



Alcohol and other drug treatment services in New South Wales

Findings from the National Minimum Data Set (NMDS) 2009–10

Highlights

In New South Wales in 2009–10, 258 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies and outlets provided 35,202 treatment episodes. This was an increase of eight treatment agencies and 309 episodes since 2008–09.

The median¹ ages of persons receiving treatment for their own drug use (35) and those seeking assistance in relation to someone else’s drug use (47) were similar to 2008–09.

Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern, rising from 51% of episodes in 2008–09 to 54% in 2009–10. Cannabis accounted for 18% and heroin for 10% of episodes. The proportion of amphetamine-related episodes fell slightly from 9% to 7%.

The episode profile of main treatment type was similar to that observed in 2008–09, with some small changes in proportions. Counselling was the most common form of main treatment provided (34% of episodes), followed by withdrawal management (20%) and assessment only (16%).

¹ The median is the midpoint of a list of observations ranked from the smallest to the largest.

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About this bulletin

This bulletin summarises the main findings from the 2009–10 Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services (AODTS) NMDS data for New South Wales. More detailed information about the 2009–10 collection and its findings is in the publication *Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2009–10: report on the national minimum data set* (AIHW 2011). This report, together with further publications and interactive data, can be accessed online at <www.aihw.gov.au/drugs>.

Scope of the AODTS–NMDS

The agencies and clients that were in scope for the 2009–10 AODTS–NMDS collection were:

- all publicly funded (at state, territory and/or Australian Government level) government and non-government agencies that provide one or more specialist alcohol and/or other drug treatment services
- all clients who had completed one or more treatment episodes at an alcohol and other drug treatment service that was in scope from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010.

It is important to note that the AODTS–NMDS collection includes pharmacotherapy clients only when they receive both pharmacotherapy and another type of treatment (from the same treatment agency). Pharmacotherapy-only clients are reported under the National Opioid Pharmacotherapy Statistics Annual Data (NOPSAD) collection.

For a complete list of clients and agencies excluded from the AODTS–NMDS, see AIHW 2011.

Collection count: closed treatment episodes

The unit of measurement in this bulletin is the ‘closed treatment episode’. A closed treatment episode refers to a period of contact, with defined start and end dates, between a client and a treatment agency. It is possible that more than one treatment episode may be in progress for a client at any one time; therefore the number of closed treatment episodes captured in the AODTS–NMDS does not equate to the total number of persons in Australia receiving treatment for alcohol and other drugs.

Treatment agencies

Throughout Australia, 671 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies supplied data for 2009–10. Of these, 258 were in New South Wales, of which 195 were government and 63 non-government agencies. In 2008–09, about 50 agencies from one area did not submit data for the collection. Consequently, this was an under-representation of the treatment agencies in the state in that year.

Treatment agencies in New South Wales were most likely to be in *Major cities* (50%), followed by *Inner regional* (37%) and *Outer regional* areas (13%).

Client profile

In New South Wales there were 35,202 closed treatment episodes in alcohol and other drug treatment services reported in the 2009–10 AODTS–NMDS collection. This was a 1% increase from 2008–09. The vast majority (98%) of closed treatment episodes involved clients seeking treatment for their own drug use. The remaining 2% involved clients seeking treatment for another person's alcohol or other drug use.

Age and sex

Males accounted for 66% of treatment episodes. This reflects the national pattern, where two-thirds of treatment episodes were provided to males. For those treatment episodes reported for someone else's drug use in New South Wales, female clients accounted for the majority (68%) of episodes.

In New South Wales, the median age of persons receiving treatment for their own drug use was 35. Of people seeking treatment in relation to someone else's drug use, the median age was 47.

Almost one-third (30%) of closed treatment episodes in the state were for clients aged 30–39, while 26% were for clients aged 20–29 and 22% were for clients aged 40–49.

Special population groups

The proportion of closed treatment episodes involving clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in New South Wales (11%) was similar to the national figure (13%). It is important to keep in mind that the majority of Australian Government-funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander substance use specific services and primary health-care services are not included in the AODTS–NMDS collection. Also, Indigenous status was not stated in 3% of episodes in New South Wales.

The large majority (88%) of closed treatment episodes in New South Wales were for clients born in Australia and 98% were for clients whose preferred language was English.

Drugs of concern

This section reports on the 34,469 treatment episodes in New South Wales where clients sought treatment for their own alcohol or other drug use.

Principal drug of concern

The principal drug of concern refers to the main substance that the client stated led them to seek treatment from an alcohol and drug treatment agency. In New South Wales in 2009–10, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern in closed treatment episodes (54%), followed by cannabis (18%), heroin (10%) and amphetamines (7%) (Table 1). The national patterns were similar to New South Wales, with alcohol also the most common principal drug of concern (48% of treatment episodes), followed by cannabis (23%), opioids (15%, with heroin accounting for 10%) and amphetamines (7%).

The proportion of treatment episodes for each drug type has been generally stable over time in New South Wales. The proportion of cannabis-related episodes increased to 77% in 2005–06, then decreased over the subsequent four years. In 2009–10, cannabis episodes remained the same as in 2008–09, at 18%. Heroin-related episodes have decreased in the last five years, while alcohol-related episodes have increased as a proportion of treatments provided over the same period.

Table 1: Principal drug of concern^(a), New South Wales and Australia, 2001–02 to 2009–10 (per cent)

Principal drug of concern	New South Wales								Australia 2009–10	
	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09 ^(b)	2009–10	Per cent	Number
Alcohol	42.1	41.2	41.5	43.0	45.0	49.3	51.0	53.9	47.9	67,450
Amphetamines	10.9	10.9	11.3	11.2	13.3	10.8	8.5	6.8	7.1	10,038
Benzodiazepines	2.4	2.5	2.1	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.1	1.6	2,238
Cannabis	15.4	16.1	17.4	20.2	19	17.1	18.4	18.4	23.2	32,676
Cocaine	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.9	0.4	595
Ecstasy	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.8	1,107
Nicotine	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.2	0.7	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.8	2,553
Opioids										
Heroin	21.4	21.4	20.1	15.6	13.0	12.0	10.8	9.6	9.9	13,882
Methadone	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.2	2	2.5	2.4	2.0	1.4	1,907
Morphine	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.8	1.1	1.0	0.9	1.1	1.2	1,751
Total opioids ^(c)	25.4	25.5	24.5	20.2	17.8	17.7	16.5	19.7	14.7	20,709
All other drugs ^(d)	0.5	0.4	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.3	0.3	2.4	3,403
Not stated	1.3	1.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total (per cent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	..
Total (number)	40,002	41,426	41,789	42,589	36,967	41,277	34,250	34,469	..	140,769

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

(b) Due to data collection system issues, New South Wales treatment episodes were under-reported in 2008–09.

(c) Total opioids includes balance of opioids.

(d) Includes balance of principal drugs of concern coded according to the Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern.

Age and sex

In New South Wales, the principal drug of concern nominated by clients varied by age. For clients aged 10–19, cannabis was the most common principal drug of concern (49% of episodes). For clients aged 20–29, the most common principal drug of concern was alcohol (39% of episodes), followed by cannabis (30%). For clients aged 30 and over, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern and it was also the highest for clients 60 and over (90% of episodes).

All drugs of concern

Clients can report up to five drugs of concern in addition to the principal drug of concern. Just under half (48%) of all treatment episodes in New South Wales involved at least one other drug of concern in addition to the principal drug.

A breakdown of all drugs of concern by drug type is in Figure 1. For example, nicotine was reported as the principal drug of concern in 1% of episodes, but was reported as a drug of concern (either 'principal' or 'other') in 17% of treatment episodes.

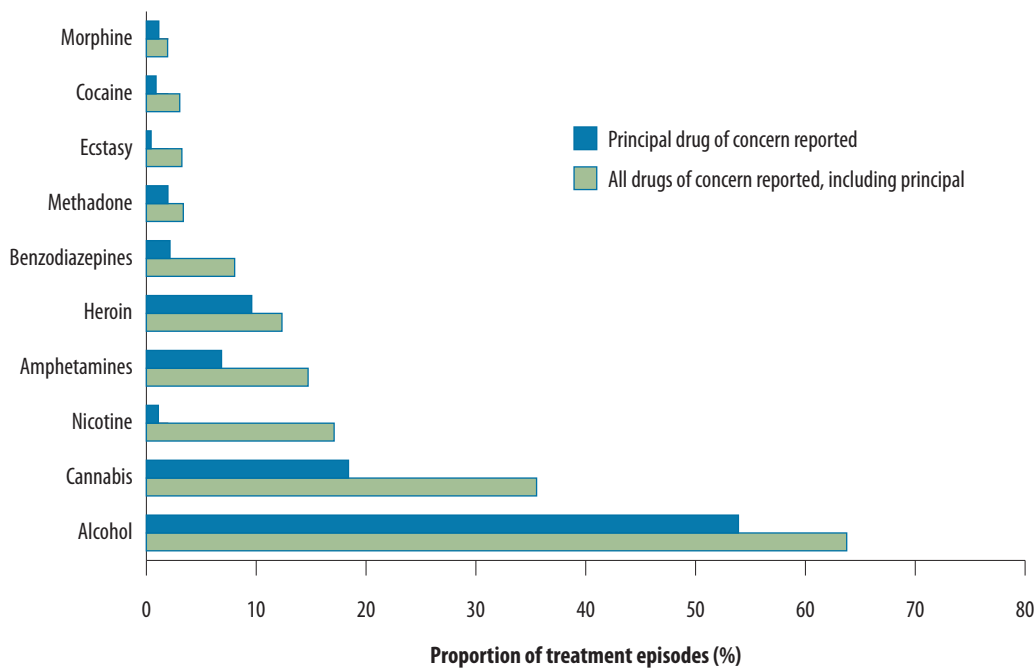


Figure 1: Principal drug of concern and all drugs of concern, New South Wales, 2009–10

Alcohol

In New South Wales, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for just over half (54%) of closed treatment episodes in 2009–10 (higher than the national proportion of 48%). When all drugs of concern are considered (that is, the principal drug and all other drugs of concern nominated by the client), 64% of episodes included alcohol.

Of the 18,576 episodes where alcohol was nominated as the principal drug of concern in 2009–10, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

Client profile

- About two-thirds (67%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 39 (males 39; females 40).
- About 10% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (38% of episodes), followed by referrals from a medical practitioner (15%).

Drug profile

- A total of 7,482 episodes (40%) included at least one other drug of concern. In these episodes, 34% of other drugs of concern were cannabis, 32% nicotine and 10% amphetamines.
- Seven in ten (71%) of episodes involved clients who reported never having injected drugs. About 5% involved currently injecting clients. About 10% of episodes did not record injecting drug use status.

Treatment profile

- Counselling was the most common main treatment type received (36% of episodes), followed by withdrawal management (23%) and 'assessment only' (15%).
- Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (57% of episodes), followed by a residential treatment facility (40%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 8.

Cannabis

In New South Wales, cannabis was the second most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for 18% of closed treatment episodes in 2009–10. When all drugs of concern are considered (that is, the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern nominated by the client), 36% of episodes included cannabis.

Of the 6,326 episodes where cannabis was nominated as the principal drug of concern in 2009–10, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

Client profile

- Around seven in ten (72%) episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 27 (for both males and females).
- One in eight (15%) of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (31% of episodes), followed by referrals from court diversion programs designed to direct people charged with drug-related offences into treatment (20%).

Drug profile

- Smoking was the most common usual method of use (98% of episodes).
- A total of 3,379 episodes (53%) included at least one other drug of concern—of these, 37% were alcohol, followed by nicotine (19%) and amphetamines (18%).
- About two-thirds (63%) of cannabis episodes involved clients who reported never having injected drugs. Nineteen per cent had injected in the past and 9% were current injectors.

Treatment profile

- Counselling was the most common main treatment type received (37% of episodes), followed by support and case management only (19%) and assessment only (16%).
- Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (77% of episodes), followed by a residential treatment setting (20%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 28.

Heroin

In New South Wales, heroin was the third most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for 9.6% of closed treatment episodes in 2009–10. When all drugs of concern are considered (that is, the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern nominated by the client), 13% of episodes included heroin.

Of the 3,305 episodes where heroin was nominated as the principal drug of concern in 2009–10, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

Client profile

- Around two-thirds (67%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 33 (males 33; females 31).
- Thirteen per cent of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (44% of episodes). About 17% of referrals were court diversions and 10% from other alcohol and other drug treatment services.

Drug profile

- Injecting was the most common method of use (90% of episodes), followed by smoking (7%).
- 2,015 episodes (61%) included at least one other drug of concern—26% of other drugs of concern were cannabis, 15% benzodiazepines and 14% for both nicotine and amphetamines.
- Around one-quarter (24%) of episodes involved clients who reported currently injecting drugs.

Treatment profile

- Support and case management only (25%) was the most common main treatment type received, followed by withdrawal management (23%) and assessment only (18%).
- Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (71% of episodes), followed by a residential treatment facility (26%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 19.

Treatment programs

The main treatment type is the principal activity that the treatment provider considers necessary for the client to complete their treatment plan for the principal drug of concern. Data presented in this section relate to clients seeking treatment for their own or someone else's alcohol or other drug use (apart from the section on principal drug of concern, which does not apply to clients seeking treatment in relation to someone else's drug use).

Of all closed treatment episodes in New South Wales, counselling was the most common form of main treatment provided (34% of episodes), followed by withdrawal management (20%) and assessment only (16%) (Table 2). Nationally, counselling was the most common treatment type (42%), followed by withdrawal management (15%) and assessment only (14%).

The proportion of treatment episodes involving each treatment type in New South Wales has been relatively stable over time in the state. However, there was an increase in the proportion of 'other' main treatment types in 2007–08, which has gradually decreased in 2008–09 and 2009–10. This increase was related to the reporting of services not included in previous years.

Table 2: Main treatment type, New South Wales and Australia, 2001–02 to 2009–10 (per cent)

Principal drug of concern	New South Wales									Australia 2009–10	
	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07 ^(a)	2007–08 ^(b)	2008–09	2009–10	Per cent	Number
Withdrawal management (detoxification)	21.0	22.6	23.3	22.2	20.9	21.0	19.7	20.4	19.8	15.4	22,534
Counselling	27.1	37.9	28.9	34.3	32.5	32.0	29.1	30.0	34.1	42.2	61,990
Rehabilitation	8.9	9.0	10.0	10.4	10.2	9.7	8.8	7.2	6.3	5.1	7,521
Support and case management only	1.9	6.0	8.3	8.4	9.8	9.7	8.4	9.7	9.9	8.7	12,718
Information and education only	13.0	2.8	2.0	2.3	1.6	1.6	1.2	1.3	1.2	8.9	13,034
Assessment only	23.0	17.3	22.3	16.0	20.6	19.0	16.2	16.3	15.5	13.5	19,803
Other ^(c)	5.1	4.4	5.1	6.4	4.4	7.0	16.5	15.2	13.2	6.3	9,186
Total (per cent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	..
Total (number)	39,348	41,166	42,529	43,079	43,798	37,945	42,078	34,893	35,202	..	146,786

(a) Due to data collection system issues, New South Wales was unable to submit data from an entire Area Health Service in 2008–09.

(b) Outreach to hospital in-patients was included in the 'other' category in 2007–08 but not in 2006–07.

(c) Other includes treatment episodes where the main treatment type was reported as pharmacotherapy.

Counselling

Counselling was the most common main treatment type reported in New South Wales in 2009–10, accounting for 34% of closed treatment episodes (lower than the national proportion of 42%). Of the 12,007 episodes where counselling was nominated as the main treatment type received, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

Client profile

- Almost all (95%) of episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- Two-thirds (64%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 35 (males 34; females 37).
- Eight per cent of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (41% of episodes), followed by medical practitioners and correctional services (both 11%).

Treatment profile

- The large majority (88%) of episodes occurred in a non-residential treatment facility.
- About half of episodes (56%) ended because the treatment was completed. The next most common reason for episodes to end was that the client ceased to participate without notice (25% of episodes ended this way). Eight per cent of episodes ended because the client transferred to another service provider.
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 49.

Principal drug profile

- Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported (58% of episodes) by people seeking counselling for their own drug use, followed by cannabis (20%) and amphetamines (7%).

Withdrawal management (detoxification)

Withdrawal management (detoxification) was the second most common main treatment type reported in New South Wales in 2009–10, accounting for 20% of closed treatment episodes (higher than the national proportion of 15%). Of the 6,982 episodes where withdrawal management was nominated as the main treatment received in 2009–10, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

Client profile

- Given the nature of the treatment, all episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- Almost seven in ten (69%) episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 38 (males 39; females 36).
- About one in ten (9%) of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (58% of episodes), followed by referrals from alcohol and other drug services (15%) and medical practitioners (11%).

Treatment profile

- Treatment was most likely to take place in a residential treatment facility (78% of episodes), followed by a non-residential treatment facility (21%).
- Almost seven in ten (69%) episodes ended because the treatment was completed. The next most common reason for treatment episodes ending was that the client ceased to participate against advice (13% of episodes ended this way). Seven per cent of episodes ended because the client transferred to another service provider.
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was six.

Principal drug profile

- Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported (61% of episodes), followed by cannabis (13%) and heroin (11%).

Assessment only

Assessment only was the third largest treatment category provided in New South Wales in 2009–10, accounting for 16% of closed treatment episodes. Of the 5,451 episodes where assessment only was nominated as the main treatment type received, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

Client profile

- ♦ Almost all episodes (98%) were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- ♦ Around seven in ten (71%) episodes were for male clients.
- ♦ The median age of persons receiving treatment was 33 (males 32; females 34).
- ♦ Seventeen per cent of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- ♦ Self-referral was the most common source of referral (38% of episodes), followed by referrals from correctional services (16%).

Treatment profile

- ♦ Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment setting (97% of episodes), followed by home and 'other' settings (both 1%).
- ♦ The vast majority (94%) of episodes ended because the treatment was completed. The next most common reason for ending a treatment episode was the client ceased to participate without notice (4% of episodes ended this way).
- ♦ The median number of days for a treatment episode was one.

Principal drug profile

- ♦ Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported by people who received assessment only for their own drug use (51% of episodes), followed by cannabis (19%) and heroin (11%).

Symbols

- nil or rounded to zero
- .. not applicable

How to find out more

If you would like more detailed data about New South Wales's alcohol and other treatment services please contact the AIHW to discuss your needs. The document Alcohol and other drug treatment services NMDS Specifications 2009–10 outlines the process to be followed for unpublished data requests. This document is available from the AIHW web site at

< <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=6442468251> >.

Reference

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2011. Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2009–10: report on the National Minimum Data Set. Drug treatment series no. 14. Cat. no. HSE 114. Canberra: AIHW.

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