

5 Use of marijuana/cannabis

Marijuana/cannabis use

The 1998 survey estimated that nearly two in five (39%) Australians aged 14 years and over had used marijuana at least once in their lifetime and nearly one in five (18%) had used recently (Table 5.1). The survey also showed that males were more likely to report both types of use – lifetime and recent – than females, with 21% of all males reporting using marijuana/cannabis within the 12 months preceding the survey compared with 15% of females. The survey also showed that:

- In each age category males were more likely to report using marijuana/cannabis in their lifetime compared with females, except among persons aged 60 years or over.
- The highest proportion of persons reporting recent use of marijuana/cannabis was among the two youngest age categories – 14–19 years and 20–29 years – with more than a third of all in these age groups reporting using marijuana/cannabis.

Table 5.1: Marijuana/cannabis use: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 1998

Age	Lifetime use (per cent)	Recent use
Males		
14–19	45.3	35.6
20–29	68.3	44.8
30–39	59.9	24.1
40–49	53.7	16.7
50–59	21.3	5.2
60+	4.0	1.1
All ages	43.8	21.4
Females		
14–19	45.1	34.6
20–29	59.3	28.9
30–39	53.6	16.4
40–49	30.0	6.4
50–59	14.8	7.3
60+	4.8	1.3 *
All ages	34.6	14.5
Persons		
14–19	45.2	35.1
20–29	63.9	36.9
30–39	56.7	20.3
40–49	41.7	11.5
50–59	18.1	6.3
60+	4.4	1.2
All ages	39.1	17.9

Type of marijuana/cannabis and method of consumption

Respondents were asked about the method of consumption and type of marijuana/cannabis they used. The survey showed that:

- More than half (54%) of all marijuana/cannabis users reported smoking from a bong and a further 45% reported smoking the drug as a 'joint'.
- As age increased, the proportion of marijuana/cannabis users reporting that they consumed marijuana in the form of joints increased. For example, only a little over one in five (22%) marijuana/cannabis users in the age group 14–19 years consumed the drug as joints, compared with nearly nine in ten (87%) aged 60 years and over.
- The majority of users (57%) preferred marijuana heads as the type of marijuana/cannabis, and a further 30% used marijuana leaf.

The survey also showed that there were sex differences in the type of marijuana/cannabis used as well as the method of consumption. Males (60%) were more likely to use marijuana heads compared with females (53%) (Table 5.3).

Table 5.2: Type of marijuana/cannabis used and method of consumption: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by age, Australia, 1998

Type/method	Age group						All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
	(per cent)						
Type							
Leaf	28.8	25.2	30.4	35.2	72.9	29.1 *	30.1
Heads	47.9	60.6	62.9	58.6	27.1	70.9	57.1
Resin	0.6 *	0.9 *	0.3 *	0.3 *	—	—	0.6 *
Oil	—	0.2 *	—	—	—	—	0.1 *
Skunk	19.7	11.9	3.0	5.8 *	—	—	10.2
Other	2.9	1.3	3.4	—	—	—	1.9
How consumed							
Smoked as joints	21.6	38.9	54.7	73.1	75.1	86.5	45.2
Smoked from bong	77.5	59.8	44.5	26.9	24.9	13.5 *	53.9
Usually eaten	0.9 *	1.3	0.8 *	0.1 *	—	—	0.9

Note: Base equals all recent marijuana/cannabis users.

Table 5.3: Type of marijuana/cannabis used and method of consumption: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Type/method	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Type			
Leaf	26.6	35.1	30.1
Heads	60.1	52.8	57.1
Resin	0.2 *	1.1	0.6 *
Oil	0.1 *	—	0.1 *
Skunk	11.6	8.3	10.2
Other	1.4	2.7	1.9
How consumed			
Smoked as joints	43.9	47.0	45.2
Smoked from bong	55.3	52.0	53.9
Usually eaten	0.8 *	1.0 *	0.9

Note: Base equals all recent marijuana/cannabis users.

Usual place of marijuana/cannabis consumption

The survey showed that two-thirds of all marijuana/cannabis users usually consumed the drug in their own home (66%) or at a friend's house (68%) (Table 5.4). The third most cited usual place of consumption was at parties (58%). The most frequently cited usual place of consumption among male users was their own home (69%), while among female users it was a friend's house (70%). More than one in five users also nominated public places as their usual place of marijuana/cannabis consumption, while 18% of users nominated a car or other vehicle as their usual place of consumption.

Table 5.4: Where marijuana/cannabis is usually consumed: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 1998

Place	Age group				All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	
	(per cent)				
	Males				
In my own home	49.3	69.6	77.5	75.3	68.8
Friend's house	77.4	68.7	67.8	46.0	66.8
Parties	68.1	60.9	65.0	37.0	59.8
Restaurants/cafes	1.8 *	8.7	5.9	0.4 *	5.5
Licensed premises	8.5	20.7	13.2	1.2 *	13.8
Educational institutions	17.0	5.2	2.7	0.2 *	6.0
Workplace	4.6	6.0	4.1	3.2	4.9
Public places	32.0	27.0	19.1	10.3	23.5
Car, other vehicle	21.6	24.8	19.6	7.0	20.4
Other places	22.3	16.7	14.5	7.4	15.8
	Females				
In my own home	34.5	69.0	87.0	59.4	61.8
Friend's house	82.1	70.9	50.4	73.3	70.2
Parties	71.5	54.0	43.5	41.7	55.4
Restaurants/cafes	3.1	3.9	1.3 *	2.6 *	3.0
Licensed premises	7.2	12.3	2.6	2.6 *	7.8
Educational institutions	4.5	1.0 *	1.3 *	—	1.9
Workplace	1.9 *	1.9	0.2 *	—	1.3
Public places	34.2	12.2	5.4	4.6 *	16.1
Car, other vehicle	22.0	13.6	6.8	10.1	14.2
Other places	9.7	9.6	4.8	7.6	8.4
	Persons				
In my own home	41.7	69.4	80.8	69.6	66.0
Friend's house	79.8	69.6	61.7	55.8	68.2
Parties	69.8	58.2	57.5	38.7	58.0
Restaurants/cafes	2.5	6.8	4.3	1.2 *	4.5
Licensed premises	7.9	17.5	9.5	1.7 *	11.4
Educational institutions	10.6	3.6	2.2	0.2 *	4.4
Workplace	3.2	4.4	2.7	2.1	3.5
Public places	33.1	21.2	14.3	8.3	20.5
Car, other vehicle	21.8	20.4	15.1	8.1	17.9
Other places	15.8	13.9	11.1	7.5	12.8

Note: Base equals all recent marijuana/cannabis users.

Frequency of marijuana/cannabis use

In 1998 the survey showed that one in six (17%) recent marijuana users smoked every day and a further one in four (25%) smoked at least once a week (Table 5.5). Further, the survey showed that nearly half (48%) male users smoked once or more a week compared with only about one in three (32%) females. The survey also showed that:

- Male users (20%) were almost twice as likely to report using marijuana every day as females (12%).
- Proportionally more females were casual smokers, with more than half (52%) of female users reported using marijuana/cannabis at most once in every few months compared with slightly more than one-third of male users (36%).

Table 5.5: Frequency of marijuana/cannabis use: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 1998

Frequency	Age group						All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
(per cent)							
Males							
Every day	10.7	21.4	21.3	31.3	1.6 *	—	19.6
Once a week or more	32.7	28.8	30.2	22.1	13.7 *	1.9 *	28.3
Once a month	16.9	14.5	14.3	16.3	28.1	50.6 *	16.0
Every few months	19.0	11.0	10.5	11.2	3.1 *	—	11.9
Once or twice a year	16.9	12.6	18.0	17.7	19.8 *	21.6 *	15.6
Less often	3.8	11.7	5.7	1.3 *	33.7	25.9 *	8.7
Females							
Every day	12.7	12.0	14.6	6.9	1.7 *	—	11.8
Once a week or more	12.7	25.5	15.9	33.3	15.3 *	27.6 *	20.4
Once a month	20.4	16.1	12.6	17.5	—	—	15.9
Every few months	24.5	18.4	20.6	25.9	5.5 *	—	20.4
Once or twice a year	21.7	18.2	22.2	9.8	77.4	72.4 *	21.9
Less often	7.9	9.9	14.2	6.6	—	—	9.6
Persons							
Every day	11.7	17.9	18.8	23.4	1.6 *	—	16.5
Once a week or more	22.6	27.6	24.9	25.8	14.1	17.7 *	25.1
Once a month	18.7	15.1	13.7	16.7	20.7	19.5 *	16.0
Every few months	21.8	13.7	14.3	16.0	3.7 *	—	15.3
Once or twice a year	19.3	14.7	19.6	15.1	35.0	52.8	18.1
Less often	5.9	11.0	8.8	3.1 *	24.9	10.0 *	9.0

Note: Base equals all recent marijuana/cannabis users.

Source of supply of marijuana/cannabis

In 1998, of all Australians aged 14 years and over who reported using marijuana in their lifetime, nearly nine in ten (89%) obtained their first supply from a friend or acquaintance (Table 5.6). Slightly more males (91%) than females (86%) obtained their first supply from a friend or acquaintance. Less than one in 50 users reported obtaining their first supply of marijuana/cannabis through a street dealer.

Table 5.6: First supplier: proportion of persons who have tried marijuana/cannabis aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Supplier	Males	Females	Persons
	(per cent)		
Friend or acquaintance	90.9	86.2	88.8
Brother or sister	3.0	4.6	3.7
Parent	0.3 *	0.6	0.4
Spouse or partner	0.2 *	4.7	2.2
Other relative	1.2	1.8	1.4
Street dealer	2.6	1.1	1.9
Stole it	0.4 *	0.3	0.4
Other	1.4	0.6	1.1

Note: Base equals all marijuana/cannabis users.

The current source of supply of marijuana/cannabis did not differ much from that of first supply. The majority of recent users (85%) obtained their supply from a friend or acquaintance, and a further one in 20 (6%) users obtained their recent supply from a street dealer (Table 5.7). The survey also showed that more males (8%) than females (2%) obtained their recent supply from a street dealer.

Table 5.7: Recent suppliers: proportion of recent users of marijuana/ cannabis aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Supplier	Males	Females (per cent)	Persons
Friend or acquaintance	84.9	85.9	85.3
Brother or sister	1.3	1.8	1.5
Parent	—	0.4 *	0.2 *
Spouse or partner	0.2 *	5.1	2.1
Other relative	0.4 *	1.1	0.7
Street dealer	7.6	2.4	5.5
Stole it	0.1 *	—	0.1 *
Other	5.5	3.4	4.6

Note: Base equals all recent marijuana/cannabis users.

Multiple drugs use with marijuana/cannabis use

Persons who used marijuana/cannabis in 1998 also used a variety of other drugs. The survey showed that:

- Nearly all (96%) recent users of marijuana/cannabis had also used alcohol.
- Nearly three-fifths (57%) of recent marijuana users had also used tobacco.
- Nearly one in five (20%) recent users had also used amphetamines.
- Nearly one in six (16%) recent users had also used hallucinogens.

The use of other drugs was similar for males and females, except that more males than females reported also using amphetamines (23% versus 15%), hallucinogens (19% versus 12%), and ecstasy/designer drugs (14% versus 9%).

Table 5.8: Polydrug use: proportion of recent marijuana/cannabis users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Other substances recently used	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Alcohol	96.2	95.6	95.9
Tobacco	56.3	57.5	56.8
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a)	10.7	13.6	11.9
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a)	7.1	8.7	7.8
Steroids ^(a)	0.9 *	0.4 *	0.7 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	1.6	0.9 *	1.3
Amphetamines ^(a)	22.5	15.3	19.5
Heroin	5.1	3.3	4.4
Methadone ^(b)	1.3	0.2 *	0.9 *
Cocaine	8.2	5.4	7.1
Hallucinogens	18.6	12.3	16.0
Ecstasy/designer drugs	14.0	8.8	11.8
Inhalants	3.6	4.5	4.0

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

Note: Base equals all recent marijuana/cannabis users.

When the data on concurrent use of other substances together with marijuana/cannabis were analysed, the survey showed that nearly three-quarters (73%) of all recent users also consumed alcohol simultaneously with marijuana/cannabis (Table 5.9). However, one in four (25%) marijuana/cannabis users did not consume any drug simultaneously with marijuana/cannabis. Some sex difference existed, with males (79%) more likely to use other substances along with marijuana/cannabis compared with females (69%).

Table 5.9: Concurrent polydrug use: proportion of recent marijuana/cannabis users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Other substances recently used	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Alcohol	76.3	67.5	72.7
Heroin	4.4	2.5	3.6
Cocaine	6.0	2.3	4.4
Benzodiazepines	0.7 *	0.3 *	0.5 *
Anti-depressants	2.4	3.1	2.7
Barbiturates	0.8 *	0.8 *	0.8 *
Pain-killers/analgesics	7.8	7.0	7.5
None of the above	20.8	31.4	25.2

Note: Base equals recent marijuana/cannabis users.

Correlates of marijuana/cannabis use

The 1998 survey showed that possession of certain socioeconomic and cultural characteristics increased the likelihood of respondents reporting marijuana/cannabis use. For example, proportionally fewer persons (21%) born in non-English-speaking countries reported being lifetime users compared with Australian-born (41%) or those born in other English-speaking countries (45%). The survey further showed that:

- Nearly half (49%) of all persons with HSC or equivalent qualifications reported using marijuana/cannabis in their lifetime, while more than one in five (23%) reported using recently.
- Nearly half (48%) of all employed persons reported using marijuana/cannabis in their lifetime, but the proportion of recent users among them was only 21%.
- Two in five (40%) persons employed in blue collar jobs reported using marijuana/cannabis in their lifetime, and more than half (21%) of lifetime users reported being recent users.
- The use of marijuana across rural/urban regions did not vary, with 18% of Australians aged 14 years and over living in urban areas reporting using recently compared with 17% among rural/remote dwellers.
- Persons who were never married at the survey period had the highest proportion of recent users of marijuana/cannabis, with more than one in three (36%) reporting using recently compared with only one in ten (10%) married persons.

Table 5.10: Correlates of marijuana/cannabis use: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, Australia, 1998

Characteristics	Never used	Lifetime use	Recent use
		(per cent)	
Education			
No qualification	68.1	31.9	13.9
HSC or equivalent	51.1	48.9	23.4
Trade/diploma	57.1	42.9	19.8
Tertiary	54.2	45.8	15.9
Employment status			
Currently employed	51.6	48.4	20.6
Student	57.0	43.0	29.2
Unemployed	52.9	47.1	32.1
Retired/pension	80.0	20.0	6.2
Occupational status			
Upper (white)	57.9	42.1	16.4
Middle	60.4	39.6	16.9
Lower (blue)	60.0	40.0	20.7
Cultural background			
Australian born	58.9	41.1	19.3
Other English-speaking born	55.0	45.0	18.6
Non-English-speaking born	79.3	20.7	8.0
Socioeconomic area			
1st quintile	64.5	35.5	16.7
2nd quintile	64.3	35.7	15.3
3rd quintile	57.7	42.3	19.0
4th quintile	59.8	40.2	18.5
5th quintile	57.3	42.7	20.4
Geography			
Urban	61.0	39.0	18.3
Rural/remote	60.6	39.4	16.9
Marital status			
Never married	46.7	53.3	36.1
Widowed	90.2	9.8	1.8 *
Divorced/separated	53.2	46.8	17.9
Presently married	66.7	33.3	10.1