

Executive Summary

The IDRS comprises a sentinel sample of people who regularly inject illicit drugs, recruited via advertisements in needle syringe programs and other harm reduction services, as well as via peer referral, across each capital city of Australia. The results are not representative of all people who inject drugs, nor of use in the general population. Data were collected in 2024 from June -July. Since 2020, interviews 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 -2024 samples relative to previous years.

Sample Characteristics

The 2024 IDRS sample (N=884) was mostly similar to the sample in 2023 and in previous years. Participants predominantly identified as male (69%) with a median age of 47 years, both stable from 2023. In 2024, most participants reported being unemployed at the time of the interview (89%; 86% in 2023), although the median weekly income significantly increased (\$424; \$400 in 2023; $p=0.006$). Drug of choice remained stable, with 42% nominating methamphetamine (45% in 2023) and 39% nominating heroin (41% in 2023) as their drug of choice. Most participants continued to nominate methamphetamine as the drug injected most often in the past month (59%; 56% in 2023).

Heroin

In 2024, 51% of the sample reported recent heroin use, stable relative to 2023 (56%). Median frequency of use also remained stable

at a median of 90 days (i.e., every second day) in the past six months (90 days in 2023). Among participants who had recently used heroin, 53% reported using white/off -white powder (59% in 2023; $p=0.015$). Price, perceived purity and perceived availability remained stable, with UHSRUWLQJ ¶PHGLXP· SXULW\ DQG UHSRUWLQJ ¶HDV\· RU obtainment (91% in 2023).

Methamphetamine

Recent use of any methamphetamine has been gradually increasing since 2010, although has been relatively stable from 2021 onwards. In 2024, 82% reported recent use, stable from 2023 (81%). Crystal continued to be the most common form of methamphetamine used by participants (81%; 80% in 2023). Fewer participants reported consuming methamphetamine powder (8%; 10% in 2023) and base (5%; 5% in 2023). Among those who reported recent use, participants reported using methamphetamine crystal on average three times per week in the six months preceding the interview (72 median days; 72 days in 2023). The reported median price for one point of powder and crystal remained stable at \$50, respectively. Perceived purity for powder and crystal remained stable, albeit mixed. Perceived availability also remained VWDEOH ZLWK UHSRUWLQJ ¶H obtainment of powder, and 95% reporting ¶HDV\· RU ¶YHU\ HDV\· REWDLQPH

Cocaine

Recent use of cocaine and frequency of use has generally decreased amongst the sample since the commencement of monitoring (peak of 35% in 2001), although remained stable in 2024 relative to 2023. In 2024, 17% of participants

Twenty-nine per cent reported having an injection-related problem in the past month (26% in 2023), most commonly any infection/abscess (13%; 10% in 2023) and any nerve damage (12%; 10% in 2023).

Overdose, naloxone and drug checking

In 2024, one fifth (21%) of the sample reported any past 12-month non-fatal overdose, stable relative to 2023 (18%), most commonly from heroin (11%; 9% in 2023).

Awareness of take-home naloxone remained stable in 2024 (80%; 80% in 2023), as did past year access (46%; 44% in 2023).

In 2024, 11% 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 (9% in 2023).

Dependence, drug treatment and HCV

In 2024, 36% of male participants obtained an AUDIT-C score of – D Q G R I I H P D O H participants obtained a score of – indicative of hazardous alcohol use.

Half (49%) of those who reported recent methamphetamine use obtained an SDS score