

13 Use of inhalants

Inhalants use

The 1998 survey estimated that nearly 1% of the Australian population aged 14 years and over used inhalants in the 12 months preceding the survey, and nearly 4% had used inhalants in their lifetime (Table 13.1). The survey also showed that:

- The use of inhalants was popular among young adults, with one in 50 aged 14–29 years reporting using inhalants.
- Female teenagers (aged 14–19 years) were more likely to report using inhalants compared to same-aged males (3% and 2% respectively).

Table 13.1: Lifetime and recent use of inhalants, 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	4.7	1.9
20–29	11.9	2.4
30–39	7.6	0.7
40+	1.3	0.2 *
All ages	5.0	0.9
Females		
14–19	7.4	3.0
20–29	6.8	1.9
30–39	3.1	0.4 *
40+	0.3 *	0.1 *
All ages	2.8	0.8
Persons		
14–19	6.1	2.4
20–29	9.4	2.2
30–39	5.4	0.6
40+	0.8	0.1 *
All ages	3.9	0.9

Usual place of inhalants consumption

The 1998 survey showed that, of those Australians aged 14 years and over who reported using inhalants, two-fifths (40%) said that they normally consumed the inhalants at parties, restaurants or licensed premises. A further one-third (34%) of recent inhalant users reported their own home or at a friend's house as the usual place of consumption (Table 13.2). The survey also showed that:

- Males (42%) were twice as likely to consume inhalants at their own home or at a friend's house compared with females (22%).
- Females (46%) were more likely to use inhalants at parties, restaurants or licensed premises compared with males (36%).

Table 13.2: Where inhalants usually consumed: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Place	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Own home, friend's house	42.4	21.6	33.6
Parties, restaurants or licensed premises	36.0	46.0	40.2
School/work	0.6 *	14.6	6.5 *
Other	21.0 *	17.8	19.7

Note: Base equals all recent inhalants users.

Frequency of inhalants use

In 1998, of all Australians aged 14 years and over who reported recent use of inhalants:

- A little more than 3% used them at least once a week or more (Table 13.3).
- Females were more likely to use them frequently compared with males, whereby 6% of female users reporting using inhalants once a week or more compared with 1.8% of males.

Table 13.3: Frequency of inhalants use: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998.

Frequency	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Once a week or more	1.8 *	6.0 *	3.2 *
About once a month	27.7	10.2 *	21.9
Every few months	22.7 *	—	15.1
Once or twice a year	25.4	37.8	29.5
Less often	21.2 *	41.5	28.0

Note: Base equals all recent inhalants users.

Source of supply of inhalants

The 1998 survey showed that the main source of supply of inhalants was a friend or acquaintance, with nearly three-quarters (73%) of lifetime users reporting obtaining their first supply from this source. Equal proportions of males and females reported that their first supply of inhalants was obtained from a friend or acquaintance.

Table 13.4: First supplier: proportion of persons who have ever used inhalants, by sex, Australia, 1998

Supplier	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Friend or acquaintance	73.1	73.0	73.0
Brother or sister	3.3 *	6.1 *	4.4 *
Street dealer	1.8 *	2.2 *	2.0 *
Other ^(a)	21.9 *	18.7	20.6

(a) Includes parents, spouse/partner and stolen.

Note: Base equals all persons who have ever tried inhalants.

In 1998 the recent inhalant users aged 14 years and over reported that most of their supply was obtained through a friend or acquaintance (59%), while nearly two-fifths reported

obtaining from other sources (Table 13.5). By sex, slightly fewer female users (54%) obtained their recent supply from a friend or acquaintance compared with males (63%).

Table 13.5: Recent suppliers: proportion of recent inhalants users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Supplier	Males	Females (per cent)	Persons
Friend or acquaintance	63.4	53.5	59.4
Brother or sister	—	—	—
Street dealer	—	4.5 *	1.8 *
Other ^(a)	36.6	42.0	38.8

(a) Includes parents, spouse/partner and stolen.

Note: Base equals all recent inhalants users.

Multiple drugs use with inhalants

As with other illicit substances, persons aged 14 years and over who reported using inhalants recently also reported using a multitude of other drugs. In 1998, of all recent users of inhalants, 95% recently used alcohol, while 82% reported using marijuana/cannabis (Table 13.6). Tobacco was another substance recently used by more than half (53%) of inhalants users.

Table 13.6: Polydrug use: proportion of recent inhalants users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Other substances recently used	Males	Females (per cent)	Persons
Alcohol	98.6	91.9	95.4
Tobacco	54.3	51.3	52.9
Marijuana/cannabis	83.3	80.0	81.7
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a)	31.1	36.9	33.8
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a)	30.4	36.2	33.2
Steroids ^(a)	—	1.7 *	0.8 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	2.0 *	5.7 *	3.8 *
Amphetamines ^(a)	65.7	36.8	51.8
Heroin	7.5 *	9.8 *	8.6 *
Methadone ^(b)	6.5 *	1.7 *	4.3 *
Cocaine	28.7	24.6	26.8
Hallucinogens	45.9	44.8	45.4
Ecstasy/designer drugs	56.5	48.1	52.5

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

Note: Base equals all recent inhalants users.

The data on concurrent use of other substances by recent inhalant users showed that alcohol and marijuana/cannabis were the drugs most frequently used. More than two-fifths (45%) reported using alcohol and nearly one in three (30%) reported using marijuana/cannabis concurrently with inhalants (Table 13.7). There were sex differences in concurrent polydrug use, with fewer females (38%) than males (66%) reporting using other drugs concurrently with inhalants.

Table 13.7: Concurrent polydrug use: proportion of recent inhalants users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Other substances concurrently used	Males	Females (per cent)	Persons
Alcohol	56.8	31.1	44.8
Marijuana/cannabis	38.9	20.6	30.3
Other ^(a)	19.6 *	16.6	18.3
None of the above	34.4	62.5	47.5

(a) Includes heroin, cocaine, benzodiazapines, anti-depressants, barbiturates and pain killers/analgesics.

Note: Base equals all recent inhalants users.

Correlates of inhalants use

The 1998 survey showed that:

- Persons with only HSC or equivalent education were nearly six times (1.8%) more likely to report using inhalants compared with persons with no qualification (0.3%) (Table 13.8).
- Students (2%) were more likely to use inhalants compared with employed persons (0.9%) or those who were unemployed during the survey (1.4%).
- The highest proportion of inhalants users was among persons who were never married (2.3%).

Table 13.8: Correlates of inhalants use: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, Australia, 1998

Characteristics	Never used	Lifetime use (per cent)	Recent use
Education			
No qualification	97.2	2.8	0.3
HSC or equivalent	94.2	5.8	1.8
Trade/diploma	95.8	4.2	0.9
Tertiary	95.9	4.1	0.8
Employment status			
Currently employed	95.6	4.4	0.9
Student	93.1	6.9	2.0
Unemployed	91.5	8.5	1.4 *
Retired/pension	98.7	1.3	0.3 *
Occupational status			
Upper (white)	95.6	4.4	0.9
Middle	96.6	3.4	0.7
Lower (blue)	95.7	4.3	0.8
Country of birth			
Australian born	95.7	4.3	1.0
Other English-speaking born	95.9	4.1	0.7 *
Non-English-speaking born	98.8	1.2	0.1 *
Socioeconomic area			
1st quintile	96.4	3.6	0.5
2nd quintile	97.0	3.0	0.4
3rd quintile	95.6	4.4	1.3
4th quintile	95.6	4.4	1.1
5th quintile	95.5	4.5	1.1
Geography			
Urban	95.8	4.2	1.0
Rural/remote	96.9	3.1	0.5
Marital status			
Never married	91.9	8.1	2.3
Widowed	99.4	0.6 *	0.5 *
Divorced/separated	97.6	2.4	0.5 *
Presently married	97.6	2.4	0.2 *