



## National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019—Western Australia

The consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs is a major cause of preventable disease and illness in Australia and varies by region. This fact sheet summarises the results from the 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) on tobacco, alcohol and other drug use in Western Australia. Data are presented for people aged 14 and over. Comparisons with prevalence estimates for other states and territories should only be considered using the age-standardised results available in the online supplementary tables. See [technical notes](#) for definitions of smokers, e-cigarettes, alcohol risk guidelines and illicit drug use.

### Quick facts

In Western Australia in 2019, among people aged 14 and over:

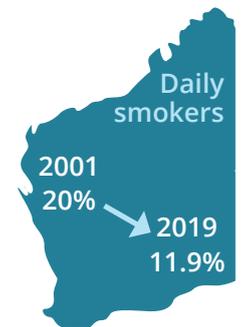
- **1 in 8** smoked tobacco daily
- **1 in 4** consumed 5 or more drinks in one session (at least monthly)
- **1 in 6** used an illicit drug in the past 12 months
- more than **half** supported testing of drugs/pills at designated sites.

### What is the National Drug Strategy Household Survey?

The survey collects information from teenagers and adults across Australia. It asks what they think about tobacco, alcohol and other drugs; and about their use of these drugs. Researchers and policymakers use the results to better understand the issues surrounding tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. The 2019 survey was the 13th iteration of the survey since it began in 1985. The survey has been conducted every 3 years since 1995.

### How many people smoke tobacco?

The proportion of daily smokers in Western Australia fell by about one-third between 2001 and 2019 (from 20% to 11.9%) (Table S.5), but was similar to the proportion in 2016 (11.5%) (Table S.5). This equates to about 300,000 people smoking daily in 2019. (Table S.7).



### More smokers are using e-cigarettes

In 2019, 12.1% of Western Australians had tried e-cigarettes (Table S.10). More people had currently used e-cigarettes in 2019 than 2016 (3.2%, up from 1.9%); with more smokers reported they currently used them, from 6.6% in 2016 to 12.2% in 2019 (Table S.11).

### How many people drink alcohol?

About 3 in 4 (73%) people had consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months (Table S.29). There were slight but non-significant declines in the proportions of people drinking daily and weekly between 2016 and 2019, continuing the downward trend observed since 2007 (Table S.12).



Most people in Western Australia drank alcohol at levels that did not exceed the lifetime risk and single occasion risk (drinking at least monthly) guidelines for reducing the health risks from drinking alcohol. The proportion of people exceeding either guideline was similar in 2016 and 2019, but both have declined since 2007 (tables S.21 and S.22).

## How has illicit drug use changed?

In 2019, about 1 in 6 (15.6%) people in Western Australia had used an illicit drug in the past 12 months ('recent use'). While no statistically significant changes were detected in recent years, illicit drug use has been trending downwards since 2010 (from 18.6%) and has declined from 22% in 2001 (Table S.23). The proportion of people using meth/amphetamines in the previous 12 months in Western Australia was higher than the national average (2.1% compared with 1.3%) and the proportion using cocaine was lower (2.4% compared with 4.2%) (Table S.29).

Cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug and this has not changed over time; but the types of other illicit drugs used in the previous 12 months have varied over time (Table 1). In 2019, pain-killers and opioids used for non-medical purposes (3.0%) were the second most commonly used illicit drug in the previous 12 months after cannabis (Table S.29).

**Table 1: Top 5 illicit drugs used in the previous 12 months, people aged 14 and over, 2001, 2016 and 2019**

	2001	2016	2019
1	Cannabis (17.5%)	Cannabis (11.6%)	Cannabis (11.2%)
2	Meth/amphetamine <sup>(a)</sup> (5.8%)	Ecstasy (3.2%)	Ecstasy (2.9%)
3	Ecstasy (4.0%)	Meth/amphetamine <sup>(a)</sup> (2.7%)	Cocaine (2.4%)
4	Hallucinogens (1.9%)	Tranquillisers/sleeping pills <sup>(a)</sup> (1.8%)	Meth/amphetamine <sup>(a)</sup> (2.1%)
5	Tranquillisers/sleeping pills <sup>(a)</sup> (1.7%)	Cocaine (1.6%)	Tranquillisers/sleeping pills <sup>(a)</sup> (1.7%)

(a) For non-medical purposes.

Note: Pain-killers and opioids have been excluded from the above table as there are no comparable data available for 2001 due to the changes that were made to the questionnaire in 2016.

## At what age do people start smoking tobacco, drinking alcohol and using illicit drugs?

In 2019, the average age at which people first (Table S.31):

-  smoked a full cigarette was 16.5 years
-  tried drinking alcohol was 17.2 years
-  tried an illicit drug excluding pharmaceuticals was 18.7 years
-  tried an illicit drug, including pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes was 20.0 years.

## How many people were victims of alcohol and drug-related incidents?

In 2019, people in Western Australia were about 1.8 times as likely to be a victim of an alcohol-related incident as an illicit drug-related incident (24% compared with 13.3%, tables S.50 and S.51).

This was evident for:

- verbal abuse (20% compared with 11.0%)
- physical abuse (5.7% compared with 2.2%, but this estimate has a relative standard error between 25% and 50% and should be interpreted with caution)
- put in fear (12.6% compared with 7.5%).

## How has support for harm-minimisation measures changed?

Support for measures related to the restriction of e-cigarette use in public places has grown since 2016, while support for measures such as increasing tax on tobacco and the stricter penalties for sale or supply to minors has declined (Table S.46).

Generally, people in Western Australia were less likely to support measures to reduce alcohol-related harm if these involved stricter restrictions on pubs, clubs and licensed venues than they were in 2016. For example, about 1 in 4 (27%) people supported reducing trading hours for pubs and clubs in 2019 compared with more than 1 in 3 (36%) in 2016 (Table S.47).

Two questions about policy measures related to illicit drugs and harm minimisation were added to the 2019 NDSHS:

- more than **1 in 2 (55%)** people supported allowing drug users to test their pills/drugs at designated sites to inform them of the purity and the substances the drug contained
- about **2 in 5 (44%)** people supported supervised drug consumption facilities/rooms (Table S.48).

## Where can I get more information?

For more information, including the full report, factsheets, technical notes and supplementary tables, see <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/illicit-use-of-drugs/national-drug-strategy-household-survey-2019>