

Exploring drug treatment and homelessness client characteristics in Australia

Jane Akhurst¹, Jennifer Zhou¹, Fiona Elliot¹, Holly Jian¹

¹*Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drugs Unit, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra, Australia*

Presenter's email: jane.akhurst@aihw.gov.au

Introduction: Considerable research suggests a link between people experiencing homelessness and those experiencing alcohol and other drug (AOD) dependence. People experiencing AOD dependence may be at increased risk of additional vulnerabilities, including mental health issues and family and domestic violence. This paper aims to highlight characteristics of people accessing specialist homelessness services and AOD treatment.

Methods: Using data from the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services (AODTS) National Minimum Data Set, the National Opioid Pharmacotherapy Statistics Annual Data Collection (NOPSAD) and the AOD cohort of the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) collection, we will examine selected demographic characteristics in clients across these collections and highlight vulnerabilities in SHS clients experiencing AOD dependence.

Key findings: Analysis of the 3 data sets found most clients in each data set were male; AODTS and NOPSAD clients were older than SHS clients. Among SHS clients who reported problematic AOD use, 43% were also experiencing a current mental health issue¹.

Discussion and conclusion: This analysis highlights the characteristics of people receiving support from SHS experiencing problematic AOD use and clients receiving treatment in the AODTS and NOPSAD collections in 2021–22. These results will support community engagement in identifying and responding to potential points of intervention, service planning, program delivery and evaluation, and assist with reducing stigma and promote help-seeking behaviours.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: The collection, collation and reporting of data for the AODTS NMDS and the NOPSAD is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care and Australian state and territory governments. The SHSC is funded by state and territory governments.

References:

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021-22](#). Canberra (AU): AIHW; 2022. Report No: Cat. no. HOU 331.