

Trends in self-reported past year non-fatal overdose and responses to overdose: Findings from the Illicit Drug Reporting System

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Background

- Fatal and non-fatal overdose amongst people who inject drugs (PWID) is a serious public health concern. Opioids are consistently the most commonly identified substances involved in fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses. In Australia, opioids were identified as being involved in over two-thirds (61%) of drug-induced deaths.¹
- People who inject drugs (PWID) are at higher risk of non-fatal overdose, and recent non-fatal overdose is associated with a higher risk of fatal overdose.² PWID who report high risk injecting activities, such as public injecting, are at increased risk of multiple non-fatal overdoses.³
- Overdose outcomes are dependent on appropriate responses following overdose. Given this, it is crucial to monitor patterns of non-fatal overdose and responses amongst people who inject drugs.
- This bulletin examines trends in self-reported non-fatal overdose and responses to heroin overdose amongst a sample of people who regularly inject drugs recruited from capital cities in all states and territories in Australia.

Method

- Data for this bulletin were drawn from the surveys of PWID conducted as part of the Illicit Drugs Reporting System (IDRS) between 2004 and 2020.
- The Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) is an annual cross-sectional survey of people who regularly inject drugs recruited from all capital cities of Australian states and territories. Participants were administered a one-hour face-to-face interview and reimbursed \$40 for their time, with the exception of 2020 when interviews were conducted via telephone or video-conference due to COVID-19. For further details on the overall methods of the IDRS see (4).
- Logistic regression was used to investigate trends in self-reported past-year any overdose and past-year heroin overdose from 2004-2020.
- Logistic regression was used to analyse trends in treatment received on the occasion of last heroin overdose from 2009-2020 (data were available from 2009).
- Survey year was treated as a continuous variable. Differences were considered significant at $p < 0.05$.

References

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Participating researchers and research centres

- Antonia Karlsson, Julia Uporova, Daisy Gibbs, Rosie Swanton, Olivia Price, Roanna Chan, Professor Louisa Degenhardt, Professor Michael Farrell and Dr Amy Peacock, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales;
- Cristal Hall, Dr Campbell Aitken and Professor Paul Dietze, Burnet Institute Victoria;
- Yalei Wilson and Associate Professor Raimondo Bruno, School of Psychology, University of Tasmania;
- Catherine Daly, Dr Natalie Thomas, Dr Jennifer Juckel, Dr Joemer Maravilla and Dr Caroline Salom, Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland;
- Dr Seraina Agramunt and Professor Simon Lenton, National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University, Western Australia; and
- Chris Moon, Northern Territory Department of Health.

Other acknowledgements

- The people who inject drugs who participated in the IDRS survey.
- The agencies that assisted with recruitment and interviewing.
- The IDRS is funded by the Australian Government under the Drug and Alcohol Program.

Suggested citation

Thomas, N., Juckel, J., Daly, C., Maravilla, J., & Salom, C. (2021). Trends in self-reported past year non-fatal overdose and responses to overdose: Findings from the Illicit Drug Reporting System. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney. doi:10.26190/hmz3-gc38