

Illicit drug use and experience of harm in the night-time economy

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Abstract

The study investigates illicit drug use in the night-time economy and its association with intoxication, harm and violence experienced by licensed venue patrons. Five-minute structured interviews measuring event-level data were conducted over a 15-month period (March 2010-June 2011) between 9 pm and 1 am. A total of 3949 patrons were interviewed in Newcastle and Geelong, Australian regional cities close to capital cities. Mean age was 24.3 years old (SD=5.8) and 54.4% were male. Six percent of the sample self-reported consuming illicit substances at the time of interview; 7.3% at nightclub venues, 11.8% in the street, 5.5% in pubs and 2.8% in bars. Amphetamines, methamphetamines and ecstasy accounted for two-thirds of substance use. Patrons who reported consuming illicit drugs were 1.90 times as likely to be involved in a prior violent incident (OR 1.35-2.70 95% CI, $p < 0.001$). Participants who reported illicit drug use at the time of interview were likely to be 0.89 ($p < 0.001$) points higher on self-reported intoxication scale (0-10), and were more likely to have engaged in high risk alcohol consumption (1, $n = 3396$) = 9.63, $p < 0.01$) than those who did not report using drugs. Illicit drug use contributes significantly to the burden of harm and intoxication in night-time environments, despite being a minority behavior.

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