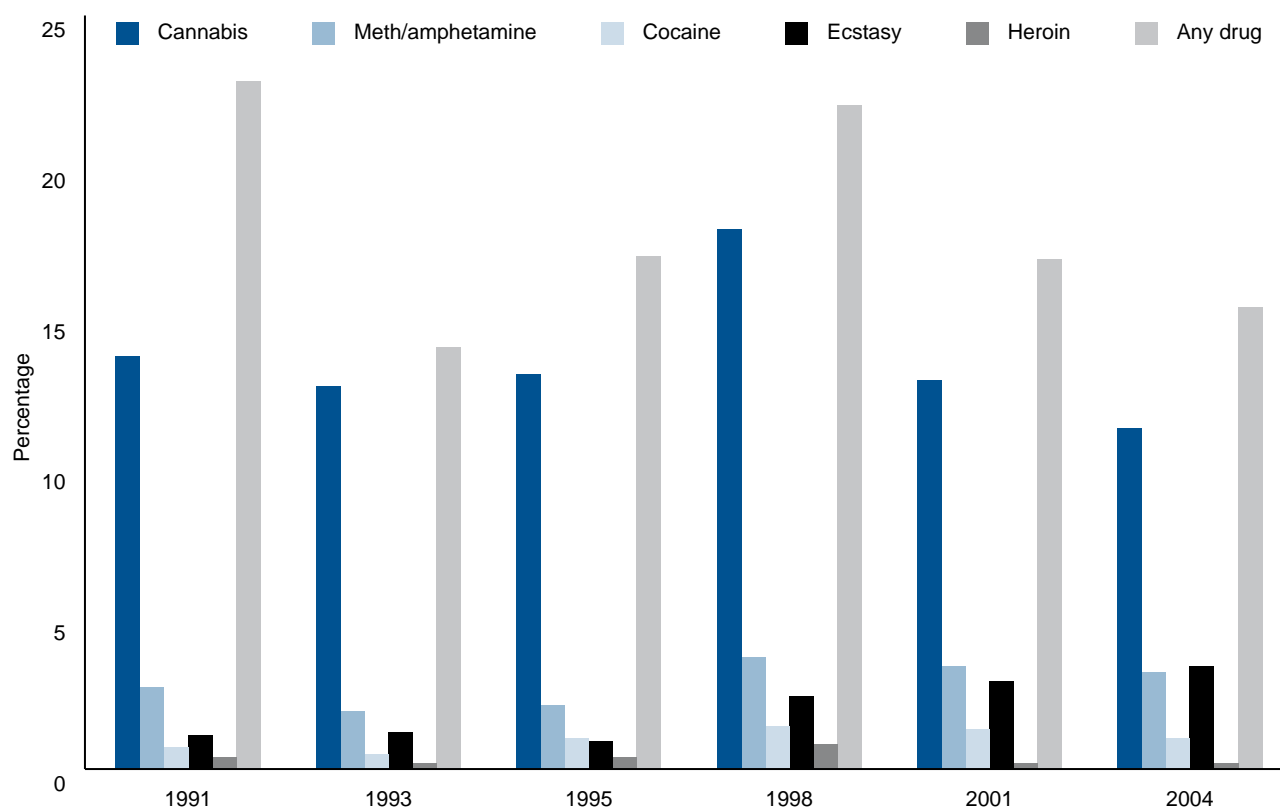


Trends in illicit drug use in Australia

The 2004 National Drug Strategy household survey was conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) at the request of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. This was the eighth and largest National Drug Strategy survey, the first being conducted in 1985. Almost 30,000 Australians participated in the 2004 survey, in which they were asked about their past and present drug consumption and attitudes towards drugs and drug policy. Earlier surveys asked similar questions, but employed smaller samples. According to the survey, in 2004, 38 percent of Australians aged 14 years and over admitted using an illicit drug at least once during their lifetime, and 15 percent said they used in the previous 12 months. The chart below shows trends in recent use (i.e. in the 12 months leading up to each survey) of selected illicit drugs between 1991 and 2004. Data from previous surveys are not shown because they are not strictly comparable, due to different methodologies. Throughout the period 1991–2004 cannabis was the illicit drug most likely to have been used recently, with 11 percent reporting using it in the past 12 months (2004 survey). Cannabis use has undergone an overall decline since 1991 (when it stood at 14%), with a pronounced peak in 1998 (18%). With the exception of ecstasy, use of other major illicit drugs, including meth/amphetamine (speed), cocaine and heroin, also peaked in the 1998 survey and declined thereafter. Recent use of ecstasy increased steadily in the period, from one percent in 1991 to three percent in 2004.

Use of selected illicit drugs in the past 12 months, 1991–2004, percentage



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2005. 2004 National Drug Strategy household survey: detailed findings. Canberra: AIHW