



What do we know about keeping
young people away from crime?

Evidence from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime

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Key messages

- Facts about youth crime:
 - Offending is a 'normal' part of growing up for many, but persistent serious offending is less common
 - Serious offending is at least partly an expression of identity that is reinforced by labeling practices.
- Facts about youth justice:
 - Agencies disproportionately target and label the most vulnerable and dispossessed young people from deprived communities.
- Solutions:
 - Minimal intervention, maximal diversion
 - Holistic and universal services
 - Create opportunities for pro-social identities

The Edinburgh Study

- Prospective longitudinal study of pathways into and out of offending, involving a cohort of 4,300 young people who started secondary school in Edinburgh in 1998
- Aims to study offending within 3 main contexts:
 - Individual development through the life-course
 - Physical and social structure of neighbourhoods
 - Impact of interaction with agencies of social control & law enforcement
- Census based approach involving all 23 mainstream schools, 8 out of 14 Independent schools and 9 out of 12 special schools (92.2% coverage)
- Six annual sweeps of data collection involving self-completion questionnaires administered in schools from 1998-2003
- Phase 7 of data collection from 2009-11 following up a selected sample of the cohort
 - those with offence referrals to CHS

Data collection

Multiple information sources:

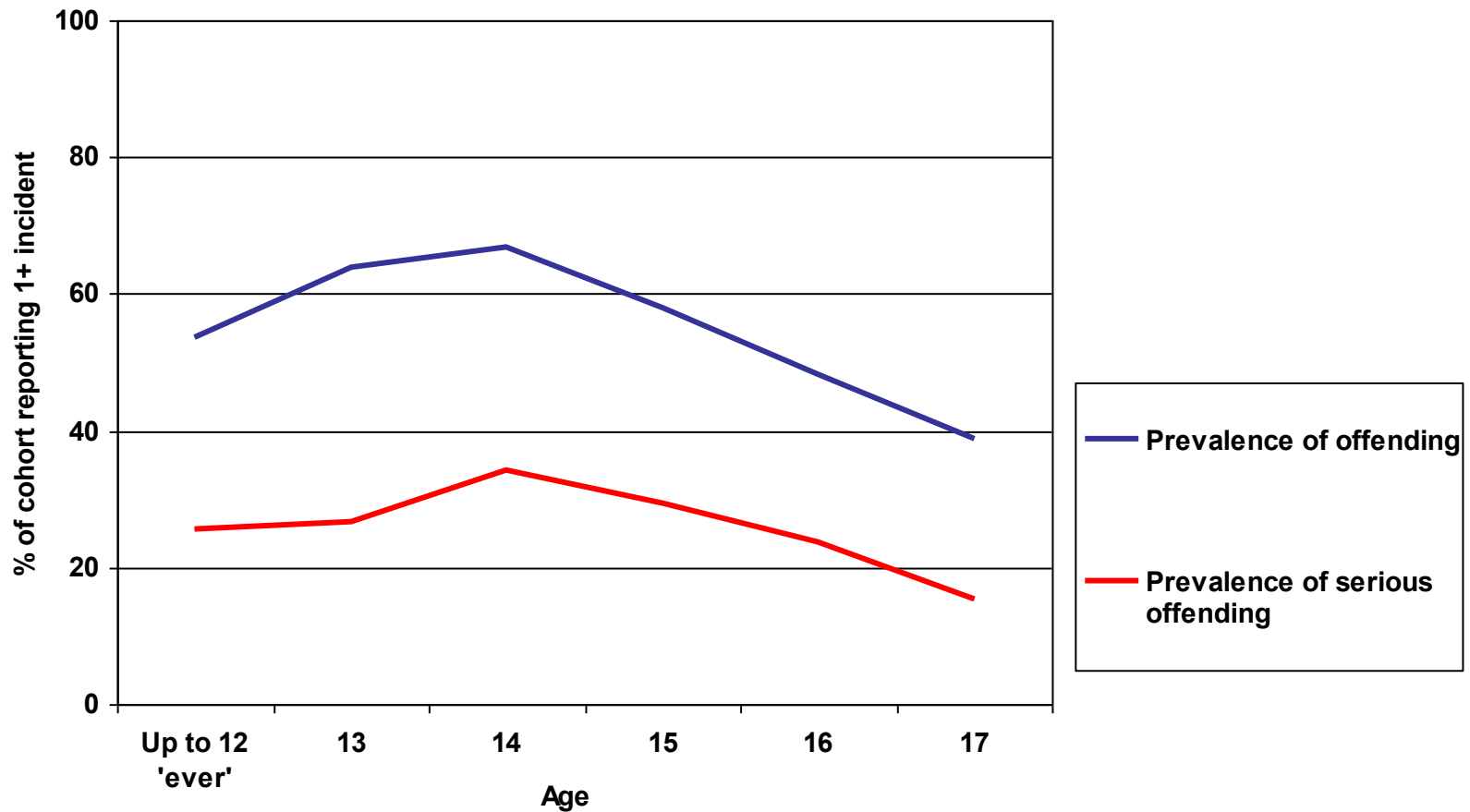
- Self-completion questionnaires (6 annual sweeps + 1 follow up)
- Semi-structured interviews (age 13 and 17 + PhD projects)
- Teachers' evaluation (age 13)
- Survey of parents (age 14)
- Police records (to age 15)
- School records about attendance (to age 18)
- SQA exam results (to age 18)
- Children's hearing records (to age 18)
- Social work records (to age 18)
- SCRO records (convictions, to age 24)
- Geographical study of Edinburgh neighbourhoods

Future plans:

- A further sweep of the whole cohort at age 30
- Procurator fiscal, Social Work and Prison records to age 30
- Health and employment records

‘Facts about youth crime’

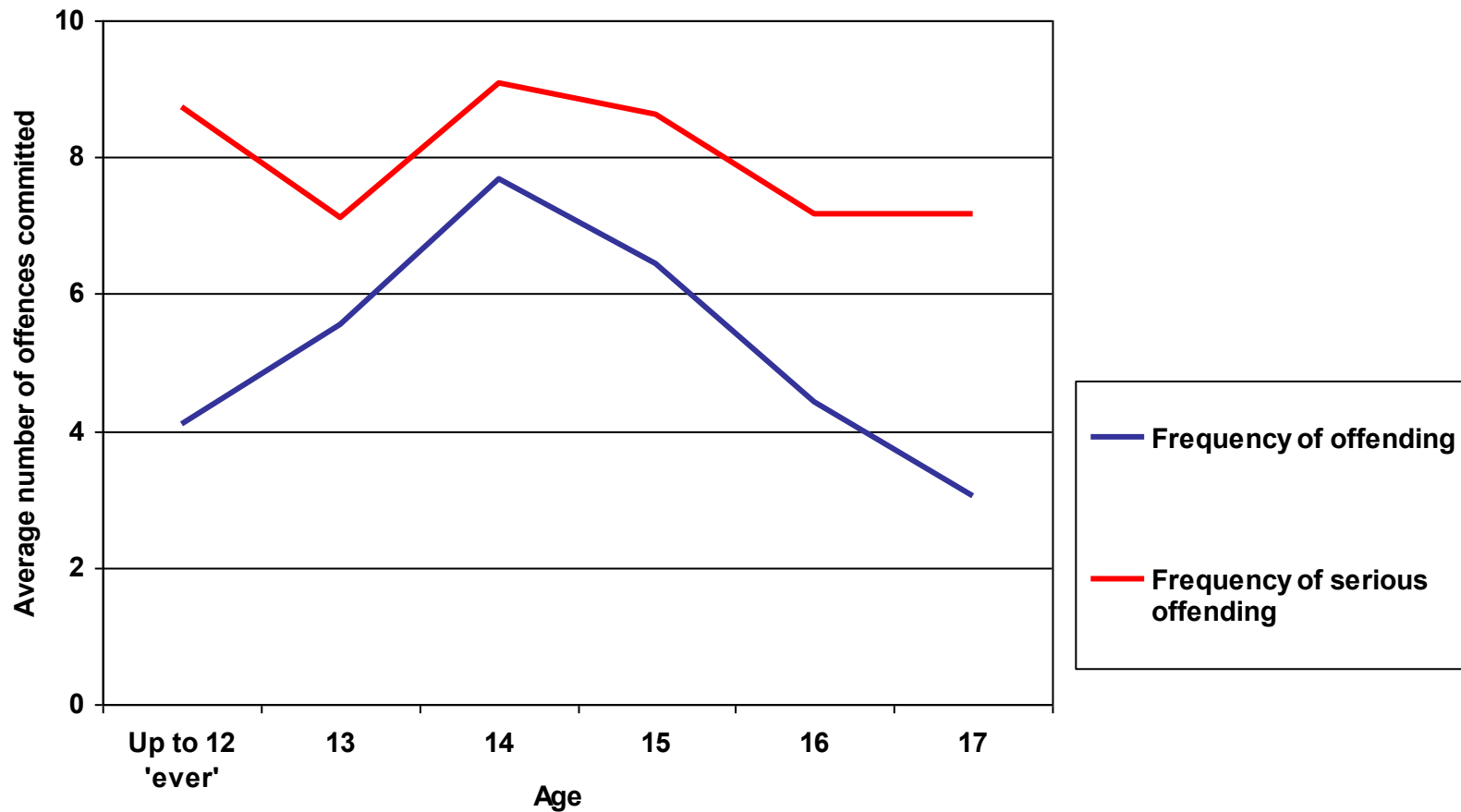
Prevalence of offending



'Offending' = breach of the peace, shoplifting, carrying a weapon, stealing by force, vandalism, housebreaking, car breaking, joyriding, fire raising and assault.

'Serious offending' = housebreaking, car breaking, fire raising, stealing by force, carrying a weapon, joyriding, and 6+ incidents of assault.

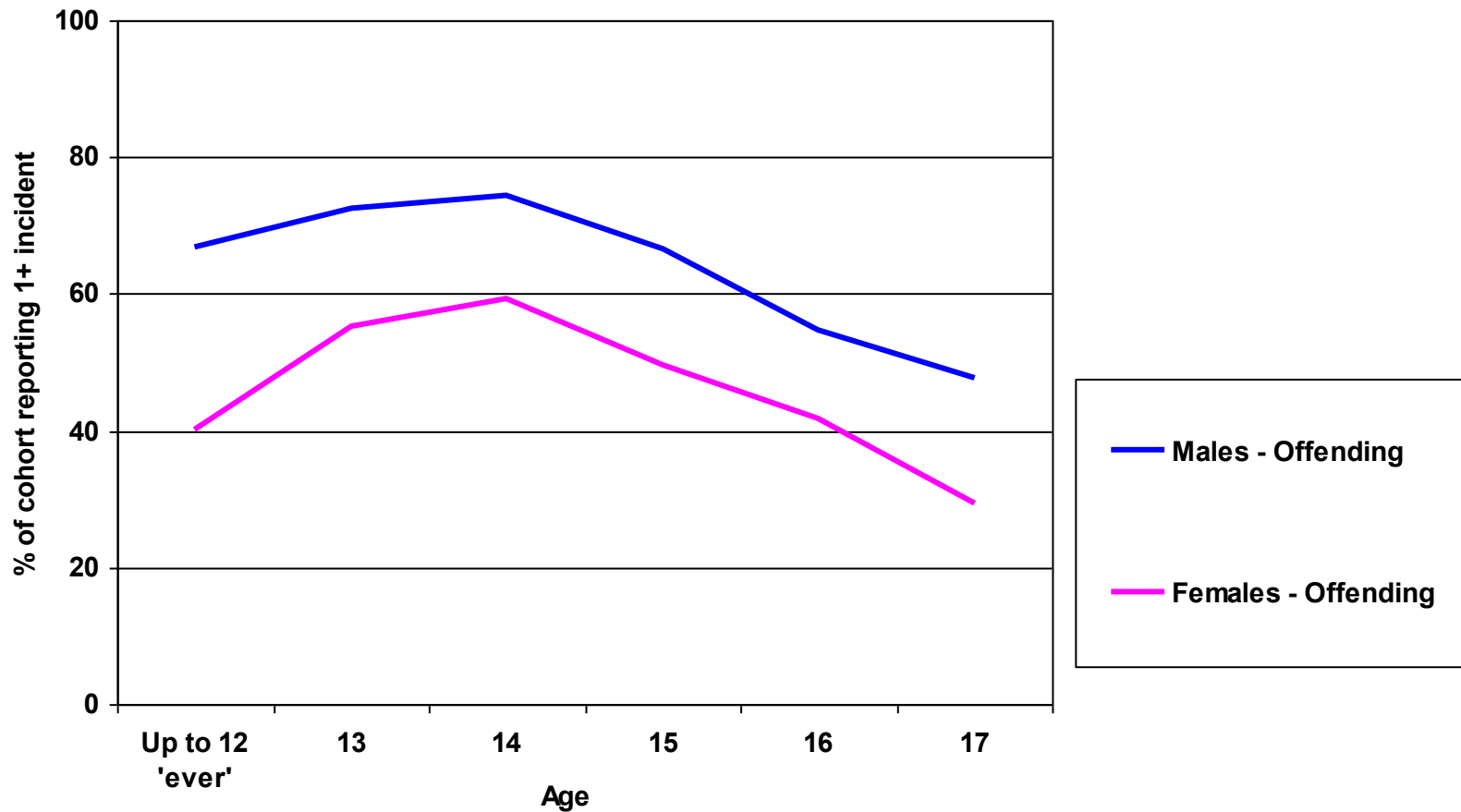
Frequency of offending



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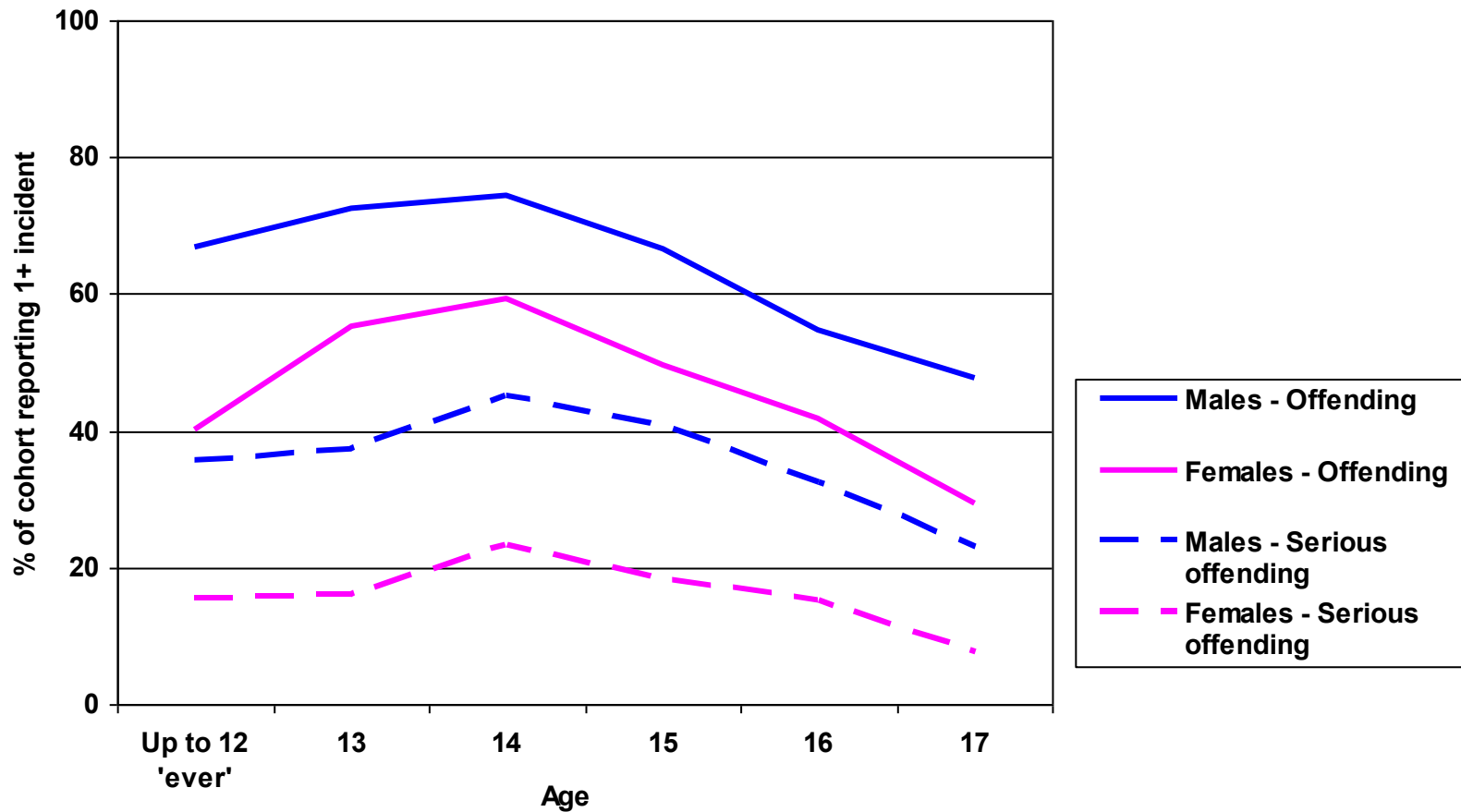
Gender differences in offending prevalence



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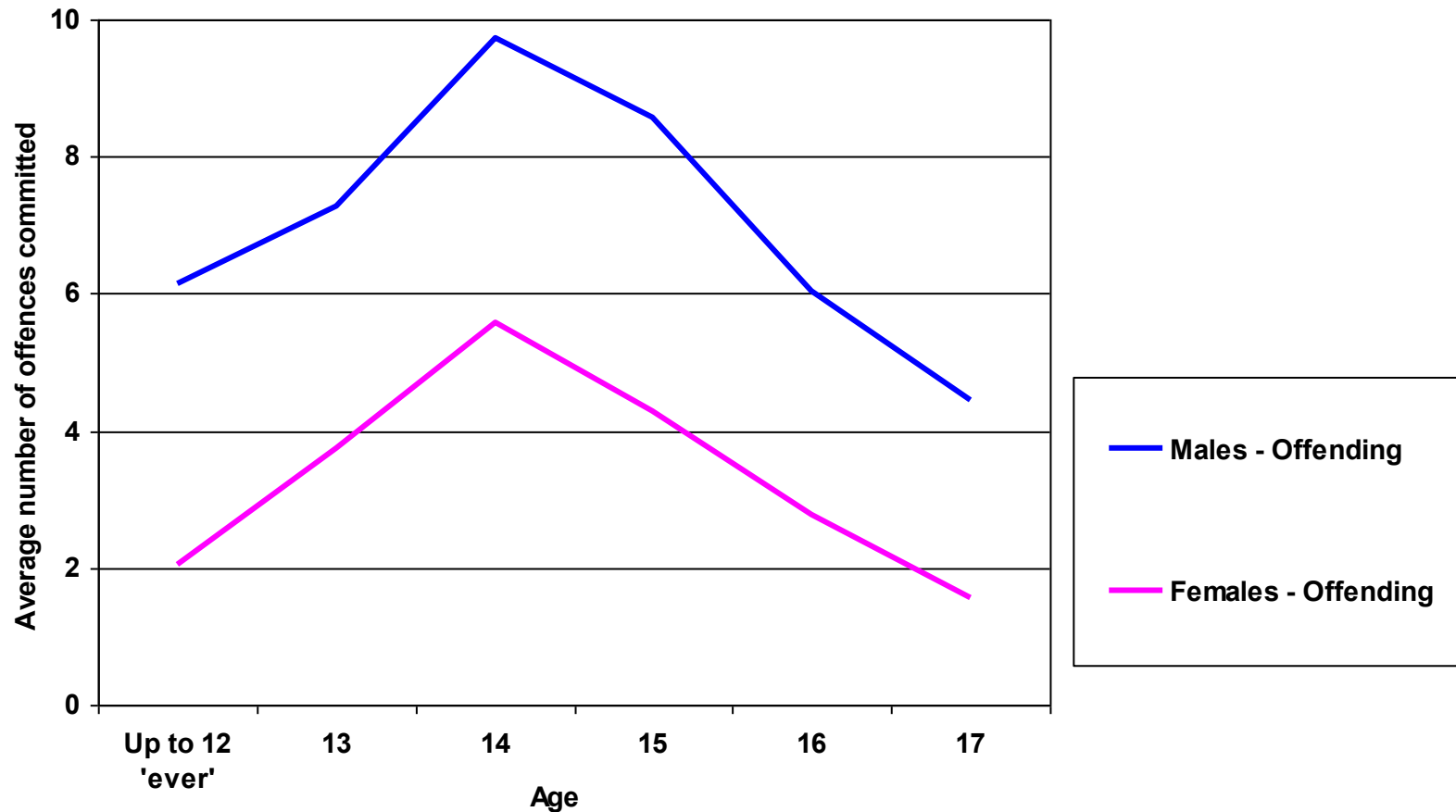
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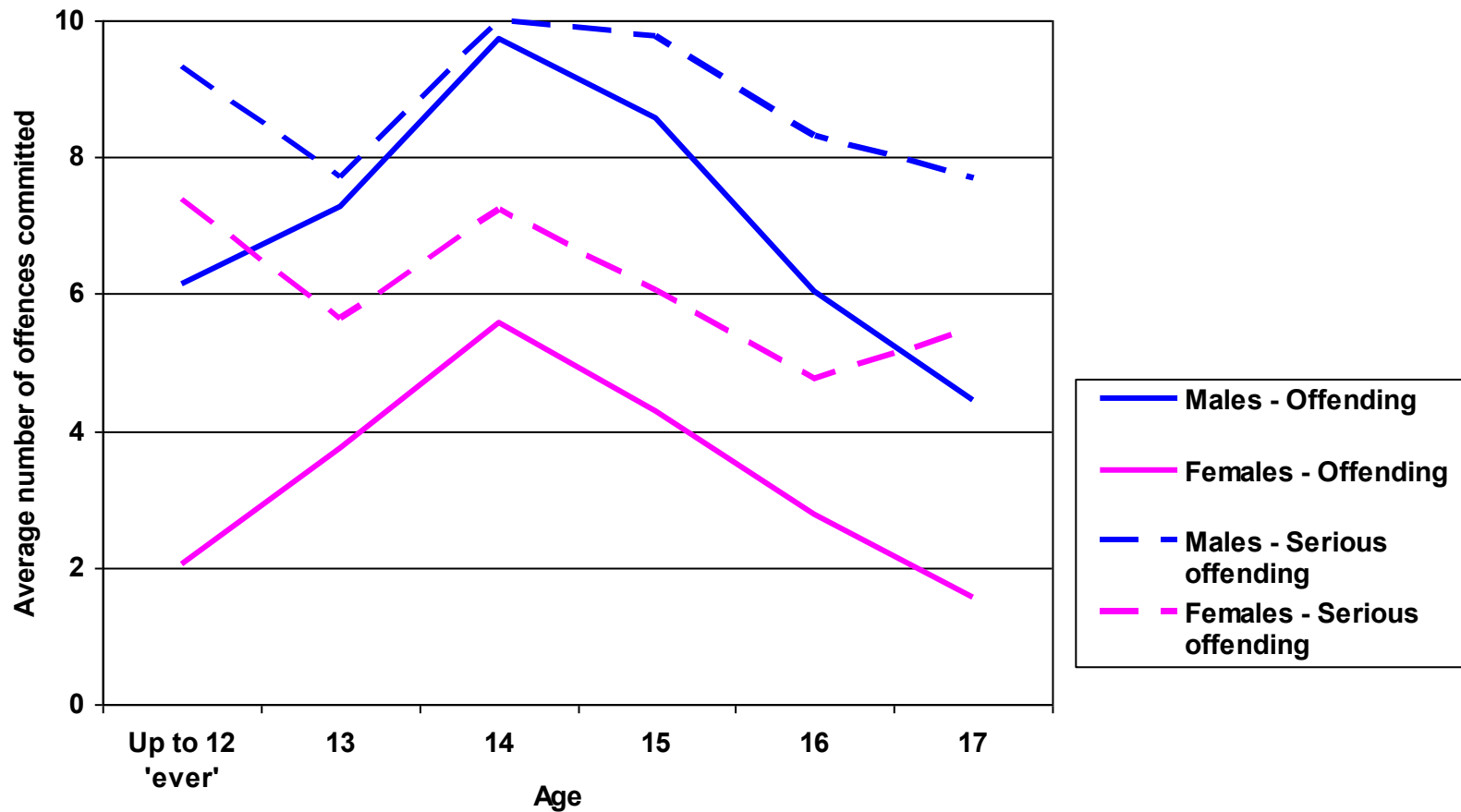
Gender differences in offending frequency



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Gender differences in offending incidence



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What predicts serious offending at age 15?

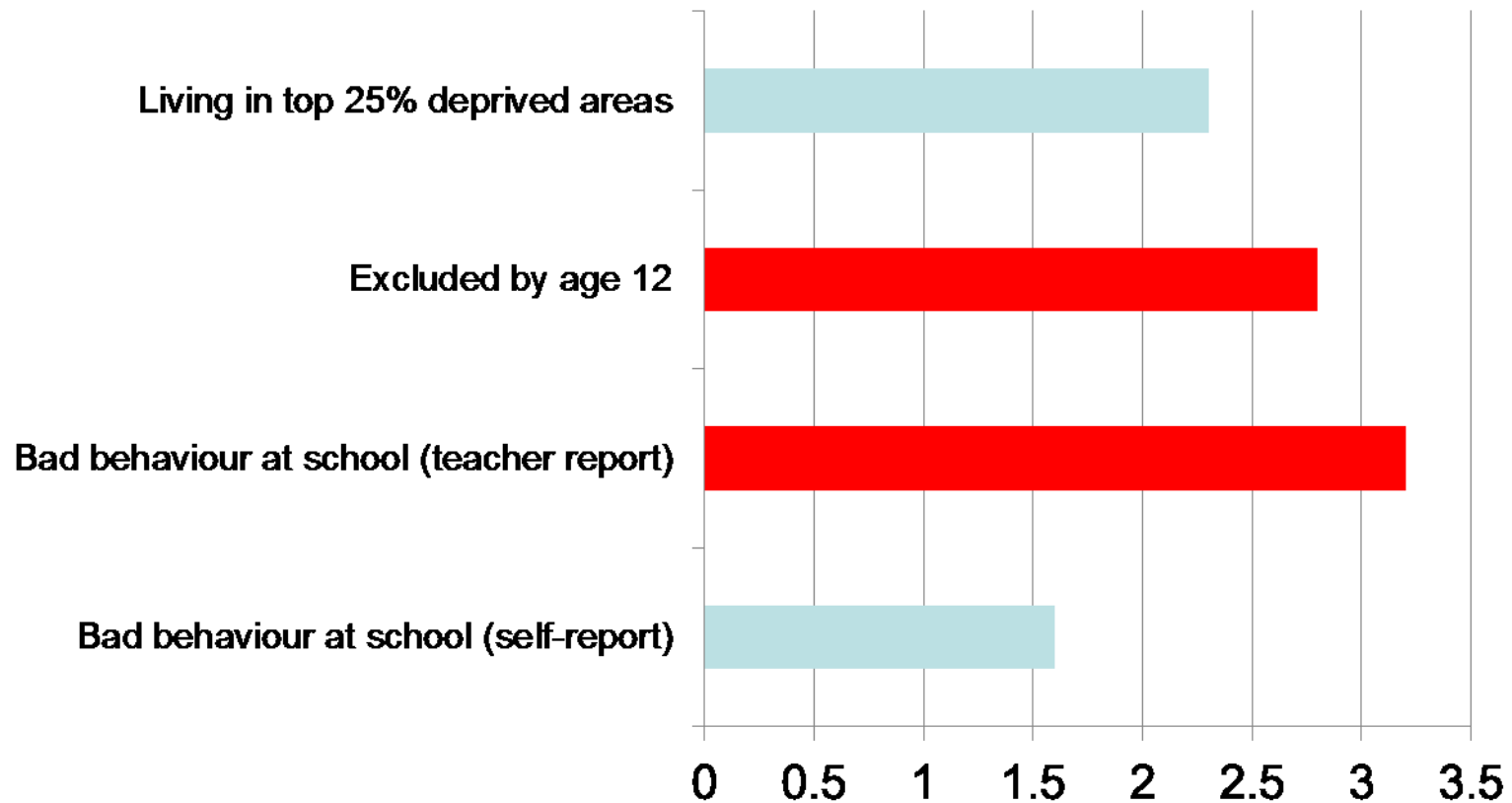
Domain	Variable at age 14	Involved in serious offending at age 15 (Yes=1037, No=1761)	
		Odds ratio (95% CI)	P value
Gender	Male	12.0 (1.6-2.4)	.000
Deprivation	Family socio-economic status (manual/unemployed)	1.4 (1.2-1.8)	.001
Family factors	Scale of family crises	1.1 (1.0-1.3)	.045
Personality/ identity	Moral attitude: accepting of violence	3.3 (1.6-6.6)	.001
	Scale of risk-taking	1.3 (1.2-1.4)	.000
Formal and informal exclusionary practices	Warned or charged by police	2.1 (1.5-3.0)	.000
	Excluded from school by age 14	1.5 (1.1-2.3)	.023
	Excluded by peers in previous year	1.6 (1.2-2.1)	.001
Exposure to risk	Scale of victimisation	1.2 (1.1-1.4)	.007
Previous offending	Scale of serious offending	15.3 (11.7-20.2)	.000

Negotiated order

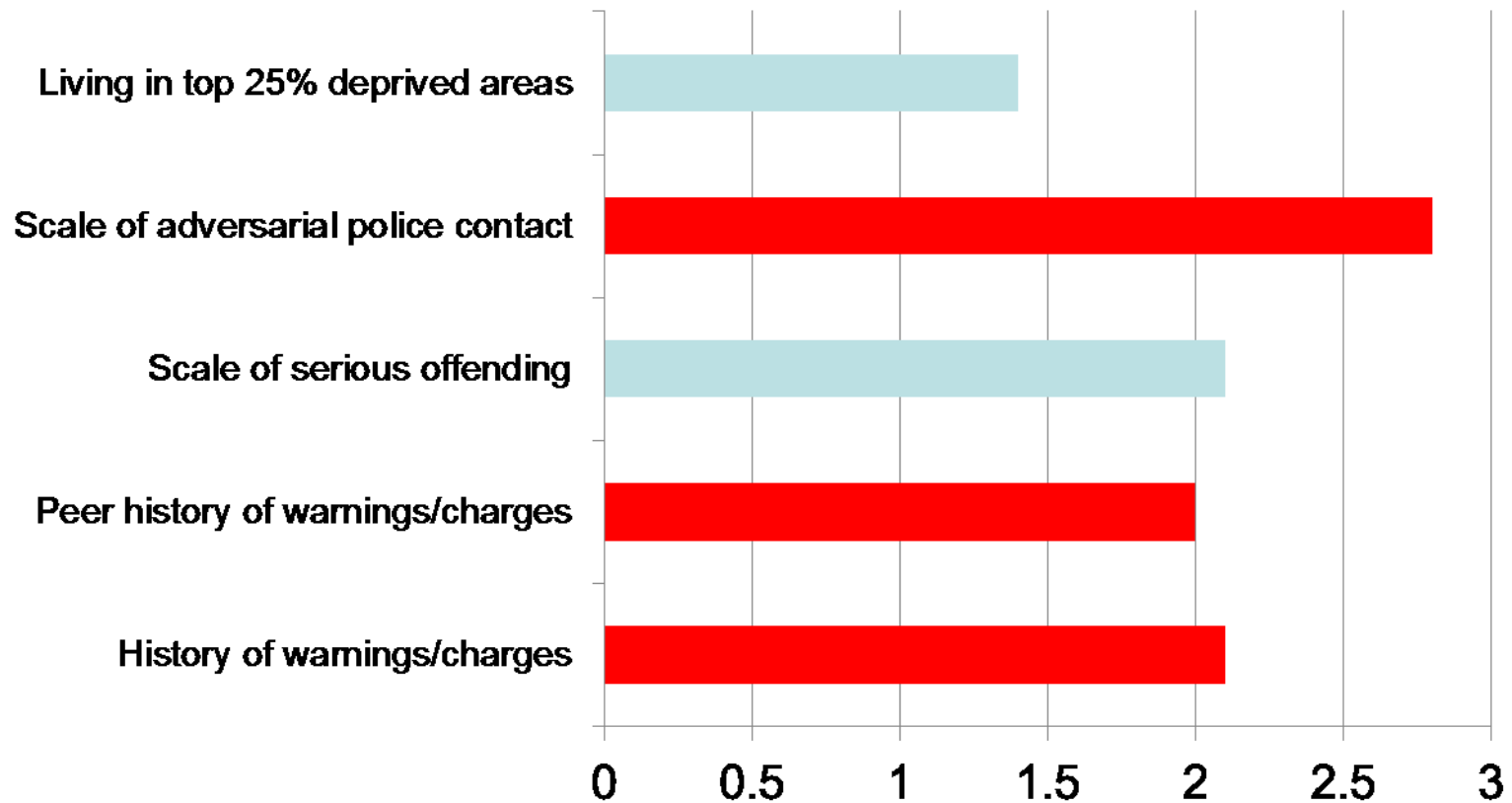
- The dynamics of informal and formal regulatory practices ascribe identities to young people which they require to negotiate (absorbing or fighting back)
- Formal practices include the school, the police, the youth justice system, informal practices include 'the street'
- Both sets of practices mimic each other in terms of an inclusionary-exclusionary logic.
- Young people who fail to exhibit appropriate appearance, manner or lifestyle are expelled through multi-layered labelling processes
- Expulsion is experienced in a range of ways e.g. school exclusion, police stop and search, exclusion from peer groups

- Identities never become fully embedded, but repeated expulsion results in persistent marginalisation.
- For those at the most extreme end of this process, the 'offender identity' becomes the dominant label.
- Young people have limited power to negotiate within the context of this web of exclusion.
- This exclusion sustains a pattern of persistent and serious offending.

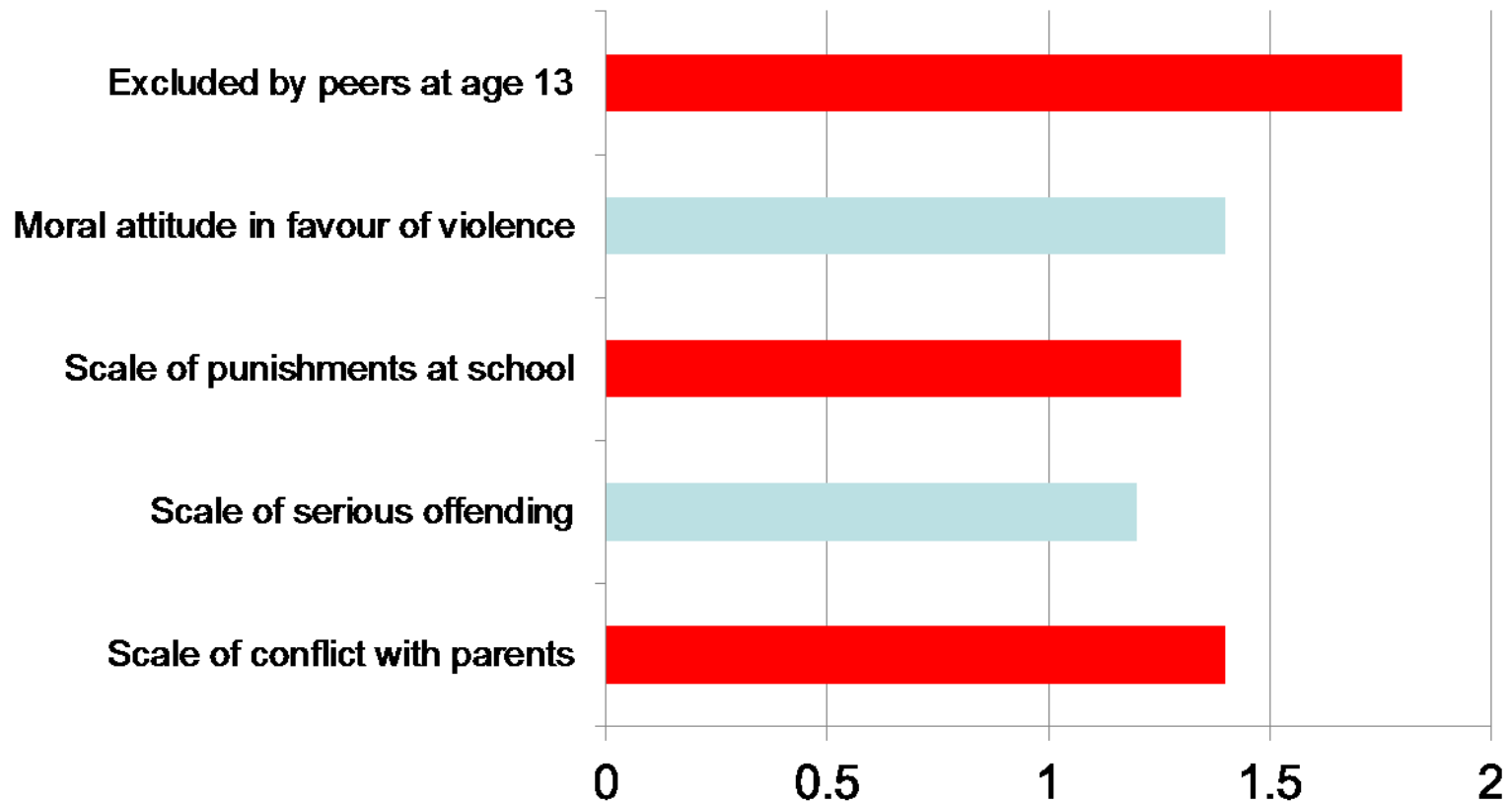
Increased risk of school exclusion at 15



Increased risk of police warnings/charges at 15



Increased risk of peer exclusion at 15



‘Facts’ about youth justice

Agencies disproportionately target and label the most vulnerable and dispossessed young people from deprived communities

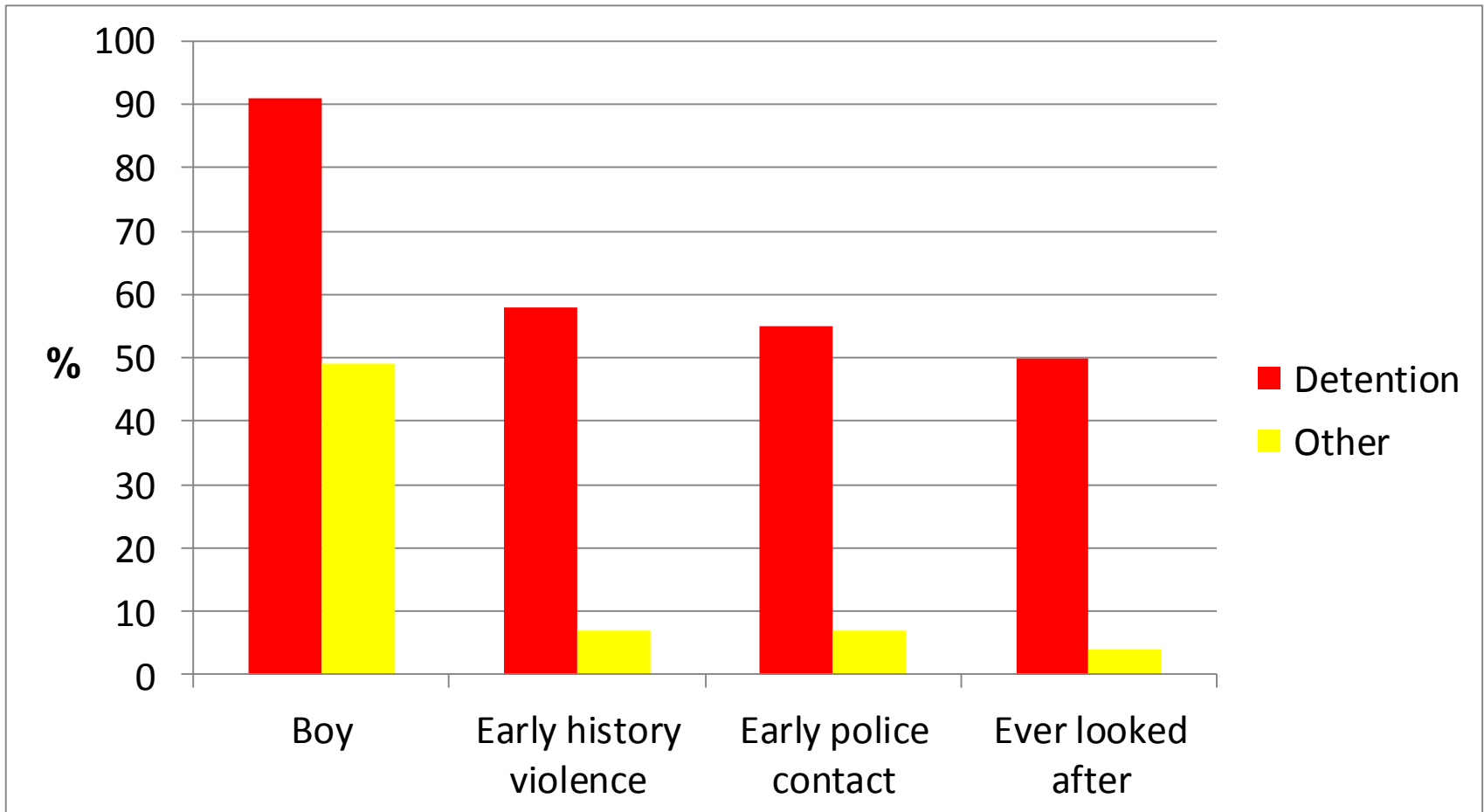
Key messages from Phase 7 (follow-up to age 24/5)

- Patterns of detention indicate that the criminal justice system serves to punish poverty, social marginalisation and individual vulnerability, as much as serious offending
- For children who are identified by agencies as presenting 'the greatest risk' at an early age:
 - early identification does NOT lead to desistence from offending
 - RATHER, early identification 'grooms' children for later imprisonment

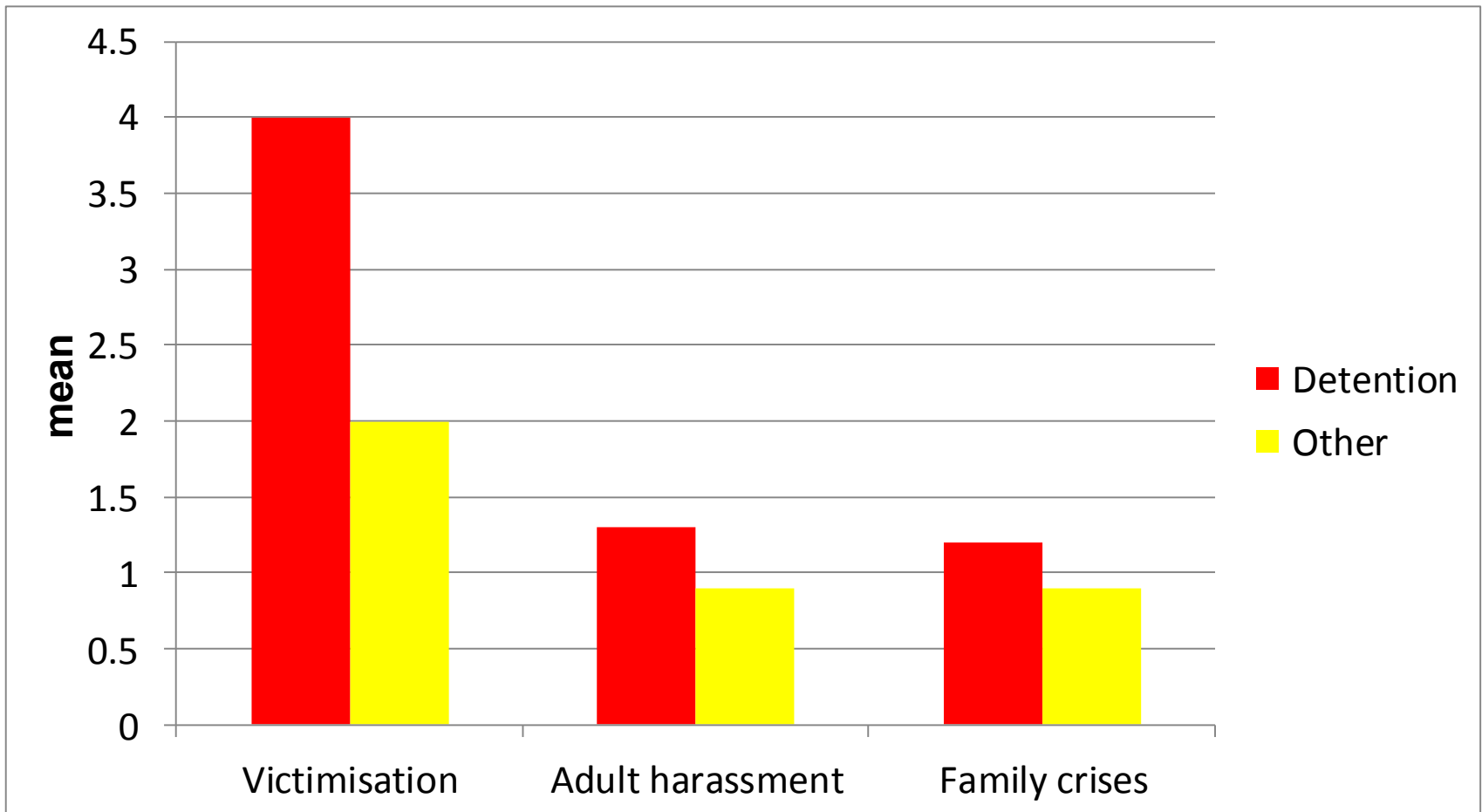
Phase 7: achieved sample (54% response rate)

(61% male)	n=252
Early offence referral (by 12)	33
Early matched group	39
Late hearings offence referral (at age 15)	50
Late matched group	53
First offence referral at age 13 or 14	77

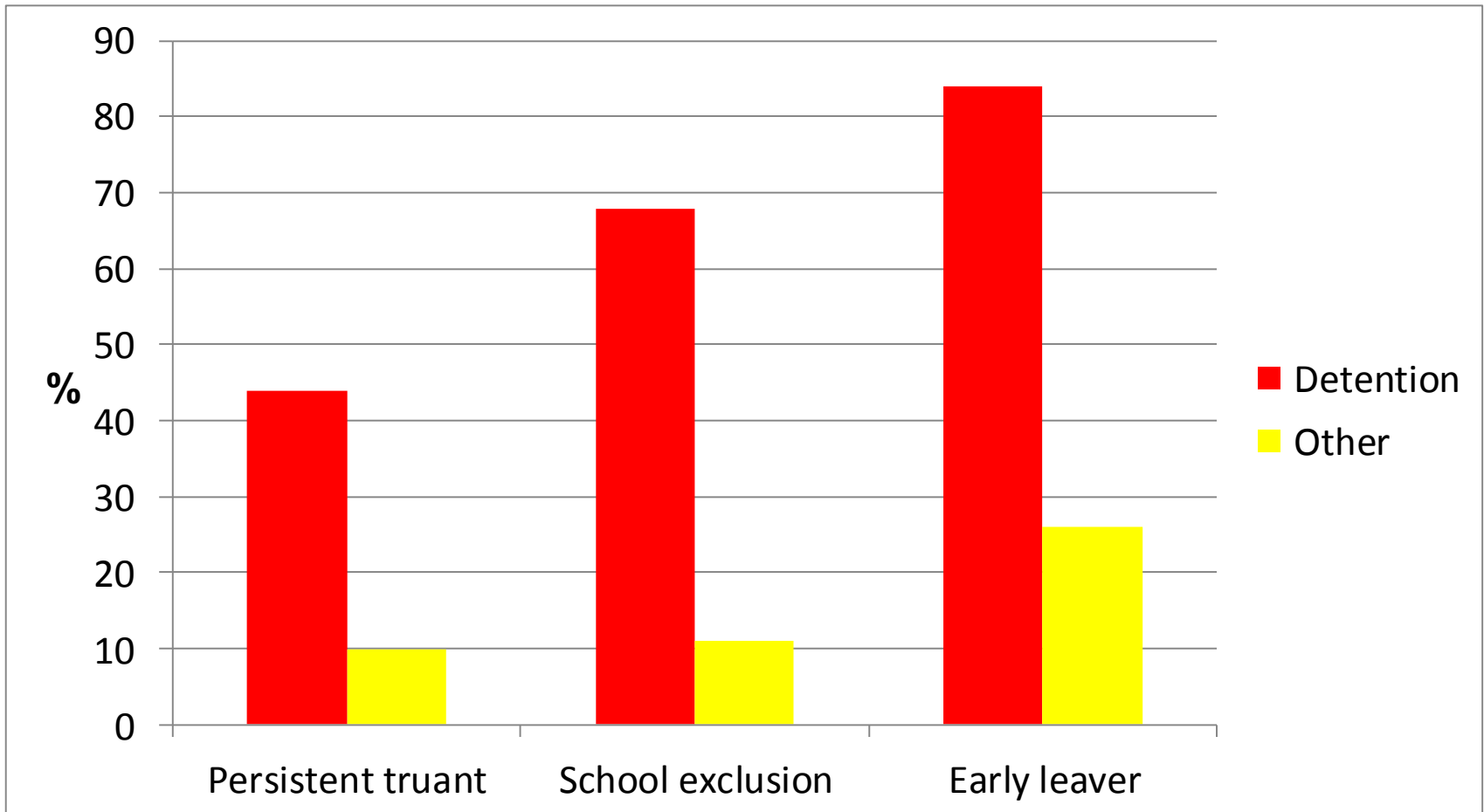
Detention by age 24



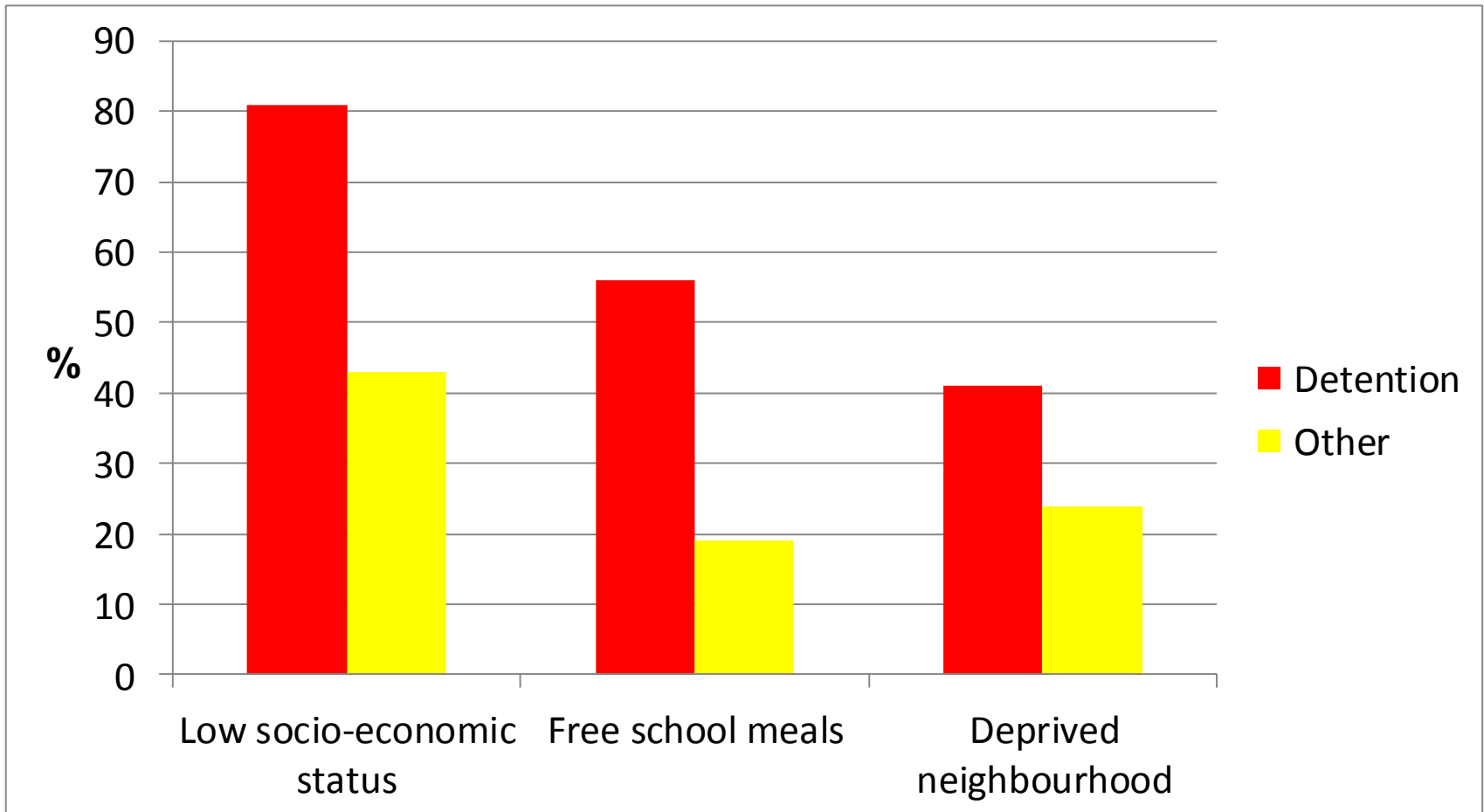
Punishing the vulnerable



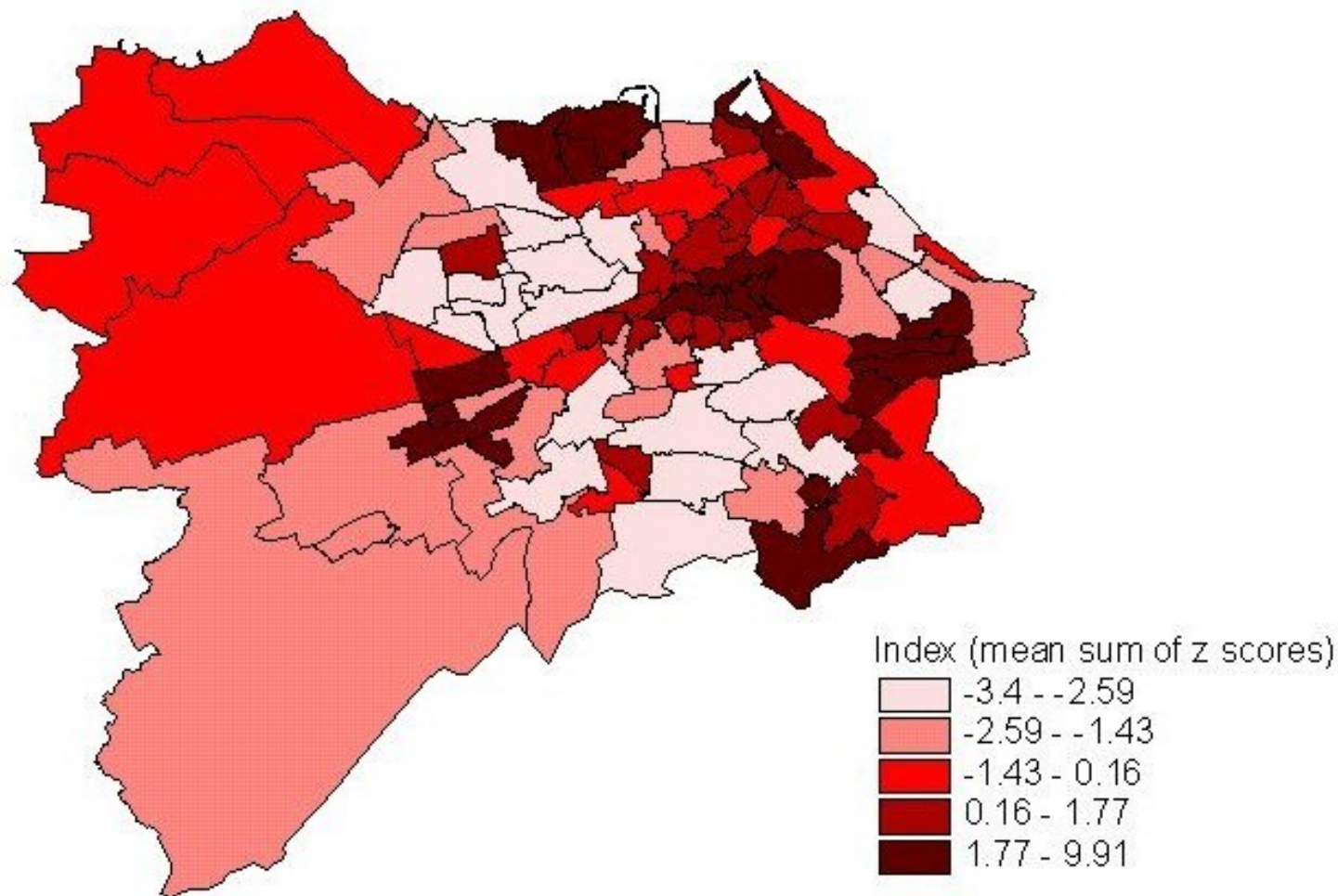
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Punishing the vulnerable

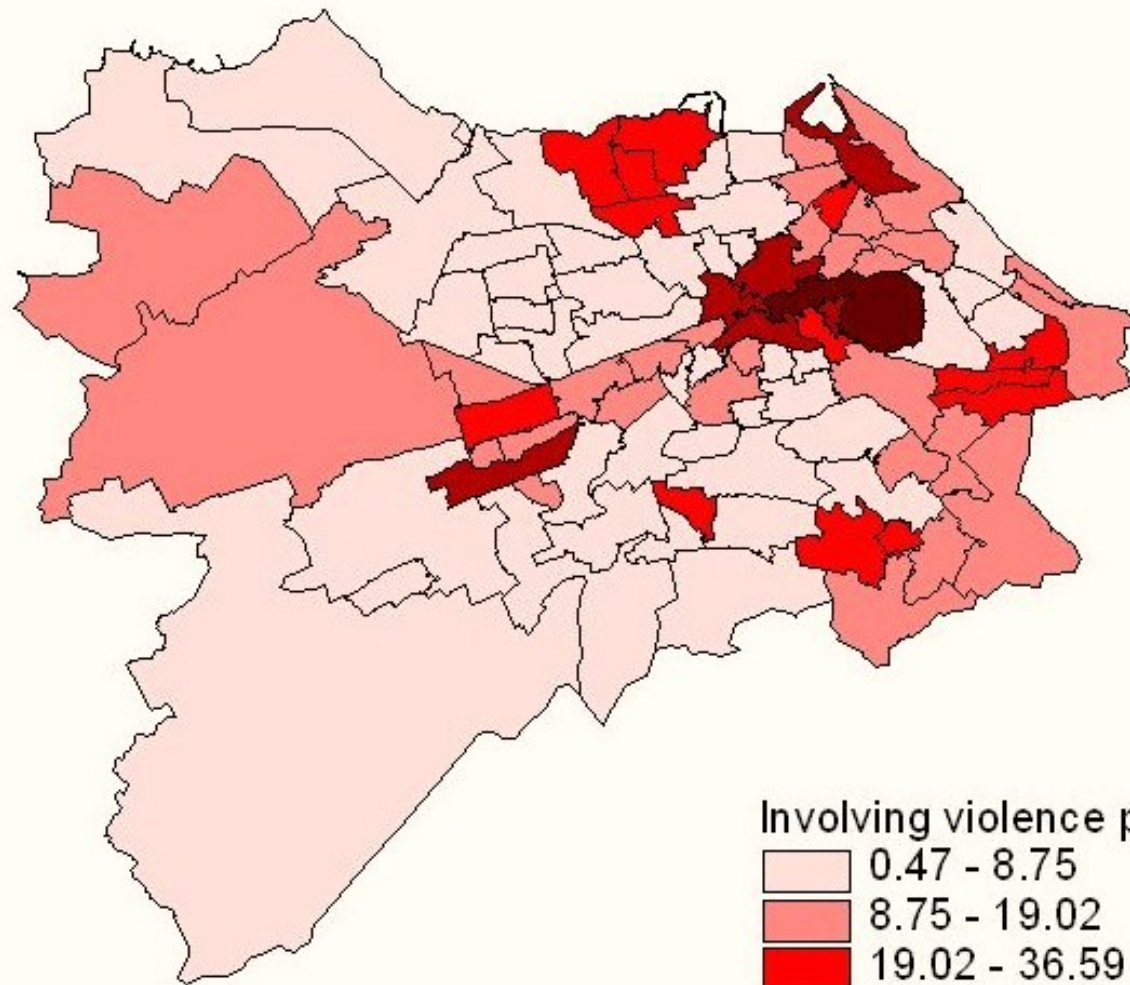


Deprivation across Edinburgh



Based on data extracted from 2001 Census

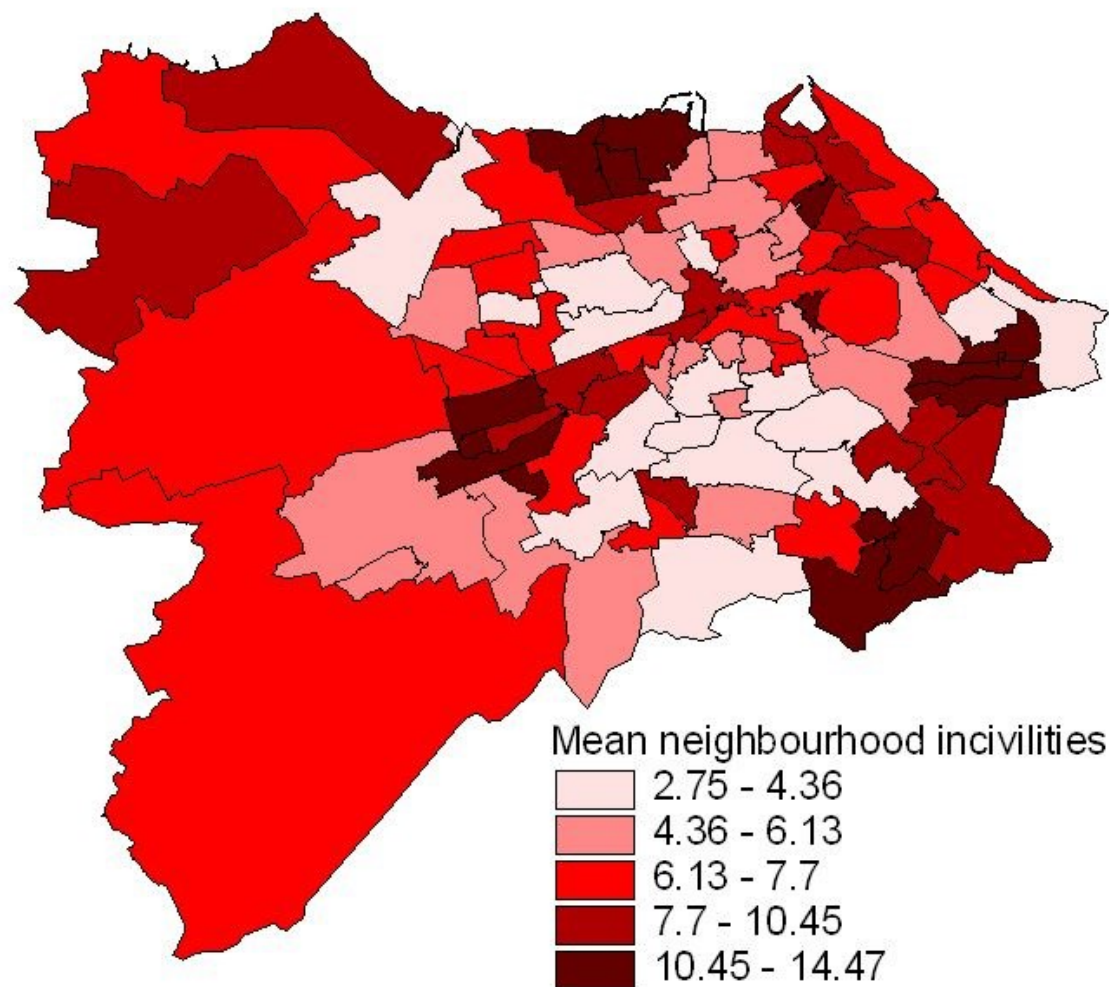
Police recorded violent crime



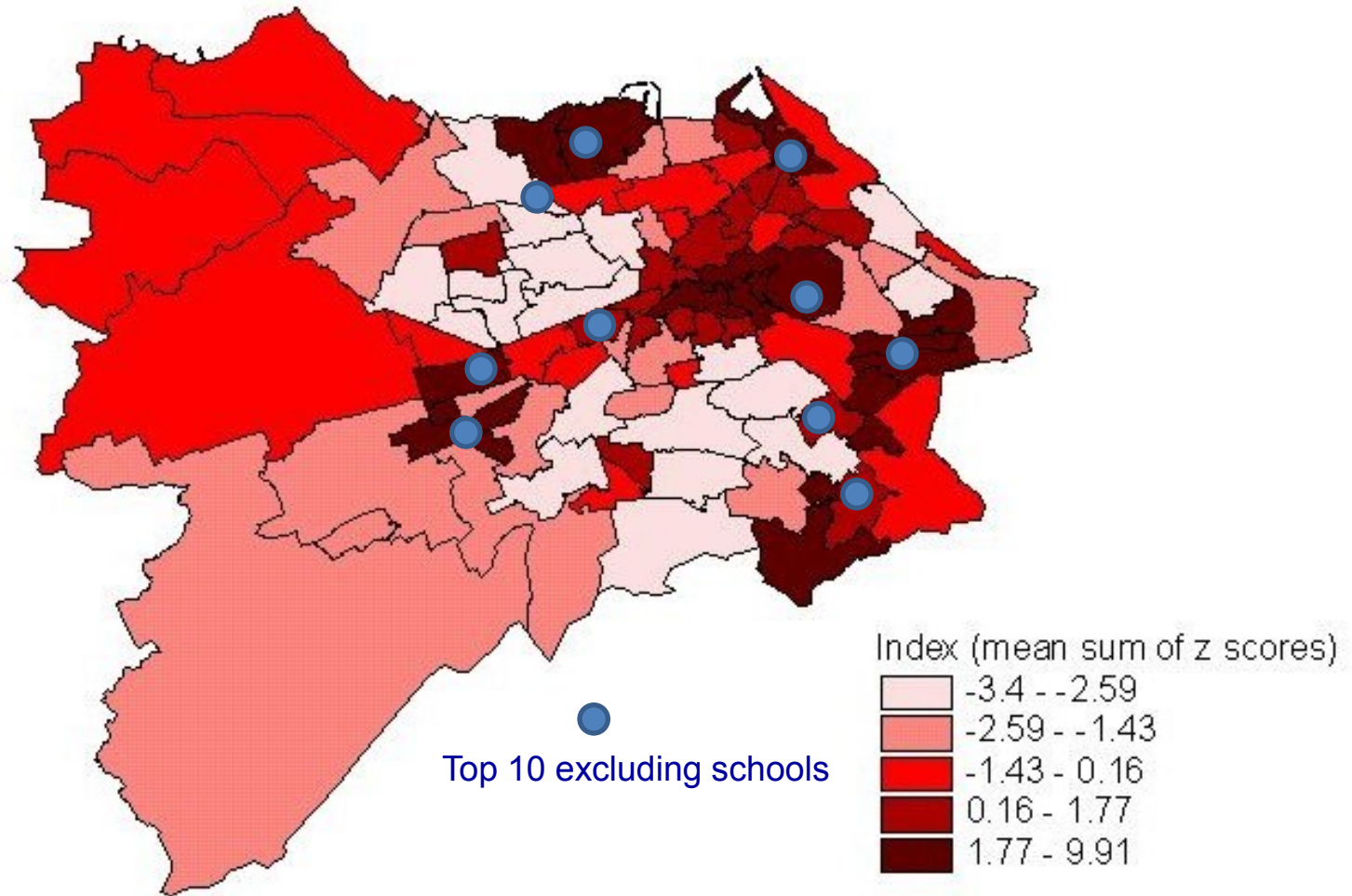
Involving violence per 1000 pop



Incivilities observed by cohort (S4)

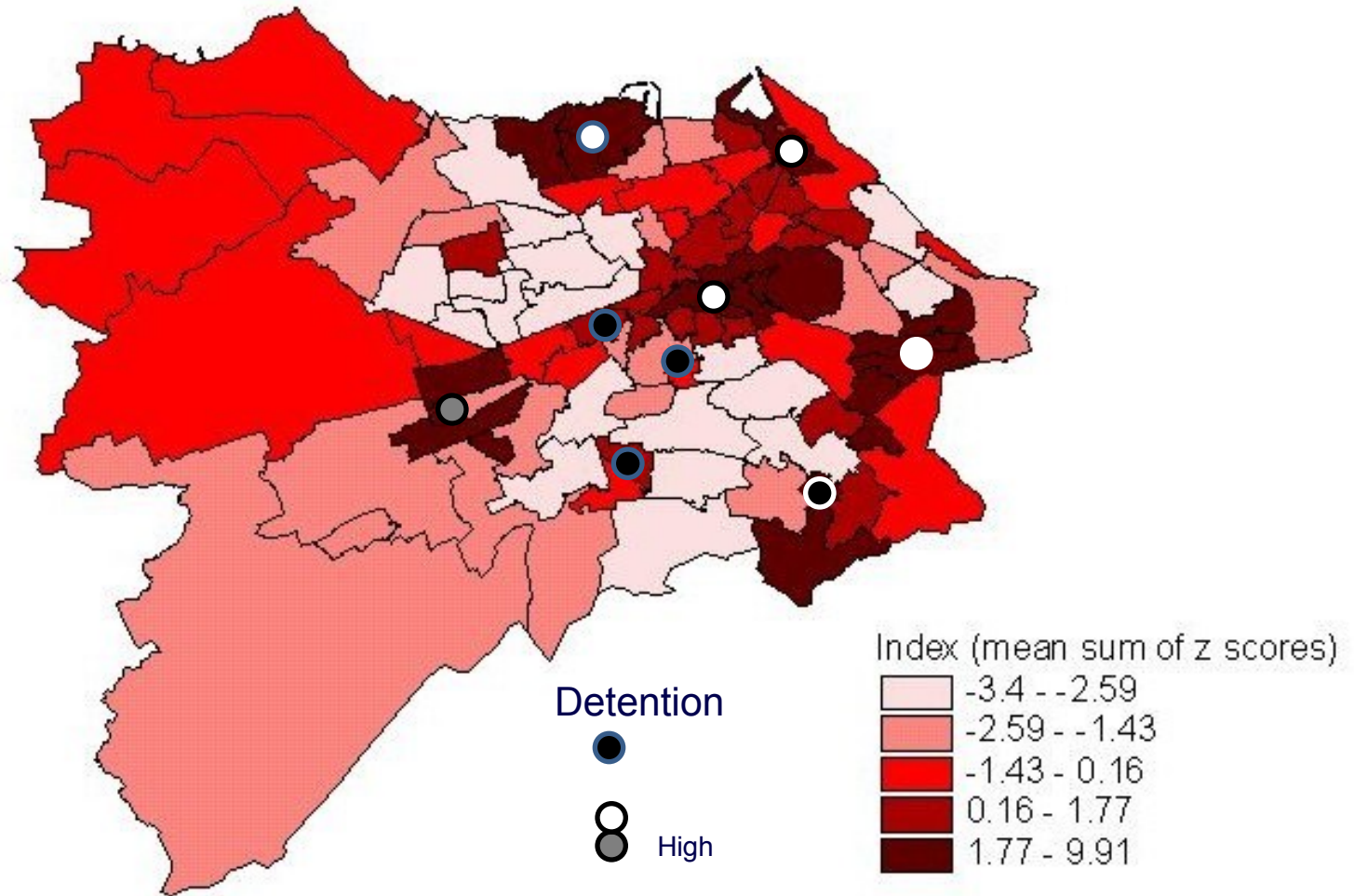


School exclusion across Edinburgh



Based on data extracted from 2001 Census

Detention across Edinburgh



Based on data extracted from 2001 Census

Phase 7: tracking criminal justice and self-reported offending careers

Comparing two groups:

(i) Early cases: offence referral to Reporter by age 12

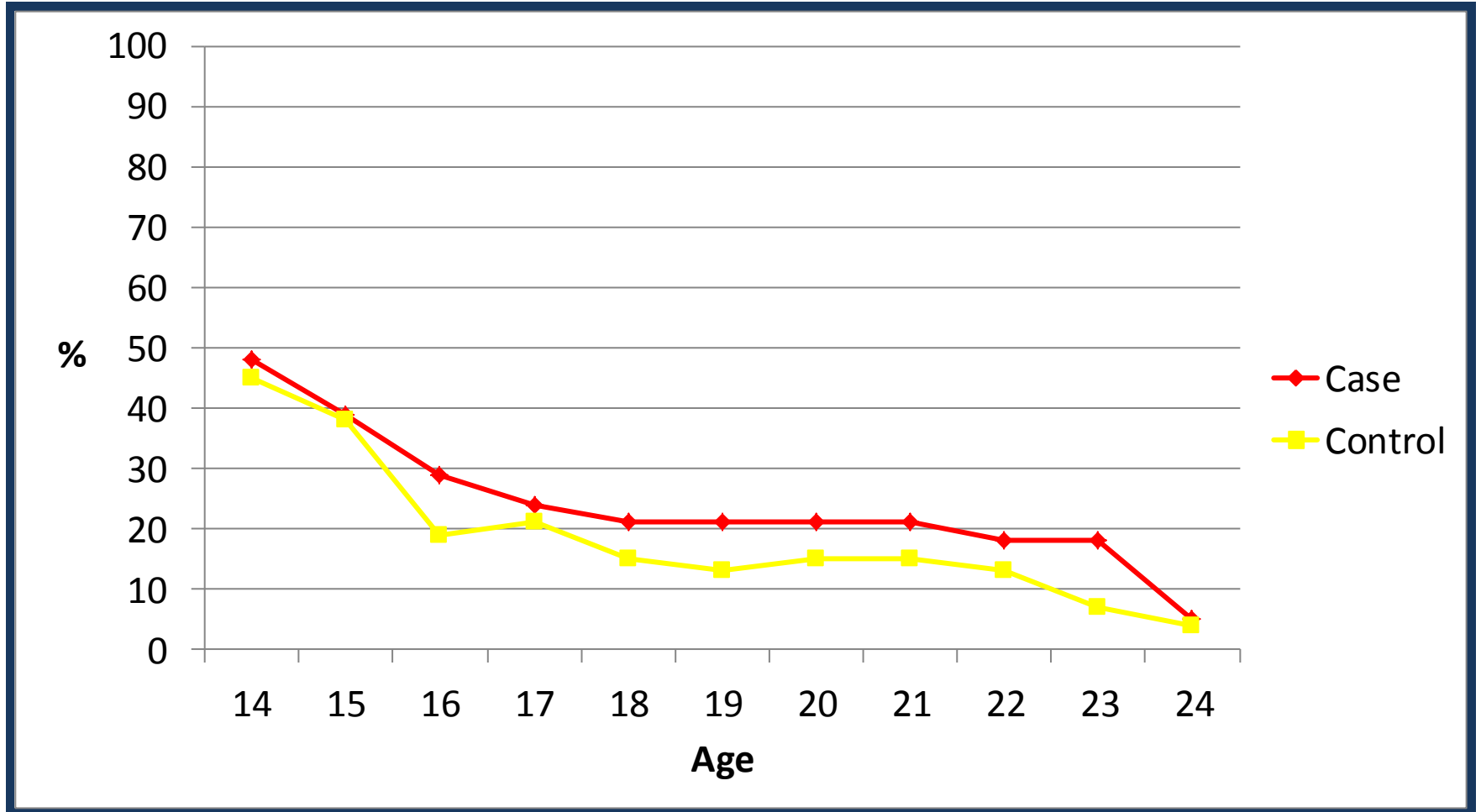
(ii) Early matches: no referral (any ground) by age 12

Groups matched at age 12 on following criteria

- Gender
- Parental separation
- Family socio-economic status
- Free school meal entitlement
- Neighbourhood deprivation
- Serious offending (self-report)
- Drug use
- Hanging about public places
- Adversarial police contact
- Truancy
- School exclusion

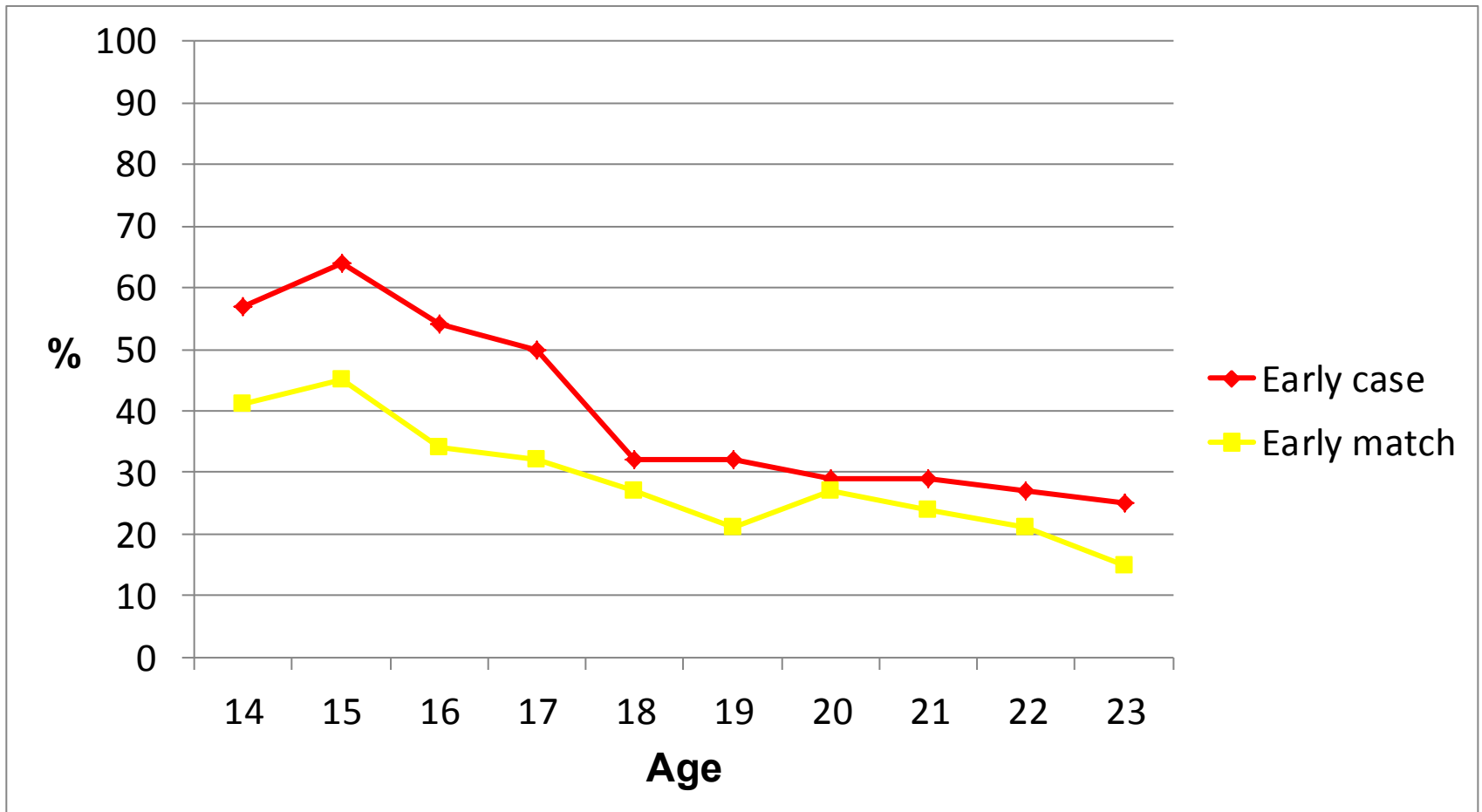
Subsequent offending careers: violence

(robbery, weapon carrying, assault)

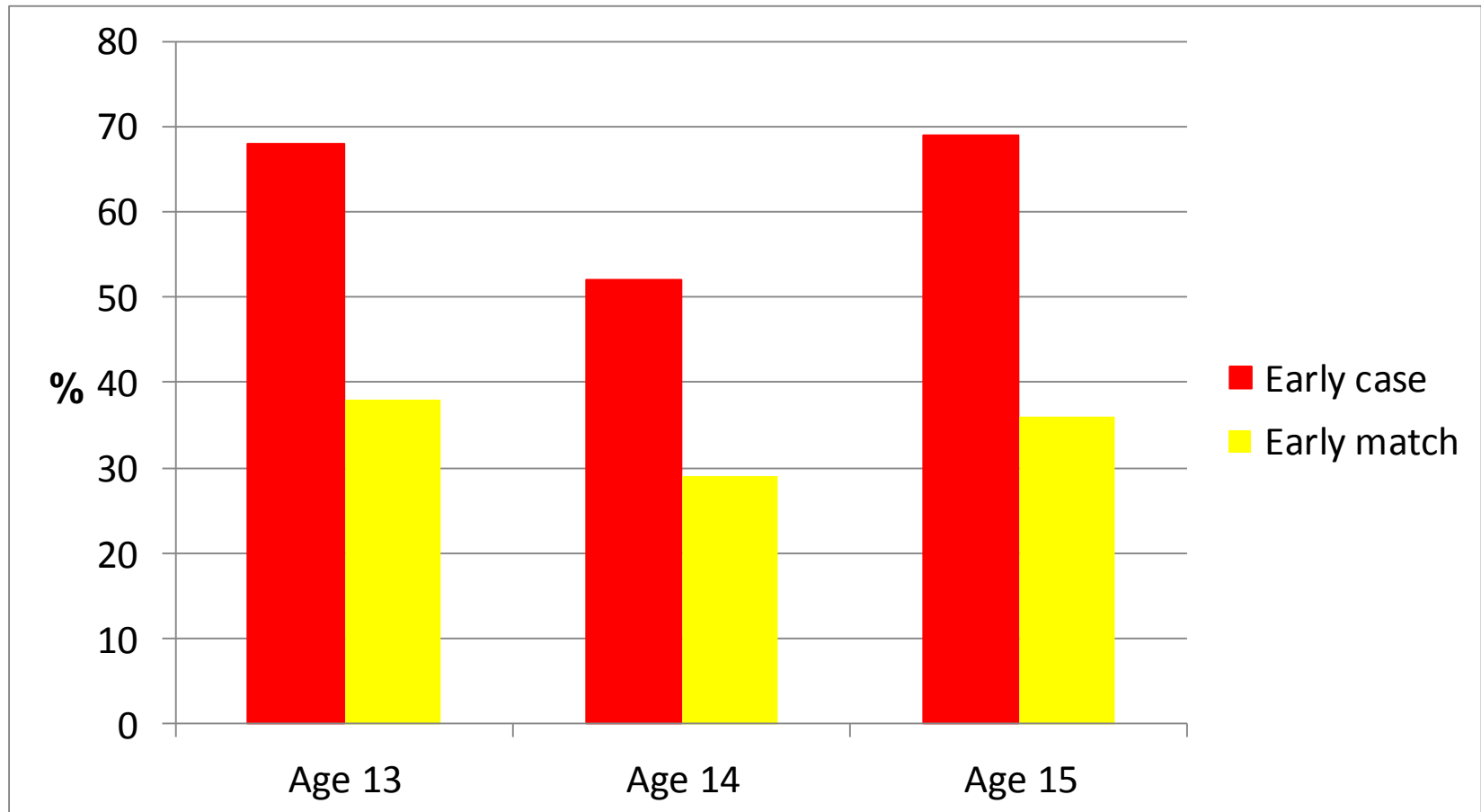


Subsequent offending careers: 'serious' offending

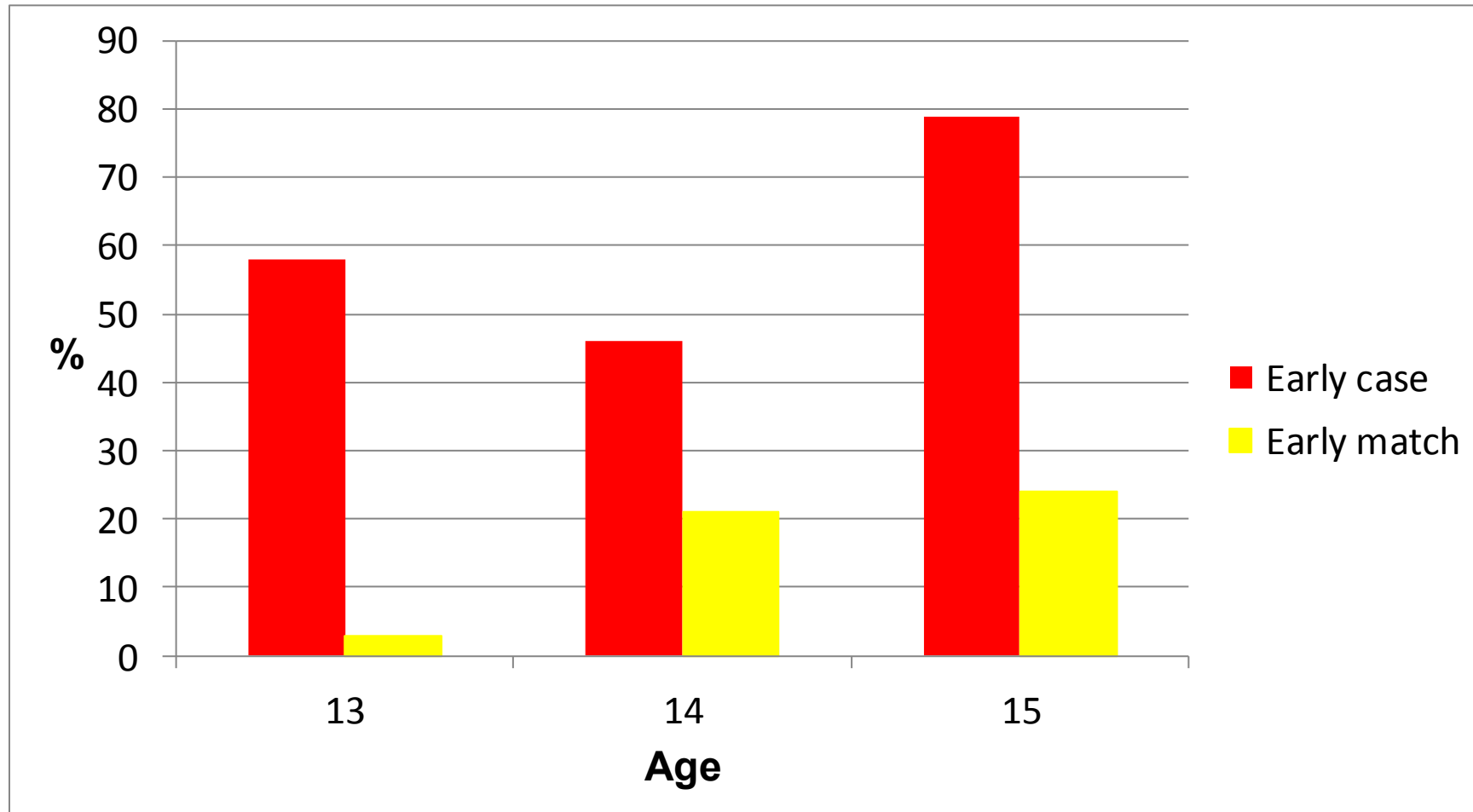
(Robbery, weapon carrying, assault, fire-raising, house-breaking, riding in stolen car, theft from mv)



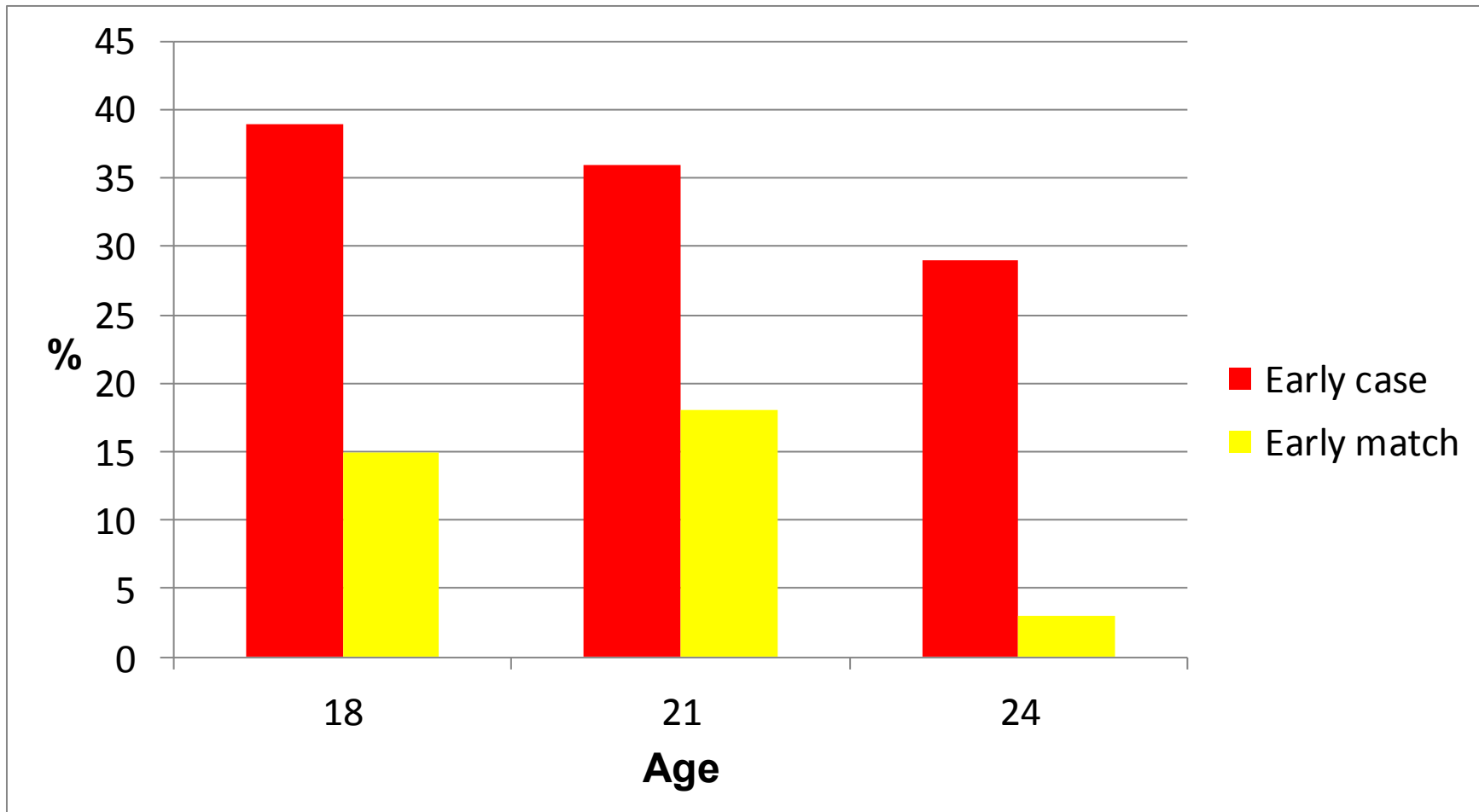
Subsequent police warnings/charges



Subsequent offence referrals to Reporter



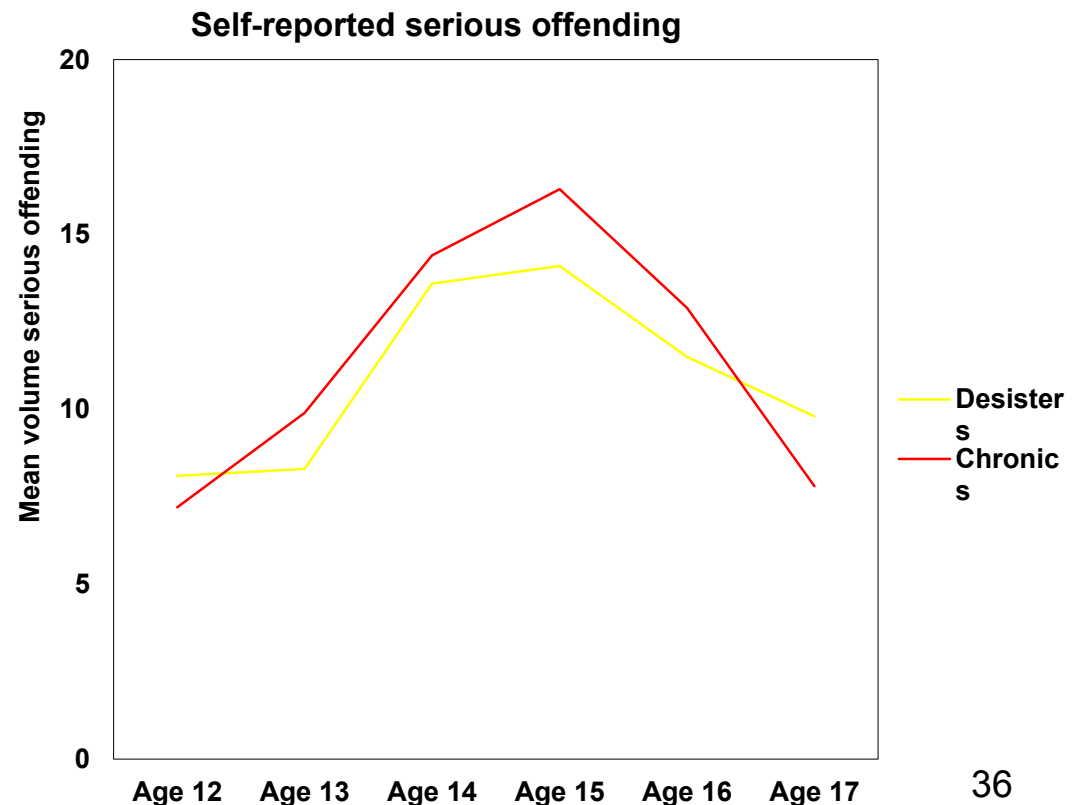
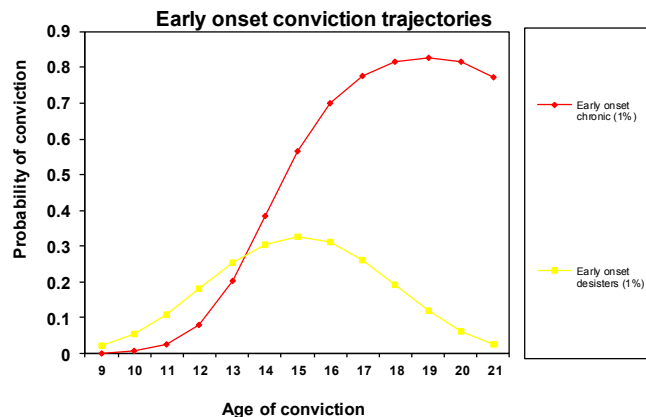
Court appearance



Earlier analysis (Phase 6): conviction trajectories

(McAra and McVie 2010)

- At age 12 no significant differences between the early onset groups on all study measures of poverty, school problems, moral attitudes, peers, family problems, personality
- Key change between 13-15 is chronics experience increased rates of truancy, school exclusion and police adversarial contact
- Variant trajectories NOT explained by self-reported offending – no significant differences between groups at any study sweep



Outcomes poorer on all criminal justice measures

	Early cases	Early matches
% conviction in adult system by 18	55	26
% conviction in adult system by 22	64	27
% custody at 18	26	9
% custody at 21	32	9
% custody by 24	42	9

Predicting custody and exclusion

Predicting custody by age 24 (amongst those with a hearings referral by age 12)	Odds ratio
Excluded from school by age 12	4.0
Boy	3.5
Residential care by age 12	4.0
Offence history includes violence by age 12 (self report)	2.9

Predicting custody and exclusion

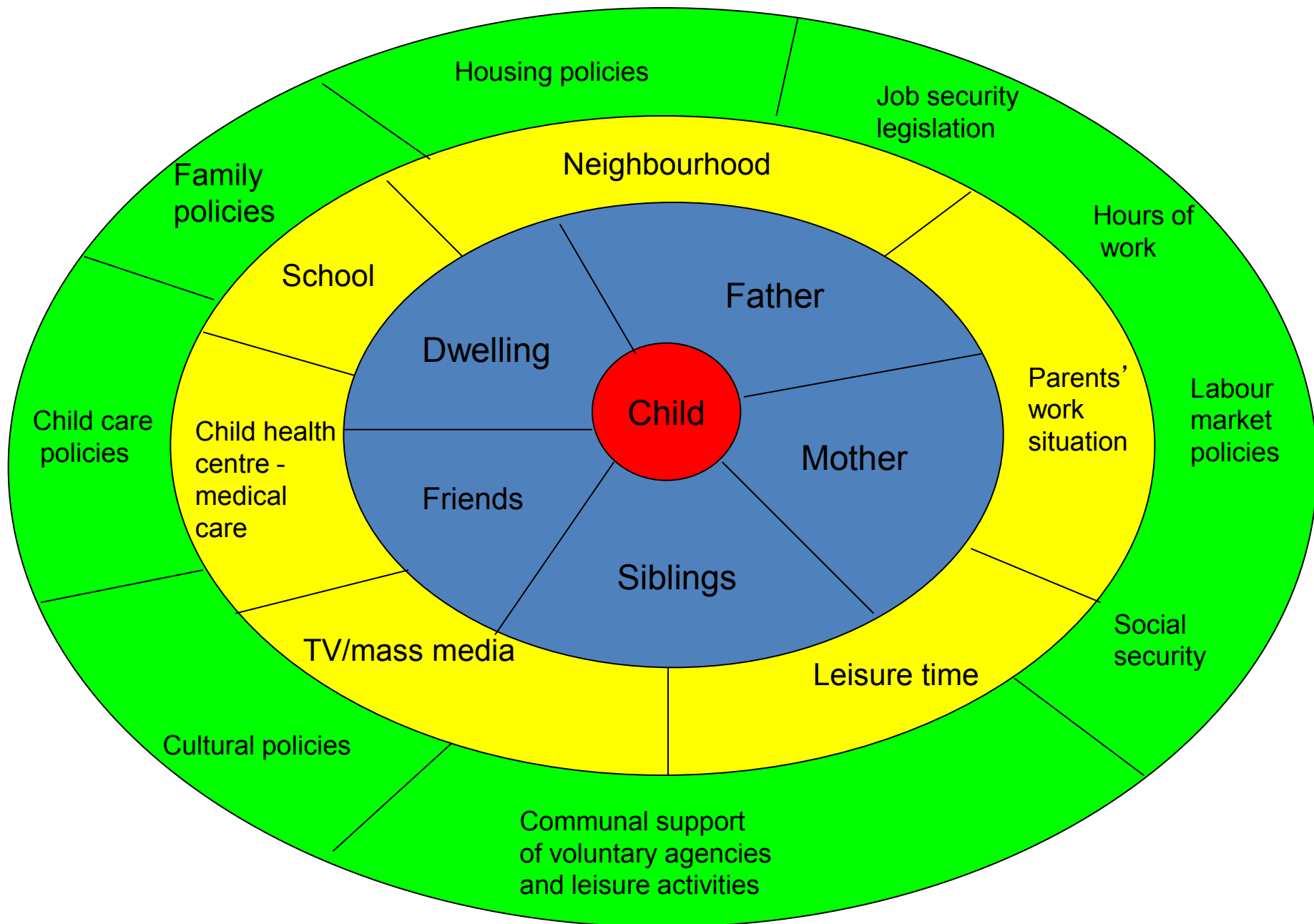
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Predicting school exclusion at age 15	Odds ratio
Boy	2.4
Single parent or non-parental carer	1.6
Low socio-economic status	1.5
Live in top 25% most deprived neighbourhoods	2.3
Excluded in first year secondary school	2.8
Rated by teachers as disruptive at age 13	3.2
High volume of bad behaviour at age 15	1.6

The revolving door

Residential care by 16 th birthday % criminal conviction by age 22	77
Residential care by 16 th birthday % imprisonment by age 22	31
Period of imprisonment by age 18 % further criminal conviction by age 22	80
Period of imprisonment by age 18 % further period of imprisonment by age 22	70
Cohort members with no care history by 16 th birthday % criminal conviction by age 22	9
Cohort members with no care history by 16 th birthday % period of imprisonment by age 22	0.3

Implications



Key publications from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime

McAra and McVie, 2005, The Usual Suspects? Young People, Street Life and the Police, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 5 (1):1-36

McAra and McVie, 2007a, Youth Justice? The Impact of System Contact on Patterns of Desistance from Offending, *European Journal of Criminology*, 4 (3)

McAra and McVie, 2007b, Criminal Justice Transitions, *Research Digest*, no. 14

McAra and McVie, 2010, Youth Crime and Justice: Key Messages from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 10 (2)

McAra and McVie, 2012, Negotiated Order: The Groundwork for a Theory of Offending Pathways, *Criminology and Criminal Justice, Special Edition on Negotiated Orders*

Find out more about the Edinburgh Study at:

www.law.ed.ac.uk/cls/esytc/