EDRS

NEW SOUTH WALES DRUG TRENDS 2024

Key Findings from the New South Wales Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) Interviews

NEW SOUTH WALES DRUG TRENDS 2024: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ECSTASY AND RELATED DRUGS REPORTING SYSTEM (EDRS) INTERVIEWS

Udesha Chandrasena[1], Amy Peacock[1,2] and Rachel Sutherland[1]

[1] National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW

[2] School of Psychology, University of Tasmania

ISSN 2981-9709

Suggested citation: Chandrasena U, Peacock A & Sutherland R. New South Wales Drug Trends 2024: Key Findings from the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) Interviews. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney; 2024. DOI: https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/30691

Please note that as with all statistical reports there is the potential for minor revisions to data in this report over its life. Please refer to the online version at Drug Trends.

This report was prepared by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney. Please contact the following with any queries regarding this publication: u.chandrasena@unsw.edu.au or drugtrends@unsw.edu.au.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

Funding

In 2024, the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS), falling within the Drug Trends program of work, was supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care under the Drug and Alcohol Program.

Research Team

The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, coordinated the EDRS. The following researchers and research institutions contributed to the EDRS in 2024:

- Dr Rachel Sutherland, Udesha Chandrasena, Antonia Karlsson, Julia Uporova, Olivia Price, Haniene Tayeb, Professor Louisa Degenhardt, Professor Michael Farrell and Associate Professor Amy Peacock, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, New South Wales;
- Zachary Lloyd and Professor Paul Dietze, Burnet, Victoria;
- Sophie Radke and Associate Professor Raimondo Bruno, School of Psychology, University of Tasmania, Tasmania;
- Dr Jodie Grigg, Dr Sophie Haywood and Professor Simon Lenton, National Drug Research Institute and enAble Institute, Curtin University, Western Australia; and
- Catherine Daly, Dr Jennifer Juckel, Dr Natalie Thomas and Associate Professor Caroline Salom, Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland, Queensland.

We would like to thank past and present members of the research team.

Participants

We would like to thank all the participants who were interviewed for the EDRS in the present and in previous years.

Contributors

We thank all the individuals who contributed to questionnaire development and assisted with the collection and input of data at a jurisdictional and national level. In particular, we would like to thank Nerida Douglas, Jon Panthers, Erica Franklin, MJ Stowe, Marcel Mellor Hutchings, Jonah Bunyon, Will Ryan, Luke Macauley, Emily Flaherty and Joshua Niles for conducting the Sydney EDRS interviews in 2024. We would also like to thank the Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP) and the Drug Trends Advisory Committee for their contribution to the EDRS.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which the work for this report was undertaken. We pay respect to Elders past, present, and emerging.

Abbreviations

4-FA	4-Fluoroamphetamine
5-MeO-DMT	5-methoxy-N,N-dimethyltryptamine
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ADHD	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
AIVL	Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League
Alpha PVP	α-Pyrrolidinopentiophenone
AOD	Alcohol and other drugs
AUDIT	Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
BZP	Benzylpiperazine
CBD	Cannabidiol
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
DMT	Dimethyltryptamine
DO-x	4-Substituted-2,5-dimethoxyamphetamines
DSM	The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
EDRS	Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System
GHB/GBL/1, 4-BD	Gamma-hydroxybutyrate/ Gamma-butyrolactone/1,4-Butanediol
GP	General Practitioner
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HR	Harm Reduction
IDRS	Illicit Drug Reporting System
IQR	Interquartile range
LSD	*d*-lysergic acid
MDA	3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine
MDMA	3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine
MDPV	Methylenedioxypyrovalerone
MXE	Methoxetamine
N (or n)	Number of participants
NDARC	National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
NPS	New psychoactive substances
NSP	Needle and Syringe Program
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
OTC	Over-the-counter
PMA	Paramethoxyamphetamine
PMMA	Polymethyl methacrylate
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
QLD	Queensland

SD	Standard deviations
SDS	Severity of Dependence Scale
SA	South Australia
STI	Sexually Transmissible Infection
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAS	Tasmania
THC	Tetrahydrocannabinol
UNSW	University of New South Wales
VIC	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

The Sydney New South Wales (NSW) EDRS comprises a sentinel sample of people who regularly use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants, recruited via social media, advertisements on websites and via word-of-mouth in Sydney, NSW. 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-June. 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

In 2024, the NSW EDRS sample (n=100) was similar to the 2023 sample, however, there were some important differences. Similar to 2023, the 2024 Sydney sample predominantly comprised of young (median age 27 years) males (66%). Current accommodation status remained stable, with almost half (49%) reporting living in a rental house/flat, and the median weekly income was $900 ($1058 in 2023). However, a significant change was observed in participants' employment status (p=0.007), with more participants reporting being unemployed at the time of the interview (24%; 8% in 2023). Additionally, drug of choice significantly changed (p=0.014), with more participants nominating ecstasy (28%; 22% in 2023) and cannabis (20%; 16% in 2023) as their drugs of choice in 2024.

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy

Recent use of any non-prescribed ecstasy remained high and stable in 2024 (96%; 99% in 2023), with frequency of use also remaining stable at a median of 7 days (8 days in 2023). Capsules (66%) remained the most common form of ecstasy consumed in the six months preceding interview, followed by pills (57%), crystal (53%), and powder (29%). The price, perceived purity and perceived availability of non-prescribed ecstasy pills, capsules, crystal and powder largely remained stable in 2024, relative to 2023. There was, however, a significant change in the perceived availability of pills between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.029), with more participants reporting pills to be 'very easy' (31%; 25% in 2023) and 'easy' (52%; 37% in 2023) to obtain in 2024.

Methamphetamine

Recent use of any methamphetamine has been declining since monitoring commenced. In 2024, one quarter (26%) of the sample reported recent use, stable relative to 2023 (21%). The largest percentage of participants reported using methamphetamine crystal (17%), followed by powder (10%). Frequency of crystal and powder use, as well as perceived purity and availability, remained stable between 2023 and 2024.

Non-Prescribed Pharmaceutical Stimulants

The per cent of participants reporting any recent non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulant (e.g., dexamphetamine, methylphenidate, modafinil) use gradually increased to 44% in 2016 and has remained relatively stable since. In 2024, 46% of the Sydney sample reported recent use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants, stable relative to 2023 (41%). Among those who reported recent use, significantly fewer participants reported using modafinil in 2024 (n≤5) compared to 2023 (28%; p=0.030). There was a significant change in the perceived availability of non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.009),

with more participants perceiving non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants to be 'difficult' (33%; n≤5 in 2023) to obtain in 2024.

Cocaine

A gradual increase in recent cocaine use was observed between 2013 and 2021, stabilising thereafter. In 2024, the majority (87%) of the sample reported recent cocaine use (86% in 2023). Participants reported using cocaine on a median of four days in the six months preceding interview. Consistent with previous years, the price per gram of cocaine remained stable at $300. Perceived purity and availability remained stable between 2023 and 2024, with 38% perceiving purity to be 'high' (25% in 2023) and 89% perceiving that cocaine was 'easy' or 'very easy' to obtain (84% in 2023).

Cannabis and/or Cannabinoid-Related Products

Almost three quarters (74%) of the sample reported recent use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products in 2024 (66% in 2023). The median frequency of use remained stable at 24 days (12 days in 2023). While the median amount of grams (1 gram) and joints (1 joint) used on the last occasion of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related product use remained stable in 2024, the median amount of cones increased from 1 cone in 2023 to 3 cones in 2024 (p=0.023). The per cent reporting recent hydroponic cannabis use significantly increased (78%; 51% in 2023; p=0.004), while recent use of bush cannabis significantly decreased in 2024 (27%; 53% in 2023; p=0.007). The price, perceived availability and perceived potency of hydroponic and bush cannabis remained stable in 2024, relative to 2023.

Non-Prescribed Ketamine, LSD and DMT

Recent use of non-prescribed ketamine (61%), LSD (43%) and DMT (n≤5) remained stable between 2023 and 2024. Frequency of use for all three substances remained low in 2024, at a median of three days or less in the preceding six months. The price, perceived availability and perceived purity of ketamine and LSD remained stable in 2024, relative to 2023.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

In 2024, 16% of the sample reported recent use of any NPS (including plant-based NPS) and 15% reported recent use of any NPS (excluding plant-based NPS), both stable relative to 2023. Any 2C substance was the most commonly used NPS in 2024 (8%; 6% in 2023).

Other Drugs

Recent use of pills with 'unknown contents' significantly increased from few (n≤5) participants reporting recent use in 2023 to one tenth (10%) of the Sydney sample in 2024 (p=0.018). The per cent reporting recent use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical opioids (7%), non-prescribed benzodiazepines (22%), non-prescribed mushrooms/psilocybin (40%), GHB/GBL/1,4-BD (15%) and nitrous oxide (42%) remained stable in 2024, relative to 2023. Two thirds (67%) of the Sydney sample reported recent non-prescribed e-cigarette use in 2024 and 63% reported tobacco use, with 22% reporting illicit smoked or non-smoked tobacco product use. One fifth (20%) of the Sydney sample reported recently using nicotine pouches.

Drug-Related Harms and Other Behaviours

Polysubstance use and bingeing

On the last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use, three quarters (78%) of the sample reported concurrent use of two or more drugs (excluding tobacco and e-cigarettes), with stimulants and depressants the most common combination (22%).

Twenty nine per cent of participants reported using stimulants or related drugs for 48 hours or more continuously without sleep in the six months preceding interview.

Dependence, overdose and injecting

The mean AUDIT score decreased significantly from 13.5 in 2023 to 11.9 in 2024 ($p<0.001$), although the per cent scoring ≥8, indicative of hazardous alcohol use, remained stable (70%; 77% in 2023).

Eight per cent of those who reported recent ecstasy use obtained an SDS score of ≥3, while 35% of participants reporting recent methamphetamine use obtained a score of ≥4, indicating possible dependence on these substances.

Past year non-fatal stimulant and depressant overdose remained stable in 2024 (9% and 21%, respectively).

Few (n≤5) participants reported past month injecting drug use in 2024.

Drug checking and naloxone awareness

One quarter (24%) of participants reported that they or someone else had tested the content and/or purity of their illicit drugs in Australia in the past year.

In 2024, 66% of the sample reported that they had ever heard of naloxone, a significant increase from 51% in 2023 ($p=0.048$).

Sexual activity, mental health and health service access

Sixty eight per cent of the Sydney sample reported engaging in sexual activity in the past four weeks, of which 76% reported using alcohol and/or other drugs prior to or while engaging in sexual activity.

Almost half (47%) of the Sydney sample self-reported that they had experienced a mental health problem in the preceding six months, of which anxiety and depression (69%, respectively) were the most commonly reported problems. Seventeen per cent reported a score of ≥30 on the K10, indicating very high psychological distress.

Twenty nine per cent of participants reported accessing any health service for alcohol and/or drug support in the six months preceding interview, most commonly from a peer based harm reduction service (11%) and a GP (7%). Current drug treatment engagement remained low (n≤5 in 2024).

One fifth (21%) of the sample reported experiencing stigma because of their illicit drug use in any health/non-health care setting in the six months preceding interview (24% in 2023).

Driving, contact with police and modes of purchasing drugs

Among recent drivers, 22% reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol, and 46% reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the past six months.

Eight per cent of participants reported past year arrest, while 19% reported a drug-related encounter with police which did not result in charge or arrest (e.g., stopped and searched/questioned).

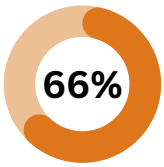
In 2024, the most popular means of arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview was face-to-face (66%), followed by social networking or messaging applications (64%). Most participants continued to report obtaining illicit drugs from a friend/relative/partner/colleague (84%).

2024 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

EDRS Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System

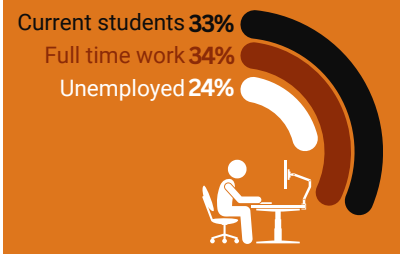
In 2024, 100 participants, recruited Sydney, NSW, were interviewed.

27 years



Male

The median age in 2024 was 27, and 66% identified as male.



In the 2024 sample, 33% were current students, 34% were employed full time and 24% were unemployed.

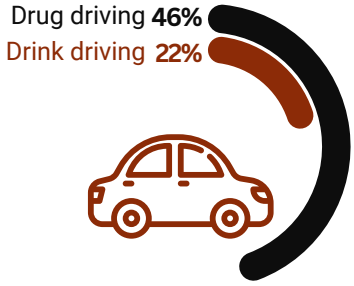
Ecstasy

Cocaine

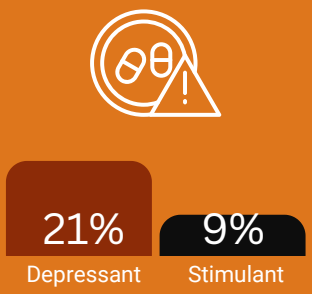
Other stimulants

Participants were recruited on the basis that they had consumed ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants at least monthly in the past 6 months.

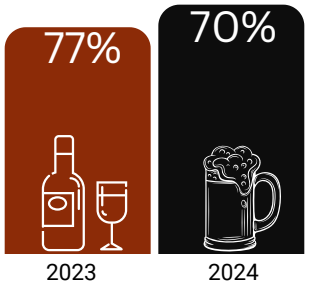
DRUG-RELATED HARMS AND RISKS



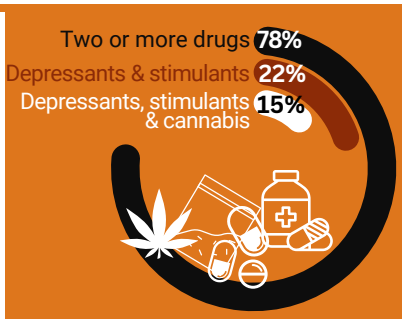
Among recent drivers, 46% reported driving a vehicle within 3 hours of consuming illicit drugs and 22% while over the legal limit of alcohol.



Percentage who reported past year non-fatal depressant and stimulant overdose.

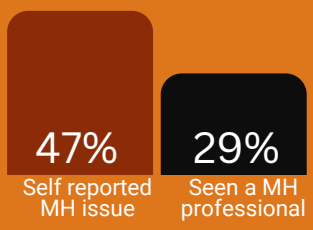


Percentage who obtained an AUDIT score of eight or more, indicative of past year hazardous alcohol use.

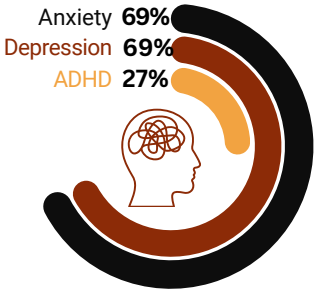


In 2024, 78% reported using two or more drugs on the last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use: the most commonly used combination of drug classes was depressants and stimulants (22%).

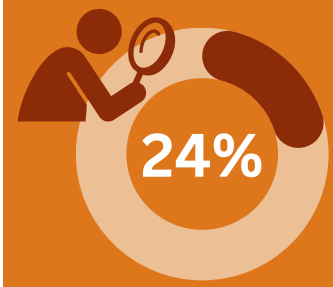
OTHER BEHAVIOURS



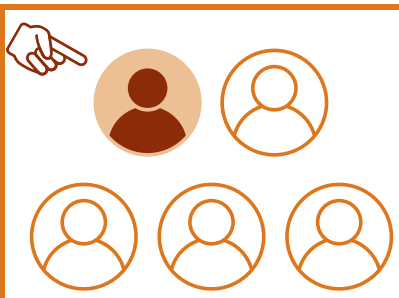
Percentage who self-reported mental health problems and treatment seeking in the six months preceding interview.



Among those who reported a mental health problem, the three most common mental health issues were anxiety, depression and ADHD.

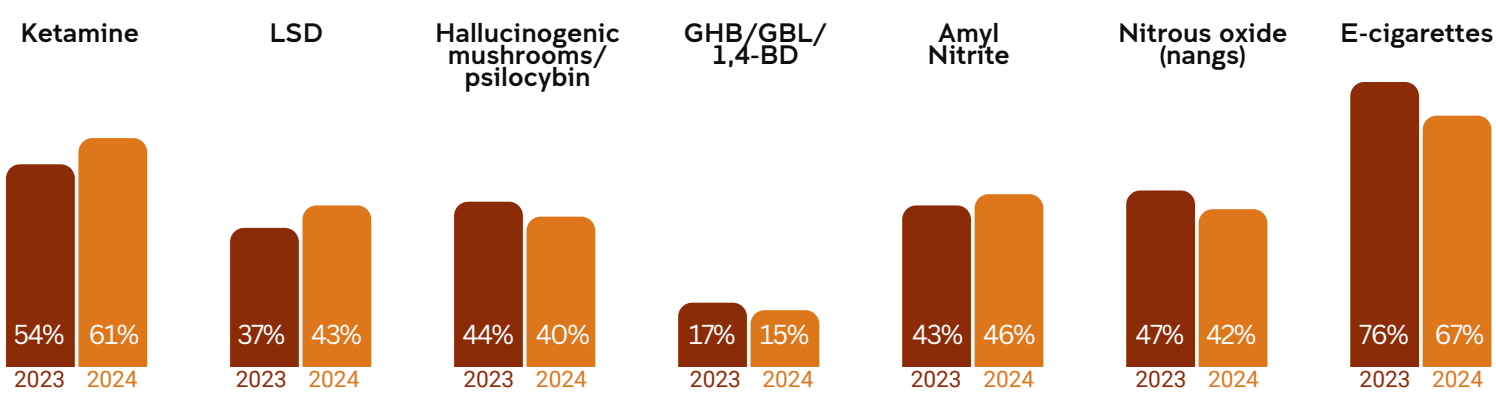


Percentage who reported that they or someone else had tested the content and/or purity of their illicit drugs in Australia in the past year.



21% of the sample reported experiencing stigma because of their illicit drug use in the six months preceding interview, most commonly from police.

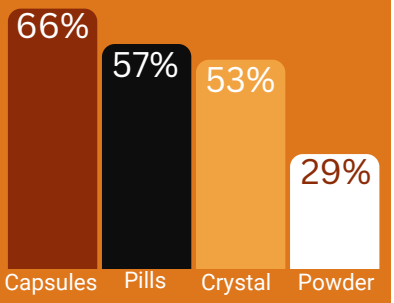
PAST 6 MONTH USE OF SELECT DRUGS



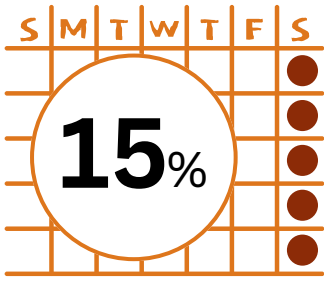
ECSTASY

EDRS Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System

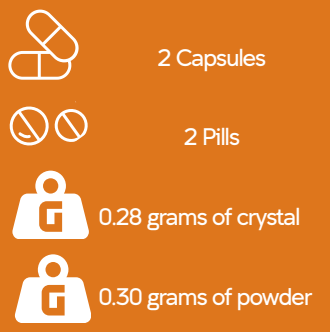
FORM of ecstasy



Past 6 month use of ecstasy capsules, crystal, pills, and powder in 2024.

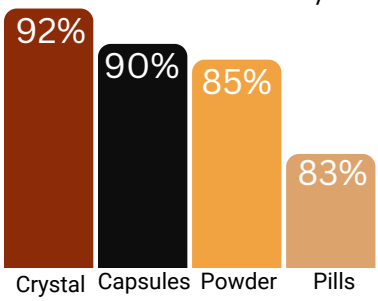


Of those who had recently used any ecstasy, 15% reported weekly or more frequent use, stable from 2023 (7%).



Median amounts of ecstasy consumed in a 'typical' session.

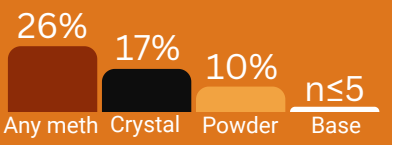
Perceived availability



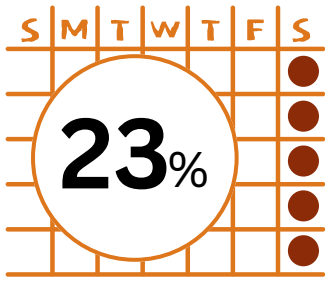
Percentage who perceived crystal, capsule, powder and pills as being 'easy' or 'very easy' to obtain.

METHAMPHETAMINE

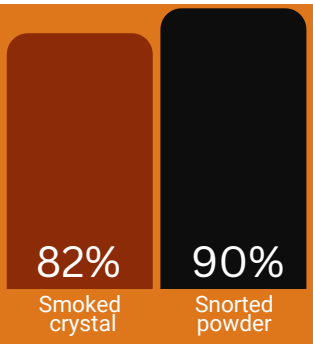
FORM of methamphetamine



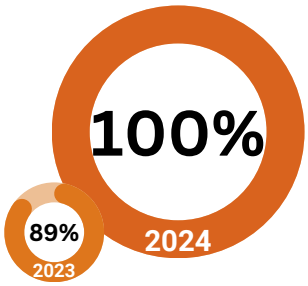
Past 6 month use of any methamphetamine, crystal, powder and base in 2024.



Of those who had recently used any methamphetamine, 23% reported weekly or more frequent use, stable from 2023 (33%).

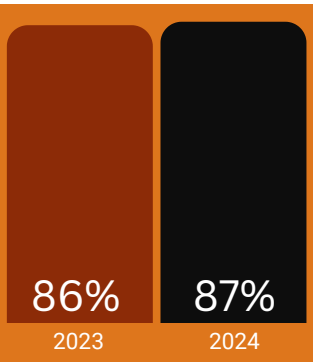


82% of participants who had recently used crystal smoked it. Of those who had recently used powder, 90% snorted it.

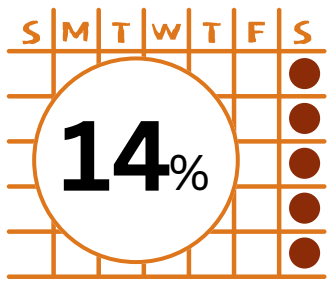


Percentage who perceived methamphetamine crystal as being 'easy' or 'very easy' to obtain.

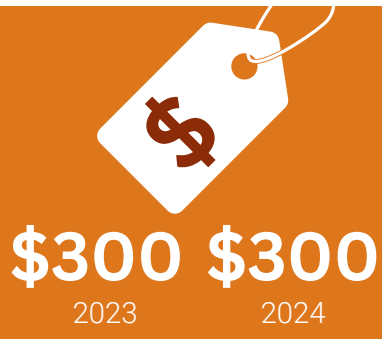
COCAINE



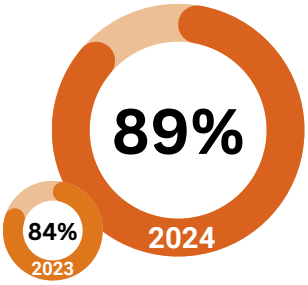
Past 6 month use of any cocaine remained stable between 2023 and 2024.



Of those who had recently consumed cocaine, 14% reported weekly or more frequent use, stable from 2023 (19%).

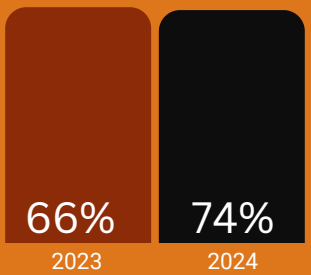


The median reported price for a gram of cocaine.

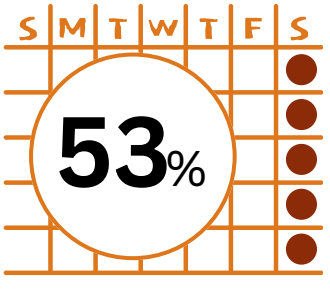


Percentage who perceived cocaine as being 'easy' or 'very easy' to obtain.

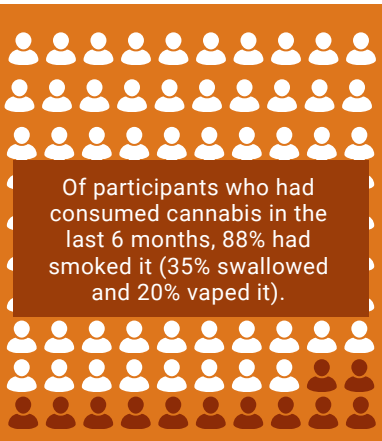
CANNABIS AND/OR CANNABINOID-RELATED PRODUCTS

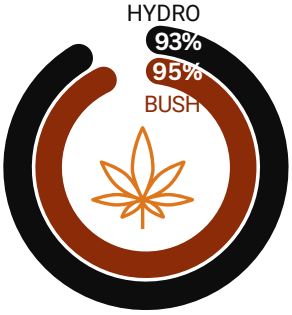


Past 6 month use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products was stable between 2023 and 2024.



Of those who had recently used non-prescribed cannabis, 53% reported weekly or more frequent use, stable from 2023 (44%).





Percentage who perceived cannabis/cannabinoid-related products as being 'easy' or 'very easy' to obtain.

Background

The Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) is an illicit drug monitoring system which has been conducted in all states and territories of Australia since 2003, and forms part of Drug Trends. The purpose is to provide a coordinated approach to monitoring the use, market features, and harms of ecstasy and related drugs. This includes drugs that are routinely used in the context of entertainment venues and other recreational locations, including ecstasy, methamphetamine, cocaine, new psychoactive substances, LSD (*d*-lysergic acid), and ketamine.

The EDRS is designed to be sensitive to emerging trends, providing data in a timely manner rather than describing issues in extensive detail. It does this by studying a range of data sources, including data from annual interviews with people who regularly use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants and from secondary analyses of routinely collected indicator data. This report focuses on the key findings from the annual interview component of the EDRS.

Methods

EDRS 2003-2019

Full details of the methods for the annual interviews are available for download. To briefly summarise, since the commencement of monitoring up until 2019, participants were recruited primarily via internet postings, print advertisements, interviewer contacts, and snowballing (i.e., peer referral). Participants had to: i) be at least 17 years of age (due to ethical constraints) (16 years of age in Perth, Western Australia (WA)), ii) have used ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants (including: MDA, methamphetamine, cocaine, non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants, mephedrone or other stimulant NPS) at least six days during the preceding six months; and iii) have been a resident of the capital city in which the interview took place for ten of the past 12 months. Interviews took place in varied locations negotiated with participants (e.g., research institutions, coffee shops or parks), and in later years were conducted using REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture), a software program to collect data on laptops or tablets. Following provision of written informed consent and completion of a structured interview, participants were reimbursed $40 cash for their time and expenses incurred.

EDRS 2020-2024: COVID-19 Impacts on Recruitment and Data Collection

Given the emergence of COVID-19 and the resulting restrictions on travel and people's movement in Australia (which first came into effect in March 2020), face-to-face interviews were not always possible due to the risk of infection transmission for both interviewers and participants. For this reason, all methods in 2020 were similar to previous years as detailed above, with the exception of:

1. Means of data collection: Interviews were conducted via telephone or via videoconferencing across all capital cities in 2020;
2. Means of consenting participants: Participants consent to participate was collected verbally prior to beginning the interview;
3. Means of reimbursement: Once the interview was completed via REDCap, participants were given the option of receiving $40 reimbursement via one of three methods, comprising bank transfer, PayID or gift voucher; and

4. Age eligibility criterion: Changed from 17 years old (16 years old in Perth (WA)) to 18 years old.

From 2021 onwards, a hybrid approach was used with interviews conducted either face-to-face (whereby participants were reimbursed with cash) or via telephone/videoconference (with participants reimbursed via bank transfer or other electronic means). Face-to-face interviews were the preferred methodology, however telephone interviews were conducted when required (i.e., in accordance with government directives) or when requested by participants. Consent was collected verbally for all participants.

2024 EDRS Sample

Between 9 April – 13 July 2024, a total of 740 participants were recruited across capital cities nationally, with 100 participants interviewed in Sydney, NSW between 11 April and 8 June 2024 (n=100 in 2023). A total of 38 interviews were conducted via telephone (50 via telephone/videoconference in 2023) and 62 interviews were conducted face-to-face (n=50 in 2023).

Few participants (n≤5) in the 2024 Sydney sample completed the interview in 2023 and, similarly, n≤5 in the 2023 Sydney sample completed the interview in 2022.

There was a significant change in recruitment methods in 2024 compared to 2023 (p=0.036), with fewer participants being recruited via the internet (e.g., Facebook and Instagram) (76%; 86% in 2023) and more participants recruited via word-of-mouth (23%; 11% in 2023).

Data Analysis

For normally distributed continuous variables, means and standard deviations (SD) are reported; for skewed data (i.e., skewness > ±1 or kurtosis > ±3), medians and interquartile ranges (IQR) are reported. Tests of statistical significance have been conducted between estimates for 2024 and 2023, noting that no corrections for multiple comparisons have been made and thus comparisons should be treated with caution. References to significant differences throughout the report are where statistical testing has been conducted and where the p-value is less than 0.050. Values where cell sizes are ≤5 have been suppressed with corresponding notation (zero values are reported). References to 'recent' use and behaviours refers to the past six-month time period. The response options 'Don't know' and 'Skip question', which were available to select throughout the interview, was excluded from analysis.

Guide to Table/Figure Notes

Table 1: Guide to Table/Figure Notes

Legend	
/	Question not asked in respective year (for tables)
-	Per cent suppressed due to small cell size (n≤5 but not 0) (for tables)
	Missing data points indicate question not asked in respective year or n≤5 answered the question (for figures)
***p*<0.050; ***p*<0.010; ****p*<0.001**	Statistical significance between 2023 and 2024

Interpretation of Findings

Caveats to interpretation of findings are discussed more completely in the methods for the annual interviews but it should be noted that these data are from participants recruited in Sydney, NSW and thus do not reflect trends in regional and remote areas. Further, the results are not representative of all people who consume illicit drugs, nor of illicit drug use in the general population, but rather are intended to provide evidence indicative of emerging issues that warrant further monitoring.

This report covers a subset of items asked of participants and does not include implications of findings. These findings should be interpreted alongside analyses of other data sources for a more complete profile of emerging trends in illicit drug use, market features, and harms in Sydney, NSW (see section on 'Additional Outputs' below for details of other outputs providing such profiles).

Differences in the methodology, and the events of 2020-2024, must be taken into consideration when comparing 2020-2024 data to previous years, and treated with caution.

Additional Outputs

Infographics, executive summary and data tables from this report are available for download. There are a range of outputs from the EDRS which triangulate key findings from the annual interviews and other data sources, including national reports, jurisdictional reports, bulletins, and other resources available via the Drug Trends webpage. This includes results from the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS), which focuses more so on the use of illicit drugs via injection.

Please contact the research team at drugtrends@unsw.edu.au with any queries; to request additional analyses using these data; or to discuss the possibility of including items in future interviews.

1

Sample Characteristics

In 2024, the median age of the Sydney sample was 27 years (IQR=20-36; 26 years in 2023; IQR=21-31; p=0.233), and two thirds (66%) identified as male (59% in 2023; p=0.574) (Table 2).

Current accommodation remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.700), with 49% of participants reporting living in a rental house/flat (54% in 2023) and one third (34%) living in their parents/family home (30% in 2023).

Current employment status significantly changed between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.007); one third (34%) reported being employed full-time at the time of interview, a decrease from 49% in 2023. Conversely, one quarter (24%) reported being unemployed at the time of interview, an increase from 8% in 2023.

The median weekly income remained stable at $900 (IQR=450-1377; $1058 in 2023;IQR=450-1700; p=0.176).

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the sample, nationally, 2024, and Sydney, NSW, 2020-2024						
	Sydney, NSW					National
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2024
	(N=103)	(N=99)	(N=100)	(N=100)	(N=100)	(N=740)
Median age (years; IQR)	21 (19-27)	23 (21-26)	29 (23-34)	26 (21-31)	**27 (20-36)**	23 (20-32)
% Gender						
Female	36	29	31	38	**31**	43
Male	62	67	64	59	**66**	55
Non-binary	-	-	-	-	**-**	3
% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	-	-	-	-	**8**	9
% Born in Australia					**73**	84
% English primary language spoken at home	/	/	/	/	**90**	97
% Sexual identity						
Heterosexual	82	75	69	71	**63**	69
Homosexual	-	-	7	10	**12**	7
Bisexual	16	13	17	14	**13**	17
Queer	-	8	-	-	**6**	4
Other identity	0	0	-	-	**6**	3
Mean years of school education (range)	12 (8-12)	12 (10-12)	12 (9-12)	12 (7-12)	**12 (9-12)**	12 (7-12)
% Post-school qualification(s)^	45	52	69	67	**60**	56
% Current students#	53	63	31	38	**33**	39
% Current employment status					**	
Employed full-time	29	28	49	49	**34**	30
Part time/casual	32	48	24	36	**38**	42
Self-employed	-	8	13	7	**-**	5
Unemployed	36	15	14	8	**24**	23
Current median weekly income $ (IQR)	$635 (430-923)	$700 (475-1000)	$1000 (550 –1600)	$1058 (450-1700)	**$900 (450-1377)**	$700 (400-1200)
% Current accommodation						
Own house/flat	6	-	14	10	**11**	10
Rented house/flat	41	71	66	54	**49**	48
Parents'/family home	47	26	16	30	**34**	34
Boarding house/hostel	-	0	0	-	**0**	1
Public housing	-	-	-	-	**-**	3
No fixed address+	0	0	0	0	**-**	2
Other	-	0	-	0	**0**	1

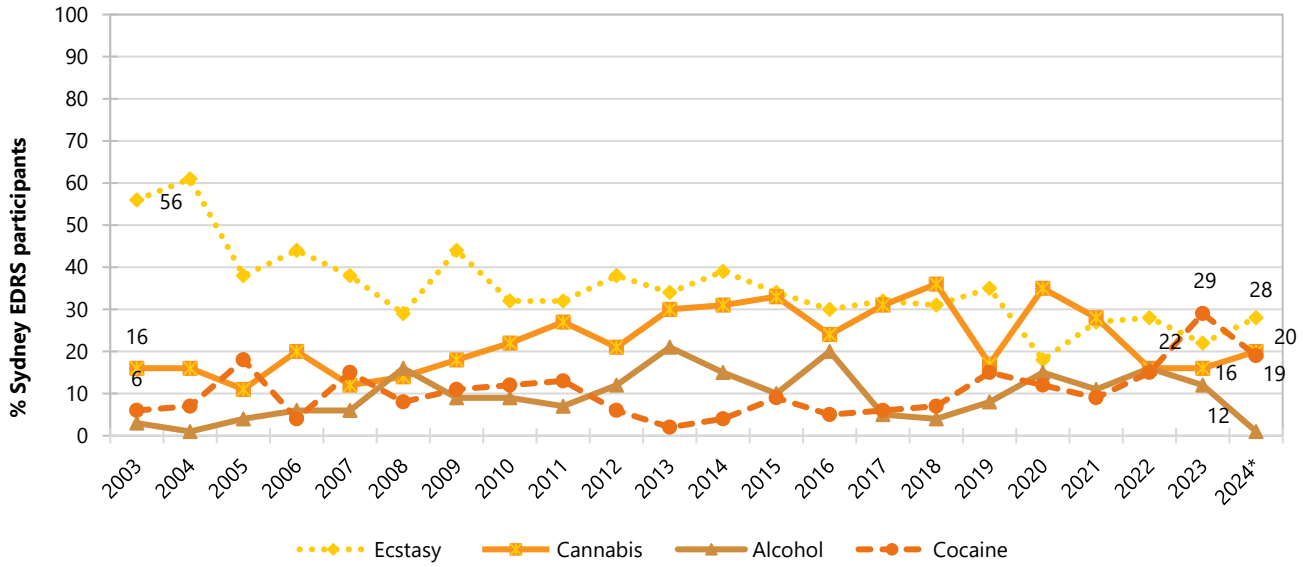
Note. ^Includes trade/technical and university qualifications. #'students' comprised participants who were currently studying for either trade/technical or university/college qualifications. + No fixed address included 'couch surfing and rough sleeping or squatting. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in table; *$p<0.050$; **$p<0.010$; ***$p<0.001$. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

The reported drug of choice significantly changed between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.014). Specifically, more participants nominated ecstasy (28%; 22% in 2023) and cannabis (20%; 16% in 2023) as their drug of choice in 2024, while fewer participants nominated cocaine (19%; 29% in 2023) and alcohol (n≤5; 12% in 2023) as their drug of choice (Figure 1).

The drug used most often remain stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.232). Twenty-nine per cent of the Sydney sample reported cannabis as the drug used most in the last month (23% in 2023), followed by ecstasy (23%; 16% in 2023), cocaine (13%; 20% in 2023) and alcohol (12%; 18% in 2023) (Figure 2).

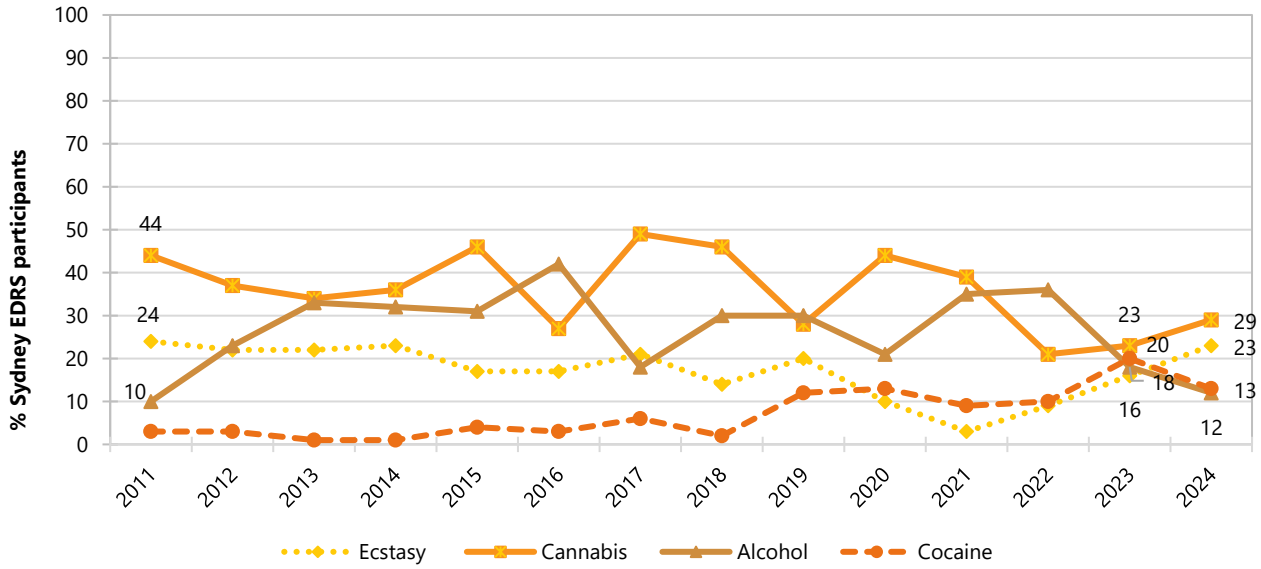
Weekly or more frequent use of cannabis (39%; 29% in 2023; p=0.184), ecstasy (14%; 7% in 2023; p=0.169), cocaine (12%; 16% in 2023; p=0.537) and methamphetamine (6%; 7% in 2023) remained stable in 2024 (Figure 3).

Figure 1: Drug of choice, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



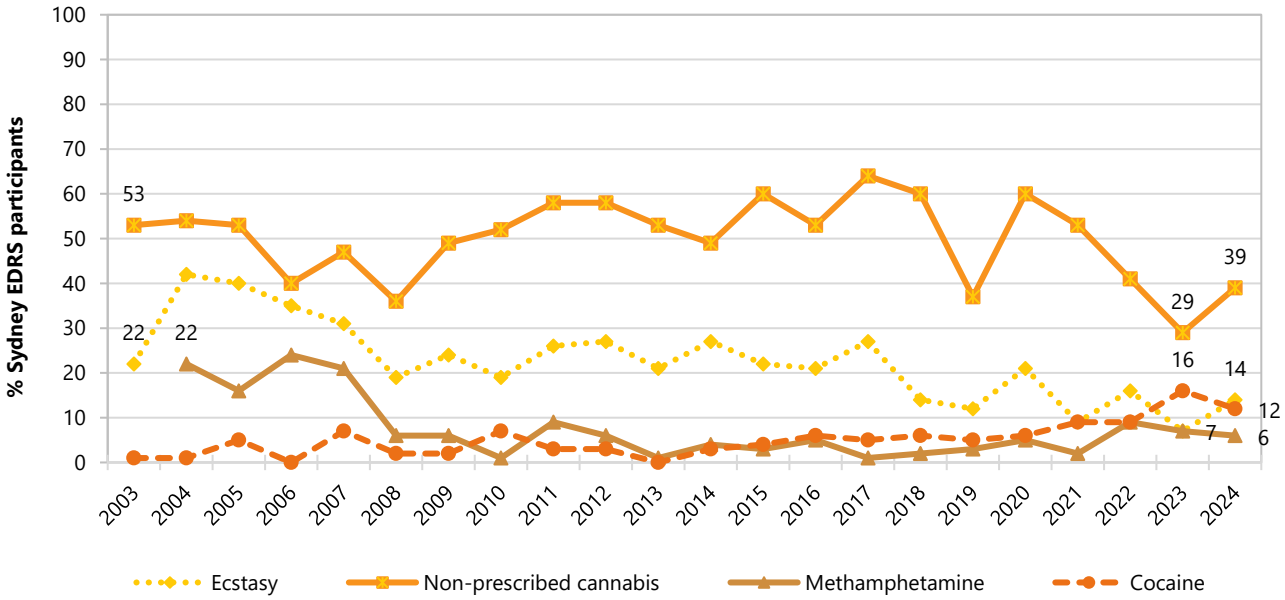
Note. Participants could only endorse one substance. Substances listed in this figure are the primary endorsed; nominal percentages have endorsed other substances. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however labels are suppressed where there are small numbers (i.e., n≤5 but not 0). For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 2: Drug used most often in the past month, Sydney, NSW, 2011-2024



Note. Participants could only endorse one substance. Substances listed in this figure are the primary endorsed; nominal percentages have endorsed other substances. Data are only presented for 2011-2023 as this question was not asked in 2003-2010. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however labels are suppressed where there are small numbers (i.e., n≤5 but not 0). For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 3: Weekly or more frequent substance use in the past six months, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Computed from the entire sample regardless of whether they had used the substance in the past six months. Prior to 2021, we did not distinguish between prescribed and non-prescribed cannabis, and as such it is possible that 2017-2020 figures include some participants who were using prescribed cannabis only (with medicinal cannabis first legalised in Australia in November 2016), although we anticipate these numbers would be very low. Further, from 2022, we captured use of 'cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products', while in previous years questions referred only to 'cannabis'. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however labels are suppressed where there are small numbers (i.e., n≤5 but not 0). For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

2

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy

Participants were asked about their recent (past six month) use of various forms of non-prescribed ecstasy (3,4-methylenedoxymethamphetamine), including pills, powder, capsules, and crystal.

Recent Use (past 6 months)

Following a decline in recent use of non-prescribed ecstasy in any form between 2021-2022, the per cent reporting recent use has returned to similar estimates observed in 2020 and earlier. In 2024, almost all (96%) of the Sydney sample had recently consumed non-prescribed ecstasy in any form in 2024, stable relative to 2023 (99%; p=0.369).

Capsules remained the most commonly consumed form of non-prescribed ecstasy, with 66% reporting recent use, stable relative to 2023 (69% in 2023; p=0.761). This was followed by pills (57%; 49% in 2023; p=0.327), and crystal (53%; 47% in 2023; p=0.473). Powder was the least commonly used form of non-prescribed ecstasy in 2024 (29%; 27% in 2023; p=0.872) (Figure 4).

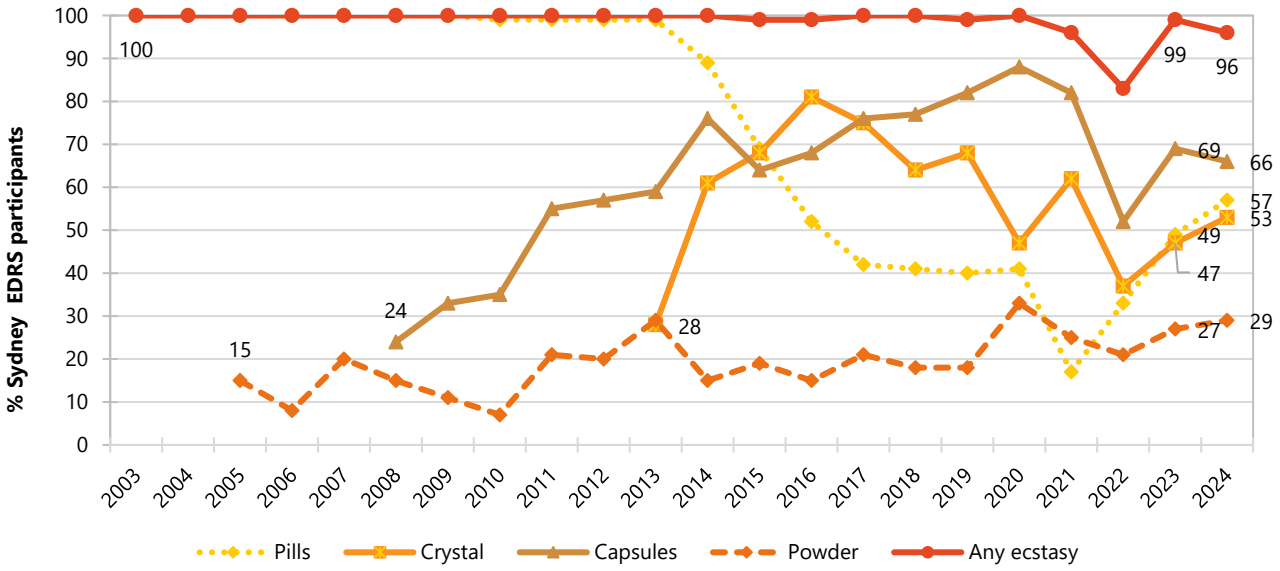
Frequency of Use

Despite some fluctuation, the median days of use of non-prescribed ecstasy in any form has steadily declined over time. In 2024, participants reported using any form of non-prescribed ecstasy on a median of seven days (IQR=4-13; n=96) in the six months preceding interview, stable from a median of eight days in 2023 (IQR=4-14; n=99; p=0.908) (Figure 5). Fifteen per cent of participants who had recently used ecstasy reported weekly or more frequent use, stable relative to 2023 (7%; p=0.114).

Number of Forms Used

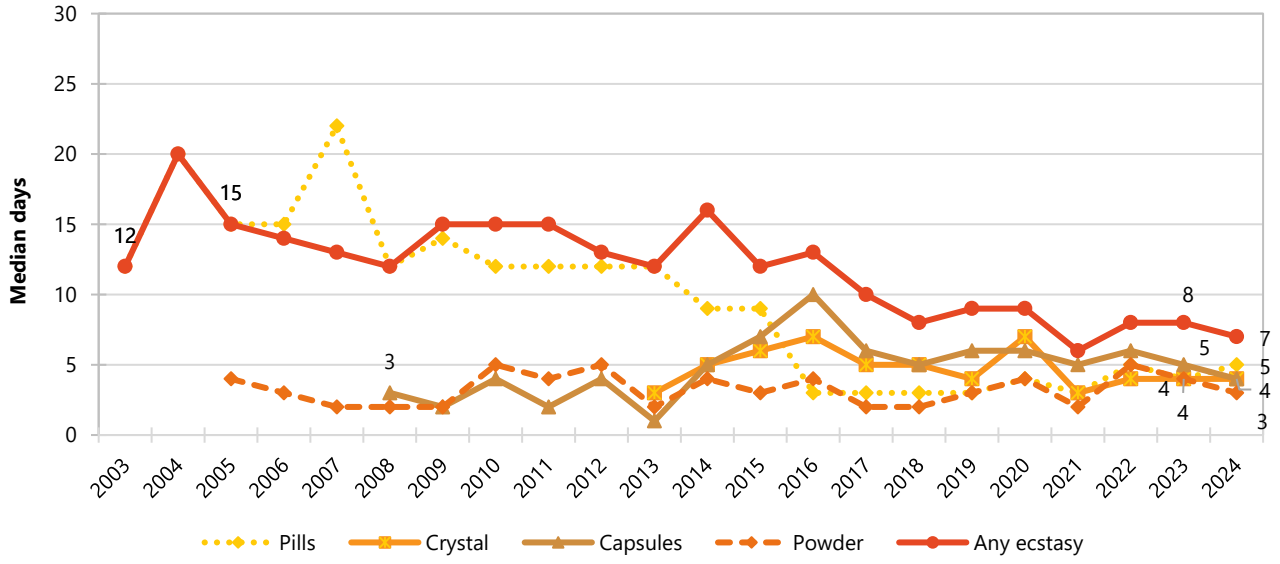
Among participants who had recently consumed non-prescribed ecstasy and commented in 2024 (n=96), the median number of forms of ecstasy used in the six months preceding interview was two (IQR=1-3), stable from 2023 (2 forms; IQR=1-3; n=99; p=0.065).

Figure 4: Past six month use of any non-prescribed ecstasy, and non-prescribed ecstasy pills, powder, capsules, and crystal, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Up until 2012, participant eligibility was determined based on any recent ecstasy use; subsequently it has been expanded to broader illicit stimulant use. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however labels are suppressed where there are small numbers (i.e., n≤5 but not 0). For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 5: Median days of any non-prescribed ecstasy and non-prescribed ecstasy pills, powder, capsules, and crystal use in the past six months, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Up until 2012, participant eligibility was determined based on any recent ecstasy use; subsequently it has been expanded to broader illicit stimulant use. Median days computed among those who reported past 6 month use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Y axis reduced to 30 days to improve visibility of trends. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however labels are suppressed where there are small numbers (i.e., n≤5 but not 0). For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Patterns of Consumption (by form)

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy Pills

Recent Use (past 6 months): Between 2013 and 2021, the per cent reporting recent use of pills has declined considerably, before increasing between 2022 and 2024. In 2024, 57% of the Sydney sample reported recent use (49% in 2023; p=0.327) (Figure 4).

Frequency of Use: Ecstasy pills were consumed on a median of five days in the previous six months (IQR=4-9; n=57; 4 days in 2023; IQR=2-12; n=49; p=0.399) (Figure 5).

Routes of Administration: Among participants who had recently consumed ecstasy pills and commented (n=57), all participants nominated swallowing as a route of administration in 2024 (100%; 98% in 2023; p=0.462) and 12% nominated snorting (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.769). No other routes of administration were reported in 2024.

Quantity: The median number of pills consumed in a 'typical' session was two (IQR=1-2; n=57), stable compared to 2023 (2 pills; IQR=1.5-3; n=49; p=0.058). The median maximum amount reported in a session was also two pills (IQR=2-4; n=57), stable from 2023 (2 pills, IQR=2-4; n=49; p=0.378).

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy Capsules

Recent Use (past 6 months): Since 2017, capsules have remained the most commonly used form of ecstasy. In 2024, two thirds (66%) of the Sydney sample reported recent use, stable relative to 2023 (69%; p=0.761) (Figure 4).

Frequency of Use: Frequency of capsule use in the six months preceding interview remained stable at four days (IQR=3-6; n=66; 5 days in 2023; IQR=3-9; n=69; p=0.457) (Figure 5).

Routes of Administration: Of those who reported recent use and responded (n=66), the vast majority (98%) of participants reported swallowing capsules in the six months preceding interview, stable relative to 2023 (96%; p=0.620). Few participants (n≤5) nominated other routes of administration in 2024.

Quantity: The median number of capsules consumed in a 'typical' session was two (IQR=1-3; n=66; 2 capsules in 2023; IQR=2-3; n=69; p=0.153). The median maximum amount reported in a session was three capsules (IQR=2-4; n=66; 3 capsules in 2023; IQR=2.5-5; n=69; p=0.021).

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy Crystal

Recent Use (past 6 months): Since peaking in 2016 with 81% of the Sydney sample reporting recent use, crystal use has generally declined between 2017 and 2022, before gradually increasing thereafter. In 2024, half (53%) of the Sydney sample reported recent use of crystal, stable relative to 2023 (47%; p=0.473) (Figure 4).

Frequency of Use: Frequency of crystal use in the six months preceding interview remained stable at a median of four days (IQR=2-6; n=53; 4 days in 2023, IQR=2-6; n=47; p=0.643) (Figure 5).

Routes of Administration: Consistent with previous years, of those who had recently used crystal (n=53), three quarters (77%) reported swallowing as a route of administration (87% in 2023; p=0.304), and one quarter (25%) reported snorting (34% in 2023; p=0.376).

Quantity: The median amount of crystal consumed in a 'typical' session was 0.28 grams (IQR=0.20-0.50; n=48; 0.30 grams in 2023; IQR=0.20-0.50; n=37; p=0.668). The median maximum amount of crystal consumed in a session was 0.50 grams (IQR=0.24-1.00; n=48;

0.50 grams in 2023; IQR=0.30-0.75; n=37; *p*=0.782).

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy Powder

Recent Use (past 6 months): Powder has generally been the least commonly used form of ecstasy reported by participants over the course of monitoring. In 2024, 29% of the Sydney sample reported recent use, stable relative to 2023 (27%; *p*=0.872) (Figure 4).

Frequency of Use: Participants reported using powder on a median of three days in the past six months (IQR=1-6; n=29), stable from 2023 (4 days; IQR=1-7; n=26; *p*=0.790) (Figure 5).

Routes of Administration: Of those who had recently used powder and responded (n=29), three fifths (62%) reported swallowing powder (44% in 2023; *p*=0.287), followed by half (52%) snorting powder in the six months preceding interview, a significant decrease compared to 2023 (81% in 2023; *p*=0.025).

Quantity: In a 'typical' session, participants reported consuming a median of 0.30 grams (IQR=0.20-0.50; n=23; 0.30 grams in 2023; IQR=0.25-0.50; n=17; *p*=0.570). The median maximum amount consumed in a session was 0.50 grams (IQR=0.28-1.00; n=23; 0.50 grams in 2023; IQR=0.30-1.00; n=19; *p*=0.858).

Price, Perceived Purity and Perceived Availability

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy Pills

Price: The median price of an ecstasy pill was $30 in 2024 (IQR=25-40; n=34; $35 in 2023; IQR=25-50; n=18; *p*=0.413) (Figure 6).

Perceived Purity: The perceived purity of ecstasy pills remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (*p*=0.169). Among those who were able to comment in 2024 (n=53), 45% reported purity to be 'high' (49% in 2023) and two fifths (40%) reported purity to be 'medium' (23% in 2023) (Figure 8).

Perceived Availability: There was a significant change in the perceived availability of non-prescribed ecstasy pills between 2023 and 2024 (*p*=0.029). Among those who responded in 2024 (n=54), half (52%) perceived availability to be 'easy', an increase from 37% in 2023, and one third (31%) reported that they were 'very easy' to obtain (25% in 2023). Conversely, fewer participants reported pills to be 'difficult' to obtain (13%; 37% in 2023) (Figure 12).

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy Capsules

Price: The median price per capsule was $30 in 2024 (IQR=25-30; n=37), stable relative to 2023 ($30; IQR=25-30; n=21; *p*=0.493) (Figure 6).

Perceived Purity: The perceived purity of capsules remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (*p*=0.116). Of those who could comment in 2024 (n=69), two fifths (42%) perceived purity to be 'medium' (36% in 2023), and a further two fifths (41%) reported purity to be 'high' (33% in 2023). One tenth (10%) perceived purity to be 'low' (9% in 2023) (Figure 9).

Perceived Availability: The perceived availability of capsules remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (*p*=0.201). Among those who were able to comment in 2024 (n=69), 55% reported capsules to be 'easy' to obtain (42% in 2023) and one third (35%) perceived that they were 'very easy' to obtain (41% in 2023). One tenth (10%) perceived capsules to be 'difficult' to obtain (13% in 2023) (Figure 13).

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy Crystal

Price: The median price for one gram of ecstasy crystal peaked at $280 in 2013 and declined to $133 in 2020. In 2024, the median price for one gram of ecstasy crystal was $180

(IQR=150-250; n=23), stable relative to 2023 ($200; IQR=160-250; n=27; *p*=0.384). Few participants (n≤5) commented on the price per point of crystal in 2024 (n≤5 in 2023) (Figure 7).

Perceived Purity: The perceived purity of ecstasy crystal remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (*p*=0.334). Among those who were able to comment in 2024 (n=49), 55% perceived purity to be 'high' (62% in 2023) and a further one third (31%) perceived purity to be 'medium' (18% in 2023) (Figure 10).

Perceived Availability: The perceived availability of ecstasy crystal remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (*p*=0.223). Among those who commented in 2024 (n=49), the majority reported crystal to be 'easy' (53%; 47% in 2023) or 'very easy' (39%; 31% in 2023) to obtain (Figure 14).

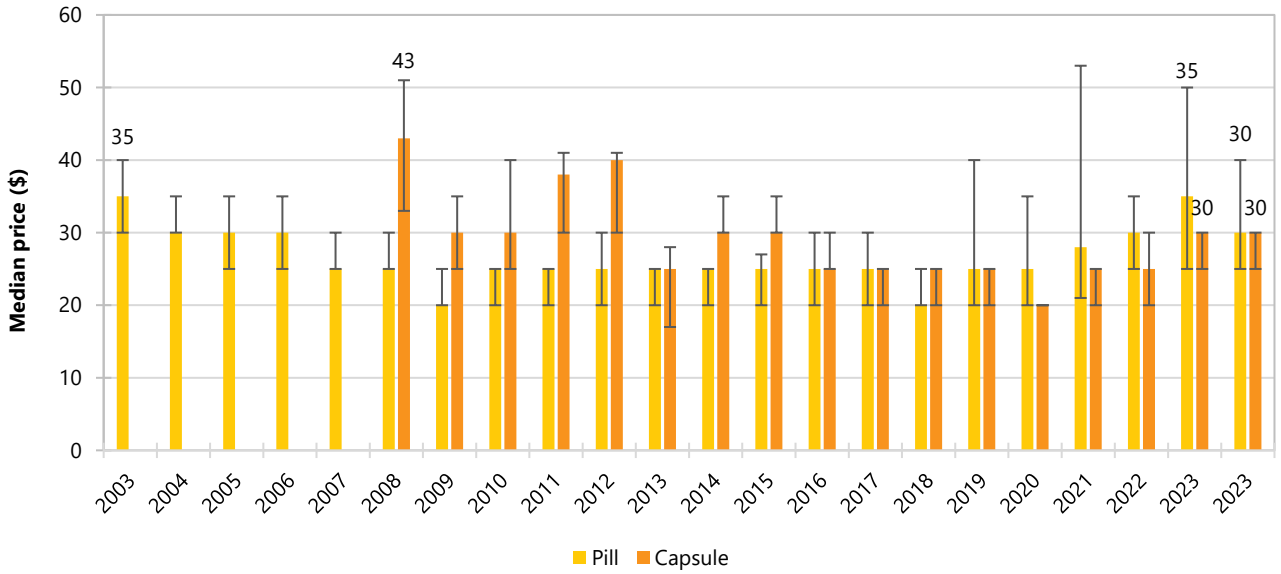
Non-Prescribed Ecstasy Powder

Price: The median price for one gram of ecstasy powder was $250 (IQR=185-250; n=10), remaining stable from 2023 ($200; IQR=200-300; n=9; *p*=0.967) (Figure 7). No participants commented on the price per point of powder in 2024 (n≤5 in 2023).

Perceived Purity: The perceived purity of ecstasy powder remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (*p*=0.722) (Figure 11). Among those who commented in 2024 (n=25), two fifths (40%) perceived ecstasy powder to be of 'medium' purity (43% in 2023), followed by 44% who perceived it to be of 'high' purity (29% in 2023).

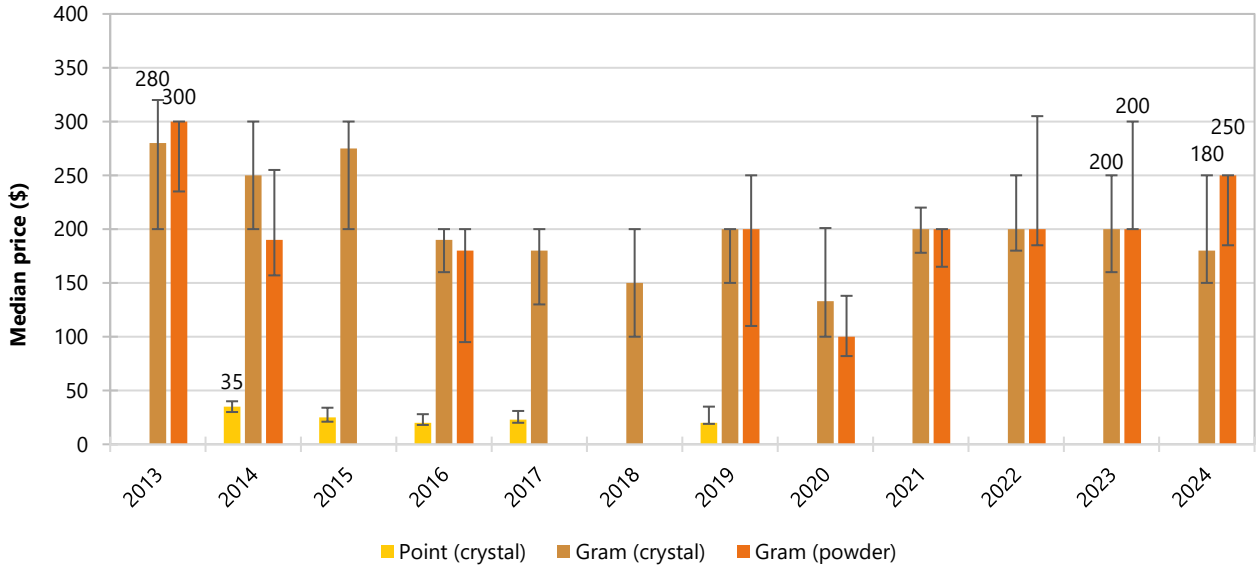
Perceived Availability: The perceived availability of ecstasy powder remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (*p*=0.462). Among those who commented in 2024 (n=26), half (50%) perceived ecstasy powder to be 'easy' to obtain (50% in 2023), with a further 35% perceiving it to be 'very easy' to obtain (25% in 2023) (Figure 15).

Figure 6: Median price of non-prescribed ecstasy pill and capsule, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



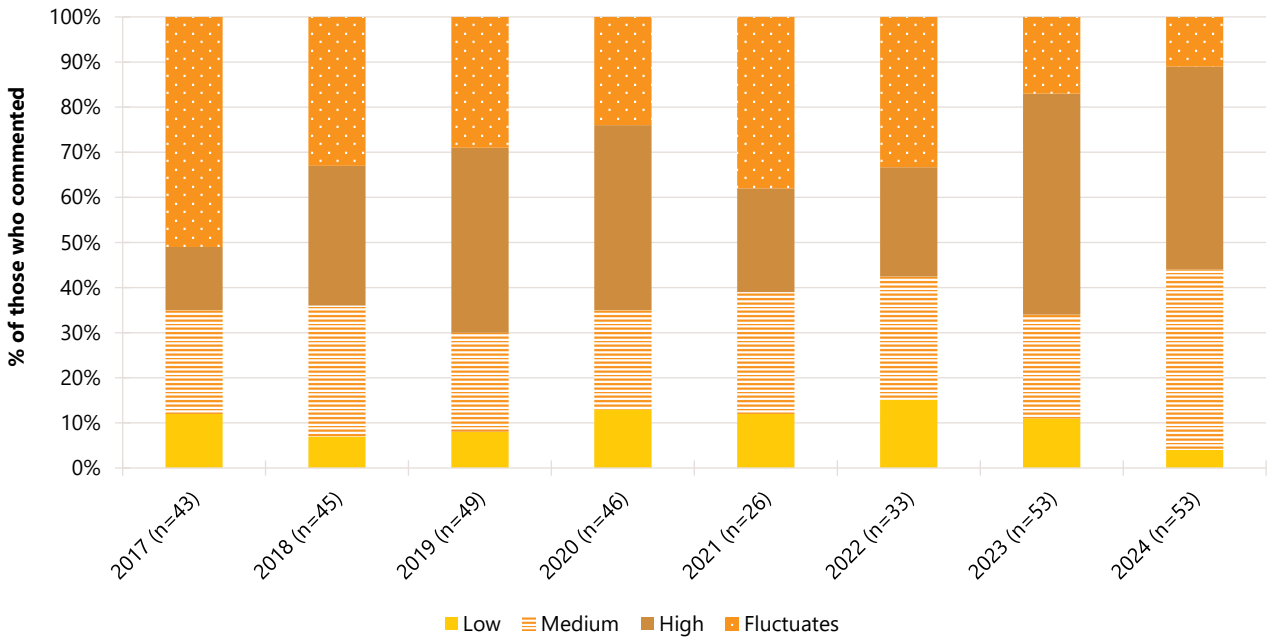
Note. Among those who commented. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. The error bars represent the IQR. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 7: Median price of non-prescribed ecstasy crystal per point and gram and powder per gram, Sydney, NSW, 2013-2024



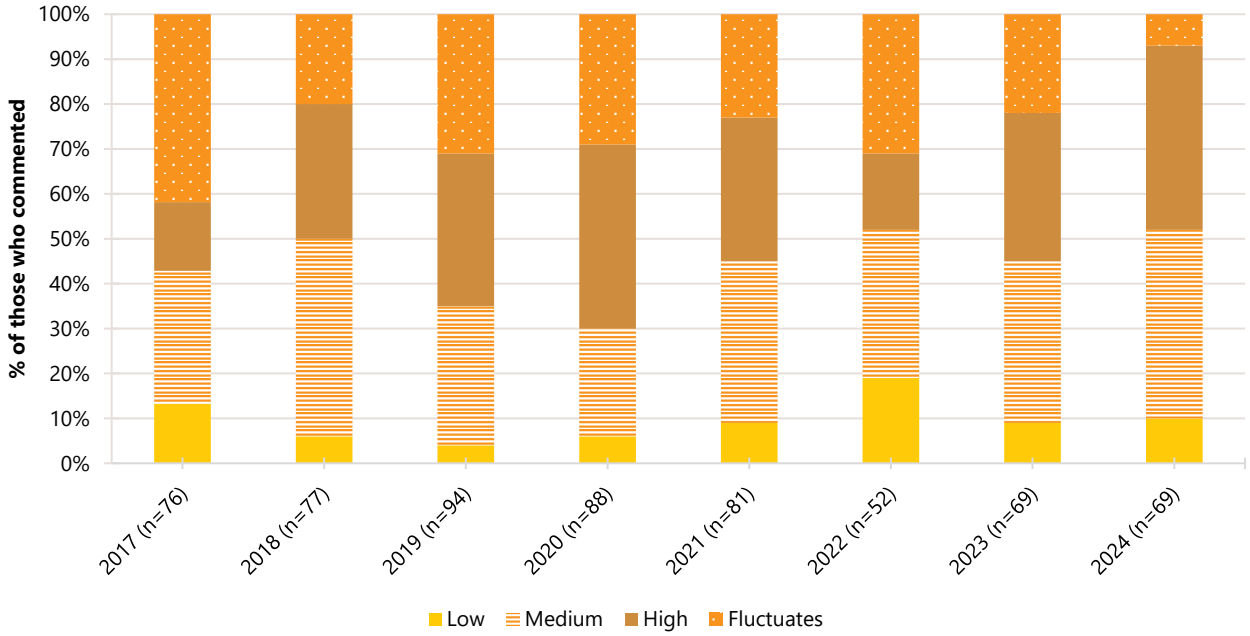
Note. Among those who commented. Data collection for price of ecstasy crystal (gram and point) and ecstasy powder (gram) started in 2013. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. The error bars represent the IQR. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 8: Current perceived purity of non-prescribed ecstasy pills, Sydney, NSW, 2017-2024



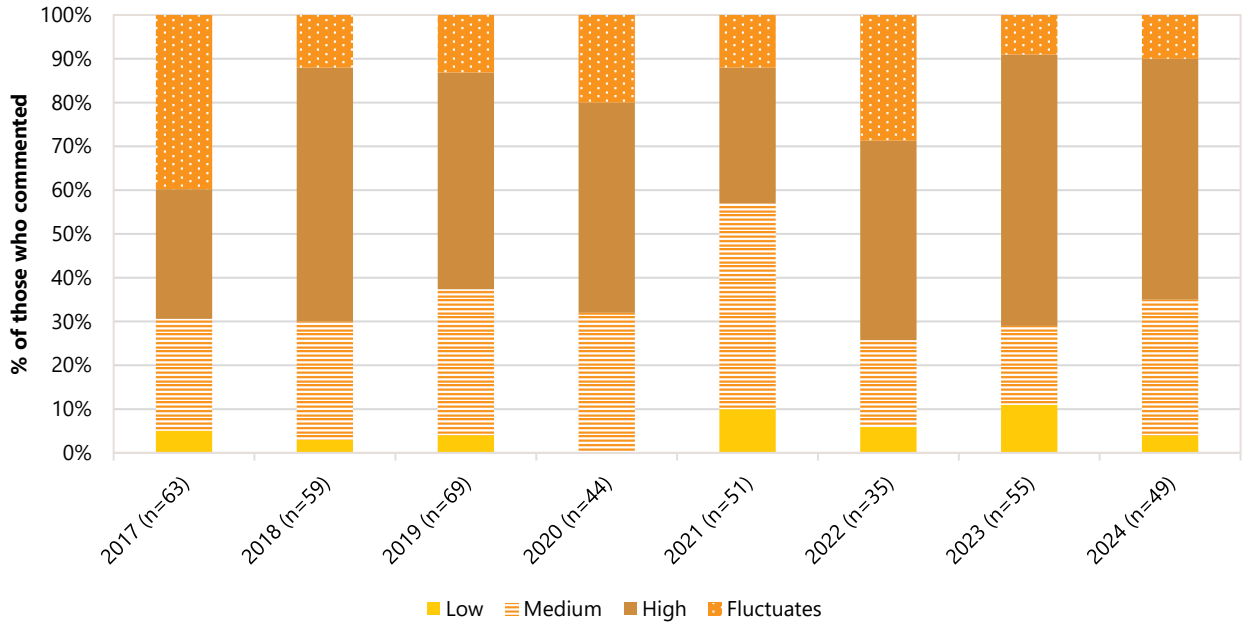
Note. Market questions were only asked for all forms of ecstasy from 2017 onwards. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 9: Current perceived purity of non-prescribed ecstasy capsules, Sydney, NSW, 2017-2024



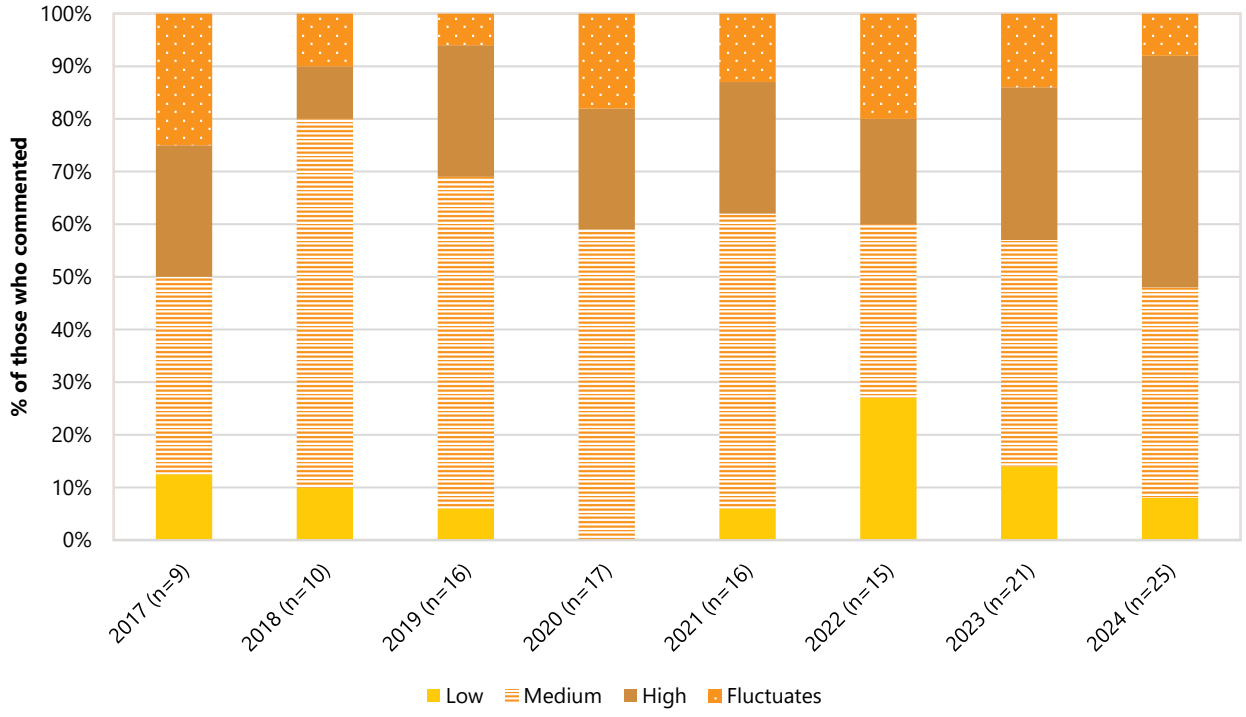
Note. Market questions were only asked for all forms of ecstasy from 2017 onwards. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 10: Current perceived purity of non-prescribed ecstasy crystal, Sydney, NSW, 2017-2024



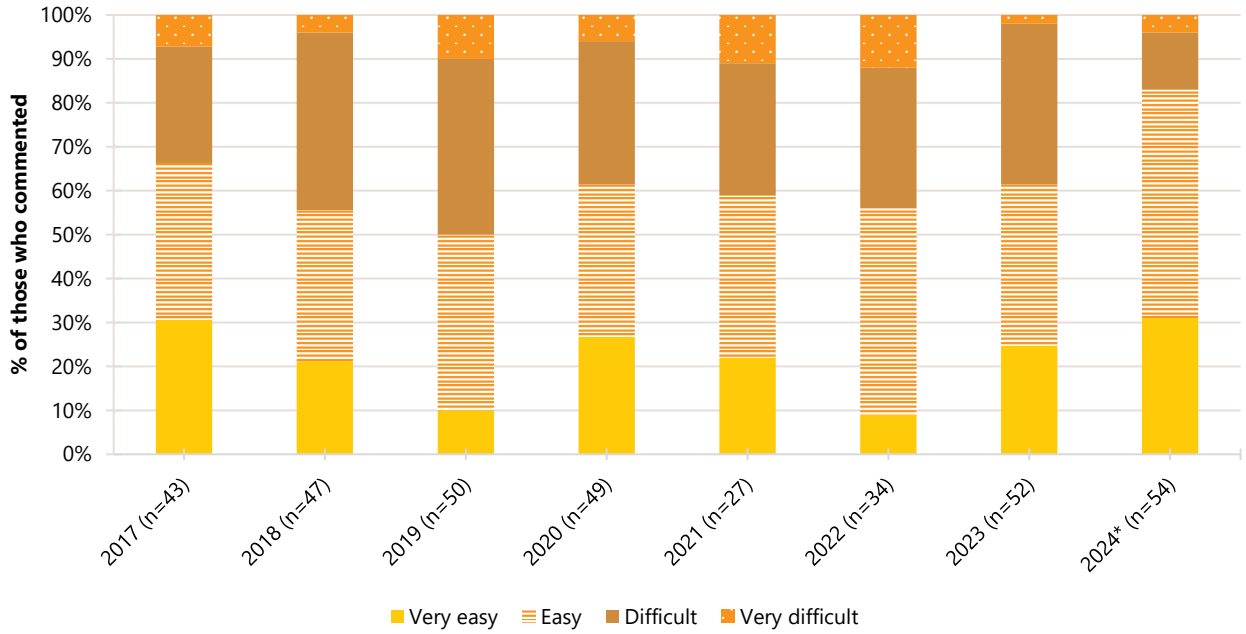
Note. Market questions were only asked for all forms of ecstasy from 2017 onwards. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 11: Current perceived purity of non-prescribed ecstasy powder, Sydney, NSW, 2017-2024



Note. Market questions were only asked for all forms of ecstasy from 2017 onwards. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 12: Current perceived availability of non-prescribed ecstasy pills, Sydney, NSW, 2017-2024

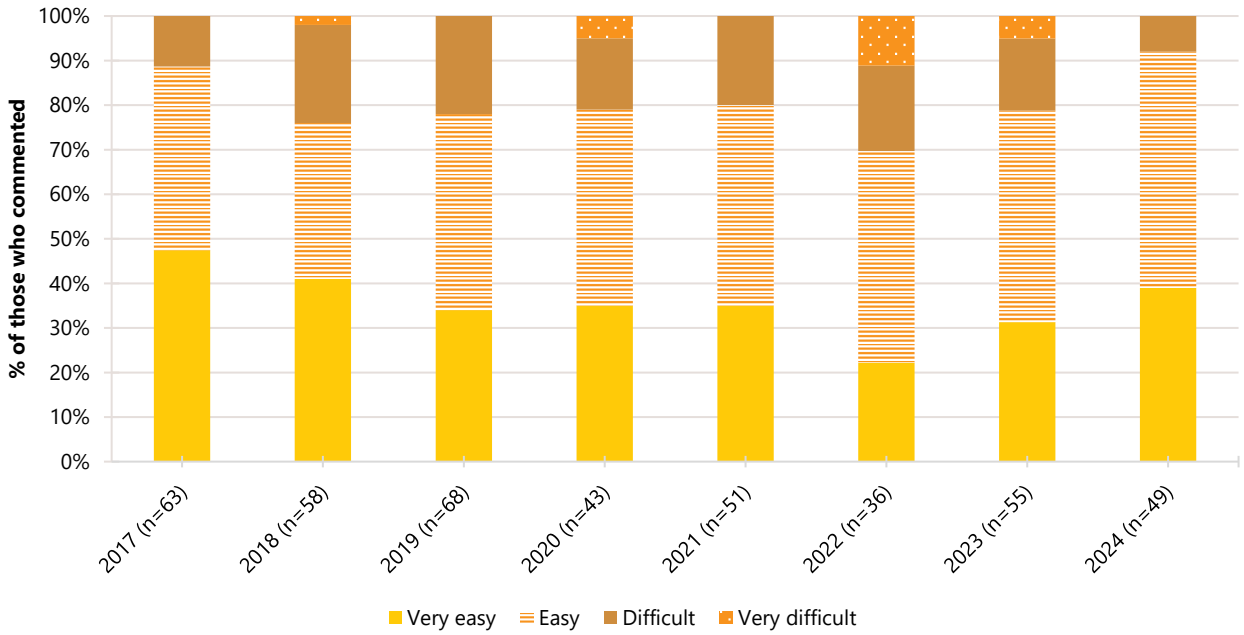


Note. Market questions were only asked for all forms of ecstasy from 2017 onwards. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 13: Current perceived availability of non-prescribed ecstasy capsules, Sydney, NSW, 2017-2024

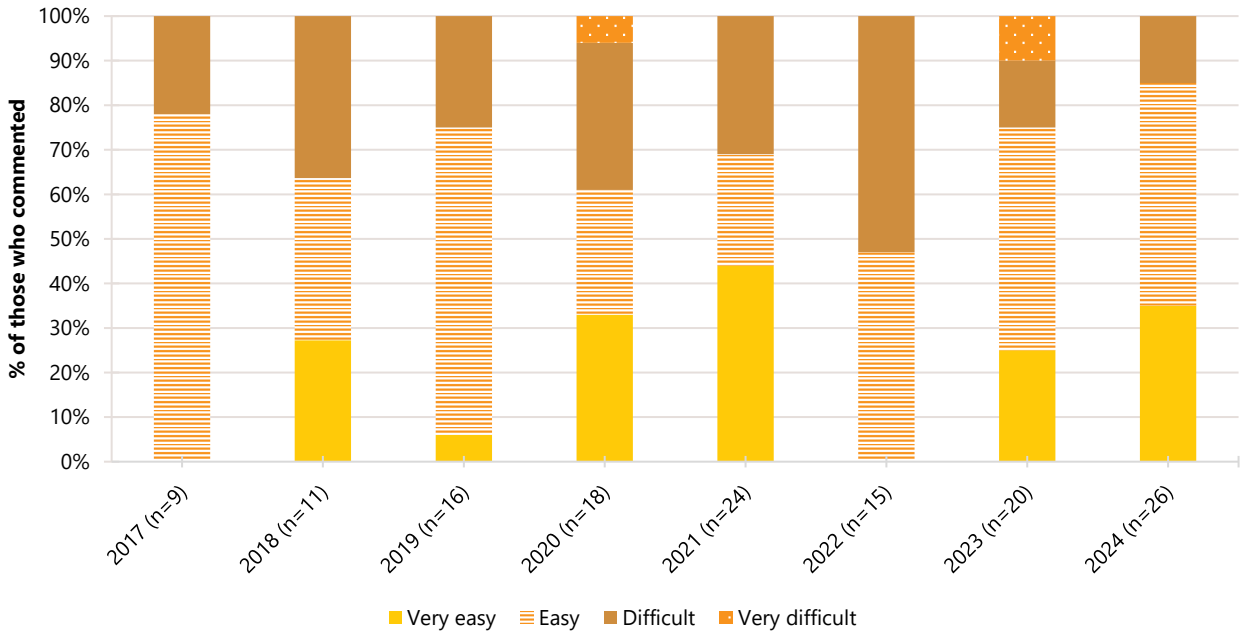
Note. Market questions were only asked for all forms of ecstasy from 2017 onwards. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 14: Current perceived availability of non-prescribed ecstasy crystal, Sydney, NSW, 2017-2024



Note. Market questions were only asked for all forms of ecstasy from 2017 onwards. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 15: Current perceived availability of non-prescribed ecstasy powder, Sydney, NSW, 2017-2024



Note. Market questions were only asked for all forms of ecstasy from 2017 onwards. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

3

Methamphetamine

Participants were asked about their recent (past six month) use of various forms of methamphetamine, including powder (white particles, described as speed), base (wet, oily powder) and crystal (clear, ice-like crystals). Findings for base methamphetamine are not reported here due to small numbers reporting recent use. For further information on base methamphetamine, please refer to the 2024 National IDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team.

Patterns of Consumption (Any Methamphetamine)

Recent Use (past 6 months)

Recent use of any methamphetamine has been declining since monitoring commenced, from 87% in 2003 to 15% in 2021. In 2024, one quarter (26%) of the Sydney sample reported recent use of any methamphetamine, stable relative to 2023 (21%; p=0.506) (Figure 16).

Frequency of Use

Frequency of any methamphetamine use peaked in 2004 and has since largely remained infrequent and stable. In 2024, participants reported use on a median of six days in the six months preceding interview (IQR=1-12; n=26; 5 days in 2023; IQR=1-50; n=21; p=0.803) (Figure 17). One quarter (23%) of participants who had recently used any methamphetamine reported weekly or more frequent use (33% in 2023; p=0.515).

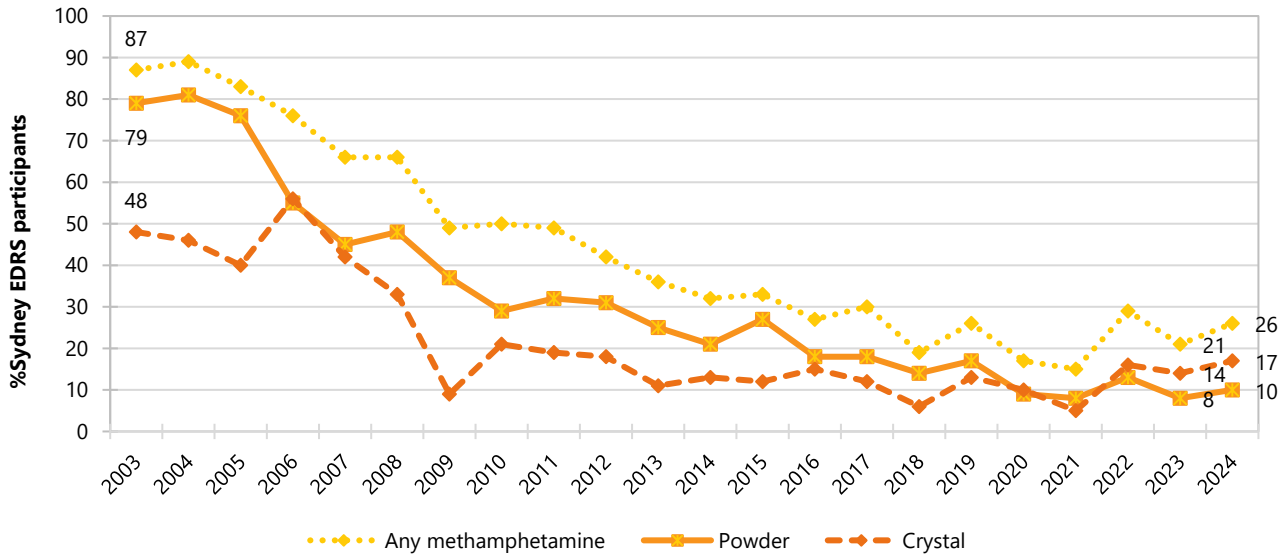
Forms Used

Of participants who had used methamphetamine in the six months preceding interview in 2024 (n=26), two thirds (65%) of participants reported using methamphetamine crystal (67% in 2023), followed by powder (38%; 38% in 2023). Few participants (n≤5) reported recent use of base (n≤5 in 2023).

Number of Forms Used

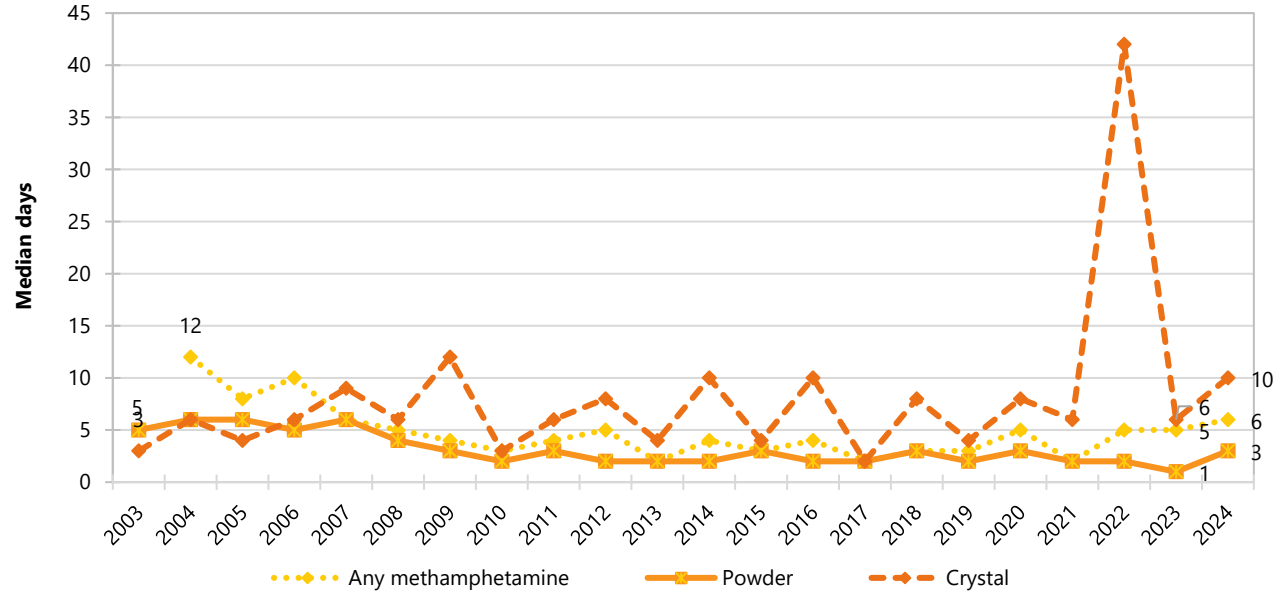
Among participants who had recently consumed any methamphetamine and commented (n=26), the median number of forms used was one (IQR=1-1; 1 form in 2023; IQR=1-1).

Figure 16: Past six month use of any methamphetamine, powder, and crystal, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however labels are suppressed where there are small numbers (i.e., n≤5 but not 0). For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 17: Median days of any methamphetamine, powder, and crystal use in the past six months, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Y axis reduced to 45 days to improve visibility of trends. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however labels are suppressed where there are small numbers (i.e., n≤5 but not 0). For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Patterns of Consumption (by form)

Methamphetamine Powder

Recent Use (past 6 months): Methamphetamine powder was the most commonly used form of methamphetamine between 2003 and 2019, however has been largely comparable with methamphetamine crystal from 2020 onwards. In 2024, one tenth (10%) of the Sydney sample reported recent use of methamphetamine powder, stable relative to 2023 (8%; p=0.801) (Figure 16).

Frequency of Use: The median frequency of methamphetamine powder use has remained infrequent and stable over the course of monitoring. In 2024, participants reported using powder on a median of three days in the six months preceding interview (IQR=1-5; n=10), stable relative to 2023 (1 day; IQR=1-7; n=8; p=0.770) (Figure 17). Few participants (n≤5) reported weekly or more frequent use of methamphetamine powder in 2024 (0% in 2023).

Routes of Administration: Of those who had recently used methamphetamine powder and responded (n=10), most (90%) reported snorting as a route of administration (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.118). Few participants (n≤5) reported swallowing and no participants reported injecting or smoking methamphetamine powder in 2024. Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Quantity: Of those who reported recent use and responded (n=7), the median amount used in a 'typical' session was 0.30 grams (IQR=0.23-0.75; n≤5 in 2023; p=0.505). Of those who reported recent use and responded (n=7), the median maximum amount used in a session was 0.50 grams (IQR=0.28-1.80; n≤5 in 2023; p=0.393).

Methamphetamine Crystal

Recent Use (past 6 months): In 2024, methamphetamine crystal was the most commonly used form of methamphetamine, with 17% of the Sydney sample reporting recent use, stable from 14% in 2023 (p=0.689) (Figure 16).

Frequency of Use: Despite a spike in 2022, the median frequency of crystal methamphetamine use has remained largely infrequent since monitoring commenced, ranging between 2 and 12 days in the six months preceding interview. In 2024, the median frequency of use was 10 days (IQR=3-24; n=17), stable relative to 2023 (6 days; IQR=2-72; n=14; p=0.952) (Figure 17). Few participants (n≤5) reported weekly or more frequent use, also stable relative to 2023 (43% in 2023; p=0.477).

Routes of Administration: Of those who had recently used methamphetamine crystal and responded (n=17), the majority (82%) reported smoking it (86% in 2023), with few participants (n≤5) reporting other routes of administration in 2024.

Quantity: In 2024, of those who reported recent use and responded (n=16), the median 'typical' amount used per session was 0.25 grams (IQR=0.10-0.50; 0.25 grams in 2023; IQR=0.10-0.50; n=13; p=0.824). Of those who reported recent use and responded (n=16), the median maximum amount used per session was 0.40 grams (IQR=0.20-0.63; 1.00 gram in 2023; IQR=0.20-1.00; n=13; p=0.314).

Price, Perceived Purity and Perceived Availability

Methamphetamine Powder

Due to low numbers reporting (n≤5), further details are not reported on price (Figure 18), perceived purity (Figure 19) and perceived

availability (Figure 21) of methamphetamine powder. Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

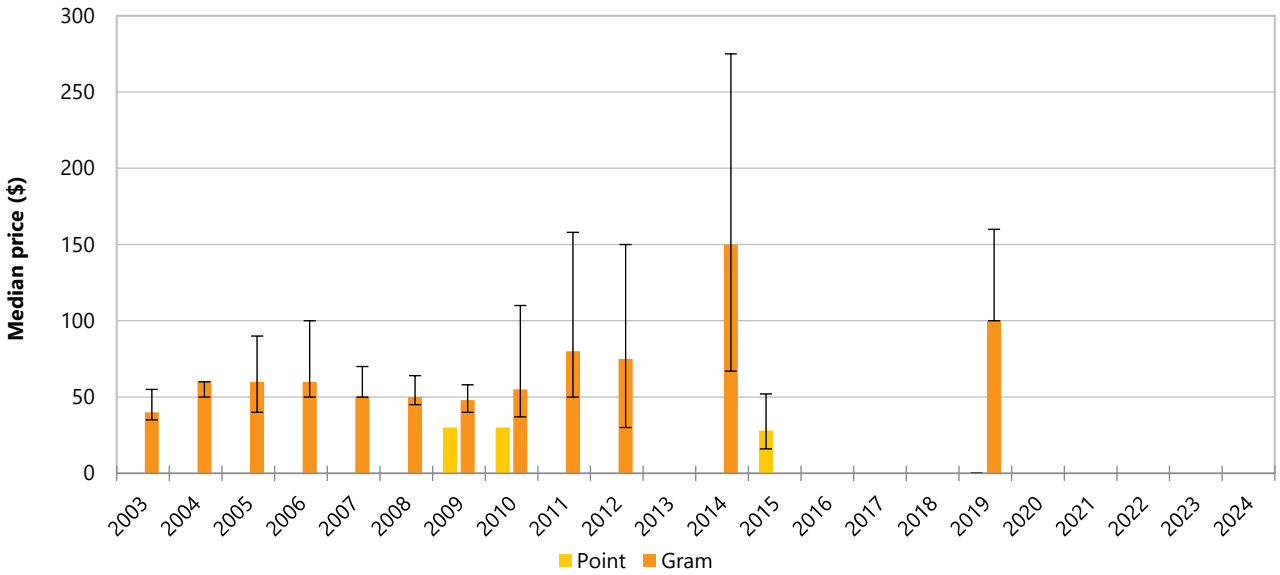
Methamphetamine Crystal

Price: Few participants (n≤5) commented on the median price of methamphetamine crystal in 2024. Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Perceived Purity: The perceived purity of methamphetamine crystal remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.782). Among those who responded in 2024 (n=14), the largest percentage perceived methamphetamine crystal to be of 'high' purity (57%; 50% in 2023).

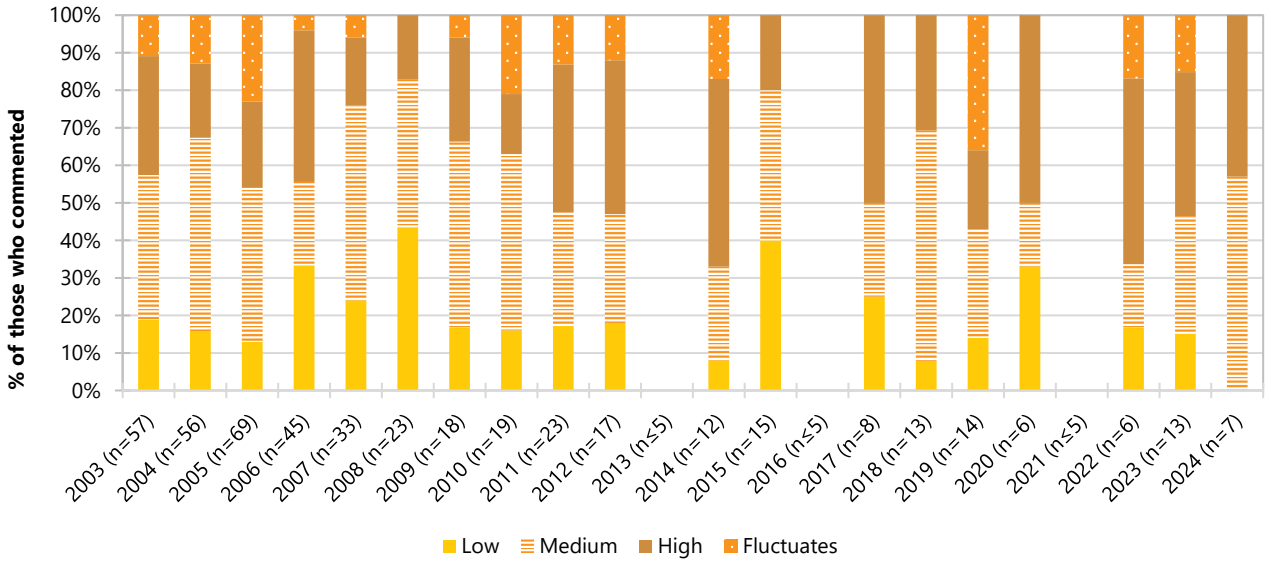
Perceived Availability: The perceived availability of methamphetamine crystal remained stable between 2023 and 2024. Among those who commented in 2024 (n=14), two thirds (64%) perceived availability as 'very easy' (56% in 2023).

Figure 18: Median price of methamphetamine powder per point and gram, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



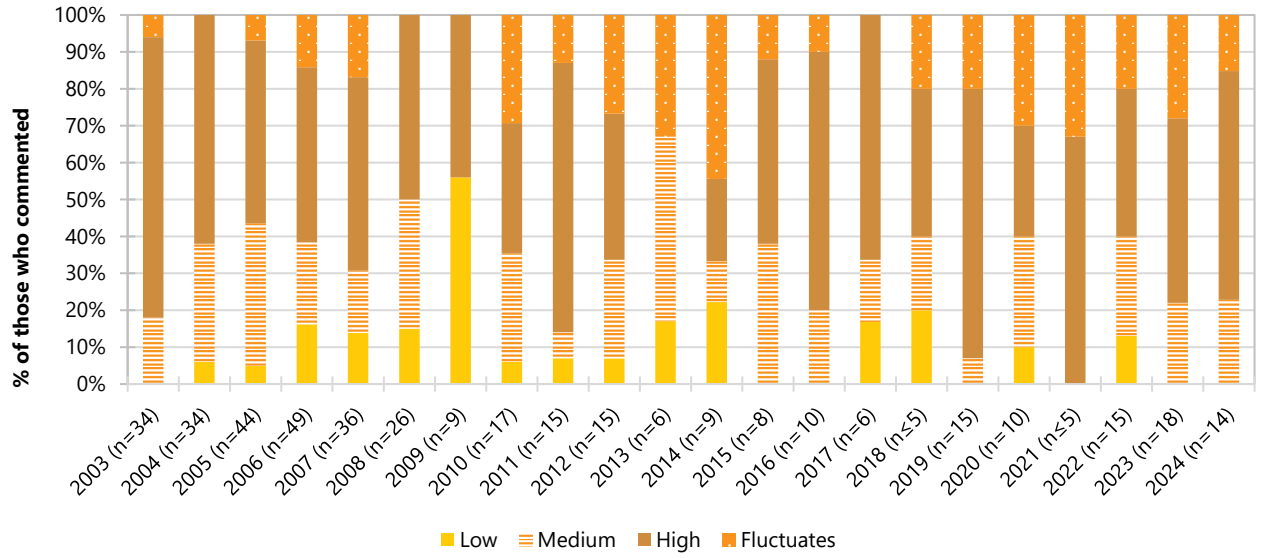
Note. Among those who commented. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. The error bars represent the IQR. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 19: Current perceived purity of methamphetamine powder, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



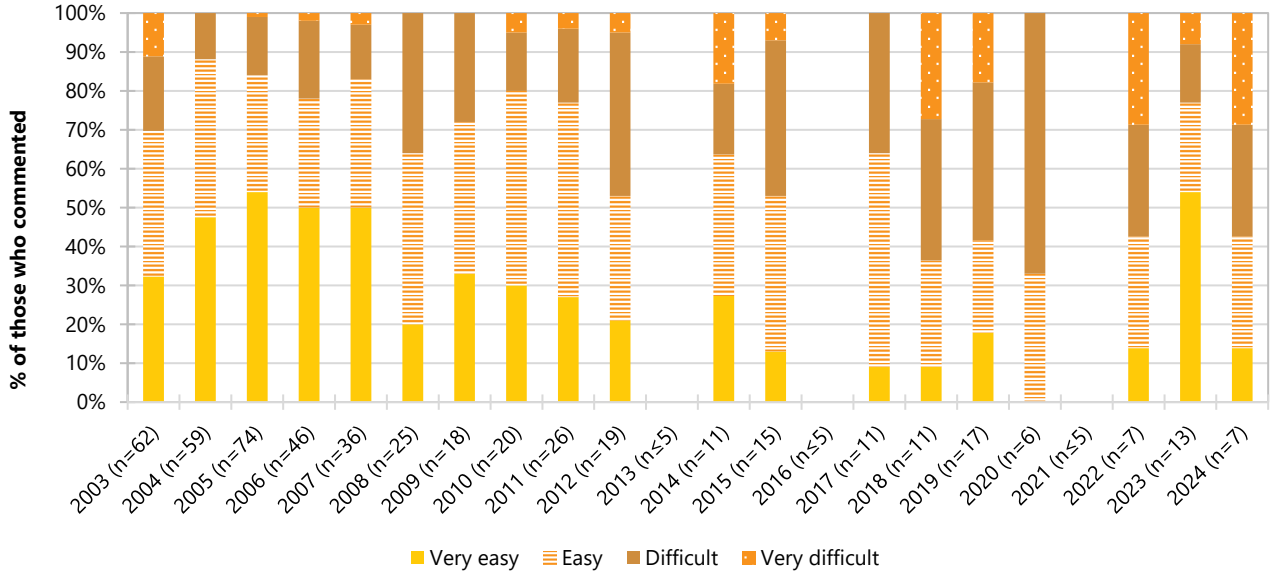
Note. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 20: Current perceived purity of methamphetamine crystal, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



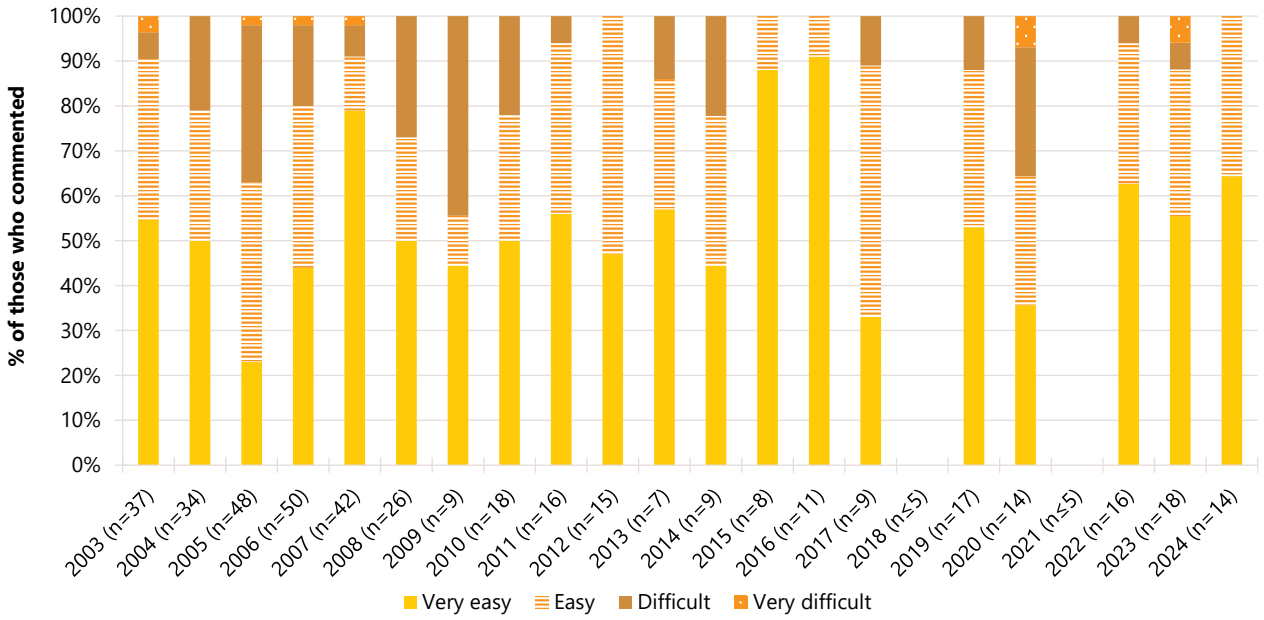
Note. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 21: Current perceived availability of methamphetamine powder, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 22: Current perceived availability of methamphetamine crystal, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

4

Non-Prescribed Pharmaceutical Stimulants

Participants were asked about their recent (past six month) use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants, such as dexamfetamine, lisdexamfetamine (Vyvanse®), or methylphenidate (Concerta®, Ritalin®, Ritalin LA®). These substances are commonly prescribed to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and narcolepsy.

Patterns of Consumption

Recent Use (past 6 months)

The per cent of participants reporting any recent non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulant use (e.g., dexamphetamine, methylphenidate, modafinil) gradually increased to 44% in 2016 and, despite a spike in use in 2021, has remained largely stable ever since. In 2024, 46% of the Sydney sample reported recent use (41% in 2023; p=0.567) (Figure 23).

Frequency of Use

Frequency of use remained stable in 2024 at a median of five days in the six months prior to interview (IQR=2-10; n=46; 5 days in 2023; IQR=2-20; n=41; p=0.666) (Figure 23).

Routes of Administration

Among participants who had recently consumed non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants and commented (n=46), the vast majority reported swallowing as a route of administration (91%; 93% in 2023), with fewer participants reporting snorting (39%; 24% in 2023; p=0.181).

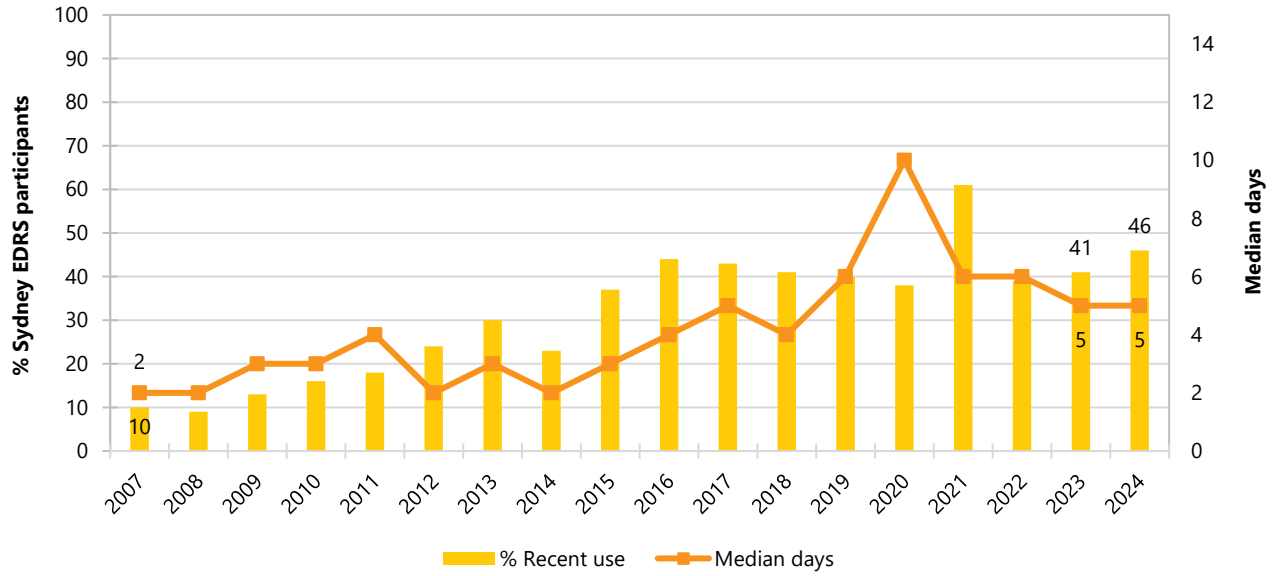
Quantity

Among those who reported recent use and responded (n=42), the median amount used in a 'typical' session was two pills/tablets (IQR=1-3; 2 pills in 2023; IQR=1-3; n=32; p=0.753). Of those who reported recent use and responded (n=41), the median maximum amount used in a session was two pills/tablets (IQR=1.5-4; 2 pills in 2023; IQR=1-3; n=32; p=0.448).

Forms Used

Among participants who had recently consumed non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants and commented (n=46), three quarters (78%) reported using dexamfetamine (75% in 2023; p=0.797), followed by Ritalin® (39%; 50% in 2023; p=0.384) and lisdexamfetamine (24%; 15% in 2023; p=0.416). Few participants (n≤5) reported using modafinil in 2024, a significant decrease from 28% in 2023 (p=0.030).

Figure 23: Past six month use and frequency of use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants, Sydney, NSW, 2007-2024



Note. Monitoring of pharmaceutical stimulants commenced in 2007. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Secondary Y axis reduced to 14 days to improve visibility of trends. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Price and Perceived Availability

Price and availability data for non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants have been collected from 2022 onwards.

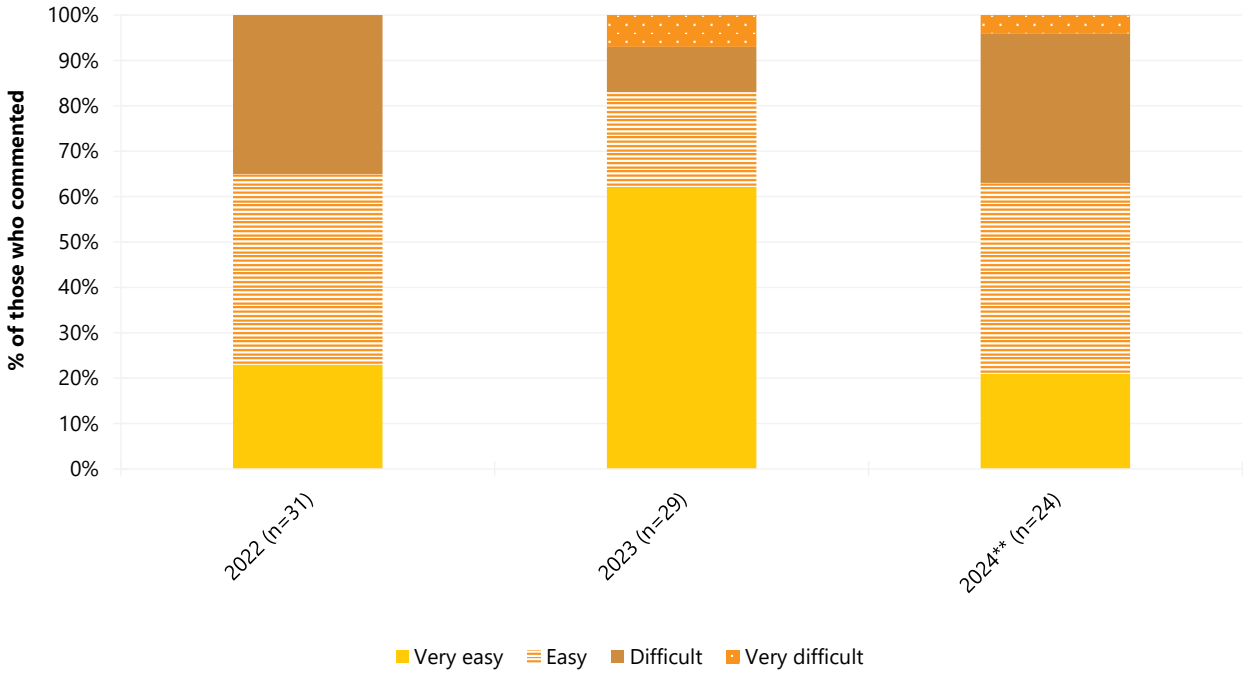
Price

Participants reported a median price of $5 per 5mg tablet (IQR=4-11; n=8), stable relative to 2023 ($10; IQR=5-10; n=9; p=0.524).

Perceived Availability

There was a significant change in the perceived availability of non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants in 2024 relative to 2023 (p=0.009). Specifically, among those able to comment in 2024 (n=24), few participants (n≤5) perceived non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants to be 'very easy' to obtain (62% in 2023), while more participants perceived it to be 'easy' to obtain (42%; 21% in 2023) (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Current perceived availability of non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants, Sydney, NSW 2022-2024



Note. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

5

Cocaine

Participants were asked about their recent (past six month) use of various forms of cocaine, including powder and 'crack/rock' cocaine. Cocaine hydrochloride, a salt derived from the coca plant, is the most common form of cocaine available in Australia. 'Crack' cocaine is a form of freebase cocaine (hydrochloride removed), which is particularly pure. 'Crack' is most prevalent in North America and infrequently encountered in Australia.

Patterns of Consumption

Recent Use (past 6 months)

A gradual increase in recent cocaine use has been observed since 2013, peaking at 94% in 2021, and then stabilising. Recent cocaine use remained stable at 87% in 2024 (86% in 2023) (Figure 25).

Frequency of Use

Participants who had recently used cocaine reported use on a median of four days (IQR=2-10; n=87) in the six months preceding interview (6 days in 2023; IQR=2-15; n=86; p=0.134) (Figure 25), with 14% reporting weekly or more frequent use (19% in 2023; p=0.416).

Routes of Administration

Of those who had recently used cocaine and commented (n=87), the majority (98%) reported snorting cocaine, consistent with previous years (99% in 2023), with fewer participants reporting swallowing (14%; n≤5 in 2023; p=0.124). Few participants (n≤5) reported other routes of administration in 2024.

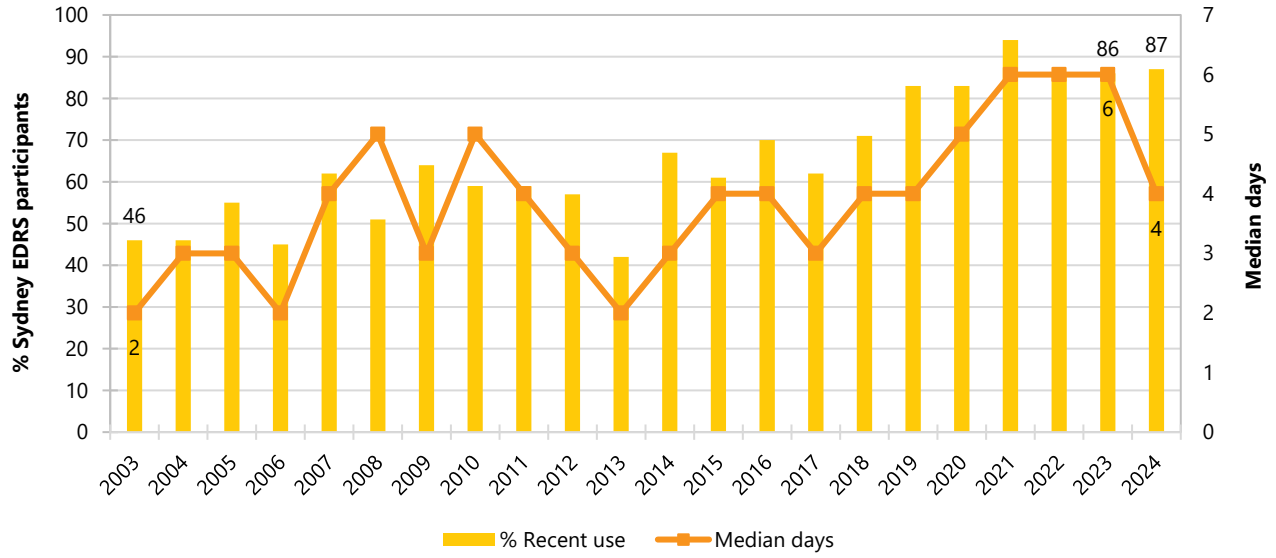
Quantity

In 2024, the median amount of cocaine consumed in a 'typical' session was 0.50 grams (IQR=0.20-0.70; n=74; 0.50 grams in 2023; IQR=0.50-1.00; n=49; p=0.009). In a maximum session, the median intake was 0.75 grams (IQR=0.30-1.20; n=73), a significant decrease from one gram in 2023 (IQR=0.50-2.00; n=51; p=0.029).

Forms Used

Among participants who had recently consumed cocaine and commented (n=87), the vast majority reported using powder cocaine (98%; 93% in 2023; p=0.168), followed by crack/rock cocaine (10%; 14% in 2023; p=0.486).

Figure 25: Past six month use and frequency of use of cocaine, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Secondary Y axis reduced to 7 days to improve visibility of trends for days of use. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Price, Perceived Purity and Perceived Availability

Price

The median price for one gram of cocaine has consistently been $300 since 2008 ($300 in 2024; IQR=275-300; n=41; $300 in 2023; IQR=250-300; n=35; p=0.182) (Figure 26).

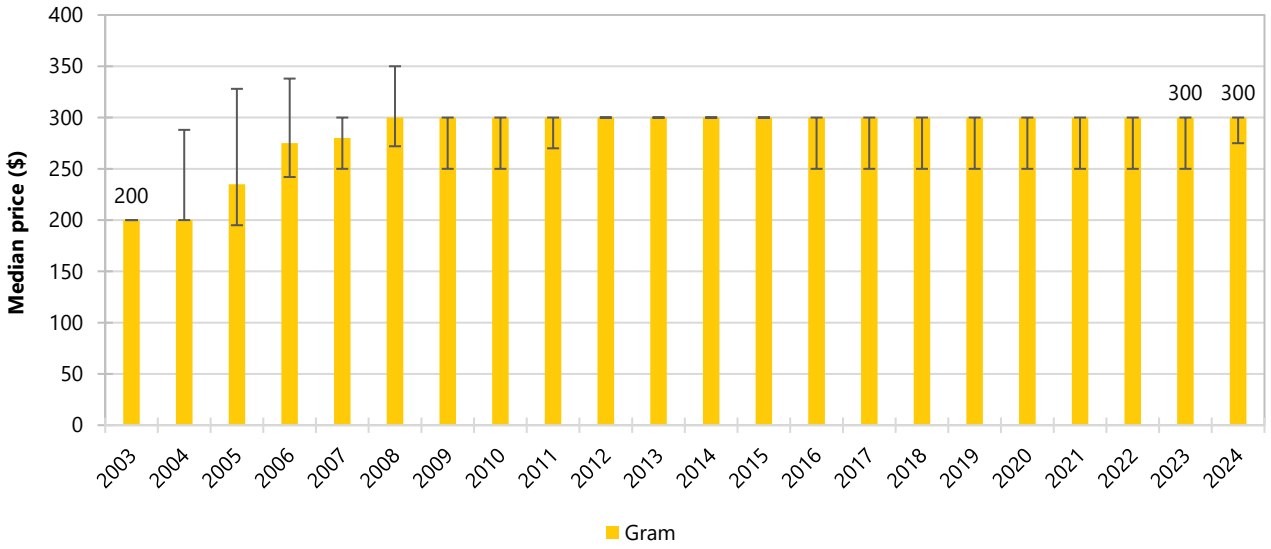
Perceived Purity

The perceived purity of cocaine remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.114). Among those who commented in 2024 (n=74), two fifths (38%) reported purity to be 'high' (25% in 2023). Conversely, one third (32%) reported purity to be 'low' (40% in 2023) and a further 24% reported 'medium' purity (21% in 2023) (Figure 27).

Perceived Availability

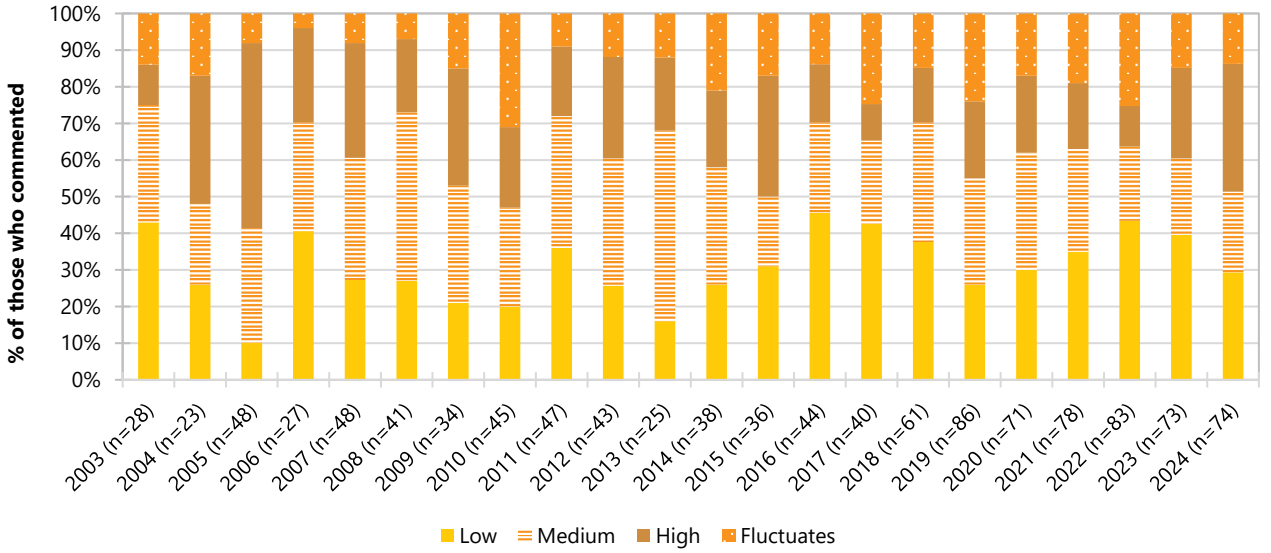
The perceived availability of cocaine remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.121). Among those who commented in 2024 (n=74), two fifths (39%) reported cocaine to be 'very easy' to obtain (51% in 2023), and 50% perceived that it was 'easy' to obtain (33% in 2023) (Figure 28). Eleven per cent perceived cocaine to be 'difficult' to obtain (15% in 2023) and no participants perceived it to be 'very difficult' to obtain (0% in 2023).

Figure 26: Median price of cocaine per gram, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



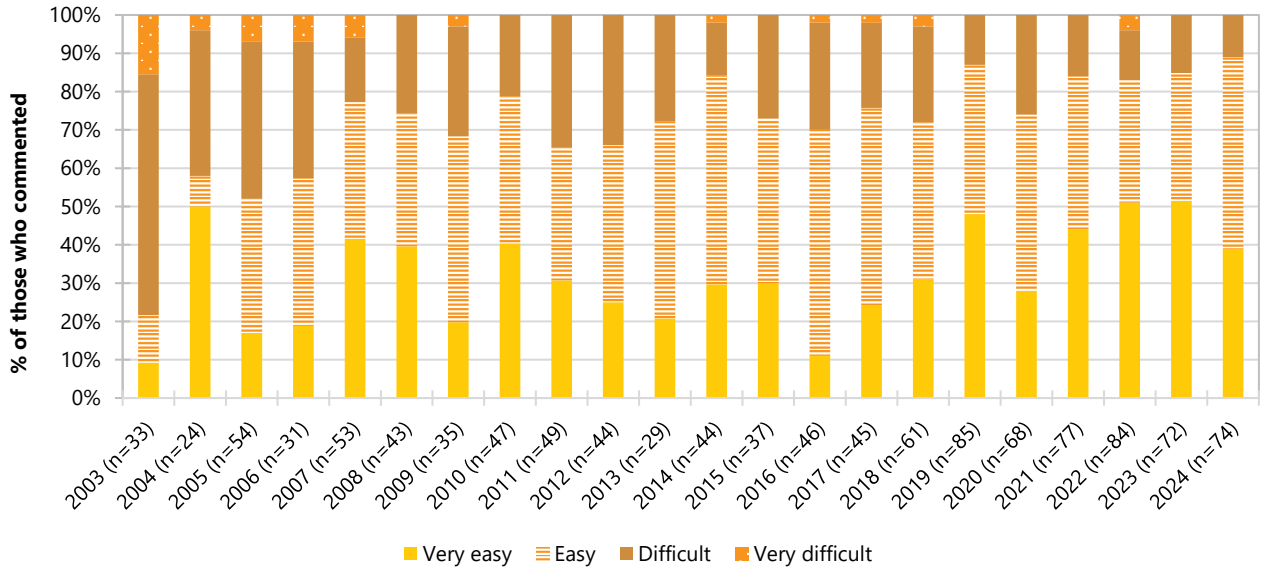
Note. Among those who commented. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. The error bars represent the IQR. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 27: Current perceived purity of cocaine, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 28: Current perceived availability of cocaine, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

6

Cannabis and/or Cannabinoid-Related Products

Participants were asked about their recent (past six month) use of various forms of cannabis, including indoor-cultivated cannabis via a hydroponic system ('hydroponic') and outdoor-cultivated cannabis ('bush'), as well as hashish, hash oil, commercially prepared edibles and CBD and THC extract.

Terminology throughout this chapter refers to:

- **Prescribed use:** use of cannabis and/or cannabinoid related products obtained by a prescription in the person's name;
- **Non-prescribed use:** use of cannabis and/or cannabinoid related products which the person did not have a prescription for (i.e., illegally sourced or obtained from a prescription in someone else's name); and
- **Any use:** use of cannabis and/or cannabinoid related products obtained through either of the above means.

Patterns of Consumption

Participants were asked about their use of both prescribed and non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products. Nine per cent of the Sydney sample reported prescribed use in the six months preceding interview (6% in 2023; p=0.591). In the remainder of this chapter, data from 2021-2024, and from 2003-2016, refers to non-prescribed cannabis use only, while data from 2017-2020 refers to 'any' cannabis use (including hydroponic and bush cannabis, hash and hash oil). While comparison between 2021-2024 and previous years should be treated with caution, the relatively recent legalisation of medicinal cannabis in Australia and the small percentage reporting prescribed use between 2022 and 2024 lends confidence that estimates are relatively comparable.

Recent Use (past 6 months)

Recent non-prescribed cannabis use has remained high and relatively stable since monitoring commenced in 2003. In 2024, three quarters (74%) of the Sydney sample reported recent use, stable relative to 2023 (66%; p=0.285) (Figure 29).

Frequency of Use

The median frequency of non-prescribed use of cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products was 24 days (IQR=4-144; n=74) in the six months preceding interview, equivalent to weekly use and stable, relative to 2023 (12 days; IQR=3-86; n=66; p=0.303) (Figure 29). Among those who had recently used non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products and were able to respond (n=74), 53% reported weekly or more frequent use (44% in 2023; p=0.311), with 23% reporting daily use (11% in 2023; p=0.074).

Routes of Administration

Of those who reported recent non-prescribed use and responded (n=74), the majority (88%) reported smoking non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products (92% in 2023; p=0.411). This was followed by swallowing (35%; 21% in 2023; p=0.096) and inhaling/vaporising (20%; 18% in 2023; p=0.826).

Quantity

On the last occasion of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related product use, the median amount used by participants remained stable at one gram (IQR=0.50-1.00; n=17; 1.00 gram in 2023; IQR=0.50-1.81; n=26; p=0.859) or one joint (IQR=1-1; n=19; 1 joint in 2023; IQR=0.50-1.00; n=20; p=0.355). The median amount of cones used by participants on the last occasion of use significantly increased from one cone (IQR=1-1; n=9) in 2023 to three cones (IQR=2-6; n=23; p=0.023) in 2024.

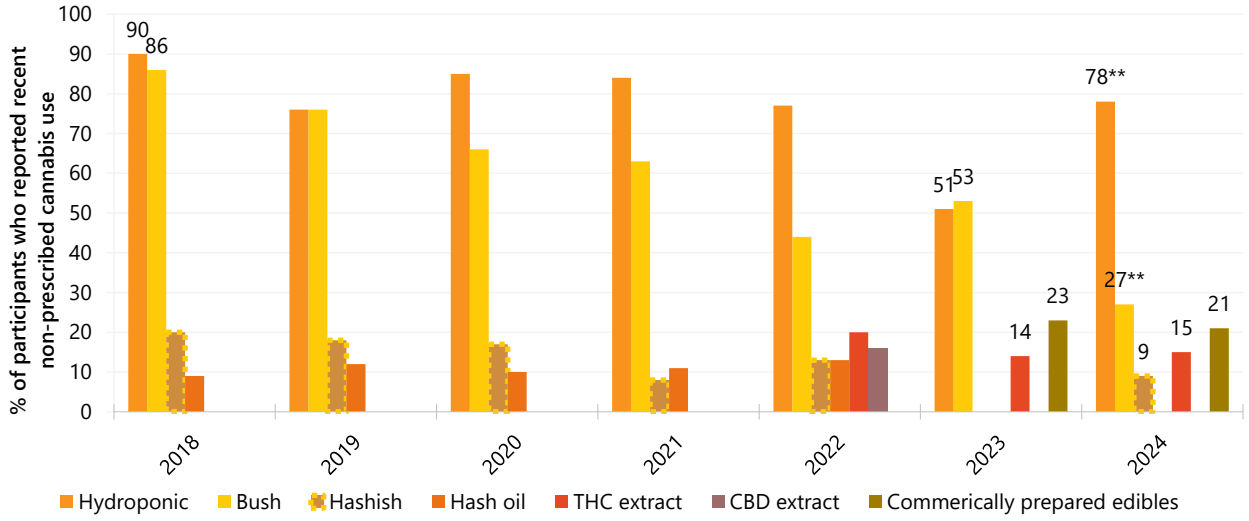
Forms Used

Among participants who had recently consumed non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products and responded (n=67), three quarters (78%) of participants reported consuming hydroponic cannabis, a significant increase from 51% in 2023 (p=0.004). Conversely, one quarter (27%) reported consuming bush cannabis, a significant decrease from 53% in 2023 (p=0.007). Twenty-one per cent reported consuming commercially prepared edibles in 2024 (23% in 2023; p=0.825), 15% reported consuming THC extract (14% in 2023) and 9% reported consuming hashish (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.752). Few participants (n≤5) reported consuming hash oil (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.468) or CBD extract in 2024 (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.725).

Figure 29: Past six month use and frequency of use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024

Note. Prior to 2021, we did not distinguish between prescribed and non-prescribed cannabis, and as such it is possible that 2017-2020 figures include some participants who were using prescribed cannabis only (with medicinal cannabis first legalised in Australia in November 2016), although we anticipate these numbers would be very low. Further, from 2022, we captured use of 'cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products', while in previous years questions referred only to 'cannabis'. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Secondary Y axis reduced to 90 days to improve visibility of trends. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 30: Past six month use of different forms of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products, among those who reported recent non-prescribed use, Sydney, NSW, 2018-2024



Note. Prior to 2021, we did not distinguish between prescribed and non-prescribed cannabis, and as such it is possible that 2018-2020 figures include some participants who were using prescribed forms of cannabis (with medicinal cannabis first legalised in Australia in November 2016), although we anticipate these numbers would be very low. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Price, Perceived Potency and Perceived Availability

Hydroponic Cannabis

Price: The median price for one gram of non-prescribed cannabis has remained stable at $20 since monitoring commenced in 2006 ($20 in 2024; IQR=20-23; n=7; $20 in 2023; IQR=20-21; n=8) (Figure 31). Few participants (n≤5) reported on the price for one ounce of non-prescribed hydroponic cannabis in 2024 (n≤5 in 2023). Please refer to Figure 31 for historical data and to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Perceived Potency: Perceived potency of non-prescribed hydroponic cannabis remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.706). Of those who commented in 2024 (n=44), half (52%) perceived potency to be 'high' (43% in 2023) and a further 32% perceived potency to be 'medium' (48% in 2023). Few participants (n≤5) perceived the potency of non-prescribed hydroponic cannabis to be of 'low' purity (0% in 2023) and 14% perceived it to be 'fluctuating' in 2024 (n≤5 in 2023) (Figure 32).

Perceived Availability: The perceived availability of non-prescribed hydroponic cannabis remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.792). Of those who commented in 2024 (n=44), almost three fifths (59%) reported non-prescribed hydroponic cannabis to be 'very easy' (64% in 2023) to obtain, and one third (34%) reported that it was 'easy' to obtain (27% in 2023). Few participants (n≤5) perceived it to be 'difficult' (n≤5 in 2023) or 'very difficult' (0% in 2023) to obtain in 2024 (Figure 33).

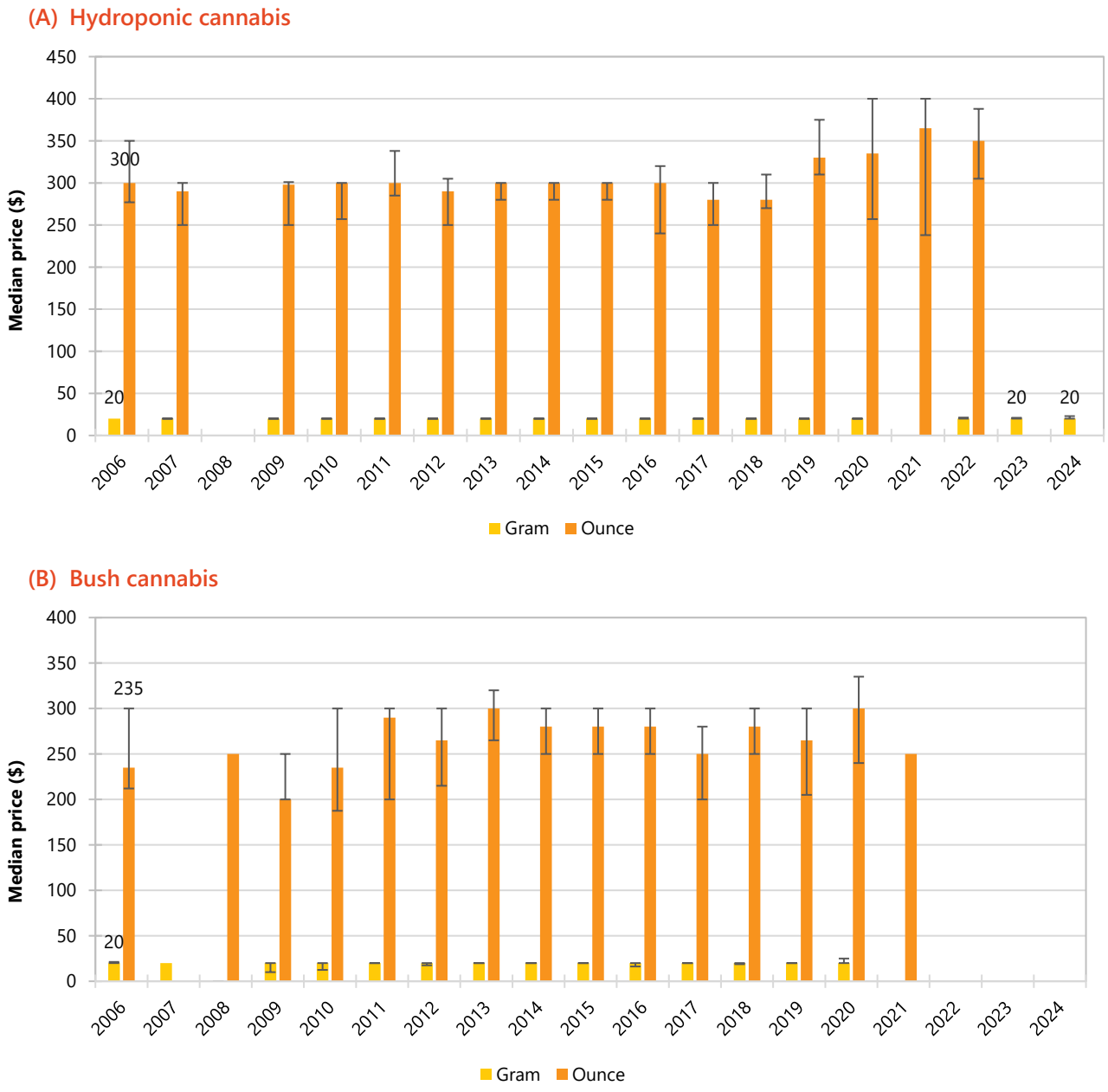
Bush Cannabis

Price: Few participants (n≤5) reported on the median price for one gram and one ounce of non-prescribed bush cannabis in 2024. Please refer to Figure 31 for historical data and to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Perceived Potency: The perceived potency of non-prescribed bush cannabis remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.473). Among those who commented in 2024 (n=18), three fifths (61%) of participants reported the potency of cannabis to be 'medium' (50% in 2023), followed by a further one third (33%) perceiving it to be of 'high' purity (25% in 2023) (Figure 32). No participants perceived bush cannabis to be of 'low' purity in 2024 (13% in 2023).

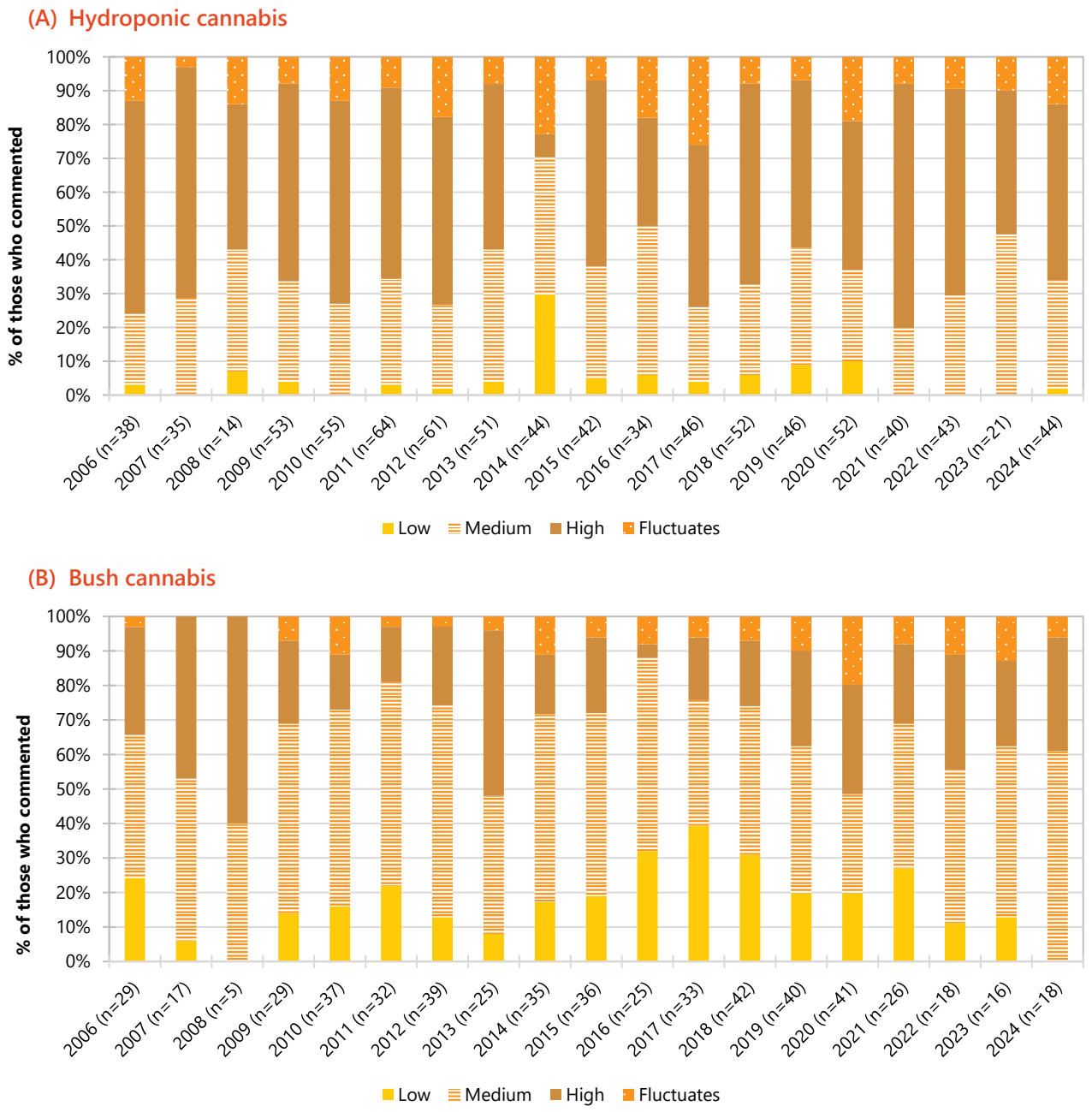
Perceived Availability: The perceived availability of non-prescribed bush cannabis remained stable between 2023 and 2024. Among those who could comment in 2024 (n=18), 56% perceived non-prescribed bush cannabis as being 'very easy' to obtain (56% in 2023), followed by two fifths (39%) who perceived that it was 'easy' to obtain (38% in 2023). Few participants (n≤5) perceived non-prescribed bush cannabis to be 'difficult' (n≤5 in 2023) or 'very difficult' (0% in 2023) to obtain in 2024 (Figure 33).

Figure 31: Median price of non-prescribed hydroponic (A) and bush (B) cannabis per ounce and gram, Sydney, NSW, 2006-2024



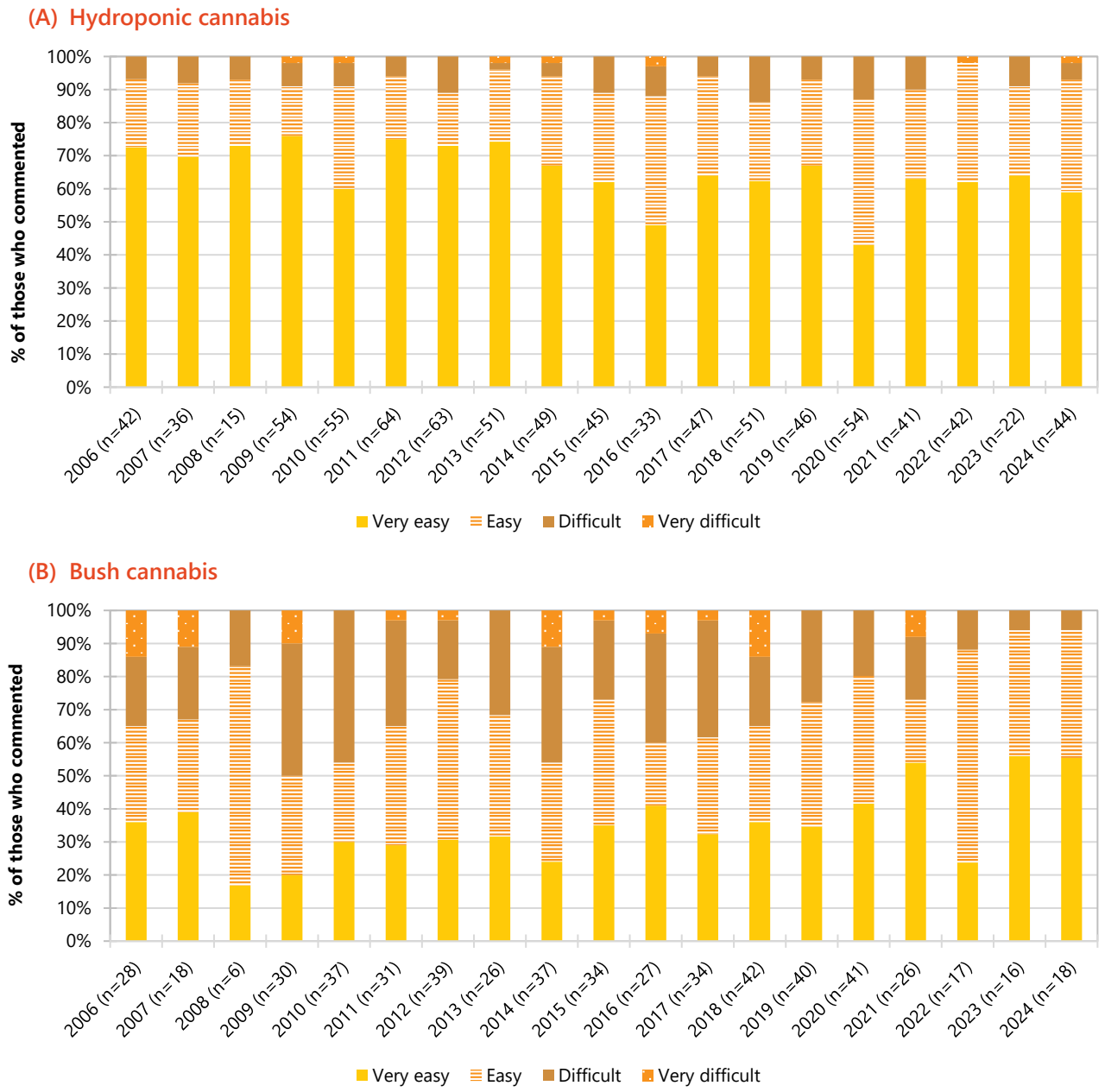
Note. From 2006 onwards hydroponic and bush cannabis data collected separately. Data from 2022 onwards refers to non-prescribed cannabis only; prior to 2022, we did not distinguish between prescribed and non-prescribed cannabis, and as such it is possible that 2017-2021 figures include some participants who reported on the price of prescribed cannabis (with medicinal cannabis first legalised in Australia in November 2016), although we anticipate these numbers would be very low. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. The error bars represent the IQR. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 32: Current perceived potency of non-prescribed hydroponic (A) and bush (B) cannabis, Sydney, NSW, 2006-2024



Note. From 2006 onwards hydroponic and bush cannabis data collected separately. Data from 2022 onwards refers to non-prescribed cannabis only: prior to 2022, we did not distinguish between prescribed and non-prescribed cannabis, and as such it is possible that 2017-2021 figures include some participants who reported on the price of prescribed cannabis (with medicinal cannabis first legalised in Australia in November 2016), although we anticipate these numbers would be very low. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 33: Current perceived availability of non-prescribed hydroponic (A) and bush (B) cannabis, Sydney, NSW, 2006-2024



Note. From 2006 onwards hydroponic and bush cannabis data collected separately. Data from 2022 onwards refers to non-prescribed cannabis only: prior to 2022, we did not distinguish between prescribed and non-prescribed cannabis, and as such it is possible that 2017-2021 figures include some participants who reported on the price of prescribed cannabis (with medicinal cannabis first legalised in Australia in November 2016), although we anticipate these numbers would be very low. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

7

Ketamine, LSD and DMT

Non-Prescribed Ketamine

Patterns of Consumption

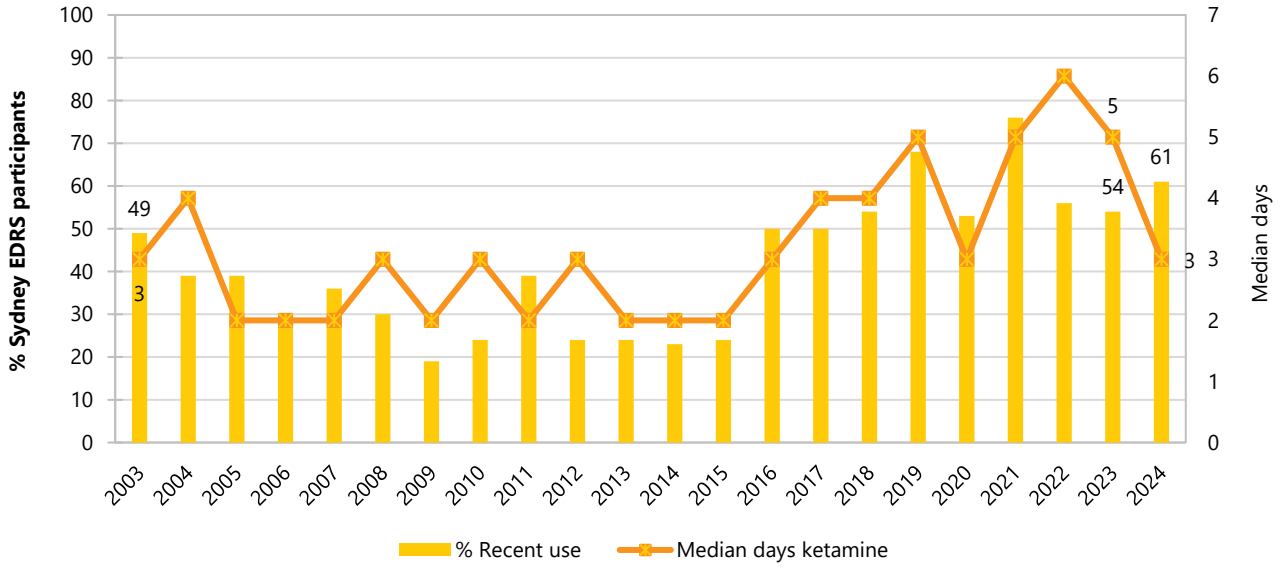
Recent Use (past 6 months): Recent use of non-prescribed ketamine has fluctuated considerably since monitoring commenced, ranging from between 19% of the sample in 2009 to 76% in 2021. In 2024, 61% of the Sydney sample reported recent use, stable relative to 2023 (54%; p=0.390) (Figure 34).

Frequency of Use: Median frequency of non-prescribed ketamine use has remained relatively infrequent and stable since monitoring commenced in 2003, ranging between 2 days and 6 days of use in the six months preceding interview. In 2024, participants who had recently used non-prescribed ketamine and commented (n=61) reported using ketamine on a median of three days (IQR=2-8; 5 days in 2023; IQR=2-7; n=54; p=0.590) in the six months preceding interview (Figure 34), with 11% reporting weekly or more frequent use (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.331).

Routes of Administration: Consistent with previous years, the most common route of administration among those who commented (n=61) was snorting (95%; 94% in 2023). Few participants (n≤5) reported other routes of administration.

Quantity: The median 'typical' and maximum quantity of non-prescribed ketamine recently used remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.184 and p=0.171, respectively). Among those who commented in 2024 (n=51), the median 'typical' amount used per session was reported to be 0.25 grams (IQR=0.16-0.50; 0.30 grams in 2023; IQR=0.23-0.50; n=23). Among those who commented (n=52), the median maximum amount used per session was reported to be 0.45 grams (IQR=0.20-1.00; 0.50 grams in 2023; IQR=0.30-1.00; n=25).

Figure 34: Past six month use and frequency of use of non-prescribed ketamine, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Secondary Y axis reduced to 7 days to improve visibility of trends. Data from 2023 onwards refers to non-prescribed ketamine only (noting that although ketamine has been used as an anaesthetic for many years, it only become available via prescription, for treatment resistant depression, in 2021). Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

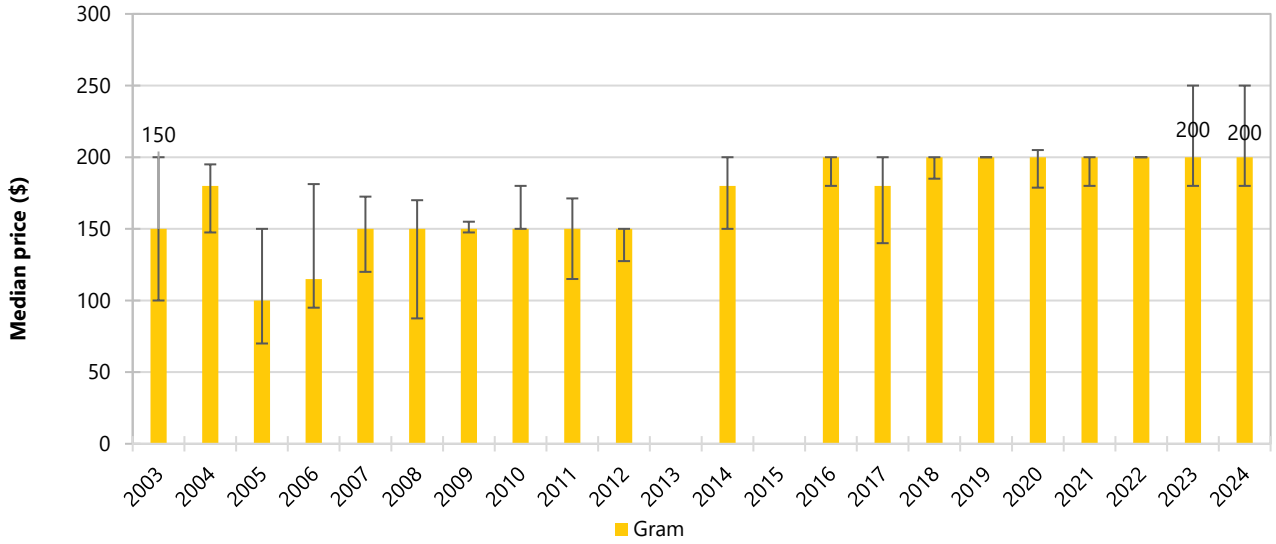
Price, Perceived Purity and Perceived Availability

Price: Since 2018, the median price per gram of non-prescribed ketamine has remained stable at $200. Consistent with previous years, the median price per gram of non-prescribed ketamine in 2024 was $200 (IQR=180-250; n=26; $200 in 2023; IQR=180-250; n=21; p=0.852) (Figure 35).

Perceived Purity: The perceived purity of non-prescribed ketamine remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.794). Among those who commented in 2024 (n=50), 64% perceived the purity of non-prescribed ketamine to be 'high' (64% in 2023) and a further 20% perceived purity to be 'medium' (16% in 2023). Few participants (n≤5) perceived non-prescribed ketamine to be of 'low' purity in 2024 (12% in 2023) (Figure 36).

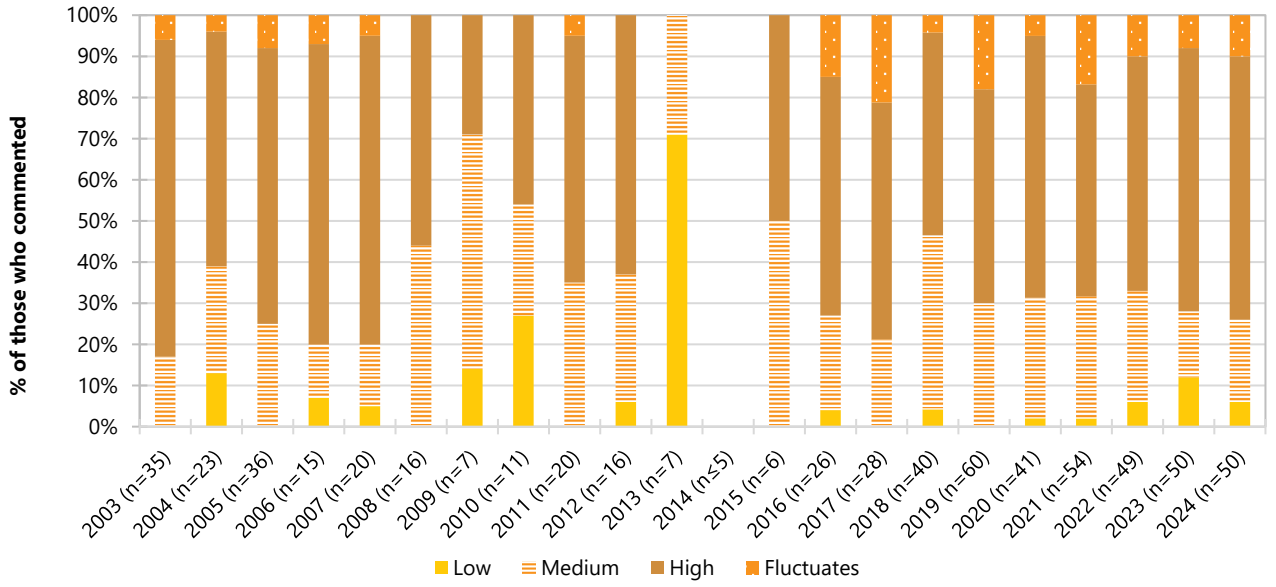
Perceived Availability: The perceived availability of non-prescribed ketamine also remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.549). Among those who responded in 2024 (n=50), the largest percentage of participants perceived non-prescribed ketamine to be 'easy' to obtain (50%; 44% in 2023) and a further 20% perceived it to be 'very easy' (30% in 2023) to obtain. Conversely, one quarter (24%) of participants who commented perceived availability to be 'difficult' (24% in 2023) and few participants (n≤5) perceived it to be 'very difficult' (n≤5 in 2023) (Figure 37).

Figure 35: Median price of non-prescribed ketamine per gram, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



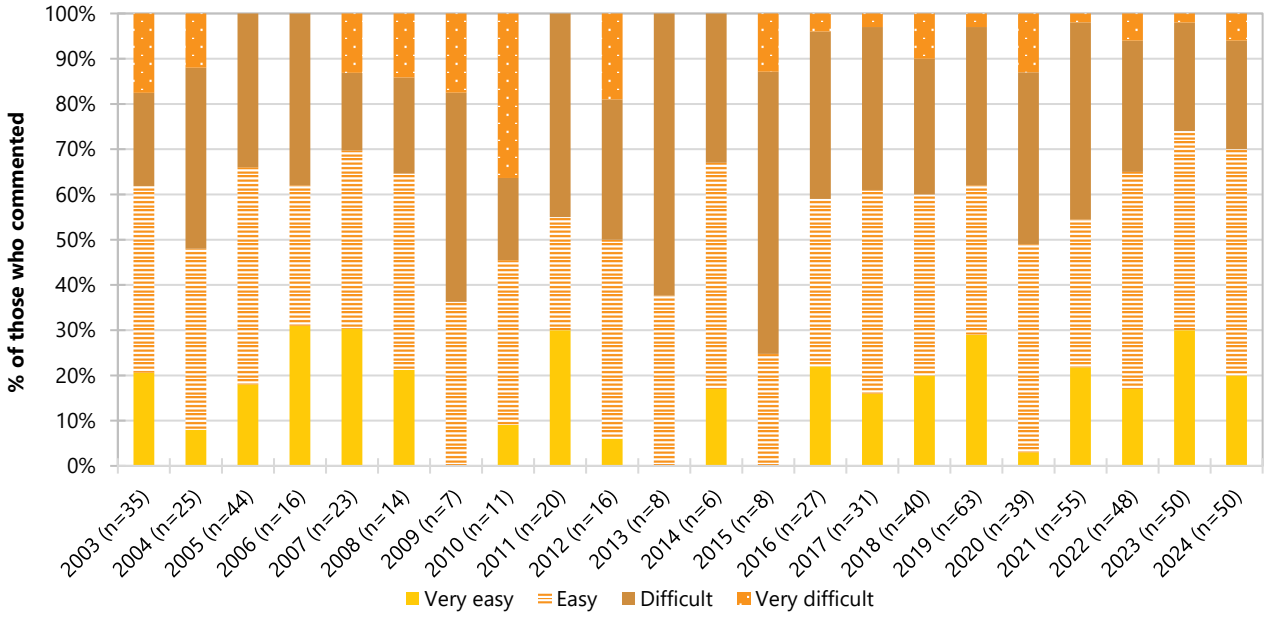
Note. Among those who commented. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. Data from 2023 onwards refers to non-prescribed ketamine only (noting that although ketamine has been used as an anaesthetic for many years, it only become available via prescription, for treatment resistant depression, in 2021). For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. The error bars represent the IQR. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 36: Current perceived purity of non-prescribed ketamine, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Data from 2023 onwards refers to non-prescribed ketamine only (noting that although ketamine has been used as an anaesthetic for many years, it only become available via prescription, for treatment resistant depression, in 2021). Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 37: Current perceived availability of non-prescribed ketamine, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Data from 2023 onwards refers to non-prescribed ketamine only (noting that although ketamine has been used as an anaesthetic for many years, it only become available via prescription, for treatment resistant depression, in 2021). Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

LSD

Patterns of Consumption

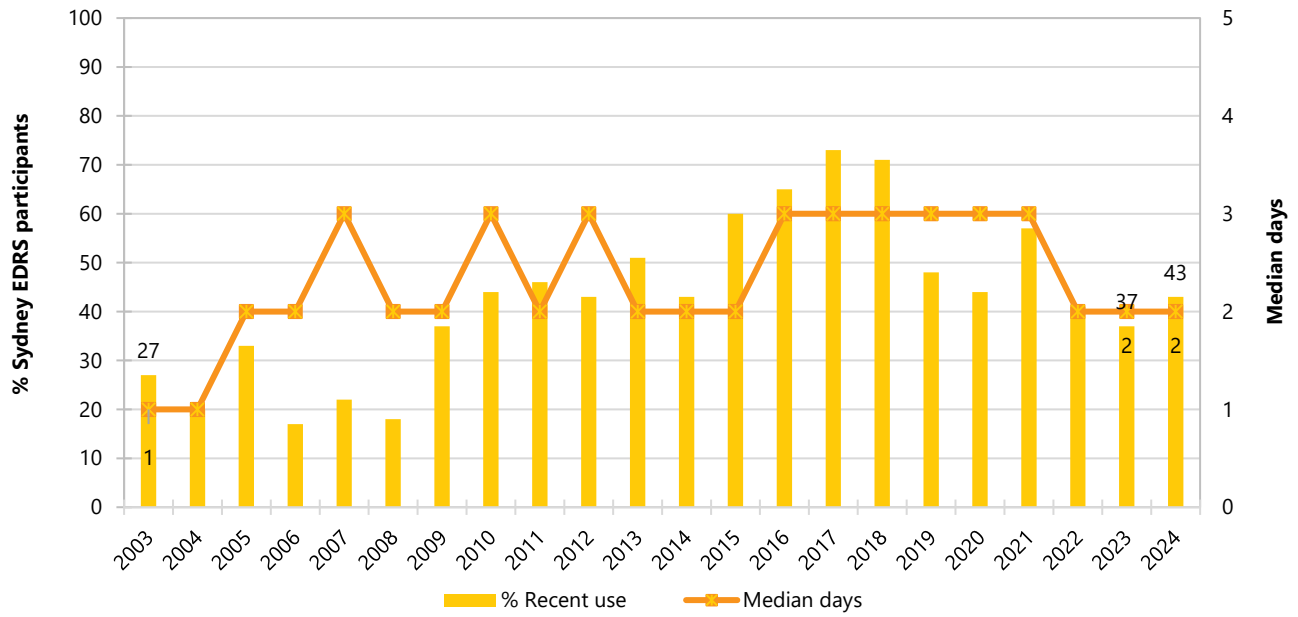
Recent Use (past 6 months): Since peaking in 2017 with 73% of the Sydney sample reporting recent LSD use, a gradual decline has been observed. In 2024, 43% of the sample reported recent use, stable relative to 2023 (37% in 2023; p=0.463) (Figure 38).

Frequency of Use: The median frequency of use of LSD has remained relatively stable and infrequent since monitoring commenced in 2003, ranging between one day and three days of use in the six months preceding interview. Among those who had recently used LSD in 2024 (n=43), the median frequency of use was two days (IQR=1-5; 2 days in 2023; IQR=1-5; n=37; p=0.960) (Figure 38).

Routes of Administration: All participants (100%) who reported recent use of LSD (n=43) reported swallowing the substance in 2024, consistent with previous years (100% in 2023).

Quantity: In 2024, the median amount used in a 'typical' session was one tab (IQR=1-2; n=35; 1 tab in 2023; IQR=1-1.50; n=27; p=0.923). Similarly, participants reported using a median of one tab (IQR=1-2; n=35; 1 tab in 2023; IQR=1-2; n=26; p=0.958) in a maximum session in 2024.

Figure 38: Past six month use and frequency of use of LSD, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Secondary Y axis reduced to 5 days to improve visibility of trends. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

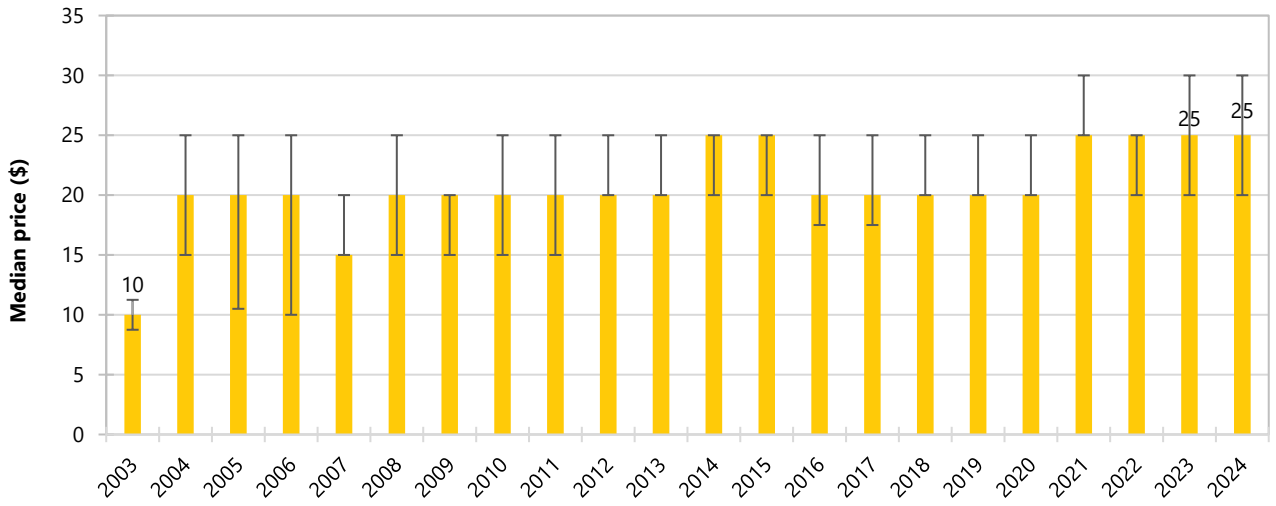
Price, Perceived Purity and Perceived Availability

Price: From 2016 to 2020, the median price for one tab of LSD remained stable at $20. The median price increased to $25 in 2021 and remained stable at $25 per tab in 2024 (IQR=20-30; n=18; $25 in 2023; IQR=20-30; n=15; p=0.810) (Figure 39).

Perceived Purity: The perceived purity of LSD remained stable between 2023 and 2024. Among those who commented in 2024 (n=35), three fifths (60%) considered purity to be 'high' (58% in 2023), followed by 29% perceiving it to be of 'medium' purity (28% in 2023). Few participants (n≤5) perceived LSD to be of 'low' or 'fluctuating' purity in 2024 (Figure 40).

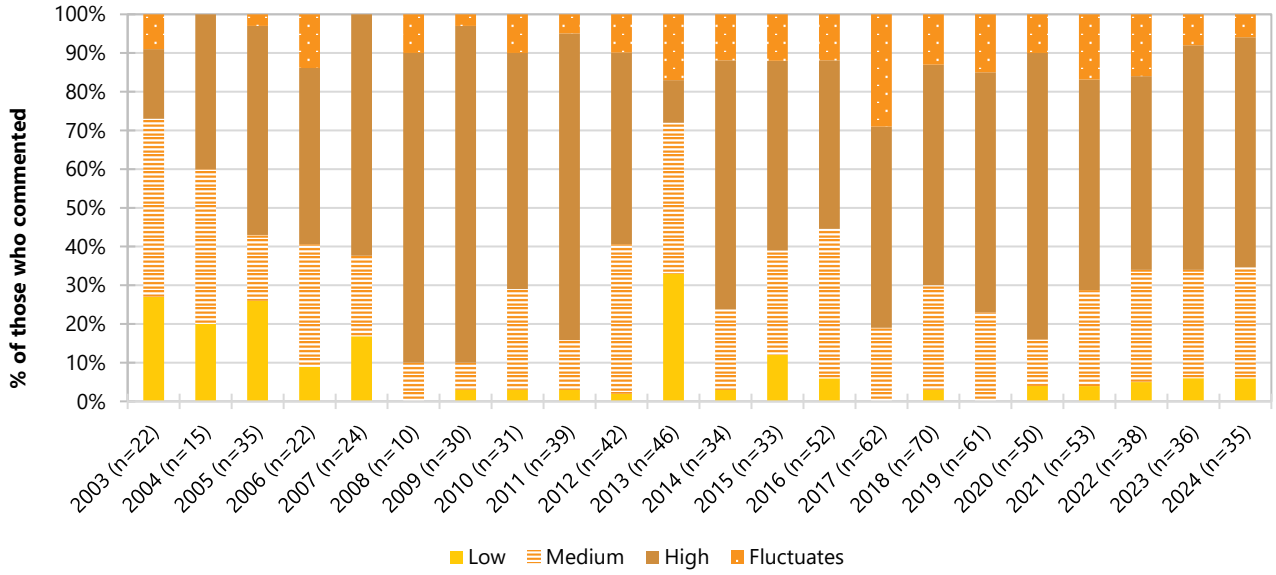
Perceived Availability: The perceived availability of LSD remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.274). Among those who commented in 2024 (n=36), one fifth (42%) perceived availability to be 'easy' (32% in 2023), followed by a further 39% perceiving it to be 'very easy' (30% in 2023). Almost one fifth (19%) perceived LSD to be 'difficult' (32% in 2023) to obtain in 2024 and no participants perceived it to be 'very difficult' (n≤5 in 2023) to obtain (Figure 41).

Figure 39: Median price of LSD per tab, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



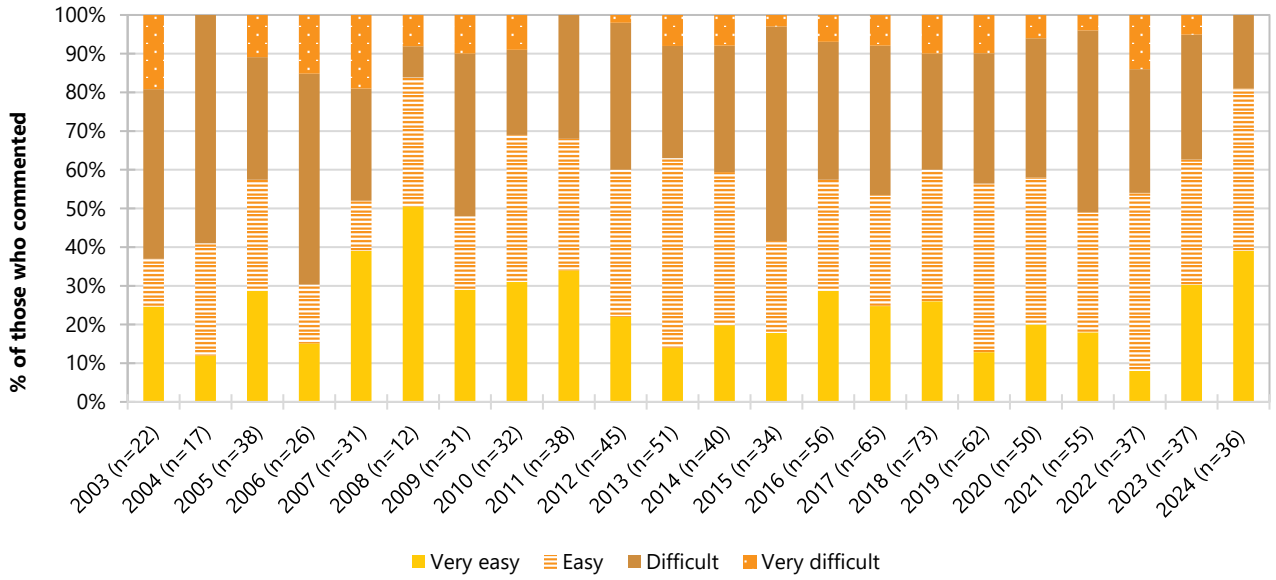
Note. Among those who commented. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. The error bars represent the IQR. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 40: Current perceived purity of LSD, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 41: Current perceived availability of LSD, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded to the item. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

DMT

Patterns of Consumption

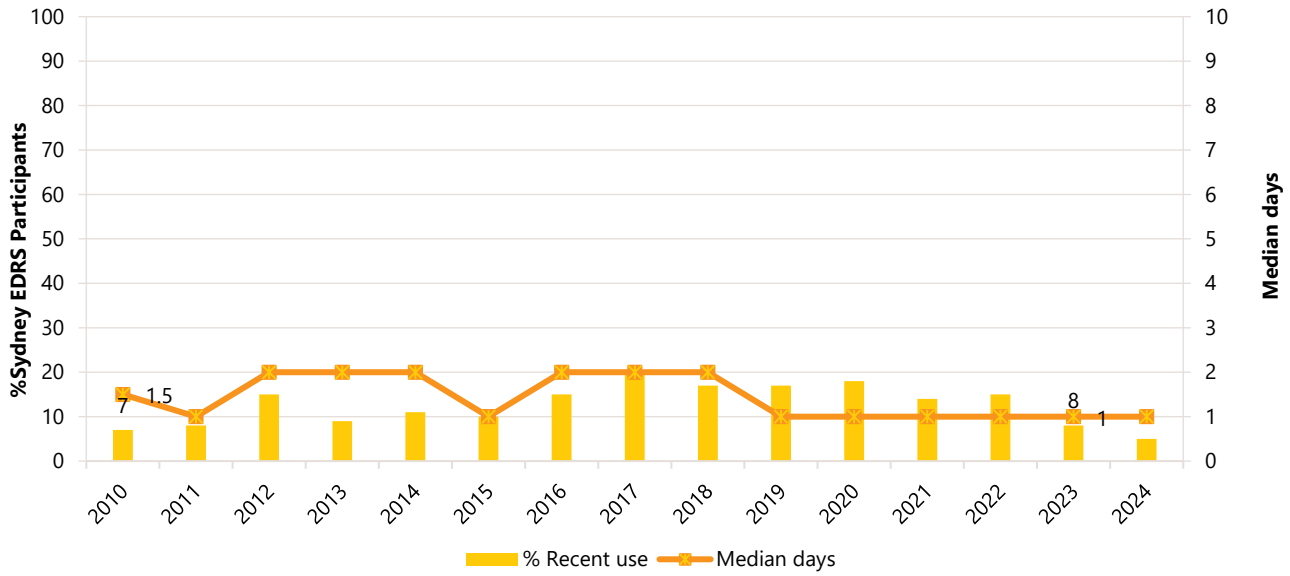
Recent Use (past 6 months): DMT use has remained low and stable since monitoring commenced, with one fifth or less of the sample reporting recent use in each year. In 2024, few participants (n≤5) reported recent use, stable from 8% in 2023 (p=0.568) (Figure 42). Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Frequency of Use: Median days of use across the years has been infrequent and stable since monitoring commenced in 2010, ranging between one and two days of use. In 2024, few participants (n≤5) reported on the median frequency of DMT use (1 day in 2023; IQR=1-1; n=8; p=0.421) (Figure 42). Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Routes of Administration: Few participants (n≤5) reported on routes of administration, therefore, these data have been suppressed. Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Quantity: Few participants (n≤5) reported on the 'typical' and maximum quantity of DMT used in a 'typical' session in 2024, therefore, these data have been suppressed.

Figure 42: Past six month use and frequency of use of DMT, Sydney, NSW, 2010-2024



Note. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Secondary Y axis reduced to 10 days to improve visibility of trends. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however labels are suppressed where there are small numbers (i.e., n≤5 but not 0). For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

8

New Psychoactive Substances

New psychoactive substances (NPS) are often defined as substances which do not fall under international drug control, but which may pose a public health threat. However, there is no universally accepted definition, and in practicality the term has come to include drugs which have previously not been well-established in recreational drug markets.

In previous (2010-2020) EDRS reports, DMT and paramethoxyamphetamine (PMA) were categorised as NPS. However, the classification of these substances as NPS is not universally accepted, and from 2021 onwards, the decision was made to exclude them from this category. This means that the figures presented below for recent use of tryptamine, phenethylamine and any NPS will not align with those in our 2010-2020 reports.

Further, some organisations (e.g., the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) include plant-based substances in their definition of NPS, whilst other organisations exclude them. To allow comparability with both methods, we present figures for 'any' NPS use, both including and excluding plant-based NPS.

Recent Use (past 6 months)

The per cent reporting recent NPS use (including plant-based) peaked at 49% of the total Sydney sample in 2011 and 2015. Between 2015 and 2020, use declined gradually, before stabilising from 2021 onwards. In 2024, 16% of the sample reported recent use of any NPS, including plant-based NPS (14% in 2023; p=0.840) (Table 3). Any NPS use, excluding plant-based NPS, has shown a similar trend, peaking at 47% in 2011 and declining to 8% in 2021. In 2024, 15% of the sample reported recent use of any NPS, excluding plant-based NPS (12% in 2023; p=0.668) (Table 3).

Forms Used

Participants are asked about a range of NPS each year, updated to reflect key emerging substances of interest. NPS use among the Sydney sample has fluctuated over time, however from 2021 onwards, any 2C substance has been the most commonly used NPS (8%; 6% in 2023; p=0.779), with few participants (n≤5) reporting use of any other NPS (Table 4). Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Table 3: Past six month use of NPS (including and excluding plant-based NPS), Sydney, NSW, 2010-2024

%	Including plant-based NPS	Excluding plant-based NPS
2010	23	22
2011	49	47
2012	43	37
2013	38	36
2014	38	35
2015	49	44
2016	28	25
2017	31	25
2018	29	26
2019	27	24
2020	17	12
2021	10	8
2022	12	9
2023	14	12
2024	**16**	**15**

Note. Monitoring of NPS first commenced in 2010. In 2021, the decision was made to remove DMT and PMA from the NPS category, with these substances now presented in Chapter 7 and Chapter 9, respectively. This has had a substantial impact on the percentage of the sample reporting 'any' NPS use in the past six months and means that the figures presented above will not align with those presented in previous (2010-2020) EDRS reports. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in table; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Table 4: Use of NPS in the past six months by drug type, Sydney, NSW, 2010-2024

	2010 N=100 %	2011 N=100 %	2012 N=100 %	2013 N=100 %	2014 N=100 %	2015 N=100 %	2016 N=103 %	2017 N=100 %	2018 N=100 %	2019 N=100 %	2020 N=102 %	2021 N=99 %	2022 N=100 %	2023 N=100 %	2024 N=100 %
% Phenethylamines	6	21	19	29	29	22	21	18	13	8	9	9	9	7	**9**
Any 2C substance~	-	17	19	19	22	18	18	12	11	7	-	9	9	6	**8**
NBOMe	/	/	/	/	9	6	6	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	**0**
DO-x	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	-	0	0	0	**0**
4-FA	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**-**
NBOH	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	**0**
Tuci	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	**-**
% Tryptamines^^	7	8	11	9	12	11	17	20	19	17	18	-	-	-	**-**
5-MeO-DMT	0	-	0	-	-	-	5	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	**-**
% Synthetic cathinones	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Mephedrone	-	-	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	**-**
Methcathinone	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	**0**
Methylone/bk MDMA	/	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	0	0	**0**
MDPV/Ivory wave	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Alpha PVP	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	**0**
N-ethyl hexedrone	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	0	-	0	**0**
N-ethylpentylone	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
N-ethylbutylone	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	0	**0**
3-chloromethcathinone	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	**0**
4-chloromethcathinone	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	**0**
3 -Methylmethcathinone	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	**0**
Alpha PHP	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	0	**0**
Dimethylpentylone	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	**0**
N, N-Dimethyl Pentylone	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	**0**
Pentylone	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	**0**
% Piperazines	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	/	/	/	/	/	/	**0**
% Dissociatives	/	/	-	0	0	-	6	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	**-**
Methoxetamine (MXE)	/	/	-	0	0	-	6	-	-	8	-	-	0	0	**0**
2F-2-oxo PCE	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	**-**

	2010 N=100 %	2011 N=100 %	2012 N=100 %	2013 N=100 %	2014 N=100 %	2015 N=100 %	2016 N=103 %	2017 N=100 %	2018 N=100 %	2019 N=100 %	2020 N=102 %	2021 N=99 %	2022 N=100 %	2023 N=100 %	2024 N=100 %
2-Fluorodeschloroketamine (2-FDCK)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	**-**
3 CI-PCP/4CI-PCP	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	**0**
3F-2-oxo PCE	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	**0**
3-HO-PCP/4-HO-PCP	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	0	**0**
3-MeO-PCP/4- MeO-PCP	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	0	**0**
Tiletamine	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	**0**
Other drugs that mimic the effects of dissociatives like ketamine	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	0	-	**-**
% Plant-based NPS	/	-	-	-	0	-	5	-	0	0	10	-	-	-	**-**
Ayahuasca	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	-	0	0	-	-	-	0	**-**
Mescaline	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	**-**
Salvia divinorum	/	-	-	-	0	-	5	-	0	0	-	0	-	-	**-**
Kratom/mitragynine	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	-	-	**-**
% Benzodiazepines	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Etizolam	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	0	-	-	-	0	0	**0**
8 -Aminoclonazolam	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	**0**
Bromazolam	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	**0**
Clonazolam	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	0	**-**
Flualprazolam	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	-	**0**
Flubromazepam	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	**0**
Other drugs that mimic the effect of benzodiazepine	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	-	0	0	0	**-**
Phenazolam	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	**0**
Xylazine	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	**0**
% Synthetic cannabinoids (e.g., ADB-BUTINACA, 4F-MDMB-BUTICA, FUB-AM)	/	/	12	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	0	-	**0**
% Herbal high[#]	/	/	13	13	-	8	5	-	-	0	/	/	/	/	**/**
Phenibut	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	-	0	-	**-**
Glaucine	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	**0**

	2010 N=100 %	2011 N=100 %	2012 N=100 %	2013 N=100 %	2014 N=100 %	2015 N=100 %	2016 N=103 %	2017 N=100 %	2018 N=100 %	2019 N=100 %	2020 N=102 %	2021 N=99 %	2022 N=100 %	2023 N=100 %	2024 N=100 %
% Other drugs that mimic the effect of opioids (e.g., acetylfentanyl, nitazenes)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**-**
% Other drugs that mimic the effect of ecstasy	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	**-**
% Other drugs that mimic the effect of amphetamine or cocaine	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	0	-	-	0	0	**-**
% Other drugs that mimic the effects of psychedelic drugs like LSD	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	-	6	-	0	0	-	**0**
% Other new and emerging psychoactive substances	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	0	-	-	-	0	**0**

Note. NPS first asked about in 2010. ^In previous EDRS reports, PMA was included as a NPS under 'phenethylamines' and mescaline was included under both 'phenethylamines' and 'plant-based NPS'. In 2021, the decision was made to remove PMA from the NPS category altogether, while mescaline was removed from 'phenethylamines' and is now only coded under 'plant-based NPS'. This means that the percentages reported for any phenethylamine NPS use in the 2021-2024 EDRS reports will not align with those presented in earlier (2010-2020) reports. ^^In previous (2010-2020) EDRS reports, DMT was included as a NPS under 'tryptamines', however, was removed from the NPS category in 2021 (refer to Chapter 7 for further information on DMT use among the sample). This means that the percentages reported for any tryptamine NPS use in the 2021-2024 EDRS reports will not align with those presented in earlier (2010-2020) reports. # The terms 'herbal highs' and 'legal highs' appear to be used interchangeably to mean drugs that have similar effects to illicit drugs like cocaine or cannabis but are not covered by current drug law scheduling or legislation. ~ In 2010 and between 2017-2019 three forms of 2C were asked about whereas between 2011-2016 four forms were asked about. From 2020 onwards, 'any' 2C use is captured. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in table; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

9

Other Drugs

Non-Prescribed Pharmaceutical Drugs

Codeine

Before the 1 February 2018, people could access low-dose codeine products (<30mg, e.g., Nurofen Plus) over-the-counter (OTC), while high-dose codeine (≥30mg, e.g., Panadeine Forte) required a prescription from a doctor. On the 1 February 2018, legislation changed so that all codeine products, low- and high-dose, require a prescription from a doctor to access.

Up until 2017, participants were only asked about use of OTC codeine for non-pain purposes. Additional items on use of prescription low-dose and prescription high-dose codeine were included in the 2018-2020 EDRS. However, from 2021, participants were only asked about prescribed and non-prescribed codeine use, regardless of whether it was low- or high-dose.

Recent Use (past 6 months): Since peaking in 2019 with 19% of the Sydney sample reporting recent non-prescribed codeine use, a gradual decline has been observed. In 2024, 8% of the Sydney sample reported recent non-prescribed codeine use, stable relative to 2023 (9% in 2023) (Figure 43).

Frequency of Use: Participants who had recently used any non-prescribed codeine (n=8) reported a median of four days (IQR=3-11) of use in the six months preceding interview in 2024, stable relative to 2023 (4 days; IQR=3-6; n=9; p=0.923).

Pharmaceutical Opioids

Recent Use (past 6 months): Since the commencement of monitoring in 2013, less than one fifth of the sample reported recent use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical opioids. In 2024, 7% of the Sydney sample reported recent use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical opioids (e.g., methadone, buprenorphine, morphine, oxycodone, fentanyl, excluding codeine), stable relative to 2023 (9%; p=0.792) (Figure 43).

Frequency of Use: In the six months prior to interview, participants who had recently used non-prescribed pharmaceutical opioids reported use on a median of three days (IQR=2-7; n=7; 4 days in 2023; IQR=2-5; n=9; p=0.957).

Forms used: Due to few participants (n≤5) nominating any specific brands of non-prescribed pharmaceutical opioids in 2024, further details regarding the main brands used are not reported. Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Benzodiazepines

From 2019-2023, participants were asked about non-prescribed alprazolam use and non-prescribed use of 'other' benzodiazepines (e.g., diazepam). In 2024, the two forms were combined, such that participants were asked about non-prescribed use of any benzodiazepines.

Recent Use (past 6 months): Recent use of non-prescribed benzodiazepines (e.g., Valium, Diazepam, Xanax, Kalma) peaked in 2019, with 52% of the sample reporting recent use, however has been gradually declining since. In 2024, one fifth (22%) of the Sydney sample reported recent non-prescribed use, stable relative to 2023 (31%; p=0.204) (Figure 43).

Frequency of Use: Median days of non-prescribed benzodiazepine (e.g., Valium, Diazepam, Xanax, Kalma) use was six days (IQR=3-24; n=22) in the six months preceding interview (6 days in 2023; IQR=2-15; n=31; p=0.626).

Forms Used: Among participants who had used non-prescribed benzodiazepines and commented in 2024 (n=22), the most commonly used brands were Valium (diazepam) (73%), followed by Xanax (alprazolam) (50%). Few participants (n≤5) indicated using other brands of non-prescribed benzodiazepines in 2024.

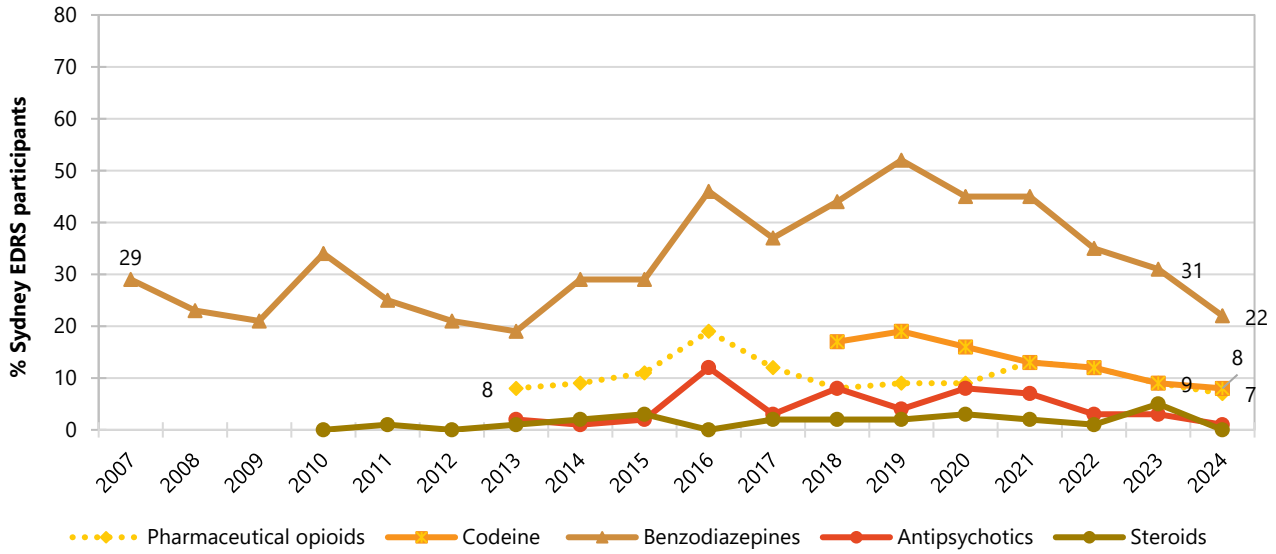
Steroids

Recent Use (past 6 months): The per cent of the Sydney sample reporting recent use of non-prescribed steroids has remained low and stable since monitoring commenced in 2010. In 2024, no participants in the Sydney sample reported recent non-prescribed steroid use (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.059).

Antipsychotics

Recent Use (past 6 months): Few participants (n≤5) reported recent use of non-prescribed antipsychotics in 2024 (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.621) (Figure 43). Please refer Figure 43 for historical data and to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Figure 43: Non-prescribed use of pharmaceutical medicines in the past six months, Sydney, NSW, 2007-2024



Note. Non-prescribed use is reported for prescription medicines. Monitoring of over-the-counter (OTC) codeine (low-dose codeine) commenced in 2010, however, in February 2018, the scheduling for codeine changed such that low-dose codeine formerly available OTC was required to be obtained via a prescription. To allow for comparability of data, the time series here represents non-prescribed low- and high dose codeine (2018-2023), with high-dose codeine excluded from pharmaceutical opioids from 2018. Between 2019 and 2023, participants were asked about 'alprazolam' and 'other benzodiazepines'. In 2024, 'alprazolam' and 'other benzodiazepines' were combined**.** Y axis has been reduced to 80% to improve visibility of trends. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *$p<0.050$; **$p<0.010$; ***$p<0.001$. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Other Illicit Drugs

Non-Prescribed Hallucinogenic Mushrooms/Psilocybin

Recent Use (past 6 months): Recent use of non-prescribed hallucinogenic mushrooms/psilocybin has fluctuated considerably since monitoring commenced in 2010, ranging between 17% and 56%. In 2024, two fifths (40%) of the Sydney sample reported recent use, stable relative to 2023 (44%; p=0.668) (Figure 44).

Frequency of Use (past 6 months): The median frequency of use among those who commented (n=40) in 2024 was two days (IQR=1-3) in the six months preceding interview, stable relative to 2023 (2 days; IQR=1-4; n=44; p=0.912).

Kava

Recent Use (past 6 months): In 2024, almost one tenth (9%) of the Sydney sample reported recent use of Kava, stable relative to 2023 (9%) (Figure 44).

Frequency of Use: The median frequency of use among those who commented (n=9) in 2024 was one day (IQR=1-3) in the six months preceding interview, stable relative to 2023 (1 days; IQR=1-1; n=9; p=0.911).

MDA

Recent Use (past 6 months): The per cent reporting recent MDA use gradually decreased from 2003 to 2010, before increasing gradually to 23% in 2013 and subsequently declining again. In 2024, 6% of the Sydney sample reported recent use, stable relative to 2023 (n≤5; p=0.331) (Figure 44).

Frequency of Use: The median frequency of use among those who commented (n=6) in 2024 was two days (IQR=1-3) in the six months preceding interview (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.336).

Substances with Unknown Contents

Capsules (past 6 months): In 2024, few participants (n≤5) reported consuming capsules with 'unknown contents' in the six months preceding interview (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.681). Please refer to Figure 44 for historical data and to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Other Unknown Substances (past 6 months): From 2019, we asked participants about their use more broadly of substances with 'unknown contents'. In 2024, one fifth (20%) of the Sydney sample reported use of any substance with 'unknown contents' (14% in 2023; p=0.198) on a median of one day (IQR=1-2; n=21; 1 day in 2023; IQR=1-3; n=14; p=0.403). When broken down by substance form, 13% of participants reported recent use of powder with 'unknown contents' in 2024 (8% in 2023; p=0.259). Ten per cent of participants reported recent use of pills with 'unknown contents', a significant increase relative to 2023 (n≤5; p=0.018). Few participants (n≤5) reported recent use of crystal with 'unknown contents'. Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Quantity: From 2020 onwards, we asked participants about the average amount of pills and capsules used with 'unknown contents' in the last six months. Among those who reported recent use of pills with 'unknown contents' and commented (n=10), the median 'typical' amount used per session was one pill (IQR=1-2; n≤5 in 2023; p=0.158).

Few participants (n≤5) reported on the median 'typical' amount of capsules with 'unknown contents' used per session and therefore, further details are not reported. Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

PMA

No participants from the 2024 Sydney sample reported recent use of PMA. Please refer to Figure 44 for historical data and the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

PMMA

No participants from the 2024 Sydney sample reported recent use of PMMA. Please refer to Figure 44 for historical data and the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Heroin

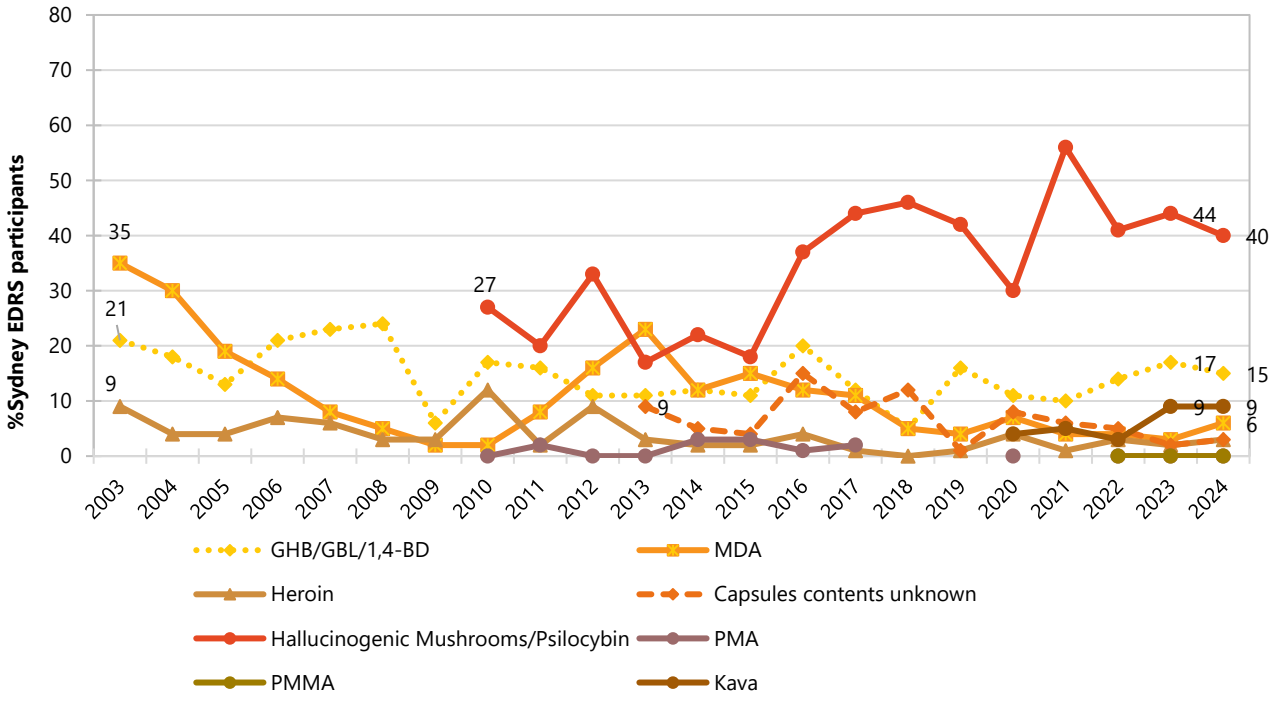
Due to low numbers reporting on recent use of heroin (n≤5), numbers have been suppressed. Please refer to Figure 44 for historical data and to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

GHB/GBL/1, 4-BD (Liquid E)

Recent Use (past 6 months): Recent use of GHB/GBL/1,4-BD has fluctuated considerably since monitoring commenced, ranging between few participants (n≤5) reporting use in 2018 to 24% in 2008. In 2024, 15% reported recent use, stable relative to 2023 (17%; p=0.845) (Figure 44).

Frequency of Use: Of those who had recently used GHB/GBL/1,4-BD (n=15), participants reported use on a median of two days (IQR=1-6) in the previous six months (3 days in 2023; IQR=2-20; n=17; p=0.233).

Figure 44: Other illicit drugs used in the past six months, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. In 2019, participants were asked more broadly about 'substances contents unknown' (with further ascertainment by form) which may have impacted the estimate for 'capsules contents unknown'. Y axis has been reduced to 80% to improve visibility of trends. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Licit and Other Drugs

Alcohol

Recent Use (past 6 months): Recent alcohol use among the Sydney sample has remained high and stable, with at least 92% of the sample reporting recent use since monitoring commenced in 2003. In 2024, the majority (96%) of the Sydney sample reported recent use, stable relative to 2023 (97% in 2023) (Figure 45).

Frequency of Use: Alcohol was consumed on a median of 24 days (IQR=14-63; n=96) in the six months preceding interview (48 days in 2023; IQR=20-72; n=97; *p*=0.277), equivalent to weekly use. Of those who had consumed alcohol recently and commented (n=96), 65% reported weekly or more frequent use (74% in 2023; *p*=0.171). Few participants (n≤5) reported daily use (n≤5 in 2023).

Tobacco

In 2024, for the first time, questions were included about illicit tobacco. Illicit tobacco was defined as products sold illegally without the necessary taxes added to the price.

Recent Use (past 6 months): An increase in the per cent reporting recent tobacco use was observed from 2003 to 2011. From 2011 to 2020, the per cent reporting recent tobacco use remained relatively stable, with a decline observed from 2020 onwards. In 2024, 63% reported recent tobacco use (54% in 2023; *p*=0.198) (Figure 45). One fifth (22%) reported recent use of smoked or non-smoked illicit tobacco products in 2024. Among those who reported the recent use of smoked tobacco (n=20), the most common product used was branded tobacco packs (90%).

Frequency of Use: Among those who had recently used tobacco and commented in 2024 (n=63), participants reported use on a median of 30 days (IQR=7-180) in the six months preceding interview (22 days in 2023; IQR=5-165; n=52; *p*=0.299). Almost one third (32%) of participants who had recently used tobacco reported daily use (25% in 2023; *p*=0.530).

E-cigarettes

From October 2021, Australians were required to have a prescription to legally access nicotine containing e-cigarette products for any purpose. In 2022, participants were asked for the first time about their use of both prescribed and non-prescribed e-cigarettes. Few participants reported recent use of prescribed e-cigarettes in 2022 (n≤5), 2023 (n≤5) and 2024 (n≤5). Data below for 2022 to 2024 refer only to non-prescribed e-cigarette use; data for 2021 and earlier refers to any e-cigarette use.

Recent Use (past 6 months): Since peaking in 2021 with 85% reporting recent use, the per cent of the Sydney sample reporting recent non-prescribed e-cigarette use has fluctuated considerably. In 2024, 67% of participants reported recent non-prescribed e-cigarette use, stable relative to 2023 (76%; *p*=0.221) (Figure 45).

Frequency of Use: Among those who reported recent use of non-prescribed e-cigarettes (n=67), frequency of use remained stable at a median of 120 days (IQR=22-180) in the six months preceding interview (125 days in 2023; IQR=29-180; n=76; *p*=0.656). Forty five per cent of participants who had recently used non-prescribed e-cigarettes reported daily use in 2024, stable relative to 2023 (47%; *p*=0.864).

Contents and Forms Used: Among those who had recently used non-prescribed e-cigarettes in 2024 (n=63), the majority (97%) reported using e-cigarettes containing nicotine. Among participants who had recently used e-cigarettes and responded in 2024 (n=67), participants most commonly reported using disposable devices (97%), followed by re-fillable devices (21%).

One third (34%) of the total sample reported vaping substances other than nicotine/vape juice. Among those who vaped substances other than nicotine/vape juice and commented (n=34), the most commonly vaped substance was cannabis (82%).

Reason for Use: Of those who had recently consumed any (i.e., prescribed, and non-prescribed) e-cigarettes and commented (n=68), one quarter (26%) reported that they had used e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation tool in 2024 (29% in 2023; p=0.719).

Nicotine Pouches

Recent Use (past 6 months): In 2024, one fifth (20%) of the Sydney sample reported recent use of nicotine pouches (not asked in 2023) (Figure 45).

Frequency of Use: Participants who had recently used nicotine pouches reported use on a median of eight days (IQR=2-30; n=20) in the six months preceding interview.

Nitrous Oxide

Recent Use (past 6 months): The per cent reporting recent nitrous oxide use gradually increased from 2003 to 2018, before stabilising and subsequently declining. In 2024, two fifths (42%) of the Sydney sample reported recent use, stable from 47% in 2023 (p=0.471) (Figure 45).

Frequency of Use: Participants who had recently used nitrous oxide (n=42) reported use on a median of three days (IQR=2-6) in the previous six months, stable from 2023 (2 days; IQR=1-7; n=46; p=0.532).

Quantity: The median number of bulbs consumed in a 'typical' session was reported to be 5 bulbs (IQR=3-14; n=34; 10 bulbs in 2023; IQR=2-20; n=41; p=0.229) and the median maximum number of bulbs in a session was reported to be 10 (IQR=3-20; n=33; 15 bulbs in 2023; IQR=4-30; n=41; p=0.256).

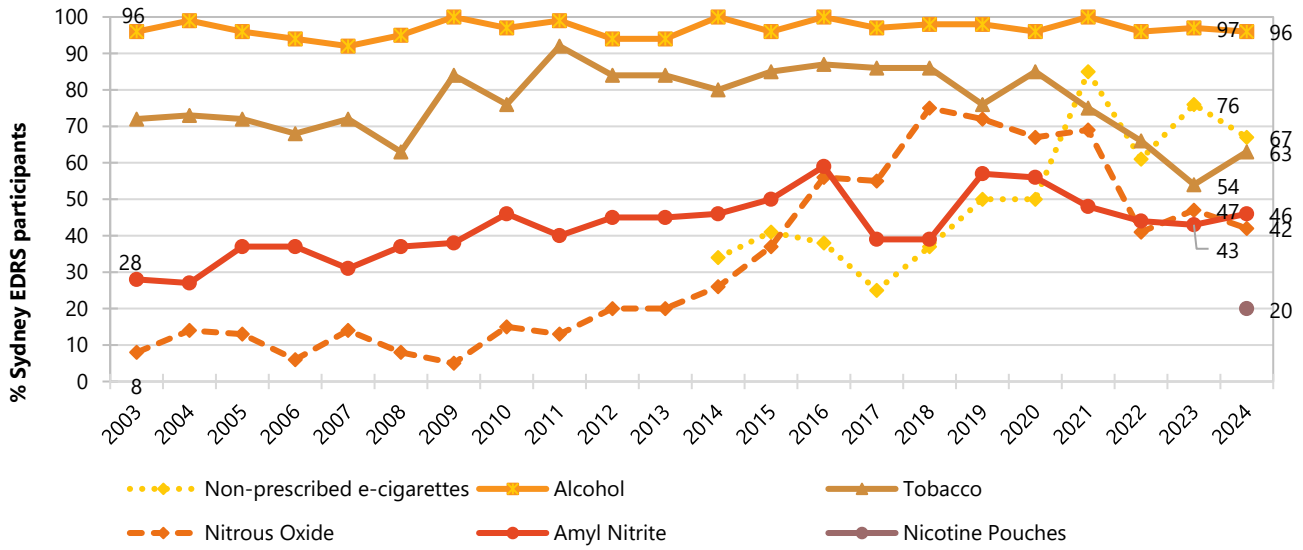
Amyl Nitrite

Amyl nitrite is an inhalant which is currently listed as a Schedule 4 substance in Australia (i.e., available only with prescription) yet is often sold under-the-counter in sex shops. Following a review by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, amyl nitrite was listed as Schedule 3 (i.e., for purchase over-the-counter) from 1 February 2020 when sold for human therapeutic purpose.

Recent Use (past 6 months): Forty-six per cent of the Sydney sample reported recent use of amyl nitrite in 2024, stable relative to 2023 (43%; p=0.775) (Figure 45).

Frequency of Use: Use of amyl nitrite was infrequent, with respondents reporting a median of five days (IQR=2-12; n=46) of use in the past six months in 2024 (6 days in 2023; IQR=1-15; n=43; p=0.898).

Figure 45: Licit and other drugs used in the past six months, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Regarding e-cigarettes, on 1 October 2021, legislation came into effect requiring people to obtain a prescription to legally import nicotine vaping products. Data from 2022 onwards refers to non-prescribed e-cigarettes only. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

10

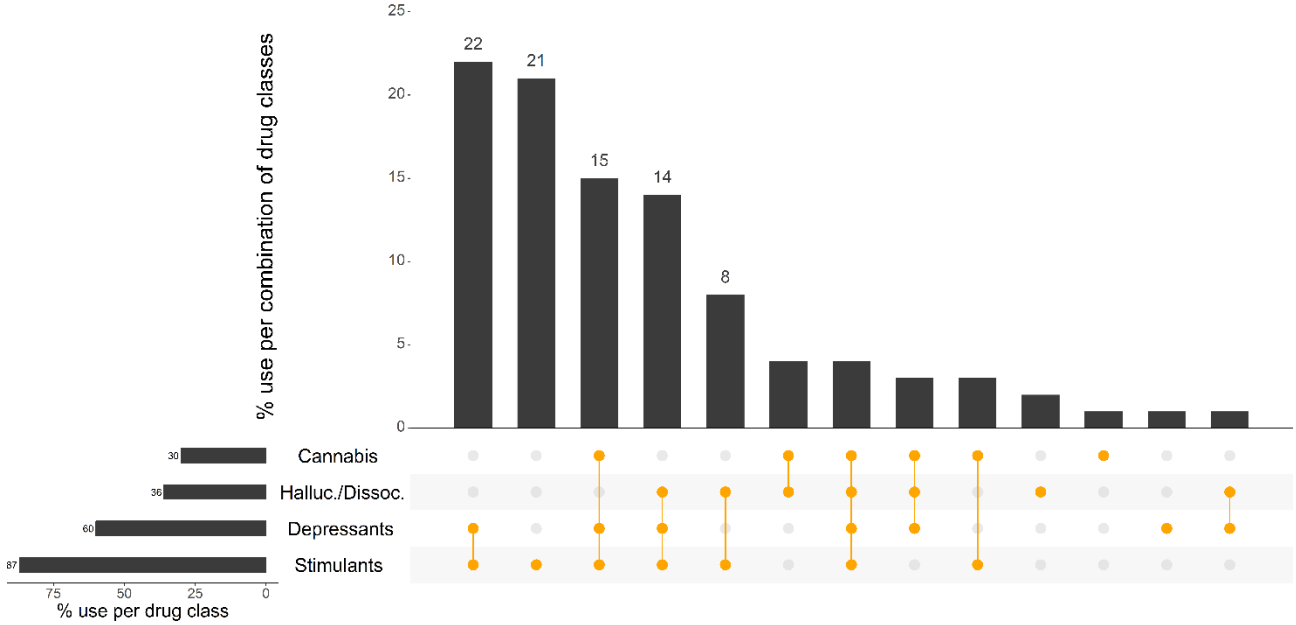
Drug-Related Harms and Other Behaviours

Polysubstance Use

On the last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use and among those who answered (n=100), the most commonly used substances were alcohol (57%) and ecstasy (49%), followed by cocaine (34%) and cannabis (30%).

Seventy eight per cent (n=77) of the Sydney sample reported concurrent use of two or more drugs on the last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use (excluding tobacco and e-cigarettes). The most commonly used combinations of substances were stimulants and depressants (22%), followed by stimulants, depressants, and cannabis (15%) and stimulants, depressants and hallucinogens/dissociatives (14%). One fifth (21%) reported using stimulants alone (Figure 46).

Figure 46: Use of depressants, stimulants, cannabis, hallucinogens and dissociatives on the last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use, Sydney, NSW, 2024: Most common drug pattern profiles

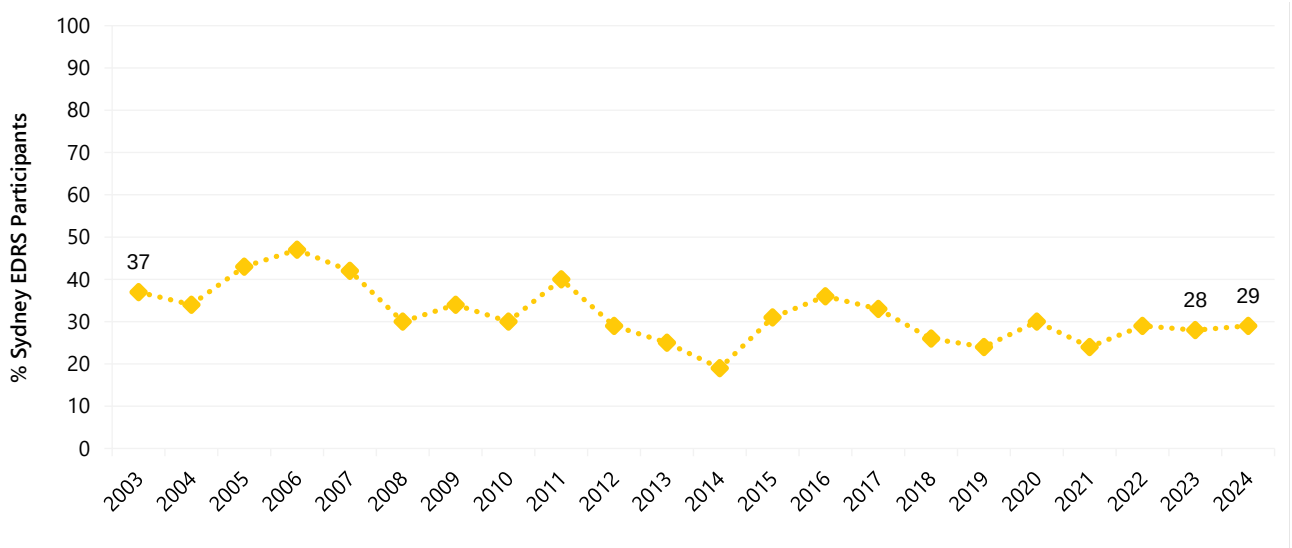


Note. % calculated out of total EDRS 2024 sample. The horizontal bars represent the per cent of participants who reported use of each substance on their last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use; the vertical columns represent the per cent of participants who used the combination of drug classes represented by the orange circles. Drug use pattern profiles reported by ≤5 participants or which did not include any of the four drug classes depicted are not shown in the figure but are counted in the denominator. Halluc./Dissoc = hallucinogens/dissociatives (LSD, hallucinogenic mushrooms, amyl nitrite, DMT, ketamine and/or nitrous oxide); depressants (alcohol, GHB/GBL,1,4-BD, kava, opioids and/or benzodiazepines); stimulants (cocaine, MDA, ecstasy, methamphetamine, and/or pharmaceutical stimulants). Use of benzodiazepines, opioids and stimulants could be prescribed or non-prescribed use. Note that participants may report use of multiple substances within a class. Y axis reduced to 25% to improve visibility of trends.

Binge Drug Use

Participants were asked whether they had used any stimulant or related drug for 48 hours or more continuously without sleep (i.e., binged) in the six months preceding interview. Twenty nine per cent of the Sydney sample had binged on one or more drugs in the preceding six months (28% in 2023) (Figure 47).

Figure 47: Past six month use of stimulants or related drugs for 48 hours or more continuously without sleep ('binge'), Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p <0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

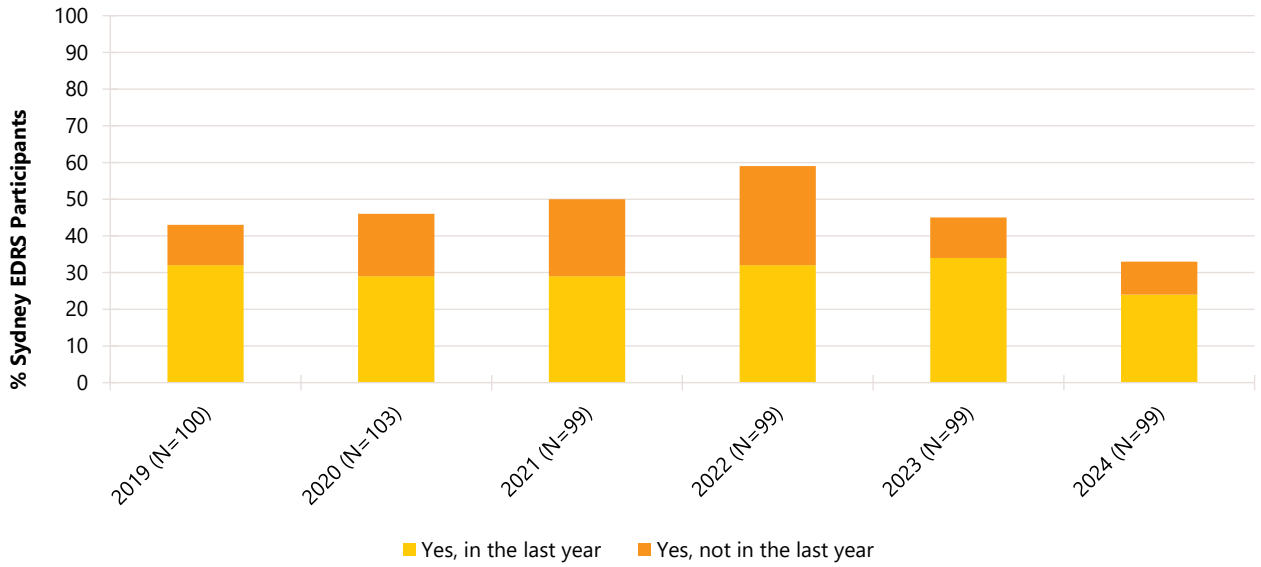
Drug Checking

Drug checking is a common strategy used to test the contents and purity of illicit drugs. At the time interviewing commenced in 2024, the only government-sanctioned drug checking services that had operated in Australia were at the Groovin the Moo festival in Canberra, ACT (2018, 2019), at CanTEST, a pilot fixed-site dug checking service in Canberra which has been operational since 17 July 2022. Queensland's first fixed-site drug checking service, CheQpoint, opened its doors in Brisbane shortly after EDRS commenced (April 20 2024), and a second service opened in the Gold Coast shortly after recruitment had finished (July 2024).

In 2024, 24% of participants reported that they or someone else had tested the content and/or purity of their illicit drugs in Australia in the past year (34% in 2023; p=0.168) (Figure 48). Of those who reported that they or someone else had tested their illicit drugs in the past year (n=33), the majority (83%) reported using colorimetric reagent test kits. Few participants (n≤5) reported having their drugs tested via testing strips (e.g., BTNX fentanyl strips or other immunoassay testing strips) or professional testing equipment (e.g., Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy).

Of those who reported that they or someone else had tested their illicit drugs in the past year and commented (n=23), 70% reported testing the drugs themselves, followed by 30% who reported having their drugs tested by a friend. Fewer participants (n≤5) reported having their drugs tested by a dealer, a partner, and/or a drug checking service.

Figure 48: Lifetime and past year engagement in drug checking, Sydney, NSW, 2019-2024



Note: Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test

The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) was designed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a brief screening scale to identify individuals with problematic alcohol use in the past 12 months.

The mean score on the AUDIT for the total 2024 Sydney sample (including people who had not consumed alcohol in the past 12 months) was 11.9 (SD 7.2), a significant decrease from 13.5 (SD 7.1) in 2023 ($p<0.001$). AUDIT scores are divided into four 'zones' which indicate risk level. Specifically, scores between 0-7 indicate low risk drinking or abstinence; scores between 8-15 indicate alcohol use in excess of low-risk guidelines; scores between 16-19 indicate harmful or hazardous drinking; and scores of 20 or higher indicate possible alcohol dependence. There was no significant change in the per cent of the sample falling into each of these risk categories from 2023 to 2024 ($p=0.330$) (Table 5).

In 2024, 70% of participants obtained a score of 8 or more, indicative of hazardous use (77% in 2023; $p=0.337$) (Table 5).

Table 5: Mean AUDIT total scores and percent of participants scoring above recommended levels, Sydney, NSW, 2010-2024

	2010 N=96	2011 N=99	2012 N=94	2013 N=96	2014 N=100	2015 N=98	2016 N=103	2017 N=96	2018 N=100	2019 N=100	2020 N=103	2021 N=99	2022 N=100	2023 N=100	2024 N=100
Mean AUDIT total score (SD)	14.5 (7.8)	16.6 (6.5)	14.0 (6.6)	11.0 (5.8)	11.6 (6.4)	11.6 (5.8)	12.4 (7.3)	12.4 (7.2)	11.9 (6.4)	12.9 (6.4)	12.6 (7.4)	13.4 (7.1)	12.0 (7.0)	13.5 (7.1)	**11.9 (7.2)*** **
Score 8 or above (%)	82	94	83	69	69	71	70	71	68	77	72	79	72	77	**70**
AUDIT zones:															
Score 0-7	18	6	17	31	31	29	30	29	32	23	28	21	28	23	**30**
Score 8-15	40	41	45	50	42	43	36	44	39	45	40	41	41	47	**38**
Score 16-19	18	19	20	10	14	19	17	10	17	15	12	19	15	9	**14**
Score 20 or higher	25	33	18	8	13	9	17	17	12	17	20	18	16	21	**18**

Note. Monitoring of AUDIT first commenced in 2010. Computed from the entire sample regardless of whether they had consumed alcohol in the past twelve months. Total AUDIT score range is 0-40, with higher scores indicating greater likelihood of hazardous and harmful drinking. Imputed values used for missing scale scores. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in table; *$p<0.050$; **$p<0.010$; ***$p<0.001$. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Overdose Events

Non-Fatal Overdose

Previously, participants had been asked about their experience in the past 12-months of i) **stimulant overdose**, and ii) **depressant overdose**.

From 2019, changes were made to this module, with participants asked about alcohol, stimulant and other drug overdose, prompted by the following definitions:

- **Alcohol overdose:** experience of symptoms (e.g., reduced level of consciousness, and collapsing) where professional assistance would have been helpful.
- **Stimulant overdose:** experience of symptoms (e.g., nausea, vomiting, chest pain, tremors, increased body temperature, increased heart rate, seizure, extreme paranoia, extreme anxiety, panic, extreme agitation, hallucinations, excited delirium) where professional assistance would have been helpful.
- **Other drug overdose (not including alcohol or stimulant drugs):** similar definition to above. Note that in 2019, participants were prompted specifically for opioid overdose but this was removed in 2020 as few participants endorsed this behaviour.

It is important to note that events reported on for each drug type may not be unique given high rates of polysubstance use among the sample.

For the purpose of comparison with previous years, we computed the per cent reporting any depressant overdose, comprising any endorsement of alcohol overdose or other drug overdose where a depressant (e.g., opioid, GHB/GBL/1,4-BD, benzodiazepines) was listed.

Non-Fatal Stimulant Overdose

After a peak in 2016 (39%), the per cent reporting overdose events related to stimulants gradually declined until 2022 and has since stabilised. In 2024, 9% of the Sydney sample reported experiencing a non-fatal stimulant overdose in the past 12 months (17% in 2023; p=0.150) (Figure 49).

Due to few participants (n≥5) reporting on the most common stimulant used during the most recent non-fatal stimulant overdose in the past 12 months, please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Among those who experienced a recent non-fatal stimulant overdose, three quarters (78%) reported that they had also consumed one or more additional drugs on the last occasion, however, the drugs involved are not reported due to low numbers(n≤5). Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

On the occasion of their last overdose event, few participants (n≤5) received treatment or assistance.

Non-Fatal Depressant Overdose

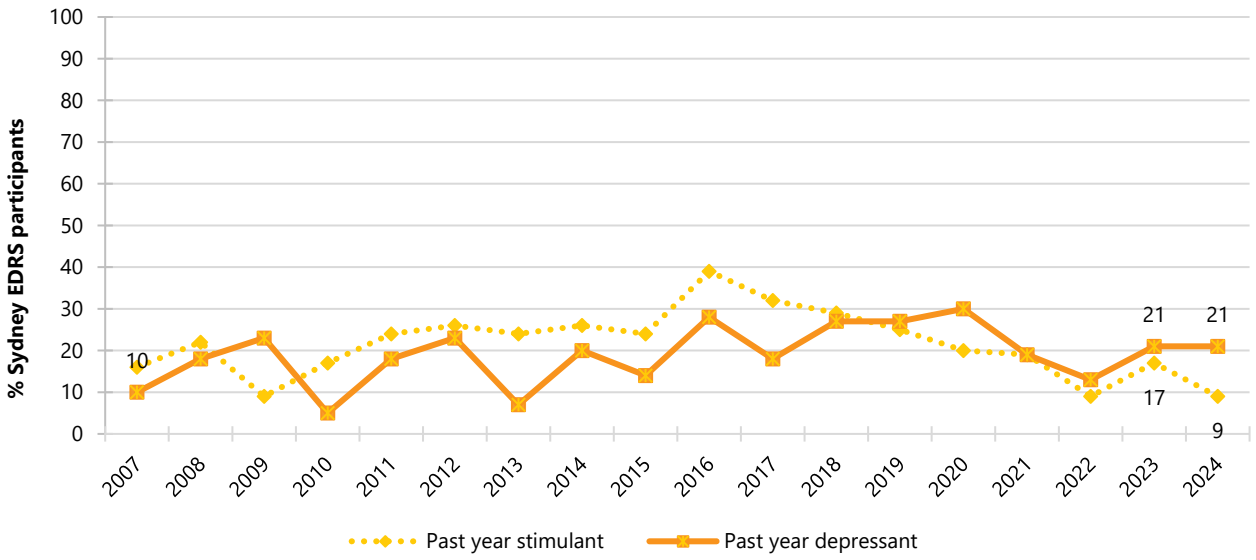
Alcohol: Almost one fifth (19%) of the Sydney sample reported having experienced a non-fatal alcohol overdose in the past 12 months on a median of two occasions (IQR=1-4; n=19) (15% in 2023; p=0.462). Of those who had experienced an alcohol overdose in the past year (n=19), 79% of participants

reported not receiving treatment on the last occasion. Among those who did not receive treatment, the most common reason for not seeking treatment was 'deciding it wasn't serious enough' (58%).

Any depressant (including alcohol): One fifth (21%) of the Sydney sample reported experiencing a non-fatal depressant overdose in the past 12 months (21% in 2023) (Figure 49).

Of those who had experienced any depressant overdose in the last year (n=21), the majority (90%) reported alcohol as the drug used prior to the event. Few participants (n≤5) reported a depressant overdose due to other drugs, therefore, these data are suppressed. Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Figure 49: Past year non-fatal stimulant and depressant overdose, Sydney, NSW, 2007-2024



Note. Past year stimulant and depressant overdose was first asked about in 2007. In 2019, items about overdose were revised, and changes relative to 2018 may be a function of greater nuance in capturing depressant events. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Awareness of Naloxone

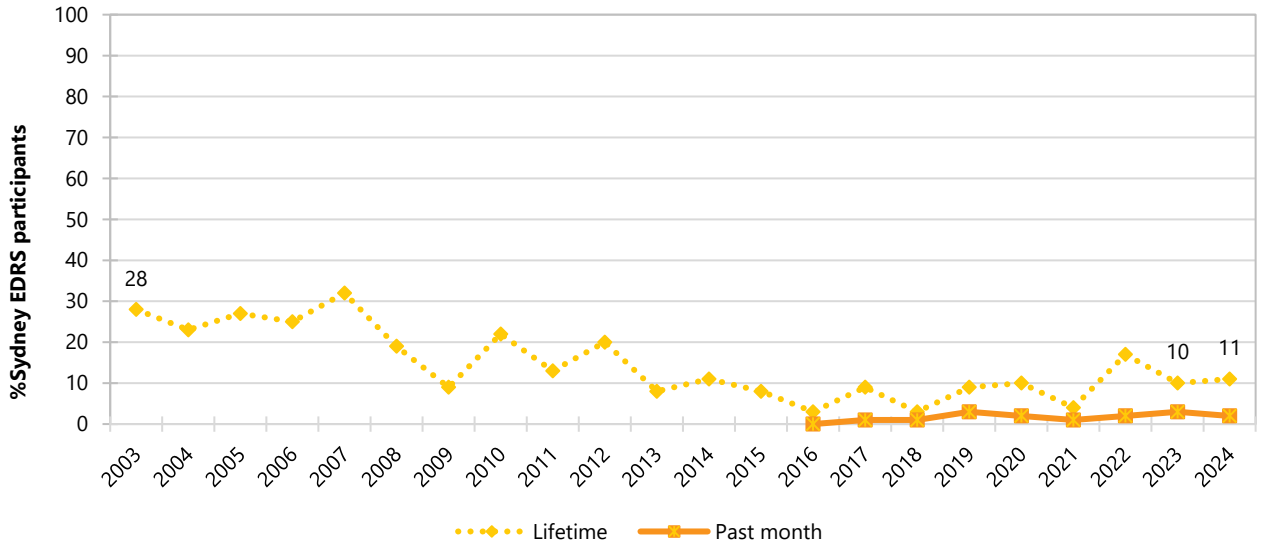
In 2024, two thirds (66%) of the Sydney sample reported that they had heard of naloxone in their lifetime, a significant increase from 51% in 2023 (p=0.048), of which 91% Among those who reported being aware of naloxone, 91% were able to correctly identify the purpose of naloxone (89% in 2023). Among participants who had ever heard of naloxone and responded (n=65), almost one quarter (23%) reported (ever) obtaining naloxone (12% in 2023; p=0.149) (15% of entire sample) and 17% reported obtaining naloxone in the twelve months prior to interview (10% in 2023; p=0.295) (11% of entire sample).

Injecting Drug Use and Associated Risk Behaviours

Despite fluctuations over time, lifetime injecting generally declined in the Sydney sample between 2007 (32%) and 2013 (8%), remaining relatively stable thereafter. In 2024, one tenth (11%) of the sample reported lifetime drug injection (10% in 2023) (Figure 50).

Few participants (n≤5) reported injecting drugs in the past month in 2024 (n≤5 in 2023). Please refer to Figure 50 for historical data and to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Figure 50: Lifetime and past month drug injection, Sydney, NSW, 2004-2024



Note. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Drug Treatment

Few participants (n≤5) reported currently receiving drug treatment, which is consistent with reporting in previous years (n≤5 in 2023). Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Ecstasy and Methamphetamine Dependence

From 2017, participants were asked questions from the Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS) adapted to investigate ecstasy and methamphetamine dependence. The SDS is a five-item questionnaire designed to measure the degree of dependence on a variety of drugs. The SDS focuses on the psychological aspects of dependence, including impaired control of drug use, and preoccupation with, and anxiety about, use. A total score was created by summing responses to each of the five questions. Possible scores range from 0 to 15.

To assess ecstasy dependence in the past six months, a cut-off score of three or more was used, as this has been found to be a good balance between sensitivity and specificity for identifying problematic dependent ecstasy use. Among those who reported recent ecstasy use in 2024 and commented (n=96), 8% recorded a score of three and above, stable from 2023 (13%; p=0.359). The median ecstasy SDS score was zero (IQR=0–1). Forty nine per cent of participants obtained a score of

zero on the ecstasy SDS (58% in 2023; p=0.258), indicative of no symptoms of dependence in relation to ecstasy use (Table 6).

To assess methamphetamine dependence in the past six months, the cut-off of four and above was used, which is a more conservative estimate and has been used previously in the literature as a validated cut-off for methamphetamine dependence. Of the participants who had recently used methamphetamine and responded (n=26), one third (35%) scored four or above, stable from 33% in 2023. The median methamphetamine SDS score was one (IQR=0-4.8). Forty six per cent of the participants obtained a score of zero on the methamphetamine SDS (43% in 2023), indicative of no symptoms of dependence in relation to methamphetamine use (Table 6).

Table 6: Total ecstasy and methamphetamine SDS scores, and per cent of participants scoring above cut-off scores indicative of dependence, among those who reported past six month use, Sydney, NSW, 2017-2024

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Ecstasy	N=100	N=100	N=99	/	N=95	N=83	N=99	**N=96**
Median total score (IQR)	1 (0-2)	1 (0-2)	0 (0-2)	/	0 (0-1)	0 (0-1)	0 (0-1)	**0 (0-1)**
% score = 0	41	36	54	/	59	70	58	**49**
% score ≥3	25	15	14	/	9	-	13	**8**
Methamphe-tamine	N=28	N=18	N=26	N=17	N=14	N=27	N=21	**N=26**
Median total score (IQR)	0 (0-2)	0 (0-2)	0 (0-2)	0 (0-2)	0 (0-1)	0 (0-5)	2 (0-5)	**1 (0-4.8)**
% score = 0	57	67	65	53	71	59	43	**46**
% score ≥4	-	-	-	-	-	26	33	**35**

Note. Severity of Dependence scores calculated out of those who used ecstasy/methamphetamine recently (past 6 months). A cut-off score of ≥3 and ≥4 is used to indicate screening positive for potential ecstasy and methamphetamine dependence, respectively. Imputed values used for missing scale scores. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in table; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Sexual Health Behaviours

In 2024, 68% of those who commented reported some form of sexual activity in the past four weeks, a significant decrease from 81% in 2023 (p=0.050). Given the sensitive nature of these questions, participants were given the option of self-completing this section of the interview (if interview undertaken face-to-face).

Of those who had engaged in sexual activity in the past four weeks and who responded (n=66), three quarters (76%; n=50) reported using alcohol and/or other drugs prior to or while engaging in sexual activity (85% in 2023; p=0.212) and 11% (n=7) reported that their use of alcohol and/or other drugs had impaired their ability to negotiate their wishes during sex (13% in 2023; p=0.794), while 42% (n=28) reported that they had used alcohol and/or other drugs to enhance sexual activity or pleasure with another person (not asked prior to 2024). Few participants (n≤5) had engaged in sexual activity in exchange for money, drugs, or other goods or services (Table 7).

Of those who commented (n=97), 68% reported having had a sexual health check-up in their lifetime (74% in 2023; p=0.429), including 32% who had done so in the six months prior to interview (40% in

2023; p=0.303). Of the total sample who responded (n=97), 28% had received a positive diagnosis for a sexually transmitted infection (STI) in their lifetime (24% in 2023; p=0.621), with 9% of participants receiving a positive diagnosis in the past six months (7% in 2023; p=0.792) (Table 7). Due to low numbers reporting on the specific types of STIs diagnosed (n≤5), please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Of the total Sydney sample who responded (n=94), 55% reported having ever had a test for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), stable from 61% in 2023 (p=0.454). One quarter (27%) reported having a HIV test in the past six months in 2024 (26% in 2023). Few participants (n≤5) in 2024 had ever been diagnosed with HIV (0% in 2023; p=0.243) (Table 7).

Table 7: Sexual health behaviours, Sydney, NSW, 2021-2024

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Of those who responded#:	N=96	N=98	N=96	**N=95**
% Any sexual activity in the past four weeks	77	86	81	**68***
Of those who responded# and reported any sexual activity in the past four weeks:	n=74	n=83	n=78	**n=66**
% Drugs and/or alcohol used prior to or while engaging in sexual activity	89	84	85	**76**
Of those who responded# and reported any sexual activity in the past four weeks:	n=74	n=83	n=76	**n=66**
% Drugs and/or alcohol impaired their ability to negotiate their wishes during sexual activity	12	11	13	**11**
Of those who responded# and reported any sexual activity in the past four weeks:	n=71	n=84	n=78	**n=66**
% Drugs and/or alcohol used to enhance sexual activity or pleasure with another person	/	/	/	**42**
Of those who responded# and reported any sexual activity in the past four weeks:				**n=65**
% Engaged in sexual activity in exchange for money, drugs or other goods or services	/	/	/	**-**
Of those who responded#:	n=95	n=96	n=96	**n=94**
% Had a HIV test in the last six months	25	31	26	**27**
% Had a HIV test in their lifetime	51	71	61	**55**
Of those who responded#:	n=97	n=97	n=96	**n=94**
% Diagnosed with HIV in the last six months	0	0	0	**-**
% Diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime	0	0	0	**-**
Of those who responded#:	n=97	n=98	n=96	**n=97**
% Had a sexual health check in the last six months	29	38	40	**32**
% Had a sexual health check in their lifetime	70	80	74	**68**
Of those who responded#:	n=97	n=97	n=96	**n=97**
% Diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection in the last six months	-	-	7	**9**
% Diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection in their lifetime	20	29	24	**28**

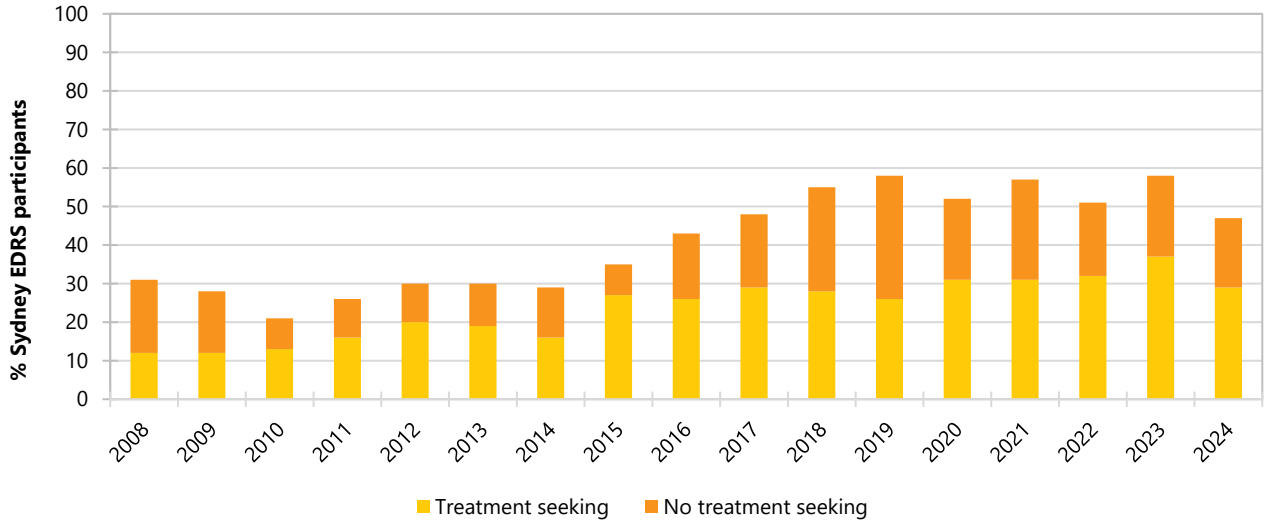
Note. #Due to the sensitive nature of these items, there is missing data for some participants who chose not to respond. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in table; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Mental Health and Psychological Distress (K10)

Mental Health

In 2024, almost half (47%) of the Sydney sample self-reported that they had experienced a mental health problem in the preceding six months (other than drug dependence), stable relative to 2023 (58%; p=0.160) (Figure 51). Of those who reported a mental health problem and commented in 2024 (n=45), the most common mental health problems were anxiety (69%; 79% in 2023; p=0.0.80) and depression (69%; 60% in 2023; p=0.875), followed by attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (27%; 21% in 2023). Of those who reported experiencing a mental health problem, 61% (29% of the total sample) reported seeing a mental health professional during the past six months (62% in 2023). Of these participants (n=29), 59% reported being prescribed medication (49% in 2023; p=0.457).

Figure 51: Self-reported mental health problems and treatment seeking in the past six months, Sydney, NSW, 2008-2024



Note. Questions about treatment seeking were first asked in 2008. The combination of the per cent who report treatment seeking and no treatment is the per cent who reported experiencing a mental health problem in the past six months. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Psychological Distress (K10)

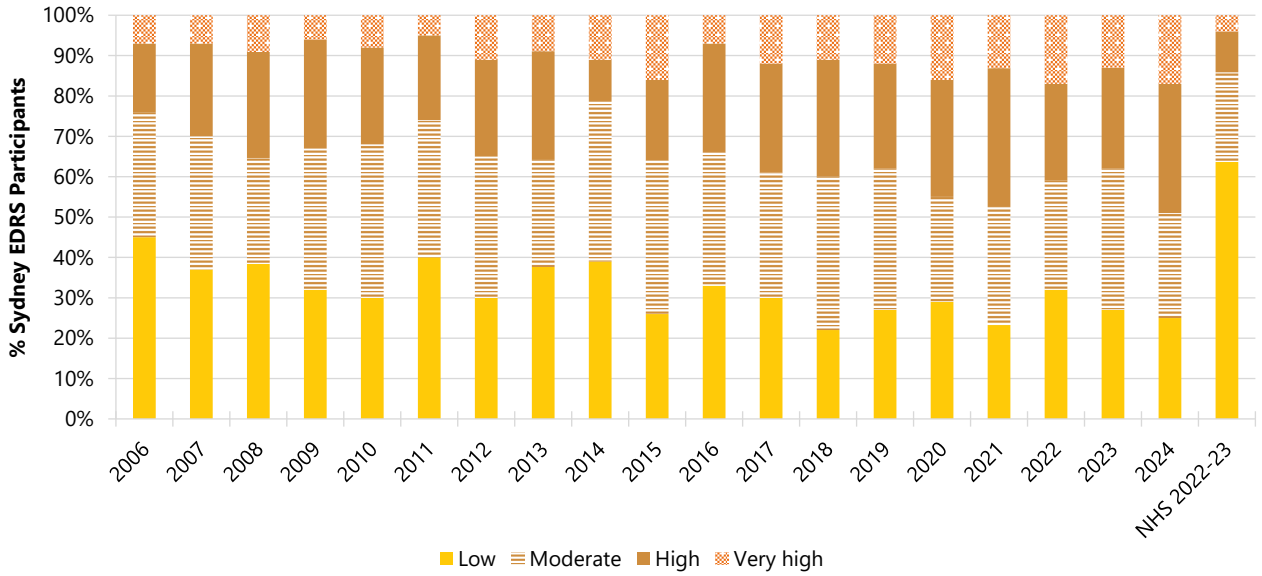
The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale 10 (K10) was administered to obtain a measure of psychological distress in the past four weeks. It is a 10-item standardised measure that has been found to have good psychometric properties and to identify clinical levels of psychological distress as measured by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders/the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM disorders.

The minimum score is 10 (indicating no psychological distress) and the maximum is 50 (indicating very high psychological distress). Scores can be coded into four categories to describe degrees of distress: scores from 10–15 indicate 'low' psychological distress; scores between 16–21 indicate 'moderate' psychological distress; scores between 22–29 indicate 'high' psychological distress; and scores between 30–50 indicate 'very high' psychological distress. Among the general population, scores of 30 or more have been demonstrated to indicate a high likelihood of having a mental health problem, and possibly requiring clinical assistance.

The per cent of participants scoring in each of the four K10 categories remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.418) (Figure 52), with 17% of the Sydney EDRS sample having a score of 30 or more (13% in 2023).

The National Health Survey 2022-23 provides Australian population data for adult (≥18 years) scores on K10. EDRS participants in 2024 reported greater levels of 'high' and 'very high' distress compared to the general population (Figure 52).

Figure 52: K10 psychological distress scores, Sydney, NSW, 2006-2024 and among the general population, 2022-2024



Note. Data from the National Health Survey are a national estimate from 2022-23 for adults 18 or older. Imputation used for missing scale scores (EDRS only). Data labels are not shown for any of the stacked bar charts in the jurisdictional reports; see data tables for values. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

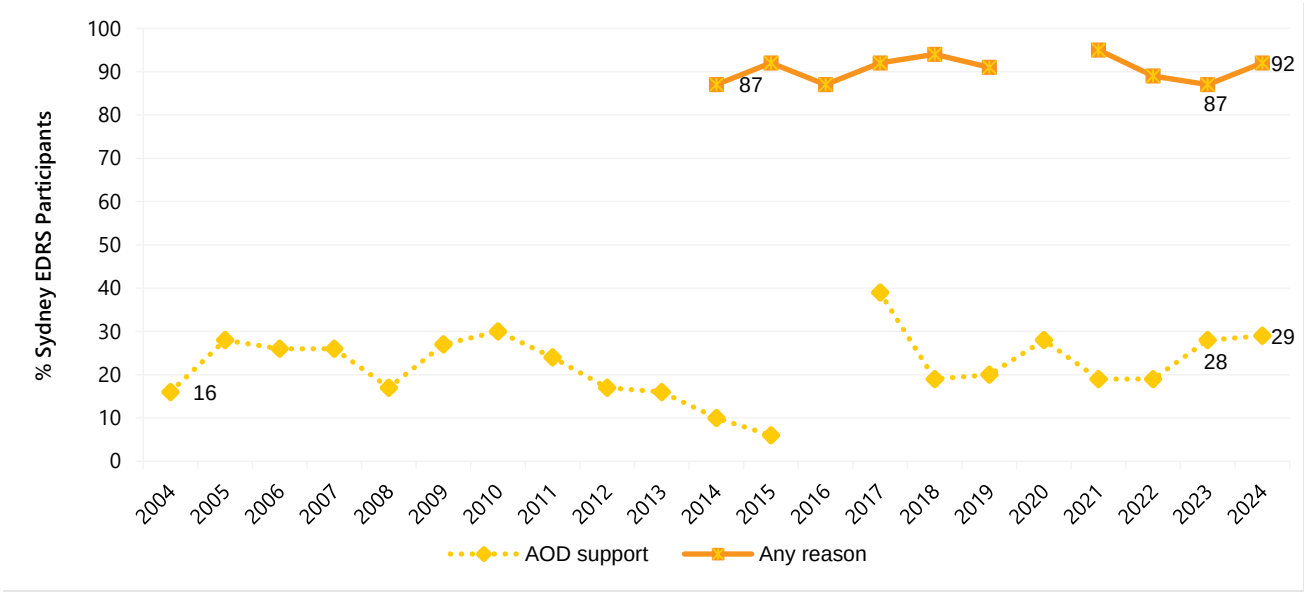
Health Service Access

Twenty nine per cent of participants reported accessing any health service for alcohol and/or drug (AOD) support in the six months preceding interview in 2024 (28% in 2023)(Figure 53). The most common services accessed by participants in 2024 were a peer based harm reduction service (11%; 8% in 2023; p=0.617) and a general practitioner (GP) (7%; 7% in 2023) (Table 8).

The majority (92%) of participants reported accessing any health service for any reason in the six months preceding interview in 2024 (87% in 2023; p=0.353) (Figure 53). The most common services accessed by participants in 2024 were a GP (78%; 68% in 2023; p=0.156), a pharmacy (61%; not asked in 2023); a dentist (33%; 42% in 2023; p=0.248) and a psychologist (25%; 25% in 2023) (Table 8).

Almost one fifth (18%) of participants reported attending the emergency department in the past six months (for any reason) (20% in 2023; p=0.852), with the most common reason being injury (9%). Furthermore, 6% reported being attended to by an ambulance in the past six months (for any reason) (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.748), although the main reason/s for ambulance attendance were mixed (n≤5). Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

Figure 53: Health service access for alcohol and other drug reasons, and for any reason in the past six months, Sydney, NSW, 2004-2024



Note. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Table 8: Types of health services accessed for alcohol and other drug reasons and for any reason in the past six months, Sydney, NSW, 2022-2024

	AOD support			Any reason		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
% accessing health services	N=100	N=100	**N=100**	N=100	N=100	**N=100**
GP	8	7	**7**	75	68	**78**
Emergency department	-	-	**-**	15	20	**18**
Hospital admission (inpatient)	-	-	**-**	15	14	**12**
Medical tent (e.g., at a festival)	-	-	**-**	-	12	**7**
Drug and Alcohol counsellor	-	-	**-**	-	-	**-**
Hospital as an outpatient	-	-	**-**	8	7	**-**
Specialist doctor (not including a psychiatrist)	-	-	**0**	23	18	**17**
Dentist	0	-	**-**	40	42	**33**
Ambulance attendance	-	-	**-**	-	-	**6**
Pharmacy	/	/	**-**	/	/	**61**
Other health professional (e.g., physiotherapist)	0	-	**0**	22	27	**20**
Psychiatrist	-	-	**-**	13	14	**16**
Psychologist	8	8	**-**	25	25	**25**
NSP	-	-	**-**	-	6	**-**
Peer based harm reduction service	6	8	**11**	7	10	**11**
Other harm reduction service	-	0	**-**	-	0	**-**

Note. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in table; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Stigma

Questions regarding stigma were derived from the Stigma Indicators Monitoring Project, with stigma defined as people being treated negatively or differently because of their illicit drug use. These questions have been asked, in part, since 2022.

In 2024, one fifth (21%) of the Sydney sample reported experiencing stigma because of their illicit drug use in any health/non-health care setting in the six months preceding interview (24% in 2023; p=0.729) (Table 9).

Six per cent of participants reported experiencing stigma within specialist alcohol and other drug (AOD) services in the six months preceding interview (n≤5 in 2023), and 13% reported experiencing stigma within general health care services (15% of those who had attended general health care services), stable relative to 2023 (9% in 2023; p=0.492). One tenth (11%) of participants reported experiencing stigma in non-health care settings (17% in 2023; p=0.315), most commonly from police (6%) (Table 9).

Notably, two fifths (39%) of participants reported engaging in some form of avoidance behaviour to avoid being treated negatively or differently by AOD specialists or general healthcare services (44% in 2023; p=0.563). This most commonly involved not telling health workers about their drug use (35%), followed by delaying accessing health care (14%), not attending follow-up appointments (9%), and looking for different services (8%).

Table 9: Self-reported experiences of stigma due to illicit drug use in the past six months, Sydney, NSW, 2022-2024

	2022	2023	2024
% Experienced stigma in specialist AOD service	N=99 **-**	N=100 -	**N=100** **6**
% Experienced stigma in general health care service	N=99 17	N=100 9	**N=100** **13**
% Experienced stigma in non-health care service	/	N=100 17	**N=100** **11**
Welfare and social service	/	-	**-**
Current or potential employer	/	-	**-**
School/uni/TAFE	/	-	**0**
Police	/	13	**6**
Other legal services	/	-	**0**
Housing and homelessness services	/	-	**0**
Other	/	-	**-**
% Experienced stigma in any of the above settings^	/	24	**21**
% Did any of the following to avoid being treated negatively or differently by AOD specialist or general healthcare services	/	N=99 44	**N=99** **39**
Delayed accessing healthcare	/	10	**14**
Did not tell health worker about drug use	/	40	**35**
Downplayed need for pain medication	/	9	**6**
Looked for different services	/	-	**8**
Did not attend follow-up appointment	/	8	**9**
Other	/	0	**0**

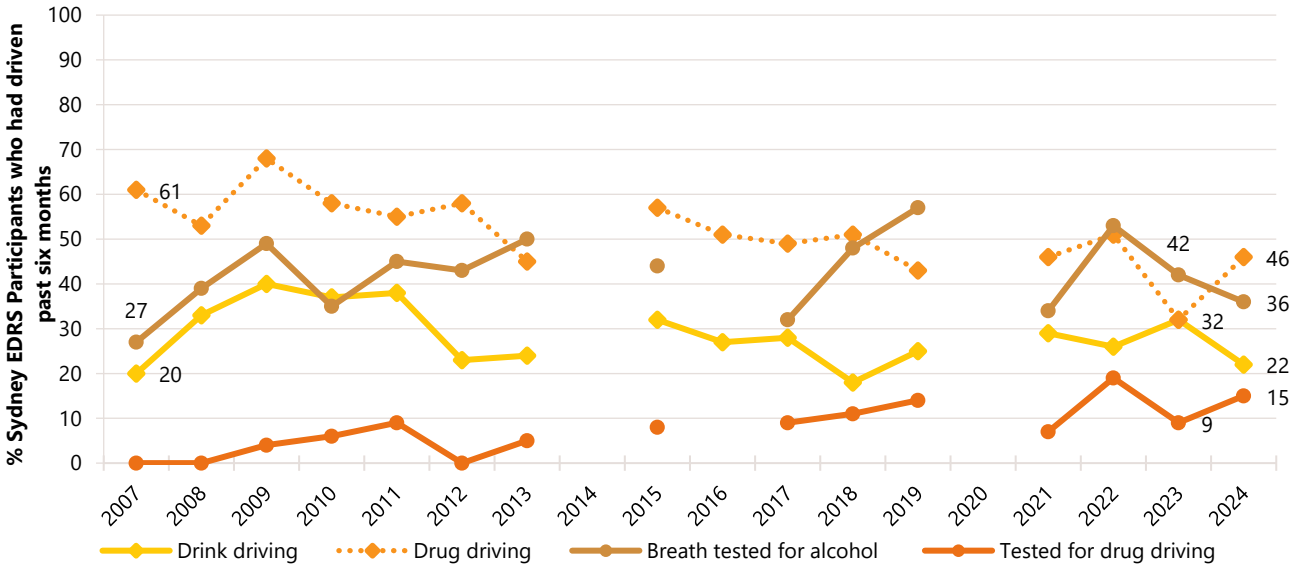
Note. N is the number who responded (denominator). ^Includes specialist AOD service, general health care service and non-health care services. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in table; *$p<0.050$; **$p<0.010$; ***$p<0.001$. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Driving

In 2024, two thirds (67%) of the Sydney sample had driven a car, motorcycle or other vehicle in the last six months. Of those who had driven in the past six months and responded (n=65), one fifth (22%) reported driving while over the (perceived) legal limit of alcohol (32% in 2023; p=0.186). Of those who had driven in the past six months and responded (n=67), 46% reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the last six months (32% in 2023; p=0.099). Of those who had driven within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the last six months and responded (n=31), participants most commonly reported using cannabis (58%) prior to driving, followed by cocaine (26%).

Of those who had driven in the past six months and responded (n=67), one third (36%) reported that they had been breath tested for alcohol by the police roadside testing service in the six months prior to interview (42% in 2023; p=0.494) and 15% reported that they been tested for drug driving by the police roadside drug testing service (9% in 2023; p=0.299) (Figure 54).

Figure 54: Self-reported testing, and driving over the (perceived) legal limit for alcohol or three hours following illicit drug use, among those who had driven in the past six months, Sydney, NSW, 2007-2024



Note. Computed of those who had driven a vehicle in the past six months. Questions about driving behaviour were first asked about in 2007. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Experience of Crime and Engagement with the Criminal Justice System

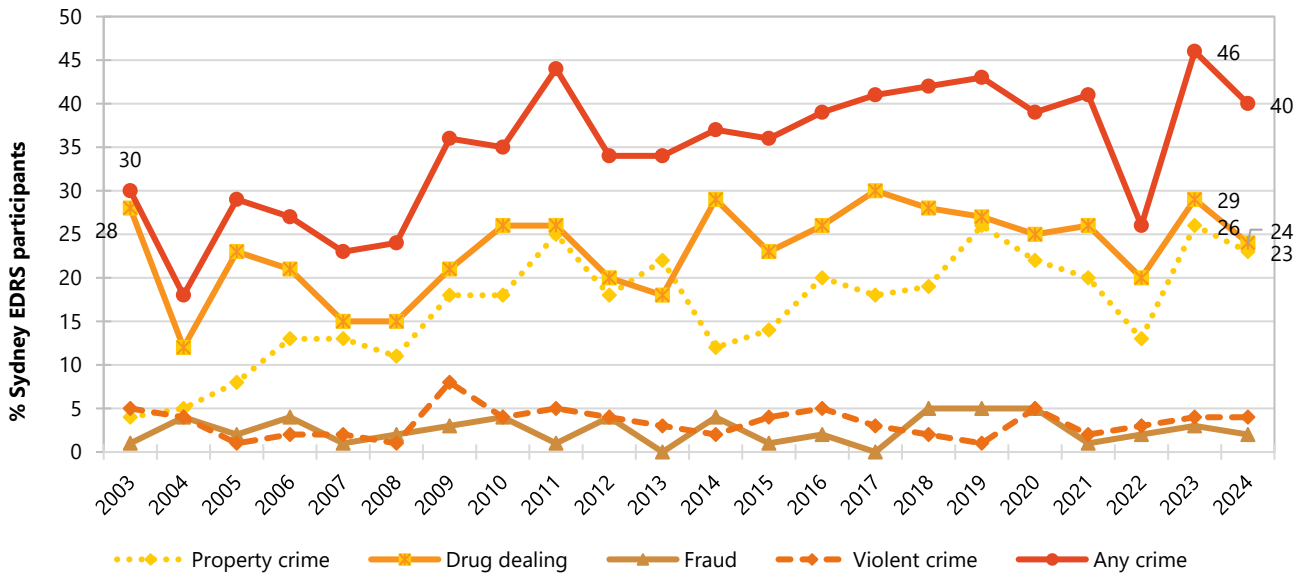
The percentage of participants reporting past month criminal activity has fluctuated considerably since monitoring commenced in 2003, ranging between 18% in 2004 and 46% in 2023. In 2024, 40% of the Sydney sample reported any criminal activity in the previous month, stable from 46% in 2023 (p=0.466). Drug dealing for cash profit (24%; 29% in 2023; p=0.514) and property crime (23%; 26% in 2023; p=0.735) were the two main forms of criminal activity in 2024 (Figure 55).

In 2024, seven per cent of participants reported being the victim of a crime involving violence (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.767) (Figure 56).

In 2024, almost one tenth (8%) of participants reported having been arrested in the 12 months preceding interview (10% in 2023; p=0.801) and few participants (n≤5) reported having ever been in prison (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.721) (Figure 57). Few participants (n≤5) reported reasons for arrest; therefore, further details are not reported. Please refer to the 2024 National EDRS Report for national trends, or contact the Drug Trends team for further information.

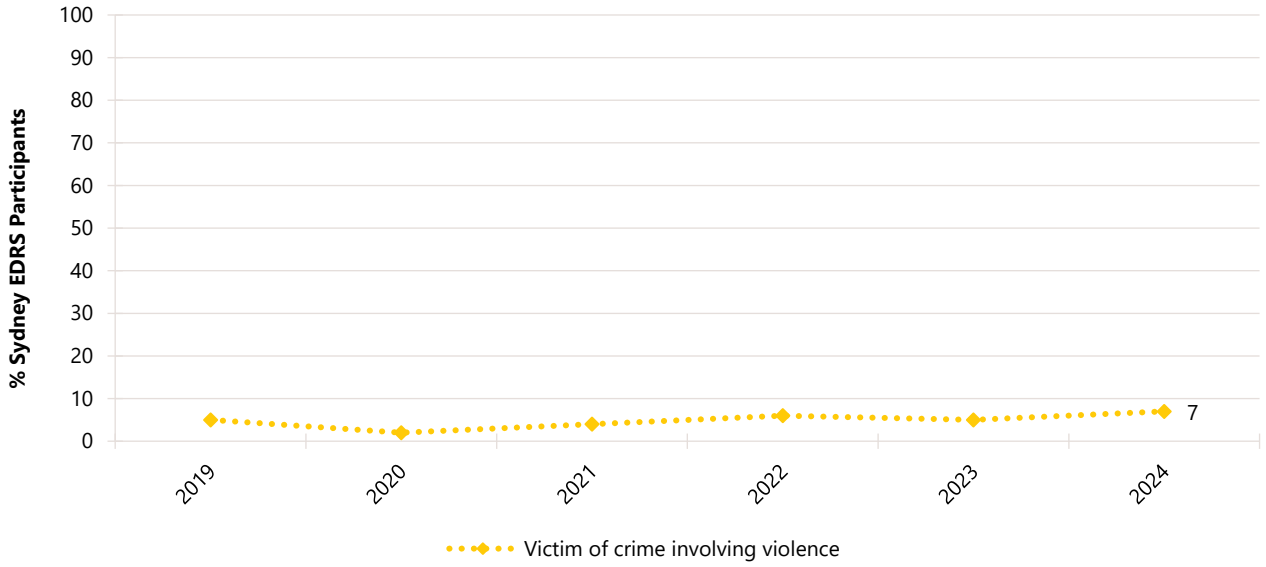
Almost one fifth (19%) of participants reported a drug-related encounter with police which did not result in charge or arrest in the past 12 months (25% in 2023; p=0.392) (Figure 57). This predominantly comprised being stopped and searched (53%; 68% in 2023; p=0.360), followed by being stopped for questioning (32%; 48% in 2023; p=0.360).

Figure 55: Self-reported criminal activity in the past month, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



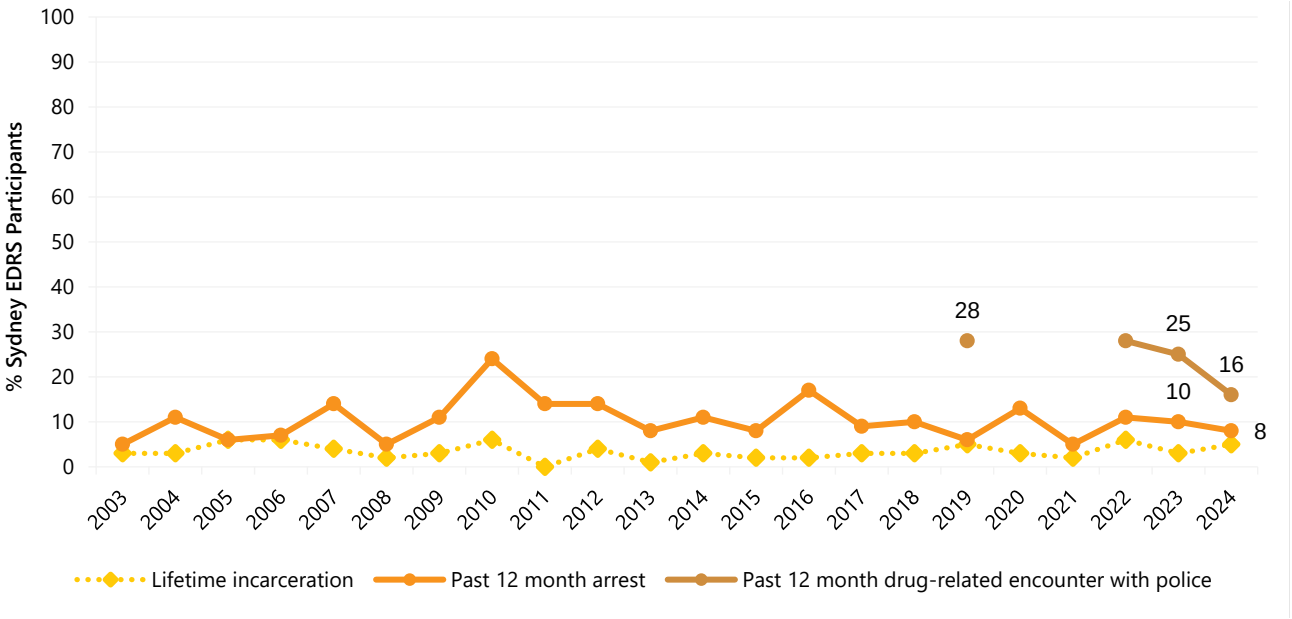
Note. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 56: Victim of crime involving violence in the past month, Sydney, NSW, 2019-2024



Note. Questions regarding being the victim of a crime involving violence were first asked in 2019. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Figure 57: Lifetime incarceration, and past 12 month arrest and drug-related encounters with police that did not result in arrest, Sydney, NSW, 2003-2024



Note. Data labels are only provided for the first and two most recent years of monitoring, however data are suppressed in the figure and data tables where n≤5 responded. For historical numbers, please refer to the data tables. Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in figure; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.

Modes of Purchasing Illicit or Non-Prescribed Drugs

In interviewing and reporting, 'online sources' were defined as either surface or darknet marketplaces.

Purchasing Approaches

In 2024, the most popular means of arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview was face-to-face (66%; 64% in 2023; p=0.878), followed closely by social networking or messaging applications (64%; 76% in 2023; p=0.095). It is important to re-iterate that this refers to people *arranging the purchase* of illicit or non-prescribed drugs. This captures participants who messaged friends or known dealers on Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp, for example, to organise the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs, which may have then been picked up in person (Median Table 10).

Among those who had used social networking or messaging applications to arrange the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview, the most commonly used social networking or messaging apps were Signal (47%), Telegram (42%) and Snapchat (39%), with substances mostly obtained from a known dealer/vendor (79%), followed by a friend/relative/partner/colleague (65%). Among those who had used social networking or messaging apps to arrange the purchase of drugs in 2024 and responded (n=63), 46% reported that the person they had obtained drugs from advertised the sale of illicit drug/s via these platforms.

Buying and Selling Drugs Online

Few participants (n≤5) had arranged the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs via the surface web or darknet in the past year (n≤5 in 2023; p=0.681 and 7% in 2023; p=0.370, respectively) (Median Table 10). However, one third (34%) of participants reported ever obtaining illicit drugs through someone who had purchased them on the surface or darknet, with 24% having done so in the last 12 months (28% in 2023; p=0.601).

In 2024, few participants (n≤5) reported that they had sold illicit drugs on the surface or darknet in the 12 months preceding interview (6% in 2023; p=0.118).

Source and Means of Obtaining Drugs

When asked about how they had received illicit drugs on any occasion in the last 12 months, the majority of participants reported face-to-face (94%; 99% in 2023; p=0.118), followed by via a collection point (defined as a predetermined location where a drug will be left for later collection) (21%; 23% in 2023; p=0.859). Receiving illicit drugs via post remained stable (12%; 11% in 2023) (Median Table 10).

Eighty four per cent of participants in 2024 reported obtaining illicit drugs from a friend/relative/partner/colleague (78% in 2023; p=0.365) in the past year, with two thirds (66%) reporting a known dealer/vender (71% in 2023; p=0.439) (Median Table 10).

Median Table 10: Means of purchasing and obtaining illicit drugs in the past 12 months, Sydney, NSW, 2019-2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
% Purchasing approaches in the last 12 months^#	N=100	N=102	N=98	N=98	N=98	**N=100**
Face-to-face	85	61	64	68	64	**66**
Surface web	8	11	7	7	-	**-**
Darknet market	13	11	7	8	7	**-**
Social networking or messaging applications	79	68	80	62	76	**64**
Text messaging	70	58	34	60	45	**51**
Phone call	43	40	29	30	30	**27**
Grew/made my own	-	-	-	-	0	**-**
Other	0	0	0	-	0	**0**
Means of obtaining drugs in the last 12 months^~	N=100	N=103	N=98	N=98	N=97	**N=99**
Face-to-face	99	95	94	95	99	**94**
Collection point	8	23	11	38	23	**21**
Post	14	16	13	17	11	**12**
% Source of drugs in the last 12 months^	N=100	N=101	N=98	N=99	N=97	**N=99**
Friend/relative/partner/colleague	8	76	82	75	78	**84**
Known dealer/vendor	20	73	74	78	71	**66**
Unknown dealer/vendor	55	45	38	30	30	**26**

Note. ^ participants could endorse multiple responses. #This refers to people *arranging the purchase* of illicit or non-prescribed drugs. This captures participants who messaged friends or known dealers on Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp, for example, to organise the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs, which may have then been picked up in person. ~ The face-to-face response option in 2021 was combined by those responding, 'I went and picked up the drugs', 'The drugs were dropped off to my house by someone' and/or 'Was opportunistic – I arranged and collected at the same time (e.g., at an event/club.)' Statistical significance for 2023 versus 2024 presented in table; *p<0.050; **p<0.010; ***p<0.001. Please refer to Table 1 for a guide to table/figure notes.