

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, New South Wales (NSW). The results are not representative of all people who use illicit drugs, nor of use in the general population. **Data were collected in 2025 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 2020-2025 samples, relative to previous years.**

Sample Characteristics

In 2025, the Sydney EDRS sample (n=101) was largely similar to the 2024 sample. Gender and median age remained stable, with the 2025 sample predominantly comprising young (median age 31 years; 27 years in 2024) males (70%; 66% in 2024). Current accommodation significantly changed between 2024 and 2025 ($p=0.016$), with half (50%) reporting living in a rental house/flat (49% in 2024), 15% reporting living in own house/flat (11% in 2024) and one fifth (21%) reporting living in their parents/family home (34% in 2024). Median weekly income and current employment status remained stable, relative to 2024, with participants reporting a median weekly income of \$750 (\$900 in 2024) and almost two fifths (38%) reporting being employed full time at the time of the interview (34% in 2024). The reported drug of choice remained stable in 2025, relative to 2024, with the highest percentage of participants nominating ecstasy as their drug of choice (32%; 28% in 2024). However, the drug used most often in the past month significantly changed between 2024

and 2025 ($p=0.004$), with one third (34%) nominating alcohol as the drug used most often, an increase from 12% in 2024.

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy

Recent use of any non-prescribed ecstasy remained high and stable in 2025 (92%; 96% in 2024), with frequency of use also remaining stable at a median of 7 days (7 days in 2024). Capsules (61%) remained the most common form of ecstasy consumed in the six months preceding interview, followed by pills (43%), crystal (42%), and powder (17%) - with a significant decrease observed in the latter, relative to 2024 (29%; $p=0.048$). The price, perceived purity and perceived availability of non-prescribed ecstasy pills, capsules, crystal and powder all remained stable in 2025, relative to 2024.

Methamphetamine

Recent use of any methamphetamine has declined since monitoring commenced, although has stabilised in more recent years. In 2025, almost one third (30%) of the sample reported recent use, stable relative to 2024 (26%). The largest percentage of participants reported using methamphetamine crystal (18%), followed by powder (14%). Median days of use in the preceding six months remained stable for both forms. The price, perceived purity and perceived availability of methamphetamine crystal and powder also remained stable between 2024 and 2025.

Non-Prescribed Pharmaceutical Stimulants

In 2025, half (50%) of the Sydney sample reported recent use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants, stable relative to 2024 (46%). There was a non-significant increase in median days of use in the preceding six months, doubling from five days in 2024 to twelve days in 2025 ($p=0.050$). Among those who reported recent use, snorting as a route of

administration significantly decreased (14%; 39% in 2024; $p=0.007$). A significant change in the perceived availability of non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants was observed between 2024 and 2025 ($p=0.002$), with more participants perceiving non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants to be 'very easy' (58%; 21% in 2024) to obtain.

Cocaine

In 2025, the majority (81%) of the sample reported recent cocaine use, stable from 2024 (87%). Participants reported using cocaine on a median of six days in the six months preceding interview (4 days in 2024). Consistent with previous years, the price per gram of cocaine remained stable at \$300. Perceived purity and perceived availability also remained stable between 2024 and 2025, with 37% perceiving purity to be 'high' (38% in 2024) and 56% perceiving that cocaine was 'very easy' to obtain (39% in 2024).

Cannabis and/or Cannabinoid-Related Products

Almost three fifths (58%) of the sample reported recent use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid related products in 2025, a significant decrease from 2024 (74%; $p=0.028$). Among those who reported recent non-prescribed use, the per cent reporting recent use of bush cannabis significantly increased in 2025 (48%; 27% in 2024; $p=0.024$), while recent use of hydroponic cannabis remained stable (68%; 78% in 2024). In 2025, the perceived potency of hydroponic cannabis changed significantly relative to 2024 ($p=0.015$), with 83% of participants reporting that it was of 'high' potency (52% in 2024). The median price of one gram of bush cannabis significantly decreased to \$10 in 2025 ($n \leq 5$ in 2024; $p=0.017$), while the price for one gram of non-prescribed hydroponic cannabis remained stable (\$11; \$20 in 2024).

Non-Prescribed Ketamine, LSD and DMT

Recent use of non-prescribed ketamine (63%), LSD (37%) and DMT (7%) remained stable in 2025, relative to 2024. Median days of LSD and DMT use remained low and stable in 2025, however, median days of ketamine use significantly increased, from 3 days in 2024 to 6 days in 2025 ($p=0.024$). The price, perceived purity and perceived availability of ketamine and LSD remained mostly stable in 2025, relative to 2024. There was, however, a significant change in the perceived availability of ketamine ($p=0.003$), with more participants reporting that it 'very easy' to obtain in 2025 (55%; 20% in 2024).

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

In 2025, 12% of the Sydney sample reported recent use of any NPS (excluding plant-based NPS), stable relative to 2024 (15%). The most common NPS used comprised any 2C substance (9%; 8% in 2024).

Other Drugs

The per cent of the 2025 Sydney sample reporting recent use of non-prescribed benzodiazepines (17%), non-prescribed mushrooms/psilocybin (45%) and nitrous oxide (35%) remained stable relative to 2024. One third (32%) of the sample reported recent use of amyl nitrite in 2025, a significant decrease relative to 2024 (46%; $p=0.045$) and one tenth (9%) reported recent use of any unknown substance, also a significantly decrease relative to 2024 (22%; $p=0.019$). Almost three fifths (57%) reported recent non-prescribed e-cigarette use in 2025 and 67% reported tobacco use, both stable from 2024 (67% and 63%, respectively). Frequency of tobacco use, significantly increased, from a median of 30 days in 2024 to 120 days in 2025 ($p=0.010$). A significant increase was also observed in the use of illicit tobacco with 57% of respondents reporting recent use (22% in 2024; $p<0.001$). One fifth (20%) of the Sydney sample reported

recently using nicotine pouches, stable from 2024 (20%).

Drug-Related Harms and Other Behaviours

Polysubstance use and bingeing

On the last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use, 87% of the sample reported concurrent use of two or more drugs (excluding tobacco and e-cigarettes).

One quarter (27%) of participants reported using stimulants 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 11.9 in 2024 to 10.4 in 2025 ($p<0.001$), although the per cent scoring ≥ 8 , indicative of hazardous alcohol use, remained stable (59%; 70% in 2024).

Past year non-fatal stimulant and depressant overdose remained stable in 2025 (13% and 12%, respectively), relative to 2024.

No participants reported past month injecting drug use in 2025 ($n\leq 5$ in 2024).

Drug checking and naloxone awareness

Almost one third (32%) 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 (24% in 2024).

In 2025, the majority (74%) of participants reported that they had heard of naloxone, of which two fifths (43%) reported that they had ever obtained naloxone, a significant increase relative to 2024 (23%; $p=0.022$).

Sexual activity, mental health and health service access

Almost two thirds (64%) of the Sydney sample reported engaging in sexual activity in the past four weeks, of which 73% reported using

alcohol and/or other drugs prior to or while engaging in sexual activity.

Almost half (48%) of the Sydney sample self-reported that they had experienced a mental health problem in the preceding six months, with depression (60%) and anxiety (49%) the most commonly reported problems. Ten per cent reported a score of ≥ 30 on the K10, indicating very high psychological distress.

Two fifths (40%) of participants reported accessing any health service for alcohol and/or drug support in the six months preceding interview, most commonly from a GP (17%) and a peer-based harm reduction service (12%).

Driving, contact with police and modes of purchasing drugs

Among recent drivers, 19% reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol, and 32% reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the past six months, both stable from 2024.

Twenty-nine per cent of participants reported 'any' crime in the month prior to interview. Ten per cent reported past year arrest, while 21% reported a drug-related encounter with police which did not result in charge or arrest (e.g., stopped and searched/questioned).

In 2025, the most popular means of arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview was social networking or messaging applications (76%; 64% in 2024), followed by face to face (68%; 66% in 2024). Most participants continued to report obtaining illicit drugs from a friend/relative/partner/colleague (78%; 84% in 2024).