

2 Overview—the status of drug use in 1998

The drugs most commonly used by West Australians in 1998 were the licit drugs, tobacco and alcohol. Apart from cannabis use, use of other illicit drugs was not found to be acceptable and similarly the legalisation of selected illicit drugs was not supported. The ages of initiation (the age when the person first used drugs) for persons in Western Australia varied considerably between 1995 and 1998.

Lifetime use of drugs by males

In 1998, the drugs most commonly tried by males in the Western Australian community were tobacco (69%) and alcohol (95%). The proportion of males in Western Australia that had ever used an illicit drug increased by eight percentage points from 47% in 1995 to 55% in 1998 (Tables 2.1, 2.2).

Table 2.1: Summary of drug use: proportion of males aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1995

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	28.4	66.3	79.2	72.7	67.0	73.4	67.2
Alcohol	62.9	100.0	100.0	92.5	98.1	100.0	91.9
Illicits							
Marijuana	28.1	70.0	71.9	19.4	64.7	71.1	41.6
Analgesics ^(a)	10.9	24.4	27.1	4.7	29.0	25.9	14.1
Tranquillisers ^(a)	—	10.1	9.3	0.6	11.2	9.6	4.2
Steroids ^(a)	—	—	2.3	—	1.6	1.3	0.5
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	5.5	10.5	1.2	8.6	8.3	4.0
Inhalants	1.2	8.8	10.3	2.4	12.1	9.7	5.2
Heroin	—	5.1	10.0	1.3	8.4	7.9	3.8
Methadone ^(b)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)
Amphetamines ^(a)	4.8	30.1	13.2	4.2	21.1	20.5	11.0
Cocaine	—	11.8	10.1	—	10.4	10.8	4.4
Hallucinogens	6.3	30.1	14.4	3.9	22.0	21.2	11.3
Ecstasy, designer drugs	8.5	18.0	—	2.4	9.7	7.8	5.4
Injected illegal drugs	1.2	12.0	10.0	—	12.1	10.9	4.6
<i>Any illicit</i>	31.7	74.2	77.8	25.4	69.4	76.2	46.9
None of the above	33.4	—	—	3.5	1.8	—	5.7

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

(c) Not asked in 1995.

Table 2.2: Summary of drug use: proportion of males aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1998

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	47.2	65.4	72.2	74.2	67.0	68.9	68.9
Alcohol	90.5	100.0	96.8	95.3	96.8	98.4	95.0
Illicits							
Marijuana	38.1	78.3	61.6	29.6	74.0	69.9	47.5
Analgesics ^(a)	19.9	6.0	8.7	7.4	6.0	7.3	8.8
Tranquillisers ^(a)	5.8	4.1	5.7	2.3 *	4.7	4.9	3.8
Steroids ^(a)	—	1.4 *	1.6	1.3 *	1.3 *	1.5 *	1.2 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	4.8	5.2	2.3 *	4.4	5.0	3.2
Inhalants	4.4	10.5	7.7	3.8	7.5	9.1	6.1
Heroin	1.5 *	12.6	4.7	3.0 *	9.0	8.7	5.2
Methadone ^(b)	1.5 *	1.8 *	1.8 *	—	1.6 *	1.8 *	0.9 *
Amphetamines ^(a)	8.0	43.1	18.2	4.7	32.6	30.6	15.9
Cocaine	—	6.5	9.2	3.2	7.1	7.8	4.8
Hallucinogens	11.4	41.5	18.0	7.6	32.2	29.7	17.3
Ecstasy, designer drugs	3.1	34.5	9.0	2.3 *	24.5	21.7	10.5
Injected illegal drugs	1.5 *	12.6	5.5	0.9 *	8.6	9.0	4.4
<i>Any illicit</i>	49.2	81.9	62.9	39.8	76.2	72.4	54.5
None of the above	16.0	—	2.3	1.6 *	2.6	1.2 *	3.1

* RSE greater than 50%.

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

- Almost one in two (48%) males had tried **cannabis** in 1998. This was an increase from two in five males (42%) in 1995.
- **Amphetamine** use by males increased in Western Australia by five percentage points, from 11% in 1995 to 16% in 1998.
- Lifetime use of **hallucinogens** increased by over 50%, from slightly over 11% in 1995 to 17% in 1998.
- The proportion of males who had ever tried **ecstasy** (and other designer drugs) doubled from 5% in 1995 to 11% in 1998.
- The lifetime use of other illicit drugs by males, including **heroin** and **cocaine**, also increased between 1995 and 1998, but at lower levels.

Lifetime use of drugs by females

In 1998, the drugs most commonly tried by females in the Western Australian community were tobacco and alcohol. With the exception of cannabis, the proportion of the female population that had used at least one illicit drug at some time in their life, although increasing since 1995, was relatively low (Tables 2.3, 2.4).

Table 2.3: Summary of drug use: proportion of females aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1995

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	42.7	71.1	74.1	57.0	70.7	72.7	62.0
Alcohol	52.9	95.7	92.5	86.5	91.9	93.9	85.9
Illicits							
Marijuana	31.2	70.4	48.7	8.3	60.3	58.9	32.1
Analgesics ^(a)	13.0	12.9	19.2	14.0	18.6	16.2	14.8
Tranquillisers ^(a)	—	2.7	3.2	2.1	2.7	3.0	2.2
Steroids ^(a)	—	—	1.7	—	1.1	0.9	0.4
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	6.2	2.4	0.3	4.6	4.2	1.9
Inhalants	—	0.7	1.6	—	0.9	1.2	0.5
Heroin	—	2.5	0.7	—	1.4	1.5	0.6
Methadone ^(b)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)
Amphetamines ^(a)	8.4	21.1	3.0	0.9	15.1	11.4	6.1
Cocaine	—	6.5	0.8	1.1	4.3	3.5	2.0
Hallucinogens	11.2	16.8	4.0	0.3	12.9	10.0	5.6
Ecstasy, designer drugs	1.4	18.8	3.9	0.3	11.8	10.8	4.9
Injected illegal drugs	1.4	—	—	1.0	0.4	—	0.6
<i>Any illicit</i>	42.3	74.6	53.7	20.8	67.6	63.5	41.1
None of the above	35.4	2.1	2.9	11.4	5.6	2.5	10.2

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

(c) Not asked in 1995.

Table 2.4: Summary of drug use: proportion of females aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1998

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	57.9	70.7	64.8	64.9	70.0	67.7	65.3
Alcohol	80.0	94.3	95.9	89.4	95.0	95.0	89.8
Illicits							
Marijuana	48.1	66.9	60.4	23.1	67.5	63.6	42.2
Analgesics ^(a)	8.8	22.9	12.5	10.3	16.2	17.7	13.1
Tranquillisers ^(a)	5.5	10.1	9.9	3.3	9.1	10.0	6.2
Steroids ^(a)	—	0.7 *	—	—	0.4 *	0.4 *	0.1 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	1.2 *	5.3	—	—	3.5	2.6	1.2 *
Inhalants	2.5 *	9.2	3.0	—	6.0	6.0	2.7
Heroin	3.9	1.4 *	2.3	—	1.7 *	1.8 *	1.2 *
Methadone ^(b)	1.5 *	0.7 *	1.7 *	—	0.9 *	1.2 *	0.7 *
Amphetamines ^(a)	5.8	15.8	5.3	1.1 *	12.2	10.5	5.4
Cocaine	2.7 *	6.6	3.7	2.3 *	5.4	5.1	3.5
Hallucinogens	12.7	17.9	9.3	1.2 *	14.5	13.5	7.5
Ecstasy, designer drugs	4.3	9.0	4.4	—	7.7	6.7	3.2
Injected illegal drugs	3.9	3.1 *	3.4	—	3.1	3.3	1.8
<i>Any illicit</i>	51.8	68.7	66.2	31.6	69.3	67.5	48.3
None of the above	16.4	5.1	4.0	3.4	4.5	4.5	5.2

* RSE greater than 50%.

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

- In 1998, almost two in three (65%) West Australian females aged 14 years and older had tried smoking **tobacco**, which was an increase from 1995 (62%).
- Approximately nine out of 10 (90%) females had tried **alcohol** in 1998. This was an increase of four percentage points over rates in 1995 (86%).
- The proportion of West Australian females aged 14 years or older that had ever used an **illicit drug** increased from 41% in 1995 to 48% in 1998.
- Just over four out of 10 (42%) females had tried **cannabis** in 1998. This was an increase of 31%, from one in three females (32%) in 1995.
- **Amphetamine** use by females decreased from 6% in 1995 to 5% in 1998.
- The proportion of females who had ever used **ecstasy** (and other designer drugs) decreased from 5% in 1995 to 3% in 1998.

Lifetime use of drugs by all persons

In 1998, the drugs most commonly tried in Western Australia were tobacco and alcohol. With the exception of cannabis, the proportion of the population that had used at least one illicit drug at some time in their life, although increasing since 1995, was relatively low (Tables 2.5, 2.6).

Table 2.5: Summary of drug use: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1995

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	35.2	68.8	76.8	64.6	68.9	73.1	64.6
Alcohol	58.4	97.7	96.2	89.4	95.1	96.9	88.8
Illicits							
Marijuana	29.5	70.2	60.5	13.9	62.5	64.9	36.9
Analgesics ^(a)	11.9	18.3	23.2	9.3	23.7	21.0	14.5
Tranquillisers ^(a)	—	6.3	6.3	1.4	6.9	6.3	3.2
Steroids ^(a)	—	—	2.0	—	1.3	1.1	0.5
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	5.9	6.5	0.8	6.6	6.2	3.0
Inhalants	0.6	4.5	6.0	1.2	6.3	5.3	2.9
Heroin	—	3.7	5.4	0.6	4.8	4.6	2.2
Methadone ^(b)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)
Amphetamines ^(a)	6.5	25.4	8.2	2.5	18.0	15.9	8.6
Cocaine	—	9.0	5.5	0.5	7.2	7.1	3.2
Hallucinogens	8.6	23.1	9.2	2.1	17.3	15.5	8.4
Ecstasy, designer drugs	5.2	18.4	1.9	1.4	10.8	9.3	5.1
Injected illegal drugs	1.3	5.7	5.1	0.5	6.1	5.4	2.6
<i>Any illicit</i>	36.6	74.4	65.9	23.1	68.5	69.7	44.0
None of the above	34.3	1.1	1.4	7.5	3.8	1.3	8.0

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

(c) Not asked in 1995.

Table 2.6: Summary of drug use: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1998

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	47.2	65.4	72.2	74.2	67.0	68.9	68.9
Alcohol	80.2	97.2	96.3	92.4	96.0	96.8	92.8
Illicits							
Marijuana	42.9	72.7	61.0	26.2	70.7	66.8	44.8
Analgesics ^(a)	14.5	14.3	10.6	8.9	11.1	12.4	11.0
Tranquillisers ^(a)	5.6	7.1	7.8	2.8 *	6.9	7.4	5.0
Steroids ^(a)	—	1.1 *	0.8 *	0.6 *	0.9 *	0.9 *	0.7 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	0.6 *	5.0	2.6	1.1 *	4.0	3.8	2.2
Inhalants	3.4	9.9	5.3	1.8 *	6.7	7.6	4.4
Heroin	2.6	7.1	3.5	1.5 *	5.3	5.3	3.2
Methadone ^(b)	1.5 *	1.3 *	1.7 *	—	1.2 *	1.5 *	0.8 *
Amphetamines ^(a)	6.9	29.7	11.7	2.8 *	22.3	20.7	10.6
Cocaine	1.3 *	6.5	6.5	2.7 *	6.2	6.5	4.1
Hallucinogens	12.1	29.9	13.7	4.3	23.3	21.7	12.3
Ecstasy, designer drugs	3.7	22.0	6.7	1.1 *	16.0	14.3	6.9
Injected illegal drugs	2.7	7.9	4.4	0.4 *	5.8	6.2	3.1
<i>Any illicit</i>	50.4	75.4	64.6	35.6	72.7	69.9	51.4
None of the above	16.2	2.5 *	3.1	2.5 *	3.6	2.8	4.1

* RSE greater than 50%.

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

- In 1998, approximately seven in 10 (69%) persons aged 14 years and older in Western Australia had tried smoking **tobacco**, which shows an increase from 1995 (65%).
- Slightly more than nine in 10 (93%) persons had tried **alcohol** in 1998. This was an increase of four percentage points since 1995.
- **Cannabis** use increased by 21%, from 37% in 1995 to 45% in 1998.
- The higher rate of **cannabis** use was reported by the 20–29 years age group, with just seven out of 10 (73%) having ever used in their lifetime.
- **Ecstasy** (and other designer drugs) increased by 35%, from 5% in 1995 to 7% in 1998.
- Overall, the use of **any illicit** drug by West Australians aged 14 years and over increased by 23%, from 44% in 1995 to 51% in 1998.

Drugs recently used by males

Between 1995 and 1998, proportions of males in Western Australia recently (in the last 12 months) using tobacco decreased slightly, using alcohol increased slightly, and increased for most illicit drugs (Tables 2.7, 2.8).

Table 2.7: Summary of drug use: proportion of males aged 14 years and over that have used drugs in the past 12 months, Western Australia, 1995

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	13.9	46.0	35.0	25.5	38.4	39.8	29.8
Alcohol	58.1	94.0	86.9	86.0	85.0	90.1	84.2
Illicits							
Marijuana	28.1	50.7	26.4	4.2	42.4	37.3	20.4
Analgesics ^(a)	—	10.2	7.8	0.6	10.3	8.8	3.9
Tranquillisers ^(a)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Steroids ^(a)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inhalants	—	2.5	—	—	1.3	1.1	0.4
Heroin	—	—	3.4	—	2.4	1.9	0.8
Methadone ^(b)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)
Amphetamines ^(a)	4.8	14.7	—	—	7.9	6.3	3.2
Cocaine	—	1.7	3.4	—	3.3	2.7	1.1
Hallucinogens	6.3	14.0	—	—	7.6	6.1	3.3
Ecstasy, designer drugs	8.5	13.3	—	—	7.2	5.8	3.4
Injected illegal drugs	1.2	3.1	—	—	1.7	1.4	0.7
<i>Any illicit</i>	28.1	57.3	32.8	4.8	50.6	43.5	23.4
None of the above	41.9	—	4.6	10.0	6.9	2.6	10.9

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

(c) Not asked in 1995.

Table 2.8: Summary of drug use: proportion of males aged 14 years and over that have used drugs in the past 12 months, Western Australia, 1998

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	13.8	40.7	30.0	27.7	39.6	35.4	29.3
Alcohol	70.8	96.7	91.9	91.1	93.1	94.3	90.2
Illicits							
Marijuana	32.3	67.0	20.3	11.1	52.0	44.1	27.3
Analgesics ^(a)	6.3	4.5	2.8	1.1 *	4.0	3.7	2.8
Tranquillisers ^(a)	5.8	0.7 *	3.0	—	1.4 *	1.8 *	1.4 *
Steroids ^(a)	—	—	0.7 *	—	0.4 *	0.4 *	0.1 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	1.5 *	0.7 *	—	1.4 *	1.1 *	0.5 *
Inhalants	1.8 *	1.6 *	—	1.7 *	1.2 *	0.8 *	1.3 *
Heroin	—	8.5	2.5	—	5.7	5.5	2.3
Methadone ^(b)	1.5 *	—	0.7 *	—	0.4 *	0.4 *	0.3 *
Amphetamines ^(a)	6.6	36.0	3.0	2.3 *	24.3	19.7	10.1
Cocaine	—	4.0 *	1.4 *	2.3 *	3.1	2.7	2.2
Hallucinogens	8.8	19.2	1.8 *	—	14.1	10.6	5.4
Ecstasy, designer drugs	3.1	30.5	2.2	2.3 *	20.0	16.3	8.3
Injected illegal drugs	1.5 *	11.7	1.7 *	—	8.0	6.7	3.0
Any illicit	33.7	69.6	21.7	13.6	53.9	45.6	29.3
None of the above	24.0	3.2 *	5.8	6.6	4.8	4.5	7.7

* RSE greater than 50%.

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

- The proportion of males in Western Australia recently using **alcohol** increased from 84% in 1995 to 90% by 1998.
- The proportion of males that recently used **any illicit drug** increased between 1995 (23%) and 1998 (29%).
- The recent use of **cannabis** by males in Western Australia aged 14 years and over increased from 20% in 1995 to 27% in 1998.
- The proportion of males recently using **amphetamines** in the 12 months prior to the survey increased from 3% in 1995 to 10% in 1998.
- Between 1995 and 1998 the use of **ecstasy** (and other designer drugs) increased five percentage points from 3% in 1995 to 8% in 1998.
- Just over one in four (27%) males reported the use of **cannabis** in the last 12 months. However, two-thirds (67%) of males aged 20–29 years had recently used cannabis. This age group constituted the highest recent users of cannabis for any age group and almost double the highest female rate of 36% for the 14–19 years age group.

Drugs recently used by females

Between 1995 and 1998, proportions of West Australian females recently (in the last 12 months) using tobacco decreased slightly, using alcohol increased slightly, and increased for most illicit drugs (Tables 2.9, 2.10).

Table 2.9: Summary of drug use: proportion of females aged 14 years and over that have used drugs in the past 12 months, Western Australia, 1995

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	13.0	40.5	35.8	20.4	33.0	37.9	26.9
Alcohol	48.8	84.4	77.1	79.6	77.2	80.4	76.6
Illicits							
Marijuana	18.6	29.4	18.4	2.5	26.0	23.8	13.0
Analgesics ^(a)	11.2	5.7	10.1	7.5	10.0	8.0	8.1
Tranquillisers ^(a)	—	2.0	3.2	0.3	2.3	2.7	1.3
Steroids ^(a)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	2.0	—	—	1.1	0.9	0.4
Inhalants	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Heroin	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Methadone ^(b)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)
Amphetamines ^(a)	1.4	10.6	0.7	0.3	6.4	5.3	2.5
Cocaine	—	1.0	—	—	0.6	0.5	0.2
Hallucinogens	5.5	6.7	—	—	5.5	3.1	1.9
Ecstasy, designer drugs	—	10.2	—	—	5.8	4.8	2.0
Injected illegal drugs	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Any illicit</i>	29.7	35.5	26.8	9.5	35.9	30.9	20.7
None of the above	47.0	6.5	14.8	17.7	13.9	10.9	17.9

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

(c) Not asked in 1995.

Table 2.10: Summary of drug use: proportion of females aged 14 years and over that have used drugs in the past 12 months, Western Australia, 1998

Drug/behaviour	Age groups				18–34	20–39	All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+			
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	17.1	42.5	30.7	18.1	39.3	36.5	25.6
Alcohol	76.2	78.3	85.7	82.6	81.5	82.0	81.7
Illicits							
Marijuana	36.0	31.3	20.2	6.2	31.0	25.5	17.2
Analgesics ^(a)	6.4	5.2	7.0	5.7	4.7	6.1	5.9
Tranquillisers ^(a)	4.3	5.9	7.1	3.3	5.8	6.5	4.7
Steroids ^(a)	—	0.7 *	—	—	0.4 *	0.4 *	0.1 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	0.7 *	—	—	0.4 *	0.4 *	0.1 *
Inhalants	1.2 *	4.3	1.5 *	—	2.5	2.9	1.3 *
Heroin	3.9	0.7 *	0.6 *	—	1.3 *	0.6 *	0.7 *
Methadone ^(b)	—	0.7 *	—	—	0.4 *	0.4 *	0.1 *
Amphetamines ^(a)	5.8	6.2	0.6 *	—	5.2	3.4	2.0
Cocaine	1.2 *	1.1 *	—	—	1.1 *	0.6 *	0.4 *
Hallucinogens	10.1	6.7	—	—	5.4	3.3	2.5
Ecstasy, designer drugs	4.3	6.9	0.5 *	—	5.1	3.6	2.0
Injected illegal drugs	1.2 *	2.4 *	0.6 *	—	1.8 *	1.5 *	0.7 *
Any illicit	37.3	30.2	28.3	11.7	30.5	29.2	21.6
None of the above	18.8	8.0	7.1	11.7	7.8	7.5	10.8

* RSE greater than 50%.

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

- Between 1995 (27%) and 1998 (26%) there was a slight decline in the proportion of females recently using **tobacco**.
- The proportion of West Australian females recently using **alcohol** increased from 77% in 1995 to 82% in 1998.
- In 1998, approximately 17% of females aged 14 years and over had used **cannabis** in the last 12 months. This was a 32% increase from 13% in 1995. However, just over one in three (36%) of 14–19 year old females reported recent cannabis use—a rate higher than that for 14–19 year old males (32%).
- The data indicates that use of **cannabis** declines with age for both males and females, reaching the same rate (20%) for the 30–39 years age group. Females aged 40 years and over are almost half as likely (6%) to have recently used cannabis than males (11%) in the same age group.
- In 1998, females aged 30–39 years in Western Australia were the highest recent users of **alcohol** (86%).
- The recent use of **alcohol** by female teenagers in Western Australia increased by the largest margin from 49% in 1995 to 76% in 1998.
- Females in Western Australia aged 20–29 years were the highest recent users of **tobacco** (43%).

Drugs recently used by all persons

Between 1995 and 1998, proportions of Western Australian persons recently (in the last 12 months) using tobacco decreased slightly, using alcohol increased slightly, and increased for most illicit drugs/substances (Tables 2.11, 2.12).

Table 2.11: Summary of drug use: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over that have used drugs in the past 12 months, Western Australia, 1995

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14-19	20-29	30-39	40+	18-34	20-39	All ages
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	13.6	43.2	35.5	22.9	35.7	38.9	28.4
Alcohol	53.8	89.0	82.0	82.7	81.1	85.2	80.3
Illicits							
Marijuana	23.7	39.5	22.5	3.4	33.9	30.5	16.7
Analgesics ^(a)	5.2	7.8	8.9	4.0	10.2	8.4	6.0
Tranquillisers ^(a)	—	1.1	1.6	0.2	1.2	1.3	0.6
Steroids ^(a)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inhalants	—	1.2	—	—	0.7	0.5	0.2
Heroin	—	—	1.7	—	1.2	1.0	0.4
Methadone ^(b)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)
Amphetamines ^(a)	3.2	12.5	0.3	0.2	7.2	5.8	2.9
Cocaine	—	1.3	1.7	—	1.9	1.5	0.6
Hallucinogens	6.0	10.1	—	—	6.5	4.6	2.6
Ecstasy, designer drugs	4.6	11.7	—	—	6.5	5.3	2.7
Injected illegal drugs	0.6	1.5	—	—	0.8	0.7	0.4
<i>Any illicit</i>	28.9	45.8	29.9	7.2	43.1	37.1	22.0
None of the above	44.3	3.4	9.6	13.9	10.5	6.8	14.4

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

(c) Not asked in 1995.

Table 2.12: Summary of drug use: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over that have used drugs in the past 12 months, Western Australia, 1998

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	
	(per cent)						
Tobacco	15.4	41.6	30.3	23.0	39.4	36.0	27.4
Alcohol	73.4	87.7	88.8	86.8	87.3	88.3	85.9
Illicits							
Marijuana	34.1	50.2	20.3	8.6	41.7	35.0	22.3
Analgesics ^(a)	6.4	4.8	4.9	3.5	4.4	4.9	4.4
Tranquillisers ^(a)	5.1	3.2 *	5.0	1.7 *	3.6	4.1	3.1
Steroids ^(a)	—	0.4 *	0.4 *	—	0.4 *	0.4 *	0.1 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	1.1 *	0.4 *	—	0.9 *	0.7 *	0.3 *
Inhalants	1.5 *	2.9 *	0.8 *	0.8 *	1.9 *	1.8 *	1.3
Heroin	1.9 *	4.7	1.5 *	—	3.5	3.1	1.5
Methadone ^(b)	0.8 *	0.4 *	0.4 *	—	0.4 *	0.4 *	0.2 *
Amphetamines ^(a)	6.2	21.4	1.8 *	1.1 *	14.6	11.5	6.0
Cocaine	0.6 *	2.6 *	0.7 *	1.1 *	2.1	1.6 *	1.3
Hallucinogens	9.4	13.1	0.9 *	—	9.7	7.0	3.9
Ecstasy, designer drugs	3.7	18.9	1.4 *	1.1 *	12.5	10.1	5.1
Injected illegal drugs	1.3 *	7.1	1.1 *	—	4.9	4.1	1.8
<i>Any illicit</i>	35.4	50.3	25.0	12.6	42.1	37.5	25.4
None of the above	21.5	5.5	6.5	9.2	6.3	6.0	9.3

* RSE greater than 50%.

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

- Between 1995 (28%) and 1998 (27%) there was a slight decline in the proportion of persons recently using **tobacco**.
- The proportion of the Western Australian population recently using **alcohol** increased from 80% in 1995 to 86% by 1998.
- The proportion of the Western Australian population that had used **any illicit drug** in the 12 months prior to the survey increased from 22% in 1995 to 25% in 1998.
- Recent use of **cannabis** increased from 17% in 1995 to 22% in 1998. This was a 34% increase across the 3-year period. Approximately 50% of 20–29 year olds had used **cannabis** in the last 12 months.
- Recent use of **heroin** and/or **cocaine** also increased between 1995 and 1998.
- Persons in Western Australia aged 30–39 years were the highest recent users of **alcohol** (89%).

Age of initiation—lifetime use for males

In 1998, the mean age at which males in Western Australia first used drugs had generally increased since 1995 (Tables 2.13, 2.14).

Table 2.13: Age of initiation of males aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1995

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(mean age)						
Tobacco	13.0	14.3	13.9	14.7	13.8	14.1	14.3
Alcohol	13.0	14.9	15.4	17.1	14.8	15.1	15.9
Illicits							
Marijuana	13.5	16.0	18.2	23.3	16.5	17.2	18.3
Analgesics ^(a)	13.0	15.0	18.9	20.6	16.5	17.3	17.3
Tranquillisers ^(a)	—	15.8	14.7	35.0	15.3	15.2	16.6
Steroids ^(a)	—	—	29.0	—	29.0	29.0	29.0
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	16.0	15.4	28.0	15.2	15.5	17.3
Inhalants	13.0	15.2	15.4	29.0	15.4	15.4	18.2
Heroin	—	16.0	17.5	48.0	15.9	17.1	21.9
Methadone ^(b)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)
Amphetamines ^(a)	15.8	18.2	18.1	29.0	18.0	18.2	19.3
Cocaine	—	17.8	23.2	—	18.7	20.6	20.6
Hallucinogens	14.4	17.6	17.3	23.6	17.1	17.5	18.3
Ecstasy, designer drugs	15.1	19.8	—	37.0	19.8	19.8	22.5
Injected illegal drugs	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

(c) Not asked in 1995.

Table 2.14: Age of initiation of males aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1998

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+ (mean age)	18–34	20–39	All ages
Tobacco	12.4	14.7	14.3	15.0	15.0	14.5	14.6
Alcohol	13.8	14.9	14.7	16.3	15.0	14.8	15.4
Illicits							
Marijuana	13.5	16.4	19.1	22.2	17.3	17.5	18.5
Analgesics ^(a)	13.2	16.0	20.7	43.4 *	19.8	18.8	27.7
Tranquillisers ^(a)	—	21.0 *	27.5	—	25.5 *	25.5 *	25.5 *
Steroids ^(a)	—	21.0	21.0 *	26.0	21.0 *	21.0 *	25.5 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	19.9 *	21.0 *	19.0	21.2 *	20.7 *	20.2 *
Inhalants	10.2 *	18.6 *	18.9	48.0 *	18.5 *	18.7 *	24.1 *
Heroin	—	25.7	22.3	25.2	25.9	25.2	25.2
Methadone ^(b)	16.0 *	19.5	27.4 *	—	23.3 *	22.7 *	21.3 *
Amphetamines ^(a)	15.5	20.6	20.0	26.9 *	20.5	20.4	20.8
Cocaine	—	20.2 *	23.5 *	26.9 *	21.7	22.1	23.8
Hallucinogens	16.1	19.2	19.3 *	18.7	19.3	19.3	19.9
Ecstasy, designer drugs	16.4	19.6	26.9	30.0 *	20.4	21.2	22.0
Injected illegal drugs	14.0 *	21.3	20.1	19.0	21.7	20.9	20.5

* RSE greater than 50%.

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

- The mean age of initiation for **alcohol** and **tobacco** appears to have changed little between 1995 and 1998.
- The largest increase in age of initiation for males was recorded for **analgesics** where the mean age increased from 17 years in 1995 to 28 years of age in 1998.
- The mean age of initiation for **tranquillisers** increased by 9 years from 17 in 1995 to 26 years in 1998.
- The mean age of initiation for **inhalants** and **heroin** increased from 18 to 24 years and 22 to 25 years respectively between 1995 and 1998.
- The mean age of initiation for **cocaine** and **barbiturates** increased 3 years between 1995 and 1998 from 21 to 24 years and 17 to 20 years respectively.

Age of initiation—lifetime use for females

In 1998, excluding inhalants and cocaine, the mean ages at which females in Western Australia first used drugs varied considerably between the different types of licit and illicit drugs (Tables 2.15, 2.16).

Table 2.15: Age of initiation of females aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1995

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(mean age)						
Tobacco	13.8	15.0	16.6	18.3	15.2	15.9	16.8
Alcohol	14.5	15.5	18.4	19.3	15.9	17.0	17.9
Illicits							
Marijuana	14.7	17.0	21.3	27.3	17.5	18.9	19.5
Analgesics ^(a)	10.0	15.7	18.0	20.8	16.0	17.0	17.9
Tranquillisers ^(a)	—	13.3	23.1	33.4	18.2	19.0	25.4
Steroids ^(a)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	18.5	19.0	30.0	18.5	18.5	19.8
Inhalants	—	14.0	27.7	—	18.6	23.9	23.9
Heroin	—	17.0	32.0	—	17.0	20.6	20.6
Methadone ^(b)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)
Amphetamines ^(a)	17.5	19.2	27.3	24.1	19.0	20.3	20.1
Cocaine	—	19.5	26.0	24.7	20.4	20.4	21.5
Hallucinogens	—	16.4	26.0	18.0	16.4	17.9	17.9
Ecstasy, designer drugs	16.0	19.7	31.0	36.0	20.5	21.9	22.2
Injected illegal drugs	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

(c) Not asked in 1995.

Table 2.16: Age of initiation of females aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1998

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(mean age)						
Tobacco	14.2	14.2	15.6	17.1	14.7	14.9	15.9
Alcohol	13.1	15.8	16.7	20.4	15.8	16.3	18.0
Illicits							
Marijuana	14.6	16.7	19.4	25.9	17.4	18.0	19.6
Analgesics ^(a)	15.6	17.0	21.1	27.4	16.6	18.9	21.0
Tranquillisers ^(a)	16.8	18.9	19.7	45.0	18.2	19.3	23.6
Steroids ^(a)	—	17.0 *	—	—	17.0 *	17.0 *	17.0 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	18.3 *	—	—	18.3 *	18.3 *	18.3 *
Inhalants	13.0 *	17.2	16.1 *	—	16.7	16.9	16.7 *
Heroin	15.1	18.0 *	25.5 *	—	16.5 *	22.7 *	20.6 *
Methadone ^(b)	—	19.0 *	—	—	19.0 *	21.7 *	21.7 *
Amphetamines ^(a)	15.4	19.6	23.4 *	24.0	19.6	20.6	20.4
Cocaine	15.8 *	20.7 *	20.7	36.1	19.8 *	20.7 *	25.3 *
Hallucinogens	15.3	18.7	19.9	—	18.4	19.0	18.1
Ecstasy, designer drugs	15.9	19.3	26.9 *	—	20.1	21.4	20.7
Injected illegal drugs	15.2 *	19.9 *	23.8 *	—	19.1 *	21.9 *	20.3 *

* RSE greater than 50%.

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

- The mean age of initiation for **alcohol** and **tobacco** among females aged 14 years and over in Western Australia remained stable at 18 years and 16 years respectively in 1998.
- The mean age of initiation for **inhalants** experienced the largest decrease, from 24 years in 1995 to 17 years of age in 1998.
- The age of initiation for **cocaine** increased from 22 years in 1995 to 25 years of age in 1998.
- The mean age of initiation for **cannabis**, **amphetamines** and **hallucinogens** increased marginally between 1995 and 1998.
- **Ecstasy** (and other designer drugs) and **tranquillisers** both decreased by 2 years to 21 years and to 24 years respectively in 1998.

Age of initiation—lifetime use for all persons

In 1998, the mean ages at which persons living in Western Australia first used drugs generally remained relatively stable for the most commonly used drugs, with increases recorded for analgesics, tranquillisers, inhalants, heroin and cocaine (Tables 2.17, 2.18).

Table 2.17: Age of initiation of the population aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1995

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	18–34	20–39	All ages
	(mean age)						
Tobacco	13.5	14.7	15.2	16.3	14.5	15.0	15.5
Alcohol	13.6	15.2	16.8	18.2	15.4	16.1	16.9
Illicits							
Marijuana	14.1	16.5	19.4	24.5	17.0	18.0	18.8
Analgesics ^(a)	11.5	15.3	18.6	20.7	16.3	17.2	17.6
Tranquillisers ^(a)	—	15.3	16.8	33.8	15.9	16.1	19.7
Steroids ^(a)	—	—	29	—	29.0	29.1	29.2
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	17.4	15.6	28.5	16.2	16.4	18.0
Inhalants	13.0	15.1	17.0	29.0	15.6	16.3	18.7
Heroin	—	16.4	18.4	48.0	16.1	17.7	21.7
Methadone ^(b)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)
Amphetamines ^(a)	16.8	18.7	19.8	27.7	18.4	19.0	19.6
Cocaine	—	18.4	23.4	24.7	19.2	20.6	20.9
Hallucinogens	15.3	17.6	18.6	24.1	17.5	17.9	18.3
Ecstasy, designer drugs	15.3	19.7	31.0	36.9	20.2	21.0	22.4
Injected illegal drugs	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)	(c)

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

(c) Not asked in 1995.

Table 2.18: Age of initiation of the population aged 14 years and over that have ever used drugs, Western Australia, 1998

Drug/behaviour	Age groups						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+ (mean age)	18–34	20–39	All ages
Tobacco	13.6	14.4	14.9	15.9	14.9	14.7	15.2
Alcohol	13.5	15.3	15.7	18.4	15.4	15.5	16.7
Illicits							
Marijuana	14.1	16.5	19.3	23.9	17.3	17.7	19.0
Analgesics ^(a)	13.8	16.8	20.9	36.4	17.6	18.9	24.0
Tranquillisers ^(a)	16.8	19.8 *	24.6	45.0 *	21.5	22.6	24.4
Steroids ^(a)	—	19.6 *	21.0 *	—	19.6 *	20.1 *	23.0 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	—	18.7 *	21.0 *	—	19.6 *	19.6 *	19.5 *
Inhalants	11.0 *	18.0 *	18.1 *	48.0 *	17.7 *	18.0 *	21.7
Heroin	15.1 *	24.9	23.9 *	—	24.2	24.6	24.2
Methadone ^(b)	16.0 *	19.4 *	26.6 *	—	22.4 *	22.4 *	21.4 *
Amphetamines ^(a)	15.4	20.4	20.7 *	26.2 *	20.3	20.5	20.7
Cocaine	15.8 *	20.5 *	22.7 *	30.8 *	20.9	21.6	24.5
Hallucinogens	15.6	19.0	19.6 *	—	19.0	19.2	19.4
Ecstasy, designer drugs	16.1	19.6	26.9 *	30.0 *	20.4	21.2	21.7
Injected illegal drugs	14.9 *	21.0	21.5	—	21.0	21.2	20.4

* RSE greater than 50%.

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

- The mean age of initiation of **alcohol** for persons in Western Australia aged 14 years and over remained stable at 17 years of age between 1995 and 1998.
- The mean age of initiation for **tobacco** decreased from 16 years in 1995 to 15 years of age in 1998.
- The mean age of initiation for **analgesics** increased from 18 years in 1995 to 24 years of age in 1998.
- The mean age of initiation for **cocaine** increased by 4 years to 25 years of age in 1998.
- The mean age of initiation for **heroin** and **amphetamines** increased slightly between 1995 and 1998.

Acceptability of drug use

In 1998, the licit drugs—tobacco and alcohol—were considered by West Australians to be the most acceptable for regular use by adults (Table 2.19). With the exceptions of cannabis and analgesics, fewer than one in 10 West Australians aged 18 years or older in 1998 thought that regular use of illicit drugs by adults was acceptable.

Table 2.19: Proportion of the population aged 18 years and over who find regular drug use by adults acceptable, by sex, Western Australia, 1995, 1998

Drug	Males		Females		Persons	
	1995	1998	1995	1998	1995	1998
(per cent)						
18–34 years						
Tobacco	45.0	53.9	47.8	53.4	46.4	53.7
Alcohol	62.0	80.2	54.9	57.9	58.4	68.9
Marijuana/cannabis	44.1	62.8	48.2	35.1	46.2	48.8
Pain killers/analgesics ^(a)	9.0	21.0	9.3	11.0	9.1	15.9
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a)	7.1	3.0	4.5	8.4	5.8	5.8
Steroids ^(a)	7.2	4.8	0.9	0.8 *	4.0	2.8
Barbiturates ^(a)	1.8	2.9	0.9	0.4 *	1.3	1.7 *
Inhalants	1.8	1.1 *	—	—	0.9	0.5 *
Heroin	4.1	2.7	3.4	1.1 *	3.7	1.9
Methadone ^(b)	(c)	1.9 *	(c)	2.8	(c)	2.4
Amphetamines	3.9	5.7	3.5	3.0	3.7	4.3
Cocaine	0.9	2.1	0.8	1.3 *	0.9	1.7 *
Naturally occurring hallucinogens	8.9	9.1	5.5	2.6	7.2	5.8
LSD/synthetic hallucinogens	6.7	6.9	2.3	1.2 *	4.5	4.0
Ecstasy/designer drugs	6.3	6.3	3.2	2.6	4.7	4.4
18+ years						
Tobacco	35.8	44.5	31.3	42.1	33.5	43.3
Alcohol	56.7	73.4	45.7	55.1	51.1	64.2
Marijuana/cannabis	28.1	40.8	26.7	26.0	27.4	33.3
Pain killers/analgesics ^(a)	6.8	12.2	9.2	11.3	8.0	11.8
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a)	2.9	3.5	4.1	5.5	3.5	4.5
Steroids ^(a)	3.2	3.1	0.3	1.2 *	1.8	2.1
Barbiturates ^(a)	2.2	1.6 *	1.1	0.7 *	1.7	1.2
Inhalants	0.6	0.6 *	—	—	0.3	0.3 *
Heroin	2.4	1.8	1.9	0.6 *	2.2	1.2
Methadone ^(b)	(c)	1.0 *	(c)	1.0 *	(c)	1.0
Amphetamines	2.4	2.3	1.5	1.2 *	1.9	1.8
Cocaine	1.3	2.2	0.3	0.5 *	0.8	1.3
Naturally occurring hallucinogens	6.2	6.5	2.5	1.2 *	4.3	3.8
LSD/synthetic hallucinogens	5.4	2.9	0.8	0.4 *	3.1	1.7
Ecstasy/designer drugs	5.2	2.6	1.3	1.2 *	3.3	1.9

* RSE greater than 50%.

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

(c) Not asked in 1995.

- Regular use of **alcohol** by adults was considered acceptable by over two-thirds (69%) of West Australians aged 18–34 years in 1998, an increase of 11 percentage points over 1995 (58%). Males were more likely than females in both 1995 and 1998 to consider the regular use of alcohol to be acceptable.
- Regular use of **tobacco** by adults was considered acceptable by 54% of the Western Australian population aged 18–34 years in 1998.

- In 1998, approximately one in two (49%) West Australians aged 18–34 years considered the regular use of **cannabis** to be acceptable. There was a difference in male and female attitudes to regular cannabis use, with about six in 10 (63%) males expressing agreement compared with one in three (35%) females.
- Regular use of **alcohol** by adults was considered acceptable by almost two-thirds (64%) of West Australians aged 18 years or older in 1998, an increase of 13 percentage points over 1995 (51%).
- Regular use of **tobacco** by adults was considered acceptable by 43% of the Western Australian population aged 18 years or older in 1998. This is a 29% increase compared with 1995 (34%).
- In 1998, approximately one in three (33%) West Australians aged 18 years or older considered the regular use of **cannabis** to be acceptable, an increase of six percentage points over 1995 (27%). Support by males increased from 28% in 1995, to 41% in 1998, whereas support by females decreased from 27% in 1995 to 26% in 1998.

Support for the legalisation of illicit drugs

Between 1995 and 1998, support for the legalisation of selected illicit drugs generally increased, with the exception of cannabis (Table 2.20).

Table 2.20: Proportion of the population aged 18 years and over who support the personal use of selected drugs being made legal, by sex, Western Australia, 1995, 1998

Drug	Males		Females		Persons	
	1995	1998	1995	1998	1995	1998
	(per cent)					
18–34 years						
Marijuana/cannabis	44.3	56.9	46.4	31.6	45.3	44.2
Heroin	2.2	12.1	9.3	2.9	5.9	7.5
Amphetamines/speed	1.3	10.1	6.0	3.9	3.6	7.0
Cocaine	0.9	11.1	5.7	2.7	3.3	6.8
18+ years						
Marijuana/cannabis	38.9	37.6	32.4	27.0	35.6	32.3
Heroin	5.4	8.5	5.8	4.8	5.6	6.7
Amphetamines/speed	4.3	7.2	3.1	3.6	3.7	5.4
Cocaine	4.9	8.1	3.9	4.3	4.3	6.2

- The support for legalisation of **cannabis** by persons aged 18–34 years in Western Australia remained stable at around 45% between 1995 and 1998.
- In 1998, males (57%) aged 18–34 years were more likely to support the legalisation of **cannabis** than females (32%).
- The support by persons aged 18–34 years for the legalisation of **heroin**, **amphetamines** and **cocaine** all increased between 1995 and 1998, but support still remained at less than one in 10 persons.
- The support for legalisation of **cannabis** by persons aged 18 years and over in Western Australia decreased four percentage points from 36% in 1995 to 32% in 1998.
- Males (38%) were more likely than females (27%) to support the legalisation of **cannabis**.
- Support by persons in Western Australia aged 18 years and over for the legalisation of **heroin** and **cocaine** remained low.