

19 Community support for drug-related policy

Measures against tobacco use

In 1998 respondents were asked to indicate their support for policies aimed at reducing the problems associated with tobacco use. Responses that indicated either 'strongly support' or 'support' out of five possible responses – strongly support, support, neither support or oppose, oppose, strongly oppose – were grouped into a single category of support.

The data showed that nine out of ten (90%) Australians aged 14 years and over supported stricter enforcement of laws against the supply of cigarettes to minors (Table 19.1). The survey further showed that:

- Four-fifths approved banning smoking in workplaces (80%), shopping centres (83%) and restaurants (77%).
- Half (50%) approved banning smoking in pubs and clubs.
- Three-fifths or more of Australians aged 14 years and over supported the increasing tax on tobacco products to pay for health education programs, for treating smoking-related diseases, and to discourage people from smoking.
- With the exception of banning smoking in restaurants, females were more supportive than males for all policy measures.

Table 19.1: Support for measures to reduce tobacco-related harm: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Measure	Males	Females	Persons
	(per cent)		
Stricter enforcement of the law against supplying cigarettes to customers who are under age	88.1	91.8	90.0
Banning tobacco advertising at sporting events	57.1	65.5	61.4
Banning smoking in the workplace	76.3	83.6	80.0
Banning smoking in shopping centres	80.5	84.6	82.6
Banning smoking in restaurants	77.4	76.9	77.1
Banning smoking in pubs/clubs	47.7	52.1	49.9
Increasing the tax on tobacco products to pay for health education programs	58.0	65.1	61.6
Increasing the tax on tobacco products to contribute to the cost of treating smoking-related diseases	63.8	68.0	65.9
Increasing the tax on tobacco products to discourage people from smoking	56.6	64.0	60.4

Measures against alcohol use

The support for measures to reduce the problems associated with excessive alcohol use was not as high as the level of support measures to reduce tobacco-related harm. A little more than one in four (27%) Australians aged 14 years and over supported increasing the price of

alcohol as a measure to reduce alcohol-related harm (Table 19.2). There was very high support for measures such as severe legal penalties for drivers who are drunk (89%), stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk (86%), and limiting advertising for alcohol on TV until after 9.30 p.m. (73%). Furthermore, females were more supportive than males of all the measures listed to reduce the harm due to excessive use of alcohol.

Table 19.2: Support for measures to reduce alcohol-related harm: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Measure	Males	Females		Persons
		(per cent)		
Increasing the price of alcohol	19.4	33.9		26.7
Reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol	27.5	41.0		34.3
Reducing trading hours for all pubs and clubs	29.8	40.2		35.0
Raising the legal drinking age	36.0	46.9		41.5
Increasing the number of alcohol-free public events	59.9	73.1		66.6
Increasing the number of alcohol-free zones or dry areas	63.7	73.2		68.5
Stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk	82.4	90.0		86.3
Serving only low-alcohol drinks, such as low-alcohol beer at sporting events or venues	64.5	77.7		71.2
Limiting advertising for alcohol on TV until after 9.30 p.m.	66.0	79.0		72.6
Banning alcohol sponsorship of sporting events	36.9	52.7		44.9
More severe legal penalties for drivers who are drunk	84.4	93.1		88.8

Measures against heroin use

The 1998 survey showed a range of support levels for measures that would reduce the problems associated with heroin use. The data showed that:

- Rapid detoxification therapy was the most supported measure to reduce the problems associated with heroin use, with three-fifths (60%) of all Australians aged 14 years and over supporting this measure (Table 19.3).
- Methadone maintenance programs were supported by 58% and treatment with drugs other than methadone was supported by 54% of Australians aged 14 years and over.
- The two least supported measures were free needle/syringe exchanges (50%) and regulated injecting rooms (33%).
- With the exception of rapid detoxification therapy, females were more supportive than males of all listed measures.

Table 19.3: Support for measures to reduce heroin-related harm: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Measure	Males	Females		Persons
		(per cent)		
Free needle/syringe exchanges	46.3	53.6		50.0
Methadone maintenance programs	56.9	58.6		57.8
Treatment with drugs other than methadone	54.2	54.4		54.3
Regulated injecting rooms	32.3	33.9		33.1
Rapid detoxification therapy	61.3	59.2		60.3

Support for legalising drugs for personal use

The 1998 survey showed very little support for legalising drugs such as heroin, amphetamines and cocaine, while there was moderate support for legalising marijuana/cannabis for personal use (Table 19.4). Specifically, the survey showed that:

- More than one in four (29%) Australians aged 14 years and over supported legalising marijuana/cannabis for personal use.
- A little over one in 15 (7%) supported legalising heroin for personal use.
- Only 6% of all Australians supported legalising amphetamines or cocaine for personal use.
- Females were less likely than males to support legalising drugs for personal use.

When the support for legalising selected drugs was analysed by age group, the data showed that:

- Persons aged 20–39 years were more likely than any other age group to support legalising drugs for personal use.
- Except for the younger age group (14–19 years), as age increased, support for legalising drugs for personal use decreased.

Table 19.4: Support for personal use of selected drugs being made legal: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 1998

Drug	Age group						All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
(per cent)							
Males							
Marijuana/cannabis	38.2	49.6	41.4	37.3	21.6	12.9	33.8
Heroin	4.9	10.6	11.0	10.4	4.6	6.4	8.4
Amphetamines/speed	6.1	10.7	7.7	8.1	3.6	3.5	6.8
Cocaine	4.3	10.0	9.0	7.9	4.4	4.4	7.0
Females							
Marijuana/cannabis	35.6	37.7	31.2	24.2	16.3	10.2	25.1
Heroin	4.6	6.1	8.4	6.1	6.5	5.2	6.2
Amphetamines/speed	4.2	5.3	6.6	3.9	3.7	4.3	4.8
Cocaine	4.4	5.3	6.7	4.6	4.2	4.8	5.1
Persons							
Marijuana/cannabis	36.9	43.7	36.3	30.7	19.0	11.4	29.4
Heroin	4.8	8.4	9.7	8.2	5.5	5.7	7.3
Amphetamines/speed	5.2	8.0	7.1	6.0	3.7	4.0	5.8
Cocaine	4.4	7.7	7.8	6.3	4.3	4.6	6.0

Support for increased penalties for the sale or supply of drugs

The 1998 survey showed that the majority of Australians aged 14 years and over supported increased penalties for the sale or supply of drugs such as marijuana/cannabis, heroin, amphetamines and cocaine (Table 19.5). The support for increased penalties varied by drug. For example:

- More than four-fifths supported increased penalties for selling or supplying heroin (85%), cocaine (84%) and amphetamines (83%).

- Only about six in ten (59%) supported increased penalties for the sale or supply of marijuana/cannabis.
- More females than males supported increased penalties for the sale and supply of drugs.
- As age increased so did support for increased penalties for the sale and supply of drugs.

Table 19.5: Support for increased penalties for the sale or supply of drugs: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 1998

Drug	Age group						All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
(per cent)							
Males							
Marijuana/cannabis	45.1	35.7	45.7	53.6	74.1	79.4	55.4
Heroin	78.6	79.1	81.6	84.8	93.5	90.7	84.7
Amphetamines/speed	74.9	71.3	78.9	84.1	92.0	89.8	81.8
Cocaine	77.3	74.3	79.8	84.4	92.5	90.5	83.1
Females							
Marijuana/cannabis	43.3	49.5	57.2	64.7	74.2	82.3	63.4
Heroin	77.4	82.4	85.9	85.2	87.9	89.6	85.4
Amphetamines/speed	73.7	79.2	84.4	84.3	87.2	88.6	83.6
Cocaine	75.6	81.3	85.2	84.2	87.3	89.5	84.5
Persons							
Marijuana/cannabis	44.2	42.5	51.5	59.2	74.1	81.0	59.4
Heroin	78.0	80.7	83.8	85.0	90.7	90.1	85.1
Amphetamines/speed	74.3	75.2	81.6	84.2	89.6	89.2	82.7
Cocaine	76.5	77.8	82.5	84.3	90.0	90.0	83.8