

Alcohol and other drug treatment services in New South Wales

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

This data briefing covers alcohol and other drug treatment services in New South Wales, 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.

New South Wales participation in the national collection

The New South Wales 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, New South Wales 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 New South Wales 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 New South Wales registrations for 2000–01, as clients with open records at 30 June 2001 were not included.

Treatment services supplying data

- In New South Wales, 181 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment services supplied data for 2000–01; 133 were government providers.

Clients

- During 2000–01, reporting services registered a total of 27,394 clients for treatment. Of those clients, 68% were males, 32% were females and 64% were aged between 20 and 39 years (Table 1). Of all clients, 86% were born in Australia and 97% 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 (77%).
- Approximately 6% of all clients identified themselves as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- The proportion of male clients in New South Wales was higher than the national average (68% and 64% respectively) while that of female clients was lower (32% and 35%).

Table 1: Client registrations by age group and sex, New South Wales and Australia^(a), 2000–01

Age group (years)	New South Wales			Australia		
	Males	Females	Total ^(b)	Males	Females	Total ^(b)
	(per cent)					
10–19	6.3	4.0	10.4	8.9	5.1	14.2
20–29	24.8	11.5	36.2	23.6	11.8	36.1
30–39	19.4	8.5	27.9	16.6	8.9	25.7
40–49	10.7	5.1	15.8	8.9	5.6	14.6
50–59	4.6	2.3	6.9	3.6	2.4	6.0
60+	1.7	0.9	2.5	1.1	0.7	1.9
Not stated	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.8	0.7	1.5
Total (%)	67.7	32.3	100.0	63.5	35.3	100.0
Total (no.)	18,534	8,847	27,394	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 New South Wales, alcohol was the most common drug (36%) for which clients sought treatment (Table 2). Heroin (33%), cannabis (11%) and amphetamines (8%) were the next most common drugs reported as the principal drugs of concern. These drugs were also the most common four drugs at the national level.
- The principal drug of concern varied with the client's age. The proportion of clients seeking treatment for alcohol use increased with age, whereas those seeking treatment for heroin use decreased with age. For example, in New South Wales 13% of clients in the 10–19 age group were seeking treatment for alcohol and 43% for heroin, but 80% of clients in the 50–59 age group were seeking treatment for alcohol and 5% for heroin. This pattern is consistent with that reported nationally.
- There were some differences between sexes for principal drugs of concern (Figure 1). In New South Wales a higher proportion of male clients reported alcohol (38%) as their principal drug of concern compared to female clients (31%). The proportion of New South Wales clients who reported heroin as their principal drug of concern (males 32%, females 33%) was higher than the national average (males 28%, females 29%).

Table 2: Proportion of clients seeking treatment for selected principal drugs of concern by age group, New South Wales 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+	
New South Wales (per cent)							
Alcohol	13.0	19.3	40.1	60.8	80.2	80.3	36.0
Heroin	43.0	45.4	29.0	17.5	4.6	1.2	32.7
Cannabis	23.3	13.5	9.2	4.7	1.3	0.5	10.9
Amphetamines	11.6	11.7	7.9	2.8	0.6	0.2	8.3
Benzodiazepines	1.1	1.7	3.3	3.8	2.1	3.0	2.5
Total (no.)^(c)	2,784	9,815	7,472	4,013	1,589	599	26,344
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

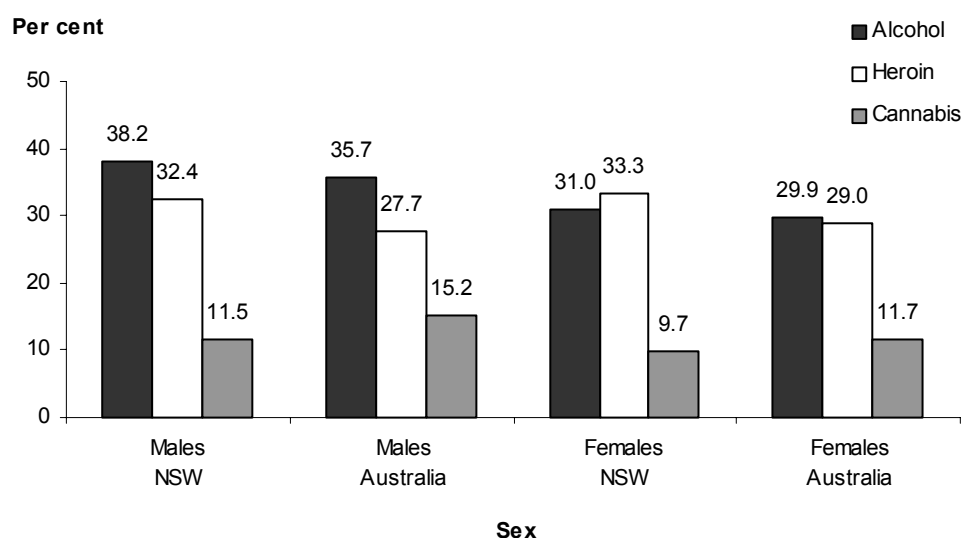
(a) Excludes Queensland.

(b) Includes instances where age was not stated.

(c) Includes all principal drugs of concern.

Source: AIHW 2002.

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



(a) Excludes Queensland.

Source: AIHW 2002.

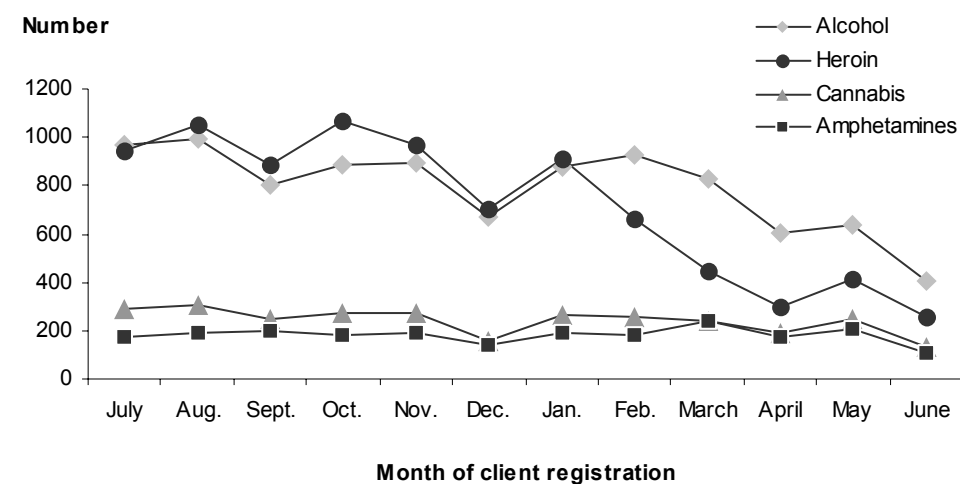
Injecting drug use

- Of clients who reported whether or not they had ever injected (i.e. excluding the 'not stated' responses), more than half (59%) stated that they had injected drugs.
- Injecting drug use also interacted with age. Of New South Wales clients seeking treatment for their own drug problem (excluding 'not stated'), injecting drug use declined with age from a peak of 73% of the 20 to 29 age group to 3% of those aged 60 years and over. These figures were generally consistent with the national average.

Principal drug trends

In New South Wales client registrations for treatment of heroin use followed a similar pattern to alcohol use until February 2001 when a decline in registrations for treatment of heroin use commenced (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of client registrations per month by selected principal drugs of concern, New South Wales, 2000-01



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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