

Executive Summary

The IDRS comprises a sentinel sample of people aged 18 years or older who injected illicit drugs ≥ 6 days in the preceding six months and resided in Brisbane/Gold Coast, Queensland. Participants were recruited via advertisements in needle and syringe programs and other harm reduction services, as well as via peer referral. The results are not representative of all people who use illicit drugs, nor of use in the general population.

Data were collected in June 2025. Interviews from 2020 onward were delivered face-to-face as well as via telephone, to reduce 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

The IDRS sample recruited from Brisbane/Gold Coast, Queensland (QLD) in 2025 (N=104) was consistent with the Brisbane/Gold Coast profile in previous years, whereby two thirds (65%) were male (75% in 2024), with a median age of 45 years (43 years in 2024). Eighty-one per cent of the sample were unemployed at the time of interview (85% in 2024), and most (87%) had received a government pension/allowance or benefit in the month prior to interview (90% in 2024). Current accommodation remained stable, with three fifths (60%; 62% in 2024) reporting residing in their own home (including renting), followed by one quarter (25%) reporting no fixed address (25% in 2024). Participants typically nominated methamphetamine as their drug of choice in 2025 (57%; 50% in 2024), followed by heroin (25%; 26% in 2024). Methamphetamine was also the drug injected most often in the past month (68%; 69% in 2024), followed by heroin (19%; 19% in 2024). Weekly or more frequent

use of methamphetamine crystal remained stable in 2025 (69%; 70% in 2024).

Heroin

Two fifths (39%) of the Brisbane/Gold Coast sample reported recent use of heroin in 2025, remaining stable from 37% in 2024. Frequency of use also remained stable at a median of 48 days in 2025 (48 days in 2024). Among those who reported recent use, white/off white rock continued to be the most commonly used form of heroin in 2025 (56%; 51% in 2024) and participants reported using 0.20 grams on an average day of consumption (0.20 grams in 2024). The price, perceived purity and perceived availability remained stable in 2025, relative to 2024.

Methamphetamine

Recent use of any methamphetamine has trended upwards over the past 10-15 years, largely driven by an increase in methamphetamine crystal use. In 2025, 88% reported any recent use, the highest per cent since monitoring commenced, though stable from 85% in 2024. Methamphetamine crystal continued to be the most commonly used form (88%; 85% in 2024), consistent since 2010, with participants reporting use on a median of 90 days (90 days in 2024). The median price for one point of crystal remained stable at \$50 (\$50 in 2024). Perceived purity and availability of methamphetamine crystal also remained stable between 2024 and 2025, with 31% of participants perceiving methamphetamine crystal as being 'high' in purity in 2025 (24% in 2024) and two thirds (64%) perceiving it as 'very easy' to obtain (67% in 2024).

Cocaine

In 2025, 29% of the sample reported recent use of cocaine, the highest per cent since monitoring commenced, although stable relative to 2024 (20%). Frequency of use

remained infrequent and stable at a median of three days in the past six months (2 days in 2024). Among those who reported recent use, most reported snorting (83%) as a route of administration (71% in 2024), followed by injecting (30%; 29% in 2024). The price, perceived purity and perceived availability of cocaine remained stable in 2025, relative to 2024.

Cannabis and/or Cannabinoid-Related Products

Three fifths (61%) of the sample reported recent use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products in 2025 (58% in 2024). Among those who reported recent use, hydroponic cannabis remained the most commonly used form (73%), although significantly decreased from 93% in 2024 ($p=0.006$). Few participants ($n\leq 5$) reported using CBD extract, THC extract, hashish, hash oil, or commercially prepared edibles. The price, perceived potency and perceived availability remained stable for both hydroponic and bush cannabis between 2024 and 2025.

Pharmaceutical Opioids

Recent non-prescribed use of pharmaceutical opioids has generally remained stable or declined over the past 5-15 years of monitoring. In 2025, recent non-prescribed use of methadone (7%; 8% in 2024), buprenorphine tablet (9%; 16% in 2024), buprenorphine-naloxone (7%; 13% in 2024), morphine (13%; 11% in 2024), oxycodone (12%; 16% in 2024), fentanyl ($n\leq 5$; $n\leq 5$ in 2024) and codeine ($n\leq 5$; $n\leq 5$ in 2024) remained low and stable in 2025, relative to 2024.

Other Drugs

Eight per cent of the sample reported recent use of any NPS in 2025 ($n\leq 5$ in 2024). Benzodiazepines remained the most common non-prescribed pharmaceutical drug reported by participants in 2025 (23%; 22% in 2024),

followed by pregabalin (21%; 13% in 2024). Recent use of tobacco remained high yet stable (83%; 83% in 2024), however recent use of illicit tobacco increased significantly in 2025 (68%; 51% in 2024; $p=0.016$). Illicit e-cigarettes were used by one third (34%) of the sample in 2025 (34% in 2024) on a median of 180 days (i.e., daily) in the six months preceding interview in 2025. One quarter (28%) of the sample reported recent use of GHB/GBL/1,4-BD, the highest per cent since monitoring commenced, although stable relative to 2024 (25%). Use of all other monitored drugs remained stable.

Drug-Related Harms and Other Behaviours

Polysubstance use and bingeing

In 2025, two thirds (66%) of the sample reported using two or more drugs on the day preceding interview (excluding tobacco and e-cigarettes).

Almost four fifths (78%) of the sample had binged on one or more drugs for 48 hours or more in the six months preceding interview, a significant increase from 2024 (64%; $p=0.048$).

Injecting behaviours and equipment access

In 2025, 10% reported receptive sharing of a needle or syringe in the past month (8% in 2024) and 18% reported distributive sharing, a significant increase from 8% in 2024 ($p=0.040$). One third (35%) of the sample reported they had re-used their own needles in the past month (33% in 2024).

Fifty-four per cent of the sample reported experiencing injection-related problems in the past month, a significant increase relative to 2024 (38%; $p=0.026$), most commonly nerve damage (28%), and infection/abscess (28%).

Overdose, naloxone and drug checking

One quarter (27%) reported overdosing on any drug in the preceding year, stable from 24% in 2024. Fourteen per cent reported a non-fatal opioid overdose (14% in 2024), and 11% reported a non-fatal stimulant overdose (10% in 2024).

In 2025, 90% of the sample reported awareness of naloxone, a significant increase relative to 2024 (76%; $p=0.013$) and 85% reported awareness of the take-home naloxone program, also a significant increase relative to 2024 (70%; $p=0.024$). Fifty-one per cent of the sample had obtained naloxone in the past year (40% in 2024).

One quarter (24%) of the sample reported that they or someone else had ever tested the content and/or purity of their illicit drugs in Australia in the past year (15% in 2024).

Dependence, drug treatment and HCV

In 2025, 34% of male participants obtained an AUDIT-C score of ≥ 4 , and 44% of female participants obtained a score of ≥ 3 , indicative of hazardous alcohol use.

Sixty-five per cent of participants who reported recent opioid use scored ≥ 5 on the Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS) and 64% of participants reporting recent methamphetamine use scored ≥ 4 , indicating possible dependence on these substances.

Forty-one per cent of participants reported receiving any drug treatment in 2025, stable relative to 2024 (40%). Thirteen per cent reported being unable to access treatment (11% in 2024).

Half (47%) of the sample reported that they had received a hepatitis C virus (HCV) antibody test (50% in 2024) and 28% reported receiving an RNA test in the past year, a significant decrease from 48% in 2024 ($p=0.008$).

Sexual activity, mental health and health service access

Half (47%) of the sample reported engaging in sexual activity in the past four weeks (60% in 2024), and 33% reported a sexual health check in the preceding six months (27% in 2024).

Self-reported mental health problems significantly increased in 2025 (72%; 56% in 2024; $p=0.023$) and was the highest per cent observed since monitoring commenced. Depression (59%) and anxiety (52%) were the most common mental health problems. Two-fifths (43%) of the sample obtained a score of ≥ 30 on the K10 scale, indicating very high psychological distress (36% in 2024).

Most (90%) participants reported accessing any health service for alcohol and/or drug support in the six months preceding interview, although this was a significant decrease from 98% in 2024 ($p=0.033$).

Driving, contact with police and modes of purchasing drugs

Of those who had driven recently ($n=42$), 77% reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug, stable relative to 2024 (80%) and few participants ($n \leq 5$) reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol ($n \leq 5$ in 2024).

Half (50%) of the sample reported engaging in 'any' crime in the past month in 2025 (39% in 2024), with property crime significantly increasing (40%; 20% in 2024; $p=0.004$). One third (33%) of the sample had been arrested in the past year (35% in 2024), and 52% reported a drug-related encounter with police which did not result in charge or arrest (46% in 2024).

In 2025, the most popular means of arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview was face-to-face (79%; 78% in 2024).