

How many people use crystal methamphetamine?



Page Summary



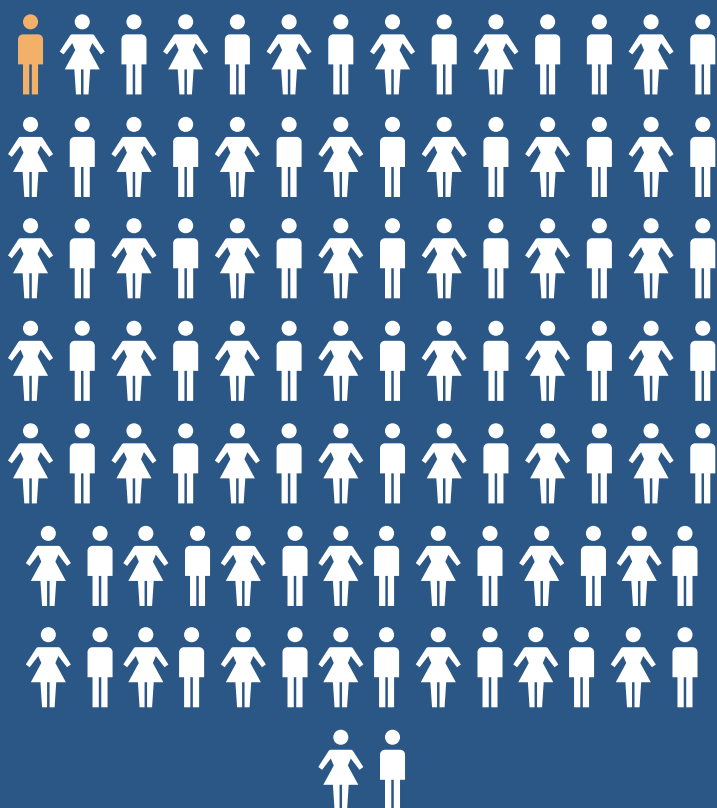
- Relatively few Australians report using methamphetamines (including crystal methamphetamine 'ice') compared to other drugs.
- The effects of methamphetamines (including ice) can however be far reaching, impacting not only those using ice but also families, friends, communities and workplaces.
- Data from the 2022-2023 National Drug Strategy Household Survey suggests
 - overall rates of recent methamphetamine use have declined over recent years, but
 - among those who do use methamphetamine, crystal is the more popular form of the drug and
 - those who use crystal (as opposed to other forms of methamphetamine) are more likely to use it more regularly
- Multiple data sources also indicate harms related to methamphetamine use are high in Australia.

[Factsheet: How many people use ice](#)

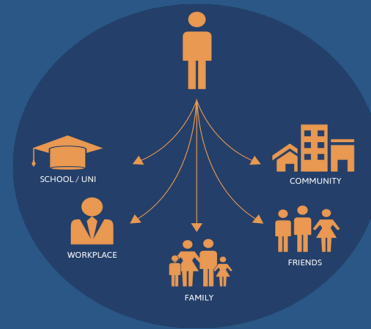
Measuring crystal methamphetamine ('ice') use in the population is difficult and many people report higher rates in their communities than are reflected in general population surveys. The data we include here come from a number of sources, including population surveys, the National Wastewater Monitoring 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 crystal methamphetamine ('ice')?

The 2022-23 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 7.5% or 1.6 million Australians over the age of 14 had ever used **methamphetamine** (including ice, speed or base) and 1% reported recent use (in the past 12 months). Among people who had recently used methamphetamines, most (43.5%) reported using crystal methamphetamine, compared to 31.1% using powder (speed). Data from the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS, 2023) indicates that 45% of their national sample (820 people who inject drugs) reported methamphetamine, including ice, as their drug of choice. This reporting system found that among their sample most people (80%) reported the use of the crystal form of methamphetamine. In the most recent report, 76% of people surveyed stated that they had used ice within the past six months (compared to 10% for speed and 9% for base).



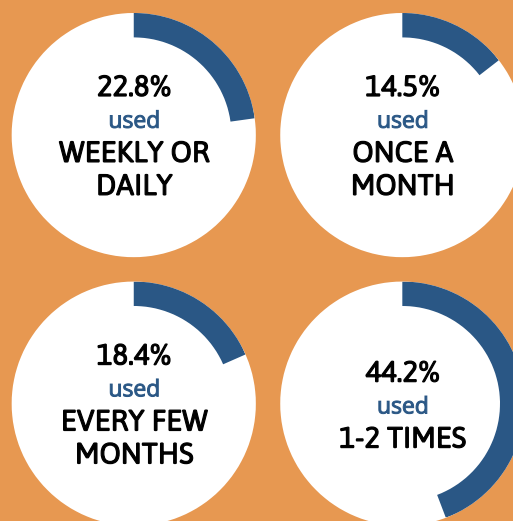
1 in 100 people have used methamphetamine in the past year



...BUT THE IMPACT CAN BE MUCH GREATER

How often do people use methamphetamines, including ice?

According to the 2022-23 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, of those who had used methamphetamines (including ice) in the past 12 months:



Ice use in regional and remote communities

Data from several sources show that of methamphetamine use and related harms in regional and remote areas in Australia have fluctuated

over time. Earlier data from the National Hospital Morbidity Database (2016-17) indicated people from remote and very remote areas of Australia received hospital care for methamphetamine-related problems at a higher rate than people from capital cities. A later report by NDARC (2024) showed that while methamphetamine-related hospitalisations were highest in outer-regional areas, they were closely followed by those in major cities. Overall, it appears that methamphetamine-related hospitalisations are declining across all regions. The 2022-23 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, indicated that rates of methamphetamine use were lower in major cities (1.1%) compared to

regional areas (1.6%), and remote or very remote areas (2.1%). However, among those who had used in the past 12 months most were from major cities (71-78%). The latest data from the 2023 National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program Report also found that capital city consumption has recently overtaken regional consumption. ([Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission](#)). Further monitoring is needed.

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, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) communities.

Learn more about [methamphetamine use and its impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities](#).

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

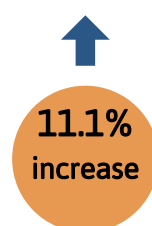
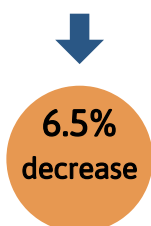
Is ice use increasing in Australia?

It is difficult to determine whether **methamphetamine** use (including ice) has increased in Australia. Data from the 2022-23 National Drug Strategy Household Survey suggest that overall recent rates of methamphetamine (including ice) use in the general population has declined over the previous 10 years.

Other data and 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 increased from 22 to 50% between 2010 and 2019, before declining to 43.5% in 2022-23. Comparatively, reports of powder/speed use decreased from 50 to 20% between 2010 and 2019, before rising to 31.1% in 2022-23. The number of individuals reporting smoking as the main route of **administration** has also increased (from 19 to 41%). Data from the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS, 2023), nearly all who reported using methamphetamine reported using the crystal form (99%), followed by 13% using powder among among people who inject drugs.

Taken together these data suggest that, among people who use methamphetamines, crystal is the most commonly used form of the drug.

From 2019 to 2022-23, among people who use methamphetamines regularly, there has been:



ICE

SPEED

Source: 2022-23 National Drug Strategy Household Survey

Data from the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program indicates that methamphetamine consumption increased in Australia from 2016 to 2019, before dropping in 2020. The latest report in July 2024 found that methamphetamine is once again rising, with consumption levels in capital cities hitting a record high at the end of 2023. However, it is unknown whether this increase was due to more people using the drug over time or a smaller number of people using larger amounts of the drug over time. It's probable that the previous declines were due to the impacts of the COVID-19 virus and the associated restrictions. It should also be noted that alcohol, tobacco and cannabis are consistently the highest consumed drugs across Australia. Secondly, the estimated drug usage from this program was 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. For example, over the decade from 2012 to 2022, hospitalisations caused by amphetamine and other **stimulant** use in Australia have increased from 25 hospitalisations per 100,000 people to 48 per 100,000 people. Of this, 80% of all amphetamine related hospitalisations were caused by methamphetamine, making it the most prevalent drug identified. This accounts for 22% of all drug-related hospitalisations (excluding alcohol and tobacco). It is important to recognise, however, that all drug-related hospitalisations (excluding alcohol and tobacco) account for less than 0.5% of all national hospitalisations.

The latest National Drug Strategy Household Survey (2022-2023), also found that people who had recently used **methamphetamine** were more likely to report a mental health condition and to be experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress compared to people who had recently used any other illicit drug (NDSHS, 2023).

Amphetamines were also the 2nd most common drug of concern in closed treatment episodes in Australian AOD treatment services in 2022-23 and the principal drug of concern in 24% of closed treatment episodes for clients' own drug use (AODTS, 2024). Methamphetamines specifically accounted for over 4 in 5 amphetamine treatment episodes (AIHW, 2024).

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 2022-23 National Drug Strategy Household Survey who had used the following substances in the past 12 months:



Learn more about [what happens when ice is used with other drugs](#).

KEY SOURCES

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