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# Extra potent drugs fuelling market

■ HSE warns of an expected spike in drug use over Christmas period

Liz Dunphy

Extra-potent illegal drugs are being produced in new European labs to capture more of the growing drug market, as use escalates in Ireland and across the continent.

The HSE is warning of extremely potent MDMA; of other synthetic substances being falsely sold as ketamine; and of synthetic cannabinoid vape liquid linked to anxiety and psychosis in circulation ahead of an expected spike in drug use over Christmas.

"The market has changed and these high-strength drugs are circulating," said Eamon Keenan, HSE national clinical lead for addiction services, told the *Irish Examiner*.

"Drugs are becoming more potent."

Synthetic drugs such as MDMA are also increasingly manufactured in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe.

The European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) has warned that increased production in Europe may trigger more consumption locally.

A report from EUDA said: "The European drug market is evolving rapidly as both suppliers and consumers are finding ways to adapt to geopolitical instability, globalisation, and technological advances."

"This appears to be resulting in the availability of a more diverse range of substances, often of high potency and purity, which are posing new risks to public health."

Some of these manufacturers are making increasingly potent drugs to boost sales of their product.

"Our tablets are better than our competitors' tablets" — that sort of thing," Prof Keenan said.

While some tablets contain 0mg of MDMA, the average adult dose is 50-100mg. However, tablets have been found by the HSE which contain 312mg.

Any tablet with 125mg or more is deemed higher risk by the HSE.

The higher the strength of the pill, powder, or crystal, the higher the risk of an emergency, the HSE warned.

Prof Keenan said: "It's obviously safer not to use

drugs, but if somebody does decide to use drugs then it's useful to know that these drugs are circulating in the night-time economy and that they do pose high risk."

Cocaine, MDMA, and ketamine will likely be the most consumed 'party drugs' over the festive period, Prof Keenan said.

Another EUDA study published this year found that ketamine use was as high as MDMA use in Ireland, according to analysis of wastewater samples in Dublin.

Dublin had the 10th highest levels of ketamine — a psychoactive dissociative anesthetic drug — in municipal wastewater of all cities tested in Europe.

Prof Keenan said: "We're seeing young people with bladder-related problems now more commonly. And that's been associated with ketamine use."

Anxiety, depression, and psychosis is also associated with ketamine use, he said.

Prof Keenan said: "Ketamine is used much more widely than we had perhaps been aware of prior to that [wastewater analysis]."

The wastewater analysis study will be expanded next year in a three-year pilot project.

Prof Keenan said: "We're in the process of finalising the awarding of the contract to a laboratory partner and we'll be able to analyse the wastewater on a regular and an ongoing basis, not just in Dublin, but outside Dublin as well."

Addiction counsellor Michael Guerin said there has been an evolution in the drug ecosystem over the past five years, with a move towards synthetic rather than plant-based drugs.

"Cannabis was a plant, heroin came from the poppy, cocaine came from a plant in the mountains in South America," he said.

"And now they are synthesising substances in laboratories, primarily in Eastern Europe, that mimic the effects of these natural substances and bind to the same receptors in the brain."

"And these synthetics are so potent that you can get an awful lot of doses into a small package, so it makes sense logistically [for drug dealers]. You don't have the same bulk to transport as with cannabis or cocaine."



Members of the public laying flowers at a memorial in the wake of a mass shooting at Bondi Beach, Sydney, on Sunday. Australian police say at least 16 people, including one suspected gunman, were killed and more than 40 others injured when two attackers opened fire near a Hanukkah celebration at the world-famous beach, in what authorities have declared a terrorist incident. Picture: George Chan/Getty

# Australian PM promises gun law reforms

Christine Chen, Scott Murdoch, and Renju Jose

Australia vowed stricter gun laws as it began mourning victims of its worst mass shooting in almost 30 years, in which a father and son are accused of killing 15 people at a Jewish celebration at Sydney's Bondi Beach.

The older gunman, aged 50, was killed at the scene, taking the tally of dead to 16, while his 24-year-old son was in a critical condition in hospital yesterday.

Police have not released the suspects' names, but

Australian media identified them as Sajid Akram and his son, Naveed Akram. Two flags of militant group Islamic State were found in their vehicle.

The incident has raised questions about whether Australia's gun laws, among the toughest in the world, need an overhaul, with police saying the older suspect had held a firearms licence since 2015, along with six registered weapons.

For between 10 and 20 minutes on Sunday, the gunmen had fired on attendees at the Hanukkah event, gunning down men, women, and

children as terrified beachgoers fled. The victims were aged between 10 and 87.

Among them were a rabbi who was a father of five, a Holocaust survivor, a Slovak woman, and a 10-year-old girl. The 40 people taken to hospital after the attack included two police officers who were in a serious but stable condition, police said.

"What we saw was an act of pure evil, an act of antisemitism, an act of terrorism," Australian prime minister Anthony Albanese told reporters after laying flowers at Bondi Beach.

"The Jewish community

are hurting today. Today, all Australians wrap our arms around them and say, we stand with you. We will do whatever is necessary to stamp out antisemitism. It is a scourge, and we will eradicate it together."

Mourners paid respects and laid flowers at a makeshift memorial draped in Israeli and Australian flags as police and private Jewish security guards patrolled.

Albanese said his cabinet had agreed to strengthen gun laws and work on a national firearms register to tackle aspects such as the number of weapons permitted and

how long licences are valid. "People's circumstances can change," he told reporters. "People can be radicalised over a period of time. Licences should not be in perpetuity."

Security officials said one of the gunmen was known to authorities but had not been deemed an immediate threat.

"We are very much working through the background of both persons. At this stage, we know very little about them," New South Wales police commissioner Mal Lanyon told reporters.

Home minister Tony Burke said the father arrived

in Australia in 1998 on a student visa, while his son is an Australian-born citizen.

Police gave no details of their firearms, but videos from the scene showed the men firing weapons that appeared to be a bolt-action rifle and a shotgun.

Albanese said measures being considered ranged from curbs on open-ended licences to limits on weapons held by a single individual and the types that are legal, including modifications, with permits restricted to Australian citizens.

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# Teenagers shoulder coffin of elderly man who died alone

Michael Moynihan

Teenagers took to Cork's streets to say goodbye to an elderly man who died alone with no family, elevating what should have been a sad occasion into an uplifting one, showcasing the best of the city and humanity at its finest.

Kenyon Jones Ginn, who had lived in the Share Mount St Joseph housing complex on Barney St from 2007 to 2021, died last month at the age of 85.



Members of secondary school charity Share attended the funeral of Kenyon 'Taffy' Jones Ginn in Cork yesterday. Picture: Noel Sweeney

A native of the Black Mountains in Wales, he entered a nursing home four years ago after developing dementia. He lived in Ireland for many years but did not have any family here.

This is where the boys and girls of Share stepped in.

The yellow jackets of the teenage charity collectors around Cork City are a familiar sight to Christmas shoppers since the charity was founded more than half a century ago by students from Presentation Brothers

College (PBC) Cork.

Mr Jones Ginn, affectionately known as Taffy, was a client of the Share housing complex in life but the charity did not forget him in death.

At the funeral, around Coughlan's halfway up Shandon St, was a guard of honour, made up of boys and girls from Share in their familiar yellow jackets. Those who shouldered the coffin out to the hearse were similarly identifiable.

PBC student Ryan Wylie said: "It's a Share tradition that you must always treat people with respect, but that you also treat people with dignity in death."

"I think that it's a great honour for us to be here, to be part of Taffy's final wishes, because one of those final wishes was that the people in Share would come to his funeral, that some of us would carry the casket, and that after the cremation we would scatter his ashes at the Mount St Joseph complex where he lived for so many years."

News: 3

# Woman killed in East Cork collision

Ann Murphy

A woman in her 60s has been killed in a road collision in East Cork.

The woman, who is understood to be from the north-

side of Cork City, was one of two people travelling in a car which was in collision with a 4x4 vehicle on the N25 near the Lakeview Roundabout in Midleton at 6.15pm yesterday.

The second person in the car, a man in his 60s, was taken to Cork University Hospital.

He was being treated there last night for serious injuries.

The driver of the 4x4 was treated at the scene and did not require hospital treatment.

An autopsy is expected to be carried out on the woman's body today.

# Reiner and wife killed; son held

The son of Hollywood director Rob Reiner and his wife Michele Singer Reiner has been arrested after the couple were killed at their Los Angeles home.

Reiner, 78, directed legal thriller *A Few Good Men* (1992), rom-com *When Harry Met Sally* (1989), and children's fantasy *The Princess Bride* (1987).

News: 3

# UK sales surge for Murphy's

An unprecedented surge in demand for Irish stout amongst UK consumers has seen Cork-brewed Murphy's report a 666% increase in sales.

Parent company Heineken UK has announced a price freeze for 2026 on the famed stout as the brewer looks to continue the triple-digit growth.

Business: 12

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