



ICE - Interpreting Functions

Last week President Bush set the world on a course to confront and defeat terrorism. President Bush described this as not “...an isolated response...” but as a “...long twilight struggle.”

The images shown below (see Figure 1¹) might recall some of the long, twilight struggle that the United States government is currently engaged in, the so-called “War on Drugs.”



Figure 1: Familiar, disturbing images from the 30 year “War on Drugs.” (a) An addict injects heroin, (b) cocaine, the “All American” drug, (c) seizure of a massive shipment of cocaine by U.S. Customs agents, and (d) heavily armed, paramilitary agents of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

With it’s origins in the Johnson Administration of the late 1960’s, the “War on Drugs” was begun in earnest by President Nixon in the late 1960’s. In a press conference held on June 17, 1971, President Nixon declared “War on Drugs.” In the address, President Nixon described drug abuse as “...public enemy number one for the United States².” President Nixon set up a number of government organizations to combat drug abuse, culminating with the “super agency” of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) founded in July 1973.

The DEA consolidated the drug enforcement efforts of a number of offices and agencies. It also quickly became known for zealous “cowboy” style of law enforcement that sometimes stretched the limits of the Fourth Amendment to breaking point³.

Some of the major events and US government actions in the 30 year history of the “War on Drugs” are shown in Figure 2⁴.

¹ Image sources: (a) <http://www.ohsinc.com> (b) <http://www.cocaine.org>

(c) CNN, <http://www.cnn.org> (d) DEA, <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/>

² Source: The Richard Nixon Library, <http://www.nixonfoundation.org/>.

³ Source: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/drugs/>

⁴ Sources: PBS, <http://www.pbs.org>



Figure 2: A selective time-line of events from the 30 year "War on Drugs."

Image sources: Linden B. Johnson Library, Richard Nixon Library, Gerald Ford Library, Ronald Reagan Library, George H. Bush Library, William Clinton Foundation and Library Project, CNN, Newsweek, <http://www.cocaine.org/>, The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, Cannabis News, PBS, U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Agency.

One of these events - perhaps above all others - creates a great deal of controversy to this day. On October 27, 1986 President Reagan signed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act into law. This act imposed stiff mandatory minimum prison sentences for any drug-related offense. Many state penal systems (such as California's⁵) are now overflowing with non-violent drug offenders who cannot be paroled. The problem of prison overcrowding due to mandatory minimum sentences for drug-related offenses has become so extreme that violent offenders such as murderers, rapists and child molesters are sometimes paroled simply to make room for more drug offenders⁶.

Recent articles have questioned the wisdom of the Federal government's policies in dealing with the problem of illegal drugs. Although few advocate illegal drugs as beneficial to society, some opinion-makers have begun to wonder which is ultimately more harmful to society - illegal drugs or government efforts at control and eradication. Commenting on the June 2001 Supreme Court decision not to allow police forces to use military-style heat seeking equipment in the "War on Drugs," Front Page magazine columnist Tanya Metaska argued⁷:

"Police departments, especially the narcotics officers, have become more interested in the amount of revenue that can be collected through asset forfeiture than protecting citizens' civil rights ... The *Los Angeles Times* of August 26, 1999 reported on a narcotics investigation that resulted in the death of Mario Paz, an innocent man ... the El Monte police executed a 'high risk entry' - shooting the locks off the doors. The police found no drugs but took \$10,000 that Paz had withdrawn from the bank in order to safeguard against Y2K bank failures. El Monte police have since said that they could not tie Paz or his family to drug trafficking ..."

In this activity, you will be able to review the results of 30 years of government efforts and literally hundreds of billions of dollars of federal spending to prevent drug use.

According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy⁸ drug use is most prevalent among people in their late teens or early twenties. Table 1 and Figure 3⁹ shows the percentage of high school seniors who report use of some illicit drug at some point in their lives.

⁵ Dilulio, J.J. "The numbers don't lie: It's the hard core doing hard time." *Washington Post*, March 1996.

⁶ Source: "Drug Cases Crowd Jails." *Journal Gazette*, Sunday 15 July 2001.

⁷ Metaska, T. "Stop the war on drugs." *Frontpage*, June 20 2001.

⁸ Source: Office of Applied Studies, "National Household Survey on Drug Abuse." 1999.

⁹ Data source: University of Michigan, "Monitoring the Future Project." 2001.

Year	Percentage	Approximate number of seniors
1975	55.2	9,400
1976	58.3	15,400
1977	61.6	17,100
1978	64.1	17,800
1979	65.1	15,500
1980	65.4	15,900
1981	65.6	17,500
1982	64.4	17,700
1983	62.9	16,300
1984	61.6	15,900
1985	60.6	16,000
1986	57.6	15,200
1987	56.6	16,300
1988	53.9	16,300
1989	50.9	16,700
1990	47.9	15,200
1991	44.1	15,000
1992	40.7	15,800
1993	42.9	16,300
1994	45.6	15,400
1995	48.4	15,400
1996	50.8	14,300
1997	54.3	15,400
1998	54.1	15,200
1999	54.7	13,600
2000	54.0	12,800

Table 1: Percentage of high school seniors reporting use of some illicit drug during their lifetime, 1975-2000.

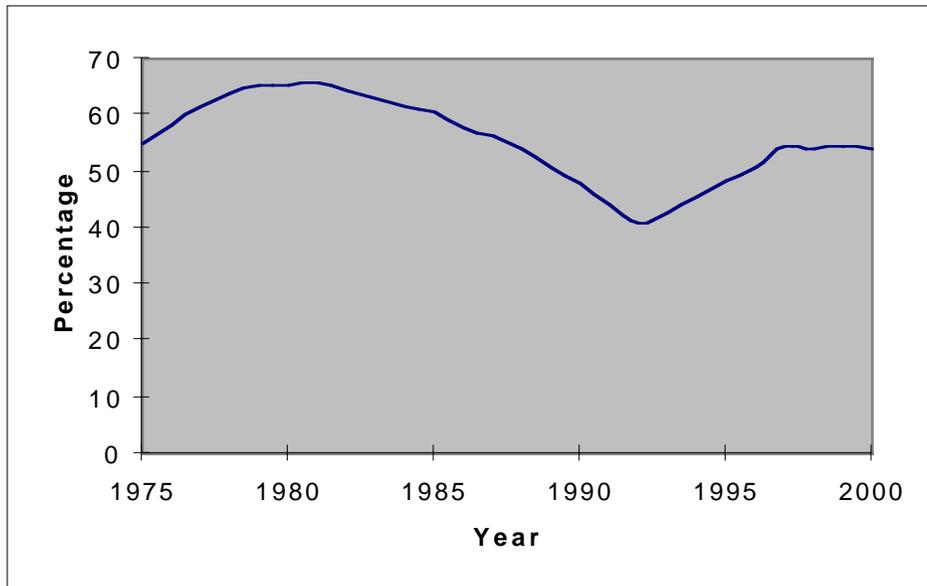


Figure 3: Percentage of high school seniors reporting use of some illicit drug during their lifetime, 1975-2000.

• *Based on the graph shown in Figure 3, during which period(s) of time did the percentage increase?*

• *Calculate the average rate of change of the percentage during these period(s) of time.*

• *Based on the graph shown in Figure 3, during which period(s) of time did the percentage decrease?*

• *Calculate the average rate of change of the percentage during these period(s) of time.*

• Do these periods of increase and decrease correspond to events in the “War on Drugs” described in Figure 2? What effects do the governmental efforts appear to have had on drug use among young people?

• During which period(s) of time was the rate of change of the graph in Figure 3 increasing?

• During which period(s) of time was the rate of change of the graph in Figure 3 decreasing?

• During which period(s) of time was the rate of change of the graph in Figure 3 constant? How could you determine this from the appearance of the graph in Figure 3?

• If the data presented here were all that you had to go on, would you say that the federal government is winning the “War on Drugs” ? Provide evidence to support your conclusion.