



INCREASING DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT MEANS INCREASING DRUG MARKET VIOLENCE, STUDIES SHOW

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Violence is common in illegal drug markets and threatens community safety. Drug law enforcement (e.g., police crackdowns, drug arrests, etc.) is often used to reduce the potential for drug-related violence. However, little is known about the effect of enforcement on levels of drug-related violence.
- This study reviewed all scientific literature to determine what is known about the link between drug-related violence and law enforcement.
- The study authors reviewed all scientific literature on drug-related violence and drug law enforcement.
- These studies measured drug-related violence through homicide records, shootings, assaults, and measured drug law enforcement through number of drug arrests, number of police officers assigned to drug crimes, police anti-drug budgets, and other indicators.

FINDINGS

- The study identified 15 scientific studies that investigated the link between violence and drug law enforcement. Of these, 14 (93%) showed that drug-related violence increased when drug-related enforcement was applied.

QUICK FACT

ALTERNATIVE REGULATORY MODELS FOR ILLEGAL DRUGS MAY BE NEEDED IF DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE IS TO BE MEANINGFULLY REDUCED.

IMPLICATIONS

- Drug market violence, which is seen as a natural part of drug markets, increases when drug law enforcement is applied.
- One way that enforcement interventions may increase violence is by removing key players in a drug market, and thereby increasing competition among other drug market players for market share. Because of the illegality of the drug trade, violence is often used to protect and expand market share.
- With respect to community safety, the failure of traditional enforcement-based approaches in reducing violence suggests that alternative regulatory models for illegal drugs may be needed if drug-related violence is to be meaningfully reduced.

Werb D, Rowell G, Guyatt G, Kerr T, Montaner JS, Wood E. **Effect of drug law enforcement on drug market violence: A systematic review.** *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 2011; 22(2): 87-94.