

Patterns of nicotine pouch use among samples of people who use illicit stimulants, 2024-2025

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Introduction: Nicotine pouches are a relatively new class of tobacco-free nicotine delivery products, yet research into the use of these products remains limited. This study: (i) examines nicotine pouch use among samples of people who use illicit stimulants; (ii) compares nicotine pouch use with other nicotine product use (e-cigarettes and tobacco); and (iii) identifies factors associated with different patterns of nicotine use.

Methods: Cross-sectional sentinel samples of people who regularly use illicit stimulants were recruited from capital cities across Australia between April-June 2024 and 2025 (n=1,430). Multinomial logistic regression analyses were conducted to identify correlates associated with nicotine pouch use.

Results: One in five participants reported recent nicotine pouch use in both 2024 (19%) and 2025 (20%), although use was infrequent (median: 3–4 days in past six months). Across both years, exclusive pouch use was rare (1%), while 15% reported concurrent use of tobacco, e-cigarettes and pouches. In multinomial models, male participants (aRRR 1.90, 95% CI 1.38–2.61) and students (aRRR 1.67, 95% CI 1.03–1.82) had higher relative risk of nicotine pouch use compared with use of other nicotine products, while older age was associated with lower risk (≥ 30 years: aRRR 0.18, 95% CI 0.12–0.26; 20–29 years: aRRR 0.74, 95% CI 0.55–0.99; < 20 years reference). Compared with no nicotine use, both nicotine-using groups showed similar associations, with recent cannabis use, hazardous alcohol consumption, high psychological distress and poor physical health associated with higher relative risk.

Discussions and Conclusions: Nicotine pouch use was relatively common but occurred predominantly alongside the use of other nicotine products rather than used exclusively. Those using pouches were more likely to be male, younger and students than those using other nicotine products only. Together, these findings suggest that harm reduction and intervention efforts may be most effective if they target shared determinants of nicotine use and are flexible to the range of nicotine products people may use concurrently.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *Drug Trends and the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre are funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Ageing and Disability under the Drug and Alcohol Program. AP (#1174630) is supported by a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Investigator Fellowship.*