



## > Illicit Drug Use in Western Australia: Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug Survey 2011

### Downward trend in use

In 2011, fewer than one-fifth of Western Australian school students (18.4%) had ever used at least one illicit drug (Figure 1). This is a significant decrease from more than two-fifths (40.4%) in 1996.

Between 1996 and 2011, analysis also indicates significant decreases in consumption in the past year (36.4% vs. 16.3%), past month (24.2% vs. 9.5%) and past week (16.7% versus 5.2%).

### No significant change since 2008

The proportion of students reporting use of at least one illicit drug in 2011 was similar to 2008.

### How is the data collected?

Every three years, school students in Western Australia are surveyed to find out about their drug use in the Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug Survey.

They are asked about how often they consume alcohol, tobacco, other illicit and licit drugs. They are also asked about how much they use, how they use and their attitudes to alcohol and other drug use.

This survey has been collected since 1984, with additional drug related questions added since 1996.

The most recent survey included 3,771 young people aged from 12 to 17 years from randomly selected government, Catholic and independent schools across the State.

More information on these surveys is available at: [www.dao.wa.gov.au](http://www.dao.wa.gov.au).

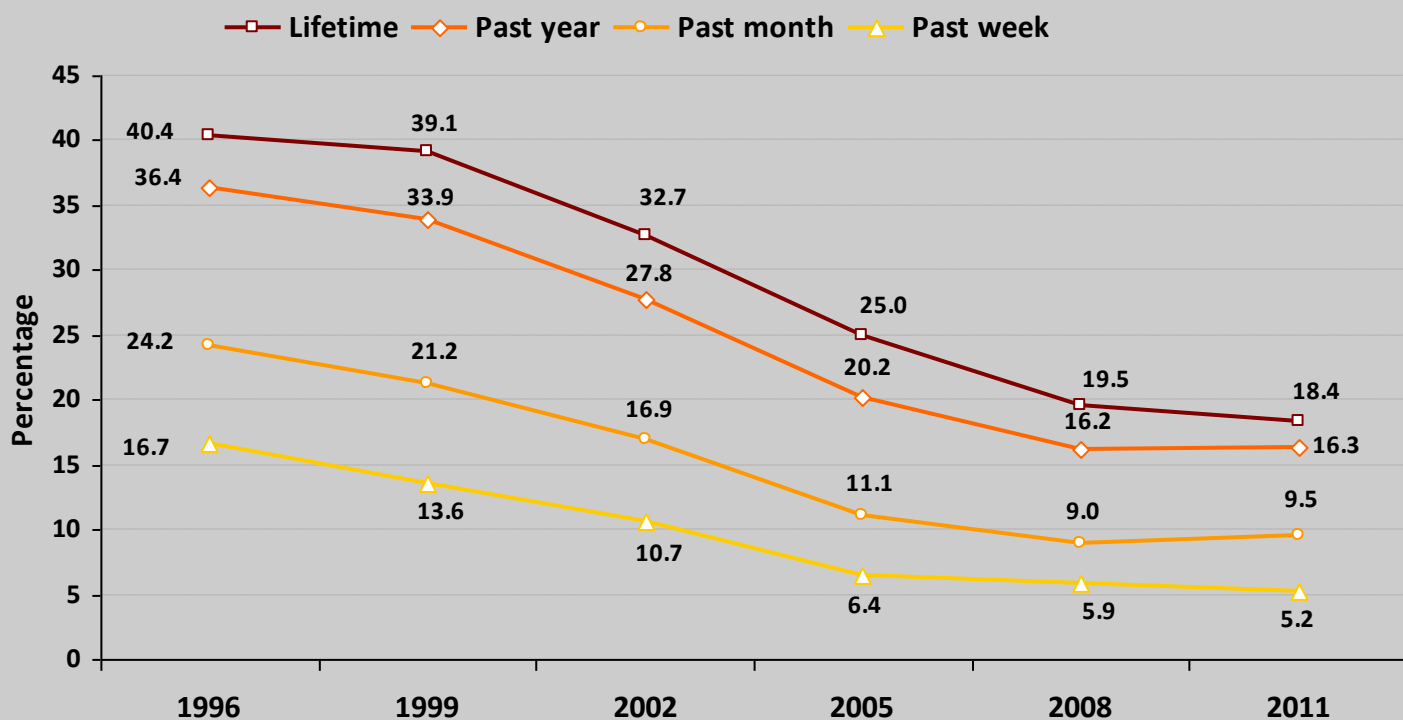
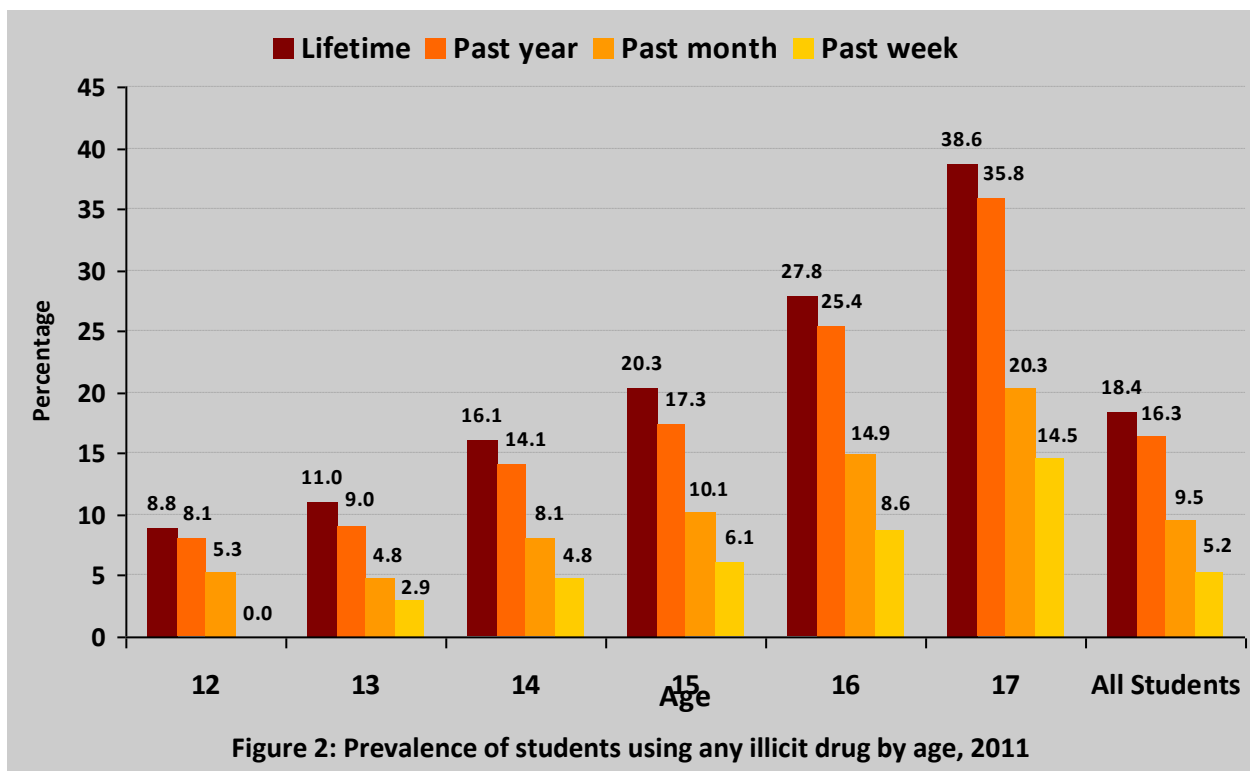


Figure 1: Trends in the use of at least one illicit drug, 1996–2011



### Use increases with age

Fewer than 1 in 10 students had ever used at least one illicit drug at age 12 and none had used one in the past week (as shown in Figure 2).

Use increases steadily with age across most frequencies of use. By age 17, 38.6% of students had ever used at least one illicit drug and 14.5% had used one in the past week.

### Use is higher for males

Males typically use illicit drugs more than females across all ages and frequencies of use (as shown in Table 1).

This is most evident at age 17, particularly in relation to use in the past week, where male use is almost double that for females (19.2% vs. 9.8%).

Table 1: Prevalence of illicit drug use by age and gender, 2011

	12 yrs	13 yrs	14 yrs	15 yrs	16 yrs	17 yrs	All Students
<b>Used in lifetime %</b>							
Males	10.6	11.2	19.0	21.1	29.7	44.5	20.2
Females	6.9	10.7	13.1	19.4	25.9	32.8	16.5
Persons	8.8	11.0	16.1	20.3	27.8	38.6	18.4
<b>Used last year %</b>							
Males	10.4	8.8	16.6	18.4	26.0	40.8	17.8
Females	5.6	9.1	11.3	16.1	24.8	30.9	14.7
Persons	8.1	9.0	14.1	17.3	25.4	35.8	16.3
<b>Used last month %</b>							
Males	10.4	4.5	9.7	11.4	16.8	23.8	11.5
Females	0.0	5.2	6.3	8.7	12.9	16.8	7.4
Persons	5.3	4.8	8.1	10.1	14.9	20.3	9.5
<b>Used last week %</b>							
Males	0.0	3.0	5.9	6.8	10.5	19.2	6.2
Females	0.0	2.8	3.6	5.4	6.8	9.8	4.2
Persons	0.0	2.9	4.8	6.1	8.6	14.5	5.2



Figure 3: Illicit drug use by recency and age, 2011

## Cannabis, tranquilisers and inhalants were most commonly used

As shown in Figure 3, cannabis was the most commonly used illicit drug, among all students in the past year (15.4%), followed by tranquilisers (13.5%) and inhalants (10.6%).

While 16 to 17 year-old students are more likely to have used cannabis and tranquilisers in the past year compared to 12 to 15 year-olds (30.4% vs. 10.2% and 15.7% vs. 12.7%, respectively), use of inhalants is more prevalent among 12 to 15 year-olds (12.3%), compared to 5.9% for 16 to 17 year-olds (Figure 3).

Fewer than 1 in 20 students aged 12 to 17 years reported use of other illicit drugs in the past year.

As patterns of use may not be fixed among students, past year use can be a useful indicator.

## Decrease in past year use of ecstasy, amphetamine and cocaine

There were significant decreases in the proportion of students reporting use of at least one illicit drug (excluding cannabis), ecstasy, amphetamines and cocaine in the past year in 2011, compared to 2008 (Table 2).

Table 2: Prevalence of illicit drug use in the last year for all students		
	2008	2011
<b>At least one illicit drug</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>16.3</b>
<b>At least one illicit drug (excluding cannabis)</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>▼ 5.9</b>
Cannabis	14.8	15.4
Ecstasy	4.3	▼ 2.0
Amphetamines <sup>^</sup>	5.3	▼ 3.4
Cocaine	2.1	▼ 1.1
Inhalants	11.0	10.6
Hallucinogens	3.2	2.6
Opioids <sup>^</sup>	1.8	2.1
Tranquilisers <sup>^</sup>	12.8	13.5
Steroids <sup>^</sup>	2.4	1.8

▼ Significantly lower than 2008 at  $p < 0.05$ .

<sup>^</sup> Non-medical use

### Definitions:

**At least one illicit drug:** At least one of cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine, amphetamines, opiates and hallucinogens

**Illicit drugs:** Illegal drugs, drugs and volatile substances used illicitly, and pharmaceuticals used for non-medical purposes.

**Non-medical use:** Use of drugs either alone or with other drugs to induce or enhance a drug experience, for performance enhancement or for cosmetic purposes.

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