



A quick guide to drugs and alcohol

Statistical Update 2014

How common is the use of ...?

ALCOHOL

The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that alcohol is the most widely used recreational drug in Australia, with 78.3% of people aged 14 or more having at least one drink in that year.

BENZODIAZEPINES

The most recent data available is from the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey which found that 8% of injecting drug users had recently injected benzodiazepines. Australian Drug Trends 2006 which surveys injecting drug users across Australia, found that between one-third and one-half of those interviewed had obtained benzodiazepines illegally in the past six months.

There is little information about non-injecting illegal use of benzodiazepines.

CANNABIS

Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug in Australia. The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 10.2% of Australians (people aged from 14 and over) had used cannabis in the previous 12 months and 34.8% had ever used cannabis in their lifetime.

COCAINE

The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 8.1% of Australians aged 14 and over have ever used cocaine (up from 7.3% in 2010, 4.7% in 2004, 4.4% in 2001, 4.3% in 1998 and around 3% between 1993 and 1995), while 2.1% reported use in the year preceding the survey.

ECSTASY

According to the 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, the proportion of Australians who have ever tried ecstasy has increased from 3.1% in 1993 to 10.9% in 2013, while the proportion who used ecstasy in the year preceding the study increased from 1% in 1993 to a peak of 3.5% in 2007 and back to 2.5% in 2013.

GHB

The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 0.9% of Australians aged 14 and over have ever tried GHB, while 0.1% used GHB in the year preceding the survey.

HEROIN

The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 0.1% of Australians aged 14 and over had used heroin in the preceding year and 1.2% had ever tried it.

ICE, SPEED and other METHAMPETAMINES

The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 7% of Australians aged 14 and above have ever tried methamphetamine or amphetamine (including speed, ice, base, prescription amphetamines and liquid amphetamine), and 2.1% used them in the year preceding the survey. For 50.4% of those who used the drug in the preceding year the main form used was ice, followed by powder/speed (28.5%); other forms, such as base (7.6%), tablet (8%), prescription amphetamines (4%) and liquid (0.5%) were less commonly used.

While there was no significant increase in meth/amphetamine use in 2013, there was a change in the main form of meth/amphetamine used. Use of powder decreased significantly from 51% to 28.5% while the use of ice (or crystal methamphetamine) more than doubled, from 22% in 2010 to 50.4% in 2013.

INHALANTS

The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 3.8% of Australians aged 14 and over have ever tried inhalants, while 0.8% used them in the year preceding the survey. In another survey, 17.3% of Australian high school students reported having deliberately sniffed inhalants at some point in their lives, while 12.6% reported having done so in the preceding year.

KETAMINE

The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 1.7% of Australians aged 14 and over have ever tried ketamine, while 0.3% used it in the year preceding the survey. Other research has found that around two-thirds of those who have ever tried ketamine had not used it in the year preceding the study.

LSD

The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 9.4% of Australians aged 14 and above had ever tried hallucinogens (including naturally occurring hallucinogens, such as magic mushrooms, as well as synthetic hallucinogens such as LSD), while 1.3% had used hallucinogens in the year preceding the survey.

MAGIC MUSHROOMS and other NATURAL HALLUCINOGENS

The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 9.4% of Australians aged 14 and above had ever tried hallucinogens (including naturally occurring hallucinogens, such as magic mushrooms, as well as synthetic hallucinogens such as LSD), while 1.3% had used hallucinogens in the year preceding the survey.

TOBACCO

The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 12.8% of Australians aged 14 and over are daily smokers of tobacco. There has been a steady decrease since 1991, when 24.3% smoked on a daily basis.

Source:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. *2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey*.

Australian Department of Health & Ageing. *Australian secondary school students' use of tobacco, alcohol, and over-the-counter and illicit substances in 2011*.

Table 21: Summary of lifetime illicit use of drugs, people aged 14 years or older, 1993 to 2013 (per cent)

Drug/Behaviour	Ever tried ^(a)			Ever used ^(b)				
	1993	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013
Illicit drugs (excluding pharmaceuticals)								
Marijuana/cannabis	34.7	31.1	39.1	33.1	33.6	33.5	35.4	34.8
Ecstasy ^(c)	3.1	2.4	4.8	6.1	7.5	8.9	10.3	10.9
Meth/amphetamines ^(d)	5.4	5.7	8.8	8.9	9.1	6.3	7.0	7.0
Cocaine	2.5	3.4	4.3	4.4	4.7	5.9	7.3	8.1
Hallucinogens	7.3	7.0	9.9	7.6	7.5	6.7	8.8	9.4
Inhalants	3.7	2.4	3.9	2.6	2.5	3.1	3.8	3.8
Heroin	1.7	1.4	2.2	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.2
Ketamine	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1.0	1.1	1.4	1.7#
GHB	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.9
Synthetic Cannabinoids	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1.3
New and Emerging Psychoactive Substances	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.4
Injected drugs	1.9	1.3	2.1	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.5#
<i>Any illicit^(e) excluding pharmaceuticals</i>	<i>37.1</i>	<i>33.1</i>	<i>40.4</i>	<i>34.3</i>	<i>34.8</i>	<i>35.1</i>	<i>37.3</i>	<i>36.8</i>
Misuse of pharmaceuticals								
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(d)	n.a.	12.3	11.5	6.0	5.5	4.4	4.8	7.7#
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills ^(d)	n.a.	3.2	6.2	3.2	2.8	3.3	3.2	4.5#
Steroids ^(d)	0.3	0.6	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5
Methadone ^(f) or Buprenorphine ^(g)	n.a.	n.a.	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4
Other opiates/opioids ^(d)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1.2	1.4	0.9	1.1	1.4#
<i>Any pharmaceutical^(h)</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>14.5</i>	<i>14.9</i>	<i>8.8</i>	<i>7.7</i>	<i>7.5</i>	<i>7.4</i>	<i>11.4#</i>
Illicit use of any drug^(h)	38.9	39.3	46.0	37.7	38.1	38.1	39.8	41.8#

* Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

Statistically significant change between 2010 and 2013.

(a) Question asked as 'Have you ever tried...' from 1993 to 1998. Tried at least once in lifetime.

(b) Question asked as 'Have you ever used...' from 2001 to 2010. Used at least once in lifetime.

(c) Included 'designer drugs' before 2004.

(d) For non-medical purposes.

(e) Illicit use of at least 1 of 12 drugs (excluding pharmaceuticals) in the previous 12 months in 2013; the number and type of drug used varied between 1993 and 2013.

(f) Non-maintenance.

(g) Did not include buprenorphine before 2007.

(h) Used at least 1 of 17 illicit drugs in 2013; the number and type of illicit drug used varied between 1993 and 2013.

Source:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. *2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey*.

Table 22: Summary of recent^(a) illicit use of drugs, people aged 14 years or older, 1993 to 2013 (per cent)

Drug	1993	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013
Illicit drugs (excluding pharmaceuticals)								
Cannabis	12.7	13.1	17.9	12.9	11.3	9.1	10.3	10.2
Ecstasy ^(a)	1.2	0.9	2.4	2.9	3.4	3.5	3.0	2.5#
Meth/amphetamines ^(b)	2.0	2.1	3.7	3.4	3.2	2.3	2.1	2.1
Cocaine	0.5	1.0	1.4	1.3	1.0	1.6	2.1	2.1
Hallucinogens	1.3	1.9	3.0	1.1	0.7	0.6	1.4	1.3
Inhalants	0.6	0.4	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.8
Heroin	0.2	0.4	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1#
Ketamine	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3
GHB	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.1	0.1	0.1	*<0.1#
Synthetic Cannabinoids	n.a.	1.2						
New and Emerging Psychoactive Substances	n.a.	0.4						
Injected drugs	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.3#
<i>Any illicit^(d) excluding pharmaceuticals</i>	13.7	14.2	19.0	14.2	12.6	10.9	12.0	12.0
Misuse of pharmaceuticals								
Pain-killers/analgesics ^(c)	1.7	3.4	5.2	3.1	3.1	2.5	3.0	3.3
Tranquillisers	0.9	0.7	3.0	1.1	1.0	1.4	1.5	1.6
Steroids ^(c)	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	—	—	0.1	*0.1
Methadone ^(e) or Buprenorphine ^(f)	n.a.	n.a.	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2
Other opiates/opioids ^(c)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.4
<i>Misuse of pharmaceuticals^(f)</i>	n.a.	4.1	6.3	3.9	3.8	3.7	4.2	4.7#
Illicit use of any drug^(g)	14.0	16.7	22.0	16.7	15.3	13.4	14.7	15.0

* Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

Statistically significant change between 2010 and 2013.

(a) Used in the previous 12 months.

(b) Included 'designer drugs' before 2004.

(c) For non-medical purposes.

(d) Illicit use of at least 1 of 12 drugs (excluding pharmaceuticals) in the previous 12 months in 2013; the number and type of drug used varied between 1993 and 2013.

(e) Non-maintenance.

(f) Did not include buprenorphine before 2007.

(g) Illicit use of at least 1 of 17 drugs in the previous 12 months in 2013; the number and type of drug used varied between 1993 and 2013.

Source:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey.