

E3 Drug misuse and treatment in Scottish prisons

Key Points

Overview of drug misuse and treatment in Scottish prisons

- In May 2002, 66 per cent of urine tests at reception into custody were positive for drugs (includes only those establishments who receive prisoners from court). (Table E3.1)
- Seventeen per cent of mandatory drug tests were positive in 2003/04 (excludes those who tested positive for drugs they may have misused before entry to prison). (Table E3.2)
- In 2003/04, of the 34 867 prison receptions, 18 186 (52%) were referred to Addictions Services. Of these, all were offered an assessment, with 14 282 (79%) of prisoners undertaking an assessment. (Table E3.4)
- Of those who were referred to Transitional Care at time of discharge (4 183 individuals), 1 248 (30%) attended first Transitional Care appointment. (Table E3.4)
- The Scottish Prison Survey 2004 shows that of those who responded, half reported experience of illicit drug use in prison in the month immediately prior to survey completion. (Table E3.5)
- There were no significant differences in reported drug use in prison in the last month between males and females and remand and convicted prisoners. (Scottish Prison Survey 2004, data not shown)
- A minority of prisoners (5%) reported injecting drugs in prison in the last month. (Table E3.5)
- Of those who had injected in the last month, over two thirds (69%) stated that they had shared their 'works' (injecting equipment) in prison in the last month. (Table E3.5)

5 year trends – 1998/99 to 2002/03

- The percentage of positive drug tests (by urine testing at reception into custody) fell from 73 per cent in 1998/99 to 66 per cent in 2002/03. (Table E3.1)
- The fall in the percentage of positive drug tests (by urine testing at reception into custody) between 1998/99 and 2002/03 is reflected across all drugs (particularly cannabis, benzodiazepines and opiates) types apart from methadone, cocaine and temgesic. (Table E3.1)
- The rate of positive results for mandatory drug testing in prison over the past five years is unchanged at around 17 per cent. (Table E3.2)
- Between 2002/03 and 2003/04, the number of prisoners who were offered an assessment by addictions services nearly doubled (9 779 to 18 186). (Table E3.4)

Drugs Recorded

- Cannabis, benzodiazepines and opiates (excluding methadone) were the drugs most commonly detected by testing at reception into custody, 34 per cent, 30 per cent and 24 per cent respectively of all tests taken. (Table E3.1)
- The drugs most frequently detected by mandatory drug testing were cannabis and opiates, 15 and 16 per cent respectively of all random tests taken. (Table E3.2)
- The most common drugs reported by those who had used illicit drugs in prison in the last month were: cannabis (78%) and heroin (63%). A third of prisoners (36%) reported using benzodiazepines (e.g. Valium, Ativan), and a quarter (26%) other opiates other than methadone (e.g. Temgesic, dihydrocodeine). A smaller proportion reported using cocaine (14%), methadone (not on prescription) (13%), ecstasy (12%), temazepam (12%) and amphetamines (6%). (Table E3.5)

Background information

Urine testing at reception into custody

During one month each year, random samples of prisoners are tested on admission to prison from the community. These samples cover only a small proportion of prison admissions (totalling around 25 000 each year), and are therefore indicative rather than definitive. It should be noted that due to the period between last drug use and testing after entry to prison, urine test results may under-report some drug use (e.g. heroin) at the expense of cannabis use. It should be noted that these do not form a strictly random sample.

Table E3.1 (previously published in Drug Misuse Statistics Scotland 2003) includes information on testing at reception into custody direct from court. This does not give a complete picture as some establishments do not receive prisoners direct from court. In 2003, the Reception Study was expanded to cover all Scottish Prison Service establishments. Information from extended study is not currently available.

Random mandatory drug testing (MDT) results

Each month, 10% of the prisoner population in each prison in Scotland is randomly selected for a urine drug test. Other reasons for targeted testing exist, but are not reported here.

Drug treatment in prisons

Addiction services within Scottish prisons are broadly equivalent to those in the wider community i.e.

- based on assessed need;
- involve prisoners in devising and agreeing their individual care plan;
- giving prisoners access to a relevant range of interventions;
- emphasising the importance of continuity of care, both in and out of the prison setting including the transitional care period. The main aim of transitional care is to facilitate the access to community based services through support during a 12 week period following a prisoners return to the community.

Table E3.4 shows what has been achieved for drug treatment over the last few years. The SPS Addictions Policy was published in January 2004. A review is currently underway of data collated as part of the Management Information System to support this new policy.

Scottish Prison Survey (2004) – 7th Survey

The Scottish Prison Service's Annual Prisoner Survey, which is undertaken in each of the 15 Scottish prisons and involves all Scottish prisoners, has a number of goals:

- it allows the Service to make use of prisoners' perceptions of service-delivery and service-quality in its business planning;
- it provides prisoners with an opportunity to comment on a range of issues that impact on their experience in prison;
- it allows staff to get a better understanding of how the halls they manage compare to other equivalent halls and to identify and share items of 'best practice'; and
- it allows the Service, through annual repeats of the same questions, to track progress across the various dimensions that are included in the Survey.

The annual prison survey 2004 took place between 4th June and 1st July 2004. It is a self-completion questionnaire (tick box response) which is hand delivered to each prisoner on site in the establishment on the day the survey takes place. It therefore provides a one-day snapshot of prisoner views in each establishment.

Information on the responses to the following questions is presented above:

'Which illegal drugs, if any, have you used in the last month while in this prison?'
(tickbox response options was as follows):

- No Illegal drugs in the last month
- Cannabis
- Heroin
- Methadone (not on prescription)
- Other opiates (e.g. temgesic DF118)
- Cocaine
- Temazepam
- Amphetamines
- Ecstasy
- Benzodiazepams (e.g. Valium, Ativan)

'Have you injected drugs in prison in the last month?'
Yes or No tick box

'If YES, you injected IN PRISON in the LAST MONTH, did you share your works? '
Yes or No tick box