

15 Injecting drugs (used for non-medical purposes)

Introduction

This chapter presents data on the use of injectable drugs that are not medically prescribed to inject. Some examples of injectable drugs are steroids, speed, heroin, pethidine, cocaine and ecstasy.

The average age at which users first injected illicit drugs was 20.2 years.

Lifetime and recent injecting drug use

In 2001, almost 300,000 (1.8%) Australians aged 14 years and over had injected illicit drugs in their lifetime. Other overall findings include:

- Fewer than one in 100 (0.6%) Australians aged 14 years and over had injected illicit drugs in the last 12 months.
- People aged 20–29 years were more likely than those in the other age groups to have injected illicit drugs.
- Males were more likely than females to have ever injected and to have injected in the last 12 months.

Table 15.1: Injecting drug use, persons aged 14 years and over, by age, by sex, Australia, 2001

	Age group				Sex		Persons
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40+	Males	Females	
	(per cent)						
In lifetime	1.4	4.4	2.9	0.8	2.4	1.3	1.8
In the last 12 months	0.6	2.1	0.5	0.1	0.8	0.4	0.6
	(number)						
In lifetime	22,200	123,900	84,200	64,200	183,300	107,200	290,600
In the last 12 months	9,700	58,200	16,100	9,500	58,600	32,400	91,000

Note: Totals may not equal sum due to rounding.

Frequency of injecting drug use

The frequency at which the 91,000 recent illicit drug injectors injected themselves varied by sex (Table 15.2):

- Two-thirds (66.2%) of recent illicit drug injectors did so at least once a week. Female injecting drug users (72.3%) were more likely than males (62.7%) to inject at least once a week.
- One in six (15.7%) recent illicit drug injectors did so daily; females (20.0%) were more likely than males (13.1%) to inject daily.

Table 15.2: Frequency of injecting drug use, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

Frequency	Males	Females	Persons
	(per cent)		
Daily	13.1	20.0	15.7
More than once a week	24.2	7.8	18.1
At least once a week	62.7	72.3	66.2

Note: Base equals recent users.

Source of supply and re-use of needles and syringes

Recent illicit drug injectors were asked where they usually obtained needles and syringes (Table 15.3):

- Recent users most typically obtained needles and syringes from a chemist (79.3%).
- The next most common source was a needle and syringe program (49.0%).

Table 15.3: Usual source for obtaining needles and syringes, recent users aged 14 years and over, by sex, Australia, 2001

Source	Males	Females	Persons
	(per cent)		
Chemist	77.1	83.2	79.3
Needle and syringe program	48.4	50.0	49.0
Friends	29.4	26.6	28.4
Hospital or doctor	14.7	16.0	15.1
Other	5.6 *	8.6 *	6.7

Notes

1. Base equals recent users.

2. Respondents could select more than one response.

- Of recent injecting drug users, 63.0% had never used a needle or other injecting equipment after someone else had already used it.
- Three in five (58.9%) recent injecting drug users reported that no-one else had ever used a needle or other injecting equipment after they had used it.