



Concomitant GHB and stimulant use among a national sample of people who regularly inject drugs in Australia, 2024

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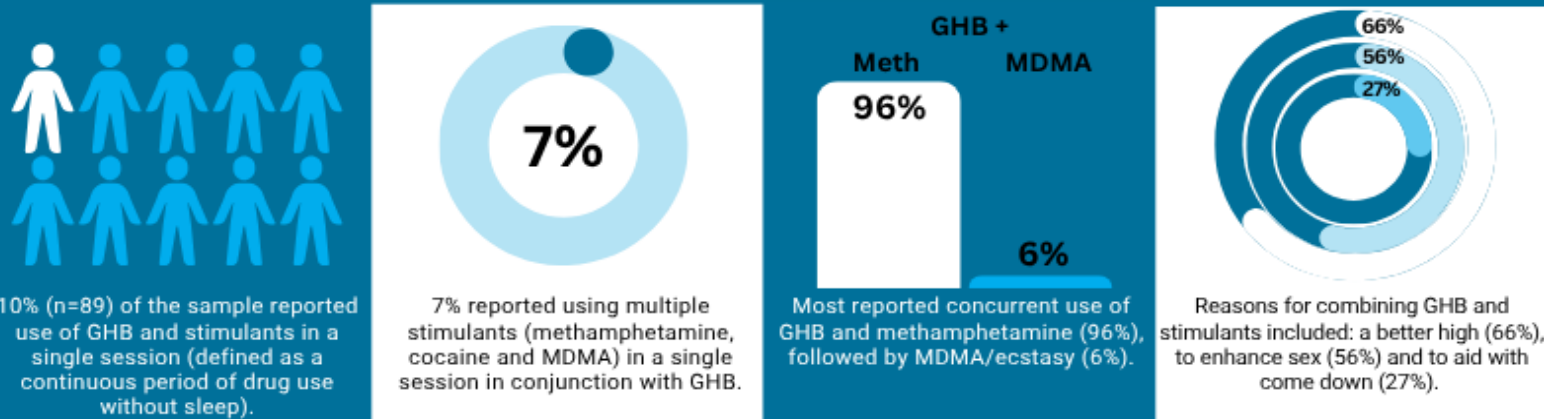
Introduction

Gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB) is a nervous system depressant, that can produce both dose-related stimulant-like and sedative-like effects. Commonly considered a "club drug" or "party drug" (1,2), there is evidence that use is increasing among broader populations and contexts. Throughout Australia, there have been increases in GHB-related emergency department presentations (3,4,5), with some studies reporting high levels of methamphetamine co-detection. Withdrawal from GHB is comparable with that of alcohol withdrawal and when combined with methamphetamine use, the risk of seizures is elevated (4,6,7). The aim of this bulletin is to examine the characteristics and patterns of use of concomitant GHB and stimulant use within a sentinel group of people who inject drugs in Australia.

Results

Data was collected between June and July 2024 as part of the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) (N=884).

Among those who reported use of GHB and stimulants in the same session:



Discussion

One in ten of the 2024 IDRS national sample reported using GHB and stimulants concomitantly, comparable to our sample of people who use ecstasy and/or other illicit stimulants (7%; 8). Among IDRS participants who reported concurrent use, GHB was mainly used in conjunction with crystal methamphetamine. The most common reason for using both GHB and methamphetamines was to achieve a better high, followed by to enhance sex. These findings show that harm reduction messaging needs to recognise the heterogeneity of people who concurrently use GHB and stimulants rather than focusing on, for example, young people who attend nightclubs or sexuality and gender diverse communities more broadly.

References

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