

HEROIN

Prevalence

General population

- Past year heroin use remains low among the broader Australian population at less than 1% in 2010.

Sentinel Groups

- Among people who inject drugs there has been a decline in the prevalence of past 6 month heroin use over time (from 79% 2000 to 58% in 2013), however daily heroin among heroin users in this group has increased to one quarter (25%) in 2013.
- Very small proportions of regular ecstasy users (4% in 2013) reported recent heroin use.

Treatment seeking

- Opioid-related hospital presentations remain higher than other illicit drug presentations.
- Hospital presentations declined substantially in 2001/02 and remained stable to 2005/06. Since this time they have increased across all age groups except the 20 to 29 year age group. Opioid-related presentations have remained low and stable since 2001/02. The 30 to 39 year age group accounted for the largest proportion (37%) of presentations in 2010/11.
- Numbers of people in opioid substitution treatment have increased between 2001 and 2012, particularly among older Australians (50 years and over), with a decline in clients aged 30 years and under.

Deaths

- Opioid-related deaths continue to outnumber deaths for other illicit drugs.
- Since 2007 there has been an upward trend in opioid-related deaths among Australians aged 35 years and over. Deaths among Australians aged 15 to 24 have remained low and stable since 2004.

Law Enforcement

- The weight of heroin seizures detected at the Australian border has increased over the past few years (400kg in 2010/11 and 256 kg in 2011/12), however the number of seizures has declined (179 in 2011/12) from a peak of 389 in 2006/07.
- The number of heroin-related arrests has remained relatively stable since 2008/09.

Market indicators

- The price of small amounts of heroin ('caps') has remained unchanged between 2000 and 2012 at \$50, while there has been a decline in the price of a gram from \$450 in 2001 to \$300 in 2013, the lowest price recorded during the 14-year period.
- While heroin remains readily available according to IDRS participants, half (50%) of the sample in 2013 report that it is 'low' in purity. This may partly explain the decrease in price for a gram of heroin.
- While heroin remains readily available according to IDRS participants, a larger proportion of this group (42% in 2011) report that it is 'low' in purity.