



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

ADVANCE FOR RELEASE AT 9:00 A.M. EDT
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2006
WWW.OJP.USDOJ.GOV/BJS

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METHAMPHETAMINE USE INCREASING AMONG STATE AND FEDERAL PRISONERS

WASHINGTON — Prior methamphetamine use among state and federal prisoners has increased since 1997, according to a new report by the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). The use of methamphetamines in the month before an offense rose from 7 percent of state prisoners in 1997 to 11 percent in 2004. Methamphetamine use at the time of an offense rose from 4 percent to 6 percent during that period. Federal inmates reported similar increases in methamphetamine use.

Prisoner reports about drug use were collected as part of the BJS "Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities." This survey has been conducted periodically since the 1970s, and in 2004 involved confidential personal interviews with a nationally representative sample of approximately 14,500 state and 3,700 federal prisoners.

Women (17 percent of state inmates, 15 percent of federal inmates) were more likely than men (10 percent of both) to have used methamphetamines in the month before their offense. At least 20 percent of white inmates in state and federal prison used methamphetamine in the month before their offense, compared to 1 percent of black inmates. Among Hispanics, 12 percent of state and 5 percent of federal inmates reported methamphetamine use.

A majority of state inmates (53 percent) and almost half of federal inmates (45 percent) were abusing or were dependent on drugs in the year before their admission to prison. Abuse included repeated drug use in hazardous situations or recurrent occupational, educational, legal or social problems caused by drug use. Dependence criteria included a range of behavioral, cognitive and physiological problems. A national survey conducted in 2002 found 2 percent of U.S. residents to be drug dependent or drug abusing.

Nearly half of violent offenders in state prison (47 percent) met the criteria for recent drug dependence or abuse; more than a quarter (28 percent) committed their current offense while under the influence of drugs, and 10 percent said that the need to get money for drugs was a motive in their crimes.

A majority (56 percent) of state inmates used drugs in the month before the offense in 2004, while a third (32 percent) committed their current offense under the influence of drugs. One in six state inmates committed their current offense to get money for drugs. Marijuana remained the most

commonly used drug, with 40 percent reporting use in the month before the offense, followed by cocaine or crack (21 percent), stimulants (12 percent), and heroin and other opiates (8 percent). State prisoner reports of overall drug use in 2004 were almost unchanged since 1997.

Reports of prior drug use by federal prisoners rose on all measures between 1997 and 2004. Among federal inmates, drug use in the month before the offense rose from 45 percent to 50 percent and use at the time of the offense increased from 22 percent to 26 percent. These changes were the result of an increased use of marijuana, methamphetamines and ecstasy.

Participation in drug abuse programs increased among state and federal inmates with recent drug use histories. Among state inmates who used drugs in the month before the offense, 39 percent reported taking part in drug treatment or other drug programs since admission, up from 34 percent in 1997. Forty-five percent of federal inmates had participated in drug treatment or other drug programs in 2004, up from 39 percent in 1997.

Compared to 1997, 63,900 more state prisoners with recent drug use histories reported taking part in some type of drug abuse programs in 2004, an increase of one-third. In federal prisons, the corresponding increase of inmates participating in drug abuse programs was nearly 14,000 – a 90 percent increase over 1997.

The report, "Drug Use and Dependence, State and Federal Prisoners, 2004" (NCJ-213530) was written by BJS policy analyst Christopher J. Mumola and BJS statistician Jennifer C. Karberg. Following publication, the report can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/dudsfp04.htm>.

For additional information on the Bureau of Justice Statistics statistical reports programs, please visit the BJS Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>.

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