



Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in Australia

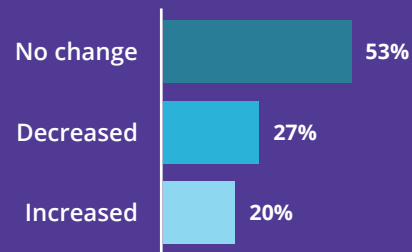
Alcohol and other drug use during COVID-19



Data sources on this factsheet are not directly comparable and care should be taken when interpreting data.

37% of Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System participants used a **different main drug** during COVID-19.^[4]







In May 2020, **27% of ANUPoll respondents reported having decreased** their alcohol consumption since the spread of COVID-19 and **20% had increased**.^[1]



49% of Illicit Drug Reporting System participants had a **disruption to their drug treatment** since COVID-19.^[5]

12% of IDRS participants had **difficulties accessing sterile needles & syringes** and **5%** had **difficulties safely disposing of used needles & syringes**.^[5]

According to national wastewater data analysis, changes in population-weighted average consumption were recorded in capital cities and regional areas between August 2019 and August 2020.^[6]

	Capital cities August 2020	Regional areas August 2020
Alcohol 	↓	↑
Cannabis 	↑	↑
Methyl- amphetamine 	↓	↓
Cocaine 	↑	↑
MDMA 	↑	↓
Heroin 	↑	↑

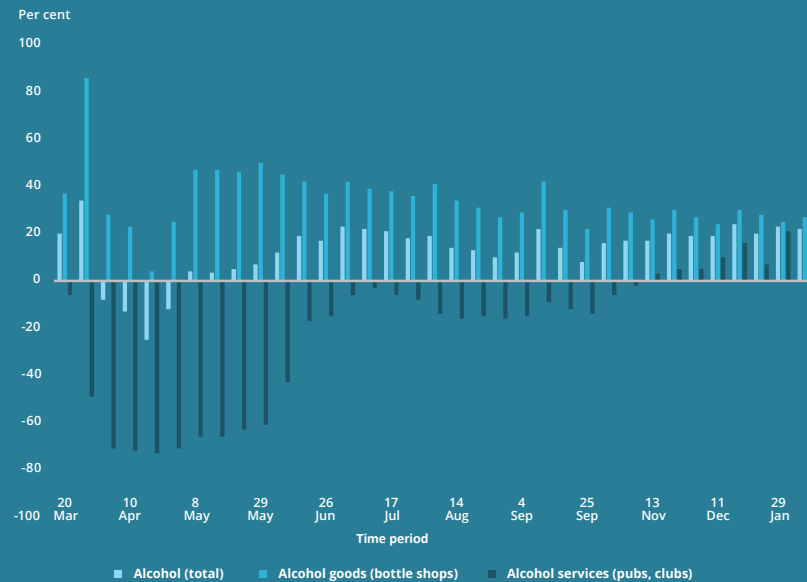
Among ADAPT study participants who completed all 3 survey waves from April 2020–January 2021, across all waves and drug types:

- **alcohol and cannabis** were the most common drugs where people said their use **increased**
- **meth/amphetamine** and MDMA were the most common drugs where people said their use **decreased**.^[3]

The majority (72%) of participants in the UNSW study who reported an increase in their alcohol consumption during Wave 1: Lockdown, returned to Pre-lockdown levels of consumption by Wave 2: Easing restrictions.

About half (47%) of participants who reported a decrease in their alcohol consumption during Wave 1: Lockdown, remained at that level of consumption at Wave 2: Easing restrictions.^[2]

Commonwealth Bank of Australia card spend data show that, until mid-November 2020, decreased spending in pubs and clubs was offset by increased spending in bottle shops relative to the same period in 2019. From November 2020 to February 2021, spending in pubs and clubs increased to levels higher than the same period the previous year.^[7]



1 in 2 (52%) of EDRS participants reported a decrease in frequency of use of ecstasy and related drugs between February 2020 and April–July 2020.^[4]



1. Biddle N, Edwards B, Gray M & Sollis K (2020). Alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 period: May 2020. ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods: Canberra. Viewed 10 June 2020.
2. Ritter A, Wilkinson C, Vuong T, Kowalski M, Barrett L, Mellor R & Sommerville K (2020). Distilling our changing relationship with alcohol during COVID-19. DPMP Monograph No. 29. Sydney: UNSW Social Policy Research Centre.
3. Sutherland R, Baillie G, Memedovic S, Hammoud M, Barratt M, Bruno R et al. 2021. Key findings from the 'Australians' Drug Use: Adapting to Pandemic Threats (ADAPT) Study Wave 3. ADAPT Bulletin no. 3. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW.
4. Australian Drug Trends 2020: Key Findings from the National Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) Interviews. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney.

5. Peacock A, Uporova J, Karlsson A, Price O, Gibbs D, Swanton R et al. 2021. Australian Drug Trends 2020: Key findings from the National Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) interviews. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW.
6. ACIC (Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission) 2021. National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program Report 12. Canberra: ACIC. Viewed 1 March 2021.
7. Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Global Economic & Markets Research reports: CBA card spend. Viewed 23 March 2021.

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For more detail, see the full report, *Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in Australia*, which is available from the AIHW website.



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