

B1 Statistics from the Scottish Drug Misuse Database 2003/04

Introduction

The Scottish Drug Misuse Database (SDMD) offers a profile of drug misuse based on non-named data about problem drug users attending services for their drug problems.

The information presented relates to new patients/clients. The definition of 'new' is any person who is attending the service for (a) the first time ever or (b) it has been at least six months since the last attendance at the service.

This report provides data from the SDMD for 5 years up to year end 31 March 2004. The data presented also forms part of the national publication *Drug Misuse Statistics Scotland*.

It is important to note that the percentages quoted below are based on the number of individuals on which data for each specific question are available i.e. they are not based on the total number of individuals reported to the Database. Further information on 'information available' is provided within each table.

Some of the figures presented in the text below (for 1999/00 to 2002/03) only appear in previous editions of Drug Misuse Statistics Scotland which can be found on the Drug Misuse Information Scotland website.

Key Points

- In 2003/04, 12 657 'new' individuals were reported to the Scottish Drug Misuse Database, an increase of nearly 1 000 individuals (8%) from 2002/03 (11 691 individuals). The 2003/04 figure corresponds to a rate of 267 per 100 000 of the Scottish population (all ages). (Tables B1.1)

Individuals attending services who report illicit drug use¹

- Of those reporting illicit drug use, 71 per cent used heroin in 2003/04 (7 813 individuals). This compares to 76 per cent in 2002/03 (7 968 individuals). (Table B1.11, Table B 1.12 and Table B1.14)
- The proportion of illicit drug users reporting use of diazepam was 32 per cent (3 563 individuals), a fall from 2002/03 (37%, 3 862 individuals) and 1999/00 (34%, 3 146 individuals). (Table B1.11 and Table B1.12)
- Use of cocaine amongst those reporting illicit drug use has increased from four per cent in 1999/00 (328 individuals) to seven per cent in 2002/03 (756 individuals) and eight per cent in 2003/04 (917 individuals), a trend reflected in all age groups. Of the 917 individuals in 2003/04, 52 per cent were resident in Greater Glasgow NHS Board and 11 per cent in Lothian. (Table B1.11 and Table B1.12)
- Use of crack cocaine amongst those reporting illicit drug use has also increased from one per cent in 1999/00 to three per cent in both 2002/03 and 2003/04 (95 to 312 and 382 individuals). Of the 382 individuals in 2003/04, 40 per cent were resident in Grampian NHS Board and 24 per cent in Lothian, 11 per cent in Argyll & Clyde and 10 per cent in Greater Glasgow. (Table B1.11 and Table B1.12)

¹ The percentages of people reporting the use of various types of drugs are calculated from the number of people reporting illicit drug use – not the total number of people reported to SDMD

Injecting

- In 2003/04, 37 per cent of all individuals reported that they had injected in the month prior to seeking treatment, a fall from previous years (in 1999/00, 40%, in 2002/03, 41%). This fall is reflected in all age groups. In the under 20 age group, there has been an increase in the percentage of individuals who report that they have never injected, 57 per cent in 1999/00, 62 per cent in 2002/03 and 72 per cent in 2003/04. (Table B1.25 and Table B1.26)
- In 2003/04, 34 per cent of current injectors reported that they shared needles/ syringes in the previous month (34% in 1999/00 and 33% in 2002/03). Forty-nine per cent of current injectors reported that they shared spoons/water/filters/solutions in the previous month (48% in 2002/03). (Table B1.33 and Table B1.36)

Additional points

Profile of individuals reported to SDMD

This section describes the demographic profile of 'new' individuals attending services.

- In the five years since 1999/00, there has been an increase of 21 per cent in the number of 'new' individuals reported to SDMD, from 10 436 individuals in 1999/00 to 12 657 in 2003/04. The corresponding rate increase is from 214 per 100 000 population in 1999/00 to 267 per 100 000 population in 2003/04. (Table B1.1)
- Overall the male: female attendance ratio in 2003/04 is 1.9:1, this has remained relatively stable since 1999/00. However, there is variation between age groups with the under 20's ratio 1.4:1 and for 40 years and over 2.4:1. (Table B1.5)
- The male attendance rate is nearly twice that of the female attendance rate (354 per 100 000 population for males, 183 per 100 000 population for females). (Table B1.3 and Table B1.4)
- The median age of those reported to the SDMD was 28 years, compared to 27 in 2002/03 and 26 in 1999/00. Nearly half of those reported to SDMD were in their twenties (48%). (Table B1.2)
- The age profile of individuals reported to the SDMD has gradually changed over the past five years towards an older population profile – in 1999/00, 14 per cent of individuals reported were under 20 years of age, this has fallen to nine per cent in 2003/04. (Table B1.5)
- In 2003/04, 99 per cent of individuals reported to SDMD described their ethnicity as 'white'. (Table B1.6)

Where clients are referred from and their presenting issues

This section includes information on the main source of referral and reported issues that have led the person to attend the service for their drug misuse problem.

- Of those individuals being seen by General Practice, the majority (71%) were self referrals i.e. there was no formal referral from another organisation or individual. In Specialist Drug Services 31 per cent were self referrals, with a further 36 per cent being referred from GP/primary care teams. The relatively large percentage of self referrals to GPs probably reflects the role of the GPs as the first point of contact for many drug users. (Table B1.7a and Table B1.7b)
- When undergoing assessment for treatment, sixty per cent of individuals reported physical health issues, and half (52%) mental health issues in addition to their drug misuse. (Table B1.8)
- In 2003/04, 42 per cent reported that their purpose in presenting to the service included seeking a prescription related to their addiction, primarily methadone or a similar drug. (Table B1.10)

Types of drugs individuals are using

The SDMD collects a range of details about the particular drugs that the new patients/clients have used in the past month.

- The fall (between 2002/03 and 2003/04) in the percentage of people reporting illicit drug use who used heroin was reflected in all NHS board areas apart from Tayside (increased from 53% to 67%, 192 to 334 individuals) and Lothian where there has been a small percentage rise (66% to 67%, 1 185 to 1 489 individuals). (Table B1.11 and Table B1.14)

- Of the 7 813 individuals who reported heroin use, 92 per cent reported it as their main drug of misuse (7 201 individuals). (Table B1.11 and Table B1.13)
- Eleven per cent of individuals who reported illicit drug use cited dihydrocodeine (1 242 individuals) and nine per cent illicit use of methadone (1 026 individuals). (Table B1.11 and Table B1.12)
- Of those individuals who reported heroin as a main drug of use, 33 per cent also reported illicit diazepam use (2 351 individuals). (Table B1.12 and Table B1.15)
- For those individuals who report heroin as their main drug of use, seven per cent also reported using cocaine (495 individuals), and four per cent reported crack cocaine (315 individuals). (Table B1.15)
- Although overall reports of ecstasy use have remained stable at around four per cent of those reporting illicit drug use, there has been increased use within the under 15 age group², eight per cent in 1999/00 (four individuals) to 14 per cent in 2003/04 (27 individuals). There has also been a rise in reported ecstasy use within the 15-19 age group, nine per cent in 1999/00 (116 individuals) rising to 15 per cent in 2003/04 (130 individuals). (Table B1.12)
- Reports of solvent abuse are highest within the under 15 age group² who report illicit drug misuse, 22 per cent in 2003/04 (42 individuals). (Table B1.12)
- There is a growing proportion of alcohol being reported along with drug use by the under 15 age group², with for example, in 1999/00, 31 per cent of under 15s reported alcohol use compared to 48 per cent in 2003/04. Due to the small numbers of people aged under 15 years reported to SDMD, caution is recommended when interpreting these data. (Table B1.12)

Age of first use, problem recognition and seeking help

The time lags between the age when individuals first used an illicit drug, age at onset of problem and age when (professional) help was sought provides an indication of the pathways through drug misuse.

- The majority of individuals reported to SDMD were in their teens when they first started using illicit drugs (which also includes volatile substances and over the counter medicines); were in their teens/early twenties when their drug use became a problem; and were in their twenties when they sought help. This is a similar pattern to that presented in previous years. (Table B1.18, Table B1.19 and Table B1.20)
- As would be expected, the time from when individuals first used illicit drugs until they perceived there to be a problem varied from person to person. Over a third (38%) reported that they did not perceive their drug use as a problem until after five years of misuse. On the other hand, 15 per cent reported recognising a problem within one year of misuse, a similar pattern to previous years. (Table B1.21)
- The time from the onset of problem drug use to seeking treatment also varied markedly. Twenty-six per cent sought treatment within one year of onset, 34 per cent in one to two years, and 16 per cent after three to four years of use. The remaining 23 per cent took more than five years to seek treatment for their drug use. This is a very similar to the pattern to that found in previous years. (Table B1.23)

Ways in which people take drugs

All patients/clients are asked whether they have ever injected and if so, whether they have done so in the past month prior to attending the service. Similar questions are asked regarding sharing needles/syringes and sharing spoons/water/filters/solutions.

- Most of the NHS Boards show a fall in the percentage who have injected in the month prior to seeking treatment, the exceptions being Fife, Forth Valley, Lothian, Shetland and Tayside. The most noticeable increase was in Grampian where there has been a rise from 54 to 62 per cent. (Table B1.25)

² Due to small numbers of people aged under 15 years reported to SDMD, caution is recommended when interpreting these data.

- For all age groups there has been a fall in the percentage of people injecting in the month prior to seeking treatment. (Table B1.26)
- Individuals in their twenties more frequently reported that they had injected during the month prior to seeking treatment than other age groups (42% and 40% of those aged 20-24 and 25-29 years respectively). Compared with other age groups relatively few individuals aged under 20 years reported recent injecting behaviour (21%). (Table B1.26)
- Thirty-eight per cent of individuals reported that they were in their teens when they first injected. This has fallen from 42 per cent in 1999/00. (Table B1.28)
- In 2003/04, 58 per cent of heroin users reported that they injected the drug (59% in 2002/03 and 60% in 1999/00). (Table B1.30)
- For those individuals who have reported using heroin in the last month there has been a gradual reduction in the percentage taking the drug through injection only, 49 per cent in 1999/00 to 38 per cent in 2003/04. There has also been a corresponding increase in the percentage who either administer the drug by injection and another method (e.g. smoking) (11% in 1990/00 to 20% in 2003/04), or those who have not injected the drug in the past month (40% in 1999/00 to 42% in 2003/04). (Table B1.31)

Social information

The personal circumstances of the drug user seeking treatment or advice from services can influence the individual's motivation for seeking help and the extent to which the service can contribute to a change in drug taking behaviour. Information on employment status, current living arrangements and accommodation and the individual's current legal status are each potentially relevant factors and are collected by the SDMD.

- Eighty-five per cent of new individuals reported that they were unemployed. The percentage reporting being unemployed for one year or longer or never employed, at 73 per cent, is similar to previous years. (Table B1.40)
- Nearly one in five (18%) individuals reported that they were living with dependent children. This compares to 18 per cent in 2002/03 and 21 per cent in 1999/00. It should be noted that this does not include those individuals who have dependent children who live elsewhere. (Table B1.42)
- Eighty-two per cent of individuals reported that they lived in owned/rented accommodation and 12 per cent lived in temporary/unstable accommodation (e.g. hostels). Two per cent of new individuals were reported as being roofless. This is a very similar pattern to that presented in previous years. (Table B1.43)
- Just under half (45%) of people reported to the SDMD in 2003/04 said that they had previously been in prison. (Table B1.45)