

Methamphetamine Use and Trends in Iowa

Key Findings

The rate of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions increased from 306 admissions per 100,000 population in 2017 to 315 admissions in 2020.

Adults aged 25 to 44 continue to have the highest rates of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions.

Iowa youth continue to report using methamphetamine at rates near zero (1% or less statewide for all grades). In 2021, 72% of 6th graders, 63% of 8th graders, and 54% of 11th graders reported it would be very hard or hard for someone their age to access 'any other illegal drug (including methamphetamine...)'.

From 2016 to 2021, deaths from psychostimulants, which include methamphetamine-related deaths, more than doubled from 78 to 182 deaths, an 133% increase.

Methamphetamine is a powerful stimulant that is chemically similar to amphetamine. Methamphetamine most commonly comes in the form of a white, odorless, bitter-tasting crystalline powder which can then be consumed orally, smoked, snorted, dissolved in water or alcohol, or injected (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2019). While the amount of methamphetamine supplied to Iowa did slow at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has since returned to pre-pandemic levels (Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy, 2021) making it a serious public health concern (Jones et al., 2020).

Methamphetamine Use among Adults in the Past Year

Methamphetamine use among Iowa adults is similar to adults nationwide. In a national survey, 0.9% of adults in Iowa and the US reported methamphetamine use in the past year (National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 2020). However, use may be increasing based on a recent statewide survey, 3% of adult Iowans reported using methamphetamine at least one day during the past month (Park et al., 2022).

Methamphetamine Use among Adults in the Past Year (NSDUH, Average Percentages, 2019 & 2020)	Iowa	U.S.
Among all adults, 18+ years	0.9%	0.9%
Among young adults, 18 to 25 years	0.7%	0.7%
Among adults, 26+ years	0.9%	0.9%

Methamphetamine Use among Youth in the Past 30 days

Among Iowa youth, less than 1% of 6th graders, 1% of 8th graders, and 1% of 11th graders reported having used methamphetamines in the past 30 days (Iowa Youth Survey (IYS), 2021).

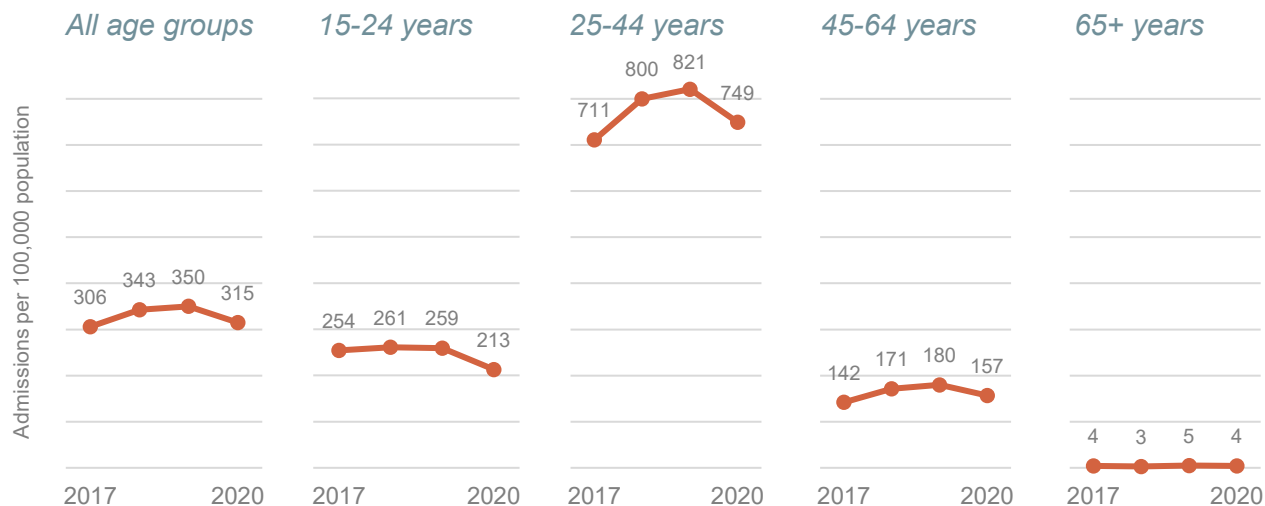
Over half of Iowa youth perceived it would be *very hard* or *hard* for someone their age to access any illegal drug (including methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, or another illegal drug)' (IYS, 2021). Specifically, 72% of 6th graders, 63% of 8th graders, and 54% of 11th graders reported it would be *very hard* or *hard* for someone their age to get 'any other illegal drug (including methamphetamine)'.

Perception of the risk associated with substance use is an important factor in whether an individual will use substances (Lipari & Jean-Francois, 2016), and reflects an individual's perceived susceptibility for harm or negative consequence of a behavior such as injury, illness, disease, or death (Ferrer & Klein, 2015). About two-thirds (69%) of 6th grade students, 79% of 8th grade students, 87% of 11th grade students reported using methamphetamines regularly poses *moderate risk* or *high risk* to physical or mental health.

Methamphetamine-Related Treatment Admissions*

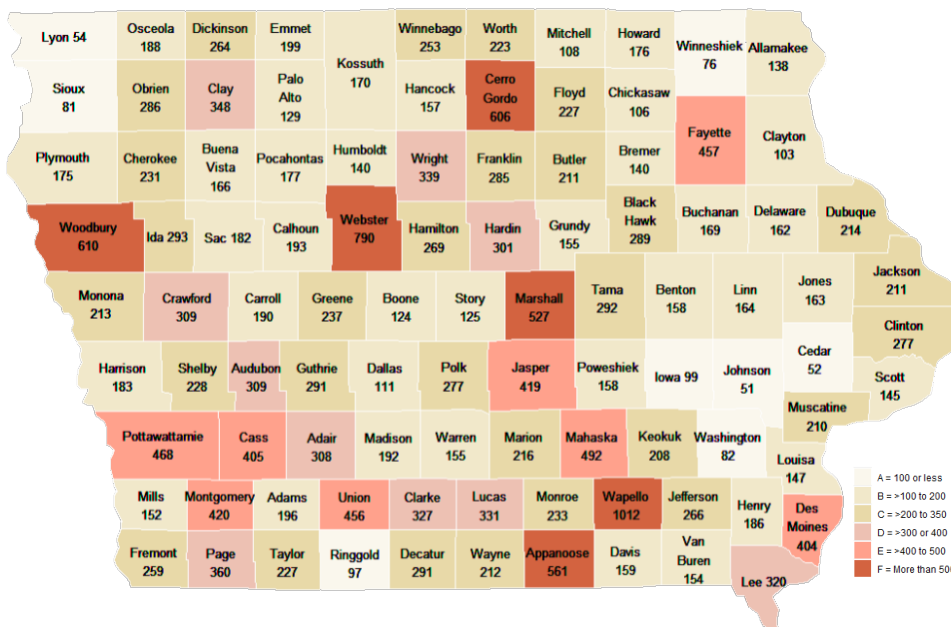
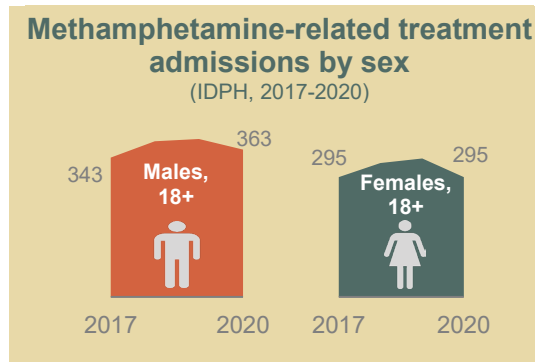
The rate of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions increased from 2017 to 2019, but decreased in 2020.

Across all age groups combined, the rate increased from 306 admissions per 100,000 population in 2017 to 315 admissions per 100,000 population in 2020.



*Methamphetamine as primary drug of choice upon admission

In 2020, more than 7,800 Iowans were admitted for methamphetamine use disorder treatment. Iowans aged 25 to 44 had the highest rates of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions compared to other age groups. Rates were higher for males than females across all years. Among males, the rate increased from 343 per 100,000 males in 2017 to 363 in 2020. Among females, the rate of 295 admissions per 100,000 females was the same in 2020 as 2017.



The map displays the average annual rates for methamphetamine-related treatment admission by county from 2016 to 2020. The county rates varied greatly from 51 admissions per 100,000 population in Johnson County to 1,012 in Wapello County. The five counties with the highest rates included: Wapello (1,012 per 100,000 population), Webster (790), Woodbury (610), Cerro Gordo (606), and Appanoose (561).

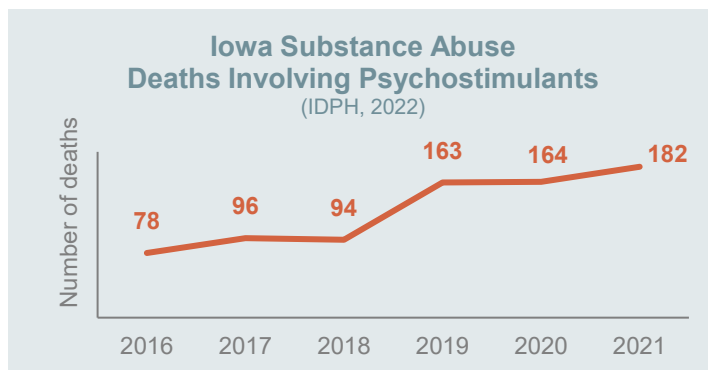
Amphetamine-Related Emergency Department Visits and Hospitalizations

Age-adjusted rate per 100,000	ER Visits	Hospitalizations
2018		
Females	2.6	1.8
Males	4.7	4.3
2019		
Females	2.8	2.7
Males	4.4	5.9
2020		
Females	2.7	2.8
Males	4.2	5.2

Methamphetamines are grouped with all amphetamines in available hospital data.

Across all years, the age-adjusted rates of amphetamine-related emergency department (ED) visits and hospitalizations were higher for males than for females. In 2020, males had 4.2 ED visits per 100,000 population compared to 2.7 visits for females. That same year, the amphetamine-related hospitalizations for males were 5.2 per 100,000 population versus 2.8 for females.

Deaths Involving Psychostimulants



From 2016 to 2021, deaths from psychostimulants, which include methamphetamine-related deaths, more than doubled from 78 to 182 deaths, an 133% increase.

Of those, 69% occurred among males compared to 31% among females. The majority of deaths from psychostimulants were among those 35 to 54 years (51%), White (92%), or non-Hispanic (97%).

Consequences of Methamphetamine Use

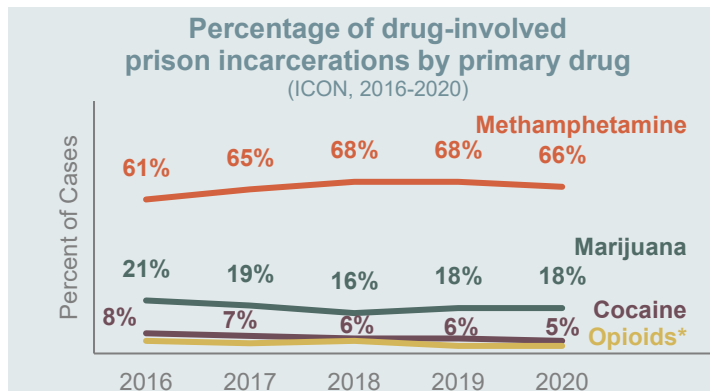
Short term health effects of taking methamphetamines include:

- Increased wakefulness and physical activity, decreased appetite, faster breathing, rapid and/or irregular heartbeat, increased blood pressure, and increased body temperature (NIDA, 2019).
- Withdrawal symptoms when people stop taking it due to its highly addictive nature which may include anxiety, fatigue, severe depression, psychosis and intense drug cravings (NIDA, 2019).
- Risky behavior that places individuals at greater risk of HIV and other bloodborne diseases (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2021).

Long term health effects of taking methamphetamines include:

- Extreme weight loss, addiction, dental problems, changes in brain structure/function, memory loss, violent behavior, paranoia, and hallucination (NIDA, 2019).
- Changes in the brain’s dopamine system that are associated with reduced coordination and impaired verbal learning (NIDA, 2019).
- Premature birth, cardiac defects and other birth defects when used during pregnancy (Wright et al., 2016).

Methamphetamines are the most common primary drug of choice among drug-involved prison incarcerations.



Prison incarcerations by primary drug of choice reflect offenders who were newly admitted to prison with a most serious drug offense (Iowa Correctional Offender Network (ICON), 2020).

Methamphetamine was reported as the primary drug of choice more frequently than marijuana, cocaine, or opioids. Between 2016 and 2020, the percentage of prison admissions in which methamphetamine was cited as the primary drug of choice increased from 61% (2016) to 66% (2020).

*Opioid incarcerations: 5% (2016), 4% (2017), 5% (2018), 3% (2019), 3% (2020).

Conclusion

Methamphetamine is a potent stimulant that can result in serious health consequences and/or death for those who use it. Methamphetamine use (in the past 30 days) among Iowa youth remain at or below 1% for each grade (6th, 8th, and 11th) based on self-reports from the 2021 Iowa Youth Survey (IYS, 2021). National surveys of adults (from 2019 and 2020) document a comparable percentage of lowans (0.9%) who reported methamphetamine use in the past year relative to the national average (0.9%) (NSDUH, 2020). However, 3% of adult lowans reported using methamphetamine in the previous 30 days in a more recent statewide survey (Park et al., 2022), which highlights the importance of continuing to monitor the use of methamphetamine and other substances in the state. Methamphetamine use is further reflected in data on treatment admissions and substance related death in Iowa. In 2020, more than 7,800 lowans (or 315 per 100,000 population) were admitted to a substance use treatment program with methamphetamine as their primary substance of choice (IDPH, 2020) and deaths from psychostimulants, which includes methamphetamine-related deaths, were twice as high in Iowa in 2021 (at 182) than five years previously (at 78) (IDPH, 2022).

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For more prevention and treatment resources in Iowa, please visit the Iowa HHS, Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention:

<https://hhs.iowa.gov/substance-abuse/Prevention-Related-Programs>, or [YourLifeIowa.org](https://yourlifeiowa.org)