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Australian Institute of Criminology

Reintegration of Indigenous prisoners

Reintegration Puzzle Conference
26 - 27 June 2008

Matthew Willis

Overview

- Background / acknowledgements
- Imprisonment and re-imprisonment
- Prior and underlying factors
- Facilitating reintegration – a (very brief) overview of what the literature says
- Facilitating reintegration - a (brief) overview of what prisoners and stakeholders say
- Implications and recommendations

Acknowledgement / background

- CSAC April 2005
- Supported and funded by each Australian jurisdiction & New Zealand
 - Staff in each jurisdiction
- Prisoners, ex-prisoners, stakeholders, respondents, Indigenous elders
- John-Patrick Moore

Background

- Administrative documentation
 - overviews, programs and services
- Quantitative data
 - sentenced male prisoners released between 1 Jan 2001 and 1 Jan 2003
- Qualitative data
 - prisoners, ex-prisoners, key respondents, stakeholders



Prior and underlying factors

- Social disadvantage and risk
 - Alcohol and substance abuse
 - Employment
 - Education
 - Community factors and violence
 - Health and mental health



Indigenous social disadvantage

- life expectancy 17 years lower
- unemployment rate 3 times higher
- lower education levels
- median household income $\frac{1}{2}$ non-Indigenous
 - Weatherburn et al 2006

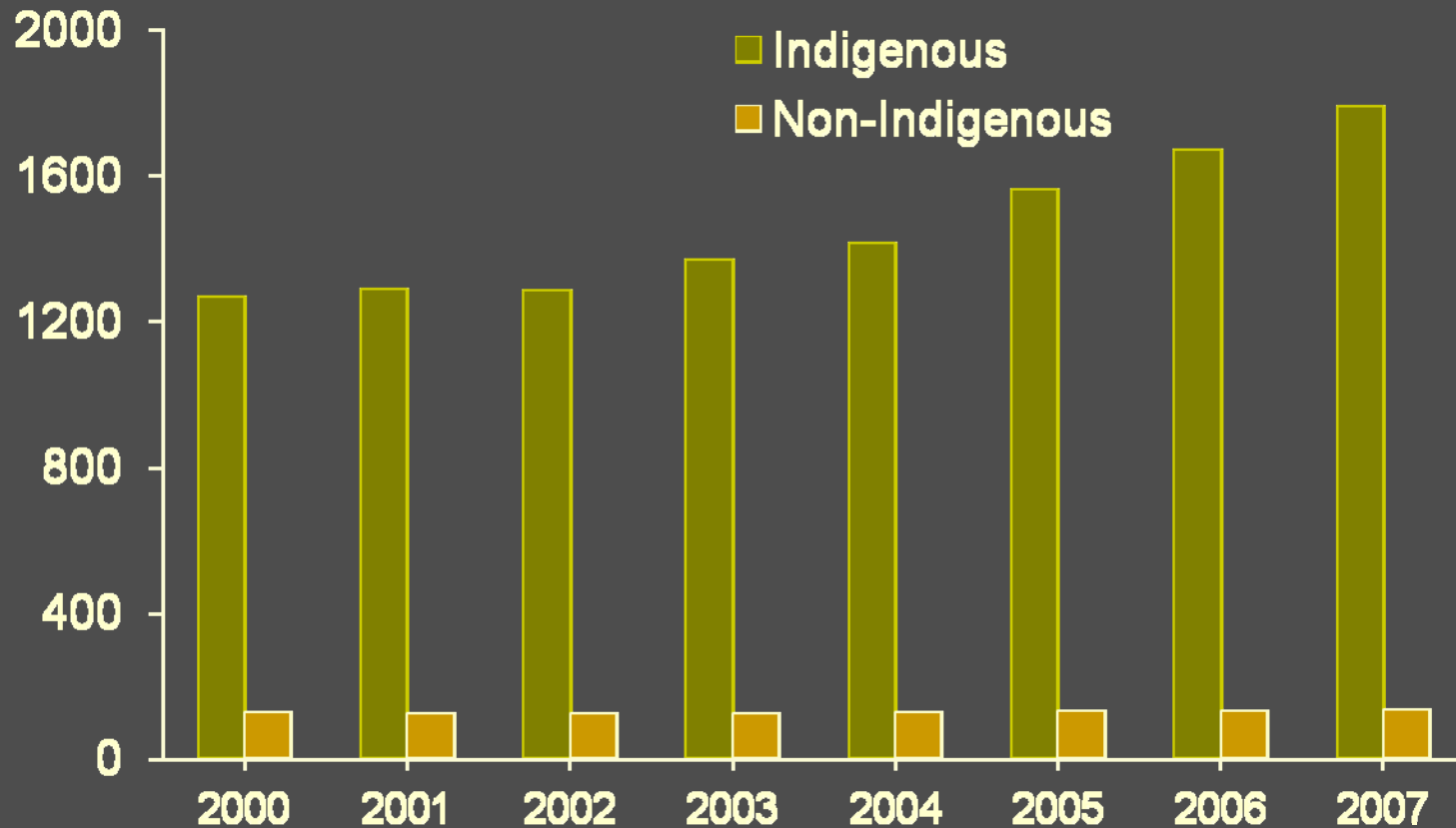


Indigenous social disadvantage cont

- child abuse and neglect
 - nearly 4 times higher
- homicide rate
 - 5 to 15 times higher
- hospitalisation for head injury due to assault
 - 69 times higher for females

Imprisonment rates

Age standardised imprisonment rates 2000–2007 (rate per 100,000 adults)



Source: ABS Prisoners in Australia 2007

Prison populations

- Over 50% of Indigenous prisoners incarcerated for violent offences (exc. robbery)
 - Compared with 40% of non-Indigenous prisoners (at 30 June 2007)
- Indigenous prisoners highly over-represented in 'acts intended to cause injury' (42% of Aust prison population)
- Indigenous offenders more likely than non-Indigenous offenders to appear in court (NSW) for:
 - Sexual assault (11 times)
 - Aggravated assault (19 times)
 - Robbery (17 times)

Recidivism

NT report – 700 prisoners released 2001-02

- Recidivism:
 - Indigenous – 45%
 - Non-Indigenous – 15%
- Higher recidivism if previously imprisoned
 - 74% Indigenous ; 52% non-Indigenous prior prison (ABS)
- Those incarcerated for assault:
 - highest rate of return to prison (51%)
 - highest rate of return for same offence (31%)

Recidivism

Victorian report – 3,352 prisoners released 2002-03

- Recidivism (return to prison):
 - Indigenous – 50%
 - Non-Indigenous – 34%
- Indigenous prisoners more likely to return to prison in the early months after release

The project

- Data on sentenced male prisoners (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who were:
 - convicted of and imprisoned for a violent offence
 - released from prison between 1 January 2001 and 1 January 2003
 - released on parole or at expiry of sentence
- Data on 8,938 prisoners

Research data sample

Location	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	993	29	2407	70	3425	38
VIC	69	7	934	93	1008	11
QLD	744	39	1181	61	1925	22
SA	41	21	148	75	197	2
WA	744	49	760	51	1504	17
TAS	37	13	237	86	276	3
NT	481	88	64	12	548	6
ACT	4	7	51	93	55	<1
TOTAL	3113	(35)	5782	(65)	8938	(100)

Completed education level

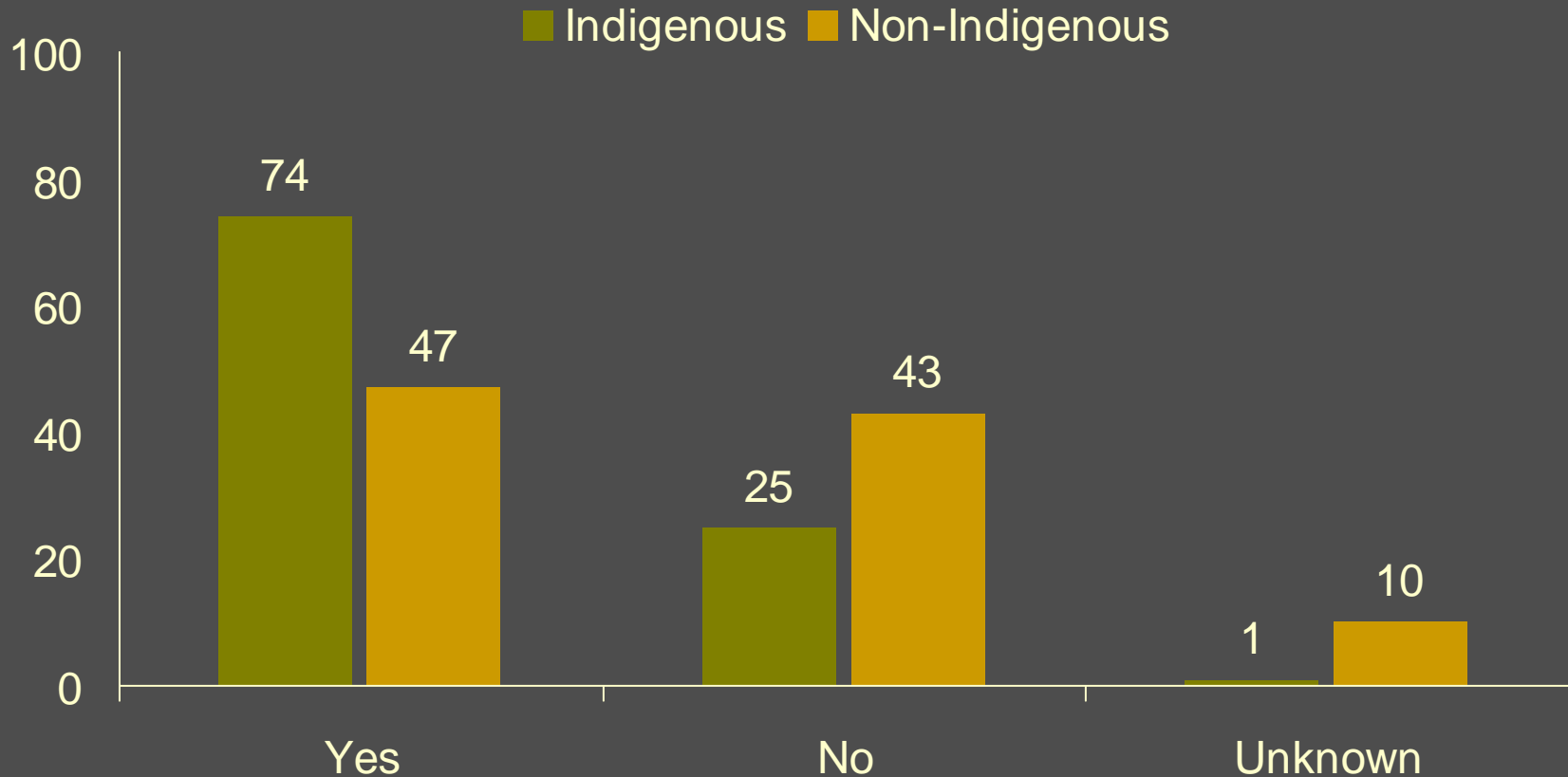
	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
< Year 9	764	37	493	21	1258	28
Yr 9 to <Yr 12	960	47	1290	54	2256	51
Year 12	114	6	230	10	346	8
Post secondary	17	<1	139	6	157	4
Unknown	192	9	238	10	433	10
TOTAL	2047	(100)	2390	(100)	4450	(100)

Does not include ACT, NSW, Victoria

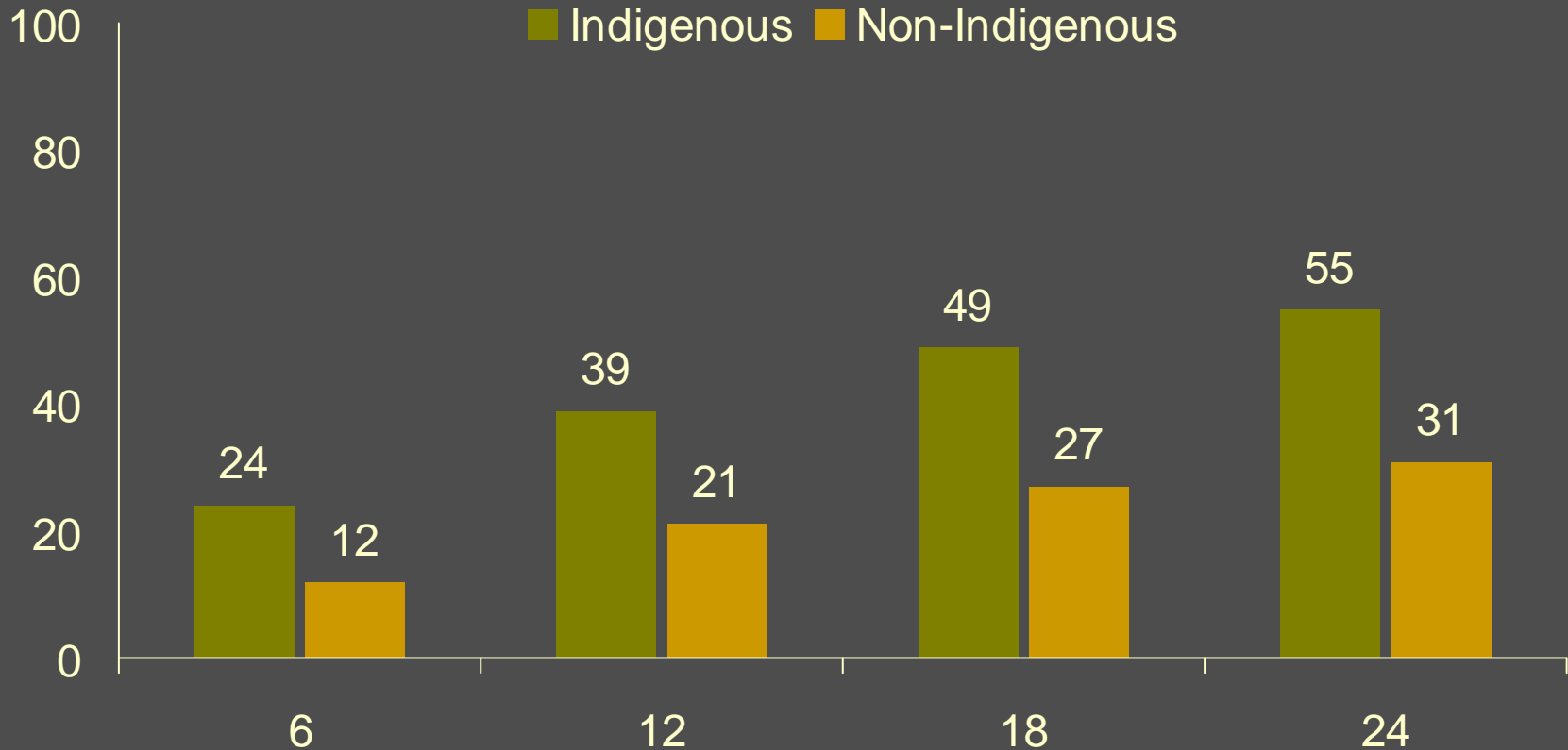
Most serious offence – sample cohort

	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Murder/attempt	65	2	207	4	242	3
Sexual assault	245	8	1137	20	1390	16
Assault	2403	77	2637	46	5069	57
Robbery	370	12	1678	29	2053	23
Other	30	<1	123	2	154	2
TOTAL	3113	(100)	5782	(100)	8938	(100)

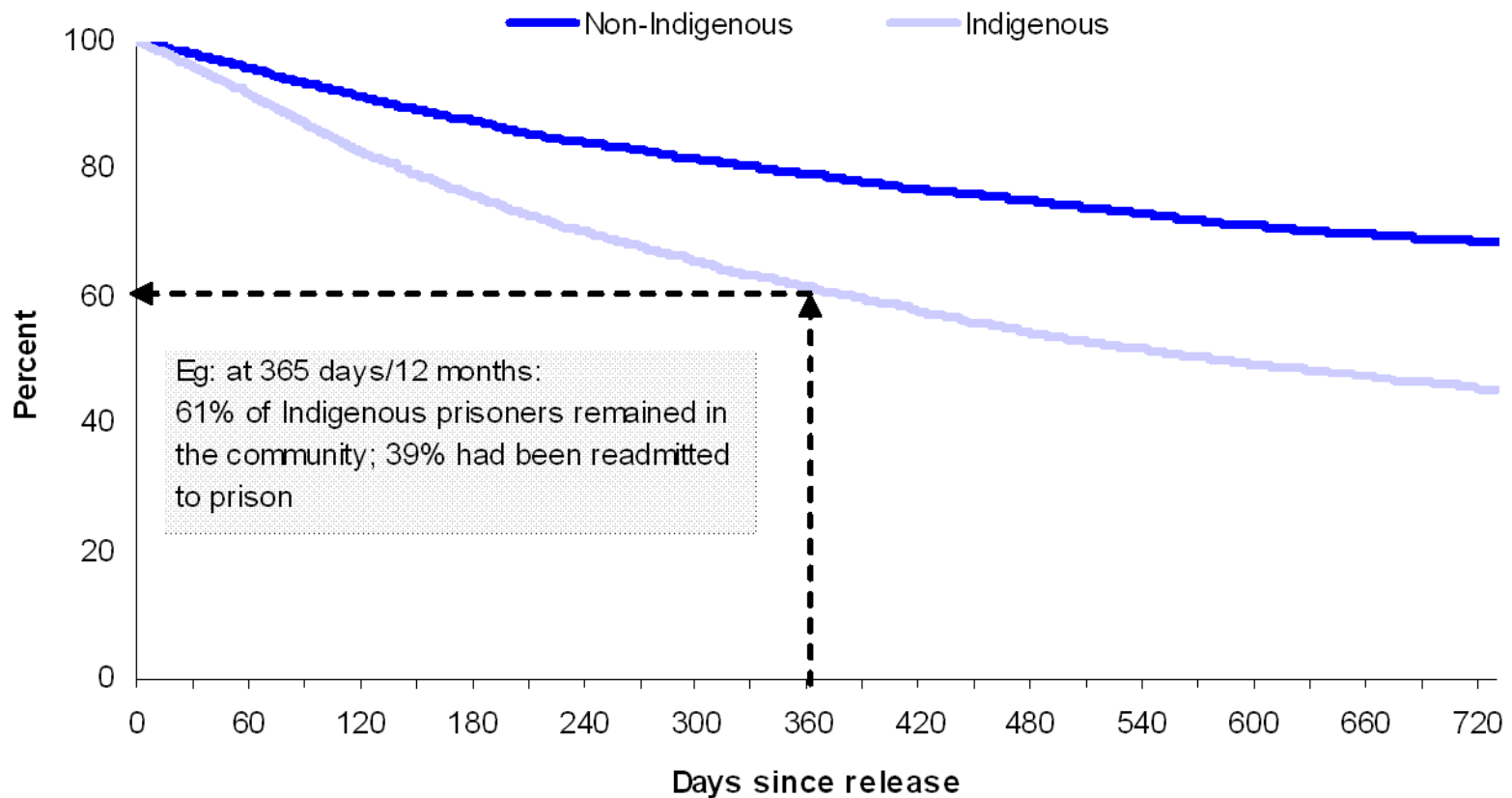
Previous adult prison sentences



Released prisoners readmitted to prison



Time remaining in community



Most serious reoffence type

	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Assault	472	44	171	20	643	33
Break & enter	78	7	117	13	195	10
Theft & related	60	6	105	12	166	9
Robbery	28	3	92	11	120	6
Traffic	103	10	74	8	177	9
Other violence	72	10	75	9	147	8
Other	195	19	240	27	495	25
TOTAL	1008	(100)	874	(100)	1943	(100)

In summary

- Indigenous male violent prisoners tend to:
 - have extensive and repeated involvement with the criminal justice system
 - have lower levels of education
 - be released at expiry of sentence rather than parole
 - be in prison, or be readmitted, for assault
 - serve shorter sentences
 - return to prison sooner
 - spend less time on remand when not convicted

Interviews with offenders

- Family background
 - most raised by other than birth parent
 - appeared unstable but not perceived that way
 - many reported family alcoholism and abuse
 - most experienced or witnessed violence
 - most used alcohol and/or drugs at time of offending

Program and service delivery

Perceptions

- improvement – possibilities and barriers

Four broad and connected themes

- meeting Indigenous-specific needs
- family and community
- other factors impacting reintegration
- resources

Meeting Indigenous-specific needs

- Content
- Participation
- Language
- Indigenous elders and facilitators
- Barriers to increasing cultural specificity
- Assessment and evaluation

Family and community

- Family and community involvement
- Linking with the community
- Follow-through
- Barriers – family and community

Other factors impacting on reintegration

- Disadvantage and isolation
- Grief and loss
- Mental health
- Short sentences and remand

Resourcing

- Funding
- Human resources
- Agency-wide issues



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