

# Alcohol and other drug treatment services in the Northern Territory

## Findings from the National Minimum Data Set (NMDS) 2000–01

This data briefing covers alcohol and other drug treatment services in the Northern Territory, with some data at the national level also included. Five other State/Territory-level data briefings and two national reports are also available.

### What is the AODTS–NMDS?

The Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set (AODTS–NMDS) is a nationally agreed set of common data items collected by government-funded service providers for clients registered for alcohol and other drug treatment. This national collection is a subset of alcohol and other drug treatment services information that is routinely collected by States and Territories to monitor treatment services within their jurisdictions. The NMDS currently excludes maintenance pharmacotherapy treatments such as methadone and buprenorphine. Therefore the following data on client registrations do not include participants in these programs unless they receive additional treatment.

The Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services participated in this national collection and contributed data to the NMDS.

### Why have an NMDS?

The NMDS has been implemented to assist in monitoring and evaluating key objectives of the National Drug Strategy and to assist in the planning, management and quality improvement of alcohol and other drug treatment services. In general, it aims to provide ongoing information on the social demographics of clients who use these services, the treatment they receive, administrative information about the agencies that provide treatment and measures of service utilisation.

It does not aim to provide population estimates or trends in alcohol and other drug use, or monitor general patterns of drug problems in Australia. Nevertheless, the information collected by the NMDS will be used with other sources of information (e.g. the National Drug Strategy Household Survey and the Illicit Drug Reporting System) to monitor patterns of drug problems in Australia.

### Treatment services supplying data

- In the Northern Territory, 20 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment services supplied data for 2000–01; 16 were non-government providers.

### Clients

- During 2000–01, reporting services registered a total of 2,564 clients for treatment. Of those clients, 62% were males, 38% were females and 62% were aged between 20 and 39 years (Table 1). Of all clients, 89% were born in Australia and, of those who stated a preference, 85% said their preferred language was English.

- Of all clients receiving services for the drug use of others (e.g. a person such as a spouse seeking treatment for their partner or a parent seeking treatment for their child) three-quarters were female (75%).
- Of those who reported their Indigenous status, 45% of clients identified themselves as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- The proportion of male clients in the Northern Territory was slightly lower than the national average (62% and 64% respectively) and that of female clients slightly higher (38% and 35%).

**Table 1: Client registrations by age group and sex, Northern Territory and Australia<sup>(a)</sup>, 2000–01**

Age group (years)	Northern Territory			Australia		
	Males	Females	Persons <sup>(b)</sup>	Males	Females	Persons <sup>(b)</sup>
	(per cent)					
10–19	7.0	7.8	7.3	14.1	14.5	14.2
20–29	26.8	24.8	26.1	37.1	33.5	36.1
30–39	37.1	33.8	35.8	26.1	25.2	25.7
40–49	20.1	25.6	22.2	14.0	16.0	14.6
50–59	7.7	6.8	7.4	5.7	6.8	6.0
60+	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.8	2.0	1.9
Not stated	—	—	—	1.3	1.9	1.5
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>62.1</b>	<b>37.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>63.5</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total (no.)</b>	<b>1,592</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>2,564</b>	<b>53,057</b>	<b>29,445</b>	<b>83,529</b>

(a) Excludes Queensland.

(b) Includes instances where sex was not stated.

Source: AIHW 2002.

## Principal drug of concern

- In the Northern Territory, alcohol was the most common drug (66%) for which clients sought treatment (Table 2). Cannabis (10%), amphetamines (7%) and heroin (3%) were the next most common drugs reported as the principal drugs of concern. The proportion of clients seeking treatment for alcohol use was much higher in the Northern Territory (66%) than at the national level (34%), whereas for heroin use it was much lower (3% and 28% respectively).
- The principal drug of concern varied with the client's age. The proportion of clients seeking treatment for alcohol use increased with age, whereas the proportion seeking treatment for cannabis use decreased with age. For example, in the Northern Territory 39% of clients in the 10–19 age group were seeking treatment for alcohol and 38% for cannabis, but 94% of clients aged 60 years and over were seeking treatment for alcohol and none for cannabis. This pattern is consistent with that reported nationally.
- There were some differences between the sexes for principal drugs of concern (Figure 1). In the Northern Territory a higher proportion of male clients reported alcohol (68%) as their principal drug of concern compared to female clients (62%).

- The high proportion of Northern Territory clients who reported alcohol as their principal drug of concern was reflected across all age groups (excepting those aged 60 years and over) and for both sexes (68% of male clients and 62% of female clients in Northern Territory compared to 36% of male clients and 30% of female clients nationally).

**Table 2: Proportion of clients seeking treatment for selected principal drugs of concern by age group, Northern Territory and Australia<sup>(a)</sup>, 2000-01**

Principal drug of concern	Age group (years)						Total <sup>(b)</sup>
	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	
<b>Northern Territory (per cent)</b>							
Alcohol	39.5	53.9	71.6	74.5	81.4	94.1	65.9
Heroin	0.0	3.8	2.8	2.5	0.0	0.0	2.7
Cannabis	37.8	13.1	7.1	5.0	0.0	0.0	9.7
Amphetamines	10.9	15.3	4.8	2.2	0.8	0.0	7.4
Benzodiazepines	0.8	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
<b>Total (no.) <sup>(c)</sup></b>	<b>119</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>791</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2,061</b>
<b>Australia (per cent)</b>							
Alcohol	14.7	19.3	40.6	59.7	77.5	77.8	33.6
Heroin	30.8	38.6	25.0	15.4	4.7	1.8	28.4
Cannabis	29.8	15.5	10.4	5.6	2.5	0.9	14.0
Amphetamines	10.0	13.0	8.2	2.7	1.5	0.6	9.1
Benzodiazepines	1.0	1.6	2.8	3.1	2.4	4.0	2.1
<b>Total (no.) <sup>(c)</sup></b>	<b>11,119</b>	<b>29,154</b>	<b>20,382</b>	<b>10,449</b>	<b>3,717</b>	<b>1,197</b>	<b>76,994</b>

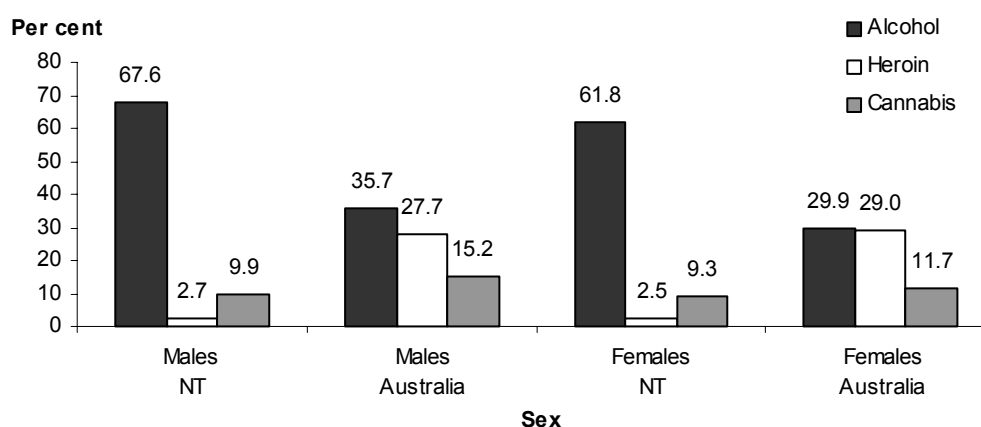
(a) Excludes Queensland.

(b) Includes instances where age was not stated.

(c) Includes all principal drugs of concern.

Source: AIHW 2002.

**Figure 1: Proportion of clients seeking treatment for selected principal drugs of concern by sex, Northern Territory and Australia<sup>(a)</sup>, 2000-01**



(a) Excludes Queensland.

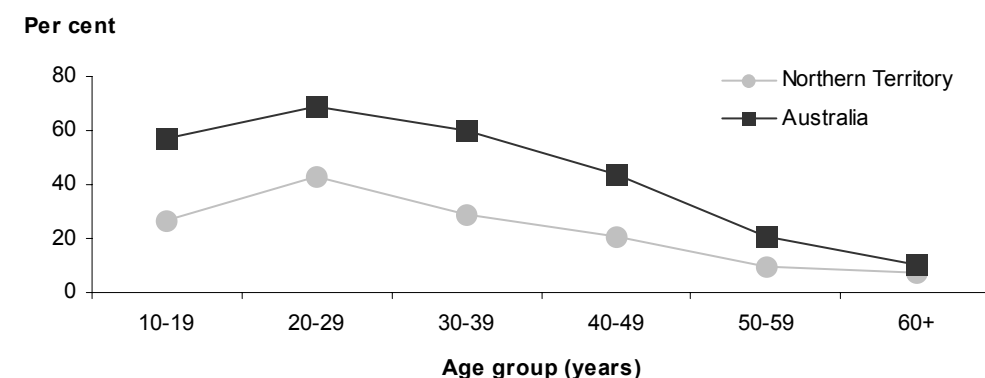
Source: AIHW 2002.

### Injecting drug use

- Of clients who reported whether or not they had ever injected (i.e. excluding the 'not stated' responses), less than one-third (30%) stated that they had injected drugs.

- Figures for Northern Territory clients reporting injecting drug use were lower than the national average across all age groups.
- Injecting drug use also interacted with age. Of Northern Territory clients seeking treatment for their own drug problem (excluding 'not stated'), injecting drug use declined with age from a peak of 43% of the 20 to 29 age group to 8% of those aged 60 years and over (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Proportion of clients who have ever injected by age, Northern Territory and Australia<sup>(a)</sup>, 2000-01**



(a) Excludes Queensland.

Source: AIHW 2002.

### Agencies and clients included nationally

All publicly funded (at State and/or Commonwealth level) government and non-government agencies that provide one or more specialist alcohol and /or other drug treatment services were included, also those based in acute care or psychiatric hospitals if they provided treatment to non-admitted patients (e.g. outpatient services).

All clients accepted for treatment from one of the above services during the reporting period (1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001) were included.

### The following agency types were excluded from the AODTS-NMDS

- Correctional institutions, halfway houses and sobering-up shelters.
- Health promotion services (e.g. needle and syringe programs) and methadone maintenance treatments.

The following caveats apply to the data collected:

- Data from Queensland were not included in the national data for 2000-01.
- The number of Indigenous clients may be under-counted because most Commonwealth-funded Indigenous substance-use services and Aboriginal health services that provide treatment for alcohol and other drug problems did not supply data for 2000-01. In addition, at the national level 8% of clients did not report their Indigenous status.

### References

AIHW 2002. Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2000-01. AIHW cat. no. HSE 22 Canberra: AIHW.

### Visit us on the Internet

For further information visit our web site ([www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)) where a number of recent alcohol and other drug publications are available in full text.

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