



Heroin use among the Australian general population is low, with <0.1%* reporting consumption in the last 12 months in 2019.^[1]



Opioid use was responsible for 1.0% of the total burden of disease and injuries in Australia in 2015, and 37% of the total burden due to illicit drug use.^[2]

Main contributors to opioid use disease and injury burden in 2015:

- drug use disorder (excluding alcohol) 31%
- poisoning 20%.^[2]

Prior to COVID-19 in 2020, the Australian heroin market was highly stable in terms of price, purity and availability.^[8]



Hospitalisations with a principal diagnosis of opioid (including heroin) poisoning **increased** by 25% between 2007–08 and 2016–17, rising from 14.1 to 17.6 hospitalisations per 100,000 population.^[4]



In 2016–17, hospitalisations with a principal diagnosis of **opioid poisoning** were more likely to involve **pharmaceutical opioids** than heroin or opium.^[4]



The **risk of fatal overdose for heroin users is high** and has been increasing in recent years.^[5]



Wastewater data analysis indicates **heroin consumption increased in Australia in 2020**, but remained **relatively low**.^[6]



25% of the **drug-induced deaths** in Australia in 2019 were due to heroin.^[7]



In 2019–20, **heroin** was the **principal drug of concern** in **5.1%** of closed alcohol and other drug treatment episodes for clients' own drug use.^[3]

In 2019, **43%*** of people who recently used heroin said they **tried to stop or cut down** in the last 3 months **but could not**.^[1]



National Drug Strategy Household Survey findings relate to people aged 14 or older unless specified. An adult is a person aged 18 or older.^[1]

(a) 2020 Illicit Drug Reporting System interviews were conducted from June–September, after COVID-19 restrictions on travel and gatherings were introduced. This should be taken into account when comparing data to previous years.

* Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

1. AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2020. [National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019](#). Drug statistics series no. 32. Cat. no. PHE 270. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 03 August 2020.
2. AIHW 2019. [Australian Burden of Disease Study: impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2015](#). Australian Burden of Disease Study series no.19. Cat. no. BOD 22. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 13 June 2019.
3. AIHW 2021. [Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2019–20](#). Cat. no. HSE 250. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 16 July 2021.
4. AIHW 2018. [Opioid harm in Australia and comparisons between Australia and Canada](#). Cat. no. HSE 210. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 9 November 2018.

5. ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2017. [Causes of death, Australia, 2016](#). ABS cat. no. 3303.0. Canberra: ABS. Viewed 4 January 2018.
6. ACIC (Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission) 2021. [National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program Report 12](#). Canberra: ACIC. Viewed 1 March 2021.
7. AIHW 2021. AIHW analysis of the National Mortality Database.
8. Peacock A, Uporova J, Karlsson A, Price O, Gibbs D, Swanton R et al. 2021. [Australian Drug Trends 2020: Key findings from the Illicit Drug Reporting System \(IDRS\) interviews](#). Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW.

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For more detail, see the full report, [Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in Australia](#), which is available from the AIHW website.



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