

DRUG & ALCOHOL OFFICE

UTILISATION OF SOBERING UP CENTRES, 1990-2004

INTRODUCTION

The *Detention of Drunken Persons Act 1989* was enacted on 27 April 1990 and decriminalised public drunkenness in Western Australia (WA). The impetus for the decriminalisation of public drunkenness and the establishment of sobering up centres (SUCs) arose from recommendations contained in the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The management, development and funding of SUCs presently rests with the Drug and Alcohol Office. (*Initial responsibility for establishing SUCs was with the Alcohol and Drug Authority, now known as Next Step Specialist Alcohol & Drug Services, was transferred to the Health Department of WA in July 1997, shifted to the WA Drug Abuse Strategy Office in July 1998 and then assigned to the Drug and Alcohol Office in December 2001.*)

What SUCs Do

Sobering up centres are support services that provide a practical, harm reduction approach to the issue of public intoxication. They provide overnight care to adults who are intoxicated, who are not in need of hospital care and whose behaviour can be managed effectively and safely by sobering up centre staff. These services generally operate five nights per week, apart from the Perth SUC, which operates seven nights per week.

Sobering up services involve the provision of a substantial meal, clean bedding and sleepwear and laundering of clothes. The short stay aims to break the negative cycle of alcohol induced harm by providing care to intoxicated persons most at risk to themselves, their families and their community.

The expansion of SUCs throughout WA provides a more appropriate option to manage public intoxication. The positive impact of SUCs on the management of intoxicated persons rather than being detained in police lockups has been demonstrated at the regional level as well as for the whole state. The gains from the expansion in SUCs include:

- reductions in police time and resources previously involved in detaining and monitoring intoxicated people in lock ups;
- reduced use of court time and resources;
- reduced levels of domestic violence and other problems associated with alcohol abuse; and
- reduced burden on hospitals because of fewer hospitalisations for alcohol related illnesses and accidents.

Written by Greg Swensen (June 2005)

In Brief

- In 2004 there were 14 SUCs that had a total operating cost of \$3.5 million, with an annual average cost of \$293,925 per centre and \$192 per admission.
- From 1991 (the first full year of operation) to 2004 the number of admissions to SUCs increased 12 fold, from 1,533 to 18,280.
- From 1992 (the first full year of complete police data) to 2004 the number of detentions of intoxicated persons in police lockups declined by 84.5%, from 12,346 to 1,919.
- From 1990 to 2004 there was a total of 177,217 admissions to SUCs, of which 122,178 (68.9%) were males and 55,004 (31.0%) were females.
- In the year 2004 there were four SUCs which accounted for just over half (51.6%) of all admissions, with 4,030 admissions at the Broome SUC, 2,095 admissions at the Kununurra SUC, 1,745 admissions at the Derby SUC and 1,559 admissions at the Halls Creek SUC.

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Experience has shown that over a period of time the opening of a SUC usually encourages the community to develop additional services to address alcohol related problems. These include outreach programs, community patrols, homeless support programs, alcohol and other drug education programs and community support for initiatives to restrict alcohol availability.

Development & Expansion

The first SUC was opened in the Perth inner metropolitan area in 1990. Since then SUCs have opened progressively in identified high priority localities throughout the State, as follows: Perth (May 1990), Port Hedland (April 1991), Halls Creek (September 1992), Roebourne (February 1993), Fitzroy Crossing (March 1994), Kalgoorlie (June 1994), Wiluna (April 1996), Kununurra (September 1996), Derby (May 1998), Broome (February 1999), Midland (June 2002), Wyndham (December 2002), Anawim (February 2003) and Geraldton (December 2003).

This publication updates the data on the utilisation of sobering up centres previously published in *Statistical Bulletin No. 5* (June 1999), *Statistical Bulletin No. 11* (April 2001) and *Statistical Bulletin No. 20* (June 2004).

Cost Effectiveness

The annual cost of sobering up services has gradually increased as the number of SUCs has expanded from, \$318,733 in 1990/1991 to \$3,517,495 million in 2003/2004 (Table 1).

This data shows that SUCs are a very cost effective service as they avoid costs that would otherwise be incurred if people had been detained or admitted to a hospital. In the year 2004 there were 14 SUCs which had a total cost of \$3,517,495, an annual average cost of \$293,925 per centre and an average of \$192 per admission (using the 2003/2004 cost data).

ADMISSIONS TO SOBERING UP CENTRES

Annual admissions to SUCs increased 14 fold, from a total of 1,533 in 1991 (the first full year of operation) to a total of 18,279 in 2004 (Table 2, page 3; Figure 1, page 3).

Table 1
Annual expenditure on sobering up services, 1990/1991 - 2003/2004

Year	Total (\$)	Year	Total (\$)
1990/1991	318,733	1997/1998	2,016,871
1991/1992	501,413	1998/1999	2,968,400
1992/1993	763,165	1999/2000	2,493,225
1993/1994	1,086,982	2000/2001	2,370,100
1994/1995	1,863,665	2001/2002	3,476,349
1995/1996	1,722,200	2002/2003	4,000,813
1996/1997	1,863,007	2003/2004	3,517,495

Gender

From 1990 to 2004 there was a total of 177,217 admissions to SUCs, of which 122,178 (68.9%) were males, 55,004 (31.0%) were females and 35 (0.1%) where gender was missing (Table 2, page 3).

Indigenous status

In 2004 of the 18,280 admissions to SUCs, 17,760 (97.2%) were indigenous and 520 (2.8%) were non indigenous. In non metropolitan HRs almost all episodes involved indigenous persons, such as Goldfields and South East Coastal (99.2%), Kimberley (99.6%), Midwest and Murchison (94.1%) and Pilbara and Gascoyne (98.7%) HRs. There has also been a growth in the proportion of indigenous persons attending the Perth SUC, increasing from 51.4% of admissions in 1999 to 84.2% of admissions in 2004.

Regional trends

An overview of trends in annual admissions to each SUC is provided in Tables 3 and 4 (pages 4 and 5). In the year 2004 there were four SUCs which accounted for just over half (51.6%) of the total of 18,280 admissions, with 4,030 admissions at the Broome SUC, 2,095 admissions at the Kununurra SUC, 1,745 admissions at the Derby SUC and 1,559 admissions at the Halls Creek SUC.

Age structure

There were notable differences in the age structure of the population that attended individual SUCs in a number of the HRs:

- at the Wiluna SUC most admissions involved the 20 to 24 age group;
- at the Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek SUCs most admissions involved the 25 to 39 age group;
- at the Broome SUC most admissions involved the 30 to 39 age group;
- at the Perth SUC most admissions involved the 35 to 49 age group; and
- at the Roebourne SUC most admissions involved the 45 to 54 age group.

DETENTIONS IN POLICE LOCK UPS

From 1990 to 2004 there was a total of 77,903 detentions of intoxicated persons in police lock ups in the various catchment areas served by operating SUCs, of which 57,585 (73.9%) were males, 19,523 (25.1%) were females and 795 (1.0%) where gender was missing (Table 2, page 3).

The impact of SUCs on the detention of intoxicated persons is demonstrated in Figure 1 (page 3) which shows a sharp decline in detentions from 1992 up to the present. From 1992 (the first full year of complete police data) to 2004 the number of detentions of intoxicated persons in police lockups declined by 84.5%, from 12,346 in 1992 to 1,919 in 2004.

Figure 1
Number of admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, 1990-2004

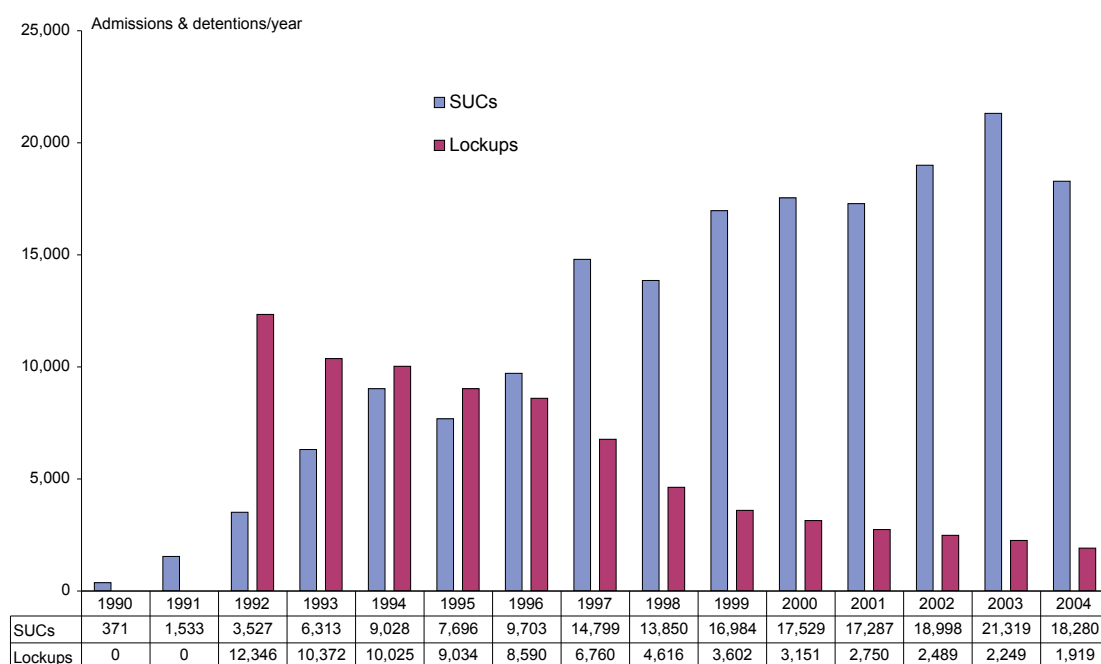


Table 2
Annual admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups by gender, 1990-2004

Year	Sobering up centres				Police lockups			
	Males	Females	Unknown	Total	Males	Females	Unknown	Total
1990	315	56	-	371	-	-	-	-
1991	1,286	247	-	1,533	-	-	-	-
1992	2,621	906	-	3,527	9,000	3,346	-	12,346
1993	4,724	1,589	-	6,313	7,789	2,583	-	10,372
1994	6,500	2,527	1	9,028	7,266	2,759	-	10,025
1995	5,616	2,071	9	7,696	6,470	2,458	106	9,034
1996	6,641	3,057	5	9,703	6,356	2,006	228	8,590
1997	10,022	4,764	13	14,799	5,035	1,578	147	6,760
1998	9,512	4,338	-	13,850	3,538	966	112	4,616
1999	11,223	5,760	1	16,984	2,764	771	67	3,602
2000	11,432	6,096	1	17,529	2,443	667	41	3,151
2001	11,326	5,960	1	17,287	2,060	652	38	2,750
2002	11,972	7,023	3	18,998	1,821	641	27	2,489
2003	13,788	7,531	-	21,315	1,654	581	14	2,249
2004	15,200	3,079	1	18,280	1,389	515	15	1,919
Total	122,178	55,004	35	177,217	57,585	19,523	795	77,903

Table 3
Annual admissions to all sobering up centres, WA, 1990-1997

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Metro								
Perth	371	1,108	1,442	1,516	1,784	1,649	1,712	2,776
Midland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anawim	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	371	1,108	1,442	1,516	1,784	1,649	1,712	2,776
Midwest & Murchison								
Wiluna	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,451	2,493
Geraldton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,451	2,493
Goldfields & SE Coastal								
Kalgoorlie	-	-	-	-	931	1,258	1,094	1,151
Sub total	-	-	-	-	931	1,258	1,094	1,151
Kimberley								
Halls Creek	-	-	754	2,105	2,248	1,971	1,873	2,432
Fitzroy Crossing	-	-	-	-	1,225	556	412	856
Kununurra	-	-	-	-	-	-	517	2,356
Broome	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derby	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wyndham	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	754	2,105	3,473	2,527	2,802	5,644
Pilbara & Gascoyne								
Hedland	-	425	1,331	2,237	2,053	1,402	1,251	1,180
Roebourne	-	-	-	455	787	860	1,393	1,555
Sub total	-	425	1,331	2,692	2,840	2,262	2,644	2,735
Total State	371	1,533	3,527	6,313	9,028	7,696	9,703	14,799

Table 4
Annual admissions to all sobering up centres, WA, 1998-2004

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Metro							
Perth	2,881	2,775	2,548	2,455	2,910	2,587	892
Midland	-	-	-	-	168	557	894
Anawim	-	-	-	-	-	523	588
Other	-	-	-	12	16	3	2
Sub total	2,881	2,775	2,548	2,467	3,094	3,670	2,376
Midwest & Murchison							
Wiluna	1,198	692	904	1,072	1,400	928	298
Geraldton	-	-	-	-	-	23	767
Sub total	1,198	692	904	1,072	1,400	951	1,065
Goldfields & SE Coastal							
Kalgoorlie	1,642	1,567	1,409	1,960	1,183	1,127	1,019
Sub total	1,642	1,567	1,409	1,960	1,183	1,127	1,019
Kimberley							
Halls Creek	1,927	1,614	1,536	1,801	1,459	1,913	1,559
Fitzroy Crossing	736	973	645	752	810	640	695
Kununurra	1,421	1,564	1,669	1,121	1,366	2,088	2,095
Broome	-	2,477	3,086	2,965	4,511	4,947	4,030
Derby	1,006	2,141	1,785	2,047	2,229	2,348	1,745
Wyndham	-	-	-	-	138	1,531	1,263
Sub total	5,090	8,769	8,721	8,686	10,513	13,467	11,387
Pilbara & Gascoyne							
Hedland	1,566	1,466	1,902	1,447	1,209	899	1,185
Roebourne	1,473	1,715	2,045	1,655	1,599	1,205	1,244
Sub total	3,039	3,181	3,947	3,102	2,808	2,104	2,429
Total State	13,850	16,984	17,529	17,287	18,998	21,319	18,280

Metropolitan Health Region

There are three SUCs in the Perth metropolitan area, the Perth SUC which was established in May 1990, the Midland SUC which was established in June 2002 and the Anawim SUC which was established in February 2003.

Over the period from 1990 to 2004 there was a total of 32,169 admissions to the SUCs and from 1992 to 2004 a total of 2,080 detentions in police lockups in the catchment areas served by these three SUCs (Figure 2).

Perth SUC

Over the period from 1990 to 2004 there was a total of 29,406 admissions, of which 23,530 (80.0%) were males, 5,874 (20.0%) were females and 2 where gender was missing. *Note: The Perth SUC was closed for a six month period for renovations from January 2004 and re-opened on 6 July 2004.*

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2004 is presented in Figure 3. This shows the greatest number of male admissions involved the 40 to 44 year age group,

Figure 2
Admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, Metropolitan Health Region, 1990-2004

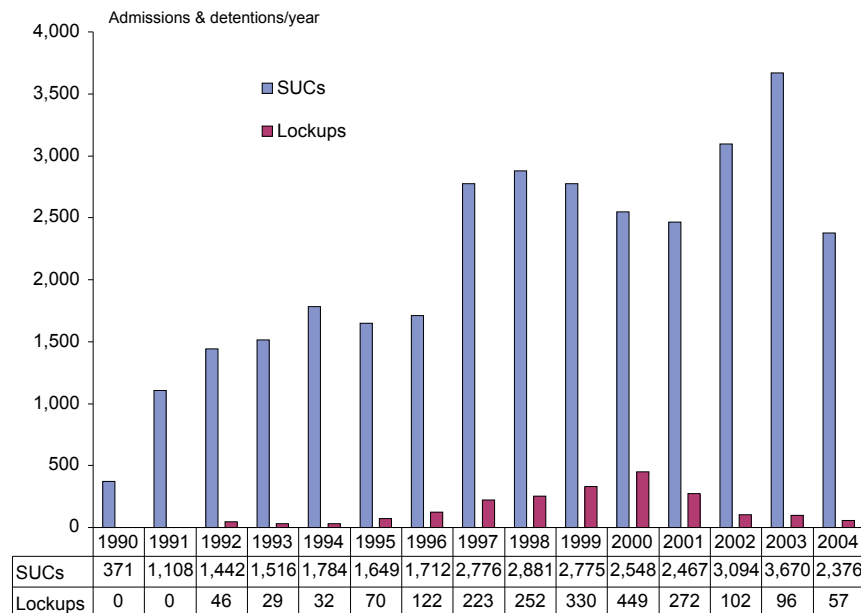
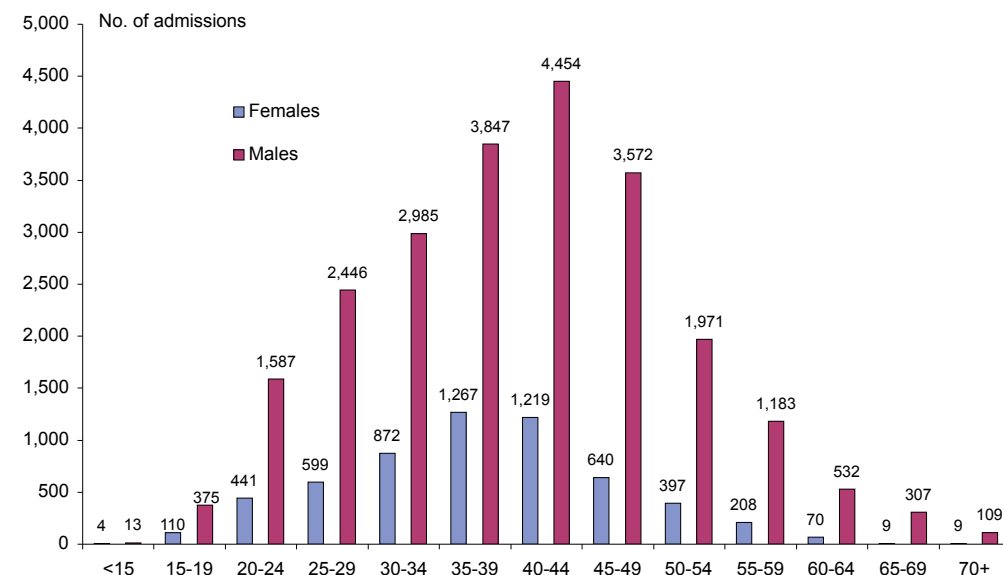


Figure 3
Admissions to Perth sobering up centre by age group, 1998-2004



Metropolitan Health Region

whereas for females most admissions involved the 35 to 39 age group.

Midland SUC

From 2002 to 2004 there was a total of 1,619 admissions, of which 1,230 (76.0%) were males and 389 (24.0%) were females.

A breakdown of age related data from 2002 to 2004 is presented in Figure 4. This shows the greatest number of male admissions involved the 45 to 49 year age group, whereas for females most admissions involved the 35 to 39 age group.

Anawim SUC

From 2003 to 2004 there was a total of 1,111 admissions, all of which were females as this SUC provides services to females only. A breakdown of age related data from 2003 to 2004 is presented in Figure 5.

This shows there were two clusters of admissions with peaks in the 30 to 34 and 40 to 44 year age groups respectively. There were relatively few admissions involving women aged 55 years and older.

Other

Data on attendances to a limited sobering up service conducted in Scarborough as part of New Year's Eve celebrations to assist in the management of intoxicated persons from 2001 is presented in Table 4 (page 5).

Figure 4
Admissions to Midland sobering up centre by age group, 2002-2004

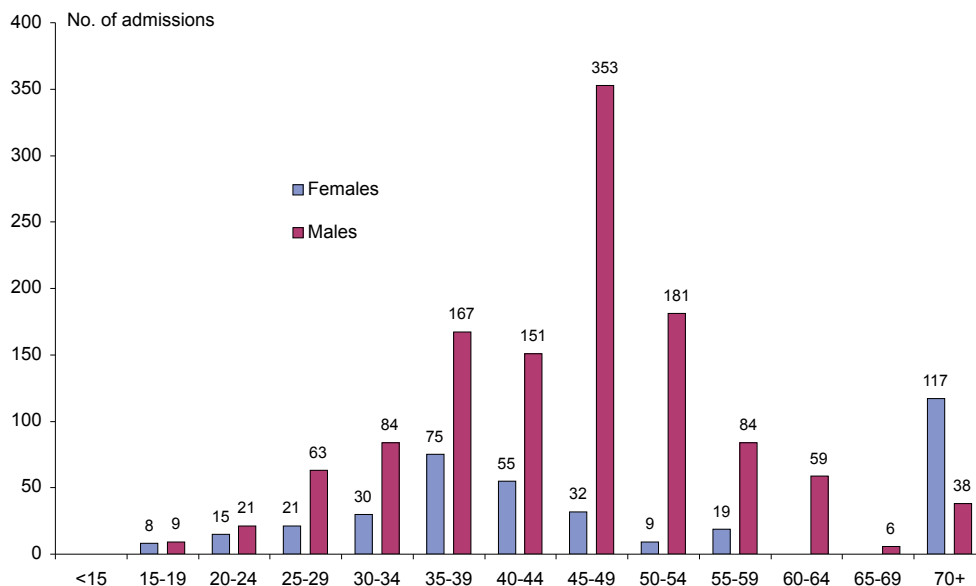
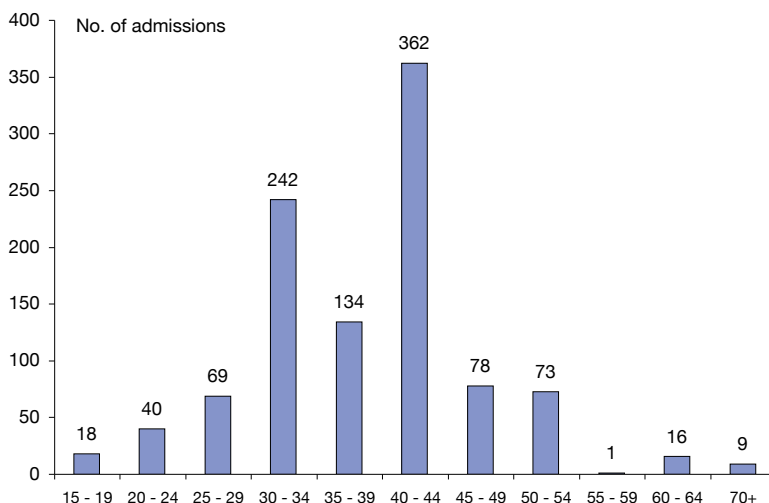


Figure 5
Admissions to Anawim sobering up centre by age group, 2003-2004



Goldfields & South East Coastal Health Region

In the Goldfields and South East Coastal Health Region there is one SUC, the Kalgoorlie SUC which was established in June 1994.

Kalgoorlie SUC

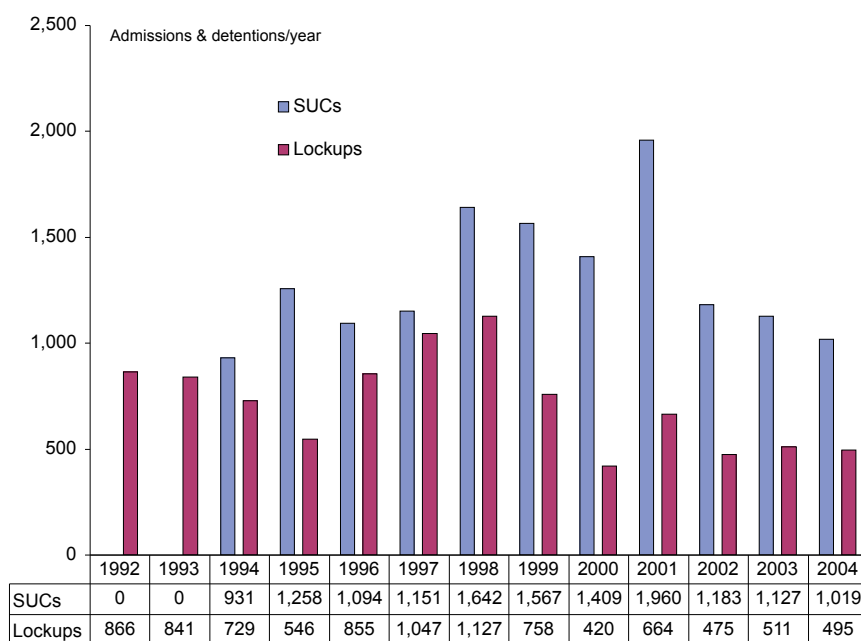
From 1994 to 2004 there was a total of 14,341 admissions to the Kalgoorlie SUC and 9,334 detentions in police lockups in the Kalgoorlie SUC catchment area.

Of the total of 14,341 admissions, 8,367 (58.3%) were males, 5,954 (41.5%) were females and 20 (0.2%) where gender was missing.

There was an initial positive impact on the number of detentions for drunkenness in the Kalgoorlie SUC catchment area. The number of detentions dropped from 729 in 1994 to 546 in 1995, doubled to 1,127 detentions in 1998 and have since dropped by 56.1% to 495 in 2004 (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, Goldfields & South East Coastal Health Region, 1992-2004

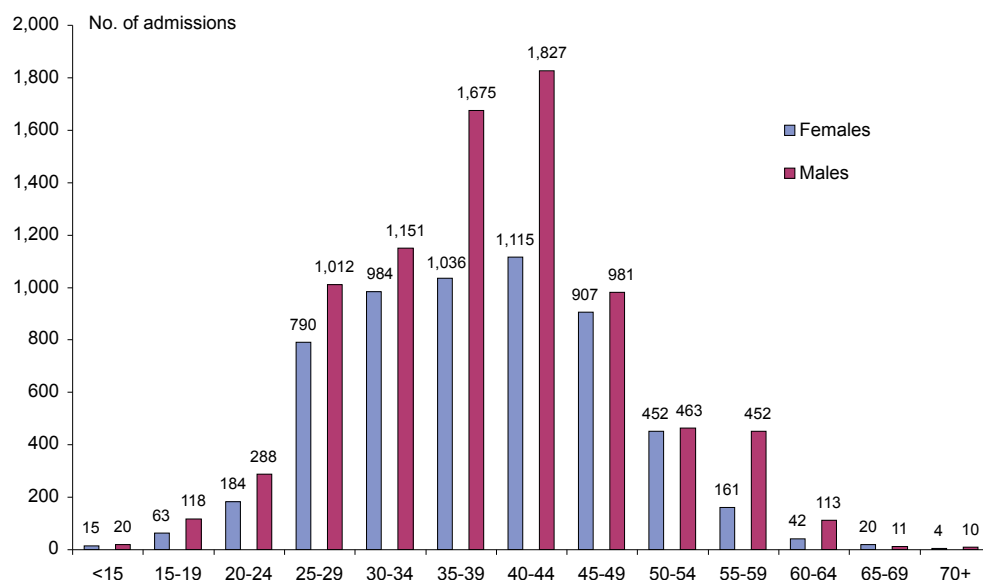


The annual number of admissions to the Kalgoorlie SUC increased by 76.4%, from 931 in 1994 to 1,960 in 2001 and then declined by 48.0% to 1,019 admissions in 2004.

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2004 is presented in Figure 7. Male admissions mostly involved the 35 to 44 age group, whereas female admissions mostly involved the 30 to 44 age group.

Figure 7

Admissions to Kalgoorlie sobering up centre by age group, 1998-2004



Midwest & Murchison Health Region

In the Midwest and Murchison Health Region there are two SUCs, the Wiluna SUC (established in April 1996) and the Geraldton SUC (established in December 2003).

From 1996 to 2004 there was a total of 11,226 admissions to SUCs and 8,810 detentions in police lockups in the catchment areas for these SUCs in this region (Figure 8).

Wiluna SUC

From 1996 to 2004 there was a total of 10,436 admissions to the Wiluna SUC, of which 6,262 (60.0%) were males and 4,174 (40.0%) were females.

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2004 is presented in Figure 9 (page 10).

Male admissions mostly involved the 15 to 29 age group, with the greatest number of admissions occurring in the 20 to 24 age group, with very few admissions occurring in the 60 years and older age group.

Female admissions were clustered in the 20 to 34 age group and then declined with age, with very few admissions occurring in the older age groups.

Geraldton SUC

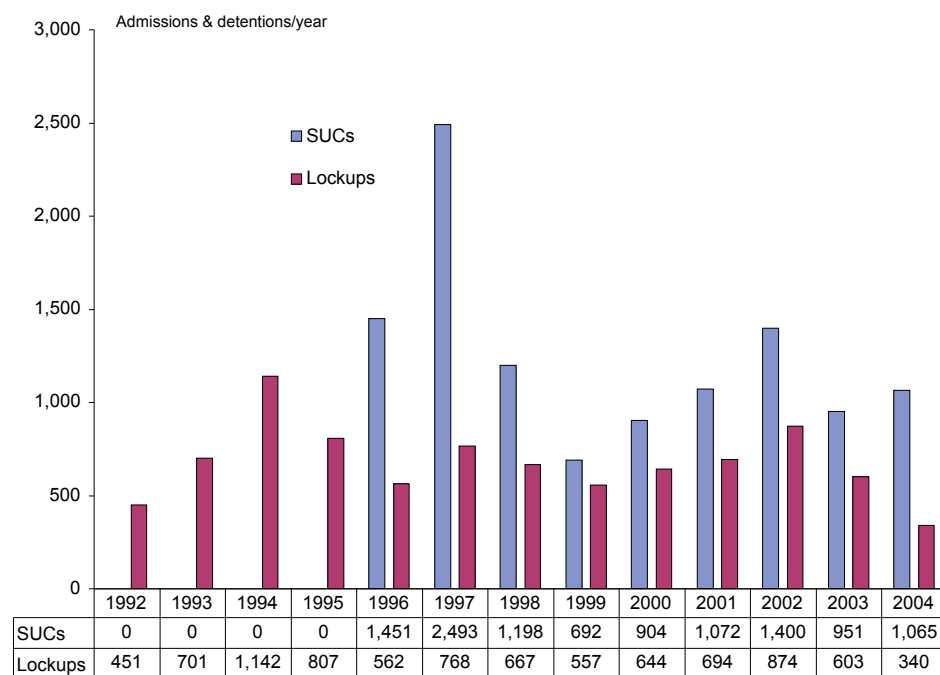
From 2003 to 2004 there was a total of 790 admissions to the Geraldton SUC, of which 638 (80.8%) were males and 152 (19.2%) were females.

A breakdown of age related data from 2003 to 2004 is presented in Figure 10 (page 10).

Male admissions peaked in the 45 to 49 age group, with most admissions involving those aged between 35 and 49 years.

Whilst the greatest number of female admissions involved the 55 to 59 age group, there was a clustering of admissions involving the 35 to 44 age group.

Figure 8
Admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, Midwest & Murchison Health Region, 1992-2004



Midwest & Murchison Health Region

Figure 9
Admissions to Wiluna sobering up centre by age group, 1996-2004

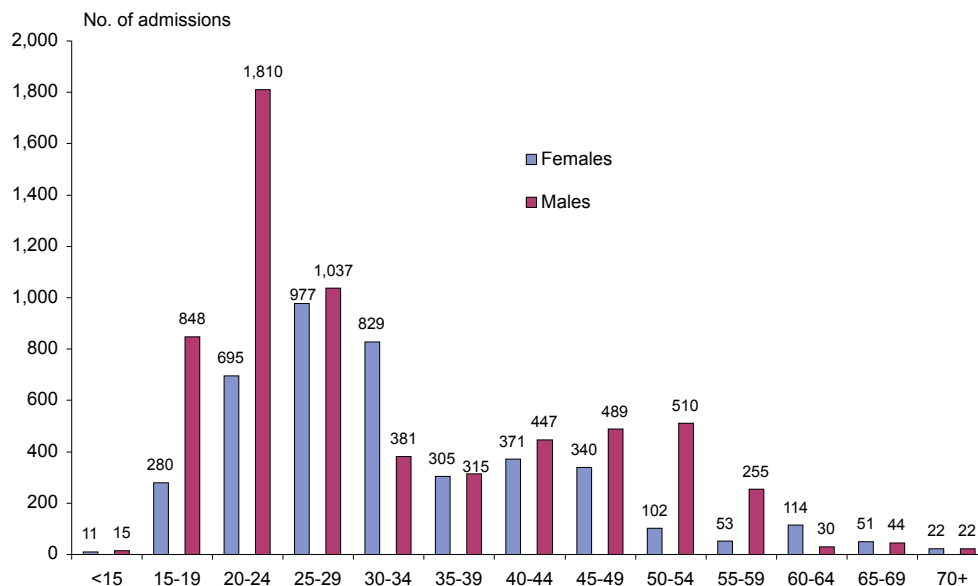
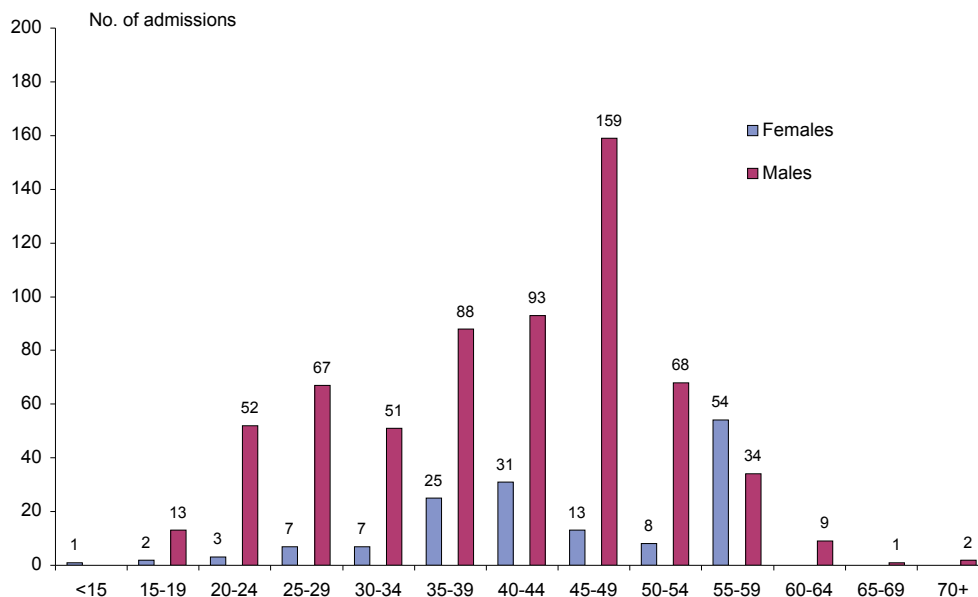


Figure 10
Admissions to Geraldton sobering up centre by age group, 2003-2004



Pilbara & Gascoyne Health Region

There are two SUCs in the Pilbara and Gascoyne Health Region, the Hedland SUC (established in April 1991) and the Roebourne SUC (established in February 1993).

From 1991 to 2004 there was a total of 35,539 admissions to SUCs and 11,968 detentions in police lockups in this region (Figure 11).

The annual number of detentions dropped from 2,128 detentions in 1992 (the first full year) to 1,232 in 1994, then increased to 1,933 in 1996. Since 1996 detentions in this region have steadily declined to 159 in 2004.

Overall, the number of admissions to SUCs increased by 197%, from 1,331 in 1992 (the first full year) to 3,947 in 2000 and then fell by 38.5% to 2,429 in 2004.

Hedland SUC

From 1991 to 2004 there was a total of 19,553 admissions, of which 12,501 (63.1%) were males, 6,704 (36.9%) were females and 3 where gender was missing.

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2004 is presented in Figure 12 (page 12).

This shows a pattern of both male and female admissions peaking in the 25 to 29 age group and then numbers of admissions slowly declining in older age groups.

There was an unusual spike in the number of male admissions in the 60 to 64 age group, whereas there were very few admissions involving females in the 50 years and older age group.

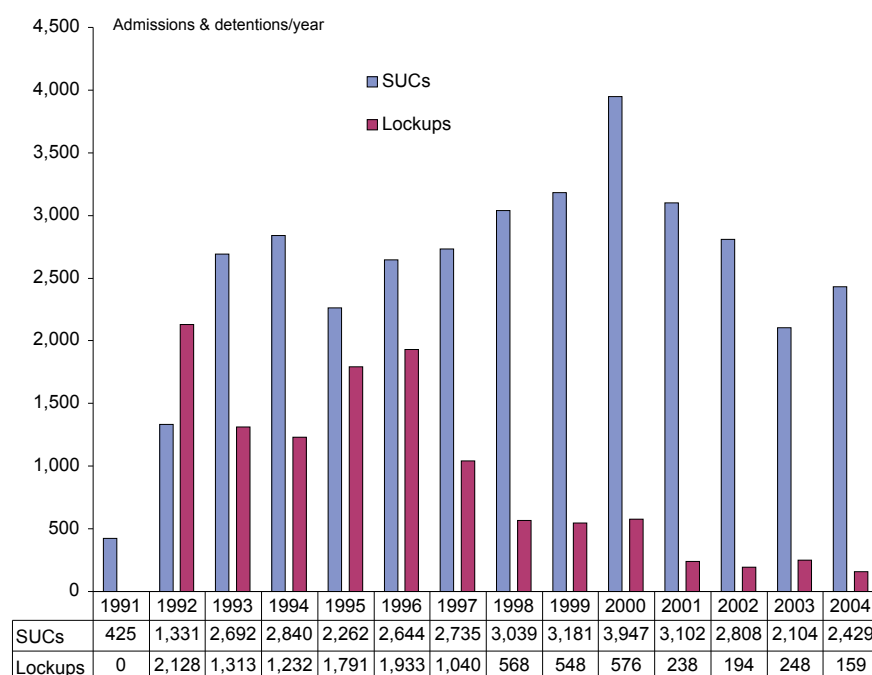
Roebourne SUC

From 1993 to 2004 there was a total of 15,986 admissions, of which 10,114 (63.3%) were males, 5,871 (36.7%) were females and 1 where gender was missing.

A breakdown of age related data from 1993 to 2004 is presented in Figure 13 (page 12).

This shows that males tended to be from younger age groups compared to females, with most male admissions clustered in the 35 to 59 age group, whereas female admissions were clustered in the 40 to 69 age group.

Figure 11
Admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, Pilbara & Gascoyne Health Region, 1991-2004



Pilbara & Gascoyne Health Region

Figure 12
Admissions to Hedland sobering up centre by age group, 1991-2004

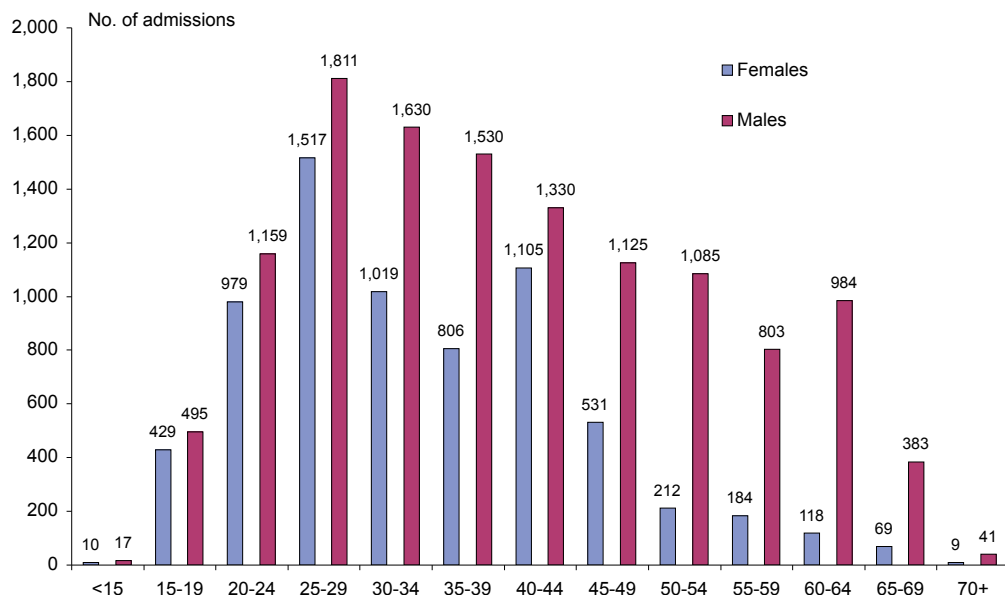
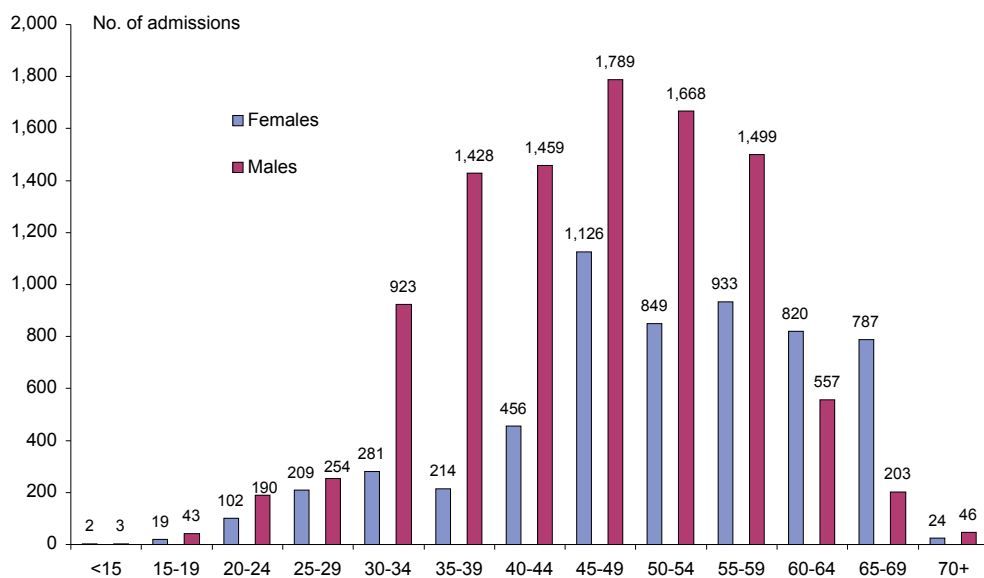


Figure 13
Admissions to Roebourne sobering up centre by age group, 1993-2004



Kimberley Health Region

In the Kimberley Health Region there are six SUCs, the Halls Creek SUC (established in September 1992), the Fitzroy Crossing SUC (established in March 1994), the Kununurra SUC (established in September 1996), the Derby SUC (established in May 1998), the Broome SUC (established in February 1999) and the Wyndham SUC (established in December 2002).

From 1992 to 2004 there was a total of 83,938 admissions to SUCs and 44,759 detentions in police lockups in the Kimberley Health Region (Figure 14).

There has been a marked positive impact on the number of detentions for drunkenness in this region, steadily dropping from 8,798 in 1992 to 766 in 2004.

The decline in detentions for drunkenness is accompanied by the steady increase in admissions to SUCs, which grew from 754 in 1992 to 11,387 in 2004, a 15 fold increase in admissions to SUCs.

Halls Creek SUC

From 1992 to 2004 there was a total of 23,192 admissions, of which 16,395 (70.7%) were males, 6,796 (29.3%) were females and 1 case where gender was missing.

A breakdown of age related data from 1992 to 2004 is presented in Figure 15 (page 14). This shows that both male and female admissions were mostly clustered in the 20 to 45 year age group. However, as can be seen whereas female admissions decreased with age, there were relatively greater numbers of males in older age groups than females.

Fitzroy Crossing SUC

From 1994 to 2004 there was a total of 8,300 admissions, of which 5,387 (64.9%) were males, 2,907 (35.0%) were females and 6 (0.1%) where gender was missing.

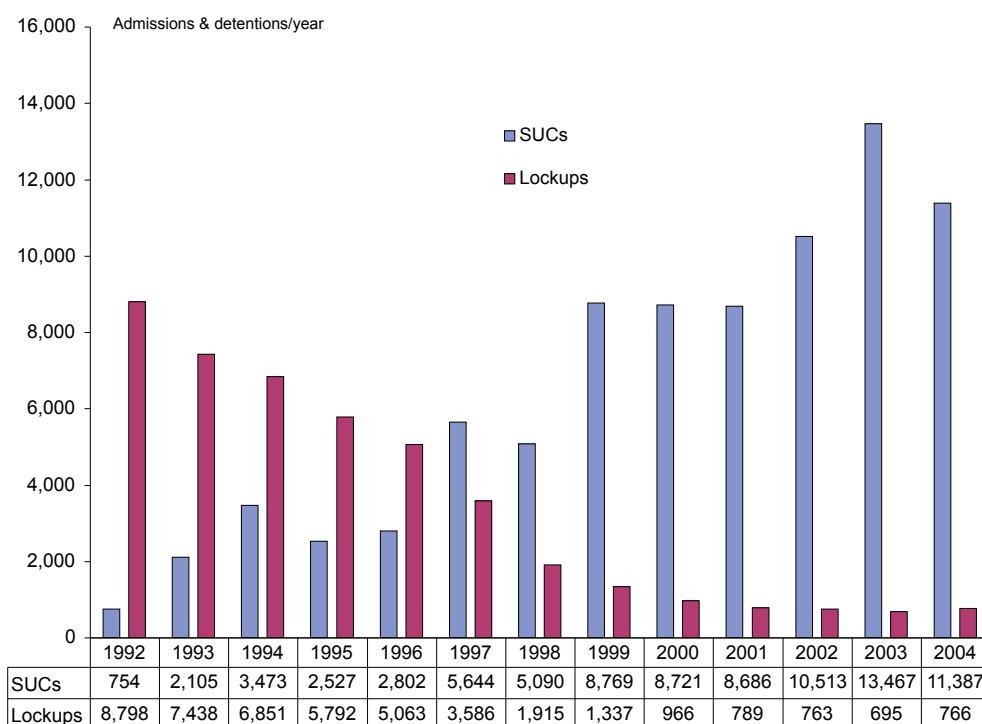
A breakdown of age related data from 1994 to 2004 is presented in Figure 16 (page 14). There was a similar age distribution for both male and female admissions with the most frequent admissions involving the 25 to 39 year age group for both sexes.

Kununurra SUC

From 1996 to 2004 there was a total of 14,198 admissions, of which 10,801 (76.1%) were males, 3,396 (23.9%) were females and 1 where gender was missing.

A breakdown of age related data from 1996 to 2004 is presented in Figure 17 (page 15).

Figure 14
Admissions to sobering up centres & detentions for drunkenness in police lockups, Kimberley Health Region, 1992-2004



This shows two peaks in male admissions, in the 30 to 39 and 45 to 49 age groups, with very few admissions in the 60 year and older age group. Female admissions were mostly clustered in the 30 to 44 year age group, with very admissions of females aged 60 years and over.

Derby SUC

From 1998 to 2004 there was a total of 13,304 admissions, of which 9,537 (71.7%) were males, 3,766 (28.3%) were females and 1 where gender was missing.

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2004 is presented in Figure 18 (page 15).

This shows that female admissions were mostly clustered in the 25 to 44 age group and then declined with very few admissions in the older age groups. Most male admissions occurred in the 25 to 49 age group and then fell sharply, with relatively few admissions in older age groups.

Broome SUC

From 1999 to 2004 there was a total of 22,016 admissions, of which 14,652 (66.6%) were males and 7,364 (33.4%) were females.

A breakdown of age related data from 1998 to 2004 is presented in Figure 19 (page 16).

Figure 15
Admissions to Halls Creek sobering up centre by age group, 1992-2004

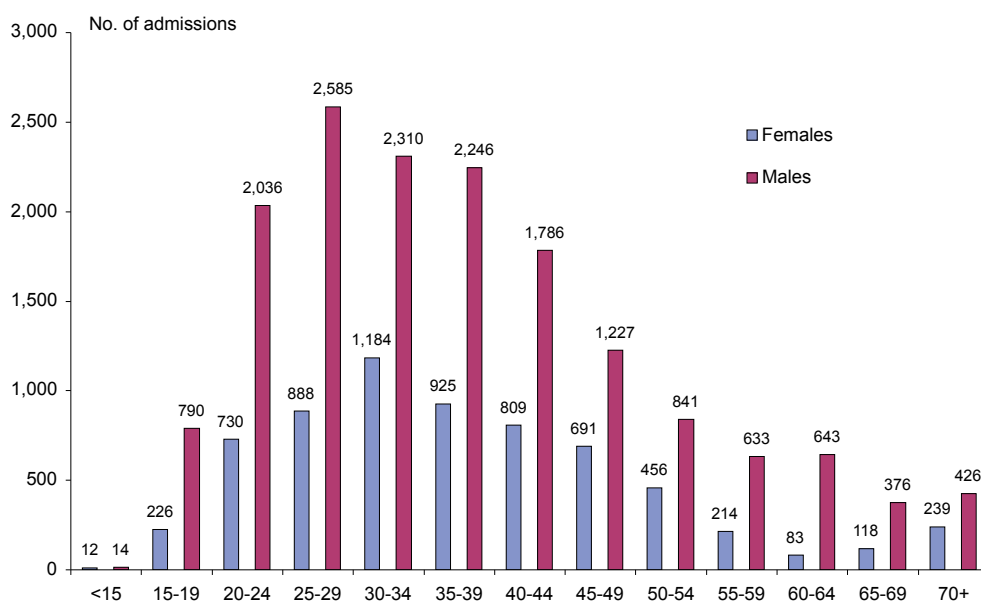
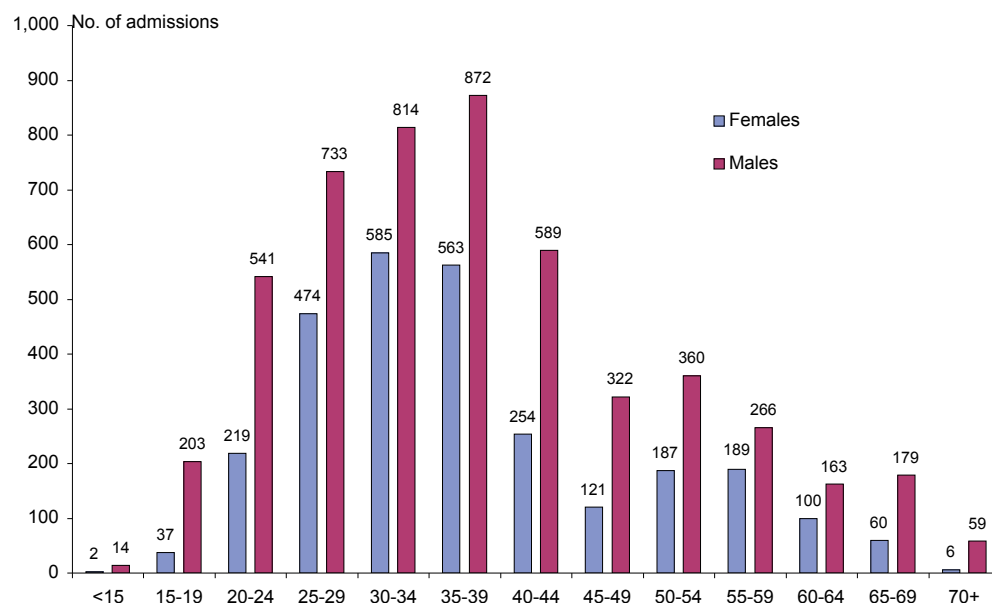


Figure 16
Admissions to Fitzroy Crossing sobering up centre by age group, 1994-2004



Overall, males were older than females with male admissions peaking in the 30 to 39 age group, whereas female admissions peaked in the 30 to 34 age group. There were very few female admissions involving those aged 55 years and older.

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From 2002 to 2004 there was a total of 2,932 admissions, of which 2,174 (74.2%) were males and 758 (25.8%) were females.

A breakdown of age related data from 2002 to 2004 is presented in Figure 20 (page 16).

This data shows two peaks in male admissions, with a sharp peak in the 35 to 39 age group and a smaller peak in the 45 to 49 age group. There were relatively few female admissions involving those aged 40 years and older compared to male admissions.

Figure 17
Admissions to Kununurra sobering up centre by age group, 1996-2004

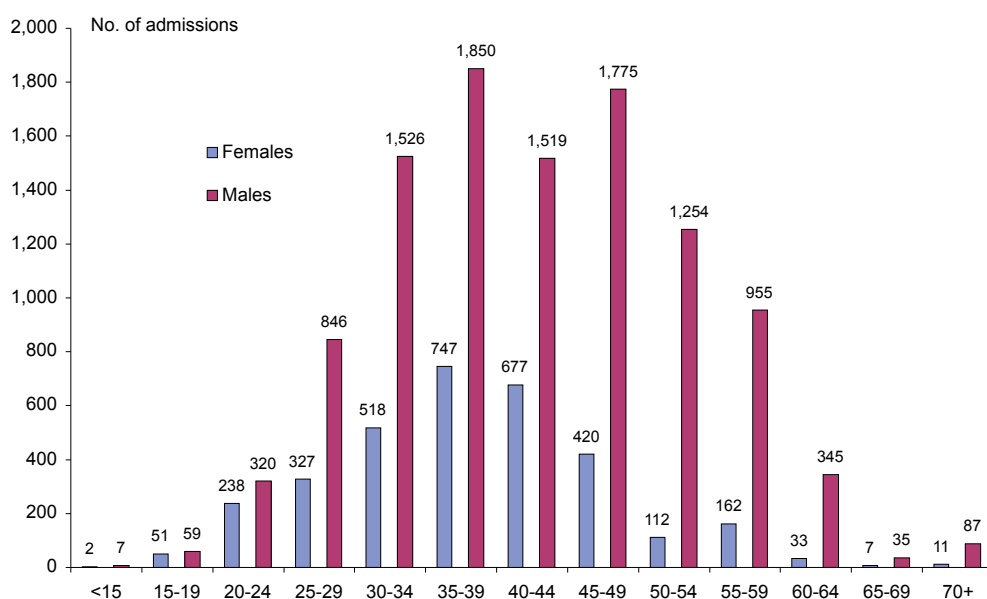


Figure 18
Admissions to Derby sobering up centre by age group, 1998-2004

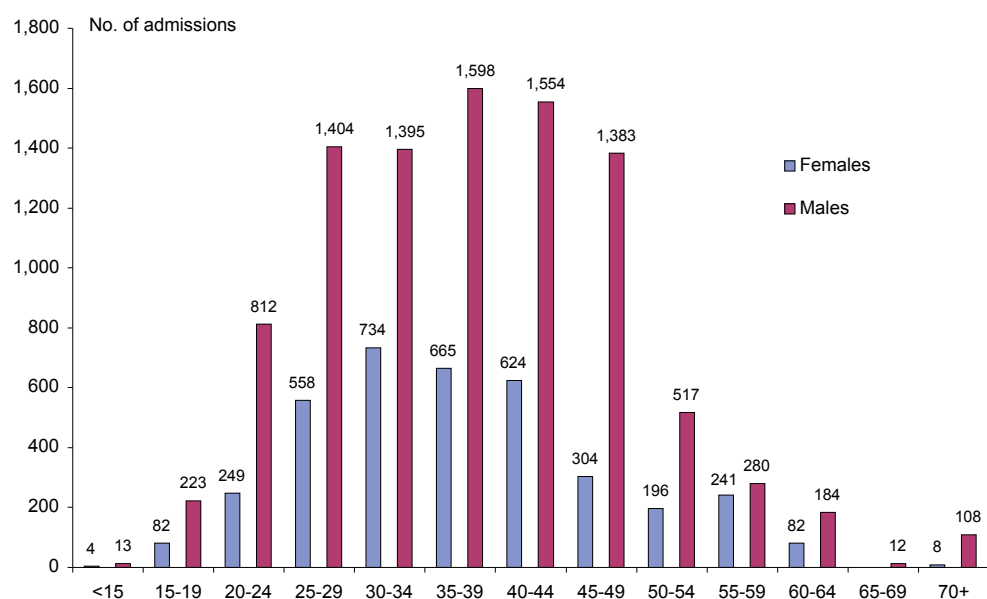


Figure 19
Admissions to Broome sobering up centre by age group, 1999-2004

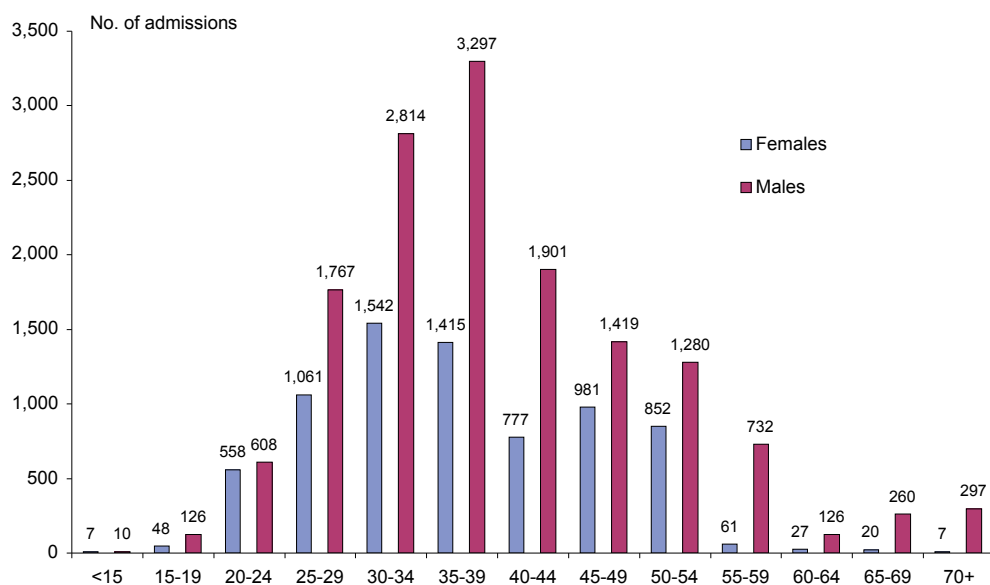


Figure 20
Admissions to Wyndham sobering up centre by age group, 2002-2004

