

Wednesday, 29 January 2020

Number of Australians taking cold, flu and allergy medication up by almost 3 million in a decade

New health and wellbeing data from Roy Morgan shows that while the rate of Australians' overall medication consumption has risen only slightly compared to a decade ago, the use of allergy, antihistamine, and cold and flu drugs has leapt up.

The proportion of Australians (14+) who reported taking any form of medication in a 12-month period rose from 88.4% (15.6 million) in 2009 to 89.1% (18.5 million) in 2019. A higher proportion of women than men take medication, but men experienced a slightly larger increase in use over the last decade. Their rate increased 0.8% points to 85.7%, compared to women, up 0.5% points to 92.3%.

The taking of medication is also highly correlated to age with use highest amongst Australians aged 65+ (95.4%), 50-64 (93.9%) and 35-49 (91.4%). The taking of medication drops significantly down to 82.6% for those aged 25-34 and 79.6% for those under 25.

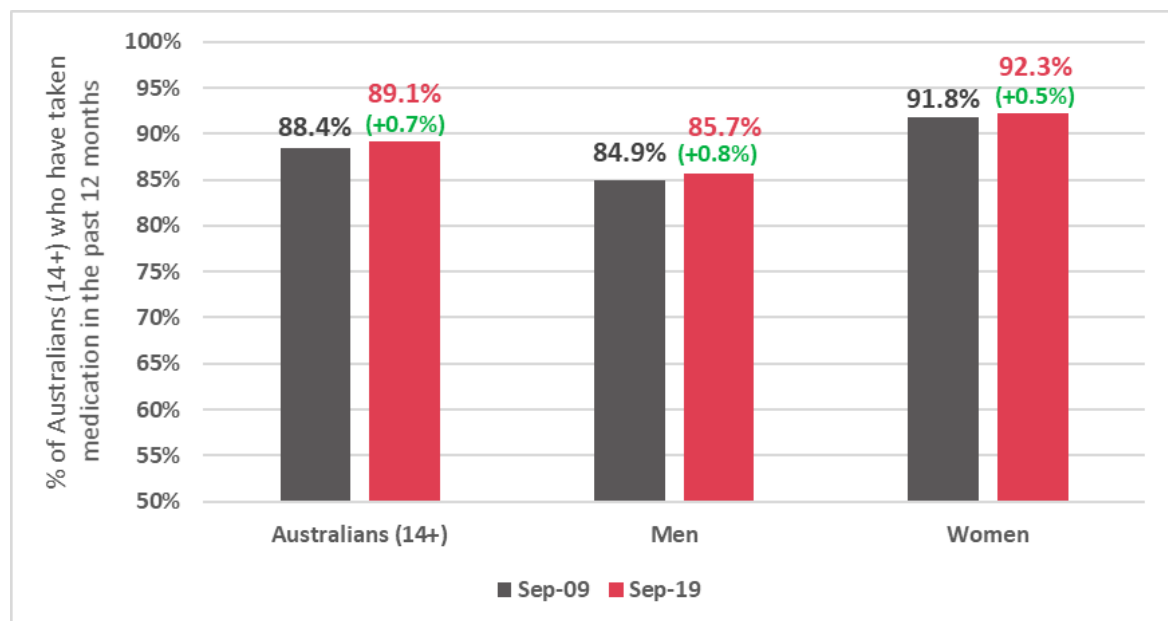
The findings are taken from the Roy Morgan Single Source survey, compiled by in-depth face-to-face interviews with over 1,000 Australians each week in their homes.

Roy Morgan CEO Michele Levine says very high rates of medication consumption, particularly among women and the elderly, have become normalised in Australia.

"Although the increase in overall medication consumption compared with 10 years ago has been minimal, it is still moving in an upward direction. 'General medications', such as paracetamol and ibuprofen are the most widely consumed medication types, with just under 80% of Australians having taken them in an average 12 months. However, the biggest increase has occurred with allergy, antihistamine, and cold and flu drugs, up by more than a third over the past 10 years. Digestive system medications, although taken by a smaller number of Australians, also increased considerably over the same period.

"In our society an extremely high proportion of women, as well as those aged over 35, consume medication. And while correctly used medication undoubtedly plays a very important role in health and wellbeing, it's worth considering whether consumption rates will eventually reach the whole population, or whether future generations will begin to reverse the trend."

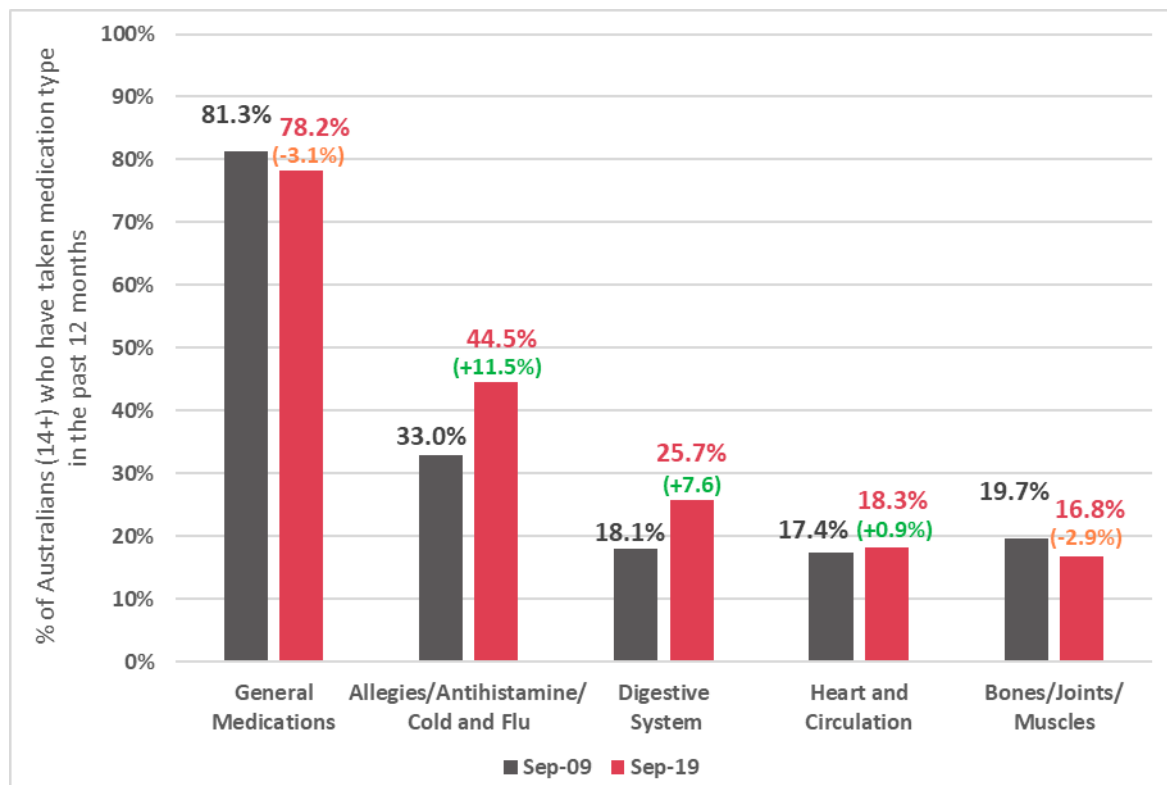
Proportion of Australians who have taken medication in an average twelve months



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source Australia, October 2008 – September 2009, n = 51,699. October 2018 – September 2019, n = 49,462. **Base:** Australians 14+.

General Medications were consumed by the highest proportion of Australians (78.2%) in an average twelve-month period. These were followed by Allergy/Antihistamine/Cold and Flu Medications (44.5%), Digestive System Medications (25.7%), Heart and Circulation Medications (18.3%) and Bone/Joint/Muscle Medications (16.8%).

Proportion of Australians who have taken medication type in an average twelve months



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source Australia, October 2008 – September 2009, n = 51,699. October 2018 – September 2019, n = 49,462. **Base:** Australians 14+.

For comments or more information about Roy Morgan's health and wellbeing data please contact:

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Related research findings

For further in-depth analysis, take a look at Roy Morgan's [Health and Wellbeing](#) products.

About Roy Morgan

Roy Morgan is Australia's largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state, as well as in the U.S. and U.K. A full-service research organisation, Roy Morgan has over 75 years' experience collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2