Injecting practices among a sample of people in Australia who inject drugs, 2022

Julia Uporova, Daisy Gibbs and Amy Peacock
This report was prepared by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney
For further information: drugtrends@unsw.edu.au

Introduction & Methods

People who inject drugs are at higher risk of infections and blood-borne viruses (1). Safe injecting practices can help protect against these infections and diseases (1). Information about safe injection behaviours, as well as the equipment necessary, is available from various sources in Australia, including peer-based organisations and local needle and syringe programs (NSPs). The aim of this bulletin is to present the most common injecting practices among a sample of people in Australia who regularly inject illicit drugs.

Methods

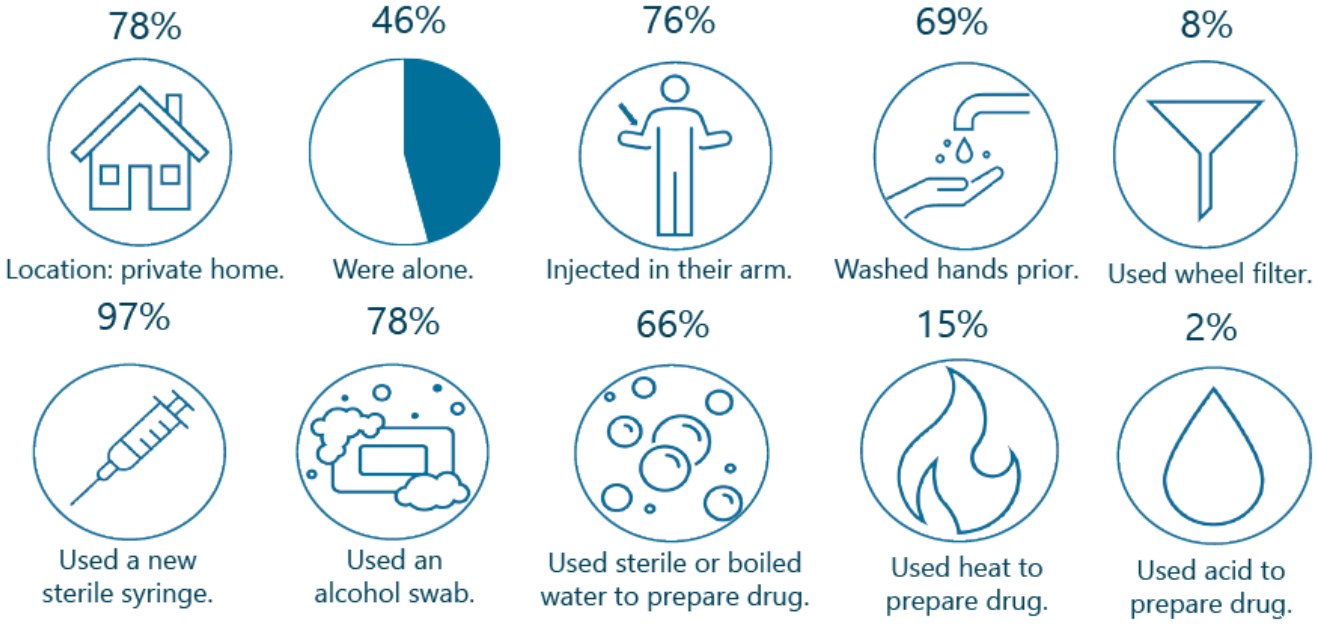
Data were collected for the Illicit Drugs Reporting System (IDRS) via annual interviews with people residing in Australian capital cities aged ≥18 who reported regularly injecting illicit drugs (2). Participants reported if they had engaged in select behaviours on their last occasion of injecting drug use (see Appendix 1 for jurisdictional results). A total of 879 participants took part in 2022.

Results

Drug last injected: *Methamphetamine: 57%* *Morphine/Oxycodone: 5%* *Heroin: 35%* *Other: 8%*

National 2022 IDRS

At the last injection participants reported:



Discussion

Understanding injecting practices is imperative to be able to tailor education. Nearly all participants reported using a new sterile syringe when last injecting, reducing risk of blood-borne virus transmission. However, nearly half of the current sample were alone when last injecting last time and three in ten did not wash their hands with soap or sanitiser prior. In addition, one-third had not used sterile water to prepare their drug(s). These findings suggest opportunity for further education, including access to necessary equipment and resources (e.g., filters, sterile water), to reduce risk of injecting-related injuries and diseases. Further research is also warranted, including studying individual factors and the context of last injecting use associated with key injecting behaviours.

References

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Appendix 1. Injecting practices nationally, and by capital city, IDRS, 2022

	Sydney	Canberra	Melbourne	Hobart	Adelaide	Perth	Darwin	Brisbane /Gold Coast	National
Drug injected last	N=151	N=99	N=150	N=101	N=102	N=100	N=66	N=100	N=869
% Methamphetamine	55	55	37	68	78	50	71	53	57
% Heroin	50	44	62	.	22	41	0	30	35
% Morphine/Oxycodone	.	0	.	17	0	.	23	.	5
% Other	5	8	5	11	.	12	8	14	8
Setting and injection site									
Physical location	N=151	N=101	N=150	N=94	N=103	N=100	N=69	N=100	N=868
% Private Home	81	86	54	81	87	80	88	82	78
% Medically Supervised Injecting Centre/Room	10	0	13	0	.	0	0	.	4
% Other (e.g., street, car, public toilet, stairwell)	18	14	33	9	12	20	12	17	18
Alone when last injected	N=152	N=101	N=151	N=95	N=103	N=100	N=70	N=100	N=872
% Yes	52	45	37	57	42	45	43	45	46
Injection site	N=152	N=101	N=150	N=94	N=103	N=100	N=70	N=100	N=870
% Arm	74	82	67	83	84	77	74	74	76
% Hand/wrist	9	10	16	6	6	12	11	12	11
% Other	7	8	7	11	10	11	15	14	13
Cleaning and swabbing									
Washed hands with soap or sanitiser before injecting	N=151	N=101	N=150	N=94	N=101	N=100	N=69	N=100	N=866
% Yes	67	72	59	73	80	64	80	65	69
Used an alcohol swab	N=152	N=101	N=151	N=95	N=103	N=99	N=68	N=100	N=869
% Yes	79	79	78	67	80	83	84	77	78
Drug preparation									
Used water	N=152	N=101	N=150	N=95	N=102	N=96	N=70	N=100	N=866
% Sterile or boiled water	82	85	62	71	55	44	79	46	66
% Non-sterile water	14	8	37	28	43	54	19	52	32
Used a filter	N=152	N=101	N=149	N=100	N=102	N=97	N=69	N=99	N=869
% Wheel/commercial filter	4	6	5	9	6	9	13	14	8
% Cigarette filter	12	.	20	15	15	16	28	39	18
% Cotton filter	55	67	50	6	19	27	.	8	33
% No filter	31	25	28	64	66	49	57	42	43
Used a new sterile syringe	N=152	N=101	N=151	N=95	N=103	N=100	N=70	N=100	N=872
% Yes	97	97	98	97	97	93	97	97	97
Used heat	N=151	N=101	N=151	N=95	N=102	N=98	N=70	N=100	N=868
% Yes	11	12	15	16	21	13	29	15	15
Used acid	N=151	N=101	N=150	N=101	N=102	N=98	N=70	N=100	N=873
% Yes	.	.	0	7	.	0	0	0	2

Note. (.) No data labels provided with small cell size (i.e., n≤5 but not 0).