Scottish Drug Misuse Database

Overview of Initial Assessments for Specialist Drug Treatment 2018/19

A National Statistics publication for Scotland

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About this release

This release by Information Services Division presents the information available from the Scottish Drug Misuse Database (SDMD) on individuals presenting for initial assessment at specialist drug treatment services in 2018/19.

Main Points

- In 2018/19, initial assessments for specialist drug treatment relating to 10,757 individuals resident in Scotland were recorded on the Scottish Drug Misuse Database.

- Just over half of people in contact with drug services were from older age groups; the percentage of individuals assessed for specialist drug treatment who were aged 35 years or over increased from 29% in 2006/07 to 53% in 2018/19.

- Heroin was the most common substance people reported needing help with, although reported use of heroin has decreased over time. Among those who indicated recent drug use, the percentage of individuals reporting heroin as their main drug decreased from 63% in 2006/07 to 38% in 2018/19.

Main illicit drug used in the month prior to assessment by financial year

Notes: 2012/13 and 2013/14 are not reported due to data quality and completeness issues. 'Other drugs' includes: Amphetamines, dihydrocodeine, Ecstasy, Mephedrone, other Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) drugs, other opiates, and other drugs.
• Reported heroin use has declined sharply among younger people; the percentage of individuals aged under 25 years reporting heroin use in the month prior to assessment decreased from 58% in 2006/07 to 19% in 2018/19.

• From 2006/07 to 2015/16, between 5% and 8% of individuals reported cocaine or crack cocaine as their main drug. This percentage has increased in the years since 2015/16, rising to 19% in 2018/19.

• There has been a decrease in reports of injecting drug use; the percentage of individuals who reported that they were currently injecting drugs declined from 28% in 2006/07 to 13% in 2018/19.

• Sharing of needles/syringes and other injecting equipment increases the risk of blood borne virus infection. Sharing of needles/syringes decreased from 11% in 2006/07 to 6% in 2011/12 and has remained around this level to 2018/19 (5%). The sharing of other injecting equipment fell from 18% in 2006/07 to 7% in 2018/19.

Background
The Scottish Drug Misuse Database (SDMD) was set up in 1990 to collect information about individuals seeking specialist treatment for problem drug use in Scotland. The SDMD is a unique source of data and provides insights into drug treatment needs and the social circumstances and behaviours of individuals at the point when they contact services for treatment.

This release should be viewed in conjunction with the Excel workbook which is publicly available and provides users with accessible, interactive content based on data from 2006/07 to 2018/19.

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Further Information
Find out more in the full report.

For more information on SDMD see the Scottish Drug Misuse Database section of our website. For related topics, please see the Drugs Misuse pages.

The Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) provides information on various aspects of drug misuse in Scotland: ScotPHO drug misuse section.

The next release of this publication will be in spring 2021.

ISD and Official Statistics
Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of ‘Official Statistics’. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Further information about our statistics.