



NEW SOUTH WALES DRUG TRENDS 2019

Key Findings from the New South Wales Ecstasy and
related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) Interviews



NEW SOUTH WALES DRUG TRENDS 2019: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ECSTASY AND RELATED DRUGS REPORTING SYSTEM (EDRS INTERVIEWS

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Please note that as with all statistical reports there is the potential for minor revisions to data in this report over its life. Please refer to the online version at [Drug Trends](#).

Please contact the Drug Trends team with any queries regarding this publication:
drugtrends@unsw.edu.au

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Research Team

The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), UNSW Sydney, coordinated the EDRS. The following researchers and research institutions contributed to EDRS 2019:

- Antonia Karlsson, Julia Uporova, Daisy Gibbs, Rosie Swanton, Olivia Price, Georgia Kelly, Professor Louisa Degenhardt, Professor Michael Farrell and Dr Amy Peacock, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales;
- Amy Kirwan, Cristal Hall, Dr Campbell Aiken and Professor Paul Dietze, Burnet Institute Victoria;
- Callula Sharman and Associate Professor Raimondo Bruno, School of Psychology, University of Tasmania;
- Jodie Grigg and Professor Simon Lenton, National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University, Western Australia; and
- Catherine Daly, Jennifer Juckel, Leith Morris and Dr Caroline Salom, Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland.

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Participants

We would like to thank all the participants who were interviewed for the EDRS in the present and in previous years.

Contributors

We thank all the individuals who assisted with the collection and input of data at a jurisdictional and national level. In particular, we would like to thank Samantha College, Christopher Eassey, Lucy Thi Tran, Emma Zahra, and Jodie Kidd.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which the work for this report was undertaken. We pay respect to Elders past, present, and emerging.

Abbreviations

2C-B	4-bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenethylamine
AUDIT	Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test
DMT	Dimethyltryptamine
EDRS	Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System
GBL	Gamma-butyrolactone
GHB	Gamma-hydroxybutyrate
IDRS	Illicit Drug Reporting System
IQR	Interquartile range
LSD	<i>l</i> -lysergic acid
MDA	3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine
MDMA	3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine
N (or n)	Number of participants
NDARC	National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
NPS	New psychoactive substances
NSW	New South Wales
OTC	Over-the-counter
SD	Standard deviations
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NBOMe	N-methoxybenzyl
MXE	Methoxetamine
PMA	Paramethoxyamphetamine
Alpha PVP	Alpha-pyrrolidinovalerophenone

Executive Summary

Sample Characteristics

The NSW EDRS sample were predominantly young (median age 25) males with a post-school qualification, consistent with the sample profile in previous years. In 2019, ecstasy was the drug of choice (35%) among the sample, followed by cannabis (17%) and alcohol (15%). Alcohol and cannabis were the drugs used most often in the preceding month (30% and 28%, respectively).

Ecstasy

Weekly or more frequent use of ecstasy has been declining in recent years (12% in 2019). Capsules have been the main form used in the past three years, followed by crystal, with declines in use of the pill form (82%, 68%, and 40%, respectively, in 2019). Recent consumers reported a median of two capsules in a typical session and three in a maximum session. Reported price of capsules and pills was \$25, and 94% of those who commented reported capsules to be easy or very easy to obtain.

Methamphetamine

Recent use of methamphetamine has been declining amongst the NSW sample since the commencement of monitoring (26% in 2019). Powder (speed) has consistently been the main form used, although the difference in the percentage reporting recent use of powder and crystal has decreased (17% and 3%, respectively in 2019). Nearly all (92%) of those who had used crystal had smoked the form.

Cocaine

Recent use of cocaine has been increasing amongst the NSW sample, with the largest per cent reporting recent use recorded in 2019 (83% up from 71% in 2018). Most consumers reported infrequent use of cocaine (5% weekly or more). Whilst the median price has remained stable (\$300 per gram), the per cent reporting cocaine to be easy or very easy to obtain is the highest recorded (87%).

Cannabis

At least three in four participants have reported recent use of cannabis each year since monitoring began (81% in 2019). In 2019, one-fifth (19%) of consumers reported daily use. Smoking remained the main route of administration.

Ketamine, LSD & Mushrooms

Recent use of ketamine and LSD has increased since monitoring began. There was a further increase in ketamine recorded from 2018 to 2019 but a decline in LSD. Frequency of use remained low. Forty-two per cent had recently consumed mushrooms.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and Other Drugs

In the NSW sample 27% reported recent use of at least one form of NPS. DMT and 2C-B were the most common recently used NPS (17%; 6%, respectively). Recent use of non-prescribed benzodiazepines was high (52%). Increases in the per cent reporting use from 2018 to 2019 were recorded for GHB/GBL, e-cigarettes and amyl nitrite.

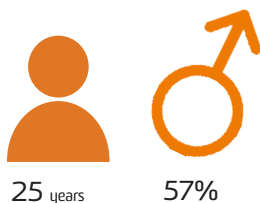
Drug-Related Harms and Other Risks

A majority (89%) reported using depressants, cannabis and/or hallucinogens/dissociative on their last occasion of stimulant use. Three-quarters (77%) reported hazardous alcohol use in the past 12 months. Non-fatal stimulant overdose was reported by 25%, and 27% reported a non-fatal depressant overdose (predominantly involving alcohol) in the past year. Of those who had penetrative sex in the past six months, 44% reported it was without a barrier with someone whose HIV/STI status was unknown. In the past 6 months, over half the sample (59%) self-reported a mental health problem in the preceding six months, and 45% of this group had seen a mental health professional. In the past month, 27% reported engaging in drug dealing, and 26% in property crime. social networking, was the main mode of purchasing illicit/non-prescribed drugs, followed by face-to-face and text messaging. Thirteen per cent had obtained drugs via the darknet in the past year and 8% had purchased drugs from surface web markets.

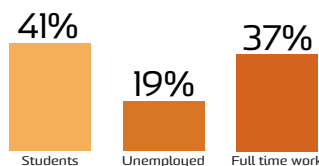
2019 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS



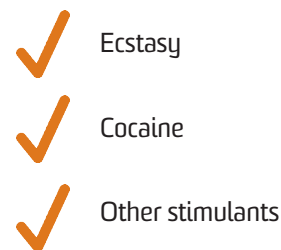
In 2019, 100 people from New South Wales participated in EDRS interviews.



The median age in 2019 was 25 (IQR = 21-29), and 57% identified as male.

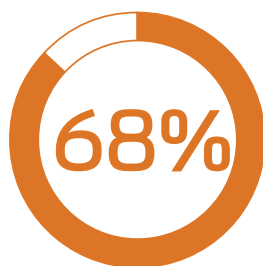


In the 2019 sample, 41% were studying, 19% were unemployed, and 37% were employed full time.

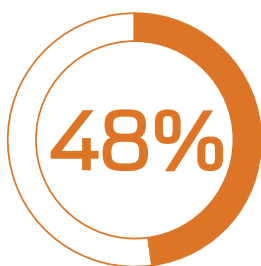


Participants were recruited on the basis that they had consumed ecstasy or other illicit stimulants at least monthly in the past 6 months.

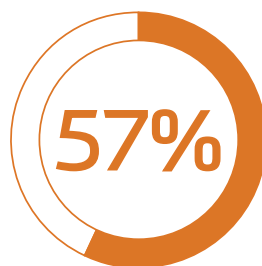
OTHER DRUGS



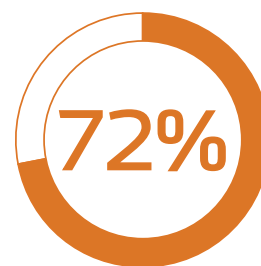
In NSW, 68% of the sample had consumed ketamine in the previous 6 months.



In NSW, 48% of the sample had consumed LSD in the previous 6 months.



In NSW, 57% of the sample had consumed amyl nitrite in the previous 6 months.

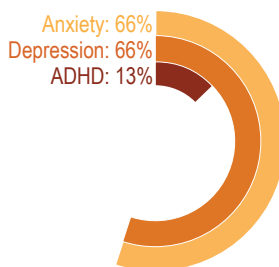


In NSW, 72% of the sample had consumed nitrous oxide in the previous 6 months.

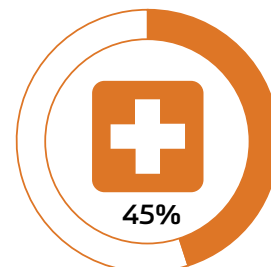
DRUG TREATMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH



Over half of the New South Wales sample (59%) self-reported that they had experienced a mental health problem in the previous 6 months.

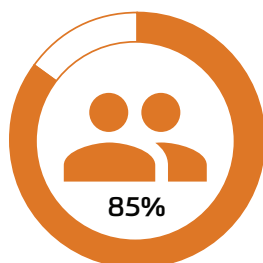


Of those who commented, the most common self-reported mental health concern was anxiety (66%), followed by depression (66%), and panic (13%).

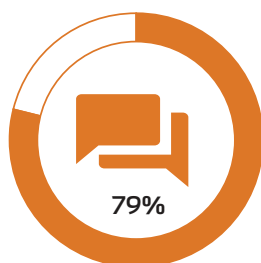


Of those self-reporting a mental health problem, 45% reported seeing a mental health professional in the previous 6 months.

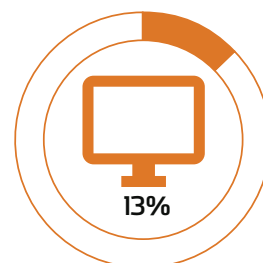
MODES OF PURCHASING



In 2019, 85% of the NSW sample reported buying drugs face-to-face in the previous 12 months.

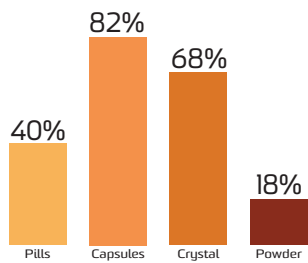


In 2019, 79% of the EDRS sample reported buying drugs off social networking applications in the previous 12 months.

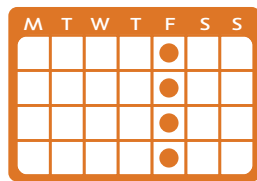


In 2019, 13% of the EDRS sample reported buying drugs off the darknet in the previous 12 months.

ECSTASY

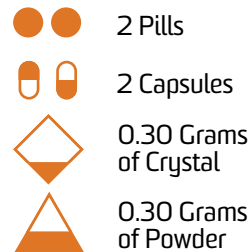


Past 6 month use of ecstasy pills, capsules, crystal, and powder in 2019.

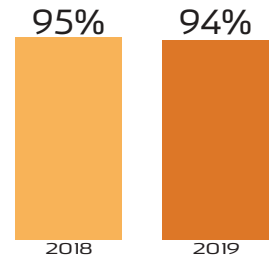


12%

Of those who had recently consumed ecstasy, 12% used it weekly or more often.



Median amounts of ecstasy consumed in a 'typical' session using each form.

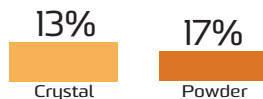


Of those who could comment
94% perceived ecstasy capsules,
and 95% to be 'easy' or 'very easy'
to obtain.

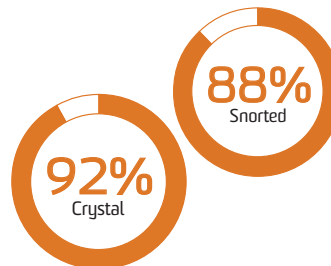
METHAMPHETAMINE



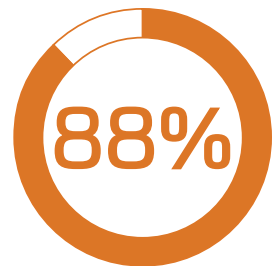
In NSW, 26% of the sample had consumed any methamphetamine in the previous 6 months.



Of the entire sample, 83% had recently consumed powder, and 13% crystal methamphetamine.



Amongst those who had recently used crystal, 92% smoked it. Of those who had recently used powder, 88% snorted it.

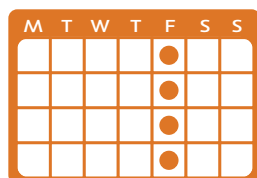


Of those who could comment
88% perceived crystal
methamphetamine to be 'easy'
or 'very easy' to obtain.

COCAINE



In NSW, 83% of the sample had consumed cocaine in the previous 6 months.

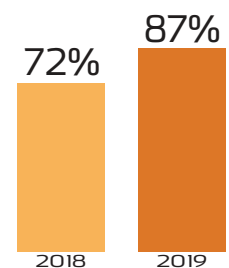


5%

Of people who had consumed cocaine recently, ?% reported weekly or more frequent use.



Of people who had consumed cocaine in the last 6 months, 100% had snorted it.

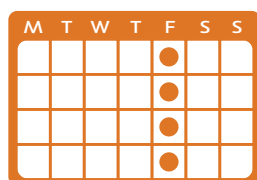


Of those who could comment 87% perceived cocaine to be 'easy' or 'very easy' to obtain.

CANNABIS



In NSW, 81% of the sample had consumed any cannabis in the previous 6 months.

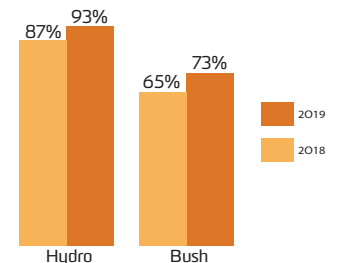


46%

Of those who had consumed cannabis recently, 46% reported weekly or more frequent use.



Of people who had consumed cannabis in the last 6 months, 98% had smoked it.



Of those who could comment
93% perceived hydro to be
'easy' or 'very easy' to obtain.

Background

The [Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System \(EDRS\)](#) is an illicit drug monitoring system which has been conducted in all states and territories of Australia since 2003, and forms part of [Drug Trends](#). The purpose is to provide a coordinated approach to monitoring the use, market features, and harms of ecstasy and related drugs. This includes drugs that are routinely used in the context of entertainment venues and other recreational locations, including ecstasy, methamphetamine, cocaine, new psychoactive substances, LSD (*d*-lysergic acid), and ketamine. The EDRS is designed to be sensitive to emerging trends, providing data in a timely manner rather than describing issues in extensive detail. It does this by studying a range of data sources, including data from annual interviews with people who regularly use ecstasy and other stimulants and from secondary analyses of routinely-collected indicator data. This report focuses on the key findings from the annual interview component of EDRS.

Methods

Full details of the [methods for the annual interviews](#) are available for download. To briefly summarise, participants were recruited primarily via internet postings, print advertisements, interviewer contacts, and snowballing (i.e., peer referral). Participants had to: i) be at least 17 years of age (due to ethical constraints), ii) have used ecstasy or other stimulants at least six times during the preceding six months; and iii) have been a resident of the capital city in which the interview took place for the past 12 months. Interviews took place in varied locations negotiated with participants (e.g., research institutions, coffee shops or parks). Following provision of informed consent and completion of a structured interview, participants were reimbursed \$40 for their time and expenses incurred. A total of 797 participants were recruited across capital cities nationally (April-July, 2019), with 100 participants interviewed in Sydney during April-June 2019 (100 in 2018).

For normally distributed continuous variables, means and standard deviations (SD) are reported; for skewed data (i.e. skewness > ± 1 or kurtosis > ± 3), medians and interquartile ranges (IQR) are reported. Tests of statistical significance have been conducted between estimates for 2018 and 2019, noting that no corrections for multiple comparisons have been made and thus comparisons should be treated with caution. Values where cell sizes are ≤ 5 have been suppressed with corresponding notation (zero values are reported).

Interpretation of Findings

Caveats to interpretation of findings are discussed more completely in the [methods for the annual interviews](#) but it should be noted that these data are from participants recruited in Sydney, and thus do not reflect trends in regional and remote areas. Further, the results are not representative of all people who consume illicit drugs, nor of illicit drug use in the general population, but rather intended to provide evidence indicative of emerging issues that warrant further monitoring.

This report covers a subset of items asked of participants and does not include jurisdictional-level results beyond estimates of recent use of various substances (included in jurisdiction outputs; see below), nor does it include implications of findings. These findings should be interpreted alongside analyses of other data sources for a more complete profile of emerging trends in illicit drug use, market features, and harms in NSW (see section on 'Additional Outputs' below for details of other outputs providing such profiles).

Additional Outputs

[Infographics](#) and [key figures](#) from this report are available for download. There is a range of outputs from the EDRS which triangulate key findings from the annual interviews and other data sources, including [jurisdictional reports](#), [bulletins](#), and other resources available via the [Drug Trends webpage](#). This includes results from [Illicit Drug Reporting System \(IDRS\)](#), which focuses more so on the use of illicit drugs, including injecting drug use.

Please contact the research team at drugtrends@unsw.edu.au with any queries; to request additional analyses using these data; or to discuss the possibility of including items in future interviews.

1

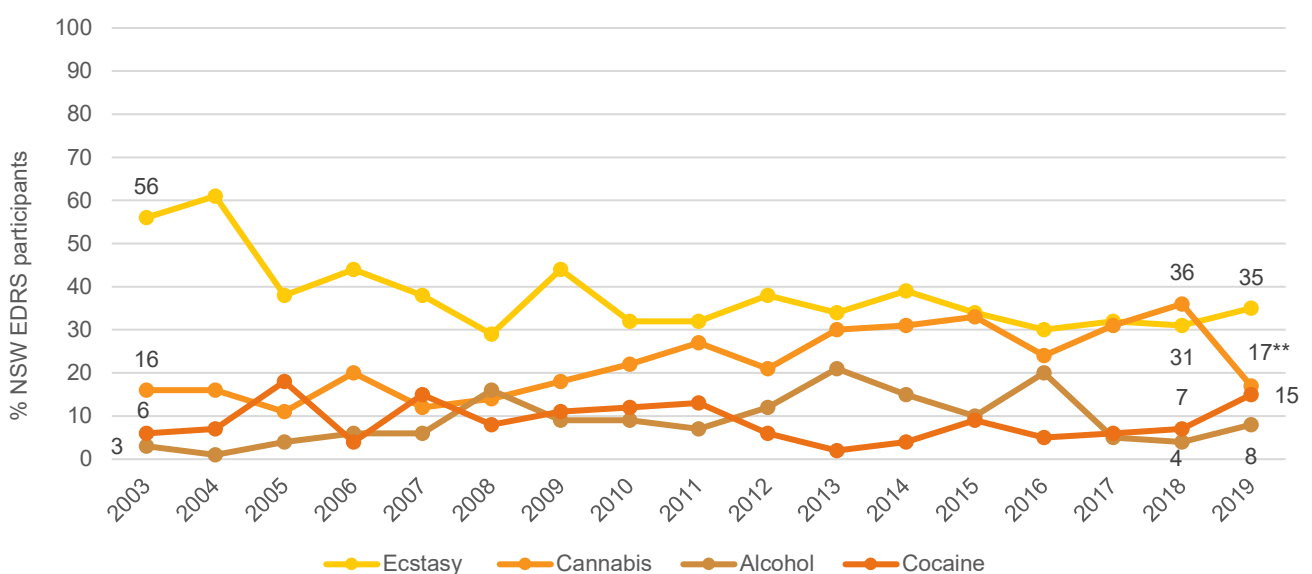
Sample Characteristics

In 2019, the NSW sample was predominantly male (57%), young (median age 25) and had diverse sexual identities compared to previous years (Table 1). In the 2019 sample, 59% reported having a post-school qualification (an increase from 30% in 2018; $p<0.001$), 61% were living in a rented house or flat, and 33% lived in the family home. Nearly two-fifths (37%) reported being employed full-time and 19% reporting being unemployed at the time of interview.

Overall, the NSW sample in 2019 was different to previous years in several ways, including education, employment, housing, and sexual identity. These factors should be considered when comparing drug trends across the years for the EDRS.

In 2019, ecstasy was the most commonly selected drug of choice (31% versus 35% in 2018; $p=0.548$). The per cent reporting cannabis as their drug of choice significantly declined from 2018 (36%) to 2019 17%; $p=0.002$), the per cent reporting alcohol, cocaine, and ecstasy remained stable (Figure 1). As with drug of choice, the per cent of people reporting cannabis as the drug most often consumed in the previous month dropped significantly (46% in 2018, 28% in 2019; $p=0.008$). Cocaine as the drug used most often in the previous month significantly increased (2% in 2018, 12% in 2019; $p=0.005$), while alcohol and ecstasy remained stable (Figure 2). Weekly or more frequent use of cannabis also declined amongst the sample from 2018 to 2019 (60% to 37%, $p=0.001$; Figure 3).

Figure 1: Drug of choice, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Substances listed in this figure are the primary endorsed; nominal percentages have endorsed other substances. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n\leq 5$). $p<0.050$; ** $p<0.010$; *** $p<0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

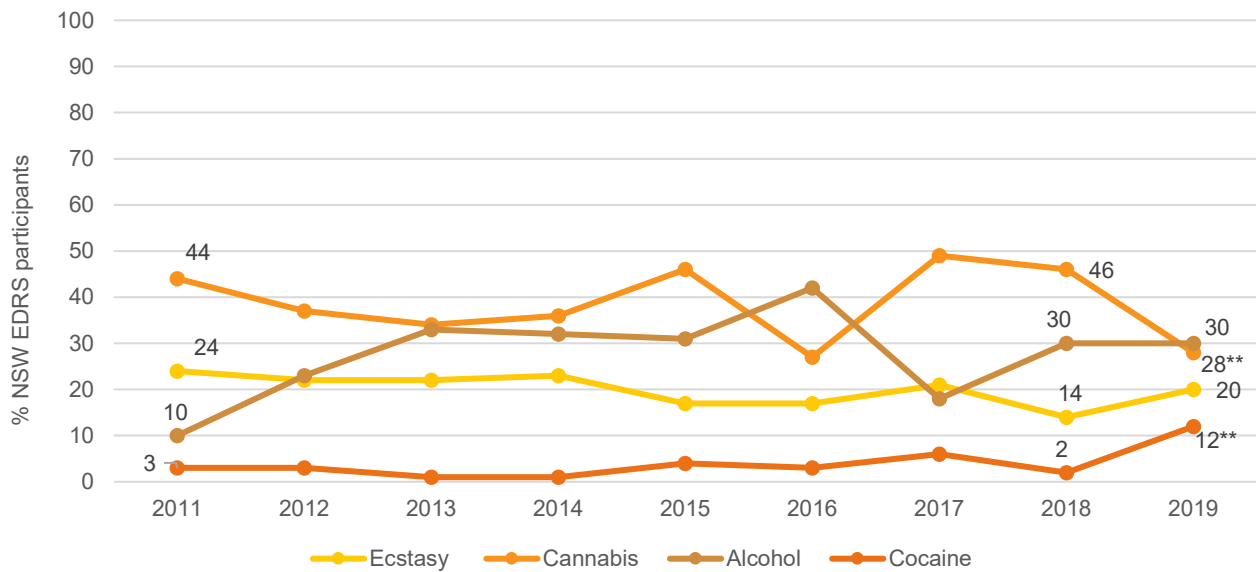
Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample, nationally and NSW, 2015-2019

	National 2019 N=797	NSW 2019 N=100	NSW 2018 N=100	NSW 2017 N=100	NSW 2016 N=103	NSW 2015 N=100
Median age (years; IQR)	22 (19-26)	25 (21-29)	20 (18-22)	20 (19-24)	21 (19-24)	21 (19-25)
% Male	60	57	60	69	68	71
% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	5	- *	7	-	-	-
% Sexual identity						
Heterosexual	81	63**	82	81	79	78
Homosexual	5	11	-	5	7	11
Bisexual	12	17	13	11	12	6
Different Identity	3	7	-	-	-	-
Mean years of school education (range)	12 (8-12)	12 (9-12)	12 (9-12)	12 (10-12)	12(9-12)	12 (3-12)
% Post-school qualification(s)^	54	59***	30	35	34	50
% Employment status						
Employed full-time	22	37*	19	19	24	24
Students#	45	41***	15	15	43	22
Unemployed	27	19	24	13	7	8
Median weekly income \$ (IQR)	(N=763) \$500 (257-850)	(N=99) \$755*** (450-1154)	(N=96) \$400 (200-764)	(N=96) 450 (25-2,100)	(N=100) 400 (15-1731)	(N=93) 500 (10-4500)
% Accommodation						
Own house/flat	4	-	6	-	-	-
Rented house/flat	48	61***	30	38	34	41
Parents'/family home	40	33**	59	58	62	52
Boarding house/hostel	5	0	-	-	-	-
No fixed address	1	-	0	-	0	-
Other	-	0	0	-	-	-

Note. ~Difference in employment and student status may be due to a difference in how the questions was asked in 2018 and 2019.

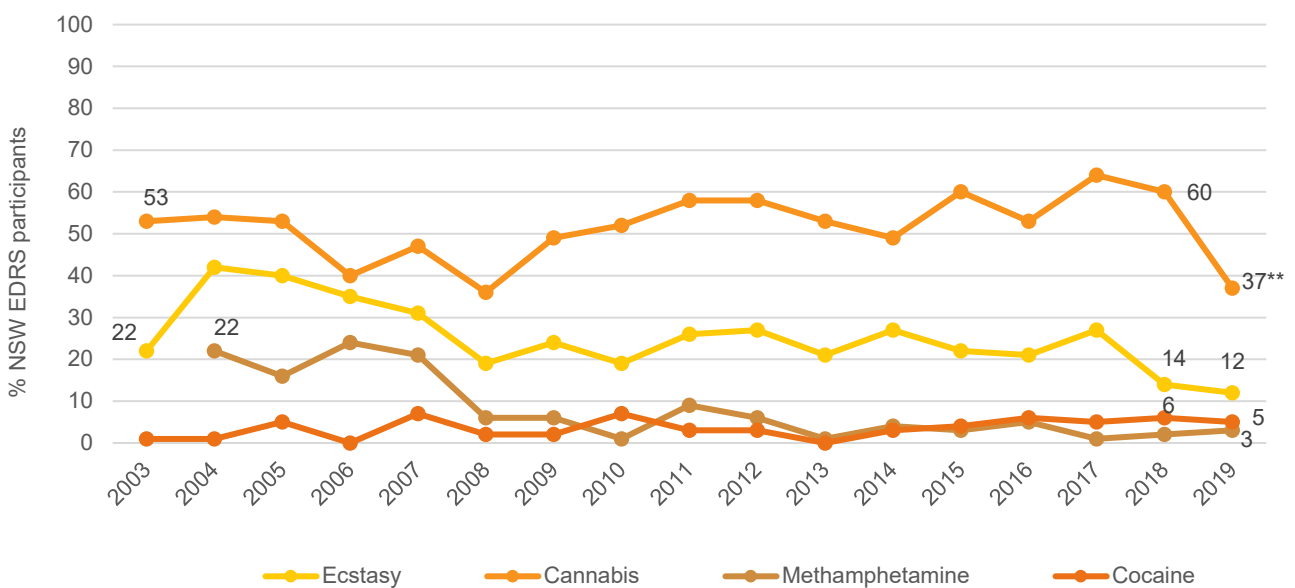
^Includes trade/technical and university qualifications. # Includes full-time students, part-time students and participants who both work and study. - Percentage suppressed due to small cell size (n≤5 but not 0). ~ until 2019, participants were asked if they identify as gay male or lesbian; in 2019, participants were asked whether they identify as homosexual. * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 2: Drug used most often in the past month, NSW, 2011-2019



Note. Substances listed in this figure are the primary endorsed; nominal percentages have endorsed other substances. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). Data are only presented for 2011-2019 as this question was not asked in 2003-2010. * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 3: High frequency substance use in the past six months, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Among the entire sample. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

2

Ecstasy/MDMA

Participants were asked about their recent (past six month) use of various forms of ecstasy (3,4-methylenedoxymethamphetamine), including pills, powder, capsules, and crystal.

Recent Use (past 6 months)

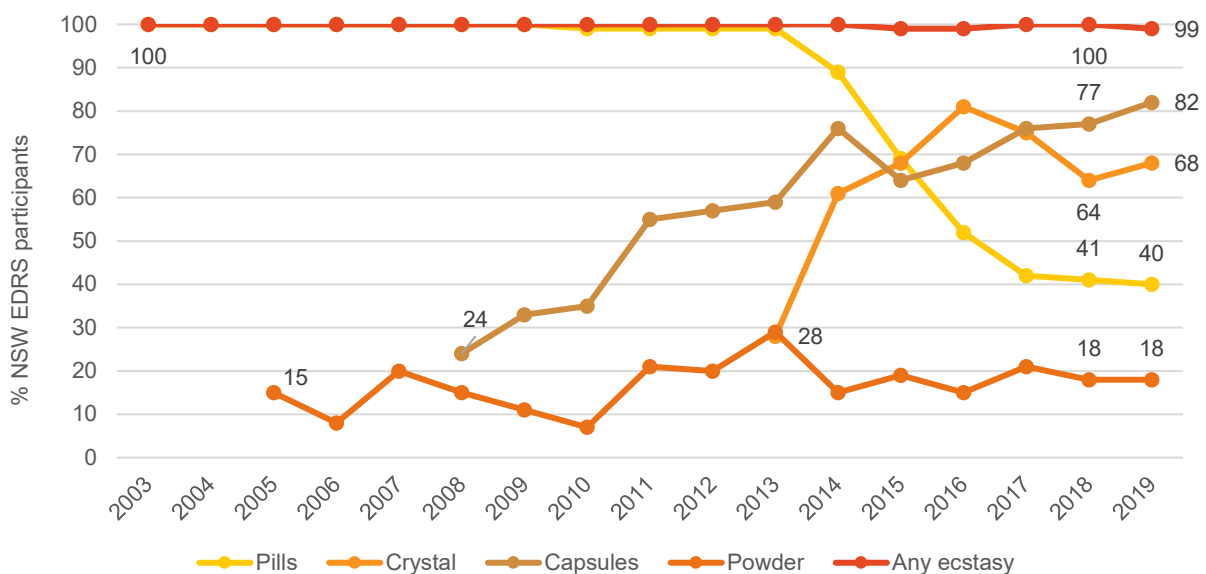
In 2019, 99% of the sample had recently consumed ecstasy in any form. This was consistent with previous years (Figure 4) and reflects the interview eligibility criteria (see Methods).

Capsules continued to be the most commonly consumed form of ecstasy, with 82% of the sample reporting recent use (77% in 2018; $p=0.381$), followed by crystal (68% in 2019 versus 64% in 2018 $p=0.551$; Figure 4).

Frequency of Use

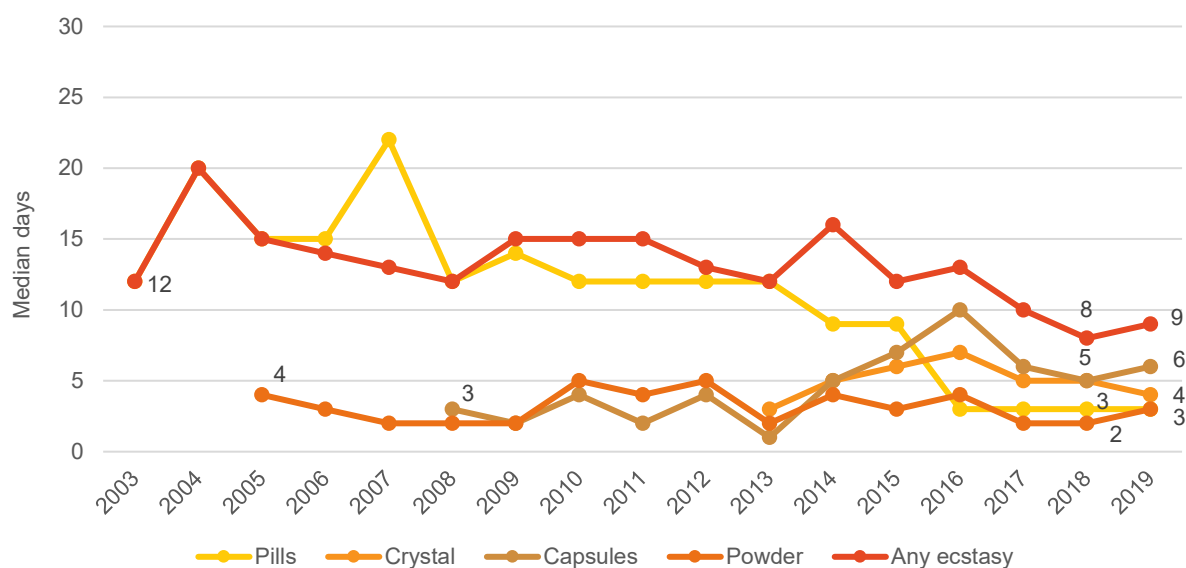
In NSW, participants reported using ecstasy (in any form) on a median of 9 days (IQR=5-13; $n=99$; Figure 5) in the previous 6 months (8 days in 2018, IQR=4-17; $p=0.719$). Of those who recently consumed ecstasy in any form, 12% had used it weekly or more frequently, continuing the downward trend of weekly or more use (14% in 2018; $p=0.674$; Figure 3).

Figure 4: Past six month use of any ecstasy, and ecstasy pills, powder, capsules, and crystal, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Up until 2012, participant eligibility was determined based on any recent ecstasy use; subsequently it has been expanded to broader illicit stimulant use. Data collection for powder started in 2005, capsules in 2008 and crystal in 2013. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 5: Median days of any ecstasy and ecstasy pills, powder, capsules, and crystal use in the past six months, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Data collection for powder started in 2005, capsules in 2008 and crystal in 2013. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Y axis reduced to 30 to improve visibility of trends. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Patterns of Consumption

Ecstasy Pills

Recent Use: In 2019, 40% of the NSW sample reported recent use of ecstasy pills. This is stable from 2018 (41%, $p=0.886$) but reflects an overall downward trend in use of ecstasy pills since 2013, when 99% of the sample reported recent use ($p=0.005$).

Frequency of Use: Ecstasy pills were consumed on a median of 3 days in the previous 6 months (IQR=1-5; 3 days in 2018, IQR=1-7; $p=0.311$; Figure 5).

Route of Administration: Swallowing remained the main route of administration for ecstasy pills in NSW (98% of consumers in 2019; 100% in 2018; $p=0.309$). Snorting was reported by 15% in 2019, down from 39% in 2018 ($p=0.010$).

Quantity: In a 'typical' session, people who had recently used ecstasy pills reported consuming a median of 2 pills (IQR=1-3). This was stable from 2018 (median 2 pills; IQR=1-2). The maximum amount participants reported in one session was also a median of 2 pills (IQR=2-4), a decrease from 2018 (3 pills, IQR=1.5-6.0).

Ecstasy Capsules

Recent Use (past 6 months): Capsules were the most commonly consumed form of ecstasy in 2019, with 82% of the NSW sample reporting recent use (77% in 2018; $p=0.381$). Capsules have now been the main form used since 2017.

Frequency of Use: Capsule use was the most frequent of any of the ecstasy forms, with a median of 6 days (IQR=4-10), similar to previous years (5 days in 2018; IQR=3-10; $p=0.362$).

Route of Administration: All who had recently consumed capsules reported swallowing them. Snorting capsules was reported by 33% of participants (25% in 2018; $p=0.251$).

Quantity: In a 'typical' session the median number of capsules consumed was two (IQR=1.5-2.8; 2018: 2 capsules, IQR=2-3), and in a 'maximum' session was three (IQR=2-4; 2018: 4 capsules, IQR=2-5).

Ecstasy Crystal

Recent Use (past 6 months): Ecstasy crystal was recently used by 68% of NSW participants in 2019 (64% in 2018; $p=0.550$). Crystal use increased from 28% in 2013 when monitoring began to a peak of 81% in 2016, and since been reported by nearly two-thirds of the sample or more.

Frequency of Use: Crystal use occurred on a median of 4 days in 2019 (IQR=2-8), with a median frequency of 5 days reported in 2018 (IQR=2-10; $p=0.581$).

Route of Administration: Of those who had recently used crystal, the majority (87%) reported swallowing, and 52% reported snorting the form. This reflects trends from 2018 (89% and 59% for swallowing ($p=0.686$) and snorting ($p=0.361$), respectively).

Quantity: The median amount of ecstasy crystal consumed in 2019 was 0.25 grams (IQR=0.15-0.40) in a 'typical' session (2018: 0.20 grams, IQR=0.20-0.50) and 0.40 grams (IQR=0.20-1.00) in a 'maximum' session (1.00 gram in 2018, IQR=0.50-1.50).

Ecstasy Powder

Recent Use (past 6 months): In 2019, 18% of the NSW sample reported past 6 month use of ecstasy powder. As in previous years, powder was the least commonly consumed form of ecstasy (18% in 2018).

Frequency of Use: For powder, the median days of use was 3 (IQR=1-4), similar to the estimate in 2018 (2 days; IQR=2-4; $p=0.504$).

Route of Administration: Routes of administration for ecstasy powder were similar to previous years, comprising snorting (78% in 2019 and 2018) or swallowing (61% in 2019 versus 67% in 2018; $p=0.728$).

Quantity: In a 'typical' session, participants reported consuming a median of 0.25 grams (IQR=0.10-0.45), slightly less than in 2018 (median 0.3 grams; IQR=0.1-0.5). The maximum amount consumed in one session had a reported median of 0.28 grams (IQR=0.13-0.88; 2018 'maximum' session numbers ≤ 5 and suppressed).

Market Trends

Ecstasy Pills

Price: Among those who could respond ($n=46$), the median price of an ecstasy pill in 2019 was \$25 (IQR=20-40), an increase from the median price recorded in 2018 (\$20, IQR=20-25) prices ($p=0.002$) but similar to prices recorded prior to this period (Figure 6).

Perceived Purity: Among those who were able to comment in 2019 ($n=49$), almost half (41%) perceived purity to be 'high' (31% in 2018, $p=0.328$) and 22% perceived purity to be 'medium' (29% in 2018, $p=0.474$; Table 2).

Perceived Availability: Of the 50 participants who could comment, 40% perceived ecstasy pills to be 'easy' to obtain (34% in 2018, $p=0.544$), while 40% perceived them to be 'difficult' to obtain (40% in 2018, $p=0.966$).

Ecstasy Capsules

Price: In 2019, the median price per capsule amongst those who could respond ($n=90$) was \$25 (IQR=20-25), consistent with previous years (\$25 in 2018, IQR=20-25; $p=0.997$; Figure 6).

Perceived Purity: Of those who could comment ($n=94$), ecstasy capsules were perceived to be 'high' purity by 34%, 'medium' by 31% and 'fluctuating' by 31%. This remained relatively stable, with 30% reporting 'high' ($p=0.561$) and 44% 'medium' ($p=0.073$) in 2018.

Perceived Availability: Among the group who responded ($n=94$), 55% perceived it to be 'very easy' to obtain ecstasy capsules. A further 39% perceived it to be 'easy', similar to 2018 ('very easy' 60%; $p=0.114$; 'easy' 35%; $p=0.060$; Table 2).

Ecstasy Crystal

Price: The median price for a gram of ecstasy crystal was \$200 (IQR=150-200; $n=44$). The increase from 2018 prices was not statistically significant (median \$150, IQR=100-200; $p=0.142$).

Perceived Purity: In 2019, 69 people in the NSW sample commented on the purity of ecstasy crystal, with 49% perceiving it to be 'high' (58% in 2018; $p=0.345$), and 33% perceiving it to be 'medium' (27% in 2018; $p=0.446$).

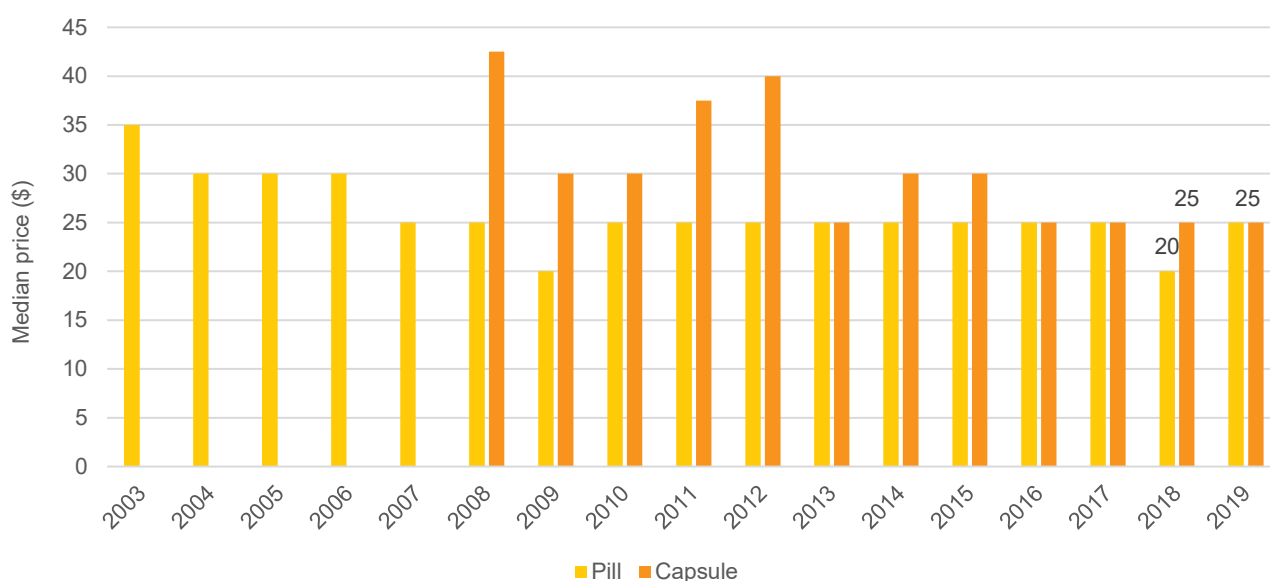
Perceived Availability: In 2019 ($n=68$), ecstasy crystal was perceived to be 'very easy' to obtain by 34% compared to 41% in 2018 ($p=0.382$). A further 44% perceived it to be 'easy' (35% in 2018; $p=0.271$; Table 2).

Ecstasy Powder

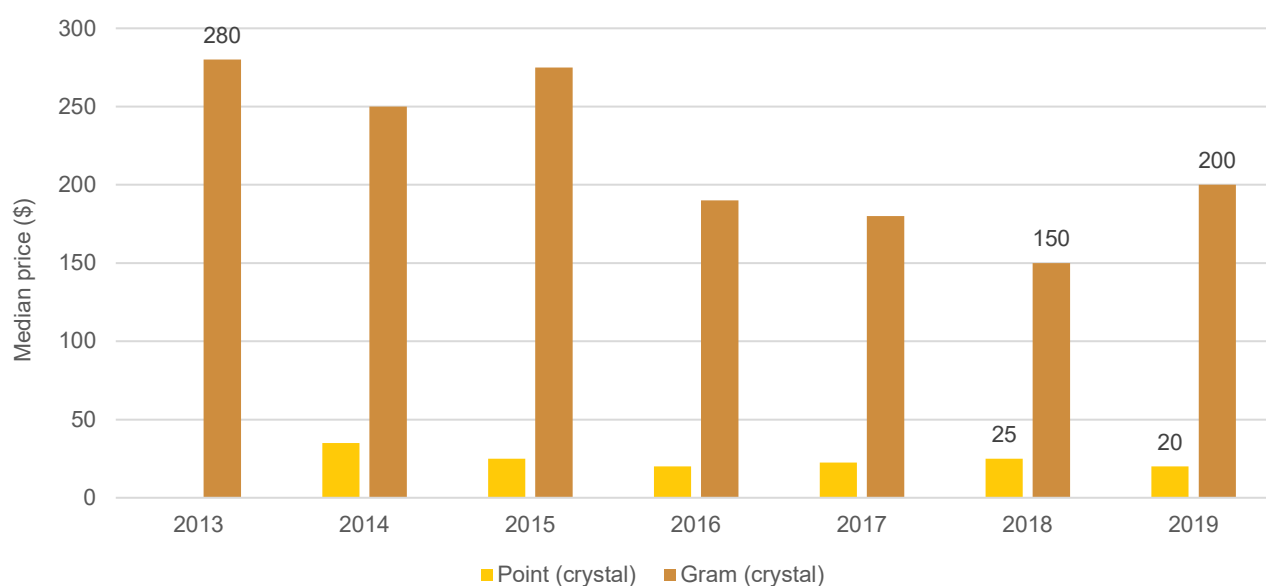
Price: In 2019, 12 people were able to comment on the price of ecstasy powder. The median price for a gram was \$200 (IQR=110-250; 2018 numbers ≤ 5 and are therefore suppressed).

Perceived Purity: Of those that commented ($n=16$), perceived purity of ecstasy powder was reported as 'medium' by 63% (2018 numbers ≤ 5 and are therefore suppressed).

Perceived Availability: Of the 16 people who could comment, 69% perceived ecstasy powder to be 'easy' to obtain (2018 numbers ≤ 5 and are therefore suppressed).

Figure 6: Median price of ecstasy pill and capsule, NSW, 2003-2019

Note. Among those who commented. Data collection for price of ecstasy capsules started in 2008. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 7: Median price of ecstasy crystal per point and gram, NSW, 2013-2019

Note. Among those who commented. Data collection for price of ecstasy crystal gram and point started in 2013 and 2014 respectively. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Table 2: Perceived purity and availability of ecstasy pills, capsules and crystal, NSW, 2017-2019

	2017	2018	2019
Current Purity			
% Pills (n)	(n=43)	(n=45)	(n=49)
Low	-	-	-
Medium	23	29	22
High	14	31	41
Fluctuates	51	33	29
% Capsules (n)	(n=74)	(n=77)	(n=94)
Low	14	-	-
Medium	30	44	31
High	15	30	34
Fluctuates	42	20	31
% Crystal (n)	(n=61)	(n=59)	(n=69)
Low	-	-	-
Medium	26	27	33
High	30	58	49
Fluctuates	39	12	13
% Powder (n)	(n=8)	(n=10)	(n=16)
Low	-	-	-
Medium	-	70	63
High	-	-	-
Fluctuates	-	-	-
Current Availability			
% Pills (n)	(n=42)	(n=47)	(n=50)
Very easy	31	21	-
Easy	36	34	40
Difficult	26	40	40
Very difficult	-	-	-
% Capsules (n)	(n=76)	(n=79)	(n=94)
Very easy	63	60	55
Easy	28	35	39
Difficult	9	5	-
Very difficult	0	0	-
% Crystal (n)	(n=61)	(n=58)	(n=68)
Very easy	48	41	34
Easy	41	35	44
Difficult	12	22	22
Very difficult	0	-	0
% Powder (n)	(n=9)	(n=11)	(n=16)
Very easy	-	-	-
Easy	78	-	69
Difficult	-	-	-
Very difficult	-	-	0

Note. The response option 'Don't know' was excluded from analysis. - Percentage suppressed due to small cell size (n≤5 but not 0).
 * $p<0.050$; ** $p<0.010$; *** $p<0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

3

Methamphetamine

Participants were asked about their recent (past six month) use of various forms of methamphetamine, including powder (white particles, described as speed), base (wet, oily powder) and crystal (clear, ice-like crystals). Findings for base methamphetamine are not reported here due to small numbers reporting recent use. For further information on base methamphetamine, please refer to the [national report](#), or contact the Drug Trends team

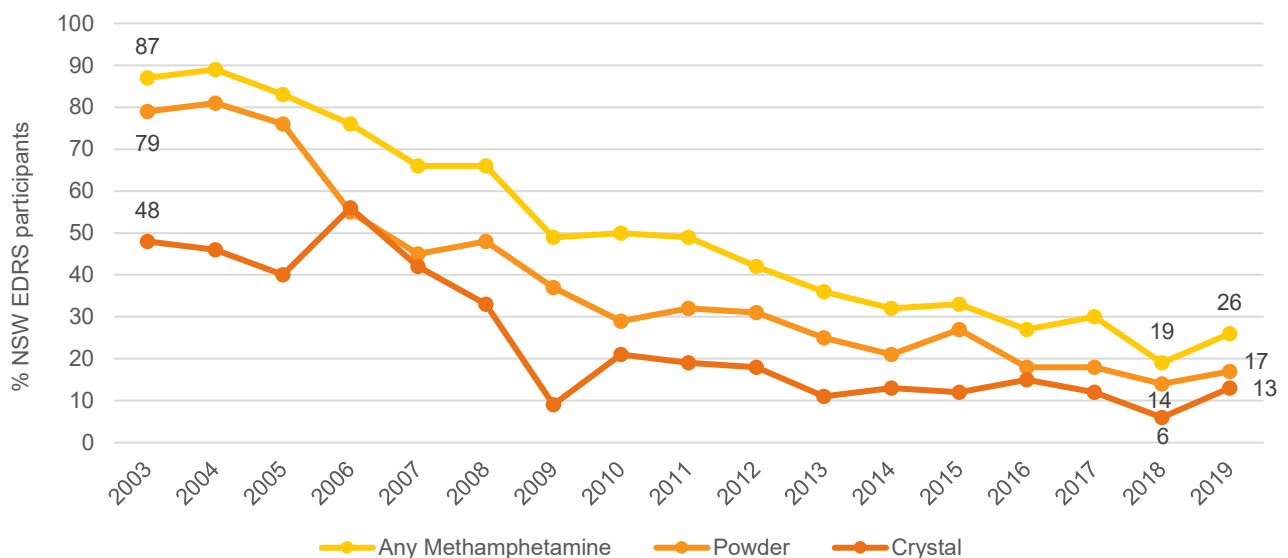
Recent Use (past 6 months)

Recent use of any methamphetamine has been declining since monitoring began, from 87% of the NSW sample reporting recent use of any methamphetamine in 2003 to 19% in 2018. In 2019, 26% of the NSW sample reported recent use ($p=0.236$; Figure 8).

Frequency of Use

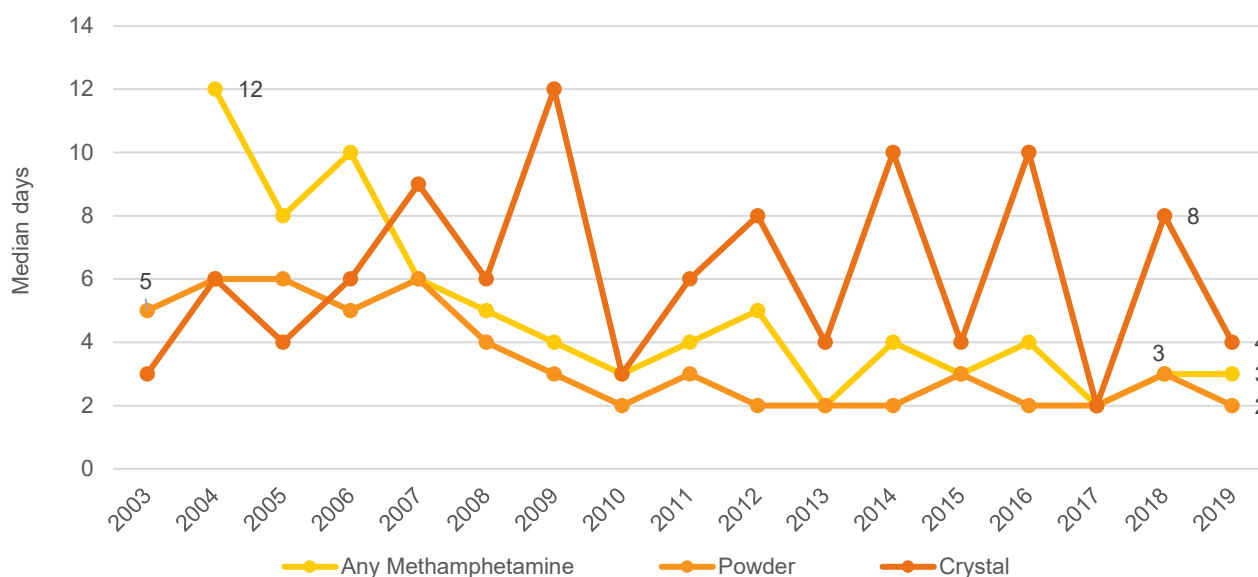
Frequency of any methamphetamine use in the past six months has been fortnightly or less over the course of monitoring. Median frequency of use in 2019 was 3 days (IQR=2-5) compared to 3 days in 2018 (IQR=1-12; $p=0.926$). Among recent consumers, ≤ 5 people reported weekly or more frequent use of any methamphetamine.

Figure 8: Past six month use of any methamphetamine, powder, and crystal, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Data labels have been removed from figures in years of initial monitoring, and 2018 and 2019 with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). Values for methamphetamine base have been suppressed due to small number reporting recent use. * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 9: Median days of any methamphetamine, powder, and crystal use in the past six months, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Y axis reduced to 14 to improve visibility of trends. Data labels have been removed from figures in years of initial monitoring, and 2018 and 2019 with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Patterns of consumption

Methamphetamine Powder

Recent Use (past 6 months): Use of methamphetamine powder ('speed') has been declining since reporting began. Four-fifths (79%) reported recent use in 2003, declining to 14% in 2018 and 17% in 2019 ($p = 0.558$; Figure 8).

Frequency of Use: Powder methamphetamine was used on a median of 2 days in 2019 (IQR=1-4), similar to 3 days (IQR=1-7) in 2018 ($p = 0.215$). No recent consumers of powder reported weekly or more frequent use in 2019.

Crystal Methamphetamine

Recent Use (past 6 months): In 2019, 13% of the NSW sample reported recent use of crystal methamphetamine ('ice'), similar to the estimate in 2018 (6%; $p = 0.091$; Figure 8).

Frequency of Use: The median number of days the NSW sample consumed crystal methamphetamine was 4 in 2019 (IQR=2-20; 2018 numbers ≤ 5 and suppressed).

Routes of Administration: Of those who had recently consumed powder methamphetamine, the majority (88%) reported snorting the form (71% in 2018; $p = 0.239$).

Quantity: The median amount of powder methamphetamine used in a 'typical' session was 0.25 grams ($n = 13$, IQR=0.10-0.45; 2018 0.30 grams, IQR=0.10-0.50). For a 'maximum' session, the median amount consumed was 0.275 grams ($n = 12$, IQR=0.125-0.875; 2018 0.500 grams, IQR=0.200-0.800).

Routes of Administration: The main route of administration for people who had used crystal methamphetamine was smoking (92% in 2019; 2018 numbers ≤ 5 and suppressed).

Quantity: The median amount of crystal methamphetamine used in a 'typical' session was 0.25 grams ($n = 55$, IQR=0.15-0.40; 2018 $n = 39$, 0.20 grams IQR=0.20-0.50). The median amount consumed in a 'maximum' session was 0.40 grams, ($n = 38$, IQR=0.20-1.00; 2018 0.50grams, IQR=0.20-1.00).

Market Trends

Methamphetamine Powder

Price: Within those who could respond (n=11), the median price for a gram of speed was \$100 (IQR=100-160). This price has remained relatively stable for the past 3 years (Figure 10).

Perceived Purity: In 2019, among those that could comment (n=16) 63% reported that powder ecstasy was of 'medium' perceived purity (70% in 2018, $p=0.696$; Figure 11).

Perceived Availability: Of those who could comment (n=17), over two-thirds perceived speed to be 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to obtain in 2019 (41%), similar to 2018 (36%; $p=0.130$; Figure 12).

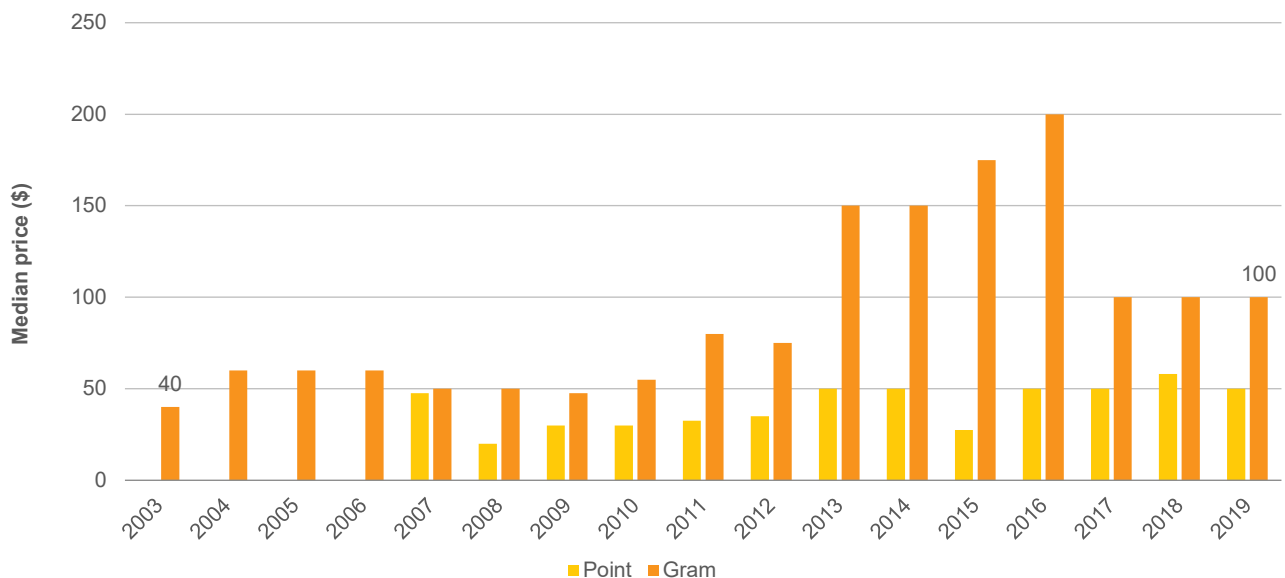
Crystal Methamphetamine

Price: Among those who could respond (n=13), the median price for a point of crystal methamphetamine was \$50 (IQR=50-50). Numbers from 2018 were low (≤ 5) and data has been suppressed. For historical data, please contact the Drug Trends team.

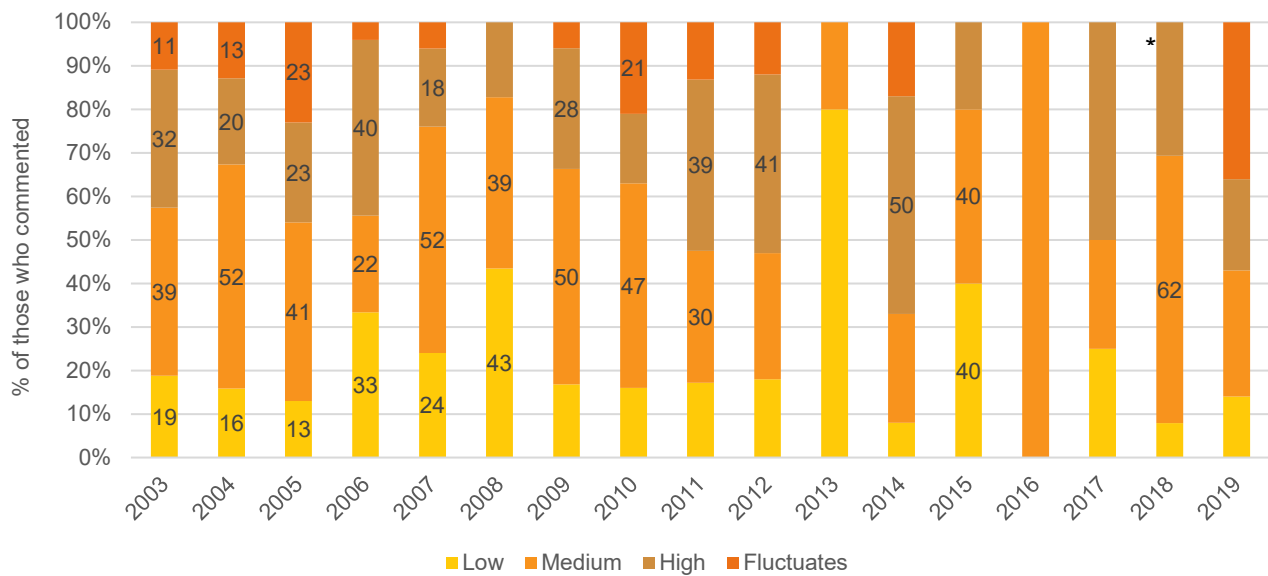
Perceived Purity: Of those who responded (n=15), 73% perceived the purity of crystal to be 'high' (2018 numbers ≤ 5 and suppressed).

Perceived Availability: Of those who commented (n=17), more than 80% perceived crystal methamphetamine to be 'easy' or 'very easy' to obtain in 2019 (2018 numbers ≤ 5 and suppressed).

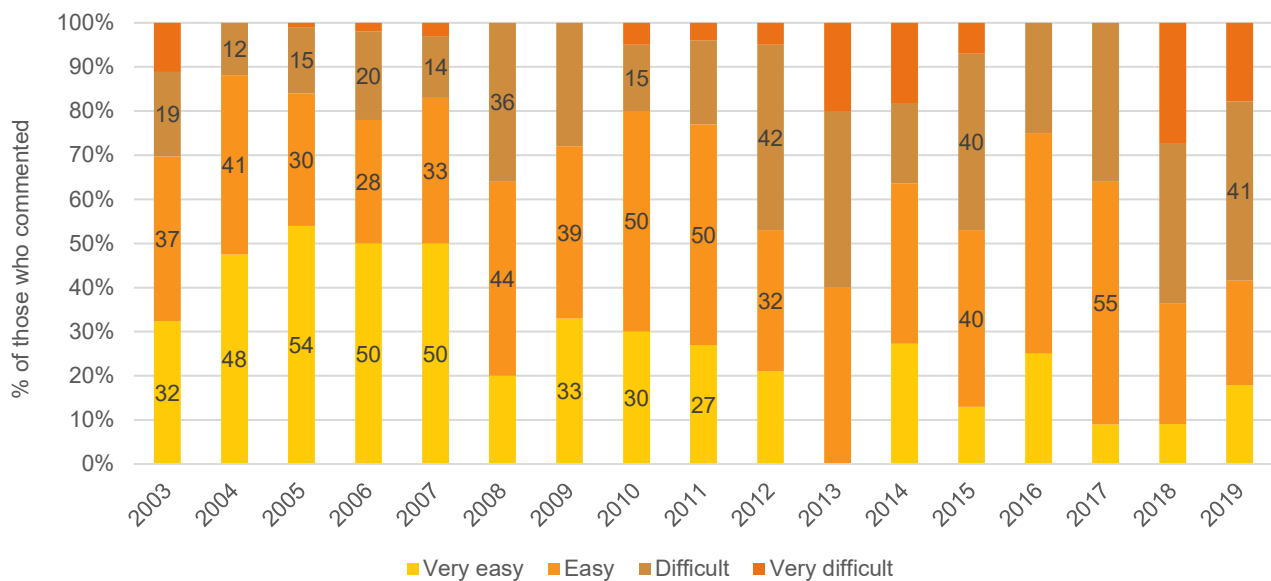
Figure 10: Median price of powder methamphetamine per point and gram, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Among those who commented. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 11: Current perceived purity of powder methamphetamine, NSW, 2003-2019

Note. The response 'Don't know' was excluded from analysis. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$).
 $*p < 0.050$; $**p < 0.010$; $***p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 12: Current perceived availability of powder methamphetamine, NSW, 2003-2019

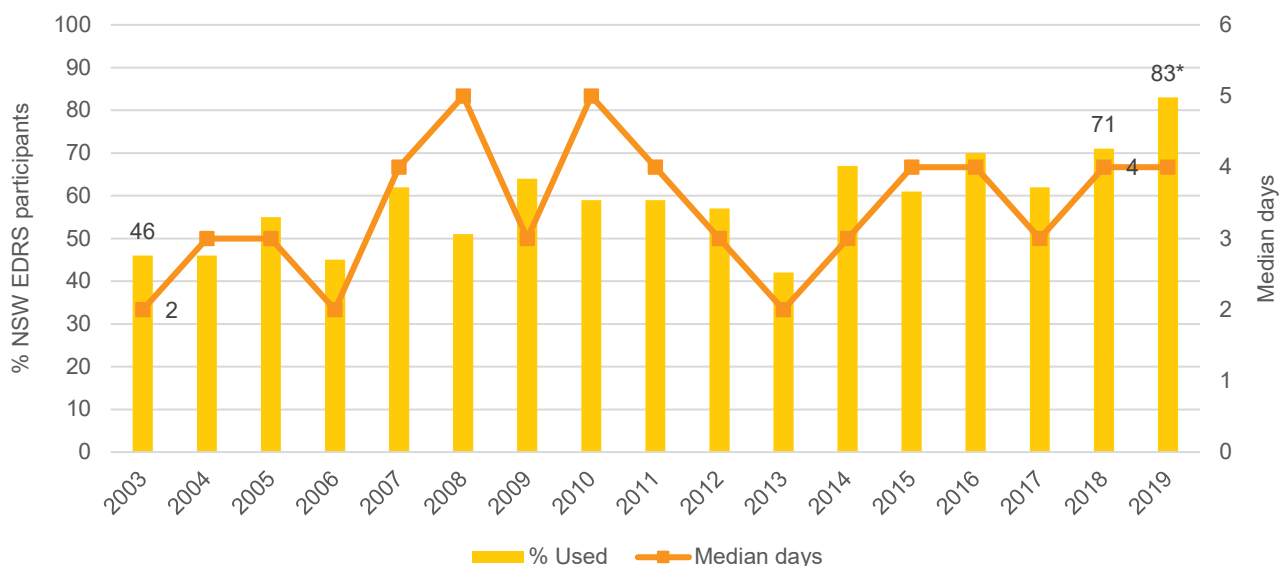
Note. The response 'Don't know' was excluded from analysis. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$).
 $*p < 0.050$; $**p < 0.010$; $***p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

4

Cocaine

Participants were asked about their recent (past six month) use of various forms of cocaine. Cocaine hydrochloride, a salt derived from the coca plant, is the most common form of cocaine available in Australia. 'Crack' cocaine is a form of freebase cocaine (hydrochloride removed), which is particularly pure. 'Crack' is most prevalent in North America and infrequently encountered in Australia.

Figure 13: Past six month use and frequency of use of cocaine, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Y axis reduced to 6 to improve visibility of trends for days of use. Data labels have been removed from figures in years 2003, 2018 and 2019 with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Patterns of Consumption

Recent Use (past 6 months)

The proportion of NSW participants reporting recent use of cocaine increased in 2019 (83%) from 2018 (71%; $p = 0.044$). This continues the general upward trend that has been observed since reporting began in 2003, when 46% of the sample reported recent use (Figure 13).

Frequency of Use

Although the per cent of people consuming cocaine has increased, the median number of days that NSW participants reported using cocaine remained stable in 2019 (4 days, IQR=2-10; 2018 median 4 days, IQR=2-8; $p = 0.644$). Weekly use or more frequent remained low at 5% of people who had recently used cocaine (6% in 2018; $p = 0.756$).

Route of Administration

Of those who had recently used cocaine, 100% reported snorting it. This was stable from 2018 (99% reported snorting $p=0.278$).

Quantity

The median amount of cocaine consumed in a 'typical' session was 0.50 grams (IQR=0.24-1.00), stable from 2018 (0.50, IQR=0.28-1.00). In a 'maximum' session, the median intake in 2019 was 0.50 (IQR=0.30-1.38), down from the 2018 'maximum' median of 1.00 gram (IQR=0.50-2.00).

Market Trends

Price

The median price for a gram of cocaine has been consistent since 2008. In 2019, 80 people responded and reported that a gram cost \$300 (IQR=250-300; 2018 $n=35$, \$300, IQR=250-300; $p=0.842$; Figure 14).

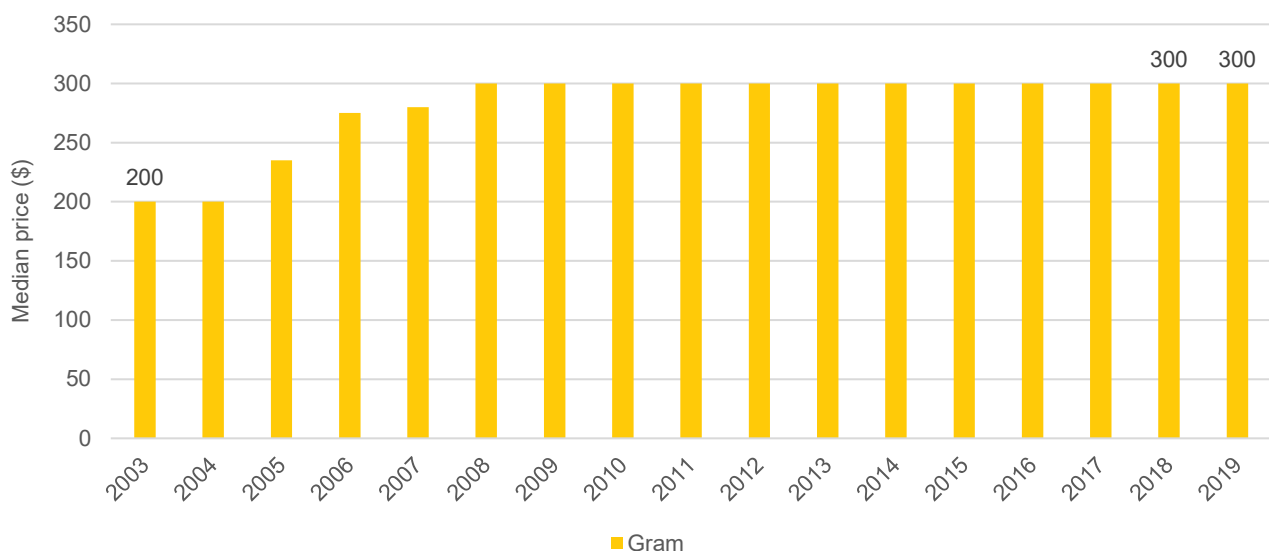
Perceived Purity

Among those who could comment ($n=86$), 29% reported that cocaine purity was 'medium', and a further 21% reported that it was 'high', similar to 2018 (33%; $p=0.630$ and 15%; $p=0.341$ respectively; Figure 15).

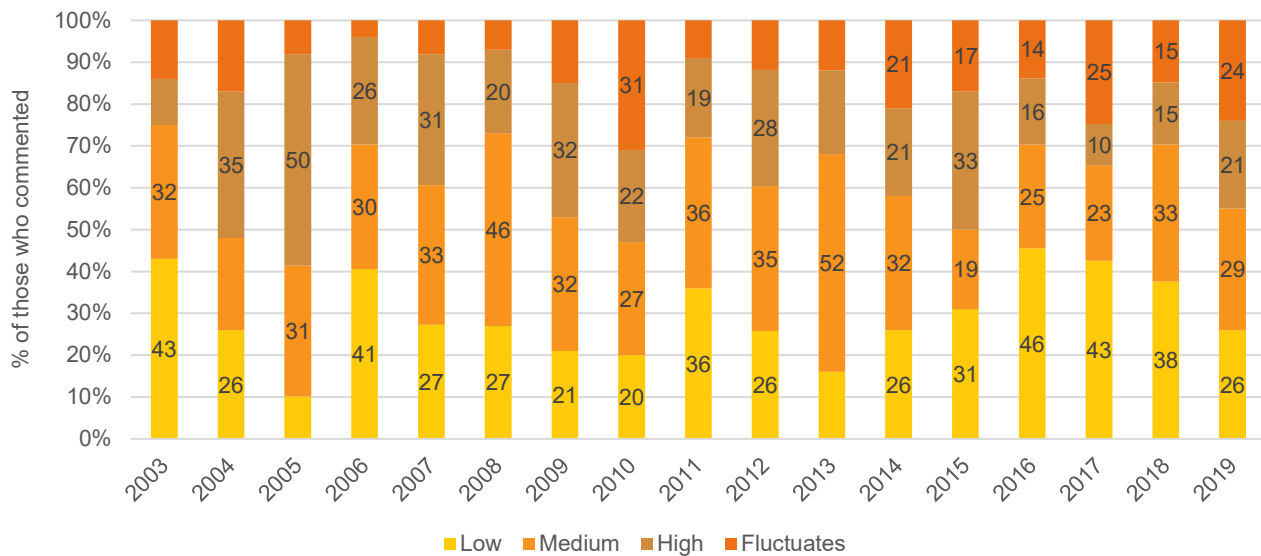
Perceived Availability

In 2019, 85 people commented on the availability of cocaine. Of them, almost half (48%) reported that it was 'very easy' to obtain (2018: 31%; $p=0.062$) and 13% stated that it was 'difficult' (2018: 25%; $p=0.004$; Figure 16).

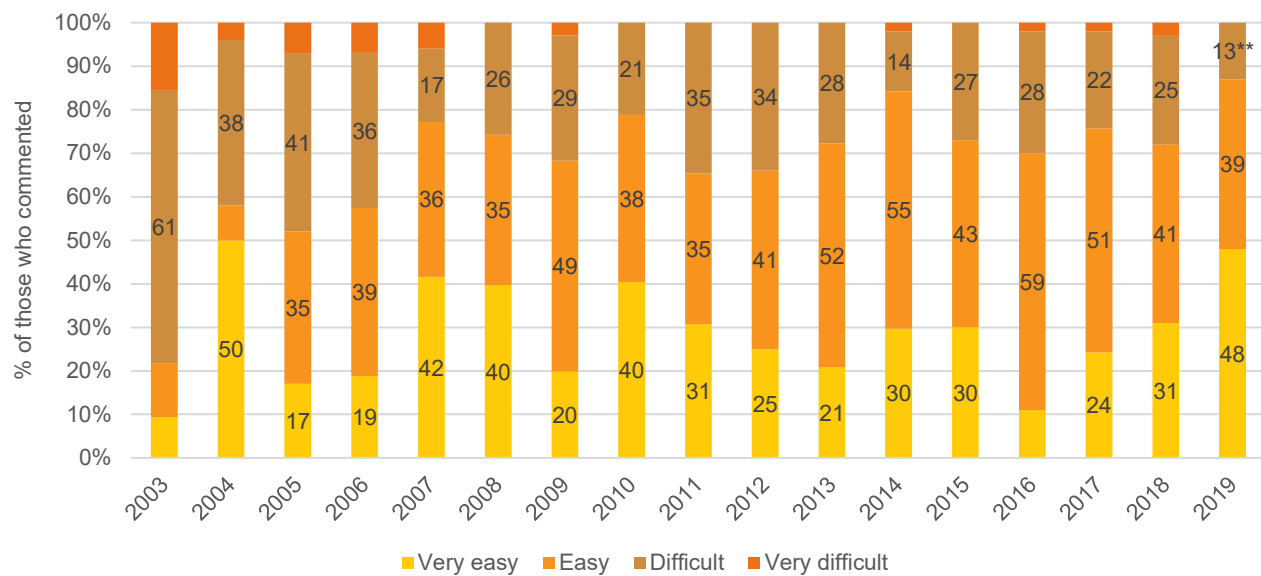
Figure 14: Median price of cocaine per gram, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Among those who commented. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 15: Current perceived purity of cocaine, NSW, 2003-2019

Note. The response 'Don't know' was excluded from analysis. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$).
 $*p < 0.050$; $**p < 0.010$; $***p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 16: Current perceived availability of cocaine, NSW, 2003-2019

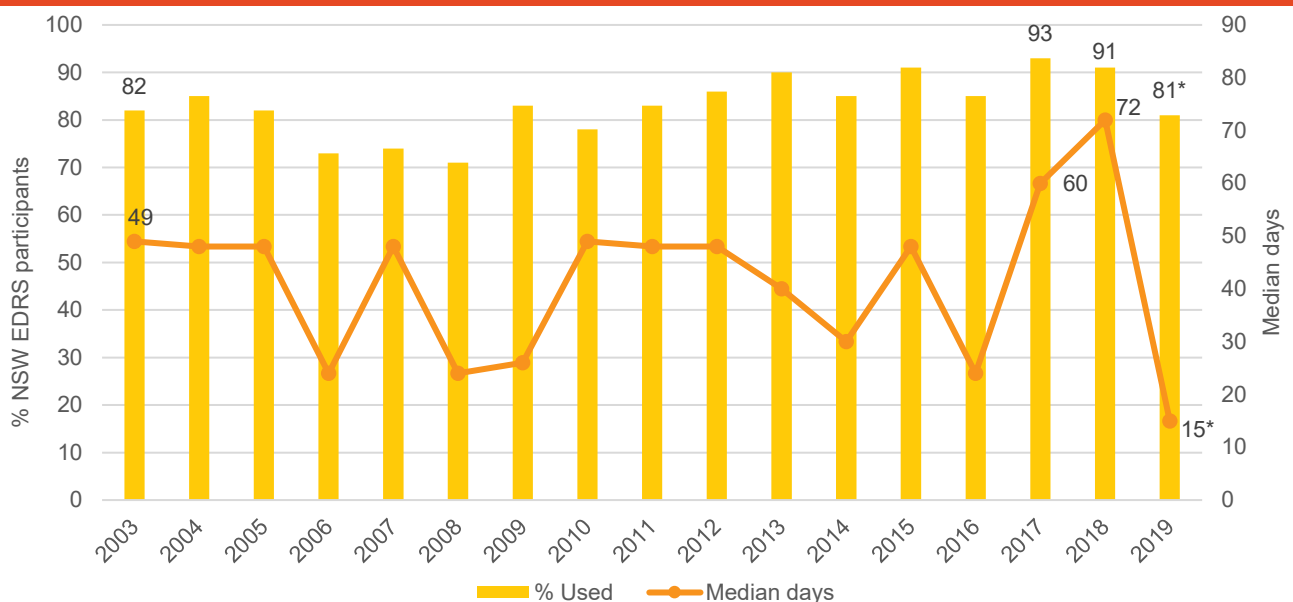
Note. The response 'Don't know' was excluded from analysis. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$).
 $*p < 0.050$; $**p < 0.010$; $***p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

5

Cannabis

Participants were asked about their recent (past six month) use of indoor-cultivated cannabis via a hydroponic system ('hydro') and outdoor-cultivated cannabis ('bush'), as well as hashish and hash oil.

Figure 17: Past six month use and frequency of use of cannabis, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Y axis reduced to 90 to improve visibility of trends in days of use. Data labels have been removed from figures in years 2003, 2018 and 2019 with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Patterns of Consumption

Recent Use

In the six months prior to interview, the majority (81%) of NSW participants reported having consumed cannabis in any form. This was a decrease from 2018 (91%; $p = 0.042$) but aligning with previous years' data (Figure 17).

Frequency of Use

The frequency of use for cannabis has fluctuated over the years, reaching a peak in 2018 with a median of 72 days (IQR=12-170). In 2019, the median days used in the last six months decreased significantly to 15 days (IQR=4.5-147; $p = 0.017$). Just under one-fifth reported daily use (19%), a similar per cent to 2018 (18%; $p = 0.574$). Almost half (46%) reported weekly or more frequent use, a significant reduction from 2018 (66%; $p = 0.008$).

Routes of Administration

As in 2018, the most common route of administration for people who had recently used cannabis in 2019 was smoking (98%, 100% in 2018; $p=0.132$). A further 43% reported swallowing cannabis (31% in 2018; $p=0.091$) and 31% reported vaping (29% in 2018; $p=0.742$).

Quantity

On the last occasion they had used cannabis, those who could comment ($n=79$) reported consuming a median of 1.00 gram ($n=13$, IQR=0.50-1.25), 3 cones ($n=25$, IQR=1-5) or 1 joint ($n=39$, IQR=0.50-1.00). This was similar to 2018, where a median of 1 gram (IQR=0.50-1.38) or 3 cones (IQR=2-5) was also reported (2018 median quantity of joints not reported due to small numbers).

Forms Used

Of those who had reported recent use of cannabis, 59% reported consuming hydroponic (80% in 2018; $p=0.005$), and 59% reported consuming bush (76% in 2018; $p=0.026$). There was a small group who reported consuming hash (14%) or hash oil (9%) in 2019, similar to 2018 (18%, $p=0.482$ and 8%, $p=0.713$ for hash and hash oil respectively). When asked about their main form of cannabis consumed in the previous 6 months, 50% of those who responded reported hydroponic cannabis (73% in 2018; $p=0.008$) and 42% reported bush (27% in 2018; $p<0.001$).

Market Trends

Hydroponic Cannabis

Price: In 2019, the median price for a gram of hydroponic cannabis was \$20 (IQR=20-20; $n=21$), consistent with previous years (2018 median \$20, IQR=20-20). The median price of an ounce increased to \$330 (IQR=310-375, $n=9$) from \$280 in 2018 (IQR=270-310; $p=0.003$), although small numbers commenting should be noted (Figure 18).

Perceived Potency: Of those who commented ($n=46$), 50% reported hydroponic cannabis as 'high' compared to 60% in 2018 ($p=0.340$; Figure 19).

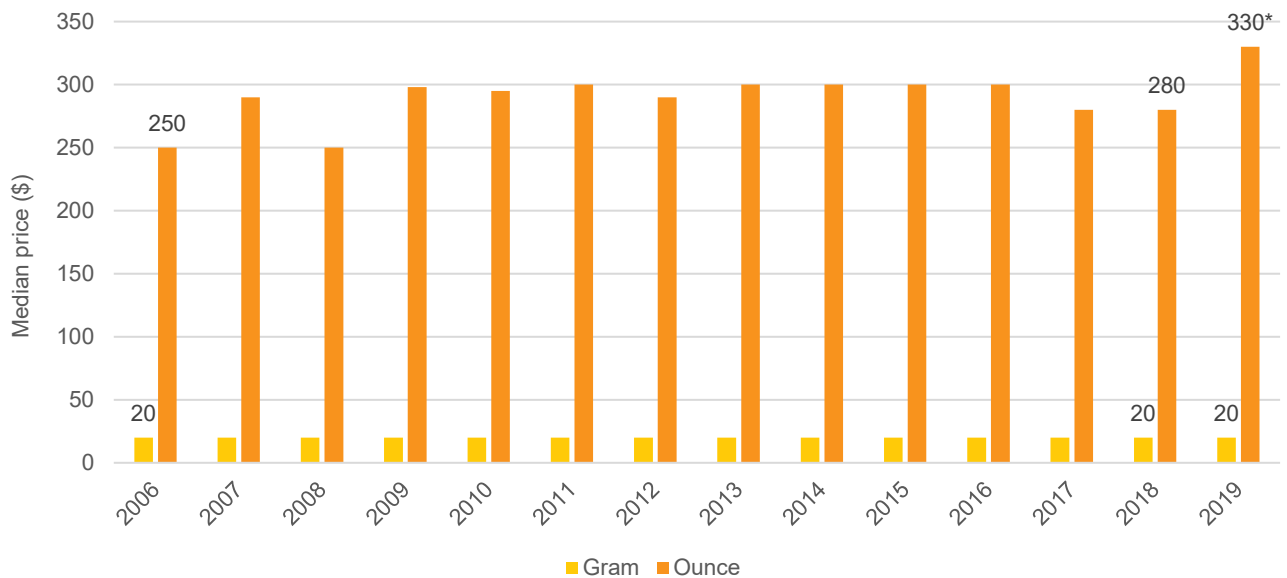
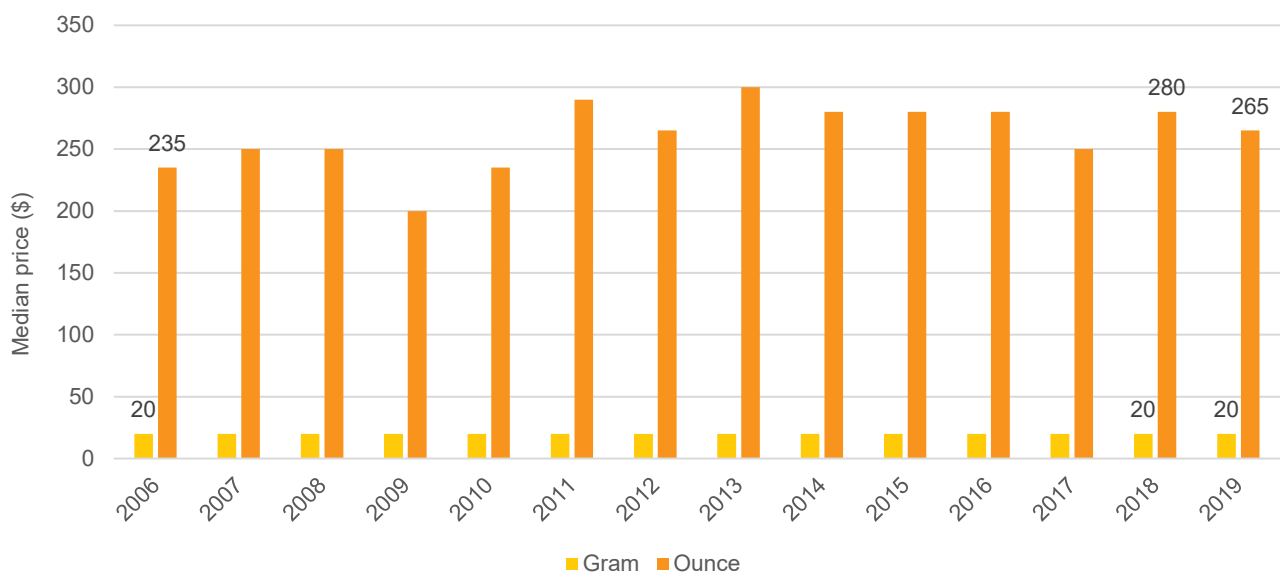
Perceived Availability: Among those who could comment ($n=46$), 67% considered hydroponic to be 'very easy' to obtain (63% in 2018; $p=0.632$) and 26% considered it to be 'easy' (24% in 2018; $p=0.771$; Figure 20).

Bush Cannabis

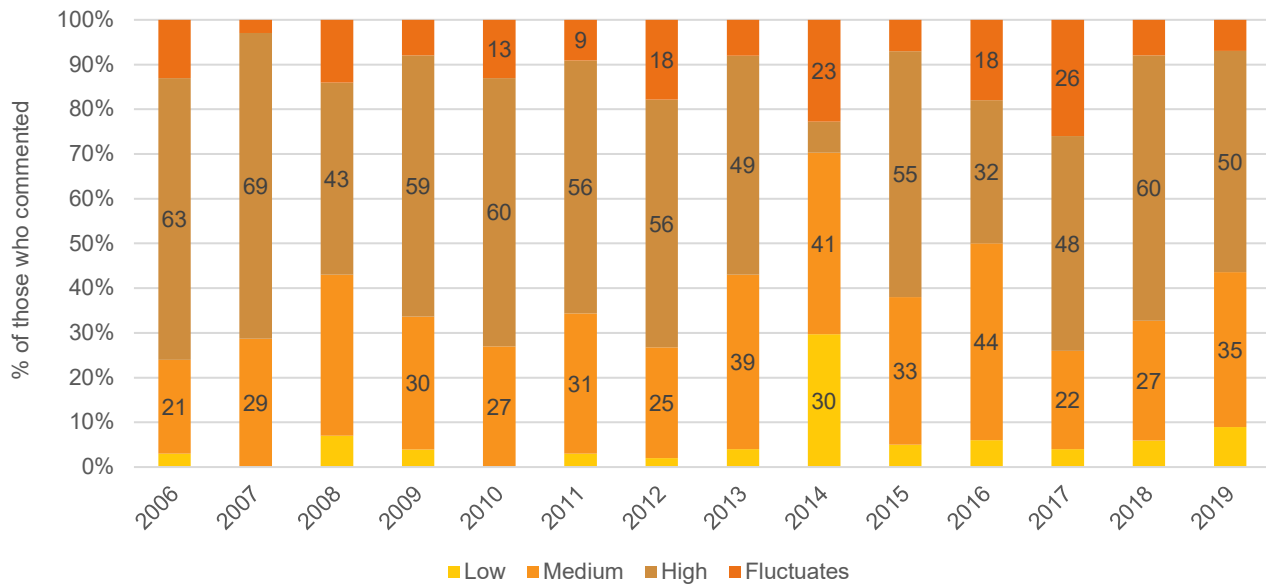
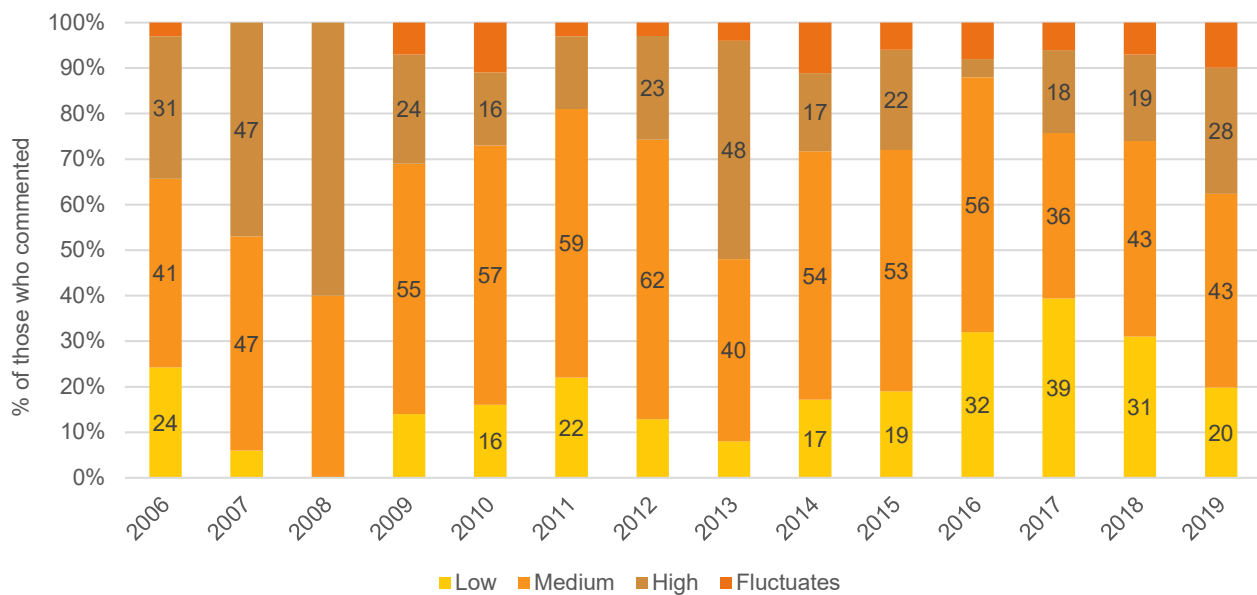
Price: Among those who could comment ($n=19$), the median price for a gram of bush cannabis was stable from 2018 at \$20 (IQR=20-20; 2018 \$20, IQR=19-20; $p=0.900$). For an ounce, the median price was \$330 (IQR=310-375, 2018 \$280, IQR=250-300, $p=0.860$; Figure 18).

Perceived Potency: The perceived potency of bush cannabis has been consistently lower than hydro. In 2019, 40 people commented on the potency and 43% rated it as 'medium' (43% in 2018; $p=0.974$; Figure 19).

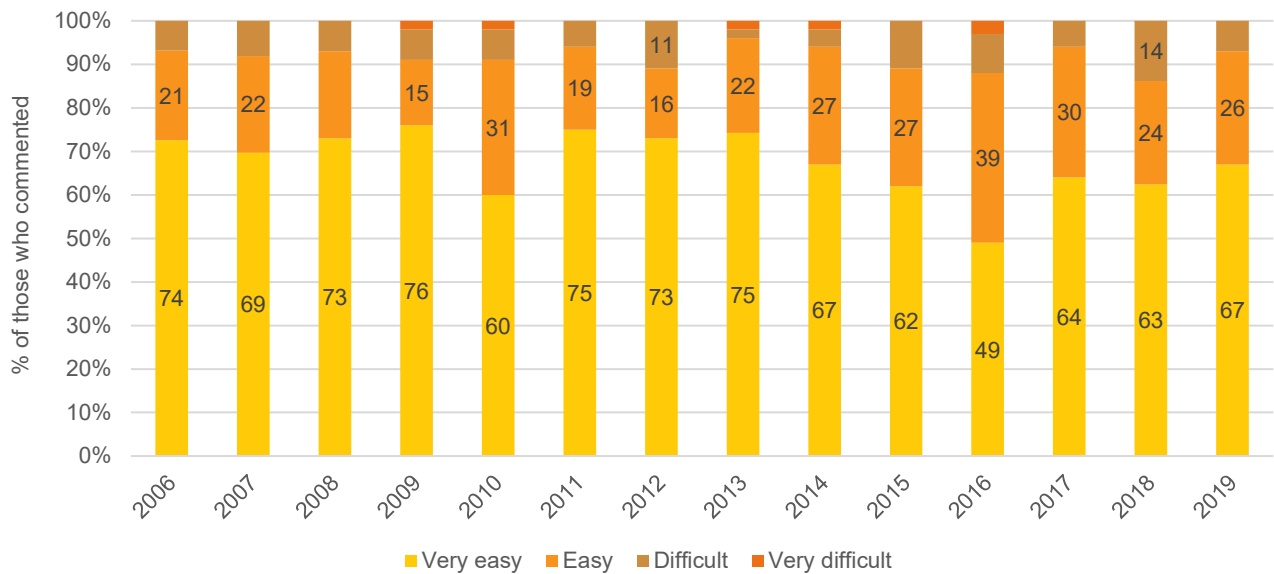
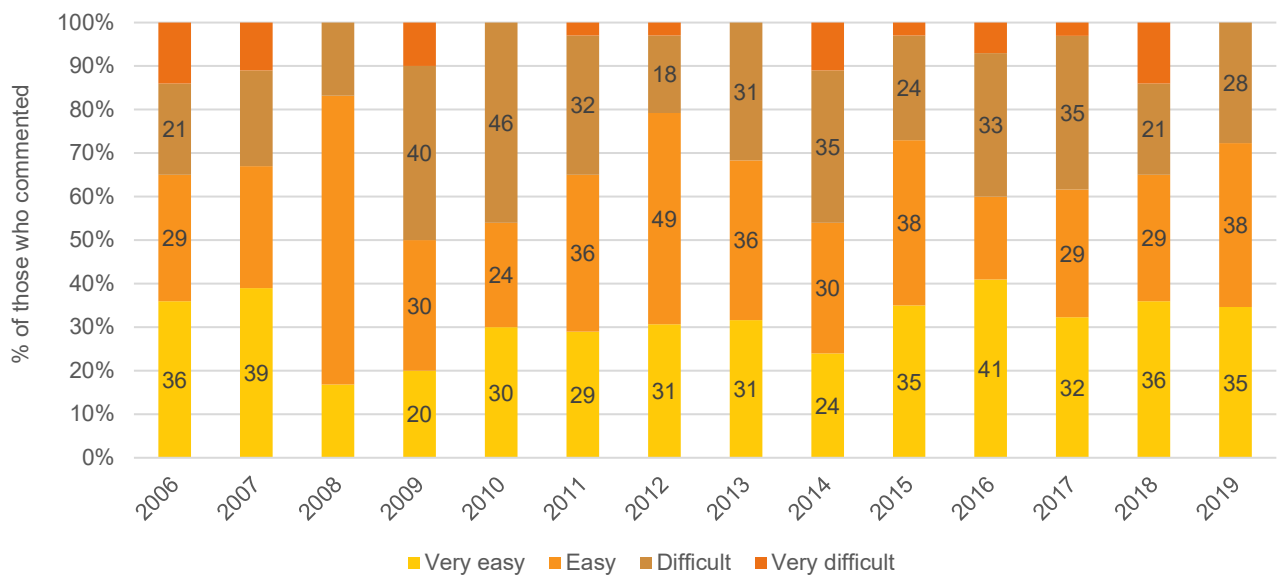
Perceived Availability: Among those who could comment ($n=40$), 35% considered bush to be 'very easy' to obtain (36% in 2018; $p=0.446$) and 38% considered it to be 'easy' (29% in 2018; $p=0.390$; Figure 20).

Figure 18: Median price of hydroponic (A) and bush (B) cannabis per ounce and gram, NSW, 2006-2019**(A) Hydroponic cannabis****(B) Bush cannabis**

Note. From 2006 onwards hydroponic and bush cannabis data collected separately. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$ but not =0). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 19: Current perceived potency of hydroponic (A) and bush (B) cannabis, NSW, 2006-2019**(A) Hydroponic cannabis****(B) Bush cannabis**

Note. The response 'Don't know' was excluded from analysis. From 2006 onwards hydroponic and bush cannabis data collected separately. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 20: Current perceived availability of hydroponic (A) and bush (B) cannabis, NSW, 2006-2019**(A) Hydroponic cannabis****(B) Bush cannabis**

Note. The response 'Don't know' was excluded from analysis. From 2006 onwards hydroponic and bush cannabis data collected separately. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

6

Ketamine, LSD, and Hallucinogenic Mushrooms

Ketamine

Patterns of Consumption

Recent Use (past 6 months): Ketamine use in the NSW sample declined from 49% reporting recent use in 2003 to 19% in 2009. The per cent recent reporting use increased from 2015, with 68% of the sample reporting recently consuming ketamine in 2019. This is the highest recorded percentage since reporting began and represents a significant increase from 2018 (54%; $p=0.042$).

Frequency of Use: The median number of days ketamine was consumed has been increasing since the mid 2000's. In 2019, people who had recently consumed ketamine reported a median of 5 days use in the previous six months (IQR=2-11 versus 4 days in 2018, IQR=2-6 $p=0.016$).

Routes of Administration: Among consumers, the most common route of administration was snorting (99% versus 98% in 2018; $p=0.878$), with a small proportion reporting swallowing ketamine (9%, ≤ 5 in 2018; $p=0.096$).

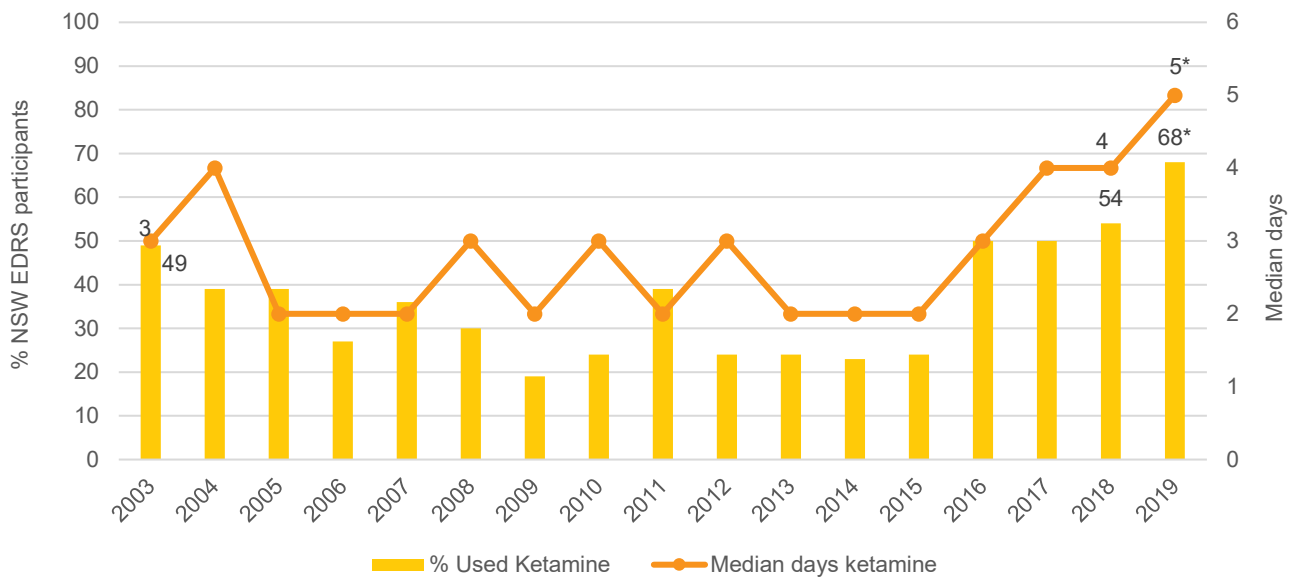
Quantity: For those who had recently consumed ketamine, the median amount they used in a 'typical' session was 0.25 grams (IQR=0.10-0.50; 2018: 0.30 grams, IQR=0.20-0.48). In a 'maximum' session, recent consumers reported using a median of 0.50 grams (IQR=0.25-1.00), matching the median amount recorded in 2018 (0.50, IQR=0.43-1.00).

Market Trends

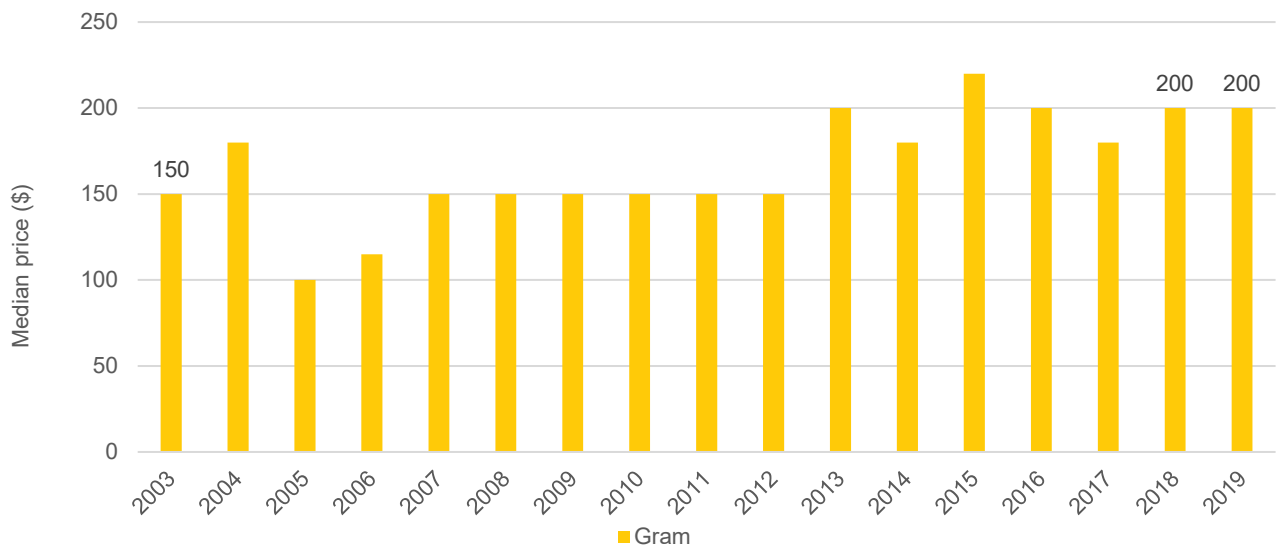
Price: A gram of ketamine in 2019 was reported by 52 people to have a median cost of \$200 (IQR=200-200), unchanged from 2018 (\$200, IQR=200-200; $p=0.602$).

Perceived Purity: Among those who could comment ($n=60$), just over half (52%) reported the perceived purity of ketamine as 'high' (65% in 2018; $p=0.187$) and a further 30% reported it as 'medium' (30% in 2018; $p=1.000$).

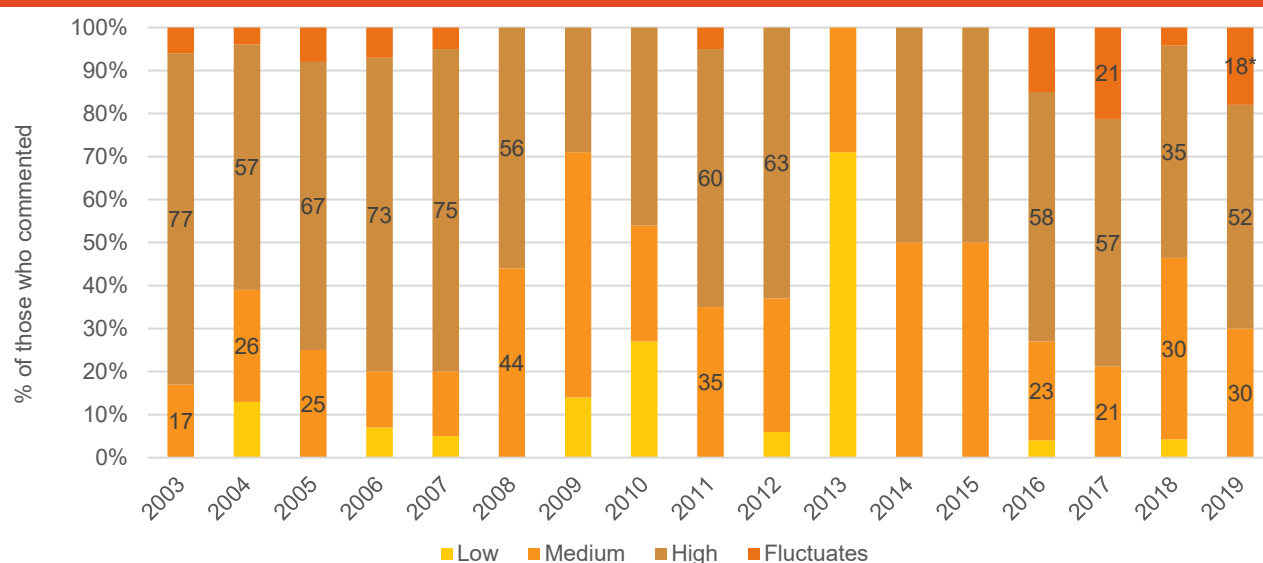
Perceived Availability: Of those that responded ($n=63$), 29% stated that ketamine was 'very easy' to obtain (20% in 2018; $p=0.329$) and 35% reported that it was 'difficult' (30% in 2018; $p=0.605$).

Figure 21: Past six month use and frequency of use of ketamine, NSW, 2003-2019

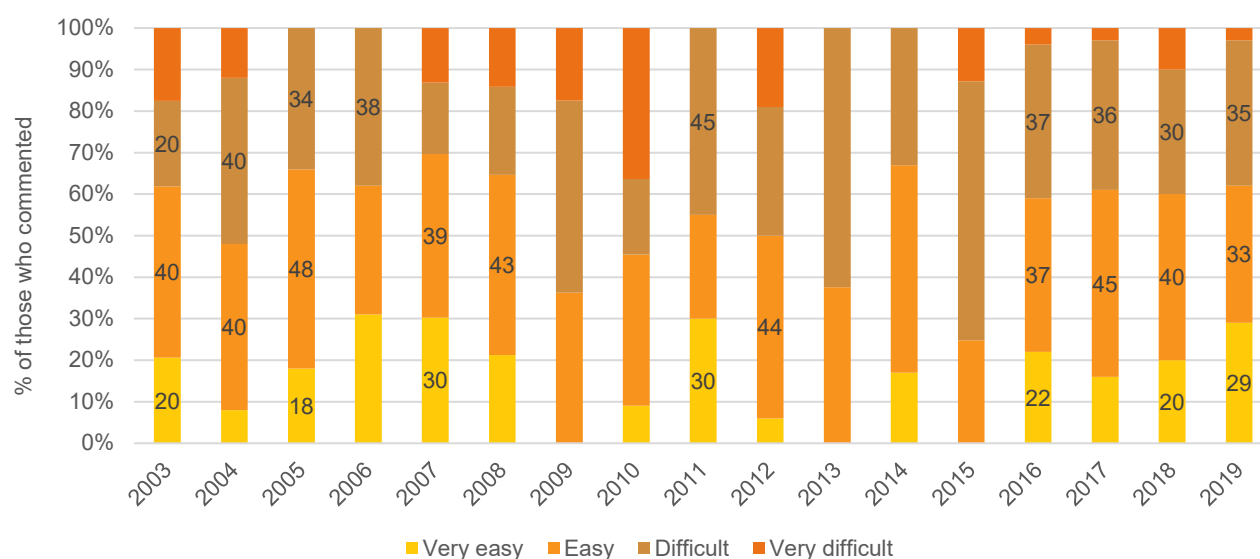
Note. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Y axis reduced to 5 days to improve visibility of trends. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 22: Median price of ketamine per gram, NSW, 2003-2019

Note. Among those who commented. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 23: Current perceived purity of ketamine, NSW, 2003-2019

Note. The response 'Don't know' was excluded from analysis. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$).
 $*p < 0.050$; $**p < 0.010$; $***p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 24: Current perceived availability of ketamine, NSW, 2003-2019

Note. The response 'Don't know' was excluded from analysis. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$).
 $*p < 0.050$; $**p < 0.010$; $***p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

LSD

Patterns of Consumption

Recent Use (past 6 months): The per cent reporting recent use of LSD in the NSW sample has been steadily increasing since reporting began, from 27% in 2003 to 71% in 2018. In 2019, half (48%) of participants reported use in the previous six months, a decline from 2018 ($p=0.001$).

Frequency of Use: Consumers reporting using LSD on a median of 3 days (IQR=1-5) in the past six months, consistent with previous years (3 days in 2018, IQR=2-7; $p=0.351$).

Routes of Administration: As in 2018, all respondents reported swallowing LSD in 2019 (100% in 2018 and 2019).

Quantity: In 2019, the median amount used in a 'typical' session was one tab (IQR=0.8-1.0), unchanged from 2018 (median 1, IQR=1-2). The reported amounts used in a 'maximum' session were consistent with 'typical' consumption.

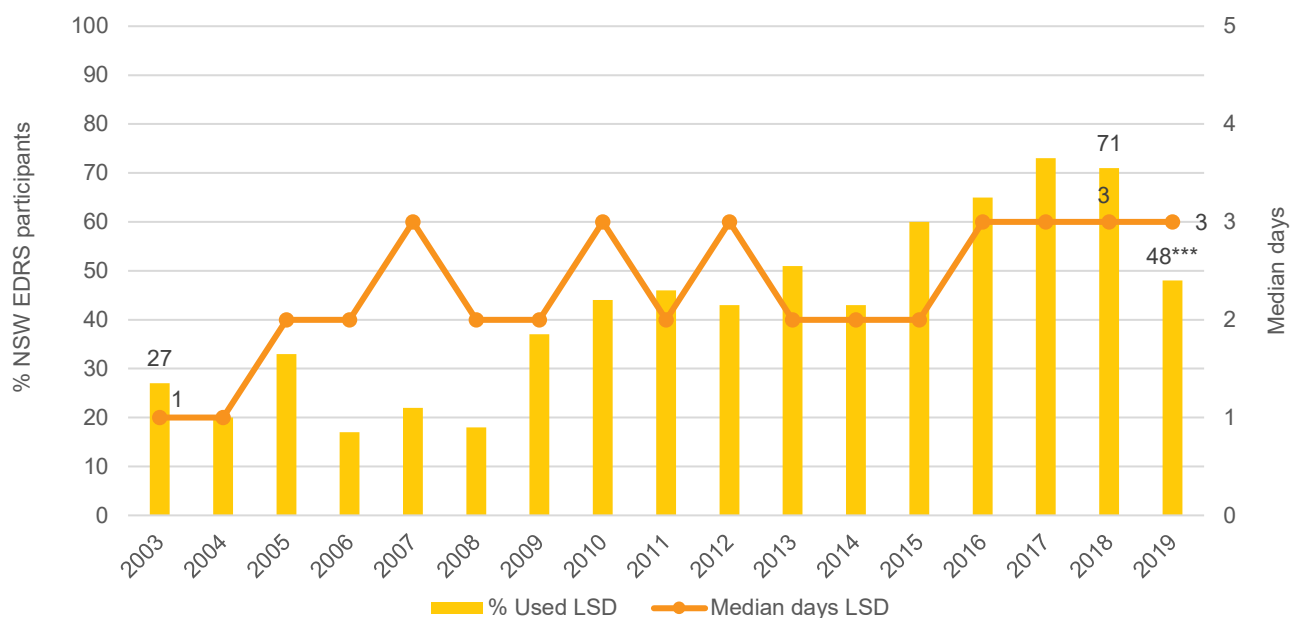
Market Trends

Price: The median price for a tab in 2019 was \$20 (IQR=20-25, n=58), unchanged from 2018 (median price \$20, IQR=20-25).

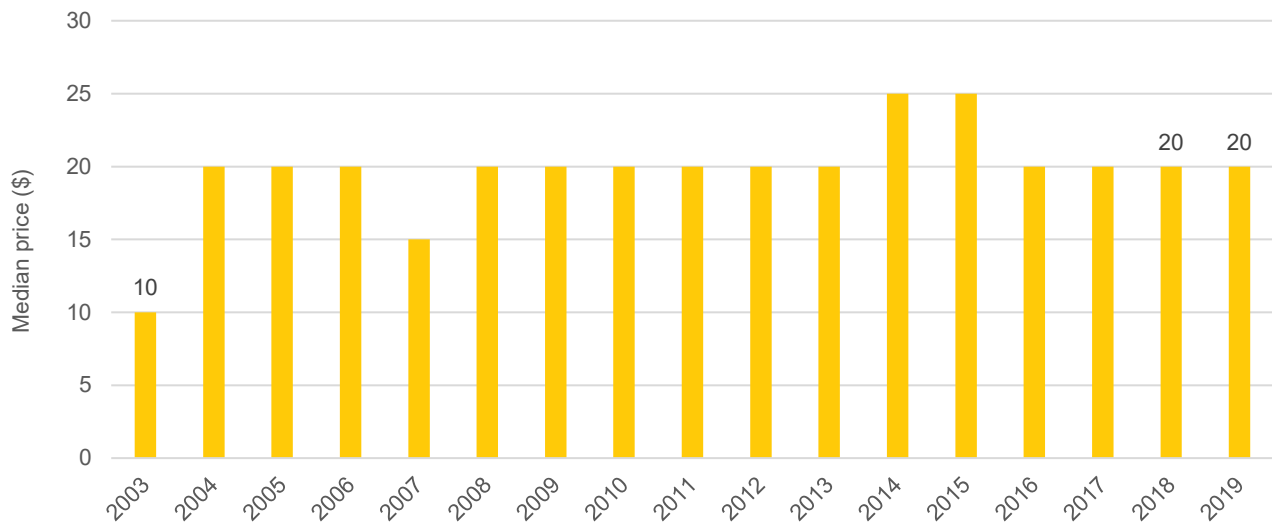
Perceived Purity: In 2019, 61 people commented on the perceived purity of LSD and of them, 62% considered it to be 'high'. This estimate was similar to 2018, when 57% reported 'high' perceived purity of LSD ($p=0.549$).

Perceived Availability: Of those who commented (n=62), 44% reported that LSD was 'easy' to obtain, and 34% stated it was 'difficult'. This was comparable to 2018, when 34% reported it was 'easy' to obtain ($p=0.268$) and 30% said it was 'difficult' ($p=0.643$).

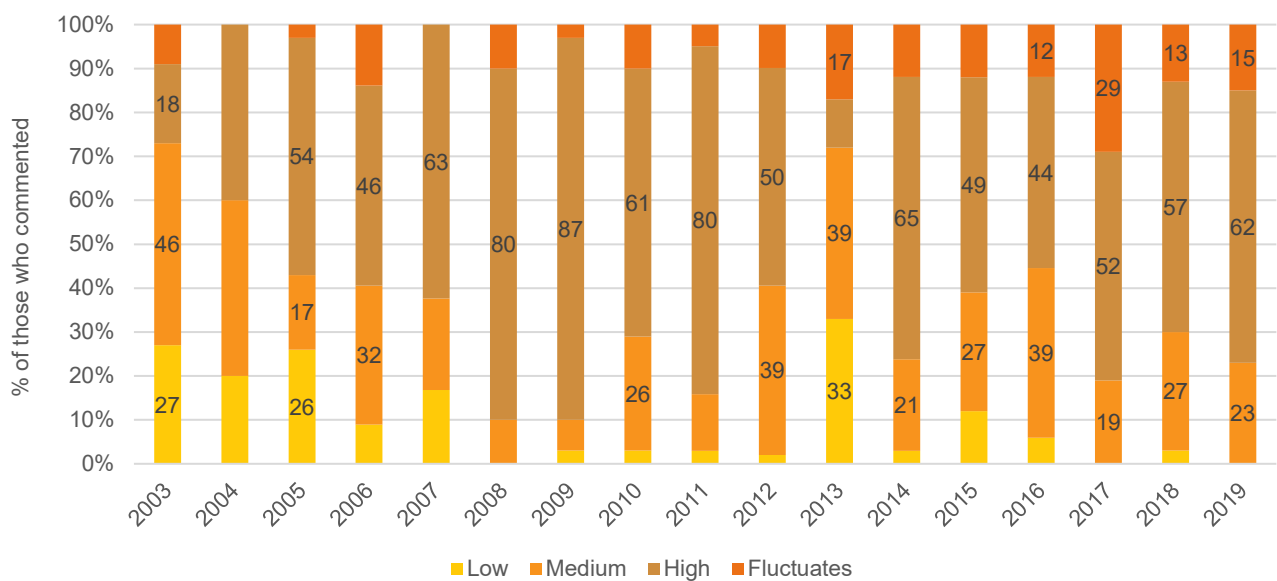
Figure 25: Past six month use and frequency of use of LSD, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Y axis reduced to 5 days to improve visibility of trends. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

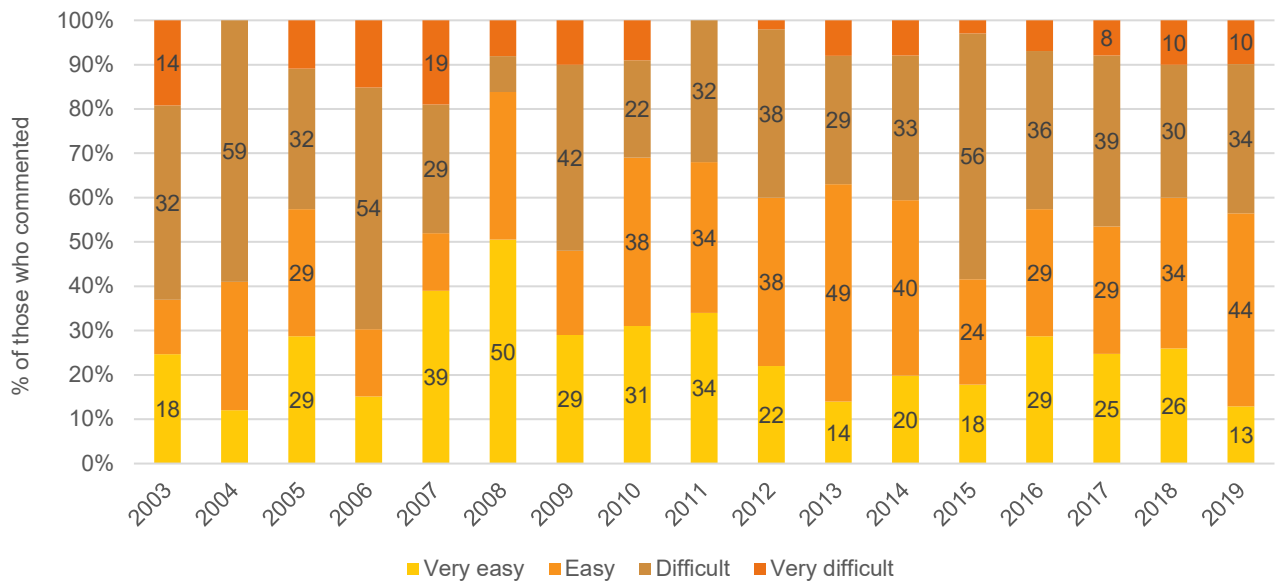
Figure 26: Median price of LSD per tab, NSW, 2003-2019

Note. Among those who commented. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 27: Current perceived purity of LSD, NSW, 2003-2019

Note. The response 'Don't know' was excluded from analysis. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 28: Current perceived availability of LSD, NSW, 2003-2019



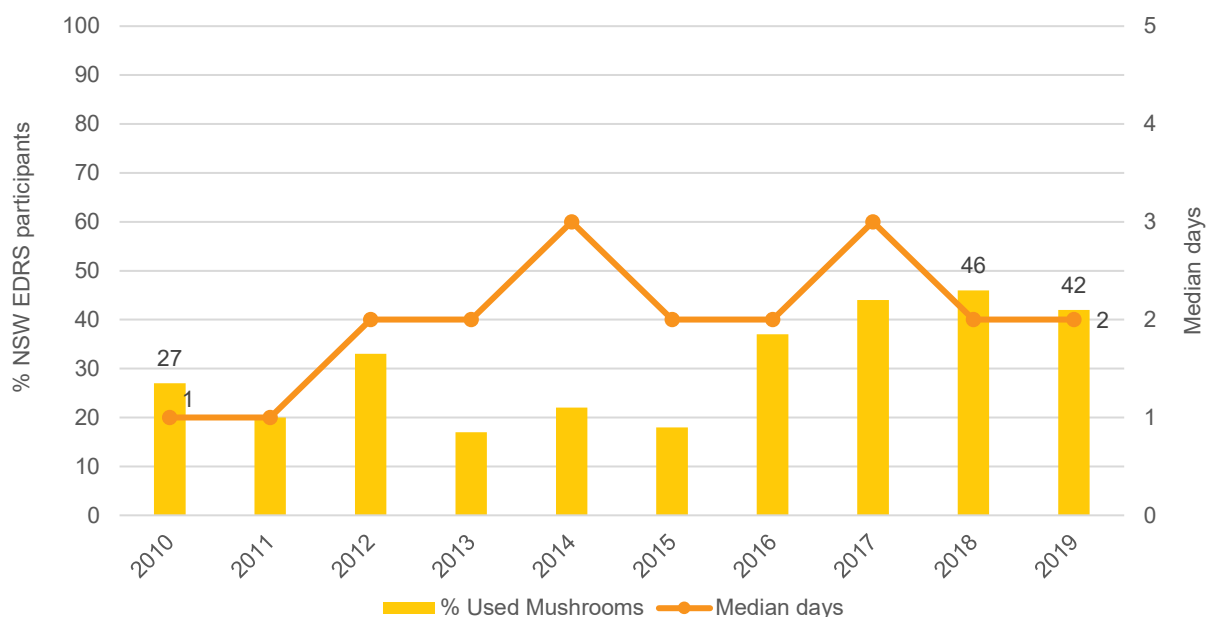
Note. The response 'Don't know' was excluded from analysis. Data labels have been removed from with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Hallucinogenic Mushrooms

Recent Use (past 6 months): In 2019, 42% had recently consumed mushrooms, stable since 2018 (46%; $p = 0.569$; Figure 29).

Frequency of Use: Those who had recently consumed mushrooms did so on a median of 2 days in the previous six months (IQR=1-4). This was unchanged from 2018 (median 2 days, IQR=1-4).

Figure 29: Past six month use and frequency of use of hallucinogenic mushrooms, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Median days computed among those who reported recent use (maximum 180 days). Median days rounded to the nearest whole number. Y axis reduced to 5 days to improve visibility of trends. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

7

New Psychoactive Substances

NPS are often defined as substances which do not fall under international drug control, but which may pose a public health threat. However, there is no universally accepted definition, and in practicality the term has come to include drugs which have previously not been well-established in recreational drug markets.

EDRS collects data on a large number of NPS specifically by name, however those with negligible numbers of participants reporting recent use are not included here. If further details about use of other NPS by the NSW EDRS are needed, please contact the Drug Trends team, or see the [national report](#) for national trends in use.

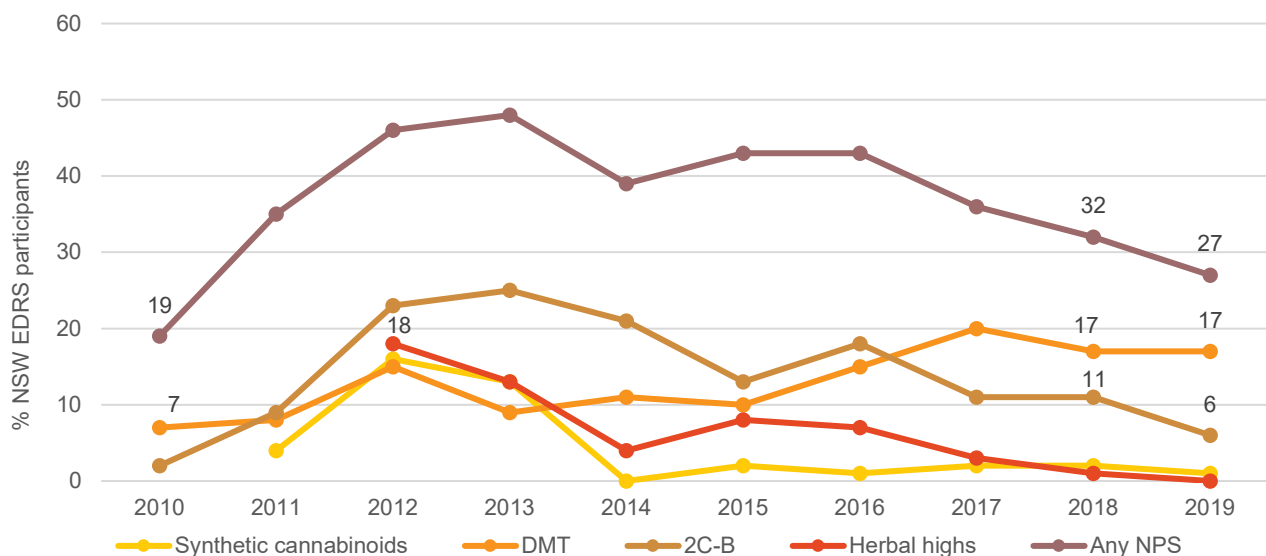
Recent Use

The per cent reporting recent NPS use peaked at 48% of the total NSW sample in 2013. Since then, use has been declining. In 2019, 27% of the sample reported recent use of NPS (32% in 2018; $p=0.394$; Figure 30). Keeping with the trend of previous years, DMT was the most frequently used NPS (17%; 17% in 2018), followed by 2C-B (6%; 11% in 2018; $p=0.205$).

Frequency of Use

Frequency of use of NPS has been consistently low, with those who had recently used DMT reporting a median of 1 day (IQR=1-3) of use in the previous six months (2 days in 2018, IQR=1-3).

Figure 30: Any use of NPS, NSW, 2010-2019



Note. Y axis reduced to 30% to improve visibility of trends. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$).
 $*p < 0.050$; $**p < 0.010$; $***p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Table 3: Use of NPS in the past six months, NSW, 2010-2019 **Table 4: Use of NPS in the past six months, NSW, 2013-2019**

	2010 N=100 %	2011 N=100 %	2012 N=100 %	2013 N=100 %	2014 N=100 %	2015 N=100 %	2016 N=103 %	2017 N=100 %	2018 N=100 %	2019 N=100 %
Phenethylamines	6	21	19	29	29	22	21	18	13	8
Any 2C substance~	-	17	19	19	22	18	18	12	11	7
NBOMe	/	/	/	/	9	6	6	-	-	-
Mescaline	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	-	-	0
DO-x	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	-
4-FA	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	0	0	0
PMA	0	-	0	0	-	-	-	-	0	-
Tryptamines	7	8	11	9	12	11	17	20	19	17
DMT	7	8	11	9	11	10	15	20	17	17
5-MeO-DMT	0	-	0	-	-	-	5	-	-	0
4-AcO-DMT	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	/	/
Synthetic cathinones	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mephedrone	-	-	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	-
Methylone/bk MDMA	/	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
MDPV/Ivory wave	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0
Alpha PVP	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	0	0
Other substituted cathinone	/	/	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	/
Piperazines	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	/	/
BZP	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	/	/
Dissociatives	/	/	-	0	0	-	6	-	-	8
Methoxetamine (MXE)	/	/	-	0	0	-	6	-	-	8
Plant-based NPS	/	-	-	-	0	-	5	-	0	0
Ayahuasca	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	-	0	0
Salvia	/	-	-	-	0	-	5	-	0	0
Benzodiazepines	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	0	-
Etizolam	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	0	-
Synthetic cannabinoids	/	/	12	13	-	-	-	-	-	-
Herbal high#	/	/	13	13	-	8	5	-	-	0
Other drugs that mimic the effect of opioids	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	0
Other drugs that mimic the effect of ecstasy	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-	-
Other drugs that mimic the effect of amphetamine or cocaine	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	0
Other drugs that mimic the effect of psychedelic drugs like LSD	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	-	6
Other drugs that mimic the effect of benzodiazepines	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	-	-

Note. / not asked. # The terms 'herbal highs' and 'legal highs' appear to be used interchangeably to mean drugs that have similar effects to illicit drugs like cocaine or cannabis but are not covered by current drug law scheduling or legislation. - not reported, due to small numbers (n≤5 but not 0). ~ In 2010 and between 2017-2019 three forms of 2C were asked whereas between 2011-2016 four forms were asked. * $p<0.050$; ** $p<0.010$; *** $p<0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

8

Other drugs

Non-Prescribed Pharmaceutical Drugs

Codeine

Before the 1st February 2018, people could access low-dose codeine products (<30mg, e.g., Nurofen Plus) over-the-counter (OTC), while high-dose codeine (≥ 30 mg, e.g., Panadeine Forte) required a prescription from a doctor. On the 1st February 2018, legislation changed so that all codeine products, low- and high-dose, require a prescription from a doctor to access.

Recent Use (past 6 months): In 2019, 19% of the total sample reported having used any codeine in the previous six months. Of these, 74% reported use of any (low or high dose) non-prescribed codeine, and 37% had used any (low or high dose) prescribed codeine.

Recent Use for Non-Pain Purposes: Very low numbers reported use of low dose codeine for non-medical/pain purposes. It is unclear if this decline was due to the legislative changes detailed above, or to a change in the way this question was asked (i.e. participants could only report use occurring prior to rescheduling in February 2018).

Frequency of Use: Participants who had recently used non-prescribed codeine (n=13) reported use on a median of 2 days (IQR=2-3) in the past six months.

Pharmaceutical Opioids

Recent Use (past 6 months): In 2019, 9% of the NSW sample reported recent use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical opioids. This was stable from 2018 (8%; $p=0.834$; Figure 31)

Frequency of Use: In the six months prior to interview, recent consumers of non-prescribed pharmaceutical opioids reported use on a median of 1 day (IQR=1-5). This low frequency of use was consistent with previous years (2 days in 2018, IQR=1-8; $p=0.606$).

Pharmaceutical Stimulants

Recent Use (past 6 months): The use of non-prescribed pharmaceutical stimulants (e.g. dexamphetamine, methylphenidate, modafinil) has been increasing since reporting began (10% in 2007; 41% in 2018). Use was stable in 2019 (40%; $p=0.886$; Figure 31)

Frequency of Use: Use of pharmaceutical stimulants (non-prescribed) occurred on a median of 6 days in the previous 6 months in 2019 (IQR=2-17), stable from 2018 (median 4 days, IQR=3-10; $p=0.932$).

Benzodiazepines

Recent Use (past 6 months): Non-prescribed benzodiazepines were used by 52% of the NSW sample in 2019, continuing the upward trend observed since monitoring began (44% in 2018; $p=0.278$; Figure

31). For the first time in 2019, participants were asked specifically about non-prescribed alprazolam versus other non-prescribed benzodiazepines. In the NSW sample, alprazolam was consumed by 30% of the sample, and other non-prescribed benzodiazepines by 43% of the sample in the past six months.

Frequency of Use: For any non-prescribed benzodiazepines, consumers reported use on a median of 3 days in the previous six months (IQR=1-9; 4 days in 2018, IQR=1-10; $p=0.922$). When studied by form, consumers reported use on a median of 3 days (IQR=1-9) for other non-prescribed benzodiazepines, and 2 days (IQR=1-5) for non-prescribed alprazolam.

Antipsychotics

Very small numbers reported recent use of non-prescribed antipsychotics and therefore data are not described. If further details about use of non-prescribed anti-psychotics by the NSW EDRS sample are needed, please contact the Drug Trends team, or see the [national report](#) for national trends in use.

Other Illicit Drugs

MDA

Very small numbers reported recent use MDA and therefore data are not described. If further details about use of MDA by the NSW EDRS sample are needed, please contact the Drug Trends team, or see the [national report](#) for national trends in use.

Substances With Unknown Contents

In 2019, we asked participants about their use more broadly of substances with 'unknown contents' (historically asked only of 'capsules with unknown contents'). These questions were asked by substance form, comprising capsules, pills, powder, crystal and 'other' form. In 2019, capsules, pills, crystal and 'other' contents unknown was reported by very small numbers and data therefore will not be reported.

Unknown Contents (any form): In the entire sample, 15% of participants reported consuming any substance with unknown contents.

Unknown Contents (powder): In 2019, 8% of the NSW sample reporting consuming powder with contents unknown on a median of 1 day (IQR=1-1) in the previous 6 months. All other forms $n \leq 5$ and suppressed.

GHB/GBL

Recent Use (past 6 months): Recent use of GHB/GBL was reported by 16% of participants in 2019, a significant increase from 2018 (numbers ≤ 5 in 2018 and suppressed; $p=0.011$; Figure 32).

Frequency of Use: Of those who had recently used the drug, they reported consuming it on a median of 3 days (IQR=1-7) in the previous six months (numbers ≤ 5 in 2018 and suppressed).

Licit and Other Drugs

Alcohol

Recent Use (past 6 months): Alcohol was recently consumed by 98% of the NSW sample in 2019, consistent with previous years (98% in 2018; Figure 33).

Frequency of Use: Alcohol was reported to be consumed on a median of 48 days (IQR=24-72; approximately twice a week) in the six months leading to interview (2018: 48 days, IQR=20-72; $p=0.179$). Of those who had used alcohol recently, 82% reported using it weekly or more (74% in 2018; $p=0.197$).

Tobacco

Recent Use (past 6 months): Tobacco has historically been used by at least three-quarters of the sample in NSW, and this trend continued in 2019 with 76% reporting recent use (86% in 2018; $p=0.072$).

Frequency of Use: Within recent consumers, frequency of use was reported to have a median of 76 days (IQR=24-180) in the last six months (2018: 150 days, IQR=48-180; $p=0.061$).

E-cigarettes

Recent Use (past 6 months): The use of e-cigarettes has been recorded since 2014, when 34% of the sample reported recent use. In 2019, 50% of the sample had recently used e-cigarettes, with 37% reporting recent use in 2018 ($p=0.064$).

Frequency of Use: Recent consumers reported use of e-cigarettes on a median of 10 days (IQR=3-63) in the past six months (2018: 5 days IQR=3-16; $p=0.207$).

Forms Used: Within those who had recently used e-cigarettes ($n=50$), 81% reported that they contained nicotine (60% in 2018; $p=0.031$), and 19% were using e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation tool (31% in 2018; $p=0.475$). No participants reported using e-cigarettes containing only cannabis ($n\leq 5$ in 2018 and suppressed, $p=0.257$).

Nitrous Oxide

Recent Use (past 6 months): Nitrous oxide use has been increasing since reporting began in 2003, when 8% of the total sample reported recent use. In 2019, 72% of the NSW sample reported recent use of nitrous oxide, stable from 2018 (75%; $p=0.631$).

Frequency of Use: Recent consumers reported using nitrous oxide on a median of 5 days in the previous six months (IQR=2-10), a decrease from 2018 (7 days, IQR=2-14; $p=0.038$).

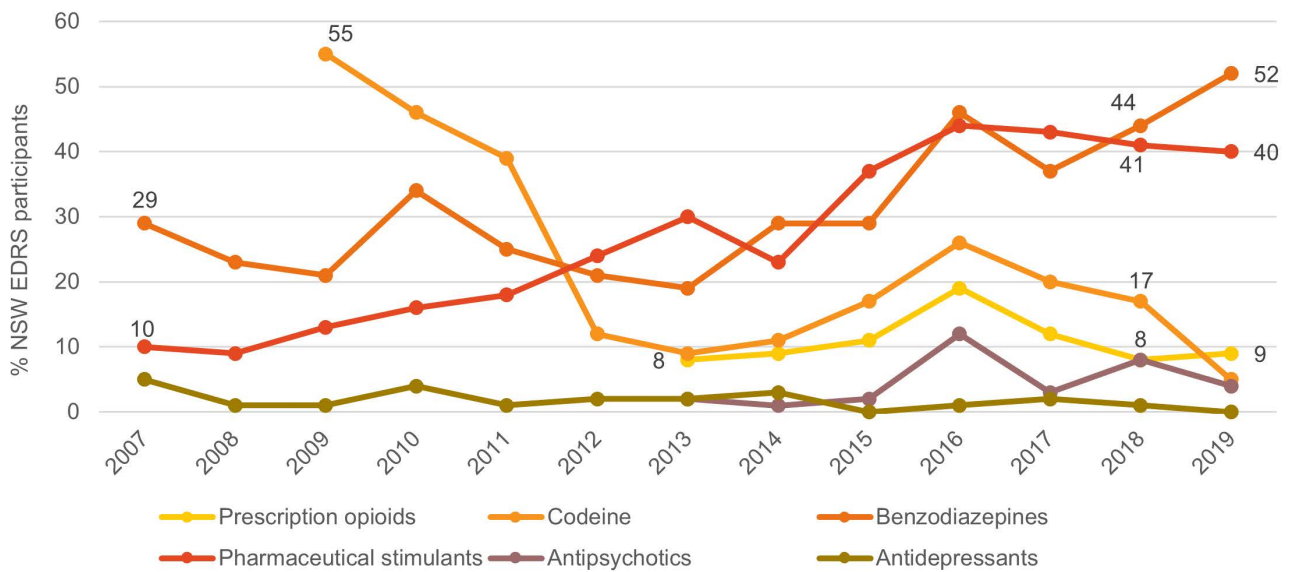
Quantity: The median number of bulbs consumed in a 'typical' session was 5 (IQR=3-10), similar to 2018 (6 bulbs, IQR=3-10).

Amyl Nitrite

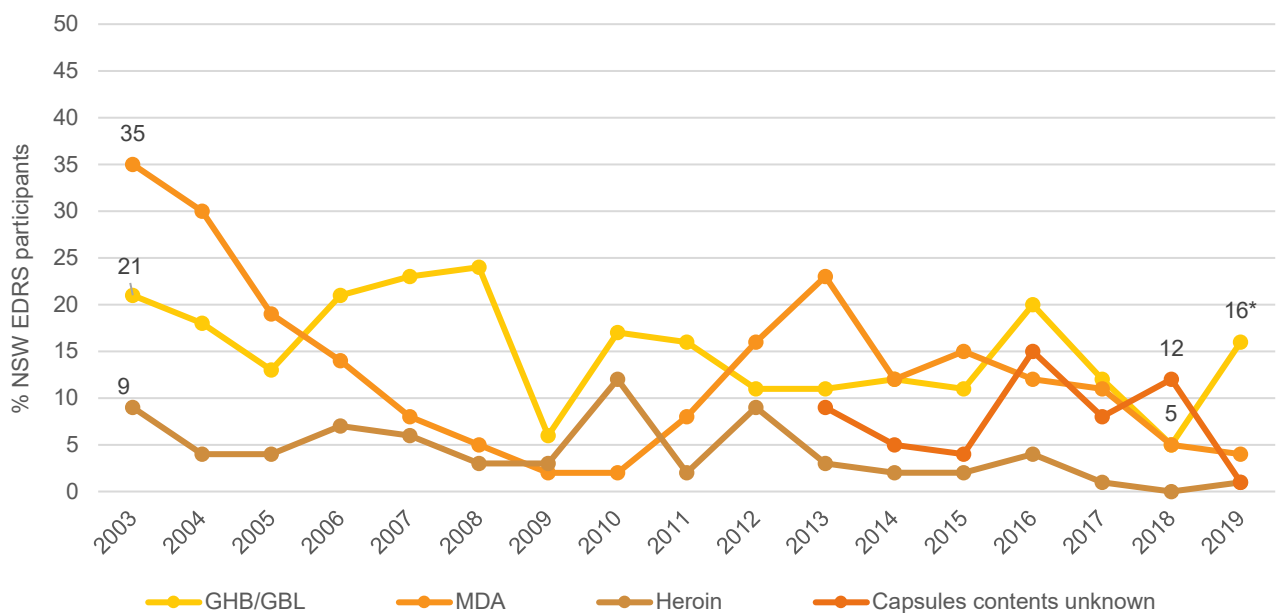
Amyl nitrite is an inhalant which is currently listed as Schedule 4 substance in Australia (i.e. available only with prescription) yet is often sold under-the-counter in sex shops. Following a review by the [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#), amyl nitrite will be listed as Schedule 3 (i.e., for purchase over-the-counter) from 1 February 2020 when sold for human therapeutic purpose.

Recent Use (past 6 months): Fifty-seven per cent of the NSW sample reported recent use of amyl nitrite in 2019, an increase from 2018 (39%, $p=0.011$).

Frequency of Use: Use of amyl nitrite was infrequent, with respondents reporting a median of 4 days of use in the past six months in 2019 (IQR=2-12), stable from 2018 (5 days, IQR=2-8; $p=0.352$).

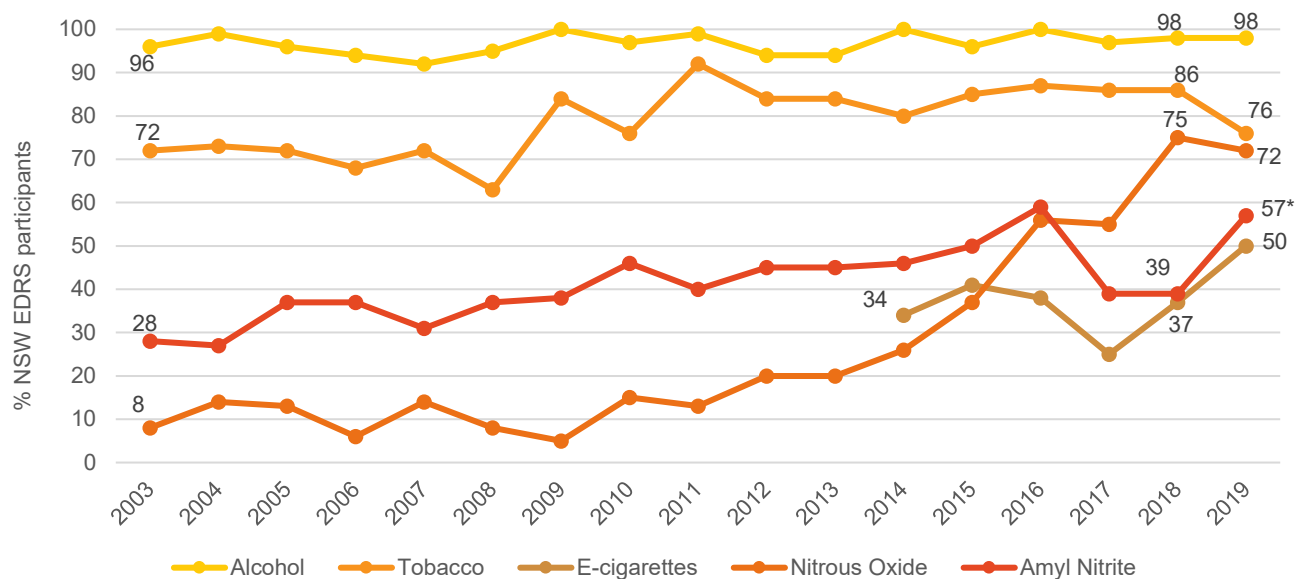
Figure 31: Non-prescribed use of pharmaceutical medicines in the past six months, NSW, 2007-2019

Note. Non-prescribed use is reported for prescription medicines (i.e., benzodiazepines, antipsychotics, and pharmaceutical stimulants). In February 2018, the scheduling for codeine changed such that low-dose codeine formerly available over-the-counter (OTC) was required to be obtained via a prescription. Note that estimates of codeine OTC use refer to use for non-pain purposes. Y axis reduced to 60% to improve visibility of trends. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$ but not =0). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 32: Other illicit drugs used in the past six months, NSW, 2003-2019

Note. Monitoring of capsules contents unknown commenced in 2013. Y axis has been reduced to 50% to improve visibility of trends. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Figure 33: Licit drugs used in the past six months, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. Monitoring of e-cigarettes commenced in 2014. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

9

Drug-Related Harms and Other Risk Factors

Polysubstance Use

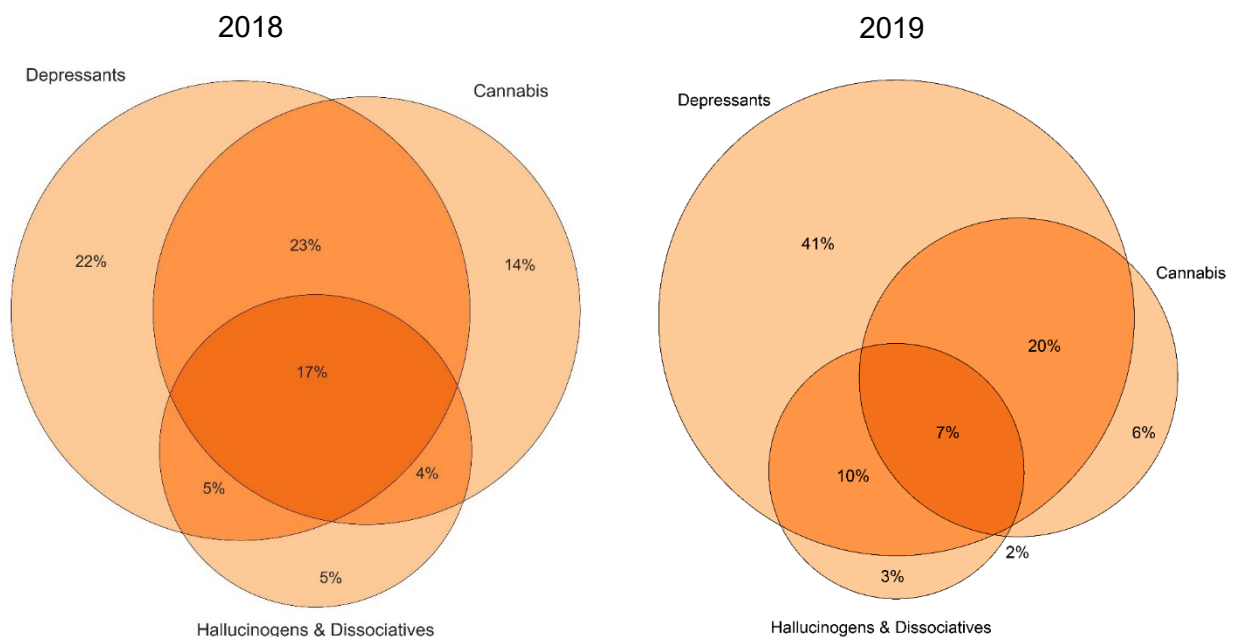
On their last occasion of stimulant use, 93% of the NSW sample reported using one or more other drugs at the same time (96% in 2018; $p=0.352$).

In the NSW sample, the most common substance consumed with a stimulant last time was alcohol (72%; 63% in 2018; $p=0.174$). This was closely followed by tobacco (44%; 66% in 2018; $p=0.001$) and cannabis (35%; 58% in 2018; $p=0.002$), both of which were consumed in conjunction with a stimulant significantly less in 2019 compared to 2018.

Eighty nine per cent of the NSW sample reported using depressants, cannabis, and/or hallucinogens/dissociatives on their last occasion of stimulant use (90% in 2018; $p=0.817$), with the most common combination being stimulants, depressants and cannabis (27%; 23% in 2018; $p=0.513$).

In the sample, 7% reported using depressants, cannabis, and hallucinogens/dissociatives on their last occasion of stimulant use, significantly fewer than in 2018 (17% in 2018; $p=0.029$; Figure 34).

Figure 34: Polysubstance use on occasion of last stimulant use, NSW, 2019



Note. This figure captures those who had also used hallucinogens/dissociatives (GHB, ketamine, LSD, and/or hallucinogenic mushrooms), depressants (alcohol and/or benzodiazepines) and/or cannabis on their last occasion of stimulant use (90% in 2018 and 89% of the sample in 2019).

Harmful Consumption of Alcohol

The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test ([AUDIT](#)) was designed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a brief screening scale to identify individuals with alcohol problems, including those in early stages. The mean score on the AUDIT for the 2019 NSW EDRS sample was 12.9 (SD 6.4). In 2019, 77% of participants obtained a score of 8 or more, indicative of hazardous use (68% in 2018; $p=0.154$; Table 3). AUDIT scores are divided into four 'zones' which indicate risk level, and there was no significant change in the per cent of the sample falling into each of these risk categories from 2018 to 2019 (Table 3).

Table 5: Mean AUDIT total scores and percent of participants scoring above recommended levels, NSW, 2014-2019

	2015 (N=100)	2016 (N=103)	2017 (N=100)	2018 (N=100)	2019 (N=100)
Mean AUDIT total score (SD)	11.3 (6.0)	12.5 (7.3)	11.9 (7.4)	11.9 (6.4)	12.9 (6.4)
Score 8 or above (%)	70	70	68	68	77
Zone 1 (low risk drinking or abstinence)	30	30	32	32	23
Zone 2 (alcohol in excess of low-risk guidelines)	42	36	42	39	45
Zone 3 (harmful or hazardous drinking)	19	18	10	17	15
Zone 4 (possible alcohol dependence)	9	17	16	12	17

Note. * $p<0.050$; ** $p<0.010$; *** $p<0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019. Average total AUDIT score from the entire NSW sample.

Non-Fatal Overdose

Previously, participants had been asked about their experience in the past 12-months of i) **stimulant overdose**, and ii) **depressant overdose**.

In 2019, changes were made to this module. Participants were asked about the following, prompted by the definitions provided:

- **Alcohol overdose:** experience of symptoms (e.g., reduced level of consciousness, respiratory depression, turning blue and collapsing) where professional assistance would have been helpful.
- **Opioid overdose** same definition as above.
- **Stimulant overdose:** experience of symptoms (e.g., nausea, vomiting, chest pain, tremors, increased body temperature, increased heart rate, seizure, extreme paranoia, extreme anxiety, panic, extreme agitation, hallucinations, excited delirium) where professional assistance would have been helpful.
- **Other drug overdose:** similar definition to above.

It is important to note that events reported on for each drug type may not be unique given high rates of polysubstance use.

For the purpose of comparison with previous years, we computed the per cent reporting any depressant overdose, comprising any endorsement of alcohol or opioid overdose or other drug overdose where a depressant (e.g. GHB, benzodiazepines) was listed.

Non-Fatal Depressant Overdose

Alcohol: In the 12 months leading to interview, 24% of the sample reported having an overdose that involved alcohol on a median of 2 occasions (IQR=1-5). Of those who had experienced an overdose event while using alcohol, 88% reported not receiving treatment (**Figure 35**)

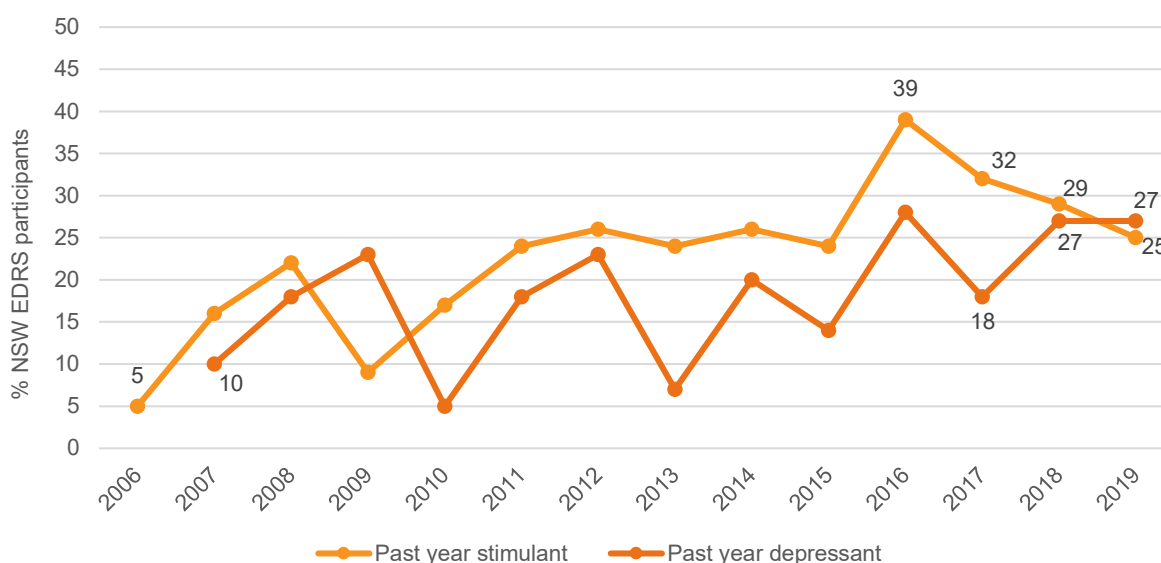
Any Depressant (including alcohol): Overdose events relating to any depressant remained stable (27% in both 2019 and 2018; Figure 35). The majority of these were due to alcohol (89%; 80% in 2018, $p=0.397$). No cases of opioid-related overdose were reported in 2019, and ≤ 5 people reported an overdose related to GHB/GBL.

Non-Fatal Stimulant Overdose

After a peak in 2015 (39%), the per cent reporting overdose events related to stimulants has been declining. In 2019, 25% of the NSW sample reported stimulant overdose on a median of 2 occasions (IQR=1-5), similar to estimates in 2018 (29%; median 2 occasions, IQR=1-3; $p=0.524$; Figure 35).

In 2019, participants reporting a non-fatal stimulant overdose in the past 12 months ($n=25$) were asked which stimulant drug they had used at the time of the last event, mainly nominating MDMA/ecstasy capsules (46%) and MDMA/ecstasy crystal (25%). Three-in-four (83%) reported that they had also used one or more additional drugs (81% in 2018; $p=0.794$). On the occasion of their last event, 88% did not receive treatment or assistance (91% in 2018; $p=0.487$).

Figure 35: Past year non-fatal stimulant and depressant overdose, NSW, 2006-2019



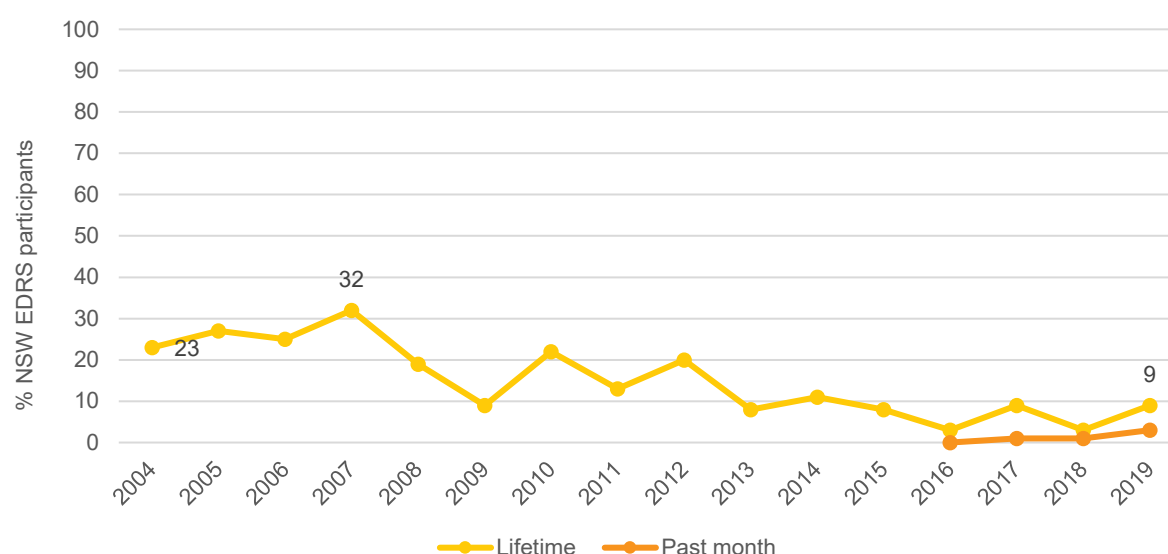
Note. Y axis has been reduced to 50% to improve visibility of trends. Data labels have been removed from figures in years of initial monitoring, and 2018 and 2019 with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Injecting Drug Use and Associated Risk Behaviours

Lifetime injecting has been declining in the NSW EDRS sample since a peak in 2007 (32%). In 2019, 9% of the total sample reported ever having injected drugs (Figure 36).

Due to low numbers reporting recently injecting drugs no further data will be reported. For national trends refer to the [national EDRS report](#) or contact the researchers for more information.

Figure 36: Lifetime and past month drug injection, NSW, 2004-2018



Note. Past 6-month injection asked of participants prior to 2016. Data labels have been removed from figures in years of initial monitoring, and 2018 and 2019 with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Drug Treatment

A nominal per cent ($n \leq 5$) reported currently receiving drug treatment; this is consistent with reporting in previous years. For national trends refer to the [national EDRS report](#), or for further information contact the researchers.

Sexual Risk Behaviours

Ninety-four per cent of the EDRS sample had engaged in penetrative sex with at least one partner in 2019. In 2019, participants were asked about any penetrative sex, whether with a regular or casual partner, whereas in previous years participants had been asked about casual partners only. Penetrative sex was defined as 'penetration by penis or hand of the vagina or anus'. Given the sensitive nature of these questions, participants were given the option of self-completing this section of the interview.

Of those who responded and had penetrative sex with one or more people ($n=86$), 37% reported penetrative sex without a barrier where they did not know the HIV/STI status of their partner in the past six months. For respondents who had consumed alcohol or drugs before engaging in penetrative sex ($n=91$), 31% stated that it had impaired their ability to negotiate their wishes during sex (27% of the female respondents, 32% of the male respondents; Table 4).

Table 6: Sexual health practices, NSW, 2019

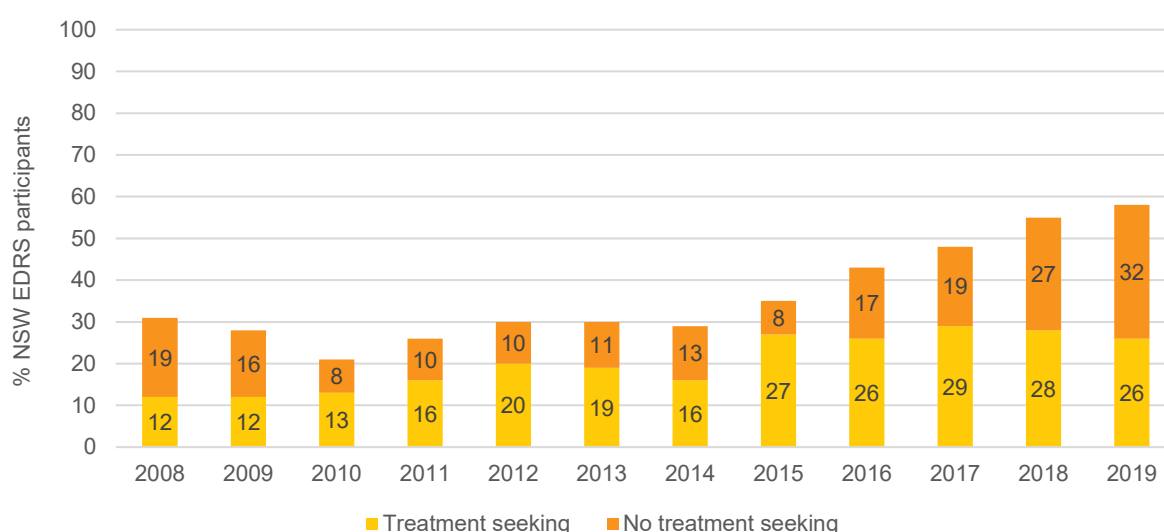
	NSW N=100
Any penetrative sex in the past six months % (n)	94 (94)
Of those who responded#:	N=86
% Had penetrative sex without a barrier and did not know HIV/STI status of partner	37
Of those who responded#:	N=91
% Drugs and/or alcohol impaired their ability to negotiate their wishes during sexual intercourse	31
Of the total NSW sample (past 12 months):	N=100
% Had a sexual health check	62
% Diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection#	12

Note. # of the total 2019 sample

Over half (62%) of the sample reported having a sexual health check-up in the past year, a significant increase from 45% in 2018 ($p=0.016$). An additional 18% had done so more than one year ago (13% in 2018; $p=0.329$); and 20% had never had a sexual health check-up (42% in 2018; $p=0.001$). Amongst those who had a sexual health check up in the previous 12 months ($n=62$), 71% reported that they had not received a positive diagnosis for a sexually transmitted infection (STI); 18% had received a positive diagnosis in the past year; and 11% had received a positive diagnosis over a year ago. Of the total sample, 12% reported they had received a positive diagnosis of an STI in the past 12 months (Table 4).

Mental Health

Fifty-nine per cent of the sample self-reported that they had experienced a mental health problem in the preceding six months (other than drug dependence), following the general upward trend since reporting began (31% in 2008; $p<0.001$; Figure 37) and similar to 2018 (56%; $p=0.712$). Of those who commented ($n=55$), the most common mental health problem was both depression (66%) and anxiety (66%). Of those who reported experiencing a mental health problem, 45% (26% of the total sample) reported seeing a mental health professional during the past six months. Of these people ($n=26$), 58% reported being prescribed medication (54% in 2018; $p=0.761$).

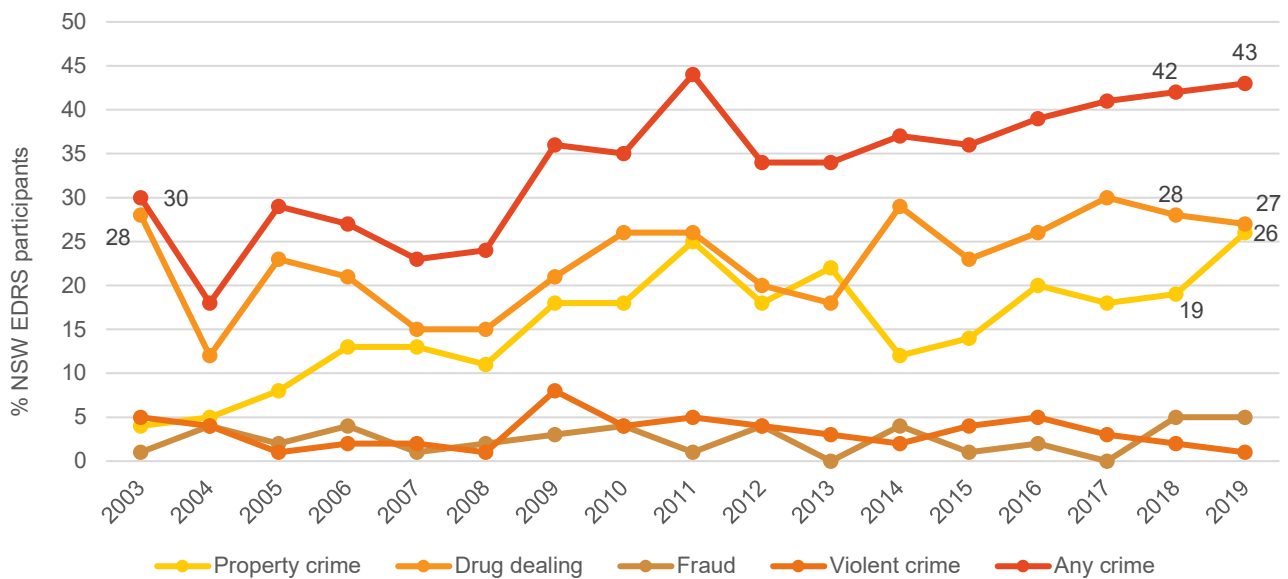
Figure 37: Self-reported mental health problems and treatment seeking in the past six months, NSW, 2008-2019

Note. The combination of the percentage who report treatment seeking and no treatment is the percentage who reported experiencing a mental health problem in the past six months. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell size (i.e. $n \leq 5$). * $p<0.050$; ** $p<0.010$; *** $p<0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Crime

Rates of past month criminal activity have fluctuated over time. In 2019, 43% of the sample reported any criminal activity in the previous month (42% in 2018; $p=0.886$; Figure 39). Drug dealing and property crime were the two main forms of criminal activity in 2019 (27% and 26%, respectively). A small per cent (6%) reported having been arrested in the 12 months preceding interview (10% in 2018; $p=0.297$). Very low numbers ($n \leq 5$) reported having ever been in prison in 2019, consistent with previous years.

Figure 38: Self-reported criminal activity in the past month, NSW, 2003-2019



Note. 'Any crime' comprises the percentage who report any property crime, drug dealing, fraud and/or violent crime in the past month. Y axis has been reduced to 50% to improve visibility of trends. Data labels have been removed from figures with small cell sizes. * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$ for 2018 versus 2019.

Modes of purchasing illicit or non-prescribed drugs

In interviewing and reporting, 'online sources' were defined as either surface or darknet marketplaces.

In 2019, the most popular means of arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview in 2019 were face-to-face (85%) and via social networking applications (e.g. Facebook, Wickr, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Grindr, Tinder; 79%). Seventy per cent had arranged to buy drugs via text message, and 43% via a phone call. One-in-ten participants (13%) reported having obtained drugs via the darknet in the past year and 8% had purchased drugs on the surface web.

When asked to choose their main purchasing approach in the previous 12 months, the largest per cent chose social networking (37%), followed by face-to-face (28%) and text messaging (27%).

When asked about how they had received illicit drugs on any occasion in the last 12 months, the majority of participants reported face-to-face (99%), with smaller numbers reporting they received them via post (14%) or collected them at a drop-off location (8%).

Buying Drugs Online

In 2019, 13% of participants reported purchasing drugs on the darknet in the previous 12 months. We asked the remaining participants about their knowledge of the darknet and among those that commented (n=82), 52% had heard of it but had never accessed or researched it, 24% had researched it but never accessed it, and 21% had accessed it, but had never purchased from it.

Among those that had purchased drugs via surface or darknet markets in the past 12 months (n=16), the most commonly reported purchased drugs via online sources was ketamine (53%) followed by LSD (35%). Of those who reported purchasing drugs via the surface or darknet in the last 12 months, 63% reported doing so for later supply to others.

Selling Drugs Online

No participants were able to comment on the sale of illicit drugs on the surface or darknet.

Please refer to the [National EDRS Report](#) for national trends, or for further information, contact the research team.

Table 7: Modes of purchasing illicit/non-prescribed drugs in the past 12 months, NSW, 2019

2019	
	N=100
% Purchasing approaches in the last 12 months^	
Face to face	85
Surface web	8
Darknet market	13
Social networking applications	79
Text messaging	70
Phone call	43
Other	0
% Main purchasing approach in the last 12 months	
Face to face	28
Surface web	0
Darknet market	-
Social networking applications	37
Text messaging	27
Phone call	-
Other	-

Note. - not reported due to small numbers (n≤5 but not 0). ^ participants could endorse multiple responses.