Methamphetamine Drug Threat Assessment

Product No. 2005-Q0317-009 March 2005

National Drug Intelligence Center
U.S. Department of Justice

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Figure 1. Six regions and Primary Market Areas for methamphetamine. San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Phoenix are leading consumption areas and leading distribution centers for the drug as determined through analysis of public health data and law enforcement reporting.

Methamphetamine Drug Threat Assessment

Methamphetamine

Key Findings

- Law enforcement reporting as well as laboratory seizure and arrest data indicates that methamphetamine availability has increased over the past year in the Northeast Region, particularly in rural areas. For example, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System (NCLSS) data show that the number of reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures in the Northeast region increased from 94 in 2002 to 143 in 2003. DEA methamphetamine-related arrests also have increased recently in the Northeast Region from 179 in 2002 to 198 in 2003. Law enforcement reporting indicates that the increase in methamphetamine availability in the Northeast Region is due primarily to a significant increase in wholesale distribution by Mexican criminal groups. Nevertheless, methamphetamine availability in the Northeast remains lower than in any other region of the country.
- The availability of ice methamphetamine has increased in the past year because of an increase in ice production and distribution by Mexican criminal groups; however, this form of the drug is not as widely available in the United States as powder methamphetamine.
- Methamphetamine production appears to have increased sharply in Mexico since 2002 because Mexican criminal groups producing the drug in the United States are having greater difficulty obtaining bulk quantities of pseudoephedrine from Canada. However, Mexican criminal groups have greater access to bulk quantities of pseudoephedrine and ephedrine from China for use in Mexico–based laboratories.
- Methamphetamine smuggling from Mexico into the United States via Arizona appears to have increased sharply since 2001. More methamphetamine was seized at or between ports of entry (POEs) in Arizona in 2003 than at or between POEs in California or Texas.

Introduction and Trends

The threat posed to the United States by the trafficking and abuse of methamphetamine is high and increasing. Methamphetamine availability, production, and distribution are increasing nationally; however, national-level data do not indicate a clear trend—either increasing or decreasing—with respect to rates of methamphetamine use. Nevertheless, demand for the drug is relatively high. In fact, National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) 2003 data indicate that more than 1.3 million persons aged 12 or older used methamphetamine within the past year in 2003.

According to state and local law enforcement agencies, the threat associated with methamphetamine trafficking and abuse has increased sharply since 2002 and now exceeds that of any other drug. NDIC National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) data show that the percentage of state and local law enforcement agencies that identified methamphetamine as the greatest drug threat in their areas has increased from 31.0 percent in 2002, to 36.2 percent in 2003, and 39.6 percent in 2004. NDTS 2004 data further indicate that, for the first time, the percentage of state and local agencies that identified methamphetamine as their greatest drug threat (39.6%) surpassed that of cocaine (35.6%), including crack, and is much higher than marijuana (12.0%), heroin (8.6%), or MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, also known as ecstasy) (0.6%).

According to state and local law enforcement agencies, methamphetamine-related criminal activity has increased concurrently with the rise in the overall threat posed by the trafficking and abuse of the drug. NDTS data show that the percentage of state and local law enforcement agencies that identified methamphetamine as the drug that most contributes to violent crime increased from 31.6 percent in 2003 to 34.2 percent in 2004. Similarly, the percentage of state and local law enforcement agencies that identified methamphetamine as the drug that most contributes to property crime increased from 29.8 percent to 32.7 percent during the same period.

The attendant dangers occasioned by domestic methamphetamine production to individuals, property, and the environment contribute to the overall threat posed by the drug. Law enforcement personnel, first responders, clandestine laboratory operators, and those in proximity to laboratories, particularly children, often are injured as a result of chemical burns, fires, and explosions at clandestine laboratories. In fact, EPIC NCLSS data show that despite a decrease in the number of reported fires and explosions at methamphetamine laboratory sites (from 396 in 2002 to 361 in 2003), the number of reported law enforcement officers injured when responding to methamphetamine laboratories increased from 129 to 255 during the same period.

The environmental damage caused by improper storage and disposal of chemicals and chemical waste attendant to methamphetamine production is severe, and the cost of soil and structure remediation at contaminated methamphetamine production sites is significant. For example, the annual expenditure for domestic clandestine laboratory (predominantly methamphetamine laboratory) remediation by DEA has increased from $2 million in fiscal year (FY) 1995, to $12.2 million in FY1999, and $16.2 million in FY2003.

Child neglect and abuse are common within families whose parents or caregivers produce or use methamphetamine. According to the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime, children who reside with methamphetamine users are more likely to experience neglect as well as physical, sexual, and mental abuse. Furthermore, children who are present in homes where methamphetamine laboratories also are present often sustain injuries, including skin lesions, chemical burns, and respiratory damage, due to drug or chemical exposure. For example, NCLSS 2003 data show that 66.0 percent (589 of 893) of the children reported present at seized methamphetamine laboratory sites subsequently tested positive for toxic levels of chemicals in their bodies.

Availability

Methamphetamine availability has increased in the Northeast Region over the past year. All five DEA Field Divisions (Boston, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C.) and five High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs)—Appalachia, New England, New York/New Jersey, Philadelphia/Camden, and Washington/Baltimore—in the Northeast Region report that methamphetamine availability has increased: one of the Field Divisions (Washington, D.C.) and the Appalachia HIDTA describe the increase as significant. Increasing methamphetamine availability in the Northeast Region also is indicated by data that show increases in the number of DEA arrests as well as Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigations and indictments in the region. According to DEA, the number of arrests for methamphetamine increased from 179 in 2002 to 198 in 2003. Similarly, the number of methamphetamine-related OCDETF case initiations in the Northeast Region increased from 2 in FY2002 to 12 in FY2003. The proportion of OCDETF indictments in which methamphetamine was charged increased from less than 1.0 percent in FY2002 to 12.0 percent in FY2003. Moreover, NCLSS data show that the number of reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures in the Northeast Region increased from 94 in 2002 to 143 in 2003. (See Figure 1 on page iv.)

NDIC Comment: Anecdotal law enforcement reporting indicates that the increase in methamphetamine availability in the Northeast Region is due primarily to a significant increase in wholesale distribution by Mexican criminal groups. According to DEA, Mexican criminal groups are the predominant wholesale distributors of methamphetamine in the region, and their presence in the region is increasing, particularly in Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Law enforcement reporting also indicates that methamphetamine availability in the Northeast is being augmented significantly by a sharp increase in methamphetamine production within the region, particularly by individuals producing small quantities of the drug (usually ounce quantities per cook) in low capacity laboratories. NCLSS data indicate that the number of reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures in the Northeast Region increased from 94 in 2002 to 143 in 2003.

Demand

National-level drug prevalence data indicate that rates of past year use for powder methamphetamine have fluctuated but decreased overall since 1999; however, the number of treatment admissions for methamphetamine has increased sharply over the same period. According to Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) data for 2002, the number of methamphetamine treatment admissions to publicly funded drug treatment facilities increased from 58,795 in 1999, to 66,975 in 2000, to 81,799 in 2001, and 104,481 in 2002.

NDIC Comment: More individuals have independently sought treatment for methamphetamine; however, criminal justice referrals account for the greatest percentage of the increase. In fact, the percentage of treatment admissions for methamphetamine that were the result of criminal justice referrals now appears to account for most treatment admissions for methamphetamine (52.6%)—a rate much higher than for cocaine (26.1%) or heroin (13.0%). TEDS data indicate that the proportion of treatment admissions for abuse of methamphetamine/amphetamine (primarily methamphetamine) resulting from individuals requesting treatment increased from 26.8 percent in 1999 to 27.3 percent in 2000, but has since decreased to 26.0 percent in 2001 and 24.0 percent in 2002. Over the same period, the proportion of treatment admissions for methamphetamine/amphetamine based on criminal justice referrals decreased from 45.6 percent in 1999 to 45.0 percent in 2000, but then increased to 47.8 percent in 2001 and 52.6 percent in 2002.

Production

There are no conclusive estimates regarding methamphetamine production in Mexico; however, methamphetamine production appears to have increased sharply in Mexico since 2002. According to DEA, Mexican criminal groups, particularly those based in Colima, Michoacán, Jalisco, and Nayarit, have increased the number and size of methamphetamine laboratories that they operate in Mexico. Supporting the assertion of increased

methamphetamine production in Mexico is an increase in the amount of methamphetamine seized in Mexico and at land POEs along the Southwest Border. Data from the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) indicate that the amount of methamphetamine reported seized in Mexico increased from 400 kilograms in 2001, to 457 kilograms in 2002, and 652 kilograms in 2003. Furthermore, 2003 EPIC data show that the amount of methamphetamine seized along the Southwest Border increased from 1,130 kilograms in 2002, to 1,733 kilograms in 2003, and 1,168 kilograms through July 2004.

NDIC Comment: Mexican criminal groups appear to be producing greater quantities of methamphetamine in Mexico for distribution in the United States because they have greater access in Mexico to bulk quantities of precursor chemicals, particularly ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. According to law enforcement reporting, Mexican criminal groups purchase bulk quantities of pseudoephedrine tablets, often more than 1 ton per shipment, from sources in China. Law enforcement reporting further indicates that many of the laboratories established during the past 2 years in Mexico are capable of producing multihundred-pound quantities of methamphetamine per production cycle. By comparison, NCLSS data indicate that the largest reported methamphetamine laboratory seized in the United States in 2003 was capable of producing 50 pounds per production cycle.

Transportation

Drug seizure data indicate that methamphetamine smuggling from Mexico into the United States via the Arizona–Mexico border appears to have increased significantly. The amount of methamphetamine seized at or between Arizona POEs has increased from 168 kilograms in 2001, to 313 kilograms in 2002, and 640 kilograms in 2003. In fact, the amount of methamphetamine seized at or between POEs in Arizona in 2003 exceeded seizures at or between POEs in California (593 kg), Texas (484 kg), and New Mexico (16 kg).

NDIC Comment: The sharp increase in the amount of methamphetamine seized at or between POEs in Arizona is more likely an indication of an overall increase in methamphetamine smuggling from Mexico into the United States than a shift in smuggling routes in favor of Arizona POEs rather than California, New Mexico, or Texas POEs. EPIC data show that since 2002—the year law enforcement reporting indicates that methamphetamine production began to increase significantly in Mexico—methamphetamine seizures at or between POEs in California and Texas increased sharply, although not to the extent of the increases in Arizona. From 2002 to 2003 seizures at or between POEs in California and Texas increased from 478 to 593 kilograms and from 305 to 484 kilograms, respectively. Methamphetamine seizures at or between POEs in New Mexico were much lower than the other states along the U.S.–Mexico border in 2002 (33.53 kg) and 2003 (16.15 kg).

Distribution

Ice methamphetamine distribution has increased significantly since 2001 in many of the largest domestic methamphetamine markets. Anecdotal law enforcement reporting indicates that ice distribution has increased sharply in Honolulu, Houston, Denver, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and St. Louis since 2001. In some methamphetamine markets ice is now considered the preferred form of the drug, supplanting powder methamphetamine as the predominant type. For example, DEA and HIDTA reporting indicate that ice methamphetamine now is the type most often distributed locally in Phoenix and San Diego, two of the Primary Market Areas for methamphetamine.

NDIC Comment: Ice distribution has increased in these cities because of a sharp increase in ice production and distribution by Mexican criminal groups seeking the higher profit margins associated with ice distribution. The costs associated with ice production are slightly higher than those of powder methamphetamine, and ice production requires greater knowledge and experience; however, ice methamphetamine often is sold at prices much higher than those of powder methamphetamine (see Table 1 on page 5).

Table 1: National Price Ranges, Methamphetamine, in Dollars, 2003

	Pound	Ounce	Gram
Powder	1,600–45,000	270–5,000	20–300
Ice	6,000–70,000	500–3,100	60–700

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

Availability

There are no conclusive estimates as to the total amount of methamphetamine available in the United States because of limitations in laboratory and drug seizure data and unsubstantiated or unknown laboratory capacity estimates in source areas. However, in attempting to quantify the amount of methamphetamine available in the United States, the interagency Methamphetamine Availability Working Group established an estimated range of 120.2 to 167.4 metric tons of pure methamphetamine in 2001, the only year for which such data are available. These estimates are derived from analysis of limited data and, as such, have a high degree of uncertainty.

Powder methamphetamine is the predominant type available in the United States, and law enforcement reporting as well as drug survey data indicates that, nationally, powder methamphetamine availability is increasing. Every HIDTA and 20 of 21 DEA Field Divisions report increasing availability of powder methamphetamine. According to DEA and HIDTA reporting, powder methamphetamine is readily available throughout the Pacific, Southwest, and West Regions as well as in most areas of the Midwest. Law enforcement reporting also indicates that the drug's availability has increased significantly in the Southeast to the point that methamphetamine is now readily available in many areas throughout the region. Availability also has increased notably in the Northeast Region, where the drug previously was unavailable or available only in limited amounts.

The availability of ice methamphetamine has increased in the past year, but overall this form of the drug is not as widely available in the United States as powder methamphetamine. Of the 21 DEA Field Divisions, 19 report that ice methamphetamine is available and that availability is increasing. Similarly, 14 HIDTAs report that ice methamphetamine is increasing in their areas. DEA and HIDTA reporting further indicates that in Arizona and northern California as well as in some areas of Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, and Seattle ice methamphetamine has supplanted powder methamphetamine as the predominant type available.

The availability of methamphetamine tablets produced in Asia (primarily Burma) appears to be very limited; such tablets are available primarily in northern California. According to DEA, individuals of Hmong and Laotian ethnicity in northern California receive methamphetamine tablets from Burma for personal use and for limited distribution. However, there are no data available to establish reliable estimates as to the amount of Burma-produced methamphetamine tablets available in the United States.

NDTS data indicate that methamphetamine availability has increased significantly over the past 3 years. The percentage of state and local law enforcement agencies reporting methamphetamine availability as high or moderate in their areas increased from 58.8 percent in 2002, to 64.6 percent in 2003, and 65.0 percent in 2004. In 2004 low methamphetamine availability was reported by 28.7 percent of agencies, and only 4.7 percent reported that methamphetamine was not available in their areas. Regionally, the highest percentage of agencies that reported high or moderate methamphetamine availability in 2004 was in the Pacific Region (99.0%), followed by the West (98.5%), Southwest (89.4%), Southeast (78.7%), Midwest (63.5%), and Northeast Regions (23.2%).

The amount of methamphetamine seized annually has fluctuated since 2001, but the data may suggest an increase in the availability of Mexico-produced methamphetamine. According to Federal-wide Drug Seizure System (FDSS) data, the amount of methamphetamine seized by federal agencies decreased significantly from 4,050 kilograms in 2001 to 2,475 kilograms in 2002, but then increased sharply to 3,845 kilograms in 2003. Of the methamphetamine seized since 2001, EPIC data show that an increasing amount was seized at or between POEs along the Southwest Border, an indication of increased smuggling of Mexico-produced methamphetamine into the United States. For example, EPIC data show that the combined amount of methamphetamine seized at or between POEs in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas decreased slightly from 1,214 kilograms in 2001 to 1,130 kilograms in 2002, but has since increased sharply to 1,733 kilograms in 2003 and 1,168 kilograms through July 2004.

DEA data regarding methamphetamine-related arrests show significant decreases overall since 2000; however, the data support anecdotal law enforcement reporting and survey data that indicate methamphetamine availability is increasing in the Northeast Region. DEA arrests for methamphetamine-related offenses decreased steadily from 7,700 in 2000 to 4,595 in 2003 (see Figure 2).

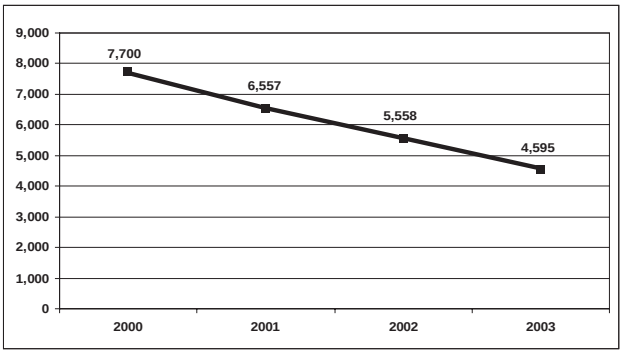

Figure 2. Methamphetamine-related arrests, United States, 2000–2003.

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

This decline is due primarily to a shift in DEA strategy to arrest fewer but higher priority targets. Despite the decrease nationally, however, methamphetamine-related arrests have increased recently in the Northeast Region from 179 in 2002 to 198 in 2003, suggesting an increase in methamphetamine availability in that region, although the number of DEA methamphetamine-related arrests in the Northeast remains much lower than in other regions (see Figure 3).

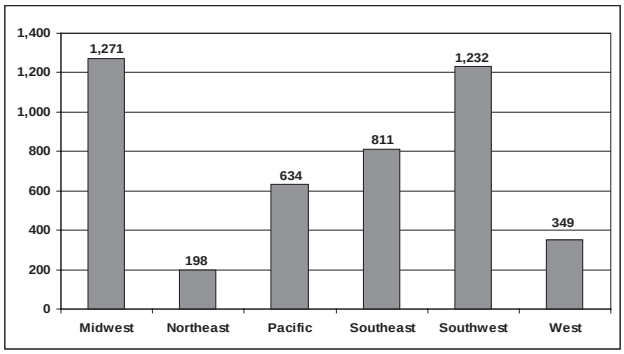

Figure 3. Methamphetamine-related arrests, by region, 2003.

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

National-level drug purity data indicate that average methamphetamine purity has increased sharply since 2001, particularly because of increased availability of high purity ice methamphetamine. According to DEA, the average purity of methamphetamine samples tested increased from 40.0 percent in 2001, to 43.8 percent in 2002, and 57.4 percent in 2003.

There are no national-level data regarding average prices for powder methamphetamine, and therefore the only available data are not a reliable independent indicator of rising or falling availability of the drug. According to DEA, price ranges for wholesale (pound) and midlevel (ounce) quantities of powder methamphetamine have expanded since 2001. However, the price range for retail (gram) quantities was the same in both 2001 and 2003, despite a rise in price in 2002 (see Table 2 on page 7).

As with powder methamphetamine, there are no national price averages for ice methamphetamine. Moreover, DEA price data for ice (reported as national price ranges) are mixed, indicating neither an increase nor a decrease in availability (see Table 3 on page 7).

Table 2: Powder Methamphetamine Prices, in Dollars, 2001–2003

	Pound	Ounce	Gram
2001	3,000-23,000	300-2,200	20-300
2002	6,000-45,000	100-6,000	20-600
2003	1,600-45,000	270-5,000	20-300

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

Table 3: Ice Methamphetamine Prices, in Dollars, 2001–2003

	Pound	Ounce	Gram
2001	8,000-13,000	800-14,000	60-600
2002	6,000-73,000	500-3,000	120-500
2003	6,000-70,000	500-3,100	60-700

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

Forms of Methamphetamine

Powder methamphetamine is the most common form of the drug in the United States. Clandestinely produced powder methamphetamine is crystalline in texture, bitter-tasting, soluble in water, and is produced in several colors including white, pink, red, tan, and brown depending on the production method employed. Powder methamphetamine usually is injected or snorted but also can be ingested orally or smoked.

Ice methamphetamine is a highly pure, very addictive form of methamphetamine resembling shards of ice or chunks of rock salt. Produced primarily in Guam, Hawaii, and Mexico, ice is the product of the process of recrystallizing powder methamphetamine in a solvent such as water, methanol, ethanol, isopropanol, or acetone to remove impurities. Ice typically is smoked using either a glass pipe, an empty aluminum can, a piece of aluminum foil, or a light bulb.

Methamphetamine tablets are produced primarily in Burma and usually contain a combination of powder methamphetamine and caffeine. Methamphetamine tablets found in the United States typically are green or orange-red in color, imprinted with a variety of symbols (most commonly WY or R), and are approximately the size of a pencil eraser. Methamphetamine tablets typically are ingested orally and often are flavored and scented like candy (grape, orange, or vanilla). Tablets also are smoked by placing the tablet on a piece of aluminum foil and passing a heat source underneath the foil until the tablet melts and vapors—which are inhaled—are released. Methamphetamine tablets also can be crushed and snorted or mixed with water and injected.

Types of Methamphetamine

l-methamphetamine (levo-methamphetamine) is produced commercially and is the active ingredient in over-the-counter products sold in the United States. It does not have substantial addictive qualities.

dl-methamphetamine (dextro-levo-methamphetamine) is clandestinely produced using the P2P method, the preferred methamphetamine production method in the late 1970s and early 1980s (see Methamphetamine Production Methods text box on page 11). Although limited, production and use of dl-methamphetamine, which is less potent than d-methamphetamine, have reemerged.

d-methamphetamine (dextro-methamphetamine) is clandestinely produced using ephedrine/pseudoephedrine reduction methods (see Methamphetamine Production Methods). Highly addictive, d-methamphetamine is the most potent, widely abused form of methamphetamine.

Demand

National-level rates of use for methamphetamine are lower than those for many illicit drugs primarily because the drug is largely unavailable to significant portions of the population, such as those in the Northeast (the most populous region in the country) and in large cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and Miami. According to 2003 NSDUH data, the rate of past year use for methamphetamine among persons aged 12 or older (0.6%) was lower than that for marijuana (10.6%), cocaine (2.5%), and MDMA (0.9%) but higher than heroin (0.1%).

Predominant User Groups

National drug prevalence data regarding rates of use for methamphetamine among various age groups are mixed and do not clearly indicate a predominant age group for methamphetamine use. For example, NSDUH 2003 data indicate that the rates of past year use for methamphetamine were much higher among young adults aged 18 to 25 (1.6%) than among adolescents aged 12 to 17 (0.7%) or adults 26 or older (0.4%). However, Monitoring the Future (MTF) 2003 data indicate that the rates of past year use for methamphetamine among tenth (3.3%) and twelfth graders (3.2%) are higher than rates among young adults aged 19 to 28 (2.7%) or college students aged 19 to 22 (2.6%). As is typical of most illicit drugs, the lowest rates of past year use for methamphetamine (2.5%) were reported by eighth graders.

Males are slightly more likely to use methamphetamine than females; however, at younger ages, females appear to use methamphetamine at higher rates than males. According to NSDUH 2003 data, the rate of past year use for methamphetamine among males was 0.7 percent compared with 0.4 percent for females. But MTF data for 2003 show that rates of past year methamphetamine use were higher among eighth and tenth grade females than males. Among all other age groups, past year use was higher among males than females (see Table 4).

Drug prevalence data indicate that adolescent methamphetamine use appears to be highest among White and Hispanic adolescents. MTF 2003 ethnicity data—available only for eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders—show that rates of past year methamphetamine use among White students were 2.7, 4.2, and 3.5 percent for eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders, respectively, similar to rates among Hispanic eighth (3.2%), tenth (4.6%), and twelfth (3.4%) graders. By comparison, rates of past year methamphetamine use among Black students were 0.8, 0.6, and 1.4 percent for eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders, respectively.

Methamphetamine use appears to be higher in rural areas than in large metropolitan areas. MTF data for 2003 show that the rate of past year methamphetamine use among students and adults in rural areas was higher than rates in large metropolitan areas (see Table 5 on page 9).

Table 4: Percentage of Past Year Use of Methamphetamine, by Gender, 2003

	Male	Female
Eighth Graders	2.0	3.0
Tenth Graders	3.0	3.7
Twelfth Graders	3.6	2.9
Adults (ages 19-30)	3.3	1.8

Source: Monitoring the Future.

Table 5: Percentage of Past Year Use of Methamphetamine, by Population Density, 2003

	Rural Areas	Metropolitan Areas
Eighth Graders	3.4	2.0
Tenth Graders	3.7	2.3
Twelfth Graders	5.3	1.8
Adults (ages 19-30)	3.4	2.5

Source: Monitoring the Future.

Trends in Use

According to MTF, past year use of methamphetamine among adults fluctuated but declined overall from 1999 to 2003 (see Figure 4). NSDUH data are available for 2002 and 2003 only and cannot be analyzed for longitudinal trends in rates of use; however, according to the data, rates of past year use for methamphetamine among adults were unchanged at 0.4 percent in both 2002 and 2003.

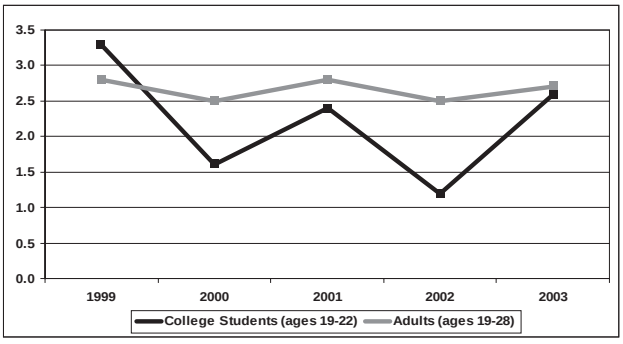

Figure 4. Adult trends in percentage of past year use of methamphetamine, 1999–2003.

Source: Monitoring the Future.

Data regarding methamphetamine use among adolescents also show downward trends overall since 1999. According to MTF 2004 data, the most notable trend in past year use was among eighth graders, who have reported a sharp decline from 1999 to 2004 (see Figure 5). NSDUH data show a decrease in past year methamphetamine use for adolescents aged 12 to 17 from 0.9 percent in 2002 to 0.7 percent in 2003.

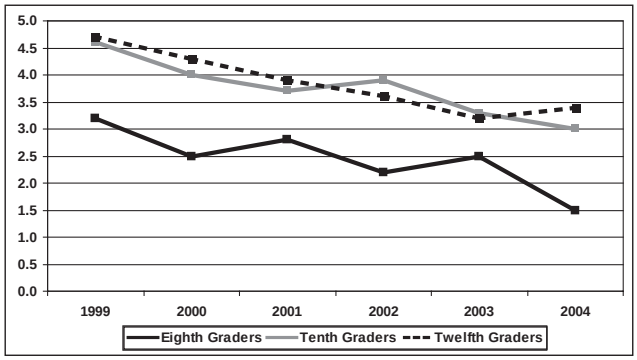

Figure 5. Adolescent trends in percentage of past year use of methamphetamine, 1999–2004.

Source: Monitoring the Future.

Perceptions of Use

Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS) data indicate that most teens perceive great risk in using methamphetamine and that the proportion of teens perceiving risk associated with methamphetamine use has increased overall since 1996 (see Figure 6 on page 10). The percentage of teens who believe there is great risk in people taking methamphetamine regularly has increased slightly from 77 percent in 1996 to 79 percent in 2003. The percentage of teens who believe there is great risk in taking methamphetamine once or twice increased from 41 percent in 1996 to 51 percent in 2003.

Data regarding the perception of risk associated with the use of ice methamphetamine among older teens and adults are mixed. While the percentages of college students and adults saying there is great risk in people trying ice methamphetamine increased

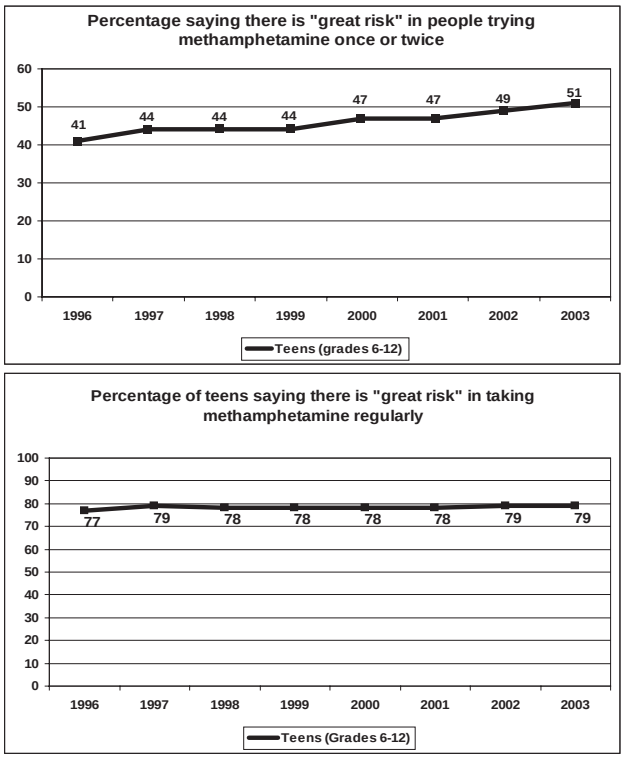

Figure 6. Trends in perceived harmfulness of methamphetamine, teens, 1996–2003.

Source: Partnership Attitude Tracking Study.

overall from 1992 to 2003, data for twelfth graders are less encouraging. The percentage of twelfth graders perceiving great risk in people trying ice fell more than 10 percent from 1992 to 2003 (see Figure 7).

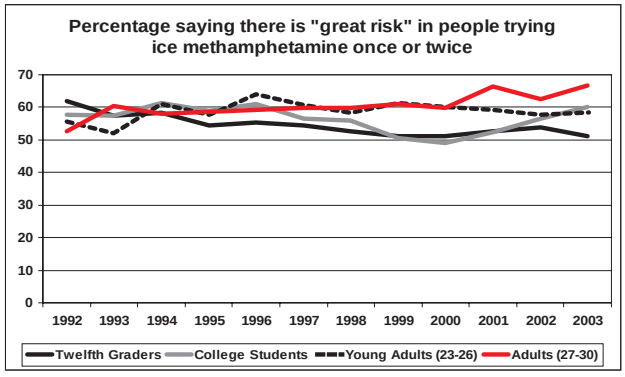

Figure 7. Trends in perceived harmfulness of ice methamphetamine, selected groups, 1992–2003.

Source: Partnership Attitude Tracking Study.

Trends in Consequences of Use

The consequences of methamphetamine use as evidenced by Emergency Department (ED) mentions and treatment admissions are trending upward. Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) data show that the estimated number of ED mentions for methamphetamine fluctuated but increased overall from 15,933 in 1995 to 17,696 in 2002 (see Figure 8). TEDS data show that the number of methamphetamine-related admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities nearly doubled from 47,683 in 1995 to 81,799 in 2001 and increased again to 104,481 in 2002 (see Figure 9).

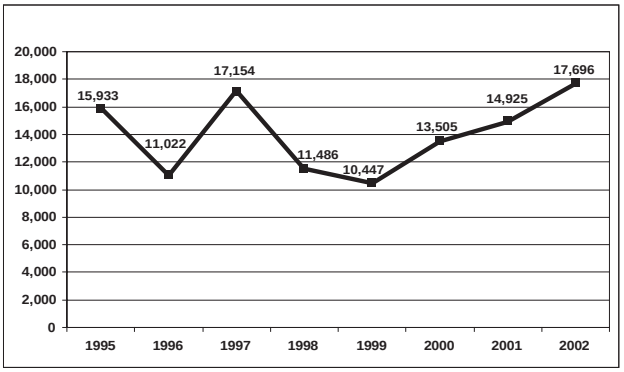

Figure 8. Methamphetamine-related emergency department mentions, estimated number, 1995–2002.

Source: Drug Abuse Warning Network.

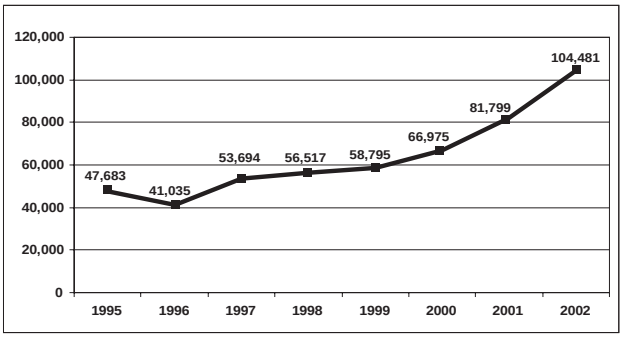

Figure 9. Methamphetamine-related admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities, number, 1995–2002.

Source: Treatment Episode Data Set.

Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) data for 2003 indicate that the median percentage of adult males testing positive for methamphetamine (4.7%) was fourth behind the percentages

testing positive for marijuana (44.1%), powder cocaine (30.1%), and heroin (5.8%). ADAM data also show that the median percentage of adult males reporting past year methamphetamine use was 7.7 percent.

Production

Illegal methamphetamine production occurs in countries throughout the world; however, only methamphetamine produced in the United States, Mexico and, to a lesser extent, Southeast Asia is available in any significant quantity in the United States. There are no conclusive worldwide methamphetamine production estimates, nor are there conclusive production estimates for the three principal methamphetamine source areas that supply U.S. drug markets. Nevertheless, laboratory seizure data suggest expanded domestic methamphetamine production, while law enforcement reporting and limited laboratory seizure data indicate a significant increase in methamphetamine production in Mexico.

Methamphetamine Production Methods

Ephedrine/Pseudoephedrine Reduction

Hydriodic acid/red phosphorus. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, hydriodic acid, and red phosphorus. This method can yield multipound quantities of high quality d-methamphetamine.

Iodine/red phosphorus. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, iodine, and red phosphorus. The required hydriodic acid in this variation of the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method is produced by the reaction of iodine in water with red phosphorus. This method yields high quality d-methamphetamine and typically is used when hydriodic acid supplies are limited.

Iodine/hypophosphorous acid. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, iodine, and hypophosphorous acid. The required hydriodic acid in this variation of the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method is produced by the reaction of iodine in water with hypophosphorous acid. Known as the hypo method, this method results in a high yield of d-methamphetamine and usually is used only when the producer in unable to acquire red phosphorus, although it can be used also when hydriodic acid is in limited supply. The iodine/hypophosphorous acid method is particularly dangerous, often resulting in fires and explosions because of phosphine gas produced during the methamphetamine production process.

Birch. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, anhydrous ammonia, and sodium or lithium metal. Also known as the Nazi method, the Birch method typically yields ounce quantities of high quality d-methamphetamine and typically is used by independent producers.

Phenyl-2-propanone

P2P. The principal chemicals are phenyl-2-propanone, aluminum, methylamine, and mercuric chloride. This method yields lower quality dl-methamphetamine, has been associated with outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs), and is commonly referred to as the P2P method.

Domestic Production

Domestic methamphetamine production occurs in clandestine laboratories that range in capacity from a few ounces to 50 pounds per production cycle. Low capacity laboratories are operated throughout the United States primarily by local independent methamphetamine users; the number of such laboratories appears to be increasing. Large-scale laboratories that yield bulk quantities of methamphetamine are typically operated by Mexican criminal groups in California.

New Mexico Laws Targeting Methamphetamine Production Enacted

On July 1, 2004, two New Mexico State laws that are intended to reduce methamphetamine production and the exposure of children to methamphetamine laboratory hazards went into effect. The first, House Bill (HB) 112, allows for a child abuse charge against anyone who exposes a child to the production of a controlled substance or allows a child to enter or remain in any building containing chemicals and equipment used to produce a controlled substance. Suspected violators will be charged with a third-degree felony on the first offense and a second-degree felony on the second or subsequent offense. If such exposure results in bodily harm or death of the child, the individual will be charged with a first-degree felony. The second law, HB 111, provides the Board of Pharmacy with the authority to add substances to the list of drug precursors and increases penalties for possession, manufacture, or transportation of drug precursors without a license from a misdemeanor to a fourth-degree felony on the first offense.

Source: New Mexico State Legislature.

NDTS data indicate expanding methamphetamine production. According to NDTS 2004 data, 49.6 percent of state and local law enforcement agencies nationwide describe the level of methamphetamine production in their areas as high or moderate, up slightly from 48.8 percent in 2003. At the same time, the percentage of agencies reporting that methamphetamine is not produced in their areas decreased from 23.2 percent in 2003 to 21.5 percent in 2004. A much higher percentage of agencies in the Pacific (76.1%), Southwest (75.1%), West (74.3%), and Southeast Regions (67.1%) report high or moderate methamphetamine production in their areas than agencies in the Midwest (46.4%) or Northeast (9.9%) Regions.

NCLSS data also indicate widespread domestic methamphetamine production. According to NCLSS, methamphetamine laboratory seizures were reported in 46 states in 2003; more laboratory seizures were reported in the Midwest Region (3,038) than in the Southeast (2,847), Southwest (1,874), Pacific (1,460), West (820), or Northeast Regions (143). NCLSS data further show that there has been a steady increase in the number of reported laboratory seizures since 1999 (see Figure 10 on page 13) and that reported seizures increased in eastern states but decreased in many western states. From 2002 to 2003 the number of reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures increased in the Southeast (1,906 to 2,847), Midwest (2,540 to 3,038), and Northeast Regions (94 to 143), but declined in the Pacific (1,738 to 1,460) and West Regions (1,078 to 820).

Reported seizures of high capacity superlabs, those capable of producing 10 or more pounds of methamphetamine per production cycle, have decreased, likely contributing to the decline in total methamphetamine laboratory seizures in western states. NCLSS data show that reported seizures of superlabs decreased sharply from 246 in 2001, to 144 in 2002, and 133 in 2003. Despite declines in reported laboratory seizures in the Pacific, most seizures of superlabs still occur in that region, particularly in California. Of the 133 reported superlab seizures in 2003, 128 were reported in California.

Law enforcement reporting and laboratory seizure data indicate that most superlabs in California are controlled by California- and Mexico-based criminal groups and are located in southern and central California. According to Los Angeles HIDTA reports, four southern California counties (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino)

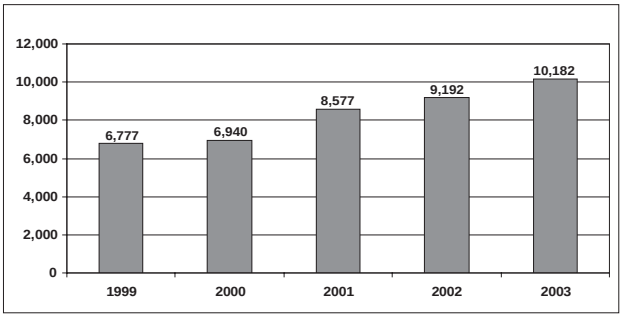

Figure 10. Methamphetamine laboratory seizures, number reported, 1999–2003.

Source: National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System.

accounted for 55.8 percent (475 of 851) of the reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures in California in 2003 including 43.0 percent (55 of 128) of reported superlab seizures. The Central Valley HIDTA reports that nine central California counties (Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare) accounted for 20.5 percent (175 of 851) of the reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures in California including 43.0 percent (55 of 128) of reported superlab seizures.

HIDTA reporting indicates that Mexican criminal groups, some based in the Los Angeles area, often travel to rural or remote areas of southern and central California to produce methamphetamine, subsequently returning to the Los Angeles area to distribute the drug. Many of the groups maintain close family and social ties with individuals in Culiacán and Michoacán, Mexico, to recruit laboratory workers who come to California for a few months to produce methamphetamine and then return to Mexico.

Methamphetamine Superlab Seized

On February 7, 2004, agents from the Stanislaus Drug Enforcement Agency, California Multijurisdictional Methamphetamine Enforcement Team, and Central Valley HIDTA arrested five Mexican nationals and seized an operational methamphetamine laboratory located in a residence in Modesto. Authorities had received information that several men who were staying at the residence had acquired large amounts of chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine. Agents observed the residence for about a week and, after observing several men taking supplies commonly used to produce methamphetamine into the residence, obtained a search warrant. Shortly after the warrant was obtained, agents observed a suspect loading garbage bags into the backseat of his car before leaving the residence. The suspect was followed until he was away from the residence, when officers stopped his vehicle. A search of the vehicle revealed two garbage bags containing 80 pounds of ephedrine. The driver was arrested and charged with manufacturing methamphetamine and possession of a controlled substance for sale. After his arrest, agents prepared to serve the search warrant on the residence. Just prior to entering the residence, four suspects were observed fleeing. Three suspects were captured, arrested, and charged with manufacturing methamphetamine, criminal conspiracy, and resisting arrest. The fourth suspect was found in a trailer located on the property; he was arrested and charged with manufacturing methamphetamine, criminal conspiracy, battery on a police officer, and resisting arrest. Inside the residence agents found evidence of methamphetamine manufacture in every room. They seized over 300 gallons of alcohol, 96 pounds of red phosphorus, 80 pounds of ephedrine, and several weapons. This laboratory was the largest ever seized in Stanislaus County.

Source: Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department.

Low capacity laboratories, those capable of producing less than 1 pound per production cycle, represent an even greater proportion of seized laboratories since the number of superlab seizures has declined in recent years. For example, low capacity laboratories accounted for 83.4 percent (7,667 of 9,192) of all seized laboratories in 2002 and 91.3 percent (9,297 of 10,182) in 2003.

Law enforcement reporting indicates that most methamphetamine production in central and eastern states occurs in low capacity laboratories operated by independent producers using the Birch or red phosphorus methods. NCLSS 2003 data show that of the 6,028 methamphetamine laboratories seized in the Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast Regions, 94 percent were small, mobile laboratories capable of producing less than 9 ounces of methamphetamine per production cycle. Every HIDTA office in the Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast Regions, with the exception of the Puerto Rico/U.S. Virgin Islands HIDTA, reports that most local methamphetamine production is conducted by local independent producers using either the Birch or red phosphorus methods. Only the Philadelphia/Camden HIDTA reported that OMGs in its area produce methamphetamine via the P2P method as well.

Foreign Production

Law enforcement reporting and seizure data show that methamphetamine produced in Mexico and Southeast Asia, as well as in Canada, is available to varying degrees in U.S. drug markets; however, only Mexican methamphetamine is smuggled into the United States in quantities adequate for national-level distribution.

Mexico. Mexico is the principal source of foreign-produced methamphetamine available in the United States. There are no conclusive estimates as to the amount of methamphetamine produced in Mexico; however, an interagency working group estimated that the amount of Mexico-produced methamphetamine seized in the United States was 0.97 metric ton in 2001 and 1.1 metric tons in 2002, the most recent year for which such data are available. Law enforcement reporting indicates that methamphetamine production in Mexico is considerable, and there is wide consensus among law enforcement agencies that production in Mexico has increased significantly since 2002, yet few data are available to confirm this assertion other than an apparent increase in methamphetamine seizures at or between land POEs along the Southwest Border (see Transportation section on page 16). According to DEA, most methamphetamine production in Mexico occurs in the southwestern states of Colima, Michoacán, Jalisco, and Guerrero and in the northern states of Baja California and Sonora. The hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method is the primary method of production in Mexico; however, the P2P method is also commonly used.

Southeast Asia. Southeast Asian criminal groups produce large quantities of ice methamphetamine in laboratories located primarily in China and, to a lesser extent, the Philippines, Taiwan, and South Korea. According to DEA, Chinese criminal groups manufacture multikilogram quantities of ice per production cycle in mobile laboratories located in eastern and southeastern provinces of China. Most ice produced in China is intended for domestic distribution; China-produced ice also supplies drug markets in other Asian countries and the United States, particularly in the Philippines, Hawaii, and Guam.

Burmese criminal groups are the principal producers of methamphetamine tablets in Southeast Asia. Intelligence reports indicate that Burmese criminal groups produce several hundred million methamphetamine tablets annually for distribution in drug markets in Thailand, China, and India. According to DEA, some shipments of methamphetamine tablets from Burma have been received by ethnic Hmong and Laotian individuals primarily in the Sacramento area. However, there are no reliable seizure data regarding Burma-produced methamphetamine tablets en route to the United States or any reliable estimates as to the amount of Burma-produced methamphetamine tablets available in the United States. Methamphetamine tablet production also has been reported in Malaysia and Fiji; however, there are no estimates as to the amount of methamphetamine tablets produced in those countries nor are there specific reports of methamphetamine tablets produced in Malaysia or Fiji available in the United States.

Canada. The amount of methamphetamine produced in Canada is relatively low compared with the United States; however, production levels in Canada may be increasing. According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the amount of methamphetamine produced in Canada

primarily by Canada-based OMGs, Asian criminal groups, and independent traffickers is increasing, as evidenced by an increase in the number of reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures in Canada from 13 in 2001, to 25 in 2002, and 39 in 2003. RCMP reporting also indicates that the amount of Canada-produced methamphetamine seized en route to the United States has increased since 1998; however, there are no quantifiable data to support this assertion. In fact, EPIC data show that the amount of methamphetamine seized at or between POEs along the Northern Border is low and decreased from 3.3 kilograms in 2002 to 0.2 kilogram in 2003.

Precursor Chemicals

Most operators of high capacity methamphetamine laboratories in the United States and Mexico produce the drug by utilizing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, precursor chemicals produced in China, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Switzerland, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates. Ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are shipped from these production countries throughout the world to the United States, Canada, and Mexico for legitimate use. However, some ephedrine and pseudoephedrine is diverted from the intended legitimate purpose by criminal groups for use in illicit methamphetamine production, particularly in California and Mexico.

Since the late 1990s, most operators of domestic superlabs have produced methamphetamine using bulk quantities of ephedrine or pseudoephedrine tablets diverted from Canada. Middle Eastern (Armenian, Jordanian, Lebanese, Syrian, and Yemeni) criminal groups and other individuals based in Canada and the United States purchase pseudoephedrine tablets in bulk—often in the millions—from legitimate wholesale chemical distributors in Canada and smuggle the tablets across the Northern Border in private and commercial vehicles through or between land POEs such as Detroit and Port Huron in Michigan. The tablets usually are transported to stash sites in the United States before being distributed to methamphetamine producers for use in high capacity laboratories, particularly those located in central and southern California. Pseudoephedrine diversion groups also transport smaller shipments of diverted ephedrine and pseudoephedrine from Canada to methamphetamine producers in the United States via mail services and, to a lesser extent, via couriers on commercial flights.

Recent anecdotal law enforcement reporting indicates that more domestic superlabs are producing methamphetamine using ephedrine or pseudoephedrine diverted from Asia. According to DEA, recent legislation in Canada designed to reduce ephedrine and pseudoephedrine diversion appears to have led many methamphetamine laboratory operators in the United States—particularly operators of high capacity laboratories—to begin using bulk quantities of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine obtained from sources in Asia but usually smuggled into the United States via Mexico. Moreover, several law enforcement operations have been successful in reducing the availability of pseudoephedrine tablets smuggled into the United States from Canada. In fact, law enforcement reporting indicates that seizures of Asia-produced pseudoephedrine products at methamphetamine superlabs in California have increased. For example, the Los Angeles County Regional Criminal Information Clearinghouse reports that pseudoephedrine products manufactured in Hong Kong have been seized at several clandestine methamphetamine laboratory sites in California since 2002. In addition, in February 2004 the Stanislaus Drug Enforcement Agency discovered a methamphetamine laboratory with three large trash bags containing empty 1,000-tablet bottles of Asia-produced pseudoephedrine. Such seizures previously were very uncommon.

Asian pseudoephedrine products also are used at methamphetamine laboratories in Mexico. Law enforcement reporting indicates that multiton quantities of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are transported each year to Mexico and that some are illegally distributed to methamphetamine producers by criminal groups. For example, law enforcement reporting indicates that between April 2002

and July 2004 nearly 80 undocumented shipments of pseudoephedrine and ephedrine were transported from Hong Kong to Mexico via the United States, Panama, or Europe for subsequent distribution to methamphetamine producers in southwestern Mexico.

Transportation

Methamphetamine is transported by numerous criminal groups using a wide range of conveyances. Mexican criminal groups, local independent dealers, street gangs, OMGs, and Asian criminal groups smuggle methamphetamine into and transport it within the United States. Most methamphetamine is transported via private vehicles although some, particularly tableted methamphetamine, is transported via commercial vehicles, mail services, couriers aboard commercial flights, and maritime conveyances.

Routes From Foreign Source Areas

Most methamphetamine transported from foreign sources is smuggled into the United States overland via private vehicles and commercial vehicles. According to EPIC seizure data, the amount of methamphetamine seized at or between land POEs from 2001 through 2003 was 4,081 kilograms, compared with approximately 85 kilograms seized from commercial flights and 5 kilograms seized from maritime conveyances.

Mexico. Mexican criminal groups based in Mexico smuggle bulk quantities of methamphetamine via couriers traveling in private and commercial vehicles, usually equipped with hidden compartments, or by foot through and between land POEs along the Southwest Border. These criminal groups also smuggle small shipments (2 kg to 4 kg) via couriers aboard commercial flights and via mail services. Methamphetamine shipments often are transported to stash sites and staging areas, primarily in California and Arizona, before the drug is distributed locally, regionally, or nationally.

Methamphetamine transported from production areas in Mexico to the Southwest Border typically has been smuggled through and between POEs in California; however, recent data indicate that more methamphetamine may now be smuggled through or between POEs in Arizona than other Southwest Border states. According to EPIC seizure data, the combined amount of methamphetamine seizures from 2001 through 2003 at or between POEs in California (1,725 kg) was much higher than the amount seized at or between POEs in Texas (1,145 kg), Arizona (1,120 kg), or New Mexico (60 kg). However, in 2003 the amount seized in Arizona (640 kg) surpassed seizures in the other Southwest Border states including California (593 kg), Texas (484 kg), and New Mexico (16 kg) possibly because of specific law enforcement operations conducted in Arizona (see Figure 11).

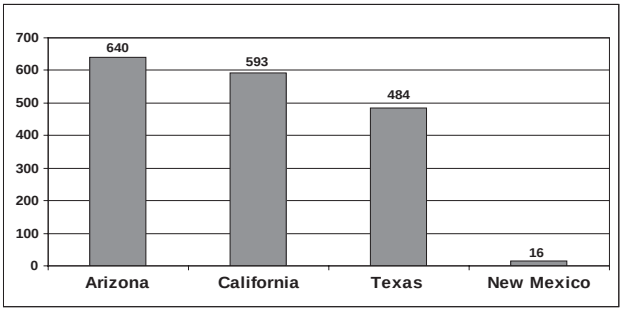

Figure 11. Methamphetamine seizures at or between ports of entry, in kilograms, 2003.

Source: El Paso Intelligence Center.

There are seven principal POEs through which methamphetamine is smuggled from Mexico into the United States: Calexico, Otay Mesa, and San Ysidro in California; Nogales in Arizona; and Hidalgo, Laredo, and Pharr in Texas. EPIC seizure data show that from 2001 through 2003 more methamphetamine was seized at the San Ysidro POE (845 kg) than any other, although seizures during the same period at Nogales (645 kg), Calexico (382 kg), Otay Mesa (195 kg), Laredo (136 kg), Hidalgo (133 kg), and Pharr (129 kg) were significant.

Once inside the United States, methamphetamine is transported from principal POEs to drug markets throughout the country, particularly to the Primary Market Areas of Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Diego, and San Francisco.

Southeast Asia. Law enforcement reporting indicates that Asian drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), including ethnic Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Thai, and Vietnamese, transport ice methamphetamine to the Pacific Region from source countries in Asia via mail services and passengers on commercial flights to California and Hawaii. Tableted methamphetamine also is transported to the United States from Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand and Laos, via mail services and couriers on commercial flights. EPIC data show that Honolulu, Los Angeles, and San Francisco International Airports are the primary POEs for methamphetamine tablets smuggled into the United States. Seizure data further show that methamphetamine tablet seizures for 2001 through 2003 combined were slightly higher in San Francisco (33,490 tablets) than in Honolulu (33,470 tablets); seizures in both cities were much higher than in Los Angeles (18,416 tablets). The Louisville POE in Kentucky reported the most methamphetamine tablets seized (111,650) in 2003; however, these tablets were seized in a single incident.

Canada. Methamphetamine smuggling from Canada through and between POEs along the Northern Border occurs at a very low level, and seizure data do not indicate any principal POEs along this border. EPIC data show that from 2001 through 2003, less than 4 kilograms of methamphetamine were seized at or between POEs along the Northern Border.

Routes From Domestic Source Areas

California is the only state with methamphetamine production sufficient to supply wholesale quantities to regional and national markets. Methamphetamine produced in California typically is transported via private vehicle to Primary Market Areas and other significant methamphetamine markets including those in the central and eastern United States.

Distribution

Powder methamphetamine and, increasingly, ice methamphetamine are distributed to a varying degree throughout the country. Law enforcement reporting indicates that powder methamphetamine distribution is widespread in the Midwest, Pacific, Southwest, and West Regions, moderate and increasing in the Southeast Region, and limited but increasing in the Northeast Region. Law enforcement reporting indicates that Mexican criminal groups control most wholesale distribution of powder methamphetamine in the Pacific, Southwest, and West as well as in many areas of the Midwest, Southeast, and Northeast Regions where wholesale quantities of Mexican methamphetamine are distributed. Mexican criminal groups also control most midlevel distribution of powder methamphetamine throughout the country, particularly in the Pacific, Southwest, and West Regions, and supply other Mexican criminal groups, OMGs, and independent Caucasian and Hispanic midlevel distributors in all regions of the country. Retail powder methamphetamine distributors include Caucasian independent dealers, Hispanic street gangs, and OMGs; Caucasian independent dealers control most retail distribution in rural areas, which often consists of distributing small amounts of methamphetamine that they produce.

The distribution of ice methamphetamine, once limited to Guam, Hawaii, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Samoa, now is pervasive throughout the Pacific and Southwest Regions, and in many areas of the Midwest and West Regions. Ice distribution is comparatively limited in the Southeast and Northeast but has increased in these regions since 2002. California- and Mexico-based Mexican criminal groups control most wholesale

distribution of ice methamphetamine in the United States; however, Asian criminal groups (including ethnic Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Thai, and Vietnamese) distribute wholesale amounts of the drug to a limited number of drug markets in the Pacific Region. Retail ice distributors include Caucasian independent dealers, Hispanic street gangs, and OMGs.

Primary Market Areas

Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Diego, and San Francisco are the Primary Market Areas for methamphetamine because these cities have very high levels of methamphetamine abuse and are among the leading regional- or national-level methamphetamine distribution centers. Several other significant markets for methamphetamine either exhibit high levels of consumption or serve as distribution centers for the drug, although not to the extent of the four Primary Market Areas. For example, methamphetamine use in Seattle appears to be considerable as evidenced by a high number of ED mentions for methamphetamine; however, drug seizure data do not substantiate Seattle as a distribution center for methamphetamine at a level comparable with the Primary Market Areas. Conversely, Dallas appears to be a significant distribution center for methamphetamine based on EPIC drug seizure data; however, methamphetamine consumption in Dallas appears to be much lower than in the Primary Market Areas.

Methamphetamine use and distribution are extensive throughout the central United States and in many areas of the Southeast; however, the data indicate that no city in central or southeastern states has demonstrated a level of methamphetamine consumption or distribution comparable with that of the Primary Market Areas. Law enforcement agencies in states such as Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas report widespread distribution; however, this distribution usually entails the sale of small amounts among friends and family members who produce methamphetamine in low capacity laboratories. To the extent that wholesale methamphetamine distribution occurs in these states, it usually involves the distribution by members of Mexican criminal groups of methamphetamine produced in Mexico or California superlabs. Despite limited data regarding methamphetamine consumption for most of the states listed above, the data that are available indicate significantly lower use in central and southeastern states than in the Primary Market Areas. For example, DAWN data for 2002 show that the number of methamphetamine-related ED mentions was much lower for Minneapolis (319), Atlanta (246), St. Louis (150), Dallas (98), and Chicago (42) than for Los Angeles (1,713), San Francisco (727), San Diego (598), and Phoenix (501).

Los Angeles. Methamphetamine use in Los Angeles is very high as evidenced by more ED mentions than any other DAWN reporting city. According to DAWN, the estimated number of methamphetamine-related ED mentions for Los Angeles (1,713) was much higher than the next highest city, San Francisco (727).

Methamphetamine distribution is pervasive throughout the Los Angeles area. According to the Los Angeles HIDTA, 63 of 110 identified criminal organizations in the Los Angeles area distribute methamphetamine. Mexican criminal groups control most wholesale and midlevel methamphetamine distribution within the Los Angeles area and also control most wholesale distribution of the drug from Los Angeles to other markets throughout the country. Hispanic street gangs, including 18th Street, Mara Salvatrucha, and Southside Gang, as well as prison gangs such as Mexican Mafia control most retail methamphetamine distribution in the Los Angeles area; however, local independent dealers also distribute the drug at the retail level.

EPIC drug seizure data indicate that Los Angeles is likely the largest distribution center for methamphetamine in the United States. Combined EPIC Pipeline, Convoy, and Jetway drug seizure data for 2002 and 2003 show that law enforcement reported 78 methamphetamine seizure events on domestic highways, railways, and at airports in which the Los Angeles area was identified as the

city of origin for the methamphetamine shipment. Moreover, significantly more methamphetamine was seized in 2002 and 2003 that originated in the Los Angeles area (259 kg) than any other city. Drug seizure data also show that methamphetamine is distributed from the Los Angeles area to other significant markets including Atlanta, Denver, Des Moines and Davenport (IA), Kansas City (KS), Kansas City (MO), and San Francisco.

Phoenix. Methamphetamine use in Phoenix is high and increasing as evidenced by a high number of ED mentions and an increase in methamphetamine-related deaths. According to DAWN data for 2002, Phoenix ranked fifth among DAWN reporting cities in the estimated number of ED mentions for methamphetamine (501) behind Los Angeles (1,713), San Francisco (727), San Diego (598), and Seattle (541). DAWN mortality data show that the number of methamphetamine-related deaths in Phoenix has increased steadily, more than doubling from 60 in 1998 to 132 in 2002.[1] Moreover, the proportion of methamphetamine-related deaths to all drug-related deaths increased from 15.3 percent in 1999 to 25.5 percent in 2002.

Mexican DTOs and criminal groups control most wholesale methamphetamine distribution in Phoenix, supplying midlevel and retail quantities to Hispanic street gangs such as Wetback Power and Sureños, OMGs such as Hells Angels, and Caucasian and Mexican independent dealers. Phoenix-based independent producers also distribute retail quantities of the methamphetamine they produce.

EPIC Pipeline, Convoy, and Jetway data indicate that Phoenix is a significant distribution center for methamphetamine. Combined EPIC data for 2002 and 2003 show that law enforcement officials reported 19 methamphetamine seizure events in which Phoenix was identified as the city of origin for the shipment. Only Los Angeles (78) and San Francisco (22) were identified more often than Phoenix as the city of origin for methamphetamine shipments destined for domestic drug markets. Furthermore, more methamphetamine was seized in 2002 and 2003 that originated in Phoenix (69 kg) than any other city with the exception of Los Angeles (259 kg). EPIC data indicate that methamphetamine is distributed to several significant drug markets in the Midwest, Northeast, and Pacific Regions, including Akron (OH), Detroit, Kansas City (MO), Las Vegas, Minneapolis, New York, Philadelphia, and Rapid City (SD).

San Francisco. The level of methamphetamine consumption in San Francisco is very high compared with most other cities. According to DAWN data, the estimated number of methamphetamine-related ED mentions in San Francisco increased from 611 in 2001 to 727 in 2002, second only to Los Angeles (1,713).

Mexican criminal groups control most wholesale and midlevel distribution of powder and ice methamphetamine in San Francisco, although Hawaiian, Filipino, and other Asian DTOs control the distribution of the ice they produce, particularly within Asian communities. Independent dealers and street gangs such as Mara Salvatrucha, 19th Street, Sureños, Trece, and Eddy Street Mob are the primary retail distributors of methamphetamine in the San Francisco area.

EPIC Pipeline, Convoy, and Jetway drug seizure data show that the San Francisco area is among the leading methamphetamine distribution centers. Combined EPIC data for 2002 and 2003 indicate that law enforcement officials reported 22 powder methamphetamine seizure events on domestic highways, railways, and at airports in which the San Francisco area was identified as the origin for the methamphetamine shipment. In fact, only Los Angeles (78) was identified more often than San Francisco as the city of origin for methamphetamine seizure events. Furthermore, more methamphetamine was seized that originated in the San Francisco area (54 kg) than any other city, with the exception of Los Angeles (259 kg) and Phoenix (69 kg). EPIC seizure data indicate that methamphetamine is distributed from the San Francisco area to drug markets throughout the country including

1. DAWN mortality data include information on drug-induced and drug-related deaths identified and submitted by death investigation jurisdictions participating in DAWN.

Anchorage, Des Moines (IA), Dutch Harbor (AK), Lihue (HI), Lynn Haven (FL), Memphis, New York, Omaha, Rupert (ID), and Sioux City (IA).

San Diego. Methamphetamine use in San Diego is very high. According to DAWN, the estimated number of methamphetamine-related ED mentions for San Diego (598) was surpassed only by Los Angeles (1,713) and San Francisco (727) among DAWN reporting cities in 2002.

Mexican DTOs and criminal groups are the primary wholesale and midlevel distributors of methamphetamine in the San Diego area. Street gangs and local independent dealers, usually supplied by Mexican criminal groups, control most retail distribution; however, independent producers also distribute smaller amounts of the methamphetamine they produce.

EPIC Pipeline, Convoy, and Jetway data indicate that San Diego is among the leading methamphetamine distribution centers. Combined EPIC data for 2002 and 2003 show that law enforcement officials reported 19 powder methamphetamine seizure events on domestic highways, railways, and at airports in which the methamphetamine shipment originated in the San Diego area. In fact, only Los Angeles (78) and San Francisco (22) were identified more than the San Diego area as cities of origin for methamphetamine shipments. Furthermore, the amount of methamphetamine seized during those events (29 kg) in 2002 and 2003 was exceeded only by the amount seized in Los Angeles (259 kg), Phoenix (69 kg), and the San Francisco area (54 kg). Drug seizure data also show that methamphetamine is distributed from the San Diego area to regional and national drug markets such as Atlanta, Chicago, Columbus (OH), Dallas, Fort Lauderdale, Honolulu, Houston, Meridian (MS), Philadelphia, St. Paul (MN), and Washington, D.C.

Outlook

Reported increases in domestic and foreign production of methamphetamine should raise availability levels in domestic markets overall, exposing an increasing number of potential new users to the drug and sustaining the demand among established methamphetamine users. As a result, the consequences of methamphetamine use are likely to continue to rise as more users experience the negative health effects brought on by methamphetamine use.

Anecdotal law enforcement reporting, drug survey data, arrest data, and laboratory seizure data indicate that methamphetamine availability, production, and distribution have increased in the Northeast Region since 2002, a situation likely to continue in the near term. Most of the methamphetamine distributed in the Northeast currently is produced in laboratories in Mexico or California, and increases in availability and distribution likely will be driven by increased distribution by Mexican criminal groups that supply local midlevel and retail dealers. However, local methamphetamine production in low capacity laboratories has been increasing in the Northeast. Small-scale local production in the Northeast likely will increase sharply in the near term as methamphetamine use in the region increases, and established users or initiates to methamphetamine use become familiar with production methods and become their own sources of supply or even small-scale distributors. According to MTF data, past year methamphetamine use in the Northeast Region trended upward from 2002 to 2003 among eighth (0.8% to 1.7%), tenth (1.5% to 2.1%), and twelfth graders (1.6% to 1.8%).

Methamphetamine production in Mexico likely will continue to increase. Reported increases in bulk ephedrine and pseudoephedrine shipments from China to Mexico for use in Mexico-based superlabs and an apparent decrease in the amount of bulk pseudoephedrine diverted from Canada for use in California-based superlabs suggest that Mexican criminal groups will concentrate more large-scale methamphetamine production efforts in Mexico.

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