

**NCIS Fact sheets are  
intended to support the work  
of death investigators and  
researchers.**



NCIS Fact sheets contain sensitive, statistical  
information on coronial cases that may be  
confronting to some readers.

We acknowledge that this content may be distressing.

If you or someone you care for is in need of  
assistance, [support services are available.](#)

# NCIS FACT SHEET

## Drug-related deaths in Australia in 2017

### 63 deaths

per week  
on average

### 3,275

drug-related deaths  
in 2017

### 19.1%

of all reportable  
deaths in 2017

**Cases are considered drug-related where the death was due to external causes, and where drugs made a contribution to death.**

Drug-related deaths occurred in a higher proportion of males than females. The majority of deaths for both sexes occurred in those aged 35 - 54 years.

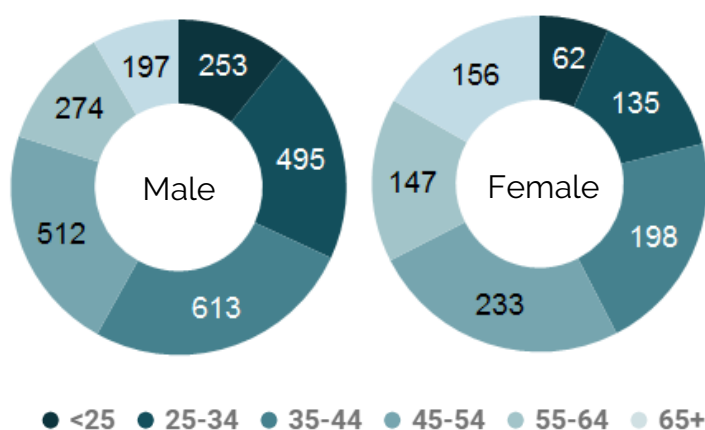


Figure 1. Frequency of drug-related deaths by age group and sex, 2017

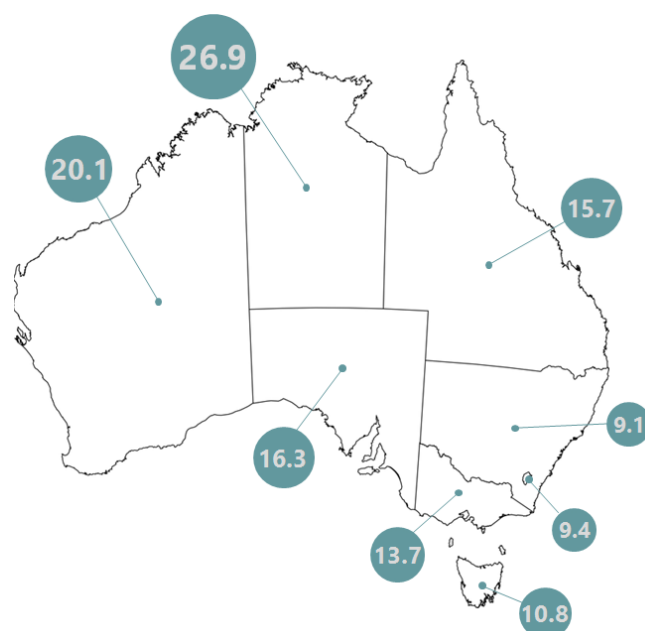


Figure 2. Rates of drug-related deaths per 100,000 by jurisdiction of investigation, 2017

The national rate of drug-related deaths was 13.5 deaths per 100,000 population (Figure 2). The Northern Territory had the highest rate at 26.9 deaths per 100,000.

### 47.5%

*of all drug-related deaths occurred in people aged between 35 and 54 years*

Figure 3 shows drug-related deaths by contribution to death. Alcohol was the most frequently identified drug involved in drug-related deaths.

**Primary** contribution relates to cases where drug toxicity was the primary cause of death. **Secondary** contribution relates to cases where drugs contributed to a death caused by another form of injury (such as drowning or a vehicle incident).

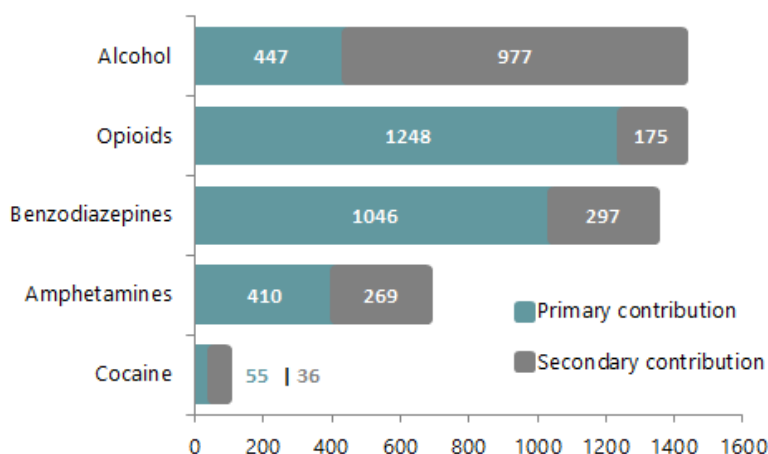
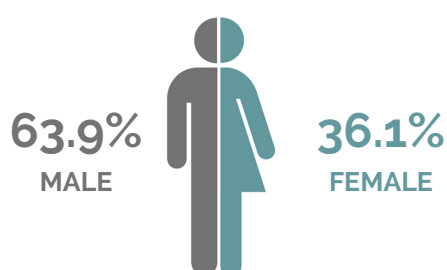
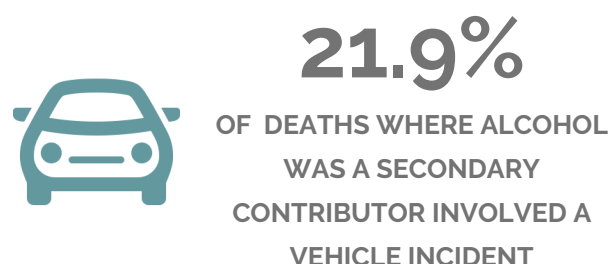
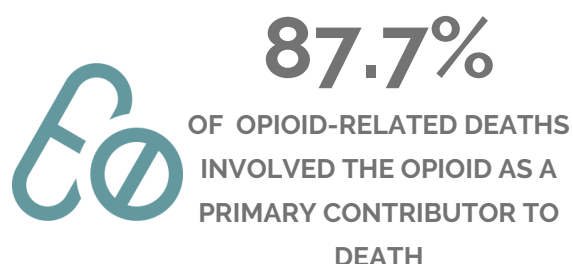
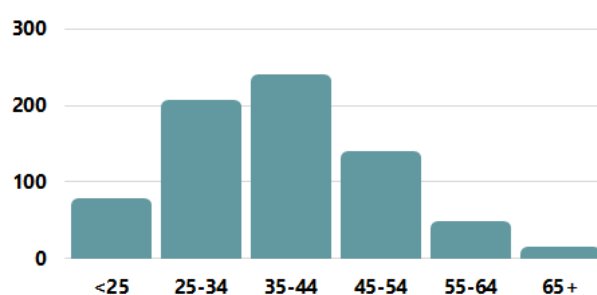


Figure 3. Frequency of drug-related deaths by drug type and contribution, 2017

**Note:** multiple drugs can contribute to a single death. As a result, the total number of deaths for the listed drug classes will exceed the total number of drug-related deaths.



**BENZODIAZEPINE DEATHS BY SEX**



**AMPHETAMINE DEATHS BY AGE**

The data presented in this fact sheet was obtained from the National Coronal Information System (NCIS) in January 2020. The dataset extracted contained every fatality reported to an Australian coroner between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2017 that was coded as involving a pharmaceutical substance for human use, and where the coronial investigation had concluded and the case was closed on the NCIS. Population data was sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Visit the NCIS website for information on [data sources and limitations](#). To request a comprehensive data report, contact the NCIS or visit [www.ncis.org.au](http://www.ncis.org.au).

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