



Level of support and willingness to use drug checking services among people in Australia who regularly consume illicit substances, 2022-2023

Julia Uporova, Rachel Sutherland and Amy Peacock

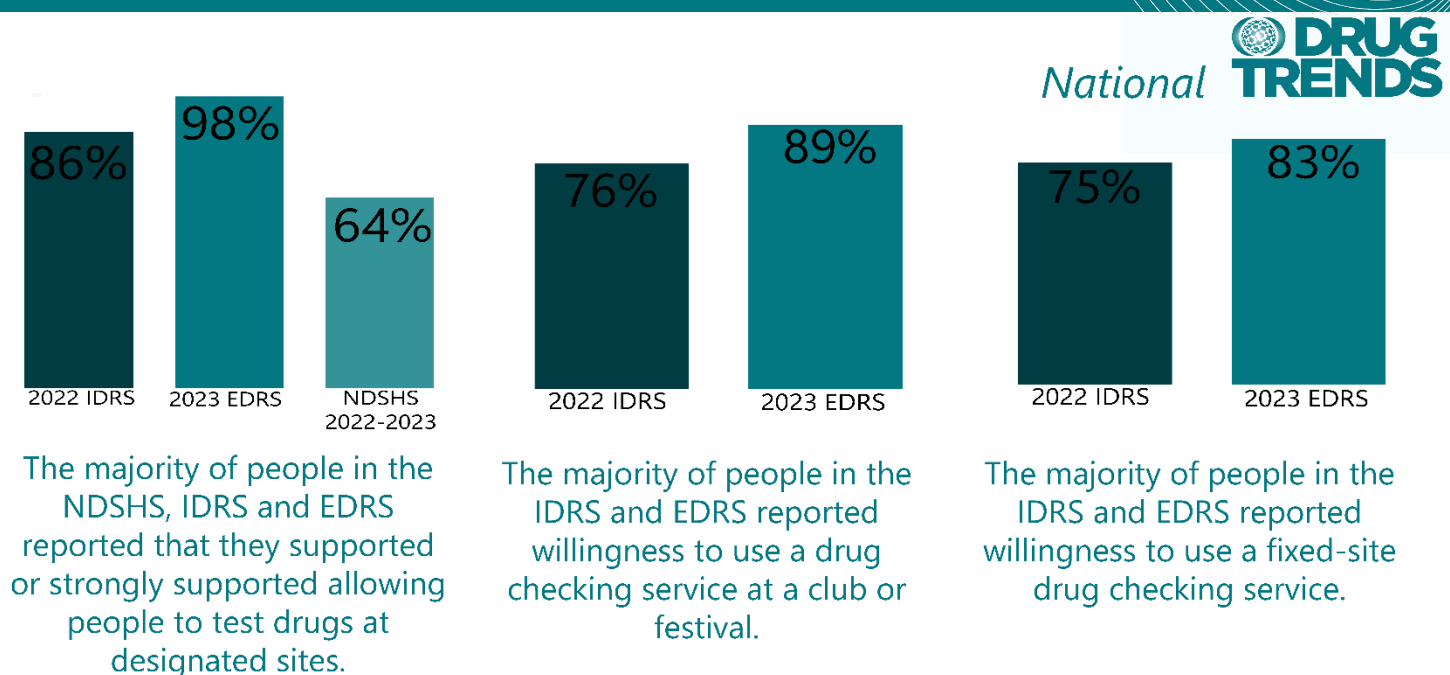
This report was prepared by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney

For further information: drugtrends@unsw.edu.au

Introduction

Drug checking services allow people to submit illicit drugs to be chemically analysed as to their contents and/or purity, providing tailored interventions to people on the results and how to reduce harms associated with illicit drug use (1). There are a range of drug checking service models, including fixed-site services and event-based (e.g., festival) services. Availability of drug checking services in Australia is expanding, with services available or soon to be available across a number of jurisdictions, but they are still not accessible to the majority of people who may wish to use them. Previous research has also shown strong general community support for offering of drug checking services in Australia (2). The aim of this study was to understand level of support and willingness to use drug checking services among a sample of people who regularly use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulant drugs recruited for the 2023 [Ecstasy and related Drugs Reporting System \(EDRS\)](#) and a sample of people who regularly inject illicit drugs recruited for the 2022 [Illicit Drug Reporting System \(IDRS\)](#). General population data from people aged 14+ years from the [National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022-2023](#) is also presented for comparison.

Results



Note. EDRS/IDRS: Of those that responded. Per cent willing to use service at a club or festival excluded those who reported not attending clubs/festivals. NDSHS: National Drug Strategy Household Survey. See Appendix 1 for results by age group and Appendix 2 & 3 for results by capital city.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate a high level of support for drug checking among the general population and among people who regularly use illicit drugs, with support higher among the latter. Nearly all people interviewed who regularly use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants supported establishing services for people to check the contents and/or purity of illicit drugs, and nearly nine in ten people who regularly inject drugs reported the same. At least four in five people who regularly use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants said they would be willing to use a drug checking service at a club/festival or in a fixed-site setting, with three in four of people who regularly inject drugs reporting the same. Overall, these findings add to a growing body of literature demonstrating support for establishing drug checking services in Australia, and showing that people who use illicit drugs would be willing to access these services across different settings.

Recommended citation:

Uporova J, Sutherland R, Peacock A. Level of support and willingness to use drug checking services among people in Australia who regularly consume illicit substances, 2022-2023. Drug Trends Bulletin Series. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney; 2024.

Appendix 1. Support or strongly support drug checking by age group, EDRS 2023, IDRS 2022 and NDSHS 2022-2023

Age group	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
EDRS (%)	99	97	/	/
IDRS (%)	/	/	86	86
NDSHS (%)	73.0	67.4	64.4	59.4

Note. / Not asked.

Appendix 2. Level of support of drug checking and services by capital city, EDRS 2023

	Sydney	Canberra	Melbourne	Hobart	Adelaide	Perth	Darwin	Brisbane/ Gold Coast
Support/ strongly support allowing people to test their drugs at designated sites (%)	97	99	100	99	97	97	92	98
Would use a club or festival-based service for drug content testing by a health professional (%)	87	93	90	95	86	90	89	88
Would use a fixed-site service for drug content testing by a health professional (%)	84	85	87	84	83	81	79	80

Appendix 3. Level of support of drug checking and services by capital city, IDRS 2022

	Sydney	Canberra	Melbourne	Hobart	Adelaide	Perth	Darwin	Brisbane/ Gold Coast
Support/ strongly support allowing people to test their drugs at designated sites (%)	79	91	90	86	82	87	82	84
Would use a club or festival-based service for drug content testing by a health professional (%)	71	84	74	75	76	80	74	74
Would use a fixed-site service for drug content testing by a health professional (%)	79	80	83	77	66	63	71	77

References

1. Barratt M. J, Measham F. "What is drug checking, anyway?", Drugs, Habits and Social Policy. 2022 Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 176-187. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1108/DHS-01-2022-0007>
2. Caluzzi G, Torney A, Callinan S. Who supports drug-checking services in Australia? An analysis of 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey data. Drug and Alcohol Review. 2023 Jul 4; Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.13707>