



Illicit opioids including heroin

Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in Australia

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



Opioid use was responsible for 0.9% of the **total burden of disease and injuries** in Australia in 2018, and 32% of the total burden due to illicit drug use.[2]

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]

In 2020–21, **heroin** was the **principal drug of concern** in 4.6% of alcohol and other drug treatment episodes for clients' own drug use.[3]

Between 2017–18 and 2018–19, the age-standardised rate of **hospitalisations due to heroin poisoning increased** from 3.2 to 4.1 per 100,000.[4]



In 2018–19, **hospitalisations** with a principal diagnosis of **opioid poisoning** were **more likely to involve pharmaceutical opioids** than heroin or opium.[4]

Prior to COVID-19 in 2020, the **Australian heroin market** was **highly stable** in terms of price, perceived purity and perceived availability.[6]

25% of **drug-induced deaths** in Australia in 2020 were due to **heroin**. [7]





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Main contributors to opioid use disease and injury burden in 2018:

- **poisoning** 42%
- **drug use disorder** (excluding alcohol) 28%.^[2]

Wastewater data analysis indicates **heroin consumption** in April 2022 was around **2 times lower** in regional areas than capital cities. ^[5]





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References

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.

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3. AIHW 2022. Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia annual report. Cat. No. HSE 250. AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 27 July 2022.
4. Man N, Chrzanowska A, Sutherland R, Degenhardt L & Peacock A 2021. Trends in drug-related hospitalisations in Australia, 1999–2019. Drug Trends Bulletin Series. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW. Viewed 24 June 2021.
5. ACIC (Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission) 2022. National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program Report 17. Canberra: ACIC, accessed 7 November 2022.
6. Sutherland R, Uporova J, King C, Jones F, Karlsson A, Gibbs D, Price O, Bruno R, Dietze P, Lenton S, Salom C, Daly C, Thomas N, Juckel J, Agramunt S, Wilson Y, Que Noy W, Wilson J, Degenhardt L, Farrell M and Peacock A. 2022. [Australian Drug Trends 2022: Key Findings from the National Illicit Drug Reporting System \(IDRS\) Interviews](#). Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney. Viewed 13 October 2022.
7. AIHW (2020) National Mortality Database. AIHW analysis of National Mortality Database, accessed 7 April 2022.

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(<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia>).

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