



Drug and Alcohol Office

In Brief: NDSHS 2007

Alcohol

86.2% of Western Australians over the age of 14 drank alcohol within the last 12 months of the 2007 survey compared to a national prevalence of 82.9%. Slightly more WA females (12.3%) than males (10.7%) drank alcohol at long-term risky levels.

Tobacco

14.8% of Western Australians over the age of 14 years smoked daily in 2007 compared to a national prevalence of 16.6%. Daily smoking prevalence in WA teenagers dropped to 5.7% in 2007 compared to 8.5% in 2004.

Illicit drugs

Cannabis remains the most prevalent illicit drug used in WA (10.8% of people) and nationally (9.1%). Cannabis use continued its decline since 1998 (22.3%). Amphetamines were almost twice as prevalent in WA (4.2%) as in Australia (2.3%). Ecstasy use in WA (4.1%) was slightly higher than the national prevalence (3.5%).

Welcome to Pulsecheck

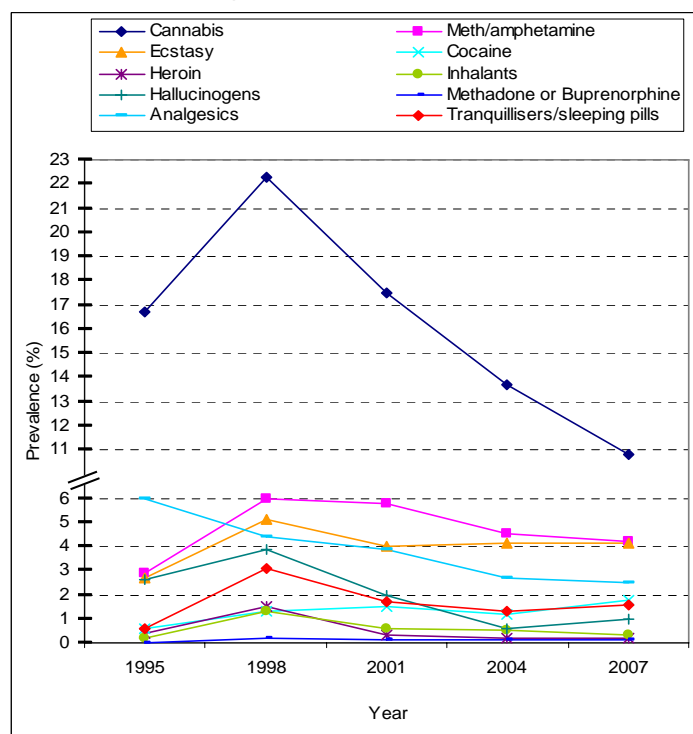
Pulsecheck aims to provide a brief summary of useful and timely information on drug and alcohol-related trends and activities relevant to Western Australians. This is based on information gathered or produced by the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research branch of the Drug and Alcohol Office.

Our first issue of *Pulsecheck* focuses on three areas; the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS), the Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS), and alcohol & other drug treatment services.

2007 Household Survey

Early 2009 saw the release of detailed findings from the 2007 NDSHS, produced by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (Canberra). This unique triennial survey collects questionnaire data randomly from households throughout Australia and is representative of the Australian (and Western Australian) population. In the most recent survey (2004-2007), 2,426 Western Australian respondents took part.

Figure 1: Percentage of WA population over 14 years of age who used illicit drugs within one year of being surveyed (1995-2007)



Illicit drugs

Between 2004 and 2007 in Western Australia, prevalence rates relating to most illicit drugs (cannabis, amphetamines, ecstasy and non-medical use analgesics) remained steady or decreased (Figure 1).

While in 2007 cannabis remained the most prevalent illicit drug used in Western Australia (WA) (Figure 1: 10.8% of people) and nationally (9.1%), cannabis prevalence in WA has declined since 2004 (13.7%). The age group exhibiting the highest recent cannabis use was 14-24 years of age whereas for other illicit drug users the highest prevalence was seen in the group aged 25-39 years.

The age group exhibiting the highest recent use of illicit drugs (excluding cannabis) in females was 14-24 years of age, whereas in males the highest prevalence age group was 25-39 years of age.

Contact Details:

For enquiries regarding this newsletter, please contact:

Anthony Gunnell
Research Analyst

Phone: (08) 9370 0319

Fax: (08) 9272 6605

Email: anthony.gunnell@health.wa.gov.au

Amphetamine use was almost twice as high in WA (4.2%) as nationally (2.3%), whereas ecstasy use in WA (4.1%) was only slightly higher than the national prevalence (3.5%). Other drugs showed comparable rates (WA versus national).

The community was generally supportive of using cannabis for treatment of medical conditions (69.3%) or for use in clinical trials (73.7%). Most people supported rapid detoxification therapy for heroin users in WA (83.4%). There was less support for a trial of prescribed heroin (37.1%).

Alcohol

86.2% of Western Australians over 14 years of age consumed alcohol within the last 12 months of the 2007 survey, compared to 82.9% nationally. The median ages for people first drinking alcohol were 16 and 17 years of age, for males and females respectively.

No clear changes in short-term risky drinking behaviour were apparent between the years 2001 - 2007 (Figure 2A). In WA a slightly greater number of females (12.3%) than males (10.7%) drank alcohol at long-term risky levels. Long-term risky drinking levels increased in all women's age groups aged 60 or less in the period 2004-2007 (Figure 2B).

The majority of WA householders supported more severe penalties for drink driving (85%) and stricter laws against serving intoxicated customers (82.5%).

53.6% of people believed alcohol sponsorship of sporting events should be banned. A greater number of people (73.8%) supported the limitation of alcohol advertising on TV until after 9.30pm. Fewest households supported strategies to increase the price of alcohol (23.2%), or reduce the number of outlets selling alcohol (26.9%).

Tobacco

In 2007, 14.8% of Western Australians over the age of 14 years smoked daily compared to a national prevalence of 16.6%. The median ages when people began smoking were 15 and 16 years of age, for males and females respectively. Daily smoking prevalence in WA teenagers dropped to 5.7% in 2007 compared to 8.5% in 2004.

WA householders were very supportive of stricter enforcement of the legislation against supplying tobacco to minors (91.2% of respondents) and stricter penalties for sale or supply to minors (88.4%). Around 70% of respondents were also supportive of having tobacco product taxes increased to pay for health education or to discourage smoking.

Figure 2A: Short-term Risky Drinking Behaviour (2001–2007) by Gender and Age

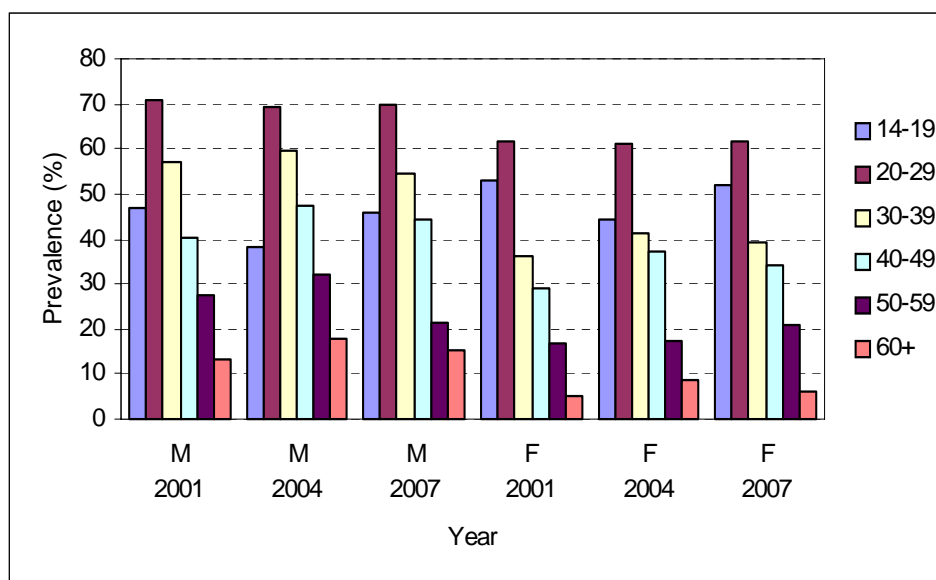
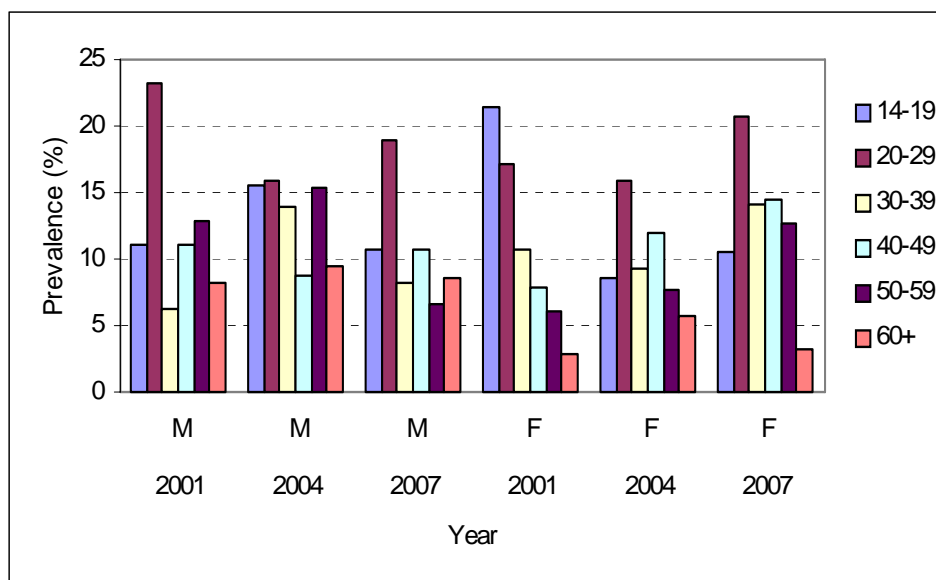


Figure 2B: Long-term Risky Drinking Behaviour (2001–2007) by Gender and Age



Alcohol and Drug Information (ADIS) Summary

ADIS is a 24-hour, state-wide, confidential telephone service providing information, advice, counselling and referral. This service incorporates the Parent Drug Information Service (PDIS) and *Quitline* counselling, in addition to undertaking projects assisting particular client groups (eg: supporting responses to prevention campaigns and people on pharmacotherapies).

A new database was introduced during 2008. Whilst many similarities exist between the old and new databases, the current system (since October 2008) provides some new, or slightly altered, categories for recording information. Given this, data comparisons including pre-October and post-October 2008 data should be interpreted with caution.

After an initial decline between Jan-May 2006, alcohol related calls increased gradually until Jan 2008. The number of cannabis related calls generally decreased. Between Jan 2006 and Jan 2008, heroin and amphetamine related calls remained stable (Figure 3).

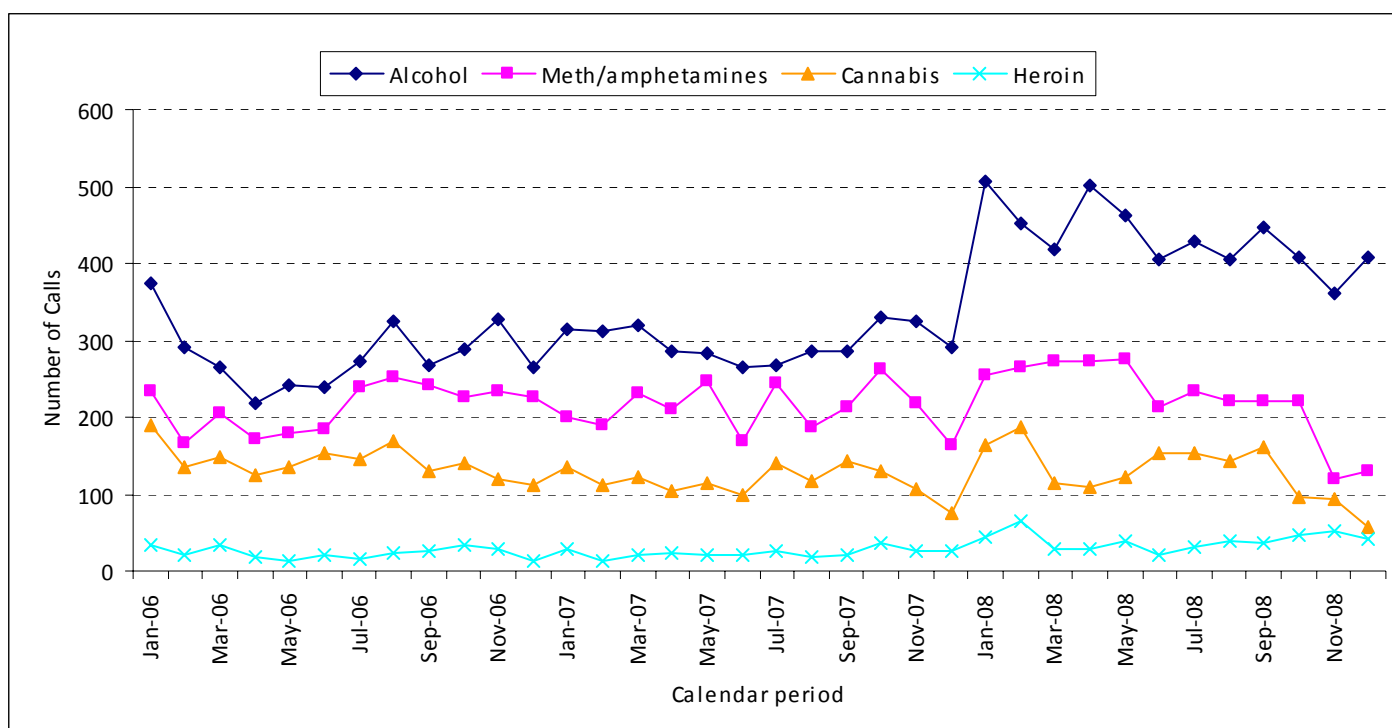
In early 2008 ADIS experienced a sharp increase in the number of alcohol-related calls, which later declined slightly, but remained at higher levels than those observed prior to 2008. A similar spike in calls was also observed for cannabis, heroin and amphetamines. The total number of calls (excluding hoax or incomplete calls) from 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2008 was 19,807.

Total Number of Calls for specific Drugs in 2008

Tobacco	5,243	Alcohol	5,200
Cannabis	1,555	Amphetamines	2,704
Heroin	482	Methadone	491
Prescribed drugs	346	Analgesics/narcotics	328
Ecstasy	218	Cocaine	61



Figure 3: Alcohol and Drug Information Service calls: primary drug of concern, 2006-2008



Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Summary

Treatment services in WA comprise Next Step Drug and Alcohol Services, Integrated Services, and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). For this report, data was accessed from a database containing both Government and non-Government treatment centres on 17 February 2009.

Clients admitted for treatment have a principal drug of concern recorded. Any other (secondary) drugs of concern will also be recorded for each individual upon admission. Figure 4 describes the number of treatment episodes aligned with the principal drug of concern and does not include information related to other drugs of concern for a given client episode.

In figure 4, the number of open and opened treatment episodes observed during the period 2006-09 is displayed. Since open episodes may overlap between months, the three-yearly total will be less than the sum of the months. Figure 4 includes data entered by Next Step, Integrated Services and NGO personnel.

Of the treatments provided between 2006-09, alcohol treatment episodes (open) number the highest and increased by 21% from the 1st calendar quarter (Q1) of 2006 to the last calendar quarter (Q4) of 2008.

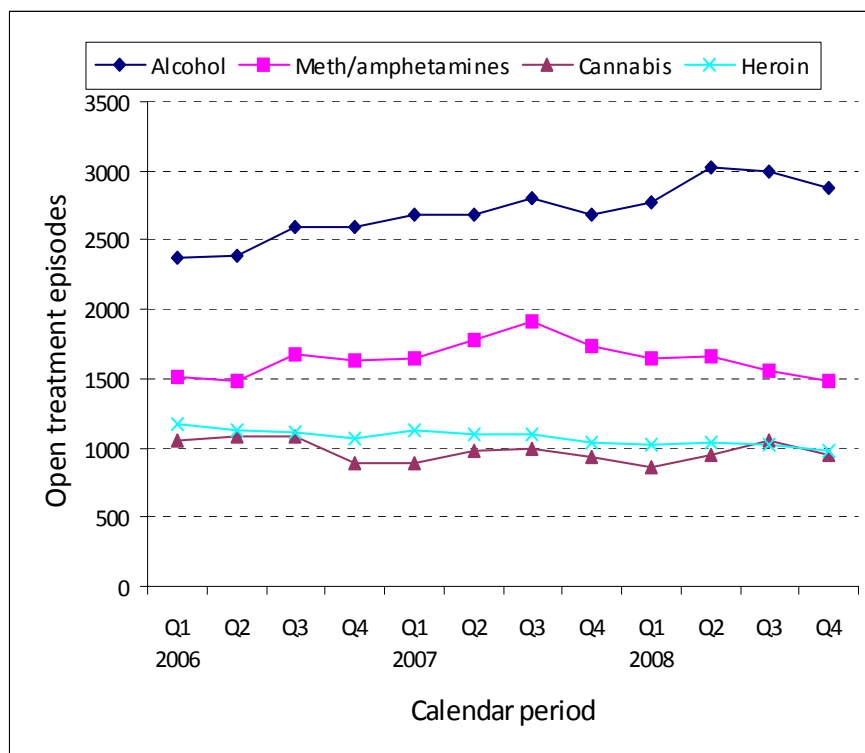
Amphetamine treatments increased from Q1 of 2006 until a peak during Q3 of 2007. After this time they declined until Q4 of 2008 when they returned to levels similar to those seen in early 2006.

Heroin treatments decreased by 16% between Q1 of 2006 and the last quarter of 2008. Cannabis treatment decreased by 10% between Q1 of 2006 and Q4 of 2008, although the number of episodes did not decline consistently during this period.

Open treatment episodes for specific drugs in 2008:

Alcohol	7,992	Amphetamines	4,263
Cannabis	2,619	Heroin	2,053
Ecstasy	97	Cocaine	30

Figure 4: Open treatment episodes for Next Step, Integrated Services and Non-Government Organisations, 2006-2009*



* Drugs specified are the primary drugs of concern for a given treatment episode.



For enquiries regarding this newsletter please contact

Anthony Gunnell, Research Analyst. Phone: (08) 9370 0319

Fax: (08) 9272 6605 or Email: anthony.gunnell@health.wa.gov.au