

# **2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey**

**Detailed findings**

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**Detailed findings**

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# Preface

This report contains information from the 2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey. It supplements data published earlier this year in the report titled *2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: First Results*. The purpose of this report is to extend the analysis with detailed data on drug use, behaviour, perceptions of drug use, drug-related incidents and support for drug-related policy and legislation.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) undertook the survey on behalf of the then Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. Custody of the survey data set rests with the AIHW and is protected by the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*. Access to a public-use data set is available through the Social Science Data Archives at the Australian National University, with access to the complete data set possible following consideration of research proposals by the AIHW Ethics Committee.



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# Summary

## **In 2001, fewer than one in five Australians aged 14 years and over smoked tobacco daily...**

- A further 1.6% smoked weekly and 2.0% smoked less often than weekly.
- The group with the highest proportion of smokers was males aged 20–29 years.
- The average age at which Australians began smoking was about 15 years. The average number of cigarettes smoked per week by male smokers was 111.8 and 106.5 for female smokers.
- More than 10% of those aged 14–17 years smoked tobacco daily; females in this age group were more likely than males to smoke daily. Three in five male smokers and three-quarters of female smokers aged 14–17 years reported that all or most of their friends or acquaintances smoked.
- For 82.6% of recent smokers aged 14–17 years, the means of obtaining tobacco was at a shop/retail outlet.
- Tobacco smoking was identified by over 40% of Australians as the main drug associated with mortality in Australia. It was also the second most likely form of drug use to be nominated as a serious concern for the community.
- For 53.2% of smokers aged 14–17 years, the usual source for obtaining tobacco was at a shop/retail outlet.
- The majority of Australians supported ‘stricter enforcement of laws against supplying minors’ as a measure to reduce the harm associated with tobacco.
- In the past 12 months a third of smokers reduced the amount of tobacco smoked in a day. For both male and female smokers, cost and effect on health or fitness were the main motivators for change in smoking behaviour.

## **One in six Australians abstained from alcohol in the past 12 months...**

- However, approximately one in 10 Australians reported drinking at levels considered risky or high risk for both short- and long-term harm. In the past 12 months, a greater proportion of males than females consumed alcohol at levels risky for short-term health. In comparison, consumption at levels of risk for harm in the long term was similar between males and females.
- The average age at which males first consumed a full glass of alcohol was about 16 years whereas for females it was about 18 years.
- In the past 12 months two-thirds of Australians aged 14–17 years had consumed at least a full glass in the last 12 months – almost one in five drank alcohol on a weekly basis. For this age group, about three-quarters of both male and female recent drinkers reported that all or most of their friends or acquaintances consumed alcohol.
- A third of those who drank at risky or high-risk levels in the past 12 months had reduced the amount drunk per session; one in 10 consumed more low-alcohol drinks. The main motivating factors for reduction were health, lifestyle and social reasons.

- The most popular form of alcohol consumed by males was regular strength beer; for females aged 14–29 years bottled spirits and liqueurs were the typical form of alcohol consumed and for females aged 30 years and over, bottled wine was the most popular form of alcohol.
- Alcohol consumption by an adult was the drug use that received the highest level of acceptance by Australians: accepted by more than four in five males and seven in 10 females. However, one in five Australians considered excessive drinking of alcohol to be the form of drug use of most concern for the general community.
- Three in 10 Australians had been verbally abused, physically abused or put in fear by someone affected by alcohol. Persons who had consumed alcohol in the past 12 months were more likely than those who had not consumed alcohol in the past 12 months to have been victims of alcohol-related incidents.

### **Illicit drugs were used by less than one in five Australians in the last 12 months...**

- Generally, greater proportions of males than females, and 20–29 years olds, were recent illicit drug users. The most influential factor in trying an illicit drug for the first time was ‘curiosity’.
- The average age at which Australians first used illicit substances ranged from 17.6 years for inhalants to 22.8 years for tranquillisers.
- Marijuana/cannabis was the most used illicit drug – over 2 million Australians aged 14 years and over used this drug in the past 12 months. Less than 3.5% of Australians aged 14 years and over had used hallucinogens, heroin, methadone, other opiates, amphetamines, ecstasy/designer drugs or cocaine.
- One-quarter of Australians reported having the offer or opportunity to use marijuana/cannabis; more than half of those who had the opportunity used in the past 12 months.
- Less than one in 10 Australians supported the legalisation of cocaine, heroin and amphetamines/speed; three in 10 approved of the legalisation of marijuana/cannabis for personal use. Recent users of marijuana/cannabis were almost four times more likely than those who were not recent users to support legalisation.
- In the past 12 months, less than one in seven Australians had been verbally or physically abused, or put in fear, by a person affected by illicit drugs. Recent users of illicit drugs were more likely than those who had not used in the past 12 months to have been victims of drug-related incidents.

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# Abbreviations

AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CATI	Computer assisted telephone interview
CURF	Confidentialised unit record file
DoHA	Department of Health and Ageing
MCDS	Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy
NCADA	National Campaign Against Drug Abuse
NDS	National Drug Strategy
NDSHS	National Drug Strategy Household Survey
NHMRC	National Health & Medical Research Council
NHS	National Health Survey
RSE	Relative standard error
SE	Standard error

## Symbols

-	nil, or rounded to zero
..	not applicable
*	relative standard error greater than 50%
n.a.	not available
m	million

