Drug Trends 2017: Looking back to think forward

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health

Prepared by Amanda Roxburgh, Toni Karlsson, Rachel Sutherland
On behalf of the Drug Trends Team
## Characterising the Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDRS Participants</th>
<th>EDRS Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N=888</strong></td>
<td><strong>N=786</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who inject drugs (six times or more past six months)</td>
<td>People who use stimulants (six times or more past six months)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| High levels of dependence  
  - Opioid dependence (69%)  
  - Methamphetamine dependence (48%)  
  - Opioid AND meth dependence (16%) | More sporadic patterns of use across a range of drugs |
| Predominantly male 67%  
  Average age 43 years | Predominantly male 64%  
  Average age 21 years |
IDRS: Drug Use

Drug of choice (%)

Drug injected most last month (%)

% Sample


Heroin Any methamph Morphine

% Sample


Heroin Crystal Morphine Any methamph
EDRS: Drug Use

Drug of choice (%)

Drug used most last month (%)

% Sample

Ecstasy  Cannabis  Alcohol

NDARC  National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre

The Difference is Research
Opioids
Heroin and Pharmaceutical Opioids
Heroin deaths in context - Australia

Rates of heroin deaths per million population

Source: Roxburgh et al, 2017; ABS, 2017
IDRS Findings
Heroin injecting – use and frequency

Heroin use **stable** nationally
Some increases – e.g. ACT, VIC, SA
Decreases – e.g. NSW, WA

Heroin daily use **stable** nationally
Some increases e.g. NSW, QLD
Some decreases e.g. SA, WA

NB: Heroin Daily among those who have used heroin
IDRS Findings
Pharmaceutical opioid injecting - use

Morphine – stable nationally
Predominant in NT and TAS

Oxycodone – declining nationally and in most jurisdictions (Increased NSW)

Fentanyl – stable and low nationally
(Increased NSW)
IDRS Findings

Daily pharmaceutical opioid injecting

Morphine - stable nationally NT daily use
Oxycodone – stable and low nationally
Fentanyl – stable and low nationally
Largely infrequent use of oxycodone and fentanyl
Methamphetamine
Methamphetamines in context

![Bar chart showing the percentage of meth users by main form of use from 2007 to 2016. Crystal Main Form and Speed Main Form are compared. The chart indicates a decrease in Crystal Main Form usage and an increase in Speed Main Form usage over the years.]

Source: NDSHS AIHW
Drug Trends Findings
Methamphetamine use – Past 6 months

% Sample

IDRS Meth use
EDRS Meth use


The Difference is Research

NDARC National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre

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Drug Trends Findings
Methamphetamine use – Frequency

% of those using methamphetamine

IDRS Meth Weekly or More
EDRS Meth Weekly or More
IDRS Meth Daily Use

% of those using methamphetamine

0 20 40 60 80 100


- IDRS Meth Weekly or More
- EDRS Meth Weekly or More
- IDRS Meth Daily Use

NDARC
National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre

The Difference is Research
Drug Trends Findings – Methamphetamine
Forms used

Crystal

% of those using methamphetamine

2003 2005 2007 2009 2011 2013 2015 2017

EDRS - Crystal  IDRS Crystal

Speed

% of those using methamphetamine

2003 2005 2007 2009 2011 2013 2015 2017

EDRS - Speed  IDRS Speed

The Difference is Research
Diversification of MDMA and other stimulant markets
EDRS Findings: Ecstasy forms used

Perceived purity
Crystal MDMA

% reported EDRS use


Pills capsules powder MDMA crystals

Perceived purity

Low Medium High Fluctuates

17 30 100 98 97 95 96 92 85 82 78 71 67 30

The Difference is Research
EDRS Findings: Ecstasy patterns of use – last six months

% of those reporting recent use

weekly ecstasy use *

* Includes pills, powder, capsules and MDMA crystals
EDRS Findings: Other drug use 2017

IDRS – 45% of cannabis users report daily cannabis use
EDRS – 24% of cannabis users report daily cannabis use
EDRS Findings
Proportions reporting use of capsules of unknown content
EDRS Findings

Proportions reporting adverse effects from stimulants past 12 months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% RPU reporting</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>26</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1. **Opioids**
   - Carefully monitor heroin and other opioid markets
   - Synthetic opioids present a future challenge - diversification
   - Importance of naloxone availability

2. **Methamphetamine**
   - Increasing levels of frequent use among IDRS participants
   - Declining use among EDRS participants
   - Engage with consumers without stigma to encourage to tx

3. **Diversification of MDMA and stimulant markets**
   - Acute harms – toxicity/adverse events – increasingly being reported
   - Particularly concerning in context of high purity crystal MDMA available and use of capsules of unknown contents
   - Importance of communication and accurate information
Targeting gangs and organised crime
9th December 2016
Police Commissioner Mike Bush
Ngā mihi. Congratulations to all staff involved in the lengthy investigation into the Head Hunters gang in Christchurch. Led by the Canterbury Organised Crime Unit, this resulted in a number of search warrants being conducted this week and the arrest of several people on charges including supplying methamphetamine. Several more Head Hunters members and associates were arrested in the lead-up to this week’s operation.

As with other recent operations of this nature, Police staff have offered to put methamphetamine users identified during the investigation in contact with agencies that can help with any dependency issues. This is a good preventative measure to reduce the harm caused by this highly-addictive and damaging drug.
Thinking Forward – Diversification in response

Eugene Ryder – Wellington Black Power – “against p”
Thinking Forward - Engagement

The Difference is Research
Thank you - 2017 Drug Trends Team

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