

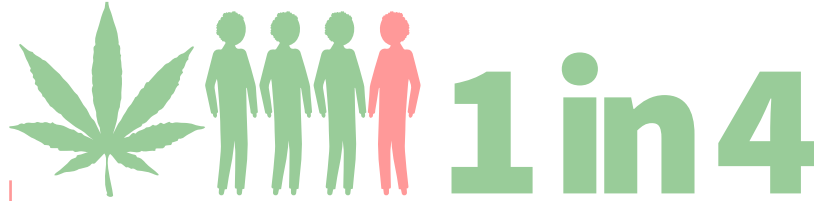


Cannabis use

among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



Cannabis (also known as gunja, yarndi or weed) is the most commonly used illegal drug in Australia. Approximately **36%** of Australians over 14 years have used cannabis in their lifetime ^[1].



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people **15** years and over had used cannabis in 2018-19 ^[2].



Rates as high as **45%** have been reported in some remote communities.



Over the last two decades cannabis has become stronger in its effects

Helping people to **never start or quit** cannabis use can make **big improvements** to their health.

Higher potency cannabis, using cannabis frequently and using at a young age are associated with an increased risk of harms to physical and mental health. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 5 times more likely to be hospitalised for cannabis related mental and behavioural disorders than non-Indigenous people.

Populations **vulnerable** to risky cannabis use are:



- young people
- people experiencing mental illness
- people in prison
- people who use alcohol and other drugs.

People are **less likely** to use cannabis

- by maintaining a connection to culture
- having lower levels of stress
- when there are low levels of alcohol and other drug use
- if they are a parent or carer.

There are many reasons to quit cannabis use:

- to protect one's mental health
- to protect respiratory health
- for family wellbeing
- to save money.



Programs to reduce cannabis use need to be:

- culturally safe
- planned with Elders, alcohol and other drugs health workers and community controlled organisations
- able to address cannabis use and mental health concerns together.



Contact your local Alcohol and other Drugs counselling service, Aboriginal Medical Service or see your Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service for treatment and support.

References

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2020). *National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019). *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, 2018-19*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistic

