

Not everyone stops in their 30s or 40s: Data from the over 50s in SuperMIX Cohort Study

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Introduction: National surveillance data from the Annual National Needle Syringe Program Survey and the Illicit Drug Reporting System suggest the cohort of people injecting drugs is ageing with the average age in both studies now well into the 40s. Established in 2008, the SuperMIX cohort study of people who inject drugs is designed to examine trajectories of injecting drug use as people age and provides an opportunity to understand this ageing population.

Method: Participants were stratified based on their current age. Only participants who had at least one interview since 01/01/2019 (901 participants) were included in analysis.

Key Findings: Of the 901 participants, 199 (22%) of them were aged over 50. When compared to those aged under 50 years, fewer were female (31% v 36%); or currently employed (9% v 17%) but a larger proportion were living in stable housing (75% v 64%). There were less people over 50 who reported no-injecting in the previous month (11% v 21%) with more people aged over 50 reporting heroin as main drug injected (68% v 53%). Participants aged over 50 were more likely to report seeing a GP (71% v 62%) and less likely to report contact with police (16% v 27%). Half of those aged over 50 reported current opioid agonist treatment and 85% reported current smoking with 28% reporting having vaped in last 12 months.

Discussion and Conclusion: The drug use, personal and social trajectories of older people with drug injecting histories is not well understood. Data from SuperMIX suggest that people aged over 50 continue to inject drugs and, in line with the broader population, their health needs are likely to increase in the coming decades. With access to linked administrative data SuperMIX provides a unique opportunity to better understand the health of this population and their healthcare needs.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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