

Executive Summary

The Adelaide 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 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 2022 from May-June. Interviews in 2020, 2021 and 2022 were delivered face-to-face as well as via telephone, to reduce the 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 2020-2022 samples, relative to previous years.**

Sample Characteristics

The EDRS sample (N=104) recruited from Adelaide was similar to the sample in 2021 and in previous years. Gender remained stable between 2021 and 2022, with half (50%) identifying as male (57% in 2021), and participants had a median age of 26 years. Most participants held tertiary qualifications (69%), with one-fifth (21%) reporting full-time employment and 42% reporting part time/casual employment. Accommodation remained stable relative to 2021, with half the sample (50%; 49% in 2021) living in a rental house/flat or residing with their parents/at their family home (28%; 40% in 2021) at the time of interview. Drug of choice and drug used most often remained stable between 2021 and 2022, with almost one-third (31%) nominating cannabis as the drug of choice (22% in 2021), and alcohol was reported as the drug used most often in the month preceding interview (33%; 34% in 2021).

Ecstasy

In 2022, significantly fewer participants reported use of any ecstasy in the six months prior to interview (74%; 87% in 2021; $p=0.025$). Recent use of ecstasy pills declined significantly in 2022 ($p=0.038$), as did ecstasy crystal ($p<0.001$), with both forms reporting the lowest percentage reported since the commencement of monitoring (38% and 22%, respectively). Frequency of use remained stable for all four forms of ecstasy. No

significant market changes were reported in 2022.

Methamphetamine

Thirty-six per cent of the Adelaide sample reported recent use of any methamphetamine, stable compared to 2021 (33%). Nevertheless, 43% of those who had recently used methamphetamine reported weekly or more frequent use, a significant decrease from 70% in 2021 ($p=0.036$). Recent use of methamphetamine powder significantly increased, from $n\leq 5$ in 2021 to 14% in 2022 ($p=0.002$). Almost one-third of the sample (30%) reported recent crystal use; forty-five per cent of this group reported weekly or greater use of methamphetamine crystal in 2022, a significant decrease from 72% in 2021 ($p=0.044$). Methamphetamine crystal was largely reported to be 'easy' (30%) or 'very easy' (67%) to obtain.

Cocaine

Recent use of cocaine has increased over the years of monitoring, with the largest per cent reporting any recent use for the second year running in 2022 (78%). Fourteen per cent of those who had recently used cocaine reported weekly or more frequent use. Perceived purity of cocaine significantly changed between 2021 and 2022 ($p=0.012$), with more participants reporting 'high' purity in 2022 (22%), compared with 2021 reports ($n\leq 5$).

Cannabis and/or Cannabinoid Related Products

At least three in four participants have reported any recent use of non-prescribed cannabis and/or cannabinoid related products each year since 2003 (noting some changes in question wording over time). Three-quarters (75%) of participants reported non-prescribed recent use in 2022, stable relative to 2021 (84%). Weekly or more frequent use amongst those who had recently used cannabis and/or cannabinoid related products remained stable (67%; 74% in 2021), as did daily use (26%; 29% in 2021). The majority reported recent use of hydroponic cannabis (78%), a significant increase from 59% in 2021 ($p=0.034$). The median price per ounce of hydroponic cannabis remained stable in 2022 (\$235; \$230 in 2021), though proved to be the

highest median price since the commencement of monitoring.

Ketamine, LSD and DMT

Recent use of ketamine (29%; 28% in 2021), LSD (30%; 35% in 2021) and DMT (6%; 13% in 2021) remained stable in 2022, relative to 2021, as did frequency of use. Whilst market changes for ketamine and LSD remained stable between 2021 and 2022, the median price for one tab of LSD was the highest median price observed since the commencement of monitoring in 2022, at \$25 per tab.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

Any NPS use, including plant-based NPS, has fluctuated over time, with 12% reporting recent use in 2022, stable from 2021 (10%). A similar percentage was observed for any NPS use, excluding plant-based NPS (7%; 8% in 2021) which proved to be the lowest percentage of use since monitoring of NPS first commenced in 2010.

Other Drugs

Participants who had recently used non-prescribed codeine (13%) reported use on a median of seven days in the preceding six months, a significant increase from three days in 2021 ($p=0.042$). Almost two-fifths (37%) of the sample reported recent use of hallucinogenic mushrooms in the six months prior to the interview, the greatest per cent reporting recent use over the period of monitoring. Sixty-two per cent reported recent use of non-prescribed e-cigarettes, also the highest percentage of recent use over the course of monitoring. Seven per cent reported recent use of GHB/GBL/1,4-BD in 2022.

Drug-Related Harms and Other Behaviours

Three-quarters (75%; $n=77$) of the Adelaide sample reported concurrent use of two or more drugs on the last occasion of ecstasy or related drug use (excluding tobacco and e-cigarettes). One-fifth (22%) of participants reported that they or someone else had tested the content and/or purity of their illicit drugs in Australia in the past year. Seventy per cent of participants obtained a score of eight or more on the AUDIT, indicative of hazardous use. Past year non-fatal stimulant overdose (16%; 19% in 2021) and non-fatal depressant

overdose (23%; 23% in 2021) remained stable in 2022, relative to 2021. Reported past month injecting drug use remained low ($n\leq 5$), as did drug treatment engagement (6%). Sixty-nine per cent of the sample reported engaging in some form of sexual activity in the past four weeks, of which 29% reported penetrative sex without a condom where they did not know the HIV status of their partner. One-fifth (20%) of the sample reported having a HIV test in the six months preceding interview, and one-third (31%) reported having a sexual health check-up in the six months prior to interview. Mental health remained stable relative to 2021, with 61% (57% in 2021) reporting experiencing a mental health problem in the six months preceding interview, with depression (65%) and anxiety (58%) most commonly reported. Amongst those who had recently driven, one-fifth (20%) reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol and 46% reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the prior six months. Thirty per cent of the sample reported 'any' crime in the past month, with drug dealing (15%) and property crime (15%) remaining the two main forms of criminal activity in 2022. Face-to-face and social networking applications were the most popular means of participants arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview (72%, respectively). In 2022, the vast majority of the sample (95%) had been tested for SARS-CoV-2, with almost three-fifths (59%) of participants having been diagnosed with COVID-19. Fifty-eight per cent reported that they were 'not at all' worried about contracting COVID-19, and 86% reported that they had received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose at the time of interview.