

RESPONDING TO NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES IN THE AOD SECTOR

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INTRODUCTION

International drug monitoring systems suggest increased rates of acute and chronic harms associated with some new psychoactive substances (NPS). This has implications for alcohol and other drug (AOD) services working with people-who-use-NPS (PWUNPS).

This study explored Australian AOD workers' attitudes, experiences and self-reported knowledge/ confidence delivering interventions and support to PWUNPS. It identified gaps in service provision and barriers to responding to NPS use.

METHODS

- investigator-developed cross-sectional online survey
- self-selected convenience sample of
- data collected Feb-Apr 2019
- exploratory descriptive analyses (quant. & qual. data)


RESULTS

94 – 97% of workers considered it VERY – EXTREMELY IMPORTANT to...

- be informed about changing drug trends & markets (97%)
- screen for and assess NPS-use (94%)
- understand NPS effects & potential harms (97%)
- discuss NPS with clients who use them (97%)

...but not all workers ALWAYS ASKED about / discussed NPS with clients


- at presentation (34%)
- when clients mentioned NPS (59%)

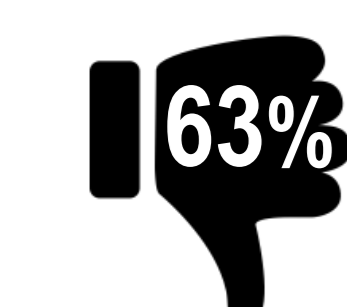
-  **Limited NPS knowledge (poor–basic)**
- prevalence of NPS use in Australia (61%)
 - NPS interactions with other substances (73%)

&


-  **Low confidence delivering interventions**
- only 1 in 5 workers VERY CONFIDENT discussing NPS or NPS brief interventions/harm reduction advice


ACCESS TO NPS INFORMATION


-  63% of workers had accessed information about NPS in previous 6 months

-  **6 in 10 workers considered NPS resources available to AOD workers inadequate**

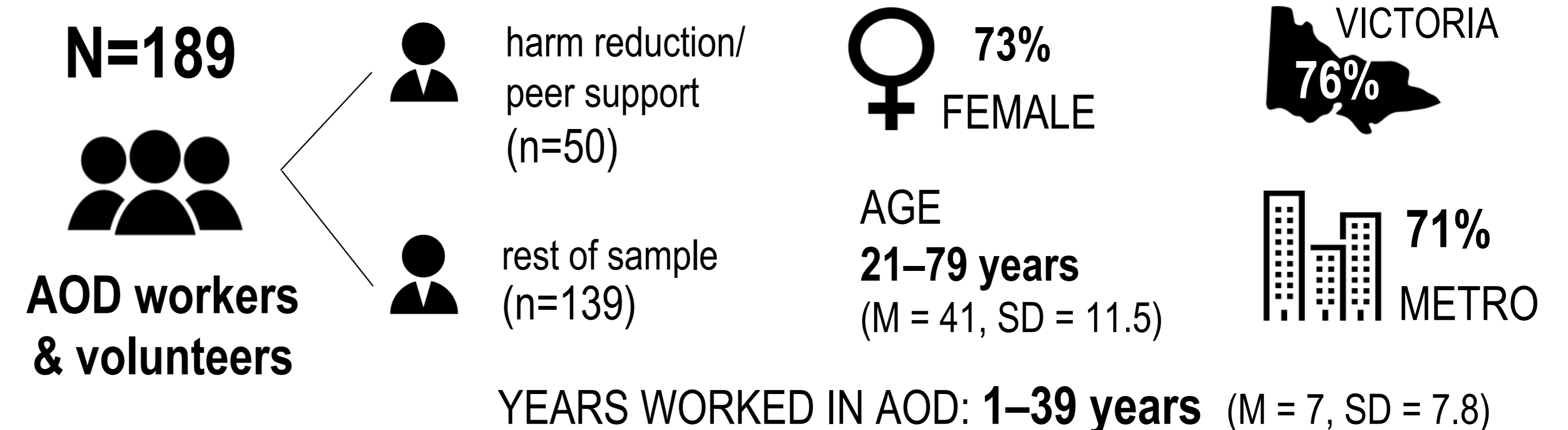
BARRIERS RESPONDING TO NPS USE

-  lack of NPS knowledge / access to timely & reliable NPS information (23%)

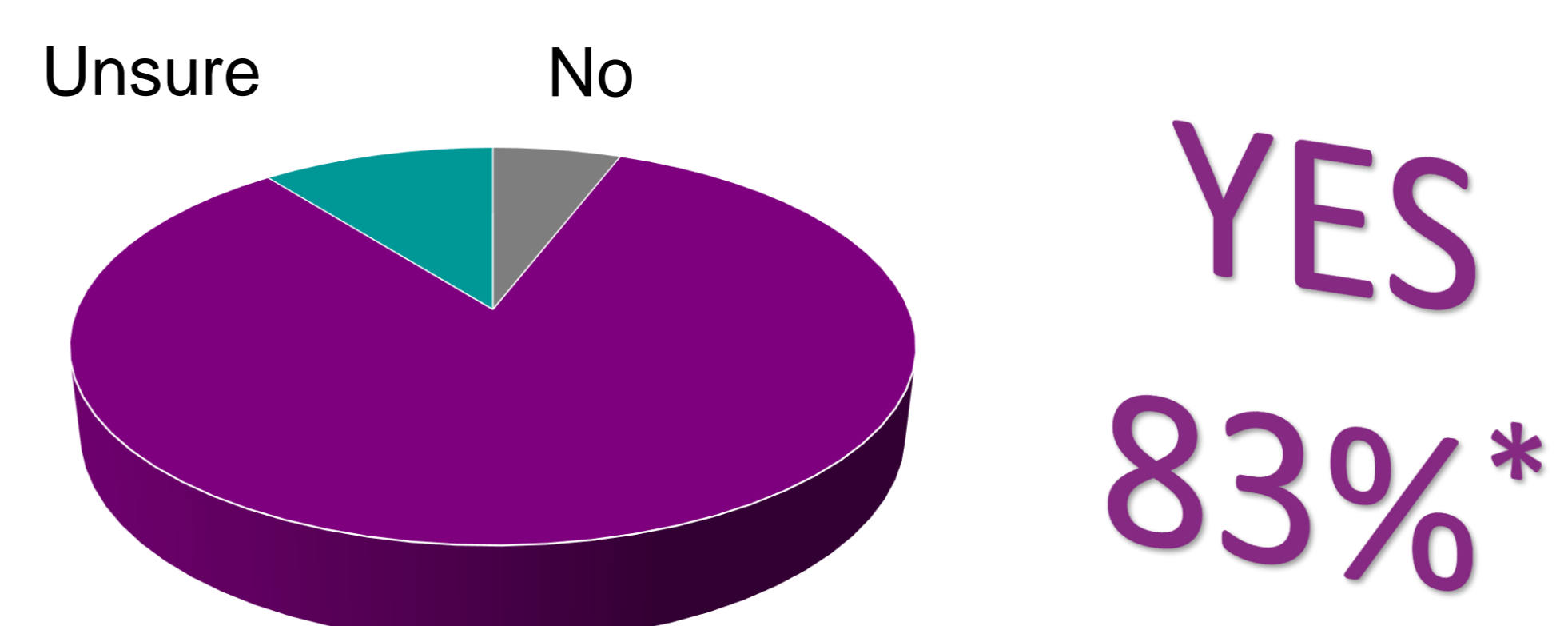
-  PWUNPS have limited awareness of potential for NPS-related harm (21%)

-  lack of NPS-specific training / professional development for AOD workers (17%)

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS



Do you work with people who use NPS?



* Workers estimated rates of NPS use disclosure among 1 – 95% of clients (M = 26%, SD = 23)

Confidence was significantly associated with recent access to NPS information

- delivering brief interventions ($\chi^2_{(1)}=6.05, p=.014$)
- providing harm reduction advice ($\chi^2_{(1)}=6.27, p=.012$)



CONCLUSIONS

- Rates of NPS-use may be higher in AOD cohorts than predicted by population data estimates
- AOD workers consider NPS relevant to their work, but have limited knowledge & confidence delivering interventions to PWUNPS
- Confidence increases with access to NPS information, but resources available to AOD sector ≠ adequate
- Opportunities exist to:
 - consider NPS as core business at every stage of AOD prevention, harm reduction and treatment
 - include NPS in AOD screening & assessment tools
 - build workforce confidence responding to NPS by improving access to evidence-based information & resources

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