

Police survey finds P is third most popular drug after alcohol, cannabis

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By [Tony Gee](#)

[P epidemic](#)

Methamphetamine, or P, is the third most commonly used drug after alcohol and cannabis among people arrested in New Zealand, a police survey has found.

In a four-year project to learn more about the drug-related problems of those they arrest, police are asking people arrested for any crime intimate details of their drug habits.

In the second year of the New Zealand Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring survey, police interviewed 895 people at Whangarei, Henderson, Hamilton and Dunedin police stations between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2007.

Six per cent of people arrested admitted using methamphetamine in the 48 hours before their arrest and 15 per cent reported spending between \$200 and \$1000 on illegal drugs in the 30 days before.

Three per cent said they spent more than \$2000 on illegal drugs during the same period.

Methamphetamines were used by 159 of those interviewed, with 29 per cent of users saying they had used the drug on 11 or more days in the 30 days before their arrest.

And 13 per cent said their offending was caused to some extent by a need to buy illegal drugs.

Assistant police commissioner Grant Nicholls said although it was the second year of data collection, it was too soon to be able to gauge trends or make valid comparisons.

Data collected from the programme is used by police and the National Drugs Intelligence Bureau in a wide range of analysis to help police devise strategies for combating drug use.

Police have funded the programme to continue through to 2010.

More than two-thirds of arrested people taking part in the 2006-07 survey had also been arrested during the preceding 12 months and nearly half were using at least one drug at the time of their arrest, Mr Nicholls said.

According to the latest report, 496 of those detained at the four city watch-houses provided useable urine samples for analysis.

Of this number, 71 per cent tested positive to one or more illegal drugs.

Analysis indicated 56 per cent who provided useable samples tested positive to one drug, 6 per cent to two drugs, 7 per cent to three drugs and 2 per cent to more than three.

Cannabis was the most commonly detected illegal drug at 69 per cent, with amphetamines recorded in 11 per cent of volunteers.

Methamphetamine users were also more likely to sell drugs to others.

When arrested, 36 per cent were using alcohol, 18 per cent cannabis and 6 per cent methamphetamine.

One-third of those arrested said none of their criminal offending was caused by a need to buy illegal drugs.

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