

## Executive Summary

The Tasmanian (TAS) EDRS comprises a sentinel sample of people who regularly use ecstasy and other illicit stimulants recruited via social media, advertisements on websites and via word-of-mouth in Hobart, TAS. The results are not representative of all people who use illicit drugs, nor of use in the general population. **Data were collected in 2021 from May-July. Interviews were delivered face-to-face (n=83) as well as via telephone (n=19), due to COVID-19 restrictions being imposed in various jurisdictions throughout the data collection period. This methodological change, which also impacted interview modality in 2020, should be factored into all comparisons of data from the 2020 and 2021 sample relative to previous years.**

### Sample Characteristics

The TAS EDRS sample (N=102) recruited from Hobart, Tasmania, was demographically very similar to the sample in 2020 and in previous years; the sample comprised predominantly young, educated males (62%), most of whom were living in a rental house/flat (49%) or residing with their parents/at their family home (28%) at the time of interview. Ecstasy and cocaine were the drugs of choice (30% and 22%, respectively). Cannabis and alcohol were the drugs used most often in the preceding month (29% and 27%, respectively) in 2021.

### COVID-19 Impact

Half (50%) of the TAS sample had been tested for SARS-CoV-2 in the 12 months prior to interview, though no participants had been diagnosed with COVID-19. Eighteen per cent of the sample had received at least one-dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the time of interview, and the majority (66%) reported that they were 'not at all' worried about contracting COVID-19.

### Ecstasy

The ecstasy market has diversified over the past few years, with the per cent reporting any recent (i.e. past six month) use of any ecstasy pills declining and use of crystal increasing

(55% and 66% of the TAS sample, respectively). Median days decreased in 2021 from 13 days in 2020 to 10 days. A significant increase in price was observed for pills, caps and crystal. There was a significant change in the perceived availability of pills and crystal, with fewer participants reporting that either form was 'very easy' to obtain.

### Methamphetamine

Recent use of any methamphetamine has been declining amongst the TAS sample since the commencement of monitoring, with 31% reporting any recent use in 2021 (31% in 2020). Participants reported using methamphetamine less than monthly on average, with a median of three days of any methamphetamine use in the preceding six months. Perceived price, purity and availability of methamphetamine was stable between 2020 and 2021.

### Cocaine

Recent use of cocaine has increased over the years of monitoring, with 84% reporting any recent use recorded in 2021 (61% in 2020;  $p<0.001$ ), the largest per cent since monitoring began. Six per cent of participants that reported recent cocaine use reported weekly or more frequent use. The quantity used in a 'typical' session and a maximum session significantly decreased to 0.30 grams and 0.50 grams. The median price of a gram of cocaine was reported as \$350 in 2021.

### Cannabis

Three quarters (75%) of participants reported recent use in 2021, stable from 2020 (84%). Participants who had recently used cannabis reported use on a median of 55 days out the preceding six months (60 days in 2020), with 63% reporting weekly or more frequent use (63% in 2020) and 28% reporting daily use (21% in 2020). An ounce of bush cannabis significantly decreased in price from a median of \$250 in 2020 to \$210 in 2021; hydroponic cannabis prices were stable.

### Ketamine, LSD and DMT

Recent use of both ketamine and LSD remained stable in 2021 relative to 2020. Forty-

six per cent and 63% of the TAS sample reported any recent use in 2021, respectively. The median price of ketamine and LSD increased (\$200 in 2020; \$250 in 2021;  $p=0.006$ ; \$18 in 2020; \$20 in 2021;  $p=0.002$ , respectively). The perceived availability of ketamine and LSD significantly changed in 2021, with more participants reporting that they were 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to obtain. Sixteen per cent reported recent use of DMT in 2021, stable from 2020 (13%).

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

Eleven per cent reported recent use of any NPS (including plant-based NPS) in 2021 and 10% reported recent use of any NPS (excluding plant-based NPS). Phenethylamine substances were the most common recently used NPS in 2021 (6%).

### Other Drugs

Almost all participants (97%) reported recent alcohol consumption, of which three-quarters (75%) reported drinking on a weekly or more basis. Tobacco smoking remained common (76% recent) with 36% of consumers reporting daily smoking. Half of the sample reported recent use of e-cigarettes, which was a significant increase relative to 2020 (35%). Frequency of e-cigarette use also significantly increased to 15 days from four days in 2020. Hallucinogenic mushrooms remain commonly but infrequently used among EDRS participants: 52% of participants reported recent use with typically one occasion of use every two months. Just over two-fifths (41%) reported recent use of nitrous oxide in 2021, similar to rates in 2020 (41%), at a median frequency of two days. Sixteen per cent reported recent use of capsules with unknown contents, a significant increase from 2020.

### Drug-Related Harms and Other Associated Behaviours

On the last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use, 93% of the sample reported concurrent use of two or more drugs (including alcohol, tobacco and prescription medicines).

Just over four in five participants (87%) obtained a score of eight or more on the AUDIT, indicative of hazardous alcohol use.

Ten per cent reported a non-fatal stimulant overdose, and 16% reported a non-fatal depressant overdose in the past year. The per cent reporting injecting drug use remained low, as did the number currently in drug treatment ( $n \leq 5$ , respectively).

The majority of the sample (82%) reported engaging in sexual activity in the past four weeks, of which 16% reported penetrative sex without a condom where they did not know the HIV status of their partner.

Three in five participants (60%) self-reported that they had experienced a mental health problem in the preceding six months, the most common problems being anxiety and depression.

Ninety-one per cent of the sample had driven recently, 22% reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol and 30% reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug.

Any criminal activity in the month preceding interview was stable at 32% in 2021 (33% in 2020). Interestingly, 100% of participants reported face-to-face obtainment of illicit drugs on any occasion in the 12 months preceding interview, which was a significant increase compared to 94% in 2020. Over one-third (34%) of the sample reported obtaining illicit drugs through someone who had purchased them on the surface or darknet in the last 12 months, stable compared to 2020.