

## Executive Summary

The IDRS sample is a sentinel group of people aged 18 years or older who injected illicit drugs  $\geq 6$  days in the preceding six months and resided in Perth, Western Australia (WA). Participants were recruited via advertisements in needle and syringe programs, pharmacies providing Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT), 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 between June and July 2025. Interviews from 2020 were delivered face-to-face as well as via telephone, while in 2022, they were only conducted via telephone to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. All interviews prior to 2020 were conducted face-to-face. From 2023 they were again delivered face-to-face as well as via telephone. This methodological change should be factored into all comparisons of data from the 2020-2025 samples relative to previous years.**

### Sample Characteristics

The 2025 Perth sample (N=100) was broadly consistent with 2024; 61% male (69% in 2024), median age 48 years (46 years in 2024). Unemployment remained high (88%; 82% in 2024) and most received government benefits in the prior month (95%; 87% in 2024). Median weekly income was \$475 in 2025 (\$450 in 2024). There was a significant change in accommodation type in 2025 relative to 2024 ( $p=0.042$ ), with fewer reported living in private house/flat (49%; 58% in 2024) and more in shelters/refuge (20%; 7% in 2024). Participants typically endorsed heroin as their drug of choice in 2025 (55%; 66% in 2024) followed by methamphetamine (37%; 24% in 2024). Heroin was the drug most injected in the last month (51%; 56% in 2024), followed by methamphetamine (45%; 39% in 2024).

### Heroin

The percentage of respondents who reported recent use of heroin remained stable between 2025 (65%) and 2024 (70%). Perceived purity and availability of heroin also remained stable, however, there was a significant decrease in the median price of one point of heroin from \$100 in 2024 to \$90 in 2025 ( $p<0.001$ ).

### Methamphetamine

There was a significant increase in the median typical amount of powder used per day in 2025, participants reported using 0.20 grams compared to 0.10 grams in 2024 ( $p=0.042$ ). The perceived purity and availability of methamphetamine crystal and powder remained stable between 2025 and 2024. However, the reported median price of methamphetamine crystal decreased from \$500 a gram in 2024 to \$300 a gram in 2025 ( $p<0.001$ ).

### Cocaine

In 2025, recent use of cocaine remained stable at 13% (9% in 2024), and was used on a median of three days (2 days in 2024). In 2025, the median typical daily use was one gram, a significant increase from 0.10 grams in 2024 ( $p=0.026$ ). The perceived purity significantly change in 2025 relative to 2024, with 78% of participants responding 'low' (0% in 2024;  $p=0.003$ ).

### Cannabis and/or Cannabinoid-Related Products

Recent use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products remained stable, with 66% of participants reporting recent use in 2025 (60% in 2024). In 2025, 27% of participants reported daily use, a significant decrease from 45% in 2024 ( $p=0.045$ ). Hydroponic cannabis remained the form most commonly used (89%; 88% in 2024), followed by bush cannabis (42%; 32% in 2024). Perceived purity, availability, and price of hydroponic and bush cannabis remained stable between 2025 and 2024.

## Pharmaceutical Opioids

No significant differences in terms of non-prescribed recent use, nor frequency of use, were observed for methadone, buprenorphine-naloxone, morphine, codeine, or tapentadol between 2025 and 2024. There was a significant decrease in any (prescribed or non-prescribed) recent use of buprenorphine tablets in 2025 (0%) compared to 2024 (8%;  $p=0.007$ ). Additionally, there was a significant decrease in the participants reporting any (non-prescribed or prescribed) recent use of tramadol in 2025 ( $n\leq 5$ ) compared to 2024 (21%;  $p=0.001$ ).

## Other Drugs

There was a significant increase in the recent use of any NPS in 2025 (6%) relative to 2024 (0%;  $p=0.013$ ). Alcohol use continued trending downward over the course of monitoring, with 53% reporting recent use in 2025 compared to 80% in 2000. While tobacco use has remained consistently high, but stable over the period of monitoring, with 89% reporting recent use in 2025 (81% in 2024). However, there was a significant increase in the recent use of illicit tobacco in 2025 (61%; 23% in 2024;  $p<0.001$ ). Use of illicit e-cigarettes remained stable in 2025, with 30% reporting recent use (34% in 2024;  $p=0.548$ ). Daily use remained consistent in 2025 (11%; 37% in 2024;  $p=0.614$ ). Frequency of GHB/GBL/1,4-BD use remained stable in 2025 (7 days; 6 days in 2024). However, there was a significant increase in participants reporting recent use of GHB/GBL/1,4-BD in 2025 (27%) relative to 2024 (11%;  $p=0.005$ ).

## Drug-Related Harms and Other Behaviours

### *Polysubstance use and bingeing*

In 2025, 68% of the sample reported using two or more drugs (excluding tobacco and e-cigarettes) on the day preceding interview.

Fifty-eight per cent of the sample had binged on one or more drugs for 48 hours or more in the six months preceding interview (47% in 2024).

### *Injecting behaviours and equipment access*

In 2025, few participants ( $n\leq 5$ ) reported receptive sharing of a needle or syringe (8% in 2024) and 7% reported distributive sharing in the past month (15% in 2024). Twenty-seven per cent of the sample reported that they had re-used their own needles in the past month, a significant decrease from 44% in 2024 ( $p=0.021$ ). Twenty per cent of the 2025 sample reported sharing other equipment (including swabs, water, tourniquets, etc.) (16% in 2024). There was a significant decrease in the number of participants reporting using spoons/mixing containers when injecting in the month prior to the interview (52%; 73% in 2024;  $p=0.003$ ). Few participants ( $n\leq 5$ ) reported reusing any filters in the month prior to the interview, a significant decrease from 2024 (11%;  $p=0.049$ ).

Participant responses to the number of times they injected in the past month remained stable in 2025 (20 times) compared to 2024 (30 times).

### *Overdose, naloxone and drug checking*

Twenty-two per cent of participants reported experiencing a non-fatal overdose in the 12 months preceding interview on any drug (19% in 2024), with 14% reporting a past year non-fatal opioid overdose (18% in 2024). In 2025, 8% of participants reported a non-fatal stimulant overdose in the 12 months preceding the interview, a significant increase from 2024 ( $n\leq 5$ ;  $p=0.018$ ).

The number of respondents who reported having accessed naloxone in the past year remained stable (59%; 58% in 2024). The number of respondents who reported receiving training in naloxone administration in the last year remained stable (28%; 21% in 2024). The number of participants who

reported that they had ever resuscitated someone using naloxone remained stable (51%; 41% in 2024).

In 2025, 10% of participants reported that they or someone else had tested the contents and/or purity of their illicit drugs in Australia in the past year (7% in 2024).

### *Dependence, treatment and Hepatitis C*

Fifty-eight percent of participants scored five or above on the Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS; 70% in 2024), indicating possible dependence relating to opioids, and 49% scored four or above (41% in 2024), indicating possible dependence relating to methamphetamine.

Two fifths (42%) of the sample reported being in any drug treatment for their substance use (43% in 2024), with methadone continuing to be the most common treatment received in 2025 (21%; 18% in 2024). Nine per cent of participants reported being unable to access treatment in the past year (17% in 2024)

In 2025, two fifths (41%) of participants reported that they had received a hepatitis C virus (HCV) antibody test in the past year (52% in 2024), while 8% had received a PCR or RNA test, a significant decrease from 38% in 2024 ( $p<0.001$ ).

### *Sexual activity, mental health and health service access*

Fifty-six per cent of the sample reported engaging in sexual activity in the past month, a significant increase relative to 2024 (40%;  $p=0.037$ ).

Self-reported mental health problems in the past six months remained stable in 2025 (51%; 47% in 2024). The two most commonly reported problems were depression (70%; 62% in 2024) and anxiety (54%; 64% in 2024).

The K10 score showed significant change from 2024 to 2025 ( $p=0.028$ ), with 23% of

participants scoring 'low' (12% in 2024) and 8% scoring moderate (21% in 2024).

There was a significant increase in the number of participants that reported accessing any health service for alcohol and/or drug (AOD) support in the six months preceding interview in 2025 (94%; 81% in 2024;  $p=0.007$ ). Primary services reported by participants for AOD support in 2025 were pharmacies (75%; 38% in 2024;  $p<0.001$ ) followed by NSPs (69%; 63% in 2024)

### *Driving, contact with police and modes of purchasing illicit drugs*

Seventy-one per cent of those who had driven recently reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the past six months (81% in 2024) and 11% of participants reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol ( $n\leq 5$  in 2024).

Fifty-three per cent of participants reported engaging in 'any' crime in the past month in 2025 (47% in 2024), with 22% arrested in the past year (20% in 2024), and 51% reporting a lifetime prison history (48% in 2024). Almost one quarter (23%) of participants reported being a victim of a violent crime in the past month in 2025, a significant increase relative to 2024 (6%;  $p<0.001$ )

In 2025, the most popular means of arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding the interview was face-to-face (73%; 72% in 2024).