
INFORMATION SHEET

(for 'Online Survey')

Title: The impacts of COVID-19 on illicit drug trafficking and supply in Australia

Description of the study

This study is part of the project titled "The impacts of COVID-19 on illicit drug trafficking and supply in Australia." This project is being undertaken by Assoc Prof Caitlin Hughes, Assoc Prof David Bright and Dr R.V. Gundur from Flinders University, Centre for Crime Policy and Research, College of Business, Government and Law. It is funded through a COVID-19 grant scheme.

Purpose of the study

This project aims to identify the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions on illicit drug purchasing, trafficking and supply in Australia. It will look at any changes in the availability of illicit drugs, drug price and purity, the types of drugs purchased and sold at different market levels, and the mechanisms of purchase, production and sale. It will also at differences in impacts across Australian states/territories and across time (March/April 2020 vs May/June 2020). The project has two elements: the first is a national online survey (this element). The second is telephone or VoIP interviews with people who supply illicit drugs.

Inclusion criteria

Before you decide to participate in this research study, we need to ensure that it is ok for you to take part. The research study is looking recruit people who meet the following criteria:

- Live in Australia
- Aged 18 or over
- Have purchased and/or supplied illicit drugs during the last 12 months – including pre and post COVID-19.

What will I be asked to do?

Participation in any research study is voluntary. If you do not want to take part, you do not have to. Should you decide to take part you will be asked to complete an online survey: The Australian COVID-19 drug supply survey. This is a national survey that will ask you questions about your basic demographics (e.g. state you live in) and your experiences of purchasing and/or supplying illicit drugs pre and post COVID-19 (e.g. how long did it take, what price did you pay) and any changes that you have noticed in the Australian drug market (e.g. increase or decrease in product range). The survey will take 20-30 minutes to complete.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?

You will be anonymous. We will not record your IP address or collect information that may be used to identify you, such as your name or address or mobile number. Should you choose to take part in the prize draw or to receive a copy of the research results we will ask you to provide an email address. This will not be linked to your survey responses in any way.

At the end of the survey we will ask you whether you may be interested in taking part in the second part of the study – VoIP interviews with suppliers – and if so how to notify the research team.

What will happen to information about me?

All information and results obtained in this study will be stored in a secure way, with access restricted to the relevant researchers. The Australian COVID-19 Drug Supply Survey is run through Qualtrics which offers secure and encrypted data capture via the Transport Layer Security (TLS) encryption (also known as HTTPS). The research team will store the data collected for this research project for a minimum of 5 years after the publication of the research results. All data will be stored on password protected files accessible only to the research team. All your answers are anonymous and strictly confidential. At no point during the study – either data collection, analysis nor publication of findings phases – will answers you provide be able to be traced back to you.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?

The main benefit will be your contribution to filling key gaps in knowledge about how the Australian drug market has been impacted in the short and longer term by the global COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying restrictions. This information will help inform Australian drug policy about changing service needs such as harm reduction and treatment. It will also add to the global body of work that is examining and comparing pandemic impacts on drug supply in different parts of the world and any specific differences in the Australian context.

If you choose to participate in the survey you will have the option to provide your email address and go into a draw for one of five \$200 Wish eGift Cards. These are provided in recognition of your contribution and time. Gift cards will be emailed out after the survey has ended: in August/September 2020.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?

Completing the survey is completely voluntary, you do not have to take part and you can choose which sections you wish to answer. You can also withdraw from the survey at any time. You can do this by closing the survey. If you withdraw from the research, we will destroy any information that has already been collected. Once you finish the survey and click on the 'submit' button however, we will not be able to withdraw your responses as the survey is anonymous.

The researchers anticipate few risks from your involvement in this study. But given that COVID-19 is causing many people additional stress in their lives some participants may experience some emotional distress. If any emotional discomfort is experienced or you want to seek advice about the use of drugs, please contact the following 24-7 services.

Lifeline: 131 114

National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline: 1800 250 015

How and when will I find out what the results of the research study are?

This project is running until 31 December 2020. The research team intend to publish the results in peer-reviewed journals and research bulletins and to disseminate the results at conferences, policy briefings and the media. All information will be published in a way that will not identify you. If you would like to receive a copy of the results you can let the research team know by inserting your email in the consent form. We will only use these details to send you the results of the research. Alternatively, results and publications will be made available via the project website at: sites.flinders.edu.au/covid-drug-supply.

What should I do if I have further questions about my involvement in the research study?

The person you may need to contact will depend on the nature of your query. If you require further information regarding this study or if you have any problems which may be related to your involvement in the study, you can email coviddrugsupply@flinders.edu.au or you can contact the following members of the research team:

Lead Chief Investigator

Name: Assoc Prof Caitlin Hughes

Email: caitlin.hughes@flinders.edu.au

Tel: 08 7421 9926

Chief Investigator

Name: Assoc Prof David Bright

Email: david.bright@flinders.edu.au

Tel: 08 8201 3884

Chief Investigator

Name: Dr R.V. Gundur

Email: rv.gundur@flinders.edu.au

Tel: 08 7421 9740

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee in South Australia (Project number HEG1851-1). For queries regarding the ethics approval of this project please contact the Executive Officer of the Committee via telephone on +61 8 8201 3116 or email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Consent Form – Participant providing own consent (online survey)

Declaration by the participant

By checking the I agree/start questionnaire option below:

- ☐ I understand I am being asked to provide consent to participate in this research study;
- ☐ I have read the Participant Information Sheet;
- ☐ I provide my consent for the information collected about me to be used as described in the Participant Information Statement;
- ☐ I understand that if necessary, I can ask questions and the research team will respond to my questions;
- ☐ I freely agree to participate in this research study as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time while you are undertaking the survey and withdrawal will not affect my relationship with any of the named organisations and/or research team members. Please note, given the survey is anonymous, data can no longer be withdrawn if you have completed the survey.
- ☐ I understand that the results of the research will be made available on the Flinders University project website at sites.flinders.edu.au/covid-drug-supply.
- ☐ I am providing my contact details to allow the research team to send me a copy of the results:

Email Address: _____

- ☐ I am providing my contact details to allow the research team to enter me in the prize draw for a \$200 WISH e-gift card.

Email Address: _____

I agree, start questionnaire