



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

Under-reporting of amphetamine use in the National Drug Strategy Household Survey

Daniel Stjepanović

Meth/amphetamines

Australians' use of meth/amphetamines among highest in world; speed (powder) and ice (crystal methamphetamines) most common forms.

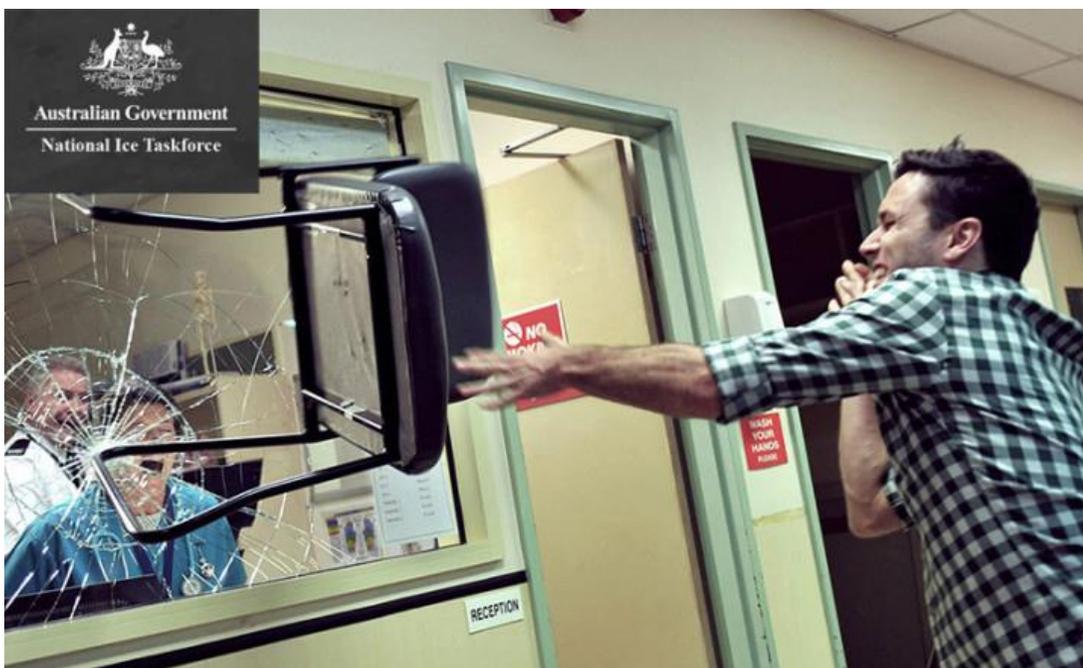
Introduction of ice into established market prompted concerns of increased harm.

Shift to more use among young people and rural regions.

Claims of an 'ice epidemic'.

- Ice Destroys Lives campaign in 2015.

Ice Destroys Lives campaign



Use in Australia

Discordant indices of use.

- General population surveys (National Drug Strategy Household Survey; NDSHS) show declining use.
- Wastewater monitoring suggested dramatic increase in population consumption.
- Treatment seeking and emergency department use increased over same period.

Aim of present work

Potential explanations for the discordant estimates of use:

- Increased harm despite reduced use in population surveys result of increased purity of ice or switch from injecting to inhalation.
- Under-reporting of use data in surveys as a consequence of negative media portrayals of methamphetamine use.

Aim of present work to estimate the degree of under-reporting of meth/amphetamine use from 2001 to 2019.

- Examined rates of lifetime use within birth cohorts over survey waves.

Methods

NDSHS data from 2001 to 2019.

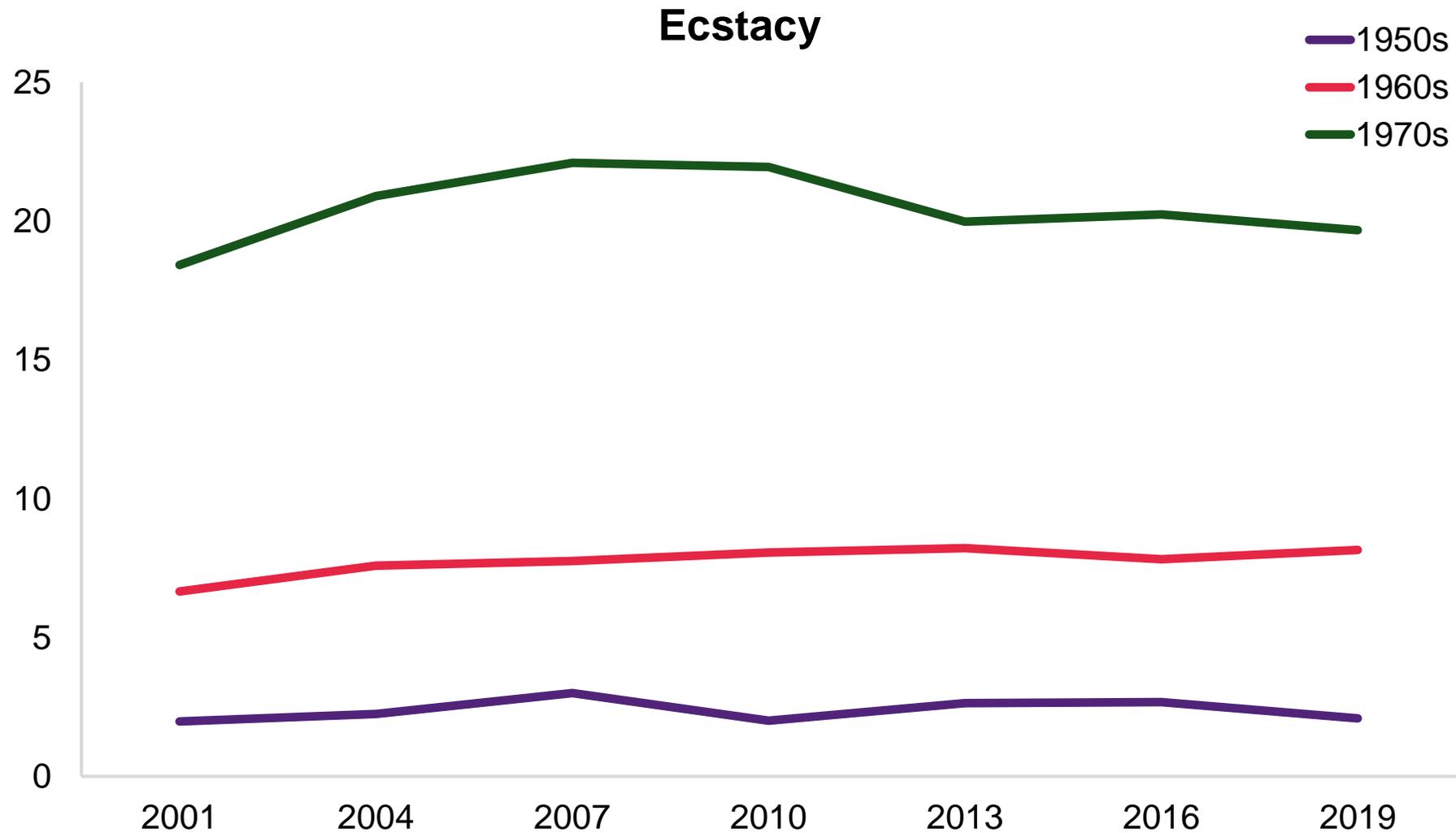
- Approximately 20,000 participants in each wave.
- One wave every 3 years.

Data weighted to adjust for implementation and to align to Australian population.

Focussed on three birth cohorts:

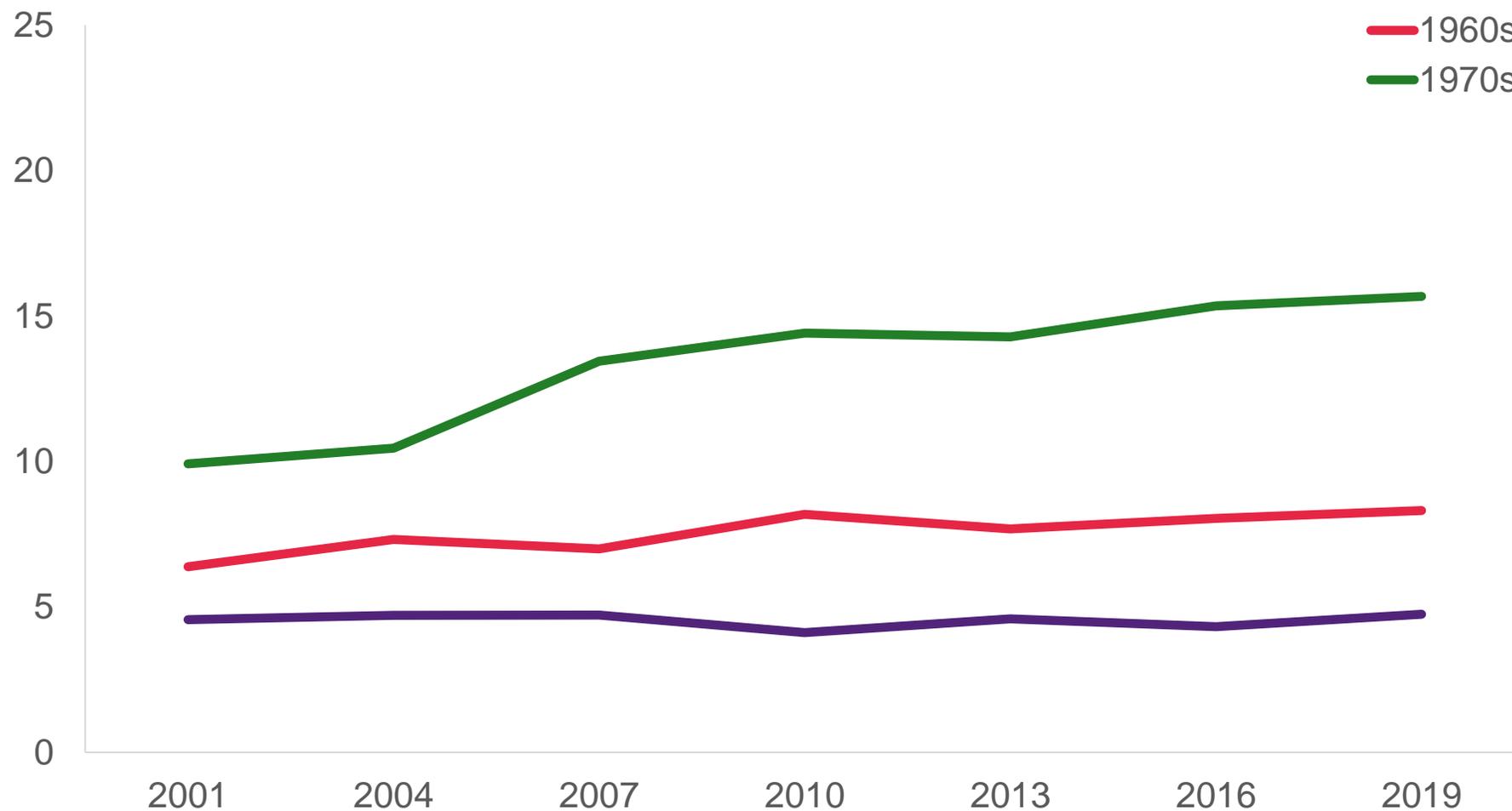
- 1951-1960
- 1961-1970
- 1971-1980

Results: Lifetime use

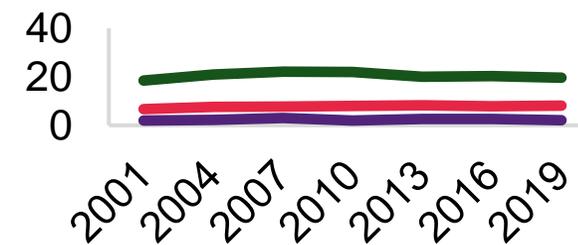


Results: Lifetime use

Cocaine

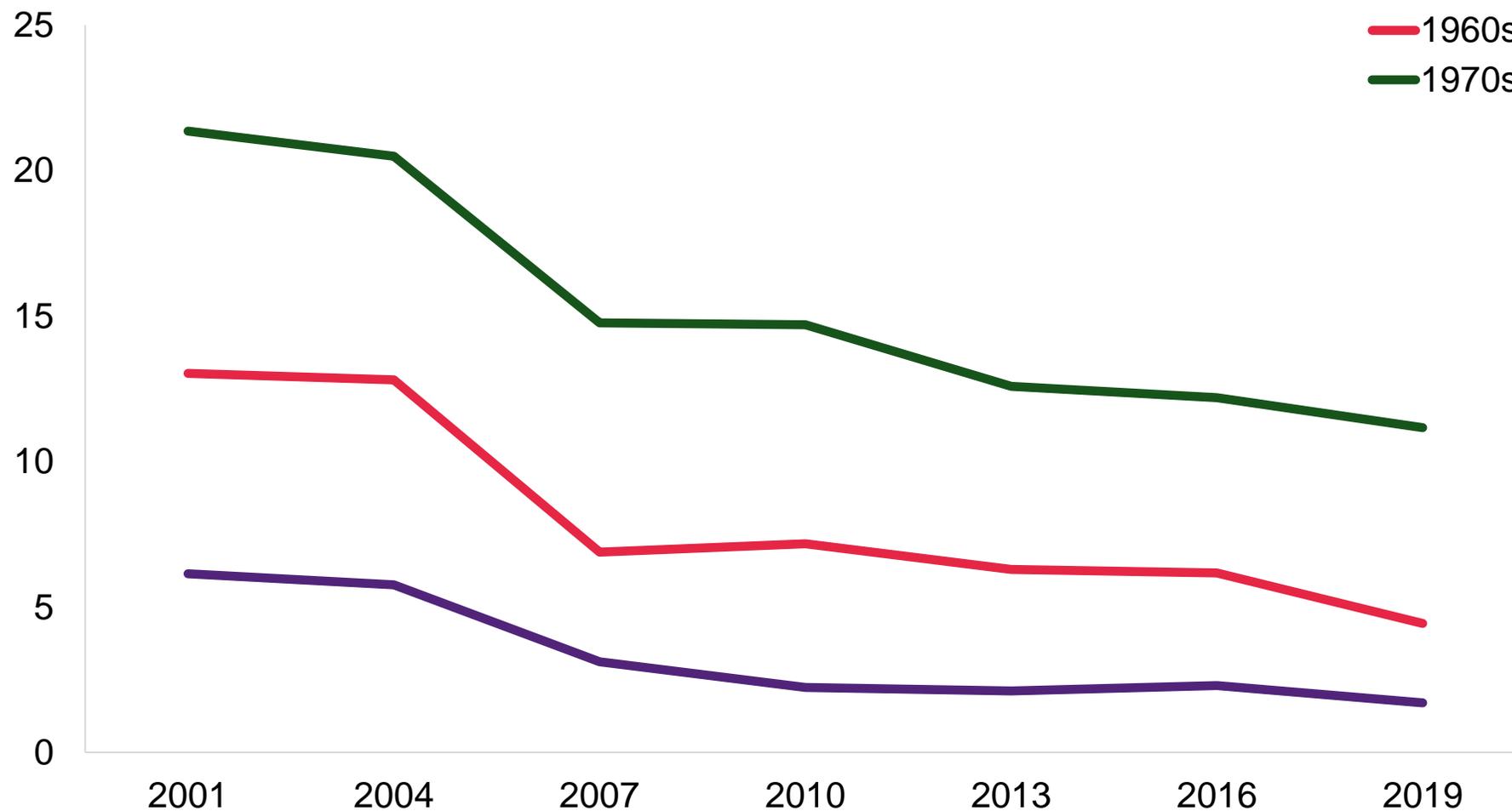


Ecstasy

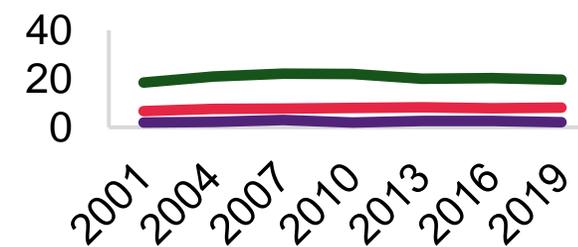


Results: Lifetime use

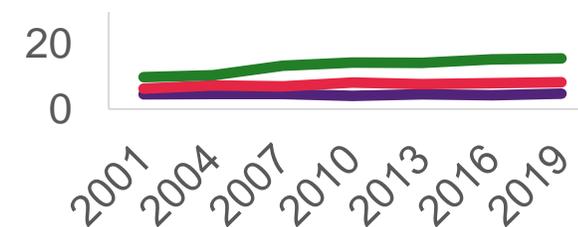
Meth/amphetamine



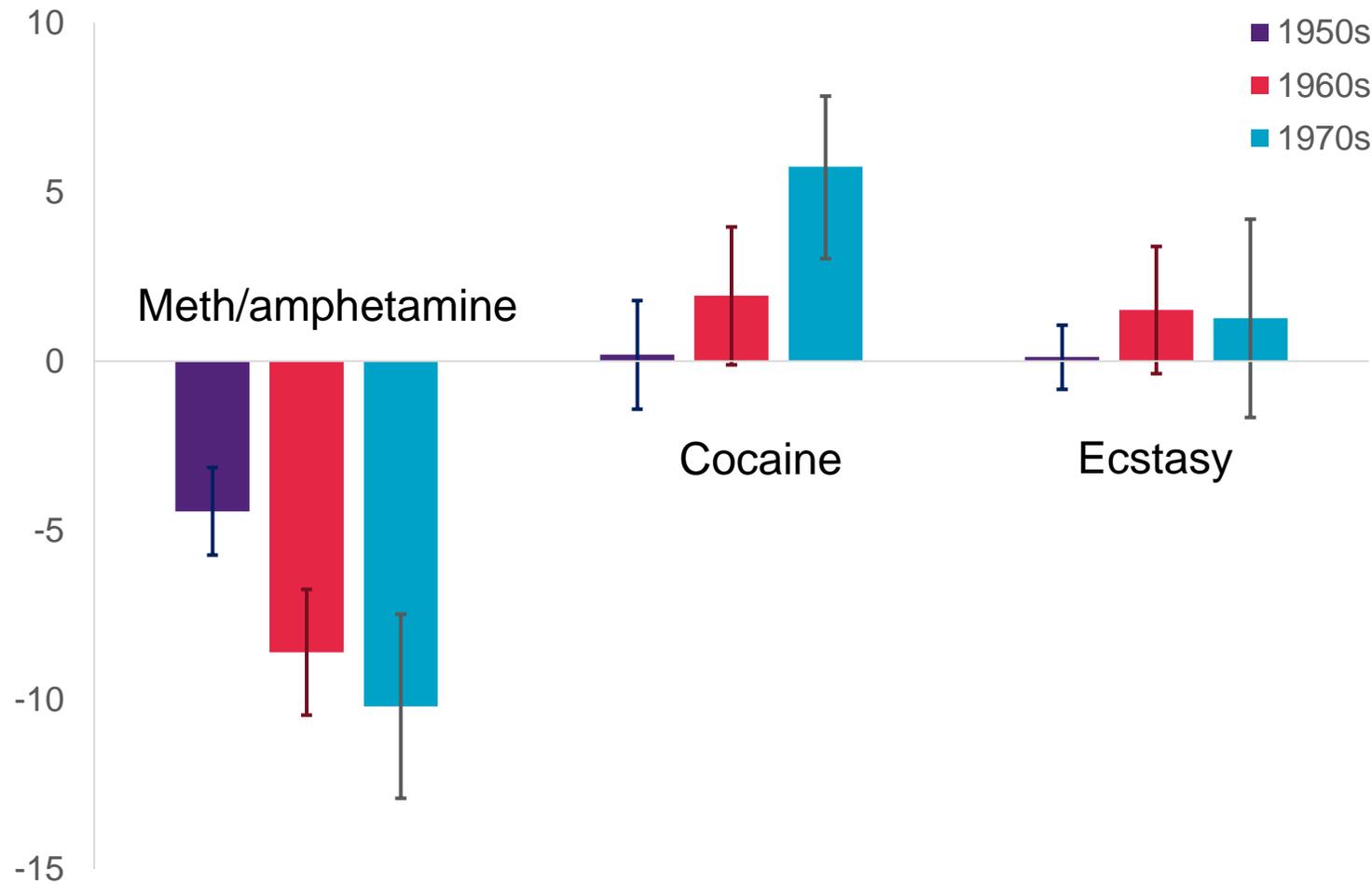
Ecstasy



Cocaine



Results: % change



Results: Summary

Cocaine and ecstasy use largely stable or increasing across all birth cohorts.
Lifetime meth/amphetamine use declined dramatically across all cohorts from 2001 to 2019.

Results: Summary

Cocaine and ecstasy use largely stable or increasing across all birth cohorts. Lifetime meth/amphetamine use declined dramatically across all cohorts from 2001 to 2019.

What could be driving this effect?

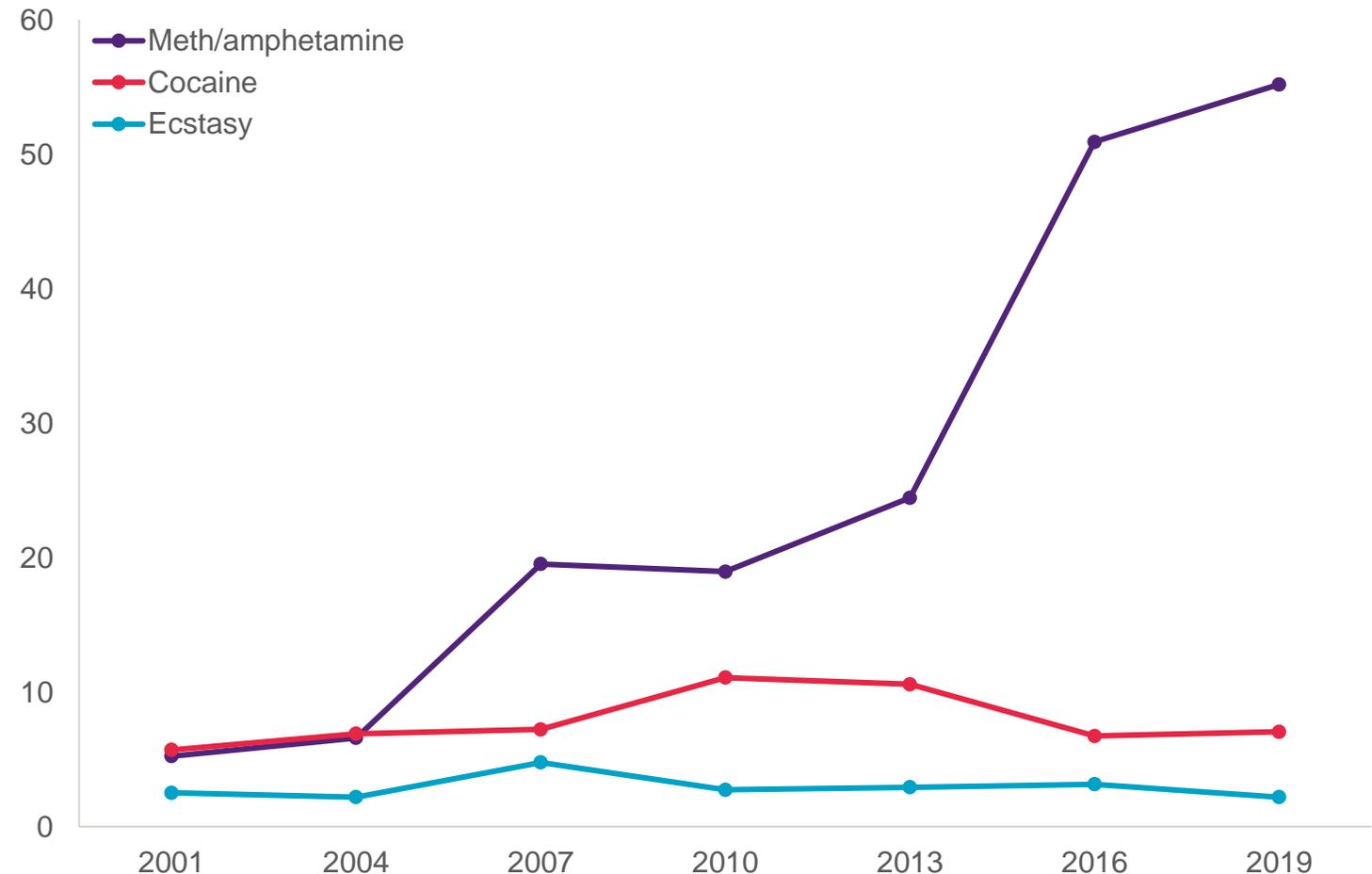
- Increasing media attention on methamphetamine use (the ice epidemic).
- Negative depictions of methamphetamine use.
- National Drugs Campaign.
 - Ice Destroys Lives.

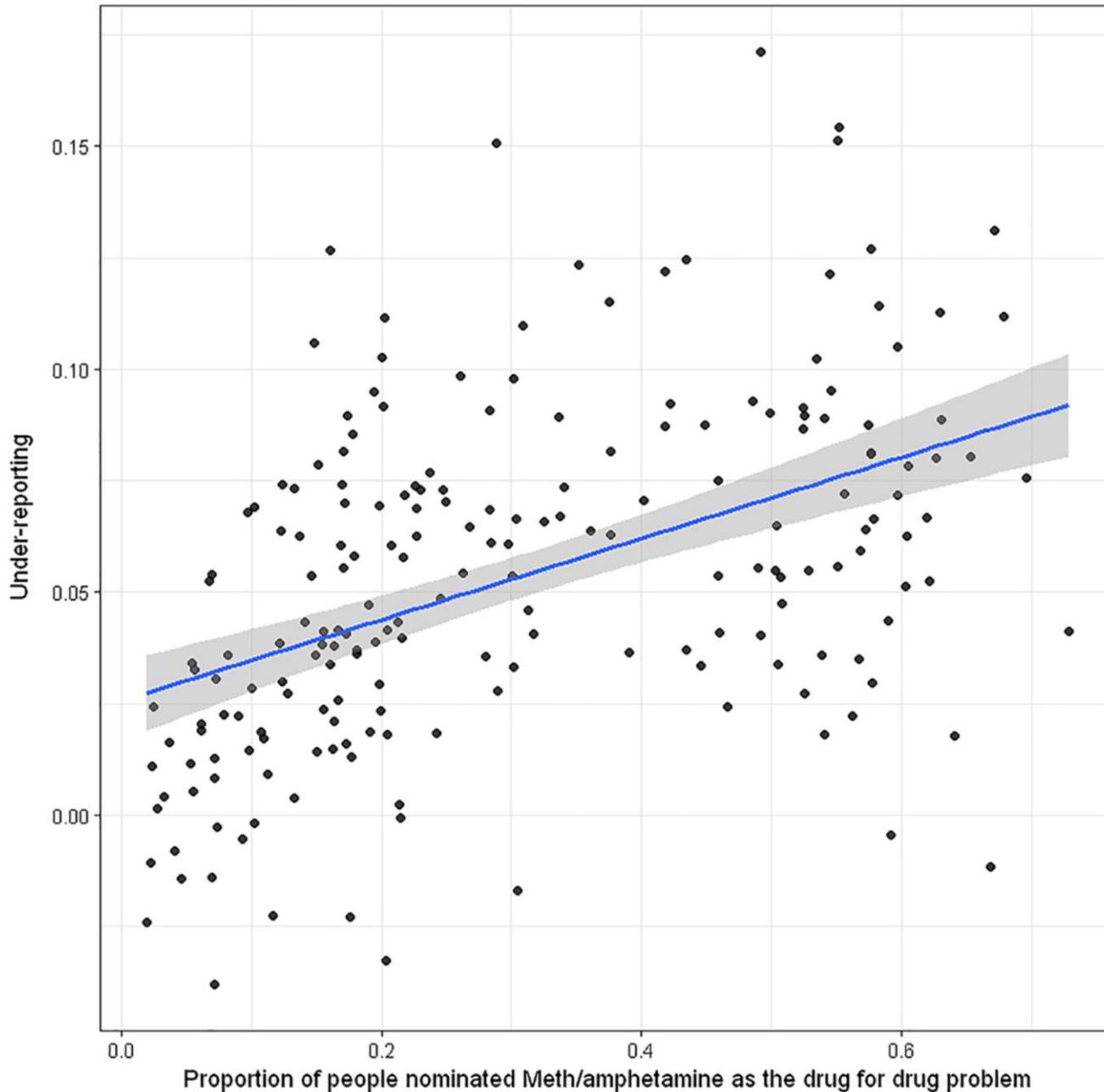
Results: Drug of concern

“When people talk about ‘a drug problem’, which is the first drug you think of?”

No significant change for cocaine and ecstasy.

Dramatic increase for meth/amphetamine.





Results: Perception

Significant association between proportion nominating meth/amphetamine as drug of concern and under-reporting, ($b = 0.09$. $SE = 0.01$, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusions

Strong evidence of under-reporting of meth/amphetamine use.

- Lifetime prevalence cannot decrease in a cohort.
- Prevalence of cocaine and ecstasy use stable or increased.

For the oldest cohort, lifetime prevalence of meth/amphetamine use likely much higher.

Level of under-reporting driven by negative perceptions.

- Under-reporting of cigarette smoking in Italy as social acceptability decreased.
- Similar trends for heroin and cocaine in the USA.

Limitations of the present work

- Self report nature of NDSHS may under-estimate prevalence rates.
- Excess mortality in people who use meth/amphetamines not estimated.



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

Thank you

Dr Daniel Stjepanović | Research Fellow
NCYSUR
d.stjepanovic@uq.edu.au

CRICOS code 00025B

