Trends in listings and vendors selling drugs on the internet via cryptomarkets: Findings from the Drug and New Technologies (DNeT) project, 2018-2021

MAX PEDERSEN[1], RACHEL SUTHERLAND[1], AMY PEACOCK[1,2], RAIMONDO BRUNO[1,2], MONICA J. BARRATT[1, 3], NICOLA MAN[1]

[1]National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, Australia, [2]School of Psychology, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia, [3]Global, Urban and Social Studies, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, Melbourne, Australia

Presenter's email: <z5164270@unsw.edu.au>

Introduction and Aims: Online drug markets operating on the darknet, known as cryptomarkets, facilitate the trade of illicit substances at an international level. The Drugs and New Technologies (DNeT) project at NDARC has been monitoring cryptomarkets since 2013. The aims were to describe trends in drug listings and unique vendors on cryptomarkets over time, in the period September 30 2018 to September 30 2021, inclusive.

Method / Approach: Cryptomarkets were monitored and scraped weekly using Python, with details on drug listings, vendors, prices, countries of origin, and shipping destinations extracted for analysis over time.

Key Findings: Up to 13 cryptomarkets were scraped weekly from September 2018 to September 2021. During May 2021, the most prevalent drugs listed were cannabis, cocaine and MDMA, at 28%, 10% and 9.6% of listings respectively. In the same month, there were 3,546 unique vendors across 10 cryptomarkets. The most common listing countries of origin were the Netherlands, UK, USA and Germany.

Discussions and Conclusions: DNeT data indicates that law enforcement operations and market exit scams have caused significant disruptions to the availability of drugs of cryptomarkets. Despite this, the profile of major drug classes being sold has been relatively consistent.