

## Asia-Pacific report

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Two major reports on drug use across Asia Pacific are to be released at Australia's first national conference on amphetamines to be held in Sydney on Thursday 28 September.

Regional Project Coordinator for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Jeremy Douglas will release a report highlighting that methamphetamine and ecstasy abuse continues to dominate the region.

Dr. John Herron and Associate Professor Robert Ali from the Australian National Council on Drugs will officially release an ANCD commissioned report from the Burnet Institute & Turning Point which snapshots drug issues in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Regional Project Coordinator for the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Jeremy Douglas (based in Thailand) will launch the report – "Patterns and trends of amphetamine-type stimulants and other drugs of abuse in East Asia and the Pacific 2005" at the conference to be held at Sydney's Convention Centre in Darling Harbour.

The UNODC report reveals that methamphetamine and ecstasy abuse continue to dominate the region.

6 of the 13 profiled countries now rank methamphetamine as the primary drug of concern...with nine countries reporting an increasing trend of methamphetamine abuse. Seven countries in the Asian region have ranked ecstasy as a major drug of concern and have clearly reported an increasing trend of abuse.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, there are a number of significant trends in the region:

- Thailand and Myanmar reported higher seizures of crystal methamphetamine (also known as ice) – and these are of a higher purity and more potent form than in previous years.
- Lao PDR and Cambodia reported seizures of ice for the first time in 2005. Authorities fear this may signify the emerging presence and spread in availability of ice in the region.
- Opiates – particularly heroin – and cannabis continue to have a widespread presence in the region. Three countries reported heroin as the primary drug of abuse and two reported cannabis as the most abused drug.
- Other drugs including benzodiazepines and ketamine have now emerged rapidly as prominent drugs of abuse. Benzodiazepine nimetazepam was ranked as the primary drug of abuse in Singapore.
- The club drug Ketamine was reported as a drug of abuse in five countries.
- Inhalant abuse continues to be an entrenched problem in the region – particularly amongst urban youth.
- The report is based on information submitted by drug control agencies in 13 countries in the region including Australia, Brunei, Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The full report is available at [apaic.org](http://apaic.org).

Speaking on the UNODC Report, Dr. John Herron, said "This is a major report which highlights what's happening in the Region. It's the third report in a series aimed at improving and collecting data amongst

countries in the Region.”

The Chairman of the Australian National Council on Drugs, Dr. John Herron will also co-launch an extensive report on drug issues in the Asia-Pacific Region at the conference with Associate Professor Robert Ali. The report “*Situational Analysis of Illicit Drug Issues and Responses in the Asia-Pacific Region*” provides an extraordinary snapshot of what’s happening with drugs across the region.

The report reveals a significant rise in the use, production and trafficking of illicit drugs across the Asian region.

The report shows that amphetamines are making substantial inroads in to youth cultures in many countries.

### **Amongst some of the remarkable findings in the report are:**

- China has now set up a massive network of methadone treatment centres across the country.
- Cambodia is now the world's largest source of cannabis for the global market.
- 74.5% of Hong Kong drug users nominate heroin as their drug of choice.
- 80% of HIV infections in Indonesia are linked directly to injecting drug use.
- 60% of Malaysian injecting drug users share needles and syringes.
- Ice is now the main drug in the Philippines.
- 25,000 new drug users are appearing in Thailand every year.
- Up to 120 people in Vietnam a day are being infected with HIV.
- 60% of them are because of injecting drugs.

Dr. John Herron said, “The number of illicit drug users throughout the Asian region has increased dramatically over the past ten years. We should not underestimate that threat that illicit drugs use and supply poses to the wider Asia-Pacific regions stability and the potential impact of this situation on Australia.”

## **Asia-Pacific Situational Analysis of Illicit Drug Issues and Responses Report**

### **Key Messages**

#### **General**

1. Both drug trafficking and drug use can seriously affect a country’s ability to develop economically and socially. Addressing these links between economic and social development and drug issues needs to be incorporated into the responses of international aid agencies.
2. There is a real opportunity to build upon the good work undertaken by Australia, particularly in the law enforcement area and the leading role taken by our international aid agencies to assist in reducing HIV transmission.
3. It is vital that support continues for countries in the Asia-Pacific Region to develop local strategies and intelligence gathering to prevent the trafficking and production of illicit drugs.
4. It is vital that countries in the Asia-Pacific Region are supported to also develop their own locally derived evidence and research bases to effectively prevent and treat drug use.

## Asian Region

5. Despite the significant reductions in poppy cultivation in the Golden Triangle area, heroin and opium use remains a major illicit drug problem.
6. The number of clandestine laboratories producing amphetamine type stimulants in the region continues to increase each year.
7. There are increasing reports of injecting drug use related to both opiate and methamphetamine use – this presents a significant HIV threat to the Region.
8. Methamphetamine use is increasingly becoming the drug of choice in many countries, and particularly amongst young people in the burgeoning middle classes. This is a particular concern given many countries continue to focus on treatment and harm reduction responses centred on opiate use.
9. There are limited drug treatment opportunities with many countries unable to provide treatment to an estimated 90% of drug users.
10. There is an increasing reliance on incarceration and compulsory treatment facilities to address drug use. This approach is questionable given the level, type and effectiveness of programs being used is not evidence based and the approach appears to be taken in lieu of providing effective drug treatment.

## Pacific Region

11. There was relatively little information on the levels of drug use in the Pacific Region.
12. The most significant drug issues facing the Pacific revolve around the use and misuse of alcohol and cannabis. Tobacco use is also a major concern.
13. Alcohol and its promotion is a key area of concern, particularly given the links of alcohol misuse to risky sexual behaviour and violence.
14. Significant investment is needed particularly for drug and alcohol research and treatment.
15. The rising use of Pacific Islands as a transit route for illicit drugs poses a significant threat at a number of levels, including national security (eg corruption) and the potential leakage of transited drugs to create a domestic market of drug use.

## Key Recommendations

1. Australia's aid and development budget needs to have a clear and discrete component dedicated to building country capacity and increasing organisational collaboration to address local drug and alcohol issues in the Asia-Pacific Region.
2. Australia needs to build on its achievements in drug based law enforcement and harm reduction initiatives to develop more comprehensive co-operative structures to assist the Asia-Pacific Region in addressing broader drug and alcohol issues.
3. Australia needs to strengthen its involvement and support for key Regional organisations (Pacific Islands Forum, United Nations, World Health Organisation, ASEAN, ACCORD) to address on drug and alcohol issues.
4. Australia needs to provide a much greater level of investment into developing research and treatment capacity in the Region. This can be done by establishing separate Australian based Institutes on Drug Policy for Asia and the Pacific linked to some of the existing tertiary institutes/facilities already working in the regions. These institutes would be dedicated to:
  1. Assisting in the development of evidence-based policy in countries within the respective Regions through research co-ordination and assistance, and the fostering of regular dialogue on

drug and alcohol issues

2. Developing Regional drug treatment and NGO networks to promote information sharing and co-operative partnerships
3. Assisting in the development of governance arrangements for the delivery of safe and effective treatment interventions
4. Providing scholarship opportunities and leadership programs for people from the Region
5. There is an urgent need to undertake a more substantive situational analysis on both the illicit and licit drug issues specifically affecting the Asian Region
6. There is an urgent need to undertake a more substantive situational analysis that specifically focuses on the illicit and licit drug issues specifically affecting the Pacific Islands

## UNODC media release

Methamphetamine, Ecstasy abuse continue to rise in East Asia and the Pacific

Based on the 2006 annual report on patterns and trends in amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) in East Asia and Pacific, methamphetamine and ecstasy abuse continue to dominate the region. Six of the 13 profiled countries ranked methamphetamine as the primary drug of concern, with 9 of them reporting an increasing trend of methamphetamine abuse. Seven of the 9 countries which ranked ecstasy as a drug of concern reported an increasing trend of abuse.

The report, entitled 'Patterns and Trends of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS) and Other Drugs of Abuse in East Asia and the Pacific 2005,' is the third report in a series of annual publications for the UNODC project "*Improving ATS Data and Information Systems*," aimed at improving the collection and sharing of ATS data among countries in the region. The project is being implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific. Released in July 2006, the report includes regional and national overviews of drug trends in East Asia and Pacific, along with comparative data from 2005 and 2004.

Significant trends were noted in the region. Thailand and Myanmar reported higher seizures of crystal methamphetamine, or ice—a higher purity and more potent form of methamphetamine than in previous years. Lao PDR and Cambodia also reported seizures of ice for the first time in 2005. Authorities fear that this may signify the emerging presence and spread in availability of ice in the region.

Opiates, particularly heroin, and cannabis continue to have a widespread presence. Three countries reported heroin as the primary drug of abuse, while two reported cannabis as the most abused drug.

Other drugs, including benzodiazepines and ketamine, have emerged rapidly as prominent drugs of abuse. The benzodiazepine nimetazepam was ranked as the primary drug of abuse in Singapore and second in Brunei. The club drug ketamine was reported as a drug of abuse in five countries. Inhalant abuse continues to be an entrenched problem in the region, particularly among urban youth.

The report is based on information submitted by drug control agencies in 13 countries in the region, which included Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Through the project, national drug control agencies have developed a network of law enforcement authorities, treatment centres, and research institutions at both the provincial and national levels from which they can collect data.

For the 2006 annual report, the countries submitted data to the Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP), an online data collection network. DAINAP was established by UNODC in May 2005 as a replacement for the *Regional ATS Questionnaire* (RAQ) to enhance the quality and efficiency of data collected in the region.

Member countries can log-on to DAINAP and submit quarterly and annual data regarding recent trends of abuse, health and treatment, arrests and seizures, and data collection networks.

The annual report is available for distribution to national counterparts, UNODC country offices, donor governments, non governmental organizations, and national and international stakeholders. The information in the report could be used for policy decisions, as well as to formulate and implement programmes and projects in the region.

The full report is available at [www.apaic.org](http://www.apaic.org). \*\*\*

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“The UNODC Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific promotes and facilitates actions against drug abuse and trafficking, transnational organized crime, human trafficking, money laundering, corruption, and terrorism, through cooperative partnerships in the region.”

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*The ANCD is the principal advisory body to Government on drug and alcohol issues.*

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