



The health of the Northern Territory's prisoners, 2018




In 2018, the National Prisoner Health Data Collection was conducted. Information on the health of people in prison was gathered from 62 prisons across Australia (except New South Wales)—2 prisons in the Northern Territory participated. Data were collected about people entering prison (entrants), people who visited the prison health clinic, people who were dispensed medications while in prison, and people due to be released in the next month (dischargees).

Quick fact



On 30 June 2018 there were 1,758 people in prison in the Northern Territory.

Characteristics of Northern Territory participants in the National Prisoner Health Data Collection 2018

Characteristic 	Entrants 	Dischargees 
Participants (number)	50	26
Male (%)	88	81
Indigenous (%)	98	100
Median age (years)	32	36
Age range (years)	19–51	22–62

Sources: Entrants and dischargees forms, 2018 NPHDC.

In the Northern Territory:

Of the 50 people who completed the prison entrants form

- **almost 4 in 5 (78%)** had been in **prison before**
- **3 in 5 (60%)** had been in prison in the **previous 12 months**
- **nearly 3 in 5 (58%)** were on **remand**.

Of the 26 people who completed the prison dischargees form

- **1 in 3 (35%)** had been in prison for **less than 3 months**
- **4%** had been in prison for at **least 2 years**.

The entrants form and the dischargees form were mostly self-reported survey questions, and the clinic visit form and medication form were completed by health professionals.

Results relate to this sample of 2018 NPHDC participants only, and not the entire prison population.



Life before and after prison

- **7 in 10 (70%)** of people entering prison **were homeless** in the month before prison, and **4 in 5 (81%)** of people leaving prison **expected to be homeless** on release
- **1 in 3 (34%)** of people entering prison were **recently employed**, and **more than 1 in 4 (27%)** people leaving prison had paid **employment organised to start** after release
- **half (50%)** of people due to be released reported having contact with **friends, family, or elders** in the previous 4 weeks.



How healthy are people in the Northern Territory's prisons?

- **1 in 8 (12%)** of people entering prison reported previously being told they had a **mental health condition**¹
- **1 in 13 (8%)** of people entering prison, and **no one** leaving prison had high or very high levels of **psychological distress**
- **more than 2 in 3 (69%)** of people leaving prison said their physical health improved while incarcerated
- **1 in 8 (12%)** of people entering prison reported living with a disability.



How many people entering prison smoke and use drugs?

- **nearly 4 in 5 (78%)** of people entering prison were smokers
- **2 in 5 (40%)** of people entering prison had used illicit drugs in the previous year
- **1 in 17 (6%)** of people entering prison had used methamphetamines, and **1 in 3 (30%)** had used cannabis in the year before prison
- **no** people leaving prison reported using illicit drugs in prison, and **no one** reported injecting drugs in prison.



What kinds of medication are dispensed to people in prison?

On the single data-collection day for medications, NT prison clinics recorded 1,710 regular medications dispensed to 674 people in prison, or an average of 2.5 medications per person taking any medication. Of the medications dispensed:

- **1 in 7 (15%)** were **analgesics** e.g. paracetamol
- **1 in 8 (12%)** were **anti-hypertensives** e.g. ACE inhibitors, beta blockers
- **1 in 9 (11%)** were **cholesterol-lowering drugs** e.g. Lipitor (atorvastatin).



What health care do people report receiving in prison?

- **almost half (46%)** of people leaving prison said they saw a doctor, **almost all (96%)** had seen a nurse, and **1 in 8 (12%)** had seen a radiographer while they were in prison
- **2 in 5 (40%)** of people leaving prison said they attended an appointment outside the prison, **4%** were admitted to hospital, and **1 in 8 (12%)** said they had been to an emergency department.

Note

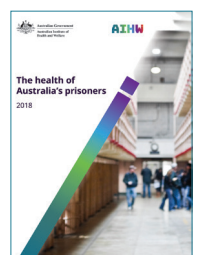
¹ The way in which surveys questions are designed may not align with Indigenous participants' perceptions of mental health issues and this could result in inaccurate reporting due to cultural differences.

More information

This fact sheet is part of *The health of Australia's prisoners 2018* release, which includes a report, a national fact sheet, state and territory fact sheets, and supplementary data tables.

For more information see

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/population-groups/prisoners/overview>



© Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020

Any enquiries about copyright and/or this fact sheet should be directed to:
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, GPO Box 570, Canberra ACT 2601,
Tel: (02) 6244 1000, Email: info@aihw.gov.au

AIHW