



Healthy Communities: Tobacco smoking rates across Australia, 2014–15

Published 8 December 2016

This report presents, for the first time, adult daily smoking rates by Primary Health Network (PHN) areas across Australia.

Tobacco smoking is an important health issue in Australia. It is one of the largest single preventable causes of death and disease¹ and a leading risk factor for many chronic conditions including coronary heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma and other respiratory conditions, diabetes and various cancers.^{2,3}

Successful public health strategies over several decades have seen daily smoking rates in Australia decline steadily, to be among the lowest in the world.⁴ In 2014–15, 2.6 million Australian adults smoked tobacco daily. This was equivalent to a national rate of 14.5% (14.7% age-standardised) of adult daily smokers,⁵ and a decrease from 16.1% (16.3% age-standardised) in 2011–12 (Figure 1).^{5,6}

This report focuses on local-level results, for PHN areas across Australia. Despite declining national smoking rates, there was wide local-level variation in 2014–15. The percentage of adult daily smokers varied four-fold across PHN areas, ranging from 5.4% in Northern Sydney to 23.3% in Western NSW.

Adults in regional areas were more likely to smoke daily than their city counterparts. Six PHN areas had smoking rates of about 19% or over, or about one in five adults smoking daily. These higher smoking rates were all recorded in regional PHN areas. Conversely, the lowest smoking rates were all recorded in metropolitan PHN areas. This report highlights areas where efforts may be directed to continue to reduce smoking rates.



Regional PHN areas had higher smoking rates than metropolitan PHN areas.

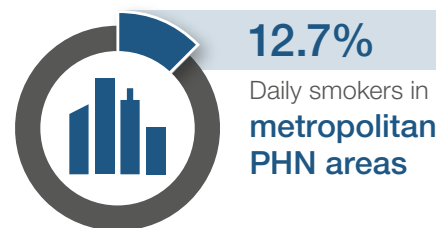
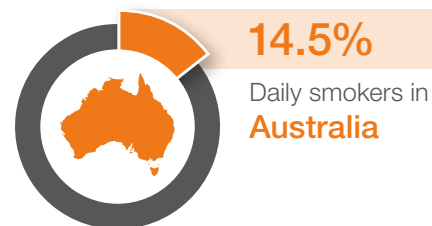
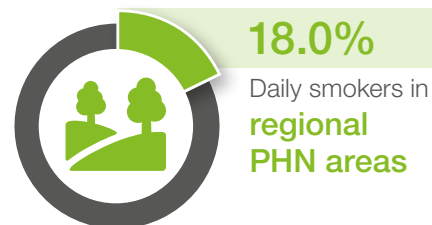
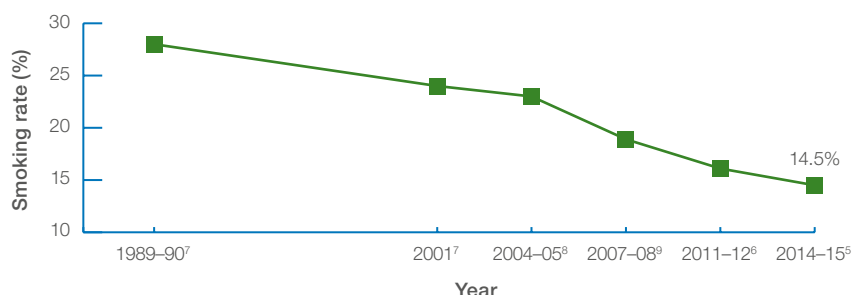


Figure 1: National adult smoking rates



What is a Primary Health Network?

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) are organisations that connect health services over local geographic areas. There are 31 PHNs in Australia. See the back page for more information.

Visit www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au for more detailed results

Sources and references can be found in the Technical Note at www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au/publications

Key findings

Australian adult daily smokers

In 2014–15, 2.6 million Australian adults smoked daily, equivalent to a rate of 14.5% (14.7% age-standardised).⁵ A higher percentage of men (16.9%) smoked daily than women (12.1%).

Across age groups, the percentage of adults smoking daily was highest among those aged 25–34 years (17.3%) and 45–54 years (17.7%). Only 6.8% of people aged 65 years or over smoked daily.

Variation across Australia

In 2014–15 across PHN areas in Australia that could be measured, Western NSW PHN area had the highest rate of adult daily smokers (23.3% or about one in four people). This was four times the rate of Northern Sydney PHN area, which had the lowest rate (5.4% or about one in 20 people).

Figure 2 (page 3) shows the results for PHN areas across Australia. Rates in some local areas were relatively high. Six PHN areas had smoking rates of about 19%, equivalent to about one in five people smoking daily. This indicates an opportunity for these areas to reduce smoking rates.

In this report, 95% confidence intervals have been used on the data presented to show the range in which the rate of adult daily smokers is likely to occur in a PHN area. Many confidence intervals overlap and this should be considered when interpreting the ranking of PHN areas. Where the 95% confidence intervals overlap it cannot be said with certainty there are differences between the areas being compared.

National performance benchmark

In 2008, the Council of Australian Governments established a national performance benchmark smoking rate of 10% (age-standardised) by 2018.¹⁰ Despite a commitment by all Australian governments, Australia is not on track to meet this benchmark.¹⁰

In 2014–15, only Northern Sydney PHN area (5.4%) met the benchmark while some other PHN areas were close (**Table 1** and **Figure 2, page 3**).

Variation across metropolitan and regional areas

Regional PHN areas generally had higher smoking rates than metropolitan PHN areas. Overall 18.0%, or one in six adults were daily smokers in regional PHN areas, compared with 12.7%, or one in eight adults in metropolitan PHN areas (**Figure 2, page 3**).

Furthermore, the six PHN areas with the highest smoking rates were all in regional locations, while the six PHN areas with the lowest rates were all metropolitan (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Primary Health Network areas with the highest and lowest rates of adult daily smokers

Key:

	Regional	National	Metropolitan
Primary Health Network area			Smoking rate
Western NSW [#]			23.3%
Northern Territory [*]			20.9%
Murray (Vic & part NSW)			20.6%
Northern Queensland			18.8%
Central Qld, Wide Bay & Sunshine Coast			18.5%
Country WA			18.5%
National average			14.5%
Brisbane North (Qld)			12.1%
Adelaide (SA)			12.0%
Central & Eastern Sydney (NSW)			11.5%
Eastern Melbourne (Vic)			10.8%
South Western Sydney (NSW)			10.7%
Northern Sydney (NSW) [#]			5.4%

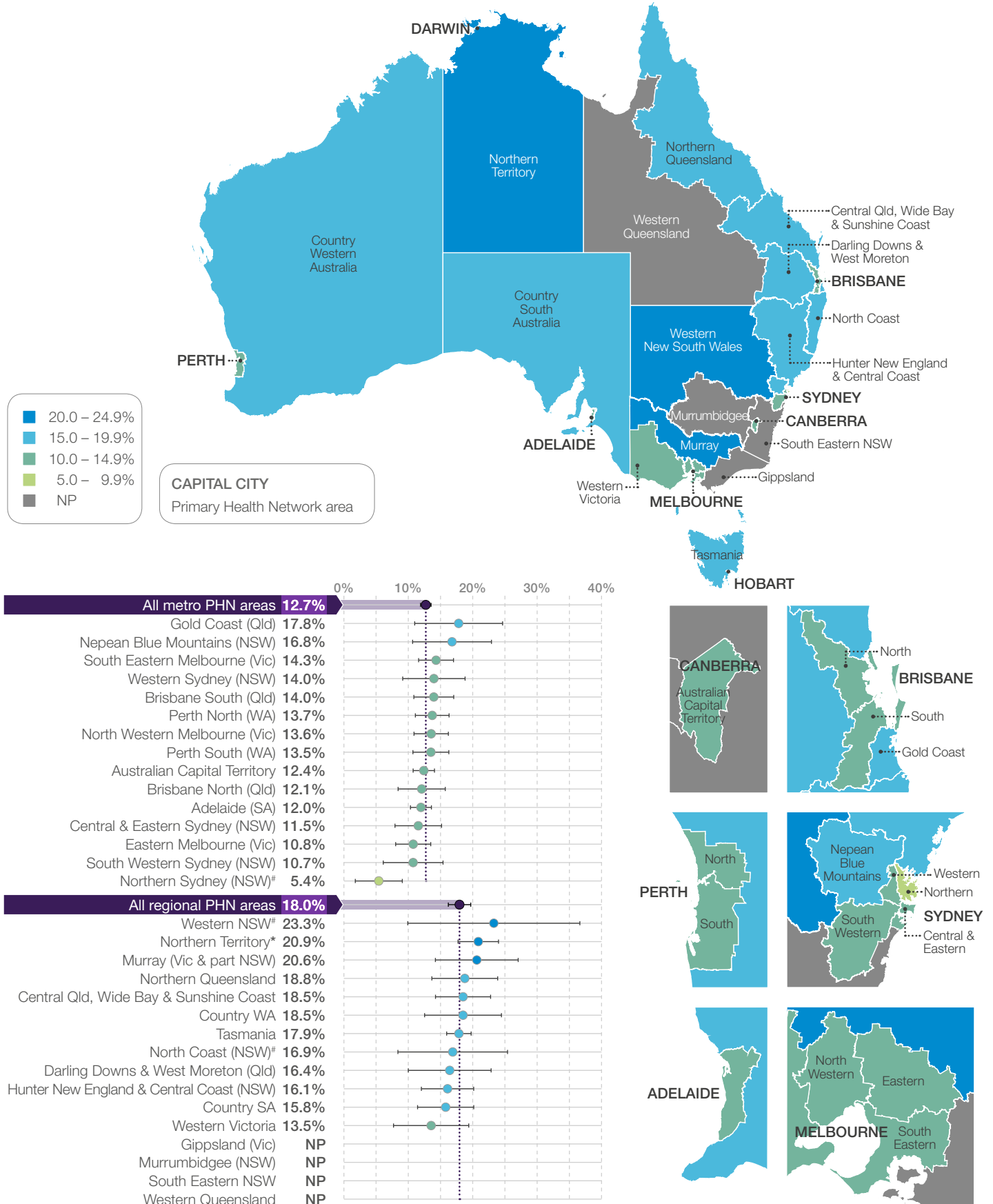
[#] Interpret with caution as estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50%. See the Technical Note for further details.

^{*} Interpret with caution: >25% of the population live in very remote areas and discrete Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities and are excluded from the survey.

Notes 'Metropolitan PHN areas' have 85% or more of the population in major cities, as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. All other PHN areas are classified as 'regional PHN areas'.

The National Health Survey is designed to produce accurate age-standardised rates at the national and state/territory level. Age-standardised rates for PHN areas could not be estimated with sufficient accuracy, hence throughout the report the national rate is presented as crude and age-standardised, and PHN area rates are presented as crude only.

Figure 2: Estimated adult daily tobacco smoking rates across Primary Health Network (PHN) areas, 2014–15



— 95% confidence interval. # Interpret with caution as estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50%. See the Technical Note for further details.

* Interpret with caution: >25% of the population live in very remote areas and discrete Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities, and are excluded from the survey.

NP Not available for publication but included in totals where applicable.

Notes Survey excludes adults living in non-private dwellings, very remote areas, and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. 'Metro PHN' areas have 85% or more of the population in major cities, as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. All other PHN areas are classified as 'regional PHN areas'.

Source Australian Institute of Health and Welfare analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics National Health Survey 2014–15.

About the data

The data were sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) National Health Survey 2014–15. Participants in the survey aged 18 years and over were asked whether they smoked at least once a day. A current daily smoker was defined as a person who smokes one or more cigarettes, roll-your-own cigarettes, cigars or pipes at least once a day. Chewing tobacco, electronic cigarettes (and similar) and the smoking of non-tobacco products were excluded.

For more information refer to the Technical Note at www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au/publications

What is a Primary Health Network?

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) are local organisations that connect health services across a specific geographic area, with the boundaries defined by the Australian Government Department of Health.

Thirty-one PHNs commenced operations on 1 July 2015, replacing Medicare Locals. They have the key objectives of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes, and improving coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.

In this report, a PHN area refers to the population that lives in the geographic area covered by a particular PHN. Due to the availability of robust and representative data at PHN area-level from the ABS National Health Survey, results for 27 of the 31 PHN areas have been published.

The results in this report relate to the period before PHNs were established; therefore, the findings do not reflect the performance of PHNs.

For more information, see <http://www.aihw.gov.au/primary-health-care/phn/>



All results in this report can be explored further at www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au

Information on tobacco smoking rates by Primary Health Network area for 2011–12 is also available.

The interactive website allows you to compare results for more than 130 health measures including:

- Adults who are overweight or obese
- Hospital admissions for mental health conditions and intentional self-harm
- GP attendances
- After-hours GP attendances
- Potentially avoidable deaths
- Life expectancy
- Child immunisation rates
- Use of emergency departments.



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Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of this document.