

Diverting Young Offenders in Victoria: The Victoria Police Cautioning Program for Juveniles

**Shasta Holland
University of Melbourne**

**Leanne Sargent
Victoria Police**



**THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE**

Background to cautioning in Victoria

Governed under operational instructions not legislation

First formally introduced in 1959

Substantially revised in 1977 and 1991

My Research

Framed as a program evaluation of cautioning

- Interviews with 29 police officers
- Aggregate statistics on juveniles 'processed' by police
- Individual records for 7,213 juveniles

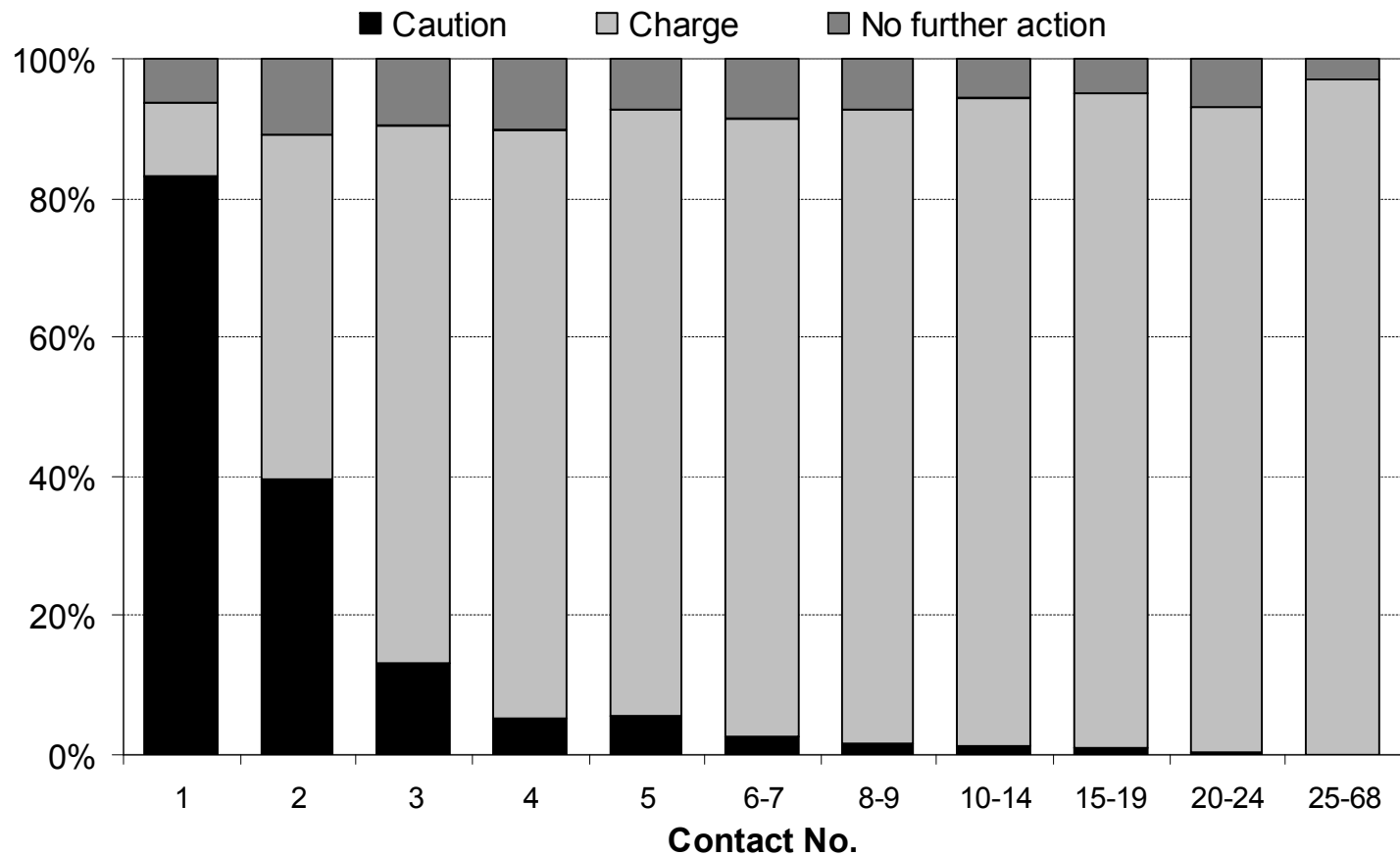
How do police officers view cautioning?

Two perspectives:

The main purpose is to give someone a second chance. The idea is to give someone who's committed an offence, first time, a second chance. (Sergeant 10)

At the end of the day, we don't like to put kids before the Children's Court if we don't have to. (Sergeant 1)

How is cautioning used?



Continued.....

For first and second contacts:

- Offence type
- Age

For second contact:

- Police division
- Outcome of first contact

Re-offending – following 1st contact

47.6% had a second contact with police

46% cautioned vs 60% charged

Strongest predictors:

- Having been reported as a missing person
- Gender

Re-offending – following 2nd contact

73.2% had a third contact with police

69% cautioned vs 77% charged

Strongest predictors:

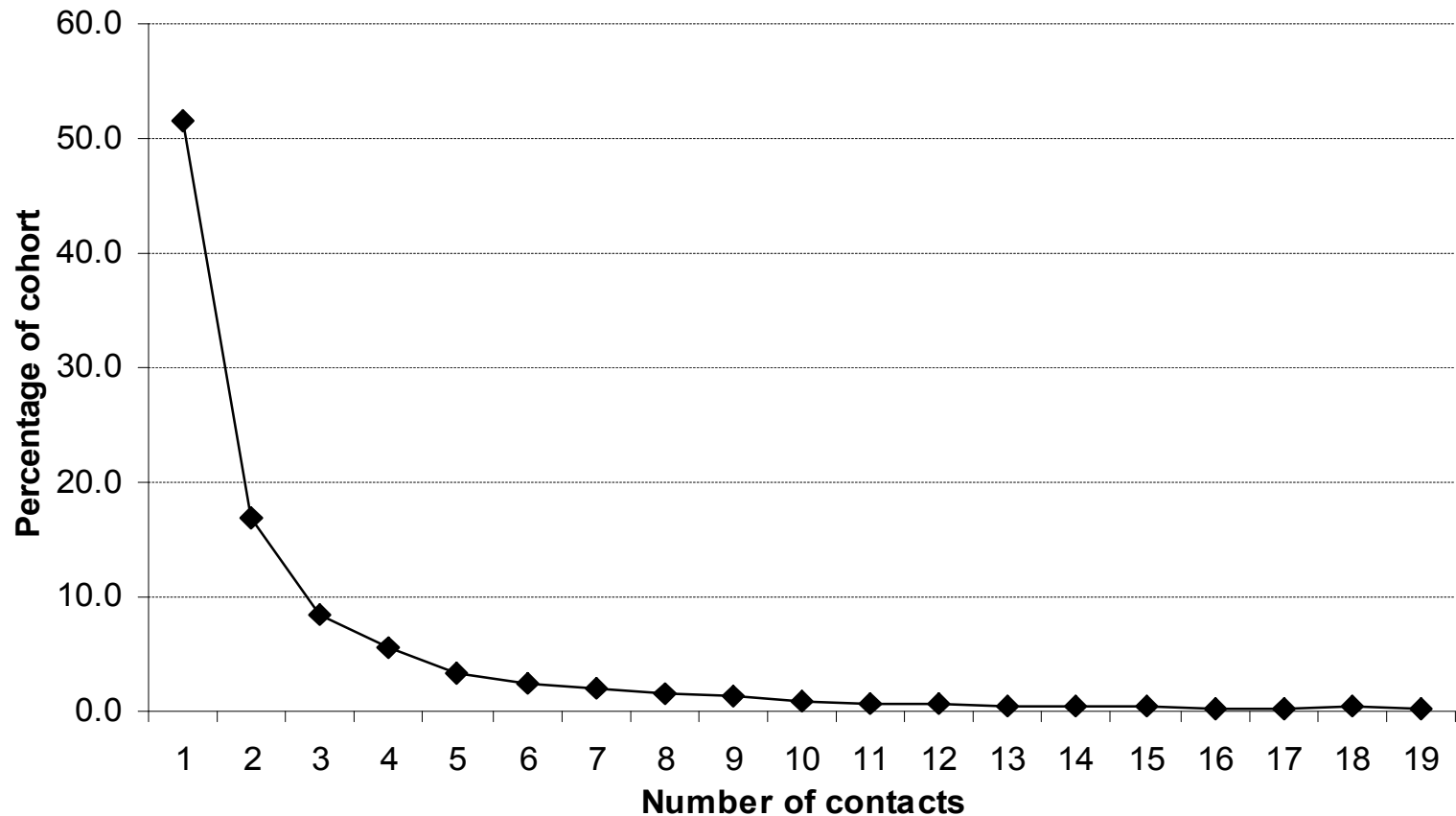
- Having been reported as a missing person
- Gender

Propensity scores analysis of re-offending

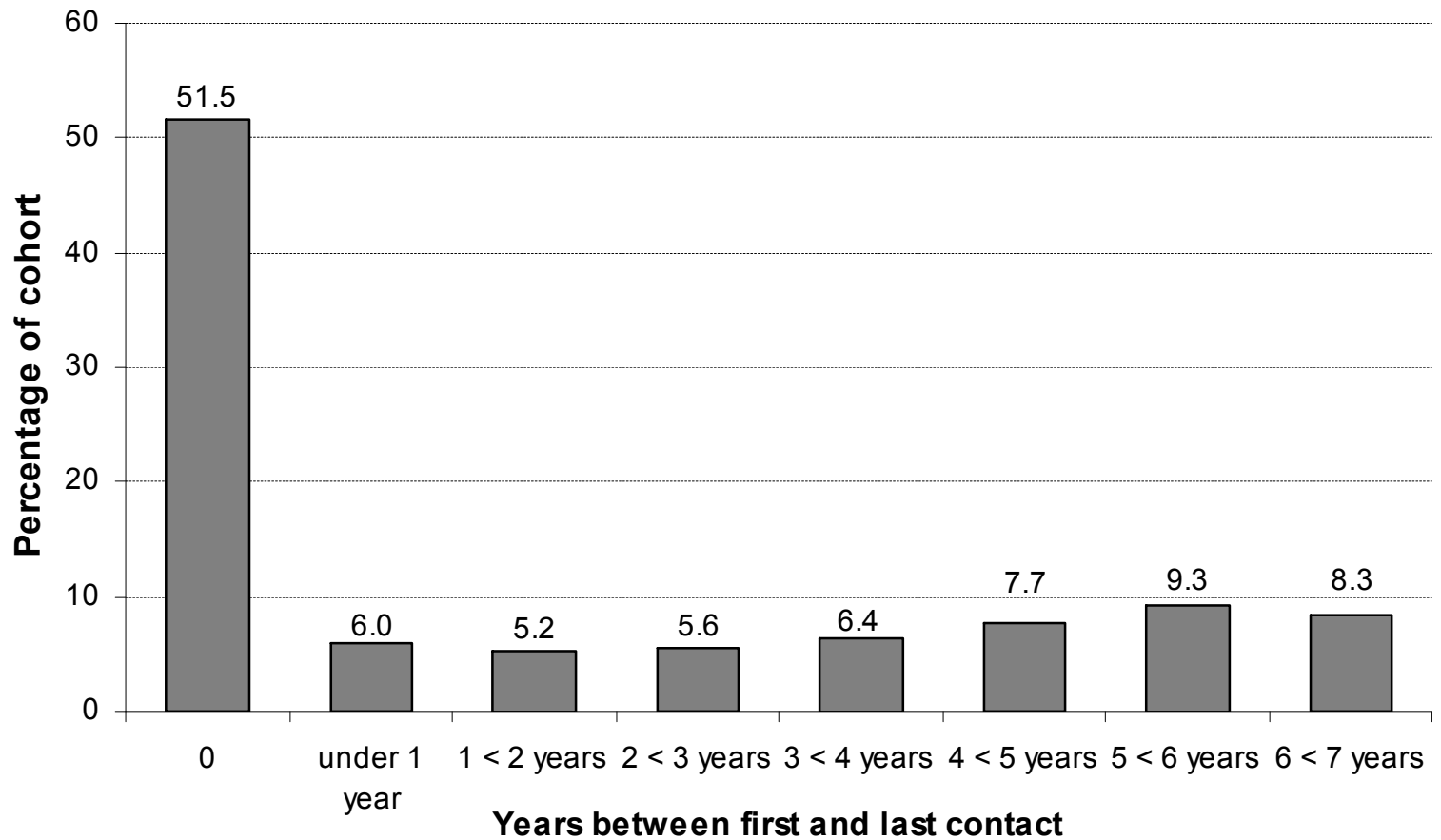
Significant problem of selection bias in non-random samples

Using this method the odds of re-offending for youths who were charged were 32% greater than for youths who were cautioned

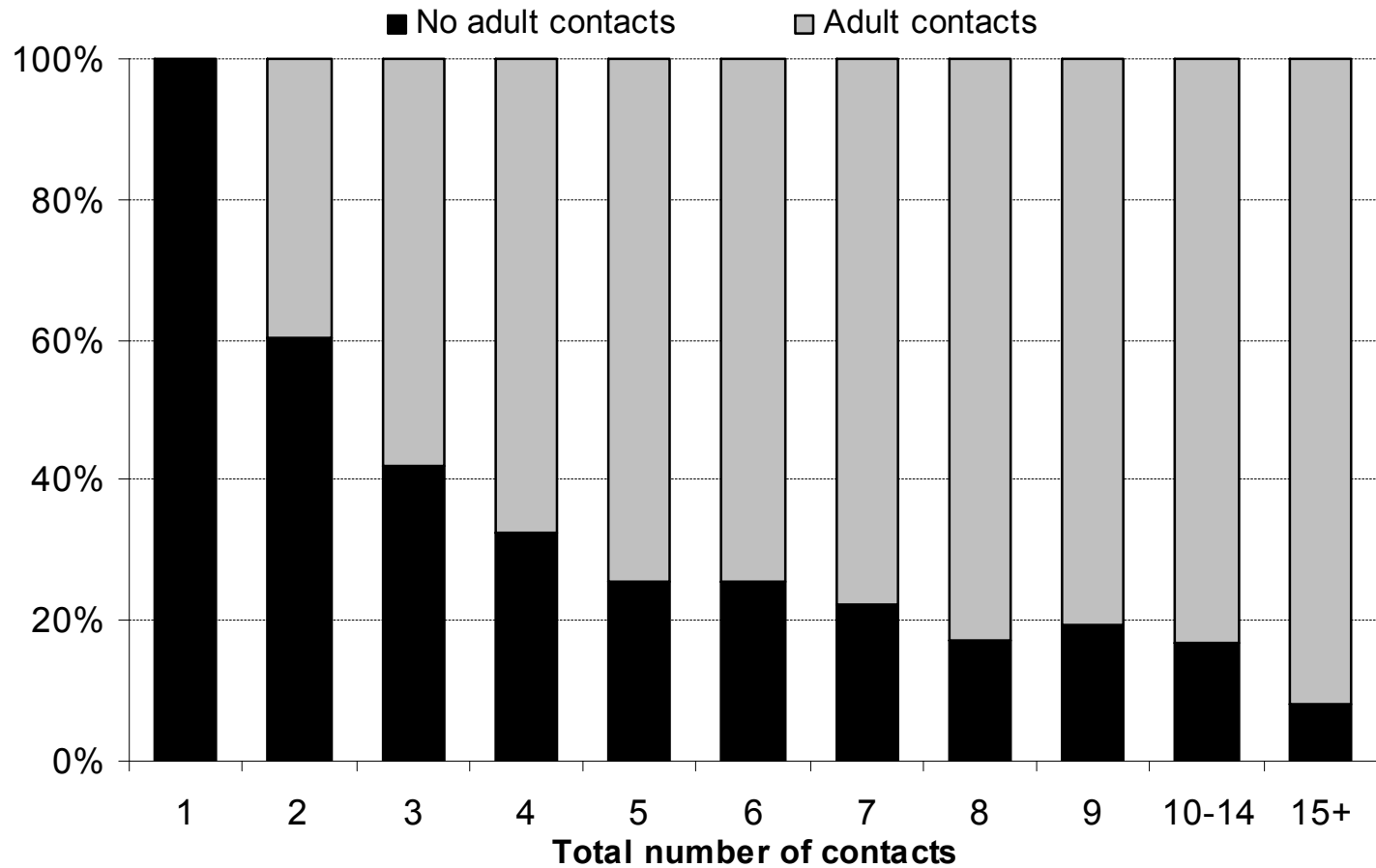
Extent of involvement with police



Career length



Continuity of offending into adulthood



Victoria Police

So

**What does all this mean for
Victoria Police?**



Further information:

Leanne.Sargent@police.vic.gov.au

s.holland2@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au