

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland at College Park *

Are We Getting Our Money's Worth?: New Report Looks at Effectiveness of Federal Drug Policy

Since 1981, nearly \$100 billion has been spent by the federal government in an effort to combat drugs. Despite this immense investment, drug use, addiction, and related crime have not been reduced. A report recently released by Drug Strategies, "Keeping Score: What We Are Getting for Our Federal Drug Control Dollars," analyzes the effectiveness of the federal drug policy, concentrating on four areas: illicit drug use, drug-related crime, drugs in the workplace, and the impact of drugs on health and health care costs. Among the findings are:

- Federal drug control spending has risen from \$1.5 billion in 1981 to \$13.2 billion in 1995. Two-thirds of the 1995 drug budget is allocated to enforcement and interdiction.
- Since 1982, cocaine has become cheaper and more plentiful, despite massive spending for international drug control.
- Every \$34 million spent per year on treatment achieves the same reduction in cocaine consumption as spending \$246 million on enforcement, \$366 million on interdiction, or \$783 million on source-country control.
- Marijuana use among 8th, 10th, and 12th graders has been rising sharply since 1992.
- Blacks constitute 40% of all drug arrests and one-third of all drug convictions nationwide--yet they make up only 12% of the population.
- Drug offenders are the largest and fastest growing population in Federal prisons, accounting for 61% of the total inmate population in 1993.
- More than two-thirds (71%) of regular drug users are employed, and 15% of them worked while under the influence of drugs in the past year.
- Many model treatment programs (described briefly in the report) are making a difference in reducing drug use at the community level.

One of the goals of "Keeping Score" is to help people judge for themselves the effectiveness of federal drug policy. As part of this goal, a "report card" is included with each report, which allows the recipient to grade federal drug control efforts in each of the four areas. The completed report card is then returned to Drug Strategies, which will provide each respondent a summary of the survey results. To receive a full copy of the report, contact Drug Strategies at 202-663-6090.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Drug Strategies, Keeping Score: What We Are Getting for Our Federal Drug Control Dollars, Washington, D.C., 1995.

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