

DUMA, Indigenous Detainees and Substance Use: challenges in the interview context

Dr Bridie O'Reilly
DUMA Site Manager Darwin

General considerations

- Culture – respect, patience & persistence
- Language – talk questions; few words; key words/phrases/expressions; pigeon/Creole.
- Question format
- Response bias
- Gender
- Contextual prompts
- Gestures as visual aids
- Perceived disrespect – repeated Qs re drugs

Ethical considerations

- Problems at start with informed consent
- Show card with ½ page of writing – too complex
- Show cards little utility – literacy
- Key words and phrases verbally – brief
- Sometimes question purpose during interview – obtain consent again
- Similar issues consent for urine sample

Determining eligibility

- Eligible if in detention for less than 48 hours
- First question problematic:

When were you detained? What day? What time?

- Many intoxicated when detained
- Often do not know the time only day or night
- Watchhouse solution - obtain information beforehand
- Court cells - process of Today? Yesterday? Day before that? Narrowing to Day? Night? Sun down little time? Long time? etc

Demographic questions

Most demographics OK if modified to key words.

What's the highest education level you are in or have completed?

Rephrase: You been to school?

- Will answer *never been* or affirmative. Sometimes state year finished school eg 1984, 1995

So ask Finish Year 8, Yr 9, Yr 10?

Follow up with: Done any TAFE / VET? Been university?

One demographic question is impossible:

What is your ethnic background?

Establishing age now

How old are you?

- Sometimes not understood or don't know

Rephrase: *How many years old?*

- Still not understood sometimes or don't know

Alternative question:

What date of birth? What year you born?

- Most know dates, years and nearly all seem to know a date of birth
- Cross checked with police database details

Establishing age in the past

When you first tried (drug) how old were you?

- Age when something first happened difficult.
- Not understood or don't know

Rephrase: *What year you first try (drug)?*

- Better chance of useful response but not always

Alternative question:

First time have (drug) how old you? Or What year?

- Context - young girl/man etc; gestures height
- 18 often significant age re alcohol

Probing past behaviour

Problems establishing if behaviour has ever occurred

Have you ever tried alcohol (grog)?

- Some say no but obvious have been drinking.
- *Ever try* can be heard as *ever use now*. If no longer use then answer *no*.

Alternative:

You dink alcohol (grog)?

If No: Never drink alcohol? Long time ago drink?

Caution re word *drinking* can mean dependency so say *No*

Probing recent behaviour

Memory often seems chunked into years with recall by year eg 1995, 2000 etc

- Last 12 months – best if prompted with 2008 and 2009
- Concepts like last 12 months, last 30 days, last 48 hours not readily understood
- Rephrase last 30 days to in the last month – don't understand, don't know what a month is or don't know what the month is
- Generally understand this yesterday, day before yesterday; last week, week before that; name of month e.g February

Examples probing recent behaviour

Have you used (drug) during the past 12 months.

Alternative question:

- Rephrasing last 12 months into last year may mean literally last year – i.e. 2008
- *You smoke gunga 2009?* If no try 2008 and then use context to see if last or first half of 2008 using context prompts (eg build up, wet etc)
- **In the past 48 hours have you used (drug)?**

Alternative:

- *You drink grog today?* If no then *Yesterday?* *Day before that – Wednesday?*

Examples of probing the past

In the past 12 months, have you served time in prison, on a sentence, for any other offences?

- Too long and complex.

Alternative:

You been in jail/the big house 2009?

- If no then 2008? Prompts for time of year.
- Sentence or waiting go court (remand)?

Probing recent events

In the 24 hours before you were arrested, how many hours did you spend drinking?

- Too long – too many words and concepts.

Alternative:

Before police get you, how many hours drinking?

- Often don't know but time of detention known

Alternative so interviewer calculates length:

What time you start drinking yesterday?

- Prompts - little bit light, long time light? Little time dark/ long time dark?
- Gestures position of sun.

Determining number of drinks

Estimating number of times can be problematic

- Alice Springs: The common expression is *Little bit sometimes* - can mean just that or a lot often
- Darwin – decanting cask wine common

How many drinks did you consume in your last drinking session?

- Not one can mean did not finish one bottle or cask
- Response just one – can mean 1 cask, 1 carton, 1 bottle
- If say *little bit* probe for number

How many beers/cans you have?

How many coke bottles moselle?

Numbers and frequency

During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use (drug)?

- Highly likely this will not be understood
- If understood will often not have any idea how many days

Alternative:

How many days a week you smoke gunga? 1 day?

2 day a week? Every week?

- Response may be *Just payday.*
- Probe: *Smoke 1 day, 2 day after payday? Sometimes people share with you?*

Number of times

How many charges have you received in the past 12 months? Do not count the one you are here for now.

- Not understood, don't know, don't know why

Alternatives:

You been this place before? 2009? 2008?

Police pick you up (arrest) you 2009? 2008? Why arrest you?

What police say you did wrong?

You been court 2009? 2008? Prompts time year

What police/judge say you did? What lawyer say you did?

If no idea - police database

Urine sampling

- Level of acculturation
- Language – not know word urine, what sample is
- Confusion with health issue - sick
- Privacy and shame issues
- Gender
- Cultural issues including sorcery
- Previous history re giving urine samples
- Disrespect – re imply lying - say not use drugs
- Ethical grey areas

Existing procedure

As mentioned earlier, we are collecting a urine sample from all consenting participants as part of the survey. Will you provide us with a sample?

[IF YES] Please take this specimen container to the toilet with you to provide the sample.

[IF NO] Your participation is completely voluntary, but I would like to remind you that no names will appear on the specimens and the results will not be given to the police or affect the outcome of your case. An independent laboratory will perform the analysis, and the sample will be destroyed as soon as the tests have been done. There is no way that the results can be tied back to you. Would you agree to provide a sample?

Modified for Indigenous detainees

Break into key words & phrases

- Urine sample – show jar and say take to private toilet or cell
- Paper bag – no one see or know (watchhouse only).
- No name – show jar and barcode emphasize no name written. No one know from you.
- Asking everyone in here.
- No talk to police or give to police or lawyers.
- I send by truck to laboratory in Sydney. No one else. All go into big machine
- When machine finished this jar goes big fire and destroyed

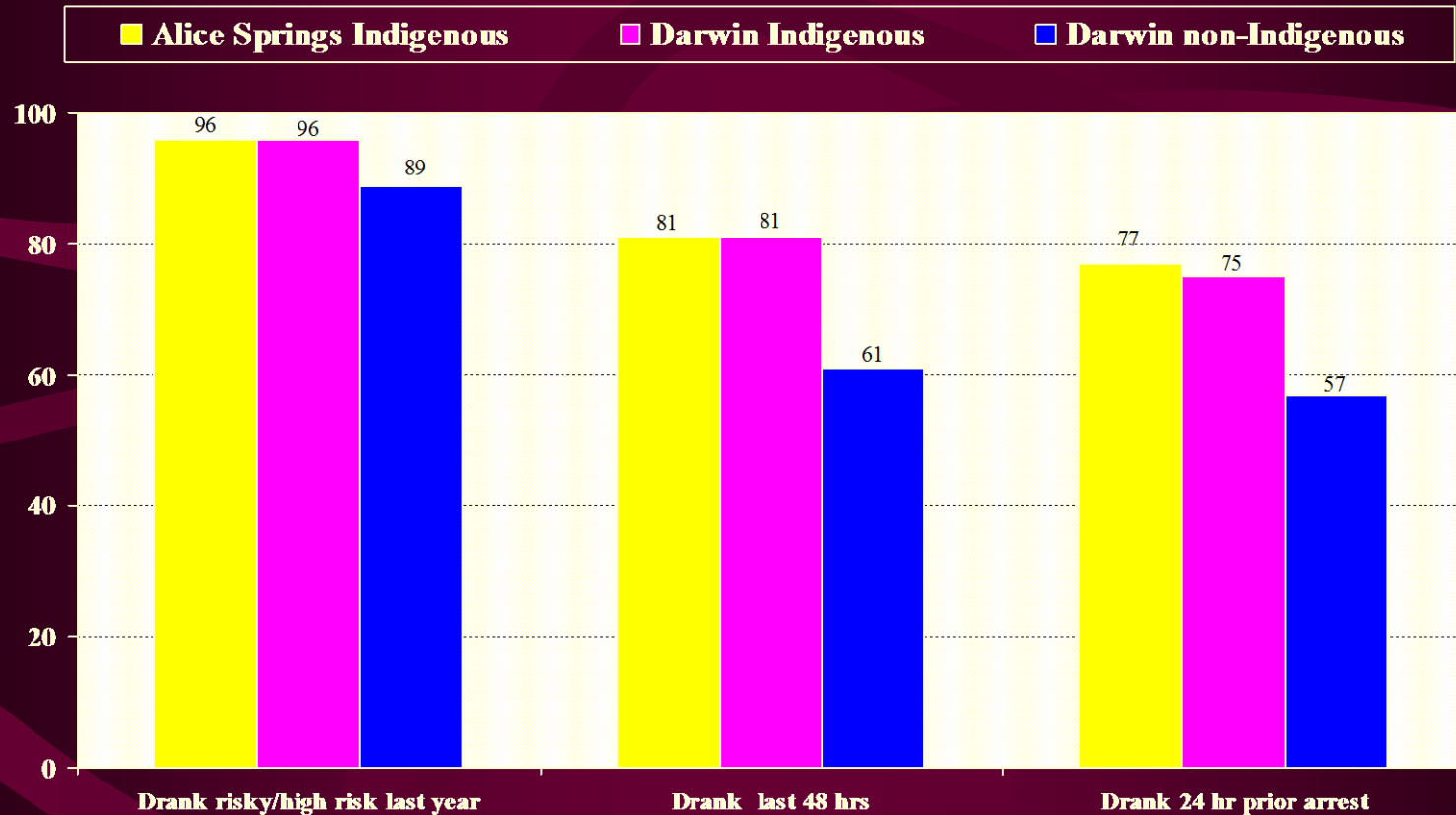
Countering reluctance

1. *Not sick, not want to* – explain different hospital
2. *Done that big house, not do* – explain different to jail
3. No response. Appear struggling to find way to say no. May ask if have to.
4. *What that for?* Questioning purpose or have not understood. Informed consent – need to explain.

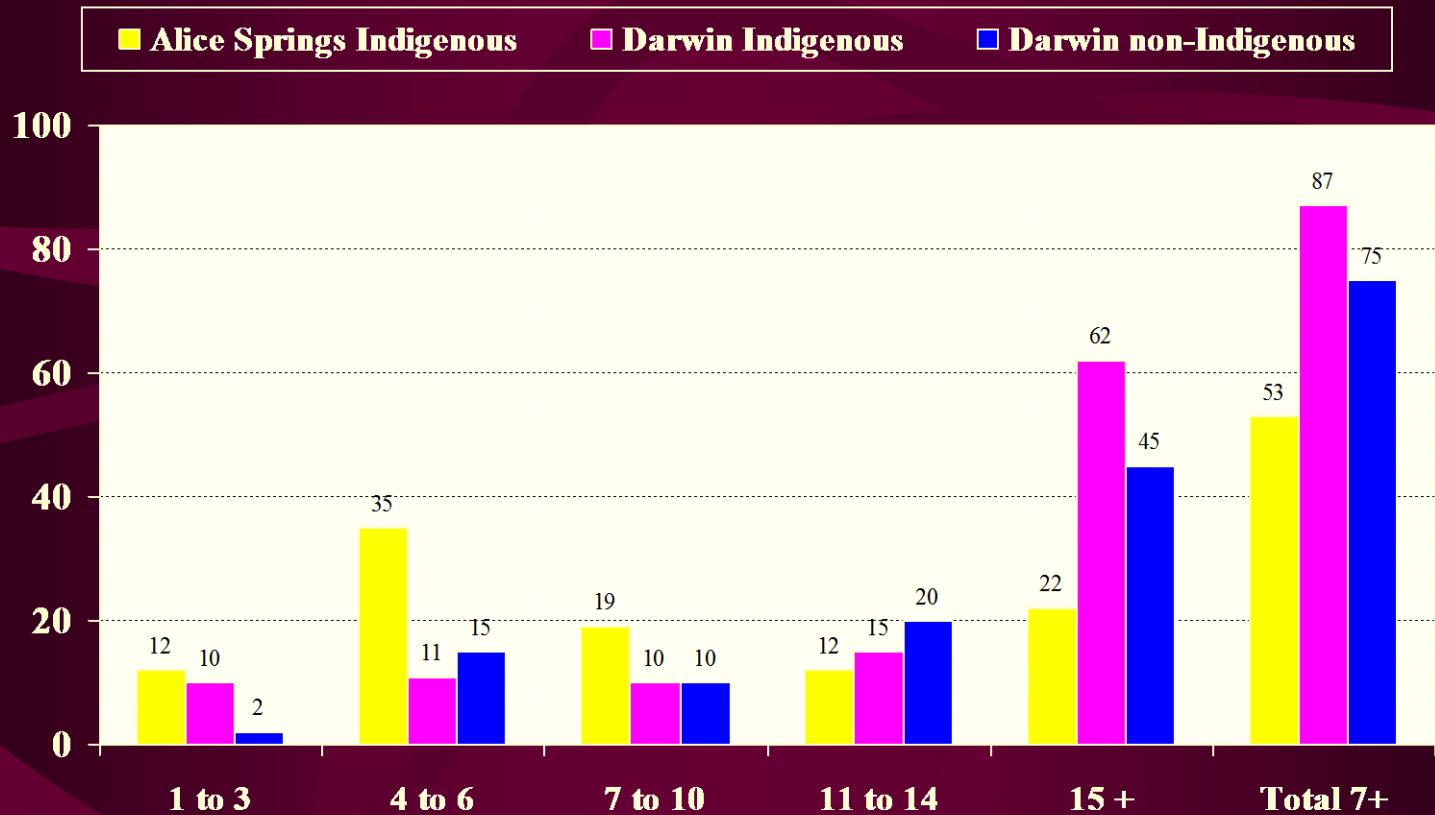
If say drug test & haven't used drugs then annoyed:

- *I already tell you no drugs!* – annoyed/angry
→ disrespect, shaming, suggest lying
- Overcome with: You say no drugs – machine say no drugs

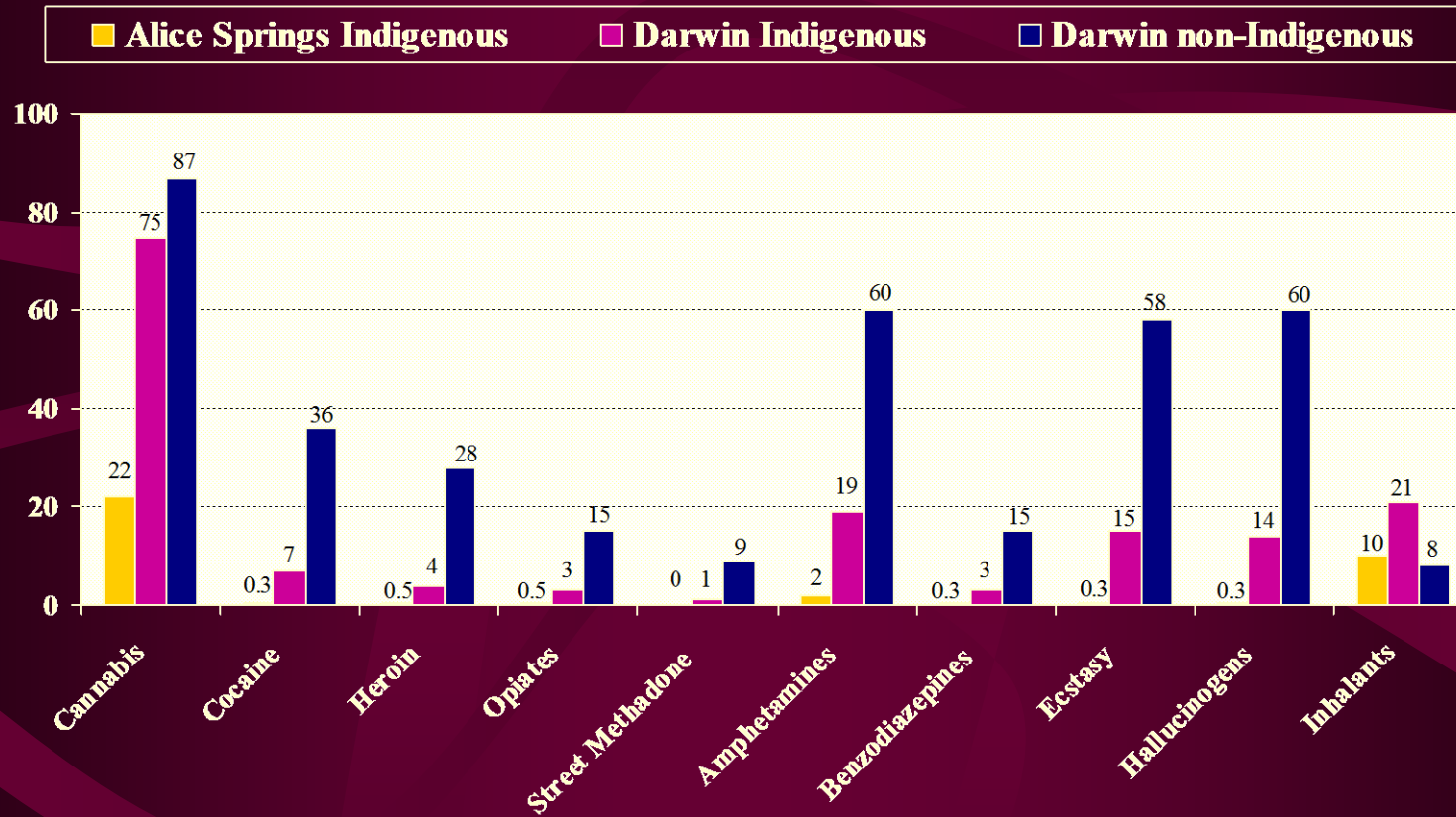
Recent alcohol use 2007/08



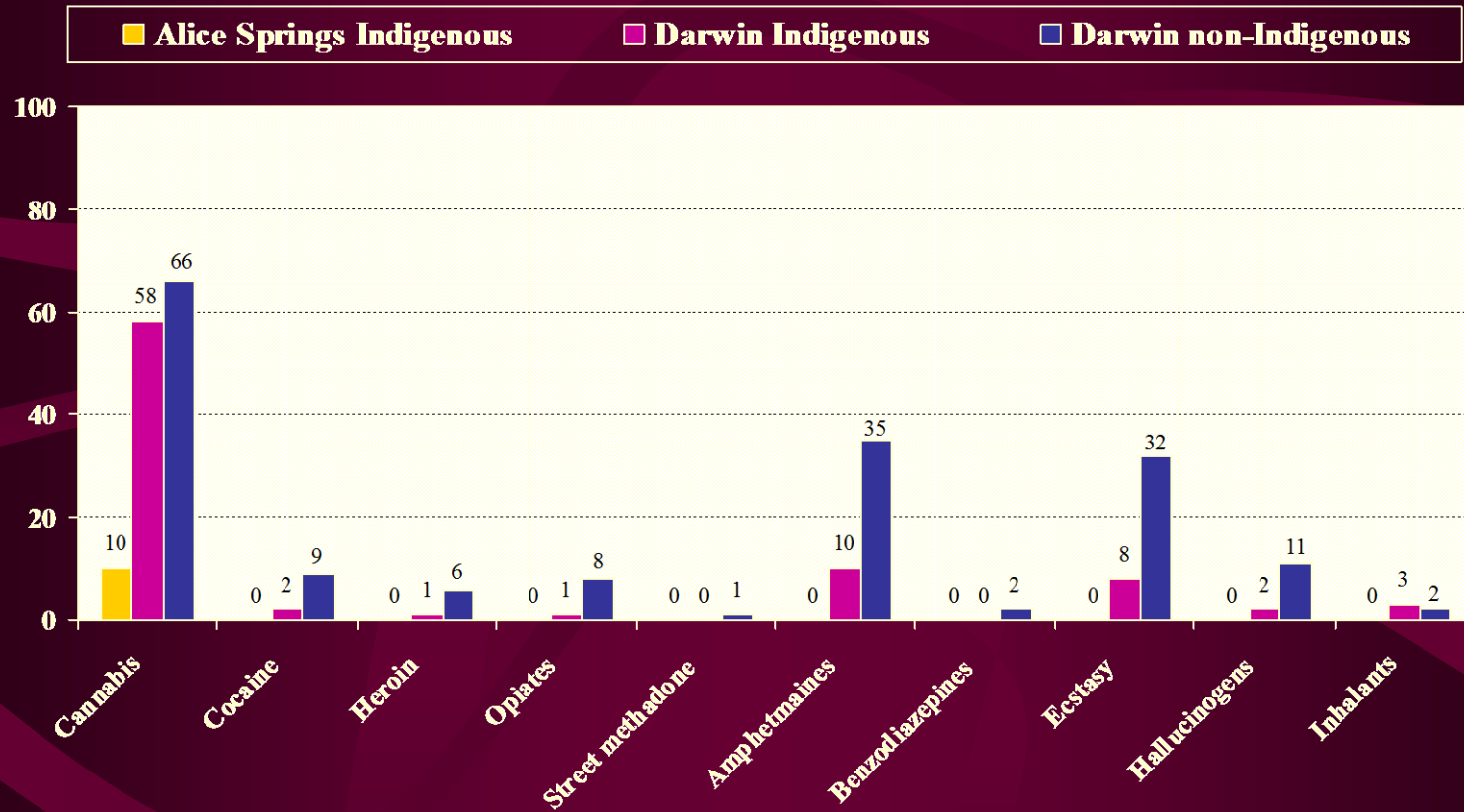
Drinks in 24 hours before arrest



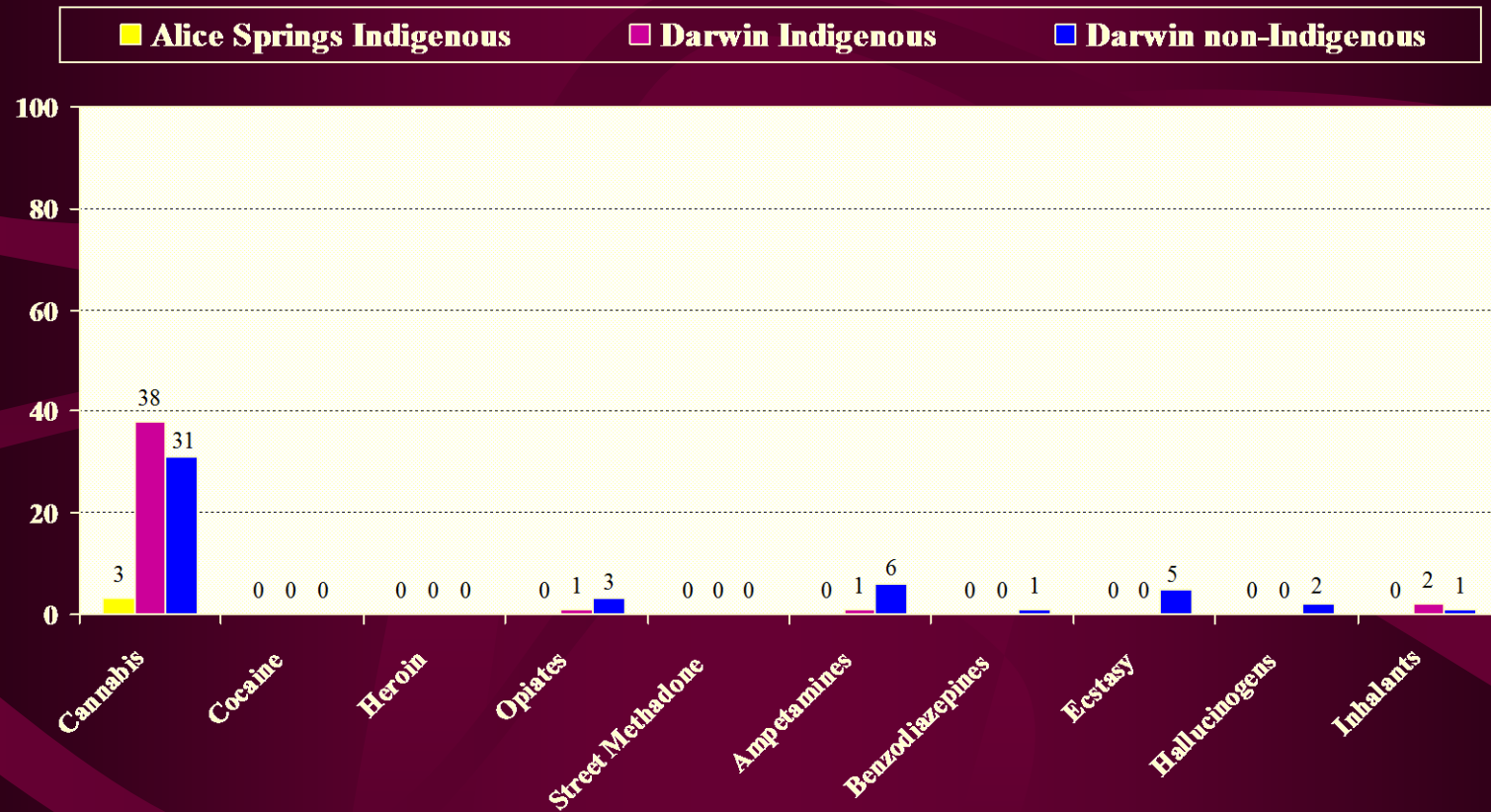
Drugs ever used 2007/08



Drugs used last 12 months



Drugs used last 48 hours



Drugs detected in urine 2007/08

