

Federal Drug Budget Trend



Policy Brief

February 2008

FY02-09 Budget Emphasizes Least Effective Ingredients of Drug Policy

Overview

A review of the federal drug control budget shows that the current administration continues to favor supply reduction programs over demand reduction programs to reduce the demand for drugs by youth and adults. Since federal fiscal year (FY) 02, the budget has emphasized what research has shown to be the least effective ingredients of a federal drug control policy. This translates into almost a decade of lost opportunity in achieving performance results.

Drug Policy Main Ingredients

There are five main ingredients of a federal drug control policy. Treatment includes helping users of illicit drugs to become drug free through such means as in-patient and out-patient counseling and other similar services. Prevention includes discouraging the first-time use of drugs and encouraging those who have begun to use drugs to cease their drug use. Law enforcement includes activities focused on the criminal justice system, such as the courts, police, prosecution, and task forces designed to stop domestic drug distribution. Interdiction includes efforts intended to stop drugs from entering the country by targeting the transportation link from the shores of source nations up to and including the United States border. International, or source country programs, focus on a wide range of activities to eradicate crops and destroy processing capabilities, including alternative crop development, and promoting the involvement of other nations to reduce cultivation and production. A sound federal drug control policy contains all of these ingredients. The art of developing the most effective drug policy involves taking the evidence that research has to offer regarding each of these main ingredients and applying it to come up with the best mix.

Budget Contradicts Research

As the table on page two of this Policy

Brief shows, according to data from the Office of National Drug Control Policy, resources for supply reduction have grown the most since FY02, by nearly 57 percent. In fact, supply reduction resources now represent nearly two-thirds of the total federal drug control budget. By comparison, resources for demand reduction grew by less than 3 percent and its share of total resources now represents only about one-third of all resources.

What is truly most effective in drug control policy and funding? Research suggests that treatment and prevention programs are very effective in reducing drug demand, saving lives, and lessening health and crime consequences. It has demonstrated that attacking drugs at their source by focusing on eradication is expensive and not very effective. It has demonstrated that interdiction has little effect on drug traffickers' ability to bring drugs into the United States and on to our street corners where they are sold. It has also shown that law enforcement and the broader criminal justice system can be a powerful partner in using its coercive powers to help drug users stop using drugs and committing drug-related crime.

In budget terms, and considering what research has taught us, one would expect marginal changes in the drug budget to emphasize treatment, prevention, and law enforcement more so than source country programs and interdiction, yet the federal drug budget does not do this:

- Interdiction grew the most over the FY02-09 period, growing by 100 percent from about \$1.9 billion to \$3.8 billion.
- Source country resources grew the second fastest, by nearly 50 percent.
- Law enforcement grew the third fastest, increasing by 31 percent over the period.

Quick Facts

- The Bush Administration's drug control budget since FY02 has emphasized supply reduction programs over demand reduction programs.
- Resources for supply reduction (interdiction of drugs, source country programs, and law enforcement), grew by almost 57% from the FY 02 baseline level to the FY 09 request now before Congress.
- By comparison, demand reduction resources (prevention and treatment, including resources for research for agencies like the National Institute on Drug Abuse) grew by only 2.7 percent—prevention is actually cut 25 percent.
- The nation's current drug strategy emphasizes reducing demand among youth and adults, but does so by mostly targeting source country and interdiction programs—focusing on the source and flow of drugs rather than this nation's underlying demand for illicit drugs.
- The FY'02-09 budget trend runs counter to what research has found: that efforts to reduce demand are best addressed through treatment and prevention rather than supply reduction.

Budget Emphasizes Supply Reduction

Bush Administration Record on Federal Drug Control Spending, by Function FY 2002–FY 2009 (Budget Authority in Millions)

| | FY 2002 Final | FY 2003 Final | FY 2004 Final | FY 2005 Final | FY 2006 Final | FY 2007 Final | FY 2008 Enacted | FY 2009 Request | FY 02 - FY 09 | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | | | | | | | | | Dollar Change | Percent Change |
| By Function: | | | | | | | | | | |
| Treatment (w/Research) | \$2,784.6 | \$2,876.0 | \$3,028.3 | \$3,053.0 | \$2,941.9 | \$3,060.9 | \$3,226.0 | \$3,402.8 | \$818.2 | 22.2% |
| Percent | 26.2% | 25.9% | 25.5% | 24.1% | 22.6% | 22.1% | 23.6% | 24.1% | | |
| Prevention (w/Research) | \$1,996.4 | \$1,936.5 | \$1,955.9 | \$1,952.1 | \$1,862.6 | \$1,841.8 | \$1,756.8 | \$1,507.1 | -\$489.3 | -24.5% |
| Percent | 18.8% | 17.5% | 16.5% | 15.4% | 14.3% | 13.3% | 12.9% | 10.7% | | |
| Domestic Law Enforcement | \$2,867.2 | \$3,018.3 | \$3,189.8 | \$3,317.9 | \$3,474.7 | \$3,748.8 | \$3,800.3 | \$3,763.3 | \$896.1 | 31.3% |
| Percent | 26.9% | 27.2% | 26.9% | 26.2% | 26.7% | 27.1% | 27.8% | 26.7% | | |
| Interdiction | \$1,913.7 | \$2,147.5 | \$2,534.1 | \$2,927.9 | \$3,285.6 | \$3,175.9 | \$3,214.2 | \$3,830.9 | \$1,917.2 | 100.2% |
| Percent | 18.0% | 19.4% | 21.4% | 23.2% | 25.3% | 22.9% | 23.5% | 27.1% | | |
| International | \$1,084.5 | \$1,105.1 | \$1,159.3 | \$1,393.3 | \$1,434.5 | \$2,016.6 | \$1,666.3 | \$1,609.8 | \$525.3 | 48.4% |
| Percent | 10.2% | 10.0% | 9.8% | 11.0% | 11.0% | 14.6% | 12.2% | 11.4% | | |
| Total | \$10,646.4 | \$11,083.4 | \$11,867.4 | \$12,644.2 | \$12,999.3 | \$13,844.0 | \$13,663.6 | \$14,113.9 | \$3,467.5 | 32.6% |
| By Supply/Demand Split | | | | | | | | | | |
| Supply | \$5,865.4 | \$6,270.9 | \$6,883.2 | \$7,639.1 | \$8,194.8 | \$8,941.4 | \$8,680.8 | \$9,204.0 | \$3,338.6 | 56.9% |
| Percent | 55.1% | 56.6% | 58.0% | 60.4% | 63.0% | 64.6% | 63.5% | 65.2% | | |
| Demand | \$4,781.0 | \$4,812.5 | \$4,984.2 | \$5,005.1 | \$4,804.5 | \$4,902.7 | \$4,982.8 | \$4,909.8 | \$128.8 | 2.7% |
| Percent | 44.9% | 43.4% | 42.0% | 39.6% | 37.0% | 35.4% | 36.5% | 34.8% | | |
| Total | \$10,646.4 | \$11,083.4 | \$11,867.4 | \$12,644.2 | \$12,999.3 | \$13,844.1 | \$13,663.6 | \$14,113.8 | \$3,467.4 | 32.6% |

- Treatment comes in fourth place, increasing by 22 percent.
- Prevention comes in last place with its resources actually declining by almost 25 percent.

Budget/Performance Link

If research were our guide, then one would expect the opposite ordering of increases in budgetary resources for drug control. The failure to incorporate research into the budgetary process is a lost opportunity to produce results. The only positive news in this decade is the reduction in youth drug use, a trend which started in the previous decade. Today's discussion of drug policy performance overlooks the fact that adult drug use and rates of addiction remain unchanged in this decade. According to the Substance Abuse

and Mental Health Services Administration's National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH):

- Drug use for those over 18 years of age has not changed since 2002. Almost 20 percent of those 18-25 years of age and 6 percent of those over 25 report using illicit drugs on a regular basis.
- The number of persons addicted to or abusing drugs and in need of treatment has also not changed since 2002. Over 22 million people are in this category.

According to the NSDUH, the drugs that enter the United States illegally (mostly cocaine and heroin) are less of a problem today than drugs that can be sold or produced or cultivated in the United

States, such as prescription drugs, methamphetamine, and marijuana.

Conclusion

For the federal drug control policy to be most effective, it must both be evidenced-based and supported by a budget specifically designed to implement it. The federal drug control budget in this decade, however, has not funded programs that research suggests would be more effective in reducing drug demand and its associated damaging consequences. Simply stated, the federal drug budget trend runs counter to what research would otherwise suggest is necessary for an effective federal drug control policy.

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