

# Alcohol and other drug treatment services in South Australia

## AODTS–NMDS collection

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 who used alcohol and other drug treatment.



## SA participation in the national collection

The South Australian Drug and Alcohol Services Council (DASC) participated in this national collection providing data from government funded non-government organisations as well as DASC services.

## Findings from the National Minimum Data Set (NMDS) 2001–02 for SA

### Highlights

- In South Australia, 48 alcohol and other drug treatment agencies provided 7,164 'treatment episodes' during 2001–02 (see below for the definition of 'treatment episodes').
- The majority of treatment episodes were for clients aged between 20 and 39 years of age (58%). 30% of all treatment episodes were provided for clients in the 30–39 year age group.
- Male clients in South Australia accounted for nearly two-thirds (65%) of all treatment episodes.
- In South Australia, alcohol (42%) and amphetamines (14%) were the most common principal drugs of concern to clients in treatment episodes, followed by cannabis (12%) and heroin (10%).
- Thirty-five per cent of treatment episodes in South Australia involved clients who were self-referred.
- In South Australia, 30% of treatment episodes where alcohol was nominated as the principal drug were for clients aged between 30 and 39 years.

### Contents of this data briefing

This data briefing summarises the main findings from the 2001–02 alcohol and other drug treatment services (AODTS) NMDS data for South Australia. Throughout this briefing, data from South Australia are presented along with national AODTS data.

### National AODTS-NMDS data reports

More detailed information about the 2001–02 collection and its findings can be found in the publication 'Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2001–02: report on the National Minimum Data Set'. This report, together with further publications and AODTS–NMDS interactive data can be accessed online at <[www.aihw.gov.au/drugs](http://www.aihw.gov.au/drugs)>.

### Data count in the collection (South Australia): treatment episodes

For the collection period 1 July 2001–30 June 2002, South Australia supplied client registration data only (treated as 'treatment episodes') based on clients who registered for alcohol and other drug treatment services. Clients could register for treatment more than once during the collection period, however, in SA data were supplied for the first treatment episode only. In all other jurisdictions data were supplied for all treatment episodes that closed during the collection period. Therefore, data from SA are likely to be an undercount of all treatment episodes in comparison with other states and territories. In 2001–02, SA did not provide data for main treatment type and other treatment related items.

### Data count in the national AODTS–NMDS collection: closed treatment episodes

The data count in the national collection is based on 'closed treatment episodes'. A closed treatment episode refers to a period of contact, with defined dates of commencement and cessation, between a client and a treatment agency. For example, a closed treatment episode could be for one specific treatment, such as withdrawal management (detoxification), that is part of an overall long-term treatment plan.

## Treatment agencies

- Throughout Australia, a total of 505 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies supplied data for 2001–02, of these, 48 were located in South Australia. Of the agencies in South Australia, 10 were non-government providers.

## Client profile

- The majority of treatment episodes in South Australia were for clients aged between 20 and 39 years of age (58%), with close to one-third of all treatment episodes (30%) provided for clients in the 30–39 year age group (Table 1). Nationally, the highest proportion of clients were aged between 20 and 29 years (34%), followed by those aged between 30 and 39 years (27%).
- The proportions of treatment episodes involving male and female clients in SA were the same as the national proportions (65% and 35%).

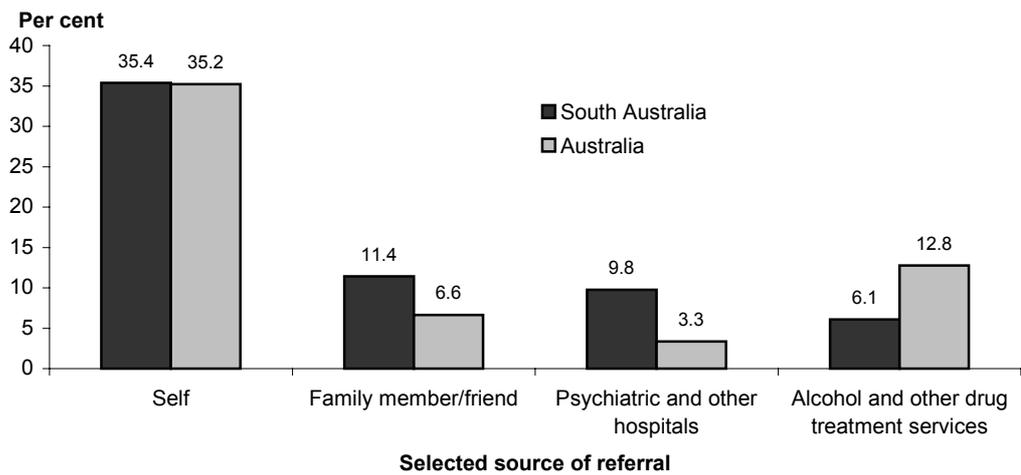
**Table 1: Treatment episodes, age group by sex of client, South Australia and Australia, 2001–02**

Age group (years)	South Australia			Australia		
	Males	Females	Persons <sup>(a)</sup>	Males	Females	Persons <sup>(a)</sup>
	(per cent)					
10–19	6.7	2.9	9.6	8.5	4.6	13.1
20–29	18.5	10.3	28.8	22.9	11.3	34.2
30–39	19.0	10.5	29.5	17.3	9.2	26.5
40–49	13.5	7.4	20.9	9.8	6.1	15.9
50–59	5.0	2.9	7.9	4.1	2.5	6.6
60+	2.1	0.9	3.0	1.5	0.8	2.3
Not stated	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.7	0.7	1.4
<b>Total (per cent)</b>	<b>65.0</b>	<b>35.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>64.8</b>	<b>35.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total (number)</b>	<b>4,666</b>	<b>2,498</b>	<b>7,164</b>	<b>78,323</b>	<b>42,415</b>	<b>120,869</b>

(a) Includes not stated for Sex.

Source: AIHW 2003.

- Ninety-two per cent of treatment episodes in South Australia involved clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- The proportion of treatment episodes involving clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin was lower in South Australia (6%) than nationally (8%). However, both of these proportions were higher than the proportion of the entire Australian population who identify as Indigenous (2.4%: ABS unpublished 2001 Census data).
- The majority of treatment episodes in SA were for clients born in Australia (81%) and 89% were for clients whose preferred language was English. Nationally, these proportions were slightly higher; 85% of treatment episodes were for clients born in Australia and 94% for clients whose preferred language was English.
- Thirty-five per cent of treatment episodes in South Australia and nationally involved clients who were self-referred (Figure 1).
- There was a higher proportion of treatment episodes in South Australia involving clients who were referred by family and/or friends (11%) or from psychiatric and other hospitals (10%) compared to those nationally (7% and 3% respectively).
- A lower proportion of treatment episodes in South Australia involved clients who were referred from alcohol and other drug treatment services (6%) compared to the national figure (13%).

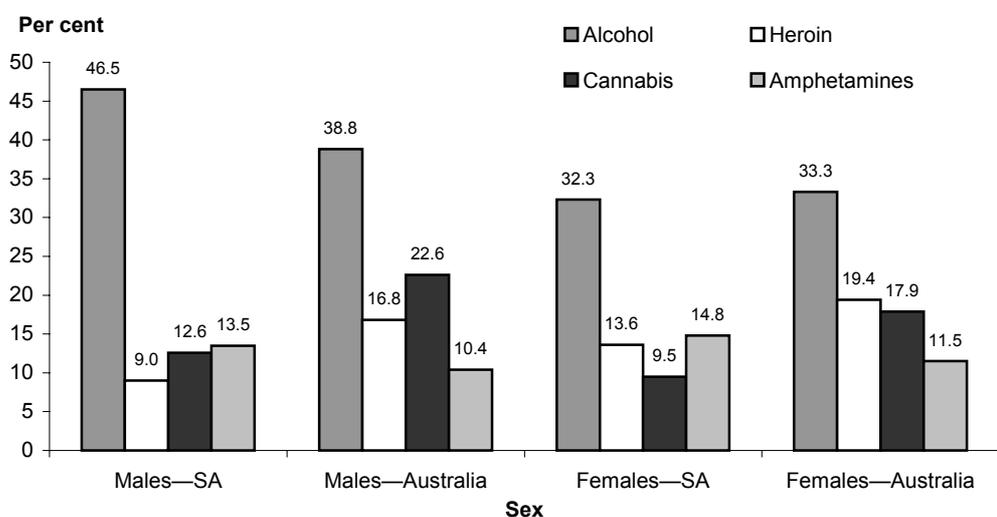


Source: AIHW 2003.

**Figure 1: Treatment episodes by selected source of referral, South Australia and Australia, 2001-02**

### Principal drug of concern

- In South Australia, alcohol (42%) and amphetamines (14%) were the most common principal drugs of concern in treatment episodes, followed by cannabis (12%) and heroin (11%). Nationally, alcohol was the most common principal drug (37%), followed by cannabis (21%), heroin (18%) and amphetamines (11%) (see caveat on page 6).
- Alcohol was the drug most commonly recorded in treatment episodes for both sexes in SA (47% for males and 32% for females). This was followed by amphetamines for males (14%) and females (15%), then cannabis for males (13%) and heroin for females (14%) (Figure 2).
- The principal drug of concern for SA varied by sex when compared to national figures. In SA, 13% of treatment episodes for male clients involved cannabis as the principal drug compared to 23% of males nationally. 14% of treatment episodes in SA for female clients involved heroin as the principal drug compared to 19% of females nationally.
- A high proportion of treatment episodes involving males in SA had alcohol as the principal drug (47%) compared to males nationally (39%).



Source: AIHW 2003.

**Figure 2: Treatment episodes, selected principal drug of concern by sex of client, South Australia and Australia, 2001-02**

- Higher proportions of treatment episodes for both males and females in SA recorded amphetamines as their principal drug (14% males and 15% females) compared to nationally (10% and 12% respectively).
- In SA, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern for clients aged 20 years or more (Table 2). The proportion of treatment episodes where the principal drug was alcohol peaked for clients aged 60 years and over (86%), followed by clients in the 50–59 year age group (84%). Nationally, clients in these age groups also recorded the highest proportion of treatment episodes where alcohol was the principal drug of concern (80% and 79% respectively).
- For treatment episodes involving clients aged between 10 and 19 years in SA, cannabis was the most common principal drug of concern (40%), followed by alcohol (18%) and amphetamines (15%). Nationally cannabis was also the most common principal drug of concern in the 10–19 year age group (46%), followed by alcohol (15%) and heroin (14%).

**Table 2: Treatment episodes, principal drug of concern by age of client, South Australia and Australia, 2001–02<sup>(a)</sup>**

Principal drug	South Australia (per cent)							Total (Australia)	
	10–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	Total <sup>(b)</sup>	Per cent	Number
Alcohol	17.9	28.9	40.9	55.7	83.6	86.3	41.9	37.0	41,886
Amphetamines	15.4	24.9	13.6	3.4	0.5	1.6	14.0	10.8	12,211
Benzodiazepines	0.3	1.7	2.2	1.9	2.6	4.2	1.9	2.4	2,745
Cannabis	39.9	14.5	7.3	4.4	2.3	—	11.6	21.0	23,826
Cocaine	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.1	—	—	0.4	0.7	804
Ecstasy	0.1	0.1	0.1	—	—	—	0.1	0.2	253
Heroin	6.8	13.7	12.8	8.6	1.2	—	10.5	17.7	20,027
Methadone	0.6	3.6	5.4	5.0	1.2	0.5	3.9	2.3	2,570
Nicotine	7.1	0.9	0.5	1.0	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.4	1,602
Other <sup>(c)</sup>	4.6	5.8	10.6	14.1	4.9	4.2	8.7	5.7	6,482
Not stated	6.6	5.3	6.1	5.9	2.1	1.6	5.5	0.2	825
<b>Total (per cent)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>—</b>
<b>Total (number)</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>2,003</b>	<b>2,034</b>	<b>1,349</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>6,699</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>113,231</b>

(a) Excludes treatment episodes for clients seeking treatment for the drug use of others.

(b) Includes not stated for Age.

(c) Includes balance of Principal drugs of concern coded according to Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern.

Source: AIHW 2003.

- In SA, alcohol was the most common principal drug for treatment episodes involving Indigenous clients (49%). Nationally, alcohol was also the most common principal drug for Indigenous clients (46%).
- Over one-third (35%) of treatment episodes in SA involved clients who reported never having injected drugs. Of the 18% who reported they were 'current injectors', 48% were aged between 20 and 29 years. Care should be taken when interpreting data for 'injecting drug use' due to the high 'not stated' response for this item (28% not stated response in SA and 15% nationally).

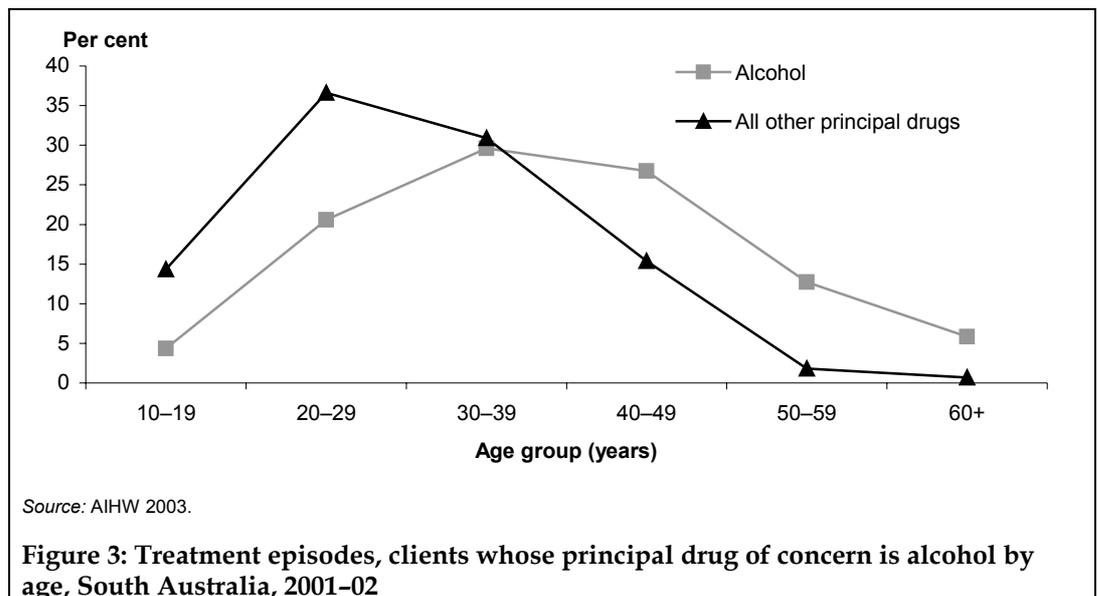
## Special theme – Alcohol

This section examines more closely the clients who reported 'Alcohol' as their principal drug of concern and the treatment programs used by them. This theme was selected following the *Survey of Treatment Agencies 2002*, in response to which agencies reported this area as being of high interest to the field.

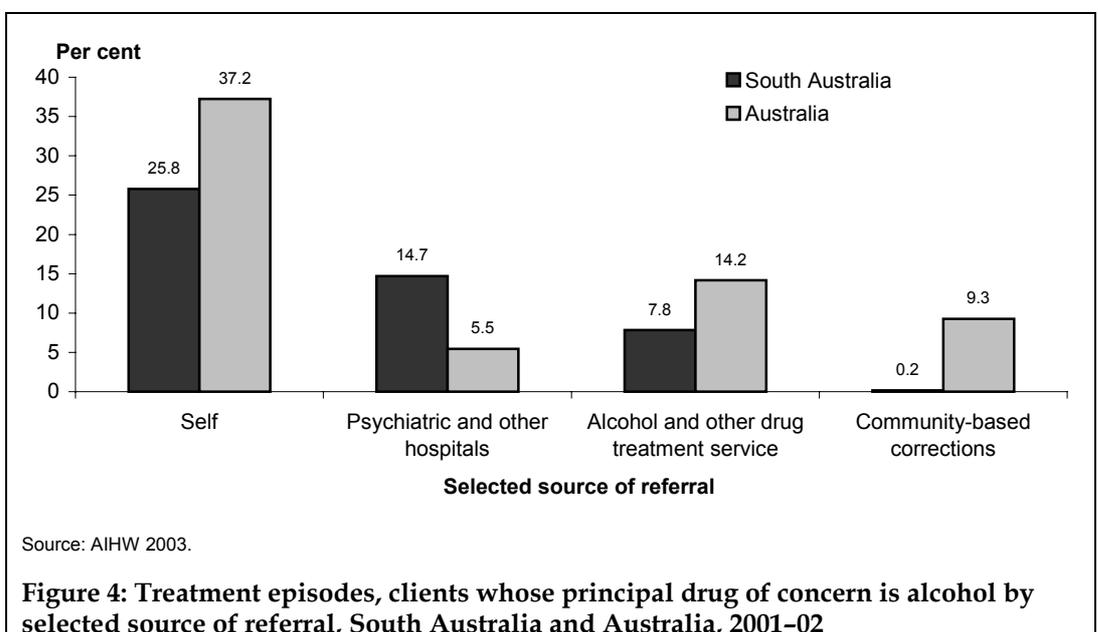
Treatment episodes in SA for clients who reported alcohol as their principal drug of concern numbered 2,809.

### Client profile

- Clients who nominated alcohol as their principal drug of concern were older, on average, than clients seeking treatment for all other principal drugs (Figure 3). For example, in SA 30% of treatment episodes with alcohol as the principal drug of concern were for clients aged between 30 and 39 years, whereas for treatment episodes involving all other principal drugs, clients were more likely to be aged between 20 and 29 years (37%).
- In SA, there were lower proportions of treatment episodes for clients in the 10 to 19 year age group with alcohol as their principal drug (4%), compared to treatment episodes for all other principal drugs (14%), and higher proportions for treatment episodes involving clients aged 40 years and over (45% and 18% respectively).
- Seventy-five per cent of treatment episodes in SA where alcohol was the principal drug involved male clients. Of these, the highest proportions were in the 30 to 39 year age group (28%) and the 40 to 49 year age group (26%).



- Of the treatment episodes involving clients who nominated alcohol as their principal drug, nationally a higher proportion were self-referred (37%) compared to those in SA (26%) (Figure 4). Less than one per cent of treatment episodes in SA (0.2%), where alcohol was nominated as the principal drug involved clients who were referred from community-based corrections, this compares with 9% nationally.



## Agencies and clients within scope

All publicly funded (State or Commonwealth) government and non-government agencies that provide one or more specialist alcohol and/or other drug treatment services, including residential and non-residential agencies, were in scope for the national data set. Specialist alcohol and drug units based in acute care hospitals or psychiatric hospitals were included if they provided treatment to non-admitted patients (e.g. outpatient services).

All clients who had completed one or more treatment episodes from an alcohol and other drug treatment service within scope during the reporting period (1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002) were included.

## Exclusions to scope

- Agencies whose sole activity is to prescribe and/or dose for opioid pharmacotherapy maintenance treatment.
- Halfway houses and sobering-up shelters, correctional institutions, health promotion services (e.g. needle and syringe exchange programs).
- Alcohol and drug treatment units in acute care or psychiatric hospitals that only provide treatment to admitted patients.
- Private treatment agencies that do not receive public funding.

## Caveats

Of data in scope, the following caveats must be observed:

- Queensland Health supplied police diversion data only, all with principal drug of cannabis. As a result, nationally, cannabis as a proportion of all principal drugs is over represented.
- South Australia supplied client registration data only (treated as 'treatment episodes') with no data for main treatment type or other treatment related items.
- The number of Indigenous clients may be under-counted as 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 2001-02. In addition, at the national level 8% of clients did not state their Indigenous status.

## Source

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003. Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2001-02: Report on the national minimum data set. AIHW cat. no. HSE 28. Canberra: AIHW.

## Interactive alcohol and other drug treatment data

The AIHW has an interactive alcohol and other drug treatment data site containing subsets of national information on alcohol and other drug treatment services from the 2001-02 collection. This site allows anyone who has access to the Internet to view AODTS-NMDS data via a web interface. The datacubes can be found at: <[www.aihw.gov.au/drugs/datacubes/index.html](http://www.aihw.gov.au/drugs/datacubes/index.html)>. Users of the datacubes can look up data and present them in a way meaningful to their needs.

For further information visit our website where a number of the recent alcohol and other drug publications are available in full <[www.aihw.gov.au/drugs](http://www.aihw.gov.au/drugs)>.

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