

Executive Summary

The Melbourne Victoria (VIC) EDRS comprises a sentinel sample of people who regularly use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants, recruited via social media and word-of mouth in Melbourne, VIC. 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

The EDRS sample (N=100) recruited from Melbourne in 2025 was similar to the sample in 2024 and in previous years. Gender remained stable between 2024 and 2025, with 55% identifying as male (46% in 2024), and participants had a median age of 28 years. The per cent of respondents that reported being a current student (28%; 39% in 2024) or holding a tertiary qualification (68%; 60% in 2024) remained stable. Employment status remained stable in 2025; 36% reported fulltime work (23% in 2024) and 43% reported part time/casual work (56% in 2024). The median weekly income significantly increased to \$1050 in 2025 (IQR=550–1500; \$600 in 2024; IQR=392–1029; $p<0.001$). There was a significant change in drug of choice between 2024 and 2025 ($p<0.001$), with fewer participants nominating ketamine (6%; 20% in 2024) and more nominating alcohol (18%; 0% in 2024) and cocaine (24%; 19% in 2024) as their drug of choice. Drug used most often in the month preceding interview also changed significantly in 2025 ($p<0.001$), with fewer participants nominating ecstasy (8%; 15% in

2024) and cannabis (19%; 31% in 2024) and more nominating alcohol (39%; 6% in 2024).

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy

Recent use of any non-prescribed ecstasy in the six months prior to interview remained stable in 2025 relative to 2024 (94%; 95% in 2024). Pills (52%) and capsules (56%) remained the most commonly used forms of non-prescribed ecstasy. Frequency of use remained stable for all four forms of non-prescribed ecstasy, although there was a significant increase in the per cent of participants reporting weekly or more frequent use of ecstasy capsules ($n\leq 5$; 0% in 2024; $p=0.020$). The perceived availability of non-prescribed ecstasy pills, capsules, crystal and powder remained stable in 2025. There was a significant change in the perceived purity of ecstasy capsules in 2025 relative to 2024, with 40% of the sample perceiving ecstasy capsules to be of 'medium' purity (28% in 2024) and a further 19% nominating 'low' purity (9% in 2024). In 2025, the median reported price of all forms of non-prescribed ecstasy remained stable relative to 2024.

Methamphetamine

Twenty-nine per cent of the Melbourne sample reported recent use of any methamphetamine, stable compared to 2024 (29%). Frequency of use also remained stable, with participants reporting a median of 5 days in 2025 (6 days in 2024). One fifth (20%) reported recent use of methamphetamine powder, while 10% reported recent use of methamphetamine crystal. The perceived price, purity and availability of methamphetamine remained stable between 2024 and 2025.

Non-Prescribed Pharmaceutical Stimulants

The percentage of participants reporting any recent non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulant (e.g., dexamphetamine, methylphenidate, modafinil) use has increased since the commencement of monitoring, from

9% in 2007, peaking at 66% in 2022, and remaining stable at this level since (65% in 2025).

Cocaine

The percentages of participants reporting recent use of cocaine remained stable at 84% in 2025 (80% in 2024). Frequency of use of cocaine in the six months prior to interview remained stable at 9 days in 2025 (8 days in 2024). One fifth (19%) of those who had recently used cocaine reported weekly or more frequent use. Perceived purity and perceived availability for cocaine remained stable between 2024 and 2025. The median price of cocaine in 2025 was \$350 per gram (\$350 in 2024; $p=0.001$).

Cannabis and/or Cannabinoid-Related Products

Sixty-five per cent of the sample reported any recent use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products in 2025, stable compared to 2024 (72%). In 2025, 22% of the Melbourne sample reported daily use of cannabis (26% in 2024). There was a significant decrease in the number of participants reporting swallowing (23%; 44% in 2024; $p=0.013$) or inhaling/vaporising ($n\leq 5$; 28% in 2024; $p=0.003$) cannabis in 2025.

Non-Prescribed Ketamine, LSD and DMT

Recent use of non-prescribed ketamine remained stable at 76% in 2025, although frequency of use in the previous six months significantly decreased from a median of 10 days in 2024 to 6 days in 2025 ($p=0.047$). Recent use of LSD remained stable in 2025 (38%; 38% in 2024) as did frequency of use (2 days; 3 days in 2024). Eleven per cent of participants reported recent use of DMT in 2025 and frequency of use remained low at 3 days.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

In 2025, 17% of the sample reported recent use of any NPS (including plant-based NPS). Of recently used NPS, drugs that mimic psychedelic drugs were the most commonly reported (9%), particularly any 2C substance (7%).

Other Drugs

Recent use and frequency of use of all other drugs remained stable between 2024 and 2025. Recent use of nicotine pouches was reported by 20% of the sample (17% in 2024), with a median frequency of use of 3 days (3 days in 2024).

Drug-Related Harms and Other Behaviours

Polysubstance use and bingeing

Most participants (93%) reported concurrent use of two or more drugs on the last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use (excluding tobacco and e-cigarettes). Of those who responded, 24% reported using stimulants or related drugs for 48 hours or more continuously without sleep in the 6 months preceding interview (29% in 2024).

Dependence, injecting and overdose

Three quarters (73%) of participants obtained a score of eight or more on the AUDIT, indicative of hazardous use (77% in 2024).

In 2025, 11% of those who reported recent ecstasy use obtained an SDS score of 3 or more (23% in 2024), whilst 21% of participants reporting recent methamphetamine use obtained a score of 4 or more (25% in 2024), indicating possible dependence on these substances.

Past year non-fatal stimulant overdose (16%; 15% in 2024) and non-fatal depressant overdose (21%; 29% in 2024) remained stable in 2025 relative to 2024.

Past month injecting drug use remained low in 2025 ($n \leq 5$).

Drug checking and naloxone awareness

Two fifths of the sample (40%) reported having tested the contents of their drugs in the past year, stable relative to 30% in 2024. Participants most commonly reported using colorimetric or reagent test kits (66%), followed by event-based face-to-face drug checking services (29%).

In 2025, 85% reported that they had ever heard of naloxone, stable relative to 2024 (76%), of whom 88% were able to correctly identify the purpose of naloxone (92% in 2024). There was a significant increase in the number of participants who reported ever obtaining naloxone (41%; 19% in 2024; $p=0.003$) and obtaining naloxone in the past year (34%; 15% in 2024; $p=0.008$).

Sexual activity, mental health and health service access

Three quarters (75%) of the sample reported engaging in some form of sexual activity in the four weeks prior to interview, of which 61% reported use of alcohol/drugs before or during sex. In 2025, three fifths (59%) of the sample reported ever having a HIV test, with one fifth (20%) reporting being tested in the six months preceding interview. One quarter (27%) of the sample reported having a sexual health check-up in the six months prior to interview.

Mental health remained stable relative to 2024, with 55% reporting experiencing a mental health problem in the six months preceding interview (63% in 2024), with depression (69%) and anxiety (63%) most commonly reported. Fifteen per cent of the sample screened positive for 'very high' psychological distress.

Eighteen per cent of participants reported accessing any health service for alcohol and/or drug support in the six months preceding interview.

Driving, contact with police and modes of purchasing drugs

Amongst those who had recently driven, 11% reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol and 31% reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the six months prior to interview, a significant decrease from 49% in 2024 ($p=0.028$). Cannabis was the most commonly reported drug used prior to driving in 2025 at 38%.

One third (32%) of the sample reported 'any' crime in the past month, a significant decrease from 52% in 2024 ($p=0.008$). Property crime was the most common form of criminal activity reported (26%; 37% in 2024). Reports of drug dealing also decreased significantly, from 29% in 2024 to 14% in 2025 ($p=0.015$). Few participants ($n \leq 5$) reported having been arrested in the 12 months preceding interview, and 11% reported a drug-related encounter with police which did not result in charge or arrest.

Social networking applications were the most common method in which participants arranged the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview (81%; 77% in 2024). The majority (89%) of participants reported obtaining illicit drugs from a friend/relative/partner/colleague in 2025. Obtaining drugs face-to-face was the most common means of collecting drugs (100%), although there was a significant decline in those reporting obtaining drugs at a collection point (13%; 32% in 2025; $p=0.001$).