

# Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Western Australia

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

This data briefing covers alcohol and other drug treatment services in Western Australia, 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 Western Australia Health Department 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

- Twenty four government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment services from Western Australia supplied data for 2000–01; 20 were non-government providers.

### Clients

- During 2000–01, reporting services registered a total of 12,113 clients for treatment. Of those clients, 62% were males, 38% were females and 56% were aged between 20 and 39 years (Table 1). Of all clients, 81% were born in Australia and 87% stated that their preferred language was English.
- Approximately 12% of all clients identified themselves as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

- The proportion of male clients registered in Western Australia was slightly lower than the national average (62% and 64% respectively) and that of female clients somewhat higher (38% and 35%).

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

Age group (years)	Western Australia			Australia		
	Males	Females	Persons <sup>(b)</sup>	Males	Females	Persons <sup>(b)</sup>
	(per cent)					
10–19	24.3	14.0	20.3	14.1	14.5	14.2
20–29	37.1	30.9	34.7	37.1	33.5	36.1
30–39	20.1	22.8	21.1	26.1	25.2	25.7
40–49	11.1	19.5	14.3	14.0	16.0	14.6
50–59	6.2	10.7	7.9	5.7	6.8	6.0
60+	1.3	2.1	1.6	1.8	2.0	1.9
Not stated	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.9	1.5
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>61.8</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>63.5</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total (no.)</b>	<b>7,490</b>	<b>4,615</b>	<b>12,113</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 Western Australia, alcohol was the most common drug (30%) for which clients sought treatment (Table 2). Amphetamines (21%), cannabis (21%) and heroin (14%) were the next most common drugs reported as the principal drugs of concern. Western Australia clients had lower proportions of clients reporting heroin and higher proportions reporting cannabis and amphetamines as their principal drug of concern compared to the national average.
- 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 Western Australia 16% of clients in the 10–19 age group were seeking treatment for alcohol and 9% for heroin, but 66% of clients in the 50–59 age group were seeking treatment for alcohol and 3% for heroin. This pattern is consistent with that reported nationally.
- There were some differences between sexes for principal drug of concern (Figure 1). In Western Australia, a higher proportion of male clients reported cannabis (24%) as their principal drug of concern compared to female clients (13%). In contrast, lower proportions of male clients reported heroin (14%) than did females (16%).
- The proportion of Western Australia clients who reported heroin as their principal drug of concern (males 14%, females 16%) was lower than the national average (males 28%, females 29%).

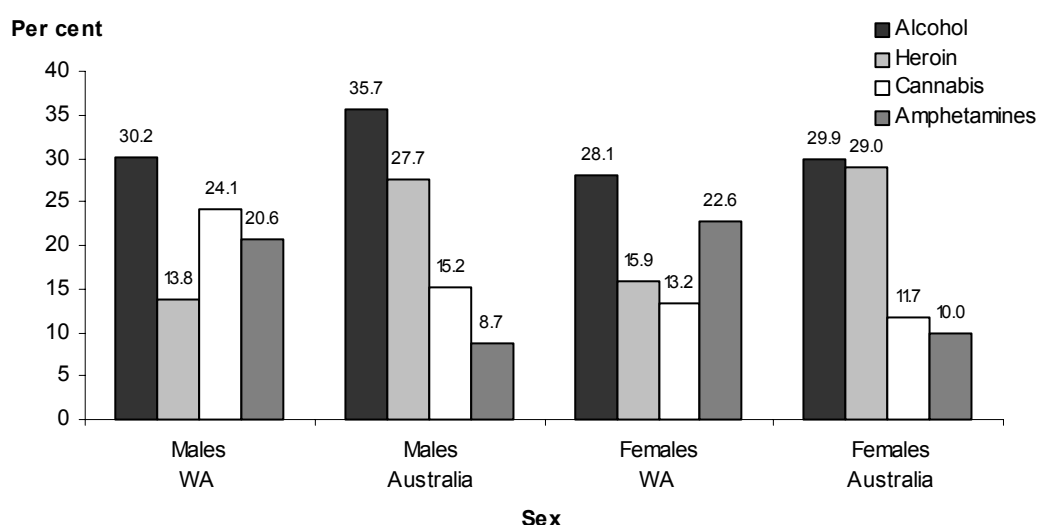
**Table 2: Proportion of clients seeking treatment for selected principal drugs of concern by age group, Western Australia and Australia<sup>(a)</sup>, 2000–01**

Principal drug of concern	Age group (years)						Total <sup>(b)</sup>
	10–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
<b>Western Australia (per cent)</b>							
Alcohol	15.7	18.0	40.7	58.4	65.9	63.4	29.5
Heroin	8.7	20.3	14.6	9.5	3.1	0.0	14.4
Cannabis	43.3	18.6	13.2	7.1	4.7	1.1	20.7
Amphetamines	19.7	31.3	17.2	4.7	4.5	2.2	21.3
Benzodiazepines	0.7	1.1	1.6	1.7	1.9	3.2	1.2
<b>Total (no.) <sup>(c)</sup></b>	<b>2,183</b>	<b>4,041</b>	<b>2,324</b>	<b>1,118</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>10,188</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, Western Australia and Australia<sup>(a)</sup>, 2000–01**



- (a) Excludes Queensland.

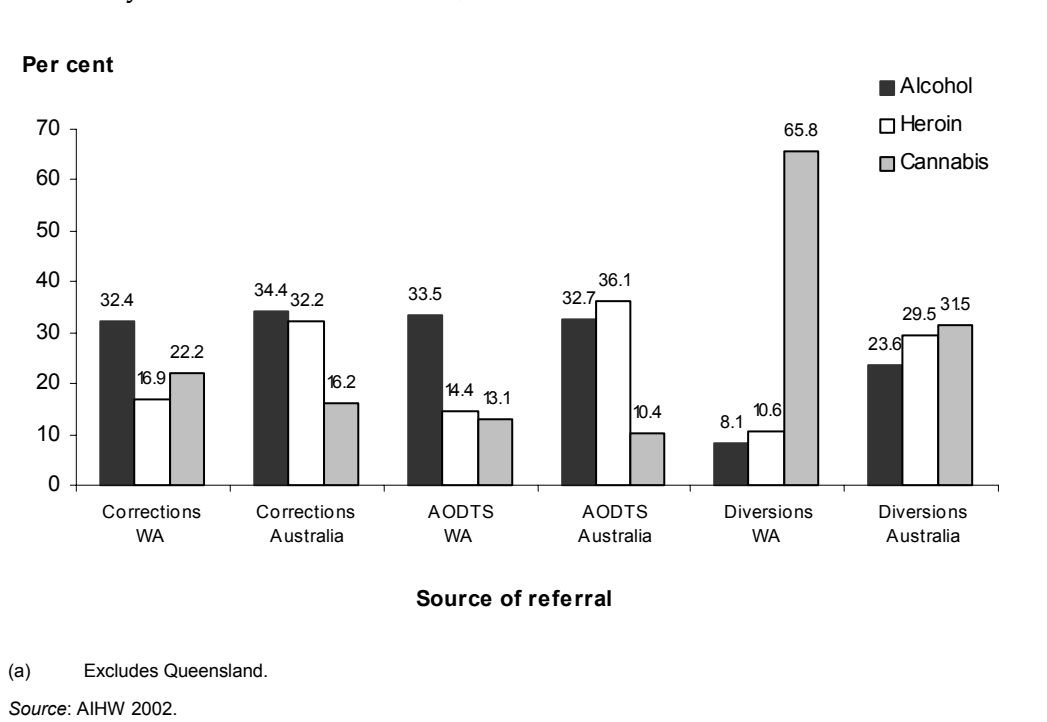
Source: AIHW 2002.

### Source of referral

The source of referral is the person or service from which the client was transferred or referred to the alcohol and other drug treatment service he or she is attending. The number of clients referred from a specific source can vary according to their principal drug of concern. For example, of WA clients referred from community-based corrections to an alcohol and other drug treatment service, 17% reported heroin as their principal drug of concern (Figure 2). This was lower than the national average of 32%. There was a similar trend for WA clients using heroin who were referred from another alcohol and other drug treatment service (14% and 36% respectively). Of clients referred from police or court diversion, 66% reported cannabis as their principal drug of concern.

This was higher than the national average of 31%. Note that for some diversion clients, the nominated principal drug of concern may only indicate the drug involved in the offence.

**Figure 2: Proportion of clients seeking treatment for selected principal drugs of concern by selected source of referral, Western Australia and Australia<sup>(a)</sup>, 2000-01**



### 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.

For further information on this data contact:  
**Gail Weaving**  
ph. (02) 6244 1050  
email  
[gail.weaving@aihw.gov.au](mailto:gail.weaving@aihw.gov.au)

Drug Treatment  
Data Briefing  
Number 2

December 2002