



# Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Queensland 2008–09

*Findings from the National Minimum Data Set (NMDS)*

## Highlights

In Queensland in 2008–09, 122 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies provided 25,523 treatment episodes. The median<sup>1</sup> age of persons receiving treatment (for their own drug use and those seeking treatment for someone else's drug use) was 29 years (31 years for females and 29 years for males).

Cannabis and alcohol were the most common principal drugs of concern at around 36% of treatment episodes each, followed by amphetamines and opioids (8% each, with heroin accounting for half the treatment episodes for opioid use).

The greatest proportion of treatment episodes was for information and education only (40%) followed by counselling (25%) and assessment only (18%).

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

## Contents

Highlights.....	1
Treatment agencies.....	3
Client profile.....	3
Drugs of concern.....	4
Treatment programs.....	9
Symbols.....	13
How to find out more.....	13
Reference.....	13

### **About this bulletin**

This bulletin summarises the main findings from the 2008–09 Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services (AODTS) NMDS data for Queensland. This is the first AODTS–NMDS state bulletin provided for Queensland. In previous years, Queensland did not provide comprehensive data on the alcohol and drug treatment services delivered by non-government organisations (NGOs).

In 2007, Queensland Health funded the establishment of the Queensland Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies (QNADA), the peak body for NGOs that provide alcohol and drug services. One of the key objectives for QNADA was the establishment of a database to collect data for the AODTS–NMDS. It is expected that this database will enable a more comprehensive data set to be submitted to the AIHW in future.

More detailed information about the 2008–09 national collection and its findings can be found in the publication *Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2008–09: report on the National Minimum Data Set* (AIHW 2010). This report, together with further publications and interactive data, can be accessed online at <[www.aihw.gov.au/drugs](http://www.aihw.gov.au/drugs)>.

### **Scope of the AODTS–NMDS**

The agencies and clients that were in scope for the 2008–09 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 during the period 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009.

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 collection (NOPSAD).

For a complete list of clients and agencies excluded from the AODTS–NMDS, see Section 1.2 of the *Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2008–09: report on the National Minimum Data Set* (AIHW 2010).

### **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, a total of 653 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies supplied data for 2008–09. Of these agencies, 122 were located in Queensland, of which 75 were non-government agencies. Treatment agencies in Queensland were more likely to be located in *Major cities* (41%) than other geographical areas.

## Client profile

In Queensland, there were 25,523 closed treatment episodes in alcohol and other drug treatment services reported in the 2008–09 AODTS–NMDS collection. The vast majority (98%) of closed treatment episodes in Queensland involved clients seeking treatment for their own drug use. The remaining 2% involved clients seeking treatment related to another person's alcohol or other drug use.

## Age and sex

The overall proportions of male and female and male clients in Queensland (70% and 30%, respectively) differed slightly from the national proportions (67% and 33%, respectively).

In Queensland, the median age of persons receiving treatment for their own drug use was 29 years. Of people seeking treatment for someone else's drug use, the median age was 45 years.

Over one-third (36%) of all closed treatment episodes in Queensland were for clients aged 20–29 years, and more than one-quarter (26%) were for clients aged 30–39 years.

## Special population groups

The proportion of treatment episodes involving clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was slightly higher in Queensland compared with the national figure (13% and 12%, respectively). Treatment data for Indigenous people need to be interpreted with caution due to the fact that the majority of Australian Government-funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander substance use specific services or primary health care services are not included in the AODTS–NMDS collection. Furthermore, Indigenous status was not stated in 6% of episodes in Queensland.

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

## Drugs of concern

This section reports only on the 24,984 closed treatment episodes where clients were seeking treatment for their own alcohol or other drug use in Queensland.

### Principal drug of concern

The principal drug of concern refers to the main substance that the client states led them to seek treatment from the alcohol and other drug treatment agency. In Queensland in 2008–09, cannabis and alcohol were the most common principal drugs of concern (around 36% each), followed by amphetamines and opioids (around 8% each) (Table 1).

**Table 1: Principal drug of concern<sup>(a)</sup>, Queensland<sup>(b)</sup> and Australia, 2002–03 to 2008–09 (per cent)**

Principal drug of concern	Queensland <sup>(b)</sup>							Total (Australia) 2008–09	
	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Per cent	Number
Alcohol	24.6	26.3	26.4	27.9	33.7	33.8	35.8	45.8	63,272
Amphetamines	8.9	10.3	8.7	10.2	9.9	8.8	7.7	9.2	12,739
Benzodiazepines	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	2,080
Cannabis	50.4	39.5	42.8	41.1	36.8	36.8	36.4	22.5	31,100
Cocaine	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	479
Ecstasy	0.4	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.4	2.2	2.3	1.0	1,397
Nicotine	2.8	4.4	6.3	6.6	6.4	6.1	6.1	1.8	2,461
Opioids									
Heroin	5.4	7.6	5.2	4.3	3.3	4.1	3.8	10.3	14,222
Methadone	1.7	2.4	1.2	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.7	1.5	2,136
Morphine	—	—	2.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.4	1,877
Total opioids <sup>(c)</sup>	7.1	10.0	10.0	8.1	7.5	8.0	7.9	15.1	20,890
All other drugs <sup>(d)</sup>	4.5	7.8	4.1	4.0	3.0	3.1	2.5	2.6	3,609
Not stated	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Total (per cent)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>..</b>
<b>Total (number)</b>	<b>13,683</b>	<b>17,912</b>	<b>19,743</b>	<b>24,159</b>	<b>24,885</b>	<b>26,332</b>	<b>24,984</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>138,027</b>

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

(b) Numbers of episodes for Queensland have increased over time partly through improvements in data collection; however, time series comparisons should be made with caution because of concerns regarding data completeness.

(c) 'Total opioids' includes the balance of opioids according to the Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern (ASCDC).

(d) Includes balance of principal drugs of concern coded according to the ASCDC

Nationally, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern (46%), followed by cannabis (23%), opioids (15%, with heroin accounting for 10%) and amphetamines (9%).

The proportion of treatment episodes related to alcohol in Queensland increased between 2007–08 and 2008–09 (from 34% to 36%), but was less than the national proportion of alcohol-related episodes (46%). The proportion of episodes for cannabis treatment have decreased slightly from around 37% in 2007–08 to around 36% in 2008–09, while treatment episodes where heroin was the principal drug of concern have remained stable at around 4%.

## Age and sex

The principal drug of concern varied between age groups in Queensland. For clients aged 10–19 years and 20–29 years, cannabis was the most common principal drug of concern (59% and 41% of episodes, respectively), while alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern for clients in all other age groups. The greatest proportion of treatment episodes was for those aged 20–29 years (36%).

Males accounted for a larger proportion of treatment episodes for all drug types compared with females. The smallest difference between the sexes was treatment for methadone (52% males and 48% females) and the largest difference was for cocaine (84% males and 16% females).

## Special population groups

In 2008–09, treatment episodes in Queensland involving clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were most likely to include alcohol as principal drug of concern (48%, compared with 33% for non-Indigenous Australians), followed by cannabis (32%, compared with 39% for non-Indigenous Australians) or 'other drugs' (10%). There is no notable difference between proportions of 'other drugs' as principal drugs of concern between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in Queensland.

## All drugs of concern

All drugs of concern refers to all drugs reported by clients, including the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern (up to five). Over half (55%) of all treatment episodes in Queensland involved at least one other drug of concern (in addition to the principal drug of concern). From these episodes 20,292 instances of 'other drugs of concern' were recorded.

A breakdown of all drugs of concern by drug type is presented in Figure 1. For example, alcohol was reported as the principal drug of concern in 36% of episodes, but was reported as a drug of concern (either principal or other) in 56% of treatment episodes. Similarly, nicotine was reported as the principal drug of concern in 6% of episodes, but was reported as a drug of concern in 26% of treatment episodes.

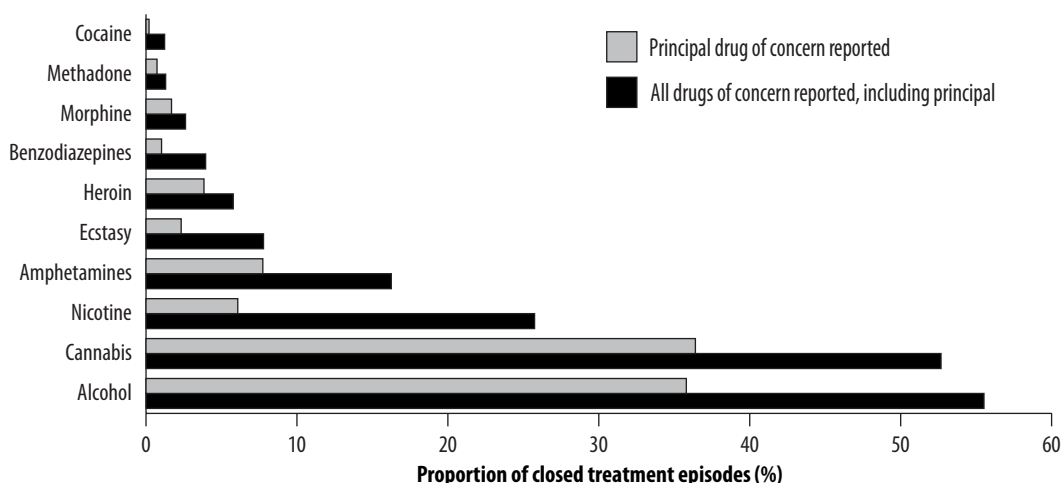


Figure 1: Principal drug of concern and all drugs of concern, Queensland, 2008–09

## Alcohol

In Queensland, alcohol and cannabis were the most common principal drugs of concern for which treatment was sought, each accounting for around 36% of closed treatment episodes in 2008–09. When all drugs of concern are considered (that is, the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern nominated by the client), 56% of episodes included alcohol.

Of the 8,943 episodes where alcohol was the principal drug of concern in 2008–09, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

### *Client profile*

- The majority (70%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of clients receiving treatment was 34 years (males 33 years; females 36 years).
- More than one-sixth (18%) of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (36% of episodes), followed by referrals from correctional services (14%).

### *Drug profile*

- 45% of alcohol episodes (4,017 treatment episodes) included at least one other drug of concern. In these episodes, 39% of other drugs were cannabis, 29% nicotine and 12% amphetamines.
- The majority (61%) of episodes involved clients who reported never having injected drugs. Another 4% of episodes involved clients who reported as currently injecting, while 14% involved clients who reported they had injected drugs in the past.

### *Treatment profile*

- Counselling was the most common main treatment type received (36% of episodes), followed by assessment only (27%) and information and education only (17%).
- Treatment was most likely to take place in a non-residential treatment facility (69% of episodes), followed by an outreach setting (21%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 10.

## **Cannabis**

In Queensland, cannabis was just as likely as alcohol to be the principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for around 36% of closed treatment episodes in 2008–09.

Cannabis was reported in 53% (13,160) of all episodes (as either the principal or other drug of concern).

Of the 9,097 episodes where cannabis was the principal drug of concern in 2008–09, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

### ***Client profile***

- The majority (75%) episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of clients receiving treatment was 25 years (males 25 years; females 26 years).
- 11% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Police diversion was the most common source of referral (46% of episodes), followed by court diversion (22%).

### ***Drug profile***

- Smoking was the most commonly reported usual method of use (96%), followed by ingestion at just over 1%.
- 61% (5,590) of episodes included at least one other drug of concern—33% were for nicotine and 40% for alcohol.
- The majority (72%) of episodes involved clients who had never injected, while 15% involved clients who reported they had injected drugs in the past (4% between 3 and 12 months ago and 11% injected 12 or more months ago). 5% of episodes involved clients who reported currently injecting drugs.

### ***Treatment profile***

- Information and education only was the most common main treatment type received (71% of episodes), followed by counselling (14%).
- Treatment was most likely to take place in a non-residential treatment facility (73% of episodes), followed by an outreach setting (16%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 1.

## **Amphetamines**

In Queensland, amphetamines accounted for around 8% of closed treatment episodes in 2008–09.

When all drugs of concern are considered (i.e. the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern nominated by the client), 16% of episodes included amphetamines.

Of the 1,935 episodes where amphetamines were the principal drug of concern in 2008–09, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

### ***Client profile***

- The majority (69%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of clients receiving treatment was 29 years (for both males and females).
- Around 7% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (36% of episodes), followed by referrals from correctional services (19%).

### ***Drug profile***

- Injecting was the most common usual method of use (74% of episodes).
- 66% included at least one other drug of concern. Alcohol was a nominated other drug of concern in 22% of amphetamines episodes, and cannabis in 35%.
- The majority (57%) of episodes involved clients who reported as currently injecting, 22% involved clients who reported they had injected drugs in the past and 14% of episodes involved clients who reported never injecting drugs.

### ***Treatment profile***

- Counselling was the most common main treatment type received (37% of episodes), followed by assessment only (23%) and information and education only (16%).
- Treatment was most likely to take place in a non-residential treatment facility (73% of episodes).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 13.



## Treatment programs

The main treatment type is the principal activity, as judged by the treatment provider, which is necessary for completing the treatment plan for the principal drug of concern. Data presented in this section relate to clients seeking treatment in relation to their own or someone else's alcohol or other drug use, except for the sub-sections relating to principal drug of concern and treatment programs (which only include episodes for people seeking treatment for themselves).

Of all closed treatment episodes in Queensland, information and education only was the most common form of main treatment provided (40% of episodes), followed by counselling (25%) and assessment only (18%) (Table 2).

Queensland provided more information and education only and assessment only as a proportion of all treatments than was provided nationally in 2008–09. Conversely, Queensland provided proportionately less withdrawal management, counselling and rehabilitation.

**Table 2: Main treatment type, Queensland<sup>(a)</sup> and Australia, 2001–02 to 2008–09 (per cent)**

Main treatment type	Queensland <sup>(a)</sup>							Total (Australia) 2008–09	
	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Per cent	Number
Withdrawal management (detoxification)	5.4	7.9	4.4	5.4	4.7	5.4	6.4	16.4	23,599
Counselling	29.2	27.7	32.4	22.6	23.5	27.1	25.0	37.4	53,787
Rehabilitation	7.4	5.7	3.1	3.6	3.4	2.2	2.6	6.7	9,667
Support and case management only	4.2	6.4	4.5	2.3	3.7	3.8	5.7	8.9	12,740
Information and education only	45.1	37.2	45.4	48.0	44.6	46.4	40.3	9.2	13,283
Assessment only	5.6	11.5	8.0	14.2	18.4	12.5	18.0	14.7	21,172
Other <sup>(b)</sup>	3.1	3.6	2.2	3.8	1.6	2.6	1.9	6.6	9,424
<b>Total (per cent)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>..</b>
<b>Total (number)</b>	<b>14,195</b>	<b>18,466</b>	<b>20,092</b>	<b>24,524</b>	<b>25,340</b>	<b>26,895</b>	<b>25,523</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>143,672</b>

(a) Numbers of episodes for Queensland have increased over time partly through improvements in data collection; however, time series comparisons should be made with caution because of concerns regarding data completeness.

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

### Information and education only

Information and education only was the most common main treatment type reported in Queensland in 2008–09, accounting for 40% of closed treatment episodes. Of the 10,296 episodes where information and education only was nominated as the main treatment type received, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

#### *Client profile*

- ♦ Almost all episodes (99%) were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- ♦ Nearly three quarters (74%) of episodes were for male clients.
- ♦ The median age of persons receiving treatment was 24 years (males 24 years; females 25 years).
- ♦ 12% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- ♦ Police diversion was the most common source of referral (53% of episodes), followed by court diversion programs (36%).

#### *Treatment profile*

- ♦ Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (71% of episodes).
- ♦ 89% of episodes ended because of expiation<sup>2</sup> (the client had met all the conditions of a diversion program). The next most common reason for episodes to end was that the treatment was completed (7% of episodes ended this way).
- ♦ The median number of days for a treatment episode was 1.

#### *Principal drug profile*

- ♦ Cannabis was the most common principal drug of concern reported (64% of episodes) by people who received information and education for their own drug use, followed by alcohol (15%) and other drugs (12%).

<sup>2</sup> 'Ceased to participate at expiation' refers to situations where the client has fulfilled their obligation to satisfy expiation requirements (e.g. participate in a treatment program to avoid having a criminal conviction being recorded against them) as part of a police or court diversion scheme and chooses not to continue with further treatment.

## **Counselling**

Counselling was the second most common main treatment type reported in Queensland in 2008–09, accounting for 25% of closed treatment episodes. Of the 6,375 episodes where counselling was nominated as the main treatment received in 2008–09, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

### ***Client profile***

- 96% of episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- The majority (67%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 31 years (males 30 years; females 33 years).
- 15% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (41% of episodes), followed by referrals from correctional services (21%).

### ***Treatment profile***

- Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (80% of episodes), followed by an outreach setting (12%).
- Almost half (44%) of episodes ended because the client ceased to participate without notifying the service provider. The next most common reason for a treatment episode to end was that treatment was completed (28% of episodes ended this way).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 30.

### ***Principal drug profile***

- Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported (52% of episodes), followed by cannabis (20%).

### **Assessment only**

Assessment only was the third most common main treatment provided in Queensland in 2008–09, and accounted for 18% of closed treatment episodes. Of the 4,590 episodes where assessment only was nominated as the main treatment type received in 2008–09, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

#### ***Client profile***

- Almost all episodes (99%) were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- The majority (71%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 34 years (33 years for males and 36 years for females).
- 13% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (33%) of episodes, followed by referrals from correctional services (24%).

#### ***Treatment profile***

- Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (70% of episodes), followed by an outreach setting (28%).
- Around 43% of episodes ended because treatment was completed, while 25% of episodes ceased without the client notifying the service provider.
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 1.

#### ***Principal drug profile***

- Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported (52%) by people who received assessment only for their own drug use, followed by cannabis (16%) and amphetamines (10%).

## Symbols

- nil or rounded to zero
- .. not applicable

## How to find out more

If you would like more detailed data about Queensland's alcohol and other treatment services please contact the AIHW to discuss your needs. The document *Alcohol and other drug treatment services NMDS Specifications 2010–11* 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/publications/index.cfm/title/11461>>.

## Reference

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2010. Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2008–09: report on the National Minimum Data Set. Drug treatment series no. 10. Cat. no. HSE 92. Canberra: AIHW.





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