

2 Client profile

This chapter highlights the important features, including demographic profiles, of clients that utilised alcohol and other drug treatment services in 2000–01. The data are predominantly reported in this chapter according to the principal drug of concern.

2.1 Client registrations

A total of 83,529 clients were registered for treatment during 2000–01 (Table 2.1). Male clients accounted for the majority of registrations (64%). Most persons registered for treatment were between 20 and 39 years of age (62%), with persons under 20 accounting for 14% of the total.

Table 2.1: Client registrations by age group and sex, Australia^(a), 2000–01

| Age group (years) | Males | | Females | | Total ^(b) | |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| 10–19 | 7,462 | 8.9 | 4,281 | 5.1 | 11,841 | 14.2 |
| 20–29 | 19,679 | 23.6 | 9,875 | 11.8 | 30,147 | 36.1 |
| 30–39 | 13,832 | 16.6 | 7,415 | 8.9 | 21,475 | 25.7 |
| 40–49 | 7,426 | 8.9 | 4,700 | 5.6 | 12,193 | 14.6 |
| 50–59 | 3,022 | 3.6 | 2,006 | 2.4 | 5,048 | 6.0 |
| 60+ | 958 | 1.1 | 601 | 0.7 | 1,562 | 1.9 |
| Not stated | 678 | 0.8 | 567 | 0.7 | 1,263 | 1.5 |
| Total | 53,057 | 63.5 | 29,445 | 35.3 | 83,529 | 100.0 |

(a) Excludes Queensland.

(b) Includes Not stated (Sex).

Clients were classified according to whether they were seeking treatment for their own substance use or for the substance use of another person (e.g. spouse, relative or friend). The majority of clients (88%) who registered for treatment were seeking help for their own substance use (Table 2.2). Of those who presented for someone else's drug use, two-thirds were female clients (66%). Age appears to be a factor in client type. The average age of clients seeking help for the substance use of others (39.3 years) was higher than that of clients seeking help for their own drug use (30.7 years) (see Appendix Table A4.4).

Table 2.2: Client registrations by client type and sex, Australia^(a), 2000-01

| Client type | Males | | Females | | Total ^(b) | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| Own drug use ^(c) | 48,996 | 92.3 | 23,927 | 81.3 | 73,769 | 88.3 |
| Other's drug use | 2,073 | 4.0 | 4,332 | 14.7 | 6,535 | 7.8 |
| Not stated | 1,988 | 3.7 | 1,186 | 4.0 | 3,225 | 3.9 |
| Total | 53,057 | 100.0 | 29,445 | 100.0 | 83,529 | 100.0 |

(a) Excludes Queensland.

(b) Includes Not stated (Sex).

(c) Own drug use also includes clients who were seeking treatment for both their own and other's drug use (0.6% of total client registrations).

Indigenous status

There were 6,571 clients (8%) who identified themselves as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in the 2000-01 collection (Table 2.3). This is a higher proportion than the overall proportion of Indigenous people in the total Australian population (2.4%), based on the Estimated Resident Population at 30 June 2001 (ABS 2002). However, because the overall proportion of clients with a 'not stated' Indigenous status slightly exceeds that reported for Indigenous status, this figure should be reported with caution as it may be an under-count of the actual number of Indigenous clients in treatment (note also the caveat in Section 1.6).

Table 2.3: Client registrations by age group and Indigenous status^(a), Australia^(b), 2000-01

| Age group (years) | Indigenous ^(a) | | Non-Indigenous | | Not stated | | Total | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| 10-19 | 1,185 | 1.4 | 9,854 | 11.8 | 802 | 1.0 | 11,841 | 14.2 |
| 20-29 | 2,341 | 2.8 | 25,393 | 30.4 | 2,413 | 2.9 | 30,147 | 36.1 |
| 30-39 | 1,943 | 2.3 | 17,619 | 21.1 | 1,913 | 2.3 | 21,475 | 25.7 |
| 40-49 | 716 | 0.9 | 10,274 | 12.3 | 1,203 | 1.4 | 12,193 | 14.6 |
| 50-59 | 223 | 0.3 | 4,361 | 5.2 | 464 | 0.6 | 5,048 | 6.0 |
| 60+ | 40 | 0.0 | 1,379 | 1.7 | 143 | 0.2 | 1,562 | 1.9 |
| Not stated | 123 | 0.1 | 1,016 | 1.2 | 124 | 0.1 | 1,263 | 1.5 |
| Total | 6,571 | 7.9 | 69,896 | 83.7 | 7,062 | 8.5 | 83,529 | 100.0 |

(a) Includes those clients who identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

(b) Excludes Queensland.

Source of referral

More than a third of all clients (34%) were self-referred (Table 2.4). Referrals from alcohol and drug treatment services (11%) and community-based corrections (10%) were also common. Male clients were more likely than female clients to have been referred from community-based corrections or police and court diversion with 16% of all male clients referred from these sources compared to only 6% of all female clients. Female clients were more likely to have been referred from other sources. However, the large proportion of referrals reported as 'Other' (11%) means that interpretations of these figures should be made cautiously.

Table 2.4: Client registrations by source of referral and sex, Australia^(a), 2000-01

| Source of referral | Males | | Females | | Persons ^(b) | |
|---|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| Self | 17,520 | 33.0 | 11,103 | 37.7 | 28,667 | 34.3 |
| Family member / friend | 3,895 | 7.3 | 2,635 | 8.9 | 6,541 | 7.8 |
| GP / medical specialist | 4,312 | 8.1 | 2,876 | 9.8 | 7,191 | 8.6 |
| Psychiatric and other hospitals | 2,054 | 3.9 | 1,149 | 3.9 | 3,203 | 3.9 |
| Community mental health services | 874 | 1.6 | 564 | 1.9 | 1,438 | 1.7 |
| Alcohol & drug treatment services | 5,433 | 10.2 | 3,498 | 11.9 | 8,947 | 10.7 |
| Other community health / care services ^(c) | 2,657 | 5.0 | 2,111 | 7.2 | 4,773 | 5.7 |
| Community-based corrections | 6,024 | 11.4 | 1,220 | 4.1 | 8,086 | 9.7 |
| Police and court diversions | 2,219 | 4.2 | 607 | 2.1 | 2,834 | 3.4 |
| Other | 6,695 | 12.6 | 2,725 | 9.3 | 9,515 | 11.4 |
| Not stated | 1,374 | 2.6 | 957 | 3.3 | 2,334 | 2.8 |
| Total | 53,057 | 100.0 | 29,445 | 100.0 | 83,529 | 100.0 |

(a) Excludes Queensland.

(b) Includes Not stated (Sex).

(c) Comprises other residential community care unit; non-residential medical and/or allied health care agency; other non-residential community health care agency / outpatient clinic; and other community service agency.

2.2 Principal drug of concern

The principal drug of concern refers to the main substance that the client states led him or her to seek treatment from the alcohol and other drug treatment agency. For the tables in this section, only those clients who were seeking treatment for their own substance use were included. It is reasoned that only substance users themselves can accurately report their substance use behaviour and their principal drug of concern.

Jurisdictions

Nationally, alcohol (34%) and heroin (28%) were the principal drugs of concern for which the majority of clients were seeking treatment. Cannabis (14%) and amphetamines (9%) were the next most commonly reported (see Appendix Table A4.11 for more details).

Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported in all jurisdictions except for the Commonwealth ('Other' category), the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria

(Table 2.5). In the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria, alcohol was less commonly reported than heroin, whereas, for the Commonwealth, alcohol was the fourth most reported principal drug of concern. The Commonwealth finding is due to these agencies specialising in treatment programs targeted at clients who have problems related to illicit drugs.

Table 2.5: Substance users^(a) by principal drug of concern and jurisdiction^(b), 2000–01

| Principal drug | NSW | Vic | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT | Other ^(c) | Total |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Analgesics | | | | | | | | | |
| (Per cent) | | | | | | | | | |
| Heroin | 32.7 | 33.3 | 14.4 | 16.8 | 2.3 | 43.5 | 2.7 | 40.5 | 28.4 |
| Methadone | 2.1 | 1.4 | 0.7 | 3.9 | 5.7 | 0.3 | — | 2.6 | 1.8 |
| Balance of analgesics ^(d) | 1.3 | 8.3 | 1.5 | 8.7 | 7.7 | 0.1 | 9.8 | 1.0 | 4.6 |
| <i>Total analgesics</i> | <i>36.1</i> | <i>43.0</i> | <i>16.6</i> | <i>29.4</i> | <i>15.7</i> | <i>43.9</i> | <i>12.5</i> | <i>44.1</i> | <i>34.8</i> |
| Sedatives and hypnotics | | | | | | | | | |
| Alcohols | 36.0 | 29.2 | 29.5 | 41.7 | 38.8 | 36.3 | 65.9 | 12.3 | 33.6 |
| Benzodiazepines | 2.5 | 2.3 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 2.3 | 1.4 | 0.2 | 2.3 | 2.1 |
| Balance of sedatives and hypnotics ^(d) | — | 0.2 | 0.1 | — | 0.5 | — | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| <i>Total sedatives and hypnotics</i> | <i>38.5</i> | <i>31.7</i> | <i>30.8</i> | <i>43.7</i> | <i>41.6</i> | <i>37.7</i> | <i>66.4</i> | <i>14.8</i> | <i>35.8</i> |
| Stimulants and hallucinogens | | | | | | | | | |
| Amphetamines | 8.3 | 4.1 | 21.3 | 10.5 | 11.8 | 10.9 | 7.4 | 16.4 | 9.1 |
| Cannabinoids | 10.9 | 16.4 | 20.7 | 8.5 | 22.9 | 6.7 | 9.7 | 15.7 | 14.0 |
| Ecstasy | — | 0.4 | * | * | * | * | — | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Cocaine | 0.8 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.2 | * | 0.3 | * | 0.3 | 0.4 |
| Nicotine | 1.5 | 0.6 | * | 0.5 | 2.4 | * | 1.8 | 0.8 | 1.0 |
| Balance of stimulants and hallucinogens ^(d) | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.3 | n.p. | n.p. | 0.1 | n.p. | 0.1 | 0.3 |
| <i>Total stimulants and hallucinogens</i> | <i>21.9</i> | <i>21.9</i> | <i>43.5</i> | <i>19.8</i> | <i>37.5</i> | <i>18.2</i> | <i>19.2</i> | <i>33.5</i> | <i>25.0</i> |
| Balance of drugs of concern ^(d) | 3.4 | 1.5 | 5.5 | 5.7 | 1.4 | 0.1 | 1.8 | 3.8 | 3.0 |
| Not stated/missing | — | 1.9 | 3.5 | 1.4 | 3.6 | — | — | 3.9 | 1.4 |
| Total (per cent) | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Total (number) | 26,344 | 26,535 | 10,188 | 6,165 | 1,343 | 2,720 | 2,061 | 1,638 | 76,994 |

(a) Substance user population comprises all client registrations excluding clients seeking treatment for the drug use of others.

(b) Excludes Queensland.

(c) Other NGOTGP services not currently reported through a State or Territory collection.

(d) Balance of drugs coded according to Australian Standards Classification of Drugs of Concern. See Appendix 5.

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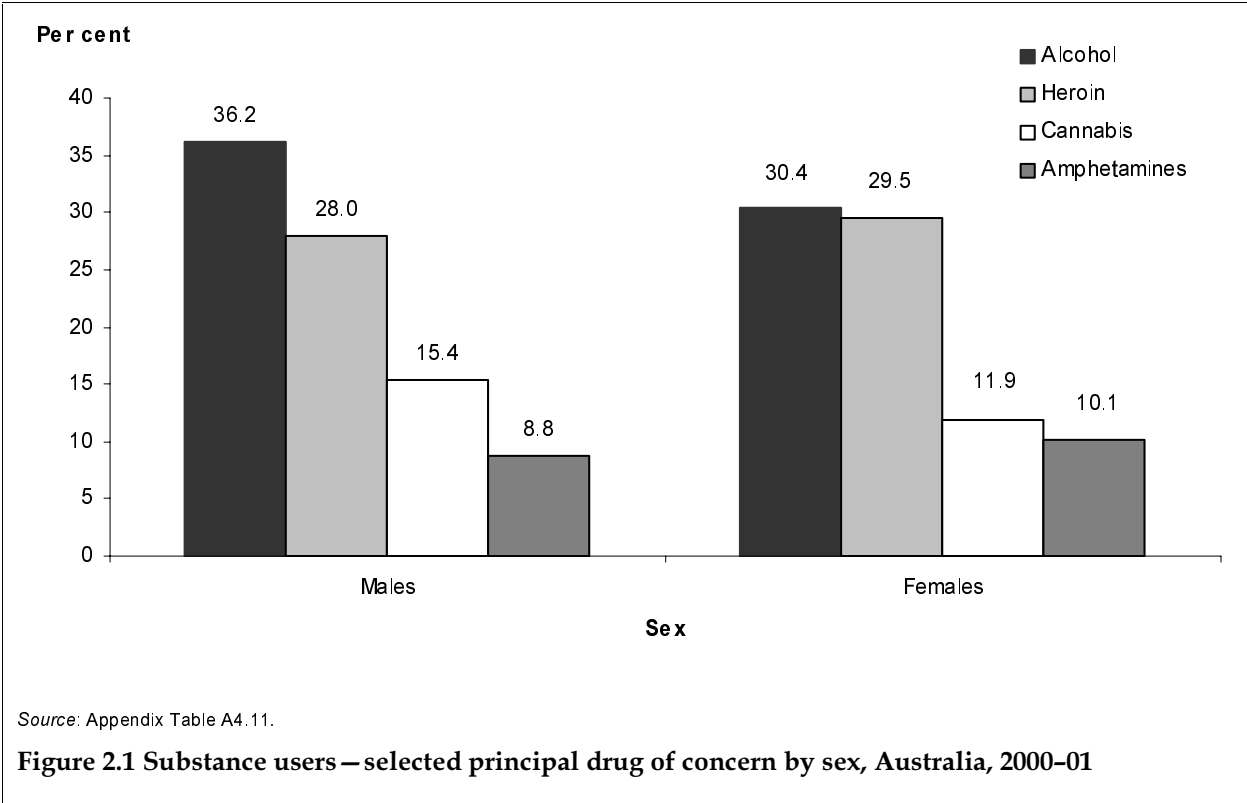
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The national reporting of heroin as a major drug of concern was not replicated in Tasmania (where heroin was reported as the principal drug of concern for only 2% of clients) or the Northern Territory (only 3% of clients). This is consistent with the findings of the Illicit Drug Reporting System (Topp et al. 2002).

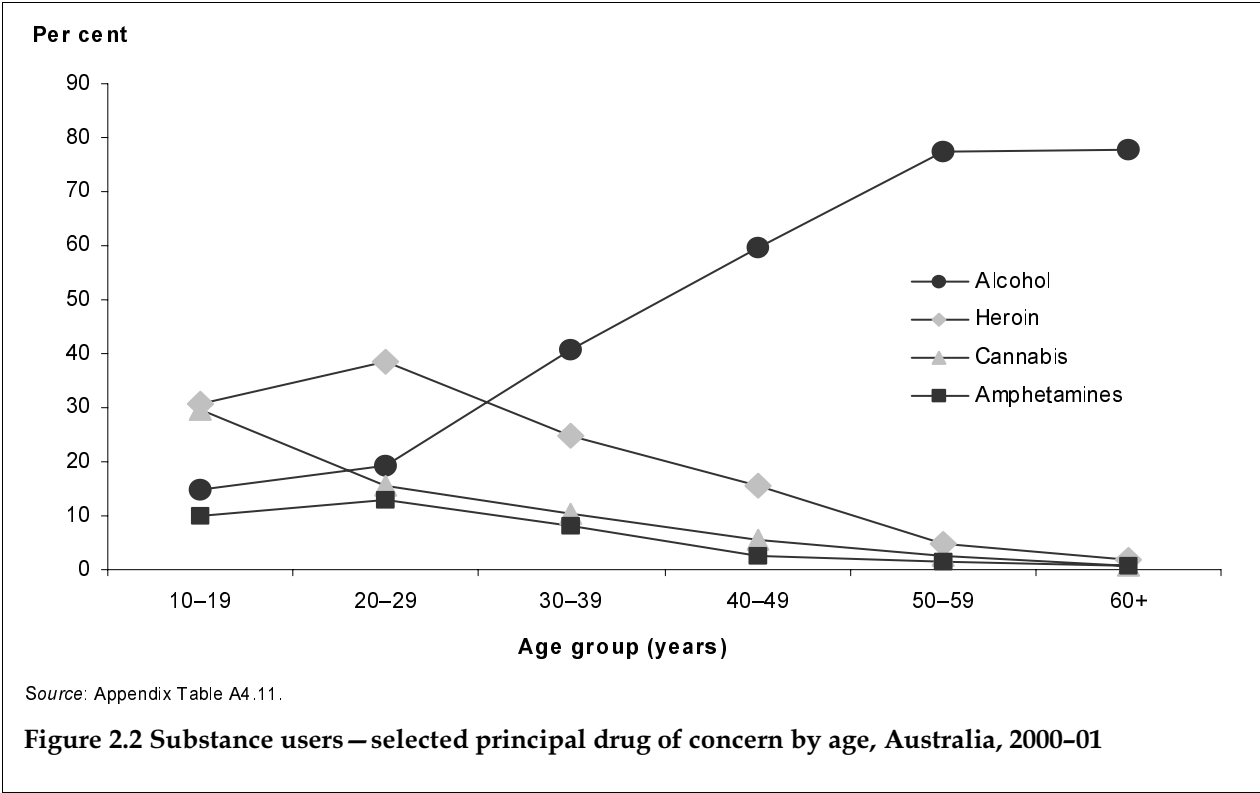
Alcohol, cannabinoids and amphetamines were more commonly reported as principal drugs of concern for clients in Tasmania, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. In the Northern Territory, alcohol was reported as the principal drug of concern for two-thirds of substance using clients (66%).

Sex and age

Gender differences for principal drugs of concern were relatively minor (Figure 2.1). A higher proportion of male clients reported alcohol (36%) and cannabis (15%) as their principal drug of concern compared to female clients (30% and 12% respectively). A slightly higher proportion of female clients reported amphetamines as their principal drug of concern (10%) than male clients (9%).

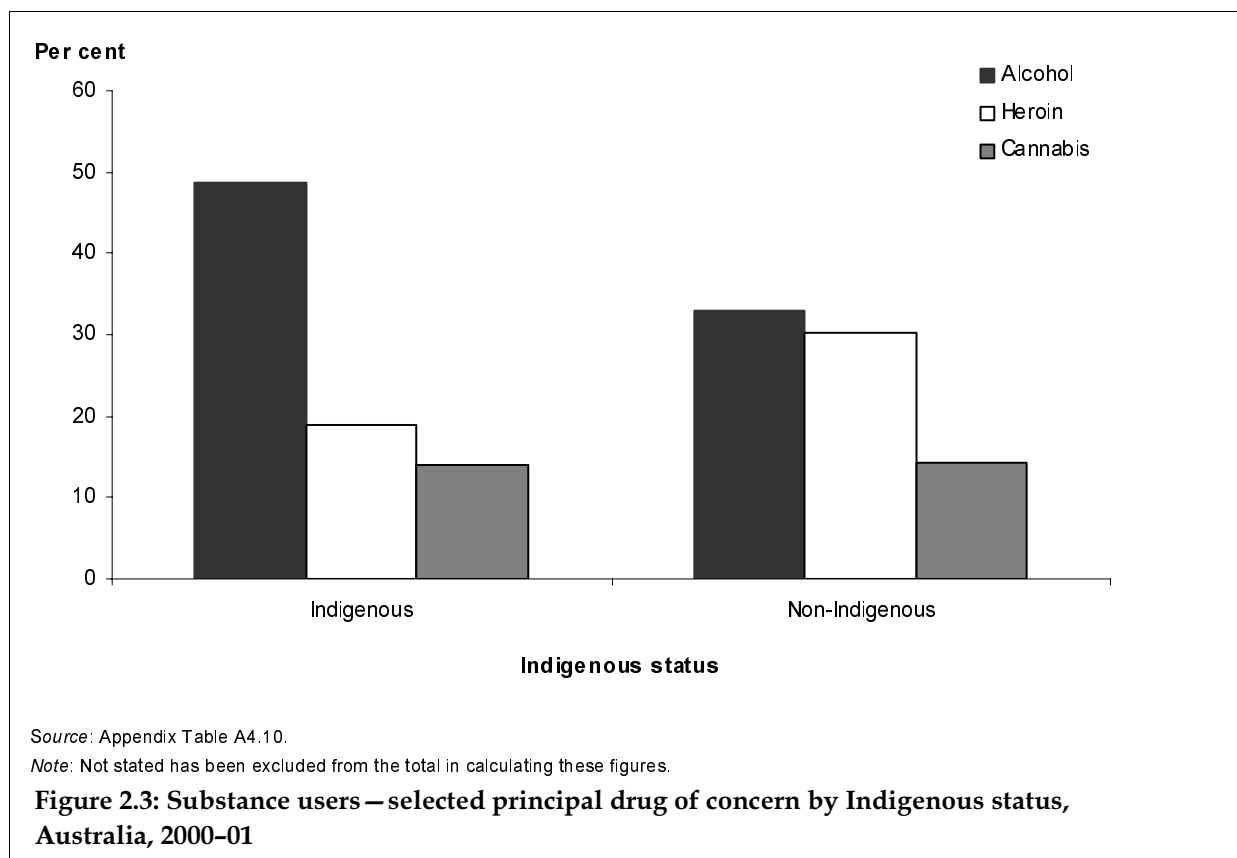


Age was found to interact with principal drug of concern, in that the proportion of clients seeking treatment for alcohol increased with age, whereas the proportion of clients seeking treatment for heroin decreased with age (Figure 2.2). For example, 15% of all clients in the age group 10–19 were seeking treatment for alcohol and 31% for heroin, however 78% of all clients in the age group 50–59 were seeking treatment for alcohol and only 5% for heroin. Heroin (31%) and cannabis (30%) were the most common principal drugs reported for teenage clients (see Appendix Table A4.11 for more details).



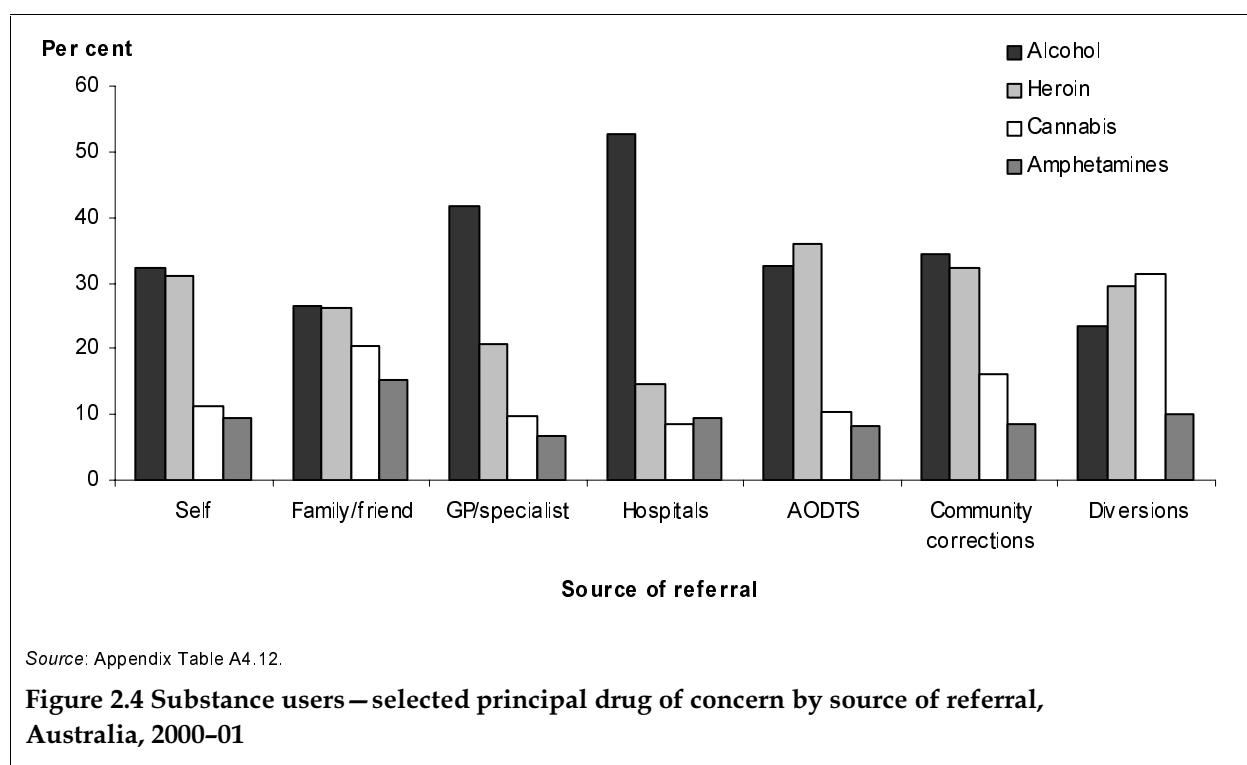
Indigenous status

There were differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous substance using clients for the most common principal drug of concern. Indigenous clients were more likely to nominate alcohol as their principal drug of concern (49%) compared with 33% of non-Indigenous clients (Figure 2.3). By contrast, 19% of Indigenous clients reported heroin as their principal drug of concern compared with 30% of non-Indigenous clients.



Source of referral

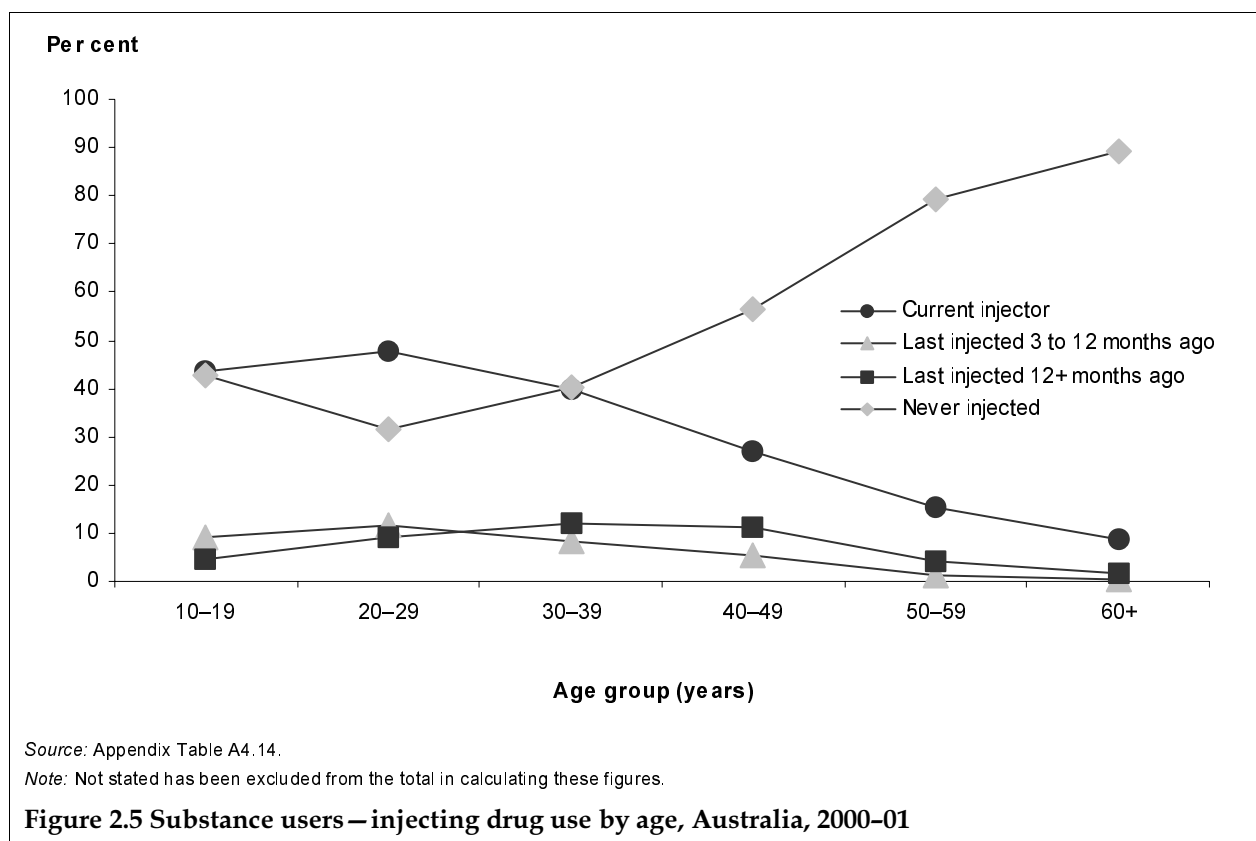
The principal drug of concern reported by a client appears to have been influenced by the client's source of referral. More than half (53%) of clients referred from hospital reported alcohol as their principal drug of concern, whereas cannabis was the most commonly reported principal drug of concern (31%) for clients referred to treatment from police or court diversion schemes (Figure 2.4). Note however, that for some diversion clients the nominated principal drug of concern may only indicate the drug involved in the offence. Clients referred from an alcohol and other drug treatment service were more likely to nominate heroin as their principal drug of concern (36%).



Injecting drug use

There were 64,212 clients who reported their injecting drug use status. Of these, 26,815 (42%) reported that they had never injected drugs (Table 2.6). However, the majority of substance using clients reported some form of injecting drug use behaviour. More than a third of clients (40%) reported current injecting behaviour (injected within the previous 3 months). Approximately 18% of clients reported that they had injected drugs in the past (9% had injected more than 3 months ago but less than 12 months and 9% had injected, but not in the last 12 months).

Injecting drug use interacted with age. The proportion of clients reporting that they had never injected generally increased with age (with the exception of the 20-29 age group). The proportion of clients reporting that they were current injectors was highest for the 10-19 and 20-29 age groups (Figure 2.5).



Female substance using clients were somewhat more likely than male clients to have reported injecting drugs at some time (59% and 57% respectively), and more likely to be current injectors than male clients (42% and 40% respectively). The difference between male and female clients who were current injectors was most noticeable in the 10-19 age group. Of female substance users, 49% in this age group had injected in the last 3 months compared to 41% of male clients in the same age group (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Substance users^(a), sex by injecting drug use and age group, Australia^(b), 2000–01

| Injecting drug use | Age group (years) | | | | | | Not stated | Total number |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| | 10–19 | 20–29 | 30–39 | 40–49 | 50–59 | 60+ | | |
| Males | (Number) | | | | | | | |
| Current injector | 2,500 | 7,836 | 4,528 | 1,569 | 320 | 54 | 160 | 16,967 |
| Injected 3–12 months ago | 494 | 1,817 | 894 | 299 | 22 | 2 | 55 | 3,583 |
| Injected 12+ months ago | 245 | 1,540 | 1,323 | 666 | 94 | 10 | 35 | 3,913 |
| Never injected | 2,843 | 5,474 | 4,435 | 3,036 | 1,621 | 605 | 197 | 18,211 |
| Not stated | 1,033 | 2,617 | 2,329 | 1,458 | 575 | 166 | 132 | 8,310 |
| <i>Total males</i> | <i>7,115</i> | <i>19,284</i> | <i>13,509</i> | <i>7,028</i> | <i>2,632</i> | <i>837</i> | <i>579</i> | <i>50,984</i> |
| Females | | | | | | | | |
| Current injector | 1,635 | 4,070 | 2,070 | 639 | 133 | 27 | 105 | 8,679 |
| Injected 3–12 months ago | 364 | 918 | 434 | 119 | 9 | 4 | 42 | 1,890 |
| Injected 12+ months ago | 165 | 669 | 621 | 240 | 23 | 4 | 29 | 1,751 |
| Never injected | 1,203 | 2,347 | 2,217 | 1,585 | 711 | 252 | 112 | 8,427 |
| Not stated | 551 | 1,338 | 1,330 | 783 | 193 | 72 | 99 | 4,366 |
| <i>Total females</i> | <i>3,918</i> | <i>9,342</i> | <i>6,672</i> | <i>3,366</i> | <i>1,069</i> | <i>359</i> | <i>387</i> | <i>25,113</i> |
| Persons^(c) | | | | | | | | |
| Current injector | 4,155 | 12,018 | 6,632 | 2,220 | 455 | 82 | 266 | 25,828 |
| Injected 3–12 months ago | 875 | 2,923 | 1,379 | 425 | 31 | 6 | 98 | 5,737 |
| Injected 12+ months ago | 420 | 2,302 | 1,995 | 915 | 122 | 14 | 64 | 5,832 |
| Never injected | 4,075 | 7,899 | 6,692 | 4,642 | 2,340 | 857 | 310 | 26,815 |
| Not stated | 1,594 | 4,012 | 3,684 | 2,247 | 769 | 238 | 238 | 12,782 |
| Total persons | 11,119 | 29,154 | 20,382 | 10,449 | 3,717 | 1,197 | 976 | 76,994 |

(a) Substance user population comprises all client registrations excluding clients seeking treatment for the drug use of others.

(b) Excludes Queensland.

(c) Includes Not stated (Sex).

Other drugs of concern

While most clients were seeking treatment for a particular drug that was of most concern to them, the majority of clients also had concerns about other drugs that they were using. Clients were able to report up to five other drugs of concern. Cannabis was the most common other drug of concern reported by clients, with nicotine, alcohol, amphetamines and benzodiazepines also commonly reported as drugs of concern (see Appendix Table A4.15).

Principal drug trends

There was some variation across time in the level of client registrations depending on the drug for which the client was receiving treatment (Figure 2.6). All client registrations for the four selected principal drugs of concern recorded a drop during December 2000. Client registrations for treatment of alcohol use were highest at the beginning of the collection period (July to August 2000) and were lowest in December 2000 and June 2001. Client registrations for treatment of heroin use started at a lower level than those for alcohol use and then followed a similar pattern until February 2001 when a sharp drop in registrations for heroin use was recorded. Client registrations for cannabis and amphetamines maintained a relatively stable monthly pattern.

Note that not all client registrations for June 2001 were included as jurisdictions that provided treatment episode-based data were not able to include records that were still open (see Section 1.5).

