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The Difference is Research

Background

- Young people with multiple and complex needs (YPMCN) experience disproportionately high rates of preventable harms as a result of a high number of risk factors.
- Despite the extent of harm experienced by YPMCN, a 2012 review identified the only interventions for YPMCN with some evidence of their effectiveness were multi-component interventions (MCIs) (Jackson et al., 2012).
- MCI's allow for simultaneous targeting of risk factors within individuals and their broader social environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruun, 2012; Jackson et al., 2012).
- A systematic review of the literature on MCI's, identified only 15 (2%) outcome studies. Of these studies, none focused on involvement in crime, or measured the impact of interventions at a community level (Knight et al., 2015 – *In press*).



A BackTrack participant and his dog participating in a dog jump competition

- The BackTrack program was established in 2007 as a MCI for YPMCN.



- Implemented at 3 different regional north-west NSW sites:
 - Community 1 - *The Flagship program*
 - Community 2 - *Outreach program #1*
 - Community 3 - *Outreach program #2*

- Broad objective: to provide alternative and positive pathways for YPMCN into adulthood.

- This objective is operationalised through a number of flexible activities which sit within five standardised core program components.

Table 1: BackTrack core components and flexible activities

| Core components | Example flexible activities |
|--|--|
| 1. Engagement | Being given responsibility for a dog when they start the program |
| 2. Diversionary activities | Weekends away, inter-state travel to community events, work experience |
| 3. Learning and skills | BackTrack school, work-ready skill programs (e.g. welding, farm work), volunteer work experience in groups |
| 4. Personal development and identity and culture | "Circle work" (informal and spontaneous group sessions), as needs counselling and mindfulness, BackTrack shirts, visits to country |
| 5. Case management | Work preparation (e.g. open account; obtain drivers licence), contingency planning, legal aid, inter-agency liaison |

Aims

This paper aims to:

- Describe the most common crimes, characteristics of the most common crimes, and the characteristics of the persons of interest (POIs) involved in the most common crimes in the communities BackTrack operates; and
- Evaluate the impact of BackTrack on community-level rates of crime using routinely collected crime data.

Methods

- Routinely collected crime data (BOCSAR, 2015) were obtained from 1999-2014 for communities where BackTrack operates.
- Descriptive analyses identified the most common crimes, their characteristics, and the characteristics of the POIs.
- Crime data were plotted over time to determine broad trends in pre-, and post-intervention crime rates in the three communities where BackTrack operates.

Results

Figure 1: Most common offences committed by male POIs (14-17 years) in communities where BackTrack operates

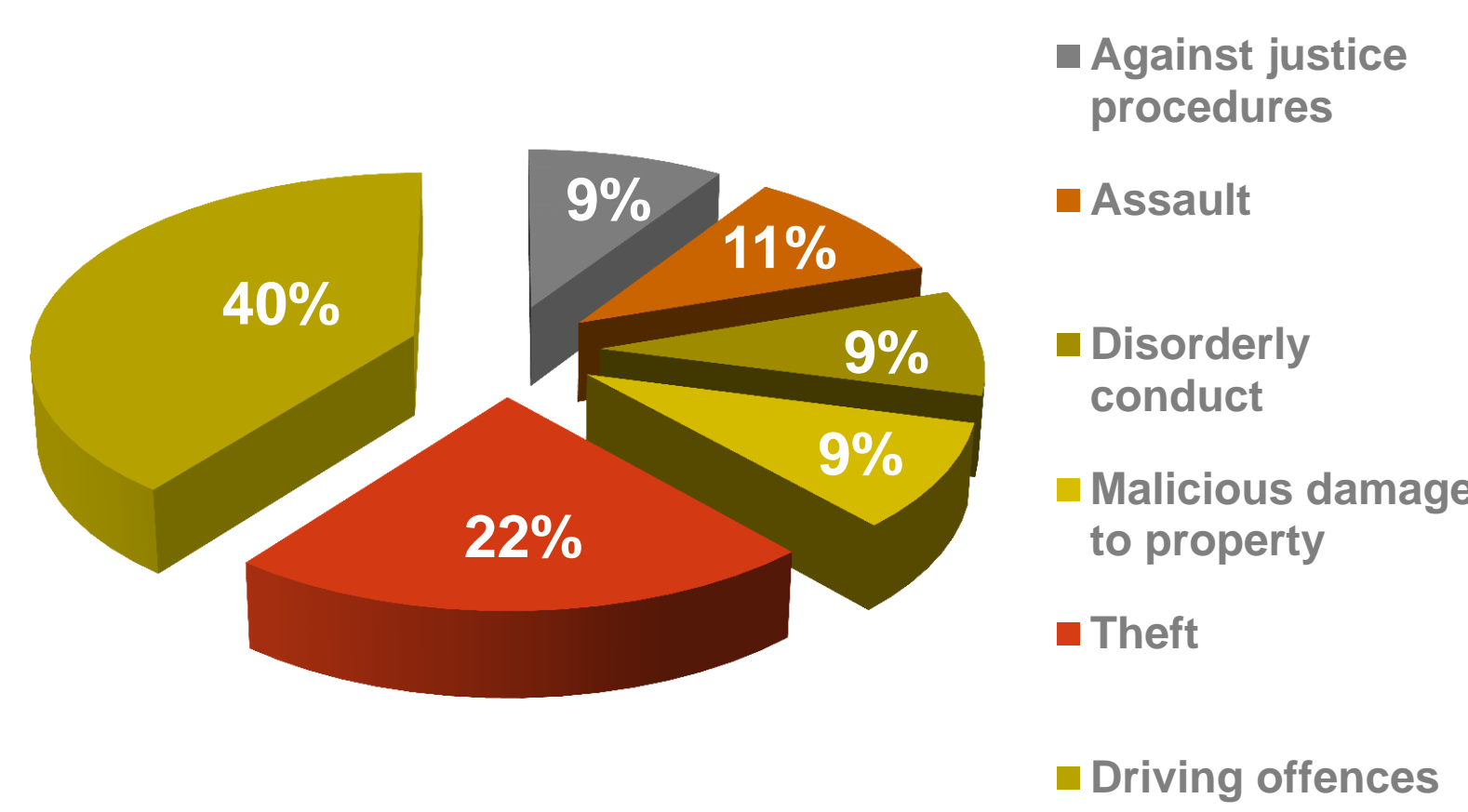


Figure 2: Premises where offending takes place

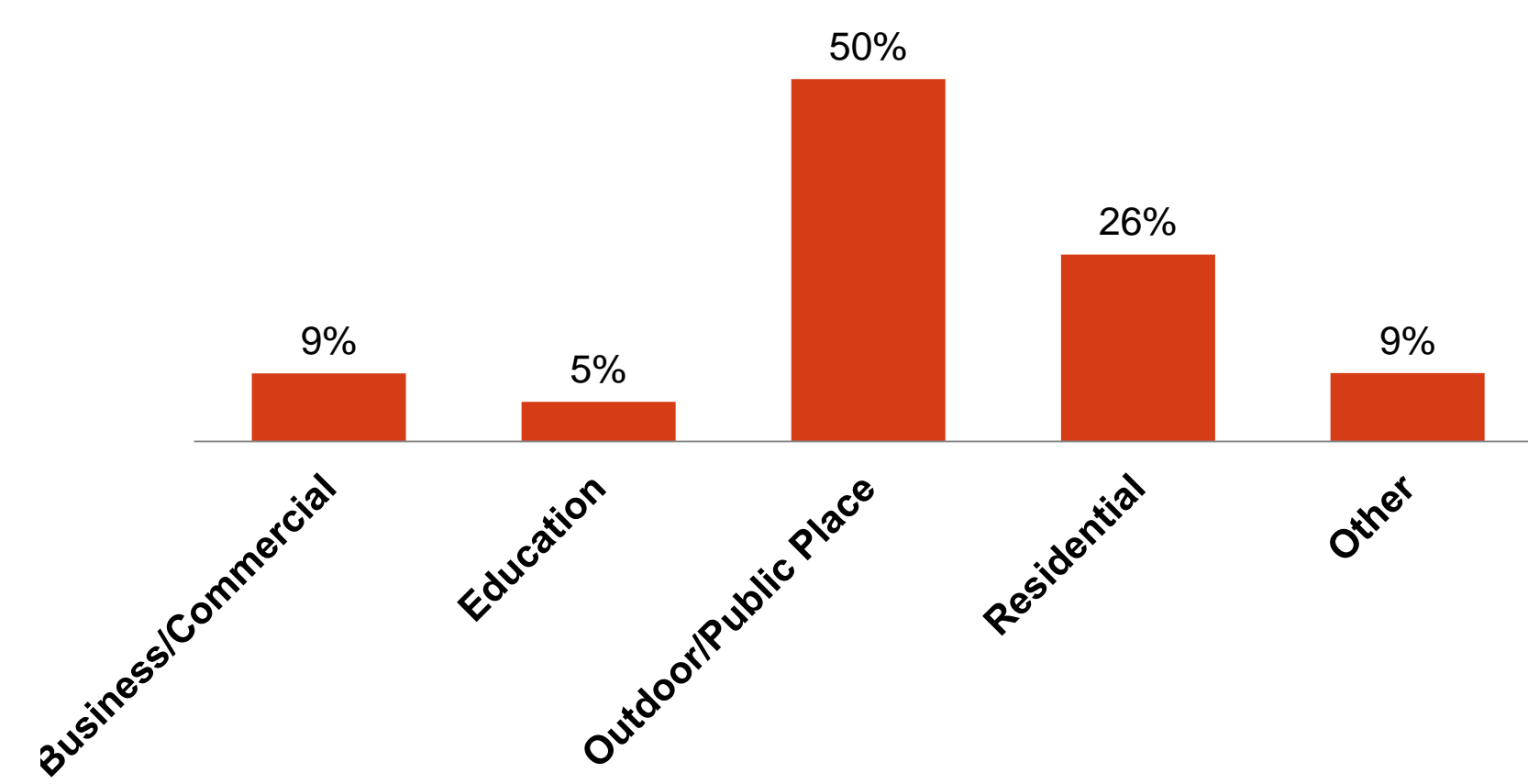


Figure 3: Domestic violence related offences

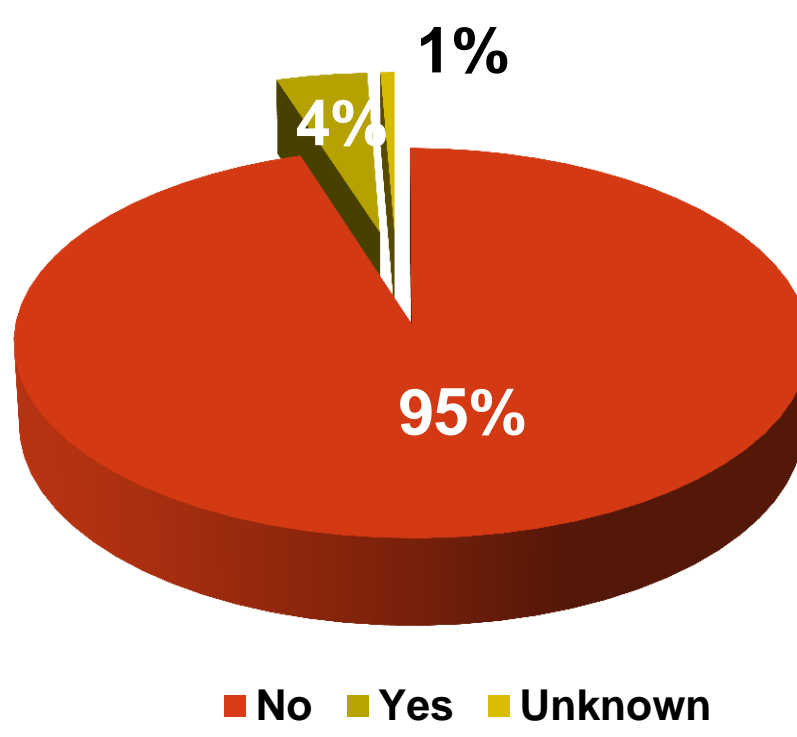


Figure 4: Alcohol related offences

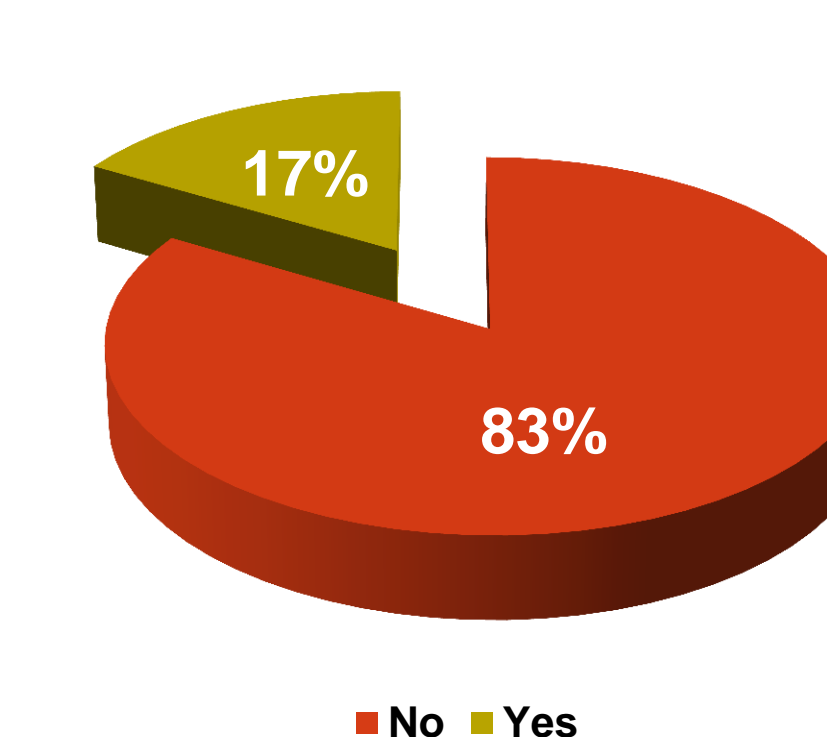


Figure 5: Days and times of most common offences committed by male POIs (14-17 years) in communities where BackTrack operates

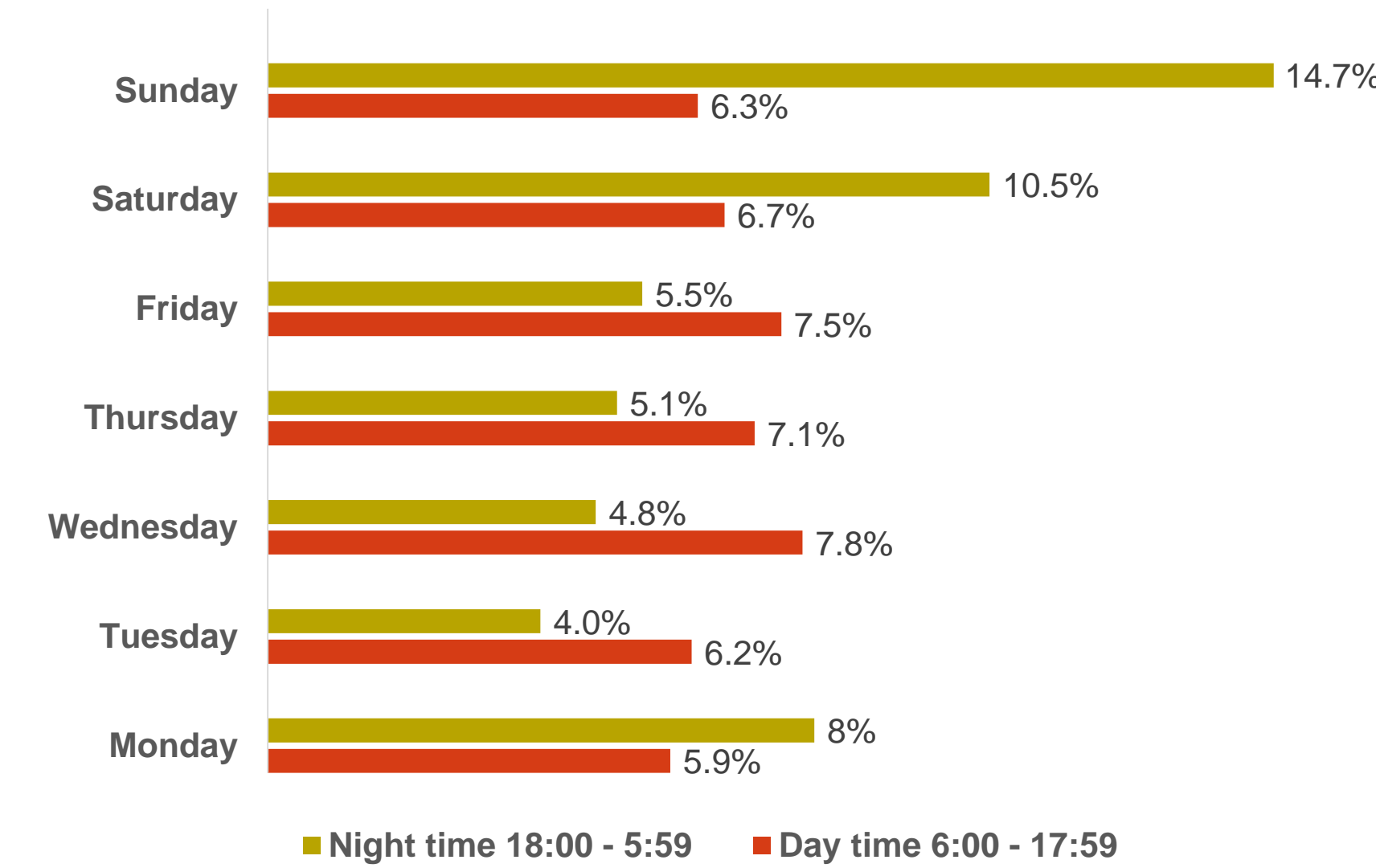


Figure 6: Age distribution of male POIs (14-17 years), in communities where BackTrack operates

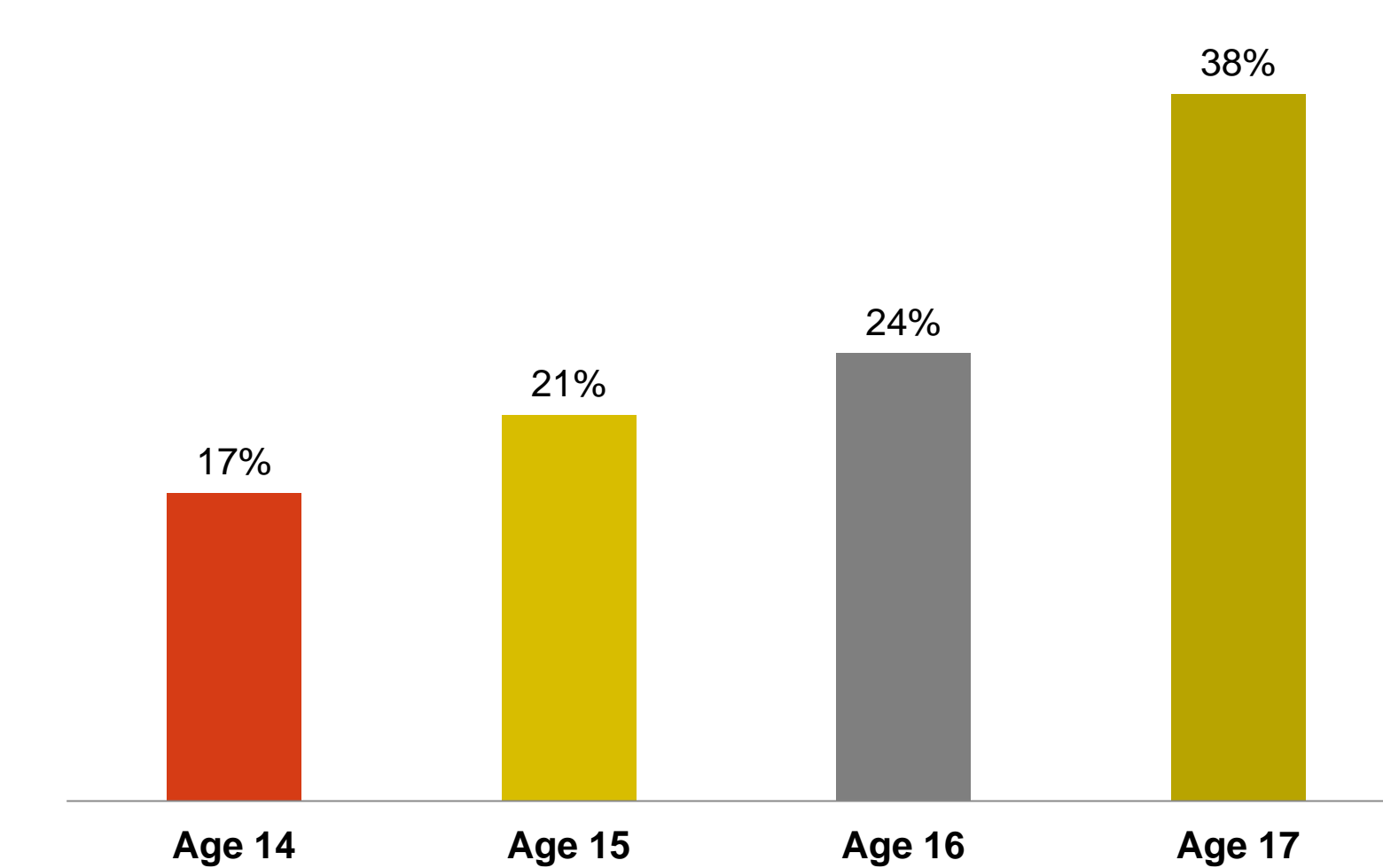


Figure 7: ATSI status of male POIs (14-17 years) in communities where BackTrack operates

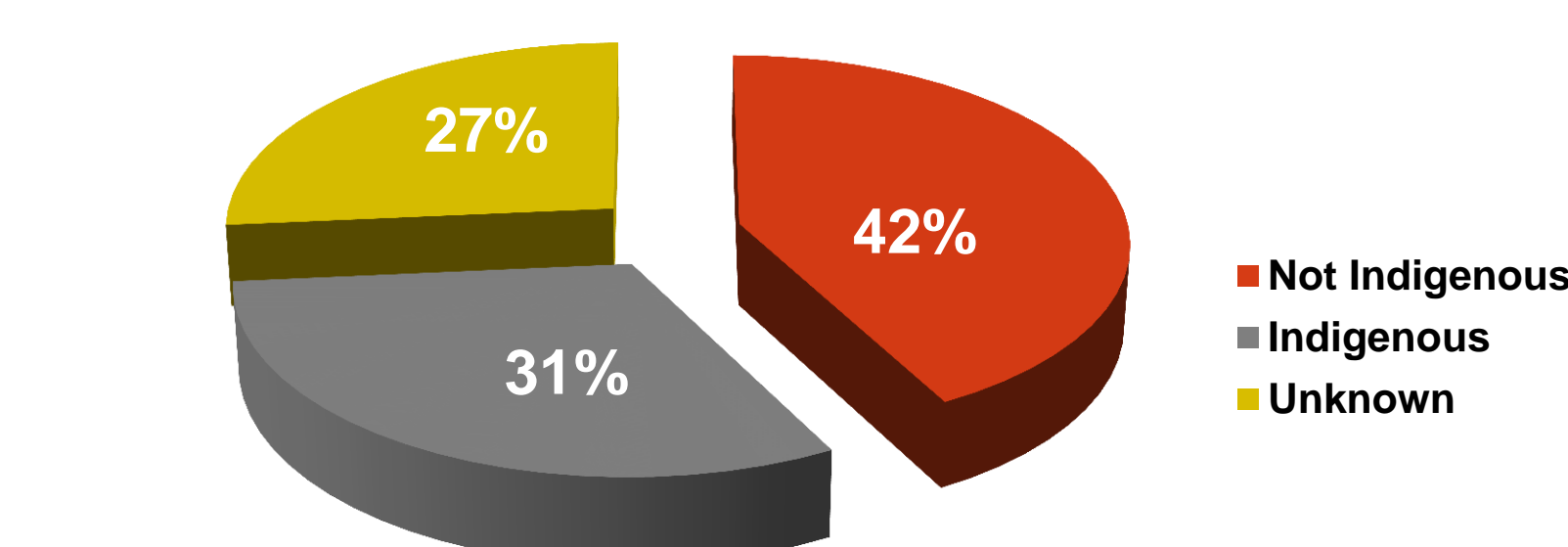
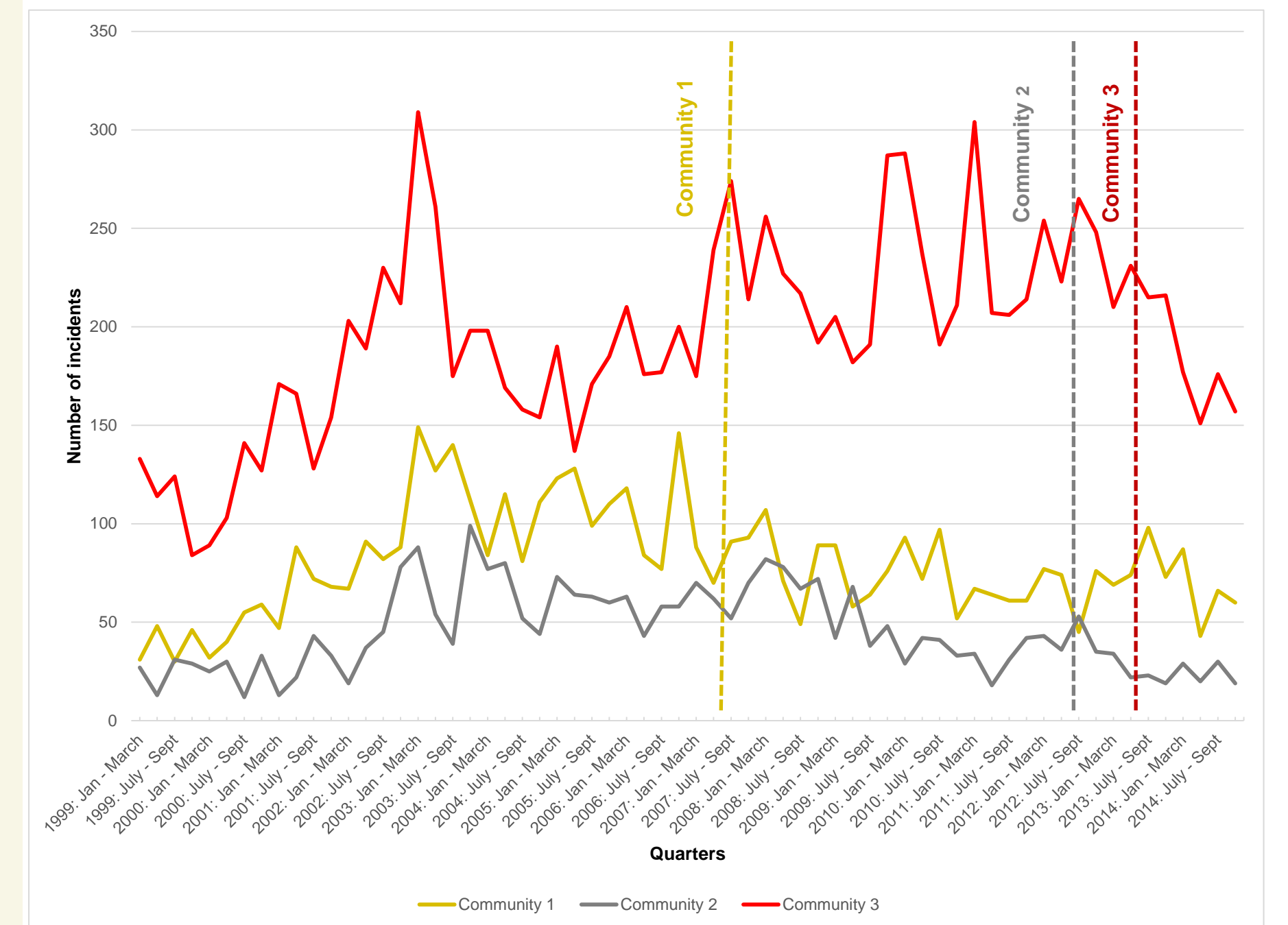


Figure 8: Impact on All Crime pre/post intervention (male POIs 14-17), in communities where BackTrack operates



Discussion

- The most common types of crimes committed amongst male POIs aged 14-17 years in the communities where BackTrack operates were: driving offences; assault (non-domestic violence); theft; malicious damage to property; against justice procedures; and disorderly conduct.

- The majority of these crimes were committed outdoors or in public places, were not domestic violence related, were not alcohol related, and were most frequently committed on a Saturday or Sunday night.

- Male POIs involved in these crimes were more likely to be aged 17 years. Indigenous young people were over-represented in the crime data (31%), given that Indigenous people represent 9% of the population in north-west NSW (ABS, 2011).

- There appears to be a broad downward trend in all crimes from pre- to post-commencement of BackTrack in the communities where BackTrack operates.

- Analyses will now be conducted to determine whether these broad trends translate into a statistically significant effect.

- Future analyses will need to consider the impact of BackTrack on the most common crimes committed by this group of young people.

Conclusion

- These preliminary results form one part (community-level impact) of a larger evaluation of BackTrack which will include examination of individual-level outcomes utilising self-report measures (substance use, mental health & wellbeing, education and employment), and an economic analysis.

- This research is the most methodologically rigorous trial of a MCI for YPMCN that has been undertaken anywhere in the world to date.

- The results of this evaluation will improve the delivery of MCIs for YPMCN producing long-term positive outcomes for the young people involved, their communities, and society.



A BackTrack participant with his dog

Acknowledgements

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