

Substance Use, Crime Survivorship, and Justice System Experiences: A Survey Comparing LGBTQ+ & Cisgender Peoples

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Introduction to the Issue

- **Substance use and trauma are both major public health issues, with overlapping impacts on mental health & justice system involvement**
 - **Victim-survivors and witnesses of crime may carry layered, complex trauma**
 - **There can be added complexities when a victim-survivors/witness of crime is intoxicated:**
 - Psychological recovery
 - Interactions with legal systems
 - Access to appropriate support
 - Are they considered reliable or honest?
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Study Aims

Amongst members of the public:

What are the patterns of AOD use, exposure to crime-related trauma, justice system experiences, and associated psychological wellbeing?

Are there key differences between priority populations?



Study Design

- **Cross-sectional anonymous survey** (10-15 min) with members of the public (N=253)
- **Recruitment through social media** (e.g., X, Reddit) and **organisations** (e.g., Universities, NGOs)
- Participant **prize draw** (1 of 5 \$100 vouchers)
- **Ethics approved** by USYD HREC (2024/HE000073)

Key Demographics

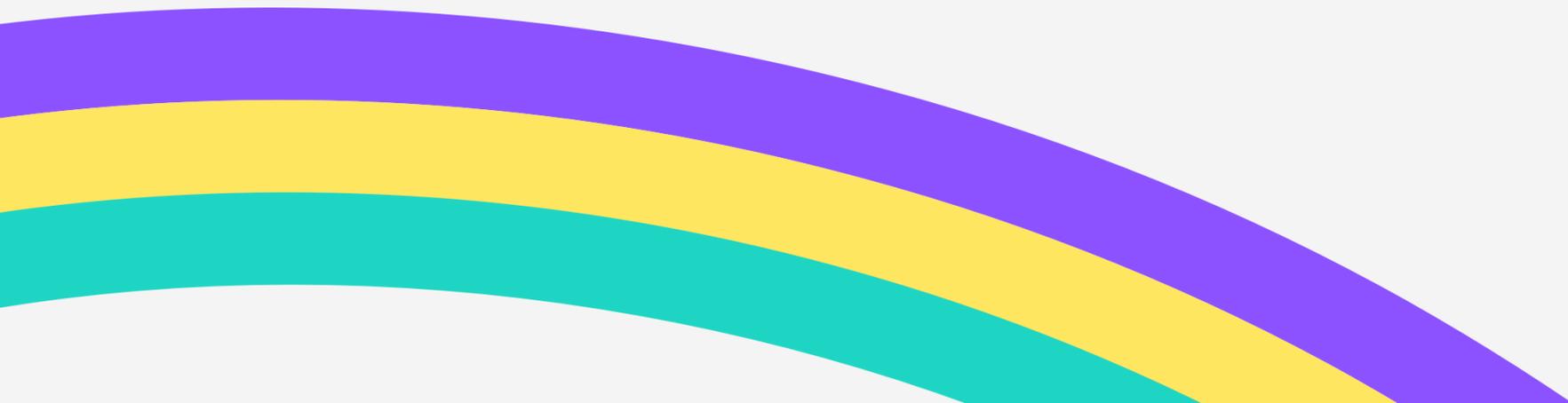
K10, AUDIT, DUDIT

Substance Use & Coping

Perceptions Intox & Crime

Past Experiences of Crime

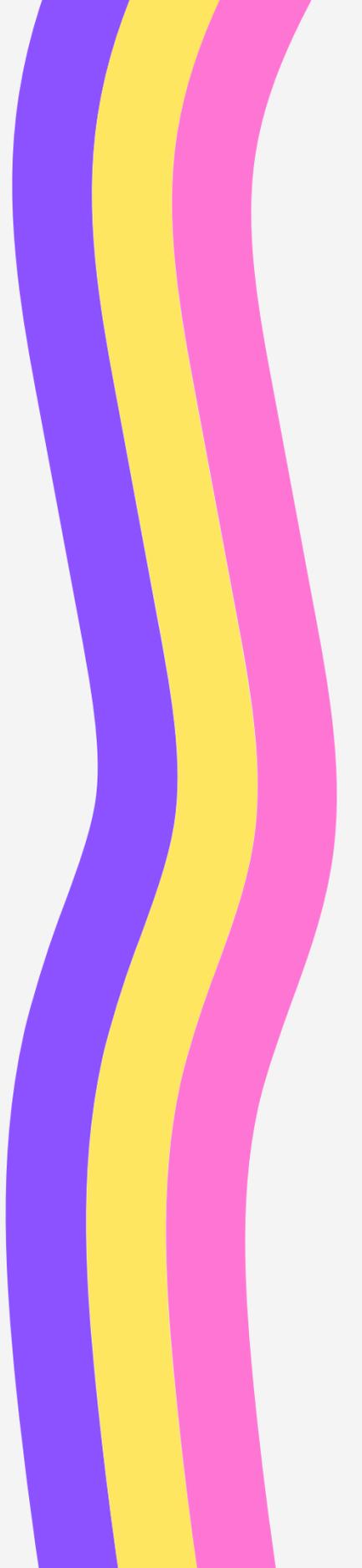
Justice System Interactions



Key Demographics

A total of 240 participants reported on both their gender and sexuality:

- **35 (IQR 27-47)** for median age
- **54.2%** identified male, **41.6%** female, **4.2%** non-binary/other
- **74.2%** Tertiary level education
- **70.4%** reported full or part-time work
- **23.8%** reported being born outside of Australia



Substance Use, Stress & Trauma

- Lifetime alcohol use: **83.1%**
- Lifetime other drug use: **62.2%**
- Used substances to cope with stress or trauma: **58.1%**
- Experienced violent or traumatic crime: **61.3%**
- Experienced violent or traumatic crime whilst intoxicated: **25.0%**

	Total N=240	LGBTQ+ N=71	Cis Het N=169	<i>F</i>	P-Value
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	(1,238)	
K10 Score (10-50)	21.87 (8.1)	23.80 (8.2)	21.05 (7.9)	5.92	0.016
AUDIT Score (0-40)	6.34 (6.5)	5.01 (5.0)	6.9 (7.0)	4.24	0.041
DUDIT Score (0-44)	5.76 (9.2)	6.18 (9.7)	5.6 (9.0)	0.21	0.643

Justice System Experiences

How much do you agree with the following statement (1-5):

My personal identity (e.g., cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity) influenced my decisions related to the crime and the criminal justice system.

- LGBTQ+ individuals more likely to report agreement with the above statement (**Mean 3.09; SD=1.4; P=0.007**), compared to cisgender heterosexual counterparts (Mean=2.43; SD=1.3)

Reporting a Crime

Can you briefly describe how coping resources influenced your decision around reporting the crime?

“I honestly didn’t process it as a crime at the time - I am a sex worker, and we experience disproportionate levels of sexual violence and other crime. I’ve also been through severe trauma in my life, so I guess my threshold is a little higher than most. But mainly the effort and a bit of shame and risk of outing myself as a Sex worker would prevent me reporting.”

Cis female, bisexual, 27 years

Can you briefly describe how the type of substance might influence your decision to report the crime?

“I would worry I wouldn't be taken seriously like I'd asked for it by taking drugs”

Cis female, straight, 55 years

Discussion Points

- **Whilst some differences were noted within this study, it is evident that experiences of crime & trauma (regardless of being intoxicated or not) cut across all groups of people**
- **Nonetheless, it is important to recognise the complex crime and other related traumas of individuals**
 - Identity-affirming, trauma-informed care within services



Discussion Points

- **What supports or models of care can we embed within AOD and other health services to support?**
 - Prevention and Response to Violence Abuse and Neglect (PARVAN) Services?
 - Legal services support clinics within health?
- **People who experience or witness violent/traumatic events while intoxicated are often considered unreliable:**
 - Is this true, or is this notion embedded in stigma and misinformation?

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