

Changes in Australians' attitudes towards supervised injecting facilities

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Introduction

Background and Rationale



01

Supervised Injecting Facilities (SIFs)

- Substantial body of evidence demonstrating effectiveness of SIFs in reducing harms related to injecting drug use (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Particularly contentious harm reduction strategy (5, 6)

02

SIFs – highly polarised

- Current & proposed services face significant opposition (5, 6)
- Consistently surrounded by negative media coverage (7, 8)
- Media coverage can impact policy decisions (8, 9)

Introduction

Background and Rationale



03

Public Opinion and Drug Policy

- Drug policy reform is complex (10, 11, 12)
- Public support imperative in the implementation of drug policy reform

04

Gaps in the Literature

- Previous Australian research: Matthew-Simmons et al., 2008 (13); Matthew-Simmons et al., 2013 (14); Thein et al., 2005 (15)
- Correlates of those who are ambivalent?
- Updating trend data from 2008

Aims



Aim 1

Describe support for SIFs in 2019



Aim 2

Explore factors associated with support for SIFs, particularly those who are ambivalent



Aim 3

Examine national and jurisdictional changes in support for SIFs over time



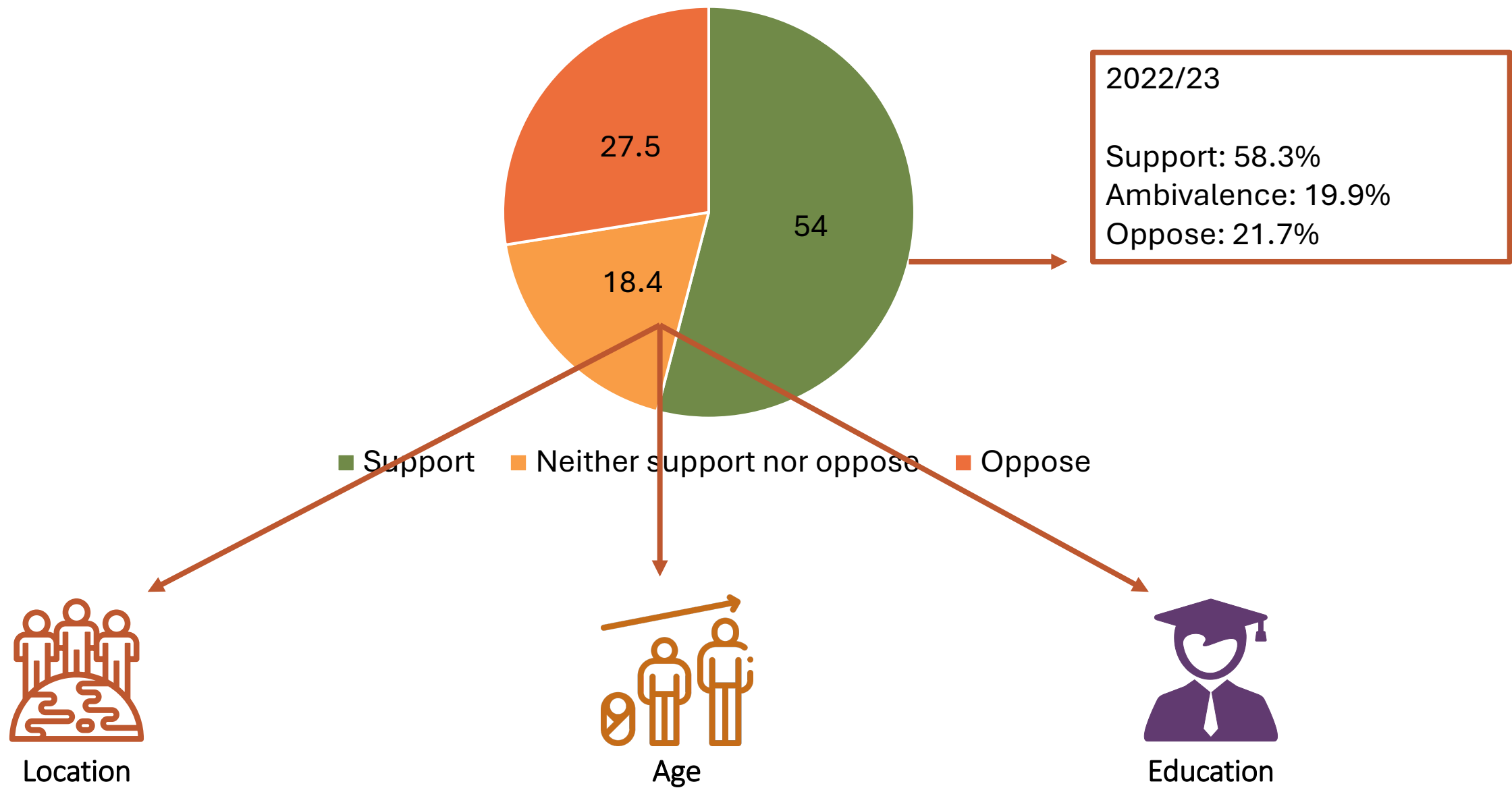
Data analysis

- Complete case analysis
- Multivariate ordinal logistic regression
- Binary logistic regression
- Predicted probability plots – binary logistic regression models

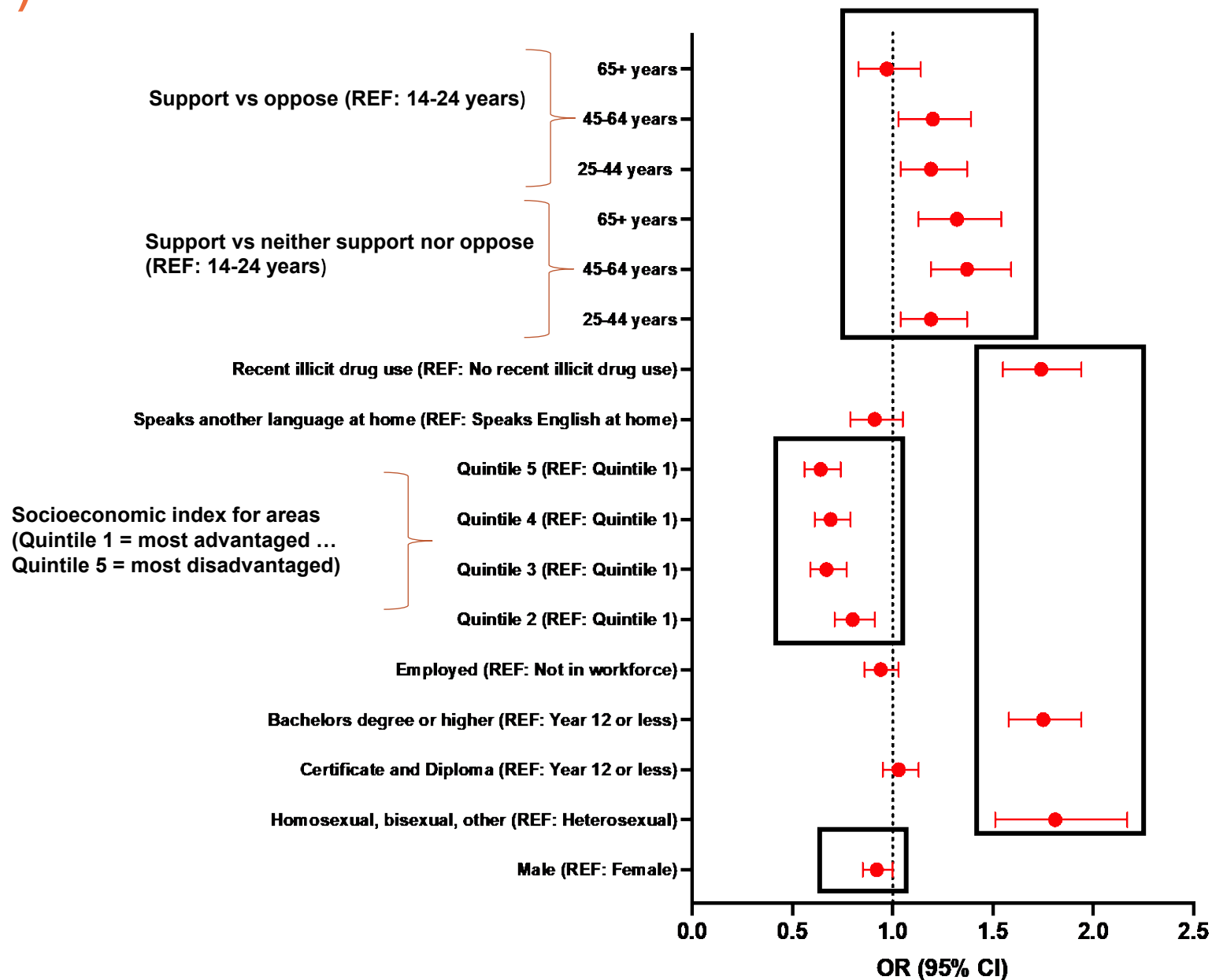
Covariates

- Demographic characteristics: age, sex, and sexuality
- Socioeconomic indicators: education, employment, Socioeconomic index for areas (SEIFA)
- Sociocultural indicators: recent use (12 months) of illicit drugs, main language spoken at home

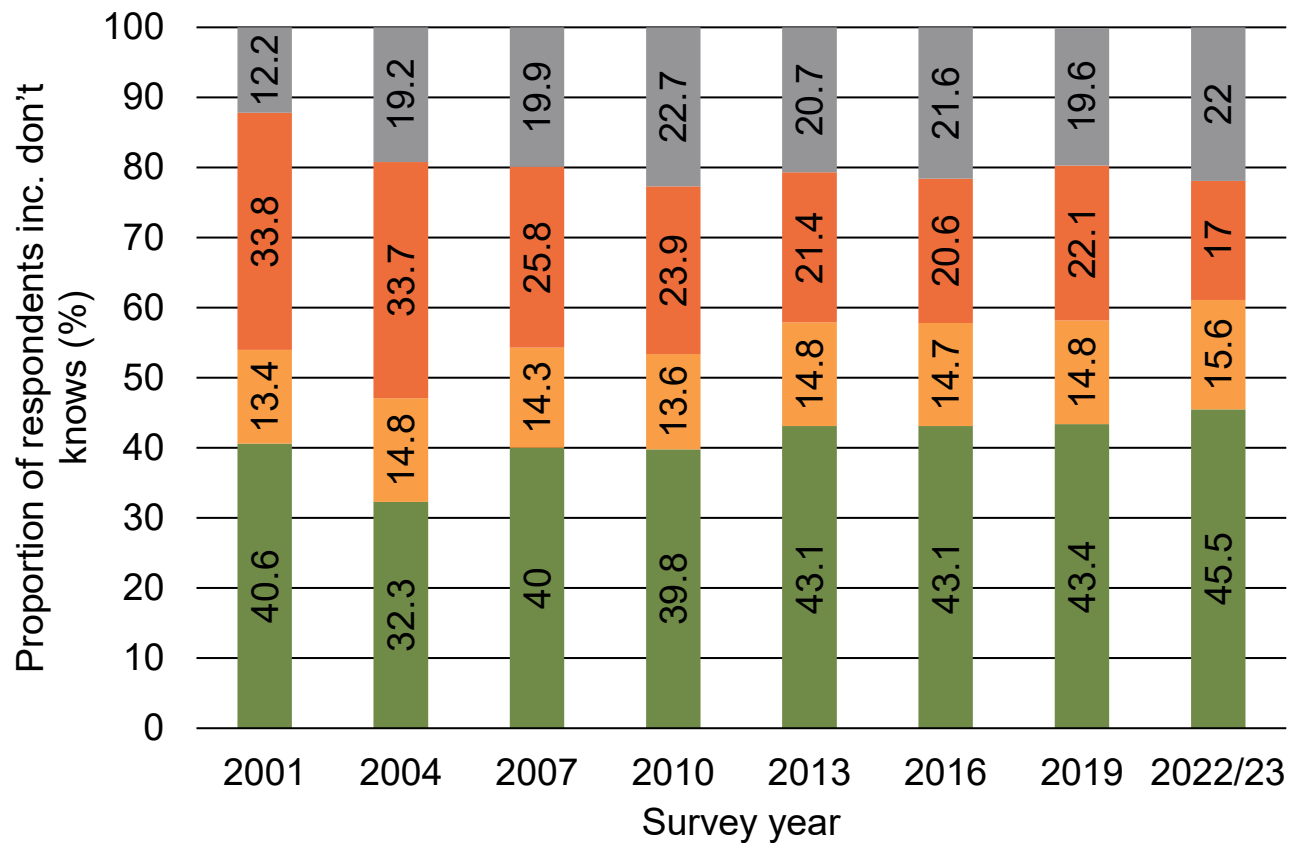
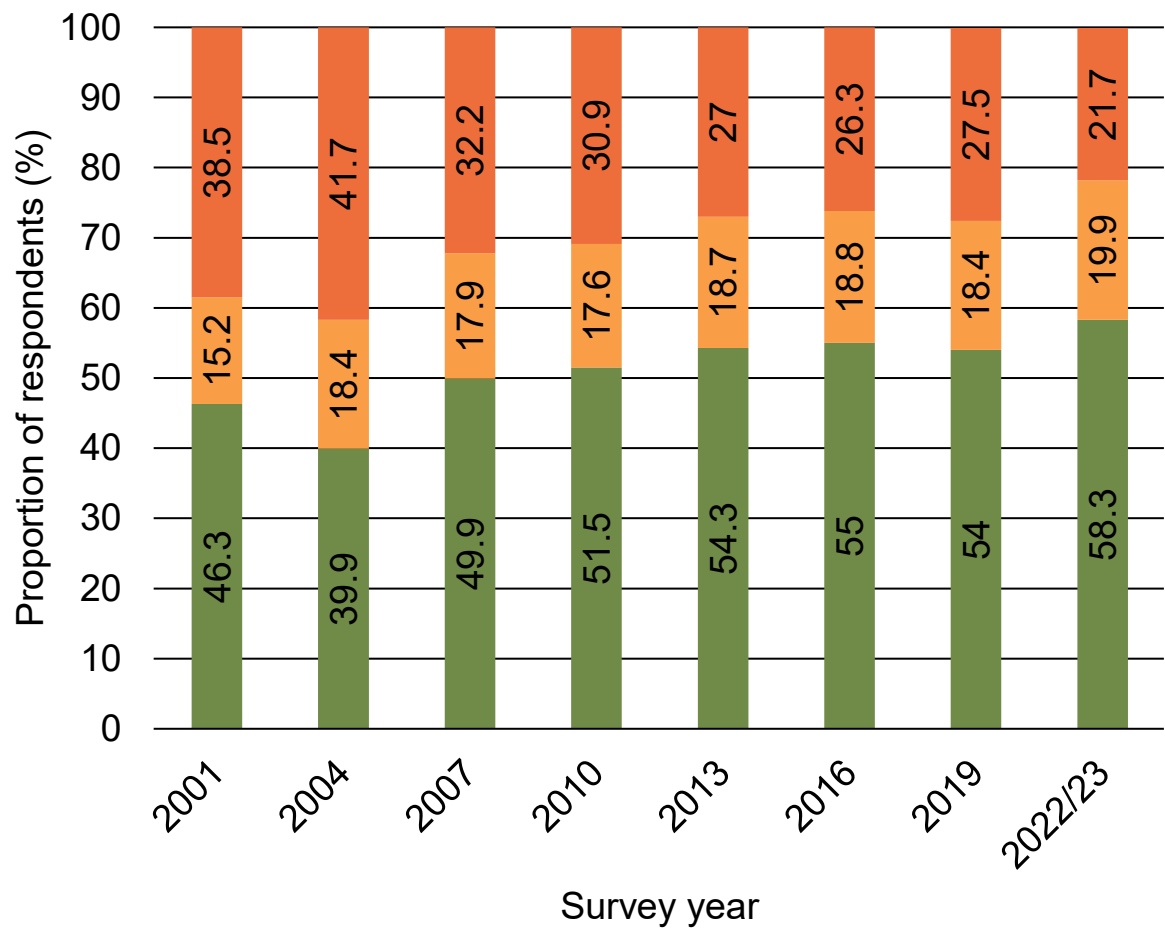
Findings: Attitudes towards SIFs (2019)



Findings: Demographic factors influencing support (2019)

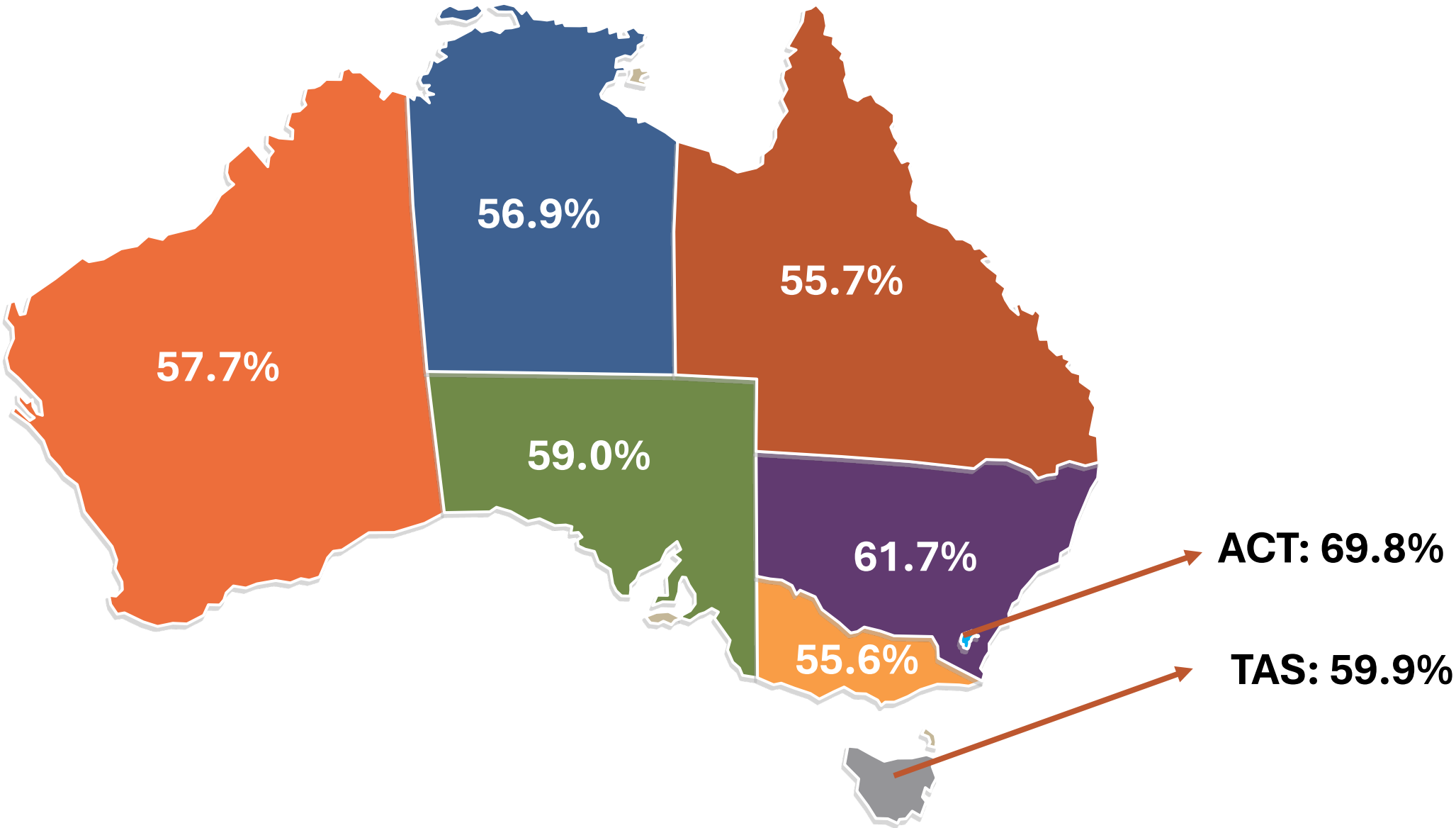


Findings: National changes in attitudes towards SIFs (2001-2022/23)



■ Support ■ Ambivalent ■ Oppose

Findings: Jurisdictional support for SIFs (2022/23)



Findings: Jurisdictional changes in attitudes towards SIFs (2001 to 2019)



A: Support

B: Ambivalent

C: Oppose

D: Don't know

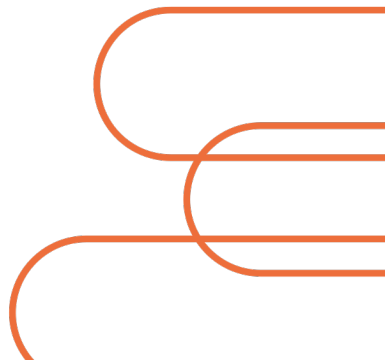
Findings: Conclusions



- Majority of Australians support SIFs, with opposition declining over time
- Ambivalent respondents were likely to be young, completed less education, or live in low-middle socioeconomic areas
- Those who support SIFs are more likely to be non-heterosexual, report recent use of illicit substances, and report completing a university degree.
- Support varies across jurisdictions; highest in the ACT, lowest in VIC; support increased significantly between 2001-2019 in NSW and QLD, while opposition declined significantly across all jurisdictions

Limitations

- Representative of the sample
- Changes in demographics, survey modes, and the wording of the question over time



Implications: Public support as a facilitator



- Sustained negative media coverage of SIFs in Australia has the potential impact policy outcomes
 1. shaping the narrative (16)
 2. reaching large numbers of Australians (9)
- Public opinion should hold more weight – especially the opinion of people who are most affected i.e. people who inject drugs



‘Disgusting’: Richmond local of more than two decades takes aim at government as injecting room to be made permanent

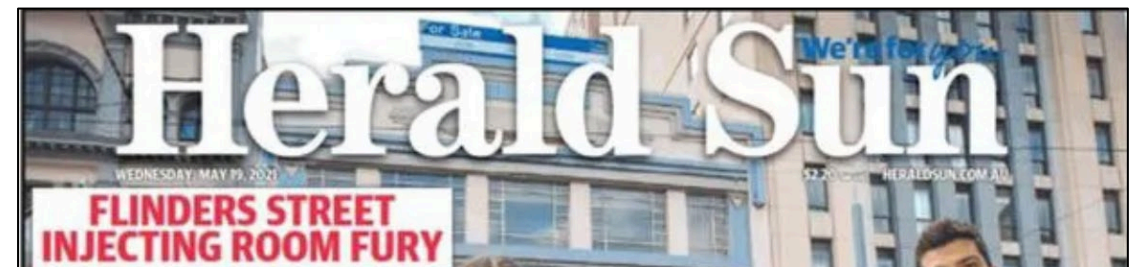
A Richmond local of 27 years has blasted Daniel Andrews for subjecting children and the community to “disgusting” scenes after it announced a contentious injecting room will be made permanent.



Joseph Huitson Digital Reporter

2 min read March 7, 2023 - 12:25PM [skynews.com.au](#)

36 comments



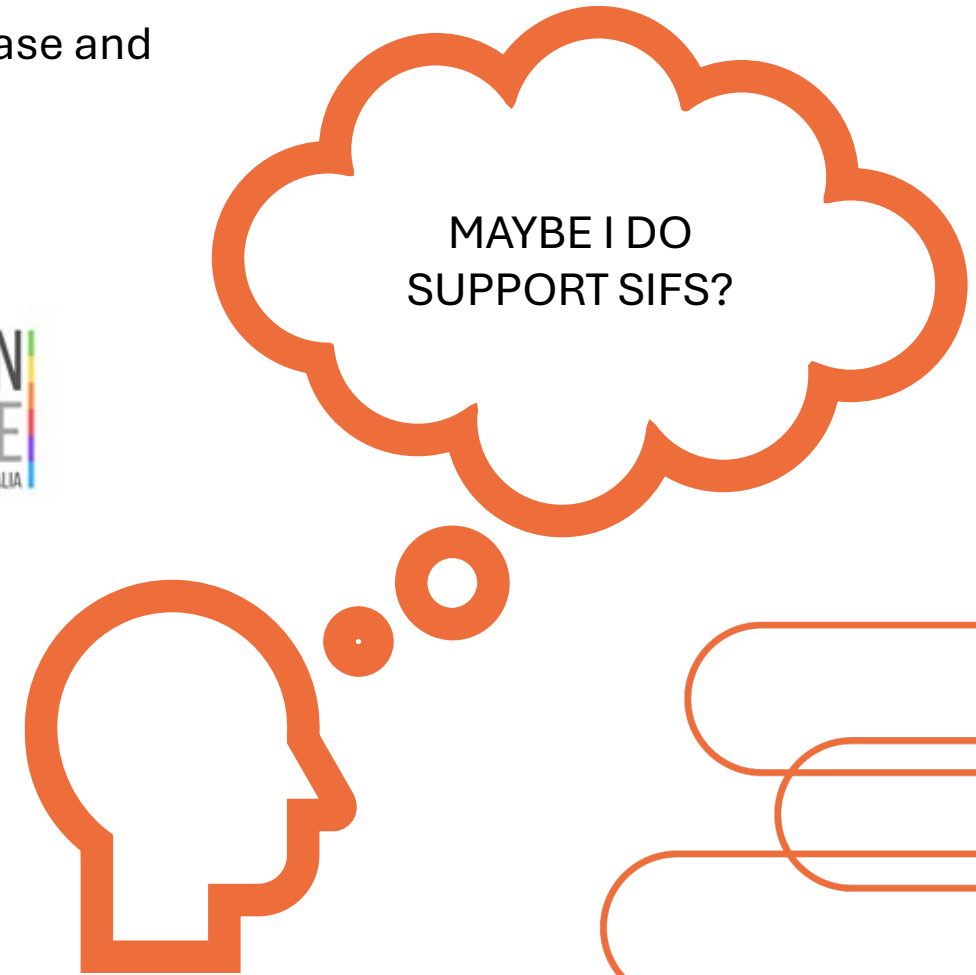
Implications: 'No-opinion' responses and the opportunity for change



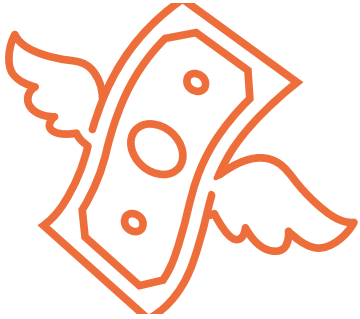
- Those who are ambivalent towards SIFs could potentially be persuaded to change their mind (16)
- Public health campaigns aimed at increasing knowledge of evidence base and associated benefits of SIFs

MESSAGE GUIDE
DRUG STIGMA

COMMON
CAUSE
AUSTRALIA



Implications: Inertia behind further SIF implementation



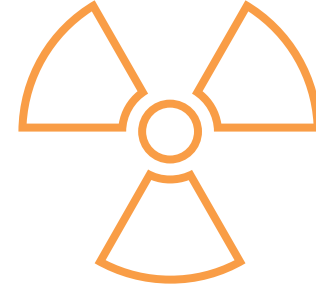
Money

Economic instability post-COVID – Victoria (17)



Stigma

Increasing stigmatisation of illicit drugs; particularly methamphetamine (18)



Risk

Risk-averse governments less likely to support policy reform viewed as “risky” or “non-essential” (19)

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Thank you

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