

## Comparing police use of drug detection dogs amongst injecting and non-injecting groups of people who regularly use drugs in Australia

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**Introduction / Issues:** Drug detection dogs are utilised across multiple settings, however existing literature focuses predominantly on festival-based encounters. We compared non-festival encounters amongst those who regularly use MDMA/ecstasy and those who regularly inject drugs.

**Method / Approach:** Australians who regularly (i.e., ≥monthly) use ecstasy and/or other illegal stimulants (n=777; Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS)) or inject illegal drugs (n=862; Illicit Drugs Reporting System (IDRS)) were surveyed between April-June, 2019. Univariable regression analyses were used to test for differences in drug dog encounters between samples, and to identify factors associated with a more intensive drug dog encounter (namely those involving a stop and/or search).

**Results:** People who inject drugs were less likely to witness drug dogs (odds ratio (OR) 0.46; 95%CI 0.30-0.69). They were significantly more likely than EDRS participants to report being stopped and/or searched (3.29; 1.68-6.44) however. Among those carrying drugs at their last stop and/or search encounter, the majority of both samples reported that their drugs were not detected by police. IDRS participants aged 35-49 were more likely to report a stop and/or search encounter than those aged 17-34; no significant associations were found among the EDRS sample.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Despite participants who use ecstasy and/or other stimulants being more likely to report encountering drug dogs in non-festival settings, participants who inject drugs were more likely to report an intensive drug dog encounter and/or formal criminal justice consequences. This study reinforces questions about the efficacy and appropriateness of drug dog operations.

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