

SELECT COMMITTEE ON TOBACCO HARM REDUCTION

Professor Emily Banks
Responses to Questions on Notice from
Hearing on Friday, 13 November 2020

QUESTION ON NOTICE 2: What are the rates of smoking amongst young people now? How is that changing?
[Senator Sheldon]

Response: evidence on smoking in young people in Australia

Contents include data from a report prepared for ANU by: Marianne Weber, Pavla Vaneckova, Stephen Wade, Qingwei Luo, Dianne O'Connell, Peter Sarich, Paul Grogan, Michael Caruana, and Karen Canfell

Current smoking

The ways of reporting smoking vary. The 2017 Australian Secondary Students' Use of Tobacco, Alcohol, Over-the-counter Drugs and Illicit Substances Study reported the proportion of 12-17 year olds who smoked more than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime (2%), who smoked in the past year (13%), who smoked in the past month (7%), who were current smokers that smoked in the past 7 days (5%), and who smoked 3 or more times in the past 7 days (5%)¹ (See Figure 1). In the 2017/18 National Health Survey, 1.9% of 15-17 years olds were daily smokers, a further 0.7% smoked less often than daily, and 1.7% were ex-smokers.² Among 14-17 years olds in the 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 3.1% of males and 0.7% of females were daily smokers³ (Figure 2).

The prevalence of current smoking has decreased over time, especially among young people (Figures 1 and 2). The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has stated that the falls in overall national prevalence of smoking are largely driven by younger people not taking up smoking.³

Figure 1. Proportion of smokers in the Australian Secondary Students' Use of Tobacco, Alcohol, Over-the-counter Drugs and Illicit Substances by smoking behaviour and survey year.¹

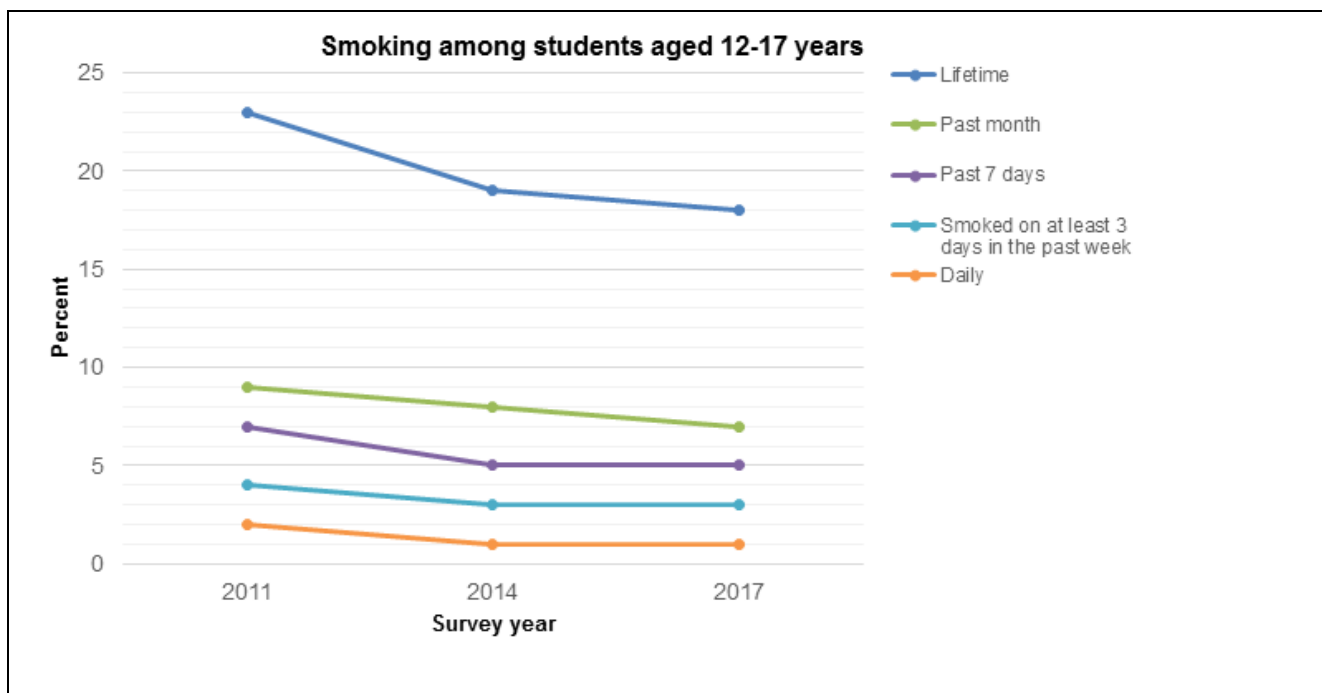
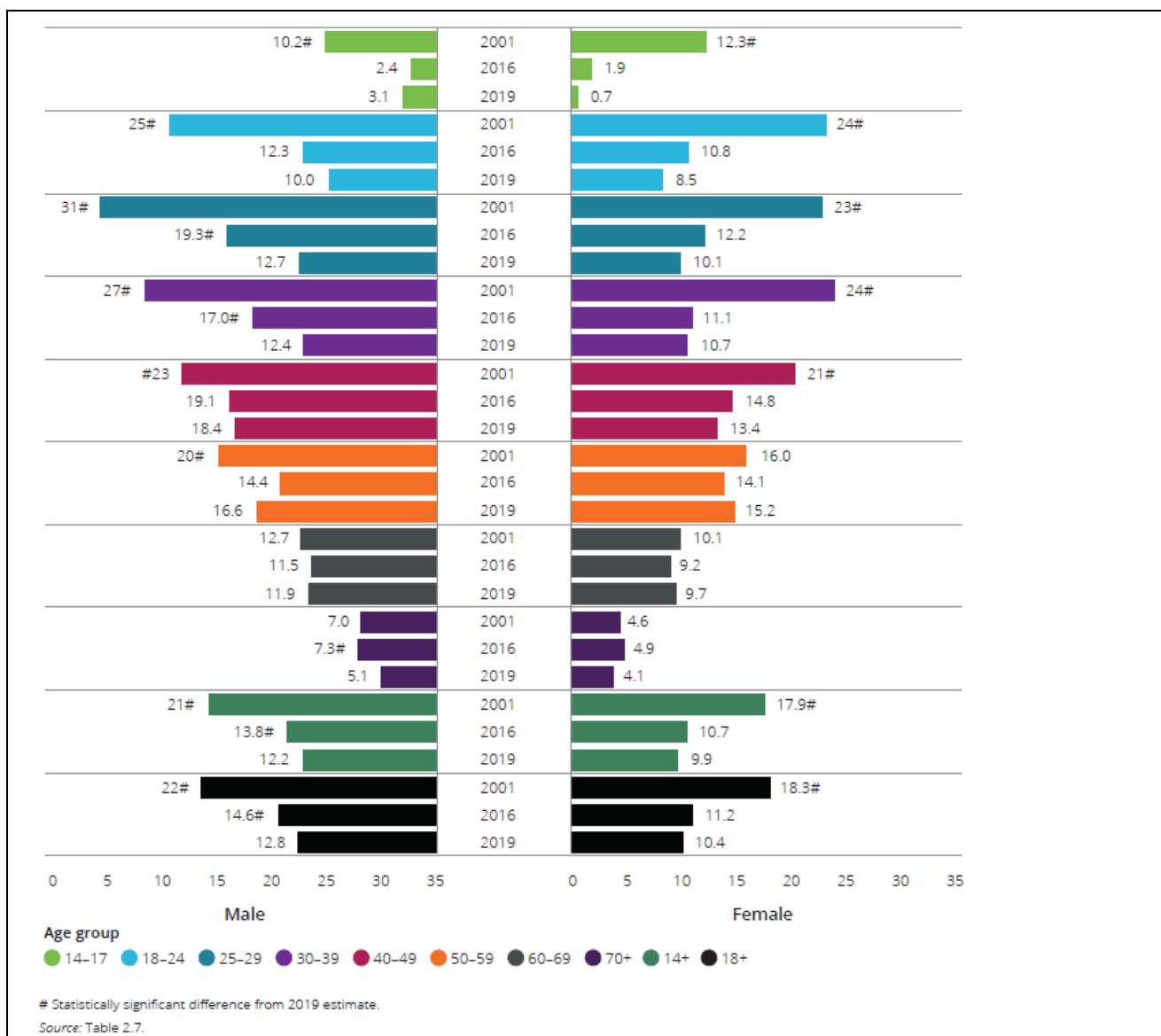


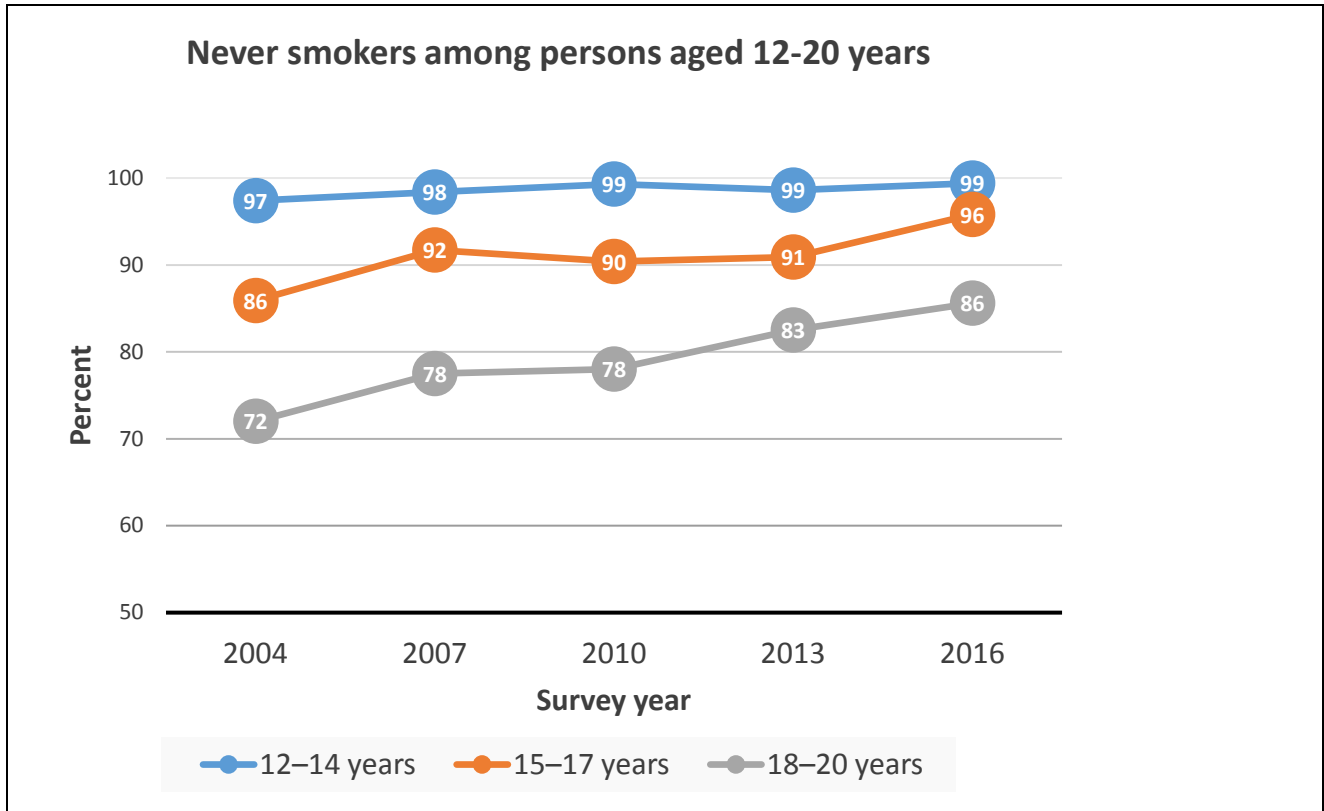
Figure 2. Proportion of daily smokers in the Australian population, by age and sex, 2001, 2016 and 2019 (per cent)³



Never smoking

The proportion of the population who have never smoked is an increasingly important indicator. The proportion of children aged 12-14 years who were reported as never smoking in the 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey was 99.4% and for those aged 15-17 years was 95.8%. In 2019, the National Drug Strategy Household Survey reported that 96.6% of youth aged 14-17 had never smoked. In the 2017/18 National Health Survey, 95.3% of those aged 15-17 were never smokers. The prevalence of never smoking in the Australian Secondary Students' Use of Tobacco, Alcohol, Over-the-counter Drugs and Illicit Substances Study was lower, at 83% for those aged 12-17 years. In all 3 surveys, the prevalence of never smokers among teenagers has increased over time (Figure 3). The 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey reported that between 2001 and 2016 there was a five-fold increase in the number of youths who reports as never having smoked.³

Figure 3. Proportion of never smokers in the National Drug Strategy Household Survey by age and survey year.⁴



References

1. Guerin N, White V. ASSAD 2017 Statistics & Trends: Australian Secondary Students' Use of Tobacco, Alcohol, Over-the-counter Drugs, and Illicit Substances. Melbourne, VIC, 2018.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. National Health Survey: First Results, 2017-18. Canberra: ABS, 2019.
3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019. Canberra: AIHW; 2020.
4. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016: detailed findings. Drug Statistics series no. 31. Cat. no. PHE 214. Canberra: Australian Government, 2017.