

12 Use of ecstasy/designer drugs

Ecstasy/designer drugs use

In 1998 it was estimated that a little over 2% of all Australians aged 14 years and over used ecstasy/designer drugs within the 12 months preceding the survey (Table 12.1). The proportion of Australians aged 14 years and over who used ecstasy/designer drugs at least once in their lifetime was estimated at 5%. The data also showed that:

- Males were twice as likely as females to report using ecstasy/designer drugs recently.
- Persons aged 20–29 years (14%) were more likely to report lifetime use than either the 14–19 years age group (5%) or those aged 60 years and over (1%).

Table 12.1: Lifetime and recent use of ecstasy: 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	4.0	3.3
20–29	17.9	11.9
30–39	7.2	1.9
40+	1.3	0.4 *
All ages	6.1	3.3
Females		
14–19	4.9	3.0
20–29	9.8	4.9
30–39	3.6	0.8
40+	0.9	1
All ages	3.6	1.6
Persons		
14–19	4.5	3.1
20–29	13.9	8.4
30–39	5.4	1.3
40+	1.1	0.4 *
All ages	4.8	2.4

Usual place of ecstasy/designer drugs consumption

In 1998, of those Australians aged 14 years and over who reported using ecstasy/designer drugs recently, three-quarters (75%) reported parties, restaurants or licensed premises as the usual place of consumption (Table 12.2). The survey also showed that there was a slight variation between males and females in reporting the usual place of consumption, with slightly fewer (3%) females nominating their own home or a friend's house as a usual place for consumption compared with males (5%).

Table 12.2: Where ecstasy/designer drugs usually consumed: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Place	Males	Females	Persons
Own home, friend's house	5.4 *	2.5 *	4.6
Parties, restaurants or licensed premises	74.6	75.1	74.7
School/work	1.3 *	—	1.0 *
Other	18.7	22.4	19.7

Note: Base equals all recent ecstasy/designer drugs users.

Frequency of ecstasy/designer drugs use

The 1998 survey showed that, of those Australians aged 14 years and over who were recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs, slightly more than one in five (22%) used at least once a month, with only 4% of all users reporting using at least once a week (Table 12.3).

Table 12.3: Frequency of ecstasy/designer drugs use: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by age, Australia, 1998

Frequency	Age group				All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	
(per cent)					
Every day	0.5 *	0.8 *	—	—	0.6 *
Once a week or more	0.3 *	4.0 *	0.5 *	—	2.9 *
About once a month	21.8	14.6	23.7	44.1 *	18.3
Every few months	35.7	34.3	30.2	52.4 *	34.9
Once or twice a year	26.5	32.5	36.6	—	30.6
Less often	15.2	13.7	9.0 *	3.5 *	12.7

Note: Base equals all recent ecstasy/designer drugs users.

Source of supply of ecstasy/designer drugs

Of all Australians aged 14 years and over who ever used ecstasy/designer drugs, nearly nine in ten (86%) reported that they obtained their first supply from a friend or acquaintance and only 7% reported buying from a street dealer (Table 12.4). The survey also showed that:

- Among females, nearly 5% of users obtained their first supply of ecstasy/designer drugs from a spouse or partner, while less than 1% of males obtained their first supply from their spouse or partner.
- Similarly, more females (9%) than males (5%) obtained their first supply through a street dealer.

Table 12.4: First supplier: proportion of persons who have ever used ecstasy aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Supplier	Males	Females	Persons
Friend or acquaintance	87.5	84.2	86.3
Spouse or partner	0.3 *	4.5 *	1.8
Street dealer	5.4 *	9.2	6.8
Other ^(a)	6.7 *	2.2 *	5.1

(a) Includes siblings, parents and stolen.

Note: Base equals all persons who have ever used ecstasy/designer drugs.

The survey showed that nearly nine in ten (89%) recent users obtained ecstasy/designer drugs from a friend or acquaintance while one in ten (10%) obtained their supply from street dealers (Table 12.5). The sex breakdown of recent supply showed that:

- More female (96%) than male (86%) recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs got their supply from a friend or acquaintance.
- Males (13%) were four times more likely to get their supply from a street dealer compared with females (3%).

Table 12.5: Recent suppliers: proportion of recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Supplier	Males	Females (per cent)	Persons
Friend or acquaintance	85.6	96.1	88.5
Spouse or partner	—	0.8 *	0.2 *
Street dealer	12.9	3.1 *	10.2
Other ^(a)	1.5 *	—	1.1 *

(a) Includes siblings, parents and stolen.

Note: Base equals all recent ecstasy/designer drugs users.

Multiple drugs use with ecstasy/designer drugs

The survey showed that Australians aged 14 years and over who recently used ecstasy/designer drugs also used a multitude of other drugs. Among the recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs, nearly all (99%) reported using alcohol recently, while nearly nine in ten (87%) reported using pain-killers/analgesics. A high proportion (70%) of users had also used amphetamines.

Table 12.6: Polydrug use: proportion of recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Other substances recently used	Males	Females (per cent)	Persons
Alcohol	98.3	100.0	98.8
Tobacco	51.7	55.8	53.1
Marijuana/cannabis	91.6	77.8	86.9
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a)	20.5	24.2	21.8
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a)	15.4	19.2	16.7
Steroids ^(a)	0.7 *	1.2 *	0.9 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	4.3 *	2.0 *	3.5
Amphetamines ^(a)	78.2	54.4	70.0
Heroin	7.8	9.5	8.4 *
Methadone ^(b)	3.7 *	1.3 *	2.9 *
Cocaine	32.1	34.2	32.8
Hallucinogens	53.2	53.2	53.2
Inhalants	15.5	23.8	18.3

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

Note: Base equals all recent ecstasy/designer drugs users.

When data on concurrent use of other drugs with ecstasy/designer drugs were analysed, the survey showed that nearly three-quarters (74%) of all recent users had consumed alcohol with ecstasy and more than half (54%) had used marijuana/cannabis with ecstasy/designer drugs (Table 12.7). The survey also revealed that more females were using marijuana/cannabis (60%) and anti-depressants (8%) concurrently with ecstasy/designer drugs compared with males (41% and 3% respectively).

Table 12.7: Concurrent polydrug use: proportion of recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Other substances concurrently used	Males	Females	Persons
	(per cent)		
Alcohol	74.7	72.1	73.9
Marijuana/cannabis	41.4	59.8	53.8
Heroin	1.5 *	—	1.0 *
Cocaine	12.7	8.1	11.2
Benzodiazepines	0.2 *	—	0.1 *
Anti-depressants	2.6 *	8.3	4.4
Barbiturates	—	0.1 *	—
Pain-killers/analgesics	2.7 *	3.7 *	3.0 *
None of the above	18.0	15.7	17.2

Note: Base equals all recent ecstasy/designer drugs users.

Correlates of ecstasy/designer drugs use

The 1998 survey showed that ecstasy/designer drugs use is popular among students, among those who have HSC or equivalent education, are Australian-born, or are living in an area of high socioeconomic status. It showed that nearly one in 20 (5%) persons with HSC or equivalent education reported using ecstasy/designer drugs compared with only one in 50 (2%) persons without any qualification. It further showed that:

- Students were more likely to report using ecstasy/designer drugs (4%) compared with employed (3%) or unemployed (3%) persons.
- Australian-born persons (3%) were more likely to report recent use of ecstasy/designer drugs compared with other English-speaking born (2%) or non-English-speaking born (2%).
- Persons living in areas with high socioeconomic status (5th quintile) were twice (3%) as likely to report using ecstasy/designer drugs compared with persons in the bottom quintile of the socioeconomic scale.
- Persons who were never married were 10–15 times more likely to be using ecstasy/designer drugs compared with persons in other marital status categories.

Table 12.8: Correlates of ecstasy/designer drugs use: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, Australia, 1998

Characteristics	Never used	Lifetime use (per cent)	Recent use
Education			
No qualification	96.9	3.1	1.6
HSC or equivalent	92.1	7.9	4.6
Trade/diploma	94.6	5.4	2.6
Tertiary	94.7	5.3	2.4
Employment status			
Currently employed	94.1	5.9	2.9
Student	93.7	6.3	3.9
Unemployed	92.9	7.1	3.3
Retired/pension	98.3	1.7	0.8
Occupational status			
Upper (white)	95.7	4.3	1.9
Middle	94.3	5.7	2.9
Lower (blue)	95.8	4.2	2.2
Country of birth			
Australian born	94.9	5.1	2.6
Other English-speaking born	95.2	4.8	1.5
Non-English-speaking born	97.7	2.3	1.6
Socioeconomic area			
1st quintile	96.8	3.2	1.5
2nd quintile	95.8	4.2	1.8
3rd quintile	94.6	5.4	2.6
4th quintile	95.3	4.7	2.5
5th quintile	93.9	6.1	3.4
Geography			
Urban	94.6	5.4	2.7
Rural/remote	96.8	3.2	1.6
Marital status			
Never married	88.5	11.5	7.0
Widowed	99.5	0.5 *	0.5 *
Divorced/separated	96.5	3.5	0.7 *
Presently married	97.9	2.1	0.6