

Planned and Unplanned Drug Use during a Night out at an Electronic Dance Music Party

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Electronic dance music (EDM) parties at nightclubs and festivals are high-risk scenes for drug use. Although intention to use drugs (such as ecstasy) has been shown to be the most proximal determinant of use, little is known regarding the extent to which drug use is unplanned in this high-risk scene.

METHODS:

We surveyed 954 adults entering EDM parties in New York City in 2017 and asked about planned drug use that night. A quarter (n = 236) completed the optional online follow-up survey which asked about drug use during their outing. We examined prevalence and correlates of planned and unplanned use.

RESULTS:

A fifth (21.0%) of attendees reported planning to use a specific drug the night of the party and over a third (35.4%) reported using a drug later that night. A quarter (26.6%) used in an unplanned manner. Unplanned marijuana use was most common

(10.7%), followed by unplanned use of ecstasy (7.3%), cocaine (4.7%), amphetamine (1.4%), LSD (1.3%), and MDA (1.1%). Unplanned initiation of ecstasy and PMA also occurred. Unplanned drug use was more likely to occur among those recruited outside of nightclubs compared to festivals. Non-heterosexual participants and those with a college degree or higher were also more likely to engage in unplanned marijuana use compared to heterosexual and less educated participants, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS:

Unplanned drug use is common at EDM parties. Results can inform prevention and harm reduction in these scenes as unplanned use may exacerbate potential adverse outcomes related to drug use and often extreme party environments.

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