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Study overview and aim

The Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) is primarily concerned with monitoring the use, market characteristics and associated harms of ecstasy and related drugs (ERD), including methamphetamine, cocaine, GHB, LSD, ketamine and new psychoactive substances (NPS) in all jurisdictions including the Northern Territory (NT).

The program is intended to serve as a strategic early warning system to prepare policy makers and both health and law enforcement sectors for issues likely to be of future concern.

The aim of this study is to investigate substance use and associated risk behaviours in a sample of regular psychostimulant users (RPU) in the NT.

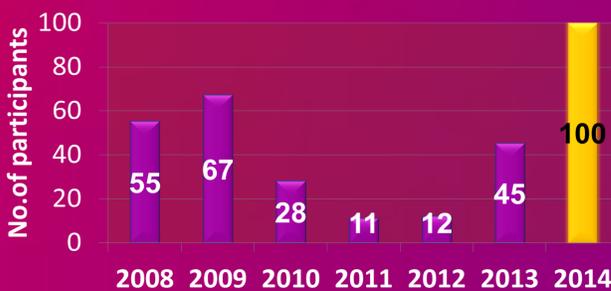
NT's recruitment strategy – did it work?

Using the national eligibility criteria, the NT EDRS has been the only jurisdiction to struggle to attract a sample of meaningful size in past years (see Figure 1).

Three changes were made to the NT EDRS recruitment criterion to reach 100 participants (see Table 1), and we are very pleased that:

2014 was the first year we recruited 100 RPU for the NT EDRS

Figure 1: Sample sizes from NT EDRS, 2008 to 2014.



Since this is the first year the NT has achieved a sample of 100, this poster will compare the NT sample against the national EDRS sample and highlight the key differences.

Table 1: Comparison of national and NT criterion for the 2014 EDRS.

National criterion	NT criterion	Reason for change
Regular use in their jurisdiction's capital city	Regular use in Australia	Darwin residents are transient
Resided in the capital city for the last 12 months	No minimum time requirement in Darwin	Darwin residents are transient
Recruitment commenced in March	Recruitment commenced in June	ERD use more frequent in the dry season

Acknowledgements

The NT Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) was supported by funding from the Australian Government under the Substance Misuse Prevention and Service Improvement Grants Fund.

Demographics and recent substance use patterns

The demographic characteristics of the NT RPU often differ notably to the national sample (see Table 2), which is partly why the NT EDRS eligibility criteria was tailored.

Significant demographic differences in 2014 were:



More even gender split in the NT sample



Less Australian born RPU = more backpackers



More RPU unemployed and working P-T/casual



Higher income reported by NT RPU

Table 2: Demographics of RPU, NT and nationally, 2014.

Demographic variables	NT (N=100)	National (N=700)
Mean age	23	23
% male	57*	67
% A&TSI	5	2
% Australian born	63**	87
% heterosexual	96	88
% tertiary qualifications	56	45
% employed full-time	32	24
% unemployed	30**	13
% employed part-time/casual	35*	24
% full-time student	0**	16
Mean weekly income	\$898**	\$561

NB: * p<0.05; ** p<0.001

Substance use patterns by the NT RPU were mostly similar to the national sample (see Table 3), however significantly less NT RPU had recently used ecstasy capsules (32% vs. 55%) or a NPS (29% vs. 41%).

Table 3: Percentage of RPU who used each drug type in the past six months, NT and nationally, 2014.

NB: * p<0.05; ** p<0.001

Drug (%)	Ecstasy/MDMA				Methamphetamine			Cocaine	Ketamine	LSD	Cannabis	NPS
	Pills	Crystal	Caps	Powder	Speed	Base	Ice/crystal					
NT (N=100)	99	43	32**	26	39	5	27	39	15	43	84	29*
National (N=700)	91	50	55	26	36	8	19	45	18	40	82	41

PPA: How does the NT compare?

Price



Higher prices in the NT than the rest of Australia. Most notably:

- ecstasy pill (\$40 vs. \$25)
- speed (\$350 vs. \$250 p/gm)
- ice (\$850 vs. \$500 p/gm)

Purity



Reported purity in the NT varied across drug types. Most notably, NT RPU reported higher purity of ecstasy and LSD, but lower potency of bush cannabis.

Availability



Generally, NT RPU reported more difficulty accessing various drugs than the national sample. This was most noted for speed, ice, cocaine and LSD.

Risks emerging among NT RPU



Bingeing

Half (50%) of NT RPU had recently binged on a stimulant (compared to 34% nationally).



Sexual engagement and check-ups

A higher proportion of NT RPU had recently engaged in casual sexual behaviours (71% vs. 63% nationally), and a higher proportion had also had a sexual health check-up in the last year (62% vs. 47%).



Recently arrested

More NT RPU reported being arrested in the past six months (18% vs. 11%), most commonly for public order or a violent crime.

Special feature on backpackers

28% of NT RPU were backpackers

- 61% were female
- Mean weekly income of \$794
- In the past six months:
 - 39% binged on a stimulant
 - 82% had casual sex, of which 91% reported being under the influence of drugs on the last occasion
 - Interesting, compared to the rest of the NT RPU, backpackers were more likely to use protection (67% vs. 45%) and recently had a sexual health check-up (75% vs. 56%)



For more information

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