



Frequency of supply, price levels, quality and quantity of supplies, typical places and dealing techniques are different at various levels of the illicit drug supply chain and areas of Italy, outlining two main categories of dealers, each with typical characteristics: those who work as part of a criminal organization and those who work independently

business strategies
drug dealing
motivations
organized crime

A total of 72 interviews were conducted in five Italian prisons with the aim to understand how cocaine and heroin dealers enter the illicit market, organise their dealing activities and manage supplies, customers, risks, profits and costs. With regard to business profits, costs and revenues, the interviewed dealers were able to provide limited information. However, many relevant insights were gained about business strategies, their perception of success and career expectations in this field and the way they face and manage challenges and risks associated with drug dealing activities.

Economic motivations, the need to support their own drug use habits and the inducement of family and friends were reported as the main reasons for their engagement into the illicit drug market. Differences and commonalities in roles, tasks, buying and selling strategies, as well as perceptions about risks and reputation emerged among dealers operating in different areas of Italy and at different levels of the illicit drug supply chain. Relevant differences also emerged between independent dealers and those who worked as part of criminal organizations. Such differences were related to the possibility to choose the suppliers, to set the prices and to decide the dealing place as well as the quantity of drugs to be sold. Relevant information was also gained on mechanisms affecting the drugs prices, such as the quantity bought by the dealer, the degree of access to and the availability of a certain drug in a certain time of the year/month/week which may vary over time and locations.

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