



## Drug use: The real story

**YOUTH DRINKING LOWEST IN THREE DECADES** is the heading on the *Bulletin: Alcohol trends in Western Australia: Australian school students alcohol and drug (ASSAD) survey*, released by the Government of Western Australia Drug and Alcohol Office in September 2016.

The ASSAD survey provides information on the use of tobacco, alcohol, and illegal and legal (for non-medical purposes) drugs in 12 to 17 year olds, and their attitudes toward these substances. The 2014 results tell us that rates of alcohol use have declined over the past three decades.

The proportion of students reporting drinking in the past year has approximately halved (79.7% to 44.3%), in the past month (50.1% to 23.9%) and past week (33.5% to 13.9%). In the same time period, the proportion of students reporting they have never drunk alcohol has more than tripled, increasing from 9.0% to 31.5%. (See Figure 1)

This information is important and relevant as many young people think that everyone is drinking or taking other drugs. It is therefore so important to let your children know that their perceptions about other young people's drug use are incorrect and that by choosing not to use alcohol or other drugs they are part of the majority of young people their age.



**Figure 1: Prevalence and recency of alcohol use for students aged 12 to 17 years, 1984 to 2014 (MHC, 2014a)**

Mental Health Commission (2016). Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey 2014: Western Australian Results. Unpublished analysis.

Mental Health Commission (2016a). Alcohol trends in Western Australia: 2014 Australian school students alcohol and drug survey, Government of Western Australia, Perth.

Mental Health Commission (2016b). Illicit drug trends in Western Australia: 2014 Australian school students alcohol and drug survey - Western Australian Results. Government of Western Australia, Perth.



**KEY MESSAGE**  
Most young people aged 12 to 17 years do not use drugs.

### The picture of illicit drug use

In 2014, fewer than one in five Western Australian school students (19.5%) had ever used at least one illicit drug.

This is a significant decrease, with the proportion more than halving from 41.4% in 1996. Furthermore, the proportion of students reporting use of at least one illicit drug in 2014 was not significantly different to 2011.

Cannabis was the most commonly used illicit drug among all students in the past year (16.4%), followed by tranquilisers (13.4%) and inhalants (10.4%). (MHC, 2016; MHC, 2016b)



If you would like to read further information about the Western Australian results of the national survey visit the Drug and Alcohol Office or the Mental Health Commission website

Drug and Alcohol Office website  
[www.dao.wa.gov.au](http://www.dao.wa.gov.au)

Mental Health Commission's website  
[www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au](http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au)