

## 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

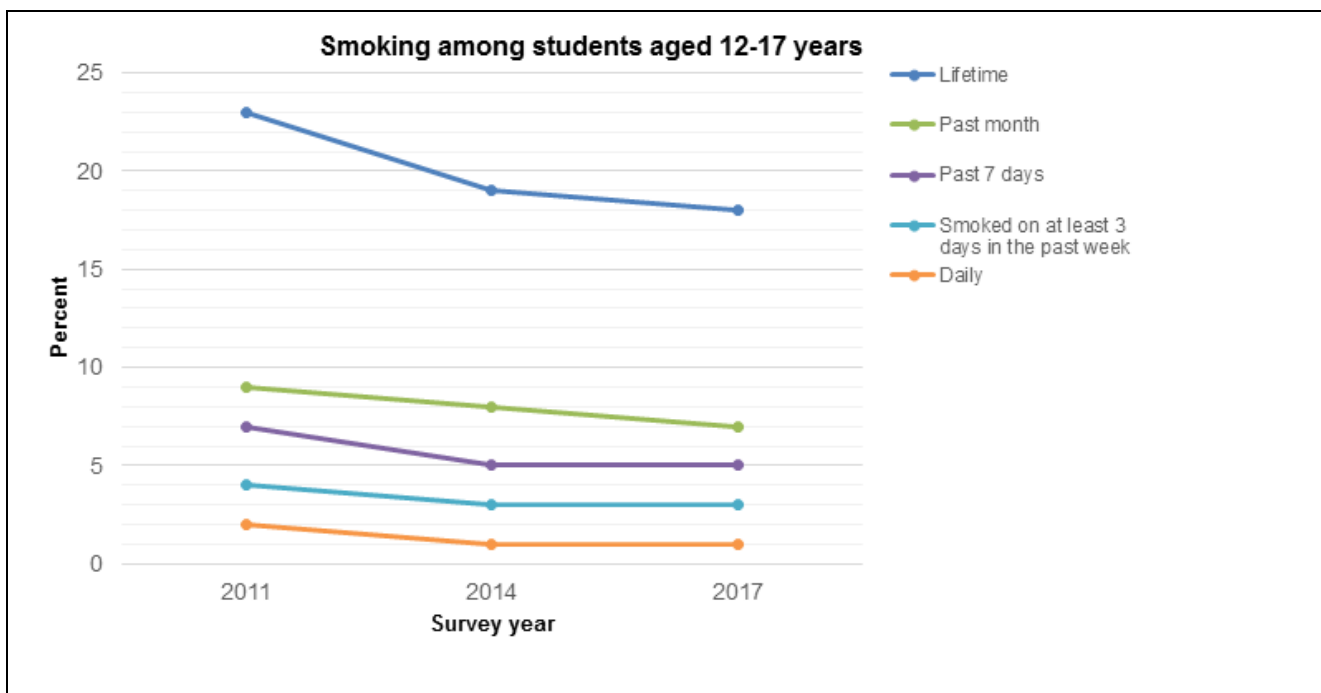
Contents include data from a report prepared for ANU by: Marianne Weber, Pavla Vaneckova, Stephen Wade, Qingwei Luo, Dianne O'Connell, Peter Sarich, Paul Grogan, Michael Caruana, and Karen Canfell

#### Current smoking

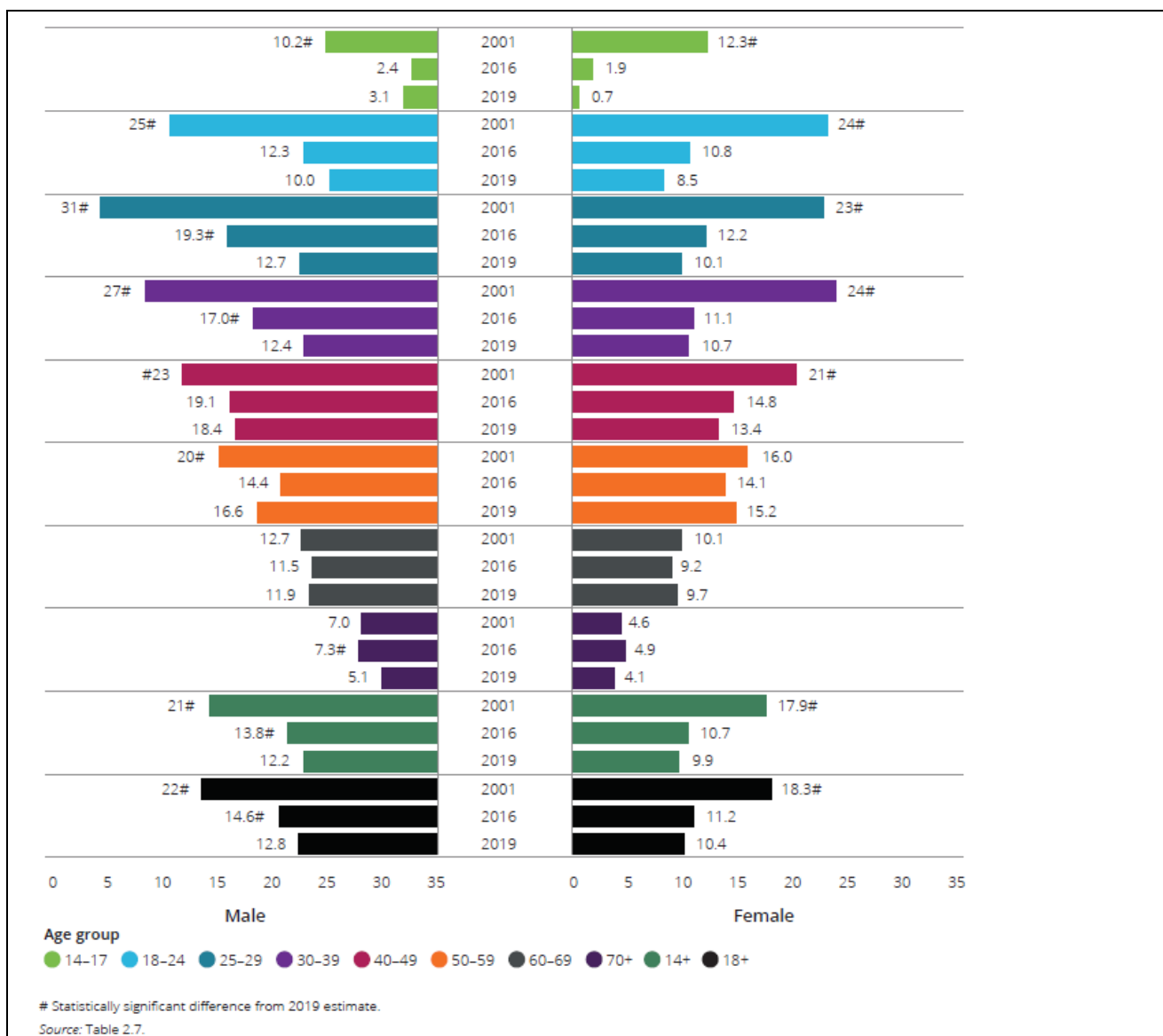
The ways of reporting smoking vary. The 2017 Australian Secondary Students' Use of Tobacco, Alcohol, Over-the-counter Drugs and Illicit Substances Study reported the proportion of 12-17 year olds who smoked more than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime (2%), who smoked in the past year (13%), who smoked 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%)<sup>1</sup> (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.<sup>2</sup> Among 14-17 years olds in the 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 3.1% of males and 0.7% of females were daily smokers<sup>3</sup> (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.<sup>3</sup>

**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.**<sup>1</sup>



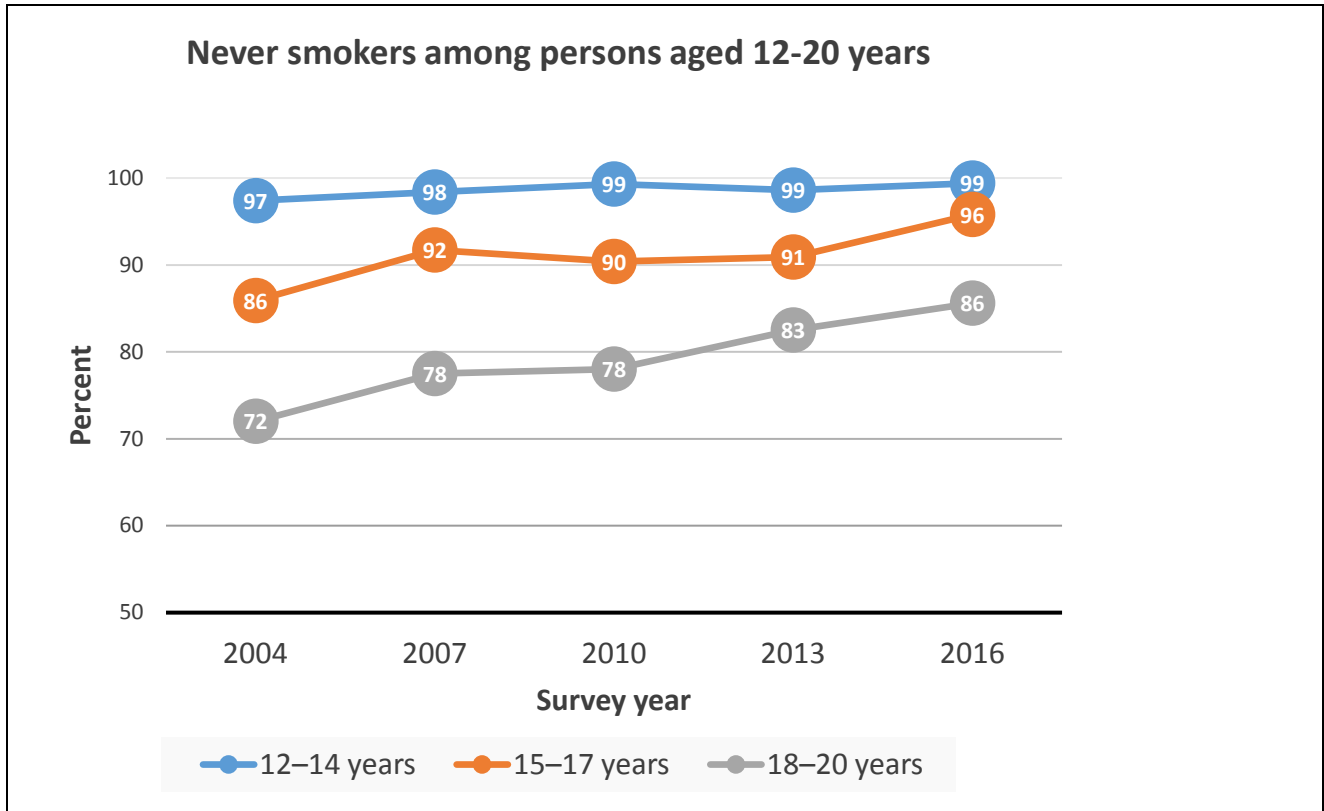
**Figure 2. Proportion of daily smokers in the Australian population, by age and sex, 2001, 2016 and 2019 (per cent)<sup>3</sup>**



### 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.<sup>3</sup>

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



### 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.