

Prediction of the Criminal Activity of Incarcerated Drug-Abusing Offenders

This study examined self-report information from a structured interview on the drug use, employment status, drug distribution income, and criminal behavior of 188 drug-abusing offenders in the six months prior to the commission of the offense for which they were incarcerated. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which drug use and income-producing activity was related to the variety, frequency, and severity of criminal behavior during this six-month period. Results revealed that the major predictors of a greater variety of crime were male gender, fewer months employed, and a larger number of different drugs used; the major predictors of a greater frequency of crime were fewer months employed and greater cocaine use and drug distribution income; and the major predictors of a greater severity of crime were younger age and male gender. Interestingly, the use of marijuana in cases that did not involve opioid use was related to the commission of more violent crimes. Subsequent examination of this result revealed that violent activity was associated with the relatively high drug distribution income for those marijuana users who did not use opioids or cocaine. Implications of this and other findings for corrections planning and public policy are discussed.