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“ICE” USE FALLS; COCAINE USE IN NSW INCREASES

Use of crystal methamphetamine, 'ice', fell across Australia in 2009, with the steepest drop being recorded in NSW, according to research of emerging drug trends collated by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at the University of NSW.

While cocaine use stabilised nationally, its use increased in NSW among regular ecstasy users.

The findings are reported in the 2009 Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) and the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) - Australia's largest drug monitoring systems. Preliminary results will be released at the National Drug Trends Conference on Tuesday (September 29).

“The IDRS and the EDRS both report on the price, purity and availability of the drugs being surveyed and serves as a strategic warning system identifying trends of concern in illicit drug markets and, in the case of the EDRS, in markets for drugs routinely used in entertainment venues,” said the studies' Chief Investigator, Dr Lucy Burns, NDARC Senior Lecturer.

The IDRS and EDRS both report on trends among users in the six months prior to the survey.

The proportion reporting heroin use remained stable nationally but the frequency of use among reported users increased in the six month (180 days) period covered by the study – from twice weekly to three times a week nationally. In NSW frequency of use among reported users increased from three times a week to every other day. Of reported users, the number using daily increased in NSW.

Key findings include:

- The number of injecting drug users who used ice in NSW fell from 69 per cent in 2008 to 46 per cent in 2009 – the largest fall since 2003 and the lowest rate of use since 2005. Nationally use among injecting drug users fell from 49 per cent in 2008 to 37 per cent in 2009.

- Among regular ecstasy users ice use fell steeply. Nine per cent of recreational drug users in NSW reported using it - down from 33 per cent in 2008. Nationally the figure fell to 15 per cent from 24 per cent in 2008.
- The falls in use mirrored declines in availability of ice for both injecting drug users and regular ecstasy users. Nationally 35 per cent of injecting drug users reported difficulties obtaining the drug and 30 per cent of regular ecstasy users reported less availability – this was even higher in NSW with 44 per cent of regular ecstasy users reporting less availability.
- Days of ecstasy use remained stable nationally but in NSW users reported it was less available with only 52 per cent of users reporting it as “very easy” to obtain compared to 74 per cent in 2008.

Dr Burns said that 2009 saw a continuation of the stabilisation of use of illicit drugs across most categories.

“There has been an increase in the use of cocaine and this has been reflected in the crime statistics,” said Dr Burns. “But this increase needs to be seen in the context of relatively small numbers compared with users of other illicit drugs being surveyed.”

The IDRS monitors the price, purity, availability and use of heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and cannabis. The EDRS examines ecstasy and related drug markets.

“With these systems we can detect emerging drug trends and this allows for governments, law enforcement and health workers to plan and implement effectively targeted policy to reduce drug related harm throughout Australia,” said Dr Burns.

What: 2009 National Drugs Trends Conference – including the first release of the national 2008 findings in illicit drug use, markets and related harms.

When: Tuesday September 29 2009, 9am – 3.30pm

Where: Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo, Sydney

Website

[http://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/NDARCWeb.nsf/resources/Conference/\\$file/Preliminary_Findings.pdf](http://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/NDARCWeb.nsf/resources/Conference/$file/Preliminary_Findings.pdf)

Link:

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