

Drug Law Enforcement Statistics Western Australia: late 1960s – 2004

Compiled by Greg Swensen (April 2021)

Overview

This document contains tabulations of a drug-related law enforcement (DLE) statistics concerning Western Australia (WA), related to the period from the late 1960s to the mid 2000s.

Some of this data was published departmental and parliamentary reports or sourced from commissioned research and has been extracted and republished primarily for its historical interest and to identify its existence. This data has potential value for research in relation to DLE activities in WA concerned particularly with cannabis, heroin and amphetamines, as well as other illicit drugs.

The data compiled below has been extracted from annual reports of the WA Police and statistical series and research studies produced by the Crime Research Centre (CRC)

Note: Interpretation of police data over this period of time requires an understanding that availability and reliability depended of improvements in the structure of the record systems, such as the offender information system (OIS) introduced in 1993/1994.

Also, there were changes in the legislative framework with new offences, and amendments to existing ones, with drug offences dealt with under the *Police Act 1892* up to August 1982 and subsequently under the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1981*, which commenced 1 September 1982.

Police annual reports: Charges 1968/1969 – 1991/1992

This data was published in appendix tables in annual reports of the WA Police.

Table 1: Annual trends of number of charges and arrest events where drug offences were involved by age group, WA, 1968/1969 – 1991/1992

	< 18 years		18 – 21 years		21+ years		Total		Rate Charges (per 100,000)
	Arrests	Charges	Arrests	Charges	Arrests	Charges	Arrests	Charges	
1968/1969	11	11	23	26	64	74	98	111	11.6
1969/1970	8	8	12	17	54	79	74	104	10.5
1970/1971	4	4	32	52	65	111	101	167	15.8
1971/1972	26	37	81	124	75	113	182	274	25.3
1972/1973	48	63	172	241	127	175	347	479	43.5
1973/1974	43	49	150	191	221	287	414	527	46.7
1974/1975	57	63	344	396	296	351	697	810	70.1
1975/1976	95	98	363	399	504	668	962	1,165	98.9
1976/1977	60	72	403	428	365	459	828	959	79.6
1977/1978	65	72	315	365	414	757	794	1,194	97.2
1978/1979	45	72	310	414	519	654	874	1,140	91.4
1979/1980	28	29	377	431	705	912	1,110	1,372	108.1
1980/1981	50	51	522	637	1,051	1,347	1,623	2,035	156.5
1981/1982	78	87	482	556	976	1,154	1,536	1,797	134.2
1982/1983	140	156	707	860	1,209	1,557	2,056	2,573	187.9
1983/1984	269	326	985	1,282	1,486	1,983	2,740	3,591	258.1
1984/1985	431	543	1,427	1,879	1,742	2,448	3,600	4,870	343.3
1985/1986	648	798	1,521	2,015	2,478	3,449	4,647	6,262	429.2
1986/1987	817	1,037	1,469	1,949	3,213	4,538	5,499	7,524	502.9
1987/1988	734	915	1,588	2,164	3,054	4,445	5,376	7,524	490.1
1988/1989							5,174	7,254	459.6
1989/1990							6,814	8,917	552.8
1990/1991							8,880	12,634	772.2
1991/1992							9,240	13,266	800.1
1992/1993							8,597	12,465	743.0
1993/1994								9,831	577.3
1994/1995								10,403	600.0
1995/1996								12,111	686.1
1996/1997								13,375	745.1
1997/1998								14,535	797.5
1998/1999								14,833	801.9
1999/2000								14,197	757.4
2000/2001								15,660	823.7
2001/2002								15,443	801.8
2002/2003								14,305	732.4
2003/2004								13,319	671.8
2004/2005								14,722	742.7
2005/2006								16,658	828.7

Source: Data 1969/1970 – 2005/2006 WA Police Service, Annual reports

Task Force on Drug Abuse: Charges 1985 – 1994

This data was published in Chapter 5 in Volume 2 of the report of the Task Force on Drug Abuse (1995).¹

Table 2 Total number of drug charges dealt with by State police, WA, 1985 - 1994

Drug type	N	%
Heroin	1,663	1.8
Cannabis		
(plants)	12,445	13.7
(leaf)	46,149	51.0
(resin)	925	1.0
(implements/utensils)	24,440	27.0
All cannabis	83,959	92.7
Cocaine	96	0.1
Amphetamines	3,266	3.6
Hallucinogens	623	0.7
Other drugs/plants	426	0.5
Deleterious substances	245	0.3
Scripts & miscellaneous	181	0.2
Steroids	91	0.1
Total	90,550	100.0

¹ Task Force on Drug Abuse, *Protecting the community: Report of the Task Force on Drug Abuse: Volume 2: Drug abuse information and analysis* (Perth, WA: Ministry of Premier and Cabinet, 1995). <http://www.planitaerth.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Task-Force-On-Drug-Abuse-1995-Report-Volume-2.pdf>.

Table 3A Number of drug charges dealt with by State police, WA, 1985 - 1989

Drug type	1985		1986		1987		1988		1989	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Heroin	204	4.2	265	4.2	227	3.0	168	2.2	135	1.9
Cannabis										
(plants)	612	12.6	677	10.8	1,010	13.4	1,055	14.0	1,034	14.2
(leaf)	2,661	54.6	3,495	55.8	3,816	50.7	3,868	51.4	3,651	50.3
(resin)	108	2.2	119	1.9	120	1.6	110	1.5	78	1.1
(implements/utensils)	1,179	24.2	1,583	25.3	2,205	29.3	2,130	28.3	2,061	28.4
All cannabis	4,560	93.6	5,874	93.8	7,151	95.0	7,163	95.2	6,824	94.1
Cocaine	2	-	-	-	-	-	8	0.1	7	0.1
Amphetamines	-	-	12	0.2	38	0.5	76	1.0	171	2.4
Hallucinogens	9	0.2	20	0.3	22	0.3	19	0.2	35	0.5
Other drugs/plants	57	1.2	24	0.4	8	0.1	21	0.3	9	0.1
Deleterious substances	-	-	32	0.5	73	1.0	65	0.9	66	0.9
Scripts & miscellaneous	38	0.8	35	0.6	5	0.1	4	0.1	7	0.1
Steroids										
Total	4,870	100.0	6,262	100.0	7,524	100.0	7,524	100.0	7,254	100.0

Source: Western Australian Police Department, Annual Reports.

Note: NC= No longer collected.

**Table 3B Number of drug charges dealt with by State police
1990 - 1994**

Drug type	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Heroin	116	1.3	121	1.0	192	1.4	141	1.1	94	1.0
Cannabis										
(plants)	1,142	12.8	1,735	13.7	1,954	14.7	1,772	14.2	1,454	14.7
(leaf)	4,565	51.2	6,292	49.8	6,746	50.8	6,295	50.5	4,760	48.4
(resin)	98	1.1	50	0.4	98	0.7	96	0.8	48	0.5
(implements/utensils)	2,646	29.7	3,661	29	3,425	25.8	3,127	25.1	2,423	24.7
All cannabis	8,451	94.8	11,738	92.9	12,223	92.1	11,290	90.6	8,685	88.3
Cocaine	12	0.1	52	0.4	8	-	5	-	2	-
Amphetamines	236	2.6	552	4.4	645	4.9	709	5.7	816	8.3
Hallucinogens	30	0.3	52	0.4	111	0.8	194	1.6	131	1.3
Other drugs/plants	45	0.5	100	0.8	43	0.3	66	0.5	64	0.7
Deleterious substances	7	0.1	2	-	NC		NC		NC	
Scripts & miscellaneous	20	0.2	20	0.2	12	0.1	31	0.3	9	0.1
Steroids					32	0.2	29	0.2	30	0.3
Total	8,917	100.0	12,637	100.0	13,266	100.0	12,465	100.0	9,831	100.0

Source: Western Australian Police Department, Annual Reports.

Note: NC= No longer collected.

CRC: Charges and arrests 1990 - 2004

Statutory review of Cannabis Control Act

Analyses were also conducted on request, by the WA Police and the Department of Attorney General, for offending and court outcomes related to cannabis as well as other drug offences. These can be found in the review's reports published in November 2007

- Statutory review of the Cannabis Control Act 2003: Supplementary data tables and figures. ²
- Statutory review of the Cannabis Control Act 2003: Technical report. ³
- Statutory review of the Cannabis Control Act 2003: Appendices. ⁴

² <http://www.planitaerth.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Cannabis-Control-Act-Review-2007-Supplementary-Tables-Figures.pdf>

³ <http://www.planitaerth.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Cannabis-Control-Act-Review-2007-Technical-Report-1.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.planitaerth.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Cannabis-Control-Act-Review-2007-Appendices-1.pdf>

The CRC also undertook analyses concerned with drug-related police arrests and charges for the period 1990 to 2004 in conjunction with this review.⁵

Table 4: Annual counts of number of charges and arrest events where drug offences were involved, WA, 1990 - 2004

	Drug charges		Arrest events			Total
	n	rate	Drug offence was MSO		Incidental drug offence	
			n	%		
1990	10,820	670.8	6,378	84.7	1,153	7,531
1991	12,491	763.5	7,247	84.7	1,306	8,553
1992	12,919	779.2	7,496	85.2	1,297	8,793
1993	12,564	748.9	6,487	83.8	1,250	7,737
1994	10,054	590.4	5,425	81.8	1,204	6,629
1995	9,764	563.2	5,234	80.5	1,264	6,498
1996	10,532	596.6	5,546	80.2	1,366	6,912
1997	10,436	581.4	5,391	79.9	1,357	6,748
1998	10,043	551.0	4,929	78.7	1,338	6,267
1999	10,205	551.7	4,894	75.8	1,565	6,459
2000	9,932	529.9	4,515	72.2	1,737	6,252
2001	10,343	544.0	4,651	72.2	1,795	6,446
2002	10,330	536.7	4,559	70.1	1,948	6,507
2003	9,295	476.7	3,943	69.9	1,697	5,640
2004	8,481	428.7	3,418	68.9	1,545	4,963

Source: Crime Research Centre, University of WA

Note: Arrest events includes cases in which drug offence was not the principal or most serious offence.
 Arrest event refers to either physical arrest or summons.
 MSO = Most serious offence.
 Incidental drug offence was not MSO or principal offence

⁵ Drug and Alcohol Office, *Statutory review of Cannabis Control Act 2003: Technical report* (Perth, WA: Drug and Alcohol Office, 2007). <http://www.planitaerth.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Cannabis-Control-Act-Review-2007-Technical-Report.pdf>.

Table 5: Annual trends of number of distinct persons where drug offences were involved, WA, 1990 - 2004

	Drug offence was MSO		Incidental drug offence	Total
	n	%		
1990	5,894	86.4	930	6,824
1991	6,606	86.9	997	7,603
1992	6,862	87.0	1,028	7,890
1993	5,922	85.9	975	6,897
1994	5,014	83.5	992	6,006
1995	4,846	82.0	1,061	5,907
1996	5,170	82.1	1,128	6,298
1997	4,909	81.6	1,108	6,017
1998	4,500	80.0	1,126	5,626
1999	4,500	77.8	1,287	5,787
2000	4,131	74.5	1,414	5,545
2001	4,146	74.4	1,424	5,570
2002	4,083	72.5	1,547	5,630
2003	3,562	71.6	1,416	4,978
2004	3,080	70.5	1,286	4,366

Source: Crime Research Centre, University of WA

Note: Crime Research Centre

The Crime Research Centre (CRC) was established at the University of Western Australia in 1989 as a joint agreement with the State government. This arrangement involved the processing and compilation of a comprehensive range of criminal justice data about criminal offending, court outcomes and policing, published as annual statistical reports, to enable review and support policy development in criminal justice in WA.

A hallmark of this unique arrangement was to develop a means for accountability by public reporting range of statistical information related to the criminal justice system and to support innovative research on a range of issues.

Since the termination of this arrangement in mid 2014 the regular publication of this level of detailed statistical information largely ceased in WA, except limited information that may be routinely published in annual reports.

There are a number of compilations of drug-related offending data produced by the CRC, such as the annual series of crime and justice statistics reports and research studies, which should be consulted for data covering the period from 1900 to the mid 2000's.

Crime and justice statistics for Western Australia was an annual statistical series, which commenced in 1990. It contained detailed breakdowns by offence, with the inclusion of drug offences since 1994, as a result of improvements in recording and offence recording by police databases.

The last Crime and justice statistics report was published for the year 2006.⁶

The CRC undertook commissioned research paper in relation to the Select Committee Into the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981, which was reproduced in Chapter 4 of its Interim report.⁷

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https://www.law.uwa.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/118365/Crime_and_Justice_Statistics_for_WA-2006-Crimes_Reported_to_Police.pdf

⁷ Select Committee Into the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981, *Interim report. Taking the profit out of drug trafficking: An agenda for legal and administrative reforms in Western Australia to protect the community from illicit drugs* (Perth, WA: Western Australian Parliament, Legislative Assembly, 1997).

<http://www.planitaerth.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Select-Committee-Into-Misuse-of-Drugs-Act-1997-1998-Interim-report.pdf>.

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