# Officers, Visitors, Tobacco, and Raw Chicken, an Exploratory Analysis of Categorical Differences in Contraband Smuggling in Georgia Prisons

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**Abstract**

Contraband smuggling causes a myriad of issues for prisons, however, there have been few studies on the smugglers who bring in the contraband, and how a smuggler's relationship to the prison may impact the category of contraband that they are introducing. Using a fisher's exact analysis with data from official press releases published by the Georgia Department of Corrections (N=788) on persons caught smuggling contraband, this paper aims to close that gap in knowledge. The author found that when dividing accused smugglers into four categories: officer, visitor, civilian, and other/unknown - across five contraband groups: cellular phones, marijuana, tobacco, alcohol/other drugs, and other/unknown contraband - each group, except for marijuana, had at least one statistically significant result, indicating that there are differences in smuggling habits among different categories of smugglers and across smuggled items. Officer smuggling behavior is examined in depth using a chi square. This second sample utilized a database of arrested and terminated/quit during investigation officers from the Atlanta Journal Constitution (N = 226). Policy implications are also discussed.

Keywords: Prisons, Contraband, Officers, Smuggling, Misconduct

## Introduction

The issue of contraband continues to plague prisons throughout the state of Georgia. The Director of the Georgia Department of Correction's Office of Professional Standards, Matthew Wolfe, stated bluntly "We know there is an epidemic in our prisons of contraband" (Winnie, 2024). In April 2024, approximately 150 people, including eight Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) employees, were arrested during Operation Skyhawk, a joint operation by the FBI and GDC, with the purpose of disbanding an alleged multi-state criminal enterprise that specialized in smuggling items into prisons. Items found during Operation Skyhawk included, but were not limited to, a semi-automatic pistol with a loaded eighteen round magazine, hundreds of pounds of tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs, as well as 273 cellular phones recovered in prisons, 180 cellular phones recovered from civilians off prison properties, and 87 drones. This operation led to more than 1,000 criminal charges being filed and may be the largest RICO case of its kind in Georgia state history at the time of writing (Osborne, 2024; Winnie, 2024). In February 2023, the warden of Smith State Prison, Brian Dennis Adams, was arrested by the Georgia Bureau of Investigations on Georgia State RICO charges related to his involvement in a contraband smuggling ring within the prison he governed (DeMarco, 2023).

These incidents highlight a contraband issue that GDC, like many other correctional departments, must combat. There is a limited library of research into the type of relationship a person has with the prison and their smuggling habits, and this paper aims to reduce that gap in knowledge. The first data set is based upon GDC press releases which highlight smuggling arrests and states which type of contraband that smugglers in the officer, visitor, civilian, and other/unknown persons categories seek to introduce. It is important to note that this dataset only

includes persons who were arrested, and does not include people who were caught but faced an alternative sanction, such as being fired, or being banned from future visitation. In determining these patterns, correctional managers may be able to better target smugglers based upon the type of contraband that they are attempting to smuggle. The second dataset in this project seeks to place an emphasis on correctional officers, and what type of contraband that correctional officers are the most likely to smuggle in. Correctional officer smuggling, although the second smallest group of smugglers in the first sample, is of particular interest due to the harm it causes to the integrity of the correctional officer occupation. This lack of correctional trustworthiness can harm rehabilitation, reentry, the negotiated order between officers and inmates, and perceived competence (Goldsmith, Halsey, & Groves, 2016).

**Background and Literature Review**

Contraband is a continuous issue for all prisons. While some contraband, such as alcohol or tattooing devices, may be manufactured readily behind prison walls, other contraband items such as cellular phones, cannot be, and therefore must be introduced into the facility by malicious actors. GDC consists of 34 prisons and is home to approximately 47,000 offenders, making it the fifth largest prison system in the United States by total population ("State Prisons" n.d.). GDC has specialized units and technology dedicated to contraband interdiction (Georgia Department of Corrections 2023b) and partners with other law enforcement agencies to arrest smugglers (Benoit, Heath, Eanes, et al., 2023; Winnie, 2024).

Prisons are total institutions, as such, the items available to offenders are limited only to items that do not compromise safety, or those items which one has legal right to possess, such as religious items or legal paperwork (Goffman, 1961; Wallace, 1971; Stout, 2010). The state of

Georgia defines contraband as "an item not issued to an inmate or available or authorized for purchase through the mail or the institutional store or specifically authorized by the Warden/Superintendent" (Board of Corrections, n.d.). Under Georgia state law, one may be sentenced to a term of incarceration for up to five years if convicted of smuggling contraband into a GDC facility ("Georgia Law O.C.G.A. 42-5-18 Regarding Contraband"). An expanded explanation of what constitutes contraband is found throughout the *Georgia Department of Corrections Inmate Handbook* and includes broader categories of contraband. These items and categories of contraband include, but are not limited to: cellular phones, weapons, narcotics, alcoholic beverages, and currency (Georgia Department of Corrections, n.d. b).

Contraband items cause secondary concerns to correctional officials, as the presence of prohibited items such as narcotics can have an impact on interpersonal relationships between offenders, as well as between inmates and staff (Kalinich & Stojkovic, 1985). The prison environment creates situations where inmate and officer interactions are forced (Goldsmith, Halsey, & Groves, 2016) and where officers are not immune from prisonization (Kauffman, 1988). Small exchanges and discretion, as explored by Jones (2013), creates slippery slopes for corruption, which can lead to smuggling in contraband (Goldsmith, Halsey, & Groves, 2016). Discretion in corrections is, however, inevitable as discretion one of the few options an officer may have to maintain order is their willingness to ignore minor infractions as a form of soft power. Rules are more likely to be ignored within sections of the prison that house gang offenders (Haggerty & Bucerius, 2021) and it is worth noting that gang involved inmates are involved in smuggling contraband among other illicit activities (Skarbek, 2010).

The presence of sellable contraband, such as narcotics, can exacerbate tensions between gangs and lead to additional violence (Kalinich & Stojkovic, 1985). When officers are the persons smuggling in contraband, the inmates will have leverage over the officer by blackmailing them into ignoring (or even perpetrating) crimes or bringing in additional items (Cooke, Hall, Friedman, et al., 2019). Contraband can interfere with routine operations of prisons such as meal schedules, programming, and medical appointments. Drugs or alcohol can lead to inmates becoming violent (Georgia Department of Corrections, 2023c). An item of concern to many correctional officials in particular are cellular phones. Cellular phones have been used to threaten officers, state officials, and witnesses by finding information about them, such as their home addresses or contacting them directly via unmonitored cellular phone lines, or social media (Williams, 2014). Cellular phones have been used to contact officers directly to attempt to form inappropriate relationships and convince them to smuggle items or engage in other corrupt acts (Goldsmith, Halsey, & Groves, 2016). Corrupt officers have financial incentives to smuggle or to allow smuggling to occur under their watch (Allen & Bosta, 1981; Norman, 2022). One interview with a former correctional officer who was arrested for smuggling in California stated that he was able to earn $100,000 by smuggling in cellular phones for inmates (Fitzgerald, 2010). Correctional officers who receive lower pay, are more likely to cross professional boundaries (Worley & Worley, 2016). Officers may receive sexual favors, drugs, or illegal firearms in exchange for agreeing to smuggle in items. In some instances, officers may gain the favor of an inmate or a psychological benefit for engaging in corruption (Goldsmith, Halsey, & Groves, 2016).

In 2022, the Georgia Department of Corrections seized thousands of contraband items including more than 8,000 cellular phones, 3,200 cellular phone chargers, 11,600 weapons,

245lbs of marijuana, 1lb of cocaine, 823lbs of tobacco, 46lbs of methamphetamines, 990 gallons of alcohol, and 3,100 miscellaneous pills. These items were found as part of a joint effort by various departments from multiple teams throughout GDC (Benoit, 2023). In FY23, 36 staff members, 72 offenders, and 208 civilians (Note: The definition of "Civilian" in this context varies from the author's definition) were arrested for contraband related offenses (Georgia Department of Corrections, 2023a). One study by Grommon, Carter, & Scheer (2018) states that for each individual cellular phone seized, there may be as many as fourteen cellular phones that are not found by correctional staff. On average, prisons seize 34 weapons, 31 cellular phones, and 28 controlled substances in a twelve-month period (Peterson, Kizzort, Kim, & Shukla, 2010). A basic cellular phone may be sold for between $100 to $2,000 in some facilities, while a smartphone may be sold for a higher price (Burke & Owens, 2010; Grohs, 2017). Drugs may be sold for three to four times their street value (Crewe, 2005) and a carton of cigarettes may be purchased for as high as $500 (Lankenau, 2001). The smugglers and drug purchasers are often paid by associates of the inmate, such as friends or family on the outside (Lankenau, 2001).

Wardens, according to Peterson, Kizzort, Kim, & Shukla, (2021), are more likely to identify visitors, items thrown or flown over perimeter, letters and packages, and incarcerated individuals returning to the facility as "a big problem" for contraband entry, as opposed to security staff, non-security staff, and volunteers (p.435). There have been few studies on who is smuggling contraband into American prisons, and what kind of contraband that officers, visitors, and non-visitors attempt to bring in. One study of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) indicates that there have only been approximately 21 incidents of staff members smuggling items illicitly into federal prisons per year (out of a staff of approximately 35,000 officers), there were also only nine contractors, and two volunteers from 2010 to 2019 who engaged in the same activity

(Norman, 2023). Visitor smuggling habits appeared to be an understudied phenomenon, with only a handful of studies implicating visitors, although smuggling had a nonsignificant correlation with contact visitation in a recent study by Peterson, Kim, & Shukla (2024). Within the category of cellular phone smuggling by visitors, a study of prisons in the Netherlands indicated that visitors may view cellular phones as "harmless" and the visitors turned smugglers may want the offender to have a cellular phone "so that the [the visitor] can have more contact with the prisoner" (Berghuis, Sentse, Palmn, et al., 2023, p.1372). A study of English prisoners' wives who have smuggled items indicated that financial benefits, perception of ease of smuggling, desire to help their husband's serve their time, and a desire to increase marital ties were all motivations for smuggling. The primary motivation, according to the researchers, "[the wives'] willingness to smuggle was based primarily on the likelihood of detection" (Fishman, 1991, p.60). Another study from England indicated that in lower security prisons, visitors were the most likely smugglers, while higher security prisons are more likely to have officers as the primary smugglers. This study also indicates that approximately 95% of prisoners and ex-prisoners view social visits (or visitors) as a route of contraband, while only 46% view staff as a route of contraband. Prison staff were more likely to identify prison staff as routes of contraband. (Chambers, 2010). A survey of inmates in North Carolina indicated that mail is the most preferred method of smuggling. Staff, officers, and family were the three most selected types of persons to smuggle in items (Sevens, 1997; Goldsmith, Halsey, & Groves, 2016). A study of contraband infractions post visitation indicated that contraband possession offenses increased in the weeks after a visitation (Siennick, Mears, & Bales, 2013).

Correctional officers have strict informal and formal boundaries with prisoners (Sykes, 1968; Kauffman, 1988). Among these boundaries is the social taboo of smuggling in items,

particularly drugs. This is due to the inherent dangers of inmates who are inebriated, and their increased likelihood of violence. As such, an officer who is suspected of, or caught, smuggling in drugs or alcohol is socially punished (Kauffman, 1988; Cooke, Hall, Friedman, et al., 2019).

There are two key areas entry points in prisons as they relate to this project: authorized entry points (which staff and visitors pass through), and throwovers and drones (where civilians may attempt to smuggle in items). Note that there are other entry points such as mailrooms, however, they are not explored in this study (Shukla, Peterson, Kim, 2021; Penfold, Turnbill, & Webster, 2005). Within entry points, items are often hidden within clothing or body cavities. This methodology may be used by either staff or visitors, however, some guards may accept a bribe to allow contraband to move through the entrance (Inciardi, Lockwood, & Quinlan, 1993; Norman, 2023). Throwover and drones are commonly used to smuggle contraband by taking advantage of outdoor recreation yards to bypass security areas (Shukla, Peterson, Kim, 2021). These throwovers are sometimes countered by security measures such as tall fences, routine patrols, surveillance cameras, and, in at least one state, strategically placed beehives (Shukla, Peterson, Kim, 2021; Peterson, Kizzort, Kim, & Shukla, 2021).

**Data**

Two datasets were used for this project, the first dataset focused on all smuggling categories, whereas the second focused only on correctional officers. The first dataset, which was utilized for the first portion of this project originated from the "GDC Press Releases on Contraband Arrests at GDC Facilities" webpage, which is the official website of the GDC ("*Contraband arrests at GDC Facilities.*," n.d.). This dataset contained 788 incidents involving persons arrested for smuggling or attempting to smuggle contraband into GDC facilities, eleven

incidents were removed due to insufficient information, such as not explicitly stating that the persons were arrested for contraband (N = 777). This dataset contains all published incidents of persons found smuggling items into GDC facilities from January 1st, 2016 to December 31st, 2023. For an unknown reason, there is a gap in the data between January 1st, 2017 – November 19th, 2017, where no incidents are recorded. GDC did not respond to a request for comment regarding this matter.

*Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics*

| Contraband Items | Officer | Visitor | Civilian | Unknown/Other | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tobacco | 64 | 34 | 191 | 49 | 338 |
| Marijuana | 67 | 87 | 124 | 37 | 315 |
| Other/Unknown | 39 | 30 | 151 | 57 | 277 |
| Cellular Phones | 18 | 13 | 167 | 42 | 240 |
| Alcohol/Other Drugs | 26 | 47 | 79 | 20 | 172 |
| N of Each Smuggler Type* | 157 | 162 | 347 | 111 | |

**Note: N will not equal 100% due to multiple possible contraband items being possible per incident,*

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for how often each contraband category was smuggled in by each category of smuggler. The most commonly smuggled category of contraband is tobacco, which was present in 338 (43.5%) of the 777 total smuggling incidents. The least common category was Alcohol/Other Drugs, which was present in 172 (22.1%). Marijuana was present in 315 (40.5%), cellular phones were present in 240 (30.9%), and the remainder, 277 (35.6%) smuggling incidents had other/unknown contraband present. The most common category of smugglers were civilians who were the smugglers in 347 (44.7%) incidents, followed by visitors who were smugglers in 162 (20.8%) incidents, officers followed closely with 158 (20.3%) incidents and other/unknown persons were smugglers in 110 (14.2%) incidents.

The data for the second portion of this project contains additional data which originated from the Atlanta Journal – Constitution (AJC), who generously allowed me to access their data. The authors of the dataset, Teegardin, Robbins, & Norder, (2024), included the information on 394 GDC employees who resigned during investigation or were fired for various offenses, including contraband smuggling, sexual relationships with inmates, and other offenses. This data was then filtered down to only (N=226) correctional officers who were arrested or resigned during investigation for contraband smuggling from January 1st, 2018- March 3rd, 2024. This data is different from the first data set in that it is not made from press releases.

*Table 2 – Descriptive Statistics for All Officers in the AJC Data*

| **Contraband Items** | **Officer** |
|---|---|
| Tobacco | *57* |
| Marijuana | 100 |
| Other/Unknown | 66 |
| Cellular Phones | 17 |
| Alcohol/Other Drugs | 62 |
| Total Number of Officers Arrested/Fired/Resigned* | 226 |

* Some officers smuggled multiple categories of items

## Methods

### *Measures*

The first portion had data categories which included the relationship between the individual and the prison, the object or objects they were bringing in, and the location where the contraband was discovered. This information was then used to assign one of four categories in terms of relationships to the prison, and five different categories of contraband. The data was inconsistently reported, some incidents involving multiple parties were reported separately, while

other individual incidents involving multiple parties were reported as a single data point. This could skew the results as the categories are measured at the incident level, not the individual level.

The four different relationship categories included Officer, Visitor, Civilian, and Unknown/Other, and were chosen due to being explicitly stated in the dataset. The Unknown/Other category included instances where the relationship to the facility was not named or where the category was too small to analyze, such as other employees/contractors (N = 15). Generally, the term "Civilian," "Officer," and "Visitor" were used in the press reports, but this was not universal and therefore judgement by the researchers had to be used in assigning categories based upon information such as the location of the arrest. It is important to note that the GDOC does not explicitly define "Officer", "Visitor", "Civilian", and "Unknown/Other" and these definitions came from the author.

The contraband categories include: Marijuana, Cellular Phones, Tobacco, Alcohol/Other Drugs, and Other/Unknown Contraband. Marijuana included any marijuana product such as leaves, items containing THC, items described as "leafy green substance," or marijuana paraphernalia. Cellular phones included either flip phones or smart phones, as well as any cellular phone accessory such as chargers or mobile hot spots. Tobacco included any tobacco products such as cigarettes, cigars, loose leaf, chewing, or tobacco paraphernalia. Alcohol and Other Drugs includes all unknown substances, methamphetamine, cocaine, synthetic drugs, or other drugs not listed. Alcohol was included with other drugs due to the rarity of alcohol smuggling incidents, with only fourteen total alcohol smuggling attempts recorded. Other/unknown contraband included any contraband which was not listed, but did not include

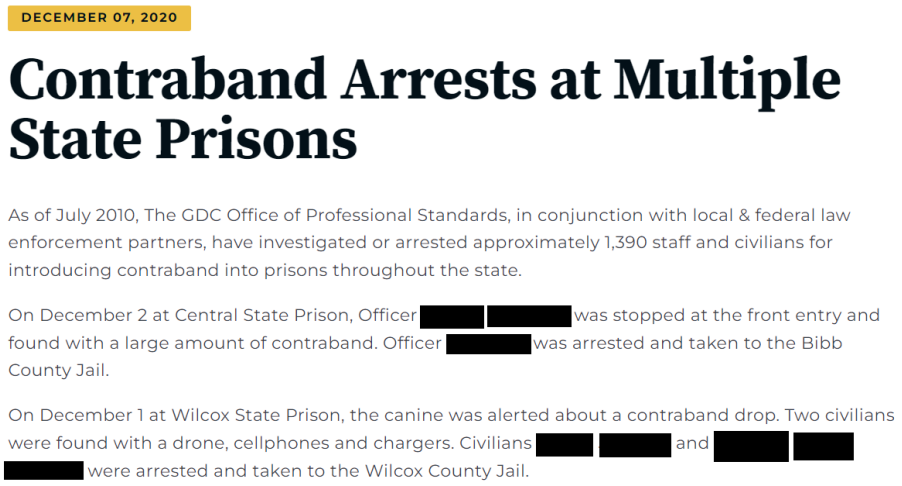
items that were an accessory to smuggling, such as drones, hollowed out footballs, or electrical tape.

For the second dataset, the measures were more clearly outlined. The information included job title and a description of the contraband. Using the job title, the researchers were able to determine who was a correctional officer and who was a non-officer employee. In thirty-three incidents, there was ambiguity and those datapoints were removed. The description of the contraband included phrases such as “Marijuana” “Cellular Phone” and “Unspecified.” This allowed for a clearer interpretation of which items were smuggled into the prison system.

***Data***

As one data point may have multiple incidents, as a person may smuggle in or attempt to smuggle in multiple contraband items, in this instance, multiple categories were reported. For example, a person smuggling both cellular phones and marijuana would be counted as smuggling in both categories. Multiple items of the same type were only counted once, for example, a person smuggling in both cigarettes and cigars would only be counted as smuggling in “tobacco” regardless of amount. Multiple persons reported as a single incident in the press release was only reported as a single datapoint, and there were no reported incidents of multiple types of people smuggling items in the same press release (I.E. officer and visitor specifically named in the same press release).

*Figure 1. Contraband Arrest Press Release from GDC*



DECEMBER 07, 2020

# Contraband Arrests at Multiple State Prisons

As of July 2010, The GDC Office of Professional Standards, in conjunction with local & federal law enforcement partners, have investigated or arrested approximately 1,390 staff and civilians for introducing contraband into prisons throughout the state.

On December 2 at Central State Prison, Officer [redacted] was stopped at the front entry and found with a large amount of contraband. Officer [redacted] was arrested and taken to the Bibb County Jail.

On December 1 at Wilcox State Prison, the canine was alerted about a contraband drop. Two civilians were found with a drone, cellphones and chargers. Civilians [redacted] and [redacted] were arrested and taken to the Wilcox County Jail.

("Contraband Arrests at Multiple State Prisons," 2020).

*Note: The names of those involved have been removed by the author of this article*

Figure 1 displays an example of GDC press releases. Figure 1 would be classified as two incidents. The first incident, occurring on December 2nd, 2020, would be classified as an incident involving an officer in the smuggling category, with unknown/other contraband being placed in the contraband category. The second incident, occurring on December 1st, 2020, would be classified as a single incident involving civilians, attempting to bring in items in the cellular phone category.

The second dataset originated from the Atlanta Journal - Constitution, a news outlet in Georgia that ran a series of articles on correctional officer corruption in the state of Georgia (Robbins, Teegardin, & Norder, 2024). The authors, as well as the Atlanta Journal – Constitution, generously provided me with anonymized data which contained, among other variables, a description of the contraband that the officer is alleged to have smuggled. This data

was analyzed separately from the first dataset due to ambiguity on which officers may have been included in the press release data.

***Data Analysis***

The first portion of this project utilized a Fisher's Exact due to the rarity of incidents, the multiple types of smugglers, and the relatively small sample size for a dataset of this time frame. The distribution of each of the categories was somewhat small, with some contraband and relationship crosstabulations having fewer than twenty incidents per relationship type (see table 1). Despite this limitation, the chosen method was able to gain several significant results. Fisher's exact provides an odds ratio for each category. For this portion, the authors decided to use the officer as the main comparison group. The null hypothesis is that all groups are equal, while the alternative hypothesis states that not all groups are equal in their likelihood to smuggle in each category of contraband. This study is only comparing instances of caught smugglers in each category and examining the smuggling habits of each type of smuggler.

The second portion utilized a chi square goodness of fit test to determine the most likely smuggling habits of officers. This dataset included officers who are fired, those who resigned during investigation, and officers who were arrested. This differs from the first dataset, which only includes arrested persons. The null hypothesis states that there are no differences in the smuggling habits of officers, and therefore all items should be smuggled in within equal proportions, the alternative hypothesis states that there will be differences in items smuggled.

## Results

The purpose of the first portion of this study was to determine which groups were at the highest risk for smuggling which category when compared to correctional officers. The results, indicate a significant difference in every category except for marijuana. The purpose of the second portion of this study was to determine the most likely contraband category among officers and offers an exploratory analysis of officer smuggling behavior. Every category except for unknown contraband was significantly different than the expected results.

Within the tobacco category, civilians had the highest incident rate of any group to introduce tobacco products into Georgia prisons, being approximately 76.5% more likely than a correctional officer to introduce tobacco, this result was both statistically and substantively significant. Other/unknown were 16.6% more likely than correctional officers to smuggle in tobacco, however, this was not statistically significant. Visitors had a significantly lower incident rate per caught smuggler, being approximately 61% less likely to bring in tobacco when compared to officers. Tobacco had the largest sample size with 331 incidents of tobacco smuggling. Within this sample, 49.9% of the smuggling incidents included tobacco,

*Table 2 - Tobacco*

| **Group** | **Odds Ratio** | **P-Value** | **95% CI** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Officers** | - | - | - |
| **Visitors** | 0.387 | **0.000**** | 0.227 – 0.650 |
| **Civilians** | 1.777 | **0.003**** | 1.193 – 2.658 |
| **Unknown/Other** | 1.147 | 0.616 | 0.681 – 1.932 |

** = P < 0.01, * = P <0.05

Officers, Visitors, Tobacco, and Raw Chicken, an Exploratory Analysis of

Within the Marijuana category, no significant differences in marijuana smuggling habits were found when compared to correctional officers. The null hypothesis that officer smuggling habits were different from other groups was not overcome for any category of smuggler.

*Table 3 - Marijuana*

| Group | Odds Ratio | P-Value | 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Officers** | - | - | - |
| **Visitors** | 1.555 | 0.056 | 0.977 – 2.484 |
| **Civilians** | 0.747 | 0.138 | 0.499 – 1.119 |
| **Unknown/Other** | 0.672 | 0.128 | 0.391 – 1.146 |

** = P < 0.01, * = P <0.05

There were two significant results in the cellular phone category, the civilian and other/unknown smugglers. Civilians were approximately 709% more likely to smuggle in cellular phones when compared to correctional officers. Other/unknown persons were approximately 473% more likely to include cellular phones when caught for smuggling. Visitors were nonsignificant, but may be ~ 42% less likely to smuggle cellular phones than officers. Cellular phones were the third most smuggled category in this study, with 234 incidents or 30.9% of smuggling incidents in the sample involving cellular phones.

*Table 4 - Cellular Phones*

| Group | Odds Ratio | P-Value | 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Officers** | - | - | - |
| **Visitors** | 0.674 | 0.346 | 0.292 – 1.518 |
| **Civilians** | 7.13 | **0.000**** | 4.132 – 12.961 |
| **Unknown/Other** | 4.671 | **0.000**** | 2.425 – 9.300 |

** = P < 0.01, * = P <0.05

There was only one significant result in the Alcohol/Other Drugs category, the visitors. Visitors were more than twice as likely as officers to smuggle in Alcohol/Other Drugs. The other two categories, civilian and unknown/other, were not statistically significant. Alcohol/Other Drugs was the smallest category in the sample, with 172 involving Alcohol/Other Drugs, or 22.1% of the sample.

*Table 5 - Alcohol/Other Drugs*

| **Group** | **Odds Ratio** | **P-Value** | **95% CI** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Officers** | - | - | - |
| **Visitors** | 2.054 | **0.011*** | 1.162 – 3.691 |
| **Civilians** | 1.484 | 0.124 | 0.892 – 2.529 |
| **Other/Unknown** | 1.106 | 0.745 | 0.549 – 2.202 |

** = P < 0.01, * = P <0.05

Other/Unknown included items such as weapons, electronics that were not cellular phones, and miscellaneous prohibited items that were not assigned in the prison. This category also included incidents where the items were not identified in the press releases. Note that items such as drug paraphernalia or drug dealing paraphernalia were not included in this category as every incident involving contraband of this nature accompanied the appropriate drug category (I.E. scales with marijuana). Items that were an accessory to the smuggling, such as electrical tape or drones, were also not included in this category. Unusual items found in the sample included raw chicken, firearms, knives, underwear, and gift cards. Within this sample, visitors were less likely to smuggle in these items when compared to correctional officers, but not to the level of statistical significance. Both civilians and unknown/other were statistically and substantively more likely to smuggle in other/unknown contraband items. The Other/Unknown

category was the third largest category. There were 277 total incidents of persons smuggling in Other/Unknown Contraband, making up approximately 35.6% of the sample.

*Table 6 – Other/Unknown Contraband*

| Group | Odds Ratio | P-Value | 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Officers** | - | - | - |
| **Visitors** | 0.688 | 0.176 | 0.386 – 1.216 |
| **Civilians** | 2.327 | **0.000**** | 1.506 – 3.647 |
| **Unknown/Other** | 3.127 | **0.000**** | 1.839 – 5.551 |

** = P < 0.01, * = P <0.05

The second portion of this project is an exploratory analysis of correctional officer smuggling behavior. This Chi Square Goodness of Fit test was statistically significant at <0.01. This sample contained 226 officers and the same categories as before. Rather than comparing officers to a specific group, the Chi Square simply looks at the expected frequency of each smuggling category and determines if there is a statistically significant deviation. The only categories that were significant were Marijuana and Cellular phones. This indicates that officers are more likely than expected to smuggle in marijuana, but less likely than expected to smuggle in cellular phones.

*Table 7 – Officer Arrested or Fired/Quit Contraband*

| Contraband Type | Observed Frequency | Expected Frequency | Standardized Residual | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Marijuana | 100 | 60.4 | 5.70 | **<0.01**** |
| Cell Phones | 17 | 60.4 | -6.24 | **<0.01**** |
| Alcohol/Other Drugs | 62 | 60.4 | 0.23 | 0.81 |
| Tobacco | 57 | 60.4 | -0.48 | 0.62 |
| Unknown/Other | 66 | 60.4 | 0.81 | 0.42 |

** = P < 0.01, * = P <0.05

## Limitations

There were several limitations to this project. The first limitation is that press releases were used as data. Although there have been numerous instances of press releases being used in criminal justice research (Choi & Lee, 2023; Walby & Alabi, 2022; Payne, Hawkins, & Xin, 2018), press releases are not designed for statistical analysis, rather they are designed for use by journalists and the general public. These are distinct from news reports, as news reports and are created in response to a demand for newsworthiness events (Ozgun & Brokel, 2022). Press releases are crafted by organizations with various interests and organizational pressures. Organizations thus may resist using negative language and may highlight more positive developments with the end goal of shaping the news, and eventually shape a positive public opinion (Hong, 2016). Persons in charge of press releases for justice agencies may not be officers and may have specialty backgrounds in communication, rather than law enforcement, additionally, they may have specific training in media (Surette, 1999). These biases may enter the dataset by virtue of including or excluding certain information, especially information related to security. Press releases were also inconsistent in their reporting, occasionally reporting a single incident into multiple reports, or multiple incidents into a single report. Some entries contained little or no usable data, while others contained robust information. Most press releases did not include the amount of contraband brought in, and it is possible that certain groups were able to smuggle in more contraband overall, even if that group was smaller. Due to practicality, a degree of judgement in reading qualitative reports on smuggling activities had to be utilized, while the authors attempted to use the most conservative interpretation of each release, it is possible that there may be inconsistencies.

No control variables were included in the analysis. Key factors such as age, race, SES, and other common variables were unavailable. This study was a correlational study, rather than a causal study, and therefore smuggling habits may change depending on interventions or the economics of the prison's underground economy.

There was no method of determining the size of each category compared to how many persons in that category were accused of smuggling. Figures involving the number of lawful visitors GDC had during the time frame of this study, or how many civilians were illicitly on prison property were unavailable. Analyzing these figures would have provided a more accurate view of the prison smuggling condition and given a rate of smuggling per population, rather than merely counting the number of persons in each relationship category who were caught smuggling contraband. There may be discretion in how minor incidents of smuggling may have been treated by GDC's press release personnel, and thus, fewer incidents may be recorded in the press releases. Officer discretion was could not be examined or controlled for in this study, and it is possible that officers or rank may have chosen not to turn over certain individuals for arrest, particularly individuals with low contraband amounts. It remains unknown how many persons were simply not caught smuggling items during the study period.

Some smuggling methods were not captured in the dataset, such as persons who were caught smuggling in items by mail. The only observed categories involved persons who were attempting to smuggle in items in person. This skews the results away from the civilians who could smuggle in items via mail, and may oversample officers, visitors, and other/unknown. Additionally, since lawful access to the prison facility itself was a prerequisite for certain

categories (Officer and Visitor) and those groups were subject to higher levels of security and scrutiny, the results of which may be skewed towards those categories, and away from civilians.

The sample size for each category was also relatively small, with certain crosstabulations having fewer than twenty incidents. For example, within the "Cellular phone" contraband category, there were only eighteen recorded incidents of officer smuggling (see table 1). While this still provides the sample size necessary for a fisher's exact, future studies may wish to include larger sample sizes with better statistical power. The other/unknown category was the third largest category of contraband with 277 (35.6%) smuggling incidents involving other/unknown contraband, and while other/unknown was the smallest category of smuggler, it involved 110 total incidents, or 14.2% of the total sample.

Operation Skyhawk is credited with intercepting approximately 170 contraband drops between November 2022 and past the end of the study period (Winnie, 2024). It is unknown if this had any impact on the publication of press releases related to contraband smuggling, or if this impacted contraband detection. It is worth noting that there were no reported smuggling attempts where the FBI were the reported arresting agency.

Within the second dataset, there were some ambiguities about who was a correctional officer and who was a non-officer employee or third party contractor. While the vast majority of the cases were clear (with many being labelled "CO," "contractor" or "Teacher") some were ambiguous. Within some prison systems, food service workers are correctional officers, and within others, they are third party contractors. Without knowing which prisons in Georgia, if any, contract their food service and which employee dedicated officers, it is impossible to know whether a food service manager or other kitchen employee is an officer. As such, a small number

of kitchen employees were removed. Store clerks have a similar issue wherein they may have been either contractors or officers. As such, only the strictest definition of officer was utilized, resulting in the removal of 32 possible officers.

## Conclusion

The introduction of contraband creates a dangerous correctional environment, harms rehabilitation efforts, and lowers institutional trust (Goldsmith, Halsey, & Groves, 2016). There have been few studies on what category of person smuggles in which type of contraband. This study should assist correctional managers and researchers in the best methods to deter and stop contraband smuggling by tailoring interdiction methods to each category of person and contraband. These results indicate that the relationship that one has to the prison correlates to which type of contraband that person is likely to smuggle in. Correctional officers smuggle in certain types of contraband more often than other types when compared to other smugglers. Cellular Phones and Other Drugs are the least likely items to be smuggled in by correctional officers, whereas marijuana and tobacco is significantly more common among caught officers.

Within the first portion of this study, smuggling habits of visitors, civilians, and unknown/other were compared to those of correctional officers. This study is among the first to measure and compare which category of person smuggles in what type of contraband into prisons. Visitors were the least likely to smuggle in tobacco (statistically and substantively) when compared to correctional officers but were more likely than officers to smuggle in alcohol/other drugs. Visitor smuggling habits were statistically insignificant in the marijuana, cellular phones, and unknown/other categories. Civilians were more likely than correctional officers to smuggle in tobacco, cellular phones, and unknown/other contraband. There was no category in which

civilians were less likely to smuggle in a specific type of contraband that was statistically significant. Within the Other/Unknown category, this group was more likely to smuggle in cellular phones and other/unknown contraband.

When examining officers more closely, most categories were significant in the chi square. Tobacco and Marijuana were higher than the expected result, Officers were less likely than expected to bring in cellular phones and alcohol/other drugs. Other/unknown was not statistically out of the expected frequency. While further research on the relationship between person type and contraband this is needed, data appears to demonstrate that there is a difference in person category and contraband smuggling habits. The second portion of this study indicates that officers are more inclined to smuggle in marijuana, and less likely than expected to smuggle in cellular phones. There is no statistically or substantive difference from the expected frequency in terms of smuggling tobacco, alcohol/other drugs, or unknown/other contraband. Legislators may wish to use this information to invest in additional methods of security. The type of person does appear to correlate with the type of contraband a person may bring in, and thus, targeting specific groups may reduce specific types of contraband.

Future researchers may wish to use a more robust dataset regarding who is smuggling in which type of item, and may wish to describe the means of entry that were utilized in order to better assist correctional leaders in slowing the illicit contraband trade. Future researchers may also wish to discuss specific strategies to deter those who may wish to bring in contraband, such as by mail, drone, or underneath clothing. The current paper does not examine the criminological theory behind each contraband smuggling group's primary motivation for smuggling, and why it varies. Other variables that future researchers may want to consider is the rate per category,

measuring the smuggling rate per 100,000 officers, visitors, civilians, and others. The current dataset did not allow for an analysis. Future researchers may wish to attempt to acquire inmate visitation logs, rosters of correctional officers, and traffic information near each facility. This information would allow for a more accurate representation of which group is the most responsible for what percentage of each type of contraband.

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