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The Difference is Research

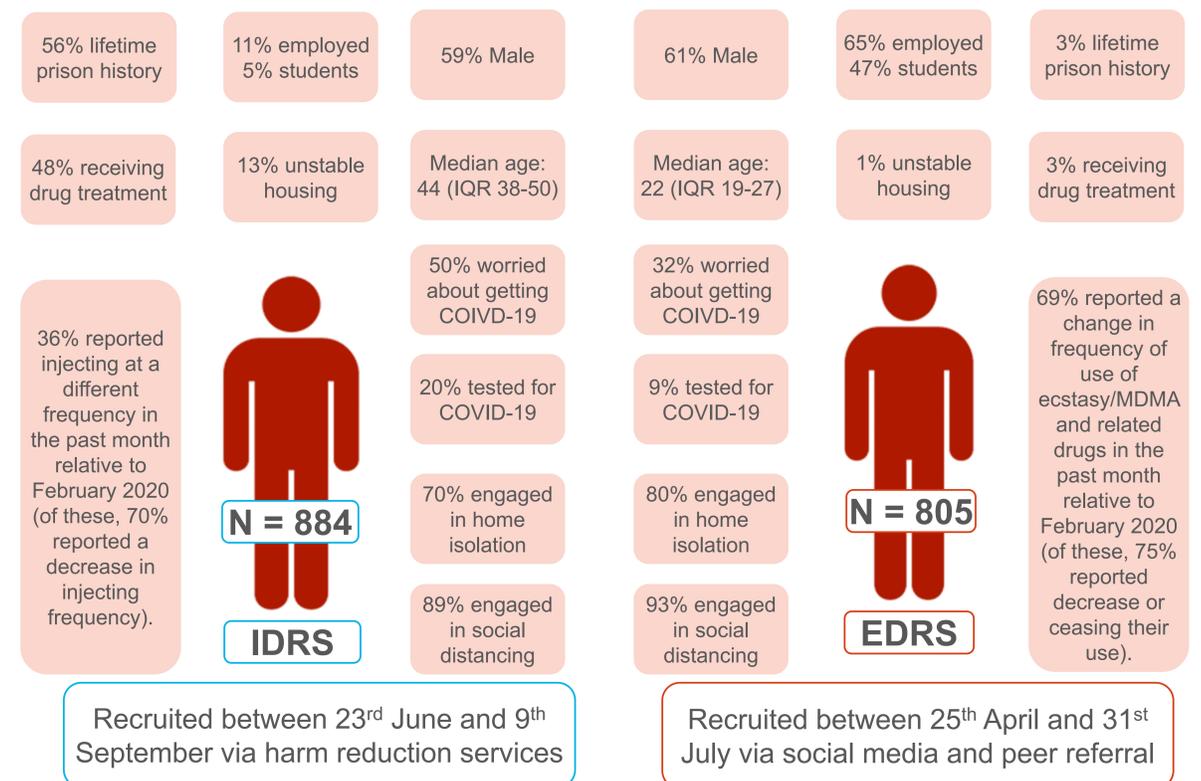
Background & Aim

- Drug markets and supply may be disrupted by COVID-19 restrictions. Physical distancing measures, restrictions on gatherings of people and increased police powers and number may all affect the way drug markets operate, including how people obtain illicit drugs.
- This study is investigating behaviour change in obtaining illicit drugs since COVID-19 movement restrictions compared to before among two sentinel groups of people who regularly consume illicit drugs.

Methods

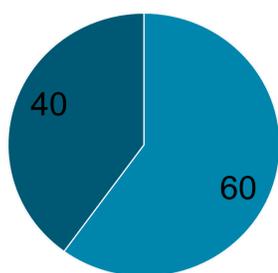
- Data were obtained from the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) and the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) in 2020.
- The EDRS is an annual survey of people who regularly consume stimulants (primarily ecstasy and related stimulant drugs) recruited from capital cities, whilst the IDRS consists of an annual survey of people who regularly inject drugs.
- The main question this study will be looking at is 'Have you changed the way you have obtained illicit drugs since the beginning of March (since COVID-19 restrictions) as compared to before?'

The sample characteristics



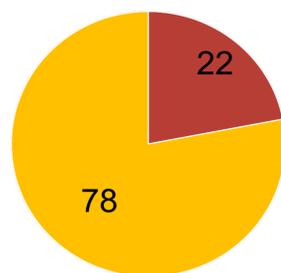
Results

Do you have concerns about accessing drugs during COVID-19?



■ Yes ■ No

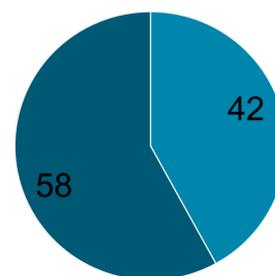
IDRS



■ Yes ■ No

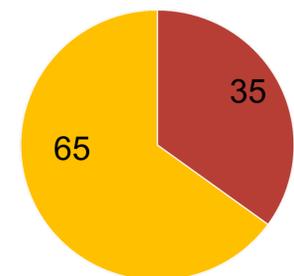
EDRS

Did you change your means of obtaining illicit drugs since COVID-19 restrictions*?



■ Yes ■ No

IDRS



■ Yes ■ No

EDRS

Note. * refers to since the beginning of March 2020

Results

% Most common change in means of obtaining illicit drugs since March 2020*	IDRS, n=363
Obtained drugs from a different person	37
Obtained drugs less frequently	30
Obtained drugs in larger quantities to use for themselves	26
Obtained drugs in smaller quantities	20
Obtained drugs more frequently	19
Obtained drugs in larger quantities to share with others	16
Arranged for more home delivery	14
Reduced face-to-face collection of drugs	12

% Most common change in means of obtaining illicit drugs since March 2020*	EDRS, n=283
Obtained drugs less frequently	35
Obtained drugs in larger quantities to use for themselves	28
Obtained drugs in larger quantities to share with others	22
Reduced face-to-face collection of drugs	22
Obtained drugs more frequently	19
Obtained drugs from a different person	16
Arranged for more home delivery	11
Obtained drugs in smaller quantities	10

Note. * out of those that reported changing means of obtaining illicit drugs

Conclusions

- 3 in 5 IDRS participants and 1 in 5 EDRS participants reported some concern around accessing drugs during COVID-19.
- 2 in 5 IDRS participants and 1 in 3 of EDRS participants reported to have changed the means of obtaining illicit drugs since the introduction of the restrictions (beginning of March 2020).
- Of those reporting change among the IDRS sample, the most common changes were obtaining drugs from a different person, less frequently and in larger quantities to use for themselves.
- Of those reporting change in the EDRS population, the most common changes were obtaining drugs less frequently, in larger quantities to use for themselves and in larger quantities to share with others.
- It is important to understand if the restrictions have influenced more risky behaviours of obtaining drugs, such as obtaining drugs in larger quantities or obtaining drugs from new sources. It is also important to monitor participants' engagement in behaviours which may reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission while obtaining drugs.

Acknowledgements and more information

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