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The Difference is Research

Background

The Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS), conducted nationally since 1999, monitors the price, purity and availability of heroin and other opioids, methamphetamines, cocaine and cannabis. This poster provides a closer look at the health related issues among people who inject drugs (PWID) interviewed in 2016 for the IDRS at a national level.

Method

The system uses data from three sources:

- Interviews with people who inject drugs
- Interviews with key experts who work with PWID such as health workers or law enforcement
- Existing databases on drug-related issues (indicator data) such as customs

Results

Demographics (see Table 1)

- 877 participants interviewed for the 2016 IDRS
- Mean age was 43 years (range 19-72 years)
- 69% were male
- 86% were unemployed
- 43% were in drug treatment
- 55% reported a prison history

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Heading	2015 N=888	2016 N=877
Mean age in years (range)	42 (17-71)	43 (19-72)
Male	67	67
Unemployed	83	86
Currently in treatment	47	43
Prison history	53	55

Source: IDRS participant interviews



Results (continued)

Recent use

Note: recent refers to in the last six months

Heroin

- 56% reported recent heroin use on a median of 75 days
- 30% of recent heroin users reported daily heroin use

Methamphetamine

- 75% reported recently using one or more forms of methamphetamine (speed, base, crystal)
- 20% recently used speed (significant decrease from 25% in 2015; $p < 0.05$) on a median of six days
- 8% recently used base on a median of eight days
- 73% recently used crystal (significant increase from 67% in 2015) on a median of 30 days (significant increase from 20 days in 2015)

Cocaine

- 11% reported recent cocaine use (25% in NSW) on a median of three days in the last six months (six days in NSW)

Cannabis

- 73% reported recent cannabis use nearly daily (135 days)
- Hydroponic cannabis dominated the market

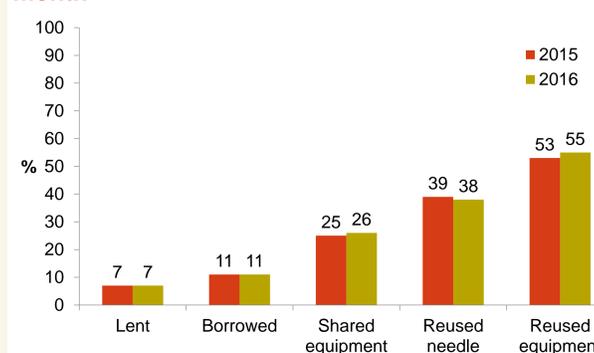
Pharmaceuticals

- 29% recently used morphine on a median of 25 days
- 27% recently injected morphine
- 21% recently used oxycodone (significant decrease from 25% in 2015) on a median of seven days
- 16% recently injected oxycodone
- 57% recently used any form of benzodiazepine (including Alprazolam) on a median of 40 days
- 3% recently injected any form of benzodiazepine

Injecting risk behaviours (see Figure 1)

- 7% reported borrowing a needle (after somebody else had used it) in the last month
- 11% reported lending a needle (after using it) in the last month
- 26% reported sharing injecting equipment (mainly spoons) in the last month
- 38% reported re-using their own needle
- 55% reported re-using their own injecting equipment (mainly spoons) in the last month
- Injecting in the arm was reported by the majority of participants (74%) as the last site of injection

Figure 1: Injecting risk behaviours in the last month



Source: IDRS participant interviews

Results (continued)

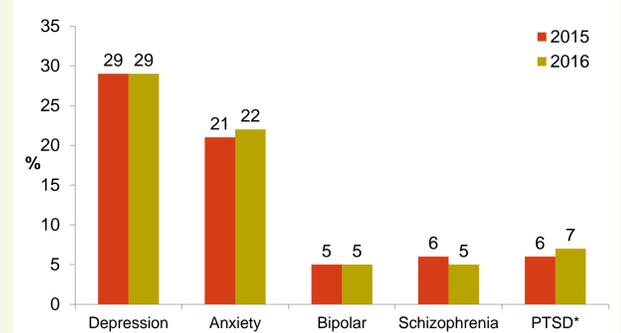
Injection related health issues

- 47% reported scarring/bruising from injecting in the last month
- 41% reported difficulty injecting in the last month
- 7% reported a dirty hit in the last month
- 8% reported an injection/abscess in the last month
- 4% reported an overdose in the last month

Mental health problems (see Figure 2)

- 43% self-reported a mental health problem in the last six months
- The majority reported depression (29%), followed by anxiety (22%)
- 29% reported attending a health professional for the mental health problem in the last six months

Figure 2: Self-reported mental health problems in the last six months



Source: IDRS participant interviews

* Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Conclusion

In 2016, 877 participants were interviewed for the IDRS. The mean age was 43yrs with the majority being male. A large proportion were unemployed and around half were in drug treatment.

Cannabis was the drug most recently used in the previous six months followed by any methamphetamine, benzodiazepines and heroin. An increase in recent crystal use and a decrease in speed and oxycodone use were found.

Small numbers reported borrowing needles however nearly half reported re-using their own needle.

Nearly half self-reported a mental health problem in the last six months, mainly depression and anxiety.

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Further information

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