Has regulating e-cigarettes impacted their use among a sample of people who use ecstasy and/or other stimulants? Findings from the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System

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Introduction and Aims: E-cigarette use has increased rapidly since the mid-to-late 2000s, and there remains substantial debate regarding the safety and efficacy of these devices, and how they should be regulated. In Australia, legislation came into effect on 1 October 2021, requiring people to obtain a prescription to legally import nicotine vaping products. This paper aims to examine the impact of this legislation on e-cigarette use among a sample of people who ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants.

Design and Methods: Data are drawn from face-to-face interviews conducted with annual cross-sectional samples of people who use ecstasy and/or other illegal stimulants recruited from capital cities as part of the 2014-2022 Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System. Data collection for 2022 is currently underway (n=137) and will be completed in June (expected sample size, n=800).

Results: Past six-month (‘recent’) e-cigarette use remained relatively stable from 2014 (34%) to 2020 (39%), before increasing sharply in 2021 (58%). Preliminary analyses suggests that use remains elevated in 2022: to-date, 61% of participants have reported recent use, predominantly non-prescribed use (59%). Few participants have reported prescribed use. Among those reporting recent use in 2022, most report using e-cigarettes containing nicotine (92%) and had not used them as smoking cessation tools (64%), consistent with previous years. Most (87%) reported that they had not experienced any difficulty accessing nicotine vaping products in the past six months.

Discussions and Conclusions: Our preliminary findings suggest that legislation requiring people to obtain a prescription to legally import nicotine vaping products has had little impact on use.

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