



# Pharmaceuticals

Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in Australia

Most **ambulance attendances** for any **pharmaceutical** drug in 2022 were for **females**, 3 in 5 of total attendances. [6]



In 2022–2023, **pain-killers/opioids** were the **most common pharmaceutical used non-medically** by Australians, followed by tranquilisers/sleeping pills. [2]

2.2%

Pain-killers/opioids

2.1%

Pharmaceutical stimulants

The rate of **opioid scripts dispensed increased** between 2012–13 and 2016–17 (from 57,700 to 63,900 scripts per 100,000), **then decreased** to 2021–22 (51,400 scripts per 100,000). [3]



Between 1997 and 2022, the **rate of deaths** where **benzodiazepines** were present **rose** from 1.9 per 100,000 population to 2.7 per 100,000 population. [1]

In 2022–2023, people from **Remote** and **very remote areas** were **1.2 times as likely** as those from Major cities to have used pain-killers/opioids for non-medical reasons. [2]



**1 in 20** (5.3%) people reported **recent non-medical use** of a pharmaceutical

**1 in 9** (11.9%) people **ever used** a pharmaceutical non-medically. [2]

In 2022–23, **pharmaceuticals** were the **principal drug of concern** in **5.6%** of **treatment episodes** for clients' own alcohol and other drug use. [5]

Between 2015–16 and 2021–22, **rates of hospitalisations decreased** for both opioids and benzodiazepines. [4]





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In 2022–2023, Australians were **more likely to approve** of non-medical use of **pain-killers/opioids** (13.0%) than other illicit drugs except cannabis.[2]



In 2022–2023, **people with mental health conditions** were **1.9x 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]

Ambulance attendance data are for those aged over 15 years, data includes NSW, VIC, QLD, TAS and ACT. [6]

### References

1. AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) AIHW analysis of the National Mortality Database 2022.
2. AIHW 2024. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022–2023, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 02 April 2024.
3. AIHW analysis of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme data maintained by the Department of Health and sourced from Services Australia and the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023.
4. AIHW analysis of the National Hospital Morbidity Database 2021–22.
5. AIHW 2024. Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia: early insights. AIHW, Australian Government. accessed 16 April 2024.
6. AIHW analysis of the National Ambulance Surveillance System, Monash University, Turning Point.

Source: Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in Australia

(<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia>).

