

Profile and Projection of Drug Prosecutions
Jurisdiction Report
PACIFIC REGION
(including British Columbia and the Yukon)

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Highlights for Pacific Region

- In 1998, there were 7,108 adults charged by the police with a drug offence, accounting for 18.6% of Canada, which is higher than its population share of 13.3%.
- From 1977 to 1998, the **number of adults charged** with a drug offence decreased by 16% from 8,448 adults charged in 1977 to 7,108 adults charged in 1998. However, the trend has been stable in the last few years.
- In terms of **types of drugs**, there had been a downward trend in the number of adults charged with a cannabis offence in the late 1970s. In contrast, there had been a large increase in the number of adults charged with cocaine offences since the late 1980s. The number of adults charged with miscellaneous drug offences has been on an upward trend until 1992, and decreased dramatically since that year. Heroin offences recorded a decrease in the early 1980s to attain its lowest level in 1987 but have since increased steadily.
- In terms of **nature of offence**, drug trafficking now accounts for 47% of all adults charged with drug offence while drug possession accounts for 35%. The remaining 18% involve cultivation and importation of drugs. The proportion of drug trafficking has slowly increased in the last few years while drug possession has slowly decreased.
- Based on the **extrapolation method of projection** selected, the number of adults charged with drug offences will increase by about 5% in the next five years, increasing from 7,108 in 1998 to 7,443 in 2003.

Background

In September 1996, the Agent Affairs Unit of the Criminal Law Branch within the Department of Justice requested the Research and Statistics Division to analyze the level of drug offences in the past and to make future projections. The purpose was to provide information to facilitate discussions relating to volume and case management of drug cases.

This is an update of that project. There are two products in the project: a national report and a series of jurisdictional reports. The reports provide information on historical profile of the trend of drug offences in the past 20 years plus a five-year projection of the trend into the future.

Data Sources

The profiles and projections were based on police reported data collected by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. The period of data used was from 1977 to 1998, the latest data available. As the objective is to produce indicators of workload in drug prosecutions, data on the number of adults formally charged by the police are used.

These data were collected by the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR) which represents the crime data of every police force in Canada. The data from this survey are the most current and reliable data on drug offences that are available in Canada today. [At the request of the Agent Affairs Unit, the number of drug offences here include only those under the Narcotic Control Act (NCA), excluding those under the Food and Drugs Act (FDA).]

In addition to police data, we also look at some data from provincial criminal courts as collected by the Adult Criminal Court Survey (ACCS). However, the data are at the present incomplete, with data from 9 jurisdictions representing 80% of the national total number of cases. Data from British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick are not yet available.

Profile of Historical Trends (Figures 1-2, Appendices 1-2)

Police data from the UCR are broken down by the types of drugs, including heroin, cocaine, cannabis, and miscellaneous drugs. Data are also broken down by nature of offence, including possession, trafficking, importation, and cultivation.

In terms of types of drugs, number of adults charged in the Pacific Region with cannabis offences accounted for 48% of all drug offences in 1998, followed by cocaine (39%), and heroin (10%). The remaining 3% were for miscellaneous narcotics.

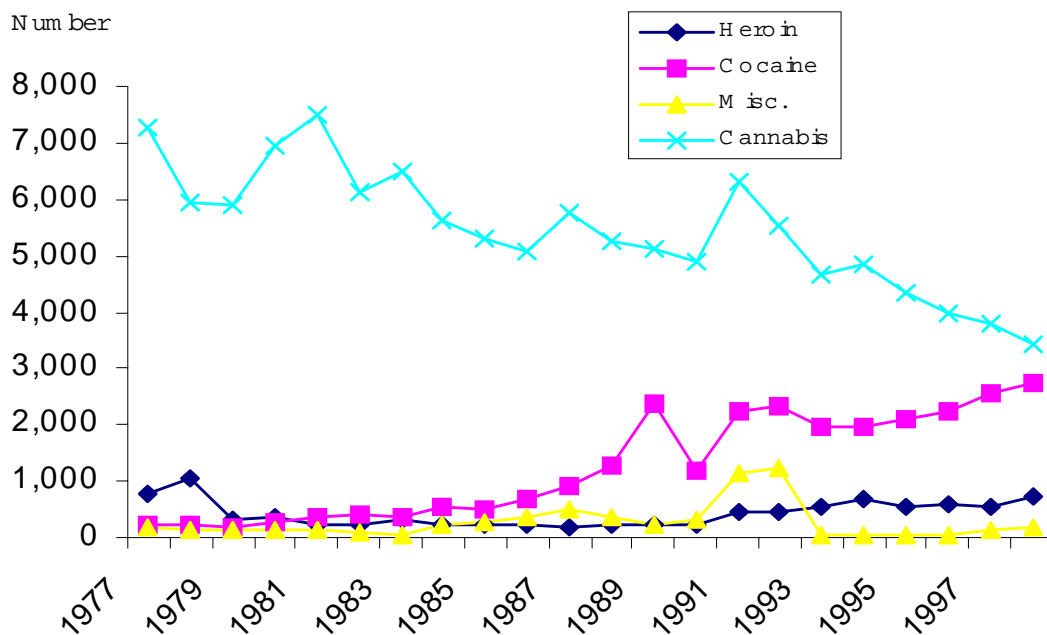
Heroin offences in 1977 were similar to 1998. It decreased from 763 adults charged in the late 1970s to around 200 in mid-1980s but has increased to 737 in 1998.

Cocaine offences increased dramatically from 209 adults charged in the late 1970s to 2,748 in 1998 (13 times). The biggest increases were reported between 1988 to 1989 (+84%), and once again between 1990 and 1991 (+92%).

Cannabis offences have remained fairly stable from the end of the 1970s to early 1980s. From 1982 on, the number of adults charged with a cannabis offence decreased 54% from the number of adults charged in 1981 (from 7,509 in 1981 to 3,439 in 1998).

Miscellaneous drug offences have remained fairly stable in the late 1970s to 1980s. From the mid-1980s, it started an upward trend to attain its highest of 1,231 in 1992. In the past six years, it decreased 85% to 184 adults charged in 1998.

Figure 1
Number of adults charged with drug offences, by drug type
Pacific Region, 1977-1998



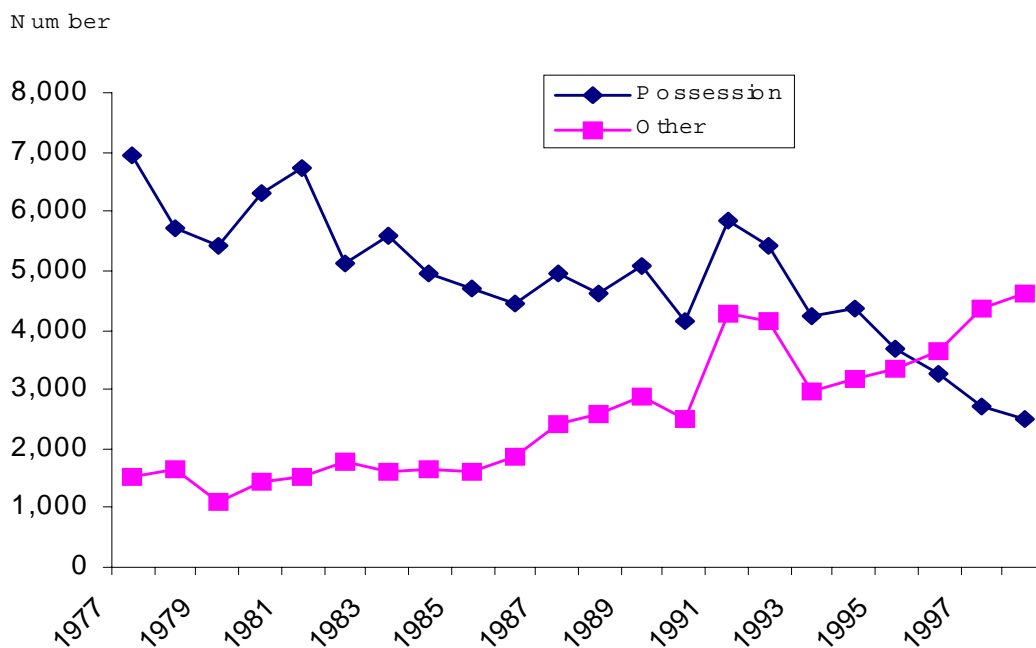
Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

In terms of nature of offence, drug **trafficking** accounted for almost one-half (47%) of all adults charged with drug offences in 1998; drug **possession** accounted for 35%; cultivation of cannabis accounted for 17%. Drug importation offences accounted for less than 1% of the drug offences reported in 1998

The number of adults charged with drug **possession** has levelled off in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but has decreased 26% from 1983 to 1990 (5,587 in 1983 to 4,129 in 1990). A 42% increase was reported in 1991 (5,855 adults charged that year), only to decrease moderately until 1998 (-58%).

In contrast, the number of adults charged with **trafficking** has increased 140% over the 20 years period, from 1,406 adults charged in 1977 to 3,370 in 1998. Importation of drugs has remained under the 55 adults charged from 1979 to 1998. The number of adults charged with a cultivation offence has remained fairly stable from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. From 1983 to 1998 however, it rapidly increased from 119 adults charged with a cultivation offence in 1984 to 1,211 in 1998 (+918%).

Figure 2
Number of adults charged with drug offences, by offence type
Pacific Region, 1977-1998



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

As a whole, the **total** number of adults charged with drug offences in Pacific Region decreased from 8,448 in the late 1970s to 7,108 in 1998. The trend has generally been levelling in the last few years.

It should be noted that the trend of reported drug offences may or may not reflect the level of usage of drugs as the level depends largely on the level of enforcement by the police.

Comparison between Police Data and Courts Data

Because British Columbia does not report to the Adult Criminal Court Survey (ACCS), it was therefore impossible to make the comparison between police and courts data for the Pacific Region.

Methods of Projection

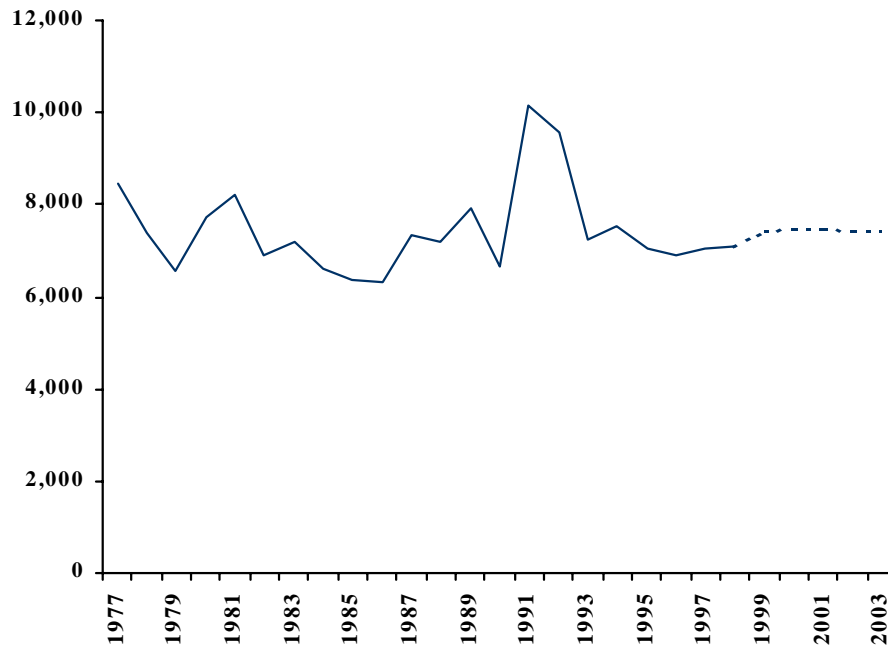
The statistical method chosen in the following projection is called **Holt's two parameter exponential smoothing extrapolation projection**. The method is to define the ongoing trend of drug offences for those years where we have actual data, that is, from 1977 to 1998, and to project the trend into the future for 1999 to 2003. The method involves the calculation of moving averages of historical data. While this method uses all data points in the past, it puts most weight on the most recent preceding years. Therefore, what has been occurring in drug offences for the past several years (for example, 1994 to 1998) will weigh heavily on the outcome of the projected trend for the future.

Results of the Projection (Figure 3, Appendix 3)

While the analysis of historical data includes separate profiles based on types of drugs and nature of offence, the projection is only done for overall total number only because small numbers after the breakdown in many of the jurisdictions.

The result of the extrapolation projection shows that the number of adults charged by the police in Pacific Region will increase slightly in the next five years. The total increase after 5 years is estimated to be about 5%, from 7,108 adults charged in 1998 to 7,443 in 2003.

Figure 3
Number of adults charged with drug offences
Pacific Region, Actual (1977-1998) and Projected (1999-2003)



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

APPENDICES

Table 1
Number of adults charged with drug offences, by drug type
Pacific Region, 1977-1998

Year	Heroin	Cocaine	Misc.	Cannabis	Total
1977	763	209	200	7,276	8,448
1978	1,064	230	149	5,945	7,388
1979	323	189	128	5,906	6,546
1980	345	293	115	6,958	7,711
1981	220	376	128	7,509	8,233
1982	250	402	94	6,138	6,884
1983	322	343	60	6,471	7,196
1984	207	539	229	5,642	6,617
1985	225	504	295	5,321	6,345
1986	210	672	354	5,068	6,304
1987	189	922	485	5,764	7,360
1988	233	1,294	382	5,276	7,185
1989	206	2,385	227	5,124	7,942
1990	238	1,178	329	4,890	6,635
1991	444	2,257	1,124	6,305	10,130
1992	457	2,352	1,231	5,540	9,580
1993	536	1,971	47	4,667	7,221
1994	673	1,947	46	4,862	7,525
1995	537	2,109	25	4,357	7,028
1996	612	2,229	50	3,990	6,881
1997	550	2,568	129	3,815	7,062
1998	737	2,748	184	3,439	7,108

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

Table 2
Number of adults charged with drug offences, by offence type
Pacific Region, 1977-1998

Year	Possession	Trafficking	Importation	Cultivation	Total
1977	6,929	1,406	43	70	8,448
1978	5,729	1,494	73	92	7,388
1979	5,432	1,014	40	60	6,546
1980	6,288	1,345	27	51	7,711
1981	6,730	1,435	34	34	8,233
1982	5,119	1,673	25	67	6,884
1983	5,587	1,437	53	119	7,196
1984	4,954	1,478	44	141	6,617
1985	4,718	1,442	43	142	6,345
1986	4,456	1,614	21	213	6,304
1987	4,933	2,096	33	298	7,360
1988	4,624	2,168	26	367	7,185
1989	5,068	2,384	36	454	7,942
1990	4,129	2,128	26	352	6,635
1991	5,855	3,695	35	545	10,130
1992	5,439	3,364	50	727	9,580
1993	4,239	2,412	21	549	7,221
1994	4,369	2,396	19	744	7,525
1995	3,665	2,621	20	722	7,028
1996	3,243	2,823	15	800	6,881
1997	2,707	3,049	44	1,262	7,062
1998	2,488	3,370	39	1,211	7,108

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

Table 3
Projected number of adults charged with drug offences
Pacific Region, 1999-2003

Year	Projected Number
1999	7,485
2000	7,474
2001	7,465
2002	7,454
2003	7,443

Projections prepared by Research and Statistics Division, Department of Justice Canada.