

Executive Summary

The Perth Western Australia (WA) EDRS comprises a sentinel sample of people who regularly use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants recruited via social media and via word-of mouth in Perth, WA. The results are not representative of all people who use illicit drugs, nor of use in the general population.

Data were collected in 2024 from April-July. Interviews from 2020 onwards were delivered face-to-face as well as via telephone, to reduce the 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 2020-2024 samples, relative to previous years.

Sample Characteristics

The Perth EDRS sample (N=100) was similar to the sample in 2023 and in previous years. Gender and age remained stable between 2023 and 2024, with 59% identifying as male (59% in 2023), and participants reporting a median age of 21 years. Half (51%) reported being current students in 2024 (31% in 2023; $p=0.008$), while 40% held tertiary qualifications (53% in 2023). Half (52%) reported part time/casual employment, while one quarter (27%) reported full-time employment. Approximately half the sample (53%) reported residing in their parents/family home at the time of interview, while one third (33%) reported living in a rental house/flat. Cannabis and ecstasy were the most commonly reported drugs of choice (29% and 28%, respectively), and were also the drugs reportedly used most often in the month preceding interview (38% and 16%, respectively).

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy

The per cent of the sample reporting recent use of any non-prescribed ecstasy decreased from 98% in 2023 to 89% in 2024 ($p=0.018$).

Capsules and crystal remained the most commonly reported forms of non-prescribed ecstasy recently used (54% and 51%, respectively). The median days of any non-prescribed ecstasy use (in the past six months) remained stable in 2024, although the frequency of recent use of capsules increased to six days (4 days in 2023; $p=0.020$). Market characteristics for non-prescribed ecstasy remained largely stable between 2023 and 2024, however the perceived purity of ecstasy crystal significantly changed ($p=0.020$). Specifically, more participants reported the purity as 'fluctuating' (31%; 11% in 2023) and 'high' (42%; 37% in 2023), while fewer reported 'medium' (24%; 46% in 2023) purity. The median price per gram of ecstasy crystal also significantly decreased from \$350 in 2023 to \$300 in 2024 ($p=0.047$).

Methamphetamine

One tenth (9%) of the Perth sample reported recent use of any methamphetamine, which represents a significant decrease relative to 2023 (29%; $p<0.001$), but is comparable to the preceding years (from 2017 onwards). This was mostly driven by a significant decrease in methamphetamine crystal, from 28% reporting recent use in 2023 to 8% in 2024 ($p<0.001$). Market characteristics for methamphetamine crystal, including perceived purity and availability and price, remained stable in 2024, relative to 2023.

Non-Prescribed Stimulants

Recent use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants has increased since monitoring commenced. In 2024, 73% reported recent use, stable relative to 2023 (68%), but an increase from 43% in 2007. Non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants were used on a median of 15 days in the six months preceding interview in 2024, representing the highest

Pharmaceutical Stimulants

frequency of use since monitoring commenced, but stable relative to nine days in 2023. Dexamfetamine remained the most commonly reported form used (96% in 2023 and 2024), followed by lisdexamfetamine (29%; 37% in 2023) and methylphenidate (29%; 13% in 2023; $p=0.028$).

Cocaine

Recent cocaine use has increased from 17% in 2003 to 71% in 2024, although stable relative to 2023 (62%). Frequency of use remained low and stable (median of 3 days in 2024), and few participants ($n\leq 5$) reported weekly or more frequent use. Price and perceived purity and availability of cocaine also remained stable between 2023 and 2024.

Cannabis and/or Cannabinoid-Related Products

In 2024, 77% reported recent use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products in the six months prior to interview, the lowest percentage since monitoring commenced, although stable from 2023 (85%). Hydroponic cannabis was the most used form of non-prescribed cannabis in 2024 (79%; 76% in 2023), while one third (34%) reported use of outdoor grown 'bush' cannabis (33% in 2023). However, there was a significant increase in recent use of THC extract (21%; 7% in 2023; $p=0.015$), commercially prepared edibles (16%; $n\leq 5$ in 2023; $p=0.008$), and hash oil (10%; $n\leq 5$ in 2023; $p=0.029$) in 2024. Market characteristics remained largely stable between 2023 and 2024, with the exception of perceived potency of hydroponic cannabis ($p=0.036$), with fewer reporting 'medium' purity and more reported 'fluctuating' purity.

Non-Prescribed Ketamine, LSD and DMT

Non-prescribed ketamine use has increased from few participants ($n\leq 5$) reporting recent use in 2015 to 55% in 2024, representing a significant increase relative to 2023 (36%;

$p=0.014$) and the highest use observed since monitoring commenced. However, frequency of use remained low and stable at a median of three days in the past six months. Recent LSD use remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (33%; 36% in 2023), as did frequency of recent LSD use (median of three days). Recent DMT use significantly decreased (11%; 26% in 2023; $p=0.013$), while frequency of DMT use remained stable (median of two days). Market characteristics for non-prescribed ketamine and LSD remained largely stable between 2023 and 2024. No market characteristic data was collected for DMT.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

Any NPS use, including plant-based NPS, has fluctuated over time, with 17% reporting recent use in 2024, stable relative to 2023 (8%). Similar results were observed for any NPS use, excluding plant-based NPS (16%; 7% in 2023). The most commonly reported NPS was any 2C substance (6%; $n\leq 5$ in 2023).

Other Drugs

In 2024, 54% reported recent use of hallucinogenic mushrooms/psilocybin. While stable relative to 2023 (42%), this is the highest percentage observed since monitoring commenced. Almost one tenth (9%) reported recent GHB/GBL/1,4-BD use, the highest percentage since monitoring commenced, although stable relative to 2023 (7%). Daily use of non-prescribed e-cigarettes significantly decreased to 42% (63% in 2023; $p=0.025$). Reported use of other drugs remained largely stable in 2024, relative to 2023.

Drug-Related Harms and Other Behaviours

Polysubstance use and bingeing

The majority (86%; $n=86$) of the Perth sample reported concurrent use of two or more drugs on the last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use (excluding tobacco and e-cigarettes).

One quarter (24%) of participants reported using stimulants or related drugs for 48 hours or more continuously without sleep in the six months preceding interview (41% in 2023).

Dependence, injecting and overdose

Four fifths (79%) of the Perth sample obtained a score of eight or more on the AUDIT, indicative of hazardous alcohol use. Eighteen per cent of those who reported recent non-prescribed ecstasy use obtained an SDS score of 3 or more, whilst few participants ($n \leq 5$) reporting recent methamphetamine use obtained a score of 4 or more, indicating possible dependence on these substances.

Past month injecting drug use remained low in 2024 (0%; $n \leq 5$; in 2023).

Past year non-fatal stimulant overdose (18%; 11% in 2023) and non-fatal depressant overdose (21%; 20% in 2023) remained stable.

Drug checking and naloxone

Almost one quarter (23%) of the Perth sample reported that they or someone else had tested the content and/or purity of their illicit drugs in Australia in the past year, a significant decrease from 43% in 2023 ($p=0.003$).

In 2024, 63% reported that they had ever heard of naloxone (61% in 2023), of which 92% correctly identified the purpose (89% in 2023).

Sexual activity, mental health and health service access

Four fifths (81%) of the Perth sample reported engaging in some form of sexual activity in the past four weeks, of which 31% reported using drugs/alcohol to enhance it. One fifth (22%) of the sample reported having a sexual health check-up in the past six months, while 13% reported a recent HIV test.

In 2024, 63% reported experiencing a mental health problem in the past six months (57% in 2023), most commonly anxiety (63%) and

depression (46%). One quarter (26%) of the sample reported very high psychological distress (21% in 2023).

Twenty-nine per cent of the Perth sample reported accessing any health service for alcohol and/or drug support in the six months preceding interview (23% in 2023), and current drug treatment engagement remained low (7%; $n \leq 5$ in 2023).

One quarter (25%) of the sample reported experiencing stigma in any setting in the six months preceding interview.

Driving, contact with police and modes of purchasing drugs

Among recent drivers, 39% reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol, while 51% reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the prior six months (stable relative to 2023).

Thirty-seven per cent of participants reported 'any' crime in the past month (30% in 2023). Property crime was the main form, significantly increasing to 23% (10% in 2023; $p=0.020$). Eight per cent of the sample reported a past year arrest, and 9% reported a drug-related encounter with police which did not result in charge or arrest.

Face-to-face and social networking apps remained the most common means of arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview (73% and 72%, respectively). The majority (86%) of participants reported obtaining illicit drugs from a friend/relative/partner/colleague, while 44% obtained illicit drugs from a known dealer.