



## 2009 YOUNG PEOPLE IN CUSTODY SURVEY FACT SHEET

### Key Findings for Young Men

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No. of young men surveyed: 319 (88%)

#### Social determinants:

- 25% of young men had been placed in care before the age of 16 years (40% young women).
- 44% have had a parent in prison (48% young women).
- 38% were attending school prior to custody (36% young women).
- 28% were working in the 6 months prior to custody (13% young women).
- 40% had been bullied (26% young women) and 51% had bullied others (60% young women).

#### Mental health:

- 57% had a history of child abuse or trauma (81% young women).
- 15% had a possible intellectual disability (IQ 69 and under) (5% young women).
- 33% scored in the borderline intellectual disability range (IQ 70 to 79) (26% young women).
- 86% were found to have any psychological disorder (92% young women), with conduct disorder (57%), substance abuse (49%), alcohol abuse (42%) or ADHD (27%) the most common.
- 14% had thought about suicide (28% young women) and 8% had ever attempted suicide (23% young women).
- 19% had thought about self-harm (35% young women) and 14% had ever self-harmed (35% young women).

#### Offending behaviour:

- 78% had reported previous time spent in custody (83% young women).
- The average age of first time in custody was 14.3 years (14.3 years young women).
- On average, young men had previously spent 5 times in custody (6 times young women).

#### Physical health:

- 41% were overweight or obese (50% young women).
- 18% had a mild to moderate hearing loss (24% young women).
- 22% have ever had asthma (30% young women).
- 32% have had a head injury resulting in unconsciousness (33% young women).
- Poor nutrition is a common risk factor and diet improved while in custody - eating fresh fruit three or more times a week increased from 43% in the community to 89% since in custody; and eating vegetables three or more times a week increased from 56% in community to 77% since in custody.
- 35% of young men reported currently taking prescribed medications (48% young women).

#### Smoking, alcohol and drugs:

- 94% had ever smoked cigarettes (98% young women) with a mean age of starting smoking at 12 years.
- 43% indicated they currently smoked cigarettes or would smoke on release from custody (68% young women).
- 93% had ever been drunk (95% young women) with an average age first drunk of 13 years.



**Smoking, alcohol and drugs cont.**

- 66% reported being drunk at least weekly in the year prior to custody (68% young women).
- 60% of young men identified that their alcohol consumption had caused them problems in the past year (with school, friends, health, police, parents) (74% young women).
- 77% were found to be risky drinkers (84% young women).
- 87% had tried illicit drugs (98% young women), with cannabis (86%) the most common used, followed by ecstasy (40%), and Meth/amphetamines (27%).
- 65% had used an illicit drug at least weekly in the year prior to custody (65% young women).
- 66% reported committing crime to obtain alcohol or drugs (60% young women).
- 68% were intoxicated (on alcohol, drugs or both) at the time of their offence (74% young women).

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## 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).



## 2009 YOUNG PEOPLE IN CUSTODY HEALTH SURVEY FACT SHEET

### Key Findings for Young Women

No. of young women surveyed: 42 (12%)

#### Social determinants:

- 40% of young women had been placed in care before the age of 16 years (25% young men).
- 48% have had a parent in prison (44% young men).
- 36% were attending school prior to custody (38% young men).
- 13% were working in the six months prior to custody (28% young men).
- 26% had been bullied (40% young men) and 60% had bullied others (51% young men).

#### Mental health:

- 81% had a history of child abuse or trauma (57% young men).
- 5% had a possible intellectual disability (IQ 69 and under) (15% young men).
- 26% scored in the borderline intellectual disability range (IQ 70 to 79) (33% young men).
- 92% were found to have any psychological disorder (86% young men), with conduct disorder (72%), substance abuse (49%), alcohol abuse (54%) or ADHD (49%) the most common.
- 28% had thought about suicide (14% young men) and 23% had ever attempted suicide (8% young men).
- 35% had thought about self-harm (19% young men) and 35% had ever self-harmed (14% young men).

#### Offending behaviour:

- 83% had reported previous time spent in custody (78% young men).
- The average age of first time in custody was 14.3 years (14.3 years young men).
- On average, young women had previously spent 6 times in custody (5 times young men).

#### Physical health:

- 50% were overweight or obese (41% young men).
- 24% had a mild to moderate hearing loss (18% young men).
- 30% have ever had asthma (22% young men).
- 33% have had a head injury resulting in unconsciousness (32% young men).
- Poor nutrition is a common risk factor and diet improved while in custody - eating fresh fruit three or more times a week increased from 40% in the community to 95% in custody; and eating vegetables three or more times a week increased from 63% in community to 77% in custody.
- 48% of young people reported currently taking prescribed medications (35% young men).
- 30% of young women had ever been pregnant.

#### Smoking, alcohol and drugs:

- 98% had ever smoked cigarettes (94% young men) with a mean age of starting smoking at 12 years.
- 68% indicated they currently smoked cigarettes or would smoke on release from custody (43% young men).
- 95% had ever been drunk (93% young men) with an average age first drunk of 13 years.
- 68% reported being drunk at least weekly prior to custody (66% young men).
- 74% of young people identified that their alcohol consumption had caused them problems in the past year (60% young men).
- 84% were found to be risky drinkers (72% young men).
- 98% had ever tried illicit drugs (87% young men), with cannabis (95%) the most common used, followed by ecstasy (50%), and Meth/amphetamines (48%).
- 65% had used an illicit drug at least weekly in the year prior to custody (65% young men).
- 60% reported committing crime to obtain alcohol or drugs (66% young men).
- 74% were intoxicated (on alcohol, drugs or both) at the time of their offence (68% young men).



## 2009 YOUNG PEOPLE IN CUSTODY HEALTH SURVEY FACT SHEET

### Key Findings for All Young People

No. of young people surveyed: 361

Sample: 88% male with an average age of 17 years

#### Social determinants:

- 27% of young people had been placed in care before the age of 16 years.
- 45% have had a parent in prison.
- 38% were attending school prior to custody.
- 26% were working in the six months prior to custody.
- 27% had been bullied and 52% had bullied others.
- 6% of young people reported being unsettled or having no fixed place of abode (6 months prior to custody), with young women representing 18 per cent.
- More than one-quarter (27 per cent) had moved two or more times in the six months prior to custody, and this was more for Aboriginal young people at nearly a third (32 per cent).
- Young women were more likely than young men to have moved four or more times in the 6 months prior to custody.
- Aboriginal young people more likely to have moved four or more times in the 6 months prior to custody.

#### Mental health:

- 60% had a history of child abuse or trauma.
- 14% had a possible intellectual disability (IQ 69 and under).
- 32% scored in the borderline intellectual disability range (IQ 70 to 79).
- 87% were found to have any psychological disorder, with conduct disorder (59%), substance use (49%), alcohol abuse (44%) or ADHD (30%) the most common.
- 16% had thought about suicide and 10% had ever attempted suicide.
- 21% had thought about self-harm and 16% had ever self-harmed.

#### Offending behaviour:

- 79% had reported previous time in custody.
- The average age of first time in custody was 14.3 years.
- On average, young people had previously spent 5 times in custody.

#### Physical health:

- 42% were overweight or obese.
- 18% had a mild to moderate hearing loss.
- 23% have had ever asthma.
- 32% have had a head injury resulting in unconsciousness.
- Poor nutrition is a common risk factor and diet improved while in custody - eating fresh fruit three or more times a week increased from 43% in the community to 90% since in custody; and eating vegetables three or more times a week increased from 57% in community to 77% since in custody.
- 37% of young people reported currently taking prescribed medications. The most common medication was for mental illness.
- There was a low prevalence of bloodborne viruses and sexually transmissible infections, with no young people found with HIV, gonorrhoea or syphilis. 4 young people were found to have antibodies to Hepatitis C, 6 had Hepatitis B and 6 had chlamydia.

**Smoking, alcohol and drugs:**

- 94% had ever smoked cigarettes with a mean age of starting smoking at 12 years.
- 46% indicated they currently smoked cigarettes or would smoke on release from custody.
- 93% had ever been drunk with an average age first drunk of 13 years.
- 66% reported being drunk at least weekly the year prior to custody.
- 61% of young people identified that their alcohol consumption had caused them problems in the past year (with school, friends, health, police, parents).
- 78% were found to be risky drinkers.
- 89% had tried illicit drugs, with cannabis (87%) the most common used, followed by ecstasy (41%), and Meth/amphetamines (29%).
- 65% had used an illicit drug at least weekly in the year prior to custody.
- 65% reported committing crime to obtain alcohol or drugs.
- 20% were intoxicated (on alcohol, drugs or both) at the time of their offence.

**The report is available on the Juvenile Justice website. Visit:**  
<http://www.djj.nsw.gov.au/publications.htm#healthsurveys>