

Criminalization prevents steroid users from seeking help, research finds

November 15 2023, by Christine Bowley



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

New research from Griffith University's School of Applied Psychology has investigated the effect criminalization of Anabolic–Androgenic Steroid (AAS) use has on users' ability to seek help.

Interviewing male and female AAS users as well as [general practitioners](#), needle and syringe harm reduction workers and harm reduction coordinators, the study looked at ways to better support those affected.

Research lead, Dr. Tim Piatkowski said the criminalization of AAS in Australia has led to a fear of legal consequences and stigmatization, creating a complex environment for both AAS users and health care providers. The work is [published](#) in the *Journal of Criminology*.

"It became apparent that the criminalization component was really affecting choices around safer use for the study cohort," he said.

"Health care providers and harm reduction coordinators all agreed it pushes AAS use further underground, which not only increases the risk of users engaging with criminal networks where they otherwise probably wouldn't, but also removes them from medical care."

In Queensland, the laws around steroids were changed in correlation with the VLAD laws (Vicious Lawless Association Disestablishment Act 2013) which were designed to disrupt and dismantle illegal activities of outlaw motorcycle clubs, meaning steroids are still aligned with other schedule one drugs including methamphetamine and heroin.

The research outcomes suggest that by destigmatizing use and reclassifying AAS in a manner similar to that of the United Kingdom's Class C framework, it is possible to encourage safer use, empower users to make informed choices, and foster a more compassionate and health-centered approach to AAS use in Australia.

"The first step is to acknowledge there is quite a large illicit substance consuming group in Australia," Dr. Piatkowski said. "The next step is to think, how can we look after their health? By addressing these issues and re-evaluating current policies, we can promote a more health-centered

approach and reduce harm associated with AAS use."

The full research paper, "Beyond the law: Exploring the impact of criminalising anabolic–androgenic steroid use on help-seeking and [health outcomes](#) in Australia" is available for [public access](#), providing valuable insights for policymakers, health care professionals and those interested in harm reduction strategies related to AAS use in Australia.

More information: Timothy Piatkowski et al, Beyond the law: Exploring the impact of criminalising anabolic–androgenic steroid use on help-seeking and health outcomes in Australia, *Journal of Criminology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/26338076231209044](https://doi.org/10.1177/26338076231209044)

Provided by Griffith University

Citation: Criminalization prevents steroid users from seeking help, research finds (2023, November 15) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-11-criminalization-steroid-users.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--