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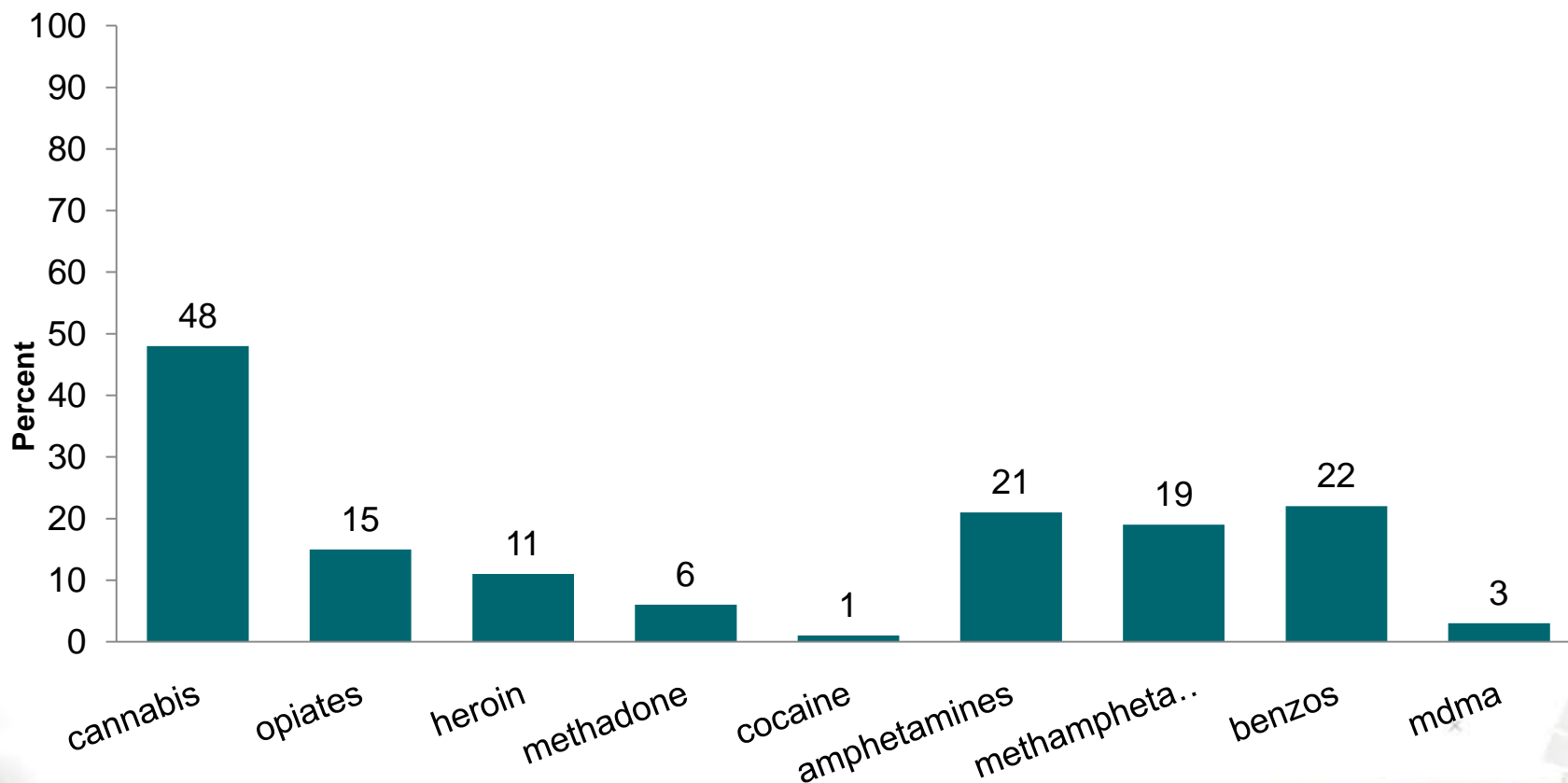
Drugs, crime and their impact on the community: DUMA annual conference 2009

Opening address

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Figure 1: Police detainee test positive rates, all sites 2008





Changing property crime rates

- Property crimes rates in 2007 were the lowest recorded in the 12 year period since 1996.
- Since the year 2000, there has been a 54% decrease in MVT.
- The rate for robbery peaked in 2001. Rates have declined by 38 percent since 2001, to 86 per 100,000 per year.



Changing violent crime rates

- Recorded assault increased again in 2007, to 840 per 100,000, compared with 623 per 100,000 in 1996. The 2007 rate was the highest recorded since 1996.
- The rate of recorded sexual assault increased between 1997 and 2007, from 78 to 94 persons per 100,000 per year.
- The rate of kidnapping remained between three and four per 100,000 per year from 1996 to 2007.
- In 2007, the homicide rate was 1.3 per 100,000, the lowest recorded since 1996.



What do we know about drugs and crime?

1. Most drug users are 'soft' users. They:

- Lead relatively normal lives
- Use relatively infrequently
- Rarely come to the attention of the police
- Commit few non-drug related offences
- May escalate to more frequent and serious drug use

2. Few drug users are serious users. They:

- Lead relatively disrupted lives
- Use a wide range of drug types, frequently
- Commit a significant amount of crime
- Have significant background risk factors

3. Some drug users do not seek treatment by themselves, and of those who do it is usually late in the cycle of abuse.




What is diversion and why have it?

1. Traditional criminal justice responses (imprisonment) have been relatively ineffective in dealing with the drugs-crime link
2. The criminal justice system provides a gateway to drug user groups who might not otherwise seek treatment
3. Problematic drug use is just as much a health issue as it is a criminal justice issue – health agencies play an important role in broader crime prevention agenda.



Three levels of diversion in Australia

The continuum of drug diversion services

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1. Police-based drug diversion programs
 2. Intermediate court-based diversion (also referred to court mandated 'referral into treatment' programs)
 3. Specialist Drug Courts



Primary aims of drug diversion programs

1. A reduction or cessation in drug use
2. A reduction or cessation in drug or drug-related offending
3. An improvement in the general health and well being of drug users
4. A reduction in workloads at particular points of the criminal justice system
5. Cost effectiveness



Problems with evaluating drug diversion programs

1. A lack of access to appropriate data, notably re-offending data and financial information, with better and more accessible data collection systems needed.
2. Lack of access to a randomised experimental design.
3. A lack of standardisation of methodologies, thus rendering any comparisons between evaluations invalid.
4. Programs lack achievable lower level objectives.



What did the evaluations find – offending outcomes?

- Police Drug Diversion:
- Modest reduction in re-offending (VIC & SA)
 - Outcomes were poor for juvenile offenders (SA)
 - Outcomes poor for those who do not comply (SA)
- Intermediate Court Diversion:
- Reductions in offending for completers (NSW & WA)
 - Reductions primarily in the drug/property crime areas (NSW)
 - No difference in reoffending between participants and non-participants (VIC)
- Drug Court Diversion:
- Reductions in reoffending (NSW, Vic, NQld & SA)
 - Significant differences in reoffending between participants and non-participants (NSW, Vic & Qld)



What did the evaluations find – health outcomes?

- Police Drug Diversion:
- Improvements in employment, general health and psychological health (QLD).
 - Overall social functioning and risk-taking remained stable
- Intermediate Court Diversion:
- Improvements in all areas of health and well-being (NSW)
- Drug Court Diversion:
- Improvements to health and well-being (NSW)
 - Self-reported improvements in housing and employment and increased engagement in treatment programs (Vic)



What did the evaluations find – court outcomes?

- Police Drug Diversion:
- Program resulted in fewer drug charges, fewer court cases and fewer persons imprisoned for cannabis related offences (NSW).
- Intermediate Court Diversion:
- Less severe sentences for those who successfully completed the program (NSW & Vic)
- Drug Court Diversion:
- Most offenders who completed the program were not sentenced to imprisonment (WA)



What did the evaluations find – cost outcomes?

Police Drug Diversion:

- Estimated program savings were equal to program costs after three years (NSW)

Intermediate Court Diversion:

- Conservative estimates suggested that more than twice the amount spent was saved (NSW)

Drug Court Diversion:

- Drug Court more expensive than conventional sanctions (NSW) or incarceration (Vic)
- Drug Court and conventional sanctions equally cost-effective in reducing the time taken to commit offences (NSW)



Conclusion and future directions

- Programs need to adapt to changing environments as different drug types wax and wane in prevalence
- Higher order outcomes are still missing from many drug diversion programs
- Programs often lack measurable performance indicators which means that evaluations are still plagued by ambiguities and mixed metrics
- There has been little attempt to date to consider a more holistic assessment that includes health, economic and criminal justice outcomes