SACENDU

SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY EPIDEMIOLOGY NETWORK ON DRUG USE

Treatment Demand Data • Service Quality Measures (SQM)
• Community-Based Harm Reduction Services

60TH SYMPOSIUM

KWAZULU-NATAL

TREATMENT DATA

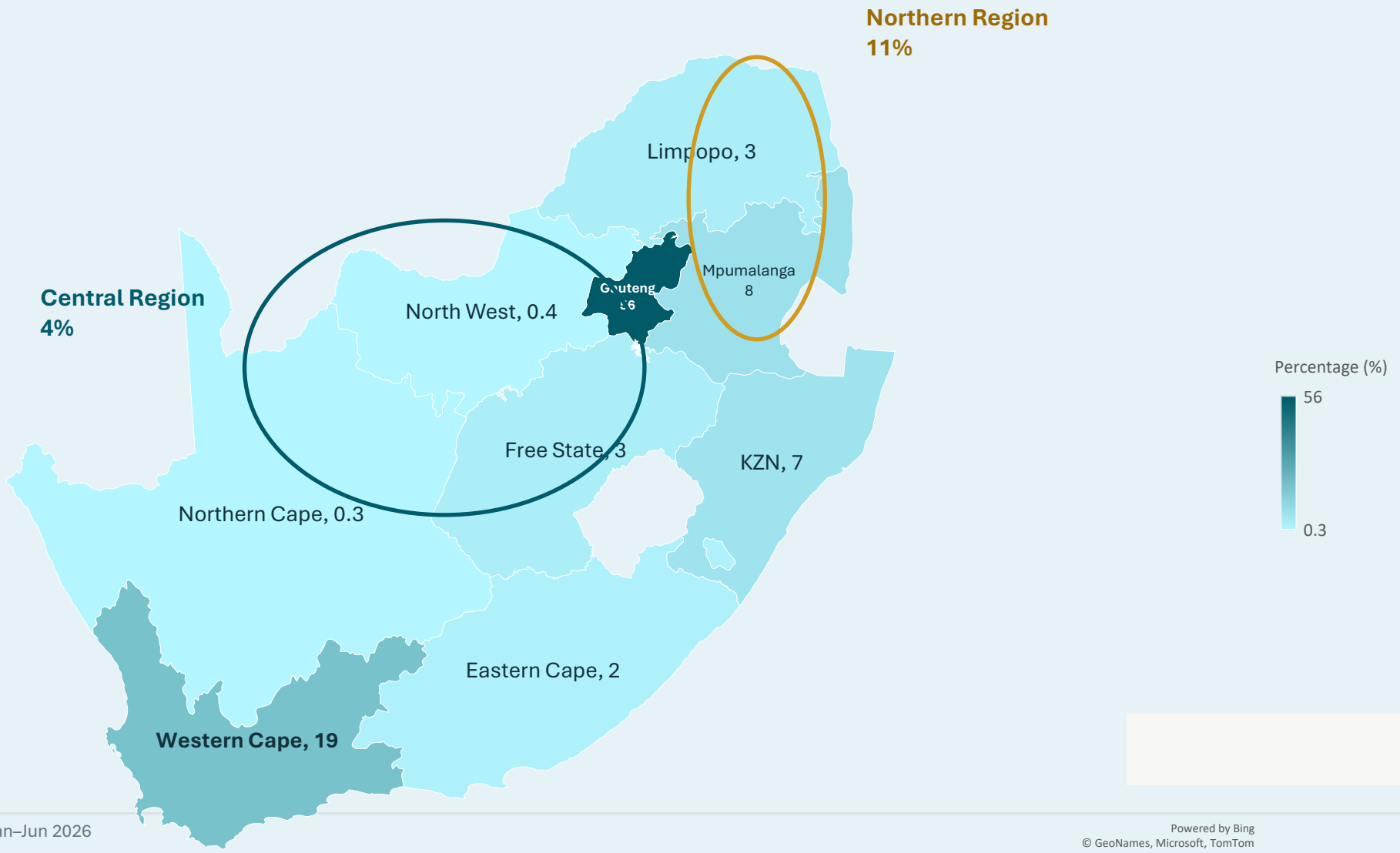
CELEBRATING OUR 60TH SACENDU SYMPOSIUM

MS NANCY HORNSBY & MS JODILEE ERASMUS

Phase 60 | Jan - Jun 2026

saMRC advancinglife

KwaZulu-Natal represents 7% of the national total



Powered by Bing
© GeoNames, Microsoft, TomTom

Treatment numbers rose to 671 in Jan–Jun 2026

OVERALL RELATIVE CHANGE

−5.4%

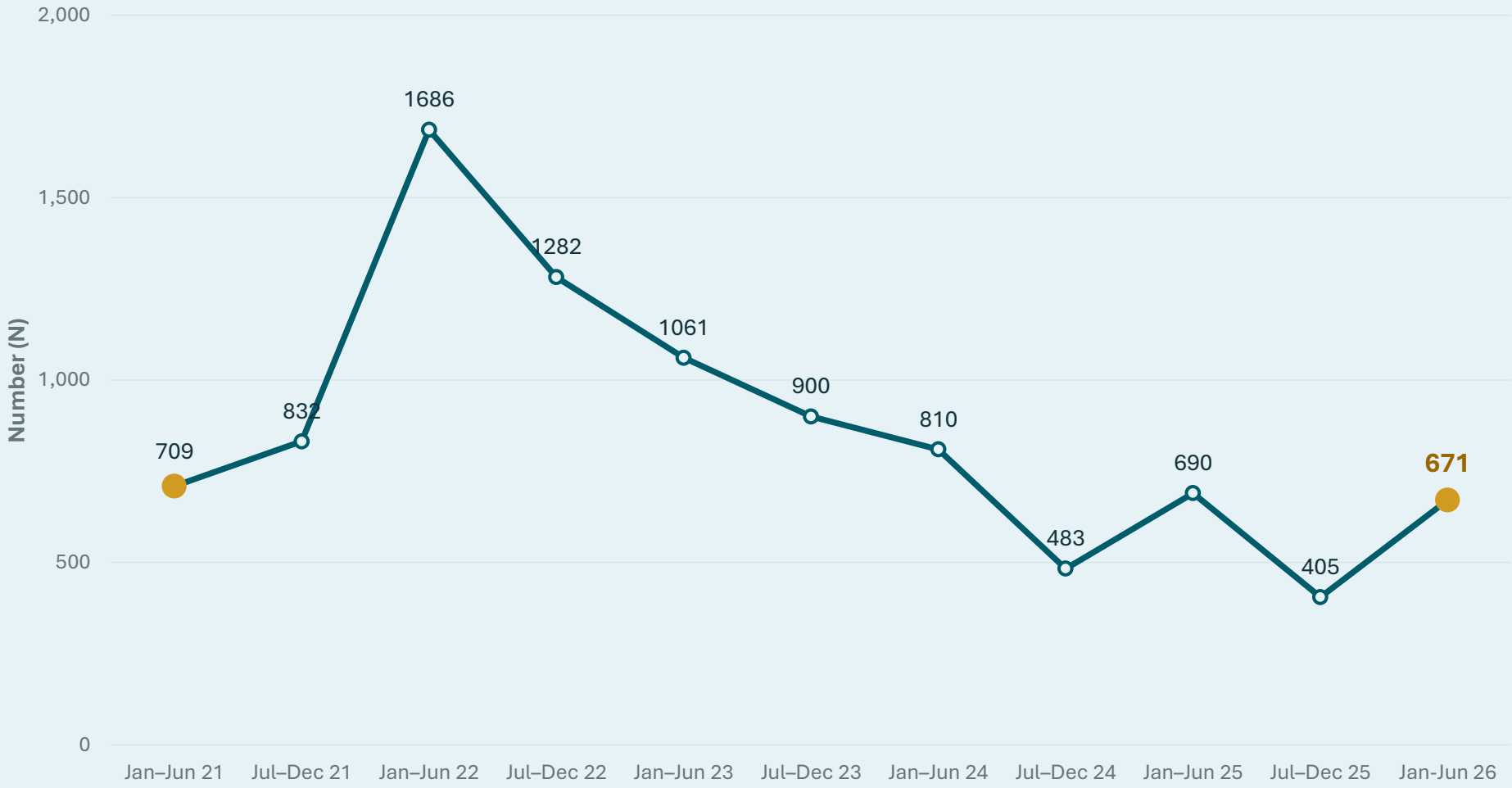
38 fewer service users

709 in Jan–Jun 2021
671 in Jan–Jun 2026

LAST 2 PERIODS

+65.7%

Jul–Dec 2025 to Jan–Jun 2026



Men comprise 84% of treatment admissions

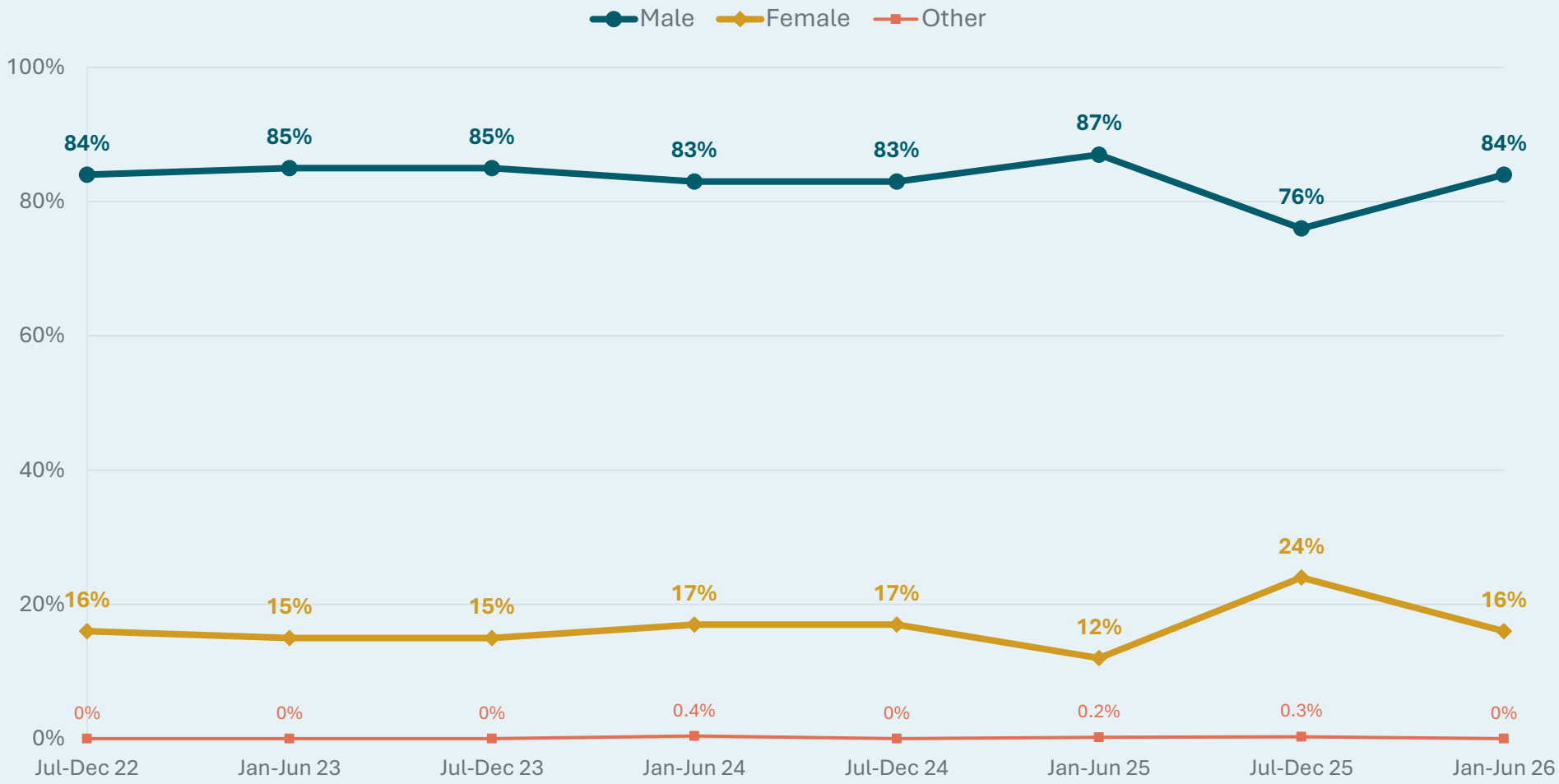
84% (CI: 81.1-86.6)

male service users

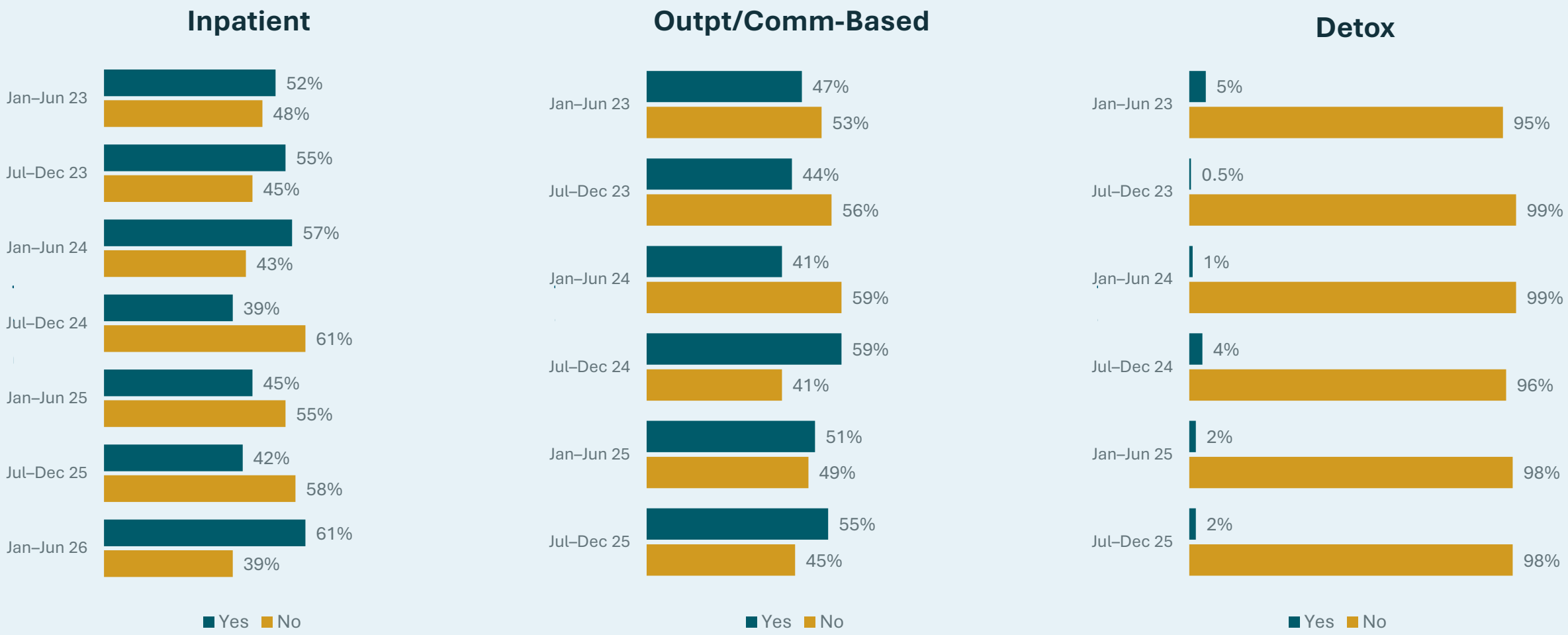
16% (CI: 13.4-18.9)

female service users

Wald's z = 23.99
p < 0.001
CI: 0.81–0.87



Inpatient treatment rose to 61% in Jan–Jun 2026



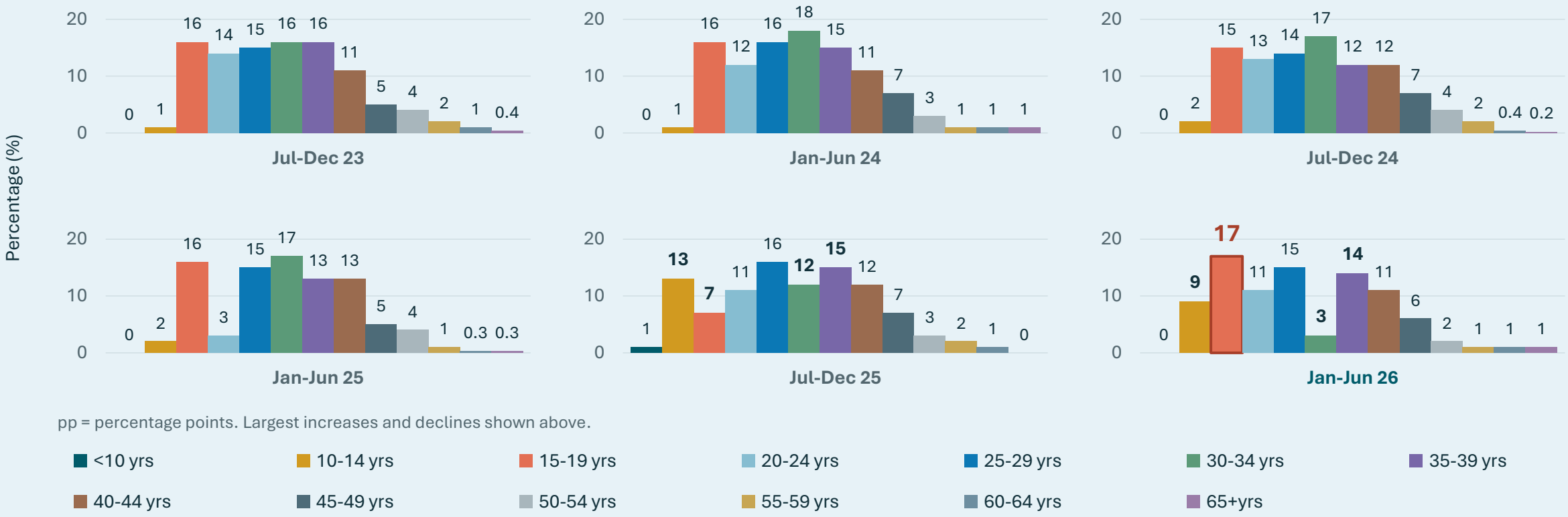
15–19 yrs lead at 17% in Jan–Jun 2026

Change from Jul–Dec 2025 to Jan–Jun 2026

Age group	Change	Share (%)
15–19 years	+10 pp	7 → 17
30–34 years	−9 pp	12 → 3
10–14 years	−4 pp	13 → 9

pp change from Jul-Dec 2025 to Jan-Jun 2026

Based on rounded percentages from the Age Distribution slide.



pp = percentage points. Largest increases and declines shown above.

Grade 8–12 remains the highest attained education level

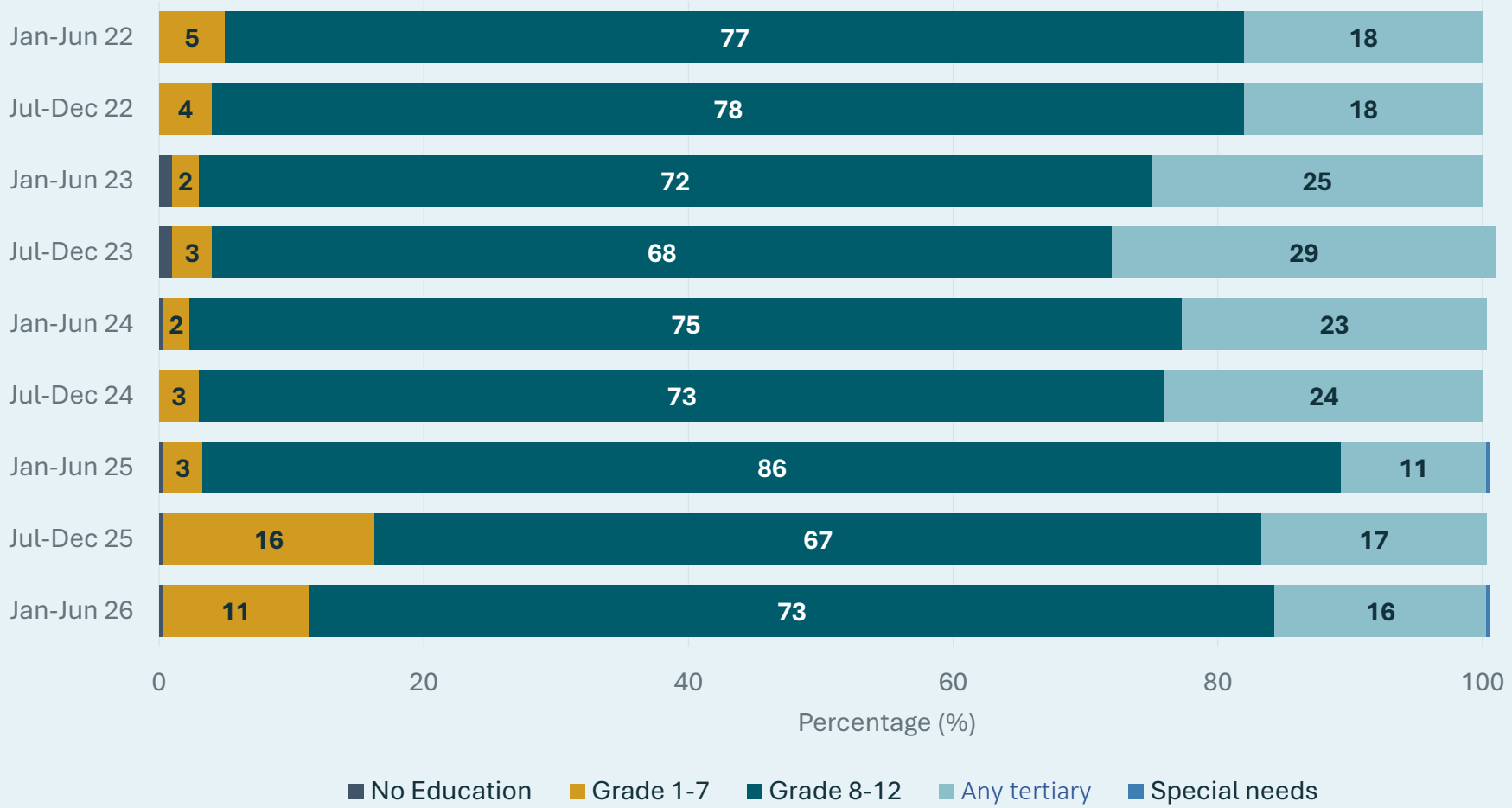
73%

CI: 69.2-76.0

Grade 8–12

KEY TAKEAWAY

Grade 8–12 accounts for 67–86% of service users in every period shown.



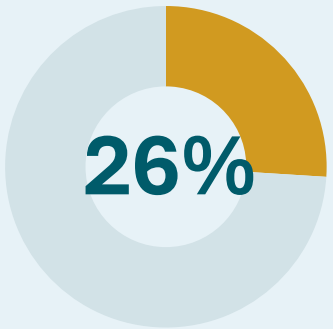
Unemployed 36%, employed 33%

36%

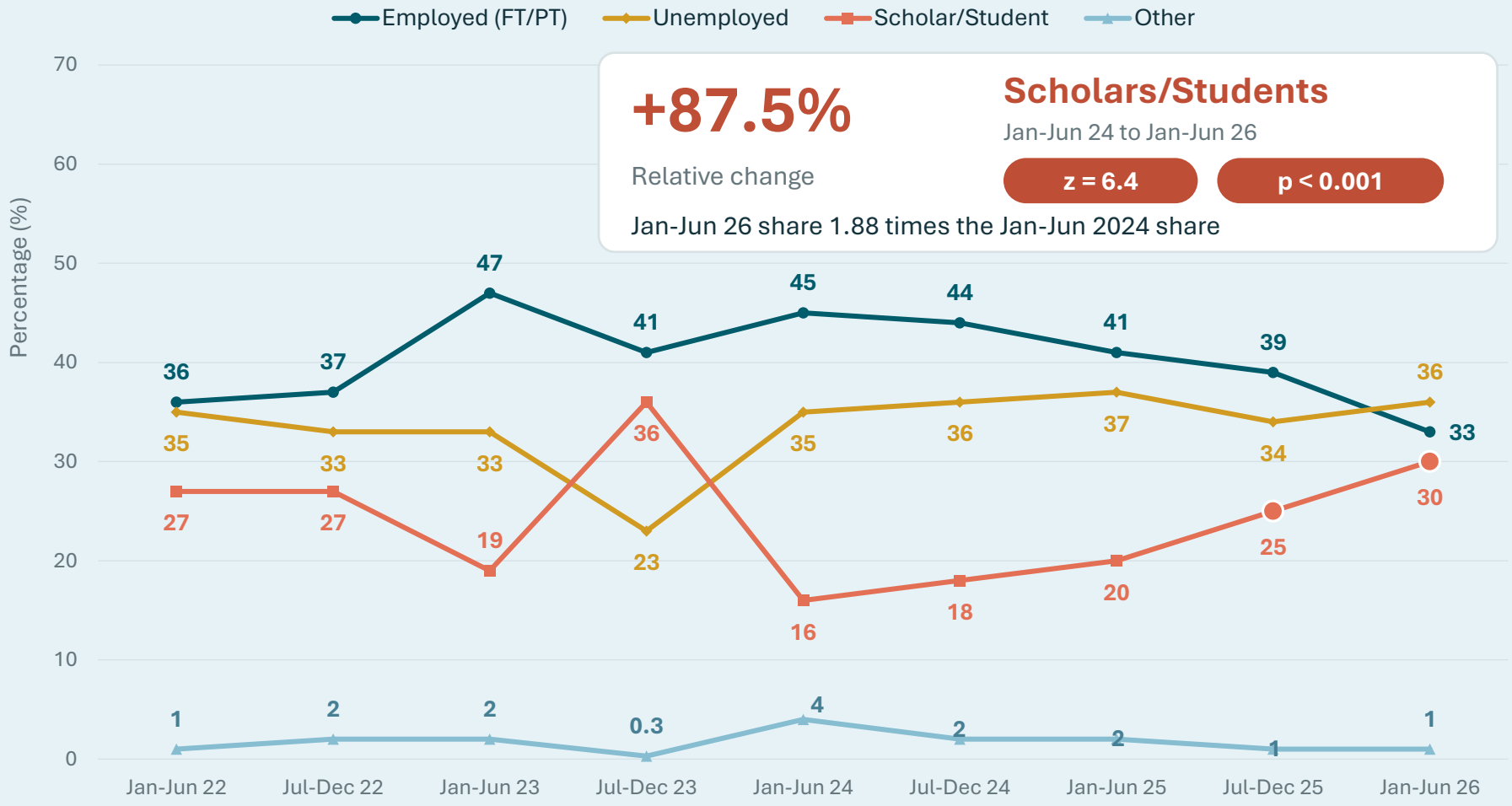
CI: 32.4–39.6

unemployed

Difference between employed and unemployed not significant, Wald z=1.08, p = 0.28



Unemployed >6 months
Jan–Jun 2026



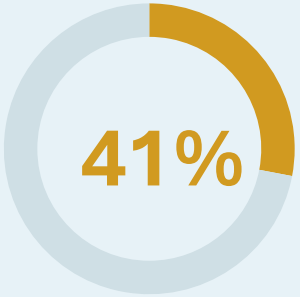
Prior HIV testing dropped to 59% in Jan–Jun 26

Previously tested for HIV

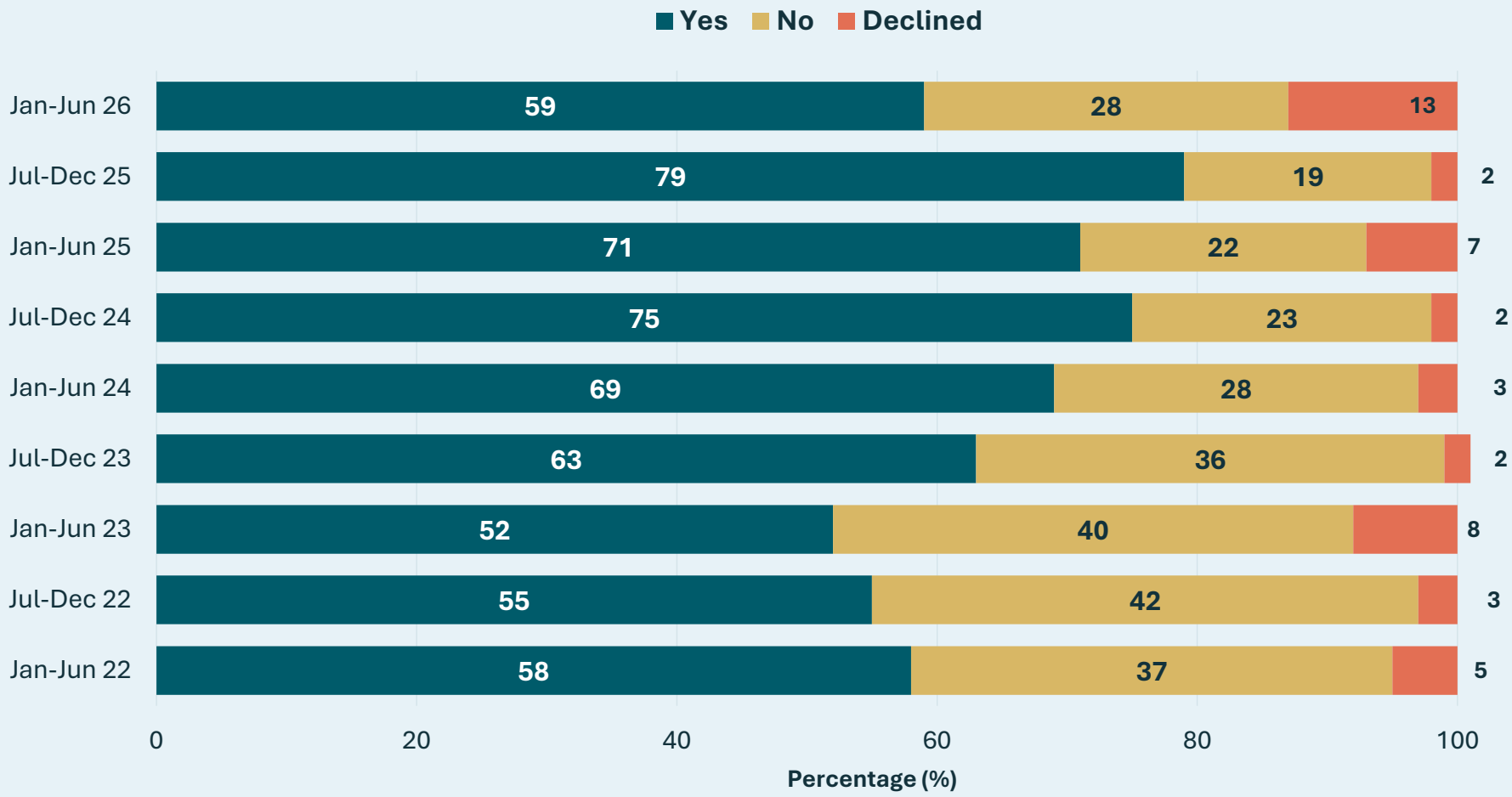


CI: 55.5-63.0

Tested within the past 12 months



CI: 37.7-45.2



40% of service users indicate willingness for HIV testing

40%
CI: 36.5–44.0

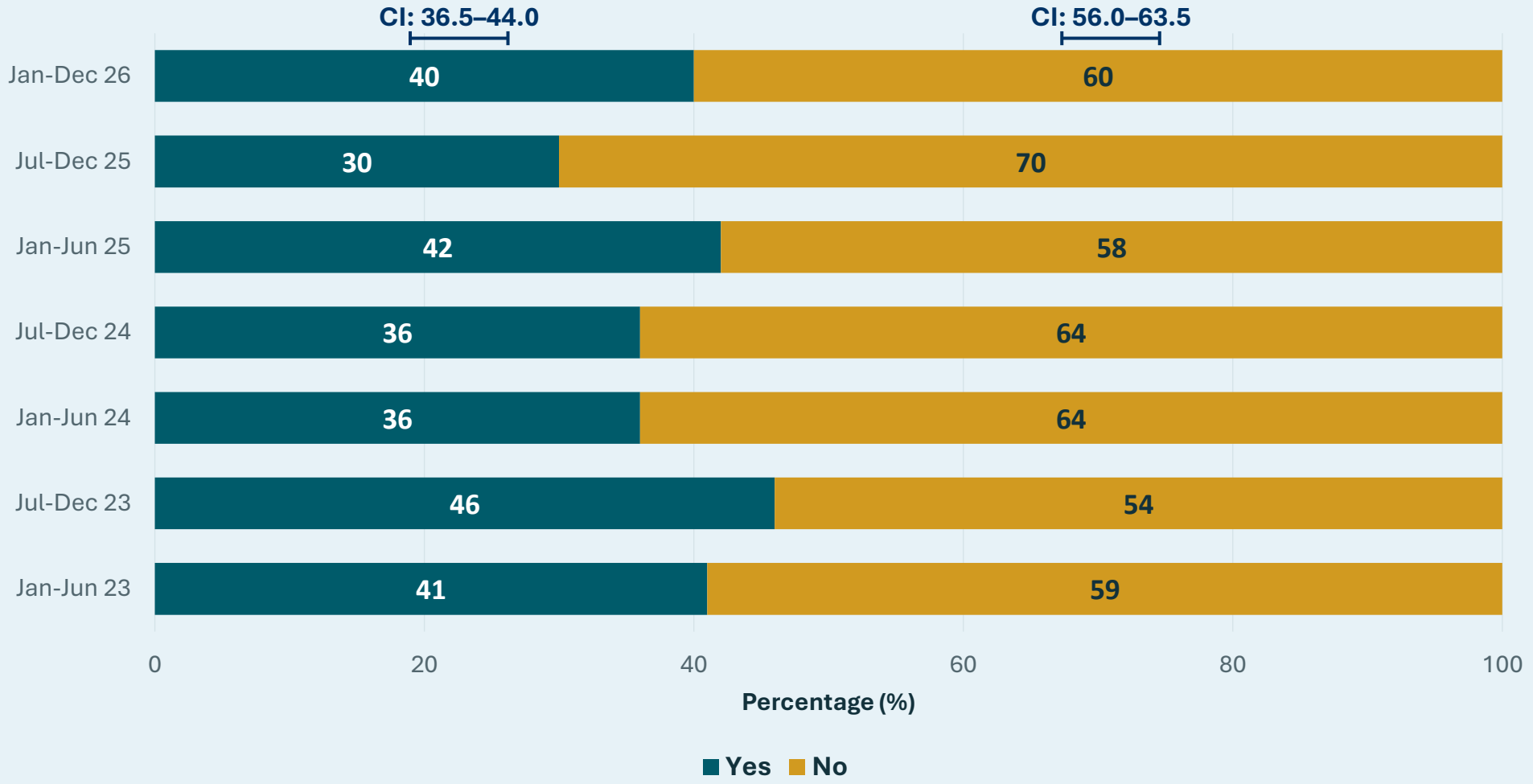
Mean referral rate across 7 periods

Unweighted average

48% peak in Jun–Dec 22
30% latest, Jul–Dec 25

–18 pp

First to last period
48% to 30%



91% of service users have a permanent abode

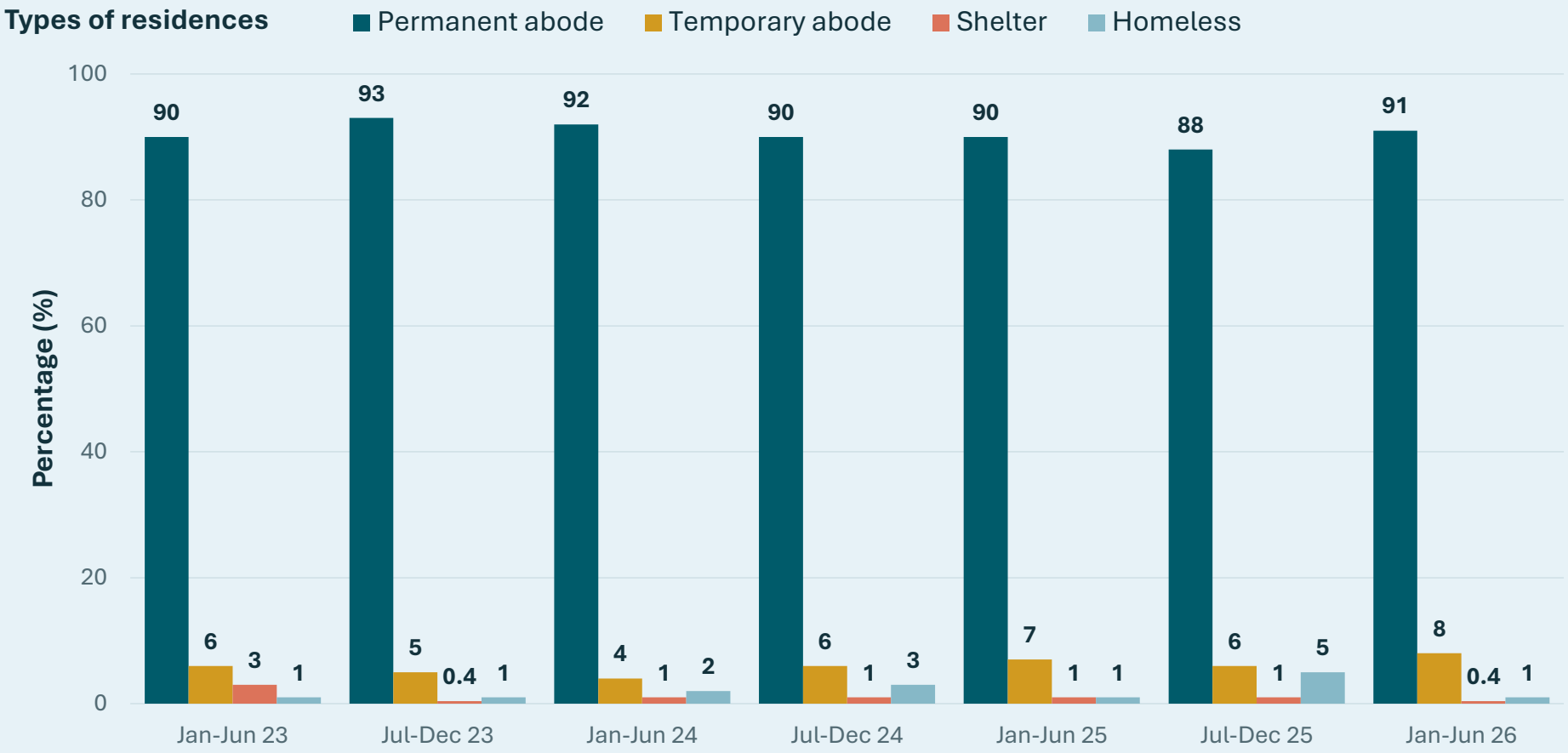
OVERALL TRENDS

88–93%
Permanent abode remains dominant

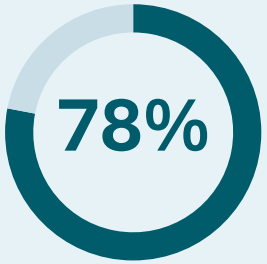
0.4–3%
Shelter consistently ranks lowest

8%
Temporary abode at its highest, latest period

1–5%
Homeless throughout the reported periods



Service users' living arrangements



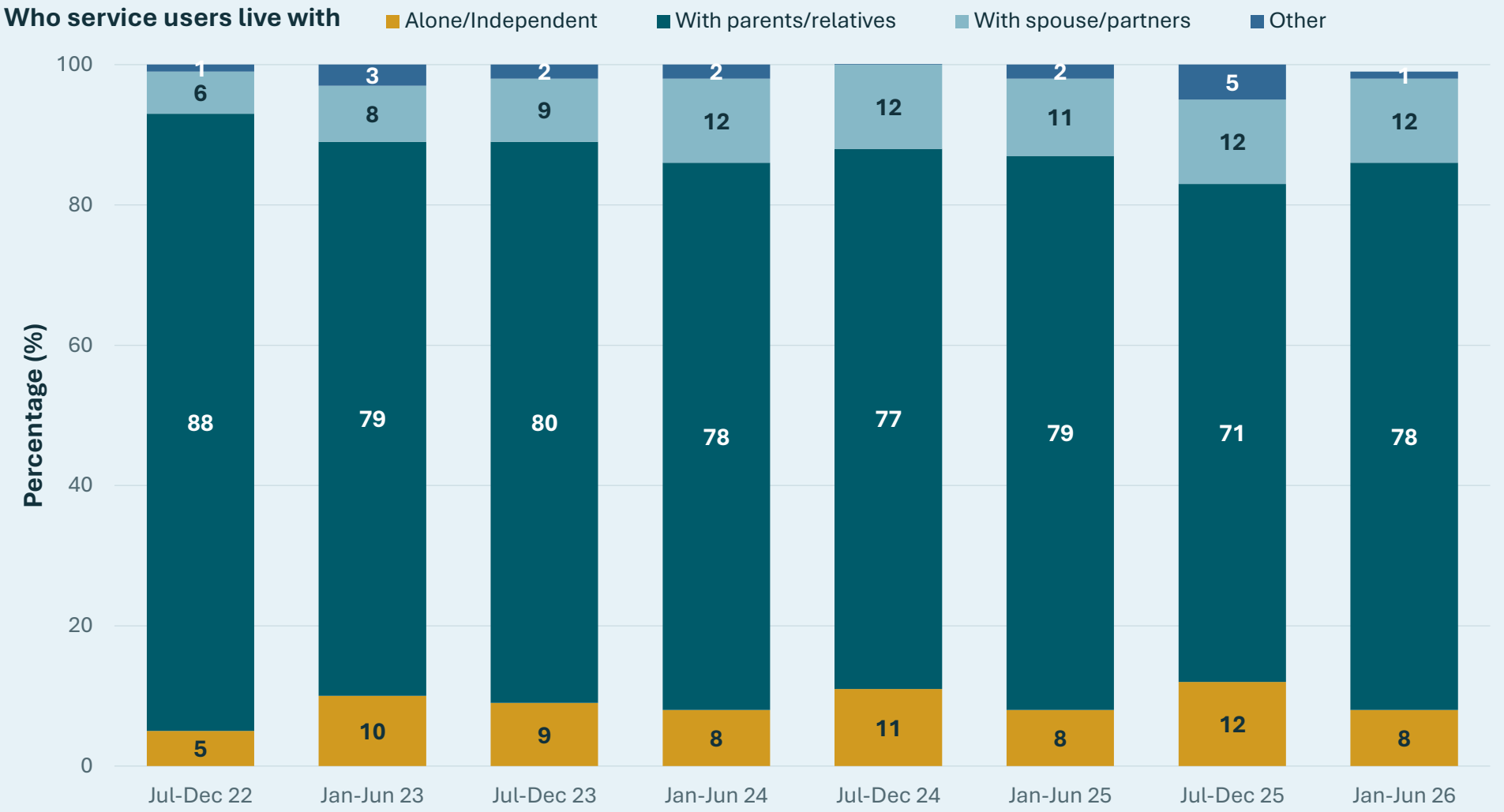
Service users live with parents or relatives

Jan–Jun 2026

OVERALL TRENDS

Jul–Dec 2022 to Jan–Jun 2026
Percentage points (pp)

–10	Parents / relatives
+3	Alone / independent
+6	Spouse / partner
0	Other



01

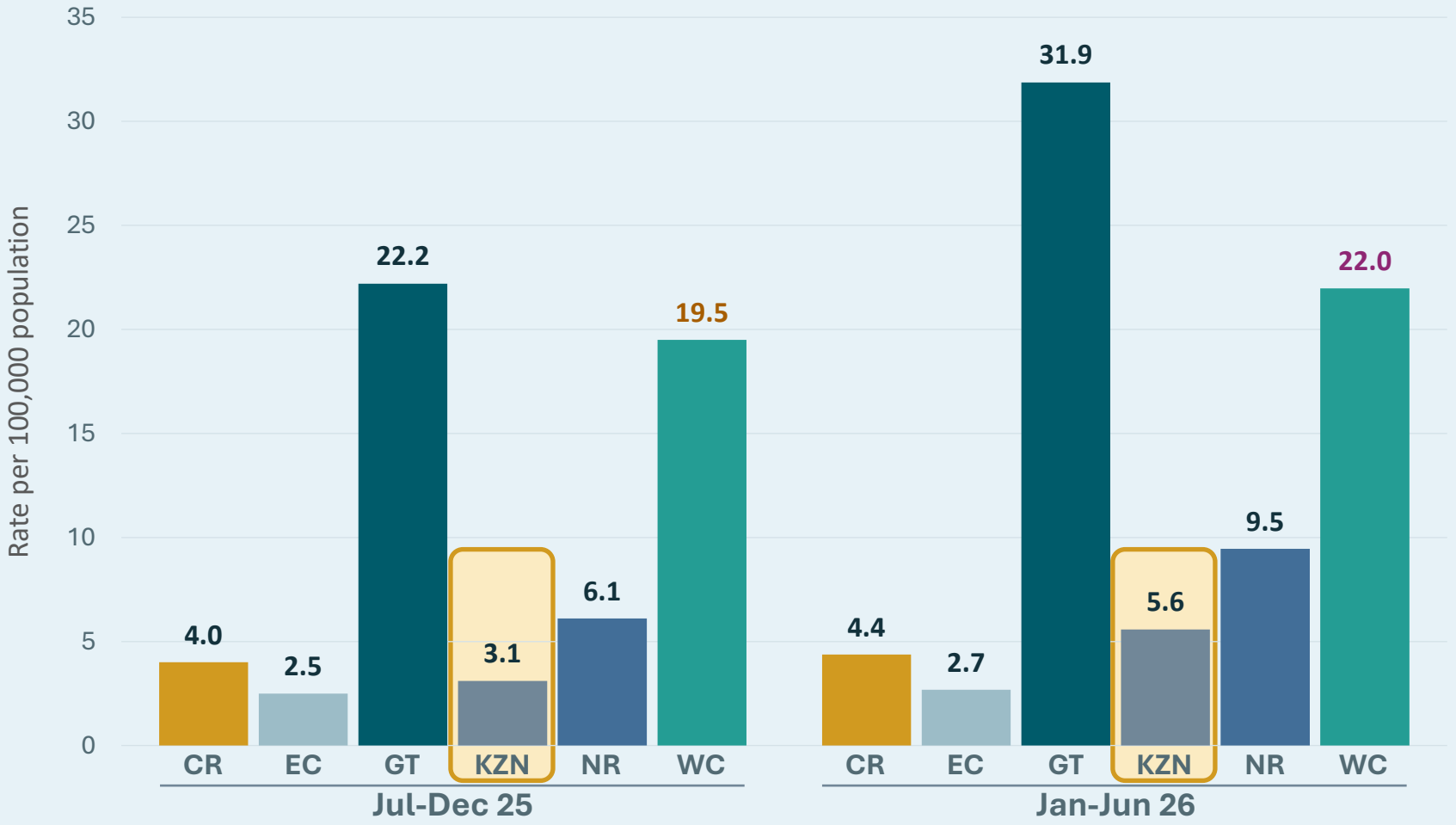
SECTION

Population-adjusted estimates

A comparable view of treatment demand across provinces

POPULATION-ADJUSTED VIEW

KZN treatment rate rose from 3.1 to 5.6 per 100,000



KZN ADMISSIONS

Jan–Jun 26 vs Jul–Dec 25

1.66

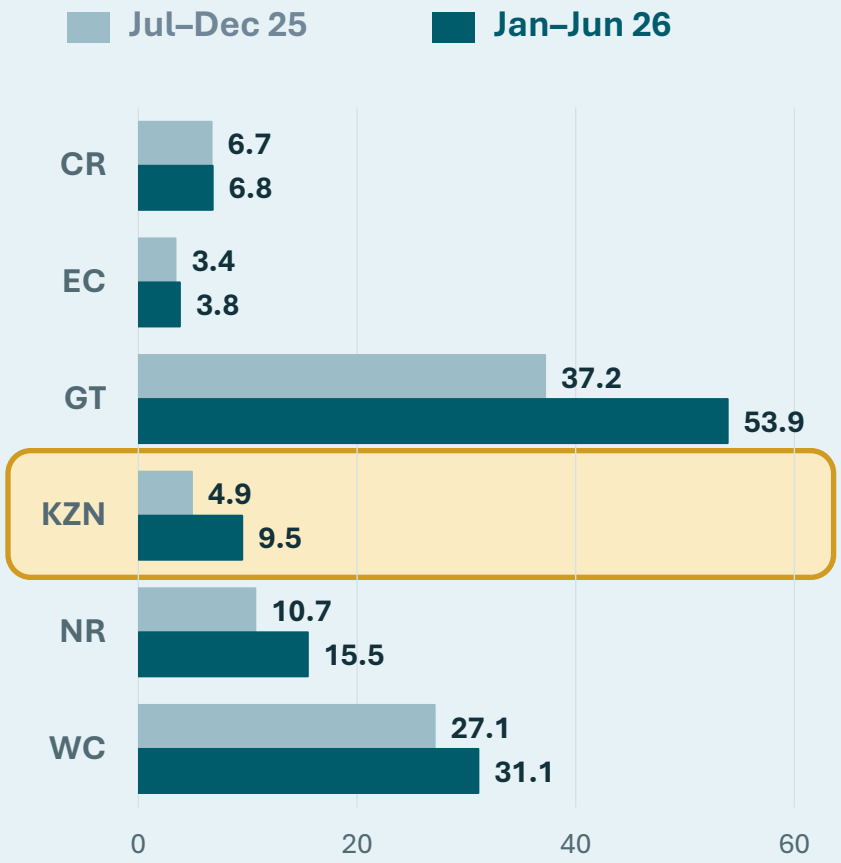
Rate ratio (RR)

CI: 1.46-1.87

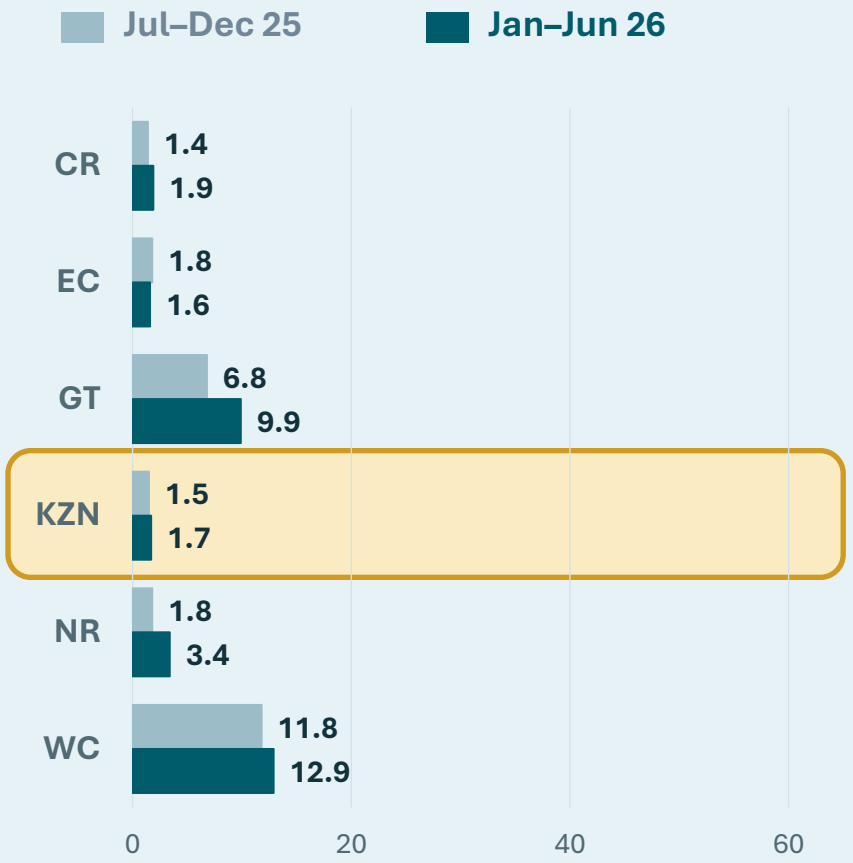
Admissions higher in Jan–Jun 26 vs Jul-Dec 25

Adjusted rates higher for men in every region

Male



Female



Both charts use the same scale for direct comparison

Rate per 100,000 population

Jan-Jun 26 vs Jul-Dec 25:

Males

RR = 1.83

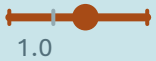
CI: 1.59-2.10



Females

RR = 1.11

CI: 0.85-1.32



Jan-Jun 26: Males vs Females

RR = 5.25

CI: 4.27-6.46



02

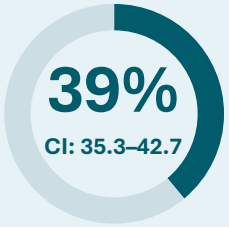
SECTION

Substances of use

Patterns of primary and secondary substance use

Alcohol leads KZN primary substance use

JAN–JUN 2026



Alcohol

Leading primary substance
Dagga second at 30%

Jan–Jun 23 vs Jan–Jun 26
pp = percentage points

Alcohol **+4 pp**

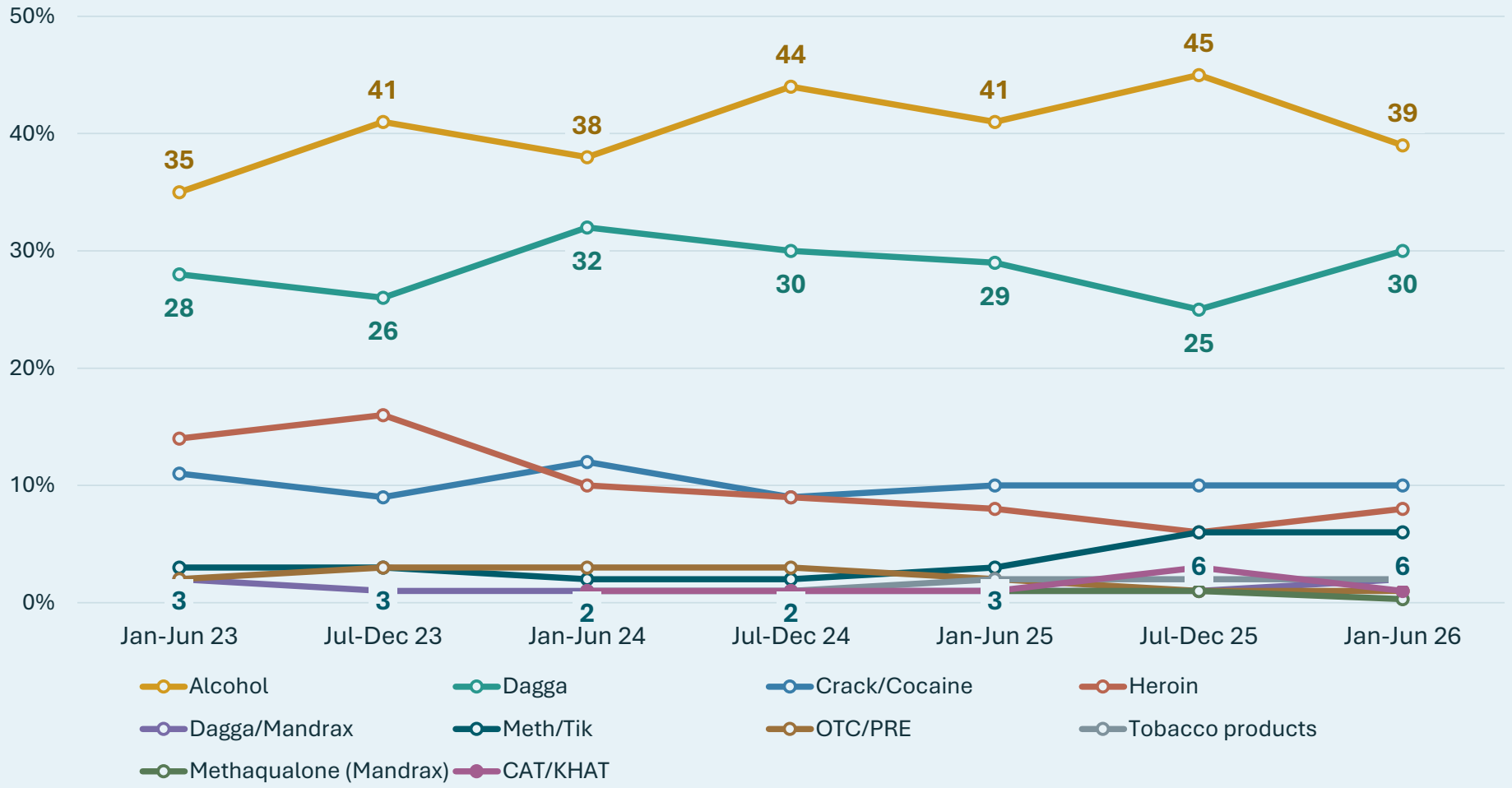
2023 35%
2026 39%

Dagga **+2 pp**

2023 28%
2026 30%

Heroin **−6 pp**

2023 14%
2026 8%



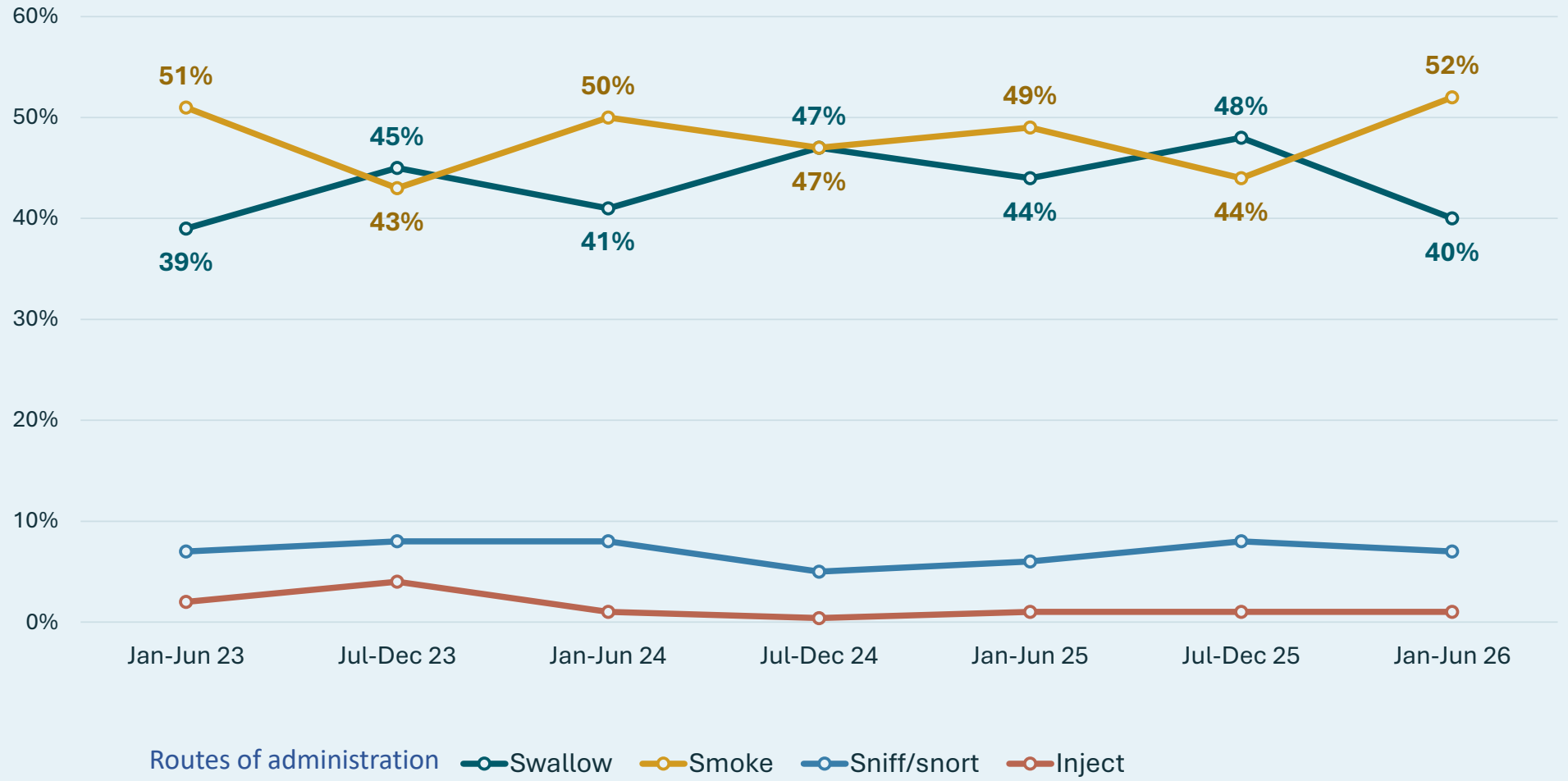
Smoking and swallowing dominate routes

52%

CI: 48.2–55.7

Smoking is the main route of administration

Swallowing is second at 40%
(CI: 36.2–43.6)



Daily use declined as less-frequent use increased

54%

(CI: 50.6–58.1)

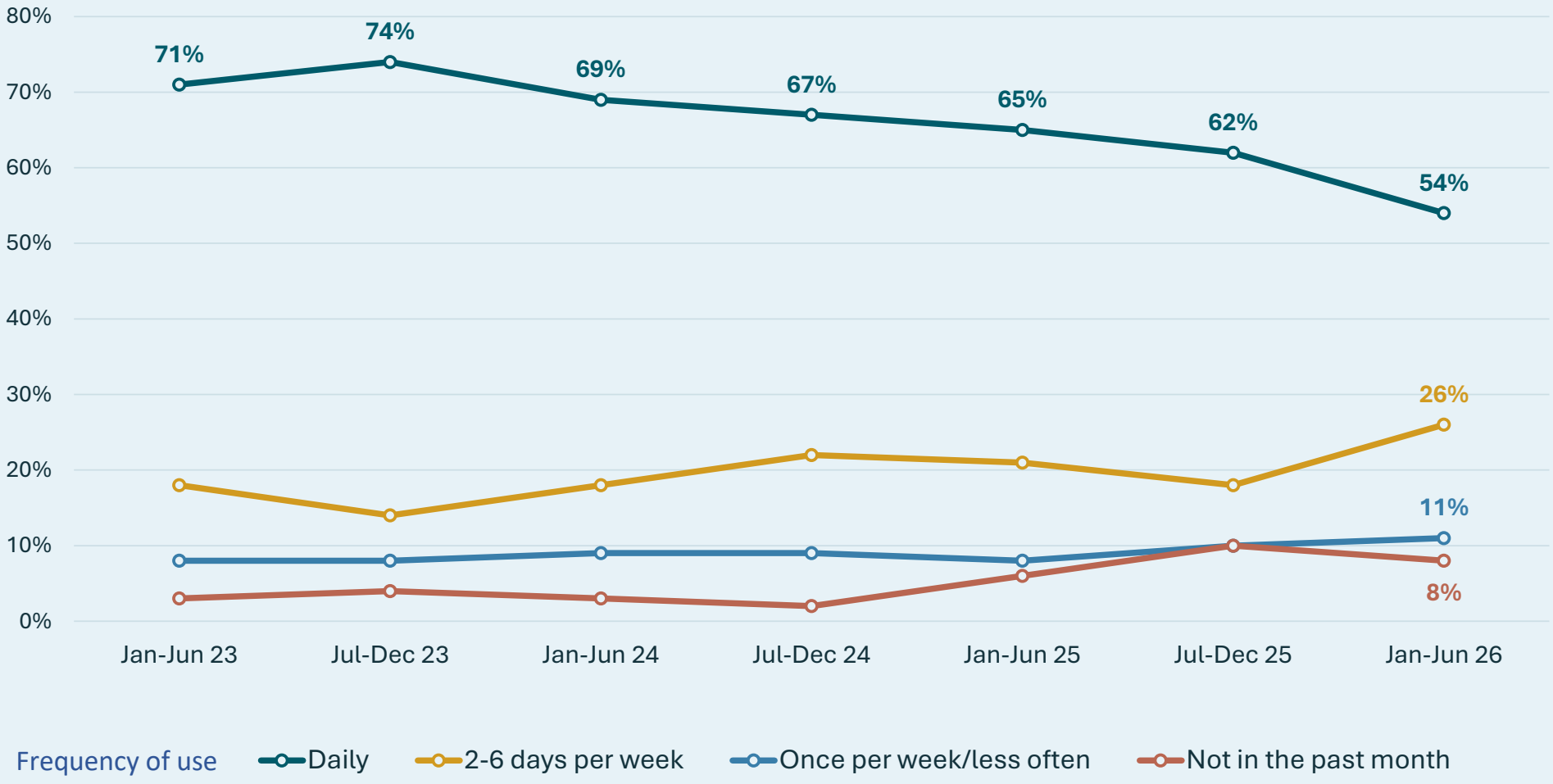
daily use
Jan–Jun 2026

−17 pp

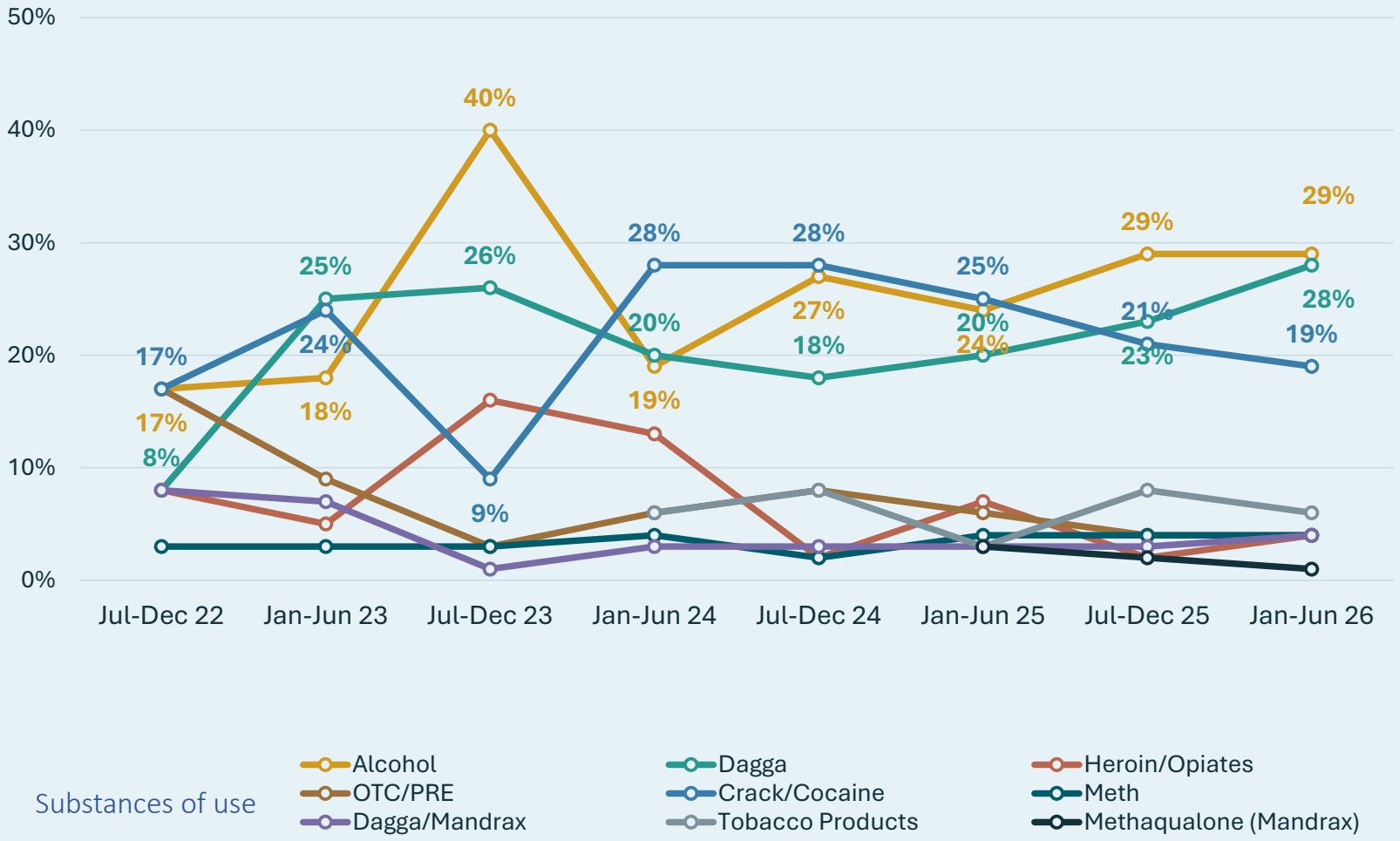
Across the entire period

Jan–Jun 2023 to Jan–Jun 2026

Decline accelerated: −8pp in the latest period



Alcohol the leading secondary substance



Polysubstance use:
43% (CI: 40.2–47.7)

Leading substances

Jan–Jun 2026

29% Alcohol
28% Dagga
19% Crack/Cocaine

Full-period change

Jul–Dec 2022 to Jan–Jun 2026

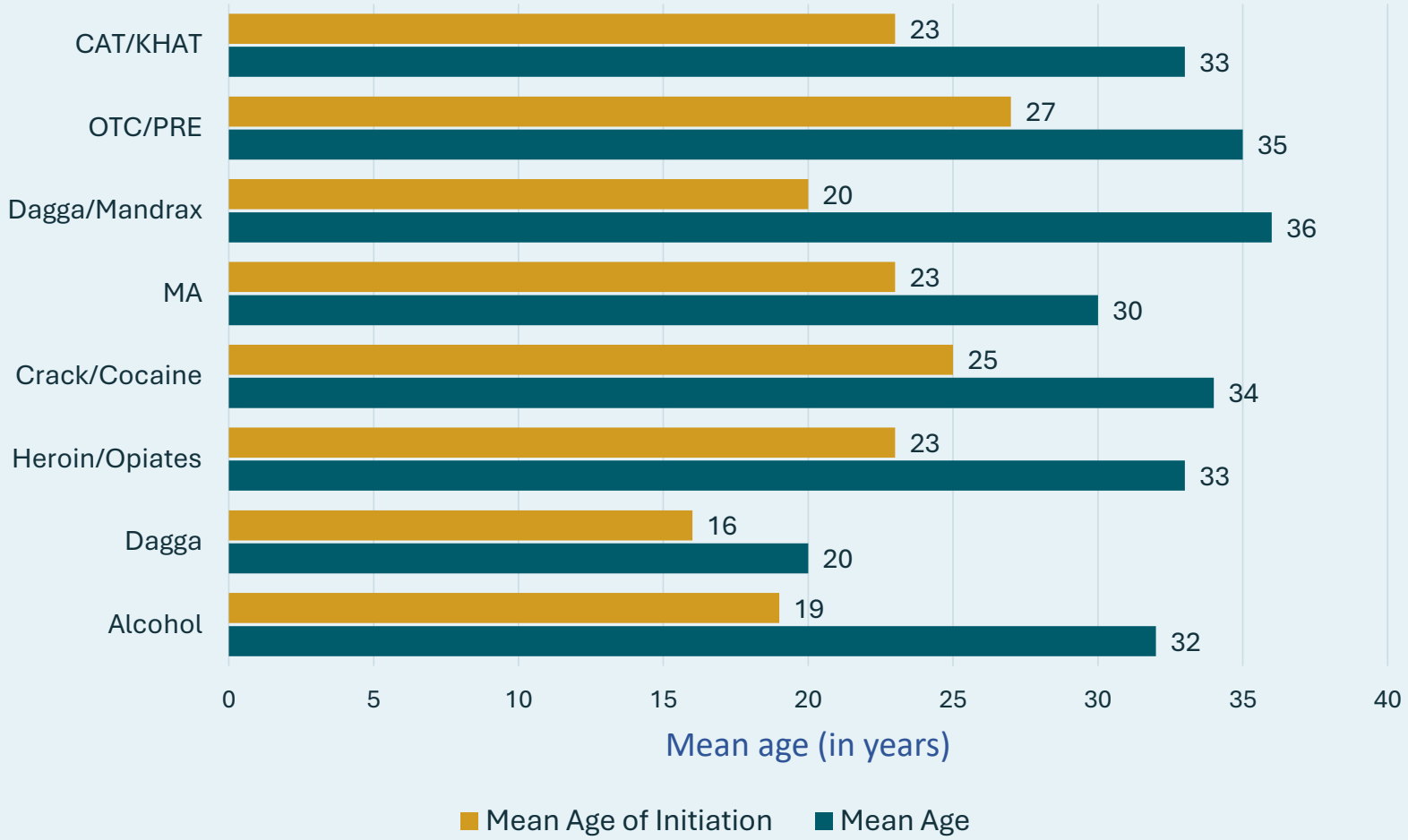
Dagga: +20 pp

Alcohol: +12 pp

Crack/Cocaine: +2 pp

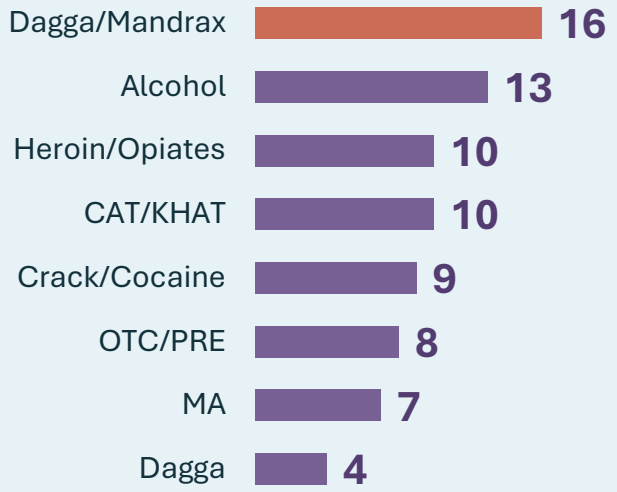
OTC/PRE: −13 pp

Dagga use starts earliest, at a mean age of 16



Treatment delay

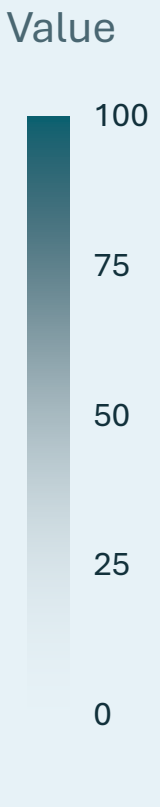
Difference in years



Difference between mean age and mean age of initiation; not a direct measure of time to first treatment.

Gender distribution by primary substance

Substance	Male (%)	Female (%)	Other (%)
Alcohol	82	18	0
Dagga	86	14	0
Crack/Cocaine	94	6	0
Heroin	84	16	0
Tik	79	21	0
Dagga/Mx	92	8	0
OTC/PRE	33	67	0
CAT/KHAT	100	0	0



Males are the majority for every substance except OTC/PRE (Females: 67%, CI: 34.8-89.6)

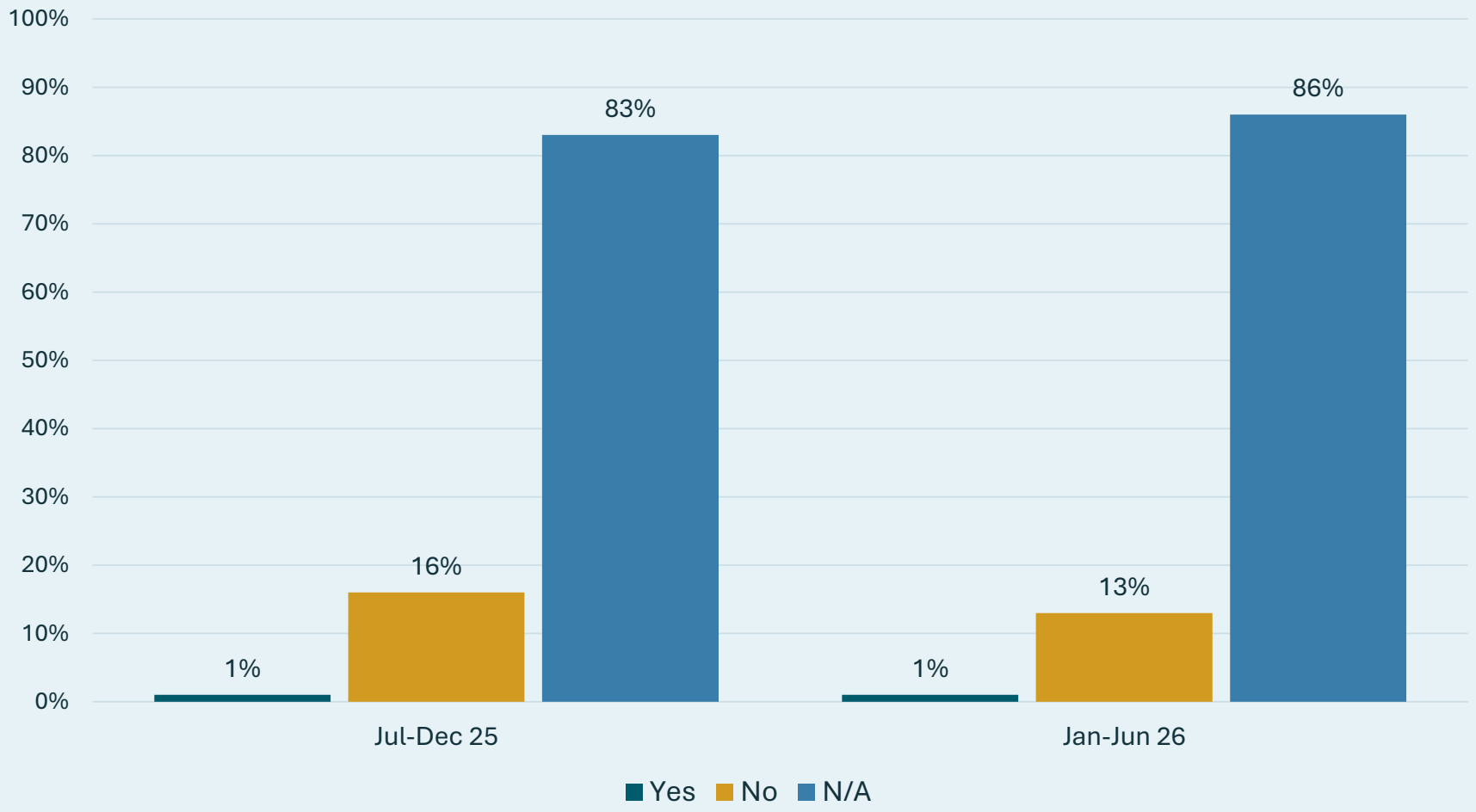
1% reported substance use during pregnancy

Substances used

Alcohol 3

Cannabis 2

Numbers (n) reported



03

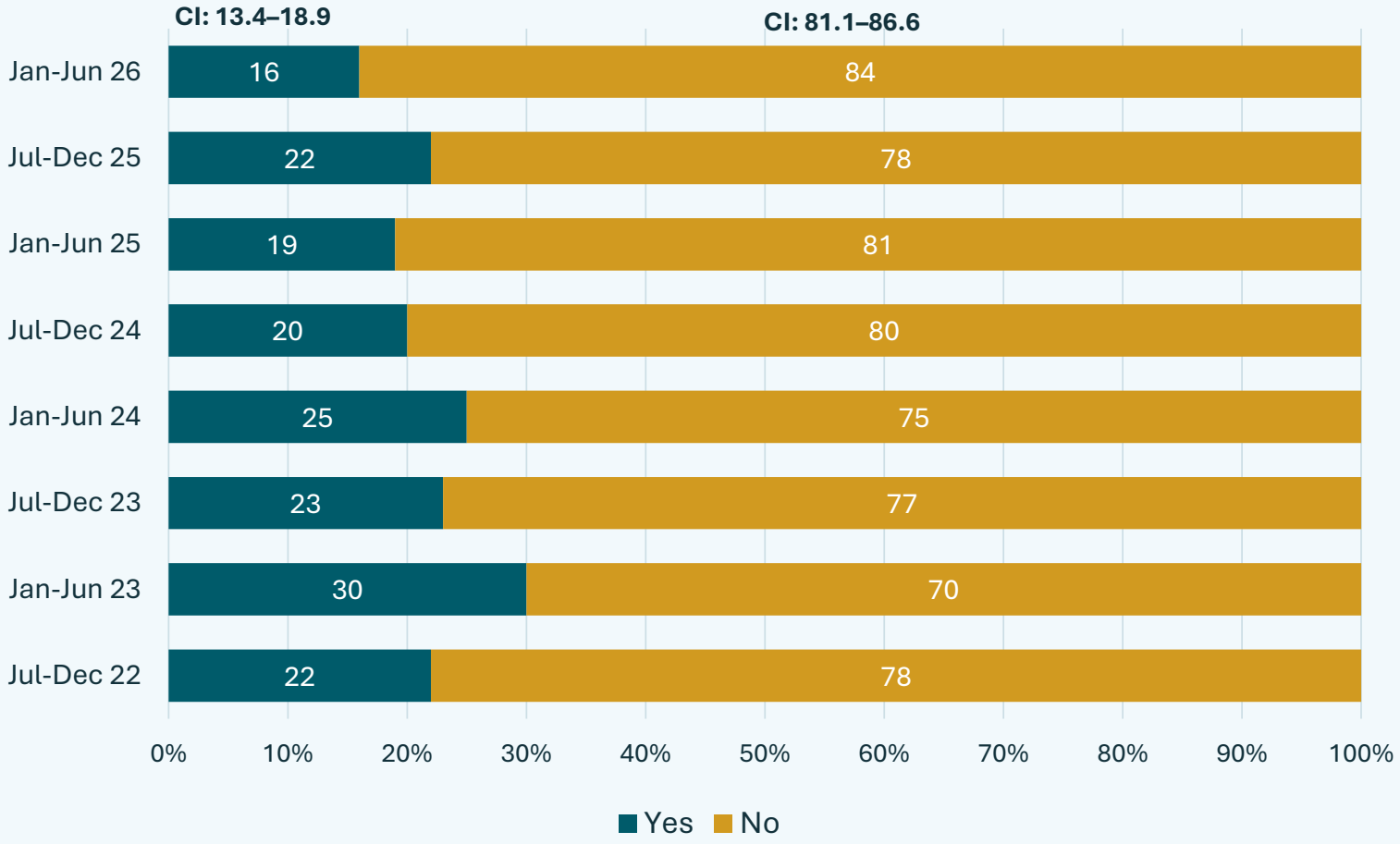
SECTION

Prior treatment

Readmission patterns and prior treatment exposure

Prior treatment episodes account for 16% of admissions

SACENDU
SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY EPIDEMIOLOGY NETWORK ON DRUG USE
Treatment Demand Data • Service Quality Measures (SQM) • Community-Based Harm Reduction Services



2 Mean episodes

Episodes	%
1 time	**80%**
2 times	**12%**
3 times	**5%**
>3 times	**10%**

Tx Type

	%
Inpatient	**69%**
Outpatient/Community-Based	**20%**
Detox	**11%**

SACENDU
SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY EPIDEMIOLOGY NETWORK ON DRUG USE
Treatment Demand Data + Service Quality Measures (SQM) + Community-Based Harm Reduction Services

Prior treatment is highest among OTC clients

	Jan-Jun 23	Jul-Dec 23	Jan-Jun 24	Jul-Dec 24	Jan-Jun 25	Jul-Dec 25	Jan-Jun 26
Alcohol	18	23	23	18	14	17	14
Dagga	9	16	20	8	15	12	8
Heroin/Opiates	27	23	23	37	31	28	26
OTC	20	41	40	36	35	33	33
Crack/Cocaine	20	38	45	40	38	44	28
Meth	15	46	38	**75**	16	55	26

HIGH

LOW

Highest readmission: 75% among Meth service users (Jul-Dec 24) | **Latest period (Jan-Jun 26): 33% (CI: 10.4-65.2)** among OTC service users

04

SECTION

Codeine & Tobacco Use

Codeine and tobacco product patterns

First-product codeine misuse concentrated among young unemployed males

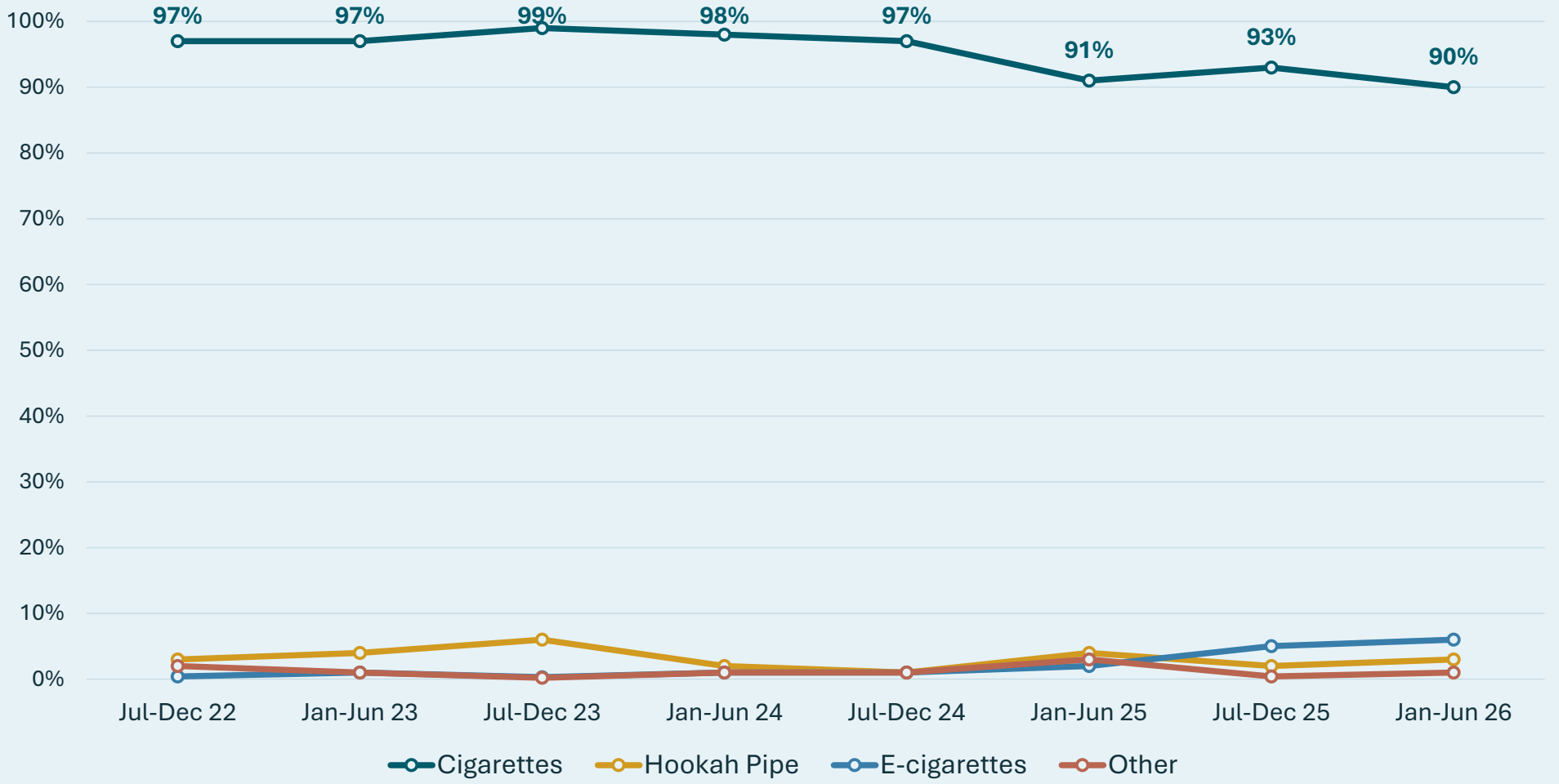
Profile of Individuals who use first product codeine (n=26, 4%)	Percent (%)
Majority were male	84
Majority were aged:	
20-24 years	35
25-29 years	27
15-19 years	15
Predominantly unemployed	47
Type of Codeine-containing medication misused	
Tablets: Stilpane; Mybulen; Painagon	
Syrup: Benylin with codeine; Broncleer	

Tobacco use remains high and is led by cigarettes

65%

(CI: 60.1-67.4)

reported tobacco use



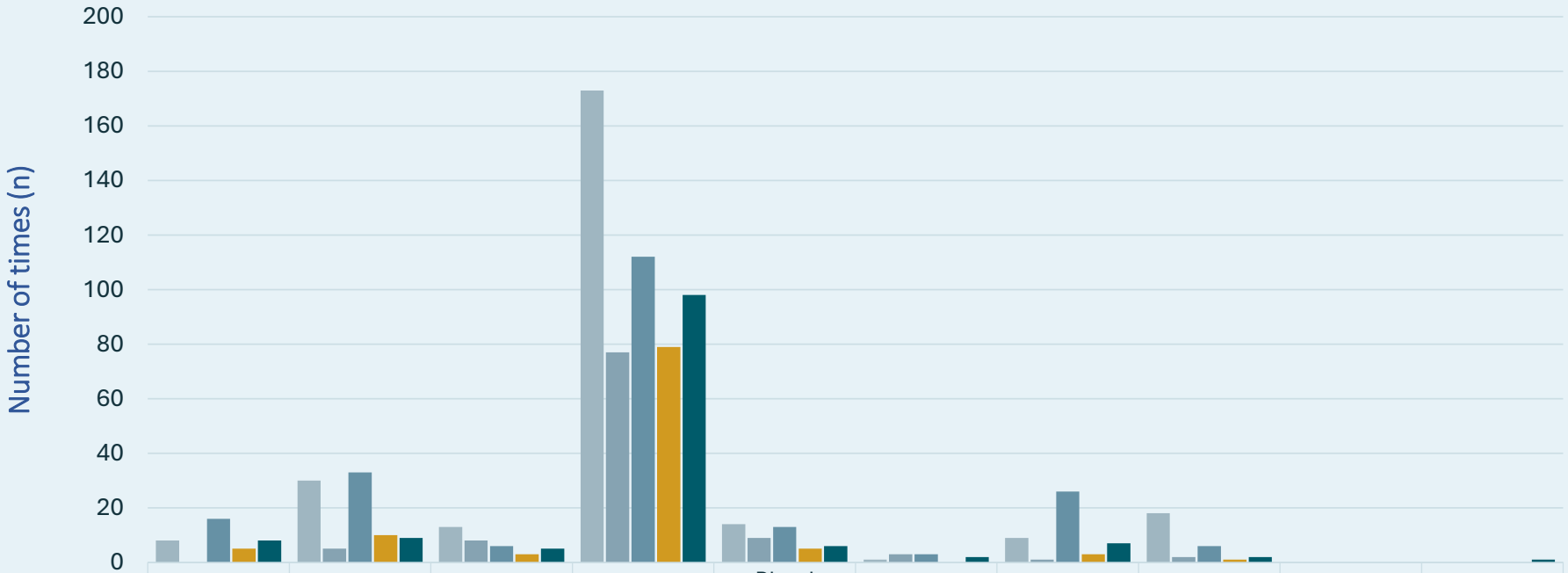
05

SECTION

Health & Related Behaviours

Health conditions and related risk behaviours

Mental health is the most frequently reported NCD



	Cardiovascular	Respiratory diseases	Diabetes	Mental Health	Blood pressure problems	Liver Disease	GIT Disease	Neurological Diseases	Hepatitis	Cancer
Jan-Jun 24	8	30	13	173	14	1	9	18	0	0
Jul-Dec 24	0	5	8	77	9	3	1	2	0	0
Jan-Jun 25	16	33	6	112	13	3	26	6	0	0
Jul-Dec 25	5	10	3	79	5	0	3	1	0	
Jan-Jun 26	8	9	5	98	6	2	7	2	0	1

18%

(CI: 14.8-20.5)

reported an NCD upon admission

Last doctor visit

77%

<2 years ago



19%

2–5 years ago

4%

> 5 years ago

Alcohol shows the highest NCD count among selected substances

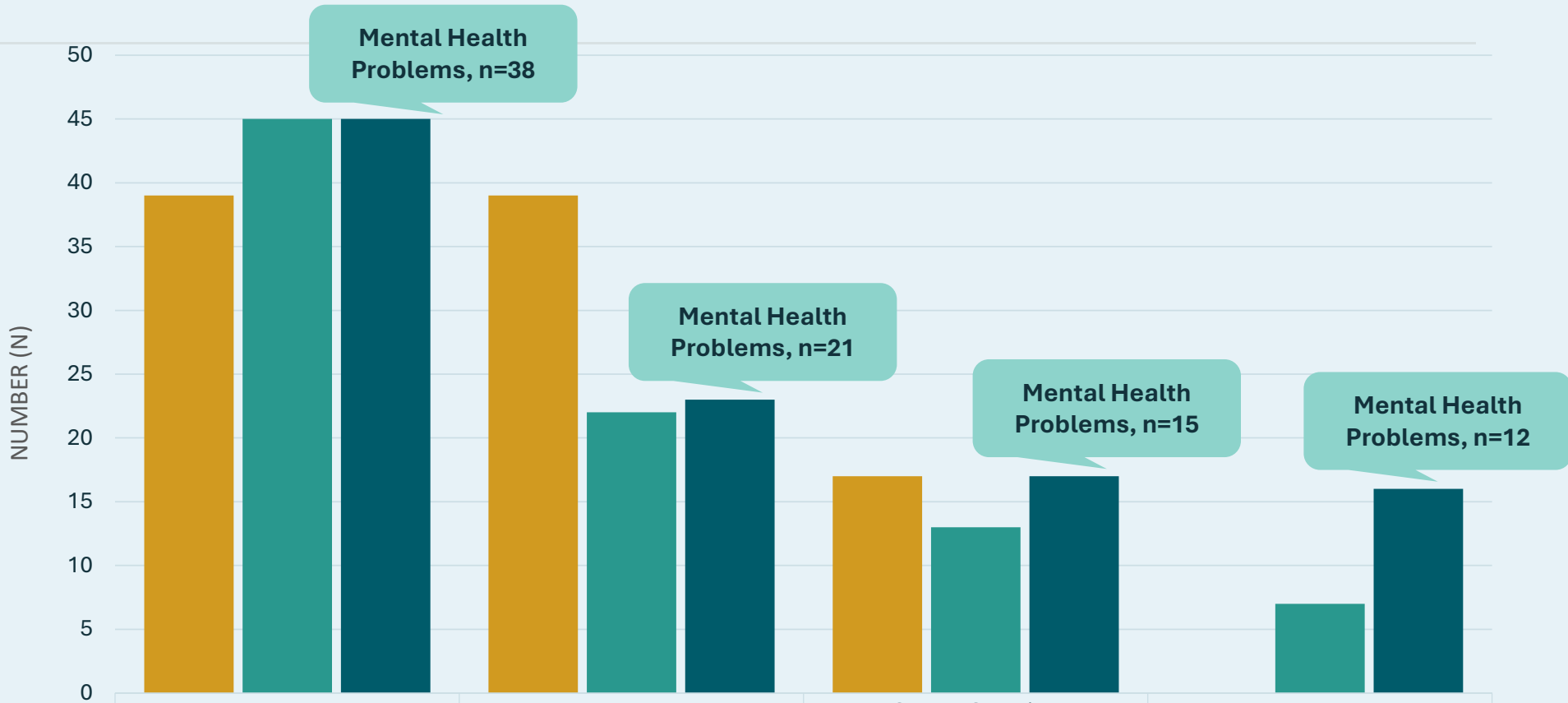
45

Number of people

Alcohol + NCD (Jan-Jun 26)

Mental health issues

most prominent by substance category



	Alcohol	Dagga	Crack/Cocaine	Meth
Jan-Jun 25	39	39	17	
Jul-Dec 25	45	22	13	7
Jan-Jun 26	45	23	17	16

06

SECTION

18 and younger

Treatment demand among children and adolescents

155 service users aged 18 and under entered treatment

OVERALL RELATIVE CHANGE

-53%

(CI: -61.5 to -43.7)

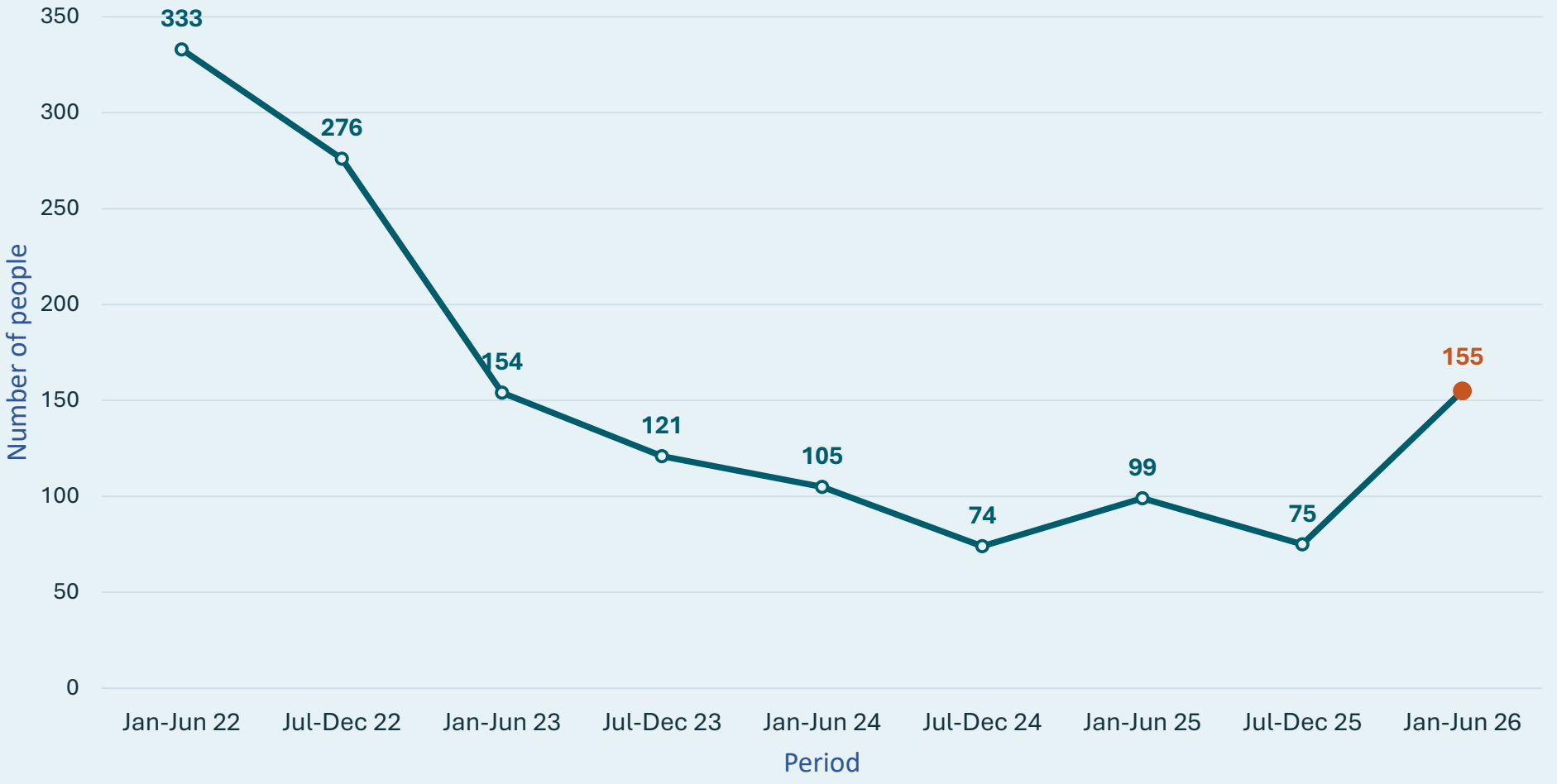
Jan–Jun 2022 to Jan–Jun 2026

LATEST RELATIVE CHANGE

+107%

(CI: 56.9 to 172.3)

Jul–Dec 2025 to Jan–Jun 2026



Girls' share of 18 and under admissions fell to 15%

Males (84%)

vs.

Females (15%)

Wald z = 11.88, p < 0.001,
CI: 0.79-0.90

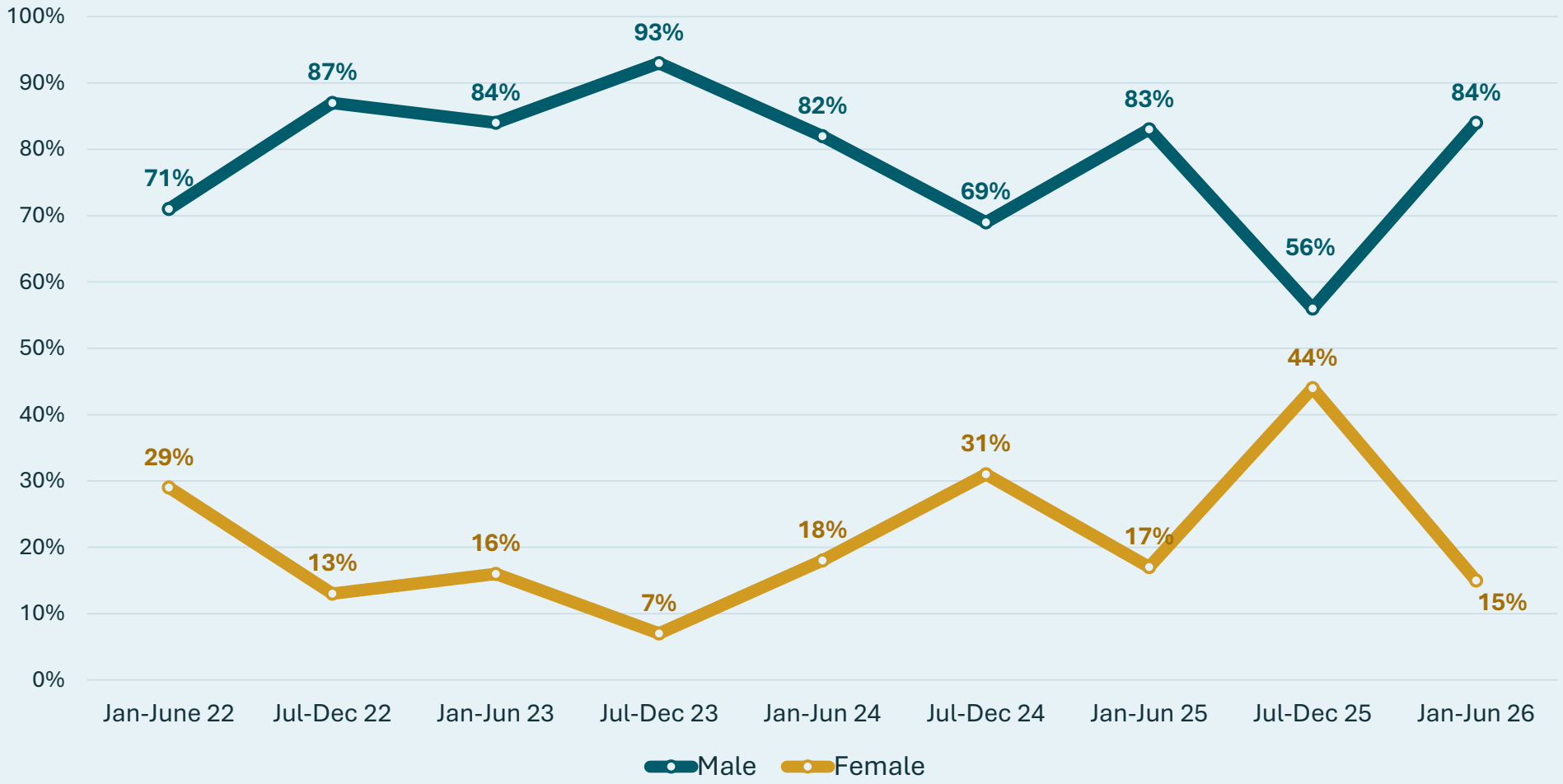
OVERALL CHANGE

Jan–Jun 2022 to
Jan–Jun 2026

Males: + 13 pp
(CI: 5.4 to 20.6)

Females: - 14 pp
(CI: -21.4 to -6.6)

pp = percentage points



Dagga remains the top primary substance; alcohol is close behind

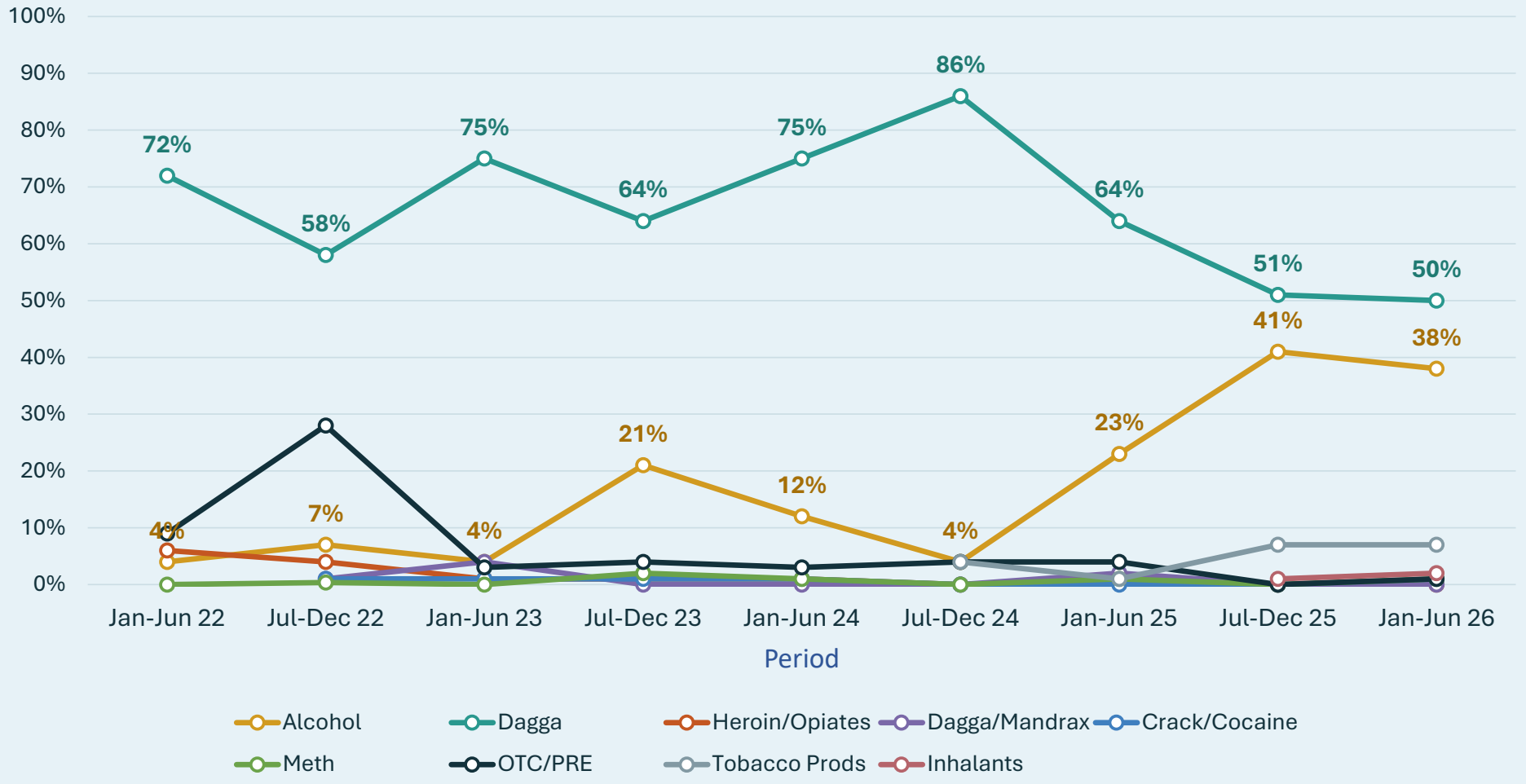
Top 2 primary substances
Jan–Jun 2026

Dagga **50%**

CI: 42.5-58.1

Alcohol **38%**

CI: 30.7-45.9



Alcohol leads secondary substance use among service users aged 18 and under

POLYSUBSTANCE USE

18% (CI: 12.6-24.7)

Top 3 substances

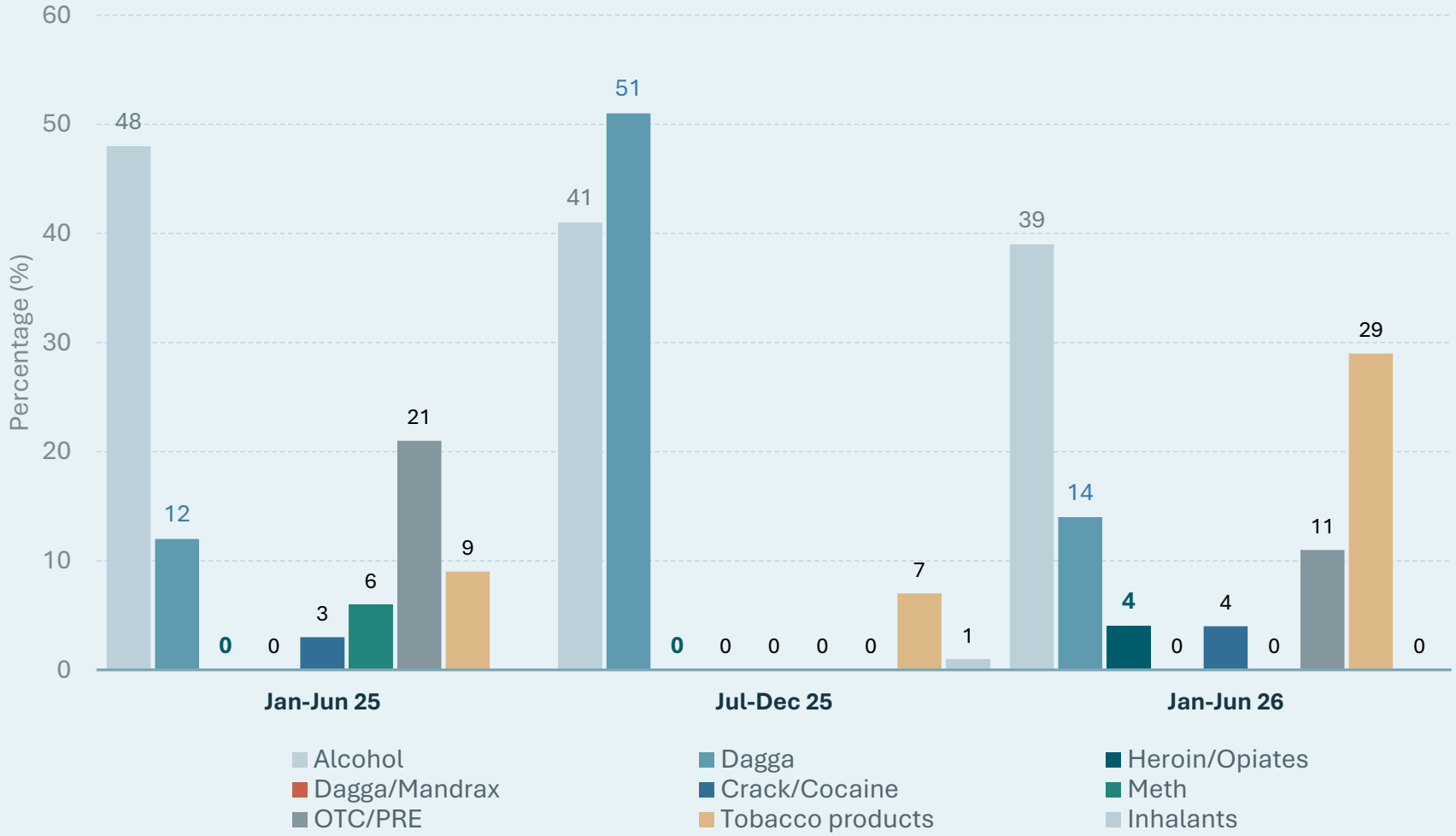
Alcohol **39%**

Tobacco products **29%**

Dagga **14%**

JUL–DEC 2025 TO JAN–JUN 2026

Tobacco products: 7% to 29%



SACENDU
SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY EPIDEMIOLOGY NETWORK ON DRUG USE

KZN treatment and substance use patterns: Key findings

PROFILE & ACCESS

- Treatment numbers rose to 671 in Jan–Jun 2026. Men are 84% of admissions.
- Unemployed 36%, employed 33%. Scholars/students up 87.5% since Jan–Jun 2024.
- Inpatient treatment rose to 61%. 91% have a permanent abode.

CARE & HEALTH

- Prior HIV testing dropped to 59%. 30% are willing to be tested.
- First-time admissions are 16%. Readmission is highest among OTC clients (33%).
- 18% reported an NCD, mental health most often. Pregnancy substance use: 1%.

SUBSTANCE PATTERNS

- Alcohol leads primary use at 39%, with dagga second at 30%.
- Alcohol leads secondary use (29%). Polysubstance use is 43%.
- Smoking is the main route (52%). Daily use is 54%, down 17 pp since Jan–Jun 2023.

YOUTH (18 AND UNDER)

- 155 service users aged 18 and under entered treatment, up 107% on the last period.
- Girls' share fell to 15%; boys are 84% of youth admissions.
- Primary use: dagga 50%, alcohol 38%. Alcohol leads secondary use (39%). 18% report polysubstance use

Thank you

Baie dankie · Enkosi

Visit our website at

https://www.samrc.ac.za/intramural-research-units/MASTRU-sacendu

Contact:
Nancy Hornsby, email: nancy.hornsby@mrc.ac.za
Jodilee Erasmus, email: jodilee.erasmus@mrc.ac.za
Mompati Kamogelo Moletsane, email: kamogelo.moletsane@mrc.ac