

SUBSTANCE USE PREVALENCE AND RELATED HARMS AMONG CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE POPULATIONS IN AN AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

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Introduction and Aims

Australian drug and alcohol treatment services report low access by people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. We examined prevalence of substance use and harms in a representative national sample.

Design and Method

We analysed data from the 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey respondents aged 18 years or older (N= 22696, mean age 46.6, 50.7% female); 3638 participants (16.03%) were from CALD backgrounds. General linear model and binary logistic regression were used to assess substance use and harms, using stabilized inverse propensity score weighting to control for potential confounding variables.

Key Findings

Adjusted odds ratios were non-significant for lifetime non-medical use of analgesics, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, steroids, heroin, GHB, synthetic cannabinoids, and injected drugs between CALD and non-CALD respondents. CALD respondents were less likely to report lifetime alcohol use (AOR=0.15 [99%CI 0.12-0.19]). Among people who reported alcohol use, CALD respondents (M=3.42, SE=0.03) reported more harm reduction practices than non-CALD (M=3.27, SE=0.01), $F(1,1357)=26.23$, $p<0.001$. CALD respondents were more likely to report being ex-drinkers than non-CALD (AOR=1.82 [99%CI 1.41-2.33]). No difference between CALD and non-CALD respondents was observed in reported substance-related abuse from strangers (AOR=0.98 [99%CI 0.81-1.18]) but CALD respondents were less likely to report abuse from partners (AOR=0.60 [99%CI 0.41-0.86], relatives (AOR=0.49 [99%CI 0.29-0.83]), or other known persons (AOR=0.56 [99%CI=0.41-0.77]).

Discussion and Conclusions

CALD populations are more likely to engage in alcohol harm reduction practices. Use of several other substances is not significantly different between CALD and non-CALD populations. Data on substance use prevalence is of little value without parallel examination of the distribution of related harms and service access. Our findings offer a useful basis for future investigation, however this dataset is characteristically limited in its ability to offer insights into specific CALD populations.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

No conflicting interests to declare.