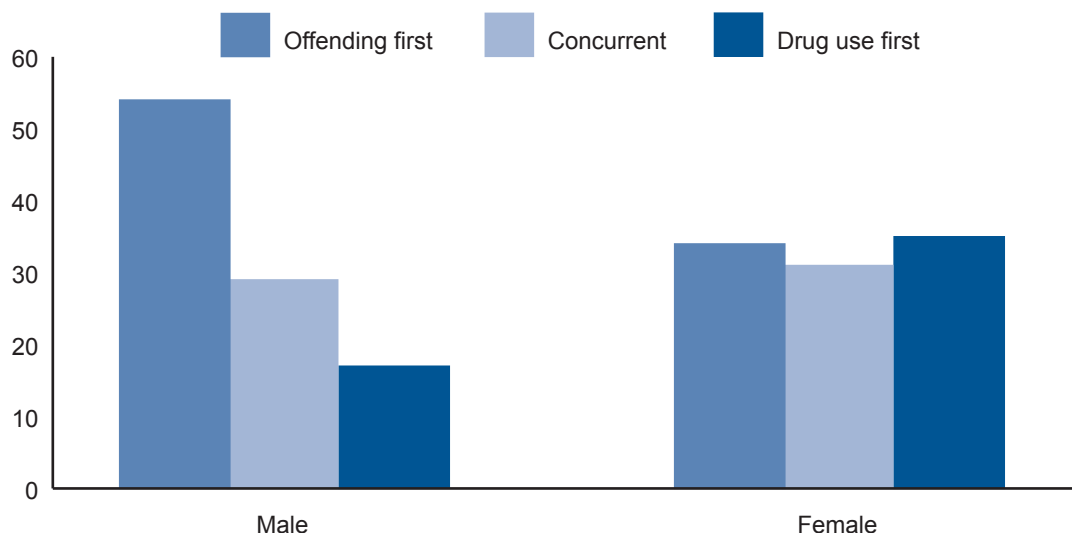


Gender differences in the sequence of drug use and crime

Illicit drug use has been identified as an important factor in criminal offending for both men and women. There is debate about whether drug use 'leads' to crime or the reverse. The Australian Institute of Criminology conducted the Drug use careers of offenders (DUCO) study in order to examine the interaction between criminal offending and drug use patterns. A total of 470 females and 2,135 males incarcerated in Australian prisons were interviewed. The project, which is funded by the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department, identified gender differences in the temporal order of drug use and crime. Using the self-reported age of first drug use and first criminal offence, this study shows that female prisoners were equally divided in the sequence of their drug use and offending initiation. A similar proportion of female prisoners reported illicit drug use before offending (35%) as they did offending before illicit drug use (34%). Male prisoners were more likely to have engaged in offending before drug use (54%) and were less likely than women to have used drugs prior to offending (17%). These results suggest that illicit drugs may play a different role in the development of a criminal career for women as compared with men.

Sequence of drug use among male and female offenders (per cent)*



* Estimates are calculated for offenders who had used drugs

SOURCE: Johnson H 2004. Key findings from the Drug use careers of female offenders study. *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* no 289. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology
 Makkai T & Payne J 2003. Key findings from the Drug use careers of offenders study. *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* no 267. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology

Full reports available on the AIC web site: <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi2/tandi267.html>
<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi2/tandi289.html>

Australian Institute of Criminology GPO Box 2944 Canberra ACT 2601
 Tel: 02 6260 9200 Fax: 02 6260 9201 Email comments: aicpress@aic.gov.au
 ISSN 1445-7288 Visit online: <http://www.aic.gov.au>