




Australian Government

Australian Institute of  
Health and Welfare

# National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019

In brief





# **National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019**

In brief

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is a major national agency whose purpose is to create authoritative and accessible information and statistics that inform decisions and improve the health and welfare of all Australians.

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### Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Board Chair

Director

Mrs Louise Markus

Mr Barry Sandison

Any enquiries relating to copyright or comments on this publication should be directed to:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

GPO Box 570

Canberra ACT 2601

Tel: (02) 6244 1000

Email: [info@aihw.gov.au](mailto:info@aihw.gov.au)

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# **About the *National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019: in brief***

The *National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019: in brief* is a companion report to the *National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019* report.

It presents the key findings from the main report to explore how tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs are used by people aged 14 and over in Australia. It also highlights how the survey results vary by age, geographic area, level of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage, and a person's education. All increases, decreases, or changes in estimates over time mentioned in this report are statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence unless specified otherwise.

The *In brief* and main report are accompanied by a range of other products, including state and territory fact sheets, more detailed technical information about the survey, and comprehensive data tables. There are also two data visualisations so users can explore the survey results by Primary Health Network areas and by various demographic and social characteristics (such as sexual orientation and educational attainment).

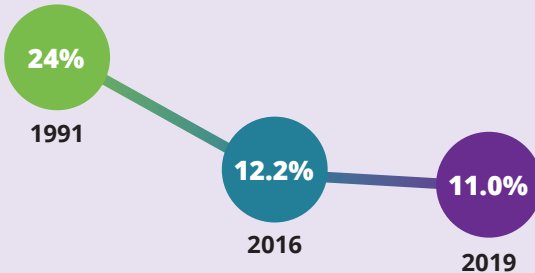
The *In brief*, main report and all associated products can be viewed and downloaded for free at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/illicit-use-of-drugs/national-drug-strategy-household-survey-2019/contents/table-of-contents>.

# Key findings

## Smoking



Fewer Australians are smoking daily than ever before



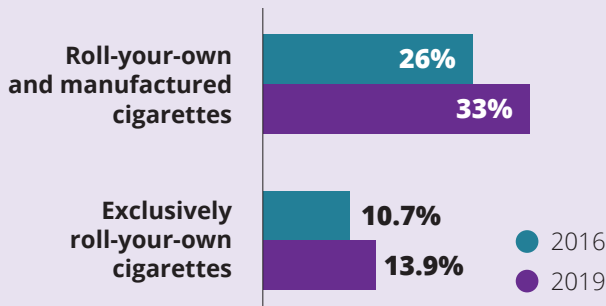
Fewer people in their 20s and 30s smoking daily now than in 2016



Little improvement for people in their 40s, 50s and 60s between 2016 and 2019

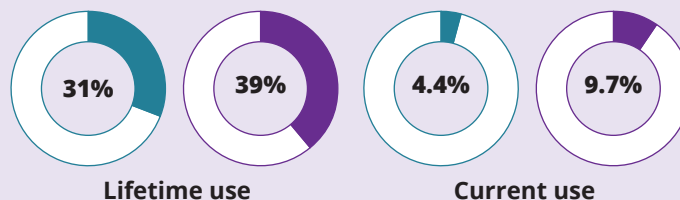


More smokers are opting for roll-your-own cigarettes



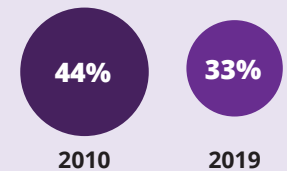
Use of e-cigarettes by current smokers increased between 2016 and 2019

● 2016 ● 2019

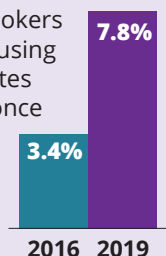


Current smokers smoked an average of 13 cigarettes per day in 2019—down from 16 per day in 2010

Current smokers who smoked 20 cigarettes or more a day



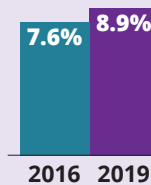
More smokers are also using e-cigarettes at least once a month



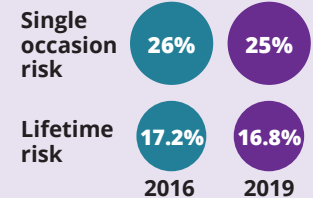
## Drinking



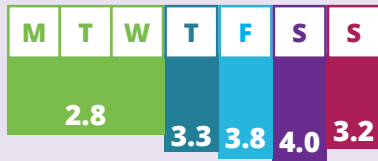
More Australians are giving up alcohol



The proportion of people exceeding the single occasion risk and lifetime risk guidelines has remained stable since 2016



Alcohol consumed throughout the week (standard drinks)



There has been an increase in 14-17 year olds who have never consumed a full standard drink

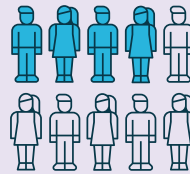
28%

2001

2019

66%

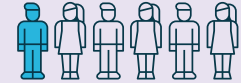
## Illicit drug use



In 2019, more than

**4 in 10**

(43%) people in Australia had illicitly used a drug at some point in their lifetime



**1 in 6**

(16.4%) had used one in the last 12 months

### Changes in recent use (2016 to 2019)



11.6%



Cannabis

10.4%



4.2%



Cocaine

2.5%



3.0%



Ecstasy

2.2%



3.6%



Pain-killers and opioids

2.7%



1.4%



Inhalants

1.0%



1.6%



Hallucinogens

1.0%



0.9%



Ketamine

0.4%



0.3%

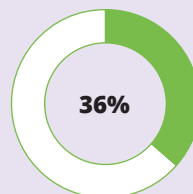


New and emerging psychoactive substances

0.1%\*

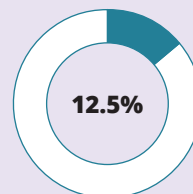
### Lifetime use among people aged 14 and over

Cannabis



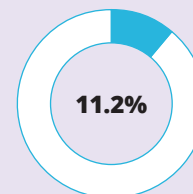
7.6 million people

Ecstasy



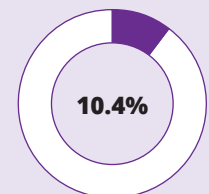
2.6 million people

Cocaine



2.3 million people

Hallucinogens

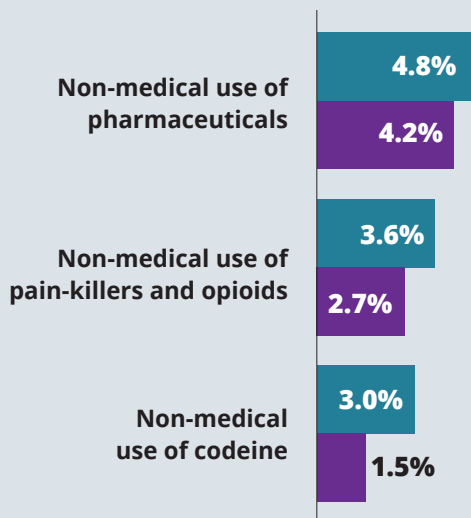


2.2 million people

# Key findings (continued)

## Illicit drug use

Non-medical use of pharmaceuticals in the previous 12 months has fallen between 2016 and 2019

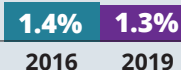


**31%** of people using pain-killers and opioids for non-medical purposes said they could not reduce their use even though they wanted to

Codeine was made a prescription-only medication in 2018

● 2016 ● 2019

Meth/amphetamines use remained stable between 2016 and 2019



**50%** of people who used meth/amphetamines used crystal/ice as the main form



The proportion of people who have been the victims of incidents related to illicit drug use rose for people in their 30s, 50s and those aged 60 and over



**69%**

First try illicit drugs out of curiosity



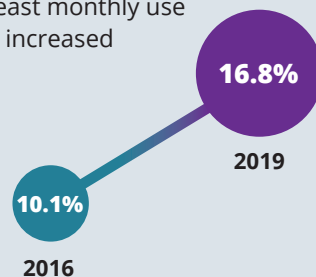
**71%**

Who continue to use them do so because they enjoy it



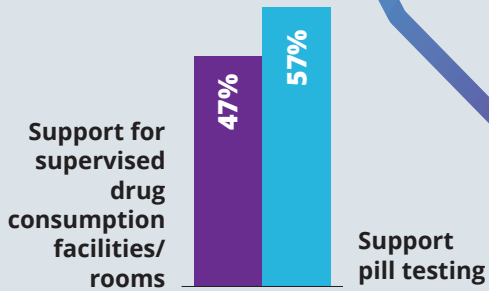
Recent cocaine use increased across all age groups (except for 14–19 year olds) and is at the highest proportion in 18 years

Among people who had used cocaine in the last 12 months, at least monthly use has increased



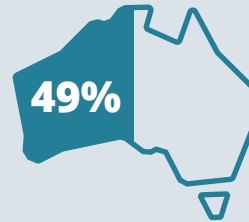
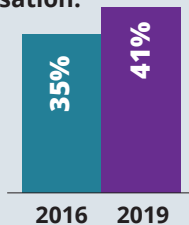


## Attitudes



People's attitudes towards cannabis are changing

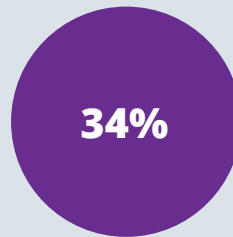
Support legalisation:



Australians nominate meth/amphetamine as the drug most likely to be associated with a drug problem—this is more than in 2016 (46%)



Although tobacco contributes to more deaths in Australia than alcohol and illicit drug use combined, people are more likely to nominate alcohol or meth/amphetamines as the largest cause of deaths



Alcohol



Meth/amphetamines



Tobacco

Community support for most policy measures aimed at reducing harms from tobacco and alcohol has dropped for most policies particularly:

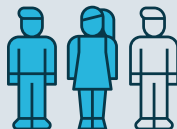


late-night alcohol trading



tax increases on tobacco

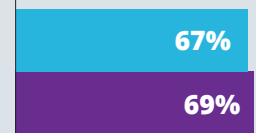
Support for measures related to the use of e-cigarettes has grown



**Two-thirds**

of the population supported restrictions on where e-cigarettes could be:

advertised  
used in public



# Terminology used in this report

## Smoking

**Daily smoker:** Smokes tobacco at least once a day (includes manufactured cigarettes, roll-your-own cigarettes, cigars or pipes). Excludes chewing tobacco, electronic cigarettes and smoking of non-tobacco products.

**Current smoker/smoker:** Reported smoking daily, weekly or less than weekly at the time of the survey.

**Ex-smoker:** Smoked at least 100 cigarettes or equivalent tobacco in their lifetime but does not smoke at all now.

**Never smoker:** Has never smoked more than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime.

**Electronic cigarette (e-cigarette):** A device designed to deliver nicotine and/or other chemicals via an aerosol vapour that the user inhales.

## Alcohol

**Lifetime risk:** For healthy men and women, drinking no more than 2 standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury.

**Single occasion risk:** For healthy men and women, drinking no more than 4 standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion (NHMRC 2009).

**Abstainer:** A person who has not consumed an alcoholic drink in the previous 12 months.

## Drugs

**Recent use:** Use of at least 1 of the 16 classes of illicit drugs asked about in the survey in the previous 12 months.

### Illicit drug use is:

- use of illegal drugs (such as meth/amphetamines and cocaine)
- use of pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes (for example, using oxycodone or benzodiazepines without a prescription, or in a quantity or for a purpose for which it is not intended).
- volatile substances used inappropriately (for example, inhalants such as petrol or glue).

**New and emerging psychoactive substances:** These are new, novel or emerging drugs. They often mimic the effect of existing illicit substances. These are sometimes referred to as research chemicals, analogues, or bath salts. Some of the more well-known substances include Mephedrone, NBOMe, and Flakka.

# Tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug use in Australia

## How many people smoke and are exposed to tobacco smoke?

Fewer Australians are smoking daily than ever before. The proportion of people smoking daily has fallen in recent years and is now at 11.0% compared with 12.2% in 2016 and 24% in 1991.

In 2019, current smokers were smoking an average of 13 cigarettes per day. Although this hasn't changed since 2016, it has fallen from 16 cigarettes per day in 2010.

Fewer Australians are exposed to tobacco smoke at home regularly. In 2019, about 1 in 50 (2.1%) households with dependent children had a household member who smoked daily inside the home—much lower than the 1 in 5 (19.7%) in 2001.

## How many people try to quit?

In 2019:



**3 in 10**

(31%) smokers tried to quit but were not successful



**2 in 10**

(21%) were able to quit for more than a month (up from 17.2% in 2016)



**4 in 10**

(39%) reduced the amount of tobacco smoked in a day

More smokers said the cost of smoking was motivating them to quit or cut back—58% in 2019 compared with 52% in 2016.

3 in 10 (30%) smokers say they don't plan on quitting and this proportion has not changed over the last decade. The main reason for not quitting is because they enjoy it or it relaxes them.

## More people are using e-cigarettes

Between 2016 and 2019, lifetime and current use of e-cigarettes increased among both smokers and non-smokers.

Frequency of use also rose among smokers between 2016 and 2019—daily use rose from 1.5% to 3.2% and at least monthly use increased from 3.4% to 7.8%

### Use of e-cigarettes

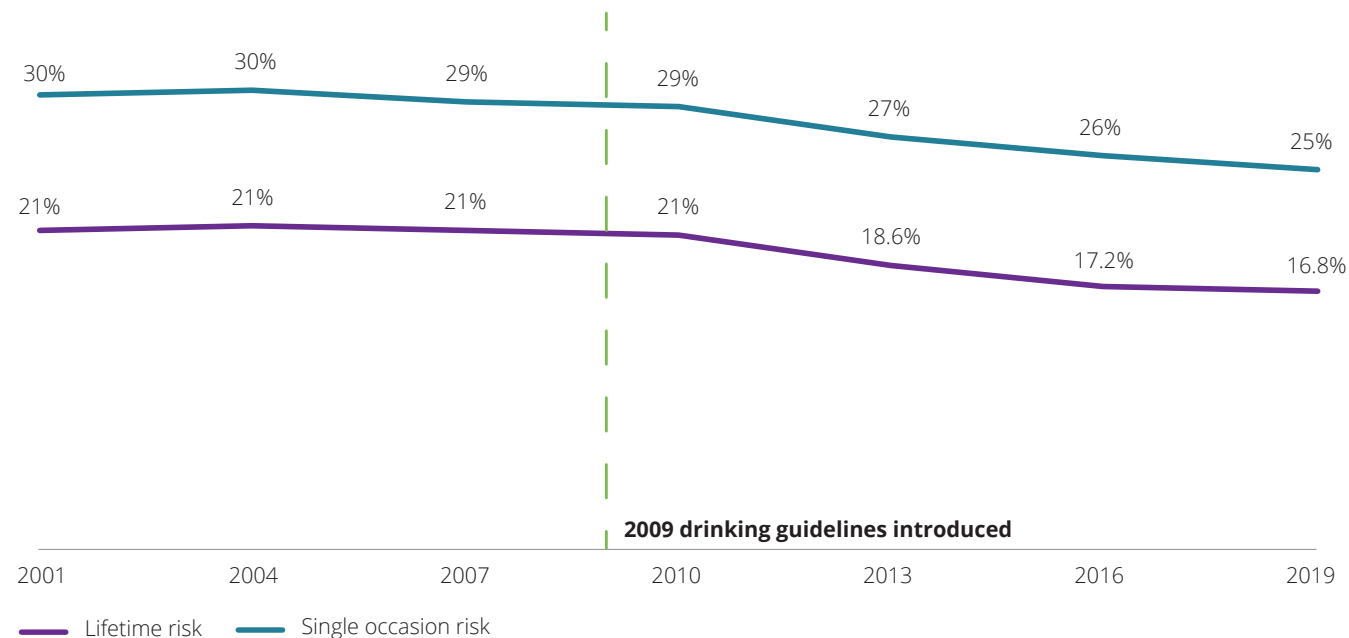


## How many people drink alcohol?

Alcohol is the most used drug in Australia and although many people use it responsibly, it is a significant source of harm to the Australian community.

The proportion of people drinking alcohol in quantities that exceeded the single occasion risk (25%) and lifetime risk guidelines (16.8%) remained stable between 2016 and 2019, although both have reduced since the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines were introduced in 2009.

### Proportion of people aged 14 and over exceeding the alcohol guidelines



Source: Table 3.13

## How many people are victims of alcohol-related incidents?

More than 1 in 5 (21%) Australians (or 4.5 million people) had been a victim of an alcohol-related incident in 2019 (verbally or physically abused, or put in fear by someone under the influence of alcohol). This proportion has not changed since 2016.

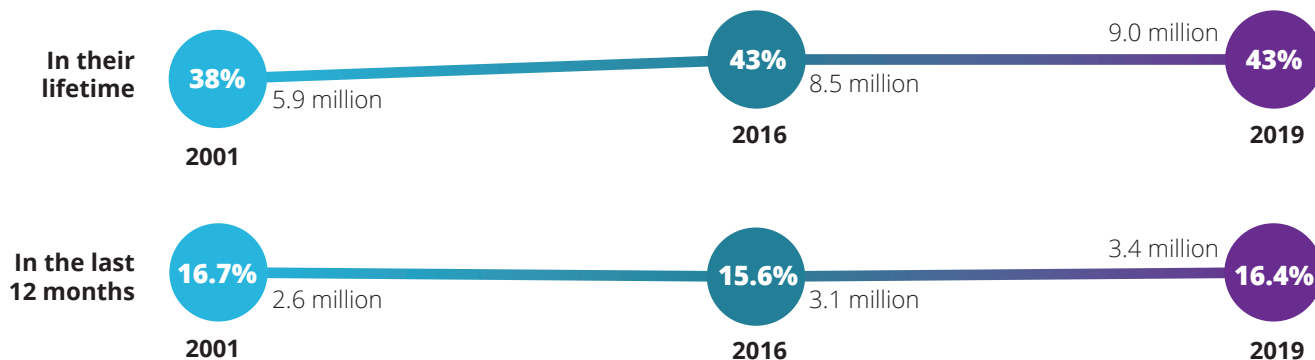
However, in 2019, fewer people reported that they had been physically abused in the previous 12 months by someone under the influence of alcohol:



## How many people use illicit drugs?

In 2019, 43% of Australians had used an illicit drug at some point in their life (including pharmaceuticals used for non-medical purposes) and 16.4% had used one in the last 12 months. The proportion using in the previous 12 months is similar to 2016 and 2001 while lifetime use has increased since 2001.

### Proportion of people who have used an illicit drug (including non-medical use of pharmaceuticals)

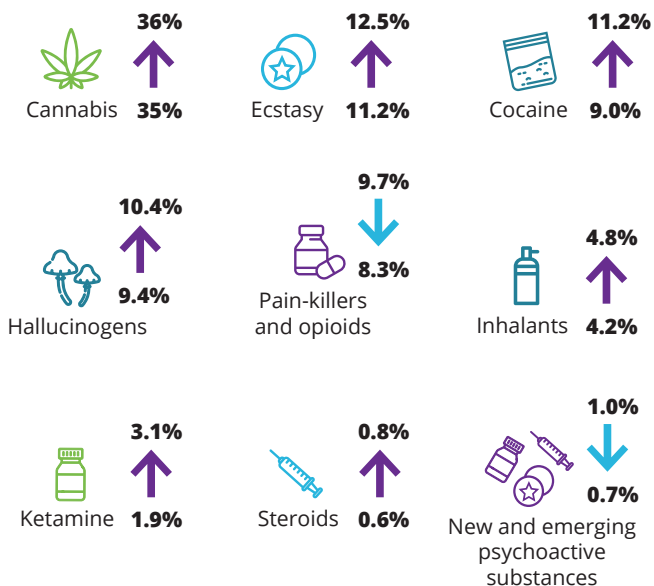


More people used illicit drugs (excluding non-medical use of pharmaceuticals) in the previous 12 months (14.1%) than in 2016 (12.6%). Use of 6 illicit drugs rose over this period—cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, hallucinogens, inhalants and ketamine.

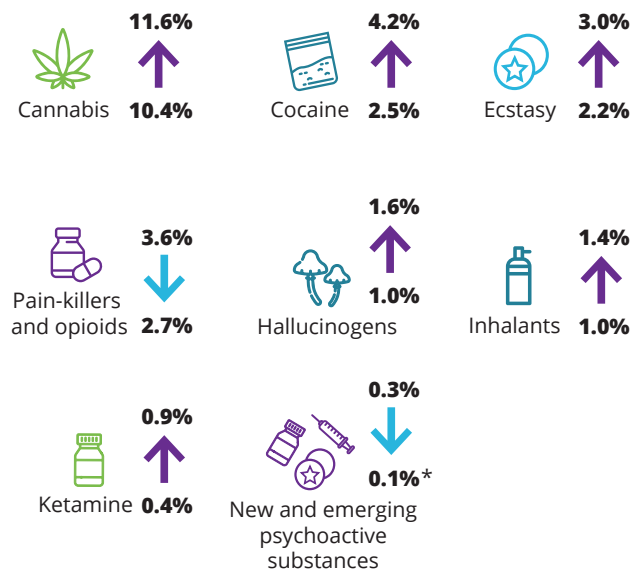
People using cocaine in the previous 12 months has been increasing since 2004 (1.0%) and is now at its highest proportion seen since 2001 (4.2 %).

There were a number of changes in lifetime and recent use of specific drugs between 2016 and 2019:

### Changes in lifetime use



### Changes in recent use

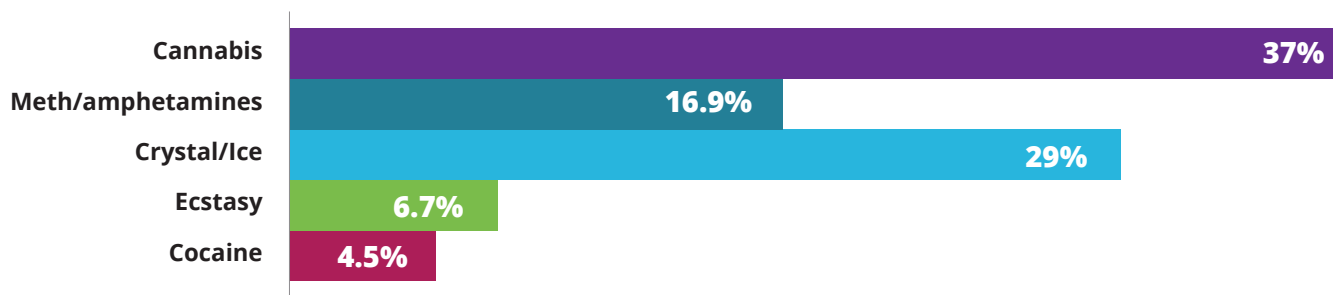


\* Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

## How often do people use drugs?

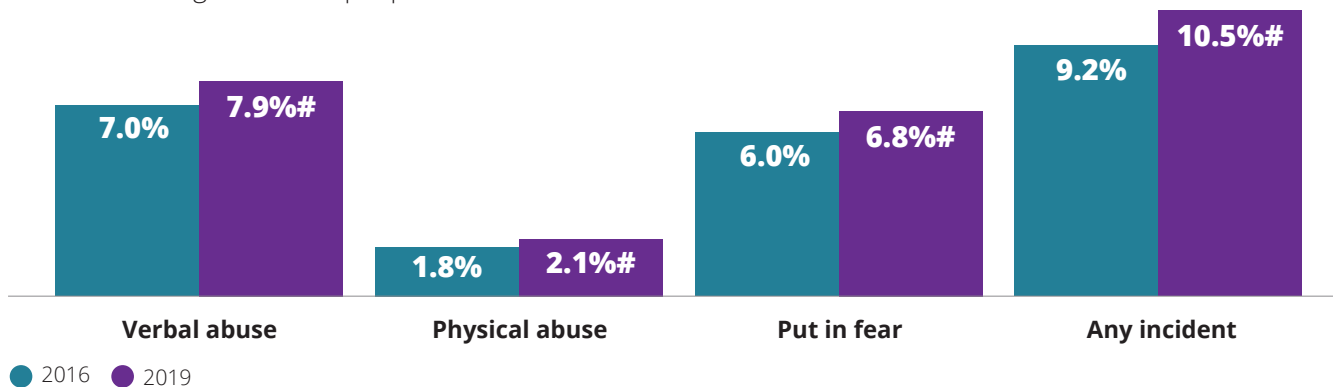
To obtain a better picture of drug use in Australia, frequency of use should also be taken into account. People who use cannabis or meth/amphetamines are more likely to use the drug on a weekly basis than people who use ecstasy or cocaine. Meth/amphetamines come in many forms, including powder/pills (speed), crystal meth/amphetamines (crystal meth or ice) and a sticky paste (base). Frequency of use increases among people who mainly use crystal/ice as their main form of meth/amphetamines.

### Proportion of people who used the drug weekly or more often



## How many people are victims of drug-related incidents?

More people were victims of an illicit drug-related incident in 2019 – 10.5% of people reported that they were verbally abused, physically abused or put in fear by someone under the influence of illicit drugs compared with 9.2% in 2016. The proportion of people who experienced a drug-related incident rose over the 3 years, driven by increases among males and people in their 30s and 50s.

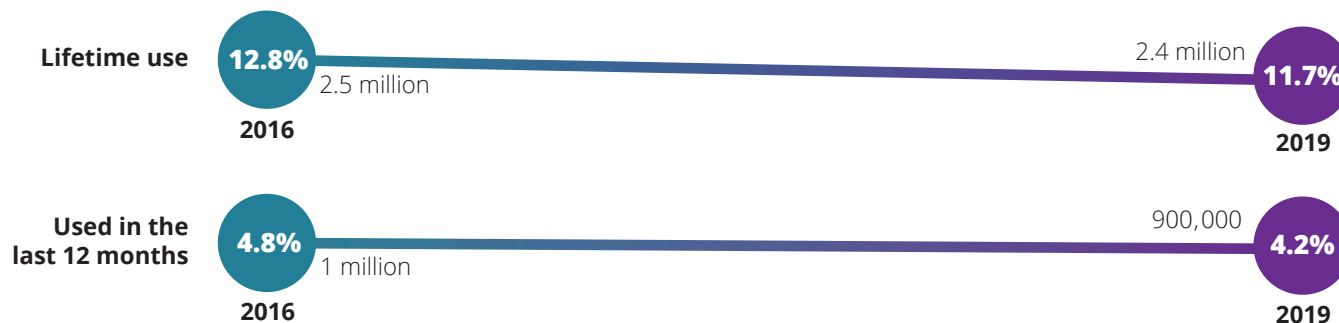


# Increase is statistically significant



## How many people have used pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes?

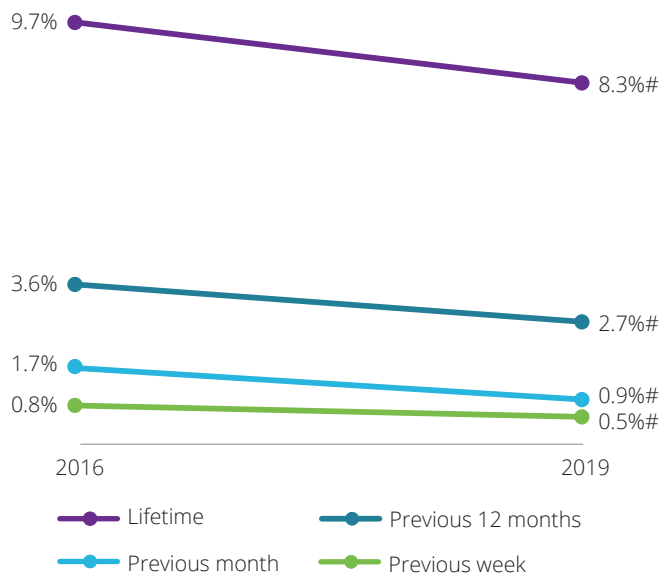
Between 2016 and 2019, non-medical use of pharmaceuticals fell:



This trend was largely driven by a drop in the non-medical use of pain-killers and opioids, from 3.6% of Australians in 2016 to 2.7% in 2019. This drop is likely due to a reclassification of medications containing codeine implemented in 2018. The proportion of people using codeine for non-medical purposes has halved since 2016, from 3.0% to 1.5% in 2019. Under the change, drugs with codeine (including some pain-killers) cannot be bought from a pharmacy without a prescription.

In 2016, pain-killers and opioids were the second most common illicitly used drug in the previous 12 months, behind cannabis. However, in 2019, they were the fourth most common, after cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy.

### Non-medical use of pain-killers and opioids in the last week, month, year and lifetime



#Statistically significant decrease.

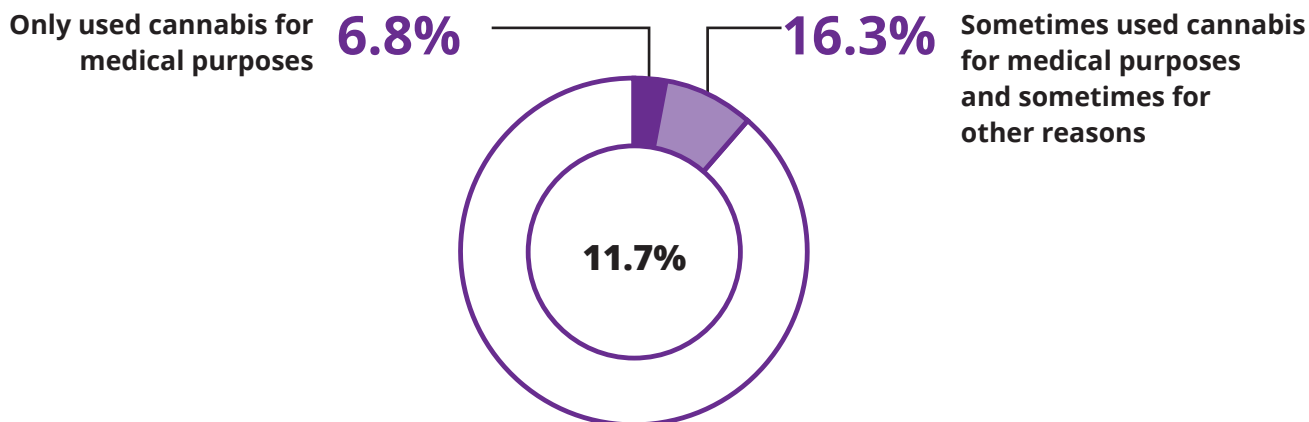
Source: Table 5.8

## How many people use medicinal cannabis?

There has been increasing interest over the last few years in the use of cannabis for medical purposes.

Before 2016, Australian law generally considered cannabis as an illegal drug. However, since February 2016, medicinal cannabis products have been available for specific patients under strict medical supervision.

In 2019, about 1 in 8 (11.7% or 2.5 million) Australians had used cannabis in the previous 12 months (including those who used it for medical purposes and had it prescribed by a doctor). Of people who used cannabis recently, 6.8% said they only used cannabis for medical purposes and 16.3% said they sometimes used it for medical purposes and sometimes for other reasons. This equates to 2.7% in the total Australian population (or about 600,000 people) using cannabis for medical purposes, either always or sometimes.



However, when asked if their medical cannabis was prescribed by a doctor, only 3.9% of those who said they used cannabis for medical purposes obtained it by a prescription (this estimates has an RSE between 25%–50% and should be interpreted with caution).

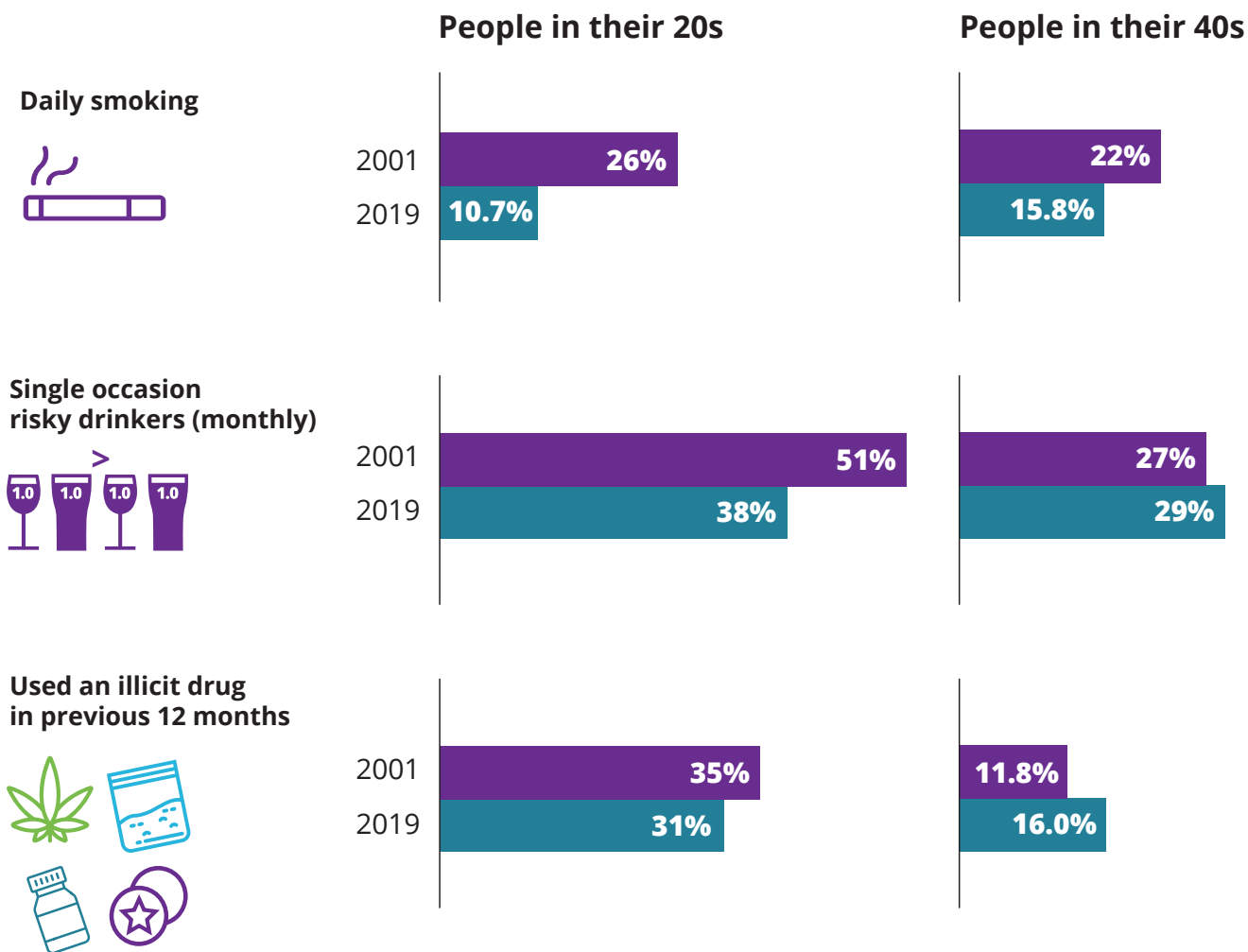
# How does substance use vary throughout life?

## Substance use is rising for older people and falling for younger people

Over the past 2 decades, there has been a shift in the use of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs across age groups in Australia:

- In 2001, people in their 20s were most likely to have ever used an illicit drug, but by 2019, it was people in their 40s. While proportions of illicit drug use rose among older age groups over this period, proportions remained stable for people in their 30s and fell for people under 30.
- In 2001, people in their 20s were also the most likely to smoke daily, but in 2019 it was people in their 40s and 50s.
- In 2019, older people were the most likely to drink alcohol daily, with the highest proportions among people aged over 70 (12.6%), while some of the lowest proportions were among those aged 20–29 (1.2%).
- People in their 40s and 50s were the most likely to exceed the lifetime risk guidelines, with more than 1 in 5 people in these age groups drinking at this level.
- Although the proportion of single occasion risky drinking remains highest among people aged 18–24, it has fallen substantially between 2001 and 2019 (from 57% to 41%). Over the same period, proportions rose for people in their 50s (from 22% to 27%) and 60s (from 12.8% to 17.4%).
- The proportion of young adults (aged 18–29) who abstain from alcohol more than doubled between 2001 and 2019, while for people aged 70 and over, the proportion abstaining has declined.


























## How has the use of drugs changed over the last 18 years?



One of the reasons for these changes could be that, in 2001, use of alcohol and illicit drugs was highest among people in their 20s. By 2019, these people were in their 40s and, for some, the substance use of their youth may have continued.

## What types of illicit drugs do different age groups use?

While cannabis is the most commonly recently used illicit drug across all ages, use of other drugs varies. For example, ecstasy is more common among people under 40, while pain-killers and opioids are more common among older people. While meth/amphetamines are the 5th most commonly used illicit drug for people aged between 30 and 50, they do not feature in the top 5 drugs used by people under 30. Inhalants are the 3rd most common illicit drug among teenagers, and teenagers and people in their 20s have greater use of hallucinogens than other age groups.

14-19 year olds	%	20-29 year olds	%	30-39 year olds	%
1  Cannabis	13.3	1  Cannabis	24	1  Cannabis	13.7
2  Ecstasy	3.6	2  Cocaine	12.0	2  Cocaine	6.5
3  Inhalants	3.1	3  Ecstasy	9.8	3  Ecstasy	3.4
4  Cocaine	2.2*	4  Hallucinogens	5.0	4  Pain-killers and opioids <sup>(a)</sup>	2.5
5  Hallucinogens	2.0*	5  Ketamine	3.9	5  Meth/amphetamines <sup>(a)</sup>	2.0
40-49 year olds	%	50-59 year olds	%		
1  Cannabis	11.4	1  Cannabis	9.2		
2  Cocaine	3.5	2  Pain-killers and opioids <sup>(a)</sup>	2.3		
3  Pain-killers and opioids <sup>(a)</sup>	3.2	3  Cocaine	1.3		
4  Tranquilisers/sleeping pills <sup>(a)</sup>	2.4	4  Tranquilisers/sleeping pills <sup>(a)</sup>	1.2		
5  Meth/amphetamines <sup>(a)</sup>	1.9	5  Meth/amphetamines <sup>(a)</sup>	0.8		

\*Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

(a) Used for non-medical purposes.

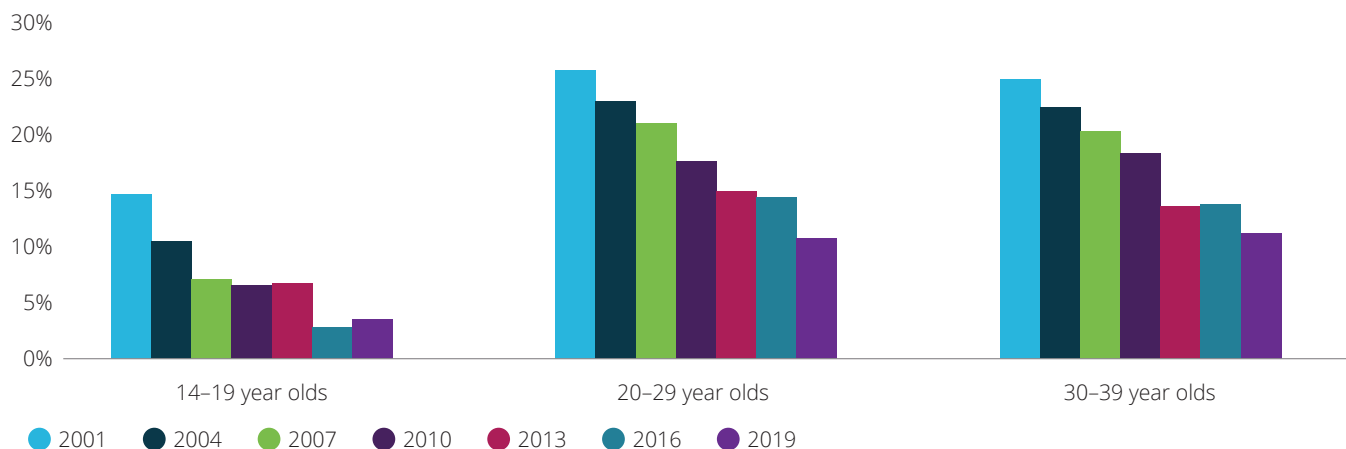
# What is happening with younger people?

## Young people are turning their backs on cigarettes

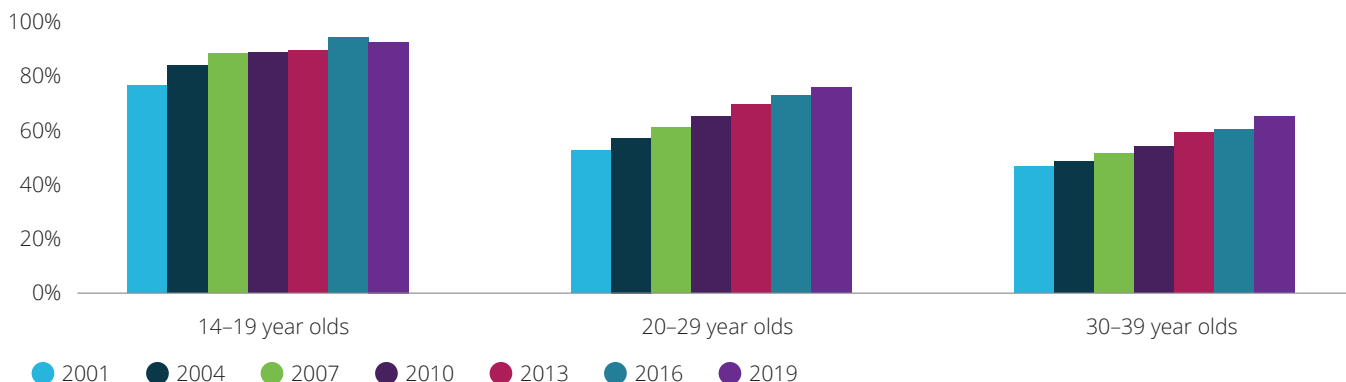
About 3.7% of teenagers, 10.7% of people in their 20s and 11.6% of people in their 30s smoked daily in 2019. These proportions have more than halved since 2001.

Over the same period, the proportion of younger people who have never smoked has continued to rise.

### Daily smokers

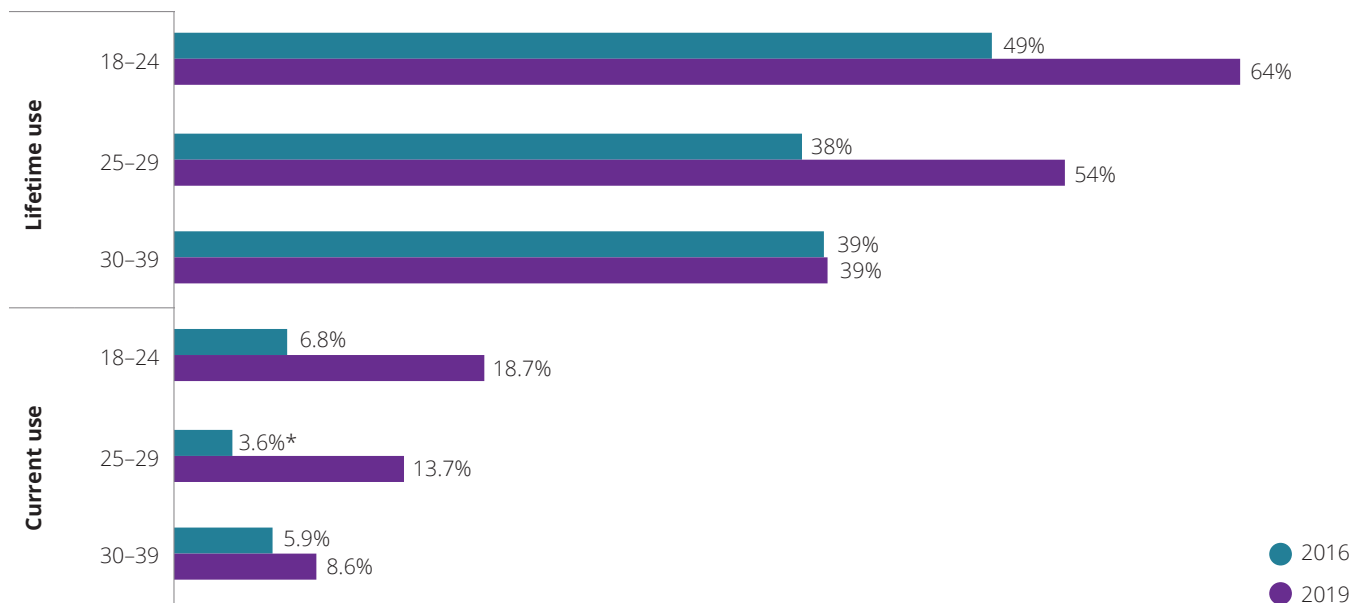


### Never smokers



## More young people are using e-cigarettes

Between 2016 and 2019, use of e-cigarettes rose across most age groups, but the rise among young adults was particularly notable. Nearly 2 in 3 current smokers and 1 in 5 non-smokers aged 18–24 reported having tried e-cigarettes.

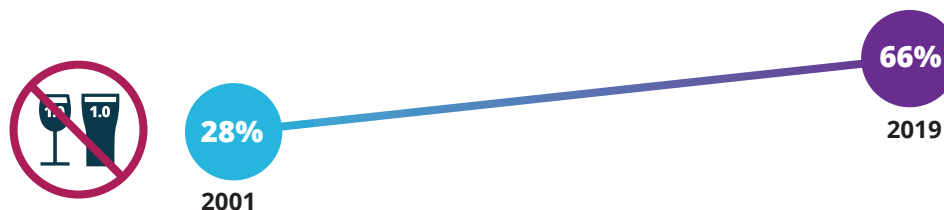


\*Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

Note: Base is current smokers; 30–39 changes are not statistically significant.

## Most adolescents have never consumed a full drink of alcohol

In 2019, 2 in 3 14–17 year olds had never consumed a full standard drink—more than double the proportion in 2001.

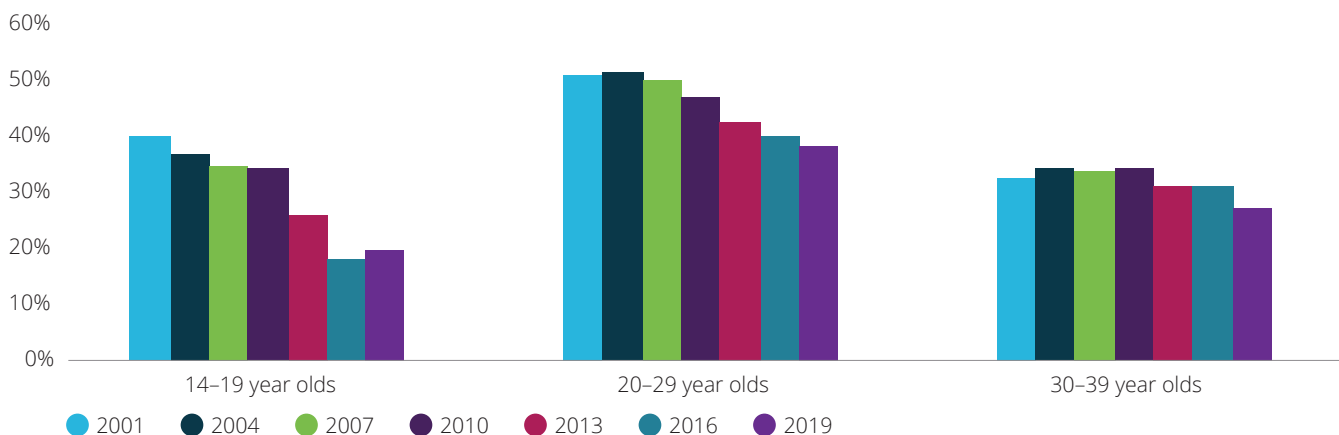


There has also been a shift towards young people abstaining from alcohol in the previous 12 months. For example, in 2019, 22% of 20–29 year olds abstained from alcohol, up from 8.9% in 2001.

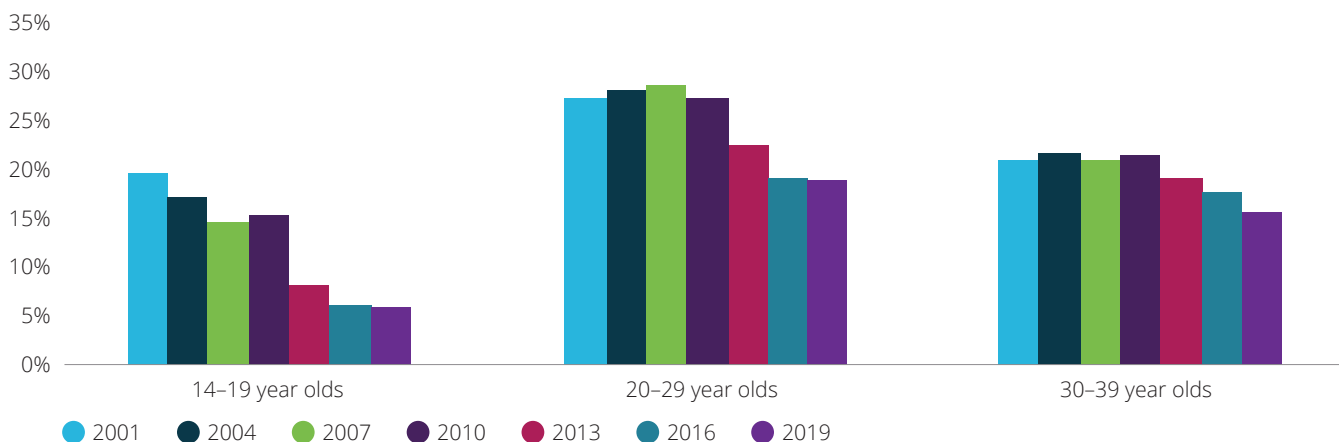
## Fewer young people are drinking at risky levels

The proportion of young people who drink alcohol at risky levels fell between 2001 and 2019. This pattern was seen among all age groups under 40, but the proportion of risky drinkers was lowest among teenagers. In 2001, 40% of 14–19 year olds exceeded the single occasion risk guidelines, but this fell to 20% in 2019. Over the same period, the proportion who exceeded the lifetime risk guidelines fell from 19.8% to 6.0%.

### Single occasion risky drinkers (at least monthly)



### Lifetime risky drinkers

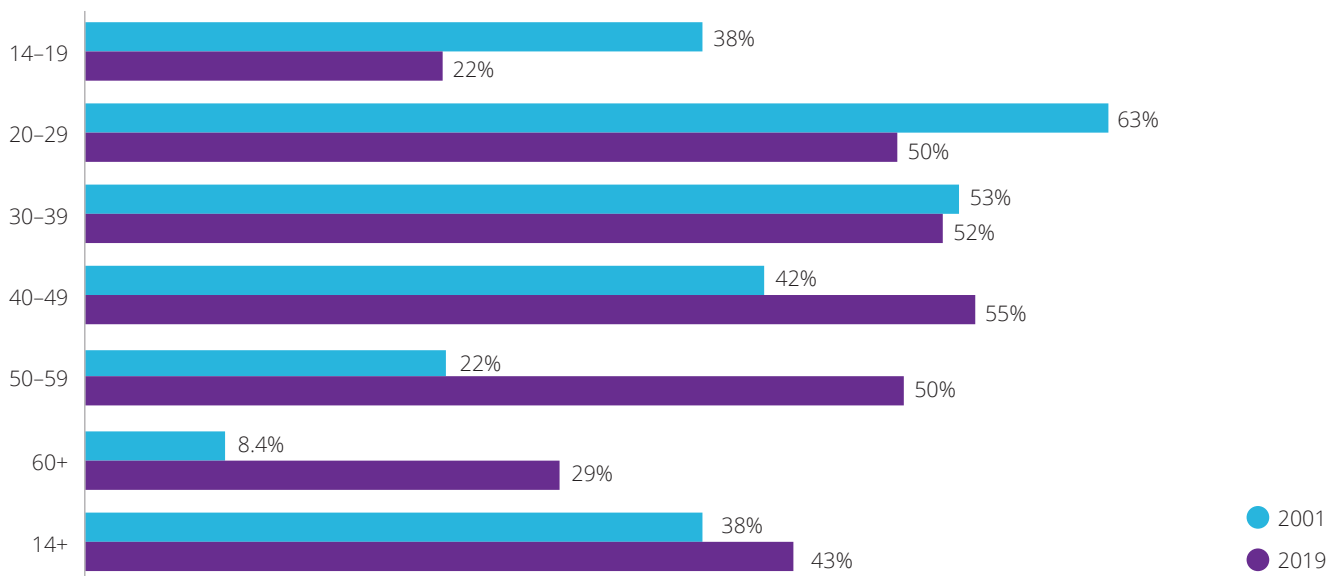




## Fewer young people are using illicit drugs

Today's young people (14–39 year olds) are less likely to have used an illicit drug than young people in 2001—with a particularly large difference seen among teenagers and people in their 20s. For example, in 2001, 38% of 14–19 year olds had used an illicit drug at some point in their lives, but by 2019, this was 22%.

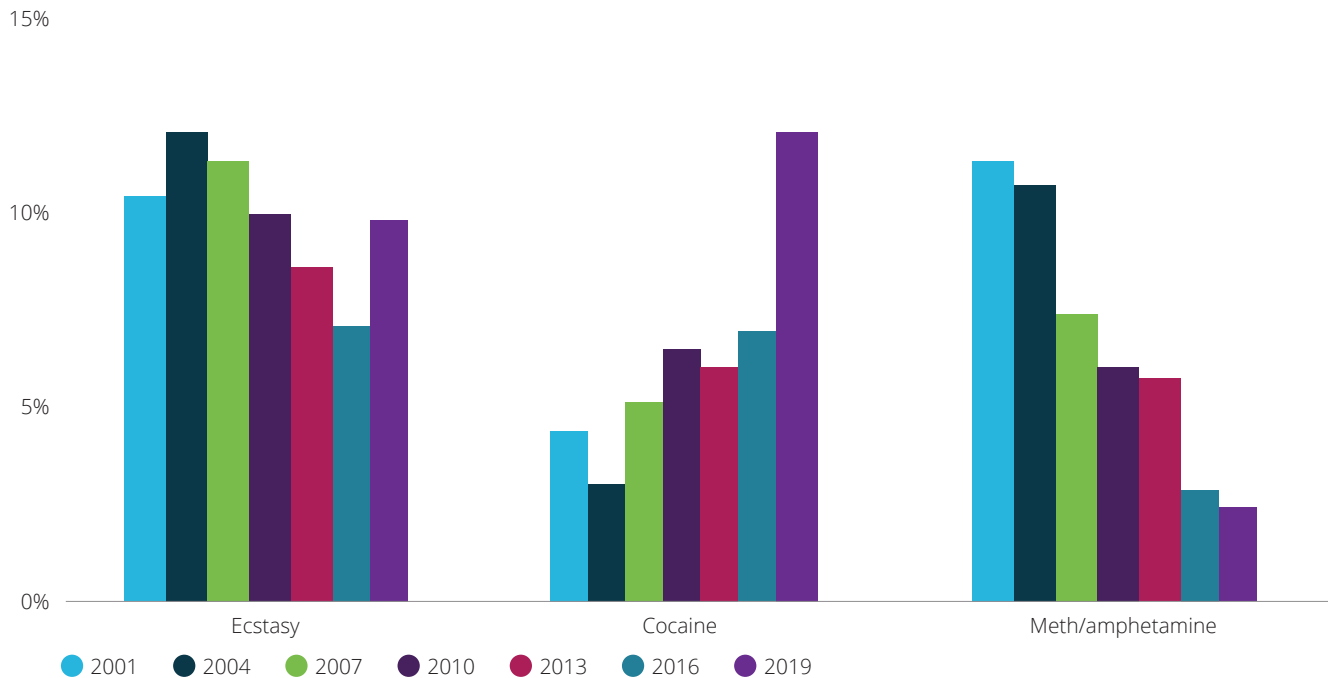
### Lifetime use of any illicit drug by age



## People in their 20s are using cocaine at levels not seen in 2 decades

There have been some changes in the types of drugs used by people in their 20s. Use of both ecstasy and cocaine has risen. Ecstasy use has returned to a level similar to that of 2001, while cocaine use is at its highest level in the 18-year period. Much of the rise in cocaine use occurred between 2016 and 2019, with the 2019 proportion 1.7 times as high as in 2016. On the other hand, use of meth/amphetamines is at its lowest level in the 18-year period.

## Illicit drug use, 20–29 year olds



## Young people are older when they first try alcohol, cigarettes and illicit drugs

While not all young people have tried alcohol, cigarettes and illicit drugs, those who do are older when they first do so, compared with people of the same age in 2001.

People who were aged 14–24 in 2019 were, on average, 16.2 years old when they first consumed a full serve of alcohol. This compares to an average of 14.7 years in 2001. The average age they smoked their first cigarette also rose, from 14.3 in 2001 to 16.6 in 2019.

When asked when they first tried an illicit drug, the average (mean) age reported by 14–29 year olds in 2019 was 17.3 years, up from 15.9 in 2001.

## What is happening with older people?

### Little change in smoking and drinking patterns

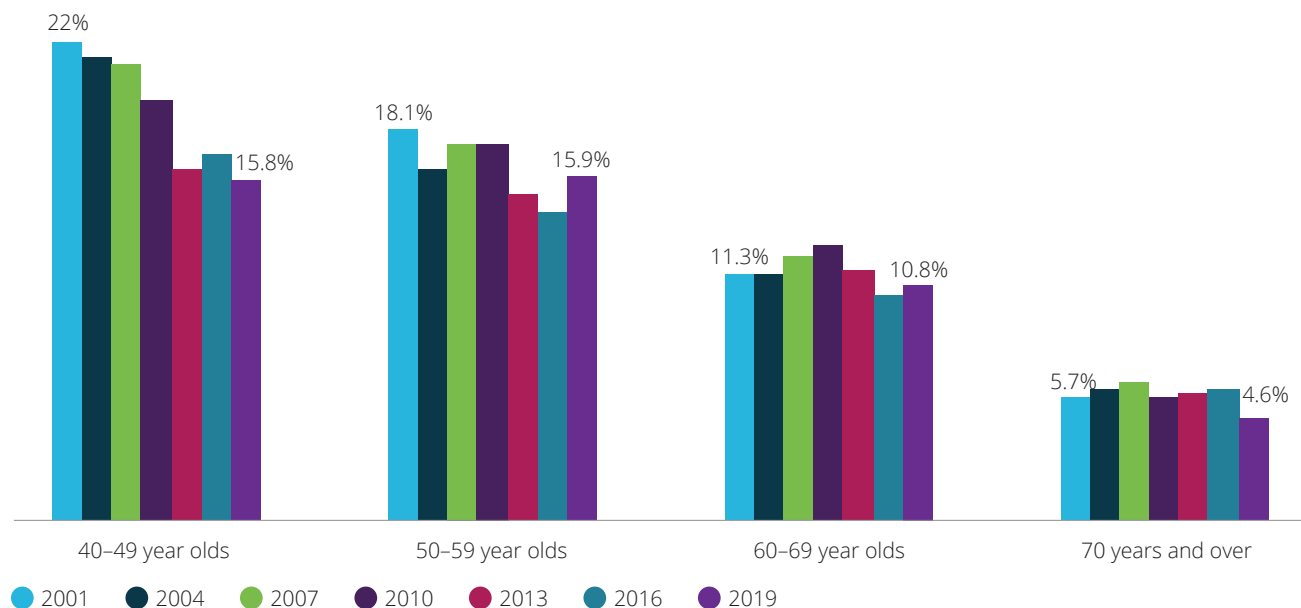
People in their 40s and 50s are more likely than other age groups to smoke—about 1 in 6 people in these age groups smoked daily in 2019.

Although this proportion has not improved since 2016, it was lower than in 2001 for people in their 40s (22%) but only slightly lower for people in their 50s (18.1%).

In 2019, among males, people in their 40s were the most likely to smoke daily (18.4%); for females, it was those in their 50s (15.2%).

Overall, people aged 40 or older continue to make up the greatest share of daily smokers (was 44% in 2001; 57% in 2016 and 62% in 2019), while the proportion aged 14–39 continues to shrink (was 56% in 2001; 43% in 2016 and 38% in 2019).

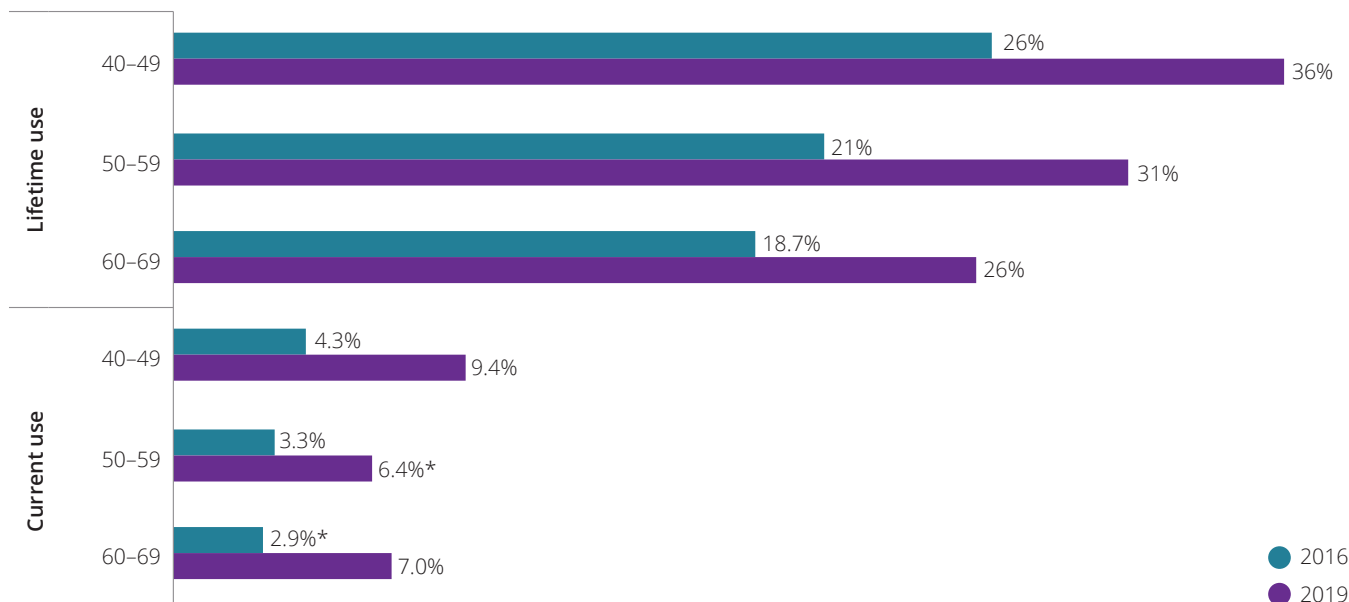
#### Proportion of people aged 40 and over who smoke



## Over 40s are less likely to use e-cigarettes

Between 2016 and 2019, lifetime and current use of e-cigarettes rose among both smokers and non-smokers across most age groups, but use is lower among people aged 40 and over.

### Lifetime and current use of e-cigarettes, smokers aged 40 and over



\*Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

Note: Base is current smokers.

## 1 in 8 Australians aged 70 and over drink daily

Consistent with previous years, the proportion of adults drinking daily increased with age. People aged 70 and over were the most likely of all Australians to drink daily at 12.6%.

In 2019, more than 1 in 5 people in their 40s drank alcohol at risky levels—21% at lifetime risk and 29% at single occasion risk (at least monthly). For people in their 50s, 21% drank at levels that put them at lifetime risk and 27% at single occasion risk.

There were no statistically significant changes in the proportion of people in their 40s drinking alcohol at risky levels between 2016 and 2019. However, consumption of 5 or more standard drinks at least once a month increased from 22% in 2001 to 27% in 2019 for people in their 50s.

Proportion of people exceeding lifetime risk and single occasion risk guidelines (monthly)

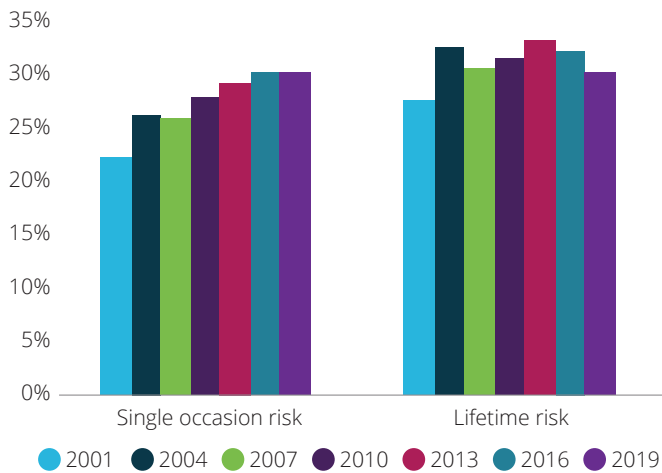
**Alcohol risk 40–49 year olds**



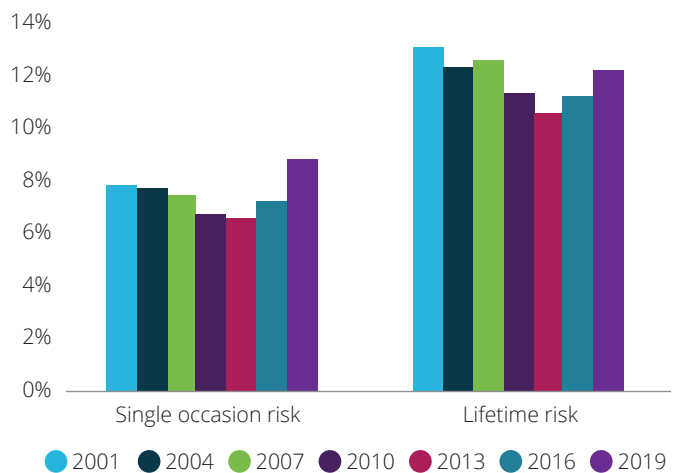
**Alcohol risk 50–59 year olds**



**Alcohol risk 60–69 year olds**



**Alcohol risk 70 years and over**

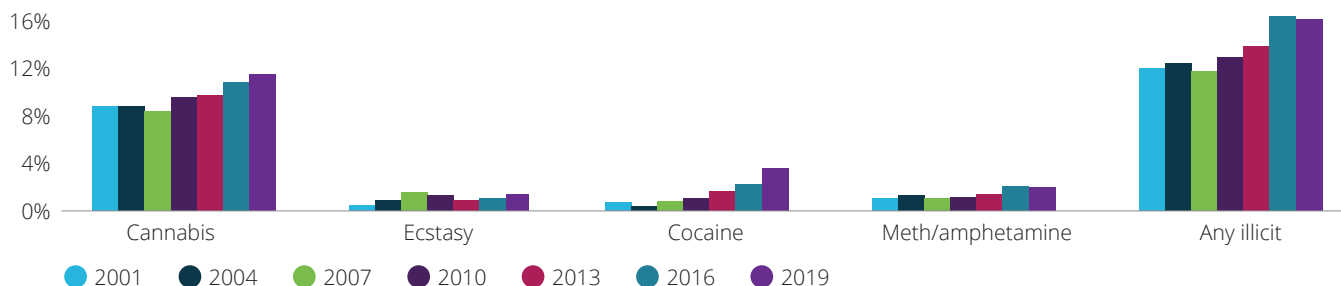


## More older Australians are using illicit drugs

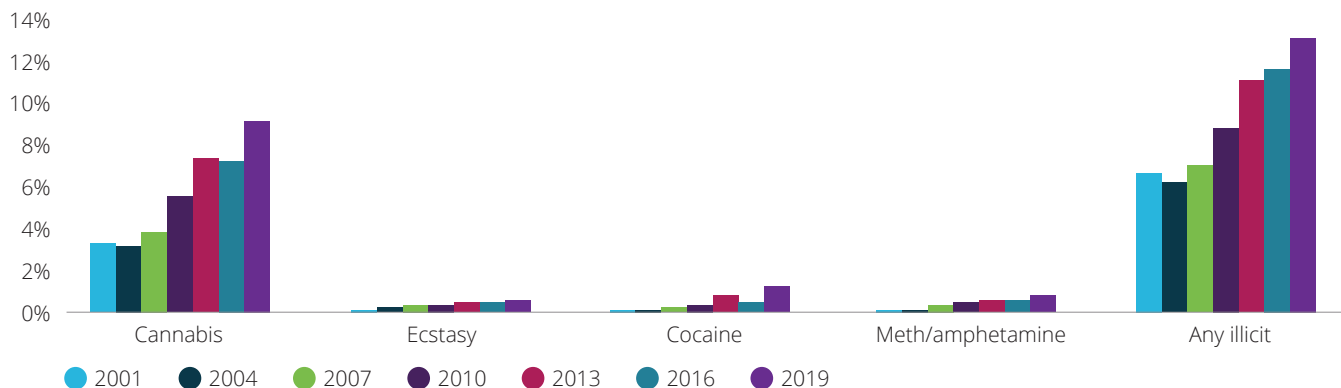
Over the past 2 decades, there has been a clear trend of increasing illicit drug use among people in their 40s and 50s.

### Proportion of people using illicit drugs

#### 40–49 year olds



#### 50–59 year olds



Recent cannabis use among those aged 50–59 and 60 and over is at the highest levels since 2001. People who used in older age groups were also the most likely to use cannabis regularly in 2019—almost 1 in 2 (48%) used it as often as once a week or more.

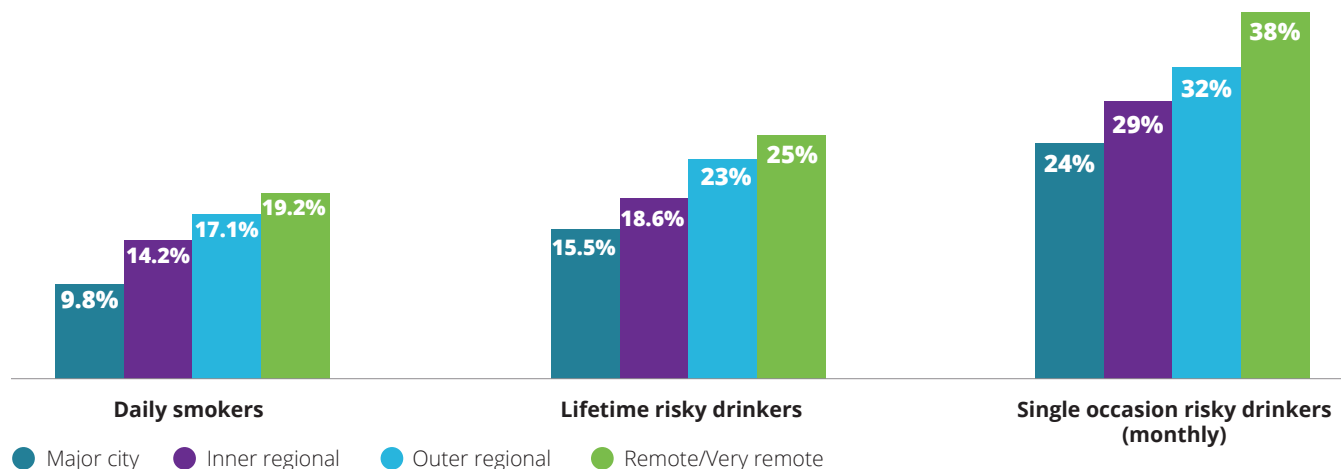
### Recent use of cannabis among people aged 40 and over

Age group	2001	2016	2019
40–49	8.7%	10.7%	11.4%
50–59	3.3%	7.2%	9.2%
60 and over	0.5%	1.9%	2.9%

# Who is more likely to smoke tobacco, drink or use illicit drugs?

People who live furthest from major cities have higher proportions of daily smoking and risky drinking

Compared with people in *Major cities*, people in *Remote* and *Very remote* parts of Australia were twice as likely to smoke daily; 1.5 times as likely to drink at levels that exceed the single occasion risk guidelines (at least monthly) and 1.6 times as likely to exceed the lifetime risk guidelines.

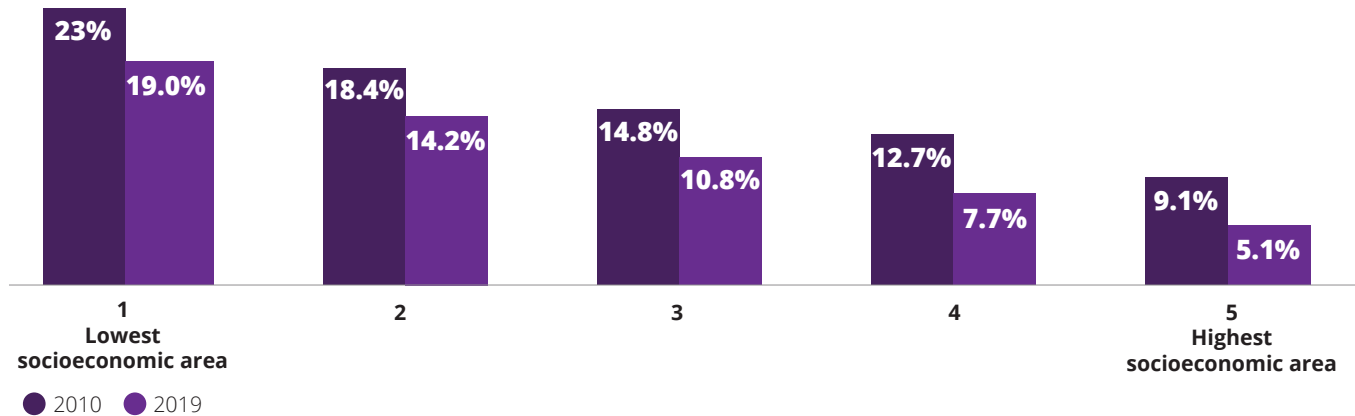


Note: Age-standardised per cents.

## Smoking proportions rise with greater socioeconomic disadvantage

While smoking proportions have fallen in all socioeconomic areas, the improvement has been greatest among people living in the highest socioeconomic areas. In 2019, the proportion of people living in the lowest socioeconomic areas who smoked daily was almost 4 times as high as the proportion of people living in the highest socioeconomic areas.

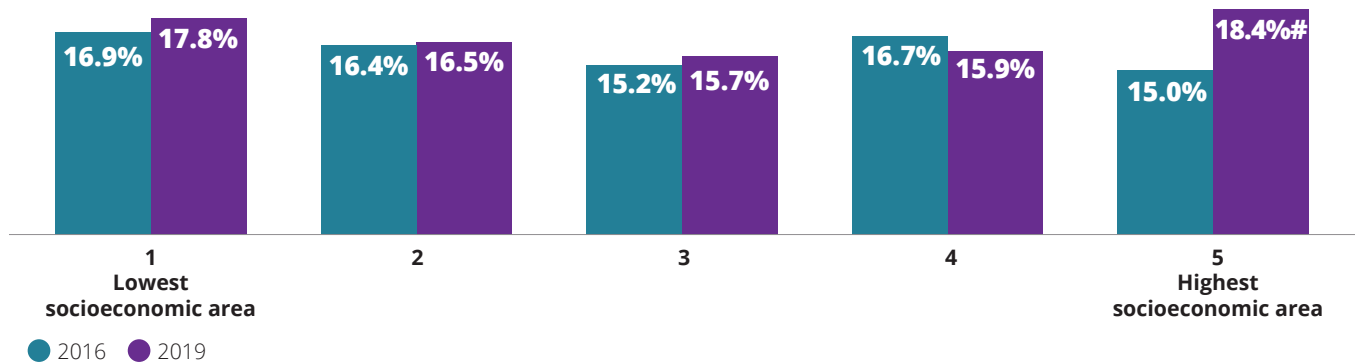
### Daily smokers (age-standardised per cent)



## Illicit drug use is rising in highest socioeconomic areas

Levels of recent illicit drug use rose in areas of highest socioeconomic advantage (from 15.0% in 2016 to 18.4% in 2019). This change has been driven by a rise in the use of cannabis (10.2% compared with 12.6%), ecstasy (3.0% compared with 4.8%) and cocaine (3.7% compared with 7.1%).

### Proportion of people who have recently used an illicit drug



# Increase is statistically significant.























## The types of drugs used vary by where people live

In 2019, people living in *Major cities* and high socioeconomic areas were more likely to have recently used cocaine and ecstasy than their counterparts in more remote and lower socioeconomic areas.

Conversely, use of pain-killers and opioids was more common in more remote and lower socioeconomic areas.

### Most commonly used drugs (age-standardised per cent)

Lowest socioeconomic area		%	Highest socioeconomic area		%
1	 Cannabis	13.5	1	 Cannabis	12.6
2	 Pain-killers and opioids <sup>(a)</sup>	3.0	2	 Cocaine	7.1
3	 Cocaine	2.6	3	 Ecstasy	4.8
4	 Ecstasy	2.1	4	 Tranquilisers/sleeping pills <sup>(a)</sup>	2.6
5	 Meth/amphetamines <sup>(a)</sup>	1.5	5	 Inhalants	2.3
Major cities		%	Remote/Very remote		%
1	 Cannabis	11.7	1	 Cannabis	13.7
2	 Cocaine	4.9	2	 Pain-killers and opioids <sup>(a)</sup>	4.0
3	 Ecstasy	3.2	3	 Ecstasy	1.8
4	 Pain-killers and opioids <sup>(a)</sup>	2.6	4	 Cocaine	1.7
5	 Tranquilisers/sleeping pills <sup>(a)</sup>	1.9	5	 Inhalants	1.7*

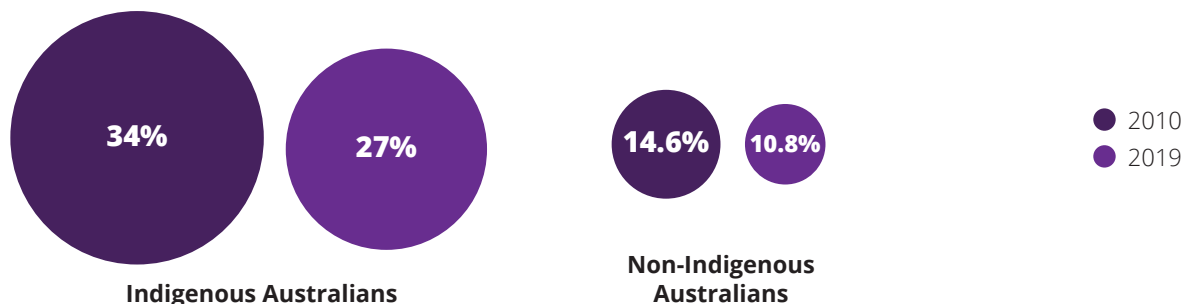
\*Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

(a) Used for non-medical purposes.

## Fewer Indigenous Australians are smoking or drinking at risky levels

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have higher proportions of daily smoking and risky drinking than non-Indigenous people, there have been improvements between 2010 and 2019.

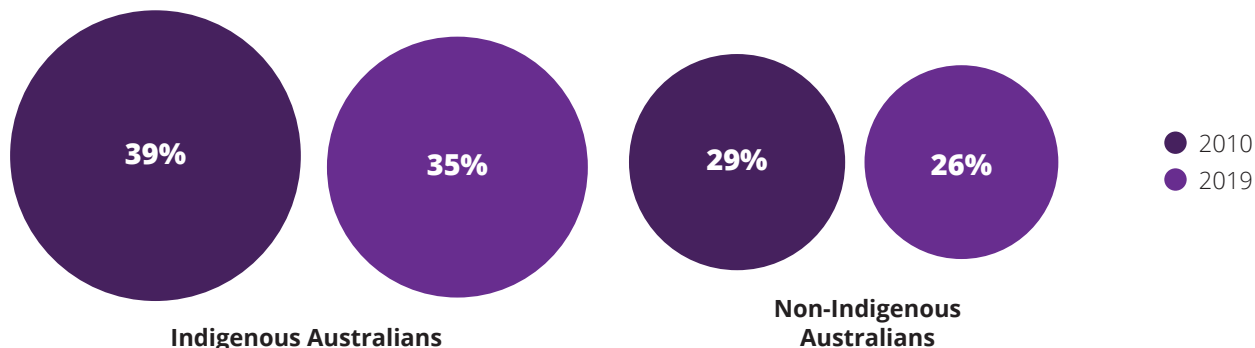
### Proportion of people who smoke daily



### Proportion of people who drink at risky levels – lifetime



### Proportion of people who drink at risky levels – single occasion (at least monthly)



Note: Age-standardised per cents.

## Highly educated people are the least likely to smoke

People with higher levels of education—such as a university qualification—are less likely to smoke daily than people with a lower level of education.

Despite this, proportions in drinking or illicit drug use were similar between people with different levels of education.

In 2019, among people aged 25–64:

people whose highest qualification is completion of year 11 or below

**1 in 4**

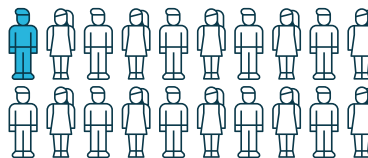
(26%) were daily smokers



People with a Bachelor's degree or higher

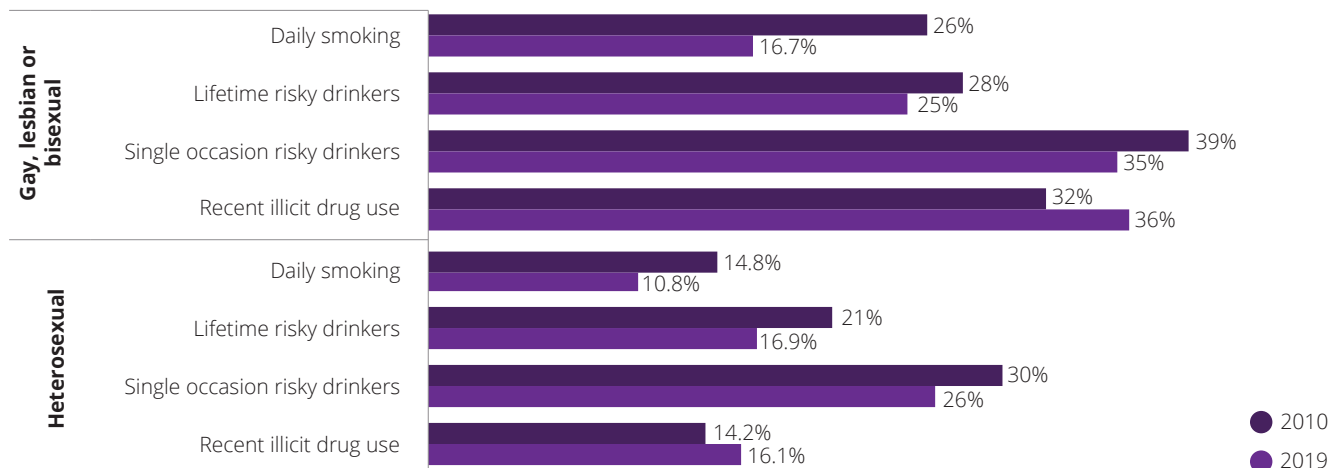
**1 in 20**

(5.1%) were daily smokers



## Smoking and drinking proportions are down among gay, lesbian and bisexual people, but drug use remains high

People who identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual have higher proportions of substance use than people who identify as heterosexual. Between 2010 and 2019, the proportions of people who identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual who smoked daily and drank at risky levels fell, but a similar proportion continue to use illicit drugs.



Note: Age-standardised per cents.

When looking at the types of drugs people had used in the last 12 months, there were differences between people who identified as heterosexual, and those who identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

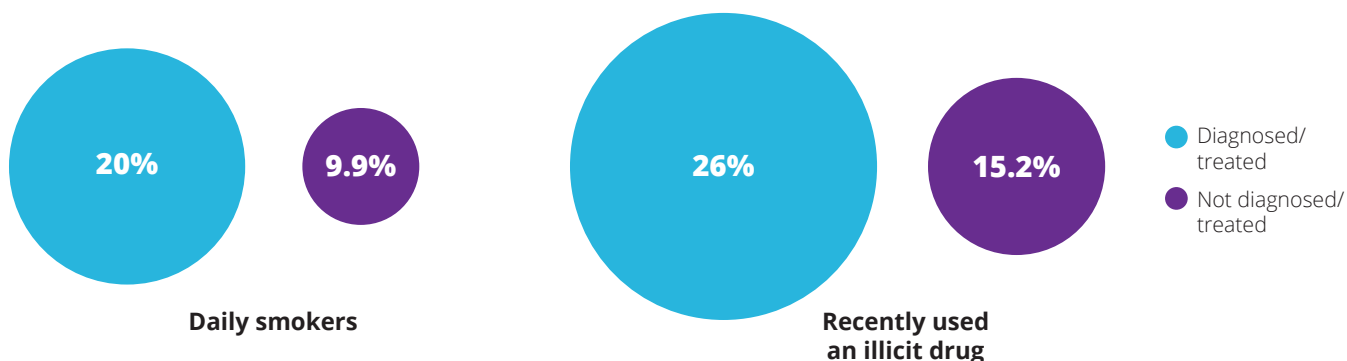
Heterosexual		Homosexual/Bisexual	
1	Cannabis	11.6%	Cannabis 26%
2	Cocaine	4.3%	Inhalants 9.9%
3	Ecstasy	2.9%	Cocaine 8.0%
4	Pain-killers and opioids <sup>(a)</sup>	2.5%	Ecstasy 7.4%
5	Tranquillisers/sleeping pills <sup>(a)</sup>	1.7%	Meth/amphetamines <sup>(a)</sup> 5.1%

(a) Used for non-medical purposes.

Note: Age-standardised per cents.

## Smoking and drug use are higher among people with mental health conditions

In 2019, people aged 18 and over who had been diagnosed with, or treated for, a mental health condition in the last 12 months, were twice as likely to smoke daily as people without a mental health condition. They were also 1.7 times as likely to have recently used an illicit drug.

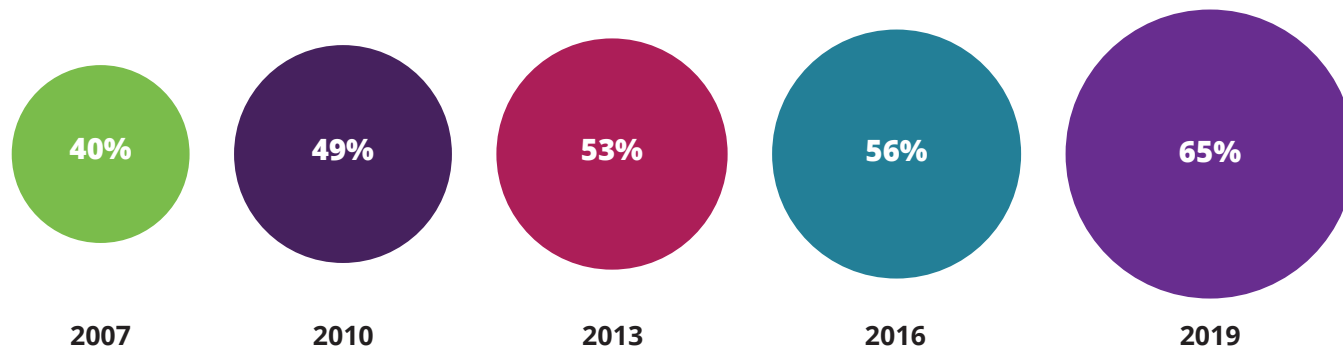


A mental illness can make some people more likely to use drugs—for example, for short-term relief from their symptoms. For other people, drug use may trigger the first symptoms of mental illness.

## More pregnant women are abstaining from alcohol

A growing proportion of women are not drinking alcohol while they are pregnant. In 2019, nearly two-thirds of women did not drink while pregnant.

### Proportion of women who did not drink during their pregnancy

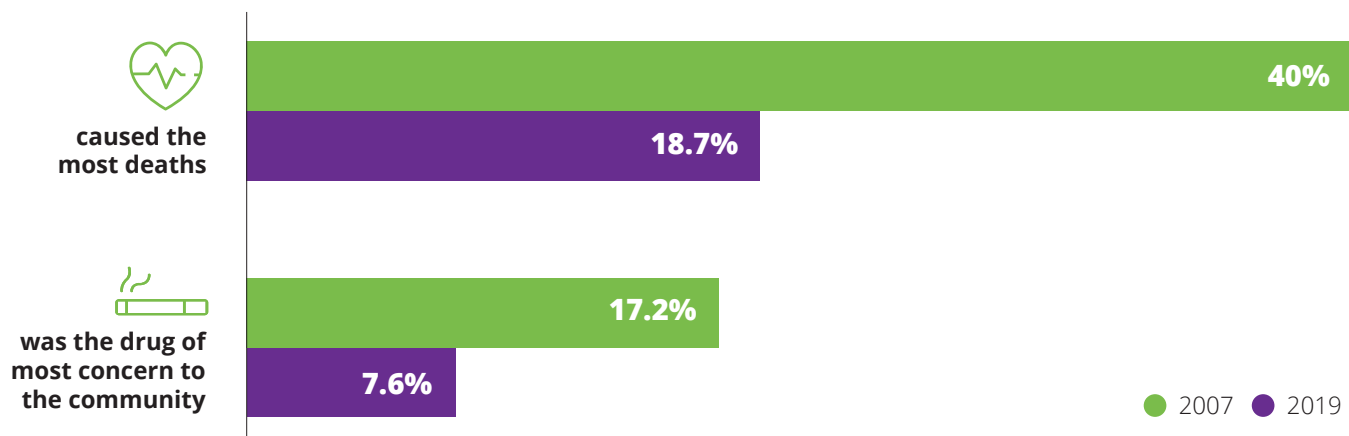


# What do Australians think about smoking and the use of alcohol and illicit drugs?

## Do people think smoking tobacco is harmful?

Tobacco contributes to more drug-related deaths in Australia than alcohol and illicit drug use combined, but this is not the perception among many Australians. In 2019, 1 in 3 (34%) Australians believed that alcohol caused the most deaths.

Between 2007 and 2019, people's perceptions of tobacco use changed considerably:



## Does the community support tobacco policies?

Although more than 6 in 10 people supported government policies to reduce tobacco-related harm in 2019, the level of support has fallen since 2016 (with 7 out of 9 policies receiving less support).

By contrast, support for measures related to the use of e-cigarettes has grown, perhaps due to an increase in use of these products. In 2019, two-thirds of the population supported restrictions on where e-cigarettes can be advertised and used in public, and 8 in 10 supported prohibiting their sale to people under 18.



# Statistically significant change between 2016 and 2019

## What does the community think about measures to reduce alcohol-related harm?

Public support declined for 12 (out of 17) measures to reduce the harms from alcohol. This continues a trend that started in 2013.

Reducing the trading hours for pubs and clubs recorded the biggest drop in support (from 39% in 2016 to 31% in 2019). This measure also had the largest increase in opposition (from 34% to 40%), making it the first time more people have opposed the policy measure than supported it since 2004 (when 32% supported and 40% opposed).

Support for the strict monitoring of late-night premises dropped from 73% to 67%, and support for restricting late-night trading of alcohol fell from 57% in 49%.

Despite these falls, a majority of Australians still supported most measures, including:



**84%**

More severe legal penalties for drink-driving



**79%**

Stricter enforcement of the law against supplying minors



**78%**

Stricter enforcement of the law against supplying customers who are drunk

Measures that received the strongest opposition involved making it harder or more expensive to obtain alcohol:



**47%**

Increasing the price of alcohol



**40%**

Reducing trading hours for pubs and clubs



**36%**

Reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol

## More people support legalisation of cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy

Community support for legalisation of cannabis has increased—2019 was the first time more people supported the legalisation of cannabis than opposed it (41% compared with 37%) and support has doubled since 2007 (21%).

By comparison, support for the legalisation of other drugs was much lower:

- cocaine (8.0%)
- ecstasy (9.5%)
- heroin (5.6%)
- meth/amphetamines (4.6%).

However, increases in support for legalisation of cocaine (from 7.0% in 2016) and ecstasy (from 8.2% in 2016) were statistically significant.

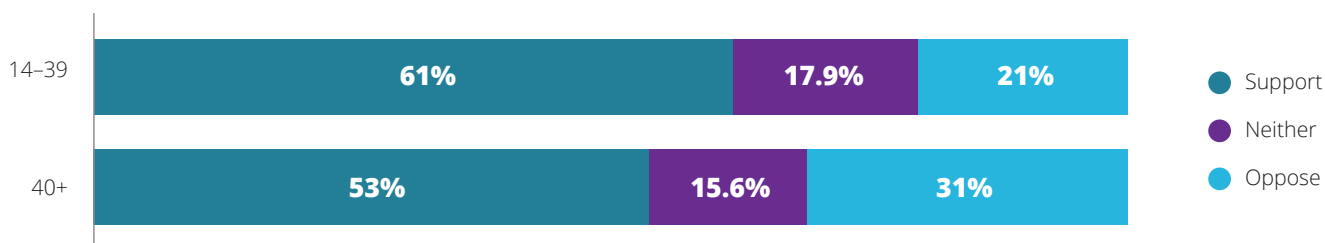


## Majority of Australians support pill testing

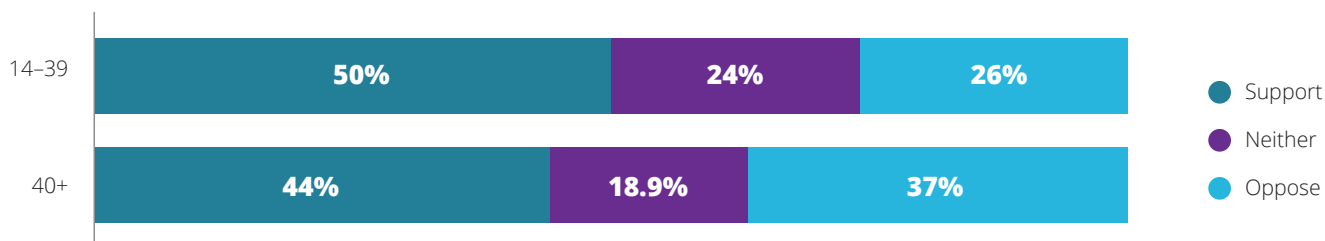
For the first time, the survey asked respondents about pill testing. Overall, more than half (57%) of Australians supported allowing potential drug users to test their pills/drugs at designated sites, while 1 in 4 (27%) opposed this measure. Support was higher among people aged 14–39 than those aged 40 and over.

Slightly less than half (47%) of Australians supported supervised drug consumption facilities/rooms, while about 1 in 3 (32%) opposed this measure. Support was higher among people aged 14–39 than those aged 40 and over.

### Allowing potential drug users to test their pills/drugs at designated sites



### Support supervised drug consumption facilities/rooms



This *in brief* presents highlights from the 2019  
National Drug Strategy Household Survey  
on Australians use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

**AIHW**

Stronger evidence,  
better decisions,  
improved health and welfare