

Data extracted for realist review of alternative measures for dealing with simple possession of drugs

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Introduction

The file associated with this 'read me' document is an Excel spreadsheet containing data extracted for a realist review of alternatives to criminalisation for dealing with simple possession of illicit drugs.

It contains information from nine countries in three categories (contexts, mechanisms and outcomes) from documents found through a systematic literature search that was carried out for the review.

Methodological information

The scope of the review included alternative to criminalisation for dealing with simple possession (i.e. not supplying) illicit drugs in nine countries (Australia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Jamaica, Netherlands, USA, UK). Measures that legalised the possession of drugs and that maintained the use of convictions and the imposition of criminal records for first offences of possession were excluded from the scope of the review.

The search of the literature took place in June 2018. It searched the following databases: Web of Science, Scopus, Criminal Justice Abstract. It used the following search terms:

- [country OR state] AND (drug OR cannabis OR marijuana OR heroin OR cocaine) AND
- (decriminali* OR depenal* OR liberal* OR diversion OR warning OR expiation OR civil OR infringement OR expiation OR law OR policy) AND (possess* OR use) AND (evaluat* OR effect* OR impact*) NOT
- (pharma* OR medic*).¹

Additional documents were found through: searches for 'grey' literature in databases maintained by the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy and by the Drug Police Modelling Program at UNSW Australia; searches of forward citation of selected documents; and through recommendations from country experts.

Documents were selected for data extraction on the basis of relevance to the aims of the review. A full list of selected documents, with full citation details, is provided as Appendix 1 below.

Data extraction focused on particular aspects of the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes of alternative measures, with each aspect forming a row of the spreadsheet.

The document includes nine worksheets – one for each country – with identical categories and row headings.

¹ The italic words for country and state were replaced with the names of the actual jurisdictions we had selected and the search was run separately for each jurisdiction. The asterisks denote 'wild' word parts, which allow the database search to include words which have the same stem, but different endings (e.g. decriminalisation and decriminalizing, effectiveness and effects).

The columns in each worksheet each represent information extracted from one document on a particular policy reform in that country. This means that there can be more than one column per document, if the document included information on more than one reform.

Data was sometimes extracted by copying text from the original document into the relevant worksheet cell, and sometimes by summarising information in the original document. Users of this data are advised to refer to the original documents for complete information.

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Further information

Queries on the data should be sent to the Principal Investigator, Professor Alex Stevens:
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Appendix 1: List of documents included in the review, by country (n = 158)

Cross-country (13 documents)²

- Belackova, V., Ritter, A., Shanahan, M., & Hughes, C. E. (2017). Assessing the concordance between illicit drug laws on the books and drug law enforcement: comparison of three states on the continuum from “decriminalised” to “punitive”. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 41, 148-157. doi:10.1016/j.drugpo.2016.12.013.
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Australia (29)

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- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2014). *Alcohol and other drug treatment and diversion from the Australian CJS: 2012-13*. Retrieved from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol-other-drug-treatment-services/diversion-from-australian-criminal-justice-system/contents/table-of-contents>

² Included in this section are documents which refer to more than one of the countries covered in the review.

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Portugal (20)

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