

CHAIR: Dr Wodak, you have been involved in this area for a long time. Do you think over, say, the last 14 years since the last working party put together its report, there has been an increase in public support in direct correlation to stronger evidence that is now available or has it always been at about that figure?

Dr WODAK: That figure came from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey which was carried out by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. The survey is conducted every three years. The data was collected in 2010, where that figure comes from, and was published in 2011. We could check on that. I have not looked up the earlier figures, but generally things are moving in that direction. Community support for things like a needle/syringe program and methadone program, where there are arguably some kinds of similarities, is growing and it is roughly at those kinds of levels now.

I have attached a copy of the report I drew my answer from

I have reproduced most but not all of that section

Please note that I did not reproduce all this material

And that copying the tables exactly was beyond my limited IT skills

I have provided the web address and the page numbers for anyone who wants to check

The report states:

Support for cannabis use in medical settings

Comparisons over time

Support for measures relating to cannabis use in medical settings remained relatively stable between 2004 and 2010 (Table 13.7). More specifically:

- just over 2 in 3 (68.8%) people aged over 14 years supported a change in legislation permitting the use of marijuana for medical purposes
- almost 3 in 4 (74.0%) supported a clinical trial for people to use marijuana to treat medical conditions
- unlike tobacco and alcohol measures, females were slightly more likely than males to support these measures.

The data for this are provided in Table 13.7

So my answer would be that 'just over 2 in 3 (68.8%) people aged over 14 years supported a change in legislation permitting the use of marijuana for medical purposes, with almost 3 in 4 (74.0%) supported a clinical trial for people to use marijuana to treat medical conditions

And that this support seems stable over time.

I trust this provides the information you seek

Community support for drug policy for illicit drugs

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011. 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey report. Drug statistics series no. 25. Cat. no. PHE 145. Canberra: AIHW.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=10737421314&libID=10737421314>

pp 176-186.

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Table 13.7: Support(a) for measures relating to cannabis use in medical settings, people aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2004 to 2010 (per cent)

Measure	Males			Females			Persons		
	2004	2007	2010	2004	2007	2010	2004	2007	2010
A change in legislation permitting the use of marijuana for medical purposes	66.6	68.0	68.7	68.5	69.2	68.9	67.5	68.6	68.8
A clinical trial for people to use marijuana to treat medical conditions	72.6	72.6	73.6	74.5	74.6	74.4	73.5	73.6	74.0

(a) Support or strongly support (calculations based on those respondents who were informed enough to indicate their level of support).

State and territory comparisons

Support for a change in legislation permitting the use of marijuana for medical purposes did not vary much by state and territory, ranging from 68.6% in New

South Wales to 72.4% in the Australian Capital Territory (Table 13.8). Support for a clinical trial for people to use marijuana to treat medical conditions ranged from 72.8% in Queensland to 81.7% in the Australian Capital Territory.

Table 13.8: Support(a) for measures relating to cannabis use in medical settings, people aged 14 years or older, by state/territory, 2010 (per cent)

Measure	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
A change in legislation permitting the use of marijuana for medical purposes	68.6	69.1	67.0	71.2	69.2	70.0	72.4	70.1	68.8
A clinical trial for people to use marijuana to treat medical conditions	73.6	74.1	72.8	75.5	74.0	75.4	81.7	74.9	74.0

(a) Support or strongly support (calculations based on those respondents who were informed enough to indicate their level of support).

Support for the possession of cannabis being a criminal offence

In 2010, just over 1 in 3 (34.0%) people aged 14 years or older supported cannabis possession being a criminal offence (Table 13.9). Females supported this measure more than males (35.2% compared with 32.8%). The highest levels of support were among males and females aged 12–17 years of age (49.3% and 50.8%, respectively), but this support declined considerably for those aged 18–19 years (29.1% and 35.4%, respectively).

Table 13.9: Support(a) for the possession of cannabis being a criminal offence, people aged 12 years or older, 2010 (per cent)

Age group (years)	12–17	18–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	Total (12+)	14–19	14+ 18+
Sex										
Males	49.3	29.1	31.3	30.0	28.4	29.9	40.6	33.7	37.2	32.8
Females	50.8	35.4	35.7	33.8	33.9	31.7	38.0	36.3	38.5	35.2
Persons	50.0	32.1	33.4	31.8	31.1	30.8	39.3	35.0	37.8	34.0

(a) Support or strongly support (calculations based on those respondents who were informed enough to indicate their level of support)

Support for legalisation of illicit drugs

Comparisons over time

In 2010, of people in Australia aged 14 years or older, 1 in 4 (24.8%) supported the legalisation of cannabis, which made it the most highly supported illicit drug (Table 13.13).

This proportion was 2007 (from 21.2%), and this statistically significant change was reflected in both sexes. Among the other illicit drugs:

- support for legalisation ranged from 5.0% for meth/amphetamines to 6.8% for ecstasy

- overall, statistically significant increases were seen between 2007 and 2010 in support for

the legalisation of all drugs except for meth/amphetamines, which increased, but not significantly

- males showed higher levels of support than females for the legalisation of all illicit drugs

surveyed, but female support for the legalisation of all illicit drugs significantly

increased from 2007, while the rise in support by males was only statistically significant

for cannabis and cocaine.

Table 13.13: Support(a) for the legalisation of selected illicit drugs, people aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2004 to 2010 (per cent)

Drug	Males			Females			Persons		
	2004	2007	2010	2004	2007	2010	2004	2007	2010
Cannabis	29.6	23.8	27.9 ↑	24.4	18.5	21.8 ↑	27.0	21.2	24.8 ↑
Heroin	5.5	5.8	6.6	4.4	4.6	5.5 ↑	5.0	5.2	6.0 ↑
Meth/amphetamines	5.5	5.4	5.4	3.9	3.9	4.7 ↑	4.7	4.6	5.0
Cocaine	5.4	6.3	7.2 ↑	3.9	4.5	5.5 ↑	4.7	5.4	6.3 ↑
Ecstasy	n.a.	7.1	8.0	n.a.	4.8	5.7 ↑	n.a.	6.0	6.8 ↑

(a) Support or strongly support (calculations based on those respondents who were informed enough to indicate their level of support).181

Age and sex comparisons

With few exceptions across age and sex groups, less than 10% of people supported the legalisation of heroin, meth/amphetamines, cocaine or ecstasy (Table 13.14). Cannabis had levels of support ranging from 13.8% for those aged 60 years or older to 31.5% for those aged 18–19 years. However, the highest

level of support was from males aged 18–19 years, with 41.8% supporting the legalisation of cannabis, compared with 21.3% among females. People aged 12–17 years were least likely to support the legalisation of all drugs when compared with other age groups, except for cannabis in which support was lowest in people aged 60 years or older. This pattern was reflected for both males and females.

Table 13.14: Support(a)for the legalisation of selected illicit drugs, people aged 12 years or older, by age and sex, 2010 (per cent)

Age group (years)

Drug 12–17 18–19 20–29 30–39 40–49 50–59 60+ Total (12+) 14–19 14+ 18+

Males

Cannabis 18.0 41.8 35.2 31.5 32.5 27.3 14.6 27.3 29.2 27.9 28.2

Heroin *4.4 *8.6 5.6 5.4 8.2 8.3 6.6 6.6 5.4 6.6 6.8

Meth/amphetamines *4.2 *8.0 5.4 5.1 6.0 5.7 5.1 5.4 4.9 5.4 5.5

Cocaine 5.0 10.6 8.1 7.4 8.2 7.5 5.8 7.2 6.5 7.2 7.4

Ecstasy 5.2 10.6 11.0 8.9 8.3 7.0 5.6 7.9 6.8 8.0 8.2

Females

Cannabis 15.8 21.3 26.0 25.9 23.4 23.0 13.1 21.3 21.1 21.8 21.8

Heroin 3.8 *4.8 4.3 4.7 5.3 7.4 6.1 5.4 4.6 5.5 5.5

Meth/amphetamines 3.8 *6.4 4.2 4.4 4.3 5.6 4.6 4.6 5.4 4.7 4.7

Cocaine 3.8 7.2 5.3 5.3 5.2 6.3 5.3 5.4 5.5 5.5 5.5

Ecstasy 4.1 8.4 6.8 5.6 5.3 5.9 4.9 5.6 6.0 5.7 5.8

Persons

Cannabis 16.9 31.5 30.6 28.7 27.9 25.1 13.8 24.3 25.2 24.8 25.0

Heroin 4.1 6.7 5.0 5.0 6.7 7.8 6.3 6.0 5.0 6.0 6.2

Meth/amphetamines 4.0 7.2 4.8 4.7 5.1 5.6 4.9 5.0 5.2 5.0 5.1

Cocaine 4.4 8.9 6.7 6.3 6.7 6.9 5.5 6.3 6.0 6.3 6.5

Ecstasy 4.7 9.5 8.9 7.2 6.8 6.5 5.2 6.8 6.4 6.8 7.0

(a) Support or strongly support (calculations based on those respondents who were informed enough to indicate their level of support).

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

Support for increased penalties for the sale or supply of illicit drugs

Comparisons over time

In 2010, large majorities (more than 4 in 5) supported increases in penalties for the sale or supply of heroin, meth/amphetamines, cocaine or ecstasy (Table 13.15). The least support was for cannabis, and support was lower compared with 2007 (down from 63.0% to 60.5%).

When comparing differences between sexes, females were more likely than their male counterparts to support increased penalties for sale or supply of drugs in 2010. For example, in 2010, 63.5% of females supported increased penalties for the sale or supply of cannabis compared with 57.4% of males.¹⁸²

Table 13.15: Support(a) for increased penalties for the sale or supply of selected illicit drugs, people aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2004 to 2010 (per cent)

Drug	Males			Females			Persons		
	2004	2007	2010	2004	2007	2010	2004	2007	2010
Cannabis	54.2	59.6	57.4 ↓	62.0	66.4	63.5 ↓	58.2	63.0	60.5 ↓
Heroin	85.0	84.3	84.6	87.1	85.1	85.9	86.0	84.7	85.2
Meth/amphetamines	82.0	84.2	84.4	85.3	85.2	85.5	83.7	84.7	84.9
Cocaine	83.0	82.4	81.9	86.1	84.2	84.2	84.6	83.3	83.0
Ecstasy	n.a.	80.5	80.2	n.a.	83.6	83.5	n.a.	82.1	81.9

(a) Support or strongly support (calculations based on those respondents who were informed enough to indicate their level of support).

Age and sex comparisons

Across age groups and sex, cannabis had the lowest support for increased penalties for the sale or supply of illicit drugs (Table 13.16). In 2010:

- teenagers aged 12–17 years were less likely to support increased penalties for all illicit drug types than adults aged 18 years or older; this was the same for both males and females, except for teenage males, who had slightly higher support for an increase in cannabis penalties than their adult counterparts (59.9% compared with 57.4%, respectively)
- those in the oldest age group (60 years or older) generally showed the highest support for increased penalties for the sale or supply of illicit drugs.

Table 13.16: Support(a) for increased penalties for the sale or supply of selected illicit drugs, people aged 12 years or older, by age and sex, 2010 (per cent)

[Table 13.16 shown in the original]

Actions for those found in possession of illicit drugs

For all people aged 14 years or older, support for actions taken against people found in possession of illicit drugs for personal use differed according to drug type (Table 13.17).

In 2010:

- for all drugs except cannabis, most support was for referral to treatment or an education program, while for cannabis the most popular action was a caution, warning or no action (38.0%)
- support for fines had the least variation across illicit drugs, ranging from 16.2% for heroin to 24.8% for ecstasy
- support for prison sentences was lowest for cannabis (6.1%) and highest for heroin (25.7%) and meth/amphetamines (20.1%)
- teenagers aged 12–17 years were most likely to support fines than other measures compared with adults aged 18 years or older
- those aged 60 years or older were more likely to support referral to treatment or education program than other age groups.