Population ageing and apparent decline in initiation of injecting drug use in Australia

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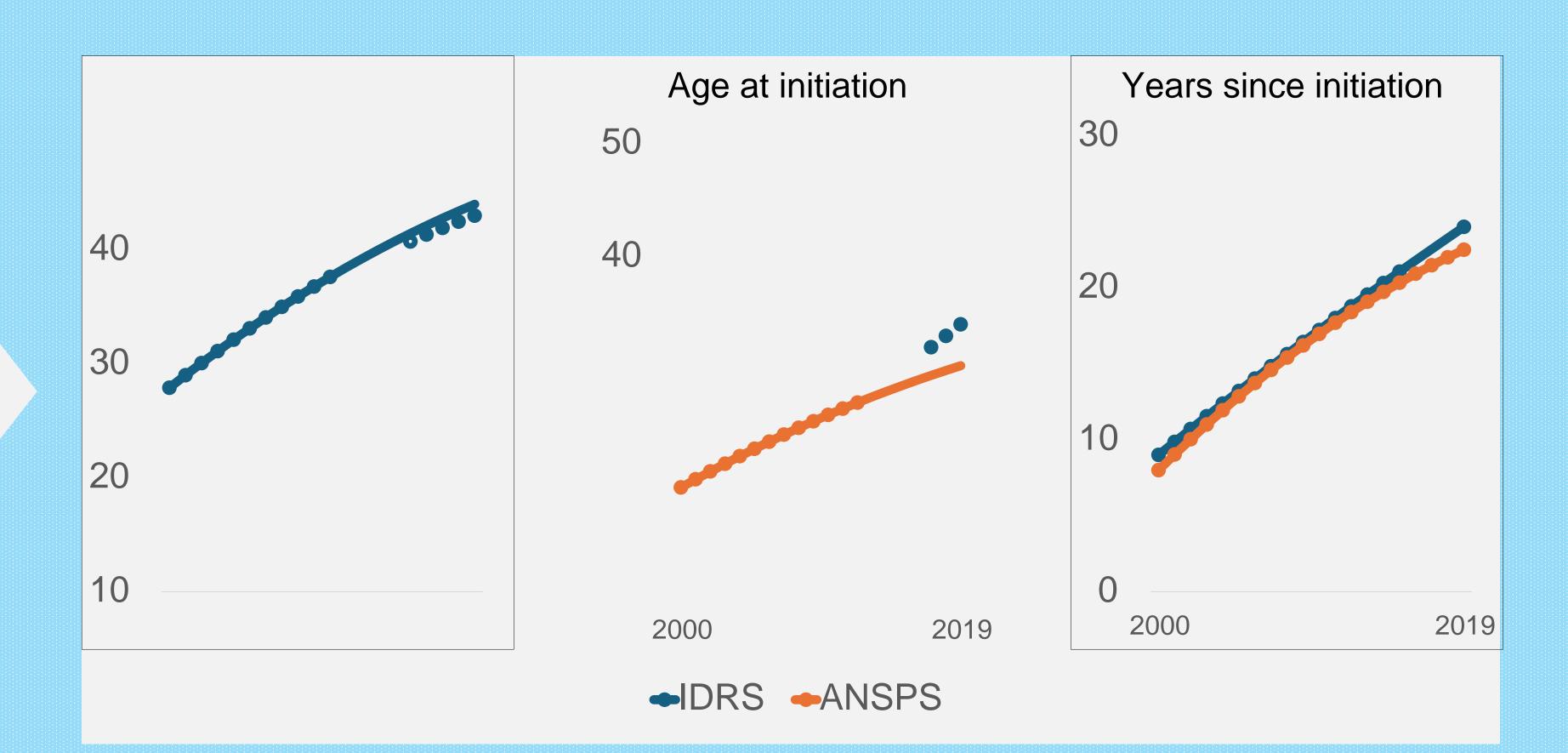
Objective

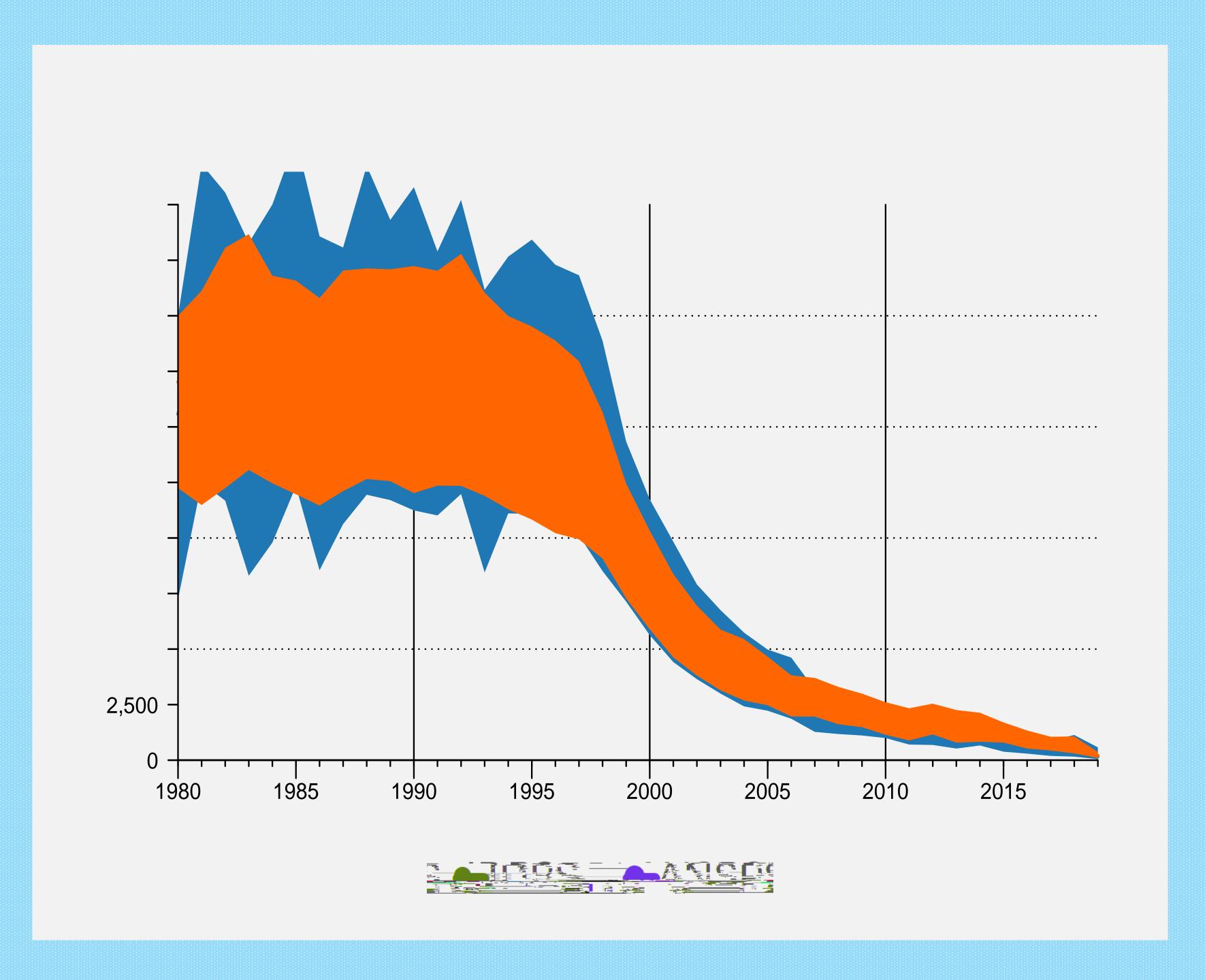
Among people who inject drugs in Australia, we examined temporal trends of age, age at injecting drug use initiation, duration of injecting drug use, and year of injecting drug use initiation. Based on Australian population size estimates of people who inject drugs, we modelled the number of people injecting drugs for the first time—each year.

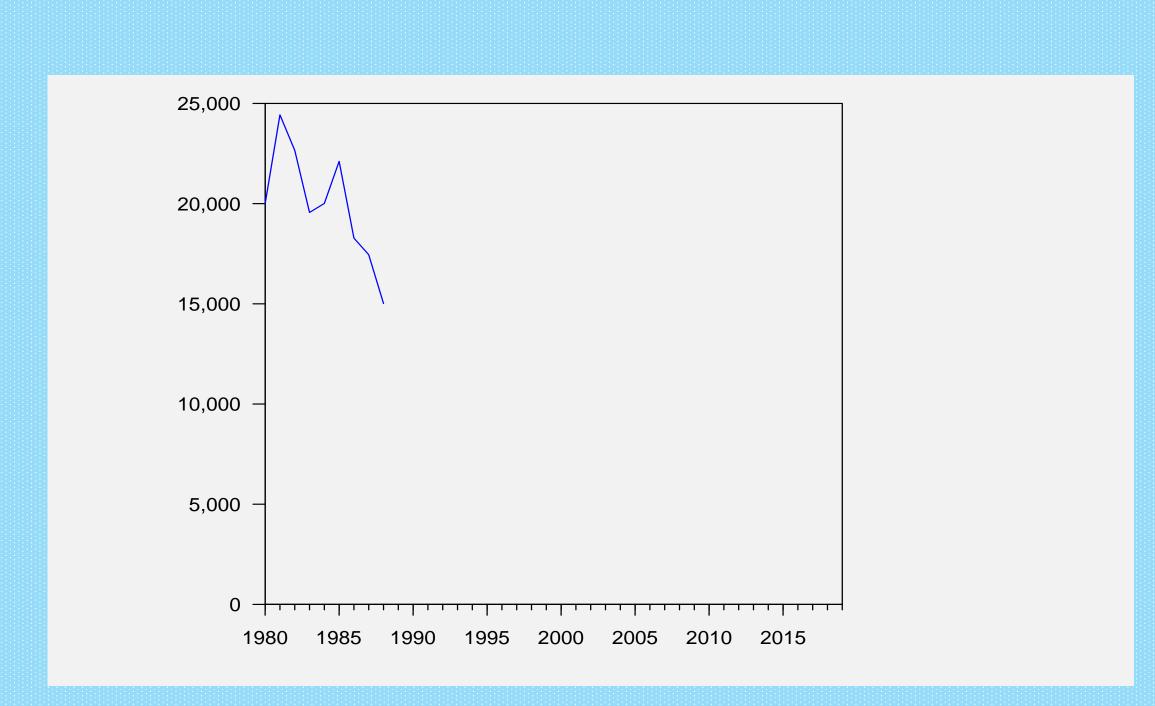
Data source

Twenty years (2000-2019) of repeat cross-sectional data from two national surveys with people who inject drugs in Australia ^the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) and the Australian National Syringe Program Survey (ANSPS).

- ‡ The median age of IDRS and ANSP participants has increased over the survey period (left)
- ‡ The age at injecting drug use initiation has increased with calendar time (middle)
- ‡ Time since injecting drug use initiation has increased over the survey period (right)







peak in initiating injecting drug use prior to this decline was sensitive to model assumptions, ranging from the early 1980s to the early 1990s.

Implications

- 1. People who inject drugs in Australia are an ageing population.
- 2. It appears this is driven by a sharp decline in the number of injecting drugs for the first time in the mid 1990s , and a cohort of people who began injecting in the 1980s or 90s and continue to inject .
- 3. Increasing age and injecting drug use duration have implications for health service delivery, as they may be accompanied by an increase in chronic health conditions and injecting -related injuries and diseases.