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**U.S. Department of Justice
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National Institute of Justice

Research in Action

James K. Stewart, Director

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Attorney General announces NIJ Drug Use Forecasting system

From 53 to 79 percent of the men arrested for serious offenses in 12 major U.S. cities tested positive for illicit drugs, Attorney General Edwin Meese III said in a recent press briefing. The National Institute of Justice's new Drug Use Forecasting system (DUF) conducted the urine tests on a sample of more than 2,000 arrestees between last June and last November.

"Overwhelming evidence now exists that links drug use to criminal activity," the Attorney General said. The National Institute of Justice sponsored the testing with cofunding by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Most of those tested were charged with such street crimes as burglary, grand larceny, and assault. The sample contained relatively few men charged with drug sales, drunk driving, or disorderly conduct. All tests were voluntary and anonymous.

"The program's purpose is to track drug use trends among urban defendants suspected of dangerous crimes," the Attorney General said. "It does not reflect drug consumption among the general population.

"We now have timely baseline statistics for detecting trends in drug use by criminal suspects across the Nation. This valuable barometer will have important implications for public safety. This is most useful. It fits in well with our other strategies for drug control, including prevention and treatment."

National Institute of Justice Director James K. Stewart added, "Increases in drug use among offenders would represent increased peril to the public. Other Institute-sponsored research interviewed California prison and jail inmates and found, for example, that heroin addicts committed 15 to 20 times more serious offenses than did nonusers. Users of

drugs other than heroin committed five times more robberies and burglaries than did nonusers."

Twelve cities are using DUF

The Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) system measures drug use in the Borough of Manhattan in New York City; Washington, D.C.; Orleans Parish (New Orleans), Louisiana; San Diego County, California; Marion County (Indianapolis), Indiana; Maricopa County (Phoenix), Arizona; Los Angeles; Houston; Chicago; Detroit; Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon. The cities were chosen to represent various regions of urban America.

The Institute will sample new arrestees four times each year and analyze the trends. During the coming year a total of 25 cities are expected to participate.

Los Angeles, Detroit, and Chicago recently joined the program. Miami, Dallas, Philadelphia, Omaha, and Birmingham are expected to do so in the near future.

Shortly following arrest, the men in the 12-city program were tested for 10 drugs:

cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methadone, methaqualone, phencyclidine (PCP), Valium, Darvon, amphetamines ("speed"), and barbiturates. The most frequently found illegal drugs were marijuana, cocaine, heroin, PCP, and amphetamines.

Figure 1 shows the percentages of those arrested who tested positive for any drug, including marijuana, from June through November 1987. Figure 2 isolates the percentages for those testing positive for cocaine.

"Drug abuse by criminal suspects far exceeds the estimated use in the general population, where it appears to be leveling off," Mr. Stewart noted. "Among criminal defendants, however, it seems to be increasing."

Cocaine use on rise among arrestees

The tests have shown that among those arrested in New York City cocaine use has almost doubled during the last 3 years, and it has more than tripled in the District of Columbia. These are rates from two to nine times higher than in the general population as estimated by

