

Transitions and Turning Points: Examining the Links between Child Maltreatment and Juvenile Offending

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Background to the research

- 2000 Criminological Research Council Grant
 - examining the links between child maltreatment and juvenile offending (DoF data)
- 2003 Criminological Research Council Grant
 - including police cautioning (QPS data)
- 2006-2008???? Australian Research Council Linkage grant with DoC, LAQ and OESR
 - linking juvenile and adult offending

Birth Cohort Study

- 1983 and 1984 birth cohorts
- All children had left the juvenile justice system
 - turned 10 in 1993 and 1994
 - turned 17 in 2000 and 2001
- Maltreatment
 - Child protection records (DoF)
 - notifications
 - substantiations and ‘at risk’
- Offending
 - Cautioning records (QPS)
 - Juvenile Court records (DoF)
- Longitudinal design
 - Advantages
 - Disadvantages

Research Questions

- How many Queensland children born in 1983 and 1984 are maltreated and how many offend?
- Of maltreated children what proportion go on to offend?
- Of young offenders what proportion were maltreated?
- Can we predict offending from the maltreatment history?
- How many distinctive child maltreatment trajectories can be identified?
- Is there a relationship between these trajectories and offending as a juvenile?

Queensland Birth Cohorts (1983 and 1984)

- 82,100 births (52% male, 48% female)
- 100,600 17 year olds (51% male, 49% female)
- 4,500 Indigenous 17 year olds (4.4% of population)

Child Protection Records

- 9% of children born in 1983 and 1984 received at least one child protection notification (9,541)
 - 8% of non-Indigenous males
 - 9% of non-Indigenous females
 - 23% of Indigenous males
 - 25% of Indigenous females
 - max notifications was 33
- 5% of children received an outcome of substantiated or ‘at risk’ (5,849)
 - 5% of non-Indigenous males
 - 5% of non-Indigenous females
 - 16% of Indigenous males
 - 17% of Indigenous females
 - max substantiated was 18
 - 62% of notified children had at least one outcome of substantiated or at risk

Offending Records

- 15% of young people born in 1983 and 1984 received a police caution (14,730)
 - 20% of males
 - 10% of females
- 6% of young children born in 1983 and 1984 had at least one finalised appearance for an offence (5,235)
 - 7% of non-Indigenous males
 - 2% of non-Indigenous females
 - 39% of Indigenous males
 - 13% of Indigenous females
 - max finalised appearances was 31
 - 8% of appearances outcome not guilty
- a total of 17% of Queensland children have come to the attention of the police for offending (caution and court)
 - 24% of males
 - 11% of females

Of children who are maltreated what percentage appear in the juvenile justice system (caution or court)?

- 27% of children with substantiated maltreatment offend
 - of maltreated Indigenous males 54% offend
 - of maltreated Indigenous females 29% offend
 - of maltreated non-Indigenous males 23% offend
 - of maltreated non-Indigenous females 9% offend
- 21% children with only unsubstantiated notifications offended
- 16% children no contact with child protection system offended

Of young people who offend (caution or court) what percentage have been maltreated?

- of young people cautioned 7% have been maltreated
 - 9% girls
 - 6% boys
- of young people in court 20% have been maltreated
 - 37% indigenous girls
 - 23% Indigenous boys
 - 26% non-Indigenous girls
 - 16% non-Indigenous boys

Summary of findings

- There is a relationship between maltreatment and offending
 - maltreated children are more likely to appear in the JJ system than children for whom there is no evidence of maltreatment
 - however, the majority of maltreated children do not offend
- What is it about the maltreatment experience that increases the likelihood of offending?

Developmental or Life Course Criminology

- development of offending and antisocial behaviour
- the timing of risk factors
- developmental effects of life events

- focus on the differential impact of life experiences at different times of the developmental timeline
 - not just the presence of risk factors
 - relationship between risk and protective factors
 - life phases and transitions

Trajectory analysis

- Land and Nagin (1993) developed Semiparametric Group Based Method (SPGM) statistical technique
- Used within criminology to identify distinctive clusters of offending patterns over time
- For example
 - Farrington et. al. (1987)
 - ‘Frequents’ and ‘Occasionals’
 - Moffitt et. al. (1993)
 - ‘Life course persistent’ and ‘adolescent-limited’ offenders
- Group together ‘similar’ trajectories of offending
- Identify offender subgroups from the data rather than imposing ex ante definitions

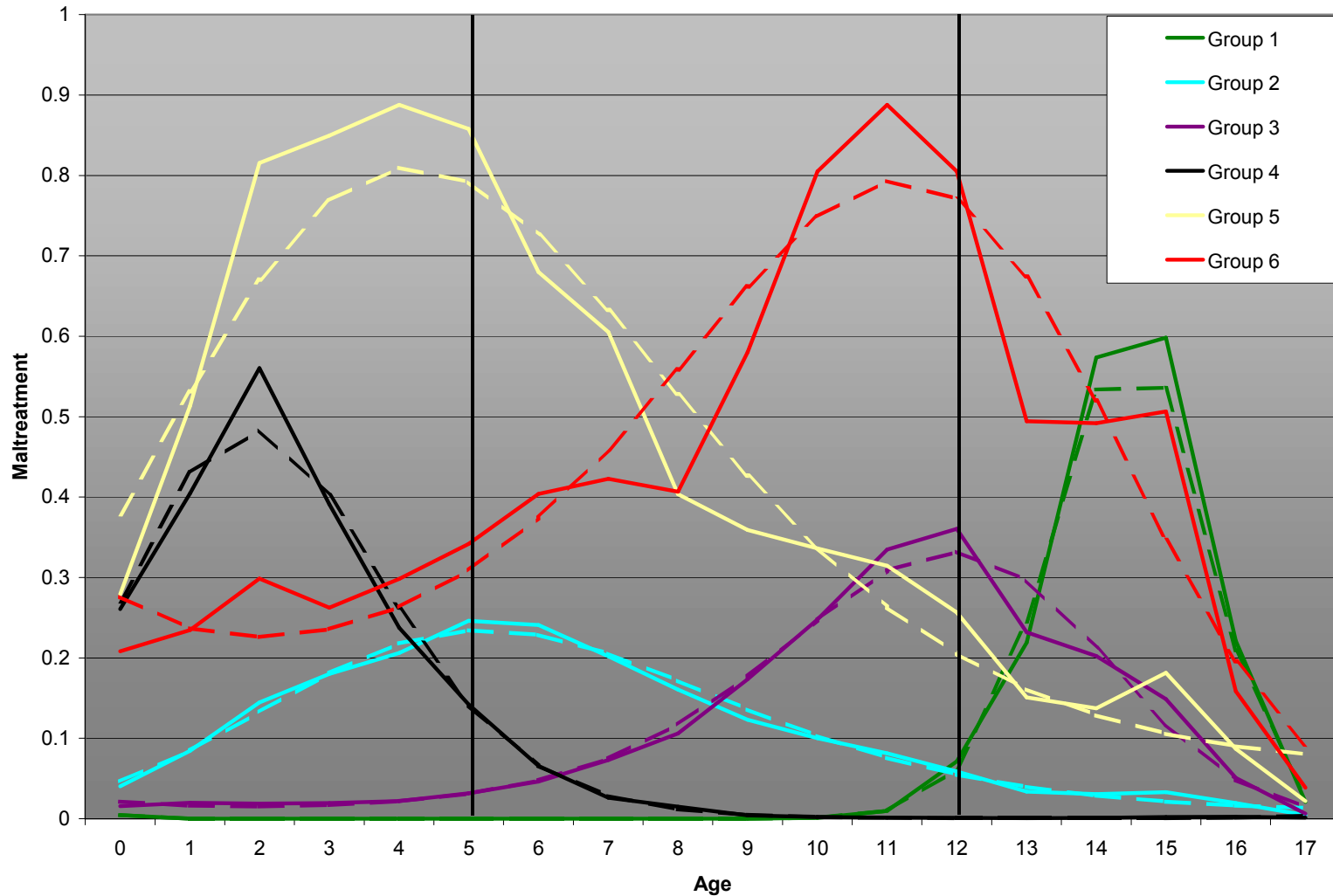
Research Questions

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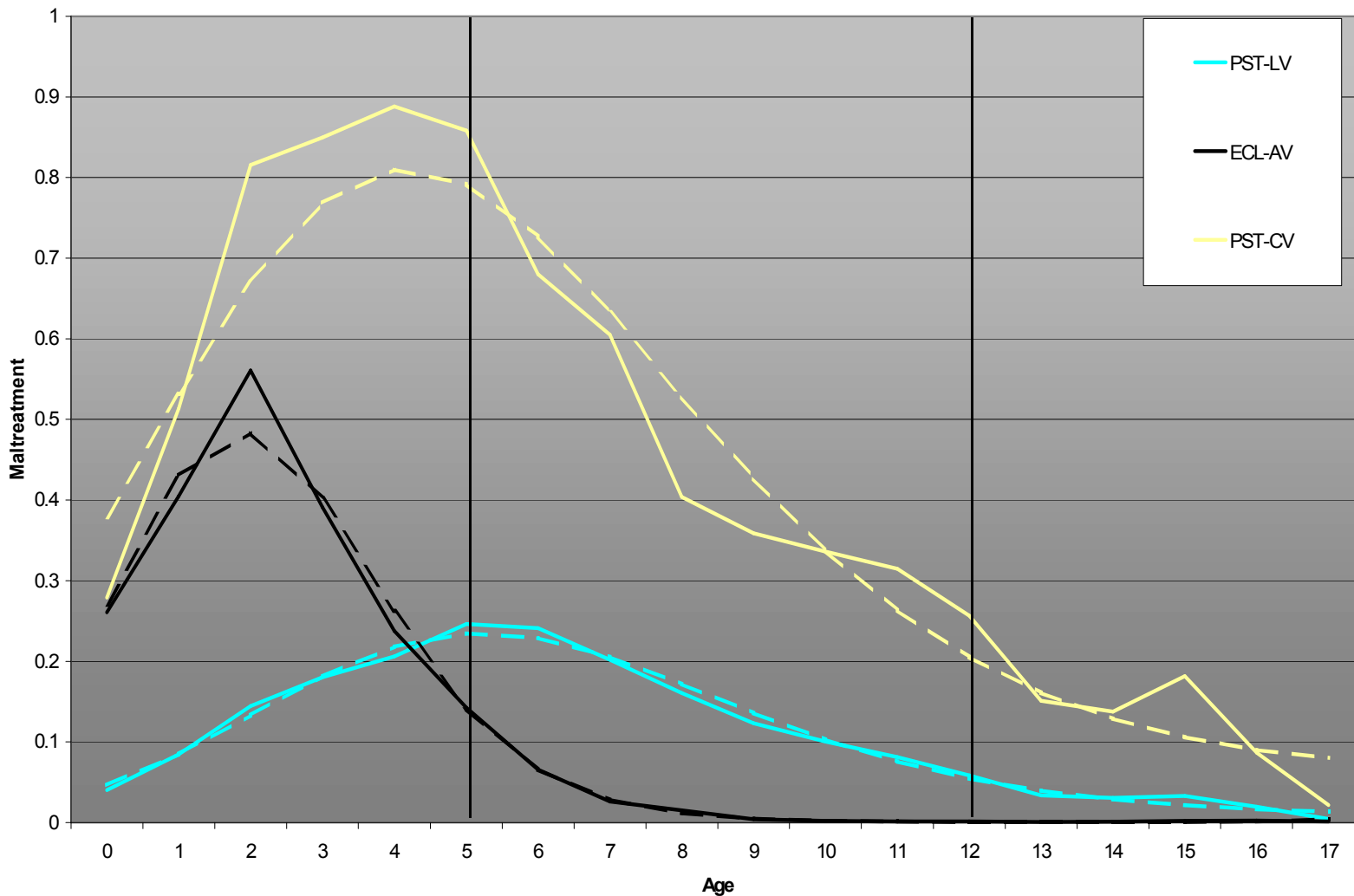
Can we predict offending from a child's maltreatment history?

- Yes – the maltreatment experiences of maltreated children who offend are different from those who do not offend
- Predictive factors
 - age of final maltreatment
 - number of maltreatment incidents
 - experience of neglect and physical abuse
- Not predictive factors
 - age of first maltreatment
 - experience of sexual and emotional abuse

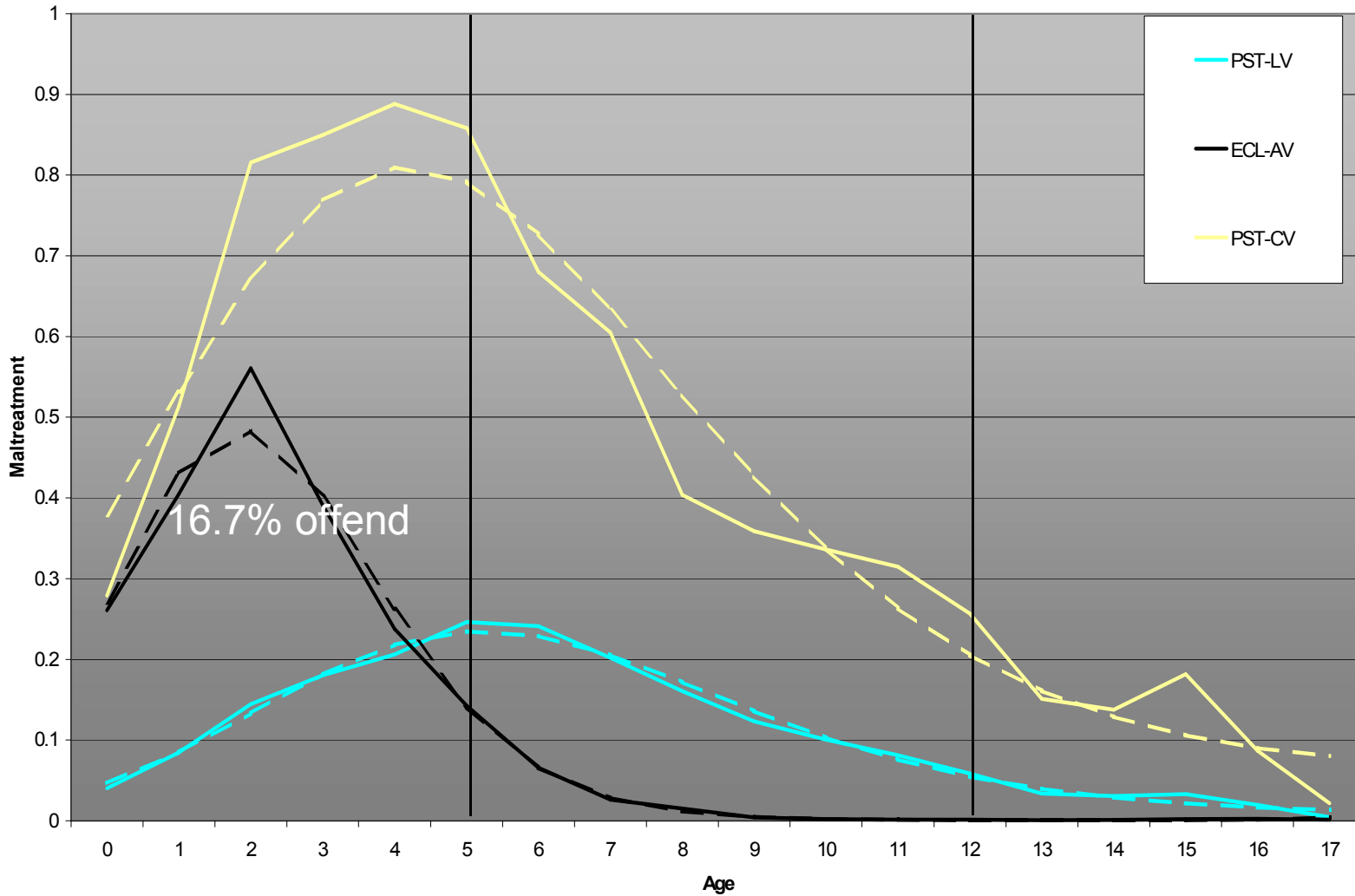
Trajectory analysis



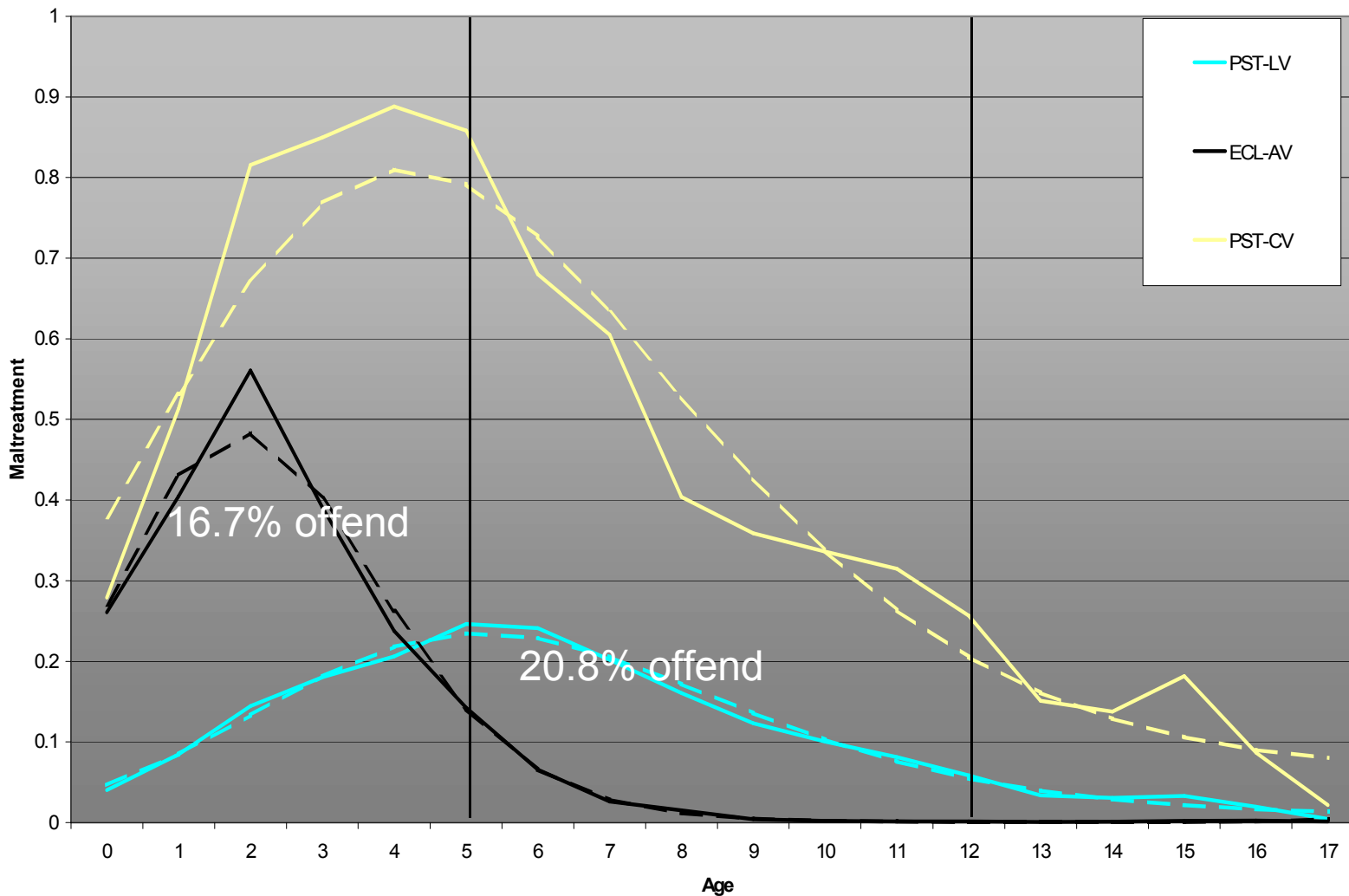
Early peaking groups



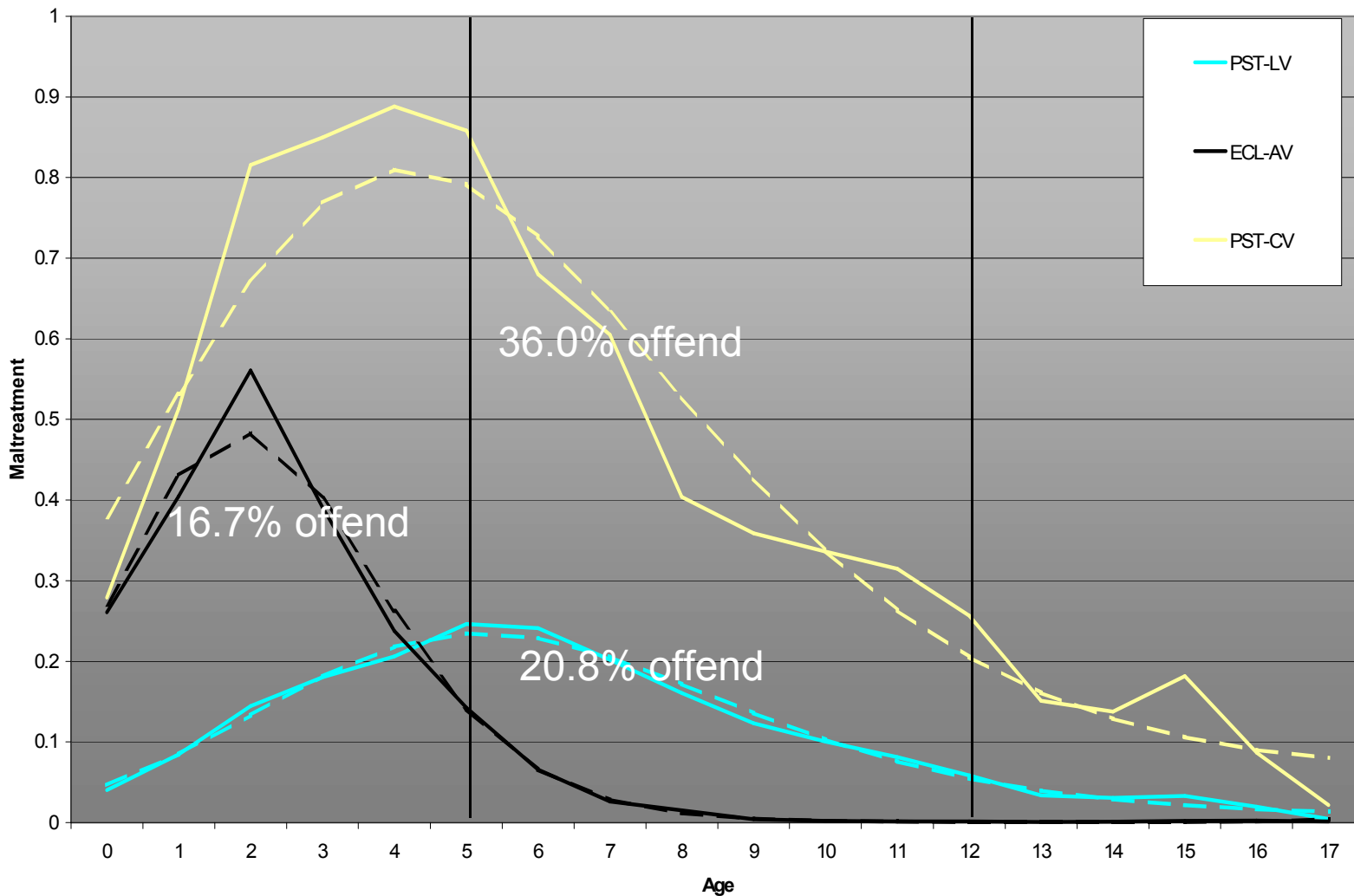
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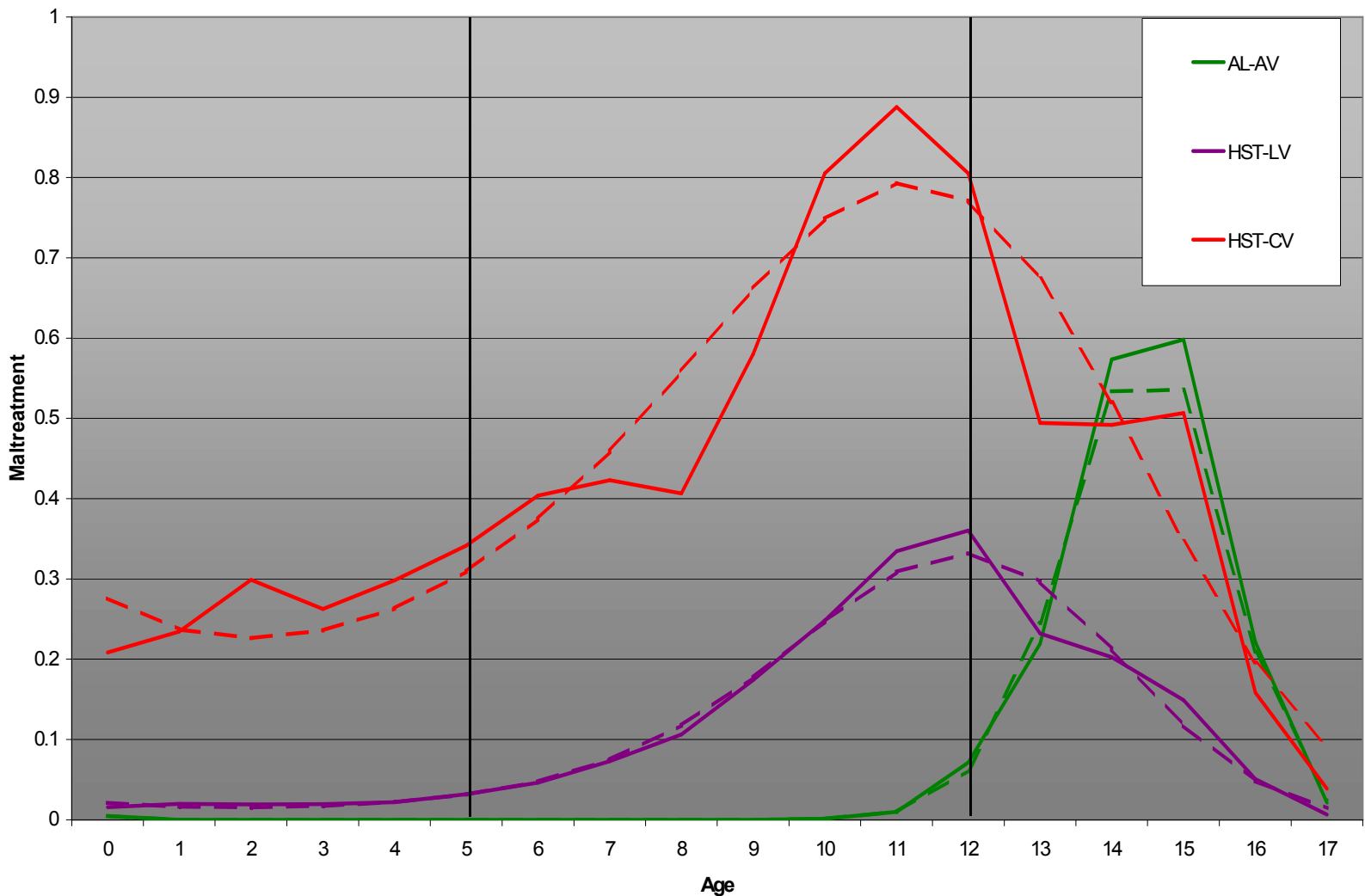
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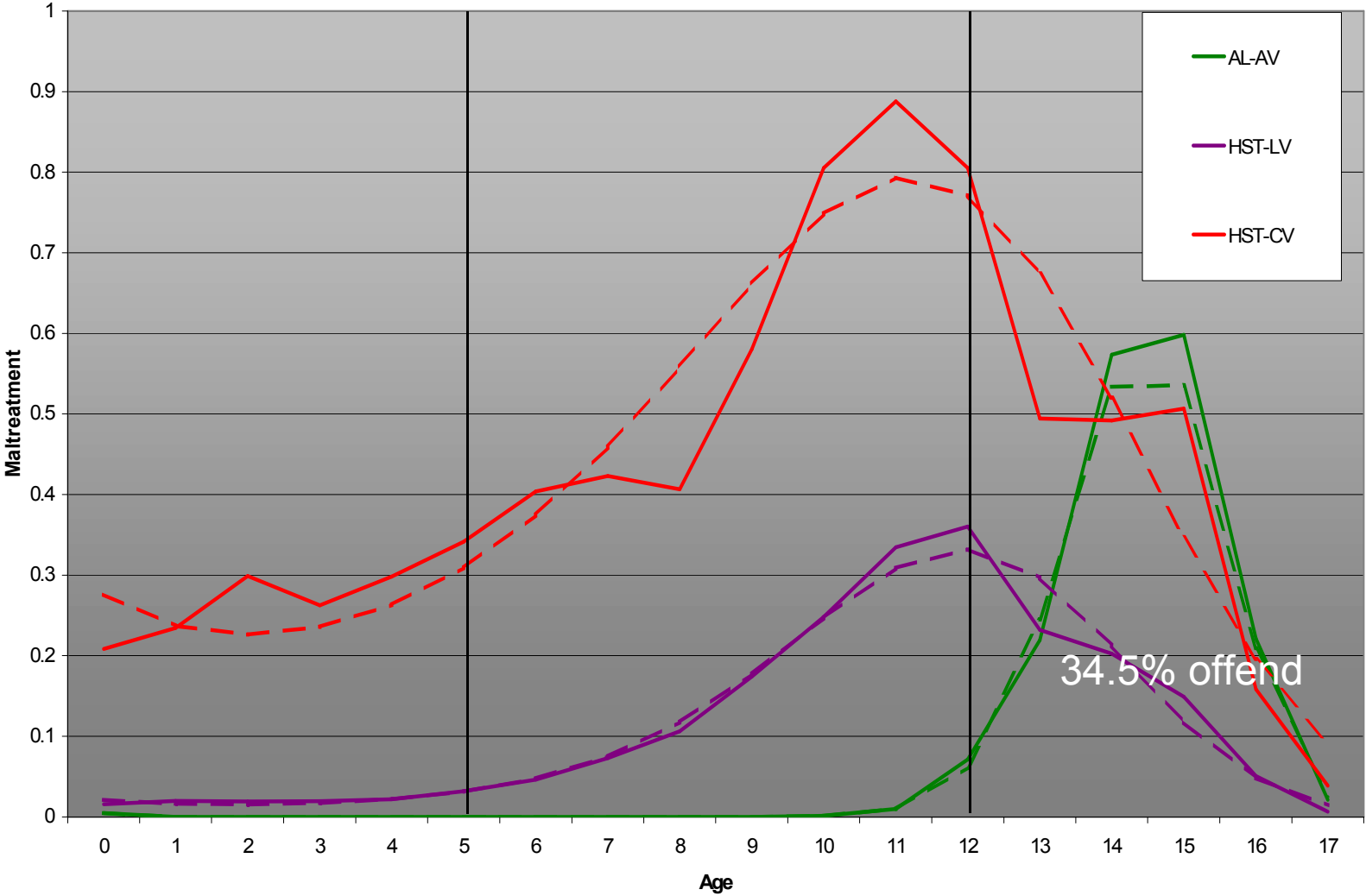
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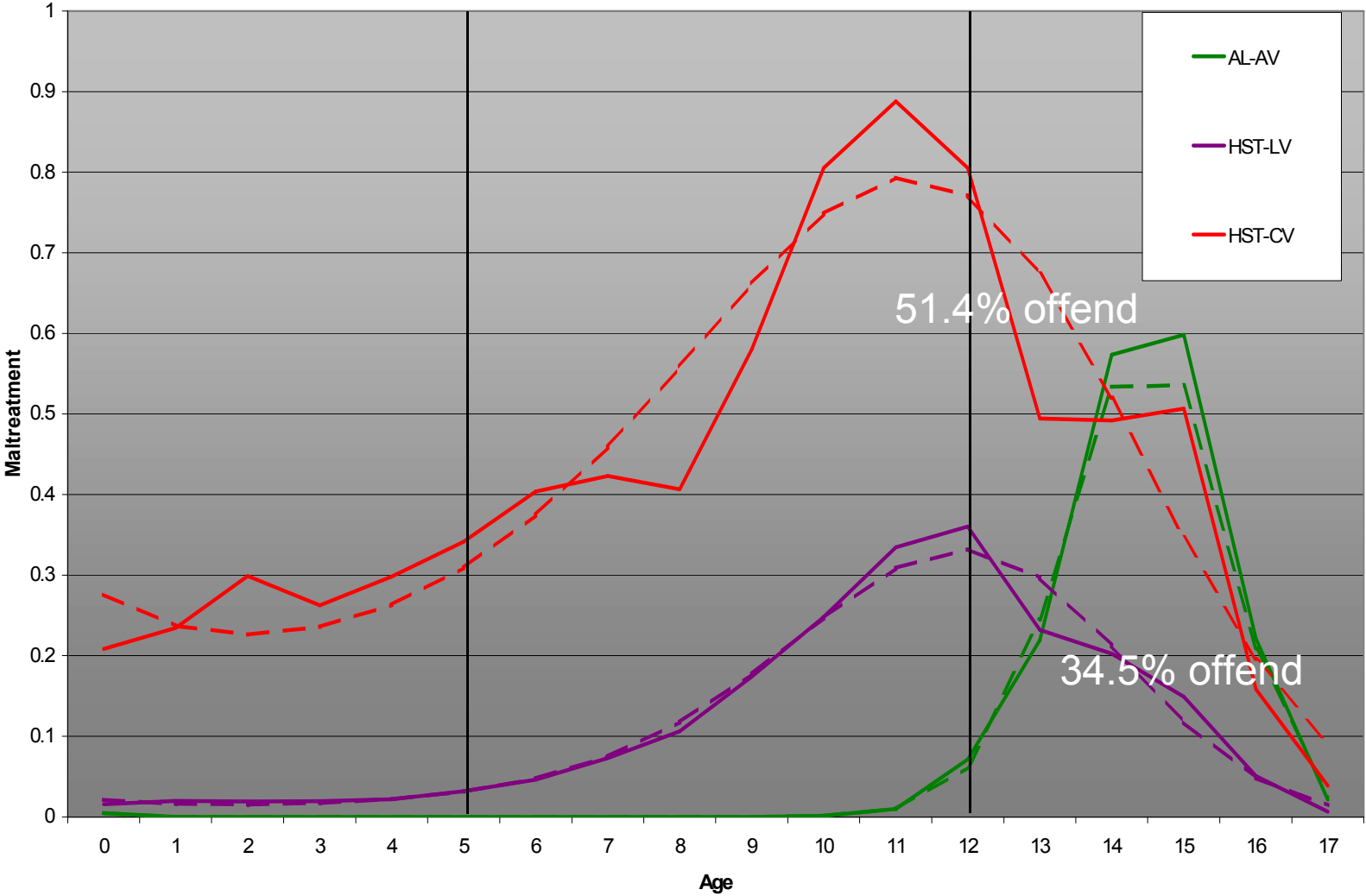
Late peaking groups



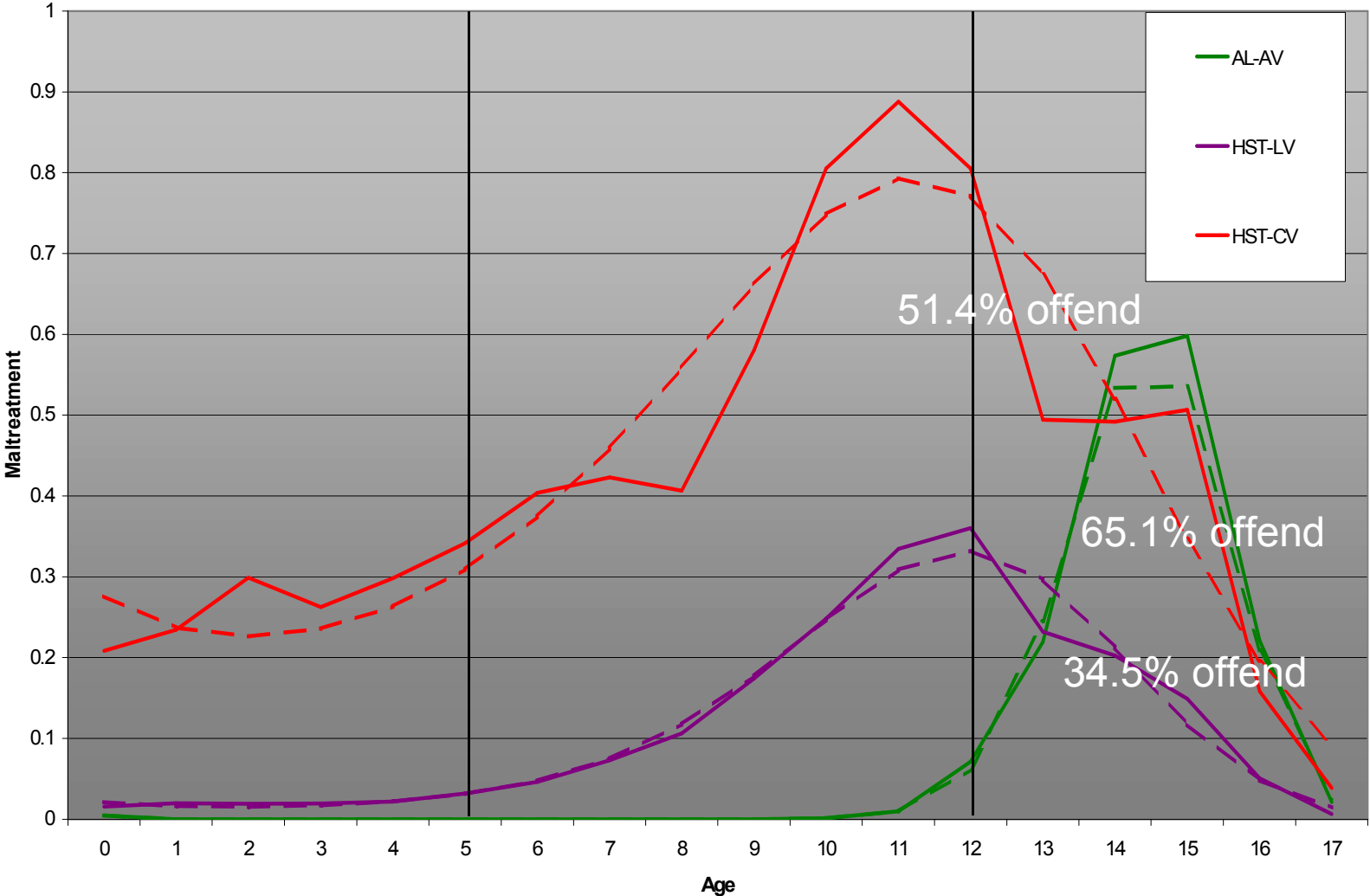
Late peaking groups



Late peaking groups



Late peaking groups



Summary of high offending trajectories

- Adolescent limited – Acute Victimization (65.1% offend)
 - 11% of maltreated children
 - little or no evidence of maltreatment in early years
 - females over represented
 - indigenous children under represented
 - most indigenous males offended
 - first maltreatment investigation
 - Emotional or physical
 - Notifier - family member, police or school teacher
 - Blended families
 - Perpetrator resided with the child
 - More likely to be place away from home
- High School Transition – Chronic victimisation (51% offend)
 - 4.4% of maltreated children
 - Indigenous children over represented (25%)
 - Almost all indigenous children offended
 - Maltreated in childhood but peaking at 11 years
 - First maltreatment investigation
 - Physical abuse or neglect

What does it all mean?

- maltreated children are more likely to offend
 - if maltreated when they are older
 - if suffer chronic maltreatment
- transitions and turning points
 - transitions are life changing events
 - going to school (preschool to early school age)
 - going to high school (adolescence)
 - turning points are when the transitions are not negotiated
- maltreatment is a significant risk factor for not negotiating a transition
- need to take maltreatment in adolescence and repeat maltreatment seriously
- offending is only one negative life outcome

- why does maltreatment peak at the transitions?
 - is it increased/changed surveillance?
 - family stress at transitions?
- why does maltreatment in older children lead to offending?
 - more likely to come into contact with police?
 - more likely to leave/be kicked out of home?
- how can we use this understanding of the impact of the transition to mitigate the effects of maltreatment?
 - school based programs?
 - early intervention programs?
 - parenting programs?