

## 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 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey suggests
  - overall rates of methamphetamine use have declined over recent years, but
  - among those who do use methamphetamine, ice is the more popular form of the drug and
  - those who use ice (as opposed to other forms of methamphetamine) are more likely to use it more regularly
- Multiple data sources also indicate harms related to ice use are increasing in Australia.

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

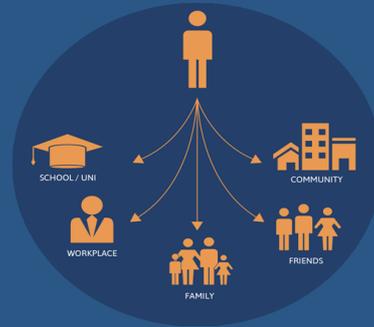
Measuring crystal methamphetamine ('ice') use in the population is difficult and many people report higher rates in their communities than are reflected in general population surveys. The data we include here come from a number of sources, including population surveys, the National Wastewater Monitoring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

The 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 5.8% or 1.2 million Australians over the age of 14 had ever used **methamphetamine** (including ice, speed or base) and 1.3% reported recent use (in the past 12 months). Among people who had recently used methamphetamines, half (50%) 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).



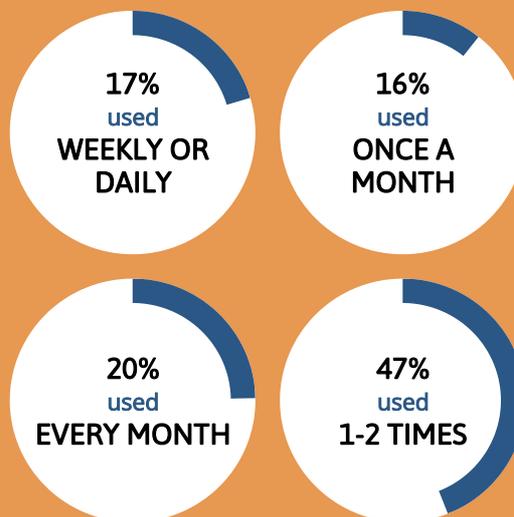
1 in 75 people have used methamphetamine in the past year



**...BUT THE IMPACT CAN BE MUCH GREATER**

## How often do people use methamphetamines, including ice?

According to the 2019 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 shows rates of methamphetamine use and related harms in regional and remote areas in Australia has fluctuated

overtime. 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. Consistent with this, 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.

However, the 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, indicated that rates of methamphetamine use were similar across major cities, inner regional areas, and remote areas. Rates were slightly lower in outer regional areas. 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 to see if this trend continues.

## 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](#).

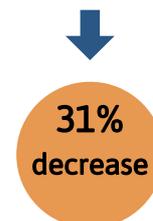
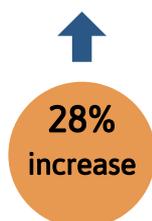
## Is ice use increasing in Australia?

It is difficult to determine whether **methamphetamine** use (including ice) has increased in Australia. Data from the 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey suggest that overall rates of methamphetamine (including ice) use in the general population declined over the previous 8 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 has increased from 22 to 50% between 2010 and 2019, 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 41%). 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 2019, among people who use methamphetamines regularly, there has been:**



## ICE

## SPEED

Source: 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey

Data from the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program (2016 to 2020) indicates that methamphetamine consumption rose in Australia from 2016 to 2019, 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. The latest report from the program also indicates that consumption has since declined sharply in all Australian capital cities from February to June 2020, possibly due to the impacts of the COVID-19 virus. By contrast, rates of consumption appear to have continued rising in most regional areas in 2020. It should also 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. For example, over the decade from 2010 to 2020, hospitalisations caused by amphetamine and other **stimulant** use in Australia have increased from 13 hospitalisations per 100,000 people to 70 per 100,000 people. This accounts for 27% 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 1% of all national hospitalisations.

Amphetamines were also the 2nd most common drug of concern in closed treatment episodes in Australian AOD treatment services in 2019-2020 and the principal drug of concern in 28% of closed treatment episodes for clients' own drug use (AODTS NMDS). Methamphetamines specifically accounted for almost 4 in 5 amphetamine treatment episodes (AIHW 2021).

## 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 2019 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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