

## Executive Summary

The IDRS comprises a sentinel sample of people who regularly inject illicit drugs, recruited via advertisements in needle syringe programs and other harm reduction services, as well as via peer referral, across each capital city of Australia. The results are not representative of all people who inject drugs, nor of use in the general population. **Data were collected in 2025 from May-July. Since 2020, interviews were delivered face-to-face as well as via telephone, to reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission; all interviews prior to 2020 were conducted face-to-face. This methodological change should be factored into all comparisons of data from the 2020-2025 samples relative to previous years.**

### Sample Characteristics

The 2025 IDRS sample (N=865) was mostly similar to the sample in 2024 and in previous years. Participants predominantly identified as male (66%) with a median age of 47 years, both stable from 2024. In 2025, most participants reported being unemployed at the time of the interview (88%; 89% in 2024), although the median weekly income significantly increased (\$465; \$424 in 2024;  $p<0.001$ ). Drug of choice remained stable, with 44% nominating methamphetamine (42% in 2024) and 42% nominating heroin (39% in 2024) as their drug of choice. Most participants continued to nominate methamphetamine as the drug injected most often in the past month (57%; 59% in 2024). Weekly or more frequent consumption of non-prescribed cannabis significantly decreased from 57% in 2024 to 52% in 2025 ( $p=0.041$ ).

### Heroin

In 2025, 54% of the sample reported recent heroin use, stable relative to 2024 (51%). Median frequency of use also remained stable at a median of 120 days in the past six months (90 days in 2024). There was a significant decrease in the reported median price for one point of heroin in 2025 (\$50; IQR=50-50) relative to 2024 (\$80; IQR=50-100;  $p=0.003$ ). Perceived purity and perceived availability remained stable, with 33% reporting 'medium' purity (39% in 2024) and 93% reporting 'easy' or 'very easy' obtainment (91% in 2024).

### Methamphetamine

Recent use of any methamphetamine has been gradually increasing since 2010, however has remained relatively stable from 2021 onwards. In 2025, 82% reported recent use, stable from 2024 (82%). Crystal continued to be the most common form of methamphetamine used by participants (79%; 81% in 2024). Use of methamphetamine powder remained stable relative to 2024 (8%; 8% in 2024) and use of methamphetamine base significantly decreased (3%; 5% in 2024;  $p=0.020$ ). The reported median price for one point of powder and crystal was \$50, respectively. Perceived purity for powder and crystal remained stable, albeit mixed. Perceived availability also remained stable, with 67% reporting 'easy' or 'very easy' obtainment of methamphetamine powder, and 96% reporting 'easy' or 'very easy' obtainment of methamphetamine crystal.

### Cocaine

Recent use of cocaine and frequency of use has generally decreased amongst the sample since the commencement of monitoring (peak of 35% in 2001), although remained stable in 2025

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relative to 2024. In 2025, 19% of participants reported recent use on a median of two days. The median price for one gram of cocaine remained stable at \$300 (\$300 in 2024). Perceived purity and availability of cocaine also remained stable, with 36% of participants reporting 'high' purity (50% in 2024), and 62% reporting 'easy' or 'very easy' obtainment (67% in 2024).

### **Cannabis and/or Cannabinoid-Related Products**

At least two thirds of the IDRS sample have reported recent use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products since monitoring commenced. In 2025, 65% reported recent non-prescribed use (69% in 2024). There were no significant changes in the perceived purity or availability of bush and hydroponic cannabis in 2025, relative to 2024. The price per gram of hydro and bush cannabis remained stable at \$20, respectively.

### **Pharmaceutical Opioids**

Overall, non-prescribed use of most forms of pharmaceutical opioids has either remained stable or declined since monitoring of each opioid first commenced. In 2025, significant decreases were observed in recent use of non-prescribed buprenorphine-naloxone (6%; 9% in 2024;  $p=0.041$ ), frequency of use of buprenorphine-naloxone (3 days; 7 days in 2024;  $p=0.010$ ) and recent use of non-prescribed tramadol (2%; 4% in 2024;  $p=0.013$ ). In 2025, oxycodone and morphine were the most commonly used non-prescribed pharmaceutical opioids (10% and 9%, respectively).

### **Other Drugs**

Use of any NPS has fluctuated between 5% and 12% since monitoring commenced in 2013,

with 6% reporting recent use in 2025 (5% in 2024). Benzodiazepines remained the most common non-prescribed pharmaceutical drug reported by participants in 2025 (23%; 25% in 2024), followed by pregabalin (16%; 13% in 2024). Recent use of non-prescribed antipsychotics significantly decreased in 2025 (3%; 5% in 2024;  $p=0.033$ ). Recent use of tobacco remained high yet stable (87%; 87% in 2024), however recent use of illicit tobacco increased significantly in 2025 (63%; 46% in 2024;  $p<0.001$ ). Illicit e-cigarettes were used by one quarter (25%) of the sample in 2025, stable relative to 2024 (27%), with participants consuming illicit cigarettes on a median of 93 days in the six months preceding interview in 2025. Use of all other monitored drugs remained stable.

### **Drug-Related Harms and Other Behaviours**

#### **Polysubstance use and bingeing**

In 2025, two thirds (66%) of the sample reported using two or more drugs (excluding tobacco and e-cigarettes) on the day preceding interview.

Three fifths (60%) of the national IDRS sample had binged on one or more drugs for 48 hours or more in the six months preceding interview.

#### **Injecting behaviours and equipment access**

In 2025, 5% of participants reported receptive sharing of a needle or syringe (5% in 2024) and 8% reported distributive sharing (9% in 2024) in the past month. Thirty-one per cent reported re-using their own needles in the past month, stable relative to 2024 (35%), and 19% reported sharing other equipment, a significant increase relative to 2024 (15%;  $p=0.021$ ).

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Thirty per cent reported having an injection-related problem in the past month (29% in 2024), most commonly any infection/abscess (14%; 13% in 2024) and any nerve damage (12%; 12% in 2024).

### **Overdose, naloxone and drug checking**

In 2025, one fifth (19%) of the sample reported any past 12-month non-fatal overdose, stable relative to 2024 (21%), most commonly from heroin (10%; 11% in 2024).

Awareness of take-home naloxone significantly increased in 2025 (80%) relative to 2024 (73%;  $p<0.001$ ), as did past year access (55%; 46% in 2024;  $p<0.001$ ).

In 2025, 15% of participants reported that they or someone else had tested the contents and/or purity of their illicit drugs in Australia in the past year (11% in 2024;  $p=0.035$ ).

### **Dependence, drug treatment and HCV**

In 2025, 35% of male participants obtained an AUDIT-C score of  $\geq 4$ , and 39% of female participants obtained a score of  $\geq 3$ , indicative of hazardous alcohol use.

Fifty-four per cent of those who reported recent methamphetamine use obtained an SDS score of  $\geq 4$ , while 59% of participants reporting recent opioid use obtained a score of  $\geq 5$ , indicating possible dependence on these substances.

Almost two fifths (38%) of the sample reported that they were in any drug treatment for their substance use at the time of interview (37% in 2024), with the most common treatment being methadone (20%).

In 2025, 51% of participants reported that they had received a hepatitis C virus (HCV) antibody test in the past year (53% in 2024), and 39% had

received an PCR or RNA test (44% in 2024;  $p=0.048$ ). Four per cent reported having a current HCV infection (4% in 2024) and 5% reported that they had received HCV treatment in the past year (6% in 2024). Almost one third (30%) of the sample reported having had a test for human immunodeficiency virus in the past six months, stable relative to 2024 (30%).

### **Sexual activity, mental health and health service access**

Half (49%) of the sample reported engaging in sexual activity in the past four weeks and one fifth (22%) reported having a sexual health check-up in the past six months.

Self-reported mental health problems remained stable in 2025 (55%) relative to 2024 (53%). Three fifths (62%) reported high/very high psychological distress (59% in 2024).

Most participants (90%) reported accessing any health service for alcohol and/or drug support in the six months preceding interview in 2025 (84% in 2024;  $p<0.001$ ).

### **Driving, contact with police and modes of purchasing drugs**

Seventy-seven per cent of those who had recently driven reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the past six months (77% in 2024) and 9% reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol (9% in 2024).

Twenty-nine per cent of participants reported a drug-related encounter with police which did not result in charge or arrest, stable relative to 2024 (32%).

In 2025, the most popular means of arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview was face-to-face (79%; 85% in 2024;  $p=0.005$ ).

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