

Executive Summary

The South Australia (SA) EDRS comprises a sentinel sample of people who regularly use ecstasy and other illicit stimulants recruited via social media, advertisements on websites and via word-of mouth in Adelaide, SA. The results are not representative of all people who use illicit drugs, nor of use in the general population. **Data were collected in 2020 from April-June: subsequent to COVID-19 restrictions on travel and gatherings in Australia. Interviews were also delivered via phone/videoconference rather than face-to-face. This should be factored into all comparisons of data from the 2020 sample relative to previous years.**

Sample Characteristics

The SA EDRS sample (N=101) recruited from Adelaide, South Australia, was very similar to the sample in 2019 and in previous years; the sample comprised predominantly young, educated males (63%), most of whom were living in a rental house/flat (49%) or residing with their parents/at their family home (40%) at the time of interview. Ecstasy and cannabis were the drugs of choice (31% and 28%, respectively), and were also the drugs used most often in the preceding month (18% and 52%, respectively) in 2020.

COVID-19 Impact

This brief section was included to summarise data collected specifically related to COVID-19 and associated restrictions; subsequent sections reflect standard annual reporting. Nine per cent of the sample had been tested for SARS-CoV-2, though no participants had been diagnosed with COVID-19. Since the beginning of March 2020, the vast majority of participants (97%) had practiced social distancing and 87% had undergone home isolation. Ecstasy was reported by 39% of participants as the drug most used in February 2020 (before COVID-19 restrictions), and by 18% in the month prior

to interview. In contrast, cannabis and alcohol were reported by 37% and 9%, respectively, as the drug most used in February, and 52% and 13%, respectively, in the month prior to interview. Overall, most participants reported no change in their use of various drugs, though 45% of participants reported a perceived decrease in ecstasy/MDMA and alcohol (40%) since March. The primary reason for a decrease in use of ecstasy/MDMA and alcohol comprised 'fewer opportunities to be with people or to go out'. An increase in cannabis use was observed for two-fifths of consumers (44%), mainly cited as arising due to 'boredom/less things to occupy time' and 'more time to use the drug'. Most participants reported drug availability as stable, although cocaine and crystal methamphetamine were most commonly cited as drugs which had decreased in availability (44% and 42%, respectively). Two-fifths (42%) of participants rated their mental health in the past four weeks as 'being worse' compared to February, 36% reported 'similar' and 23% reported their mental health as 'better'. Over one-tenth (13%) of participants reportedly sought information on how to reduce the risk of acquiring COVID-19 or avoiding impacts of restrictions on drug acquisition and use. Two-thirds (67%) of participants reported engaging in various harm reduction behaviours to reduce the risk of acquiring COVID-19 or impacts of COVID-19 restrictions while using or obtaining drugs.

Ecstasy

The ecstasy market has diversified over the past few years, with the per cent reporting any recent (i.e. past six month) use of any ecstasy pills and powder declining and use of capsules increasing (52%, 37%, and 83% of the SA sample, respectively). Though ecstasy crystal has increased since the commencement of monitoring in 2013, a significant decline was observed in 2020 (59%; 78% in 2019). Median days decreased in 2020 from 18 days in 2019 to 10 days. A decrease was observed in the

per cent reporting capsules, crystal and powder as being 'very easy' to obtain.

Methamphetamine

Recent use of any methamphetamine has been declining amongst the SA sample since the commencement of monitoring, with 26% reporting any recent use in 2020, the lowest percentage over the course of monitoring. Over one-third (35%) of recent consumers reported weekly or more frequent use in 2020. Whilst the recent use of powder has generally declined over the course of monitoring, a further significant decrease in recent use transpired in 2020 (6%; 16% in 2019). Significantly fewer participants perceived crystal methamphetamine to be 'very easy' to obtain in 2020 (58%), relative to 2019 (84%).

Cocaine

Recent use of cocaine has increased over the years of monitoring, with the second largest per cent reporting any recent use recorded in 2020 (69%; 71% in 2019). Nine per cent of recent consumers reported weekly or more frequent use. The median price of a gram of cocaine was reported as \$350 in 2020.

Cannabis

At least three in four participants have reported any recent use of cannabis each year since monitoring commenced. Eighty-nine per cent of participants reported recent use in 2020, stable from 2019, though frequency of use significantly declined from 145 days in 2019 to 85 days in 2020. Significantly fewer participants (27%) reported using cannabis on a daily basis, relative to 2019 (49%).

Ketamine and LSD

Recent use of both ketamine and LSD remained stable in 2020, relative to 2019. Almost one-third (32%) and over half (52%) of the SA sample reported any recent use in 2020, respectively. Significantly fewer participants in 2020 perceived ketamine to be 'high' in purity compared to 2019.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

One-quarter (25%) reported recent use of any NPS in 2020. DMT and any class of the 2C substance were the most common recently used NPS in 2020 (13% and 7%, respectively).

Other Drugs

Reported recent use of non-prescribed benzodiazepines increased significantly in 2020 (52%; 30% in 2019), as did the per cent reporting any recent amyl nitrite use (47%; 31% in 2019). The per cent reporting any recent use of hallucinogenic mushrooms doubled since monitoring commenced in 2005 (14%; 30% in 2020), although use was infrequent. Alcohol and tobacco use were common amongst the sample, with 48% of recent tobacco consumers reporting daily use. Over one-third (34%) of the sample reported recent use of e-cigarettes, though over two-thirds (68%) of recent consumers reported that they did not use e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation tool, a significant increase from 45% in 2019.

Drug-Related Harms and Other Associated Behaviours

Over three-quarters (77%) of the sample obtained a score of eight or more on the AUDIT, indicative of hazardous alcohol use. Thirty per cent reported a non-fatal stimulant overdose, and 32% reported a non-fatal depressant overdose in the past year. The per cent reporting injecting drug use remained low, as did the number currently in drug treatment. Half the sample (50%) self-reported that they had experienced a mental health problem in the preceding six months, the most common problems being depression and anxiety. Any criminal activity significantly declined in the month preceding interview, from 47% in 2019 to 29% in 2020. Whilst drug dealing remained to be the main form of self-reported criminal activity in 2020, this also significantly declined, from 38% in 2019 to 19% in 2020. Interestingly, the majority of participants (96%) reported face-to-face obtainment of illicit drugs on any occasion

in the 12 months preceding interview. There was, however, an increase in those receiving illicit drugs via a collection point, compared with 2019 (25%; 12% in 2019).