

# Sexual risk behaviours among people who had recently engaged in penetrative sex & who regularly use drugs in Adelaide, South Australia, 2019

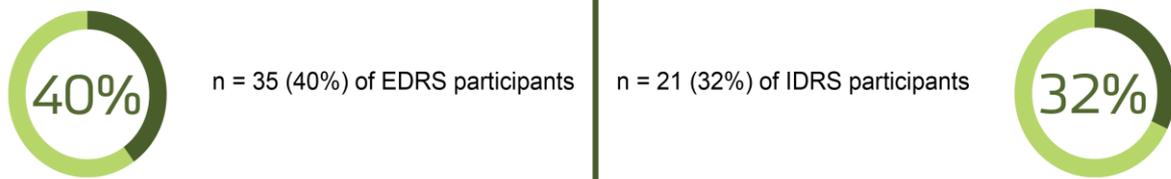
Ms Antonia Karlsson and Dr Amy Peacock  
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney

## The issue

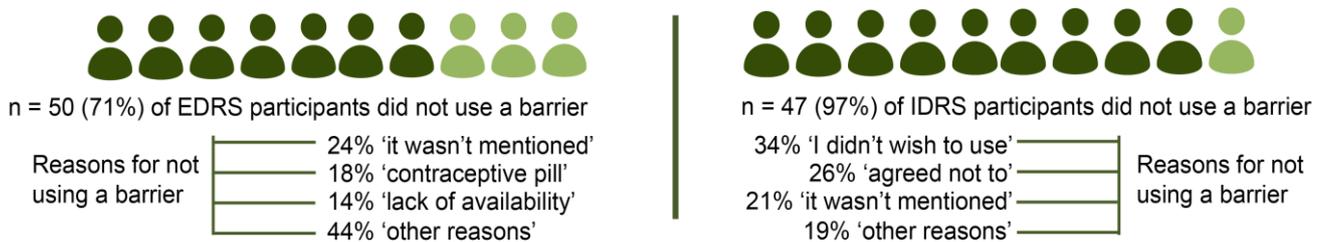
- Research suggests that substance use is associated with high levels of unsafe and risky sexual health behaviours, which may place people at risk of sexually transmitted diseases (Mateu-Gelabert et al, 2015).
- The aim of this bulletin is to describe trends in sexual risk behaviours amongst two samples of people in Adelaide, South Australia, who had engaged in penetrative sex and used drugs in the six months prior to interview in 2019.
- The majority (n=88) of participants in the [Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System \(EDRS\)](#) (a sample of people who regularly use ecstasy and other stimulants) and almost two-thirds (n=65) of participants in the [Illicit Drug Reporting System \(IDRS\)](#) (a sample of people who regularly inject drugs) engaged in penetrative sex in the six months prior to interview.

## What our work found

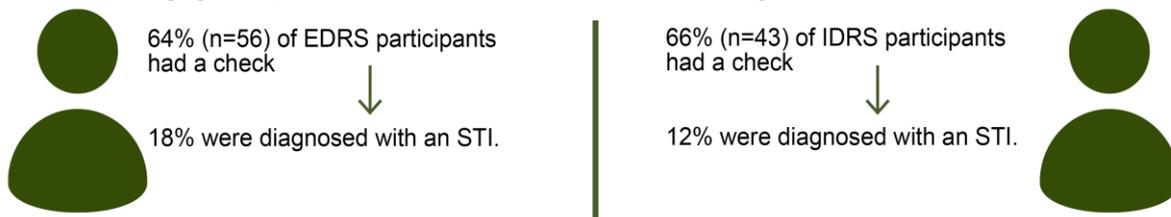
Per cent of those who had penetrative sex without a barrier and did not know the HIV/STI status of their partner:



The last time alcohol or drugs were used before engaging in penetrative sex:



Of those who had engaged in penetrative sex, per cent who had undergone a sexual health check in the last year:



## Implications

- Of those who had unprotected penetrative sex in the last six months, it is concerning that at least one-third of both samples did not know the HIV/STI status of their partner.
- 'Contraceptive pill' was cited by 18% of EDRS participants as a reason for not using a barrier before engaging in unprotected penetrative sex after substance use. Furthermore, 14% reported a 'lack of availability' of a condom/dam.
- These perceptions/issues demonstrate:
  - The need for better education, including promoting understanding of the methods which prevent pregnancy versus reduce risk of STI transmission;
  - The importance of access to contraception (without fear of experiencing stigma or discrimination); and
  - The opportunity for services such as clean needle programs to link in clients with appropriate facilities (e.g. sexual health clinics) where sexual health information and advice can be offered.

**Reference:** Mateu-Gelabert, P. et al. (2015). Injection and sexual HIV/HCV risk behaviours associated with nonmedical use of prescription opioids among young adults in New York City (Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment (48): 13-20.

Suggested citation: Karlsson A., & Peacock, A. (2020). Sexual risk behaviours among people who had recently engaged in penetrative sex & who regularly use drugs in Adelaide, South Australia, 2019. Drug Trends Bulletin Series. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney. <http://doi.org/10.26190/5e77dc802ca3a>

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health under the Drug and Alcohol Program ©NDARC, UNSW SYDNEY 2019. This work is copyright. You may download, display, print and reproduce this material in unaltered form only (retaining this notice) for your personal, non-commercial use or use within your organisation. All other rights are reserved. Requests and enquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the information manager, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney, NSW 2052, Australia.