



Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2008–09: Report on the National Minimum Data Set

The report

A wide variety of drug and alcohol treatment services are available across Australia. These services are funded by state and territory health departments, the Commonwealth Government, privately, or a combination of these.

Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2008–09: Report on the National Minimum Data Set presents national, state and territory data about alcohol and other drug treatment services that were either wholly or partly funded by public money during the reporting year.

The Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set (AODTS–NMDS) is based on closed treatment episodes specific interventions with defined start and end dates.

In 2008–09, there were 143,672 such treatment episodes. The number of treatment episodes, however, does not equal the total number of people in Australia who received treatment for alcohol and other drug use. This is because clients may have received more than one treatment episode from the one agency within the collection period, or services from more than one treatment agency.

The report does include, however, demographic information about the clients who accessed treatment, the drugs for which they were seeking treatment and the treatment they received. The report also presents contextual information about drug use, drug-related deaths and hospital stays, and other types of treatment provided for alcohol and other drug issues in Australia.

Fast facts

In 2008–09:

- Alcohol continued to be the most common substance for which treatment was sought.
- Cannabis continued to be the most common illicit substance for which treatment was sought.
- Two-thirds of treatment episodes were for men.
- Younger people were more likely to have received treatment for cannabis use and older clients for alcohol use.
- 12% of treatment episodes were for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Counselling and withdrawal management (detoxification) remained the two most common treatment types.

Scope of the data set

Some alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia are not within the scope of the AODTS–NMDS. The collection does not include, for example, information from services solely prescribing and/or dosing for opioid pharmacotherapy treatment (such as methadone treatment programs), or from clients who were only receiving this type of treatment. This activity is captured through the National Opioid Pharmacotherapy Statistics Annual Data Collection.

Other services that were not included were half-way houses and emergency accommodation services, needle and syringe exchange programs, sobering-up shelters, and services delivered by correctional facilities. Clients who were aged under 10 years, and those who sought advice or information but were not formally assessed, were also excluded from the collection.

Regional variations

There were 291 government and 362 non-government alcohol and other drug treatment agencies in scope across all states and territories of Australia in 2008–09. The AODTS–NMDS uses the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (Australian Bureau of Statistics) to classify the locations of agencies as *Major city*, *Inner regional areas*, *Outer regional areas*, *Remote areas* and *Very remote areas*. In 2008–09, most agencies were located in a *Major city*.

Counselling was the most common treatment in all areas apart from the *Very remote*, where Support and case management only was most common. Of those treatments offered in *Very remote* areas, less than 1% were for Withdrawal management (detoxification), a fall from 3% in the previous year, and compared with 18% in *Major cities*.

Clients and treatment

The demographic profile of clients who accessed treatment services has remained relatively stable since the collection began in 2002.

In 2008–09, almost two-thirds of episodes were for men, the median client age was 32 years (32 years for men and 33 years for women), and almost all treatment episodes (96%) were for people seeking treatment for their own alcohol or other drug use. The majority of episodes (87%) were for clients who were Australian-born, preferred to speak English (95%) and did not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (88%). Clients were more likely to seek treatment of their own accord than to be referred by other services (self-referral episodes were 34%) and for 51% of episodes the client had never injected drugs.

The 'typical' client

In 2008–09, the typical client of an Australian alcohol and other drug treatment service was a man who had sought treatment for his own drug use, was around 32 years of age, born in Australia, and not an Indigenous Australian. He sought treatment for alcohol consumption and received counselling in a Major city.

Drugs of concern

Clients seeking treatment for their own drug use were asked to identify the principal drug for which they were seeking treatment (principal drug of concern) and any other drugs which may have caused them concern. Nationally, alcohol continued to be the most commonly reported principal drug of concern, increasing from 38% of episodes in 2002–03 to 46% in 2008–09. These proportions varied among states and territories.

Alcohol and other drug treatment

Alcohol and other drug use often varies with age, as shown in other Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) collections such as the National Drug Strategy Household Survey. The AODTS–NMDS also showed age-related variations. For example, young people (10–19 years) were the most likely age group to seek treatment for cannabis, and the least likely to seek treatment for alcohol use (see Figure 1). In contrast, over 83% of clients aged 60 years and older sought treatment for alcohol use.

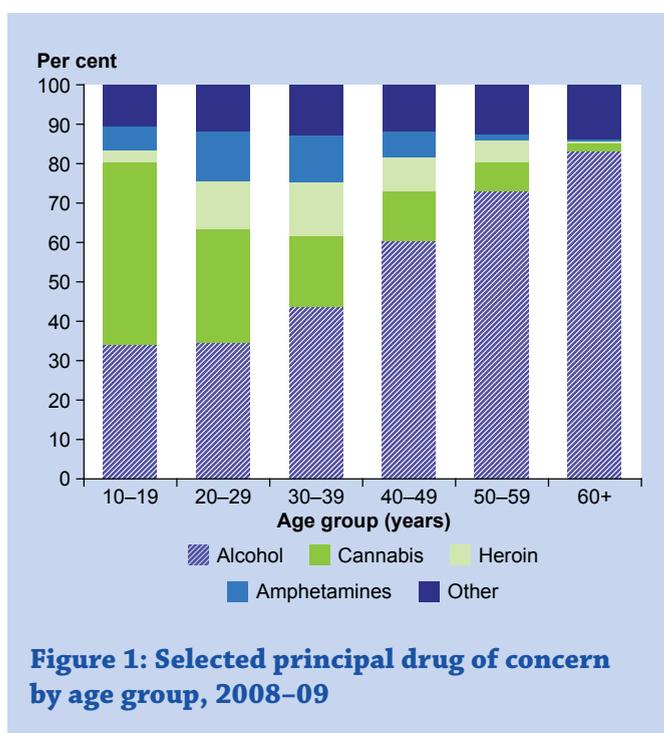


Figure 1: Selected principal drug of concern by age group, 2008–09

Treatment received

As in previous years, counselling was the most common treatment delivered of the six main treatment types (37%, see Figure 2). The median duration for a treatment episode of counselling was 44 days, and the median age for clients attending counselling was 33 years.

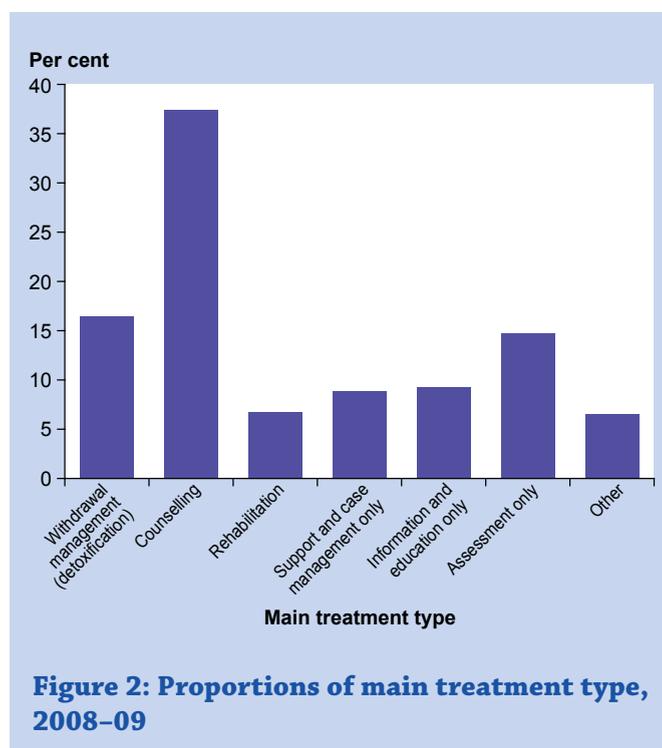


Figure 2: Proportions of main treatment type, 2008–09

Treatment setting

The collection provides information about the type of setting in which treatment is delivered, for example in residential, non-residential or outreach settings. In 2008–09, most treatments were delivered in a non-residential setting (70%).

Acknowledgments

Funding from the Department of Health and Ageing contributed to the production of the report.

About the Drug Surveys and Services Unit

The AIHW's Drug Surveys and Services Unit manages the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set (AODTS NMDS), the National Drug Strategy Household Survey and the National Opioid Pharmacotherapy Statistics Annual Data (NOPSAD) collection.

Reports produced from these data collections are available on the AIHW website at www.aihw.gov.au/drugs/publications.cfm.

Data guides, collection manuals and specifications are also available at this site.

CONTACT

Drug Surveys and Services Unit

PHONE: 02 6244 1000

FAX: 02 6244 1299

EMAIL: aod@aihw.gov.au