













































































“Heroin was detected in seven bills in amounts ranging from 0.03 to 168.50 µg per bill; 6-AM and morphine were detected in three bills; methamphetamine and amphetamine in three and one bills, respectively, and PCP was detected in two bills in amounts of 0.78 and 1.87 µg per bill.” (Jenkins, 2001).

One research paper specifically reports the sudden appearance of methamphetamine contamination in a community, in US banknotes sourced from the Birmingham Alabama Metropolitan Area. Fultz et al. [22] found that 42% percent of bills collected from within this community in 2012 were contaminated with methamphetamine, more than has been previously reported for any drug other than cocaine in the United States. These authors commented [22] that:

“The high percentage of contamination detected in this study, and its sudden appearance, indicates a significant change in the pattern of drug contamination of currency around Birmingham, probably reflecting higher methamphetamine abuse in the local populace. This conclusion is in agreement with and complements the findings reported in the National Substance Abuse Index, which states that methamphetamine abuse currently exceeds that of cocaine throughout the state of Alabama [...] The results of this study suggest that it is possible to track significant changes in methamphetamine abuse in a specific region over time.”

Traces of methamphetamine have also been detected on Euro banknotes [19].

Parallels exist for other categories of chemical compounds, where local activities and use patterns result in characteristic ‘forensic levels’ of environmental contamination. For example, like methamphetamine and most drugs, high explosives are also organic compounds. Traces of high explosive residues are rare in public places in the US and UK [23, 24]; as might be expected because most members of the public are not in routine contact with high explosives such as nitroglycerine, trinitrotoluene (TNT), pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN), or cyclotrimethylene trinitramine (RDX). By contrast, nitroglycerine, which is associated with firearm use, was more commonly detected at UK police sites [24], and going a step beyond this, traces of a range of high explosives can be found at any operational military range [25].

Based on this ability of banknotes to carry a trace history of drug use within a local population, it would be expected that if testing were to be carried out, low concentrations of methamphetamine would be detectable in a proportion of New Zealand banknotes, reflecting current use of this drug in the New Zealand community.

An interesting implication of this likelihood is that traces of methamphetamine may exist within the walls of most households in New Zealand at least some of the time, on banknotes carried in by the occupants.