



Australian Government

Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare



Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Western Australia 2007–08

Findings from the National Minimum Data Set (NMDS)

Highlights

In Western Australia (WA) in 2007–08, 51 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies provided 18,705 treatment episodes. This represented an increase of 7 treatment agencies and around 1000 treatment episodes compared to 2006–07. The median age of persons receiving treatment for their own drug use and those seeking treatment for someone else’s drug use was similar to 2006–07 (30 years and 47 years respectively).

Alcohol (41%), amphetamines (26%) and cannabis (14%) were again the top three drugs of concern.

As in 2006–07, counselling was the most common form of main treatment provided (55% of episodes), followed by rehabilitation (15%) and withdrawal management (11%, up from 8% in 2006–07).

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About this bulletin

This bulletin summarises the main findings from the 2007–08 Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services (AODTS) NMDS data for Western Australia. More detailed information about the 2007–08 collection and its findings can be found in the publication *Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2007–08: report on the National Minimum Data Set* (AIHW 2009). This report, together with further publications and interactive data, can be accessed online at <www.aihw.gov.au/drugs>.

Scope of the AODTS–NMDS

The agencies and clients that were in scope for the 2007–08 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 2007 to 30 June 2008.

It is important to note that the AODTS–NMDS collection only includes pharmacotherapy clients 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 1.3 of the AODTS–NMDS 2007–08 annual report (AIHW 2009).

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 658 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies supplied data for 2007–08. Of these agencies, 51 were located in WA, of which 32 were non-government agencies.

Treatment agencies in WA were most likely to be located in *Major cities* (75%).

Client profile

In Western Australia, there were 18,705 closed treatment episodes in alcohol and other drug treatment services reported in the 2007–08 AODTS–NMDS collection. The vast majority (91%) of closed treatment episodes in WA involved clients seeking treatment for their own drug use. The remaining 9% involved clients seeking treatment for another person's alcohol or other drug use.

Age and sex

The overall proportions of male and female clients in WA (63% and 37% respectively) differed slightly from the national proportions (66% and 34% respectively). However, of those treatment episodes reported for someone else's drug use in WA, females accounted for the majority of clients (73%).

In WA, the median age of persons receiving treatment for their own drug use was 30 years. Of people seeking treatment for someone else's drug use, the median age was 47 years.

Almost one-third (32%) of all closed treatment episodes in WA were for clients aged 20–29 years, and more than one-quarter (29%) were for clients aged 30–39 years.

Special population groups

The proportion of closed treatment episodes involving clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin was higher in WA compared with the national figure (15% and 11% respectively). These figures need to be interpreted with caution due to the fact that the majority of Australian Government-funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander substance use services or primary health care services are not included in the AODTS–NMDS collection.

The majority (83%) of closed treatment episodes in WA were for clients born in Australia and 99% of treatment episodes were for clients whose preferred language was English.

Drugs of concern

This section reports only on the 17,014 closed treatment episodes where clients were seeking treatment for their own alcohol or other drug use in WA.

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 WA in 2007–08, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern in closed treatment episodes (41%), followed by amphetamines (26%) and cannabis (14%) (Table 1). Nationally, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern (45% of treatment episodes), followed by cannabis (22%), opioids (14%, with heroin accounting for 11%) and amphetamines (11%).

The proportion of treatment episodes related to alcohol in WA increased between 2006–07 and 2007–08 (from 40 to 41%), but remained smaller than the national proportion of alcohol-related episodes (45%). Amphetamine-related episodes have consistently made up 25–26% of treatment provided in WA over time, as compared to around 11–12% nationally. WA had a smaller proportion of episodes for cannabis (14%) than was reported nationally (22%).

Table 1: Closed treatment episodes^(a) by principal drug of concern, Western Australia and Australia, 2001–02 to 2007–08 (per cent)

Principal drug of concern	Western Australia							Total (Australia) 2007–08	
	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	Per cent	Number
Alcohol	33.6	32.7	32.6	32.5	36.5	39.9	40.6	44.5	65,702
Amphetamines	26.0	26.2	25.6	26.3	24.6	25.9	25.6	11.2	16,588
Benzodiazepines	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.7	2,487
Cannabis	21.8	24.5	22.0	19.1	18.8	15.7	14.2	21.6	31,864
Cocaine	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	457
Ecstasy	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.9	1,321
Nicotine	0.7	0.8	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.8	1.7	2,548
Opioids									
Heroin	8.9	8.6	9.9	12.0	10.2	7.9	8.3	10.5	15,571
Methadone	0.9	0.6	1.6	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.3	1.6	2,296
Morphine	—	—	—	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.9	1,390
Total opioids	9.8	9.3	11.7	14.7	12.9	10.4	11	14.5	21,380
All other drugs ^(b)	4.9	4.1	5.3	5.1	5.0	5.9	6.1	3.6	5,374
Not stated	1.5	0.6	0.4	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total (per cent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	..
Total (number)	13,303	12,142	12,479	14,235	14,251	16,110	17,014	..	147,721

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

(b) Includes balance of principal drugs of concern coded according to the Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern.

Age and sex

The principal drug of concern varied by age in WA. For clients aged 10–19 years, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern (37% of episodes), while for clients aged 20–29 years amphetamines (35%) and alcohol (31%) were the most common principal drugs. For clients aged 30 years and above, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern—highest for clients aged 60 years and over (82% of episodes).

Special population groups

In 2007–08, treatment episodes involving clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin in WA were most likely to involve alcohol as the principal drug of concern (53%), followed by cannabis (19%) and amphetamines (18%).

Alcohol and cannabis were more likely to be nominated by Indigenous clients (53% and 18% respectively) compared with other Australians (38% and 13%).

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 (clients can report up to five other drugs of concern).

Over half (52% or 8,773) of all treatment episodes in WA involved at least one other drug of concern (in addition to the principal drug of concern). From these episodes, 16,449 instances of other drugs of concern were recorded.

A break down of all drugs of concern by drug type is presented below (Figure 1). For example, nicotine was reported as the principal drug of concern in less than 1% of episodes, but was reported as a drug of concern (either 'principal' or 'other') in 15% of treatment episodes.

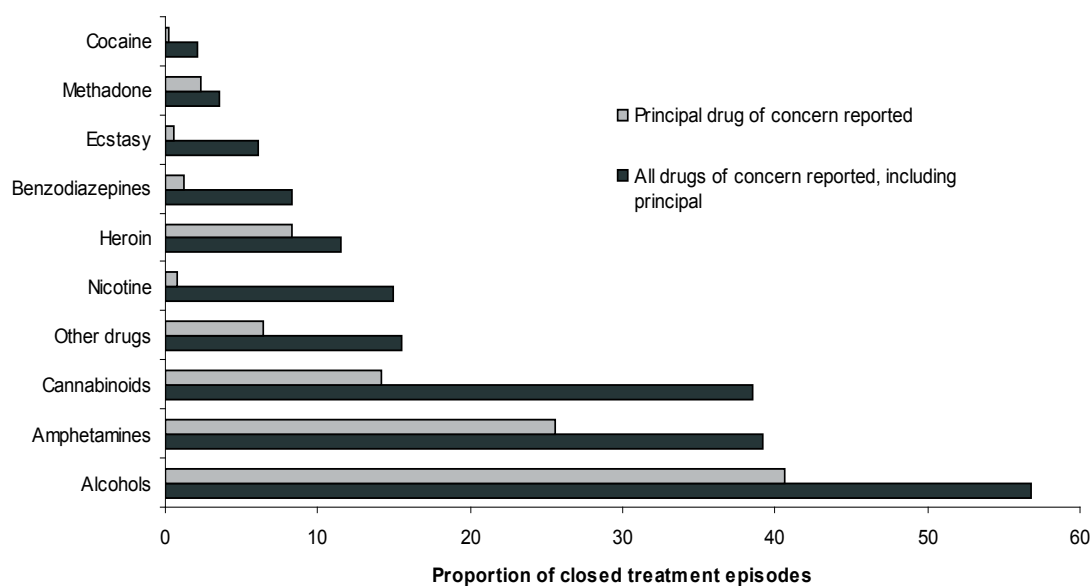


Figure 1: Closed treatment episodes by principal drug of concern and all drugs of concern, Western Australia, 2007–08

Alcohol

In WA, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for 41% of closed treatment episodes in 2007–08. When all drugs of concern are considered (that is, the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern nominated by the client), 57% of episodes included alcohol.

Of the 6,906 episodes where alcohol was the principal drug of concern in 2007–08:

Client profile

- The majority (68%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of clients receiving treatment was 34 years (males 33 years; females 37 years).
- Around one-fifth (21%) of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (34% of episodes), followed by referrals from court diversion programs (17%).

Drug profile

- 41% of episodes included at least one other drug of concern. From these episodes, 4,518 instances of other drugs of concern were recorded—36% were for cannabis, 21% for nicotine and 20% for amphetamines.
- The majority (70%) of episodes involved clients who reported never having injected drugs. Another 8% of episodes involved clients who reported being current injectors, while 15% involved clients who reported they had injected drugs in the past.

Treatment profile

- Counselling was the most common main treatment type received (56% of episodes), followed by rehabilitation (17%) and assessment only (11%).
- Treatment was most likely to take place in a non-residential treatment facility (77% of episodes), followed by a residential treatment facility (13%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 16.

Amphetamines

In WA, amphetamines were the second most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for 26% of closed treatment episodes in 2007–08. Amphetamines were reported in 39% of all episodes (as either the 'principal' or 'other' drug of concern).

Of the 4,348 episodes where amphetamines were the principal drug of concern in 2007–08:

Client profile

- The majority (66%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of clients receiving treatment was 28 years (males 29 years; females 28 years).
- Around 11% of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (38% of episodes), followed by referrals from correctional services (17%).

Drug profile

- Injecting was the most common usual method of use (71%), followed by smoking (20%) and ingestion (6%).
- 59% included at least one other drug of concern. From these episodes, 5,274 instances of other drugs of concern were recorded—32% were for cannabis and 24% for alcohol.
- The majority (53%) of episodes involved clients who reported being current injectors, while 22% involved clients who reported they had injected drugs in the past (12% between 3 and 12 months ago and 10% 12 or more months ago). The remaining 19% of episodes involved clients who reported never having injected drugs.

Treatment profile

- Counselling was the most common main treatment type received (54% of episodes), followed by rehabilitation (21%).
- Treatment was most likely to take place in a non-residential treatment facility (73% of episodes), followed by a residential treatment facility (11%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 22.

Cannabis

In WA, cannabis was the third most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for 14% of closed treatment episodes in 2007–08.

When all drugs of concern are considered (that is, the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern nominated by the client), 39% of episodes included cannabis.

Of the 2,412 episodes where cannabis was the principal drug of concern in 2007–08:

Client profile

- The majority (72%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of clients receiving treatment was 24 years (males 23 years; females 26 years).
- Around 22% of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (25% of episodes), followed by referrals from court diversion programs (24%).

Drug profile

- Smoking was the most common usual method of use (97% of episodes).
- 57% included at least one other drug of concern. Alcohol constituted 39%, amphetamines 24% and nicotine 16%.
- The majority (64%) of episodes involved clients who reported never having injected drugs. Another 11% of episodes involved clients who reported being current injectors, while 16% involved clients who reported they had injected drugs in the past.

Treatment profile

- Counselling was the most common main treatment type received (68% of episodes), followed by rehabilitation (13%) and assessment only (6%).
- Treatment was most likely to take place in a non-residential treatment facility (79% of episodes).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 19.

Treatment programs

'Main treatment type' is the principal activity, as judged by the treatment provider, that is necessary for completing the treatment plan for the principal drug of concern. Data presented in this section relate to clients seeking treatment for 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 WA, counselling was the most common form of main treatment provided (55% of episodes), followed by rehabilitation (15%) and withdrawal management (11%) (Table 2). The treatment types provided in WA have remained reasonably stable over time. In 2007–08, withdrawal management increased to 11% of treatment episodes (from 8% the previous year).

WA provided more counselling and rehabilitation as a proportion of all treatments than was provided nationally in 2007–08. On the other hand, WA provided proportionately less withdrawal management, support and case management only, information and education only and assessment only.

Table 2: Closed treatment episodes by main treatment type, Western Australia and Australia, 2001–02 to 2007–08 (per cent)

Main treatment type	Western Australia							Total (Australia) 2007–08	
	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	Per cent	Number
Withdrawal management (detoxification)	11.8	9.7	6.6	9.1	9.4	8.2	10.6	16.2	24,999
Counselling	61.4	58.0	50.2	54.8	57.1	54.0	54.6	37.3	57,470
Rehabilitation	8.5	6.1	16.4	12.2	14.1	15.0	14.6	7.2	11,099
Support & case management only	0.3	0.7	1.1	2.8	1.4	2.3	3.0	8.0	12,279
Information and education only	6.6	13.8	9.7	6.8	5.8	4.3	2.7	9.8	15,086
Assessment only	6.5	9.5	9.8	7.4	5.2	10.4	10.3	14.3	21,976
Other ^(a)	4.9	2.1	6.1	6.8	6.9	5.7	4.4	7.2	11,089
Total (per cent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	..
Total (number)	15,232	14,122	14,256	16,092	16,342	17,802	18,705	..	153,998

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

Counselling

Counselling was the most common main treatment type reported in WA in 2007–08, accounting for 55% of closed treatment episodes. Of the 10,210 episodes where counselling was nominated as the main treatment type received:

Client profile

- The majority (85% or 8,644) of episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- Over half (62%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 30 years (males 29 years; females 34 years).
- Around 20% of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (31% of episodes), followed by referrals from court diversion programs (21%).

Treatment profile

- Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (88% of episodes).
- About 40% of episodes ended because the treatment was completed. The next most common reason for episodes to end was that the client ceased to participate without notifying the service provider (29% of episodes ended this way).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 22.

Principal drug profile

- ✦ Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported (45% of episodes) by people who received counselling for their own drug use, followed by amphetamines (27%) and cannabis (19%).

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation was the second most common main treatment type reported in WA in 2007–08, accounting for 15% of closed treatment episodes. Of the 2,721 episodes where rehabilitation was nominated as the main treatment received in 2007–08:

Client profile

- ✦ All episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- ✦ The majority (68%) of episodes were for male clients.
- ✦ The median age of persons receiving treatment was 30 years (males 30 years; females 31 years).
- ✦ About 11% of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- ✦ Self-referral was the most common source of referral (39% of episodes), followed by referrals from correctional services (26%).

Treatment profile

- ✦ Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (50% of episodes), followed by a residential treatment facility (36%).
- ✦ Around a third (34%) of episodes ended because the treatment was completed. The next most common reason for ending a treatment episode was that the client ceased to participate without notifying the service provider (29% of episodes ended this way).
- ✦ The median number of days for a treatment episode was 31.

Principal drug profile

- ✦ Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported (44% of episodes), followed by amphetamines (34%) and cannabis (12%).

Withdrawal management

Withdrawal management replaced assessment only as the third most common main treatment provided in WA this year. Withdrawal management accounted for 11% of closed treatment episodes in 2007–08. Of the 1,978 episodes where withdrawal management was nominated as the main treatment type received in 2007–08:

Client profile

- All episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- The majority (61%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 34 years (males 34 years; females 35 years).
- Around 7% of episodes involved clients who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (40%) of episodes, followed by referrals from family members or friends (16%).

Treatment profile

- Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (61% of episodes), followed by a residential treatment facility (28%).
- Around 56% of episodes ended because the client ceased to participate without notice. The next most common reason for ending a treatment episode was because the treatment episode was completed (35% of episodes ended this way).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 8.

Principal drug profile

- Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported (36%) by people who received withdrawal management, followed by heroin (24%) and amphetamines (17%).

How to find out more

If you would like more detailed data about WA's alcohol and other treatment services please contact the AIHW to discuss your needs. The document *Alcohol and other drug treatment services NMDS Specifications 2009–10* outlines the process to be followed for unpublished data requests. This document is available from the AIHW website at <www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10726>.

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Reference

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