

*Brief Communication no.1**- ASSAD 2008: Tobacco*

## Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug Survey 2008 – Western Australian Tobacco Results

### 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 drugs use among students. The first survey of this nature was conducted in 1984 and investigated tobacco prevalence amongst school students.

As with previous surveys, the target population comprised all 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.

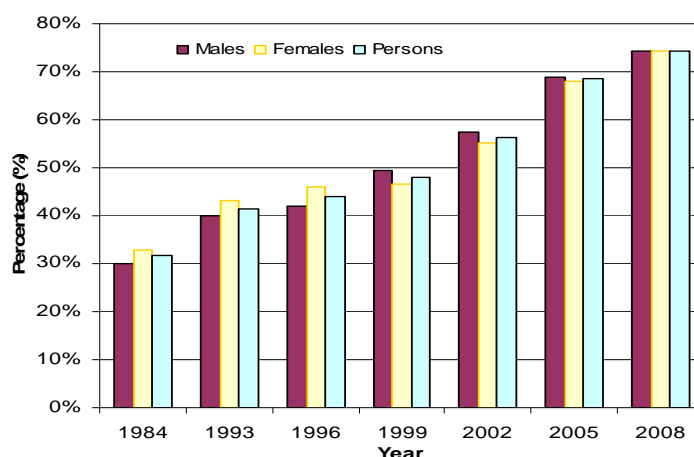
To increase representativeness of the sample population with respect to the Western Australian school enrolments for Semester 2, 2008, estimates for the prevalence (%) of tobacco use in this report are weighted according to age, gender and school type. These weights were obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and take into account information related to enrolment prevalence and differences regarding school leaving age over time. 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.

### Tobacco

The proportion of Western Australian school students aged 12 to 17 years who had **never tried** cigarettes in their lifetime significantly increased compared to 2005 (table 1) and continued a trend observed in previous years (figure 1).

In 2008, females were more likely to have smoked within the past week (5.1%) or year (16.8%) of being surveyed than males (4.6% and 14.9% respectively). However, significantly fewer females had smoked in the past week or month in the 2008 survey compared to those in 2005 and 1984 (table 1). Overall, fewer students reported having smoked in the past week, month, or year prior to being surveyed.

**Figure 1. Lifetime prevalence of school students aged 12 to 17 years who have never smoked for 1984 - 2008**



**Table 1. Prevalence of tobacco use of school students aged 12-17 years by gender and recency of use: 1984, 2005 & 2008**

	1984	2005	2008		1984	2005	2008
<b>Never smoked</b>			<b>%</b>	<b>Smoked in past month</b>			<b>%</b>
Male	30.0	68.9	*74.2	Male	23.0	7.6	7.7
Female	33.0	68.0	*74.3	Female	27.0	9.8	*7.8
Persons	31.6	68.5	*74.2	Persons	25.1	8.7	7.7
<b>Smoked in past year</b>				<b>Smoked in past week</b>			
Male	37.0	16.2	14.9	Male	17.0	5.5	4.6
Female	42.0	19.0	16.8	Female	18.0	6.8	*5.1
Persons	39.7	17.6	15.9	Persons	17.5	6.1	*4.8

\* Indicates a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between 2008 and 2005 survey results; adjusted for age and school type (for gender-specific results); adjusted for age, school type and gender (for 'Persons').

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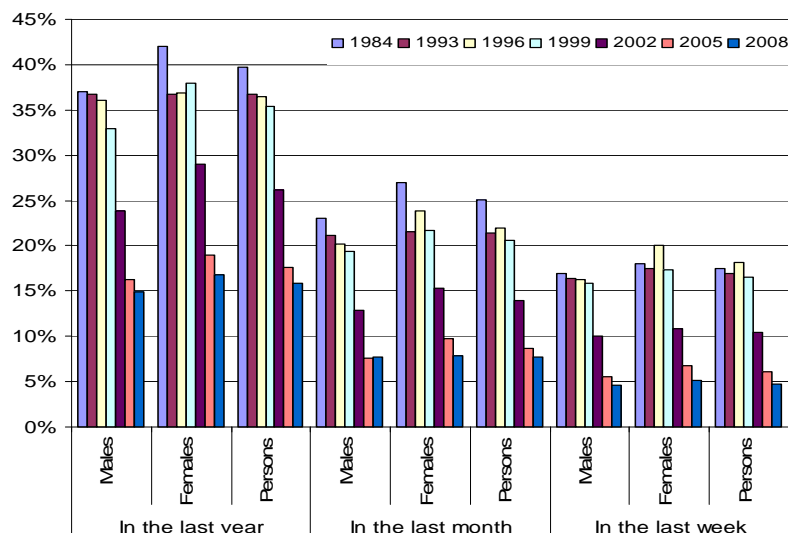
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Students aged 12 to 17 years who had smoked in the week prior to the 2008 survey had smoked an average of 3.6 days and 19.7% had smoked daily.

Of those who smoked in the week prior to the 2008 survey, more females intended to continue, or would be likely to continue to smoke in a year (51.6%) compared to males (48.4%). More females reported being an occasional or light smoker (4.3% and 2.3% respectively) than males (2.9% and 1.5% respectively).

Since 1984, tobacco use within 1 week, 1 month, and 1 year of being surveyed declined for both genders (figure 2). The prevalence of tobacco use in 2008 decreased by 50% or more in all categories reported, compared to 1984 (figure 2).

**Figure 2. Prevalence of tobacco use in school students aged 12 to 17 years between 1984 – 2008, by gender and recency of use**



**Table 2. Recency of tobacco smoking for school students by age for 2008**

	12yrs		13yrs		14yrs		15yrs		16yrs		17yrs		12-17yrs		14-17yrs	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
<b>Never smoked<sup>‡</sup></b>																
Males	87.3	144	83.6	186	78.5	161	64.4	217	57.0	208	55.1	63	74.2	979	66.8	649
Females	94.1	141	83.6	175	78.5	188	64.4	205	57.0	158	55.1	79	74.3	946	65.4	630
Persons	90.6	285	84.1	364	75.8	351	63.5	428	63.3	368	55.0	143	74.2	1939	66.1	1279
<b>Smoked in the last year<sup>‡</sup></b>																
Males	5.1	9	9.8	22	13.4	30	22.8	68	19.4	51	28.9	39	14.9	219	19.7	188
Females	2.9	5	11.2	25	16.7	44	23.9	79	26.5	71	26.3	31	16.8	255	22.7	255
Persons	4.1	15	10.5	47	15.0	74	23.4	149	23.0	123	27.6	70	15.9	478	21.2	413
<b>Smoked in the last month<sup>‡</sup></b>																
Males	2.9	5	3.7	8	7.6	16	12.3	36	11.1	29	12.4	20	7.7	114	10.5	101
Females	0.6	1	4.4	10	7.5	20	12.8	43	11.1	29	14.6	16	7.8	119	11.0	108
Persons	1.8	7	4.0	18	7.5	36	12.5	80	11.1	58	13.5	36	7.7	235	10.7	209
<b>Smoked in the last week<sup>‡</sup></b>																
Males	2.3	4	2.1	4	3.8	10	7.1	20	6.4	17	9.4	15	4.6	70	6.2	62
Females	0.0	0	2.2	5	5.6	15	8.7	29	7.0	19	9.8	10	5.1	78	7.5	73
Persons	1.2	5	2.2	9	4.7	25	7.9	49	6.7	36	9.6	25	4.8	149	6.8	135
<b>Mean number of cigarettes per week*</b>																
Males	6.8		4.8		28.5		19.6		18.4		24.3		20.0		22.0	
Females	0.0		4.8		17.8		18.6		9.0		13.7		14.8		15.5	
Persons	6.8		4.8		22.3		19.0		13.4		20.0		17.2		18.4	

\*Calculation of mean only includes students who smoked in the last week. Respondents who indicated that they smoked more than 40 cigarettes per day were excluded.

‡Total numbers (n) of males and females per age group may not equal the corresponding 'Persons' number due to missing data on gender status.

Suggested citation: Griffiths, P., Kalic, R. & Gunnell, A. (2009). *Australian School Student Survey 2008: Western Australian Tobacco Results*, Brief Communication no.1. Perth; Drug and Alcohol Office.

