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# Restorative Justice Research in Britain and Australia: What Do We Know?

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## What kind of RJ has been included in this review of research findings?

- Face to face RJ where offenders who admit responsibility for their offence voluntarily meet their victims in the presence of their families and friends and a trained facilitator
- All participants deliberate - often highly emotional encounters, with emphasis on direct, unmediated communication between those most affected by the crime
- Starting point of the meeting is acknowledged harm by one party to another - no moral equivalence
- All participants agree an outcome designed to repair harm and preventing reoffending
- May be either instead of or in addition to formal justice

# List of Included Studies Comparing Face-to-Face RJ Conferencing with Conventional Justice (CJ)

	<u>Offender N</u>
1. Australia RISE Canberra <30 years violence (diversion)	121
2. Australia RISE Canberra juvenile personal property (diversion)	248
3. Australia RISE Canberra juvenile shoplifting (diversion)	142
4. US Indianapolis juvenile property/violence (diversion)	782
5. UK Northumbria juvenile property/violence (police Final Warning)	208
6. UK Northumbria adult property (Magistrates Courts)	63
7. UK Northumbria adult assault (Magistrates Courts)	44
8. UK London robbery (Crown Courts)	88
9. UK London burglary (Crown Courts)	167
10. UK Thames Valley violence – Probation	64
11. UK Thames Valley violence – Prison	<u>94</u>
Total offender N =	2021

## Conditions under which our research team has tested effectiveness of RJ against CJ

- As diversion from CJ and in addition to it
- Adult and juvenile offenders
- Wide range of offence seriousness: minor property crime through to aggravated burglary and robbery; minor violence to very serious violence
- When in addition to CJ, tested pre-sentence (after guilty plea in court) and post-sentence (in prison or on probation)
- Total of 11 separate tests

## How have we tested effects of RJ?

- All 11 studies are randomised controlled trials on the medical model for testing new drugs
- In all cases both victims and offenders agreed to be randomly assigned either to RJ or not
- All 4 Australian studies compared RJ with normal court processing among cases that would all normally have been sent to court but instead were diverted to RJ
- All 7 British studies compared cases assigned to RJ in addition to CJ with those who were assigned not to have RJ but only CJ

## What Does a Review of These Studies Conclude?

### Offenders –

- Slows some down, others stop reoffending completely while some are unaffected
- May be better for the most prolific offenders
- On average 27% reduction in repeat convictions across British trials (Sheffield U evaluation)

### Offences –

- Works better for violence than property offences
- Wasted on minor offences

### Victims -

- Unequivocal evidence on benefits for those willing to meet their offenders

## Stages of Criminal Process

6 of 11 are Tests of ***Diversions*** to RJ

- 3 compared to court

- 2 compared to other diversion

6 of 11 are Tests of ***Adding*** RJ to Conventional Justice (CJ)

- 4 after court conviction, before sentencing

- 2 after sentencing

  - probation for serious violence

  - prison for serious violence

# Diversion From CJS

## RISE Australia

- Violence to age 29
- Property to age 18
- Shoplifting to age 18

Juvenile Final Warnings, Northumbria UK Violence and Property

## Adding to Conventional Justice Before sentence, after guilty plea

(Did not affect sentencing)

London Burglary (in the Crown Courts)

London Robbery (in the Crown Courts)

Northumbria Assault (in Magistrates Courts)

Northumbria Property Crime (in Magistrates Courts)

## Adding to Conventional Justice Post-Sentence

1. Sentence to probation for violence:  
*with vs. without RJ with victim*  
*At beginning of community sentence*
2. Sentence to prison for violence  
*with vs. without RJ with victim*  
*before release from prison*

## Question 1

In general, what effect does RJ have on -

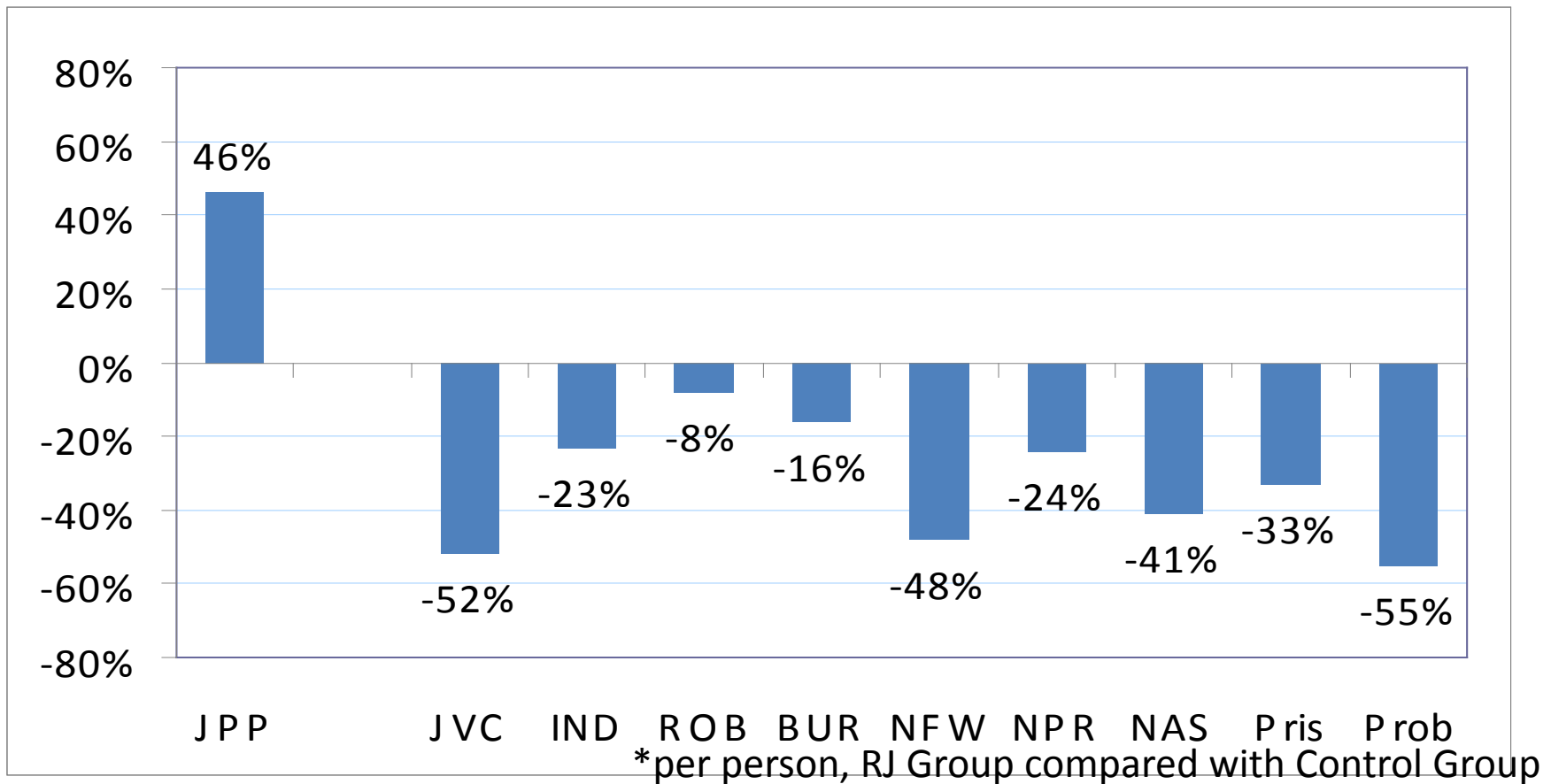
Frequency of reconvictions

across different points of criminal justice process  
with personal victims intended to be there?

ANSWER: 9 out of 10 tests show less crime for RJ than CJ  
(RISE juvenile personal property experiment failed for RJ)

NB especially results for prison and probation experiments

# Personal Victims Present: % Change\* in Reconviction Frequency



## Question 2

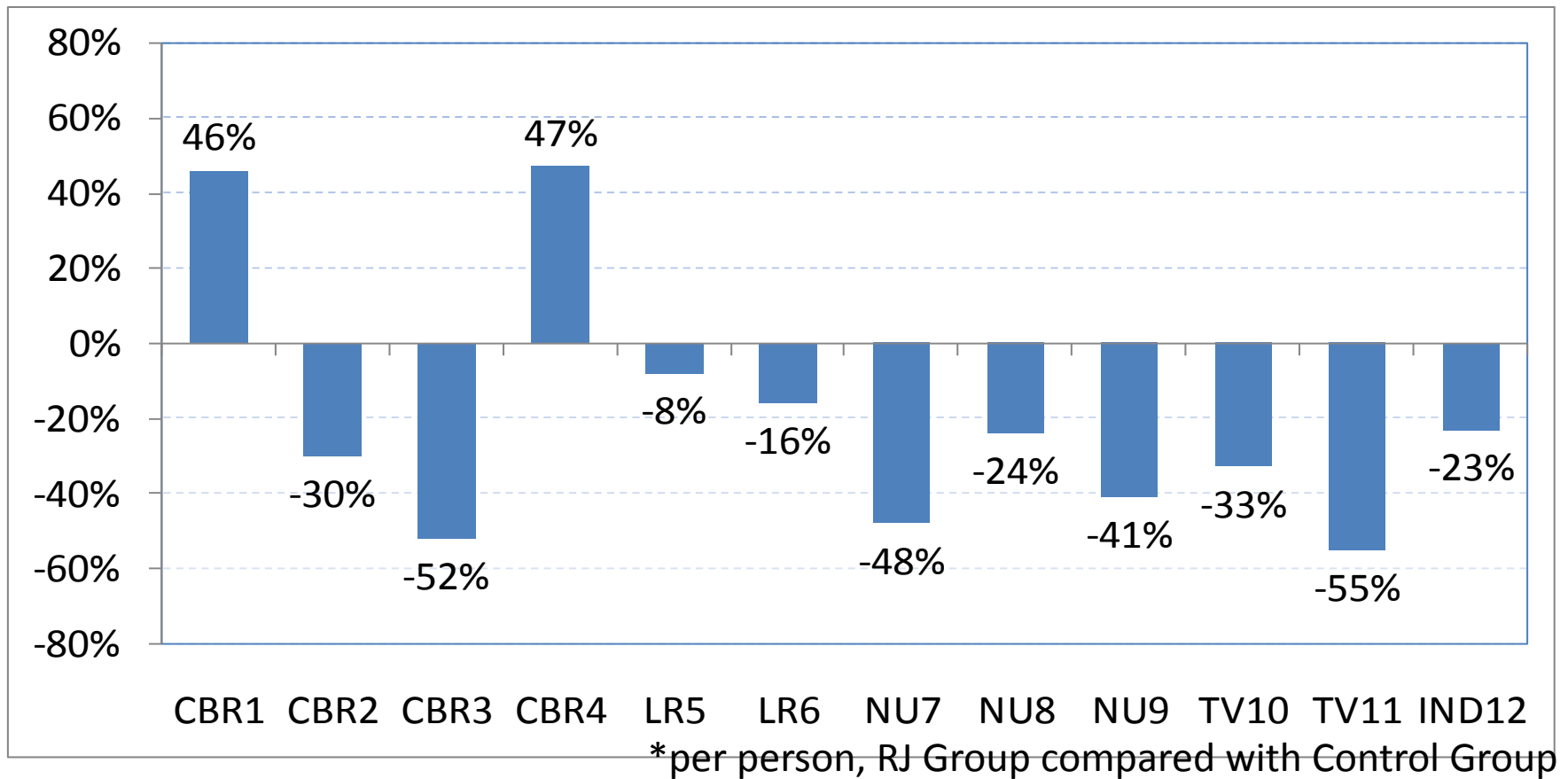
What effect does RJ have on-

Frequency of reconvictions

All tests - 10 with victims present, 2 not victims present

ANSWER: 10 out of 12 show less frequency than CJ  
(RISE juvenile property experiment and drinking/driving experiments failed for RJ)

# Percent Change\* in the Frequency of Reconviction



## Question 3

What effect does Face-to-face RJ have on -

Frequency of Reconviction

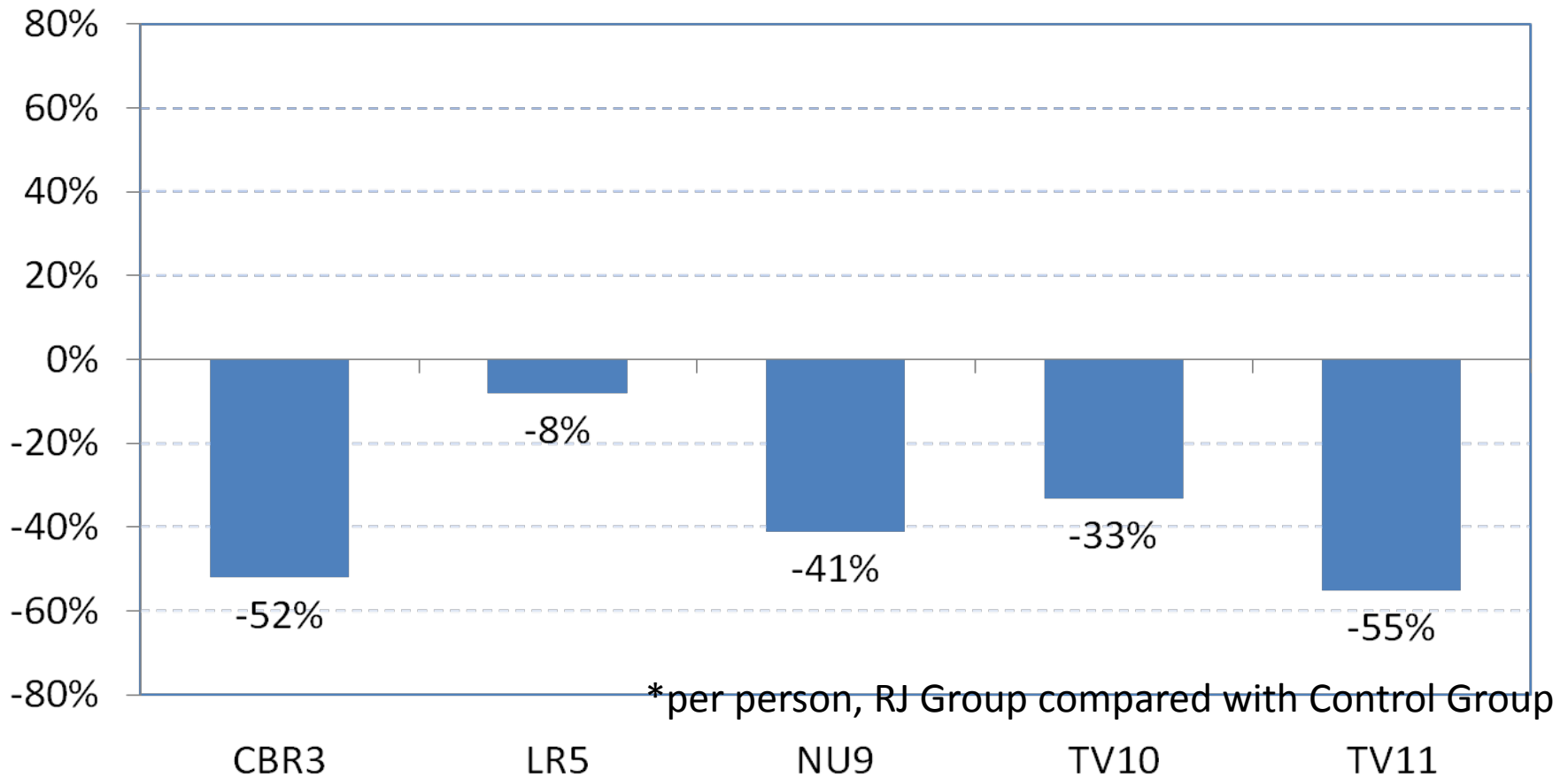
In Violent Crime Experiments

Youth and Adult Combined

All levels of seriousness from simple assault to grievous bodily harm

Answer: 5 out of 5 violence tests show less crime for RJ

# Percent Change\* in the Frequency of Reconviction – Violence Experiments



## Question 4

What Effect Does RJ have on -

Frequency of Reconviction

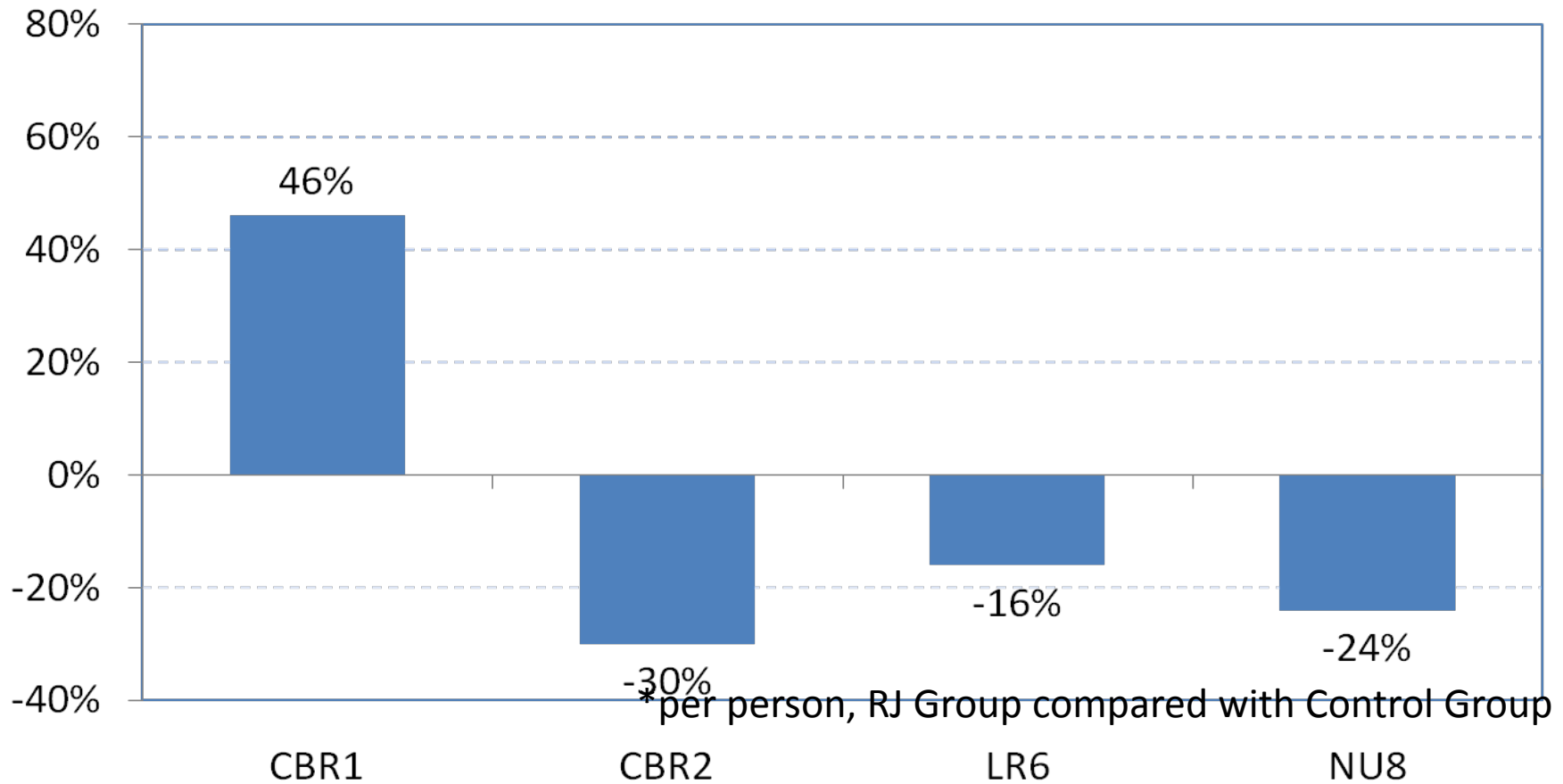
Property Crime Offenders

Youth and Adult Combined

Answer: 3 out 4 tests show less crime for RJ  
Effects not as big, or as prevalent, as for violence

***RJ WORKS BETTER FOR MORE SERIOUS CRIME***

# Percent Change\* in the Frequency of Reconviction – Property Experiments



## Question 5

What effect does RJ have on -

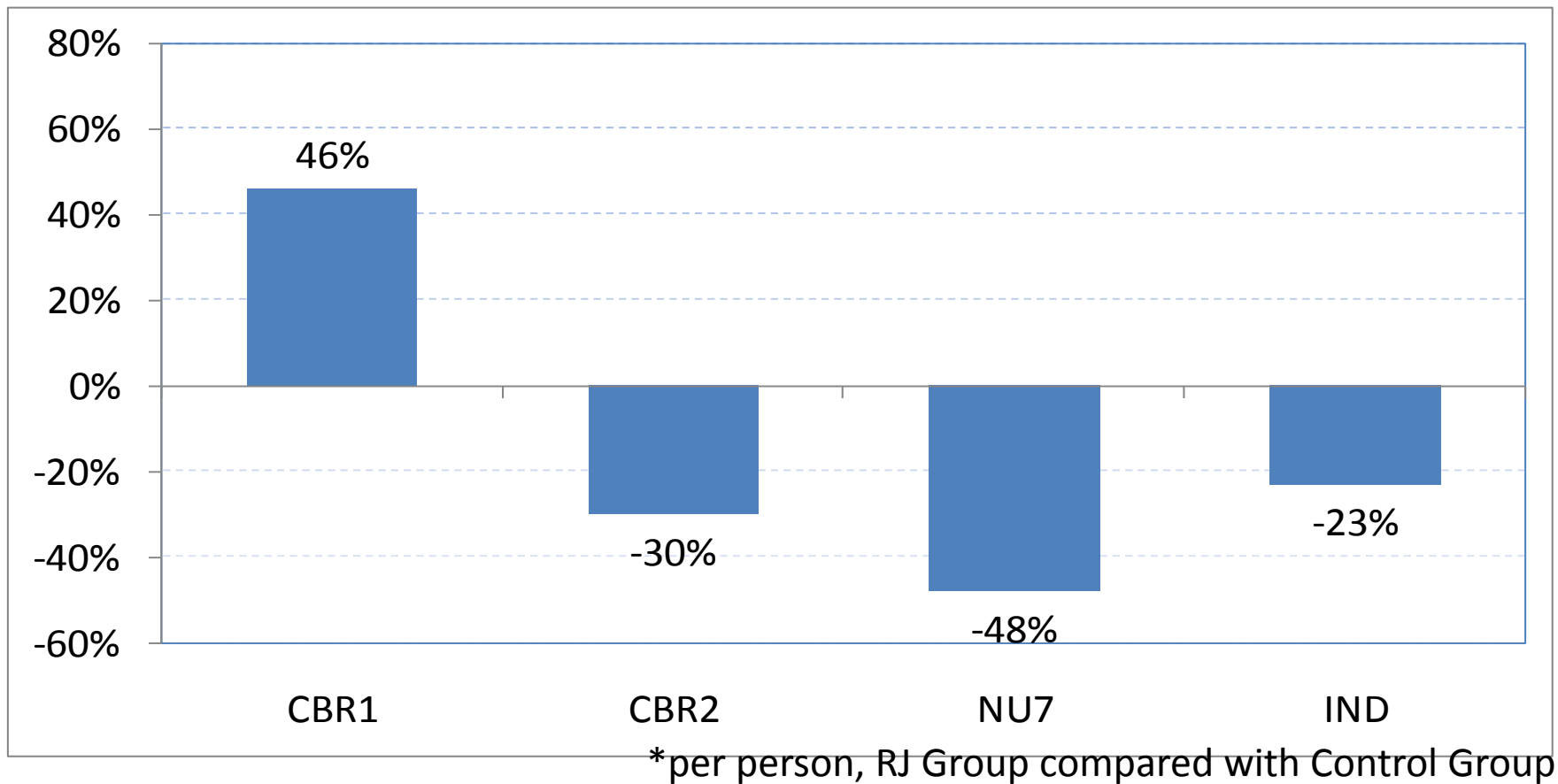
Youth Crime

Property and Violent Crime

US, UK, Australia?

Answer: 3 out of 4 tests show less crime for RJ

# Percent Change\* in the Frequency of Reconviction – Youth Experiments



## Question 6

What effect does RJ have on

Adult Crime

Property and Violent

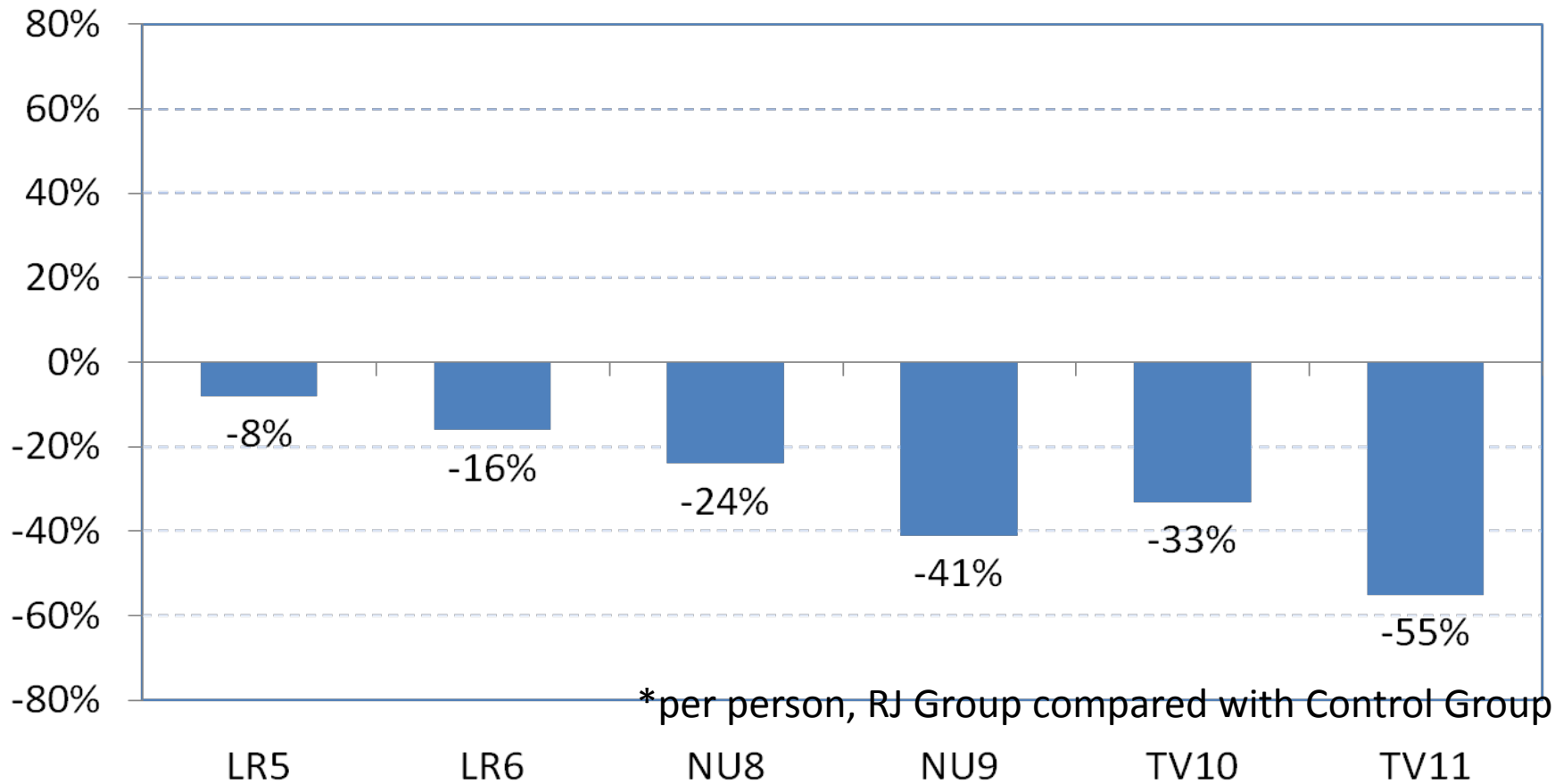
US, UK, Australia?

Answer:

6 out of 6 tests on adults = less crime for RJ

*Effects bigger for adults than for juveniles*

# Percent Change\* in the Frequency of Reconviction – Adult Experiments



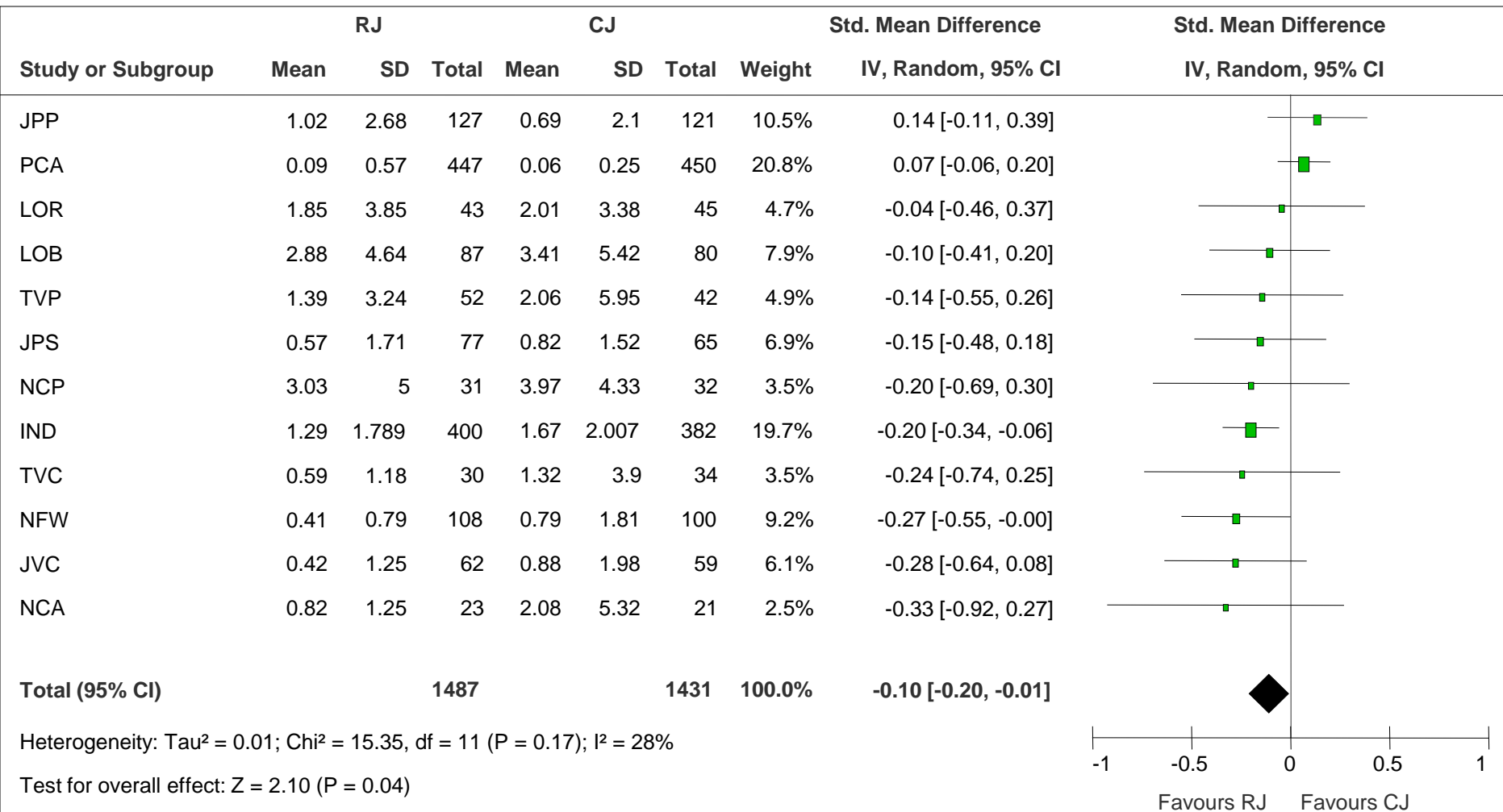
## Question 7: Prevalence and Frequency of Reoffending

What is the effect of RJ on the *prevalence* and *frequency* of any reconviction over 2 years (percentage with 1 or more conviction or arrest)

*16% Reduction in Prevalence* across all tests, on border of significance, across 3,140 offenders (16% fewer RJ offenders re-offended than CJ)

*27% Reduction in Frequency* across all tests, statistically significant (27% less crime among offenders who had RJ in addition to CJ)

## Restorative Justice Effect: 2-year Frequency of Reconvictions:



## Victim Benefits

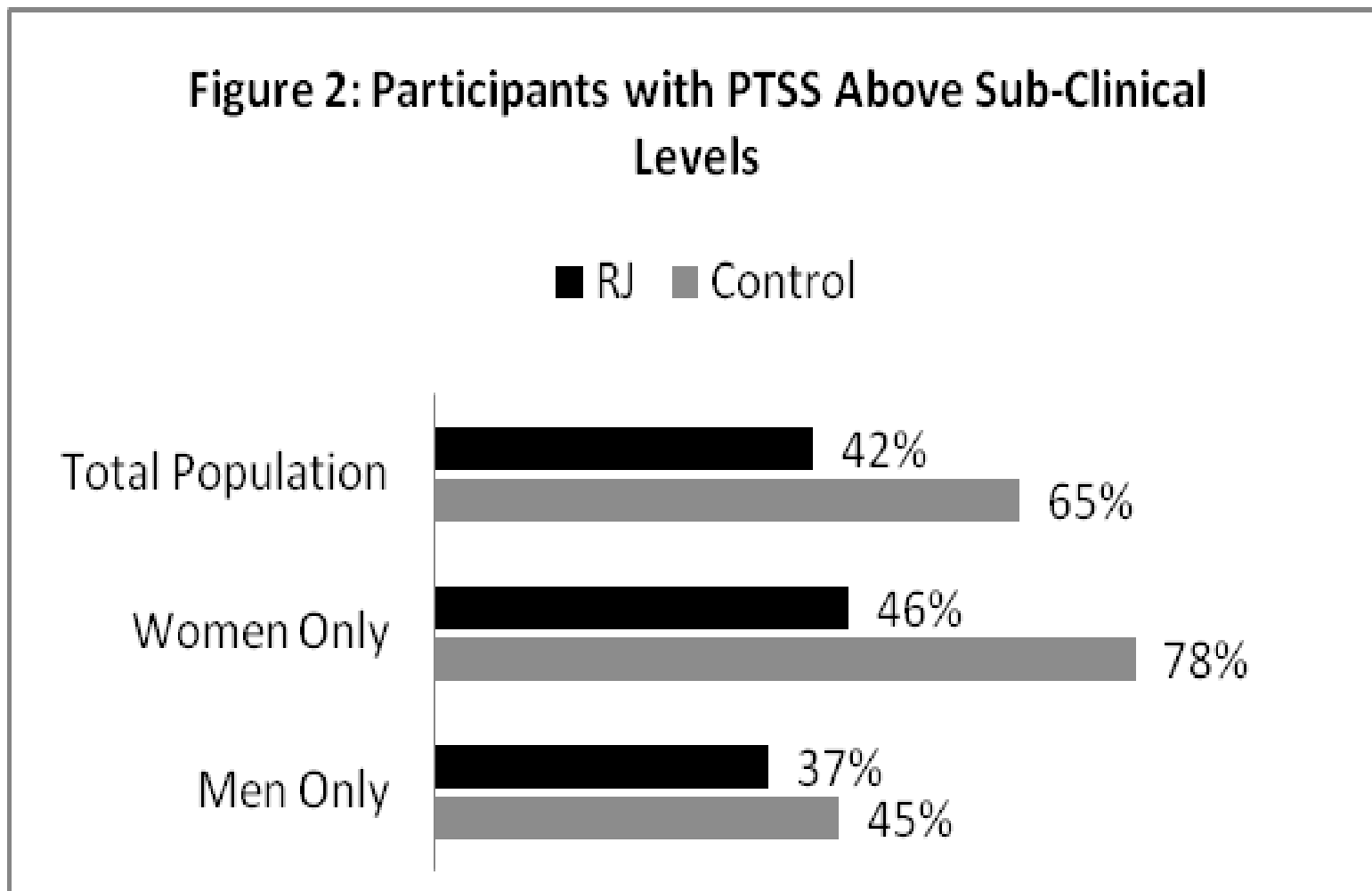
RJ provides

- significantly higher victim satisfaction than court justice
- significantly higher levels of apology
- significant greater reduction in desire for revenge
- significantly greater reduction in Post-traumatic Stress Symptoms (PTSS)

## PTSS Findings

- Burglary and robbery victims interviewed 6 months after offence
- Trauma measured by standard psych test (Impact of Events Scale-Revised)
- Almost half of victims had encountered/been injured by offender during crime
- Quarter of all victims found to have experienced PTSS
- RJ victims had significant reductions in PTSS compared with control group ( $p < 0.01$ )
- Almost all the difference driven by effects on women

## Gender Difference in PTSS



# Cost-Benefit Ratios

<u>SITE</u>	<u>RJ COST</u>	<u>CJ Benefit*</u>	<u>Total Benefit</u>	<u>CJ Ratio</u>	<u>Total Ratio</u>
London	598,848	1,817,426	8,261,028	1:3	1:14
N'Umbria	275,411	70,42	320,125	1:0.26	1:1.2
Thames Valley	222,463	101,520	461,455	1:0.46	1:2
Total	1,096,722	1,989,734	9,042,608	1:1.8	1:8

\*CJ benefit estimated at average 22% of total costs of crime

PTSS findings alone could translate into huge cost savings for victims of serious crime in lost work, health care and quality of life.

# Summary

- Violent Crime: Biggest, clearest effects of RJ in reducing reoffending
- Property Crime: positive, not so big
  
- RJ appears more effective for adult offenders than youth
- RJ appears more effective than court alone post-sentence than pre-sentence
  
- RJ extremely effective for victims who wish to participate - more apologies, less revenge, more satisfaction with cjs
- RJ better for women victims than men (but good for both) in repairing psychological distress
  
- UK: RJ cost effective for cjs costs and for 'hidden' victim costs

## Policy Implications

- Investment of RJ in more serious crimes (when victims want to do it)
- Particularly effective in reducing reoffending after conviction in court and prior to sentencing
- But need more tests of RJ re race and minorities groups
- Appears particularly effective prior to end of probation/community supervision or term of imprisonment (when victims' fears can be allayed)
- But need more tests of RJ at point of release (weak power in our research)
- Cost effective in reduced reoffending in all studies where RJ used in addition to court.