



Public Health at Otago.

POSTGRADUATE



CHRISTCHURCH

A public health approach to reducing methamphetamine harm in Aotearoa

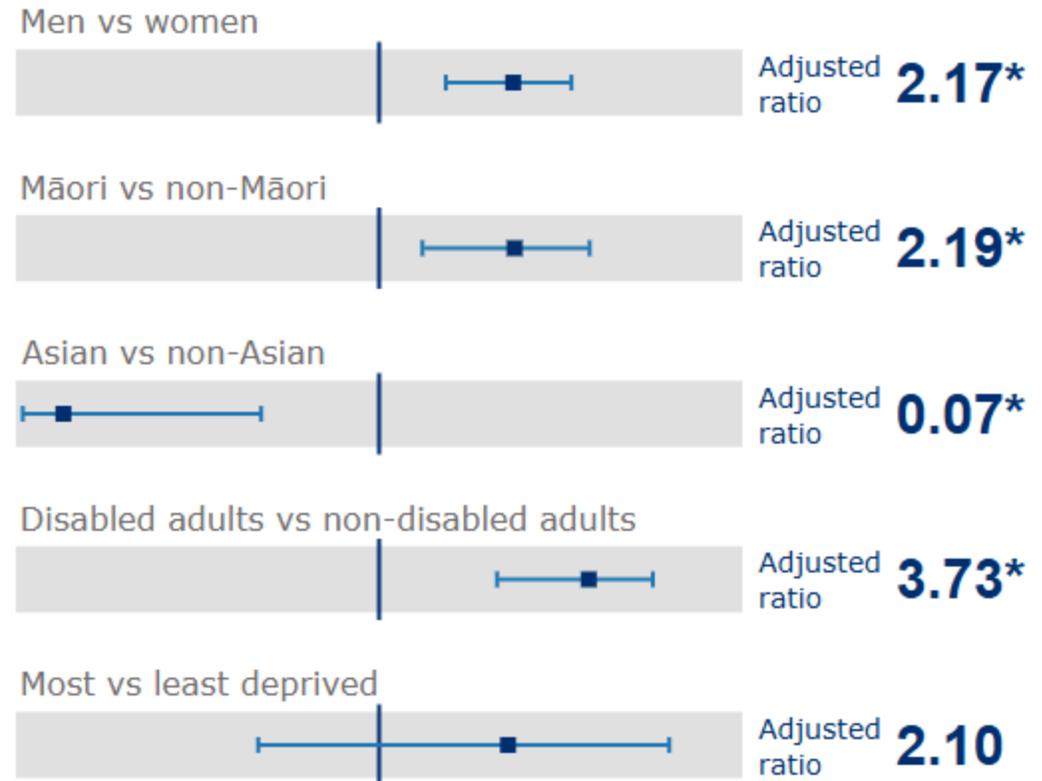
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Key statistics

- Over 3,000 kg seized by customs in last 12 months
- But prices are declining (suggesting high supply)
- Wastewater testing – 33 kg per week in Q1 2025
- NZ health survey – 1.3% of those aged 15 or over report use in last 12 months (i.e. 56,000 people)



An asterisk indicates that the adjusted ratio is statistically significant.

<https://www.police.govt.nz/about-us/publication/national-drugs-wastewater-testing-programme-quarter-1-2025> and https://minhealthnz.shinyapps.io/nz-health-survey-2022-23-annual-data-explorer/_w_088e6df2/#!/explore-indicators and <https://www.customs.govt.nz/about-us/statistics/drug-interceptions/drug-seizures/> and <https://shoreandwhariki.ac.nz/nzdts-research-bulletins>



Methamphetamine harm

\$864 million – estimated cost of harm

Harms to self

Medical

Psychological

Addiction

Relationship loss

Tangible losses

Harms to others

Injury

Crime

Economic cost

Family harm

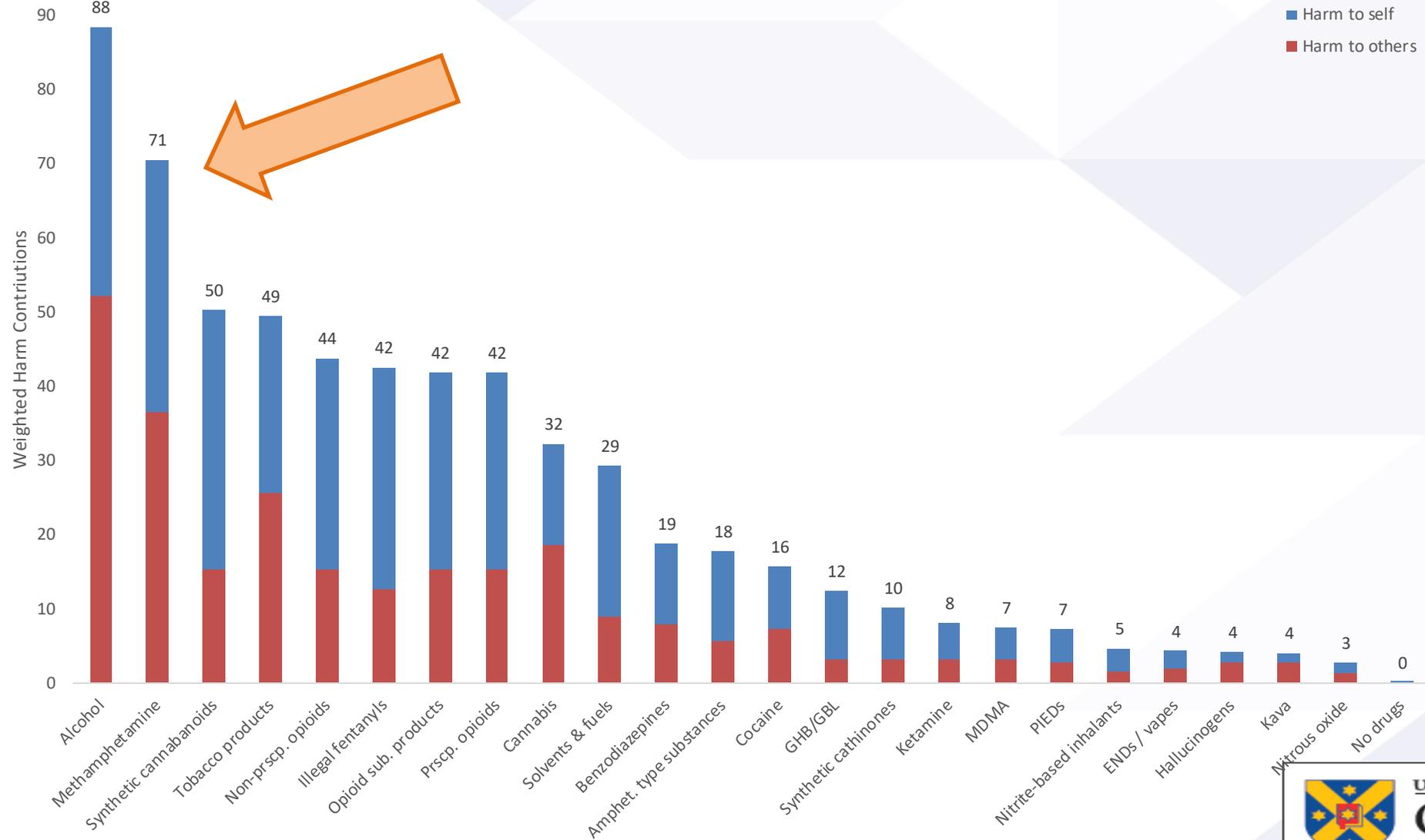
Damage to communities

Source: <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/2024-07/2023-illicit-drug-harm-index.pdf>

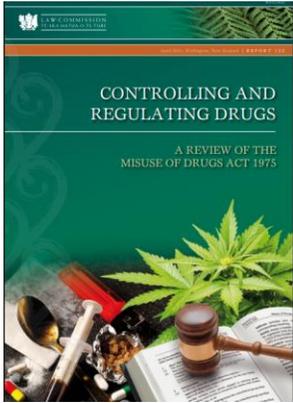
Crossin, R., Cleland, L., Wilkins, C., Rychert, M., Adamson, S., Potiki, T., ... & Boden, J. (2023). The New Zealand drug harms ranking study: A multi-criteria decision analysis. *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, 37(9), 891-903.



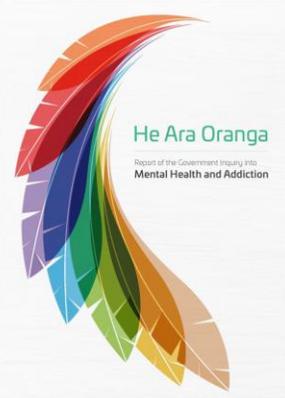
Harm to Self & Others in Overall Population



Crossin, R., Cleland, L., Wilkins, C., Rychert, M., Adamson, S., Potiki, T., ... & Boden, J. (2023). The New Zealand drug harms ranking study: A multi-criteria decision analysis. *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, 37(9), 891-903.



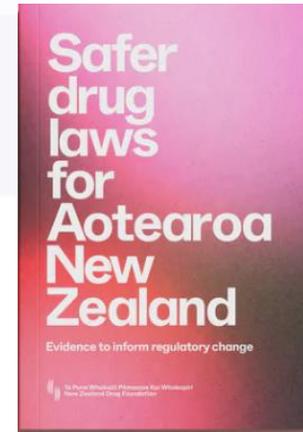
“The Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 should be repealed and replaced by a new Act, which should be administered by the Ministry of Health”



Emphasised need for a move towards a health-based approach to drugs



“We must do what works instead of just trying the same tired old approaches. We must focus relentlessly on harm minimisation rather than just locking people into a cycle of addiction and incarceration.”



“Aotearoa New Zealand’s current drug laws do not serve their intended purpose. Instead of protecting health, they entrench stigma, expose people to unsafe illicit markets, and perpetuate deep inequities, particularly for Māori.”



When asked how they would like \$100 of their tax spent, a representative sample put almost two-thirds towards health-based responses



A public health approach



“Not criminal
justice”

Watson, T. M., Chochla, S., Kim, A., MacIntosh, K., Bonn, M., Haines-Saah, R., ... & Penney, G. (2024). Defining a public health approach to substance use: Perspectives from professionals and practitioners across Canada. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 128, 104427.

Crepault, J. F., Russell, C., Watson, T. M., Strike, C., Bonato, S., & Rehm, J. (2023). What is a public health approach to substance use? A qualitative systematic review and thematic synthesis. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 112, 103958.



Our study

- What would a public health approach to methamphetamine look like in practice, in Aotearoa?
- Conducted a review of reviews, with additional inclusion of studies related to:
 - Harm reduction
 - Indigenous approaches
- To present an evidence-based set of interventions for Aotearoa to enact a health-based approach



The studies we found

- 71 systematic reviews and meta-analyses
- Plus, 52 additional methamphetamine-specific studies:
 - 6 studies on indigenous approaches
 - 12 studies on education
 - 3 studies on drug-checking
 - 8 on NSPs
 - 4 on safer injecting approaches
 - 3 on safer inhalation approaches
 - 4 on drug consumption facilities
 - 9 on safer supply
 - 3 on alternative justice approaches

Key takeaways

Mixed evidence for pharmacological and psychosocial treatment approaches

- Noting that some of those showing most promise (e.g. contingency management) are not widely used in Aotearoa
- And abstinence was the primary outcome measure in the majority of studies

Mixed evidence for education-based approaches

- But, peer education effective at reducing harm

Evidence for efficacy of harm reduction approaches

- But, most studies are not from Aotearoa
- And, many types of harm reduction are not available

Significant knowledge gaps

- Indigenous approaches
- Programmes at a collective level
- Support for family / whānau

What could we do in Aotearoa?

- Invest in areas of promise
- Strengthen research on indigenous approaches, led by and for Māori
- Evaluate in our local context
- In order, to reduce methamphetamine harm and inequities
- This is the message we will all be communicating through our policy and advocacy networks

Questions?

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