

Alcohol and other drug treatment services in the Australian Capital Territory

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

This data briefing covers alcohol and other drug treatment services in the Australian Capital 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.

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.

Australian Capital Territory participation in the national collection

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Health Department participated in this national collection and contributed data to the NMDS. The collection basis nationally for 2000–01 was client registration-based. However, the ACT had already implemented their new system on the treatment episode approach proposed for 2001–02 and subsequent years so their data were based on completed treatment episodes for 2000–01. For the purposes of national collation in 2000–01 and this data briefing, the ACT data were transformed to client registration-based data by selecting the earliest date of commencement for each client and excluding their additional treatment episodes. This resulted in an under-count of the ACT registrations for 2000–01, as clients with open records at 30 June 2001 were not included.

Treatment services supplying data

- In the Australian Capital Territory, 6 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment services supplied data for 2000–01, with the majority of clients being serviced by the one government agency.

Clients

- During 2000–01, reporting services registered a total of 2,743 clients for treatment. Of those clients, 67% were males, 33% were females and 65% were aged between 20 and 39 years (Table 1). Of all clients, 91% were born in Australia and 96% stated that 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) just over three-quarters were female (78%).
- Approximately 5% of all clients identified themselves as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- The proportion of male clients in the Australian Capital Territory was slightly higher than the national average (67% and 64% respectively) and that of female clients somewhat lower (33% and 35%).

Table 1: Client registrations by age group and sex, Australian Capital Territory and Australia^(a), 2000–01.

Age group (years)	Australian Capital Territory			Australia		
	Males	Females	Persons ^(b)	Males	Females	Persons ^(b)
	(per cent)					
10–19	7.9	6.1	14.0	8.9	5.1	14.2
20–29	26.9	11.4	38.3	23.6	11.8	36.1
30–39	18.4	8.4	26.8	16.6	8.9	25.7
40–49	8.8	4.8	13.6	8.9	5.6	14.6
50–59	2.9	1.4	4.3	3.6	2.4	6.0
60+	1.1	0.4	1.6	1.1	0.7	1.9
Not stated	0.9	0.5	1.4	0.8	0.7	1.5
Total (%)	66.9	33.1	100.0	63.5	35.3	100.0
Total (no.)	1,834	909	2,743	53,057	29,445	83,529

(a) Excludes Queensland.

(b) Includes instances where sex was not stated.

Source: AIHW 2002.

Principal drug of concern

- In the Australian Capital Territory heroin was the most common drug (43.5%) for which clients sought treatment (Table 2). Alcohol (36%), amphetamines (11%) and cannabis (7%) were the next most common drugs reported as the principal drugs of concern. In contrast, at the national level alcohol was more common as a principal drug of concern than heroin, and cannabis more common than amphetamines.
- The principal drug of concern varied with the client's age. The proportion of clients seeking treatment for alcohol use generally increased with age, whereas the proportion seeking treatment for heroin use generally decreased with age. For example, in the Australian Capital Territory 30% of clients in the 10–19 age group were seeking treatment for alcohol and 43% for heroin, but 59% of clients in the 50–59 age group were seeking treatment for alcohol and 29% for heroin. This pattern is consistent with that reported nationally although rates for heroin as a principal drug of concern were consistently higher across all age groups in the Australian Capital Territory than nationally.

Table 2: Proportion of clients seeking treatment for selected principal drugs of concern by age group, Australian Capital Territory and Australia^(a), 2000–01

Principal drug of concern	Age group (years)						Total ^(b)
	10–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
Australian Capital Territory (per cent)							
Alcohol	29.6	28.1	40.3	50.5	59.0	59.5	36.3
Heroin	43.1	50.2	41.0	35.8	29.1	31.0	43.5
Cannabis	11.4	6.7	4.7	6.0	6.0	4.8	6.7
Amphetamines	13.8	13.4	10.3	4.1	5.1	4.8	10.9
Benzodiazepines	0.5	0.8	2.2	2.7	0.0	0.0	1.4
Total (no.)^(c)	378	1,048	730	366	117	42	2,720
Australia (per cent)							
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
Total (no.)^(c)	11,119	29,154	20,382	10,449	3,717	1,197	76,994

(a) Excludes Queensland.

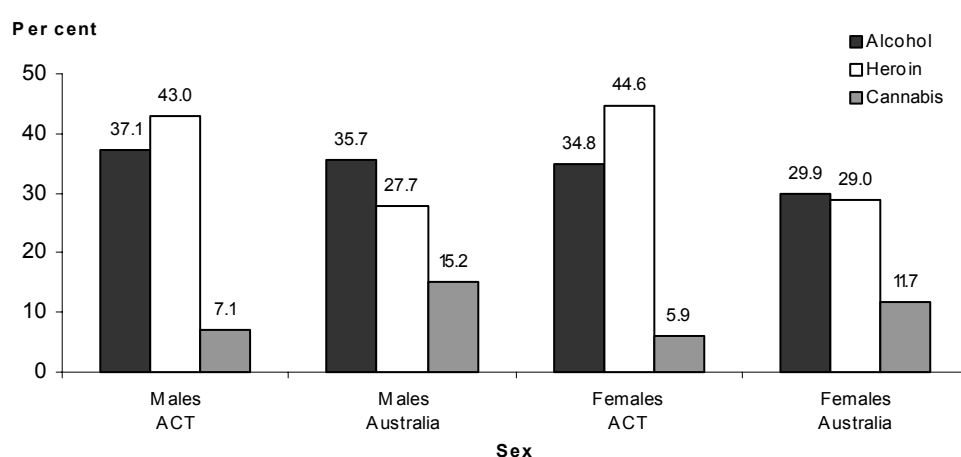
(b) Includes instances where age was not stated.

(c) Includes all principal drugs of concern.

Source: AIHW 2002.

- There were some differences between the sexes for principal drugs of concern (Figure 1). In the Australian Capital Territory a higher proportion of male clients reported alcohol (37%) as their principal drug of concern compared to female clients (35%).
- The high proportion of Australian Capital Territory clients who reported heroin as their principal drug of concern was reflected across all age groups and for both sexes (43% of male clients and 45% of female clients in ACT compared to 28% of male clients and 29% of female clients nationally).

Figure 1: Proportion of clients seeking treatment for selected principal drugs of concern by sex, Australian Capital Territory and Australia^(a), 2000–01



(a) Excludes Queensland.

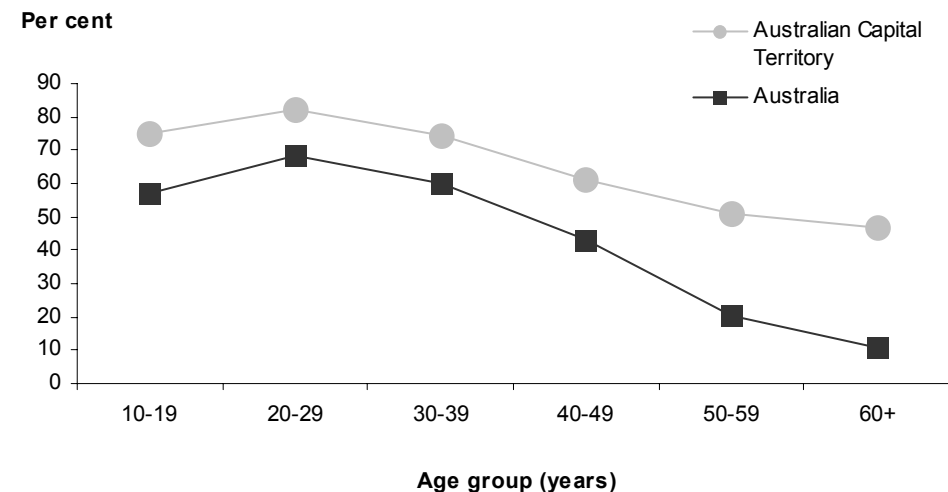
Source: AIHW 2002.

Injecting drug use

- Of clients who reported whether or not they had ever injected (i.e. excluding the 'not stated' responses) almost three-quarters (74%) stated that they had injected drugs (Figure 2).

- Injecting drug use also interacted with age. Of Australian Capital Territory clients seeking treatment for their own drug problem (excluding 'not stated'), injecting drug use declined with age from a peak of 82% of those aged 20 to 29 years to 47% of those aged 60 years or more.
- Injecting drug use figures for the Australian Capital Territory were generally much higher than the national average, particularly in the 60 and over age group (47% and 11% respectively).

Figure 2: Proportion of clients who have ever injected by age, Australian Capital Territory and Australia^(a), 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.

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

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