

Meth use has skyrocketed in Australia

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The total number of regular methamphetamine users in Australia is 270,000 - greater than the populations of either Hobart or Townsville.

The statistic is a key finding of two scientific reports, both featuring Professor Wayne Hall from The University of Queensland's Centre for Youth Substance Abuse Research.

"There has been ongoing debate about whether the number of [methamphetamine](#) users in Australia has increased significantly or whether it is a small percentage of the population using a lot more," Professor Hall said.

"These studies when viewed together will be consistent with there being substantial growth in the number of users."

The [study on national estimates](#) was led by Professor Louisa Degenhardt from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales.

A total of 270,000 users is greater than 2014 population figures for Hobart (219,243) and Townsville (178,649), and marginally less than the Wollongong region (289,236).

On Monday, 7 March a second report will be released, again featuring Professor Hall, along with UQ colleagues from The National Research Centre for Environmental Toxicology (Entox).

Professor Jochen Mueller, Dr Phong Thai, Ms Foon Yin Lai and Mr Jake O'Brien provided supporting evidence by testing wastewater in south-east Queensland.

More than 1000 samples were taken from a coastal metropolitan city and a major inland regional city between 2009 and 2015.

Consumption levels of methamphetamine were ascertained by testing the concentration of the drug in both the metropolitan area and regional area.

"This took place over a similar period (from 2009 to 2014) as the study published today, and will support the reported nationwide upsurge of more than 170,000 regular users to a total of 270,000 users," Professor Hall said

"A regular user is defined as someone using at least once per month.

"The number of dependent methamphetamine users – those with impaired control over their usage - was estimated in the first research paper as 160,000.

"Highest usage rates were found among those aged 25-34, while the sharpest increase was in the 15-24 bracket."

Both the wastewater study and the study on Australian usage estimates are published by The *Medical Journal of Australia*.

More information: Estimating the number of regular and dependent methamphetamine users in Australia, 2002–2014. *Medical Journal of Australia*. [DOI: 10.5694/mja15.00671](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja15.00671)

Provided by University of Queensland

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