



NATIONAL DRUG AND  
ALCOHOL RESEARCH CENTRE

## **STUDY FINDS MORE ECSTASY USERS BUY THEIR DRUGS IN HOMES THAN CLUBS**

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Results, to be released tomorrow at the first international conference to be held in Australia examining club health challenge the commonly held belief that the majority of ecstasy users purchase their drugs at nightclubs, raves or dance parties. Conference delegates will be told that instead ecstasy is most often obtained at friends' homes and dealers' homes.

Further findings of the first Party Drug Initiative (PDI) study will be released tomorrow at the Club Health Conference held at the Melbourne Convention Centre. The PDI is a national study funded by the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund and conducted in the capital city of every state and territory in Australia to monitor emerging trends in markets for drugs such as ecstasy, speed, crystal methamphetamine, cocaine, GHB and ketamine.

The study, which interviewed 809 regular ecstasy users from across the country found 65% reported that they most often obtained the drug at friends' homes, with 44% reporting dealers' homes as their usual place of purchase. Other purchase locations included at nightclubs (37%), at their own home (34%), at raves (25%), dance parties (22%), and in pubs (13%). Other drugs associated with the party scene such as GHB and ketamine were even less likely to be reported to be bought in a nightclub.

The results of the study demonstrate that rather than buying from unknown dealers in clubs and dance parties, the majority of participants in this national sample usually obtained their drugs from friends (86%). It would appear that the purchasing of drugs is far more likely to be conducted privately and probably with people that are known to the user.

The findings reinforce what we already know about ecstasy use in Australia in that the drug appears to be being used in a variety of contexts, not just clubs and dance parties, according to Chief Investigator for the project, Dr Louisa Degenhardt, Lecturer at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of NSW.

“Although ecstasy was most commonly used in nightclubs, a significant number of people appear to be using at private parties (50%), friends' home (47%) and at their own home (45%),” said Dr Degenhardt. “Over a quarter of the sample had used in a pub, this really challenges the community's perception of ecstasy use.”

“Ecstasy and other drug use occurs in a range of locations, both in public and private venues,” said Dr Degenhardt. “The high proportion of users reporting use in a home environment may be indicative of a ‘normalisation’ of ecstasy use.”

“Still, since a substantial proportion of party drug use continues to occur in dance-related venues one of the major recommendations of the PDI is that training in harm reduction and appropriate responses to persons suspected of using drugs should be provided to staff of venues as well as emergency workers.”

Every weekend, across Australia, tens of thousands of young people attend nightclubs, dance parties and a range of other entertainment venues. For some of them this also means taking a range of substances that are used to ‘enhance’ the party environment.

The use of ecstasy and other drugs associated with the party scene appears to be increasing in many parts of the world. In Australia, general population surveys indicate an increase in those ever having tried ecstasy between the years 1998 and 2001: from 4.8% to 6.1%.

Club Health 2004 will be held at the Melbourne Convention Centre from April 18-20. A range of international and Australian speakers will present on a wide range of nightlife issues including drink spiking, clubbing and driving and nightlife violence.

“This is the first time the Club Health Conference has been held outside of Europe,” said Mr Paul Dillon, Information Manager for the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and one of the organizers of the conference. “Club Health 2004 offers a unique opportunity for individuals from Australia with interests in nightlife to discuss and develop strategies, interventions and research relating to health in the night time environment.”

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