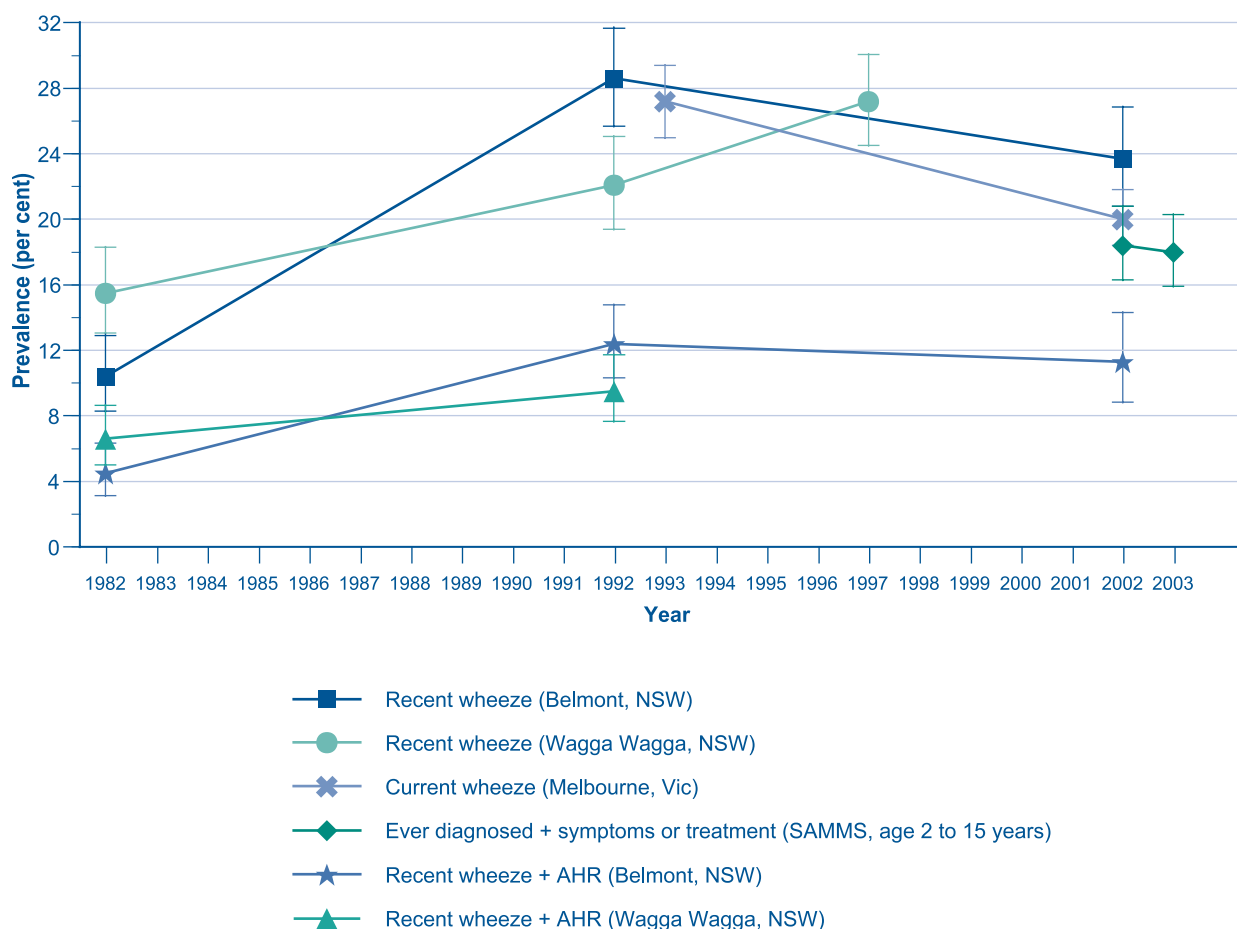


Figure 3.2
Prevalence of current asthma, children aged 15 years and under, Australia, 1982–2003



Note: Different definitions are used. Recent wheeze = wheeze in the last 12 months. Recent wheeze + AHR = wheeze in the last 12 months plus airway hyperresponsiveness. Ever diagnosed + symptoms or treatment = Ever diagnosed with asthma by a doctor plus symptoms when didn't have a respiratory infection or treatment in the last 12 months.

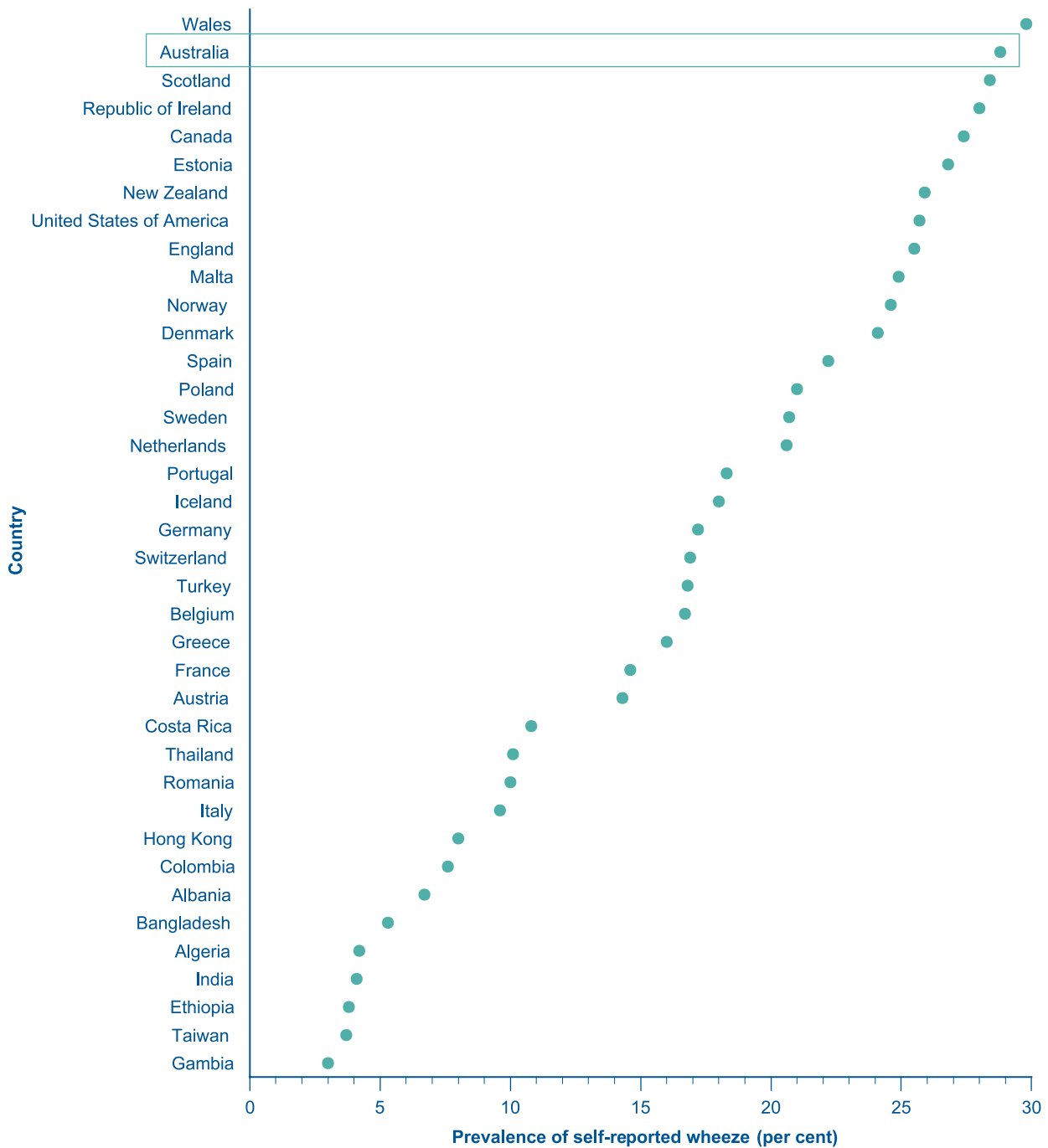
Sources: Comino et al. 1996; Downs et al. 2001; Peat et al. 1994; Toelle et al. 2004; Population Research and Outcome Studies Unit, SA Department of Human Services.

International comparisons

In assessing the burden of asthma in Australia it is useful to be able to place the prevalence of the disease in this country in an international context. The difficulties in comparing local data derived using various methods, definitions and settings are magnified substantially when attempting to make international comparisons of the prevalence of asthma. Fortunately, two large international studies, one conducted in adults (Burney 2002) and the other in children (ISAAC 1995), have applied standardised methods and definitions in an attempt to overcome these problems.

The European Community Respiratory Health Survey (ECRHS) was conducted among adults aged 20 to 44 years in 35 centres in 16 countries (Chinn et al. 1997). Melbourne was the Australian centre in this study (Abramson et al. 1996). Figure 3.3 shows the prevalence of self-reported wheeze among adults using data from the ECRHS and other comparable studies from countries not participating in ECRHS. The diagram shows that Australia had one of the highest prevalence rates of reported wheeze in the last 12 months among the 41 countries studied. The prevalence of self-reported wheeze among 13 to 14 year old children was also high in Australia compared with most other countries participating in ISAAC (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 3.3
World ranking for the percentage of adults with self-reported wheeze in previous 12 months, people aged 20 to 44 years



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