

Study finds increased substance use with direct, indirect exposure to mass terrorism

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For adults, increased substance use (ISU) is seen in populations with direct, indirect, and media exposure to mass terrorism, according to a study [published](#) online July 24 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Roi Eliashar, from the Israel Center on Addiction in Netanya, and colleagues examined which factors are associated with reporting ISU in a population affected by mass [terrorism](#) and examined whether psychological distress mediated the association between trauma exposure and reporting ISU. The study was a partially representative cross-sectional survey of the adult Jewish population in Israel (aged 18 to 70 years) conducted four weeks after Oct. 7, 2023. Data were included for 968 participants (mean age, 41.5 years).

The researchers found that participants were significantly more likely to report ISU if they had experienced direct exposure, indirect exposure, [media exposure](#), psychological distress, or previous mental health difficulties. The association between indirect exposure and media exposure with reporting ISU was partially mediated by psychological distress ($b = 0.20$ and 0.14 , respectively). There was no evidence to support previous mental health difficulties as a moderator of these indirect effects.

This cross-sectional study "added important insights regarding the outcomes of [psychological distress](#) on these consequences and emphasized the potential prevalence of distress and ISU among individuals exposed to events of such scope and to unparalleled media attention, independent of their preexisting vulnerability," the authors write.

"These insights are crucial for planning and disseminating essential health services and [preventative measures](#)."

More information: Roi Eliashar et al, Reported Increase in Substance Use Following Mass Terrorism and the Role of Psychosocial Factors, *JAMA Network Open* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.23993](#)

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