



The non-medical use of pharmaceutical drugs is an **ongoing concern internationally**.



Between 1997 and 2019, the rate of **deaths** where benzodiazepines were present **rose** from 1.9 per 100,000 population to 3.3 per 100,000 population.^[1]



The rate of **dispensed prescriptions for pharmaceutical opioids** has **decreased** by 8.6% from 2015–16 (58,485 scripts per 100,000 population) to 2019–20 (53,427 per 100,000).^[3]

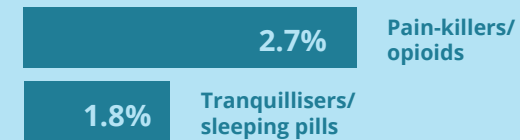


In 2019, people from **Remote and very remote** areas were **1.5 times as likely** as those from *Major cities* to have used pharmaceuticals for non-medical reasons.^[2]



In 2019, Australians were more likely to approve of **non-medical use** of pain-killers/opioids (12.4%) and tranquilisers/sleeping pills (9.3%) than other illicit drugs except cannabis.^[2]

In 2019, **pain-killers/opioids** were the most common pharmaceutical used non-medically by Australians, followed by tranquilisers/sleeping pills.^[2]



Benzodiazepines and other sedatives and hypnotics (including barbiturates; excluding ethanol) accounted for more drug-related hospital separations than opioids in 2018–19 (6.8% compared to 6.2%).^[4]



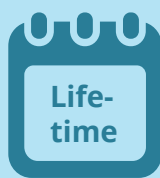
In 2019–20, pharmaceuticals were the **principal drug of concern in 4.5%** of closed treatment episodes for clients' own alcohol and other drug use.^[5]

Aged 14+ ^[2]

1 in 25 (4.2%) people reported **recent non-medical use** of a pharmaceutical



1 in 9 (11.7%) people **ever** used a pharmaceutical non-medically



In 2019, people with **mental health conditions** were **2.1x as likely** as those without mental health conditions to have recently used pharmaceuticals for non-medical reasons.^[2]



National Drug Strategy Household Survey findings relate to people aged 14 or older unless specified. An adult is a person aged 18 or older.^[2]

Benzodiazepines and other sedatives and hypnotics includes barbiturates, but excludes ethanol.^[4]

1. AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2021. AIHW analysis of the National Mortality Database 2019.

2. AIHW 2020. [National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019](#). Drug statistics series no. 32. Cat. no. PHE 270. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 3 August 2020.

3. AIHW analysis of PBS data maintained by the Department of Health and sourced from Services Australia and the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021.

4. AIHW analysis of the National Hospital Morbidity Database 2018–19.

5. AIHW 2021. [Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2019–20](#). Cat. no. HSE 250. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 16 July 2021.

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For more detail, see the full report, [Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in Australia](#), which is available from the AIHW website.



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