

UNDERSTANDING DIAL-A-DOPING AND DEVELOPING
PROFILES OF DIAL-A-DOPERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

THE FIRST STEP INTO
CRIMINAL GANGS:
IT BEGINS WITH THE
DIAL-A-DOPER

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CENTRE FOR PUBLIC SAFETY &
CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH

The Crime Reduction Research Project

The Crime Reduction Research Program (CRRP) is the joint-research model in British Columbia between academics, the provincial government, and police agencies operated by the Office of Crime Reduction – Gang Outreach. The CRRP is supported and informed by a Crime Reduction Research Working Group which includes representation from the Ministry of Public Safety Solicitor General (represented by Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch and Police Services Branch), the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of British Columbia and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police “E” Division.

The CRRP focuses on investing in research that can be applied to support policing operations and informing evidence-based decisions on policies and programs related to public safety in British Columbia. Each year, the CRRP reviews submissions of research proposals in support of this mandate. The CRRP Working Group supports successful proposals by working with researchers to refine the study design as necessary, provide or acquire necessary data for projects, and advise on the validity of data interpretation and the practicality of recommendations.

The CRRP operates a \$1M annual funding allocation in the form of grants that are dedicated to support university-led research at Canadian institutions. This project was supported through the 2017/18 CRRP funding allotment.

Executive Summary

This purpose of this project was to develop a better understanding of the profile of street-level dial-a-dopers and the pathways to dial-a-doping in British Columbia. To do so, quantitative analyses of drug trends in the province between 2013 and 2020 were analysed both at a provincial level, at a policing district level, and at the level of participating RCMP police detachments. This was combined with qualitative analyses based on semi-structured interviews conducted with 25 participants from 15 policing agencies across the province of British Columbia.

While the current study focused on dial-a-doping, several types of drug distribution markets now exist, including the phone-based model of dial-a-doping, social media app-based markets (e.g., using Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Wickr), online cryptomarkets, and the more traditional open-air drug markets. The spread of mobile phones and related technologies has contributed to a drugs-on-demand model, also known as ‘delivery dealing’ or ‘dial-a-doping’ where drug users can text or dial their dealer to place an order for drugs that will quickly be fulfilled and delivered at an agreed upon location. In British Columbia, dial-a-doping has been the predominant method of illicit drug dealing when compared with other hand-to-hand street-level or street corner operations that take place in other regions in Canada and the United States.

Criminal gangs in British Columbia use dial-a-doping as a primary means to gain revenue, generating profit margins in the range of tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Gangs target youth to operate as dial-a-dopers and recruit them under the pretense of providing an ability for the recruit to make quick and easy money, though the reality is that the dial-a-doper makes a modest income yet takes the most risk. They are susceptible to being conned, robbed, or pressured into providing drugs without compensation, are responsible for any unaccounted drugs or money, they are more likely to be involved in violence, including as victims of homicide, and they may be targeted by law enforcement and pressured to provide information or evidence about those higher up in the organisation. Law enforcement also suggest that this is also the initial step into gang involvement/membership. Generally, in British Columbia, the dial-a-doper is a youth or young adult without a criminal record who holds a driver’s licence and access to a car. They may be recruited through friends or family. They receive drug orders through a burner cellphone from known drug users. Customers call the dial-a-doper and ask for the quantity and type of illicit drug they want to purchase. Once arrangements are made on the time and location to meet, dial-a-dopers may fill customer orders in as little as a 30-minute timeframe. When the dealer’s product supply runs low, a “reloader” replenishes the inventory from drugs stockpiled at a local safe house.

Use of mobile phones and encrypted technology to facilitate the trafficking of illicit drugs has made it more difficult for police to detect, enforce, and deter activities like dial-a-doping. Therefore, the current study focused on understanding the extent and nature of dial-a-doping in jurisdictions across British Columbia, the profile of a typical dial-a-doper, possible pathways into dial-a-doping, the role of organized crime and street gangs, and police strategies to manage dial-a-doping.

The quantitative analyses were conducted using three databases: (i) the drug offence charges in British Columbia between 2013 and 2020; (ii) demographic characteristics of drug offenders; and (iii) drug overdose trends in British Columbia between 2013 and 2020.

Between 2013 and 2020 in British Columbia, a disproportionate number of drug charges were laid in three of the four policing districts, relative to their population size. The Lower Mainland District accounted for around 20% fewer drug charges than would be expected based on population, whereas the South-East District account had more than 50% more drug charges than would be expected, followed by the North District, which had twice the number of drug charges than would be expected based on population. While half of drug charges between 2013 and 2020 were related to cannabis, this was more characteristic of the Lower Mainland District than the other three policing districts. Further, this trend shifted over time; the number of cannabis charges across British Columbia steadily declined between 2013 and 2019 after which they remained stable for 2020, except for the Lower Mainland District where they rose between 2018 and 2019. Conversely, the rates of fentanyl-related charges remained stable between 2013 and 2016 after which they steadily increased through 2020. Methamphetamine charges increased steadily over the study period for all four districts; all other drug-related charges (cocaine, heroin, and other Schedule 1) fluctuated between 2013-2020. Possession charges were the most frequent charge type overall, though there were some district level trends. For instance, Importing/Exporting charges were concentrated in the Lower Mainland District (driven by the municipality of Richmond), whereas Trafficking/Distribution charges were twice as common in the North District as they were in the Lower Mainland District.

There was also some variation over time, where charges for Possession declined by almost 50% between 2013 and 2020 in the province, whereas charges for Importing/Exporting grew substantially since 2017, particularly between 2018 and 2019. Likewise, charges for Trafficking/Distribution increased substantially between 2018 and 2019. Production charges were relatively stable until 2017 when there was a sharp increase in 2018 and 2019 before dropping substantially again in 2020. When focusing specifically on Trafficking charges, as these are most likely to be associated with dial-a-doping, nearly half of all trafficking cases (43 per cent) involved cocaine, while one-fifth (20 per cent) involved cannabis. However, there were some variations by district; the South-East District was substantially more likely to report trafficking charges for methamphetamines than the Lower Mainland or North Districts were, whereas the North District was more likely than the other districts to report cocaine trafficking charges. Over the study period, there were also shifts in the pattern of trafficking charges. Overall, there was a consistent and significant decline in trafficking charges between 2013 and 2020. While these were most pronounced for cocaine and cannabis, the declines applied to all substances with the exception of fentanyl.

The number of fentanyl trafficking charges nearly doubled between 2018 and 2020, and in 2020, fentanyl became the most frequent type of trafficking charge, accounting for 30% of all trafficking charges in British Columbia. In contrast, by 2020, heroin trafficking charges were reduced to a mere handful. There were also some interesting shifts in charging practices, which may be a result of COVID-19 effects on the criminal justice system. Specifically, while there was a notable drop in the proportion of cases leading to charges in 2017, an even more extreme decline occurred in 2020; this latter drop was experienced province wide. The reductions in the proportion of cases concluding in charges ranged between 50% in the Lower Mainland and Island Districts and up to 70% in the South-East and 80% North Districts.

The second set of quantitative analyses examined the demographic profile of 6,166 drug traffickers in British Columbia. Most drug traffickers were of Caucasian ethnicity, though the proportion varied by district, with a larger proportion of South Asian traffickers in the Lower Mainland District and a larger proportion of Indigenous traffickers in the North District compared to the other districts. Males were responsible for four-fifths (81 per cent) of all trafficking cases in the province, though, in the Lower Mainland District, this trend was clearer. In the other three districts, females were implicated in a slightly higher proportion of cases. Regardless of district, traffickers were most commonly 20 or 21 years of age.

The third set of quantitative analyses examined drug overdose trends between 2013 and 2020. Consistently across the four districts, illicit drugs comprised around 70% of all overdoses, followed by prescription drugs at around 17%, and fentanyl at around 13%. In 2016 and 2017, there were unusually high levels of illicit drug overdoses, which dropped in 2018 but rose again in 2020 by 45%. Fentanyl overdoses registered huge increases in 2016 and 2017, then declined slightly in 2018 and 2019. However, in 2020, the number of fentanyl overdoses again rose by about 35%. Since peaking in 2016, overdoses related to prescription drugs in British Columbia have declined every year. These patterns were generally consistent for all four districts, though the South-East and North Districts experienced a more substantial rise in fentanyl overdoses between 2019 and 2020.

For the qualitative portion of this project, interview participants were drawn from 15 policing agencies across the province. In total, the 25 interview participants that were drawn from these 15 policing agencies were involved in some aspect of drug investigations. Dial-a-doping was identified as the dominant form of drug trafficking in all the participating policing jurisdictions, though the number of drug lines operating per district ranged from a handful to more than 100. Participants identified a range of different dial-a-doping models, with the more sophisticated set-ups involving organised criminal groups, generally located in the Lower Mainland District, at the top of the hierarchy, spreading out to communities across British Columbia using multiple stash houses and numerous drug lines operated by dial-a-dopers who would be sent to a community to work for several weeks at a time. While the line may remain active 24/7, the dial-a-dopers might be moved around between jurisdictions to reduce the likelihood of police detection. Stash houses might include apartments, Airbnb rentals, or hotel rooms where the drugs may be simply stored, or where they might be cut into the smaller packages to disseminate on the streets. Once a dial-a-doper received an order from a client, they would meet at an agreed upon time and location to complete the exchange. This was generally in a public setting. As dial-a-dopers would, in some cases, move around the city in a vehicle with a driver, orders could be fulfilled within 30 to 60 minutes of being placed. Some operations, such as those in urban centres, functioned 24/7, whereas, in the more rural communities, they may not be active overnight because the chances of being detected by police was greater when fewer people were out in public spaces.

Unlike in past research on drug dealing where drug networks may work more independently from each other and experience conflict or violence related to control over a particular territory, the participants identified the heavy involvement of organised crime and street gangs in dial-a-doping in the province. Moreover, while they identified a range of different organised crime groups and street gangs, they observed that some of these groups would collaborate with each other to

facilitate the importation of illicit drugs into the province. Further, while many of the organised crime groups and street gangs were 'headquartered' in the Lower Mainland, they engaged in dial-a-doping across the province by sending their dial-a-dopers to operate their satellite lines in all four policing districts. Consequently, most participants reported having multiple gangs or organised criminal groups operating simultaneously in their jurisdiction who, for the most part, worked relatively peacefully with each other. This is likely due to the greater focus on profit-making and less concern over territory that is shared by the organised criminal groups and street gangs in British Columbia.

Given the tendency for dial-a-dopers with some drug lines to move in and out of communities, to use stash houses to store the larger quantities of their illicit drugs, to use rental vehicles to travel through the community, and to use burner phones to communicate with their clients, it was difficult for police to detect drug-related offences and even more difficult to build a successful case that would result in charge approval by Crown Counsel. Even if police were able to seize drugs and the related paraphernalia associated with dial-a-doping, participants commented that as long as the demand for illicit drugs was present, there was always someone ready and willing to supply drugs. Generally speaking, the demand and supply for drugs was for fentanyl, either by itself or combined with heroin, as well as for cocaine, crack cocaine, and methamphetamines. Cannabis was not commonly distributed by dial-a-dopers because of legalisation and the proliferation of Cannabis stores.

From the perspective of participants, dial-a-dopers were typically young, Caucasian males, though consistent with the quantitative analysis, this varied somewhat by jurisdiction. In some communities where females were involved, they were more often used as drivers and were described as older, involved in the sex trade, and paid in drugs. Some communities had a larger proportion of South Asian, Asian, or Indigenous dial-a-dopers. Participants reported a variety of reasons why dial-a-dopers had become involved in this work, including the need for money lack of the necessary skills, education, ambition, or ability to get a 'regular' job, or they had started out as drug users and needed to sell drugs to fund their addiction or pay off their drug debts. Still others became involved as a pathway towards gang membership. In some cases, dial-a-dopers were university students or people with legal jobs who began dial-a-doping to supplement their income. Many dial-a-dopers reportedly came from lower socio-economic classes and experienced mental health, addictions, or other social issues. However, some came from – and still lived with – families that were supportive and financially stable. In these cases, the dial-a-dopers viewed dial-a-doping as an easier and quicker way to make money.

There were several pathways to becoming a dial-a-doper. Some were recruited by family or friends who were already involved, some were recruited by the dial-a-doper they purchased their drugs from, and others sought opportunities for dial-a-doping intentionally as a pathway into the gangster lifestyle. Others might start out in the stash houses before being promoted upwards. Overall, there was no single specific profile of what a dial-a-doper might look like or pathway into dial-doping. Furthermore, as some communities reported that the dial-a-dopers rotated in and out of their jurisdiction, there was a lack of consistency in who engaged in this activity. Once recruited into dial-a-doping, they would go through an apprenticeship where they would be shown the steps,

and then assigned minor roles, such as being a lookout riding in the backseat of the vehicle, then moving up to becoming a driver, or answering the phone to take the order.

Dial-a-dopers and the organisations they worked for used a variety of tactics to promote their lines, including handing out their phone numbers and free samples at bars or to vulnerable populations and using sex workers to advertise their drug lines. They used burner phones and encrypted messaging apps to communicate with clients. Dial-a-dopers might be more willing to sell to unknown entities at the outset of setting up a line but over time, as they developed a dedicated client base, they were less inclined to sell to new clients, or those who came without a 'reference' from a current client.

While participants were asked about prevention dial-a-doping, and recognised that this was important, most noted that they generally did nothing in this area, as their mandate was enforcement. Likewise, intervention was viewed as another word for enforcement. Thus, their strategies generally involved being visible and active in the community, disrupting or interfering directly with dial-a-doping, and otherwise enforcing the law by targeting drug trafficking. The main tactic used by police to detect dial-a-doping in their community was the use of confidential informants, though some also used Crime Stoppers tips and information gathered from patrol officers to identify priority targets. Few mentioned having a dedicated analyst as part of their unit. Using analysts to monitor community-level trends, such as by analysing the information documented by patrol or surveillance teams, would help drug units become more intelligence-led in their approach to dial-a-doping enforcement. Regarding enforcement, participants reported using provincial acts, such as the *Motor Vehicle Act* or *Liquor Control Act* to make life less comfortable for dial-a-dopers and spoke in support of programs like Bar Watch and Restaurant Watch. Likewise, though it was challenging to be successful in a request for criminal forfeiture, this was seen as an effective way to disrupt drug trafficking. Overall, their main strategies appeared to involve writing search warrants, conducting surveillance, developing confidential informants, and making seizures. Many participants felt under-resourced in these areas, noting that they lacked sufficient human resources to be able to adequately respond to and suppress dial-a-doping in their communities, they lacked civilian or non-sworn members to assist with administrative tasks and disclosure requirements, and they did not have dedicated analysts attached to their units. They also identified a need for more vehicles to use for tactics like surveillance, and needed funding for more modern equipment, such as tracking devices. Still, some participants recognised that increasing policing resources was not enough, as other aspects of the police agency and criminal justice system (e.g., Crown Counsel, courtrooms, judges) continued to be inadequately staffed and resourced. Some suggested that the move to decriminalise small amounts of currently illicit drugs for personal use would reduce some of this pressure but recognised that more work needed to be done in the first instance to reduce the demand.

The first broad recommendation of this report involved several options for police jurisdictions to consider in terms of adjusting the size, structure, or mandate of drug units in the province. For some agencies with a lot of dial-a-dopers and drug lines, it makes sense to commit more human, physical, and technological resources to support the unit in managing a larger proportion of drug lines currently operating. For other agencies, where dial-a-doping is less prevalent, it might make sense to refocus the efforts of their drug units on broader yet related issues, such as prolific

offenders. Some jurisdictions might also benefit from adopting a more regional approach to this issue, where they combine their resources and intelligence together to counter the multi-jurisdictional dial-a-doping happening in their communities. Regardless, drug unit members should ensure that they are routinely meeting and sharing information on current dial-a-dopers, drug trends, and policing tactics on a regular basis with other drug units in their region.

The participants recognised the value of early prevention by noting that a major challenge to their ability to be success was that a new dial-a-doper was always ready to take the place of those the police were able to disrupt and arrest. Prevention programs that educated youth about the realities and risks of this lifestyle may dissuade some from following this pathway. This includes educating parents about the importance of emotional connections with their children and ensuring they are aware of the children's activities. However, this is not the mandate of a police-based drug unit. There are existing programs, such as End Gang Life through the CFSEU-BC, that are much better positioned and resourced to offer gang prevention and intervention programs. The focus of municipal-level drug units should instead be on enforcement.

Police currently use a range of strategies for enforcement. This includes developing and nurturing confidential informants, seeking tips through Crime Stoppers and information from fellow officers about potential targets to focus on, and conducting surveillance and seizures to develop intelligence and disrupt traffickers. Police should continue to be given opportunities for training, for instance, on new social media applications that may be used to facilitate dial-a-doping and supported with sufficient resources to support their work in these areas.

Advancements in technology have contributed to the spread of dial-a-doping as the predominant method of drug trafficking in British Columbia. While communities and governments must continue to address the demand for drugs and the number of young people willing to become dial-a-dopers through prevention efforts, the mandate of drug units across the province is to enforce drug trafficking laws through the targeted disruption of drug trafficking activities. Decriminalisation of minor amounts of illicit drugs for personal use may alleviate some of the pressure many drug units face; however, given the substantial profits made by criminal organisations and street gangs through dial-a-doping, drug units must work together and have their work supported through adequate human and technological resourcing, clear mandates, information sharing protocols, and training.

Introduction

The mandate of the Combined Forces and Special Enforcement Unit in British Columbia (CFSEU-BC) is to “target, investigate, prosecute, disrupt, and dismantle organised crime groups and individuals that pose the highest risk to public safety due to their involvement in gang violence”. The CFSEU-BC has identified that a typical pathway into gang or organised crime participation begins with early entry into drug dealing, through participation as a dial-a-doper. Beyond typically being male and young, there is very little research identifying the typical characteristics of a dial-a-doper. However, having a better understanding of the profile of those involved in dial-a-doping, the pathways to becoming a dial-a-doper, and some of the ways in which police have intervened, disrupted, and used enforcement strategies to combat dial-a-doping should assist police agencies, educators, and parents to identify those youth or young adults who are at-risk for being recruited into these positions, and could be used to inform the development of targeted prevention and intervention strategies.

Project Objectives

This purpose of this project is to develop a better understanding of the profile of street-level dial-a-dopers and the pathways to dial-a-doping in British Columbia. Specifically, the project will examine dial-a-dopers and dial-a-doping in the “E” Division Lower Mainland (Surrey, Vancouver, Burnaby, Langley, and Abbotsford), Island District (Victoria, Nanaimo, Saanich, West Shore, and Campbell River), North District (Prince George), and South-East District (Kelowna, Vernon, Cranbrook, and Merritt).

Project Methodology

In addition to a literature review on dial-a-doping, this project used a variety of quantitative and qualitative research methods. To begin constructing the more detailed understanding of the profile of the typical dial-a-doper and the pathways to dial-a-doping, in consultation with the Operations Strategy Branch (OSB) for ‘E’ Division RCMP and Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit (CFSEU-BC), 23 RCMP and municipal police agencies from across the four policing districts in British Columbia were selected to participate in this project based on the volume of dial-a-doping in their jurisdictions and the number of Provincial Tactical Enforcement Priority (PTEP) offenders. In total, 15 police agencies agreed to participate. Interviews were completed with 25 participants in total. This included nine participants from five police agencies in the Island District, eight participants from five police agencies in the Lower Mainland, two participants from one police agency in the North, and six participants from four police agencies in the Southeast. The participants ranged in experience from under six months working in the drug unit to over 10 years. The average length of experience in the drug unit was approximately 5 years. Many of the participants were supervisors/senior leaders overseeing the drug unit or gang enforcement team, while several participants were investigators, in charge of street level investigations and drug and gang enforcement operations.

The interview themes focused on the participant's experience working with dial-a-dopers, their description of the typical dial-a-doper in their jurisdiction, the pathways into dial-a-doping, the known methods this population uses to communicate with and sell drugs to customers, their perception of the degree of overlap between dial-a-dopers, gang activity, and organised crime, and the police's strategies for dealing with this population. All interviews were conducted by university researchers with current RCMP Security Clearances. The interviews were conducted either by phone or in a private office or meeting room in the participant's detachment or department, or via a telephone interview. The ethics of the research project, including the interview schedule and project methodology, were reviewed by the University Research Ethics Board prior to any data being collected. Participation in the interview was voluntary and those willing to participate were provided with an information sheet prior to the interview that included a detailed overview of the purpose of the interview. Immediately before the interview began, all participants were provided with the information sheet and asked to sign an informed consent form. Interviews were not recorded using video or audio recording devices, all information provided by participants was typed into an anonymised Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and qualitatively analysed for common themes. The analyses focused on themes emerging from the specific content provided by participants during their interviews, in addition to latent content illustrating any underlying themes.

OSB provided data about those individuals involved in the drug trade from 2013 to 2020. Given this, an analysis of drug-related crime trends was conducted for each of the participating jurisdictions, the districts, and the province. These analyses focused on the amount and range of drug-related criminal activity documented between 2013-2020 and included an analysis of Police Records Information Management Environment (PRIME) data linked to individuals under the age of 25 years old who have had negative police contacts related to Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) trafficking offences. This analysis will also include data on local drug seizure statistics, as well as drug overdose statistics. Of note, the data provided by OSB related to overdoses was for the years 2015 to 2020.

Literature Review

As Sjøgaard et al. (2019) explained, "illegal drug dealers no longer complete for customers only through the quality of their products, but also in convenience and speed of delivery" (p. 8). Consequently, the spread of mobile phones and related technologies has contributed to a drugs-on-demand model, also known as 'delivery dealing' or 'dial-a-doping' where drug users can text or dial their dealer to place an order for drugs that will quickly be fulfilled and delivered at an agreed upon location. The annual Global Drug Survey (2018) asked participants whether it was quicker to get a gram of cocaine delivered or a pizza; in Canada, approximately 27% of participants stated that they could get a gram of cocaine in 30 minutes or less, while 70% indicated same-day delivery (Global Drug Survey, 2018; Winstock, 2018).

In British Columbia, dial-a-doping has been the predominant method of illicit drug dealing when compared with other hand-to-hand street-level or street corner operations that take place in other regions in Canada and the United States (CFSEU-BC, 2015; City of Surrey, 2018). Dial-a-dope

operations function as a “pizza delivery service for drugs” where a drug dealer is contacted by a buyer via phone call to deliver illicit substances (Province of British Columbia, 2020, p. 6; also see CFSEU-BC, 2015; Søggaard et al., 2019). The process has been equated to other food-delivery business models, such as Skip the Dishes or Uber Eats (Osterberg, 2020) and referred to in other places, like in the United Kingdom, as a “ring and bring” or “dial-a-drug” operation (see Søggaard et al., 2019).

Dial-a-doping and drug delivery services are not unique to British Columbia or Canada. Research has shown that illicit drug delivery operations began in the 1980s (Curtis et al., 2002) and have increased across the globe since then (see European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction [EMCDDA], 2018; Søggaard et al., 2019). Scholars have suggested that this rise in drug delivery operations was due to increased Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) camera surveillance in many major cities that made hand-to-hand street corner operations less discreet (Winstock, 2017, 2018).

Søggaard et al. (2019) summarized that there were now several types of drug distribution markets; the phone-based market (i.e., dial-a-doper), social media app-based markets, online cryptomarkets, as well as the more traditional open-air drug market. However, some of these may overlap. For example, a dial-a-doper may also engage in street corner dealing to establish and promote a new drug line. Dial-a-dopers may also use a combination of phone-based sales and app-based networks, such as Snapchat and WhatsApp) (Moyle et al., 2019). The growth of these technology-facilitated markets has increased the challenges for police to effectively detect, investigate, and engage in enforcement actions against drug dealers.

Recent publications (Bakken & Demant, 2019; Moyle et al., 2019) have examined the use of social media and encrypted messaging applications, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, and Wickr, in the distribution of illegal drugs. Although they may be used on mobile phones, Bakken and Demant (2019) implied that app-based communications may be replacing mobile phones as the new market for drug dealing, particularly as these tools become the more familiar, common, and routine methods of communication for people, whether used for private purposes or for facilitating a drug deal. Whereas the use of mobile phones to text or call to discuss a drug deal requires that a previous relationship be established between the dial-a-doper and their client, apps provide opportunities for dealers to publicly reach a much wider potential client base (Bakken & Demant, 2019). The use of apps to market their products allows dealers to hashtag their products and use emojis in place of drug-related phrasing to communicate about the types of drugs they had for sale and allows their clients to follow them for updates about products and pricing (Bakken & Demant, 2019; Moyle et al., 2019). Social media may be used by the dealers to advertise their locations and products. Encrypted messaging services are then used to facilitate a more secure discussion about the potential transaction between the dealer and the client. This is where Bakken and Demant (2019) argued that the social media market diverged from the cryptomarket and elevated the potential risk for the client and dial-a-doper, as they typically agreed on a location and time to meet in public and complete the exchange. In Bakken and Demant’s (2019) examination of social media drug markets in five European countries, very few social media transactions concluded with the dealer mailing the product. Instead, most orders were delivered in person within one hour.

Moyle et al. (2019) conducted an online survey with 358 people who had used or had considered using an app to purchase drugs, as well as 47 rapid or more in-depth interviews. Participants were drawn from Canada (6 per cent of the sample), the United States (42 per cent), Australia (21 per cent), and the United Kingdom (5 per cent). Nearly half (44 per cent) of their participants identified having used an app to purchase drugs in the past year; most commonly cannabis (65 per cent), with LSD being a distant second (8 per cent). Interestingly, nearly all participants (93 per cent) had used apps to connect with local drug dealers, rather than to purchase drugs from afar.

Those who had thought about, but not actually used, apps to purchase drugs reported feeling anxiety around being detected by law enforcement. They reported being unsure about the nature of encrypted technology and were unclear which technologies police could and could not monitor (Moyle et al., 2019). In contrast, participants who had used apps to purchase drugs generally reported that they found the use of apps to purchase drugs much easier, faster, and lower risk than using street-markets or cryptomarkets. The main reasons given for using apps to purchase drugs were the immediacy and convenience and because no special technological skills were required to do so (Moyle et al., 2019). In many ways, the use of apps to coordinate the purchase and delivery of drugs was the same as using a phone line to text to connect with a dial-a-doper, as the apps were used to communicate the order and the pickup location. In fact, WhatsApp was seen as just another version of texting (Moyle et al., 2019). One participant described the process of using apps to purchase drugs as "...a simple, modern way to buy things" (p. 106). Using apps enabled clients to have a quick private conversation for which there may be no record of the transaction after a set amount of time due to the self-destructing nature of the messaging system. For example, three-quarters of Moyle et al.'s (2019) participants reported having used Snapchat to purchase drugs. The popularity of this app was due to the message disappearing from record once the recipient had viewed it, though as Moyle et al. (2019) cautioned, unopened messages in Snapchat sit 'in limbo' (p. 109) on the server until the recipient viewed it. This could provide for opportunities for enforcement interception. The use of these apps might also enable potential buyers to routinely buy from more than one source, as participants in Moyle et al.'s (2019) study reported using location services to locate nearby dealers who they could connect with quickly. Further, it offered clients a broader array of drugs that they could purchase, as participants reported that it would be rare for a dealer to sell many different types of drugs simultaneously on the street or to sell certain types of drugs at all on the street (Moyle et al., 2019).

Although the use of social media messaging apps was similar in practice to texting an order for drugs to an established phone line, the clients expressed some anxiety around the possibility of the drugs they were purchasing being fake or not what they ordered, and the possibility of law enforcement detection (Moyle et al., 2019). It appeared from this study that the extra level of anonymity offered by social media apps resulted in clients feeling less secure about their purchases than if they were texting or phoning a drug line to place their order.

Cryptomarkets, such as the digital Silk Road, are yet another environment in which drug transactions may be conducted at relatively low risk to the seller and only a slightly higher risk to the buyer (Barratt et al., 2016; Moyle et al., 2019). In this market, clients used cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin, to purchase drugs over internet sites using anonymising software, such as Tor, which were then distributed to them through the mail (Moyle et al., 2019). Purchasing drugs via

cryptomarkets may be perceived by clients as a safer route to obtaining drugs (Barratt et al., 2016). The main risk of detection posed to the dealer was when packaging and mailing the drugs, whereas the main risk of detection for the client was when receiving the delivery, particularly if they were there to receive the delivery in person and if they signed for the delivery (Aldridge & Askew, 2017). Post office drop offs and pick-ups were also avoided to minimise the likelihood of being recorded on camera selling or purchasing illicit substances (Aldridge & Askew, 2017). Therefore, while they offered a certain level of appeal to those who wished to be more discreet in their purchasing of illicit drugs, once the transaction had been made, the client no longer enjoyed anonymity. In addition, Aldridge and Askew (2017) noted that cryptomarket dealers instructed clients to use their own name and address to receive the mailed order to avoid raising suspicion among mail carriers who were familiar with the names of the residents they were delivering mail to. Further, Moyle et al. (2019) suggested that those using cryptomarkets to purchase and sell drugs needed to be at least somewhat technologically savvy, with the ability to access the darknet and to have some degree of familiarity with the use of cryptocurrencies. There was also some concern regarding the quality of the drugs being purchased through relatively unknown suppliers (Barratt et al., 2019; Moyle et al., 2019). Further, cryptomarket users still needed to wait for their purchase to arrive by mail, whereas with dial-a-doping, clients could almost immediately have their demands met. Moreover, clients risked being caught by law enforcement when the drugs were delivered to their home if the package was intercepted en route (Barratt et al., 2016; Moyle et al., 2019). In contrast, when purchasing drugs through a dial-a-doper, the client had more control over coordinating an agreed upon meeting location and time with a dial-a-doper in a more public location. These may be contributing reasons why dial-a-doping appears to be the main method by which drugs are disseminated to clients in British Columbia.

THE EFFECTS OF MOBILE PHONES ON DRUG SELLING

McEwen (2010) identified the mobile phone as the “master tool in the hands of those involved in organised crime” (p. 135) given the degree to which this technology facilitated the commission of criminal activity. Simply put, mobile phones increased flexibility and efficiency. For example, mobile phones allowed for adjustments to be made at the last moment to pre-agreed upon meeting locations and times (McEwen, 2010), thus allowing dealers and their clients to reduce potential detection by the police. The use of ‘burner’ phones and the increasing use of encrypted technology and applications has facilitated anonymous communications making it difficult for law enforcement to trace illicit deals made using cell phones (McEwen, 2010). These issues have led to changing policies across the globe, such as to remove anonymity of pre-purchased phones (e.g., in South Africa) and the introduction of national registries for mobile phone subscribers (Mexico, Greece, South Africa) (McEwen, 2010).

Søgaard et al. (2019) observed that whereas street-level dealers may be tied to a specific geographical location within a community due to ‘turf’ wars between competing drug sellers, the growth of ‘ring and bring’ drug services meant that drug dealers were no longer constrained to a single specific area within a community. Instead, they could coordinate meeting locations more broadly with their clients. This has made drug dealing a flexible industry. Dealing drugs in this manner has also resulted in a shift to dial-a-doping being seen more as a service where reputation

was built on quality of product and quality of service. Dial-a-dopers were judged by their clients based on how quickly and accurately they could fulfil orders placed through their drug lines (Søgaard et al., 2019). Poor service, where an order was slow to be filled or where an order was filled incorrectly, may subsequently result in the client finding a new line. Given that these qualities appeared to be routinely advertised by dial-a-dopers, switching allegiances to a new line does not appear to be difficult.

Søgaard et al. (2019) interviewed 21 dial-a-dopers in Denmark regarding their use of mobile phones to facilitate drug delivery dealing. As summarized in their literature review and interview results, the use of mobile phones to facilitate drug dealing allowed the sellers to engage in drug selling more discreetly, to build and maintain a consistent client list, to share widespread distributions (group texts) advertising new products, to share information about law enforcement tactics or activities, and to reorganize distribution networks. The use of encrypted mobile phones to facilitate drug dealing, therefore, allowed dial-a-dopers to minimize risk while maximizing profits (Moyle et al., 2019). For instance, they could advertise new products and prices, new lines, and their hours of operation.

The dealers in Søgaard et al.'s (2019) study spoke about the importance of building a dedicated client list in their phone as a means of social capital, which contributed towards their relative degree of importance in the drug network hierarchy. The more phone lines someone had under their control, the more respect or admiration they experienced from others involved in the trade (Søgaard et al., 2019). Thus, mobile phones were considered a form of 'street capital' and were directly tied to one's status (Sandberg 2008, as cited in Søgaard et al., 2019). Mobile phones were seen as an investment that would enable drug dealers to secure a better future, as the more phones and customers they could develop, the more money they could eventually sell the phone number for in the future (Søgaard et al., 2019). This was especially true if they had been establishing and building their customer base over a period of several years. To sell a phone line, the dealers in Søgaard et al.'s (2019) study explained that a potential buyer would spend about one week alongside the seller witnessing how active the phone line was.

The dealers interviewed by Søgaard et al. (2019) in Denmark commonly reported having two phones. One was connected to the internet and used for private communications, while the second phone was typically a very simple technology-disabled phone used only for text or phone call-based communications. This phone was preferred for communications with clients as it was seen as more difficult for the police to connect to or trace due to the lack of Bluetooth, GPS, or internet connection (Søgaard et al., 2019). They also reported using pre-paid and anonymous SIM cards to run their lines, and routinely changed their phone number if they suspected it was becoming 'hot' (p. 11). Interestingly, to avoid any confusion in fulfilling drug orders, some of the dealers reported operating multiple phones, one for cannabis sales and another for harder drugs, such as cocaine (i.e., a 'smoke phone' and a 'coke phone', Søgaard et al., 2019, p. 12). Again, this was done because their reputation depended upon efficient and effective fulfillment of drug orders.

The dealers interviewed by Søgaard et al. (2019) did participate in some aspects of 'traditional' drug dealing. For example, they might go to a nightclub or a street corner to recruit new customers. The goal behind this marketing or selling activity was to spread their phone number to facilitate greater dial-a-doping sales in the future. To do this, they might sell their products and pass out their

number, but they might also distribute their phone number along with free samples. In other example, dialers attended areas where drug users were known to concentrate. As these were areas where police were allowed to stop-and-search anyone in the vicinity without probable cause, they would only bring business cards or copies of their phone number on a piece of paper rather than the drugs (Søgaard et al., 2019). Other examples of advertising a drug line included putting up flyers with a particular symbol or putting business cards directly into people's mailboxes (Søgaard et al., 2019).

A major difference between the dial-a-dope operations in Denmark, as reported by Søgaard et al., (2019) and dial-a-doping in British Columbia was the lack of organised crime involvement in Denmark. While some Danish dial-a-dopers collaborated to increase their ability to rapidly respond to demand, few were part of an organised criminal group. Given this, their operations were typically much smaller than what might be seen in British Columbia, with only a couple of phone operators and a few runners of the drug, and the possibility that they would have non-operating hours when they had no one to cover the drug line (Søgaard et al., 2019). Of note, the person operating the phone may be in a vehicle alongside the dealer running the drugs to convey estimates effectively and accurately for arrival time at the agreed upon location (Søgaard et al., 2019).

PROFILE OF A DIAL-A-DOPER

Generally, in British Columbia, the dial-a-doper is a youth or young adult with a driver's licence, access to a car, who receives drug orders through a burner cellphone from known drug users (Penner, 2019). These customers call the dial-a-doper and ask for the quantity and type of illicit drug they want to order. In the Lower Mainland, dial-a-dopers typically fill customer orders within a 30-minute timeframe. When the dealer's product supply runs low, a "reloader" replenishes the inventory from drugs stockpiled at a local safe house (CFSEU-BC, 2015).

Criminal gangs in British Columbia use dial-a-doping as a primary means to gain revenue (CFSEU-BC, 2015). Osterberg (2020) conducted 44 semi-structured interviews with law enforcement ($n = 42$) and civilian employees ($n = 2$) from the cities of Surrey, Abbotsford, and Delta in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia on perceptions of gang networks, organisations, illicit activities, and violence. Law enforcement from these areas described dial-a-doping as a "lucrative, profitable, and extensively deployed mode of business" (p. 157). As one RCMP member described, "a dial-a-dope trafficker worked usually a 12-hour shift. They have a float, they have a line boss, they have a dispatcher, and they have someone who usually rides with them for security reasons" (Osterberg, 2020, p. 158). Overall, dial-a-doping "is a crime that requires forethought and planning, a cell phone, a drug supplier, packaging materials, sometimes measuring equipment, and usually a vehicle" (Honourable Mr. Justice Lowry in *R. v. Dickey*, 2016 BCCA 177, para. 28). Overall dial-a-dope operations are extremely important for British Columbia's Lower Mainland gangs generating profit margins in the range of tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars (*R. v. Franklin*, 2001). For instance, Michael Le, one of the original founders of the Red Scorpions, a British Columbia-based gang, stated in court that, at the age of 18 years old, his New Westminster operation earned approximately \$125,000 to \$150,000 per month (Bolan, 2014). Michael would buy cocaine wholesale from the Triads, a Chinese transnational criminal enterprise to then sell to

clients (Bolan, 2014). In effect, while there was some risk from law enforcement and competing gangs, dial-a-doping could be seen as a lucrative way for gangs and gang members to make a substantial amount of money over a short period of time.

MOTIVATIONS, CHARACTERISTICS, AND THE LIFE OF A DIAL-A-DOPER

Gangs target youth to operate as dial-a-dopers and recruit under the pretense of providing an ability for the recruit to make quick and easy money. Law enforcement suggests that this is the initial step into gang involvement/membership (CFSEU-BC, 2015). Young drug dealers are motivated to participate in this lifestyle for various reasons; however, typically, youth have reported motives surrounding financial gain, supporting their drug habit, or helping a friend (Coomber & Turnbull, 2007). Others feel enticed by different elements of the gang lifestyle, including a sense of protection, identity, belonging, and respect (Descormiers & Corrado, 2016; Ngo et al., 2017). In Calgary, Canada, Ngo and colleagues (2017) interviewed 30 current and former gang-involved immigrant youths about their experiences in entering the gang lifestyle. Researchers found that youth identified several personal and interpersonal difficulties within the home, school, and the community that contributed to their lack of self-concept. Gang involvement fulfilled their need for social belongingness and connectedness that they lacked from conventional means (Ngo et al., 2017). In effect, gangs promoted a sense of identity and interpersonal comradery, protection, and economic or social status gains (Ngo, 2010; see also Descormiers & Corrado, 2016; Juhasz, 2019). Some research found nonconventional risk factors for gang involvement within the South Asian community in British Columbia related to family wealth, parental admiration toward male offspring, authoritarian parenting style, conflict in the parent-child relationship, hyper-masculine ideals, and group pride (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018; Brar, 2017; McConnell, 2015).

Additionally, Little and Steinberg (2006) identified several psychosocial factors associated with youth drug dealing among a sample of inner-city adolescents from Philadelphia ($N = 605$). They found that inadequate parental supervision, residing in a neighbourhood with a high degree of social disorder, the lack of local job opportunities, parental substance use or abuse, and associating with antisocial or deviant peers all increased the prospects of youth involvement in drug dealing. After adjusting for these social correlates, Little and Steinberg (2006) discovered that youths' temperance – that is, higher impulse control – was correlated with less cannabis selling, whereas youth who were less susceptible to peer influence engaged in higher volumes of non-cannabis drug-selling. Therefore, the researchers reasoned that youth selling non-cannabis drugs presented certain unique challenges as these types of drugs were harder to acquire and protect, necessitating a “greater initiative, independence, and risk tolerance than dealing cannabis” (Little & Steinberg, 2006, p. 369). This research might also provide some insight into those dial-a-dopers who move up in the organisation and are given more responsibilities compared to those who remain primarily street-level dial-a-dopers.

Regardless of the motivations to sell drugs, the reality is that dial-a-dopers make modest incomes, and are susceptible to being conned, robbed, or pressured into providing drugs to customers without compensation (i.e., ‘front’ drugs). Dial-a-dopers are responsible for any unaccounted drugs or money and, as a result, accrue debt with the gang – e.g., owing money to reloaders (CFSEU-BC, 2015). Dial-a-dopers may also be targeted by law enforcement, arrested, and charged under the

Controlled Drugs and Substance Act [CDSA], S. C. 1996, c.19, section 5(2) for unlawful possession of a controlled substance(s) for the purpose of trafficking. Alternatively, they may be ‘flipped’ by police who, in exchange for intelligence on those individuals higher up in the organization, will not forward recommended charges to Crown (Greer et al., 2022). Illicit substances that fall under the CDSA include heroin, crack cocaine, cocaine, psilocybin, MDMA, methamphetamine. Therefore, they take the most risk but gain the least when it comes to profiteering from drug trafficking.

The media and research point to several other characteristics that make certain youth more attractive to gangs for dial-a-doping recruitment, such as having a driver’s licences (City of Surrey, 2018, p. 8) and no previous criminal record (CFSEU-BC, 2015). Furthermore, under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, first time offenders were likely to be diverted out of the formal criminal justice system either by police or Crown Counsel (Juhasz, 2019), which police identified as a major barrier to enforcement. Dial-a-dopers appeared to start in the industry at a young age. The adult dial-a-dopers in Denmark who were interviewed by Søggaard et al. (2019) identified an age of onset of 14 years old. Interestingly, during the 2014-2016 gang conflict, the Surrey Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) calculated that, on average, the age of a gang member’s first criminal offence was 16 years old (City of Surrey, 2018). There are many examples of teen involvement in dial-a-doping. In a 2021 case, law enforcement caught two 16- year-olds at a safe house associated with a local drug trafficking organisation (i.e., dial-a-dope operation) in the Whalley area of Surrey. Police confiscated firearms, ammunition, \$11,000 in cash, and sachets of fentanyl, cocaine, crack cocaine, methamphetamine, and MDMA (Zytaruk, 2021). As one officer stated in an interview, “Now...there are a lot of younger males, especially in the South Asian community: 14, 15, 16. It is not uncommon to see...much younger ages than you would have historically” (see Garrett in Osterberg, 2020, p. 169).

Youth may get involved in dial-a-doping for a gang because “they do not fear consequences or enforcement” (City of Surrey, 2018, p. 58). They are thrill-seekers “open to adventure and are willing to try out new and dangerous ways of living” as they pursue status and quick money (CFSEU-BC, 2015, p. 7). Youth in these circumstances are challenging to reach for intervention service providers, such as Stop Now and Plan [SNAP] and WRAP around programs. Once a youth has become entrenched with a dial-a-doping operation, they may not be attending school or willing to participate in programs, counseling, or other outreach services (City of Surrey, 2018). Despite the seemingly impulsive decision of youth involvement in dial-a-doping, in a 20-year-old British Columbia court decision, the Honourable Mr. Justice Henderson contrarily argued that “one does not enter into a dial-a-dope operation impulsively or spontaneously. It is necessary to obtain a supplier, to outfit oneself with a pager and a cell phone and a vehicle, and to make sure the word gets around. It is a calculated decision to engage in a particular type of business” (*R. v. Franklin*, 2001 BCSC 706, paras. 47). A clinical counsellor with the Burnaby School District, Vijay Mann (2019), who specializes in gang intervention and exiting programs, offered their clinical expertise in the wake of the recent gang violence in the Lower Mainland:

In my work with at-risk or crime-entrenched youth, one glaring common factor is present – the absence of emotionally present fathers. Sure, these youth usually have their dads in their lives. But often, these dads are not emotionally available to their kids. We can blame a number of factors for this *phenomenon* – and yes, it’s a phenomenon in the South Asian community. I fully acknowledge that there are systemic issues also at play which disproportionately target immigrant, minority, and

marginalized communities. However, we must also address our own accountability...we need to be emotionally accountable to our kids.¹

Further, the British Columbian Illegal Firearms Task Force found that young dial-a-dopers were one of the primary causes of gang violence in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. For example, they were frequently involved in very public execution-style homicides of rival lower-ranking gang dialers (City of Surrey, 2018). Older, more established, and more embedded gang members generally instruct younger members to commit homicides to establish loyalty/allegiance or pay off debts. By delegating violence to younger members, more senior or veteran gang members were able to distance themselves from direct connection to the murder, which lessened their risk of being targeted for violent retaliation or criminal culpability (City of Surrey, 2018). To that end, there is a deliberate veil of anonymity created within these networks. Gang members intentionally constructed as many degrees of separation as possible from the dial-a-dopers to the high-ranking gang leaders. As an outcome of this deliberate structure, dial-a-dopers did not always know whom they were working for or whom they were working with (CFSEU-BC, 2015).

Despite the high-risk nature of dial-a-doping, youth dial-a-dopers at the bottom of the hierarchy were not provided protection or loyalty from other gang members. “These traffickers [e.g., ‘dialers’] are considered the lowest rung in the drug hierarchy and are more likely to be detected by law enforcement. Individuals at a higher level of the trafficking operation, either as couriers, mid-level dealers, or high-level dealers, insulate themselves from detection and are more difficult for police to detect” (Hrymak, 2018, p. 154). Due to the number of gang-related shootings in the Metro Vancouver Region, on May 18th, 2021, CFSEU-BC issued a public safety warning, presenting the identities of 11 men connected to the gang conflict who were likely future targets for gang-related violence (Judd, 2021). The CFSEU-BC stated that those in close contact with these 11 individuals were at significant risk. Many victims in the Metro Vancouver shootings were young men with gang ties (e.g., 19-year-old Toni Dalipi, 20-year-old Bailey McKinney; see Judd, 2021). Since many details are still pending in the latest incidents, it remains somewhat unclear whether drug trafficking operations (e.g., dial-a-doping) factored into the latest wave of violence.

Some police officers have suggested that the gangs in British Columbia were changing and becoming less predictable and less organized than they once were. For example, one police officer from the Abbotsford Police Department stated that sometimes violent incidents “may not have anything specifically to do with the gang, or with the drug trade. It may just be that these two combatants went to high school with each other, or one of them is dating someone’s cousin, and when we have peeled back the layers, we have been surprised the number of times that we thought that this was about the ongoing conflict in town and it absolutely had very little to do with it” (Osterberg, 2020, p. 168). Another police officer from the Surrey RCMP had a similar comment: “these are not rigid groups. One day they are friends, the next day he is skewing over the guys that he’s been best friends with, and he’s trying to start his own (dial-a-dope) line” (Osterberg, 2020, p. 170).

¹ Original post: https://www.instagram.com/p/CO-tzKTs1KZ/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=1f9d6ff7-4e5c-4be6-b160-e31f8abf7aea; also see Martins, 2021.

POLICE INVESTIGATIONS OF DIAL-A-DEALING NETWORKS AND DEALER STRATEGIES TO MINIMIZE RISK

Once police officers identified a dial-a-dealer phone number, they might be able to apply for a judicial authorization to wiretap the line. However, in Canada, these applications are quite lengthy and time consuming to complete. One interview with a British Columbian police officer working in a drug unit revealed that completing the paperwork for a Part 6 application to intercept private communications took two months to complete, while another participant stated that they worked on an application for eight full shifts (Cohen et al., 2021). By this point, the dial-a-doper using the mobile phone may become aware that their line is 'hot' and change to a new line.

Similarly, if police can obtain a search warrant and then seize a mobile phone that they suspect has been used to facilitate dial-a-doping, they can apply for a Production Order to obtain the data from the phone (Cohen et al., 2021; McEwan, 2010). However, police routinely also need to apply for a Section 490 order to allow them to hold a mobile phone belonging to a suspect for longer than 90 days due to consistent delays in having the digital evidence extracted (Cohen et al., 2021). This was particularly true when the seized mobile phone was encrypted, as police may not have the current skills, technology, or resources to break the level of encryption present on some modern mobile phones (Cohen et al., 2021). In a recent report regarding the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* police investigations in British Columbia, Cohen et al. (2021) observed that, in addition to increasingly using encrypted technologies and apps, drug dealers also shifted tactics towards using mobile phone providers who ran servers outside of Canada making it nearly impossible for the police to obtain the appropriate search warrants and production orders with which to legally search the phone.

The *R. v. Marakah* decision added more challenges to the police's use of mobile phone technology in drug investigations (Cohen et al., 2021). The decision in this case rendered communications made between two mobile phones private, even if the owner of one of the phones willingly submitted their phone as evidence to the police. For example, a confidential informant who communicated with a dial-a-doper over their mobile phone would not be able to provide that evidence to the police unless the officer first obtained a search warrant, as the second party to that conversation was considered to have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

Given the complex and time consuming nature of applying for wiretaps and obtaining search warrants and production orders, and the increasingly complicated challenge of 'cracking' an encrypted mobile phone, while mobile phones initially offered substantial promise to drug investigators as an 'informational gold mine' (p. 86) in their investigations, the drug unit officers in Cohen et al.'s (2021) study suggested that, in some investigations, they were no longer bothering to apply or seize mobile phones from drug dealers. Wiretapping a phone line was also somewhat more irregular given the substantial demand on police resourcing to prepare the necessary judicial application and then carry out the surveillance (Cohen et al., 2021). Further, some subjects of wiretapping were able to evade this police tactic by sweeping for wiretaps or using signal jammers. In other words, mobile phone technology and the way in which drug dealers and criminal organisations utilized this tool made it extremely difficult for police to obtain this kind of digital evidence to support potential criminal charges. Similarly, police officers in British Columbia who were interviewed by Greer et al. (2022) regarding enforcement of drug laws indicated that it

required a substantial number of resources to investigate and build a case that Crown Counsel would then fail to move forward to the courts. Instead, police officers might intentionally focus on enforcement against low-level dealers who they would then attempt to flip to obtain intelligence that could be used to target and build a case against the higher-level traffickers. In this way, drug enforcement of low-level dial-a-doping was seen as an investigative tool rather than a crime prevention, reduction, or intervention strategy.

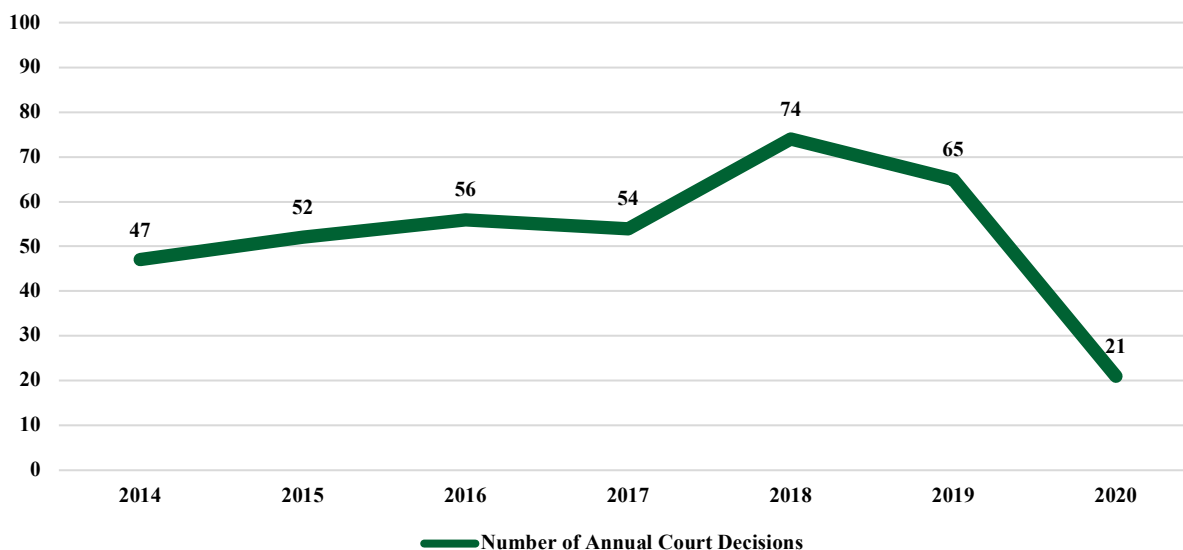
In Søggaard et al.'s (2019) interviews with dial-a-dopers, they reported that dial-a-dopers tried to carefully balance maintaining a current and active drug line number, and therefore their client base, and only switching up the number if they felt it was getting 'hot' and risked losing customers (p. 11). Similarly, Fader's (2016) interviews with 20 American drug dealers ranging in age from 18 to 33 years old suggested that they engaged in risk management, where they considered the risks of being detected versus the risk of losing potential sales. To that end, they adopted minor shifts to their practices to become "smarter" at selling drugs. These might include refusing to sell to those they did not know personally or requiring a referral from a trusted party, the increasing use of cell phones to conduct drug transactions, using code words to refer to substance types and quantities, reverting temporarily to the sale of only decriminalized substances (e.g., cannabis) or substances that would result in lesser sentences if caught, and going to a new neighbourhood or city that was out of their normal routine (Fader, 2016). One overarching strategy used by dealers in this study was risk distribution, where the dealer would pass on the risk of being caught and convicted to those lower down in the hierarchy of the organisation. For example, they might have others run their drugs or operate the stash houses where they stored larger quantities of the illegal substances they were selling (Fader, 2016). Interestingly, the dealers in this study identified females as the ideal stash operator as they would be less likely to be suspected by police as involved in the drug trade. One dealer identified females who were addicted to drugs, who was still able to maintain legal employment, and who was not connected intimately with the dealer as a good person to work for a stash house. As the dealer became more experienced and risk averse, they would shift to brokering deals, where they received payments for connecting clients to dealers. Few dealers in Fader's (2016) study desisted from selling drugs, even after being convicted for drug dealing and spending time in prison. Instead, they shifted to less risky positions where they would play a less visible role. In contrast, those who were more willing to take on more risk were typically younger male dealers with less experience. In effect, those who were caught for various drug-related activities as teenagers generally did not perceive the sanctions to be meaningful, therefore, they were not deterred from continuing to be involved in some aspect of drug dealing (Fader, 2016). Again, those who had been caught and sanctioned for drug dealing were not necessarily deterred from returning to this life after being released from prison. For example, one of Fader's (2016) participants indicated that the 'heat was off me' due to being in prison for several years. Another continued to operate a high-level drug network while on parole. As they continued to have clean urine tests, their parole officer did not detect that they were continuing to participate in the drug network. The participants also observed that when police cracked down, for example, by descending on a hot spot, they would simply shift tactics by moving from cars to bikes, moving just several blocks over, or 'laying low' for a couple of weeks (Fader, 2016). Given this, it seemed that disrupting drug sales and sanctions for engaging in drug dealing were not effective deterrents.

Using confidential informants to identify phone lines should be a key strategy for police officers as this was one of the ways the police could increase the cost of doing business for dialers. While this may not have a substantial effect on the more organised crime lines, in the short term, it disrupted the demand-and-supply chain and may effectively put smaller lines out of business. If the dealer instead chooses to take the risk and not switch lines for risk of losing customers, then the police may be able to conduct the authorized surveillance and disrupt the dial-a-doper line through potential charges. However, as Søggaard et al. (2019) observed in Denmark, given that dial-a-dopers typically distributed small amounts of drugs in each transaction, it could be difficult for police to establish the grounds that a 'serious crime' had been committed, which subsequently prevented the police from being able to successfully apply for wiretapping or undercover operations. Dial-a-dopers in Denmark, therefore, were not forced to use encrypted applications as police were unlikely to be granted applications to search even basic digital telecommunications, such as unencrypted text messages.

RATES OF DIAL-A-DOPING VIA COURT DECISIONS: AN EXAMINATION OF CASE LAW AND POLICE INVESTIGATIONS

While police data in British Columbia on the rates of suspected or confirmed dial-a-doping cases per jurisdiction are not publicly available, dial-a-dope court decisions are open-source and accessible through CanLII (n.d.), a legal Canadian non-profit organisation. Over the past seven years, there has been a gradual increase in dial-a-dope-related court decisions from 47 in 2014 to 65 in 2019. Rates for 2020 showed a steep decline to only 21 dial-a-dope-related court decisions taking place during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic as many British Columbia courts limited operations (see Figure 1 for details; Allsup & Morrison, 2020). Even though some have argued that the COVID-19 restrictions impeded illicit drug trafficking supply chains leading to a decrease in illicit drug operations, one recent study from Germany (Namli, 2021; also see Eligh, 2020) suggested otherwise. Namli (2021) found no disruptions to both open and closed drug markets and no drug prices or street-level product distribution changes. In fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic, dealers started to deliver directly to customers' locations rather than arranging a meet-up location to do hand-to-hand transactions (Namli, 2021).

FIGURE 1: THE FREQUENCY OF COURT DECISIONS FOR DIAL-A-DOPE CASES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA FROM 2014 TO 2020



Note: Data was sourced from CanLII (n.d.). Each year includes new court decisions and appeal decisions. “Dial-a-dope” was entered as the key the search term; rates include all dial-a-dope-related case decisions in B.C. only, inclusive of appeal decisions.

All dial-a-dope-related court decisions in British Columbia in 2020 with examples of cited case law used for sentencing principles, legal frameworks, defence, or prosecution arguments are presented in Table 1. It is evident that throughout the cases cited in Table 1, dealers more commonly sold fentanyl, cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine, and less frequently sold cannabis, psilocybin, carfentanyl, alprazolam, mixed drugs (e.g., “Down” heroin and fentanyl), and MDMA. The case law presented in the following sub-sections directly pertains to how police were expected to structure their investigations to secure success in British Columbia provincial or federal courts.

TABLE 1: 2020 COURT DECISIONS FOR DIAL-A-DOPE-RELATED CASES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Case	Age	year/mm/dd	Court	Dial-A-Dope	Type of Drugs
1. R. v. Cox	26	2020-12-02	BCSC	Evidence consistent with dial-a-dope operations	Fentanyl, cocaine, crack cocaine, and methamphetamine
2. R. v. West	42	2020-11-24	BCSC	Possession for the purposes of trafficking	Fentanyl, cocaine, crack cocaine, and methamphetamine
3. R. v. McKibbin	62	2020-11-18	BCCA	Tip indicating dial-a-dope operations; appeal due to offender illness	Cocaine
4. R. v. Milliken	54	2020-11-05	BCPC	Possession for the purposes of trafficking	Carfentanyl and methamphetamine
5. R. v. Rai	N/A	2020-10-23	BCSC	Conspiracy to traffic drugs	Cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine
6. R. v. Sekhon	N/A	2020-10-22	BCSC	Possession for the purposes of trafficking; evidence consistent with dial-a-dope operations	Fentanyl, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine
7. R. v. Nair	29	2020-09-15	BCPC	Possession for the purposes of trafficking	Fentanyl and methamphetamine

Case	Age	year/mm/dd	Court	Dial-A-Dope	Type of Drugs
8. R. v. Pawar	N/A	2020-09-15	BCCA	On appeal warrantless search; possession for the purposes of trafficking; tip indicating dial-a-dope operations	Cocaine, MDMA, psilocybin and marihuana
9. R. v. Colligan	34	2020-07-31	BCSC	Possession for the purposes of trafficking; tip indicating dial-a-dope operations	Cocaine, crack cocaine, and methamphetamine
10. R. v. Greer	45	2020-06-19	BCSC	Possession of a prohibited weapon; dial-a-dope operation involvement	Heroin mixed with fentanyl – i.e., “Down” (see R. v. Greer, 2020 BCSC 1878)
11. R. v. Lucas	34	2020-05-22	BCPC	Possession of various controlled substances for the purpose of trafficking; accused involved in a dial-a-dope operation	Fentanyl, cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine
12. R. v. Pipping	N/A	2020-04-04	BCCA	On appeal - convicted of the production of various controlled substance and possession for the purpose of trafficking; convicted of possession of a loaded restricted firearm and possession of a prohibited device, a silencer	Fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin
13. R. v. Byrne	42	2020-04-06	BCSC	Possessing various controlled substances for the purpose of trafficking and occupying a vehicle containing brass knuckles, a prohibited weapon	Mixture of fentanyl and heroin, and fentanyl and carfentanyl
14. R. v. Bradshaw	N/A	2020-03-24	BCCA	Appeals two murder convictions; involved in dial-a-dope operations	N/A
15. R. v. Chappell	29	2020-03-13	BCSC	Possessing proceeds of crime more than \$5,000, and one count of possessing MDMA for purposes of trafficking	MDMA
16. R. v. Bagchi	N/A	2020-03-05	BCPC	Request for the exclusion of police evidence in a dial-a-dope investigation	N/A
17. R. v. Aeichele		2020-03-03	BCSC	Charter breach; suspected dial-a-dop operation/transaction; possession of various controlled substances for the purpose of trafficking	Cocaine, fentanyl, and methamphetamine
18. R. v. Huynh	N/A	2020-02-28	BCPC	Possession of various controlled substances for the purpose of trafficking	Fentanyl, carfentanyl, cocaine, heroin, and alprazolam
19. R. v. Brawn	36	2020-02-19	BCSC	Possession of various controlled substances for the purpose of trafficking	Heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine
20. R. v. Robinson	N/A	2020-02-12	BCSC	Reckless discharge of a firearm and possession of a firearm without a licence; possession of cocaine for the purpose of trafficking	Cocaine
21. R. v. Adamu	24	2020-01-15	BCSC	Possession for the purposes of trafficking; tip indicating dial-a-dope operations	Heroin mixed with fentanyl and cocaine

Note: BCCA = Court of Appeal for British Columbia; BCSC = Supreme Court of British Columbia; BCPC = Provincial Court of British Columbia; SCC = Supreme Court of Canada (Federal). * = sentencing principles; sourced from <https://www.canlii.org>.

BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA, DIAL-A-DOPE CASE LAW: REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS PRIVACY

Several notable British Columbia court cases occurred in 2020 for dial-a-dope that effected police drug investigations. For instance, in the case of *R. v. Pipping*, police became aware of a dial-a-dope operation involving two higher-level personnel, Pipping (i.e., boss) and Summers (i.e., supervisor), who police suspected were storing drugs and cash at a small four-story secure condominium in Burnaby, British Columbia. The police had a general warrant under section 487.01 of the *Criminal Code* to gain access to common areas within the building complex (e.g., lobby, hallways, stairways, parking garage, or elevators). Police officers covertly watched Pipping unlock and enter unit 407 and used this surveillance evidence to obtain authorization to search the unit. Once in the unit, officers found drugs, firearms, and cash. Pipping was charged with drug and firearm-related

offences. In this case, “whether a general warrant was required and whether the search of the common areas was covert are both issues related to the question of whether Mr. Pipping had a reasonable expectation of privacy in the common area. If he did have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the common area, then the police required a warrant to search that area” (*R. v. Pipping*, 2020 BCCA 104, para. 20). The Honourable Madam Justice Garson from the Court of Appeal for British Columbia addressed the notion of reasonable expectation of privacy and covert searches. She stated that:

Given that the search, in this case, was conducted by undercover officers seeking to avoid detection, in my view, the trial judge committed no palpable and overriding error by finding that the police surveillance here constituted a covert search. While the Crown is correct to note that the warrant was directed to the property manager, who is the agent of the owners of the condominium units, and that the warrant itself makes no mention of a covert search, in my view, this misses the point. The inquiry must focus not on the words of the warrant but on what the police sought to do. The police sought to covertly observe Mr. Pipping in the hallway.

This conclusion is supported by the language used in the Information to Obtain the general warrant, which reads in material part: (175) *This General Warrant involves allowing the police to have access to the common areas of the [Burnaby Property] to make observations of what suite(s) [the appellants] are accessing and using for their drug trafficking operation. (176) Given the nature of this investigation, covertly being able to confirm which suite(s) [the appellants] are accessing without arousing their suspicions will assist police in identifying which suite(s) to target for a CDSA search warrant.* [Emphasis added.] I conclude that the judge did not err in finding that the actions of the police constituted a covert search (*R. v. Pipping*, 2020 BCCA 104, paras. 44-46).

As for whether the general warrant was not invalid as suggested by the trial judge, Justice Garson, the appellate judge, pointed out that the “lack of a provision requiring the police to give notice of their covert entry rendered the general warrant invalid” (*R. v. Pipping*, 2020 BCCA 104, para. 54). Since the accused had a privacy interest in the common areas of the condominium building and the general warrant was invalid, the covert search executed by the officers in the hallway and the ensuing search of the unit created a breach of Mr. Pippings’s section 8 Charter rights (*R. v. Pipping*, 2020 BCCA 104, para. 55). Therefore, the judge also argued that, given that the warrant for the search of unit 407 was garnered from evidence obtained during the covert surveillance in the condominium with an invalid general warrant, the authorization to the search unit 407 was warrantless and breached the accused section 8 Charter rights – i.e., to be free secure against unreasonable searches or seizures (*R. v. Pipping*, 2020 BCCA 104).

However, the British Columbia Court of Appeal judge further articulated that the police violation of Mr. Pipping’s Charter rights was not egregious but a technical error within a lawful investigation. There was no indication that the police intended to deceive or mislead Mr. Pipping, and there was no pattern of abuse or misconduct. Given the seriousness of drug-related offences, the judge reasoned that the admissibility rather than the exclusion of evidence from unit 407 outweighed the unconstitutional search of Mr. Pipping’s unit (*R. v. Pipping*, 2020 BCCA 104).

FEDERAL DIAL-A-DOPE CASE LAW IN CANADA: ENTRAPMENT

In addition to the British Columbia dial-a-dope court decision, on May 29th, 2020, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) delivered their decision involving entrapment law within police drug investigations in two dial-a-dope cases, *R. v. Ahmad* and *R. v. Williams*, in Toronto, Canada. The SCC judgment delivered expectations regarding the appropriateness of police investigative techniques used in suspected dial-a-dope operations. Moldaver J. acknowledged the changing environment in which police conducted drug investigations stating that:

The days when drug dealers, particularly low-level dealers, would associate themselves with a fixed location are largely gone. Now, these dealers regularly associate themselves with a phone number and run their businesses through so-called “dial-a-dope” operations. The proliferation of mobile phones and other forms of instant communication has allowed modern-day drug dealers to traffic from any number of different locations as a means of evading police detection (*R. v. Ahmad*, 2020 SCC 11, para. 86).

In *R. v. Ahmad* and *R. v. Williams*, police had obtained an unverified tip that a particular name and phone number was tied to a dial-a-dope operation. Police officers called the phone number, conversed with the dealer, ordered drugs, and organised an in-person pick-up time. During this pick-up, police arrested Ahmad and Williams. At trial, both Ahmad and Williams argued that the court proceedings should be stayed due to entrapment and abusive police conduct (see *R. v. Ahmad*, 2020 SCC 11). According to the SCC judges’ reasonings, the application of entrapment law to these two situations necessitated two differing inferences – i.e., Ahmad was not entrapped by police, while indeed William was. In essence, Ahmad was not entrapped by police since police first substantiated the dial-a-dope operation tip before offering Ahmad the opportunity to sell the officer drugs, whereas in Williams, the opposite order of events occurred, leading the court to argue that Williams was allowed the opportunity to offend without the prior reasonable verification of suspicion (see *R. v. Ahmad*, 2020 SCC 11). See Table 2 for the analysis.

TABLE 2: ENTRAPMENT LAW IN THE 2020 SUPREME COURT OF CANADA DECISION IN R. V. AHMAD AND R. V. WILLIAMS

Conversation	
<i>Ahmad</i>	<i>Williams</i>
Male: Hello.	Male: Hello.
Officer: Hey, It’s Mike, Matt said I can give you a call, this is Romeo?	Canepa: Jay?
Male: He did, did he?	Male: Yeah.
Officer: Yeah, said you can help me out?	Canepa: You around?
Male: What do you need?	Male: Who is this?
Officer: 2 soft.	Canepa: It’s Vinny.
Male: Hold on, I’ll get back to you.	Male: Vinny who?
Officer: Alright.	Canepa: Vinny. Jesse from Queen and Jarvis gave me your name . . . your number. Said you could help me out. I need 80.
	Male: Okay. You have to come to me.
	Canepa: Okay. Where?
	Male: Queen and Dufferin.
	Canepa: Okay. It’ll take me a few because I’m at Yonge & Bloor.
	Male: Okay, hurry up.
	Canepa: I’ll call you when I get there.
	Male: Okay. What you want, soft or hard.
	Canepa: Hard. Hard buddy.
	Male: Okay.

Conversation	
Reasoning in <i>Ahmad</i>	Reasoning in <i>Williams</i>
<p><i>Allen J. concluded that reasonable suspicion crystallized when Ahmad asked D.C. Limsiaco [‘Officer’], ‘What do you need?’ By that point, the officer had asked Ahmad if he went by the name ‘Romeo,’ which he did not deny. When the officer asked Ahmad, ‘[Y]ou can help me out?’, Ahmad responded positively to this use of language particular to the drug subculture: ‘What do you need?’ Having connected the tip to the person on the phone, the aspect of the tip that asserted illegality was corroborated by Ahmad’s understanding of drug-trafficking slang and willingness to engage in it. Allen J. found that, in this context, these markers of reliability together sufficiently corroborated the initial tip to give rise to an objective possibility that Ahmad was involved in drug trafficking before the officer asked for ‘2 soft.’ ... While this is an extremely close call, we are satisfied that Allen J. did not err in her conclusion that the police had a reasonable suspicion of drug trafficking before providing the opportunity to commit an offence (R. v. Ahmad, 2020 SCC 11, paras. 75-76).</i></p>	<p><i>As soon as the person who answered confirmed that he was Jay, D.C. Canepa provided an opportunity to traffic drugs when he presented Williams with the specific request to sell him ‘80,’ slang for a dollar amount of cocaine. Once Williams responded, ‘Okay,’ the offence of trafficking by offer was complete. Unlike in Ahmad’s case, there was nothing in Williams’ responses — before D.C. Canepa provided the opportunity to traffic — to suggest that the phone number was being used to sell drugs. D.C. Canepa did not wait to see how Williams would respond to an investigative question that could have corroborated that Williams was engaged in criminal activity prior to providing the opportunity to commit the crime. This means Williams did not respond positively to slang particular to the drug subculture until after the opportunity had been provided. That one aspect of a tip has been corroborated — here, ‘Jay’s’ name — does not allow that tip to ground a reasonable suspicion. The corroboration of the name does not strengthen the reliability of the tip ‘in its assertion of illegality’ (R. v. Ahmad, 2020 SCC 11, paras. 79-80).</i></p>

In a similar case, *R. v. Li*, the Honourable Justice Sheilah L. Martin, on appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, applied case law from *R. v. Ahmad* on issues of entrapment. Martin J. reasoned that in dial-a-dope cases, as outlined in *R. v. Ahmad*, police investigations must first establish “reasonable suspicion” related to the suspected dealer, the phone number, or both prior to requesting drugs. For Mr. Li’s case, Martin J. confirmed that police “used a *Swan* sheet to record what actions they took to verify this [dial-a-dope] tip” to substantiate suspicions of criminality tied to the car, the licence plate, and other associates with criminal records (*R. v. Li*, 2020 SCC 12, para. 3). Thus, no entrapment was found.

A “*Swan* sheet,” named after *R. v. Swan*, 2009 BCCA 142, is an internal police file that officers use to provide a compiled list of an on-going timeline for tips they received, verification of tips, and other relevant information that may substantiate suspicions in drug trafficking cases (*R. v. Swan*, 2009 BCCA 142). In *R. v. Swan*, on appeal to the British Columbia Court of Appeal, Mr. Swan’s drug trafficking (i.e., a dial-a-dope operation) charges were stayed as the appellate court deemed that the police were merely making cold-calls without reasonable or corroborated suspicions. Police were not conducting a “bona fide investigation” rather a “random virtue-testing” after presenting the opportunity to traffic drugs (Novakowski, 2010, paras. 18-19).

FEDERAL DIAL-A-DOPE CASE LAW IN CANADA: THE “JORDAN RULING”

On July 8th, 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) rendered their decision in *R. v. Jordan* regarding what constituted a reasonable time to be tried (i.e., dial-a-dope case; *R. v. Jordan* 2016 SCC 27). In Mr. Jordan’s case, it took nearly 50 months from charge to trial on charges related to a dial-a-dope operation. Precisely, in late 2008, the police executed a search warrant of Mr. Jordan’s apartment and seized heroin, cocaine, and crack cocaine. A day later, Mr. Jordan was arrested and charged with possession of a controlled substance for the purposes of trafficking. However, it was not until September 10th, 2012, that a trial date was fixed. On appeal to the Supreme Court of

Canada, the Honourable Justice Mr. Frits E. Verhoeven detailed the delays in the timeline as follows. Inherent requirements contributed to delays of 10.5 months, the Crown delays accounted for an additional two months, institutional delays equaled 32.5 months, and the accused delayed proceedings by four months, for a total delay of 49.5 months.

Mr. Jordan argued that his s.11(b) Charter rights “to be tried within a reasonable time” had been violated. The Supreme Court of Canada agreed that Mr. Jordan’s rights were infringed. The court stayed the charges and revoked a previous decision outlined in *R. v. Morin* on reasonable case timeframes. The judges reasoned that:

The Morin framework for applying s. 11(b) has given rise to both doctrinal and practical problems, contributing to a culture of delay and complacency towards it. Doctrinally, the Morin framework is too unpredictable, too confusing, and too complex. It has itself become a burden on already over-burdened trial courts. From a practical perspective, the Morin framework’s after-the-fact rationalization of delay does not encourage participants in the justice system to take preventative measures to address inefficient practices and resourcing problems (*R. v. Jordan*, 2016 SCC 27).

The Jordan Ruling set forth a fixed timeline for cases; “a presumptive ceiling.” The Supreme Court outlined that provincial court trials should be no longer than 18 months and superior courts no longer than 30 months. If a case extended past these limits, not including defence delays, charges should be stayed unless the Crown could prove exceptional circumstances, i.e., the trial was more prolonged than initially anticipated or the case included complex or lengthy evidence or disclosure.

In Osterberg’s interviews (2020), seven of the 44 interviewees directly mentioned the *R. v. Jordan* Supreme Court of Canada decision and expressed the difficulties this decision had created for law enforcement. According to Osterberg (2020), police organisations were challenged by limited human and financial resources, extensive reporting requirements related to fiscal accountability, the inherently reactive nature of policing, the ever-growing disclosure requirements resulting from *R. v. Stinchcombe*, and the strict legislative timelines established in *R. v. Jordan*. Thus, the *R. v. Jordan* decision continues to effect drug investigations as the “Jordan Clock” starts at the time charges are laid against the accused. For instance, after this decision, as of 2019, approximately 800 cases were thrown out due to the Jordan Ruling (see Russell, 2019).

Quantitative Drug Offence Data Analysis

CHARGES FOR DRUG OFFENCES

Table 3 provides a general overview of drug offence charges in British Columbia and the four policing districts within British Columbia between 2013 and 2020. In total, less than half (45.2 per cent) of all drug charges were laid in the Lower Mainland District, while almost one-quarter (22.0 per cent) were in the South-East, 14% on in the Island District, and 12% were in the North District (see Table 3). These numbers do not correspond with the distribution of the population within the province. With 60% of the population in British Columbia, the Lower Mainland District accounted for about 20% fewer drug charges than would be expected based on population. Given the high proportion of urban centres in the Lower Mainland District, this finding was in line with the work of Greer et al. (2022) that found police in rural jurisdictions were more likely to proceed with recommended charges than police elsewhere in British Columbia. Conversely, the South-East

district (15% of BC's population) had more than 50% more drug charges than would be expected based on population, while the North (6% of BC's population) had about twice the proportion of drug charges. With 19% of the population, the Island District contributed 14% of all charges.

TABLE 3: DRUG OFFENCE CHARGE CATEGORIES IN BC AND BY DISTRICT, 2013-2020

Drug Offence Category	BC		LMD		South-East		North		Island	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cannabis	74,535	50.5	35,807	53.6	14,198	43.6	7,382	44.2	8,878	45.3
Cocaine	19,714	13.4	8,295	12.4	4,607	14.2	3,662	21.9	2,041	10.4
Methamphetamine	14,771	10.0	6,021	9.0	4,369	13.4	1,935	11.6	1,911	9.8
Other Schedule I	11,893	8.1	4,593	6.9	2,965	9.1	1,028	6.2	2,799	14.3
Heroin	8,796	6.0	4,061	6.1	2,280	7.0	995	6.0	1,207	6.2
Fentanyl	5,010	3.4	1,894	2.8	1,659	5.1	382	2.3	755	3.9
Other	12,948	8.8	6,124	9.2	2,450	7.5	1,307	7.8	1,988	10.2
Totals	147,667		66,795		32,528		16,691		19,579	

Across the province, between 2013 and 2020, half of all drug-related charges were related to cannabis.² This figure was driven by the Lower Mainland District, where over half of all charges involved a cannabis offence (Table 4). Cannabis comprised between 43% and 45% of charges in the remaining districts. Although the proportions varied to some degree, the relative ordering of offence types were consistent in every district, except for the Island District, where charges for Schedule I drugs were higher than those for methamphetamine. Apart from this minor discrepancy, the other figure that stood out was the 22% for Cocaine offences in the North District, which was more than 50% higher than the next closest district.

The distribution of drug charges within each district was further broken down by the jurisdiction in which participating RCMP detachments operated. The results of these analyses are presented in Tables 4 through Table 8. The distribution of drug charges was fairly consistent across the four municipalities in the Lower Mainland District (see Table 4), but there are variations worth noting. Burnaby's figures most closely mirrored those of the Lower Mainland District. Surrey similarly demonstrated a pattern of charges largely similar to the rest of the Lower Mainland District. In contrast, Langley diverged most significantly from the other cities, in that it had the lowest proportion of cannabis charges, and the highest number of charges for methamphetamines and heroin. In Richmond, the proportion of charges related to cannabis was very high, accounting for two in every three drug charges. As a result, the proportion of charges related to cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines in Richmond were comparatively very low.

² A complete breakdown of Drug Charge categories is presented in Appendix A.

TABLE 4: DRUG OFFENCE CHARGE CATEGORIES, SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES IN LOWER MAINLAND DISTRICT, 2013-2020

Drug Offence Category	LMD		Burnaby		Langley		Richmond		Surrey	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cannabis	35,807	53.6	2,346	53.5	2,540	47.0	9,680	67.2	8,715	47.8
Cocaine	8,295	12.4	685	15.6	772	14.3	715	5.0	2,721	14.9
Methamphetamine	6,021	9.0	391	8.9	767	14.2	669	4.6	1,829	10.0
Other Schedule I	4,593	6.9	316	7.2	144	2.7	824	5.7	1,343	7.4
Heroin	4,061	6.1	265	6.0	598	11.1	223	1.5	1,704	9.4
Fentanyl	1,894	2.8	151	3.4	218	4.0	174	1.2	586	3.2
Other	6,124	9.2	232	5.3	368	6.8	2,129	14.8	1,316	7.2
Totals	66,795		4,386		5,407		14,414		18,214	

Table 5 presents a far more varied picture of drug charges in the South-East District. For example, in Vernon, fewer than 30% of charges involved cannabis, while the figures in Kamloops and Kelowna were 37% and 34% respectively. Moreover, the percentage of charges attributable to cannabis were up to 50% higher in Cranbrook and Merritt. Another example involves differences in cocaine-related charges, which were twice as high in Vernon as they were in Kamloops. Of note given the current crisis involving fentanyl, this drug type was far less prominent in Merritt, Kamloops, and Cranbrook as compared to Vernon and particularly as compared to Kelowna.

TABLE 5: DRUG OFFENCE CHARGE CATEGORIES, SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES IN SOUTH-EAST DISTRICT, 2013-2020

Drug Offence Category	South-East District		Cranbrook		Kamloops		Kelowna		Merritt		Vernon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cannabis	14,198	43.6	495	60.7	2,499	37.1	3,223	33.7	537	57.2	836	28.5
Cocaine	4,607	14.2	145	17.8	713	10.6	1,857	19.4	187	19.9	586	20.0
Methamphetamine	4,369	13.4	52	6.4	1,098	16.3	1,725	18.1	46	4.9	336	11.4
Other Schedule I	2,965	9.1	34	4.2	1,207	17.9	297	3.1	46	4.9	393	13.4
Heroin	2,280	7.0	18	2.2	664	9.9	851	8.9	40	4.3	379	12.9
Fentanyl	1,659	5.1	25	3.1	176	2.6	992	10.4	16	1.7	174	5.9
Other	2,450	7.5	46	5.6	381	5.7	608	6.4	67	7.1	231	7.9
Totals	32,528		815		6,738		9,553		939		2,935	

As with the South-East District, the distribution of drug charges in the North District illustrated considerable variation across municipalities, with each municipality displaying a somewhat distinct pattern of charges (see Table 6). For example, in Fort St. John, charges for cocaine were more than 2½ times higher than in Williams Lake. On the other hand, Williams Lake had the highest proportion of charges for cannabis, which was more than 50% higher than in Prince George. Prince George had the highest proportion of both methamphetamine and heroin charges, which were,

respectively, 30% and 60% higher than they were in the next closest (in terms of proportion of charges) municipality of Quesnel. Finally, compared with the other municipalities in the North, Quesnel most closely approximated a “typical” municipality.

TABLE 6: DRUG OFFENCE CHARGE CATEGORIES, SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES IN NORTH DISTRICT, 2013-2020

Drug Offence Category	North District		Fort St. John		Prince George		Quesnel		Williams Lake	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Cannabis	7,382	44.2	473	38.3	1,832	30.5	601	41.0	827	54.6
Cocaine	3,662	21.9	450	36.4	1,613	26.9	207	14.1	244	16.1
Methamphetamine	1,935	11.6	25	2.0	1,213	20.2	226	15.4	84	5.5
Other Schedule I	1,028	6.2	95	7.7	110	1.8	145	9.9	189	12.5
Heroin	995	6.0	5	0.4	757	12.6	115	7.8	41	2.7
Fentanyl	382	2.3	45	3.6	220	3.7	26	1.8	33	2.2
Other	1,307	7.8	143	11.6	258	4.3	146	10.0	98	6.5
Totals	16,691		1,236		6,003		1,466		1,516	

As presented in Table 7, notable disparities in the distribution of drug charges were also evident in the selected municipalities of the Island District. In Saanich, four out of every five drug charges were for cannabis. The number of charges for cannabis were not nearly as high in Campbell River and Nanaimo. However, Campbell River had a comparatively high proportion of charges related to fentanyl, while the rate of charges for methamphetamines was very high in Nanaimo.

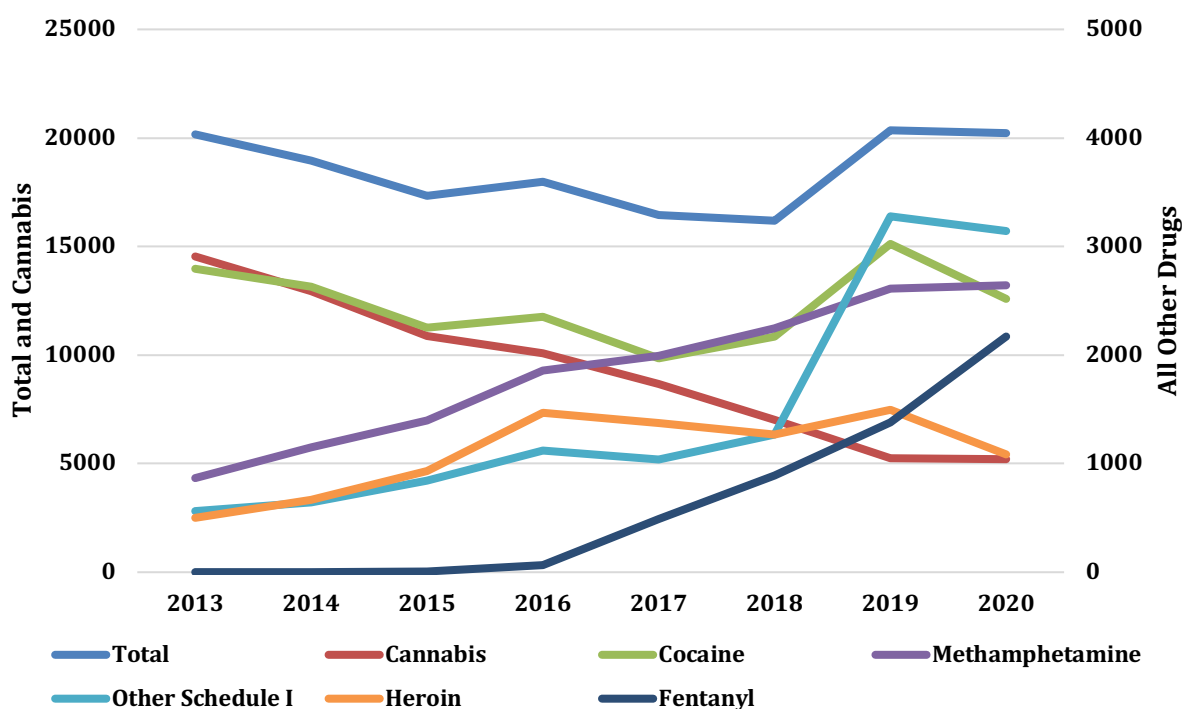
TABLE 7: DRUG OFFENCE CHARGE CATEGORIES, SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES IN ISLAND DISTRICT, 2013-2020

Drug Offence Category	Island District		Campbell River		Nanaimo		Saanich	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Cannabis	8,878	45.3	865	42.5	1,818	40.0	97	80.8
Cocaine	2,041	10.4	248	12.2	503	11.1	9	7.5
Methamphetamine	1,911	9.8	67	3.3	745	16.4	0	0.0
Other Schedule I	2,799	14.3	302	14.9	590	13.0	3	2.5
Heroin	1,207	6.2	95	4.7	373	8.2	1	0.8
Fentanyl	755	3.9	172	8.5	148	3.3	0	0.0
Other	1,988	10.2	284	14.0	367	8.1	10	8.3
Totals	19,579		2,033		4,544		120	

The trends in drug charges are displayed in Figure 2. Between 2013 and 2018, the overall number of drug charges in British Columbia dropped by about 20%. However, these years of steady decline were followed by a very large spike in 2019, which saw about the same number of drug charges as 2013. This same level of drug charges was also recorded in 2020. Figure 2 also shows different trajectories of charges by drug type. For example, the number of cannabis-related charges had

decreased consistently since 2013. Over the entire period of study, the level of cannabis-related charges had fallen by two-thirds. This is likely the result, in part, of the legalisation of cannabis in Canada. In contrast, other drug types have experienced steady increases over the same time; most notably heroin (doubled), methamphetamines (tripled), and Other Schedule I drugs, which increased by a factor of 5.³ Indicative of the growing fentanyl crisis, charges associated with fentanyl, virtually non-existent prior to 2016, more than quadrupled in the four-year period from 2017-2020. At its current rate of increase, fentanyl would be expected to surpass all drug types, except cannabis, by 2022, becoming the most frequent drug charge by 2024.

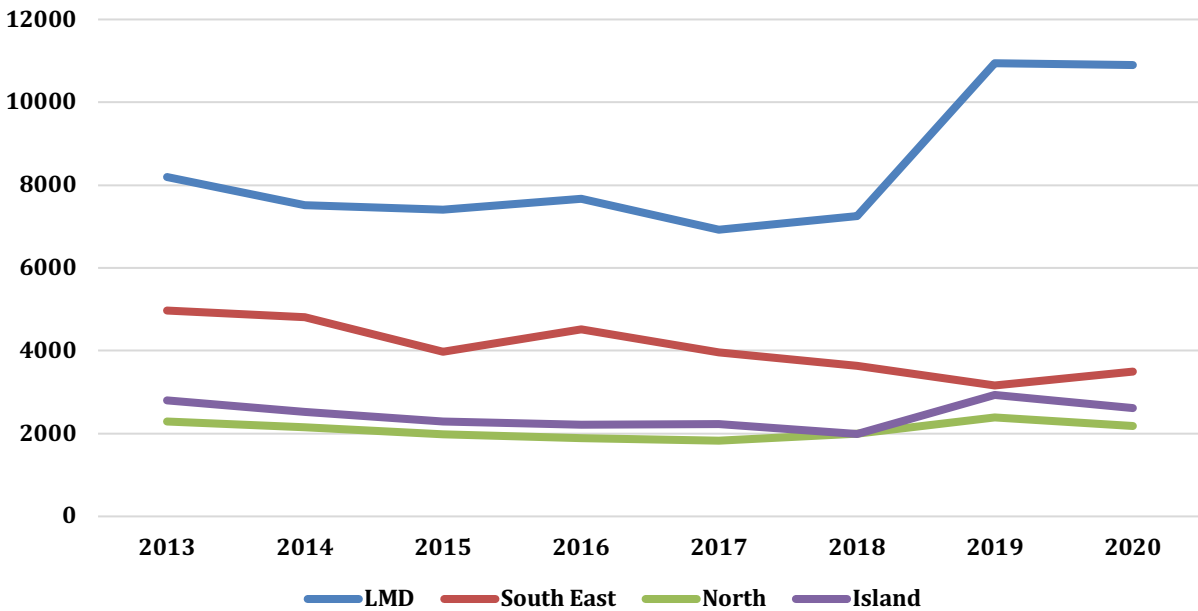
FIGURE 2: DRUG OFFENCE CHARGE CATEGORIES, CHANGES OVER TIME IN BC, 2013-2020



Trends in total drug charges over time are presented in Figure 3. Simply put, almost the entire spike in drug charges in 2018 was attributable to the Lower Mainland District. In the North and Island districts, the levels of drug charges remained generally constant between 2013 and 2020, while they dropped by about 30% in the South-East district over the same period. The distributions of charges by drug types over time are highlighted in Figure 4 through Figure 9.

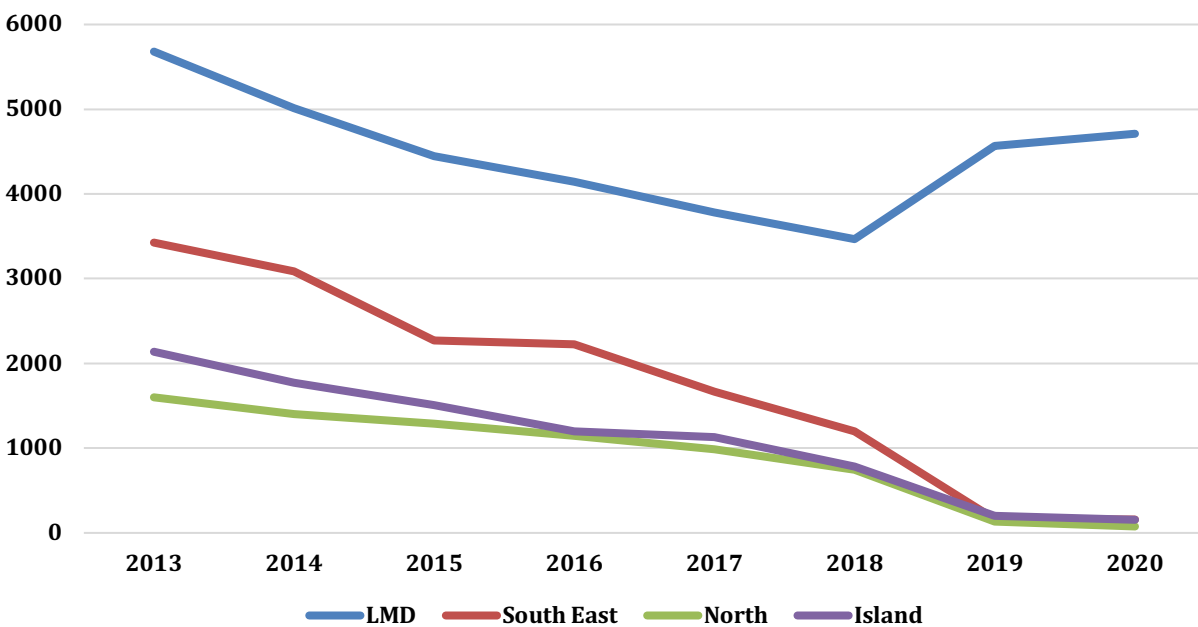
³ Note that Figure 2 features two scales: one related to total drug charges and cannabis, and another for all other drug types.

FIGURE 3: DRUG OFFENCE CHARGE CATEGORIES, CHANGES OVER TIME BY DISTRICT, 2013-2020



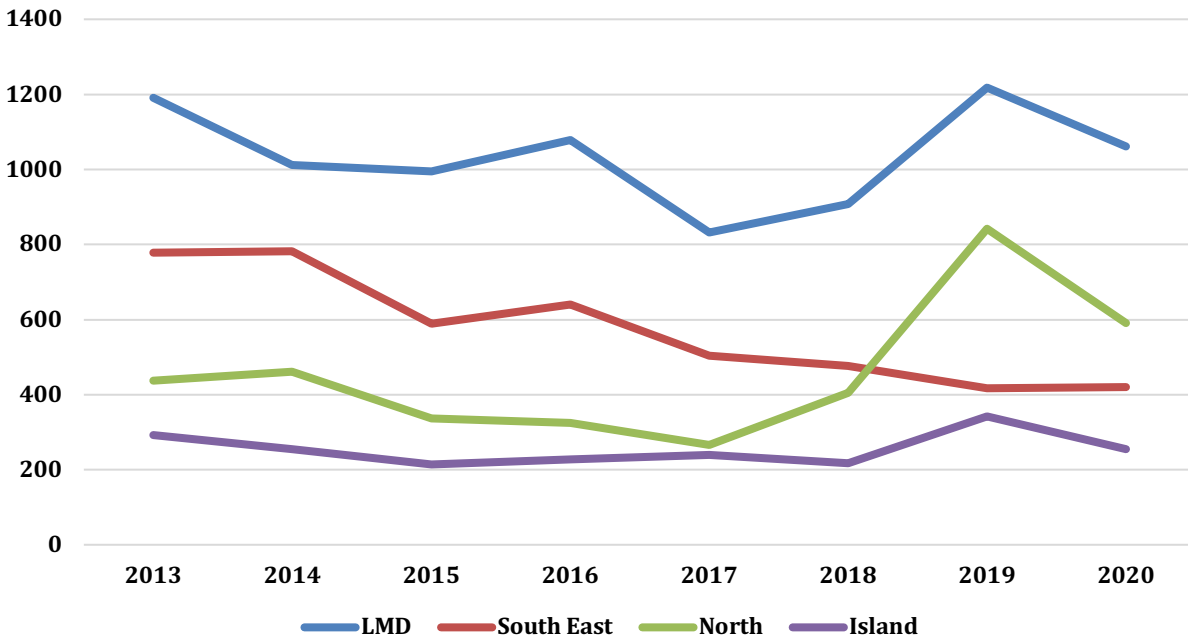
Of note, cannabis consistently decreased year over year in all four policing districts, except for the Lower Mainland District, where it rebounded in 2018 (see Figure 4). In the other three policing districts, by 2019, charges for cannabis had become almost inconsequential.

FIGURE 4: CANNABIS CHARGES, CHANGES OVER TIME BY DISTRICT, 2013-2020



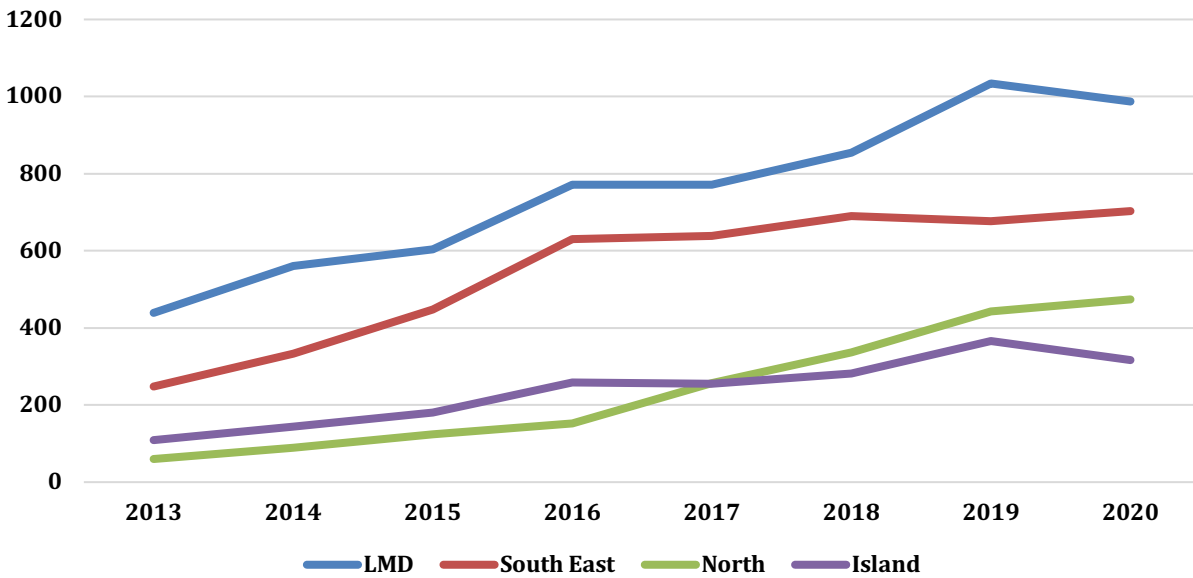
The trends for cocaine-related charges are very similar in the Lower Mainland District and the North District (see Figure 5). In both districts, cocaine charges were on a generally downward trajectory until 2019, when they increased substantially. The volume of charges fell again in 2020. Cocaine charges have gradually declined each year in the South-East District. In effect, between 2013-2020, the cumulative drop was 45%. Apart from a “blip” in 2019, cocaine charges in the Island District have held steady.

FIGURE 5: COCAINE CHARGES, CHANGES OVER TIME BY DISTRICT, 2013-2020



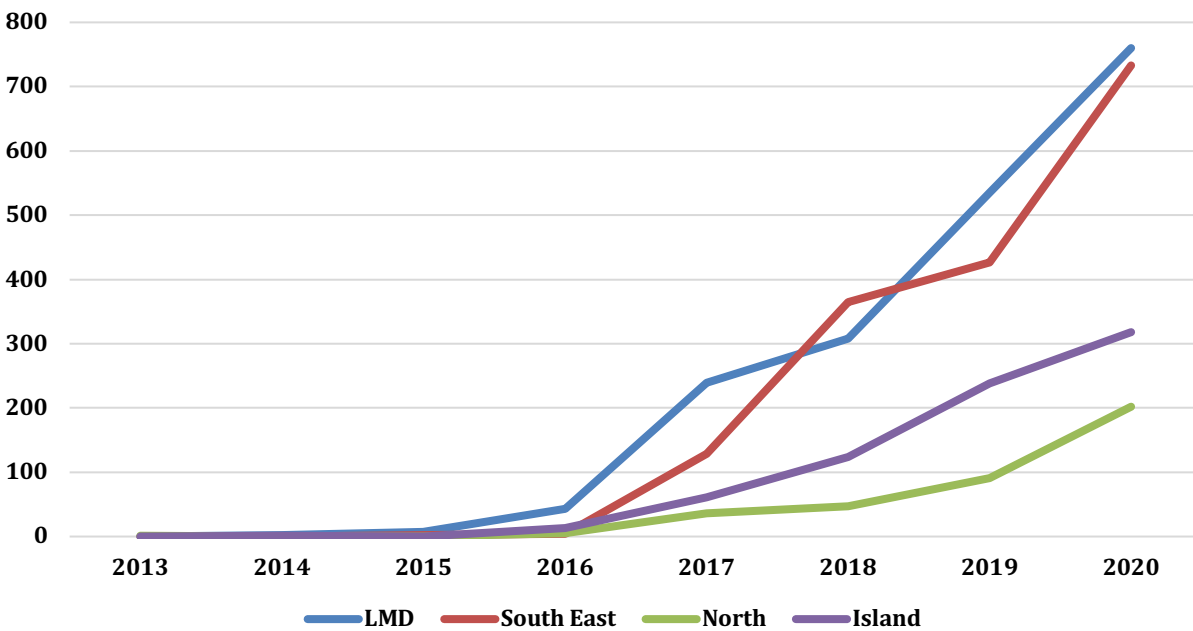
The trends for charges associated with methamphetamines shown in Figure 6 revealed an unequivocal pattern of growth. In the North District, the level of methamphetamine charges was almost eight times higher in 2020 than it was in 2013. In the Island, South-East, and Lower Mainland Districts, the levels rose by more than two, 2½, and approximately three times respectively.

FIGURE 6: METHAMPHETAMINE CHARGES, CHANGES OVER TIME BY DISTRICT, 2013-2020



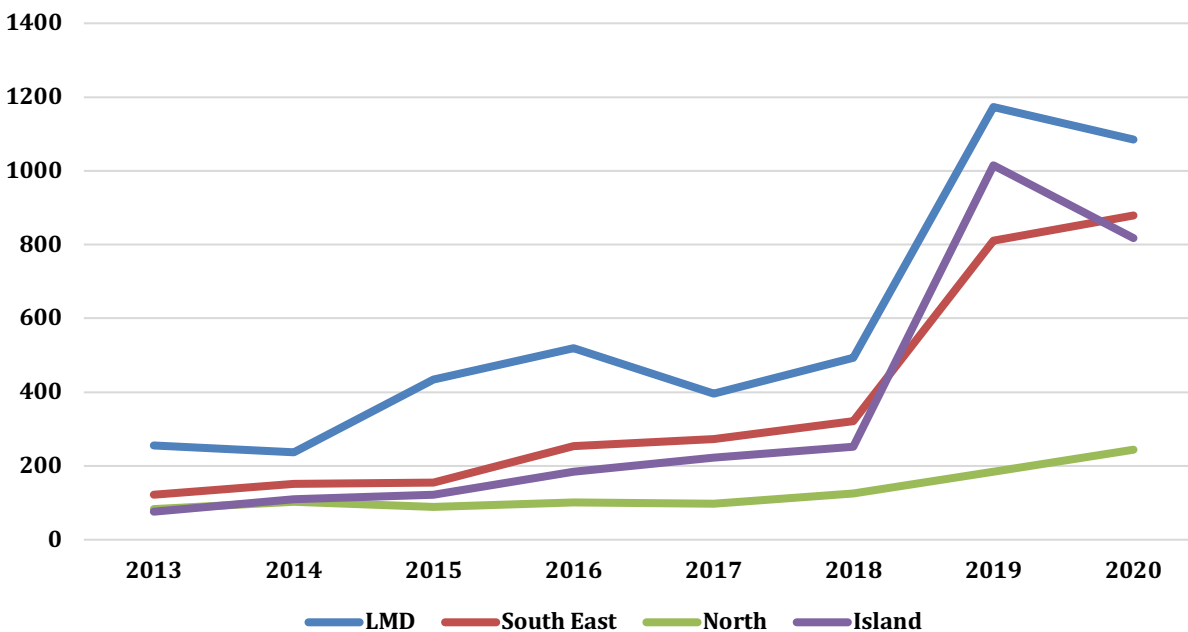
Although it occurred over a shorter period, an unbroken pattern of increase in fentanyl is demonstrated in Figure 7. In the Lower Mainland District, fentanyl-related charges grew by a factor of three between 2017 and 2020. In all the other districts, the level of fentanyl charges was five times higher in 2020 compared to 2017.

FIGURE 7: FENTANYL CHARGES, CHANGES OVER TIME BY DISTRICT, 2013-2020



The pattern for Other Schedule I drugs⁴ evidenced in Figure 8 also showed increases, but the growth tended to be more uneven. In the North district, the increase in such drugs was steady as, between 2013 and 2020, charges increased by about 150%. But each of the other districts experienced notable spikes on charges for Other Schedule I drugs in 2019. Even with modest corrections in 2020 for the Lower Mainland District and Island District, the increase in Other Schedule I drug-related charges were between 175% and 260%.

FIGURE 8: OTHER SCHEDULE I DRUG CHARGES, CHANGES OVER TIME BY DISTRICT, 2013-2020

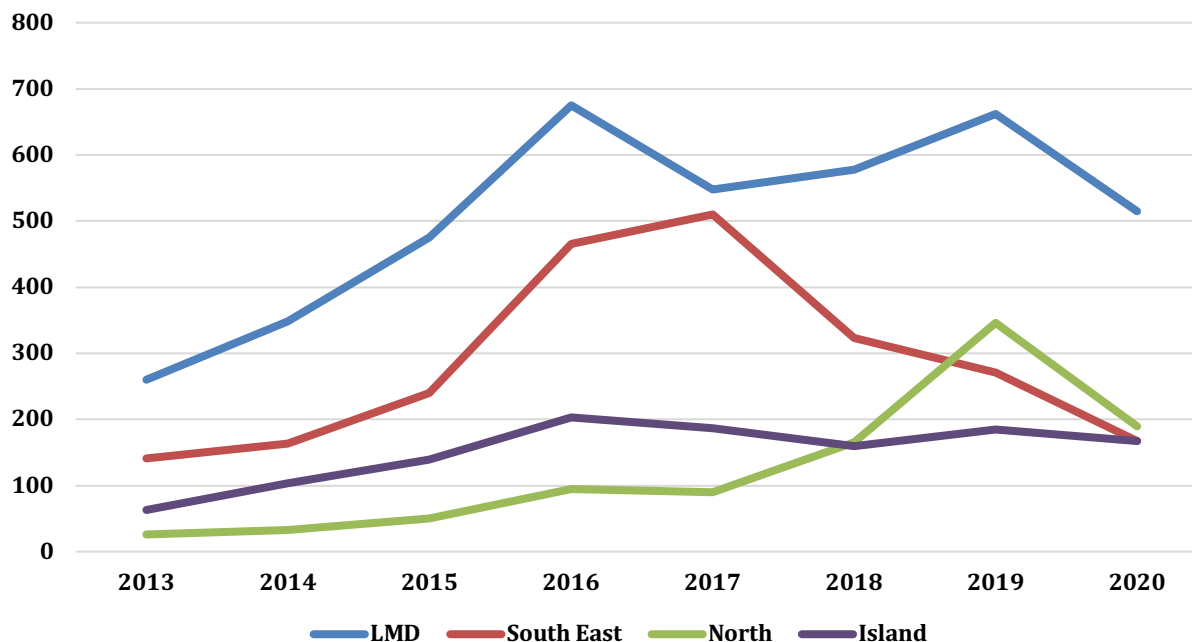


Finally, the time trends for heroin demonstrated in Figure 9 showed the least consistency of any of the drug types. In the Lower Mainland District, there are two clear peaks: one in 2016 and another in 2019. But both peaks were followed by notable declines. Over the whole period, the number of heroin-related charges in the Lower Mainland District essentially doubled. In comparison, there was only one peak for the South-East District, which occurred in 2017. This peak represented a 3½ times increase in heroin charges compared with 2013. However, heroin charges dropped thereafter, and, by 2020, heroin charges were only 18% higher than they had been in 2013. In the North District, the growth in heroin charges continued between 2013 and 2019. Like the Lower Mainland District, charges then fell noticeably (by 45 per cent) in 2020. Even with this drop, in 2020, heroin charges were still seven times higher than they were in 2013. Of the four districts,

⁴ It was not clear by the authors of this report what specific drugs were included in the “Other Schedule I” categorisation.

the Island District demonstrated the least volatility in heroin charges, the number of which quadrupled from 2013 to 2016, but the number of charges has held fairly constant since that point.

FIGURE 9: HEROIN CHARGES, CHANGES OVER TIME BY DISTRICT, 2013-2020



The analysis in Table 8 shifts to the types of drug charges. Across British Columbia, and in each of the districts, Possession was the most frequent type of drug charge. But there were important variations across the proportions of both Possession and the other charge types. For example, charges for Trafficking/Distribution were almost twice as common in the North District compared to the Lower Mainland District. Conversely, charges for Importing/Exporting comprised almost one in five charges in the Lower Mainland District, but they barely occurred in the other three districts. Put another way, charges for Importing/Exporting in British Columbia were almost solely limited to the Lower Mainland District.

TABLE 8: DRUG CHARGE TYPE IN BC AND DISTRICTS, 2013-2020

Drug Charge Type	BC		LMD		South-East		North		Island	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Possession	106,880	72.4	43,989	65.9	26,276	80.8	12,392	74.2	15,289	78.1
Trafficking/Distribution	18,942	12.8	7,301	10.9	4,178	12.8	3,322	19.9	2,594	13.2
Production	4,093	2.8	1,278	1.9	936	2.9	296	1.8	626	3.2
Importing/Exporting	12,572	8.5	12,303	18.4	62	0.2	47	0.3	20	0.1
Impaired	4,883	3.3	1,811	2.7	1,016	3.1	605	3.6	985	5.0
Other	297	0.2	113	0.2	60	0.2	29	0.2	65	0.3
Totals	147,667		66,795		32,528		16,691		19,579	

Within the Lower Mainland District, charges related to Importing/Exporting was clearly the focus in Richmond (see Table 9), which accounted for roughly three-quarters of such charges. In effect, while all other participating municipalities in the Lower Mainland District had most of their drug-related charges for Possession, Richmond was the only municipality for which the proportion of Possession charges was not more than 70%. In fact, its rate of Possession charges was 2½ to 3 times lower than the other participating cities in the Lower Mainland District.

TABLE 9: DRUG CHARGE TYPE, SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES IN THE LOWER MAINLAND DISTRICT, 2013-2020

Drug Charge Type	LMD		Burnaby		Langley		Richmond		Surrey	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Possession	43,989	65.9	3,737	85.2	4,314	79.8	3,962	27.5	12,887	70.8
Trafficking/Distribution	7,301	10.9	403	9.2	688	12.7	678	4.7	2,600	14.3
Production	1,278	1.9	108	2.5	90	1.7	149	1.0	353	1.9
Importing/Exporting	12,303	18.4	11	0.3	153	2.8	9,454	65.6	1,869	10.3
Impaired	1,811	2.7	115	2.6	158	2.9	158	1.1	468	2.6
Other	113	0.2	12	0.3	4	0.1	13	0.1	37	0.2
<i>Totals</i>	<i>66,795</i>		<i>4,386</i>		<i>5,407</i>		<i>14,414</i>		<i>18,214</i>	

The distribution of charge types portrayed in Table 10 were much more consistent in the selected municipalities of the South-East District. Here, Possession charges accounted for at least 73% of all charges, while Trafficking/Distribution was the second most common type in each area. Together, these two types of charges comprised approximately 95% of all drug charges in each municipality.

TABLE 10: DRUG CHARGE TYPE, SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES IN SOUTH-EAST DISTRICT, 2013-2020

Drug Offence Category	South-East		Cranbrook		Kamloops		Kelowna		Merritt		Vernon	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Possession	26,276	80.8	686	84.2	5,948	88.3	7,677	80.4	694	73.9	2,148	73.2
Trafficking/Distribution	4,178	12.8	108	13.3	464	6.9	1,438	15.1	202	21.5	611	20.8
Production	936	2.9	14	1.7	160	2.4	107	1.1	22	2.3	84	2.9
Importing/Exporting	62	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.0	12	0.1	0	0.0	3	0.1
Impaired	1,016	3.1	5	0.6	164	2.4	305	3.2	16	1.7	85	2.9
Other	60	0.2	2	0.2	1	0.0	14	0.1	5	0.5	4	0.1
<i>Totals</i>	<i>32,528</i>		<i>815</i>		<i>6,738</i>		<i>9,553</i>		<i>939</i>		<i>2,935</i>	

In general, the data presented in Tables 11 and 12 demonstrated that essentially the same patterns held for the North and Island Districts. In the former, the percentage of charges for Possession was lowest in Fort St. John, but this was offset by the fact that it had the highest rate of Trafficking/Distribution charges in the district. In the Island District, this same pattern was highlighted in Campbell River.

TABLE 11: DRUG CHARGE TYPE, SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES IN NORTH DISTRICT, 2013-2020

Drug Offence Category	North		Fort St. John		Prince George		Quesnel		Williams Lake	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Possession	12,392	74.2	791	64.0	4,501	75.0	1,139	77.7	1,262	83.2
Trafficking/Distribution	3,322	19.9	307	24.8	1,257	20.9	219	14.9	206	13.6
Production	296	1.8	12	1.0	83	1.4	36	2.5	13	0.9
Importing/Exporting	47	0.3	1	0.1	1	0.0	1	0.1	0	0.0
Impaired	605	3.6	121	9.8	155	2.6	66	4.5	32	2.1
Other	29	0.2	4	0.3	6	0.1	5	0.3	3	0.2
Totals	16,691		1,236		6,003		1,466		1,516	

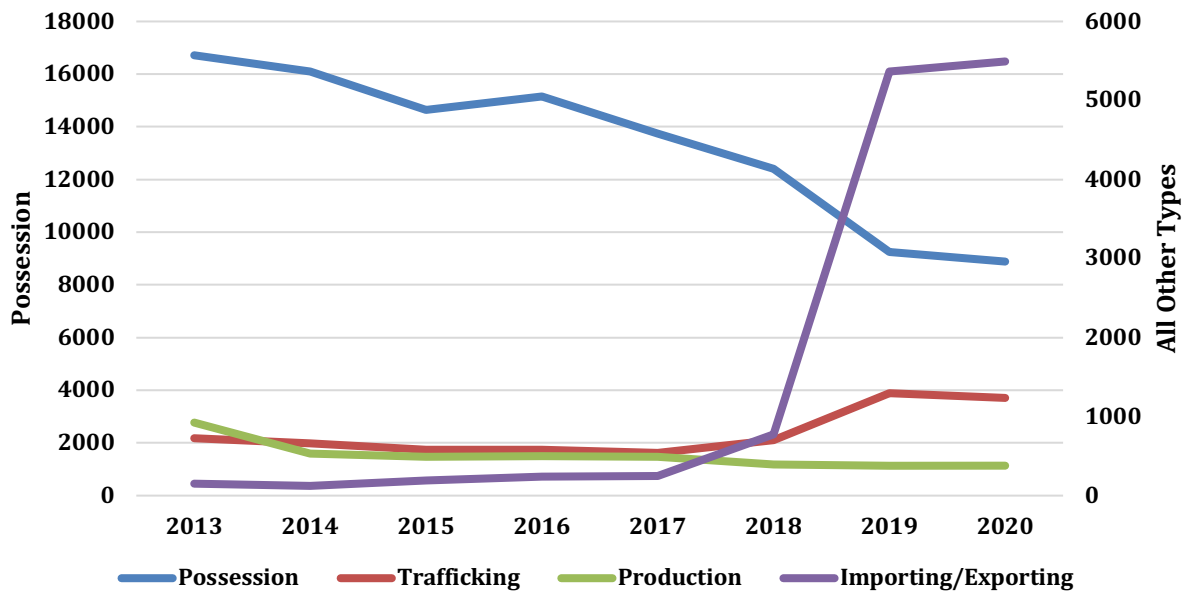
TABLE 12: DRUG CHARGE TYPE, SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES IN ISLAND DISTRICT, 2013-2020

Drug Offence Category	Island		Campbell River		Nanaimo		Saanich	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Possession	15,289	78.1	1,418	69.7	3,891	85.6	99	82.5
Trafficking/Distribution	2,594	13.2	398	19.6	423	9.3	10	8.3
Production	626	3.2	55	2.7	94	2.1	1	0.8
Importing/Exporting	20	0.1	1	0.0	7	0.2	1	0.8
Impaired	985	5.0	151	7.4	121	2.7	9	7.5
Other	65	0.3	10	0.5	8	0.2	0	0.0
Totals	19,579		2,033		4,544		120	

Figure 10 presents the trends in charge types between 2013 and 2020.⁵ Based on this data, several things stood out. First, the number of charges for Possession declined precipitously, by almost 50%, over this time. In contrast, the number of charges for Importing/Exporting increased substantially since 2017. Although the pace of growth did slow substantially in 2020, at this rate, Importing/Exporting charges could become more prevalent than Possession charges over time.

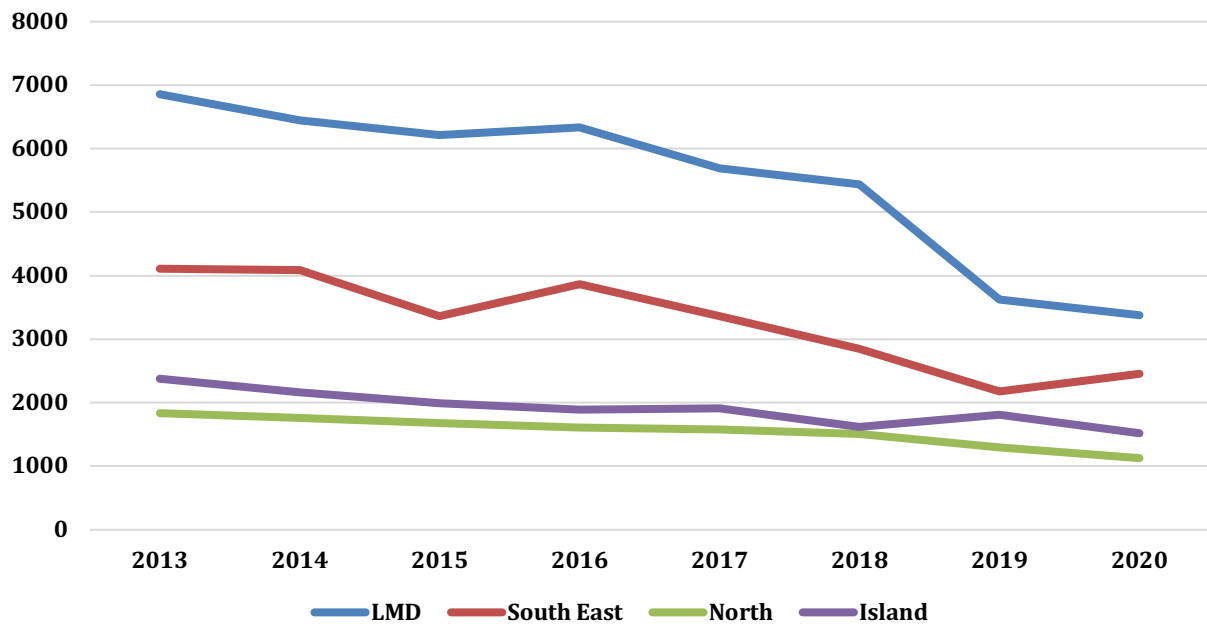
⁵ Note that Figure 10 features two scales: one for Possession charges and another for all other charge types.

FIGURE 10: DRUG OFFENCE CHARGE TYPES, 2013-2020



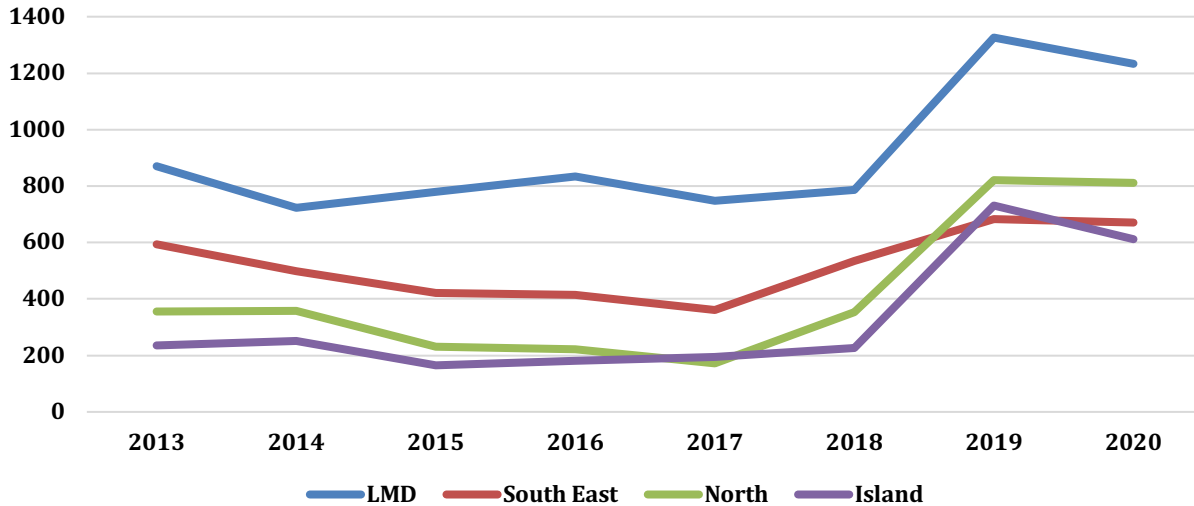
The downward trajectory in Possession charges was notable across all districts (see Figure 11). At the lower end of spectrum, Possession charges fell by 36% in the Island District. The drop was more pronounced for the Lower Mainland District, which had the number of Possession charges cut in half.

FIGURE 11: POSSESSION CHARGES BY DISTRICT, OVER TIME, 2013-2020



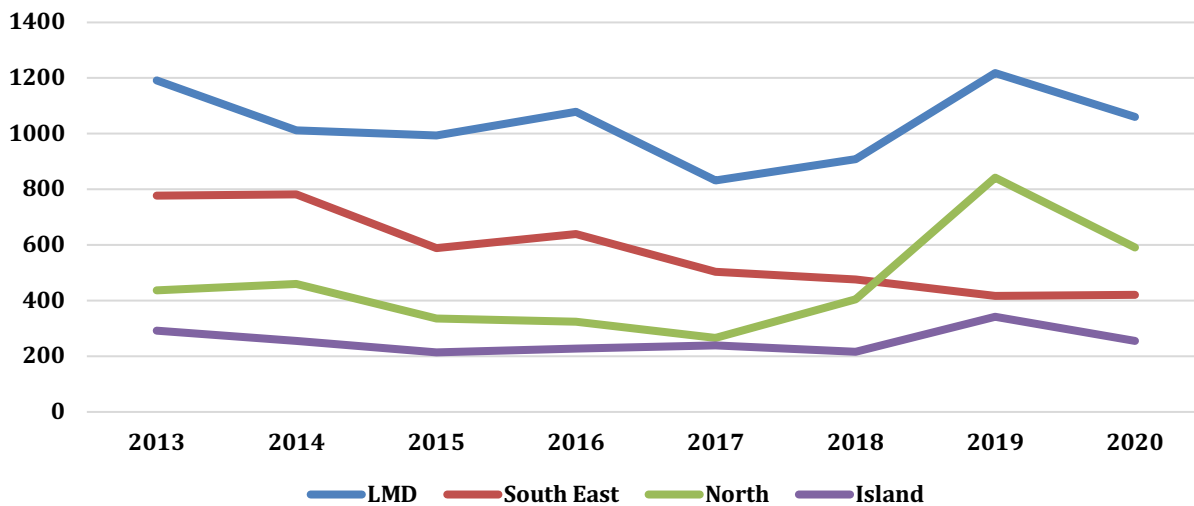
As demonstrated in Figure 12, the corresponding increase in Trafficking charges occurred in all districts, although the bulk of these increases have transpired since 2018.

FIGURE 12: TRAFFICKING/DISTRIBUTION CHARGES BY DISTRICT, OVER TIME, 2013-2020



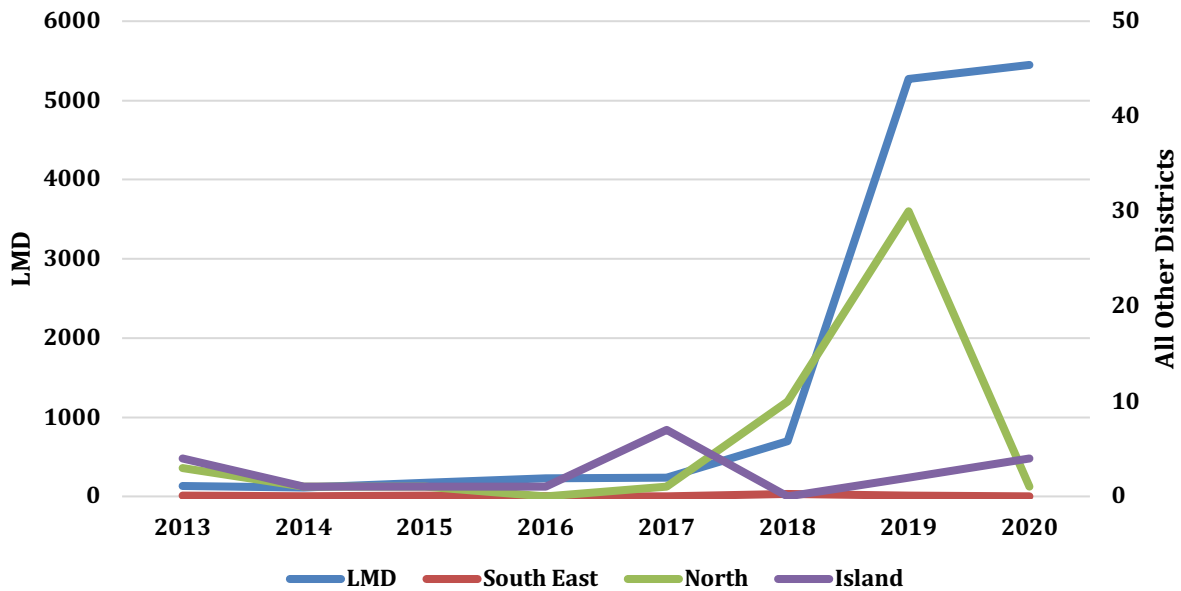
The pattern for Production charges over time was more mixed (see Figure 13). Although distinct in scale, the trajectories of charges in the Lower Mainland and North Districts closely mirrored one another. The pattern was a decline from 2013-2017 followed by a sharp increase for the next two years with a significant drop in 2020. In contrast, charges for Production declined consistently in the South-East District, by a total of 46%, while in the Island district, the number of charges changed very little between 2013 and 2020.

FIGURE 13: PRODUCTION CHARGES BY DISTRICT, OVER TIME, 2013-2020



The trends revealed in Figure 14⁶ demonstrated that charges for Importing/Exporting were overwhelmingly limited to the Lower Mainland District. In 2018, the rate of these charges increased by a factor of three, and in the following year they increased in excess of 700%. The South-East and North Districts also experienced notable increases in 2018 and 2019, but these were less seismic.

FIGURE 14: IMPORTING/EXPORTING CHARGES BY DISTRICT, OVER TIME, 2013-2020



DRUG TRAFFICKING

To examine more closely the types of crimes that most directly involved dial-a-dope operations, this section of the quantitative analysis focused exclusively on drug trafficking. A summary of trafficking files in British Columbia and the four policing districts within British Columbia are presented in Table 13. For British Columbia, 43% of trafficking cases involved cocaine, while another 20% were related to cannabis. The remainder of the cases were roughly evenly divided between the other drug categories.⁷

⁶ Note that Figure 14 features two scales: one for LMD charges and another for all other districts.

⁷ A complete breakdown of Drug Charge categories related to Trafficking is presented in Appendix B.

TABLE 13: TRAFFICKING – DRUG CATEGORIES IN BC AND DISTRICTS, 2013-2020

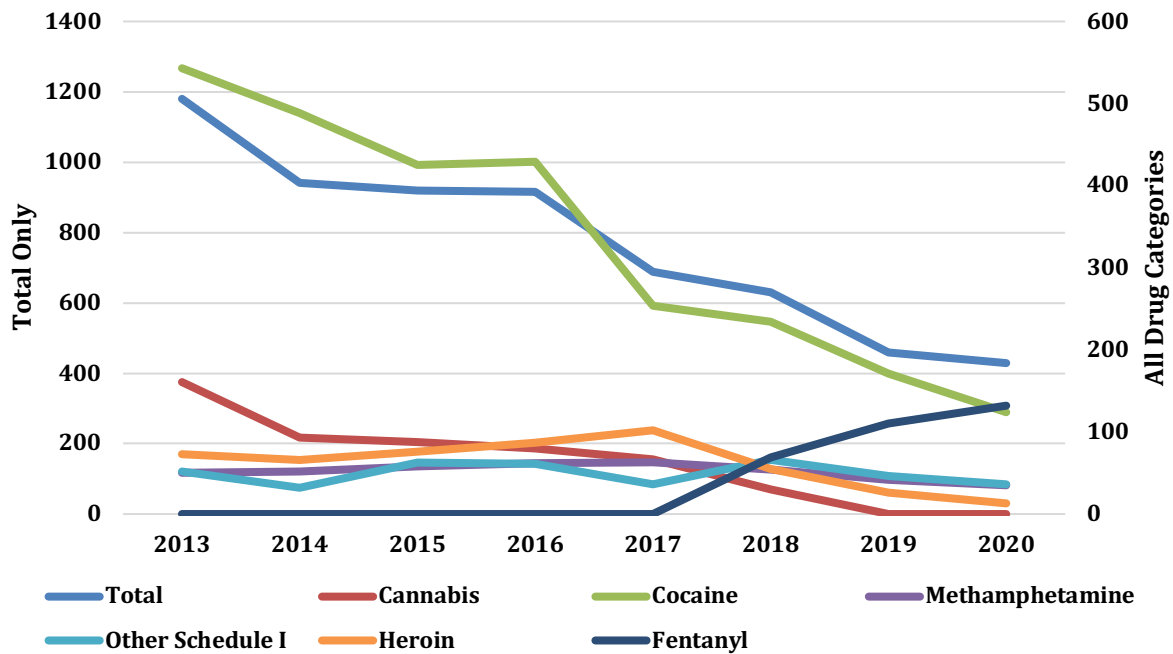
Drug Offence Category	BC		LMD		South-East		North		Island	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Cannabis	1,206	19.6	608	21.1	180	14.8	147	15.9	177	26.2
Cocaine	2,668	43.3	1,159	40.2	506	41.5	578	62.4	219	32.4
Methamphetamine	416	6.7	109	3.8	160	13.1	74	8.0	50	7.4
Other Schedule I	392	6.4	274	9.5	53	4.3	22	2.4	33	4.9
Heroin	498	8.1	262	9.1	106	8.7	35	3.8	70	10.4
Fentanyl	311	5.0	131	4.5	65	5.3	16	1.7	36	5.3
Other	675	10.9	338	11.7	150	12.3	54	5.8	90	13.3
Totals	6,166		2,881		1,220		926		675	

Not surprisingly, as it comprised close to half of all instances of trafficking, the pattern of cases in the Lower Mainland District essentially mirrored that of the province. This pattern did not diverge wildly in the other districts, but there were some identifiable variations. In the South-East District, for example, the percentage of trafficking associated with methamphetamines was more than four times greater than it was in the Lower Mainland District, and was 50% higher than the next closest district, which was the North District. The prevalence of cocaine trafficking in the North District was substantially higher than in the other districts. As a result, the proportions of charges related to other drugs, especially heroin and fentanyl, were the lowest in the province. In addition to exhibiting the lowest level of cocaine trafficking and the highest level of cannabis trafficking, the Island District also had the highest level of heroin trafficking, although it was not notably higher than in the Lower Mainland District.

Figure 15 highlights a consistent, significant decline in trafficking between 2013 and 2020 in British Columbia.⁸ Although these decreases were most pronounced for cocaine (greater than 75%), and cannabis, which fell to 0 in both 2019 and 2020, the decline was evident in all the drug types, apart from fentanyl. The amount of fentanyl trafficking nearly doubled between 2018 and 2020, and, in 2020, fentanyl became the most frequent type of trafficking charge, accounting for 30% of all trafficking charges in British Columbia.

⁸ Note that Figure 15 features two scales: one for Total trafficking charges and another for all other drug types.

FIGURE 15: TRAFFICKING - DRUG CATEGORIES IN BC, OVER TIME, 2013-2020



As demonstrated in Figure 16, the decline in trafficking files was experienced across the province, which decreased by over four times in the North District, and by over five times in the other districts. The overall pattern of decreasing charges was clearest for cannabis (see Figure 17) and cocaine (see Figure 18). Trafficking charges for these drugs declined substantially in each district.

FIGURE 16: TRAFFICKING - DRUG CATEGORIES IN DISTRICTS, OVER TIME, 2013-2020

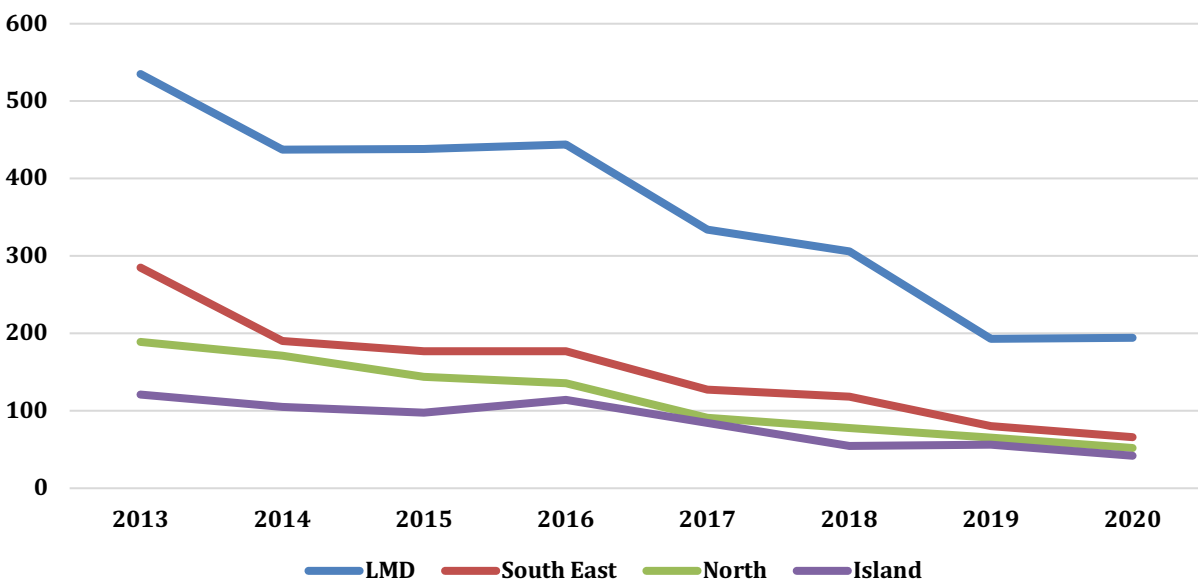


FIGURE 17: TRAFFICKING – CANNABIS – IN DISTRICTS, OVER TIME, 2013-2020

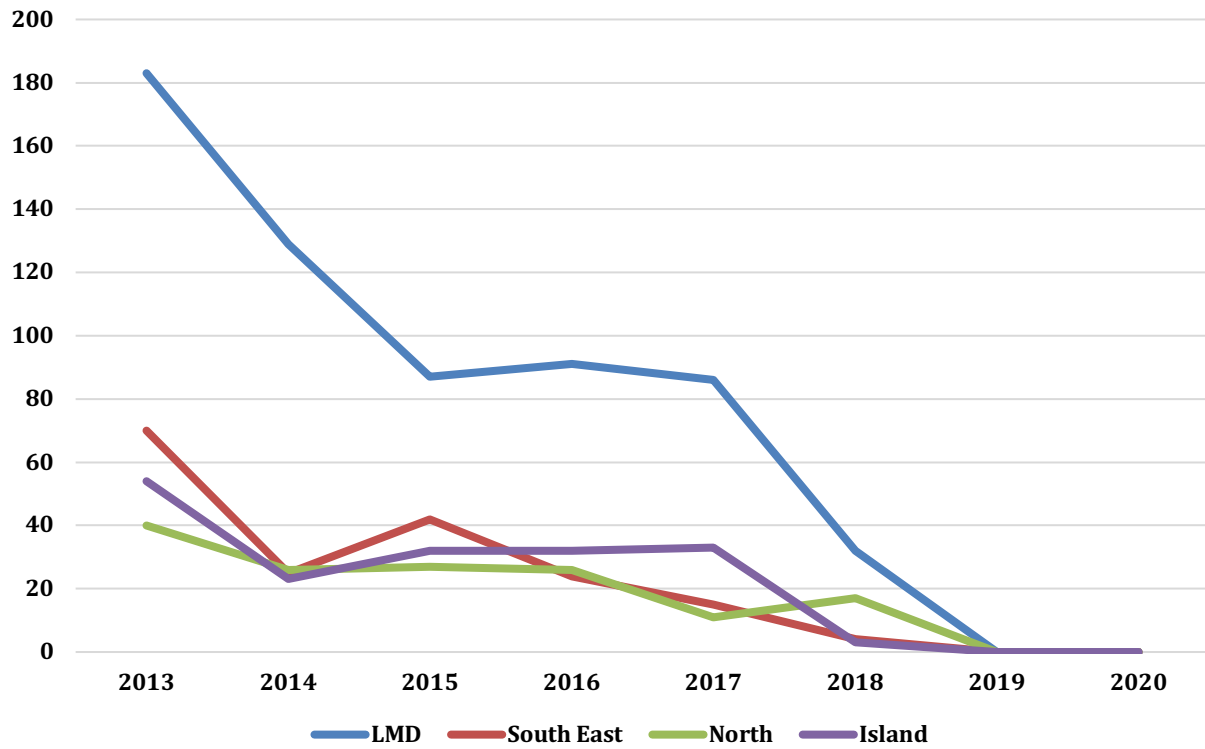
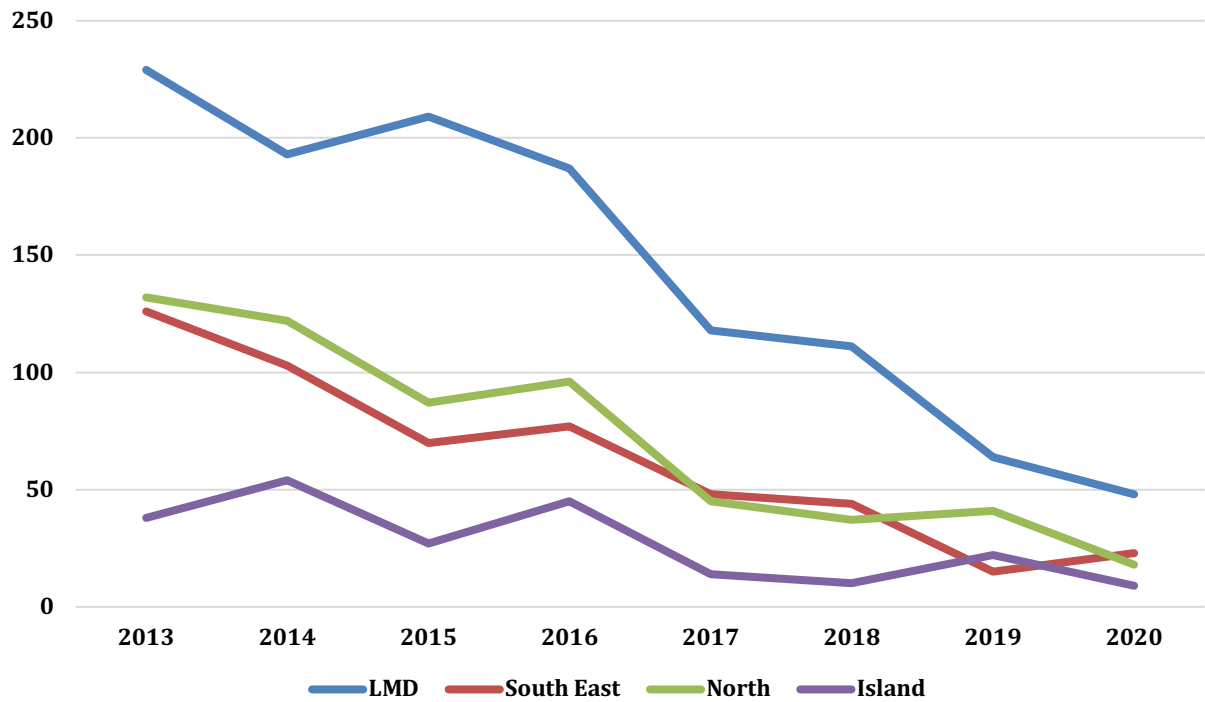
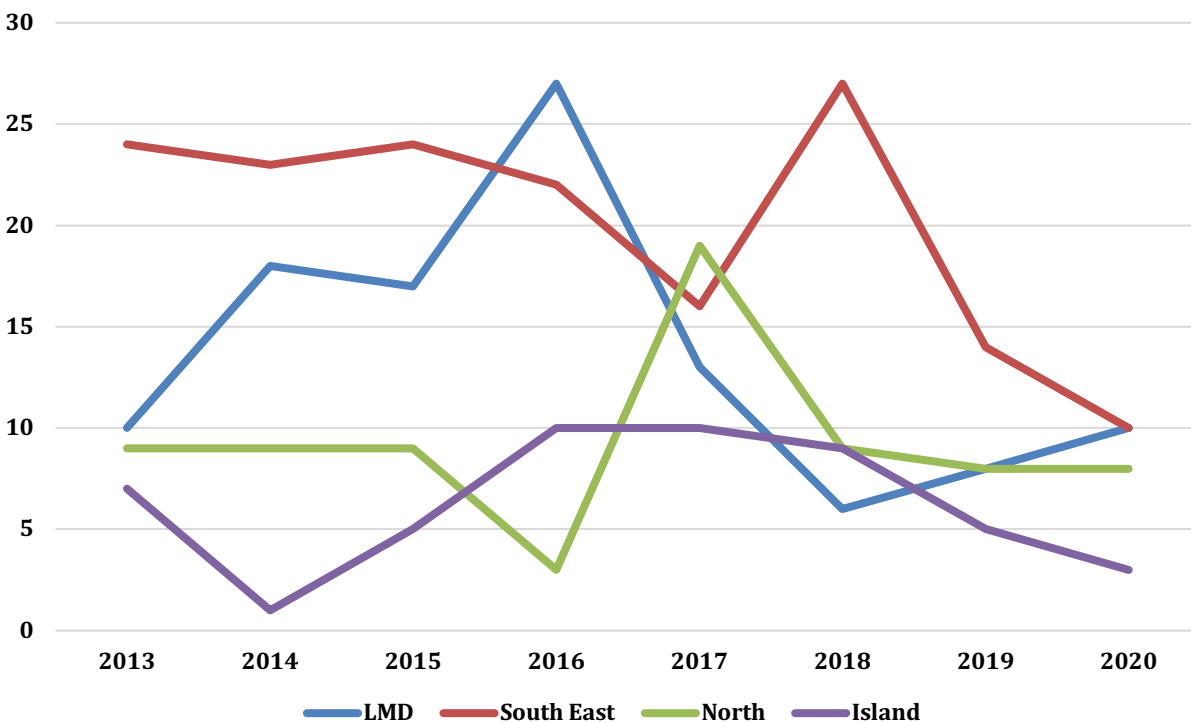


FIGURE 18: TRAFFICKING – COCAINE – IN DISTRICTS, OVER TIME, 2013-2020



Owing to relatively smaller numbers, the patterns were more unstable for other drug types. Figure 19 demonstrates the distribution of trafficking files related to methamphetamines. Except for the Island District, each district witnessed a large spike in methamphetamine cases at some point between 2016 and 2018. But, following this peak, the number of charges fell again. Comparing 2013 to 2020, methamphetamine trafficking charges dropped by over 50% in the South-East and the Island Districts. In the North District, the drop was only 10%, while in the Lower Mainland District, the number of charges was basically unchanged.⁹

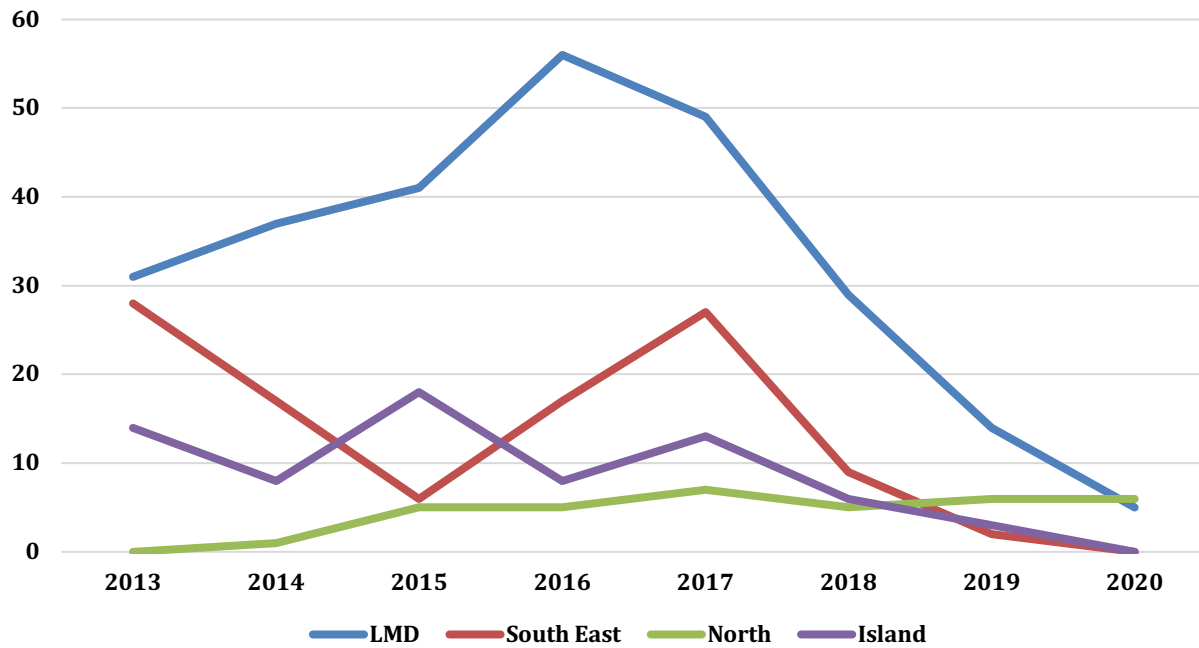
FIGURE 19: TRAFFICKING – METHAMPHETAMINES – IN DISTRICTS, OVER TIME, 2013-2020



The portrayal of heroin presented in Figure 20 was similarly characterized by variability. In the Lower Mainland District, the pattern was straightforward; notably increases followed by even more substantial decreases. In contrast, the patterns evidenced for the South-East and Island Districts were more “up and down.” In the North District, instances for heroin trafficking were essentially flat. Ultimately, the districts were similar by where their numbers ended up. In effect, by 2020, heroin trafficking charges had been reduced to a mere handful, perhaps reflecting the greater tendency for use of fentanyl in place of heroin.

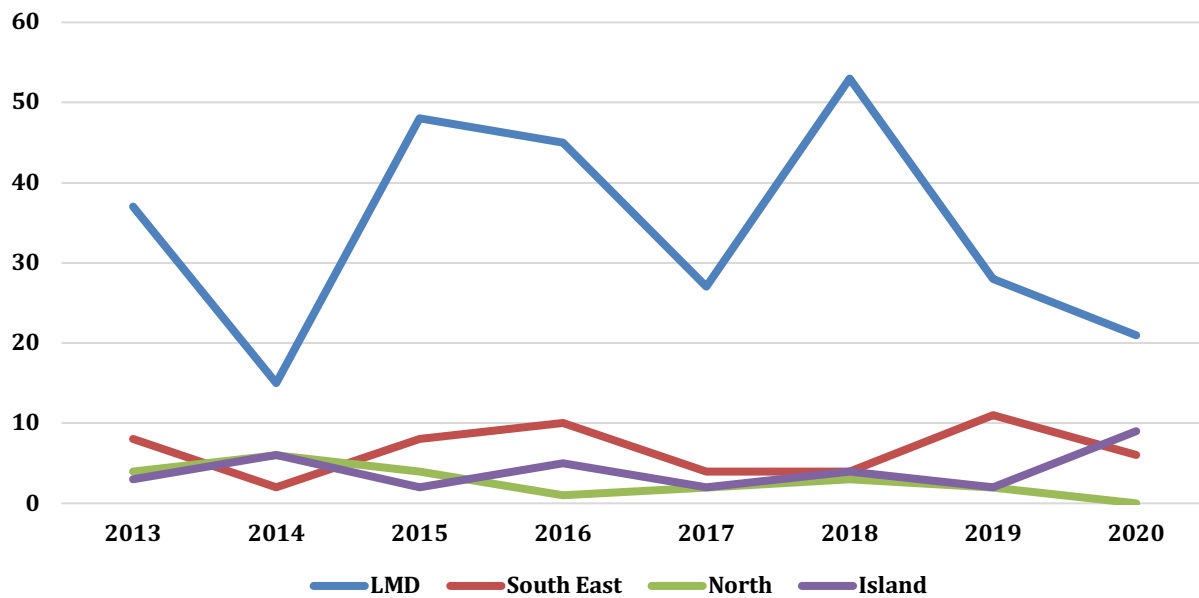
⁹ It is worth noting that the numbers were quite small, leading to potentially misleading percentages.

FIGURE 20: TRAFFICKING - HEROIN - IN DISTRICTS, OVER TIME, 2013-2020



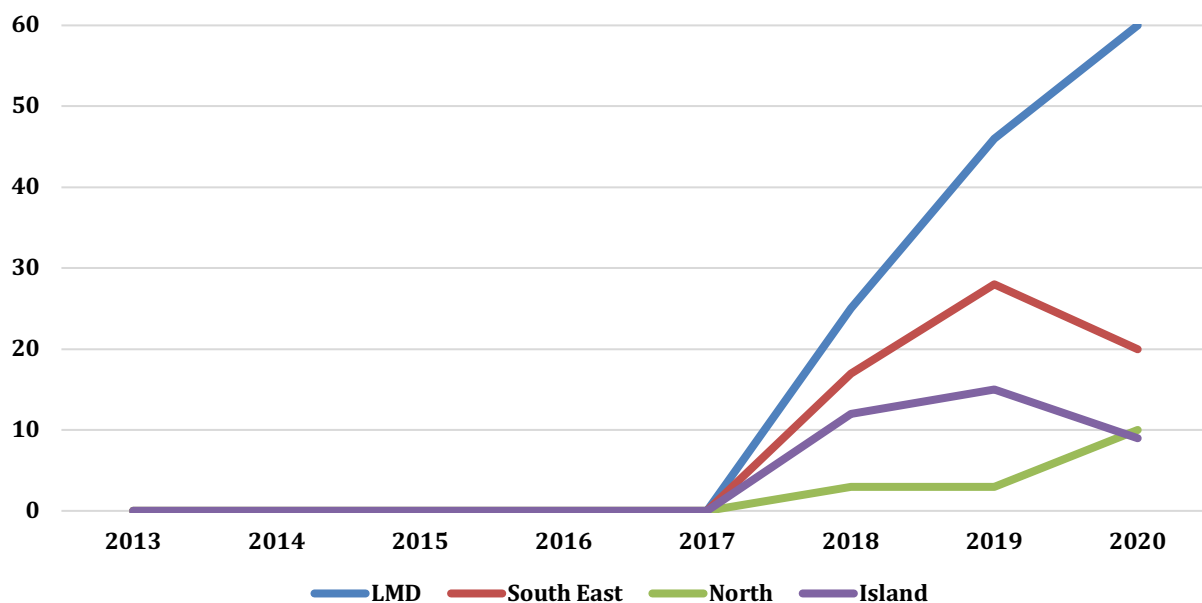
For Other Schedule I drugs, trafficking files were most noteworthy in the Lower Mainland District, which was characterized by a series of spikes and dips (see Figure 21). Since the last peak, in 2018, the numbers for this category declined. In the remainder of the districts, Other Schedule I drugs did not feature prominently in trafficking files. The numbers in these areas saw very little fluctuation.

FIGURE 21: TRAFFICKING - OTHER SCHEDULE I DRUGS - IN DISTRICTS, OVER TIME, 2013-2020



Although fentanyl trafficking rose significantly since 2017, the increase was not consistent across British Columbia. As shown in Figure 22, most of the growth since 2017 was attributable to the Lower Mainland District. The South-East District showed increases in 2018 and 2019, but then recorded a drop in charges of close to 30% in 2020. The Island District also experienced an increase in charges in 2018, but the increase in the subsequent year was somewhat modest, and this district also saw a decrease in 2020. Although fentanyl trafficking was clearly on a steep upward trajectory in the Lower Mainland District, the comparatively short time frame makes it hard to draw any firm conclusions about the potential paths of fentanyl trafficking in the other districts.

FIGURE 22: TRAFFICKING - FENTANYL - IN DISTRICTS, OVER TIME, 2013-2020



In Table 14, the analysis focused on considering charging practices. Between 2013 and 2020, suspects were charged in one-third of trafficking files. But this figure masked considerable variation across the period. First, there was a notable drop in the proportion of files leading to charges in 2017. Second, an even more extreme decline was evinced in 2020. While the 2017 dip was confined to the Lower Mainland and Island Districts, the decrease in 2020 was experienced in every district. In the Lower Mainland and Island Districts, the charging rate fell by 50%. In the South-East and North Districts, the charging rate declined by over 70% and 80% respectively. This may be an instance in which the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were particularly evident. Further data will be required to determine the potential longer-term effects of the pandemic on charging practices in British Columbia.

TABLE 14: TRAFFICKING – CHARGED CASES – IN BC AND DISTRICTS, OVER TIME, 2013-2020

Year	BC		LMD		South-East		North		Island	
	<i>Charged</i>	<i>Not Charged</i>	<i>Charged</i>	<i>Not Charged</i>	<i>Charged</i>	<i>Not Charged</i>	<i>Charged</i>	<i>Not Charged</i>	<i>Charged</i>	<i>Not Charged</i>
2013	32.6	67.4	29.7	70.3	39.3	60.7	50.0	50.0	37.2	62.8
2014	41.9	58.1	39.6	60.4	49.5	50.5	36.5	63.5	35.2	64.8
2015	37.2	62.8	40.6	59.4	46.3	53.7	23.5	76.5	30.6	69.4
2016	39.2	60.8	38.7	61.3	46.9	53.1	33.5	66.5	31.6	68.4
2017	25.0	75.0	21.9	78.1	39.4	60.6	24.7	75.3	17.9	82.1
2018	33.0	67.0	33.3	66.7	39.8	60.2	19.0	81.0	45.5	54.5
2019	30.7	69.3	31.1	68.9	41.3	58.8	28.9	71.1	50.0	50.0
2020	13.8	86.2	14.9	85.1	10.6	89.4	4.7	95.3	23.8	76.2
<i>Aggregate</i>	33.4	66.6	32.8	67.2	41.6	58.4	29.8	70.2	33.5	66.5

The breakdown of charging by drug types is presented in Table 15. Immediately obvious was apparent shift in charges for cannabis trafficking, which dropped by more than half in 2017, and ultimately fell to 0 in 2019 and 2020. Otherwise, the aggregate decrease in the number of charges revealed in Table 15 were evident for every drug type. In short, the decline in charges was a generalized phenomenon. It was not the result of actions in a particular district, regarding a specific drug type, but rather, was system wide.

TABLE 15: TRAFFICKING – CHARGED CASES – BY DRUG TYPE IN BC, OVER TIME, 2013-2020

Year	Cannabis	Cocaine	Meth.	Other Schedule I	Heroin	Fentanyl	Other
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
2013	24.8	38.7	34.0	34.6	28.8	N/A	29.9
2014	31.3	49.2	51.9	34.4	36.4	N/A	28.7
2015	23.0	40.2	67.2	28.6	52.6	N/A	28.7
2016	29.6	42.9	48.4	18.0	56.3	N/A	33.0
2017	13.5	29.1	28.6	16.7	43.1	N/A	11.4
2018	18.8	31.2	42.6	21.2	43.6	40.6	39.3
2019	N/A	31.0	21.4	32.6	26.9	36.4	26.6
2020	N/A	15.3	11.4	13.9	15.4	12.9	13.5
<i>Aggregate</i>	24.6	38.4	40.1	25.0	42.4	27.3	26.5

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF DRUG TRAFFICKERS

The final tables in this section demonstrate the demographic characteristics of individuals involved in drug trafficking. The ethnicity of drug traffickers is shown in Table 16. Most drug traffickers in the database were Caucasian. In the Island District, Caucasians comprised four-fifths of traffickers, while in the Lower Mainland District, the comparable figure was considerably lower (44.7 per cent). This disparity was most likely because in the Lower Mainland District a considerable number

of traffickers (nearly one-quarter) were identified as South Asian. In fact, supplementary analyses indicated that, since 2013, the proportion of traffickers that were Caucasian has been decreasing, while the number of traffickers who were South Asian has increased. In 2020, the percentages in each group had essentially converged (33% Caucasian, 31% South Asian). If the trend holds, in the Lower Mainland District, the number of South Asian traffickers will eclipse Caucasian traffickers in 2021.

TABLE 16: TRAFFICKING – ETHNICITY – IN BC AND DISTRICTS, 2013-2020

Ethnicity	BC		LMD		South-East		North		Island	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Caucasian	3,353	54.4	1,287	44.7	859	70.4	467	50.4	539	79.9
South Asian	855	13.9	664	23.0	51	4.2	10	1.1	16	2.4
Asian	349	5.7	288	10.0	19	1.6	10	1.1	11	1.6
Black	208	3.4	128	4.4	33	2.7	15	1.6	13	1.9
Hispanic	137	2.2	100	3.5	17	1.4	3	0.3	9	1.3
Middle Eastern	212	3.4	175	6.1	14	1.1	0	0.0	6	0.9
Indigenous	725	11.8	131	4.5	101	8.3	383	41.4	48	7.1
Other/Unknown	327	5.3	108	3.7	126	10.3	38	4.1	33	4.9
Totals	6,166	100	2,881	100	1,220	100	926	100	675	100

Caucasians similarly made up the majority of traffickers in the North District, but a sizeable number of traffickers in that district were identified as Indigenous. However, it is important to note that the prevalence of trafficking involving Indigenous individuals in the North District fell by 30% between 2013 and 2020. Supplemental analyses showed that, in 2013 and 2014, the majority of trafficking files involved Indigenous persons. However, by 2020, that figure dropped to 35%, while the proportion of Caucasians involved in trafficking charges increased to 60%.

Table 17 displays the breakdown of trafficking by sex. Across British Columbia, males were responsible for 81% of trafficking charges, while females accounted for 19%. The numbers were generally consistent across the years, apart from 2017, when the proportion of charges attributable to males fell to 77%. The gap between male and female participation in trafficking was most notable in the Lower Mainland District. In this district, on average, fewer than 15% of trafficking charges involved females. Conversely, outside of the Lower Mainland District, females played a larger role in trafficking, comprising between 20% and 25% of charges, on average, in each of the remaining three districts.

TABLE 17: TRAFFICKING – SEX – IN BC AND DISTRICTS, OVER TIME, 2013-2020

Year	BC		LMD		South-East		North		Island	
	Males (%)	Females (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)
2013	81.5	18.5	87.3	12.7	75.8	24.2	76.7	23.3	76.9	23.1
2014	83.7	16.3	87.4	12.6	77.9	22.1	83.6	16.4	79.0	21.0
2015	81.9	18.1	86.5	13.5	75.1	24.9	79.2	20.8	77.6	22.4
2016	81.2	18.8	85.4	14.6	73.4	26.6	80.1	19.9	78.1	21.9
2017	76.9	23.1	79.9	20.1	70.1	29.9	76.9	23.1	75.0	25.0
2018	80.4	19.6	84.6	15.4	71.2	28.8	73.1	26.9	87.3	12.7
2019	80.7	19.3	88.1	11.9	72.5	27.5	69.2	30.8	80.4	19.6
2020	80.8	19.2	85.6	14.4	75.8	24.2	73.1	26.9	76.2	23.8
Aggregate	81.3	18.7	85.7	14.3	74.4	25.6	77.9	22.1	78.4	21.6

The primary takeaway from the data on age depicted in Table 18 was one of constancy. Simply put, traffickers were most commonly 20 or 21 years of age. This held true across British Columbia, within each of the districts, and over time.

TABLE 18: TRAFFICKING – AVERAGE AGE – IN BC AND DISTRICTS, OVER TIME, 2013-2020

Year	BC			LMD			SE			North			Island		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
2013	20.6	20.5	20.7	20.2	20.3	20.0	21.1	21.0	21.4	20.8	20.8	20.5	20.8	20.6	21.6
2014	21.0	20.9	21.3	20.7	20.7	20.4	21.4	21.1	22.3	20.9	20.9	21.3	21.1	21.1	21.2
2015	20.8	20.7	21.0	20.7	20.6	21.5	20.6	20.8	20.1	21.2	21.2	21.3	20.9	20.6	21.8
2016	20.9	20.7	21.9	20.6	20.4	21.9	21.2	21.0	22.0	21.3	21.1	22.3	20.8	20.7	21.1
2017	20.7	20.7	20.8	20.4	20.3	20.7	21.0	21.0	21.0	21.2	21.3	20.9	20.6	20.5	21.0
2018	21.1	21.1	21.1	20.6	20.6	20.7	21.6	21.9	21.2	21.9	21.9	21.9	20.8	20.8	20.7
2019	21.5	21.5	21.5	21.0	21.0	20.6	21.8	21.8	21.8	21.9	22.1	21.5	22.2	22.2	22.4
2020	21.2	21.1	21.6	21.0	21.0	20.8	21.3	20.9	22.3	22.6	22.9	21.6	21.6	21.2	23.1
Aggregate	20.9	20.8	21.2	20.6	20.5	20.8	21.2	21.1	21.4	21.3	21.2	21.3	21.0	20.9	21.5

DRUG OVERDOSES

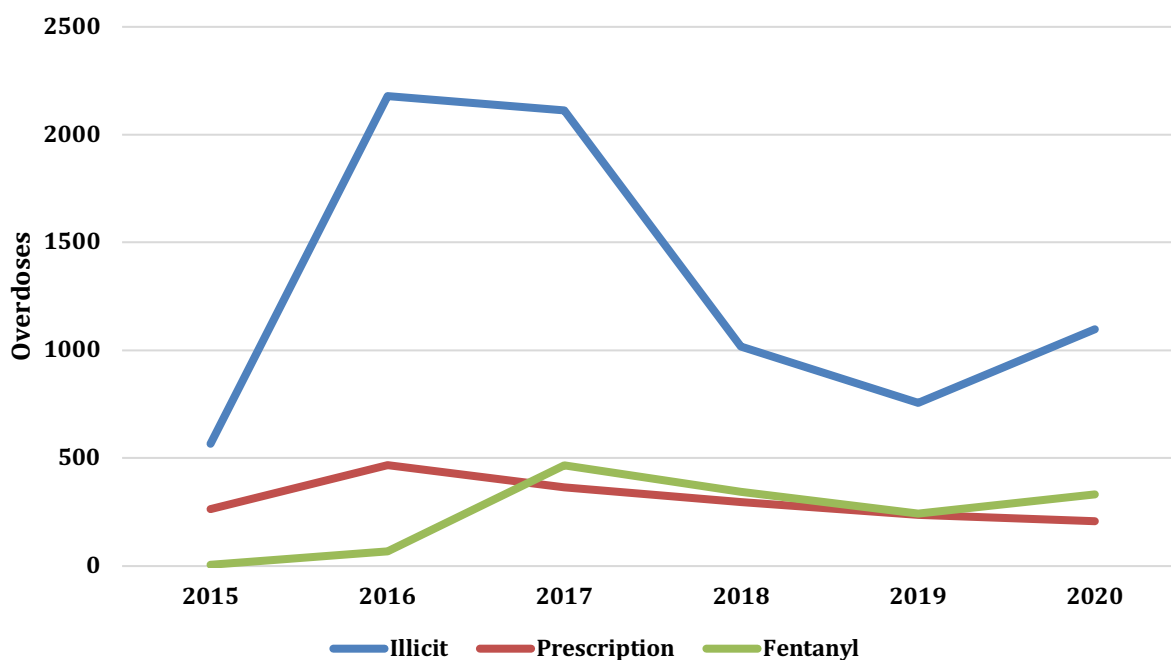
A third way of trying to understand the effects of drugs is to consider overdoses. The numbers of overdoses in British Columbia and the four districts are presented in Table 19. As mentioned in the methodology section, the data provided by OSB was for 2015 to 2020. Across the province, illicit drugs comprised 70% of overdoses, while prescription drugs accounted for about 17% and fentanyl 13%. These figures do not vary substantially between the four police districts. The largest disparity was evident in the Island District, which had comparative higher number of prescription drug overdoses and concomitantly a lower number of overdoses attributable to fentanyl.

TABLE 19: OVERDOSES BY DRUGS IN BC AND DISTRICTS, 2015-2020

Overdose Drug	BC		LMD		South-East		North		Island	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Illicit	7,734	70.1	3,867	72.6	1,608	68.0	983	73.1	1,105	65.6
Prescription	1,839	16.7	749	14.1	419	17.7	175	13.0	413	24.5
Fentanyl	1,457	13.2	713	13.4	337	14.3	187	13.9	166	9.9
Totals	11,030		5,329		2,364		1,345		1,684	

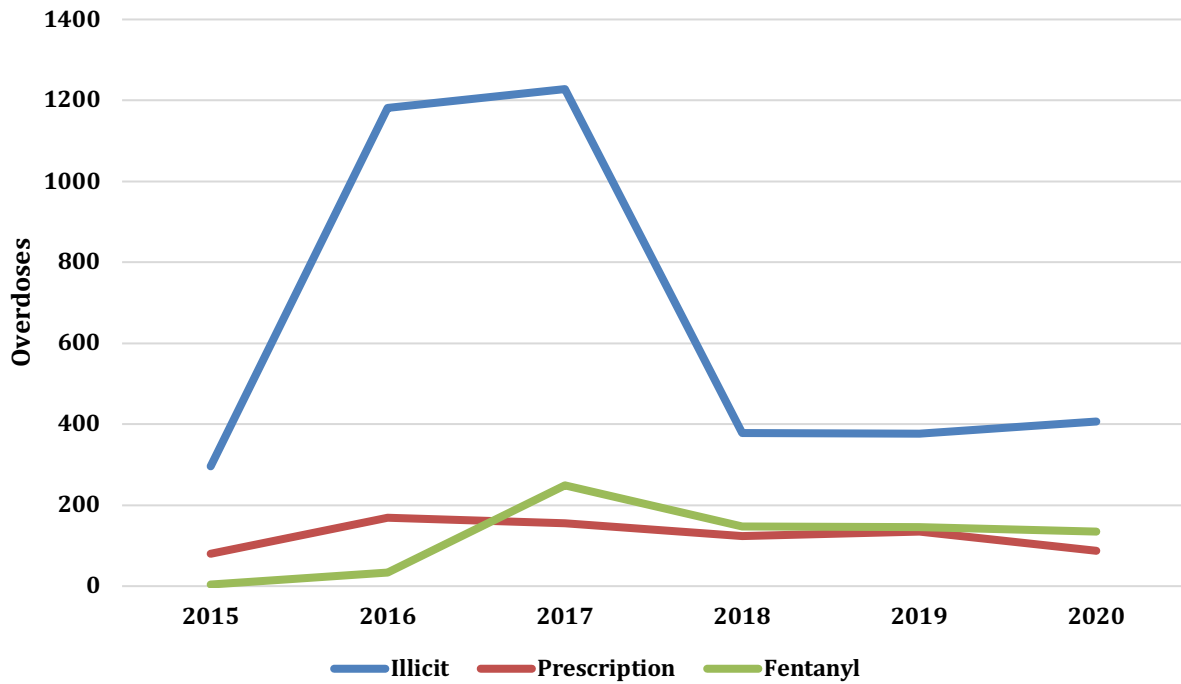
Trends in overdoses in British Columbia are illustrated in Figure 23. It is immediately obvious that 2016 and 2017 saw unusually high levels of illicit drug overdoses, which were twice as high as they were in any other year. The number of Illicit drug overdoses dropped in 2018, but, in 2020, the number of overdoses rose again by 45%. Fentanyl overdoses registered huge increases in 2016 and 2017, then declined slightly in 2018 and 2019. However, in 2020, the number of fentanyl overdoses again rose by about 35%. Since peaking in 2016, overdoses related to prescription drugs in British Columbia have declined every year.

FIGURE 23: OVERDOSES BY DRUG TYPE - BC, OVER TIME, 2015-2020



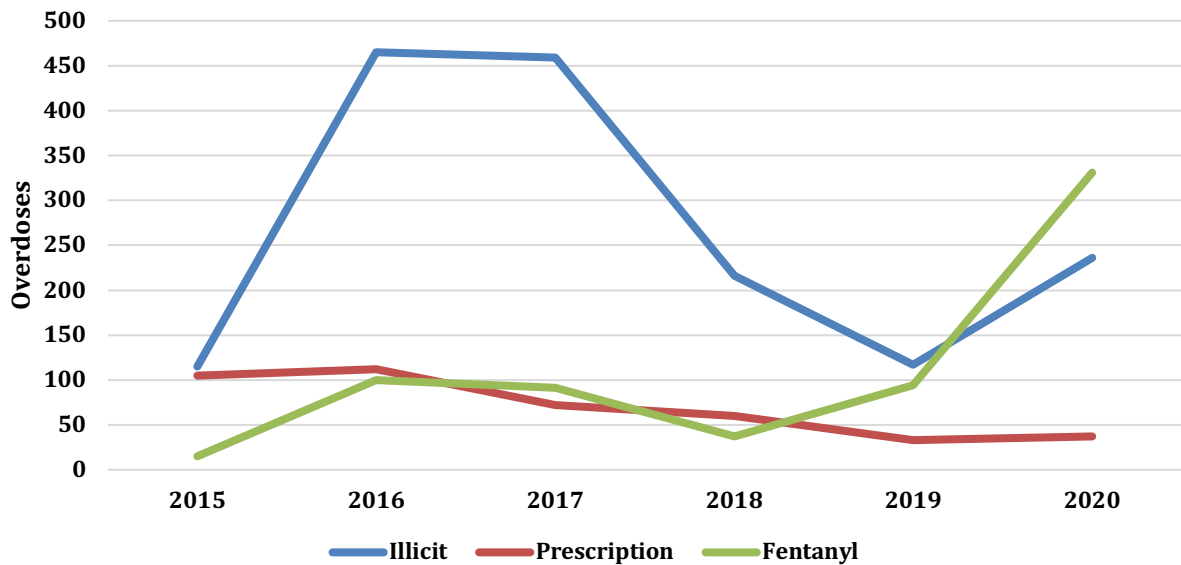
The trends in overdoses are broken down by each of the districts in Figure 24 through Figure 27. As is usually the case, the figures for the Lower Mainland District (see Figure 24) were virtually the same as those for the province.

FIGURE 24: OVERDOSES BY DRUG TYPE - LOWER MAINLAND DISTRICT, OVER TIME, 2015-2020



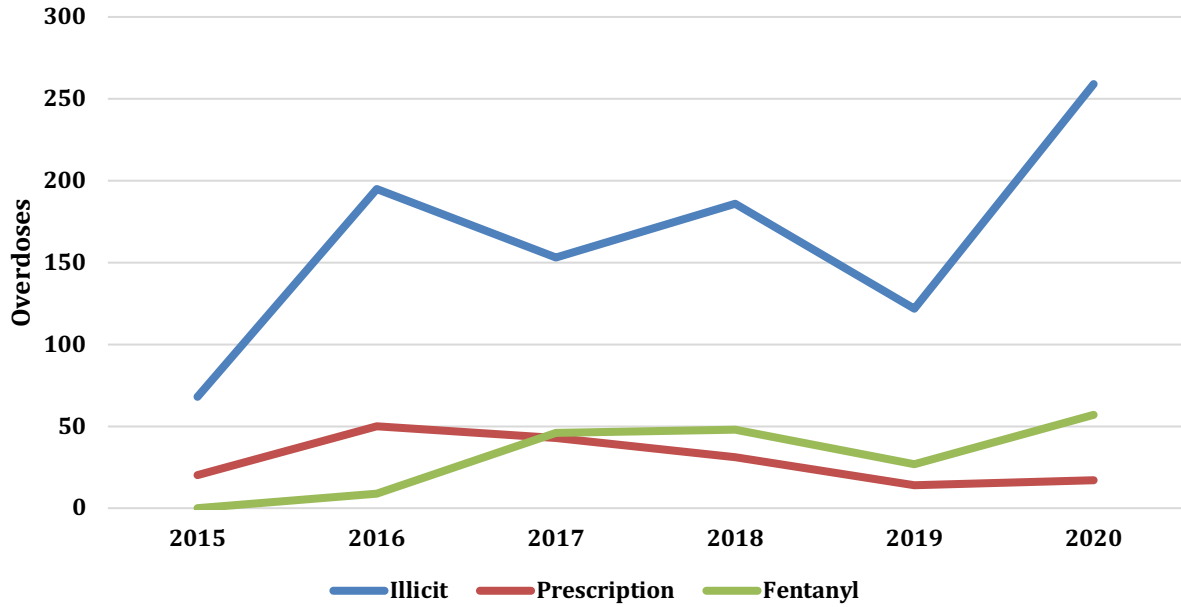
In the South-East District, the pattern for illicit drug overdoses was consistent with the provincial statistics, but the rise in fentanyl overdoses was more substantial, as it increased by over 3½ times between 2019 and 2020 (see Figure 25).

FIGURE 25: OVERDOSES BY DRUG TYPE - SOUTH-EAST DISTRICT, OVER TIME, 2015-2020



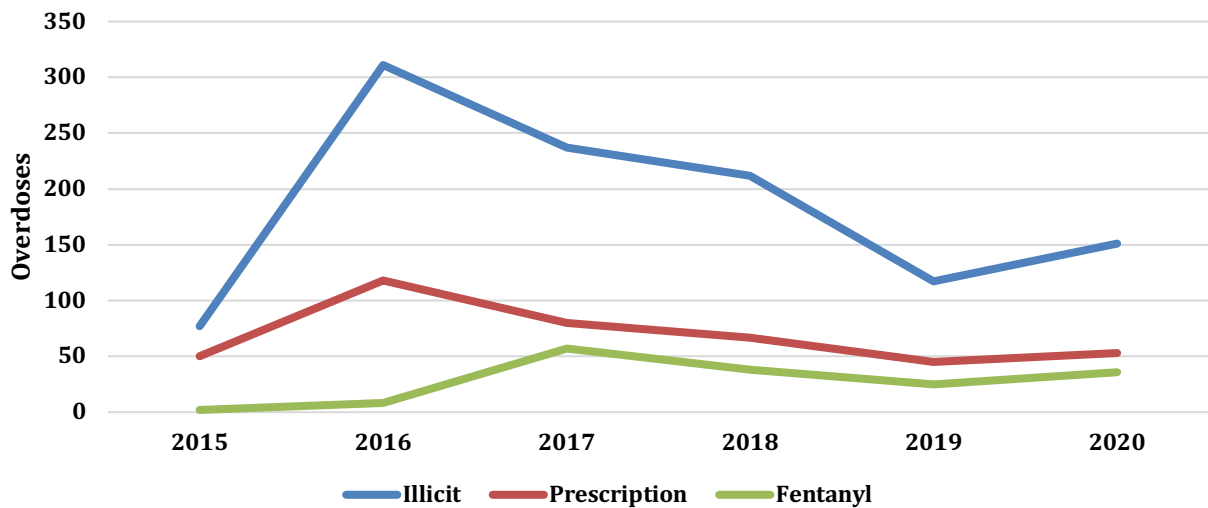
For the North District, both illicit drug and fentanyl overdoses doubled between 2019 and 2020 (see Figure 26).

FIGURE 26: OVERDOSES BY DRUG TYPE - NORTH DISTRICT, OVER TIME, 2015-2020



Finally, in the Island District, the increases for illicit drugs and fentanyl overdoses during this same period (2019 to 2020) were more modest (Figure 27).

FIGURE 27: OVERDOSES BY DRUG TYPE - ISLAND DISTRICT, OVER TIME, 2015-2020



Qualitative Interviews with Participants

MANDATE

Although participants identified engaging in a range of different activities, they consistently identified that their mandate concerned the disruption of low- or medium-level trafficking of drugs at either the street-level (dial-a-doping) or with regards to organised criminal groups. In addition to this, some agencies/detachments also focused on PTEP targets, prolific offenders and property crimes, and serious crimes related to drug trafficking, such as kidnappings and home invasions. Less commonly, some agencies/detachments noted that they provided support to other drug investigations, such as those completed by general duty members, or that they engaged in education and prevention activities with youth. Of note, one participant reported that, generally speaking, municipal/RCMP drug units would deal with the lower-level drug crimes, like dial-a-dopers, whereas the CFSEU-BC would target middle-level suppliers (e.g., the gangs), and Federal Serious and Organised Crime (FSOC) would target those at the highest levels (e.g., organised crime). However, as will be described further in this report, for the most part, the participants did not clearly distinguish between gangs and organised criminal groups operating in British Columbia.

DESCRIPTIONS OF DIAL-A-DOPING

The participants described dial-a-doping as the distribution of a phone number amongst drug users (clients) that clients contacted by phone call or text to place an order for illicit drugs. Put more simply by one participant, “it is using cell phones to create a line used to arrange meets and buy drugs”. Whereas dial-a-doping is believed to have onset during the age of pagers, it has since morphed primarily into the use of communication via cell phone, either through a verbal or text communication. Several participants likened it to ordering a pizza for delivery, where there is a centralized number that people called to order drugs, and those drugs were then delivered to the client at a time and location agreed upon with the dial-a-doper. Often, the phone number was advertised by word of mouth, though numbers have also been marketed using business cards or by being taped or written onto an object, like a disposable lighter, that was given to vulnerable populations (e.g., handed out at homeless encampments).

In a simple setup, the person(s) in control of the phone – the supplier or ‘dial-a-doper’ – both received and delivered the drug order. Often, the dial-a-doper carried a variety of different drugs, which one participant described as “a buffet of drugs”. Once the order was received over the phone, the dial-a-doper distributed the drugs out of their vehicle or by meeting with the buyer (client) at an agreed upon location. Less frequently, the dial-a-doper might go to the buyer’s home to deliver the order. It was reportedly uncommon for dial-a-dopers to work directly out of a residence. Participants indicated that it was considered safer by dial-a-dopers to arrange a meeting elsewhere than to have someone knock on their door and bring attention to their residence. Meeting elsewhere would also protect them from warrants that could otherwise be issued to search the house they operated out of. Given this, participants suggested that the most common model was that a client called or texted the dial-a-doper, they arranged a time and place for the transaction to occur, and the dial-a-doper then attended the meeting in a vehicle. The exchange typically took between 30-60 seconds, after which both parties immediately leave the area.

While some dial-a-dopers worked alone, participants observed that there might be a crew of two people working together, where one was the driver and the other handled the drugs, cash, and phone. One participant described that dial-a-doping operations could range from a simple “1-man show” where the person engaged in dial-a-doping a few hours a day up to more complex and organised systems, where there might be multiple lines being monitored by someone who took the calls and dispatched the delivery. There were also models where there was more of a vertical hierarchy in managing and supervising the process. In these cases, dial-a-dope operations might be run as a 24-hour business, where several different dial-a-dopers took shifts, and shared the phone lines, contacts, and vehicles between them. As will be discussed below, **these different models require different strategies to effectively target and disrupt dial-a-doping.**

Dial-a-doper(s) often have multiple stashes throughout or even across several cities where they store the drugs they sell. Participants provided several reasons for this, including that if they encountered a police officer while selling the drugs, they would only be in possession of a small quantity of drugs, and will subsequently face less severe criminal charges, if any. From the perspective of participants, the scale of drugs distributed via dial-a-doping per client often ranged from around half a gram to 3.5 grams (colloquially referred to as an 8-ball). Another reason for having multiple stashes was that some dial-a-dopers met their clients in various locations across or between cities. As such, they maintained several stash locations to facilitate this process. Moreover, in the more complex operations, where there were multiple dial-a-dopers working a single or multiple lines, the dial-a-dopers needed to re-supply during their shift, thus requiring multiple locations where they could collect more drugs to fulfill orders. The drugs might be stashed in houses, but the participants observed that, in the more organised systems, dial-a-dopers used hotel rooms or rented Airbnb’s to stash their drugs.

To summarize the overall process, while some dial-a-dopers would sell drugs out of their residence, the most common model appeared to be that dial-a-dopers would operate one or more lines on behalf of a hierarchical gang/organised crime group that would provide the dial-a-doper with a supply of drugs to sell on the streets. They would then stash the supply at one or more locations (often rented) within or across nearby cities, they received orders by phone or text message to the marketed phone line, and they would meet briefly at a pre-determined location to quickly complete the transaction.

THE SYMBIOTIC NATURE OF DIAL-A-DOPING, GANGS, AND ORGANISED CRIME

Participants were asked to describe how much overlap existed between dial-a-dopers, gangs, and organised crime. Although there were some ‘independent’ organisations operating in some jurisdictions, typically dial-a-doping went hand in hand with gangs/organised crime. In effect, participants stated that you cannot have one without the other. The dial-a-dopers were at the bottom of the hierarchy and were generally taking the most risks and driving the profits for the gangs/organised crime groups, while the gangs/organised crime groups sourced the supply and coordinated the hierarchical structure of the operations. Many participants described dial-a-doping as the main or only source of income for gangs and described the gangs in their jurisdiction as similar to a typical ‘organised crime’ group due to their hierarchal structure and degree of

organisation in their operations. One participant described that “the less sophisticated, the more involved they were in actual dial-a-doping as opposed to supplying”. Similarly, the more organised a dial-a-doping line was, the more likely it would be directly connected to gangs or organised crime.

When asked to identify the major players in dial-a-doping in their jurisdiction, participants reported a substantial degree of cross-jurisdictional activity. Unlike in other jurisdictions where one geographical location may be associated with a single gang or organised crime group who may operate only in that specific geographical area, the overall pattern in British Columbia, as described by the participants, was for there to be multiple major gangs/organised crime groups that may be in the Lower Mainland but who were operating dial-a-doping lines in multiple communities across the province. For example, some gangs reportedly send people from the Lower Mainland to the Island, Interior, or North to operate their lines (described as satellites), shifting them in and out as needed, leading one participant to describe it as ‘almost like a camp job’ where a dial-a-doper would be sent into town to work a line for a couple of weeks before being pulled out again to be sent elsewhere in the province.

While there may be some smaller lines operating independently, most dial-a-doper lines were connected in some way to the major gangs or organised criminal groups primarily located in the Lower Mainland. Commonly mentioned groups included the Brother’s Keepers, United Nations, Red Scorpions, Independent Soldiers, 856 Gang, SB47 gang, the Kang or Atwal or Grewal groups, and the Hell’s Angels or other motorcycle groups. Some of these groups were offshoots of the larger gangs but continued to work with these larger groups to source and distribute drugs. Notably, some of the smaller groups reportedly worked with multiple gangs or organised crime groups. This may partly explain why most participants reported having multiple gangs or organised criminal groups operating simultaneously in their jurisdiction. There was no clear single gang or organised criminal group in control in any one district and generally they were reported by participants to work ‘peacefully’ with each other. In some jurisdictions, a particular gang would send people into town for one or two weeks, then pull them back out again, so they would not always have a presence. Other participants observed that the groups would sell different types of drugs. Participants reported that it could be difficult to determine who was working for who as there was a lot of crossovers between the different gangs and organised crime groups. However, one jurisdiction in the Island District was an outlier in that participants stated that this jurisdiction was known as an independent town. Although there were gangs and organised crime groups operating in nearby jurisdictions, the dial-a-dopers operating in this community were generally independent players who were connected less directly to organised crime. Their connection consisted of purchasing their supply through organised crime, but they were not selling on behalf of the organised crime group.

Independent lines would also pop up in some of the other jurisdictions where gangs/organised crime had a stronger presence. However, the looser, less organised lines or gangs that would attempt to set up in a jurisdiction would be more easily taken down, either by the more organised gangs or organised crime groups or by the police. This typically occurred because these lines or gangs were not as sophisticated and left more of a trail for police, for example, by using dial-a-dopers with criminal records or histories of police contacts, using their own vehicles instead of renting vehicles, using their home and leaving evidence of the drug trade behind, using the same

cell phone and phone number for a long periods of time, and perhaps using in addition to selling drugs. In contrast, the more organised groups switched their dial-a-dopers out more regularly, so police did not become as familiar with them. Moreover, these groups would not use people with criminal records as dial-a-dopers, they would rent vehicles so police were not familiar with their cars, they would rent hotel rooms or Airbnb's to use as stash houses, they would routinely dump their phones and change their lines, they might coordinate their lines through a master phone number that was never taken onto the street, and they might refuse to sell drugs to unknown people. They may also sell off a drug line to others if they felt that the number was compromised; thus, lines were a commodity that they would sell for profit and for security. The more organised and experienced groups reportedly were less likely to resort to violence and their activities were more covert, whereas the more loosely organised gangs were not afraid to have a more overt presence, even if that involved weapons and engaging in violence towards each other.

In some cases, dial-a-dopers were only tangentially related to a gang or an organised crime group, or their connections to gangs or organised crime was not clear. One participant suggested that some smaller dial-a-doping operations might identify as an affiliate of an organised crime group, even if they were not directly connected to them. Another participant observed that local dial-a-doper lines or 'mom-and-pop shops' were run independently but were still connected to organised crime as that was the source of the drugs they were selling. Rather than directly control the running of the line in this case, the gang would supply the drugs. These 'mom-and-pop shops' might pay a 'tax' to the gang or organised criminal group they were purchasing their supply from, which might offer them a degree of protection from competing gangs or organised crime groups.

Though it was not commonly mentioned, one participant observed that some changes had occurred to dial-a-doping because of the dark web and fentanyl. According to this participant, the ability to order drugs on the dark web and have the drugs delivered through the mail meant that the police were dealing with more 'lone wolf' dealers than in the past. Generally speaking, participants noted that it was easy to set up a new operation, though the dial-a-doper would, in most cases, still need to find a supplier, and the supplier would typically come from a more organised street gang or organised criminal group. To set up a new operation, the dial-a-doper would often give out drug samples to vulnerable populations, along with their phone number on a business card or on a disposable lighter, for example. However, this was noted as being a vulnerable time for the dial-a-doper as they needed to market themselves and make themselves more known to drug clients to get established. As noted above, it would also be a risky time for the individual dial-a-doper or gang to potentially be taken over by a more organised crime group who became aware that someone was attempting to set up shop in the community. Given this, a less risky process was to provide samples and then market by word of mouth, or to work directly or indirectly with the gang or organised crime group by purchasing the drugs from them or paying a tax.

Dial-a-doper lines were reportedly also bought and sold like a commodity. Participants suggested that a dial-a-dope line might be sold for \$10,000 to \$20,000. Of note, one participant in a larger jurisdiction suggested that a dial-a-dope line might sell for upward of \$500,000. One example of why someone might sell a profitable dial-a-dope line was if a line operator was going to prison. In this case, the offender might sell off or rent out their line for the duration of time that they were going to be in prison in exchange for a portion of the profits, though this was one of the situations

noted by participants to more likely result in violence as conflict might occur when the operator attempted to take back control of their line. Another example of how a dial-a-dope line might change hands was if a dial-a-doper was doing a good job and the gang or organisation wanted to promote them. In this case, the dial-a-doper would be moved up in the hierarchy and given a new line to operate. A third example, as noted before, was if a line was becoming 'hot' and the gang or organised crime group became concerned about risk. In these cases, the dial-a-dope line operator or the organisation or gang might sell the line to someone else or simply shut the line down.

Overall, it appeared that the dial-a-doping lines operating in most communities were professional or organised and were run directly or indirectly by the more established street gangs or organised criminal groups. On occasion, more independent lines would be established but they generally became connected to the street gangs or organised criminal groups in one way or another. To summarize, the participants identified dial-a-doping, gangs, and organised crime as symbiotic components of a hierarchical organisation. Even when independent lines existed, they typically did so for either short periods of time before being taken over, or they purchased supplies and protection from the gangs or organised crime, thus tying them to these more organised groups in some way.

HOW COMMON IS DIAL-A-DOPING?

Participants suggested that dial-a-doping was very common and, in most of their jurisdictions, participants reported that it comprised the bulk or all low-level drug dealing. However, many participants found it difficult to quantify precisely how much of this activity was happening in their jurisdiction. Still, some of the larger jurisdictions reported knowing that they had between one dozen to over 100 different lines operating in their city. Notably, few had any open-air drug markets, though some participants were able to identify dial-a-doping hotspots. Several participants specifically stated that due to the influx of dial-a-doping, they no longer had 'crack shacks' or crack houses where people would go to a known house to purchase drugs. In other words, dial-a-doping was the predominant form of conducting drug transactions, which meant that drug units were dealing with a constantly moving target, requiring different enforcement strategies than they used during the 'crack house' era.

Interestingly, one participant reported that in the Island District, dial-a-doping activity was more common on certain days of the week, as well as in the week when welfare cheques were issued. A participant in a smaller policing jurisdiction in the Interior observed that during the week when welfare cheques were issued, they would see around \$50,000 in dial-a-doping transactions in a single week. Another participant in the Interior reported that some dial-a-doping lines shut down at night as they would otherwise stand out due to the quiet nature of their evenings. But, otherwise, they had around six to eight different dial-a-dope groups consistently active during the day. In contrast, participants in the Lower Mainland said that dial-a-doping in their jurisdiction occurred '24-7'.

It was interesting to note that participants did not appear to have clear strategies to monitor dial-a-doping trends. For example, they could not articulate how many transactions were typically made in a day, how much money this amounted to, or how many lines were operating in their jurisdiction

at any given time. The challenge was due, in part, because arrests were not necessarily a useful way to monitor how much dial-a-doping was happening in their community, as new players would quickly step in to fill any voids resulting from police enforcement or changes in gang or organised crime strategies. Even in the absence of police intervention, if a line was no longer working, it might be unclear to the police whether this was due to the drug line being shut down or if the dial-a-doper had simply switched numbers. The main way that participants reported monitoring what was happening in their jurisdiction was through confidential informants, who would tell them when new groups were moving in or groups moving out, when new lines were set up, and when drugs were difficult to bring into the jurisdiction resulting in reduced supply and less activity.

Interestingly, when asked to describe how they monitor the dial-a-doping trends in their jurisdiction, only two participants reported that they had access to an analyst. One participant reported that they had one analyst but needed a whole team. It was unclear how many of the drug units had a dedicated analyst or how they used them. Given this, it would appear that **this may be one way in which the drug units can better monitor their trends going forward**, such as monitoring what drugs were trending, what prices were active, where the demand was coming from and when, when key players were in or out of the criminal justice system, and which players were moving between jurisdictions in their dial-a-doping activities). The analysts could review the intelligence provided by confidential informants, information submitted to Crime Stoppers, the information documented by patrol (e.g., from vehicle stops, street checks), and the intelligence recorded by surveillance teams to better inform the drug units or teams.

From the perspective of participants, the drugs commonly distributed by dial-a-dopers included fentanyl, either by itself or combined with heroin (though many participants observed that it was mostly or only fentanyl), as well as cocaine or crack cocaine, and methamphetamines. Some would sell prescription drugs, like oxycontin, but this was not very common and/or was not very commonly targeted by drug units. Similarly, some jurisdictions reported 'party drugs', like GHB or ecstasy, were sold by dial-a-dopers. Of note, cannabis was not commonly distributed by dial-a-dopers because of the proliferation of stores legally selling many forms of cannabis. The bulk of the drug trade involving dial-a-dopers was, therefore, primarily fentanyl, cocaine, and methamphetamines.

GETTING DRUGS INTO THE HANDS OF DIAL-A-DOPERS

Given the frequency with which dial-a-doping lines were upwardly connected with street gangs and organised crime, a consistent process appeared to be followed in terms of getting drugs, primarily fentanyl and cocaine as methamphetamine was more likely to be produced locally, distributed down through the hierarchy. For example, the supply of drugs might arrive in the Lower Mainland from South America or the United States by boat, air, or land. Interestingly, one participant indicated that the major players may work together to do a major importation of drugs, where there may be three to five different suppliers coordinating a delivery together. A portion of the drugs that arrived in the Lower Mainland would then be pre-packaged, where a kilo of drugs may be 'stepped down' into one-ounce bags where the pure substance was cut with other drugs or additives to create more product. The packages would then be couriered by a member of the

organisation, for example by vehicle to the North or the Interior of British Columbia, or by floatplane, ferry, helijet, or boat over to a satellite line on the Island where the drugs would be divided and stored in different stash houses. The drugs would then be sold by dial-a-dopers to their clients. A similar model reported by other participants was for the supply to arrive and then be transferred to the stash houses where the drugs would be 'stepped down' into the diluted smaller portions for sale to clients. The amount that was supplied may last for one or two weeks before the dial-a-doping line needed to be restocked from the Lower Mainland. At this point, the operation may move to a new stash house, rent new vehicles, and send in a new group of dial-a-dopers.

In effect, due to the involvement of organised crime, the trafficked drugs were usually received at a central point in the province and then disseminated outwards to the different satellite lines working in communities across British Columbia. Over the course of this distribution, there were likely different people involved at the different stages, so no one person could describe the full process or identify all the people involved. Moreover, the people involved will be moved around fairly frequently to limit their exposure to confidential informants and the police. The same overall process was described in the Interior and Northern policing districts though, in these cases, the drugs might come in from either the Lower Mainland or across the border with Alberta and then distributed from a major city to the satellites. Another example given by participants from the Interior District was that rather than have couriers bring the substances out from the Lower Mainland, 'locals' would drive to the Lower Mainland themselves to pick up the supply of drugs.

Though the upside-down pyramid of distribution was the general process described by participants, several noted that it was possible for dial-a-dopers not connected with major gangs or organised criminal groups to order fentanyl online from China, which was received directly by mail and disseminated. The independent dial-a-doper was an infrequent occurrence though, as most of the activity described above by the participants concerned the more sophisticated operations connected to gangs or organised crime.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF DIAL-A-DOPERS

In describing the profiles and characteristics of dial-a-dopers in British Columbia, it was clear that there was not a single profile, but that jurisdiction and the demographics of the community played a key role. Still, nearly all participants indicated that most dial-a-dopers were young, Caucasian males who frequently engaged in dial-a-doping to support a drug habit. More specifically, all participants stated that dial-a-dopers were overwhelmingly male; however, there were several participants who reported that females were involved in dial-a-doping in some specific ways. For example, in those jurisdictions where females were more commonly associated to dial-a-doping, they were typically older, involved in the sex trade, or used as drivers for other dial-a-dopers. Participants indicated that it was also more common for females involved in dial-a-doping to be paid in drugs rather than money. Of note, none of the participants indicated that females were the lead or main dial-a-dopers in their jurisdictions. Instead, as mentioned above, females were more typically consigned to driving the vehicles for male dial-a-dopers or were part of a husband and wife, mother and daughter, or boyfriend and girlfriend dial-a-doping duo. In effect, it was reported that females got involved in dial-a-doping by having a family or intimate relationship with a male dial-a-doper.

While very jurisdictionally dependent and based on the demography of the community, as mentioned above, most dial-a-dopers were reported by participants to be Caucasian. Still, some participants from the Island and Lower Mainland districts indicated that there were growing numbers of Vietnamese males engaged in dial-a-doping, while in other communities, there were large numbers of South Asian males involved in dial-a-doping.

In addition to mostly being male and Caucasian, it was also most common for dial-a-dopers to be younger in age. Regardless of the jurisdiction, most participants indicated that dial-a-dopers were commonly between 20 and 30 years old; however, some participants reported encountering dial-a-dopers who were over the age of 40 years old, and some indicated that they have encountered dial-a-dopers who were senior citizens. For those who were older dial-a-dopers, participants believed that these people had been involved in drugs and crime their entire lives. Participants pointed out that lifestyle was the primary driver of older dial-a-dopers. For example, because they had been exposed to or part of a criminal lifestyle in the past, when they needed money, they knew people who they could sell drugs for. So, rather than doing it for some of the other reasons that will be discussed below, needing some money in the short-term was a main reason for older people to be involved in dial-a-doping.

Participants provided a range of reasons why younger people got involved in dial-a-doping and the more common characteristics among dial-a-dopers. As expected, participants reported that young males got involved in dial-a-doping because they needed money but did not have the skills, education, ambition, or ability to get a 'regular' job. Participants stated that many dial-a-dopers started out as drug users, became addicted, and then got involved in dial-a-doping to support their addiction or to pay off their drug debts. In effect, participants felt that supporting one's drug addiction was a leading reason for becoming a dial-a-doper. Of note, not all participants indicated that the dial-a-dopers they interacted with were drug users. Some dial-a-dopers were well connected with organised crime groups, they wanted to become gang members, or they were interested in becoming more entrenched in a criminal lifestyle and considered dial-a-doping a way to do so. Other dial-a-dopers were university students or people with other jobs who began dial-a-doping to supplement their income.

It was also frequently reported by participants that the dial-a-dopers they interacted with were from the lower socio-economic classes. It was interesting to note that some participants indicated that a few of the dial-a-dopers they interacted with came from good homes with supportive families with financial means. These dial-a-dopers were living with their parents but did not value hard work, going to school, or care about their family or community, and viewed dial-a-doping as an easier and quicker way to make money. In effect, these people were not interested in being a gangster or joining a gang but were focused on the income that dial-a-doping could provide.

Still, it was much more common for dial-a-dopers not to come from money, to be living on their own or to be homeless, and to have a range of social and mental health issues that have been associated with criminality. Dial-a-dopers were commonly referred to by participants as being less intelligent and involving people who have 'fallen through the cracks of society'. To some extent, these types of people were targeted by organised crime groups and gangs because they were easier to manipulate, pressure, and extort into dial-a-doping. Participants reported that many dial-a-dopers were vulnerable people or those who had a variety of negative life experiences. It should be

noted that a few participants indicated that some dial-a-dopers got involved in the drug trade to pay off the debts of others, such as friends or family members, or, at one point, had been higher up in the organisation or gang but for some reason had fallen out of favour and needed to prove their value or regain the trust of the other members. One way of doing so was to work for some time as a dial-a-doper. Again, while this was not very typical, a final common characteristic among dial-a-dopers was possessing a driver's licence and having access to vehicles, either a vehicle they owned or the ability to rent a vehicle.

More than one participant indicated that there were several stereotypes associated with dial-a-dopers; many of which were not true. For example, participants indicated that some of the myths about the appearance of dial-a-dopers were having a 'man-bag' or a 'murse', wearing a track suit, having a big, studded earring, or having fake Louis Vuitton products were all outwards signs of someone being a dial-a-doper. Other participants mentioned that some dial-a-dopers wore specific clothes to stand out in the crowd, including a particular type of Nike sneaker, while other dial-a-dopers tried to blend in as much as possible and did not want to draw any attention to themselves by their appearance, the types or styles of clothes they wore, or the type of car they drove. To this last point, it was reported that dial-a-dopers could not be distinguished by a particular model of vehicle; however, there was a time, in one community, where driving a Honda Civic was an indication to investigators that the driver and passenger might be dial-a-dopers. Another participant stated that having one person, especially a female, driving a rental car while another person, typically a younger male who was constantly on the phone, in the passenger seat or the backseat was characteristic of dial-a-doping.

In sum, in terms of characteristics or a profile of the typical dial-a-doper, participants generally felt that it could be anyone. Some dial-a-dopers wanted to look the part, others did not. Most were younger, but some were older. Most were Caucasian males, but some were from different ethnic backgrounds and/or were female. While many were drug addicts who engaged in dial-a-doping to feed their addiction or pay off debts, some were employed in other jobs and used dial-a-doping to supplement their income. Still others did it because they believed it was an easier and quicker way to make money. Some dial-a-dopers saw it as a steppingstone to becoming a member of a gang or an organised crime group. Finally, as will be discussed in greater detail below, while some groups took precautions when it came to who they would sell their drugs to, participants felt that most dial-a-dopers would sell to anyone because making money was their main motivation.

When asked if there were any specific peculiarities amongst dial-a-dopers that participants felt were unique or distinct for their jurisdiction, one participant from the Island District indicated that there appeared to be a kind of rotation that occurred among dial-a-dopers. In other words, a dial-a-doper would arrive in the community from somewhere else, most commonly the Lower Mainland, with a large quantity of drugs, work as a dial-a-doper for some time and then leave the community to be replaced by a new dial-a-doper. Another participant from the Island District indicated that there was a level of inter-connectedness among dial-a-dopers in their jurisdiction that was not found in other locations. For example, this participant indicated that the dial-a-dopers all knew each other by either going to school together or through their association with the drug trade. As a result, there was a certain level of cooperation between the dial-a-dopers that resulted in less violence and less turf wars. In effect, the social connections between dial-a-dopers allowed for

multiple dial-a-dopers to operate in the same area without violence over who controlled which specific territory. Given this, it was reported that newer dial-a-dopers would frequently avoid operating in this jurisdiction because they did not have this connection with other dial-a-dopers. As noted above, some dial-a-dopers will sell to anyone; however, one participant from the South-East District indicated that, in their jurisdiction, dial-a-dopers were much more selective and careful about who they sold to. For example, some dial-a-dopers in this jurisdiction did extensive background checks on new clients or required that someone the dial-a-doper knew referred a new client. Other dial-a-dopers use drop names or phrases that a client must use to get into the drug line. Finally, one participant in the South-East District reported that, in their jurisdiction, dial-a-doping was not directly connected to organised gangs. In that community, it was rather safe to engage in dial-a-doping because of this specific type of control. There was not a lot of control over specific jurisdictions or lines so just about anyone could get involved in dial-a-doping quite safely, in terms of needing to be affiliated with a gang or to receive a gang's permission to begin selling drugs.

RECRUITMENT

Participants reported that there were several common pathways to becoming a dial-a-doper. One theme was a family or friend connection. In this pathway, dial-a-dopers had criminal parents or a criminal sibling and were following in these people's footsteps. Otherwise, the dial-a-doper might have some other association to criminals or gangsters that got them started in selling drugs. There were slight variations of this pathway as some participants indicated that a dial-a-doper might get involved in selling drugs to pay off the drug debt of a parent, sibling, or friend. Other participants indicated that someone might be asked by a friend to help them to sell some drugs, then offer them a job, or ask them to drive around with them and, in time, the person might choose to become a dial-a-doper or be expected to work. In this way, a trusted friend might recruit someone to begin working by proposing dial-a-doping as a business opportunity that they could do together. As a particular example, several participants reported that there were groups of dial-a-dopers in British Columbia who were childhood friends, all knew each other, and decided to get into business together as dial-a-dopers.

Related to this idea, sometimes it is one's drug dealer who, after establishing a trusting relationship with a client, will recruit the user to become a dial-a-doper. The client might be told about how easy it was to make money selling drugs or how they could get their drugs for free by selling on the side. In this way, a steady client could become a dial-a-doper. Another pathway to dial-a-doping identified by participants was related to people knowing each other through legitimate employment and deciding to also sell drugs because they wanted the extra money or found it thrilling or exciting to do something illegal. Additionally, some participants indicated that there were people who got into dial-a-doping by getting injured at a legitimate job, having some time off, developing an addiction to pain killers, and, once their prescription expired, looked for alternative ways to get drugs. To supplement their income because they were off work, they got involved in dial-a-doping. Related to this pathway might be a high school or university student who had graduated and realized that they had not accomplished very much or did not do very well in school

and were a drug user. With few job prospects or an inability to keep a job, these individuals could be recruited into dial-a-doping.

As expected, the most common pathway to becoming a dial-a-doper was the need for money related to supporting a drug habit or addiction. Participants indicated that those who were addicted to drugs were particularly vulnerable to being exploited. And, once one got involved with a gang or an organised crime group, it was very difficult to get away from them or break that connection. In this way, vulnerable youth, such as those from broken homes, those with few friends or friends who were connected to a gang or a drug dealer in some way, or those with mental health or addiction issues were targeted by recruiters to become dial-a-dopers. Participants stated that a typical strategy was for drug dealers to hang out around high schools to identify and recruit troubled youth. Those who had a driver's licences were recruited to drive, while those who were younger were tasked with selling out of the passenger seat of a vehicle.

For the purposes of prevention, it is important to note that participants reported that another pathway to becoming a dial-a-doper was the attraction that some youth had for the gangster lifestyle, especially the desire for expensive cars and clothes, as well as the desire for women, status, power, and a sense of belonging. Participants felt that social media had played a role in recruiting young people into dial-a-doping. Recruiters post glamorizing images of the gangster lifestyle, such as posing with guns, money, or attractive women, suggesting that this was all the result of being part of a gang and highlighting the amount of money that one could earn over a short period of time selling drugs. Participants believed that this strategy appealed to both those people who were looking for a way to make money and those who were not necessarily in need of money but were interested in the alleged lifestyle associated with being a member of a gang or selling drugs. As one participant put it, recruitment to dial-a-doping focused on protection, profit, and power. Recruiters identified vulnerable people and offered them protection from others, the ability to have some control or power over others by being associated to a gang or organised crime group, and the ability to make money. The notion of protection, power, and profit was felt to be extremely appealing to many people, especially vulnerable youth.

When asked about the age range that people typically were recruited into dial-a-doping, the range was most commonly late teens to early 20's. The most common pattern was for someone in their teens to start selling cannabis and then progressing over time and experience to selling harder drugs. These youth may not know that they were working for a particular gang or organisation and may not even be seeking to join a gang but begin dial-a-doping for money, for companionship, or for protection. As mentioned above, for many recruiters, it was important that dial-a-dopers had a driver's licence and access to a vehicle, so it was common for recruiters to seek out those who were over the age of 16 years old. However, participants indicated that there were dial-a-dopers who were selling drugs using their bicycles in their neighbourhoods. As these youth got older and proved their abilities and reliability, they could move up in the gang and begin to take on more responsibility for drug dealing and distribution.

As mentioned above, some participants also indicated that there were dial-a-dopers who were recruited in their early to mid-20's. The profile reported for those in this age range included people who were still socially active and looking for a place to belong or group of people to associate with. These might be people who go to restaurants, bars, and clubs looking for companionship and saw

others living a more glamorous lifestyle and began to associate with those people. Over time, these people might be either forced into dial-a-doping or chose to become dial-a-dopers because they wanted to continue to associate with gang members and desired the things that those people had, such as money, clothes, cars, and women.

Somewhat different based on jurisdiction, there were slight variations in what recruits did when getting started in dial-a-doping. The most commonly mentioned process was that there was some 'training' where dealers would take the new recruit with them to teach them how to sell the drugs, how to keep accurate records of who owed what, how to organize their phones, and how to drive in ways that might avoid police detection. Once that was completed, the newest recruits would do minor hand-to-hand drug deals, deliver small quantities of drugs, meet with customers, be the lookout for the police, and answer the phone when customers called. In effect, there appeared to be a sort of trial period where new recruits were given rather minor tasks to determine whether they could be trusted with greater responsibilities. In the most basic terms, recruits would start as a driver or lookout, learn the 'tricks of the trade' from a more established dial-a-doper, and then become a seller. If not driving, this might start with the recruit being in the backseat of the vehicle to learn how the process worked and to serve as a lookout. Over time, the recruit would move to the front seat to handle the drugs and the money. Other times, a recruit might be required to store or house drugs for a dealer. This would then progress to transporting drugs and eventually selling drugs. Being successful at these 'entry level' positions could result in a recruit progressing to the point where they oversaw the SIM cards with all the information about contacts and clients, answering the drug phones, weighting and packaging the drugs for sale, and delivering the drugs to the client.

In terms of connecting a dial-a-doper with a drug user, the most frequently reported ways that dial-a-dopers communicated, marketed, and sold their drugs was through cell phones and social media where drugs were advertised. One reason why dial-a-doping was the predominate form of selling drugs was due to enhancements in technology. Mobile phones have become much more secure and accessible, facilitating the dial-a-doping trade. In some jurisdictions, such as the Lower Mainland and the Island districts, the preferred method of communication was texting, sometimes on encrypted devices or devices using encrypted text messaging applications, such as WhatsApp or Snap Chat. Participants indicated that cell phones might be erased once per day or more frequently to ensure that if the police seized a phone, there would be very limited information available on it. Participants also indicated that dial-a-dopers used burner phones or pay-as-you-go phones that were easily purchased and disposed of. One common method was to use call forwarding. In this approach, a customer would call a number, which would be the central line that could be connected to one of the dial-a-dopers. In this way, the dealers could change who was the dial-a-doper without having to change the physical phone or the drug line number. Word of mouth or handing out business cards with a phone number were other common ways to establish oneself as a dial-a-doper or to establish a new drug line; however, this appeared to occur mainly in the South-East District. Moreover, it was reported in the Island District that some dial-a-dopers used sex workers to advertise a drug line. While not all participants provided a timeline for establishing a client-base, one participant from the Island District indicated that it took about two months while another participant from the Lower Mainland District simply stated that it took a much longer time.

As mentioned above, providing free samples and being less selective in who one would sell drugs to was also reported as being quite common in the beginning, particularly in the South-East District. However, once established, a new client would have to be referred by someone to be able to purchase drugs. Several participants indicated that dial-a-dopers were less inclined to sell drugs to people they did not know once a drug line had been successfully established. While texting was reported as being the most common method, some dial-a-dopers would only sell to someone after hearing their voice over the phone to confirm their identity. In this way, some dial-a-dopers vetted new customers and only sold to people they knew or were referred by a trusted customer once the drug line had been established. Some dial-a-dopers also hung out in bars, clubs, restaurants, or near schools to distribute their drug line numbers for potential customers to call for drugs.

STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY AND PREVENT DIAL-A-DOPING AND DIAL-A-DOPERS

Participants were asked how they identified dial-a-dopers. While there were jurisdiction specific strategies and techniques, such as identifying youth who were getting into trouble at school selling drugs and determining who their associates were to see if there was any connection to dial-a-dopers or stopping vehicles in high crime areas that had someone constantly on the phone, driving slowly, and making frequent stops. However, there were also several ways that all participants used to identify or become aware of dial-a-dopers. One of these ways was through Crime Stoppers. While participants indicated that there were challenges associated with the use of Crime Stoppers, mainly that the police could not rely on the information obtained through this process because it was anonymous, nearly all participants indicated that Crime Stoppers information was helpful in beginning an investigation. Some participants implied that they were only able to manage a small proportion of the dial-a-doping activity in their jurisdiction. Several jurisdictions reported receiving many tips through Crime Stoppers; however, they were not able to investigate all tips, so participants reported that drug units would cherry pick the tips that seemed most viable, or they would target the dial-a-dopers or users who they were already were familiar with.

Many participants indicated that it was extremely helpful to talk with users or to use surveillance on users as this would identify who the user was buying their drugs from. Related to this, some participants indicated that they received a lot of useful information from patrol officers, talking to other criminals, following up on citizen complaints about people buying, selling, or using drugs, and by examining the phones of overdose victims. Several participants indicated that it was common that the last person an overdose victim called was their dial-a-doper. Other common strategies included engaging in surveillance of known drug houses or known local drug traffickers and their vehicles. In effect, having a good understanding of the drug trafficking areas in one's jurisdiction and patrolling these areas was viewed as a very effective strategy as it served to identify both the dial-a-dopers and their clients. Participants also spoke of the value of doing a lot of undercover operations focused on buying drugs to identify the dial-a-dopers and the vehicles associated with dial-a-dopers.

Of note, all participants reported on the value of confidential informants because of their ability to identify the drug line's phone numbers, act as references for the police to connect with dial-a-dopers, identify stash houses and higher-level drug dealers, and provide information about those involved in the drug trade and their associates. All participants discussed the contributions that

confidential informants made to assisting the police to target the right people and locations for surveillance or where to start their drug investigations. Importantly, some participants indicated that they also had very good relationships with local hospitals, other law enforcement agencies, local high schools, and landlords who would share information related to drug possession and trafficking that could assist in dial-a-doping investigations.

THE PREVENTION OF DIAL-A-DOPERS AND DIAL-A-DOPING

With a general understanding of how police identified dial-a-dopers, participants were asked how they attempted to prevent the recruitment of dial-a-dopers. As many of the participants were in enforcement roles, most participants indicated that they or their unit did nothing to prevent the recruitment of dial-a-dopers. Nonetheless, these participants were able to speak to some of the work that others in their police agency did. Moreover, some participants had a direct role in the prevention of dial-a-dopers. Like the work undertaken by CFSEU-BC's End Gang Life program, participants stated that the most used strategies were educational presentations to students in schools and traditional and social media campaigns.

Many participants indicated that their police agency's school liaison officers or youth squad members would be responsible for preventing young people from getting involved in dial-a-doping. The most common strategies used by these members involved school presentations or using the DARE program. The focus in these classroom presentations was on demystifying the gang lifestyle and educating students on the realities, risks, and dangers associated with drug use, the gang lifestyle, and dial-a-doping. It was interesting to note that, even with these efforts, many participants believed that it was extremely difficult to prevent some young people from deciding to become dial-a-dopers. Instead, participants believed that until a young person was arrested and had to face the consequences of an arrest, there was very little that the police could do to prevent the recruitment of dial-a-dopers. More than one participant stated that they did not think there was anything that the police could do to prevent someone from becoming a dial-a-doper. In this way, many participants believed that enforcement was a good deterrent and, while not the preferred method, was more successful than attempts at prevention.

In terms of media campaigns, participants reported that it was important to get the message to the community that dial-a-dopers were not welcome, that dial-a-dopers would be arrested, and to educate the community on the realities of drug use and drug dealing. Some participants emphasized the importance of working with local community groups to disseminate information about the risks and dangers associated with dial-a-doping in the hopes that this might encourage young people to make the decision to not become a dial-a-doper.

Similarly, when asked for the strategies that participants used to prevent dial-a-doping many of the same themes emerged and most participants were quite discouraged about the police's ability to prevent dial-a-doping. Participants reiterated that enforcement strategies, being visible and active in the community, and disrupting or interfering directly with dial-a-dopers, such as preventing meetings between dial-a-dopers and their customers, were the most effective approaches. Again, the main theme was that the police were not doing much to significantly prevent dial-a-doping. Instead, they were enforcing the law under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and targeting

drug trafficking. While a clear goal was to prevent violence in the community, most participants indicated that they posed an inconvenience to dial-a-dopers and that even when they were successful at bringing down a drug line, it would be re-established rather quickly. In effect, using undercover operations, the police were able to infiltrate the dial-a-dope lines with their own undercover operatives, but participants recognised that this did not prevent dial-a-doping but contributed to the police's ability to then use enforcement actions against a gang or criminal organisation that was dial-a-doping.

THE POLICE RESPONSE TO DIAL-A-DOPING AND DIAL-A-DOPERS

While participants were not encouraged by their efforts and successes in preventing dial-a-doping, in terms of disrupting dial-a-dopers, participants spoke of using the *Motor Vehicle Act* and searching cars that they were able to stop because the vehicle was in ill-repair or due to some observed driving violation. Participants also spoke of using the *Liquor Control Act* as a way of making life somewhat uncomfortable for dial-a-dopers. Still, most participants expressed the reality that when they arrested someone for dial-a-doping, someone else would almost immediately take their place. They were also very aware that it was impossible to shut down every dial-a-dope operation if there continued to be demand for the commodity in the community. This led some participants to state that the only way to truly stop dial-a-doping was for people to stop buying drugs from dial-a-dopers. In the absence of that, participants felt that making it as difficult as possible for dial-a-dopers to operate and live in the community was a useful strategy. Along those lines, participants spoke of programs, such as Inadmissible Patrons Programs like Bar Watch and Restaurant Watch, as effective in restricting the freedom of dial-a-dopers to enjoy themselves. Other strategies that were reported as successful by participants included increasing their presence around problem residences, taking away dial-a-dopers' driver's licences, and targeting known drug traffickers with enforcement actions. On this last point, it was felt that lower-level dial-a-dopers were easy to replace, but if the police were more successful at arresting higher-level members, these people were harder to replace and would disrupt the ability of dial-a-dopers to function to a greater degree.

Of note, one area where there was a lot of agreement among participants had to do with civil and criminal forfeiture. While participants felt that it was more challenging to be successful with a request for a criminal forfeiture, as the threshold was much higher, many participants reported that seizing assets and restraining drug lines were very effective because it hurt dial-a-dopers' ability to sell their drugs and make money. Taking away dial-a-dopers' vehicles was seen as very effective as was seizing dial-a-dopers' money, phones, and drugs. In effect, the main strategy was enforcement, and, from an enforcement perspective, the main approaches were obtaining search warrants, undertaking surveillance, developing and nurturing confidential informants, obtaining arrest warrants, and seizing property. Even so, some participants were aware that there were criminal organisations and gangs that were strong enough to work around the effects of one or more drug line being disrupted or taken down. Even so, participants consistently argued that enforcement was really the only effective strategy. As mentioned above, many participants indicated that the issue of dial-a-doping was really a community issue around an acceptance or tolerance of drug use and the basic principle of supply and demand. The notion was that as long as people were interested in

using illegal drugs, there would be dial-a-dopers. Participants felt that the police could make it more difficult for dial-a-dopers and for customers to purchase illegal drugs through stiffer criminal sanctions and holding people in custody overnight and for longer periods of time; however, those options no longer existed. As such, many participants felt that there was little deterrence associated with engaging in dial-a-doping.

In terms of strategies to intervene directly with dial-a-dopers, much of what has been discussed above was reiterated by participants. In effect, the two main themes were enforcement and non-enforcement interventions. While some participants spoke of strategies to disrupt dial-a-doping or to assist dial-a-dopers to exit their criminal lifestyle, most participants viewed intervention as just another word for enforcement. As such, with respect to enforcement as a method of intervention, surveillance was identified by many participants as their most used strategy. Surveillance was used to observe drug deals, to provide reasonable grounds for a drug trafficking charge or an arrest, or to connect dial-a-dopers to others in the gang or criminal organisation. In this way, participants spoke of seizing drugs, money, and vehicles, targeting specific dial-a-dopers, or disrupting certain drug lines as other common strategies to directly intervene with dial-a-dopers. It was interesting to note that some participants indicated that their strategies focused on trying to identify the drug lines operating in their jurisdictions because of their view that dial-a-doping was the method of business used by gangs or organised crime and the focus of their police agency was on the business of drug production, distribution, and trafficking. Other participants indicated that they focused on identifying and intervening with the dial-a-dopers and spending fewer resources on trying to identify and take down the drug lines.

In terms of other forms of interventions, some participants indicated that their investigators liaised with CFSEU-BC to connect dial-a-dopers with CFSEU-BC's initiatives and their 'End Gang Life' program, while other participants identified other gang intervention programs, such as the City of Surrey's WRAP program. A common comment was that there was so much money that could be made by dial-a-dopers in a short period of time that it was very difficult to intervene in a non-criminal sanction way with dial-a-dopers. Given this, several participants felt that education and other efforts at prevention before someone began dial-a-doping were more likely to be successful than non-enforcement intervention strategies with those already engaged in dial-a-doping.

As a result, and likely due to the specific units or teams that participants worked on, most participants felt that enforcement was not only the main strategy they were engaged in but also the most likely strategy to have success with dial-a-dopers. To have the greatest possible impact, some participants reported focussing their efforts on those dial-a-dopers who were part of the provincial Tactical Enforcement Priority list (PTEP), as well as those who aligned with the jurisdiction's gang conflict priorities or who were engaged in acts of violence. Regardless of who the police selected to focus on, participants frequently reported that their efforts to intervene with dial-a-dopers were severely hampered by the lack of resources available to them to investigate and intercede with dial-a-dopers. Being under-resourced was the main complaint of many participants. In fact, all but two participants reported that there were not enough people in their units or in their police agency to adequately respond to and suppress dial-a-doping. In addition to the lack of officers dedicated to drug enforcement and surveillance, most participants indicated that there were an insufficient number of civilian or non-sworn members in the units or the police agency who could assist with all

the administrative tasks associated with drug investigations. Similarly, as mentioned above, the **lack of dedicated analysts attached to drug units** was mentioned by several participants, particularly in the Island and South-East Districts. Additional concerns were related to the timelines established in *R. v. Jordan* and the disclosure requirements set out in *R. v. Stinchcombe* and other judicial decisions (for more information about these issues, please see “An Examination of the Impact of Court Rulings on Police Investigation Time and Resources” by Cohen et al., 2021). For example, in addition to the time and resources related to complying with all disclosure requirements, some participants were concerned that *R. v. Jordan* contributed to a situation where a police officer might catch a dial-a-doper, but it might take two years before that individual appeared in court. As a result of *R. v. Jordan*, the concern was that the dial-a-doper was in the community without any conditions, which frequently resulted in them continuing to sell drugs. There was also the concern that the outcome of the criminal process would not serve as a deterrent to future dial-a-doping.

Of note, several participants suggested that simply adding resources to police enforcement approaches would not necessarily have the intended effect of substantially reducing the volume of dial-a-doping and the number of people involved in dealing drugs. One participant provided the following scenario to demonstrate the point mentioned by several participants. If, for example, there were 150 dial-a-dope lines in a jurisdiction and the police had the necessary resources to effectively target 20 of them and four of these lines involved substantial enforcement efforts, would doubling the number of lines targeted have the effect of reducing the volume of dial-a-doping in the jurisdiction? The participant’s experience was that the void left because of police intervention would quickly be filled and the increased number of dial-a-dopers who would be arrested by the police would require an increase in the number of Crown Prosecutors, additional court rooms, and more judges. There would also be the accompanying substantial increase in the demand for drug labs to analyse the drugs seized, and crime labs to download and assess the information on seized cell phone. The police would also require more members with experience in writing warrants and production orders. In effect, some participants recognized that **simply increasing the capacity of a drug unit to investigate dial-a-dopers by increasing the size of the drug teams and the surveillance teams would not necessarily have the intended outcome if other aspects of the police agency and the criminal justice system were not also adequately staffed and resourced.**

So, while **adding police officers was the main theme identified by participants when asked how to potentially increase the police’s capacity to effectively respond to dial-a-dopers**, participants also saw a need to address the court process and the effects of judicial decisions and case law. Moreover, participants had several other thoughts or recommendations related to making the police more effective against dial-a-dopers. Several participants stated that **their teams required a greater number of vehicles**. There was a concern that the vehicles used by the surveillance and drug teams were easily identified by dial-a-dopers, so having the capacity to rotate vehicles would be beneficial. **Funding for better and more modern equipment**, such as the tracking devices used on the vehicles of dial-a-dopers, was also suggested. It was interesting to note that one participant suggested that decriminalizing all drugs, like the approach taken in some European countries, would be a possible way of responding to dial-a-doping, while other participants took the opposite approach and felt that harsher sanctions and a judiciary that took

drug offences much more seriously was required. Participants who expressed the latter view argued that the sentences handed down to convicted dial-a-dopers sent the message that dial-a-doping was not a priority or of great concern to the criminal justice system. Not only might this influence the level of resourcing for the police to combat dial-a-doping, but some participants felt that this type of messaging counteracted the messages forwarded by law enforcement and other organisations and groups that dial-a-doping would result in the offender serving time in prison or ending up dead. One participant highlighted the concern that the much lighter sanctions that young persons who were dial-a-doping received encouraged drug dealers to recruit youth. In effect, it was felt that making the sanctions for dial-a-doping also harsher in the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* might serve as a greater deterrent for youth getting involved in dial-a-doping.

With respect to possible strategies or approaches to address dial-a-doping and dial-a-dopers that the police were not actively engaged in, participants provided several ideas. Some participants recognized that if there was a demand for drugs, there would be dial-a-doping. Given this, some participants reemphasized the need to focus on education and prevention strategies that both included the police and those that could occur without the direct support or participation of the police. Again, the emphasis was placed on more community outreach and educating youth about the risks and dangers associated with drug use and dial-a-doping. Several participants highlighted that safe injection sites and other similar locations were hubs of dial-a-doping. In this way, participants wished that these locations would feel more comfortable reporting trafficking in their area to the police.

Other participants focussed on a perceived gap in enforcement efforts. While participants stressed the importance of targeting dial-a-dopers, some emphasized the need to target those in greater positions of power in the gang or organised crime group without compromising the ability to maintain pressure on the dial-a-dopers themselves. Others believed that there was an ability for federal police officers to target those higher up in the gang or organisation and that detachment-level drug units could be effective against lower-level targets, such as the dial-a-dopers. However, this approach resulted in little focus or attention being paid to the mid-level criminals. There was a group of drug offenders that were key to the successful operation of the enterprise, but these offenders were 'too small' for the federal officers and 'too big' for the street-level police officers. In other words, there was a growing desire among participants to have the ability to also target the drug suppliers, in addition to the dial-a-dopers.

Related to the aforementioned issue of human, technological, and financial resources related to investigating and disrupting dial-a-doping, some participants indicated that their limited resources resulted in them not being able to investigate multiple dealers at the same time. This was also connected to disclosure requirements and the resources that would be required to complete multiple disclosure packages concurrently. It was also felt that there was a limit to the number of confidential informants that officers could oversee, which, as discussed above, was felt to be a critical component of a successful drug investigation. It was suggested that the police keep databases with intelligence from confidential informants, such as the names of new players or drug lines, or records of who was active and who was not, but participants noted that, even once they made an arrest, because they could not have charges recommended right away because disclosure requirements, arresting a dial-a-doper did not necessarily disrupt their dial-a-doping activities.

Again, the court process and the increased demands and time it took to write and receive warrants related to drug files was also reported as hindering the ability of the police to intervene with dial-a-dopers or to disrupt dial-a-doping. As such, participants argued for the need to work with the judiciary to ensure that policies and procedural law reflected, in some way, the demands and processes of drug investigations and that court-imposed conditions and sentences provided some degree of deterrence and public safety.

One specific request was for the **creation of a phone number database that could be accessed by officers in any jurisdiction that could identify people related to a particular phone number**. The notion was that when a phone was seized and searched, all the phone numbers could be downloaded and stored in a searchable database that police could use for investigative purposes. While there are likely to be several technological and legal challenges associated with this type of database, the participant who suggested this approach felt that it would be useful in establishing the social and professional associations between people that would help in identifying dial-a-dope drug lines, dial-a-dopers, and their associations to gangs and organised crime groups. In effect, participants were asking for the police to have easier access to subscribers and owners of certain phone lines who were known to be associated with dial-a-dopers. In a somewhat related way, a small number of participants from smaller jurisdictions suggested that there would be value in creating a regional unit that focused exclusively on dial-a-doping. Developing a regional unit with this expertise and focus might contribute to a smoother court process and an ability to respond to drug offenders who were becoming more sophisticated in their methods.

THE EFFECTS OF DIAL-A-DOPING

While there was a clear understanding that dial-a-doping had negative effects on the dealer, the customer, and the community, when asked to discuss other offences or social problems that participants felt were the result of dial-a-doping, several important themes emerged. The connection between dial-a-doping and crime was expressed by all participants. The links articulated by participants between dial-a-doping and crime were that a substantial number of acquisition-type offences, such as property crime, theft from vehicles, theft of vehicles, and break and enter of businesses and residents, were the result of people needing money to support their drug addiction and to pay off their debts to dial-a-dopers. Moreover, participants felt that a proportion of the assaults, kidnapping, unlawful confinement, shootings, and murders in their jurisdictions were associated with dial-a-doping. Threats of violence using real or imitation firearms, as well as intimidation, was also reported as being connected to dial-a-doping. Given the ways in which dial-a-doping operated, some participants suggested that many incidents of dangerous driving, unlicensed drivers, prohibited drivers, which posed a threat to public safety, related to dial-a-doping.

Many participants also made the link between dial-a-doping and a range of social problems in the community. For example, some participants reported that dial-a-doping contributed to drug addiction, which was connected to mental health issues and homelessness. More than one participant indicated that public spaces were being used by drug addicts, such as public bathrooms, public libraries, alleys, and parks, with drug paraphernalia being left on site, who were being served

by dial-a-dopers. In effect, the notion was that there was a growing number of people who were self-medicating and became addicted to drugs, or were suffering from childhood or adult traumas, while others were survivors of sexual or physical abuse, or had struggles with employment or education that contributed to their reliance on drugs. Regardless, dial-a-doping was viewed as a delivery system for all that harm. In other words, in general, many participants held the view that dial-a-doping contributed to addiction issues that, in turn, contributed to homelessness, mental health issues, risk of victimizing others and being the victim of crime, unemployment, and overdoses.

PARTICIPANTS' FINAL THOUGHTS

In general terms, participants felt that it was very difficult to prevent dial-a-doping. This attitude was not presented as a criticism of the tools that participants had access to, their abilities or successes in partnering with other agencies, the level of support that participants received from their police agency's senior management, the diversity of experience and backgrounds in their drug investigation teams, or their ability to work with undercover or surveillance units. Instead, it was based on the availability of drugs in the community, the desire of a segment of the population to purchase illicit drugs or to buy certain types of drugs cheaper than what could be acquired legally, and the ease and amount of money that could be earned through dial-a-doping. In other words, while dial-a-doping was distilled by many participants as supply and demand, others believed that drug use and dial-a-doping were not perceived as big problems in many communities. Other participants focused on the sentences that youth received in relation to dial-a-doping and believed that the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* was too lenient with youth convicted of drug offences, which sent the wrong message to young people about the seriousness of dial-a-doping and drug use.

Some participants also believed that there was a contradiction between what police and the criminal justice system was messaging to the public about dial-a-doping and drug use and what other government agencies were stating. As an example, one participant was concerned that Fraser Health was encouraging safe drug use rather than abstinence from drug use. While there was some recognition that safe drug use was a political statement, there was some concern raised by one participant that money was being spent on police enforcement measure against drug users and dial-a-dopers at the same time as money was being spent on testing street drugs to ensure that they were safe and that users had a safe space to use illicit drugs. Some participants felt that increasing youth initiatives, such as identifying and developing strong adult and peer role models that protected youth from being recruited by gangs, was a useful approach. It was noted by several participants that many communities already had programs designed to link at-risk youth to positive role models, but some participants believed that more effort, both from the police and the community, was needed in this area. Regardless of the specific approach taken, there was some degree of consensus that not engaging more effectively with youth in ways that prevented them from getting involved with dial-a-doping was creating the next general of drug traffickers and gang leaders.

The final main theme was about the challenges associated with investigating and prosecuting dial-a-dopers. Again, limited resources were recognized as a substantial hinderance, but there was also

a common belief that the requirements associated with judicial decisions was making the entire enterprise challenging. For example, several participants mentioned that investigations took much too long and that it took even longer to prepare a case for Crown prosecutors. And, while *R. v. Jordan* was designed to reduce the amount of time between arrest and prosecution, from the perspective of participants, *R. v. Jordan* simply shifted the length of time from investigation to arrest. In other words, prior to *R. v. Jordan* officers would do a quick investigation, provide some information to the Crown prosecutor, who would charge and either have the suspect in remand or under conditions. However, because of *R. v. Jordan*, the investigative process needed to be fully complete before Crown prosecutors would charge an offender. Moreover, disclosure and other judicial decisions extended the complexity and amount of time it took to complete an investigation. Given this, some participants indicated that files that would have been closed in a matter of months prior to *R. v. Jordan* and *R. v. Stinchcombe*, for example, now took one year or longer to complete. Moreover, once cases came to court, some participants felt that the outcome, particularly the sanctions, were so weak that they served no public safety or deterrent effect. Participants felt that, for the most part, **the criminal justice system's response to dial-a-doping did little to dissuade a person from becoming a dial-a-doper.**

In conclusion, participants did not see the issue of dial-a-doping going away anytime soon, given the constant and consistent demand for drugs, the ease with which new drug lines could be set up and new dial-a-dopers moved into place to take over from those who had been arrested, the lengthy and complex investigations into dial-a-doping, and the lack of timely or meaningful sanctions from the criminal justice system. There was also no lack of people who owed money to a gang or organised crime group who could be recruited into dial-a-doping. Particularly if the economy was struggling, gangs and organised crime groups found no shortage of people willing to step into the drug trade and take on the role of a dial-a-doper. Arrests of dial-a-dopers or shutting down a line would only result in short-term disruptions to dial-a-doping operations. Legalization of cannabis was not perceived as having had an impact on the dial-a-doping trade, though future research should explore the effects of the possible pending decriminalization of small amounts of 'hard' drugs. While a few participants perceived that dial-a-doping had increased in their communities, most felt that there was a consistently high level of this occurring. However, what has changed were the number of people dying from drug use/overdoses, and the length of time it took the police to investigate and conclude a file, due to enhancements in technology and disclosure requirements as set by the courts.

Further, one participant suggested that due to disclosure practices, they felt that gangs were learning just as much about police operations and anti-dial-a-doping strategies as police were learning about dial-a-doping, so gangs and organised crime groups were constantly evolving methods to adapt to police enforcement and intervention strategies. A major contributing issue was technology, particularly given that police tended to be slower to adopt new technologies whereas gangs and organised crime had the ability to be much more flexible and nimbler. Technology was also used by dial-a-dopers to counter police enforcement strategies.

Recommendations

This report identified the process of dial-a-doping, the profiles of dial-a-dopers, and some of the main challenges facing law enforcement and communities when it comes to drug dealing and drug dealers. The interviews with police officers who had direct experience with dial-a-doping identified that enforcement was the main approach taken, rather than focusing on prevention. Still, there are several recommendations that would strengthen the role of the police in addressing dial-a-doping in their jurisdictions. While there were several suggestions or recommendations highlighted throughout the report, this section focuses on a few key recommendations.

THE POLICE AGENCY'S DRUG UNIT SIZE, STRUCTURE, OR MANDATE

There are a variety of ways that drug units or teams may consider adjusting their approach to investigating dial-a-doping in their jurisdiction. Rather than recommending a one-size-fits-all approach or solution, the tactics, strategies, and practices adopted by any particular drug unit will vary according to the size and scope of the problem in their policing jurisdiction and the level and distribution of resources that the police agency has to allocate to drug dealing and drug dealers relative to other issues in the jurisdiction. Still, there are three general options that are recommended here for consideration.

Option 1: Increasing Drug Unit Size, Structure, and Mandate

One option for some jurisdictions to consider is to enhance the current size, structure, and mandate of their drug unit or teams. This may make sense in communities where there are many simultaneous drug lines operating. Increasing the number of human and technological resources would support members in addressing more drug lines or the most active lines, as well as having the necessary resources dedicated to the time and skills required to write Section 6 applications, search warrants, production orders, and Section 490 orders. Having members on the team who have had the opportunity to receive specialized training to serve as the affiant, and regularly involving the Legal Application Support Team in this work should increase the number of applications a drug unit can make. This will enable the unit to focus on a greater proportion of the drug lines operating in their community. In addition, a greater integration of dedication crime and intelligence analysts would better direct and support the work of the drug teams. Given the increasing proliferation of encrypted technologies and drug dealing on social media, having investigators with social media training and digital technology training as a central part of the team and expanding the drug unit's mandate to include more of these off-street investigations, such as dial-a-doper markets, social media drug markets, and cryptomarkets, may enable police to identify, target, and disrupt ever expanding drug dealing networks. Finally, including more civilianized positions to take on some of the administrative workload, such as digital evidence transcription or preparing documents for disclosure, would support the drug unit members in being able to use their time and investigative skills more effectively. In sum, rather than just increasing the number of sworn members assigned to the drug unit, increasing the human resources and technological resources related to all aspects of drug enforcement, intervention, and prevention, including civilian members, analysts, and appropriate levels of specialised training is recommended for those

police agencies facing a large number of dial-a-dope lines and a more explicit connection between dial-a-doping and organised crime groups.

Option 2: Decreasing the Drug Unit Size, Structure, and Mandate

While some policing agencies in the current study were reportedly able to investigate only a small proportion of the dial-a-doper lines in their community, others reported having far fewer dial-a-dopers residing and operating in their jurisdiction. For some drug units, particularly in jurisdictions where dial-a-dopers were more temporary, reducing the size of the unit or shifting the structure and mandate to focus on a broader array of drug related concerns may be more beneficial and effective. For example, in some jurisdictions, dial-a-dopers were more ‘professional’ or organised, acting as part of a sophisticated criminal network, some participants reported that their jurisdiction’s dial-a-dopers were typically drug users as well as sellers of the product. In these types of jurisdictions, combining the drug unit with teams or units focusing on prolific offenders may result in a more effective deployment of resources.

Decreasing the size or shifting the structure of mandate of drug units may also be a reasonable decision for some jurisdictions should the current proposal to decriminalise a far wider array of currently illicit substances be approved by the federal government. In an effort to remove the stigmatising effects of drug use and reduce the rate of fatal overdoses, the province of British Columbia recently submitted a proposal to Health Canada to decriminalise possession of small amounts of illicit substances, including opioids, cocaine, and methamphetamine; the three main drugs that, according to participants, were being disseminated by dial-a-dopers.¹⁰ Although some drug user advocates have criticized the proposal for decriminalisation only up to 4.5 grams per person (Ghoussoub, 2021), the results of the current study suggested that this amount would be appropriate given that per client, dial-a-dopers tended to carry and sell between one-half gram to around 3.5 grams. Decriminalising this amount should result in disruptions to the dial-a-doping method of dissemination, similar to how participants in the current study suggested that legalisation had affected street-level dealing of cannabis. Consequently, drug units may need to shift their mandate, perhaps to work more closely with agencies at the middle or high level that are targeting the higher-level trafficking of illicit substances.

Option 3: Adopting a Regional Approach

The structure of municipal policing is such that the detachments and municipal agencies operate their own drug units although, at the mid-level (CFSEU-BC) and national level (FSOC), there are cross-jurisdictional units. However, there may be a few reasons why some of the drug units at the municipal level may consider forming regional teams. As explained by the participants in the current study, virtually every participating jurisdiction reported dial-a-drug lines that could be connected in one way or another back to organised crime. There were some consistently identified criminal groups who were implicated in this role. These groups were often traced back to the

¹⁰ The submission can be accessed at <https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/DecrimSubmission.pdf>

Lower Mainland, where their main operations may be housed. The organised crime groups would send dial-a-dopers out to different communities for a couple of weeks to run their line, after which they would pull them back and then switch them to a new jurisdiction and a new line where the police in that area may be less familiar with them and, therefore, less likely to detect them. Given this, regional teams may be in a better position to address the redeployment of dial-a-dopers as they cross from one jurisdiction to the next. Regional teams would also result in greater access to a wider range of resources, primarily covert vehicles that could be used across a wider range of communities where dial-a-doping is occurring.

An alternative that supports a regional approach while maintaining the community-specific focus of drug units is to ensure that all policing districts participate in regional meetings. It might be worthwhile to formalise regional meetings where a few members per drug unit, including an analyst whenever possible, meet with nearby detachments or municipal police departments quarterly or twice per year to discuss their dial-a-doper populations. These discussions should focus on the profiles of dial-a-dopers, their drug lines, and connections to gangs or organised crime groups that they are dealing with, the enforcement, interdiction, and intervention strategies they are currently using, best practices, how much displacement or cross-jurisdictional drug dealing is occurring and what are the effects of this displacement, and any cross-jurisdictional strategies that they may consider implementing for dial-a-dopers who are known to cross police jurisdictional boundaries.

EARLY INTERVENTION IS CRITICAL – BUT NOT BY DRUG UNITS

As discussed in the literature review, many young gang members reportedly found their way into gang membership through recruitment into dial-a-doping, starting out as runners or stash operators and working their way up through the organisation. This may be due to the influence of their peers or family, and it may be motivated by the desire for status, respect, protection, or profit. Young dial-a-dopers may appeal to criminal organisations due to their clean driving and criminal records, their willingness to take risks, and the low likelihood of receiving serious sanctions from the youth criminal justice system if caught and prosecuted. Given the issues British Columbia has been experiencing over the past few decades because of the proliferation of street gangs and organised crime, and the periodic bouts of extreme violence that poses a threat to public safety, it is critical that more investments be dedicated to early prevention and intervention strategies that deter youth from seeing drug dealing or the gang lifestyle as an appealing prospect. However, this needs to be done at the family, school, and community level. Prevention and intervention were not part of the mandate of the drug units participating in this study, nor should they be. Drug unit investigators should be aware of and able to connect youth and adults in conflict with the law with youth officers, community groups and organisations, and police programs, such as the End Gang Life and Gang Exiting Programs operated by CFSEU-BC. However, their skill sets are in surveilling, establishing and supporting confidential informant networks, and otherwise investigating trafficking-related crimes, and they should not be redirected from their drug enforcement mandate to focus on prevention, even if illicit substances are decriminalised for the purpose of personal use. Rather, drug units should maintain a focus on enforcement.

Given the common refrain from participants that dial-a-doping is a supply and demand phenomena, there is a role for police to work with communities, including schools and people who are more commonly targeted by gang recruiters. However, given the age that most people get involved in dial-a-doping, and the typical demographic, social, economic, and psychological profiles of dial-a-dopers, this responsibility is better suited to youth officers, school liaison officers, and gang outreach officers rather than drug team members.

ADAPT ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIES TO TARGET HIGHER-LEVEL TRAFFICKERS

Drug unit members identified that the only strategy they found to be successful were enforcement-based strategies. This might include hot spot policing to disrupt the open-air dealing of illicit drugs, taking down identified crack shacks, or infiltrating networks and arresting dealers who are caught in the act of distributing drugs. However, as summarised by Osterberg (2020), police cannot arrest their way out of this issue. Further, enforcement strategies were recognised both in the current study and previous literature as only temporarily disrupting and displacing drug trafficking. However, in conjunction with the first recommendation above, drug unit members may be able to more effectively focus on building more serious cases against higher-level drug traffickers by focusing their attention on further developing their confidential informant network, conducting more surveillance/wiretapping, infiltrating more social media-based drug markets, and providing enhanced training to members to support writing more applications for search warrants and production orders and conducting more serious drug investigations. While beyond the mandate of police, dedicating more specialized Crown Counsel together with these enforcement strategies might result in the development of more complex cases targeting higher-level gang/organised crime members to put forward for charge approval and prosecution, which may consequently have more of an impact on the cost of doing business for organised crime groups in British Columbia.

Conclusion

Given advancements in technology and the spread and networking of organised gangs in British Columbia, this study's results indicated that the dissemination of illicit drugs in the participating British Columbian police jurisdictions primarily occurred through supply chains originating from organised criminal groups with representation across all policing districts in the province. These networks reach down to the street level through dial-a-dopers, who take orders and disseminate drugs to users through a pizza delivery style system. Dial-a-dopers may be directly or indirectly connected to street gangs and organised crime, though it appeared that few operations in British Columbia operated independently of organised crime. Thus, one major difference identified in this study compared to prior research on dial-a-doping was the substantial level of involvement of organised crime in dial-a-doping in British Columbia. For instance, Søgaaard et al.'s (2019) study specifically identified that the spread of dial-a-doping in Denmark had enabled independent dealers to establish themselves as part of the drug dealing network. While they may partner with other dial-a-dopers from time to time, they generally operated small networks with one to two phone operators and a small number of runners. In contrast, the current study's results implicated a strong role for organised crime in virtually every jurisdiction under study. The involvement of

organised crime in dial-a-doping operations appeared to be associated with an increased level of sophistication in the dial-a-doping operations, as these criminal groups were often highly organised, willing to collaborate with each other to facilitate the importation and distribution of drugs across the province, skilled at using encrypted technologies, and flush with resources that enabled them to shut down and set up new lines to avoid detection. Consequently, the drug enforcement strategies that police drug units were required to use to infiltrate and enforce against dial-a-doping operations must likewise become more sophisticated. However, to this extent, as reported in a study examining the impact of court rulings on police investigations (Cohen et al., 2021), it appeared as though many police drug units were finding it increasingly challenging to successfully investigate and successfully obtain charges against dial-a-dope operators. This was due to the increased legal requirements associated with disclosure and the significant difficulties related to cracking and receiving digital evidence from encrypted mobile phones in a reasonable amount of time.

The era of open drug markets and ‘crack houses’ in British Columbia appears to be over, with the new drug markets consisting of dial-a-doping over cell phone messaging or social media apps. The shift in drug dealing, therefore, requires police to adapt their enforcement and interdiction strategies accordingly. Consequently, drug unit dial-a-dope counter-operations appeared to primarily focus on shutting down dial-a-dope lines using confidential informants to identify and get connected to lines. However, these strategies appeared to result in only short-term suppression, as dialers, for the most part, were able to shift to new lines or become replaced by a new dial-a-doper relatively quickly and easily, with little overall negative implications or effects on the operations of the street gang/organised criminal group. Furthermore, the difficulties with obtaining a search warrant, wiretap, or production order and then successfully ‘cracking’ the encrypted phone have resulted in police relying less often on this investigative tactic, particularly when the dial-a-doper was relatively low level or caught with only a small amount of drugs. This was also combined with the police believing that the likelihood of charge approval was low and, even in the case of a conviction, the sentence would do little to deter further dial-a-doping (e.g., Greer et al., 2022).

The findings of this study suggested that drug unit members were primarily working under an enforcement-mandate, but some participants recognized the value and importance of early intervention and prevention efforts. Given that dial-a-dopers were often youth or young adults who were attempting to display their potential worth to a gang, developing and implementing British Columbia-specific strategies to deter youth from joining gangs must continue to be prioritized as a central strategy for the province. A second central strategy must be the continued efforts to disrupt the trafficking of illicit drugs at the organised crime level; however, this strategy was also outside the jurisdiction of participating drug unit members. The third central strategy should be the continued movement towards decriminalization of illicit drugs. Drug unit members in the current study observed that following decriminalization of cannabis, they saw a substantial decline in the dissemination of cannabis through dial-a-doping lines. Consequently, should some of the other illicit drugs currently distributed through dial-a-doping lines also be decriminalized and regulated by the province, a similar effect might be expected from both organised crime and dial-a-doping operations. This would then enable drug unit operations to support the work of organisations like the CFSEU-BC and FSOC to disrupt the higher-end trafficking of drugs and criminal networks.

Regardless of the specific target population of dial-a-dopers that each drug unit decides to focus on and their varying threshold for enforcement, interdiction, and intervention, identifying the dial-a-dopers that drug unit members or teams are going to target, providing additional training on conducting drug investigations, Section 6 applications, search warrants, production orders, and Section 490 orders, being comfortable with and understanding the latest technologies used by dial-a-dopers, being familiar with all current judicial decisions that affect drug investigations, supporting drug units and personnel to stay on their mandate, providing access to timely information and intelligence through crime analysts, and emphasizing the values of interagency partnerships should increase the success that the police have in responding to and preventing dial-a-doping. Addressing the demand for drugs and the recruitment of young people by gangs and organised crime groups must remain a priority of the government, agencies of public safety, and communities; however, this responsibility should not be owned exclusively by the police or be the primary mandate, focus, or responsibility of police detachment or department drug team members.

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Appendix A

TABLE 20: DRUG OFFENCE CHARGES IN BC AND DISTRICTS, 2013-2020

Drug Offence Charge	BC		LMD		South-East		North		Island	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Cannabis/Resin	17,826	12.1	12,248	18.3	1,848	5.7	982	5.9	1,275	6.5
Cannabis Involving Youth	192	0.1	60	0.1	35	0.1	40	0.2	44	0.2
Cannabis Involving Adult	11	0.0	3	0.0	3	0.0	2	0.0	2	0.0
Cannabis Under	52,452	35.5	21,914	32.8	11,374	35.0	6,044	36.2	6,978	35.6
Cannabis Over	3,309	2.2	1,205	1.8	816	2.5	264	1.6	451	2.3
Cannabis Over Youth	329	0.2	139	0.2	66	0.2	33	0.2	74	0.4
Cannabis Over Adult	416	0.3	238	0.4	56	0.2	17	0.1	54	0.3
Cocaine	19,714	13.4	8,295	12.4	4,607	14.2	3,662	21.9	2,041	10.4
Heroin	8,796	6.0	4,061	6.1	2,280	7.0	995	6.0	1,207	6.2
Methamphetamine	14,771	10.0	6,021	9.0	4,369	13.4	1,935	11.6	1,911	9.8
Fentanyl	5,010	3.4	1,894	2.8	1,659	5.1	382	2.3	755	3.9
Anabolic Steroid	690	0.5	667	1.0	7	0.0	2	0.0	7	0.0
LSD (Acid)	229	0.2	78	0.1	88	0.3	14	0.1	15	0.1
MDA/MDMA (Ecstasy)	991	0.7	521	0.8	270	0.8	42	0.3	89	0.5
Methadone	190	0.1	88	0.1	46	0.1	19	0.1	25	0.1
Morphine	229	0.2	51	0.1	86	0.3	38	0.2	37	0.2
Opium	262	0.2	240	0.4	6	0.0	3	0.0	6	0.0
Other Schedule I	11,893	8.1	4,593	6.9	2,965	9.1	1,028	6.2	2,799	14.3
Other Schedule III	1,630	1.1	651	1.0	345	1.1	158	0.9	338	1.7
Other Schedule IV	736	0.5	668	1.0	22	0.1	7	0.0	20	0.1
Other Schedule V	4	0.0	3	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other Schedule VI	22	0.0	19	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.0
Other CDSA	2,263	1.5	1,064	1.6	326	1.0	332	2.0	356	1.8
Psilocybin (Mushrooms)	587	0.4	183	0.3	190	0.6	48	0.3	66	0.3
PCP (Angel Dust)	14	0.0	6	0.0	5	0.0	2	0.0	1	0.0
Amphetamine	130	0.1	36	0.1	28	0.1	25	0.1	29	0.1
Unknown	4,971	3.4	1,849	2.8	1,031	3.2	617	3.7	997	5.1
Totals	147,667		66,795		32,528		16,691		19,579	

Appendix B

TABLE 21: TRAFFICKING – DRUG OFFENCE CHARGES IN BC AND DISTRICTS, 2013-2020

Drug Offence Charge	BC		LMD		South-East		North		Island	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Cannabis/Resin	27	0.4	17	0.6	3	0.2	1	3	3	0.4
Cannabis Under	1040	16.9	544	18.9	152	12.5	132	137	137	20.3
Cannabis Over	139	2.3	47	1.6	25	2.0	14	37	37	5.5
Cocaine	2668	43.3	1159	40.2	506	41.5	578	219	219	32.4
Heroin	498	8.1	262	9.1	106	8.7	35	70	70	10.4
Methamphetamine	416	6.7	109	3.8	160	13.1	74	50	50	7.4
Fentanyl	311	5.0	131	4.5	65	5.3	16	36	36	5.3
Anabolic Steroid	10	0.2	2	0.1	6	0.5	0	2	2	0.3
LSD (Acid)	21	0.3	3	0.1	9	0.7	4	1	1	0.1
MDA/MDMA (Ecstasy)	195	3.2	113	3.9	57	4.7	7	15	15	2.2
Morphine	2	0.0	1	0.0	1	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Opium	4	0.1	1	0.0	2	0.2	0	0	0	0.0
Other Schedule I	392	6.4	274	9.5	53	4.3	22	33	33	4.9
Other Schedule III	46	0.7	23	0.8	8	0.7	1	9	9	1.3
Other Schedule IV	32	0.5	21	0.7	3	0.2	1	4	4	0.6
Other CDSA	302	4.9	152	5.3	50	4.1	33	48	48	7.1
Psilocybin (Magic Mushrooms)	26	0.4	11	0.4	8	0.7	0	3	3	0.4
Amphetamine	35	0.6	10	0.3	6	0.5	8	8	8	1.2
Barbiturate	1	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Unknown	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Totals	6,166		2,881		1,220		926		675	

