



Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug Survey 2008 – Western Australian Results (excluding tobacco)

Research Methodology

A survey of Western Australian school students in Years 7 to 12 was conducted in 2008 to provide up-to-date information on the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drug use among students. Previous surveys on tobacco and alcohol consumption were conducted at three-yearly intervals between 1984 and 2008. Questions on other drug use were added to the survey in 1996.

As with previous surveys, the target population comprised of students enrolled in school years 7 to 12 attending government, Catholic and independent schools in Western Australia. The survey was administered in schools by external research staff using a self-completion questionnaire. Students were randomly selected and had no prior knowledge of the contents of the survey. A total of 2,802 Western Australian school students in Years 7 to 12 took part in the survey and of those surveyed 2,719 gave a response for age and gender.

To increase representativeness of the sample population with respect to the Western Australian school enrolments for Semester 2, 2008, estimates for the prevalence (%) of alcohol or other drug (AOD) use in this report are weighted according to age, gender and school type. Age, school type, and in some cases gender, were included as covariates in models for calculating statistical significance in order to adjust for potential confounding associated with these factors.

Definitions

Risky Drinking	Defined as males consuming seven or more standard drinks on any one day in the last week, or females consuming five or more standard drinks on any one day in the past week. This is equivalent to risk of harm in the short-term as defined by the National Drug Strategy Household Survey.
Illicit drugs	Illegal drugs i.e. amphetamines, cocaine, ecstasy, cannabis and opiates.
Opiates	Heroin and other opiates such as methadone, morphine or pethidine used for non-medical reasons.
Tranquillisers	Sleeping tablets, tranquillisers or sedatives such as Valium, Serepax or Rohypnol used for non-medical reasons.
Inhalants	Inhaled substances such as glue, paint, petrol or thinners.
Non-medical drug use	To use a substance (i) to enhance performance (e.g. athletic), (ii) for cosmetic purposes (e.g. body-shaping), or (iii) either alone or in combination with other drugs to induce or enhance a drug experience.



Alcohol Consumption

In the 2008 survey, 15.9% of Western Australian school students aged 12 to 17 years had **never consumed** alcohol in their lifetime compared to 12.3% in the 2005 survey.

The **frequency** of alcohol consumption for school students in the 2008 survey was reported as 63.9% in the past year, 40.2% in the past month and 26.9% in the past week, whereas the 2005 survey reported prevalences of 65.2%, 43.5% and 28.9% respectively.

Of those school students aged 14 to 17 years who drank in the week prior to the 2008 survey, 26.5% of males and 32.5% of females drank at **risky** levels (Figure 1 and Table 1). These levels are not significantly different to the 2005 survey when 19.8% of males and 33.0% of females aged 14 to 17 years reported drinking at risky levels in the week prior to the survey.

In the 2008 survey, 45.8% of school students aged 12-17 years reported **obtaining alcoholic** beverages from their parents, and 23.1% received alcohol from their friends. This alcohol was consumed at home (42.3%), a friend's house (17.1%), or at a party (24.5%).

Alcohol consumption was generally under **adult supervision** for school students aged 12 to 17 years (70.3%) in the 2008 survey. Younger students were more likely to have consumed alcohol under an adult's supervision (12 year olds 86.0% cf. 17 year olds 58.3%).

Figure 1. Proportion of school students aged 14 to 17 yrs engaging in 'at risk' drinking in the week prior to the 2005 and 2008 surveys

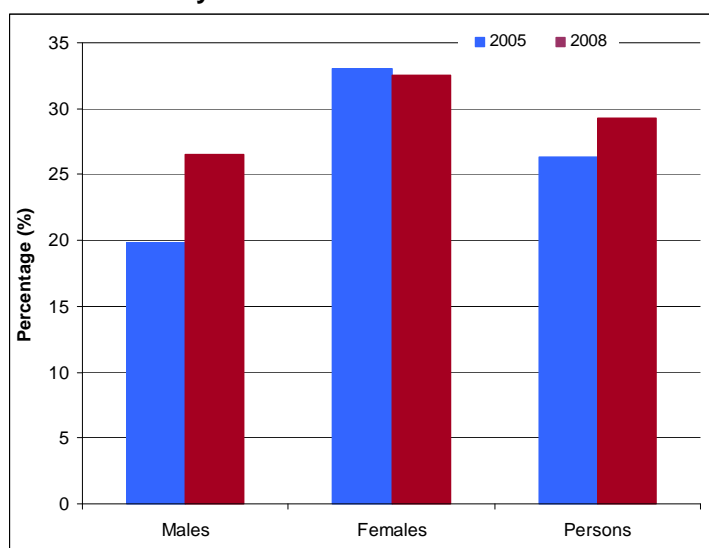


Table 1. Prevalence of school students drinking behaviours by age for 2005 and 2008[^]

DRINKER CATEGORY	AGE (Years)						2008		2005	
	12	13	14	15	16	17	12-17	14-17	12-17	14-17
Never drank						(%)				
Male	23.2	16.7	10.6	8.5	8.3	7.5	*13.2	*9.0	11.1	6.3
Female	41.7	24.8	12.9	7.7	8.7	9.4	*18.6	*9.8	13.6	7.6
Total	32.1	20.6	11.7	8.1	8.5	8.5	*15.9	*9.4	12.3	6.9
Drank in the past week										
Male	10.7	18.1	22.4	35.6	36.3	49.2	*24.8	*31.3	30.3	40.1
Female	4.6	17.5	23.9	32.3	32.4	26.9	*24.8	*29.2	27.4	38.2
Total	8.1	17.6	23.0	34.0	34.6	38.0	*26.9	*30.3	28.9	39.1
'At Risk' drinkers (of those who drank in the last week)										
Male	10.8	0.0	16.9	21.7	24.5	50.7	21.3	26.5	24.3	19.8
Female	14.3	5.6	22.9	25.5	35.0	61.2	27.9	32.5	29.8	33.0
Total	11.8	2.5	20.1	23.4	29.7	55.0	24.3	29.3	26.9	26.3

[^] Significance testing done by Chi Square and adjusted for age and school type (for gender-specific results); adjusted for age, school type (ie. government, Catholic or independent) and gender (for 'Persons').

* significant compared to 2005 result ($p < 0.05$).

Whilst not significant, the p value was suggestive of a notable difference ($p = 0.051$) when compared to the 2005 survey.

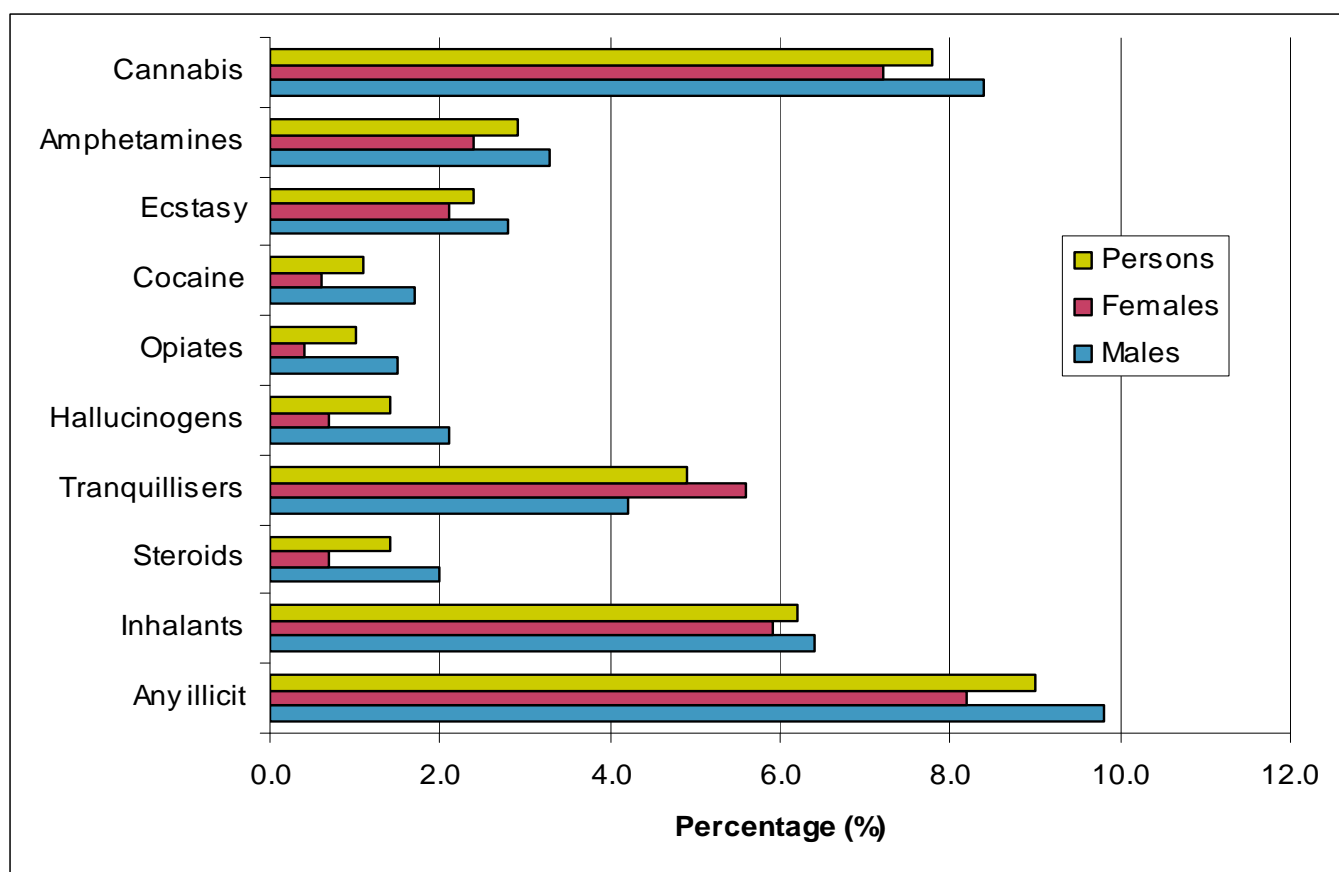
¥ Sample sizes for school students aged 12 and 13 were low and these results should be interpreted with caution.



Illicit Drugs

In the 2008 survey, 80.5% of respondents aged 12 to 17 years indicated that they had **never consumed** an illicit drug in their lifetime compared to 75.3% in the 2005 survey. The **most commonly** reported illicit drug used in the past month for the 2008 survey was cannabis (7.8% cf. 10.1% in 2005), followed by amphetamines (2.9% cf. 3.4% in 2005) (Figure 2 and Table 2).

Figure 2. Prevalence of illicit and other drug consumption by 12 to 17 year olds in the past month, by gender for 2008



The number of school students aged 12 to 17 years that had used **any illicit drug** in the past month was higher for males than for females in the 2008 survey (9.8% cf. 8.2%). Illicit drug use in the past year significantly decreased in the 2008 survey (16.2%) compared to the 2005 survey (20.2%), with a further significant decrease from the 2002 survey (27.6%). The number of school students who had used **any illicit drug excluding cannabis** also significantly decreased across the three surveys from 12.1% of school students aged 12 to 17 years in 2002 to 7.5% in the 2008 survey.

Cannabis use significantly decreased in the 2008 survey compared to 2005 for all measured time periods - lifetime (17.8% cf. 23.2%), past year (14.8% cf. 19.0%), and past month (7.8% cf. 10.1%). More males had used cannabis in the past month (8.4%) than females (7.2%).

In the 2008 survey, **amphetamine** use in the past month had significantly decreased for school students aged 12 to 17 years (2.9% cf. 3.4% in 2005), with males being more likely to have used amphetamines (3.3%) than females (2.4%). However, amphetamine use in the past year was similar between males (5.4%) and females (5.2%).



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Overall, 4.3% of school students aged 12 to 17 years reported **ecstasy** use in the past year compared to 3.2% in 2005 and 4.2% in 2002 (Figure 3). In 2008, 2.4% reported ecstasy use in the last month compared to 1.4% in 2005.

Opiate use remained stable between the 2008 and the 2005 surveys. One percent of school students aged 12 to 17 years used opiates in the past month (cf. 0.8% in 2005) and 1.8% reported using opiates in the past year (cf. 1.6% in 2005).

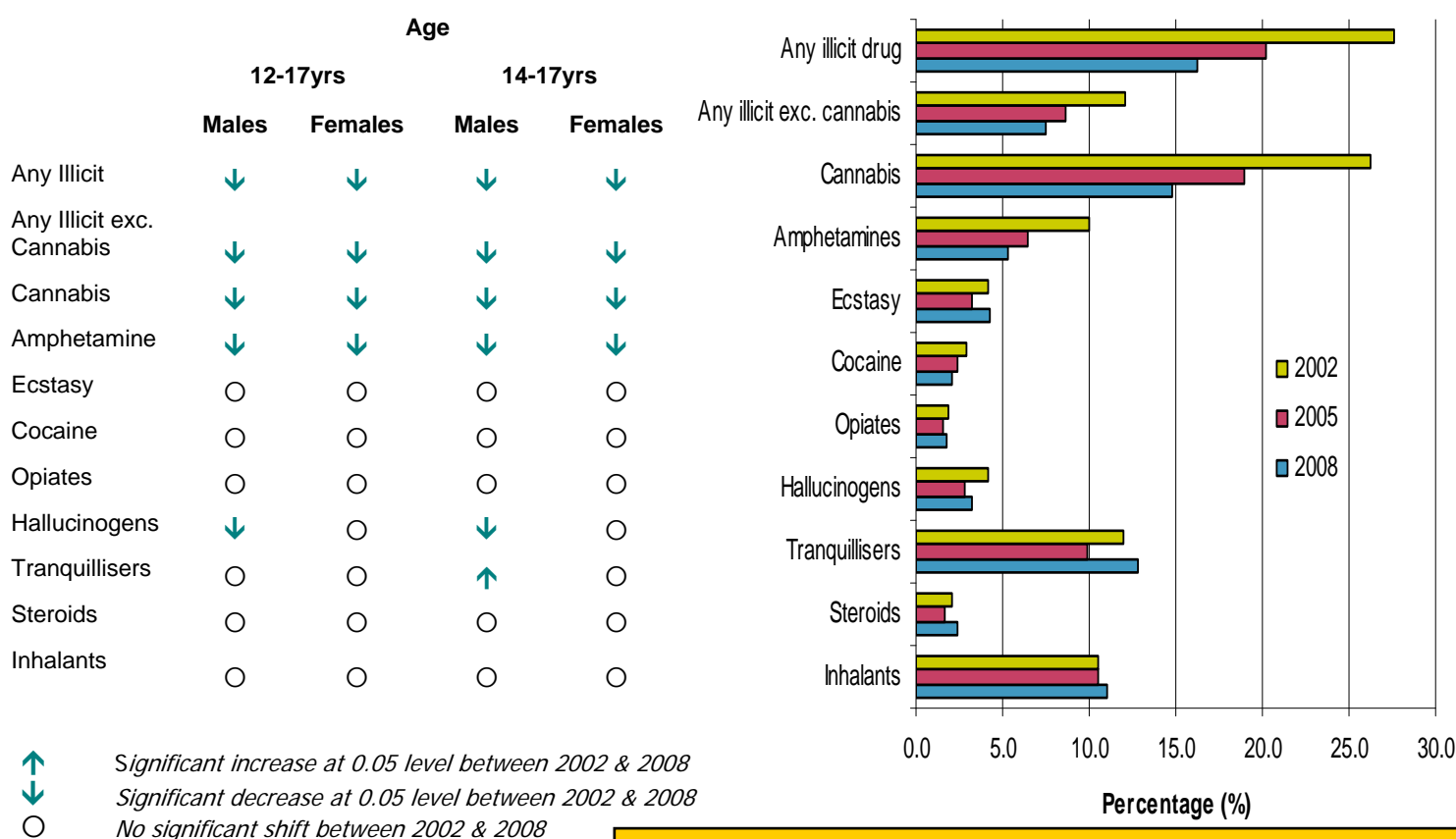
Tranquillisers were the most commonly misused licit drug (not used for medical purposes) by school students aged 12 to 17 years, with 4.2% of males and 5.6% of females using them in the month prior to the survey (cf. 4.7% of males and 4.1% of females in 2005).

Inhalant use by school students aged 12 to 17 years did not appear to differ between the 2005 and 2008 surveys with 5.9% of females and 6.4% of males using inhalants in the past month (cf. 5.7% of females and 6.4% of males in 2005). The percentage of school students aged 12 to 17 years reportedly using inhalants in the past year was 11.0% (cf. 10.5% in 2005).

Table 2. Prevalence of 12 to 17 year old students who have used drugs (excl. alcohol or tobacco) in the last month in Western Australia for 2008 * significance testing done by Chi Square ($p = 0.05$) and controlled for age, gender and school type (i.e. government, Catholic or independent).

Drug used in the last month	Survey Year	
	2005	2008
Any illicit	11.1	*9.0
Any illicit excluding cannabis	4.5	4.0
Inhalants	6.1	6.2
Steroids	0.9	1.4
Tranquillisers	4.4	4.9
Hallucinogens	1.0	1.4
Opiates	0.8	1.0
Cocaine	1.2	1.1
Ecstasy	1.4	*2.4
Amphetamines	3.4	2.9
Cannabis	10.1	*7.8

Figure 3. Percentage of Western Australian school students aged 12 to 17 years who used drugs in the past year, including significant shifts, by age group and gender from 2002 to 2008



Suggested citation: Griffiths, P., Kalic, R. & Gunnell, A. (2009). *Australian School Student Survey 2008: Western Australian Results (excluding tobacco)*, Brief Communication no.2. Perth; Drug and Alcohol Office.