

I. Why worry about drugs?

As a working police member, you may be called upon to deal with murders, rapes, violent robberies, and serious assaults. Compared to these offences, drug enforcement may seem hardly worth the time. But there are several important reasons why you should be concerned about understanding drugs and their effects.

In a study conducted by the Medical Research Council and the Institute for Security Studies (the SA-ADAM 3 Metros study), it was found that nearly half the people arrested in sites in Durban, Cape Town, and Johannesburg tested positive for some illegal drug in their urine. While this does not prove that drugs cause crime, it does suggest that:

- Many offenders consume drugs, and drug enforcement can lead to the arrest of people involved in many other criminal activities.
- Helping people get out of drugs may help them get out of crime.
- Many people may be under the influence of drugs at the time they are arrested, and special care may be needed in dealing with these suspects in order to prevent them injuring themselves or others, and to cope with possible hallucinations or withdrawal symptoms. Drug intoxication may also influence the results and veracity of interviews and statements.



Drug-related crime comes in many forms:

- People under the influence may act impulsively, or misinterpret the actions of others, resulting in violence and crime.
- Some people may use drugs to steel their courage to commit crime.

- Addicts may need to steal to pay for their drugs, and the more serious the addiction, the more violent the crime may become.
- Female addicts may turn to prostitution, and may continue to practice sex work whatever their HIV status.
- Dealers may use violence to advance or defend their territory, or to collect debts.
- Organised crime syndicates may exchange other commodities for drugs, and in this way drug demand may fuel trafficking in endangered species parts, precious metals and minerals, and guns, as well as stolen vehicles and other stolen property.
- Traffickers make use of forged or fraudulently acquired documents and may use bribery to corrupt officials.

It is therefore important that YOU learn to recognise drugs, understand their effects, and perceive the signs of drug consumption and dealing.

This book is designed to help you identify street drugs, the people that use them, and the people that sell them. The 'profile' information on user and dealer types is offered so that you will know which communities are most at risk and when to be most vigilant to signs of drug use. For example, even if an elderly African woman in a rural area is displaying signs consistent with ecstasy use, information available at present indicates that it is unlikely that she would be under the influence of the drug. But fitting the profile does NOT imply use of the drug! Other information, such as the suspect displaying the symptoms detailed in each section, is needed to provide a reasonable basis to suspect drug use, possession, or sales.

The main drug types you will encounter on the street are discussed: dagga; Mandrax; cocaine and crack cocaine; heroin and other opiates; the 'club drugs' (ecstasy, LSD, and others); and methcathinone and methamphetamine. Certain of these drugs are more problematic in some areas of the country than in others, and you should pay special attention to the drugs common in your area. This book does not cover prescription drugs that are often abused, although these may also pose a serious problem in South Africa. This is because frontline police personnel will find it difficult to ascertain whether these drugs are legitimately prescribed or not, and because, with some exceptions, these drugs are rarely sold on the street.