

# Young People In Custody Health Survey

# 2015

## Key Findings for Young Males

Number of young males surveyed: 207 (91%)

### Social Determinants

- Mean age 17.3 years, significantly older than females in custody (16.3 years).
- 20% of young males had been placed in care before the age of 16 years (32% females).
- 51% have had a parent in prison (74% females).
- 26% were attending school prior to custody (32% females).
- 27% were working in paid employment in the 30 days prior to custody (11% females).
- 33% had been bullied, with males significantly less likely to have been bullied than females (58%).
- 52% had bullied other people (37% females).
- 12% reported being unsettled or having no fixed place of abode in the four weeks prior to custody (21% females).
- 22% had moved two or more times in the six months prior to custody, with females more likely than males to have done so (58%).
- 67% met criteria for a substance use disorder (i.e. either abuse or dependence) (55% females): 35% for an alcohol use disorder (18% females) and 59% for a drug use disorder (36% females).
- 58% met criteria for an attention/behavioural disorder (73% females).
- 24% met criteria for an anxiety disorder (27% females) and 12% (9% females) for a mood disorder.
- 62% met criteria for two or more psychological disorders (73% females).
- 12% had engaged in past self-harm (50% females) and 9% since they had been in custody (26% females).
- 15% had thought about suicide in the past (20% females) and 13% had ever attempted suicide (0% females).
- Since coming into custody, 9% had thought about suicide (11% females), with 2% reporting that they had attempted suicide during this time (0% females).

### Mental Health

- 48% had been exposed to a past traumatic event (47% females).
- 68% had experienced childhood abuse/neglect (64% females).
- 27% had experienced severe abuse/neglect (45% females).
- 16% had an intelligence quotient (IQ) in the "Extremely Low" (intellectual disability) range (under 70) (23% females).
- 37% scored in the "Borderline" range (70 to 79) (62% females).
- 83% met criteria for a psychological disorder in the preceding 12 months (82% females).

### Language and Reading

- 47% had Severe Difficulties (scoring 70 or below) in core language skills (60% females).
- 77% had Severe Difficulties (scoring 70 or below) in reading comprehension (92% females).

### Offending Behaviour

- 83% had been in custody prior to the current custodial period (89% females).
- The average age of first time in custody was 15.1 years (15.0 years females).
- Males had previously spent an average of 5.1 times in custody (7.1 times females).

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## Key Findings for Young Males

### Physical Health

- 28% of males were overweight (28% females) and 19% obese (17% females).
- 28% have ever had asthma (26% females).
- 23% have had a head injury resulting in unconsciousness, with such head injuries significantly more likely among females (53%).
- Diet improved while in custody. Eating fresh fruit three or more times a week increased from 41% (32% females) in the community to 90% (95% females) in custody. Eating fresh vegetables three or more times a week increased from 48% (42% females) in the community to 85% (84% females) in custody.
- 56% were currently taking prescribed medications (55% females).

### Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

- 92% had ever smoked cigarettes (89% females), with a mean age of initiation of 12.2 years (12.5 years females).
- Of those who had ever smoked, 82% had smoked cigarettes every day/almost every day in the 12 months prior to custody (82% females) and 42% indicated they would smoke on release from custody (53% females).
- 90% of all young males had ever been drunk (89% females), with an average age first drunk of 13.6 years (13.5 years females).

- Of young males who reported drinking in the 12 months prior to custody, 41% reported being drunk at least weekly during this period (50% females).
- Of males who reported drinking in the 12 months prior to custody, 51% identified that their alcohol consumption had caused them problems (with school, friends, health, police, parents) during this period (63% females).
- Of those who had consumed alcohol in the 12 months prior to custody, 86% of those aged 18 years or older (100% females), and 98% of those under 18 (100% females), were drinking at hazardous and harmful (i.e. "risky") levels.
- 93% had ever engaged in illicit drug use\* (84% females), with cannabis (91%; 84% females) the most commonly used drug, followed by crystal methamphetamine (55%; 53% females) and ecstasy (43%; 26% females).
- 82% reported illicit drug use at least weekly in the year prior to custody (79% females).
- 64% reported committing crime to obtain alcohol and/or drugs (81% females).
- 78% were intoxicated (on alcohol, drugs or both) at the time of their offence (69% females).

*\* 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.*