

Substance abuse and addictions

Addiction is a pervasive social reality throughout Australian society. Some people become addicted to substances after they use them to relieve pain from a medical or psychological issue (self-medication). Substance abuse can also occur as a result of experimentation or choice.

The use of opiates, alcohol, narcotics, nicotine and other substances can lead to the chemical and/or psychological dependency that we know as addiction. The total number of Australians who are addicted or dependent on substances and the total number of Australians fighting addictions are unknown.

ADDICTION ACROSS AUSTRALIA

The country's main substances of abuse are:

- alcohol – 44 % of Australians who sought counselling and treatment
- cannabis – 22% of Australians who sought counselling and treatment
- amphetamines – 11 % of Australians who sought counselling and treatment
- heroin – 11 % of Australians who sought counselling and treatment

While alcohol is the biggest overall drug problem, the *Australia's Welfare 2009* Biennial Report cites that younger Australians cited pot/cannabis as 'their principal drug of concern'.

Australian statistics are taken from the *Australia's Welfare 2009* Biennial Report and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Salvation Army statistics are from The Salvation Army's service and mission information system (SAMIS).

For more information visit salvationarmy.org.au



The *Australia's Welfare 2009* Biennial Report found that parental alcohol and drug abuse, and sometimes concurrent parental mental health problems are inter-related risk factors that place children at higher risk of domestic/family violence, abuse and neglect, and serious harm or injury.

Children who are raised in supportive, nurturing environments are more likely to have better social, behavioural and health outcomes. The factors that expose children and young people to a greater risk of disadvantage are all interrelated, and often connect around the issue of addiction and substance abuse: they include financial difficulties, social isolation, domestic violence, mental health problems, disability and the lack of, or uninhabitable, housing.

Each year The Salvation Army's Australia Southern Territory* assists more than 7,000 people with addiction issues, including alcohol, drugs or gambling. Salvation Army services include detoxification and rehabilitation, as well as supported accommodation, private and group counselling sessions, financial counselling and emergency relief.

