

Profile and Projection of Drug Prosecutions
Jurisdiction Report
SASKATCHEWAN

by
Nathalie L. Quann, M.A.
Kwing Hung, Ph.D.

Research and Statistics Division
Department of Justice Canada

March 2000



Highlights for Saskatchewan

- In 1998, there were 1,285 adults charged by the police with a drug offence, accounting for 3.4% of Canada, same as its population share of 3.4%.
- From 1977 to 1998, the **number of adults charged** with a drug offence decreased by 51% from 2,627 adults charged in 1977 to 1,285 adults charged in 1998. However, the trend has been stable in the last few years.
- In terms of **types of drugs**, the number of adults charged with a cannabis offence has decreased significantly over the years. In contrast, there had been a large increase in the number of adults charged with cocaine offences in the late 1980s. The number of adults charged with miscellaneous drug offences has fluctuated in the 20 year period examined. Heroin offences have remained under 20 adults charged over the past 20 years.
- In terms of **nature of offence**, drug possession now accounts for 55% of all adults charged with drug offence. The remaining 45% involve trafficking, cultivation and importation of drugs. The proportion of drug trafficking has remained stable until 1991 but is now on a slow upward trend.
- A comparison between the number of adults charged with drug offences and the number of drug cases handled in **Saskatchewan provincial criminal courts** reveals that for every 100 adults charged, about 60 cases end up in courts.
- Based on the **extrapolation method of projection** selected, the number of adults charged with drug offences will increase about 21% in the next five years, increasing from 1,285 in 1998 to 1,561 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 Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan 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 Saskatchewan with cannabis offences accounted for 73% of all drug offences in 1998, followed by miscellaneous drugs (14%) and cocaine (11%). The remaining 2% were for heroin.

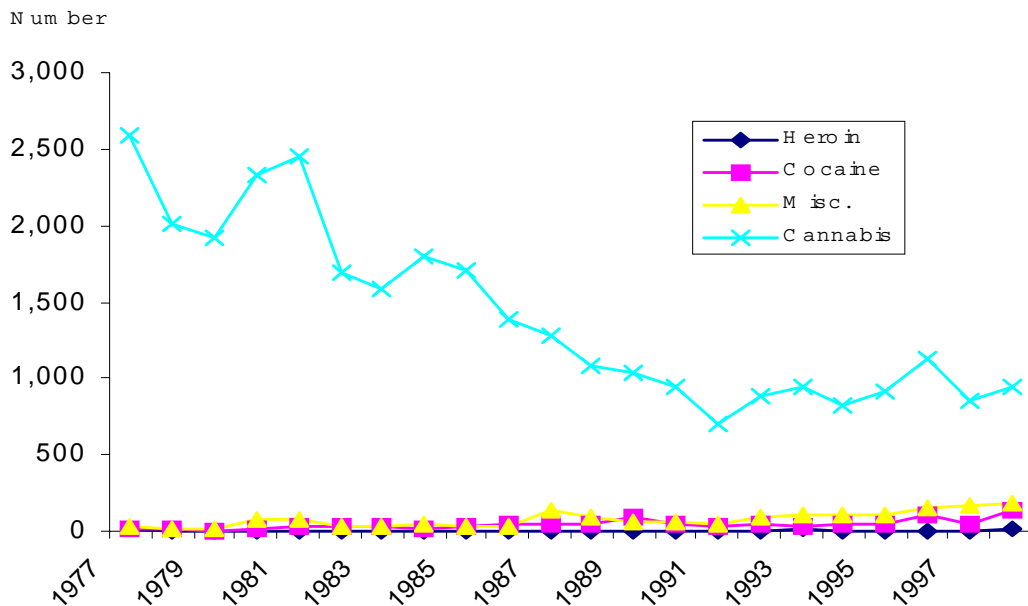
Heroin offences were relatively rare. They increased from 8 adults charged in 1977 to 18 in 1998.

Cocaine offences increased dramatically from 8 adults charged in the late 1970s to 142 in 1998 (18 times). The biggest increase was reported in the early 1990s and the number of adults charged has remained over 150 adults ever since.

Cannabis offences have started their downward trend in the early 1980s. Since then, the number of adults charged with a cannabis offence has decreased consistently over the years to reach its lowest in 1994 (821 adults charged). It has levelled off over in the last few years.

Miscellaneous drug offences have remained fairly stable in the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. From 1987, 3 times more adults were charged compared to the previous year (139 in 1987 compared to 38 in 1986). The number of adults charged slowly decreased for the next few years only to increase to 182 adults charged in 1998.

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



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

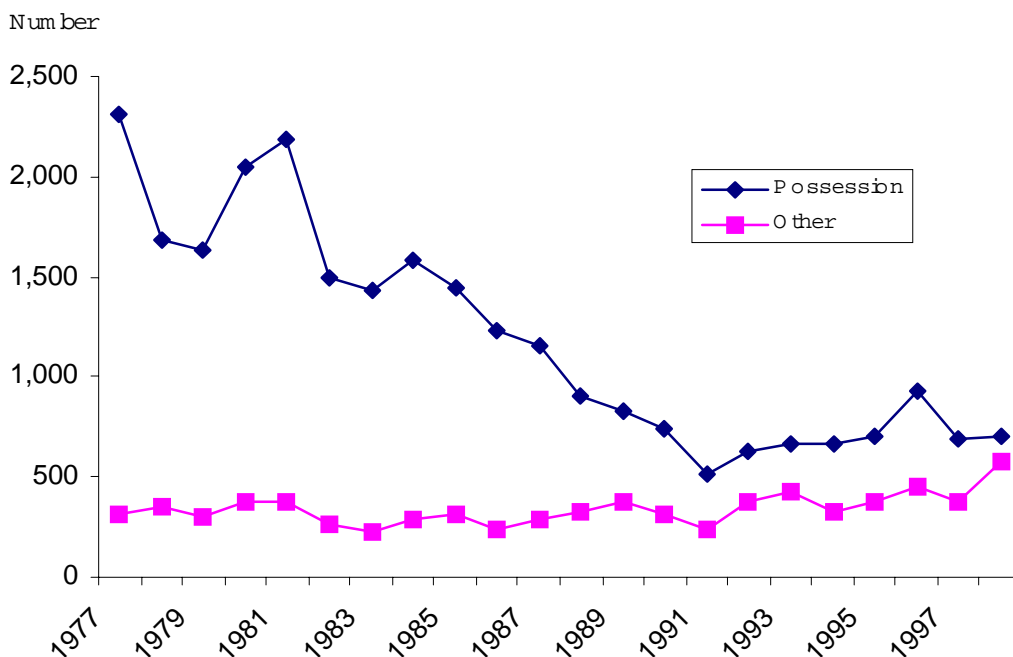
In terms of nature of offence, drug **possession** accounted for more than one-half (55%) of all adults charged with drug offences in 1998; drug **trafficking** accounted for 38%; cultivation of cannabis accounted for 6%. There were only 8 adults charged with drug importation offences in 1998.

The number of adults charged with drug **possession** has decreased in the late 1970s but increased 25% in 1980 (from 1,637 adults charged in 1979 to 2,051 in 1980). Since 1981, it decreased consistently over the years, to a low of 519 adults charged in 1991. In the last few years, there were slow increases, with the exception of an exceptional high year in 1996.

In contrast, the number of adults charged with **trafficking** has remained in a slow upward trend. The 1998 total of 488 adults charged was 59% higher than the 308 adults in 1998.

The number of adults charged with a cultivation offence has remained fairly stable slow upward trend from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. Until 1996, it remained under 50 adults charged. However, there was a large increase in 1998 (60% increase in one year).

Figure 2
Number of adults charged with drug offences, by offence type
Saskatchewan, 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 Saskatchewan decreased from 2,627 in the late 1970s to 1,285 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

The assumption in comparing the number of adults charged by the police and the number of cases handled by provincial criminal courts is that a small proportion of the offenders charged may not actually appear before the courts for various reasons such as diversion. If this is the case, then the number of drug cases in courts should be slightly below the number of adults charged.

Two years of provincial criminal court data were used in the comparison (1996/97 and 1997/98). In 1996/97, there were 1,309 persons charged by the police in Saskatchewan while there were 973 cases handled by Saskatchewan provincial criminal courts. The ratio between the two numbers was 0.74, compared to 1.01 for Canada as a whole. Note that the number can be higher than 1 because the time of appearance before the courts is not the same as the time of charging by the police and some cases handled by the courts may have been cases charged by the police in previous year.

However, the situation in 1997/98 was quite different. There were 1,125 persons charged by the police in Saskatchewan while there were 483 cases handled by Saskatchewan provincial criminal courts. The ratio was 0.43, meaning that for every 100 adults charged by the police, 43 cases were handled in the provincial criminal courts. This was significantly lower than in 1996/97. The ratio was lower than the rest of Canada where the ratio was 0.68. The reason of these lower ratios is not known.

The conclusion is that for every 100 adults charged by the police in Saskatchewan the average number of court cases is about 59, compared to 85 in Canada. However, the actual number may vary widely from about 40 to 100, depending on the jurisdiction in question.

Methods of Projection

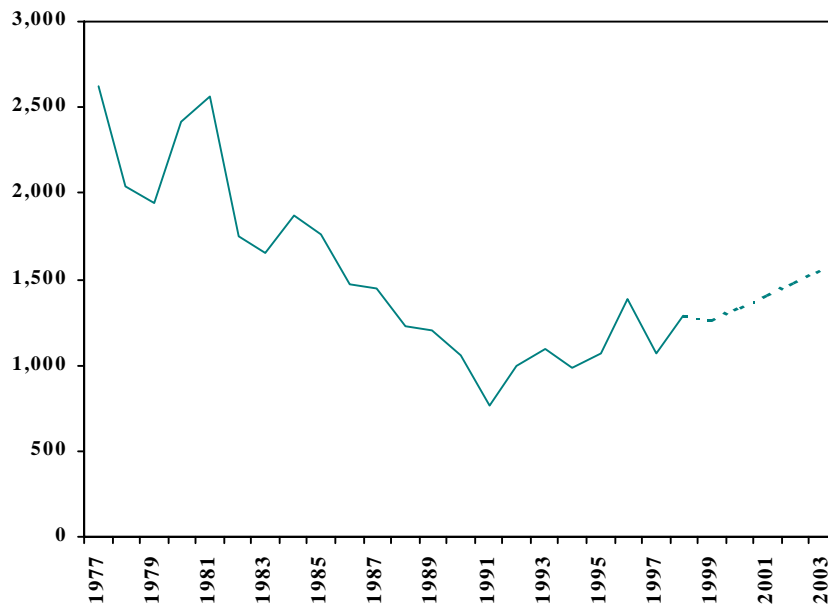
The statistical method chosen in the following projection is called **Holt's two parameter exponential smoothing extrapolation projection**. The method is to define the ongoing trend of drug offences for those years where we have actual data, that is, from 1977 to 1998, and to project the trend into 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 Saskatchewan will increase in the next five years. The total increase after 5 years is estimated to be about 21%, from 1,285 adults charged in 1998 to 1,561 in 2003.

Figure 3
Number of adults charged with drug offences
Saskatchewan, 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
Saskatchewan, 1977-1998

Year	Heroin	Cocaine	Misc.	Cannabis	Total
1977	8	8	27	2,584	2,627
1978	6	8	18	2,006	2,038
1979	3	3	20	1,913	1,939
1980	0	17	76	2,329	2,422
1981	4	33	72	2,459	2,568
1982	3	23	36	1,686	1,748
1983	0	36	33	1,588	1,657
1984	0	22	46	1,802	1,870
1985	0	33	27	1,701	1,761
1986	1	45	38	1,386	1,470
1987	0	39	139	1,273	1,451
1988	1	52	94	1,082	1,229
1989	1	91	68	1,040	1,200
1990	2	45	66	940	1,053
1991	0	25	41	697	763
1992	0	39	87	876	1,002
1993	13	34	103	944	1,094
1994	5	50	108	821	984
1995	3	40	114	916	1,073
1996	5	100	159	1,124	1,388
1997	2	46	169	854	1,071
1998	18	142	182	943	1,285

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

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

Year	Possession	Trafficking	Importation	Cultivation	Total
1977	2,309	307	2	9	2,627
1978	1,683	339	2	14	2,038
1979	1,637	290	5	7	1,939
1980	2,051	355	3	13	2,422
1981	2,190	353	2	23	2,568
1982	1,490	232	3	23	1,748
1983	1,435	200	9	13	1,657
1984	1,581	257	2	30	1,870
1985	1,445	286	4	26	1,761
1986	1,233	213	6	18	1,470
1987	1,162	265	2	22	1,451
1988	899	310	1	19	1,229
1989	824	350	1	25	1,200
1990	745	284	1	23	1,053
1991	519	226	2	16	763
1992	622	360	0	20	1,002
1993	664	390	1	39	1,094
1994	661	288	0	35	984
1995	699	344	0	30	1,073
1996	933	419	0	36	1,388
1997	692	329	0	50	1,071
1998	708	488	8	81	1,285

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

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

Year	Projected Number
1999	1,258
2000	1,334
2001	1,409
2002	1,485
2003	1,561

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