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Drugs and Crime:
a Study of Incarcerated
Male Offenders

Toni Makkai and Jason Payne

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Toni Makkai and Jason Payne



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Disclaimer

This research paper does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the Australian Government.

Executive Summary

The key focus of this report is on the illegal drug-using and criminal careers of 2,135 male offenders who were incarcerated in prisons in Western Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory in mid-2001. In general terms, these offenders tended to be aged in their twenties or thirties, reported low levels of education, had a one in four chance of being Indigenous, and had high levels of prior contact with the criminal justice system. On average, they were the most chronic and serious offenders who had come to the attention of police and courts. Understanding their patterns of offending is critical for crime prevention strategies and drug use is commonly regarded as a significant factor in offending behaviour.

Offenders reported a variety of property and violent offending behaviour throughout their criminal careers. Despite this diversity in offending it was possible to classify three quarters of the offenders into a typology of offending or crime types. These were:

- regular property offenders (27 per cent);
- regular multiple offenders (15 per cent);
- regular violent offenders (eight per cent);
- regular fraud offenders (eight per cent);
- drug sellers (seven per cent);
- drug buyers (seven per cent); and
- homicide offenders (five per cent).

The remainder have been grouped into a non-regular offenders group (24 per cent).

The majority of offenders reported using illegal drugs and poly-drug use was common. In the six months prior to their most recent arrest at the time of the study, current regular illegal drug use was reported by 62 per cent of offenders. In terms of the types of drugs, regular use was reported by:

- 53 per cent for cannabis;
- 31 per cent for amphetamines;

- 21 per cent for heroin;
- seven per cent for cocaine; and
- 35 per cent for two or more of the above illegal drugs.

In general, for offenders with any history of property offending (76 per cent), the drug-using and criminal careers began with the onset of offending, and then the onset of illegal drug use, which in turn persisted into regular offending followed by regular illegal drug use. There are variations on this theme that are detailed in each of the chapters on the different crime types.

In summary, these variations indicate that offenders of different crime types started offending and drug use at different ages and the length of time between onset and persistence varied. The most significant variations indicate that more frequent and extensive offenders started offending and illegal drug use at a younger age. This in turn was followed by persistence with these activities at a younger age than is the norm for criminal careers. Importantly, in many cases, it appears that the time between onset and persistence of drug use was also shorter for these more chronic offenders. However, with the exception of offenders who were classified as regular drug sellers, offending, on average, preceded the onset of drug use.

There are some significant variations in the nature of offending by drug types. In particular:

- regular amphetamine users were more likely to be engaged in violent offending such as physical assault and were significantly more likely to act impulsively with no planning;
- homicide offenders, regular violent offenders and non-regular offenders were more likely to implicate alcohol in their offending;
- regardless of drug type, *addicted* offenders reported more frequent property offending; and
- cocaine use was more likely to be reported by homicide and fraud offenders, although the numbers were small.

The overall impact of illegal drugs or alcohol on the lifetime criminal career is clear—*of those who reported drug use*, 51 per cent attributed all or most of their

criminal offending to illegal drugs and alcohol. Attributions centred around three explanations:

- drug related economic/compulsive;
- psychopharmacology of drugs; and
- drugs and alcohol lead to crime.

Attributions varied according to different crime and drug types.

Of significance was:

- heroin users were more likely to attribute offending to economic/compulsive factors; and
- amphetamines or alcohol users were more likely to attribute offending to psychopharmacological factors.

Analysis of drug market activity prior to incarceration indicates that offenders use a variety of methods to obtain illegal drugs. The most common method was to pay cash, but other methods were also used. Most notably:

- for heroin and amphetamines, around a half reported trading stolen goods, swapping drugs and being paid in drugs for work; just over a third reported trading other goods or recutting the drug;
- for cocaine, around half reported swapping drugs and around a quarter said they recut the drug or received it as payment for work;
- for cannabis, around a quarter reported trading stolen goods, swapping drugs or receiving it as payment for work; and
- in terms of drug expenditure, chronic offenders and those addicted to drugs reported spending more money per week on illegal drugs.

These data suggest that violence associated with drug markets in Australia may be more common than first thought, although it is relatively rare around the cannabis market. In terms of amphetamines, 20 per cent said they had used force or violence to obtain drugs and eight per cent said they also used weapons. The most violence seemed to be around heroin markets with 29 per cent reporting the use of force or threats of violence and 17 per cent using weapons. There was also violence associated with the cocaine market, with 15 per cent reporting the use of force or threats and nine per cent reporting the use of weapons.

In terms of risk factors, juvenile detention is a clear marker for early onset and persistence into both criminal and drug-using careers. These offenders were also more likely to pursue more serious and frequent offending careers.

Indigenous offenders are over-represented in the criminal justice system, and these data indicate that their offending tends to be over-represented in violent offences. Illegal drug use, where it occurred, was primarily concentrated with cannabis use and with some use of amphetamines. Although onset into offending occurred at a younger age than non-Indigenous offenders, onset into illegal drug use occurred later than for non-Indigenous offenders.

Of all offenders, 62 per cent reported being intoxicated at the time of their most serious offence, 24 per cent were high on illicit drugs, 21 per cent on alcohol and 17 per cent on the two combined. Fifty two per cent of the total sample reported addiction to alcohol or illegal drugs during the six months prior to the most recent arrest. Thirty-two per cent reported addiction to illegal drugs only, 11 per cent to alcohol, and nine per cent to both alcohol and illegal drugs. Offenders reporting addiction were significantly more likely to report higher frequency drug use and offending behaviours in the six months prior to arrest.

Estimating the proportion of crime related to illegal drugs suggests that 29 per cent of offenders causally attributed their current most serious offence to intoxication—11 per cent to illegal drugs, 10 per cent to alcohol and eight per cent to both alcohol and illegal drugs. Similarly, 24 per cent of offenders causally attributed their offending to drug or alcohol dependency—18 per cent to illegal drugs, three per cent to alcohol and three per cent to both alcohol and illegal drugs. After combining these estimates the total proportion of offenders who causally attributed their current most serious offence to illegal drugs or alcohol was 39 per cent—18 per cent to illegal drugs, nine per cent to alcohol and 12 per cent to both.

1 Overview of Drugs and Crime

Recently, a major report on the social cost of drugs to the community has been published (Collins and Lapsley 2002). Within this volume two papers by the Australian Institute of Criminology provide estimates of the proportion of criminal behaviour that can be attributed to the use of drugs. Estimates from a study of police detainees suggest that between 37 and 52 per cent of offenders report that their criminal activity is directly attributable to their drug problem. Similar methods were used to assess the proportion of offending that was directly attributable to illegal drugs using the Drug Use Careers of Offenders (DUCO) project data. The present study builds on this preliminary work with a more detailed analysis of offending and drug use among incarcerated offenders.

What is the cost to the community of drug related offending? The Australian Institute of Criminology has also recently released a wider ranging study of the costs of crime to the Australian community (Mayhew 2003). This study found that crime accounted for \$32 billion annually. Of this, drug offences specifically cost the Australian community \$1,960 million, but it is highly likely that drugs account for more of this total crime bill. As mentioned above, two studies suggest that, at a minimum, drugs might also account for a further one-third of the costs of other criminal activity.

At the macro level the numbers demonstrate the importance of crime and problematic drug misuse to society. At the micro level, Australians both as individuals and as members of families and communities, experience the reality that underlies these macro level facts on a regular basis. Recorded crime in 2002 indicate that there was an average of 90 break and enters every hour in Australia and six motor vehicles stolen every 30 minutes (ABS 2003a). In terms of assault and violent crime, the Australian Bureau of Statistics Crime and Safety Survey indicates that, in the 12 months prior to the survey, around five percent of persons aged 15 years or over were the victims of assault, sexual assault or robbery (ABS 2003b). National data from the Australian component of the International Crime Victims Survey (Mayhew et al. 2000) found that 30 per cent of Australians reported being a victim of crime in the year prior to the study. The experience and fear of crime has real and tangible effects on how our society functions; such experiences

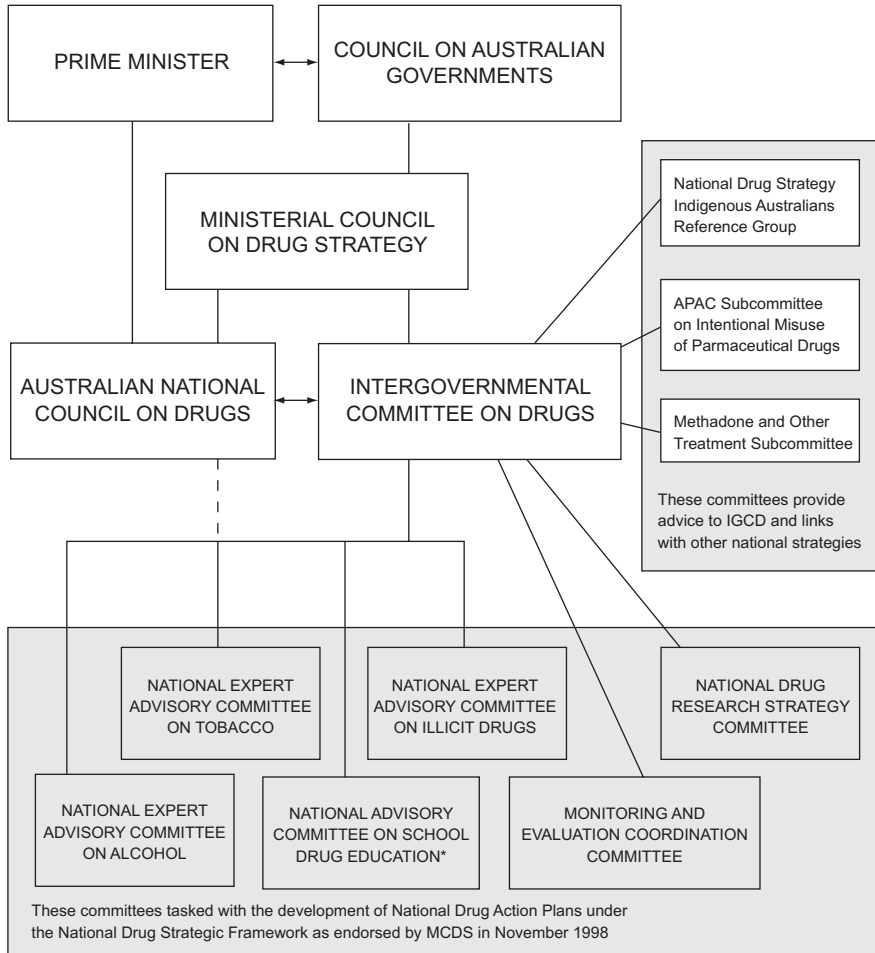
undermine confidence and trust in public institutions and leave society vulnerable to systematic corruption with far reaching consequences for economic and social development.

Protecting our community from the insidious effects of crime is a key priority for government with the recent endorsement by the Australian government for a key priority area—‘Building a Safer Society’. This report seeks to further our evidence base on the links between illegal drugs and criminal offending and contribute to the strategic research priorities set by government. Such information will also assist with the effective implementation of policies and programs. With limited government resources, the need for risk management of the problem has never been greater. Failure to effectively risk manage will result in costly mistakes, ineffective and possibly damaging effects on individuals and communities, and an escalation of a problem to an unacceptable level. Risk management requires the collation and analysis of a wide range of data. This report provides data for such a process.

Australian Governance Arrangements

Australia’s National Drug Strategy Framework gives a complex set of arrangements to control illegal drugs. Figure 1.1 provides an outline of the key committees and their inter-relationships at the national level. Essentially the Inter-Governmental Committee on Drugs (IGCD) is the policy making forum, comprising both health and law enforcement officials from all jurisdictions who advise the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy. There is a range of expert committees who provide advice to the IGCD and/or the Australian National Council on Drugs. The Australian National Council on Drugs provides independent advice to both the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy and the Prime Minister.

Figure 1.1 Advisory structures for the National Drug Strategy Framework 1998–99 to 2002–03



*The National Advisory Committee on School Drug Education who reports to the Ministerial Council on Education, Training and Youth Affairs

Source: <http://www.ncnd.org.au/about/ndsf.htm>

Overview of Drug Trends Amongst the General Population

During the last three decades, most countries have experienced significant increases in the availability and use of illegal drugs. Until relatively recently, international and national efforts to reduce illegal drugs have had marginal effects, particularly on the street prices and availability of illegal drugs (Farrell 1998).

There are a number of contemporary international conditions which have increased the 'vulnerability' and the 'sensitivity' of some regions to drug trafficking (Morrison 1997). These include:

- improvements in transportation systems and global infrastructure;
- increasing international trade in goods, people and services;
- local corruption (for example, weak legal systems, under-resourced law enforcement and corrupt public officials) in both source and destination countries;
- the growth of free trade zones allowing for the free movement of people and goods across national borders;
- more sophisticated methods by drug traffickers; and
- global drug trafficking networks are now becoming more diverse and 'ethnically-interconnected'.

By their very nature of illegality, the extent of usage of illegal drugs is difficult to measure. This is because people who use illegal drugs, especially hard or injectable drugs, are often not readily identifiable or they are often unable or unwilling to participate in surveys. In Australia, the National Drug Strategy Household Survey is the best, and indeed the only, indicator available of the prevalence of illegal drug use across the general community.

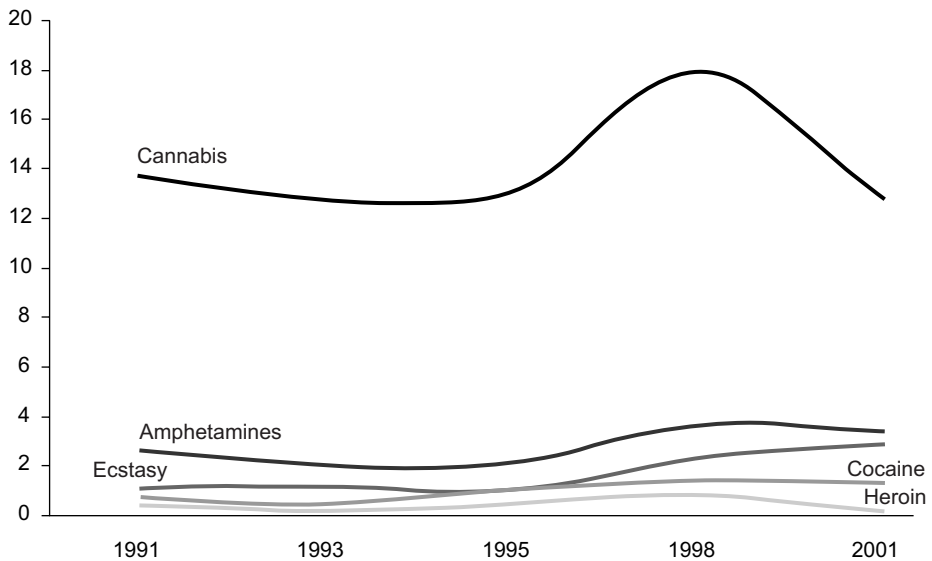
The most recent survey was conducted in 2001 amongst those aged 14 years or older. Self-reported use in the past 12 months was:

- 13 per cent for cannabis;
- three per cent of amphetamines;

- three per cent for ecstasy or designer drugs;
- one per cent for cocaine; and
- less than one per cent for heroin.

The household surveys have been conducted since the mid-1980s. Figure 1.2 shows the change over the last decade of the self-reported use of the key drugs in the past 12 months. Although there are some changes from survey to survey, the trend over the decade is essentially one of stability across the general population. However, the household survey under represents groups in the community such as the homeless and the incarcerated population who are more likely to be users of illegal drugs. This report fills a significant gap in our knowledge base as it reports on self-reported illegal drug use amongst a large sample of incarcerated adult males from a number of Australian jurisdictions.

Figure 1.2 Trends in recent drug use for persons aged 14 years or older (per cent)



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2003. Statistics on drug use in Australia 2002. Canberra: AIHW.

Illegal Drugs and Crime

Australian research on illegal drugs and crime has found that:

- some offenders attribute their own offending to drugs (Makkai 1999; Makkai and McGregor 2002b; Indermaur 1995);
- offenders are more likely to report criminal activity prior to any involvement in drug use (Dobinson and Ward 1985); and
- offenders are more likely to report a younger age of onset into drug use than either injecting drug users or the general population (Johnson 2001).

These findings are consistent with a range of overseas studies (see Inciardi 1979; Mott and Taylor 1974; Stephens and Ellis 1975; McGlothlin, Anglin and Wilson 1978; Plair and Jackson 1970; Stanton 1969; Chambers, Moffett and Jones 1968; Wright and Decker 1994; Chaiken and Chaiken 1990; Johnson et al. 1985).

In addition overseas work has shown that:

- offending rates fluctuate according to levels of drug use (see Inciardi 1979 and McGlothlin et al. 1978).

The nature of the link between illegal drugs and offending can be further explored by focusing on the criminal career. Such a focus provides a mechanism for structuring and organising information that describes offending patterns over the life course of the offender. This method effectively controls for the confounding effects of age. Criminological research has consistently shown that offenders tend to 'mature out' of crime; a similar effect has been noted in the drug use literature. Effectively the career is comprised of three key components:

- onset or participation (entry into offending);
- career length or persistence (total amount of time the offender is active); and
- desistance (exit from offending) (Blumstein et al. 1986; Chaiken and Chaiken 1990).

During the criminal career offending behaviour can vary in two ways:

- the frequency (the rate of criminal activity); and
- the seriousness (recognising levels of seriousness of criminal activity).

Analyses of criminal careers in the United States have found significant variation in criminal offending. This has obvious consequences for interventions that fail to take such diversity into account. Chaiken and Chaiken (1984, p.195) highlight this:

“Faced with high crime rates, fiscal limitations, and a conservative political movement, public officials increasingly long for a simple, encompassing policy that would permit them to deal quickly and effectively with criminals. Unfortunately, an important truth has almost disappeared during these developments: There are many kinds of criminals, and to fix on any single punitive solution to the problem of crime is simplistic, unjust and inefficient.”

Illegal Drug Use and the Criminal Career

It is the transition from occasional illegal drug use to regular illegal drug use, and the progression from ‘softer’ drugs (like cannabis) to ‘harder’ drugs, that has sparked much debate among researchers. Several researchers have found that few people try ‘harder’ illegal drugs without first using cannabis and this is the basis of the ‘stepping stone’ hypothesis (Ellickson, Hays and Bell 1992; Kandel, Yamaguchi and Chen 1992; Kandel 1975). Cohen (1972) analysed drug use in light of the stepping stone hypothesis and concluded that the sequence of drug use has more to do with market situation, the rationing of dealers, and the chance opportunities of obtaining different drugs, rather than one particular drug being a starting point towards other drug use.

There are important public policy issues that are associated with this ‘academic’ debate. These include:

- if certain drugs are causally associated with offending then identifying the pathways into drug use is important for crime prevention and intervention programs; and
- understanding when these transitions occur can facilitate improved risk assessments for diverting potential offenders away from a criminal career.

The strongest support for the stepping stone hypothesis comes from a 21-year longitudinal birth cohort of 1,265 New Zealand children examining the relationship between cannabis use in adolescence and the onset of other illegal drug use (Fergusson and Horwood 2000). By age 21, nearly 70 per cent of the sample had used cannabis and 26 per cent had used other illegal drugs. More significantly,

their research showed strong evidence that cannabis use preceded other illegal drug use. The study found that 39 per cent of those who reported use of other illegal drugs had used cannabis first. While it is the case that the vast majority of offenders use cannabis (Makkai and McGregor 2003) the issue of whether it is a causal prerequisite for other illegal drugs use is more difficult to answer.

Fergusson and Horwood (2000) found that those using cannabis on at least 50 occasions in any given year were 140 times more likely to use other illegal drugs than those who did not use cannabis in that year. Controlling for factors such as social, family, and individual, those who used cannabis on more than 50 occasions in a given year were still about 60 times more likely to use other illegal drugs. This is a powerful study for it does not rely on self-reported use of drugs in the past but tracks drug use as it occurs.

Although there are a number of specific studies that ask about the onset of drug use in Australia, none has attempted to map the onset and persistence of drug use and criminal offending prospectively. The closest longitudinal study in Australia focused on explaining and understanding criminal behaviour is the sibling study (Western, Lynch and Ogilvie 2001). Unfortunately this study is small, focused in Brisbane, and its drug use measures limited. As a result there is not a strong evidence base for the stepping stone hypothesis and its links to criminal offending in Australia. The available data suggests that offenders report using illegal drugs at a younger age than non-offenders and injecting drug users (Johnson 2001). They are also more likely to begin their drug use with cannabis, followed by amphetamines, then heroin and finally cocaine.

Although government has been visionary in its investments in longitudinal collections, particularly in the past five years, their primary focus is on transition from school to employment, developmental pathways for children, women's health and wellbeing and women's work experience. There has not been a commitment to a long-term study of criminal careers. The closest study is the Australian Institute of Family Studies Temperament Study (Prior et al. 2000). Such studies are extremely expensive, require a long-term commitment by both policy makers and researchers, but will reap substantial rewards in the distant future because they will overcome many of the methodological limitations of the retrospective studies that are

primarily undertaken in Australian criminology. The limitations of retrospectively asking about criminal and drug-using behaviour apply equally to the DUCO survey. However, DUCO provides more detailed analyses of a variety of offending behaviours and drug use on a scale not collected before.

Factors Influencing Criminal Careers

Lifestyle characteristics have been explored in conjunction with criminal careers to determine the extent that they influence criminal behaviour and subsequently criminal careers (De Li, Priu and MacKenzie 2000). Table 1.1 contains a summary of some factors that have been identified as important predictors of offending. Drug use, drug addiction and the frequency of drug use have all been identified by various studies. The most common finding is that offenders who are drug users self-report higher levels of offending than their non-drug using peers.

Property Crime in Australia

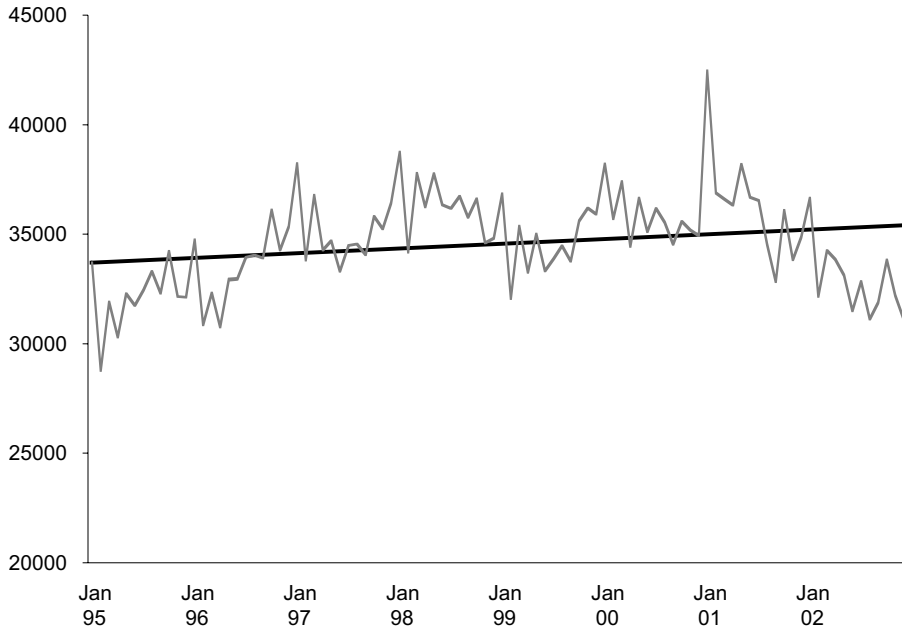
By definition, property crime includes break and enter (including residential and non-residential), motor vehicle theft, stealing, arson, malicious damage, and fraud. This report focuses on a subset of property crime sometimes referred to as 'acquisitive' crime (such as unlawful entry with intent, motor vehicle theft, receiving and stealing) as it is this type of crime that is often associated with illegal drug use.

Property crime in Australia has been identified as a significant problem. The International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) ranks Australia as having one of the highest rates of burglary and vehicle theft victimisation of 17 industrialised countries (van Kesteren, Mayhew and Nieuwbeerta 2000). The ICVS estimates are consistent with Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) crime victim surveys (Carcach 2002; Carcach and Makkai 2003), that in turn are supported by ABS recorded crime data. Figure 1.3 confirms that unlawful entry with intent (burglary) increased between 1995 and 2001, but has since declined during 2002. Similarly, incidents of motor vehicle theft show a general upward trend between 1995 and 2001 and decline in 2002.

Table 1.1 Relevant factors influencing drug use and criminal offending careers

Factors	References	Nature of relationship
Age	Nagin, Farrington & Moffit 1995; Blumstein et al. 1986	Criminal offending tends to reach a peak in the mid to late teens.
Education level	Nagin, Farrington & Moffit 1995	Those with lower levels of education are more likely to become involved in drugs and crime.
Employment	Sampson & Laub 1993	Job stability decreases the likelihood of criminal offending.
Employment status	Nagin, Farrington & Moffit 1995; Blumstein et al. 1986	Those who are unemployed are more likely to be involved in drugs and crime than those who are employed.
Level of drug use	Dobinson & Ward 1985; Nagin, Farrington & Moffit 1995; Nurco 1998; Salmelainen 1995; Stevenson & Forsythe 1998; Makkai 2002; Peterson, Braiker and Polich 1980–Rand Study	Those who are higher frequency drug users or current users are more likely to commit more crimes.
Drug addiction	Anglin & Speckart 1988; Dobinson & Ward 1985; Makkai 2002; Blumstein et al. 1986	Those who are drug addicts are more likely to commit more crimes.
Frequency of offending	Stevenson & Forsythe 1998	During periods of high frequency drug use frequency of offending increases.
History of juvenile delinquency	Moffit & Silva 1988; Salmelainen 1995; Peterson, Braiker and Polich 1980–Rand Study	Those with a history of juvenile delinquency are more likely to become adult offenders. Juvenile delinquency could be linked to adult criminal offending and drug use.
Previous criminal record	Dobinson & Ward 1985; McCord 2000; Salmelainen 1995; Peterson, Braiker and Polich 1980–Rand Study	Those who have a previous criminal record are likely to continue to be offenders—recidivist argument.
Family instability	McCord 2000; Nagin & Farrington 1992; Nagin, Farrington & Moffit 1995; Blumstein et al, 1986	Family instability may be an important factor in determining involvement in delinquent behaviour such as illegal drug use and committing crime.
Exposure to motivated offenders	Hindelang, Gottfredson & Garafalo 1978; Sampson & Lauritsen 1990; Blumstein et al. 1986	Exposure to motivated offenders increases the likelihood of offending.
Absence of a capable guardian	Hindelang, Gottfredson & Garafalo 1978; Sampson & Lauritsen 1990	Lack of supervision allows the development of deviant behaviours.
Marriage and family ties	Sampson & Laub 1993	Increased attachment through marriage and family decreases involvement in criminal activity.

Figure 1.3 Recorded criminal incidents of unlawful entry with intent in Australia 1995–2002 (number)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Recorded Crime Australia, 1995–2002

Theoretical Models of the Drug–Property Crime Connection

Explanations for the drugs and property crime connection usually fall into one of three models:

- the enslavement model—in which an individual becomes addicted to drugs and eventually can no longer support their drug habit through legitimate means. Faced with no alternatives the drug addict resorts to crime to fund their addiction;
- the criminal career model—in which offending most often precedes drug use; criminal behaviour and drug use are both forms of ‘deviancy’ and there is no causal link between the two; and
- the intensification or escalation model—which is used to describe the criminal career that is already well established before dependence or even use of illegal drugs begins. However, the onset of drug use, and particularly when that use becomes abuse, income generating crime intensifies in order to fund the additional costs of addiction (Goode 1997, p.124–125).

The differences between these three basic models are based primarily on the temporal order of offending and drug use. The enslavement model purports that drug dependent offenders resort to criminal offending to support their drug taking behaviour. It assumes that crime occurs after drug use in the temporal order of the drug use and criminal offending career and all criminal behaviour is the direct result of illegal drugs. Conversely, the intensification model argues that a general deviant lifestyle begins with offending. Drug use begins as just one part of this deviant lifestyle, but when continued use turns to dependency and abuse, an offender's criminal behaviour escalates or intensifies. For the final model, the criminal career model, the temporal order of drug use and crime in the offending career is almost irrelevant. The only real connection between drugs and crime is that both behaviours are the result of a general deviant lifestyle, neither having a greater causal effect on the other.

These models have two significant implications for both offending and offending rates. A reduction in the total number of offenders will undoubtedly reduce offending rates, however a reduction in offending rates will not automatically result in a reduction in the total number of offenders. Take, for example, drug treatment programs aimed at reducing levels of drug dependency within the community. Assuming that drug use enslaves otherwise non-criminogenic individuals, as in the enslavement model, drug treatment programs would reduce the total pool of offenders and in turn the offending rate. If however, drug use serves only to escalate an already active criminal lifestyle, drug treatment may reduce drug-related offending rates but not the total pool of offenders. Finally, if no causal relationship exists between drug use and crime, as in the criminal career model, drug use reduction will decrease neither the offending rate nor the total pool of offenders.

These different models of the links between drug use and crime have significant implications for crime prevention strategies targeted at drug users who come into contact with the criminal justice system such as drug diversion programs and drug courts.

The Illegal Drug–Property Crime Relationship

Within Australia a number of criminological studies have demonstrated a correlation between illegal drugs and property crime. These studies have found that:

- property offenders are more likely to test positive to illegal drugs particularly opiates (Makkai and McGregor 2002a);
- drug-using property offenders have higher rates of criminal activity (Dobinson and Ward 1985; Stevenson and Forsythe 1998; Loxley 2001; Makkai 2002);
- violent property offenders report using drugs (usually amphetamines) to provide ‘dutch’ courage to commit their crimes (Indermaur 1995); and
- the level of offending varies according to the type of drug on which the offender is dependent (Makkai 2002).

The only major Australian study of drug-using offenders comes from the mid-1980s when Dobinson and Ward (1985) interviewed 225 prisoners in NSW prisons with the aim of investigating the extent to which property crime could be attributed to regular use of drugs. The sample was incarcerated offenders who were in jail for one or more property offences¹. By using self-report as their data collection method, they collected information about the temporal sequence, quantity and frequency of drug use, the amount of property crime committed, and the interaction between intensity of criminal activity and degree of drug use.

Seventy-two per cent of heroin users reported a first instance of property crime before their first use of heroin (Dobinson and Ward 1985, p. 48). However, 60 per cent reported that crime became a regular activity after their first use of heroin. Notably, three quarters (76 per cent) of these offenders did not progress to regularly committing crime until they were regular heroin users. Despite this, close to one-third (33 per cent) reported regularly committing property crime before their first use of heroin.

The issue of temporal sequence can be further explored by examining when individual offence types were committed. Dobinson and Ward (1985) found that the less serious crimes of shoplifting, motor vehicle theft and unauthorised use of

¹ Property offences included: robbery; break, enter and steal; larcenies; all forms of fraud; receiving; and goods in custody.

a motor vehicle were first committed prior to the first use of heroin. The first committal of robbery and fraud usually occurred after the first use of heroin.

When considering the temporal sequence for regular crime and regular heroin use, the majority of offenders reported that they were never involved in regularly committing property offences. The regular committal of motor vehicle theft (considered to be a less serious crime) was always reported to have begun prior to regular heroin use. On the other hand, armed robbery (an acquisitive violent crime) occurred on a regular basis after the regular use of heroin. Fraud was also reported as being regularly committed after regular use of heroin began (Dobinson and Ward 1985).

There was a greater likelihood that heroin users would progress from initially committing crimes to regularly committing crimes. When considering break, enter and steal, there was a 73 per cent chance that heroin users would become regularly involved in this activity compared with a 31 per cent chance for non-users. The situation was similar for armed robbery where there was a 40 per cent chance of users becoming regularly involved, compared with a 13 per cent chance of non-users becoming regularly involved.

Although Dobinson and Ward's study was ground breaking at its time, there are a number of limitations—the sample is from NSW prisons, it is restricted to property offenders and focused largely on heroin. The present study improves on these limitations by increasing the sample to include all types of offenders. It is representative of incarcerated offenders in four jurisdictions, and examines the four major illegal drugs—cannabis, heroin, amphetamines and cocaine.

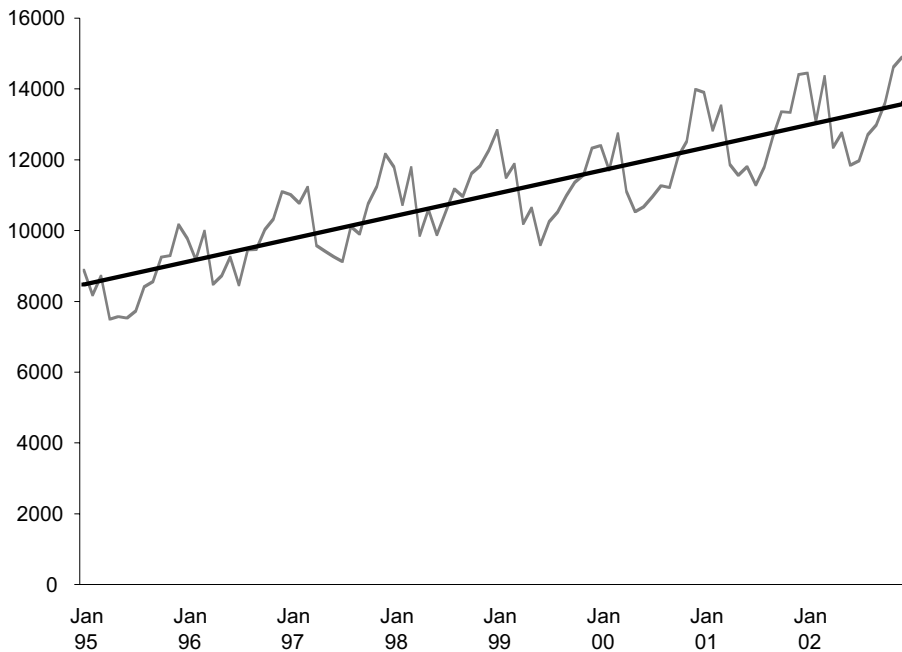
Violent Crime in Australia

Homicide numbers in Australia have remained relative stable over the past 100 years. Other violent crime types have however been increasing. Figure 1.4 shows the general increase in the number of assaults from 1995 to 2002. It is widely accepted that there is a high correlation between some forms of violence, such as assault, and alcohol use. In the United States since the 1980s, a considerable body of literature has linked cocaine and violence. However the relationship between illegal drugs and violent crime has not been so widely

reported in Australia. This has changed in the past few years with increasing discussion of amphetamine type substances (ATS) and their link to violent behaviour due to the increasing use of ATS, primarily methamphetamines.

With no major study on the links between illegal drug use and violent offending, this study represents a significant contribution to the evidence base in Australia. Although violent offending occurs less frequently than property crime, the relatively large sample size allows for some detailed analyses. Furthermore the drugs covered include amphetamines with some data also collected on alcohol.

Figure 1.4 Recorded criminal incidents of assault in Australia 1995–2002 (number)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Recorded Crime Australia, 1995-2002

Theoretical Models of the Drug–Violent Crime Connection

The major theoretical work in this area was undertaken by Goldstein in the mid-1980s. He proposed three models to account for the association between drug use and violence:

- psychopharmacological model that implies that individuals commit the crime because of the short or long-term effects of the drugs themselves;
- economically compulsive model where individuals commit the crime to fund an expensive drug habit; and
- systemic model that argues that the drug distribution system results in violence.

An extensive review of the literature has found “limited evidence that ingestion of substances is a direct, pharmacological cause of aggression” (Fagan 1990, p. 241). Despite popular wisdom, and many studies finding high correlations between illegal drugs and violent crime “research on the nexus of aggression and substance use has consistently found a complex relationship, mediated by personality and expectancy factors, situational factors and sociocultural factors that channel the arousal effects of substances into behaviour types which may or may not involve interpersonal aggression” (Fagan 1990, p. 243).

The economically compulsive model is similar to that described for illegal drugs and property offending. “Violence generally results from some other factor in the social context in which the economic crime is perpetrated. Such factors include the perpetrator’s own nervousness, the victim’s reaction, weaponry (or lack of it) carried by either offender or victim, the intercession of bystanders, and so on” (Goldstein 1985, p. 257).

Drug distribution systems involve considerable sums of money. As an illegal market, the distributors have to provide their own protection system—for obvious reasons they cannot rely on the formal arms of the criminal justice system. A result is that violence is associated with regulating the drug market. The most extreme and widespread example of this was the high levels of violence that surrounded the crack cocaine markets in the US in the late 1980s.

The Illegal Drug–Violent Crime Relationship

The most significant piece of work on this topic in Australia has been Indermaur’s (1995) study of violent property offenders. He conducted in-depth interviews with 88 violent property offenders and sought to understand how and why violence occurred. He found that violence occurred in approximately 23 per cent of cases because of the effects of amphetamine.

There has been a far greater focus in Australia on alcohol and violence.

These studies have found:

- strong association between alcohol sales and assaults (Briscoe and Donnelly 2001);
- alcohol is associated with approximately 17 per cent of male homicides (Mouzos 2003); and
- alcohol has been implicated in both domestic violence and sexual assault (Lievore 2002).

Although many of these studies are correlational, the consistency of the findings provides credence to the view that alcohol is a causal factor in violent behaviour. However, it is also important to acknowledge that many anthropological studies have found societies in which heavy binge drinking does not result in violence, suggesting that cultural values and social norms are important moderating factors in explaining the association between alcohol and violence.

In the Australian context there seems to be little evidence that a significant proportion of violent crime is due to the drug distribution system. The Australian Institute of Criminology's National Homicide Monitoring Program has not detected a significant number of homicides that occurred over drug turf wars. This lack of evidence may be due to an over-reliance on police data—the victims of violence in these particular circumstances are unlikely to report being victims to police given that they are complicit in the illegal behaviour. In the case of male offenders, this study found relatively few offenders who self-reported that they engaged in violence to protect a drug market. Such violence has been noted in overseas studies particularly in regard to prostitution. The second wave of the DUCO study with female offenders will enable us to determine if females self-report higher levels of violence in this situation.

An emerging drug problem that does not fit within Goldstein's three models is 'drink spiking'. In such cases offenders use drugs to 'restrain' an individual and then perpetrate sexual assaults. At the present time there is little information of the scale of the problem, the circumstances in which it occurs, and the motivations of offenders.

Conclusion

Although there is an active research program in Australia focused on the health, treatment and policy issues surrounding illegal drugs, there has been relatively little empirical work focused on offenders and their drug use. The primary focus of this study is on incarcerated male offenders and the links to illegal drug use. The remainder of the report examines illegal drug use and offending amongst 2,135 male offenders who were interviewed in prisons in four Australian jurisdictions. The analysis is based on self-reported responses to a structured questionnaire and asks offenders to retrospectively recall their criminal and drug-using histories. There are a number of methodological limitations to the current study that have already been noted; however a more detailed discussion is provided in the technical appendix.

2 Describing the Offenders

The DUCO sample was comprised of male offenders who were incarcerated in prisons in Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia and the Northern Territory during 2001. In Tasmania the total population was surveyed; in Queensland the Northern Territory and Western Australia a random sample was selected. More details are provided in the technical appendix. An analysis showed that the age, Indigenous status and educational status of the DUCO sample was similar to the profile of offenders in each jurisdiction. Similarly the total DUCO sample did not differ dramatically to the total prison population across the four states². This chapter provides descriptive data on socio-demographic characteristics, criminal offending and drug use.

Socio-demographic Characteristics

The over-representation of Indigenous offenders in the criminal justice system is well documented. It should come as no surprise, therefore, to find that one quarter of the DUCO sample was in this category, particularly given that three of the four participating jurisdictions have sizeable Indigenous communities.

The age profile of the sample was consistent with the criminal careers of offenders. The vast majority of offenders in general are in their late teenage years and it is at this age that offending is most often concentrated in the minor offence categories. It is rare for such offenders to be incarcerated. It is usually only after a substantial history of offending that prison sentences are applied. Often this 'substantial history of offending' has escalated to more serious offences such as armed robbery and assault. As a result, around one-third of the DUCO sample was aged 36 years or older. Just over a further one-third were aged between 26 and 35 years. Relatively few were aged under 20 years, although Indigenous offenders were more likely to be younger in age than non-Indigenous offenders. The mean age of Indigenous offenders was 29 as compared to a mean age of 34 for the non-Indigenous offenders.

² It is worth noting that the overall profile of this sample of incarcerated male offenders was similar to the total Australian male prison population as recorded in the June 2001 ABS Prison census.

Table 2.1 Demographic characteristics of the sample

	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age distribution						
18–20	54	10	99	7	165	8
21–25	134	26	328	22	485	23
26–30	143	28	315	21	478	22
31–35	83	16	227	15	322	15
36+	103	20	549	36	685	32
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(517)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(1,518)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(2,135)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Educational attainment						
Never went to school	14	3	20	1	36	2
Completed some primary school	26	5	8	1	34	2
Primary school	170	33	314	21	506	24
Year 10	110	21	266	18	395	19
Apprenticeship	22	4	108	7	141	7
Year 12	11	2	81	5	93	4
TAFE/technical college	156	30	626	41	821	39
Tertiary	4	1	94	6	104	5
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(513)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(1,517)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(2,130)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Prior juvenile detention	215	42	401	26	642	30

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Education attainment amongst offenders was much poorer compared with the general community. Amongst this group 47 per cent did not proceed beyond year 10 of school. Thirty-nine per cent completed TAFE or technical college and only four per cent completed year 12—this compares to 38 per cent for adult males generally who have completed year 12 (ABS 2002).

There were significant differences in educational attainment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders. The former were significantly less likely to have completed TAFE or technical college. Only one per cent of Indigenous offenders had completed a tertiary qualification. This compares to six per cent of the non-Indigenous offenders.

Almost one third of offenders reported that they had experienced a period of juvenile detention. This was significantly higher for Indigenous than non-Indigenous offenders, where 42 per cent of Indigenous offenders reported

such an experience, compared with 26 per cent of non-Indigenous offenders. Those with prior juvenile detention were also less likely to have completed year ten or completed TAFE or technical college.

Offending Activity

Offenders were asked about their offending behaviour for a range of offences covering property and fraud offences, violent offences including assault and homicide, and drug offences. Table 2.2 provides the percentages that reported having ever committed these offences and those who reported regularly committing the offences. The definition of 'regular' was self-defined by the offender.

Table 2.2 Prevalence of offending

	Ever		Regular		Escalation
	n	%	n	%	%
Property offences					
Break and enter	1,225	58	674	32	55
Stealing without break in	1,104	52	491	23	44
Motor vehicle theft	1,088	51	423	20	39
Traded in stolen goods	1,026	48	582	27	57
Vandalism	671	32	159	8	24
Violent offences					
Physical assault	1,309	61	300	20	23
Armed robbery	573	27	189	9	33
Robbery without a weapon	499	23	155	7	31
Sexual offence	289	14	68	3	24
Killed someone	220	10	5	0	0
Drug offences					
Bought illegal drugs	1,455	68	1,220	57	84
Sell illegal drugs	974	46	674	32	69
Fraud offences					
Fraud	573	27	180	9	31
Multiple offences					
Three or more offences	1,580	74	863	40	55

Escalation = 'regular' divided by 'ever'

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

The two offences that offenders were most likely to have ever committed in their lifetime were buying illegal drugs (68 per cent) and physical assault (61 per cent). Aggregating across offence type, offenders were most likely to report committing drug offences, followed by property offences and finally violent offences. This pattern was the same for regular offending. The final column in table 2.2 illustrates the rate of escalation for each offence type. Escalation is based on the proportion of offenders who reported ever committing an offence, and who then progressed to regularly committing that offence. Escalation was greatest for the buying and selling of illegal drugs.

Aside from the drug offences, break and enters (32 per cent), trading in stolen goods (27 per cent) and stealing without break in (23 per cent) were the offences most likely to be regularly committed by the DUCO male sample. The least common were homicide, sexual offences and robbery with and without a weapon, indicating that the more severe the offence type, the less likely it is to be regularly committed. Similarly, rates of escalation were higher for minor offences such as stealing without break in (44 per cent) and break and enter (55 per cent), than for sexual assault (24 per cent). It seems that both the proportions of offenders who reported regular offending and the likelihood of escalation to regular offending are affected by offence seriousness. The one exception to this general pattern of escalation was for physical assault, where 61 per cent of offenders said they had committed that offence but only 23 per cent of this group went on to regular offending.

In terms of offence specialisation, it is widely thought that most offenders restrict their offending behaviour to a specific offence type—in the case of homicide or sexual assault—or within a specific offence typology. For example, property offenders would not engage in violent crime or vice versa. These data on over 2,000 male offenders found that three quarters reported having committed three or more of the offences as analysed in this study. The overlap is strong between ‘similar’ types of regular offending:

- 92 per cent of those who had regularly sold illegal drugs had also regularly bought illegal drugs;
- 50 per cent who regularly reported committing break and enters reported also regularly stealing without a weapon;

- 62 per cent who regularly engaged in motor vehicle theft reported also trading in stolen goods; and
- 39 per cent of offenders who regularly committed a robbery without a weapon also committed a robbery with a weapon.

However, there was also an overlap between broad offending categories. The overlap tended to be strongest for particular types of offending such as drug and property offences. Thirty-nine per cent of regular property offenders reported being regular drug sellers; this was also the case for 50 per cent of armed robbery offenders and 53 per cent of fraud offenders. There was also an overlap between regular physical assault and break and enter offending (31 per cent) and with robbery and regular physical assault (65 per cent). It is clear that offenders, on the whole, did not specialise in any one form of criminal activity and these data demonstrate the diversity of offending within the incarcerated adult male population.

The primary focus of this report is to present an analysis of offending and drug use careers among a variety of different offending types, as well as to illustrate the variation that exists among the incarcerated population. Categorisation of offenders can be undertaken using two forms of data—self-reported offending data, and most serious offence data (MSO). The MSO generally represents the offence for which an incarcerated offender received the longest prison sentence, and can be affected by discrete jurisdictional differences. Self-reported offending data relies on offender’s individual account of their lifetime offence history.

In terms of classifying offender types, the MSO can conceal a systemic pattern of offending behaviour for each individual offender. For instance, an offender who was arrested, charged and convicted on five counts of break and enter, two counts of theft and one count of manslaughter, would, by the use of the MSO be categorised as a homicide offender, even though the act of manslaughter may have accidentally occurred during a spate of property offences. Similarly, individuals whose offending history is primarily made up of fraud offences, but on the last occasion was involved in an assault, would be categorised as a violent offender. Without full arrest and conviction histories for each individual inmate, it is problematic to draw any substantive conclusions about offending behaviour based simply on the MSO.

Due to the significant limitations of the MSO data, self-reported offending history is used in this report to categorise offenders into a series of discrete groups. There is in criminology a long tradition of relying on self-reported offending rather than official records. Clearance rates for many crimes are low, indicating that many offenders are not caught for all their offending; it is this disparity between the two that has lead researchers to rely on self-report data. Offenders typically report committing many more offences than are officially recorded on their administrative criminal histories—another source of bias in administrative databases.

It is the case within this sample that the development of a measure of offending is complicated by the extent to which offenders reported regularly buying and selling illegal drugs. The widespread use of drugs is consistent with the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia data on detainees—most use illegal substances (Makkai and McGregor 2003). Because of the prolific use of drugs among all offending categories, regular drug offences such as buying or selling illegal drugs were not taken into account when developing the primary classification scheme. That is, regular property offenders may have also reported regularly buying or selling illegal drugs but were classified as regular property offenders. This was also the case for regular violent offenders, fraud offenders, multiple offenders and homicide offenders.

The DUCO male offender sample has been divided into seven mutually exclusive categories. There were four discrete categories based on self-reported regular offending.

- Regular property offenders of one or more property offences including break and enter, motor vehicle theft, trading in stolen goods, stealing without a weapon and vandalism—these offenders did not report being a regular offender of any violent or fraud offence. There were 566 offenders in this classification.
- Regular fraud offenders—these offenders may have also reported regularly engaging in property and violent offences, however, as will be shown, fraud offenders tended to be older. Fraud seems to be an offence that long-term property offenders commit after engaging in other forms of acquisitive crime. For this reason fraud offenders have been separated out into an individual offender category. There were 180 regular fraud offenders.

- Regular violent offenders of one or more violent offences including sex offences, physical assault, robbery without a weapon and armed robbery—these offenders were not regular property offenders or fraud offenders. There were 167 offenders.
- Drug selling offenders who reported selling drugs on a regular basis but were not a regular offender of any property, violent or fraud offences—there were 148 offenders.

As already demonstrated, some offenders do not specialise but commit offences across more than one broad offence category. A fifth classification was identified for regular offenders of both property and violent offences but who were not regular fraud offenders. There are 311 offenders in this classification and they have been named 'regular multiple offenders'.

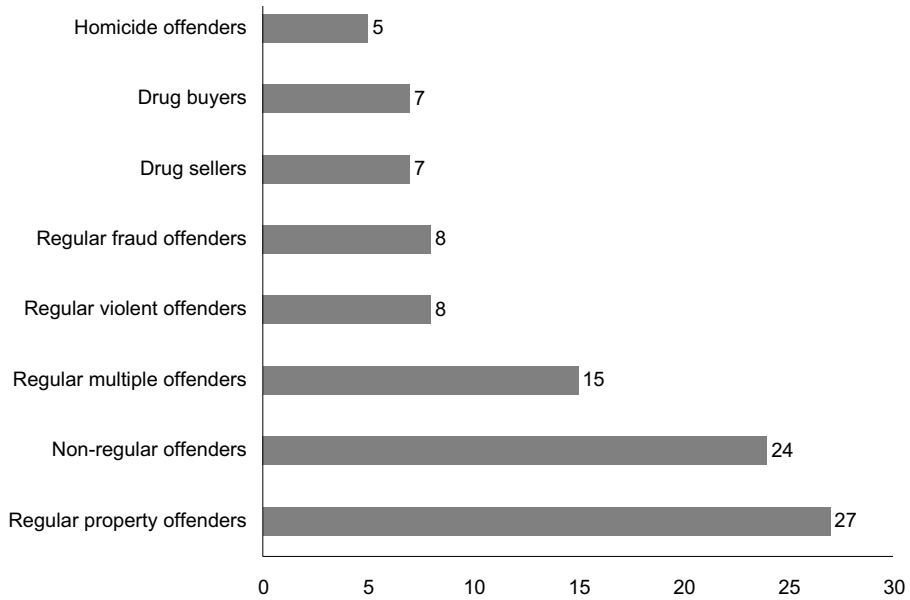
The vast majority of homicide offenders did not report engaging in this serious crime on a regular basis. They also tended not to report other kinds of offending or illegal drug use. A sixth classification group was created that comprised 113 homicide offenders who self-reported ever having committed at least one homicide offence but were not regular offenders of any property, violent or fraud offence.

The classification of homicide does not differentiate between murder and accidental homicide such as manslaughter. Therefore, some offenders (n=107) who have reported to have killed someone have been allocated to the one of the other regular offending types as they indicated regularly engaging in these activities. At first glance this may seem strange; however, manslaughter often occurs in conjunction with some other criminal activity such as a burglary, an armed robbery or assault that 'goes wrong'. Even though murder is the most serious of all criminal activity it is more useful, both conceptually and analytically, to classify these offenders with their main offending type. From a crime prevention perspective there is little point in focusing on the 'accidental' outcome of an offence rather than the actual cause of the behaviour.

There was a relatively large group of offenders who claimed that they regularly bought illegal drugs but did not regularly engage in any of the other categories of crimes listed in the DUCO study. They comprise the seventh classification, with 144 offenders.

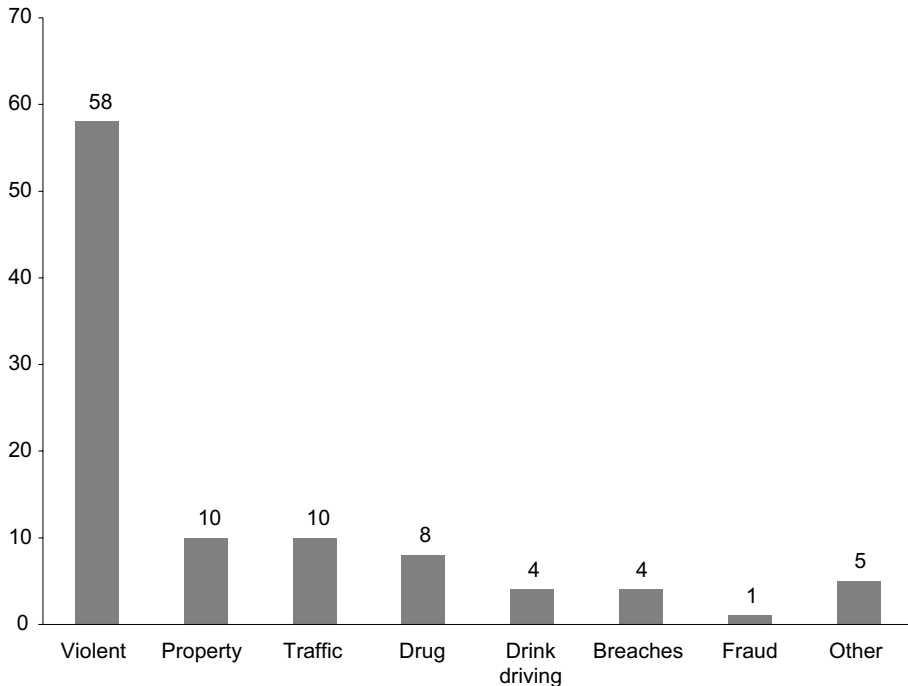
The final classification is for non-regular offenders of any of the offences listed in the survey. This 'catch-all' category is the second largest, comprising 506 of the offenders. Figure 2.2 shows the most serious offence for which they were sentenced to prison. More than half (58 per cent) were in prison for a violent offence and a further 10 per cent for a property offence. Few offenders within this category were in prison for a drug offence (eight per cent) drink driving (four per cent) and fraud (one per cent).

Figure 2.1 Crime types (per cent of total sample)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Figure 2.2 Administrative most serious offence for non-regular offenders (per cent)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Offenders in this group did not see themselves as regular offenders, at least for the offence categories that the survey specifically asked about and, as will be shown in the chapter that focuses on this group, they were significantly different from the regular crime types. On average they reported fewer arrests and fewer prior imprisonment episodes. They also reported a lower frequency of property and violent offending in the six months prior to the time of the offence for which they were now incarcerated.

On a methodological note, the categorisation process eliminates double counting across each of the offending typologies. This is important to ensure that one sample can be compared against another. The limitations of this process mean that while there is no overlap in terms of actual offenders, some of the offence typologies overlap in the types of offences included. The most obvious is regular fraud offenders who may have also regularly committed a property or violent offence. The purpose of this classification is to provide a relatively 'true' picture of offending

behaviour and is also of utility in furthering our understanding of illegal drugs and criminal behaviour. Given that the sample is reasonably representative of the participating jurisdictions this pattern is probably representative of their overall male prison population.

Illegal Drug Use

The DUCO study also collected information on illegal drug use. Table 2.3 provides information on the prevalence of drug use as well as, for regular users, the frequency of use. As is consistent with other drug data collection systems—other than surveys of injecting drug users who represent a select group of drug users—cannabis was the drug most likely to have ever been used, to have been used in the six months prior to arrest and to have been regularly used prior to the arrest that lead to the current period of incarceration. The next most common drug was amphetamines, then heroin and finally cocaine. Questions on drug use referred specifically to the illegal use of these drugs. For amphetamines, this included both illegal use of amphetamines and methamphetamines. Urine testing of police detainees shows that 90 per cent of the amphetamines are methamphetamines (see Makkai and McGregor 2003), and as a result the term amphetamines is used here in a generic sense that also includes methamphetamine use.

Sixty-two per cent of offenders reported that they were current regular users of at least one of the four illegal drugs prior to arrest. In terms of multiple use, 35 per cent of offenders reported that they had been current regular users of more than one of the drugs. The most common combination was cannabis and amphetamines, a combination used by 73 per cent of the multiple drug-using inmate population.

Table 2.3 Prevalence of illegal drug use (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any	More than 1
Prevalence						
Ever used	81	58	45	32	82	60
Used in six months prior to arrest	62	42	27	16	69	44
Current regular user	53	31	21	7	62	35
Escalation						
(n)	(1,139)	(658)	(450)	(152)	(1,319)	(749)
Frequency of use for current users						
Less than monthly	5	9	5	22		
One to several times a month	8	10	8	25		
One to several times a week	20	24	12	31		
Once a day	14	13	12	7		
Several times a day	54	44	62	15		
(Total)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)		

Escalation = 'current regular' divided by 'ever used'

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

There are differing patterns of drug use that are usually grouped into four categories—abstinence, non-hazardous (low risk) use, hazardous/risky/harmful use and dependence. The DUCO study did not attempt to clinically assess levels of dependence. However two indicators give a reasonable insight into drug use in the six months prior to arrest—the proportions of offenders who had progressed from ever using the drug to regular use and the frequency of use in this period. Escalation from ever to regular use was highest for cannabis—this progression occurred for two-thirds of those who reported they had ever used the drug. Escalation in drug use was reported by just over half of those who had tried amphetamines and just under half who had tried heroin. The escalation rates were lowest for cocaine. Cocaine is known to be a highly addictive drug but it did not appear to be widely found amongst this group of offenders. Other studies have shown that very few police detainees test positive to cocaine and the majority test positive to cannabis (Makkai and McGregor 2003). According to the Australian Illicit Drug Report 2001–02 the price of cocaine is higher than amphetamines (Australian Crime Commission 2003), which may explain the low levels of use amongst those who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

The chances of progressing from trying illegal drugs to regular use prior to this most recent period of incarceration was very high; there was a three in four chance, although this varies for different drug types. The frequency of use just prior to the most recent arrest indicates a slightly more complex picture—although the escalation rates were slightly lower for heroin. Those who were current heroin users were more likely to report using several times a day than were amphetamine and cannabis users. This is a reflection of the nature of heroin dependency, with 62 per cent reporting they used several times a day in the six months prior to their current period of incarceration. Forty-four per cent of current regular amphetamine users and 54 per cent of current regular cannabis users reported using the drug several times a day in the six months prior to arrest. Of the 152 offenders who reported being regular cocaine users, relatively few reported that they frequently used the drug.

Conclusion

This descriptive profile of the total male DUCO sample indicates a group that:

- were poorly educated, aged in their twenties or thirties and had a one in four chance of being Indigenous;
- regularly engaged in a range of offending activity, particularly property and drug related crime; and
- had high levels of exposure to illegal drugs—particularly cannabis, amphetamines and heroin—prior to incarceration.

The remainder of the report will explore the links between illegal drug use and offending behaviour among a variety of offending types.

3 Regular Property Offenders

This chapter examines offenders who self-reported having ever been a regular offender of one or more property offences, but not a regular offender of any violent or fraud offence (n=566).

Regular property offenders made up over one quarter of the total inmate population surveyed within this study. Although this group of offenders were typically younger and more likely to have a history of juvenile detention than the overall sample, their demographic profile was similar to the broader inmate sample in terms of Indigenous status and education:

- around one in four identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and
- around one third had not progressed beyond primary school.

Table 3.1 Demographic characteristics for regular property offenders

	n	%
Age distribution		
18–20	70	12
21–25	183	32
26–30	138	24
31–35	79	14
36+	96	17
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(566)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Indigenous status		
Indigenous	129	24
Non-Indigenous	417	76
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(546)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Educational attainment		
Never went to school	9	2
Completed some primary school	9	2
Primary school	162	29
Year 10	88	16
Apprenticeship	32	6
Year 12	20	4
TAFE/technical college	234	41
Tertiary	12	2
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(566)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Prior juvenile detention	248	44

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File].

Offending Histories

Regular property offenders had extensive offending careers, spanning both violent and drug offences. Many reported to have offended across a number of different offences at least once in their lifetime. Table 3.2 illustrates the offending histories of regular property offenders, including lifetime prevalence across all offence types and the rates of regular offending across the five property offences. Ninety-seven per cent self-reported having committed three or more of the offences analysed in the DUCO male survey and 74 per cent reported committing a violent offence at least once. Sixty-nine per cent regularly committed three or more property offences.

Given that they were regular property offenders, all of them must have committed at least one property offence in their lifetime. When broken down among specific offence types, 87 per cent self-reported having committed a break and enter offence at least once, while just over three quarters had stolen a motor vehicle, stolen something without a weapon, and traded in stolen goods. The most common property offence to be regularly committed was break and enter (66 per cent), followed by trading in stolen goods (51 per cent), stealing without a weapon (44 per cent), and motor vehicle theft (37 per cent). Vandalism was a relatively rare regular occurrence among this sample of regular property offenders (11 per cent) as well as among the general DUCO sample.

It is important to note that this sample of regular property offenders also reported a lifetime prevalence of violent offending, but not regular violent offending. That is, throughout their lifetime criminal career they may have been involved in violence but did not progress to become regular violent offenders. In fact, for this sample, criminal activity seemed to be motivated primarily by the acquisition of property through non-violent means. In terms of violent offending, it comes as no surprise that these regular property offenders reported higher lifetime prevalence rates of robbery and armed robbery than the more serious offences of sexual assault and homicide. Robbery and armed robbery are acquisitive crimes that are traditionally classified as violent offences because of the circumstances. The primary factor is that a person was present during the robbery and fear or injury was caused.

Table 3.2 Prevalence of offending for regular property offenders

	Ever		Regular		Escalation
	n	%	n	%	%
Property offences					
Break and enter	494	87	368	66	74
Stealing without break in	425	75	245	44	58
Motor vehicle theft	429	76	205	37	48
Traded in stolen goods	425	75	288	51	68
Vandalism	247	44	63	11	26
Drug offences					
Bought illegal drugs	487	86	441	78	91
Sell illegal drugs	330	58	220	39	67
Fraud offences					
Fraud	168	30	–	–	–
Violent offences					
Physical assault	342	61	–	–	–
Armed robbery	159	28	–	–	–
Robbery without a weapon	148	26	–	–	–
Sexual offence	41	7	–	–	–
Killed someone	46	8	–	–	–
Multiple offences					
Three or more offences	546	97	389	69	71

Escalation = 'regular' divided by 'ever'

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

In this sample, the proportions reporting lifetime prevalence of these offences were similar for both armed and unarmed robbery (28 and 26 per cent respectively). It is, however, impossible to discern those instances where robbery or armed robbery occurred unintentionally, especially in the case of a break and enter that 'went wrong'.

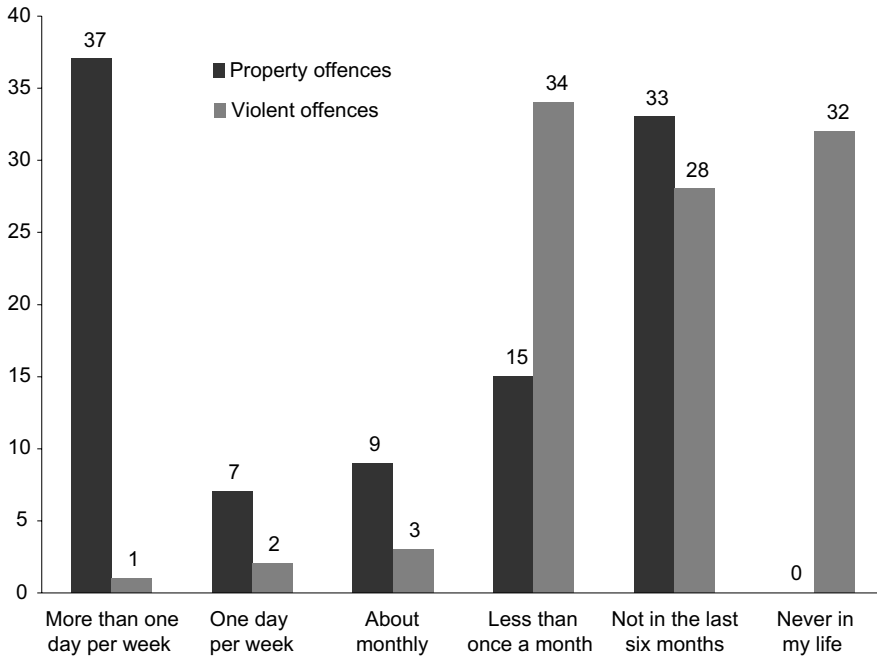
Lifetime prevalence of physical assault was high for the overall sample and regular property offenders reported similar levels of lifetime prevalence (61 per cent). For regular property offenders however, physical assault did not become a regular activity.

A large proportion of regular property offenders were active participants in the drug market, with many regularly engaging in the purchase and sale of illegal drugs. The proportions that ever and regularly bought and sold illegal drugs was higher than for the inmate sample as a whole. For example, 78 per cent of regular property offenders reported regularly buying and 39 per cent were regularly selling; this compares to 57 per cent who were regular buyers in the general sample and 32 per cent who were regular sellers.

Figure 3.1 focuses specifically on self-reported offending behaviour during the six months prior to the arrest that led to the current period of incarceration. More than two-thirds of regular property offenders committed at least one property offence during that time. Forty-four per cent reported that the frequency of their property offending was one or more times per week. One-third stated that they had not committed any property offence in the six months prior to the offence for which they were now in prison. As regular offending was self-defined by the offender and was not restricted to the six months prior to arrest it is possible for an offender to indicate lifetime prevalence of regular property offending, but an abstinence from property offending during the time period in question. This might be indicative of a number of possibilities—that this group of offenders was experimenting with other forms of non-regular offending such as violence or drug crimes; that the individuals were in some way incapacitated during the time period in question; or that they had truly abstained from regular offending but when they did offend, they were detected, charged and convicted.

Just under one third of regular property offenders said they had never committed a violent offence in their lives and 28 per cent said they had not committed a violent offence in the six months prior to arrest. Although 40 per cent had engaged in violence in the six months prior to their most recent arrest, few regular property offenders reported that they were engaged in high levels of violence. Of those who reported violent offending in the past six months, three per cent reported that it occurred at least weekly, three per cent said about monthly, and the majority (62 per cent) said less than once a month. In all, 32 per cent of regular property offenders reported never having ever committed a violent offence.

Figure 3.1 Volume of offending in the six months prior to arrest for regular property offenders (per cent)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 3.3 illustrates the levels of formal interaction with the criminal justice system. On average, regular property offenders reported 67 charges within their lifetime, and of these charges, an average of 54 resulted in a conviction. The conversion between charge and conviction suggests that eight in every ten charges imposed on a regular property offender resulted in a criminal conviction. Furthermore, 41 per cent of all convictions resulted in a prison sentence. The mean number of convictions resulting in a prison sentence was 22. The table also provides the median number of charges/convictions and sentences to prison. The large differences between the mean and the median highlight that a small number of offenders committed disproportionately more crime. However, the likelihood of a charge resulting in a conviction and similarly a conviction resulting in a sentence remain at around 80 to 90 per cent and 30 to 40 per cent respectively, regardless of whether means or medians are used.

Similar results were found when analysing individual charge histories by offence types. For all regular property offenders, the likelihood of a property offence charge resulting in a conviction was 83 per cent and conviction to prison was 38 per cent. Regular property offenders reported few charges for violent offences and drug offences (two and one charges respectively). It is important to remember that charge information is not necessarily the same as offending. Clearance rates indicate that many crimes are not cleared, and crime victim surveys show that many victims do not report certain kinds of offending to police. The mean number of charges may only be an indicator of the mean number of times each offender has been caught. However it is reasonable to assume that high volume offenders would have a higher probability of arrest. As a result the relative estimates are probably reliable but the point estimates are more than likely a conservative estimate of the overall level of offending.

In addition, convictions resulting in prison sentences as seen in table 3.3 are greater than the total number of times spent in prison seen at table 3.4. In most cases, a number of convictions are sentenced collectively at the one court hearing, and may result in a single term of imprisonment.

Table 3.3 Offending outcomes for regular property offenders

	Any	Property	Violent	Drugs	Fraud
Mean (median) number of:					
Charges	67 (22)	61 (16)	2 (1)	1 (0)	2 (0)
Convictions	54 (19)	49 (14)	2 (1)	1 (0)	2 (0)
Prison sentences	22 (6)	19 (4)	1 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

On average, regular property offenders have been in an adult corrective institution four times (see table 3.4). Very few (16 per cent) reported that that this was their first term of imprisonment while five per cent reported having been in prison more than 20 times within their lifetime. Forty-four per cent of regular property offenders had been detained in a juvenile centre. Among all regular property offenders there was an average of two episodes in a juvenile facility. Offenders who had been detained in a juvenile facility experienced an average of four episodes in a juvenile centre and a total of nine episodes in both an adult and juvenile correctional facility.

Table 3.4 Prison experience for regular property offenders

	Mean (median) number of times
Prison experience	
Adult institutions	4 (3)
Juvenile detention centres	2 (0)
Of those having been in a juvenile detention centre (n=241)	
Juvenile detention centres	4 (3)
Both adult and juvenile centres	9 (7)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Drug Use Histories

As for the offending histories of regular property offenders, drug use histories were both complex and extensive. More than 93 per cent of all regular property offenders have tried one or more of the four main drug categories—cannabis, amphetamines, heroin and cocaine. Eighty-eight per cent had used at least one of these drugs in the six months prior to the arrest for which they are now in prison, and more than 80 per cent were defined as a current regular user of at least one drug. The most frequently used drug was cannabis, with 93 per cent reporting having used it at least once (see table 3.5). Seventy-seven per cent reported having ever used amphetamines and 62 per cent reported heroin use. Seventy-nine per cent of regular property offenders reported having ever used two or more of the four main drug types.

The DUCO male survey also sought information on each offender's drug use on or around the time of the offence for which they are now in prison. Eighty-eight per cent of regular property offenders reported using at least one of the four main drug types in the six months prior to being arrested, while 63 per cent reported the use of two or more of these drugs. Again, cannabis was the drug most used by this sample during this time (78 per cent). Amphetamines (59 per cent) and heroin (38 per cent) were the next most frequently used drugs in the six months prior to arrest.

Table 3.5 Prevalence of illegal drug use amongst regular property offenders (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any	More than 1
Prevalence						
Ever used	93	77	62	39	94	79
Used in six months prior to arrest	78	59	38	19	88	63
Current regular user	70	46	30	8	81	53
Escalation						
(n)	(394)	(260)	(167)	(43)	(457)	(299)
Current regular users—frequency of use						
Less than monthly	4	11	6	16		
One to several times a month	7	11	7	23		
One to several times a week	16	22	13	35		
Once a day	15	15	14	9		
Several times a day	59	42	61	16		
(Total)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)		

Escalation = 'current regular' divided by 'ever used'

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 3.5 also illustrates the frequency of use for property offenders who were current regular users of each drug type. Among regular users of heroin, around 60 per cent reported that they used heroin several times a day in the six months prior to arrest. The frequency of use reported by heroin users was greater than that for regular users of amphetamines (42 per cent reporting use several times a day). When compared with the general sample, regular property offenders reported higher rates of ever and regular drug use; nevertheless the frequency of use was the same.

Linking Drugs and Property Offenders

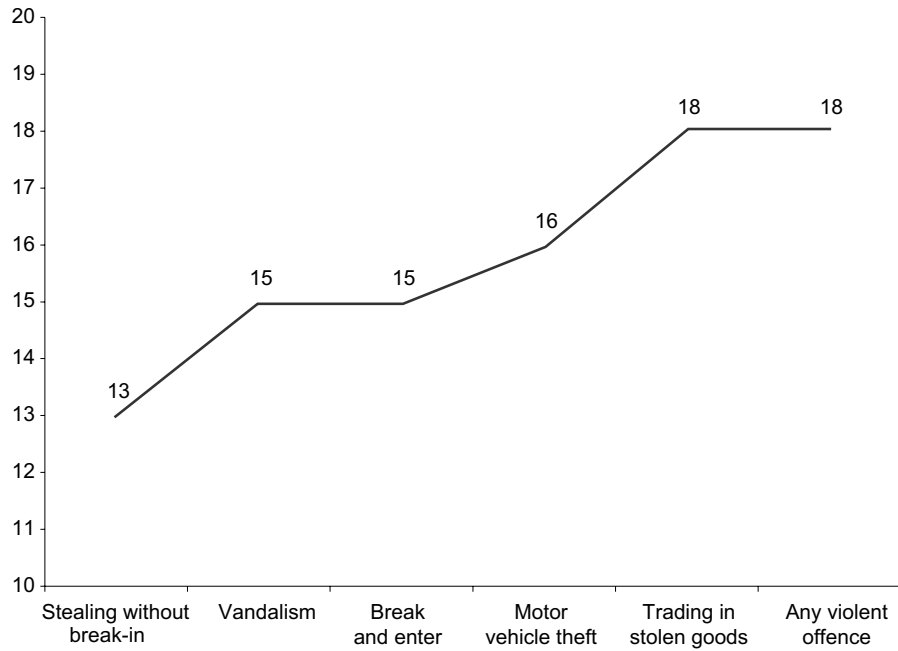
Age of Onset

One method for inferring a link between drug use and crime is to compare the ages of onset across offence types and drug use. If the onset of drug use occurs before the onset of offending, one can presume that drug use might have been a contributing factor to the onset of criminal activity. Similarly, if the age of first or regular drug use follows the onset of criminal offending but precedes the age of regular offending, it might be inferred that drug use is a contributing factor in the persistence of offending behaviour.

On average, regular property offenders began their property offending careers at approximately 13 years of age (Figure 3.2). The first offence type was most likely to be stealing without a break in (13 years) followed by break and enter (15 years). For offenders of any violent offence (74 per cent of regular property offenders) the mean age for first violent offence was 18 years. Table 3.6 shows the interval between the onset of offending and escalation into regular offending for each of the property offence types. The largest interval was for break and enters with the mean age of first offence being 14 years whereas the mean age of regular offending was 17 years. The only offence where first and regular offending coincide was vandalism.

Table 3.7 examines age of drug use initiation. On average, regular property offenders began their drug use at the approximate age of 14 years. The drug type most likely to be used first was cannabis (14 years), followed by amphetamines (18 years), then heroin or cocaine (20 years). Current regular users reported the same average age of initiation for cocaine and heroin, but a year younger for experimentation with amphetamines. The average time interval between the progression from first to regular use was one year for cannabis and amphetamines, and two years for cocaine and heroin. Regardless of whether it was first or regular use, the use of cannabis preceded other drug use by approximately four years. The next drug to be regularly used tended to be amphetamines followed approximately two years later by heroin and cocaine.

Figure 3.2 Mean age of first offence for regular property offenders



Estimates are for those reporting that offence.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 3.6 Mean age of offending for regular property offenders

	Stealing without break in	Break and enter	Vandalism	Motor vehicle theft	Trading stolen goods
First offence	13	14	14	15	18
Regular offending	15	17	14	16	19
<i>Interval (regular-first)</i>	2	3	0	1	1
<i>(n)</i>	(245)	(368)	(63)	(205)	(288)

Estimates are for offenders who reported that offence regularly.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 3.7 Mean age of illegal drug use for regular property offenders

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any
First use					
Mean age	14	18	20	20	14
(n)	(528)	(436)	(346)	(220)	(531)
Of current regular drug users					
First use	14	18	19	19	
Regular use	15	19	21	21	
Interval (regular–first)	1	1	2	2	
(n)	(394)	(260)	(167)	(43)	

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 3.8 Mean age of illegal drug use by regular offending¹

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any
Vandalism					
First use	13	16	16	17	14
Regular use	14	17	17	18	–
(n)	(48)	(28)	(19)	(7)	(59)
Stealing without break in					
First use	13	17	19	19	14
Regular use	15	18	21	20	–
(n)	(196)	(139)	(80)	(21)	(230)
Motor vehicle theft					
First use	13	17	19	18	14
Regular use	15	18	20	19	–
(n)	(166)	(123)	(71)	(18)	(198)
Break and enter					
First use	14	17	19	18	14
Regular use	15	19	21	19	–
(n)	(291)	(196)	(129)	(25)	(348)
Trading in stolen goods					
First use	14	17	19	20	14
Regular use	15	19	21	21	–
(n)	(236)	(174)	(115)	(31)	(280)

¹ Estimates are for regular offenders of that offence type, and regular users of that drug type.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 3.8 provides a clearer picture of when the onset and persistence of drug use occurred for each of the property offences. The general pattern mirrors the total group with the exception of vandalism. The pattern seems to be that onset and persistence was much younger for those who reported regularly being engaged in vandalism. Although relatively few offenders reported that they regularly engaged in vandalism, it may be a significant risk factor for the onset of illegal drug use that results in persistence at an earlier age.

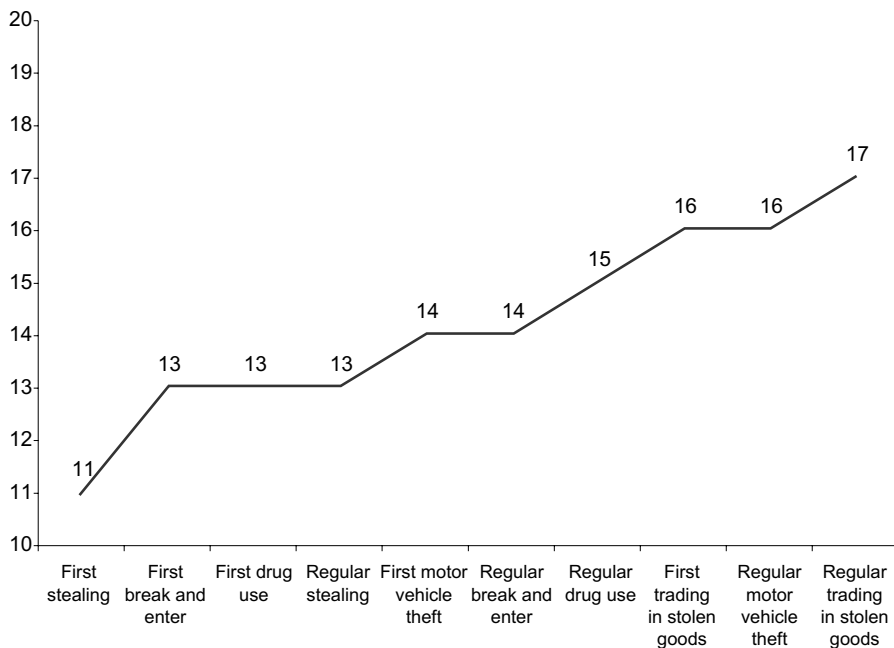
To understand the overall lifetime career for regular property offenders it is possible to combine the data presented in tables 3.6 and 3.7. It shows that across all property offenders the average age for first stealing without break in was 13 years. This was followed by 14 years for first use of cannabis, 15 years for break and enter and vandalism, 16 years for motor vehicle theft, 17 years for amphetamines, 18 years for trading in stolen goods and finally 20 years for first use of heroin and cocaine.

Figure 3.3 tracks the offenders from onset to persistence through a variety of illegal drug use and property offending careers. To simplify, the model pathways are described for regular offenders who reported lifetime prevalence and regular offending across four main property crimes—stealing without break in, motor vehicle theft, break and enter and trading in stolen goods (n=45). These data show a complex picture of offending careers which, in most cases, began with minor property crime such as shoplifting followed by an escalation to more serious and frequent forms of property offending. For these offenders, a career in property crime began with stealing at the mean age of 11 years. Two years later, offenders first committed a break and enter offence, at which time minor stealing had already become a regular activity. Regular break and enter followed one year later at the age of 14 years along with the commencement of motor vehicle theft. After a further two years, motor vehicle theft had become a regular activity and these serious offenders had begun to trade in stolen goods. Finally the escalation ended with offenders regularly trading in stolen goods at the average age of 17 years.

Clearly the data presented in figure 3.3 demonstrate a model of escalation in property offending that started with minor offences and develops to more serious and frequent offending at a later stage in the career. Where cannabis was included in the model, the mean age of first drug use occurred two years after the first property offence, which in this case was stealing without break in. Offenders who began to experiment with illegal drugs also escalated their offending in both volume

and seriousness, where stealing and shoplifting became a regular activity, and offenders first began break and enter offending. One year after experimentation with illegal drugs, break and enters became a regular occurrence and the theft of motor vehicles began. At the approximate age of 15 years, regular use of illegal drugs began, followed one year later by trading in stolen goods and regular motor vehicle theft. Regularly trading in stolen goods again ended the escalation at a mean age of 17 years.

Figure 3.3 Pathways model for ages of first and regular offending—including cannabis (age in years)¹



¹ Estimates are offenders who reported regularly stealing without break in, break and enter, motor vehicle theft, trading in stolen goods, and regularly using any of the four main drug types (n=45).

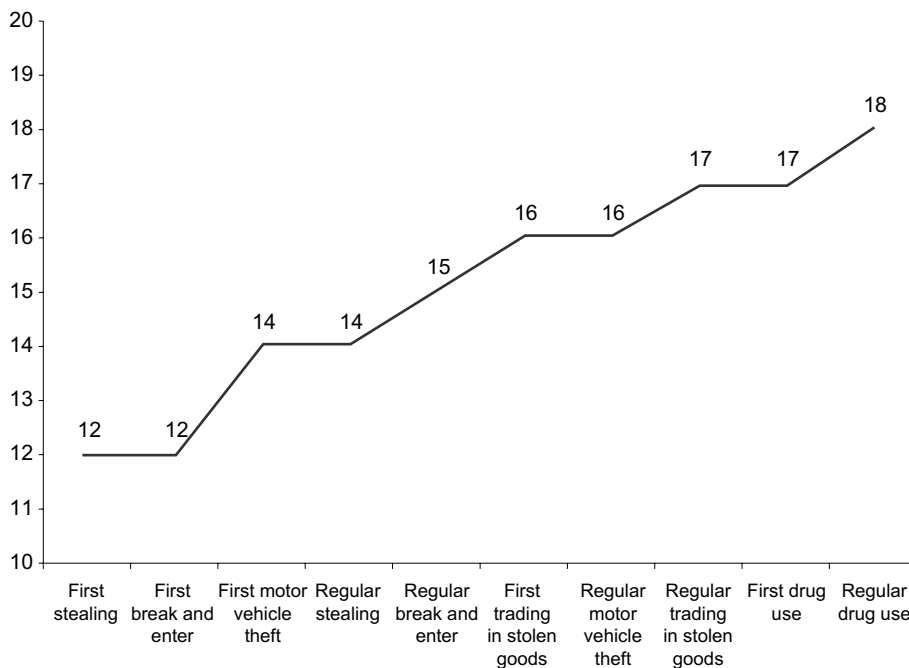
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

As previously shown, drug use most often began with cannabis experimentation followed by the use of harder drugs such as heroin, amphetamines and cocaine a number of years later. Many studies have shown that more serious drug use is most often preceded by cannabis use at an earlier age, however the causal associations between the two are more difficult to ascertain. In particular, cannabis and other illegal drug use may be the result of other social factors such as family, environment and socio-economic status.

Nevertheless, among regular property offenders the average interval between first cannabis use and first amphetamine use was four years.

The second model presented in figure 3.4 excludes the age of first use of cannabis. As a result, the model illustrates that illegal drug use played a less significant role in the escalation of property offending. Among this group of regular property offenders, the first age of use for heroin, amphetamines or cocaine was 17 years. It was at this same age that these offenders reported regularly engaging in the trade of stolen goods and that the escalation of the property-offending career peaked. Regular use of either of these three drugs began one year later at the age of 18 years, by which time these offenders were already entrenched in a property-offending career.

Figure 3.4 Pathways model for ages of first and regular offending—excluding cannabis (age in years)¹



¹ Estimates include offenders who reported regularly stealing without break in, break and enter, motor vehicle theft, trading in stolen goods, and regularly using any of the three main drug types (n=38)
 Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Regardless of whether cannabis is included or excluded in the analysis of the pathways model, it is clear that property offending, and the escalation of that offending commenced before the first use of any illegal drug. Cannabis use invariably occurred after the commencement of minor property crime, but before escalation into more serious crime. The use of harder drugs was not usually evident until after the establishment of a significant property-offending career.

Lifetime Offending Attributions

It is clear that a large proportion of regular property offenders reported having used illegal drugs, and that they were regular users prior to incarceration. The extent to which property offending can be causally attributed to the use of illegal substances is measured in two ways:

- the proportions of property offenders who reported illegal drugs as the reason for committing their current most serious property offence; and
- the nature of the impact of illegal drugs on their lifetime offending career.

From a policy perspective, the first measure helps to quantify the proportion of property offenders who attribute illegal drugs to their current property offending, while the second helps to provide an indication of the overall lifetime effect of illegal drugs on the property offending career. The latter, as we have seen, might also include violent and drug offences.

Estimating the proportion of offenders who causally attribute their current most serious offence to illegal drugs or alcohol is complicated and further discussion is detailed later in this report (see Chapter 12). To help identify the effect of drugs and alcohol on the lifetime offending career, offenders in the DUCO male study were asked the following question:

"In your own words, what has been the effect of your personal alcohol and drug use history on your criminal activities?"

It is important to recognise that lifetime attributions to illegal drugs or alcohol are not necessarily causal. Offenders were not asked to nominate the extent to which drugs or alcohol caused their lifetime crime, but simply how it had been affected. Of those property offenders who provided an answer which could be defined as a numerical representation of the possible relationship, 26 per cent

self-reported that all (100 per cent) of their criminal activities could be in some way attributed to their personal alcohol or drug use histories. A further 33 per cent reported that their drug use histories affected most (75 per cent) of their criminal activities, while 29 per cent stated that there was no effect. The verbatim responses were also coded into a qualitative coding scheme. Fifty-four per cent provided a qualitative response. Twenty-nine per cent stated that the effect was psychopharmacological. Thirty-one per cent stated that their offending activities were driven by the economic/compulsive effects of drugs and alcohol, while a further 27 per cent stated that drugs and alcohol lead to crime, but did not provide further information on how this was the case.

Table 3.9 Lifetime offending attributions for regular property offenders

	n	%
Of those who quantified the effect		
0 per cent	104	29
25 per cent	26	7
50 per cent	18	5
75 per cent	117	33
100 per cent	92	26
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(357)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Of those who qualified the effect		
Psychopharmacological	90	29
Economic/compulsive	96	31
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	84	27
Other	37	13
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(307)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Questions relating to the effect of personal drug and alcohol use on the lifetime offending career were open ended and invited an individual response that was recorded in verbatim. While providing this response, some offenders went on to specify the type of substance that had the most significant impact on their offending career. While not all property offenders causally attributed their lifetime offending to one substance only, attributions generally varied by drug type (see table 3.10). Where the lifetime effect of alcohol and drugs on the offending behaviour was considered psychopharmacological, significant proportions of property offenders mentioned alcohol as the main substance having had that

effect (39 per cent). This is markedly different from offenders reporting an economic/compulsive effect, where illegal drugs only were more likely to be implicated as the substance having had the greatest impact (74 per cent). Offenders reporting that drugs and alcohol lead them to crime were more likely (than offenders citing other reasons) to have reported a combination of illegal drugs and alcohol as having the greatest effect on their offending careers.

Table 3.10 Lifetime offending attributions by the drug mentioned for regular property offenders (column per cent)

	Psychopharmacological	Economic compulsive	Drugs and alcohol lead to crime
Illegal drugs only	29	74	51
Alcohol only	39	5	18
Alcohol and illegal drugs	7	5	12
Unspecified	26	16	19
(n)	(90)	(96)	(84)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

The link between lifetime attributions and drug use in the six months prior to arrest is further explored in table 3.11. Regular heroin users were more likely to have reported an economic/compulsive reason for the criminal career, while regular amphetamine users were more likely to have reported a psychopharmacological explanation for their offending career.

Table 3.11 Lifetime offending attributions by the current regular drug use of regular property offenders (column per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine ¹
Psychopharmacological	26	26	15	–
Economic/compulsive	35	29	39	–
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	26	31	28	–
Other	13	14	18	–
(n)	(225)	(158)	(95)	–

¹ Insufficient sample size.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

These attributions are important as they support the notion that different drug and crime pathways operate within a relatively homogenous group of regular property offenders. Those who attributed their offending career to psychopharmacological factors were the group who, on average, started property offending at a younger age. Those who reported economic/compulsive reasons started both offending and drug use at the same time on average. Those who said that drugs and alcohol led them to crime actually reported, on average, the onset of offending prior to the onset of drug use, with regular offending occurring some three years later.

Age of regular drug use was the same for regular property offenders reporting different lifetime causal attributions for their offending. What differed, however, was the age at which regular offending occurred. For those who attributed psychopharmacological reasons, the age of regular offending occurred simultaneously at 15 years, while for offenders reporting economic/compulsive reasons it occurred one year later. For offenders reporting that drugs and alcohol lead to crime, regular use of illegal drugs occurred two years prior to regular property offending. These data suggest that there exists a number of different pathways between drugs and crime that vary by:

- drug type;
- attribution type;
- age of onset; and
- experimenters and regular drug users.

As discussed previously, cannabis use complicates data on the ages of initiation into illegal drug use. By excluding the age of first and regular cannabis use, the commencement of property offending and the escalation to regular property offending occurred, on average, prior to the use and regular use of illegal drugs (heroin, amphetamines and cocaine). This was the case for offenders reporting psychopharmacological or economic/compulsive attributions. For offenders who stated that drugs led them to crime, the onset of drugs and regular property offending occurred at the same age.

Table 3.12 Mean age of initiation by lifetime offending attributions for regular property offenders¹

	First property offence	Any drug use	Regular property offending	Regular drug use	(n)
Including cannabis					
Psychopharmacological	12	13	15	15	(65)
Economic/compulsive	13	13	16	15	(89)
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	13	14	17	15	(72)
Excluding cannabis					
Psychopharmacological	12	17	16	19	(52)
Economic/compulsive	13	17	16	18	(73)
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	13	17	17	19	(61)

¹ Estimates are for current regular users of any drug.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Conclusion

Regular property offenders comprised one quarter of the male inmate prison population. These offenders:

- engaged in a range of offending, including violent offences such as sexual assault and homicide;
- regularly bought illegal drugs;
- were likely to report committing property offences (one in three) on a daily basis in the six months prior to their arrest;
- have high levels of contact with the criminal justice system;
- were current regular users (80 per cent) of at least one of the four drugs prior to their recent arrest; and
- were regular users of either heroin, amphetamines or cocaine (approximately 50 per cent).

Regular property offenders were on average more likely to have started their career with minor offending prior to any experimentation with illegal drugs. The first drug they were most likely to start with was cannabis, followed by

amphetamines, heroin and, for a very small group, cocaine. Where cannabis is excluded, first use did not occur until 17 years on average; this is well into the criminal career of a regular property offender.

Around one quarter of offenders attributed their total offending career to the effect of drugs and a further one third indicated that more than half was due to drugs. The three major explanations for the effect of drugs was psychopharmacological, economic/compulsive and drugs and alcohol lead to crime.

Of those who reported illegal drugs as a factor in their criminal careers, an analysis of the onset and persistence of drug and property offending careers indicates that engagement in minor property crime usually preceded the onset of illegal drug use. They then proceeded to regular property offending and then to regular drug use. These data lend support to the escalation model of drug use amongst offenders; it does not seem to be the case that they became enmeshed in a drug-using career that compelled them into a life of crime. Instead they were already engaged in risky activities and probably had ready access to illegal drugs. Once they began regular drug use they then escalated to regular property offending.

4 Regular Violent Offenders

This chapter focuses on offenders who self-reported having ever been a regular offender of one or more violent offences, but not a regular offender of any property or fraud offence (n=167).

Regular violent offenders constituted a small portion (eight per cent) of the total inmate population surveyed in this study. The majority (43 per cent) were aged 36 years or older, with few offenders (19 per cent) aged between 18 and 25 years. One in three regular violent offenders identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; this was higher than for the regular property offenders. Interestingly, regular violent offenders were somewhat more likely than the regular property offenders to have completed year 10 of school and less likely to have been incarcerated in a juvenile detention centre.

Table 4.1 Demographic characteristics for regular violent offenders

	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age distribution						
18–20	5	9	5	5	11	7
21–25	10	18	10	9	20	12
26–30	17	31	19	18	37	22
31–35	11	20	16	15	28	17
36+	12	22	57	53	71	43
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(55)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(107)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(167)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Educational attainment						
Never went to school	2	4	2	2	4	2
Completed some primary school	1	2	1	1	2	1
Primary school	17	31	18	17	36	22
Year 10	19	35	25	23	45	27
Apprenticeship	1	2	10	9	13	8
Year 12	1	2	4	4	5	3
TAFE/technical college	14	26	34	32	49	29
Tertiary	0	0	13	12	13	8
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(55)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(107)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(167)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Prior juvenile detention	12	22	9	8	21	13

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

There were significant differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous regular violent offenders—Indigenous regular violent offenders were younger, had lower educational levels, and were more likely to have spent time in a juvenile detention centre.

Offending Histories

Regular violent offenders had moderate offending careers when compared with other offender types. The proportions of violent offenders self-reporting having ever committed each of the individual offence categories was around 30 per cent and suggested that violent offenders less frequently offended across a broad range of violent and property offences. Of the total group, 64 per cent reported having ever committed three or more of the offences as asked by the DUCO questionnaire. Seventy-five per cent self-reported having ever committed a physical assault while just over one third (37 per cent) had ever committed a sexual offence. In terms of regular offending, 59 per cent self-reported the regular commission of physical assault. This was followed by just over one quarter (28 per cent) that reported regularly committing a sex offence. Only 11 offenders (seven per cent) within this sample reported regularly committing two or more of the violent offences asked in the DUCO male survey.

Like regular property offenders, the majority of regular violent offenders (65 per cent) self-reported having committed at least one property offence in their lifetime. Lifetime prevalence was highest for break and enter offences (35 per cent) and stealing without break in (34 per cent), followed by the theft of motor vehicles (28 per cent). However, compared with regular property offenders, regular violent offenders were much less likely to have committed a range of property offences.

In terms of drug market activity, regular violent offenders did report buying and selling illegal drugs but not to the same level as regular property offenders. Fifty-five per cent reported having ever bought illegal drugs, while 34 per cent reported having ever sold them. This decreases to 42 per cent reporting that they regularly purchase illegal drugs and 20 per cent reporting regularly selling illegal drugs. The onset and persistence of crime associated with illegal drug use was not as evident amongst this group of offenders.

Table 4.2 Prevalence of offending for regular violent offenders

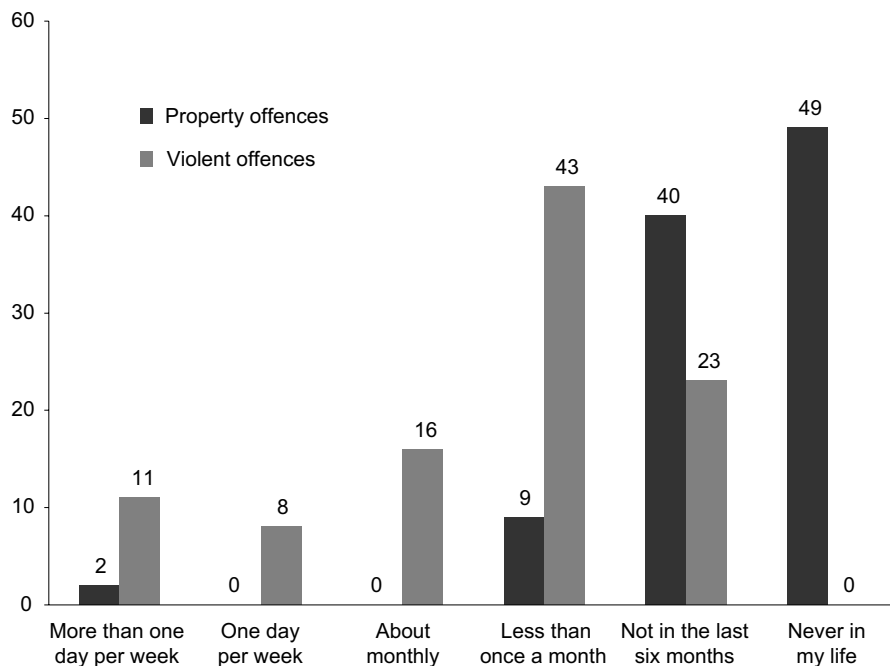
	Ever		Regular		Escalation
	n	%	n	%	%
Violent offences					
Physical assault	126	75	99	59	79
Robbery without a weapon	23	14	8	5	35
Armed robbery	37	22	26	16	70
Sexual offence	61	37	47	28	77
Killed someone	16	10	0	0	0
Property offences					
Break and enter	59	35	–	–	–
Stealing without break in	57	34	–	–	–
Motor vehicle theft	47	28	–	–	–
Traded in stolen goods	37	22	–	–	–
Vandalism	44	26	–	–	–
Fraud offences					
Fraud	21	13	–	–	–
Drug offences					
Bought illegal drugs	91	55	70	42	77
Sell illegal drugs	57	34	33	20	58
Multiple offences					
Three or more offences	107	64	35	21	33
Any property offence	109	65	–	–	–

Escalation = 'regular' divided by 'ever'.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Figure 4.1 examines self-reported offending behaviour during the six months prior to the most recent arrest. Seventy-seven per cent reported committing at least one violent offence during this time. Forty-three per cent reported that the frequency of their violent offending was less than once a month, while 11 per cent reported the occurrence was daily. The data suggest that regular violent offenders, although self-defined as 'regular', offend less frequently than regular property offenders. Only three regular violent offenders reported property offending more than one day per week, but did not self-report themselves as a regular property offender. All other regular violent offenders reported property offending less than monthly or never in the six months prior to the arrest for which they are now in prison.

Figure 4.1 Volume of offending in the six months prior to arrest for regular violent offenders (per cent)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

On average regular violent offenders have had 14 charges within their lifetime, and of these charges, an average of 11 resulted in a conviction (see table 4.3). The conversion between charge and conviction suggests that eight in every ten charges imposed on a regular violent offender resulted in a criminal conviction. Furthermore, of all convictions received by regular violent offenders, it was reported that 55 per cent resulted in a prison sentence. The mean number of convictions resulting in a prison sentence was six. As seen earlier, regular property offenders reported a lower conversion rate from conviction to sentence (38 per cent of convictions). This suggests that the nature of violent offences resulted in regular offenders of this type being more frequently sentenced to prison for their crimes, which were more likely to be more serious or severe than property crime. As suspected, similar results were found when analysing regular violent offender’s charge histories by their individual offence types. Again, these were consistent with what we would expect—intuitively suggesting that offender’s self-reports were relatively reliable.

The overall volume of charges was considerably lower than that reported by the regular property offenders and is consistent with what is known about the offending patterns of violent as opposed to property offenders.

Table 4.3 Offending outcomes for regular violent offenders

	Any	Violent	Property	Drug	Fraud
Mean (median) number of:					
Charges	14 (7)	12 (5)	2 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Convictions	11 (6)	10 (5)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Prison sentences	6 (3)	6 (2)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

The prison histories of regular violent offenders indicate that on average, they had been in an adult corrective institution a total of three times (table 4.4). Of the 13 per cent who had spent time in a juvenile detention centre the average number of imprisonment episodes was three and in total they had spent seven times in both an adult and juvenile detention centre. On average their rates of detention in juvenile and adult correctional institutions were slightly less than for the regular property offenders.

Table 4.4 Prison experience of regular violent offenders

	Mean (median) number of times
Prison experience	
Adult institutions	3 (2)
Juvenile detention centres	0 (0)
Of those having been in a juvenile detention centre (n=21)	
Juvenile detention centres	3 (2)
Both adult and juvenile centres	7 (7)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Drug Use Histories

As with the offending histories of regular violent offenders, drug use histories were complex but not as high as seen for regular property offenders. More than 70 per cent of all regular violent offenders had ever used one or more of the four main drug categories—cannabis, amphetamines, cocaine and heroin. Fifty-six per cent had used at least one of these drugs in the six months prior to their most recent arrest, and 49 per cent were defined as a current regular user of at least one drug. Twenty-five per cent reported the use of two or more of these drugs in the six months prior to arrest.

Table 4.5 Prevalence of illegal drug use amongst regular violent offenders (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any	More than 1
Prevalence						
Ever used	68	40	24	24	71	40
Used in six months prior to arrest	51	26	12	11	56	25
Current regular user	43	16	8	6	49	16
Escalation						
(<i>n</i>)	(71)	(27)	(14)	(10)	(81)	(26)
Current regular users—frequency of use						
Less than monthly	9	4	0	0		
One to several times a month	10	4	7	10		
One to several times a week	21	30	14	60		
Once a day	7	19	14	10		
Several times a day	54	44	64	20		
(Total)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)		

Escalation = 'current regular' divided by 'ever used'

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

The most frequently used drug was cannabis, with 68 per cent reporting having used it at least once. Forty per cent reported having ever used amphetamines and 24 per cent reported heroin and cocaine use. Cannabis was the drug most used in the six months prior to their most recent arrest (51 per cent). Amphetamines (26 per cent) and heroin (12 per cent) were the next most frequently used drugs during this period.

The third row of table 4.5 provides the percentages that defined themselves as regular users who also reported using in the six months prior to their most recent arrest. Forty-nine per cent were current regular users of at least one of the four main drug types prior to arrest, while only 16 per cent were current regular users of more than one of these drugs. The majority of these were cannabis users (43 per cent) while 16 per cent were current regular users of amphetamines. Only eight per cent were current regular users of heroin and six per cent were current regular users of cocaine.

Table 4.5 also illustrates the frequency of use for violent offenders who were current regular users of each drug type. As with the regular property offenders (and the sample as a whole) heroin users tended to report more frequent use than the regular users of the other three drugs. There is a potential and important difference between the groups in regard to cocaine, although the numbers are very small. Amongst regular property offenders who also were regular users of cocaine, 60 per cent reported using once a week or more; the comparable figure for regular violent offenders is 90 per cent.

Linking Drugs and Violent Offenders

Age of Onset

Table 4.6 illustrates the self-reported ages of first offence for regular violent offenders. On average, regular violent offenders began their offending careers at the approximate age of 17 years, this being the mean age of first offence across all offences. The first violent offence occurred at the average age of 20 years. This is noticeably later than the average age of initiation into property crime amongst the regular property offenders. Although around three quarters of all regular violent offenders reported lifetime prevalence of property offending,

they did not report escalation to regular property offending. Interestingly, in this group the first occurrence of property offending was most likely to have preceded violent offending by an average of two years. The mean age of first property offence was 15 years, which was still two years older than that of regular property offenders.

For regular violent offenders who did not self-report any property offending, the mean age of first offence across all offence types including drug offences was 24. For violent offending only, the mean age of first offence was 25. The data presented here illustrate the complex picture that surrounds the lifetime offending histories of regular violent offenders. It suggests that regular violent offenders with a history of property offending begin their offending careers at a much earlier age than regular violent offenders without a history of property offending.

Table 4.6 Mean age of first offending for regular violent offenders

	Any Offence ¹	Any violent offence	Any property offence
First offence			
Mean age	17	20	–
(n)	(167)	(167)	–
Of offenders with no history of property offending			
First offence	24	25	–
(n)	(58)	(58)	–
Of offenders with a history of property offending			
First offence	13	17	15
(n)	(109)	(109)	(109)

¹ Estimates include drug offences

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

In this group of offenders, the difference in the age of first offence across any offence type was large (13 years versus 24 years). Similar differences were found for the mean age of violent offences only.

It is possible that the variation in the ages of onset seen here are more the result of the offence type rather than any other factor. Further analysis of these data suggests that regular violent offenders with a history of property offending were less

likely to report having ever committed a sex offence than regular violent offenders with no history of property offending. Sex offending first occurred at a much older age than physical assault, robbery or armed robbery (table 4.7).

Table 4.7 illustrates the mean ages of first and regular offending among offenders with regular offending histories for each individual offence. Fifty-nine per cent of regular violent offenders reported having been a regular offender of physical assault. Of these, the mean age of the first assault was 17 years and the age at which physical assault became regular was 18 years. For offenders who reported being a regular sex offender, the first offence occurred at a mean age of 30 and regular offending at age 32. Also included in table 4.7 is the number of years between first and regular offending for each individual offence type. For regular offenders of sex offences and armed robbery, the mean age difference between first and regular offending was two years, while for physical assault, it was one year.

Table 4.7 Mean age of regular offending for regular violent offenders

	Assault	Sex offence	Robbery ¹	Armed robbery
First offence	17	30	20	20
Regular offending	18	32	20	22
<i>Interval (regular–first)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(99)</i>	<i>(47)</i>	<i>(8)</i>	<i>(26)</i>

¹Robbery without a weapon

Estimates are for regular offenders of that offence.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

On average, regular violent offenders began their drug use at the approximate age of 17 years, this being the mean age of first use across all four drug types (see table 4.8). The drug type most likely to be used first was cannabis (17 years), followed equally by amphetamines, heroin and cocaine (21 years). In terms of continuance with drug use the data suggest a much shorter gap between onset and persistence for cannabis and heroin (one year), with two years for amphetamines, and three for cocaine.

It is apparent that cannabis use preceded other drug use by approximately four years. When data from table 4.6 and table 4.8 are compared, it can be seen that violent offending careers began at approximately the same average age as drug use. However upon further analysis (see table 4.9) regular violent offenders with

Table 4.8 Mean age of illegal drug use for regular violent offenders

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any
First use					
Mean age	17	21	21	21	17
(n)	(108)	(66)	(40)	(39)	(112)
Of current regular users					
First use	16	20	20	18	
Regular use	17	22	21	21	
Interval (regular–first)	1	2	1	3	
(n)	(71)	(27)	(14)	(10)	

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

a history of property offending began drug use at a much earlier age than regular violent offenders with no history of property offending. For any of the four drug types combined, offenders with a lifetime history of property offending initiated drug use on average four years earlier than their counterparts with no history of property offending.

Analysis of offending and drug use for those who reported having ever committed a property offence and those who had not indicates that for regular violent offenders with a history of property offending, the first offence (most likely a property offence) started at the mean age of 13 years. Initiation into criminal offending preceded the first use of illegal drugs by two years. At the mean age of 17 years these offenders began regular use of illegal drugs, at which time the first violent offence also occurred. This was followed a further two years later with regular violent offending. It is important to note that estimates used in this pathways model include only those offenders who reported current regular use of any of the four main drug types. These offenders made up only 49 per cent of the regular violent offender sample.

Although the numbers are small, violent offenders without a history of property offending show a different pathway. The first violent offence occurred much later at the age of 19 years—the same age that first drug use commenced. Two years later regular violent offending began at 21 years of age, followed by regular illegal drug use at 22. The comparison between regular violent offenders with or without a history of property offending shows that where offenders reported the lifetime

prevalence of property offending, they were more likely to begin their offending careers, start illegal drug use, and escalate to regular illegal drug use on or before the commencement of violent and regular violent offending. Offenders without such a history did not regularly engage with illegal drugs until after they had escalated into a regular violent offending career.

Table 4.9 Pathways model for ages of onset by lifetime history of property offending for regular violent offenders¹

	First offence	Any drug use	Regular drug use	First violent offence	Regular violent offending	(n)
Including cannabis						
History of property offending	13	15	17	17	19	(68)
No history of property offending	17	19	22	19	21	(13)
No current regular drug use	20	–	–	22	25	(86)
Excluding cannabis						
History of property offending	12	19	22	16	19	(39)
No history of property offending	16	21	22	17	20	(4)

¹Estimates are for current regular drug users of any drug.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

The last pathways model presented at table 4.9 (at line three) tracks the offending careers of offenders who did not escalate to become a current regular user of illegal drugs. As such, the ages of onset and persistence for drug use have been omitted; however the data suggest that the offending career of these offenders was delayed significantly by no less than three years. The mean age of first offence was 20 years followed by the first violent offence at 22 years, and regular violent offending at 25.

Lifetime Offending Attributions

As part of the core DUCO male survey instrument, offenders were asked what effect their personal alcohol and drug use had on their lifetime offending career. Of those violent offenders who provided an answer which could be defined as a numerical representation of the possible effect, 13 per cent self-reported that all (100 per cent) of their criminal activities could be in some way be attributed to their personal alcohol or drug use histories. A further 25 per cent reported that their drug use histories affected most (75 per cent) of their criminal activities, while

more than half stated that there was no effect. Compared with regular property offenders (59 per cent), fewer regular violent offenders (38 per cent) attributed most or all of their offending careers to the use of alcohol or illegal drugs.

The verbatim responses were again coded into a qualitative coding scheme. Sixty-one per cent stated that the effect was psychopharmacological. Ten per cent stated that their offending activities were driven by the economic/compulsive effects of drugs and alcohol, while a further 26 per cent stated that drugs and alcohol lead to crime, but did not provide further information on how this was the case. This is noticeably different from the regular property offenders who were more likely to indicate an economic/compulsive explanation than a psychopharmacological one.

Table 4.10 Lifetime offending attributions for regular violent offenders

	n	%
Of those who quantified the effect		
0 per cent	60	53
25 per cent	8	7
50 per cent	2	2
75 per cent	28	25
100 per cent	15	13
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(113)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Of those who qualified the effect		
Psychopharmacological	31	61
Economic/compulsive	5	10
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	13	26
Other	2	3
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(51)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Conclusion

Regular violent offenders are a small proportion of the total male inmate population. In all, they reported less offending across a range of offence types, although they did report some property and drug offending. Two-thirds reported routinely engaging in physical assaults and one quarter reported regularly committing sexual assaults. Their onset into violent offending was later than the onset of property offending for the regular property offenders, indicating that a lifetime time career in violent offending began at a later age than property offending. Regular violent offenders were also less likely to report onset and persistence with illegal drugs when compared with other crime types.

However, this study suggest that there are two distinct pathways for regular violent offenders—those who begin their offending career with some property offending and those who do not. For those who do, the onset and persistence of both drug use and violent crime occurs at an earlier age than violent offenders without such as history. Despite this, drug use invariably commences after the commencement of offending.

5 Regular Multiple Offenders

Regular multiple offenders consist of those who self-reported having ever been a regular offender of one or more violent offences and one or more property offences (n=311). This sample does not include regular offenders of any fraud offence.

Regular multiple offenders represented 15 per cent of the total inmate population interviewed in this study. The majority (57 per cent) were aged between 21 and 30 years of age, with relatively few offenders (15 per cent) aged 36 years or older (table 5.1). In terms of the general age profile, regular multiple offenders were not dissimilar to regular property offenders, but younger on average than regular violent offenders.

One in three regular multiple offenders identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and very few (two per cent) reported never having been to school. A large proportion (42 per cent) had completed TAFE or technical college, and 16 per cent had completed year 10. More than half (57 per cent) of all regular multiple offenders had a history of juvenile detention. Compared with the total DUCO male sample, regular multiple offenders were more likely to have been incarcerated as a juvenile.

Offending Histories

Regular multiple offenders have extensive offending careers spanning all offence categories including violent, property and drug offences. All reported to have offended across a number of different offences at least once in their lifetime and almost 100 per cent self-reported having ever committed three or more of the offences as asked by the DUCO male survey. When broken down among specific offence types, 90 per cent self-reported having committed a break and enter offence while just over 80 per cent had stolen a motor vehicle. This group of offenders typified the more serious, frequent and chronic offenders within the incarcerated population. They are particularly problematic for criminal justice organisations and are important for correctional and community policy initiatives because of their prolific offending.

Table 5.1 Demographic characteristics for regular multiple offenders

	n	%
Age distribution		
18–20	42	14
21–25	91	29
26–30	86	28
31–35	45	15
36+	47	15
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(311)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Indigenous status		
Indigenous	94	32
Non-Indigenous	204	69
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(298)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Educational attainment		
Never went to school	7	2
Completed some primary school	1	0
Primary school	89	29
Year 10	51	16
Apprenticeship	19	6
Year 12	7	2
TAFE/technical college	130	42
Tertiary	7	2
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(311)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Prior juvenile detention	176	57

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

The violent offences most likely to be ever committed were physical assault (91 per cent) and robbery without a weapon (63 per cent). Few offenders (12 per cent) within this sample reported having ever committed a sex offence. In terms of regular offending, the most common offences were physical assault (54 per cent), break and enter (71 per cent), and trading stolen goods (59 per cent). Ninety-five per cent reported having regularly committed more than three offence types in their criminal careers.

Drug offending was common. Ninety-two per cent reported having bought illegal drugs while 65 per cent reported having sold them. This decreases to 85 per cent reporting regularly purchasing illegal drugs and 49 per cent reporting regularly selling illegal drugs. A larger proportion of regular multiple offenders self reported buying illegal drugs than regular property offenders or regular violent offenders.

Table 5.2 Prevalence of offending for regular multiple offenders

	Ever		Regular		Escalation
	n	%	n	%	%
Property offences					
Break and enter	280	90	221	71	79
Stealing without break in	254	82	159	52	63
Motor vehicle theft	260	84	159	51	61
Traded in stolen goods	248	80	182	59	73
Vandalism	179	58	70	23	39
Violent offences					
Physical assault	284	91	168	54	59
Armed robbery	189	61	130	42	69
Robbery without a weapon	196	63	118	38	60
Sexual offence	36	12	19	6	53
Killed someone	29	10	3	0	0
Drug offences					
Bought illegal drugs	286	92	264	85	92
Sell illegal drugs	201	65	151	49	75
Fraud offences					
Fraud	88	28	–	–	–
Multiple offences					
Three or more offences	310	100	295	95	95
Three or more property offences	270	87	156	50	58
Three or more violent offences	140	45	0	0	0

Escalation = 'regular' divided by 'ever'.

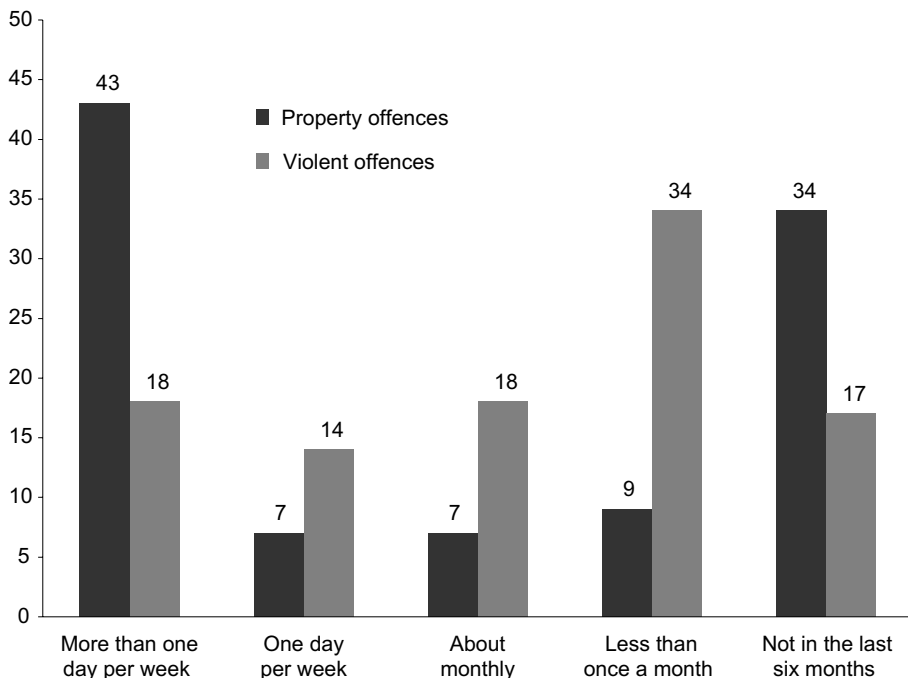
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

More than 80 per cent of regular multiple offenders reported committing at least one violent offence during the six months prior to the arrest for which they are now in prison, while 66 per cent reported having committed a property offence (see figure 5.1). The trend in these data suggest that fewer regular multiple offenders reported property offending than violent offending in the six months prior to the most recent arrest. However of those that did, the frequency of offending was much greater. Forty-three per cent of regular multiple offenders reported committing property offences on more than one day per week. This compares to only 18 per cent of offenders reporting violent offending at the same frequency. The frequency of violent offences are skewed to the lower end with 34 per cent reporting that they had committed a violent offence less than once a month in this time.

It is possible that individual perceptions of regular offending are influenced by the seriousness of some violent crimes. That is, one violent offence per week might be defined as regular offending while five property offences per week may need to be committed before offenders would self-define themselves as a 'regular'. Furthermore, the classification of offenders into a particular crime type is based on ever having been a regular offender, which may or may not have occurred in the six months prior to the arrest for which they are now in prison. This may have implications to the offending frequencies presented for regular property and regular violent offenders in earlier chapters.

On average these offenders reported a total of 56 charges within their lifetime, and of these charges, an average of 45 resulted in a conviction (see table 5.3). The conversion between charge and conviction suggests that approximately eight in every ten charges imposed on a regular multiple offender resulted in a criminal conviction. Furthermore, of all convictions received by regular multiple offenders, it was reported that 47 per cent resulted in a prison sentence. The mean number of convictions resulting in a prison sentence was 21.

Figure 5.1 Volume of offending in the six months prior to arrest for regular multiple offenders (per cent)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Similar results were found for specific offence types. For property offences, the conversion from charge to conviction was 80 per cent and conviction to prison was 43 per cent. Regular multiple offenders reported fewer charges for violent offences, fraud offences and drug offences.

Table 5.3 Offending outcomes for regular multiple offenders

	Any	Property	Violent	Drugs	Fraud
Mean (median) number of:					
Charges	56 (25)	44 (12)	10 (6)	1 (0)	1 (0)
Convictions	45 (20)	35 (10)	8 (5)	1 (0)	1 (0)
Prison sentences	21 (7)	15 (3)	5 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 5.4 reports the prison histories of regular multiple offenders. On average, these offenders had served time in an adult corrective institution a total of four times. Fifty-seven per cent of regular multiple offenders had served time in a juvenile detention centre. These offenders spent an average of five times in a juvenile facility and a total of nine times in both an adult and juvenile correctional centre. These numbers are higher than for regular violent offenders but similar to regular property offenders. A further discussion of juvenile detention is provided in chapter 12.

Table 5.4 Prison experience of regular multiple offenders

	Mean (median) number of times
Prison experience	
Adult institutions	4 (3)
Juvenile detention centres	3 (1)
Of those having been in a juvenile detention centre (n=172)	
Juvenile detention centres	5 (3)
Both adult and juvenile centres	9 (7)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Drug Use Histories

As with other criminal offending, drug use is prolific. Table 5.5 illustrates the extent of drug use among regular multiple offenders. It shows that:

- ninety-eight per cent reported having used any of the four main drug types—cannabis, amphetamines, cocaine and heroin;
- ninety per cent of the sample reported having used at least one of these drugs in the six months prior to arrest;
- eighty-seven per cent were classified as a current regular user of at least one of these drugs during this time;
- eighty-three per cent reported lifetime prevalence of more than one of the four main drug types; and
- more than half of all regular multiple offenders were current regular users of more than one of the four main drug types during the six months prior to the arrest for which they are now in prison.

Like with most other offender types, cannabis was the drug most likely to have been used. Ninety-seven per cent of regular multiple offenders had used cannabis, while 78 per cent were current regular users prior to arrest. The next most common drug was amphetamines. Eighty per cent had ever used it, while just less than half (49 per cent) reported being a current regular user in the six months prior to arrest. As for heroin, 38 per cent of all regular multiple offenders were current regular users during the six months prior to the arrest for which they were now in prison.

Frequency of use is high. Sixty-six per cent of current regular heroin users reported at least daily use in the six months prior to arrest. This compares to 45 per cent of current regular amphetamine users and 59 per cent of current regular cannabis users. Cocaine users reported infrequent use with 50 per cent reporting monthly or less use of cocaine. The definition of regular use of each specific drug type is defined differently by its regular users. Offenders reporting to be current regular users of cocaine reported less frequent use than did current regular users of heroin, cannabis or amphetamines.

Sixty-one per cent of regular multiple offenders progressed from onset to persistence for amphetamines. Persistence occurred for 54 per cent of heroin users and for 80 per cent of cannabis users. Compared with regular violent offenders, regular multiple offenders reported much higher rates of escalation for amphetamines, heroin and cannabis. However the patterns of drug use and persistence among this sample follow similar patterns to the regular property offenders.

Table 5.5 Prevalence of illegal drugs use amongst regular multiple offenders (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any	More than 1
Prevalence						
Ever used	97	80	71	50	98	83
Used in six months prior to arrest	82	60	48	29	90	67
Current regular user	78	49	38	12	87	57
Escalation	80	61	54	24	89	69
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(241)</i>	<i>(152)</i>	<i>(119)</i>	<i>(36)</i>	<i>(271)</i>	<i>(177)</i>
Current regular users—frequency of use						
Less than monthly	4	8	6	22		
One to several times a month	5	10	8	28		
One to several times a week	18	24	14	31		
Once a day	14	13	6	6		
Several times a day	59	45	66	14		
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(100)</i>		

Escalation = 'current regular' divided by 'ever used'

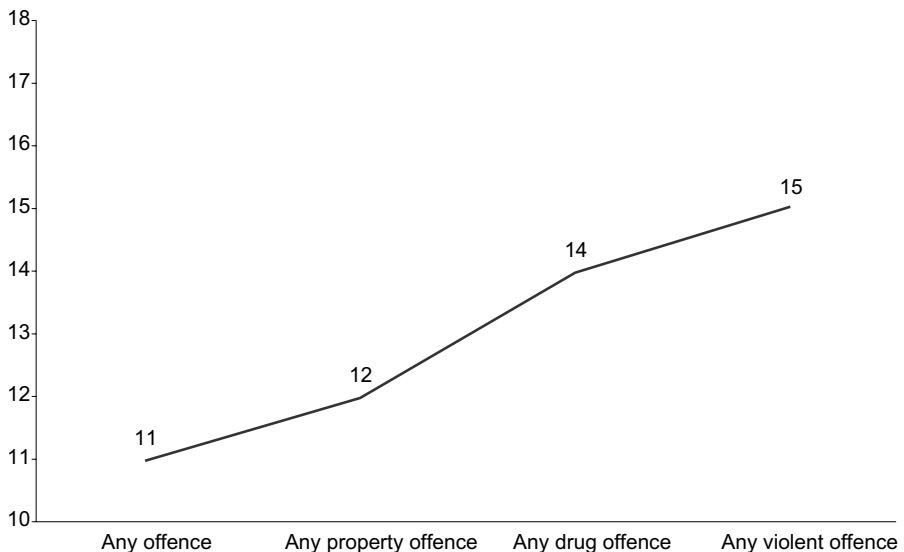
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Linking Drugs and Multiple Offenders

Age of Onset

As mentioned in earlier chapters, the age of onset into both offending and drug taking behaviours can provide important information for early intervention policy and programs. For regular multiple offenders the age of onset into criminal careers was markedly lower than many of the other offender types analysed in this report. This indicates that the more chronic and serious adult offenders began their offending careers at much earlier ages. This is confirmed by the proportions of regular multiple offenders reporting juvenile detention (57 per cent), which is also significantly higher than most other offender types. The average age of first offence across violent, property and drug offences was 11 years. Broken down and averaged across offence type, regular multiple offenders typically began their offending careers with property offences. Drug offences that included buying and selling illegal drugs began approximately two years after the first property offence at the age of 14 years. The mean age of first violent offence was 15 years.

Figure 5.2 Mean age of offending for regular multiple offenders



Estimates are for offenders having committed that offence

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Further analyses by individual offence types are shown in table 5.6. The first offence was most likely to be stealing without a weapon or shoplifting. The mean age for this offence was 12 years, and was followed by break and enter at 13 years. The first occurrence of physical assault was an average of two years after the onset of break and enter. Sex offending, where it did occur, onset at a much later age than most of the other offence types (21 years). Even for regular multiple offenders it seems that the offending pathway was one of minor property offending followed by regular property offending, violent offending, and finally regular violent offending. In any case, violent offending almost invariably occurred after the establishment of a significant and regular property offending career.

Table 5.6 Mean age of first and regular offending for regular multiple offenders

	Stealing without break in	Break and enter	Motor vehicle theft	Vandalism	Assault	Traded stolen goods	Robbery without a weapon	Armed robbery	Sex offence
First offence									
Mean age	12	13	14	14	15	16	17	19	21
(n)	(250)	(279)	(260)	(178)	(284)	(247)	(194)	(189)	(36)
Of regular offenders¹									
First offence	12	13	14	14	15	16	16	18	21
Regular offending	13	15	15	14	16	17	17	19	23
Interval (regular–first)	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	2
(n)	(159)	(221)	(159)	(70)	(168)	(182)	(117)	(130)	(19)

¹ Estimates are for regular offenders of each offence type

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

There was very little variation in the time delay between first and regular offending among each offence type, averaging between zero and two years. This interval is interpreted as the average time taken for an offender to progress to regular offending for each individual offence type. These data are important from a policy perspective, as this interval between first and regular offending represents the maximum timeframe for intervention prior to the establishment of a more chronic and regular offending pattern. It is clear from these data that the window of opportunity for early intervention or diversion is somewhat limited. The age of onset for each individual offence type did not significantly differ between regular and non-regular offenders across all offence types.

The drug most likely to be used was cannabis, with first use of the other three drug types occurring much later. The average interval between first use and regular use of amphetamines and cocaine was one year, while for cannabis and heroin the mean age interval was two years. The interval between onset and persistence of cocaine and amphetamines was much shorter than for either the regular property or regular violent offenders.

Table 5.7 Mean age of illegal drug use for regular multiple offenders

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any
First use					
Mean age	14	18	18	19	14
(n)	(299)	(245)	(220)	(153)	(301)
Of current regular users					
First use	13	17	17	18	
Regular use	15	18	19	19	
Interval (regular–first)	2	1	2	1	
(n)	(241)	(151)	(119)	(36)	

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

As noted, 30 per cent of regular multiple offenders reported having committed two or more of the violent offences as asked by the DUCO male survey. This group of multiple offenders also reported violent and property offending at a higher frequency during the six months prior to the arrest for which they are now in prison. Table 5.8 illustrates that these offenders began both their offending and drug use careers earlier than offenders who reported committing only one violent offence regularly.

Despite the obvious disparity in age of onset and persistence, the order of progression remained relatively the same for both offender groups. Where the age of first use of cannabis is included in the analysis, the order of progression typically began with a property offence. This was followed by regular property offending and first drug use, both of which commenced approximately two years after the first property offence. The first violent offence typically followed one year later, at which time regular drug use also commenced. The progression followed with the commencement of regular violent offending. Among both groups, first and regular property offending began prior to the commencement

of any violent offending. The interval between regular drug use and regular violent offending among those who reported only one regular violent offence was three years. This compares to a two-year interval among the more serious violent offenders.

Cannabis was used by a significant portion of the total offender population. Its use in almost all cases preceded other illegal drug use by up to four years. If cannabis is excluded from the analysis of the pathways, first use of drugs occurred later in the criminal career. Regardless of the volume of regular violent offending, the first violent offence occurred prior to the first use of illegal drugs, with regular drug use occurring at around the same time as regular violent offending.

Table 5.8 Pathways model for ages of onset by offence combinations for regular multiple offenders¹

	First property offence	Regular property offending	Any drug use	First violent offence	Regular drug use	Regular violent offending	(n)
Including cannabis							
Two violent offences	11	13	13	14	14	16	(92)
One violent offence only	12	14	14	15	15	18	(188)
Excluding cannabis							
Two violent offences	11	13	16	14	17	16	(70)
One violent offence only	12	14	17	15	18	18	(143)

¹Estimates are for current regular drug users of any drug.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Lifetime Offending Attributions

These offenders were undoubtedly the more serious and chronic offenders within the total offender population. They reported the commencement of offending and drug use earlier than most other offender types, and committed crimes across a broader range of offences. So to what extent did regular multiple offenders attribute drugs or alcohol to their lifetime offending? Of those regular multiple offenders who provided an answer (64 per cent) that could be defined as a numerical representation of the possible effect, 20 per cent self-reported that all (100 per cent) of their criminal activities could be attributed to their personal alcohol or drug use histories. A further 41 per cent reported that their drug use histories affected

most (75 per cent) of their criminal activities, while more than one in four stated that there was no effect. Compared with regular property offenders and regular violent offenders, a greater number of regular multiple offenders attributed all or most of their lifetime offending to drugs or alcohol.

Forty per cent stated that the effect of alcohol and drugs on their lifetime offending behaviour was primarily psychopharmacological. Twenty-one per cent reported the economic/compulsive effects of drugs and alcohol, while a further 30 per cent stated that drugs and alcohol lead to crime. Compared with regular property offenders, regular multiple offenders were more likely to report the psychopharmacological effects, and less likely to report the economic/compulsive effects.

Table 5.9 Lifetime offending attributions for regular multiple offenders

	n	%
Of those who quantified the effect		
0 per cent	53	27
25 per cent	18	9
50 per cent	6	3
75 per cent	81	41
100 per cent	40	20
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(198)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Of those who qualified the effect		
Psychopharmacological	64	40
Economic/compulsive	34	21
Drugs/alcohol lead to crime	48	30
Other	16	9
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(162)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

In terms of explaining the extent of the association between drugs and criminal offending across the lifecycle, between 24 and 40 percent of regular illegal drug users attributed their offending to psychopharmacological factors. However, this was less likely to be the case for regular heroin users. These offenders were more likely to attribute their criminal offending to economic/compulsive factors of drug use. Again a sizeable proportion reported that drugs and alcohol were a factor in lifetime criminal offending.

Table 5.10 Lifetime offending attributions by the current regular drug use of regular multiple offenders (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine
Psychopharmacological	36	39	24	40
Economic/ compulsive	24	22	31	25
Systemic	1	0	1	0
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	30	32	34	30
Other	9	7	10	5
(n)	(132)	(82)	(71)	(20)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Exploring attributions of behaviour by the age of onset and persistence shows that, on average, regular multiple offenders (who have attributed their offending career to drugs) were most likely to onset with property offending prior to the experimentation with illegal drugs. Violent offending and regular violent offending invariably commenced after the onset of illegal drug use. The greatest variability between offenders of different attributions exists around the age of regular property offending and regular drug use. Offenders reporting the psychopharmacological effects of drug and alcohol use reported regular property offending prior to regular use of illegal drugs. However, for offenders reporting economic/compulsive effects, both regular drug use and regular offending occurred concurrently; and those reporting that drugs led them to crime reported on average the onset of regular drug use one year prior to regular property offending.

When cannabis is excluded from the pathways analysis, it becomes more evident that both the onset of drug use and regular drug use did not commence until the property offending career was well established. The age of onset for any of the three main drugs—amphetamines, heroin and cocaine—typically occurred after the commencement of first and persistent property offending. Furthermore, when cannabis use is excluded from the analysis, the first violent offence preceded any drug use.

As seen earlier, the inclusion of cannabis use most often placed regular drug use two or three years prior to regular violent offending. By excluding the age of regular cannabis use, regular violent offending and regular use of illegal drugs occurred on or around the same time in the temporal order of the offending and drug use career. When compared with the reasons given for lifetime attribution, offenders reporting a primarily psychopharmacological effect of alcohol and drug use reported that, on average, regular drug use occurred after the commencement of regular violent offending. Conversely, regular multiple offenders who stated that drug use led them to crime most often reported regular drug use prior to regular violent offending. In any case, regular property offending preceded the regular use of harder drugs such as heroin, amphetamines and cocaine.

Table 5.11 Pathways model by the lifetime offending attributions of regular multiple offenders¹

	First property offence	Any drug use	Regular property offending	Regular drug use	First violent offence	Regular violent offending	(n)
Including cannabis							
Psychopharmacological	11	13	14	15	15	17	(55)
Economic/ compulsive	11	13	14	14	15	17	(34)
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	12	13	15	14	15	17	(45)
Excluding cannabis							
Psycho pharmacological	11	16	14	18	15	17	(39)
Economic/ compulsive	11	16	14	17	15	17	(30)
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	12	16	15	17	15	18	(36)

¹Estimates are for regular drug users of any drug.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter show that regular offenders of both property and violent offences display a broad range of offending histories. They have offended across a number of violent, drug and property offences in their lifetime, and have regularly committed more than one violent and property offence. This group contained more frequent violent and property offenders than either regular property and regular violent offenders alone. They were more likely to have escalated to regular illegal drug use than regular violent offenders and they reported more frequent use across all four main drug types.

For these reasons, the regular multiple offender presents a number of significant implications for criminal justice policy. They are the most frequent and chronic offenders within the criminal justice system and both their offending patterns and motivations help to illuminate to complex web of interactions between offending and drug use.

Unlike regular property offenders alone or regular violent offenders, the time from onset to persistent drug use was shorter, indicating a narrower window of opportunity for intervention prior to behaviours becoming regular occurrences. Importantly, the age of onset for offending behaviour was younger. This suggests that offenders who begin at an earlier age are more likely to have more chronic and serious offending and drug-using careers.

6 Regular Fraud Offenders

This group consists of offenders who reported having ever been a regular offender of fraud (n=180). Offenders may also have reported to be a regular offender of both violent and property crimes.

Included among the 13 offence types analysed in the DUCO male study was fraud and fraud related offences such as embezzlement and misappropriation. Australian and international research have commented on the differences between the typical fraud offender and the general property offending population (Smith 2002). This chapter focuses on a subset of incarcerated male offenders that reported regularly engaging in fraud (eight per cent). The majority (47 per cent) were aged between 21 and 30 years, with a further one-third aged 36 years or older. Very few regular fraud offenders were aged between 18 and 20 years (seven per cent).

Regular fraud offenders were:

- less likely than the total DUCO sample to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander—eleven per cent of regular fraud offenders identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander as compared with 24 per cent of the total inmate sample;
- more educated than the general inmate sample—very few (two per cent) regular fraud offenders had never been to school; similarly, only five per cent had completed a tertiary qualification, while 45 per cent reported having completed TAFE or technical college; and
- just as likely as the total male sample to have ever spent time in a juvenile detention centre (29 per cent).

Offending Histories

Due to the complexity and diversity of offending behaviours of the DUCO male sample it is almost impossible to extract a group of specialist offenders. This was most certainly the case for regular fraud offenders, who reported high rates of regular offending across a broad range of offences types. Fraud offending includes all forms of fraud both large and small scale, although offenders of more serious fraud offences such as embezzlement and tax evasion are a minority within the male incarcerated population.

Table 6.1 Demographic characteristics for regular fraud offenders

	n	%
Age distribution		
18–20	12	7
21–25	43	24
26–30	41	23
31–35	32	18
36+	52	29
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(180)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Indigenous status		
Indigenous	19	11
Non-Indigenous	152	89
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(171)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Educational attainment		
Never went to school	4	2
Completed some primary school	2	1
Primary school	28	16
Year 10	35	19
Apprenticeship	10	6
Year 12	11	6
TAFE/technical college	81	45
Tertiary	9	5
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(180)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Prior juvenile detention	53	29

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

In terms of lifetime offending, those who regularly engaged in fraud were very likely to have also engaged in other forms of both property and violent offending—ninety-three per cent reported lifetime prevalence of any property offence and 77 per cent lifetime prevalence of any violent offence. Of the total sample, 74 per cent self-reported having committed a break and enter while just over three quarters (68 per cent) had stolen a motor vehicle. This is compared to 62 per cent having ever physically assaulted someone, and seven per cent having ever committed a sex offence. Ninety-three per cent reported having committed three or more offences as asked by the DUCO male survey.

Table 6.2 Prevalence of offending for regular fraud offenders

	Ever		Regular		Escalation
	n	%	n	%	%
Fraud offences					
Fraud	180	100	180	100	100
Property offences					
Break and enter	132	74	85	48	64
Stealing without break in	140	78	87	49	62
Motor vehicle theft	122	68	59	33	48
Traded in stolen goods	140	78	112	63	80
Vandalism	70	39	26	15	37
Violent offences					
Physical assault	112	62	33	18	29
Armed robbery	76	42	33	18	43
Robbery without a weapon	70	39	29	17	41
Sexual offence	13	7	2	1	15
Killed someone	16	9	0	0	0
Drug offences					
Bought illegal drugs	155	86	139	79	90
Sell illegal drugs	127	71	95	53	75
Multiple offences					
Three or more offences	168	93	144	80	86
Any property offence	167	93	145	81	87
Any violent offence	138	77	67	37	49
Property and violent offences	134	74	61	34	46

Escalation = 'regular' divided by 'ever'

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

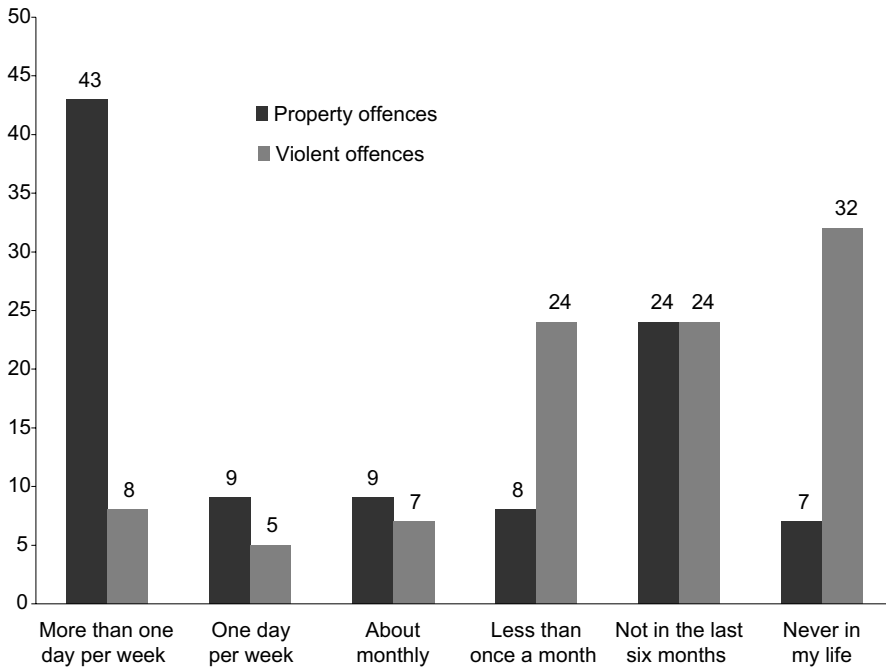
Analysis of regular offending patterns illustrates that 81 per cent of regular fraud offenders reported having been a regular property offender, while 37 per cent reported having been a regular violent offender. Just over one third of all regular fraud offenders had been a regular offender of both property and violent offences during their criminal career. Other than fraud offences, this group was more likely than any other offence type to have regularly traded in stolen goods (63 per cent) followed by stealing without break in (49 per cent). Only two offenders within this sample reported having regularly committed sex offences while 18 per cent reported armed robbery. Regular fraud offenders also

reported high levels of drug market activity with more than 86 per cent having bought illegal drugs, and 79 per cent having bought them on a regular basis. Just less than three quarters reported having sold illegal drugs, and 53 per cent had sold illegal drugs regularly.

In the six months prior to arrest, forty-three per cent of regular fraud offenders reported property offending more than one day per week, compared with only eight per cent reporting violent offending at the same frequency. Compared with regular property offenders—who did not regularly engage in fraud—the frequency of property offending was higher, while the frequency of violent offending was much lower. Property offences in figure 6.1 also include the offences of fraud or forgery along with break and enter, stealing without break in and trading in stolen goods. It is suspected that while fraud offenders reported a higher frequency of property offending in the six months prior to arrest, the majority of these offences are fraud offences. This notion is partially supported by the criminal justice information provided in table 6.3, where fraud offenders reported on average, the same number of charges and convictions for fraud offences as all other property offences combined.

In all, regular fraud offenders had been charged an average of 92 times across all offence types, and the offence for which they had received the most charges was fraud. Regular fraud offenders also reported a comparable number of charges for all property crimes combined including shoplifting, break and enter and motor vehicle theft. Of the average 92 charges received by regular fraud offenders, 76 resulted in a criminal conviction, 29 of which resulted in a prison sentence. The conversion rates suggest that eight in every ten charges received by regular fraud offenders were successfully entered as a conviction and one in every three convictions resulted in a sentence of incarceration.

For all offenders the average number of individual times spent in an adult prison was four. Just less than 30 per cent of regular fraud offenders had spent time in a juvenile detention centre. Of these offenders, the average number of times spent in a juvenile centre was five and the total number of times spent in both adult and juvenile centres was 10. Clearly, regular fraud offenders have had multiple contact with the criminal justice system. They reported a large number of both charges and convictions for a variety of offences, along with an increased number of prior periods of incarceration for both adult and juvenile detention centres.

Figure 6.1 Volume of offending in the six month prior to arrest for regular fraud offenders (per cent)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 6.3 Offending outcomes for regular fraud offenders

	Any	Property	Violent	Drug	Fraud
Mean (median) number of:					
Charges	92 (35)	43 (10)	3 (1)	2 (0)	45 (3)
Convictions	76 (23)	34 (9)	3 (1)	2 (0)	37 (3)
Prison sentences	29 (6)	9 (2)	2 (1)	1 (0)	17 (1)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Regular fraud offenders reported a high frequency of offending, significant contact with the criminal justice system, and repeated episodes in detention centres. Comparison with regular property offenders illustrates some remarkable similarities in terms of offending histories, but significant differences in terms of basic socio-demographic indicators, particularly in the case of age. A combination of these data indicates that the majority of incarcerated regular fraud offenders may in fact have been regular property offenders who had progressed to this more serious and sophisticated acquisitive crime throughout the criminal career.

Table 6.4 Prison experience of regular fraud offenders

	Mean (median) number of times
Prison experience	
Adult institutions	4 (3)
Juvenile detention centres	1 (0)
Of those having been in a juvenile detention centre (n=53)	
Juvenile detention centres	5 (3)
Both adult and juvenile centres	10 (7)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Drug Use Histories

Ninety-two per cent of regular fraud offenders had used cannabis. Just over 80 per cent had used amphetamines, while 66 per cent had used heroin and 58 per cent cocaine. Of all regular fraud offenders, the rate of poly-drug use was high with 84 per cent self-reporting the use of more than one of the four main drugs—cannabis, cocaine, amphetamines and heroin.

Thirty-four per cent of regular fraud offenders reported having used cocaine in the six months prior to the arrest for which they were now in prison, while 62 per cent had used amphetamines and 48 per cent heroin. During this period, 79 per cent of regular fraud offenders were current regular users of any of the four main drug types, while just over half were current regular users of more than one of these drugs.

As seen in earlier chapters, only eight per cent of regular property offenders, six per cent of regular violent offenders and 12 per cent of regular multiple offenders reported current regular use of cocaine. Among regular fraud offenders, however, a significantly larger proportion (21 per cent) reported to be a current regular user. Moreover, not only had a larger proportion of fraud offenders ever used cocaine, the rate of escalation to regular use was also high. For regular property offenders the rate was 21 per cent, violent offenders, 25 per cent, and multiple offenders, 24 per cent. This compares to an escalation rate of 36 per cent among regular fraud offenders who had ever used cocaine. Fraud offenders were also more likely to be regular heroin users than both regular property and regular violent offenders.

Table 6.5 Prevalence of illegal drug use amongst regular fraud offenders (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any	More than 1
Prevalence						
Ever used	92	82	66	58	93	84
Used in six months prior to arrest	72	62	48	34	84	66
Current regular user	64	49	40	21	79	56
Escalation						
	70	60	61	36	85	67
(n)	(116)	(88)	(72)	(37)	(143)	(101)

Escalation = 'current regular' divided by 'ever used'

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Linking Drugs and Regular Fraud Offenders

Age of Onset

Offence history data suggests that a significant number of regular fraud offenders had committed property or violent offences. The mean age of first offence was 13 years and included property, violent and drug offences. The mean age of first fraud offence was 22 years. Given the nature of fraud related crime coupled with the extensive offending histories of this sample, it is evident that fraud usually occurred later in the criminal career. Offenders who had committed a property offence reported the mean age of first property offence to be 14 years. Similarly, for regular fraud offenders with a lifetime history of violent offences, the mean age of first violent offence was 18 years. This pattern indicates that for the majority of fraud offenders with lifetime histories of both property and violent crime, property crime was most likely to occur first, followed by violent crime and finally fraud.

Table 6.6 shows that regular fraud offending typically commenced approximately one year after the first offence of fraud. This compares to three years for property offending and three years for violent offending. The time interval between first committing an offence and regularly engaging in it is an important tool to guide policy and intervention initiatives. In terms of regular fraud offending, it is clear that the window of opportunity is quite limited.

Table 6.6 Mean age of first and regular offending for regular fraud offenders

	Fraud	Any property offence	Any violent offence	Any offence
First offence				
Mean age	22	14	18	13
(n)	(180)	(167)	(138)	(180)
Of regular offenders¹				
First offence	22	13	17	
Regular offending	23	16	20	
Interval (regular–first)	1	3	3	
(n)	(180)	(145)	(67)	

¹ Estimates are for regular offenders that offence type.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

The onset and persistence of drug use among regular fraud offenders is shown in table 6.7. On average, fraud offenders commenced their drug use careers with cannabis at the mean age of 14 years. This was followed by amphetamines (19 years) and heroin (20 years). Cocaine remains the last drug to be experimented with in the drug use career. The mean age of onset for cocaine was 21 years. The time interval between onset and persistence for regular users of cannabis, amphetamines, heroin and cocaine was one year, which for heroin and cocaine was much shorter than occurred for regular property offenders. The first use of illegal drugs (15 years) and regular use of illegal drugs (16 years) preceded the onset and persistence of fraud offending (22 and 23 years respectively). This was also the case for regular offenders of each of the four main drugs types—cannabis, heroin, amphetamines and cocaine.

Lifetime Offending Attributions

Regular fraud offenders, like regular property offenders, were most likely to report the economic/compulsive effects of illegal drugs or alcohol as an explanation for their lifetime offending career. The next most common reasons given were psychopharmacological (26 per cent), and that drugs or alcohol lead to crime (26 per cent).

Table 6.7 Mean age of illegal drug use for regular fraud offenders

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any
First use					
Mean age	14	19	20	21	15
(n)	(165)	(146)	(119)	(104)	(167)
Of current regular users					
First use	14	18	19	20	
Regular use	15	19	20	21	
Interval (regular–first)	1	1	1	1	
(n)	(116)	(88)	(72)	(37)	

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 6.8 Casual attribution for lifetime offending

	n	%
Of those who quantified the effect		
0 per cent	41	38
25 per cent	3	3
50 per cent	4	4
75 per cent	33	30
100 per cent	28	26
(Total)	(109)	(100)
Of those who qualified the effect		
Psychopharmacological	25	26
Economic/compulsive	29	31
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	25	26
Other	16	17
(Total)	(95)	(100)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Lifetime offending attributions were affected by the type of drug(s) used by the offender (see table 6.9). Current regular users of heroin were more likely to report that the effect of drugs and alcohol on their lifetime offending was economic/compulsive (39 per cent), while amphetamine users were more likely to report a psychopharmacological effect (28 per cent).

Table 6.9 Lifetime offending attributions by the current regular drug use of regular fraud offenders (column per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine
Psychopharmacological	25	28	10	–
Economic/compulsive	32	26	39	–
Systemic	2	0	0	–
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	24	31	31	–
Other	17	15	20	–
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(63)</i>	<i>(51)</i>	<i>(49)</i>	<i>(15)¹</i>

¹ Insufficient numbers for analysis (n=15).

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Conclusion

Regular fraud offenders comprised eight per cent of the total male inmate population and they tended to be older, less likely to be Indigenous, reported higher standards of education, and they were less likely than regular property and regular multiple offenders to have spent in a juvenile detention centre. Although the social profile of this group is distinct, they still reported a range of property and violent offending, where the frequency of property offending was high and violent offending low. Fraud offenders reported more active involvement in the drug market with more than half indicating that they had regularly sold illegal drugs.

Regular fraud offenders did not commence their offending career with fraud. Fraud was most likely to commence sometime well into the property offending career, indicating that the majority of fraud offending was usually the result of an escalation through other forms of less serious acquisitive crime. As with the other crime types analysed in previous chapters, offending usually preceded drug use in the criminal career. The escalation through drug use was not dissimilar to other offender categories; however, amongst regular fraud offenders cocaine use was much greater. Regular fraud offenders also reported higher rates of regular heroin use than regular property offenders.

The differences seen among regular fraud offenders may be accounted for by age cohort effects. Fraud offenders are on average older than other regular offenders, as seen in this report. As a result they have had more opportunity use drugs and commit a wider variety of crimes.

7 Regular Drug Sellers

Regular drug sellers consist of offenders who reported having been a regular drug seller and not a regular offender of any violent crime, property crime or fraud (n=148).

In terms of age, regular drug sellers did not differ from the overall DUCO male sample. Around one-third were over 36 years of age, while the bulk of offenders were aged between 21 and 30 years (41 per cent). They were, however, less likely than the total inmate sample to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (nine per cent). Regular drug sellers tended, on average, to be the most educated group of offenders. Ten per cent had completed tertiary study, which compares to five per cent of fraud offenders and seven per cent of homicide offenders. They were also less likely than the total DUCO sample to have ever spent time in a juvenile detention centre (17 per cent).

The analysis of regular drugs sellers is important to this study because it provides data on a sub set of offenders who regularly engage in activities directly related to illegal drugs. Unlike regular property and regular violent offenders, the connection between illegal drugs and the offending career is undisputable, however the nature of that relationship remains contested. Why these offenders begin a criminal career, and to some extent specialise in the sale of illegal drugs remains an important consideration in criminal justice policy and practice.

Offending Histories

The offending histories of regular drug sellers included both property and violent offences (table 7.2). Seventy-three per cent reported ever having committed a property offence while 70 per cent reported violent offences. In all 87 per cent reported multiple offending across three or more of the offences as asked by the DUCO male survey. When broken down by offence type, similar proportions of regular drug sellers reported lifetime prevalence of each property offence not including vandalism. Forty-one per cent reported ever committing a break and enter, 45 per cent trading in stolen goods, and 39 per cent motor vehicle theft. This pattern is not the same for violent offences where assault was, on average,

committed by larger proportions of regular drug sellers than sex offences or robbery with or without a weapon. Twenty-eight per cent of regular drug sellers reported having committed a fraud offence. Compared with the overall DUCO male sample this group of regular drug sellers reported lower lifetime prevalence rates for all property and violent offences. However, they frequently reported lifetime prevalence of three or more offences (87 per cent) when compared with the total sample (74 per cent).

Table 7.1 Demographic characteristics for regular drug sellers

	n	%
Age distribution		
18–20	9	6
21–25	25	17
26–30	36	24
31–35	34	23
36+	44	30
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(148)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Indigenous status		
Indigenous	13	9
Non-Indigenous	126	91
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(139)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Educational attainment		
Never went to school	0	0
Completed some primary school	1	1
Primary school	24	16
Year 10	32	22
Apprenticeship	12	8
Year 12	11	8
TAFE/technical college	53	36
Tertiary	14	10
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(147)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Prior juvenile detention	25	17

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Regular drug sellers reported an average of only 11 lifetime charges for any offence. This compares, for example, to an average of 92 lifetime charges reported by regular fraud offenders and 67 for regular property offenders. Nine of the 11 charges received by regular drug sellers resulted in a conviction and four (45 per cent) resulted in a prison sentence. When broken down by offence type, regular drug sellers reported receiving an average of four charges for property offences, two for violent offences and three for drug offences. The data in table 7.3 indicate that regular sellers of illegal drugs, although not regular property offenders, were more likely to have come into contact with the criminal justice system for property offences than for violent or drug offences.

Table 7.2 Prevalence of offending for regular drug sellers

	n	Ever
		%
Drug offences		
Bought illegal drugs	139	94
Sell illegal drugs	148	100
Property offences		
Break and enter	60	41
Stealing without break in	55	37
Motor vehicle theft	57	39
Traded in stolen goods	67	45
Vandalism	26	18
Violent offences		
Physical assault	88	60
Armed robbery	27	18
Robbery without a weapon	21	14
Sex offence	17	12
Killed someone	0	0
Fraud offences		
Fraud	41	28
Multiple offences		
Three or more offences	128	87
Any property offence	108	73
Any violent offence	104	70

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 7.3 Offending outcomes for regular drug sellers

	Any	Property	Violent	Drug
Mean (median) number of				
Charges	11 (6)	4 (0)	2 (1)	3 (1)
Convictions	9 (4)	4 (0)	2 (1)	2 (1)
Prison sentences	4 (2)	1 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

As is consistent with their less prominent criminal histories, regular drug sellers reported less formal contact with the criminal justice system. They reported relatively few prison episodes (see table 7.4), where the mean number of times spent in an adult institution was two. This compares to an average of four for regular property offenders. Compared with regular offenders of property and violent offences, regular drug sellers were, on average, unlikely to have experienced time in a juvenile detention facility.

Table 7.4 Prison experience of regular drug sellers

	Mean (median) number of times
Prison experience	
Adult institutions	2 (2)
Juvenile detention centres	0 (0)
Of those having been in a juvenile detention centre (n=25)	
Juvenile detention centres	2 (1)
Both adult and juvenile centres	5 (4)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Drug Use Histories

It could be presumed that regular drug sellers come into contact with illegal drugs on a regular basis. They might then be more likely to report use and regular use of illegal drugs. This is confirmed with almost 100 per cent having ever tried one of the four main drug types—cannabis, heroin, amphetamines and cocaine—while 91 per cent reported having used more than one of these drugs in their lifetime. Cannabis use was most prevalent (97 per cent), followed by amphetamines

(82 per cent), heroin (67 per cent), and cocaine (60 per cent). These were the highest prevalence rates for any of the crime types analysed for this report.

In the six months prior to the arrest for which these offenders are now in prison, 90 per cent of offenders had used one of the four main illegal drugs. Cannabis was again most likely to have been used (80 per cent) followed by amphetamines (54 per cent). Heroin was used by 35 per cent of regular drug sellers in the six months prior to arrest. Escalation from experimentation to current regular use of heroin and amphetamine was lower than for regular property and fraud offenders but higher than for regular violent offenders.

Table 7.5 Prevalence of illegal drug use amongst regular drug sellers (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any	More than 1
Prevalence						
Ever used	97	82	67	60	99	91
Used in six months prior to arrest	80	54	35	28	90	64
Current regular user	77	41	28	10	87	51
Escalation	79	50	42	17	88	56
(n)	(114)	(60)	(41)	(15)	(128)	(76)

Escalation = 'current regular' divided by 'ever used'

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

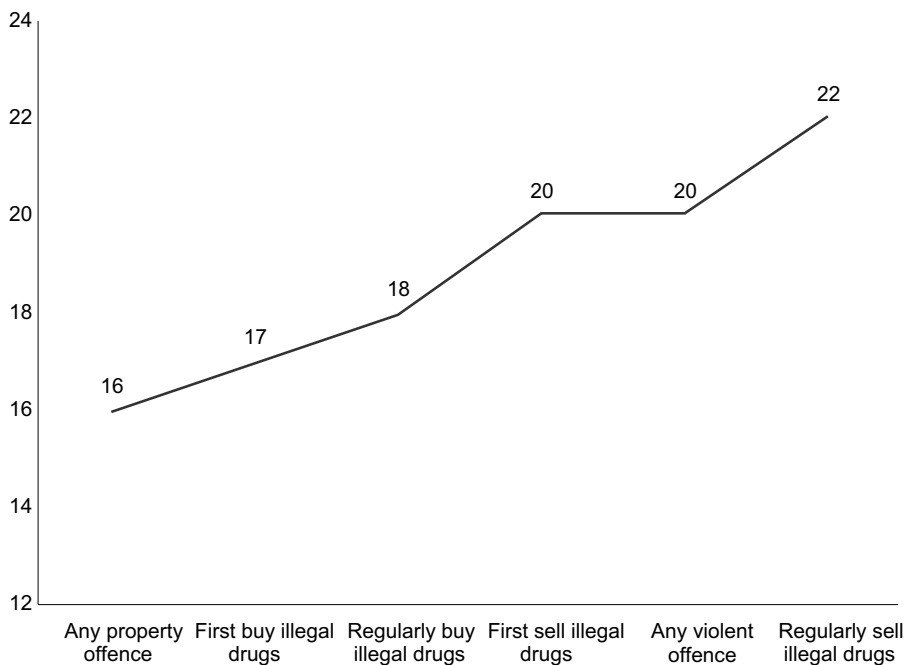
Linking Drugs and Regular Drug Sellers

Regular drug sellers typically began their offending careers at the mean age of 16 years. This is consistent with the lower rates of juvenile incarceration. The first offence was most likely to be a property offence followed four years later by a violent offence (20 years). Drug offending started in most cases with the purchase of illegal drugs followed by the sale of illegal drugs. There was a mean time difference of three years between when offenders first purchased illegal drugs and when they began to sell them.

The age of onset and persistence with drug use indicates that these offenders first began illegal drug use at the age of 15 years; cannabis was the drug most likely to be used first. The mean age of first use for heroin, amphetamines and cocaine was

the same (21 years). There was a significant time lag between first cannabis use and first use of amphetamines or heroin (6 years)—a delay that is not mirrored among any other offending group. The data also suggest a two-year delay between the onset of first drug use to the first purchase of illegal drugs. Current regular users of each drug reported first use at an earlier age than offenders who had not escalated from experimentation to regular use. This was the case for amphetamines, cocaine and heroin, but not for cannabis, where the mean age of first use remained at 15 years.

Figure 7.1 Mean ages of first offence for regular drug sellers¹



¹ Estimates are for offenders reporting lifetime prevalence of that offence type.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

The story of onset and persistence among many of the offender groups within the DUCO male sample is one that shows that offending (primarily property offending) began one or two years before first drug use. First use of illegal drugs, most often cannabis, was followed by the onset of regular property offending and then regular drug use. Violent offending, if at all present, did not usually begin until after the onset of regular drug use. For regular drug sellers however, the story was different.

A comparison of onset and persistence data in figure 7.1 and table 7.6 show that, for regular drug sellers, first drug use (most often cannabis) began at the age of 15 years, which was older than regular property offenders but younger than regular violent offenders. This was followed by the first property offence or drug purchase offence at the mean age of 16 years. Regular cannabis use began one year after the onset of offending, which in turn was followed by regular offending (primarily the purchase of illegal drugs).

Table 7.6 Mean age of illegal drug use for regular drug sellers

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine
First use				
Mean age	15	21	21	21
(n)	(141)	(123)	(98)	(86)
Of current regular users				
First use	15	19	20	20
Regular use	17	21	23	23
<i>Interval (regular–first)</i>	2	2	3	3
(n)	(114)	(60)	(41)	(15)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Lifetime Offending Attributions

The DUCO male study asked offenders a number of questions relating to the effects of drugs and alcohol on the lifetime offending career. The data in table 7.7 demonstrate that more than half of all regular drug sellers attributed their offending careers in some way to the affect of alcohol or drugs. Twenty-six per cent of this sample reported that all of their offending behaviour was related to their personal alcohol or drug use, while 24 per cent reported that most of their offending could be in some way attributed to these factors. In all, 42 per cent reported that drugs or alcohol had no effect on their offending career. This compares, for example, with 29 per cent of regular property offenders, 27 per cent of regular multiple offenders and 53 per cent of regular violent offenders who reported no effect of alcohol or illegal drugs on their lifetime offending career.

Offenders who reported that drugs or alcohol had an effect on their offending career most often stated that drugs led them to crime (30 per cent). This result is

consistent with the onset and persistence of cannabis use prior to any offending and is unlike other crime types, where persistent use usually occurred after regular offending. A further 27 per cent reported that the effect was most likely psychopharmacological, while 19 per cent said that the economic/compulsive effects of their personal drug use was the primary motivation for their lifetime offending careers. Further analysis indicates that compared with regular violent offenders and regular property offenders, these offenders more often reported that the illegal status of drugs is what essentially motivated their offending career. A small number of offenders (13 per cent) stated that the reason for their offending was because of the illegal status of drugs.

Significant differences exist in the attributions between regular drug sellers whose most serious offence is violence or drugs. More than 40 per cent of offenders whose most serious offence was a drug offence stated that the effect of drugs and alcohol on their lifetime career was primarily economic/compulsive. Offenders with a current violent most serious offence were more likely to report a psychopharmacological effect (47 per cent).

Table 7.7 Lifetime offending attributions for regular drug sellers

	n	%
Of those who quantified the effect		
0 per cent	38	42
25 per cent	5	6
50 per cent	2	2
75 per cent	22	24
100 per cent	24	26
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(91)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Of those who qualified the effect		
Psychopharmacological	18	27
Economic/ compulsive	13	19
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	20	30
Illegal status of drugs	9	13
Other	7	11
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(67)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Conclusion

Regular drug sellers were more likely to have completed tertiary studies, to be non-Indigenous and less likely to have spent time in a juvenile facility. They reported the highest drug use prevalence rates of any crime type analysed within this report. However, there was a longer time delay between moving from cannabis to the other drugs, and on average the interval between onset and persistence across all four drug types was longer than for other offender types.

The criminal and drug-using career of this group differed from the other crime types analysed in this report. The onset of cannabis preceded the onset of offending. When attributing factors that might explain their offending careers, they were more likely to report reasons that focused on 'drugs cause crime', including the illegal status of drugs.

8 Regular Drug Buyers

This crime type comprises offenders who self-reported never having committed any offence regularly other than the purchase of illegal drugs (n=144). They made up approximately seven per cent of the total male DUCO sample.

On average this group tended to be slightly younger than the general prison population with a mean age of 30 years. Just under a quarter were Indigenous, which is similar to the overall profile of the sample; their educational attainment was also consistent with the overall profile of the DUCO male sample. One quarter had spent time in a juvenile facility.

Table 8.1 Demographic characteristics for regular drug buyers

	n	%
Age distribution		
18–20	6	4
21–25	45	31
26–30	37	26
31–35	18	13
36+	38	26
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(144)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Indigenous status		
Indigenous	30	22
Non-Indigenous	105	78
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(135)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Educational attainment		
Never went to school	1	1
Completed some primary school	0	0
Primary School	32	22
Year 10	28	19
Apprenticeship	10	7
Year 12	8	6
TAFE/technical college	62	43
Tertiary	3	2
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(144)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Prior juvenile detention	35	24

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Offending Histories

No offenders within this group reported committing any other offences regularly other than the purchase of illegal drugs. In terms of ever having committed other offences they were less likely to have a lifetime history of serious violent offending. They were more likely to report property offences such as break and enter, stealing without a weapon, motor vehicle theft and fraud. Less than one-third reported having sold illegal drugs and none of these offenders had progressed to selling illegal drugs regularly.

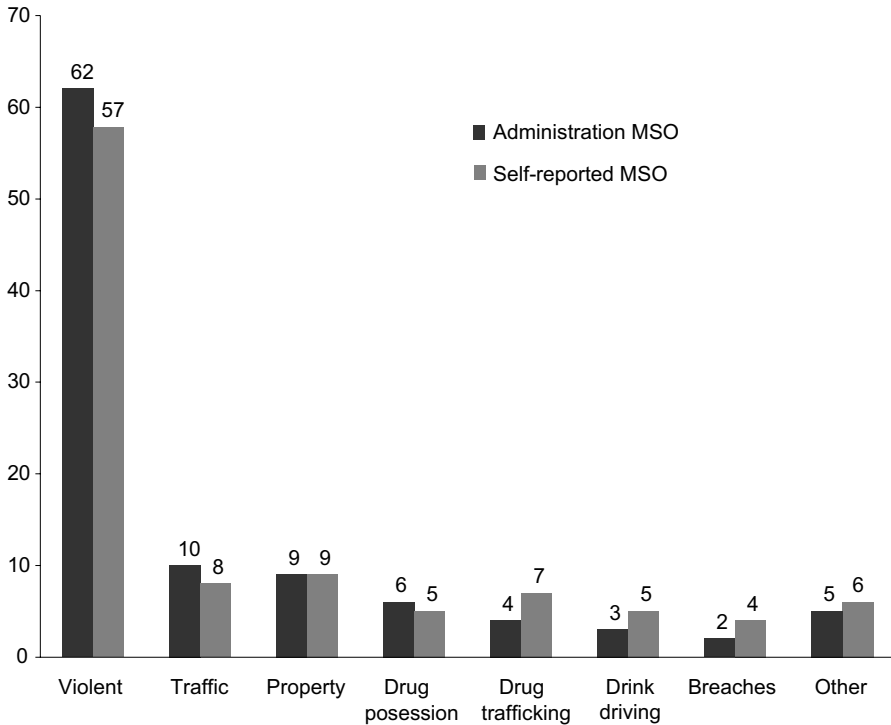
Table 8.2 Prevalence of offending for regular drug buyers

	n	Ever %
Drug offences		
Bought illegal drugs	144	100
Sell illegal drugs	44	31
Property offences		
Break and enter	65	45
Stealing without a weapon	72	50
Motor vehicle theft	60	42
Traded in stolen goods	43	30
Vandalism	39	27
Violent offences		
Physical assault	78	55
Armed robbery	41	29
Robbery without a weapon	15	10
Sexual offence	10	7
Killed someone	0	0
Fraud offences		
Fraud	25	17
Multiple offences		
Three or more offences	118	82
Any property offence	112	78
Any violent offence	102	71

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Few offenders are sent to prison on a drug possession charge alone. The most recent 2002 prison census indicates that less than one per cent of incarcerated male offenders were in prison for a most serious offence of drug possession or use in the four participating jurisdictions (ABS 2003c).

Figure 8.1 Current most serious offence for regular drug buyers (per cent)



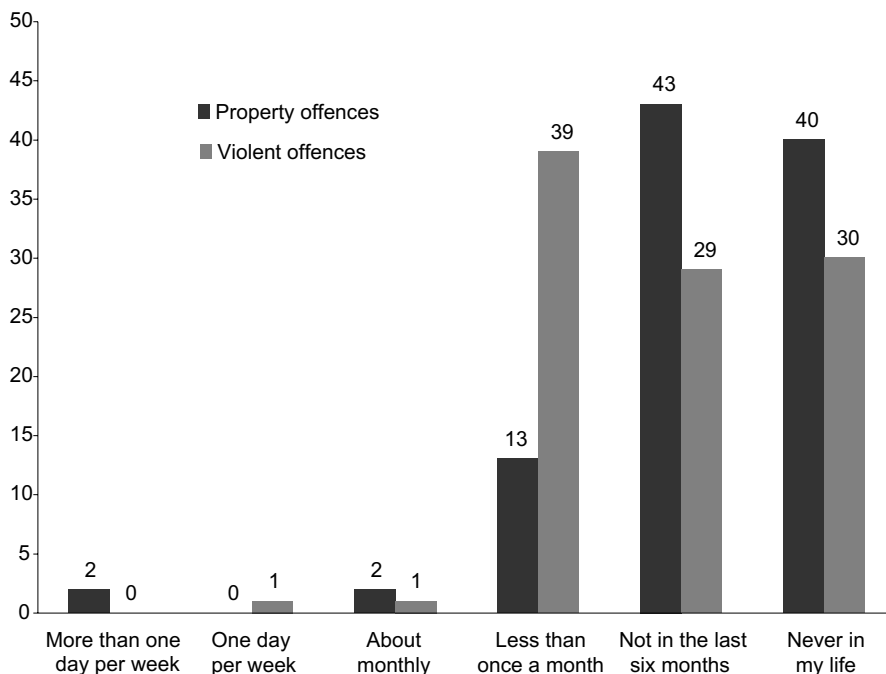
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Figure 8.1 shows the administrative and self-reported most serious offence for this sample of regular drug buyers. More than half of regular drug buyers had been incarcerated on a violent offence. As expected relatively few offenders had a most serious offence for drug possession or use. These data highlight the differences between the most serious offence and the 'criminal' career.

The definition of 'regular' offending was self-defined by the offender. Figure 8.2 shows that only four per cent of offenders reported committing property offences at least monthly and two per cent reported the same volume of offending for violent offences. More of the offenders reported committing violent offences in

the six month period prior to arrest than property offences—this is consistent with their administrative most serious offence details. Despite this, the frequency of offending reported here provides further support to the non-regular offending behaviour of this sample.

Figure 8.2 Volume of offending in the six months prior to arrest for regular drug buyers (per cent)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 8.3 Offending outcomes for regular drug buyers

	Any	Property	Violent	Drug	Fraud
Mean (median) number of:					
Charges	8 (4)	5 (1)	2 (1)	1 (0)	0 (0)
Convictions	7 (4)	4 (1)	2 (1)	1 (0)	0 (0)
Prison sentences	4 (2)	3 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Compared with the overall sample, the self-report offending histories in terms of the number of charges received is very low, but it is consistent with offenders indicating that they were not regular property or violent offenders. They reported an average of only eight charges in total compared to 67 charges for regular property offenders, 14 for regular violent offenders and 56 for regular multiple offenders. Their history was more like that of the regular drug sellers who reported an average of 11 charges. Of course, charge history is not necessarily an indicator of the number of offences committed by an individual offender. It is possible that offenders who reported their only regular offence as the purchase of illegal drugs, less frequently committed more serious offences, but when they did they were caught and successfully prosecuted at higher rates.

Given that this sample was younger on average than the total male inmate population, and that they reported fewer prior charges, their levels of adult imprisonment is surprising. Table 8.4 indicates that the mean number of times these offenders had been in adult prisons was the same as the overall prison population. The same is true for juvenile detention—24 per cent of regular drug buyers had been detained in a juvenile centre as compared with 30 per cent for the total sample. These offenders spent an average of four times in a juvenile detention centre and a total of seven times in both an adult and juvenile correctional facility.

Table 8.4 Prison experience of regular drug buyers

	Mean (median) number of times
Prison experience	
Adult institutions	3 (2)
Juvenile detention centres	1 (0)
Of those having been in a juvenile detention centre (n=35)	
Juvenile detention centres	4 (2)
Both adult and juvenile centres	7 (5)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Drug Use Histories

Regular drug buyers were slightly more likely to have tried cannabis and slightly less likely to have tried cocaine (the numbers are small however) than the general DUCO male sample. They were also more likely to report having tried amphetamines and to have used the drug in the six months prior to arrest. These differences may reflect their age profile—they have a lower mean age. In summary, 88 per cent of these offenders reported being a regular user of at least one of the four drugs, and 35 per cent reported being a regular user of at least two.

Table 8.5 Prevalence of illegal use amongst regular drug buyers (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any	More than 1
Prevalence						
Ever used	99	74	47	26	100	79
Used in six months prior to arrest	76	53	26	9	91	53
Current regular user	70	35	20	4	88	35
Escalation						
	71	47	43	15	88	44
(n)	(101)	(50)	(29)	(6)	(126)	(50)

Escalation = 'current regular' divided by 'ever used'

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Linking Drugs and Regular Drug Buyers

Age of onset

The age of onset into particular forms of offending shows that these offenders, on average, began their criminal careers with property offending at the age of 15 years (table 8.6). This was followed two years later by the first purchase of illegal drugs. The age at which buying drugs became regular was 19 years, followed by the onset of violent offending where it occurred at 20 years.

The typical pattern of onset into drug use is found in table 8.7—first cannabis, then amphetamines and heroin followed by cocaine. Few offenders reported using cocaine early in their drug-using careers, which is consistent with other crime types. The main difference between regular drug buyers and regular

Table 8.6 Mean age of first and regular offending for regular drug buyers

	Any property offence	Buying drugs	Any violent offence
First offence	15	17	20
Regular offending	–	19	–
(n)	(111)	(144)	(100)

Estimates are for those reporting that offence.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 8.7 Mean age of illegal drug use for regular drug buyers

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any
First use					
Mean age	16	20	20	21	16
(n)	(140)	(105)	(65)	(35)	(143)
Of current regular users					
First use	15	20	19	21	
Regular use	17	22	21	22	
Interval (regular–first)	2	2	2	1	
(n)	(101)	(50)	(19)	(6)	

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

property offenders and multiple offenders was the age of onset into illegal drug use, which was delayed by approximately two years for all four drug types.

Also, the age of onset into drugs and crime is relatively consistent with the other crime types. The mean age of onset was 15 years for property offending, followed closely by the first use of cannabis at 16 years. At 17 years, onset into the purchase of illegal drugs occurred as well as regular use of cannabis. At 19 years, offenders had become regular drug buyers. If violent offending was reported it occurred one year later at 20 years.

Lifetime Offending Attributions

Offenders were asked to comment on the effect of drugs and alcohol on their lifetime offending career. Ninety-six offenders (67 per cent) within this group answered questions relating to the effects of drugs and alcohol on lifetime offending. Of those who quantified the effect, 29 per cent stated that all of their

offending was due to drugs and alcohol, and a further 19 per cent said three quarters of it was due to these factors. The attributions were similar to regular property offenders and regular multiple offenders. Forty-one per cent indicated that none of their lifetime offending was related to alcohol or illegal drugs. Further analysis indicates that the majority of drug buyers who reported that alcohol or illegal drugs had no effect on their lifetime offending were in prison on a self-reported most serious violent offence. Forty-seven per cent of offenders whose most serious offence was a drug offence stated that all or most of their lifetime offending was drug or alcohol related.

Table 8.8 Lifetime offending attributions for regular drug buyers

	n	%
Of those who quantified the effect		
0 per cent	39	41
25 per cent	6	6
50 per cent	5	5
75 per cent	18	19
100 per cent	28	29
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(96)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Of those who qualified the effect		
Psychopharmacological	25	35
Economic/compulsive	20	28
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	16	23
Other	10	14
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(71)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Conclusion

In terms of socio-demographic characteristics this group tended to be younger, report fewer arrests but had higher rates of incarceration. When compared with regular property or regular violent offenders their levels of contact with the criminal justice system in terms of charges and arrests might reflect their younger age and, as a consequence, shorter criminal histories. Their higher rates of incarceration may result from more serious offending. Analysis of the most serious offence data indicates that over one third of these offenders reported armed or unarmed robbery as the violent offence for which they are now in prison. An alternative explanation is that these offenders were easily caught. They were slightly more likely to report emotional or expressive reasons for offending, and if the offences are more serious this may have increased the probability of detection. It may also have increased the probability of conviction—explaining the high ratio of arrests to convictions to prison sentences.

When compared with regular property offenders:

- the majority did report some property and violent offending but not as frequently;
- they were more likely to be cannabis and amphetamine users, but their onset of use of these two drugs was delayed by an average of two years; and
- there was an additional year of delay between onset and persistence of drug use.

9 Homicide Offenders

Homicide offenders are those who self-reported having committed homicide, but have never been a regular offender of property, fraud or other violent crime (n=113). They represent five per cent of the total male DUCO sample.

Previous chapters in this report have focused specifically on the regular offending behaviours of the DUCO male inmate sample. Almost all offender categories already discussed were categorised as a result of their self-reported regular offending behaviours. These 113 offenders reported having committing homicide but they were not regular property offenders, violent offenders or fraud offenders.

Homicide offenders are specifically interesting to both criminal justice agencies and policy makers because, in most cases, they are not chronic and persistent offenders, but they have committed what the criminal justice system considers as the most serious of crimes.

Compared with the total DUCO male sample, homicide offenders tended to be much older, with a mean age of 38 years. Very few homicide offenders (one per cent) were aged between 18 and 20 years. Age was not the only distinguishing factor among this sample, as homicide offenders were less likely to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (19 per cent). Homicide offenders tended to have higher levels of education. Seven per cent reported having completed tertiary study and a further 45 per cent had completed TAFE or technical college.

Not surprisingly, homicide offenders did not report high levels of juvenile detention, with only 12 per cent reporting such a history. This compares with almost 30 per cent of the total inmate sample.

Table 9.1 Demographic characteristics for homicide offenders

	n	%
Age distribution		
18–20	1	1
21–25	17	15
26–30	15	13
31–35	17	15
36+	63	56
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(113)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Indigenous status		
Indigenous	21	19
Non-Indigenous	89	81
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(110)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Educational attainment		
Never went to school	0	0
Completed some primary school	0	0
Primary school	21	19
Year 10	17	15
Apprenticeship	12	11
Year 12	4	4
TAFE/technical college	51	45
Tertiary	8	7
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(113)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Prior juvenile detention	13	12

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Offending Histories

Being non-regular offenders of any property, violent or fraud offences, it is not surprising that this group of homicide offenders reported lower lifetime prevalence rates than the other offending categories in this report. Around two thirds reported having ever committed three or more offences, compared with 97 per cent of regular property offenders. When individual offences are combined, homicide offenders reported a higher prevalence of violent offending than property offending. Fifty-seven per cent reported committing a violent offence not including homicide, while 51 per cent reported having committed any property offence.

Of all offences, not including drug offences, physical assault was the offence most likely to have been committed by homicide offenders (50 per cent). This was followed by motor vehicle theft (26 per cent), break and enter (22 per cent), and stealing without break in (20 per cent). More homicide offenders reported having committed armed robbery than robbery without a weapon, but very few (five per cent) reported committing fraud offences. Drug use offences are also illustrated in table 9.2, and indicate that slightly more than 50 per cent reported ever buying illegal drugs, and 32 per cent reported ever selling them. Thirty-five per cent of homicide offenders reported regularly purchasing illegal drugs and 24 per cent reported the regular sale of illegal drugs. This was considerably lower than the total inmate population as a whole.

Table 9.2 Prevalence of offending for homicide offenders

	n	Ever %
Violent offences		
Physical assault	57	50
Armed robbery	13	12
Robbery without a weapon	3	3
Sex offence	12	11
Killed someone	113	100
Property offences		
Break and enter	25	22
Stealing without break in	22	20
Motor vehicle theft	29	26
Traded in stolen goods	20	18
Vandalism	21	19
Fraud offences		
Fraud	6	5
Drug offences		
Bought illegal drugs	58	51
Sell illegal drugs	36	32
Multiple offences		
Three or more offences	71	63
Any property offence	58	51
Any violent offence	64	57
Both a property and violent offence	36	32

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Homicide offenders reported the least formal contact with the criminal justice system of all the crime types analysed so far. On average they reported five charges in their lifetime across all offences. Of these charges, 80 per cent resulted in a conviction where the mean number of convictions received was four. Although homicide offenders had far fewer lifetime charges, the conversion rate from charge to conviction was the same as for property offenders and violent offenders. The differentiating factor for homicide offenders is that 50 per cent of all convictions resulted in a sentence to prison. This is significantly higher than property offenders where the average conversion was around 35 per cent. This, coupled with offence history data, suggests that homicide offenders offend far less frequently; but when their offences are detected by the criminal justice system they are more likely to result in a sentence of imprisonment. This could be the result of a number of factors, including offence type, where serious violent offences normally result in a prison sentence.

Table 9.3 Offending outcomes for homicide offenders

	Any	Property	Violent	Drug	Fraud
Mean (median) number of:					
Charges	5 (2)	2 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Convictions	4 (2)	1 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Prison sentences	2 (1)	1 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Homicide offenders also reported few periods of incarceration in both adult and juvenile detention centres. The average number of times spent in an adult prison was two. This compares to regular violent offenders with a mean of three times in prison.

Only 12 per cent reported a history of juvenile detention but, of those who did, the average number of times spent in a juvenile detention centre was three and the average time spent in both a juvenile and adult facility was seven. This was the same for regular violent offenders, but was less than regular property offenders and regular multiple offenders.

Table 9.4 Prison experience of homicide offenders

	Mean (median) number of times
Prison experience	
Adult institutions	2 (1)
Juvenile detention centres	0 (0)
Of those having been in a juvenile detention centre (n=12)¹	
Juvenile detention centres	3 (3)
Both adult and juvenile centres	7 (7)

¹ Estimates are for offenders with a history of juvenile detention

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Drug Use Histories

Homicide offenders were less likely to have used drugs when compared to the total DUCO male sample. Seventy-three per cent of homicide offenders reported having used cannabis. This is followed by amphetamines (35 per cent), heroin (20 per cent) and cocaine (19 per cent). Seventy-four per cent reported having used one of the four main drug types, while 38 per cent reported the use of more than one. This profile was similar to that of regular violent offenders.

Table 9.5 Prevalence of illegal drug use amongst homicide offenders (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any	More than 1
Prevalence						
Ever used	73	35	20	19	74	38
Used in six months prior to arrest	50	17	4	8	53	16
Current regular user	35	6	3	3	37	8
Escalation						
(n)	(40)	(7)	(3)	(3)	(42)	(9)

Escalation = 'current regular' divided by 'ever used'

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

In the six months prior to arrest, 53 per cent of homicide offenders had used at least one of the four main drug types, with 16 per cent having used more than one of these drugs during this time. Cannabis was the drug most likely to have been used (50 per cent) in the six months prior to arrest, followed by amphetamines (17 per cent). Cocaine was used during this period by more offenders than was heroin, a trend that was not found among any other offender type. Eight per cent reported cocaine use in the six months prior to arrest, whereas only four per cent used heroin.

Not only did more homicide offenders report the use of cocaine than heroin in the six months prior to arrest, they were slightly more likely to progress from experimentation to regular use of cocaine than of heroin. This pattern of escalation was unique to this group of offenders in the DUCO male study.

Linking Drugs and Homicide Offenders

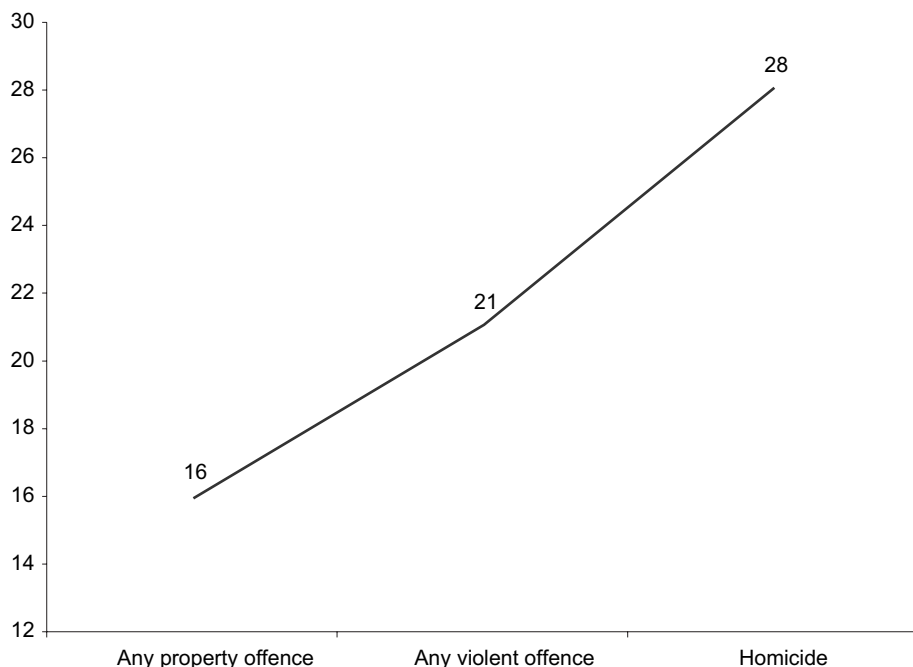
Age of onset

Figure 9.1 shows the mean ages of offending among homicide offenders. Because they were not regular offenders, the age of persistence in offending behaviour cannot be analysed for this group. Not surprisingly, however, the age of first homicide offence was relatively old at 28 years.

Where the offender reports lifetime prevalence of property offending, the mean age of first offence was 16 years. For violent offences, excluding homicide, the mean age was 21. The overlap in offending among this sample was much lower than seen in the other offender types—only 32 per cent reported having committed both a property and violent offence. For these offenders, however, the temporal order of offending was again, property to violent to homicide.

Three quarters of homicide offenders within this sample reported having ever used any drug. Table 9.6 shows the mean age of onset for each individual drug type and the age of regular use among current regular users. Among all offender types, illegal drug use most often commenced with cannabis. For homicide offenders the story was the same, with onset of cannabis prior to any other illegal drug. The mean age of first cannabis use was 17 years. This was followed by cocaine (19 years), amphetamines (20 years), and heroin (21 years).

Figure 9.1 Mean age of offending for homicide offenders



Estimates are based on offenders having committed that offence type.
 Any violent offence does not including homicide offences.
 Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

While the numbers of offenders ever having used cocaine are small, and the extent of poly-drug use was limited, offenders who reported ever using cocaine did so one year prior to amphetamine and heroin use. This is the only crime type where the first use of cocaine preceded the first use of other drugs.

Table 9.6 also illustrates the age of onset and persistence among regular users of cannabis and amphetamines. Due to small sample sizes, reliable estimates could not be generated for regular cocaine and heroin users. For homicide offenders, who were current regular users of cannabis (35 per cent), first use began at the mean age of 15 years, and persistence began at 17 years. For current regular amphetamine users, onset began at 19 years and persistence at 23 years. The time taken between onset and persistence for both these drugs tended to be longer than for the other offender types, including regular violent offenders. In the case of homicide offenders who were regular users of amphetamine the average interval between onset and persistence was four years. This compares to a two-year interval among regular violent offenders.

Table 9.6 Mean age of illegal drug use for homicide offenders

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine
First use				
Mean age	17	20	21	19
(n)	(81)	(36)	(22)	(19)
Of current regular users				
First use	15	19	–	–
Regular use	17	23	–	–
Interval (regular–first)	2	4	–	–
(n)	(40)	(7)	(3) ¹	(3) ¹

¹ Insufficient numbers for analysis

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

The picture that emerges from these data is important. Homicide offenders had less extensive offending histories. They reported less overall drug use, less recent drug use, and tended to start drug use at ages older than regular property and regular violent offenders. For those who did become regular users, the time taken from onset to persistence tended to be longer. Moreover, homicide offenders reported more recent use of cocaine than heroin, and they also, on average, began cocaine use prior to heroin or amphetamine use.

Lifetime Offending Attributions

Homicide offenders reported fewer lifetime charges and convictions than regular property or regular violent offenders and they reported less lifetime offending across a broad range of offending categories. It could be suggested that homicide offenders offended less frequently but more seriously than any of the other offender types. Table 9.7 provides data on the self-reported attributions for the lifetime offending career. When asked to what extent alcohol and drug use affected their lifetime offending career the majority (53 per cent) of homicide offenders claimed that it had no effect. Seventeen per cent reported that their whole offending career was the result of these factors, while a further 16 per cent reported that most of their offending was the result of alcohol or drug use. While homicide offenders were not specifically asked to nominate the substance having had the greatest effect on their lifetime career, those who did overwhelmingly stated alcohol above illegal drugs. The majority (62 per cent) of homicide offenders reported psychopharmacological effects as an explanation for their offending. Eighteen per cent reported that drug use lead to offending activity.

Table 9.7 Lifetime offending attributions for homicide offenders

	n	%
Of those who quantified the effect		
0 per cent	47	53
25 per cent	10	11
50 per cent	3	3
75 per cent	14	16
100 per cent	15	17
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(89)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Of those who qualified the effect		
Psychopharmacological	24	62
Economic/compulsive	1	3
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	7	18
Other	7	18
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(39)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Conclusion

This group of homicide offenders was different from other offenders because they were older, significantly less likely to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and had higher levels of education. They were much less likely to have had prior arrests or detention in either a juvenile or adult institution. Although they reported fewer property offences, they did have a higher prevalence of violent offending and were more likely to be sent to prison for that offending.

Homicide offenders reported less illegal drug use, although they were more likely to report using cocaine in the six months prior to arrest than heroin. This, coupled with an earlier age of onset for experimentation with cocaine, might be indicative of a different drug-using pathway. In terms of explaining their lifetime offending career, more than half of this group reported that drugs or alcohol could not be attributed to their lifetime offending. Of those who did report that drugs or alcohol played a role in their lifetime offending career, the majority stated psychopharmacological reasons. This was most likely to be due to alcohol.

10 Non-regular Offenders

The DUCO male study includes 506 offenders who did not report regularly committing any offence included in the DUCO male survey. Of the total DUCO male sample, these non-regular offenders comprised 24 per cent.

Non-regular offenders within the DUCO male sample tended to be older and slightly more educated than the total inmate sample (table 10.1). Half of all non-regular offenders were aged 36 years and older, while only a small proportion (three per cent) were aged between 18 and 20 years. Compared with the total sample, non-regular offenders were also categorised as:

- being more likely to identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander—one-third of non-regular offenders were in this group, compared with 25 per cent of the total male sample;
- having higher educational qualifications—the greatest proportion of non-regular offenders had completed TAFE or technical college, while eight per cent had completed a tertiary qualification, the highest of all offender types; and
- being less likely to have a prior history of juvenile detention—14 per cent reported having ever been incarcerated in a juvenile detention centre, compared with 30 per cent of the total DUCO sample.

Offending Histories

As this group did not self-report regular offending, they had less extensive offending careers and offending across multiple offence types was not common. Fifty-nine per cent reported ever committing a violent offence, and 41 per cent reported property offending. The overlap between property and violent offending was not extensive, with 26 per cent of offenders reporting both a property and violent offence. The same proportion reported committing three or more offences. The offences most likely to have been committed by non-regular offenders were physical assault (44 per cent) and break and enter (22 per cent). Seventeen per cent reported having ever stolen a motor vehicle and 16 per cent reported stealing without a break in.

Compared with the total inmate sample for the DUCO study, non-regular offenders were significantly less likely to have committed each of the individual offence types, with the exception of sex offences (table 10.2). Twenty per cent of non-regular offenders reported having ever committed a sex offence, compared to 14 per cent among the total sample. Non-regular offenders were less likely to report ever buying illegal drugs (19 per cent) or selling them (six per cent).

As is consistent with the self-reported offending histories, non-regular offenders did not report a high frequency of property or violent offending in the six months prior to the arrest for which they are now in prison (see figure 10.1). Only one per cent of offenders reported property offending or violent offending on more than one day per week during this time.

Table 10.1 Demographic characteristics for non-regular offenders

	n	%
Age distribution		
18–20	14	3
21–25	61	12
26–30	88	17
31–35	69	14
36+	247	54
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(506)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Indigenous status		
Indigenous	156	33
Non-Indigenous	318	67
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(474)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Educational attainment		
Never went to school	11	2
Completed some primary school	19	4
Primary school	114	23
Year 10	99	20
Apprenticeship	33	7
Year 12	27	5
TAFE/technical college	161	32
Tertiary	38	8
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(502)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Prior juvenile detention	71	14

Source: AIC, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File].

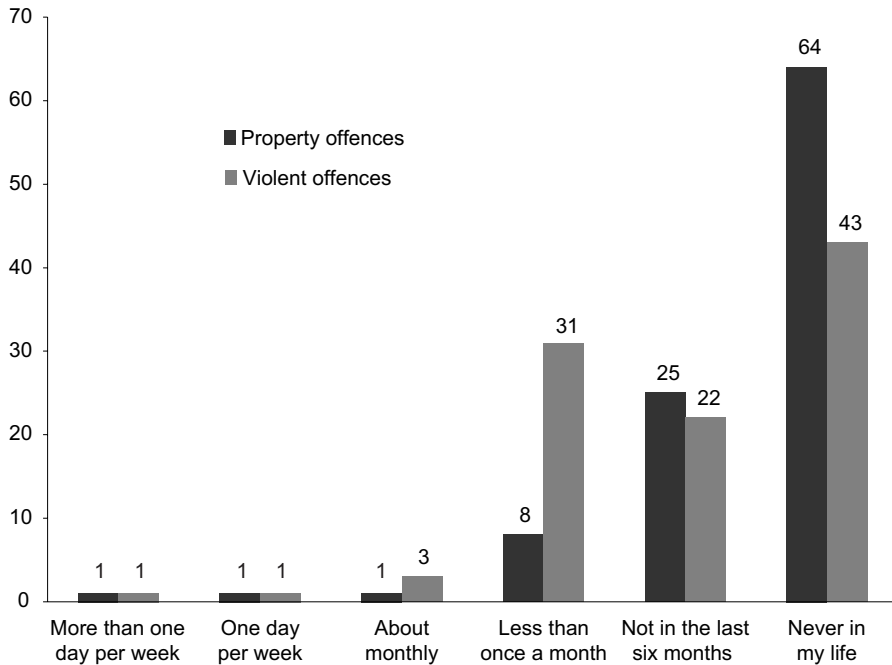
Table 10.2 Prevalence of offending for non-regular offenders

	n	Ever %
Property offences		
Break and enter	110	22
Stealing without break in	79	16
Motor vehicle theft	84	17
Traded in stolen goods	46	9
Vandalism	45	9
Violent offences		
Physical assault	222	44
Armed robbery	31	6
Robbery without a weapon	23	5
Sexual offence	99	20
Killed someone	0	0
Drug offences		
Bought illegal drugs	95	19
Sell illegal drugs	31	6
Fraud offences		
Fraud	44	9
Multiple offences		
Three or more offences	132	26
Any property offence	205	41
Any violent offence	296	59
Both a violent and property offence	133	26

Source: AIC, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

The majority (89 per cent) reported never having committed a property offence or not having done so in the six-month period prior to arrest. This was the case for 65 per cent reporting on violent offending. Clearly, the frequency of violent offending, while not high, was greater than property offending. Thirty-six per cent reported committing violent offences in the six months prior to arrest, compared with only 11 per cent for property offending.

Figure 10.1 Volume of offending in the six months prior to arrest for non-regular offenders (per cent)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Non-regular offenders reported minimal formal interaction with the criminal justice system. Table 10.3 shows an average of four lifetime charges across any offence category. Of these charges, 100 per cent resulted in a conviction and 50 per cent in a sentence to prison. Broken down by offence type, non-regular offenders reported slightly more lifetime charges for violent offences than property offences. What is evident from these data is that non-regular offenders offended far less frequently than the regular offending types analysed earlier in this report. However, when their crimes were detected by law enforcement, 100 per cent of charges resulted in a conviction—the highest rate of charge to conviction seen among all offender groups within the DUCO male sample. These data probably reflect the high levels of violent offending (including sexual assault) reported by this group.

Table 10.3 Offending outcomes for non-regular offenders

	Any	Property	Violent
Mean (median) number of:			
Charges	4 (1)	1 (0)	2 (1)
Convictions	4 (1)	1 (0)	2 (1)
Prison sentences	2 (1)	1 (0)	1 (0)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 10.4 Prison experience of non-regular offenders

	Mean (median) number of times
Prison experience	
Adult institutions	3 (1)
Juvenile detention centres	0 (0)
Of those having been in a juvenile detention centre (n=71)	
Juvenile detention centres	2 (1)
Both adult and juvenile centres	6 (5)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Non-regular offenders reported having spent an average of three times in an adult prison. Significantly fewer non-regular offenders reported having ever been detained as a juvenile than the total DUCO sample. Of those who did (14 per cent of all non-regular offenders) the mean number of times spent in a juvenile facility was two and the mean number of times spent in both a juvenile and adult correctional facility was six.

The mean number of episodes in an adult institution for non-regular offenders was greater than for homicide offenders and regular drugs sellers, and the same as regular drug buyers. However, a comparison of the mean and median number of times spent in an adult institution indicates that a small proportion of non-regular offenders reported disproportionately more episodes in prison. Further analysis revealed that for 70 per cent of non-regular offenders the current sentence of imprisonment was the first.

Drug Use Histories

Fifty per cent of non-regular offenders had used one of the four main drug types—cannabis, cocaine, amphetamines and heroin. Fourteen per cent reported using more than one of these drugs. Of all non-regular offenders, 48 per cent had used cannabis, followed by amphetamines (14 per cent), and heroin (six per cent). Only 20 offenders (four per cent) had ever used cocaine. In the six months prior to the arrest for which they are now in prison, one quarter had used at least one of the four drug types and six per cent had used more than one. The most common drug was cannabis (25 per cent), followed by amphetamines (seven per cent). Sixty-nine per cent of the total DUCO sample had used at least one of the four main drugs in the six months prior to arrest. This compares to only 26 per cent of non-regular offenders. Non-regular offenders were also less likely to report poly-drug use.

Table 10.5 also shows the rate of escalation for those who had ever used and become current regular users of each drug type. In the case of cannabis, 25 per cent of non-regular offenders who had ever used became a current regular user. This was the case for 21 per cent of amphetamine users and 17 per cent for heroin users. The rates were significantly lower than the total DUCO inmate sample. For all inmates, the rate of escalation for cannabis was 65 per cent, amphetamines 53 per cent and heroin 47 per cent.

Table 10.5 Prevalence of illegal drug use amongst non-regular offenders (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any	More than 1
Prevalence						
Ever used	48	14	6	4	50	14
Used in six months prior to arrest	25	7	2	1	26	6
Current regular user	12	3	1	0	14	2
Escalation						
(n)	(62)	(14)	(5)	(2)	(71)	(11)

Escalation = 'current regular' divided by 'ever used'

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

These data indicate that non-regular offenders were not only less likely to have ever used any of the four main drugs but were also less likely to have escalated to become current regular users of any drug.

Linking Drugs and Non-regular Offenders

Non-regular offenders started their offending careers at a much later age than regular offenders. Table 10.6 shows that the mean age of first offence across all offence types was 22 years. Because there was not a large overlap between property and violent offending, those who had ever committed a property offence reported the age of onset into property offending at 17 years. Violent offending occurred nine years later at a mean age of 26. The offences most likely to be committed by non-regular offenders were physical assault and motor vehicle theft. There was also a large proportion of offenders who reported lifetime prevalence of sex offences. The mean age of first physical assault was 24 years, whereas motor vehicle theft was 18 years. The onset of sex offences was 36 years.

Table 10.6 Mean age of offending for non-regular offenders

	Any property offence	Any violent offence	Any offence	Physical assault	Motor vehicle theft	Sex offence
First offence						
Mean age	17	26	22	24	18	36
(n)	(201)	(289)	(389)	(216)	(82)	(96)

Estimates are for offenders having committed that offence.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 10.7 tracks the mean age of onset into illegal drug use and shows that on average, any drug use began at the mean age of 20 years. This drug was most likely to be cannabis (20 years) followed equally by amphetamines, cocaine and heroin (23 years). While the numbers are small, current regular users of each drug reported earlier ages of onset than those who were not regular users. Typically, experimentation with cannabis began at 17 years, followed by persistence at 19 years. For current regular users, both first and regular use commenced at least one year prior to the first use of non-regular users. For current regular users of amphetamines, regular use commenced at the mean age of 22 years followed by regular use at 23 years.

Table 10.7 Mean age of illegal drug use for non-regular offenders

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any
First use					
Mean age	20	23	23	23	20
(n)	(236)	(66)	(22)	(31)	(243)
Of current regular users					
First use	17	22	–	–	
Regular use	19	23	–	–	
Interval (regular–first)	2	1	–	–	
(n)	(62)	(13)	(5) ¹	(2) ¹	

¹ Insufficient sample size for analysis.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Lifetime Offending Causation

The DUCO male survey sought to gather information about the self-perceived effects of drugs and alcohol on the offending career. For non-regular offenders, the majority (66 per cent) reported that alcohol or drugs had no effect on their lifetime offending behaviour. Twenty-seven per cent reported that all or most of their

Table 10.8 Lifetime offending attributions for non-regular offenders

	n	%
Of those who quantified the effect		
0 per cent	243	66
25 per cent	17	5
50 per cent	9	2
75 per cent	39	11
100 per cent	60	16
(Total)	(368)	(100)
Of those who qualified the effect		
Psychopharmacological	81	60
Economic/ compulsive	4	3
Drugs and alcohol lead to crime	44	33
Other	6	4
(Total)	(135)	(100)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

offending behaviour was in some way affected by alcohol or drug use and, of these, the majority indicated that alcohol was the primary substance. Of those offenders who believed that alcohol and drugs had affected their lifetime offending behaviour and provided an explanation of that effect, the majority (60 per cent) stated that the effect was psychopharmacological, while a further 33 per cent reported that drugs lead them to crime. Few non-regular offenders (three per cent) reported that the primary effect of drugs and alcohol was economic/compulsive.

Conclusion

Non-regular offenders comprised a significant proportion of the offenders within the DUCO male sample (24 per cent). They tended to be older, slightly better educated, somewhat more likely to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, report less frequent offending generally, and have less overlap between major crime categories where offending did occur. In terms of explaining who these offenders were, the most likely story is that this group were simply not as enmeshed in a criminal lifestyle as were the other offender types analysed in this study. Non-regular offenders demonstrated comparatively low rates of overall offending and illegal drug use, did not report regular offending, and reported older ages of onset into criminal activity and drug use—indicators that have been illustrated as important in defining the criminal career.

In terms of explaining why they were involved in criminal activity, few commonly attributed drugs or alcohol. Where drug related attributions were made, alcohol was the substance most likely to be indicated as a motivation for offending.

11 Drug Market Activity

The DUCO male questionnaire asked a number of questions relating to the offender's involvement in the drug market prior to incarceration. As the questions refer to drug market activity prior to the time when the offender was incarcerated the drug market questions may not accurately reflect the drug market as it exists today. Furthermore the DUMA data shows that drug markets vary across different geographical areas (Makkai and McGregor 2003).

Drug Market Involvement

Offenders were asked to indicate their preferred drug of choice. The most popular drug was cannabis (30 per cent), followed by alcohol (18 per cent), heroin (17 per cent) and amphetamines (15 per cent). This pattern was not consistent across the offender types (table 11.1). The major differences were:

- the preferred drug of choice for fraud offenders was heroin;
- regular violent offenders, homicide offenders and non-regular offenders were much more likely to report alcohol as their drug of choice than amphetamines or heroin; and
- regular multiple offenders, regular property offenders, regular fraud offenders and regular drug offenders were more likely to nominate heroin or amphetamines than alcohol.

Offenders who nominated a legal substance as their preferred drug of choice were asked to nominate an illegal drug. The drug market questions were then asked about this drug. Of offenders who first nominated alcohol as the preferred drug of choice, 22 per cent provided an illegal drug of choice. The illegal drug they were most likely to nominate was cannabis (18 per cent), followed by amphetamines (three per cent). Offenders were asked how they usually obtained their drug of choice in the six months prior to the arrest for which they are now in prison. Multiple responses were coded in this section as offenders rarely reported that they used only one method for obtaining drugs.

The most common method of obtaining illegal drugs was to pay cash for them (table 11.2). This occurred for 79 per cent whose drug of choice was cannabis, 89 per cent for amphetamines and cocaine and 96 per cent for heroin.

Table 11.1 Self-reported preferred drug of choice by offender type (row per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Alcohol	Other ¹
All Offenders (n=1,962)	30	15	17	2	18	18
Regular property offenders	34	21	22	3	10	10
Regular violent offenders	35	7	7	2	30	19
Regular multiple offenders	32	22	29	2	8	7
Regular fraud offenders	21	25	31	2	7	14
Regular drug sellers	36	21	20	8	1	14
Regular drug buyers	44	16	17	1	7	15
Homicide offenders	33	6	4	2	32	23
Non-regular offenders	19	2	1	1	40	37

¹ Includes: tobacco, hallucinogens, inhalants, methadone, Benzociazepines, morphine and steroids.
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 11.2 Methods used to obtain the illegal drug of choice (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine
Stole it	13	11	20	7
Paid cash for it	79	89	96	89
Traded stolen goods	24	54	59	23
Traded other goods	18	39	38	11
Swapped drugs	20	47	50	49
Traded sex	1	4	2	2
Re-cut a previously obtained deal	14	32	37	26
Received in payment for a job	23	44	43	23
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(591)</i>	<i>(301)</i>	<i>(329)</i>	<i>(47)</i>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Although paying cash was a significant method for obtaining illegal drugs, offenders also reported using a number of other means during this period. These means varied by the type of drug, as follows:

- around half reported trading stolen goods for amphetamines and heroin, compared with around a quarter who reported doing this for cannabis and cocaine;
- around half also swapped drugs for amphetamines, heroin or cocaine while only one in five reported doing this for cannabis;
- few male offenders reported trading sex for drugs;
- re-cutting was done but relatively rarely for cannabis, with a quarter reporting this for cocaine and around a third for with amphetamines and heroin;
- receiving drugs as payment for a job was also a means to obtain illegal drugs with just under half obtaining amphetamines and heroin in this way, and around one in five reporting this for cannabis and cocaine; and
- cannabis was less likely to be associated with other property crime and almost a quarter reported trading in stolen goods for the drug; cannabis was also less likely to be re-cut and sold on.

Theoretically, drugs and crime models suggest that some people engage in violent criminal activity in order to protect their drug market or turf. This is referred to as the systemic model. Certainly in the US, some drug markets are associated with very high levels of violence; this is particularly the case for street level crack cocaine markets. There are very few Australian data on this aspect of illegal drug markets. Homicide data do not suggest that this most severe form of violence is associated in any significant way with violent drug markets. Offenders were asked whether, in the six months prior to arrest, they had ever used violence, threats or a weapon to obtain drugs. DUCO data suggests that violence is associated with drug markets but it is primarily the heroin market followed by the markets for amphetamines and cocaine. The cannabis market is rarely associated with force or threats of violence. The data on violence suggest that around half of all force or threats of violence are associated with the use of a weapon. Weapons are most likely to be associated with the heroin market and least likely to be associated with the cannabis market.

The use of violence varies by different offender types. Just over a third of regular multiple offenders reported the use of threats or violence and 20 per cent reported using a weapon.

Table 11.3 Violence to obtain drugs by preferred drug of choice (per cent)

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine
Force or threats of violence	7	20	29	15
Use of a weapon	3	8	17	9
(n)	(591)	(301)	(329)	(47)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Twenty-eight per cent of regular fraud offenders reported violence while just under half of these reported using a weapon. Although almost the same proportion of regular property and regular violent offenders reported using force or threats of violence (11–12 per cent), violent offenders were more likely to report also using a weapon.

Table 11.4 Violence to obtain drugs by offender type¹ (per cent)

	Regular property offender	Regular violent offender	Regular multiple offenders	Regular fraud offender	Regular drug seller	Regular drug buyer	Homicide offender	Non-regular offender
Force or threats of violence	11	12	36	28	8	6	0	1
Use of a weapon	5	8	20	13	3	5	0	0
(n)	(436)	(77)	(255)	(131)	(119)	(111)	(45)	(94)

¹ Estimates are for offenders whose preferred drug was one of the four main illegal drug types.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Offenders were asked to indicate how much they spent each week on drugs. As some offenders had spent a considerable time in prison prior to participation in this survey, each individual response was adjusted for inflation to best represent prices at the time of the survey (in 2001). For example, the drug expenditure of an offender incarcerated in 1996 was adjusted by the equivalent 1996 inflation ratio. It should be noted, however, that the expenditure means seen in table 11.5 are calculated only for offenders who reported being a current regular user of that

drug in the six months prior to arrest. This provides a more accurate picture of maximum expenditure among offenders who were actively involved in the drug market prior to arrest. The data illustrate that offenders reported spending relatively little per week on cannabis when compared with heroin. Across the total inmate population the average weekly expenditure on heroin for regular users was \$2,329.

When broken down by offender type, regular multiple offenders spent more on average for heroin, cannabis and cocaine than any other offender group. Fraud offenders spent an average of \$1,493 per week on amphetamines, which was the highest among all the offending groups. Non-regular offenders spent less on average for heroin, cannabis and amphetamines than all other offending categories.

Table 11.5 Weekly expenditure on drugs adjusted for inflation by current regular users (\$)¹

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine
All offenders	175	911	2329	837
Regular property offender	201	986	2346	617
Regular violent offender	121	480	1740	766
Regular multiple offender	240	985	2666	1272
Regular fraud offender	161	1493	2444	750
Regular drug seller	133	760	2167	788
Regular drug buyer	117	461	1347	851
Homicide offender	146	— ²	— ²	— ²
Non-regular offender	33	63	— ²	— ²

¹ Estimates are for current regular users of each drug type.

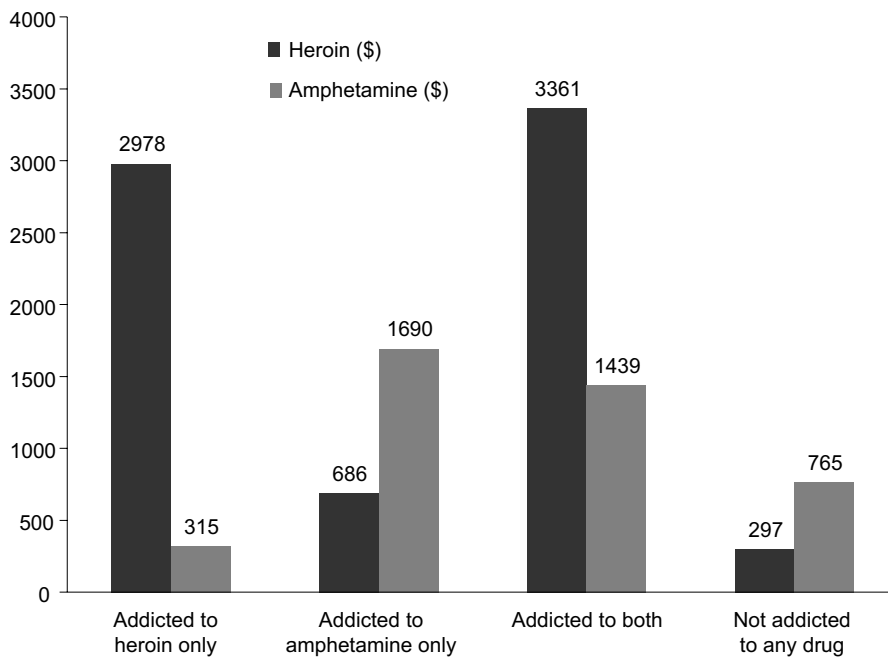
² Insufficient sample for analysis (n<10).

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Expenditure on illegal drugs was significantly higher for offenders who reported addiction to a drug in the six months prior to their most recent arrest (see figure 11.1). Current regular users of heroin who reported addiction spent an average of \$2,978 per week for heroin. By contrast, current regular users of heroin who were not addicted to any drug had a mean expenditure of \$297 per week. Similar results are found for amphetamine expenditure among current regular users who were or were not addicted in the six months prior to arrest. Offenders who were addicted to both heroin and amphetamines reported the highest weekly expenditure for heroin

(\$3,361). For those who were current regular users of heroin or amphetamine but did not self-report addiction, the mean weekly expenditure on amphetamines was significantly larger than heroin expenditure. Also, the mean expenditure on amphetamines was lower than heroin for addicts of both drugs.

Figure 11.1 Weekly expenditure on drugs by addiction status (\$)¹ - adjusted for inflation



¹ Estimates are for current regular users of each drug type.
 Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Conclusion

There are significant differences between the crime types in terms of their accessing and spending on drugs. These are as follows:

- Not including cannabis, regular property offenders, multiple offenders and fraud offenders were most likely to report heroin as the preferred illegal drug of choice. They were also likely to spend more on heroin per week.
- Regular violent offenders, homicide offenders and non-regular offenders reported alcohol as the primary drug of choice, and cannabis as the illegal drug of choice.
- Regular users of illegal drugs reported paying cash for their illegal drug of choice.
- Those who reported heroin or amphetamines as the illegal drug of choice were more likely to trade in stolen goods, swap drugs, re-cut the drug and be paid in drugs.
- Offenders whose preferred drug of choice was heroin were more likely to report using threats of violence and or a weapon in the drug market.
- Addicted offenders reported a higher weekly expenditure on heroin and amphetamines than non-addicted offenders. Poly-drug users of heroin or amphetamines spent more on heroin per week than offenders addicted to heroin only.

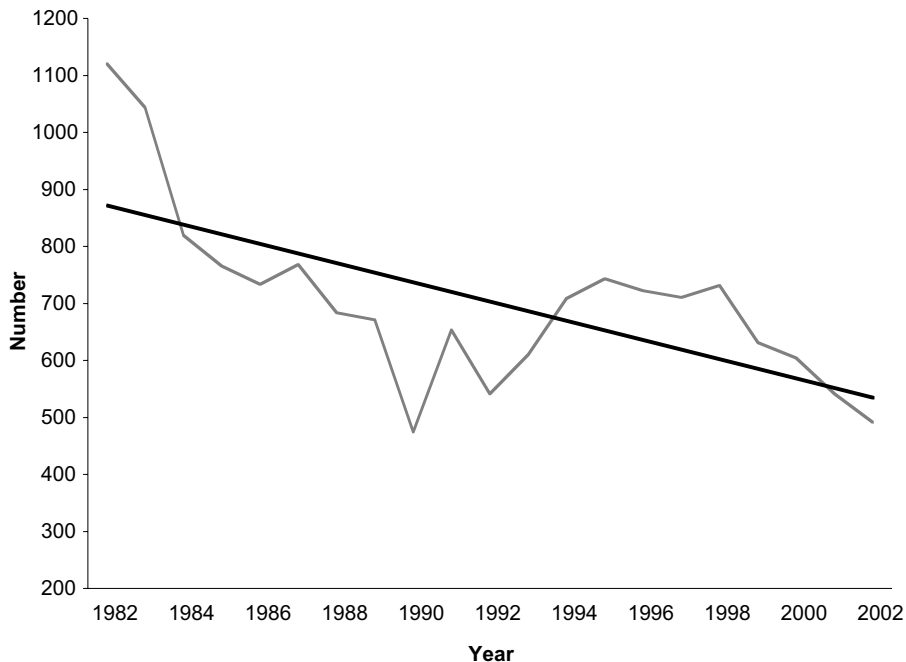
12 Risk Factors

The literature review identified a number of risk factors associated with the development of both drug and criminal careers. These factors have been found across a number of studies and countries. In this chapter five key risk factors are examined—early experience of detention in a juvenile facility, Indigenous status, alcohol, addiction, and the link between psycho-stimulant use and violence.

Juvenile Detention

Although offending peaks in the late teenage years, it is rare these days for young offenders to spend time in a juvenile facility. Figure 12.1 shows the proportion of young people detained in Australia over the last 20 years.

Figure 12.1 Offenders detained in juvenile detention in Australia 1982–2002 (number)

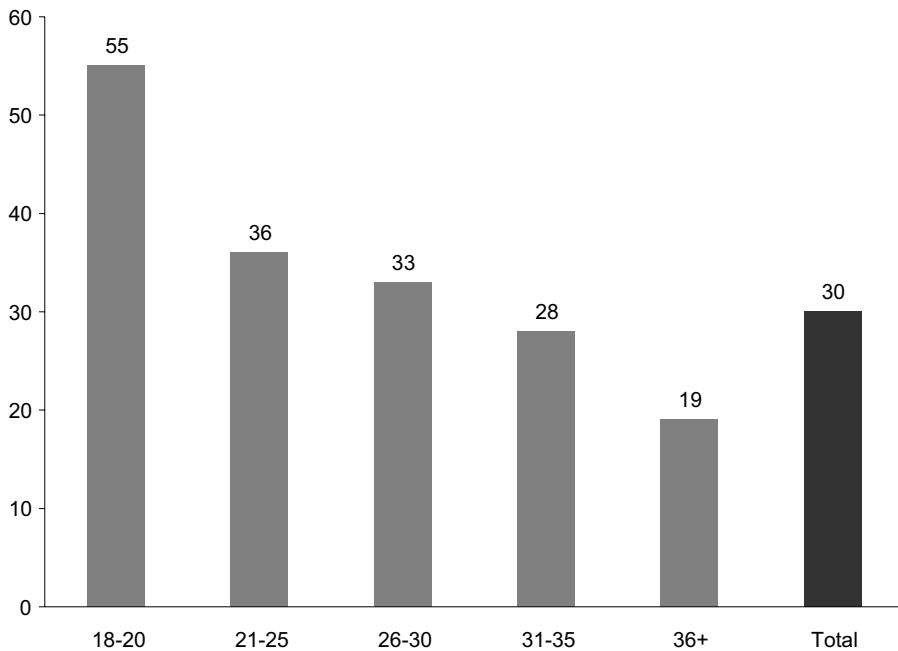


Source: Bareja, M., and Charlton, K. 2002, 'Statistics on Juvenile Detention in Australia 1981–2002' *Technical and Background Paper Series*, No.5, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

While the trends in incarceration data indicate a decrease in the numbers of juvenile offenders being detained, these figures are affected by a number of policy changes that have occurred between 1982 and 2002. Official incarceration rates for juveniles do not provide an indication of the number of juveniles being sentenced to weekend detention, home detention or remand.

Those juveniles who are detained are generally regarded by the State as being at significant risk of future offending. They also have a multiplicity of other factors that impact on their behaviour—weak social control, poor parenting and lack of guardianship, and lower levels of human capital in the form of education and skills. Figure 12.2 examines the proportions of incarcerated males that reported an experience of juvenile detention by age group. Overall, one third of the total DUCO male sample reported having been in a juvenile detention centre. Despite significant changes in juvenile detention policy in recent years, such as those described above, more than half of offenders aged between 18 and 20 years reported prior juvenile detention. This compares to less than 20 per cent of persons aged 36 years and over.

Figure 12.2 Rates of juvenile detention by age category (per cent)

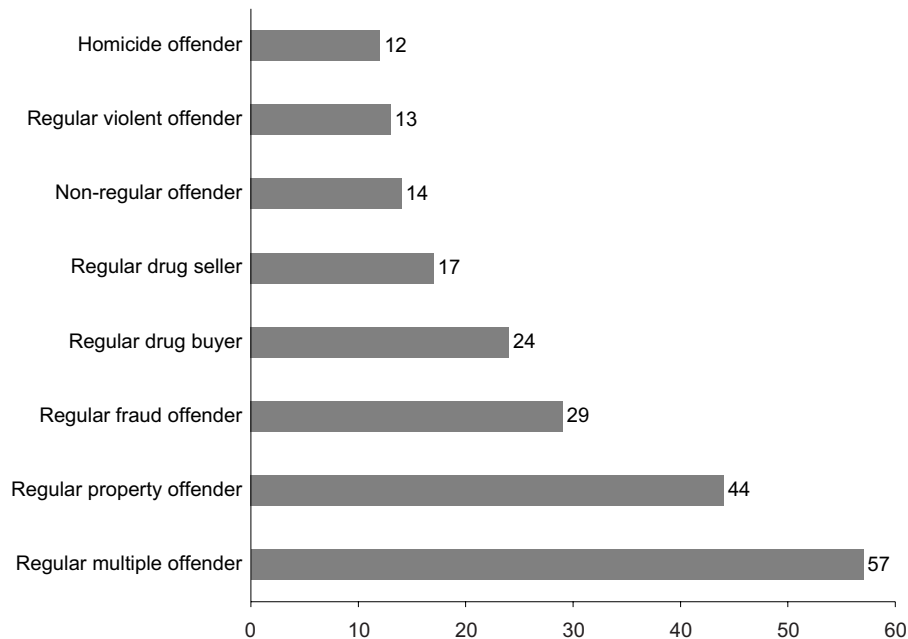


Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

When compared across offending types there are noticeable differences, with regular property offenders and regular multiple offenders more likely to report a history of juvenile detention than any other offender type (see Figure 12.3). As noted in an earlier chapter, regular multiple offenders reported higher rates of regular offending across both violent and property offences and were more likely to report having ever regularly committed three or more offences. Homicide offenders (12 per cent), regular violent offenders (13 per cent), non-regular offenders (14 per cent), and regular drug buyers (17 per cent) were all less likely than the total DUCO male sample to report a history of juvenile detention. These offenders reported less significant and entrenched offending histories throughout their lifetime.

Offenders with a history of juvenile incarceration had a greater probability of becoming a regular property and regular multiple offender than any other offending type. Table 12.1 demonstrates the level of contact for offenders with and without juvenile detention histories. The average number of charges was higher by a factor of three for those with prior juvenile detention. Table 12.1 also illustrates that offenders with a history of juvenile detention reported having spent more

Figure 12.3 Rates of juvenile detention by offender type (per cent)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

times in an adult prison than offenders without such a history. The average number of periods of adult incarceration was four for offenders with a history of juvenile detention and three for offenders without a history of juvenile detention.

Table 12.1 Formal interaction with the criminal justice system by juvenile detention history (per cent)

	History of juvenile detention	No juvenile detention
Mean number of:		
Charges	72	23
Convictions	56	19
Prison sentences	23	9
Times in adult institutions	4	3

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Analysis of the age of onset into offending also indicates that offenders who had been detained in a juvenile detention facility commenced their criminal offending at a much earlier age than offenders without a history of juvenile detention. Table 12.2 shows that the average age at onset of offending across a variety of crime categories was significantly higher for offenders who had never spent time in a juvenile detention facility. For these offenders, the mean age of first offence across all offence types was 12 years, five years earlier than the mean age of first offence for offenders without a history of juvenile detention.

'Any offence' as seen in table 12.2 includes both violent, property and drug offences. The disparity seen between first offence and first property offence for offenders with no history of juvenile detention suggests that, for at least some of the offenders within this category, a violent offence was the first offence committed in the lifetime offending career. As documented throughout this report, violent offending on average commenced later than property offending. This partly reflects the fact that homicide offenders, regular violent offenders, or non-regular offenders were less likely to have experienced juvenile detention. Nonetheless, even for offenders with a history of property offending, but no history of juvenile detention, the first property offence occurred at least three years later than offenders with a history of juvenile detention.

Prior juvenile detention also has an effect on the lifetime prevalence rates of drug use of individual offenders. Those with a history of juvenile detention were significantly more likely to have used any drug and to have persisted to regular use of any drug (see table 12.3). Moreover, they were more likely to have reported regular use of more than one drug and to self-report addiction.

Table 12.2 Mean age of offending by juvenile detention history

	Any offence	Any property offence	Any violent offence	Any drug offence
History of juvenile detention				
First offence	12	12	16	15
(n)	(633)	(604)	(532)	(530)
No juvenile detention				
First offence	17	15	21	17
(n)	(1384)	(1026)	(1047)	(955)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 12.3 Drug use indicators by juvenile detention history (per cent)

	History of juvenile detention	No juvenile detention
Use any drug ever	91	78
Regularly use any drug ever	77	55
Regularly use more than one drug ever	47	30
Addicted to any drug	53	36

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

As for the mean ages of onset for offending, these offenders also reported onset into illegal drugs at a younger age. Table 12.4 compares the mean age of onset for the different drugs for the two groups. Those with a history of juvenile detention were more likely to report starting drug use at a younger age. The first use of any drug for offenders with a history of juvenile detention was 14 years, compared with 16 years for offenders without such a history. This two-year difference for the mean age of onset was the same for cannabis and amphetamine use, while the difference is reduced to one year among users of heroin and cocaine. The literature highlights that the earlier drug use begins the more likely it is to persist, which has implications for crime and drug prevention strategies.

Table 12.4 Mean age of onset into illegal drug use by juvenile detention history

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any
History of juvenile detention					
First use	14	18	19	20	14
(n)	(597)	(467)	(378)	(20)	(583)
No juvenile detention					
First use	16	20	20	21	16
(n)	(1119)	(756)	(563)	(433)	(1,139)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Indigenous Status

Indigenous people are over-represented in the criminal justice system. In this sample they comprise almost one quarter of the offenders surveyed, but in terms of the proportion of adult males in the community they represent only two per cent (ABS 2002). On average, Indigenous offenders report having spent more times in an adult institution than their non-Indigenous counterparts. They are also more likely to have been incarcerated as a juvenile. This was the case for 42 per cent of Indigenous offenders as compared to 26 per cent for non-Indigenous offenders (table 12.5).

On average, Indigenous offenders reported fewer charges and convictions in their lifetime when compared with non-Indigenous offenders, but they reported the same average number of sentences to prison. The conversion between conviction and sentence for Indigenous offenders suggests that just over half (54 per cent) of all convictions resulted in a sentence to prison. For non-Indigenous offenders only 41 per cent of convictions resulted in the same. A number of factors may influence these data, including offence type and severity, as well as discrete jurisdictional differences. In particular, Indigenous offenders were more likely to report violent crime.

Figure 12.4 indicates that Indigenous offenders are over-represented among certain offender types. While Indigenous offenders made up 25 per cent of the DUCO male sample, they constituted 34 per cent of the regular violent offenders and 32 per cent of regular multiple offenders. Indigenous offenders were also

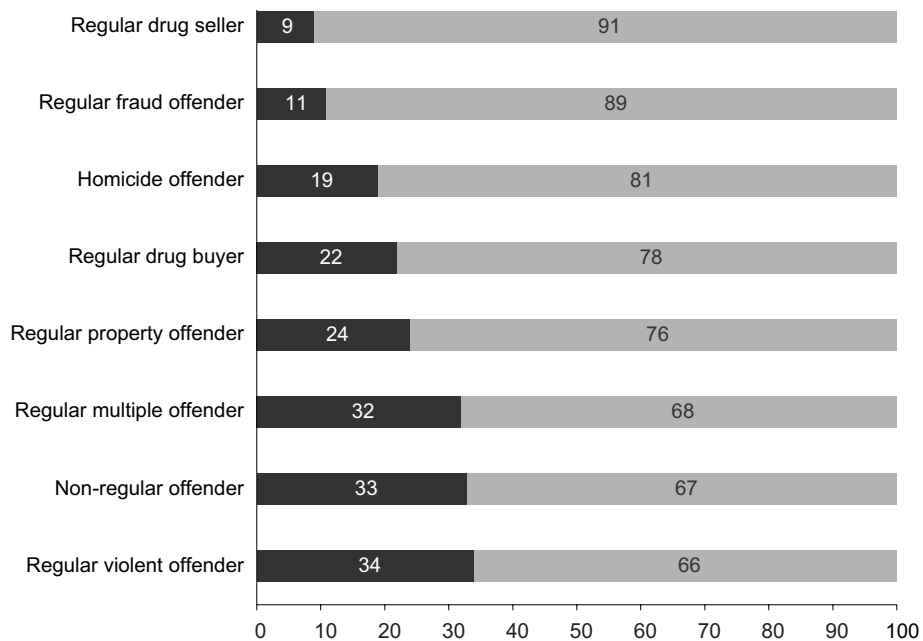
over represented among non-regular offenders of any offence type, although their most serious offence was most likely to be a violent offence. Indigenous offenders were less likely to be categorised as a regular fraud offender or to regularly engage in the sale of illegal drugs.

Table 12.5 Offending outcomes by Indigenous status

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Mean number of:		
Charges	31	39
Convictions	24	32
Prison sentences	13	13
Times in adult institutions	4	3
Juvenile detention (per cent)	42	26

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

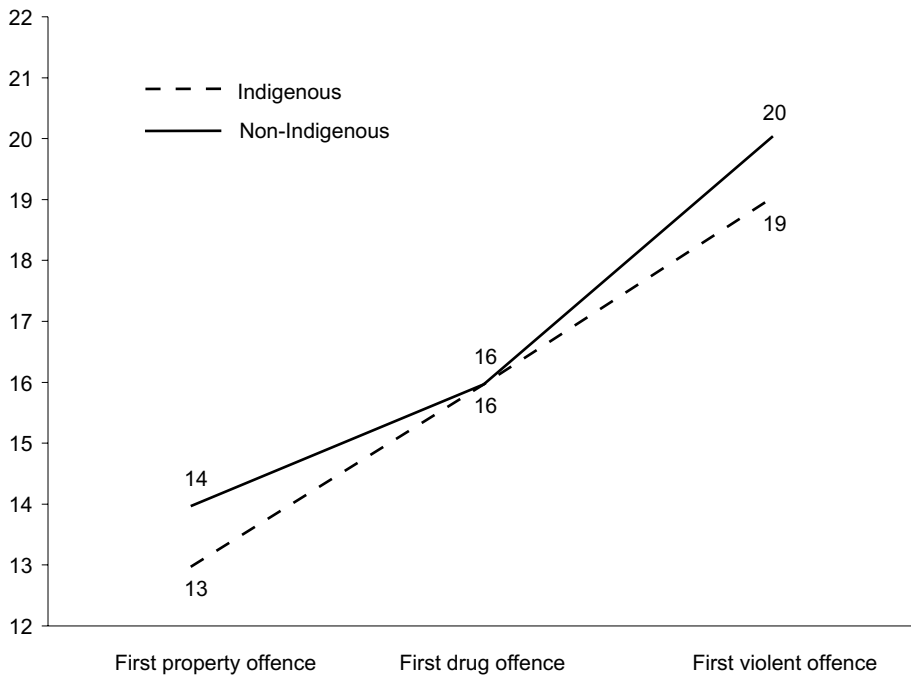
Figure 12.4 Offender type by Indigenous status (per cent)



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

On average, Indigenous offenders reported the onset of offending behaviour at a younger age than non-Indigenous offenders. Figure 12.5 shows the break down across three offence types, and indicates that Indigenous offenders reported the onset of property offending and violent offending one year earlier than non-Indigenous offenders. This difference might also account for the greater number of Indigenous offenders who spent time in juvenile detention. In terms of drug offending, however, the average age at which Indigenous offenders first committed these offences was the same as non-Indigenous offenders.

Figure 12.5 Mean age of offending by Indigenous status



Estimate are for offenders having committed that offence

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Although Indigenous offenders are over-represented within the prison population, have had more contact with the criminal justice system, and reported younger onset into criminal careers, on average, they reported lower rates of illegal drug use. Table 12.6 shows a range of drug use indicators for Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders. The largest difference is in terms of ever using more than one drug. Indigenous offenders were far less likely to report ever or regularly

using two or more of the four main drug types—cannabis, heroin, cocaine and amphetamines. However, further analysis indicates that Indigenous offenders were significantly more likely to report the use of alcohol in the six months prior to the arrest for which they are now in prison, and also to be a current regular user of alcohol. The effects of alcohol are addressed later in this chapter.

Indigenous offenders reported the age of first use of any of the four main drug types to be 16 years of age (table 12.7). This is one year later than non-Indigenous offenders who, on average, reported first starting their drug use careers at 15 years. This trend was particularly so for cannabis users, where Indigenous offenders began use approximately one year after non-Indigenous offenders. There were few Indigenous offenders who reported illegal ‘hard’ drug use. Where this did occur there was no difference in the mean age of onset for amphetamine or heroin, but of those who had used cocaine, Indigenous offenders reported onset one year earlier than non-Indigenous offenders.

The general inmate population is, on average, more likely to report some offending prior to onset into illegal drug use. Where there is regular drug use, the drug-using and criminal career begins with offending, followed by first illegal drug use and then progression to regular offending, culminating in regular drug use.

For Indigenous offenders who were regular users of any of the four main drug types the story is slightly different. Their mean age of initiation into any of the crime categories was 12 years. At the age of 15, both first drug use and regular offending commenced; and one year later, at the age of 16 years, the regular use of any drug began. On average, Indigenous offenders who later became regular users of any of the four main drug types reported onset of offending prior to the commencement of drug use. The main difference between these offenders and their non-Indigenous counterparts, is that for Indigenous offenders both regular offending and first drug use occurred concurrently, and it usually commenced much later in the lifetime career (after a three-year interval).

Table 12.6 Drug use indicators by Indigenous status (per cent)

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Use any drug ever	72	85
Use more than one drug ever	39	68
Current regular user of any drug	55	64
Regularly use more than one drug ever	22	40

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 12.7 Mean age of onset into illegal drug use by Indigenous status

	Cannabis	Amphetamines	Heroin	Cocaine	Any
Indigenous					
First use	16	19	20	19	16
(n)	(369)	(192)	(136)	(80)	(372)
Non-Indigenous					
First use	15	19	20	20	15
(n)	(1268)	(977)	(770)	(570)	(1268)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Alcohol

Alcohol has been widely associated with certain forms of offending, most notably, driving while under the influence and violent offending. The literature review has indicated that the empirical basis for the link between alcohol and violence is not clear cut—some argue that it is due to the pharmacology, others argue that it is part of a set of cultural values that condones violence in particular circumstances. There is solid research emerging in Australia that shows high correlations between alcohol availability and location and assault (Briscoe and Donnelly 2001; Teece and Williams 2000). This report has concentrated on the four main illegal drugs, although some data on alcohol prevalence and use were collected. This section highlights the association between alcohol use and criminal behaviour.

As for the general population, offenders reported nearly 100 per cent lifetime prevalence of alcohol (see table 12.8). Around three quarters reported using in the six months prior to arrest while between 53 and 71 per cent reported being current regular users. There were noticeable differences across offender types and current

regular use—regular violent and homicide offenders reported high rates of use in the six months prior to arrest. Of regular users, the frequency of use does not vary significantly across the offender type. When several times a day and daily are combined, regular multiple offenders were the highest (45 per cent) with the next highest being homicide offenders (41 per cent).

What is not measured by the DUCO male study is how much alcohol was consumed in any one drinking occasion. However, offenders were asked whether they were addicted to alcohol and whether they were intoxicated with alcohol at the time of offending. The group most likely to report addiction was regular violent offenders, followed by regular multiple offenders and then homicide offenders (see table 12.9). In terms of intoxication at the time of their offence, the group most likely to report this was homicide offenders, followed by regular violent offenders. The data on homicide offenders seem to indicate that alcohol is a factor but that most offenders did not self-report being addicted. In terms of addiction and intoxication at the time of offending, fraud offenders were the least likely to report this, although they were more likely to report being regular users of cocaine.

Of the total DUCO male sample who were regular users of alcohol, the mean age of onset was 14 years, with regular use at 17 years. Typically, first alcohol use preceded cannabis use by approximately one year. These ages of onset for alcohol varied by offender type, with the more chronic offenders such as regular multiple offenders and regular property offenders reporting experimentation with alcohol at a mean age of 13 years—one year prior to cannabis. This compares to regular violent offenders, homicide offenders and non-regular offenders who reported experimentation with alcohol at a mean age of 15 years. These data illustrate that, despite a greater escalation from onset to persistence for alcohol among typically violent offenders, the age of onset remained older than for more chronic offenders where escalation to regular use was less common.

Table 12.8 Prevalence of alcohol use by offender type (per cent)

	Regular property offenders	Regular violent offenders	Regular multiple offenders	Regular fraud offenders	Regular drug sellers	Regular drug buyers	Homicide offenders	Non- regular offenders
Prevalence								
Ever used	97	96	98	97	96	97	97	94
Used in six months prior to arrest	78	86	79	75	69	79	85	87
Current regular user (n)	58 (330)	71 (119)	65 (201)	58 (104)	53 (78)	60 (86)	70 (79)	60 (302)
Frequency of use								
Less than monthly	11	8	9	11	10	15	6	6
One to several times a month	14	9	11	13	15	13	11	12
One to several times a week	42	43	36	39	42	47	42	41
Once a day	12	12	16	12	10	13	23	17
Several times a day (Total)	21 (100)	28 (100)	29 (100)	26 (100)	22 (100)	13 (100)	18 (100)	23 (100)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 12.9 Alcohol addiction and intoxication by offender type (per cent)

	Regular property offenders	Regular violent offenders	Regular multiple offenders	Regular fraud offenders	Regular drug sellers	Regular drug buyers	Homicide offenders	Non- regular offenders
Addicted to alcohol	19	34	28	17	19	13	22	19
Intoxication at time of MSO								
Alcohol only	12	23	15	8	10	18	34	42
Alcohol and illegal drugs	22	20	25	17	18	17	10	5
Illegal drugs only	34	9	34	40	36	24	9	3

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 12.10 Mean age of onset and persistence for regular alcohol users by offender type

	Regular property offenders	Regular violent offenders	Regular multiple offenders	Regular fraud offenders	Regular drug sellers	Regular drug buyers	Homicide offenders	Non-regular offenders
First use	13	15	13	14	14	14	15	15
Regular use	16	18	15	16	17	17	18	19
(n)	(330)	(119)	(201)	(104)	(78)	(86)	(79)	(302)

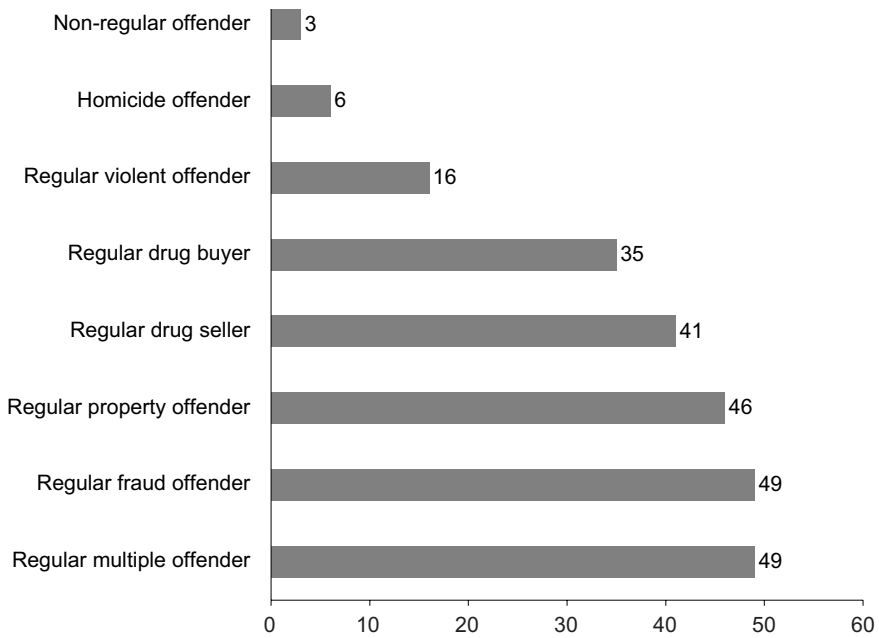
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Psycho-stimulants and Violent Crime

Studies conducted in the United States indicate that cocaine use is highly correlated with violence, while Australian research on violent property crime indicates that the use of psycho-stimulants, namely amphetamine and methamphetamine is related to violent crime (Indermaur 1995). Analysis of the effects of psycho-stimulant use is limited in this research by two factors:

- firstly, few offenders reported current regular use of cocaine—this is consistent with surveys of police detainees where the numbers testing positive to cocaine are minimal (Makkai and McGregor 2003); and
- secondly, while 31 per cent of the total DUCO male sample reported current regular use of amphetamines, only three per cent reported amphetamines as the only drug that they were a regular user of. As a result, it is difficult to disentangle the direct effects for amphetamines only.

Figure 12.6 illustrates that non-regular offenders were the least likely of all offender categories to report current regular amphetamine use (three per cent). Fewer regular violent offenders (16 per cent) reported current regular use of amphetamines than did regular property offenders (46 per cent), regular multiple offenders (49 per cent) and regular fraud offenders (49 per cent).

Figure 12.6 Regular amphetamine use by offender type (per cent)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

As mentioned above, the analysis of amphetamine use is increasingly difficult given the extent of poly-drug use among this sample of incarcerated offenders. Three user groups were developed to aid data analysis:

- regular amphetamine users who were not current regular users of heroin or cocaine—there were 353 offenders;
- regular heroin users who were not current regular users of amphetamine or cocaine—there were 184 offenders; and
- current regular users of both amphetamines and heroin but not cocaine—there were 185 offenders.

The first two categories have been designed to enable a comparison of key characteristics between regular heroin and regular amphetamine users without double counting or crossover effects from the regular use of both drugs. The third category allows us to examine regular poly-drug use for heroin and amphetamine. It should be noted however that due to the extent of poly-drug use, these three drug user categories do not control for the regular use of other legal and illegal

drugs including cannabis and alcohol. The offending history and frequency of offending was similar for regular heroin and regular amphetamine users, but was slightly higher for poly-drug users. Offenders who were not regular users of any of the four main drug types were significantly less likely to engage in violent or regular violent offending. Sixty-five per cent of non-regular users reported ever committing a violent offence, compared with 81 per cent of regular amphetamine users and 76 per cent of regular heroin users.

Table 12.11 Prevalence of violent offending for regular amphetamine and heroin users (per cent)

	Regular amphetamine user only	Regular heroin user only	Regular amphetamine and heroin users	Non-regular user of any drug
Violent offence history				
Ever committed any violent offence	81	76	83	65
Ever regularly committed a violent offence	26	29	38	17
Ever regularly committed two or more violent offences	9	8	10	2
Frequency of violent offending (column per cent)				
More than one day per week	5	9	10	2
One day per week	5	4	5	2
About monthly	4	9	8	4
Less than once a month	34	29	26	35
None in the past six months	22	20	25	24
Never in my life	29	29	25	32
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Regular amphetamine users were more likely to commit and regularly commit physical assault than regular users of heroin. In terms of robbery without a weapon, there was very little difference in the number reporting lifetime prevalence and regular offending. However regular users of heroin were more likely to report having committed armed robbery and escalated to committing armed robbery on a regular basis. Across the board, non-regular users of any of the four main drug types less frequently reported assault, robbery and armed robbery than did the regular drug user samples.

The differences in offending patterns among these four samples are notable. Regular heroin users reported committing armed robbery more frequently, while regular amphetamine users reported assault. Traditionally, armed robbery is classified as a violent offence because a victim was present at the time of the offence and fear or injury was caused. Despite this, it is clear that the primary motivation for robbery and armed robbery is the acquisition of property, whereas the motivation for assault is violence.

Table 12.12 Violent offending histories by regular drug use (per cent)

	Regular amphetamine user	Regular heroin user	Regular users of amphetamine and heroin	Non-regular user of any drug
Assault				
Ever	70	57	67	49
Regular	17	10	16	9
Robbery				
Ever	34	34	48	7
Regular	10	11	18	1
Armed robbery				
Ever	35	56	52	10
Regular	12	18	19	2

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

There is some evidence in the DUCO data that suggests that the violent crimes committed by regular amphetamine users and regular heroin users were motivated by different factors. When asked how long prior to committing violent crimes did the offenders usually decide to commit them, regular amphetamine users more frequently report there was no decision to commit violent crime or that the decision to do so was made on the spur of the moment (see table 12.13). Forty-three per cent of regular heroin users reported some form of premeditation. This compares with only 18 per cent of regular amphetamine users. Some offenders across all three samples reported that there was usually no decision to commit violent crime, but that it just happened—this was most likely to be reported by non-regular users of any drug.

Table 12.13 Decision making and planning of violent crime by regular drug use (per cent)

	Regular amphetamine user	Regular heroin user	Non-regular user
Decision making for violent crime¹			
More than a week before	5	18	7
About a day before	5	13	4
About and hour before	8	12	4
Usually on the spur of the moment	57	42	45
Didn't decide, it just happened	25	15	40
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Volume of planning for violent crimes¹			
A lot of planning	4	10	5
A fair bit of planning	4	11	3
A little bit of planning	14	25	9
No planning at all	77	54	84
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

¹ Estimates are for offenders with lifetime prevalence of violent offending.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Aside from the decision to commit violent crime, regular amphetamine users spent less time on average planning their violent crime than did regular heroin users. Ten per cent of regular heroin users reported 'a lot of planning' before committing violent offences. This compares with only four per cent of regular amphetamine users. In all, just less than half (46 per cent) of regular heroin users reported some level of planning for their violent offences, while only 22 per cent of amphetamine users reported the same. This is consistent with regular heroin users reporting acquisitive violent crimes such as robbery and armed robbery, and regular amphetamine users reporting physical assault.

So, did regular amphetamine users tend to associate their lifetime offending with the psychopharmacological effects of their drug use? When asked what effect alcohol or drugs has had on the lifetime offending career, regular amphetamine users more often nominated the psychopharmacological effects, whereas regular heroin users nominated the economic/compulsive effects (table 12.14). Thirty-seven per cent of regular amphetamine users reported that the main effect of drugs and alcohol on the lifetime offending career was psychopharmacological, compared with only 12 per cent of regular heroin users.

Table 12.14 Attributions for the lifetime offending career by regular drug use (per cent)

	Regular amphetamine user	Regular heroin user
Psychopharmacological	37	12
Economic/compulsive	25	49
Drugs and alcohol led to crime	26	26
Other	12	13
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

The relationship between violent crime the use of psycho-stimulant drugs such as amphetamine and cocaine has been the topic of much debate in recent years. The data presented here provide mixed results, suggesting that, on the whole, regular violent offenders report less use of amphetamines than regular property offenders and regular fraud offenders. However, when broken down by offence type, current regular amphetamine users report higher lifetime prevalence of physical assault, compared to higher rates of armed robbery for regular users of heroin. In addition to this, there is evidence to suggest that current regular amphetamine users report less planning and decision-making than do current regular heroin users—a factor that almost certainly related to the offence type.

Due to the nature of the DUCO study, it was impossible to collect information that could accurately link the use of psycho-stimulant drugs to the actual event of violent crime. As a result, these data present compelling anecdotal evidence about the existence of such a relationship, although further research is still needed in this area.

Addiction and Intoxication

Both longitudinal and cross sectional studies have noted that during periods of heavy drug use offenders increase the volume and severity of their offending. Without a prospective study it is difficult to collect reliable data on periods of high drug use and offending over the lifetime career.

However, offenders in this study were asked two questions that can assist in understanding the links between drug use and crime. Offenders were asked:

- if they were addicted to illegal drugs or alcohol during the six months prior to arrest; and
- whether they were intoxicated with illegal drugs or alcohol at the time of committing the most serious offence for which they are now in prison.

Addiction

While the DUCO study did not clinically test levels of drug dependency, offenders were asked whether they were addicted to one or more of the four main drug types in the six months prior to their arrest. Overall, 41 per cent of offenders reported being addicted to cannabis, amphetamines, heroin, cocaine or any combination of these drugs. Table 12.15 shows that there were noticeable differences between offender types. Regular multiple offenders were most likely to report addiction to any drug (67 per cent). Sixty-one per cent of regular property offenders reported being addicted, while this was the case for 63 per cent of regular fraud offenders. The lowest rates of self-reported addiction were for homicide offenders, regular violent offenders and non-regular offenders. When the four drug types are combined, regular fraud offenders were more likely to report addiction to two or more drugs, followed equally by regular property offenders and regular multiple offenders.

Table 12.15 Addiction indicators by offender type (per cent)

	Regular property offenders	Regular violent offenders	Regular multiple offenders	Regular fraud offenders	Regular drug sellers	Regular drug buyers	Homicide offenders	Non-regular offenders
Drug type								
Cannabis	33	21	33	27	27	20	8	3
Amphetamines	25	9	29	35	20	15	2	1
Heroin	26	8	31	33	25	15	3	1
Cocaine	4	1	6	6	4	2	2	0
Any of the four drugs	61	28	67	63	52	42	12	4
Multiple illegal drugs								
Two or more	22	6	22	27	18	8	1	1

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Current literature suggests that heroin addiction is a major factor in property offending, while there is some evidence that amphetamine and cocaine use are factors in violent offending. Table 12.16 examines the frequency of property offending during the period when offenders reported on their level of addiction for two of the major drug groups—amphetamines and heroin. Addicts, regardless of the drug type, reported high levels of offending. Forty-two per cent of offenders who were addicted to heroin in the six months prior to arrest reported committing property offences on more than one day per week while only eight per cent of offenders not addicted to any drug reported this. However, offenders who reported addiction to heroin reported similar levels of property offending compared with offenders reporting addiction to amphetamines and those addicted to both illegal substances.

Table 12.16 Volume of property offending by addiction status (column per cent)

	Addicted to heroin only	Addicted to amphetamine only	Addicted to both heroin and amphetamine	Not addicted to any drug
More than one day per week	42	43	47	8
One day a week	7	9	13	2
About monthly	10	3	8	3
Less than once a month	9	10	11	9
Not in the last six months	27	24	18	32
Never in my life	6	12	3	46
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(236)</i>	<i>(136)</i>	<i>(38)</i>	<i>(1249)</i>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

While drug addiction presents clear implications for the level and frequency of offending, the dynamics of addiction related behaviour are still not clearly understood. Potentially, addiction to an illegal drug results in an increased involvement in the drug market, and subsequent criminal offending. Alternatively, the physical need for illegal drugs forces individuals to resort to illegitimate means to support a drug habit. The DUCO male survey asked offenders whether, at the time of committing the most serious offence, they were 'hanging out', 'sick' or 'hurting' from the lack of drugs.

Offenders who reported 'hanging out' for illegal drugs at the time of the current most serious offence were in almost all cases addicted to one of the four main drug types (90 per cent). The relationship was strongest for offenders who reported an addiction to both heroin and amphetamines, followed by heroin only addicts. Table 12.17 illustrates that 55 per cent of those addicted to heroin reported hanging out for drugs at the time of offending. This compares to 30 per cent of offenders addicted to amphetamines only. Offenders who were not addicted to illegal drugs were unlikely to report hanging out for illegal drugs at the time of their offending (three per cent).

Table 12.17 Hanging out for illegal drugs by addiction status (per cent)

	Addicted to heroin only	Addicted to amphetamine only	Addicted to both heroin and amphetamine	Not addicted to any drug
Hanging out for illegal drugs				
Yes	55	30	63	3
No	45	70	37	97
(n)	(234)	(131)	(38)	(1129)

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Offenders reporting addiction to illegal drugs or alcohol were more likely to causally attribute their current most serious offence to drug or alcohol use. Alcohol addiction was reported by 21 per cent of the total sample, and has been included in this analysis as some offenders causally attributed their offending to both illegal drugs and alcohol. Table 12.18 illustrates that offenders who were addicted to either of these substances were significantly more likely to causally attribute their offending to these factors. In all, thirteen per cent of addicted offenders reported that the primary motivation for their current most serious offence was for money for drugs. This compares to only two per cent of non-addicted offenders. Similarly more than 30 per cent of addicted offenders stated that the reason for their offences was drug or alcohol related but did not clearly articulate the causal link. This compares to eight per cent of non-addicted offenders.

So how much crime is related to drug dependency? Estimates of a causal relationship are based on a group of offenders who reported: (a) addiction at the time of the current most serious offence; and (b) that the reason they committed

Table 12.18 Causal attribution by addiction status (per cent)

	Addicted ¹	Not addicted
Reason for committing most serious offence		
Money for illegal drugs or alcohol	13	2
Intoxicated by illegal drugs or alcohol	15	10
Illegal drugs or alcohol—not specified	32	8
Other	40	80
(n)	(1098)	(863)

¹ Estimates include persons addicted to alcohol

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

that offence was related to drugs, either for money or unspecified. Adjusting addiction levels for causal attribution, 24 per cent of all current most serious offences were causally attributable to addiction. The break down is 18 per cent for addiction to illegal drugs, three per cent for alcohol and three per cent for both alcohol and illegal drugs.

By offender type, significant differences appear (table 12.19). Regular fraud offenders were most likely to causally attribute their most serious offence to drug or alcohol addiction (45 per cent), followed by property offenders (33 per cent). Few non-regular and homicide offenders (four and ten per cent respectively) causally attributed their offending to illegal drugs or alcohol.

Table 12.19 Model addiction attribution by offender type (per cent)¹

	Regular property offenders	Regular violent offenders	Regular multiple offenders	Regular fraud offenders	Regular drug sellers	Regular drug buyers	Homicide offenders	Non- regular offenders	Total DUCO sample
Addiction attribution to:									
Illegal drugs	28	10	25	37	20	20	5	1	18
Alcohol	2	6	2	1	1	2	5	3	3
Both	3	4	6	7	4	1	1	0	3
None	67	80	67	55	75	77	90	96	76
<i>Total addiction attribution</i>	33	20	33	45	25	23	10	4	24

¹ Estimates are for offenders who reported addiction in the six months prior to arrest and reported drugs or alcohol as the reason for committing that offence.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Intoxication

In addition to questions of addiction, offenders were asked to state whether they were 'high' on illegal drugs or 'drunk' on alcohol at the time of committing the most serious offence for which they are now in prison. Sixty-two per cent of all offenders reported intoxication by alcohol or illegal drugs. Twenty-four per cent were high on illegal drugs, 21 per cent drunk on alcohol and 17 per cent stated that they were intoxicated with both illegal drugs and alcohol. Despite these seemingly high levels of intoxication, many offenders did not directly attribute offending to their state of intoxication (see table 12.20). When asked why they committed the most serious offence for which they are now in prison, only 12 per cent of all offenders reported intoxication as the reason. A further 29 per cent said that their offending was drug and alcohol related but they did not clearly articulate a causal link.

The disparity between self-reported intoxication and causal attribution is potentially the result of three underlying factors. Firstly, offenders may have been intoxicated but did not genuinely believe that their state of intoxication was the reason for committing their offence. Secondly, an offender's behaviour, such as the desire for retribution or 'pay-back', may have been exacerbated by intoxication, but that the desire for retribution was stated as the reason for the offence, not intoxication. Thirdly, some offenders may have committed their crime because of the effects of illegal drugs or alcohol, but did not articulate a causal attribution when intoxicated.

By adjusting the levels of intoxication for causal attribution, it is estimated that 29 per cent of all offenders within the DUCO male sample committed their most serious offence because of intoxication (see table 12.21). Eleven per cent were due to illegal drugs, ten per cent to alcohol and eight per cent were due to both. The total level of attribution to intoxication is fairly consistent across offender types (between 20 and 30 per cent). The most notable difference is for regular multiple offenders, where 35 per cent causally attributed intoxication to their most serious offence. Non-regular offenders and homicide offenders were less likely to attribute their offending to intoxication. Table 12.22 illustrates the differences in the drug most likely to be attributed in intoxication. Homicide offenders, non-regular offenders and violent offenders were more likely to report intoxication by alcohol. This compares with regular property, fraud and multiple offenders who were more likely to report intoxication by illegal drugs.

Table 12.20 Intoxication and causal attribution for current most serious offence

	n	%
Intoxicated at time of most serious offence		
Illegal drugs	476	24
Alcohol	414	21
Both illegal drugs and alcohol	340	17
None	763	38
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(1993)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Reason for committing most serious offence		
Under the influence	248	12
Drug related – other	586	29
Other	1192	59
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(2026)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Table 12.21 Model intoxication attribution by offender type (per cent)¹

	Regular property offenders	Regular violent offenders	Regular multiple offenders	Regular fraud offenders	Regular drug sellers	Regular drug buyers	Homicide offenders	Non-regular offenders	Total DUCO sample
Intoxication attribution to:									
Illegal drugs	14	4	17	20	16	11	2	1	11
Alcohol	6	14	5	2	1	8	17	20	10
Both	9	13	13	8	8	10	5	3	8
None	71	96	65	70	75	71	76	76	71
<i>Total intoxication attribution:</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>29</i>

¹ Estimates are for offenders who reported intoxication at the time of the most serious offence and reported drugs or alcohol as the reason for committing that offence.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

How Much Crime is Attributable to Drugs or Alcohol?

Throughout this section both addiction and intoxication have been used to model and estimate the proportion of most serious offences that are causally attributable to illegal drugs or alcohol. These models suggest that 29 per cent of offenders causally attribute their current most serious offence to intoxication by illegal

drugs or alcohol while 24 per cent attribute addiction. Given that addicted offenders are also more likely to be intoxicated at the time of the most serious offence, there exists an overlap of offenders who causally attribute their offending to both these factors. By combining these two models, the total proportion of offenders that causally attributed their offending to illegal drugs or alcohol is 39 per cent. The breakdown by drug type indicates that illegal drugs are most likely to be associated with offending behaviours among this sample (18 per cent). This is followed by the use of both illegal drugs and alcohol (12 per cent) and alcohol alone (nine per cent).

Comparisons across offending types again illustrate the differences that exist. As for the findings throughout this report, fraud offenders (51 per cent), regular property offenders (46 per cent) and regular multiple offenders (47 per cent) were the groups most likely to attribute illegal drugs to their current most serious offence. Homicide offenders and non-regular offenders were significantly less likely to causally attribute illegal drugs or alcohol (25 per cent). Moreover, these offenders were the only groups where the total causal attributions to alcohol were greater than attributions to illegal drugs or both.

Table 12.22 Model causal attribution by offender type — intoxication and addiction combined (per cent)

	Regular property offenders	Regular violent offenders	Regular multiple offenders	Regular fraud offenders	Regular drug sellers	Regular drug buyers	Homicide offenders	Non-regular offenders	Total DUCO sample
Causal attribution:									
Illegal drugs	26	6	26	35	22	22	4	1	18
Alcohol	6	13	4	2	1	5	15	20	9
Both	14	15	16	14	10	13	6	4	12
None	54	55	53	49	67	60	75	75	61
<i>Total attribution:</i>	46	34	47	51	33	40	25	25	39

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File]

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined a number of significant risk factors for certain types of offending. In particular:

- offenders with a history of juvenile detention reported onset into illegal drug use at a younger age with less time between onset and persistence;
- Indigenous male offenders were over-represented in violent offending but they had lower levels of illegal drugs use and later onset into illegal drugs than non-Indigenous offenders;
- frequent alcohol use was more likely to be associated with violent offending, and alcohol use preceded illegal drug use;
- addicted offenders, regardless of the drug type, reported more frequent property offending, were more likely to attribute their offending to illegal drugs, and were more likely to be 'hanging out' for drugs at the time of their most recent arrest;
- although regular amphetamine users and regular heroin users reported similar levels of violent offending, when violent offending is broken down by offence type, regular amphetamine users were more likely to engage in physical assault; regular heroin users were more likely to report regularly committing robberies and armed robberies than regular amphetamine users;
- regular amphetamine users were significantly more likely to have acted impulsively with no planning and to attribute their offending to the psychopharmacological properties of drug use; and
- thirty-nine per cent of all offenders causally attributed their current most serious offence to illegal drugs or alcohol. Eighteen per cent causally attributed their offending to illegal drugs, nine per cent to alcohol and 12 per cent to both.

13 Conclusions

The report has provided an analysis of the criminal and drug-using careers of a sample of male offenders who were incarcerated in prisons in Western Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory in mid-2001. Not unexpectedly the male prison population is relatively young, poorly educated, and has an over-representation of Indigenous males. Moreover they reported significant levels of prior offending and imprisonment.

In terms of their criminal offending they engaged in widespread violent and property offending throughout their careers. A typology of offending or crime types was developed. These were:

- regular property offenders (27 per cent);
- regular multiple offenders (15 per cent);
- regular violent offenders (eight per cent);
- regular fraud offenders (eight per cent);
- drug sellers (seven per cent);
- drug buyers (seven per cent);
- homicide offenders (five per cent); and
- non-regular offenders group (24 per cent).

Eighty-two per cent of offenders reported having ever tried cannabis, amphetamines, cocaine or heroin and 62 per cent reported that they were regular users in the six months prior to their most recent arrest. Poly-drug use is common, with 35 per cent reporting that they used two or more the drugs on a regular basis. Because of the overlap in drug use it is difficult to disentangle direct effects for particular drugs.

The analysis of the onset and persistence of offending and drugs shows that on average most offenders onset with minor offending, then progressed to more serious offending and then moved into regular offending. The first illegal drug that offenders usually tried was cannabis. This more often than not occurred after the onset and persistence with minor offending. Offenders then progressed onto more

serious and regular offending. In some crime types 'hard' drug use started between serious and regular offending, in other crime types it occurred after regular offending. Either way there is little support for the hypothesis that offenders are forced into a life of crime by their illegal drug use. Offenders confirm this, as the majority of them did not attribute all of their offending to illegal drugs. This suggests that the most common model of drugs and crime is one of the criminal career.

The data do show, however, that a subset of offenders who are 'addicted' to illegal drugs reported offending at a higher rate and spending more money on illegal drugs. This suggests that where illegal drugs are a significant factor in the life of an offender their addiction escalated pre-existing offending behavior. This is also confirmed by the attribution of heroin offenders who tended to ascribe their behaviour to economic/compulsive reasons; they also tended to be more likely to be property offenders. Thus for a subset of offenders the intensification of their criminal careers resulted from their addiction to illegal drugs.

Amphetamine and alcohol users were much more likely to ascribe their behaviour to the psychopharmacological effects of the drugs. These users tended to be violent offenders, although amphetamine users also reported property offending. Although cocaine was less frequently used it tended to be reported by homicide and fraud offenders. Thus these findings lend support to subgroups of offenders whose criminal careers can be accounted for by either the psychopharmacological model for violent offenders and the economical/compulsive model for the property offenders who are amphetamine and cocaine users.

It is apparent from the data that different offending types reported lower and higher levels of drug use and similarly reported earlier and later onset and persistence with illegal drugs. Offenders who reported more serious criminal behaviour such as homicide and violent offending were more likely to report use of alcohol and amphetamines, while more prolific property offenders reported higher rates of heroin. Amphetamine use was also common due to the high level of poly-drug use.

Offenders used a variety of means to obtain drugs. The primary mechanism was to pay cash, however there was a considerable number of other mechanisms used to obtain drugs including selling stolen property, trading other property, swapping

drugs, re-cutting drugs and being paid for work in drugs. These 'informal economy' trade activities were less likely to occur in the cannabis market, and varied in their use across the heroin, amphetamine and cocaine markets.

The most violence seemed to surround the heroin market, with 29 per cent reporting that they used force or threats of violence to obtain their drugs. Seventeen per cent have also used a weapon and 20 per cent reported stealing heroin. There was also violence around the amphetamines and cocaine markets; 20 per cent reported using force or threats of violence to obtain amphetamines and 15 per cent reported this activity for cocaine. There was relatively little violence reported for the cannabis market. Surprisingly few of the regular drug sellers reported using violence or weapons; this activity was more likely to be reported by the regular multiple offenders (which include violent offenders) and the regular fraud offenders (who are more likely to report being cocaine users).

Estimating the proportion of crime related to illegal drugs suggests that 29 per cent of offenders causally attributed their current most serious offence to intoxication—11 per cent to illegal drugs, 10 per cent to alcohol and eight per cent to both alcohol and illegal drugs. Similarly, 24 per cent of offenders causally attributed their offending to drug or alcohol dependency—18 per cent to illegal drugs, three per cent to alcohol and three per cent to both alcohol and illegal drugs. After combining these estimates the total proportion of offenders who causally attributed their current most serious offence to illegal drugs or alcohol was 39 per cent—18 per cent to illegal drugs, nine per cent to alcohol and 12 per cent to both.

Technical Appendix

Estimates provided in this report are primarily based on self-report information obtained through an interviewer administered questionnaire with incarcerated males. Participation in the study was voluntary. The survey was conducted in Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory in 2001. Estimates and proportions reported are of those respondents who answered the relevant questions and exclude missing values.

Methodology

Sampling

In the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland a geographically stratified systematic random sample was used. Tasmania, however, has a relatively small male sentenced inmate population and therefore a complete census of the prison population was attempted.

The geographic stratification procedure was based on a 'proportional-to-population' quota. The first respondent (later named the 'index' respondent) was selected at random at each prison. The 'bed' number occupied by the 'index' respondent was then identified as the base number for which further offenders were chosen. Accordingly, the occupant of every 'nth' bed thereafter was selected for participation, where the 'n' number of beds was determined by ratio on a state-by-state basis. Offenders identified by the general manager as non-participants were excluded from selection, but were not replaced.

Interviewer-administered Questionnaire

The interviewer-administered questionnaire comprised items on:

- socio-demographics—age, education, Indigenous status, and detention history;
- current offending;

- current drug use;
- illicit drug market characteristics;
- offender decision-making processes; and
- estimates of financial costs of drug use.

Interviewing Procedures

Eligible offenders identified by the sampling process were approached by corrective services personnel and advised that a researcher would like to conduct an interview. The custodial officer was not informed of the nature of the research and did not offer any explanation to the offender other than 'it is research on why you are presently incarcerated'. In practice however, the 'grapevine' soon alerted offenders of the study. If the potential respondent agreed to meet with the interviewer the custodial officer escorted them to the interview room. The attending officer remained within visual distance for the duration of the interview. In some facilities interviewers wore a duress alarm during the interview. At the time of presentation and prior to commencing the interview, a descriptive statement about the survey was read out to the potential offender and verbal consent obtained.

At a number of points during the interview, offenders were reminded of their rights and asked to reconfirm consent. They were also asked to indicate their state of comfort before proceeding with further questions. Custodial officers and other correctional staff were not allowed to read through either a completed or blank questionnaire. All project materials were stored in a closed container or briefcase which stayed with the interviewer at all times while on the collection site, and they were removed from the site at the end of each day. Similarly, questionnaires were contained in a locked filing cabinet or other container while on the premises of the data collector. On completion of each site, questionnaires were mailed in secure containers to the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) for coding and processing.

Administrative Data

The administrative data were provided by the departments of corrective services of each jurisdiction and comprised further demographic information and most serious offence for each offender.

Informed Consent

As part of the DUCO study, a survey instrument was developed by which participants would be asked to provide information about individual offending and drug use behaviours. Given the explicit nature of the information collected, participants were afforded a measure of protection that meant that they were not required to provide written (signed) consent to participate in the study. Instead, prior to the commencement of the interview a descriptive statement was read to each participant that explained the scope and nature of the study and required the offender to provide verbal consent to participate. The introductory statement was designed in such a way to ensure that all participants understood that:

- the information collected from the interview would be held in the strictest of confidence;
- that their participation was voluntary;
- they could not be individually identified in any published material;
- they could choose not to answer particular questions; and
- that the interview could be terminated at any time.

Confidentiality

To guarantee confidentiality a number of steps were taken so that neither the AIC nor the jurisdictional corrective services agency could identify individual participants and their responses. To ensure this, the contracted data collector applied a unique identifier to questionnaires. As part of the data processing conducted at the AIC, algorithms were applied to the unique identifier so as to further disguise identification. The administrative data and interviewer-administered data were later matched electronically. Coders of the interviewer-administered questionnaire did not have access to the administrative data for each offender prior to coding.

Data Collection

Data collection for the male sample was completed by 30 June 2001. Distributions of response rates from correctional facilities in the other three jurisdictions were relatively uniform across the main survey.

Reliability of Estimates

The response rate for the completion of the survey was greater than expected at 73 per cent (see table A.1). Interviewers in all four jurisdictions approached 2,941 potential respondents, of which 2,135 surveys were completed and declared by the AIC to be eligible. The jurisdiction with the highest eligible response rate was the Northern Territory (94 per cent) followed by Western Australia (84 per cent) and Tasmania and Queensland (68 per cent).

Table A.1 Mean age of illegal drug use by Indigenous status

	Qld	Tas	WA	NT	Total
Number approached for interview	1,901	257	641	142	2,941
Number completed interview	1,320	197	536	134	2,187
Number of interviews declared eligible by AIC	1,290	174	537	134	2,135
Completed eligible response rate (per cent)	68	68	84	94	73

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO, 2001 [Administrative File]

Comparisons with the total inmate populations of the four participating jurisdictions found few differences between the sample selected for the DUCO male survey and the population from which it was drawn. The age distributions for both the DUCO sample and the total sentenced population were comparable, and similar proportions of offenders from both samples were incarcerated on a life sentence. Indigenous status was under reported. In the DUCO study sample, Indigenous offenders represented 25 per cent of the total inmate sample, where as they constitute 31 per cent of the total sentenced inmate population of the four participating jurisdictions.

A core component of the DUCO male questionnaire required offenders to provide sensitive information about the extent of their offending and drug use history. Much of the information provided by offenders is in relation to activities that may or may not have already been detected by law enforcement agencies. Given the nature and content of this information, the DUCO project, like all projects of the same nature, is limited to the extent to which the self-report information is reliable. In the field of criminology and in the study of criminal careers, research has generally shown that self-reported offending amongst prisoners is generally

Table A.2 Comparison of the DUCO sample and the total sentenced inmate population

	DUCO sample		Total sentenced population	
	n	%	n	%
Age distribution				
18–20	165	8	517	6
21–25	485	23	1907	22
26–30	478	22	1933	22
31–35	322	15	1475	17
36+	685	32	2966	34
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(2,135)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(9,798)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Indigenous status				
Indigenous	517	25	6112	31
Non-Indigenous	1518	75	2713	69
<i>(Total)</i>	<i>(2,035)</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(8,827)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
Sentence status				
Life Sentence	133	7	565	6

Note: Data for the total inmate population were provided by the individual jurisdictions.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Administrative File]

reliable (Peterson, Braiker and Polich 1980—Rand Study). Furthermore, studies of criminal histories have shown that self-reported criminal histories are consistent with administrative data (Peterson, Braiker and Polich 1980—Rand Study).

Drug Use Indicators

It is widely accepted that drug use prevalence rates among incarcerated offenders are greater than would be found among the general population. The extent of this variation is illustrated in table A.3 where comparative drug use data have been drawn for the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's 2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS), reported in AIHW (2002). Across all of the four main drug types, adult male offenders in the DUCO study reported significantly higher lifetime prevalence rates than did adult males in general. For cannabis, 81 per cent of offenders reported having ever used it, compared with 37 per cent of adult males in the NDSHS. Similarly, 45 per cent of offenders reported having ever used heroin, compared with only two per cent of the general adult male population.

Table A.3 also illustrates recent use of each of the four drugs for both offenders and the general population. Offenders were asked whether they had used each drug in the six months prior to their arrest, while respondents in the NDSHS were asked whether in the 12 months prior to interview they had used the drug. Despite the difference in time, a greater number of offenders reported recent use of any of the four illegal drugs in the six months prior to arrest than did the general adult male population in the 12 months prior to interview.

Table A.3 Drug use prevalence (per cent)

	DUCO sample		2001 Household survey ¹	
	Ever used	Used in the six months prior to arrest	Ever used	Used in the last 12 months
Cannabis	81	62	37	15
Amphetamines	58	42	11	4
Heroin	45	27	2	0.3
Cocaine	32	16	6	2

¹Estimates are for males over 18 years of age.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, DUCO Male Survey, 2001 [Computer File] and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Age Care, National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 2001 [Compute File].

Reliability of Drug Use Indicators

There is some debate about whether self-reported drug use provides reliable data (see Harrison 1997). Comparison of self-reported drug use and urinalysis testing in the AIC's Drug Use Monitoring in Australia project indicates that offenders with a history of prior imprisonment and poor socio-economic status are those most likely to accurately report their drug use (McGregor and Makkai 2003). A key finding from that report suggests that offenders with the most to lose (i.e. those who are full time employed or own their own home) were most likely to under-report their drug use. In light of this, self-reported drug use amongst this sample of incarcerated offenders is likely to be reasonably reliable and valid.

Explanatory Notes

Drug Categories

A number of questions relating to the use of illegal drugs and alcohol were asked as part of DUCO male study. In most cases, the drug categories were provided on the questionnaire and respondents were asked to select each drug that was appropriate to them. Some questions required the respondent to nominate a drug as a verbatim response. Such responses were coded to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern (ABS 2000).

Regular

The concept of 'regular' is used in this report in relation to both drug use and offending behaviour. The term 'regular' was self-defined by the individual respondent, but where further clarification was required, offenders were told that the term meant 'frequent or habitual'.

Offenders in this study were asked a question relating to regular offending for each of the offence types asked in the DUCO male survey. An example of this question is:

"How old were you when [offence] became a regular activity?"

To determine regular offending a dummy dichotomous variable was created for each of the 13 offence types and coded as '1' for regular offenders and '0' for non-regular offenders. Offenders who answered this question by providing an age at which the offence became a regular activity were taken to have been a regular offender of that offence type at some point in their lifetime. Offenders who did not report ever committing this offence type and offenders who had committed this offence but did not provide an age of regular offending were coded as non-regular offenders. In some cases offenders answered 'Don't know' to the question of regular offending. As regular offending was calculated on a self-defined basis, these offenders, and those who missed the question entirely were also coded as non-regular offenders of that offence type. This method allowed for the total DUCO male sample to be divided into eight mutually exclusive categories.

Current Regular Use

At a number of points throughout this report, reference is made to a 'current regular user' of illegal drugs. This term was derived through a combination of questions and should be interpreted as an offender who reported being a regular user of an illegal drug, and who had used that illegal drug in the six months prior to the arrest for which they are in prison at the time of the interview. For example, a current regular user of heroin, would have used heroin on a regular basis, and used heroin in the six months prior to the arrest for which they were in prison at the time of the interview.

Open-ended Items

A number of open-ended questions in the DUCO male survey required offenders to provide a verbal answer about a given situation. This verbatim response was subsequently recorded in full by the interviewer and coded manually prior to data entry. There were two questions of this nature used for the analysis of this report:

- QA18—"What do you think was the main reason you committed the offence(s) you are now in prison for"; and
- QC18—"In your own words, what has been the effect of your personal alcohol or drug use history on your criminal activities".

Each of the questions was coded independently by three coders according to predetermined theoretical constructs. Inter-rater reliability for these questions was greater than 80 per cent. All discrepancies were resolved in favour of the majority (two out of three).

Financial Measures

Respondents were asked to estimate their individual expenditure across a variety of drug types in the six months prior to arrest. As time already served on the current sentence varied from very recent back to 1956, the estimates were adjusted for inflation so as to represent current pricing standards. Given the illegal nature of drug expenditure, there is no national 'illegal drugs price index'. As a result, illegal drug expenditure estimates were adjusted according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Retail Price Index series 1850–1999 (1945 index year) and was supplemented with the year 2000 consumer prices index (ABS 2001).

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