



National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019—New South Wales

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 New South Wales. 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 New South Wales in 2019, among people aged 14 and over:

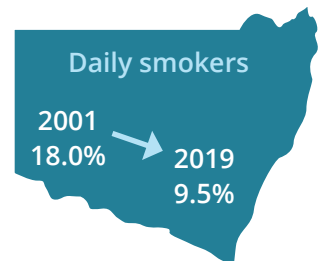
- **1 in 10** smoked tobacco daily
- **1 in 4** consumed 5 or more drinks in one sitting (at least monthly)
- **1 in 6** used an illicit drug in the past 12 months
- nearly **3 in 5** supported testing of drugs/pills at designated sites.

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 daily?

The proportion of daily smokers in New South Wales almost halved between 2001 and 2019 (from 18.0% to 9.5%). There was a significant fall over the last 3 years—down from 11.5% in 2016—which equates to about 100,000 fewer daily smokers (down from about 700,000 to 600,000 people) (tables S.5 and S.7). The proportion of daily smokers in New South Wales was lower than the national average (11.0%). In 2019, there were fewer current smokers in New South Wales compared with 2016 (12.4% compared with 14.0%) (Table S.29).

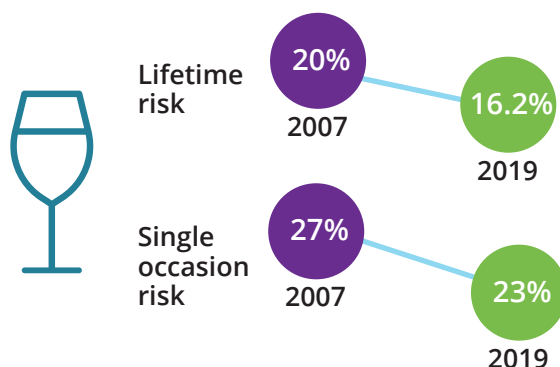


More people are using e-cigarettes

In 2019, more people had used e-cigarettes in their lifetime (10.1%, up from 8.0% in 2016) and currently used e-cigarettes (2.2%, up from 1.0%) (Table S.10). Among smokers, current use of e-cigarettes rose from 3.9% in 2016 to 9.6% in 2019. (Table S.11).

How many people drink alcohol?

About 3 in 4 (74%) people had consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months (Table S.29). The proportion drinking weekly declined between 2016 and 2019 (from 36% to 33%), while the proportion of ex-drinkers increased from 7.2% to 9.3% (Table S.12).

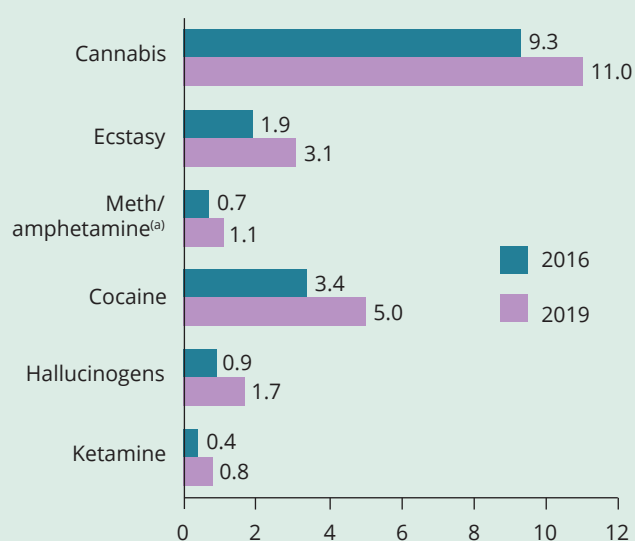


Most people in New South Wales drank alcohol at levels that did not exceed the lifetime risk and single occasion risk (drinking at least monthly) guidelines for reducing the health risks from drinking alcohol. While the proportion of people exceeding either guideline between 2016 and 2019 remained relatively stable, both have declined since 2007 (tables S.21 and S.22).

How has illicit drug use changed?

In 2019, about 1 in 6 (15.9%) people in New South Wales had used an illicit drug in the past 12 months ('recent use'). No clear trend for recent illicit drug use is evident for New South Wales; after declining between 2001 and 2007 (from 15.6% to 12.1%), it has increased gradually since. (Table S.23). However, recent use of a number of illicit drugs rose between 2016 and 2019 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Recent use of illicit drugs that increased in New South Wales between 2016 and 2019, people aged 14 and over




(a) For non-medical purposes.

Note: Estimates for ketamine in 2016 should be used with caution due to an RSE of between 25% and 50%.


Source: Table S.29.


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

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

 smoked a full cigarette was 16.8 years (up from 16.5 in 2016)

 tried drinking alcohol was 17.4 years (similar to 2016)

 tried an illicit drug excluding pharmaceuticals was 18.9 years (similar to 2016)

 used a pharmaceutical for non-medical purposes was 27.6 years (similar to 2016).

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

In 2019, people in New South Wales were about twice as likely to be a victim of an alcohol-related incident as a drug-related incident (20% compared with 9.3%, tables S.50 and S.51). This pattern was evident for:

- verbal abuse (16.9% compared with 6.9%)
- physical abuse (4.6% compared with 2.0%)
- put in fear (11.0% compared with 6.0%).

How has support for harm-minimisation measures changed?

Support for measures related to restricting the availability of e-cigarettes has grown since 2016, while support for measures such as increasing tax on tobacco and making it harder to buy tobacco in shops has fallen (Table S.46).

Generally, people in New South Wales 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, 3 in 10 (31%) people supported reducing trading hours for pubs and clubs in 2019 compared with 4 in 10 (40%) in 2016 (Table S.47).

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

- nearly **3 in 5 (57%)** 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 **half (49%)** of 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>

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