

3 Availability of drugs

Offer or opportunity to use drugs

Respondents to the 2001 survey were asked if they had been offered or had the opportunity to use selected drugs in the past 12 months. Alcohol and tobacco were the drugs Australians aged 14 years and over were most likely to have been offered or had the opportunity to use (Table 3.1):

- Nine in 10 (90.4%) Australians had alcohol available for use in the past 12 months and 57.2% had tobacco available for use. For both of these drugs those aged 20–29 years indicated the greatest opportunity for use.
- A greater proportion of males than females had the offer or opportunity to use where opportunity was equal, for all of the selected drugs except prescription drugs.
- Marijuana/cannabis was offered or available to 24.2% of Australians. Of those aged 14–19 years one in two (48.3%) had this drug available for use.

Table 3.1: Opportunity to use selected drugs in the past 12 months, persons aged 14 years and over, by age, by sex, Australia, 2001

Drug	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
				(per cent)			
Tobacco	70.3	77.7	66.4	44.2	62.7	51.9	57.2
Alcohol	89.2	95.5	93.3	87.9	93.2	87.7	90.4
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	48.3	50.1	28.6	8.7	28.0	20.4	24.2
Prescribed drugs ^(a)	39.4	49.3	49.3	45.5	46.2	46.2	46.2
Inhalants	6.8	6.1	2.9	1.7	4.3	2.2	3.2
Heroin	3.5	3.4	1.3	0.5	2.0	1.0	1.5
Amphetamines/speed	15.8	21.8	7.1	1.3	9.3	5.8	7.6
Cocaine	5.5	10.1	3.7	0.7	4.3	2.6	3.4
Hallucinogens	9.8	12.6	3.7	0.6	5.6	3.0	4.3
Ecstasy/designer drugs	16.4	24.1	6.6	1.1	9.7	6.0	7.8

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

Acceptance of the offer or opportunity to use drugs

The 2001 survey identified the proportion of those that had been both offered or had the opportunity to use selected drugs in the past 12 months, and used the selected drug in the last 12 months. When available, marijuana/cannabis was the illicit drug most likely to have also been used (Table 3.2). Those who had been offered or had the opportunity to use selected drugs in the past 12 months also reported that:

- less than 10% of those who had prescription drugs available for use had used them for non-medical purposes in the last 12 months;
- females (25.5%) were more likely than males (16.1%) to have had heroin available in the past 12 months and to have used; and
- those aged 40 years and over (27.4%) were almost twice as likely as 14–19 year olds (14.8%) to have had heroin available in the past 12 months and to have used.

Table 3.2: Recent drug use, persons aged 14 years and over who had the opportunity to use, by age, by sex, Australia, 2001

Drug	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
				(per cent)			
Tobacco	29.7	43.8	46.6	43.7	42.9	42.1	42.5
Alcohol	82.8	94.6	93.5	91.9	92.5	91.0	91.7
Illicit drugs							
Marijuana/cannabis	52.3	60.7	58.3	52.1	59.5	53.0	56.7
Prescribed drugs ^(a)	13.0	13.4	8.5	7.7	9.5	9.3	9.4
Inhalants	16.4	18.2	19.5	7.8	15.3	15.0	15.2
Heroin	14.8	17.0	22.9	27.4	16.1	25.5	19.2
Amphetamines/speed	42.2	54.7	46.9	37.7	48.3	49.8	48.9
Cocaine	25.6	44.1	44.2	44.0	39.0	44.2	41.0
Hallucinogens	28.1	38.9	33.3	10.1	33.3	31.8	32.8
Ecstasy/designer drugs	32.1	45.6	38.8	25.1	38.9	41.6	39.9

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

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

Ease of obtaining illicit drugs

Survey respondents were asked how difficult or easy they thought it would be for them to obtain selected illicit drugs, if they wanted them. Australians aged 14 years and over considered that marijuana/cannabis would be the easiest drug to obtain, nominated as easy by one in two (49.2%) Australians (Table 3.3). Other results include:

- The age groups 14–19 and 20–29 years were most likely to consider marijuana/cannabis easy to obtain.
- Aside from marijuana/cannabis, respondents typically did not know whether obtaining illicit drugs would be easy or difficult. For heroin, amphetamines, hallucinogens, cocaine and ecstasy/designer drugs around two in five nominated 'don't know'.
- For each of the selected drugs, a greater proportion of males than females considered the obtaining of drugs to be 'easy'.
- Those aged 20–29 years were more likely than other age groups to consider illicit drugs to be easy to obtain. Almost one in two considered amphetamines (45.0%) and ecstasy/designer drugs (47.8%) 'easy' to obtain.

Table 3.3: Perception of the ease of obtaining selected illicit drugs, persons aged 14 years and over, by age, by sex, Australia, 2001

Drug	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
Marijuana/cannabis							
Easy ^(a)	73.2	75.2	60.1	31.8	54.4	44.0	49.2
Don't know	11.0	9.8	22.7	38.8	25.1	30.2	27.7
Heroin							
Easy	18.4	25.0	19.6	12.4	19.7	13.6	16.6
Don't know	23.7	24.0	37.6	45.8	36.1	40.0	38.1
Amphetamines							
Easy	32.2	45.0	29.7	14.7	28.5	20.9	24.7
Don't know	21.5	19.1	34.5	45.5	34.3	38.1	36.3
Hallucinogens							
Easy	22.2	31.0	19.9	10.3	20.4	13.6	17.0
Don't know	27.2	24.5	39.1	47.9	38.0	41.8	39.9
Cocaine							
Easy	19.2	26.2	19.4	10.7	18.8	13.1	16.0
Don't know	22.8	22.7	37.6	46.7	36.2	40.3	38.2
Ecstasy/designer drugs							
Easy	35.9	47.8	28.4	13.6	29.0	20.6	24.8
Don't know	20.9	18.4	35.5	46.2	34.4	38.7	36.6

(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 only select one response.

For the selected drugs, the 2001 survey showed that perceptions of the ease of obtaining differed between those who had never used, ex-users and recent users:

- Across all selected drugs, perception of ease of obtaining was substantially higher among recent or ex-users than among never users.
- More than nine in 10 (95.3%) recent users considered marijuana/cannabis 'easy' to obtain (Table 3.4). This drug was considered 'easy' to obtain by 76.0% and 32.1% of ex-users and never users respectively.

Table 3.4: Perception of the ease of obtaining selected drugs, persons aged 14 years and over, by user status, Australia, 2001

Drug	Never used	Ex-user	Recent user
	(per cent)		
Marijuana/cannabis			
Easy ^(a)	32.1	76.0	95.3
Don't know	37.6	11.4	1.4
Heroin			
Easy	16.0	60.4	53.5
Don't know	38.4	11.7	15.0
Amphetamines			
Easy	19.7	66.8	89.5
Don't know	39.1	8.8	1.5
Hallucinoogens			
Easy	45.9	91.5	96.3
Don't know	29.5	2.6	0.4
Cocaine			
Easy	14.1	51.5	72.4
Don't know	39.5	10.6	3.7
Ecstasy/designer drugs			
Easy	20.9	77.7	93.3
Don't know	38.6	4.4	1.0

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