

SOLUTIONS

NOT STIGMA

COMMUNITY VOICES ON

DRUG REFORM

Annie Madden, Oisin Stronach, Baillee Farah, Chloe Span, Paige Webb, James Lomas & Cigdem Watson



Introduction

This research project/survey was **unfunded**.

There are **no conflicts to declare** in relation to this project.



Introduction

- Drug policy decisions often **exclude** the **voices** of those most affected.
- Perspectives of communities and frontline AOD & harm reduction workers are **under-represented** in drug policy decision making.
- Politicians **frequently** cite public opinion to **justify** inaction in drug policy space.
- The **Solutions Not Stigma** project challenges this status quo by **reframing policy debates** through grassroots knowledge.
- What are the **policy priorities** for those who are living with and working on these issues every day – are they **different from the priorities** expressed through the **NDSHS**?



Methods

Survey **co-designed** with people directly affected by drug policy:

- Students and young people (SSDP)
- Families with lived experience (FDS)
- Professionals in AOD, harm reduction, and related sectors (HRA)

Previously each organisation conducted **annual membership surveys** (on drug policy issues)

Decided to **collaborate** to amplify community voices in advocacy and policymaking

We asked people about their **attitudes** toward **23 areas of drug policy reform**

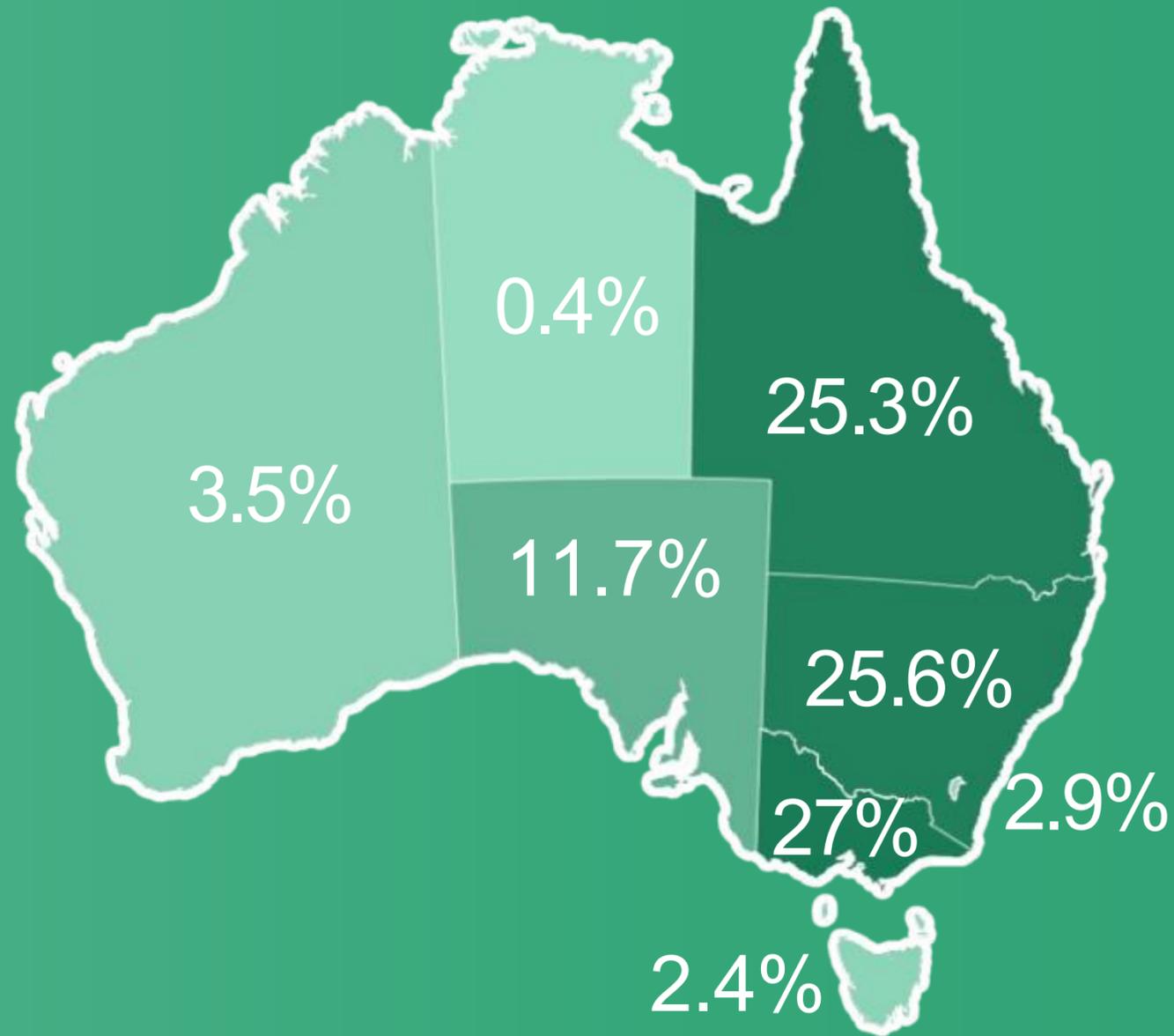
Almost 1200 individuals (**n=1 167**) people shared their views

Survey disseminated online **Dec 2023 – June 2024**

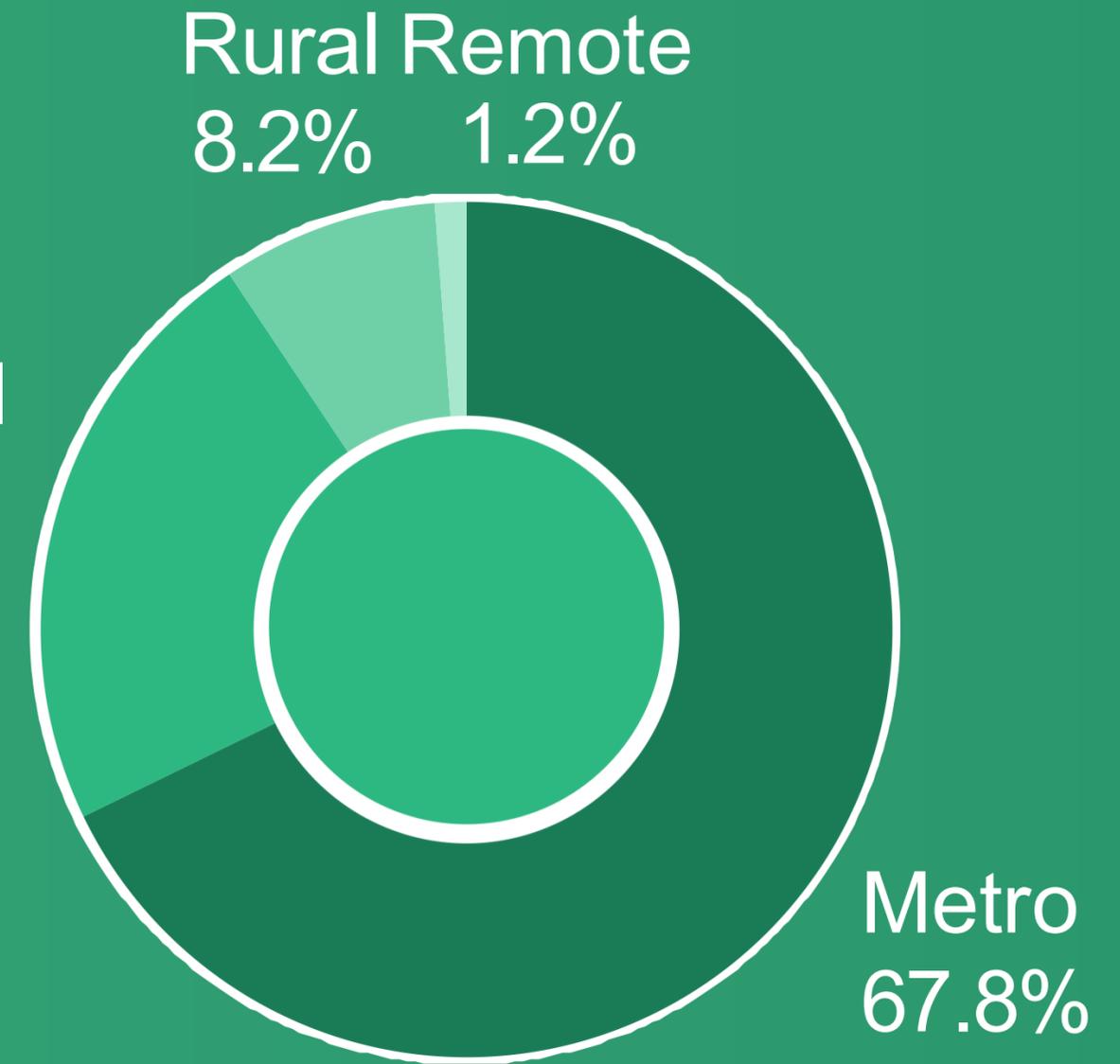
Collaborative approach to data collection, analysis and dissemination



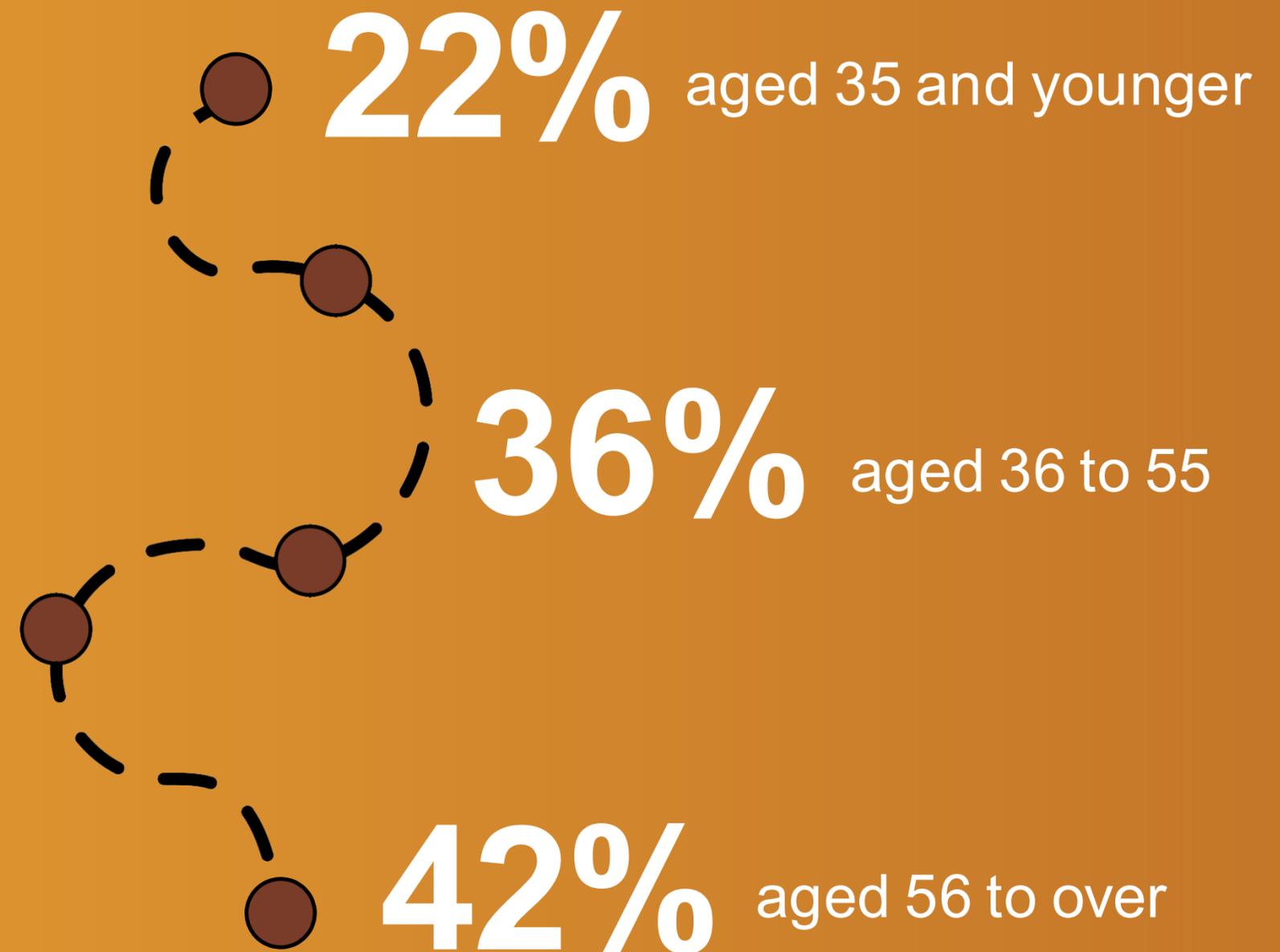
Sample Characteristics



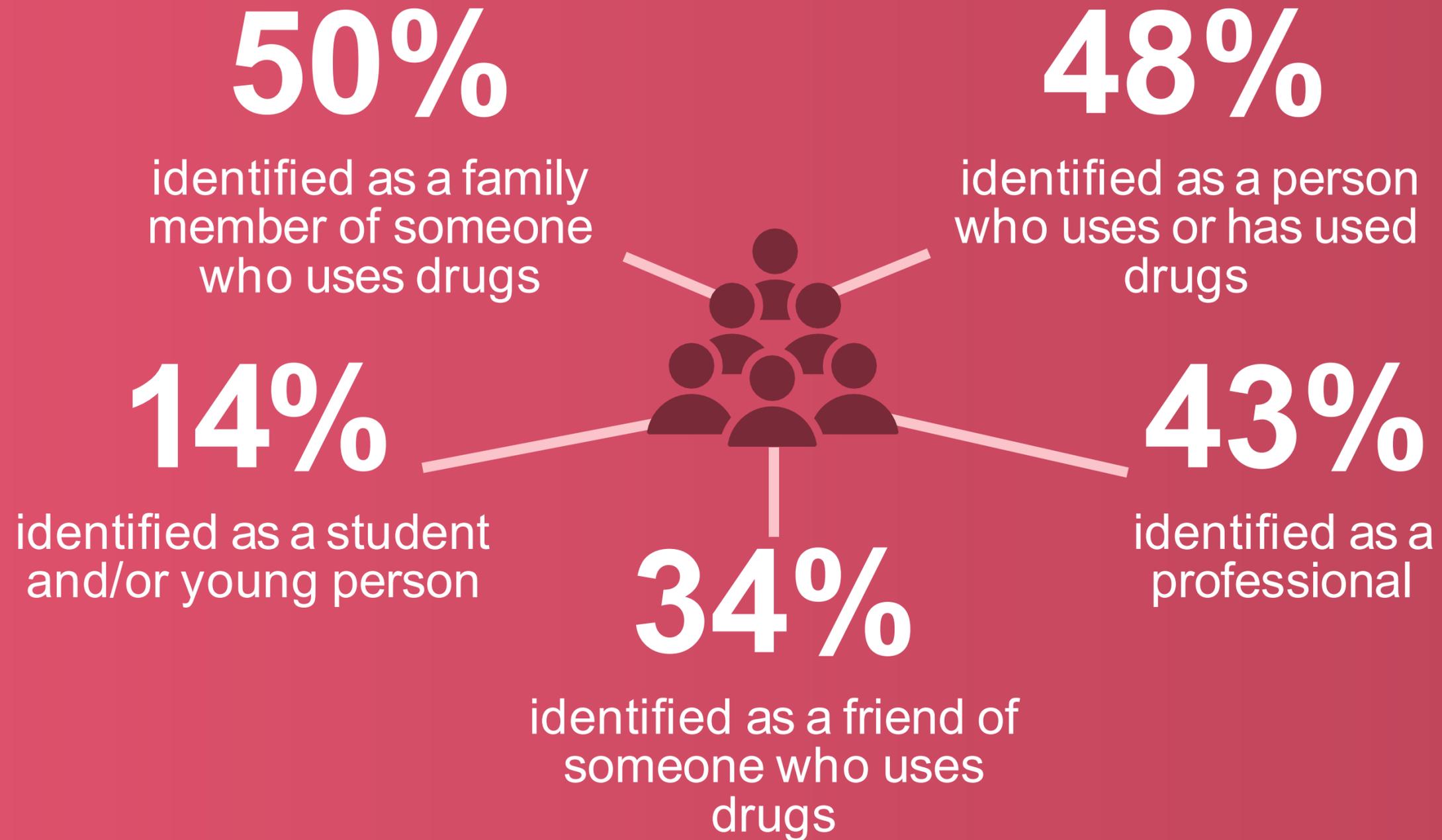
Regional
22.8%



Sample Characteristics

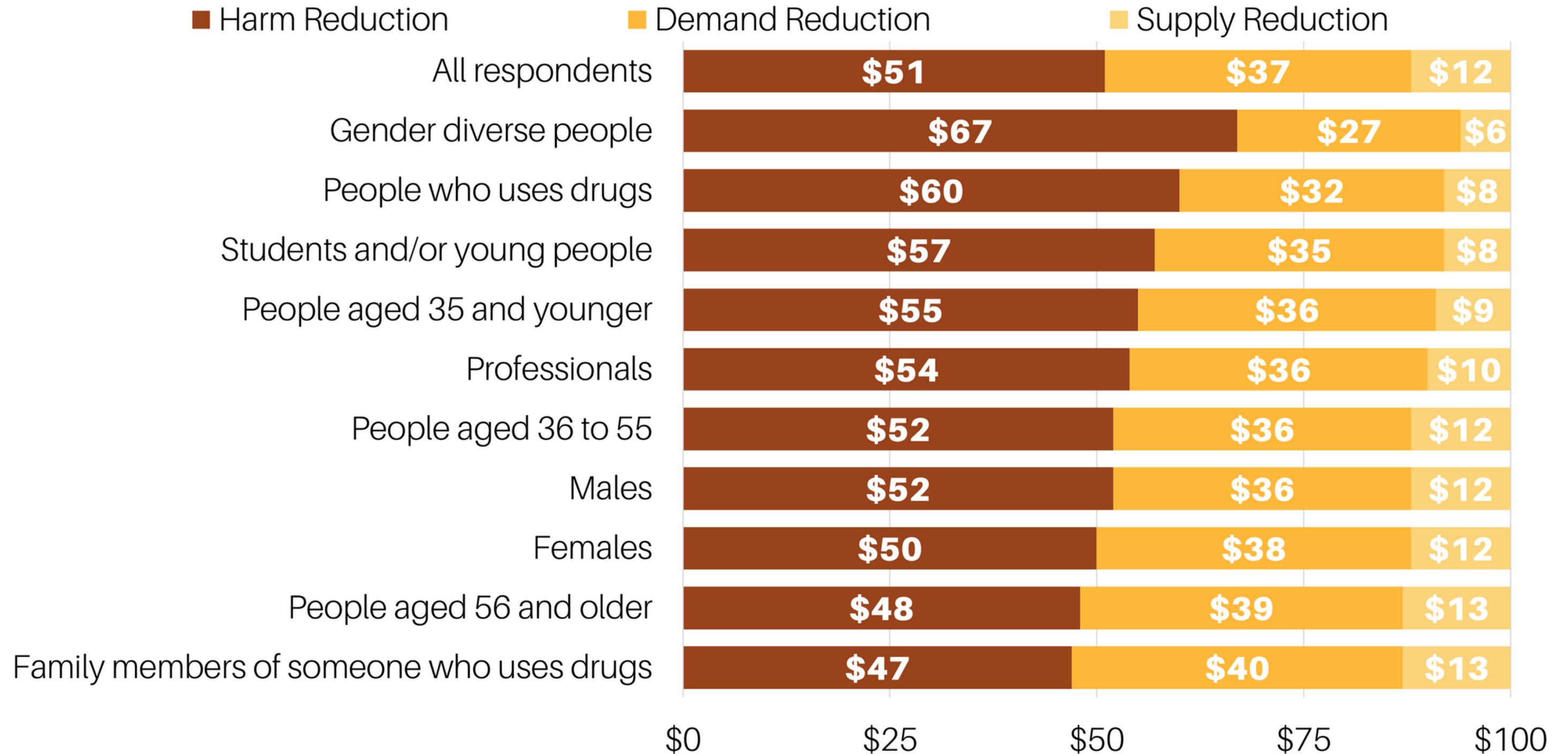


Sample Characteristics



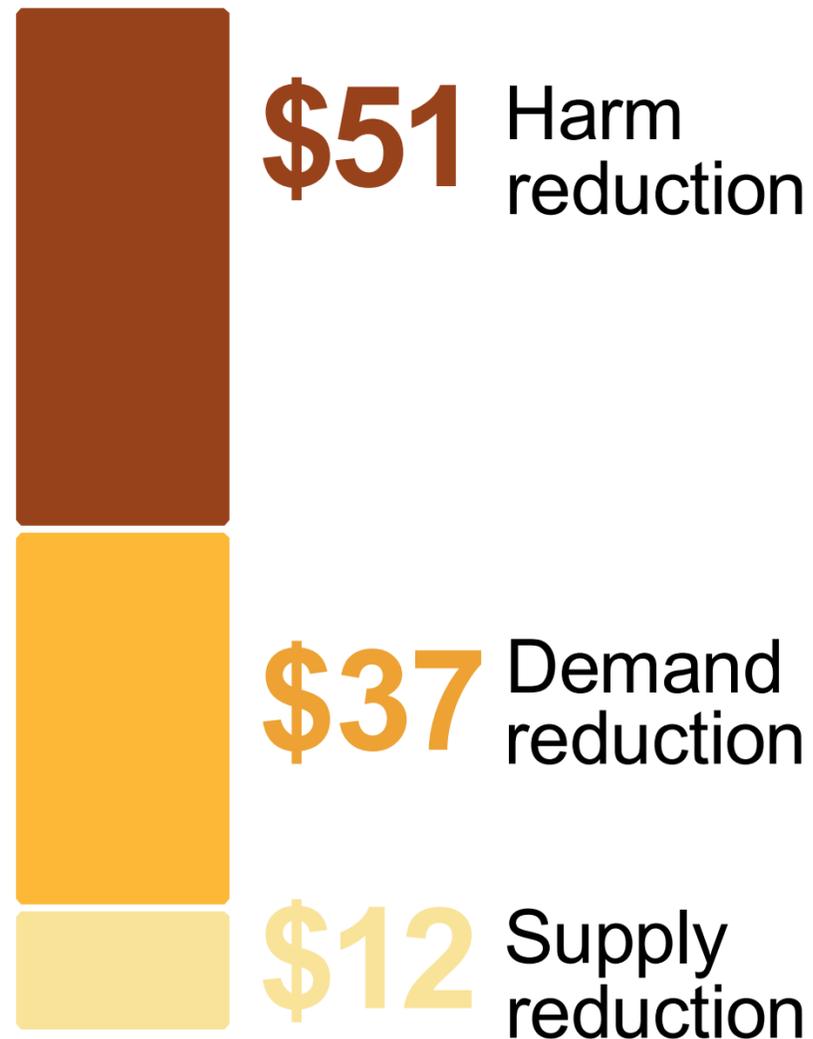
Funding and Access to Services

How would you allocate \$100 across supply, demand & harm reduction?



How would you allocate \$100 across supply, demand & harm reduction?

We found



VS

2022/23 NDSHS ^[1]

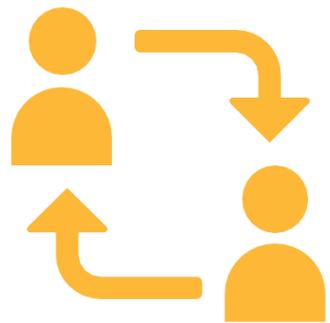


VS

Actual allocation ^[6]



Should there be greater investment in...



90%

Support greater investment in peer-based drug user organisations



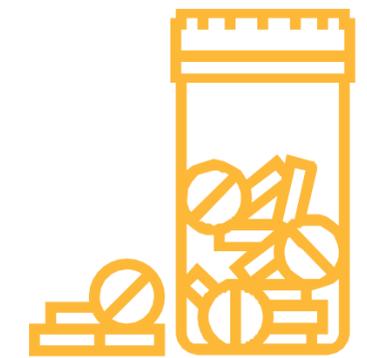
94%

Support greater investment in family/carer led services for families



93%

Support AOD treatment resourcing being an urgent government priority



93%

Support affordable opiate treatment programs



Decriminalisation and Legalisation

Decriminalisation of drugs for personal use



51%

Support the decriminalisation of all currently illicit drugs

- 88% Cannabis
- 69% Psilocybin mushrooms
- 66% MDMA
- 61% Cocaine
- 59% Heroin
- 57% Methamphetamine

“Drug use **MUST** be treated as a social/health issue and not a criminal one. Money and resources put into prohibition and enforcement is much better spent on literally anything else, but in particular harm reduction practices and education.”

A person who uses/used drugs, a young person, a professional, 35 or younger, male



Legalisation and regulation of drugs



We found

76% Cannabis

46% MDMA

36% Cocaine

35% Heroin

33% Methamphetamine

VS

2022-23 NDSHS ^[1] found

46% Cannabis

12% MDMA

10% Cocaine

7% Heroin

6% Methamphetamine

Harm Reduction Policies and Programs

Key harm reduction programs in Australia



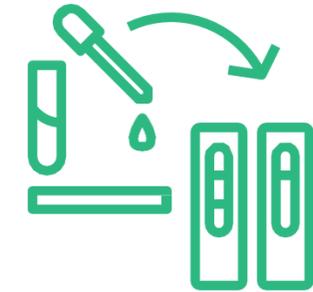
97%

Support greater investment in harm reduction programs



95%

Support peer-led harm reduction at music festivals/events

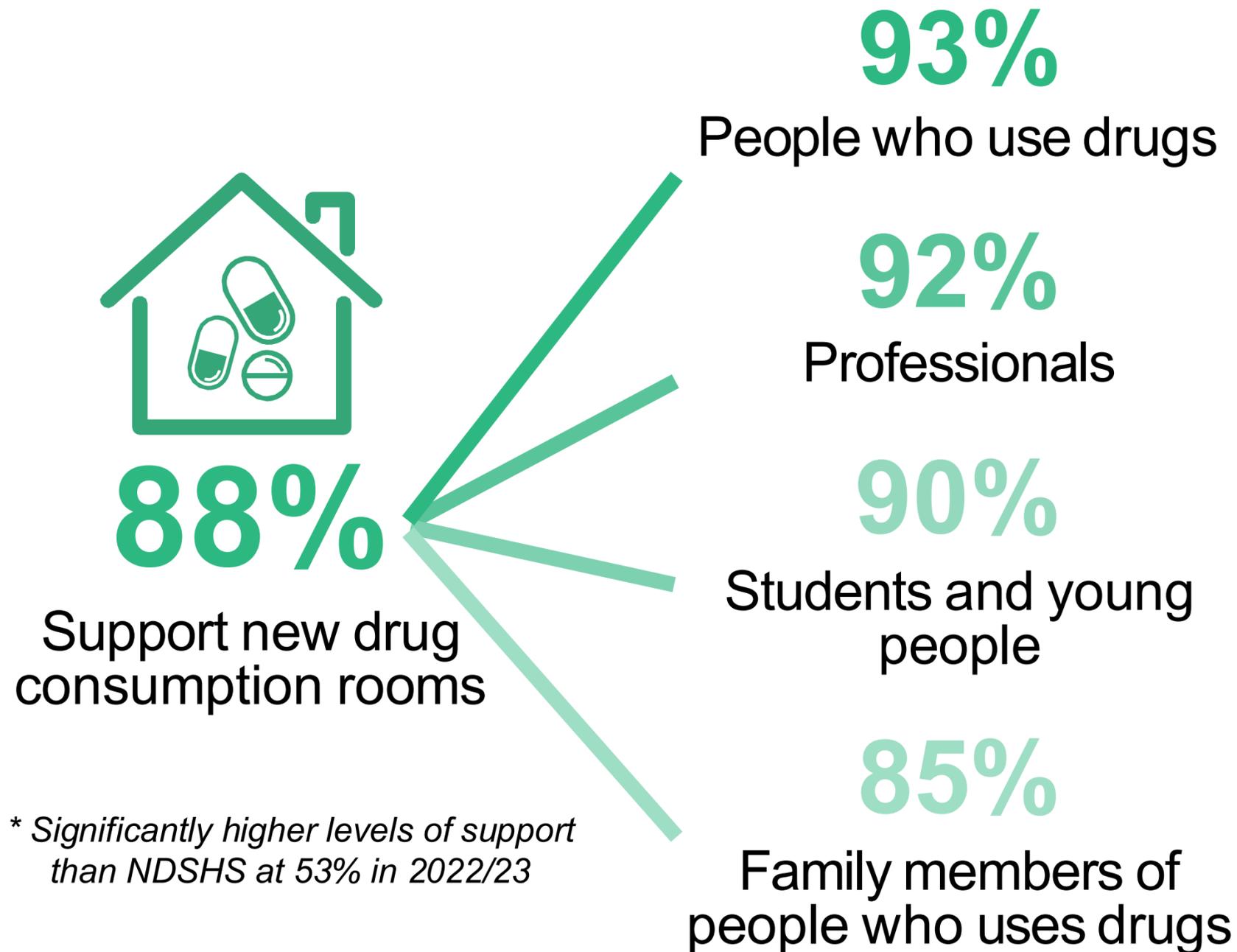


94%

Support drug checking programs



Should new drug consumption rooms be established where there is a community need?



“There should be more Supervised Injecting Facilities around Australia”

A person who uses/used drugs, a family member of someone who uses drugs, a professional, 35 or younger, female



Should Australia establish needle and syringe programs (NSPs) in prisons?

We found

79%

Support needle and syringe programs in prisons

VS

What others have found

68%

2022-23 NDSHS (NSPs generally) ^[1]

83%

2022-23 NDSHS people who recently used drugs (NSPs generally) ^[1]



Discussion

Instead of running separate surveys, we **collaborated to strengthen** our collective voice.

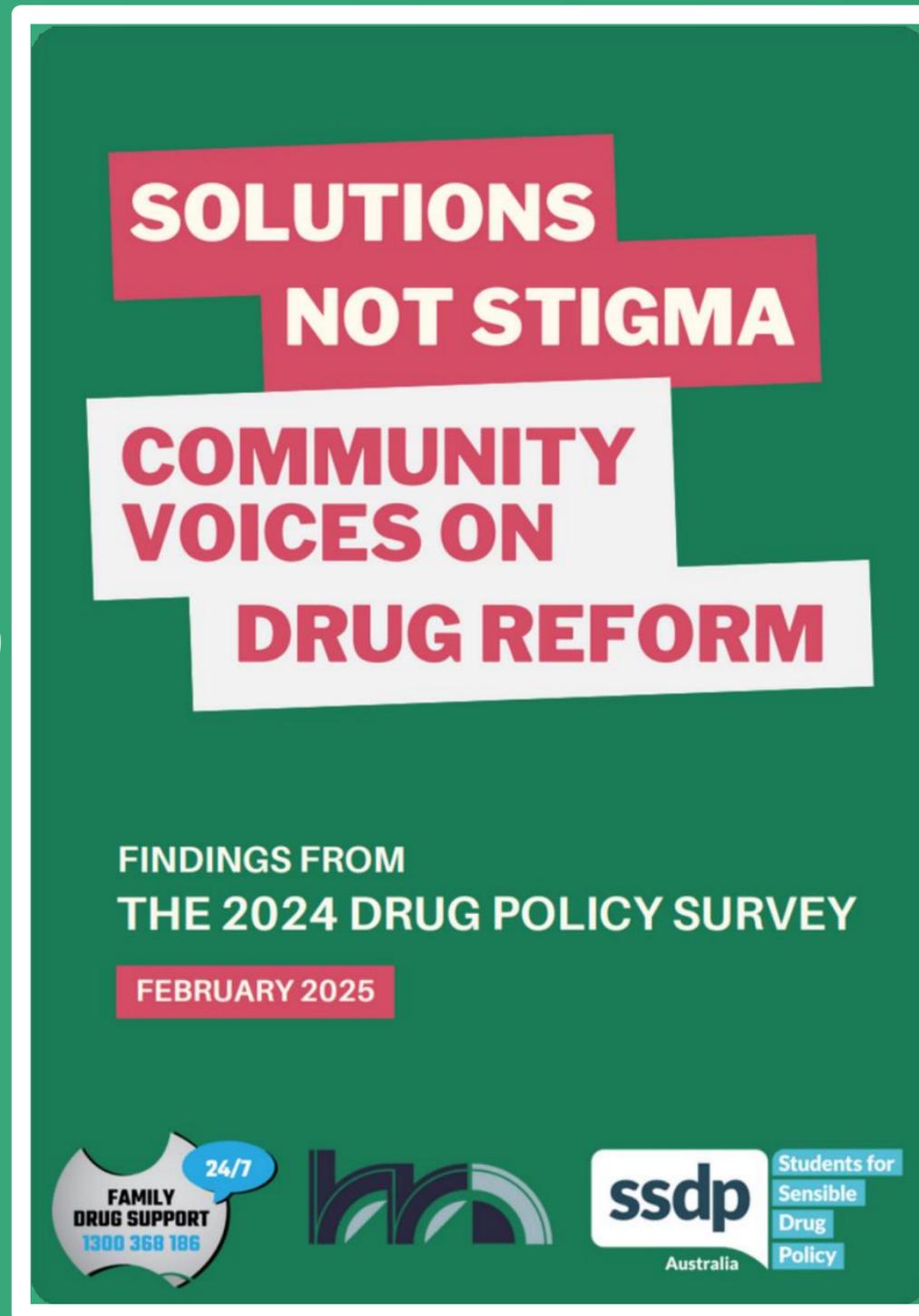
The findings **challenge** national **narratives** from polls like the NDSHS.

Unlike the NDSHS (which samples private dwellings), our **purposive sample** focused on priority communities and those working at the frontline of AOD treatment harm reduction.

Not claiming these results are representative but they do reflect perspectives we consistently see in the **communities we serve and among those who work with people who use drugs every day**.

Important voices to **hear** and **listen to!**





For more information contact:

Oisin Stronach: Students for Sensible Drugs Policy (SSDP)
oisin@ssdp.org.au

James Lomas: Family Drug Support (FDS)
james@fds.org.au

Dr Annie Madden: Harm Reduction Australia (HRA)
annie.madden@harmreductionaustralia.org.au