

15 Health and social impact of drug use

Use of selected substances by pregnant or breastfeeding women

The 1998 survey collected information on whether or not pregnant or breastfeeding women were using substances. The survey showed that, of all the pregnant respondents aged 14–49 years, more than a quarter (26%) smoked tobacco daily or most days (Table 15.1). The proportion of breastfeeding women aged 14–49 years reporting smoking tobacco was 18%. The survey also showed that nearly one in four (24%) females aged 14–49 years who were neither breastfeeding nor pregnant reported smoking tobacco.

The survey further showed that nearly three-quarters (73%) of all pregnant respondents aged 14–49 years reported drinking alcohol recently and 17% of all pregnant respondents reported drinking at least three standard drinks when they drank. A slightly higher proportion of breastfeeding women (76%) reported drinking alcohol, and the proportion of breastfeeding women reporting drinking at least three standard drinks when they drank was 26%. In comparison, the data for female respondents aged 14–49 who were neither pregnant nor breastfeeding showed that more than four-fifths of them drank alcohol and one in four drank at least three standard drinks when they drank. As for the use of marijuana/cannabis, one in six (17%) pregnant women reported using it during their pregnancy.

Table 15.1: Proportion of pregnant and/or breastfeeding women who recently used selected substances, Australia, 1998

Current activity	Pregnant ^(a)	Breastfeeding only (per cent)	Neither pregnant nor breastfeeding
Smokes tobacco ^(b)	25.9	17.5	24.1
Drinks alcohol ^(c)	73.1	75.7	82.3
Drinks at least 3 standard drinks			
Every day	1.6	2.7	1.6
4–6 days/week	0.6	6.8	3.2
2–3 days/week	6.4	2.2	7.5
Less often	8.3	14.5	24.8
Subtotal ^(d)	16.9	26.2	37.1
Uses marijuana/cannabis ^(e)	17.2	16.4	20.1
Injects drugs ^(e)	1.3	0.6	0.5

(a) Includes pregnant or pregnant and breastfeeding.

(b) Defined as smokes daily or most days.

(c) Defined as those who drink regularly or occasionally.

(d) Prevalence of at least 3 standard drinks.

(e) Defined as used in past 12 months.

Note: Base equals females aged 14–49 in each column .

Activities undertaken while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs

The 1998 survey asked respondents whether they drove a motor vehicle, operated machinery, abused others or damaged property while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. The data showed that, of all alcohol users aged 14 years and over, nearly one in five (18%) drove a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol (Table 15.2). One in ten (10%) alcohol users reported verbally abusing someone in the preceding 12 months while under the influence of alcohol. The survey also showed that:

- Male users were twice (24%) as likely to drive a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol compared with females (11%).
- Males were twice (13%) as likely to verbally abuse others under the influence of alcohol compared with females (6%).
- Males (7%) were more likely to report creating a public disturbance or nuisance compared with females (3%).

The survey showed that, among those Australians aged 14 years and over using drugs other than alcohol, proportionally fewer persons reported engaging in hazardous or undesirable activities under the influence of those drugs compared with respondents using alcohol. For example, more than one in 20 (6%) among those using drugs other than alcohol reported driving a motor vehicle under the influence of such drugs compared with 18% who drove under the influence of alcohol. Proportionally, males under the influence of other drugs were more likely to report engaging in hazardous or anti-social behaviours compared with females under the influence of other drugs.

Table 15.2: Activities engaged in while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs in the preceding 12 months: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Influence and activity	Males	Females	Persons
	(per cent)		
Under the influence of alcohol^(a)			
Drove a motor vehicle	23.9	11.2	17.5
Operated hazardous machinery	1.6	0.1 *	0.9
Verbally abused someone	13.0	6.1	9.5
Physically abused someone	3.2	0.9	2.1
Caused damage to property	4.4	1.0	2.6
Stole property	1.6	0.3 *	1.0
Created a public disturbance or nuisance	6.7	2.6	4.6
Under the influence of other drugs^(b)			
Drove a motor vehicle	8.3	3.9	6.1
Operated hazardous machinery	1.3	0.1 *	0.7
Verbally abused someone	2.5	1.2	1.8
Physically abused someone	0.8	0.2 *	0.5
Caused damage to property	1.1	0.2 *	0.7
Stole property	0.7	0.1 *	0.4
Created a public disturbance or nuisance	1.4	0.6 *	1.0

(a) Base equals all persons who consumed alcohol in the preceding 12 months.

(b) Base equals all persons who used an illicit drug in the preceding 12 months.

When data on dangerous activities and anti-social behaviours under the influence of alcohol or other drugs by different age groups were analysed, the survey revealed that a higher

proportion of persons aged 14–29 years reported engaging in such activities compared with other groups (Table 15.3). For example, nearly a third (28%) of alcohol users in the age group 20–29 years reported driving a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol and one in five (21%) reported verbally abusing others. However, the teenagers (aged 14–19 years) were more likely to report physically abusing others (5%), stealing property (3%) and damaging property (9%) while under the influence of alcohol compared with other age groups. Similarly, teenagers (14–19 years) were also more likely to verbally abuse (7%), damage property (3%), steal property (2%) or create a public nuisance (4%) while under the influence of drugs other than alcohol compared with other age groups.

Table 15.3: Activities engaged in while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs in the preceding 12 months: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, by age, Australia, 1998

Influence and activity	Age group						All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
	(per cent)						
Under the influence of alcohol^(a)							
Drove a motor vehicle	8.3	27.9	23.9	21.8	12.2	4.6	17.5
Operated hazardous machinery	1.9	1.5	1.1	0.6 *	0.2 *	—	0.9
Verbally abused someone	18.4	20.5	6.9	7.8	5.3	0.4 *	9.5
Physically abused someone	5.3	4.5	0.8 *	1.0	2.0	—	2.1
Caused damage to property	9.3	6.6	1.2	0.3 *	0.3 *	0.1 *	2.6
Stole property	3.4	2.6	0.3 *	0.2 *	—	—	1.0
Created a public disturbance or nuisance	14.4	10.8	2.2	1.2	1.9	0.1 *	4.6
Under the influence of other drugs^(b)							
Drove a motor vehicle	8.1	15.4	7.2	3.1	0.8 *	0.8 *	6.1
Operated hazardous machinery	1.5	1.8	0.6 *	0.1 *	0.2 *	—	0.7
Verbally abused someone	6.6	4.6	0.5 *	0.5 *	0.4 *	—	1.8
Physically abused someone	1.8	1.3	0.1 *	0.1 *	—	—	0.5
Caused damage to property	2.9	1.6	0.1 *	0.1 *	—	—	0.7
Stole property	1.7	0.8 *	0.1 *	0.1 *	—	—	0.4
Created a public disturbance or nuisance	4.0	2.3	0.4 *	0.1 *	0.1 *	0.1 *	1.0

(a) Base equals all persons who consumed alcohol in the preceding 12 months.

(b) Base equals all persons who used an illicit drug in the preceding 12 months.

Activities undertaken in order to buy alcohol or drugs

The 1998 survey asked respondents whether they committed any fraud, sold illegal drugs or stole money in order to buy alcohol or other drugs. The survey showed that:

- Among those using alcohol in the preceding 12 months, one in 25 (4%) users reported stealing money without force or threats to buy alcohol.
- A similar proportion (4%) reported stealing property without force or threats.
- The proportion of alcohol users reporting using a weapon to get money from a person was estimated at 4%, while those using a weapon or force to get things other than money was 3%.
- Among other drug users, one in 30 (3%) sold illegal drugs in order to buy drugs.

Table 15.4: Activities undertaken in order to buy alcohol or other drugs: proportion of recent users aged 14 years and over, Australia, 1998

Activities	To buy alcohol ^(a)	To buy drugs ^(b)
	(per cent)	
Stole money without force or threats	4.1	1.7
Stole property without force or threats	3.7	0.8
Used a weapon, force, or strong arm-methods to get money from a person	3.5	0.1 *
Used a weapon, force, or strong-arm methods to get things other than money from a person	3.4	0.1 *
Committed a fraud	3.6	0.6
Sold illegal drugs	3.7	3.3

(a) Base is people who consumed alcohol in the preceding 12 months.

(b) Base is people who used an illicit drug in the preceding 12 months.

Incidence of alcohol- and other drug-related violence

The 1998 survey showed that an estimated 29% of all Australians aged 14 years and over were verbally abused by persons affected by alcohol (Table 15.5). More than one in 20 (6%) Australians aged 14 years and over also reported being physically abused by persons affected by alcohol. The proportion of people verbally abused by persons affected by other drugs was lower, at 10%. The survey further showed that:

- Males were more likely to report being verbally abused by persons affected by alcohol, with nearly one in three (33%) compared with one in four females (26%).
- Slightly more females (18%) reported being put in fear by persons affected by alcohol compared with males (14%).
- More males (12%) than females (9%) reported being verbally abused by persons affected by other drugs.

Table 15.5: Victims of alcohol- and other drug-related incidents: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Influence and incident	Males	Females	Persons
	(per cent)		
Alcohol-related incidents			
Verbal abuse	32.5	26.0	29.2
Physical abuse	7.7	5.1	6.4
Put in fear	14.0	17.6	15.8
Property damaged	8.9	7.7	8.3
Property stolen	4.2	3.3	3.8
Other drug-related incidents			
Verbal abuse	12.0	8.6	10.3
Physical abuse	2.9	2.0	2.4
Put in fear	6.3	8.4	7.4
Property damaged	3.3	3.0	3.1
Property stolen	3.8	3.0	3.4

When incidents were analysed by age group, the survey showed that:

- Nearly half (48%) of persons aged 20–29 years reported being verbally abused by persons affected by alcohol.
- Persons aged 20–29 years reported higher rates of all kind of drug-related incidents.

Table 15.6: Victims of alcohol- and other drug-related incidents: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by age, Australia, 1998

Influence and incident	Age group						All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
	(per cent)						
Alcohol-related incidents							
Verbal abuse	34.9	47.7	32.3	29.3	23.4	7.2	29.2
Physical abuse	9.5	12.9	5.2	5.7	4.9	0.5	6.4
Put in fear	23.8	27.4	17.9	13.8	8.2	4.0	15.8
Property damaged	11.2	14.6	9.2	6.9	4.8	2.7	8.3
Property stolen	7.1	6.5	3.2	2.1	2.2	2.1	3.8
Other drug-related incidents							
Verbal abuse	12.4	18.2	10.4	9.7	7.8	3.1	10.3
Physical abuse	3.0	4.6	2.6	2.3	1.0	0.7	2.4
Put in fear	9.3	11.7	8.9	5.9	5.0	3.2	7.4
Property damaged	3.3	5.0	3.1	3.4	1.4	2.0	3.1
Property stolen	4.0	4.3	4.2	2.9	1.9	2.7	3.4

The survey showed that most of the alcohol- or other drug-related incidents involving verbal or physical abuse occurred in pubs and clubs, while damage to property occurred in victims' homes. Of those Australians aged 14 years and over who reported being verbally abused by persons affected by alcohol or other drugs, nearly two-fifths (39%) said that the incident took place in pubs and clubs (Table 15.7). Nearly a third (33%) of respondents who were physically abused reported that the incident happened in the street, while more than one in five (23%) respondents reported that the incident happened at his/her home (Table 15.7). The survey also showed that:

- Males were more likely to report being abused verbally (46%) and physically (43%) in pubs and clubs compared with females (32% and 23% respectively).
- Females were more likely to report being abused verbally (37%) and physically (54%) in their homes compared with males (12% and 14% respectively).
- More males (49%) reported being put in fear by persons affected by alcohol or other drugs in the street compared with females (35%).

Table 15.7: Location of alcohol- or other drug-related incident: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Incident	In victim's home	In pubs and clubs	At victim's workplace	School/ university	In the street	Elsewhere
(per cent)						
Males						
Verbal abuse	12.1	45.7	10.0	0.7	37.3	15.7
Physical abuse	13.6	42.9	11.5	0.7 *	35.2	10.2
Put in fear	11.2	32.0	7.8	1.2	48.7	18.1
Property damaged	53.3	10.3	8.1	0.7 *	28.1	8.4
Property stolen	64.6	5.1	10.1	1.4 *	17.2	10.7
Females						
Verbal abuse	36.5	32.0	10.4	1.0	27.3	16.4
Physical abuse	54.4	22.7	3.1	0.5 *	15.1	13.8
Put in fear	34.9	24.9	10.7	1.3	35.2	18.1
Property damaged	75.8	6.6	4.8	1.0 *	12.9	7.4
Property stolen	71.8	7.0	7.3	1.6 *	7.7	11.2
Persons						
Verbal abuse	23.2	39.4	10.2	0.9	32.7	16.0
Physical abuse	29.7	34.9	8.1	0.6 *	27.2	11.6
Put in fear	24.3	28.1	9.4	1.3	41.3	18.1
Property damaged	63.9	8.6	6.6	0.8 *	21.0	7.9
Property stolen	67.8	6.0	8.9	1.5 *	13.0	10.9

Note: Base equals respondents who experienced the relevant incident.

When respondents were asked to identify the person(s) responsible for alcohol- or other drug-related incidents, the survey showed that the majority of the incidents were perpetrated by persons the victims knew very well. For example, of those verbally abused, nine in ten (91%) reported that a spouse or partner was responsible for the incident, 87% reported parents were responsible, and 86% said boyfriends/ girlfriends were responsible (Table 15.8). However, the survey also showed that, of those verbally abused, more than three in four (76%) said that the persons responsible for the incident were not known to them.

In the case of other incidents, the survey showed that:

- Nearly a third (30%) of all physically abused persons reported a former partner as the perpetrator of the incident, with more females (37%) than males (19%) reporting being abused by former partners.
- Of those who reported being put in fear, more than two-fifths (44%) reported the person responsible for the incident was unknown to the victims. However, among female victims, former partners (62%) were the most cited perpetrator for causing fear compared with only 15% among male victims.
- Of those who reported their property had been damaged, most cited alleged offenders were 'other relative' (27%), former partner (27%), or 'other house/flat resident' (25%).

Table 15.8: Person(s) alleged responsible for alcohol- or other drug-related incident: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Person/s	Verbal abuse	Physical abuse	Put in fear	Property damaged	Property stolen
(per cent)					
Males					
Spouse or partner	90.6	11.7	9.6	11.7	7.5
Parent	83.0	7.9	31.2	3.5	3.0
Child	73.6	15.0	6.8	9.6	22.0
Sibling	74.9	14.9	26.8	16.4	14.4
Other relative	77.5	6.9	13.4	18.1	2.9 *
Other house/flat resident	83.4	9.6	27.5	20.2	8.0
Current boy/girlfriend	87.1	4.5	8.7	14.1	12.3
Former spouse/partner, boy/girlfriend	83.4	18.8	14.6	20.5	13.7
Work/school mate	86.5	9.4	18.8	11.4	5.1
Friend/acquaintance	78.5	20.0	15.5	17.4	11.2
Unknown	80.0	19.5	38.2	16.4	14.2
Females					
Spouse or partner	91.1	29.0	45.6	29.1	6.5
Parent	88.4	16.0	36.9	5.9	7.5
Child	77.9	17.5	26.2	13.3	6.2
Sibling	83.1	12.3	35.4	15.1	16.5
Other relative	71.3	4.6	54.3	33.8	41.8
Other house/flat resident	70.9	13.3	50.6	35.4	7.8
Current boy/girlfriend	84.5	38.4	51.5	27.3	9.2
Former spouse/partner, boy/girlfriend	85.3	36.9	61.9	30.4	14.7
Work/school mate	84.6	11.1	41.6	7.8	9.2
Friend/acquaintance	68.0	10.2	39.1	23.6	12.6
Unknown	70.6	7.4	52.1	12.9	12.7
Persons					
Spouse or partner	91.0	24.4	36.1	24.5	6.8
Parent	86.3	12.8	34.7	5.0	5.7
Child	75.8	16.2	16.4	11.5	14.1
Sibling	78.0	13.9	30.1	15.9	15.2
Other relative	74.1	5.6	36.2	26.9	24.7
Other house/flat resident	79.3	10.8	35.2	25.3	7.9
Current boy/girlfriend	85.9	21.0	29.4	20.5	10.8
Former spouse/partner, boy/girlfriend	84.6	30.1	44.2	26.7	14.3
Work/school mate	85.9	9.9	25.7	10.3	6.3
Friend/acquaintance	73.7	15.5	26.3	20.3	11.8
Unknown	76.3	14.8	43.6	15.1	13.6

Note: Base equals respondents who were abused in the preceding 12 months by person(s) affected by either alcohol or other drugs.

When respondents who sustained an injury as a result of an incident perpetrated by a person affected by alcohol or other drugs were asked to describe the most serious injuries they sustained (Table 15.9), the following was found:

- Of all injuries, nearly three in four (66%) were minor in nature, not requiring suturing or admission to a hospital.
- Nearly one in five (19%) respondents who sustained an injury reported that the injury was serious enough to require suturing, was a fracture, or required a hospital admission.

- Females (11%) were more likely to sustain serious injuries such as fractures compared with males (6%).

Table 15.9: Most serious injury sustained as a result of an alcohol- or other drug-related incident: proportion of injured persons aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Injury	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Bruising/abrasions	68.0	63.8	65.9
Burns not requiring admission to hospital	0.7 *	0.5 *	0.6 *
Minor lacerations	14.2	15.3	14.7
Lacerations requiring suturing	2.3 *	6.4	4.4
Fractures	5.9	11.1	8.5
Sufficiently serious to require hospital admission	8.9	2.8	5.8

Note: Base equals people who sustained an injury as a result of an incident perpetrated by a person affected by alcohol or other drugs.

The survey showed that more than nine in ten (91%) persons who had been the victim of verbal or physical abuse or whose property was damaged or stolen by people affected by alcohol or other drugs, reported the incidents – either all or some – to the police (Table 15.10). Females (80%) were more likely to report all incidents to police compared with males (77%). However, more than one in four (22%) victims chose either not to report any incidents or report only some incidents to the police.

Respondents who were abused or whose property was stolen or damaged but who did not report any or all such incidents to the police were asked to give reasons for not reporting such incidents. More than three-fifths (64%) of those who did not report incidents to the police said that the incident was too trivial or unimportant to report (Table 15.11). More than one in ten (12%) gave their reason for non-reporting as ‘police could not do anything’. Nearly one in ten (9%) did not report the incidents to the police due to fear of reprisal. Across sex, the survey showed that:

- More males (72%) than females (54%) thought the incidents were too trivial/unimportant.
- More females (14%) than males (6%) did not report the incidents due to the fear of reprisal.
- More females (21%) than males (14%) thought the incidents were a private matter.

Table 15.10: Incidents reported to police: proportion of victims of alcohol- or other drug-related incidents aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Reported	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Yes, all	77.1	79.6	78.3
Yes, some	12.3	13.9	13.0
No, none	10.6	6.5	8.7

Note: Base equals people who had been physically or verbally abused or had property damaged or stolen by people affected by alcohol or other drugs.

Table 15.11: Reason why all or some incidents not reported to police: proportion of victims of alcohol- or other drug-related incidents aged 14 years and over who did not report the incident, by sex, Australia, 1998

Reason	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Too trivial/unimportant	72.0	54.3	64.0
Private matter	14.3	21.4	17.5
Police could not do anything	8.5	16.6	12.1
Police would not do anything	9.0	6.4	7.8
Did not want offender punished	4.6	7.4	5.9
Too confused/upset	2.6	8.0	5.0
Afraid of reprisal	5.6	13.7	9.2
Incident not uncommon for me	13.6	11.6	12.7
Other	6.1	8.3	7.1

Note: Base equals people who had been physically or verbally abused or had property damaged or stolen, by people affected by alcohol or other drugs and did not report any or some of these incidents to the police.

The 1998 survey also collected from respondents who were the victims of verbal or physical abuse or whose property was damaged by the persons under the influence of alcohol or drugs information about whether the victims were themselves under the influence of drugs at the time of the incident. The survey suggested that nearly half (48%) of those reporting being a victim of abuse or whose property was damaged or stolen by persons under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, were themselves taking drugs or consuming alcohol at the time of such incidents (Table 15.12). Sex-wise, more male (56%) than female (38%) victims were themselves under the influence of drugs when such incidents took place.

Table 15.12: Concomitant alcohol or other drug consumption by victim at time of incident: proportion of victims of alcohol- or other drug-related incidents aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 1998

Consumption	Males	Females	Persons
		(per cent)	
Alcohol only	42.3	29.5	36.4
Drugs other than alcohol only	2.3	3.0	2.6
Both alcohol and other drugs	11.3	5.2	8.5
Neither alcohol nor other drugs	44.1	62.3	52.5

Note: Base equals people who had been physically or verbally abused or had property damaged or stolen by people affected by alcohol or other drugs.

Lost days of school or work

The 1998 survey collected information on the loss of school or work days due to personal use of alcohol or other drugs. The survey estimated that in the preceding three months:

- Of all the recent users of alcohol, one in 20 (5%) reported missing school or work due to personal use of alcohol (Table 15.13).
- Among recent users of other drugs, one in 50 (2%) reported missing school or work due to personal use of those drugs.
- Proportionally more younger aged users reported missing school or work compared with their older counterparts due to the personal use of alcohol or other drugs.
- Males were slightly more likely to report missing school or work due to personal use of alcohol or other drugs compared with females.

Table 15.13: Persons who missed days of work or study in the preceding three months due to personal use of alcohol or other drugs: proportion of persons aged 14 years and over who were working or studying, by age and sex, Australia, 1998

Consumption	Age group				
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	All ages
	(per cent)				
	Males				
Alcohol ^(a)	10.4	13.2	3.7	0.3 *	5.3
Other drugs ^(b)	4.5	3.4	1.4 *	0.6 *	1.9
	Females				
Alcohol ^(a)	7.2	6.9	2.7	2.1	4.1
Other drugs ^(b)	3.6	2.5	0.7 *	2.5	2.2
	Persons				
Alcohol ^(a)	8.8	10.6	3.3	1.0 *	4.8
Other drugs ^(b)	4.0	3.0	1.1 *	1.4	2.0

(a) Base equals people who were working or studying and consumed alcohol in the preceding three months.

(b) Base equals people who were working or studying and used any illicit drug in the preceding three months.

Physical and mental health status of drug users

The 1998 survey collected information about respondents' health status using the SF-36 survey instrument, the items of which represent eight of the most important health concepts. The SF-36 is a generic measure assessing health concepts representing basic human values that are relevant to everyone's functional status and wellbeing (Ware 1990). The details of SF-36 survey and how the scores are interpreted are discussed in detail in the *SF-36 Health Survey: Manual and Interpretation Guide* (Ware 1993). The higher the score on each scale, the better the health status. The SF-36 scores can be used to compare the relative physical and mental health status of different groups. For example, if regular smokers score lower for the item 'Physical functioning' compared with those who never smoked, we can say that persons from the non-smoker group can perform all types of physical activities with fewer limitations compared with persons in the smoker group, who will have some limitation in performing all physical activities.

The age-standardised mean SF-36 scores for eight items are presented in Table 15.14. The first column lists the drug categories and the consumption status and columns 2–9 list the age-standardised average scores for eight items. The data show that there are differences in health status among users depending on the types of drug used and the consumption pattern.

When mean SF-36 scores obtained from the 1998 survey for all persons are compared with Australian population norms (ABS 1997), we find that mean scores obtained from 1998 survey are higher for seven of the eight items (the exception being Vitality) compared with the Australian population norms.

Table 15.14: Mean physical and mental health measures by consumption status: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, Australia, 1998

Consumption	Physical functioning	Physical role	Bodily pain	General health	Vitality	Social functioning	Emotional role	Mental health
(mean)								
Smoking status								
Regular	84.8	83.3	75.7	68.7	62.0	85.2	83.8	74.8
Occasional	89.4	85.3	75.4	73.0	61.8	87.6	87.4	79.9
Past	86.2	81.6	76.0	73.1	63.0	87.0	87.5	77.2
Never	87.4	86.5	80.3	75.9	67.3	89.8	89.5	79.6
Alcohol status								
Regular	88.4	85.0	78.1	73.5	65.3	89.0	88.1	78.7
Occasional	85.5	83.5	75.6	73.5	63.5	87.7	87.2	77.5
Past	80.9	77.2	75.5	68.7	62.0	82.6	83.9	75.4
Never	85.0	88.5	82.1	73.4	66.6	89.5	88.7	77.2
Marijuana / cannabis status								
Recent	84.2	82.8	72.5	64.7	61.1	85.3	85.3	75.1
Past	87.1	82.0	75.4	69.7	61.3	86.0	86.0	76.2
Never	85.9	84.8	78.6	74.7	65.9	89.0	88.8	78.9
Illicit drug status								
Recent	84.9	80.0	72.6	68.4	61.4	84.7	85.2	75.4
Past	86.0	81.2	74.7	70.1	61.9	85.9	85.5	75.9
Never	86.5	85.2	79.2	75.3	66.5	89.6	89.3	79.5
Injecting drug status								
Current	81.4	70.6	63.5	58.0	48.9	72.6	67.2	62.0
Past	85.0	80.7	64.9	59.6	54.5	73.8	69.2	66.5
Never	86.6	84.0	77.7	73.5	64.8	88.1	87.6	78.0
All persons	86.2	83.6	77.3	73.0	64.4	87.7	87.3	77.7
Population Norms	82.5	79.8	76.8	71.6	64.5	84.9	82.8	75.9

(a) For injecting drug status, age standardisation was conducted using four age group categories (aged 14–19, 20–29, 30–39, 40+ years); for other drug consumption status, six age groups (aged 14–19, 20–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60+ years) were used.

Note: Figures are age-standardised to 1995 Australian standard population.

When various measures of health are compared by types of drug consumed, the survey data show that persons regularly consuming alcohol report better health compared with users of other types of drugs. However, if we compare the physical and mental wellbeing of persons who are regular drinkers with that of those who are either occasional drinkers or were former drinkers, the data show that persons who regularly drink alcohol have better health than those who either drink occasionally or are ex-drinkers. The finding shows that there is some association between drinking status and health, but no causality can be inferred.

If the health status of persons with different smoking status is compared, the data show that, in general, those persons who smoke regularly are slightly less healthy compared with those who smoke only occasionally or are ex-smokers. Of all the drug consumption status, persons who are current users of injecting drugs have reported the lowest physical and mental health status. The data also show that those persons who had used injecting drugs in the past but no longer use have slightly better health compared with the recent injecting drug users.

Drug consumption status and contact with health services

In 1998 the survey collected information on recency of respondents' consultation with a doctor and the number of hospital admissions of at least an overnight stay. The survey showed that:

- Proportionally more (60%) recent injecting drug users reported consulting a doctor within the preceding three months compared with regular smokers (51%), recent regular drinkers (52%) and recent marijuana/cannabis users (51%) (Table 15.15).
- The average number of hospital admissions was highest among recent drug users, with nine admissions for every ten drug users in the preceding 12 months compared with three admissions for every ten regular smokers and four admissions for every ten persons who had not taken any drugs in the preceding 12 months.

Table 15.15: Contact with health services: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by consumption status, Australia, 1998

Consumption status	Recency of consultation with doctor			Mean number of times admitted to hospital in preceding 12 months
	Within last 3 months	3 to 6 months ago	>6 months ago	
		(per cent)		
Recent regular smoker ^(a)	51.1	13.2	35.7	0.3
Recent regular drinker ^(b)	52.1	14.9	33.0	0.2
Recent marijuana/cannabis user ^(c)	50.8	15.8	33.4	0.3
Recent injecting drug user ^(d)	60.2	9.0	30.8	0.9
Currently not using any drug	57.3	14.8	27.9	0.4

(a) Those smoking daily or most days.

(b) Those drinking daily or most days.

(c) Those who have consumed marijuana/cannabis in the preceding 12 months.

(d) Those who injected drugs in the preceding 12 months.