



OVERDOSE DEATHS IN AUSTRALIA

2003 Edition

COCAINE AND METHAMPHETAMINE MENTIONS IN ACCIDENTAL DRUG-INDUCED DEATHS IN AUSTRALIA, 2003

This bulletin provides data on accidental drug-induced deaths in which methamphetamine and cocaine were mentioned. This includes deaths where these drugs were determined to be the underlying cause of death - that is, that they were the primary factor responsible for the person's death, as well as deaths where cocaine or methamphetamine were noted in "toxic quantities" but where another drug was thought to be primarily responsible. They are coded according to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Problems, 10th revision (ICD-10).

The data presented here refer to deaths among those aged 15 to 54 years in 2003 that were attributed to the following:

- Accidental deaths due to poisoning by cocaine or methamphetamine¹ (and no other drug from same category was mentioned);
- Accidental deaths due to cocaine or methamphetamine use (usually dependence); and
- Accidental drug-induced deaths where cocaine or methamphetamine was mentioned.

There were a total of 50 deaths in which methamphetamines were mentioned among those aged 15 to 54 years, with over half of these deaths (54%) occurring in New South Wales (n=27), followed by Western Australia (18%) and Victoria (16%).

Methamphetamine was determined to be the underlying cause of death in one third (34%) of all methamphetamine related deaths in 2003 (n=17).

Fifteen deaths in which cocaine was mentioned occurred among the 15-54 year age group, all of which occurred in New South Wales.

Cocaine was determined to be the underlying cause of death in one third (33%) of all cocaine related deaths in 2003 (n=5).

The rate of death per million persons among those aged 15-54 years in Australia for methamphetamine and cocaine related deaths remains unchanged (Figure 2).

Table 1: Number of accidental drug-induced deaths mentioning cocaine or methamphetamine among those aged 15-54 years in Australia, 1997-2002.

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Cocaine - underlying cause	0	3	4	3	2	1	5
Cocaine - total mentions	20	36	33	27	28	15	15
Methamphetamine - underlying cause	4	6	15	15	13	1	17
Methamphetamine - total mentions	25	48	79	99	51	55	50

¹ ICD-10 uses the terminology "amphetamine" to refer to the drug class "methamphetamine". Since the vast majority of "amphetamine" in Australia is actually methamphetamine this is the term that will be used in this report.

Figure 1: Number of accidental drug-induced deaths mentioning cocaine or methamphetamine (total and underlying COD) among those aged 15-54 years in Australia, 1997-2003.

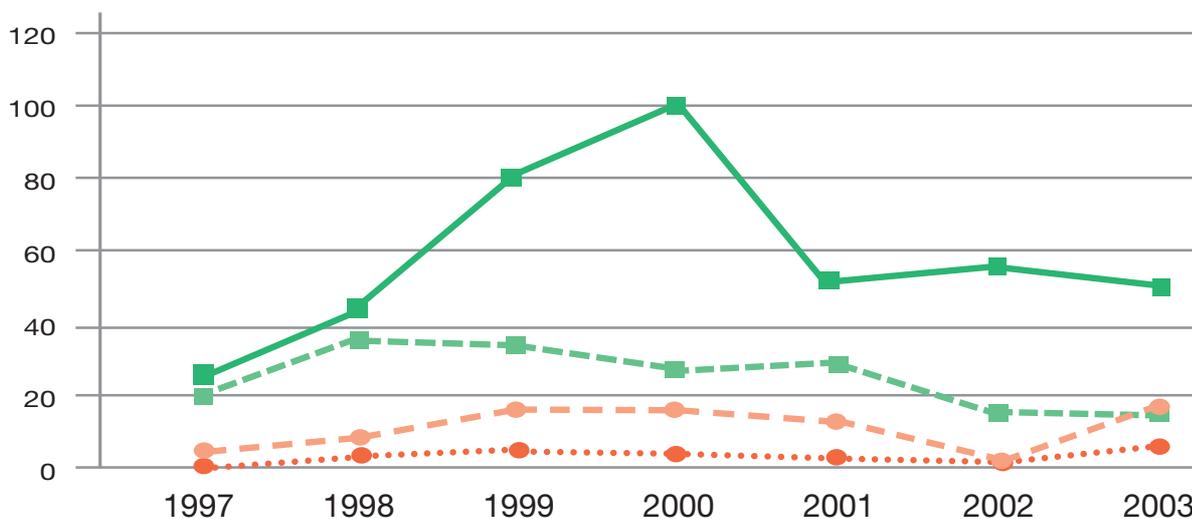
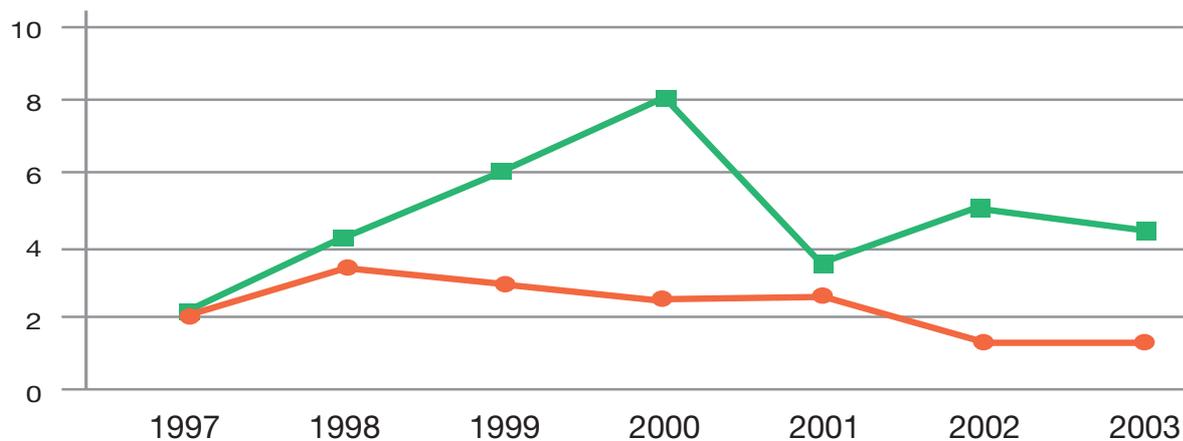


Figure 2: Rate of accidental drug-induced deaths with cocaine or methamphetamine mentions per million population aged 15-54 years, Australia 1997-2003.



ABS DATA ON COCAINE AND METHAMPHETAMINE MENTIONS IN ACCIDENTAL DRUG-INDUCED DEATHS IN AUSTRALIA

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is responsible for collecting data every year on persons who have died across Australia. Data on accidental deaths are collected from the Medical Certificates of Cause of Death submitted to each State or Territory's Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages and from the National Coroners Information System.

Death certificates typically state the sequence of events that led to a person's death. The ABS then uses its coding rules to establish the *underlying* cause of death, that is "the disease or injury that initiated the train of morbid events leading directly to death, or the circumstances of the accident or violence which produced the fatal injury". The ABS also lists the diseases, injuries and health-related factors that *contributed* to the death but which were not the main cause of death.

The ABS uses an international classification system for classifying deaths, developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). This is called the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Problems (ICD). The ICD edition currently used is the 10th edition (ICD-10). This edition of the classification system has been used since 1997 and provides more detailed information on accidental drug-induced deaths than previous versions.

All data on in this report refer to accidental drug-induced deaths where the underlying cause of death is drug-related and accidental. There are more deaths each year in which drugs are considered to have *contributed* to a person's death (e.g. general medical conditions, suicides, traffic accidents, drownings), but these deaths are not included.

In this report, the following ICD-10 codes have been used to examine deaths where methamphetamine and cocaine were considered to be the *underlying* cause of death:

- F14 - Accidental deaths due to cocaine use disorder (including cocaine dependence)
- F15 - Accidental deaths due to methamphetamine use disorder (including methamphetamine dependence)
- X42 with T40.5 - Accidental deaths due to poisoning cross-classified with cocaine poisoning (but excluding any other drug from the X42 category)
- X41 with T43.6 - Accidental deaths due to poisoning cross-classified with methamphetamine poisoning (but excluding any other drug from the X41 category)

The following codes have also been examined to investigate deaths in which cocaine or methamphetamines were mentioned as a *contributing* cause of an accidental drug-induced death, but in which they may not have been the primary cause of death:

- Accidental deaths due to other drug use disorder (F11-F16, F19, F55) cross-classified with cocaine (T40.5 and F14) or methamphetamine (T43.6 and F15); and
- Accidental deaths due to poisoning by another drug (X40-X44) cross-classified with cocaine (T40.5 and F14) or methamphetamine (T43.6 and F15).

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www.med.unsw.edu.au/ndarc

For more information about the ABS, go to:

www.abs.gov.au

For more information on ICD-10, go to:

www.who.int/whosis/icd10/

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