

5 National Child Protection Data Collection

Introduction

Child protection services are the responsibility of the community services departments in each state or territory. Children who come into contact with the community services departments for protective reasons include those:

- who are suspected of, or have been abused, neglected or otherwise harmed; or
- whose parents cannot provide adequate care or protection.

The community services departments provide assistance to these children through the provision of, or referral to, a wide range of services. Non-government agencies are often contracted by the departments to provide these services which range from family support to the placement of children in out-of-home care.

Children who are seen to be in need of protection can come to the attention of child protection authorities through a notification by an individual, an organisation, a third party such as a medical professional, or by children themselves. These reports are assessed by the child protection agencies and in cases where there is a possibility of risk of harm to the child or it is suspected that abuse or neglect has occurred, they are classified as a notification. Most notifications are then investigated and classified as either 'substantiated' or 'not substantiated' depending on whether it is concluded that the child has been or will be abused or neglected or otherwise harmed. A range of services may then be provided to the child and his/her family.

In the more serious cases, the department may also apply to the relevant court to place a child on a care and protection order. Care and protection orders vary between jurisdictions but they can provide a supervisory role for the department or transfer of legal guardianship to the department. The issuing of a care and protection order is often a legal requirement if a child is to be placed in out-of-home care. This option can be used to protect the child from further harm or where there is family conflict and 'time out' is needed or where parents are ill or unable to care for the child.

The AIHW is responsible for the collection and publication of national child protection data. The three areas of child protection services for which national data are collected are:

- child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations;
- children on care and protection orders; and
- children in out-of-home care.

The data is supplied by state and territory community service departments who fund the AIHW to collate and publish these data annually. Currently the data are provided to the AIHW in the form of aggregate data in Excel spreadsheets, although the collection is moving to unit record for future collections. The AIHW has been responsible for collecting national data on child abuse and neglect (now referred to as child protection notifications,

investigations and substantiations) and on children on care and protection orders since 1992 and for national data on children in out-of-home care since 1995–96.

Data quality issues

As each state and territory has its own legislation, policies and practices in relation to child protection, the data provided by the jurisdictions are not strictly comparable. This is particularly the case with the data on notifications, investigations and substantiations, where jurisdictions use different definitions, policies and practices.

There are also variations across jurisdictions in the quality of the data on Indigenous status due to differences in practices adopted to identify and record Indigenous status. Some jurisdictions are using the standard ABS question (e.g. Queensland have just introduced this as a requirement for all child protection workers) but in others the information appears to be acquired in a more ad-hoc way. Although the Indigenous status field is mandatory in all jurisdictions, there is a 'not known' option when entering the information onto the data system in all states and territories, except in Victoria.

If a client's Indigenous status is marked not known there is usually no requirement to review these data when the client's status becomes known, except in Western Australia, where a 'pop-up' message automatically reminds the case workers that the Indigenous status is currently not known and that they ought to update this information in the database.

The current counting rules require jurisdictions to allocate all children with not known/missing not stated Indigenous status to the non-Indigenous category. Therefore no information about the quality of the data is available nor the extent to which quality varies across jurisdictions. However, in 2001–02, data for each state and territory on the number of children and young people with not known/missing/not stated Indigenous status were collected nationally for the first time. The information was not disaggregated by age, sex or other characteristics. As these data were collected for the first time in 2001–02, there are no time series data on not known/missing/not stated data for Indigenous status, although this information will now be collected annually.

The data on Indigenous status for notifications are likely to be the least reliable as the information on a child may come from third parties who do not know the child or family well. A significant number of notifications are not subject to an investigation and in these cases there is no way of verifying the information provided. The data on investigations and substantiations are likely to be more reliable as departments will have face-to-face contact with children in these cases and will have obtained more detailed information about a child and their circumstances. The data for children on care and protection orders and children in out-of-home care are likely to be the most reliable as there is significant intervention by the department for children receiving these services.

The nature of child protection services, which are fairly intrusive interventions into family life and in which many families are not involved voluntarily, means that there are particular issues in relation to the identification of the Indigenous status of children and young people. In some situations workers may not feel that it is appropriate to ask about a child or young person's Indigenous status. This could include situations where parents are not happy about their involvement with the child protection system. Parents may also be reluctant to identify as Indigenous in certain situations, particularly given the long and fraught relationship between Indigenous people and child welfare services. These factors are likely to impact on both the validity and the reliability of the data on Indigenous status.

Child protection also has the added complication of dealing with very young children. It is not clear at what age a child is considered old enough to be asked to self-identify. It is also not clear how to record the status when the views of the parents conflict – one parent identifies the child as Indigenous while the other does not.

Analyses

Child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations

Table 5.1 shows the number and proportion of notifications, investigations and substantiations where Indigenous status was not known/missing/not stated. The totals for Australia show that the proportion of not known/missing/not stated decreased from 13% at the point of notification, to 12% at the point of investigation and 7% at substantiations. There were, however, marked variations by jurisdiction.

In Victoria and the Northern Territory there were no notifications, investigations or substantiations recorded where the Indigenous status of the child was not known/missing/not stated. In Victoria, the Indigenous status of children in the child protection system must be coded as either Indigenous or non-Indigenous. There are no provisions for recording not known/missing/not stated Indigenous status.

In other jurisdictions, the proportion of notifications, investigations or substantiations when Indigenous status was recorded as not known/missing/not stated varied. In relation to notification the proportion ranged from 9% in South Australia to 95% in Tasmania; for investigations the range was 8% in South Australia to 94% in Tasmania; and for substantiations, the range was 3.3% in New South Wales to 95% in Tasmania. The proportion of not known/missing/not stated was relatively low at each stage of the child protection process for Queensland, from notification, through investigation to substantiation.

Table 5.1: Notifications, investigations and substantiations, by Indigenous status by state and territory 2001-02

Indigenous status	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Notifications									
Number									
Indigenous children	6,421	2,134	2,527	946	1,926	6	58	795	14,813
Other children	36,126	35,842	21,567	1,726	8,291	21	299	810	104,682
Not known/missing/ not stated	12,661	..	3,498	373	986	520	444	—	18,482
Total	55,208	37,976	27,592	3,045	11,203	547	801	1,605	137,977
Per cent									
Indigenous children	11.6	5.6	9.2	31.1	17.2	1.1	7.2	49.5	10.7
Other children	65.4	94.4	78.2	56.7	74.0	3.8	37.3	50.5	75.9
Not known/missing/ not stated	22.9	..	12.7	12.2	8.8	95.1	55.4	—	13.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	100
Investigations									
Number									
Indigenous children	4,442	1,052	2,180	913	1,069	7	50	479	10,192
Other children	24,297	12,159	17,965	1,671	4,098	23	251	356	60,820
Not known/missing/ not stated	4,879	..	2,889	353	466	499	349	—	9,435
Total	33,618	13,211	23,034	2,937	5,633	529	650	835	80,447
Per cent									
Indigenous children	13.2	8.0	9.5	31.1	19.0	1.3	7.7	57.4	12.7
Other children	72.3	92.0	78.0	56.9	72.7	4.3	38.6	42.6	75.6
Not known/missing/ not stated	14.5	..	12.5	12.0	8.3	94.3	53.7	—	11.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	100.0
Substantiations									
Number									
Indigenous children	1,101	630	1,206	426	483	2	11	236	4,095
Other children	7,224	7,057	7,546	646	1,568	8	102	113	24,260
Not known/missing/ not stated	281	..	1,284	115	179	172	107	—	2,142
Total	8,606	7,687	10,036	1,187	2,230	182	220	349	30,497
Per cent									
Indigenous children	12.8	8.2	12.0	35.9	21.7	1.1	5.0	67.6	13.4
Other children	83.9	91.8	75.2	54.4	70.3	4.4	46.4	32.4	75.9
Not known/missing/ not stated	3.3	..	12.8	9.7	8.0	94.5	48.6	—	7.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

Children on care and protection orders

In the data collection for children on care and protection orders there was only one jurisdiction with no not known/missing/not stated records for Indigenous status – the Northern Territory. Across other jurisdictions, the proportion of not known/missing/not stated records was 3% in New South Wales and Queensland, 10% in South Australia and 49% in Tasmania. In Tasmania the proportion of not known/missing/not stated records for care and protection orders (49%) was markedly lower than for substantiations (95%).

Table 5.2: Not known/missing/not stated counts for children on care and protection orders, at 30 June 2002

Indigenous status	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
	Number								
Indigenous children	1,992	510	880	469	233	29	32	126	4,265
Other children	6,000	4,463	2,762	914	926	208	161	68	15,734
Not known/missing/ not stated	237	2	123	1	127	227	68	—	558
Total	8,229	4,975	3,765	1,384	1,286	464	261	194	20,557
	Per cent								
Indigenous children	24.2	10.3	23.4	33.9	18.1	6.3	12.3	64.9	20.7
Other children	72.9	89.7	73.4	66.0	72.0	44.8	61.7	35.1	76.5
Not known/missing/ not stated	2.9	—	3.3	0.1	9.9	48.9	26.1	—	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

Children in out-of-home care

Table 5.3 shows the number of children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2002. The proportion of children with not known/missing/not stated Indigenous status in each jurisdiction was similar to the proportions on care and protection orders. Proportions ranged from 2% of children in Victoria to 45% of children in Tasmania (although this State has a relatively low number of children in out-of-home care). In Western Australia, each child in care with a not known/missing/not stated Indigenous status is followed up to ascertain Indigenous status. This allows the calculation of the number of Indigenous children placed according to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, required for the annual report for the Western Australian Department of Community Development.

Table 5.3: Not known/missing/not stated counts for children in out-of-home care, at 30 June 2002

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total ^(a)
	Number								
Indigenous	2,098	489	708	511	232	22	27	105	4,192
Non-Indigenous	5,687	3,354	2,429	983	851	191	135	n.a.	13,630
Not known/missing/ not stated	299	75	120	—	113	172	62	n.a.	841
Total	8,084	3,918	3,257	1,494	1,196	385	224	163	18,721
	Per cent								
Indigenous	26.0	12.5	21.7	31.8	19.4	5.7	12.1	64.4	22.4
Non-Indigenous	70.3	85.6	74.6	68.2	71.2	49.6	60.3	n.a.	72.8
Not known/missing/ not stated	3.7	1.9	3.7	—	9.4	44.7	27.7	n.a.	4.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Total percentages do not include the Northern Territory.

Key findings

- Data on the number of children and young people with not known/missing/not stated Indigenous status were first collected in 2001–02. Therefore there are no time series data of this kind for Indigenous status; however these data will now be collected annually.
- The proportion of not known/missing/not stated records decreased from 13% at the point of notification, to 12% at the point of investigation and 7% at substantiations. There were, however, marked variations by jurisdiction, due to differences in practices adopted to identify and record Indigenous status (Table 5.1).
- In Tasmania the proportion of not known/missing/or not stated was higher than other jurisdictions. However, this is probably more a reflection of recording practices than case workers' knowledge of the child's Indigenous status.
- In the data collection for children on care and protection orders there were three jurisdictions with virtually no not known/missing/not stated records for Indigenous status (Table 5.2).
- When providing data for the National Child Protection Data Collection to the AIHW, jurisdictions allocate all children with not known/missing/not stated Indigenous status to the non-Indigenous category, as instructed in the counting rules.

Issues for follow-up

- To reduce variations across jurisdictions it is recommended that child protection workers be encouraged to ask the standard ABS question of clients about Indigenous status. For this to be done effectively staff would need to be supported and trained appropriately.
- Indigenous status should ideally not be recorded at the notification stage of a child protection matter. The quality of the data is questionable, as many notifications are from third parties who do not know the child or family well.

- Indigenous status should be reviewed by the case workers at the substantiation stage of a child protection matter. One way to do this is to use pop-up screens on the computerised records to automatically prompt staff to check the accuracy of the Indigenous status.

6 Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set

Introduction

The Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set (AODTS–NMDS) has been implemented to assist in monitoring and evaluating key objectives of the National Drug Strategic Framework and to assist in the planning, management and quality improvement of alcohol and other drug treatment services. In general, it aims to provide ongoing information on the demographics of clients who use these services, the treatment they receive and administrative information about the agencies that provide alcohol and other drug treatment services. Although the NMDS aims to provide a measure of service utilisation, it was not designed to calculate trends in alcohol and other drug use or to monitor general patterns of drug problems in Australia. Nevertheless, the information collected by the AODTS–NMDS will play a role in monitoring patterns of drug problems in Australia.

The AODTS–NMDS is a subset of alcohol and other drug treatment services information that is routinely collected by states and territories to monitor treatment services within their jurisdiction. The information collected by the AODTS–NMDS is a nationally agreed set of common data items collected by service providers for clients registered for treatment. The AIHW has the role of data custodian for the national minimum data set. The Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs (IGCD) NMDS Working Group is responsible for the development and implementation of the national collection. Members of the working group include representatives from the Commonwealth and each state and territory as well as other organisations such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC).

The AODTS–NMDS for 2000–01 consists of de-identified unit record data for both clients and treatment agencies. The client-level records consist of 14 data items and the agency-level records consist of 3 data items. The client-level data items are intended to collect demographic information and information about the client's drug use behaviour.

Scope

The following agencies and clients are within scope for the collection:

- All publicly funded (at state and/or Commonwealth level) government and non-government agencies that provide one or more specialist alcohol and/or other drug treatment services, including residential and non-residential agencies. 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 assessed and accepted for one or more types of treatment from an alcohol and other drug treatment service within scope during the relevant reporting period (1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001).

The following agencies and clients are excluded from the collection:

- Agencies for which the primary function is to provide accommodation or overnight stays such as 'halfway houses' and 'sobering-up shelters'.
- Agencies for which the primary function is to provide services concerned with health promotion (e.g. needle and syringe exchange programs).
- Treatment services based in prison or other correctional institutions.
- Clients receiving treatment from services based in prison or other correctional institutions.
- Agencies whose sole activity is to prescribe and/or dose for methadone maintenance treatment.
- Clients who were on a methadone maintenance program and who were not receiving any other form of treatment. It should be noted that methadone maintenance data are featured in this chapter and this additional information should be taken into account when any attempt is made to estimate the total number of clients receiving treatment from all publicly funded alcohol and other drug treatment services.
- Alcohol and drug treatment units in acute care or psychiatric hospitals that only provide treatment to admitted patients.
- Admitted patients in acute care or psychiatric hospitals.
- People who sought advice or information but were not formally assessed and accepted for treatment.
- Private treatment agencies that do not receive public funding.

Data quality

There were difficulties in aggregating data from highly diverse state/territory data collection systems. The national collection is a compilation of agency administrative data from state and territory health authority systems. There is a large degree of diversity in the data collection systems and practices that are in place within the alcohol and other drug treatment sector across Australian jurisdictions. The following notes should be used to guide interpretation of the data:

- New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory had already implemented systems designed to collect treatment episode data (which is what will be reported in the AODTS-NMDS from 2001-02) before the first collection period had finished. Therefore, these jurisdictions provided AIHW with treatment episode rather than client registration data. Treatment episode data are based on completed episodes (i.e. a period of contact between a client and a treatment provider with defined dates of commencement and cessation), therefore while AIHW was able to transform episode data into client registration data, clients with open records were not included. As a result, data from these jurisdictions are likely to be an under-count of the actual client numbers.
- Although the *National Health Data Dictionary* definitions provide the basic standards of the data set, there is some variation in the actual data definitions used by data providers within a few jurisdictions. Where possible, the AIHW has performed data mapping to align information to the equivalent national standard.

For the data in scope the following caveats must be observed:

- These figures do not include data from Queensland Health.
- These figures do not include the majority of Commonwealth-funded Indigenous substance use services or a number of Aboriginal primary health care services that also provide treatment for alcohol and other drug problems. These services are generally not under the jurisdiction of the state or territory health authority and the Commonwealth currently only reports NMDS data from one specific program. In addition, both of these services have a different collection basis to the NMDS. As a result, most of these data are not currently included in the AODTS-NMDS collection. Therefore the number of Indigenous clients in this report will under-represent the total number of Indigenous Australians that received treatment for alcohol and other drug problems during 2000–01.
- These figures do not include all of the services provided under the National Illicit Drug Strategy Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program (NGOTGP). The respective state or territory where the service is located reports many of those services, however some are reported by the Commonwealth. Not all of those agencies under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth were able to supply data for this report (21 of the 33 services supplied data). It is anticipated that all services will be reported on in future collections. Those reported by the Commonwealth are included in the total in the jurisdiction-based tables.
- On their own, these figures do not provide measures of the incidence or prevalence of alcohol or other drug abuse or dependence in the community. This is because not all persons who abuse or become addicted to alcohol or other drugs seek treatment for their condition, or seek treatment from a publicly funded service.

Interpretation of data

The following counting rule has been used for the data included in the report:

A 'client registration' occurred when a person commenced treatment for an alcohol or other drug problem within the period of 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001.

A person was identified as commencing treatment if:

- they were a new client (i.e. seeking treatment from the agency for the first time);
- they were a previous client who was re-registering for treatment because they had had no contact with the service for a period of 3 months or more and no plan in place for further contact (i.e. there had been an extended break since the client had last sought treatment from the agency); or
- they were a current client whose principal drug of concern had changed (i.e. the main drug problem for which they were seeking treatment had changed).

Although there has been national agreement on the definitions and standards for the data items that comprise the AODTS-NMDS, this does not ensure that there is perfect comparability of the data across states and territories, nor across agencies within states and territories.

Analyses

Age and sex

Of all clients of alcohol and other drug treatment services, 8.5% had a missing/not stated Indigenous status (Table 6.1). Female clients (9%) were more likely than male clients (8%) to have a missing/not stated Indigenous status.

Clients who did not state their sex had the highest rates of missing/not stated Indigenous status (12.5%), particularly those in the 40–49 and 50–59 age groups (18% and 20% respectively).

Clients aged 40 years or more had slightly higher rates of missing/not stated Indigenous status than those aged under 40 years. For example, one in ten clients in the 40–49 age group had a missing/not stated Indigenous status.

Table 6.1: Proportion of clients with a missing/not stated Indigenous identifier^(a) by age and sex, Australia^(b), 2000–01

Age group (years)	Males	Females	Unknown sex	Total
	Per cent			
10–19	6.8	6.6	11.2	6.8
20–29	7.7	8.4	12.3	8.0
30–39	8.2	10.1	12.3	8.9
40–49	9.2	10.8	17.9	9.9
50–59	8.9	9.5	20.0	9.2
60+	9.6	8.5	0.0	9.2
Unknown age	7.8	12.5	0.0	9.8
Total (%)	8.0	9.1	12.5	8.5
Total (no.)	53,057	29,445	1,027	83,529

(a) Proportion of all clients of each age and sex who have a missing/not stated Indigenous identifier.

(b) Excludes Queensland.

Age and sex profiles

Analysis was carried out to examine if the sex distribution (Table 6.2) and age distribution (Table 6.3) amongst the missing/not stated records was similar to that of the Indigenous or the non-Indigenous clients. There was a much higher proportion of males in both the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous clients (63.2 and 63.9% respectively), with a similar sex profile for the records with a missing/not stated Indigenous identifier (60.3%) (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2: Number and proportion of clients by Indigenous status by sex, Australia^(a), 2000–01

Indigenous status	Males	Females	Unknown	Persons^(c)
	Number			
Indigenous	4,152	2,368	51	6,571
Non-Indigenous	44,649	24,399	848	69,896
Missing/not stated	4,256	2,678	128	7,062
Total	53,057	29,445	1027	83,529
	Per cent			
Indigenous	63.2	36.0	0.8	100.0
Non-Indigenous	63.9	34.9	1.2	100.0
Missing/not stated	60.3	37.9	1.8	100.0
Total	63.5	35.3	1.2	100.0

(a) Excludes Queensland.

(b) Includes instances where sex was not stated.

Of all clients with a missing Indigenous identifier, the highest proportions were in the 20–29 age group (34%) and the 30–39 age group (27%) (Table 6.3). This was also true for both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients.

However, below age 20 and from age 40 onwards the age profile of the clients with a missing Indigenous identifier had greater similarities to the age profile of non-Indigenous clients than that of Indigenous clients.

Table 6.3: Number and proportion of clients by Indigenous status by age, Australia^(a), 2000–01

Age group (years)	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Missing/not stated	Total
Number				
10–19	1,185	9,854	802	11,841
20–29	2,341	25,393	2,413	30,147
30–39	1,943	17,619	1,913	21,475
40–49	716	10,274	1,203	12,193
50–59	223	4,361	464	5,048
60+	40	1,379	143	1,562
Unknown age	123	1,016	124	1,263
Total	6,571	69,896	7,062	83,529
Per cent				
10–19	18.0	14.1	11.4	14.2
20–29	35.6	36.3	34.2	36.1
30–39	29.6	25.2	27.1	25.7
40–49	10.9	14.7	17.0	14.6
50–59	3.4	6.2	6.6	6.0
60+	0.6	2.0	2.0	1.9
Unknown age	1.9	1.5	1.8	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Excludes Queensland.

State and territory

South Australia had the highest proportions of clients with a missing/not stated Indigenous status (31%) and the Australian Capital Territory the lowest (0.5%) (Table 6.4).

There did not appear to be an association at the jurisdiction level between the proportion of Indigenous clients and the proportion of missing/not stated Indigenous status.

Table 6.4: Number and proportion of clients by Indigenous status by state and territory^(a), 2000–01

Indigenous status	NSW	Vic	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total ^(b)
Number								
Indigenous	1,725	1,325	1,479	397	92	116	1,099	6,571
Non-Indigenous	23,980	25,518	9,677	4,125	1,165	2,599	1,354	69,896
Missing/not stated	1,689	2,044	953	2,034	129	15	111	7,062
Total	27,394	28,887	12,113	6,556	1,400	2,743	2,564	83,529
Per cent								
Indigenous	6.3	4.6	12.2	6.1	6.6	4.2	42.9	7.9
Non-Indigenous	87.5	88.3	79.9	62.9	83.2	94.8	52.8	83.7
Missing/not stated	6.2	7.1	7.9	31.0	9.2	0.5	4.3	8.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Excludes Queensland.

(b) Includes other NGOTGP services not currently reported through a specific state or territory collection.

Principal drug of concern

The highest proportion of missing/not stated Indigenous status was found amongst those clients who did not provide information on their principal drug of concern (19.2%) (Table 6.5).

Of those who did report their principal drug of concern, clients who reported 'balance of analgesics' or 'balance of drugs of concern' as their principal drug of concern were most likely to have a missing/not stated Indigenous status (16.6% and 16.5% respectively). The next highest proportion was for clients who reported methadone as their principal drug of concern (12.9%).

The groupings 'balance of analgesics' and 'balance of drugs of concern' are groupings from the Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern 1248.0 (ABS 2000). In the grouping 'balance of analgesics', the majority of clients with missing/not stated Indigenous status reported code 1000, 'Analgesics, not further defined (nfd)' as their principal drug of concern. In the grouping 'balance of drugs of concern', the majority of clients with missing/not stated Indigenous status reported code 9999, 'Other drugs of concern'.

While those clients reporting alcohol or heroin as their principal drug of concern did not, comparatively, have a high proportion of missing/not stated Indigenous status, they did by far constitute the biggest group of clients, at 1,901 and 1,455 records with missing/not stated Indigenous status respectively.

Table 6.5: Number and proportion of substance users^(a) by selected principal drug of concern by Indigenous status, Australia^(b), 2000–01

Principal drug of concern	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Missing/not stated	Total
Number				
Heroin	1,177	19,249	1,455	21,881
Methadone	73	1,102	174	1,349
Balance of analgesics ^(c)	126	2,831	587	3,544
Alcohol	3,020	20,968	1,901	25,889
Benzodiazepines	64	1,444	127	1,635
Amphetamines	476	5,859	644	6,979
Cannabinoids	865	9,137	796	10,798
Ecstasy	5	129	5	139
Cocaine	11	259	21	291
Nicotine	50	655	48	753
Balance of drugs of concern ^(c)	346	1,885	440	2,671
Not stated	37	824	204	1,065
Total	6,250	64,342	6,402	76,994
Per cent				
Heroin	5.4	88.0	6.6	100.0
Methadone	5.4	81.7	12.9	100.0
Balance of analgesics ^(c)	3.6	79.9	16.6	100.0
Alcohol	11.7	81.0	7.3	100.0
Benzodiazepines	3.9	88.3	7.8	100.0
Amphetamines	6.8	84.0	9.2	100.0
Cannabinoids	8.0	84.6	7.4	100.0
Ecstasy	3.6	92.8	3.6	100.0
Cocaine	3.8	89.0	7.2	100.0
Nicotine	6.6	87.0	6.4	100.0
Balance of drugs of concern ^(c)	13.0	70.6	16.5	100.0
Not stated	3.5	77.4	19.2	100.0
Total	8.1	83.6	8.3	100.0

(a) Substance user population comprises all client registrations excluding clients seeking treatment for the drug use of others.

(b) Excludes Queensland.

(c) Balance of drugs of concern coded to Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern.

Client type

In general, where a client did not provide information on a particular question such as age, sex or client type etc., they were also less likely to provide information on their Indigenous status. As a result, proportions of missing/not stated Indigenous status were usually highest for this group.

Clients who were seeking treatment for the drug use of others, or both their own and others' drug use, had higher proportions of missing/not stated Indigenous status (10% and 11% respectively) than those seeking treatment for their own drug use (8%) (Table 6.6).

Table 6.6: Number and proportion of clients by client type by Indigenous status, Australia^(a), 2000-01

Client type	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Missing/not stated	Total
Number				
Own drug use	5,911	61,388	5,958	73,257
Other's drug use	321	5,554	660	6,535
Own and other's drug use	144	312	56	512
Not stated	195	2,642	388	3,225
Total	6,571	69,896	7,062	83,529
Per cent				
Own drug use	8.1	83.8	8.1	100.0
Other's drug use	4.9	85.0	10.1	100.0
Own and other's drug use	28.1	60.9	10.9	100.0
Not stated	6.0	81.9	12.0	100.0
Total	7.9	83.7	8.5	100.0

(a) Excludes Queensland.

Proportion of clients who identified as Indigenous

Within agencies, the higher the proportion of clients who were reported as Indigenous, the lower the proportion with a missing/not stated Indigenous status. For example, in agencies where more than half their clients were reported as Indigenous, overall 91% of clients were reported as Indigenous and less than 1% had a missing Indigenous status. Conversely, in agencies where less than 1% of their clients were reported as Indigenous, 0.3% of clients were reported as Indigenous and 15% had a missing Indigenous status (Table 6.7).

It should be noted that the percentage of clients who identified as Indigenous has been extracted from the same data that are under scrutiny here. In other words, there is no way of knowing the 'true' proportion of Indigenous clients for each agency, only the reported proportion, which itself is affected by the proportion of missing/not stated records. This needs to be taken into account when interpreting the outcome of this particular analysis.

Table 6.7: Number and proportion of clients by Indigenous status by agencies' proportion of known Indigenous status, Australia^(a), 2000–01

Indigenous status	Proportion of agencies' clients who identified as Indigenous				
	<1% ^(b)	1–9%	10–24%	25–49%	>50%
	Number				
Indigenous	29	2,511	1,446	955	1,630
Non-Indigenous	7,668	52,092	8,435	1,560	141
Missing/not stated	1,322	4,967	662	96	15
Total	9,019	59,570	10,543	2,611	1,786
	Per cent				
Indigenous	0.3	4.2	13.7	36.6	91.3
Non-Indigenous	85.0	87.4	80.0	59.7	7.9
Missing/not stated	14.7	8.3	6.3	3.7	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Excludes Queensland.

(b) Includes three agencies which did not report Indigenous status for any of their clients.

Indigenous identification: two areas of concern

The AODTS–NMDS is a relatively new data set that commenced on 1 July 2000, with data from this 2000–01 period published in November 2002. The collection is still undergoing improvements to data procedures and data quality. There are two main areas in relation to Indigenous data that need addressing: the quality of responses to the Indigenous status question; and the comprehensiveness of data on Indigenous people who receive treatment for an alcohol or other drug use problem.

In relation to the first area, jurisdictions have received feedback on the level of 'not stated' responses to the Indigenous status data item and they are taking steps to increase the level of Indigenous identification where necessary. South Australia, for instance, is taking steps to

decrease the rate of missing/not stated responses for 2001–02 including training agency staff on the necessity of asking the question and suggesting sensitive ways of doing it.

For the second area, additional sources of data on Indigenous clients who receive treatment for an alcohol or other drug use problem have been identified (see p. 69). A recent strategic planning workshop convened by the Department of Health and Ageing considered these additional sources of data and their relationship to the scope and data definitions of the AODTS NMDS. A report from that workshop is in preparation, for consideration by the Inter-Governmental Committee on Drugs.

With efforts being undertaken in both of these areas it is expected that, over time, the quality and coverage of data on Indigenous people accessing treatment services for an alcohol or other drug use problem will improve.

Key findings

- Of all clients of alcohol and other drug treatment services, 8.5% had a missing/not stated Indigenous status (Table 6.1).
- In general, where a client did not provide information on a particular question such as age, sex or client type, they were also less likely to provide information on their Indigenous status.
- Of all clients with a missing Indigenous identifier, the majority were aged 20–29 (34%) and 30–39 (27%) (Table 6.3). This was also true for both the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous clients. However, below age 20 and from age 40 onwards the age profile of the clients with a missing Indigenous identifier had greater similarities to the age profile of non-Indigenous clients than that of Indigenous clients (Table 6.3).
- Clients who were seeking treatment for the drug use of others, or both their own and others' drug use, had higher proportions of missing/not stated Indigenous status than those seeking treatment for their own drug use (Table 6.6).
- Within agencies, the higher the proportion of clients who were reported as Indigenous, the lower the proportion with a missing/not stated Indigenous status (Table 6.7).

Issues for follow-up

- Missing/not stated Indigenous records are sometimes part of a broader pattern where other demographic data on clients are also missing. In these cases general efforts to improve the collection of demographic information from clients are likely to increase the Indigenous identification rate.
- Agencies with a low proportion of clients who identified as Indigenous were more likely to report missing/not stated Indigenous status. It is expected that the efforts made by the jurisdictions to encourage service providers to ask the standard ABS question on Indigenous status will result in an increase in the level of Indigenous identification.
- Some agencies had higher rates of missing/not stated Indigenous status than others. Follow-up work is being undertaken to alert those agencies so that they can then explore ways to increase the level of Indigenous identification in their agency.

- It is suggested that, when available, the rate of missing/not stated records in the 2001-02 data set be examined and compared with the data in this report, to ascertain whether the rate has decreased.