

Executive Summary

The EDRS comprises a sentinel sample of people who regularly use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants, recruited via social media and word-of-mouth across each capital city of Australia. The results are not representative of all people who use illicit drugs, nor of use in the general population. **Data were collected in 2026 from March-July. Interviews from 2020 onwards were delivered face-to-face as well as via telephone and videoconference; all interviews prior to 2020 were conducted face-to-face. This methodological change should be factored into all comparisons of data from the 2020-2026 samples relative to previous years.**

Sample Characteristics

In 2026, the national EDRS sample (n=698) remained largely similar to the sample in 2025. Specifically, gender identity (59% male; 57% in 2025) and median age (25 years; 26 years in 2025) remained stable. Current employment status also remained stable, with most participants employed on a part time/casual (37%; 39% in 2025) or full time (31%; 29% in 2025) basis, although the median weekly income significantly increased, from \$700 in 2025 to \$890 in 2026 ($p=0.002$). Drug of choice significantly changed ($p<0.001$), with more participants nominating cocaine (20%; 13% in 2025) and fewer reporting cannabis (16%; 23% in 2025) as their drugs of choice in 2026. The drugs used most often in the month preceding interview also significantly changed in 2026 ($p=0.030$), with more participants reporting alcohol (38%; 29% in 2025) and fewer reporting cannabis (22%; 29% in 2025) as the drugs used most often.

Non-Prescribed Ecstasy

Recent use of any non-prescribed ecstasy remained stable in 2026 (94%; 93% in 2025), though the frequency of use significantly decreased (7 days; 8 days in 2025; $p=0.010$). Capsules remained the most commonly used form of non-prescribed ecstasy in 2026 (55%; 55% in 2025), followed by crystal (43%; 51% in 2025; $p=0.006$) which declined significantly relative to 2025. Recent use of pills (40%; 40% in 2025) and powder (21%; 23% in 2025) remained stable. The median price for both one non-prescribed ecstasy pill and one non-prescribed ecstasy capsule was \$25, stable from 2025. The median price for one point of non-prescribed ecstasy crystal significantly decreased, from \$30 in 2025 to \$20 in 2026 ($p=0.017$). Perceived purity for all forms of non-prescribed ecstasy remained stable in 2026, relative to 2025, though the perceived availability of ecstasy pills significantly changed between 2025 and 2026 ($p=0.011$), with more participants reporting 'easy' obtainment in 2026 (47%; 34% in 2025).

Methamphetamine

Recent methamphetamine use among this sample has declined over time, with a further decrease observed between 2025 (29%) and 2026 (20%) ($p<0.001$). Recent use of methamphetamine crystal (15%; 20% in 2025; $p=0.005$) and powder (6%; 12% in 2025; $p<0.001$) both significantly decreased in 2026, though frequency of use for both forms remained stable. Few participants ($n\leq 5$) reported using base in 2026. The price, perceived purity and perceived availability of methamphetamine powder and methamphetamine crystal remained stable between 2025 and 2026.

Non-Prescribed Pharmaceutical Stimulants

Past six month use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants remained stable in 2026 (53%; 55% in 2025), as did frequency of use (6 days). Among those who reported recent use, the majority reported using dexamfetamine (79%), followed by ritalin (33%). Median price (\$5 per 5mg tablet) and perceived availability both remained stable relative to 2025, with 80% reporting 'easy' or 'very easy' obtainment.

Cocaine

A significant increase was observed in recent use of cocaine, from 79% in 2025 to 84% in 2026 ($p=0.019$), the highest per cent observed over the reporting period. Median frequency of use also significantly increased, from 5 days in 2025 to 6 days in 2026 ($p<0.001$). The majority of participants who had recently consumed cocaine reported using powder cocaine (93%; 96% in 2025; $p=0.020$), with 14% reporting use of crack/rock cocaine (9% in 2025; $p=0.013$). Perceived purity and perceived availability of cocaine remained stable between 2025 and 2026. While the median price of a gram of cocaine remained stable at \$350, the distribution of reported prices differed significantly between 2025 and 2026 ($p=0.019$).

Cannabis and/or Cannabinoid-Related Products

Recent use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid-related products remained stable in 2026 (71%) relative to 2025 (72%), though frequency of use significantly decreased (30 days; 48 days in 2025; $p=0.005$). Among those who reported recent use in 2026, hydroponic cannabis was the most commonly used form of non-prescribed cannabis (62%), followed by bush cannabis (53%). The price, perceived potency and perceived availability of hydroponic cannabis remained stable in 2026

relative to 2025. However, the median price of a gram of bush cannabis significantly increased (\$20; \$15 in 2025; $p=0.040$), and the perceived availability significantly changed, relative to 2025 ($p<0.001$), with less participants reporting 'very easy' obtainment (60%; 79% in 2025), and more participants reporting 'easy' obtainment (34%; 19% in 2025).

Non-Prescribed Ketamine, LSD and DMT

Recent use of non-prescribed ketamine (53%; 52% in 2025), LSD (34%; 35% in 2025) and DMT (9%; 11% in 2025) remained stable in 2026, relative to 2025. Median frequency of use remained low for all three substances, though median days of non-prescribed ketamine significantly increased from 5 days of use in 2025 to 6 days in 2026 ($p=0.031$). Price, perceived purity and perceived availability for non-prescribed ketamine and LSD remained stable between 2025 and 2026.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

Recent use of any NPS (excluding plant-based NPS) remained stable in 2026 (10%; 13% in 2025), with any 2C substance the most commonly used NPS (6%; 4% in 2025).

Other Drugs

In 2026, 95% reported recent alcohol use, a significant increase relative to 2025 (92%; $p=0.031$), though frequency of use remained stable (30 days; 40 days in 2025). Recent use of any tobacco remained stable in 2026, relative to 2025 (72%, respectively), although there were significant decreases in median days of use (85 days; 120 days in 2025; $p=0.010$) and daily use (34%; 43% in 2025; $p=0.003$). The per cent reporting recent use of smoked or non-smoked illicit tobacco products significantly increased in 2026 (55%; 46% in 2025; $p<0.001$). Recent use of all other monitored drugs remained stable between 2025 and 2026.

Drug-Related Harms and Other Behaviours

Polysubstance use and bingeing

On the last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use, 88% of participants reported concurrent use of two or more drugs (excluding tobacco and e-cigarettes).

One quarter (25%) 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

Three quarters (75%) of participants obtained an AUDIT score of ≥ 8 , indicative of hazardous alcohol use. Seventeen per cent of those who reported recent ecstasy use obtained an SDS score of ≥ 3 , while 45% of participants reporting recent methamphetamine use obtained a score of ≥ 4 (32% in 2025; $p=0.032$), indicating possible dependence on these substances.

Past year non-fatal stimulant overdose remained stable in 2026 (15%; 18% in 2025), however, past year non-fatal depressant overdose significantly decreased (17%; 22% in 2025; $p=0.023$).

Past month injecting drug use remained low and stable (1%; 2% in 2025).

Drug checking and naloxone awareness

One third (33%) 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, a significant decrease from 39% in 2025 ($p=0.044$).

In 2026, 77% of the sample reported that they had ever heard of naloxone, of which 21% reported that they had obtained naloxone in the year prior to interview, both stable from 2025 (73% and 27%, respectively)

Sexual activity, mental health and health service access

Almost four fifths (77%) of the sample reported engaging in sexual activity in the past four weeks, of which 82% reported using alcohol and/or other drugs prior to or while engaging in sexual activity.

Fifty-five per cent of the sample self-reported that they had experienced a mental health problem in the preceding six months. Fifteen per cent reported a score of ≥ 30 on the K10, indicating very high psychological distress.

Twenty-eight per cent of participants reported accessing any health service for alcohol and/or drug support in the six months preceding interview. Current drug treatment engagement remained low (6%).

Driving, contact with police and modes of purchasing drugs

In 2026, the per cent of recent drivers who reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol (24%; 20% in 2025; $p<0.001$) or within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug (35%; 44% in 2025; $p=0.003$) both significantly changed relative to 2025, albeit in opposite directions.

Five per cent of participants reported past year arrest (8% in 2025; $p=0.029$), while 11% reported a drug-related encounter with police which did not result in arrest (15% in 2025; $p=0.035$).

In 2026, the most common means of arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview was face-to-face (75%), closely followed by social networking or messaging applications (73%). Most participants continued to report obtaining illicit drugs face-to-face (96%), primarily from a friend/relative/partner colleague (79%) or from a known dealer (67%).