

Ice use by injecting drug users increases for second year in a row

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Use of ice (crystal methamphetamine) by injecting drug users in Australia continued to climb in 2012, according to research on emerging drug trends by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at the University of New South Wales.

The research, which details trends in drug use among both injecting drug users and regular ecstasy users, found 54 per cent of regular injecting drug users surveyed in 2012 had used ice in the previous six months, up from 45 per cent in 2011 and 39 per cent in 2010.

Regular ecstasy users also reported a small increase in the use of ice – 29 per cent of ecstasy users reported ice use in 2012 compared with 26 per cent in 2011. Speed powder is the form of methamphetamine most likely to be used by ecstasy users – with just under 50 per cent using speed.

Big jumps in use of ice among injecting drug users occurred across all states except for the Northern Territory and Queensland. In NSW 68 per cent of injecting drug users reported recent use (up from 53 per cent in 2011); in the ACT 66 per cent reported recent use; in Victoria, 59 per cent; in WA 64 per cent (up from 46 per cent in 2011); in South Australia 56 per cent and Tasmania 43 per cent. Use of ice in Queensland dropped to 44 per cent of injecting drug users from 50 per cent in 2011.

The findings are reported in the 2012 Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) and the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) - Australia's largest drug monitoring systems. [Key findings were released at the National Drug Trends Conference in October 2012.](#) Final reports will be available via the NDARC website during April 2013.

Drug Trends' Chief Investigator and NDARC Senior Lecturer, Dr Lucy Burns, said that ice use among injecting drug users is now close to 2006 levels, when 57 per cent of injecting drug users reported using ice and in some states use among injecting drug users was at its highest ever levels. This was a concerning trend with significant social and mental health implications.

"Methamphetamine is associated with psychosis, aggressive behaviour and unpredictability," said Dr Burns.

"We are already seeing increased mental health problems reflected in self reported mental health and social problems in the survey, with users reporting increased instances of panic, anxiety and depression."



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The IDRS and EDRS both report on trends among users in the six months prior to the survey.

The IDRS monitors the price, purity, availability and use of heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and cannabis. The EDRS examines ecstasy and related drug markets.

“With these systems we can detect emerging drug trends and this allows for governments, law enforcement and health workers to plan and implement effectively targeted policy to reduce drug related harm throughout Australia,” said Dr Burns.

More information and more detailed findings from each state and territory can be accessed [on our website](#). Final reports will be available via the website from April 2013. You can also view our [methamphetamine fact sheets](#).

About the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS)

The IDRS has been conducted in all states and territories since 2000. Its purpose is to monitor the use of illicit drugs such as heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine.

These surveys of drug users are designed to provide early warnings of trends. The results of the IDRS are **NOT** representative of drug use among the general population, nor are they intended to be. The results are intended to indicate emerging trends to assist policy makers, law enforcers and clinicians.

The Illicit Drug Reporting System is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

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