

Executive Summary

The IDRS sample comprises a sentinel group of people aged 18 years or older who injected illicit drugs in the preceding six months and resided in greater Darwin, Northern Territory. Participants were recruited via advertisements in needle and syringe programs and other harm reduction services, as well as via peer referral. The results are not representative of all people who use illicit drugs, nor of use in the general population.

Data were collected between June and July 2024. Interviews were delivered face-to-face as well as via telephone, to reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission; all interviews prior to 2020 were conducted face-to-face. This methodological change should be factored into all comparisons of data from the 2020-2024 samples relative to previous years.

Sample Characteristics

The IDRS sample recruited from Darwin, Northern Territory (NT) in 2024 (N=70) was consistent with the Darwin profile in previous years, whereby three-fifths (61%) were male, with a mean age of 49 years. The majority (86%) of the sample were unemployed at the time of interview, and most (94%) had received a

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hydroponic cannabis as 'easy' or 'very easy' to

a test for human immunodeficiency virus in the past six months.

Sexual activity, mental health and health service access

Half (50%) of the sample reported engaging in sexual activity in the month preceding interview and 16% reported recently having a sexual health check-up.

Thirty-seven per cent of the sample self-reported experiencing a mental health problem, with the most commonly reported problems being depression (67%) and anxiety (63%). One tenth (10%) reported high/very high psychological distress in 2024.

Thirty per cent reported accessing any health service for alcohol and/or drug support in the six months preceding interview.

Driving, contact with police and modes of purchasing drugs

Three quarters (78%) of those who had recently driven reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the past six months, though few participants Q• reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol.

One third (36%) of participants reported engaging in 'any' crime in the month preceding interview. Few participants Q• reported having been arrested in the past year or having a drug-related encounter with police which did not result in charge or arrest.

In 2024, the most popular means of arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview was face-to-face (94%).