

Fast Facts

From *Count the Costs: 50 Years of the War on Drugs*¹

- Over \$100 billion is spent globally each year on enforcing the war on drugs
- The UN estimates that there are currently over 200 million illegal drug users, most criminalized purely because of their use
- Up to 1000 people are executed for drug offences each year, in direct violation of international law
- Despite millions of hectares of coca being eradicated since the 1980s, overall production has easily kept pace with rising demand – even if it has moved from one region to another
- In Russia, where injection drug users now number over 1.8 million, 37% are HIV-positive

Resources

^{①③} Transform Drug Policy Foundation. Count the Costs: 50 Years of the War on Drugs. (2010). www.countthecosts.org

^② Werb, D., Kerr, T., Nosyk, B., Strathdee, S., Montaner, J., & Wood, E. (2013). The temporal relationship between drug supply indicators: An audit of international government surveillance systems. *BMJ Open*, 3(9). doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2013-003077

^④ Al Jazeera and Agencies. Rodrigo Duterte: 'I don't care about human rights'. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/rodrigo-duterte-human-rights-160806211448623.html>

^⑤ Lee, K. C., Ladizinski, B., & Federman, D. G. (2012). Complications Associated With Use of Levamisole-Contaminated Cocaine: An Emerging Public Health Challenge. *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, 87(6), 581-586. doi:10.1016/j.mayocp.2012.03.010

^⑥ Rincón-Ruiz, A., Correa, H. L., León, D. O., & Williams, S. (2016). Coca cultivation and crop eradication in Colombia: The challenges of integrating rural reality into effective anti-drug policy. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 33, 56-65. doi:10.1016/j.drugpo.2016.06.011

^⑦ Nutt, D. J., King, L. A., & Nichols, D. E. (2013). Effects of Schedule I drug laws on neuroscience research and treatment innovation. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience Nat Rev Neurosci*, 14(8), 577-585. doi:10.1038/nrn3530

^⑧ Siegel, R. K. (2005). *Intoxication: The universal drive for mind-altering substances*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press.

^⑨ <http://beckleyfoundation.org/resources/science-publications/>

^⑩ Murrough, J. W et al (2013). Antidepressant Efficacy of Ketamine in Treatment-Resistant Major Depression: A Two-Site Randomized Controlled Trial. *American Journal of Psychiatry AJP*, 170(10), 1134-1142. doi:10.1176/appi.ajp.2013.13030392

To get involved, or for more information, email contact@cssdp.org

Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy

Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP) is a grassroots network comprised of youth and students who are concerned about the negative impact our drug policies have on individuals and communities. We work on local, national and international levels to promote sensible drug policy, increase harm reduction awareness, and disseminate evidence-based educational resources.



Why Drug Policy?

Drug legislation in Canada and around the world does not accurately represent the relative harms and benefits of controlled substances.

Historically, drug policies are informed by moral doctrines rather than scientific or medical knowledge. The ensuing War on Drugs has caused more harm than chemicals themselves ever could.

Drug Policy impacts:

- Human Rights
- Race and class based oppression
- Mental Health
- Physical health
- Environmental Degradation
- Women's issues

Drug use is a public health issue, not a criminal one. Decriminalization of recreational substance use has been a successful strategy in a number of jurisdictions including Colorado and Uruguay for Cannabis, and Portugal and the Czech Republic for all classes of drug. Harm reduction strategies, such as needle exchanges, supervised injection sites and drug testing (checking drugs for adulterants) are all effective alternative approaches to drug policy.

Trends during the 'War on Drugs'

- **Purity and Price:** The purity of heroin, cocaine and cannabis has increased while the costs have all decreased.²
- **Increased Violence:** Since the Mexican government increased military force to combat drug cartels in 2006, an explosion of violence has left over 30,000 murdered.³ The President of the The Philippines has recently incited violence against drug users, resulting in around 800 extra-judicial killings between May and August 2016.⁴
- **Increased Risks to Drug Use:** There are poisoning risks associated with the adulterants and bulking agents used by criminal suppliers. For example, Levamisole, - a potentially toxic livestock de-worming agent - is widely used as a cocaine adulterant (reported in 69% of seized cocaine in the US, 2009) and can cause lethal skin infections.⁵
- **Environmental Degradation:** Crop eradication strategies involving aerial spraying of coca and opium crops. In Colombia, 128,000 hectares of crops are sprayed annually with little to no effect on production. This strategy motivates farmers to cut down more rainforest and is also related to a number of health complications such as respiratory infections and miscarriages.⁶

Why Should Students Care?

As drug policy does not accurately reflect the relative harms and benefits of drugs, it poses unnecessary and unjustified barriers to scientific research.⁷

These restrictions imply normative assumptions about human beings – that people “shouldn’t” be altering their consciousness, or that some drugs are intrinsically more “bad” than others - that are not empirically grounded. For example, pursuing altered states of consciousness may even be a universal human drive⁸

More and more people are becoming aware of the medical uses of cannabis, but this is not the only medication that is being made inaccessible to researchers.

Psilocybin, LSD, MDMA and Ketamine are among the many important chemical tools⁹ for scientific inquiry that remain unavailable to those who can maximize their social benefits. Yet these compounds are still widely used recreationally.

Prohibitionist drug policies increase the harms of drug use by suppressing information about illicit substances, restricting access to related public health services and criminalizing people who use drugs.