The IDRS comprises a sentinel sample of people aged 18 years or older who injected illicit drugs ≥6 days in the preceding six months and resided in Melbourne, Victoria. Participants were recruited via advertisements in needle and syringe programs and other harm reduction services, as well as via peer referral. The results are not representative of all people who use illicit drugs, nor of use in the general population. Data were collected in June, 2024. Interviews from 2020 were delivered face-to-face as well as via telephone, to reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission; all interviews prior to 2020 were conducted face-to-face. This methodological change should be factored into all comparisons of data from the 2020-2024 samples relative to previous years.

The IDRS sample recruited from Melbourne, Victoria (VIC) in 2024 (N=150) was mostly consistent with samples in previous years. Seventy-two per cent of participants were male (74% in 2023), but median age increased significantly to 48 years (45 years in 2023;

=0.189), with most participants reporting residing at a private house/flat (63%) or at no fixed address (25%). Participants typically nominated heroin as their drug of choice in

2024 (64%; 57% in 2023), followed by methamphetamine (23%; 30% in 2023). Heroin was also the drug injected most

Over half (53%) of participants reported receiving any drug treatment in 2024, stable relative to 2023 (53%). Six per cent of the Melbourne sample reported being unable to access treatment in 2024, a significant decrease from 14% in 2023 (p=0.036).

The mean AUDIT-C score decreased significantly from 4.3 in 2023, to 3.3 in 2024 (p=0.001), as did the per cent of participants scoring four or above on the AUDIT-C (35%; 51% in 2023; p=0.021).

Seven tenths (69%) of the sample reported that they had received a hepatitis C virus (HCV) antibody test (64% in 2023) and 69% reported receiving an RNA test (64% in 2023) in the past year. Ten per cent reported having a current HCV infection.

Sexual activity, mental health and health service access

Self-reported mental health problems remained stable in 2024 (56%; 55% in 2023), with depression being the most commonly reported problem (65%), followed by anxiety (57%) and post-traumatic stress disorder (30%).

The K10 score remained stable between 2023 and 2024 (p=0.550), with 23% of participants scoring 'high' psychological distress and 39% scoring 'very high' (28% and 31% in 2023, respectively).

Over four fifths (85%) of participants reported accessing any health service for alcohol and/or drug support in the six months preceding interview (89% in 2023). Seventy-five per cent of participants reported using an NSP for 'any reason', a significant decrease from 85% in 2023 (p=0.047).

Driving, contact with policy and modes of purchasing drugs

Of those who had driven recently (n=39), few participants (n 5) reported driving while over the perceived legal limit of alcohol, and 80% reported driving within three hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug, both stable relative to 2023 (n 5 and 63%, respectively).

Forty-four per cent of participants reported engaging in 'any' crime in the past month in 2024 (47% in 2023), with 22% having been arrested in the past year (26% in 2023), and 66% reporting a lifetime prison history (74% in 2023).

One fifth (22%) of participants reported a drug-related encounter with police which did not result in charge or arrest, stable relative to 2023 (28%). There was a significant decrease in participants reporting being stopped and questioned by police (45%; 76% in 2023; p=0.012).

In 2024, face-to-face contact was the most popular means of arranging the purchase of illicit or non-prescribed drugs in the 12 months preceding interview (83%). In 2024, 40% of participants reported purchasing illicit drugs via text message, a significant increase from 23% in 2023 (p=0.002).