

7 Use of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes

General use of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes

The 1998 survey found that 6% of all Australians aged 14 years and over had used tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes in their lifetime and 3% had recently used them (Table 7.1). Since the estimated rate of recent use is small and the measurement error quite large, care should be taken when interpreting these results.

Table 7.1: Lifetime and recent use of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 1998

Age	Lifetime use (per cent)	Recent use
Males		
14–19	3.6	2.3
20–29	10.3	5.3
30–39	6.9	3.6
40+	4.2	1.3
All ages	5.9	2.7
Females		
14–19	5.8	3.6
20–29	10.5	5.6
30–39	7.0	2.6
40+	4.9	2.6
All ages	6.5	3.3
Persons		
14–19	4.7	2.9
20–29	10.4	5.4
30–39	6.9	3.1
40+	4.6	2.0
All ages	6.2	3.0

Usual place of consumption of tranquillisers/sleeping pills

The survey showed that, of those who recently used tranquillisers/sleeping pills, more than nine in ten (92%) reported their homes as the usual place of consumption and one in eight (12%) reported a friend's house as the usual place for consumption (Table 7.2). The survey also showed that more males (99%) reported home as the usual place of consumption compared with females (84%).

Table 7.2: Where tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes are usually consumed: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Place	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
In my own home	98.9	84.3	91.9
Friend's house	17.0	7.4	12.3
Licensed premises	4.1 *	15.7	9.7
Other places ^(a)	4.7 *	8.9	6.8

(a) Includes parties, restaurants/cafes, educational institutions, workplace and public places.

Note: Base equals all recent users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes.

Frequency of use of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes

In 1998, of all the Australians who were recent users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes, nearly one in four (24%) used them at least weekly, with one in ten (11%) using them daily. Further, the survey showed that more females (12%) than males (9%) used tranquillisers/sleeping pills on a daily basis.

Table 7.3: Frequency of tranquillisers/sleeping pills use for non-medical purposes: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Frequency	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Every day	9.3	12.1	10.6
Once a week or more	23.1	3.1 *	13.7
About once a month	22.9	14.6	19.0
Every few months	17.5	20.4	18.9
Once or twice a year	16.1	18.0	17.0
Less often	11.2	31.7	20.9

Note: Base equals all recent users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes.

Source of supply of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical use

In 1998, of all the persons aged 14 years and over who used tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes, half (50%) reported obtaining their first supply from a friend or acquaintance (Table 7.4). There was a sex difference in reporting the source of supply, with three-fifths (63%) of male users reporting a friend or acquaintance as first source compared with nearly two-fifths (38%) of female users.

However, the survey also revealed, that among the recent users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills, only a third (34%) reported they currently got their supply from a friend or acquaintance, while nearly half (49%) reported they obtained it from other sources (Table 7.5).

Table 7.4: First supplier: proportion of persons who have ever used tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Supplier	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Friend or acquaintance	63.4	38.4	50.2
Brother or sister	2.8 *	2.7	2.7
Parent	7.5	7.0	7.2
Spouse or partner	6.2	6.2	6.2
Other relative	—	2.4 *	1.3 *
Street dealer	0.6 *	0.6 *	0.6 *
Stole it	4.4	4.3	4.3
Other	15.1	38.4	27.4

Note: Base equals all users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes.

Table 7.5: Recent suppliers: proportion of recent users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Supplier	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Friend or acquaintance	36.7	31.4	34.1
Brother or sister	2.5 *	—	1.2 *
Parent	10.3	0.2 *	5.2
Spouse or partner	10.4	4.0 *	7.2
Other relative	—	—	—
Street dealer	—	1.5 *	0.7 *
Stole it	—	4.7 *	2.4 *
Other	40.1	58.2	49.3

Note: Base equals all recent users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes.

Multiple drugs use with tranquillisers/sleeping pills

The 1998 survey showed that, of those Australians aged 14 years and over who reported using tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes recently, nearly nine out of ten (87%) had also consumed alcohol recently and three-quarters (76%) had consumed pain-killers/analgesics recently (Table 7.6). Among those who used tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes, proportionally more males used multiple drugs recently compared with females.

The survey further showed that more than half (53%) of recent tranquillisers/sleeping pills users also consumed alcohol at the same time as taking these drugs and more than one in three (36%) reported smoking marijuana/cannabis at the same time (Table 7.7).

Table 7.6: Polydrug use: proportion of recent users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Other substances recently used	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Alcohol	95.3	80.2	86.8
Tobacco	50.4	37.1	43.1
Marijuana/cannabis	57.3	38.5	46.8
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a)	81.3	71.2	75.7
Steroids ^(a)	3.6 *	0.8 *	2.1 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	10.1	4.1 *	6.7
Amphetamines ^(a)	34.5	20.8	26.8
Heroin	15.5	4.3 *	9.2
Methadone ^(b)	7.2 *	1.0 *	3.8
Cocaine	13.1	4.2 *	8.2
Hallucinogens	22.9	13.2	17.4
Ecstasy/designer drugs	18.6	9.1	13.3
Inhalants	10.0	8.6	9.2

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

Note: Base equals recent users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes.

Table 7.7: Concurrent polydrug use: proportion of recent users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Other substances concurrently used	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Alcohol	62.2	46.2	53.3
Marijuana/cannabis	50.0	25.0	36.1
Heroin	10.4	3.2 *	6.4
Cocaine	7.6 *	2.3 *	4.6
Pain-killers/analgesics	16.6	18.0	17.4
None of the above	30.6	38.9	35.2

Note: Base equals recent users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes.

Correlates of tranquillisers/sleeping pills use for non-medical purposes

The correlates that stand out distinctly with the use of tranquillisers/sleeping pills are occupational status and country of birth (Table 7.8). The survey showed that the highest proportion of lifetime (16%) as well as recent (9%) users of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes were among the unemployed. The group that reported the least use of tranquillisers/sleeping pills for non-medical purposes was persons with a non-English-speaking background, with one in 20 reporting a lifetime use and only one in 100 reporting recent use.

Table 7.8: Correlates of tranquillisers/sleeping pills use for non-medical purposes: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, Australia, 1998

Characteristics	Never used	Lifetime use (per cent)	Recent use
Education			
No qualification	93.5	6.5	3.1
HSC or equivalent	92.9	7.1	3.1
Trade/diploma	94.7	5.3	3.3
Tertiary	93.5	6.5	2.2
Employment status			
Currently employed	93.9	6.1	2.5
Student	95.0	5.0	2.8
Unemployed	84.2	15.8	9.1
Retired/pension	94.9	5.1	2.7
Occupational status			
Upper (white)	94.2	5.8	2.3
Middle	94.0	6.0	3.5
Lower (blue)	92.9	7.1	3.1
Country of birth			
Australian born	93.6	6.4	3.2
Other English-speaking born	93.8	6.2	3.0
Non-English-speaking born	95.1	4.9	1.3
Socioeconomic area			
1st quintile	94.0	6.0	3.0
2nd quintile	94.4	5.6	3.1
3rd quintile	94.4	5.6	2.7
4th quintile	93.1	6.9	3.2
5th quintile	93.1	6.9	2.9
Geography			
Urban	93.6	6.4	3.1
Rural/remote	94.5	5.5	2.7
Marital status			
Never married	91.3	8.7	4.9
Widowed	94.3	5.7	5.4
Divorced/separated	91.9	8.1	2.2
Presently married	95.5	4.5	1.8