

7 Marijuana/cannabis

Introduction

In 2001, marijuana/cannabis was the most commonly used illicit drug in Australia: over 5 million Australians aged 14 years and over had used this drug in their lifetime.

The average age at which Australians first used marijuana/cannabis was 18.5 years.

Use of marijuana/cannabis

About one-third (33.1%) of the population aged 14 years and over had used marijuana/cannabis in their lifetime (Table 7.1):

- Males (15.8%) were more likely than females (10.0%) to have used marijuana/cannabis in the last 12 months.
- Approximately 1.2 million people aged 14 years and over had used marijuana/cannabis in the last month. A higher proportion of males (10.3%) than females (5.3%) had used in the last month.
- Almost 900,000 Australians aged 14 years and over had used marijuana/cannabis in the last week. Again, a higher proportion of males (7.6%) than females (3.7%) had used in the last week.

Table 7.1: Marijuana/cannabis use, persons aged 14 years and over, by age, by sex, Australia, 2001

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	34.3	58.9	49.8	18.6	36.9	29.4	33.1
In the last 12 months	24.6	29.3	16.1	4.1	15.8	10.0	12.9
In the last month	13.3	17.9	10.2	2.5	10.3	5.3	7.8
In the last week	9.1	12.4	8.2	1.8	7.6	3.7	5.6
	(number)						
In lifetime	557,600	1,670,300	1,463,900	1,523,700	2,870,900	2,338,800	5,205,600
In the last 12 months	400,300	829,600	474,700	335,500	1,232,800	797,500	2,029,500
In the last month	204,000	545,000	295,400	207,400	800,400	422,300	1,221,300
In the last week	139,200	377,400	236,600	151,200	593,600	291,900	884,300

Note: Totals may not equal sum due to rounding.

Frequency of use of marijuana/cannabis

The frequency at which the over 2 million recent users of marijuana/cannabis used this drug varied by age and sex (Table 7.2):

- Approximately one in six (16.0%) used marijuana/cannabis every day.
- Males (17.1%) were more likely than females (14.3%) to have used marijuana/cannabis every day.
- Australians aged 30–39 years were more likely than those in the other age groups to have used marijuana/cannabis every day.

Table 7.2: Frequency of marijuana/cannabis use, recent users aged 14 years and over, by age, by sex, Australia, 2001

Frequency	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
Every day	11.6	17.7	18.3	14.5	17.1	14.3	16.0
Once a week or more	19.1	21.1	27.0	24.9	26.2	17.3	22.7
About once a month	16.5	12.3	11.6	11.0	12.9	12.7	12.8
Every few months	24.5	20.5	14.3	19.3	18.8	20.9	19.6
Once or twice a year	28.3	28.4	28.8	30.4	24.9	34.8	28.8

Note: Base equals recent users.

Form, quantity and method of use of marijuana/cannabis

Recent users of marijuana/cannabis were asked what form of marijuana/cannabis they used (Table 7.3) and, on average, how many cones, bongs or joints they normally had on a day they used this drug:

- Heads were the most common form of marijuana/cannabis used by both male and female recent users; however, a greater proportion of males (83.1%) compared with females (72.3%) used this form.
- Marijuana/cannabis leaf was the next most commonly used form of the drug, for both male (41.9%) and female (53.1%) recent users.

Table 7.3: Form of marijuana/cannabis used, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

Form of drug	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Leaf	41.9	53.1	46.3
Heads	83.1	72.3	78.9
Resin (including Hash)	17.4	13.5	15.9
Oil (including Hash Oil)	7.3	5.2	6.5
Skunk	27.3	17.9	23.7
Other	5.3	6.3	5.7

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

- Recent users of marijuana/cannabis most commonly used only one cone, bong or joint on a day this drug was used.
- The most common method of use of marijuana/cannabis among both male and female recent users was smoking as joints.

Source of supply of marijuana/cannabis

Recent users of marijuana/cannabis were asked to indicate where they usually obtained this drug (Table 7.4):

- Marijuana/cannabis was usually obtained from friends or acquaintances (70.6%).
- One in seven (13.9%) recent users of marijuana/cannabis obtained this drug from a dealer.
- One in twenty (4.6%) recent users grew their marijuana/cannabis themselves.

Table 7.4: Usual source for obtaining marijuana/cannabis, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

Source	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Friend or acquaintance	70.4	70.9	70.6
Relative	3.7	9.4	6.0
Dealer	16.0	10.9	13.9
Grew it myself	5.2	3.5	4.6
Other	4.7	5.3	4.9

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents were asked to select one response only.

Usual place of use of marijuana/cannabis

Recent users of marijuana/cannabis were asked to indicate the locations they usually used marijuana/cannabis (Table 7.5):

- Recent users of marijuana/cannabis most commonly used this drug in their home or at a friend's house (87.4%).
- Private parties were the second most common location for both male (52.3%) and female (42.9%) recent users of marijuana/cannabis to use this drug.

Table 7.5: Usual place of use of marijuana/cannabis, recent users aged 14 years and over, Australia, 2001

Location	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
In a home	86.2	89.2	87.4
At private parties	52.3	42.9	48.6
At raves/dance parties	12.4	7.2	10.3
At public establishments	10.7	6.1	8.9
At work or school/TAFE/university, etc.	7.7	3.7	6.1
In public places (e.g. parks)	20.2	13.9	17.7
In a car or other vehicle	23.8	15.5	20.5
Somewhere else	11.7	8.1	10.3

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Concurrent drug use with marijuana/cannabis

Recent users of marijuana/cannabis were asked if any other drugs were used (on at least one occasion) at the same time as this drug:

- Almost all (95.1%) had used alcohol at the same time as marijuana/cannabis (Table 7.6).
- One-quarter (26.0%) had used amphetamines at the same time as marijuana/cannabis.
- One in five (19.9%) had used ecstasy/designer drugs at the same time as marijuana/cannabis.
- Less than 3% had not used another drug at the same time as marijuana/cannabis.

Table 7.6: Other drugs used with marijuana/cannabis, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Alcohol	95.9	93.6	95.1
Heroin	2.7	2.4	2.6
Cocaine/crack	9.0	5.8	7.8
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a)	5.1	4.5	4.9
Anti-depressants ^(a)	3.3	6.1	4.4
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a)	6.7	6.3	6.6
Barbiturates ^(a)	1.5	0.7	1.2
Amphetamines/speed ^(a)	28.5	22.0	26.0
Ecstasy/designer drugs	21.5	17.3	19.9
Other	4.2	3.1	3.8
None of the above	2.3	3.4	2.7

(a) Used for non-medical purposes.

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Substitution of other drugs for marijuana/cannabis

Recent users of marijuana/cannabis were asked if they had used another drug when marijuana/cannabis was not available:

- Three-quarters (75.1%) of recent users reported substituting alcohol for marijuana/cannabis (Table 7.7).
- One in five (19.1%) male recent users of marijuana/cannabis and one in four (24.5%) female recent users did not use any other drug when marijuana/cannabis was not available.

Table 7.7: Other drugs used to substitute for marijuana/cannabis when marijuana/cannabis not available, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

Drug	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Alcohol	77.6	70.8	75.1
Heroin	0.2 *	0.5	0.3
Cocaine	0.2 *	–	0.1 *
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a)	0.6	0.5	0.5
Anti-depressants ^(a)	–	0.6	0.2 *
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a)	0.3 *	0.6	0.4
Barbiturates ^(a)	–	–	–
Amphetamines/speed ^(a)	1.1	1.2	1.2
Ecstasy/designer drugs	0.5	0.5	0.5
Other	0.4	0.8	0.6
None	19.1	24.5	21.1

(a) Used for non-medical purposes.

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents were asked to select one response only.

Marijuana/cannabis use by friends and acquaintances

All respondents were asked what proportion of their friends and acquaintances used marijuana/cannabis. The proportions varied depending on the use history of the respondent (Table 7.8):

- Among people who had never used marijuana/cannabis, 69.8% had no friends and acquaintances who used marijuana/cannabis, compared with 11.0% among those who had used in their lifetime.
- Of those who had used marijuana/cannabis in their lifetime, almost three-quarters (73.2%) reported that up to half of their friends and acquaintances used this drug.
- Among recent users, one-third (32.9%) reported that all or most of their friends or acquaintances used this drug.

Table 7.8: Marijuana/cannabis use by friends and acquaintances, persons aged 14 years and over, by use status, Australia, 2001

Proportion of friends	Use status		
	Never use	Ever use	Recent use
		(per cent)	
All or most	0.9	15.8	32.9
About half or less	29.3	73.2	66.5
None	69.8	11.0	0.6