

■ Illicit drug use among Queensland school students aged 12 to 17 years, 2005

The Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) Survey is conducted every three years in each state and territory. The survey covers a range of issues including use of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs, as well as other health behaviours. Data on illicit drug use has been collected in Queensland through the ASSAD Survey since 1996. This report presents key findings from the illicit drug component of the 1996, 2002 and 2005 surveys for Queensland.

■ Have not tried drugs

During the period 1996 to 2005, the proportion of school students not trying cannabis or inhalants increased significantly (Table 1). There was little or no change in the refusal rates for all other illicit drugs.

Table 1: Proportion of Queensland students aged 12-17 years who had *not* used an illicit drug in their lifetime, by drug type in 1996, 2002 and 2005

	1996	2002	2005
	%	%	%
Cannabis	70	74**	80
Inhalants	77	80**	84
Tranquillisers	81	82	83
Amphetamines	96	94	94
Hallucinogens	94	95	96
Ecstasy	98	96	95
Heroin	97	97	97
Steroids	99	97	97
Cocaine	97	97	97

** Significantly different from 2005 at (P<0.01).

■ Drug use at least once in lifetime

For all age groups and both genders, the drugs most commonly used were cannabis, inhalants and tranquillisers e.g. sleeping tablets and sedatives (Tables 2 and 3). Trying drugs such as amphetamines, hallucinogens, ecstasy, heroin, steroids and cocaine was very low (between 3% and 6%).

Cannabis use at least once in a student's lifetime decreased significantly from 30% in 1996 to 20% in 2005.

In general, a greater proportion of older students (aged 16 and 17 years) than younger students (aged 12 to 15 years) had tried an illicit drug. For most drugs, a slightly greater proportion of males than females had tried these drugs at least once in their lifetime.



Table 2: Proportion of Queensland students aged 12-17 years who had used an illicit drug at least once in their lifetime, by drug type and age group in 1996 and 2005

	1996			2005		
	12-15yrs	16-17yrs	Total	12-15yrs	16-17yrs	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Cannabis	24	47	30	15	36	20
Inhalants	26	15	23	18	11	16
Tranquillisers	18	20	19	17	18	17
Amphetamines	4	6	4	5	8	6
Hallucinogens	4	12	6	4	4	4
Ecstasy	2	3	2	5	6	5
Heroin	3	2	3	3	3	3
Steroids	2	1	1	4	3	3
Cocaine	3	2	3	4	3	3

Table 3: Proportion of Queensland students aged 12-17 years who had used an illicit drug at least once in their lifetime, by drug type and gender in 1996 and 2005

	1996		2005	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
	%	%	%	%
Cannabis	27	32	19	21
Inhalants	23	24	17	15
Tranquillisers	18	19	17	18
Amphetamines	4	4	5	7
Hallucinogens	6	6	3	5
Ecstasy	2	3	5	5
Heroin	2	3	3	3
Steroids	1	2	3	4
Cocaine	2	4	3	4

■ Have not used drugs recently

During the period 1996 to 2005, the proportion of Queensland school students aged 12 to 17 years who had not used cannabis in the week prior to the ASSAD survey increased from 90% to 95% (Table 4). For all other illicit drugs there was little or no change.

Table 4: Proportion of Queensland students aged 12-17 years who have *not* used an illicit drug in the week prior to the survey, by drug type in 1996, 2002 and 2005

	1996	2002	2005
	%	%	%
Cannabis	90	92	95
Inhalants	95	94	96
Tranquillisers	98	98	97
Amphetamines	99	98	98
Hallucinogens	99	99	98
Ecstasy	100	99	98
Heroin	99	99	99
Steroids	99	99	99
Cocaine	99	99	99

■ Recent drug use

For all age groups and both genders, the illicit drugs most commonly used during the week prior to the survey were cannabis and inhalants (Tables 5 and 6). Recent use of all other types of illicit drugs was extremely low (1% to 3%).

Cannabis use in the week prior to survey has halved, with the rate dropping from 10% in 1996 to 5% in 2005.

In both 1996 and 2005, the proportion of older students (aged 16 and 17 years) versus younger students (aged 12-15 years) who had used illicit drugs within the last week varied for the different types of drugs. In general, a greater proportion of males than females had recently used illicit drugs.

Table 5: Proportion of Queensland students aged 12-17 years who have used an illicit drug in the week prior to the survey, by drug type and age group in 1996 and 2005

	1996			2005		
	12-15 yrs	16-17 yrs	Total	12-15 yrs	16-17 yrs	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Cannabis	8	17	10	4	7	5
Inhalants	7	1	5	5	2	4
Tranquillisers	2	3	2	3	3	3
Amphetamines	1	1	1	2	1	2
Hallucinogens	1	2	1	2	1	2
Ecstasy	<1	<1	<1	2	2	2
Heroin	1	<1	1	1	1	1
Steroids	1	<1	1	1	<1	1
Cocaine	1	<1	1	2	1	1

Table 6: Proportion of Queensland students aged 12-17 years who have used an illicit drug in the week prior to the survey, by drug type and gender in 1996 and 2005

	1996		2005	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
	%	%	%	%
Cannabis	8	12	4	6
Inhalants	5	6	3	5
Tranquillisers	3	2	3	3
Amphetamines	1	1	1	3
Hallucinogens	<1	2	1	2
Ecstasy	<1	1	1	3
Heroin	<1	1	1	2
Steroids	<1	1	1	1
Cocaine	<1	1	<1	2

■ Methodology

In late 2005, 2,091 students from 39 Queensland schools (Government, Independent and Catholic) in metropolitan and regional areas participated in the ASSAD Survey. Questionnaires were eliminated if school year, age or sex data were missing. Questionnaires were also eliminated if the respondent was younger than twelve or older than seventeen years of age. These adjustments resulted in a final sample of 2,028.

During the analysis phase, the data were weighted by age, sex and school type to bring the sample into line with the state distribution of Government, Independent and Catholic school populations.

For comparisons over time, data from the ASSAD surveys since 1996, except 1999, are provided. Analysis of 1999 ASSAD data for Queensland found that the sample sizes for ages 13 to 17 were unacceptably low, raising doubts about the accuracy of the estimates for these ages and hence the 1999 survey overall. Accordingly, 1999 data have not been used in this report.

As this report is based on data from a sample and not a census of the total population, it is necessary to allow for sampling error. Sampling error depends on the size of the sample and the size of the prevalence estimates associated with the sample. The sampling error will be largest when the sample size is small and estimates are around 50%. In 2005, the sampling errors range from a high of $\pm 9\%$ among 17 year old girls to a low of $\pm 6\%$ among 16 year old boys.

Finally, as is usually the case with surveys of alcohol, tobacco and other drug consumption, all data from the ASSAD Surveys is based on students' self-report of their own behaviour. It is difficult to know with any certainty whether students have under or overestimated their actual drug use behaviour, nor whether the accuracy of self-report has changed over time. However, the same questions assessing drug use behaviour have been used for each survey, so that should reduce the propensity of accuracy changing over time.

Note:

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