

Prevalence and correlates of public injecting among a group of people who inject drugs in Australia

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Introduction: Public injecting is associated with a higher risk of drug-related harms such as experiencing overdose and contracting blood borne viruses. Public injecting is also often a measure used to index public amenity around street-based drug markets. We aimed to examine the prevalence of public injecting over time and identify key correlates associated with recent public injecting.

Methods: Data were drawn from the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) annual cross-sectional samples of people who regularly inject drugs recruited from Australian capital cities. Trends in self-reported public injecting were examined over time (2000-2022). Potential correlates of public injecting were examined in the 2022 IDRS sample (n=696) in a multivariable logistic regression model.

Key Findings: Self-reported public injecting has decreased from 34% in 2000 to 17% in 2022 among the IDRS sample. Increased public injecting was associated with unstable housing and the number of different drugs injected, and reported more frequently in Melbourne, Hobart, and Perth.

Discussions and Conclusions: Public injecting was more likely among participants who were unstably housed, highlighting the nexus between social circumstances and drug use behaviours and potential exposure to harms related to public injecting amongst people who inject drugs. Further work is needed to understand the nature of the differences observed across the different cities included in the study.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: None to declare