

Driving under the influence: emerging findings from the Drug Trends study, 2021-2023

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Introduction and Aims: Driving under the influence (DUI) of psychoactive substances is concerning due to potential harms to others. Roadside testing for DUI is expected to act as a deterrent; additional testing for cocaine has recently commenced in Queensland. We examined DUI reported by people who regularly use ecstasy and/or related stimulants and people who regularly inject drugs.

Design and Methods: Data from Ecstasy and Related Drug Reporting System (EDRS) and Illicit Drugs Reporting System (IDRS) cross-sectional surveys with people who regularly use psychoactive stimulants and people who regularly inject drugs (respectively), recruited from capital cities were used. Participants reported on driving within 3 hours of using psychoactive substances and having been tested by police. Logistic regression explored substance use and psychosocial correlates.

Results: In 2022, 50% of EDRS and 75% of IDRS participants who drove in the last 6 months reported driving within 3 hours of illicit drug use; 15% and 23% respectively reported having been tested. Perceived driving under the influence of alcohol was lower: 27% among EDRS and 10% for IDRS. Alcohol breath testing was more common (42% and 36%). 2021 findings were similar. Among EDRS, DUI cannabis was most commonly-reported (71%), followed by cocaine (21%), pharmaceutical stimulants (12%) and methamphetamine (10%). In contrast IDRS participants reported DUI methamphetamine (59%), heroin (35%) and cannabis (35%). 2023 findings will examine whether recent increases in cocaine use is reflected in drug-driving reports.

Discussions and Conclusions: The high prevalence of driving within 3 hours of substance use suggests that awareness of the risks of impairment and harm to others should be revisited in awareness campaigns.

Implications for Translational Research (optional): Regular and rapid data collection that allows monitoring of emerging practices around substance use can be helpful to inform targeting of safety responses where harms to others may be indicated.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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