

# What does resilience mean for families who have experienced paternal imprisonment?

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# Outline

- ▶ Why study resilience in families who have experienced parental imprisonment?
- ▶ The Families and Imprisonment Research (FAIR) study
- ▶ Headline Findings
  - ▶ constancy and change in families
  - ▶ Imprisonment and the family over time
  - ▶ Father's desistance and the family
  - ▶ Resilience and the family

# Why is resilience a helpful concept in the study families who have experienced parental imprisonment?

- ▶ Earlier studies have identified variation in outcomes of parental imprisonment for prisoners' families.
- ▶ Rarely been asked how and why a proportion of children and families cope relatively well with this adverse life event.
- ▶ *Resilience* provides a useful conceptual framework for approaching this question. Analytical salience at both an individual and a family level (e.g. Criss et al., 2015; Masten, 2016, Walsh, 2016).

# How are we defining *resilience*?

- ▶ “reduced vulnerability to environmental risk experiences, the overcoming of a stress or adversity or *a relatively* good outcome despite risk experiences” (Rutter, 2012, p. 336).
- ▶ The project is drawing on an *ecological resilience framework* (Ungar, 2012). Brings into vision the political, social, economic and cultural factors.
- ▶ The outcome may be defined in terms of specific achievements or competencies e.g. keeping family going, bringing up children, or by an absence of debilitating social and mental health problems. Linked to valued outcomes and ability to achieve them.
- ▶ Multi-level processes and influences (psychological, physical, social, cultural and structural) that vary *over time* (Masten & O’Dougherty Wright, 2010).
- ▶ Dynamic and often ‘non-linear’, interactive nature of protective mechanisms and outcomes (Kirmayer et al., 2009; Luthar et al., 2000).
- ▶ Studying resilience at an individual and family level.

# The Families and Imprisonment Research (FAIR) study)

- ▶ Prospective longitudinal study.
- ▶ ESRC funded.
- ▶ Building on earlier study 'Risk and Protective Factors in the Resettlement Imprisoned Fathers with their Families.

# Research Objectives

- ▶ 1) to analyse the long-term interaction of risk and protective factors associated with resilience in families with previously imprisoned fathers
- ▶ 2) to improve knowledge of the relationship between psychological, social and environmental mechanisms affecting the resilience of prisoners' families
- ▶ 3) to provide insight into the stability of resilience over time and discover what factors promote continuity versus change;
- ▶ 4) to examine the role of formal and informal support, criminal justice and social policies on resilience at the individual and family level.
- ▶ 5) to identify promising strategies for reducing adversity and enhancing resilience of families in similar vulnerable circumstances.

# Methods

Interviews and standardised measures at 3 time points with fathers, mothers and children aged 4 - 18 yrs.

Time 1 within 4 months of the father's release.

Time 2 up to 6 months after the father's release.

Time 3 up to 6/7 years after the father's release

# 54 families in the FAIR study

Time 1 9 (2010-11)  
54 families

- 54 fathers
- 54 mothers
- 90 children (45 interviewed)

Time 2 (2011-2)  
49 families

- 40 fathers
- 49 mothers
- 80 children (39 interviewed)

Time 3 (2017-9)  
40 families

52 families (outline data)

- 30 fathers
- 35 mothers
- 88 children (38 interviewed)



# Constancy and change in family units



## Time 1

45 together (83%)

9 separated (17%)

## Time 2

34 together (24%)

18 separated (69%)

2 status unknown  
(2%)

## Time 3

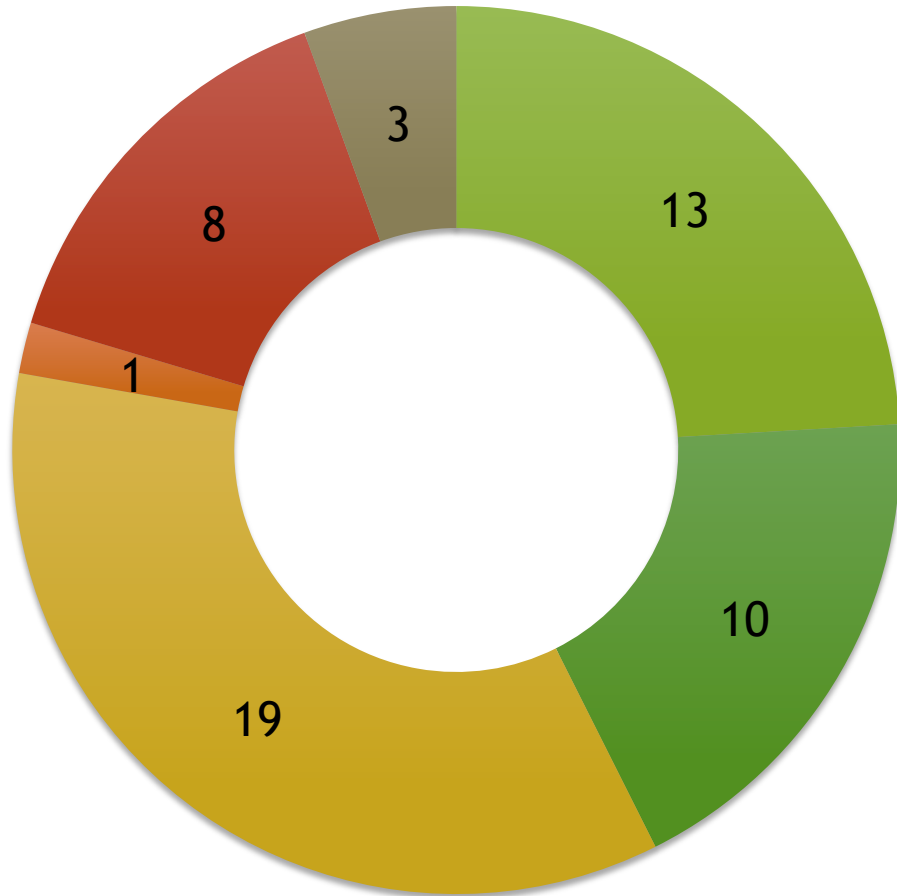
13 together (24%)

37 separated (69%)

3 one partner  
deceased (6%)

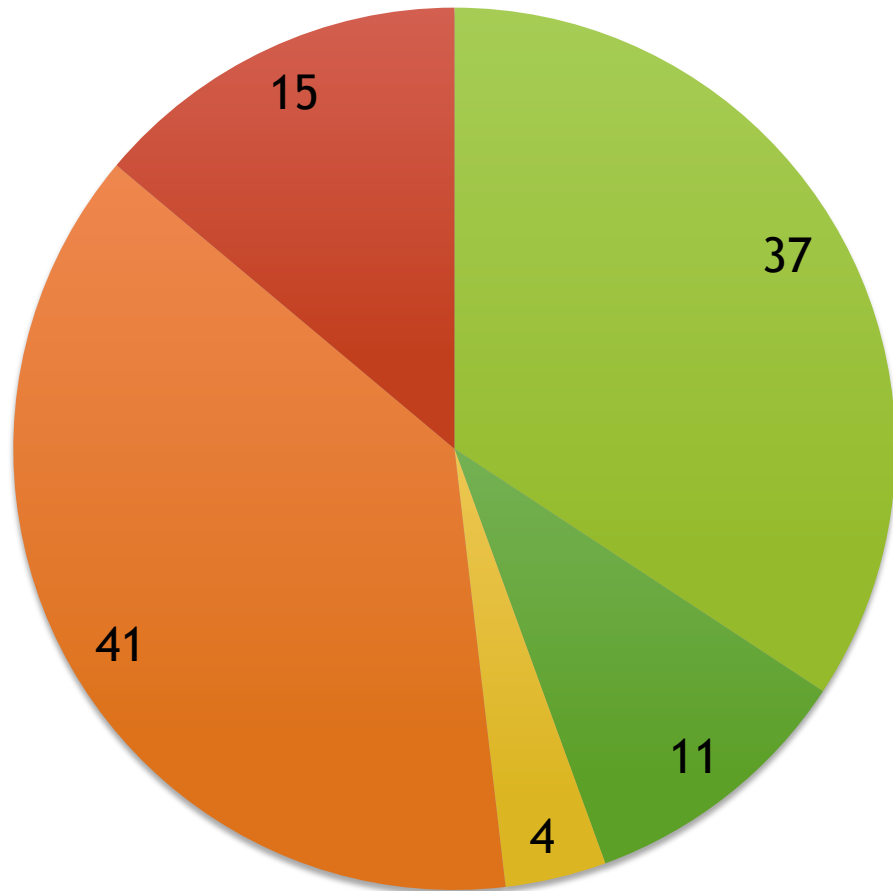
1 status unknown  
(2%)

# Parental relationships over time



- Together at all 3 time points
- Together at T1 and separated since
- Together T1 and T2 and now separated
- Together T2 separated at T1 and T3
- Separated all 3 time points
- Unknown

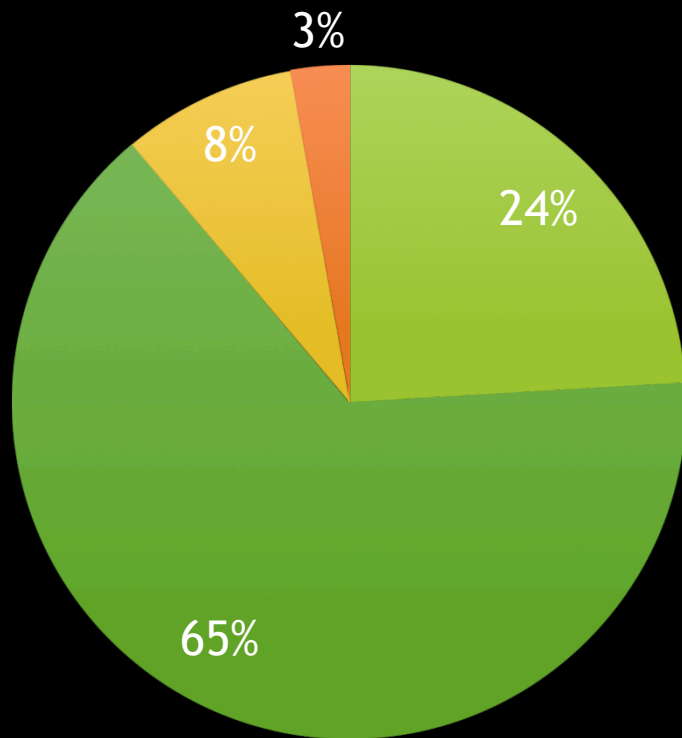
# Mothers and Fathers with Additional Children



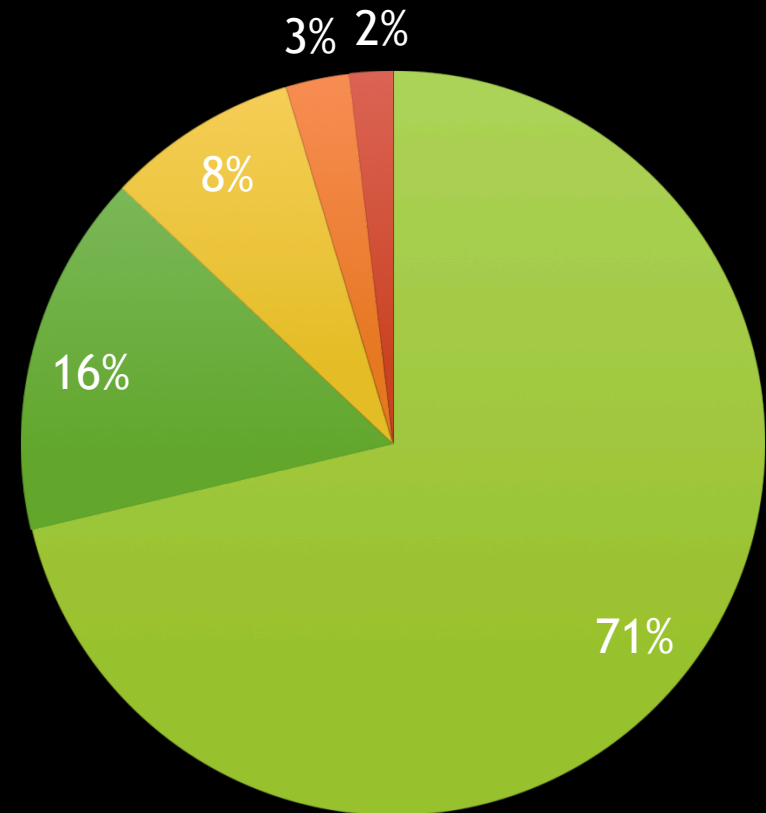
- More children with partner from study
- More children with new partner
- More children with both partner from study and new partner
- No more children since T2
- No confirmed data

# Home Location

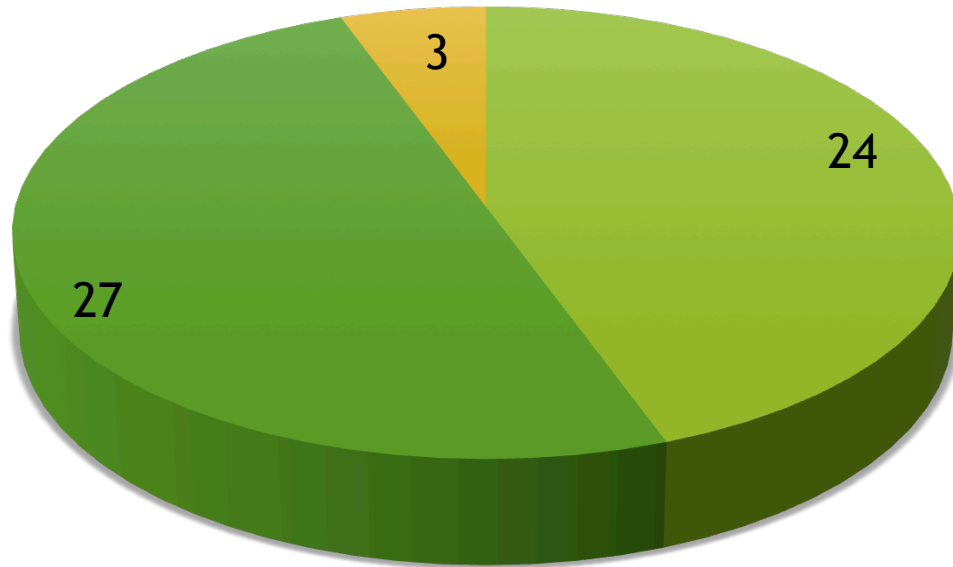
- Live at same address as Time 2
- Live at different address
- Prison
- Deceased



- Live in same area
- Have moved area
- Prison
- Deceased
- Not known



## Further imprisonment of fathers



- Not in prison since T2 44%
- In prison since T2 50%
- Unknown 6%

# Multiple and ongoing adversities

- ▶ Economic hardship
- ▶ Accommodation - eviction
- ▶ Mental health difficulties of family members
- ▶ School bullying
- ▶ Alcohol and or drug addiction of either parent
- ▶ Long-term effects of prison sentence
  - ▶ Varied
  - ▶ Social stigma for some
  - ▶ Father's employment for many. (Employment that is found can be as a result of self-employment or casual work.)

# Early indications of factors indicating dispersal of family units

- ▶ Decline or breakdown of intimacy in parental relationship precipitated by:
  - ▶ criminal justice factors
    - ▶ father's return to prison
    - ▶ repercussions from father's earlier criminal activity
    - ▶ father's on-going involvement in crime (but not always)
- ▶ Either parent's drug or alcohol addiction and/or mental health
- ▶ Partner violence
- ▶ Conflicting life-style interests and aspirations
- ▶ Death of father or mother

# Early indications of factors relating to constancy of family units

- ▶ Family oriented lifestyle:
  - ▶ frequent and good communication between family members during imprisonment and afterwards”
  - ▶ clear and agreed approaches to decision making and problem solving
  - ▶ regular family activities
  - ▶ emotional and practical support from wider family network
- ▶ Parental commitment to and aspirations for children



# Imprisonment and the Family

Prison continues to have a more direct impact on families where the father has been in and out of prison.

Stigmatisation associated with imprisonment remains for some and the father's prison sentence is actively kept secret, sometimes even from the children.

Wider structural difficulties e.g. employment resulting from criminal record continue to have impact on family lifestyles.

# Father's desistance from crime and the family

Family relationships and/or relationships with a partner and particularly children are important for most fathers and for some are source of support/motivation as they desist.

Often linked to father's values about the importance of family and his opportunity to be a part of family and/or to play his role father.

The father's desistance may not be related to support from the initial family group.

For the fathers who are still involved in crime or in the criminal justice system...

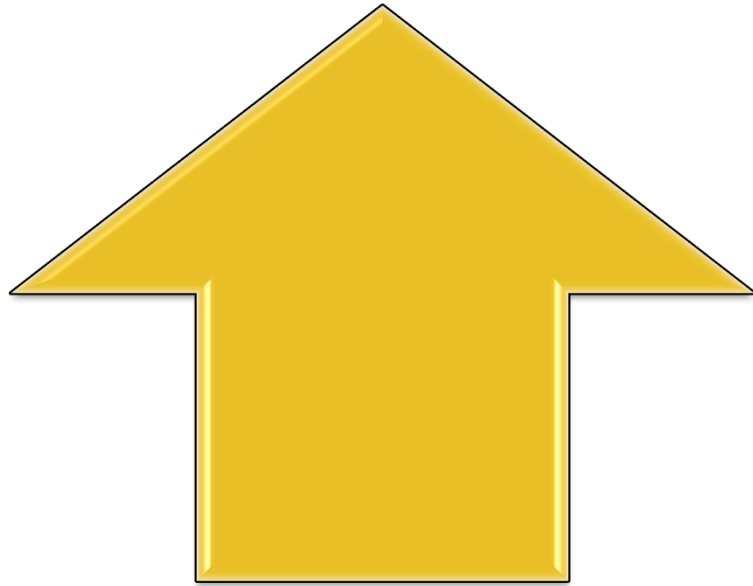
Their on-going involvement in crime can be given a reason for the family breaking-up but some families remain together while the father's criminal activities continue.

Distancing of the father by partners and children may be attributed in some cases to further offending by the father.

# Resilience and the family I

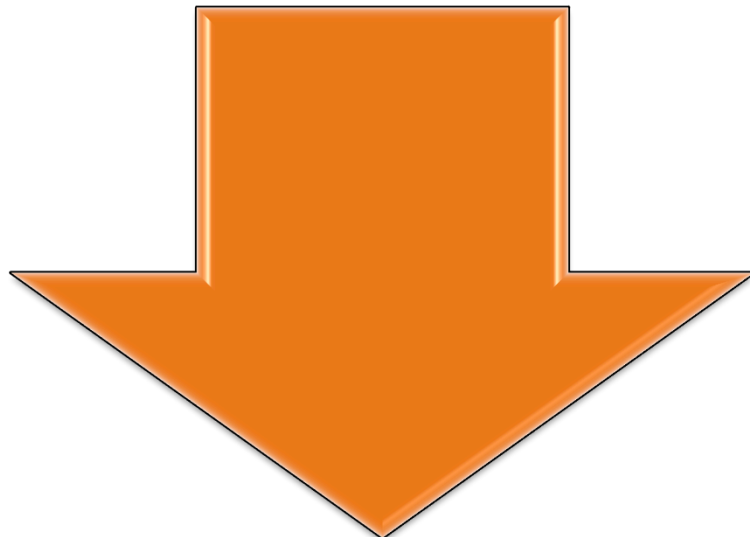
- ▶ Resilience is evident when individuals and families succeed in comparison to others in overcoming specific adversities: for fathers re-imprisonment, for fathers and mothers: poverty, living difficulties, alcohol or drug addiction; for children: bullying at school. For families: social stigma/discrimination, poverty.
- ▶ Resilience is linked to forward looking perspectives, of getting through difficult times, of achieving desired outcomes. Desired outcomes are personal/familial and shaped by cultural values. Raises normative questions about valued outcomes.
- ▶ Variations in the strategies people adopt to overcome adversities. A sense of agency is central as is a support network.

# Resilience and the family II



In some families individual and family resilience are mutually sustaining and re-enforcing.

- Family members gain support from each other during times of adversity from external sources (for family as a whole or for individual family member e.g. children at school).
- Some partners take the lead in actively maintaining the family.



In other families, adversity is generated from within and individual resilience is sustained by the breaking-up or downsizing the family unit.

# Reflections for policy and practice

The FAIR study research identifies the on-going heterogeneity of families' outcomes following paternal imprisonment.

The longitudinal perspective on multiple family adversity highlights that criminal justice contact is an additional burden in an often already difficult set of life circumstances.

As family structures alter, family visitors to the same father may change over time and their familiarity with the prison environment and regimes will vary.

For fathers, the ability to maintain relationships with children both in families who are together and in separated families is important.

Family relationships are relevant to fathers' desistance but the significance of particular relationships varies.

Family-oriented support requires recognition of the complex directional relationship between individual and family resilience.

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# Continuity, change and resilience in imprisoned fathers' problematic substance use

# INTRODUCTION

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- ✘ Substance misuse problems common among imprisoned men (e.g., Fazel, Bains, & Doll, 2006).
- ✘ Associated with resettlement problems and strong predictor of reoffending (e.g. Dowden & Brown, 2002).
- ✘ Lack of knowledge on longer-term experiences of substance use in imprisoned men, especially what contributes to recovery from addiction.



# DIFFICULTIES WITH SUBSTANCE USE AT TIME 2

Cluster 1 Re-grouped families	Mean (Scale 1 - 5)	Cluster 2 Less settled families	Mean (Scale 1 - 5)
Accommodation	1.1	Accommodation **	3.5
Employment	2.9	Employment	3.4
Finance	2.6	Finance**	3.6
Alcohol	1.2	Alcohol*	2.3
Drugs	1.1	Drugs*	2.3
Avoiding criminal activity	1.3	Avoiding criminal activity*	2.2

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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- ✘ What do the fathers' problems with substances look like over the longitudinal time course?
- ✘ Was there continuity in their problems over the waves?
- ✘ Was there change in their problems over the waves?
- ✘ If there was positive change what made the difference for them?
- ✘ If problems continued, why was that?

# METHOD

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- ✘ Three waves of data from the FAIR Study
- ✘ Sample of fathers who were interviewed at least at T1 and T3 (N = 30).
- ✘ Subsample who had substance use problems at T1 = 19

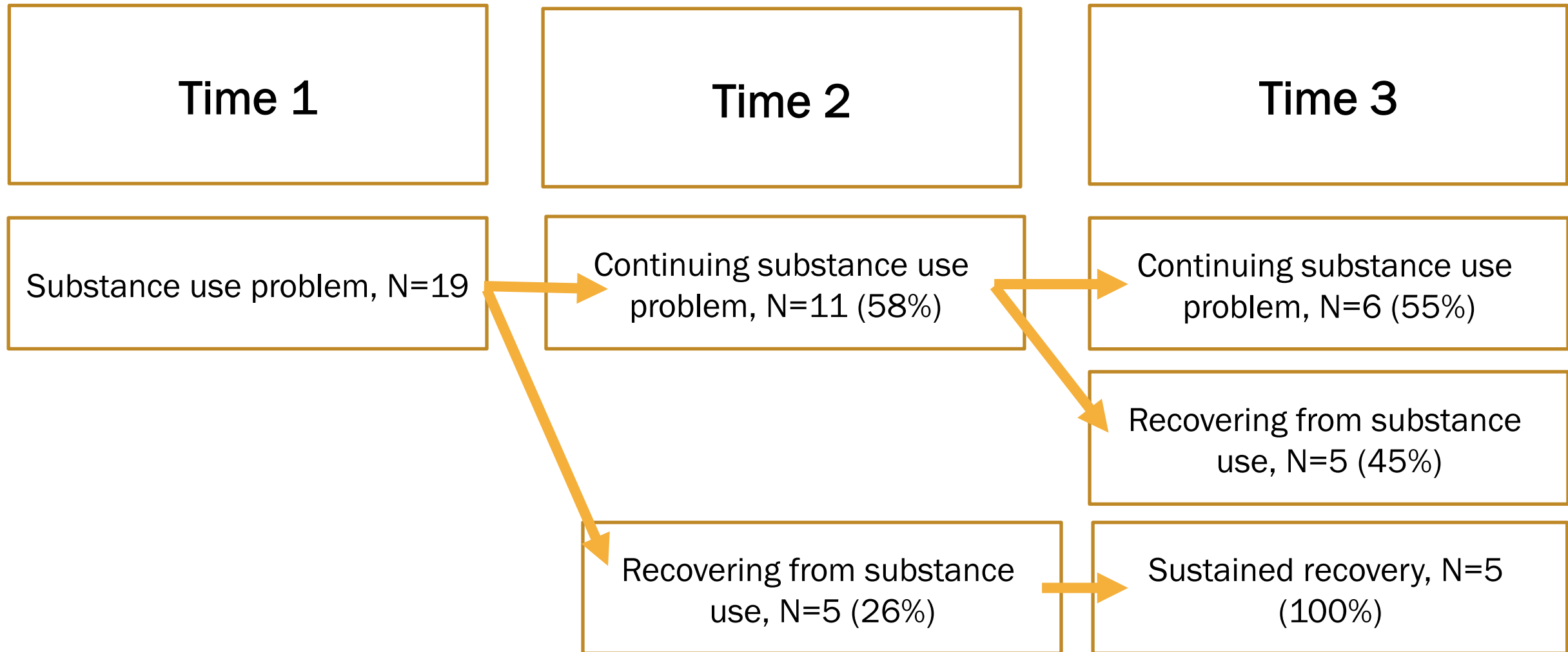
# FINDINGS

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**1) Was there continuity and change in father's problems with substances at T1, T2, T3?**

- > Problem defined according to whether it negatively impacted functioning- e.g. work, health, relationships, lifestyle.
- > Alcohol or drugs
- > Current problem at each wave
- > Father or mother reported
- > Quantitative or qualitative report

# FINDINGS - SUBSTANCE USE PROBLEMS OVER TIME



NB. Three of the subsample of 19 not interviewed at T2

# FINDINGS

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- ✘ For the majority of the men (55%), substance use problems endured over all the waves
- ✘ A minority of the men were recovering by T2 (26%) and all of them were managing to sustain their recovery at T3.
- ✘ A larger proportion were recovering by T3 (45%)

# **FINDINGS – WHAT PROMOTED CONTINUITY AND CHANGE?**

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## **2) What promoted continuity and change?**

- > Why did substance use problems continue for some?**
- > What supported resilience to substance use problems for others?**
- > What can we learn about how to enhance resilience to substance use problems?**

# RESULTS – WHAT PROMOTED CONTINUITY AND CHANGE?

The recovering group (N=12)



## EXTENDED FAMILY SUPPORT

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*“I think all the things that...all the hardest things that I have been through in my life...er...I’ve done it with...my mum’s been there for me through...without a doubt she would have been there...she’d be on the end of the phone when I was just like...just...the depths of despair you know? And then erm...she can’t always talk me out of it but she’s always there on the end of the phone you know...every time I’ve come close to succeeding in the past it’s been because I’ve had family backing me.” (Douglas, T3)*

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*“So they didn’t want to take me in rehab, really... at least when my dad was asking them, ‘cause I was past the point of being able to make any decisions, really. And they was like – listen, your son’s violent, he’s aggressive, he’s abusive when he comes into the drug help agencies... that’s how he behaves. He uses drugs in our toilets, he’s just antisocial, and we’re not getting through to him, he won’t accept any help. And, you know, because things are a bit tough at the moment, he suddenly wants help again. And dad was like “No, but he’s dying!” This sort of thing. And one of them a bit higher up the chain said “Alright, look, we’ll give him a chance”. And that was it, really.” (Darryl, T3).*

## SUPPORTIVE EXPERIENCES OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE/PRISON

- ✘ *“They treated me very well in regard of... I mean, really, prison saved my life. I know that now. I mean, the way I was living I don’t think I’d have done too well if it wasn’t for them. They got me back to health...there are some people who really try hard, and thank God for them. It must be really hard work being on the front line like that because most of the people you’re trying to help are incapable of being honest because they don’t even realise how the way they live is insane.” (Darryl, T3).*

## TURNING POINTS/INSIGHT/REFLECTION

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*“I had a few penny-drop-moments, you know, where I was like “Oh my God, life don’t have to be like this”. And then it was possible to become aware of an alternative” (Darryl, T3).*

*“I just woke up in prison one day and decided I'd had enough” (Perry, T3).*

*“What the judge said to me before he sentenced me was...if I was to get caught committing the same crime er, again...I would serve no less than ten years. And so that just...enough for me. Twenty-eight years old at the time and just....going to prison for ten years and coming out at thirty-eight wasn’t appealing to me you know?! I really wanted to go and live my life like.’ (Douglas, T3),*

## VALUING A 'CONVENTIONAL' LIFESTYLE

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*“I wanted to live a normal life...it was a bit of a nightmare when you come back and you’ve not got money, you’ve not got stuff. But I just wanted to get back into normal sort of life. Didn’t wanna go back”*  
(Blake, T3)

*“I was working hard...I was travelling around the country to gain new qualifications...I’d bought the house outright...I bought that outright from hard work and savings, from building work, private work, project managing, jobs in other countries, and various things, all legal, all legit and above board”* (0041, Time 3)

# STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

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*“We have a really strong bond. If it weren’t for her and the kids I don't think I'd ever get out of prison. Just wouldn't bother. If you've got a strong background of family then you don't want to come back” (Gerry, T3).*

*We’re just there for each other, strong. I couldn’t live without her I don’t think“ (Ben, T3)*

*“It [being a father] means everything. It’s just everything. It’s the reason I’m..er..doing as well as I am just now” (Douglas, T3).*

# RESULTS – WHAT PROMOTED CONTINUITY AND CHANGE?

The continuing problem group (N=7)

# CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY

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*“Parents split when I was three or four, they got on very badly. Was physically and sexual abused by mum’s boyfriend”  
(Jonathon, T1).*

*“Experienced a lot of racism so I rebelled. I didn’t fit in. I was made to hold up a placard saying ‘black bad’ next to a boy holding a placard saying ‘white good’ when aged 11.” (Lloyd, T1)*

*“Dad was verbally abusive. Would take it out on me when drunk”  
(Danny, T1)*



# INSTITUTIONALISATION

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“I was sitting there, and I said to her, “Listen, I need to go back to jail.” And she just went mental. She said, “Are you a fuckin’ lunatic?” you know what I mean? I said “Why?” She said, “Why would you wanna go back to jail?” And I couldn’t explain it. I said “D’you know what? I just feel I need to go back to jail. I’ve got this feeling that I need to go... I wanna go back to jail. I miss it.” How mad’s that? I miss jail” (Philip, T3).

## UNHELPFUL EXPERIENCES OF PRISON

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*“Been banged up 22 hours a day- on basic. My own fault. [Current sentence has been] pretty bad, nearly died twice, from spice. Collapsed in cell, sink broke, split fingers open twice, split eye open...On basic regime. No exercise. In a cell with bed, on own, taking drugs most days’ Lack of communication with agencies and prison staff-locked away. Keep having to ask - doesn’t get done. Do feel isolated- 290 miles from home” (Max, T3).*

# UNSTABLE ACCOMMODATION

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- ✘ Around half of the recovering fathers reported having stable accommodation over the waves. None of the problem group fathers did.
- ✘ 83% of the problem group fathers were re-imprisoned at T3. None of the recovering group fathers were.

## POOR CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

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*“I saw my younger son when he was probably about 10 months old. So he doesn’t know me, and basically, when my younger son hears the word ‘daddy’, he thinks of this monster. When I got with my ex-girlfriend, my ex-partner would not let me go anywhere near the kids, she said “Oh no, you chose her, you’re not seeing the children. However, just before I came in I was driving home once, and I saw my eldest son, my younger son and my ex-partner. I literally stopped the van in the middle of the road, jumped out and went “[name of eldest son]!” And he’d go “I miss you, daddy” . And obviously because I’m not there, he’s been told “Your daddy don’t care, your daddy don’t love you” (Jonathan, T3).*

*“The last time she [daughter] saw me I had a needle hanging out of my arm” (Max, T3).*

## POOR COPING

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*“I used to get off on drugs. I’m switched off emotionally. Quite a few times I’ve looked at my life and thought I’m gonna put a noose round my neck...That’s why I have all my photos, because I know that without them, I probably would have hanged myself in my cell. I would have, because I’m very low” (Jonathan, T3).*

*“Don't care about living- nothing to lose attitude. Used drugs daily- every hour- crack and heroin. Taking drugs is a necessity- do it because I want to escape, get away. Stare adversity in the face. What can you do to me that hasn't already been done?” (Max, T3)*

## RESISTING IDEA OF A 'CONVENTIONAL' LIFESTYLE

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*“She’s five years older than me. But she’s the type, she keeps saying it to me “You need to come home and settle down.” I said “Yeah, but you’re making me older than I already am”, d’you know what I mean? “I’m only 47, and I don’t feel it. I still feel like I’m 25. And you’re trying to make me slippers in front of the fire, you know, and a pipe and all that.” I said “It’s not me. Don’t get me wrong. I understand the settle down bit...But I’m not settling down, settling down to the point where, you know, I’m not moving” (Philip, T3).*

*“Spend the day hedonistically. Every minute. If I don't enjoy it, I don't want to do it” (Danny, T3).*

# ENHANCING RESILIENCE TO SUBSTANCE USE PROBLEMS

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- ✘ Identify those from highest risk backgrounds?
- ✘ Support process of change (readiness, turning points, meaningful activities)
- ✘ Practical resources to facilitate coping (accommodation, employment)
- ✘ Role of prison?
- ✘ Family relationships matter