

Evaluating Fire Safety Initiatives

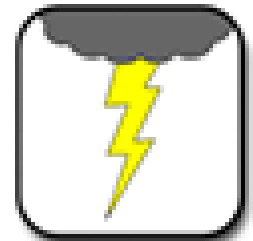
Home Safety Visits and Life Skills for Young People at Risk

Professor Peter Squires
University of Brighton

p.a.squires@brighton.ac.uk

Background and Foundations

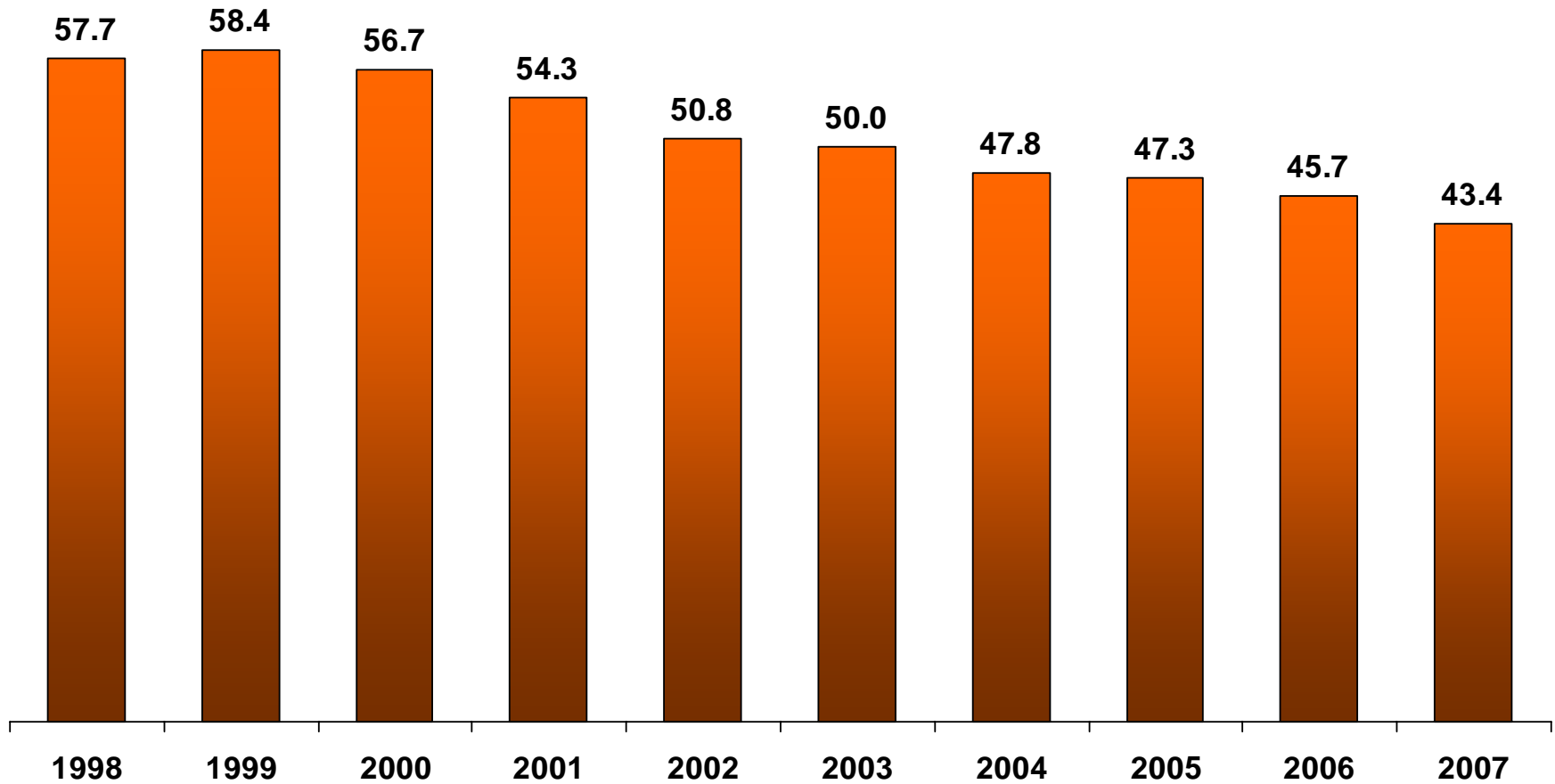
- **Community Safety** Agenda (in Criminology)
- Social Crime Prevention
- But **Crime and Disorder** Reduction Partnerships:
later **Anti-Social Behaviour**
- 2004 Fire and Rescue Services Act ... etc....
- Familiar “***What works***” and “***evidence led***”
questions
- Culture shifts, partnerships and change [issues]



Accidental fires in dwellings in the UK

(in '000s)

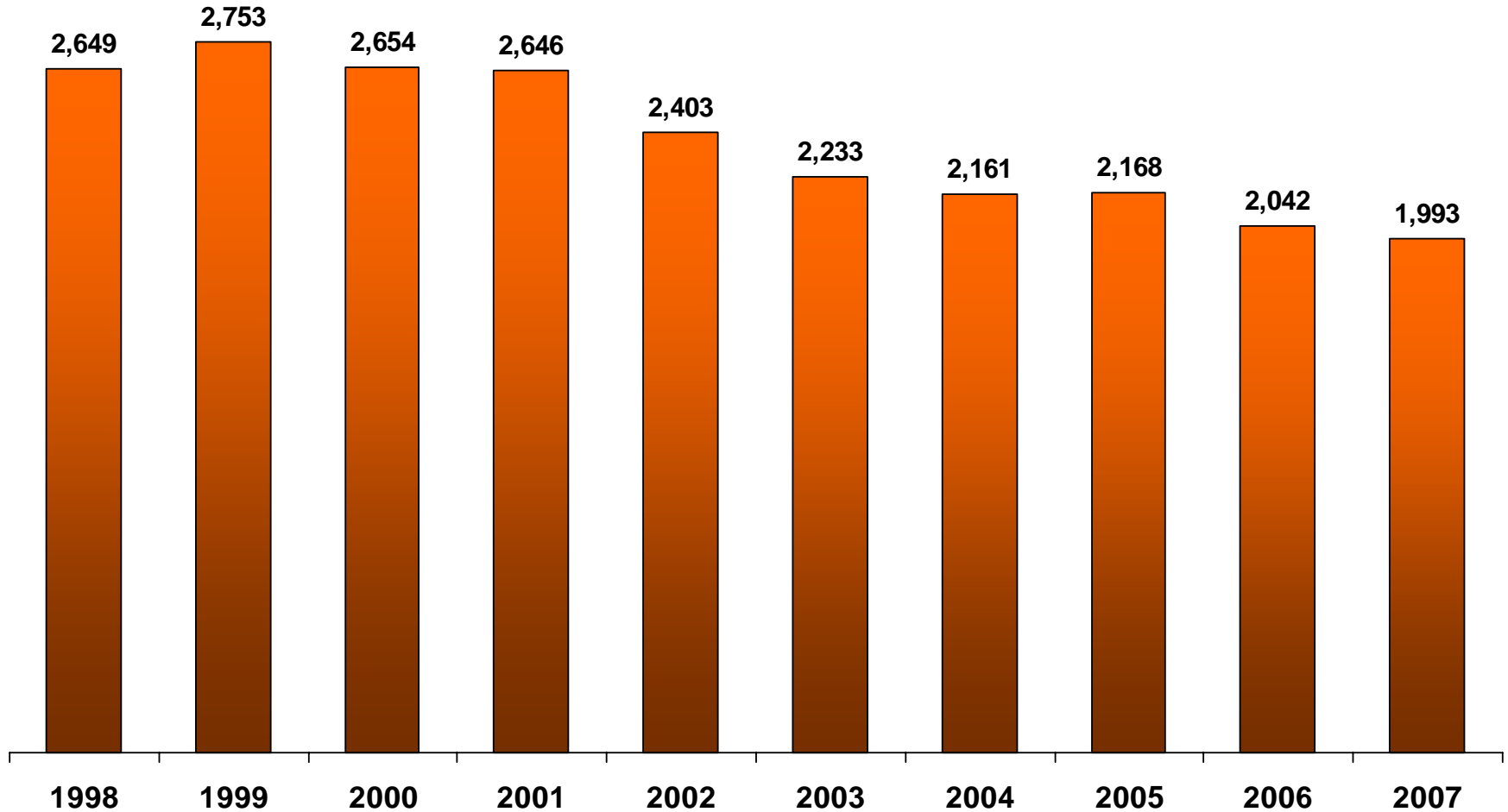
A positive story **24.7% reduction**



Accidental fires in dwellings in Wales

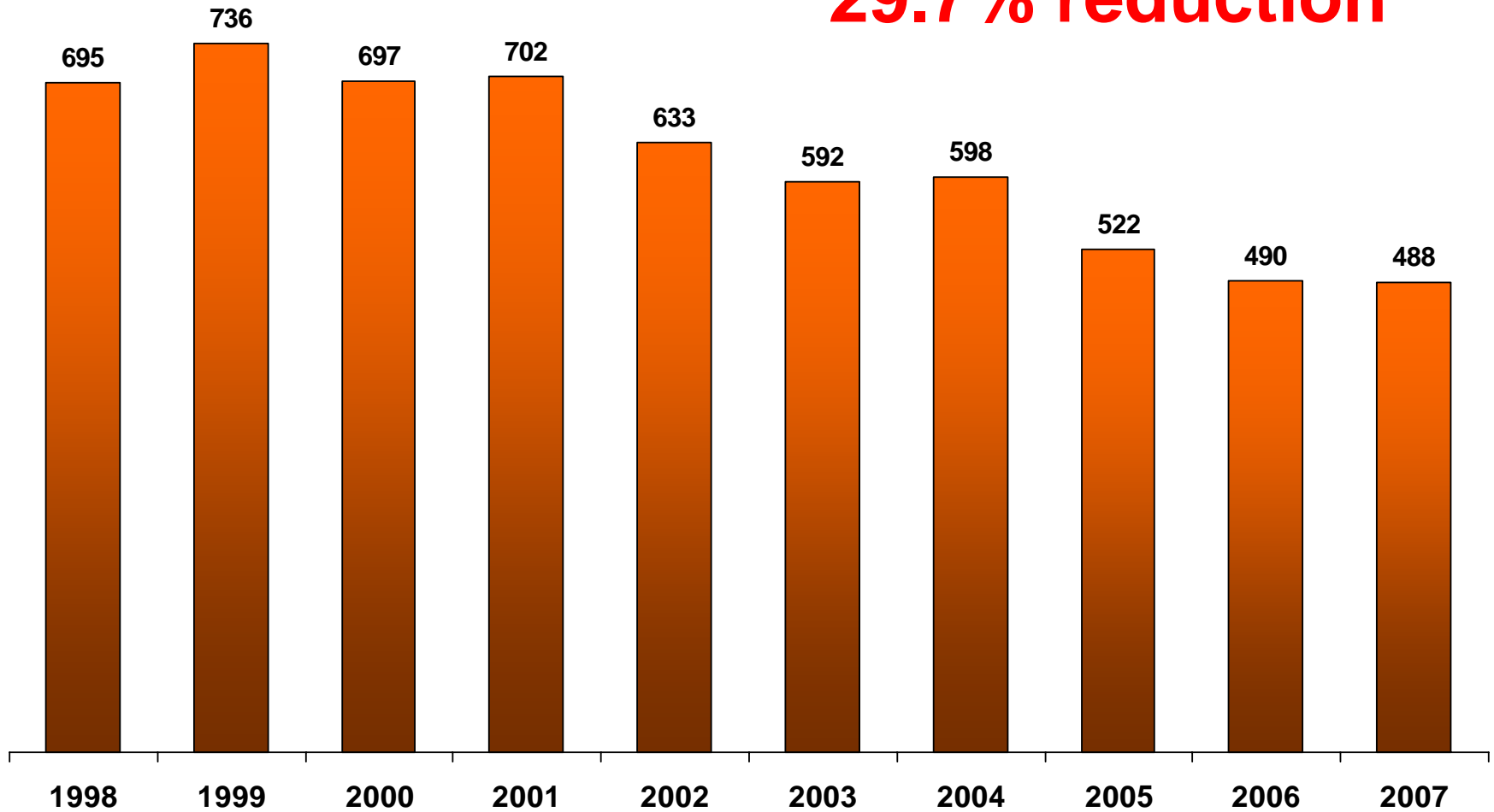
Another positive story

24.7% reduction

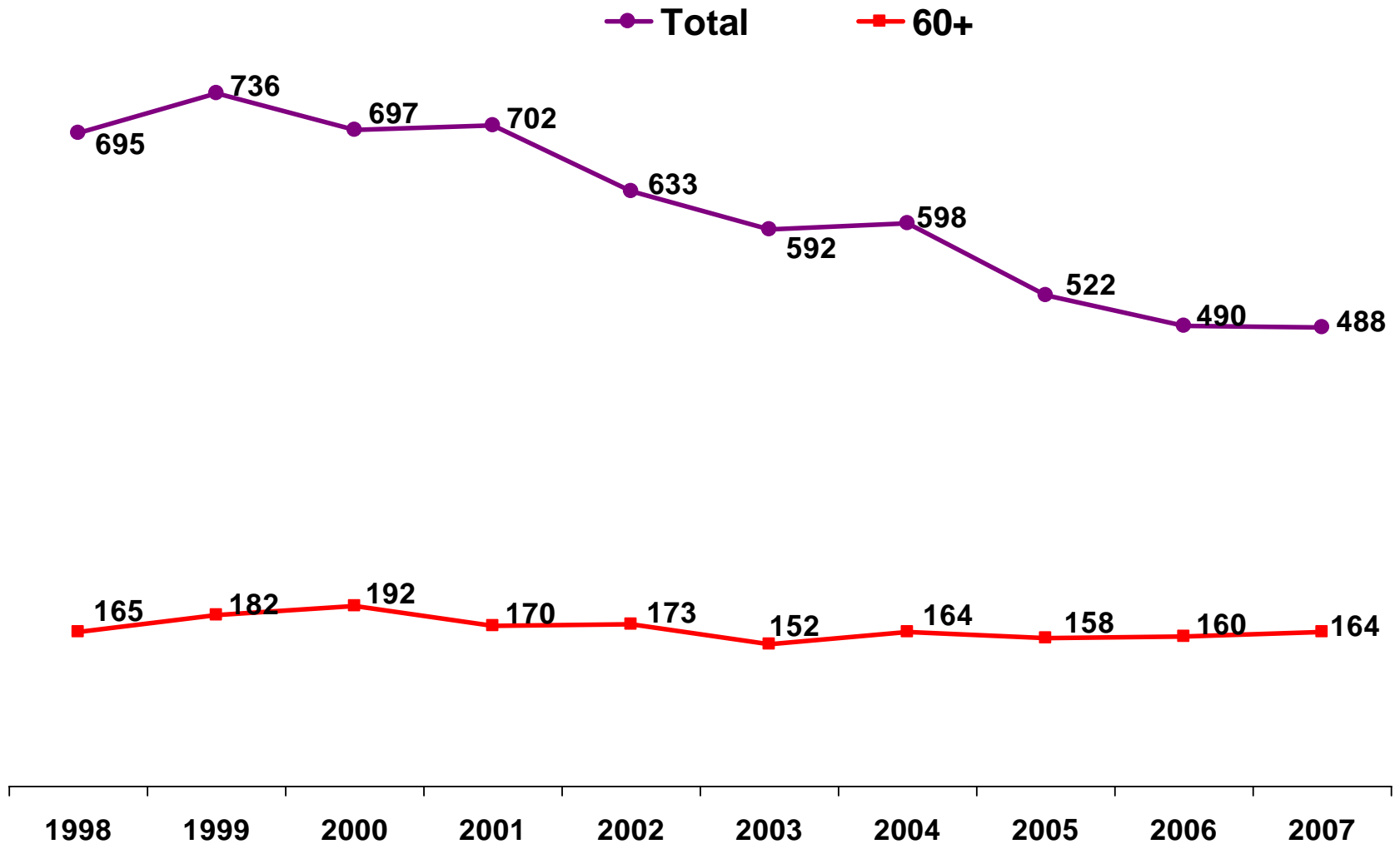


Casualties (fatal and non-fatal) in accidental fires in dwellings in Wales

29.7% reduction



Casualties (fatal and non-fatal) in accidental fires in dwellings in Wales: Total (all ages) vs. those aged 60+



- **Reducing overall numbers of risks**
- **Identifying highest risks => appropriate targeting of interventions**
- **Reducing the impact of incidents
=> targeting and support**

The need for research



- Report conducted on behalf of CLG in 2008 included review of recent studies into how fire risk varies.
- Concluded that following **socio-demographic issues and factors** associated with higher fire risk:
 - Being single
 - Deprivation
 - Mental and / or physical impairment
 - Careless use of smokers' materials
 - Alcohol

The need for research



- UK study of 535 fatal Fire Investigation reports found that 80% of all fires involved victims that were impaired in some way.
- Study found that alongside immediate causes of fire (e.g. carelessly discarded cigarettes) biggest single influences on fire starting / fatal consequences were:

— Alcohol

— Mobility



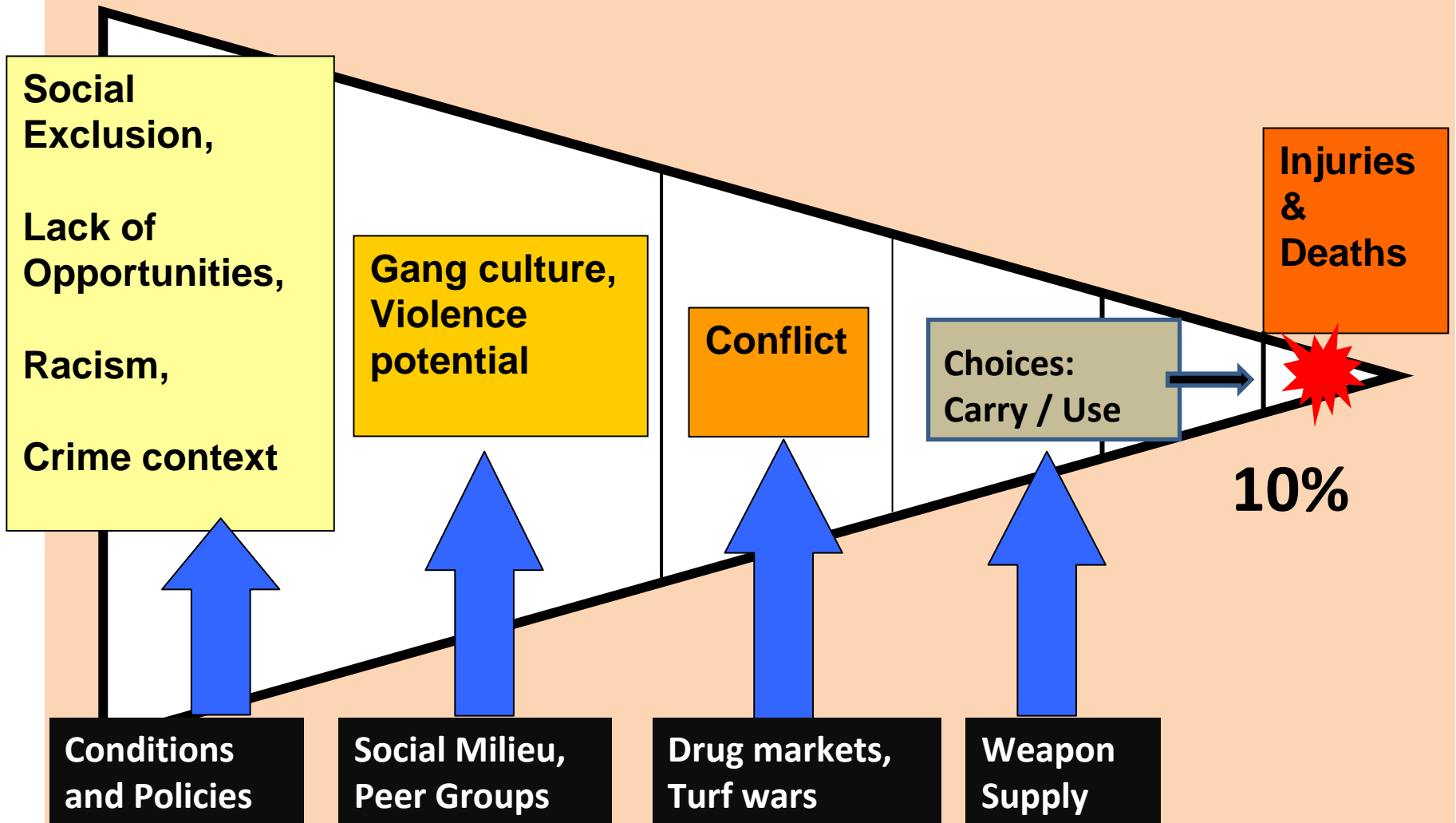
Effectively targeted by interventions that have a geo-demographic basis?

— Mental illness

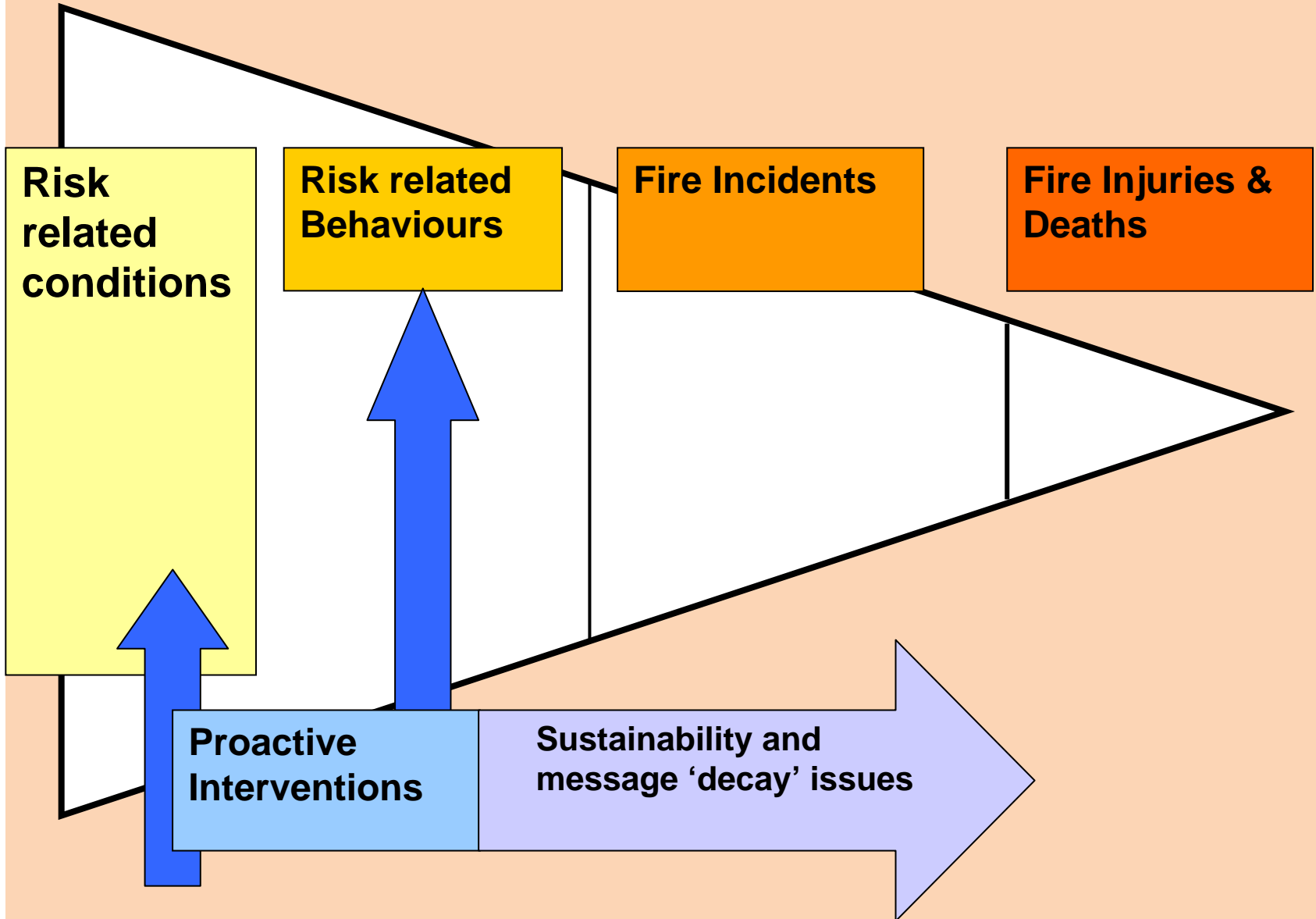
- Firebrake recognise the need to work with partner organisations to reach and influence these vulnerable groups

How would this work in practice?

Gun Crime Project: Modelling



Community Fire Safety Project: Home Safety Visits



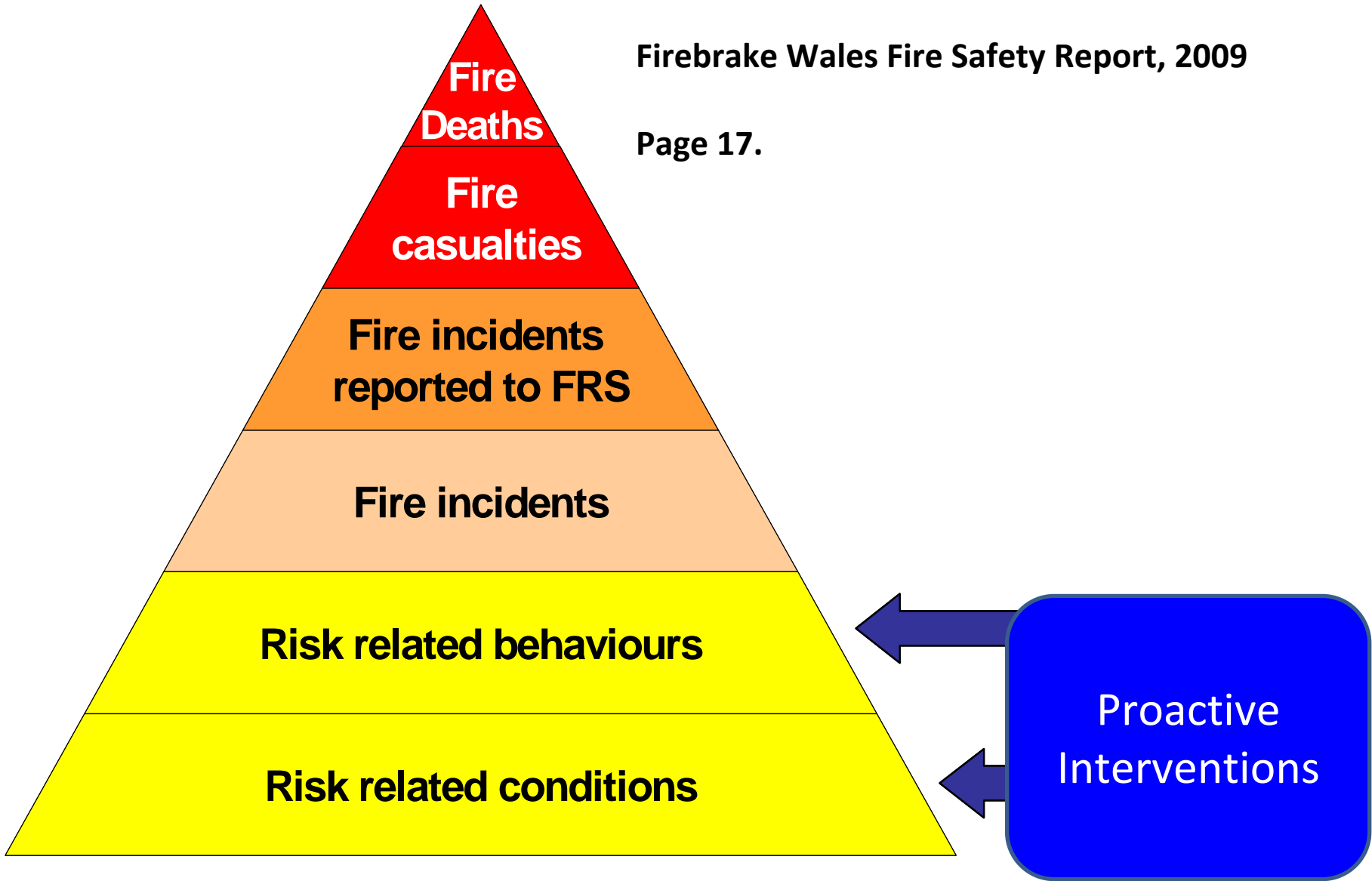


Figure 2: Research Plan over 3 years

ISSUES:

Socio-economic differences & targeting

Non-specialist visits

Repeat victimisation/'Fire Prone-ness' or 'wake-up calls'

Resistance

Recall or message decay

Message impact

STAGE 1

100 interviews (A)

East Brighton
New home safety
Visits
Social housing
estates/ families

100 Interviews

(B) Saltdean
Older families (?)
older people living
alone

Interim Report

STAGE 2

100 interviews

Previously visited at
some time

100 Interviews

Households having
had fires

Interim Report 2

STAGE 3

100 interviews

Group A **East Brighton**
Previously visited

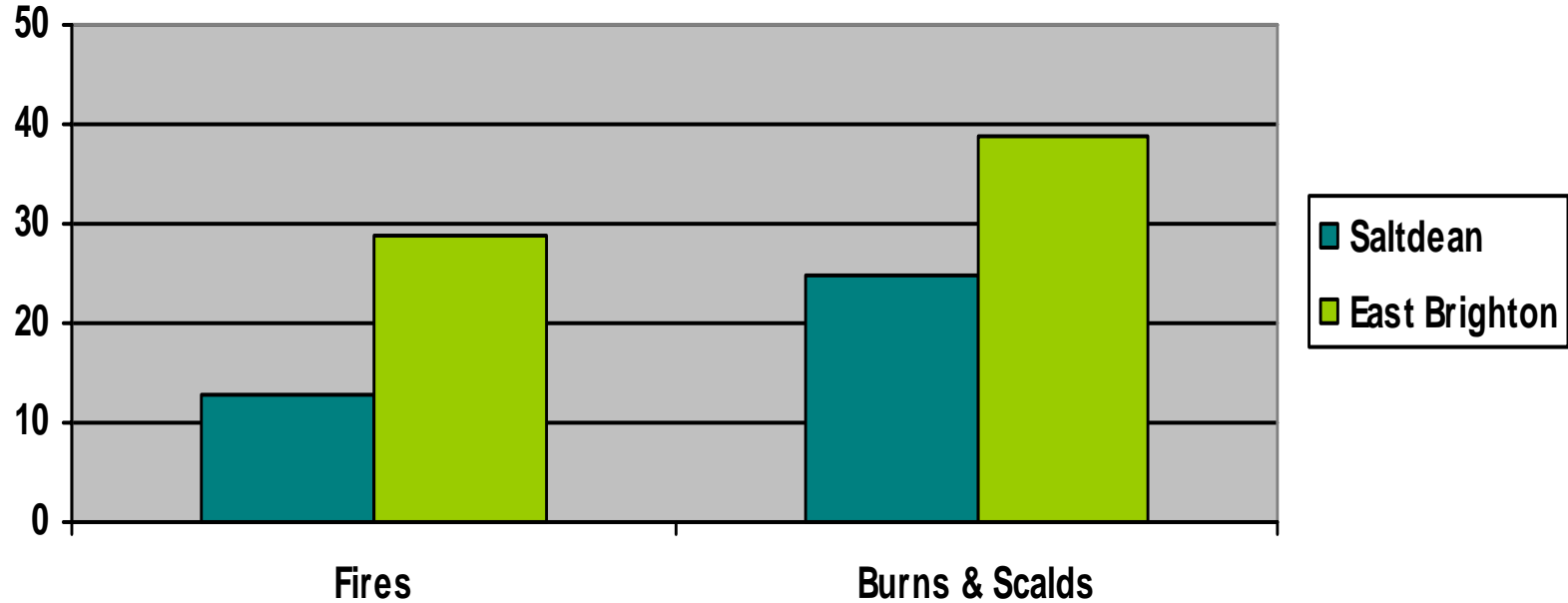
100 Interviews

Group B **Saltdean**
Previously visited

FINAL Report

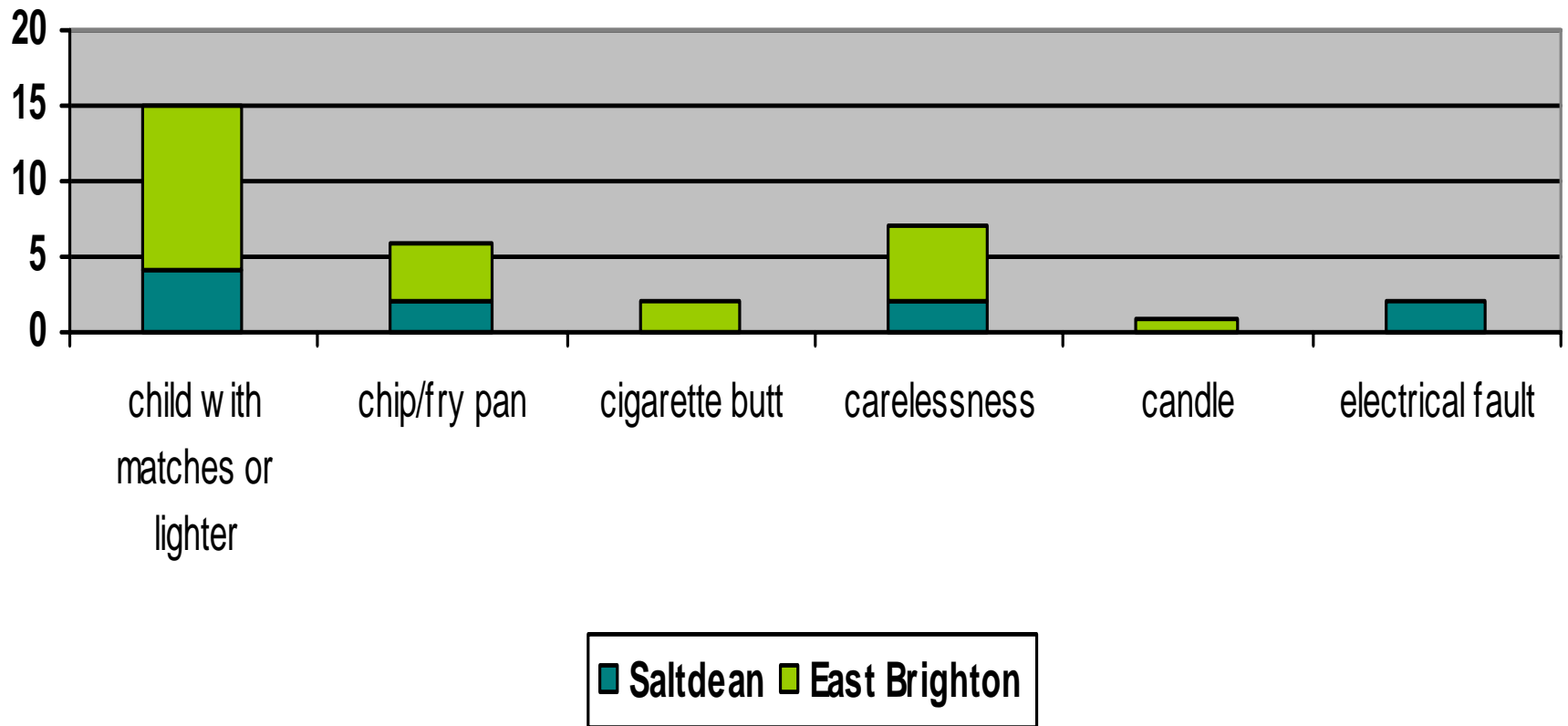
Socio-Economic Difference: Fire problems

(Phase 1)



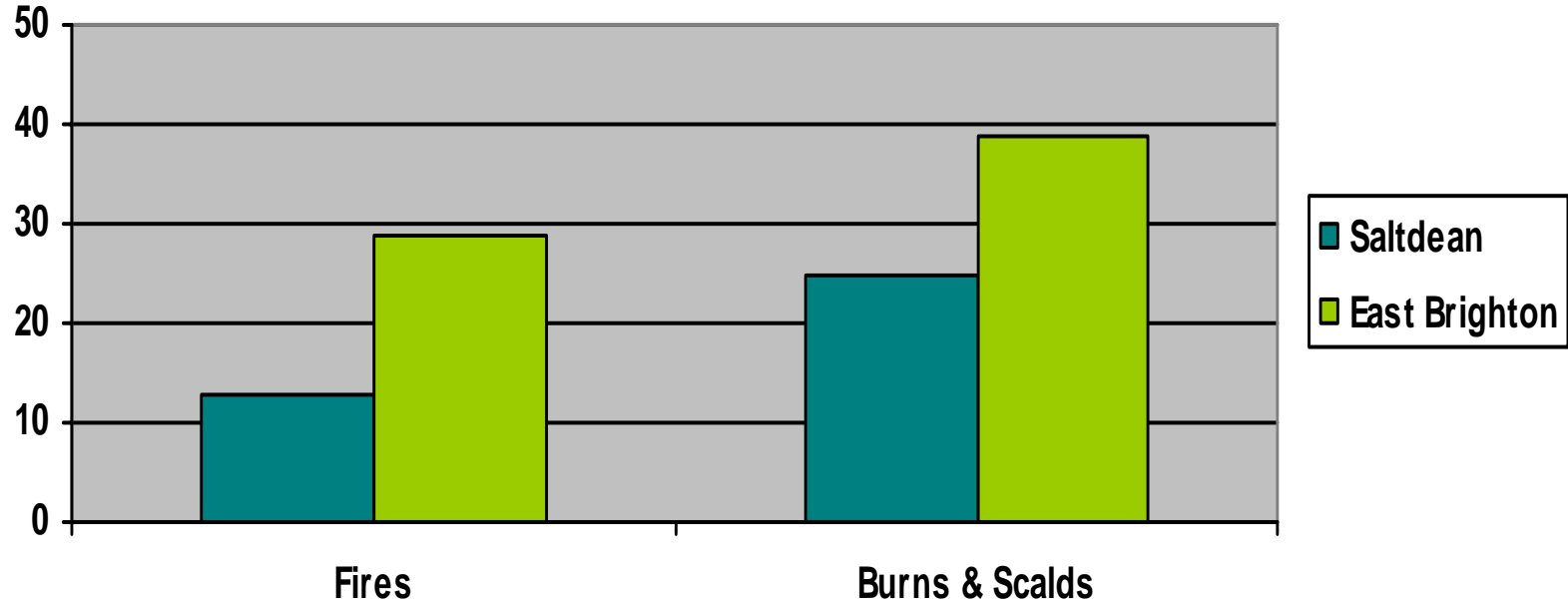
Socio-Economic Difference: Fire problems

(Phase 1)



Socio-Economic Difference: Fire problems

(Phase 1)



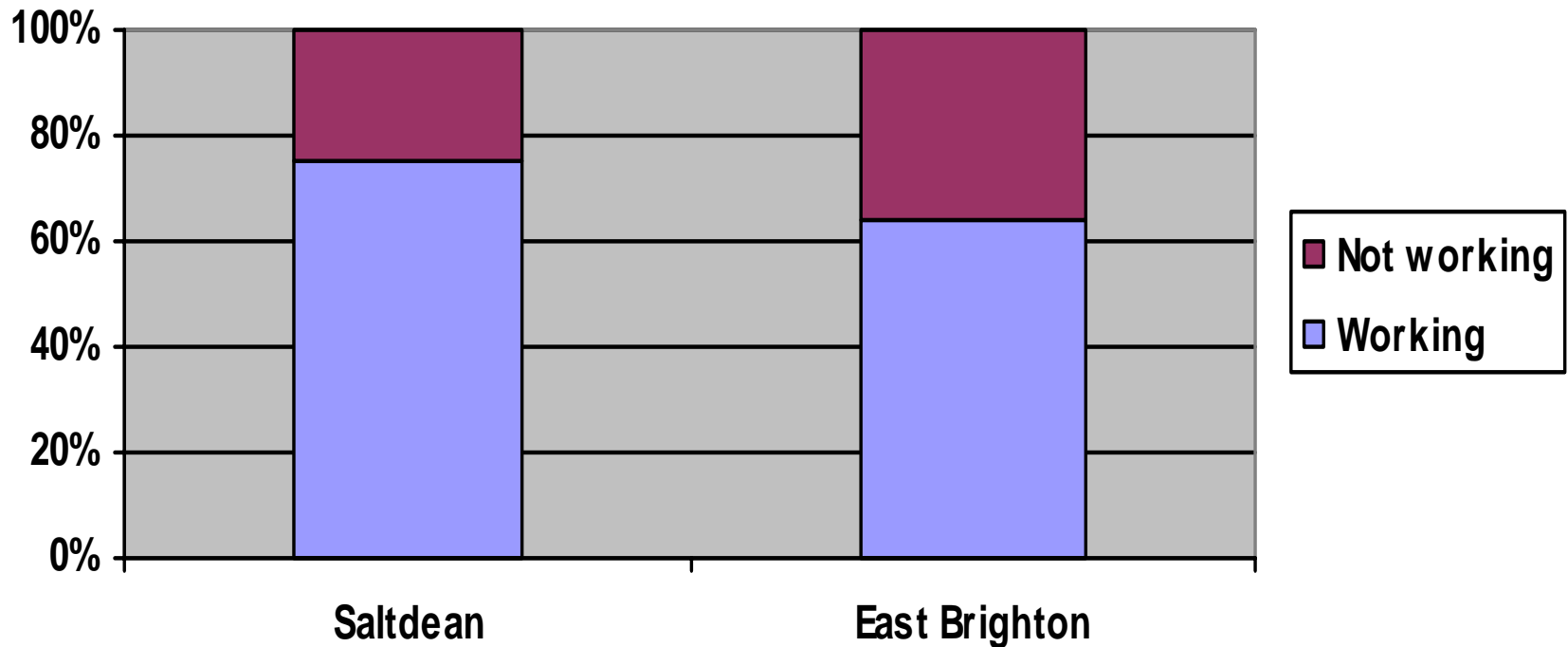
Comparative Rates of Smoke Alarm failure

(Phase 2)

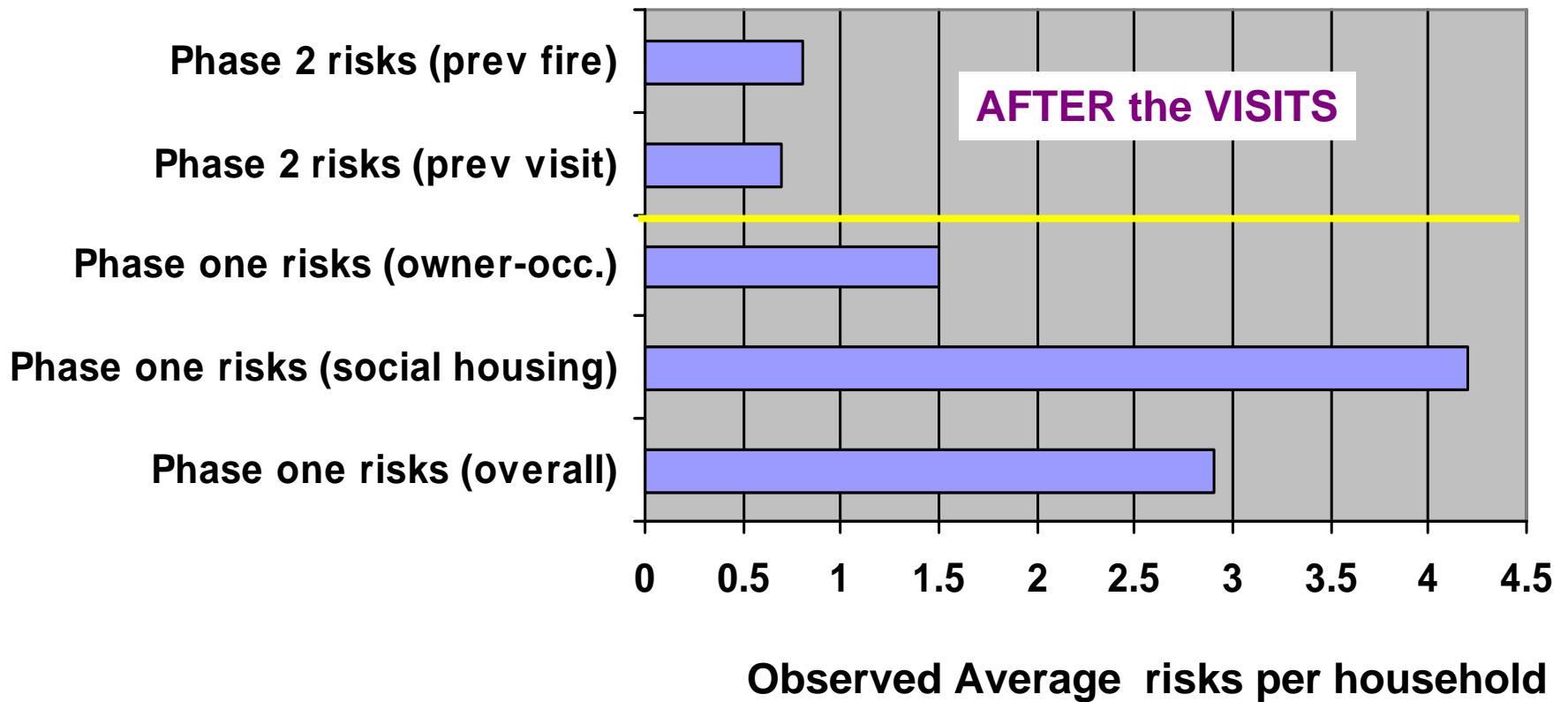


Did the previously installed smoke detectors actually work? (Percentages)

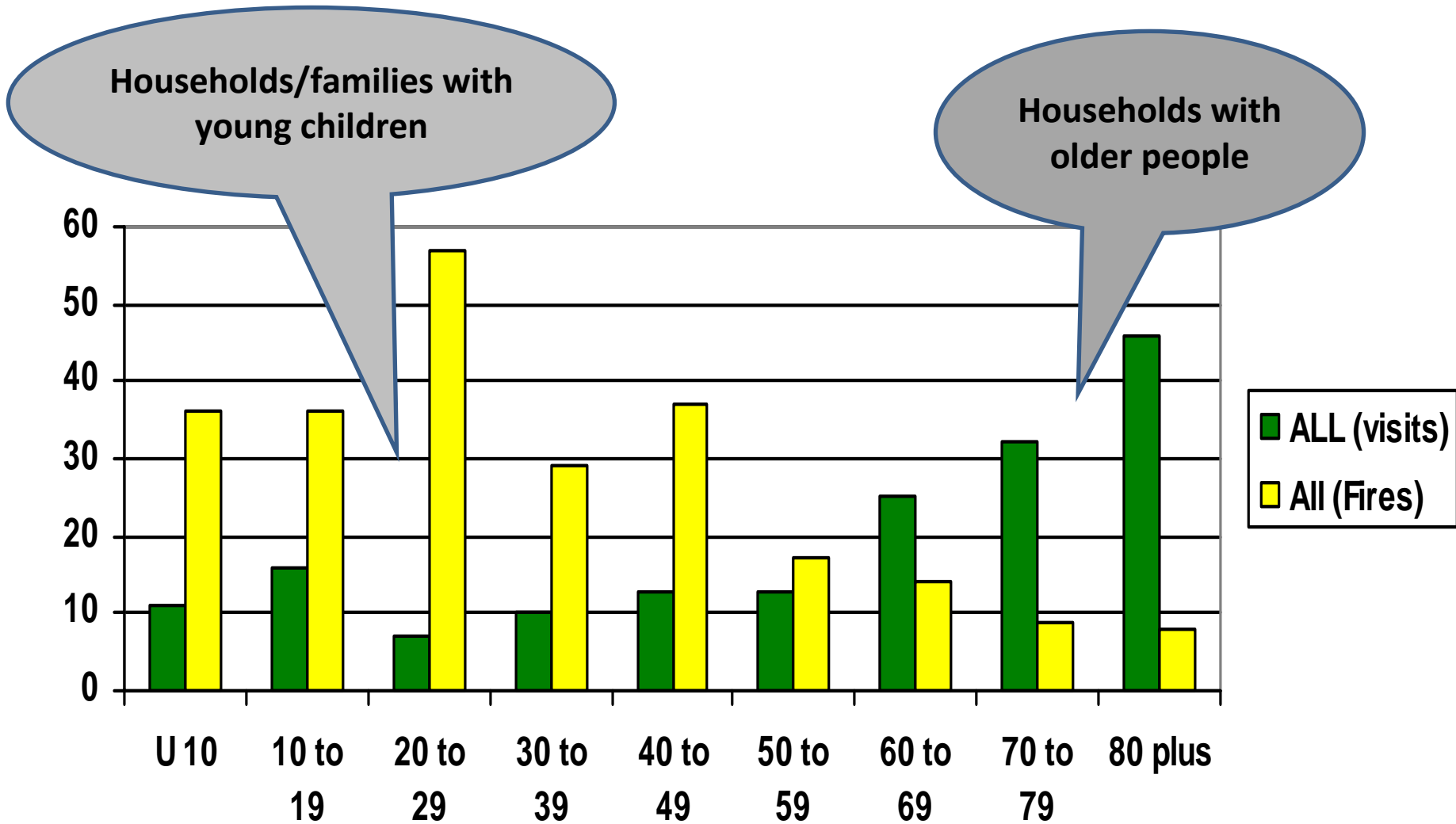
(Phase 1)



Summary Data outcomes on observed 'risk-per-household' (Phase 2)



Mismatch (?) between fire risks and fire visits



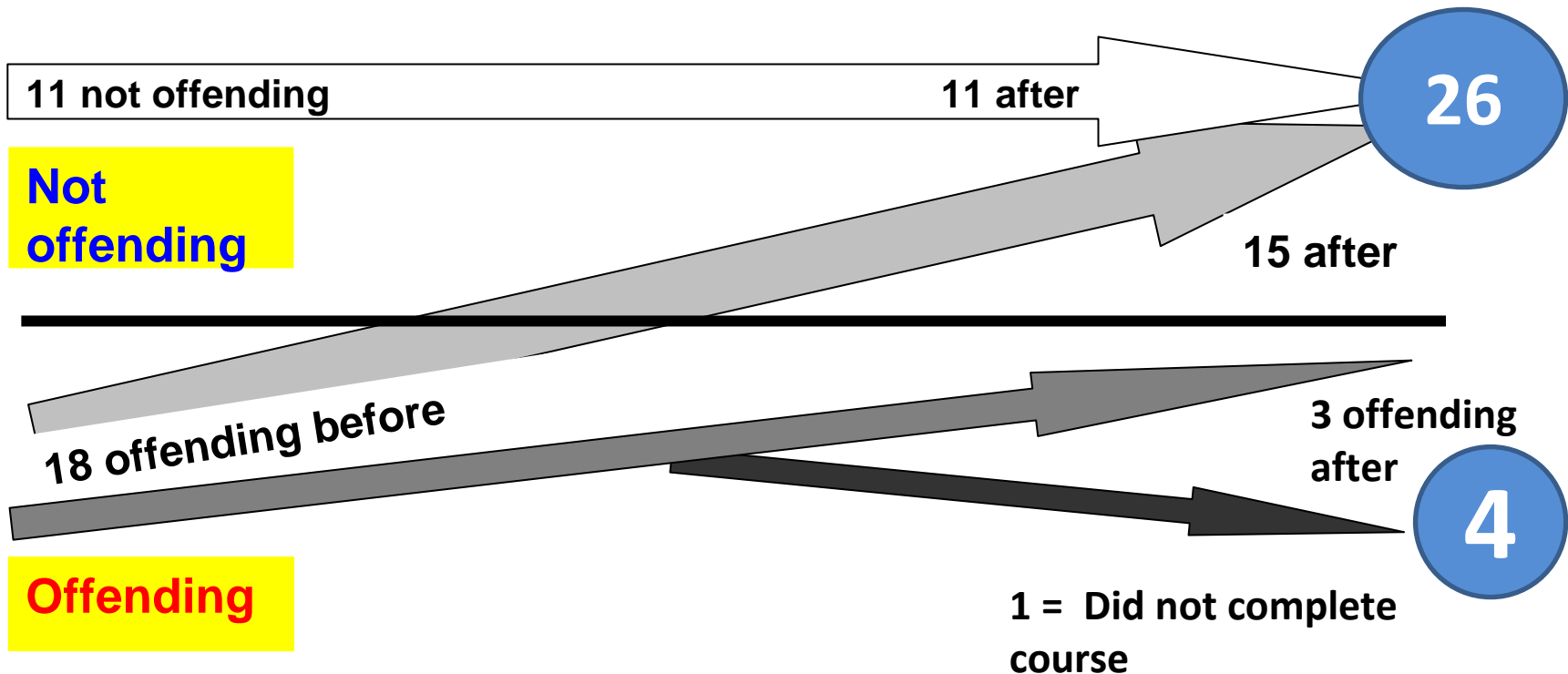
Second Area of Evaluation Work with East Sussex F&RS

- **LIFE Skills:** [Local Intervention, Fire Education]
- Intensive 'fire education' programme for young people 'at risk'
- Similar to other 'fire-setting' & prevention projects
- First phase: Initial cohorts - process
- Second phase: records follow up after 4 years

Progress of first 2 LIFE cohorts

30 young people (Tyne & Wear Diagram Model)

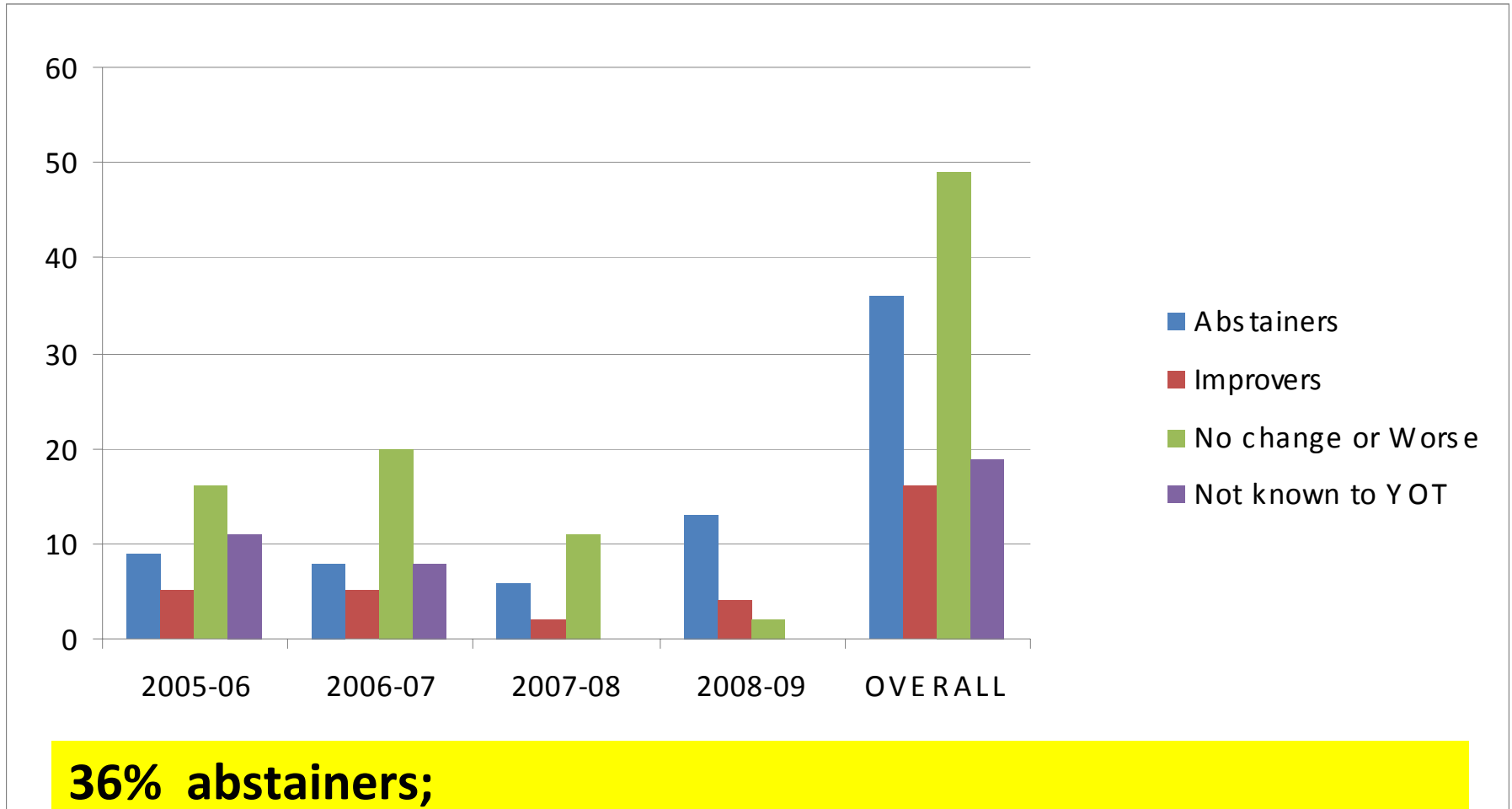
First 2 cohorts – 7 months after the intervention



LIFE COURSE: Phase 2: Follow-Up

- 4 years: 20 cohorts approx 300 young people
- Data problems: despite agreement, YOT tracking data on only 98
- **ABSTAINERS:** No offences recorded by the YOT following participation in the LIFE Course
- **IMPROVERS:** Lower rate of offending/Arrests, Lower overall Gravity Score following participation in the LIFE Course
- **WORSE/NO CHANGE:** Increase in or no apparent change in offending profile/arrests or Gravity Score following participation in the LIFE Course.

4 Years of LIFE



**36% abstainers;
16% improvers;**

48% no change or worse

Conclusions ?

- Evaluation: Impacts and effectiveness
- Assumptions - testing
- Performance indicators
- Evaluation Process
- Partnership
- Conditions, contexts and behaviour
- Organisational Culture and change
- Commissioning (and key priorities)