

2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey

Detailed findings

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2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey

Detailed findings

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Preface

This report contains information from the 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey. It supplements data published earlier this year in the report entitled *2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: First Results*. The purpose of this report is to extend that analysis with detailed prevalence of drug use, drug-related behaviours and incidents, and support for drug-related policy and legislation. The report expands the analysis of the 2001 report, in particular by analysis of the data for 12- and 13-year-olds arising from their inclusion in the 2004 survey for the first time. New mental and physical health analysis is also reported. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) undertook the survey on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. Custody of the survey data set rests with the AIHW and is protected by the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*. Access to a public-use data set is available through the Australian Social Science Data Archive at the Australian National University, with access to the complete data set possible following consideration of research proposals by the AIHW Ethics Committee.

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Additional funds were provided by the Queensland Health Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Service Unit to increase the sample of young people in Queensland.

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Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CATI	Computer-assisted telephone interview
CURF	Confidentialised unit record file
DoHA	Department of Health and Ageing
MCDS	Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy
NCADA	National Campaign Against Drug Abuse
NDS	National Drug Strategy
NDSHS	National Drug Strategy Household Survey
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NHS	National Health Survey
RSE	Relative standard error
SE	Standard error

Symbols

—	Zero or rounded to zero
..	Not applicable—no valid entry
[NS]	Difference between results not statistically significant
*	Relative standard error greater than 50%

Summary

This report of the 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, *Detailed Findings*, describes the use of licit and illicit drugs and the perceptions and attitudes associated with them.

Throughout this report the focus and results reported are – as they were for earlier surveys – on Australians aged 14 years and older. The main exception to this is the chapter on youth, which gives additional details for 12–13-year-olds, who were first included in the survey in 2004. In this Summary the results given are for Australians aged 14 years and older, unless indicated otherwise.

Drug use opinions

- Two in five Australians considered heroin to be the drug most associated with ‘a drug problem’ (males: 39.7%, females: 39.1%).
- Three in ten of Australians (males: 28.0%, females: 33.8%) thought excessive alcohol drinking was the most serious problem for the general community.
- Marijuana/cannabis had the highest personal approval of all illicit drugs (males: 27.4%, females: 19.0%), followed by pharmaceuticals (pain killers/analgesics, tranquillisers, steroids and barbiturates) for non-medical purposes (males: 11.6%, females: 8.3%).

Availability

- The drugs most available to Australians were alcohol (nine in ten, 90.3%) and tobacco (one in two, 52.8%).
- The illicit drugs most available to Australians were pharmaceuticals (used for non-medical purposes) (two in five, 42.8%) and marijuana/cannabis (one in five, 20.6%).

Tobacco

- Of the 3.4 million smokers, 84% smoked daily, averaging 14 cigarettes (or equivalent tobacco) per day.
- Of females aged 14–19 years, one in eight (11.9%) smoked daily; one in eleven (9.5%) males aged 14–19 years smoked daily.
- The QUIT line was a factor which motivated change to smoking behaviour for only one person in thirty (3.0%). The greatest motivation was smoking’s effect on health and fitness, nominated by one in two (51.1%) smokers.

Alcohol

- One in eleven (8.9%) Australians drank daily, a further five in eleven (41.2%) drank weekly and two in eleven (16.4%) did not drink at the time of the survey.

- One in five (20.7%) Australians drank, once or more a month, at levels that put them at high risk of alcohol-related harm in the short term.
- One in ten (9.9%) drank at levels that put them at high risk of alcohol-related harm in the long term. One in twelve (8.3%) drank at levels that put them at high risk of both short- and long-term harm
- One in four (22.7%) Indigenous people drank at levels that put them at high risk of alcohol-related harm in the long term; two in five (38.7%) drank at levels that put them at high risk of alcohol-related harm in the short term

Illicit (use of) drugs

- One in seven (15.3%) Australians aged 14 years and older had used an illicit drug in the last 12 months. One in nine (11.3%) had used marijuana/cannabis in the last 12 months.
- Three in five (61.9%) Australians had never used an illicit drug; this increased to four in five (81.4%) when marijuana/cannabis was excluded.
- Three in four (75.6%) of those who had never used an illicit drug gave ‘just not interested’ as their reason for not doing so; one in two (54.6%) gave reasons relating to health and/or addiction.
- One in nine (11.3%) Australians had used marijuana/cannabis in the last 12 months; one in six (16.4%) of them used it every day.
- Of Australians aged 14 years and older, 0.6 million (3.8%) had used pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes. About three-quarters of that use was accounted for by the use of pain-killers/analgesics.
- Three in a thousand (0.3%) Australians used heroin, methadone (not for maintenance) or other opioids (opiates) in the last 12 months. Of those users, one in two (45.0%) used one of these opioids daily or weekly.
- Ecstasy was used in the last 12 months by three in a hundred (3.4%) Australians. Of these users, three in five (63.3%) had, most commonly, used it at raves/dance parties.
- Alcohol was the drug most commonly used concurrently with every illicit drug.

Drug-related abuse and potential harm

- Three in ten (28.8%) Australians had been verbally or physically abused or put in fear by someone affected by alcohol.
- One in eight (12.9%) Australians had been verbally or physically abused or put in fear by someone affected by illicit drugs.
- One in two (46.8%) women and one in twelve (8.1%) men, who had been physically abused, knew the person who abused them.
- The most common places that drug-related physical abuse took place were in a pub or club (men) and in the home (women).

Drug-related policy

- Nine in ten (92.0%) Australians supported stricter enforcement of laws against supplying tobacco to minors.
- Almost nine in ten (85.9%) Australians supported more severe penalties for drink driving and eight in ten (83.8%) supported stricter laws against serving drunk customers.
- Those who had used heroin in their lifetime were more likely than those who had not to support policies aimed at reducing heroin-related problems.
- Asked to allocate a nominal 'drug' budget between education, treatment and law enforcement for each of five drugs, the allocation to education was around two fifths for alcohol (40.8%), tobacco (45.6%) and marijuana/cannabis (41.7%) but closer to a third for meth/amphetamines (speed) (34.1%) and heroin or cocaine (31.4%). Recent users of each drug favoured education more than did those who had never used that drug.

Legislation

- One in four (27.0%) Australians supported the legalisation of marijuana/cannabis.
- No more than one in twenty supported the legalisation of heroin (5.0%), meth/amphetamines (speed) (4.7%) or cocaine (4.7%).
- Two in five (males: 36.3%, females: 40.3%) supported the possession of marijuana/cannabis being a criminal offence.

Drugs and health

- Of tobacco smokers, one in thirteen (7.8%) rated their health excellent whereas one in six (17.0%) non-smokers did so.
- One in two (50.3%) Australians who had used heroin in the last month were diagnosed or treated for mental illness in the last 12 months compared with only one in eleven (9.1%) of those who had not used heroin in the last 12 months.
- One in three (32.7%) Australians aged 18 years and older who had used heroin in the last month experienced very high levels of psychological distress compared with only two in a hundred (2.2%) of those who had not used heroin in the last 12 months.
- One in fifteen (6.5%) non-smokers lived in households where someone smoked daily.

Young people

- Of Australians aged 12–15 years, two in a hundred (2.3%) smoked tobacco daily (males: 2.0%, females: 2.6%). For those aged 16–17 years, this difference between males and females had widened: one in thirteen (7.5%) males smoked daily and one in seven (14.5%) females smoked daily.
- Between the ages of 12–13 years and 18–19 years there was a tenfold increase in daily or weekly alcohol consumption.

- For most illicit drug types, a lower proportion of 12–15-year-olds had used in the last 12 months than of any other age group, the main exception being inhalants (1.1%).
- Two in three (68.8%) smokers and three in four ex-smokers aged 12–15 obtained their first cigarette from a friend or acquaintance.
- ‘Friends or acquaintances’ and ‘theft’ were each a more likely source of first supply for 12–17-year-olds than they were for those aged 18 years and older.