

12 Ecstasy/designer drugs

Introduction

In 2001, almost 1 million (6.1%) Australians aged 14 years and over had used ecstasy/ designer drugs in their lifetime.

The average age at which Australians used ecstasy/ designer drugs for the first time was 21.9 years.

Use of ecstasy/designer drugs

Overall findings of ecstasy/ designer drug use include:

- Almost half a million (2.9%) Australians aged 14 years and over had used ecstasy/ designer drugs in the last 12 months.
- Ecstasy/ designer drugs were used by 1.1% of the population in the last month, and by 0.5% of the population in the last week.
- Males were more likely than females to have used ecstasy/ designer drugs.

Table 12.1: Ecstasy/designer drug use, persons aged 14 years and over, by age, by sex, Australia, 2001

Period	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	7.0	19.7	7.4	1.0	7.1	5.1	6.1
In the last 12 months	5.0	10.4	2.4	0.2	3.6	2.3	2.9
In the last month	2.1	4.2	0.7	–	1.5	0.7	1.1
In the last week	1.0	1.7	0.3	–	0.6	0.3	0.5
	(number)						
In lifetime	114,200	559,500	217,000	82,800	550,400	401,800	952,100
In the last 12 months	81,900	295,200	69,800	20,600	277,000	179,400	456,400
In the last month	32,300	127,400	19,600	3,000 *	115,600	55,700	171,300
In the last week	15,500	50,600	8,200	1,900 *	49,100	23,100	72,200

Note: Totals may not equal sum due to rounding.

Frequency of use of ecstasy/designer drugs

The frequency at which the 456,400 recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs used these drugs varied by age group and sex (Table 12.2):

- Approximately one in 16 (6.2%) used ecstasy/designer drugs every day or every week.
- Males tended to use more frequently than females.
- A higher proportion of those aged 14–19 years used ecstasy/designer drugs every day or every week compared with the other age groups.

Table 12.2: Frequency of ecstasy/designer drugs use, recent users aged 14 years and over, by age, by sex, Australia, 2001

Frequency	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
				(per cent)			
Daily or weekly	10.4	6.9	0.1 *	–	6.9	5.1	6.2
About once a month	20.7	20.3	16.2	4.3 *	20.2	17.2	19.0
Every few months	22.8	30.7	25.8	42.7	31.4	25.1	28.9
Once or twice a year	46.1	42.2	57.9	52.9	41.5	52.7	45.8

Note: Base equals recent users.

Source of supply and quantity used of ecstasy/designer drugs

Recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs were asked to indicate where they usually obtained this drug (Table 12.3):

- Recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs most typically obtained these drugs from a friend or acquaintance (72.9%).
- The next most common source for ecstasy/designer drugs was from a dealer (22.9%).

Table 12.3: Usual source for obtaining ecstasy/designer drugs, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

Source	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Friend or acquaintance	71.3	75.5	72.9
Relative	1.9	3.8	2.6
Dealer	25.4	19.1	22.9
Other	1.5 *	1.6 *	1.5

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.

2. Respondents were asked to select one response only.

- On a day they used ecstasy/designer drugs, over 90% of recent users normally had one or two pills.

Usual place of use of ecstasy/designer drugs

Recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs were asked to indicate where they usually used this drug (Table 12.4):

- Recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs most commonly used these drugs at raves/dance parties (70.1%).
- Private parties were the second most common location for recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs to use these drugs (53.8%).

Table 12.4: Usual place of use of ecstasy/designer drugs, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

Location	Males	Females (per cent)	Persons
In a home	44.3	48.9	46.1
At private parties	57.4	48.3	53.8
At raves/dance parties	74.6	63.1	70.1
At public establishments	49.4	51.4	50.2
At work or school/TAFE/university, etc.	2.2	2.8	2.4
In public places (e.g. parks)	10.2	9.2	9.8
In a car or other vehicle	8.2	3.8	6.5
Somewhere else	3.5	6.2	4.6

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Concurrent drug use with ecstasy/designer drugs

Recent users of ecstasy/designer drugs were asked if any other drugs were used (on at least one occasion) at the same time as this drug (Table 12.5):

- Three-quarters (76.5%) had used alcohol at the same time as ecstasy/designer drugs.
- Two-thirds (66.2%) had used marijuana/cannabis at the same time as ecstasy/designer drugs.

Table 12.5: Other drugs used with ecstasy/designer drugs, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

Drug	Males	Females (per cent)	Persons
Alcohol	75.8	77.6	76.5
Marijuana/cannabis	70.6	59.4	66.2
Heroin	0.2 *	2.1	1.0 *
Cocaine/crack	24.1	16.2	21.0
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a)	8.9	5.9	7.7
Anti-depressants ^(a)	2.1	2.5	2.3
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a)	4.2	3.5	3.9
Barbiturates ^(a)	1.7 *	0.7 *	1.3
Amphetamines/speed ^(a)	52.6	49.8	51.5
Other	3.4	3.3	3.3
None of the above	5.9	6.2	6.1

(a) Used for non-medical purposes.

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

Substitution of other drugs for ecstasy/designer drugs

Recent users of ecstasy/ designer drugs were asked if they had used another drug when ecstasy/ designer drugs were not available (Table 12.6):

- When ecstasy/ designer drugs were not available, one-third (36.7%) of recent users substituted alcohol for ecstasy/ designer drugs.
- One-quarter (26.2%) of recent users substituted amphetamines for ecstasy/ designer drugs when the latter were not available.
- One in six (15.6%) recent users of ecstasy/ designer drugs did not use another drug when these drugs were not available.

Table 12.6: Other drugs used to substitute for ecstasy/designer drugs when ecstasy/ designer drugs not available, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

Drug	Males	Females (per cent)	Persons
Alcohol	37.0	36.2	36.7
Marijuana/cannabis	17.8	16.2	17.2
Heroin	0.1 *	0.2 *	0.1 *
Cocaine	2.6	2.5	2.6
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(a)	0.2 *	–	0.1 *
Anti-depressants ^(a)	0.3 *	0.9 *	0.6 *
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(a)	0.5 *	–	0.3 *
Barbiturates ^(a)	0.1 *	–	0.1 *
Amphetamines/speed ^(a)	28.1	23.2	26.2
Other	0.5 *	0.8 *	0.6 *
None	12.8	19.9	15.6

(a) Used for non-medical purposes.

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.
2. Respondents were asked to select one response only.

Ecstasy/designer drugs use by friends and acquaintances

All respondents were asked what proportion of their friends and acquaintances used ecstasy/designer drugs. The proportions varied with the respondent's history of use (Table 12.7):

- Among people who had never used ecstasy/designer drugs, 86.4% had no friends and acquaintances who had used ecstasy/designer drugs. In comparison, among those who had used in their lifetime, 8.6% had no friends and acquaintances who used ecstasy/designer drugs.
- Three-quarters (76.5%) of those who had used ecstasy/designer drugs in their lifetime reported that about half or less of their friends and acquaintances used ecstasy/designer drugs.
- Among recent users, 26.7% reported that all or most of their friends and acquaintances used ecstasy/designer drugs.

Table 12.7: Ecstasy/designer drugs use by friends and acquaintances, persons aged 14 years and over, by user status, Australia, 2001

Proportion of friends	Use status		
	Never use	Ever use (per cent)	Recent use
All or most	0.3	14.9	26.7
About half or less	13.4	76.5	72.9
None	86.4	8.6	0.4 *