

Harm reduction behaviours among a sample of people in Australia who regularly use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants, 2022

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Introduction

People who use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants can engage in a range of behaviours aimed at enhancing positive effects of use, and reducing risk of harm (1). Examples of such behaviours can include avoiding mixing drugs that might have negative effects, testing contents of their drug before use and controlling the amount used (1). The aim of this bulletin is to describe engagement in various harm reduction behaviours on last occasion of ecstasy and/or related drug use (e.g., LSD, ketamine, cocaine, methamphetamine) by a sample of people in Australia who regularly consume ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants recruited from all Australian capital cities from April-July 2022 (2).

Results

Harm reduction behaviour on last occasion of ecstasy and/or related drug use among the national EDRS sample, 2022 (N=700; see Supplement for results by jurisdiction)



Discussion

The majority of participants in the 2022 EDRS sample reported some form of harm reduction behaviour on their last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use. The most commonly reported behaviours were being 'with people who knew I was using drugs', and 'consuming water regularly'. Previous research has shown that engagement in harm reduction behaviours is associated with reduced drug-related harms (1). These findings speak to the ongoing importance of education aimed at promoting harm reduction behaviours among people who use ecstasy and other illicit stimulants.

References

1. Fernández-Calderón F et al. Harm reduction behaviors among young polysubstance users at raves. *Substance Abuse* 2014;35:45–50. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08897077.2013.792760>
2. Sutherland R et al (2022). Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) Interviews 2022: Background and Methods. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney.

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Supplement: Harm reduction behaviours, by jurisdiction, 2022

	NSW (n=100) %	ACT (n=99) %	VIC (n=95) %	TAS (n=66) %	SA (n=104) %	WA (n=100) %	QLD (n=102) %
Any harm reduction behaviour	96	96	93	79	93	98	99
Tested contents/purity of illicit drugs (e.g., reagent test)	10	8	7	n≤5	n≤5	11	6
Searched online for information about the drug by appearance	9	6	16	8	n≤5	11	22
Measured dose with scales	27	28	21	17	11	37	24
Obtained information from people who had already tried the drug	52	57	45	36	58	62	62
Consumed a test dose	32	23	27	21	16	25	28
Avoided drugs that might interact to have negative effects	51	48	52	29	39	63	40
Pre-planned amount to use and used only that amount	51	52	51	39	44	58	54
Spread out doses	63	59	71	39	65	66	62
Tried to stay cool (e.g., taking breaks)	53	56	62	30	38	66	51
Consumed water regularly	65	65	70	56	61	76	76
With people who knew I was using drugs	80	73	83	62	67	90	74

Note. Due to the particularly small sample recruited in Darwin in 2022 (n=22), data from Darwin are not presented in this table.