

## ***Mental health and drug dependency amongst police detainees***

The 2004 Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) annual report found that a higher proportion of adult police detainees suffered from psychological distress than occurs in the general population. This level of distress increased if the detainee was dependent on either drugs or alcohol. The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) was used to measure the level of anxiety and depressive symptoms a person experienced in the 30 days prior to interview. The method identifies four levels of psychological distress: low, moderate, high and very high. Using the same scale, the 2001 national health survey of the general adult population found that almost two thirds (64%) of adults were classified at low levels of psychological distress, 23 per cent at moderate levels, nine per cent at high levels and four per cent at very high levels (ABS 2002). In contrast, aggregated across all DUMA sites, almost a third of adult detainees (30%) scored very high on the K10 scale. Based on previous research, a very high K10 score may indicate a need for professional assistance (ABS 2002). Detainees with very high levels of distress were more likely to have been in prison in the past 12 months and were more likely to report drug and alcohol dependency.

### **Psychological distress and dependency, police detainees, 2004 (column per cent)**

Psychological distress (K10) scale	Alcohol		Drugs		Both	
	Not dependent	Dependent	Not dependent	Dependent	Not dependent	Dependent
Low	28	14	33	12	28	10
Moderate	22	18	23	19	20	17
High	27	27	31	29	25	28
Very high	23	41	13	41	27	45
Total (n)	(148)	(215)	(120)	(442)	(646)	(142)

SOURCE: Schulte C, Mouzos J & Makkai T 2005. *Drug use monitoring in Australia: 2004 annual report on drug use among police detainees*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. Research and public policy series no 65  
<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/65/index.html>

REFERENCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002. *2001 National health survey: summary of results*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats>