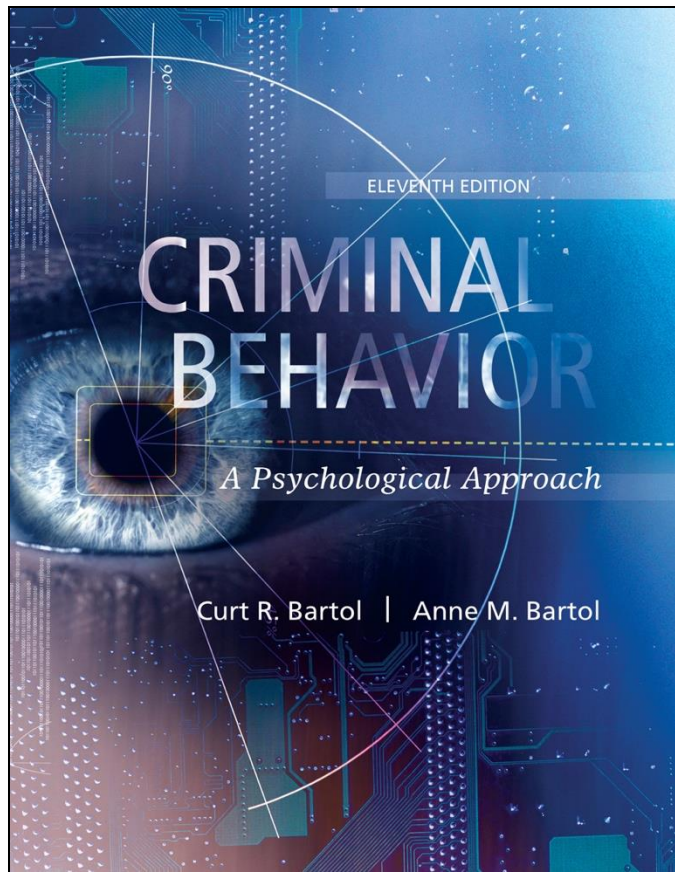


Criminal Behavior

A Psychological Approach

Eleventh Edition



CHAPTER 16

Substance Abuse,
Alcohol, and Crime

Chapter Objectives

- Summarize the effects of the psychoactive drugs that have been most connected to crime and delinquency.
- Caution about and emphasize the many individual differences in reactions to illegal drugs and alcohol.
- Define and explain drug tolerance and dependence.

Chapter Objectives

- Examine closely the extent of juvenile substance and alcohol use.
- Explain the tripartite conceptual model and experimental substance use.
- Note the illegal drugs most commonly used by American culture.

Chapter Objectives

- Discuss the effects and extent of marijuana use, because this is the most popular illicit drug today.
 - Technically not legal anywhere in the US
 - Why?
- Discuss the sharp increase in the use of synthetic narcotics.
- Sketch the relationship between alcohol abuse and crime and delinquency.

War on Drugs

- Is the war on drugs still justified?
 - National Council on Crime and Delinquency states it should be primarily a health disorder
 - States, are decriminalizing possession of small quantities of Marijuana (US News and World Report, 2025)
 - In 48 states Marijuana is legal as a medication
In 24 states, plus Washington DC, it is outright legal for recreational use in small quantities
 - It is still a federal crime to possess it as of November 2025
 - It has bi-partisan support to repeal that law

Juvenile Drug Use

- Juvenile substance use/abuse
 - Conduct problems
 - Antisocial behavior
 - Negative peer groups
 - Poor academic performance
- As indicated in earlier chapters, all of the above factors are associated with early criminal behavior (beyond the crime of illegal possession and use of drugs)
 - Where would they get \$ to buy it other than through criminal acts?

Juvenile Drug Use

- Who is selling to juveniles?
 - Other students hired by older dealers
 - Gang members
 - Drugs may be a fringe benefit of gang membership
 - Sellers are the most likely group to be involved in violent crime
- Males consume more frequently and in higher quantities than females (true across the lifespan).

Consistent Findings on Illicit Drug Use and Crime

1. The use, sale, manufacture, distribution, and possession of illegal drugs as crime
2. The pharmacological effects certain drugs have on a user's behavior in promoting criminal actions.
 - Loss of impulse control
3. Abusers that do get probationary sentences are more likely to be “violated” for testing positive for drug and alcohol use in violation of restrictions
4. Extensive illicit drug use often causes abusers to commit crimes to obtain money to buy drugs

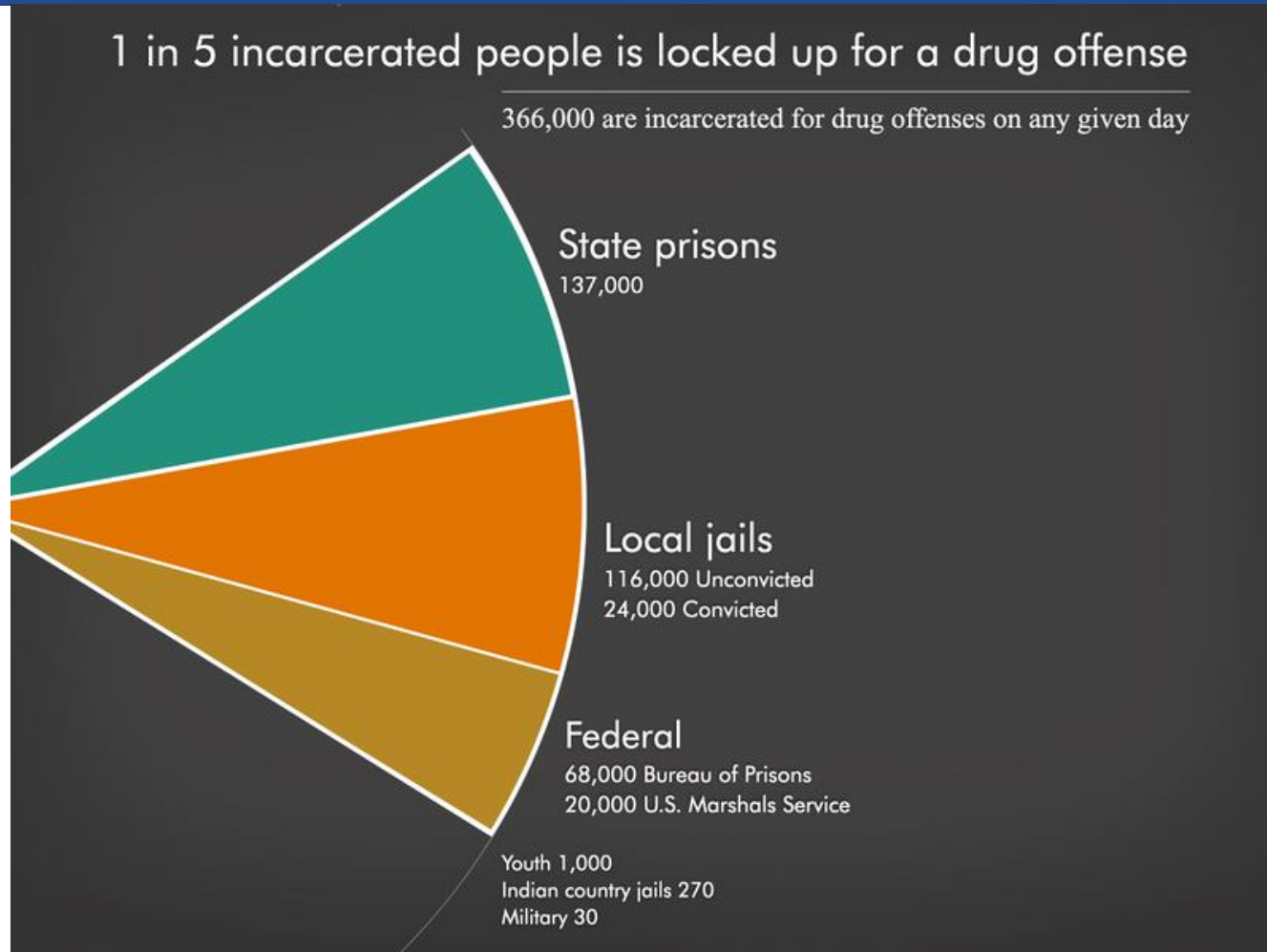
Consistent Findings on Illicit Drug Use and Crime

5. For those that sell, violence is associated with drug trade
6. Abusers of both genders are more likely to be victims of crimes of violence than are non-users
7. Early mortality from drug use as well
 - Overdoses
 - Unclean equipment
 - Hepatitis
 - AIDS

Consistent Findings on Illicit Drug Use

- More individuals are incarcerated or held in jails and prisons for drug offenses than for any other offense, and this has contributed to burgeoning jail and prison populations.
 - Jail and prison crowding (see next slide)

Drug Incarcerations (Sawyer & Wagner, 2025)



Major Categories of Drugs

- Drug Schedules
 - Both Federal and State
 - Marijuana is Schedule 1 under Federal Law, Unscheduled in Virginia
 - Schedule 1 drugs are those for which there is no approved medical use, and which have a high potential for abuse
 - From Schedules 2 to 6 the dangerousness and addictive qualities of the drug decreases as the schedule number goes up

Major Categories of Drugs

- Psychoactive drugs
 - A chemical substance that influences a person's mood, perception, mode of thinking, and behavior
 - Some are extremely dangerous when mixed with other drugs
 - Synergistic effect
 - Ex. Alcohol and Benzodiazepines
 - Can be fatal at low doses
 - Can bring out unexpected reactions in the abuser not experienced with higher individual doses of either of the combined drugs
 - Criminal acts of violence

Major Categories of Drugs

- Tolerance and Dependence
 - Highly related
- Tolerance
 - The individual requires a larger dose of the drug to reach the same effects he or she has previously experienced.
 - The person has become psychologically and physiologically habituated to the drug.
- Dependence
 - Physical or psychological, or both
 - No longer just want the drug, now need it

Major Categories of Drugs

- Tolerance, Dependence & Crime
 - This is related to crime in that as the person develops tolerance, he/she will need more of the substance to either get high or to just feel normal. More often than not will not be able to afford the additional quantities without resorting to criminal acts.

PCP

- Phencyclidine (PCP)
 - Developed as an anesthetic but the effects were highly unpredictable and very dangerous.
 - No longer used medically either by MD's or Vet's.
 - Psychosis
 - Extreme strength
 - Have broken handcuffs
 - Zero pain
 - Persons have cut off or burned off appendage's and reported not feeling it
 - Pain compliance Defensive Tactics holds may not work
 - Popular in the 1970's and 1980's

Illegal Stimulants

- Amphetamines
 - Was used for weight loss, ADHD
 - Methamphetamine (Methedrine or Desoxyn)
 - Manufacture and sales associated with crimes of violence
 - Motorcycle gangs and far right-wing groups support activities by making and selling meth.
 - Manufacturing process uses highly volatile chemicals and breaking up a lab can be extremely dangerous for law enforcement
 - Users can become extremely paranoid and commit crimes of violence due to the paranoia

Cocaine

- Cocaine
 - Power and Crack
 - Most laws punish crack sale and possession more harshly than the powder form. Both are chemically identical.
 - Above may largely be due to the high level of violence associated with the production and sale of this substance. Crack users as a group are not statistically more violent than are powder cocaine users

MDMA - Ecstasy

- MDMA
 - Used increased in the late 1990s.
 - Nightclubs and raves
 - Increased energy, euphoria, emotional warmth and empathy toward others, and distortions in sensory and time perception
 - Users become predisposed to high-risk activities which includes criminal acts
 - Has been associated with rape of persons who were unknowingly drugged in clubs

Narcotic Drugs

- Heroin
 - Highly addicting. Addicts often engage in crime to support habit
 - Central nervous system depressant
 - Relationship to money-producing crime
 - Overdoses kill a lot of people each year

Narcotic Drugs

- Fentanyl
 - Similar to heroin in its biological and psychological effects
 - MUCH stronger (30 to 50x)
- Sale of both of the above associated with drug cartels and very violent criminal activities
- OxyContin® and Vicodin®
 - Prescription pain medication
 - The most prevalent and widespread abuse of all the opioids and prescription drugs in the United States (Why?)

Narcotic Drugs

- Associated crime
 - An increase in the number of pharmacy robberies, thefts, fraudulent prescriptions, and healthcare fraud
 - Physicians are being arrested and prosecuted for over prescribing
 - Black market street sales
- Naloxone (Narcan®) now carried by a lot of law enforcement, and the general public can also purchase it, but it is expensive.
 - It reverses the effects of opiate overdoses.
However, it wears off often long before the effects of the drugs do

Naloxone Use



The Club Drugs: Sedative Hypnotic Compounds

- Ketamine
- GHB
- Rohypnol
- Given to unsuspecting users in drinks in clubs:
 - Associated with date rape
 - Synergistic effect when mixed with alcohol can kill
 - Manufacturers now making it in pills that will turn drinks blue to protect unsuspecting drinkers

Alcohol

- The substance most widely used by teenagers.
 - Binge drinking
- Responsible for more deaths and violence than all other drugs combined.
 - Alcohol poisoning
 - Aggressive and violent behavior as impulse control is lowered or lost altogether
 - Not a cause, it is a catalyst
 - DUI crashes
 - “Cold Turkey” withdrawal of the severely addicted can be fatal

Alcohol

- Alcohol and crime
 - Approximately one-third of all offenders who commit violent crime were drinking at the time of offense.
 - May facilitate aggressive tendencies
 - May significantly inhibit impulse control
 - Binge drinker alcoholic may be the more dangerous of the alcoholics
 - Not as practiced dealing with the effects of intoxication
 - May not have developed tolerance
 - DUI crashes kill more people than homicides
 - Can die from “cold turkey” withdrawal

Substance Abuse and Violence in Juveniles and Adolescents

- Little evidence that alcohol or drug use **causes** violent behavior in adolescent offenders.
 - Likely brings it out in persons susceptible to it
 - Likely accentuates it in persons already exhibiting violent behaviors
- By statute, it **is** the cause of crimes such as DUI as it requires either drug or alcohol presence in the blood stream at the time of the offense
 - Same for underage possession of alcohol

Additional Resources

- Pasco deputies save man's life using Narcan, (2018).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB4ysD6rrBM>
- US News and World Report (2025) Where Is Weed Legal? A Guide to Marijuana Legalization. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/where-is-marijuana-legal-a-guide-to-marijuana-legalization>
- Sawyer, W & Wagner, P (2025) Prison Policy Initiative. Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2025.
<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2025.html>