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INTRODUCTION

- Cocaine is a stimulant drug that increases heart rate and blood pressure, and causes people who use it to feel energised, alert, and excited.
- Long term cocaine use can cause a range of health problems, including psychosis, paranoia, and cardiovascular diseases.
- In Australia, rates of hospital separations related to cocaine increased four times between 2010-11 and 2017-18, from 0.8 to 4.1 per 100,000 population (1).
- For this reason, monitoring engagement in treatment is important to understand experience of problematic cocaine use and help-seeking.

AIMS

- To show trends in the use of drug and alcohol treatment services where cocaine was the principal drug of concern in Australia between 2002-03 and 2018-19.
- To show trends in cocaine related treatment episodes by key sociodemographic features and treatment characteristics.

Methods

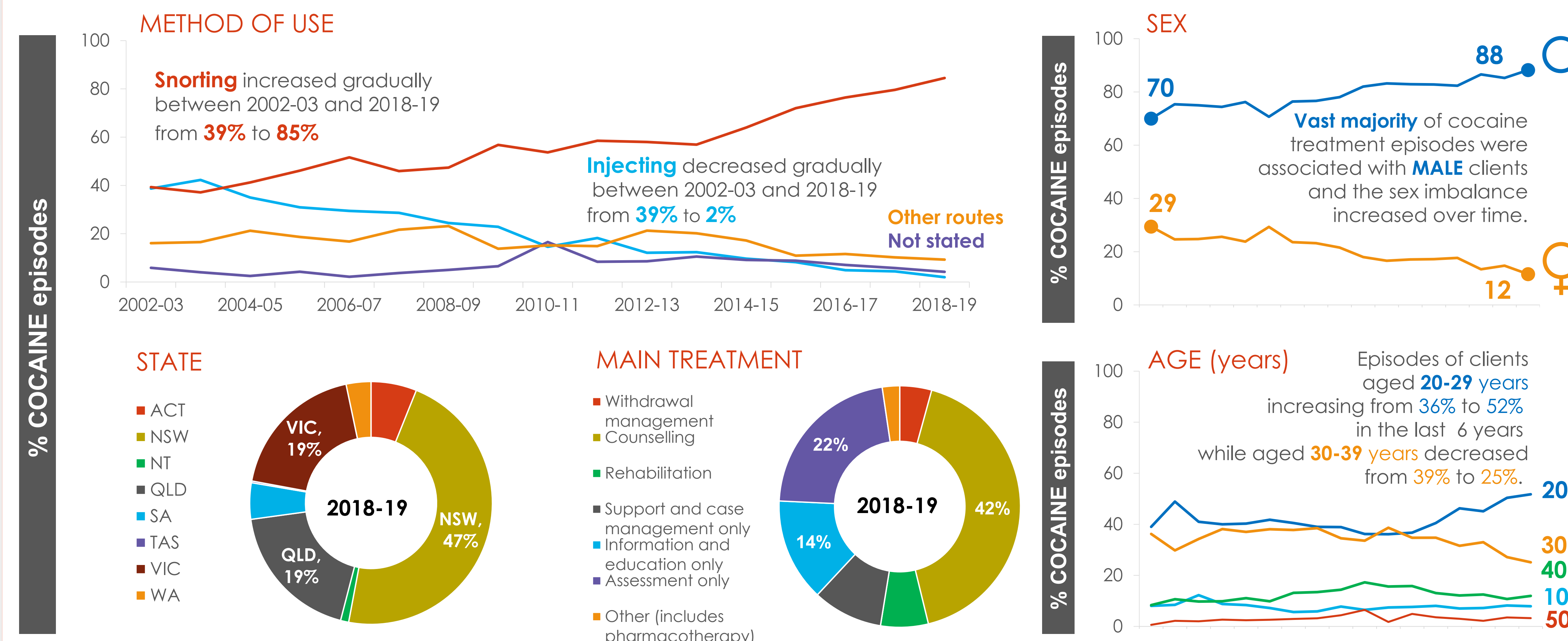
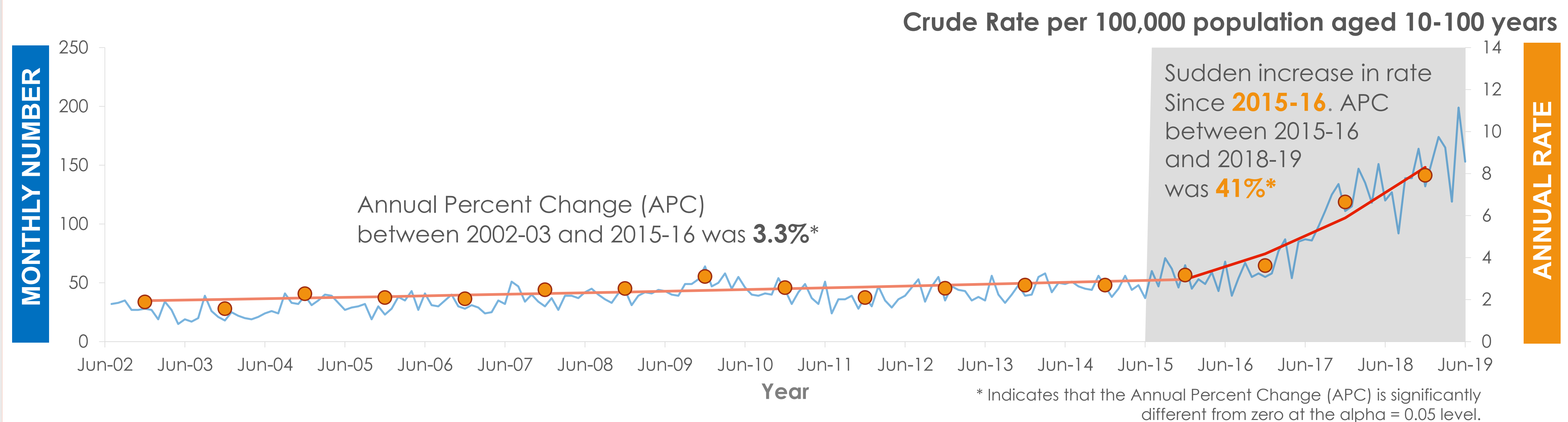
- We analysed data from the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set (AODTS-NMDS 2002-03 to 2018-19). The AODTS-NMDS comprise all publicly funded government and non-government agencies providing specialist alcohol and other drug treatment services (2).
- Analyses were undertaken of those episodes where cocaine was identified by the client as their principal drug of concern.
- Joinpoint analysis (3) were used to estimate the annual percent change in crude rates of cocaine treatment episodes.

Terminology

The **principal drug of concern** is the main substance that leads an individual to seek treatment from an alcohol and drug treatment agency.

RESULTS

Treatment episodes with COCAINE as principal drug of concern



IMPLICATIONS

These data provide critical information on trends in cocaine related treatment, increasing demand on these services, changes in method of use and who is using cocaine. This findings are concerning and provide a greater evidence base for the development of policy responses to ensure appropriate access and coverage. Close monitoring of this indicator is necessary given the potential for further elevation in rates of use and harms, particularly if reductions in price occur alongside increased availability.

REFERENCES

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- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020. Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia: 2018-19. Drug treatment series no. 34. Cat. no. HSE 243. Canberra: AIHW.
- Joinpoint Regression Program, Version 4.8.0.1 - April 2020; Statistical Methodology and Applications Branch, Surveillance Research Program, National Cancer Institute.

Results and conclusions

- The recent increase in rate of cocaine treatment episodes was not driven by any treatment or sociodemographic characteristics.
- The increase in annual rates was confirmed by increasing in monthly number of closed cocaine treatment episodes.
- Counselling was the most common treatment method and comprised between 35% and 45% each year.
- Majority of clients were self-referred (29% to 47%) or referred by law reinforcement agencies (20% to 40%).
- More than a half of all cocaine treatments were completed and most of them were delivered through NSW drug and alcohol treatment services.
- In 2018-19, 88% of clients seeking treatment were males and their proportion compared to females had been gradually increasing since 2002-03 where they accounted for 70% of all cocaine treatment episodes,
- 20-29 years was the most common age group which increased from in the last 6 years, while 30-39 years decreased between 39% to 25%
- Clients of 9 in 10 cocaine treatment episodes reported snorting as the method of use in 2018-19. This number had been gradually increasing since 2002-03 where 4 in 10 episodes had snorting as the method of use. By contrast injecting of cocaine decreased from 39% in 2002-03 to 2% in 2018-19