



Children *and* Family Research Center

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



Behavioral and Delinquency Referrals in Child Welfare: Well Served or Wishful Thinking?

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Background

- Primary purpose of child welfare is to respond to the needs of abused and neglected children
- Yet child welfare systems serve non maltreated youth/families
 - Long recognition two tier system, as the children get older the conditions leading to placement shift from “things happening to children” to “things children are doing” (Fanshel, 1992; Bernstein et al 1975))
 - NSCAW estimates 19% enter care in hopes of receiving MH (Barth et al 2006)
- Child welfare is vehicle for delivery of MH and SA services (Leslie et al 2005)
 - Yet questions remain about the efficiency and effectiveness of this approach (Hurlburt et al 2004; Raghaven et al 2010)
- Little is known about how well these youth are served in child welfare settings
- Concern that these youth account for the relatively high rates of delinquency., adult criminality and violence (Widom, 1991)



Research Questions

1. What proportion of adolescents in the child welfare system enter substitute care settings for reasons other than child abuse or neglect?
2. How well are these youth served?
 - Placement type (congregate care vs. family setting)
 - Placement stability
 - Contact with the juvenile justice system
3. What proportion of youth arrested in the child welfare were placed for reasons other than child abuse or neglect?



Data and Methods

State of Washington, Children's Administration, AOC, King County juvenile justice

Youth associated with child protection 1/1/200 and 12/31/2009 (n=252,057)

- Allegations of maltreatment (dates, type)
- Finding (e.g. indicated)
- Placement (reason, dates, type)
- Demographics (name, dob, gender, race)

Juvenile and adult arrests through 6/30/2009 (n=2,387,484)

- Offense (date, type)
- Disposition (e.g. dismissed, probation)
- Youth demographics (name, race, dob, gender)

State of Washington matched records (probabilistic)

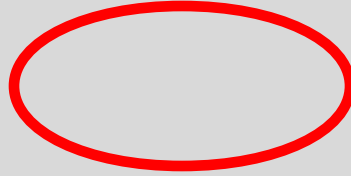
Limited sample to at least 8 years old as of January 1, 2000 (5,528)



Reason for Placement 2000 - 2003 (n=5,528)



Reason for Placement 2000 - 2003 (n=5,528)



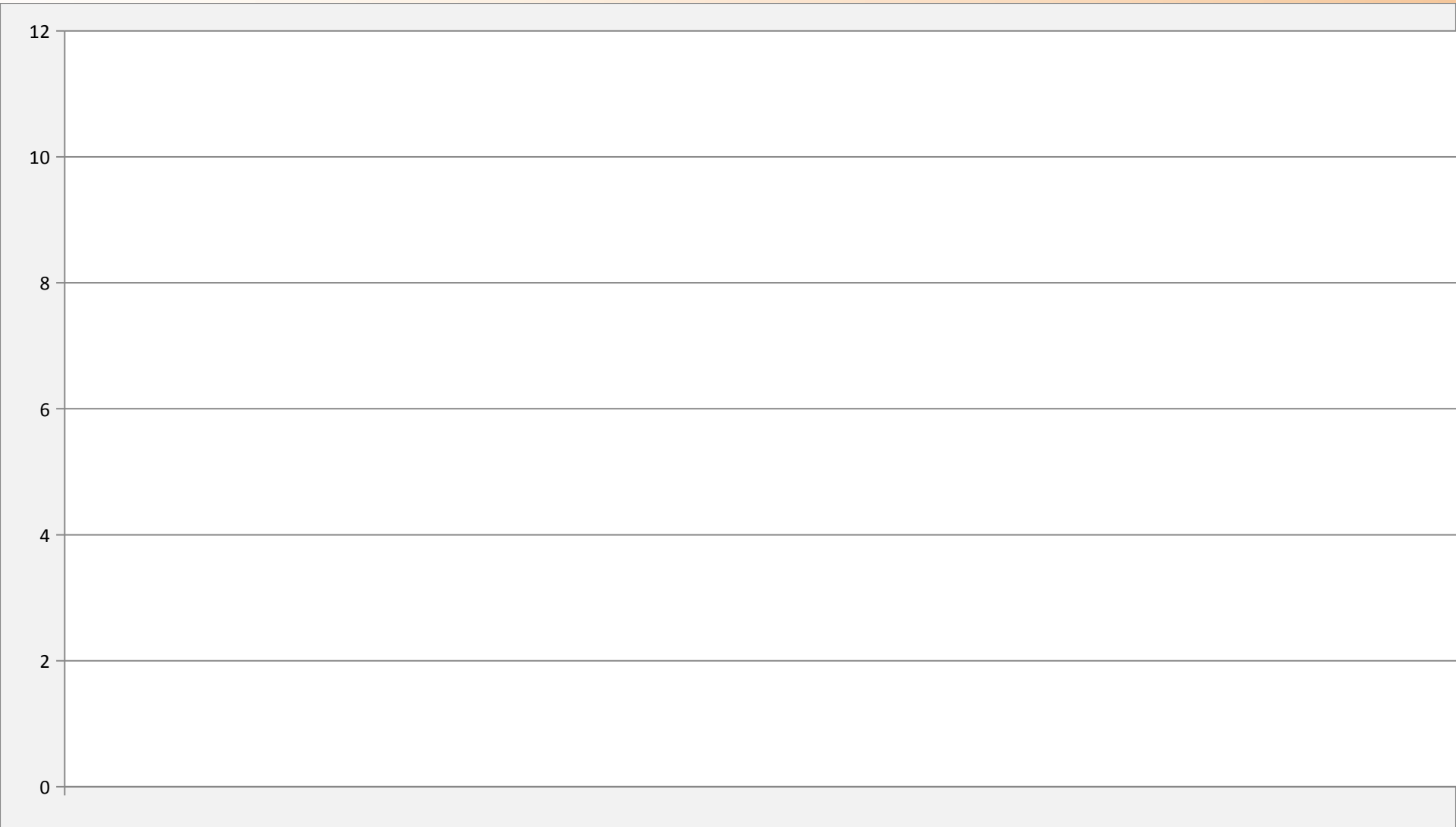


Reason for Placement 2000 - 2003 (n=5,528)

23% placed for child
behavioral problems

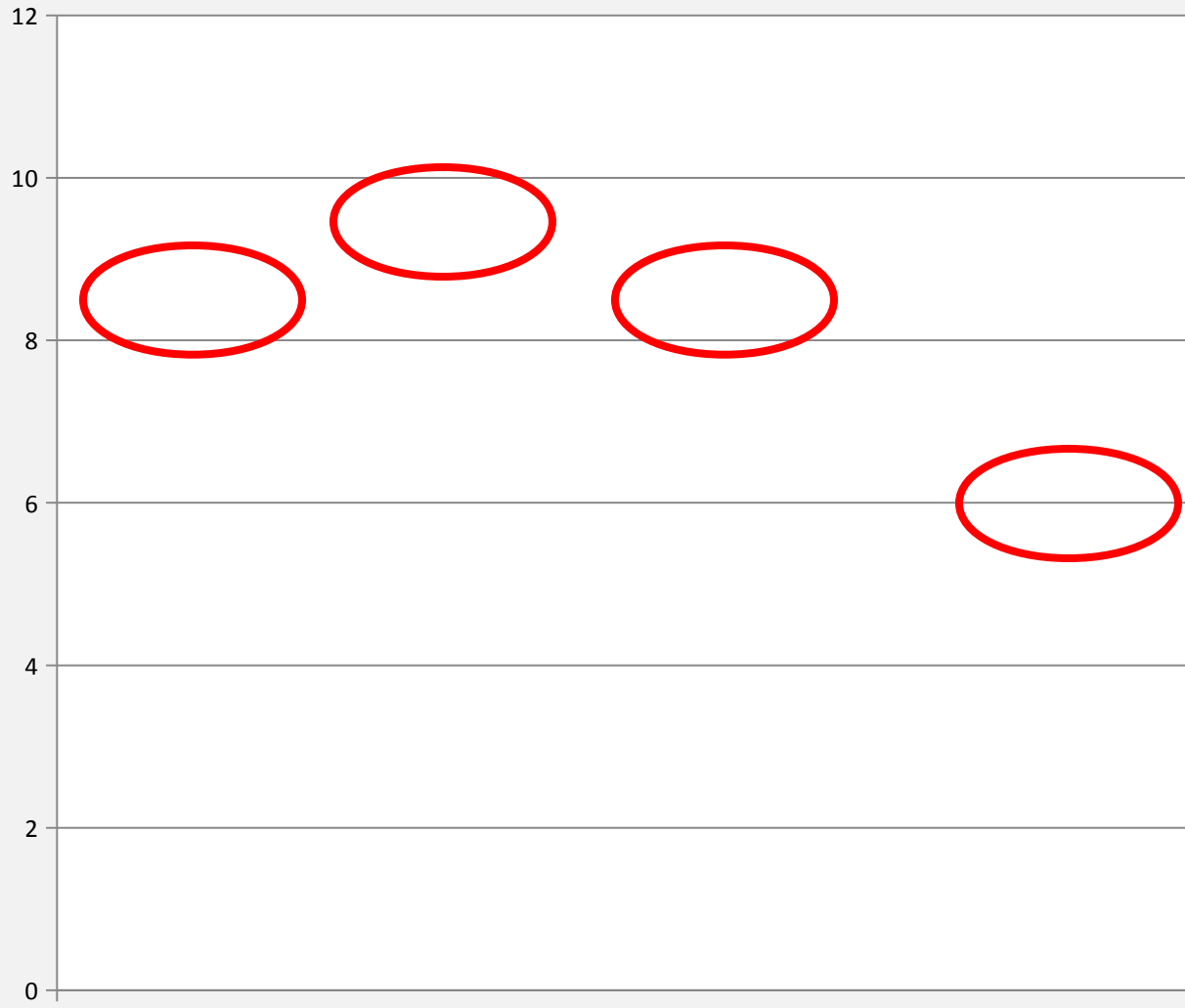


Youth and Placement Characteristics by Reason for Placement (n=5,528)



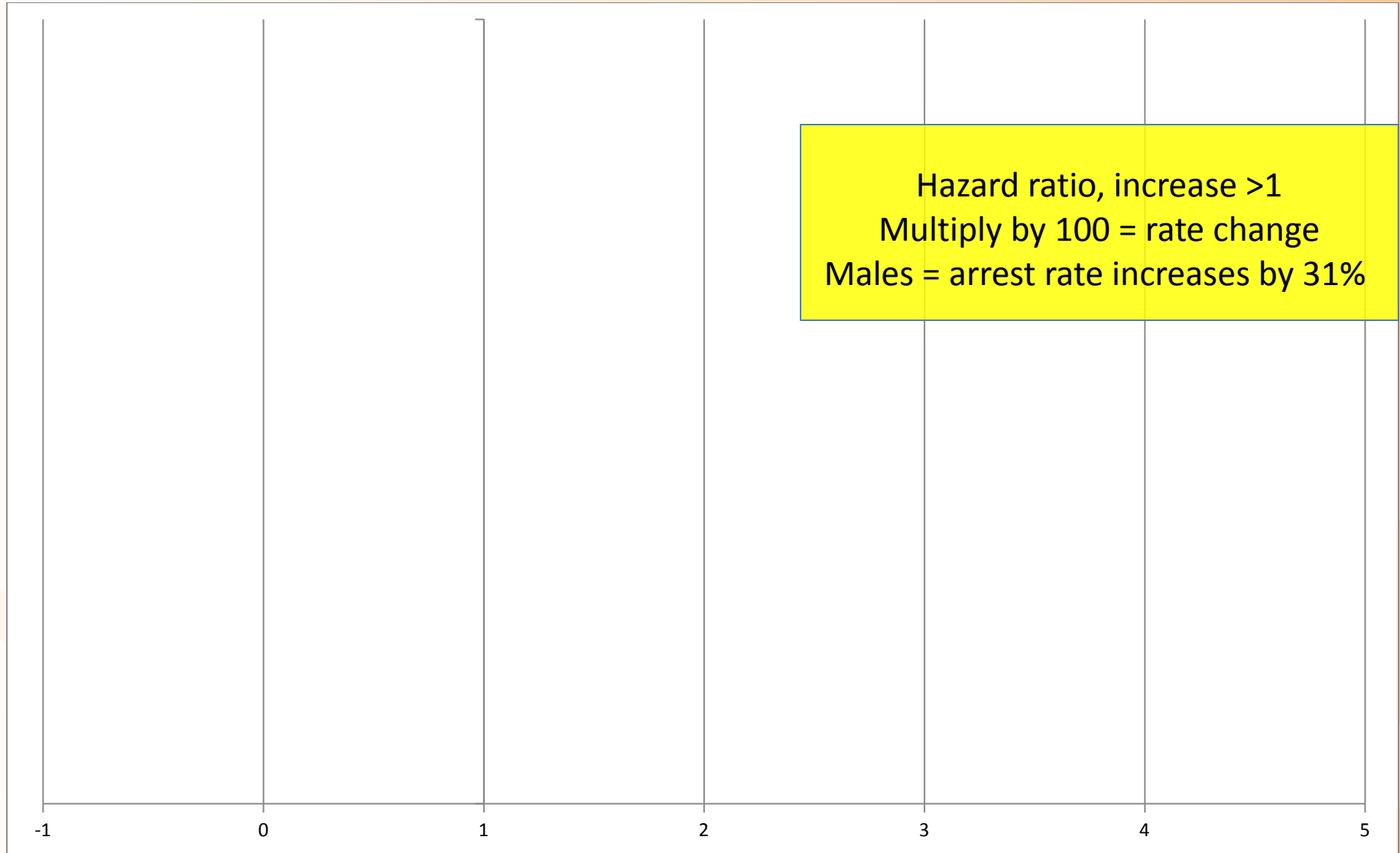


Youth and Placement Characteristics by Reason for Placement (n=5,528)



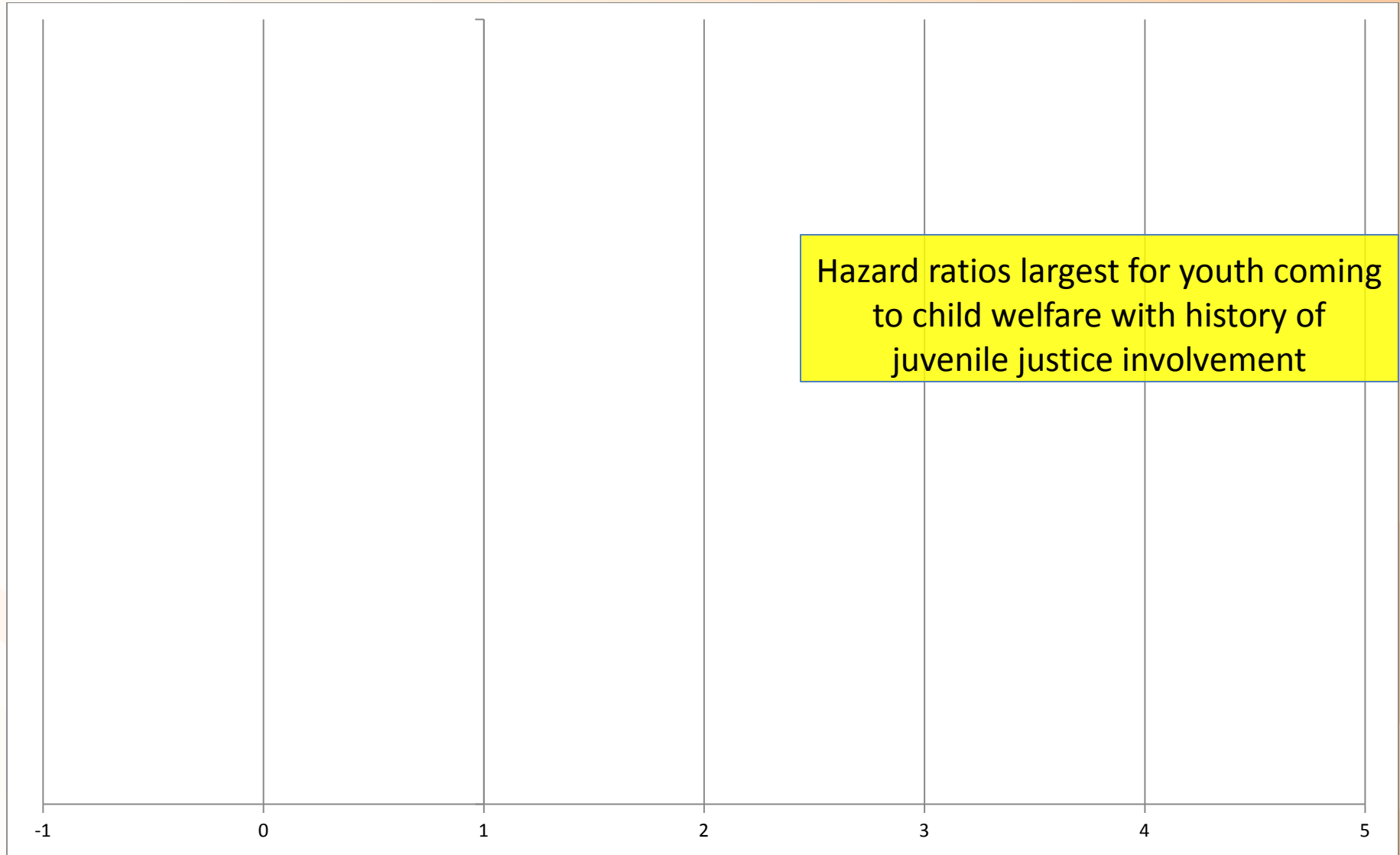


Risk of Arrest Subsequent to Child Welfare Placement (n=5,528)



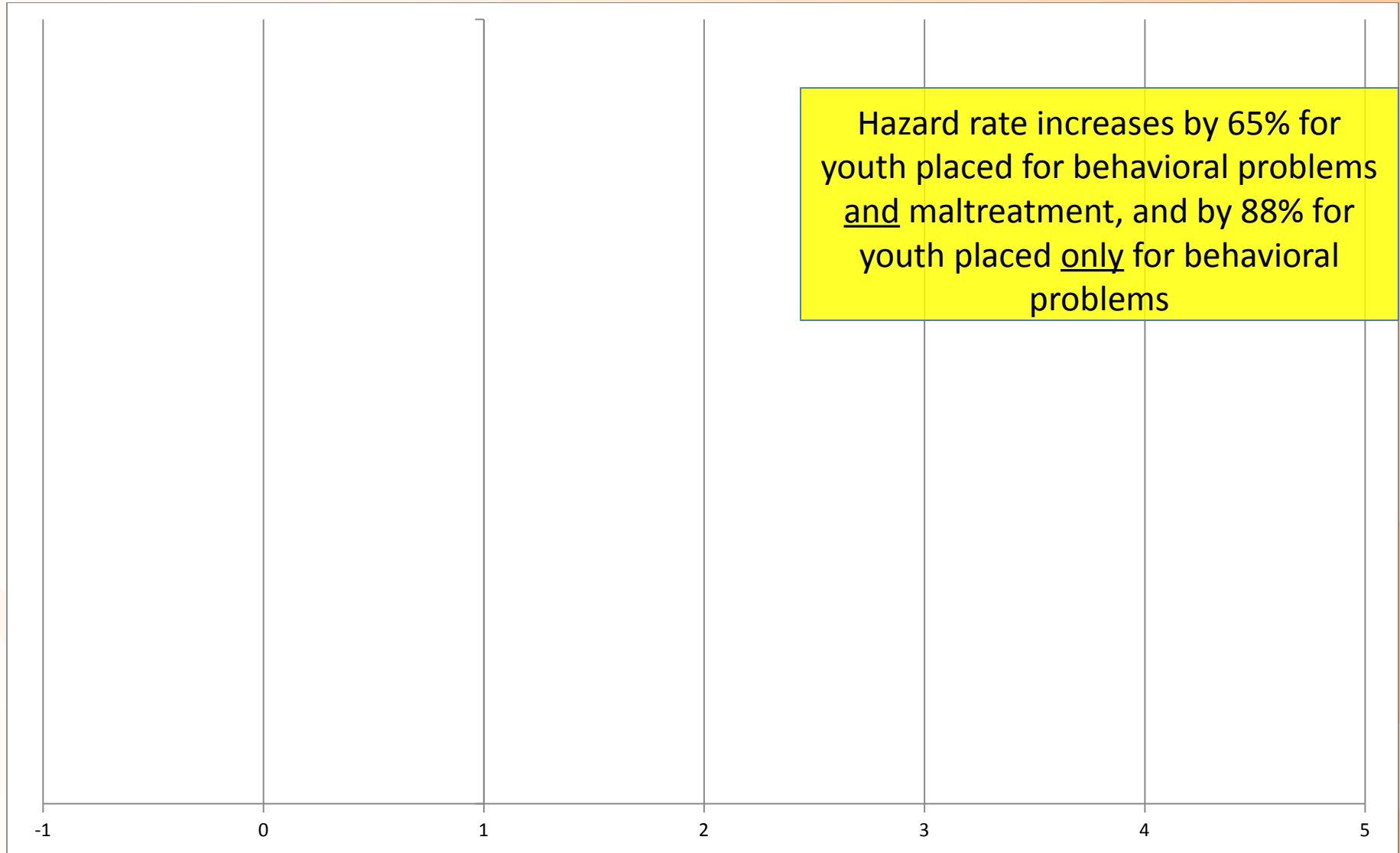


Risk of Arrest Subsequent to Child Welfare Placement (n=5,528)



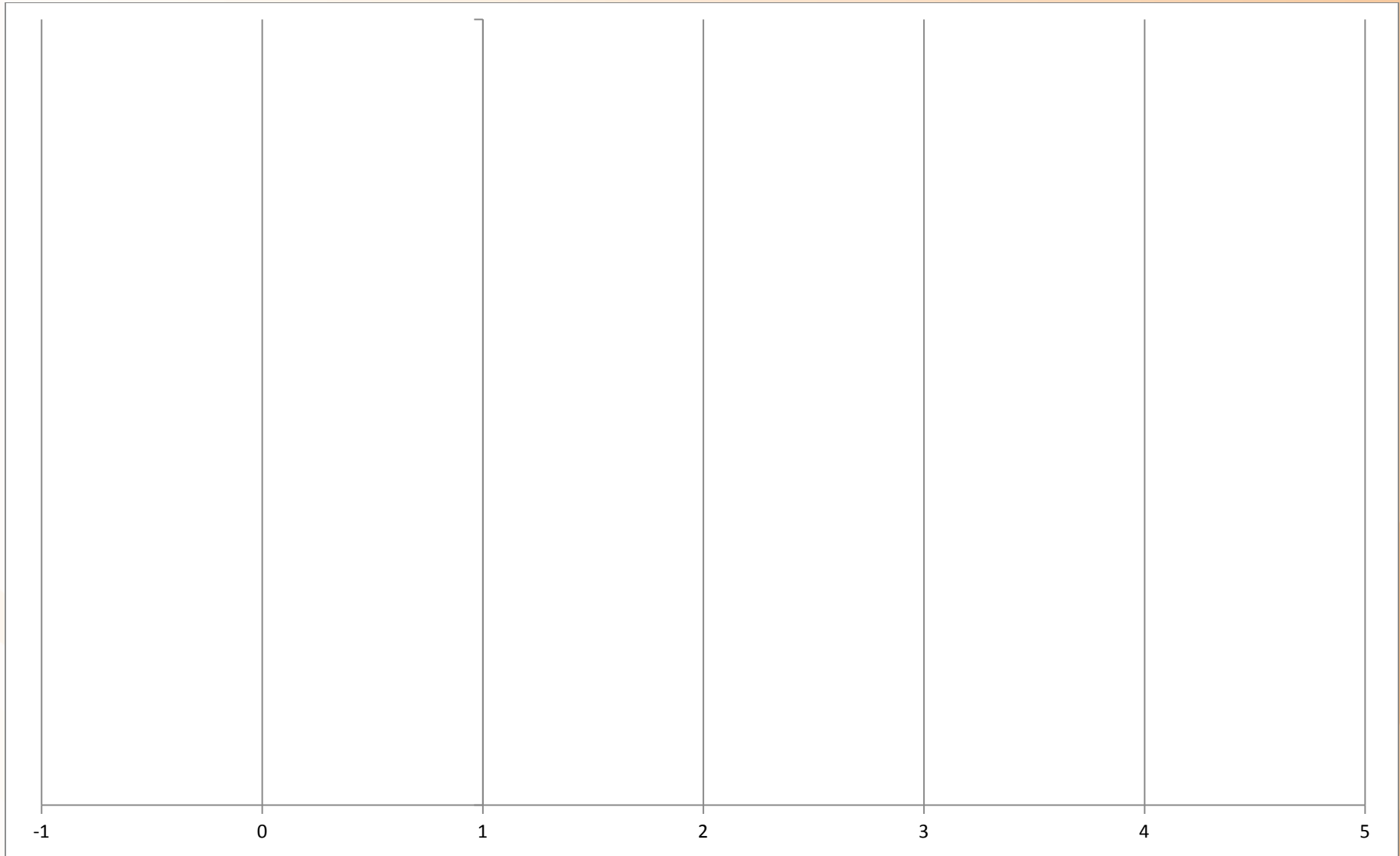


Risk of Arrest Subsequent to Child Welfare Placement (n=5,528)



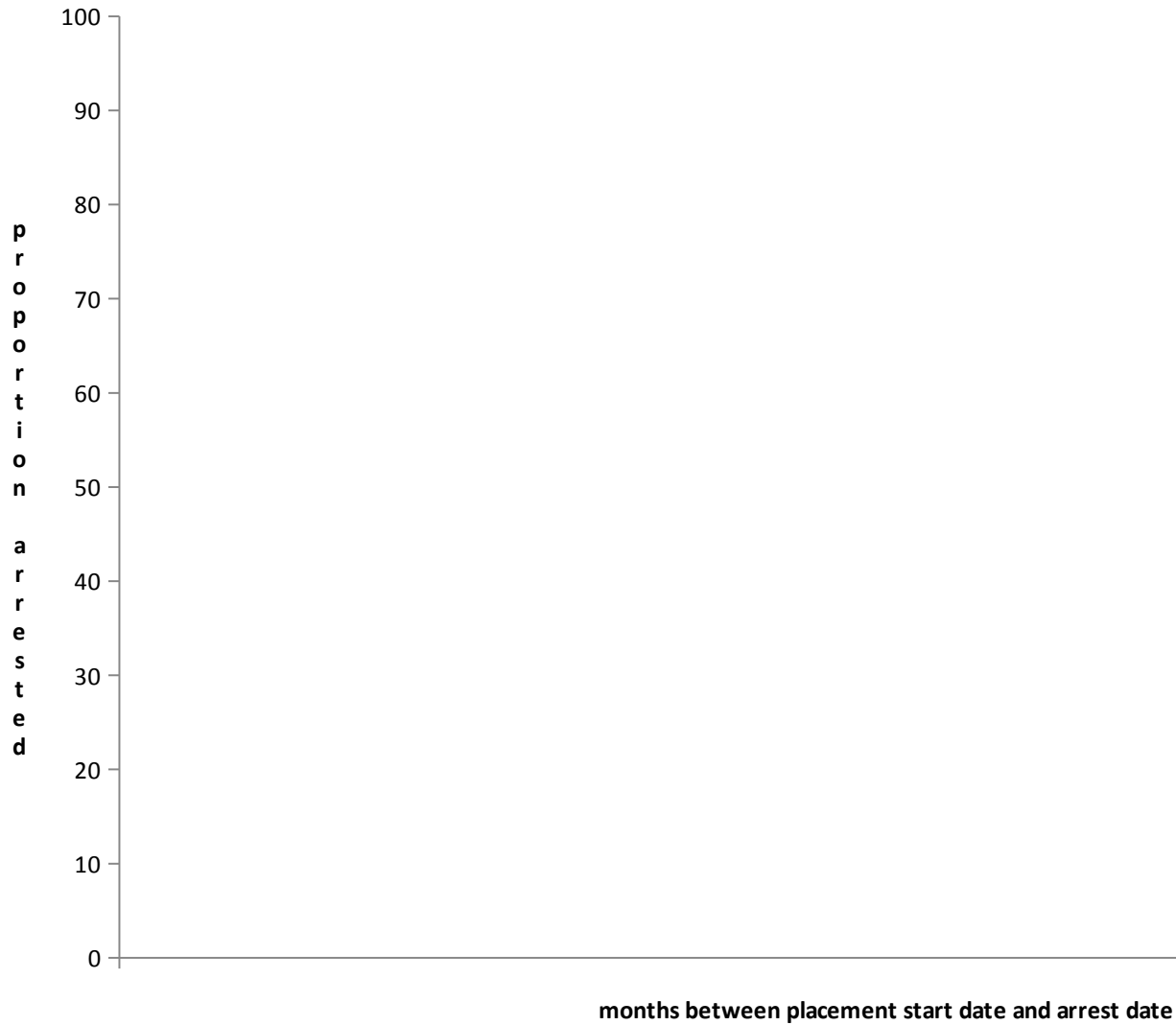


Risk of Arrest Subsequent to Child Welfare Placement (n=5,528)





Reason for Placement and the Timing of Arrest (n= 5,528)



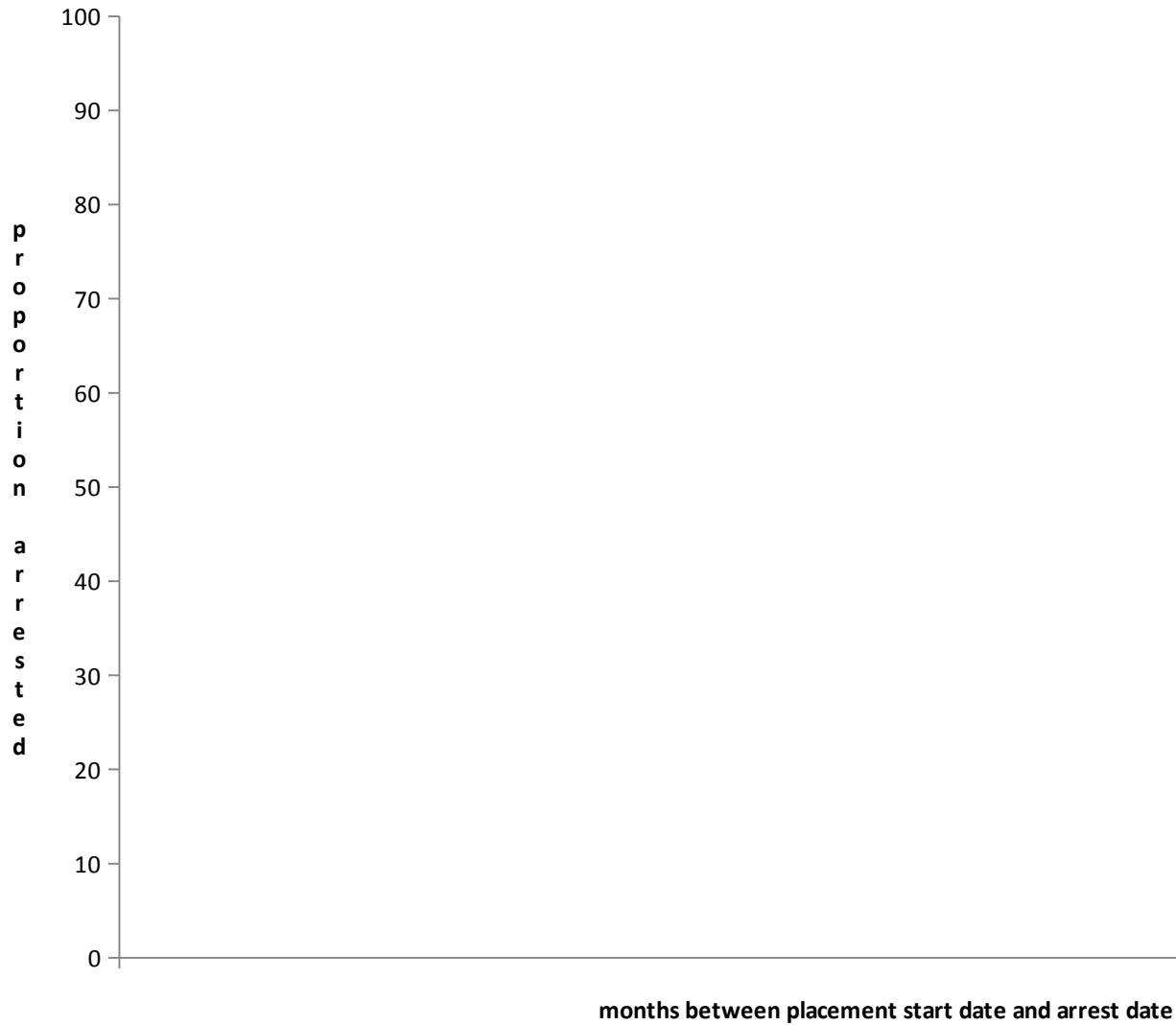


Reason for Placement and the Timing of Arrest (n= 5,528)





Reason for Placement and the Timing of Arrest (n= 5,528)



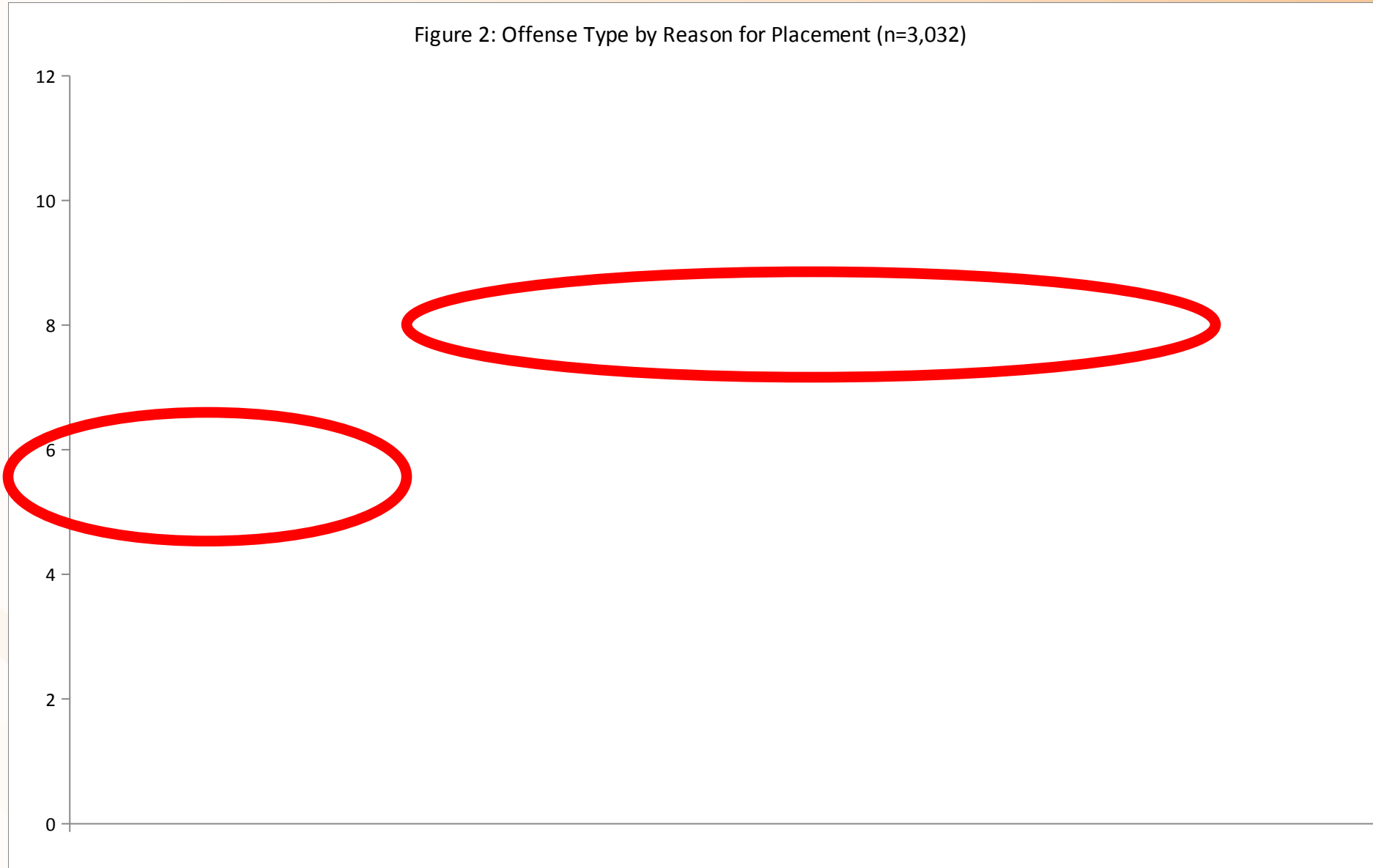


Reason for Placement and the Timing of Arrest (n= 5,528)



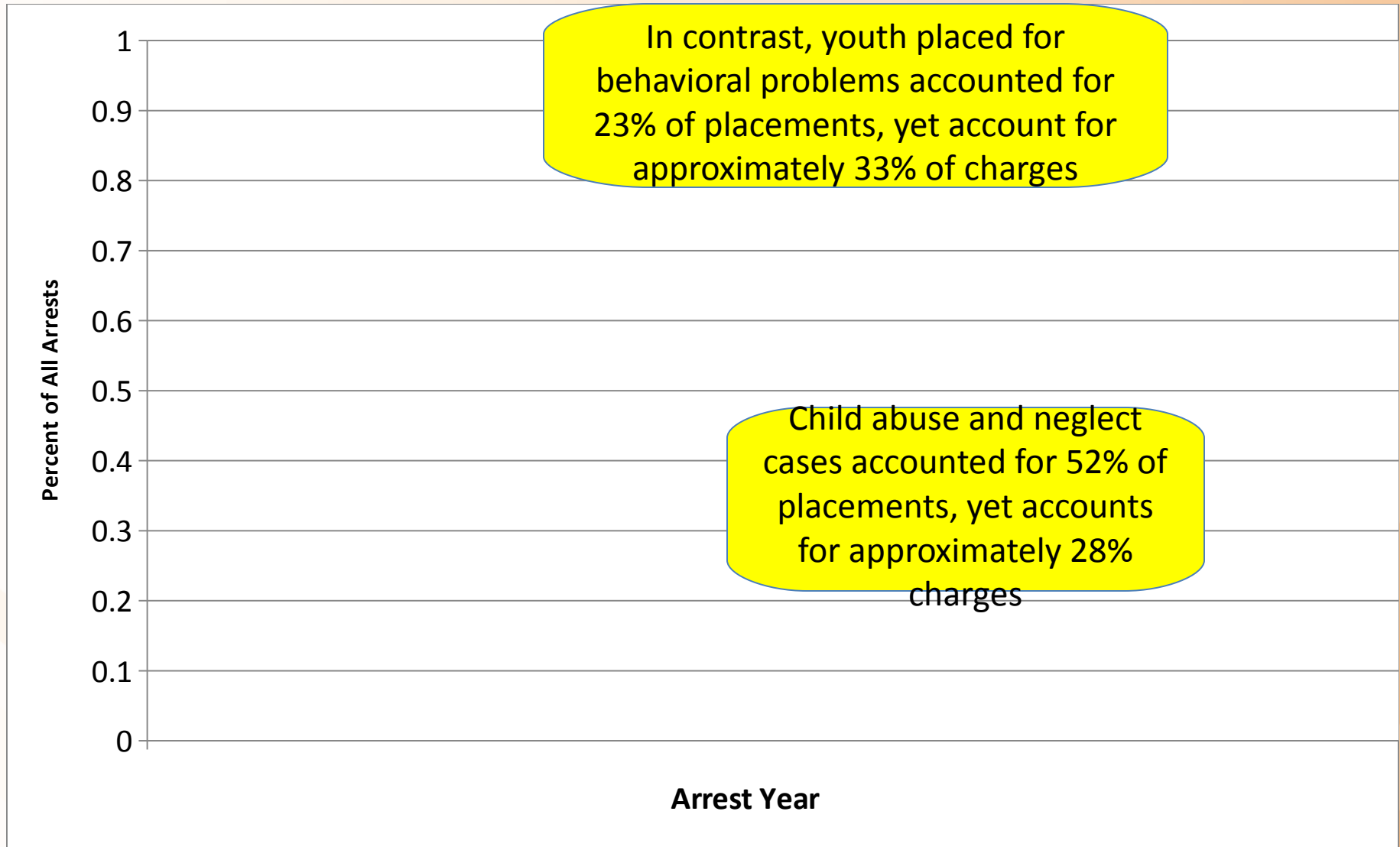


Figure 2: Offense Type by Reason for Placement (n=3,032)





Charges by Reason for Placement, 2006 – 2008 (n=9,035)





Summary of Findings and Implications

- 23% of youth (8 & over) entering substitute care settings in child welfare are placed for child behavioral problems – as opposed to child abuse & neglect
- Female adolescents are overrepresented in the population of youth placed in child welfare settings for child behavioral problems
- Youth placed for behavioral problems are significantly more likely to experience congregate case facilities, more likely to experience only congregate care, more likely to experience placement instability, and more likely to be associated with a subsequent arrest
- Youth placed only for reasons of maltreatment have relatively low rates of justice involvement
- Need to better understand the rationale for placing youth in child welfare settings to address behavioral problems
- If child welfare systems continue to serve this population (actually may increase), need to adopt practice approaches from the menu of evidence based options



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Questions at the End