

2.21 Drug and other substance use including inhalants

The use of drugs and other substances including inhalants among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Data sources

Data for this measure come from the 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, the 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, the National Hospital Morbidity Database and the Australian Institute of Criminology Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) survey.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey

The 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) collected information from 10,439 Indigenous Australians of all ages. This sample was considerably larger than the supplementary Indigenous samples in the 1995 and 2001 National Health Surveys. The survey was conducted in remote and non-remote areas of Australia and collected a range of information from Indigenous Australians. This included issues of health-related actions, health risk factors, health status, socioeconomic circumstances and women's health. The survey provides comparisons over time in the health of Indigenous Australians. It is planned to repeat the NATSIHS at 6-yearly intervals, with the next NATSIHS to be conducted in 2010–11. Selected non-Indigenous comparisons are available through the 2004–05 National Health Survey (NHS).

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey

The Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) between August 2002 and April 2003. The 2008 NATSISS was conducted between August 2008 and April 2009. The survey provides information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of Australia for a wide range of areas of social concern including health, education, culture and labour force participation. The 2008 NATSISS included for the first time children aged under 15. The NATSISS will be conducted every 6 years with the next survey planned for 2013.

The 2008 NATSISS collected information by personal interview from 13,300 Indigenous Australians across all states and territories of Australia, including those living in remote areas. The sample covered persons aged 15 years and over who are usual residents in selected private dwellings. It collected information on a wide range of subjects including family and culture, health, education, employment, income, financial stress, housing, and law and justice.

National Hospital Morbidity Database

The National Hospital Morbidity Database is a compilation of episode-level records from admitted patient morbidity data collection systems in Australian hospitals in each state and territory. State and territory health departments provide information annually on the characteristics, diagnoses and care of admitted patients in public and private hospitals to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Data are presented for the six jurisdictions that have been assessed by the AIHW as having adequate identification of Indigenous hospitalisations in 2006–08 – New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. These six jurisdictions represent approximately 96% of the Indigenous population of Australia. Data are presented by state/territory of usual residence of the patient.

In the period 2007–08, there were 276,000 hospital separations (episodes of care for admitted patients) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, around 3.5% of all separations. The proportion of separations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons was higher in public hospitals (5.4% or 256,425 separations) compared with private hospitals (0.6% or 20,015 separations). Of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander separations, nearly 93% occurred in public hospitals (AIHW 2009).

Hospitalisations for which the Indigenous status of the patient was not reported have been included with hospitalisations data for non-Indigenous people under the 'other' category. This is to enable consistency across jurisdictions, because public hospitals in some states and territories do not have a category for the reporting of 'not stated' or inadequately recorded/reported Indigenous status.

Hospitalisation data are presented for the 2-year period from July 2006 to June 2008. An aggregate of 2 years of data has been used, because the number of hospitalisations for some conditions is likely to be small for a single year.

The principal diagnosis is the diagnosis established to be the problem that was chiefly responsible for the patient's episode of care in hospital. The additional diagnosis is a condition or complaint either coexisting with the principal diagnosis or arising during the episode of care. The term 'hospitalisation' has been used to refer to a separation, which is the episode of admitted patient care. This can include a total hospital stay (from admission to discharge, transfer or death) or a portion of a hospital stay beginning or ending in a change in the type of care (for example, from acute to rehabilitation). 'Separation' also means the process by which an admitted patient completes an episode of care by being discharged, dying, transferring to another hospital or changing type of care.

Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) survey

DUMA is an annual survey which has been conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) since 1999 at some locations across Australia. The survey reports on drug use among police detainees at selected police stations. The survey is by a voluntary questionnaire and drug use is confirmed by a urine sample provided by the detainee.

The number of detainees questioned is quite low and thus includes a very small Indigenous sample. The Indigenous status of the detainee is established by the following question: 'What is your ethnic background?' (if the respondent mentions 'Australian' but not 'Aboriginal', prompt: 'Do you consider yourself an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?').

Analysis is presented by state/territory, as the figures do not permit national coverage.

Data analyses

Age-standardised rates and ratios have been used as a measure of morbidity in the Indigenous population relative to other Australians. Ratios of this type illustrate differences between the rates of morbidity among Indigenous people and those of other Australians, taking into account differences in age distributions.

Illicit substance use can be divided into two categories: use of substances which are illegal to possess (for example, heroin) and non-medical use of substances that are legally available (for example, petrol inhalation and misuse of prescription drugs).

Self-reported illicit drug use

Self-reported data on illicit substance use among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population from the 2008 and 2002 NATSISS are presented below.

- In 2008, approximately 23% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over reported illicit substance use in the 12 months before the survey (Table 2.21.1).
- In 2008, 43% of Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over reported illicit substance use at least once in their lifetime (Table 2.21.2).

Substance use by age and sex

- In 2008, the age groups with the highest proportions of Indigenous persons who used substances in the previous 12 months were aged 18–24 years (32%) and 25–34 years (26%) (Table 2.21.1).
- In 2008, 51% of Indigenous males and 36% of Indigenous females aged 15 years and over reported illicit substance use at least once in their lifetime (Table 2.21.2).

Table 2.21.1: Substance use, by age and sex, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over^(a), 2008

Age (years)	Never used substances			Used substances but not in last 12 months			Used substances in last 12 months		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Proportion of total persons (Per cent)									
15–17 ^(b)	18.5	11.8	14.6	3.5	3.8	3.7	6.8	7.9	7.3
18–24	19.6	17.1	18.1	13.8	22.0	17.7	31.5	31.5	31.5
25–34	17.1	17.1	17.1	27.0	30.0	28.5	25.8	27.0	26.3
35–44	14.0	19.2	17.1	28.2	25.8	27.0	20.1	19.3	19.8
45–54	13.2	16.3	15.0	18.1	13.6	15.9	12.1	11.6	11.9
55+	17.5	18.5	18.1	9.3	4.8	7.1	3.7	2.7	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Proportion of age group (Per cent)									
15–17 ^(b)	77.1	78.2	77.6	6.7	7.4	7.0	16.3	14.4	15.4
18–24	44.6	53.2	49.0	14.3	20.1	17.3	41.1	26.7	33.7
25–34	38.7	51.3	45.2	27.8	26.5	27.1	33.6	22.1	27.6
35–44	36.6	59.9	49.3	33.3	23.7	28.1	30.1	16.4	22.6
45–54	46.6	69.5	59.0	29.0	17.0	22.5	24.5	13.5	18.5
55+	73.4	89.6	82.4	17.8	6.8	11.7	8.8	3.6	5.9
Total	49.3	63.8	56.9	22.4	18.8	20.5	28.3	17.4	22.6
Total number	69,293	98,949	168,242	31,453	29,104	60,557	39,764	26,996	66,759

(a) People who accepted the substance use form.

(b) Excludes data obtained through child proxy.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Table 2.21.2: Substance use, by type of substance and sex, Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over, 2008

	Males		Females		Persons	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Has ever used substances						
Marijuana, hashish or cannabis resin	60,860	43.3	45,425	29.3	106,285	35.9
Amphetamines or speed	19,499	13.9	12,869	8.3	32,368	10.9
Ecstasy or designer drugs	13,433	9.6	9,270	6.0	22,704	7.7
Pain killers or analgesics for non-medical purposes	11,120	7.9	10,654	6.9	21,775	7.4
Kava	11,506	8.2	5,427	3.5	16,932	5.7
LSD or synthetic hallucinogens	9,744	6.9	5,692	3.7	15,437	5.2
Naturally occurring hallucinogens	9,323	6.6	3,334	2.1	12,656	4.3
Cocaine	7,143	5.1	4,400	2.8	11,543	3.9
Petrol	6,003	4.3	2,476	1.6	8,479	2.9
Other inhalants	5,203	3.7	3,267	2.1	8,470	2.9
Tranquillisers or sleeping pills for non-medical purposes	5,112	3.6	3,199	2.1	8,311	2.8
Heroin	4,932	3.5	2,099	1.4	7,031	2.4
Methadone for non-medical purposes	1,051	0.7	491	0.3	1,543	0.5
<i>Total has ever used substances^(a)</i>	<i>71,263</i>	<i>50.7</i>	<i>56,295</i>	<i>36.3</i>	<i>127,558</i>	<i>43.1</i>
Has not used substances	69,293	49.3	98,949	63.7	168,242	56.9
Total	140,555	100.0	155,244	100.0	295,799	100.0
Not stated	15,497	9.9	15,805	9.2	31,302	9.6
Total	156,052	100.0	171,049	100.0	327,101	100.0
Has used substances in the last 12 months						
Marijuana, hashish or cannabis resin	32,596	23.2	18,229	11.8	50,825	17.2
Pain killers or analgesics for non-medical purposes	6,862	4.9	6,564	4.2	13,425	4.5
Amphetamines or speed	7,631	5.4	4,179	2.7	11,810	4.0
Ecstasy or designer drugs	6,116	4.4	3,555	2.3	9,671	3.3
Tranquillisers or sleeping pills for non-medical purposes	2,384	1.7	1,788	1.2	4,172	1.4
Kava	2,365	1.7	1,090	0.7	3,454	1.2
LSD or synthetic hallucinogens	1,813	1.3	753	0.5	2,566	0.9
Cocaine	1,515	1.1	817	0.5	2,332	0.8
Naturally occurring hallucinogens	1,537	1.1	297	0.2	1,834	0.6
Volatile solvents	877	0.6	273	0.2	1,150	0.4
Other analgesics	719	0.5	271	0.2	990	0.3
<i>Total used substances in last 12 months^(a)</i>	<i>39,764</i>	<i>28.3</i>	<i>26,996</i>	<i>17.4</i>	<i>66,759</i>	<i>22.6</i>
Has not used substances in last 12 months	100,746	71.7	128,053	82.6	228,799	77.4
Total	140,510	100.0	155,049	100.0	295,558	100.0
Not stated	15,543	10.0	16,000	9.4	31,543	9.6
Total	156,052	100.0	171,049	100.0	327,101	100.0

(a) Totals may not be equal to the sum of their components as survey respondents may have used more than one type of substance.

Source: 2008 NATSISS.

Substance use by remoteness

- In 2008, a higher proportion of Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over in non-remote areas than remote areas reported ever having used illicit substances (47% compared with 31%) and substance use in the previous 12 months (24% compared with 17%) (Table 2.21.3).

Table 2.21.3: Illicit drug or substance use, by remoteness, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, 2008

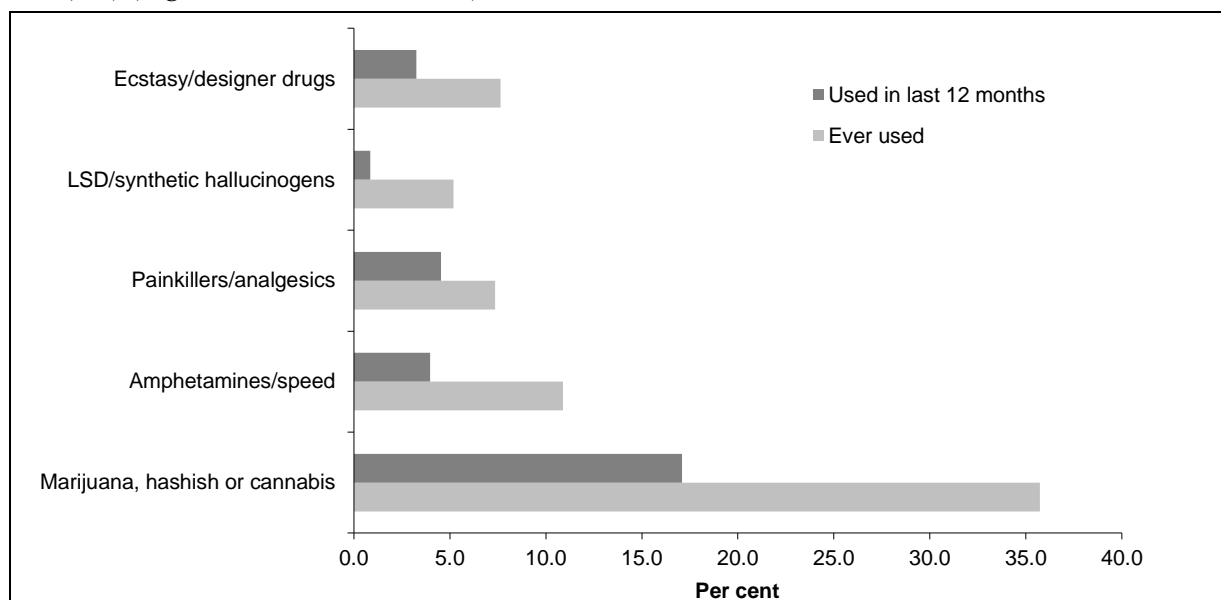
	Remote		Non-Remote		Persons	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Has ever used substances						
Marijuana, hashish or cannabis resin	19,283	26.1	87,002	39.2	106,285	35.9
Amphetamines or speed	2,317	3.1	30,051	13.5	32,368	10.9
Ecstasy or designer drugs	1,916	2.6	20,788	9.4	22,704	7.7
Pain-killers/analgesics	2,872	3.9	18,903	8.5	21,775	7.4
Kava	2,235	3.0	14,698	6.6	16,932	5.7
LSD or synthetic hallucinogens	1,119	1.5	14,318	6.5	15,437	5.2
Naturally occurring hallucinogens	1,036	1.4	11,620	5.2	12,656	4.3
Cocaine	1,217	1.6	10,326	4.7	11,543	3.9
Petrol	2,210	3.0	6,269	2.8	8,479	2.9
Other inhalants	1,007	1.4	7,463	3.4	8,470	2.9
Tranquillisers/sleeping pills	484	0.7	7,826	3.5	8,311	2.8
Heroin	505	0.7	6,526	2.9	7,031	2.4
<i>Total has ever used substances^(a)</i>	<i>22,608</i>	<i>30.6</i>	<i>104,950</i>	<i>47.3</i>	<i>127,558</i>	<i>43.1</i>
Has not used substances	51,224	69.4	117,018	52.7	168,242	56.9
Total	73,832	100.0	221,967	100.0	295,799	100.0
Not stated	7,669	9.4	23,632	9.6	31,302	9.6
Total	81,501	100.0	245,600	100.0	327,101	100.0
Has used substances in last 12 months						
Marijuana, hashish or cannabis resin	10,459	14.2	40,365	18.2	50,825	17.2
Pain Killers or Analgesics for non-medical purposes	1,405	1.9	12,021	5.4	13,425	4.5
Amphetamines or Speed	729	1.0	11,081	5.0	11,810	4.0
Ecstasy or Designer Drugs	1,073	1.5	8,598	3.9	9,671	3.3
Tranquillisers or Sleeping Pills for non-medical purposes	298	0.4	3,874	1.7	4,172	1.4
Kava	862	1.2	2,592	1.2	3,454	1.2
LSD or Synthetic Hallucinogens	165	0.2	2,401	1.1	2,566	0.9
Cocaine	464	0.6	1,868	0.8	2,332	0.8
Naturally Occurring Hallucinogens	82	0.1	1,752	0.8	1,834	0.6
Volatile solvents	156	0.2	995	0.4	1,150	0.4
Other Analgesics	170	0.2	820	0.4	990	0.3
<i>Total used substances in last 12 months^(a)</i>	<i>12,739</i>	<i>17.3</i>	<i>54,021</i>	<i>24.4</i>	<i>66,759</i>	<i>22.6</i>
Has not used substances in last 12 months	60,988	82.7	167,811	75.6	228,799	77.4
Total	73,727	100.0	221,831	100.0	295,558	100.0
Not stated	7,774	9.5	23,768	9.7	31,543	9.6
Total	81,501	100.0	245,600	100.0	327,101	100.0

(a) Totals may not be equal to the sum of their components as survey respondents may have used more than one type of substance.

Source: 2008 NATSISS.

Type of substance use

- Marijuana was the most commonly reported illicit drug used by Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over in 2008. Around 36% reported ever having tried marijuana and 17% had used marijuana in the previous 12 months. Amphetamines/speed was the next most frequently reported substance ever used (11%) while ecstasy and designer drugs followed (8%) (Figure 2.21.1; Table 2.21.4).



Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Figure 2.21.1: Illicit substance use, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, 2008

Table 2.21.4: Illicit substance use, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, 2008

	Ever used	Used in last 12 months
	Per cent	
Marijuana, hashish or cannabis	35.9	17.2
Amphetamines/speed	10.9	4.0
Painkillers/analgesics	7.4	4.5
LSD/synthetic hallucinogens	5.2	0.9
Ecstasy/designer drugs	7.7	3.3

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Time series analyses

- For Indigenous people aged 15 years and over who accepted the substance use form reported rates of ever having used illicit substances increased from 40% to 43% between 2002 and 2008 (Table 2.21.5).
- Over the same period, reported rates of illicit substance use in the 12 months before the survey were similar (24% in 2002 and 23% in 2008).
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians who reported marijuana, hashish or cannabis resin use in the previous 12 months decreased from 2002 to 2008 (19% compared with 17%).
- The proportion of Indigenous males who reported use of amphetamines/speed in the last 12 months in 2008 (5.4%) was similar to that reported in 2002 (4.9%).

Table 2.21.5: Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over in non-remote areas^(a), substance use, by sex, 2002 and 2008

Substance use	2002			2008		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
	Per cent					
Used substances in last 12 months						
Marijuana, hashish or cannabis resin	23.0	15.5	19.1	23.1	11.7	17.1
Amphetamines or speed	4.9	4.5	4.7	5.4	2.7	4.0
Ecstasy or designer drugs	2.2	1.6	1.9	4.3	2.3	3.3
LSD or synthetic hallucinogens	0.7 ^(b)	0.6 ^(b)	0.7 ^(b)	1.3 ^(b)	0.5 ^(b)	0.9 ^(b)
Pain-killers or analgesics for non-medical purposes	4.1	4.6	4.4	4.9	4.2	4.5
Naturally occurring hallucinogens	0.5 ^(b)	0.2 ^(c)	0.3 ^(b)	1.1 ^(b)	0.2 ^(b)	0.6 ^(b)
Cocaine	0.5 ^(b)	0.8 ^(b)	0.6 ^(b)	1.1 ^(b)	0.5 ^(b)	0.8 ^(b)
Other analgesics and opiates ^(d)	0.5 ^(b)	0.6 ^(b)	0.5 ^(b)	0.5 ^(b)	0.2 ^(b)	0.3 ^(b)
Volatile organic and other inhalants ^(e)	0.5 ^(b)	0.3 ^(c)	0.4 ^(b)	0.6 ^(b)	0.2 ^(b)	0.4
Tranquillisers or sleeping pills for non-medical purposes	0.7	2.2 ^(b)	1.5	1.7	1.1	1.4
Kava	0.5 ^(b)	0.6 ^(b)	0.6 ^(b)	1.7 ^(b)	0.7 ^(b)	1.2
Total used substances in last 12 months	26.6	20.7	23.5	28.2	17.3	22.5
Used substances but not in last 12 months	16.4	15.9	16.1	22.3	18.6	20.4
Total used substances	43.0	36.6	39.6	50.5	35.9	42.8
Never used substances	48.3	54.2	51.4	49.2	63.2	56.6
Total^(a)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Substance use form status						
Form accepted	93	92	93	55.4	58.9	57.2
Form non-response	7	8	7	5.9	5.5	5.7
Form status not known	..	..	..	38.7	35.7	37.1
Total	100	100	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) People who accepted the substance use form.

(b) Estimates with a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% should be used with caution.

(c) Estimates with a relative standard error greater than 50% are considered too unreliable for general use.

(d) Includes other analgesics and heroin.

(e) Includes petrol, volatile solvents and other inhalants.

Source: AIHW and ABS analysis of 2002 and 2008 NATSISS.

Substance use by selected health and population characteristics

- In 2008, a higher proportion of Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over who were recent substance users (that is, used substances in the previous 12 months) reported they were currently daily smokers than those who had never used illicit substances (Table 2.21.6a).
- Indigenous persons who were recent substance users were also more likely to be unemployed, renters and have experienced stressors in the last 12 months than persons who had never used illicit substances (Table 2.21.6a).

Table 2.21.6a: Substance use status, by selected health and population characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over^{(a)(b)}, 2008

	Never used illicit substances	Ever used substances ^(a)	Recent substance use ^(b)
	Per cent		
Self-assessed health status			
Excellent/very good	44.3	43.0	40.5
Good	33.8	34.4	35.4
Fair/poor	21.9	22.6	24.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Other substance use			
Current daily smoker	35.2	57.6	68.1
Risky/high-risk alcohol consumption (3 day)	3.0	7.0	7.3
Risky/high-risk alcohol consumption (7 day)	3.4	8.7	8.9
Level of psychological distress^(c)			
Low or moderate	72.5	63.6	60.0
High or very high	27.5	36.4	40.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Gross weekly equivalised income			
1st quintile (lowest)	49.1	43.0	46.8
4th and 5th quintile (highest)	18.1	25.9	23.7
Financial stress—unable to raise \$2,000 within a week for something important			
	50.8	49.8	55.1
Highest year of school completed^(d)			
Year 12	17.9	22.8	18.5
Year 11	12.5	14.8	14.1
Year 10	30.5	31.7	33.4
Year 9 or below ^(e)	39.1	30.8	34.1
<i>Total^(d)</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Whether has non-school qualification^(e)			
Has a non-school qualification	31.8	37.7	34.2
Does not have a non-school qualification	68.3	62.3	65.8
<i>Total^(d)</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Employment			
Employed CDEP	6.2	4.4	6.3
Employed non-CDEP	42.4	52.9	47.5
<i>Total employed</i>	<i>48.7</i>	<i>57.3</i>	<i>53.9</i>
Unemployed	8.9	12.0	14.8
Not in the labour force	42.4	30.7	31.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

(continued)

Table 2.21.6a (continued): Substance use status, by selected health and population characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over^{(a)(b)}, 2008

	Never used illicit substances	Ever used substances ^(a)	Recent substance use ^(b)
	Per cent		
Housing			
Owner	31.0	30.1	23.3
Renter ^(f)	69.0	69.9	76.7
Stressors in last 12 months			
Serious illness or disability	13.1	16.0	14.9
Witness to violence	2.8	5.1	6.4
Abuse or violent crime	1.8	4.6	5.9
Other stressors	46.1	62.1	67.0
<i>Total experienced stressors^(g)</i>	<i>63.9</i>	<i>87.8</i>	<i>94.2</i>
No stressors	48.1	34.6	30.4
Total^(h)	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) People who accepted the substance use form.

(b) Excludes data obtained through child proxy.

(c) Grouped Kessler (K5) score.

(d) Persons not still at school.

(e) Includes persons who never attended school.

(f) Excludes boarders.

(g) Total may be greater than the sum of its components survey respondents may indicate positive response to more than one category.

(h) Includes whether experienced stressor not stated and refusals.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Table 2.21.6b: Substance use status, by selected health and population characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over^{(a)(b)}, 2008

	Never used illicit substances	Ever used substances ^{(a)(h)}	Total	Recent substance use only ^(b)
	Per cent			
Self-assessed health status				
Excellent/very good	57.7	42.3	100.0	20.9
Good	56.5	43.5	100.0	23.5
Fair/poor	56.2	43.8	100.0	24.4
<i>Total</i>	56.9	43.1	100.0	22.6
Other substance use				
Current daily smoker	44.7	55.3	100.0	34.3
Risky/high-risk alcohol consumption (3 day)	36.1	63.9	100.0	35.2
Risky/high-risk alcohol consumption (7 day)	34.0	66.0	100.0	35.5
Level of psychological distress^(d)				
Low or moderate	59.8	40.2	100.0	19.9
High or very high	49.7	50.3	100.0	29.1
Gross weekly equivalised income				
1st quintile (lowest)	59.3	40.7	100.0	23.0
4th and 5th quintile (highest)	47.1	52.9	100.0	25.2
Financial stress—unable to raise \$2,000 within a week for something important				
	57.5	42.5	100.0	24.5
Highest year of school completed^(e)				
Year 12	48.8	51.2	100.0	21.5
Year 11	50.5	49.5	100.0	24.5
Year 10	53.8	46.2	100.0	25.2
Year 9 or below ^(f)	60.6	39.4	100.0	22.6
<i>Total^(e)</i>	54.7	45.3	100.0	23.5
Whether has non-school qualification^(f)				
Has a non-school qualification	50.5	49.5	100.0	23.3
Does not have a non-school qualification	57.0	43.0	100.0	23.6
<i>Total^(e)</i>	54.7	45.3	100.0	23.5
Employment				
Employed CDEP	65.3	34.7	100.0	26.3
Employed non-CDEP	51.4	48.6	100.0	22.9
<i>Total employed</i>	52.9	47.1	100.0	23.2
Unemployed	49.6	50.4	100.0	32.5
Not in the labour force	64.6	35.4	100.0	19.0
<i>Total</i>	56.9	43.1	100.0	22.6

(continued)

Table 2.21.6b (continued): Substance use status, by selected health and population characteristics, persons aged 15 years and over^{(a)(b)}, 2008

	Never used illicit substances	Ever used substances ^{(a)(h)}	Total	Recent substance use only ^(b)
	Per cent			
Housing				
Owner	57.6	42.4	100.0	17.2
Renter ^(g)	56.6	43.4	100.0	25.0
Stressors in last 12 months				
Serious illness or disability	52.0	48.0	100.0	23.5
Witness to violence	41.7	58.3	100.0	38.2
Abuse or violent crime	34.4	65.6	100.0	44.0
Other stressors	49.5	50.5	100.0	28.5
<i>Total experienced stressors</i>	<i>51.2</i>	<i>48.8</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>27.2</i>
No stressors	64.8	35.2	100.0	16.3
<i>Total^(h)</i>	<i>56.9</i>	<i>43.1</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>22.6</i>
Total number	168,242	127,317	295,558	66,759

(a) People who accepted the substance use form.

(b) Excludes data obtained through child proxy.

(c) Includes people who recently used illicit substances.

(d) Grouped Kessler (K5) score.

(e) Persons not still at school.

(f) Includes persons who never attended school.

(g) Excludes boarders.

(h) Includes whether experienced stressor not stated and refusals.

Note: Excludes not stated and unknown responses.

Source: 2008 NATSISS.

Multiple drug use

- In 2008, approximately 19% of Indigenous males and 13% of Indigenous females aged 15 years and over had used one substance in the previous 12 months and 9% of Indigenous males and 4% of Indigenous females had used two or more substances in the previous 12 months (Table 2.21.7).

Table 2.21.7: Multiple substance use, by sex, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, 2008^(a)

	Did not use substances ^{(b)(c)}	Used one substance ^(c)	Used two or more substances ^(c)	Total used substances ^(c)	Total	Total number
	Per cent					
Males	71.7	19.4	8.9	28.3	100.0	140,510
Females	82.6	13.4	4.0	17.4	100.0	155,049
Persons	77.4	16.2	6.4	22.6	100.0	295,558

(a) Self-reported data.

(b) Comprises persons who have never used a substance and those who used substances, but not in the previous 12 months.

(c) In the previous 12 months.

Source: 2008 NATSISS.

Detainees and drug use

The AIC Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) survey reports on drug use among police detainees at selected police stations in Australia. The survey is by a voluntary questionnaire and drug use is confirmed by a urine sample provided by the detainee. Data from the 2008 survey are presented in Table 2.21.8.

- In all but one of the selected police stations shown in Table 2.14.8 there was a higher proportion of Indigenous detainees testing positive to drugs than non-Indigenous detainees.
- Between 65% and 100% of Indigenous detainees at selected police stations in South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Victoria tested positive to drugs compared with between 49% and 78% of non-Indigenous detainees.
- Cannabis was the most common drug for which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous detainees tested positive. Methamphetamines and benzodiazepines were also common drugs to which Indigenous and non-Indigenous detainees tested positive. Between 8% and 100% of Indigenous detainees and between 14% and 46% of non-Indigenous detainees tested positive for multiple drugs.

Table 2.21.8: Detainees at selected police stations, by drug use and Indigenous status, 2008

	Adelaide + Elizabeth (SA)		Bankstown + Parramatta (NSW)		Brisbane + Southport (Qld)		East Perth (WA)		Darwin (NT)		Footscray/ Sunshine (Vic)	
	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.
Tested positive to a drug	Per cent											
Benzodiazepines	44.0	25.6	20.6	15.0	26.4	22.5	12.5	21.8	10.1	n.p.	n.p.	36.1
Cannabis	74.0	45.7	61.8	37.3	68.9	44.3	65.8	51.7	61.5	70.3	n.p.	40.1
Cocaine	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	3.3	n.p.	1.2	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	6.1
Heroin	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	7.4	n.p.	10.7	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	47.6
Methamphetamine	18.0	27.0	n.p.	8.5	16.2	18.0	28.3	35.8	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	20.4
Multiple drugs	48.0	30.8	23.5	18.3	29.7	24.7	30.3	38.1	8.3	n.p.	n.p.	46.3
<i>Tested positive to a drug^(a)</i>	<i>86.0</i>	<i>65.9</i>	<i>67.7</i>	<i>48.5</i>	<i>77.7</i>	<i>63.3</i>	<i>75.7</i>	<i>72.5</i>	<i>65.1</i>	<i>78.4</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>67.4</i>
Did not test positive to a drug	14.0	34.2	32.4	51.5	22.3	36.7	24.3	27.6	34.9	21.6	0.0	32.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	50	328	34	367	148	1,205	152	294	109	37	n.p.	147

(a) Proportion who tested positive to a least one drug. Sum of components will add to more than the total testing positive, as detainees can test positive to more than one type of drug.

Source: AIC 2008 DUMA survey.

Hospitalisations

Table 2.21.9 presents hospitalisations with principal diagnoses related to drug use for the period July 2006 to June 2008 in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

- During the period July 2006 to June 2008, in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined there were 4,333 hospitalisations of Indigenous Australians relating to substance use (Table 2.21.9). This represented 0.8% of total hospitalisations of Indigenous Australians in these jurisdictions.
- Indigenous Australians were hospitalised for conditions relating to substance use at around twice the rate of other Australians.
- Poisoning due to anti-epileptic, sedative-hypnotic and anti-Parkinson disease drugs, poisoning due to psychotropic drugs, and poisoning due to antibiotics and hormones were responsible for 14%, 14% and 11% respectively of all hospitalisations of Indigenous Australians relating to substance use over the period June 2006 to July 2008. Indigenous Australians were hospitalised for these three types of poisoning at twice the rate of other Australians.
- Mental and behavioural disorders due to use of cannabis and use of multiple drug and psychoactive substances were responsible for 15% and 12% respectively of all hospitalisations of Indigenous Australians relating to substance use. Indigenous Australians were hospitalised for these disorders at five and three times the rate of other Australians respectively.
- Indigenous Australians were hospitalised for mental and behavioural disorders from use of volatile solvents at around 39 times the rate of other Australians.

Table 2.21.11 presents hospitalisations for external causes related to drug use for the period July 2006 to June 2008 in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

- Indigenous Australians were hospitalised for external causes related to drug use at 1.6 times the rate of other Australians (Table 2.21.10).

Table 2.21.9: Hospitalisations with principal diagnoses related to drug use in NSW, Vic, Qld, WA, SA and NT, July 2006 to June 2008^{(a)(b)(c)(d)}

	Number		Per cent		Indigenous			Other ^(e)			Rate Ratio ^(f)
	Indigenous	Other ^(e)	Indigenous	Other ^(e)	No. per 1,000 ^(f)	95% LCL ^(g)	95% UCL ^(h)	No. per 1,000 ^(f)	95% LCL ^(g)	95% UCL ^(h)	
Poisoning											
Antiepileptic, sedative-hypnotic and anti-Parkinson's drugs (T42)	616	16,805	14.2	22.3	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.6*
Psychotropic drugs, includes antidepressants (T43)	595	13,472	13.7	17.9	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.6*
Antibiotics and hormones (T36–T39)	466	11,406	10.8	15.1	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.4	1.7*
Narcotics, including opium, heroin, methadone and cocaine (T40)	239	6,213	5.5	8.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.7*
Toxic effect of organic solvents (T52)	62	430	1.4	0.6	—	—	0.1	—	—	—	3.6*
Mental/behavioural disorders											
From use of cannabinoids (F12)	656	5,093	15.1	6.8	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.1	0.1	0.1	4.7*
From use of multiple drug and psychoactive substances (F19)	516	5,814	11.9	7.7	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.2	3.3*
From use of other stimulants (F15)	418	5,418	9.6	7.2	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1	3.0*
From use of opioids (F11)	383	7,097	8.8	9.4	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	2.2*
From use of volatile solvents (F18)	137	103	3.2	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.4	—	—	—	39.4*
From use of sedatives (F13)	78	2,223	1.8	2.9	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.6*
From use of cocaine (F14)	11	322	0.3	0.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.8
Other											
Neonatal withdrawal symptoms from maternal use of drugs of addiction (P96.1)	130	853	3.0	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	—	—	—	3.0*
Acute hepatitis C (B17.1)	21	182	0.5	0.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	5.2*
Maternal care for suspected damage to foetus by drugs (O35.5)	5	20	0.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8.2*
Total	4,333	75,451	100.0	100.0	4.3	4.2	4.4	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.2*

Table 2.21.9 (continued): Hospitalisations with principal diagnoses related to drug use in NSW, Vic, Qld, WA, SA and NT, July 2006 to June 2008^{(a)(b)(c)(d)}

* Represents results with statistically significant differences in the Indigenous/non-Indigenous comparisons.

- (a) Data are from public and most private hospitals. Exclude private hospitals in the Northern Territory.
- (b) Categories are based on the ICD-10-AM 5th edition (National Centre for Classification in Health 2006).
- (c) Financial year reporting.
- (d) Data are reported by state/territory of usual residence of the patient hospitalised and are for New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland only. These six jurisdictions are considered to have adequate levels of Indigenous identification, although the level of accuracy varies by jurisdiction and hospital. Hospitalisation data for these six jurisdictions should not be assumed to represent the hospitalisation experience in the other jurisdictions.
- (e) Includes hospitalisations of non-Indigenous people and those for whom Indigenous status was not stated.
- (f) Directly age-standardised using the Australian 2001 standard population.
- (g) LCL = lower confidence limit.
- (h) UCL = upper confidence limit.
- (i) Rate ratio Indigenous:other.

Source: AIHW analysis of National Hospital Morbidity Database.

Table 2.21.10: Hospitalisations for external causes relating to drug use in NSW, Vic, Qld, WA, SA and NT, July 2006 to June 2008 ^{(a)(b)(c)(d)}

	Number		Indigenous			Other ^(e)			Rate Ratio ⁽ⁱ⁾
	Indigenous	Other ^(e)	No. per 1,000 ^(f)	95% LCL ^(g)	95% UCL ^(h)	No. per 1000 ^(f)	95% LCL ^(g)	95% UCL ^(h)	
Accidental poisoning									
Antidepressants and barbiturates (X41)	301	7,050	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.7 [*]
Unspecified (includes glues and paints) (X49)	198	6,070	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.2 [*]
Narcotics (includes cannabis, cocaine, heroin, opium and methadone) and hallucinogens (X42)	138	3,663	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.9 [*]
Organic solvents, including petroleum derivatives (X46)	40	300	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.6 [*]
Total	677	17,083	1.4	1.3	1.5	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.6[*]

* Represents results with statistically significant differences in the Indigenous/non-Indigenous comparisons.

(a) Data are from public and most private hospitals. Exclude private hospitals in the Northern Territory.

(b) Categories are based on the ICD-10-AM 5th edition (National Centre for Classification in Health 2006).

(c) Financial year reporting.

(d) Data are reported by state/territory of usual residence of the patient hospitalised and are for New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland only. These six jurisdictions are considered to have adequate levels of Indigenous identification, although the level of accuracy varies by jurisdiction and hospital. Hospitalisation data for these six jurisdictions should not be assumed to represent the hospitalisation experience in the other jurisdictions.

(e) Includes hospitalisations of non-Indigenous people and those for whom Indigenous status was not stated.

(f) Directly age-standardised using the Australian 2001 standard population.

(g) LCL = lower confidence limit.

(h) UCL = upper confidence limit.

(i) Rate ratio Indigenous:other.

Source: AIHW analysis of National Hospital Morbidity Database.

Hospitalisations by remoteness

Hospitalisation rates with a principal diagnosis related to drug use in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory covering the period July 2007 to June 2009 are presented by Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) in Table 2.21.11a.

- Indigenous Australians in all remoteness areas were more likely to be hospitalised for these conditions than other Australians. There was statistically significant difference between the hospitalisations ratios for Indigenous and other Australians in all ASGC areas.
- Rates of hospitalisations per 1,000 people were highest for Indigenous people living in *Major cities*, at 5.8 per 1,000. The rate was also highest for other Australians who lived in *Major cities*, at 2.0 per 1,000. The lowest rates were observed in *Very remote* areas for both Indigenous Australians (2.0 per 1,000) and other Australians (1.5 per 1,000).
- Indigenous people were hospitalised for drug-use-related conditions at a rate of 2.9 times that of other Australians in *Major cities*. In *Very remote* areas, where the lowest ratio was observed, Indigenous Australians were hospitalised at a rate of 1.3 times that of other Australians. Nationally, the rate ratio was 2.2.

Table 2.21.11a: Hospitalisations with a principal diagnosis related to drug use, by Indigenous status and remoteness, NSW, Vic, Qld, WA, SA and NT, July 2007 to June 2009^{(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)}

	Indigenous				Other ^(g)				Rate ratio ^(k)
	Number	No. per 1,000 ^(h)	LCL 95% ⁽ⁱ⁾	UCL 95% ^(j)	Number	No. per 1,000 ^(h)	LCL 95% ⁽ⁱ⁾	UCL 95% ^(j)	
Major cities	1,838	5.8	5.5	6.1	56,346	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.9*
Inner regional	988	5.2	4.9	5.6	13,336	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.6*
Outer regional ^(l)	798	3.8	3.5	4.1	5,814	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.1*
Remote	394	4.2	3.7	4.7	859	1.7	1.6	1.9	2.4*
Very remote	326	2.0	1.6	2.4	246	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.3*
Missing	51	..	..	..	759	..	..	..	..
Total^(m)	4,395	4.5	4.4	4.6	77,360	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.2*

* Represents results with statistically significant differences in the Indigenous/other comparisons at the $p < 0.05$ level.

(a) Data are from public and most private hospitals. Jurisdictional data excludes private hospitals in the Northern Territory.

(b) Categories are based on the ICD-10-AM 5th edition (National Centre for Classification in Health 2006).

(c) Financial year reporting.

(d) Data are reported by state/territory of usual residence of the patient hospitalised.

(e) Age-standardised rates for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Australia have been calculated using the direct method, age-standardised by 5 year age group to 65+.

(f) New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland are considered to have adequate levels of Indigenous identification, although the level of accuracy varies by jurisdiction and hospital. Hospitalisation data for these six jurisdictions should not be assumed to represent the hospitalisation experience in the other jurisdictions.

(g) 'Other' includes hospitalisations of non-Indigenous people and those for whom Indigenous status was not stated.

(h) Directly age-standardised using the Australian 2001 standard population.

(i) LCL = lower confidence limit.

(j) UCL = upper confidence limit.

(k) Rate ratio Indigenous: other.

(l) Outer regional includes remote Victoria

(m) Total includes hospitalisations where ASGC is missing.

Notes:

1. Rates for Indigenous are calculated using the 2006 population estimates based on the 2006 Census (Series B).

2. Care types 7.3, 9 & 10 (Newborn – unqualified days only; organ procurement; hospital boarder) excluded from analysis.

Source: AIHW analysis of National Hospital Morbidity Database.

Hospitalisation rates for external causes related to drug use in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory are presented by Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) in Table 2.21.11b, covering the period July 2007 to June 2009.

- Indigenous Australians in all remoteness areas were more likely to be hospitalised for these conditions than other Australians. There was a statistically significant difference between the ratio of hospitalisations of Indigenous Australians and the ratio of hospitalisations of other Australians in all published ASGC areas.
- Rates of hospitalisations per 1,000 head of population were highest for Indigenous people living in *Remote* areas, at 12 per 1,000. The rate was highest for other Australians who lived in *Very remote* areas, at 4.0 per 1,000. The lowest rates were observed in *Major cities* for both Indigenous people (6.2 per 1,000) and other Australians (less than 0.05 per 1,000).
- Indigenous people were hospitalised for these conditions at a rate of 217 times that of other Australians in *Major cities* of Australia. In *Very remote* areas, where the lowest rate ratio was observed, Indigenous Australians were hospitalised at a rate of 1.8 times that of other Australians. Nationally, the rate was 82 times.

Table 2.21.11b: Hospitalisations for external causes related to drug use, by Indigenous status and remoteness, NSW, Vic, Qld, WA, SA and NT, July 2007 to June 2009^{(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)}

	Indigenous				Other ^(g)				Ratio ^(k)
	Number	No. per 1,000 ^(h)	LCL 95% ⁽ⁱ⁾	UCL 95% ^(j)	Number	No. per 1,000 ^(h)	LCL 95% ⁽ⁱ⁾	UCL 95% ^(j)	
Major cities	1,042	6.2	5.7	6.7	784	—	—	—	..
Inner regional	923	8.7	8.0	9.4	711	0.1	0.1	0.1	90.6*
Outer regional ^(l)	1,032	8.7	8.0	9.3	842	0.2	0.2	0.3	35.4*
Remote	712	12.1	11.0	13.2	698	1.4	1.3	1.5	8.5*
Very remote	722	7.3	6.2	8.4	592	4.0	3.9	4.1	1.8*
Missing	120	..	..	..	268	..	..	..	..
Total^(m)	4,551	8.2	7.9	8.5	3,895	0.1	0.1	0.1	82.1*

* Represents results with statistically significant differences in the Indigenous/other comparisons at the $p < 0.05$ level.

- (a) Data are from public and most private hospitals. Jurisdictional data excludes private hospitals in the Northern Territory.
- (b) Categories are based on the ICD-10-AM 5th edition (National Centre for Classification in Health 2006).
- (c) Financial year reporting.
- (d) Data are reported by state/territory of usual residence of the patient hospitalised.
- (e) Age standardised rates for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Australia have been calculated using the direct method, age standardised by 5 year age group to 65+.
- (f) New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland are considered to have adequate levels of Indigenous identification, although the level of accuracy varies by jurisdiction and hospital. Hospitalisation data for these six jurisdictions should not be assumed to represent the hospitalisation experience in the other jurisdictions.
- (g) 'Other' includes hospitalisations of non-Indigenous people and those for whom Indigenous status was not stated.
- (h) Directly age-standardised using the Australian 2001 standard population.
- (i) LCL = lower confidence limit.
- (j) UCL = upper confidence limit.
- (k) Rate ratio Indigenous: other.
- (l) Outer regional includes remote Victoria
- (m) Total includes hospitalisations where ASGC is missing.

Notes:

1. Rates for Indigenous are calculated using the 2006 population estimates based on the 2006 Census (Series B).
2. Care types 7.3, 9 & 10 (Newborn – unqualified days only; organ procurement; hospital boarder) excluded from analysis.

Source: AIHW analysis of National Hospital Morbidity Database.

Substance use during pregnancy

Data on the use of illicit drugs or substances by the mothers of Indigenous children aged 0-3 years during pregnancy is presented in Table 2.21.12 and Table 2.21.13. Rates by state/territory are presented in Table 2.21.12 and rates by Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) are presented in Table 2.21.13.

- Use of illicit drugs or substances during pregnancy by the mothers of Indigenous children aged 0-3 years was highest in Victoria (9.3%) and Western Australian (8.5%) (Table 2.21.12).
- Use of illicit drugs or substances during pregnancy by the mothers of Indigenous children aged 0-3 years was similar in remote (4.9%) and non-remote areas (5%) (Table 2.21.13).

Table 2.21.12: Illicit drug or substance use by child's mother during pregnancy, Indigenous children aged 0-3 years, by state/territory, 2008

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas/ACT	NT	Aust
	Per cent							
Used illicit drugs/ substances during pregnancy	3.9	9.3	3.9	8.5	6.1	4.2	4.2	5.0
Did not use illicit drugs/ substances during pregnancy	96.1	90.7	96.1	91.5	93.9	95.8	95.8	95.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	16,132	3,336	16,523	6,767	2,730	2,444	5,948	53,880

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Table 2.21.13: Illicit drug or substance use, by child's mother during pregnancy, by remoteness, Indigenous children aged 0-3 years, 2008

	Remote		Non-Remote		Persons	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Used illicit substances during pregnancy	429	4.9	1,693	5.0	2,122	5.0
Did not use illicit substances during pregnancy	8,295	95.1	32,354	95.0	40,649	95.0
Total	8,724	100.0	34,047	100.0	42,771	100.0
Not collected	3,256	27.2	7,853	18.7	11,109	20.6

Source: 2008 NATSISS.

Data quality issues

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey)

The NATSIHS uses the standard Indigenous status question. The NATSIHS sample was specifically designed to select a representative sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. It therefore overcomes the problem inherent in most national surveys with small and unrepresentative Indigenous samples. As with other surveys, the NATSIHS is subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. Calculations of standard errors and significance testing help to identify the accuracy of the estimates and differences.

Information recorded in this survey is essentially 'as reported' by respondents. The ABS makes every effort to collect accurate information from respondents, particularly through careful questionnaire design, pre-testing of questionnaires, use of trained interviewers and assistance from Indigenous facilitators. Nevertheless, imperfect recall or individual interpretation of survey questions may affect some responses.

Non-Indigenous comparisons are available through the National Health Survey (NHS). The NHS was conducted in *Major cities, Inner and outer regional areas* and *Remote and very remote areas*, but *Very remote* areas were excluded from the sample. Time series comparisons are available through the 1995 and 2001 NHS.

In *Remote and very remote* communities there were some modifications to the NATSIHS content in order to accommodate language and cultural appropriateness in traditional communities and help respondents understand the concepts. Some questions were excluded and some reworded. Also, paper forms were used in communities in remote areas and computer-assisted interview (CAI) instruments were used in non-remote areas. The CAI process included built-in edit checks and sequencing.

Further information on NATSIHS data quality issues can be found in the NATSIHS 2004-05 publication (ABS 2006).

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey

The NATSISS is conducted in all states and territories and includes remote and non-remote areas. The 2008 sample was 13,300 persons in 6,900 households, with a response rate of 82% of households. Up to three randomly selected Indigenous people were chosen from selected households to participate in the survey. Trained ABS interviewers conducted the survey using face-to-face interviews. In non-remote areas interviewers used a notebook computer to record responses, while in remote areas a paper questionnaire was used. Interviewers obtained the consent of a parent or guardian before interviewing those aged 15 to 17 years. Indigenous persons usually resident in non-private dwellings such as hotels, motels, hostels, hospitals, short-stay caravan parks, prisons and other correctional facilities were excluded.

The NATSISS uses the standard Indigenous status question. The NATSISS sample was specifically designed to select a representative sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

As with other surveys, the NATSISS is subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. Care has been taken to ensure that the results of this survey are as accurate as possible. Trained ABS officers conducted all interviews. However, some factors may affect the reliability of the data.

Information recorded in this survey is 'as reported' by respondents, and therefore may differ from information available from other sources or collected using different methodologies.

Data on health-related indicators have been age-standardised to the 2001 total Australian population to account for differences in the age structures of the states and territories and the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population.

Time series comparisons for the 2008 survey are available through the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey and the 2002 NATSISS. However not all data elements align across the three (1994, 2001 and 2008) NATSISS surveys, hence care is required when reviewing results across the three surveys. There are no strictly comparable non-Indigenous results available for the 2008 NATSISS because the latest General Social Survey (which has been used in the past to compare with Indigenous results from the NATSISS) was run in 2006, with the next being run in 2010–11. Data from other ABS surveys run in 2008 may, however, be used to obtain rough non-Indigenous comparisons for some data items. Where possible, the ABS has provided recommendations for non-Indigenous data comparisons and these have been adopted in this report.

The 2008 NATSISS has a relatively large level of under-coverage when compared to other ABS surveys. There was also an increase in under-coverage compared to previous ABS Indigenous surveys. For example, the estimated under-coverage in the 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) was 42%. The overall under-coverage rate for the 2008 NATSISS is approximately 53% of the in-scope population at the national level. This rate varies across the states and territories (ABS 2010).

Further information on NATSISS data quality issues can be found in the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey: User's guide, 2008* (ABS 2010).

National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS)

The NDSHS collects information relating to drug use in Australia. The sample size for the 2007 survey was over 23,000 persons aged 12 years and over.

The NDSHS does not have an enhanced Indigenous sample. Therefore, only a small number of Indigenous respondents are picked up in this survey. In 2007, approximately 372 Indigenous respondents were included. The sample size for Indigenous Australians is very small and therefore the estimates should be interpreted with caution (ABS & AIHW 2005). This small Indigenous sample size also limits the reliability of time series analyses.

NDSHS data are reportable at the national level only. Data are not available for remoteness areas, regional areas and state and territory levels.

AIC Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA)

The Indigenous status of the detainee is established in the questionnaire by the following question:

'What is your ethnic background?' (if the respondent mentions 'Australian' but not 'Aboriginal' prompt: 'Do you consider yourself an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?').

It is likely that this question will underestimate the number of Indigenous persons being detained through a reluctance on the part of detainees to identify as Indigenous.

This survey is conducted at police stations in selected metropolitan areas and does not provide regional coverage. In addition, the actual number of detainees questioned is quite low, which does not permit great analysis of the Indigenous data. Finally, the figures do not permit national coverage, but instead analysis by state is recommended.

Hospital separations data

Separations

Differing admission practices among the jurisdictions and from year to year, and differing levels and patterns of service delivery can affect the number and pattern of hospitalisations.

In all states and territories, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander separations in public hospitals increased over the 11-year period 1996–97 to 2007–08, from 3.7% to 5.4%. In private hospitals, it stayed around 0.2% to 0.3% until 2003–04, when there was a modest increase to 0.5%.

Indigenous status question

Some jurisdictions have slightly different approaches to the collection and storage of the standard Indigenous status question and categories in their hospital collections. The ‘not stated’ category is missing from several collections. It is recommended that the standard wording and categories be used in all jurisdictions (AIHW 2005).

‘Not stated’ responses to the Indigenous status question were around 1% in public hospitals and 4% in private hospitals in 2007–08. This is a reduction from 1998–99 when 2% of responses in public hospitals and 8% of responses in private hospitals had a ‘not stated’ Indigenous status (AIHW 2009).

Under-identification

The incompleteness of Indigenous identification means the number of hospital separations recorded as Indigenous is an underestimate of hospitalisations involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Based on an analysis of a sample of data conducted in 2010, an estimated 89% of Indigenous patients were correctly identified in Australian public hospital admission records in 2007–08 (AIHW 2010). In other words, 11% of Indigenous patients were not identified, and the ‘true’ number of hospital admissions for Indigenous persons was about 12% higher than reported.

For several years, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory reported that Indigenous status in their hospital separations data were of acceptable quality (AIHW 2007). The AIHW, however, has recently completed an assessment of the level of Indigenous under-identification in hospital data in all states and territories. Results from this assessment indicate that all hospitals in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia and public hospitals in the Northern Territory have adequate Indigenous identification (80% or higher overall levels of Indigenous identification in public hospitals only) in their separations data. For Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, the levels of Indigenous identification were not considered acceptable for analysis purposes. It has therefore been recommended that reporting of Indigenous hospital separations data be limited to information from New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory, individually or in aggregate. The proportion of the Indigenous population covered by these six jurisdictions is 96%. The following caveats have also been recommended for analysis of hospitalisation data from selected jurisdictions (AIHW 2010):

- Interpretation of results should take into account the relative quality of the data from the jurisdictions included.
- Interpretation of time series analysis should take into account the possible contribution of changes over time in ascertainment of Indigenous status to changes in hospitalisation rates for Indigenous people.
- Bias may have been introduced due to the sampling method of hospitals used in the study. Hospitals with high proportions of Indigenous separations were used in the study to ensure sufficient numbers of Indigenous people were included in the study. Proportions of Indigenous separations should therefore not be taken to represent the NHMD overall.
- Hospitalisation data for these six jurisdictions are not necessarily representative of other jurisdictions.

From the AIHW study, it was possible to produce correction factors for the level of Indigenous under-identification in hospital data for each jurisdiction and at the national level.

Remoteness areas

There were acceptable levels of Indigenous identification for all remoteness areas, ranging from 80% in *Major cities* to 97% in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas. The quality of data supports analyses by remoteness areas, in aggregate, across states and territories. However, the sample size was insufficient to allow assessment of the quality of Indigenous identification by remoteness area within jurisdictions.

Numerator and denominator

Rate and ratio calculations rely on good numerator and denominator data. There are changes in the completeness of identification of Indigenous people in hospital records. These may take place at different rates from changes in the identification of Indigenous people in other administrative collections and population censuses. Denominators used in this analysis are sourced from *Experimental estimates and projections: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians 1991 to 2021* (ABS 2009).

Data sources for injury emergency episodes

The National Non-admitted Patient Emergency Department Care Database is a national collection of de-identified data on emergency department episodes based on the Non-admitted Emergency Department Care National Minimum Data Set. This data set includes the standard Indigenous status question but does not include injury coding (for example, ICD-10). The Injury Surveillance National Minimum Data Set includes injury coding (components of ICD-10) but does not include demographic details such as Indigenous status. Therefore, there is currently no national minimum data set containing both Indigenous status and injury coding.

List of symbols used in tables

- n.a. not available
- rounded to zero (including null cells)
- 0 zero
- .. not applicable
- n.e.c. not elsewhere classified
- n.f.d. not further defined
- n.p. not available for publication but included in totals where applicable, unless otherwise indicated

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