

Current drug issues

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Outline

- Drug monitoring systems – what relevance do they have for NSW Drug Court?
- Heroin market
- Methamphetamine market
- Ecstasy market
- Other trends in drug use
- Drug related harm

Drug monitoring systems

- Referring to the IDRS and EDRS
- Intended to act as strategic early warning systems
- Document the price, purity, and availability of illicit drugs
- Monitor patterns of use and trends over time in use and harms
- Point to specialised/detailed research
- Provide an evidence base for policy
 - Make decisions
 - Avoid poor decisions(!)

Methodology

- Three components
 1. Sentinel group of drug users
 2. Key experts for different drug classes
 3. Indicator data
- Triangulation of the components

1. Sentinel groups of drug users

The logo for the Injecting Drug Users Research Study (IDRS), consisting of the letters IDRS in white on a black rectangular background.

- Regular injectors
- In the “market” for the past year
- Sampled from needle and syringe programs, outreach, clinics, snowballing
- 100-150 IDU from each jurisdiction

The logo for the Ecstasy Drug Users Research Study (EDRS), consisting of the letters EDRS in white on a black rectangular background.

- Regular ecstasy users
- In the “market” for the past year
- Sampled from street press, music and clothing stores, websites, snowballing
- Around 100 REU from each jurisdiction

2. Key Experts

- Persons with regular contact with a group of illicit drug users or good knowledge of markets

The logo for IDRS (Illicit Drug Research Service), consisting of the letters IDRS in white, bold, sans-serif font on a black rectangular background.

NSP workers, treatment providers, outreach, law enforcement

The logo for EDRS (Enforcement Drug Research Service), consisting of the letters EDRS in white, bold, sans-serif font on a black rectangular background.

DJs, night club industry workers, health promotion workers, first aid medical officers, youth workers, law enforcement

3. Indicator Data

- **Existing routine data collections with information related to illicit drugs**
- **Law enforcement and health indicators**
 - Ambulance calls to overdoses, overdose deaths
 - Emergency department admissions
 - Police incidents related to drug possession or supply
 - Drug seizure data (Customs, AFP, jurisdictional)
 - NSP data, treatment numbers
 - Calls to phone help lines

Demographics (NSW 2008)

The logo for the Inpatient Drug Rehabilitation Study (IDRS), consisting of the letters IDRS in white on a black rectangular background.

- Mean 37 years (range 17-62)
- 66% male
- 77% unemployed
- 11% A&TSI
- 89% heterosexual
- Mean 10 years education

The logo for the Emergency Department Rehabilitation Study (EDRS), consisting of the letters EDRS in white on a black rectangular background.

- Mean 25 years (range 19-55)
- 57% male
- 11% unemployed
- 2% A&TSI
- 81% heterosexual
- Mean 12 years education
- 10% injected last 6 months

Drug Use Patterns Overview

NSW IDRS 2008

	Use last 6 months	Median Days of Use
Heroin	83%	72 (<i>~3 x per week</i>)
Methamphetamine (incl. speed, base, crystal/ice)	74%	48 (<i>~2 x per week</i>)
Cocaine	58%	12 (<i>fortnightly</i>)
Cannabis	80%	180 (<i>daily</i>)
Ecstasy	22%	3 (<i>~every 3 months</i>)

Drug Use Patterns Overview

NSW EDRS 2008

	Use last 6 months	Median Days of Use
Ecstasy	100% (Entry criteria)	12 (<i>fortnightly</i>)
Methamphetamine (incl. speed, base, crystal/ice)	66%	5 (<i>~monthly</i>)
Cocaine	51%	5 (<i>~monthly</i>)
Cannabis	71%	24 (<i>weekly</i>)
GHB	24%	2.5 (<i>~every 2 months</i>)
Heroin	3%	18 (<i>~weekly/fortnightly</i>)

Heroin

The Heroin Shortage

- 1990s
 - Large increase in scale of heroin market
 - Generation of street markets
 - Huge increases in overdose deaths: >1000 in 1999
- Heroin shortage: early 2001
 - Marked reductions in availability
 - Purity halved at street level
 - Price doubled
 - Market has changed and not returned to pre-"shortage" levels since that time

Changes following the heroin shortage

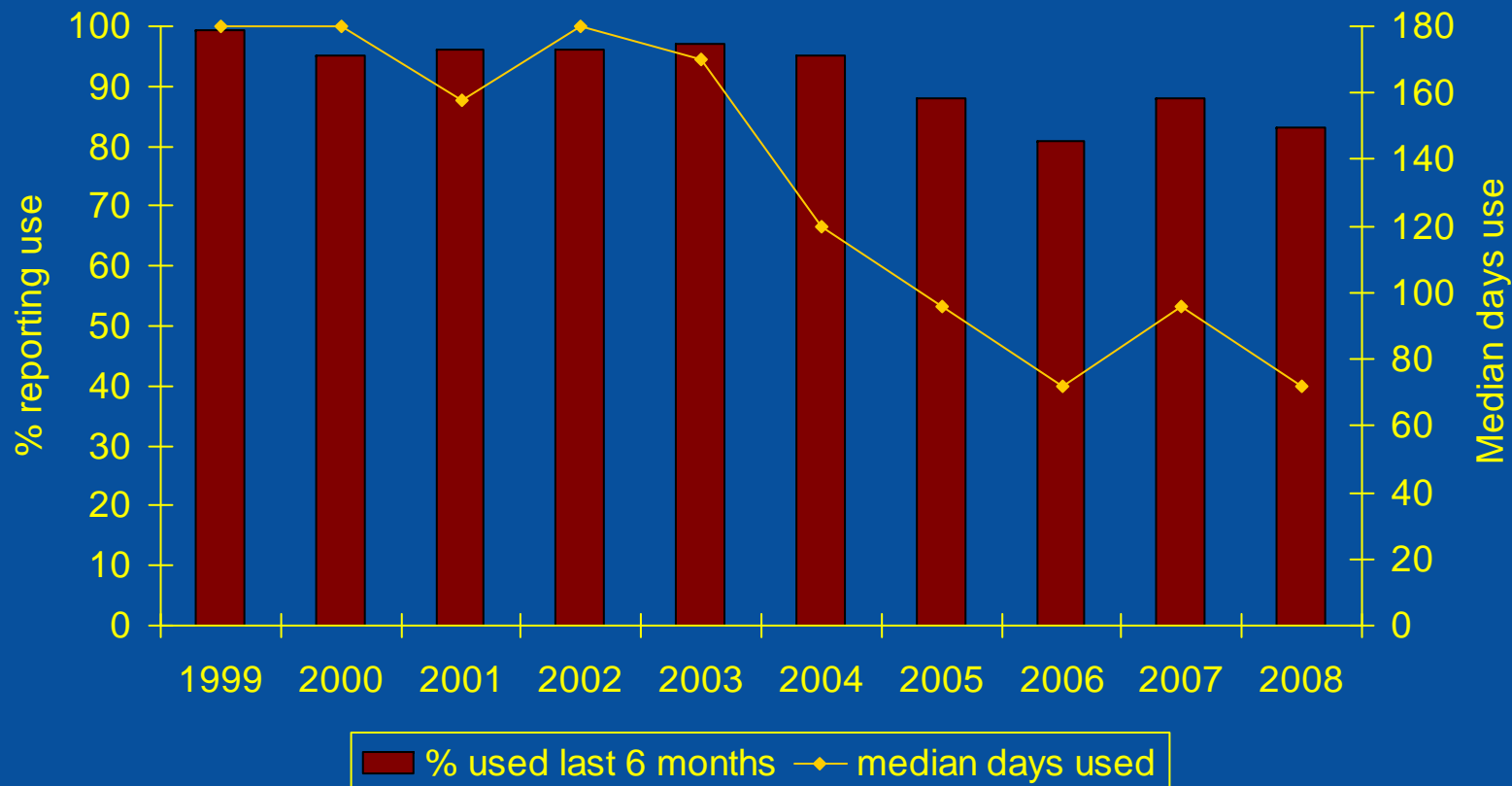
- **Drug use**
 - ↓ heroin use and injecting drug use
 - ↑ cocaine and prescription drugs (Sydney IDU), methamphetamine
- **Drug treatment**
 - ↓ heroin treatment for new and younger treatment entrants
 - More complex polydrug problems
 - ↑ for cocaine and methamphetamine – younger age groups

Changes following the heroin shortage

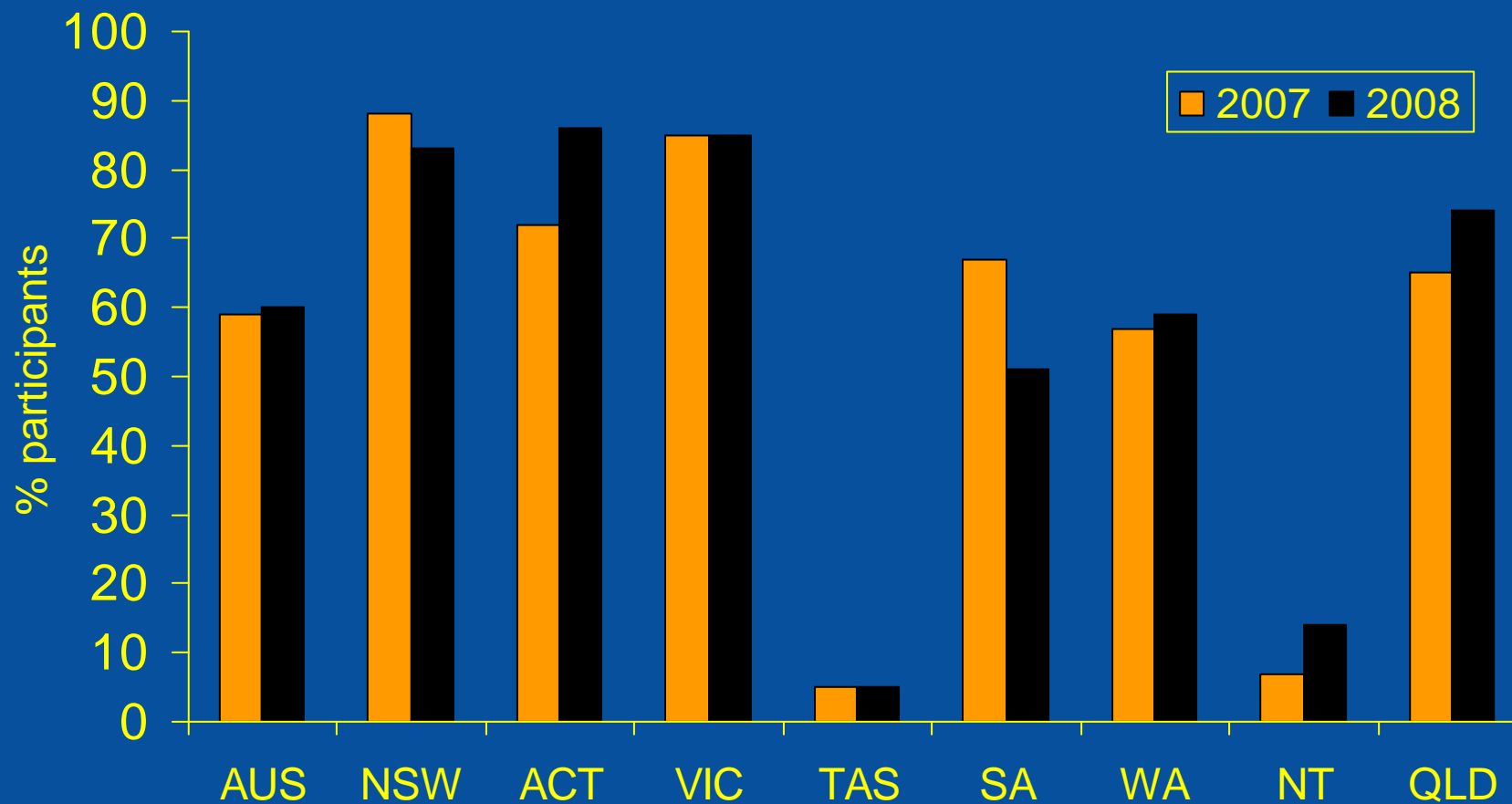
- **Harms**
 - ↓ heroin overdoses
 - No increase in other drug overdoses
 - ↓ hepatitis C notifications
 - ↓ heroin possession offences

- **Larger effects among younger groups**

Recent use of heroin 1999-2008



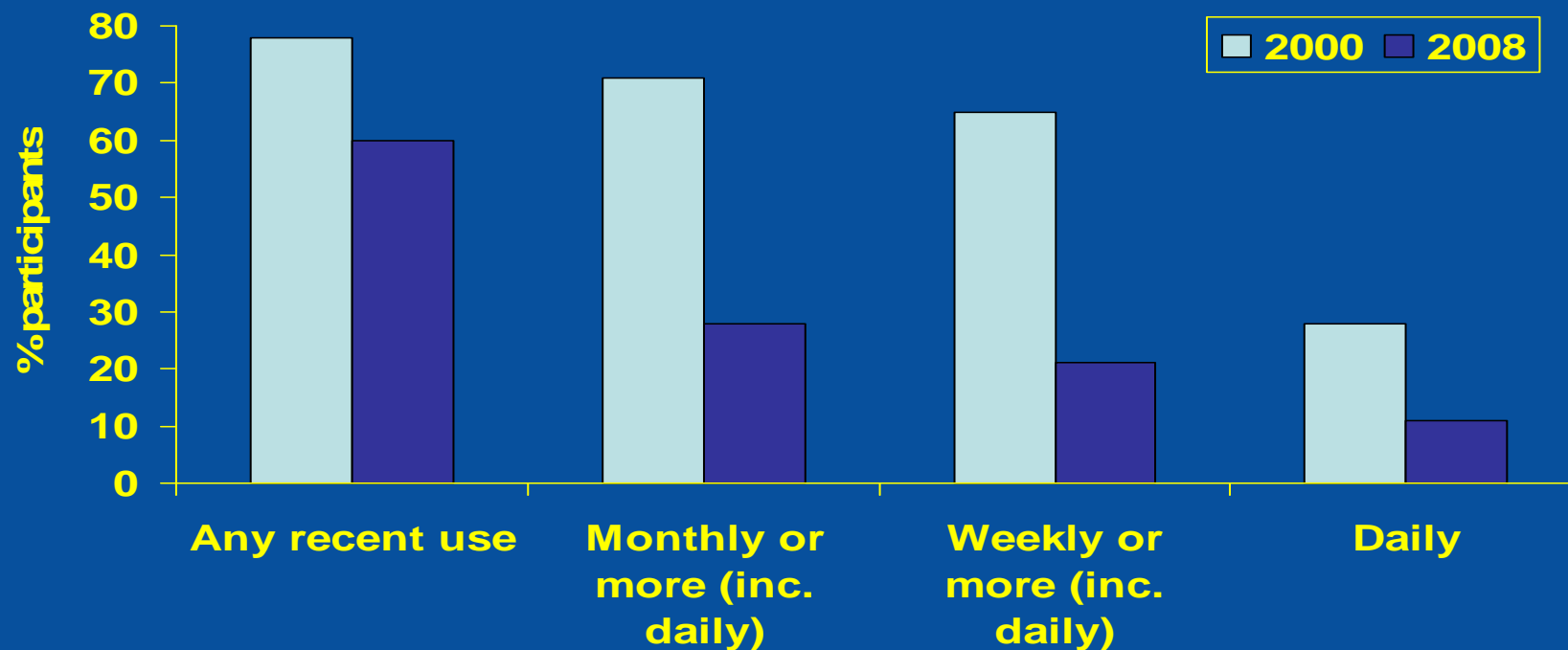
Recent heroin use, 2007-2008



Source: IDRS regular injecting drug users

Are we getting back to pre-shortage levels?

Frequency of heroin use across national sample, 2000 and 2008



Source: IDRS regular injecting drug users (national sample)

Heroin price, purity and availability: comparing 2000 and 2008

	2000	2008
Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$25 'cap' NSW • Around \$50 elsewhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$50 'cap' NSW • Around \$50 elsewhere (VIC \$47.50)
Availability	'very easy'	'easy' or 'very easy'
Purity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approx 50% in 1999/00 (NSW 59%) • Users rated as 'medium' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACC data unavailable (<i>but: 20% or less in 2005/06</i>) • Users rated as 'low' or 'medium'

Other Trends: Brown Heroin

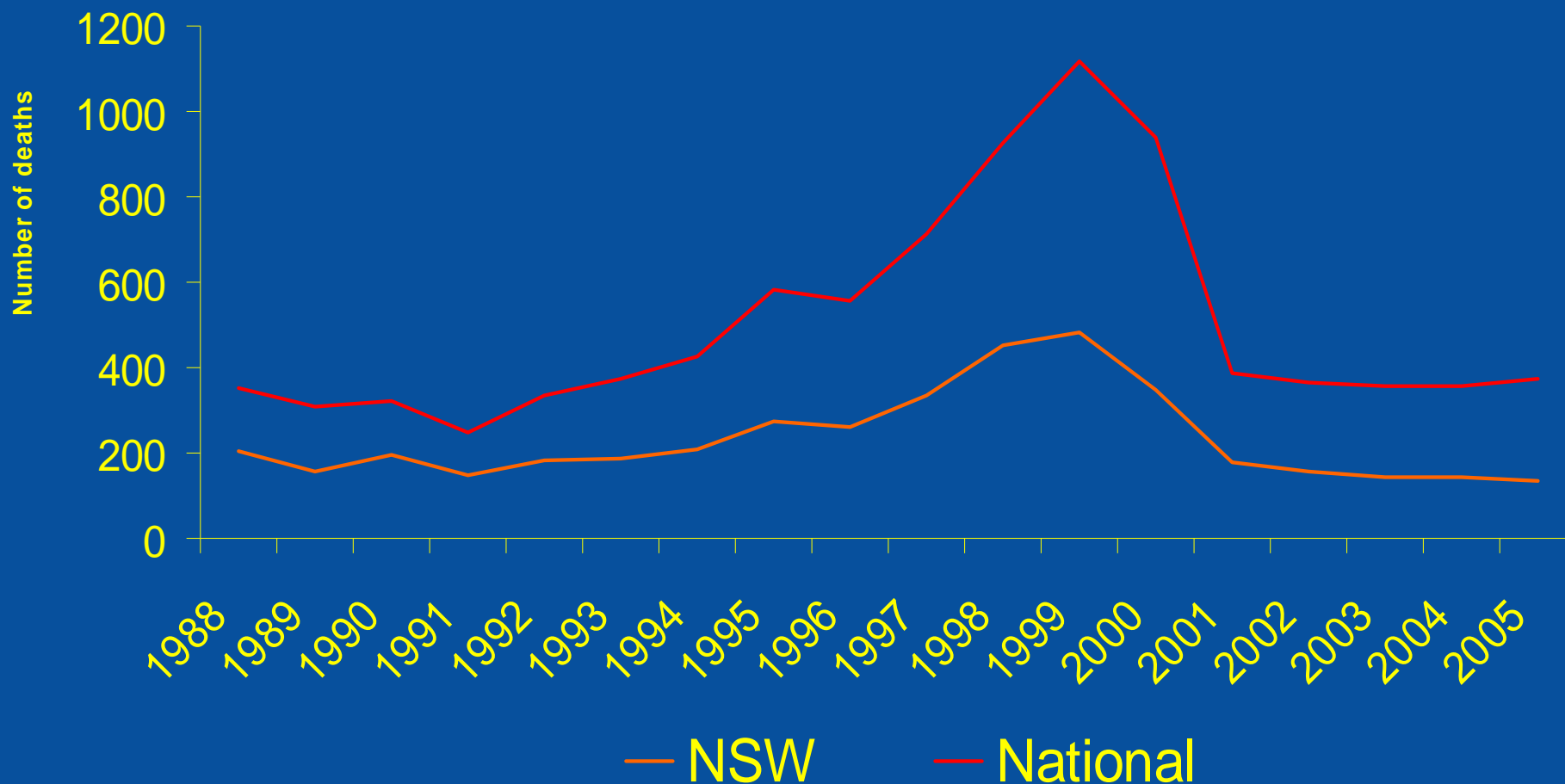
Investigated at a State and National level



Brown heroin

- In 2006 Sydney MSIC reported appearance of brown alkaline heroin
 - Requires different preparation method and may reflect a different source (the Golden Crescent)
- Brown heroin use most common in NSW, QLD and VIC
- 'White/off-white' predominated in all jurisdictions with established heroin markets
 - 70% heroin users (56% entire sample) had used 'brown' coloured heroin in the last 6 months
 - 18% reported brown heroin as form most often used (state and national level)
- Cannot draw national conclusions based on colour & MSIC alone; however the issue was further investigated in 2008- results to be released shortly.

Number of accidental deaths due to opioids among those aged 15-54 years in NSW and Australia, 1988-2005



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics mortality database; Degenhardt and Roxburgh 2007

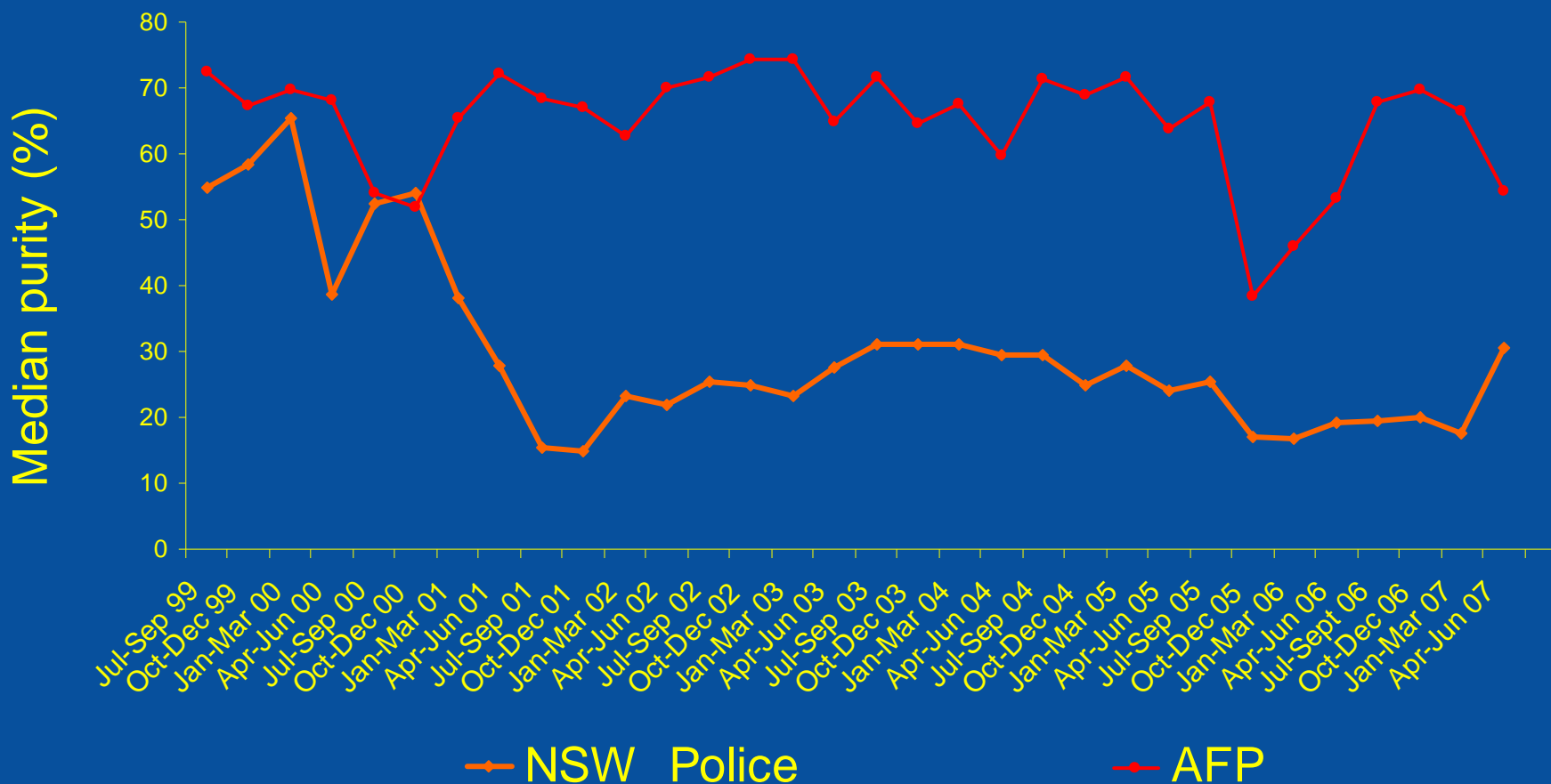
Recorded incidents of narcotic possession/use in NSW per quarter, July-September 1996 to April-June 2008



Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (unpublished data accessed through the Crime Trends Tool at <http://bocd.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/bocd/cmd/crimetrends/Init> December 2008) accessed 19th December 2008

NB: Changes in the number of recorded incidents may be indicative of changes in police activity, or an increase in possession/use, or a reflection of both.

Purity of heroin seizures analysed in NSW, by quarter, 1999/00-2006/07

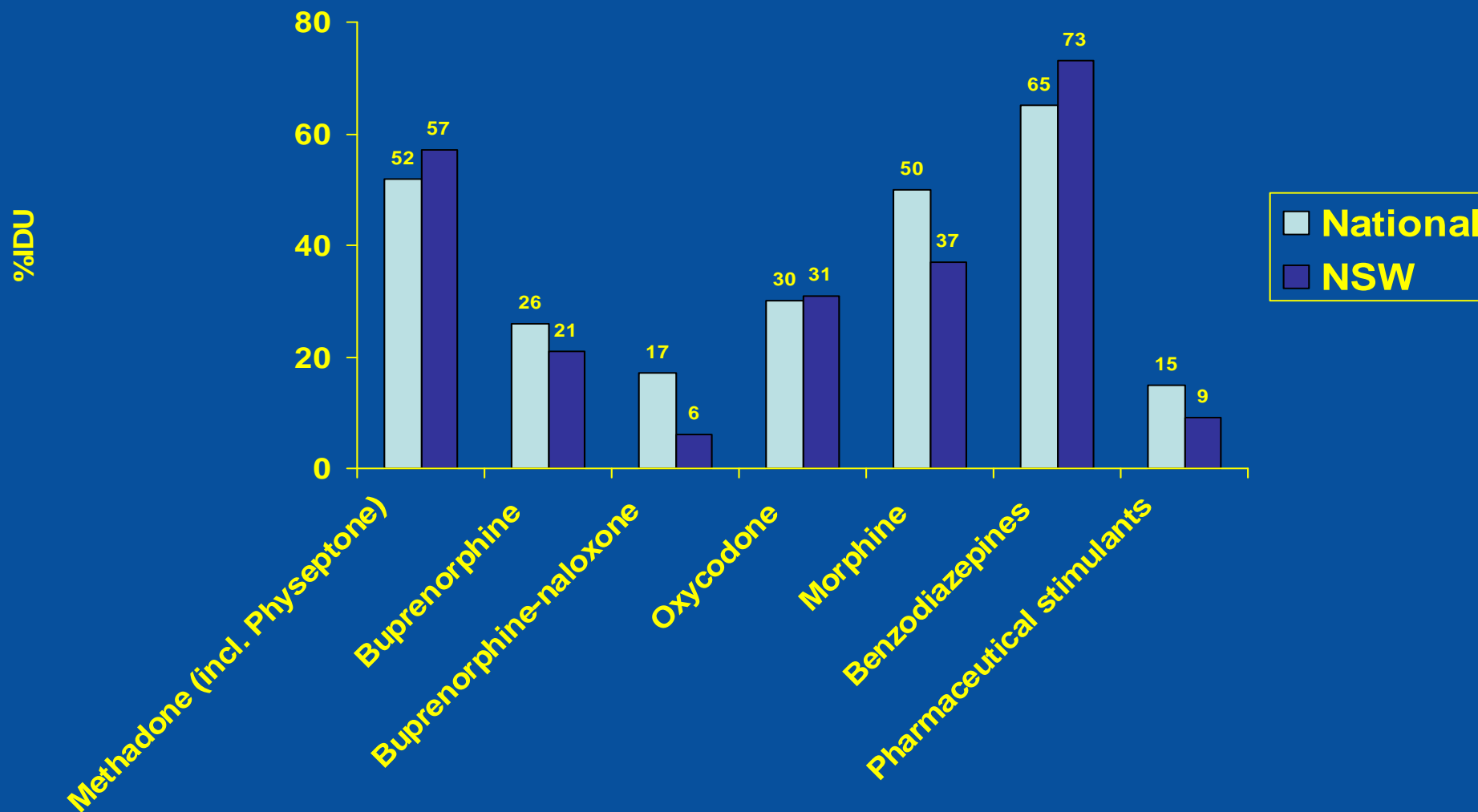


Source: ABCI 2001, 2002; ACC, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007

NB: Data were unavailable for 2007/08 at time of publication

Other opioids and benzodiazepines

Recent use of other opioids and benzodiazepines, National vs NSW 2008

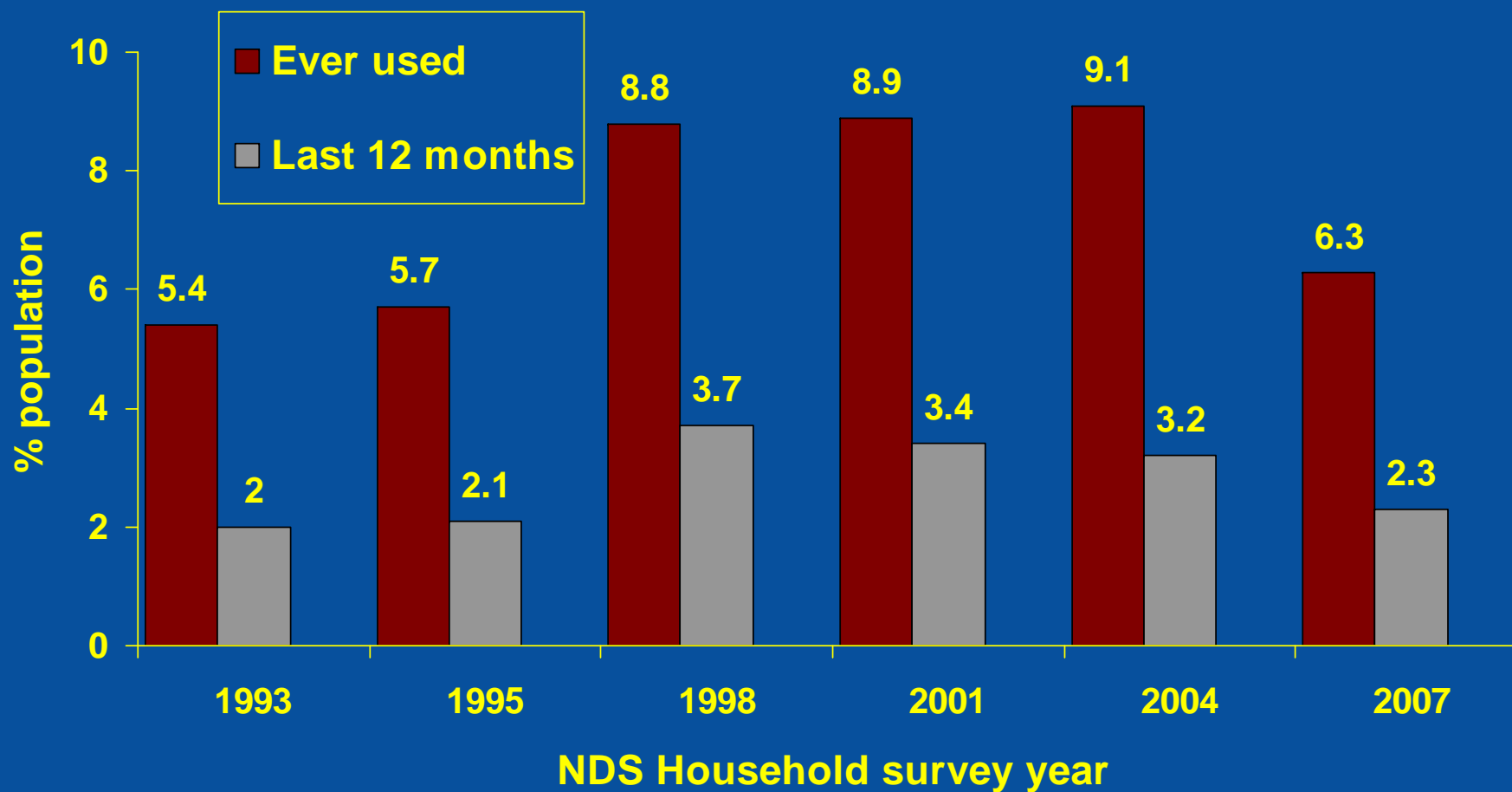


Methamphetamine

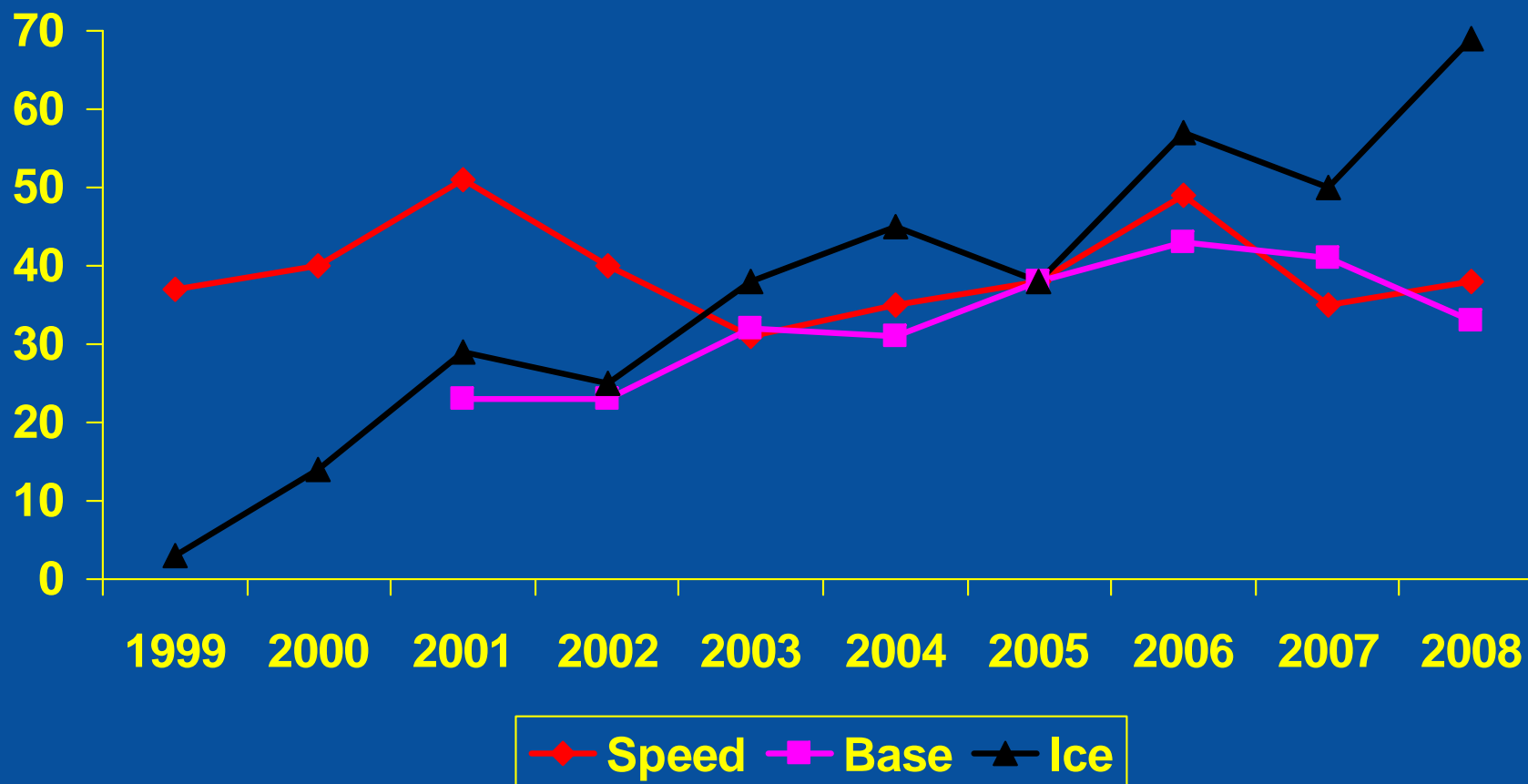
Speed powder, base and ice



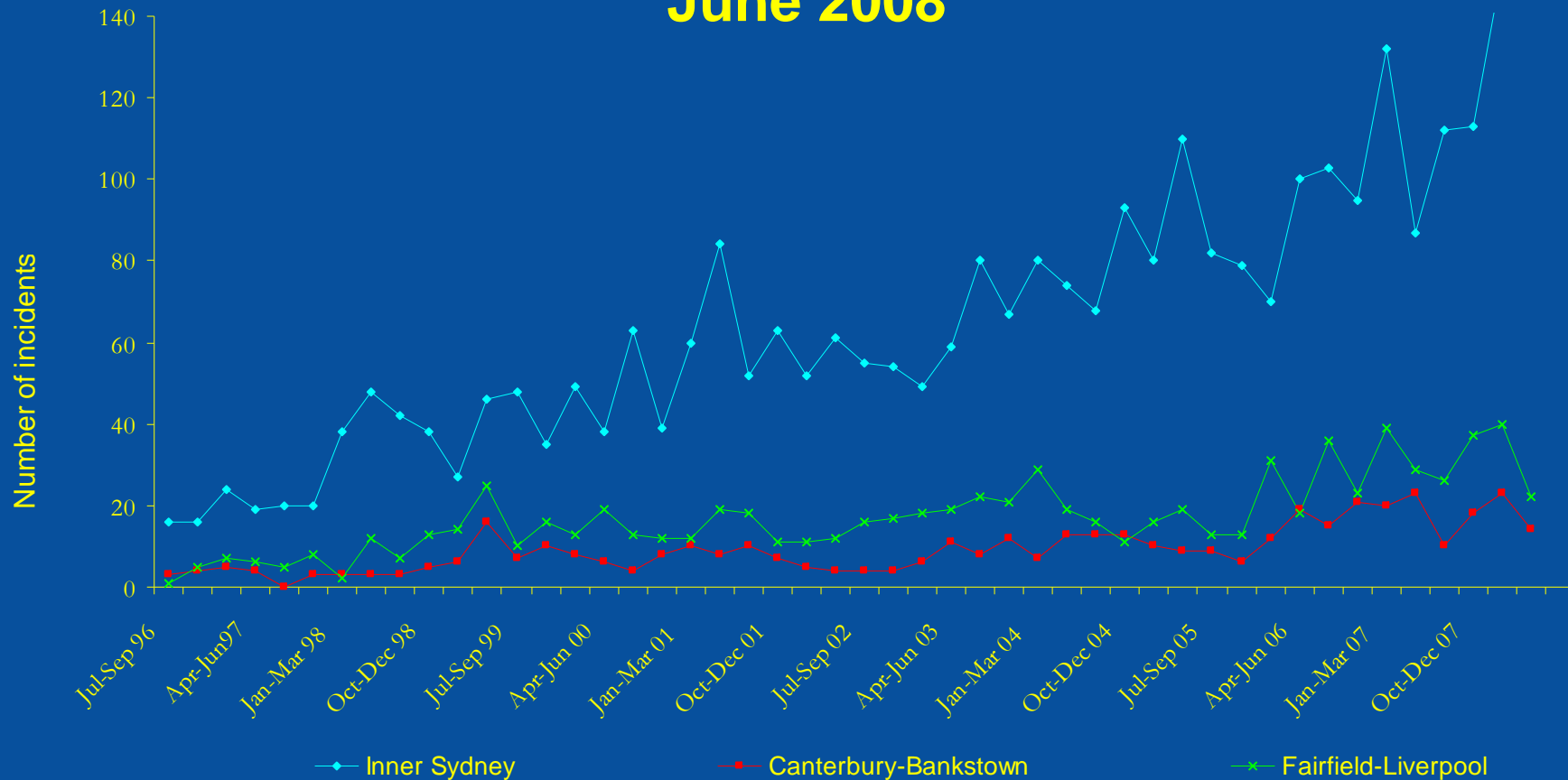
Population Methamphetamine use



Recent use of amphetamines (NSW IDRS 1999-2008)



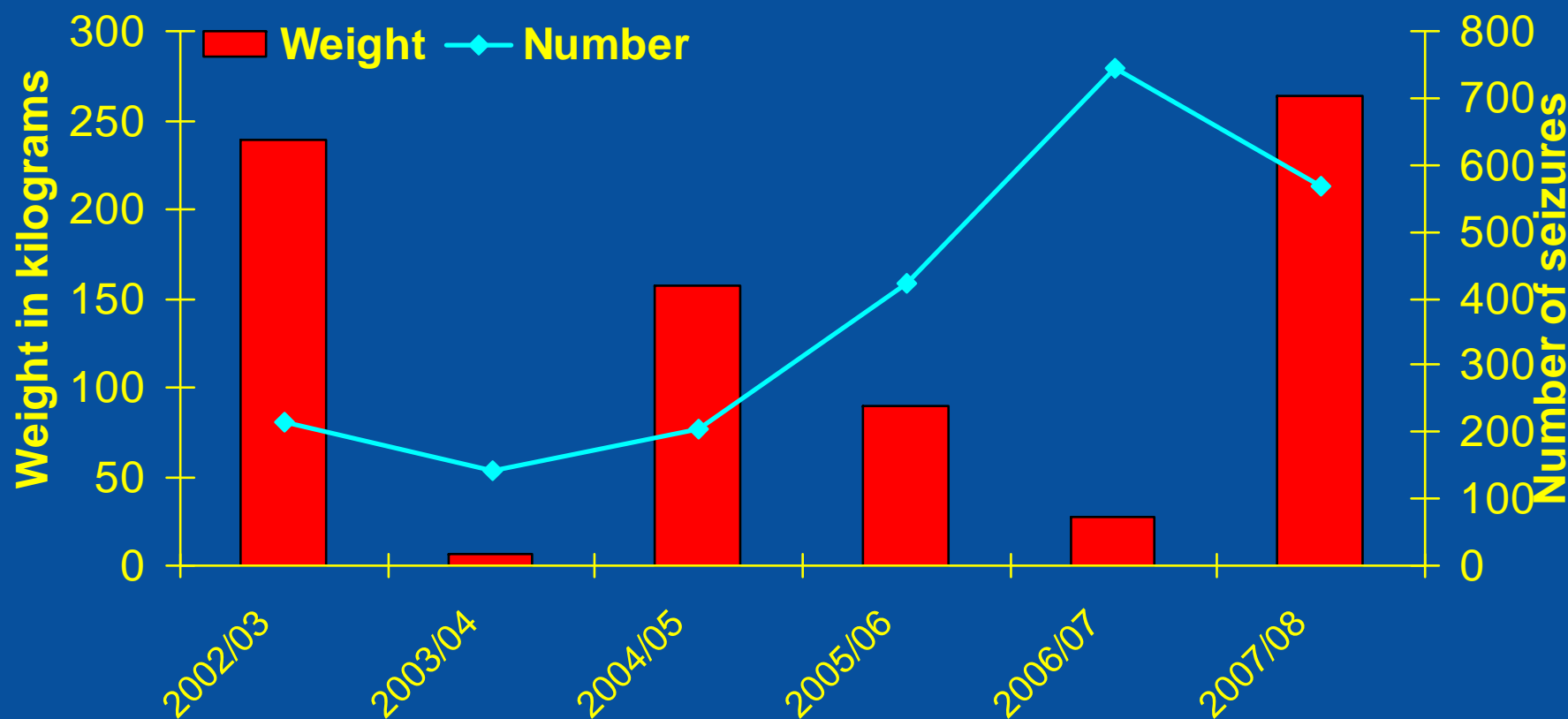
Recorded incidents of amphetamine possession/use by geographic area per quarter, July-September 1996 to April-June 2008



Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (unpublished data accessed through the Crime Trends Tool at <http://bcod.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/bcod/cmd/crimetrends/lnit> December 2008) accessed 19th December 2008

NB: Changes in the number of recorded incidents may be indicative of changes in police activity, or an increase in possession/use, or a reflection of both.

Number and weight of detections of ATS (excluding phenethylamines) at the Australian border 1996–97 to 2006–07



Source: Australian Customs Service

Number of principal amphetamine-related hospital admissions among persons aged 15-54, NSW and nationally, 1996/97-2006/07



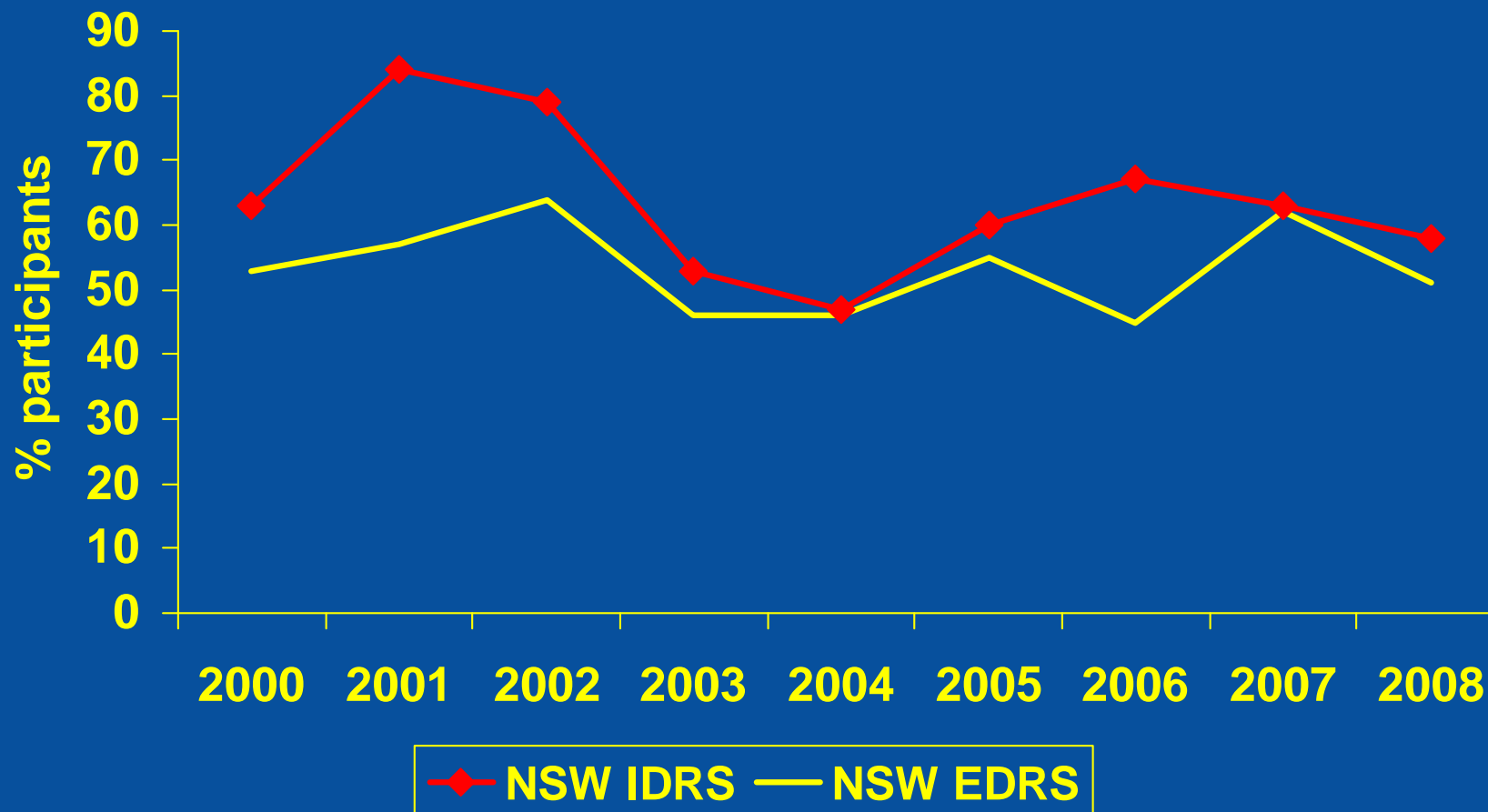
Source: NHMD, AIHW, ACT, TAS, NT, QLD, SA, NSW, VIC and WA Health Departments of Health and (Roxburgh and Burns, in press)

Cocaine

EDRS

IDRS

Recent cocaine use, NSW 2000-2008



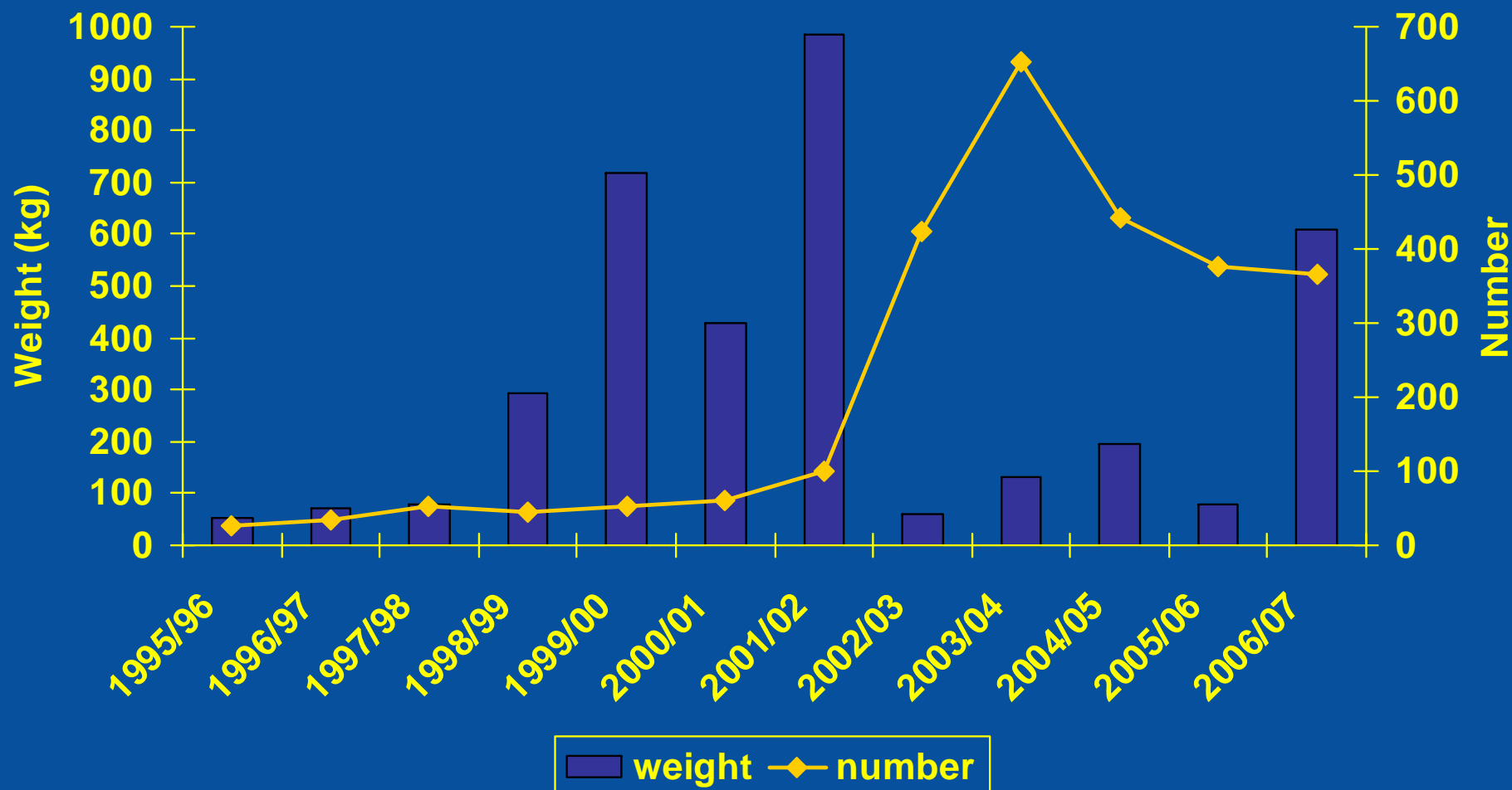
Recorded incidents of cocaine possession/use in NSW per quarter, July-September 1996 to April-June 2008



Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (unpublished data accessed through the Crime Trends Tool at <http://bocd.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/bocd/cmd/crimetrends/Init> December 2008) accessed 19th December 2008

NB: Changes in the number of recorded incidents may be indicative of changes in police activity, or an increase in possession/use, or a reflection of both.

Australian border seizures of cocaine, 1995-2007



Source: Australian Customs Service

Overall cocaine trends

IDRS

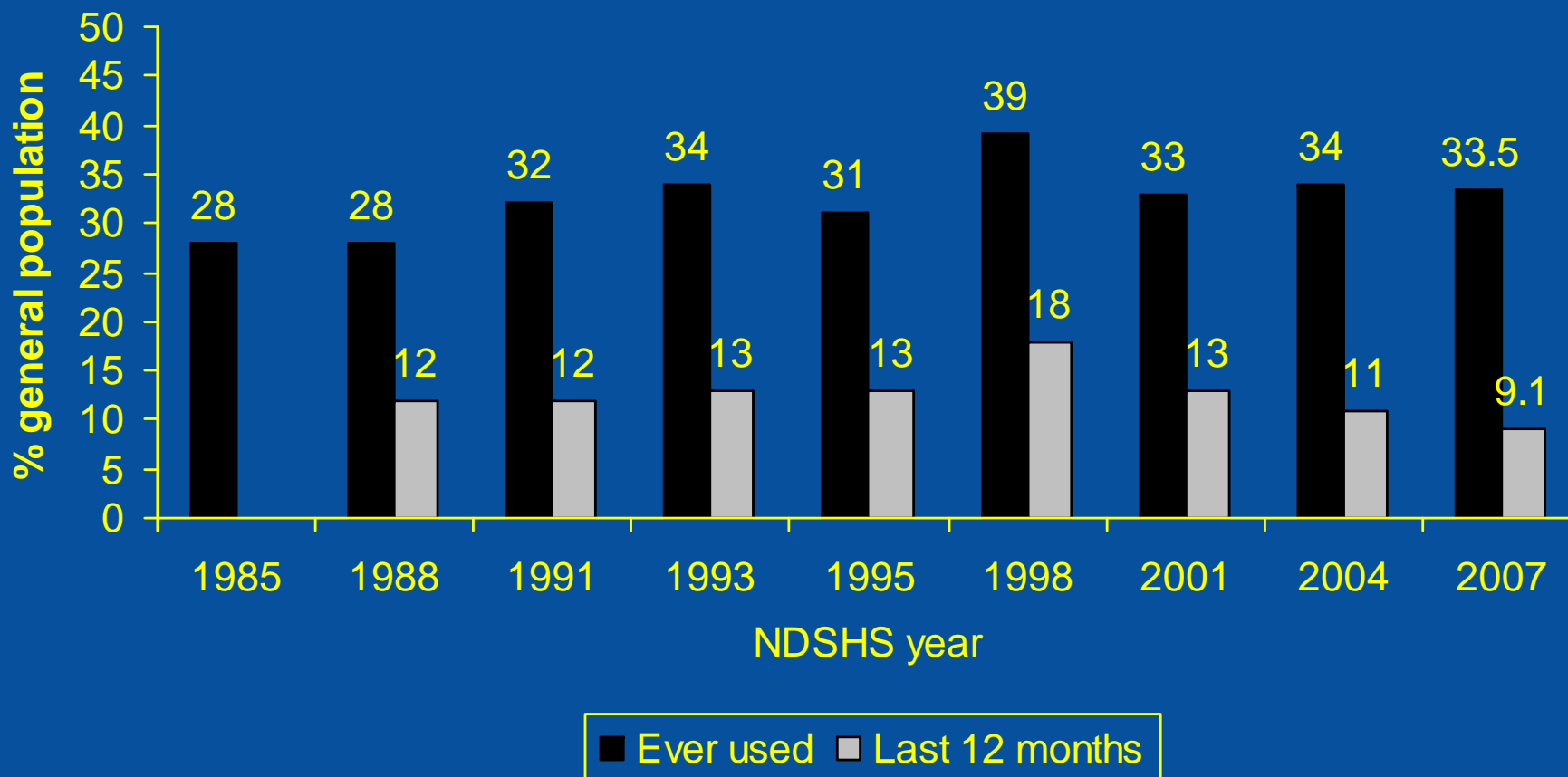
- Use still concentrated in NSW (Sydney)
- Cocaine use increased among Sydney IDU (60% use)
- Frequency continues to be low (12 days in NSW)
- Purity –medium to low

EDRS

- Use has remained stable over the last four years (around 40% nationally)
- Frequency continues to be lower than IDU (3 days nationally)
- Purity- medium
- Price remains expensive at \$300 per gram

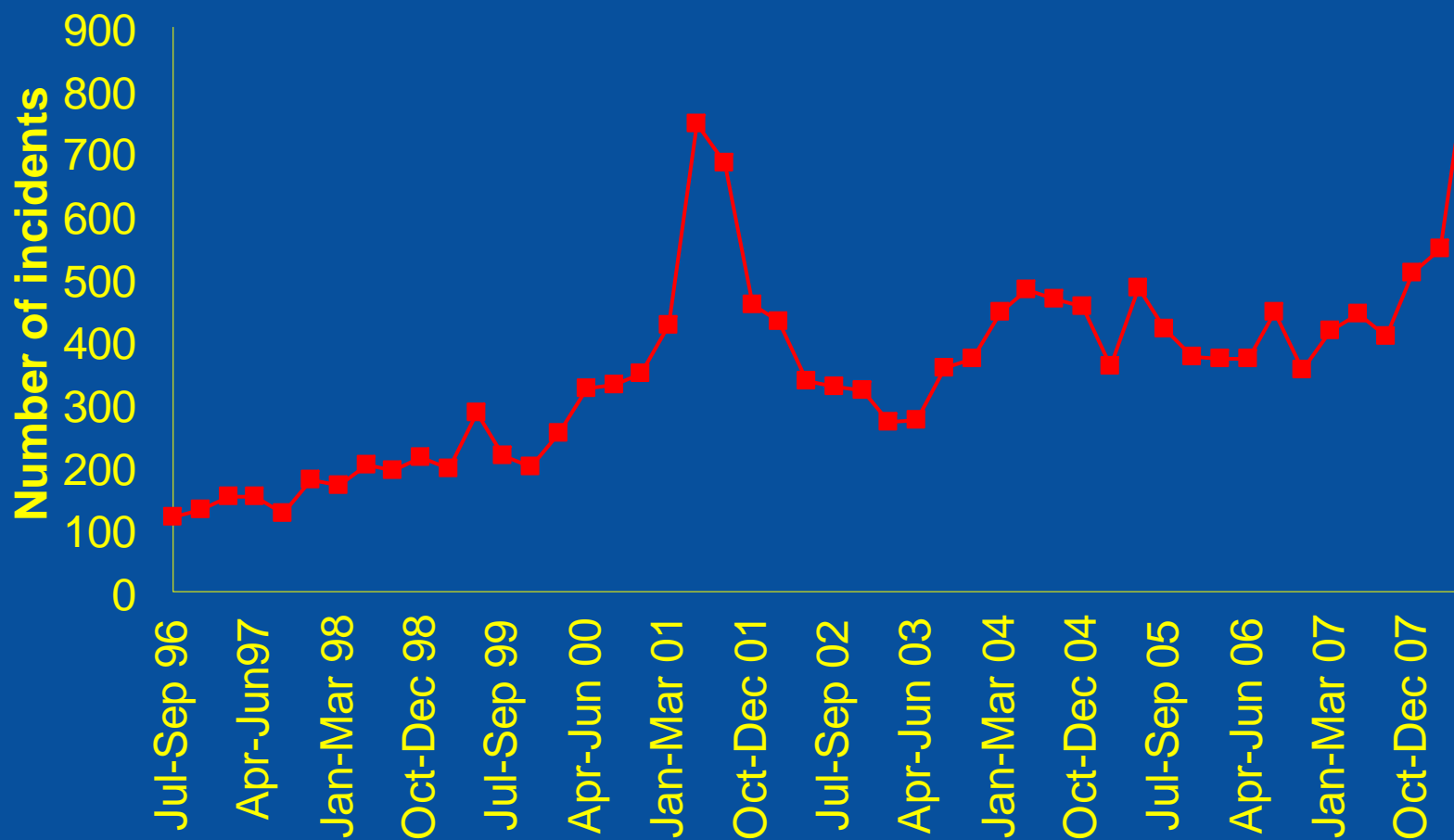
Cannabis

Population use cannabis, 1985-2007



Source: National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 2004

Recorded incidents of cannabis possession/use in NSW per quarter, July-September 1996 to April-June 2008



Overall cannabis trends

The logo for the International Drug Research Survey (IDRS), consisting of the letters 'IDRS' in a bold, white, sans-serif font on a black rectangular background.

- Majority of IDU use cannabis
- Remains 'easy' to obtain in all states, availability is stable
- Hydroponic dominates market
- Potency of hydro rated as 'high' and bush 'medium' (both stable)
- Price remains fairly stable

The logo for the European Drug Research Survey (EDRS), consisting of the letters 'EDRS' in a bold, white, sans-serif font on a black rectangular background.

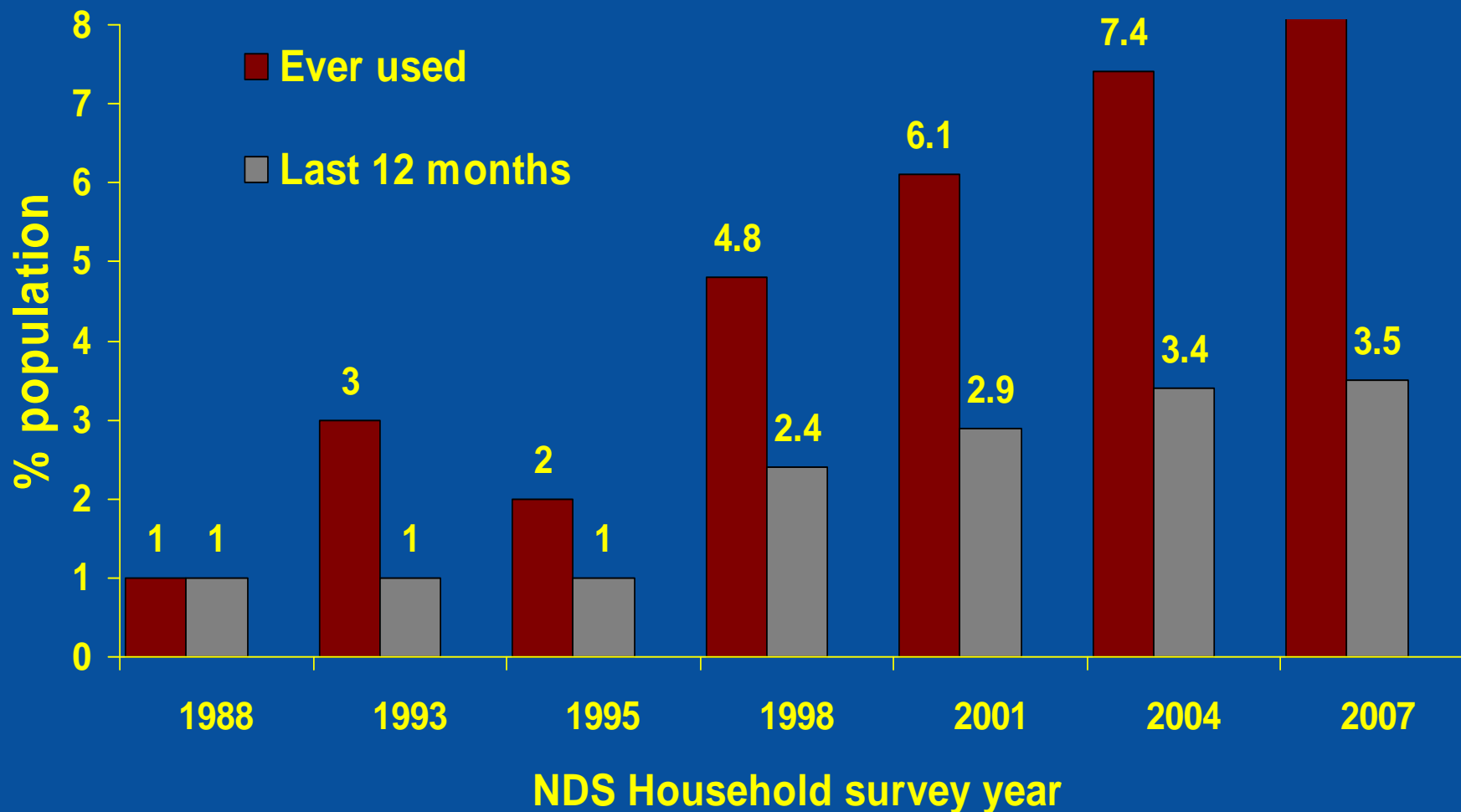
- Majority of REU use cannabis
- Median days of use has dropped in 2008 from 48 (twice weekly use) to 24 (weekly use)
- Other properties of market-price, purity and availability remain stable.

Cannabis and psychosis

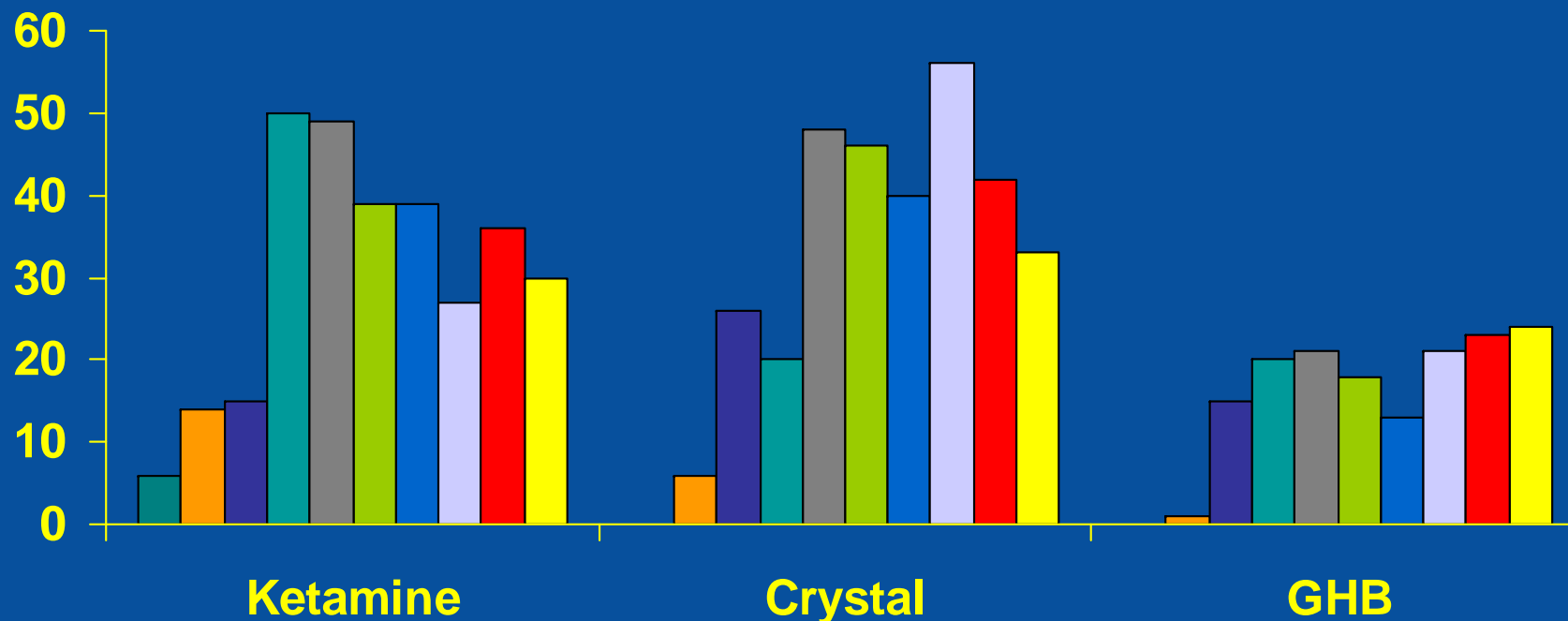
- What do we mean by “psychosis”?
- What do we mean by terms like “cause”?
- Discussed in ways that are very different from discussions around methamphetamine (WHY?)
- Summary (very brief) of recent evidence
 - Cannabis use higher among persons with psychotic disorders
 - Cannabis use increases risk of reporting psychotic symptoms at a later point in time
 - The role of vulnerability is probably central

Ecstasy

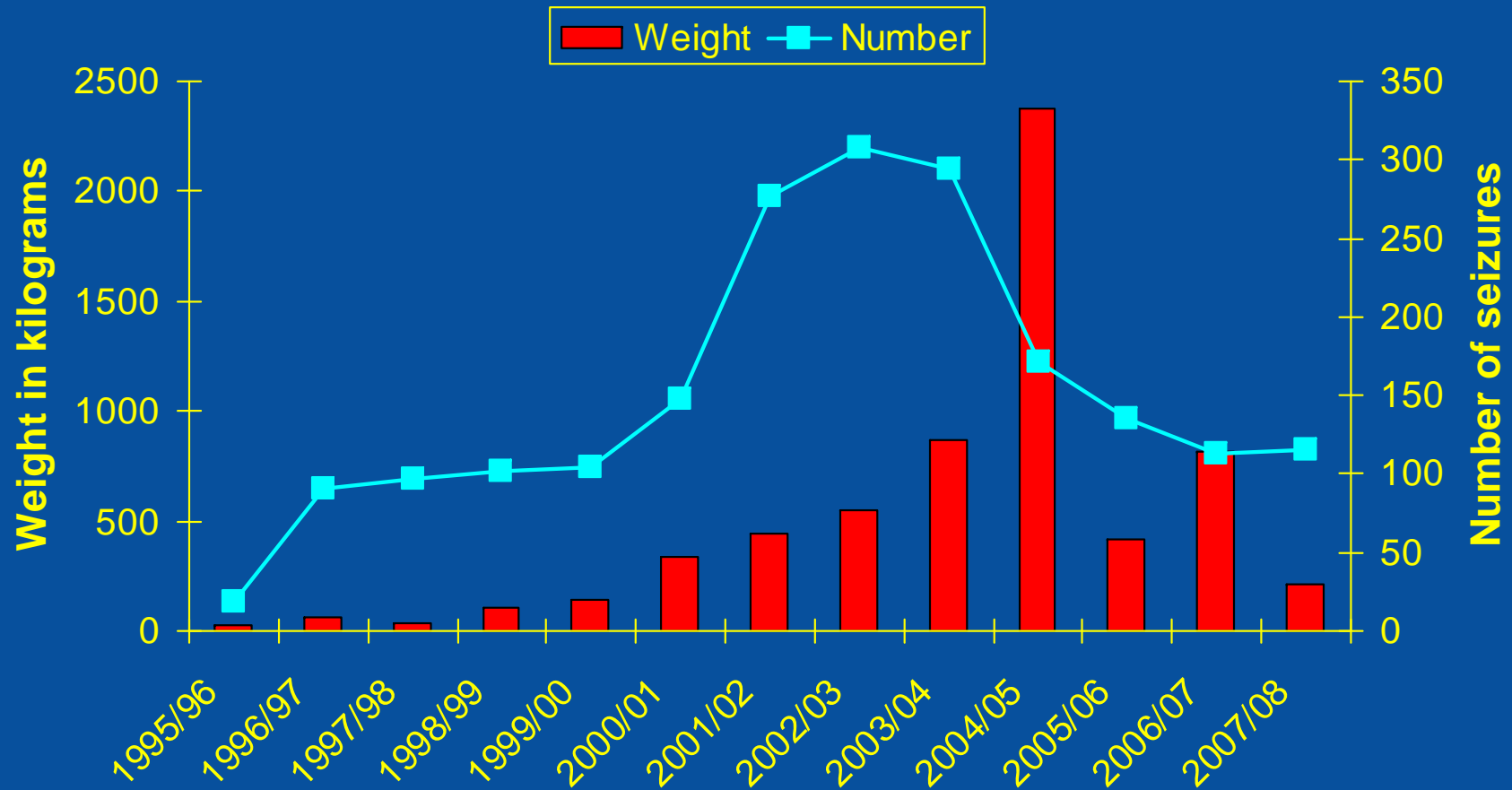
Ecstasy use in the general population 1988-2007



Selected other drug use among regular ecstasy users (NSW 1997-2008)

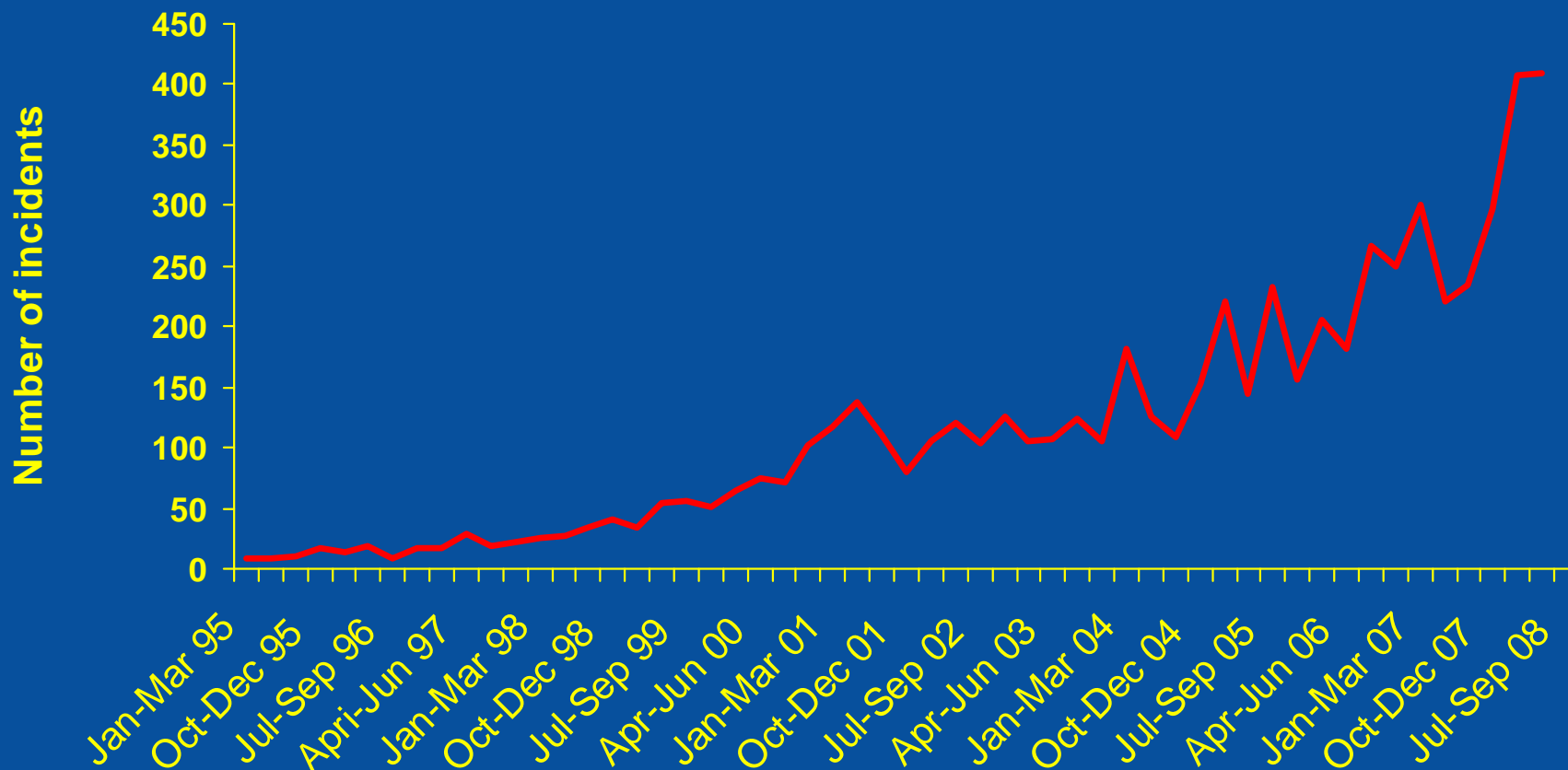


Number of MDMA seizures at the Australian border, 1995-2008



Source: Australian Customs Service

Recorded incidents of ecstasy possession/use 1995-2008



Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR)

Associated Issues

IDRS

EDRS

Criminal Activity (NSW 2008)

IDRS

- 79% prison history
- 49% crime last month (self-report)
 - Mainly property crime and drug dealing
- 44% arrested last 12 months
 - Mainly for property crime

EDRS

- 2% convicted of an offence
- 24% crime last month (self-report)
 - Mainly drug dealing
- 5% arrested last 12 months

IDRS Criminal Activity under the influence of drugs, 2008 (National)

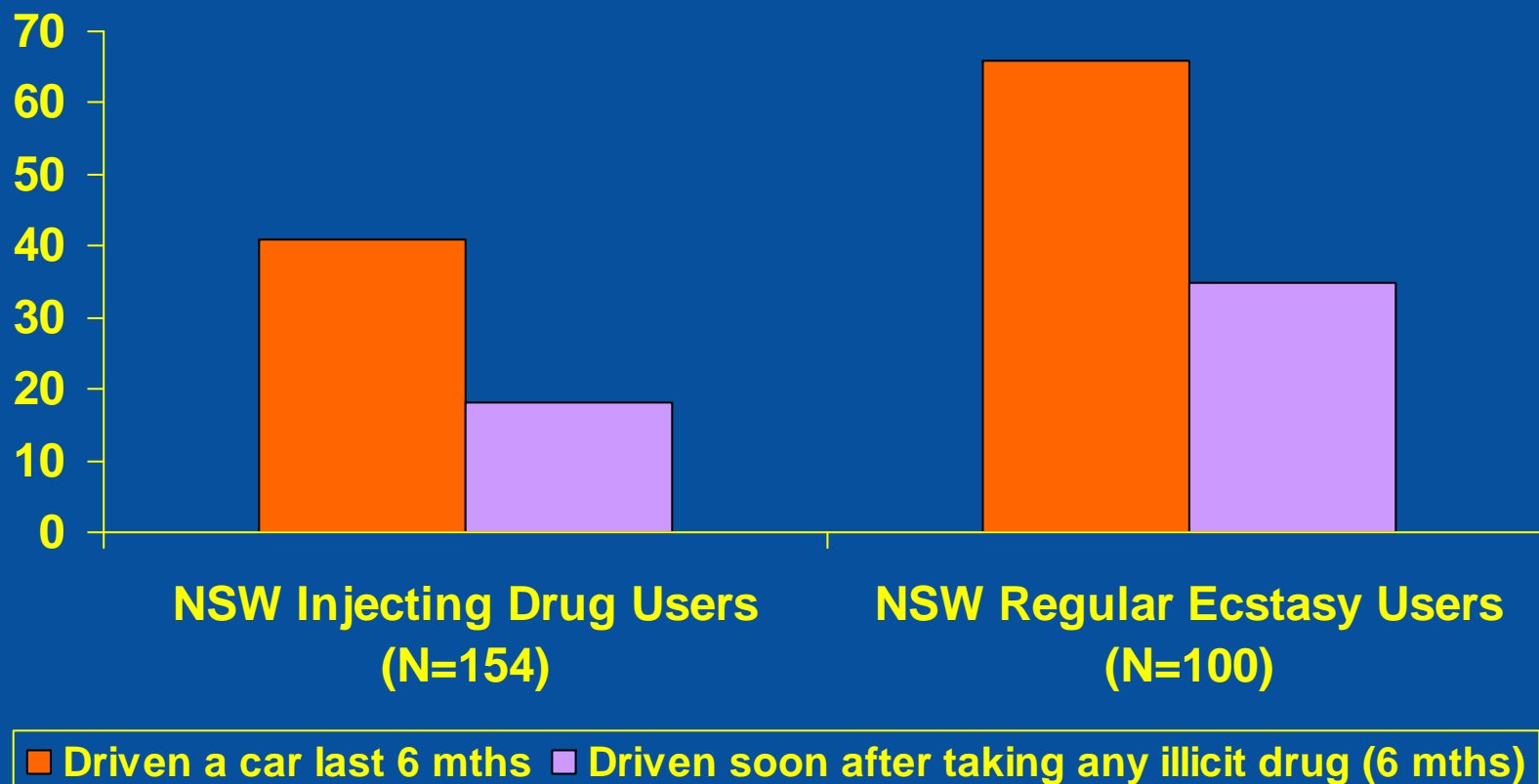
- Of those that committed a property crime (n=116) in the past month, 73% reported being under the influence of drugs or alcohol- predominantly heroin and benzodiazepines.
- Of those that committed a violent offense in the past month (n=24), 73% reported being under the influence of drugs of alcohol – predominantly alcohol followed by crystal/ice.

IDRS

Ecstasy purchasing patterns (NSW EDRS 2008)

- Bought ecstasy from a median of 2 people
- 39% bought ecstasy for themselves and 56% for themselves and others
- Number of times purchased ecstasy past 6 months
 - 34% 1-6 times
 - 39% 7-12 times
 - 19% 13-24 times
 - 3% 25+ times
- Typically bought median of 4 pills per occasion
 - 21% 6-10
 - 13% >10
- 67% could buy other drugs from their dealer

Drug Driving Behaviour, NSW 2008



Drug Treatment (NSW 2008)

IDRS

- 67% any current drug treatment (60% in 2004)
- 82% recent drug treatment (last 6 months)
 - 56% methadone
 - 25% buprenorphine
 - 11% drug counselling
 - <10% detox, NA

EDRS

- 3% any current drug treatment (10% in 2007)
- 17% accessed medical/health service in relation to their drug use (last 6 months)
 - GP: 41%
 - Counsellor: 29%
 - Emergency Department: 24%

Other problems (NSW, 2008)

IDRS

- 42% any problem last 6 months (self report; not diagnosis).
- Mainly depression (69%), anxiety (36%), paranoia (23%), schizophrenia (15%)
- 71% of those with a problem, attended a health professional in last 6 months

EDRS

- 33% work/study problems
- 24% found self in at-risk situations when under the influence
- 21% relationship/social problems
- 1% legal/police problems
- Ecstasy the drug most frequently attributed to these problems

New areas under investigation in 2009

The logo for the International Drug Research Survey (IDRS), consisting of the letters 'IDRS' in a bold, white, sans-serif font on a black rectangular background.

- Increased focus continues on use of pharmaceuticals
 - Buprenorphine
 - Buprenorphine-naloxone
 - Oxycodone
- Physical and Mental Health
- Further investigate 'drug driving' with the introduction of Drug Driving Testing

The logo for the Experimental Drug Research Survey (EDRS), consisting of the letters 'EDRS' in a bold, white, sans-serif font on a black rectangular background.

- Investigate participants' behaviour when under the influence of drugs in terms of aggression and violence
- In-depth look at risky behaviour practices with alcohol
- Further investigate the occurrence of 'drug driving'

Acknowledgments

- Users from both projects that participated
- Key experts for their time and expertise
- Agencies providing indicator data
- Researchers across the country
- Current and previous national coordinators
- Funding Body: Commonwealth Government Department of Health and Ageing

Contact Details

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More information see:
www.ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au ('Drug Trends')

2008 IDRS/EDRS Reports to be released shortly (April 2009)

