

THE METH PROJECT

Methamphetamine Impact: National Statistics

The abuse of methamphetamine—a potent and highly addictive psychostimulant—continues to be a very serious problem in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Methamphetamine abuse leads to devastating medical, psychological and social consequences. Adverse health effects include memory loss, aggression, psychotic behavior, heart damage, malnutrition and severe dental problems. Methamphetamine abuse also contributes to increased transmission of infectious diseases, such as hepatitis and HIV/AIDS, and increases in crime, unemployment, child neglect or abuse, as well as other social ills.ⁱ

The Economic Cost of Methamphetamine Use in the United States

The RAND Corporation’s report “The Economic Cost of Methamphetamine Use in the United States, 2005,” estimates the national cost of Meth abuse is \$23.4 billion.ⁱⁱ This study represents the first time that a comprehensive assessment of the annual costs of methamphetamine abuse has been analyzed on a national scale.

- The RAND study found that methamphetamine use imposes a significant and disproportionate burden on both individuals and society in money spent on treatment, healthcare, and foster care services, as well as the costs of crime and lost productivity associated with the drug.
- The \$23.4 billion in costs translates into \$26,614 for each person who used methamphetamine in the past year or \$73,692 for each Meth dependent user.

Meth Crime

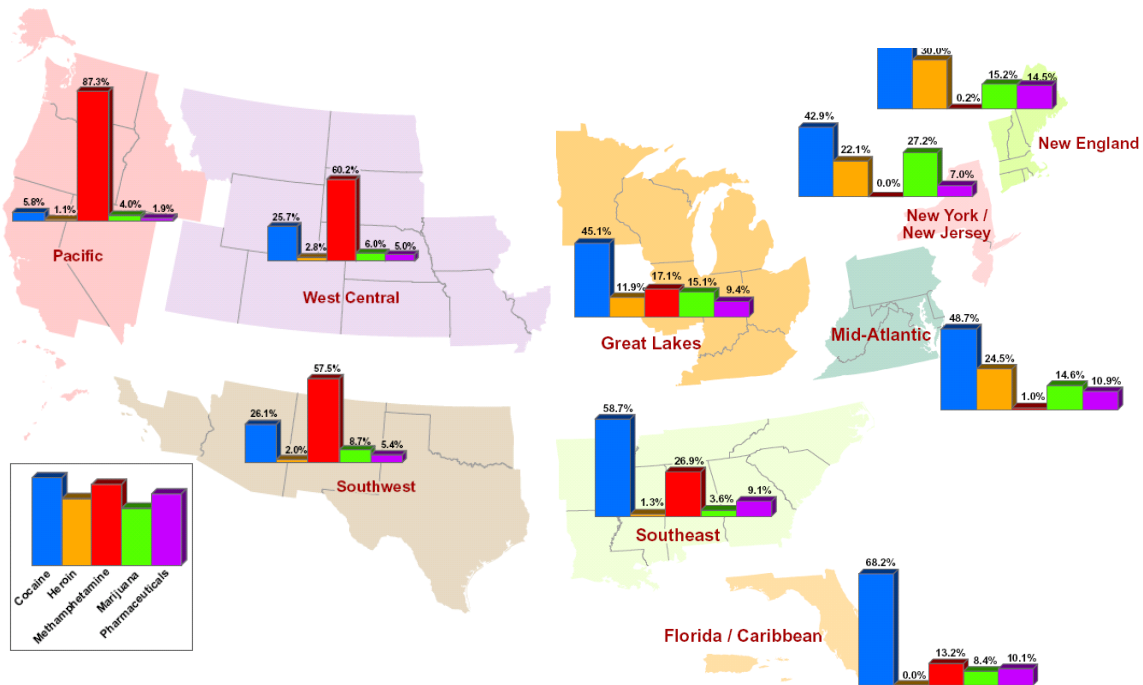
Meth abuse imposes serious costs to the criminal justice system. For example, in 2005, the National Association of Counties (NACO) released results from a survey of law enforcement officials from 45 states reporting that Meth-induced crime was increasing, and more than half reported that Meth was their county’s greatest drug problem.ⁱⁱⁱ

- Based on its 2007 survey results, NACO reported Meth is still the number one drug problem and according to their survey:^{iv}
 - 47% of county sheriffs report that Meth is their number one drug problem. That is more than cocaine (21%) and marijuana (22%) combined.
 - 55% of sheriffs report increases in robberies and burglaries during the last year
- Criminal justice costs associated with enforcing Meth laws, represent the second largest category of costs at \$4.2 billion.^v

The U.S. Department of Justice’s National Drug Threat Assessment 2009^{vi} continues to report that an overwhelming percentage (68%) of state and local agencies in the 20 Western states perceive Meth as their greatest drug threat. Comparatively, 19% perceive cocaine as their top threat (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Map A2. NDTA 2008 greatest drug threat by region, as reported by state and local agencies.



Meth Treatment and Use

- According to the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, the best estimate for the number of Meth dependent users is 270,348—an 11% increase from 2005.^{vii}
- 47% of hospitals report Meth as the top illicit drug involved in emergency room visits.^{viii}
- The calculated costs associated with drug treatment are approximately \$545 million, of which \$491 million is in the community-based specialty treatment sector.^{ix}
- Treatment admissions for Meth more than doubled nationally between 2000 and 2005.^x

ⁱ Nora D. Volkow, M.D. Director National Institute on Drug Abuse Website.

ⁱⁱ RAND, The Economic Cost of Methamphetamine Use in the United States, 2005.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Association of Counties. The Methamphetamine Epidemic: The Changing Demographics of Methamphetamine. August 2007.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v RAND, The Economic Cost of Methamphetamine Use in the United States, 2005.

^{vi} U.S. Department of Justice, National Drug Intelligence Center, National Drug Threat Assessment 2009.

^{vii} RAND, The Economic Cost of Methamphetamine Use in the United States, 2005.

^{viii} National Association of Counties. The Methamphetamine Epidemic: The Changing Demographics of Methamphetamine. August 2007.

^{ix} RAND, The Economic Cost of Methamphetamine Use in the United States, 2005.

^x Ibid.