



**Alcohol and Tobacco Use by ACT
Secondary School Students
1996-2002**

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Background

In 2002 ACT Health and the Cancer Council ACT conducted a survey of 1678 secondary school students aged 12-17 years attending government, catholic and independent schools in the ACT. The ACT has participated in this three yearly survey series, the Australian Secondary School Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) Survey, in 1996, 1999 and 2002. The survey included questions relating to tobacco, alcohol, other substance use and sun protection. Questions on nutrition and physical activity were included in the survey for the first time in 2002.

This paper presents results from the 2002 survey and trends in alcohol consumption since 1996. The data are weighted to ensure the survey sample represents the population of ACT secondary students. Results described as statistically significant are significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Alcohol consumption by ACT secondary students

Key results:

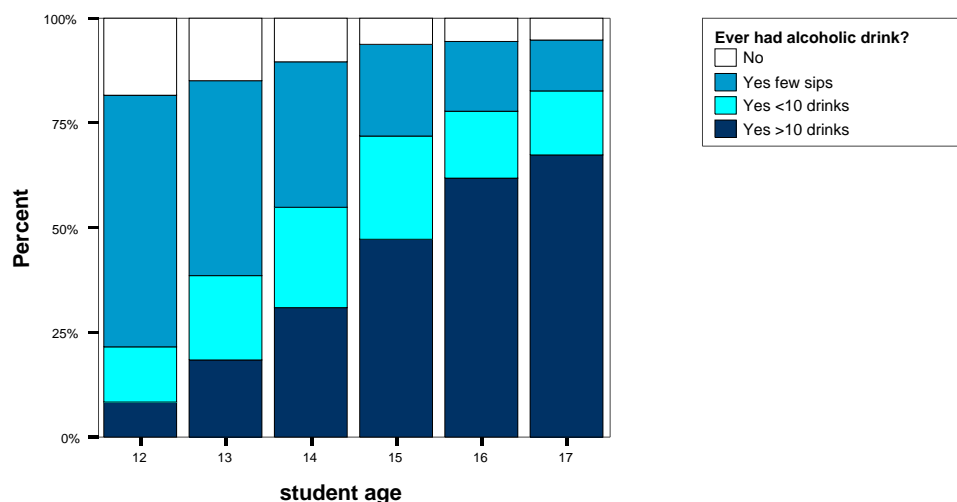
- Sixteen year old students were most likely to report that they had engaged in binge drinking.
- Seventeen year old males and females were most likely to have consumed alcohol in the last week.
- The majority of male students preferred to drink beer and spirits. The majority of female students preferred to drink pre-mixed spirits or other spirits.
- Students aged 12 to 15 years were most likely to drink at home. Older students were most likely to drink at a party or celebration.

Consumption of alcohol

In 2002, 90 per cent of secondary school students in the ACT reported having consumed alcohol at least once in their lifetime, with similar results observed for males and females. These proportions equate to an estimated 24,950 secondary school students in the ACT (12,710 males, 12,240 females).

The proportion of students who reported having ever tried alcohol increased with age (Figure 1).

Figure 1: 'Have you ever had an alcoholic drink' by age, ACT 2002.

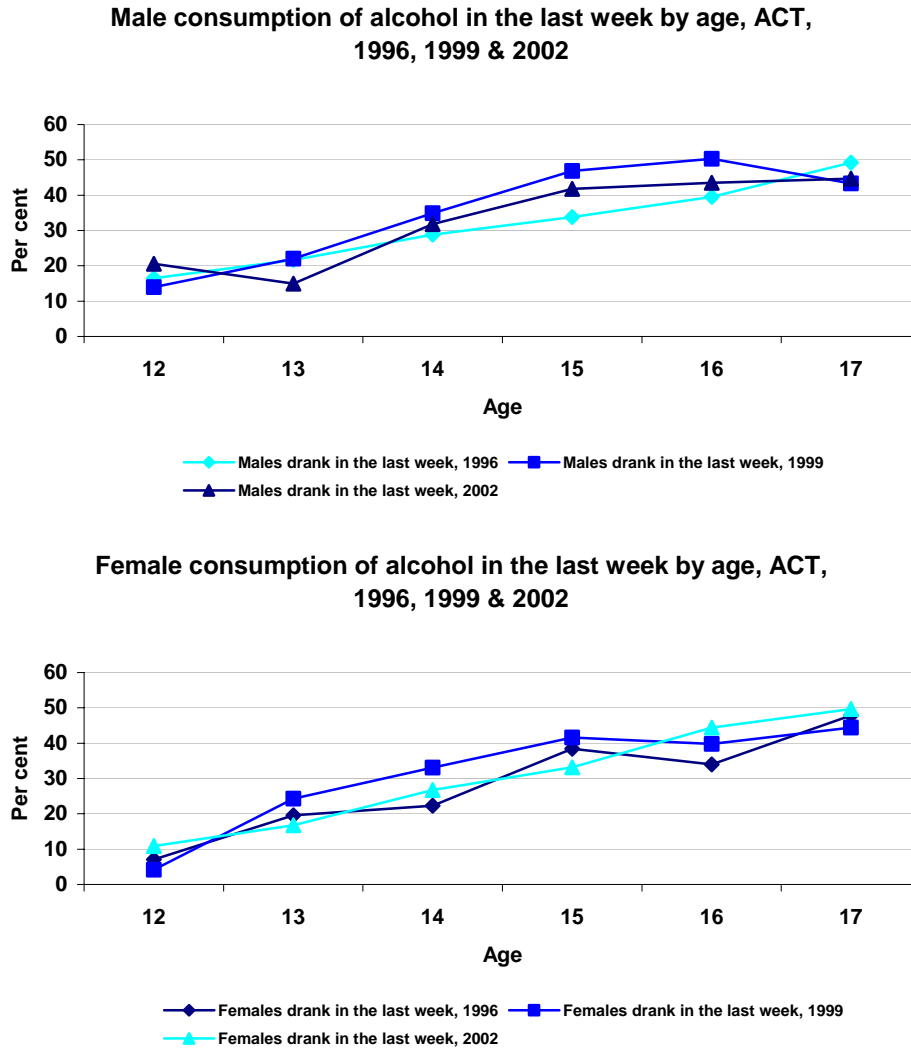


Over two thirds (67.3%) of 17 year olds had consumed more than 10 alcohol drinks in their lifetime, compared with only 11.5% of 12 year olds. There has been little change in the proportion of students reporting to have tried alcohol between 1996 and 2002.

Recent consumption of alcohol

The prevalence of recent alcohol consumption by male and female students has not changed significantly since 1996. Overall, 32.6% of males and 29.8% of females reported that they had consumed alcohol in the last week. The prevalence of drinking alcohol during the week prior to the survey increased with age (Figure 2). In 2002 seventeen year old males (44.7%) and females (49.7%) were the most likely to have consumed alcohol in the last week.

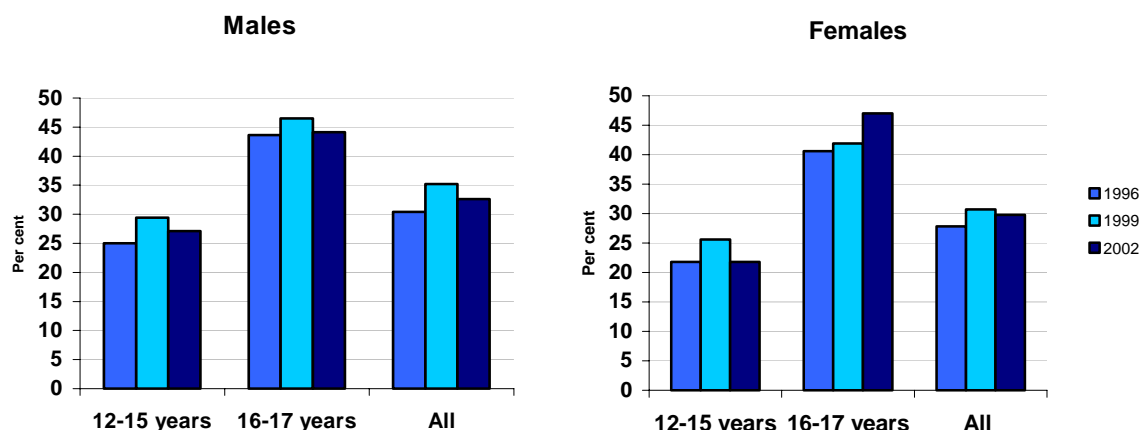
Figure 2: Consumption of alcohol in the past week by sex & age, ACT 1996, 1999 & 2002 (%).



For all three surveys the prevalence of drinking alcohol in the week prior to the survey was significantly higher in the 16-17 year age group than the 12-15 year age group (2002 45.5% vs 24.5%).

In 2002 males aged 12-15 years were significantly more likely to report that they had consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey than females aged 12-15 years (27.1% vs 21.8%) (Figure 3). No significant difference in recent alcohol consumption was observed between males and females in the 16-17 year age group (male 44.1%, female 47.0%).

Figure 3: Students who had consumed alcohol in the last week by age groups and sex, ACT 1996, 1999 & 2002 (%).

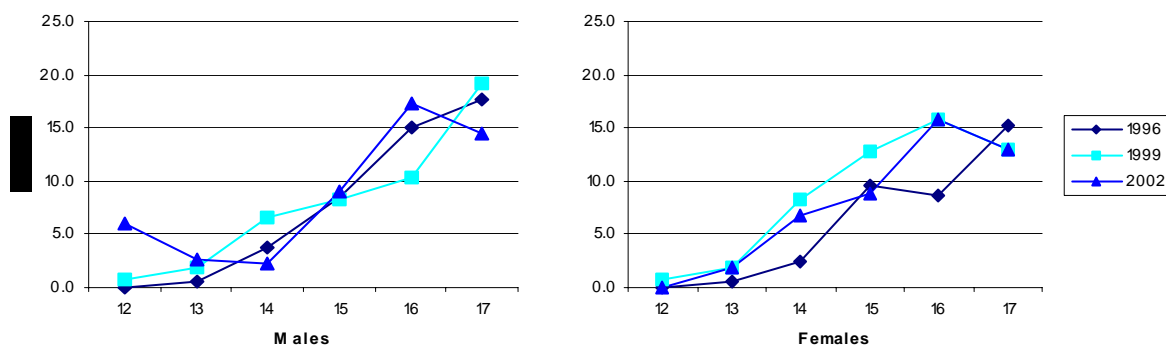


Harmful alcohol consumption

Current alcohol consumption guidelines recommend that females not consume more than four alcoholic drinks on any one day, and that males not consume more than six alcoholic more drinks on any one day.¹ Consumption above these levels is thought to significantly increase the short-term risk of health and social problems.

Harmful alcohol consumption by students was therefore defined as five or more drinks on any one day in the week prior to the survey for females, and seven or more drinks on any one day in the week prior to the survey for males. The overall prevalence of harmful alcohol consumption by students was similar over the three surveys, ranging from 6.4% in 1996 to 8.1% in 1999 and 8.0% in 2002. In 2002, the prevalence of harmful alcohol consumption in male and female students was similar (males 8.5%, females 7.5%). Sixteen year old male (17.2%) and female (15.7%) students were most likely to report harmful alcohol consumption in 2002 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Students engaging in harmful alcohol consumption in the week prior to the survey, ACT 1999 & 2002.



¹ Australian Alcohol Guidelines: Health Risks and Benefits, NHMRC, 2001.

Preferred alcoholic drinks

The majority of males reported that they preferred beer and spirits, while the majority of females preferred pre-mixed spirits and spirits. The percentage of females reporting beer as their preferred drink decreased from 20.1% in 1996 to 12.8% in 2002. The popularity of pre-mixed spirits among female students is evident.

Table 1: Type of alcohol students prefer, ACT 1996, 1999 & 2002 (%)

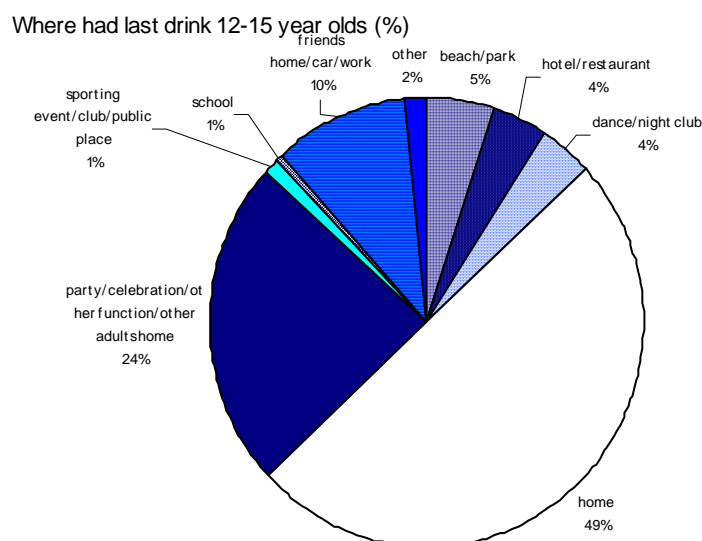
Male	1996	1999	2002
Ordinary beer	42	42.8	41.4
Spirits	30.5	35.7	36.7
Premixed spirits	*	*	22.3
Wine	20.6	18.2	18.4
Low alcoholic beer	10.3	12.6	10.6
Female	1996	1999	2002
Premixed spirits	*	*	42.2
Spirits	31.9	35.9	30.7
Wine	21.2	24.2	18.8
Ordinary beer	20.1	15.9	12.8
Liquers	13.2	12.7	11.1

*Previously included as 'alcoholic sodas'.

Places where alcohol was consumed

Students who reported that they had consumed alcohol at least once in their lifetime alcohol were asked where they had consumed their last drink. Students aged 12-15 years were most likely to report that they had consumed their last drink at home (49.9%), or at a party, function or at the home of an adult other than their parents (23.5%). Other locations reported by students are presented in Figure 5.

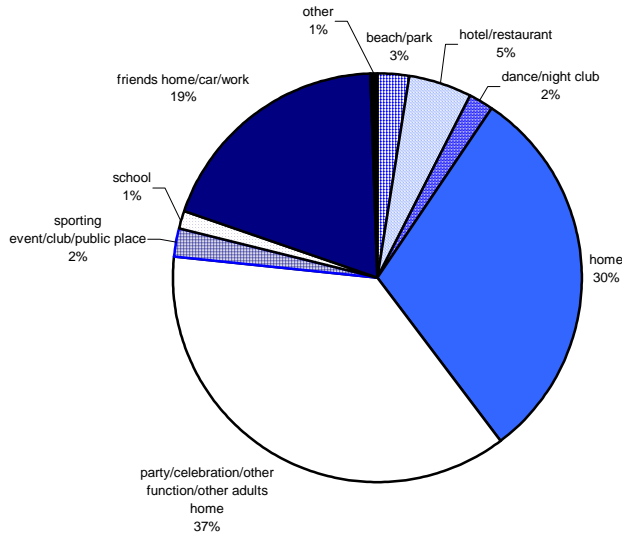
Figure 5: Places where students reported consuming their last alcohol drink, 12-15 years of age, ACT 2002.



The majority of 16-17 year olds reported that they had consumed alcohol at a party or other adults home (37%); at home (30.3%); with friends at home/in car or at work (19.2%); and hotel/restaurant (5.1%) (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Places where students reported consuming their last alcohol drink, 16-17 years of age, ACT 2002.

Where had last drink -16-17 years (%)



Attitudes to alcohol

Over three quarters of students in 2002 agreed that 'you can have a good party without alcohol'. Similar findings were observed in previous surveys.

Almost half of male students and 40 per cent of female students agreed that 'occasionally getting drunk is not a problem'. Male students were more likely to agree that 'drinking is the best way of relaxing' (41.9%) than female students (24.6%). Almost double the proportion of males students agreed that 'drinking is the best way to get to know others' compared with female students (Table 2).

Table 2: Attitudes to drinking, per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing, by sex, ACT 1996, 1999 & 2002 (%).

MALES	1996	1999	2002
Agree or strongly agree that:			
You can have a good party without alcohol	79.6	74.0	74.8
Occasionally getting drunk is no problem	43.5	52.6	48.4
Drinking is the best way of relaxing	37.2	45.4	41.9
Drinking is the best way to get to know people	34.3	42.6	38.6
Drinkers are usually more popular	26.3	30.2	33.6
Drinking makes you part of the group	13.2	14.9	30.3
FEMALES	1996	1999	2002
Agree or strongly agree that:			
You can have a good party without alcohol	86.3	81.9	87.8
Occasionally getting drunk is no problem	43.1	47.1	40.4
Drinkers are usually more popular	19.6	30.0	25.8
Drinking is the best way of relaxing	24.3	27.4	24.6
Drinking is the best way to get to know people	21.9	23.3	21.2
Drinking makes you part of the group	6.1	10.2	16.4

The proportion of students – male students in particular - reporting that ‘drinking makes you part of the group’ increased significantly between 1999 and 2002, while the proportion of students agreeing that ‘drinking is the best way of relaxing’ and ‘drinking is the best way of getting to know people’ decreased significantly between 1999 and 2002.

Education in class on alcohol

In 2002 80.7% of students surveyed recalled receiving at least part of a lesson in class on alcohol in the previous year. The proportion of students receiving lessons on alcohol varied with age, ranging from 72.8% of 12 year olds to 87.5% of 15 year olds. The proportion of students receiving education was highest among 14-16 year olds. Overall, the proportion of students who reported having received education on alcohol was similar for the three surveys. However, reported education has decreased among 12-13 year olds since 1996 and increased among 14-17 year olds (Table 3).

Table 3: Received at least part of a lesson in class on alcohol by age and year, ACT 1996, 1999 and 2002 (%).

AGE	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
During 2002	72.8	74.7	86.1	87.5	86.5	75.8	80.7
During 1999	74.3	77.3	83.3	83.2	84.1	66.9	78.3
During 1996	76.4	81.4	80.1	73.9	78.4	63.7	76.1

Tobacco use by ACT secondary students

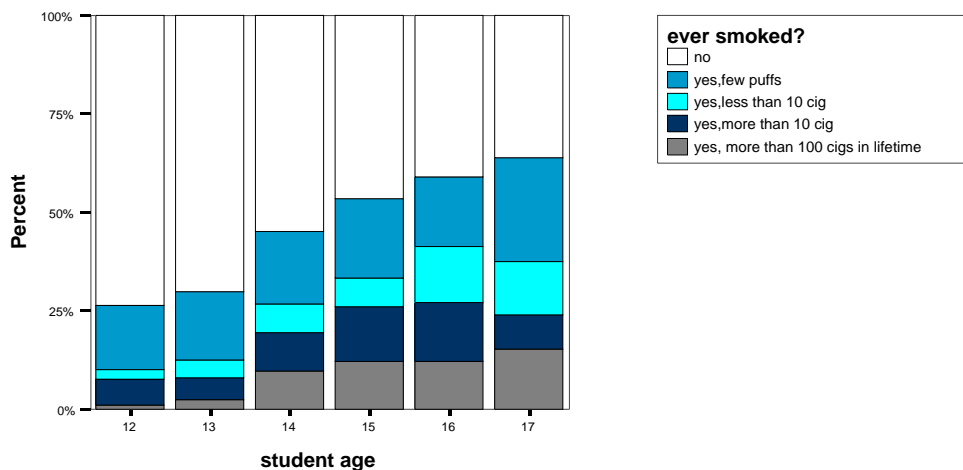
Key results:

- Current tobacco use decreased significantly since 1999 for both male and female students.
- Females were more likely than males to have tried smoking and to be current smokers.
- The percentage of students who purchased their last cigarette has decreased significantly since 1996.
- Nearly half (45.9%) of ACT secondary school students have used tobacco at least once in their lifetime.
- Nearly half (46.3%) of current smokers indicated that they intended to continue smoking in 12 months compared with 2.2% of current non-smokers.

Use of tobacco

In 2002, 45.9% of secondary students in the ACT reported having used tobacco at least once in their lifetime, with females (46.9%) only slightly more likely to have used tobacco than males (44.9%). These proportions equate to an estimated 12,745 secondary students in the ACT (6,135 males, 6,429 females).

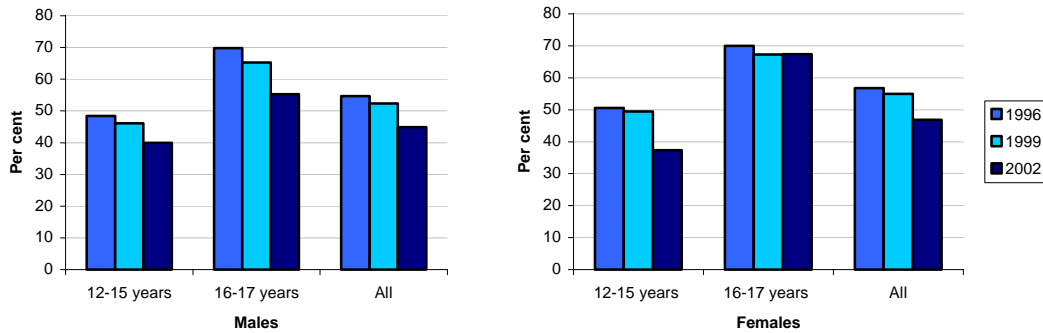
Figure 7: 'Have you ever smoked' by age, ACT 2002 (%).



Use of tobacco increased significantly with age (Figure 7), with students aged 16-17 years more likely to have tried smoking than students aged 12-13 years.

There has been a significant decrease in students reporting that they had tried smoking, with students in 2002 10 per cent less likely to report this than students in 1996. The decrease in students who had tried tobacco was observed for both younger and older male students, and for younger female students, but not for older female students (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Ever smoked, by sex and age group, ACT 1996, 1999 & 2002 (%).

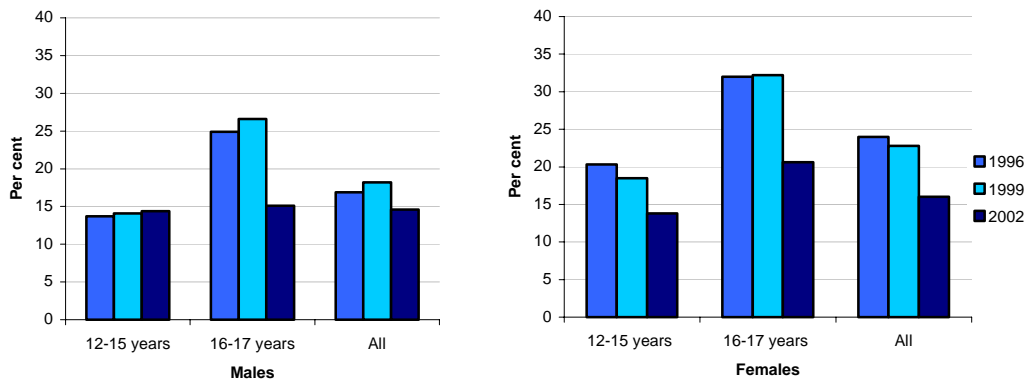


Recent use of tobacco

Overall, 15 per cent of males and 16 per cent of females reported current tobacco use (ie. they had smoked in the week prior to the 2002 survey). Students aged 16-17 years were more likely to report current tobacco use than students aged 12-15 years.

Between 1996 and 2002 there was a decrease of students reporting that they had smoked in the week prior to the survey, from 21 per cent to 15 per cent. A larger decrease was observed for female students compared with male students in both the 12-15 year and 16-17 year age groups (Figure 9). While female students were still slightly more likely than male students to be current smokers, this difference is no longer significant.

Figure 9: Smoked in week prior to survey, by sex and age group, ACT 1996, 1999 & 2002 (%).



There has been a large decrease since 1999 in older students (aged 16-17 years) reporting being current smokers (11.5% for males and 11.6% for females).

Quantity of tobacco used

In 2002, of those students who had smoked in the last week, 42.6 per cent reported smoking 7 cigarettes or less and a further 21.3 per cent reported smoking between 7 and 25 cigarettes in a week. In 1999, these proportions were similar: 39.0 per cent and 22.0 per cent.

The median number of cigarettes smoked in the last week was significantly higher for students aged 16-17 years (males 31 cigarettes, females 20 cigarettes) than students aged 12-15 years (males 4 cigarettes, females 12 cigarettes).

Preferred Brands

The preferred cigarette packet size reported by current smokers was 25's for both males (45.0%) and females (39.5%). This was followed by 20's for males (32.9%) and females (24.4%).

The five most preferred brands for male and female students were Winfield; Longbeach; Peter Jackson; Benson & Hedges and Dunhill (Table 4).

Table 4: Preferred brand of cigarettes by sex, ACT 1996, 1999 & 2002 (%).

Males	1996	1999	2002
Winfield	27.8	32.4	45.5
Longbeach	5.9	14.2	30.7
Benson & Hedges	9.8	19.4	21.3
Peter Jackson	41.5	40.7	17.8
Dunhill	4.4	15.3	15.7

Females	1996	1999	2002
Winfield	17.6	33.7	40.2
Peter Jackson	53.7	38.8	31.1
Longbeach	5.8	9.4	16.7
Benson & Hedges	9.4	16.5	13.0
Dunhill	2.8	7.2	12.7

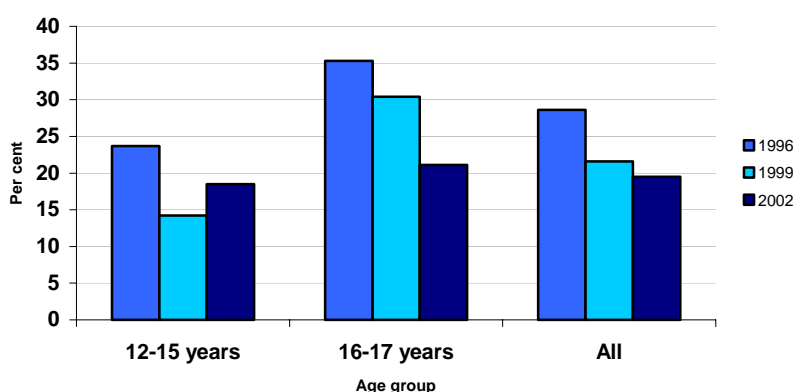
Preferences for the Peter Jackson brand cigarettes have fallen considerably since 1996, from 48.7% to 24.3% in 2002. Initially this drop in preference was observed among female students between 1996 and 1999 and then among male students between 1999 and 2002. Preference for the Winfield brand increased significantly among female students between 1996 and 1999, and then among male students between 1999 and 2002. Preferences for Longbeach and Dunhill have also increased since 1996.

Source of tobacco

Students who reported current tobacco use were asked where they had obtained their last cigarette. The majority of current smokers had not bought their last cigarette (81.0%). The most frequently reported sources of tobacco were friends (36.7%); asking somebody to buy their cigarettes (21.1%); parents (7.5%); siblings (6.0%); or taking the cigarette from home (6.5%).

Overall, the percentage of students who reported that they had bought their last cigarette decreased significantly between 1996 (28.6%) and 2002 (19.5%) (Figure 10). The percentage of students aged 16-17 years who bought their last cigarette decreased from 35.3% in 1996 to 22.1% in 2002. No significant difference was seen between the two age groups regarding whether their last cigarette had been bought in 2002 (16-17 years 22.1%, 12-15 years 17.4%). Cigarettes were most frequently purchased from supermarkets, petrol stations and friends.

Figure 10: Percentage of students who bought their last cigarette by age group, ACT 1996,1999 & 2002.

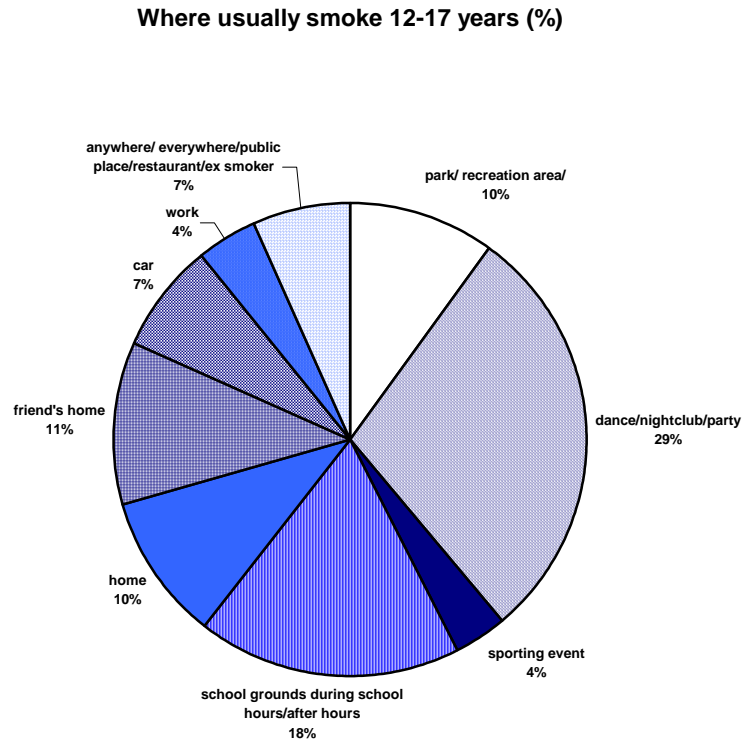


The proportion of current smokers who had purchased a single cigarette or cigarettes that were not in a packet increased from 21.3% in 1996 to 40.4% in 2002. Seventy four per cent of students purchased their cigarettes from a friend or relative and a further 18.9 per cent purchased the cigarettes from another person.

Places where students' smoked

Students who had tried smoking were asked where they had smoked their last cigarette. Students were most likely to smoke at a dance venue/nightclub/party (28.4%), followed by school (18%), friend's home (10.8%) and home (9.9%) (Figure 11). Similar results were observed for students aged 12-15 and 16-17 years.

Figure 11: Places where students reported usually smoking cigarettes, ACT 2002.



Attitudes to smoking

The majority of female (92.7%) and male (83.8%) students agreed that passive smoking can affect your health, similar to findings in previous surveys (1996 and 1999).

The proportion of students who agreed that smokers are usually more popular has decreased significantly since 1999, with just over one quarter of students (31.4% males, 25.3 % females) agreeing that smokers are usually more popular in 2002. A slight decrease was also observed in the proportion of students who agreed that 'people who smoke seem more mature' over the three surveys (Table 5). Eleven per cent of males and 6.1 per cent of females agreed with this statement in 2002.

Table 5: Attitudes to smoking, agreeing or strongly agreeing by sex, ACT 2002 (%).

	Males			Females		
	1996	1999	2002	1996	1999	2002
Passive smoking can affect your health	87.7	86.6	83.8	92.6	90.5	92.7
Smokers are usually more popular	31.3	32.3	31.4	30.4	38.0	25.3
People who smoke seem more mature	11.7	11.6	11.5	8.7	7.3	6.1

Intention to be smoking in 12 months

Of those students that currently smoked, 23.3% reported that they were unlikely to be smoking in twelve months, and 46.3% indicated that they would be smoking in twelve months. Another 30.3% of current smokers were unsure of their future smoking status.

Education in class on smoking

In 2002, 80.4 per cent of students recalled having received an education session in class on smoking during the previous year. The proportion of students receiving education varied a little by age, with 17 year olds the least likely to have received education and 15 year olds the most likely to receive education (Table 6).

Table 6: Received at least part of a lesson in class on smoking by age, ACT 2002 (%).

Age	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
During 2002	81.6	77.8	86.2	88.0	78.9	69.3	80.4
During 1999	83.8	90.1	88.3	86.1	84.1	66.1	83.3
During 1996	83.9	84.0	82.2	77.4	75.0	57.9	77.4

Notes

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