



Bundeskriminalamt



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### **Research on organised crime in Scotland**

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## Abstract

While the enduring significance of illicit drug markets to organised crime is acknowledged in threat assessments such as the UK Threat Assessment of Organised Crime and the Europol OCTA, what is not well understood is the immediate impact of law enforcement drug interdiction upon the availability of illicit drugs at a community level. This presentation will describe a recent European Commission funded study that explored the immediate impact of law enforcement drug interdiction at a local level.

Researchers were deployed at 3 sites in the UK in the days immediately following law enforcement drug operations. The deployment was facilitated through the sharing of sensitive information between law enforcement and the University of Glasgow surrounding the proposed overt phase of on-going covert operational law enforcement activity. The research sought to establish the immediate impact of drug interdiction upon the availability of illicit drugs in communities and to this end the impact of two separate test purchase operations and a significant drug seizure were explored.

Drug users from 3 interdiction sites were recruited at methadone dispensing pharmacies and asked a series of questions surrounding their drug use and drug purchasing behaviour in the period immediately following the overt phase of the law enforcement anti-drug operations. In addition, in an attempt to establish the longer term impact, subjects also completed a follow-up questionnaire that was administered some weeks after the administration of the initial questionnaire. Other measures employed included the use of a self-completed drug use diary that sought to establish drug use behaviour, semi-structured interviews undertaken with drug users designed to gain a more detailed insight into their perceptions of drug interdiction and semi-structured interviews undertaken with service providers and law enforcement officers to gain an insight into their perceptions of drug enforcement and drug misuse.

In the first instance, what the results show is the ready availability of illicit drugs within the research sites. This was evident in the responses elicited to questions surrounding the ease or difficulty associated with purchasing illicit drugs. Across all three sites, there was a perception amongst respondents that illicit drugs were 'normally' very easy to obtain and this relative ease of supply was only marginally reduced when subjects were asked to consider a more 'recent' timeframe. As the law enforcement operation at each site had taken place within the 7 day period preceding the administration of the initial questionnaire, the response to the questions surrounding the consideration of a more recent time frame would indicate that the operations undertaken had little immediate impact on drug availability. However, on being probed further on the recent availability of illicit drugs, one third of respond indicated that over the previous 30 days it had indeed become more difficult to source drugs. The difficulty was particularly evident at one particular site where over 50% of respondents not only found it more difficult to source drugs, a number of respondents indicated that the difficulty was indeed attributable to law enforcement drug interdiction.