

2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey

Detailed findings

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2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey

Detailed findings

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Preface

This report contains information from the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey. It supplements data published earlier this year in the report entitled *2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: first results*. The purpose of this report is to extend that analysis with detailed results on the prevalence of drug use, drug-related behaviours and incidents, and support for drug-related policy and legislation. The report expands the analysis of the 2004 report, in particular by additional analysis of data relating to alcohol consumption and young people. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) undertook the survey on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. Custody of the survey data set rests with the AIHW and is protected by the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*. Access to a public-use data set is available through the Australian Social Science Data Archive at the Australian National University, with access to the complete data set possible following consideration of research proposals by the AIHW Ethics Committee.

Acknowledgments

Authorship

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Contributors

Suraiya Nargis aided with preparation of the report and, with Lynda Carney, made a significant contribution to the data analysis.

Assistance was received from Mark Cooper-Stanbury, who also provided advice on design and content.

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Survey respondents

The authors also gratefully acknowledge the time and care taken by more than 23,000 Australians who completed the survey.

Symbols and definitions

Symbols

Symbol	Explanation
—	Zero
<0.1	Non-zero estimate less than 0.1%
..	Not applicable – no valid entry
*	Relative standard error greater than 50%
#	Difference between 2004 and 2007 estimates is statistically significant
↓	Statistically significant decline between 2004 and 2007
↑	Statistically significant increase between 2004 and 2007
≈	Change between 2004 and 2007 not statistically significant

Note: Statistical significance based on a normal model 2-tailed test, $\alpha = 0.05$.

Definitions

‘Illicit drugs’ means illegal drugs (such as marijuana/cannabis), prescription or over-the-counter pharmaceuticals (such as analgesics/pain-killers or tranquillisers/sleeping pills) used for illicit purposes, and other substances used inappropriately (such as naturally occurring hallucinogens and inhalants).

‘Recent use’ is equivalent to ‘use in the previous 12 months’ and the terms are used interchangeably. Both terms refer to the 12 months preceding the survey.

Further definitions are provided in Appendix 3.

Key findings

This report of the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, *Detailed Findings*, describes the use of licit and illicit drugs and the perceptions and attitudes associated with them. Results in the Key Findings are presented for those aged 14 years or older.

Tobacco and alcohol use

(Chapters 4 and 5)

- Of 17.2 million Australians, one in six smoked daily, a decline from one in four in 1993. Among daily smokers, almost one third had reduced the amount smoked in a day, and one-quarter had tried unsuccessfully to give up smoking.
- Lower socioeconomic status appeared to be related to higher levels of smoking. Smoking rates were also higher in rural and remote areas and among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- The majority of Australians had consumed at least one glass of alcohol in the previous 12 months. One in ten consumed alcohol at levels consider to be harmful in the long term, and one in five consumed alcohol once a month or more at levels considered to be harmful in the short term. These measures of alcohol consumption have been relatively stable since 2001.
- The vast majority of recent drinkers had undertaken at least some alcohol moderation behaviour. The main reason chosen was for health reasons.
- People living in Remote or Very Remote areas were more likely to drink at risky or high-risk levels than those living in other areas. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples were more likely than other Australians to abstain from drinking alcohol, but those who did drink were more likely to drink at risky or high-risk levels for short-term harm.

Illicit drug use

(Chapters 6 to 16)

- The proportion of the Australian population using illicit drugs continued to decline, with approximately one in seven (13.4%) saying they used at least one illicit drug in 2007.
- Marijuana/cannabis, at 9.1%, was the illicit drug most commonly used in the past 12 months, showing a decline from around 13% in most previous surveys. Ecstasy was the second most common, used by an estimated 3.5% of the population (unchanged from 2004), and more prevalent than meth/amphetamine (which includes 'ice') at 2.3%, down from 3.2% in 2004.
- Significant increases were recorded for two drugs in 2007 compared with 2004: cocaine (from 1.0% to 1.6%), and tranquillisers/sleeping pills used for non medical purposes (from 1.0% to 1.4%).
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were more likely than other Australians to have used an illicit drug in the previous 12 months.

Attitudes, opinions and policy support

(Chapters 2, 3, 18 and 19)

- Heroin remained the drug most associated with a 'drug problem' in Australia in 2007; however, the drug considered of most serious concern to the community was alcohol.
- Two-fifths of people accurately identified tobacco as the drug that caused the most deaths in Australia.
- Alcohol and tobacco were the drugs most available to Australians. The acceptance of the offer or opportunity to use drugs was greatest for alcohol and lowest for inhalants.
- The majority of Australians support policies aimed at reducing the acceptance and use of drugs, and the harms resulting from drug use. Broadly speaking, there was greater support for education and law enforcement measures than treatment measures.
- There was very little support for the legalisation of illicit drugs. The most favoured single action for someone found in possession of illicit drugs was referral to treatment or education.

Drug-related health and harm

(Chapters 17 and 20)

- In general, higher rates of drug use were related to poorer health status and higher levels of psychological distress. However, it is unclear what other factors (such as age, sex or socioeconomic status) may be influencing these relationships.
- Smokers were more likely to report fair or poor health than non-smokers (18.2% compared with 10.7%).
- Those consuming alcohol at high-risk levels of harm, in both the short- and long-term, were more likely to report fair or poor levels of health than were risky or low-risk drinkers. However, abstainers also reported higher proportions of fair or poor health compared with risky or low-risk drinkers.
- Those who had used marijuana in the previous 12 months reported similar levels of fair or poor health compared with those who had not used marijuana in the previous 12 months (both approximately 12%).
- Recent drinkers and recent illicit drug users were more likely than non-drinkers or non-users respectively to be victims of drug-related incidents. However, the majority of victims had not been drinking alcohol or using drugs other than alcohol when the incident occurred.

Summary table

A summary of drug use patterns is provided in Table K.1, overleaf

Table K.1: Summary of drug use patterns in Australia, proportion of the population aged 14 years or older, 2007

Drug	Drug of most serious concern ^(a)	Ever used	Age of initiation ^(b)	Recent ^(c)			Recent use ^(c)			Monthly or more ^(e)	Most common source of supply	Used with alcohol ^(f)
				offer or opportunity to use	Persons	Change from 2004 ^(d)	Males	14–19 years	20–29 years			
	%	%	years	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Tobacco	17.2	44.6	15.8	49.2	19.4	↓	21.2	9.8	26.8	16.6	Not reported	Not asked
Alcohol	32.3	89.9	17.0	89.3	82.9	≈	86.0	71.0	87.1	8.1	Not reported	Not asked
Marijuana/cannabis	5.7	33.5	18.8	17.1	9.1	↓	11.6	12.9	20.8	47.1	Friend/acq.	87.3
Pharmaceuticals ^(g)	1.4	7.0	Not reported	17.8	3.6	Not reported	3.6	2.8	5.4	49.7	Not reported	30.9
Inhalants	1.4	3.1	19.3	3.2	0.4	≈	0.6	1.1	0.7	44.3	Buy at shop	46.4
Heroin	10.5	1.6	21.9	0.9	0.2	≈	0.3	0.3	2.0	Not reported	Friend/acq.	39.5
Meth/amphetamine ^(g)	16.4	6.3	20.9	4.9	2.3	↓	3.0	1.6	7.3	35.7	Friend/acq.	80.8
Cocaine	8.3	5.9	23.1	3.9	1.6	↑	2.2	1.1	5.1	18.9	Friend/acq.	86.9
Hallucinogens	0.5	6.7	19.6	2.4	0.6	≈	0.9	1.2	2.1	17.5	Friend/acq.	65.1
Ecstasy ^(h)	6.0	8.9	22.6	8.1	3.5	≈	4.4	5.0	11.2	25.0	Friend/acq.	85.4

(a) For alcohol, respondents were asked about 'Excessive drinking of alcohol'. For inhalants, respondents were asked about 'Sniffing glue, petrol, solvents and rush'.

(b) Age at which the person first used the drug.

(c) In the previous 12 months.

(d) Significant difference between 2004 and 2007.

(e) Base equals recent users, percentage that used at least once a month, except for tobacco and alcohol where 'at least daily' use is presented.

(f) Use at the same time on at least one occasion.

(g) For non-medical purposes.

(h) Included 'Designer drugs' prior to 2004.

1 Introduction and overview

Background

The use and misuse of licit and illicit drugs is widely recognised in Australia as a major health problem and one which has wider social and economic costs. For example, tobacco smoking is the single most preventable cause of ill health and death, being a major risk factor for coronary heart disease, stroke, peripheral vascular disease, cancer and a variety of other diseases and conditions (AIHW 2008a). It is estimated to be responsible for 7.8% of the burden on the health of Australians: around 10% of the total burden of disease in males and 6% in females (Begg et al. 2007). The tangible costs of tobacco use in Australia were estimated to be \$12.0 billion in 2004–05 (Collins & Lapsley 2008), or about 1.3% of gross domestic product.

Excessive alcohol consumption is also a major risk factor for morbidity and mortality. It has been estimated that harm from alcohol was the cause of 3.8% of the burden of disease for males and 0.7% for females, ranking it sixth out of the 14 risk factors studied (Begg et al. 2007). In 2004–05, the total tangible cost attributed to alcohol consumption (which includes lost productivity, health-care costs, road accident-related costs and crime-related costs) was an estimated \$10.8 billion (Collins & Lapsley 2008), or around 1.2% of gross domestic product.

Illicit drug use is a major risk factor for ill health and death, being associated with HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C virus, low birth weight, malnutrition, infective endocarditis (leading to damage to the heart valves), poisoning, mental illness, suicide, self-inflicted injury and overdose (AIHW 2008a). In Australia, it is estimated that 2.0% of the burden of disease in 2003 was attributable to the use of illicit drugs, ranking it eighth out of the 14 risk factors studied (Begg et al. 2007).

The National Drug Strategy

The National Drug Strategy (NDS), formerly the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse, was created in 1985 with strong bipartisan political support to confront the impact drugs have on Australian society, including tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs. It is a cooperative venture between Australian, state and territory governments and the non-government sector, and aims to improve health, social and economic outcomes for Australians by preventing the acceptance of harmful drug use and reducing the harmful effects of licit and illicit drugs in our society.

The NDS is the responsibility of the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (MCDS). The MCDS is a national ministerial-level forum responsible for developing policies and programs to reduce the harm caused by drugs to individuals, families and communities in Australia (MCDS 2004). The MCDS is the peak policy- and decision-making body on licit and illicit drugs in Australia. It brings together the Australian Government, state and territory ministers responsible for health and law enforcement, and the Australian Government minister responsible for education. The MCDS is responsible for ensuring that Australia has a nationally coordinated and integrated approach to reducing the substantial harm associated with drug use.

The National Drug Strategy Household Survey

A number of data collections support the NDS. A key component of these is the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS), which has been conducted every 2–3 years since 1985. The ninth survey in this program was conducted in 2007, with previous surveys in 1985, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, 2001 and 2004. The data collected from these surveys have contributed to the development of policies for Australia's response to drug-related issues.

The 2007 NDSHS was built on the design of the 2001 and 2004 surveys, which both had larger sample sizes and covered more extensive aspects of drug use than earlier surveys. In the 2007 survey, more than 23,000 people aged 12 years or older provided information on their drug use knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. The sample was based on households, so homeless and institutionalised people were not included in the survey (consistent with the approach in previous years).

The methodology of the 2007 survey differed only slightly from that of previous surveys – a discussion of the main differences is presented in Chapter 6 of the *2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: first results* report (AIHW 2008b).

The 2007 survey used the drop and collect method and the computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) method to collect information from household respondents. The 2007 sample (23,356) included about 6,000 fewer respondents than the 2004 sample. Variations were made to the questionnaire call-back procedures in order to improve the response rate for the 2007 survey. Owing to the large sample size, the 2007 estimates enable detailed and reliable analyses to be conducted on specific smaller groups of interest.

For the second time, the 2007 survey included 12- and 13-year-olds. They were asked the same questions as older respondents with a few exceptions – those covering drugs and issues not considered likely to affect the analysis of the results or considered inappropriate by the AIHW's Ethics Committee.

Questions relating to the occurrence and circumstances of injury were added in 2007. Also, the description of meth/amphetamine was refined and buprenorphine was added to the questions on methadone. More radically, a fictitious drug, zanthanols, was included to allow some validation of the survey instrument. A full copy of the 2007 questionnaire is available on the AIHW website at <www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10579>.

Main findings

Between 1993 and 2007, for Australians aged 14 years or older, the proportion that had smoked tobacco in the year before the survey fell from 29.1% to 19.4% (Table 1.1). In 2007, 44.6% of Australians aged 14 years or older had smoked at least 100 cigarettes or the equivalent amount of tobacco in their lifetime, a decline from the 2004 level of 47.1% (Table 1.2). The proportion who were daily smokers had also declined to 16.6% in 2007 (Table 4.1), compared with 25.0% in 1993 and 17.4% in 2004 (AIHW 2008b).

The proportion of the population aged 14 years or older recently using alcohol increased from 77.9% in 1993 to 83.6% in 2004, but declined slightly in 2007 to 82.9% (Table 1.1). In 2007, nine out of every ten (89.9%) people had consumed a full serve of alcohol in their lifetime (Table 1.2). One in ten (10.4%) consumed alcohol at levels consider to be harmful in the long term in 2007, and one in five (20.4%) consumed alcohol once a month or more at levels considered to be harmful in the short term (Table 5.8). These levels of harmful consumption have been relatively stable since 2001.

In 2007, the proportion of Australians aged 14 years or older that had used an illicit drug in the previous 12 months was 13.4% (Table 1.1). This was significantly lower than the 2004 estimate (15.3%) and lower than any corresponding estimate over the period these surveys have been conducted. Only three drugs have defied this general trend:

- the prevalence of cocaine use was significantly higher in 2007 (1.6%) than in 2004 (1.0%) and higher than at any previous survey;
- the prevalence of ecstasy use was higher (but not significantly) in 2007 (3.5%) than in 2004 (3.4%) and higher than at any previous survey; and
- the prevalence of use of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes was significantly higher in 2007 (1.4%) than in 2004 (1.0%) and higher than at any previous survey with the exception of 1998.

In 2007, the prevalence of recent use of an illicit drug (that is, in the previous 12 months) was highest for marijuana/cannabis at 9.1% – a decline from estimates of around 13% in most survey years between 1993 and 2001. Ecstasy was the second most common with a recent prevalence of 3.5% – more prevalent than meth/amphetamine (which includes ‘ice’) at 2.3%. Over one-third of the population of Australians aged 14 years or older had ever used any illicit drug (38.1%) in 2007, unchanged from 2004 (Table 1.2).

Table 1.1: Summary of recent^(a) drug use: proportion of the population aged 14 years or older, 1993 to 2007

Drug/behaviour	1993	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007
	(per cent)					
Tobacco	29.1	27.2	24.9	23.2	20.7	19.4#
Alcohol	77.9	78.3	80.7	82.4	83.6	82.9
Illicits						
Marijuana/cannabis	12.7	13.1	17.9	12.9	11.3	9.1#
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(b)	1.7	3.5	5.2	3.1	3.1	2.5#
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(b)	0.9	0.6	3.0	1.1	1.0	1.4#
Steroids ^(b)	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	—	—
Barbiturates ^(b)	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1
Inhalants	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.4
Heroin	0.2	0.4	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2
Methadone ^(c) or buprenorphine ^(d)	n.a.	n.a.	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other opiates/opioids ^(b)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.3	0.2	0.2
Meth/amphetamine ^(b)	2.0	2.1	3.7	3.4	3.2	2.3#
Cocaine	0.5	1.0	1.4	1.3	1.0	1.6#
Hallucinogens	1.3	1.8	3.0	1.1	0.7	0.6
Ecstasy ^(e)	1.2	0.9	2.4	2.9	3.4	3.5
Ketamine	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.3	0.2
GHB	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.1	0.1
Injected drugs	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.5
Any illicit	14.0	17.0	22.0	16.9	15.3	13.4#
None of the above	21.0	17.8	14.2	14.7	13.7	14.1

(a) Used in the 12 months before the survey. For tobacco and alcohol, 'recent use' means daily, weekly and less-than-weekly smokers and drinkers respectively.

(b) For non-medical purposes.

(c) Non-maintenance.

(d) This category did not include buprenorphine before 2007.

(e) This category included substances known as 'Designer drugs' before 2004.

Difference between 2004 result and 2007 result is statistically significant (2-tailed $\alpha = 0.05$).

Table 1.2: Summary of drugs ever used/tried: proportion of the population aged 14 years or older, 1993 to 2007

Drug/behaviour	Ever tried ^(a)			Ever used ^(b)		
	1993	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007
	(per cent)					
Tobacco	50.9	47.4	50.8	49.4	47.1	44.6#
Alcohol	88.0	87.8	89.6	90.4	90.7	89.9#
Illicits						
Marijuana/cannabis	34.7	31.1	39.1	33.1	33.6	33.5
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(c)	n.a.	12.3	11.5	6.0	5.5	4.4#
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(c)	n.a.	3.2	6.2	3.2	2.8	3.3#
Steroids ^(c)	0.3	0.6	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.3
Barbiturates ^(c)	1.4	1.2	1.6	0.9	1.1	0.9
Inhalants	3.7	2.4	3.9	2.6	2.5	3.1#
Heroin	1.7	1.4	2.2	1.6	1.4	1.6
Methadone ^(d) or buprenorphine ^(e)	n.a.	n.a.	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3
Other opiates/opioids ^(c)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1.2	1.4	0.9#
Meth/amphetamine ^(c)	5.4	5.7	8.8	8.9	9.1	6.3#
Cocaine	2.5	3.4	4.3	4.4	4.7	5.9#
Hallucinogens	7.3	7.0	9.9	7.6	7.5	6.7#
Ecstasy ^(f)	3.1	2.4	4.8	6.1	7.5	8.9#
Ketamine	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1.0	1.1
GHB	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.5	0.5
Injected drugs	1.9	1.3	2.1	1.8	1.9	1.9
<i>Any illicit</i>	38.9	39.3	46.0	37.7	38.1	38.1
None of the above	8.0	8.1	6.7	7.5	7.9	8.2

(a) Tried at least once in lifetime.

(b) Used at least once in lifetime.

(c) For non-medical purposes.

(d) Non-maintenance.

(e) This category did not include buprenorphine before 2007.

(f) This category included substances known as 'Designer drugs' before 2004.

Notes

1. For tobacco, 1998, 2001, 2004 and 2007 figures represent proportions of the population that have smoked more than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime.

2. For alcohol, figures represent proportions of the population who have consumed a full serve of alcohol.

Difference between 2004 result and 2007 result is statistically significant (2-tailed $\alpha = 0.05$).

About this report

Contents

This report presents estimates derived from survey responses to selected questions, weighted to the Australian population aged 12 years or older or 14 years or older as specified. With a handful of exceptions, the analysis presented is of Australians aged 14 years or older, to aid comparability with previous reports.

Not all questions were asked of all respondents – 12- and 13-year-olds and/or CATI respondents were excluded from certain questions.

The report includes a minimum of comparison with earlier surveys, favouring detailed reporting over trend analysis, which was the focus of the earlier report *First results*.

Generally the text of the report is based on tables and figures included in the report. Occasionally, for a particular drug and estimate, no tabulation is provided, usually where most or all of the estimates would be of limited use.

Structure

After this introductory chapter, there is a discussion of the survey results regarding perceptions and acceptability of drug use (Chapter 2) and about access to drugs (Chapter 3). Each of the following thirteen chapters covers a different drug or type of drug or drug use. Chapters 17 to 20 cover drug-related abuse, policy, legislation and health. Finally, Chapter 21 discusses drugs and young people, including 12- and 13-year-olds.

Additional information on the measures used in the 2007 survey can be found in the AIHW publication *2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: first results* (AIHW 2008b).

Alcohol risk

Central to much of the analysis of alcohol consumption in this report is the concept of risk. The model used is that outlined in the current Australian Alcohol Guidelines (NHMRC 2001), for short-term and long-term risk of alcohol-related harm. In summary:

- Short-term risk of harm (particularly injury or death) is associated with given levels of drinking on any drinking occasion. For adult males the consumption of up to 6 standard drinks on a single occasion is considered 'Low risk', 7 to 10 per occasion 'Risky', and 11 or more per occasion 'High risk'. For adult females the consumption of up to 4 standard drinks on a single occasion is considered 'Low risk', 5 to 6 per occasion 'Risky', and 7 or more per day 'High risk'. Short-term risk can be reported on a weekly, monthly or yearly basis. In this report, unless otherwise noted, we have used a monthly measure of short-term risk – that is, risk of harm occurring once or more a month.
- Long-term risk of harm is associated with regular daily patterns of drinking. For adult males the consumption of up to 28 standard drinks per week is considered 'Low risk', 29 to 42 per week 'Risky', and 43 or more per week 'High risk'. For adult females the consumption of up to 14 standard drinks per week is considered 'Low risk', 15 to 28 per week 'Risky', and 29 or more per week 'High risk'.

Readers should note that these alcohol risk guidelines are currently being reviewed by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

Licit drugs—illicit use

In the 2007 survey, as in the past, respondents were asked about their use of certain drugs – pain-killers/analgesics, tranquillisers/sleeping pills, steroids and barbiturates (termed 'pharmaceuticals'), meth/amphetamine, methadone and buprenorphine and other opioids such as morphine or pethidine – which have legitimate medical uses. The focus of the survey and this report is on the use of these drugs for non-medical purposes.

Nevertheless, for some questions in the survey, the distinction between licit and illicit use was not made. For instance, where users of a particular drug are asked about other substances used with or as a substitute for that drug, pharmaceuticals and other opioids are referred to without reference to their medical status.

Note that where each of these licit/illicit drugs is central to the analysis, it is their illicit use that is analysed.

Reliability of estimates

Sampling error

As the estimates in this report are based on a sample, they are subject to sampling variability (that is, the extent to which the sample-derived results vary from the results that would have been derived had a census/complete survey been undertaken). Estimates with relative standard errors over 50% should be interpreted with care. Readers should refer to Table A4.1 in Appendix 2, Standard errors for more information. Results are marked with an asterisk (*) if the relative standard error is greater than 50% (based on a normal model two-tailed test at 95% significance).

In particular, the 2007 survey included 372 respondents identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. When results are drawn from this group, care should be exercised especially where the group is disaggregated.

Non-sampling error

In addition to sampling errors, the estimates are subject to non-sampling errors. These can arise from errors in transcription of responses, errors in reporting of responses (for example, failure of respondents' memories), and the unwillingness of respondents to reveal their 'true' responses.

Further, although most of the drug terms would have been relatively familiar to most respondents, it is likely that in some cases answers were given to the 'wrong drug'. This would certainly be the case where a respondent was unable to identify the drug used, for example, if the respondent were deceived by a drug supplier. Ecstasy and related drugs are particularly susceptible to this misapprehension.

The 2007 questionnaire included a 'fake' drug with a view to validating the survey instrument. Initial analysis suggests that very few (half a dozen) respondents nominated it as a drug they had used. Among these few respondents, various subsequent responses were made, suggesting that they may have completed initial questions in error.

In summary, caution should be used when interpreting the reported findings as they are based on self-reported data and not empirical testing of the substance(s) used.

Presentation of estimates

Throughout the report, proportions are shown as percentages rounded to 1 decimal place and population estimates are shown to the nearest 100, in tables and text. Totals and further calculated results, in the text and the tables, are derived from the underlying, unrounded, data and not from the less precise tabular data. Population reference values are provided in Appendix 1. No results are age-standardised in this report.

Population estimates

All population estimates are calculated by multiplying prevalences and the relevant subpopulation (such as age groups) counts. The sum of the resulting population estimates does not usually equal the overall population estimate. The more precise estimate is that based on the greater disaggregation of the underlying population and prevalences as it

allows for variations in the distribution of prevalences over various subpopulation groups – not unlike standardisation.

2 Perceptions and acceptability of drug use

This chapter presents findings on the opinions and perceptions of Australians aged 14 years or older on a variety of drug-related issues, including personal approval of drug use, the impact of drugs on the general community and on mortality, and their perceptions of health risk from alcohol and tobacco consumption.

Summary

Heroin remained the drug most associated with a 'drug problem' in Australia in 2007. However, the drug considered of most serious concern to the community was alcohol. Meth/amphetamine replaced heroin in the top three drugs of most serious concern to the community. Two-fifths of people aged 14 years or older accurately identified tobacco as the drug that caused the most deaths in Australia. Low-risk drinkers were more likely than risky or high-risk drinkers to accurately identify harmful levels of alcohol consumption in the long term. However, this pattern was reversed for identification of harmful levels of alcohol consumption in the short term.

Key findings

Drugs perceived to be associated with a 'drug problem'

In 2007, heroin was the drug most associated with a 'drug problem', nominated first by three in ten Australians aged 14 years or older (males 29.7%, females 30.9%) (Table 2.1). Young people, however, were more likely to associate marijuana/cannabis with a drug problem – two in five of those aged 14–19 years did so (42.2% of males and 42.5% of females).

Form of drug use perceived to be of most serious concern for the general community

One in three Australians (males 30.5%, females 34.0%) aged 14 years or older considered excessive alcohol consumption to be the most serious concern (Table 2.2). Tobacco smoking (one in five males (18.2%), one in six females (16.3%)) and use of meth/amphetamine (males 17.2%, females 15.7%) were the next two most commonly nominated concerns for the general community.

Drugs perceived to be associated with mortality

Of Australians aged 14 years or older, four in ten (40.6%) thought tobacco was the drug which caused the most deaths in Australia, three in ten (29.4%) thought it was alcohol and one in ten (9.8%) thought it was an opiate such as heroin (Table 2.3). The correct answer is tobacco.

Approval of drug use

Alcohol was approved for regular use by more males (51.7%) and females (38.9%) than was any other drug (Table 2.4).

For each of the selected drugs, personal use by an adult was approved of by a far greater proportion of recent users (of each drug) than by those who had not used that drug in the 12 months before the survey (Figure 2.1).

Perceptions of the health effects of alcohol

In this section the health effects of alcohol consumption are described in terms of the risk of harm in the short term (that is, consumption on a single drinking occasion) and long term (that is, consumption over many years). Alcohol risk is described more fully in Chapter 1.

Alcohol-related health risk for males

Of males aged 14 years or older who drank at low-risk levels for harm in the short term, 30.2% thought that an adult male could drink seven or more standard drinks in a 6-hour period without putting his health at risk (Table 2.5). By contrast, a lower proportion (23.0%) of males who drank at risky or high-risk levels for short-term harm themselves thought that an adult male could drink seven or more standard drinks without putting his health at risk.

Of males aged 14 years or older who drank at low-risk levels for harm in the long term, 7.9% thought that an adult male could drink five or more standard drinks every day for many years without putting his health at risk. Of males who drank at risky or high-risk levels for long-term harm themselves, 30.5% thought that an adult male could drink five or more standard drinks every day for many years without putting his health at risk.

Alcohol-related health risk for females

Of females aged 14 years or older who drank at low-risk levels for harm in the short term, 76.2% thought that an adult female could drink five or more standard drinks in a 6-hour period without putting her health at risk (Table 2.6). By contrast, a lower proportion (59.2%) of females who drank at risky or high-risk levels for short-term harm themselves thought that an adult female could drink five or more standard drinks without putting her health at risk.

Of females aged 14 years or older who drank at low-risk levels for harm in the long term, one in ten (9.7%) thought that an adult female could drink three or more standard drinks every day for many years without putting her health at risk. Of females who drank at risky or high-risk levels for long-term harm themselves, 21.5% thought that an adult female could drink three or more standard drinks every day for many years without putting her health at risk.

Perceptions and attitudes towards drugs by social characteristics

In 2007, Australians aged 14 years or older varied in their perceptions and attitudes to drug-related issues according to sex and socioeconomic status (Table 2.7) and according to their geography, main language spoken at home and their Indigenous status (Table 2.8).

For example, the highest rates of approval of regular tobacco use were reported by those of the lowest socioeconomic status. Conversely, the highest rates of approval of regular alcohol use were reported by those of the highest socioeconomic status.

Table 2.1: Drugs most likely to be associated with a 'drug problem', persons aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Age group						Aged 14+
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
Males							
Tobacco	4.1	2.7	2.1	2.9	3.4	4.4	3.3
Alcohol	10.7	9.1	8.2	10.5	11.9	14.1	10.8
Tea/coffee/caffeine	* 0.4	* 0.4	* 0.3	* 0.3	* 0.1	0.5	0.3
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	42.2	24.8	22.2	22.2	24.4	25.7	25.8
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	1.3	0.6	0.6	1.0	1.0	1.2	0.9
Inhalants	* 0.1	* 0.5	* 0.4	* 0.1	* 0.4	0.7	0.4
Heroin	13.2	27.6	30.8	34.3	33.6	32.0	29.7
Meth/amphetamine	14.0	19.7	20.6	17.9	13.7	10.2	16.0
Cocaine	6.7	8.1	8.8	6.6	6.6	6.2	7.2
Hallucinogens	* 0.6	* 0.1	0.6	* 0.2	0.5	0.6	0.4
Ecstasy/designer drugs	5.8	5.2	3.8	2.8	3.1	2.9	3.8
Other	—	* 0.2	* 0.4	* 0.1	0.5	0.3	0.3
None/can't think of any	* 0.8	0.8	1.2	1.0	0.7	1.3	1.0
Females							
Tobacco	3.1	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.9	3.2	2.0
Alcohol	8.3	7.3	7.1	9.0	10.9	15.8	10.2
Tea/coffee/caffeine	* 0.3	* 0.1	* 0.1	* 0.1	* 0.2	0.4	0.2
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	42.5	24.5	21.8	20.8	24.6	22.3	24.6
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	1.2	1.3	1.0	0.8	1.0	2.0	1.3
Inhalants	* 0.6	* 0.3	* 0.2	* 0.1	* 0.1	0.4	0.3
Heroin	15.0	28.4	33.9	34.5	32.0	33.7	30.9
Meth/amphetamine	11.2	21.0	22.4	20.2	15.9	9.8	16.8
Cocaine	7.3	8.5	7.0	6.8	6.8	6.4	7.1
Hallucinogens	* 0.2	* 0.4	0.4	0.5	* 0.3	0.6	0.4
Ecstasy/designer drugs	9.0	5.7	4.1	4.3	4.6	3.2	4.8
Other	* 0.2	* 0.2	0.3	* 0.2	* 0.3	0.3	0.2
None/can't think of any	1.1	1.0	0.6	1.3	1.2	1.9	1.2
Persons							
Tobacco	3.7	2.0	1.6	2.1	2.7	3.8	2.6
Alcohol	9.6	8.2	7.6	9.7	11.4	15.0	10.5
Tea/coffee/caffeine	* 0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	* 0.2	0.4	0.3
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	42.4	24.6	22.0	21.5	24.5	23.9	25.2
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	1.2	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.6	1.1
Inhalants	* 0.3	0.4	0.3	* 0.1	0.2	0.5	0.3
Heroin	14.1	28.0	32.4	34.4	32.8	32.9	30.3
Meth/amphetamine	12.6	20.4	21.5	19.0	14.8	10.0	16.4
Cocaine	7.0	8.3	7.9	6.7	6.7	6.3	7.1
Hallucinogens	* 0.4	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.4
Ecstasy/designer drugs	7.4	5.5	3.9	3.6	3.9	3.1	4.3
Other	* 0.1	* 0.2	0.4	* 0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3
None/can't think of any	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.0	1.6	1.1

(a) Includes pain-killers/analgesics, tranquilisers/sleeping pills, steroids and barbiturates, used for non-medical purposes.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 2.2: Form of drug use thought to be of most serious concern for the general community, persons aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Form of drug use	Age group						Aged 14+
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
Males							
Tobacco smoking	24.4	18.0	16.2	16.6	17.9	18.7	18.2
Excessive drinking of alcohol	25.4	25.7	32.1	33.7	32.5	31.4	30.5
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis use	9.6	5.9	4.5	5.4	4.7	5.5	5.7
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	1.6	1.7	1.0	0.7	1.3	0.8	1.1
Sniffing	2.2	1.9	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.4
Heroin use	6.0	12.2	9.0	7.7	12.1	15.3	10.8
Meth/amphetamine use	14.6	22.4	22.9	20.1	14.6	8.9	17.2
Cocaine use	6.5	7.3	6.2	7.9	8.6	11.3	8.2
Hallucinogen use	* 0.5	* 0.4	* 0.2	* 0.4	* 0.1	0.9	0.4
Ecstasy use	8.1	4.2	6.6	5.8	6.7	5.8	6.0
None of these	* 1.0	* 0.4	* 0.2	0.5	* 0.2	0.4	0.4
Females							
Tobacco smoking	23.3	18.1	14.6	14.6	15.2	15.5	16.3
Excessive drinking of alcohol	26.7	27.9	32.3	36.2	37.4	38.7	34.0
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis use	8.8	6.9	4.9	5.1	6.1	4.6	5.8
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	1.5	2.5	0.9	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.6
Sniffing	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.3	1.5	1.5
Heroin use	6.6	11.0	9.4	8.2	10.1	12.8	10.1
Meth/amphetamine use	17.7	19.8	21.6	17.1	13.2	8.2	15.7
Cocaine use	7.4	6.1	7.2	8.3	8.8	10.8	8.3
Hallucinogen use	* 0.8	0.5	0.6	* 0.3	0.4	0.6	0.5
Ecstasy use	5.7	5.5	7.0	6.9	5.9	5.1	6.0
None of these	* <0.1	* 0.2	* 0.3	* 0.2	* 0.1	0.5	0.3
Persons							
Tobacco smoking	23.8	18.0	15.4	15.6	16.5	17.0	17.2
Excessive drinking of alcohol	26.0	26.8	32.2	34.9	34.9	35.3	32.3
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis use	9.2	6.4	4.7	5.2	5.4	5.0	5.7
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	1.5	2.1	0.9	1.0	1.5	1.2	1.4
Sniffing	1.9	1.7	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.4
Heroin use	6.3	11.6	9.2	8.0	11.1	14.0	10.5
Meth/amphetamine use	16.1	21.1	22.2	18.6	13.9	8.6	16.4
Cocaine use	6.9	6.7	6.7	8.1	8.7	11.1	8.3
Hallucinogen use	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.5
Ecstasy use	6.9	4.8	6.8	6.4	6.3	5.4	6.0
None of these	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.4	* 0.2	0.5	0.3

(a) Includes pain-killers/analgesics, tranquilisers/sleeping pills, steroids and barbiturates, used for non-medical purposes.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 2.3: Drugs thought to either directly or indirectly cause the most deaths in Australia, persons aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Age group						Aged 14+
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
Males							
Tobacco	38.3	44.4	46.4	44.9	47.0	40.5	43.8
Alcohol	31.7	31.1	29.2	31.3	27.9	27.4	29.6
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	2.4	0.9	0.6	0.9	1.2	2.1	1.3
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	* 0.6	0.6	1.2	0.9	0.9	0.5	0.8
Opiates/opioids (such as heroin)	5.9	6.6	6.7	9.0	9.8	13.7	9.0
Meth/amphetamine	5.6	7.3	6.0	4.2	3.5	2.7	4.8
Cocaine	5.2	4.6	5.3	5.4	5.3	8.1	5.8
Hallucinogens	2.3	* 0.3	* 0.3	* 0.3	* 0.4	0.7	0.6
Ecstasy/designer drugs	8.1	4.1	4.2	3.2	4.1	4.3	4.4
Females							
Tobacco	37.2	33.8	38.0	41.2	38.5	36.0	37.4
Alcohol	26.2	31.2	27.7	28.0	31.5	29.7	29.3
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	2.4	0.9	0.9	0.8	1.4	1.6	1.3
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	1.6	1.9	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.4
Opiates/opioids (such as heroin)	4.1	9.4	12.2	10.8	10.6	13.1	10.7
Meth/amphetamine	9.0	7.8	6.6	5.8	4.4	3.2	5.7
Cocaine	6.2	7.9	7.5	7.4	7.2	8.9	7.7
Hallucinogens	1.6	0.9	0.6	* 0.4	* 0.3	0.4	0.6
Ecstasy/designer drugs	11.7	6.3	5.2	4.4	4.9	5.8	6.0
Persons							
Tobacco	37.7	39.2	42.2	43.0	42.7	38.1	40.6
Alcohol	29.0	31.2	28.5	29.6	29.7	28.7	29.4
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	2.4	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.3	1.8	1.3
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.1
Opiates/opioids (such as heroin)	5.0	8.0	9.5	9.9	10.2	13.4	9.8
Meth/amphetamine	7.2	7.5	6.3	5.0	3.9	3.0	5.3
Cocaine	5.7	6.2	6.4	6.4	6.3	8.5	6.8
Hallucinogens	2.0	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.6
Ecstasy/designer drugs	9.9	5.2	4.7	3.8	4.5	5.1	5.2

(a) Includes pain-killers/analgesics, tranquillisers/sleeping pills, steroids and barbiturates, used for non-medical purposes.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 2.4: Personal approval of the regular use by an adult of selected drugs, persons aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

	Age group						
Drug	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	Aged 14+
Males							
Tobacco	17.1	23.1	17.9	14.7	15.3	8.3	15.8
Alcohol	55.0	60.6	56.6	51.0	50.6	39.5	51.7
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	9.5	14.6	11.9	8.7	5.9	2.5	8.7
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	18.6	19.6	14.0	12.5	15.5	13.7	15.2
Inhalants	* 0.6	1.9	0.5	0.5	0.7	1.7	1.0
Heroin	* 1.0	2.0	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.9	1.3
Methadone or buprenorphine ^(b)	* 0.3	1.3	0.7	1.2	1.0	1.4	1.1
Meth/amphetamine	1.7	3.0	1.4	0.7	0.7	1.5	1.5
Cocaine	1.5	3.8	1.8	0.8	1.1	1.8	1.8
Hallucinogens	2.8	4.4	2.3	1.1	1.3	1.2	2.1
Ecstasy	2.2	6.0	3.3	1.3	1.3	1.2	2.5
Ketamine	* 0.5	1.5	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.4	1.1
GHB	* 0.4	1.2	* 0.4	* 0.5	0.8	1.2	0.8
Females							
Tobacco	16.9	19.8	16.1	13.9	8.0	5.9	12.9
Alcohol	47.9	50.7	46.2	39.8	32.1	24.4	38.9
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	6.9	7.6	6.4	4.4	2.4	1.5	4.6
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	18.3	11.0	10.7	12.6	10.4	11.0	11.7
Inhalants	* 0.7	0.5	0.6	0.6	* 0.3	1.1	0.7
Heroin	1.1	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.5	1.0	0.7
Methadone or buprenorphine ^(b)	* 0.6	1.2	1.0	0.8	0.8	1.1	1.0
Meth/amphetamine	1.0	1.3	1.1	0.6	* 0.4	0.9	0.9
Cocaine	1.3	1.5	1.0	0.8	0.5	1.2	1.0
Hallucinogens	2.3	2.1	1.2	0.8	* 0.4	1.0	1.2
Ecstasy	2.9	2.5	1.8	1.1	* 0.4	1.0	1.5
Ketamine	* 0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.6	1.3	0.8
GHB	* 0.9	* 0.5	0.9	0.5	* 0.3	1.0	0.7

(continued)

Table 2.4 (continued): Personal approval of the regular use by an adult of selected drugs, persons aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

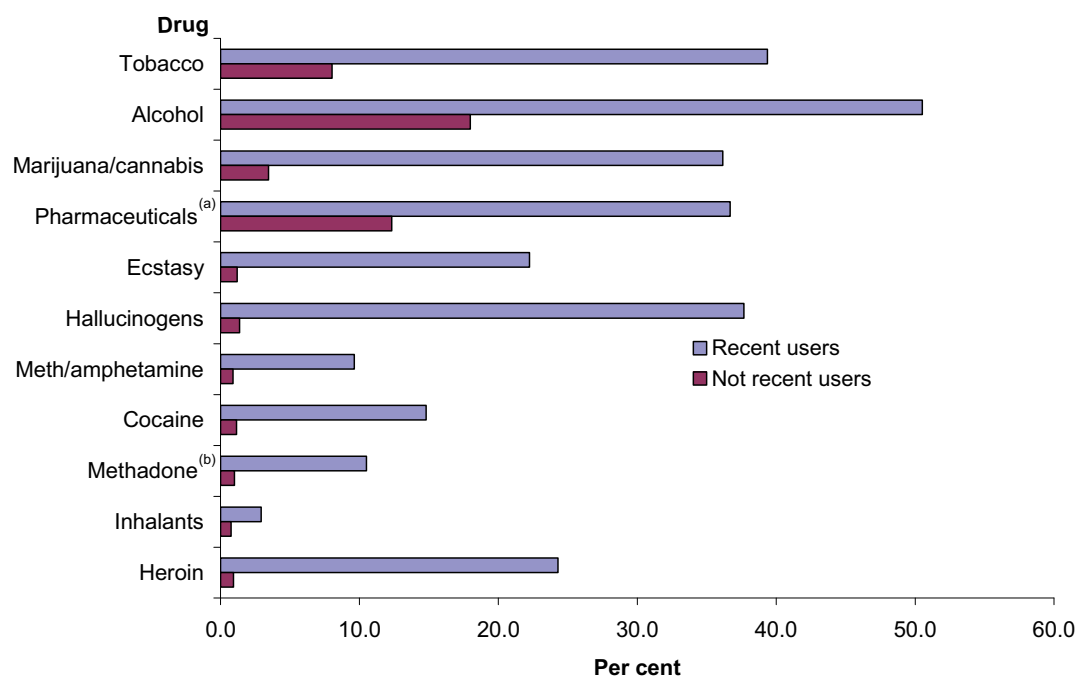
Drug	Age group						Aged 14+
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
Persons							
Tobacco	17.0	21.4	17.0	14.3	11.6	7.1	14.3
Alcohol	51.6	55.7	51.4	45.4	41.3	31.6	45.2
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	8.2	11.1	9.2	6.5	4.1	2.0	6.6
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	18.4	15.1	12.3	12.5	12.9	12.3	13.4
Inhalants	0.7	1.2	0.6	0.6	0.5	1.4	0.8
Heroin	1.1	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.4	1.0
Methadone or buprenorphine ^(b)	* 0.5	1.3	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.2	1.0
Meth/amphetamine	1.4	2.1	1.2	0.6	0.5	1.2	1.2
Cocaine	1.4	2.7	1.4	0.8	0.8	1.4	1.4
Hallucinogens	2.6	3.3	1.8	1.0	0.9	1.1	1.7
Ecstasy	2.6	4.2	2.6	1.2	0.8	1.1	2.0
Ketamine	* 0.6	1.1	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.3	1.0
GHB	* 0.6	0.9	0.6	0.5	0.5	1.1	0.7

(a) Includes pain-killers/analgesics, tranquillisers/sleeping pills, steroids and barbiturates, used for non-medical purposes.

(b) Used for non-maintenance purposes.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: The question structure upon which these analyses are based was changed between 2004 and 2007 and so results are not directly comparable.



(a) Includes pain-killers/analgesics, tranquillisers/sleeping pills, steroids and barbiturates, used for non-medical purposes.

(b) Used for non-maintenance purposes.

Figure 2.1: Approval of the regular use of drugs by an adult, persons aged 14 years or older, by user status, 2007

Table 2.5: Perception of the number of standard drinks an adult male could drink before he puts his health at risk, males aged 14 years or older, by alcohol risk status, 2007 (per cent)

Risk/standard drinks	Risk status			All
	Abstainer	Low risk	Risky or high risk	
Short-term risk				
11 or more	24.5	11.0	7.9	11.7
7–10	30.6	19.2	15.1	19.5
5–6	13.7	19.8	14.2	18.0
3–4	10.8	9.8	9.1	9.8
1–2	16.5	31.1	42.6	32.1
None	3.9	9.2	11.1	9.0
Long-term risk				
11 or more	* 0.1	0.5	1.7	0.6
7–10	2.8	1.6	9.8	2.7
5–6	4.0	5.8	19.0	7.2
3–4	26.8	33.4	43.6	34.0
1–2	47.5	50.6	23.0	47.1
None	18.9	8.1	2.8	8.4

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Risk status of respondents corresponds with the thresholds (short-term or long-term risk) being assessed.

Table 2.6: Perception of the number of standard drinks an adult female could drink before she puts her health at risk, females aged 14 years or older, by alcohol risk status, 2007 (per cent)

	Risk status			
Risk/standard drinks	Abstainer	Low risk	Risky or high risk	All
Short-term risk				
11 or more	38.1	28.1	16.7	26.9
7–10	32.9	28.1	20.8	27.2
5–6	12.5	20.0	21.6	19.4
3–4	7.8	9.1	13.2	9.8
1–2	7.8	12.4	24.9	14.4
None	0.9	2.3	2.7	2.2
Long-term risk				
11 or more	—	0.1	0.4	0.2
7–10	0.9	0.4	0.6	0.5
5–6	2.5	0.7	2.0	1.1
3–4	11.0	8.4	18.5	10.0
1–2	55.1	74.0	69.1	71.0
None	30.6	16.3	9.4	17.2

Note: Risk status of respondents corresponds with the thresholds (short-term or long-term risk) being assessed.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 2.7: Perceptions and attitudes towards drugs, by sex and by socioeconomic status, persons aged 14 years or older, 2007 (per cent)

Perceptions and attitudes	Sex		Socioeconomic status (quintile ^(a))				
	Males	Females	1	2	3	4	5
Drugs associated with a 'drug problem'							
Tobacco	3.3	2.0	3.0	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.0
Alcohol	10.8	10.2	12.1	10.1	10.2	10.0	10.4
Marijuana	25.8	24.6	29.2	28.7	26.4	24.2	19.9
Heroin	29.7	30.9	26.1	28.1	31.4	30.4	34.1
Meth/amphetamine	16.0	16.8	15.9	15.8	15.3	18.2	16.4
Cocaine	7.2	7.1	6.0	6.0	6.5	7.3	9.0
Ecstasy/designer drugs	3.7	4.7	3.3	4.6	3.8	4.2	4.8
Other	2.4	2.5	3.2	2.7	2.4	1.8	2.5
None/can't think of any	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.1	0.9
Most serious concern for the community							
Tobacco smoking	18.2	16.3	17.7	16.1	17.6	17.8	16.9
Excess drinking of alcohol	30.5	34.0	28.3	29.8	31.2	33.2	37.7
Marijuana/cannabis use	5.7	5.8	7.9	7.0	5.9	4.4	3.9
Heroin use	10.8	10.1	11.9	10.3	11.0	9.9	9.5
Meth/amphetamine use	17.2	15.7	15.3	17.7	15.9	17.1	16.2
Cocaine use	8.2	8.3	8.7	8.3	8.7	7.8	8.0
Ecstasy use	6.0	6.0	6.2	6.9	6.1	5.8	5.3
Other	3.0	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.2	3.8	2.2
None of these	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.2
Approval of regular use by an adult							
Tobacco	15.8	12.9	18.6	15.9	13.8	13.4	10.8
Alcohol	51.7	38.9	41.8	40.0	44.3	46.6	51.8
Marijuana	8.7	4.6	8.2	4.8	6.9	6.3	7.0
Heroin	1.3	0.7	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.0	0.8
Pharmaceuticals	13.9	10.7	14.8	12.2	13.4	10.8	10.9
Other	4.4	2.5	3.7	2.8	3.3	3.4	4.0

(a) Socioeconomic quintiles represent levels of relative socioeconomic status. Quintile 1 represents those of lowest socioeconomic status and quintile 5 represents those of highest socioeconomic status.

Table 2.8: Perceptions and attitudes towards drugs, by geography, language and Indigenous status, persons aged 14 years or older, 2007 (per cent)

Perceptions and attitudes	Geography		Main language spoken at home		Indigenous status	
	Major city	Other	English	Other	Indigenous	Other Australians
Drugs associated with a 'drug problem'						
Tobacco	2.5	2.8	2.4	4.5	2.4	2.6
Alcohol	9.6	12.3	10.6	8.1	12.0	10.4
Marijuana	22.5	30.9	25.3	22.2	36.2	25.0
Heroin	32.7	25.4	30.3	32.6	17.5	30.7
Meth/amphetamine	16.4	16.5	17.3	6.7	18.8	16.5
Cocaine	8.0	5.3	6.7	11.7	6.6	7.1
Ecstasy/designer drugs	4.6	3.5	4.2	4.7	4.0	4.2
Other	2.5	2.4	2.2	5.1	* 1.3	2.4
None/can't think of any	1.2	0.9	0.9	4.5	* 1.2	1.1
Most serious concern for the community						
Tobacco smoking	17.4	17.0	16.5	24.1	11.2	17.2
Excess drinking of alcohol	32.0	32.7	33.5	23.3	29.2	32.7
Marijuana/cannabis use	5.0	7.2	5.6	6.6	12.6	5.6
Heroin use	11.1	9.2	9.8	16.5	6.0	10.4
Meth/amphetamine use	16.6	16.1	17.4	6.8	17.6	16.6
Cocaine use	8.5	7.9	7.8	12.9	12.3	8.1
Ecstasy use	6.0	6.1	6.0	5.7	8.0	6.0
Other	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1
None of these	0.3	0.4	0.3	1.0	—	0.3
Approval of regular use by an adult						
Tobacco	13.8	15.3	13.9	16.3	22.2	13.9
Alcohol	45.7	44.3	46.0	33.0	44.6	45.1
Marijuana	6.7	6.4	6.7	4.0	12.4	6.5
Heroin	1.2	0.7	0.8	2.7	* 1.1	0.9
Pharmaceuticals	12.4	12.0	11.5	17.9	10.9	11.9
Other	4.0	2.3	2.9	7.0	3.2	3.2

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

3 Access to drugs

Respondents to the 2007 survey were asked about their access to tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs. Their responses are analysed in this chapter in terms of the offer of, or opportunity to use drugs; acceptance of such an offer or opportunity; and perception of ease of obtaining selected illicit drugs. Perception of the ease of obtaining selected drugs was substantially higher among recent or ex-users than among those who had never used.

Summary

Alcohol and tobacco were the drugs most available to Australians aged 14 years or older. The acceptance of the offer or opportunity to use drugs was greatest for alcohol and lowest for inhalants. One of the greatest differences, between males and females, in the acceptance of the offer or opportunity to use a drug arose for heroin.

Key findings

Offer of or opportunity to use drugs

Alcohol and tobacco were the drugs most available to Australians aged 14 years or older (Table 3.1). Nine in ten (89.3%) had alcohol available for use in the previous 12 months and half (49.2%) had tobacco available for use. For each of these drugs, those aged 20–29 years indicated the greatest availability (with the exception of alcohol, for which 30–39-year-olds greater availability (93.5% versus 92.9%)). Marijuana/cannabis was available to 17.1% of Australians aged 14 years or older. It was available to 26.4% of those aged 14–19 years.

Acceptance of the offer or opportunity to use drugs

The acceptance of the offer or opportunity to use drugs was greatest for alcohol (93.2%) and lowest for inhalants (14.4%) (Table 3.2). One of the greatest differences in acceptance was between males and females, for heroin (32.4% for males, 16.3% for females).

Ease of obtaining illicit drugs

Of Australians aged 14 years or older, 36.0% thought marijuana/cannabis would be easy to obtain (Table 3.3). This was the highest 'easy' rating, although around one-third said, for each selected drug, that they did not know how easy obtaining it would be.

Perception of the ease of obtaining each of the selected drugs was substantially higher among recent or ex-users than among those who had never used (Table 3.4). Not knowing was greatest among those who had never used. Marijuana/cannabis was rated the easiest to obtain of the selected illicit drugs and hallucinogens the least 'easy', rated so by each user-status group.

Table 3.1: Offer of or opportunity to use selected drugs in the previous 12 months, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Age group				Sex		
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	Persons
Tobacco	49.6	69.2	59.0	39.6	53.7	44.7	49.2
Alcohol	82.1	92.9	93.5	88.1	91.5	87.0	89.3
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	26.4	38.5	22.4	7.2	20.4	13.9	17.1
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	15.3	21.3	18.8	16.9	18.3	17.3	17.8
Inhalants	6.1	4.4	2.9	2.4	4.1	2.3	3.2
Heroin	1.3	1.8	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.8	0.9
Meth/amphetamine	4.5	13.6	7.3	1.5	6.1	3.7	4.9
Cocaine	4.0	10.7	5.5	1.2	4.7	3.1	3.9
Hallucinogens	3.7	6.8	2.1	0.8	2.9	1.8	2.4
Ecstasy	13.6	23.2	9.7	1.8	9.6	6.6	8.1
Ketamine	0.9	2.3	0.9	0.6	1.2	0.8	1.0
GHB	1.0	1.6	0.7	0.5	0.9	0.7	0.8
Kava	1.3	3.4	1.9	1.4	2.3	1.3	1.8

(a) Includes pain-killers/analgesics, tranquilisers/sleeping pills, steroids and barbiturates, used for non-medical purposes.

Table 3.2: Recent drug use, persons aged 14 years or older who had the opportunity to use, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Age group				Sex		
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	Persons
Tobacco	20.8	39.3	43.4	47.2	41.3	42.2	41.7
Alcohol	86.9	94.1	93.8	93.8	94.0	92.4	93.2
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	49.1	56.0	57.2	55.2	59.0	49.3	55.0
Pharmaceuticals ^(a)	21.5	27.2	20.1	22.0	22.0	23.4	22.7
Inhalants	21.6	16.3	17.0	9.1	16.6	10.5	14.4
Heroin	28.0	27.8	42.7	13.7	32.4	16.3	25.3
Meth/amphetamine	38.9	54.8	56.0	32.4	52.2	46.0	49.8
Cocaine	25.4	49.2	53.8	29.0	50.1	35.6	44.3
Hallucinogens	26.3	32.5	21.9	10.4	30.2	18.7	25.7
Ecstasy	34.4	49.5	52.3	36.1	49.0	41.4	45.8
Ketamine	35.5	22.8	14.0	8.9	20.7	12.9	17.6
GHB	* 12.8	36.5	* 3.9	* 0.3	24.7	* 4.4	15.4

(a) Includes pain-killers/analgesics, tranquilisers/sleeping pills, steroids and barbiturates used for non-medical purposes.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base for each row is those who reported having been offered or had the opportunity to use in the previous 12 months.

Table 3.3: Perception of the ease of obtaining selected illicit drugs, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Age group				Sex		
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	Persons
Marijuana/cannabis							
Easy ^(a)	42.2	59.7	48.3	23.6	39.6	32.4	36.0
Don't know	12.4	14.2	22.1	36.8	26.5	29.3	27.9
Heroin							
Easy	7.0	10.7	10.9	5.9	9.3	6.2	7.7
Don't know	21.5	29.1	34.4	43.5	36.6	37.8	37.2
Meth/amphetamine							
Easy	12.3	26.8	20.1	8.4	16.4	11.7	14.0
Don't know	20.8	25.5	31.7	42.9	35.2	36.3	35.7
Hallucinogens							
Easy	9.6	17.9	13.4	5.7	11.4	7.7	9.5
Don't know	23.6	29.2	34.8	44.3	37.4	38.6	38.0
Cocaine							
Easy	11.2	21.5	16.0	6.4	12.8	9.6	11.2
Don't know	19.8	24.6	32.3	43.3	35.1	36.5	35.8
Ecstasy/designer drugs							
Easy	22.8	41.1	26.4	9.4	22.1	16.2	19.1
Don't know	17.4	20.3	29.3	42.4	32.7	34.8	33.8

(a) Responses of 'fairly easy' and 'very easy' were grouped to form 'easy'.

Notes

1. Respondents could select from 'probably impossible', 'very difficult', 'fairly difficult', 'fairly easy', 'very easy' and 'don't know'.
2. Respondents could select only one response.

Table 3.4: Perception of the ease of obtaining selected illicit drugs, persons aged 14 years or older, by user status, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Never used	Ex-users	Recent users	All
Marijuana/cannabis				
Easy ^(a)	19.8	59.5	88.4	35.9
Don't know	36.1	15.8	1.6	27.9
Heroin				
Easy	7.1	36.4	* 86.3	7.7
Don't know	37.6	13.7	* 0.8	37.2
Meth/amphetamine				
Easy	10.4	55.3	85.2	13.9
Don't know	37.6	11.6	1.6	35.8
Hallucinogens				
Easy	7.6	30.8	66.7	9.4
Don't know	39.6	17.8	* 4.8	38.0
Cocaine				
Easy	8.6	42.2	73.4	11.1
Don't know	37.5	13.5	2.9	35.9
Ecstasy/designer drugs				
Easy	13.8	61.7	88.2	19.0
Don't know	36.6	8.7	* 0.9	33.8

(a) Responses of 'fairly easy' and 'very easy' were grouped to form 'easy'.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

4 Use of tobacco

This chapter presents information on the use of tobacco by Australians aged 14 years or older. As mentioned in Chapter 1, tobacco smoking is the single most preventable cause of ill health and death in Australia, contributing to more drug-related hospitalisations and deaths than alcohol and illicit drug use combined.

Summary

Of 17.2 million Australians aged 14 years or older, one in six smoked daily in 2007. Nearly seven in ten smokers smoked manufactured cigarettes but fewer than one in ten had ever smoked unbranded tobacco. Almost one-third had reduced the amount smoked in a day, and one-quarter had tried unsuccessfully to give up smoking. The most common reason for a change to smoking behaviour was for health reasons. Lower socioeconomic status appeared to be related to higher levels of smoking. Smoking rates were also higher in rural and remote areas and among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Key findings

Tobacco smoking status

Of 17.2 million Australians aged 14 years or older, one in six (16.6%) smoked daily in 2007 (Table 4.1). Males were generally more likely to be daily smokers than females except in the 14–19 years age group where females were more likely to be daily smokers (8.7%) than males (6.0%).

Of Australians aged 14 years or older who had ever smoked, males had their first full cigarette at age 15.1 years on average and females at 16.1 years. Daily smokers had their first cigarette at 15.1 years for males and 15.9 years for females, but started smoking daily at 17.5 years for males and 18.1 years for females, on average.

Type of tobacco smoked

Of Australian smokers aged 14 years or older, 69.4% smoked manufactured cigarettes only and a further 3.2% smoked all three types of tobacco (Figure 4.1).

Unbranded loose tobacco

Of Australians aged 14 years or older, one-third (33.6%) had seen or heard of unbranded loose tobacco (Table 4.2). Fewer than one in ten (8.0%) had actually smoked unbranded tobacco, which was one-quarter (25.9%) of those who were aware of it.

Changes to smoking behaviour

Of Australian smokers aged 14 years or older, almost one in three (31.6%) had reduced the amount smoked in a day, the highest proportion for any of the changed behaviours proposed in the survey (Table 4.3). One-quarter (25.2%) had tried unsuccessfully to give up smoking.

Motivators for change to behaviour

Of those who had undertaken a change in their smoking behaviour, almost half (45.0%) had done so because smoking was affecting their health (Table 4.4). The second most commonly nominated factor was cost (35.8%).

Characteristics by smoking status

Analyses of the 2007 results by population characteristics such as socioeconomic status, geography and Indigenous status showed varying smoking behaviour (Table 4.5).

In 2007, of those aged 14 years or older, the proportion who smoked daily, weekly or more than weekly was inversely related to the socioeconomic status of where they lived – 25.9% for lowest status versus 13.9% for highest status. Smoking was also related to remoteness, with 25.0% of people living in Remote and Very Remote areas being smokers, compared with 18.0% for people in Major Cities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were more likely than other Australians to smoke (34.1% versus 19.0%).

Mean number of cigarettes smoked per week

In 2007, smokers aged 14 years or older smoked an average of 97 cigarettes per week (Table 4.6).

People living in areas with the lowest socioeconomic status smoked more cigarettes per week (117) than others – this contrasts with the average of 74 cigarettes smoked per week by those living in the highest status areas.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, on average, smoked more cigarettes per week than other Australians (115 versus 97).

Table 4.1: Tobacco smoking status, persons aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

	Age group						
Smoking status	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	Aged 14+
Males							
Daily	6.0	23.7	22.7	21.8	20.1	10.8	18.0
Weekly	1.0	2.5	1.9	1.4	1.2	0.6	1.4
Less than weekly	1.6	3.1	2.5	2.0	0.5	0.5	1.7
Ex-smokers ^(a)	1.7	12.0	23.0	29.7	38.3	48.3	27.9
Never smoked ^(b)	89.7	58.6	49.9	45.0	40.0	39.8	50.9
Females							
Daily	8.7	19.0	18.9	20.6	15.0	8.8	15.2
Weekly	1.7	2.4	1.8	0.9	0.6	0.4	1.2
Less than weekly	* 0.7	2.7	1.9	1.5	0.5	0.3	1.3
Ex-smokers ^(a)	2.9	13.5	25.2	27.8	27.4	27.4	22.4
Never smoked ^(b)	86.0	62.3	52.1	49.2	56.6	63.1	59.8
Persons							
Daily	7.3	21.4	20.8	21.2	17.5	9.7	16.6
Weekly	1.3	2.4	1.8	1.2	0.9	0.5	1.3
Less than weekly	1.2	2.9	2.2	1.8	0.5	0.4	1.5
Ex-smokers ^(a)	2.3	12.8	24.1	28.8	32.8	37.2	25.1
Never smoked ^(b)	87.9	60.5	51.0	47.1	48.3	52.2	55.4

(a) Smoked at least 100 cigarettes or the equivalent tobacco in their life, and no longer smoke.

(b) Never smoked more than 100 cigarettes or the equivalent tobacco in their life.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

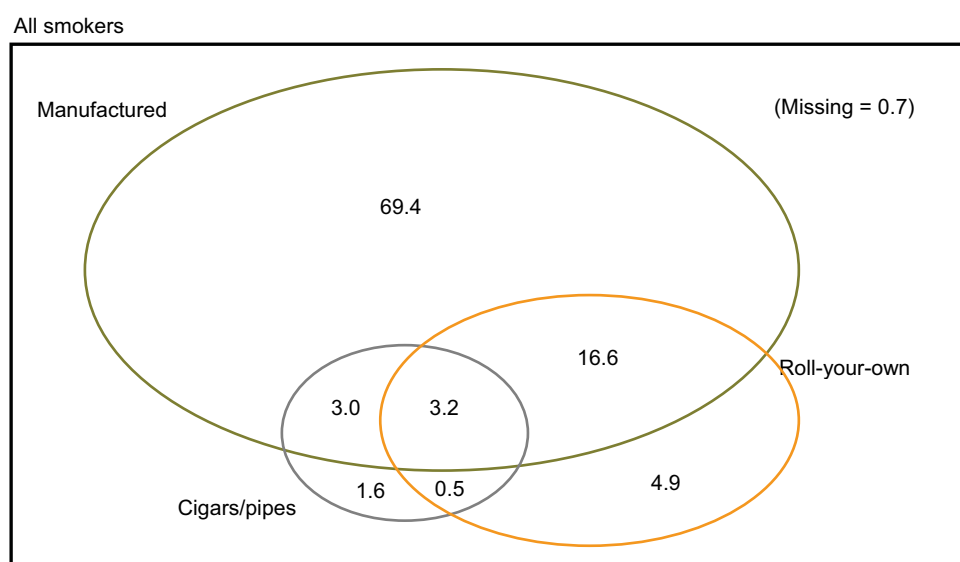


Figure 4.1: Type of tobacco smoked, proportion of smokers aged 14 years or older, 2007 (per cent)

Table 4.2: Unbranded loose tobacco, awareness and use, Australians aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Behaviour	Age group				Sex		
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	Persons
Aware of unbranded loose tobacco	32.6	38.5	38.2	30.9	37.6	29.8	33.6
Ever smoked unbranded loose tobacco							
As proportion of those aware	13.9	30.7	32.1	24.0	30.0	20.9	25.9
As proportion of population	4.5	11.8	12.3	7.4	11.3	6.2	8.7
Smoke unbranded loose tobacco half the time or more							
As proportion of those ever smoked it	* 8.7	15.7	11.6	27.3	15.1	28.6	19.1
As proportion of population	* 0.1	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 4.3: Changes to smoking behaviour, recent smokers aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Behaviour	Males	Females	Persons
Reduced amount smoked in a day	31.3	32.0	31.6
Tried to give up unsuccessfully	25.4	24.9	25.2
Given up for more than 1 month	23.6	25.2	24.3
Changed to a lower tar or nicotine content	11.9	15.3	13.5
Tried to reduced amount smoked daily unsuccessfully	12.5	13.7	13.0
Tried to changed to a lower tar or nicotine content unsuccessfully	2.3	2.7	2.5
None of the above	29.7	26.4	28.2

Notes

1. Base is those who reported smoking in the previous 12 months.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 4.4: Factors which motivated change to smoking behaviour, smokers aged 14 years or older who reported a change in behaviour, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Factor	Males	Females	Persons
Affecting health or fitness	45.7	44.2	45.0
Costing too much	34.5	37.2	35.8
Wanted to get fit	29.5	25.1	27.4
Family/friends asked me to quit	25.6	24.4	25.0
Worried it was affecting the health of those around me	21.3	21.4	21.4
Anti-smoking advertisements	15.6	15.5	15.5
Health warnings on packets	19.1	19.7	19.4
Advice from doctor	14.8	12.8	13.9
Smoking restrictions in public places	13.2	14.2	13.7
Pregnant or wanting to start a family	2.7	11.3	6.8
Smoking restrictions in the workplace	9.2	6.0	7.7
QUIT line	2.2	2.7	2.4
Tobacco Information Line (advertised on packet)	0.4	1.1	0.7
Other	11.8	13.1	12.4

Notes

1. Base is those who reported undertaking measures in Table 4.3.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 4.5: Characteristics of persons aged 14 years or older by smoking status, 2007 (per cent)

Characteristic	Never smoked ^(a)	Ex-smokers ^(b)	Smokers ^(c)
All persons (aged 14+)	55.4	25.1	19.4
Education			
With post-school qualifications	53.4	27.9	18.8
Without post-school qualifications	57.5	21.5	21.0
Labour force status			
Currently employed	52.5	25.8	21.7
Student	86.6	4.3	9.2
Unemployed	45.5	16.3	38.2
Engaged in home duties	55.5	25.3	19.2
Retired or on a pension	49.9	37.0	13.1
Unable to work	43.9	22.4	33.7
Other	51.4	21.9	26.7
Main language spoken at home			
English	53.7	26.5	19.8
Other	75.0	12.5	12.5
Socioeconomic status			
1st quintile (lowest status)	49.6	24.5	25.9
2nd quintile	53.4	25.1	21.5
3rd quintile	55.8	23.7	20.5
4th quintile	56.9	25.2	17.8
5th quintile (highest status)	59.6	26.6	13.9
Geography			
Major Cities	57.6	24.4	18.0
Inner Regional	51.7	26.4	21.9
Outer Regional	50.2	26.9	23.0
Remote and Very Remote	47.8	27.1	25.0
Marital status			
Never married	70.2	8.8	21.0
Divorced/separated/widowed	45.4	29.9	24.7
Married/de facto	51.2	31.4	17.4
Indigenous status			
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	47.6	18.3	34.1
Other Australian	55.6	25.5	19.0

(a) Never smoked more than 100 cigarettes or the equivalent tobacco in their life.

(b) Smoked at least 100 cigarettes or the equivalent tobacco in their life, and no longer smoke.

(c) Smoked daily, weekly or less than weekly.

Table 4.6: Mean number of cigarettes smoked per week, current smokers aged 14 years or older, by social characteristics, by sex, 2007 (number)

Characteristic	Males	Females	Persons
All persons (aged 14+)	102	91	97
Education			
With post-school qualifications	99	84	93
Without post-school qualifications	108	100	104
Labour force status			
Currently employed	99	85	93
Student	47	64	55
Unemployed	121	103	114
Engaged in home duties	147	100	103
Retired or on a pension	118	114	116
Unable to work	125	107	117
Other	126	72	90
Main language spoken at home			
English	104	91	98
Other	73	90	77
Socioeconomic status			
1st quintile (lowest status)	123	111	117
2nd quintile	109	95	102
3rd quintile	103	91	97
4th quintile	93	84	89
5th quintile (highest status)	78	69	74
Geography			
Major Cities	94	83	89
Inner Regional	112	104	108
Outer Regional	126	107	117
Remote and Very Remote	114	98	107
Marital status			
Never married	92	73	84
Divorced/separated/widowed	128	110	118
Married/de facto	101	93	98
Indigenous status			
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	111	117	115
Other Australian	102	91	97

Note: Base is current (daily, weekly and less than weekly) smokers.

5 Use of alcohol

This chapter presents information on the alcohol consumption patterns of Australians aged 14 years or older in 2007. As discussed in Chapter 1, results presented about the risks associated with alcohol consumption are based on the current Australian Alcohol Guidelines (NHMRC 2001). Readers should note that these guidelines are currently under review.

Summary

In 2007, the majority of Australians aged 14 years or older had consumed alcohol. Three in five drank at levels considered at low risk of harm in the short or long term. Most recent drinkers usually consumed alcohol in their own home. Male drinkers most commonly consumed regular strength beer, and female drinkers were most likely to consume bottled wine or spirits. The vast majority of recent drinkers had undertaken at least some alcohol moderation behaviour. The main reason chosen was for health reasons. People living in Remote or Very Remote areas were more likely to drink at risky or high-risk levels than those living in other areas. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples were more likely than other Australians to abstain from alcohol, but those who did drink were more likely to drink at risky or high-risk levels, for short-term harm.

Key findings

Alcohol use

In 2007, 10.1% of Australians aged 14 years or older had never consumed a full serve of alcohol; a further 7.0% had not consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months (Table 5.1). The average age at which males first consumed a full glass of alcohol was 16.3 years, whereas for females it was 17.1 years.

Alcohol consumption risk status

Three in five (60.8%) Australians drank at levels considered at low risk of harm in the short or long term (Table 5.2). Almost one in ten (8.6%) drank at levels considered risky or high risk for both short-term and long-term harm. Females aged 14 years or older (20.1%) were more likely to be abstainers than males (14.0%).

Usual place of consumption of alcohol

Four in five (80.5%) recent drinkers aged 14 years or older usually consumed alcohol in their own home (Table 5.3). Younger recent drinkers aged 14–19 years were more likely to usually consume alcohol at a private party (67.6%) or at a friend's house (57.8%).

Type of alcohol usually consumed

Male drinkers most commonly consumed regular strength beer, except for two groups:

- those aged 14–19 years who were drinking at levels considered low-risk of harm in the long term, preferred pre-mixed spirits in a can and

- those aged 40 years or older who were drinking at levels considered low-risk of harm in the long term, usually consumed bottled wine (Table 5.4).

Female drinkers were most likely to consume bottled wine, except for two groups:

- those aged 14–19 years who were drinking at levels considered low-risk of harm in the long term, preferred pre-mixed spirits in a bottle and
- those aged 14–29 years who were drinking at levels considered risky or high-risk of harm in the long term, preferred bottled spirits and liqueurs.

Moderating behaviour

Of recent drinkers, approximately 0.9% had not undertaken any of the blood alcohol limiting measures surveyed.

The most common blood alcohol limiting measure undertaken by recent drinkers aged 14 years or older was to ‘limit the number of drinks’ they consumed (77.7%) (Table 5.5). In general, female drinkers were more likely than males to use any of the measures surveyed, except for consuming ‘low-alcohol drinks only’.

For all recent drinkers, the least undertaken measures were ‘alternating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks’ (24.4%) and ‘drinking low-alcohol drinks only’ (16.7%).

Reduction measures by risk

Those drinking at low levels for risk of short-term or long-term alcohol-related harm were less likely to have reduced their alcohol consumption than those drinking at risky or high-risk levels, with the exception of stopping drinking altogether (Table 5.6).

Reasons for reduction, by risk

For all groups, the main reason recent drinkers who had chosen to moderate their drinking nominated was for health reasons (Table 5.7). Pressure from peers and from adults/parents were the least likely reasons given.

Characteristics by alcohol risk status

In 2007, the characteristics of consumers of alcohol varied by level and pattern of their alcohol consumption (Table 5.8). For example, people living in Remote or Very Remote areas were more likely to drink at risky or high-risk levels than were those living in other areas. For example, for short-term risk, 32.1% of people living in Remote or Very Remote areas drank at risky or high-risk levels versus 19.8% of those living in Major Cities. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples were more likely than other Australians to abstain from alcohol consumption, (23.4% versus 16.8%) and also more likely to consume alcohol at risky or high-risk levels for harm in the short term (27.4% versus 20.1%).

Table 5.1: Alcohol drinking status, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drinking status	Age group						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	14+
Males							
Daily	1.4	2.8	6.1	11.4	15.9	21.4	10.8
Weekly	23.0	55.7	54.8	51.0	49.6	39.2	46.8
Less than weekly	46.4	30.3	28.2	26.7	24.5	22.1	28.3
<i>Recent drinker^(a)</i>	<i>70.8</i>	<i>88.9</i>	<i>89.1</i>	<i>89.2</i>	<i>90.1</i>	<i>82.7</i>	<i>86.0</i>
Ex-drinker ^(b)	3.3	2.8	5.2	5.7	5.7	10.3	5.8
Never a full serve of alcohol	25.9	8.3	5.7	5.1	4.2	7.0	8.2
Females							
Daily	0.5	1.7	3.0	5.6	7.8	10.5	5.5
Weekly	18.8	39.6	40.4	42.7	38.0	30.6	35.9
Less than weekly	52.0	44.0	43.1	37.7	36.2	27.8	38.5
<i>Recent drinker^(a)</i>	<i>71.3</i>	<i>85.2</i>	<i>86.5</i>	<i>86.1</i>	<i>81.9</i>	<i>68.9</i>	<i>79.9</i>
Ex-drinker ^(b)	2.6	5.8	6.4	6.2	8.4	14.2	8.1
Never a full serve of alcohol	26.1	8.9	7.0	7.8	9.7	16.9	12.1
Persons							
Daily	1.0	2.3	4.6	8.5	11.8	15.6	8.1
Weekly	20.9	47.8	47.5	46.8	43.8	34.6	41.3
Less than weekly	49.1	37.0	35.7	32.3	30.4	25.1	33.5
<i>Recent drinker^(a)</i>	<i>71.0</i>	<i>87.1</i>	<i>87.8</i>	<i>87.6</i>	<i>86.0</i>	<i>75.3</i>	<i>82.9</i>
Ex-drinker ^(b)	3.0	4.3	5.8	5.9	7.1	12.4	7.0
Never a full serve of alcohol	26.0	8.6	6.3	6.5	7.0	12.3	10.1

(a) Consumed at least a full serve of alcohol in the previous 12 months.

(b) Consumed at least a full serve of alcohol, but not in the previous 12 months.

Table 5.2: Risk of harm in the long term by monthly risk of harm in the short term, by sex, persons aged 14 years or older, 2007 (per cent)

		Short-term risk		
Long-term risk	Abstainer	Low risk	Risky or high risk	Total
Males				
Abstainer	14.0	..	..	14.0
Low risk	..	60.9	14.9	75.8
Risky or high risk	..	1.4	8.8	10.2
Total	14.0	62.3	23.7	100.0
Females				
Abstainer	20.1	..	..	20.1
Low risk	..	60.6	8.8	69.4
Risky or high risk	..	2.1	8.4	10.5
Total	20.1	62.7	17.2	100.0
Persons				
Abstainer	17.1	..	..	17.1
Low risk	..	60.8	11.8	72.6
Risky or high risk	..	1.7	8.6	10.3
Total	17.1	62.5	20.4	100.0

Table 5.3: Usual place of consumption of alcohol, recent drinkers aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

	Age group						
Place	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	Aged 14+
Males							
In my home	50.5	72.5	84.4	86.9	88.8	87.1	81.2
At friend's house	57.3	64.5	56.6	47.3	45.3	40.3	51.1
At licensed premises	35.3	74.2	61.0	50.3	47.3	44.0	53.5
At restaurants/cafes	14.6	51.2	54.8	49.1	50.6	44.0	46.9
At private parties	65.9	59.7	49.6	40.7	40.1	34.2	46.4
At workplace	3.7	12.7	12.0	7.5	5.2	1.2	7.3
At raves/dance parties	18.3	19.1	5.0	2.8	1.2	1.8	6.9
In public places	10.6	8.3	4.9	3.6	4.1	2.7	5.2
In a car	9.0	6.4	3.5	3.1	1.3	0.6	3.5
At school/TAFE/university, etc.	4.7	5.2	0.6	* 0.5	* 0.4	* 0.2	1.6
Somewhere else	7.8	5.1	2.3	2.6	2.1	1.7	3.1
Females							
In my home	52.5	71.0	87.2	86.0	84.1	82.6	79.7
At friend's house	58.3	60.3	61.8	53.2	53.6	40.9	54.0
At licensed premises	37.7	69.6	52.4	44.1	44.3	31.0	46.9
At restaurants/cafes	18.9	56.7	60.6	58.3	61.2	50.0	53.8
At private parties	69.4	57.5	52.9	49.1	45.6	33.7	49.3
At workplace	2.5	9.0	5.0	3.2	3.7	0.3	4.0
At raves/dance parties	21.3	15.3	2.6	1.4	2.3	1.0	5.8
In public places	9.3	4.4	2.4	3.7	3.6	1.5	3.6
In a car	4.8	3.2	1.1	* 0.4	0.8	* 0.1	1.4
At school/TAFE/university, etc.	2.4	3.5	* 0.2	* 0.3	* 0.4	* 0.2	1.0
Somewhere else	5.2	2.2	0.5	0.9	0.8	0.6	1.3
Persons							
In my home	51.5	71.8	85.8	86.4	86.5	84.9	80.5
At friend's house	57.8	62.5	59.2	50.2	49.2	40.6	52.6
At licensed premises	36.5	72.0	56.7	47.2	45.9	37.7	50.3
At restaurants/cafes	16.7	53.9	57.7	53.6	55.6	46.9	50.3
At private parties	67.6	58.7	51.2	44.9	42.7	34.0	47.8
At workplace	3.1	10.9	8.5	5.4	4.5	0.8	5.7
At raves/dance parties	19.8	17.2	3.8	2.1	1.8	1.4	6.4
In public places	9.9	6.4	3.6	3.6	3.8	2.1	4.4
In a car	6.9	4.9	2.3	1.8	1.1	0.4	2.5
At school/TAFE/university, etc.	3.6	4.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2	1.3
Somewhere else	6.5	3.7	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.1	2.3

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent drinkers.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 5.4: Type of alcohol usually consumed, recent drinkers aged 14 years or older, by long-term risk status, 2007

Age group	Long-term risk	
	Low risk	Risky or high risk
Males		
14–19	Pre-mixed spirits in a can (52.8%)	Regular strength beer (74.3%)
20–29	Regular strength beer (65.8%)	Regular strength beer (78.6%)
30–39	Regular strength beer (59.0%)	Regular strength beer (77.0%)
40+	Bottled wine (54.3%)	Regular strength beer (61.5%)
Females		
14–19	Pre-mixed spirits in a bottle (64.2%)	Bottled spirits and liqueurs (84.9%)
20–29	Bottled wine (58.8%)	Bottled spirits and liqueurs (67.6%)
30–39	Bottled wine (68.9%)	Bottled wine (69.7%)
40+	Bottled wine (69.9%)	Bottled wine (72.2%)

Notes

1. Base is recent drinkers.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 5.5: Blood alcohol limiting measures undertaken always or most of the time, recent drinkers aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Measure	Age group						Aged 14+
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
Males							
Limit number of drinks	48.0	58.3	73.2	77.6	83.8	87.4	73.7
Refuse alcoholic drink offered when not wanted	49.0	46.1	48.7	51.1	54.1	63.5	52.4
Make a point of eating while consuming	41.4	41.7	46.6	53.3	54.9	57.4	49.9
Count number of drinks consumed	51.5	42.2	47.0	48.4	49.8	55.4	48.8
Quench thirst before having alcohol	30.1	25.0	27.6	25.0	25.8	19.5	25.0
Alternate between alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks	18.2	13.4	14.3	15.7	17.2	16.9	15.7
Drink low-alcohol drinks only	12.2	6.0	10.2	17.0	25.4	31.8	17.3
Females							
Limit number of drinks	50.7	69.4	86.0	87.0	91.7	91.7	82.0
Refuse alcoholic drink offered when not wanted	62.2	61.7	68.4	68.5	71.4	77.6	68.8
Make a point of eating while consuming	44.3	54.1	66.9	70.7	74.9	76.1	66.2
Count number of drinks consumed	55.3	52.6	59.6	62.2	66.2	65.9	60.6
Quench thirst before having alcohol	34.6	38.9	43.5	44.1	43.5	42.3	41.7
Alternate between alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks	25.1	24.8	33.2	37.5	40.0	38.4	33.6
Drink low-alcohol drinks only	18.6	11.3	12.3	14.4	17.0	25.3	16.0
Persons							
Limit number of drinks	49.4	63.7	79.5	82.3	87.5	89.4	77.7
Refuse alcoholic drink offered when not wanted	55.6	53.7	58.4	59.8	62.3	70.3	60.4
Make a point of eating while consuming	42.8	47.7	56.6	61.9	64.3	66.3	57.8
Count number of drinks consumed	53.4	47.3	53.2	55.2	57.5	60.3	54.5
Quench thirst before having alcohol	32.4	31.8	35.4	34.4	34.1	30.2	33.1
Alternate between alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks	21.7	19.0	23.6	26.4	27.9	27.0	24.4
Drink low-alcohol drinks only	15.4	8.6	11.2	15.7	21.6	28.8	16.7

Notes

1. Base is recent drinkers.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 5.6: Reduction in alcohol consumption, recent drinkers aged 14 years or older, by short- and long-term risk status, 2007 (per cent)

Measure	Short-term risk		Long-term risk	
	Low risk	Risky or high risk	Low risk	Risky or high risk
Males				
Reduced amount drunk per session	29.7	32.2	30.6	28.7
Reduced the number of times drank	27.6	34.4	29.9	26.2
Drank more low-alcohol drinks	9.5	9.6	9.6	9.7
Stopped drinking	4.6	3.1	4.2	3.9
None of the above	51.4	48.5	50.2	53.5
Females				
Reduced amount drunk per session	25.6	34.4	26.3	35.2
Reduced the number of times drank	26.9	38.0	28.7	33.4
Drank more low-alcohol drinks	4.9	5.6	4.9	6.0
Stopped drinking	7.3	3.9	7.0	3.6
None of the above	55.4	44.5	54.2	45.3
Persons				
Reduced amount drunk per session	27.6	33.2	28.5	32.1
Reduced the number of times drank	27.3	36.0	29.3	30.0
Drank more low-alcohol drinks	7.2	7.9	7.3	7.8
Stopped drinking	5.9	3.5	5.6	3.7
None of the above	53.4	46.8	52.1	49.3

Notes

1. Base is recent drinkers.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 5.7: Reason for reduction in alcohol consumption, recent drinkers aged 14 years or older, by short- and long-term risk status, 2007 (per cent)

Reason	Short-term risk		Long-term risk	
	Low risk	Risky or high risk	Low risk	Risky or high risk
Males				
Health reasons	33.0	28.2	31.7	31.4
Lifestyle reasons	15.8	23.6	18.1	17.8
Social reasons	18.0	17.8	18.3	15.4
Drink driving regulations	11.1	8.3	10.6	7.7
Financial reasons	5.1	10.9	6.0	13.0
Prefer low-alcohol drinks, not to get drunk	7.8	5.2	7.0	7.3
Pregnant and/or breastfeeding	..	..	..	..
Adult/parent pressure	0.8	0.7	0.8	* 0.5
Peer pressure	0.7	* 0.3	0.6	* 0.8
Other	7.7	5.1	7.0	6.1
Females				
Health reasons	35.9	32.5	33.8	41.5
Lifestyle reasons	14.1	21.8	16.3	15.2
Social reasons	15.6	17.3	15.9	16.9
Drink driving regulations	7.0	6.5	6.5	9.1
Financial reasons	3.5	7.0	4.2	5.5
Prefer low-alcohol drinks, not to get drunk	5.3	2.2	5.0	1.9
Pregnant and/or breastfeeding	10.5	5.5	10.2	3.7
Adult/parent pressure	0.5	0.7	0.6	* 0.4
Peer pressure	* 0.1	* 0.2	* 0.1	* 0.2
Other	7.4	6.4	7.4	5.6
Persons				
Health reasons	34.4	30.1	32.7	37.1
Lifestyle reasons	15.0	22.8	17.3	16.3
Social reasons	16.8	17.6	17.2	16.3
Drink driving regulations	9.1	7.5	8.7	8.5
Financial reasons	4.3	9.1	5.2	8.8
Prefer low-alcohol drinks, not to get drunk	6.6	3.8	6.1	4.3
Pregnant and/or breastfeeding	5.1	2.5	4.8	2.1
Adult/parent pressure	0.6	0.7	0.7	* 0.5
Peer pressure	0.4	* 0.3	0.4	* 0.5
Other	7.5	5.6	7.2	5.8

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent drinkers who had undertaken at least one measure to reduce their level of alcohol consumption in the previous 12 months.

Table 5.8: Characteristics of persons aged 14 years or older by short- and long-term risk status, 2007 (per cent)

Characteristic	Abstainer/ ex-drinker	Short-term risk		Long-term risk	
		Low risk	Risky or high risk	Low risk	Risky or high risk
All persons (aged 14+)	17.1	62.5	20.4	72.6	10.3
Education					
With post-school qualification	11.8	67.3	20.9	77.5	10.6
Without post-school qualification	23.1	56.9	20.1	66.9	10.0
Labour force status					
Currently employed	10.2	64.2	25.6	77.7	12.1
Student	31.5	46.4	22.1	61.7	6.8
Unemployed	16.4	54.6	29.0	67.6	16.0
Engaged in home duties	20.1	67.3	12.7	72.1	7.8
Unable to work	31.4	51.9	16.7	57.5	11.2
Retired or on a pension	25.1	67.9	7.0	67.3	7.6
Other	24.4	62.2	13.4	69.8	5.8
Main language spoken at home					
English	14.7	63.8	21.5	74.4	11.0
Other	42.7	51.2	6.0	55.1	2.2
Socioeconomic status					
1st quintile (lowest status)	22.5	57.6	19.9	66.7	10.8
2nd quintile	19.5	60.4	20.1	70.5	9.9
3rd quintile	17.9	62.4	19.7	71.9	10.2
4th quintile	16.5	63.4	20.1	74.4	9.1
5th quintile (highest status)	11.5	66.9	21.6	77.1	11.5
Geography					
Major Cities	17.3	62.9	19.8	72.9	9.8
Inner Regional	17.2	62.1	20.7	72.0	10.9
Outer Regional	16.5	61.8	21.7	71.5	12.0
Remote and Very Remote	12.6	55.3	32.1	72.1	15.3
Marital status					
Never married	20.0	47.1	32.9	66.2	13.9
Divorced/separated/widowed	22.1	63.8	14.0	68.0	9.9
Married/de facto	14.7	69.2	16.1	76.5	8.8
Indigenous status					
Indigenous	23.4	49.2	27.4	64.2	12.5
Other Australians	16.8	63.1	20.1	73.0	10.2

6 Illicit drug use

This chapter presents data on use of any illicit drug. Illicit drugs include illegal drugs (such as marijuana/cannabis), pharmaceutical drugs (such as pain-killers, tranquillisers) when used for non-medical purposes (strictly an illicit behaviour), and other substances used inappropriately (such as inhalants). For a full list of drugs included in the survey questionnaire, see Glossary. Data in this chapter are presented with and without marijuana/cannabis because of its relatively high use compared with other illicit drugs.

Summary

Over 6.6 million Australians have used an illicit drug and 3.1 million have used an illicit drug other than marijuana/cannabis in their lifetime. More than 2 million Australians had used an illicit drug in the 12 months before the survey. Marijuana was the most commonly used illicit drug. Most illicit drug users did so for the first time because they were curious. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were more likely than other Australians to have used an illicit drug in the previous 12 months.

Key findings

Use of any illicit drug

In 2007, more than 6.6 million (38.1%) Australians aged 14 years or older had used an illicit drug in their lifetime (Table 6.1). Males (41.4%) were more likely than females (34.8%) to have used an illicit drug in their lifetime.

More than 2 million (13.4%) Australians had used an illicit drug in the previous 12 months. Males (15.8%) were more likely than females (11%) to have used in the previous 12 months.

Marijuana/cannabis was the most commonly used illicit drug over lifetime (Figure 6.1, Table 1.2) and for recent use (Figure 6.2, Table 1.1). Ecstasy and hallucinogens were the second and third most common for lifetime use, and ecstasy and pain-killers/analgesics were the second and third most common for recent use.

Australians aged 30–39 years were more likely than those in the other age groups to have used an illicit drug in their lifetime (Table 6.1).

Australians aged 20–29 years were more likely than those in the other age groups to have used an illicit drug in the previous 12 months. This was also the case for marijuana/cannabis, meth/amphetamine and ecstasy (Figure 6.3).

Curiosity was a factor influencing the use of an illicit drug for three in five (60.5%) of those who had ever used an illicit drug (Table 6.2). Peer pressure was a factor for 43.3%.

The highest proportion of recent drug use across all subpopulations was for people who were unemployed (23.3%) (Table 6.3). The lowest proportion of recent users for a subpopulation was for people who were retired or on a pension (5.5%).

A higher proportion of people with the highest socioeconomic status were recent users of illicit drugs (14.3%) compared with the other socioeconomic groups.

A greater proportion of people from Remote and Very Remote regions used illicit drugs in the previous 12 months (21.0%) than people from other regions.

Indigenous people were almost twice as likely to be recent users of illicit drugs as other Australians (24.2% compared with 13.0%).

Use of any illicit drug except marijuana/cannabis

When the use of marijuana/cannabis is ignored, just over 3 million people or 18.2% of Australians aged 14 years or older had used an illicit drug in their lifetime (Table 6.4). A greater proportion of males than females had used an illicit drug in their lifetime, the previous 12 months, the previous month and the previous week. Of people aged 20–29 years, 4.4% had used an illicit drug in the previous week compared with 2.1% of those aged 14–19 years and 2.5% of those aged 30–39 years.

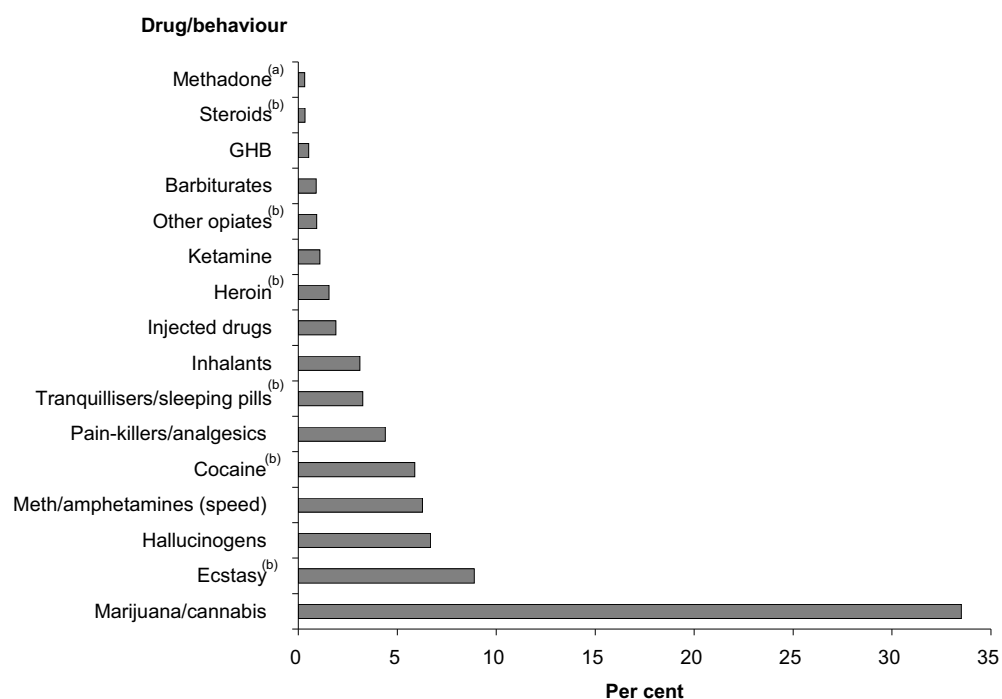
There was little difference in the proportion of the population with or without post-school qualifications who were recent users (8.3% versus 8.4%) (Table 6.5).

Non-users of illicit drugs

The most common influences on the decision not to try illicit drugs were ‘just not interested’, nominated by almost two in three (63.1%) of Australians who had never used an illicit drug, and ‘for reasons related to health or addiction’ (41.4%) (Table 6.6).

Table 6.1: Use of any illicit drug, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

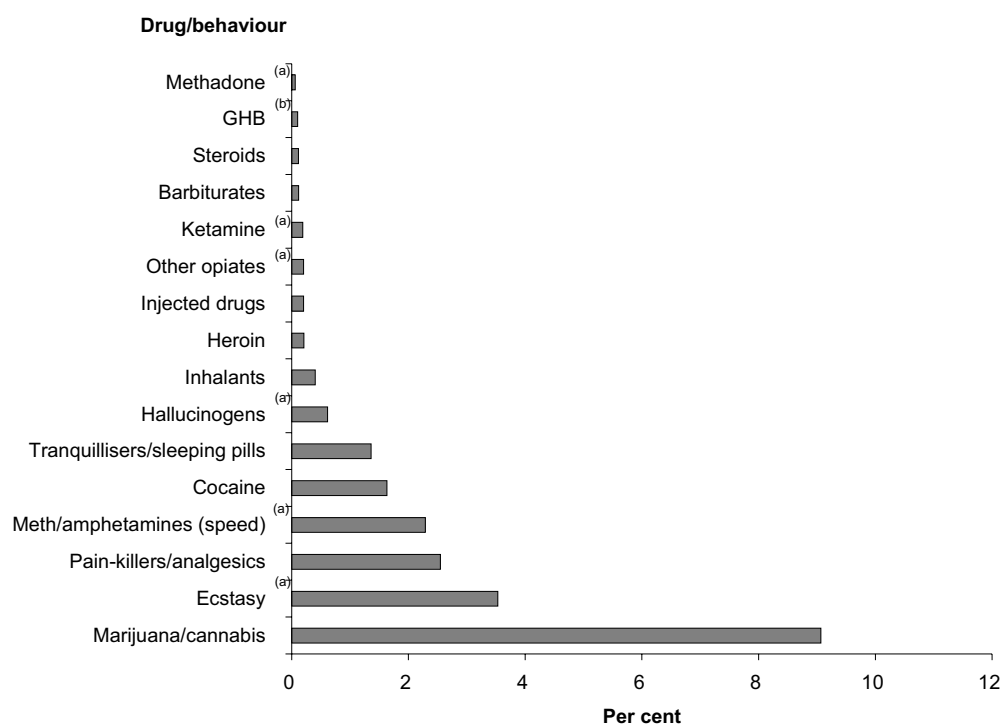
Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	23.8	54.0	57.9	29.4	41.4	34.8	38.1
In the last 12 months	16.6	27.7	16.7	7.4	15.8	11.0	13.4
In the last month	9.8	15.5	9.8	4.3	9.5	6.0	7.7
In the last week	5.2	10.2	6.8	3.1	6.6	3.7	5.1
	(number)						
In lifetime	410,000	1,585,500	1,759,100	2,799,900	3,521,200	3,035,200	6,554,900
In the last 12 months	286,600	814,900	506,000	704,800	1,347,300	960,700	2,306,200
In the last month	169,300	454,500	297,400	410,700	805,100	523,600	1,327,400
In the last week	89,400	300,100	205,400	291,200	561,900	321,900	882,800



(a) Used for non-maintenance purposes.

(b) Used for non-medical purposes.

Figure 6.1: Use of illicit drugs in lifetime, persons aged 14 years or older, 2007

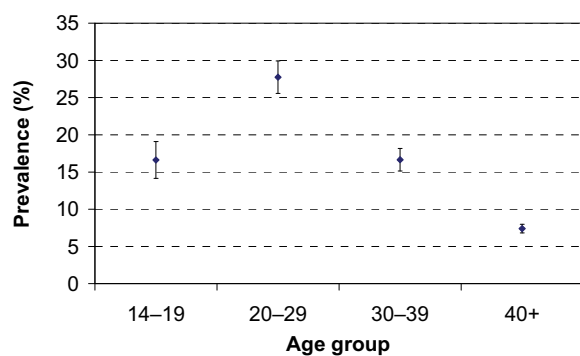


(a) Used for non-medical purposes.

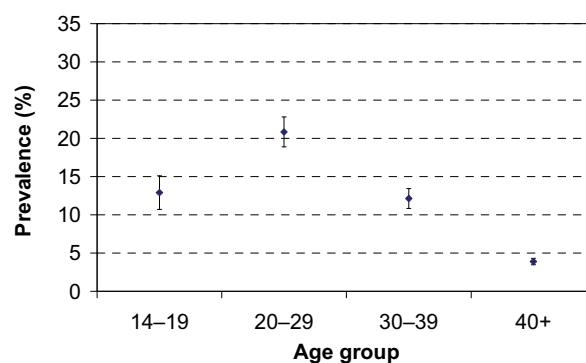
(b) Used for non-maintenance purposes.

Figure 6.2: Recent use of illicit drugs, persons aged 14 years or older, 2007

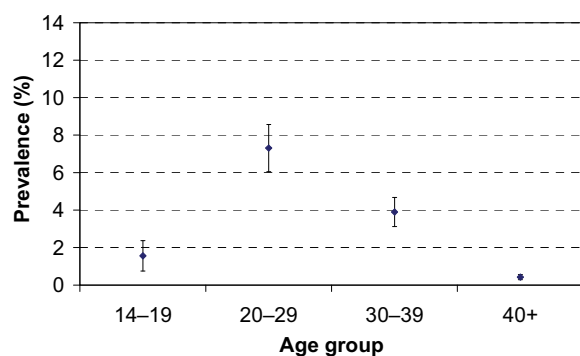
Any illicit drug



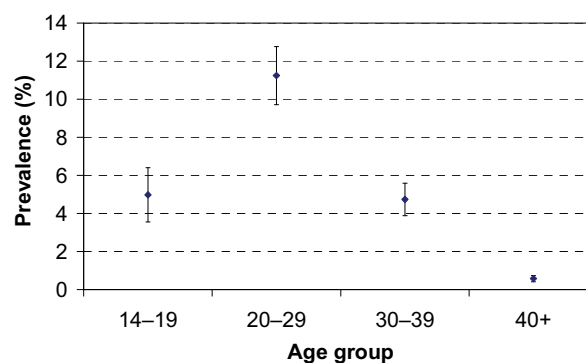
Marijuana/cannabis



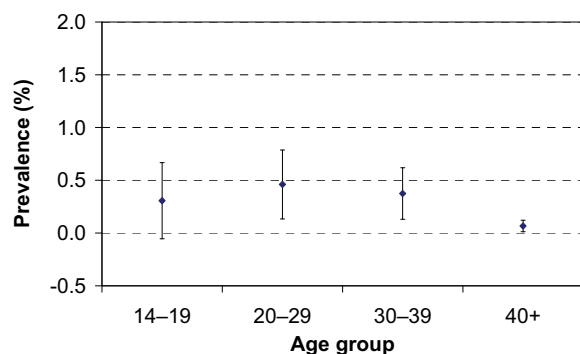
Meth/amphetamine



Ecstasy



Heroin



Injecting drugs

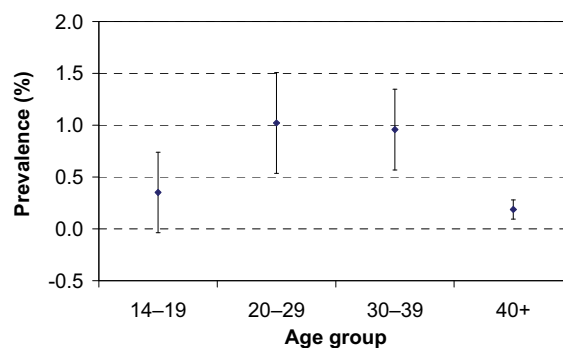


Figure 6.3: Prevalence and 95% confidence intervals of drug use in the previous 12 months, selected illicit drugs, persons aged 14 years or older, 2007

Table 6.2: Factors influencing first use of any illicit drug, lifetime users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Factor	Males	Females	Persons
Curiosity	62.3	58.6	60.5
Peer pressure	43.2	43.4	43.3
To do something exciting	13.0	12.9	12.9
To enhance an experience	9.3	8.4	8.9
To take a risk	5.6	6.1	5.8
To feel better	4.4	4.5	4.5
Family, relationship, work or school problems	3.7	3.9	3.8
Traumatic experience	1.7	2.2	1.9
To lose weight	0.3	1.1	0.7
Other	3.8	3.7	3.8

Notes

1. Base is those who had ever used an illicit drug.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 6.3: Characteristics of persons aged 14 years or older by illicit drug use status, 2007 (per cent)

Characteristic	Never used	Ex-users	Recent users
All persons (aged 14+)	61.9	24.8	13.4
Education			
Without post-school qualifications	56.6	29.5	13.8
With post-school qualifications	68.2	18.0	13.8
Labour force status			
Currently employed	52.7	32.3	15.0
Student	74.8	8.5	16.8
Unemployed	49.6	27.1	23.3
Engaged in home duties	59.0	32.3	8.7
Retired or on a pension	85.3	9.2	5.5
Unable to work	55.3	25.7	19.0
Other	62.6	22.1	15.3
Main language spoken at home			
English	59.7	26.5	13.8
Other	88.3	5.9	5.8
Socioeconomic status			
1st quintile (lowest status)	64.6	21.7	13.7
2nd quintile	64.7	24.0	11.3
3rd quintile	63.5	23.0	13.5
4th quintile	60.0	26.8	13.2
5th quintile (highest status)	58.8	26.9	14.3
Geography			
Major Cities	61.9	24.4	13.6
Inner Regional	63.8	24.5	11.7
Outer Regional	60.3	27.0	12.6
Remote and Very Remote	50.3	28.7	21.0
Marital status			
Never married	59.4	17.3	23.3
Divorced/separated/widowed	66.6	23.0	10.4
Married/de facto	62.1	28.4	9.4
Indigenous status			
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	46.8	29.0	24.2
Other Australians	62.2	24.8	13.0

Table 6.4: Use of any illicit drug except marijuana/cannabis, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	10.4	32.5	28.1	12.2	20.3	16.3	18.2
In the last 12 months	8.5	17.9	9.7	4.2	8.8	6.9	7.9
In the last month	4.4	9.1	4.6	2.2	4.5	3.5	4.0
In the last week	2.1	4.4	2.5	1.3	2.4	1.8	2.1
	(number)						
In lifetime	179,000	953,400	852,700	1,158,800	1,724,100	1,417,300	3,139,900
In the last 12 months	147,000	525,000	293,600	396,400	752,200	605,400	1,356,700
In the last month	76,400	268,700	141,300	208,700	383,600	308,500	691,700
In the last week	37,000	129,900	77,500	123,300	205,100	161,200	366,000

Table 6.5: Characteristics of persons aged 14 years or older by status of use of any illicit drug except marijuana/cannabis, 2007 (per cent)

Characteristic	Never used	Ex-users	Recent users
All persons (aged 14+)	81.8	10.4	7.8
Education			
Without post-school qualifications	84.3	7.3	8.4
With post-school qualifications	78.8	12.9	8.3
Labour force status			
Currently employed	78.3	13.2	8.5
Student	86.4	4.2	9.4
Unemployed	73.4	12.0	14.6
Engaged in home duties	81.9	13.0	5.1
Retired or on a pension	92.0	3.8	4.2
Unable to work	72.5	16.2	11.2
Other	79.9	10.7	9.4
Main language spoken at home			
English	81.0	11.0	8.0
Other	93.3	2.7	4.1
Socioeconomic status			
1st quintile (lowest status)	83.5	8.8	7.7
2nd quintile	84.2	9.5	6.3
3rd quintile	82.5	9.4	8.1
4th quintile	81.0	11.4	7.5
5th quintile (highest status)	79.0	11.8	9.1
Geography			
Major Cities	81.0	10.6	8.5
Inner Regional	84.5	9.0	6.6
Outer Regional	82.8	11.4	5.8
Remote and Very Remote	76.2	13.8	10.0
Marital status			
Never married	76.3	9.5	14.2
Divorced/separated/widowed	84.8	9.6	5.6
Married/de facto	83.8	10.9	5.3
Indigenous status			
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	73.9	14.0	12.1
Other Australians	82.1	10.3	7.6

Table 6.6: Factors influencing the decision never to try an illicit drug, Australians aged 14 years or older who had never used, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Factor	Males	Females	Persons
Just not interested	60.6	65.5	63.1
For reasons related to health or addiction	42.7	40.3	41.4
For reasons related to the law	23.2	21.9	22.5
Didn't like to feel out of control	14.2	18.3	16.3
Religious/moral reasons	14.8	16.0	15.4
Didn't think it would be enjoyable	12.9	13.2	13.1
Fear of death	11.6	13.0	12.3
Pressure from family or friends	9.6	9.0	9.3
No opportunity	4.8	6.2	5.5
Financial reasons	5.7	4.5	5.1
Didn't want family/friends/employer or teachers to know	4.4	3.8	4.1
Don't know	* 0.1	0.2	0.2
Other	6.8	6.6	6.7

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is those who had never used any illicit drug.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

7 Marijuana/cannabis

This chapter presents information on the use of marijuana/cannabis in 2007 by Australians aged 14 years or older. Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Summary

Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug in Australia in 2007, with over 5.5 million people having ever used the drug. The drug was most commonly consumed within private homes and most commonly obtained through friends or acquaintances. Alcohol was the drug most commonly used *with* and as a *substitution for* marijuana. Marijuana was most commonly consumed at least once a week and most often one cone/joint/bong on a day the drug was used.

Key findings

Use of marijuana/cannabis

Marijuana/cannabis is the most used illicit drug in Australia across all age groups. In 2007, over 5.5 million people aged 14 years or older (33.5%) had used marijuana/cannabis in their lifetime and more than 600,000 people had used it in the week before the survey (3.5%) (Table 7.1).

Males were more likely than females to have used marijuana/cannabis in their lifetime (37.1% compared with 30%).

People aged 20–29 were most likely to have used marijuana/cannabis in the previous month (one in ten or 11.1%).

Frequency of use

Recent users were most likely to use marijuana/cannabis once or twice a year (33.5%) and least likely to use it about once a month (12.4%) (Table 7.2).

Recent users aged 30 years or older were more likely to have used marijuana/cannabis daily than those in younger age groups.

Males were more likely than females to have used marijuana/cannabis daily (16.4% compared with 12.3%). Females were more likely than males to use marijuana/cannabis once or twice a year (40.0%, compared with 29.8%).

Form, quantity and method of use

Recent users of marijuana/cannabis were asked what form of the drug they used and, on average, what quantity they would normally consume on a day when they used it. The terminology in Table 7.3 reflects a common language used to describe forms of marijuana/cannabis.

Almost two-thirds of recent users most commonly used the heads of marijuana plants (65.4%). 'Hydro' was the next most common form of marijuana/cannabis used (two in five, or 41.4%) and a greater proportion of males (45.9%) than females (33.6%) recently used the drug in this form. Females used leaf more often than males (43.8% compared with 34.5%) and this form was third most common overall (37.9%) for recent users.

The majority of people who recently used marijuana/cannabis used one cone/joint/bong on a day when they used the drug. Recent users were more likely to smoke the drug as a joint/reefer/spliff (84.3%), followed by smoking in a bong or pipe (81.7%). Almost two-thirds of recent users combined marijuana/cannabis with tobacco (64.8%).

Source of supply

Over two-thirds of people obtained marijuana/cannabis from a friend or acquaintance (68.5%), with females (71.3%) more likely than males (66.9%) to obtain the drug this way (Table 7.4). Females (9.6%) obtained the drug from relatives in greater proportions than males (2.0%). Males were more likely than females to obtain the drug from marijuana/cannabis plants they grew themselves (3.8% versus 1.9%).

Usual place of use

The most common place to use marijuana/cannabis was a private home (87.9%), and in this there was little difference between males (87.8%) and females (88.1%) (Table 7.5). Almost half (49.6%) of males used the drug at private parties compared with 43.4% of females.

Concurrent drug use

The majority of recent users of marijuana/cannabis (87.3%) had used alcohol at the same time (Table 7.6). Almost three in ten recent users (28.3%) had used ecstasy or a designer drug at the same time. Males were more likely to have used another drug with marijuana/cannabis than were females for all other drugs except antidepressants (males 5.1%, females 7.7%).

Substitution of other drugs

When marijuana/cannabis was not available, alcohol was the most commonly used substitute—59.3% of recent users of marijuana/cannabis (males 63.7%, females 52.0%) (Table 7.7). One in three recent users (32.2%) used no other drug when marijuana/cannabis was not available, higher for females (two in five or 40.0%) than for males (one in four or 27.7%).

Marijuana/cannabis use by friends and acquaintances

For almost one in four (23.6%) recent users, most or all of their friends used marijuana/cannabis. This compares with less than one in a hundred (0.7%) among those who have never used the drug (Table 7.8).

Table 7.1: Marijuana/cannabis use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	20.0	49.5	54.6	24.5	37.1	30.0	33.5
In the last 12 months	12.9	20.8	12.1	3.9	11.6	6.6	9.1
In the last month	7.2	11.1	7.1	2.3	6.9	3.4	5.1
In the last week	3.9	7.5	4.9	1.8	4.9	2.2	3.5
	(number)						
In lifetime	344,400	1,455,300	1,659,000	2,333,000	3,156,800	2,616,100	5,771,200
In the last 12 months	222,600	612,000	368,700	369,900	988,800	574,400	1,561,900
In the last month	123,700	325,000	216,200	220,100	585,000	294,800	878,900
In the last week	66,800	219,000	148,200	173,600	414,800	189,600	603,700

Table 7.2: Frequency of marijuana/cannabis use, recent users aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Frequency	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
Every day	10.7	13.4	17.7	17.1	16.4	12.3	14.9
Once a week or more	16.8	17.0	19.5	26.6	21.6	16.7	19.8
About once a month	15.3	13.0	11.6	10.5	13.4	10.7	12.4
Every few months	22.9	21.1	18.1	15.5	18.9	20.2	19.3
Once or twice a year	34.3	35.5	33.1	30.3	29.8	40.0	33.5

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 7.3: Form of marijuana/cannabis used, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Form of drug	Males	Females	Persons
Head	69.1	59.0	65.4
Hydro	45.9	33.6	41.4
Leaf	34.5	43.8	37.9
Resin (including hash)	12.7	9.5	11.5
Oil (including hash oil)	6.9	3.4	5.6
Other	3.3	4.7	3.8

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 7.4: Usual source of marijuana/cannabis, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Source	Males	Females	Persons
Friend or acquaintance	66.9	71.3	68.5
Dealer	23.3	12.9	19.5
Relative	2.0	9.6	4.8
Grew it myself	3.8	1.9	3.1
Other	4.1	4.2	4.1

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 7.5: Usual place of use of marijuana/cannabis, recent users aged 14 years or older, 2007 (per cent)

Place	Males	Females	Persons
In a private home	87.8	88.1	87.9
At private parties	49.6	43.4	47.3
In a car or other vehicle	21.0	14.1	18.5
In public places (e.g. parks)	20.8	14.0	18.3
At raves/dance parties	10.1	6.5	8.8
At public establishment	9.8	4.1	7.7
At work or school/TAFE/university, etc.	5.8	2.4	4.6
Somewhere else	11.0	7.3	9.6

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 7.6: Other drugs used with marijuana/cannabis, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	90.1	82.7	87.3
Ecstasy/designer drugs	29.8	25.8	28.3
Meth/amphetamine	26.8	18.7	23.8
Cocaine/crack	13.5	8.0	11.5
Pain-killers/analgesics	9.8	8.4	9.3
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	9.3	5.3	7.8
Antidepressants	5.1	7.7	6.1
Heroin	4.4	2.6	3.8
Barbiturates	2.0	1.9	1.9
Other	7.9	4.2	6.6
None	5.6	14.2	8.8

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 7.7: Other drugs used to substitute for marijuana/cannabis when marijuana/cannabis not available, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	63.7	52.0	59.3
Ecstasy/designer drugs	2.2	2.4	2.3
Pain-killers/analgesics	0.9	* 0.6	0.8
Meth/amphetamine	* 0.6	1.1	0.8
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	* 0.5	0.9	0.6
Antidepressants	0.9	* 0.1	0.6
Heroin	0.7	* 0.3	0.6
Cocaine/crack	* 0.4	* 0.5	0.4
Barbiturates	—	* 0.5	* 0.2
Other	1.9	1.5	1.8
A cocktail or combination of drugs	* 0.6	* 0.2	0.4
No other drug	27.7	40.0	32.2

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 7.8: Marijuana/cannabis use by friends and acquaintances, persons aged 14 years or older, by use status, 2007 (per cent)

Proportion of friends	Never used	Ex-users	Recent users	All
All or most	0.7	2.4	23.6	3.3
About half or fewer	22.7	64.7	72.3	37.7
None	76.6	32.9	4.1	59.0

8 Pharmaceuticals used for non-medical purposes

In this report, the use of pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes refers to the use of pain-killers/analgesics, tranquillisers, barbiturates and/or steroids in ways not medically intended, whether under prescription or available over-the-counter. Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Summary

In 2007, over 1.2 million people had ever used a pharmaceutical drug for a non-medical purpose with about half having done so in the previous 12 months. The difference between males and females was small for lifetime and recent use and across pain-killer/analgesics and tranquillisers. However, males used steroids in greater proportions than females. Males used pharmaceutical drugs for non-medical purposes more frequently than females.

Key findings

Use of pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes

In 2007, 7.0% of Australians aged 14 years or older (1.2 million) had used pain-killers, tranquillisers, barbiturates and/or steroids for non-medical purposes in their lifetime (Table 8.1). About half of these (3.6% or 0.6 million) had done so in the previous 12 months.

Whereas males were more likely than females to have used pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes in their lifetime (7.6% versus 6.4%), equal proportions of males and females (3.6%) had used these drugs in the 12 months before the survey.

Australians aged 20–29 years were more likely than those in the other age groups to have used pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes in their lifetime (10.3%), in the previous 12 months (5.4%) and in the previous month (2.4%).

Recent use

In the previous 12 months 2007, the pharmaceutical most likely to have been used, for non-medical purposes, in the previous 12 months, by Australians aged 14 years or older, was most likely to be pain-killers/analgesics (2.5%) (Table 8.2).

Recent use of pain-killers/analgesics and tranquillisers/sleeping pills was highest among persons aged 20–29 years.

Recent use of steroid and barbiturates was low and was similar across all age groups.

Frequency of use

Of recent users of pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes, the largest proportion used these drugs daily or weekly (Table 8.3). By age group, this generalisation was true for all but those aged 14–19, who used these drugs about once a month.

Source of supply

Of people who had used pain-killers for non-medical purposes in the previous 12 months, just over half (53.3%) usually obtained them from a shop/retail outlet.

'Friend or acquaintance' was the most commonly nominated source of supply for recent users of tranquillisers (39.8%) and 'other' was most commonly nominated for steroids (33.3%).

Usual place of use

Recent users of pain-killers most commonly used them in their own home (three in four, 76.6%). The next most common places of use were at a friend's house (one in ten, 10.6%) and in the workplace (7.6%).

Similarly, recent users of tranquillisers were most likely to use them in their own home (74.1%) or at a friend's house (18.5%), as were recent users of steroids (67.3% and 24.3%, respectively).

Concurrent drug use

Of recent users of pain-killers/analgesics, almost half (48.2%) used no other drug at the same time, one in three (31.0%) used alcohol, and 18.4% used marijuana/cannabis.

Of recent users of tranquillisers, 42.5% used alcohol, 34.1% used no other drug at the same time, and 25.2% used marijuana/cannabis.

Of recent users of steroids, 39.3% used no other drug at the same time, 30.5% used alcohol and 28.3% used pain-killers/analgesics.

Substitution of other drugs

Of recent users of pain-killers/analgesics, approximately two-thirds (63.1%) would make no substitution and 16.9% would use alcohol if pain-killers/analgesics were not available.

Of recent users of tranquillisers, 47.5% would make no substitution, 26% would use alcohol and 12.9% would use marijuana/cannabis.

Of recent users of steroids, 51.9% would make no substitution and 21.7% would use alcohol.

Table 8.1: Use of pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	4.2	10.3	8.6	6.0	7.6	6.4	7.0
In the last 12 months	2.8	5.4	3.5	3.2	3.6	3.6	3.6
In the last month	1.6	2.4	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.9
In the last week	0.7	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.1
	(number)						
In lifetime	72,300	301,400	260,400	572,500	647,100	559,100	1,205,800
In the last 12 months	48,700	159,000	106,100	301,200	303,900	310,600	614,600
In the last month	27,600	69,400	52,500	170,200	156,500	163,200	319,700
In the last week	11,800	33,500	33,100	106,500	84,400	100,600	185,000

Table 8.2: Recent use of selected pharmaceuticals, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Pharmaceutical	Age group				Aged 14+
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	
Males					
Pain-killers/analgesics	1.6	3.4	2.3	2.3	2.4
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	0.9	3.4	1.7	1.0	1.6
Steroids	* 0.4	0.6	* 0.3	* <0.1	0.2
Barbiturates	* 0.5	* 0.4	* 0.2	* <0.1	0.2
Females					
Pain-killers/analgesics	2.6	3.4	2.5	2.6	2.7
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	1.2	2.4	1.4	0.7	1.2
Steroids	—	—	* <0.1	* <0.1	* <0.1
Barbiturates	* 0.3	* 0.2	* 0.1	—	0.1
Persons					
Pain-killers/analgesics	2.0	3.4	2.4	2.4	2.5
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	1.1	2.9	1.6	0.9	1.4
Steroids	* 0.2	0.3	* 0.1	* <0.1	0.1
Barbiturates	* 0.4	0.3	0.2	* <0.1	0.1

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 8.3: Frequency of pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes use, recent users aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Frequency	Age group				Sex		
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	Persons
Daily or weekly	21.8	33.0	28.9	34.3	35.8	25.6	31.5
About once a month	27.6	21.2	9.7	16.9	23.7	10.5	18.2
Every few months	26.3	27.1	22.9	17.7	22.8	23.9	23.3
Once or twice a year	24.3	18.8	38.5	31.0	17.8	39.9	27.1

Note: Base is recent users.

9 Hallucinogens

This chapter presents information about the use of natural and synthetic hallucinogens (combined) by Australians aged 14 years or older in 2007. Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Summary

The recent use of natural and synthetic hallucinogens was most common among 20–29 year olds, although those aged 30–39 years had the greatest proportion of lifetime use. Magic mushrooms are the most commonly used form, and the majority of users at all ages use hallucinogens infrequently.

Key findings

Use of hallucinogens

In 2007, over 1 million Australians aged 14 years or older had used hallucinogens in their lifetime, 106,100 of them in the 12 months before the survey (Table 9.1). A higher proportion of males than females had used hallucinogens in their lifetime and in the previous 12 months. However, differences were very small between the sexes for use in the previous month and in the previous week. Australians aged 30–39 years were more likely than those in the other age groups to have used hallucinogens in their lifetime.

Frequency, form and quantity of use

Of the 106,100 recent users of hallucinogens, 17.5% used them once or more a month, but this proportion varied markedly by age and sex (Table 9.2). The majority of users (65.8%) at all ages and both sexes were relatively infrequent users (once or twice a year).

The most common form of hallucinogens used was magic mushrooms (69.6% of recent users), followed by LSD tabs (62.0%) (Table 9.3).

The most common number of trips normally used by recent users of hallucinogens was one (67.7%) but the highest average number of trips usually had (2.5) was among males aged 30–39 years.

Source of supply and usual place of use

The most common source of hallucinogens for recent users was a friend or acquaintance (56.3%), followed by 'grew/made/picked it' (20.5%) (Table 9.4).

Users most commonly used hallucinogens in a home (74.5%), followed by private parties (43.7%) (Table 9.5).

There were few differences between males and females, although females were almost twice as likely to use hallucinogens at a public establishment (22.1% compared with 11.7%).

Concurrent drug use and substitution of other drugs

Almost two-thirds of recent users (65.1%) had used alcohol in combination with hallucinogens, with a greater proportion of females (69.4%) than males (63.3%) using these drugs in combination (Table 9.6). Over half (59.3%) had used marijuana/cannabis in combination with hallucinogens, with a greater proportion of males than females using them in combination (64.6% versus 47.0%). Females were more likely than males to use no other drug in combination with hallucinogens (22.8% versus 12.5%).

Marijuana/cannabis was the most likely drug to be used by recent users as a substitute for hallucinogens (24.3%) (Table 9.7). The second most commonly used drug in place of hallucinogens was alcohol (22.2%).

Use by friends and acquaintances

Of recent users of hallucinogens, over three-quarters (77.5%) had some friends who also used hallucinogens, compared with 28.5% of ex-users and 4.5% of those who had never used hallucinogens (Table 9.8).

Table 9.1: Hallucinogens use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	1.6	10.1	13.3	4.5	8.5	4.9	6.7
In the last 12 months	1.2	2.1	0.6	0.1	0.9	0.4	0.6
In the last month	* 0.3	0.5	* 0.1	* <0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
In the last week	* 0.3	—	—	—	0.1	* <0.1	<0.1
	(number)						
In lifetime	27,100	298,100	405,700	424,800	725,100	426,900	1,151,300
In the last 12 months	21,300	60,700	17,000	8,300	75,000	31,100	106,100
In the last month	* 5,900	14,100	* 2,900	* 2,100	18,800	6,000	24,800
In the last week	* 5,800	—	—	—	5,800	* 1,200	7,000

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 9.2: Frequency of hallucinogens use, recent users aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Frequency	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
One or more times a month	25.8	15.6	* 10.2	* 26.2	19.2	* 13.6	17.5
Every few months	* 14.1	20.0	* 12.9	* 2.8	13.7	23.7	16.6
Once or twice a year	60.1	64.3	76.9	* 71.0	67.1	62.7	65.8

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 9.3: Form of hallucinogens used, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Form	Males	Females	Persons
LSD/tabs	62.9	59.7	62.0
LSD/liquid	20.2	16.8	19.2
Magic mushrooms	72.7	62.5	69.6
Datura/angel's trumpet	* 5.7	* 2.1	* 4.7
Other	12.7	17.6	14.2

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 9.4: Usual source of hallucinogens, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Source	Males	Females	Persons
Friend or acquaintance	55.6	57.9	56.3
Grew/made/picked it	25.8	* 8.2	20.5
Dealer	11.6	* 7.4	10.4
Relative	—	* 14.7	* 4.5
Other	* 7.0	* 11.7	8.4

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 9.5: Usual place of use of hallucinogens, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Place	Males	Females	Persons
In a home	75.0	73.2	74.5
At private parties	42.6	46.4	43.7
At raves/dance parties	36.3	40.7	37.6
In public places (for example, parks)	28.1	28.2	28.1
At public establishment	11.7	22.1	14.8
In a car or other vehicle	* 6.8	* 5.2	6.3
At work or school/TAFE/university, etc.	* 1.4	—	* 1.0
Somewhere else	14.1	* 6.2	11.7

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 9.6: Other drugs used with hallucinogens, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	63.3	69.4	65.1
Marijuana/cannabis	64.6	47.0	59.3
Ecstasy/designer drugs	33.3	37.2	34.4
Methamphetamines/amphetamine	17.6	16.6	17.3
Cocaine/crack	* 6.1	* 11.8	7.8
Antidepressants	* 5.0	* 5.0	* 5.0
Pain-killers/analgesics	* 0.6	* 1.4	* 0.8
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	* 0.7	—	* 0.5
Heroin	—	—	—
Barbiturates	—	—	—
Other	* 6.9	* 13.6	8.9
None	12.5	22.8	15.6

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 9.7: Other drugs used to substitute for hallucinogens when hallucinogens not available, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Marijuana/cannabis	29.8	* 10.9	24.3
Alcohol	21.9	22.8	22.2
Ecstasy	15.8	19.5	16.9
Meth/amphetamine	* 2.7	* 2.8	* 2.7
Cocaine/crack	—	* 7.0	* 2.0
Heroin	* 1.4	—	* 1.0
Antidepressants	—	—	—
Barbiturates	—	—	—
Pain-killers/analgesics	—	—	—
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	—	—	—
Other	* 2.4	—	* 1.7
A cocktail or combination of drugs	* 3.2	—	* 2.3
No other drug	22.7	37.1	26.9

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 9.8: Use of hallucinogens by friends and acquaintances, persons aged 14 years or older, by use status, 2007 (per cent)

Proportion of friends	Never used	Ex-users	Recent users	All
All or most	0.1	* 0.4	* 3.9	0.2
About half or less	4.4	28.1	73.6	6.3
None	95.4	71.5	22.5	93.5

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

10 Heroin, methadone and other opioids

This chapter presents data on use of heroin, methadone for non-maintenance purposes and other opioids (termed opiates in the survey) such as morphine and pethidine for non-medical purposes. The survey's coverage of other opioids was not the same as for heroin and methadone; therefore, some of the information below does not include other opioids. Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Summary

In 2007, nearly 350,000 Australians aged 14 years or older had used heroin, methadone and/or other opioids in their lifetime. About 57,000 Australians had used these drugs in the previous 12 months. Of those recent users, most used at least once a week and usually used rock heroin or physeptone tablets. Most recent users of these drugs injected them, and were equally likely to obtain them from a friend or dealer. Most recent users used these drugs in their own home or at a friend's house. If they chose to use other drugs concurrently or in place of opiates, they most often chose to use alcohol, marijuana or tranquillisers/sleeping pills.

Key findings

Use of heroin, methadone and/or other opioids

In 2007, 347,900 Australians aged 14 years or older had used heroin, methadone and/or other opioids in their lifetime (Table 10.1). Roughly twice as many males as females had used opioids in their lifetime (226,700 versus 121,500). For recent use, this variation was reduced, to 36,800 versus 20,200. The average age at which Australians first used heroin was 21.9 years, and for methadone it was 23.3 years.

Frequency, form and quantity used

Of recent users of heroin and/or methadone, three in five (60.9%) used these drugs weekly or more frequently. Approximately 14.3% used them only once or twice a year (Table 10.2).

The most common form of heroin used by recent users was rock heroin (76.6%), followed by heroin powder (58.1%). The most common form of illicit methadone used was physeptone tablets (23.8%). Methadone syrup was used illicitly by 7.5% of recent users. The most common form of other opiates used illicitly by recent opiate users was morphine (63.7%).

On a day when heroin was used, about half of recent heroin users had one, two or three hits, with an overall average of 2.6 hits. On a day when methadone was used, the majority of recent users of methadone had one dose.

Method of use

Nine in ten recent heroin users (89.0%) injected heroin, and two in three (57.7%) smoked it. One-third of recent illicit methadone users (39.4%) swallowed methadone, and three-

quarters (73.9%) injected it. Other opioids were most commonly injected (51.6%) or swallowed (50.4%).

Source of supply

Of recent users of heroin, 29.1% obtained it from a friend or acquaintance, and about the same proportion had obtained it from a dealer (28.3%). Of recent users of methadone, 75.8% obtained it from family, an acquaintance or a dealer.

Usual place of use

Of recent users of heroin, 67.6% used it in their own home, and 51.1% used it at a friend's house. Of recent users of methadone, 36.1% used it in their own home, and 25.4% used it at a friend's house.

Concurrent drug use

Of recent users of heroin, 66.4% had used marijuana/cannabis and 39.5% had drunk alcohol on the same occasion they had used heroin. Of recent users of methadone, 30.6% had used marijuana/cannabis and 28.8% had drunk alcohol. Of recent users of other opioids, 35.7% had used marijuana/cannabis and 25.3% had drunk alcohol.

Substitution of other drugs

Of recent users of heroin, 24.9% had substituted marijuana/cannabis, 16.7% had substituted tranquillisers/sleeping pills and 14.0% had not used another drug when heroin was not available. Of recent users of methadone for non-maintenance purposes, 28.9% had substituted tranquillisers and 24.2% had used alcohol.

Table 10.1: Heroin, methadone and/or other opiate use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	0.5	2.7	3.3	1.7	2.7	1.4	2.0
In the last 12 months	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.3
In the last month ^(a)	* 0.1	0.2	0.3	<0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
In the last week ^(a)	* 0.1	* 0.2	0.2	* <0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
	(number)						
In lifetime	8,500	79,000	99,800	161,400	226,700	121,500	347,900
In the last 12 months	7,800	19,100	15,800	14,600	36,800	20,200	56,900
In the last month ^(a)	* 1,900	7,200	8,700	4,500	15,100	7,100	22,200
In the last week ^(a)	* 900	* 6,800	7,100	* 4,200	14,000	4,900	18,900

(a) Heroin and methadone only; excludes other opioids.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 10.2: Frequency of heroin, methadone and/or other opiate use, recent users aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Frequency	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
Daily or weekly	* 66.1	37.8	* 80.0	* 85.7	56.0	* 73.1	60.9
Monthly	* 33.9	45.9	* 2.1	—	31.1	* 9.2	24.8
Once or twice a year	—	* 16.3	* 18.0	* 14.3	* 12.9	* 17.7	14.3

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

11 Meth/amphetamine

This chapter presents summary information on use of meth/amphetamine among Australians aged 14 years or older. All meth/amphetamine use in this chapter relates to use for non-medical purposes. Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Summary

As for most drugs, males and those aged 20–29 years were more likely than females or those of other ages to have used meth/amphetamine. Powder remains the most common form used and most users obtained this drug from a friend or acquaintance. The majority of recent users consumed alcohol concurrently with meth/amphetamine.

Key findings

Use of meth/amphetamine

Of Australians aged 14 years or older:

- Over 1 million (6.3%) had ever used meth/amphetamine.
- About one in forty (2.3%, 394,800) had used meth/amphetamine for non-medical purposes in the 12 months before the survey (Table 11.1). Males were more likely than females to have used meth/amphetamine.
- People aged 20–29 years were more likely than those in the other age groups to have used meth/amphetamine.
- The average age at which Australians first used meth/amphetamine was 20.9 years.

Frequency of use

Of the 394,800 recent users of meth/amphetamine for non-medical purposes, 14.2% used them at least once a week, and a further 21.5% had used about once a month (Table 11.2). The most common frequency of use was once or twice a year (37.7% of recent users).

Form and quantity used

Powder was the most common form of meth/amphetamine used, with 80.1% of recent users having ever used this form of the drug; a greater proportion of males (82.9%) than females (74.9%) used this form (Table 11.3). Recent users typically used 1, 2 or 5 points (10 points = 1 gram), although the average quantity was 4.3 points.

Source of supply

Nearly two-thirds (65.9%) of recent users typically obtained meth/amphetamine from a friend or acquaintance (Table 11.4). A further 27.0% obtained meth/amphetamine from a dealer.

Usual place of use

Both males (65.3%) and females (72.6%) were most likely to use meth/amphetamine in their own home or at a friend's house (Table 11.5). Substantial proportions used the drug at parties (50.3%) or other public establishments (38.3%).

Concurrent drug use

Eight in ten recent users (80.8%) had consumed alcohol with meth/amphetamine (on at least one occasion) (Table 11.6). Next most commonly, 62.8% of recent meth/amphetamine users had used marijuana/cannabis and 53.0% had used ecstasy.

Substitution of other drugs

When meth/amphetamine was not available, 38.3% substituted alcohol, with ecstasy the next most common substitute (17.2%) (Table 11.7).

Use by friends and acquaintances

Of recent users, 90.4% had at least some friends who used meth/amphetamine, compared with 53.4% of ex-users and 5.3% of those who had never used meth/amphetamine (Table 11.8).

Table 11.1: Meth/amphetamine use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	2.1	16.0	11.4	2.5	7.7	4.9	6.3
In the last 12 months	1.6	7.3	3.9	0.4	3.0	1.6	2.3
In the last month	0.9	3.5	1.8	0.1	1.4	0.7	1.0
In the last week	* 0.4	1.5	0.9	0.1	0.7	0.3	0.5
	(number)						
In lifetime	37,000	470,400	346,400	237,500	656,000	426,000	1,081,200
In the last 12 months	26,900	214,700	118,300	39,900	256,300	138,800	394,800
In the last month	14,700	101,500	53,500	11,000	118,500	59,800	178,100
In the last week	* 7,000	42,700	28,000	5,100	57,500	24,200	81,600

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 11.2: Frequency of meth/amphetamine use, recent users aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Frequency	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
Daily or weekly	* 11.9	16.1	11.5	14.2	15.4	12.0	14.2
About once a month	37.3	22.8	17.5	15.6	22.7	19.2	21.5
Every few months	21.4	29.4	27.1	13.7	24.9	29.9	26.6
Once or twice a year	29.4	31.7	43.9	56.4	37.0	38.9	37.7

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 11.3: Form of meth/amphetamine used, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Form of drug	Forms ever used			Main form used		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Powder	82.9	74.9	80.1	53.6	46.6	51.2
Crystal	50.1	58.4	53.0	25.8	28.5	26.7
Base/paste/pure	39.2	30.4	36.1	10.8	15.4	12.4
Tablet	27.0	21.1	24.9	6.1	* 3.3	5.1
Prescription amphetamines	15.3	18.8	16.5	* 2.6	4.3	3.2
Liquid	14.8	11.7	13.7	* 1.1	* 1.7	* 1.3

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 11.4: Usual source of meth/amphetamine, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Source	Males	Females	Persons
Friend or acquaintance	62.0	73.0	65.9
Dealer	31.1	19.7	27.0
Relative	4.3	5.6	4.8
Other	* 2.6	* 1.7	2.3

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 11.5: Usual place of use of meth/amphetamine, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Place	Males	Females	Persons
In a home	65.3	72.6	67.8
At private parties	50.7	49.7	50.3
At public establishment	40.2	34.7	38.3
At raves/dance parties	37.6	37.1	37.4
In a car or other vehicle	20.2	20.0	20.1
In public places (e.g. parks)	16.2	10.0	14.0
At work or school/TAFE/university, etc.	8.0	5.7	7.2
Somewhere else	9.9	9.7	9.8

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 11.6: Other drugs used with meth/amphetamine, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	82.9	77.0	80.8
Marijuana/cannabis	67.3	54.4	62.8
Ecstasy	56.1	47.5	53.0
Cocaine/crack	22.8	13.8	19.6
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	14.1	10.9	13.0
Pain-killers/analgesics	9.9	15.0	11.7
Antidepressants	6.0	8.7	7.0
Other	8.6	* 1.4	6.1
Heroin	6.2	4.6	5.6
GHB	6.7	* 2.9	5.3
Ketamine	5.8	3.5	5.0
Barbiturates	* 0.9	* 3.0	1.7
None	* 1.0	5.4	2.5

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 11.7: Other drugs used to substitute for meth/amphetamine when meth/amphetamine not available, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	37.0	40.5	38.3
Ecstasy	16.1	19.4	17.2
Marijuana/cannabis	18.1	9.8	15.2
GHB	3.2	4.1	3.5
Heroin	* 2.3	* 1.1	1.9
Cocaine/crack	* 2.1	* 1.3	1.8
A cocktail or combination of drugs	* 2.2	* 0.5	1.6
Other	* 1.1	* 0.9	* 1.0
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	* 1.6	—	* 1.0
Pain-killers/analgesics	—	* 0.2	* 0.1
No other drug	16.3	22.3	18.4

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 11.8: Meth/amphetamine use by friends and acquaintances, persons aged 14 years or older, by use status, 2007 (per cent)

Proportion of friends	Never used	Ex-users	Recent users	All
All or most	0.1	1.7	15.9	0.5
About half or less	5.2	51.7	74.5	8.4
None	94.7	46.6	9.7	91.1

12 Ecstasy

This chapter presents findings on the use of ecstasy. In the 2001 and earlier surveys, ecstasy was analysed as ecstasy/designer drugs, with the term 'designer drugs' never being defined in the survey. The 2004 and 2007 surveys separated out ecstasy, ketamine and GHB, and did not cover any other 'designer drugs'. In this report, ketamine and GHB are discussed in the next chapter.

Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Summary

Among Australians aged 14 years or older, recent use of ecstasy (3.5%) was second only to marijuana (9.1%) of all illicit drugs surveyed. About 600,000 people had used ecstasy in the previous 12 months. Males aged 20–29 years were more likely than others to use ecstasy. On average, recent users took 1.6 pills when they used the drug and were most likely to consume them at a rave or dance party. Most recent ecstasy users also consumed alcohol at the same time they used ecstasy.

Key findings

Use of ecstasy

Of Australians aged 14 years or older:

- Over 1.5 million (8.9%) had used ecstasy at any time in their life.
- Approximately 608,400 (3.5%) had used ecstasy in the previous 12 months (Table 12.1).
- Males were more likely than females to have ever used ecstasy.
- Those aged 20–29 years were more likely than those in the other age groups to have used ecstasy.
- The average age at which Australians used ecstasy for the first time was 22.6 years.

Frequency of use

Of the 600,000 recent users of ecstasy, 8.3% used it at least once a week (Table 12.2). Among 14–19-year-old users, 17.3% used ecstasy at least once a week, but 50.2% used it only once or twice a year.

Quantity used

On a day when ecstasy was used, most recent users of ecstasy (87.9%) normally had two or fewer pills, with an overall average of 1.6 pills.

Source of supply

The majority (72.2%) of recent users typically obtained the drug from a friend or acquaintance (Table 12.3). A further 21.6% obtained ecstasy from a dealer.

Usual place of use

Of recent users of ecstasy, 60.5% used it at raves/dance parties, but sizeable proportions also used it at public establishments (52.2%), at private parties (53.5%) and in a home (48.2%) (Table 12.4).

Concurrent drug use

The majority of recent ecstasy users (85.4%) had drunk alcohol at the same time, half (49.2%) had used marijuana/cannabis, and 28.7% had used meth/amphetamine on the same occasion they were using ecstasy (Table 12.5).

Substitution of other drugs

Almost half of recent ecstasy users (46.2%) had substituted alcohol for ecstasy, while 17.3% had used meth/amphetamine and 11.3% had used marijuana/cannabis, when ecstasy was not available (Table 12.6).

Use by friends and acquaintances

Most recent users (95.2%) had some friends and acquaintances who used ecstasy, compared with 13.0% of those who never used ecstasy (Table 12.7).

Table 12.1: Ecstasy use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	6.0	23.9	17.0	2.4	10.2	7.6	8.9
In the last 12 months	5.0	11.2	4.7	0.6	4.4	2.7	3.5
In the last month	1.8	4.6	1.6	0.1	1.7	0.9	1.3
In the last week	0.9	2.0	0.6	* <0.1	0.7	0.4	0.5
	(number)						
In lifetime	102,600	701,700	516,000	224,400	866,000	648,900	1,530,700
In the last 12 months	85,800	330,200	144,000	54,900	375,100	227,900	608,400
In the last month	30,500	133,800	47,500	13,800	144,400	76,800	222,900
In the last week	15,400	59,200	18,300	* 2,500	61,800	31,700	94,300

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 12.2: Frequency of ecstasy use, recent users aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Frequency	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
Daily or weekly	17.3	8.5	4.7	* 1.9	8.5	7.8	8.3
About once a month	10.8	24.3	6.7	* 7.3	18.1	14.6	16.8
Every few months	21.8	30.0	30.6	29.2	29.8	27.4	28.9
Once or twice a year	50.2	37.2	58.1	61.6	43.5	50.1	46.0

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 12.3: Usual source of ecstasy, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Source	Males	Females	Persons
Friend or acquaintance	72.1	72.3	72.2
Dealer	24.3	17.1	21.6
Relative	* 0.9	6.8	3.2
Other	2.6	3.7	3.1

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 12.4: Usual place of use of ecstasy, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Place	Males	Females	Persons
At raves/dance parties	61.4	59.1	60.5
At public establishment	53.8	49.8	52.2
At private parties	55.4	50.4	53.5
In a home	50.1	45.1	48.2
In public places (e.g. parks)	10.3	10.6	10.4
In a car or other vehicle	5.7	5.4	5.6
At work or school/TAFE/university, etc.	* 0.5	* 2.2	1.2
Somewhere else	6.0	6.5	6.2

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 12.5: Other drugs used with ecstasy, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	84.6	86.7	85.4
Marijuana/cannabis	53.1	43.0	49.2
Heroin	* 1.7	* 1.4	1.6
Cocaine/crack	19.8	16.3	18.5
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	5.4	3.3	4.6
Antidepressants	3.1	4.9	3.8
Pain-killers/analgesics	3.3	2.4	2.9
Barbiturates	* 0.3	* 0.7	* 0.5
Meth/amphetamine	29.1	28.1	28.7
Viagra	3.9	* 0.6	2.6
GHB	4.3	* 1.2	3.1
Ketamine	6.1	3.2	5.0
Other	5.0	3.2	4.3
None	4.5	6.2	5.2

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 12.6: Other drugs used to substitute for ecstasy when ecstasy not available, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	47.0	44.8	46.2
Marijuana/cannabis	10.8	11.9	11.3
Heroin	* 0.3	—	* 0.2
Cocaine/crack	2.5	3.8	3.0
Antidepressants	* 0.3	—	* 0.2
Pain-killers/analgesics	* 0.3	—	* 0.2
Barbiturates	* 0.3	—	* 0.2
Meth/amphetamine	16.3	18.9	17.3
GHB	* 0.8	—	* 0.5
Ketamine	* 0.6	—	* 0.4
Other	* 1.5	* 0.2	* 1.0
A cocktail or combination of drugs	* 1.1	* 0.7	* 0.9
None	18.3	19.7	18.9

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 12.7: Ecstasy use by friends and acquaintances, persons aged 14 years or older, by user status, 2007 (per cent)

Proportion of friends	Never used	Ex-users	Recent users	All
All or most	0.3	3.0	19.9	1.2
About half or less	12.7	67.9	75.3	18.0
None	87.0	29.1	4.8	80.8

13 Designer drugs—ketamine and GHB

This chapter presents data on use of ketamine and GHB. The survey had limited coverage of these drugs because of their low prevalence in the community. Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text. Estimates should be interpreted with caution.

Summary

In 2007, use of ketamine and GHB by Australians aged 14 years or older was very limited. About 30,000 Australians had used ketamine in the previous 12 months and about 17,000 had used GHB in the same period. The average age of initiation was older for these two drugs than for other illicit drugs surveyed. Most recent ketamine and GHB users took the drugs only once or twice per year. Most recent users did not have friends or acquaintances who also took these substances.

Key findings

Use of ketamine and GHB

Ketamine

In 2007, 32,500 Australians aged 14 years or older had used ketamine in the previous 12 months (Table 13.1). Males were more likely than females to have ever used ketamine or used it in the previous 12 months. The average age at which Australians aged 14 years or older first used ketamine was 24.0 years (males 23.8 years; females 24.3 years).

GHB

In 2007, 17,300 Australians aged 14 years or older had used GHB in the previous 12 months (Table 13.2). Males were more likely than females to have ever used GHB or used it in the previous 12 months. The average age at which Australians aged 14 years or older first used GHB was 24.6 years (males 25.3 years; females 22.8 years).

Frequency of use of ketamine and GHB

Of recent users of ketamine, 51.1% used the drug once or twice a year, and a further 27.3% used it every few months (Table 13.3). Similarly, 56.6% of recent users of GHB did so once or twice a year.

Concurrent drug use with ketamine and GHB

Ketamine

Of recent users of ketamine, three quarters (73.5%) had drunk alcohol, half (53.6%) had used Viagra and a quarter (24.0%) had used marijuana/cannabis at the same time as using ketamine (Table 13.4).

GHB

Of recent users of GHB, almost all had used alcohol at the same time as GHB.

Ketamine and GHB use by friends and acquaintances

Ketamine

Most recent users of ketamine (80.9%) had some friends who used ketamine, compared with 35.0% of ex-users and 1.5% of those who had never used ketamine (Table 13.5).

GHB

Most recent users of GHB (91.5%) had some friends who used GHB, compared with 44.3% of ex-users and 1.8% of those who had never used GHB (Table 13.6).

Table 13.1: Ketamine use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	* 0.3	3.3	2.2	0.2	1.6	0.6	1.1
In the last 12 months	* 0.3	0.6	* 0.2	<0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2
In the last month	* 0.1	* 0.1	* <0.1	* <0.1	* 0.1	* <0.1	<0.1
In the last week	* 0.1	—	* <0.1	* <0.1	* <0.1	* <0.1	* <0.1
	(number)						
In lifetime	* 4,700	98,400	65,900	21,000	133,300	54,800	188,000
In the last 12 months	* 4,600	18,900	* 4,800	4,600	25,200	7,300	32,500
In the last month	* 1,600	* 1,700	* 1,400	* 2,200	* 4,900	* 2,000	6,900
In the last week	* 1,600	—	* 1,400	* 600	* 1,900	* 1,700	* 3,600

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 13.2: GHB use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	* 0.4	1.5	1.0	0.1	0.8	0.3	0.5
In the last 12 months	* 0.1	0.5	* <0.1	* <0.1	0.2	* <0.1	0.1
In the last month	—	* 0.2	* <0.1	—	0.1	—	<0.1
In the last week	—	—	* <0.1	—	* <0.1	—	* <0.1
	(number)						
In lifetime	* 6,100	45,300	29,100	10,900	64,000	26,400	90,300
In the last 12 months	* 2,000	14,800	* 700	* 100	15,000	* 2,300	17,300
In the last month	—	* 6,900	* 100	—	6,900	—	6,900
In the last week	—	—	* 100	—	* 100	—	* 100

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 13.3: Frequency of ketamine and GHB use, recent users aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug/frequency	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
Ketamine							
Daily or weekly	—	—	26.9	16.2	7.7	—	6.0
About once a month	29.1	19.5	—	—	16.4	12.9	15.6
Every few months	—	38.0	—	40.7	32.5	9.9	27.3
Once or twice a year	70.9	42.6	73.1	43.1	43.4	77.2	51.1
GHB							
Daily or weekly	—	14.6	19.2	—	15.0	—	13.0
About once a month	—	29.7	—	—	28.8	—	25.0
Every few months	48.2	—	—	—	—	41.0	5.4
Once or twice a year	51.8	55.7	80.8	100.0	56.2	59.0	56.6

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 13.4: Other drugs used with ketamine, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	75.7	* 65.9	73.5
Marijuana/cannabis	28.3	* 9.1	24.0
Heroin	* 1.5	—	* 1.2
Cocaine/crack	* 14.7	* 29.2	18.0
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	—	* 5.8	* 1.3
Antidepressants	* 1.5	* 26.1	* 7.1
Pain-killers/analgesics	* 4.0	* 20.9	* 7.8
Barbiturates	—	—	—
Meth/amphetamine	* 21.4	* 16.9	20.4
Viagra	59.7	* 32.9	53.6
GHB	* 17.2	* 12.7	* 16.1
Other	* 15.2	—	* 11.7
None	* 7.8	* 6.1	* 7.4

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 13.5: Ketamine use by friends and acquaintances, persons aged 14 years or older, by user status, 2007 (per cent)

Proportion of friends	Never used	Ex-users	Recent users	All
All or most	0.1	* 1.4	* 16.5	0.1
About half or less	1.4	33.6	64.4	1.8
None	98.5	65.0	19.2	98.1

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 13.6: GHB use by friends and acquaintances, persons aged 14 years or older, by user status, 2007 (per cent)

Proportion of friends	Never used	Ex-users	Recent users	All
All or most	0.1	* 3.0	* 18.1	0.1
About half or less	1.7	41.3	* 73.4	1.9
None	98.2	55.7	* 8.5	98.0

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

14 Cocaine

This chapter presents data on the use of cocaine in 2007 by Australians aged 14 years or older. Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Unlike use of most other drugs surveyed, recent cocaine use increased between 2004 (1.0%) and 2007 (1.6%) (AIHW 2008b).

Summary

In 2007, over 1 million Australians aged 14 years or older had ever used cocaine and almost 300,000 had used it in the previous 12 months. The highest levels of cocaine use were seen in the 20–29 years age group. Of recent users, overall, most had used only once or twice in the previous 12 months. Almost all recent users used cocaine powder. On a day they used cocaine, about half of recent users had two or fewer hits/lines. Most users usually obtained cocaine from a friend or acquaintance and usually used the drug in their own home or at a friend's house. Among recent users, one in ten reported that all of or most of their friends use cocaine.

Key findings

Use of cocaine

Of Australians aged 14 years or older, over 1 million (5.9%) had ever used cocaine and 281,100 (1.6%) had used it in the previous 12 months (Table 14.1). The highest levels of cocaine use were seen in the 20–29 years age group – 11.9% had ever used cocaine and 5.1% had used in cocaine in the previous 12 months. The average age at which Australians used cocaine for the first time was 23.1 years.

Frequency of use

Of recent users of cocaine, 18.9% had used it at least once a month (Table 14.2). Males were more likely than females to use cocaine every few months or more often. Of recent users overall, 57.6% had used it only once or twice in the previous 12 months.

Form, quantity and method of use

Almost all (96.9%) recent users used cocaine powder; one in seven (13.7%) used crack cocaine. On a day they used cocaine, about half of recent users had two or fewer hits/lines. Of recent users, 95.2% had snorted cocaine; 7.9% had injected it.

Source of supply

Three-quarters of recent users (74.4%) usually obtained cocaine from a friend or acquaintance (Table 14.3). The next most common source of cocaine was a dealer (20.1%).

Usual place of use

Seven in ten recent users (70.5%) usually used cocaine in their own home or at a friend's house, and just over half (55.7%) used it at private parties (Table 14.4).

Concurrent drug use

The majority (86.9%) of recent users had consumed alcohol when using cocaine (Table 14.5). Nearly half of recent cocaine users had used it with ecstasy (43.3%) and/or marijuana/cannabis (43.8%).

Substitution of other drugs

Of recent cocaine users, 34.4% had drunk alcohol, 19.5% had used ecstasy and 23.0% had not used another drug when cocaine was unavailable (Table 14.6).

Use by friends and acquaintances

Of recent cocaine users, 90.7% had friends and acquaintances who also used it, including 10.2% who reported that all or most of their friends were cocaine users (Table 14.7).

Table 14.1: Cocaine use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	2.0	11.9	11.4	3.1	7.3	4.6	5.9
In the last 12 months	1.1	5.1	2.9	0.3	2.2	1.0	1.6
In the last month	0.8	1.3	0.8	0.1	0.6	0.4	0.5
In the last week	* 0.3	0.5	* 0.1	* <0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2
	(number)						
In lifetime	34,000	348,400	346,000	291,900	617,700	397,200	1,014,400
In the last 12 months	19,000	148,900	86,800	29,500	190,800	90,600	281,100
In the last month	14,100	37,700	23,900	6,700	50,200	31,300	81,500
In the last week	* 5,800	14,800	* 4,000	* 1,900	19,800	6,500	26,300

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 14.2: Frequency of cocaine use, recent users aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Frequency	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
Once a month or more	58.3	17.1	15.3	* 13.4	20.0	16.4	18.9
Every few months	* 11.1	21.1	25.0	39.2	25.8	18.6	23.5
Once or twice a year	* 30.7	61.9	59.6	47.4	54.1	65.0	57.6

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 14.3: Usual source of cocaine, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Source	Males	Females	Persons
Friend or acquaintance	69.6	84.5	74.4
Dealer	26.1	7.3	20.1
Relative	* 0.7	* 5.2	* 2.1
Other	* 3.6	* 3.0	3.4

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 14.4: Usual place of use of cocaine, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Place	Males	Females	Persons
In a home	65.5	81.1	70.5
At private parties	55.4	56.2	55.7
At public establishment	45.2	42.4	44.3
At raves/dance parties	34.4	30.7	33.2
In a car or other vehicle	9.6	16.4	11.8
At work or school/TAFE/university, etc.	* 3.9	* 5.1	4.3
In public places (e.g. parks)	6.5	* 5.7	6.2
Somewhere else	* 4.1	* 1.7	3.3

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 14.5: Other drugs used with cocaine, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	86.2	88.3	86.9
Marijuana/cannabis	46.9	34.3	42.8
Heroin	* 3.4	—	* 2.3
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	5.3	* 4.6	5.1
Antidepressants	* 1.9	7.2	3.6
Pain-killers/analgesics	* 3.2	* 1.7	2.7
Barbiturates	* 0.7	* 0.6	* 0.6
Meth/amphetamine	25.8	20.0	24.0
Ecstasy	43.2	43.4	43.3
GHB	* 0.8	* 1.4	* 1.0
Ketamine	5.8	* 4.2	5.3
Other	* 2.8	* 5.7	3.7
None	4.9	6.7	5.5

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 14.6: Other drugs used to substitute for cocaine when cocaine not available, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	35.0	33.1	34.4
Marijuana/cannabis	9.0	* 5.4	7.8
Heroin	* 0.7	—	* 0.4
Antidepressants	* 0.8	—	* 0.5
Pain-killers/analgesics	—	* 2.7	* 0.9
Meth/amphetamine	10.7	13.3	11.5
Ecstasy	18.5	21.4	19.5
Ketamine	* 1.5	* 1.0	* 1.4
A cocktail or combination of drugs	* 0.3	* 1.2	* 0.6
No other drug	23.5	21.8	23.0

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 14.7: Cocaine use by friends and acquaintances, persons aged 14 years or older, by user status, 2007 (per cent)

Proportion of friends	Never used	Ex-users	Recent users	All
All or most	0.1	1.3	10.2	0.3
About half or less	5.8	49.4	80.5	9.0
None	94.0	49.4	9.3	90.7

15 Inhalants

This chapter presents data on the use of volatile substances such as solvents, aerosols, glue and petrol used as inhalants. Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Summary

Almost 70,000 Australians aged 14 years or older had used inhalants in the previous 12 months before the survey, and about two-fifths of these used once a month or more. Alcohol, ecstasy and/or cannabis were commonly used at the same time as inhalants.

Key findings

Use of inhalants

Around 500,000 Australians aged 14 years or older (3.1%) had ever used inhalants—more males (3.9%) than females (2.3%) had done so (Table 15.1). Much lower proportions had used inhalants in the previous 12 months, with the highest prevalence being among 14–19 years-olds (1.1%).

Frequency of use and quantity used

Among recent users, 44.3% used inhalants once or more a month, with the remainder using less often (Table 15.2). The highest prevalence of monthly use was among those aged 40 years or older (69.4%).

On a day they used inhalants, the majority (78.0%) of recent users had 5 or fewer hits, although 13.5% had 10 or more hits, giving an average of 4.5 hits.

Source of supply

Two-fifths of recent users (41.0%) usually bought inhalants from a shop, and a further third (34.0%) obtained inhalants from a friend or acquaintance (Table 15.3).

Usual place of use

Male and female recent users were most likely to use inhalants in someone's home (70.1% and 74.3% respectively) (Table 15.4). A much smaller proportion (20.5% overall) used inhalants at private parties, with females about twice as likely as males (31.8% versus 16.6%) to use at those places.

Concurrent drug use

Almost half (46.4%) of recent users of inhalants also consumed alcohol with inhalants (Table 15.5). Around one-third (30.9%) of recent users also used ecstasy at the same time as inhalants, and one-quarter (26.6%) used marijuana/cannabis.

Substitution of other drugs

Nearly half (47.0%) of recent users did not substitute anything when inhalants were not available, although a quarter (23.2%) substituted alcohol (Table 15.6).

Use by friends and acquaintances

Of recent users, one-third (33.7%) reported that some of their friends and acquaintances used inhalants, with most of the remainder (66.3%) reporting that none of their friends or acquaintances did so (Table 15.7).

Table 15.1: Inhalants use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	2.0	5.2	6.1	1.8	3.9	2.3	3.1
In the last 12 months	1.1	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.4
In the last month	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.2
In the last week	* 0.3	* 0.1	* 0.1	0.1	0.2	* <0.1	0.1
	(number)						
In lifetime	34,200	152,200	185,500	167,300	334,900	202,100	536,700
In the last 12 months	19,300	20,100	12,900	17,700	52,000	17,600	69,600
In the last month	10,600	10,800	8,300	10,000	32,200	7,300	39,400
In the last week	* 5,100	* 3,900	* 4,300	7,000	18,200	* 2,100	20,300

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 15.2: Frequency of inhalants use, recent users aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Frequency	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
Once or more a month	45.3	* 21.0	45.4	69.4	51.4	24.5	44.3
Three or more times a year	27.9	35.2	* 24.6	23.7	24.6	38.8	28.3
Once or twice a year	26.8	43.8	* 30.1	* 6.8	24.1	36.7	27.4

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 15.3: Usual source of inhalants, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Source	Males	Females	Persons
Buy at shop	38.3	48.3	41.0
Friend or acquaintance	35.8	29.0	34.0
Doctor shopping/forged script	* 11.9	* 7.7	10.8
Relative	* 2.6	* 4.3	* 3.1
Other	* 11.4	* 10.7	11.2

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 15.4: Usual place of use of inhalants, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Place	Males	Females	Persons
In a home	70.1	74.3	71.2
At private parties	16.6	31.8	20.5
At raves/dance parties	16.4	* 10.6	14.9
In public places (e.g. parks)	* 8.8	30.4	14.3
At public establishment	11.8	* 13.1	12.1
In a car or other vehicle	10.5	* 16.2	12.0
At work or school/TAFE/university, etc.	* 2.4	* 3.8	* 2.8
Somewhere else	* 9.9	—	7.4

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 15.5: Other drugs used with inhalants, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	47.3	43.8	46.4
Ecstasy/designer drugs	31.4	29.4	30.9
Marijuana/cannabis	24.7	31.9	26.6
Meth/amphetamine	12.1	* 5.4	10.3
Cocaine/crack	* 9.5	* 4.0	* 8.1
Antidepressants	* 4.3	* 9.3	* 5.6
Pain-killers/analgesics	* 3.4	* 7.6	* 4.5
Heroin	* 3.4	* 5.4	* 3.9
Barbiturates	* 4.3	—	* 3.1
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	* 0.6	* 5.4	* 1.9
Other	—	* 5.5	* 1.4
None	28.4	40.3	31.5

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 15.6: Other drugs used to substitute for inhalants when inhalants not available, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
Alcohol	23.0	* 24.0	23.2
Marijuana/cannabis	12.4	* 17.9	13.9
Heroin	* 2.7	* 5.5	* 3.5
Pain-killers/analgesics	—	* 6.3	* 1.6
Ecstasy	* 10.4	* 5.1	9.0
Cocktail/combination of drugs	* 2.4	—	* 1.7
No other drug	49.1	41.2	47.0

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 15.7: Inhalants use by friends and acquaintances, persons aged 14 years or older, by use status, 2007 (per cent)

Proportion of friends	Never used	Ex-users	Recent users	All
All or most	0.1	* 0.4	* 1.6	0.1
About half or less	1.1	5.2	32.1	1.3
None	98.8	94.4	66.3	98.6

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

16 Injecting drugs

This chapter presents data on the use of injectable drugs that are not medically prescribed for injection. Some examples of injectable drugs are steroids, speed, heroin, pethidine, cocaine and ecstasy. Apart from the health risks of the illicit drugs themselves, further risks arise from injection, including infected injecting equipment.

Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Summary

About 80,000 Australians aged 14 years or older had injected illicit drugs in the 12 months before the survey. This practice was more common among males aged 20–39 years than other groups. About half of these users injected daily and the majority of recent injectors obtained their needles and syringes from a chemist. The majority of recent injectors had never shared a needle or other injecting equipment.

Key findings

Lifetime and recent injecting drug use

Of Australians aged 14 years or older (Table 16.1):

- 328,100 had ever injected illicit drugs (1.9%).
- 82,400 had injected illicit drugs in the previous 12 months (0.5%).
- People aged 20–29 years (2.6%) and 30–39 years (4.0%) were more likely than those in the other age groups to have ever injected illicit drugs.
- Males were more likely than females to have ever injected drugs (2.5% versus 1.3%) and in the previous 12 months (0.7% versus 0.3%).
- The average age at which users first injected illicit drugs was 21.3 years.

Frequency of injecting

Of the 82,400 recent illicit drug injectors, about three in ten (30.7%) injected daily, and about half (54.7%) injected once per week or less often (Table 16.2).

Source of injecting equipment

Of recent users, 58.7% usually obtained needles and syringes from a chemist (Table 16.3).

Re-use of needles and syringes

Of recent injecting drug users, 62.5% had never used a needle or other injecting equipment after someone else had already used it.

Similarly, for 58.7% of recent injecting drug users, no one else had ever used a needle or other injecting equipment after they had used it themselves.

Table 16.1: Injecting drug use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
In lifetime	0.7	2.6	4.0	1.2	2.5	1.3	1.9
In the last 12 months	* 0.4	1.0	1.0	0.2	0.7	0.3	0.5
(number)							
In lifetime	12,400	77,200	121,300	118,500	211,600	113,800	328,100
In the last 12 months	* 6,100	30,000	29,100	17,900	58,700	23,200	82,400

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 16.2: Frequency of injecting drug use, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Frequency	Males	Females	Persons
Daily	28.2	37.2	30.7
Twice a week or more but less than daily	15.4	* 12.4	14.6
Once a week or less	56.4	50.4	54.7

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users.

Table 16.3: Usual source of needles and syringes, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Source	Males	Females	Persons
Chemist	60.3	54.8	58.7
Needle and syringe program	53.6	46.0	51.4
Friends	22.0	19.2	21.2
Hospital or doctor	11.0	23.8	14.7
Diabetes Australia	* 1.2	* 6.7	* 2.8
Other	* 2.6	* 4.3	* 3.1

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

17 Drug-related abuse and potential harm

An objective of the National Drug Strategy is to minimise the harmful effects on the population of both licit and illicit drugs. The NDSHS contributes to this by exploring and reporting on the experiences of drug-related incidents and harm for Australians.

This chapter presents data on persons aged 14 years or older who were victims of drug-related incidents, where drug-related incidents occurred, and what the outcomes were. Also presented are data on the perpetrators of drug-related incidents and persons who, while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, put themselves or others at risk of harm. Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Summary

In 2007, one in five Australians aged 14 years or older were the victims of alcohol-related incidents. Recent drinkers and recent illicit drug users were more likely than others to be victims of drug-related incidents. However, the majority of victims had not been drinking alcohol or using drugs other than alcohol when the incident occurred. The majority of victims did not report these incidents to police because they thought the incident was too trivial or unimportant. About one in seven recent drinkers had driven a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol.

Key findings

Victims of drug-related incidents

Australians aged 14 years or older were more likely to have been abused or put in fear by someone affected by alcohol (29.6%) than by someone affected by illicit drugs (14.6%) (Table 17.1). For both alcohol- and illicit drug-related incidents, 'verbal abuse' was reported more often than 'put in fear', which was in turn more likely than 'physical abuse', for every age group and for both males and females.

Victims of alcohol-related incidents by alcohol consumption status

Compared with both ex-drinkers and those who had never consumed alcohol, recent drinkers were more likely to have experienced both verbal (27.5%) and physical abuse (4.8%) by someone affected by alcohol (Figure 17.1).

Victims of illicit drug-related incidents by illicit drug use status

Consistent with the pattern of alcohol-related incidents, recent users of illicit drugs were more likely to have experienced each of the three types of incident (verbal abuse: 20.8%; physical abuse: 6.1%; put in fear: 14.2%) than those who had not used recently and those who had never used illicit drugs (Figure 17.2).

Use of alcohol or other drugs by victims

The majority of victims of alcohol- or illicit drug-related incidents (58.0%) had not been drinking alcohol or using other drugs when the incident occurred (Figure 17.3). More than one-third (37.7%) had been drinking alcohol themselves when the incident occurred.

Reporting of drug-related incidents to police

Of Australians aged 14 years or older who had experienced alcohol- and/or illicit drug-related abuse, nine in ten (89.8%) had not reported it. Of those, almost two-thirds (63.5%) considered the matter too trivial/unimportant. However, victims were more likely to report incidents of physical abuse to the police (28.2%).

Relationship of perpetrator to victims of drug-related incidents

Females were generally more likely than males to know their abuser (Table 17.2). For example, 43.2% of females (compared with 8.5% of males) had been physically abused by a current or former spouse or partner.

Location of drug-related incidents

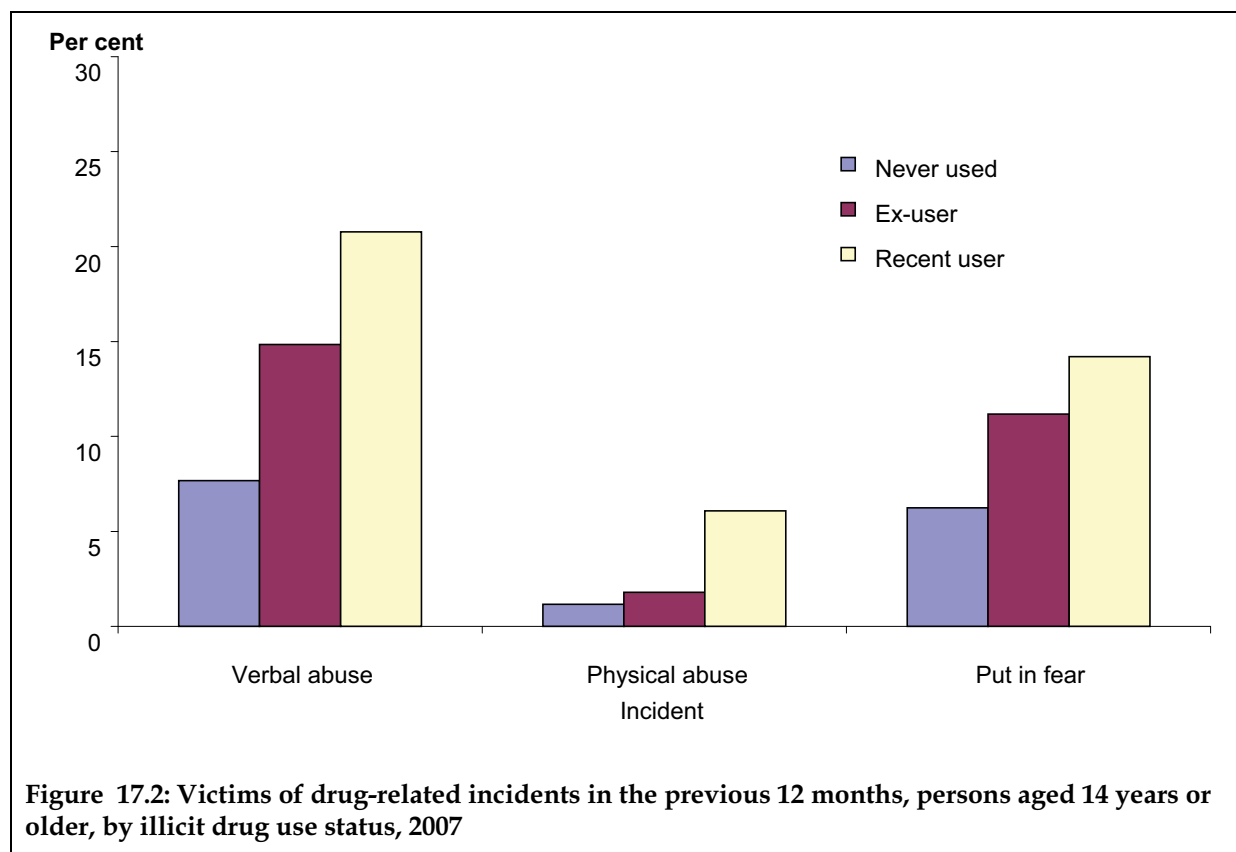
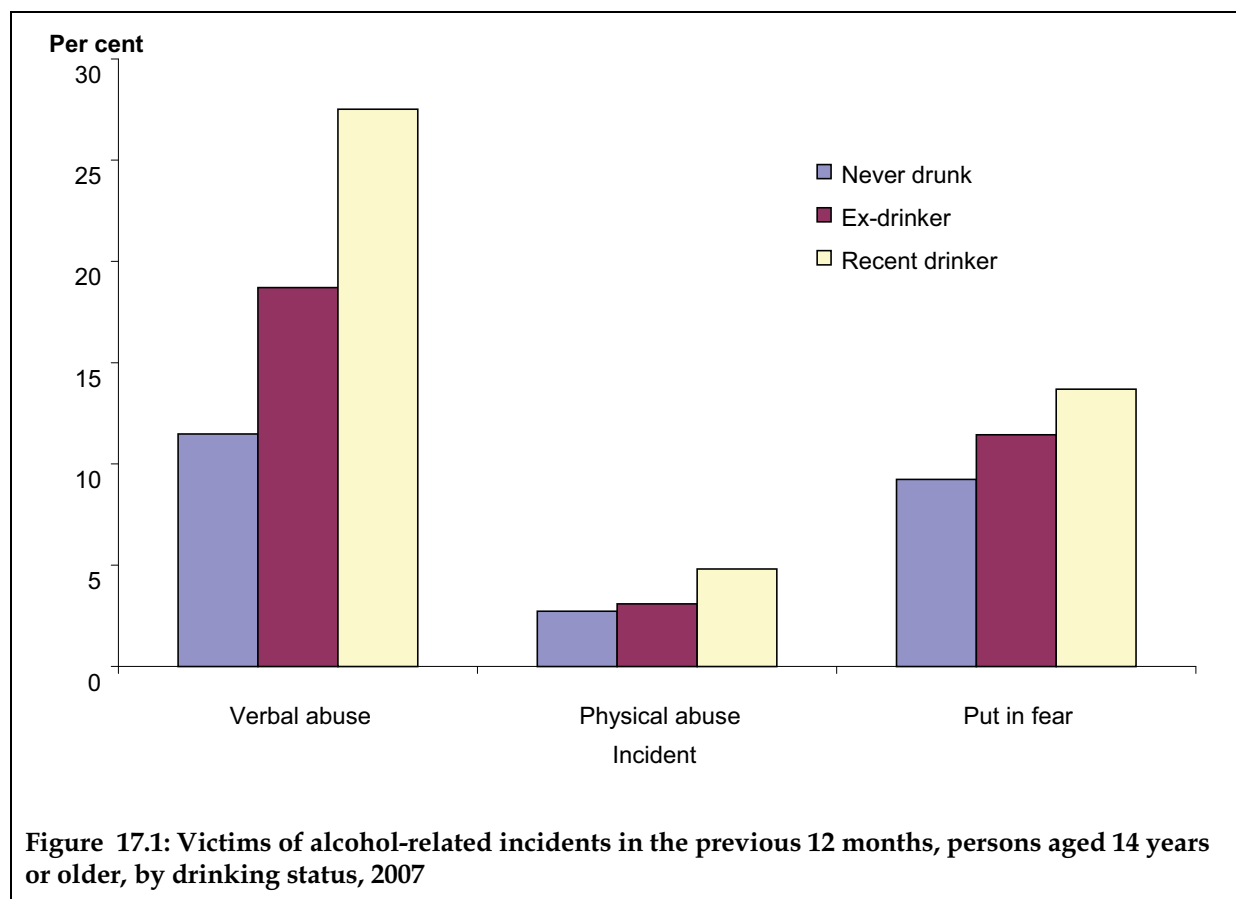
The most common locations of abuse were in the street, in one's own home, or in a pub or club (Table 17.3). Males were more likely to be involved in incidents of physical abuse in pubs and clubs (37.9%) or in the street (36.6%); for females these incidents were more likely to be in their own home (58.1%).

Activities under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs

About one in seven recent drinkers (14.3%) had driven a motor vehicle in the previous 12 months while under the influence of alcohol (that is, 2.1 million people, comprising 1.4 million males and 0.7 million females) (Table 17.4). Of recent illicit drug users aged 14 years or older, one in five (20.9%) had driven a motor vehicle while under the influence of illicit drugs (Table 17.5).

Table 17.1: Victims of drug-related incidents in the previous 12 months, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Influence and incident	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
Alcohol							
Verbal abuse	27.9	39.9	28.8	19.4	29.3	21.5	25.4
Physical abuse	6.9	10.4	4.0	2.3	5.9	3.1	4.5
Put in fear	17.3	20.0	14.6	9.7	12.0	14.1	13.1
Any incident	33.4	45.3	32.6	23.0	32.8	26.5	29.6
Illicit drugs							
Verbal abuse	9.6	17.2	12.1	9.0	13.0	9.1	11.0
Physical abuse	2.8	4.2	2.1	1.1	2.6	1.4	2.0
Put in fear	10.0	11.4	8.9	7.1	7.9	9.0	8.4
Any incident	14.8	21.7	15.3	12.1	16.0	13.2	14.6



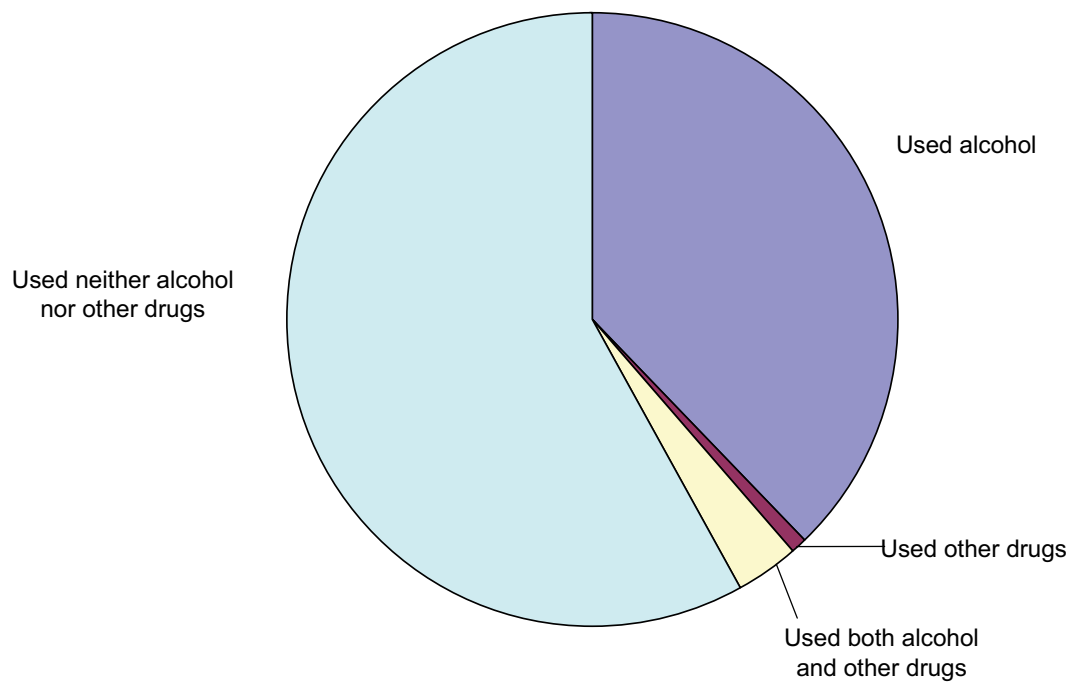


Figure 17.3: Use of alcohol or other drugs at the time of drug-related incidents in the previous 12 months, victims aged 14 years or older, 2007

Table 17.2: Relationship of perpetrators to victims of drug-related incidents, victims aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Incident and relationship of perpetrator	Males	Females	Persons
Verbal abuse			
Someone not known to me	63.2	44.0	54.8
Current or former spouse or partner	8.6	27.4	16.8
Other person known to me	22.8	18.4	20.9
Relative	7.9	16.9	11.9
Friend	11.6	10.0	10.9
Physical abuse			
Someone not known to me	58.9	23.8	46.7
Current or former spouse or partner	8.5	43.2	20.6
Other person known to me	26.7	13.7	22.2
Relative	6.4	9.6	7.5
Friend	8.0	8.0	8.0
Put in fear			
Someone not known to me	64.7	49.4	56.8
Current or former spouse or partner	3.7	22.7	13.5
Other person known to me	19.0	18.4	18.7
Relative	8.1	14.9	11.6
Friend	6.3	7.9	7.1

Notes

1. Base is those who reported being a victim of drug-related incidents in the previous 12 months.
2. Respondents were able to select more than one response.

Table 17.3: Location of drug-related incidents, victims aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Incident, location	Males	Females	Persons
Verbal abuse			
In the street	40.4	29.5	35.7
In own home	14.2	34.6	23.1
In a pub or club	32.8	21.6	27.9
At a party	10.7	9.4	10.1
At own workplace	8.6	11.2	9.7
Public transport	8.2	5.7	7.1
At school/university	* 0.3	* 0.5	0.4
Somewhere else	10.7	14.3	12.3
Physical abuse			
In the street	36.6	27.5	33.4
In own home	21.2	58.1	34.1
In a pub or club	37.9	27.1	34.1
At a party	19.5	14.9	17.9
At own workplace	12.9	10.1	11.9
Public transport	9.1	9.0	9.1
At school/university	* 0.9	* 0.3	* 0.7
Somewhere else	11.6	19.3	14.3
Put in fear			
In the street	50.7	35.5	42.9
In own home	15.9	36.6	26.5
In a pub or club	28.0	23.1	25.5
At a party	11.9	8.9	10.4
At own workplace	9.0	12.2	10.6
Public transport	11.4	7.9	9.6
At school/university	* 0.4	* 0.7	* 0.5
Somewhere else	11.6	14.4	13.0

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Notes

1. Base is those who reported being a victim of drug-related incidents in the previous 12 months.
2. Respondents were able to select more than one response.

Table 17.4: Activities undertaken in the previous 12 months while under the influence of alcohol, recent drinkers aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007

Activity	Males	Females	Persons
(per cent)			
Drove a vehicle	18.6	9.8	14.3
Verbally abused someone	8.5	4.9	6.8
Went swimming	8.1	4.0	6.1
Went to work	6.9	2.5	4.7
Created a disturbance, damaged or stole goods	6.2	2.4	4.3
Operated a boat or hazardous machinery	3.3	0.3	1.9
Physically abused someone	1.9	0.6	1.3
(number)			
Drove a vehicle	1,377,300	682,500	2,055,400
Verbally abused someone	632,200	345,800	975,700
Went swimming	602,600	280,100	880,200
Went to work	509,500	175,000	681,800
Created a disturbance, damaged or stole goods	459,900	166,700	624,100
Operated a boat or hazardous machinery	246,400	22,400	267,000
Physically abused someone	144,100	44,600	187,800

Note: Base is recent drinkers.

Table 17.5: Activities undertaken in the previous 12 months while under the influence of illicit drugs, recent users aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007

Activity	Males	Females	Persons
(per cent)			
Drove a vehicle	25.6	14.4	20.9
Went to work	15.2	7.2	11.8
Went swimming	13.6	7.3	11.0
Verbally abused someone	7.5	4.5	6.3
Created a disturbance, damaged or stole goods	7.7	3.5	5.9
Operated a boat or hazardous machinery	6.1	* 0.4	3.7
Physically abused someone	3.4	* 0.9	2.4
(number)			
Drove a vehicle	376,600	149,600	525,800
Went to work	223,200	74,500	297,100
Went swimming	200,300	76,300	275,900
Verbally abused someone	110,000	47,200	156,900
Created a disturbance, damaged or stole goods	113,700	36,000	149,200
Operated a boat or hazardous machinery	89,900	* 4,000	93,600
Physically abused someone	50,100	* 9,700	59,700

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent illicit drug users.

18 Drug-related policy

In this chapter, data are presented on the levels of support for various policy measures and the distribution of a notional \$100 budget to reduce drug use and related harms. Responses of either 'strongly support' or 'support' (on a scale of five possible responses – strongly support, support, neither support nor oppose, oppose, strongly oppose) are reported as 'support'. Responses of 'don't know enough to say' are excluded from the analysis.

Summary

The majority of Australians support policies aimed at reducing the uptake and use of drugs, and the harms resulting from drug use. Across most policy options, there was less support from recent users than from non-users. Broadly speaking, there was greater support for education and law enforcement measures than for treatment measures.

Key findings

Support for policy measures

Tobacco use

For Australians aged 14 years or older, ex-smokers and those who had never smoked were more likely than smokers to support policies aimed at reducing the problems associated with tobacco use (Table 18.1).

The policy measure with the highest level of support was the stricter enforcement of the law against supplying cigarettes to minors. An estimated 92.0% of those who had never smoked and 92.6% of ex-smokers supported this measure, compared with 81.5% of smokers.

Excessive consumption of alcohol

Generally, the support for measures to reduce problems associated with excessive alcohol use was not as high as the level of support for measures to reduce tobacco-related harm (Table 18.2).

Non-drinkers and those drinking at low-risk levels were more likely than those drinking at risky or high-risk levels to support policies aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm.

The policy measure with the highest level of support was 'more severe penalties for drink driving'. An estimated 85.8% of non-drinkers and those drinking at low-risk levels and 71.2% of those drinking at risky or high-risk levels supported this measure. At the other end of the scale, increasing the price of alcohol was supported by 18.1% of non-drinkers and those drinking at low-risk levels, and by 5.3% of risky/high-risk drinkers.

Heroin use

Those who had used heroin in their lifetime were more likely than those who had not to support policies aimed at reducing heroin-related problems, except for 'Rapid detoxification therapy' and 'Use of Naltrexone' (Table 18.3).

The policy measure with the highest level of support among those who had ever used heroin was 'needle and syringe programs' (80.4%).

The policy measure with the highest level of support among those who had never used heroin was 'rapid detoxification therapy' (79.0%).

Distribution of a notional drugs budget

Australians aged 14 years or older were asked to allocate nominal budget of \$100 to reduce the harm of each of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs. For alcohol and tobacco, education typically received the greater proportion of the allotted \$100 (Figure 18.1). For illicit drugs, the emphasis was on law enforcement.

A comparison of users and non-users of each drug or category shows a higher allocation to law enforcement by non-users, and a higher allocation to education by users for all drugs.

Table 18.1: Support for measures to reduce the problems associated with tobacco use, persons aged 14 years or older, by smoking status, 2007 (per cent)

Measure	Never smoked ^(a)	Ex-smokers ^(b)	Smokers ^(c)	All
Stricter enforcement of law against supplying minors	92.0	92.6	81.5	90.1
Stricter penalties for sale or supply to minors	90.3	89.7	77.1	87.6
Ban smoking...				
in the workplace	89.9	87.0	53.5	82.0
in pubs/clubs	87.0	83.0	41.3	77.0
Increase tax on tobacco products...				
to contribute to treatment costs	80.2	72.8	30.9	68.6
to pay for health education	79.8	70.7	27.5	67.1
to discourage smoking	78.1	68.6	27.5	65.7
Making it harder to buy tobacco in shops	77.7	70.2	30.2	66.4
Bans on point of sale advertising	81.3	78.0	46.8	73.6
Implement licensing scheme for tobacco retailers	79.8	73.3	46.3	71.5

(a) Never smoked more than 100 cigarettes or the equivalent tobacco in their life.

(b) Smoked at least 100 cigarettes or the equivalent tobacco in their life, and no longer smoke.

(c) Smoked daily, weekly or less than weekly.

Table 18.2: Support for measures to reduce the problems associated with excessive alcohol use, persons aged 14 years or older, by long-term alcohol risk status, 2007 (per cent)

Measure	Abstainers/low-risk drinkers	Risky/high-risk drinkers	All
More severe penalties for drink driving	85.8	71.2	85.2
Stricter laws against serving drunk customers	83.1	60.2	82.2
Strict monitoring of late-night licensed premises	73.8	58.0	73.2
Limiting TV advertising until after 9.30 p.m.	71.3	55.5	70.7
Adding information on the national drinking guidelines to alcohol containers	70.0	49.4	69.1
Increasing the size of standard drink labels on alcohol containers	65.1	47.2	64.4
Increasing the number of alcohol-free events	60.2	30.3	59.0
Increasing the number of alcohol-free dry zones	60.6	34.7	59.5
Serving only low-alcohol beverages at sporting events	58.1	29.1	56.9
Restricting late-night trading of alcohol	54.9	31.6	53.9
Banning alcohol sponsorship of sporting events	45.6	26.6	44.9
Raising the legal drinking age	42.7	24.2	41.9
Increasing the tax on alcohol products	36.0	16.1	35.2
Reducing trading hours for pubs and clubs	34.5	18.1	33.8
Reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol	26.8	10.2	26.2
Increasing the price of alcohol	18.1	5.3	17.6

Table 18.3: Support for measures to reduce the problems associated with heroin use, persons aged 14 years or older, by heroin use status, 2007 (per cent)

Measure	Never used	Ever used	All
Rapid detoxification therapy	79.0	71.7	78.8
Use of Naltrexone	74.8	73.9	74.8
Treatment with drugs other than methadone	68.3	77.9	68.5
Methadone maintenance programs	67.7	68.8	67.7
Needle and syringe programs	66.8	80.4	67.0
Regulated injecting rooms	49.6	66.5	49.9
Trial of prescribed heroin	32.4	59.1	32.9

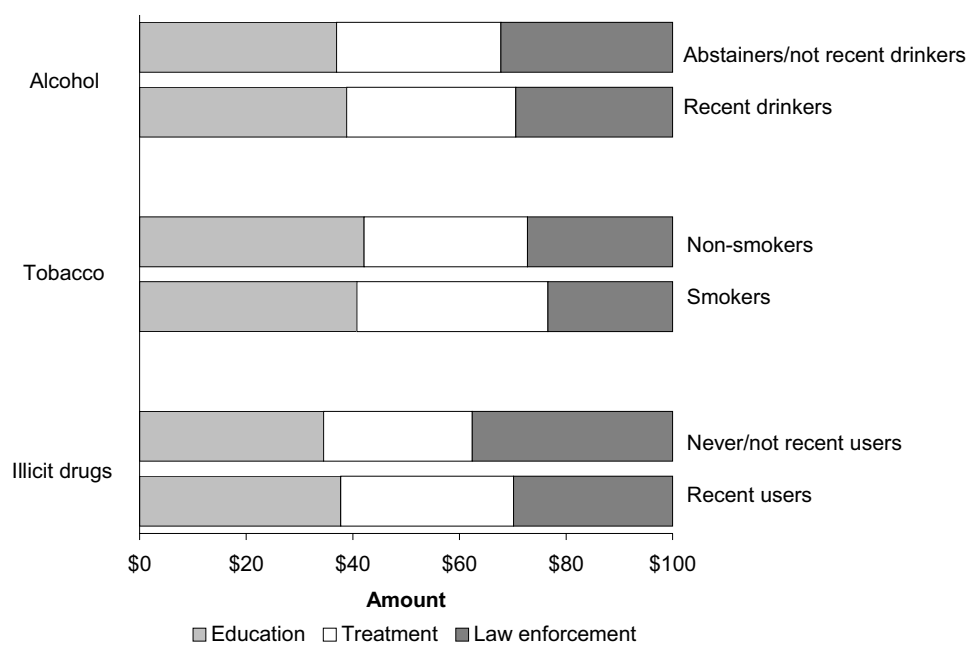


Figure 18.1: Notional allocation of \$100 to reduce drug use and related harms, persons aged 14 years or older, by user status, 2007

19 Drug-related legislation

In this chapter, data are presented on the levels of support for various legislative measures. Responses of either 'strongly support' or 'support' (on a scale of five possible responses – strongly support, support, neither support nor oppose, oppose, strongly oppose) are reported as 'support'. Responses of 'don't know enough to say' are excluded from the analysis. Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Summary

There was very little support for the legalisation of illicit drugs, although around one-fifth of Australians supported the legalisation of marijuana. On the other hand, around two-fifths supported possession of marijuana being a criminal offence. The most favoured single action for someone found in possession of illicit drugs was referral to treatment or education. With the exception of males aged 20–29 years, the majority of people supported increased penalties for the sale or supply of illicit drugs.

Key findings

Support for legalisation of illicit drugs

With few exceptions across age and sex groups, less than 10% of Australians supported the legalisation of heroin, meth/amphetamine, cocaine or ecstasy. Marijuana had two to three times the support, ranging between 12.0% (males: 11.9%, females: 12.1%) for those aged 60 years or older and 30.1% (males: 35.3%, females: 24.9%) for those aged 20–29 years (Table 19.1).

Support for increased penalties for the sale or supply of illicit drugs

Also with few exceptions across age and sex groups, more than three-quarters of Australians supported increased penalties for the sale or supply of heroin, meth/amphetamine, cocaine or ecstasy. For marijuana, support for increased penalties was lower (63.0%) (Table 19.2).

Actions for those found in possession of illicit drugs

For all ages combined, referral to treatment or education was the most favoured action for those found in possession of illicit drugs (Table 19.3). A caution/warning, or no action, had moderate support in relation to marijuana.

Criminal status of marijuana/cannabis possession

Nearly two-fifths (38.7%) of Australians supported possession of marijuana being a criminal offence (Table 19.4), with the highest support among those aged 14–19 years (50.7%).

Use of marijuana/cannabis if legalised

The vast majority (85.1%) of Australians would not use marijuana even if it was legal and available. Among recent users, however, 78.0% would use it about as often as they do now, and a further 7.1% would use it more often.

Table 19.1: Support for the legalisation of selected illicit drugs, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug	Age group						Aged 14+
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
Males							
Marijuana/cannabis	22.2	35.3	29.5	25.7	19.9	11.9	23.8
Heroin	6.5	5.1	4.9	5.8	7.1	5.7	5.8
Meth/amphetamine	6.4	6.5	4.8	4.5	5.2	5.3	5.4
Cocaine	7.1	8.0	5.9	5.1	6.4	5.5	6.3
Ecstasy	8.9	11.4	7.1	5.3	6.0	5.3	7.1
Females							
Marijuana/cannabis	16.1	24.9	22.4	19.0	16.8	12.1	18.5
Heroin	3.4	4.4	3.7	4.7	4.4	6.1	4.6
Meth/amphetamine	3.3	4.3	3.2	3.4	3.6	5.1	3.9
Cocaine	3.9	4.8	3.7	4.1	4.2	5.4	4.5
Ecstasy	4.3	6.0	4.3	4.4	4.0	5.2	4.8
Persons							
Marijuana/cannabis	19.2	30.1	26.0	22.3	18.4	12.0	21.2
Heroin	5.0	4.8	4.3	5.2	5.8	5.9	5.2
Meth/amphetamine	4.9	5.4	4.0	4.0	4.4	5.2	4.6
Cocaine	5.5	6.4	4.8	4.6	5.3	5.5	5.4
Ecstasy	6.7	8.7	5.7	4.8	5.0	5.3	6.0

Table 19.2: Support for increased penalties for the sale or supply of illicit drugs, persons aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

	Age group						
Drug	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	Aged 14+
Males							
Marijuana/cannabis	56.3	46.6	50.3	55.4	65.5	78.3	59.6
Heroin	76.9	80.9	83.7	85.0	85.6	89.4	84.3
Meth/amphetamine	76.7	77.5	83.9	85.8	87.3	89.6	84.2
Cocaine	76.1	74.7	81.1	84.0	85.3	89.0	82.4
Ecstasy	73.6	68.5	78.5	83.3	85.7	88.9	80.5
Females							
Marijuana/cannabis	62.5	56.5	60.5	63.7	72.2	77.8	66.4
Heroin	80.5	82.2	85.0	86.2	87.7	86.6	85.1
Meth/amphetamine	81.4	80.6	85.4	86.7	88.2	86.9	85.2
Cocaine	79.4	79.3	83.2	85.9	87.7	86.6	84.2
Ecstasy	78.2	77.1	83.2	85.5	87.9	86.7	83.6
Persons							
Marijuana/cannabis	59.3	51.5	55.4	59.6	68.8	78.1	63.0
Heroin	78.7	81.5	84.4	85.6	86.7	88.0	84.7
Meth/amphetamine	79.0	79.0	84.7	86.3	87.7	88.2	84.7
Cocaine	77.7	76.9	82.2	85.0	86.5	87.8	83.3
Ecstasy	75.9	72.7	80.8	84.4	85.6	87.8	82.1

Table 19.3: Support for actions taken in relation to anyone found in possession of selected illicit drugs for personal use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Drug/action	Age group						Aged 14+
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
Marijuana/cannabis							
A caution/warning or no action	26.2	37.3	35.1	32.7	29.5	22.2	30.4
Referral to treatment or education program	26.4	27.7	32.1	38.7	44.7	55.5	39.2
Fine	30.9	24.2	21.5	17.0	14.7	12.2	18.9
Community service or weekend detention	8.5	4.7	5.7	5.0	4.9	4.2	5.2
Prison sentence	6.3	4.8	4.6	4.8	5.0	5.1	5.0
Some other arrangement	1.7	1.3	1.1	1.8	1.2	0.8	1.3
Ecstasy/designer drugs							
A caution/warning or no action	8.2	15.3	10.8	7.0	5.9	5.3	8.5
Referral to treatment or education program	30.2	34.8	41.2	52.1	56.1	65.1	48.9
Fine	36.5	29.1	24.0	16.8	15.2	12.8	20.8
Community service or weekend detention	9.2	6.7	8.0	6.3	5.4	4.1	6.3
Prison sentence	14.3	11.9	14.9	15.7	16.1	11.8	13.9
Some other arrangement	1.7	2.2	1.2	2.1	1.3	1.0	1.5
Heroin							
A caution/warning or no action	3.2	2.9	2.5	3.8	3.8	5.2	3.7
Referral to treatment or education program	36.1	44.1	50.0	56.0	60.4	66.5	54.3
Fine	29.3	18.0	16.0	11.8	11.5	11.0	15.0
Community service or weekend detention	9.3	9.9	8.1	6.4	4.6	3.6	6.6
Prison sentence	19.7	22.5	21.7	19.7	17.9	12.6	18.5
Some other arrangement	2.5	2.6	1.8	2.3	1.7	1.1	1.9
Meth/amphetamine							
A caution/warning or no action	9.3	13.6	10.0	8.4	9.4	11.4	10.5
Referral to treatment or education program	36.9	39.7	47.5	55.7	59.7	64.3	52.7
Fine	30.1	25.7	21.8	18.1	14.1	11.9	18.9
Community service or weekend detention	9.1	8.3	8.2	6.8	5.8	3.9	6.6
Prison sentence	12.7	10.7	10.8	9.4	9.9	7.3	9.7
Some other arrangement	1.8	2.1	1.7	1.5	1.1	1.2	1.5

Table 19.4: Support for the possession of marijuana/cannabis being a criminal offence, persons aged 14 years or older, 2007 (per cent)

Sex	Age group						Aged 14+
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
Males	49.4	29.6	30.5	33.7	34.8	50.0	37.4
Females	52.0	40.4	32.4	36.3	39.8	44.7	40.2
Persons	50.7	34.9	31.4	35.0	37.2	47.3	38.7

20 Drugs and health

This chapter reports the results of a number of self-reported health assessments from the 2007 NDSHS. More specifically, tobacco, alcohol and selected illicit drug use patterns are compared with measures of general health, selected health conditions and psychological distress. Data are also presented on exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, alcohol-induced memory lapse, use of other's medication, and injuries.

These data are all based on respondent self-report and are therefore not empirically verified. These data have not been standardised by age or sex. Some tables are not provided due to small frequencies in some cells, but aggregated information is included in the text.

Summary

There appears to be a relationship between drug use status, general health and psychological distress. In general, higher rates of drug use are related to poorer health status and higher levels of psychological distress. However, it is unclear what other factors, such as age, sex, or socioeconomic status, may be influencing this relationship. Non-smokers were more likely to avoid environmental tobacco smoke (exposure to other people's smoke) than smokers. Younger drinkers were more likely to report a loss of memory after drinking than other Australians. There also appears to be a relationship between recent illicit drug use and falls for those who reported an injury in the previous four weeks.

Key findings

General health

Among Australians aged 14 years or older:

- Around one in eight (12.2%) rated their health as fair or poor. However, self-assessed health status varied by recent drug use status (Table 20.1). For example, smokers were almost twice as likely (18.2%) to report fair or poor health than non-smokers (10.7%).
- Those consuming alcohol at high-risk levels of harm, in both the short- and long-term, were more likely to report fair or poor levels of health than risky or low-risk drinkers. However, abstainers also reported higher proportions of fair or poor health compared with risky or low-risk drinkers.
- Those who had consumed marijuana in the previous 12 months reported similar levels of fair or poor health to compared with those who had not used marijuana in the previous 12 months (at approximately 12%).
- Diagnosis or treatment was reported for a number of chronic diseases – diabetes by 5.3%, heart disease by 17.2%, asthma by 8.7%, cancer by 2.5% and mental illness by 10.8% (Table 20.2). However, reported diagnosis or treatment varied by recent drug use status. For example, 12.3% of daily smokers reported diagnosis or treatment for heart disease, compared with 8.2% of other recent smokers and 18.5% of non-smokers (including ex-smokers). In contrast, 52.4% of recent heroin users reported diagnosis or treatment for a mental illness compared with 10.7% of those who had not used heroin in the previous 12 months.

Psychological distress

Among Australians aged 18 years or older, one in ten (9.9%) reported high or very high levels of psychological distress in the preceding four-week period (Table 20.3). Daily smokers, those who consumed alcohol at high-risk levels of harm in the short term, and recent illicit drug users, were more likely to have reported high or very high levels of psychological distress than other Australians. Alcohol abstainers were more likely to report high or very high levels of psychological distress (11.0%) than those who consumed alcohol at levels considered low risk of harm in the short-term (8.5%).

Note that in this analysis, 'recent use' refers to use in the previous month to correspond with the reporting period of psychological distress.

Environmental tobacco smoke

Non-smokers aged 14 years or older were far more likely to report always avoiding places where they may be exposed to environmental tobacco smoke (43.5%) compared with recent smokers (6.0%) (Table 20.4). However, 6.0% of non-smokers reported at least daily exposure to cigarette smoke inside the home (Table 20.5).

Alcohol-induced memory lapse

Of recent drinkers aged 14 years or older, males (19.4%) were more likely than females (15.1%) to report loss of memory after drinking at least once in the previous 12 months (Table 20.6). Younger recent drinkers aged 14–19 years were the most likely to report a loss of memory at least once in the previous 12 months (32.1%).

Use of someone else's medication

About two in five (18.1%) Australians aged 14 years or older reported ever using medication prescribed or recommended for someone else. Of those people, 47.2% had used pain-killers/analgesics, 23.0% had used someone else's antibiotic and 14.9% had used someone else's asthma medication (Table 20.7).

Injuries

Approximately 15.4% of Australians aged 14 years or older had received an injury in the previous 4 weeks. Of those people, one in three (33.0%) had been cut with a knife or tool (Table 20.8). Very few reported being involved in a road traffic accident (1.6%). Those who received an injury in the previous four weeks and who reported drinking alcohol at levels considered high risk in the short term were about twice as likely (3.1%) to have been injured in a road traffic crash/accident as those who drank alcohol at low risk levels (1.3%). Recent illicit drug users were more likely to report a fall, particularly a low fall, than those who had not used an illicit drug in the previous month. Recent illicit drug users were about three times more likely to report being attacked by another person in the previous four weeks (7.0%) compared with non-users (2.1%).

Table 20.1: Self assessed health status^(a) by selected drug use patterns, persons aged 14 years or older, 2007 (per cent)

Drug/use	Health status				
	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
All persons (14+)	16.7	37.7	33.4	10.2	2.0
Tobacco					
Smoker	8.5	30.9	42.3	15.2	3.0
Non-smoker	18.7	39.3	31.2	9.0	1.7
Risk of alcohol-related harm in the long term					
High risk	10.2	33.7	37.1	15.5	3.4
Risky	14.0	34.5	40.4	9.1	2.0
Low risk	16.8	39.7	32.6	9.3	1.5
Abstainer	18.8	31.2	33.0	13.3	3.7
Risk of alcohol-related harm in the short term					
High risk	14.7	35.4	37.3	10.9	1.7
Risky	15.5	40.1	35.4	7.4	1.6
Low risk	16.7	39.5	32.5	9.7	1.6
Abstainer	18.8	31.2	33.0	13.3	3.7
Marijuana/cannabis					
Used in the last 12 months	13.7	34.4	39.4	10.6	1.9
Not used in the last 12 months	17.1	38.0	32.8	10.1	2.0
Any illicit drug other than marijuana/cannabis ^(b)					
Used in the last 12 months	14.6	32.4	38.5	12.2	2.3
Not used in the last 12 months	17.1	38.2	32.9	10.0	1.9

(a) In response to the question 'In general, would you say your health is...?'.

(b) 'Used in the last 12 months' relates to those people who have used any illicit drug but not those who have only used marijuana/cannabis.

Table 20.2: Self-reported health conditions^(a) by selected drug use patterns, persons aged 14 years or older, 2007 (per cent)

Drug/use	Condition				
	Diabetes	Heart diseases ^(b)	Asthma	Cancer	Mental illness ^(c)
All persons (aged 14+)	5.3	17.2	8.7	2.5	10.8
Tobacco smoking status					
Daily	4.7	12.3	11.2	2.3	18.6
Other recent smokers	3.4	8.2	11.1	* 0.7	11.2
Non-smokers	5.4	18.5	8.1	2.6	9.1
Risk of alcohol-related harm in the short term					
High risk	1.9	7.6	11.7	0.9	13.2
Risky	2.0	11.0	8.2	0.8	11.0
Low risk	5.2	18.7	8.0	3.1	10.2
Abstainer	9.7	21.3	9.5	2.4	11.1
Marijuana/cannabis					
Used in the last month	1.6	5.8	10.6	0.7	16.8
Not used in the last month	5.5	17.8	8.6	2.6	10.4
Inhalants					
Used in the last month	* 2.5	* 6.8	22.5	* 3.1	25.4
Not used in the last month	5.3	17.2	8.6	2.5	10.7
Heroin					
Used in the last month	* 9.2	* 6.1	* 9.4	—	52.4
Not used in the last month	5.3	17.2	8.7	2.5	10.7
Meth/amphetamines					
Used in the last month	* 1.5	4.9	9.9	—	21.0
Not used in the last month	5.3	17.4	8.6	2.5	10.6
Cocaine					
Used in the last month	* 1.5	* 4.1	11.9	* 0.8	14.7
Not used in the last month	5.3	17.2	8.7	2.5	10.7
Ecstasy					
Used in the last month	* 1.8	4.0	9.7	—	15.5
Not used in the last month	5.3	17.4	8.7	2.5	10.7
Any illicit drug					
Used in the last month	2.7	8.6	11.1	1.0	17.6
Not used in the last month	5.4	17.8	8.4	2.6	10.1

(a) Respondents could select more than one condition, in response to the question 'In the last 12 months have you been diagnosed or treated for...?'.

(b) Includes heart diseases and hypertension (high blood pressure).

(c) Includes depression, anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, an eating disorder and other form of psychosis.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 20.3: Psychological distress^(a) by selected drug use patterns, persons aged 18 years or older, 2007 (per cent)

Drug/use	Level of psychological distress ^(b)			
	Low	Moderate	High	Very high
All persons (aged 18+)	69.0	21.1	7.7	2.2
Tobacco smoking status				
Daily	59.4	24.0	11.6	5.1
Other recent smokers ^(c)	58.4	31.5	8.1	2.1
Non-smokers ^(d)	71.5	20.1	6.8	1.5
Risk of alcohol-related harm in the short term				
High risk	56.3	28.5	12.2	3.1
Risky	65.4	23.6	8.3	2.7
Low risk	71.8	19.7	6.7	1.8
Abstainer	68.6	20.5	8.1	2.9
Marijuana/cannabis				
Used in the last month	51.2	27.2	15.7	5.8
Not used in the last month	70.1	20.8	7.2	1.9
Inhalants				
Used in the last month	44.3	32.5	17.5	* 5.7
Not used in the last month	69.2	21.1	7.6	2.1
Heroin				
Used in the last month	* 20.9	* 14.2	53.7	* 11.1
Not used in the last month	69.2	21.1	7.5	2.1
Meth/amphetamines				
Used in the last month	43.5	35.3	15.8	5.4
Not used in the last month	69.6	21.0	7.4	2.1
Cocaine				
Used in the last month	47.1	30.9	15.3	* 6.7
Not used in the last month	69.3	21.1	7.5	2.1
Ecstasy				
Used in the last month	45.4	34.4	16.3	3.9
Not used in the last month	69.5	20.9	7.5	2.1
Any illicit ^(e)				
Used in the last month	51.2	28.6	14.6	5.6
Not used in the last month	70.8	20.5	6.9	1.8

(a) Using the Kessler 10 (K10) scale of psychological distress. This instrument has not been validated for persons younger than 18 years.

(b) Low: K10 score 10–15; Moderate: 16–21; High: 22–29; Very high: 30–50.

(c) Other recent smokers are persons who smoke weekly or less than weekly.

(d) Non-smokers are ex-smokers or persons who have never smoked.

(e) Any illicit includes pain-killers, tranquillisers, steroids, barbiturates, meth/amphetamine, marijuana, heroin, methadone, cocaine, hallucinogens, ecstasy, ketamine, GHB and inhalants.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 20.4: Avoidance of places where respondents may be exposed to other people's tobacco smoke, recent smokers and never/ex-smokers, persons aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Frequency	Recent smokers			Never/ex-smokers		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Yes, always	6.3	5.7	6.0	40.1	46.7	43.5
Yes, sometimes	27.1	30.1	28.5	42.2	39.2	40.7
No, never	66.6	64.2	65.5	17.7	14.1	15.8

Table 20.5: Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke in the home at least daily, non-smokers aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 (per cent)

Exposure	Males	Females	Persons
Yes, inside the home	6.4	5.7	6.0
No, only smokes outside the home	15.4	17.4	16.4
No one at home regularly smokes	78.2	77.0	77.5

Note: Base is non-smokers.

Table 20.6: Loss of memory after drinking at least once in the previous 12 months, recent drinkers aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Age group	At least weekly	At least monthly	At least once in the last 12 months	
Males				
14–19	3.5	9.4	32.9	54.2
20–29	4.5	13.5	29.3	52.7
30–39	3.5	5.4	23.8	67.3
40+	1.7	3.0	12.7	82.6
<i>Aged 14+</i>	2.7	5.9	19.4	72.0
Females				
14–19	4.2	8.5	31.2	56.2
20–29	2.6	6.9	29.3	61.1
30–39	2.5	2.3	16.3	78.9
40+	1.7	1.4	7.6	89.3
<i>Aged 14+</i>	2.2	3.1	15.1	79.5
Persons				
14–19	3.8	8.9	32.1	55.2
20–29	3.6	10.3	29.3	56.8
30–39	3.0	3.9	20.1	73.0
40+	1.7	2.2	10.2	85.8
<i>Aged 14+</i>	2.5	4.5	17.3	75.7

Note: Base is recent drinkers.

Table 20.7: Type of medication used, by those who had used medication prescribed or recommended for another person, by sex, persons aged 14 years or older, 2007 (per cent)

Medication	Males	Females	Persons
Pain-killers/analgesics	48.7	45.7	47.2
Antibiotics	24.1	21.8	23.0
Anti-depressants	2.6	2.5	2.5
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	10.6	10.2	10.4
Asthma medication	14.5	15.4	14.9
Herbal and alternative medicines	15.3	20.1	17.7
Others	6.2	5.5	5.8
None in the last 12 months	17.3	19.4	18.3

Notes

1. Base is those who had ever used medication prescribed or recommended for another person.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Table 20.8: Injuries received in the previous four weeks^(a) by selected drug use patterns, persons aged 14 years or older, 2007 (per cent)

Drug/use	Type of injury				
	Road traffic crash/ accident	High fall ^(b)	Low fall ^(c)	Cut with a knife/tool	Attacked by another person
All persons (aged 14+)	1.6	1.9	15.5	33.0	2.6
Tobacco smoking status					
Daily	2.9	3.3	14.3	37.0	5.5
Other recent smokers ^(d)	* 0.3	* 4.0	20.1	28.0	* 4.8
Non-smokers ^(e)	1.4	1.6	15.6	32.4	2.0
Risk of alcohol-related harm in the short term					
High risk	3.1	3.1	20.3	33.8	7.2
Risky	* 1.4	* 1.3	14.2	34.5	2.7
Low risk	1.3	1.9	14.9	32.2	1.4
Abstainer	* 1.2	* 1.0	12.9	33.9	* 1.6
Marijuana/cannabis					
Used in the last month	* 1.3	4.6	22.6	28.8	6.2
Not used in the last month	1.6	1.7	14.9	33.4	2.3
Any illicit ^(f)					
Used in the last month ^(g)	* 1.2	3.4	21.7	29.0	7.0
Not used in the last month	1.6	1.7	14.9	33.5	2.1

(a) Base is respondents who had received an injury to their body in the previous 4 weeks.

(b) High fall is from a height of 1 metre or more.

(c) Low fall is from ground/floor level.

(d) Other recent smokers are persons who smoke weekly or less than weekly.

(e) Non-smokers are ex-smokers or persons who have never smoked.

(f) Use in the last month refers to use of the substance at least once in the previous month.

(g) Any illicit includes pain-killers, tranquillisers, steroids, barbiturates, meth/amphetamine, marijuana, heroin, methadone, cocaine, hallucinogens, ecstasy, ketamine, GHB and inhalants.

(g) Use in the last month refers to use of the substance at least once in the previous month.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

21 Drugs and young people

This chapter presents data on the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs by young Australians, aged 12–19 years. This extension to the reporting in the rest of this report and in previous NDSHS waves arises from the expansion of the 2004 and 2007 surveys to include those 12- and 13-year-olds.

With the focus of this chapter on young people, the tabulations generally cover three age groups to age 19 years and then ‘the rest’, that is, 20 years or older.

Summary

For all but the youngest, Australians first used tobacco and alcohol before they first used illicit drugs. Teenagers, however, used pain-killers/analgesics for non-medical purposes over a year before they used tobacco and alcohol. Current and former users of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs were most likely to have been given their first cigarette, drink or illicit drug by a friend or acquaintance. Friends and relatives were the most common source of drugs, licit and illicit, for younger Australians. Those legally allowed to do so bought tobacco and alcohol at retail outlets.

The prevalence of consumption of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs generally is lowest for 12–15-year-olds and highest for 20–29-year-olds.

Trends in risky alcohol drinking and in choice of product have been relatively stable between 2001 and 2007; young females drink at levels of greater risk of harm than young males, but adult males are more likely to risk alcohol-related harm than older adult females; the youngest drinkers prefer spirits but older males generally prefer beer (and wine, later in life) and older females prefer wine.

Curiosity was the most likely influence on users’ first use of an illicit drug. ‘Just not interested’ and ‘for reasons related to health or addiction’ had roughly equivalent influence on the decision of non-users to have never used an illicit drug (Table 21.14).

Key findings

Age of initiation—tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs

The average age at which Australians aged 12 years or older first used tobacco was lower than for alcohol (15.8 versus 16.9 years) (Table 21.1). The average age of first use of any illicit drug was higher than for both licit drugs, ranging from 18.8 years for marijuana to 25.7 years for tranquillisers/sleeping pills. This relationship did not hold for younger groups. For example, 12–19-year-olds first used pain-killers for non-medical purposes, on average, before they smoked or drank (13.1 years versus 14.3 and 14.5 respectively).

Tobacco and younger Australians

Supply of *first* cigarette

The most likely source of current and former smokers' first cigarette was a friend or acquaintance — 74.0% of current (in the 12 months before the survey) smokers aged 12–15 years and all ex-smokers in that age group received their first cigarette from a friend or acquaintance (Table 21.2).

Obtaining cigarettes

The vast majority of current smokers aged 18–19 years (89.0%) and 20 years or older (92.7%) bought cigarettes at shops/ retailers (Table 21.3). Legal restrictions on the sale of tobacco products to minors make it unsurprising that only 8.2% of 12–15-year-old males obtained cigarettes at shops, with 58.4% using friends and relatives. By contrast, 42.3% of females aged 12–15 years, 47.7% of females aged 16–17 years and 80.2% of males aged 16–17 years obtained cigarettes at shops.

Alcohol and younger Australians

Supply of *first* alcohol

A greater proportion of recent drinkers and ex-drinkers were given their first glass of alcohol by a friend or acquaintance (recent: 42.3%, ex: 43.2%) than by relatives (recent: 38.5%, ex: 32.7%) (Table 21.4). However, for younger drinkers and ex-drinkers a greater proportion received their first glass of alcohol from a relative (recent: 60.9%, ex: 58.3%) than from a friend or acquaintance (recent: 33.8%, ex: 28.6%). Lower proportions of recent and ex-drinkers acquired their first glass of alcohol by theft or purchase.

Obtaining alcohol

The population norm was to purchase alcohol at retail outlets — in 2007, 86.5% did so (Table 21.5). However, of those younger than 18 years (a legal threshold) the majority obtained alcohol from friends or relatives (71.7% of 12–15-year-olds, 64.1% of 16–17-year-olds). Nevertheless, some 30.2% of drinkers aged 16–17 years bought alcohol at a shop/ retail outlet (males: 35.4%, females: 25.6%).

Usual supply of alcohol

Of recent drinkers aged 18 years or older, over 90% bought alcohol themselves (Table 21.6). By contrast, only 3.1% of 12–15-year-olds and 12.2% of 16–17-year-olds did so. For younger drinkers, the usual supply was, as it was for their initial glass of alcohol, a friend or acquaintance or relative.

Risk of harm from alcohol consumption

Although around 70% of 12–15-year-olds (males: 70.2%, females: 69.5%) did not consume alcohol, about 3.0% of males and 6.3% of females in that age group were at risk of alcohol-related harm in the short term, at least once a month (Table 21.7). However, much greater proportions of 16–17-year-olds drank at levels that risked harm in the short term (at least once a month): 23.9% of males and 27.3% of females. The highest levels of risky drinking in the short term were found among 18–19-year-olds, with 43.7% of males and 46.0% of females

in that group drinking at risky or high risk levels on a monthly basis; this includes 17.5% of males and 17.4% of females consuming alcohol in risky or high risk way on a weekly basis.

Risk of harm in the long term also increased with age, up to 20–29 years for males and 18–19 years for females. Among teenagers, the rates were higher for females than males.

Trends in risky and high-risk alcohol consumption

Allowing for the absence of 12–13-year-olds from the 2001 data, levels of abstinence and risky drinking (short and long term) have remained almost unchanged in the 2001, 2004 and 2007 surveys (Table 21.8). The tendency for younger females to be more likely to consume alcohol at risky levels than their male counterparts, noted above, is confirmed over time.

Trends in preferences for selected alcohol drinks

In general, males prefer beer and females prefer wine, for each of the surveys reported, but with a few age-based variations (Table 21.9 and Table 21.10). Generally, teenage females prefer spirits and pre-mixed spirits as do young teenage males. Older males, while retaining a preference for beer, also expressed a preference for wine.

Illicit drugs and younger Australians

Illicit drugs – first supply

‘Friends and acquaintances’ were most likely to have been first source of illicit drugs, for both younger (aged 12–19 years) and older (aged 20 years and over) recent users (Table 21.11).

Means of obtaining drugs other than tobacco and alcohol

Illicit drugs were most commonly obtained from friends or relatives, with 41.3% of users giving this answer, followed by 37.4% who said they ‘paid cash but not at a retail outlet’ (Table 21.12). This pattern was found for both males and females and across age groups, with the exception of females aged 18–19 years, where 50.5% said they ‘paid cash’ compared with 41.2% who said they obtained drugs from a friend or relative.

Influences on first use

Curiosity was the most likely influence on users’ first use of an illicit drug, at all ages (Table 21.13). The part curiosity played generally increased with age – from 59.8% of users aged 12–15 years to 71.4% of users aged 20 years or older. Peer pressure was also an influence for 51.0% of users.

Influences on decision never to try illicit drugs

Respondents in the survey who had never used illicit drugs were asked for their reasons for not trying them. The most common response was ‘just not interested’ (62.5%), followed by ‘for reasons related to health or addiction’ (42.0%) and ‘for reasons related to the law’ (22.9%) (Table 21.14). The ordering of these reasons for not trying drugs was similar across age groups. Among teenagers, however, ‘fear of death’ was a stronger influence than it was for older respondents.

Table 21.1: Average age of initiation to tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs, persons aged 12 years or older, by age, 2007 (per cent) (per cent)

Drug	Age group					Aged 12+
	12–15	16–17	18–19	20–24	25+	
Tobacco	13.0	14.3	14.7	14.3	15.9	15.8
Alcohol	13.3	14.6	15.2	14.5	17.2	16.9
Illicit drugs						
Marijuana/cannabis	13.6	15.1	15.9	15.3	19.0	18.8
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a)	12.5	13.2	13.4	13.1	21.5	20.7
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a)	13.0	14.7	16.1	15.6	26.2	25.7
Steroids ^(a)	12.0	16.0	15.6	15.0	24.6	23.7
Barbiturates ^(a)	..	17.0	15.7	16.0	19.8	19.6
Inhalants	12.5	19.3	14.2	15.5	19.5	19.3
Heroin	..	13.0	16.5	16.2	22.0	21.9
Methadone ^(b)	..	..	16.0	16.0	23.4	23.3
Meth/amphetamine ^(a)	14.4	15.7	15.7	15.6	21.1	20.9
Cocaine	13.9	12.8	16.0	15.0	23.4	23.1
Hallucinogens	14.4	15.2	16.8	16.3	19.7	19.6
Ecstasy	13.3	15.5	16.9	16.3	23.1	22.6
Ketamine ^(c)	..	14.0	18.0	17.7	24.1	24.0
GHB ^(c)	14.0	..	15.2	14.9	25.3	24.6
Injected drugs ^(c)	14.6	14.1	21.5	14.3	21.3	21.3

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

(c) Not asked of 12–13-year-olds.

Notes

1. Base is those who had ever used.

2. Age of initiation was not asked for 'other opiates'.

Table 21.2: Supply of first cigarette, recent smokers and ex-smokers aged 12 years or older, by age, 2007 (per cent)

Smoking status/first supply	Age group				Aged 12+
	12–15	16–17	18–19	20+	
Recent smokers					
Friend or acquaintance	74.0	75.6	71.5	59.7	60.4
Relative	* 4.8	* 5.4	7.8	12.5	12.2
Stole it	* 16.5	12.9	18.1	10.9	11.2
Bought it	—	* 2.7	* 2.6	14.9	14.2
Other	* 4.7	* 3.4	—	1.9	1.9
Ex-smokers					
Friend or acquaintance	100.0	100.0	* 76.0	58.9	59.1
Relative	—	—	* 10.7	9.7	9.7
Stole it	—	—	* 9.6	10.7	10.6
Bought it	—	—	—	18.9	18.7
Other	—	—	* 3.8	1.9	1.9

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent and ex-smokers.

Table 21.3: Means of obtaining tobacco, smokers aged 12 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Means of obtaining	Age group				Aged 12+
	12–15	16–17	18–19	20+	
Males					
Friend or relative	* 58.4	48.7	23.8	12.2	13.2
Bought at shop/retail outlet	* 8.2	* 80.2	* 84.8	92.4	91.7
Paid cash but not at retail outlet	* 28.3	* 29.2	* 3.3	1.2	1.6
Stole or traded goods or services	* 5.1	* 1.5	* 3.3	1.0	1.0
Other	—	* 0.4	* 4.7	0.9	1.0
Females					
Friend or relative	* 65.2	57.7	22.8	9.3	11.2
Bought at shop/retail outlet	42.3	47.7	* 93.2	93.0	91.6
Paid cash but not at retail outlet	* 28.8	* 8.6	* 6.9	1.2	1.8
Stole or traded goods or services	44.5	* 5.0	* 3.1	* 0.3	0.9
Other	—	18.4	* 2.3	0.6	1.0
Persons					
Friend or relative	62.4	54.5	23.3	10.9	12.3
Bought at shop/retail outlet	28.4	59.3	89.0	92.7	91.6
Paid cash but not at retail outlet	28.6	16.0	* 5.1	1.2	1.7
Stole or traded goods or services	28.5	* 3.8	* 3.2	0.7	1.0
Other	—	12.0	* 3.5	0.7	1.0

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent smokers.

Table 21.4: Supply of first glass of alcohol, recent drinkers and ex-drinkers aged 12 years or older, by age, 2007 (per cent)

Drinking status/first supply	Age group				
	12–15	16–17	18–19	20+	Aged 12+
Recent drinker					
Friend or acquaintance	33.8	44.1	45.9	42.3	42.3
Relative	60.9	50.1	43.7	37.3	38.5
Stole it	2.6	2.3	3.0	2.8	2.8
Bought it	* 1.3	* 1.6	6.1	15.0	13.9
Other	* 1.4	2.0	* 1.4	2.6	2.5
Ex-drinker					
Friend or acquaintance	28.6	54.6	* 61.7	43.1	43.2
Relative	58.3	41.3	* 28.7	31.9	32.7
Stole it	* 7.2	—	—	2.2	2.3
Bought it	—	—	—	19.3	18.2
Other	* 5.9	* 4.0	* 9.6	3.4	3.6

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent and ex-drinkers.

Table 21.5: Means of obtaining alcohol, drinkers aged 12 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Means of obtaining	Age group				Aged 12+
	12–15	16–17	18–19	20+	
Males					
Friend or relative	76.5	60.3	37.6	18.6	21.6
Bought at shop/retail outlet	* 5.2	35.4	89.5	91.5	88.1
Paid cash but not at retail outlet	6.0	18.6	7.8	1.4	2.2
Stole or traded goods or services	* 5.6	* 3.6	5.3	2.7	2.8
Other	—	* 2.2	4.2	1.9	2.0
Females					
Friend or relative	67.4	67.6	37.7	22.4	25.6
Bought at shop/retail outlet	9.7	25.6	88.5	88.9	84.8
Paid cash but not at retail outlet	13.2	6.2	3.9	1.0	1.6
Stole or traded goods or services	5.2	* 2.9	* 1.3	0.6	0.8
Other	* 2.2	—	* 0.4	0.4	0.5
Persons					
Friend or relative	71.7	64.1	37.6	20.4	23.5
Bought at shop/retail outlet	7.6	30.2	89.0	90.2	86.5
Paid cash but not at retail outlet	9.8	12.0	5.8	1.2	1.9
Stole or traded goods or services	5.4	3.2	3.3	1.7	1.8
Other	* 1.2	* 1.0	2.3	1.2	1.2

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent drinkers.

Table 21.6: Usual supply of alcohol, by age, 2007 (per cent)

Source	Age group				Aged 12+
	12–15	16–17	18–19	20+	
Friend or acquaintance	37.5	40.0	5.5	2.1	4.1
Relative	49.4	43.4	2.2	5.1	7.0
Bought it myself	3.1	12.2	90.4	91.2	87.0
Stranger bought it	* 1.9	* 0.9	* 0.1	<0.1	0.1
Stole it	* 0.8	* 0.2	* 0.3	* <0.1	0.1
Other	7.3	3.3	* 1.4	1.5	1.7

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent drinkers.

Table 21.7: Risk of harm from alcohol consumption, by risk status, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Type of risk	Age group						Aged 12+
	12–15	16–17	18–19	20–29	30–39	40+	
Males							
Abstainer	70.2	27.4	9.8	11.1	10.9	13.1	16.5
Short-term risk—weekly							
Low risk	29.3	64.9	72.7	71.7	79.2	80.1	74.5
Risky	0.3	5.1	8.1	8.6	6.6	4.7	5.5
High risk	0.2	2.6	9.4	8.6	3.4	2.0	3.5
Short-term risk—monthly							
Low risk	26.9	48.8	46.6	45.1	61.7	71.0	60.6
Risky	2.1	11.5	18.0	14.5	13.9	10.1	11.3
High risk	0.9	12.4	25.7	29.3	13.6	5.8	11.6
Long-term risk							
Low risk	29.0	65.3	77.5	73.3	79.2	77.7	73.6
Risky	0.6	3.6	8.4	9.3	6.2	5.6	6.0
High risk	0.2	3.3	4.3	6.2	3.7	3.6	3.8
Females							
Abstainer	69.5	21.4	12.1	14.8	13.5	22.3	22.1
Short-term risk—weekly							
Low risk	28.1	71.8	70.5	73.0	79.7	74.0	71.8
Risky	0.5	3.0	8.1	5.1	4.0	2.3	3.1
High risk	1.9	3.7	9.3	7.1	2.8	1.4	2.9
Short-term risk—monthly							
Low risk	24.3	51.3	41.9	49.9	66.4	68.6	61.2
Risky	2.3	12.8	18.6	13.2	9.3	5.6	7.9
High risk	4.0	14.5	27.4	22.1	10.8	3.5	8.8
Long-term risk							
Low risk	28.1	70.0	68.8	68.8	75.7	69.0	67.6
Risky	1.3	4.9	13.2	11.0	7.7	6.7	7.4
High risk	1.0	3.7	5.9	5.4	3.0	1.9	2.7

Notes:

1. See Glossary for description of risk levels.
2. 'Short-term risk—monthly' includes 'Short-term risk—weekly': these two categories should not be added.

Table 21.8: Recent trends in risky and high-risk alcohol consumption, by age and sex, 2001–2007 (per cent)

		Age group						Aged 12+
Type of risk	Year	12–15	16–17	18–19	20–29	30–39	40+	
Males								
Abstainer	2007	70.2	27.4	9.8	11.1	10.9	13.1	16.5
	2004	68.2	23.9	14.4	7.8	8.9	12.4	15.3
	2001	49.3	24.3	10.7	8.4	9.8	14.7	14.1
Short-term risk weekly	2007	0.5	7.8	17.5	17.2	10.0	6.7	9.0
	2004	1.0	9.2	21.6	17.4	10.3	6.9	9.4
	2001	1.5	7.8	18.6	14.6	7.8	6.6	8.5
Short-term risk monthly	2007	2.9	23.8	43.6	43.8	27.4	15.9	22.9
	2004	3.3	25.1	46.3	44.0	29.2	15.7	23.3
	2001	11.5	28.6	46.1	42.5	28.2	14.9	23.8
Long-term risk	2007	0.8	6.9	12.7	15.5	9.9	9.2	9.9
	2004	0.6	5.3	16.5	14.4	10.3	9.2	9.8
	2001	0.7	6.6	18.5	14.5	8.8	9.7	10.2
Females								
Abstainer	2007	69.5	21.4	12.1	14.8	13.5	22.3	22.1
	2004	67.0	21.1	11.3	13.4	13.0	22.5	21.8
	2001	43.6	22.0	14.7	11.3	16.0	24.5	20.8
Short-term risk weekly	2007	2.4	6.8	17.4	12.2	6.8	3.7	6.1
	2004	1.7	10.7	17.4	10.9	5.8	3.3	5.5
	2001	5.9	10.4	17.7	9.3	4.8	2.9	5.3
Short-term risk monthly	2007	6.2	27.3	46.0	35.3	20.1	9.1	16.7
	2004	5.5	30.3	47.3	36.9	19.7	8.5	16.8
	2001	15.8	32.1	47.1	36.1	17.6	7.7	16.9
Long-term risk	2007	2.3	8.6	19.1	16.4	10.8	8.6	10.1
	2004	2.1	11.7	21.0	15.1	9.9	7.4	9.3
	2001	8.4	12.7	21.3	14.9	8.6	7.0	9.4

Notes:

1. 'Short-term risk—monthly' includes 'Short-term risk—weekly': these two categories should not be added.
2. The 2001 survey did not include 12–13 year olds. In this table, 14–15-year-olds are shown in the 12–15 age group column for 2001. Therefore the trend for this column should be interpreted with caution. The totals for 2001 are for 14 years or older.

Table 21.9: Trends in preferences for selected alcoholic drinks, males, 2001–2007 (per cent)

Alcohol type	Year	Age group						Aged 12+
		12–15	16–17	18–19	20–29	30–39	40+	
Cask wine	2007	6.1	8.2	7.5	7.0	7.1	16.0	12.0
	2004	9.5	8.0	9.1	7.7	9.4	22.1	15.9
	2001	10.0	11.7	5.9	7.7	11.0	22.2	16.0
Bottled wine	2007	11.9	10.1	18.9	34.1	47.7	52.6	45.1
	2004	17.2	8.3	21.0	36.2	46.0	49.4	43.4
	2001	21.4	14.6	15.2	34.2	42.3	45.0	39.7
Regular strength beer	2007	29.0	50.6	63.9	68.0	61.0	40.1	49.8
	2004	34.9	51.2	67.8	68.6	55.3	35.7	47.0
	2001	44.2	62.9	71.7	67.1	59.1	38.2	50.1
Low alcohol beer	2007	13.5	12.5	5.7	11.0	17.5	29.4	22.3
	2004	23.7	14.2	5.5	12.7	23.1	33.6	26.0
	2001	21.4	18.4	8.9	15.4	26.3	36.1	28.3
Bottled spirits and liqueurs	2007	30.6	47.6	54.0	54.5	40.3	32.0	38.7
	2004	35.5	42.9	63.1	51.9	37.1	31.9	38.0
	2001	44.4	58.0	67.6	58.4	40.9	30.3	40.4
Pre-mixed spirits in a can	2007	36.9	56.3	60.7	47.6	28.5	10.9	24.3
	2004	50.2	55.7	65.3	42.0	27.9	9.3	23.0
	2001	43.8	57.9	53.5	34.8	19.5	5.5	18.2
Pre-mixed spirits in a bottle	2007	25.8	29.9	33.3	26.4	11.6	3.8	11.5
	2004	21.1	32.0	41.7	22.7	10.0	3.6	10.8
	2001	24.1	31.9	35.6	21.2	9.1	1.7	9.6

Notes:

1. Preferences are inferred from responses to the question 'What type of alcohol do you usually drink?'; respondents could select more than one usual drink.
2. The 2001 survey did not include 12–13 year olds. In this table, 14–15-year-olds are shown in the 12–15 age group column for 2001. Therefore the trend for this column should be interpreted with caution. The totals for 2001 are for 14 years or older.

Table 21.10: Trends in preferences for selected alcoholic drinks, females, 2001–2007 (per cent)

Alcohol type	Year	Age group						Aged 12+
		12–15	16–17	18–19	20–29	30–39	40+	
Cask wine	2007	3.8	7.3	9.7	10.7	10.9	19.3	15.2
	2004	8.8	11.0	16.0	13.6	14.8	26.8	20.8
	2001	12.4	15.8	18.4	14.9	19.8	30.3	23.9
Bottled wine	2007	15.4	16.5	28.0	60.0	69.0	70.2	63.8
	2004	19.5	21.0	32.7	54.4	62.0	66.8	59.8
	2001	24.7	20.1	30.7	57.3	62.0	61.6	57.3
Regular strength beer	2007	9.8	9.6	17.3	25.6	19.8	9.0	14.3
	2004	12.1	17.2	24.9	26.5	18.1	8.2	14.4
	2001	8.9	15.1	26.2	29.3	17.6	8.4	15.1
Low alcohol beer	2007	5.8	3.6	6.3	5.9	7.7	10.8	8.8
	2004	7.8	5.2	4.6	7.9	10.8	12.7	10.8
	2001	12.9	5.6	3.0	8.1	11.9	14.4	11.9
Bottled spirits and liqueurs	2007	53.3	54.4	73.9	58.3	44.2	33.5	42.4
	2004	46.1	64.4	69.8	61.5	43.1	34.4	43.5
	2001	51.7	59.1	76.8	64.4	48.8	33.4	45.4
Pre-mixed spirits in a can	2007	59.4	57.0	60.8	37.1	22.8	9.7	21.3
	2004	43.0	61.7	57.3	37.1	21.9	7.5	20.1
	2001	55.5	57.2	62.0	32.5	19.2	5.5	18.6
Pre-mixed spirits in a bottle	2007	49.9	68.5	68.9	47.3	28.7	11.0	25.4
	2004	55.1	80.8	75.4	51.8	27.2	10.5	26.8
	2001	63.6	70.8	76.4	47.7	25.3	7.1	24.7

Notes:

1. Preferences are inferred from responses to the question 'What type of alcohol do you usually drink?'; respondents could select more than one usual drink.
2. The 2001 survey did not include 12–13 year olds. In this table, 14–15-year-olds are shown in the 12–15 age group column for 2001. Therefore the trend for this column should be interpreted with caution. The totals for 2001 are for 14 years or older.

Table 21.11: First supply of selected illicit drugs, recent users and ex-users, aged 12 years or older, by age, 2007 (per cent)

Drug/first supply	Age group				Aged 12+
	12–15	16–17	18–19	20+	
Marijuana/cannabis					
Friend or acquaintance	67.8	90.2	86.4	79.7	80.5
Relative	* 15.0	* 6.3	* 6.3	10.3	9.9
Dealer	* 4.0	* 2.3	* 2.1	5.3	4.9
Grew it myself	* 4.1	—	* 1.6	1.3	1.3
Other	* 9.1	* 1.1	* 3.6	3.4	3.4
Inhalants					
Friend or acquaintance	—	* 90.1	* 54.3	33.7	38.7
Relative	* 18.2	—	—	20.3	16.1
Dealer	* 11.8	—	—	—	* 1.1
Bought at a shop/retail outlet	* 70.1	* 9.9	* 23.9	12.8	18.6
Other	—	—	* 21.7	33.2	25.4
Heroin					
Friend and acquaintance	—	100.0	* 37.3	51.8	50.7
Relatives	—	—	—	* 16.8	* 14.7
Dealer	—	—	—	29.3	25.6
Other	—	—	* 62.7	* 2.1	* 9.1
Meth/amphetamine					
Friend and acquaintance	100.0	* 75.0	62.5	75.3	75.0
Relatives	—	—	* 18.8	7.0	7.3
Dealer	—	* 25.0	* 18.8	14.3	14.6
Other	—	—	—	3.4	3.2
Cocaine/crack ^(a)					
Friend and acquaintance	100.0	* 83.4	* 74.4	84.2	83.9
Relatives	—	* 16.6	* 14.5	3.9	4.4
Dealer	—	—	* 2.2	11.3	10.7
Other	—	—	* 8.8	* 0.7	* 1.0
Ecstasy					
Friend and acquaintance	* 36.2	79.7	70.7	86.6	84.4
Relatives	—	* 3.5	* 10.3	5.6	5.8
Dealer	* 41.3	* 16.8	18.5	6.4	8.2
Other	* 22.5	—	* 0.5	1.5	1.5

(a) Not asked of 12–13-year-olds.

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Table 21.12: Means of obtaining drugs other than tobacco and alcohol, users aged 12 years or older, by age and sex, 2007 (per cent)

Means of obtaining	Age group				Aged 12+
	12–15	16–17	18–19	20+	
Males					
Friend or relative	41.0	61.7	45.3	41.2	42.2
Bought at shop/retail outlet	—	—	—	3.5	3.2
Paid cash but not at retail outlet	* 8.0	26.9	37.9	40.7	39.7
Stole or traded goods or services	—	* 11.5	* 7.4	4.1	4.5
Other	* 21.6	* 15.5	* 7.5	8.4	8.7
Females					
Friend or relative	55.1	53.9	41.2	38.4	39.9
Bought at shop/retail outlet	* 12.4	—	* 3.7	2.3	2.5
Paid cash but not at retail outlet	36.1	30.5	50.5	33.0	33.9
Stole or traded goods or services	* 20.4	* 3.2	* 7.6	1.5	2.4
Other	* 19.0	* 8.2	19.0	6.1	7.3
Persons					
Friend or relative	49.5	57.4	43.7	40.1	41.3
Bought at shop/retail outlet	* 7.4	—	* 1.5	3.1	2.9
Paid cash but not at retail outlet	24.8	28.9	42.9	37.7	37.4
Stole or traded goods or services	* 12.2	* 6.9	7.5	3.1	3.6
Other	20.0	11.5	12.1	7.5	8.1

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent users of any illicit drugs.

Table 21.13: Influences on first use of an illicit drug, recent and former users aged 12 years or older, by age, 2007 (per cent)

Influence	Age group				Aged 12+
	12–15	16–17	18–19	20+	
Curiosity	59.8	82.4	71.1	71.4	71.5
Peer pressure	46.3	44.0	49.1	51.3	51.0
To do something exciting	25.8	22.6	20.6	14.9	15.4
To enhance an experience	* 11.5	13.8	13.2	10.4	10.6
To take a risk	16.2	12.5	15.1	6.5	7.0
To feel better	* 10.5	9.3	10.0	5.1	5.4
Family, relationship, work or school problems	17.3	13.1	10.0	4.1	4.6
Traumatic experience	* 2.1	6.7	* 2.2	2.2	2.3
To lose weight	* 6.0	6.5	* 1.5	0.7	0.9
Other	* 11.6	5.4	10.5	5.1	5.3

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is recent and former users of any illicit drugs.

Table 21.14: Influences on decision never to try illicit drugs, never-users aged 12 years or older, by age, 2007 (per cent)

Influence	Age group				Aged 12+
	12–15	16–17	18–19	20+	
Just not interested	53.5	56.9	62.6	63.9	62.5
For reasons related to health or addiction	52.7	54.8	64.1	39.1	42.0
For reasons related to the law	32.6	32.1	37.7	20.7	22.9
Didn't like to feel out of control	14.7	18.9	22.0	16.0	16.2
Religious/moral reasons	13.4	19.4	22.7	14.9	15.2
Didn't think it would be enjoyable	18.6	18.7	24.7	12.0	13.4
Fear of death	27.9	23.5	26.7	10.3	13.1
Pressure from family or friends	16.7	20.2	22.6	7.6	9.5
No opportunity	8.7	7.4	8.3	5.1	5.7
Financial reasons	6.2	5.5	12.2	4.7	5.1
Didn't want family/friends/employer or teachers to know	8.1	9.6	11.6	3.2	4.2
Other	10.5	10.9	9.5	6.0	6.8
Don't know	* 0.7	* 0.5	* 0.2	0.1	0.2

* Relative standard error greater than 50%.

Note: Base is those who had not used any illicit drugs in their lifetime.

Appendix 1: Population estimates

Analysis of the 2007 NDSHS is based on the (preliminary) June 2007 estimated resident population of Australia, tabulated by sex and some common age groupings in Table A3.1.

Table A3.1: Australian population estimates (preliminary), June 2007

Age group	Males	Females	Persons
(14 years or older)			
14–19	885,800	838,700	1,724,500
20–29	1,489,100	1,447,900	2,937,000
30–39	1,513,300	1,525,900	3,039,100
40–49	1,511,900	1,533,600	3,045,500
50–59	1,324,400	1,333,400	2,657,800
60+	1,781,500	2,040,700	3,822,100
<i>Aged 14+</i>	<i>8,506,000</i>	<i>8,720,100</i>	<i>17,226,200</i>
(12 years or older)			
12–15	583,600	552,900	1,136,500
16–17	297,000	281,000	578,000
18–19	295,600	280,200	575,800
<i>12–19</i>	<i>1,176,200</i>	<i>1,114,100</i>	<i>2,290,300</i>
20+	7,620,200	7,881,400	15,501,600
<i>Aged 12+</i>	<i>8,796,400</i>	<i>8,995,500</i>	<i>17,792,000</i>

Source: AIHW National Population Database.

Appendix 2: Standard errors

Table A4.1: Standard errors (SE) and relative standard errors (RSE) for indicative population sizes, 2007 (per cent)

Prevalence (%)	Indicative population											
	250,000		500,000		1,500,000		3,000,000		9,000,000		18,000,000	
	SE ^(a)	RSE ^(b)	SE	RSE	SE	RSE	SE	RSE	SE	RSE	SE	RSE
95	1.57	1.7	1.11	1.2	0.64	0.7	0.45	0.5	0.26	0.3	0.18	0.2
90	2.16	2.4	1.53	1.7	0.88	1.0	0.62	0.7	0.36	0.4	0.25	0.3
80	2.88	3.6	2.04	2.5	1.18	1.5	0.83	1.0	0.48	0.6	0.34	0.4
70	3.30	4.7	2.33	3.3	1.35	1.9	0.95	1.4	0.55	0.8	0.39	0.6
50	3.60	7.2	2.54	5.1	1.47	2.9	1.04	2.1	0.60	1.2	0.42	0.8
30	3.30	11.0	2.33	7.8	1.35	4.5	0.95	3.2	0.55	1.8	0.39	1.3
20	2.88	14.4	2.04	10.2	1.18	5.9	0.83	4.2	0.48	2.4	0.34	1.7
10	2.16	21.6	1.53	15.3	0.88	8.8	0.62	6.2	0.36	3.6	0.25	2.5
5	1.57	31.4	1.11	22.2	0.64	12.8	0.45	9.1	0.26	5.2	0.18	3.7
3	1.23	40.9	0.87	28.9	0.50	16.7	0.35	11.8	0.20	6.8	0.14	4.8
2	1.01	50.4	0.71	35.6	0.41	20.6	0.29	14.5	0.17	8.4	0.12	5.9
1	0.72	71.6	0.51	50.6	0.29	29.2	0.21	20.7	0.12	11.9	0.08	8.4
0.5	0.51	101.5	0.36	71.8	0.21	41.4	0.15	29.3	0.08	16.9	0.06	12.0
0.3	0.39	131.2	0.28	92.8	0.16	53.6	0.11	37.9	0.07	21.9	0.05	15.5
0.2	0.32	160.8	0.23	113.7	0.13	65.6	0.09	46.4	0.05	26.8	0.04	18.9
0.1	0.23	227.5	0.16	160.9	0.09	92.9	0.07	65.7	0.04	37.9	0.03	26.8

(a) Standard error expressed in same units as prevalence.

(b) Relative standard error.

Notes

1. The standard error estimates are modelled on the average design effects across 35 key variables.
2. Light shading indicates caution in using estimates; dark shading indicates unreliable for most practical purposes.

Table A4.2: Prevalence and population estimate thresholds for 50% relative standard error, 2007

Age group	Males		Females		Persons	
	Prevalence	Estimate	Prevalence	Estimate	Prevalence	Estimate
	(per cent)	(number)	(per cent)	(number)	(per cent)	(number)
(14 years or older)						
14–19	0.89	7,900	0.79	6,600	0.42	7,200
20–29	0.55	8,200	0.39	5,700	0.23	6,700
30–39	0.40	6,000	0.26	4,000	0.16	4,800
40–49	0.39	5,900	0.31	4,700	0.17	5,200
50–59	0.37	5,000	0.30	4,000	0.17	4,400
60+	0.21	3,800	0.18	3,700	0.10	3,700
<i>Aged 14+</i>	<i>0.07</i>	<i>5,500</i>	<i>0.05</i>	<i>4,400</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>4,900</i>
(12 years or older)						
12–15	1.38	8,000	1.34	7,400	0.68	7,800
16–17	2.47	7,300	2.10	5,900	1.15	6,600
18–19	2.86	8,400	2.44	6,800	1.33	7,700
<i>12–19</i>	<i>0.68</i>	<i>8,100</i>	<i>0.62</i>	<i>6,900</i>	<i>0.33</i>	<i>7,500</i>
20+	0.07	5,400	0.05	4,300	0.03	4,700
<i>Aged 12+</i>	<i>0.06</i>	<i>5,600</i>	<i>0.05</i>	<i>4,500</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>5,000</i>

Appendix 3: Definition of characteristics variables

Table A5.1: Definitions and population proportions^(a) of characteristics variables, 2007

Variable	Description	Measurement	Definition	% ^(a)
Education	Level of education	Without post-school qualification With post-school qualification	Is still at school, did or did not complete highest level of secondary school Has skilled or basic vocational qualification, undergraduate or associate diploma, bachelor degree or higher	46.6 53.4
Employment status		Currently employed Student Unemployed Engaged in home duties Retired or on a pension Unable to work Other	Working full time or part time for pay Full-time or part-time student Unemployed looking for work Engaged in home duties Retired or on a pension Unable to work Other than the above cases	56.2 11.0 2.4 7.4 19.8 1.7 1.5
Main language spoken at home		English Other	Main language spoken at home is English Main language spoken at home is a language other than English	91.9 8.1
Socioeconomic status	Socioeconomic status (SES) of the area lived in (census collection area and postcode), based on ABS Socio-economic Index Areas (SEIFA)—lowest status to highest	1st quintile—lowest SES 2nd quintile 3rd quintile 4th quintile 5th quintile—highest SES	Index score below 917.65 Index score from 917.65 to 973.46 Index score from 973.47 to 1,023.84 Index score from 1,023.84 to 1,088.08 Index score above 1,088.08	17.5 17.3 18.3 22.7 24.1
Geography	Locality of residence	Major Cities Inner Regional Outer Regional Remote and Very Remote	Major cities Inner regional Outer regional Remote and very remote regions	67.7 20.3 10.0 1.9
Marital status		Never married Divorced/separated/widowed Married/de facto	Never married Divorced, separated or widowed Married or in a de facto relationship	25.9 11.7 62.4
Indigenous status	Self-reported origin	Indigenous Other Australians	Origin Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both All other origins	1.3 98.7

(a) Estimated population proportions, persons aged 14 years or older.

Glossary

Abstainer (alcohol)	Never consumed a full serve of alcohol.
Concurrent use	Use of two or more substances at the same time.
Ever use	Used at least once in lifetime.
Ex-drinker	A person who has consumed a full serve of alcohol in their lifetime, but not in the previous 12 months.
Ex-smoker	A person who has smoked at least 100 cigarettes or equivalent tobacco in their lifetime, but does not smoke at all now.
Ex-user	A person who has used a substance in their lifetime, but not in the previous 12 months.
High risk (alcohol)	Defines a level of drinking at which there is substantial risk of serious harm, and above which risk continues to increase rapidly.
Illicit drugs	Illegal drugs, drugs and volatile substances used illicitly, and pharmaceuticals used for non-medical purposes. The survey included questions on the following illicit drugs: - pain-killers/analgesics* - tranquillisers/sleeping pills* - steroids* - barbiturates* - meth/amphetamine* - marijuana/cannabis - heroin - methadone** - other opiates (opioids)* - cocaine - LSD/synthetic hallucinogens - natural hallucinogens - ecstasy - ketamine - GHB - inhalants (any) injected drug
	<i>Note</i> * used for non-medical purposes ** non-maintenance program Non-medical and non-maintenance use is noted in the report.
Long-term risk (alcohol)	The level of risk associated with regular daily patterns of

	drinking, defined by the total amount of alcohol typically consumed per week.
Low risk (alcohol)	Defines a level of drinking at which there is only a minimal risk of harm. At this level, there may be health benefits for some of the population.
Never smoker	A person who does not smoke now and has smoked fewer than 100 cigarettes or the equivalent tobacco in their lifetime.
Non-maintenance	Use of a substance other than as part of a medically supervised maintenance program. In this report this includes methadone.
Non-medical use	Use of drugs either alone or with other drugs in order to induce or enhance a drug experience, for performance enhancement or for cosmetic purposes. In this report this includes pain-killers/analgesics, tranquillisers/sleeping pills, steroids and barbiturates (termed 'pharmaceuticals') and meth/amphetamine and other opioids such as morphine or pethidine.
Non-smoker	Never smoked or an ex-smoker.
Recent	In the previous last 12 months.
Risky (alcohol)	Defines a level of drinking at which risk of harm is significantly increased beyond any possible benefits.
Short-term risk (alcohol)	The risk of harm (particularly injury or death) in the short term, that is associated with given levels of drinking on a single day. These levels assume that overall drinking patterns remain within the levels set for long-term risk, and that these heavier drinking days occur a maximum of three times per week. Outside these limits, risk is further increased.
Smoker	A person who reported currently smoking daily, weekly or less often than weekly.
Standard drink	Containing 10 grams of alcohol (equivalent to 12.5 millilitres of alcohol). Also referred to as a full serve.

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