

The contribution of prison-based hepatitis C treatment initiations to overall treatment uptake in Victoria.

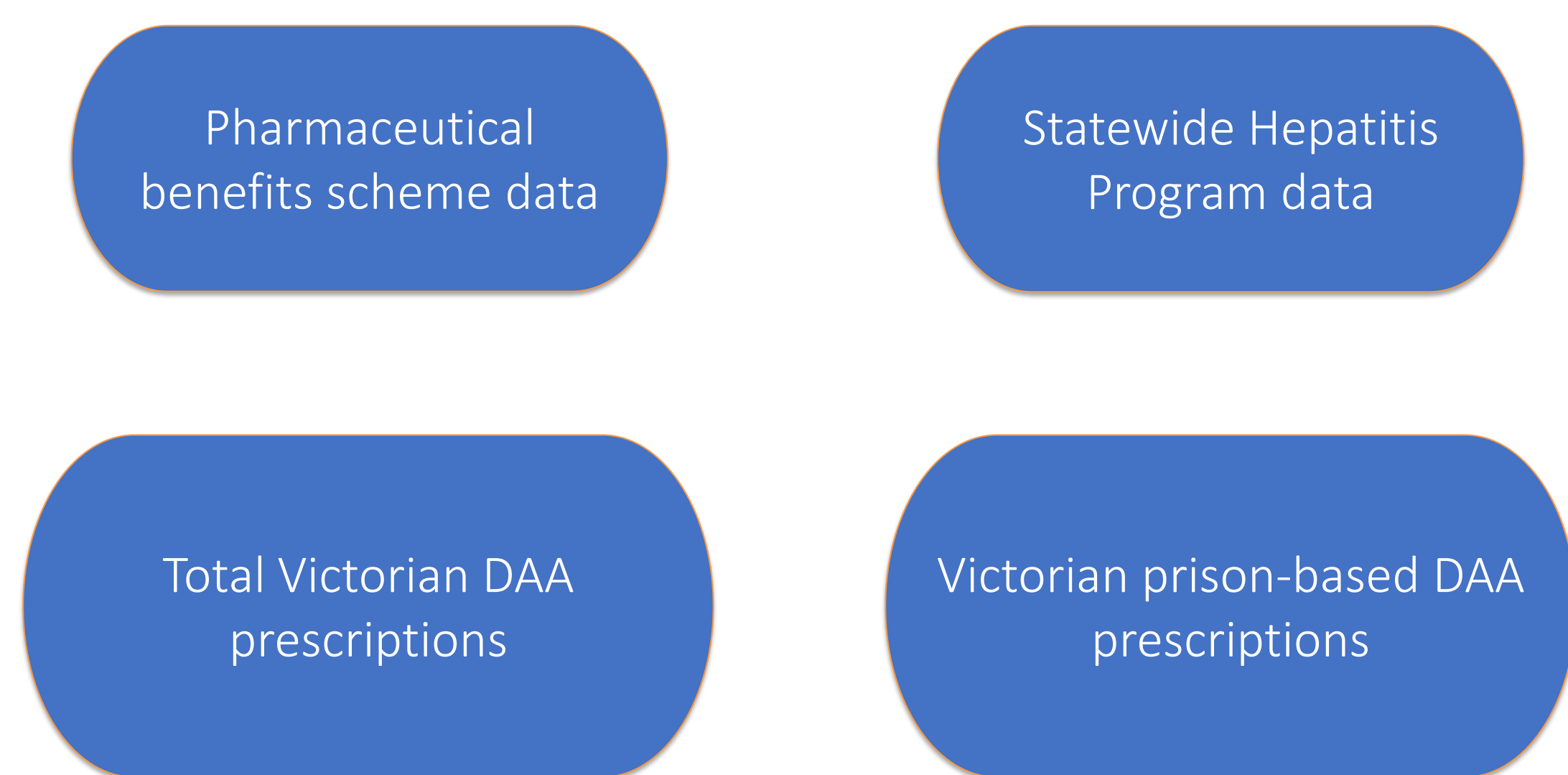
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BACKGROUND

- Prisons are a priority setting for hepatitis C elimination.
- Prison-based hepatitis C programs accounted for 35% of all DAA treatments nationally in 2022.
- DAA treatment uptake has declined since 2016, with the lowest number of people being treated in 2022.
- If treatment rates don't increase, Australia is unlikely to meet hepatitis C elimination targets by 2030.
- We aimed to describe treatment in prison and the community between 2016-2022 and identify trends in treatment uptake by setting.

METHODS



We conducted a Poisson regression model to estimate the association between monthly first prescriptions, setting (community or prison), and time

REGRESSION

- The number of monthly treatment initiations declined in both settings over time.
- The decline was more pronounced in community settings (average monthly decline 3.82% [IRR 0.962, 95% CI 0.961-0.962]) compared to prison (1.62% [IRR 0.984, 95% CI 0.982-0.985]).
- There was a statistically significant difference between the decline in monthly treatment initiations between settings (IRR 0.978, 95% CI 0.976- 0.979)

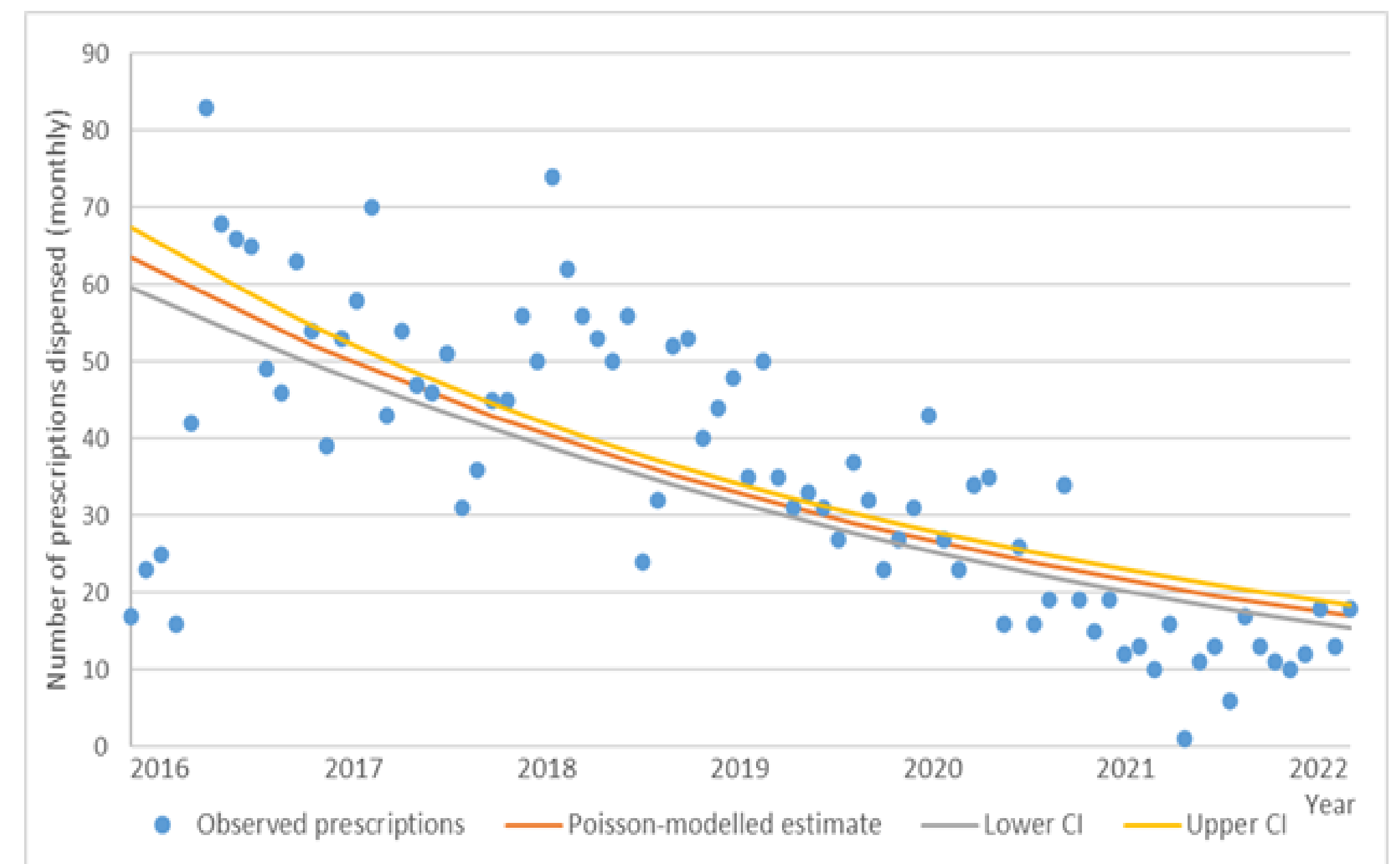


Figure 2a. Observed and fitted monthly number of people initially prescribed DAAs in Victorian prisons, 2016-2022.

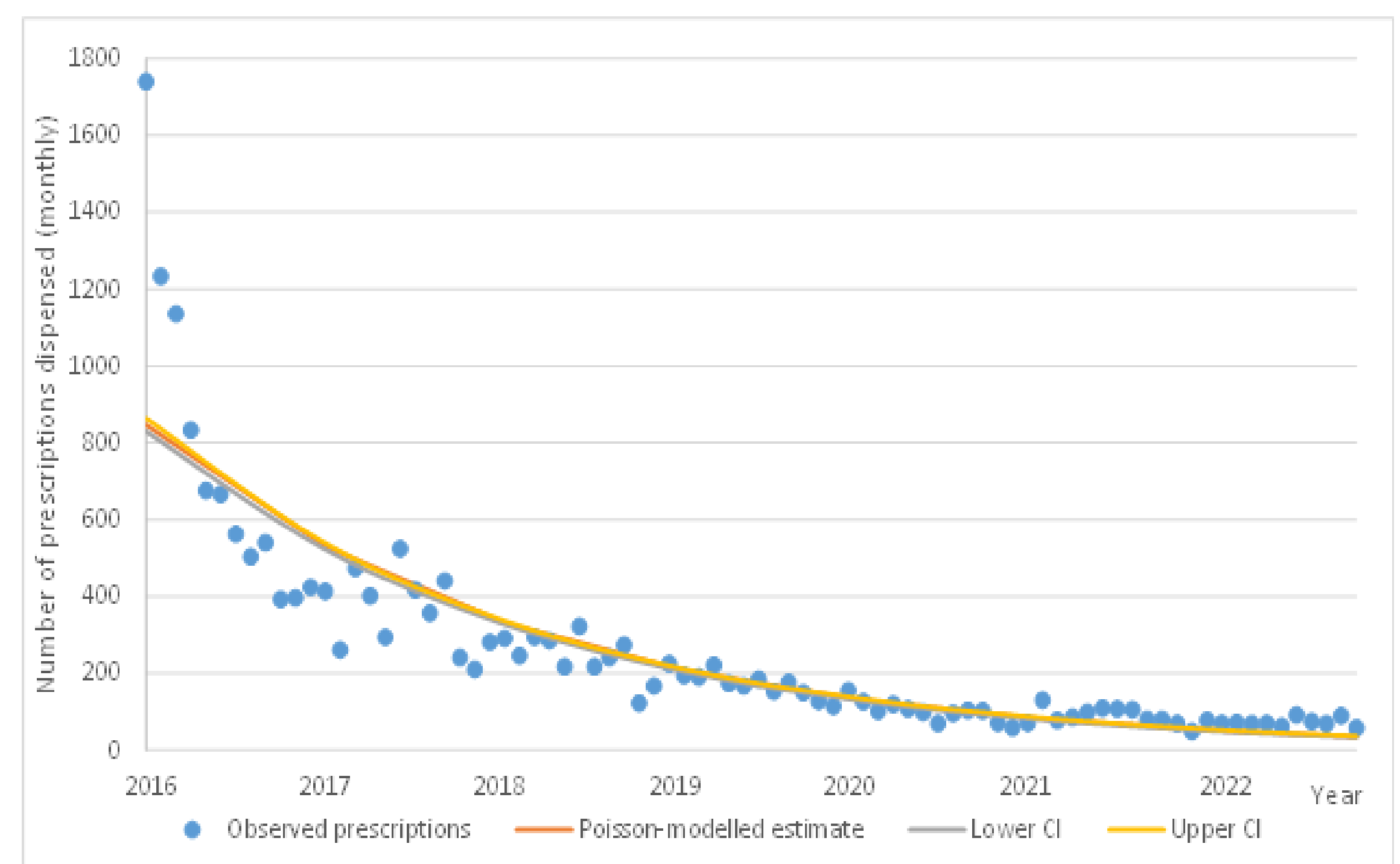


Figure 2b. Observed and fitted monthly number of people initially prescribed DAAs in the community, 2016-2022.

RESULTS

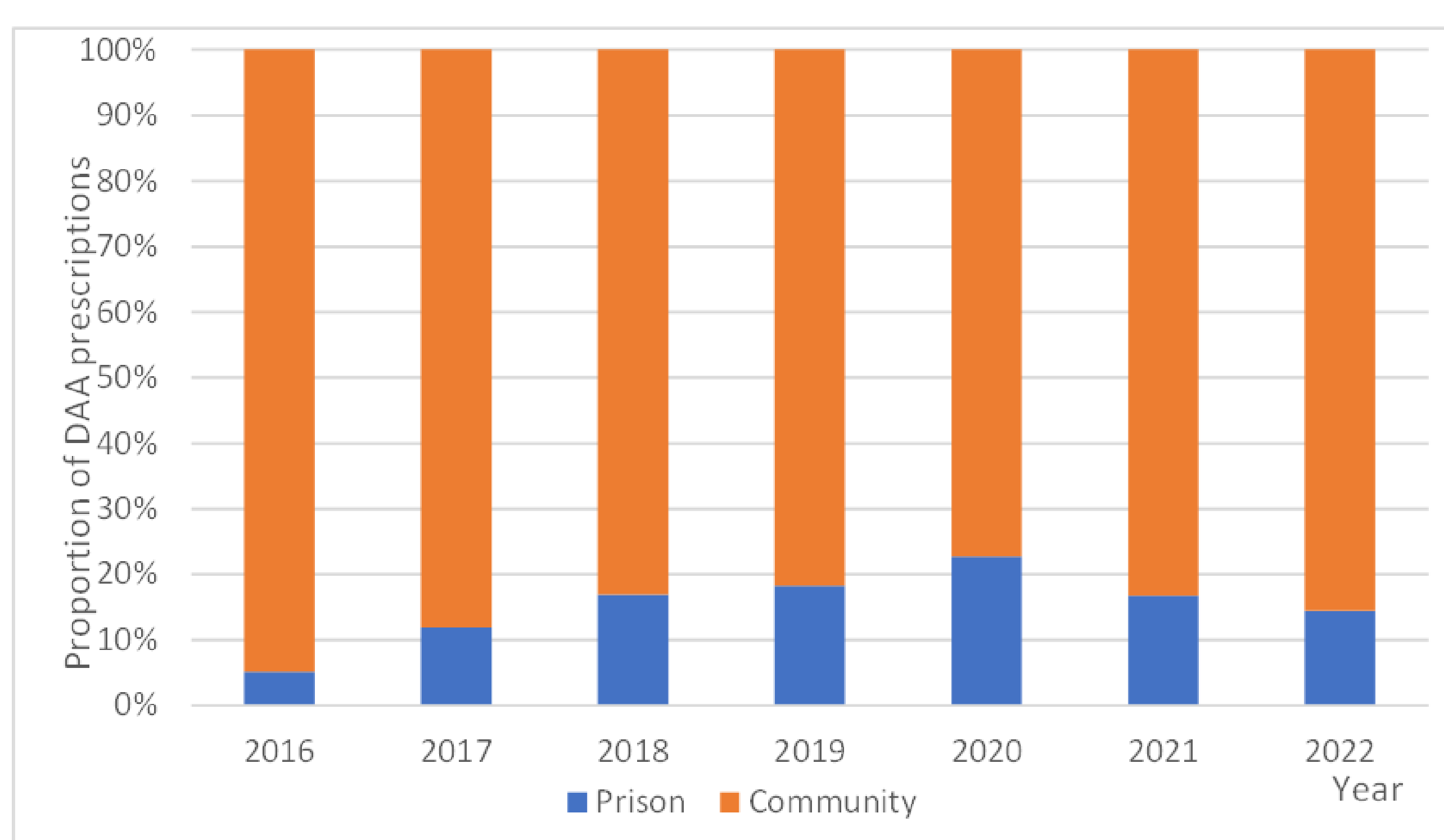


Figure 1. The proportion of DAA prescriptions in Victorian prisons and in the community, 2016-2022.

- Between 1 March 2016 and 31 December 2022, there were 26,353 DAA treatment episodes prescribed in Victoria; 24,125 of these were first treatments and 2,238 were retreatments.
- Of first treatments, 88% (n=21,228) were in the community and 12% (n=2,897) were in prisons
- The proportion of first treatments initiated in prison increased from 5% in 2016 to 14% in 2022.

IMPLICATIONS

- Both community and prison treatment initiations are declining, a red flag for Australia's progress towards elimination.
- Amid declining treatment rates, treatment in prisons is becoming increasingly important.
- Greater relative declines in community treatment rates highlight that community models of care need to be more accessible and tailored to the needs of people at high-risk.
- Strategies to eliminate hepatitis C in Australia must sustain treatment rates in prisons and strengthen community testing and treatment models.

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ARTICLE INFORMATION



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