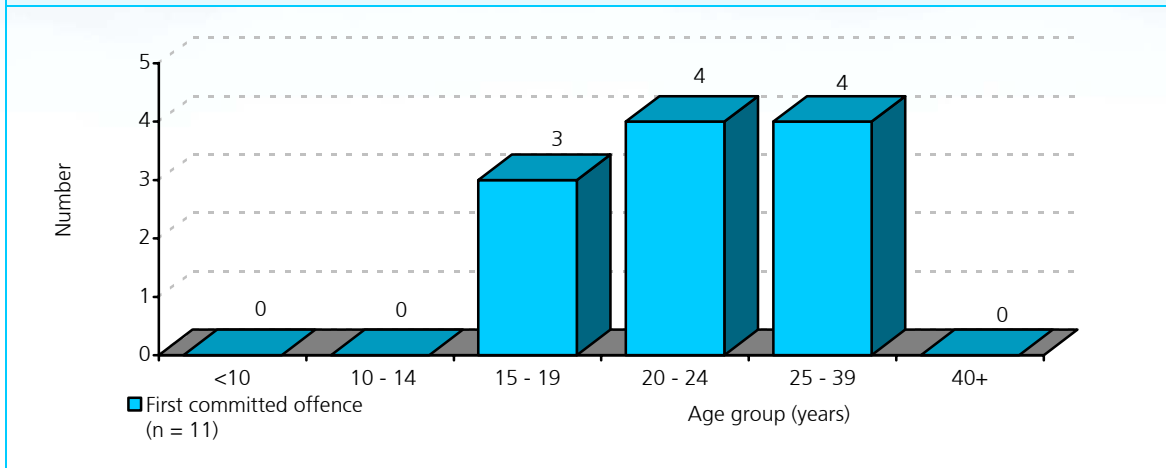
Figure 76: Armed robbery: Number of individuals who reported ever committing or ever 'regularly' committing this offence and numbers resulting in a charge, conviction or prison sentence



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 77 shows that four individuals were aged 20 to 24 years when they committed their first armed robbery offence, while three were aged 15 to 19 years.

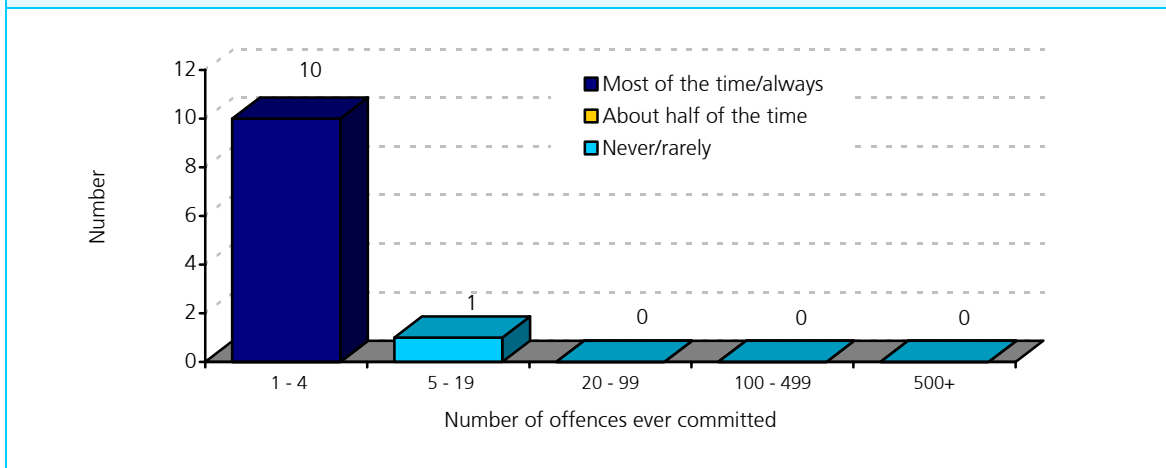
Figure 77: Armed robbery: Age of first offence



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

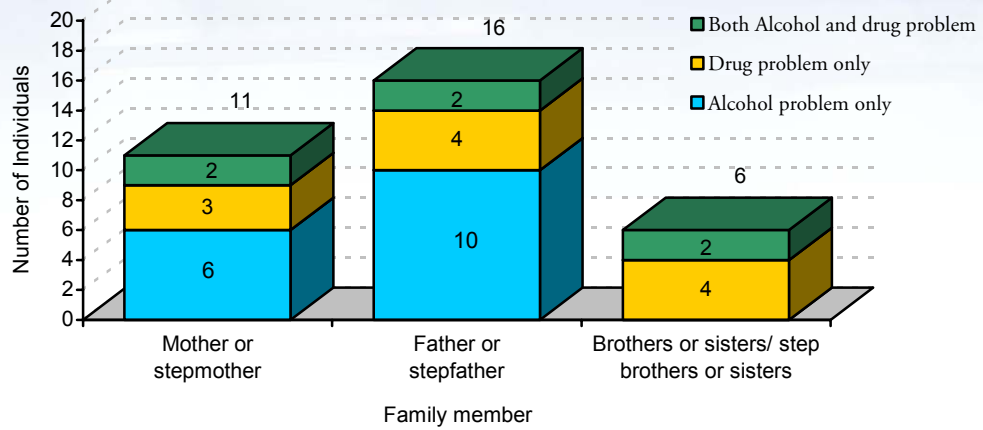
Figure 78 shows the number of armed robberies that individuals reported ever committing by how often the police found out who committed the offence. As shown, 10 of the 11 individuals reported that they had committed the offence less than five times in their lifetime and that the police always or most of the time found out about these offences.

Figure 78: Armed robbery: Number of offences ever committed by how often the police found out about it



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Figure 79: Number of individuals whose family members had a drug or alcohol problem while the respondent was growing up



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO female study, 2003 [computer file]

Of the 19 individuals who reported that either their mother/stepmother or their father/stepfather had a drug or alcohol problem while growing up, 15 reported that they now have children of their own.



Summary

- Just under half (18 individuals) reported that they had ‘ever’ committed break and enter offences, while 15 reported that this became a ‘regular’ activity. Eleven individuals reported that this offending resulted in being charged, convicted and given a prison sentence.
- Over half (24 individuals) reported that they had ‘ever’ stolen anything. The majority of these individuals reported that they had done so before the age of 15 years.
- Over half (23 individuals) reported that they had handled stolen goods, most of whom (21 individuals) reported that they went on to ‘regularly’ commit this offence. There were ten individuals who reported that this offending resulted in being charged and convicted, while eight reported that it resulted in a prison sentence.
- The majority of individuals who committed break and enter, theft and handle stolen goods offences indicated that they had committed these offences at least one hundred times and that the police never or rarely found out about them.
- While 11 individuals reported that they had committed armed robbery offences, no individuals progressed to ‘regularly’ committing such offences. The majority of these 11 individuals reported that they committed the offence less than five times and that the police always or most of the time found out about it.