

# 4 Community support for drug-related policy

## Introduction

Survey respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they would support or oppose specific policies, using a five-point scale (strongly support, support, neither support nor oppose, oppose, and strongly oppose). There was no opportunity for individuals to respond 'Don't know enough about this', except for the question regarding the 'Tough on Drugs' illicit drugs policy (as first announced by the Prime Minister on 2 November 1997). For the purposes of this chapter, responses of 'support' or 'strongly support' are taken as support.

For tobacco and alcohol, the questions were in the context of reducing the problems associated with their use; for heroin there was no reference to the reduction of problems associated with its use.

## Tobacco

Between 1995 and 1998, there were both increases and decreases in public support for measures to reduce the harms associated with tobacco (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Support<sup>(a)</sup> for tobacco harm-reduction measures: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by sex, Queensland and the rest of Australia, 1995, 1998**

Measure	Males				Females				Persons			
	1995		1998		1995		1998		1995		1998	
	Aus-Q	Qld	Qld	Aus-Q	Aus-Q	Qld	Qld	Aus-Q	Aus-Q	Qld	Qld	Aus-Q
	(per cent)											
Stricter enforcement of law against selling to minors	92.0	<b>89.3</b>	<b>87.8</b>	88.3	95.3	<b>92.6</b>	<b>92.0</b>	91.7	93.7	<b>91.0</b>	<b>89.9</b>	90.1
Banning tobacco advertising at sporting events	51.4	<b>35.8</b>	<b>50.3</b>	58.9	59.1	<b>48.5</b>	<b>61.2</b>	66.7	55.3	<b>42.2</b>	<b>55.8</b>	62.9
Banning smoking in the workplace	73.7	<b>63.7</b>	<b>72.0</b>	77.2	84.7	<b>80.7</b>	<b>80.2</b>	84.4	79.2	<b>72.3</b>	<b>76.1</b>	80.9
Banning smoking in shopping centres	74.5	<b>69.5</b>	<b>75.6</b>	81.6	77.9	<b>80.5</b>	<b>82.6</b>	85.3	76.2	<b>75.0</b>	<b>79.1</b>	83.5
Banning smoking in restaurants	72.0	<b>74.8</b>	<b>73.3</b>	78.4	75.5	<b>74.1</b>	<b>76.1</b>	77.3	73.8	<b>74.4</b>	<b>74.7</b>	77.8
Banning smoking in pubs/clubs	41.0	<b>40.8</b>	<b>40.8</b>	49.6	47.4	<b>46.4</b>	<b>47.4</b>	53.2	44.2	<b>43.7</b>	<b>44.1</b>	51.5
Increase tax on tobacco products to pay for health messages	65.6	<b>52.2</b>	<b>56.9</b>	58.5	68.7	<b>68.5</b>	<b>65.2</b>	65.0	67.2	<b>60.4</b>	<b>61.1</b>	61.8
Increase tax on tobacco products to contribute to treatment costs	69.4	<b>55.1</b>	<b>60.6</b>	64.9	69.0	<b>69.5</b>	<b>67.1</b>	68.3	69.2	<b>62.3</b>	<b>63.9</b>	66.6
Increase tax on tobacco products to discourage smoking	59.8	<b>45.7</b>	<b>54.1</b>	57.4	63.7	<b>53.2</b>	<b>62.1</b>	64.3	61.8	<b>49.5</b>	<b>58.1</b>	60.9

(a) Strongly support and support.

In Queensland:

- Approximately nine in 10 persons supported 'Stricter enforcement of law against selling tobacco to minors' both in 1995 and 1998.
- Levels of support in 1998 for other tobacco measures were generally greater than 50% of the population. Proportions ranged from 55.8% for 'Banning tobacco advertising at sporting events' to 79.1% for 'Banning smoking in shopping centres'. The exception was 'Banning smoking in pubs/clubs' which received 44.1% support in 1998 and similar levels in 1995 (43.7%).
- The majority of tobacco harm-reduction measures received similar levels of support in both 1995 and 1998, with the exception of 'Banning tobacco advertising at sporting events' (1995 42.2%, 1998 55.8%) and 'Increasing tax on tobacco products to discourage smoking' (1995 49.5%, 1998 58.1%).
- In 1998, levels of support for all tobacco harm-reduction measures were higher for females than for males. For example, 'Banning tobacco advertising at sporting events' (males 50.3%, females 61.2%) and 'Increase tax on tobacco to pay for health messages' (males 56.9%, females 65.2%).

Compared to the rest of Australia:

- Levels of support for tobacco harm-reduction measures were higher in the rest of Australia than in Queensland for all measures surveyed in 1998. The largest difference was for the measure with the lowest levels of support in both Queensland and the rest of Australia: 'Banning smoking in pubs/clubs' (Qld 44.1%, Aus-Q 51.5%).
- Levels of support were similar for males and females between Queensland and the rest of Australia in 1998. For both males and females, proportions who supported harm-reduction measures were generally higher in the rest of Australia than in Queensland.

## Alcohol

Support generally declined between 1995 and 1998 for possible measures to reduce the harms associated with alcohol (Table 4.2).

In Queensland:

- In 1998, the alcohol harm-reduction measure with the highest level of support was 'More severe penalties for drunk drivers' (89.3%). The measure with the lowest level of support was 'Increasing the price of alcohol' (27.2%).
- In general, support for alcohol harm-reduction measures decreased between 1995 and 1998, with the exception of 'Limiting TV advertising until after 9.30 p.m.' (1995 66.2%, 1998 70.3%) and 'Banning alcohol sponsorship of sporting events' (1995 29.1%, 1998 39.2%).
- In 1998, levels of support were notably higher for females than for males for all alcohol harm-reduction measures. For example, 'Reducing the number of outlets' (males 25.8%, females 41.4%), and 'Raising the legal drinking age' (males 41.6%, females 52.2%).
- Between 1995 and 1998, support for alcohol harm-reduction measures for males was variable, for example, 'Raising the legal drinking age' decreased from 46.8% to 41.6%, 'Increasing the number of alcohol-free public events' remained stable at around 57.5%, and 'Limiting TV advertising until after 9.30 p.m.' increased from 54.6% to 64.2%.

**Table 4.2: Support<sup>(a)</sup> for alcohol harm-reduction measures: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by sex, Queensland and the rest of Australia, 1995, 1998**

Measure	Males				Females				Persons			
	1995		1998		1995		1998		1995		1998	
	Aus-Q	Qld	Qld	Aus-Q	Aus-Q	Qld	Qld	Aus-Q	Aus-Q	Qld	Qld	Aus-Q
	(per cent)											
Increasing the price of alcohol	26.5	<b>21.8</b>	<b>19.5</b>	19.6	40.8	<b>41.3</b>	<b>34.8</b>	33.6	33.7	<b>31.6</b>	<b>27.2</b>	26.7
Reducing the number of outlets	25.3	<b>23.4</b>	<b>25.8</b>	27.9	42.3	<b>41.6</b>	<b>41.4</b>	41.1	33.9	<b>32.5</b>	<b>33.7</b>	34.6
Reducing trading hours	31.5	<b>29.3</b>	<b>29.9</b>	30.0	46.2	<b>46.1</b>	<b>39.0</b>	40.3	39.0	<b>37.7</b>	<b>34.4</b>	35.2
Raising the legal drinking age	43.9	<b>46.8</b>	<b>41.6</b>	34.6	53.3	<b>62.7</b>	<b>52.2</b>	45.5	48.6	<b>54.8</b>	<b>46.9</b>	40.1
Increasing the number of alcohol free public events	64.2	<b>57.7</b>	<b>57.5</b>	60.5	78.1	<b>71.4</b>	<b>72.1</b>	73.5	71.3	<b>64.6</b>	<b>64.8</b>	67.1
Increasing the number of alcohol free dry zones	69.3	<b>60.9</b>	<b>59.6</b>	65.0	76.0	<b>75.4</b>	<b>71.7</b>	73.5	72.7	<b>68.1</b>	<b>65.7</b>	69.3
against serving customers who are drunk	86.3	<b>88.3</b>	<b>82.9</b>	82.3	93.4	<b>96.3</b>	<b>89.6</b>	90.2	89.9	<b>92.3</b>	<b>86.2</b>	86.3
Serving only low alcohol beverages at sporting events	65.1	<b>64.4</b>	<b>63.8</b>	64.7	79.7	<b>78.6</b>	<b>75.6</b>	78.4	72.5	<b>71.5</b>	<b>69.7</b>	71.6
Limiting TV advertising until after 9.30 p.m.	66.9	<b>54.6</b>	<b>64.2</b>	66.7	81.3	<b>77.8</b>	<b>76.5</b>	79.8	74.2	<b>66.2</b>	<b>70.3</b>	73.3
Banning alcohol sponsorship of sporting events	32.1	<b>22.8</b>	<b>29.9</b>	38.5	47.5	<b>35.3</b>	<b>48.4</b>	54.0	39.9	<b>29.1</b>	<b>39.2</b>	46.4
More severe penalties for drunk drivers	84.4	<b>87.5</b>	<b>85.5</b>	84.2	94.5	<b>92.5</b>	<b>93.0</b>	93.1	89.5	<b>90.0</b>	<b>89.3</b>	88.8

(a) Strongly support and support.

- The proportion of females supporting alcohol harm-reduction measures generally decreased between 1995 and 1998, with the major exception of 'Banning alcohol sponsorship of sporting events', which increased from 35.3% to 48.4%.

Compared to the rest of Australia:

- In general, the proportion of other Australians who supported alcohol harm-reduction measures was slightly higher or equal to Queensland proportions. This excludes 'Raising the legal drinking age' which was 46.9% in Queensland and 40.1% in the rest of Australia.
- This pattern was also evident for males and females: for males, 41.6% of the Queensland population supported 'Raising the legal drinking age' compared to 34.6% of other Australian males. For females, 52.2% supported this measure in Queensland, compared to 45.5% in the rest of Australia.

## Illicit drugs

The survey addressed support for measures for the problems associated with heroin use, support for legalisation of personal use of selected substances (see Chapter 2), and support for the ‘Tough on Drugs’ approach. It should be noted that these measures were not explained in detail to survey respondents (Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3: Support<sup>(a)</sup> for heroin harm-reduction measures: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by sex, Queensland and the rest of Australia, 1998**

Measure	Males		Females		Persons	
	Qld	Aus-Q	Qld	Aus-Q	Qld	Aus-Q
	(per cent)					
Free needle/syringe exchanges	45.4	46.5	51.6	54.2	48.5	50.4
Methadone maintenance programs	58.9	56.2	57.9	58.6	58.4	57.5
Treatment with drugs other than methadone	52.7	54.2	52.8	54.4	52.8	54.3
Regulated injecting rooms	32.8	32.2	34.0	34.2	33.4	33.2
Rapid detoxification therapy	59.5	61.6	56.0	59.7	57.7	60.6

(a) Strongly support and support.

### In Queensland:

- More than half of Queensland survey respondents supported treatment programs for heroin users, including rapid detoxification therapy (57.7%), methadone maintenance programs (58.4%), and treatment with drugs other than methadone (52.8%).
- Half of survey respondents supported free needle/syringe exchange (48.5%), and one-third supported regulated injecting rooms (or ‘shooting galleries’) (33.4%).
- In general, support for the various illicit drug harm-reduction measures was similar for males and females. However, free needle/syringe exchanges were supported by a higher proportion of females (51.6%) than males (45.4%), and rapid detoxification therapy was supported by a higher proportion of males (59.5%) than females (56.0%).

### Compared to the rest of Australia:

- The proportion of persons in the rest of Australia who supported the various illicit drug harm-reduction measures was generally very similar to Queensland. However, support for rapid detoxification therapy was marginally higher in the rest of Australia (60.6%) than in Queensland (57.7%).
- For females, levels of support for all illicit drug harm reduction-measures were higher in the rest of Australia than in Queensland. However, for males the proportion who supported methadone maintenance programs was higher in Queensland (58.9%) than in the rest of Australia (56.2%).