

Profile and Projection of Drug Prosecutions
Jurisdiction Report
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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March 2000



Highlights for the Northwest Territories

- In 1998, there were 150 adults charged by the police with a drug offence, accounting for 0.4% of Canada, slightly higher than its population share of 0.2%.
- From 1977 to 1998, the **number of adults charged** with a drug offence slightly decreased by 4% from 157 adults charged in 1977 to 150 adults charged in 1998.
- In terms of **types of drugs**, the number of adults charged with a cannabis offence has remained fairly stable during the 20-year period examined, with some fluctuations over the years. Cocaine offences were on a general upward trend. The number of adults charged with heroin and miscellaneous drug offences has been generally small.
- 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 possession has remained fairly stable over the years.
- A comparison between the number of adults charged with drug offences and the number of drug cases handled in **Northwest Territories provincial criminal courts** reveals that for every 100 adults charged, about 40 cases end up in courts.
- Based on the **extrapolation method of projection** selected, the number of adults charged with drug offences will increase about 39% in the next five years, increasing from 150 in 1998 to 208 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 Northwest Territories, Northwest Territories 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 Northwest Territories with cannabis offences accounted for 94% of all drug offences in 1998, followed by cocaine (4%). The remaining 2% were for miscellaneous narcotics and heroin.

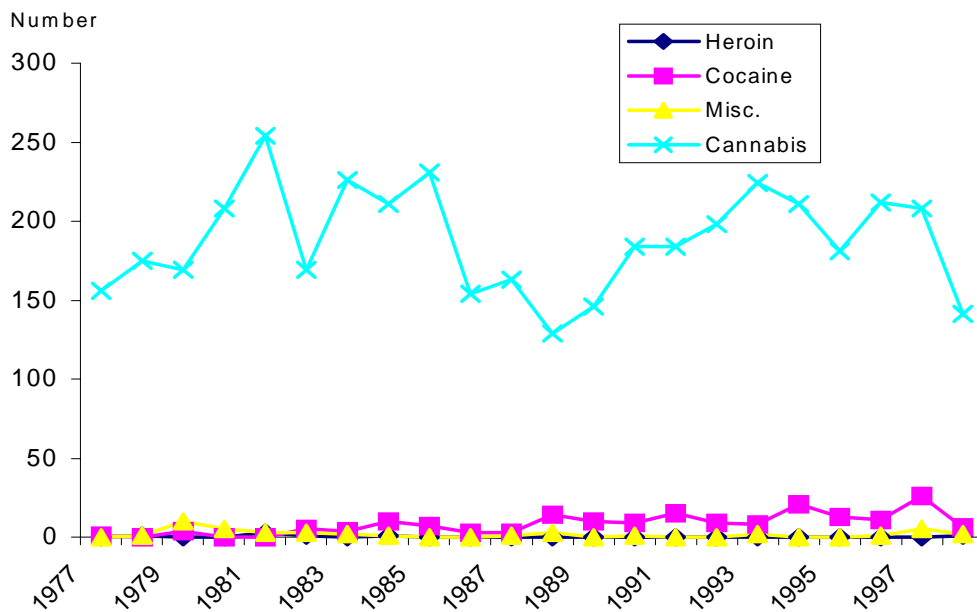
Practically no adults were charged with **heroin** offences during the 20 year period examined.

Cocaine offences were on a general upward trend in the last 20 years. There were wide fluctuations where the number increased a few times over the previous year. The reason is because of the overall small numbers.

Cannabis offences have been fairly stable during the 20-year period examined, with less than 250 adults charged every year. Highest number of adults charged with a cannabis offence occurred in 1981 (254) and the lowest occurred in 1998 with 141 adults charged.

Miscellaneous drug offences were generally low.

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



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

In terms of nature of offence, drug **possession** now accounts for 55% of all adults charged with drug offences in 1998 while trafficking accounts for 43%. There were practically no adults charged with drug cultivation (2) and importation (1) offences in 1998

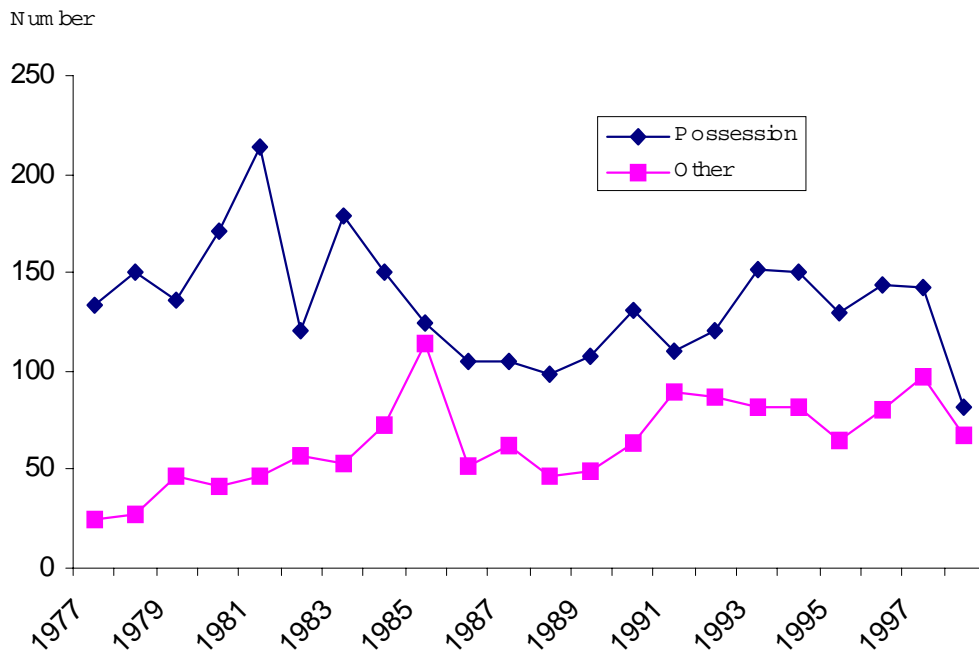
The number of adults charged with drug **possession** has remained fairly stable in the late 1970s to early 1980s only to decrease under 100 adults charged in 1988. Since then, it move on an

upward trend to attain its highest of 152 adults charged in 1993. After a stable few years, it decreased to 82 adults charged in 1998 (-46%).

In contrast, the number of adults charged with **trafficking** has remained on a slow upward trend.

Over the years, there were practically no adults charged with a cultivation or importation offence in the territory. For both offence types, the number of adults charged stayed under 5 over the past 20 years.

Figure 2
Number of adults charged with drug offences, by offence type
Northwest Territories, 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 Northwest Territories slightly decreased from 157 in the late 1970s to 150 in 1998. However, the trend has decreased 37% in 1998 after a few years with a fairly stable number of adults charged with a drug offence.

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.

One year of provincial criminal court data were used in this section since the territory started participating in the Adult Criminal Court Survey only in 1997/98.

In 1997/98, there were 217 persons charged by the police in the Northwest Territories while there were 90 cases handled by the Northwest Territories provincial criminal courts. The ratio was 0.42, meaning that for every 100 adults charged by the police, 42 cases were handled in the provincial criminal courts. This was much lower than the rest of Canada where the ratio was 0.68. The reason for these lower ratios is not known.

The conclusion is that for every 100 adults charged by the police in the Northwest Territories the average number of court cases is about 42, 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

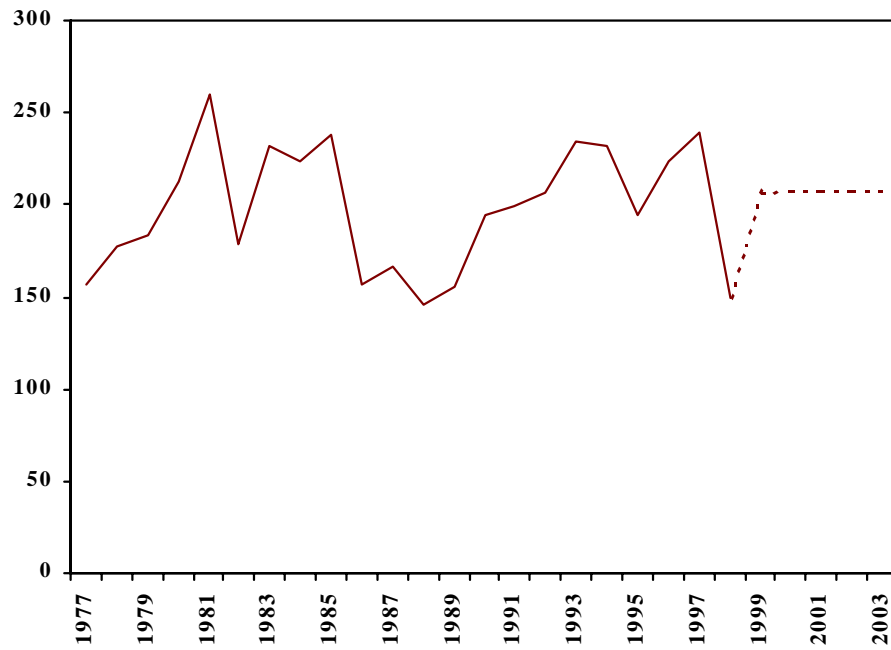
The statistical method chosen in the following projection is called **Holt's two parameter exponential smoothing extrapolation projection**. The method is to define the ongoing trend of drug offences for those years where we have actual data, that is, from 1977 to 1998, and to project the trend into 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 of 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 Northwest Territories will increase in the next five years. The total increase after 5 years is estimated to be about 39%, from 150 adults charged in 1998 to 208 in 2003.

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

| Year | Heroin | Cocaine | Misc. | Cannabis | Total |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1977 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 156 | 157 |
| 1978 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 175 | 177 |
| 1979 | 0 | 4 | 10 | 169 | 183 |
| 1980 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 208 | 213 |
| 1981 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 254 | 260 |
| 1982 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 169 | 178 |
| 1983 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 226 | 232 |
| 1984 | 1 | 10 | 1 | 211 | 223 |
| 1985 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 231 | 238 |
| 1986 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 154 | 157 |
| 1987 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 163 | 167 |
| 1988 | 0 | 14 | 3 | 129 | 146 |
| 1989 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 146 | 156 |
| 1990 | 0 | 9 | 1 | 184 | 194 |
| 1991 | 0 | 15 | 0 | 184 | 199 |
| 1992 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 198 | 207 |
| 1993 | 0 | 8 | 2 | 224 | 234 |
| 1994 | 0 | 21 | 0 | 211 | 232 |
| 1995 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 181 | 194 |
| 1996 | 0 | 11 | 1 | 212 | 224 |
| 1997 | 0 | 26 | 5 | 208 | 239 |
| 1998 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 141 | 150 |

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

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

| Year | Possession | Trafficking | Importation | Cultivation | Total |
|------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| 1977 | 133 | 22 | 0 | 2 | 157 |
| 1978 | 150 | 25 | 0 | 2 | 177 |
| 1979 | 136 | 47 | 0 | 0 | 183 |
| 1980 | 171 | 42 | 0 | 0 | 213 |
| 1981 | 214 | 46 | 0 | 0 | 260 |
| 1982 | 121 | 56 | 0 | 1 | 178 |
| 1983 | 179 | 53 | 0 | 0 | 232 |
| 1984 | 150 | 70 | 3 | 0 | 223 |
| 1985 | 124 | 113 | 1 | 0 | 238 |
| 1986 | 105 | 51 | 0 | 1 | 157 |
| 1987 | 105 | 61 | 0 | 1 | 167 |
| 1988 | 99 | 45 | 0 | 2 | 146 |
| 1989 | 107 | 47 | 0 | 2 | 156 |
| 1990 | 131 | 63 | 0 | 0 | 194 |
| 1991 | 110 | 85 | 0 | 4 | 199 |
| 1992 | 120 | 87 | 0 | 0 | 207 |
| 1993 | 152 | 79 | 0 | 3 | 234 |
| 1994 | 150 | 82 | 0 | 0 | 232 |
| 1995 | 129 | 65 | 0 | 0 | 194 |
| 1996 | 144 | 79 | 0 | 1 | 224 |
| 1997 | 142 | 97 | 0 | 0 | 239 |
| 1998 | 82 | 65 | 1 | 2 | 150 |

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

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

| Year | Projected Number |
|------|------------------|
| 1999 | 207 |
| 2000 | 208 |
| 2001 | 208 |
| 2002 | 208 |
| 2003 | 208 |

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