

Factors Associated With Adult Incarceration Among People With Opioid Use Disorder in New South Wales, Australia

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Background

- OUD drives high mortality/morbidity (overdose, HIV, HCV) and social harms like unemployment and justice involvement.
- Incarceration is common among people with substance use disorders and worsens health. The negative impacts of prison continue after release: high mortality rates, unemployment and lack of housing.
- Disadvantage, substance use, isolation and childhood adversity are theorised drivers of incarceration. Understanding these broader social and developmental determinants of incarceration may inform future intervention efforts.
- Few studies have examined these risk factors specifically in opioid-dependent adults.

Study Aim

To examine associations with time to first incarceration among people with OUD

Methods

Data source and sample:

- The Opioid Dependence Survey
- 297 individuals aged 18 years or over

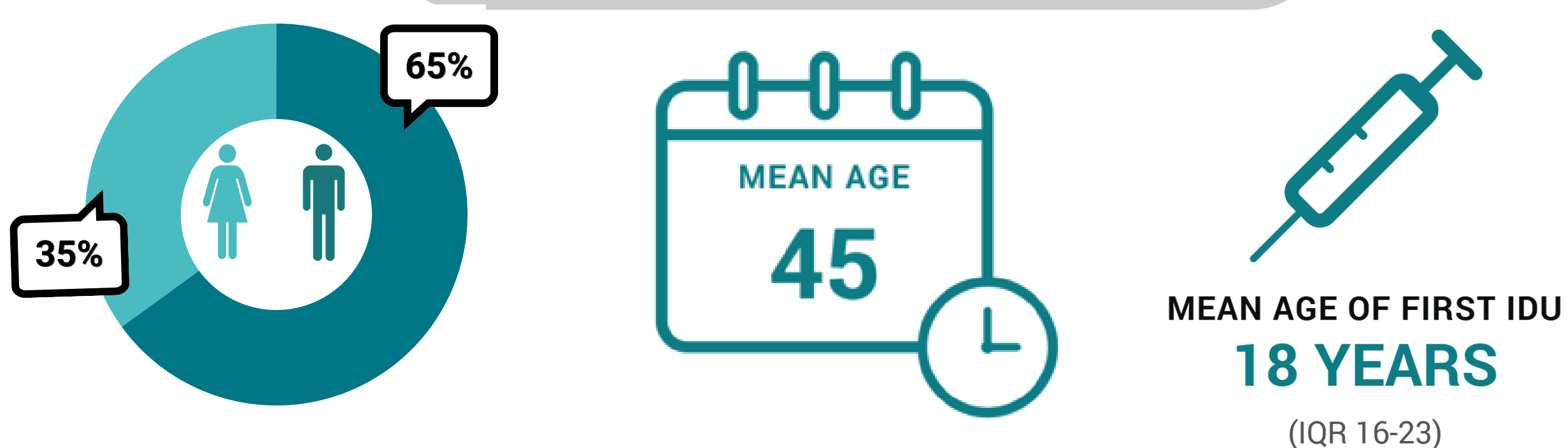
Measures

- **Outcome variable:** First adult incarceration
- **Covariates:** Age, gender, education, injecting drug use, adverse childhood experiences

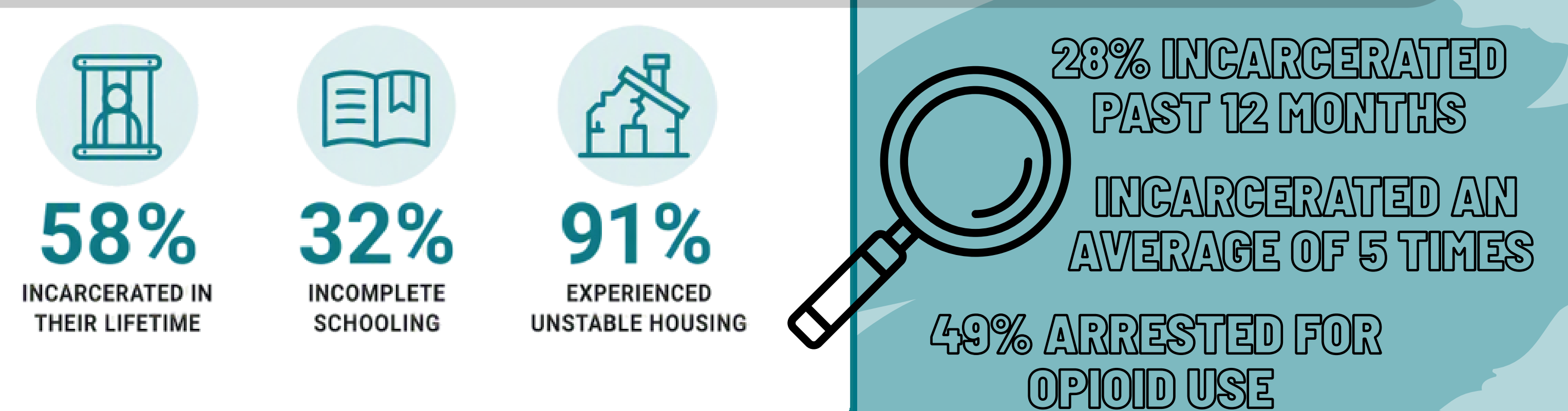
Analysis

- Univariate and multivariate discrete-time logistic regression models

Participant profile



Experience of incarceration



Factors associated with first adult incarceration

RISK FACTORS

INJECTING DRUG USE



Injecting drugs **tripled the odds** of being incarcerated in any given year (aOR 3.65; 95%CI 1.12,11.91)

HOUSEHOLD SUBSTANCE USE DURING CHILDHOOD



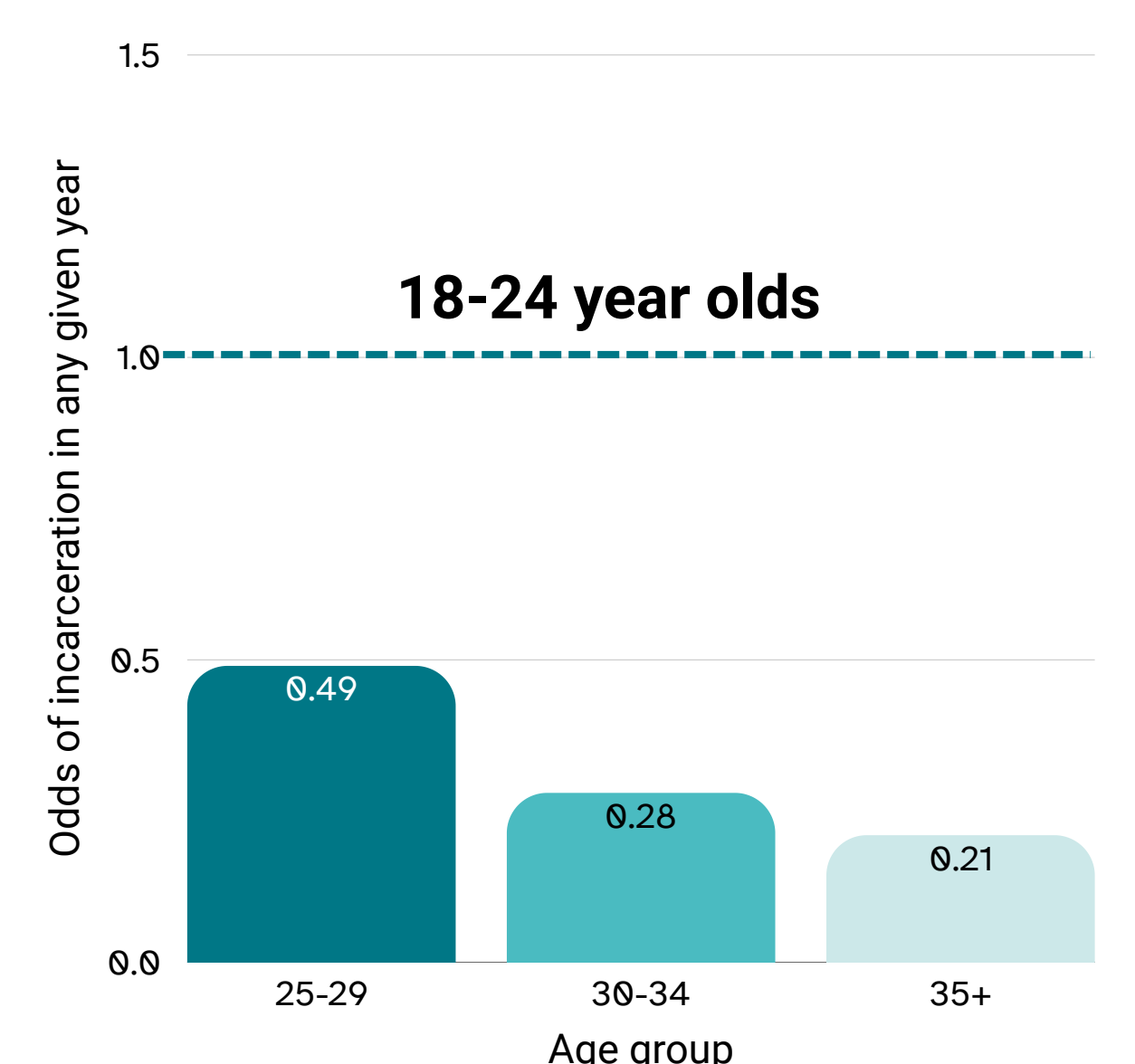
A household member using psychoactive substances during childhood **doubled the odds** of being incarcerated in any given year (aOR 2.07; 95% CI 1.36, 3.16)

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

COMPLETING YEAR 10



Completing education past year 10 **halved the odds** of being incarcerated in any given year (aOR 0.56; 95% CI 0.37–0.86)



Younger adults (**18-24 years**) were at **highest risk** of incarceration

Conclusion and implications

- Social disadvantage, early-life adversity and injecting patterns may drive earlier entry into carceral systems for people with opioid dependence
- Young adults carry the highest risk of first-time incarceration - a critical window for prevention
- Re-engagement with education, early intervention, and family support could meaningfully reduce incarceration risk
- Effective interventions must be comprehensive - addressing more than substance use
- Diversion schemes that direct people into treatment, not custody, should be prioritised to minimise the harms of incarceration.

