



# ADAI RESEARCH BRIEF

No. 04-07 February 2004

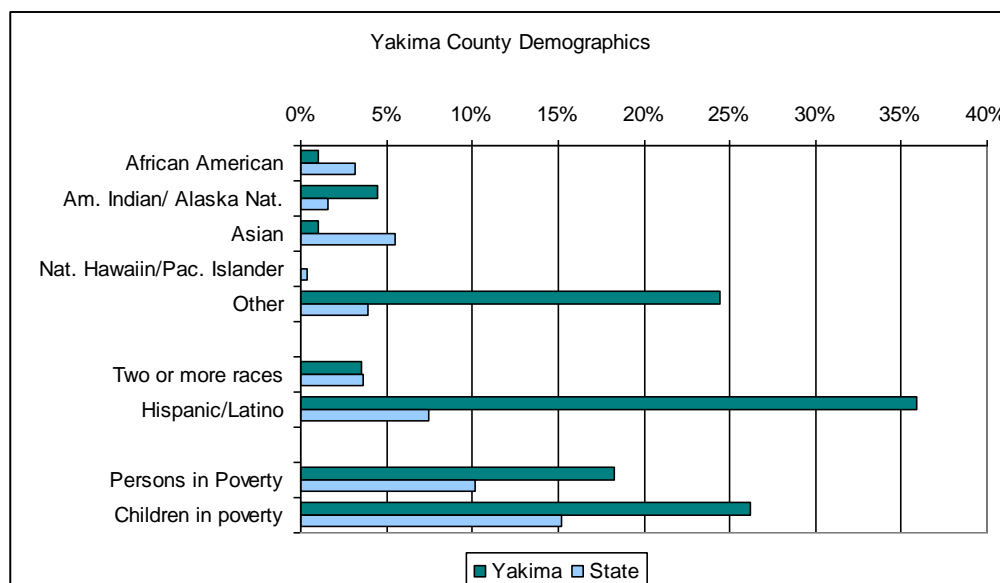
## YAKIMA COUNTY – DRUG USE EPIDEMIOLOGY

### LOCATION AND POPULATION OVERVIEW

Yakima County is located in central Washington. The County covers 4,296 square miles making it the second largest in Washington State. The major cities are adjacent to Interstate 82 which runs through the northeast part of the County. In the western part of the County sits the Cascade Mountain range including Mount Adams. The Yakama Indian Reservation makes up most of the southern half of the County.

The population of Yakima County is 222,581 up 18% from 1990. The City of Yakima, which serves as the County seat has a population of 71,845. The larger urban area, including the City of Yakima, has a population of 128,615. Agriculture is a vital part of the local economy, major products include fruit, grain and cattle.

According to 2000 Census results, the County had a much smaller proportion of Caucasian residents than the State, and a much larger Hispanic/Latino population (36%). Poverty statistics show much higher rates of poverty in Yakima County than the State as a whole.



### ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE - ADULTS

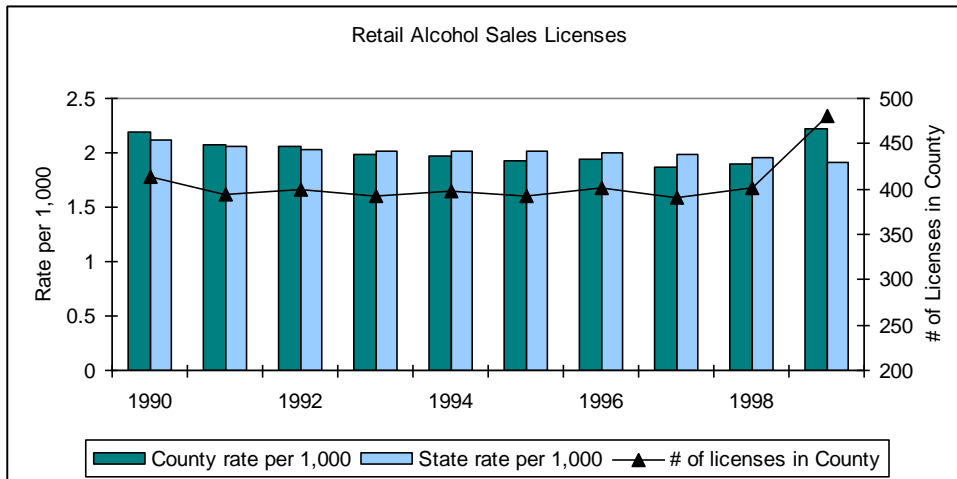
#### Alcohol Use

##### Alcohol Retail Sales Licenses

The number of alcohol retail sales licenses in a county is an important measure of the availability of alcohol. Sales licenses indicate the number of active licenses at locations including restaurants, grocery stores and wine shops, it does not include liquor stores.

Yakima County had seen a steady decrease in the number, per capita, of locations that can sell alcohol until 1999 when the rate increased to its highest level since 1992. The rate in

1999 was 2.2 liquor licenses per 1,000 residents, equal to 480 licenses<sup>1</sup>. This rate is above the State rate of 1.9 per 1,000 residents.

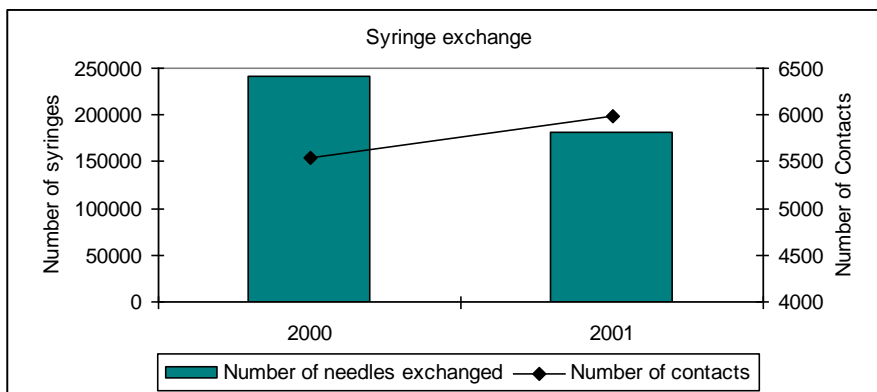


**Other Drug Use**

Illegal drug users are generally a hidden population. Estimates of the prevalence of illegal drug use can be difficult to obtain. Population surveys are one way to estimate the number of drug users. However, no recent survey data are available on the level of illegal drug use among adults in the County. Indicator data provide indirect evidence of the nature of substance abuse and are often available from organizations that work with drug users. Indicator data presented in this report include needles exchange, Alcohol and Drug Helpline, Poison Center calls and treatment admissions. Mortality data are an indicator of the serious effects of drug use; currently data on deaths due to specific drugs are unavailable for the County.

**Needle Exchange**

Needle exchange operations began in the County in 1992. Currently the exchange is open at a fixed site two days a week for two hours each day. In 2001 181,234 syringes were exchanged, this is a decrease from 241,066 syringes 2000. The number of contacts increased from 5,540 to 5,991. Staff make a concerted effort to provide outreach to farm workers in addition to other local populations.

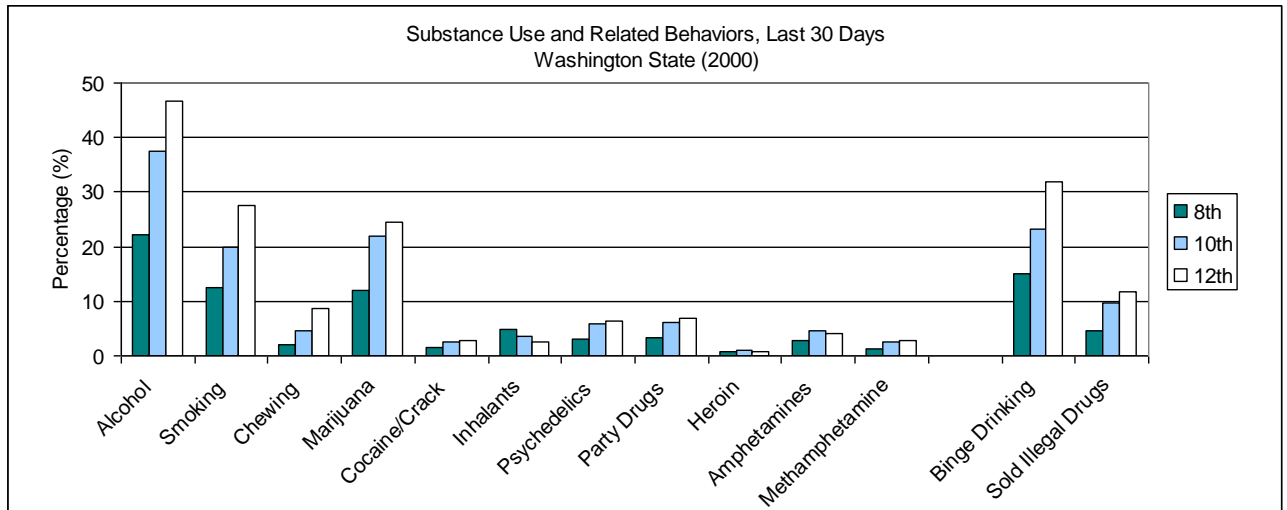


**ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE - YOUTH**

Local data estimating the prevalence of alcohol and drug use among youth are unavailable. State data are shown in the figure below. School survey data indicates that alcohol, tobacco and marijuana are the most commonly used substances. Alcohol use in the prior 30 days was

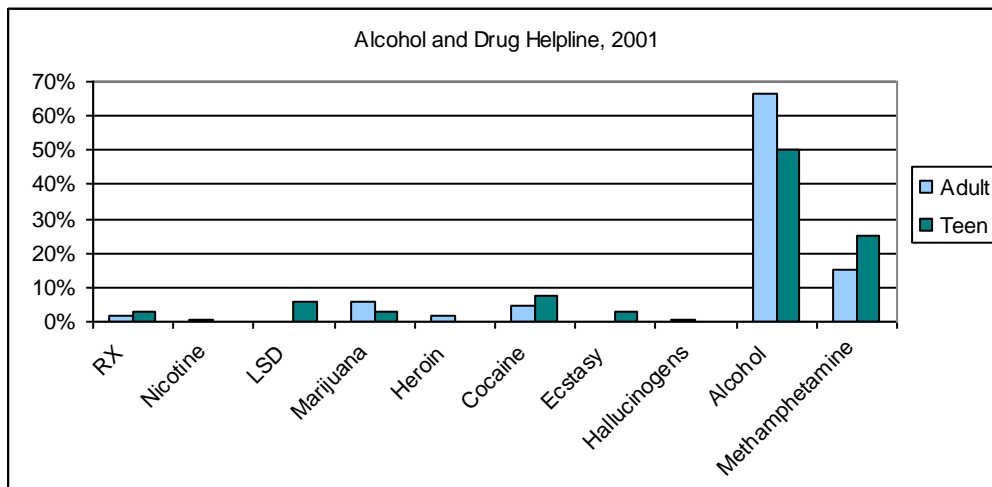
reported by almost a quarter of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and almost half of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 2000. Marijuana was the most commonly used illegal drug, with 24% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported recent use. Psychedelics and party drugs were reported by approximately 6.5% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Other drugs were less commonly reported.

Binge drinking was reported by 15% of 8<sup>th</sup>, 28% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 32% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Selling illegal drugs was reported by one in every eight 12<sup>th</sup> graders. A recognized limitation of school based surveys is that those with the most serious behavioral and substance using problems are more likely to drop out of school and are therefore less likely to be surveyed in the higher grades; the result being an underreporting of such problems.



**ALCOHOL AND DRUG HELPLINE**

A total of 930 calls were made to the Alcohol and Drug Helpline in 2001 from Yakima residents, 862 were from or about adults. Two thirds of adult calls and half of teen calls were about alcohol. Methamphetamine was the next most common drug mentioned, with a higher rate of youth calls than adult. Calls for other types of drugs were infrequent. The number and proportion of calls to the helpline vary based on a number of factors including prevalence of local use of the drug, recent publicity about the helpline as well as publicity about a specific drug.



**POISON CENTER**

The Washington Poison Center receives calls from throughout Washington State made to its toll free number. In 2001 there were 205 calls from Yakima County residents related to commonly abused illegal, prescription and over-the counter drugs to the Poison Center<sup>1</sup>. (See the end of this document for important details about this data source.) The majority of these were for over-the-counter and prescription medicines. Dextromethorphan and opiates were the most common psychoactive prescription drugs mentioned, with 51 and 45 calls respectively. The most common types of opiates identified were codeine, oxycodone (e.g. OxyContin and Percodan), and hydrocodone (e.g. Vicodin and Percoset). Note that the number and types of calls vary greatly statewide and are impacted substantially by local referrals, education, prevention and intervention efforts.

Drug Category	Drug Name	Total # of Exposures
<b>Prescription(Rx) and Over the Counter Drugs(OTC)</b>		<b>174</b>
	Antihistamines- (Rx & OTC)	33
	Opiates (Rx)	45
	Dextromethorphan- cold & cough preparations	51
	Benzodiazepine	23
	Other depressants/sedatives	22
<b>Street Drugs</b>		<b>31</b>
	Amphetamine	20
	Marijuana	6
	Cocaine	4
	Nitrous oxide	1
<b>Sub-total- Street, Rx and OTC Drugs (Summed from above)</b>		<b>205</b>
<b>Alcoholic Beverages</b>		<b>34</b>

Few calls regarding street drugs and stimulants were made. Amphetamines were the most commonly identified street drug, 20 of 31 calls. Poison center staff report that this is used as a 'catch all' term for stimulants that are not identified more specifically and does not necessarily refer to amphetamines as commonly referred to by those in the substance abuse field (N. Hasting, August 19, 2002, personal communication). It is likely that many of the drugs identified generally as amphetamines were actually methamphetamine. The number of calls for other drugs were quite small.

**ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT SERVICES AND TREATMENT GAP**

Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services

Alcohol and drug treatment services are available from 27 providers throughout the County. Services range from DUI assessment to long term residential treatment. Programs with special areas of focus include services for pregnant and parenting women, American Indians, Latinos, and dually diagnosed clients. Drug court is available for adults as an alternative to incarceration.

**Treatment Gap**

The estimated gap in Yakima County between needed treatment and actual treatment utilization is 35% for those under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, much lower than the State average, (see the table below)<sup>1</sup>. This means that two-thirds of people who are in need of alcohol or other drug treatment services receive such services. The treatment gap in Yakima County is the smallest for any large county (more than 200,000 residents) in the State.

Region	Number of adults <200% FPL and eligible for DASA services	% of adults <200% FPL and in need of Treatment	Number of adults <200% FPL Receiving Treatment	Number of Adults not Receiving Treatment	Treatment Gap
Yakima	48,090	8.4%	2,617	1,408	35.0%
State Total	868,734	11.1%	25,395	71,207	73.7%

\*Federal Poverty Level, 200% FPL = \$36,200 for a family of four in WA (2002)

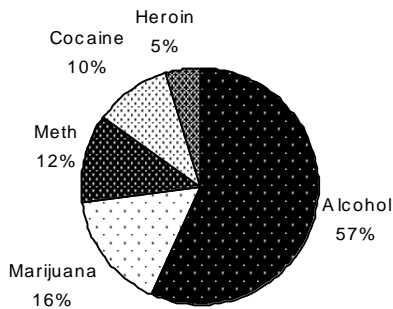
This estimate of treatment gap is based upon the Washington Needs Assessment Household Survey of substance use and treatment need done in 1993-94 and adjusts for new population numbers. There are some limitations to these data because patterns of drug utilization are known to have changed since this survey, e.g. the rise in methamphetamine use. However, these are the best available data on estimating the need for treatment services in the State.

**ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT ADMISSIONS**

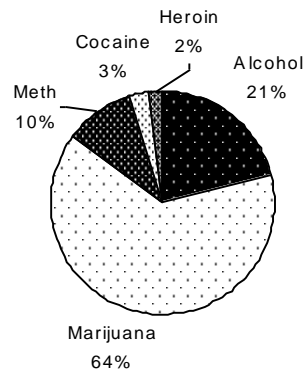
Admission to treatment reflects many factors including treatment demand (self referral and professional/court referrals), treatment availability (locally and regionally), funding, outreach and intervention programs, and changes in local and state policies. It is very important to note that available data are only for publicly funded treatment. It is likely that those receiving privately funded treatment differ in terms of demographics and the types of substances abused. Data on those receiving privately funded treatment are unavailable.

In 2001, the rates of alcohol, cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana drug treatment admissions were substantially higher in Yakima County than in the State. Among adults in the County, alcohol is the drug for which treatment is most often received, followed by marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin<sup>2</sup>. For youth, marijuana is the most common drug treated, followed by alcohol methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin. A noticeable peak in youth treatment admissions was evident in 1999 for alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine.

Adult Publicly Funded Treatment Admissions 2001

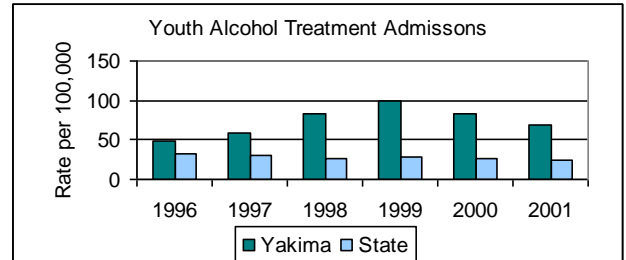
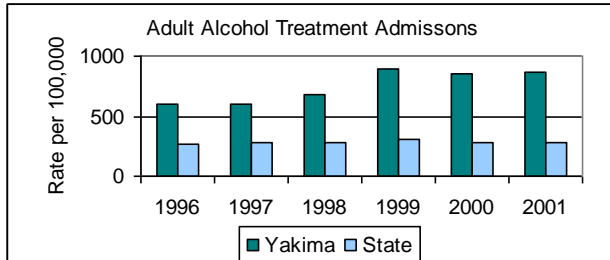


Youth Publicly Funded Treatment Admissions 2001



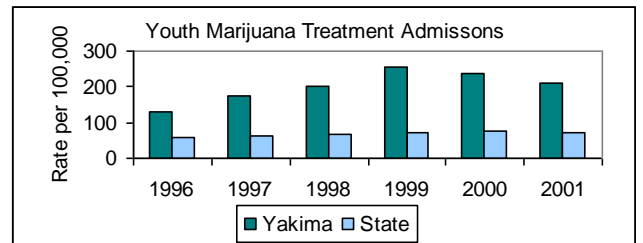
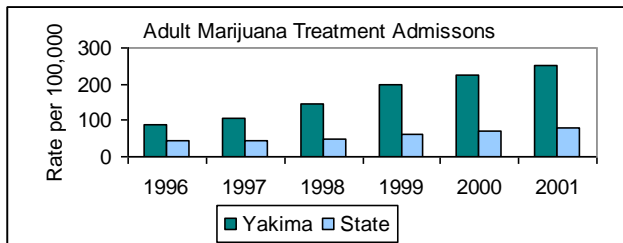
Alcohol

A substantial increase in adult treatment admissions was seen in 1999, with admissions steady at this new, higher level for the following years. In 1996, the County rate was double the State's, while in 2001 it was triple the State's. Youth admissions also peaked in 1999, but unlike adults, they decreased the following two years. In 2001, the rate of youth admissions for alcohol were more than double the State rate.



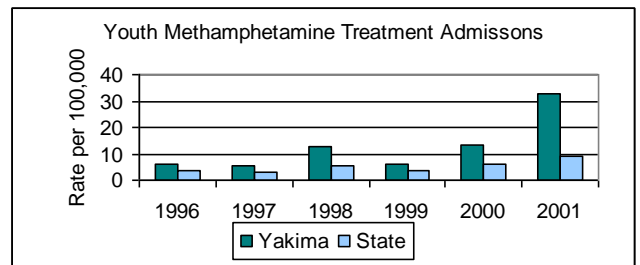
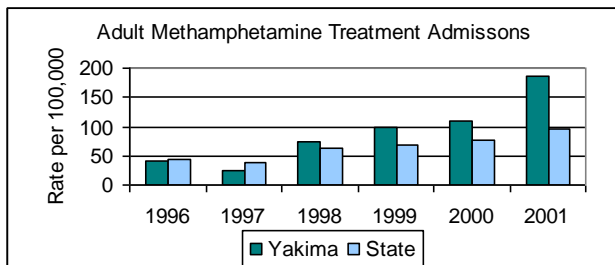
Marijuana

Adult treatment admissions for marijuana increased steadily from 1996 onward, and in 2001 were more than triple the State's. More youth were admitted to treatment for primary marijuana dependence than adults from 1996 to 2000. Youth treatment admissions increased from 1996 to 1999, declining gradually the following two years. In 2001, youth entered treatment at more than double the rate of youth statewide.



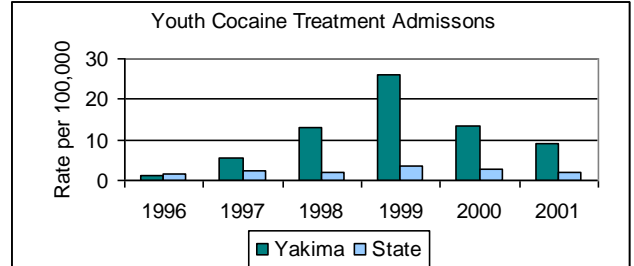
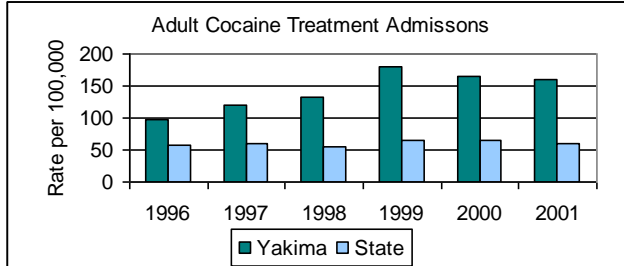
Methamphetamine

The first big increase in methamphetamine admissions for youth and adults in the County was seen in 1998, the next big increase was seen in 2001. In 2001, the adult treatment rate was almost double the State's, while the youth treatment rate was more than triple the State's. For both youth and adults the rate of treatment admissions was third highest among all Washington counties.



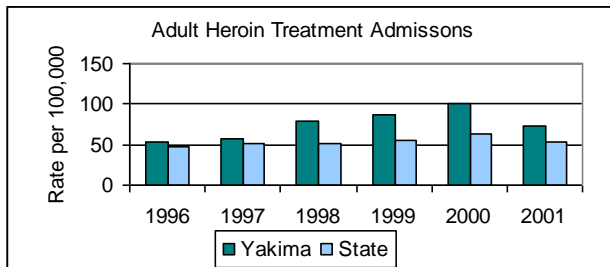
### Cocaine

The adult rate of treatment admissions for cocaine is by far the highest in the State, almost triple the State's in 2001. Youth treatment admissions peaked in 1999, when there were 58 admissions; the numbers have since declined substantially though the County rate is still several times higher than the State's.



### Heroin

Heroin treatment admissions have increased steadily, almost doubling from 1996 to 2000, followed by a substantial decline in 2001. Statewide the rate is lower for heroin treatment admissions than in Yakima County. Youth admissions are relatively infrequent with a total of 49 from 1996 to 2001.

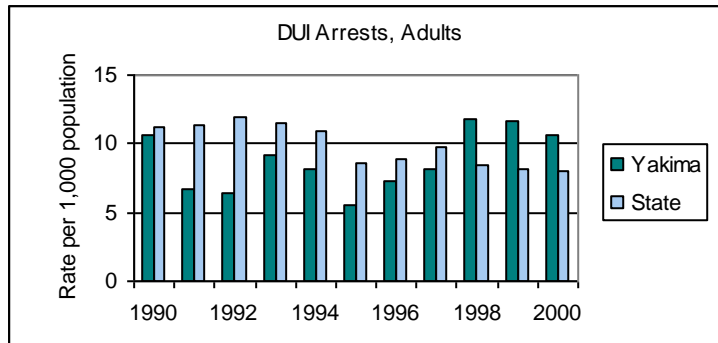


## **CRIMINAL ACTIVITY**

Arrests are one measure of criminal activity. Arrest rates are dependent upon the actual level of crime and enforcement pressure which includes the number of law enforcement officers, their geographic deployment and other factors.

### Arrests for Driving Under the Influence (DUI)

Both State and County arrest rates for DUI were similar in 1990. The State rate has shown a decline over the following ten years while the county rate fluctuated, with the rate from 1998 to 2000 well above the State rate. There were 1,509 arrests for DUI in 2000 in Yakima County. It is important to note that arrests by the Washington State Patrol are not assigned to counties and therefore are not included in this data. (The statewide arrest rate for the Washington State Patrol was 2.24 per 1,000 population in 2000.)



## **DRUG TRAFFICKING AND PRODUCTION**

### Trafficking

Mexican nationals are involved in the trafficking of multiple types of drugs including heroin, cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine throughout the State and in Yakima County. In addition, marijuana, is grown locally and is also available from sources up and down the west coast including Northern California, Oregon and British Columbia, Canada. Approximately one third of methamphetamine used in Washington is produced in the State. Much of the drugs arriving in Yakima County come up Interstate 82 and Route 97, with the County serving as a distribution point for many drugs.

According to the NW HIDTA, the large Mexican-American community in the County makes it possible for Mexican nationals to easily blend into the community.

Law enforcement reported nine known drug trafficking organizations in 2001<sup>2</sup>.

Notable law enforcement activity reported by the DEA during January-June 2002 includes:

- May 2002, a pickup bound for Yakima was seized with 63 kilograms of cocaine<sup>2</sup>.

DEA provided the following information on drug trafficking, prices and availability in Yakima County January-June 2002:

- Heroin is exclusively Mexican black tar, with the purity of seizures in Yakima ranging from 1.5% to 30%. Prices are as low as \$30 a gram. Pound and kilogram quantities are available locally.
- Heroin abuse is reported to be a problem in the Lower Valley region.
- Cocaine HCl (powder) is reported to be increasingly available in the city of Yakima as well as the Lower Valley region. Purity ranges from 25%-62%. It is reported that Hispanic dealers are selling at lower prices in response to the growing use of methamphetamine.
- Crack cocaine is available in small quantities for \$10-\$20. Sales are typically made by Hispanic traffickers who also deal other drugs.
- Mexican marijuana is reported to be the most common variety found in the Yakima Valley and Eastern Oregon
- Methamphetamine in Yakima has historically been in the range of 30%-40% purity. More recent DEA seizures ranged in purity from 18-95%. Generally, locally produced methamphetamine ('box laboratories' and the 'Nazi method') is higher purity than Mexican methamphetamine.

## **DRUG SEIZURES BY LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Data on drugs seized by law enforcement are divided by region of the County. Data point to substantial seizures of several types of drugs. The amount of 'manicured' marijuana and the number of plants increased between 2000 and 2001. The volume of heroin decreased substantially during this timeframe. Methamphetamine seizures were relatively consistent, while cocaine fluctuated by year and location.



The City/County Narcotics Unit, Upper Valley Task Force, involves Yakima County Sheriff's Office and City of Yakima Policy Department<sup>2</sup>. Drugs seized are shown in the table below.

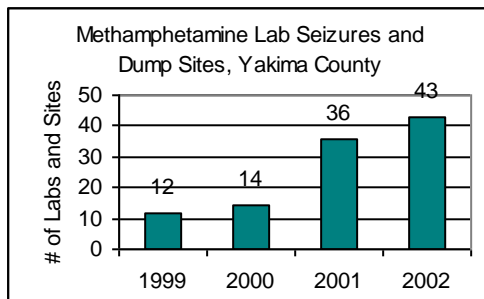
<b>DRUGS SEIZED- Upper Valley</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
Cocaine	3,009 gms	1,523 gms
Heroin	6,991 gms	498 gms
Marijuana	8,164 gms	14,758 gms
Marijuana Plants	3,339 plants	4,956 plants
Methamphetamine/Amphetamine	4,475,45 gms	4,263 gms
LSD	12 hits	0 hits
Mushrooms	4 gms	105 gms
Value of drugs seized	\$3,215,098	\$2,147,058

The Law Enforcement Against Drugs (LEAD), Lower Valley Task Force includes the Yakima County Sheriff's Office along with the Washington State Patrol, Grandview Police Department, the Sunnyside Police Department, the Yakama Nation Tribal Police, the Yakima County Prosecutor, and the Washington National Guard in the LEAD Task Force<sup>1</sup>. Drugs seized are shown in the table below.

<b>DRUGS SEIZED- Lower Valley</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
Cocaine	3,296 gms	5,138 gms
Heroin	2,337 gms	45 gms
Marijuana	31,998 gms	92,945 gms
Marijuana Plants	4,286 plants	9,038 plants
Methamphetamine	14,427 gms	16,410 gms

Methamphetamine Incidents

The number of methamphetamine incidents more than tripled from 1999 to 2002. The increase in labs from 2001 to 2002 is counter to the picture statewide where a 10% decrease was seen during this same time frame. There were 19 labs per 100,000 residents in Yakima County in 2002 compared with a rate of 29 per 100,000 Statewide.



## HEALTH IMPACTS OF SUBSTANCE USE

### Infectious Diseases

#### HIV/AIDS

Through June 2002, 140 cases of AIDS had been diagnosed in Yakima County. HIV has been reportable since 1999, data available from that date onward indicate 43 newly diagnosed cases.

HIV<sup>1</sup> AND AIDS CASES DIAGNOSED, KNOWN DEATHS, AND CASES PRESUMED LIVING, BY COUNTY OF RESIDENCE<sup>2</sup> AT DIAGNOSIS

	CASES DIAGNOSED			DEATHS			PRESUMED LIVING				
	HIV <sup>1</sup>		AIDS	HIV <sup>1</sup>		AIDS	HIV <sup>1</sup>		AIDS		
	No.	(%)	No. (%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)		
YAKIMA	43	(1.3%)	140 (1.4%)	183	3	(2.9%)	70 (1.3%)	40	(1.3%)	70 (1.5%)	110
REGION <sup>2,3</sup>	101	(3.1%)	328 (3.2%)	429	5	(4.8%)	171 (3.1%)	96	(3.1%)	157 (3.4%)	253
STATE	3,222	(100%)	10,177 (100%)	13,399	104	(100%)	5,597 (100%)	3,118	(100%)	4,580 (100%)	7,698

1 Includes persons reported with HIV infection who are not known to have progressed to AIDS as of this report date. Does not include those who have only been tested anonymously for HIV.

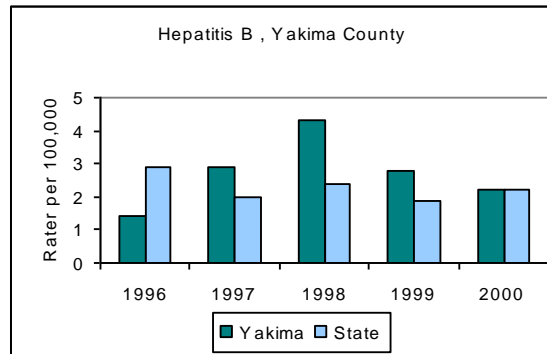
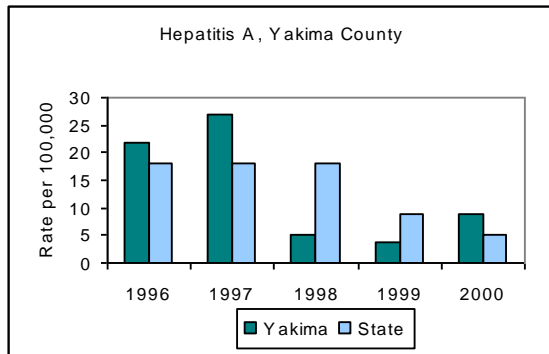
2 County of residence at the time of testing positive for HIV (HIV cases) or at the time of AIDS diagnosis (AIDS cases). May not reflect where people are currently residing.

3 Region 2 Includes Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Franklin, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat and Yakima Counties

Source: Infectious Disease and Reproductive Health Assessment Unit Washington State Department of Health

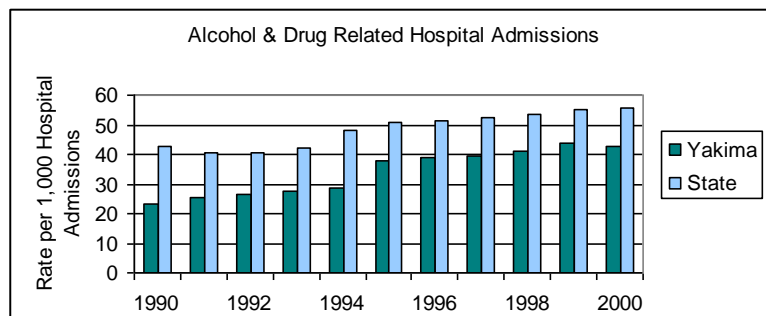
#### Hepatitis

Rates of hepatitis A declined substantially following a peak in 1997 in Yakima County. The rate of hepatitis B peaked in 1998 at 4 per 100,000 residents, returning to 2 per 100,000 residents in 2000, the same rate as that seen Statewide.



### HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS FOR ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

The proportion of alcohol and other drug related hospital admissions has doubled to a rate of 43 per 1,000 hospital admissions in 2000. This is the highest level since 1990, but is still below the State rate, which increased more slowly to 56 per 1,000 in 2000.



## SUMMARY

Yakima has higher rates of treatment admissions for alcohol, marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin than the State, with alcohol, marijuana and cocaine all at least double the State rate. These high rates of treatment result in a smaller treatment gap than that seen in most of the State. Alcohol and methamphetamine were by far the most commonly mentioned drugs in calls to the helpline. The number of methamphetamine incidents increased from 1999 to 2002. The syringe exchange is active with over 180,000 syringes exchanged in 2001.

### **Sources and Data Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Research and Data Analysis, CORE-GIS Data System, May 2001

<sup>2</sup> Washington Poison Center. *American Association of Poison Control Centers, Toxic Exposure Surveillance System, Annual Report 2001, Washington Poison Center.* Seattle, WA: Author.

Data note: The majority of calls to the Poison Center are made from private residences regarding poisonings that occur in the home, health care facilities represent the second largest group calling the Poison Center. Calls related to symptomatic exposure or intoxication from drugs of abuse are more likely to be placed by health care facilities compared to information only calls which are more likely to be placed from residences (information only calls are not included in the data presented). Most calls from health care facilities are regarding serious cases or unusual presentations in which substance specific medical advice or consultation is desired.

Not every poisoning or exposure is reported to the Poison Center and the total numbers reported do not equal the total number of poisonings that actually occurred statewide. Therefore data do not indicate the prevalence of symptomatic exposures to substances used, but rather point to serious or unusual situations involving substances. Multiple substances may be recorded for each call.

Information requests related to pill identification are referred to the FDA.

<sup>3</sup> Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Trends in Washington State 2002 Report.

Data note: These data exclude Detox, Transitional Housing and Group Care Enhancement, private pay admissions. Includes total admissions – counts may be duplicated for an individual based on multiple admissions or multiple modalities of care.

<sup>4</sup> Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Threat Assessment 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration (2002). *Memo: trends in the Traffic- Washington State and Portland, Oregon Metropolitan Area, January-June 2002.*

<sup>6</sup> Data from the Yakima County Sheriff's Office. Accessed from <http://www.pan.co.yakima.wa.us/Sheriff/01annual/ccnu.htm> .

<sup>7</sup> Data from the Yakima County Sheriff's Office. Accessed from <http://www.pan.co.yakima.wa.us/Sheriff/01annual/lead.htm> .

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