

2009 YOUNG PEOPLE IN CUSTODY HEALTH SURVEY FACT SHEET

Key Findings for Aboriginal Young People

No. of Aboriginal young people surveyed: 174 (48%)

Social determinants:

- 38% of Aboriginal young people had been placed in care before the age of 16 years (compared to 17% non-Aboriginal).
- 61% have had a parent in prison (30% non-Aboriginal).
- 42% were attending school prior to custody (34% non-Aboriginal).
- 17% were working in the six months prior to custody (34% non-Aboriginal).
- 25% had been bullied (30% non-Aboriginal) and 55% had bullied others (50% non-Aboriginal).

Mental health:

- 59% had any childhood abuse or trauma (61% non-Aboriginal).
- 20% have a possible intellectual disability (IQ 69 and under) (7% non-Aboriginal).
- 39% scored in the borderline intellectual disability range (IQ 70 to 79) (26% non-Aboriginal).
- 92% were found to have any psychological disorder (82% non-Aboriginal), with conduct disorder (66%; 53% non-Aboriginal), substance abuse (58%), alcohol abuse (45%) or ADHD (32%) the most common.
- 17% had thought about suicide and 11% had ever attempted suicide (15% and 9% non-Aboriginal).
- 20% had thought about self-harm and 18% had ever self-harmed (21% and 15% non-Aboriginal).

Offending behaviour:

- 85% had reported previous time in custody (73% non-Aboriginal).
- The average age of first time in custody was 13.6 years (14.9 non-Aboriginal).
- On average, Aboriginal young people had previously spent 6 times in custody (4 times non-Aboriginal).

Physical health:

- 36% were overweight or obese (49% non-Aboriginal).
- 19% had a mild to moderate hearing loss (17% non-Aboriginal).
- 23% have had asthma (23% non-Aboriginal).
- 34% have had a head injury resulting in unconsciousness (31% non-Aboriginal).
- Poor nutrition is a common risk factor and diet improved while in custody - eating fresh fruit three or more times a week increased from 46% in the community to 87% since in custody (40% to 92% non-Aboriginal); and eating vegetables three or more times a week increased from 60% in community to 77% since in custody (53% to 77% non-Aboriginal).
- 39% of Aboriginal young people reported currently taking prescribed medications (35% non-Aboriginal).

Smoking, alcohol and drugs:

- 99% had ever smoked cigarettes with a mean age of starting smoking at 12 years (90% and 13 years non-Aboriginal).
- 52% indicated they currently smoked cigarettes or would smoke on release from custody (40% non-Aboriginal).
- 97% had ever been drunk with an average age first drunk of 13 years (89% and 14 years non-Aboriginal).
- 69% reported being drunk at least weekly in the year prior to custody (63% non-Aboriginal).
- 71% of young people identified that their alcohol consumption had caused them problems in the past year (with school, friends, health, police, family) (52% non-Aboriginal).
- 83% were found to be risky drinkers (73% non-Aboriginal).
- 93% had ever tried illicit drugs (85% non-Aboriginal), with cannabis (93%; 82% non-Aboriginal) the most common used, followed by ecstasy (34%; 47% non-Aboriginal), and Meth/amphetamines (29%; 30% non-Aboriginal).
- 72% had used an illicit drug at least weekly in the year prior to custody (58% non-Aboriginal).
- 73% reported committing crime to obtain alcohol or drugs (58% non-Aboriginal).
- 73% were intoxicated (on alcohol, drugs or both) at the time of their offence (64% non-Aboriginal).