



# Facts About...

## HIV Infection in Incarcerated People in King County

**SUMMARY:** Although there have been no comprehensive population-based surveys of HIV infection among persons at the Regional Justice Center in Kent, or the King County Correctional Facility in downtown Seattle, results of a voluntary testing program conducted since 1986 indicate that about 2% of inmates tested were HIV positive. Incarcerated populations tend to have a higher prevalence of HIV infection than the general population, in part because they are more likely to have engaged in high-risk behavior such as injection drug use. There are also very high rates of chronic hepatitis C, a virus that is also spread by sharing injection equipment. HIV and hepatitis C infection among inmates are especially significant health concerns because jail populations, both locally and nationally, continue to increase each year. Close monitoring is warranted.

### STATUS AND TRENDS IN HIV INFECTION:

- The number and rate of people incarcerated in the US has risen dramatically in recent years from 2,092,630 (601/100,000 population) in 1995 to 2,593,460 (686/100,000) in 2001.<sup>1</sup> The HIV prevalence among inmates was estimated to be 2.2% in males and 3.6% in females in 2000.<sup>2</sup> The number known to be HIV+ declined from 25,801 in 1999 to 25,088 in 2000 in federal and state prisons.
- The Washington Department of Health surveyed incoming inmates to state prisons in 1995 and 1997 and found an HIV prevalence of 1.0% in males and 0.8% in females. A total of 90 persons were known to be infected with HIV in state and federal prisons in Washington State by the end of 2000.<sup>2</sup>
- The average daily King County adult and juvenile detention populations increased from 1,946 in 1992 to 2,906 in 2001. The average length of stay was 18.9 days in 2001. Jail staff estimate that on any given day about 1-2% of inmates, or about 60 people, are HIV positive.
- Results of voluntary HIV testing in King County correctional and detention facilities during the past 10 years are shown in Table 1. Of 13,025 persons, 247 (1.9%) people were HIV+.
- As shown in Table 1, HIV prevalence was greatest among men who had sex with men (MSM: 14%) and MSM who reported injecting drugs (MSM/IDU: 8%).
- While the HIV prevalence rate was lower in male and female drug injectors (IDU: 2%), injection drug use was the risk category associated with the largest number of HIV infections: 58 (29%) of the 199 HIV+ men and 24 (50%) of the 48 HIV+ women.

**Table 1: HIV Prevalence among Persons Incarcerated in King County by Gender & HIV Risk, 7/92 - 6/02**

<b>MALES: Risk Category</b>	<b># Tested</b>	<b># HIV positive</b>	<b>% HIV positive</b>
Male-male sex (MSM) and IDU	491	41	8%
MSM	273	38	14%
Injection drug use (IDU)	4,015	58	1%
Partner of HIV positive	116	6	5%
Partner of IDU	1,114	7	1%
Sex for money or drugs	950	8	1%
Other risk <sup>^</sup>	1,486	7	<1%
No risk identified	1,955	34	2%
<b>Total, males</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>2%</b>

<sup>^</sup>'Other risk' category includes transfusion recipients, clients reporting needlesticks or other blood exposure, and clients

reporting multiple heterosexual partners.

**Table 1 (continued):**

<b>FEMALES: Risk Category</b>	<b># Tested</b>	<b># HIV positive</b>	<b>% HIV positive</b>
Injection drug use (IDU)	1,531	24	2%
Partner of MSM	107	2	2%
Partner of HIV positive	27	1	4%
Partner of IDU	227	1	<1%
Sex for money or drugs	214	6	3%
Other risk <sup>^</sup>	194	0	0%
No risk identified	325	14	4%
<b>Total, females</b>	<b>2,625</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>2%</b>

<sup>^</sup>'Other risk' category includes transfusion recipients, clients reporting needlesticks or other blood exposure, and clients reporting multiple heterosexual partners.

**BEHAVIORAL RISKS AMONG IDUs ARRESTED IN KING COUNTY:**

- Public Health-Seattle & King County conducts an interview survey of injection drug users recently arrested and booked into the King County Correctional Facility (the Kiwi Study). Between 8/98 and 7/02, 1,822 persons (76% men and 24% women) participated in the study.
  - ✓ Thirty-eight (2%) of the 1,822 persons tested were HIV positive.
  - ✓ Of the 38 testing positive, 22 (58%) were aware of their HIV infection.
  - ✓ 86% of male participants and 92% of female participants reported a prior HIV test.
- The survey showed injection risk behaviors prior to incarceration were common among the 1,822 IDU interviewed.
  - ✓ The median age when study participants began drug injection was 19 years.
  - ✓ In the past 6 months, 61% had injected with a needle that had been used by somebody else before them.
  - ✓ In the past 6 months, 72% had shared cookers.
  - ✓ In the past 6 months, 61% had backloaded (divided drugs with somebody else using the same syringe).
- The survey also showed that sexual risks were common as evidenced by the report of a history of at least one sexually transmitted disease by 40% of participants.

**OTHER MEASURES OF RISK:**

- **Prevalence of drug injection behavior:** Information from various national studies place the prevalence of drug injection in prison and jail populations at between 12-20%.<sup>2</sup>
- **Prevalence of STDs:** Several studies have documented a higher rate of STDs in incarcerated populations than in the general population. One study of women entering a Washington State prison found a 23% self-reported rate of previous STDs.<sup>3</sup>
- **Hepatitis C infection:** Hepatitis C infection is transmitted by sharing drug injection equipment and is very common among the IDU population in King County. In the Public Health Raven Study, 85% of IDU recently released from jail had hepatitis C infection.

**For more information see CDC's fact sheets on drug use, HIV, and the criminal justice system.**

**Online at:** <http://www.cdc.gov/idu>

<sup>1</sup> Prisoners in 2001. US Department of justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin. Online at: <http://virlib.ncjrs.org/Corrections.asp>

<sup>2</sup> HIV in Prisons 2000. US Department of justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin. Online at: <http://virlib.ncjrs.org/Corrections.asp>

<sup>3</sup>Young DS. Health Status and Service Use among Incarcerated Women. **Family and Community Health**. October 1998, pp16-31.