

Queensland Minimum Data Set for Needle and Syringe Programs (QMDS-NSP):

January 2008 to December 2008

Queensland Needle and Syringe Program

Queensland Health

June 2010

Acknowledgements:

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Contents

Introduction.....	7
Content of the Queensland minimum data set for needle and syringe programs	8
Standardised Data Collection	9
Executive summary	10
Regional Trends	11
State-wide Profile.....	12
Occasions of Service	12
Client Demographics	13
Drug Trends	16
Equipment Distribution	19
Interventions Provided	21
Referrals to Services	22
Brisbane City	24
Central Area	27
Northern Area	30
Southern Area	33
Discussion of QMDS-NSP findings	36
The minimum data set	36
Trends in service access	36
Drug use patterns and trends	36
Age, gender and drug use	37
Injecting equipment and drug use	37
Interventions	37
Referral activity	38
Australian NSP Survey.....	42

List of figures

Figure 1: Total service occasions across participating NSPs, 2008	12
Figure 2: Service occasions by age category, 2008 (N=155,235)	13
Figure 3: Service occasions by age category, 2008 (N=155,235)	15
Figure 4: Service occasions by gender, 2008 (N=155,235)	15
Figure 5: Service occasions related to male and female drug use, 2008 (N=153,465).....	16
Figure 6: Percentage breakdown of amphetamine sub type-related service occasions, 2008 (N=30,736)	17
Figure 7: Percentage breakdown of opioid-related service occasions, 2008 (N=79,274)	18
Figure 7: Total equipment ordered, Financial Year 2007-08 & 2008-09.....	19
Figure 8: Total equipment ordered as Vending Kits, Financial Year 2007-08 & 2008-09	19
Figure 9: Total equipment distributed, 2008	20
Figure 10: Type of interventions provided, 2008, (N=59008)	21
Figure 11: Type of referrals provided, 2008, (N=3180)	22
Figure 12: Percent of internal and external referrals, 2008 (N=3,180)	23
Figure 13: Percent of active and passive referrals, 2008 (N=3,180).....	23
Figure 14: Brisbane City: Age distribution, 2008 (N=70,779).....	24
Figure 15: Brisbane City: Service occasions related to male and female drug use, 2008 (N=69,918)	25
Figure 16: Central Area: Age distribution, 2008, (N=21,759)	27
Figure 17: Central Area: Service occasions related to male and female drug use, 2008, (N=17,081)	28
Figure 18: Northern Area: Age distribution, 2008, (N=11,452)	30
Figure 19: Northern Area: Service occasions related to male and female drug use, 2008, (N=7,353).....	31
Figure 20: Southern Area: Age distribution, 2008, (N=51,245).....	33
Figure 21: Southern Area: Service occasions related to male and female drug use, 2008, (N=36,710)	34
Figure 22: HIV antibody prevalence by year of survey, Australia & Queensland, 2004-2008.....	39
Figure 23: HCV antibody prevalence by year of survey, Australia & Queensland, 2004-2008	40
Figure 24: Age profile of respondents by year of survey, Australia, 2004-2008	40
Figure 25: Gender profile of respondents by year of survey, Australia, 2004-2008	41
Figure 26: Indigenous status of respondents by year of survey, Australia, 2004-2008.....	41

List of tables

Table 1. Number of service occasions related to drug type by age group (N=155,235).	14
Table 2. Brisbane City: Interventions provided, January 2008 to December 2008.....	26
Table 3. Brisbane City: Referrals provided, January 2008 to December 2008.....	26
Table 4. Central Area: Interventions provided, January 2008 to December 2008.....	29
Table 5. Central Area: Referrals provided, January 2008 to December 2008.....	29
Table 6. Northern Area: Interventions provided, January 2008 to December 2008	32
Table 7. Northern Area: Referrals provided, January 2008 to December 2008.....	32
Table 8. Southern Area: Interventions provided, January 2008 to December 2008.....	35
Table 9. Southern Area: Referrals provided, January 2008 to December 2008.....	35
Table 10. Drug last injected by respondents by year of survey, Australia, 2004-2008	42

1. Introduction

The purpose of the Queensland Minimum Data Set for Needle and Syringe Programs (QMDS-NSP) is to establish a state-wide standardized data collection system. This will support the ongoing development of the Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) sector in Queensland by providing core data about program activities.

Effective data collection among (NSPs) in Queensland is essential for planning and developing programs. Program development that is guided by valid, reliable data can help ensure, for example, that access is adequate in different locations and that an optimal mix of services and resources is available to clients. Hence, routine program data collection is integral to reducing the spread of HIV and hepatitis C among injecting populations.

Data sets of various forms have been collected by NSPs in Queensland since their inception in the 1980s. The equipment ordering data, collected since 1995, and the Australian NSP Survey (Finger Prick Survey), collected since 1995, have been the key data sources.. Service occasion data has also been collected by NSPs; however, shortcomings in regard to data uniformity and comparability have limited its value.

Collection of standardised data began in December 2006 with 13 primary programs sending in monthly data, since then the numbers have increased to 19 primary programs and three secondary programs sending QMDS-NSP data collected between January and December 2008.

In addition, there has been significant growth in the number of programs and an increase in the diversity and complexity of the NSP sector in Queensland. Linkages with other services, including drug and alcohol treatment and primary health care services, have become more prominent, as has the need to meaningfully record referrals to such services. Major changes in the types of drugs injected and regional variations in these drugs underscore the importance of collecting basic drug information from clients.

The Queensland minimum data set for NSPs encompasses the following objectives:

- Establishing a core set of uniform definitions for activity data, relating to the equipment and services provided by NSPs on each occasion of service;
- Promoting consistency, validity and reliability in NSP data;
- Providing up-to-date information for NSPs on their program activities via the reporting tools of their data collection software;
- Providing regular analyses of NSP data available to participating NSPs.

1.1 Content of the Queensland minimum data set for needle and syringe programs

There are a total of 16 items or data elements in the QMDS-NSP. Only a subset of these will be collected on most occasions of service, depending on the client's injection equipment requirements and whether any interventions and referrals are provided.

Conceptually, the data elements can be divided into three groups, a) client data, b) equipment data, and c) interventions data. These groups are as follows:

Client data (five elements)

- Date of NSP occasion of service
- Sex
- Postcode
- Age
- Drug to be injected

Equipment data (six elements)

- Needles and syringes issued
- 3*ml* barrels issued
- 5*ml* barrels issued
- 10*ml* barrels issued
- 20*ml* barrels issued
- Butterflies issued

Interventions data (five elements)

- NSP interventions provided
- Referral destination
- Referral location
- Referral type
- Time spent

In addition, there are four optional data elements – 'Indigenous status', 'wheel filters issued', 'disposal method', and 'phone calls' – that may be used by individual NSPs as required.

1.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Collection of standardised data began in December 2006 with 13 primary programs sending in monthly data, since then the numbers have gone up with 19 primary programs and three secondary programs sending data collected through the QMDS-NSPs between January and December 2008.

The needle and syringe provision at these 22 sites comprised over three quarters (82%) of the State-wide provision at the end of 2007/08 financial year. Brisbane City, comprising Biala and Brisbane QuIHN, has been analysed separately from the Southern Area as these NSPs are the state's two busiest sites; contributing over 46 per cent of the service occasions across these 22 agencies. The Northern and Central Areas formed the other categories when data was grouped according to the geographical location of the NSPs where they were collected from.

Data for 2008 was collected for all 12 months from all 22 of the participating NSP programs. Data was collected and sent to the QNSP statistics team under ISDMU, who cleaned the data according to the QMDS-NSPs guidelines and sorted it according to their unique identifiers*. The cleaned data was then collated and entered onto an Access database. Descriptive analysis of the data was carried out using STATA version 10.0.

For the purpose of this report, data is examined at a State-wide level to indicate trends across the state in this 12-month period. Data is further analysed at a regional level to observe any variations among the participating NSPs.

* numerical code assigned to individual NSPs by NSPMU

2. Executive summary

Scope of needle and syringe program activity

- The Queensland Minimum Data Set for Needle and Syringe Programs (QMDS-NSP) was implemented at the beginning of December 2006
- From January 2008, 19 primary programs and three secondary programs collected data.
- The needle and syringe provision of these 22 agencies comprised over four fifths (82%) of the State-wide provision at the end of the 2007/08 financial year.
- From January 2008 to December 2008 there were 155,235 occasions of service across the 22 participating NSPs.
- There was a 6.5 per cent growth in occasions of service among the participating sites from the previous reporting year (November 2007) and the current year (December 2008).

Drug use patterns

- Opioids[^] continued to be the drug most injected and was the primary drug type for more than half (51%) of the total occasions of service delivery ; amphetamines and other stimulants made up more than a third (37%) of the service occasions.
- More than half (53%) of all opioid-related service occasions were for heroin use.
- Methadone continued to be the ORT drug most often reported by clients despite decreases in methadone prescribing. 'Base' methamphetamine continues to be the type of amphetamine most often reported by clients

Client demography and drug use

- The average age of clients was 35 years (SD = 11), with the 30-34 age group comprising the largest proportion of clients (22%).
- Clients in the 30 to 34 year age group had the most number of service occasions at 22% and clients less than 35 years in age made up nearly 55% of the occasions.
- Amphetamines were the primary drug of choice for injecting purposes for clients younger than 25 years (46%). The clients between 25 and 44 years age group had similar

[^] heroin, morphine, methadone, buprenorphine, suboxone and other opioid drugs

proportions of service occasions related to amphetamines and opioids. Heroin and morphine predominantly along with other opioid drugs were the drugs of choice for clients 45 years and older (59%).

- Service occasions related to use of drugs used in Opioid Replacement Treatment (ORT), i.e. Methadone, Buprenorphine and Suboxone were more prevalent among clients in the 40 years and older age groups.

Interventions and referrals

- There were over 59,008 primary interventions provided during the 12 month period. Staff provided at least one intervention in the form of information and education on topics such as blood-borne viruses, vein care, safe disposal of syringes, drug-related topics, sexual health, and antenatal and parenting information on 38 per cent of service occasions.
- There were over 3,180 referrals provided by NSP staff during the 12-month period; two per cent of all occasions of service involved referrals.
- The top 3 referral destinations across the state were to drug and alcohol, sexual health services and hepatitis services.

Regional trends

- There were similar patterns in gender and age distribution throughout the state; however Central Area recorded the highest attendance of females, with almost 29 per cent of service occasions being for females, compared with 26 per cent State-wide.
- Service occasions associated with amphetamine, total opioids, heroin and morphine differed according to area. Total opioid use was more prevalent in Brisbane City than all other areas (60% v 52%)
- Northern area displayed distinctively different drug use trends to other areas: amphetamine use remained higher than total opioid use throughout the 12 month period. Morphine use comprised the majority of opioid-related service occasions (76%), while heroin accounted for less than 11 per cent of service occasions.

3. Statewide Data Profile

3.1 Occasions of Service

There were 155,235 occasions of service for year 2008 across the 22 participating NSPs; this was an increase over the 145,815 occasions of service observed across the 20 NSPs for year 2007 (December 2006 to November 2007) (Figure 1). The growth can be attributed to increases in service occasions among programs in Southern, Central and Northern Areas, larger programs in Brisbane city (Biala & QuIHN Brisbane) did not contribute to this increase.

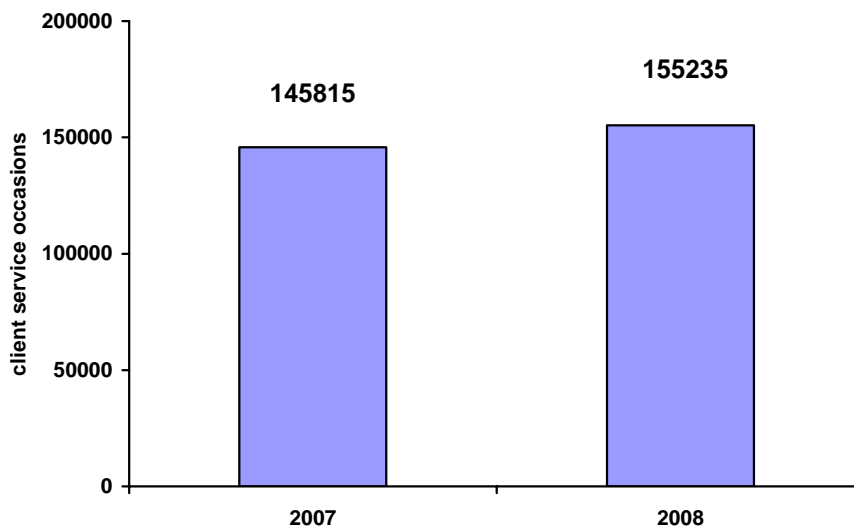


Figure 1: Total service occasions across participating NSPs, 2007-08

3.2 Client Demographics

3.2.1 Client Age

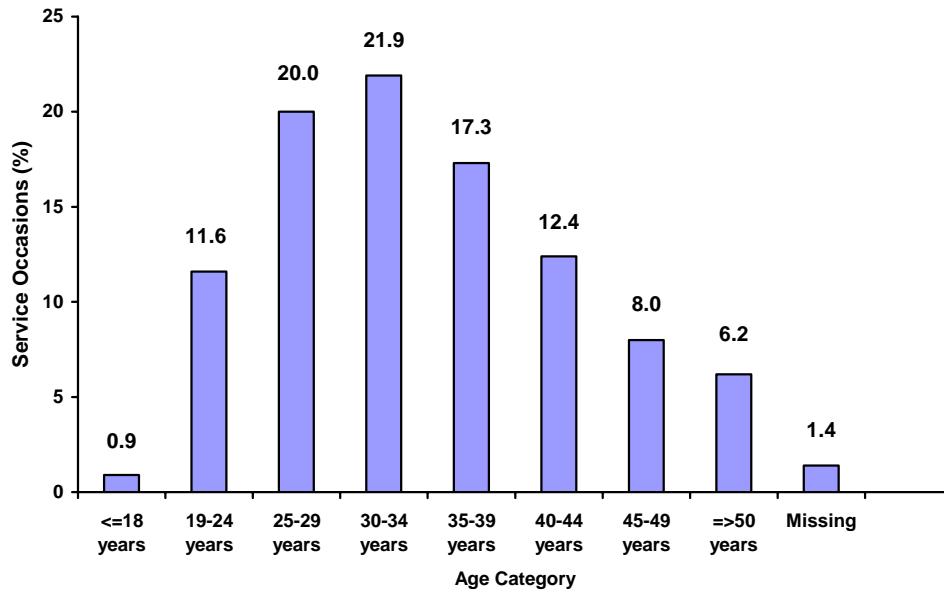


Figure 2: Service occasions by age category, 2008, (N=155,235)

The average age of clients was 35 years (SD = 11), with the 30-34 year age group comprising the largest proportion of clients (22%) (Figure 2). The 25-29 age group were the second largest group, followed by 35-39 year olds. Clients aged under 18 years comprised less than 1 per cent of all clients, while clients under the age of 25 comprised 12 per cent..

Table 1. Per cent of service occasions related to drug type, by age group (N=155,235)

Drug Type (%)	Total	<=18	19-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	=>50	Missing
Amphetamines	35.8	51.0	45.3	39.4	38.5	36.7	32.1	24.0	21.2	9.8
Heroin	27.1	14.0	24.5	28.2	29.0	26.7	26.7	28.6	27.9	4.2
Morphine	15.8	12.2	11.8	13.3	13.5	17.7	20.2	21.1	20.4	4.9
Methadone	3.6	2.6	2.0	3.7	3.1	3.8	4.3	5.3	5.3	1.7
Buprenorphine	1.7	0.7	1.1	3.0	2.4	1.1	1.0	1.2	0.5	0.2
Suboxone	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.0
Other opioids	2.2	0.6	0.9	1.9	2.0	2.3	3.1	3.8	3.6	0.5
Steroids	2.6	5.9	6.3	3.4	2.3	1.9	1.0	1.22	1.0	1.2
Benzodiazepines	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0
Ecstasy	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0
Cocaine	0.7	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.2	0.2
All other categories*	2.4	2.5	1.9	1.8	2.3	2.4	2.8	2.7	5.2	2.7
Missing	6.8	8.9	4.3	3.4	4.6	5.7	7.0	10.6	12.7	69.1
Total in each age group (n)	155235	1464	18016	31073	34104	26850	19282	12500	9711	2235

* Includes all other substance types (other stimulants, HGH, vitamin B, insulin, hallucinogens, ketamine, GHB, other drug)

Table 1 displays the number of service occasions by age group for common drugs used. Comparing all drug types, it can be seen that amphetamines accounted for a majority of service occasions across all age groups except for those aged greater than 45 years. Amphetamine was reported as being used in 51 per cent of service occasions involving clients aged 18 years and under, while for the 19-24 and 25-29 year olds this drug was used on fewer occasions (45% and 39% respectively). For clients aged over 45 years, heroin use accounted for the majority of service occasions (28%) followed by amphetamines (23%) and morphines (21%). Steroid use was more prevalent in the younger age group.

3.2.2 Client Gender

Of the 155,235 service occasions, 74 per cent (n = 114,661) were for male clients and 25 per cent (n = 39,604) were for female clients. In less than 1 per cent (n = 970) of cases this information was missing or not stated. Compared with males, a higher proportion of female clients were less than 30 years of age.

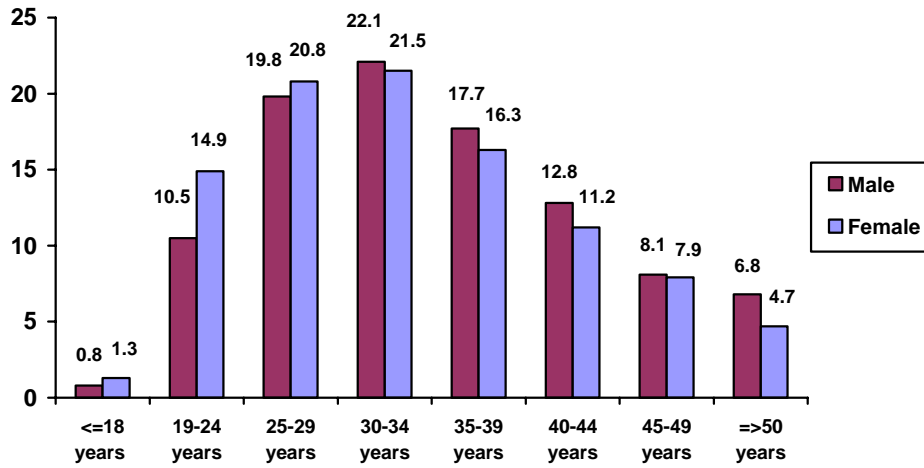


Figure 3: Service occasions by age category, 2008 (N=155,235)

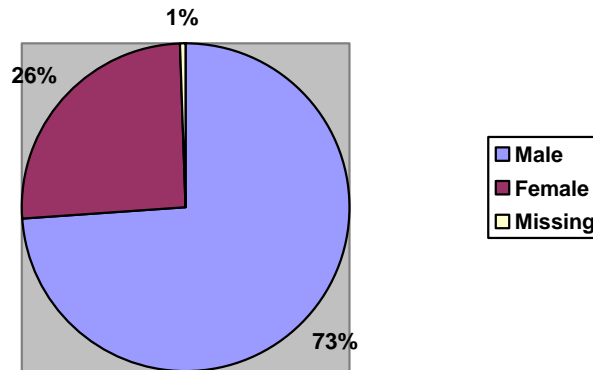


Figure 4: Service occasions by gender, 2008 (N=155,235)

3.3 Drug Trends

3.3.1 Service Occasions Related to Male and Female Drug Use

Figure 5 displays service occasions related to male and female drug use, by drug type. State-wide, the three most commonly used drug types were the same for males and females. Amphetamine accounted for 38 per cent of male and 35 per cent female occasions of service. Heroin use was quite similar in both males and females with 27 per cent and 28 per cent of service occasions respectively, morphine use was slightly higher in males compared with females (16.4% vs. 14.2%). A key difference between male and female drug use was the occurrence of steroid use; as expected, use of this substance was much higher in male clients (3.3% of male vs. 0.4% of female service occasions).

The 'All Other' category in this figure encompasses all other drug types (other stimulants, HGH, Vitamin B, insulin, hallucinogens, ketamine, GHB). The missing and not applicable categories related to this category comprised less than 2 per cent of all service occasions.

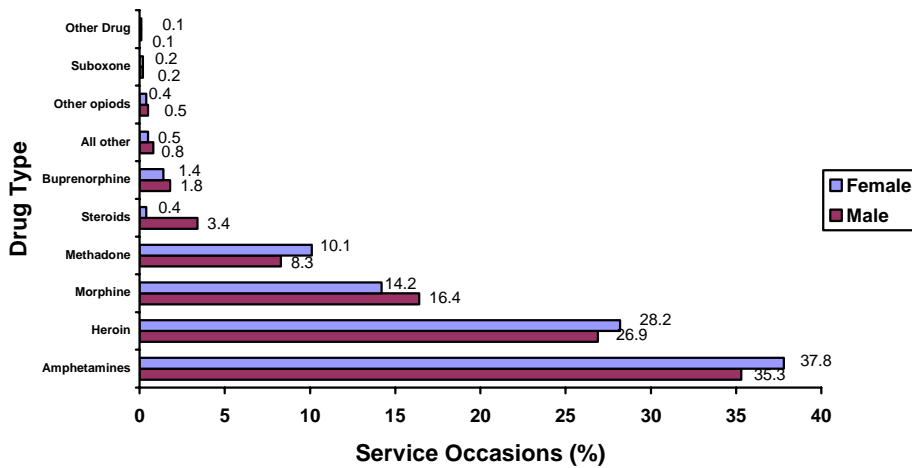


Figure 5: Service occasions related to male and female drug use, 2008 (N=153,465)

3.3.2 Amphetamine Subtypes

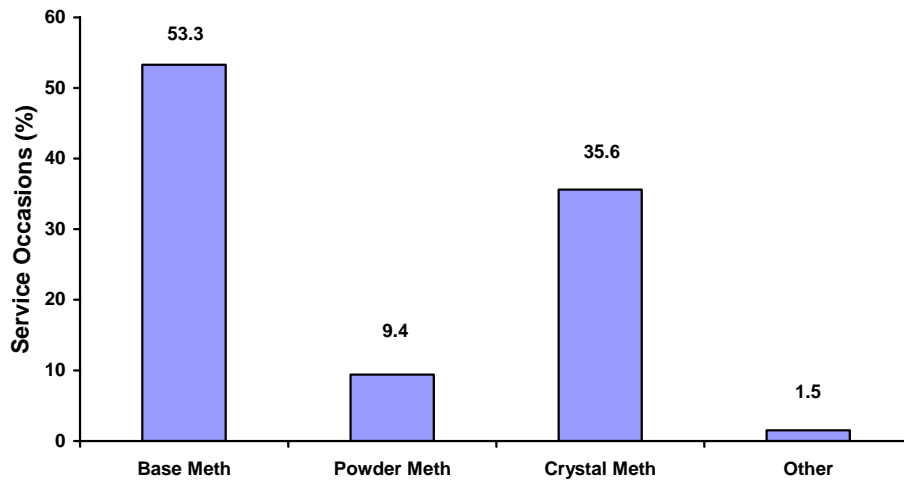


Figure 6: Per cent of service occasions for each amphetamine sub-type (where specified) 2008, (N=30,736)

The Queensland minimum data set has five categories for recording amphetamine use. A broad amphetamines code is entered when clients are unsure of the exact type of amphetamine they will be using. The four other amphetamine categories (base, powder, crystal, and other) are categories used when clients are aware of and report the type of amphetamine they will be using. The 'Other' amphetamine code may be used for liquid and pill forms of this substance as well as amphetamine sulphate.

Of the 55,697 occasions of service related to all amphetamine use, more than half (55%) were recorded as specific amphetamine types. Figure 5 displays the breakdown of amphetamine types on occasions when specific amphetamine types were reported. Base (53%) followed by crystal methamphetamine (36%) were the most common forms used.

3.3.3 Opioid related service occasions

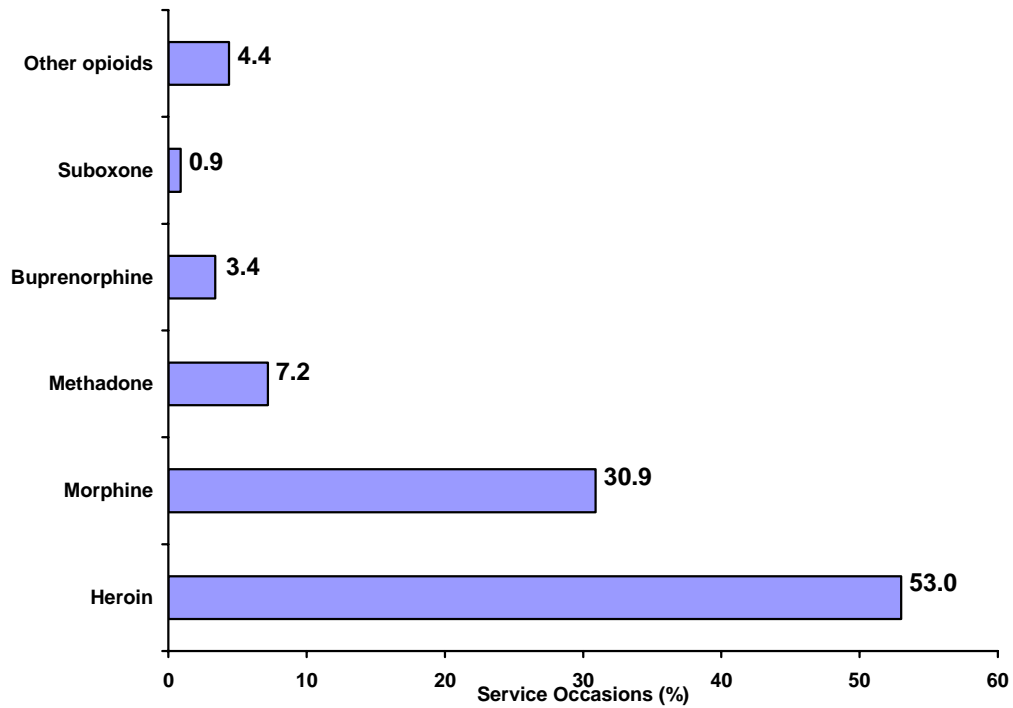


Figure 7: Percentage breakdown of opioid-related service occasions, 2008, (N=79,274)

Figure 7 displays the percentage breakdown of service occasions related to all opioid use. Heroin and morphine, comprising over 85 per cent of opioid-related service occasions were the most commonly used opioids throughout this period.

3.4 Equipment Ordering and Distribution

3.4.1 Equipment Ordering

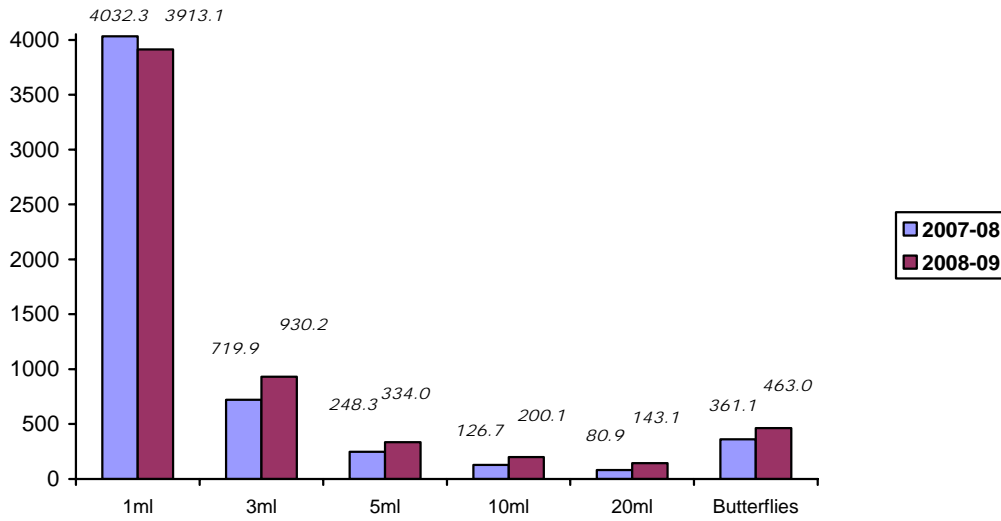


Figure 7: Total equipment ordered, Financial Year 2007-08 & 2008-09 (in thousands of units)

The total for each equipment type ordered by all primary and secondary NSP sites in Queensland for financial years 2007-08 and 2008-09 is displayed in Figure 7. One *ml* syringes were the most commonly ordered item among syringes followed by 3 *ml* syringes. The ordering data for 1 *ml* and 3 *ml* syringes also include those that were ordered as vending machine kits; the total of 1 *ml* and 3 *ml* syringes dispensed as vending machine kits can be observed in (Figure 8).

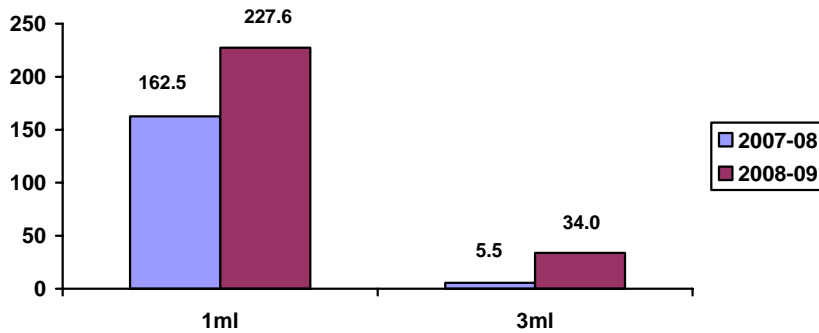


Figure 8: Total equipment ordered as Vending Kits, Financial Year 2007-08 & 2008-09 (in thousands of units)

3.4.2 Equipment Distributed

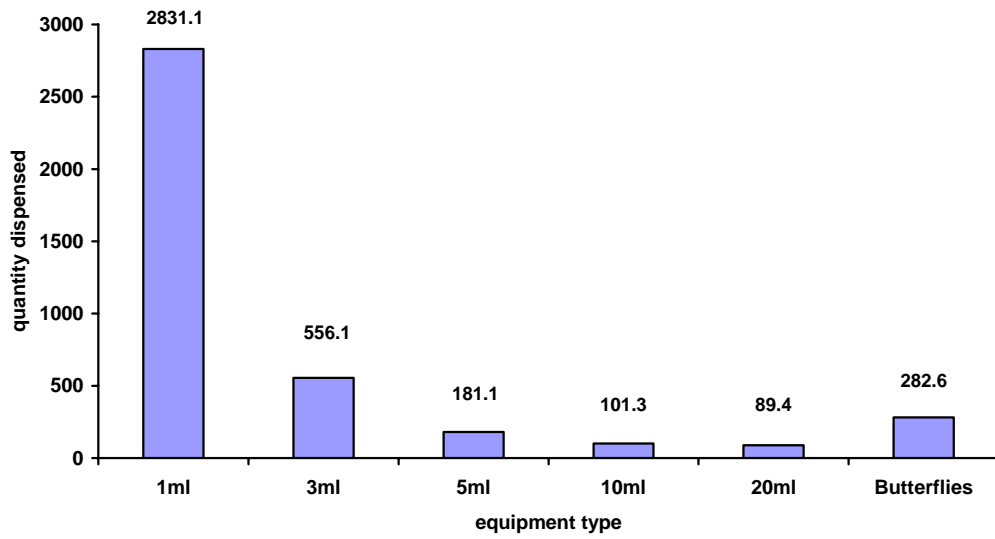


Figure 9: Total equipment distributed, 2008 (in thousands of units)

Total distribution for each equipment type is displayed in Figure 9. One *ml* syringes were the most commonly dispensed item, comprising 72 per cent of all equipment distributed followed by 3 *ml* syringes which accounted for 14 per cent.

3.5 Interventions Provided

NSP interventions comprise information and education on topics such as blood-borne viruses (BBV), vein care and safe injecting practices, safe disposal of syringes, drug-related topics, sexual health and antenatal information. Interventions also include ‘client-focussed discussion’. Client-focussed discussion comprises any discussion between the client and staff member focussed upon the client’s health or other needs, and includes rapport-building.

Up to three different interventions can be recorded for each service occasion, but for the purpose of analysis only the primary intervention is included. Figure 10 displays the primary interventions provided across all sites, from January 2008 to December 2008.

Staff provided a primary intervention on 38 per cent of service occasions. The top five interventions provided across the state were safe disposal information and education, client-focussed discussion, vein care, drug information and blood borne virus information. The prominence of these interventions reflects the health needs and concerns of clients and their communities. The ‘Other info’ category encompasses site-specific interventions not covered by the minimum dataset codes.

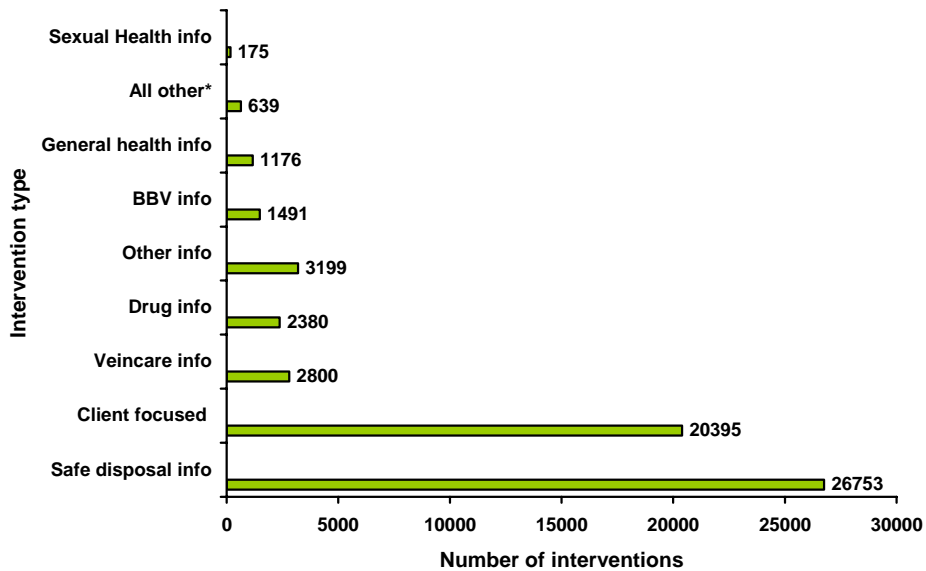


Figure 10: Type of interventions provided, 2008, (N=59,008)

*Includes antenatal education and condom/dam provision

3.6 Referrals to Services

As part of an NSP occasion of service a client may be referred to a service. There were 3,180 referrals provided by NSP staff during the 12-month period; two per cent of all occasions of service involved referrals. Figure 11 displays the total number of referrals made to each destination. 'Other' referrals include site-specific referrals not covered by the minimum dataset codes.

The top four referral destinations across the state (excluding the 'Other' category) were referrals to drug and alcohol, sexual health services, hepatitis and medical services. Medical services include treatment (by nurses or medical practitioners) for bacterial infections and vascular disease, in addition to any other medical services not elsewhere classified.

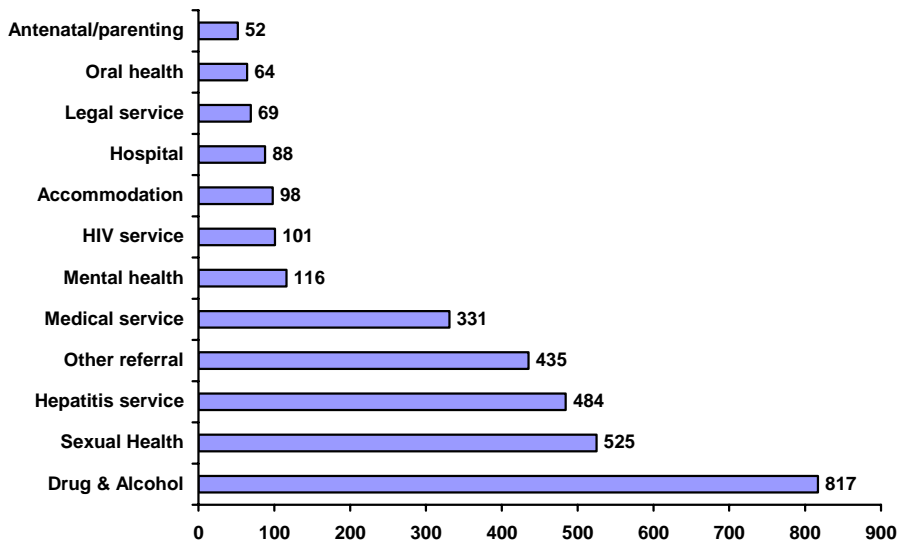


Figure 11: Type of referrals provided, 2008, (N=3,180)

Referrals are characterized according to referral type (internal/external and active/passive). Internal referrals include any referrals made to services within the premises where the NSP is located, while external referrals are those that are external to these premises. Referrals are also recorded as active or passive. An active referral occurs when NSP staff arranges a referral by writing a letter, phoning for an appointment, or having face-to-face contact with the staff member to whom the client is being referred. A referral is considered passive when the client is provided with agency information but is not assisted to make an appointment with the agency.

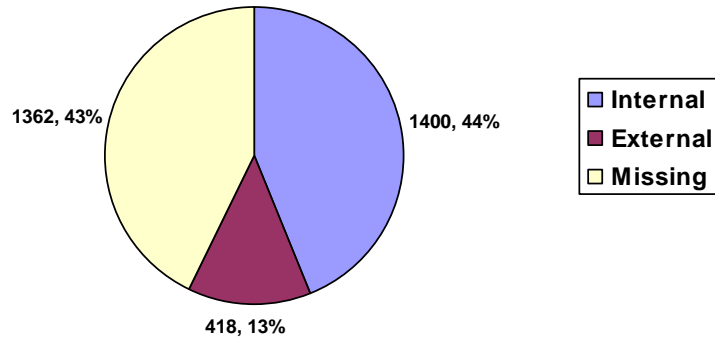


Figure 12: Percent of internal and external referrals, 2008, (N=3,180)

Figures 12 and 13, display the breakdown of internal and external referrals, and active and passive referrals respectively. There was not much variance in the number of internal and external referrals; internal, informal referrals were the most commonly provided referral type.

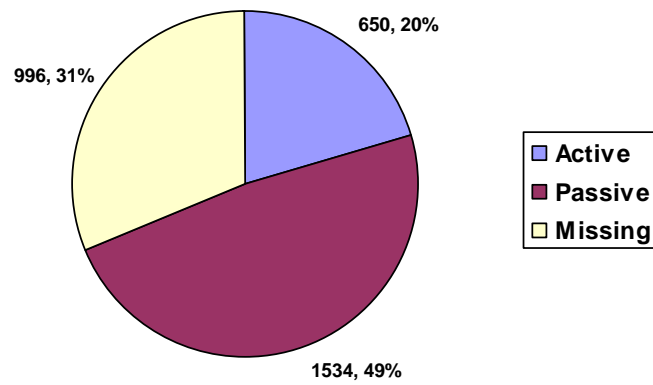


Figure 13: Percent of active and passive referrals, 2008, (N=3,180)

4. Regional Profiles

4.1 Brisbane City

- From January 2008 to December 2008 there were 70779 occasions of service conducted in the Brisbane City region (comprising Biala and QuIHN Brisbane).

4.1.1 Client Gender

- Brisbane City's male attendance (76.6%) was slightly higher than state-wide attendance (73.8%).
- 23.3 per cent of clients attending were female.

4.1.2 Client Age

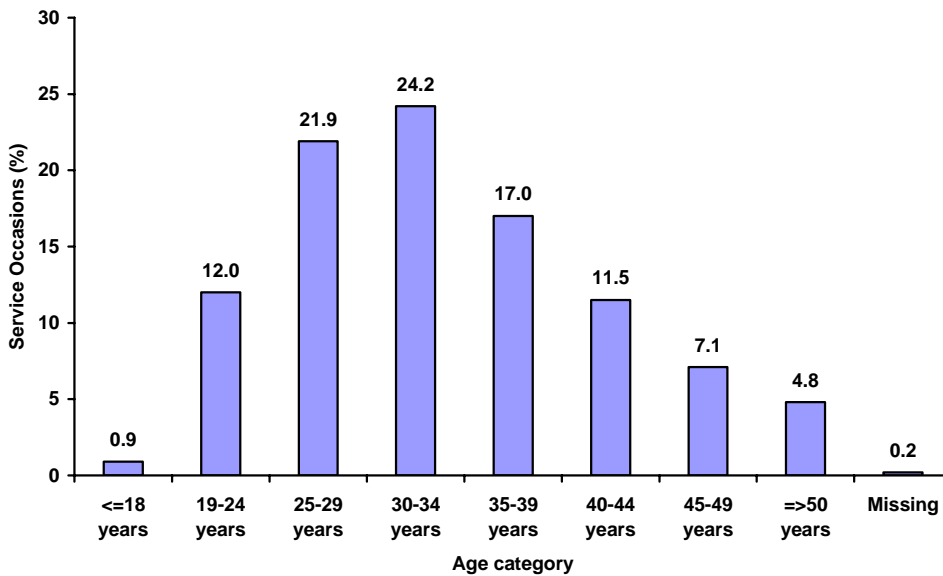


Figure 14: Brisbane City: Age distribution, 2008, (N=70,779)

- The average age of clients attending was 33.6 years (SD = 8.9), lower than the State-wide mean of 35 years (SD = 11), consistent with State-wide patterns, the 26-35 age group comprised the largest proportion of clients attending. Almost 50 per cent (48%) of service occasions were for clients in this age group.

4.1.3 Drug Trends

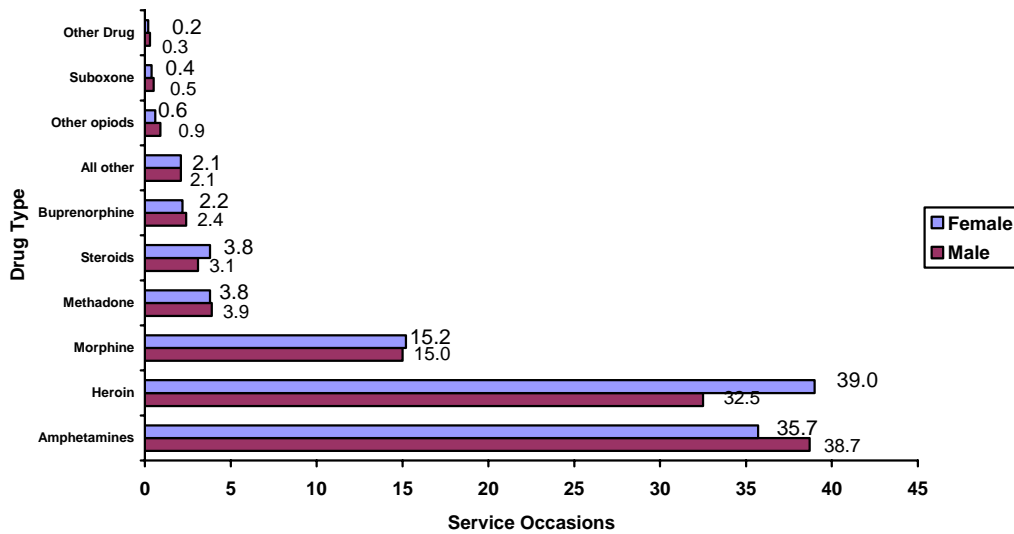


Figure 15: Brisbane City: Service occasions related to male and female drug use, 2008, (N=69,918)

- Consistent with State-wide trends, for males and females, service occasions related to amphetamine, heroin, and morphine use were more prevalent than for any other drug types.
- Consistent with State-wide data, approximately 38 per cent of male and 35 per cent of female service occasions were related to amphetamines, while heroin was reported by a greater number of females (39%) when compared to the males (32.5%) and accounted for about one third (33.6%) of service occasions, and morphine approximately 15 per cent.

4.1.4 Interventions Provided

Table 2. Brisbane City: Interventions provided, January 2008 to December 2008

Information/Education	Interventions
Safe Disposal	11312
Client-focussed Discussion	6667
Drug Information	1446
Veincare	1770
BBV	462
Other	2122
General Health	465
Sexual Health	53
Condom/dam provision	222
Antenatal	14
Total interventions	24533

- On 34.6 per cent of service occasions, at least one intervention was provided to clients attending Brisbane City NSPs.
- Information on the safe disposal of equipment was provided most often, followed by client-focussed discussion, drug information, vein care and blood borne virus information and education.

4.1.5 Referrals to Services

Table 3. Brisbane City: Referrals provided, January 2008 to December 2008

Services	Referrals
Drug Alcohol	420
Hepatitis	311
Medical	206
Other	300
Sexual Health	49
Mental Health	83
Accommodation	41
HIV/AIDS	13
Legal	13
Antenatal	7
Hospital	14
Oral Health	5
Total Referrals	1462

- Referrals to drug and alcohol, hepatitis and medical services were provided more frequently than any other referrals.

4.2 Central Area

- From January 2008 to December 2008, Central Area (comprising Rockhampton ATODS, Bundaberg ATODS, Caboolture Community Health, Redcliffe Community Health, Sunshine Coast ATODS and QuIHN Sunshine Coast) conducted 21,759 occasions of service.

4.2.1 Client Gender

- Female attendance in this region was higher than State-wide attendance (28.9% versus 25.5%) and all other regions.
- Seventy per cent (70.6%) of service occasions were for male clients.

4.2.2 Client Age

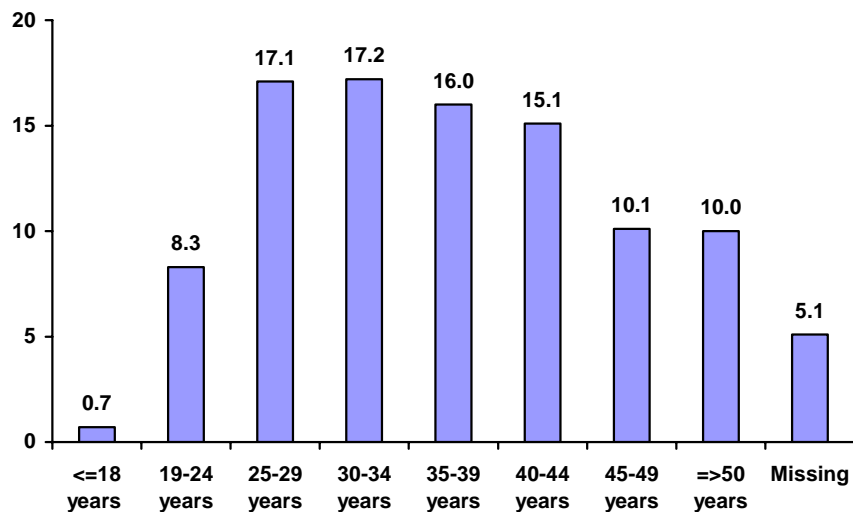


Figure 16: Central Area: Age distribution, 2008, (N=21,759)

- The average age of clients was 39.3 years (SD=16.6), about four years older than the State average.
- Consistent with State-wide data, the 26-35 age group made up the largest proportion of client presentations.

4.2.3 Drug Trends

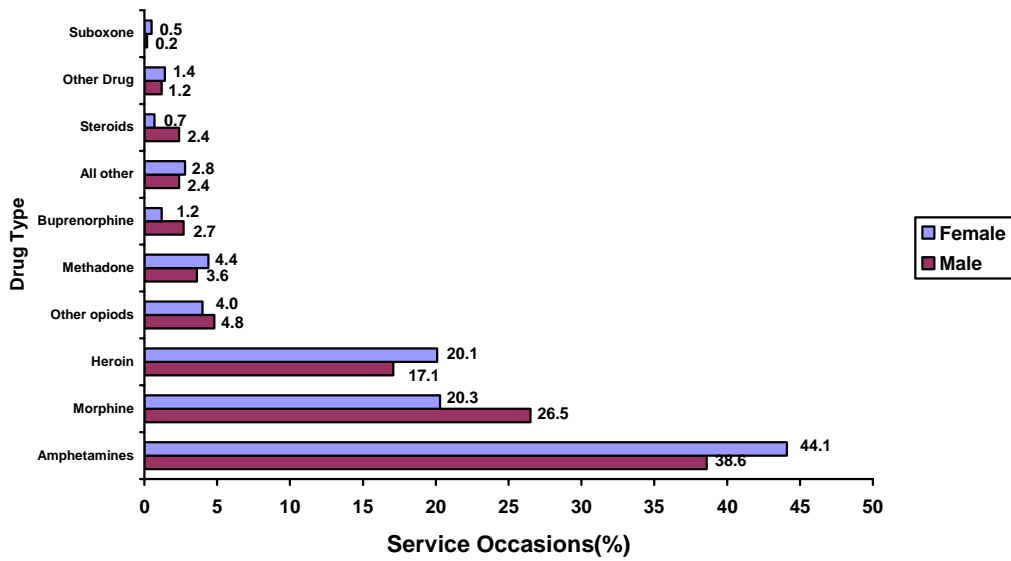


Figure 17: Central Area: Service occasions related to male and female drug use, 2008, (N=17,081)

- Amphetamine use was higher than State-wide patterns of use with 39 % of male and 44 % of female service occasions.
- The use of heroin was lower for males and females when compared to State-wide data (17.1% Vs 26.9% & 20.1% Vs 28.2% respectively); also service occasions related to morphine was higher for both males (26.5%) and females (20.3%) in comparison to State-wide data.

4.2.4 Interventions Provided

Table 4. Central Area: Interventions provided, January 2008 to December 2008

Information/Education	Interventions
Safe Disposal	5801
Client-focussed Discussion	749
Veincare	323
BBV	272
Drug	214
Other	186
Condom/dam provision	105
General Health	97
Sexual Health	22
Antenatal	0
Total Interventions	7769

- Information and education was provided to clients on approximately 36 per cent of service occasions, particularly education related to safe disposal of equipment, client-focussed discussion, veincare, blood borne viruses and safe drug use general health

4.2.5 Referrals Provided

Table 5. Central Area: Referrals provided, January 2008 to December 2008

Referral to Services	Referrals
Drug Alcohol	82
Oral Health	24
Other	24
Hepatitis	21
Medical	14
Sexual Health	11
Accommodation	0
Antenatal	5
Mental Health	5
Legal	4
HIV/AIDS	3
Hospital	0
Total Referrals	193

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- Referrals to oral health, drug and alcohol, medical and hepatitis services were more prevalent than to any other referral services.
- In contrast to other regions, referrals to oral health was higher in comparison to state-wide patterns (12% Vs 2%)

4.3 Northern Area

- From January 2008 to December 2008, the Northern Area (comprising Cairns ATODS, Mackay ATODS, Townsville, North Ward Community Health (Townsville), Innisfail Community Health and Cairns Youth Link) conducted 11,452 occasions of service.

4.3.1 Client Gender

- Male and female attendance was not in contrast to State-wide attendance; with 73 per cent of service occasions being for males and 27 per cent for females.

4.3.2 Client Age

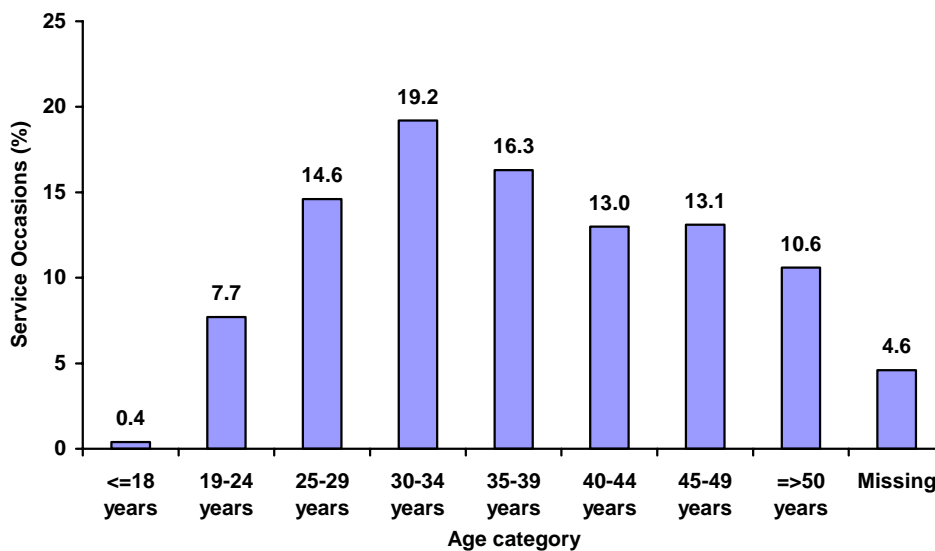


Figure 18: Northern Area: Age distribution, 2008, (N=11,452)

- The average age of clients attending was 39.7 years (SD=15.9), about one year higher than the State-wide average.
- The age distribution for this region was divergent from the State-wide distribution, there were lower proportions of 18-25 and 26-35 year olds and higher attendance of clients in the 46-55 year olds.

4.3.3 Drug Trends

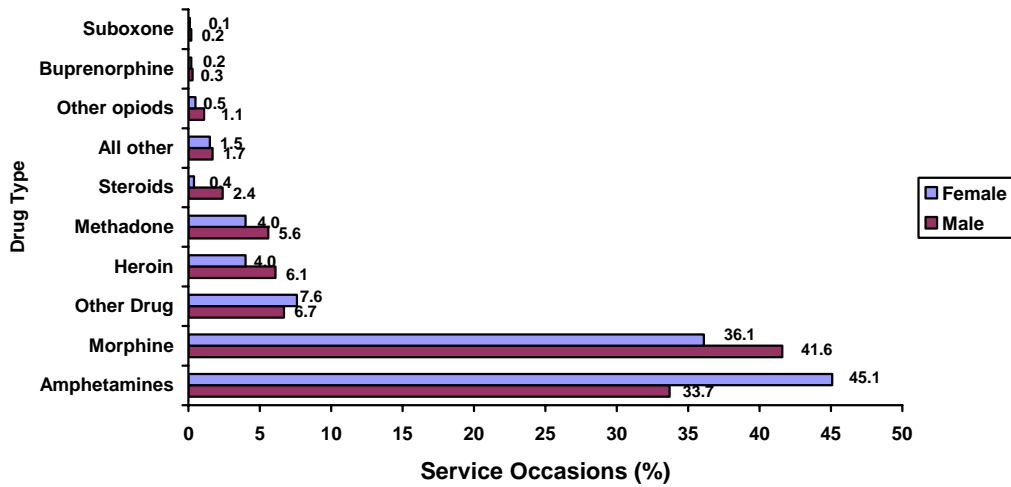


Figure 19: Northern Area: Service occasions related to male and female drug use, 2008, (N=7,353)

- For females, amphetamine-related service occasions (45.1%) were more common than service occasions for any other drug type, while morphine (41.6%) was the most common drug reported by males.
- Morphine related service occasions were higher for both males and females (41.6% & 36.1% respectively, higher than the 15 per cent for males and females State-wide.
- Heroin use in the Northern Area is substantially lower than State-wide data; it accounts for approximately 5 per cent of male and female service occasions, compared to approximately 25% of male and female service occasions State-wide.

4.3.4 Interventions Provided

Table 6. Northern Area: Interventions provided, January 2008 to December 2008

Information/Education	Interventions
Client-focussed Discussion	2507
Safe Disposal	928
Other	847
General Health	443
Drug	435
Veincare	353
BBV	268
Condom/dam provision	172
Sexual Health	84
Antenatal	45
Total Interventions	6082

- At least one intervention was provided on 53 per cent of service occasions.
- After client-focussed discussion, safe disposal, and general health education were the most common interventions provided.

4.3.5 Referrals to Services

Table 7. Northern Area: Referrals provided, January 2008 to December 2008

Referral to Services	Referral
Sexual Health	140
Drug & Alcohol	90
Medical	77
Other	68
Hepatitis	57
HIV/AIDS	48
Hospital	47
Accommodation	42
Mental Health	14
Oral Health	24
Legal	21
Antenatal	6
Total Referrals	634

- Referrals to sexual health, drug and alcohol, medical and hepatitis services were the most frequently provided referrals in the Northern Area.
- Referrals to sexual health made up 22 per cent of the referrals provided across the Northern Area and this was higher than the State wide pattern of 18 per cent.

4.4 Southern Area

- There were a total of 51,245 occasions of service conducted in this region (comprising Beenleigh Community Health, Gold Coast ATODS, Logan Youth & Family Services, Logan Central Community Health, Toowoomba Sexual Health, Ipswich Sexual Health, Inala ATODS, Palm Beach Community Health, and QuIHN Gold Coast) from January 2008 to December 2008.

4.4.1 Client Gender

- Female attendance in this region was slightly higher than State-wide (26.8% vs. 25.5%). Males comprised 72 per cent of clients attending.

4.4.2 Client Age

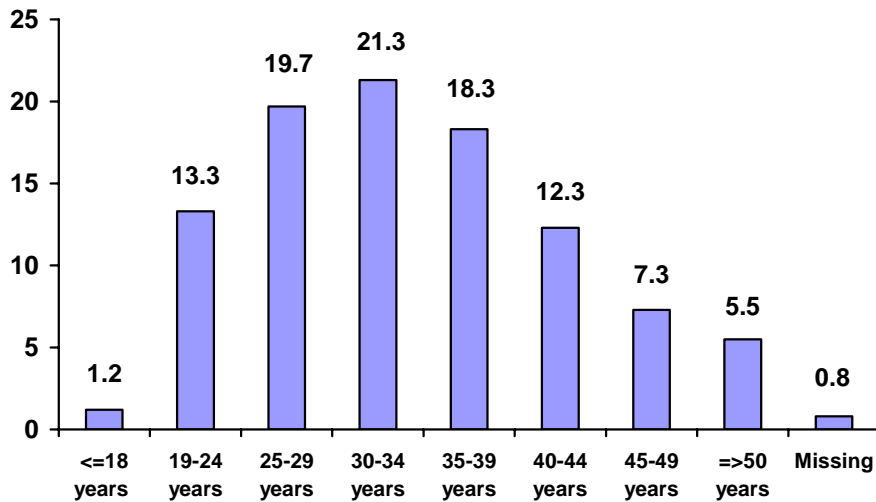


Figure 20: Southern Area: Age distribution, 2008, (N=51,245)

- The average age of clients attending was 34.2 years (SD=10.4), slightly lower than the State-wide average age of 35.1 years (SD=11.6).
- The age distribution for this region was very similar to the State-wide distribution; 26-35 year olds comprised the largest proportion of clients attending followed by 36-45 and 18-25 year olds.

4.4.3 Drug Trends

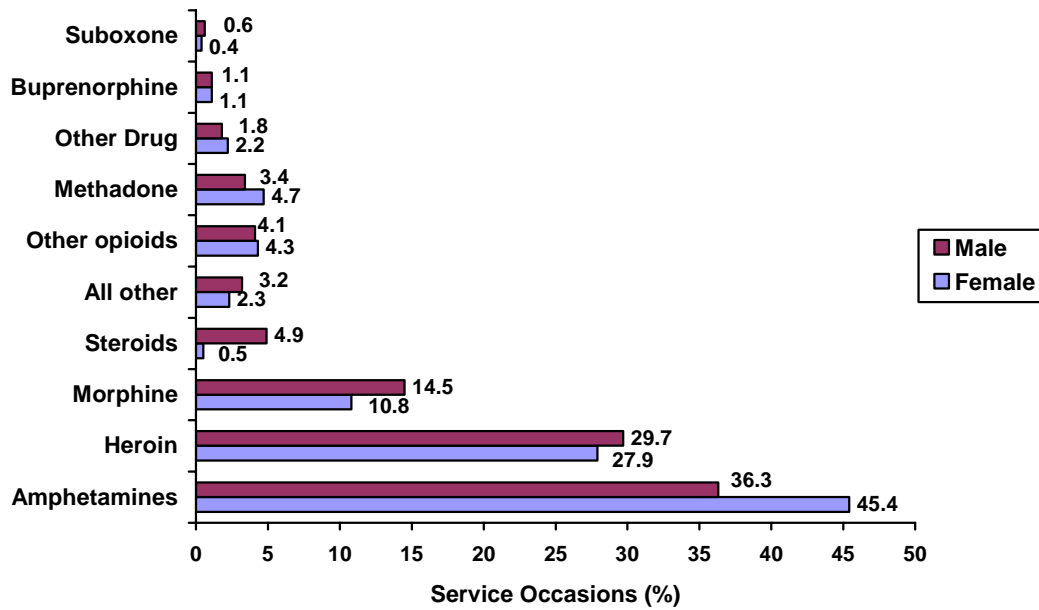


Figure 21: Southern Area: Service occasions related to male and female drug use, 2008, (N=49,229)

- For Southern Area, the most commonly used drug types for males and females were amphetamines, heroin and morphine, consistent with State-wide data.
- Proportions of males using these drug types were also consistent with State-wide data: approximately 35 per cent of service occasions were related to amphetamine use, 29 per cent were heroin related and 14 per cent were morphine related.
- Female service occasions for amphetamine use were slightly higher than for males (and State-wide use for females) at 44.6 per cent, while morphine occasions were lower than State-wide trends at approximately 10 per cent.

4.4.4 Interventions Provided

Table 8. Southern Area: Interventions provided, January 2008 to December 2008

Information/Education	Interventions
Client-focussed Discussion	10472
Safe Disposal	8712
BBV	489
Drug	285
Veincare	354
Condom/dam provision	76
General Health	171
Other	44
Sexual Health	16
Antenatal	5
Total Interventions	20624

- On 35 per cent of service occasions, at least one intervention was provided.
- Client-focussed discussion occurred most frequently, followed by safe disposal, blood borne virus education, drug-related information and vein care.

4.4.5 Referrals to Services

Table 9. Southern Area: Referrals provided, January 2008 to December 2008

Referral to Services	Referrals
Drug & Alcohol	225
Sexual Health	325
Other	43
Medical	34
Accommodation	15
Hepatitis	95
Antenatal	34
Legal	21
HIV/AIDS	37
Mental Health	14
Oral Health	21
Hospital	27
Total Referrals	891

- Drug and alcohol services were the most common referral destination that was specified, followed by sexual health, medical and accommodation services.

5. Discussion of QMDS-NSP findings

5.1 The minimum data set

The Queensland Minimum Data Set for Needle and Syringe Programs (QMDS-NSP) collection of standardised data began in December 2006 with 20 programs (including three QuIHN sites) sending in monthly data, since then the numbers have increased with 22 programs collecting data between January and December 2008.

The needle and syringe provision of these 22 sites comprised of 82% of the State-wide provision at the end of 2008. This report examines the data over the 12-month period from January 2008 to December 2008 inclusive.

The information generated through data collected by the QMDS-NSP contributes to efforts to reduce the spread of blood borne viruses including HIV and hepatitis C. The improved standardised collection of data throughout Queensland enables more accurate monitoring of NSP service provision, including the distribution of sterile injection equipment. Trends in the demand for sterile injecting equipment in a health service district can readily be ascertained, and considered in the context of current and emerging drug use patterns and service needs of the target population.

The QMDS-NSP recognises the important role of NSPs as the primary contact point the health system has with people who inject drugs. For this reason the data set emphasises the clear reporting of the types of interventions and referrals provided by NSPs, including the quality of the referrals provided.

The data set also specifies the different types of injecting equipment distributed. This information in conjunction with clients' reported use of specific types of drugs and information about equipment usage can increase our understanding of clients' drug use behaviour and exposure to health risks.

5.2 Trends in service access

There were 155,235 occasions of service from January 2008 to December 2008, this was an increase from the 145,815 occasions of service across the 20 participating NSPs reported between December 2006 and November 2007. The 6.5 per cent growth underscores the need for continuing to develop a strategic regional focus for the diversification and enhancement of program delivery in Queensland.

5.3 Drug use patterns and trends

There are a number of key findings in terms of drug use patterns. The use of all opioids have overtaken the levels of amphetamine use, and the consistent upward trend throughout the 12 months presents the likelihood of further growth. Heroin (54%) and morphine (31%) made up 85 per cent of opioid related occasions of service. Methadone (7%) was the OTP drug most often reported by clients.

Base methamphetamine continued to be the type of amphetamine most often reported by clients, although clients were frequently unsure of what type they used; on 45 per cent of amphetamine-related service occasions the client did not report a specific type of amphetamine.

Service occasions for steroid use comprised 4 per cent of the occasions of service with males outnumbering the females.

5.4 Age, gender and drug use

Based on client data, the average age of injectors in Queensland continues to increase. The average age of clients was 35 years (SD = 11), with the 26-35 age group comprising the largest proportion of clients (44%).

Amphetamine and steroid use were clearly more prevalent in the younger age group. In 45 per cent of service occasions involving 18-25 year olds, amphetamine was reported by clients as the drug they intended to use.

The majority of NSP clients are male, which is consistent with established patterns of program utilisation. Of the 155,235 service occasions, three-quarters (n = 114,661) were for male clients and one-quarter (n = 39,604) were for female clients.

5.5 Injecting equipment and drug use

The QMDS-NSP shows the state-wide distribution trends for different types of injection equipment. Amphetamine-related service occasions were associated with the highest distribution of 1ml needles and syringes. Morphine-related service occasions were associated with the highest distribution of 3, 5, and 10ml syringes, as well as butterflies and wheel filters. Twenty ml syringes were most often distributed for methadone use. Despite steroid-related service occasions comprising only 3.6 per cent of all service occasions, 3ml syringe distribution for this substance was second only to morphine.

In total, far more butterflies were dispensed for morphine-related service occasions than for occasions related to any other opioid type. However, looking at butterfly distribution as a proportion of service occasions for each opioid type, a higher number of butterflies per occasion of service were distributed for methadone use, followed by morphine and other opioids.

5.6 Interventions

The intervention data indicate that primary NSPs perform a major role in delivering information and education to clients to reduce injection-related harm, and also demonstrate the unique and sentinel position of NSPs in the healthcare system, in terms of being able to build trust and rapport with the target population.

NSP interventions comprise information and education on topics such as blood-borne viruses (BBV), vein care and safe injecting practices, safe disposal of syringes, drug-related topics, sexual health and provision of condoms and dams, and antenatal and parenting information. Interventions also include 'client-focussed discussion'. Client-focussed discussion comprises any

discussion between the client and staff member focussed upon the client's health or other needs, and includes rapport-building.

Staff provided a primary intervention on 38 per cent of service occasions. The top five interventions provided across the state were safe disposal information and education, client-focussed discussion, vein care, drug information and blood borne virus information. The prominence of these interventions reflects the health needs and concerns of clients and their communities.

5.7 Referral activity

As part of an NSP occasion of service a client may be referred to a service. There were 3,180 referrals provided by NSP staff during the 12-month period; two per cent of all occasions of service involved referrals.

The top four referral destinations across the state (excluding the 'Other' category) were referrals to drug and alcohol, sexual health services, hepatitis and medical, and. Medical services include treatment (by nurses or medical practitioners) for bacterial infections and vascular disease, in addition to any other medical services not elsewhere classified. There was not much variance in the number of internal and external referrals; internal, informal referrals were the most commonly provided referral type.

It is important to note that there is under reporting of referral activity across the programs, which is not surprising given the recent implementation of the QMDS-NSP. Consequently there is a need for ongoing data training and simplification of referral reporting, while retaining the capacity to report the quality of the referrals provided.

6. Australian NSP Survey

The Australian NSP survey monitors Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) antibody prevalence among injecting drug users in Australia. The information gathered annually through the survey is used to guide policy and planning for treatment, prevention and harm reduction services in Australia. In 2008, a total of 2270 people recruited through 52 NSP sites participated in the survey, of these 508 people and eight sites were in Queensland.

Data collected from the survey shows that national prevalence of HIV antibody has remained at 1.5% over the past 5 years, in contrast the prevalence of HIV antibody in Queensland has varied between a high of 2.4% and a low of 1.8% over the past five years (Figure 22). The national HCV antibody prevalence has been relatively high but stable at 62% across the past three years. In comparison the average HCV antibody prevalence over the past five years for Queensland is lower at 55% and this can be observed in Figure 23.

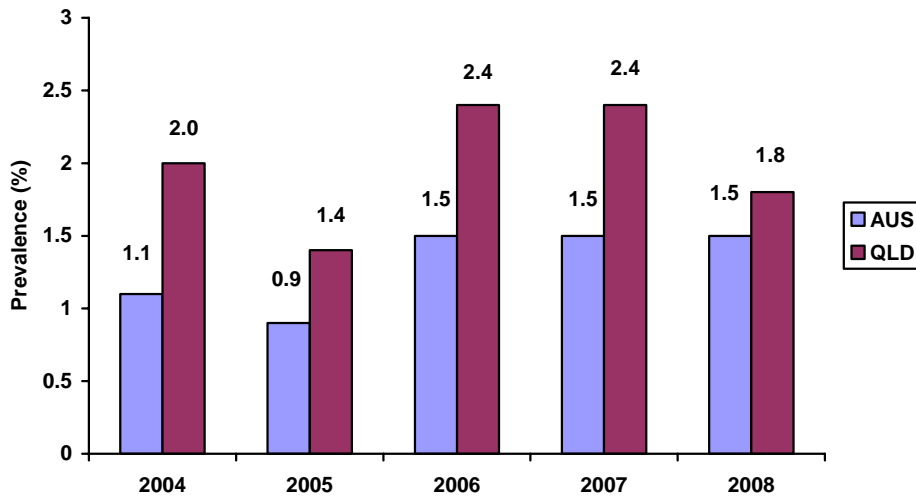


Figure 22: HIV antibody prevalence by year of survey, Australia & Queensland, 2004-2008

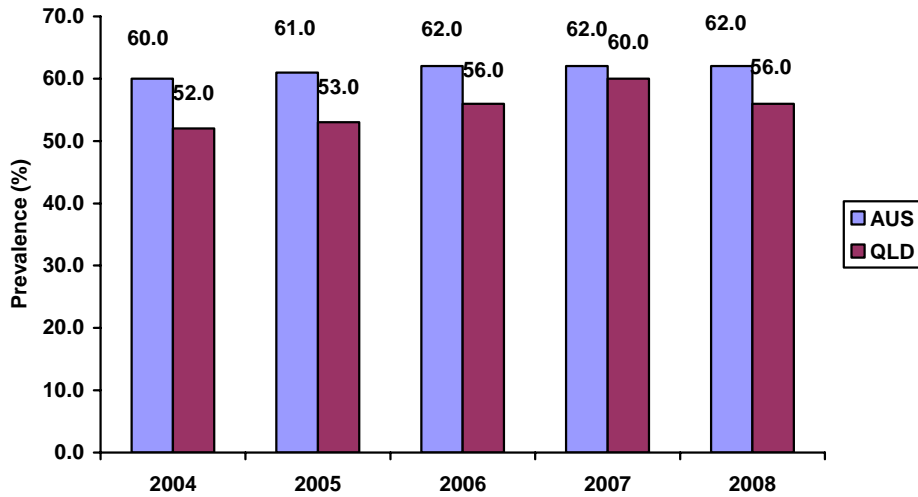


Figure 23: HCV antibody prevalence by year of survey, Australia & Queensland, 2004-2008

The median age of the participants at the time of the survey was 36 years for 2008 slightly greater than 33 years, the median age of the clients accessing NSP services in Queensland in 2008. The largest proportion of the NSP survey participants were from 30+ years age group followed by participants in the 25-29 years age group, over all five years (Figure 24). The proportion of participants aged less than 25 years has declined annually from 19% in 2004 to 9% in 2008 and this decrease can be observed in Figure 24. Similar data trends across the age categories can be observed for survey participants from Queensland.

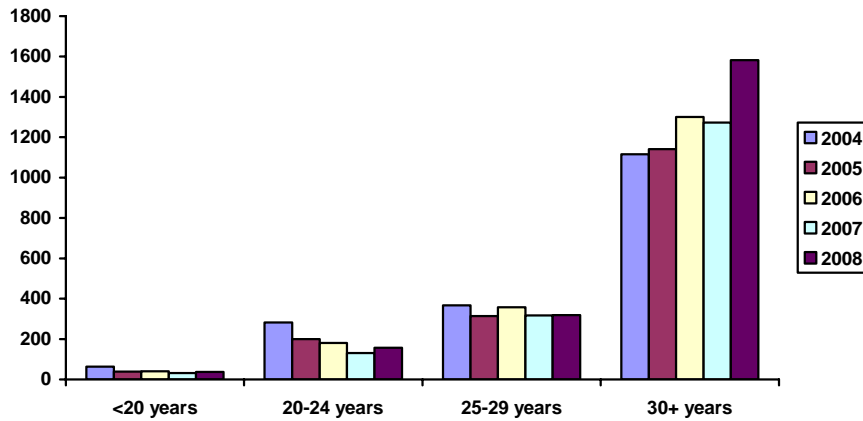


Figure 24: Age profile of respondents by year of survey, Australia, 2004-2008

The survey reported that respondents were predominantly males in the age group of 30+ years; the male to female ratio was approximately 1:2 over all five years. In contrast of the 155,235 service occasions across participating NSP's in Queensland, 73.8 per cent (n = 114,661) were for male clients and 25.5 per cent (n = 39,604) were for female clients. The gender differences among the respondents to the Australian NSP survey over a five year period can be observed in Figure 25.

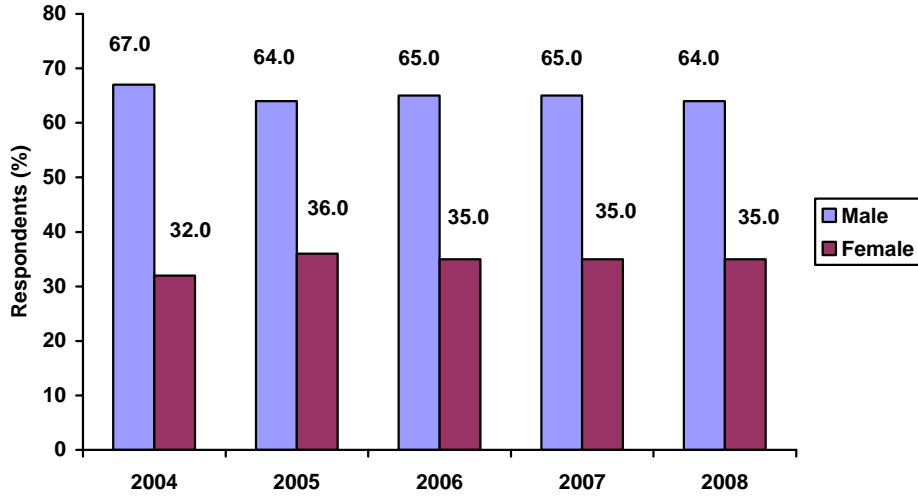


Figure 25: Gender profile of respondents by year of survey, Australia, 2004-2008

There was a 3% increase in the number of survey respondents identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people over the five year period. Data pertaining to Indigenous status was not mandatory under the QMDS-NSP data collection guidelines before 2010.

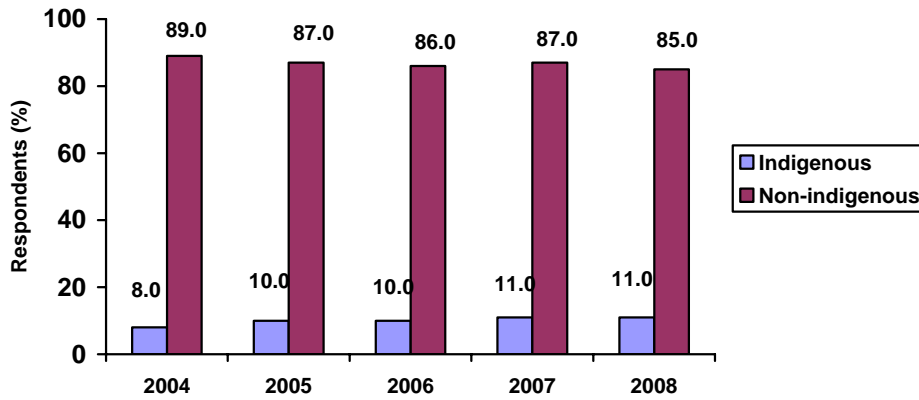


Figure 26: Indigenous status of respondents by year of survey, Australia, 2004-2008

According to the Australian NSP survey there was a shift in the last drug injected over the five year period with increases in reporting of heroin and morphine and decreases for amphetamines (Table 10). A similar trend can be observed in Table 1 for clients accessing NSP services in QLD in 2008 through data collected on their drug use through the QMDS-NSP. Opioid drugs made up the greater proportion among the drugs reported by the clients for primary dependency with a decline observed for amphetamines.

Table 10. Drug last injected by respondents by year of survey, Australia, 2004-2008

Drug Last Injected (%)	2004 N = 2035	2005 N= 1800	2006 N = 1961	2007 N = 1912	2008 N = 2270
Amphetamines	665 (33)	573 (32)	737 (38)	574 (30)	645 (28)
Heroin	738 (36)	618 (34)	510 (26)	593 (31)	781 (34)
Morphine	164 (8)	158 (9)	236 (12)	268 (14)	345 (15)
Methadone	135 (7)	166 (9)	180 (9)	187 (10)	192 (8)
Steroids	25 (1)	29 (1)	36 (2)	20 (1)	35 (2)
Bup/Subutex	42 (2)	56 (3)	101 (5)	99 (5)	104 (5)
Cocaine	52 (2)	53 (3)	44 (2)	33 (2)	53 (2)
Other	27 (2)	39 (2)	32 (2)	51 (3)	21 (1)

References:

- Queensland Minimum Data Set for Needle & Syringe Programs, **The first 12 months of data collection, December 2006 to November 2007. QNSP, Queensland Health, June 2008**
- Australian NSP Survey, National Data Report 2004-2008. **Prevalence of HIV, HCV and injecting and sexual behaviour among NSP attendees. National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, May 2009**