



# Drug-related police encounters across the globe: How does Australia compare?

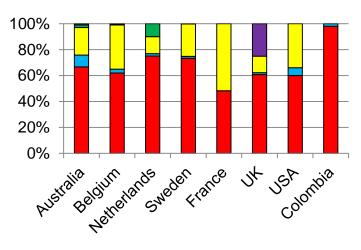
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# Background

- Drug law enforcement subsumes the majority of drug policy expenditure across the globe (Ritter et al., 2013)
- Research has shown that much of this investment does not achieve its intended goals (Babor et al., 2010)
- Spurred increasing calls for cross-national comparisons of drug law enforcement approaches (Kilmer, Reuter, & Giommoni, 2015; Reuter, 2017)

#### **Drug policy expenditure**



■ Law enforcement ■ Prevention

□ Treatment ■ Harm reduction

Other

Sources: Ritter et al, 2013; Ritter Ritter, Hughes, Hull, 2017.





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### The potential benefits of cross-national research

- Comparative policy analysis across and within countries is a proven method to show:
  - 1. Where there are differences and similarities
  - Worth of different approaches
  - 3. Why differences have emerged (e.g. Ritter et al, 2016; Burris et al, 2017)
- To date, there has been much attention to mapping and comparing drug laws
- Revealed many new insights:
  - Shown large variation in how nations construct laws e.g. what drugs are prohibited and legal threshold limits (e.g. Rosmarin & Eastwood, 2013)
  - Shown that multiple regulatory components can impact on the extent and nature of harms from laws e.g. Pacula et al (2015) highlighted importance of dispensaries in medical marijuana schemes









The Difference is Research

### Towards cross-national comparisons of drug policing

- But, negligible application to drug law enforcement
- This is a significant omission. For example, as argued by Kilmer, Reuter, and Giommoni (2015, p. 279) "focusing on drug law enforcement is much more important for cross-national drug policy comparisons than focusing on drug laws"
- The key stumbling block to cross-national comparative research of drug law enforcement has been methodological (Kilmer et al., 2015)
  - harder to assess what police do, than to assess laws
  - available metrics of drug law enforcement such as on "arrest" are seldom directly comparable across countries
  - no current metrics on any form of pre-arrest activity
- One recommendation for gathering data has been to capitalise upon existing cross-national surveys to ensure the same set of metrics are employed in all nations







# **Objectives**

This study sought to provide the first cross-national comparison of illicit drug-related police encounters amongst people who use drugs, using a new drug policing module added to the 2017 Global Drug Survey

#### Specifically, the aims were:

- To compare the incidence and nature of drug-related police encounters
- 2. To identify which countries have the highest (and least) intense policing responses, after controlling for pre-existing individual and national differences in policing and drug use prevalence
- 3. To identify how Australia compares







# Methods







### Methods

- The data were drawn from the 2017 Global Drug Survey (GDS)
- The Global Drug Survey is the world's largest anonymous, annual survey of drug and alcohol use: and has now been running for six years (Barratt et al., 2017)
- The survey is widely promoted through global news and media partners, social media and other agencies
- All participants are self-selected and all data is self-reported
- The Global Drug Survey 2017 (GDS2017) ran from November 2016 to December 2016
- Sample: 45,942 respondents from 26 countries. All aged ≥18 years and had used illicit drugs in the last 12 months (mainly cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine)







## The drug policing module

- Assessed the incidence and frequency of police encounters in the last 12 months that involved:
  - being stopped and searched for drugs;
  - encountering a drug detection dog;
  - being given a caution or warning for drugs;
  - being charged and arrested for drugs;
  - paying a bribe.







# **Analyses**

- Chi square: to examine the unadjusted cross-national incidence and punitiveness of drug policing encounters (defined as the proportion of encounters in the last 12 months that lead to an arrest) across countries
- 2. Multi-level logistic regressions: to examine the probability of drug policing encounters after controlling for individual level factors and country level factors (e.g. prevalence of illicit drugs most commonly used by the sample)





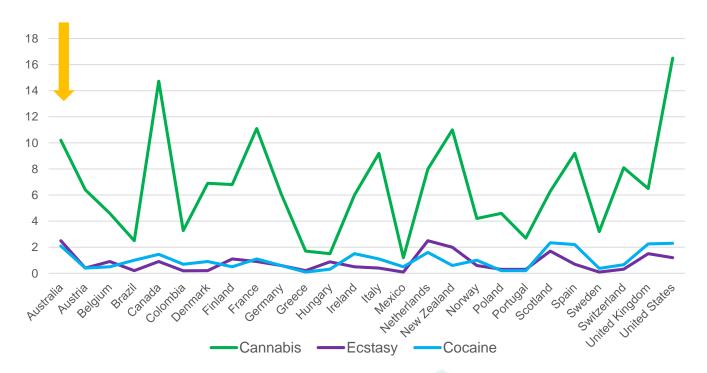


# **Country level controls**

| Type of control | Variable  | Data source   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Drug use        | The last 12 month prevalence of cannabis use, in each country amongst the population aged 15-64 | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) country profile                          |
| Drug use        | The last 12 month prevalence of <b>cocaine</b> use  | UNODC   |
| Drug use        | The last 12 month prevalence of "ecstasy" type substances use                                   | UNODC   |
| Policing        | The number of <b>police personnel</b> per 100,000 population in each country                    | United Nations Survey on<br>Crime Trends and<br>Operations of Criminal<br>Justice Systems |
| Policing        | The aggregate incidence of any police encounters in the last 12 months in each country          | The GDS2017 drug policing module  |

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### Last 12 month prevalence of use, by drug and nation









### **Results**







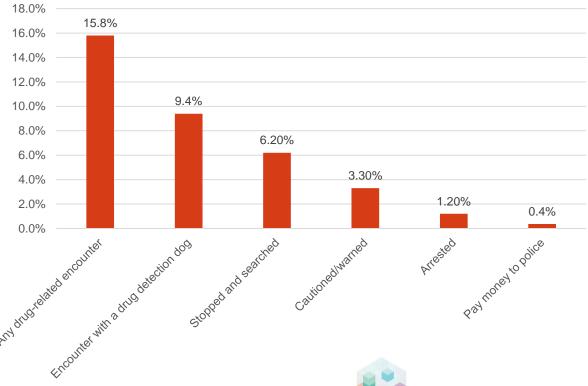
# Unadjusted data







# Overall incidence of drug-related police encounters in the last 12 months across the 26 countries

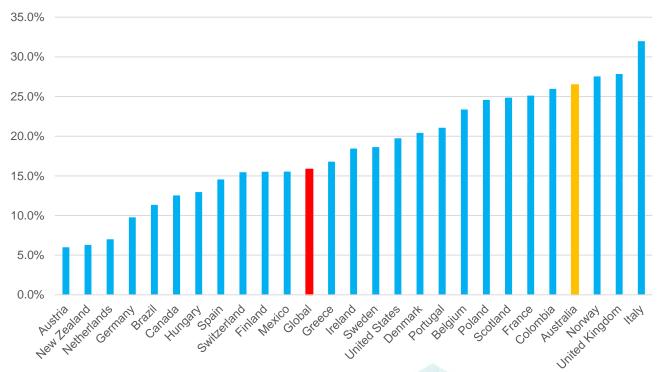








### Incidence of a drug-related police encounter, by country

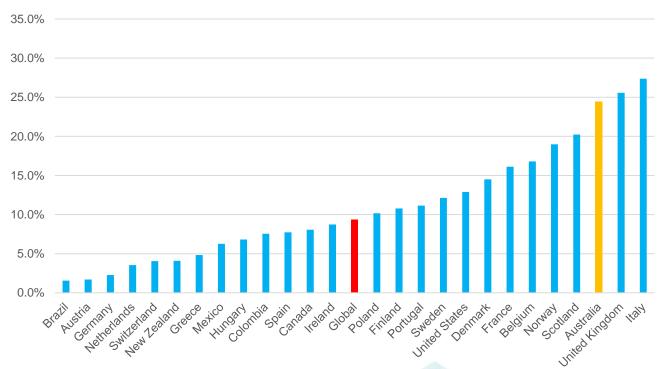








### Incidence of police encounter with drug detection dogs









# Cross-national comparison, controlling for individual and national factors







### Multi-level model

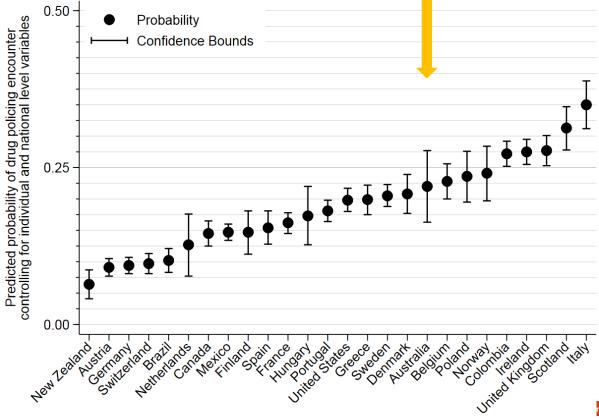
|   | OR        | CI           |  |
|---|-----------|--------------|--|
| Individual level factors                                  |           |              |  |
| Sex: Male vs female                                       | 1.565 *** | 1.202-2.038  |  |
| Age   | 0.897 *** | 0.865-0.930  |  |
| Age <sup>2</sup>  | 1.000 *** | 1.000-1.001  |  |
| Residence   |           |              |  |
| Regional vs metropolitan                                  | 1.153 *   | 1.015-1.311  |  |
| Remote vs metropolitan                                    | 1.038     | 0.903-1.192  |  |
| Ethnicity: White/Caucasian vs other                       | 0.860 *** | 0.784-0.943  |  |
| Clubbing frequency  |           |              |  |
| <ul> <li>&lt;4 times per year versus never</li> </ul>     | 1.389 *** | 1.205-1.504  |  |
| <ul> <li>4 or more times per year versus never</li> </ul> | 1.674 *** |              |  |
| Any prior police encounters: yes vs no                    | 1.031 **  | 1.010-1.051  |  |
| Country level factors                                     |           |              |  |
| Prevalence of cannabis use                                | 0.952 *** | 0.9311-0.974 |  |
| Prevalence of ecstasy use                                 | 1.112     | 0.879-1.408  |  |
| Prevalence of cocaine use                                 | 1.357 *** | 1.158-1.591  |  |
| Total no. police personnel per 100,000 pop                | 1.001 **  | 1.000-1.002  |  |
| Aggregate rate any police encounters                      | 1.046 *** | 1.033-1.059  |  |







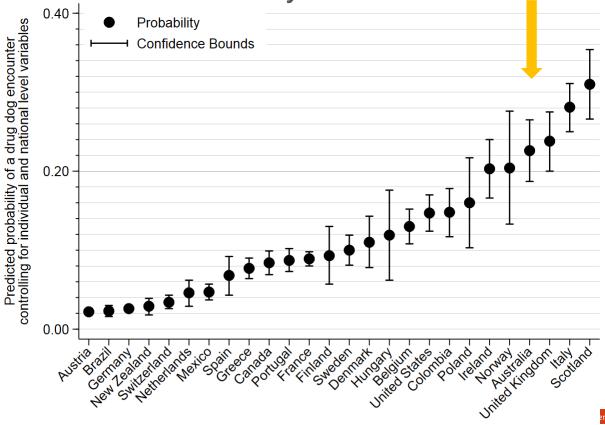
Predicted probability of a recent drug policing encounter, controlling for individual and country level effects



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Country 19

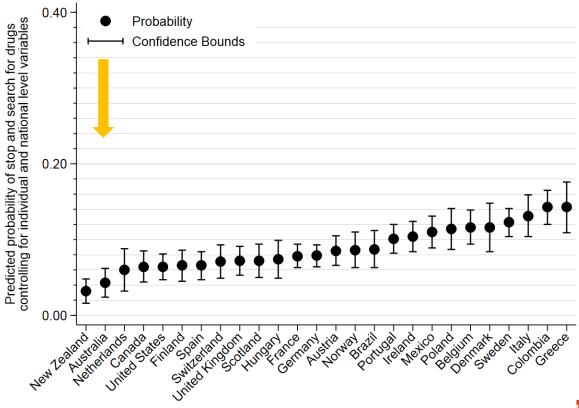
Predicted probability of a drug dog encounter, controlling for individual and country level effects



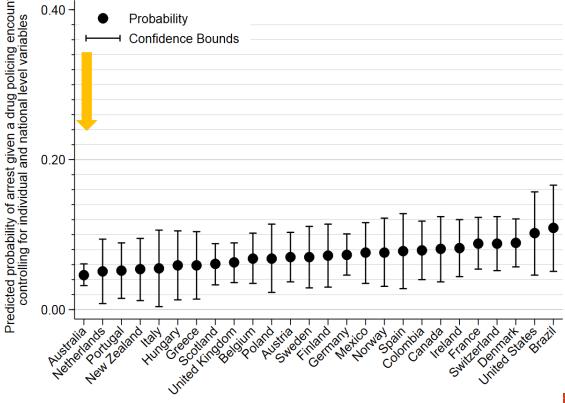
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Country 20

# Predicted probability of stop and search, controlling for individual and country level effects



# Predicted probability of a drug encounter leading to an arrest, controlling for individual and country level effects



### Conclusion

- Limitations: Self-selected and non-injecting sample. Excludes some countries known for high drug-related policing e.g. Russia.
- But, affords first evidence of significant cross-national variation in drug-related policing of people who use drugs
- Highlights key areas of difference:
  - Intensity of drug policing
  - Nature of drug policing e.g. stop and search (Sweden, Poland) vs drug dogs (Australia, UK)
- Differences do not appear attributable to national differences in drug use prevalence or number of police personnel
- How does Australia compare....
  - higher than average likelihood of police encounters
  - fourth highest likelihood of drug detection dog encounters







# **Implications**

- Variation in drug policing is important to unmask as different approaches carry different risks for people who use drugs
  - e.g. Drug detection dogs can increase consumption of drugs on site of dogs – a clear risk for overdose
- 2. Reminds that countries do have choices in *how* they choose to police people who use drugs
- Suggests real opportunity for countries to better inform drug policing approaches
  - What approaches are most cost-effective?
  - What approaches most reduce harm?
  - What approaches offer the best mix from a public health and public safety perspective?

Next steps: replicate survey (Nov-Dec 2018)







### Thank You!

We thank all the people who took part in the Global Drug Survey and the media partners (www.globaldrugsurvey.com) who helped promote the survey.

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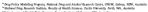
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Drug-related police encounters across the globe: How do they compare?





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#### ABSTRACT

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Stop and search Drug detection dog Comparative policy analysis Gross-national comparison

Background: Drug law enforcement subsumes the majority of drug policy expenditure across the globe. Fuelled by knowledge that much of this investment is ineffective or counter-productive there have been increasing calls for cross-na tional comparisons to identify where policing approaches differ and what types of approaches may be more effective. Yet, to date cross-national comparison of drug law enforcement has proven a methodologically hazardous affair. Using a new drug policing module added to the 2017 Global Drug Survey, this study seeks to provide the first cross national comparison of the incidence, nature and intensity of illicit draw-related police encounters amongst people who use drugs.

Methods: The Global Drug Survey was administered in late 2016. Across 26 countries including Australia, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Switzerland, the UK and the USA a total of 45,942 people who had recently used drugs completed the drug policing module. Key variables assessed included the incidence and frequency of drug related police encounters in the last 12 months that involved: a) being stopped and searched: b) encountering a drug detection dog; c) being given a caution or warning; d) being charged and arrested; and e) paying a bribe Multi-level models were used to control for pre-existing national differences in drug use prevalence and non-drug specific policing (including the total number of police personnel in each country).

Results: Drug related police encounters were most commonly reported in Italy and Scotland. Conversely, police encounters were most likely to lead to arrest in Norway, Finland and Sweden. The type and locations of encounters further differed across countries, with for example stop and search most reported in Greece and Colombia, and encounters with drug detection dogs most reported in Scotland, Italy, UK and Australia. Multilevel models showed that the incidence of reported policing encounters continued to differ significantly across countries after controlling for pre-existing national differences in drug use prevalence and policing, and that drug policing encounters were 4 to 14 times more common in some nations than others.

Conclusion: The findings unearth significant cross-national differences in the incidence and nature of drug-re lated policing of people who use drugs. This suggests that there may be opportunities for countries to learn from each other about how and why they differ, and the potential benefits of switching to lower intensity modes o

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Drug law enforcement subsumes the majority of drug policy expenditure across the globe (Babor et al., 2010; Ritter, Hughes et al., 2016; Ritter, McLeod, & Shanahan, 2013; Ritter & Stevens, 2017). For example, 64% of Australian government expenditure on illicit drugs is directed at policing and enforcing laws (Ritter et al., 2013) and in the USA, UK and Sweden, 59%, 65% and 75% of government expenditure respectively is directed at this domain (Ritter Husbes et al., 2016). Ru research has shown that much of this investment does not achieve its intended goals: and indeed that investment is making the problem worse (Babor et al., 2010). For example, street-level drug law en forcement has minimal capacity to deter drug use or supply (Hughes, Moxham-Hall et al., 2017; Friedman, Cooper et al., 2006). Equally studies from across the globe, including the USA, UK, Australia, Russia Mexico, Thailand, and Ganada have shown that criminal justice

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