

# GLOBAL DRUG SURVEY

IS AN INDEPENDENT RESEARCH ORGANISATION BASED IN LONDON, UK.

WE RUN THE LARGEST DRUG SURVEY IN THE WORLD

THIS IS OUR 8TH ANNUAL REPORT



WWW.GLOBALDRUGSURVEY.COM

GDS2019 KEY FINDINGS REPORT | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EMBARGOED UNTIL: MAY 16 2019 | 06:00 BST

PROFESSOR ADAM R WINSTOCK

ON BEHALF OF GDS CORE RESEARCH TEAM

## DATA COLLECTION PERIOD

GDS2019 ran from October 29 – December 30 2018.

## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS: GLOBAL DRUG SURVEY 2019 (GDS2019)

Data from **123,814 people from > 30 countries** was used in the preparation of this report.

- 59% were male
- The mean age was 29 years
- 57% of the sample aged 25 years or under and 19% aged 35 years and older
- 87% of the sample was white
- 60% reported going clubbing 4 or more times a year.

## DRUG USE

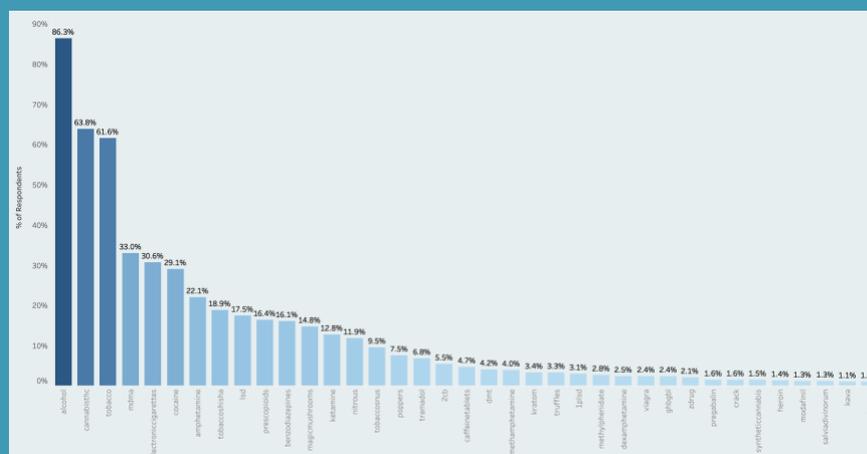
Of the 20 drugs used most commonly in the last 12 months:

- 4 were tobacco/nicotine-based products
- 6 were psychedelic/dissociative drugs
- 4 were stimulant drugs
- 3 were prescription CNS depressants

## THE TOP 10 DRUGS USED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS (EXCLUDING ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO/NICOTINE PRODUCTS) WERE:

GDS2019 USE OF DRUGS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS  
GLOBAL SAMPLE

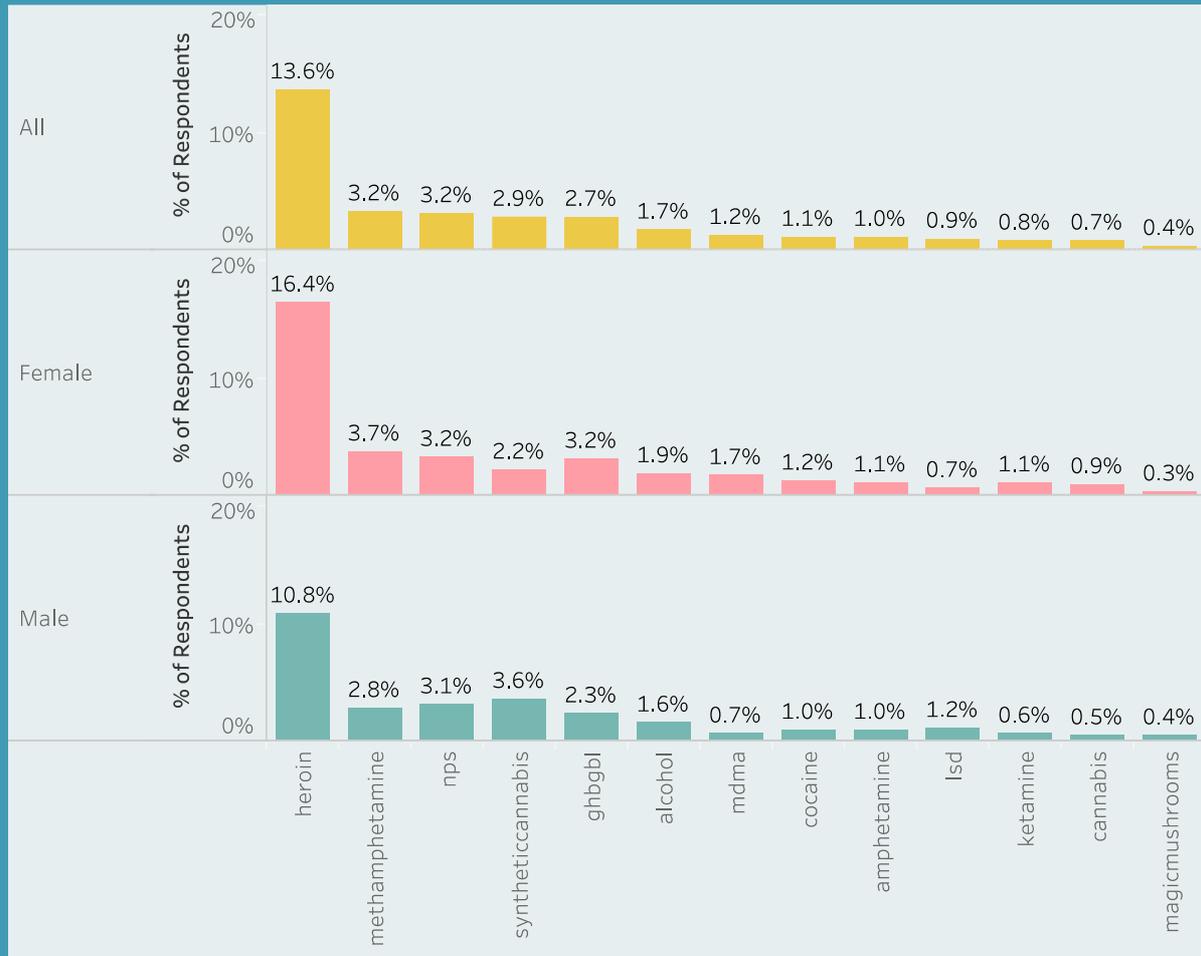
- Cannabis
- MDMA
- Cocaine,
- Amphetamines
- LSD
- Magic mushrooms
- Benzodiazepines
- Prescription opioids
- Ketamine
- Nitrous oxide



## SEEKING EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

Using data from the GDS2019 sample we ranked 13 drugs in terms of the percentage of people who recently used that drug, reported seeking emergency medical treatment (EMT) in the last 12 months.

### % PARTICIPANTS REPORTING SEEKING EMT FOLLOWING THE USE OF DIFFERENT DRUGS LAST YEAR



### THE RANKING BASED ON REPORTED EMT INCIDENCE WAS AS FOLLOWS:

1. HEROIN
2. NOVEL DRUGS/ METHAMPHETAMINE
3. SCRAS (SYNTHETIC CANNABIS)
4. GHB/GBL
5. ALCOHOL
6. MDMA
7. COCAINE
8. AMPHETAMINE
9. LSD
10. KETAMINE
11. CANNABIS
12. MAGIC MUSHROOMS

## ALCOHOL

BRITISH GDS RESPONDENTS WHO DRINK ALCOHOL GET DRUNK MORE TIMES PER YEAR THAN ANYWHERE ELSE.

WOMEN OVER 25 YEARS OLD REGRET GETTING DRUNK MOST OFTEN (ESPECIALLY IF THEY LIVE IN A GERMAN-SPEAKING COUNTRY).

- On average, GDS respondents said they got drunk 33 times in the last 12 months.
- Participants from English-speaking countries reported getting drunk most often (in the UK 51 times in last year, in the USA on 50 times, Canada 48 times and Australia 47 times), while participants from South American countries reported getting drunk on the lowest number of occasions (Chile 16 times a year, Colombia and Germany tied at 22).
- Globally, GDS participants who drank alcohol in the last 12 months reported regretting getting drunk on 20% of occasions, with the highest rates of regret being reported among women aged 25 years and older (24.2%) and lowest among males aged 25 years and younger (17%).
- Women over 25 years from German-speaking countries regretted getting drunk most often (33%).
- Participants who reported high risk drinking patterns (as assessed by the WHO alcohol problem screening tool, the AUDIT), regretted getting drunk almost twice as often (35%) than the participants with low risk drinking (19%).

Overall, 38% of the participants who drank alcohol in the last 12 months wanted to drink less next year, with the preferred form of support being an online tool such as the free, anonymous Drinks Meter app, available on the app stores and at [www.drinksmeter.com](http://www.drinksmeter.com)

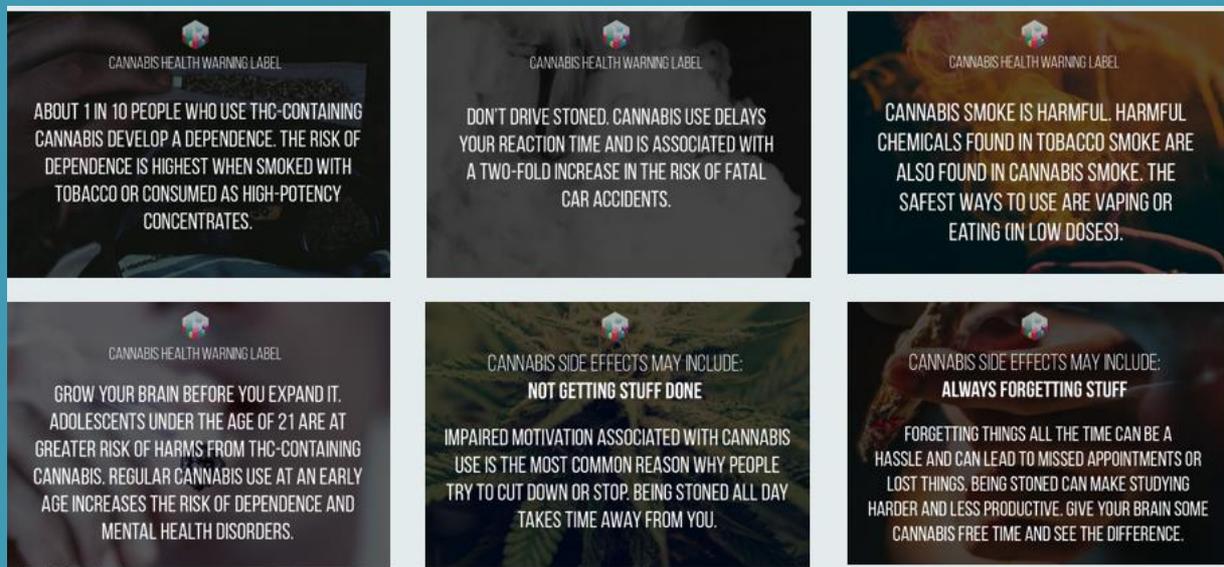
## COCAINE

BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY, ESCALATING RATES OF ACUTE HARMS & GLOBAL SUPPORT FOR FAIR TRADE.

- Overall, 65% of participants reported using cocaine on 10 or fewer occasions, with only 8.9% reporting use on 50 or more occasions in the last year.
- The median amount of cocaine powder consumed on a day of use was 0.5gm.
- 62% reported same day delivery of cocaine in the last year, with 30.4% reporting that the delivery took no longer than 30 minutes.
- Overall, 41% of participants who recently used cocaine said they would like to use less cocaine next year.
- Of the 20,000 people who completed the section on cocaine use in the last year, 1.1% sought emergency medical treatment following use (compared to 0.9% in GDS2018 and 0.6% in both GDS2017 and GDS2016).
- It is likely that higher purity cocaine is related to increased harms.
- Over 70% of participants who recently used cocaine would support a regulated fair-trade cocaine market with 85% of these willing to pay more for the drug, on average 25% more.

## CANNABIS & HEALTH

>55,000 GDS respondents who used cannabis in the last year evaluated 6 cannabis health information labels addressing the risk of dependence, smoking harms, effects on those aged 21 years and under, driving risk, and the impact on memory and motivation.



- Believability of all messages was high (>75%), except for dependence risk (64%).
- One quarter (25%) indicated that the risks of cannabis smoke and the risk of dependence (1 in 10) were new pieces of information to them.
- 50% reported that the 'driving when stoned' message would make them think about not driving stoned and over one third said the GDS 'side effect labels' highlighting the impact on memory and motivation would make them think about using less.

The bottom line is this – if you are going to profit from selling cannabis (whether you are the government or a corporate entity) treat your customers with honesty and respect. *Cannabis companies are in their infancy – now is the time to help them grow into responsible adult corporations and a bit of smart of government regulation (like good parenting) may help this to succeed.*

Check out [www.saferuselimits.co](http://www.saferuselimits.co) for feedback on how your cannabis use compares to others.

If you would like to use our labels please contact us.

## MDMA

**MOST GDS2019 RESPONDENTS WHO TAKE MDMA DO SO ON 10 OR LESS OCCASIONS PER YEAR. 1.2% OF LAST YEAR USERS SOUGHT EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT (1.7%F v 0.7%M)**

- Most participants who used MDMA used it infrequently with the median number of days used in the last year being 5 and with almost 3/4s reporting use on 10 or fewer occasions.
- The use of MDMA powder is now as common as MDMA tablets (ecstasy).
- The median price for MDMA was €10/pill and €40/gm for powder.
- The median number of pills consumed was one, with the median amount of MDMA powder consumed being 0.3gm.
- Only 23% reported always trying an initial test dose when using MDMA from a new batch.

## PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS

**HALF OF THE GDS2019 PARTICIPANTS WHO REPORTED THE USE OF PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS (16.5% OF THE GDS2019 SAMPLE) REPORTED HAVING USED THESE TO GET HIGH AT LEAST ONCE IN THE LAST YEAR.**

- The use of prescription opioids in the last year was highest in Australia (30%), the USA (29%) and England (28%).
- Of the 50% who reported getting high at least once, half did so on 3 or more occasions.
- Rates were highest in the USA with 69% reporting getting high at least once, followed by Finland (66%) and lowest in Ireland (24%).

## DRUG DEALERS: TRUST, GENDER AND DELIVERY

**IN GDS2019, 57% OF THE RESPONDENTS REPORTED EVER BUYING DRUGS (OTHER THAN CANNABIS) FROM A DEALER WHO IDENTIFIED AS A WOMAN. DELIVERY AND PICK ARE JUST AS LIKELY IN MOST COUNTRIES.**

- The most common description of the main person that they obtained drugs from was a friend, with only 22% describing them solely as their drug supplier.
- Over 50% had known the main person they get drugs from for 3 or more years.
- Over a third of people reported that they usually take drugs with their supplier when purchasing, with 5% saying they usually flirt or have sex when they get their drugs.
- Overall rates of trust in their dealer with respect to them not becoming abusive or violent if a complaint was made was high, with respondents from Brazil, Scotland and Ireland perceiving their dealers the least trustworthy in this regard.
- Picking up your drugs or having them delivered are common in all countries with 40% indicating both were just as likely.
- Delivery of illegal drugs to order was most common in Brazil (47%), Scotland (39%), England (36%) and least common in Hungary and Norway (<10%).

## VALUE FOR MONEY:

LSD WAS RATED AS THE BEST VALUE-FOR-MONEY DRUG IN THE WORLD, DESPITE DOUBLING IN PRICE (FROM APPROXIMATELY €8 TO €16).

ALCOHOL BOUGHT IN BARS WAS PERCEIVED AS SIMILAR VALUE FOR MONEY TO COCAINE.

MEAN VALUE FOR MEAN MONEY GLOBAL RATINGS FROM GDS2019 FOR 13 DRUGS  
LSD is the best value for money (1 = poor, 10 = excellent)



- In GDS2016, the mean global value-for-money rating for cocaine was 4/10. In GDS2019 it was 4.9/10, an **increase of 23% in 3 years**.
- In GDS2016 the mean global price for gram was 66 EUROS. In GDS2019 it was 80 EUROS, **an increase of 21%**.

# MORE CONSUMERS USING DARKNET MARKETS FOR BUYING DRUGS

YEAR-ON-YEAR INCREASE OBSERVED IN MOST COUNTRIES.

OVER 25% REPORTING ACCESS IN THE LAST YEAR ARE NEW RECRUITS TO THE DARKNET.

6-YEAR TRENDS IN % OF GDS2019 RESPONDENTS FROM ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES REPORTED HAVING USED DRUGS OBTAINED FROM THE DARKNET IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



Over the last 6 years, there has been a year on year increase in the percentage of GDS participants obtaining drugs on the darknet in most countries. Over ¼ of participants reporting darknet market use in the last 12 months began their use in the year 2018: *they were new recruits to the darknet.*

THE TOP DRUGS BOUGHT ON THE DARKNET WERE MDMA, LSD AND CANNABIS, followed by amphetamines, NPS and prescription pharmaceuticals. Further, darknet purchases of DMT, ketamine, and 2C-B have increased over the last 5 years.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT, INTOXICATION AND CONSENT

ONE THIRD OF GDS2019'S FEMALE RESPONDENTS REPORTED HAVING BEEN TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF SEXUALLY WHILST UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL AND/OR OTHER DRUGS EVER AND 8% IN THE LAST YEAR.

- Figures were similar for those identifying as non-binary/a different gender identity (28% ever, 10% in the last year).
- Rates for men were 6% and 2%, respectively.
- Rates of being taken advantage of were highest among young bisexual women (14%).
- Of those reporting an incident in the last 12 months, 2,300 people (75%) agreed to provide further details.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT, INTOXICATION AND CONSENT (cont.)

### WHAT SUBSTANCES WERE TAKEN?

- Alcohol was involved in almost 90% of the cases and was the only substance used in 59% cases involving women and 48% involving men.
- In approx 1/3 cases for both men and women, alcohol and other drugs were involved.
- Illegal drugs alone accounted for 14% of cases involving men and 7% involving women.

### WHERE DID IT HAPPEN AND WHO ELSE WAS AROUND?

- 67% of the incidents took place in a private residence.
- In 34% of cases, one or two good friends were nearby, and in 26% of cases lots of friends were nearby.

### WHO WERE THE PERPETRATORS?

- In 30% of cases the perpetrator was a total stranger, in 11% of cases it was a person they had previously been in a relationship with and in 11% it was a person they knew was attracted to them.
- In 9% of cases it was a person they were in a relationship with at the time of the incident.

### SEXUAL CONSENT AND RECOLLECTION OF EVENTS

- In 25% of incidents consent was given to initiate the activity, and in 49% not.
- In 46% of cases the person stated they remembered everything. In 13% of cases there was lots of uncertainty over what happened, and in 3% the person remembered nothing.

### POLICE INVOLVEMENT

- In 97% of cases no report was made to police.
- When asked why not:
  - 43% indicated they did not report to the police because they felt partly responsible
  - 43% did not think what happened was a crime
  - 25% said they did not report because the person involved was part of their friendship group
  - 20% stated they did not want others to find out
  - 16% did not report because of shame/stigma
  - 10% did not because they were worried that drugs had been involved.

### COMMENTARY

- Our findings debunk common rape myths (e.g. only women can be raped, women are most likely to be raped when outside alone at night).
- Our findings demonstrate the importance of recognising the complexity of people's lived experience in their understanding of intoxicated sexual assault.
- Previous research has found that feelings of responsibility are common among victims of sexual assault.

## PSYCHEDELICS IN PSYCHIATRY

PSYCHEDELIC-ASSISTED THERAPIES ACCEPTABLE MANY PEOPLE WITH RECOGNITION THAT IT CAN GET TO THE ROOTS OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS, BUT AMONG DRUG NAÏVE GROUPS THERE ARE STILL CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME STIGMA.

>87,000 people responded to questions related to their mental health and likelihood to accept various interventions to treat depression and/or PTSD: medication, talking therapy, and psychedelic assisted therapies.

- Overall 70% indicated it would be likely or very likely that they would accept the offer of talking (psychological)therapies such as CBT. This is significantly higher than the approximately 40% indicating they would accept traditional psychiatric medications or psychedelic assisted therapies.
- One third indicated that it would be unlikely or very unlikely that they would accept psychiatric medications such as antidepressants, with almost 40% indicating it would be unlikely or very unlikely that they would accept psychedelic assisted therapies.
- Of the respondents who were experienced with the use of psychedelic substances, 59% indicated they would be likely or very likely to accept psychedelic assisted therapies as treatment for depression or PTSD compared to only 18% of those who have never used these drugs.
- The main concerns related to psychiatric psychedelic use were fears of brain damage and bad trips.

Decades of misinformation and ideologically driven, ‘evidence resistance’ to the potential of psychoactive drugs to ‘heal not harm’ will need to be overcome. We will need to be careful not to sway the pendulum too far with false promises, and the requisite research and reorientation of both services and cultures will take time. It is worth taking the time to ensure that potential benefits don’t get waylaid by commercial interests, unqualified practitioners exploiting the vulnerable and those with a strong interest to resist change.

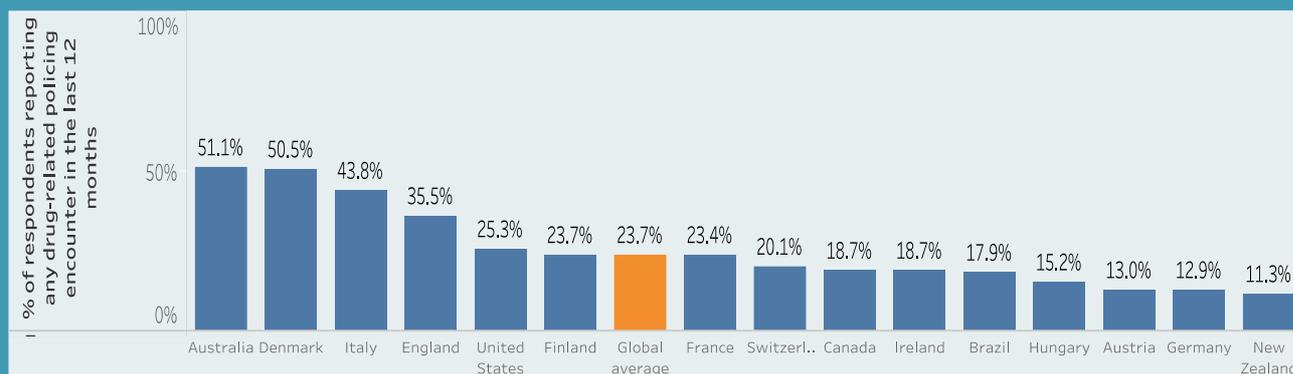
Among those participants indicating that they would maybe, likely or be very likely to accept psychedelic assisted therapies, regardless of past experience with psychedelics, the substances of choice were low doses of LSD or psilocybin, followed by high doses of LSD or psilocybin, then MDMA. Respondents rated ketamine and ayahuasca as least acceptable.

People’s desire to get to the root of their mental health problems was a top driver for choice of treatment type, and this was rated high for psychedelic therapy for those who had experience with psychedelics.

## DRUGS & POLICING

### AUSTRALIA CONTINUES TO HAVE ONE OF THE HIGHEST RATES OF POLICING OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS.

Just over 52,000 respondents to GDS2019 completed the policing section – all who have used illicit drugs in the last year. They told us whether they had been recently stopped by police and their attitudes to police in their country. Across the global sample 23.7% of all recent drug users reported they had encountered police in relation to their drug use in the last 12 months.



- **Australia and Denmark had the highest reported rate of police encounters** of people who use drugs in the last 12 months: with 51.1% and 50.5% respectively. In contrast **New Zealand had one of the lowest rates** (11.3%).
- The most common method of drugs policing was deployment of drug detection dogs, followed by stop and search, police warnings and roadside drug testing.
- Comparisons of GDS2017 and GDS2019 suggest police encounters with drug detection dogs have increased in many countries (global average of 9.5% respondents in GDS2017 vs 14.7% in GDS2019).
- The countries with the highest growth in drug detection dog encounters were Australia, Denmark, Italy and England.

### ATTITUDES TO POLICE

Most respondents had favourable attitudes to police. For example 50% of respondents (who are all people who use drugs) said police frequently/somewhat frequently treat people with dignity and respect. But those who have been recently policed had less favourable attitudes and were less likely to report they would help the police if asked.

## GDS2020 LAUNCHES IN NOVEMBER 2019

With a focus on the intersection between alcohol and other drug use, the night time economy and public health policy, as well as cannabis regulation / medical use and more on psychedelics and health, it's a great time to plan your partnership with us. If you would like to bring your region, publication or research group on board please contact us.

### Thank you

Professor Adam R Winstock

on behalf of the GDS Core Research Team and International Academic Network



GLOBAL DRUG SURVEY

## CAN'T FIND WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR?

- Want more data on your own country or substance of interest?
- We have data on hundreds of thousands of people who use drugs from all over the world and a network of highly skilled researchers who are experts in their field. From in depth questions on patterns of use, harms, motivations and cost to source of purchase, policing, harm reduction strategies and much more.
- We have data on virtually every drug you can think of (almost). We are always interested in collaborating with academics and other groups especially those involved in public policy, health promotion and harm reduction. We are able to provide bespoke data based reports to help you craft optimal policy and harm reduction strategies in your country.
- Please contact me for further details at [adam@globaldrugsurvey.com](mailto:adam@globaldrugsurvey.com)

Thank you,  
Professor Adam R Winstock on behalf of the GDS Core Research Team and academic partner network

*If you have any questions please contact [adam@globaldrugsurvey.com](mailto:adam@globaldrugsurvey.com)*