

17 Drug-related policy

The 2001 NDSHS contained a number of questions that related to survey respondents' opinions and attitudes of drug-related policies.

In this section, responses that indicated either 'strongly support' or 'support' out of six possible responses – strongly support, support, neither support nor oppose, oppose, strongly oppose, don't know enough to say – were grouped into a single category of 'support'. Data are presented on the levels of support for various policy measures and the distribution of a drugs budget.

Support for policy measures

Tobacco use

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for various tobacco-related policy measures. In 2001, across all measures ex-smokers and those who had never smoked were more likely than smokers to support policies aimed at reducing the problems associated with tobacco use (Table 17.1). The survey also found that for Australians aged 14 years and over:

- the policy measure with the highest level of support was the stricter enforcement of the law against supplying cigarettes to minors. More than nine in 10 of those who had never smoked (93.3%) or were ex-smokers (93.2%) supported this measure. The majority of smokers (84.3%) also supported this policy measure; and
- bans on smoking in public places, such as the workplace, shopping centres and restaurants, were the next most supported measures.

Table 17.1: Support for measures to reduce the problems associated with tobacco use, persons aged 14 years and over, by smoking status, Australia, 2001

Measure	Smoker	Ex-smoker	Never smoked
	(per cent)		
Stricter enforcement of law against supplying minors	84.3	93.2	93.3
Immediate ban on tobacco advertising at sporting events	48.4	69.4	73.1
Making it harder to buy tobacco in shops	28.9	63.3	73.0
Ban smoking			
in the workplace	55.3	85.6	91.0
in shopping centres	66.9	88.2	92.5
in restaurants	60.0	88.5	92.8
in pubs/clubs	20.5	67.9	76.1
Increase tax on tobacco products			
to pay for health education	24.4	69.4	80.6
to contribute to treatment costs	30.8	71.9	81.6
to discourage smoking	25.0	64.5	76.6

Excessive consumption of alcohol

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for policy measures aimed at reducing the problems associated with excessive alcohol use. Generally the support for these measures was not as high as the level of support for measures to reduce tobacco-related harm (Table 17.2). Other results include:

- In 2001, the measure that received the most support from Australians aged 14 years and over was 'more severe penalties for drink driving'. Nine in 10 abstainers/low-risk drinkers (91.0%) and eight in 10 risky/high-risk drinkers (80.5%) supported this policy.
- Stricter laws against serving drunk customers was the measure which received the next greatest support.
- Increasing the price of alcohol was supported by less than 30% of Australians aged 14 years and over (29.1% of abstainers/low-risk drinkers and 5.7% of risky/high-risk drinkers).

Table 17.2: Support for measures to reduce the problems associated with excessive alcohol use, persons aged 14 years and over, by drinking status, Australia, 2001

Measure	Abstainers/ low-risk drinkers	Risky/ high-risk drinkers
	(per cent)	
Increasing the price of alcohol	29.1	5.7
Reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol	38.3	11.8
Reducing trading hours for pubs and clubs	42.3	15.2
Raising the legal drinking age	51.5	25.1
Increasing the number of alcohol-free events	76.0	48.3
Increasing the number of alcohol-free dry zones	74.5	50.1
Serving only low-alcohol beverages at sporting events	73.8	46.7
Limiting TV advertising until after 9.30 p.m.	76.1	57.7
Banning alcohol sponsorship of sporting events	53.3	27.2
More severe penalties for drink driving	91.0	80.5
Stricter laws against serving drunk customers	90.2	75.6
Restricting late night trading of alcohol	63.3	28.9
Strict monitoring of late night licensed premises	80.0	60.0
Increasing the size of standard drink labels on alcohol containers	73.4	58.2
Adding information on the national drinking guidelines to alcohol containers	77.6	59.5

Note: Respondents could select more than one response.

Heroin use

Survey respondents were asked their opinion of measures to reduce the problems associated with heroin use (Table 17.3):

- Seven in 10 (73.1%) who had ever used heroin supported regulated injecting rooms. This compares with less than half (45.0%) of those who had not used.
- A greater proportion of those who had never used (63.8%) compared with those who had used (59.0%) supported the use of methadone maintenance programs.
- Rapid detoxification therapy as a measure to reduce the problems associated with heroin use was supported by approximately eight in 10 Australians (77.3% of those who had used heroin and 80.0% of those who had never used).

Table 17.3: Support for measures to reduce the problems associated with heroin use, persons aged 14 years and over, by illicit drug use status, Australia, 2001

Measure	Used in lifetime	Never used
	(per cent)	
Needle and syringe programs	85.4	58.6
Methadone maintenance programs	59.0	63.8
Treatment with drugs other than methadone	71.6	65.7
Regulated injecting rooms	73.1	44.6
Trial of prescribed heroin	64.3	34.0
Rapid detoxification therapy	77.3	80.0
Use of Naltrexone	77.5	75.2

Nominal distribution of a drugs budget

In 2001, survey respondents were asked to allocate \$100 across the three areas of education, treatment and law enforcement for each of five drug categories. Across each of the drug categories, education typically received the greater proportion of the allotted \$100 (Figure 17.1). It was also found that:

- the distribution of monies for alcohol-related programs was similar between recent drinkers and those who were never or ex-drinkers. Approximately \$40 was nominated for education, \$30 for treatment and \$30 for law enforcement; and
- for illicit drug use, law enforcement received a greater proportion of the \$100 from those who had never used or were ex-users than recent users.

