



Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2015-16: key findings

Web report | Last updated: 20 Apr 2017 | Topic: [Alcohol & other drug treatment services](#) |

Citation

AIHW

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Newer release available

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About

Over 130,000 Australians received treatment from 796 publicly-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies in 2015-16. The principal drugs that led clients to seek treatment were alcohol (32% of treatment episodes), amphetamines (23%), cannabis (23%) and heroin (6%). The alcohol and other drug client group is an ageing cohort with a median age of 33 years in 2015-16, up from 31 years in 2006-07.

Cat. no: WEB 196

- [Data visualisations](#)
- [Data](#)

Findings from this report:

- The principal drugs that led clients to seek treatment were amphetamines, cannabis and heroin
 - The AOD client group is an ageing cohort, with a median age of 33 years in 2015-16, up from 31 years in 2006-07
 - A total of 796 publicly-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies provided services to clients
 - Counselling & assessment, support & case management, & withdrawal management remain the most common types of treatment
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Last updated 10/05/2022 v2.0

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Summary

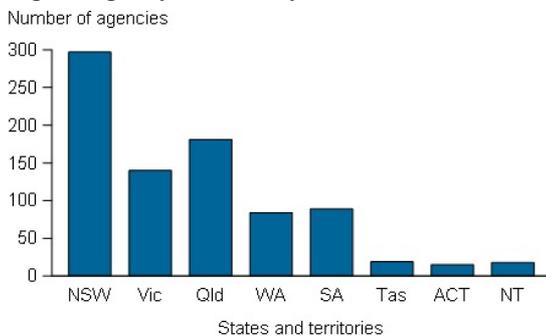
The Australian Government and state and territory governments fund non-government and government organisations to provide a range of alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services. Services are delivered in residential and non-residential settings and include treatment such as detoxification and rehabilitation, counselling, and pharmacotherapy.

The Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set (AODTS NMDS) contains information on publicly-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies.

Number of agencies

- In 2015-16, 796 publicly-funded AOD treatment agencies reported to the AODTS NMDS. This represents most (90.9%) agencies in-scope of the AODTS NMDS. The number of agencies in each jurisdiction ranged from 15 in the Australian Capital Territory to 287 in New South Wales (Figure Agency 1).
- Over the last 10 years, there has been an increase nationally in the number of participating agencies—from 633 to 796. The increase has been largely driven by Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia.
- While there has been an increase in agencies over the last 10 years, the number of agencies decreased from 843 in 2014-15 to 796 in 2015-16. This is largely a result of system issues in certain states.

Figure Agency 1: Publicly-funded AOD treatment agencies providing data, by states and territories, 2015-16



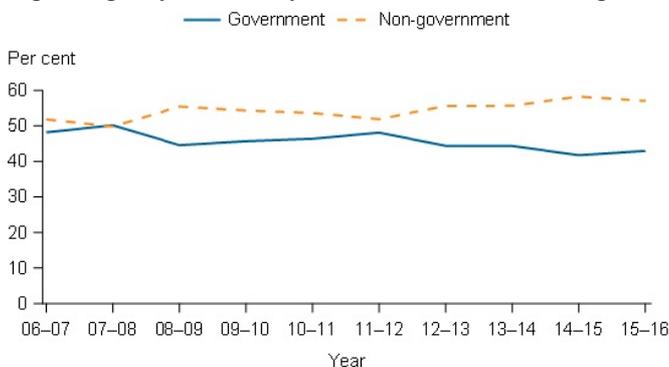
Source: AODTS NMDS. [Data cube \[Profile of drug treatment agencies by SA2\]](#).

Service sector

A mix of government and non-government agencies deliver government-funded AOD treatment services. In 2015-16:

- Nationally, over half (57%) of AOD treatment agencies were non-government, and these agencies provided almost two-thirds (64%) of closed treatment episodes. The proportion of non-government agencies has remained stable since 2006-07—at 52% (Figure Agency 2).
- In New South Wales the majority (73%) of AOD treatment agencies were government agencies.
- In the remaining states and territories the ratio of non-government and government-funded agencies varied, although in most jurisdictions agencies were non-government agencies—ranging from 55% in South Australia to 100% in Victoria (See [Data cube \[Profile of drug treatment agencies by SA2\]](#)).

Figure Agency 2: Publicly-funded AOD treatment agencies providing data, by service sector, 2006-07 to 2015-16



Source: AODTS NMDS. [Data cube \[Profile of drug treatment agencies by SA2\]](#).

Agencies

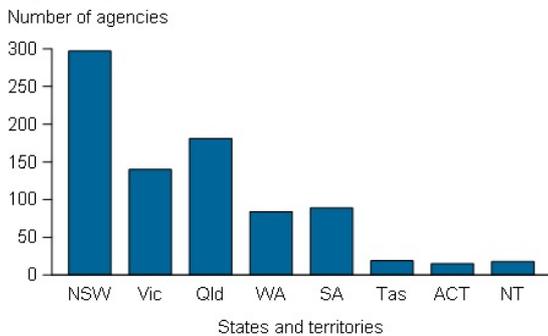
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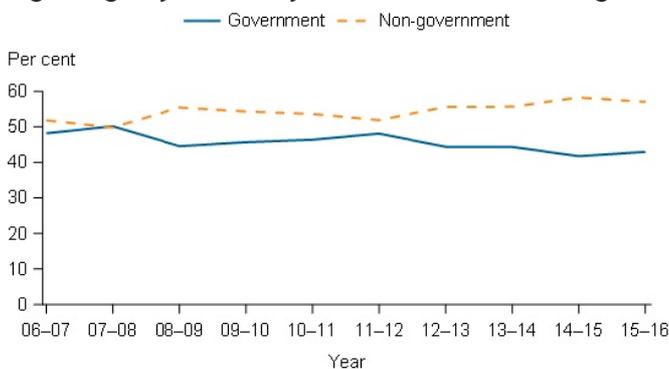
Source: AODTS NMDS. [Data cube \[Profile of drug treatment agencies by SA2\]](#).

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Source: AODTS NMDS. [Data cube \[Profile of drug treatment agencies by SA2\]](#).

Clients

Client numbers and characteristics

In 2015-16, there were an estimated 133,895 clients who received treatment from publicly funded alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment agencies across Australia. This is a rate of 559 clients per 100,000 people, or about 1 in 179 people in the general population. Around 96% of clients received treatment for their own drug use, and the remainder were receiving support and assistance for someone else's drug use.

The number of closed treatment episodes has increased over the last 10 years, from 147,325 in 2006-07 to 206,635 in 2015-16.

In the last year there has been a significant increase in the number of reported treatment episodes from 170,367 in 2014-15 to 206,635 in 2015-16. This increase is largely a result of improvements in reporting following the underreporting of treatment episodes and clients in 2014-15 due to system issues.

Client-level information is counted in the AODTS NMDS using a unique identifier—a statistical linkage key (SLK). For some records, the quality of SLK information is not good enough to use for counting clients. Therefore, an imputation strategy has been applied to account for these records and estimate the number of clients receiving treatment. This imputation has been applied to the total number of clients only. For more information on the imputation strategy see *Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2013-14*.

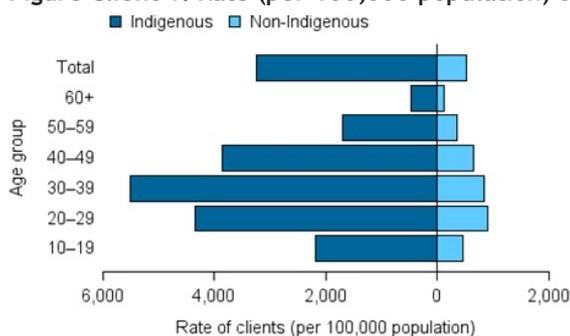
Age and sex

- Over half of all clients were aged 20-39 (55%), 32% were aged 40 and over and 13% were aged 10-19.
- The age profile of people using services is consistent with an ageing cohort—over the 10 years from 2006-07 to 2015-16, the percentage of people being treated who were aged 20-29 fell from 32% to 28% of treatment episodes, while those aged 40 and over rose from 26% to 32%. Similarly, the median age of clients seeking treatment has risen from 31 to 33 years from 2006-07 to 2015-16.
- Consistent with previous years, two-thirds (67%) of clients receiving treatment in 2015-16 were male (See [Data Cube \[Closed treatment episodes: all clients profile\]](#)).

Cultural and linguistic diversity

- In 2015-16, despite only comprising 2.7% of the Australian population aged 10 and over, 14% of AODTS clients were Indigenous Australians aged 10 years and over.
- Among the Australian population Indigenous clients were almost 7 times as likely to receive treatment services as non-Indigenous clients (Figure Client 1).
- The majority (87%) of treatment episodes in 2015-16 were for clients who were born in Australia, with the United Kingdom (3%) and New Zealand (2%) being the most common countries of birth for clients born outside Australia—unchanged from 2014-15. These proportions are generally consistent with the Australian population.
- In 2015-16, English was the preferred language of clients in 93% of treatment episodes.

Figure Client 1: Rate (per 100,000 population) of clients by age group and Indigenous status, 2015-16



Source: AODTS NMDS. [Data cube \[Closed treatment episodes: all clients profile\]](#).

Drugs of concern

In 2015-16, the top principal drugs that led clients to seek treatment were alcohol (32% of treatment episodes), cannabis (23%), amphetamines (23%) and heroin (6%) (See [Data cube \[Closed treatment episodes: all clients profile\]](#)). These patterns and proportions were similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients, although cannabis was a principal drug of concern for more Indigenous clients than non-Indigenous clients (27% of treatment episodes, compared with 22%).

Across states and territories there were some variations in the top 4 principal drugs of concern. In most states and territories alcohol was also the top drug of concern; including NT (48% of episodes), ACT (42%), Tasmania (39%), NSW (37%) and Victoria (30%); whereas in SA and WA amphetamines were top, with 36% and 35% of episodes, respectively. In Queensland, Cannabis was the top drug, reported in 39% of episodes.

For those clients seeking treatment for their own drug use:

- Nationally, clients received an average of 1.6 treatment episodes in 2015-16.
- Almost half (45%) of clients received treatment for more than 1 drug of concern.

The proportion of episodes where clients were receiving treatment for amphetamines (23%) has continued to increase over the last 10 years, from 12% of treatment episodes in 2006-07, and from 20% in 2014-15. See [Data cube \[Closed treatment episodes for clients own drug use by principal drug of concern 2015-16\]](#).

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Data visualisations

Data visualisations are available for Alcohol and other drug treatment services National Minimum Dataset (AODTS NMDS), for selected principal drugs of concern, 2010-11 to 2015-16.

Users can customise charts within displays. Users can also customise tables within the data visualisations by clicking on the 'Cross tabulation' tabs in the top navigation row.

[Data visualisation: Selected principal drugs of concern](#)

Data

AODTS NMDS 2015-16 data visualisations

[View](#)

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Treatment

Many types of treatment are available in Australia to assist people with problematic drug use. Most aim to reduce the harm of drug use, for example counselling, information and education, and diversion programs, while some use a structured drug-free setting with abstinence oriented interventions to help prevent relapse and develop skills and attitudes that assist clients to make changes leading to drug-free lifestyles.

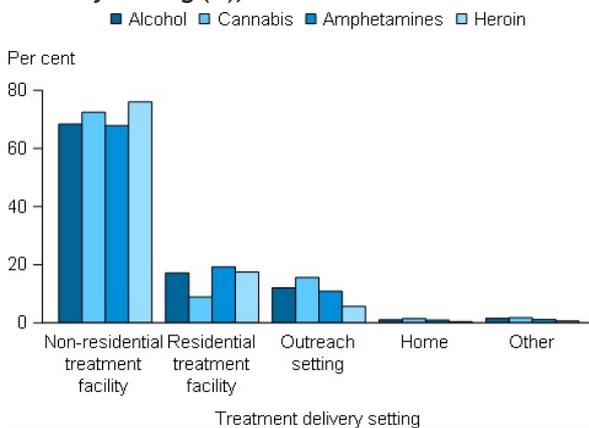
Drugs of concern

- Alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines and heroin have remained the top principal (that is, main) drugs for which clients received treatment since 2006-07—this is the same for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients.
- In 2015-16, 32% of closed treatment episodes were for alcohol, 23% for cannabis, 23% for amphetamines and 6% for heroin as the main drug of concern.
- Across most states and territories alcohol was also the top drug of concern; however in SA and WA it was amphetamines, and in Qld it was Cannabis.
- Treatment for the use of amphetamines increased over the 5 years to 2015-16 (from 11% of closed treatment episodes to 23%).

Treatment delivery setting

- The majority of clients receiving treatment for heroin (76%), cannabis (72%) amphetamines (68%), or alcohol (68%) as their principal drug of concern, received treatment in a non-residential treatment facility, such as a community health centre (Figure Treatment 1).
- Residential treatment facilities (where clients reside in a facility that is not their home or usual place of residence) were the second most common treatment setting for clients with amphetamines (19%), heroin, or alcohol (both 17%) as their principal drug of concern (Figure Treatment 1).
- Outreach settings were the second most common for clients receiving treatment for cannabis (16%) as their main drug of concern (Figure Treatment 1).

Figure Treatment 1: Closed treatment episodes provided, by selected principal drugs of concern and treatment delivery setting (%), 2015-16



Source: AODTS NMDS. See [Supplementary Table S1](#).

Treatment types

- Counselling continues to be the most common main treatment type provided to clients, comprising almost 2 in 5 (38%) closed treatment episodes in 2015-16 for all clients
- It has continued to be the most common main treatment type since 2006-07, and for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients
- In 2015-16, assessment only was the second most common main treatment type (16%), followed by support and case management only (13%).

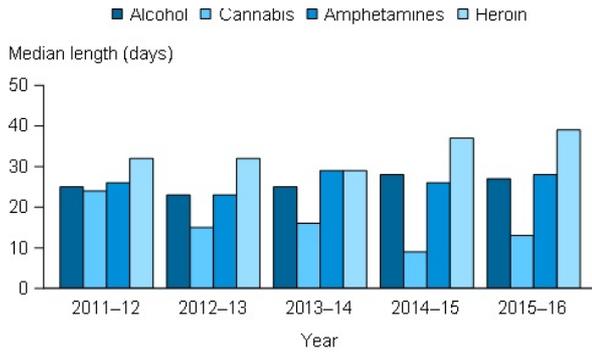
Length of treatment

For those clients seeking treatment for their own drug use:

- In 2015-16, the median duration of treatment for closed treatment episodes was just under 3 weeks (19 days).
- Treatment duration varied by drug of concern. In 2015-16, the median duration of closed treatment episodes was 39 days for clients receiving treatment for heroin, 28 days for amphetamines, 27 days for alcohol, and 13 days for cannabis (Figure Treatment 2).
- Almost 4 in 5 (79%) closed treatment episodes in 2015-16 ended within 3 months.
- Over the 5 years to 2015-16, clients receiving treatment for heroin or amphetamines as their principal drug of concern tended to have treatment episodes of a longer duration, compared to those receiving treatment for alcohol or cannabis, although treatment lengths for alcohol have increased in recent years (Figure Treatment 2).

- The decline in median episode length for cannabis between 2012-13 and 2015-16 has been affected by an increase in the number of diversion programs for people using cannabis (which had relatively shorter durations on average).

Figure Treatment 2: Closed treatment episodes provided, by selected principal drugs of concern and median duration, 2011-12 to 2015-16



Source: AODTS NMDS. See [Supplementary Table S2](#).

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Notes

The data visualisations require [Adobe Flash Player 11.1](#) or later and have [minimum browser requirements](#).

Displays open in a new window and may take several minutes to download.

Data are subject to minor revisions over time.

Last updated 22/01/2018 v6.0

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Report editions

Newer releases

- Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2017-18: key findings | **Web report** | 25 Jul 2019
- Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2016-17: key findings | **Web report** | 20 Apr 2018

This release

Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2015-16: key findings | 20 Apr 2017

Last updated 13/11/2017 v2.0

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Data

Data tables: [AODTS NMDS 2015-16: key findings](#)

Data

Download Data tables: [AODTS NMDS 2015-16: key findings](#). Format: [XLS 72Kb](#) [XLS 72Kb](#)

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Related material

[Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set](#)

Resources

[Infographic: Alcohol and other drug treatment services 2015-16](#)

Resource

134,000 people accessed treatment services provided by 800 agencies. The top four drugs that led people to seek treatment were alcohol, followed by amphetamines, cannabis and heroin. 2 in 3 were male, and more than half were aged between 29-39 years. This is the latest data in a series from 2012-13.

[Download Infographic: Alcohol and other drug treatment services 2015-16. Format: JPG 394Kb](#) [JPG 394Kb](#) [Get text alternative of Infographic: Alcohol and other drug treatment services 2015-16. Format: TXT 1Kb](#) [TXT 1Kb](#)

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