

11 Amphetamines

Introduction

In 2001, amphetamines were the second most commonly used illicit drug, following marijuana/cannabis.

The average age at which Australians first used amphetamines was 20.4 years.

Use of amphetamines

About 1.4 million Australians aged 14 years and over had used amphetamines in their lifetime (Table 11.1):

- Males were more likely than females to have used amphetamines.
- About 224,000 people aged 14 years and over used amphetamines in the last month. A higher proportion of males (1.8%) than females (1.0%) had used in the last month.
- Those aged 20–29 years were more likely than those in the other age groups to have used amphetamines.

Table 11.1: Amphetamine use, persons aged 14 years and over, by age, by sex, Australia, 2001

| Period | Age group | | | | Sex | | Persons |
|-----------------------|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| | 14–19 | 20–29 | 30–39 | 40+ | Males | Females | |
| | (per cent) | | | | | | |
| In lifetime | 8.4 | 22.0 | 13.5 | 3.2 | 10.6 | 7.3 | 8.9 |
| In the last 12 months | 6.2 | 11.2 | 3.1 | 0.4 | 4.2 | 2.7 | 3.4 |
| In the last month | 2.9 | 4.8 | 1.2 | 0.1 | 1.8 | 1.0 | 1.4 |
| In the last week | 1.2 | 1.8 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.6 |
| | (number) | | | | | | |
| In lifetime | 13,700 | 624,600 | 396,600 | 268,300 | 828,200 | 57,800 | 1,405,800 |
| In the last 12 months | 101,400 | 317,800 | 90,600 | 36,000 | 323,100 | 211,200 | 534,200 |
| In the last month | 44,200 | 145,500 | 33,700 | 12,200 | 141,200 | 82,800 | 224,000 |
| In the last week | 18,900 | 56,100 | 9,200 | 7,600 | 50,800 | 36,600 | 87,400 |

Note: Totals may not equal sum due to rounding.

Frequency of use of amphetamines

The frequency at which the 534,200 recent users of amphetamines used this drug varied by age and sex (Table 11.2):

- Around one in eight (11.9%) used this drug daily or weekly. However, recent users most commonly used amphetamines once or twice a year (45.5%).
- About 43,000 recent users aged 20–29 years used amphetamines daily or weekly.

Table 11.2: Frequency of amphetamines use, recent users aged 14 years and over, by age, by sex, Australia, 2001

| Frequency | Age group | | | | Sex | | Persons |
|----------------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| | 14–19 | 20–29 | 30–39 | 40+ | Males | Females | |
| | (per cent) | | | | | | |
| Daily or weekly | 10.7 | 13.6 | 7.3 | 13.5 | 11.9 | 11.8 | 11.9 |
| About once a month | 18.6 | 17.2 | 12.7 | 7.5 * | 17.1 | 14.7 | 16.2 |
| Every few months | 26.3 | 28.5 | 23.8 | 14.0 | 26.9 | 25.7 | 26.4 |
| Once or twice a year | 44.4 | 40.7 | 56.2 | 65.0 | 44.1 | 47.8 | 45.5 |

Note: Base equals recent users.

Form and quantity of amphetamines used

Recent users of amphetamines were asked what form of the drug they used, and, on average, how many points or grams they normally had on a day they used this drug (Table 11.3):

- The most common form of amphetamines used by recent users was amphetamine powder (83.6%).
- About one-third (37.7%) of recent users of amphetamines used crystal amphetamines.

Table 11.3: Form of amphetamines used, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

| Form of drug | Males | Females | Persons |
|---------------------------|------------|---------|---------|
| | (per cent) | | |
| Powder | 83.5 | 83.8 | 83.6 |
| Liquid | 8.6 | 9.4 | 8.9 |
| Crystal | 41.7 | 31.5 | 37.7 |
| Tablet | 13.8 | 13.7 | 13.8 |
| Prescription amphetamines | 9.6 | 9.0 | 9.4 |

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.

2. Respondents could select more than one response.

- On a day they used amphetamines, recent users typically had 10 points (that is, 1.0 grams).

Source of supply of amphetamines

Recent users of amphetamines were asked to indicate where they usually obtained this drug (Table 11.4):

- Recent users of amphetamines typically obtained this drug from a friend or acquaintance (70.9%).
- Almost one-quarter (23.3%) of recent users of amphetamines obtained this drug from a dealer.

Table 11.4: Usual source for obtaining amphetamines, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

| Source | Males | Females | Persons |
|------------------------|-------|------------|---------|
| | | (per cent) | |
| Friend or acquaintance | 69.9 | 72.5 | 70.9 |
| Relative | 2.1 | 4.0 | 2.9 |
| Dealer | 24.7 | 21.1 | 23.3 |
| Other | 3.3 | 2.3 | 2.9 |

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents were asked to select one response only.

Usual place of use of amphetamines

Recent users of amphetamines were asked to indicate where they usually used this drug (Table 11.5):

- Both male (55.4%) and female (65.0%) recent users were most likely to use amphetamines in their own home or at a friend's house, compared with all other locations.
- Private parties were the next most common location for use of amphetamines (47.4%).

Table 11.5: Usual place of use of amphetamines, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

| Location | Males | Females | Persons |
|---|-------|------------|---------|
| | | (per cent) | |
| In a home | 55.4 | 65.0 | 59.1 |
| At private parties | 49.5 | 44.2 | 47.4 |
| At raves/dance parties | 49.3 | 41.1 | 46.1 |
| At public establishments | 42.5 | 36.8 | 40.3 |
| At work or school/TAFE/university, etc. | 9.2 | 7.3 | 8.4 |
| In public places (e.g. parks) | 9.3 | 7.3 | 8.5 |
| In a car or other vehicle | 14.4 | 10.5 | 12.9 |
| Somewhere else | 6.5 | 6.9 | 6.7 |

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Concurrent drug use with amphetamines

Recent users of amphetamines were asked if any other drugs were used (on at least one occasion) at the same time as this drug (Table 11.6):

- Alcohol was the drug most likely to be consumed (on at least one occasion) at the same time as amphetamines (87.7%) by recent users of amphetamines.
- Recent users next most commonly used marijuana/cannabis at the same time as amphetamines (71.5%).

Table 11.6: Other drugs used with amphetamines, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

| Drug | Males | Females (per cent) | Persons |
|--|-------|-----------------------|---------|
| Alcohol | 87.3 | 88.4 | 87.7 |
| Marijuana/cannabis | 75.0 | 65.6 | 71.5 |
| Heroin | 3.2 | 4.1 | 3.6 |
| Cocaine | 15.6 | 12.1 | 14.3 |
| Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a) | 7.3 | 6.2 | 6.9 |
| Anti-depressants ^(a) | 2.8 | 4.1 | 3.3 |
| Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a) | 6.5 | 5.4 | 6.1 |
| Barbiturates ^(a) | 1.6 | 1.9 | 1.7 |
| Ecstasy/designer drugs | 43.4 | 43.2 | 43.3 |
| Other | 3.0 | 5.2 | 3.8 |
| None of the above | 0.8 * | 1.4 * | 1.0 |

(a) Used for non-medical purposes.

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Substitution of other drugs for amphetamines

Recent users of amphetamines were asked if they had used another drug when amphetamines were not available (Table 11.7):

- About three in five (58.7%) recent users of amphetamines substituted alcohol for amphetamines when the latter were not available.
- Marijuana/cannabis was the second most common substitute for amphetamines (35.0%).

Table 11.7: Other drugs used to substitute for amphetamines when amphetamines not available, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

| Drug | Males | Females | Persons |
|--|-------|------------|---------|
| | | (per cent) | |
| Alcohol | 57.4 | 61.0 | 58.7 |
| Marijuana/cannabis | 38.8 | 28.4 | 35.0 |
| Heroin | 1.0 * | 2.4 * | 1.5 * |
| Cocaine | 1.4 * | 4.6 * | 2.5 |
| Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a) | 0.1 * | 0.2 * | 0.1 * |
| Anti-depressants ^(a) | – | 2.4 * | 0.9 * |
| Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a) | 1.3 * | 1.1 * | 1.2 * |
| Barbiturates ^(a) | – | – | – |
| Ecstasy | – | – | – |
| Other | – | – | – |
| None | – | – | – |

(a) Used for non-medical purposes.

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents were asked to select one response only.

Amphetamines use by friends and acquaintances

All respondents were asked what proportion of their friends and acquaintances used amphetamines. The proportions varied with the respondent's history of use (Table 11.8):

- A high proportion (88.4%) of Australians aged 14 years and over who had never used amphetamines had no friends and acquaintances who used amphetamines. In comparison, among those who had used in their lifetime, 20.2% had no friends and acquaintances who used amphetamines.
- Three-quarters (73.6%) of those who had used amphetamines in their lifetime reported that about half or less of their friends and acquaintances used amphetamines.
- Among recent users, 13.3% reported that all or most of their friends and acquaintances used amphetamines.

Table 11.8: Amphetamines use by friends and acquaintances, persons aged 14 years and over, by use status, Australia, 2001

| Proportion of friends | Use status | | |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Never use | Ever use | Recent use |
| | | (per cent) | |
| All or most | 0.1 | 6.2 | 13.3 |
| About half or less | 11.4 | 73.6 | 84.4 |
| None | 88.4 | 20.2 | 2.3 |