

People charged with drug offences

More people are now charged for methamphetamine than cannabis

The number of people charged in court for drug offences has fallen by 35% since 2010, mostly driven by a 58% decrease in people charged for cannabis. However, over the same period people charged for methamphetamine has increased by 34%, and now exceeds the number of people charged for cannabis.

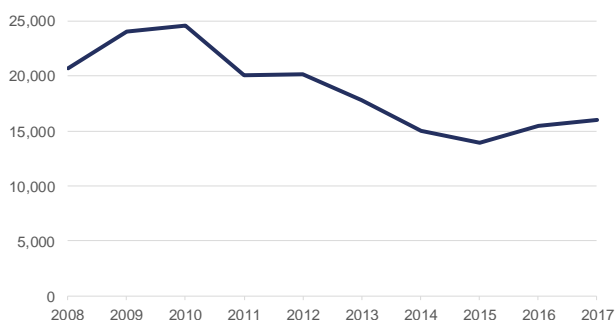
How do we measure drug crime in New Zealand?

There is no single measure that is used to give a complete picture of drug crime in New Zealand. Measures using administrative data do not indicate the level of drug usage and are strongly influenced by Police resourcing and practice. This should be remembered when interpreting the number drug offending from people charged in court.

The number of people charged with drug offences has dropped since 2010 due to a decrease in cannabis charges

Over the last 10 years, there has been an overall decline in people charged for drug offences as shown in Figure 1. From its peak in 2010, the number of people charged for drug offences has decreased by 35%. However, this trend has reversed in recent years. Between 2015 and 2017, there was a 15% increase in people charged for drug offences.

Figure 1: Number of people charged for drug offences from 2008 to 2017

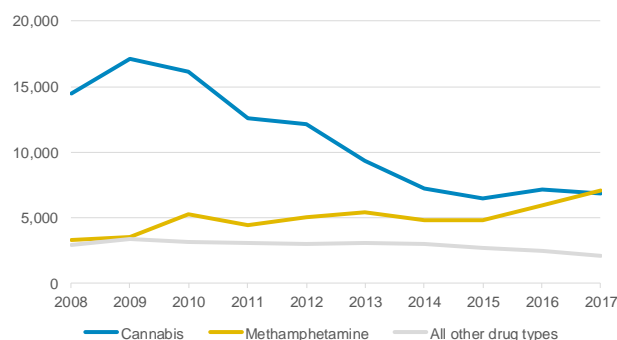


Cannabis has been the main driver behind the decreasing number of people charged for drug offences. The number of people charged for cannabis offences dropped 58% between 2010 and 2017 as shown in Figure 2.

The number of people charged with methamphetamine offences has been increasing since 2015

While the decrease in people charged for cannabis has recently plateaued, people charged for methamphetamine increased by 48% between 2015 and 2017. In 2017, the number of people charged for methamphetamine exceeded cannabis for the first time (Figure 2). In 2017, methamphetamine made up 44% of all people charged for drug offences while cannabis made up 43%.

Figure 2: Number of people charged for drug offences per drug type from 2008 to 2017



Māori show a similar trend to all people convicted for drug offences

Māori are disproportionately represented in illicit drug convictions. While only 15% of the population are Māori, they comprised 42% of people convicted for drug offences in 2017. Drug convictions for Māori have followed the same overall pattern as all drug convictions. Between 2015 and 2017, the number of Māori convicted of cannabis offences increased 3% (1,265 to 1,305 people) but increased by 60% for methamphetamine offences (622 to 993 people).

Date published: 17 AUG 2018

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