

Drug misuse in Scotland – General introduction

About Drug Misuse Statistics Scotland 2001

This publication presents the latest available information on drug misuse drawing from a wide range of national data sources: national surveys; the Home Office; the Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health; the Crime and Criminal Justice Unit at the Scottish Executive and ISD Scotland.

In a change from previous years, the information has been grouped within the following subject headings.

- Prevalence of drug misuse
- Health impact of drug misuse
- Services and treatment for drug misusers
- Drug education in schools
- Drugs and criminal justice

It is hoped that these new groupings will make it easier for the reader to navigate through the publication and, hopefully, easier to find the information required.

Thanks are given to all the organisations supplying the information presented in this publication. Contact details can be found on [page 155](#).

Drug Misuse Information Strategy Team

The Drug Misuse Information Strategy Team, who produced this publication, are part of the [Information and Statistics Division \(ISD\)](#) Scotland within NHSScotland.

The team:

- provides information support to Drug Action Teams, Local Authorities, NHS boards, specialist drug services, the Scottish Executive, and others;
- manages the Scottish Drug Misuse Database (SDMD), and ensures the effective and appropriate exploitation of other relevant data collected by ISD, e.g. hospital inpatient data;
- develops expertise in the use of available data to produce robust performance and activity indicators to monitor the impact of national and local policies; and
- supports the research and analytical work of other organisations, subject to general strategic priorities and ethical and legal considerations.

The team also provides an information service (ad hoc service) to organisations and individuals who wish to use the data relating to drug misuse collected by ISD Scotland. For further information please contact 0131 551 8715 or e-mail sdmd@isd.csa.scot.nhs.uk.

Other developments undertaken by the Drugs Misuse Information Strategy Team are outlined on page 126.

Contact

[Paul Stroner](#) (Team Leader) phone: 0131 551 8686.

1

Drug misuse in Scotland – Abstract of Statistics, 2001

Drug misuse is a complex problem, involving the use of both illegal and legal drugs and other substances. It is an issue of concern across the whole health and social spectrum, including criminal justice.

The following presents an abstract of statistics from the national publication: Drug Misuse Statistics Scotland 2001. A previous version of this abstract was published online in December 2001. This current abstract has been updated to provide readers with the latest available facts and figures.

Key Points from Chapter 2 : Prevalence of drug misuse

Source

Scottish schools survey, 2000

- In Autumn 2000, 4 700 pupils in 150 schools in Scotland were surveyed about their smoking, drinking and drug use. The survey found that cannabis was by far the most likely drug to have been used – 13 per cent of pupils aged 12-15 had used cannabis in the last year. One per cent of 12-15 year olds had used opiates (heroin or methadone) in the last year, and 3 per cent had used stimulants (a group of substances which includes ecstasy, cocaine, crack, amphetamines and poppers).

National Centre for Social Research (NCSR) and National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

Table 2

Scottish crime survey

- The 2000 Scottish crime survey (SCS) is the fifth survey of its kind to be carried out in Scotland since the early 1980s. The SCS was based on an overall sample of 5 059 households; the response rate was 71 per cent. Between the 1996 and 2000 there was a statistically significant drop from 9 per cent to 7 per cent in the proportion of respondents who reported having taken a drug in the last year. The major change in drug taking seems to be with regard to males aged 16 – 24 reporting drug use in the last year from 33 per cent in 1996 to 18 per cent in 2000. Whereas drug use amongst females in the same age group remained stable at 20 per cent in 1996 and 19 per cent in 2000.

Scottish crime survey

Tables 6 and 7

National prevalence study



- The recent National prevalence study estimates that 55 800 individuals are misusing opiates or benzodiazepines within Scotland. These figures correspond to a prevalence rate of 2 per cent of the Scottish population aged between 15 and 54 years.
- Problematic drug misuse is occurring in both urban and rural areas, although the prevalence in rural areas is clearly lower.

National prevalence study – CDMR and SCIEH

Table 13

Key Points from Chapter 3 : Health impact of drug misuse

Source

- In 2000/01, the largest group of general acute hospital admissions for drug misuse relates to opiate use. In some 46 per cent of all general acute admissions for drug misuse, opioids are specifically identified, but the true figure is likely to be even higher as some of the patients recorded as using ‘multiple/other psychoactive substances’ may use opioids.
[ISD Scotland \(SMR01\)](#)
[Tables 16 and 18](#)
- Between 1994/95 and 1999/00 there has been an increase in the number of admissions to psychiatric hospitals involving drug misuse, although improved recording may be responsible in part.
[ISD Scotland \(SMR04\)](#)
[Table 24](#)
- Of the 1 257 cases where a main diagnosis of drug misuse was recorded, just over half (51 per cent) of the patients were in their twenties. Males accounted for 68 per cent of those individuals with a main diagnosis of drug misuse (a proportion similar to that reported by services to the Scottish Drug Misuse Database).
[ISD Scotland \(SMR04\)](#)
[Table 25](#)
- Information from a nationally representative sample of General Practitioners shows that for male patients with a diagnosis of drug misuse, 16.8 per cent have also received a diagnosis of depression and 14.6 per cent one of anxiety, compared to only 6.1 and 5.6 per cent respectively of males without a drug misuse diagnosis. Drug misusing males were also more likely to have been diagnosed for alcohol problems (8.9 per cent) than males attending with no drug misuse diagnosis (1.6 per cent).
[ISD Scotland \(CMR\)](#)
[Table 32](#)
- In 1999/00, of a total of 53 047 maternities (pregnancies which result in a live or stillbirth) recorded, there were 188 cases where the mother had a diagnosis of drug misuse (a rate of 3.5 per 1 000 maternities). Drug misuse in maternities is believed to be under-recorded and these figures will be an under-estimate.
[ISD Scotland \(SMR02\)](#)
[Table 34](#)
- Of the 360 cases of Hepatitis B infection reported to SCIEH in 2000, 89 cases (25 per cent) mentioned injecting drug use as the patient’s probable route of transmission. However, it is thought likely that the majority of the cases acquired their infection through injecting practices.
[Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health](#)
[Table 36](#)
- As of 31 December 2000, there have been 1 248 reports of HIV infection in Scotland where injecting drug use was identified as the probable route of transmission. Injecting drug users make up 39 per cent of all reports of HIV infection.
[Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health](#)
[Table 37](#)
- Of the 10 929 known cases of Hepatitis C Virus in Scotland as at 30 June 2000, 6 326 (58 per cent) have ‘Injecting drug user’ identified as the probable route of transmission. It is thought likely that a further 3 780 (35 per cent) cases with an ‘unknown’ cause of transmission will also include a high proportion of injecting drug users. These figures almost certainly underestimate the true extent of the problem.
[Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health](#)
[Table 45](#)
- Under the new, more restricted, definition of a ‘drug-related death’ there were 292 drug-related deaths in 2000. Of these, 104 (36 per cent) occurred in the Greater Glasgow NHS board area. Lothian, with 37, Grampian and Argyll & Clyde, both with 31, and Lanarkshire, with 29, had the next highest totals.
[General Register Office Scotland](#)
[Table 49](#)

Key Points from Chapter 4 : Services and treatment for drug misusers

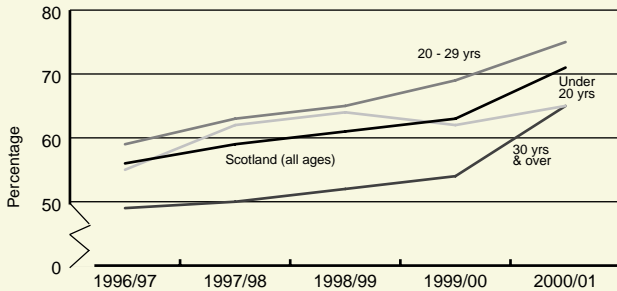
Source

- In 2000/01, the Scottish Drug Misuse Database received information on 10 591 new attendees at drug services (including general practice).

ISD Scotland
(Scottish Drug Misuse Database)

Table 55

Heroin use by age group

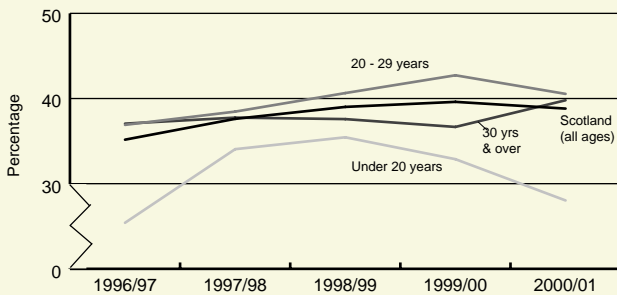


- Information on new attendees at drug services shows that reports of heroin use have increased in recent years - from 56 per cent of new attendees in 1996/97 to 71 per cent in 2000/01. This increase is reflected in all age groups.

ISD Scotland
(Scottish Drug Misuse Database)

Table 61

Reported to have injected in the previous month by age group

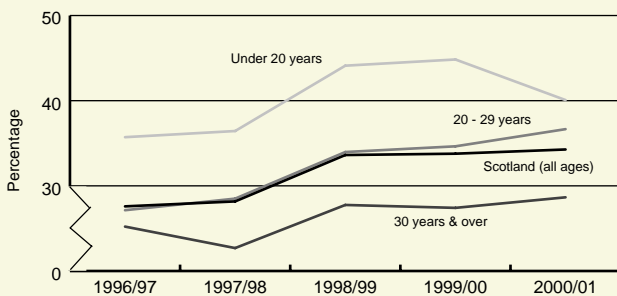


- In 2000/01, 39 per cent of new attendees at drug services reported that they had injected in the previous month, a decrease from the 40 per cent reported in 1999/00. This fall is reflected in both the under 20 and 20-29 age groups. For those aged 30 years and over, the percentage increased.

ISD Scotland
(Scottish Drug Misuse Database)

Table 69

Reported to have shared in the previous month by age group



- The percentage of injectors reporting that they had shared injecting equipment in the previous month has remained reasonably static in recent years. Information by age group shows a fall in the sharing percentage of the under 20s. This contrasts with a slight increase in the percentage sharing among the older age groups.

ISD Scotland
(Scottish Drug Misuse Database)

Table 77

- The rate of prescribing methadone mixture has increased steadily over the last four years. In 2000/01 there were 53 prescriptions of methadone mixture per 1 000 population; compared to 35 prescriptions per 1 000 population in 1997/98.

ISD Scotland
(Prescribing Information System)

Table 91

- Eighty-four per cent of the total number of methadone prescriptions dispensed in 2000/01 were dispensed in instalments (e.g. daily doses). Daily dispensing was introduced to combat non-prescribed use of methadone. Due to a change in data collection methods, it is not appropriate to compare these figures with those presented in previous years.

ISD Scotland
(Prescribing Information System)

Table 92

Key Points from Chapter 5 : Drug education in schools, 2000/01

Source

- In 2000/01, 97 per cent of all schools in Scotland provided drug education compared to 95 per cent in 1999/00. Virtually all secondary schools said they provided drug education while 98 per cent and 80 per cent of responding primary and special schools, respectively, said they did so. A greater proportion of local authority schools than other schools provided drug education, notably in the primary sector.

[Scottish Executive
Education
Department](#)
[Table 94](#)

- In 2000/01, 93 per cent of schools provided education on controlled drugs and this proportion was at least as high for alcohol, tobacco, solvents and safe use of medicine. Figures for all types of drug education show increases from 1999/00.

[Scottish Executive
Education
Department](#)
[Table 94](#)

Key Points from Chapter 6 : Drugs and criminal justice

Source

- The 31 431 drug-related offences recorded by Scottish police forces in 2000 are equivalent to a rate of 615 per 100 000 population. The largest proportion of drug-related offences recorded was in Glasgow City council area, at a rate of 1 451 per 100 000 population, followed by Inverclyde with a rate of 1 065 per 100 000 population.
[Scottish Executive Justice Department](#)
[Table 97](#)
- In 1999, 6 400 people were convicted in Scottish courts of drug offences (i.e. where 'main offence'). Of these, 4 841 (76 per cent) were charged with 'possession' and 1 466 (23 per cent) were charged with 'possession with intent to supply'.
[Scottish Executive Justice Department](#)
[Table 99](#)
- The number of drug seizures in Scotland rose nearly four-fold between 1985 and 1995, and increased by a further 41 per cent by 1998. However, in 1999 there was a fall of 5 per cent in Scotland compared to a fall of 12 per cent across the UK as a whole (excluding HM Customs & Excise).
[Home Office](#)
[Table 102](#)
- The quantities of heroin, cocaine and methadone seized in Scotland reached record levels in 1999. Of particular note is the fact that the amount of heroin confiscated in 1999 was 5 times the quantity seized the previous year, itself a record. Between 1998 and 1999, there were also moderate increases in the seizures of crack cocaine, LSD and benzodiazepines.
[Home Office](#)
[Table 104](#)
- In October 2000, 364 prisoners (a sample from a spread of establishments in the Scottish Prison Service) were tested at entry to the prisons from the community. Seventy-five per cent of these reception testing samples tested positive for drugs. The most commonly detected drugs, as a percentage of all tests taken, were cannabis (53 per cent), benzodiazepines (45 per cent) and opiates (31 per cent).
[Scottish Prison Service](#)
[Table 107](#)
- Each month, 10 per cent of the prisoner population in each prison in Scotland is randomly selected for a urine test (MDT). In 2000/01, 21 per cent of all tests gave a positive result, compared with 22 per cent the previous year. Comparable figures based on the underlying rate (excluding those who may have used the drugs for which they tested positive, before entry to prison) have remained steady at 15 per cent.
[Scottish Prison Service](#)
[Table 109](#)
- In June 2000, the SPS launched its revised drug strategy. This aims to keep drugs out of prisons; to bring prisoners into drug treatment; to keep them in contact with treatment services; and to manage effectively transition between prison and community. Of a total of 23 472 recorded prison receptions in 2000/01, 14 300 (61 per cent) were identified as having an issue with substance misuse. Of the 9 800 subsequently offered assessment for their substance misuse problems, 78 per cent undertook the assessment.
[Scottish Prison Service](#)
[Table 111](#)