



AODCCC

Alcohol and Other Drug
Consumer & Community Coalition

AODCCC Membership Survey Report 2023-2024

...beyond stigma



AODCCC
Alcohol and Other Drug
Consumer & Community Coalition

...beyond stigma

Acknowledgement of Country

AODCCC acknowledges that we are on Nyoongar country and extend our respect to the Traditional Custodians, the Wadjuk people, their Elders past and present. We recognise the strength, resilience, and wisdom of all Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and First Nations cultures.

We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.



AODCCC

Alcohol and Other Drug
Consumer & Community Coalition

...beyond stigma

Recognition of Lived Experience

We would like to acknowledge the individual and collective expertise of those with a lived or living experience of alcohol and/or other drug issues. We also acknowledge the emotional labour and vulnerability that is present in this space. We also recognise the work of those who came before us to build the foundations to enable this work to actually take place.

About AODCCC

The Alcohol and Other Drug Consumer & Community Coalition (AODCCC) is the peak body for alcohol and other drug consumer-driven systemic advocacy in Western Australia. Our aim is to empower the voices of consumers, their families and supports, ensuring the health and wellbeing of our community. The AODCCC was incorporated in June 2018 in response to the need and support for an alcohol and other drug specific consumer advocacy body. We have received funding from the Mental Health Commission in order to progress our establishment.

The AODCCC would like to acknowledge the ongoing support from the Mental Health Commission of Western Australia for funding our organisation to date.

2023-24 Annual Member Survey Report

Welcome to the AODCCC Membership Survey Report 2023-24.

We continue to collate and amplify the voices of our members and ensure that they guide and inform the systemic advocacy agenda of the organisation and contribute towards our mission **“to promote the interests, education and welfare of those impacted by alcohol and other drugs.”** This year has seen a continued firm and steady **36%** increase of membership to the organisation, 552 as of 05/09/2023.

Our members actively participated in a variety of opportunities this year, including AODCCC Upskilling Training Modules, Mental Health First Aid Training, and various paid reference group participation opportunities promoted through our member exclusive monthly newsletter.

The AODCCC have **amplified the members’ voice** to create impact and influence systemic change by contributing to a variety of projects this year, including:

- AODCCC Annual Membership Survey 2022-2023.
- WANADA AODCCC Peer Workforce and Consumer Survey.
- AODCCC Response to Alcohol Home Delivery Regulations in Western Australia 24-05-2023.
- AODCCC Response to WA Liquor Act Reform 10-01-2023.
- AODCCC Response to Alcohol Floor Price in Western Australia 24-11-2022.

How did the members voice from the inaugural survey influence the AODCCC this year?

Last year, members wanted to see us expand our reach to the outer suburbs. We have continued to engage the community and will deliver targeted presentations to drug and alcohol specific organisations and services in the northern suburbs, in the first half of 23-24 financial year. This will continue to support a steady and strong membership growth from diverse backgrounds. We continue to promote the necessity of a state specific peak body, representing those with a lived or living experience of alcohol and other drug issues, ensuring Western Australia has a platform to influence needed change at a systemic level.

Last year, members indicated that they mostly accessed information on what treatment and service options were available through their GP/Doctor. Members also expressed experiencing significant stigma and discrimination when attending health services for care. The AODCCC continues to advocate that alcohol and other drug use is a public health issue. We have taken the opportunity to appoint a Medical Director with public and private sector experience to our Management Committee, with a view to seek change in the health sector.

Voices of our members and the feedback of their AODCCC membership journey:

“Thank you so much all your effort for our community. All amazing.”

“Thanks for the good work you all do.”

“Now that I have chosen not to be part of the problem, I'm very eager to be an active part of the solution.”

We would like to thank the 42 members that chose to participate in our sophomore survey. We hope you find this report informative and helpful to motivate the change that is needed in our community, to move beyond stigma.

Sincerely,

Alex Arpino – Development Coordinator AODCCC

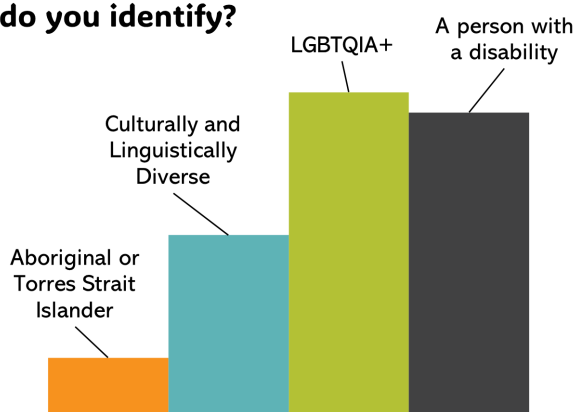
2023-24 Annual Member Survey

About our member participants...

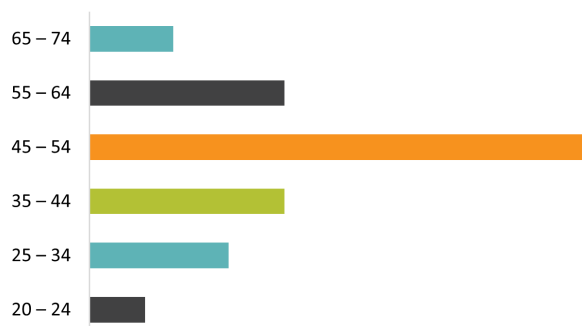
42 participants took part in this survey over a 4 week period.

Participants were provided with several identifiers, and were able to select from more than one area. Individuals were also able to self-specify how they chose to identify. Out of our 42 survey participants, 3 participants identified as Aboriginal, 16 as LGBTQIA+, 15 as a person with a disability, and 9 as Culturally and Linguistically diverse.

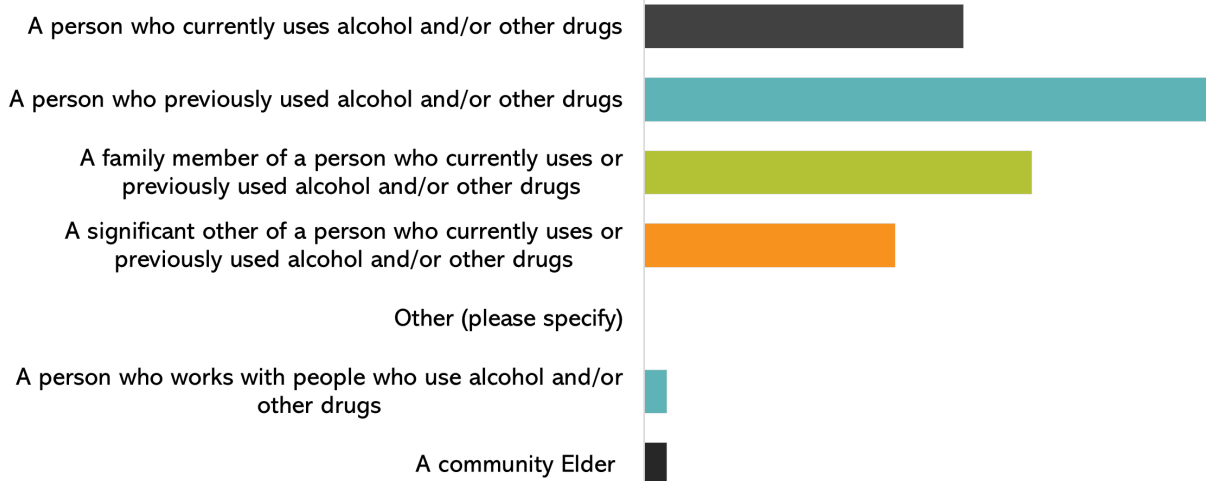
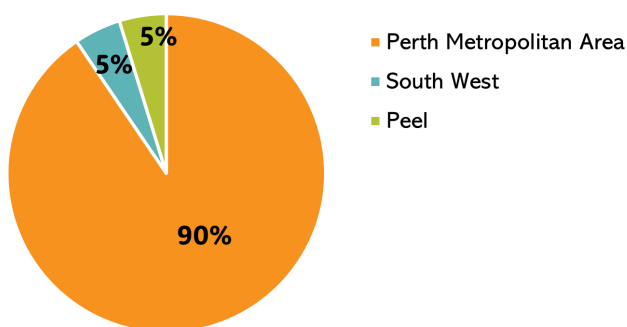
How do you identify?



How old are you?



Where in Western Australia do you live?



Majority (25) of participants identified as a person who previously used alcohol/or other drugs.



AODCCC
Alcohol and Other Drug
Consumer & Community Coalition

...beyond stigma

Are there any alcohol and other drug related laws or policies that need to be changed?

Participants voiced a need for systemic alcohol and other drug reforms in the following areas;

Decriminalisation of Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Mental Health Act

Harm Reduction

Housing

Increase in Needle & Syringe Programs

Prescription Medication Regulation

Easier Access to Medical Cannabis

Improved access to Opioid Pharmacotherapy Programs

“Drug reform across the board, legalise cannabis, decriminalise simple possession of drugs”

“Pill testing at festivals, decriminalisation of small/personal quantities of illicit substances and paraphernalia, restricting single use drug testing kits to pharmacies, increase in NSPs/NSEPs across the Perth metro”.

The Help, Not Handcuffs: evidence-based approaches to reducing harm from illicit drug use report supports this by highlighting that responding to drug use through a cohesive mix of varied treatment options, social services, harm reduction, prevention and education initiatives, is integral to achieving positive outcomes. While WA has a range of great services and initiatives, there is also significant room for improvement. WA experiences a lack of treatment services to meet demand, disproportionate access in regional and remote areas, isolated service delivery and a lack of cohesive mental health and alcohol and other drug integrated services.¹

- **Stigma**
- **Department of Justice not having a AOD Peer Workforce**
- **Training to ensure all workforces are AOD friendly**
- **Normalisation of alcohol and gambling**
- **Waitlists and protocols to access treatment**
- **Employability issues due to police clearance requirements**
- **Lack of effective co-occurring service delivery**

Participants were asked to share their perspectives on the current biggest issues faced by those with a lived, or living experience of alcohol and other drug use in our society...

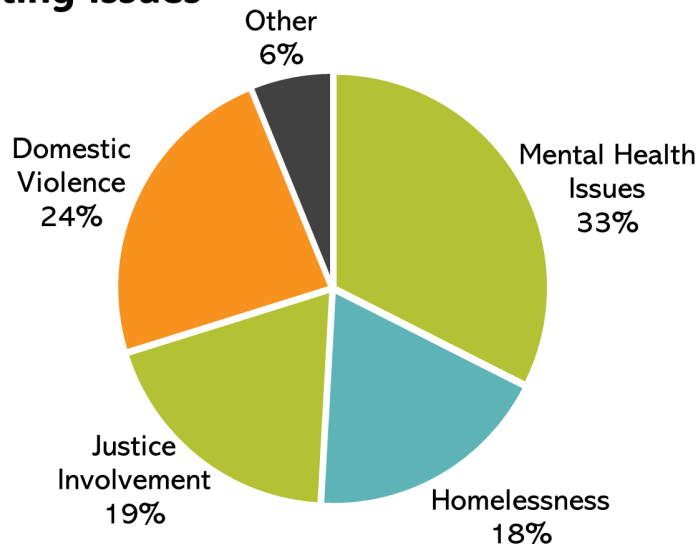
1) Help, Not Handcuffs: evidence-based approaches to reducing harm from illicit drug use. Final report of the select committee into alternate approaches to reducing illicit drug use and its effects on the community. (2019). Parliament of Western Australia.

Available from: [https://parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/commit.nsf/\(WebInquiries\)/76DC63572B331E7F482584BE00219B5F?opendocument](https://parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/commit.nsf/(WebInquiries)/76DC63572B331E7F482584BE00219B5F?opendocument)



Have you or a significant other/family member also experienced the following in addition to alcohol and other drug use?

Intersecting Issues



Members indicated that living with and through co-occurring experiences is prevalent. Other additional experiences highlighted from our membership included:

- ***Stigma and Discrimination***
- ***Physical Health Issues***
- ***Workplace Bullying and Burnout***
- ***Unstable Housing***
- ***Problems engaging in the mental health system to deal with co-occurring issues***

The AODCCC understands that problematic alcohol and other drug use can result in individual and community-wide social, health and economic harms. These harms result from both drug use and drug prohibition. While drug-related harms affect all levels of society to some degree, the people most likely to experience those harms are those who are subject to the social determinants of drug use — social disadvantage, mental illness, trauma and poor health. Drug-related harms such as experiencing stigma and receiving a criminal record, can compound existing disadvantage and make it more difficult to achieve positive life outcomes.

“Stigma and discrimination from the community and peers”



AODCCC

Alcohol and Other Drug
Consumer & Community Coalition

...beyond stigma

How do you like to keep up to date with what's happening at the AODCCC?



Our monthly AODCCC newsletter provides our members with current and evidence informed alcohol and other drug sector research, news and updates. We are proud to offer exclusive training and paid participation opportunities for our members through this platform.

Each newsletter is reviewed by our Reference Group, where feedback, suggestions and input are then considered for upcoming newsletters. This ensures we keep our communications relevant to the members and their lived and/or living experience of alcohol and other drugs.

We take pride in being able to collate such a valuable resource for our members and we hope to see continued growth of engagement from our associate members to share their opportunities and information that our members could benefit from.

How do you access general information relating to alcohol and other drugs?



Non-Government Organisations, Peak Bodies & advocacy services

Government websites & resources

Family & friends

Social Media

G.P / Doctors

Pharmacy / Chemist

Peers

Academic literature / journals

Hospitals / other health services

Have you or a significant other ever experienced stigma/discrimination within a 'system' because of your lived experience of alcohol and other drugs?

73% of our participants reported that either themselves, or a significant other had experienced stigma and/or discrimination, as a person with a living or lived experience of alcohol and other drug use.

Comments provided by participants reported feelings of judgement and shame because “drug use was a moral failing”. Negative hospital admittance experiences and ongoing justice barriers caused by the criminalisation of drug use in society were also raised.

The AODCCC understand that stigma and discrimination are pervasive within health care settings, welfare support services, police and justice settings, workplaces and within society in general. Within these settings, stigma and discrimination negatively impact peoples ability to access to services including health care, fair treatment within the justice system, employment opportunities and relationships with family and friends, resulting in feelings of ongoing social isolation.

The AODCCC will continue advocating that problematic alcohol and other drug use is a public health and wellbeing issue, not a moral or criminal justice issue. The AODCCC believes that reducing stigma and discrimination within our community will have a positive impact on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all Western Australians.

Have you, and/or a family member/significant other, ever not disclosed/shared your alcohol and other drug use within a system, due to concerns that this would have a negative impact?

78% of our members indicated non-disclosure due to:

- *“fear of judgement – disclosure would cause more problems”*
- *“you simply don’t get the help you need if you have a chronic pain injury, you’re treated as if you’re just looking for drugs to get high”*
- *“my brother is still using after watching me battle with the system, he will never engage because he seen what happened to me, so he sticks to self medication”*
- *“Stigma is so embedded”*
- *“I know my disclosure would negatively effect how people viewed my professionalism”*



AODCCC

Alcohol and Other Drug
Consumer & Community Coalition

...beyond stigma

The AODCCC understands that stigma and discrimination are avoidable harms that impact negatively on the mental and physical wellbeing of individuals and families experiencing problematic alcohol and other drug use. The AODCCC believes Western Australians need a system that is strength based and empowering, and conveys messages of protective and preventative measures for reducing harms related to alcohol and other drug use.

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has become the first Australian jurisdiction to decriminalise illicit drugs in small quantities. Would you like to see any changes to how WA responds to illicit drug use and possession?

80% of members surveyed believe a re-focus is needed, away from a criminal justice approach and towards a health-based approach.

Our members understand that this approach would allow the community to review current practices and improve services in line with contemporary evidence.

The AODCCC understands that decriminalisation is one element of creating a successful integrated, multifaceted and comprehensive health-based approach to drug use.

Participants were asked what alcohol and other drug related topics they would like to see more information on.



Advocacy Services

Harm Reduction

Alternative Therapies

Prescribed Harms

AOD Services

System Navigation

Family/Carer Resources

AOD studies

Legislative Action & Change

Co-occurring AOD & other health challenges

Participants were asked what activities they would like the AODCCC to be providing for members, the key recommendations were:

Training & Upskilling

Guest Speakers

Consumer Representation Groups

Advocacy Information

Networking





AODCCC
Alcohol and Other Drug
Consumer & Community Coalition

...beyond stigma

Moving Forward...

The AODCCC team would like to sincerely thank all the individuals and associates who have taken the time to provide valuable insight and to share their wisdom and knowledge into the work we do at the AODCCC. This survey aimed to inform the whole community on the broad perspectives of our membership and clarify and help drive our advocacy work for the year ahead.

This year we celebrate 36% growth in membership - ensuring consumers, their families and significant others can continue contributing to meaningful change at all levels of decision making within the sector.

To effectively address stigma and discrimination, a multifaceted approach that addresses individual attitudes and behaviours, in tandem with strategies focused on societal structures and systems is required. To shift community attitudes and to decrease stigma associated with accessing information about alcohol and other drugs and treatment services, it is essential to challenge the pervasive negative stereotypes of people who experience problems with alcohol and other drug use. It is also essential to convey hopeful messages that support is available and there are services and a variety of treatment types available within the community.

Thank you for helping us with this hopeful journey to move beyond stigma.

The AODCCC Team

Alex, Brooke and Vivienne.

Phone: (08) 6311 8402

Email: info@aodccc.org

Web: www.aodccc.org

Address: 33 Moore St, East Perth, WA, 6004.



AODCCC
Alcohol and Other Drug
Consumer & Community Coalition