

KEY POINTS

1. There was a consistent pattern of decreased reporting of heroin and increased reporting of amphetamine as the type of drug last injected from 2000 to 2001 in nearly all participating NSP sites across the country.
2. Cocaine injection increased markedly in Sydney.
3. Morphine injection increased in Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia
4. Reporting of more than one drug as the last drug(s) injected increased in Queensland, South Australia and Victoria.
5. Specification of benzodiazepine or temazepam as an "other" drug remained stable (less than one percent per year).

Drug Use Trends Among Injecting Drug Users (IDU).

Findings from the Australian Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) Survey, 1995-2001

Introduction

The Australian NSP Survey has been carried out over one week each year since 1995. During the designated survey week, NSP staff asked all clients who attended to complete a brief, self-administered questionnaire and provide a finger prick blood sample. The survey response rate was approximately 50% in each year (see sample distribution by jurisdiction on page 4). This issue of the Drug Trends Bulletin presents the most recent findings from the Australian NSP Survey, with comparisons between jurisdictions and over time. Drug use figures are based on self-report of the type of drug last injected.

National Trends

Demographic characteristics

The median age of respondents decreased from 1995 (29 years) to 1997 (27 years), remained stable from 1998 to 2000 (28 years), then increased in 2001 (29 years). Similarly, the median duration of drug injection decreased from 1995 (10 years) to 2000 (8 years), then increased in 2001 (9 years). In all surveys approximately 65% of respondents were male and the median age at first injection was 18 years.

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Table 1: Type of drug last injected, 1995-2001

	1995 n = 1072	1996 n = 1497	1997 n = 1978	1998 n = 2665	1999 n=2491	2000 n=2694	2001 n=2454
Amphetamine*	22%	18%	19%	21%	26%	21%	37%
Cocaine	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	7%
Heroin**	44%	53%	55%	52%	53%	56%	30%
Methadone	19%	11%	11%	8%	3%	3%	5%
Morphine	3%	2%	3%	4%	4%	4%	6%
Steroids	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%
> one drug	8%	9%	7%	10%	8%	10%	11%
Other drugs	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Not reported	<1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%

* Increased from 1998 when analysis was restricted to sites participating in all surveys: 1995 = 20%, 1996 = 18%, 1997 = 19%, 1998 = 27%, 1999 = 27%, 2000=25%, 2001=34%.

** Similar pattern when restricted to sites participating in all surveys: 1995 = 42%, 1996 = 51%, 1997 = 53%, 1998 = 46%, 1999 = 47%, 2000=46%, 2001=30%.

Frequency of injection

Reporting of at least daily injection in the month before survey increased from 1995 (41%) to 2000 (58%) then decreased in 2001 (46%). Daily or more frequent injection was more likely to be reported among respondents reporting morphine (74%), heroin with cocaine (71%), more than one drug combination (64%), or heroin (60%), as the type of drug last injected, than among respondents reporting cocaine (54%), amphetamine (41%), methadone (31%), or anabolic steroids (26%).

tion also increased in Western Australia. In the Northern Territory reporting of morphine remained stable.

Amphetamine

In previous surveys amphetamine was the second most frequently reported drug after heroin (Table 1). However in 2001, more respondents reported amphetamine than heroin (37% vs. 30%). More than half the respondents in Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia reported amphetamine as the type of drug last injected in 2001 (Figure 1).

Type of Drug Injected

Nationally, reporting of heroin as the type of drug last injected decreased and amphetamine injection increased from 2000 to 2001 (Table 1). There was a consistent decrease in heroin and increase in amphetamine injection in nearly all survey sites across the country (Figure 1). In New South Wales, reporting of cocaine or cocaine with another drug also increased from 2000 to 2001. Whereas in Queensland, South Australia, and Victoria, morphine and more than one drug combination increased. Morphine injection

Figure 1: Prevalence of heroin and amphetamine injection by jurisdiction, 2000-2001

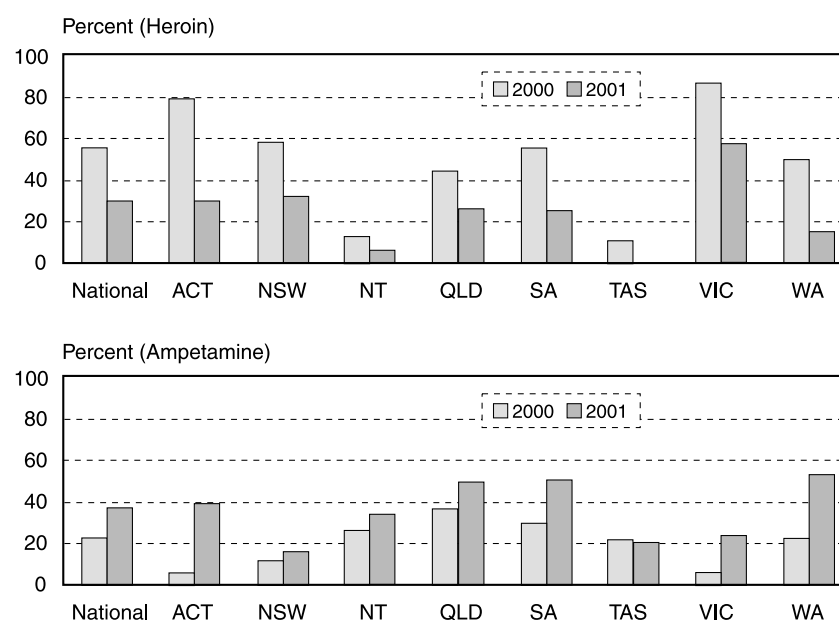
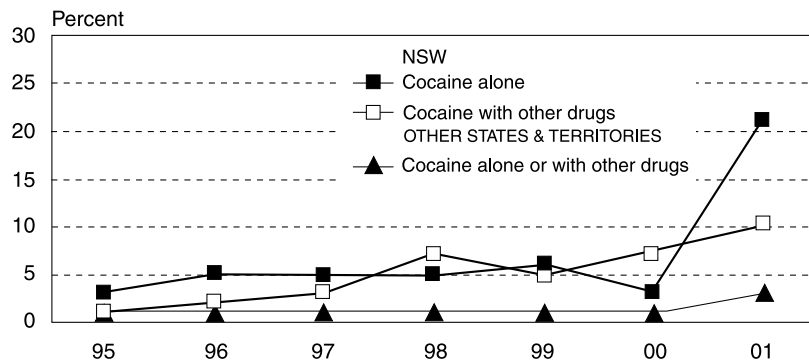


Figure 2: Prevalence of cocaine injection in NSW and other jurisdictions, 1995-2000.



Cocaine

Cocaine injection remained higher in New South Wales than in other jurisdictions (Figure 2), increasing from 2000 (3%) to 2001 (21%). There was also increased reporting of cocaine in combination with another drug, usually heroin, in New South Wales (7% to 10%). Prevalence of cocaine injection was 3.2% in South Australia, 1.5% in Victoria, 1.2% in Western Australia, 0.2% Queensland and zero in other jurisdictions. Cocaine in combination with another drug was reported by around 3% of respondents from all states and territories, except New South Wales, in 2001.

Heroin

Nationally, the prevalence of heroin injection dropped by around a half in 2001 compared to 2000 (from 56% to 30%). Prior to 2001, heroin was the most frequently reported type of drug last injected (Table 1). Prevalence of heroin injection was higher in Victoria (60%) than in the ACT, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia (25% to 30%) or Northern Territory (5%) and Tasmania (0 of 28) in 2001 (Figure 1).

Methadone

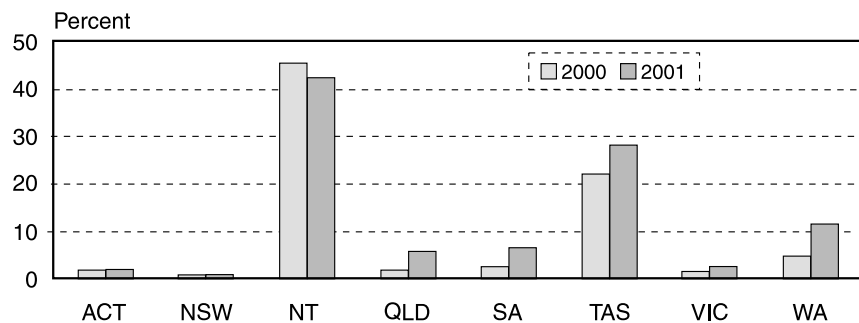
Reporting of methadone injection was infrequent (5%) in 2001 and similar to 2000

(3%). Methadone injection remained higher among respondents in New South Wales than in other jurisdictions in 2001. However, reporting of methadone injection among New South Wales respondents has remained less than ten percent over the past few years.

Morphine

Consistent with previous surveys, morphine injection was reported more frequently by respondents in Northern Territory (43%) and Tasmania (8 of 28) than by respondents in other jurisdictions (1 to 12%). Prevalence of morphine injection increased from 2000 to

Figure 3: Prevalence of morphine injection by jurisdiction, 2000-2001.



2001 in Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia and remained stable in other jurisdictions (note: sample size is very small in Tasmania; Figure 3).

Anabolic steroids

Prevalence of anabolic steroid injection was infrequently reported (<2%) in all jurisdictions. Nationally, reporting of steroid injection in 2001 (1%) was consistent with previous years (1%-2%).

Benzos

There were a small proportion of respondents in each year (<1%) who specified benzodiazepine or temazepam as an "other" drug. No increase was detected from 2000 to 2001 (0.2% to 0.5%).

Summary

The 2001 Australian NSP survey found marked changes in patterns of drug injection. Decreased heroin and increased amphetamine injection were reported at nearly all survey sites. Cocaine injection also increased markedly in Sydney, particularly in combination with heroin. Morphine injection increased in Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia, but remained stable in other jurisdictions. Reporting of more than one drug increased in Queensland, South Australia, and Victoria.

The NSP surveys were carried out in October 2000, just before the "heroin drought". The 2001 survey suggests that the heroin short-

age continued through to October the following year. Persistence of decreased heroin availability in 2001 was also reported in the IDRS surveys. It is possible that changes in the usual social networks of injectors due to changes in drug availability may increase the transmission of blood borne infections. Prevention programs should highlight potential changes in susceptibility to infection or re-infection due to changes in injecting networks.

1 Sample distribution

The number of IDU surveyed varied between jurisdictions and across years. Some jurisdictions have been omitted from comparisons due to small sample size. Please refer to the table below for sample sizes by jurisdiction, 1995-2001.

Jurisdiction	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
ACT	72	125	87	138	94	163	44
NSW	433	499	682	1001	907	911	691
NT	30	19	102	102	102	95	94
QLD	344	513	520	694	834	750	817
SA	37	45	59	230	250	312	276
TAS	6	18	23	51	25	27	28
VIC	120	195	457	288	214	293	340
WA	30	83	48	161	86	143	164
Total	1072	1497	1978	2665	2503	2694	2454
Response rate	41%	54%	60%	42%	45%	50%	46%
No of sites	21	20	24	32	34	35	38

