

# ADHD symptomology and associated drug use among a sample of people who regularly use illicit drugs in Australia

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# Acknowledgement of Country

- The University of Queensland (UQ) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which we meet.
- We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.
- We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.

*The Brisbane River pattern from A Guidance Through Time  
by Casey Coolwell and Kyra Mancktelow.*



## ADHD in ~3-8% of adults (general population)

- Poor health, social outcomes, multiple disadvantages
- Prescribed stimulants as treatment
- Under/late diagnosis common; symptoms observed anecdotally among PWUD

## Research questions

- How widespread are **symptoms** of ADHD among people who regularly use drugs?
- How many people have received **diagnoses** or formal **treatment**?
- What **substances** are people using to address their symptoms?

## Data sources

- National EDRS (n=740) and IDRS (n=884) interviews 2024
- QLD EDRS (n=101) and IDRS (n=104) interviews 2025



## **DRUG TRENDS**

**Ecstasy &  
Related Drugs  
Reporting  
System**



**Illicit Drugs  
Reporting  
System**



**Annual interviews** with people recruited from all Australian capital cities who regularly **use illicit stimulants (EDRS) or inject drugs (IDRS)**

- ▶ **Regular** information about Australia's drug markets & trends in drug related harms
- ▶ Enhanced **evidence** base for development of policy responses & interventions
- ▶ A **timely** warning system for issues that require further monitoring

Symptoms<sup>1</sup> are common

Diagnoses<sup>2</sup> are less common

Treatment<sup>3</sup> less so again

Self medication<sup>4</sup> is common

<sup>1</sup> Scores from **ASRS** (Adult ADHD self-report scale)

<sup>2</sup> Self-reported receipt of diagnosis from MH professional

<sup>3</sup> Self-reported prescribed meds from MH professional

<sup>4</sup> Self-reported use of non-prescribed substances to manage symptoms

\* Of whole sample

	EDRS		IDRS	
	2025 QLD* %	2024 National* %	2025 QLD* %	2024 National* %
ASRS >threshold	58.4	55	57.7	46.1
Diagnosis	28.7	21.6	22.1	17.1
Prescribed meds	15.8	12.3	4.8	4.8
Nil	62.4	59.6	68.3	69.8
Pharma stims	20.8	22.7	3.9	2.2
Methampheta mine	4.0	5	26.9	18
Cannabis	14.9	14.2	5.8	8

## Outcomes:

- \* ADHD is common but under-recognised
- \* Intentional substance use to manage symptoms is common

## Higher ASRS scores associated with:

- \* Younger age (EDRS, IDRS)
- \* Cis-women, trans, gender diverse identity (EDRS), cis-men (IDRS)
- \* Non-hetero sexual identity (IDRS)
- \* Living with disability (EDRS)
- \* Crime (EDRS)

## Concerns:

- \* Medication shortages
- \* Contaminants in unregulated drug markets
- \* Tailored supports are required in therapeutic and custodial systems

See our bulletin here



Thankyou

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