

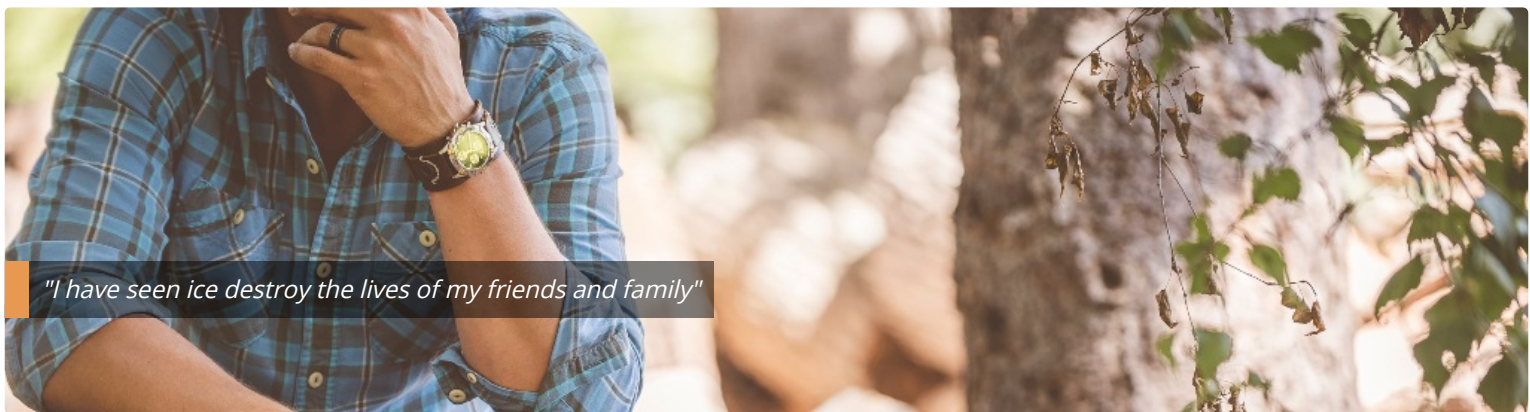
HOW MANY PEOPLE USE CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE?

PAGE SUMMARY



- Relatively few Australians report using methamphetamines (including crystal methamphetamine 'ice') compared to other drugs.
- The effects of methamphetamines (including ice) can however be far reaching, impacting not only those using ice but also families, friends, communities and workplaces.
- Data from the 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey suggests
 - overall rates of methamphetamine use have declined over recent years, but
 - people who use methamphetamines are reporting higher rates of regular and dependent use, and
 - among those who do use methamphetamine, ice is becoming a more popular form of the drug
- Multiple data sources also indicate harms related to ice use are increasing in Australia.

Factsheet: How many people use ice



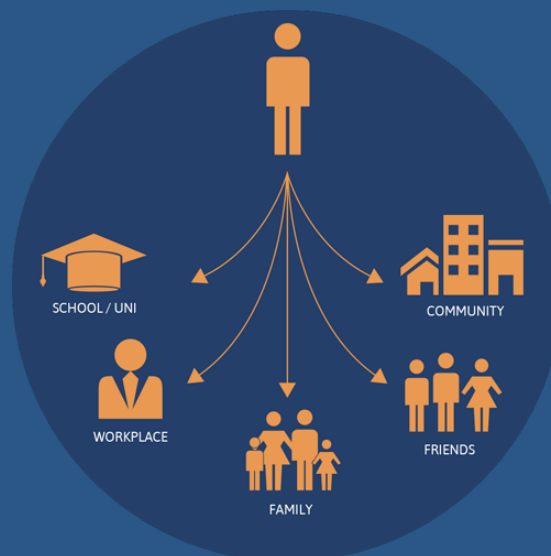
Measuring crystal methamphetamine ('ice') use in the population is difficult and many people report higher rates in their communities than are reflected in general population surveys. The data we include here come from a number of sources, including population surveys, the National Wastewater Monitoring Program, hospital and other treatment centre data. What is clear from these data is that the impact of ice on many communities around Australia is significant. It is important to note that there are many reasons why people may use ice.

HOW MANY PEOPLE USE ICE?

The 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 6.3% or 1.3 million Australians over the age of 14 had ever used methamphetamine (including ice, speed or base) and 1.4% reported recent use (in the past 12 months). Among people who had recently used methamphetamines, over half (57%) reported using ice (crystal methamphetamine), compared to 20% mainly using powder (speed). Data from the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS, 2019) indicates that one third of their national sample (902 people who inject drugs) reported methamphetamine, including ice, as their drug of choice. This reporting system has also detected an increase in the amount of people using ice as opposed to other forms of methamphetamine. In the most recent report, 76% of people surveyed stated that they had used ice within the past six months (compared to 23% for speed and 9% for base).



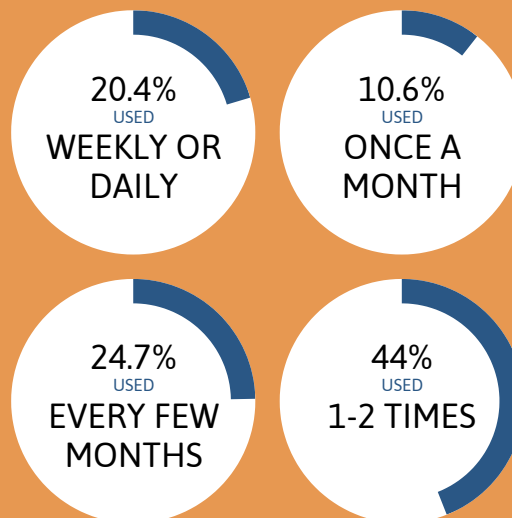
1 IN 70 PEOPLE HAVE USED METHAMPHETAMINE IN THE PAST YEAR



...BUT THE IMPACT CAN BE MUCH GREATER

HOW OFTEN DO PEOPLE USE METHAMPHETAMINES, INCLUDING ICE?

According to the 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, of those who had used methamphetamines (including ice) in the past 12 months:



ICE USE IN RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Data from a number of sources indicate rates of **methamphetamine** use are higher among rural and remote areas of Australia compared to regional areas and major cities. For example, the 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found rates of methamphetamine use were 2.5 times as high among people living in remote or very remote areas compared to rates among those living in major cities or regional areas. Young people aged 18–24 years old living in rural areas were also more likely to report recent ice use than their city or regional counterparts. This is also supported by recent 2019 data from the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program (report 8) which found that average consumption of methamphetamine in regional areas exceeded consumption in capital cities ([Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission](#)). Data from the National Hospital Morbidity Database (2016–17) also indicates that people from remote and very remote areas of Australia are receiving hospital care for methamphetamine-related problems at a higher rate than people from capital cities.

ICE USE IN DIFFERENT POPULATIONS

There are also other groups of people in Australia who are more likely to use methamphetamine or more likely to experience harms related to methamphetamine compared to others. These groups include young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) communities.

[Click here for a review of methamphetamine use and its impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.](#)

[Click here for culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.](#)

IS ICE USE INCREASING IN AUSTRALIA?

It is difficult to determine whether **methamphetamine** use (including ice) has increased in Australia. Data from the 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey suggest that overall rates of methamphetamine (including ice) use in the general population declined over the previous 5 years.

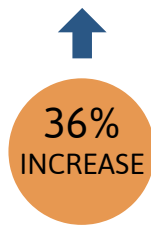
Other data from this survey and from hospital records indicate that rates of regular and **dependent** methamphetamine use have increased. Additionally, the number of people who regularly use methamphetamines who report using crystal methamphetamine (ice) as their main form of methamphetamine has increased from 22 to 57% between 2010 and 2016, while reports of speed use have decreased

(from 50 to 20%). The number of individuals reporting smoking as the main route of **administration** has also increased (from 19 to 42%).

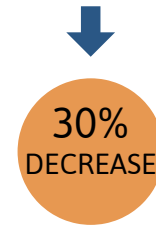
Data from the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS, 2019) suggests similar trends are emerging among people who inject drugs. Reports show a rise in recent use (last 6 months) of crystal methamphetamine among people who inject drugs from 2010 (39%) to 2019 (76%), and a decline in recent use of speed (41% in 2010, 23% in 2019).

Taken together these data suggest that, among people who use methamphetamines, ice is becoming a more popular form of the drug.

FROM 2010 TO 2016, AMONG PEOPLE WHO USE METHAMPHETAMINES REGULARLY THERE HAS BEEN:



ICE



SPEED

Source: 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey

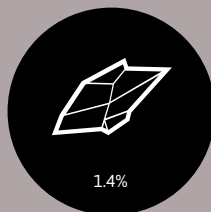
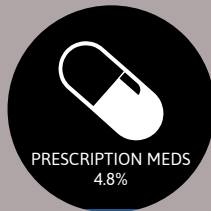
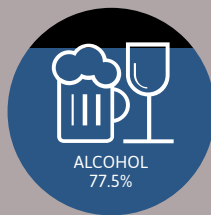
Data from the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program (2016 to 2019) indicates that methamphetamine is the highest consumed *illicit* drug in Australia, in both capital cities and regional sites. The most recent report (2019) noted that there has been an increase in the amount of methamphetamine consumed between 2016 and 2019, however it is unknown whether this increase is due to more people using the drug over time or a smaller number of people using larger amounts of the drug over time. It should be noted that alcohol and tobacco were consistently the highest consumed drugs across Australia and that cannabis was not included in the program's comparison of drugs tested. Secondly, the estimated drug usage from this program was highly variable depending on the different sites tested.

ARE HARMS FROM ICE USE INCREASING IN AUSTRALIA?

When looking at population data it is difficult to separate harms specifically related to ice use from harms related to other forms of methamphetamine use. However, data from a number of sources indicate harms related to methamphetamine use have increased. The increase in reported harms most likely reflects the increases in regular and **dependent** use, as well as shifts from using less **potent** (e.g. speed) to more potent (e.g. crystal) forms of methamphetamine. This has resulted in an increase in methamphetamine-related helpline calls, drug and alcohol treatment episodes and hospital admissions for methamphetamine use, **dependence**, **psychosis** and other mental health problems, as well as methamphetamine-related deaths.

HOW DOES ICE USE COMPARE TO OTHER DRUG USE IN AUSTRALIA?

Although methamphetamine is widely reported on in the media it is not the most commonly used drug in Australia. This diagram shows the proportion of Australians surveyed in the 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey who had used the following substances in the past 12 months:



To learn more about what happens when ice is used with other drugs please visit [“using ice with other drugs”](#).

KEY SOURCES

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