

Young People In Custody Health Survey

2015

Key Findings for Aboriginal Young People

Number of young people surveyed: 125 (55%)

Social Determinants

- Mean age of 16.9 years, significantly younger than non-Aboriginal participants (17.5 years).
- 23% of Aboriginal young people had been placed in care before the age of 16 years (19% non-Aboriginal).
- 67% have had a parent in prison, a significantly greater proportion than that among non-Aboriginal participants (37%).
- 30% were attending school prior to custody (24% non-Aboriginal).
- 15% were working in paid employment in the 30 days prior to custody, a significantly lower proportion than that among non-Aboriginal participants (39%).
- 37% had been bullied (33% non-Aboriginal) and 52% had bullied others (48% non-Aboriginal).
- 11% reported being unsettled or having no fixed place of abode in the four weeks prior to custody (15% non-Aboriginal).
- 21% had moved two or more times in the six months prior to custody (31% non-Aboriginal).

Mental Health

- 45% had been exposed to a past traumatic event (51% non-Aboriginal).
- 66% had experienced childhood abuse/neglect (non-Aboriginal 71%).
- 26% had experienced severe childhood abuse/neglect (non-Aboriginal 30%).
- 24% had an intelligence quotient (IQ) in the "Extremely Low" (intellectual disability) range (under 70), a significantly higher proportion than that among non-Aboriginal young people (8%).
- 40% scored in the "Borderline" range (IQ 70 to 79) (non-Aboriginal 37%).

- 87% met criteria for a psychological disorder in the preceding 12 months (79% non-Aboriginal).
- 38% met criteria for an alcohol use disorder (30% non-Aboriginal) and 63% for a substance use disorder (52% non-Aboriginal).
- 60% met criteria for a behavioural disorder (59% non-Aboriginal).
- 10% met criteria for a mood disorder (13% non-Aboriginal).
- 69% met criteria for two or more psychological disorders (57% non-Aboriginal).

Language and Reading

- 57% of Aboriginal young people had Severe Difficulties (scoring 70 or below) in core language skills, a significantly greater proportion than that among non-Aboriginal young people (39%).
- 84% of Aboriginal young people had Severe Difficulties (scoring 70 or below) in reading comprehension, being significantly more likely to have such difficulties than non-Aboriginal young people (72%).

Offending Behaviour

- 90% had been in custody prior to the current custodial period, a significantly higher proportion than that among non-Aboriginal young people (77%).
- The average age at which Aboriginal young people first entered custody was significantly earlier than that among non-Aboriginal participants (14.6 vs 15.6 years).
- Aboriginal young people had previously spent an average of 5.8 times in custody (non-Aboriginal 4.6 times).

Physical Health

- 28% were overweight (27% non-Aboriginal) and 17% obese (20% non-Aboriginal).
- 29% have had asthma (25% non-Aboriginal).

Young People In Custody Health Survey

Key Findings for Aboriginal Young People

- 30% have had a head injury resulting in unconsciousness (19% non-Aboriginal).
- Diet improved while in custody. Eating fresh fruit three or more times a week increased from 46% (34% non-Aboriginal) in the community to 93% (87% non-Aboriginal) in custody. Eating vegetables three or more times a week increased from 53% (42% non-Aboriginal) in the community to 85% (85% non-Aboriginal) in custody.
- 64% were currently taking prescribed medications, a significantly higher proportion than that among non-Aboriginal young people (46%).
- Of those who reported drinking in the 12 months prior to custody, 55% identified that their alcohol consumption had caused them problems (with school, friends, health, police, family) during this period (48% non-Aboriginal).
- Of those who had consumed alcohol in the 12 months prior to custody, 92% of those aged 18 years or older (81% non-Aboriginal), and 96% of those under 18 (100% non-Aboriginal), were drinking at hazardous and harmful (i.e. "risky") levels.
- 93% had ever engaged in illicit drug use* (92% non-Aboriginal), with cannabis (91%; 89% non-Aboriginal) the most commonly used drug, followed by crystal methamphetamine (60%; 49% non-Aboriginal) and ecstasy (31%; 55% non-Aboriginal).

Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

- 90% had ever smoked cigarettes (94% non-Aboriginal), with a mean age of initiation of 11.7 years, significantly earlier than non-Aboriginal participants (12.7 years).
- Of those who had ever smoked, 81% had smoked cigarettes every day/almost every day in the 12 months prior to custody (83% non-Aboriginal) and 51% indicated they would smoke on release from custody (33% non-Aboriginal).
- 87% had ever been drunk (93% non-Aboriginal), with an average age first drunk of 13.3 years, significantly earlier than non-Aboriginal participants (13.9 years).
- Of those who reported drinking in the 12 months prior to custody, 37% reported being drunk at least weekly during this period (47% non-Aboriginal).
- 84% reported illicit drug use at least weekly in the year prior to custody (78% non-Aboriginal).
- 69% reported committing crime to obtain alcohol and/or drugs (61% non-Aboriginal).
- 77% were intoxicated (on alcohol, drugs or both) at the time of their offence (79% non-Aboriginal).

** Illicit drug use was defined as either use of illicit drugs (i.e. heroin, cannabis, methamphetamine, amphetamine, cocaine, ecstasy, gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB), lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), hallucinogens), non-medical use of over the counter and prescription pharmaceutical drugs, misuse of licit substances (e.g. volatile substances), or use of "synthetic" drugs.*