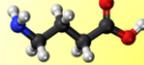




SOCI 270

Drugs, Society and Behavior

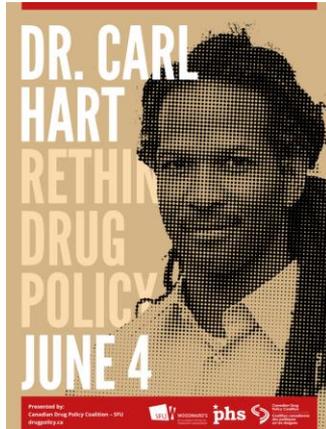
Professor Kurt Reymers, Ph.D. (Dr. K)



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Chapter 18

Rethinking Drug Policy



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1. Impetus for Change

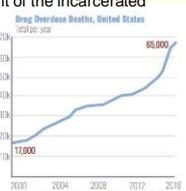
a. Selective targeting and racial discrimination in the drug laws contribute to stunning statistics



- In the United States
 - Nearly one-third of those arrested for drug law violations are Black, although drug use rates do not differ by race
 - Black males comprise about 6 percent of the general population but make up nearly 40 percent of the incarcerated population

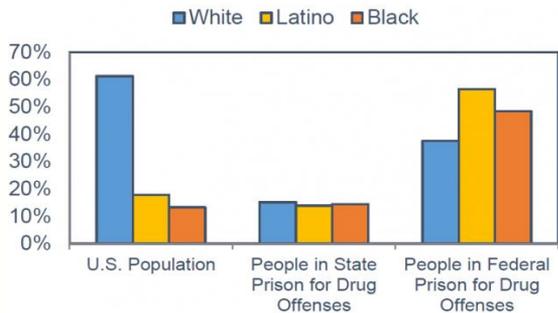
b. Overdose deaths, in majority, are caused by ingesting a combination of various sedating drugs

- Rarely caused by a single drug

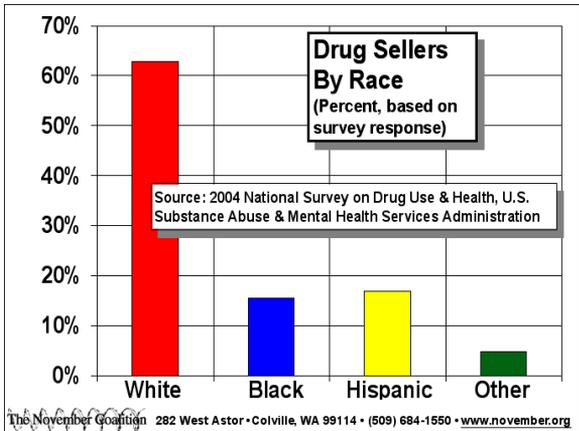


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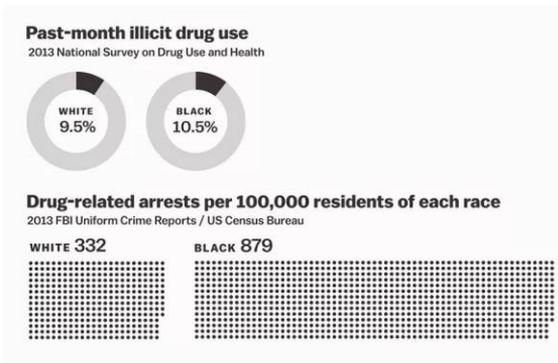
Disproportionate Impact of Drug Laws on Black and Latino Communities



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2. Drug Decriminalization

e. Example: Portuguese drug regulation system

- No criminal conviction for possession exists
 - **Warning is issued** in verbal or ticket form
 - Those with tickets appear before a panel that consists of a **social worker, a medical professional, and a lawyer**
- Drug use is addressed as a potential health problem, not a crime.



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2. Drug Decriminalization

f. Outcomes of the Portuguese drug regulation system vary



Positives:

- The number of drug-induced deaths dropped
- Overall rates of drug use dropped, especially among young people

Negatives: does not address some important concerns related to illegal drug use

- Drug quality control
- Violence in drug trafficking



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3. Strategies to Enhance Public Health and Safety

a. Drug legalization

- Suggested as one strategy to decrease violence associated with drug trafficking

b. Drug purity-testing

c. Heroin-assisted treatment

d. Safe drug consumption sites



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3.a. Drug Legalization

- Attempts come from a variety of cultural sources

- NORML** (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws)

- Freedom of choice; Libertarian appeal

- LEAP** (Law Enforcement Action Partnership)

- Public safety;

- Diminishing of institutional trust**

- [Nixon administration official admitted to racial bias in starting the war on drugs](#)



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3.b. Drug Purity-Testing

- 1999: Spanish** nongovernmental organization, **Energy Control**, offers confidential drug-testing services

- Provided free of cost to citizens
- Credited with decreasing harms associated with illegal drug use and potentially saving lives

- Also implemented by smaller organizations in a select number of countries

- Instituted at places where substance use is pervasive
 - Example: [music festivals](#)

Contains 4-FA instead of MDMA



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3.c. Heroin-Assisted Treatment

- 1980s to 1990s: Swiss public health officials were faced with increasing rates of HIV infections

- Made worse by intravenous heroin use and needle sharing

- 1994: Swiss authorities approved a program of heroin-assisted treatment**

- Treatment plan: individuals with heroin use disorder received a prescription for pharmaceutical-grade heroin

- A nurse, physician, psychologist, and social worker are assigned to aid in their care and help with addiction-related issues.

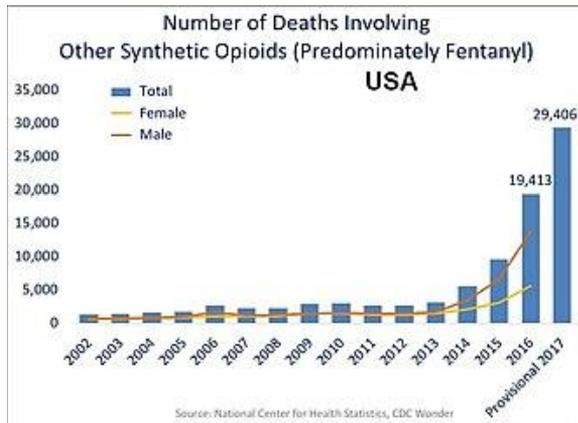


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3.c. Heroin-Assisted Treatment

- **Positive outcomes** of Switzerland's heroin-assisted treatment programs
 - Decrease in the street heroin usage and exposure to adulterants
 - Decrease in the number of Swiss who contracted the H I V virus
 - 1990s: the number of individuals who died from AIDS-related illnesses decreased
- **Similar programs have been initiated** by several other countries
 - Is a result of more than 20 years of successful implementation of the program in Switzerland
 - Examples: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and **now the U.S.**

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3.d. Safe Drug Consumption Sites

- Accessible to drug users who may not be well connected to healthcare services
- Viewed as **part of a continuum of care for people with addiction, mental illness, HIV or AIDS, and hepatitis**
- Facilities provided at the consumption sites
 - Drug users are permitted to consume their substance of choice under medical supervision
 - Supervision is not overbearing or intrusive

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3.d. Safe Drug Consumption Sites



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3.d. Safe Drug Consumption Sites

- In case of **drug overdoses** at the facility, **trained medical personnel** are prepared to reverse the effects (Narcan, Naloxone)
- **Harms are overcome** that are associated with contaminated drug equipment by providing **clean drug kits**
- Safe consumption facilities are located in **multiple countries** around the globe
- Examples: Canada, Switzerland, and the United States



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