



Alcohol and other drug treatment services in South Australia 2008–09

Findings from the National Minimum Data Set (NMDS)

Highlights

In South Australia (SA) in 2008–09, 55 publicly funded government and non-government alcohol and other drug treatment agencies provided 9,664 treatment episodes. This represented an increase of 6 treatment agencies and 687 treatment episodes from 2007–08. The median¹ ages of persons receiving treatment for their own drug use and those seeking treatment in relation to someone else's drug use was the same as for 2007–08 (34 years and 45 years, respectively).

Alcohol was again the most common principal drug of concern (53%), followed by amphetamines (13%) and heroin (11%).

Assessment only episodes decreased slightly from 30% in 2007–08 to 27% in 2008–09, but remained the most common form of main treatment provided in South Australia. This was followed by counselling (26%), withdrawal management (17%) and rehabilitation (14%).

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

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About this bulletin

This bulletin summarises the main findings from the 2008–09 Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services (AODTS) NMDS data for South Australia. More detailed information about the 2008–09 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>.

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 *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, 55 were located in South Australia, of which 39 were government agencies.

Treatment agencies in the state were most likely to be located in *Major Cities* (67%), followed by *Inner Regional* (15%) and *Outer Regional* areas (13%).

Client profile

In South Australia, there were 9,664 closed treatment episodes in alcohol and other drug treatment services reported in the 2008–09 AODTS–NMDS collection. The vast majority (97%) of closed treatment episodes in the state involved clients seeking treatment for their own drug use. The remaining 3% involved clients seeking treatment related to another person's alcohol or other drug use.

Age and sex

The overall proportions of male and female clients in South Australia (70% and 30%, respectively) were similar to the national proportions (67% and 33%, respectively). Of those treatment episodes reported for someone else's drug use in South Australia, female clients accounted for the majority (64%).

In South Australia, the median age of persons receiving treatment for their own drug use was 34 years. Of people seeking treatment in relation to someone else's drug use, the median age was 45 years. Persons aged 30–39 years and 20–29 years accounted for the largest proportion of episodes in the state (28% and 30%, respectively).

Special population groups

The proportion of closed treatment episodes involving clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was slightly lower in South Australia than nationally (9% compared with 12%). 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 specific services or primary health care services are not included in the AODTS–NMDS collection. Furthermore, Indigenous status was not stated in 3% of episodes in the state.

The majority (86%) of closed treatment episodes in South Australia were for clients born in Australia and 97% of treatment episodes were for clients whose preferred language was English.

Drugs of concern

This section reports only on the 9,399 closed treatment episodes where clients were seeking treatment for their own alcohol or other drug use in South Australia.

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 South Australia in 2008–09, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern in closed treatment episodes (53%), followed by opioids (19%) and amphetamines (13%). Included in opioids was heroin at 11% (Table 1). Compared with the national figures, the state had proportionally more episodes for alcohol and amphetamines and fewer for cannabis. Alcohol has risen steadily as the most common principal drug of concern from 2004–05 to 2008–09 (from 43% to 53%).

Table 1: Principal drug of concern^(a), South Australia and Australia, 2001–02 to 2008–09 (per cent)

Principal drug of concern	South Australia								Total (Australia) 2008–09	
	2001–02 ^(b)	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Per cent	Number
Alcohol	41.9	47.4	46.6	43.4	44.7	49.3	52.8	53.0	45.8	63,272
Amphetamines	14.0	19.6	17.3	17.5	17.6	18.7	15.8	13.2	9.2	12,739
Benzodiazepines	1.9	2.3	2.1	2.5	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.5	2,080
Cannabis	11.6	10.1	10.2	11.5	14.4	10.1	10.3	10.1	22.5	31,100
Cocaine	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	479
Ecstasy	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.7	1.0	1.5	1.0	1,397
Nicotine	1.5	0.1	0.4	1.2	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.7	1.8	2,461
Opioids										
Heroin	10.5	13.2	14.7	13.1	9.4	8.3	8.9	10.5	10.3	14,222
Methadone	3.9	1.6	1.6	2.0	2.2	2.5	1.5	2.4	1.5	2,136
Morphine	1.8	2.9	3.9	3.6	2.7	3.1	2.4	2.6	1.4	1,877
Total opioids ^(c)	20.7	18.8	22.1	22.2	16.2	13.9	16.1	18.5	15.1	20,890
All other drugs ^(d)	2.4	1.0	0.6	1.1	3.6	4.6	1.1	0.8	2.6	3,609
Not stated	5.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total (per cent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.00	100.0	100.0	..
Total (number)	6,699	6,946	7,234	7,591	8,766	8,709	8,712	9,399	..	138,027

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

(b) In 2001–02, SA supplied client registration data rather than treatment episode data, so the percentages are based on clients, not treatment episodes.

(c) The total opioids row 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.

Age and sex

In South Australia in 2008–09, the most common principal drug of concern varied by age group. For clients aged 10–19 years, cannabis was the most common principal drug of concern nominated (42% of episodes), while for clients aged 20 years and over alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern—the highest proportion was among those aged 60 years and over (92%).

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%) of all treatment episodes in South Australia involved at least one other drug of concern (in addition to the principal drug of concern). In episodes where other drugs had been specified, 11,522 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 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 almost one quarter of treatment episodes (23%).

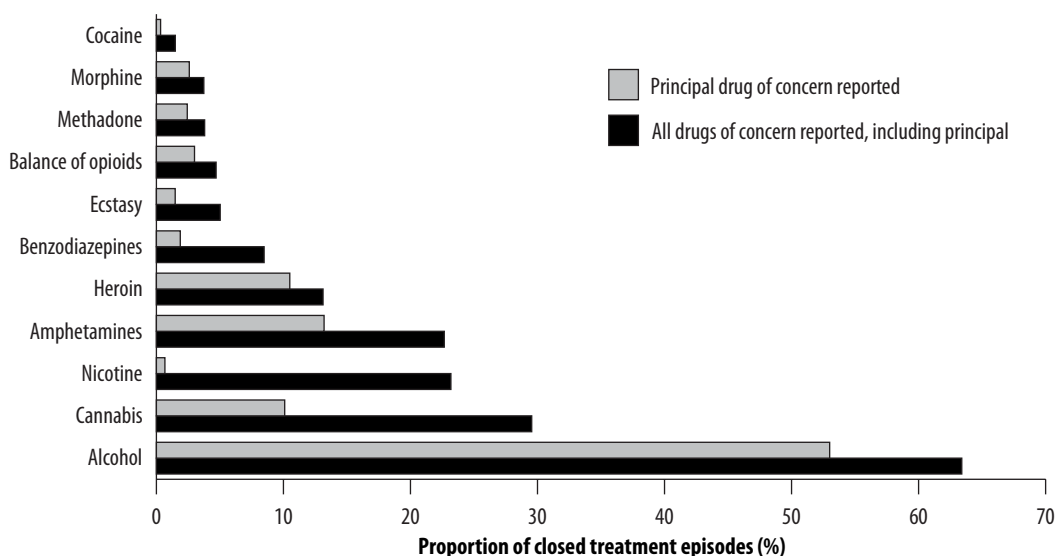


Figure 1: Principal drug of concern and all drugs of concern, South Australia, 2008–09

Alcohol

In South Australia, alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for 53% of treatment episodes in 2008–09. When all drugs of concern were considered (that is, the principal drug of concern and all other drugs of concern nominated by the client), 63% of episodes included alcohol.

Of the 4,978 episodes where alcohol was nominated as the principal drug of concern in 2008–09, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

Client profile

- The majority (74%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 38 years (males 37 years; females 39 years).
- 9% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Referrals from 'other' sources was the most common source of referral (30% of episodes), followed by self-referral (25%) and hospitals (15%).

Drug profile

- 46% of episodes included at least one other drug of concern. In episodes where other drugs had been specified, 5,509 instances of other drugs of concern were recorded—43% were 'other drugs', 23% were nicotine and 19% cannabis.
- The majority (71%) of episodes involved clients who reported never having injected drugs. Another 6% of episodes involved clients who reported as currently injecting, while 15% involved clients who reported they had injected drugs in the past. However, caution should be exercised when interpreting data for injecting drug use due to the 9% not stated response for this item.

Treatment profile

- The most common main treatment type received was assessment only (33% of episodes), followed by counselling (23%) and withdrawal management (19%).
- Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (75% of episodes) or a residential treatment facility (18%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 5.

Amphetamines

In South Australia, amphetamines were the second most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for 13% 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), 23% of episodes included amphetamines.

Of the 1,242 episodes where amphetamines were nominated as the principal drug of concern in 2008–09, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

Client profile

- The majority (68%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 32 years (males 33 years; females 30 years).
- 6% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Self-referral and referrals from police diversion programs, designed to direct people charged with drug-related crimes to treatment, each accounted for 29% of referrals.

Drug profile

- Injecting was the usual method of use (56% of episodes), followed by smoking (22%).
- 59% of episodes included at least one other drug of concern. In episodes where other drugs had been specified, 1,699 instances of other drugs of concern were recorded—28% were 'other drugs', 22% were cannabis and 17% were alcohol.
- The majority (52%) of episodes involved clients who reported as currently injecting, while over 16% involved clients who injected drugs in the past (8% between 3 and 12 months ago and 8% had injected 12 or more months ago). The remaining 28% of episodes involved clients who reported never having injected drugs.

Treatment profile

- Counselling was the most common main treatment type received (32% of episodes), followed by assessment only (28%) and rehabilitation (18%).
- Treatment was most likely to take place in a non-residential treatment facility (81%), followed by a residential treatment facility (10%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode decreased from 17 days in 2007–08 to 6 days in 2008–09.

Heroin

In South Australia, heroin overtook cannabis as the third most common principal drug of concern for which treatment was sought, accounting for 11% 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), 13% of episodes included heroin.

Of the 983 episodes where heroin was nominated as 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 33 years (34 years for males; 31 years for females).
- 6% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (55% of episodes), followed by referrals from family and friends (10%), alcohol and other drug treatment services, and correctional services (both 8%).

Drug profile

- Injection was the most common method of use (81% of episodes), followed by smoking (14%).
- 62% of episodes included at least one other drug of concern. In episodes where other episodes had been specified, 1,473 instances of other drugs of concern were recorded—24% were 'other drugs', 16% were nicotine and 14% were cannabis.
- The majority (65%) of episodes involved clients who reported as currently injecting. A further 22% of episodes involved clients who reported either never having injected drugs or had injected drugs more than 12 months ago (both 11%).

Treatment profile

- Pharmacotherapy was the most common main treatment type received (33% of episodes), followed by withdrawal management (22%) and counselling (15%).
- Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (61% of episodes), followed by other settings (19%) and residential treatment facilities (18%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 7.

Treatment programs

The main treatment type is the principal activity that the treatment provider considers necessary for the client to complete their 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, apart from the section on principal drug of concern, which does not apply to clients seeking treatment in relation to someone else's drug use.

Of all closed treatment episodes in South Australia in 2008–09, assessment only was the most common form of main treatment provided (27% of episodes), closely followed by counselling (26%). Withdrawal management made up 17% of episodes and rehabilitation a further 14% (Table 2).

Table 2: Main treatment type, South Australia and Australia, 2002–03 to 2008–09 (per cent)

Main treatment type	South Australia							Total (Australia) 2008–09	
	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Per cent	Number
Withdrawal management (detoxification)	21.6	19.8	20.8	18.5	20.3	18.9	17.4	16.4	23,599
Counselling	23.3	22.7	25.2	27.2	29.4	26.4	25.7	37.4	53,787
Rehabilitation	22.6	20.8	18.8	13.4	13.1	16.2	14.4	6.7	9,667
Support and case management only	2.5	3.8	1.2	5.1	3.2	0.9	1.2	8.9	12,740
Information and education only	1.9	1.3	1.3	4.4	1.7	2.0	5.8	9.2	13,283
Assessment only	21.8	22.8	22.8	24.0	24.7	29.8	26.9	14.7	21,172
Pharmacotherapy ^(a)	5.5	7.9	7.9	5.7	5.2	4.3	7.2	2.4	3,441
Other	0.8	1.0	2.0	1.7	2.4	1.5	1.4	4.2	5,983
Total (per cent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.00	100.0	100.0	..
Total (number)	7,440	7,613	7,952	9,100	9,020	9,030	9,664	..	143,672

(a) The total for pharmacotherapy as the main treatment type represents a small proportion of pharmacotherapy treatment in SA because agencies whose sole activity is to prescribe and/or dose for methadone or other opioid pharmacotherapies are excluded from the AODTS–NMDS.
Note: SA did not provide data for main treatment in 2001–02.

Nationally, counselling was the most common treatment provided (37%). South Australia provided proportionally more episodes for rehabilitation than the rest of Australia and fewer episodes for counselling, support and case management only and information and education only.

Assessment only

Assessment only was the most common main treatment type reported in South Australia in 2008–09, accounting for 27% of closed treatment episodes. Of the 2,599 episodes where assessment only was nominated as the main treatment received in 2008–09, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

Client profile

- ♦ Almost all episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- ♦ The majority (81%) of episodes were for male clients.
- ♦ The median age of persons receiving treatment was 32 years (males 32 years; females 33 years).
- ♦ 7% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- ♦ Referrals from 'other' sources were the most common source of referral (49% of episodes), followed by self-referrals (17%).

Treatment profile

- ♦ Treatment was most likely to occur in a non-residential treatment facility (98% of episodes).
- ♦ The majority of episodes ended because the treatment was completed (82%). The next most common reason for a treatment episode to end was because the client ceased to participate without notifying the service provider (9% of episodes ended this way).
- ♦ The median number of days for a treatment episode was 1.

Principal drug profile

- ♦ Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported (64% of episodes) by people who received assessment only, followed by amphetamines (14%) and cannabis (9%).

Counselling

Counselling was the second most common main treatment type reported in South Australia in 2008–09, accounting for 26% of closed treatment episodes. Of the 2,483 episodes where counselling was nominated as the main treatment type received in 2008–09, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

Client profile

- The vast majority (90%) of episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use. The remaining 10% were for clients seeking treatment related to someone else's drug use.
- Nearly two-thirds (65%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 34 years (males 34 years; females 35 years).
- 6% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (32% of episodes), followed by referrals from alcohol and other drug treatment services (11%) and referrals from 'other' sources (9%).

Treatment profile

- Most (89%) episodes took place in a non-residential treatment facility.
- The most common reason for treatment episodes to end was because the treatment was completed (43%) or because the client ceased to participate without notifying the service provider (31%).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 64.

Principal drug profile

- Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported (50% of episodes) by people seeking counselling for their own drug use, followed by amphetamines (18%) and cannabis (16%).

Withdrawal management (detoxification)

Withdrawal management was the third most common main treatment provided in South Australia in 2008–09, accounting for 17% of closed treatment episodes. Of the 1,684 episodes where withdrawal management was nominated as the main treatment type received in 2008–09, the client, drug and treatment profiles were as follows:

Client profile

- Due to the nature of withdrawal management, all episodes were for clients seeking treatment for their own drug use.
- The majority (65%) of episodes were for male clients.
- The median age of persons receiving treatment was 38 years (for both males and females).
- 7% of episodes involved clients who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral (61% of episodes), followed by referrals from hospitals (20%).

Treatment profile

- Treatment was most likely to occur in a residential treatment facility (71% of episodes), or a non-residential treatment facility (28%).
- The majority (68%) of episodes ended because the treatment was completed. The next most common reason for a treatment episode to end was that the client ceased to participate against advice (18% of episodes ended this way).
- The median number of days for a treatment episode was 6.

Principal drug profile

- Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern reported (55% of episodes) by people who received withdrawal management, followed by heroin (13%) and amphetamines (8%).

Symbols

- nil or rounded to zero
- .. not applicable

How to find out more

If you would like more detailed data about South Australia'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 website 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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ISBN 978-1-74249-110-3

Acknowledgment

The AIHW would like to acknowledge the input of data providers and the IGCD AODTS–NMDS Working Group, as well as the funding provided by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing for this project.

Suggested citation

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011. Alcohol and other drug treatment services in South Australia 2008–09: findings from the National Minimum Data Set. Cat. no. HSE 102. Canberra: AIHW.

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Published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Printed by