

METHAMPHETAMINE OFFENDERS IN PRISON

Introduction

On July 1, 2001, there were 230 offenders in Minnesota correctional facilities whose governing offense involved possession, possession with intent to distribute, sale, or manufacturing of methamphetamine. By January 1, 2006, the methamphetamine offender population had increased by 395 percent to 1,138 offenders. At that time, methamphetamine offenders accounted for over half (54%) of all drug offenders.

Methamphetamine offenders still account for the largest share of the drug offender population, however the number of these offenders have been declining in the last few years. The methamphetamine population dropped by 383 inmates in recent

years, from a high of 1,138 on January 1, 2006 to 755 on July 1, 2010. The total drug population also declined during this time but not as rapidly. The drug offender population declined, on average, four percent annually over the last five years compared to eight percent annually for the methamphetamine population.

Demographic Characteristics

The methamphetamine offender population is comprised mostly of white males in their 20s and 30s who were convicted in a non-metropolitan county. Specifically, 84 percent of the 755 offenders are male, and 76 percent are white. Their average age is 36, with 45 percent falling between the ages of 25 and 34. Nearly two-thirds (66%) of methamphetamine of-

fenders were committed by a county outside of the metropolitan area.

Offense and Sentencing Characteristics

Nearly half (47%) of the 755 methamphetamine offenders were convicted of drug possession. One-third (33%) were incarcerated for selling methamphetamine, and an additional 10 percent were incarcerated for possessing methamphetamine with the intent to sell, distribute, or manufacture the drug. Just 11 percent of the offenders were incarcerated for manufacturing or producing methamphetamine. Offenders convicted in a county outside of the metropolitan area were most likely to be incarcerated for manufacturing or selling methamphetamine while those convicted in the metropolitan

area were most likely to be convicted of possession. Most of the methamphetamine offenders were incarcerated either for a first degree offense (38%) or a second degree offense (34%); this finding did not vary significantly by the location of the county in which the offender was convicted.

The average sentence length for methamphetamine offenders was 70.5 months. This is 15 months greater than that of non-methamphetamine drug offenders. Over half (56%) are serving a sentence of five years or more, and approximately

Table 1 - Methamphetamine Offender Percentage of Drug Offender & Total Prison Population

Date	Number of meth offenders*	Number of drug offenders	Meth % of drug population	Total prison population	Meth % of total population	Drug % of total population
7/1/01	230	1,151	20.0	6,428	3.6	17.9
1/1/02	287	1,169	24.6	6,583	4.4	17.8
7/1/02	417	1,337	31.2	6,946	6.0	19.2
1/1/03	517	1,483	34.9	7,073	7.3	21.0
7/1/03	724	1,730	41.8	7,568	9.6	22.9
1/1/04	869	1,859	46.7	7,795	11.1	23.8
7/1/04	1,012	2,047	49.4	8,333	12.1	24.6
1/1/05	1,087	2,090	52.0	8,482	12.8	24.6
7/1/05	1,127	2,178	51.7	8,708	12.9	25.0
1/1/06	1,138	2,109	53.9	8,874	12.8	23.8
7/1/06	1,089	2,039	53.4	9,010	12.1	22.6
1/1/07	993	1,858	53.4	8,900	11.2	20.9
7/1/07	967	1,887	51.2	9,178	10.5	20.6
1/1/08	970	1,893	51.2	9,270	10.5	20.5
7/1/08	928	1,841	50.4	9,224	10.1	20.2
1/1/09	868	1,832	47.4	9,217	9.4	19.9
7/1/09	828	1,851	44.7	9,353	8.9	19.8
1/1/10	833	1,844	45.2	9,619	8.7	19.2
7/1/10	755	1,763	42.8	9,650	7.8	18.3

* Does not include amphetamine

one-fourth are serving a sentence between three and five years in length (Table 2). The average sentence length was shorter for female offenders, inmates under the age of 25, and those incarcerated for possession.

Felony Conviction Histories

Three-fourths of the offenders incarcerated for a drug offense involving methamphetamine have a previous felony conviction (Table 3). Of those with a previous felony conviction, the average number of previous convictions is 4.2. Nearly one-third (31%) had one or two previous felony convictions, and over one-fourth (26%) had five or more previous felony convictions.

The majority (83%) of the 476 offenders with a previous conviction had a previous, felony-level drug conviction, and 72 percent had a previous conviction for a felony-level property offense. Just over one-third (37%) had been convicted of a person offense in the past.

Table 2 - Sentence Lengths of Methamphetamine Offenders

<i>Sentence Lengths</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1-2 years	95	12.6
2-3 years	53	7.0
3-5 years	186	24.6
5-10 years	325	43.0
Over 10 years	96	12.7
Total	755	100.0

Compared to repeat offenders, the 186 offenders who did not have any previous felony convictions were slightly younger on average (34 versus 36 years). Female and Hispanic inmates were more likely to be first-time offenders as well.

Incarceration Histories

As shown in Table 3, just over half (54%) of the offenders incarcerated for a methamphetamine offense on July 1, 2010, were experiencing their first incarceration as an adult

in a Minnesota correctional facility. Offenders incarcerated for the first-time are disproportionately females and Hispanic and are slightly more likely to be incarcerated for selling methamphetamine than possessing or manufacturing methamphetamine. First-time offenders also are slightly younger on average than those with previous incarcerations (35 versus 37 years).

Those who had been incarcerated previously had an average of 1.8 prior prison commitments. Twenty-six percent of the methamphetamine offenders had been incarcerated once before, and 11 percent had been incarcerated twice before. Nine percent of the offenders had three or more prior incarcerations.

Table 3 - Criminal Histories of Methamphetamine Offenders

<i># of prior felony convictions</i>	<i># of offenders with prior felony convictions</i>	<i>Percent</i>
0	186	24.6
1	129	17.1
2	102	13.5
3	74	9.8
4	67	8.9
5 or more	197	26.1
Total	755	100.0

<i># of prior felony incarcerations</i>	<i># of offenders with prior incarcerations</i>	<i>Percent</i>
0	408	54.0
1	195	25.8
2	82	10.9
3	39	5.2
4	21	2.8
5 or more	10	1.3
Total	755	100.0

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