



# The use of nicotine pouches among people in Australia who regularly consume illicit substances, 2024

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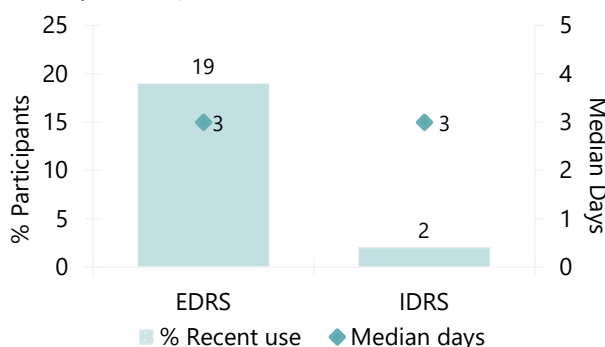
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## Introduction

Nicotine pouches are small, discreet pouches that contain nicotine, typically in the form of a white powder, which is absorbed into the bloodstream by being placed between the lip and gum. These pouches represent a new class of nicotine products that are often marketed as an alternative to e-cigarettes which have come under strict regulations in Australia [1]. Under Australian law, nicotine pouches can be lawfully supplied via prescription for the purpose of smoking cessation if they are included in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG) or have an authority or approval under the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, however to-date, no nicotine pouches have been included in the ARTG or received an authority or approval [2]. There are concerns that these products have gained popularity due to their lower cost, ease of concealability, as well as recent laws introducing restrictions to the access of e-cigarettes [1], however literature on use remains scarce. In 2024, questions on past 6 month use of nicotine pouches, and source of obtainment, were included in the [Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System](#) (EDRS) and the [Illicit Drug Reporting System](#) (IDRS). This bulletin aims to examine patterns of use and sourcing of nicotine pouches among these two samples of people who regularly use illicit substances.

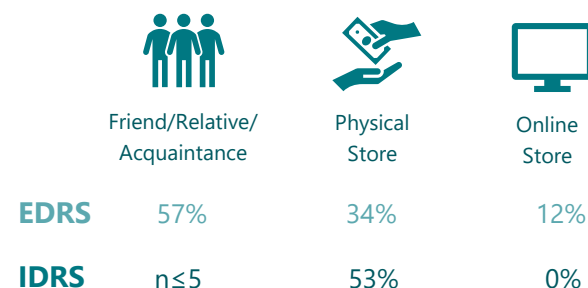
## Results

Figure 1: Past six month use and frequency of use of nicotine pouches, 2024



Note. Primary Y axis has been reduced to 25% and secondary Y axis to 5 median days to improve visibility of trends. See Appendix 1 for results by capital city.

Figure 2: Source of nicotine pouches, 2024



Note. Per cent among those who reported use of nicotine pouches in six month period preceding interview. Per cent suppressed in cases of n≤5 observations. Physical stores include vape stores, tobacconists, convenience store, liquor store, petrol station or supermarket.

## Discussion

Recent use of nicotine pouches was relatively common among participants who regularly use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants, with approximately one in five (19%) reporting use in the six months preceding the interview, on a median of three days. Most EDRS participants who reported recent use of nicotine pouches obtained them from a friend/relative/acquaintance (57%), followed by physical stores (34%) and online stores (12%). In contrast, only 2% of participants who regularly inject illicit substances reported past six month use of nicotine pouches, on a median of three days, with the majority (53%) reporting that they had obtained these products from a physical store. Although motivations for use were not explored in the current bulletin, the recent reforms making it illegal for e-cigarettes to be sold outside of pharmacy settings and restricting the flavours available mean that it is possible that people will turn to nicotine pouches as a substitute [1]. Given this potential increase in use, and the unknown long-term health risks, ongoing monitoring of this substance is crucial [1,3].

## References

[1] Jongenelis M, Brierly M, Li R. Patterns of nicotine pouch use among young Australians. DAD. 2024. 264. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2024.112428>. [2] TGA. Nicotine pouches [Internet]. [www.tga.gov.au](http://www.tga.gov.au). [cited 2024 Dec 13]. Available from: <https://www.tga.gov.au/products/unapproved-therapeutic-goods/vaping-hub/nicotine-pouches>. [3] Quit. Nicotine pouches exposed: what you need to know [Internet]. [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au). [cited 2024 Dec 13]. Available from: <https://www.quit.org.au/articles/nicotine-pouches-exposed-what-you-need-to-know>

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## Appendix 1. Past six month use of nicotine pouches by jurisdiction, 2024

Per cent of participants	Sydney	Canberra	Melbourne	Hobart	Adelaide	Perth	Darwin	Brisbane/ Gold Coast
<b>EDRS</b>	20	27	17	16	21	22	.	17
<b>IDRS</b>	.	.	0	.	6	.	0	.

Data is suppressed (.) in cases where  $n \leq 5$ .