

# 10 Use of cocaine

## Cocaine use

The 1998 survey estimated that 1.4% of all Australians aged 14 years and over had used cocaine in the preceding 12 months. It also showed that more than one in 25 (4%) of all Australians aged 14 years and over had used cocaine at some time in their lives (Table 10.1). Further:

- Males (2%) were twice as likely to be a recent user compared with females (1%).
- Cocaine was used mostly by younger aged persons.

**Table 10.1: Lifetime and recent use of cocaine: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 1998**

Age	Lifetime use (per cent)	Recent use
<b>Males</b>		
14–19	1.0	0.6
20–29	9.8	5.0
30–39	10.3	2.7
40+	2.5	0.6
<b>All ages</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>1.9</b>
<b>Females</b>		
14–19	2.5	1.0
20–29	6.9	2.9
30–39	6.2	1.0
40+	1.0	0.1 *
<b>All ages</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>Persons</b>		
14–19	1.8	0.8
20–29	8.4	3.9
30–39	8.3	1.8
40+	1.7	0.3 *
<b>All ages</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>1.4</b>

## Types of cocaine and methods of consumption

In 1998, of those Australians aged 14 years and over using cocaine recently, more than nine in ten (92%) used cocaine as powder and only 14% used in a crack form. (Table 10.2).

The survey also showed that 'snorting' was the most frequently cited usual method of cocaine consumption, with nearly nine in ten (89%) recent users reporting this method of consumption. Further, female users (34%) were twice as likely to swallow cocaine compared with males (17%), who in turn were more likely to smoke (16%) compared with females (12%).

The age breakdown of type of cocaine used and the method of consumption showed that all users aged 14–19 years used cocaine in a powder form (100%) while one in five (20%) injected it.

**Table 10.2: Type of cocaine used and method of consumption: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998**

Type/method	Males	Females (per cent)	Persons
<b>Type</b>			
Cocaine powder	90.4	95.4	91.9
Crack (cocaine crystals)	13.3	14.2	13.6
<b>How consumed</b>			
Smoked	16.0	11.5 *	14.6
Snorted	86.7	93.7	88.9
Swallowed	17.3	34.1	22.7
Injected	5.0 *	13.5	7.7 *

Note: Base equals all recent cocaine users.

**Table 10.3: Types of cocaine used and method of consumption: proportion of recent users, by age, Australia, 1998**

Type/method	Age group				All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	
(per cent)					
<b>Type</b>					
Cocaine powder	100.0	88.2	94.7	100.0	91.9
Crack (cocaine crystals)	22.7 *	18.8	5.5 *	—	13.6
<b>How consumed</b>					
Smoked	11.1 *	19.1	11.7 *	—	14.6
Snorted	80.6	85.5	94.2	100.0	88.9
Swallowed	33.0 *	15.8	34.9	25.3	22.7
Injected	20.4 *	8.5 *	6.1 *	—	7.7

Note: Base equals all recent cocaine users.

## Usual place of cocaine consumption

In 1998, of all Australians aged 14 years and over who used cocaine recently, two-thirds (68%) reported consuming in clubs/restaurants, while only about one in six (16%) reported using in their own home or in a friend's house (Table 10.4). The survey also showed that:

- More females (79%) than males (63%) used cocaine in clubs/restaurants.
- More males (18%) than females (11%) used cocaine in their own home or at a friend's house.

**Table 10.4: Where cocaine usually consumed: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998**

Place	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Own home, friend's house	17.9	11.4 *	16.0
Parties, restaurants or licensed premises	63.0	78.5	67.5
School/work	5.0 *	—	3.5 *
Other	14.1	10.1 *	12.9

Note: Base equals all recent cocaine users.

## Frequency of cocaine use

The 1998 survey showed that, of those Australians aged 14 years and over who reported using cocaine recently:

- Only 15% said they used cocaine at least once every month (Table 10.5).
- A further 21% said they only used once every few months.
- Half (51%) of all recent users used at most twice a year.

**Table 10.5: Frequency of cocaine use, proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 1998**

Frequency	Age group				
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	All ages
	(per cent)				
<b>Males</b>					
Every day	—	—	—	—	—
Once a week or more	4.3 *	—	6.1 *	—	2.0 *
About once a month	—	12.4 *	25.5	—	14.9
Every few months	67.2 *	15.3 *	14.8 *	—	15.4
Once or twice a year	28.5 *	54.8	38.2	100.0	53.0
Less often	—	17.6	15.3 *	—	14.7
<b>Females</b>					
Every day	—	—	—	—	—
Once a week or more	—	2.1 *	—	—	1.4 *
About once a month	52.2 *	3.8 *	—	—	8.8 *
Every few months	27.3 *	39.4	5.7 *	—	29.5
Once or twice a year	20.4 *	43.8	40.5	—	46.8
Less often	—	10.8 *	53.8	—	13.5 *
<b>Persons</b>					
Every day	—	—	—	—	—
Once a week or more	1.4 *	0.8 *	5.0 *	—	1.8 *
About once a month	35.5 *	9.1 *	20.9	—	12.7
Every few months	40.1 *	24.7	13.2	—	20.5
Once or twice a year	23.0 *	50.5	38.7	100.0	50.8
Less often	—	14.9	22.3	—	14.3

Note: Base equals all recent cocaine users.

## Source of supply of cocaine

In 1998, of those Australians aged 14 years and over who had used cocaine in their lifetime:

- Nearly nine out of ten (87%) obtained their first supply through a friend or acquaintance.
- Only 8% reported buying their first dose from a street dealer.

**Table 10.6: First supplier: proportion of persons aged 14 years and over who have ever used cocaine, by sex, Australia, 1998**

Supplier	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Friend or acquaintance	88.9	85.0	87.4
Spouse or partner	—	4.9	2.0 *
Street dealer	9.0 *	7.1	8.3
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	1.3 *	3.0 *	2.0 *

(a) Includes siblings, parents and stolen.

Note: Base equals all cocaine users.

The source of supply for recent cocaine users was not much different, with more than nine in ten (93%) recent users reporting a friend or acquaintance as their current source, a slight increase on the level for lifetime users.

**Table 10.7: Recent suppliers: proportion of recent cocaine users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998**

Supplier	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Friend or acquaintance	93.6	91.1	92.9
Spouse or partner	—	—	—
Street dealer	4.1 *	8.9 *	5.4 *
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	2.3 *	—	1.6 *

(a) Includes siblings, parents and stolen.

Note: Base equals all recent cocaine users.

## Multiple drugs use with cocaine

In 1998, of all the recent users of cocaine aged 14 years and over:

- Almost all (97%) reported using alcohol recently (Table 10.8).
- Nine in ten (91%) reported using marijuana/cannabis recently.
- More than three-quarters (77%) reported using amphetamines.
- Nearly three-fifths (58%) reported using ecstasy/designer drugs.

**Table 10.8: Polydrug use: proportion of cocaine recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998**

Other substances recently used	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Alcohol	97.1	97.5	97.3
Tobacco	60.5	70.9	64.0
Marijuana/cannabis	93.0	85.8	90.6
Pain-killers/analgesics <sup>(a)</sup>	33.0	21.6	29.2
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills <sup>(a)</sup>	19.1	16.4	18.3
Steroids <sup>(a)</sup>	5.5 *	3.0 *	4.7 *
Barbiturates <sup>(a)</sup>	7.4 *	5.8 *	6.8 *
Amphetamines <sup>(a)</sup>	79.8	72.1	77.2
Heroin	17.3	20.8	18.5
Methadone <sup>(b)</sup>	1.1 *	3.7 *	1.9 *
Hallucinogens	49.5	40.3	46.4
Ecstasy/designer drugs	55.6	61.4	57.5
Inhalants	13.9	20.7	16.2

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

Note: Base equals all recent cocaine users.

When data on concurrent polydrug use among recent cocaine users were analysed, the survey showed that:

- Three-quarters (76%) of all recent cocaine users used alcohol concurrently with cocaine (Table 10.9).
- Nearly three-fifths (58%) used marijuana/cannabis with cocaine.

**Table 10.9: Concurrent polydrug use: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998**

Other substances concurrently used	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Alcohol	79.8	66.5	75.7
Marijuana/cannabis	66.5	39.0	57.9
Pain-killers/analgesics	9.9 *	3.9 *	8.0
Other substances <sup>(a)</sup>	1.6 *	9.9 *	4.2 *
None of the above	8.1 *	25.4	13.5

(a) Includes heroin, benzodiazapines, anti-depressants and barbiturates.

Note: Base equals all recent cocaine users.

## Correlates of cocaine use

The 1998 survey showed that variables such as education, cultural background, socioeconomic status of area of residence and marital status were correlated with cocaine use. For example:

- A higher proportion of people with a trade/diploma qualification (2%) reported being recent cocaine users, compared with persons with a tertiary qualification (1%).
- A higher proportion of Australian-born (2%) persons were recent cocaine users compared with persons from a non-English-speaking background (1%).

- Persons who lived in areas that rank highest in socioeconomic index were eight times more likely to be recent cocaine users compared with persons living in areas with the lowest socioeconomic quintile.

**Table 10.10: Correlates of cocaine use: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, Australia, 1998**

Characteristics	Never used	Lifetime use (per cent)	Recent use
<b>Education</b>			
No qualification	93.5	6.5	1.8
HSC or equivalent	94.6	5.4	1.9
Trade/diploma	94.0	6.0	2.4
Tertiary	97.3	2.7	0.6 *
<b>Employment status</b>			
Currently employed	94.4	5.6	1.9
Student	96.0	4.0	1.7
Unemployed	91.8	8.2	1.5 *
Retired/pension	98.4	1.6	0.3 *
<b>Occupational status</b>			
Upper (white)	94.5	5.5	1.9
Middle	95.1	4.9	1.6
Lower (blue)	97.0	3.0	0.9
<b>Country of birth</b>			
Australian born	95.7	4.3	1.5
Other English-speaking born	93.4	6.6	1.3
Non-English-speaking born	97.3	2.7	0.7 *
<b>Socioeconomic area</b>			
1st quintile	96.9	3.1	0.3
2nd quintile	96.9	3.1	0.7
3rd quintile	95.9	4.1	1.9
4th quintile	95.4	4.6	1.3
5th quintile	93.8	6.2	2.5
<b>Geography</b>			
Urban	95.0	5.0	1.7
Rural/remote	97.4	2.6	0.5
<b>Marital status</b>			
Never married	92.6	7.4	3.4
Widowed	99.8	0.2 *	—
Divorced/separated	96.3	3.7	0.7 *
Presently married	96.8	3.2	0.6