

8 Use of amphetamines

Lifetime and recent use of amphetamines

In 1998 nearly one in ten (9%) Australians aged 14 years and over reported using amphetamines during their lifetime, while one in 25 (4%) reported using in the past 12 months (Table 8.1). Males (5%) were almost twice as likely to be recent users as females (3%). Generally, proportionally fewer in the older age groups reported using amphetamines than their younger counterparts, with less than 1% of persons aged 60 years and over reporting being a user compared with one in five persons aged 20–29 years.

Table 8.1: Lifetime and recent use of amphetamines: 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	7.0	5.5
20–29	25.3	16.4
30–39	16.5	4.1
40+	3.6	0.7
All ages	10.9	5.0
Females		
14–19	8.3	6.3
20–29	16.5	7.6
30–39	7.9	1.2
40+	2.4	0.3 *
All ages	6.7	2.5
Persons		
14–19	7.7	5.9
20–29	20.9	12.0
30–39	12.2	2.6
40+	3.0	0.5
All ages	8.8	3.7

Types of amphetamines and methods of consumption

In 1998, of those Australians aged 14 years and over who were recently using amphetamines, nine in ten (91%) used the drug in a powder form while one in six (17%) used prescription amphetamines (Table 8.2). In the case of the method of consumption, the majority of the recent users either swallowed (58%) and/or snorted (60%), with only one in six (17%) injecting themselves. The survey further showed that slightly more females (9%) than males (6%) used amphetamines as a liquid. A slightly higher proportion of female users (65%) preferred to swallow it compared with males (55%).

Table 8.2: Type of amphetamines used and method of consumption: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Type/method	Males	Females	Persons
	(per cent)		
Type			
Amphetamine powder	93.4	85.6	90.9
Amphetamine liquid	6.0	9.1	7.0
Prescription amphetamines	16.0	18.4	16.8
How consumed			
Smoked	15.0	17.5	15.8
Snorted	61.7	55.0	59.5
Swallowed	55.2	64.6	58.3
Injected	16.8	16.7	16.8

Note: Base equals all recent amphetamines users.

Table 8.3: Type of amphetamines used and method of consumption: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by age, Australia, 1998

Type/method	Age group				All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	
	(per cent)				
Type					
Amphetamine powder	93.8	91.1	94.8	71.4	90.9
Amphetamine liquid	9.7 *	5.8 *	5.4 *	15.4	7.0
Prescription amphetamines	17.2	18.3	11.3	13.1	16.8
How consumed					
Smoked	23.8	15.5	9.7	10.1	15.8
Snorted	55.2	57.5	69.4	68.0	59.5
Swallowed	55.8	64.2	53.9	18.1	58.3
Injected	11.2 *	17.4	19.9	19.1	16.8

Note: Base equals all recent amphetamines users.

Usual place of consumption of amphetamines

In 1998, more than half (56%) of recent amphetamine users nominated clubs or restaurants as usual places of consumption, while nearly one in six (16%) said their usual place of consumption was their or a friend's home (Table 8.4).

Table 8.4: Where amphetamines 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	11.8	25.2	16.1
Clubs, restaurants	56.6	54.0	55.8
School/work	3.1 *	2.6 *	2.9 *
Other	28.5	18.2	25.2

Note: Base equals all recent amphetamines users.

Frequency of amphetamines use

In 1998, of those Australians aged 14 years and over who used amphetamines in the past 12 months, one in four (26%) used at least once a month, while one in ten (11%) used at least weekly (Table 8.5). Further, more males (13%) used weekly compared with females (6%).

Table 8.5: Frequency of amphetamines use: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 1998

Frequency	Age group				All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	
(per cent)					
Males					
Every day	—	—	—	—	—
Once a week or more	5.0 *	13.1	19.0	—	12.9
About once a month	7.2 *	14.7	15.2	8.0 *	13.6
Every few months	29.2	20.3	23.6	—	21.5
Once or twice a year	43.4	36.9	36.0	92.0	39.3
Less often	15.2	15.0	6.1 *	—	12.6
Females					
Every day	—	2.5 *	—	—	1.3 *
Once a week or more	7.2 *	6.5 *	—	—	5.5
About once a month	10.2 *	23.9	14.9 *	—	17.5
Every few months	22.1	28.0	6.4 *	92.7	27.2
Once or twice a year	54.5	36.8	19.0	—	37.5
Less often	6.1 *	2.2 *	59.7	7.3 *	10.8
Persons					
Every day	—	0.8 *	—	—	0.5 *
Once a week or more	6.2 *	11.0	14.6	—	10.4
About once a month	8.8	17.6	15.1	4.1 *	15.0
Every few months	25.4	22.7	19.6	45.2	23.5
Once or twice a year	49.3	36.9	32.0	47.1	38.7
Less often	10.3	11.0	18.6	3.6 *	12.0

Note: Base equals all recent amphetamines users.

Source of supply of amphetamines

In 1998, of all the amphetamines users aged 14 years and over, nearly nine in ten (88%) first obtained the drug from a friend or acquaintance, and slightly less than one in 20 (5%) got their first supply from a street dealer (Table 8.6). Among recent users, eight in ten (81%) obtained the drug from a friend or acquaintance while one in ten (11%) reported that they obtained it through a street dealer (Table 8.7).

Table 8.6: First supplier: proportion of persons who have ever tried amphetamines aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Supplier	Males	Females	Persons
	(per cent)		
Friend or acquaintance	91.0	82.6	87.8
Spouse or partner	0.3 *	5.2	2.1
Street dealer	4.2	5.0	4.5
Other ^(a)	4.6 *	7.3	5.6

(a) Includes siblings, parents and stolen.

Note: Base equals all recent amphetamines users.

Table 8.7: Recent suppliers: proportion of recent amphetamines users aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 1998

Supplier	Males	Females	Persons
	(per cent)		
Friend or acquaintance	79.1	84.3	80.8
Spouse or partner	—	3.6 *	1.2 *
Street dealer	14.0	6.0	11.4
Other ^(a)	6.8	6.0	6.6

(a) Includes siblings, parents and stolen.

Note: Base equals all recent amphetamines users.

Multiple drugs use with amphetamines

In 1998, of those Australians aged 14 years and over who had used amphetamines in the past 12 months, nearly all had used alcohol (98%) and marijuana/cannabis (93%) recently (Table 8.8). The proportion of amphetamines users reporting recent use of hallucinogens was 47% and the proportion of those using ecstasy/designer drugs was 46%.

Of the recent users, eight in ten (81%) used alcohol concurrently with amphetamines and two-thirds (66%) reported using marijuana/cannabis with amphetamines (Table 8.9).

Table 8.8: Polydrug use: proportion of recent amphetamine users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Other substances recently used	Males	Females	Persons
	(per cent)		
Alcohol	97.5	98.4	97.9
Tobacco	67.9	66.9	67.6
Marijuana/cannabis	94.8	88.0	92.5
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a)	24.0	29.7	26.0
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a)	18.5	28.7	21.9
Steroids ^(a)	2.4 *	1.1 *	1.9 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	5.9	3.5 *	5.1
Heroin	14.9	10.0	13.2
Methadone ^(b)	4.0 *	0.8 *	2.9 *
Cocaine	30.2	27.0	29.2
Hallucinogens	48.5	43.5	46.8
Ecstasy/designer drugs	49.6	37.6	45.7
Inhalants	11.8	12.7	12.1

(a) For non-medical purposes.

(b) Non-maintenance.

Note: Base equals all recent amphetamines users.

Table 8.9: Concurrent polydrug use: proportion of recent amphetamine users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Other substances concurrently used	Males	Females (per cent)	Persons
Alcohol	83.7	76.7	81.4
Marijuana/cannabis	69.4	60.3	66.3
Heroin	2.9 *	1.9 *	2.6 *
Cocaine	8.5	7.2	8.1
Benzodiazepines	0.7 *	0.2 *	0.6 *
Anti-depressants	3.8 *	6.8	4.8
Barbiturates	0.2 *	1.0 *	0.4 *
Pain-killers/analgesics	4.9	5.0	4.9
None of the above	6.8	11.6	8.4

Note: Base equals all recent amphetamines users.

Correlates of amphetamines use

Lifetime use and recent use of amphetamines varied greatly among people with different socioeconomic characteristics. The highest proportions of lifetime users were found among the unemployed (17%) and among those who were never married (18%) (Table 8.10). In the case of recent users, the survey found that:

- The lowest levels of use were among widowed (0.2%) persons, followed by those presently married (0.9%).
- A person's place of residence in terms of socioeconomic status made very little difference in the use of amphetamines.
- Unemployed persons and persons who were never married were the groups with the highest proportion of recent amphetamines users (10% and 11% respectively).

Table 8.10: Correlates of amphetamines use: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, Australia, 1998

Characteristics	Never used	Lifetime use (per cent)	Recent use
Education			
No qualification	92.7	7.3	3.1
HSC or equivalent	88.7	11.3	5.8
Trade/diploma	89.6	10.4	4.3
Tertiary	90.7	9.3	2.2
Employment status			
Currently employed	89.4	10.6	4.3
Student	90.8	9.2	5.3
Unemployed	82.8	17.2	10.3
Retired/pension	96.1	3.9	1.0
Occupational status			
Upper (white)	91.8	8.2	2.6
Middle	89.6	10.4	4.5
Lower (blue)	91.6	8.4	3.8
Country of birth			
Australian born	90.5	9.5	4.2
Other English-speaking born	90.9	9.1	2.5
Non-English-speaking born	96.6	3.4	1.7
Socioeconomic area			
1st quintile	91.3	8.7	3.0
2nd quintile	92.1	7.9	4.0
3rd quintile	90.5	9.5	3.5
4th quintile	92.5	7.5	3.1
5th quintile	90.0	10.0	4.3
Geography			
Urban	90.7	9.3	3.9
Rural/remote	92.5	7.5	3.3
Marital status			
Never married	82.3	17.7	10.5
Widowed	99.1	0.9 *	0.2 *
Divorced/separated	92.4	7.6	1.8
Presently married	94.8	5.2	0.9