

Engagement with a fixed-site drug checking service in Canberra among people who use drugs

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Acknowledgements



Traditional Custodians of the lands upon which we meet today and work more broadly, and all First Nations people present today



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Those with lived and living experience of substance use and the health services who supported this study



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AIMS

To establish among people in Canberra who regularly use illicit drugs:

- 1. Engagement with the Canberra fixed-site drug checking service**
- 2. Reasons for and against accessing the service**

Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS)

Interviews with **cross-sectional samples** of people in Canberra who **regularly use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants**, recruited via social media, word-of-mouth (n=~100 annual)

Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS)

Interviews with **cross-sectional samples** of people in Canberra who **regularly inject drugs**, recruited via needle-syringe programs and word-of-mouth (n=~100 annual)

July
**Fixed-site
service opens**

October
**ACT Gov
commits to
pilot service**

July
**Positive
evaluation,
continued to
2024**

August
**ACT Gov
commits to
service until
2027**

August
**To date: 5,361
samples,
223 health
interventions**

2021

2022

2023

2024

2025

Apr-Jun: EDRS
Jun: IDRS

Apr-Jun: EDRS
Jun: IDRS



AIM 1 Engagement with the Canberra fixed-site drug checking service

In the past 12 months:



Visited CanTEST



Submitted a sample



Median visits



**People who use illicit
stimulants (EDRS)**

2023

2024

23.4%



28.3%



22.4%



22.2%



**People who inject
drugs (IDRS)**

2023

2024

15.0%



23.2%



14.0%



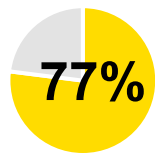
16.2%



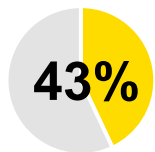
AIM 2 Reasons for accessing the service



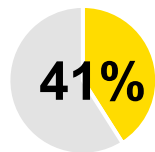
People who use illicit stimulants (EDRS)



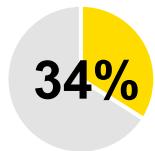
Want to keep myself as safe as possible when using the drug



To know what I'm taking



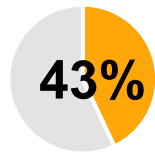
Intended to use the drug and suspected it contains adulterant(s) or is a different substance than expected



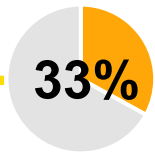
Want to share info about drug with other people with whom the drug will be shared



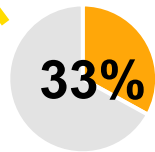
People who inject drugs (IDRS)



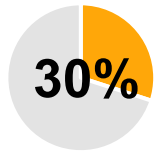
Curious as to how testing and the service works



To know what I'm taking



Want to keep myself as safe as possible when using the drug



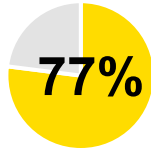
Already used the drug and suspected it contains adulterant(s) or is a different substance than expected



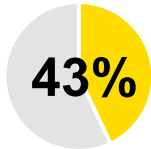
AIM 2 Reasons for accessing the service



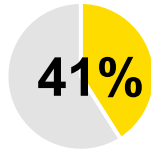
People who use illicit stimulants (EDRS)



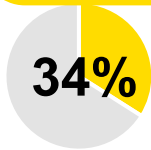
Want to keep myself as safe as possible when using the drug



To know what I'm taking



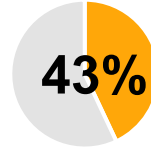
Intended to use the drug and suspected it contains adulterant(s) or is a different substance than expected



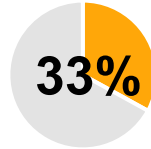
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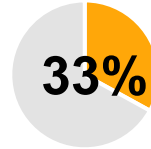
People who inject drugs (IDRS)



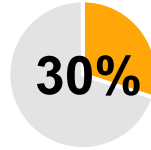
Curious as to how testing and the service works



To know what I'm taking



Want to keep myself as safe as possible when using the drug

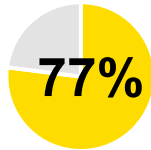


Already used the drug and suspected it contains adulterant(s) or is a different substance than expected

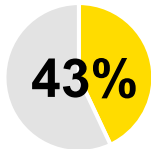
AIM 2 Reasons for accessing the service



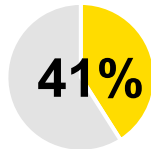
People who use illicit stimulants (EDRS)



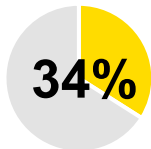
Want to keep myself as safe as possible when using the drug



To know what I'm taking



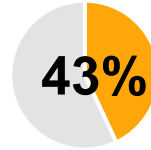
Intended to use the drug and suspected it contains adulterant(s) or is a different substance than expected



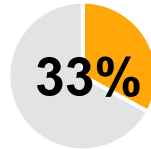
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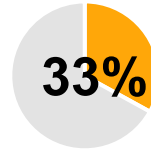
People who inject drugs (IDRS)



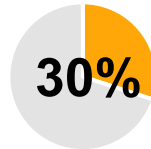
Curious as to how testing and the service works



To know what I'm taking



Want to keep myself as safe as possible when using the drug



Already used the drug and suspected it contains adulterant(s) or is a different substance than expected

AIM 2 Reasons against accessing the service



People who use illicit stimulants (EDRS)

41%

Trust my provider/dealer gives me accurate information about drug contents

24%

Not worried about the risk from the unknown contents of my drugs

20%

Didn't know the service had opened

14%

Prefer to keep my drug use private



People who inject drugs (IDRS)

24%

Trust my provider/dealer gives me accurate information about drug contents

22%

Didn't know the service had opened

21%

Drug use is too spontaneous for me to use the service

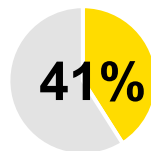
19%

Not worried about the risk from the unknown contents of my drugs

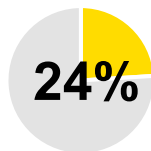
AIM 2 Reasons against accessing the service



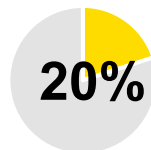
People who use illicit stimulants (EDRS)



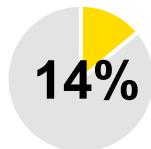
Trust my provider/dealer gives me accurate information about drug contents



Not worried about the risk from the unknown contents of my drugs



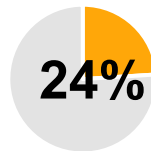
Didn't know the service had opened



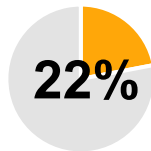
Prefer to keep my drug use private



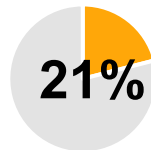
People who inject drugs (IDRS)



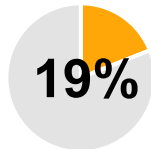
Trust my provider/dealer gives me accurate information about drug contents



Didn't know the service had opened



Drug use is too spontaneous for me to use the service



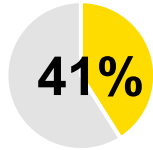
Not worried about the risk from the unknown contents of my drugs



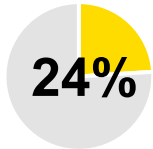
AIM 2 Reasons against accessing the service



People who use illicit stimulants (EDRS)



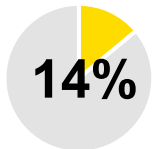
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Not worried about the risk from the unknown contents of my drugs



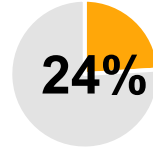
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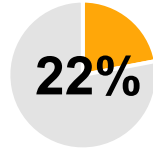
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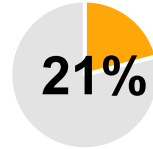
People who inject drugs (IDRS)



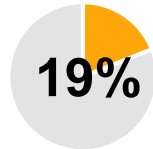
Trust my provider/dealer gives me accurate information about drug contents



Didn't know the service had opened



Drug use is too spontaneous for me to use the service

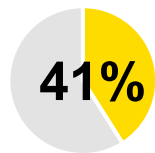


Not worried about the risk from the unknown contents of my drugs

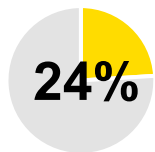
AIM 2 Reasons against accessing the service



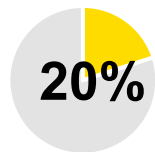
People who use illicit stimulants (EDRS)



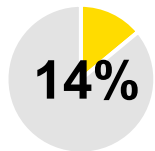
Trust my provider/dealer gives me accurate information about drug contents



Not worried about the risk from the unknown contents of my drugs



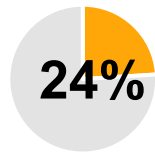
Didn't know the service had opened



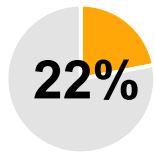
Prefer to keep my drug use private



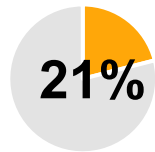
People who inject drugs (IDRS)



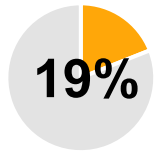
Trust my provider/dealer gives me accurate information about drug contents



Didn't know the service had opened



Drug use is too spontaneous for me to use the service



Not worried about the risk from the unknown contents of my drugs

Conclusions



- 1. People are engaging (repeatedly) with the service to address concerns around adulteration and reduce risk of harm.**
- 2. Findings reinforce drug checking as a positive social network intervention.**
- 3. Opportunity to raise awareness around uncertainty and risks in current drug markets.**
- 4. Opportunity for complementary service models tailored to diverse needs (e.g., outreach with portable devices).**

Thank you



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www.unsw.edu.au/research/ndarc

