

# Fire service study

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## Key findings

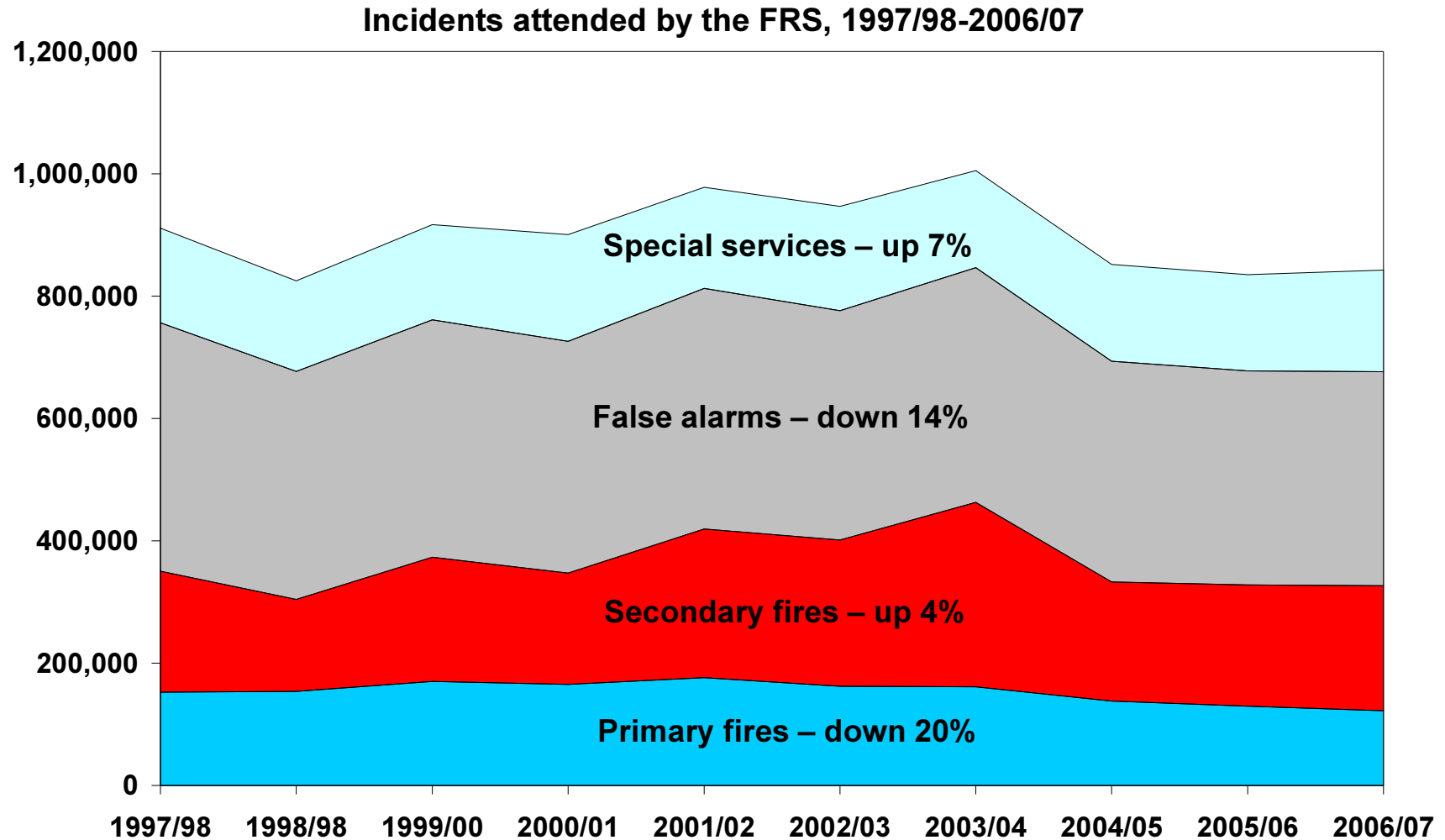


## The last decade has been a period of unprecedented change for the fire and rescue service

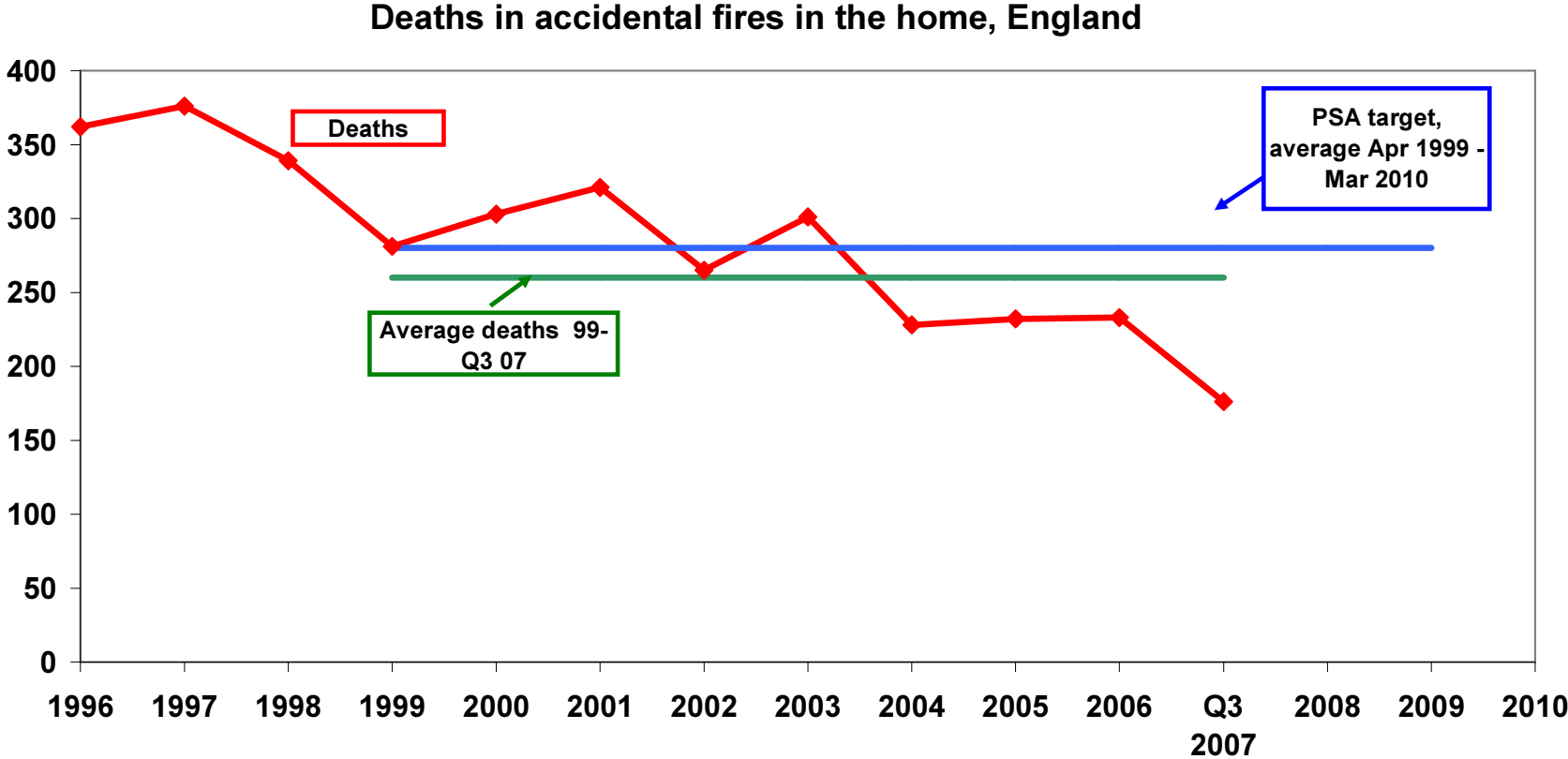
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- The risks the service have to manage have changed significantly
- It has undergone a major modernisation programme in an attempt to improve the way it deals with those risks
  - This has included shifting resources away from the traditional firefighting role, towards fire prevention, community safety and dealing with major civil emergencies
- In general performance has been good over this period
  - But further consideration must be given to how the service deals most efficiently and effectively with changing risks, roles and responsibilities

# The number of incidents attended by the FRS has fallen by 8 per cent in the last decade



# The FRS is well on course to meet its PSA target...



## **... and is performing well on many other measures**

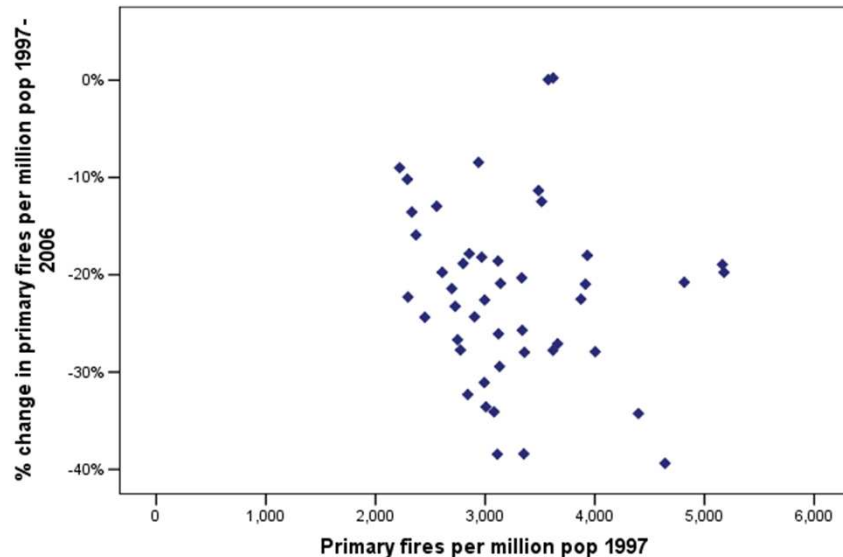
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- Nearly 2 million Home Fire Safety Checks carried out between Oct 2004 and Mar 2008
- The FRS as a whole has delivered over £180m cashable efficiency savings since April 2004, well over the target set
- The 2007 performance assessment found 37 (80%) FRSs performing well and 28 (61%) improving well or strongly

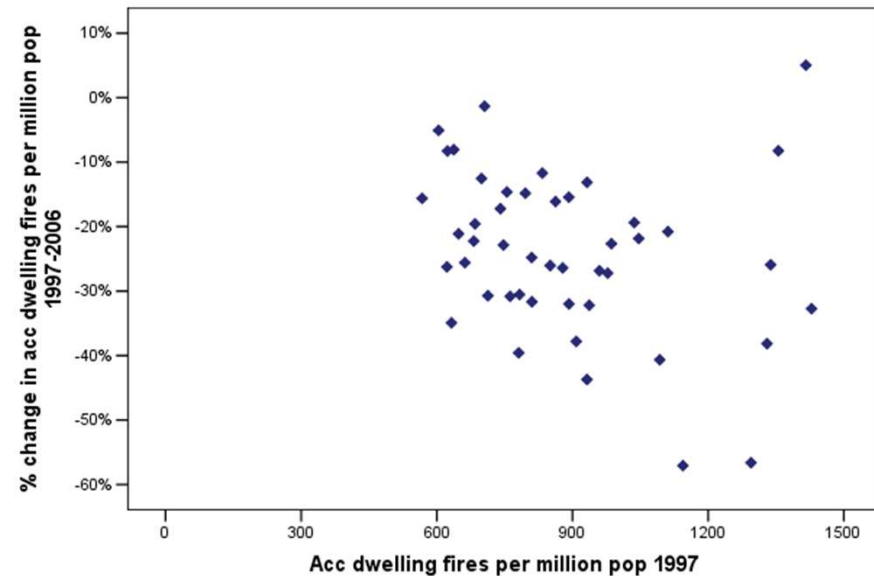
# But good overall performance masks significant variation in performance of individual FRSs

There is great variation in reductions in primary fires and accidental fires in the home over the last decade that isn't explained by FRSs' baseline performance

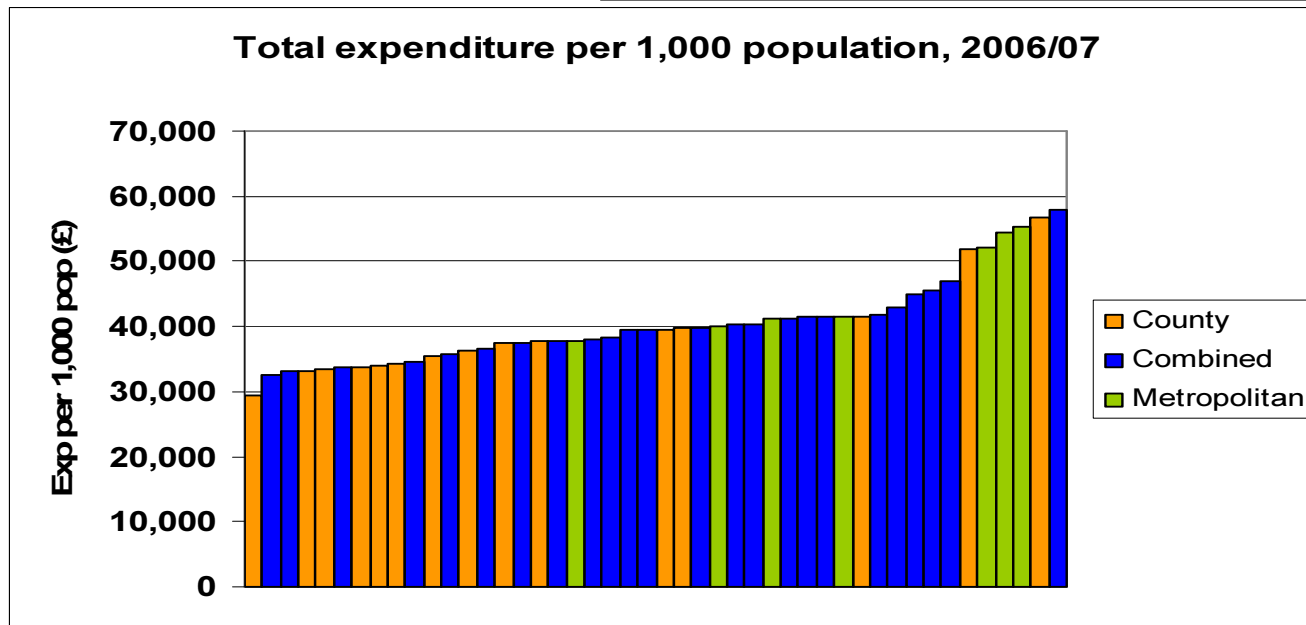
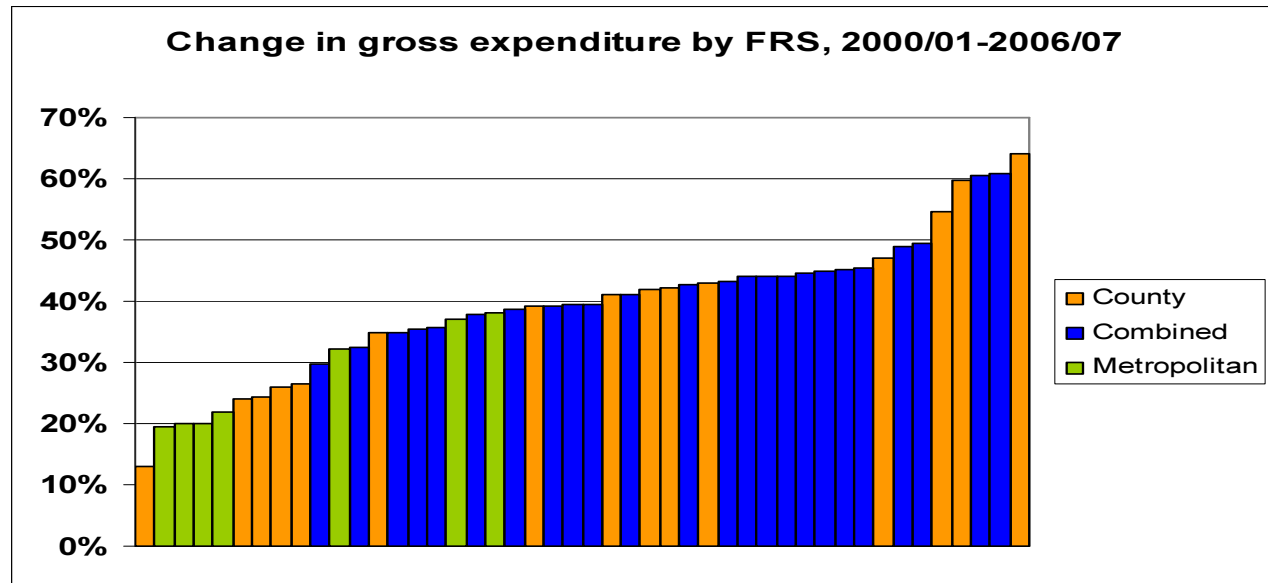
Primary fires per million population 1997 and % change in primary fires per million population 1997-2006



Accidental dwelling fires per million population 1997 and % change in accidental dwelling fires per million population 1997-2006

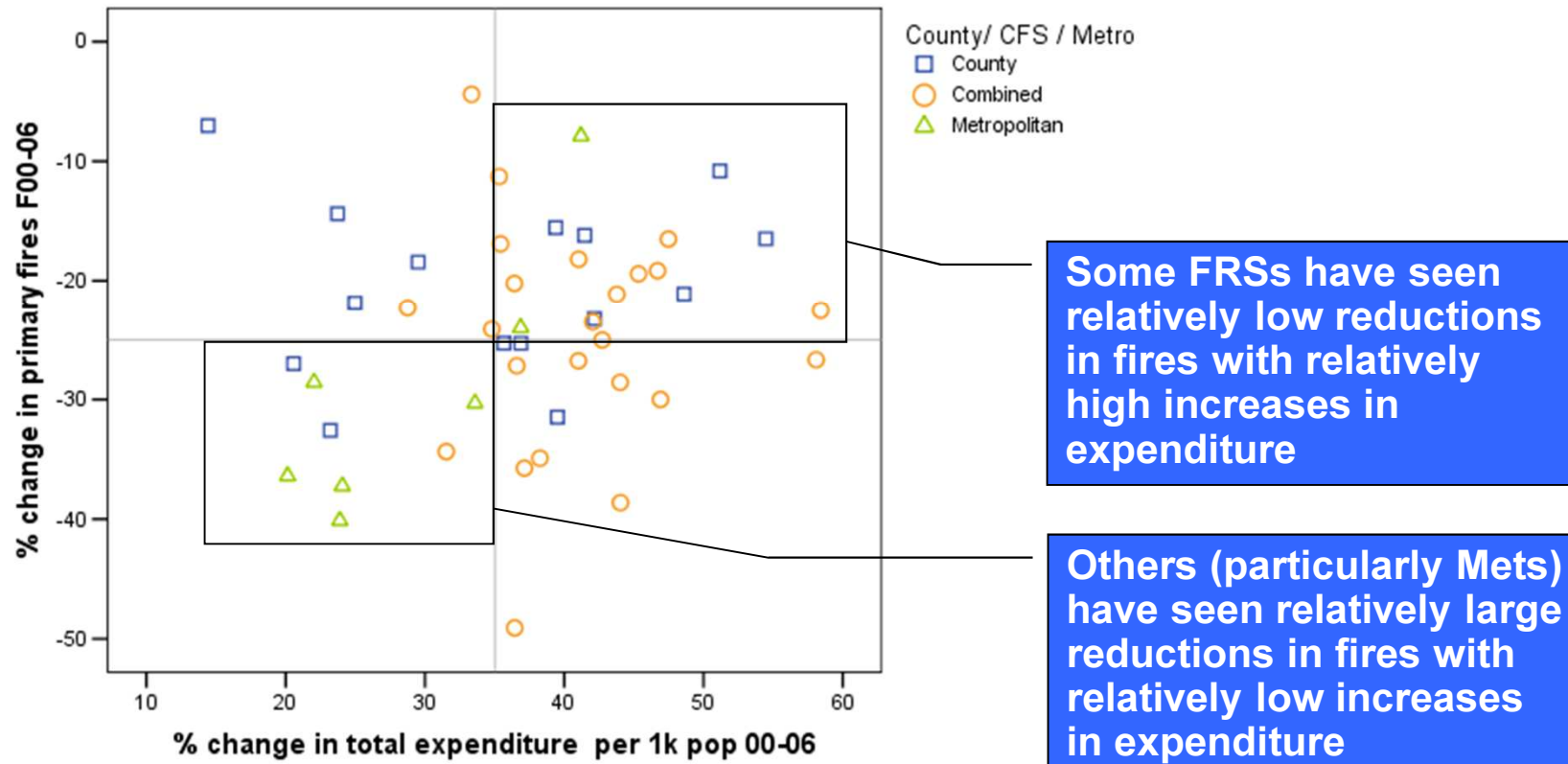


# There is wide variation in expenditure...



# ... but those FRSs that have increased spending most are not always seeing better outcomes as a result

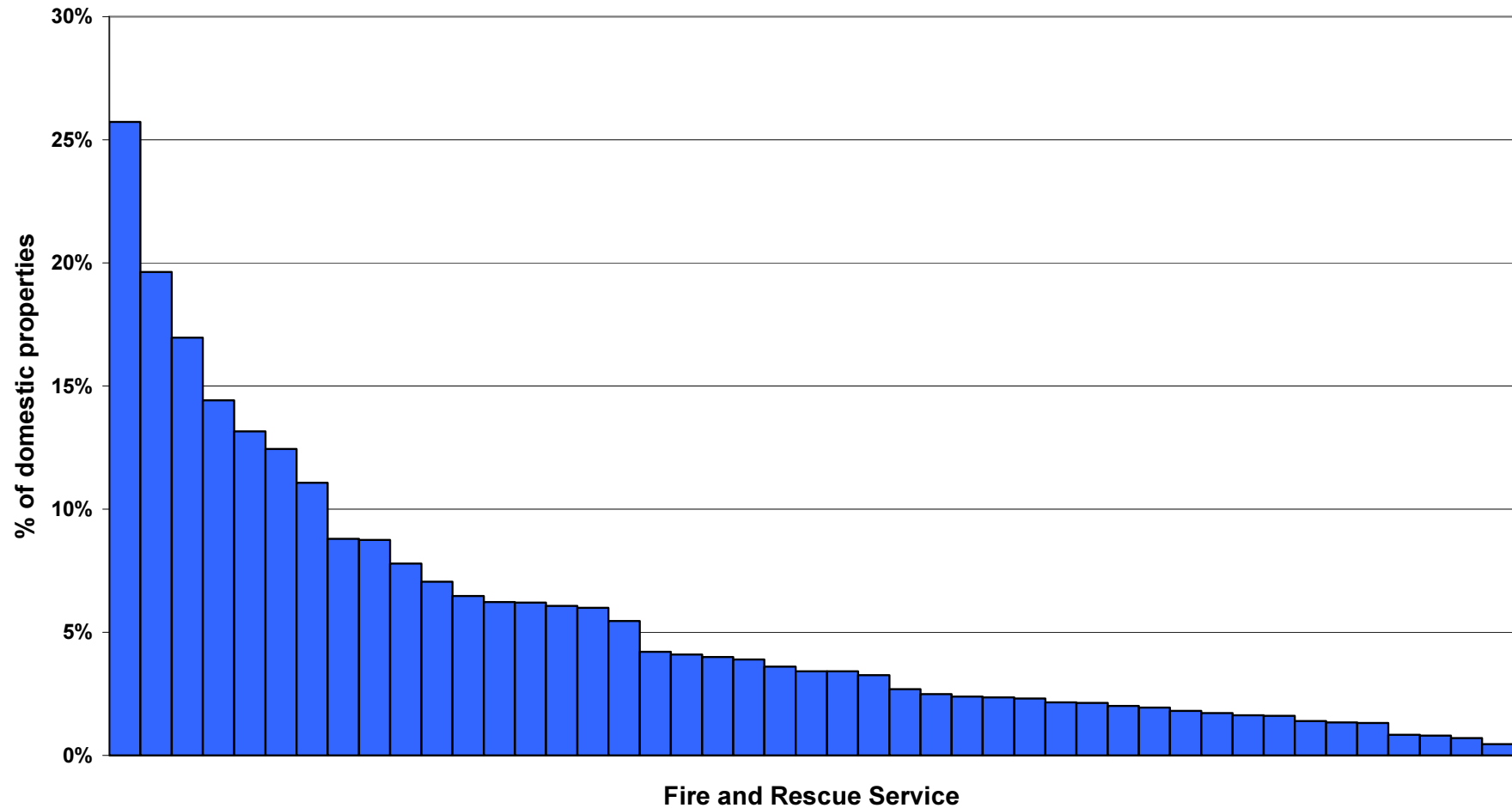
Change in total expenditure by change in number of primary fires, 2000/01 - 2006/07





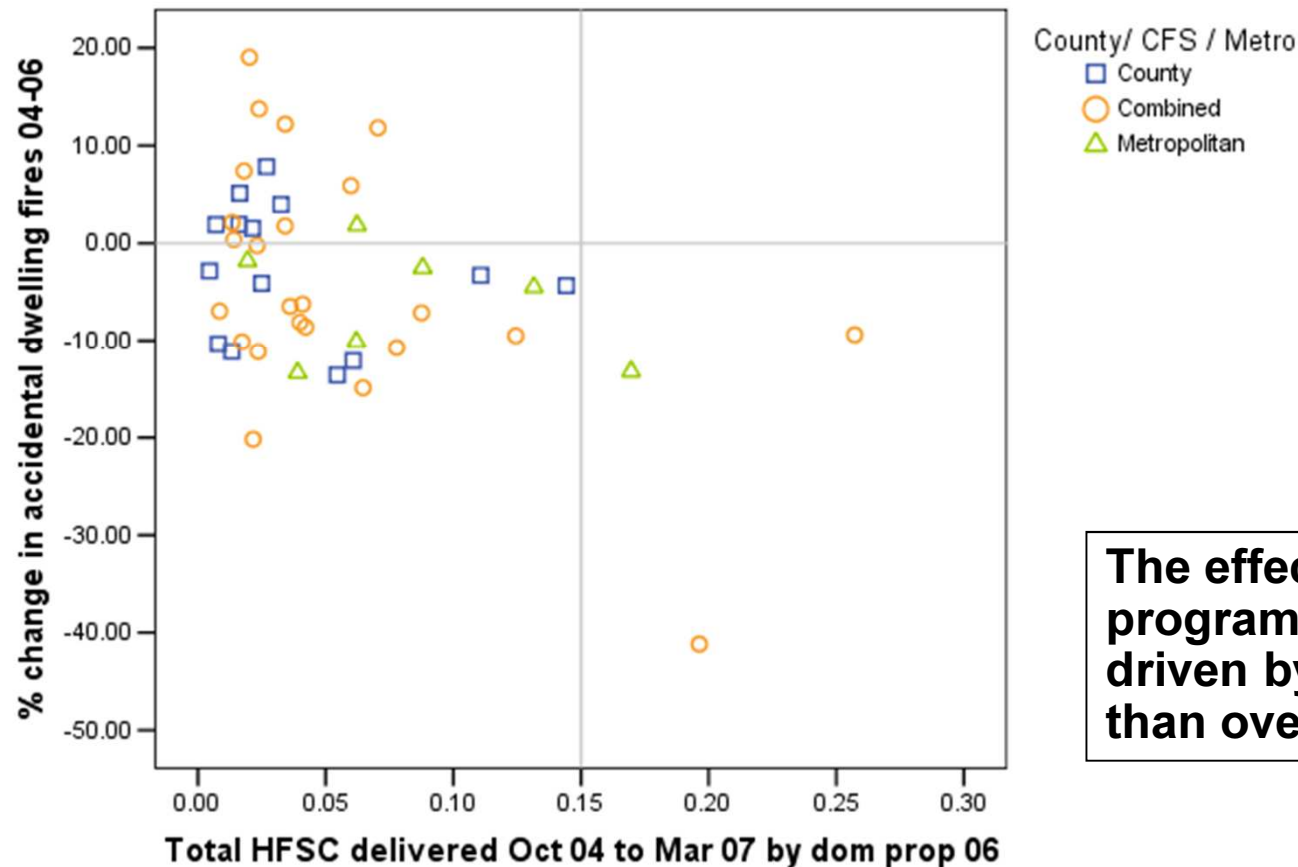
# Some FRSs have delivered far more Home Fire Safety Checks than others

HFSCs delivered, Oct 04 to Mar 07, as a % of domestic properties, by FRS



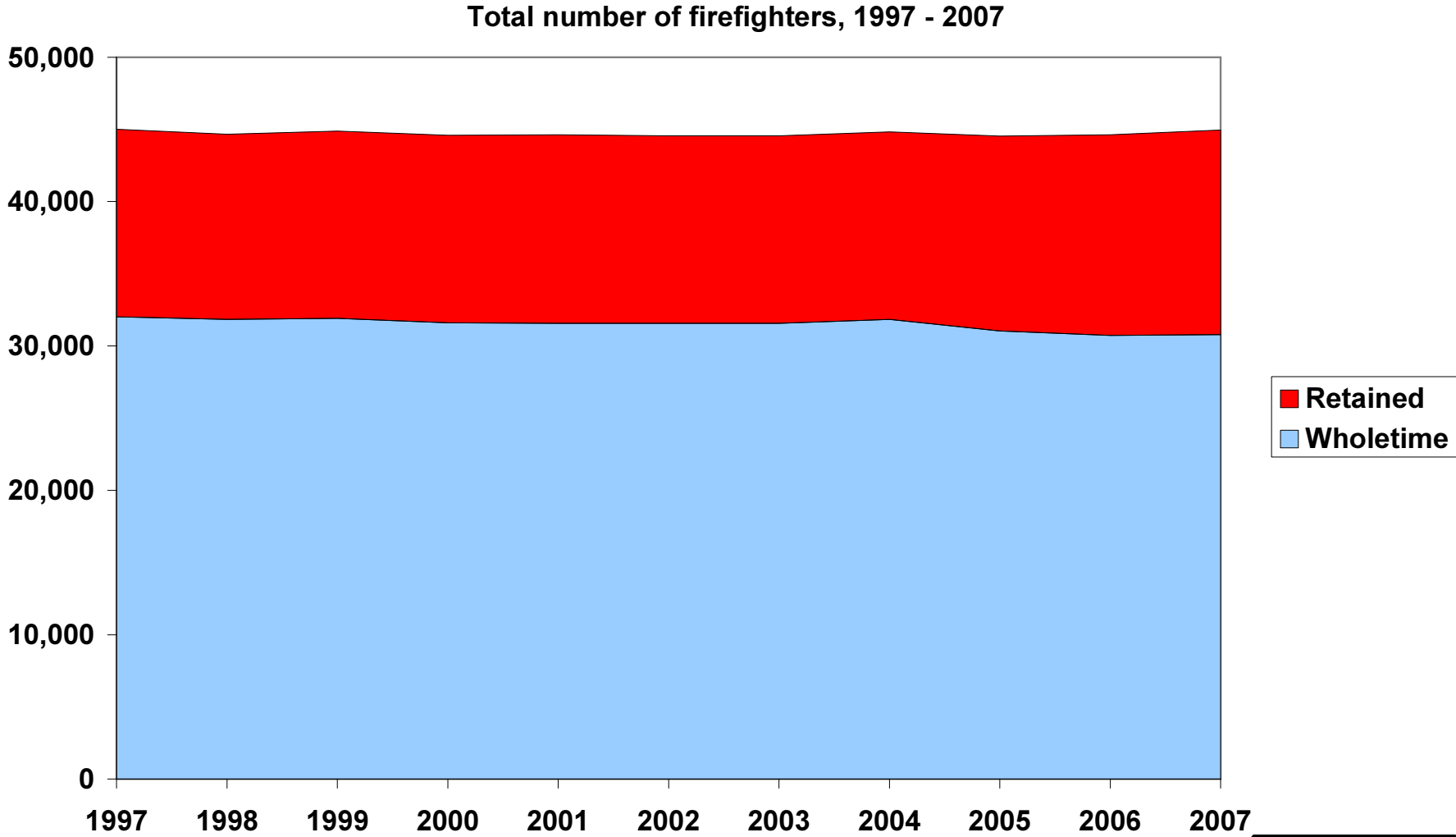
# ... but there is no clear link to reductions in accidental fires in the home

Total Home Fire Safety Checks by change in number of accidental dwelling fires, Oct 04 - Mar 07

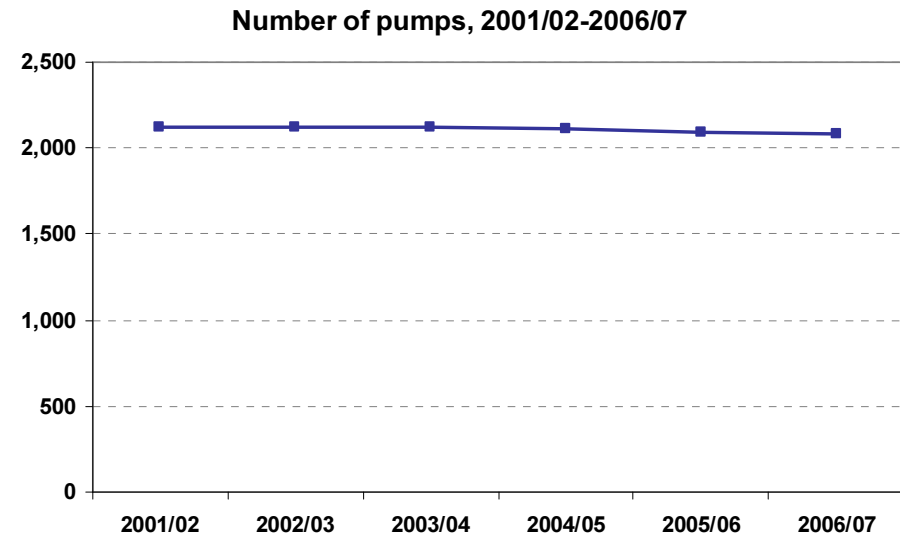
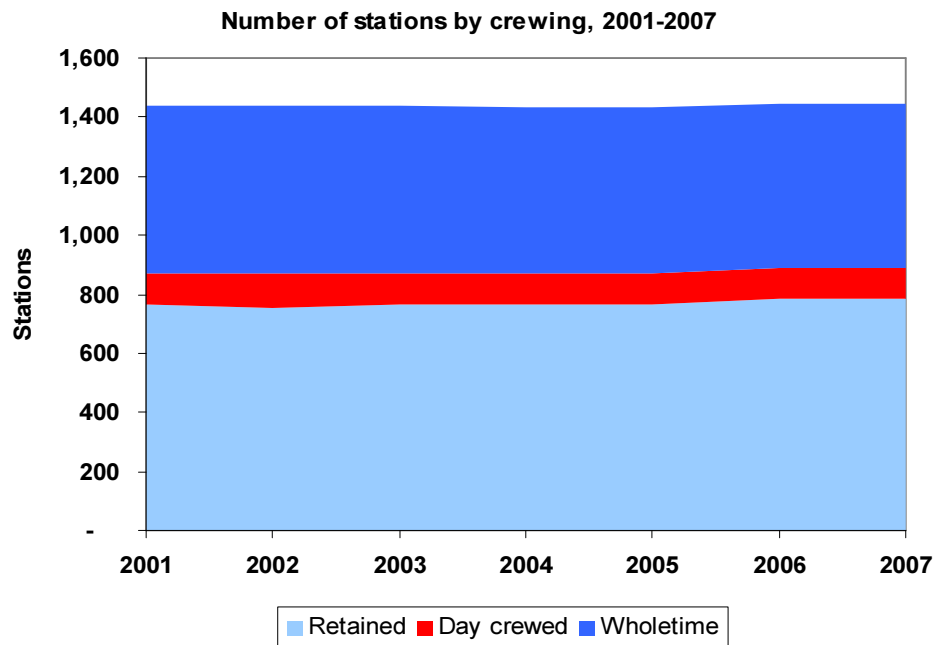


The effectiveness of HFSC programmes is likely to be driven by targeting more than overall numbers

# Despite the decline in incidents, firefighter levels have remained static over the last decade...

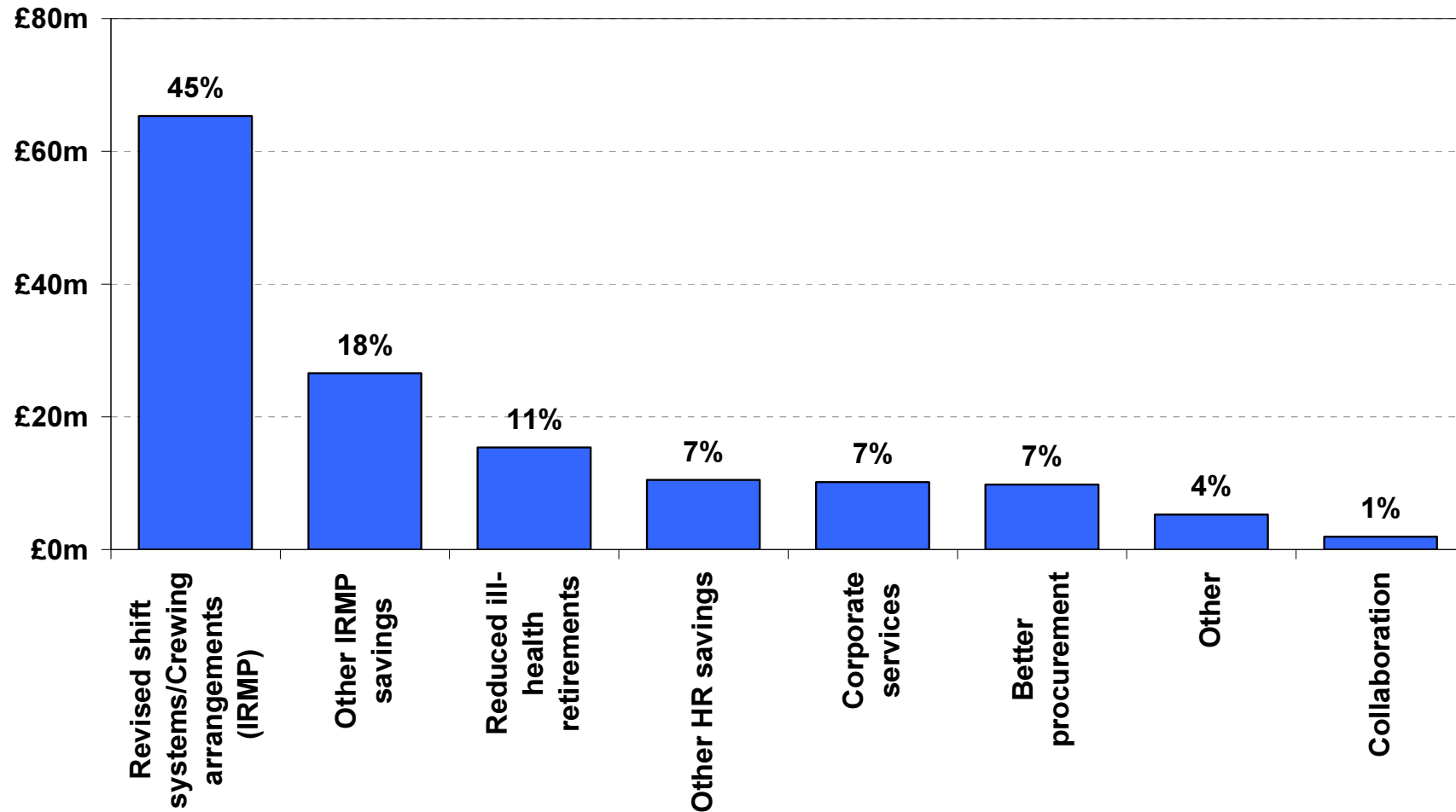


# ...as have station and appliance levels



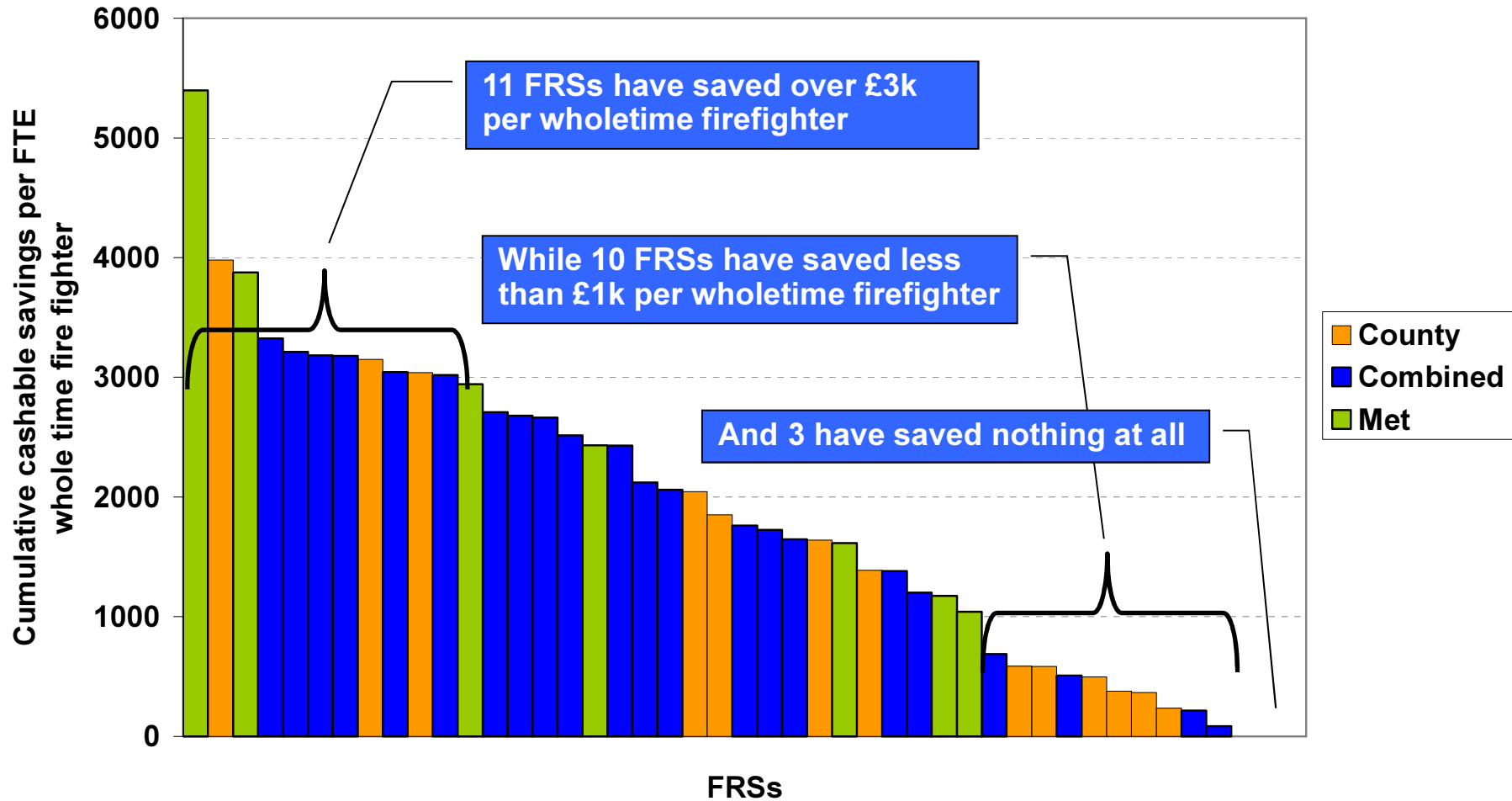
# Forty-five per cent of recent efficiency savings have come from changes to shift systems and crewing...

Cumulative cashable efficiency savings by FRSs, 2004-05 to 2006-07, England



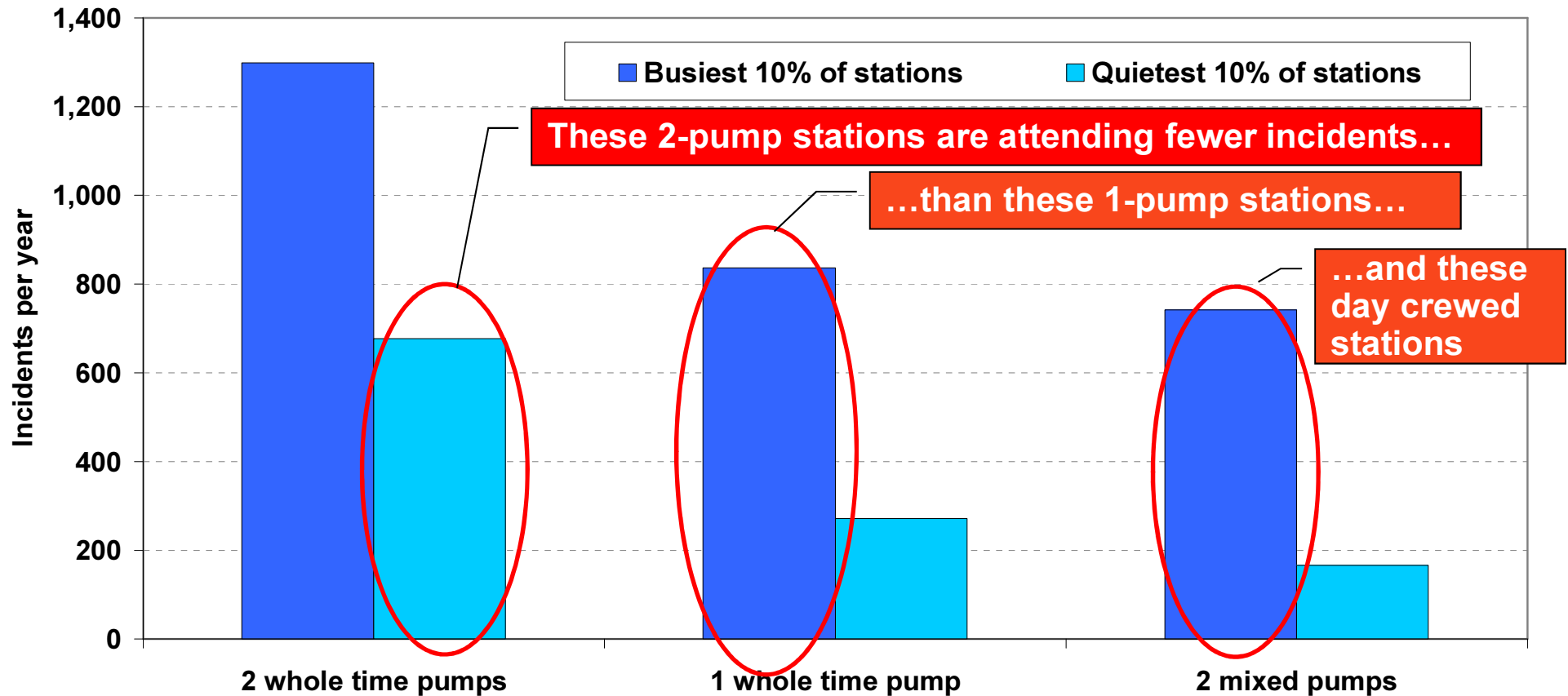
# ... but there is still scope to do much more

Cumulative (04/05 to 06/07) cashable savings on crewing/shift arrangements per FTE whole time fire fighter (as at 03/04), by FRS, England



# Some stations with similar number of incidents have different crewing arrangements

Incidents attended per year by station type and number of pumps, excluding false alarms, 2006/07

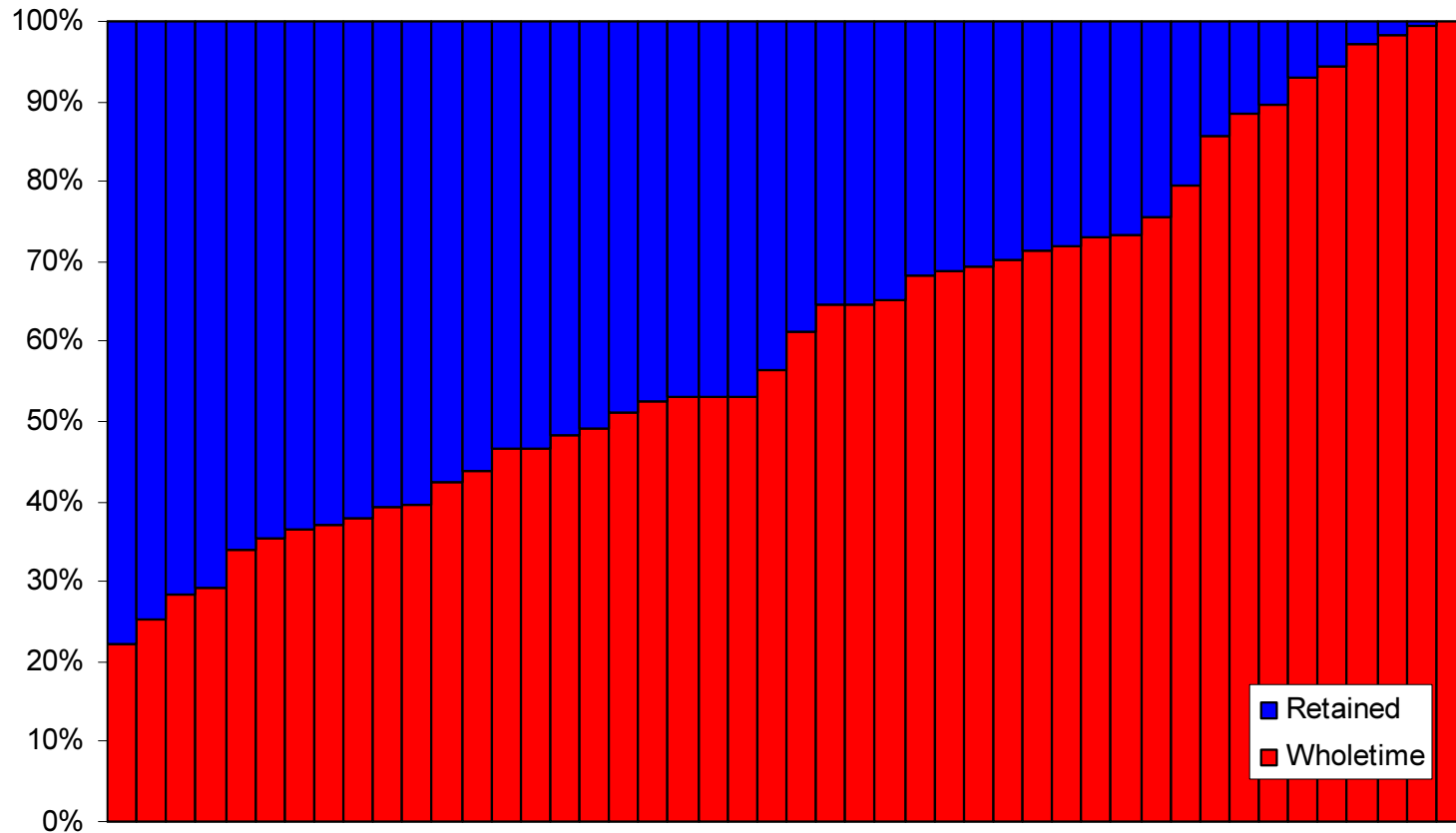


Based on a sample of 17 FRSs

# Clearly, the level of retained firefighters will limit scope to make some efficiencies

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Wholetime/retained firefighter ratio





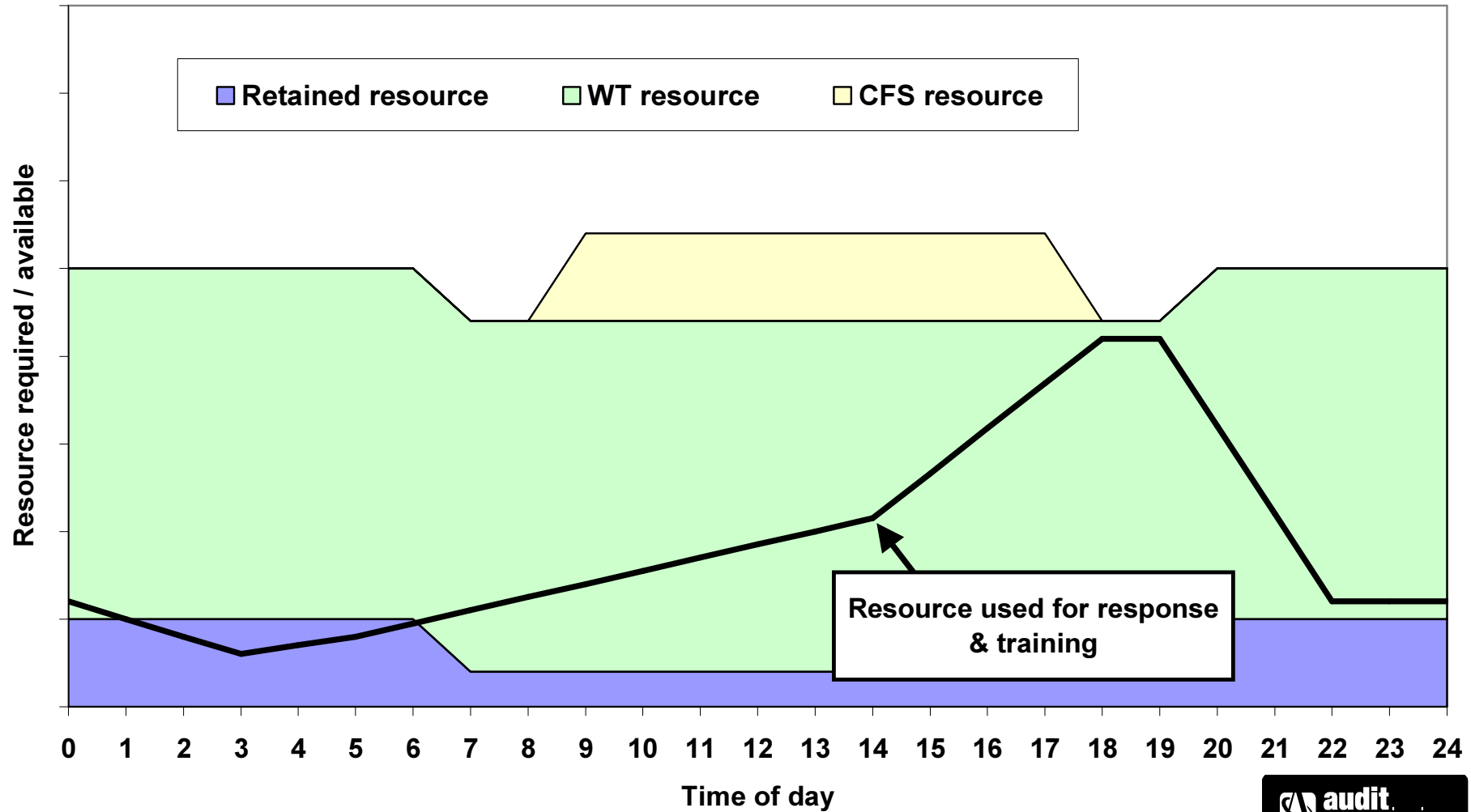
# Local autonomy to define risk and response has led to little change in practice so far

Old standards of fire cover					
	A/B (large cities/towns) 5 mins	C (suburbs & small towns) 8-10 mins	D (all other areas) 20 mins	Remote rural No standard	
<b>New local standards</b>					<b>Current performance</b>
FRS 1	To attend 80% of all life threatening incidents in 6 minutes				62%
FRS 2	To attend 75% of life threatening incidents within 8 minutes				58%
FRS 3	Attendance within 10 minutes for 90% of calls				96%
FRS 4	10 minutes for urban areas	20 minutes for rural areas			76% within 10 minutes
FRS 5	Response within 6-10 minutes in high risk areas on 90% of occasions	Response within 16-20 minutes in low risk areas on 90% of occasions			“Constantly exceeding”

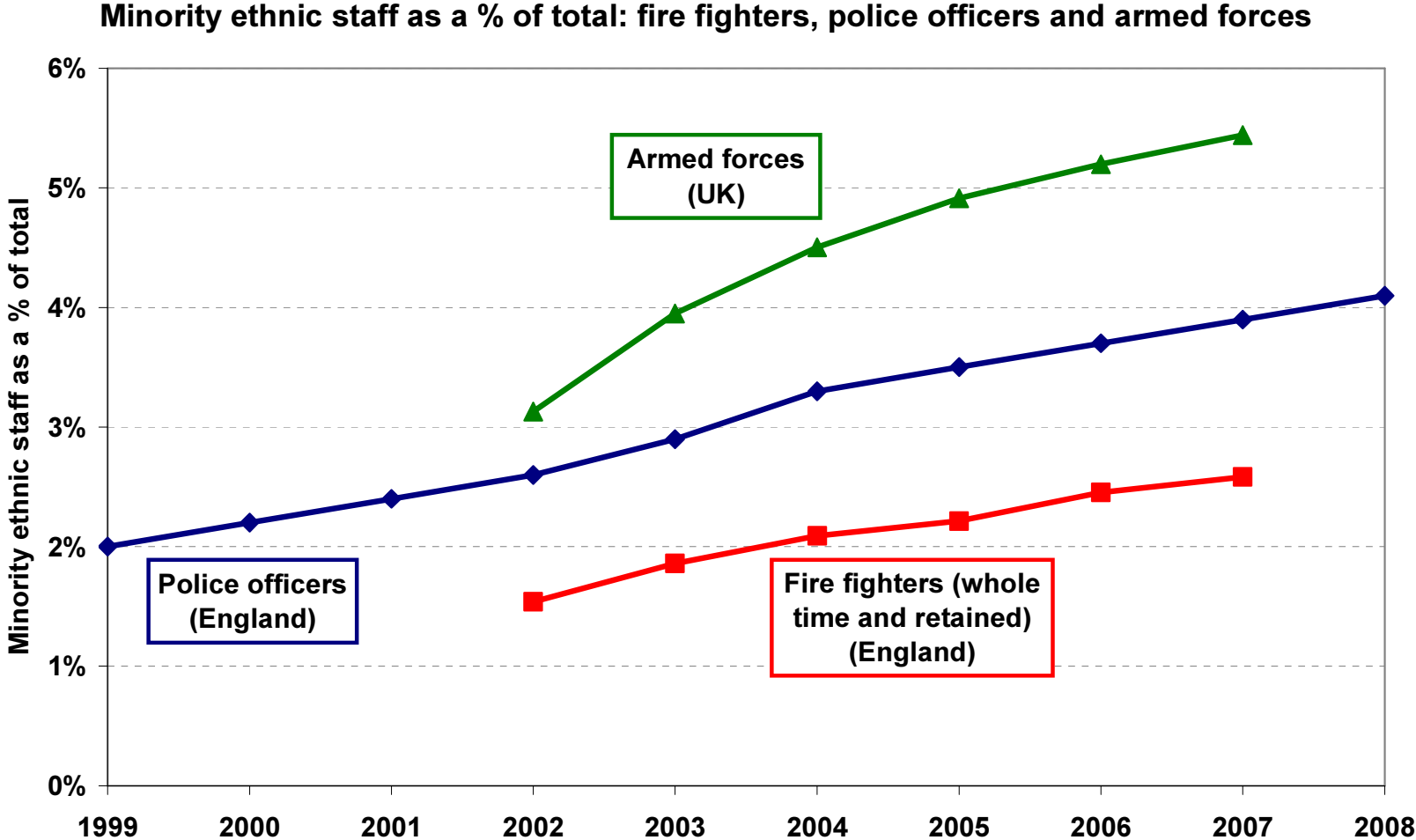
# There is an availability / utilisation mismatch

***ILLUSTRATIVE***

Resource vs Activity for an 'average' FRS

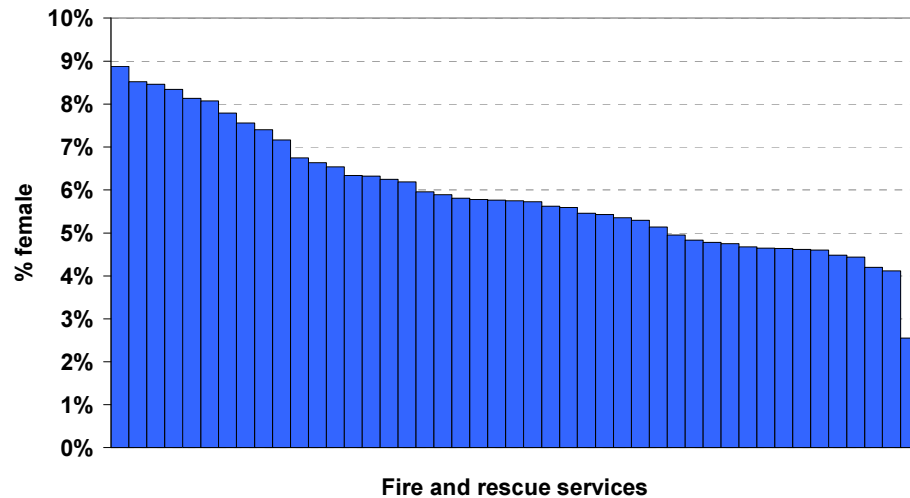


# Recent progress on E&D is similar to that of the police, but the FRS started from a worse position



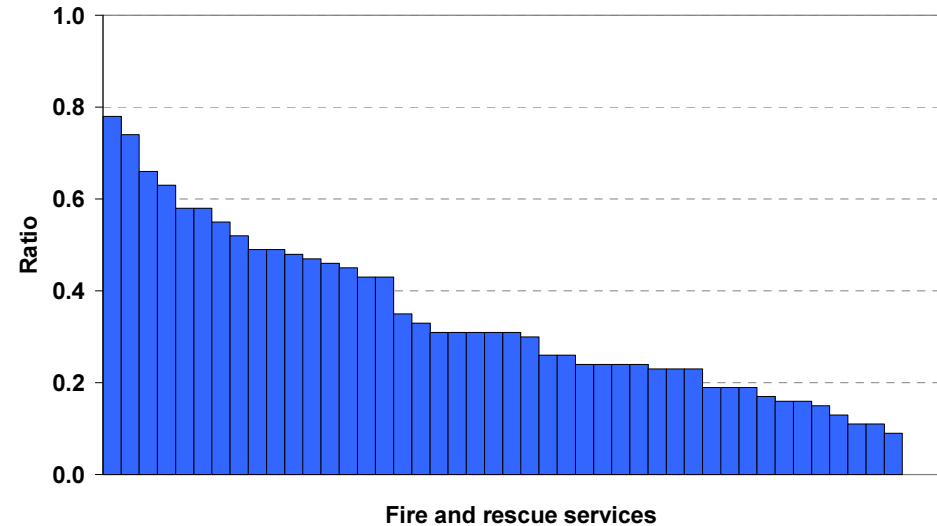
# The diversity of the workforce varies between FRSs but there are no outstanding performers

Female operational staff as a % of all operational staff, by FRS, 2006/07



The proportion of female operational staff varies from 3 to 9 per cent.

Ratio of BME staff to BME population, by FRS, 2006/07



Some FRSs have around two-thirds of the expected level of BME operational staff; almost half have less than a quarter the expected level.

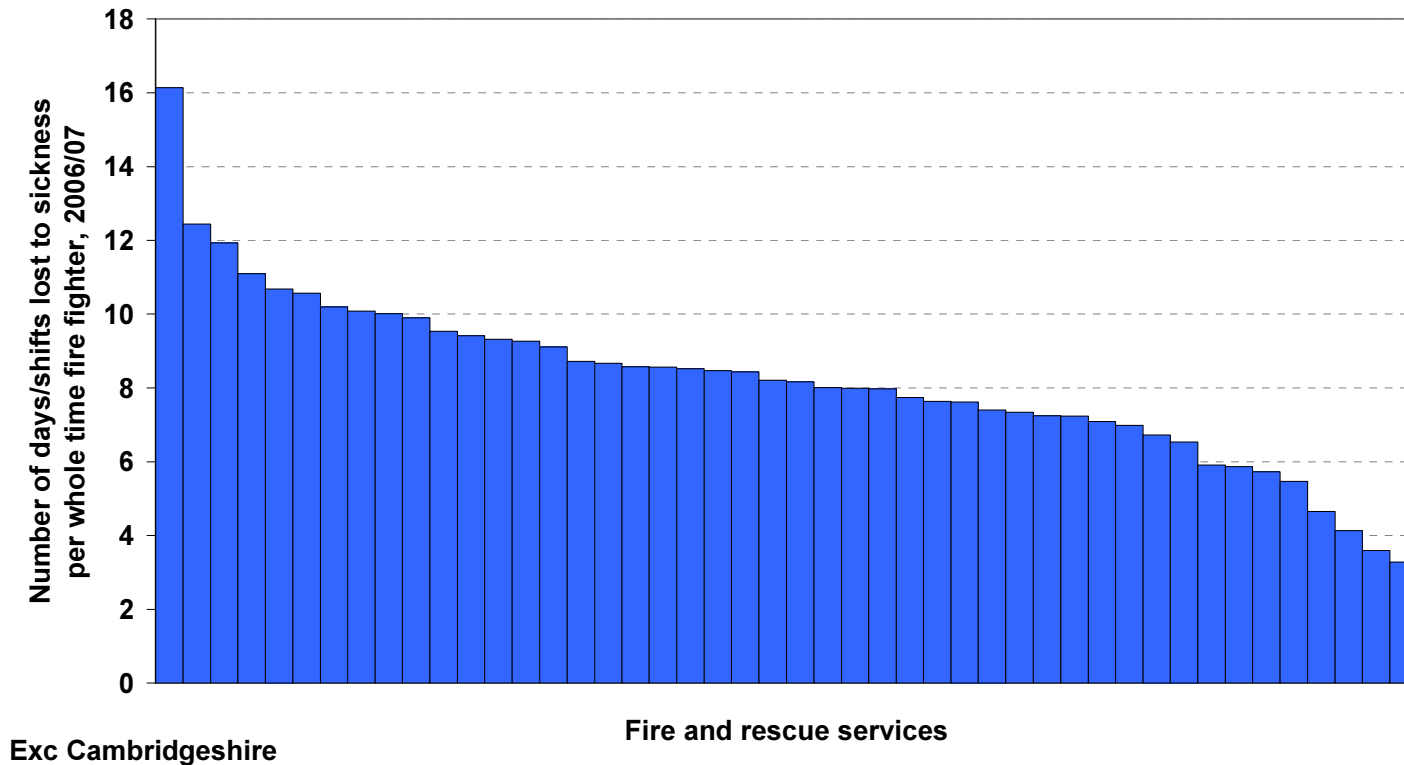
## Diversity is also low in senior management and a “canteen culture” is still prevalent

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- Females and BME groups are seriously under-represented in senior positions
- A recent firefighter survey for CLG found:
  - Only a quarter of respondents believed attracting a diverse workforce was important
  - Large proportions stated they had witnessed a variety of unacceptable behaviour, including:
    - verbal (58%) and physical (11%) assault
    - bullying and harassment (51%)
    - age (23%), gender (21%) or race (13%) discrimination
  - Over half reported experiencing unacceptable behaviour
    - a third reported being bullied or harassed
- In most cases, *women and other under-represented groups were more likely to witness or experience these behaviours*

# While sickness absence has fallen in recent years, there are further efficiency gains to be had

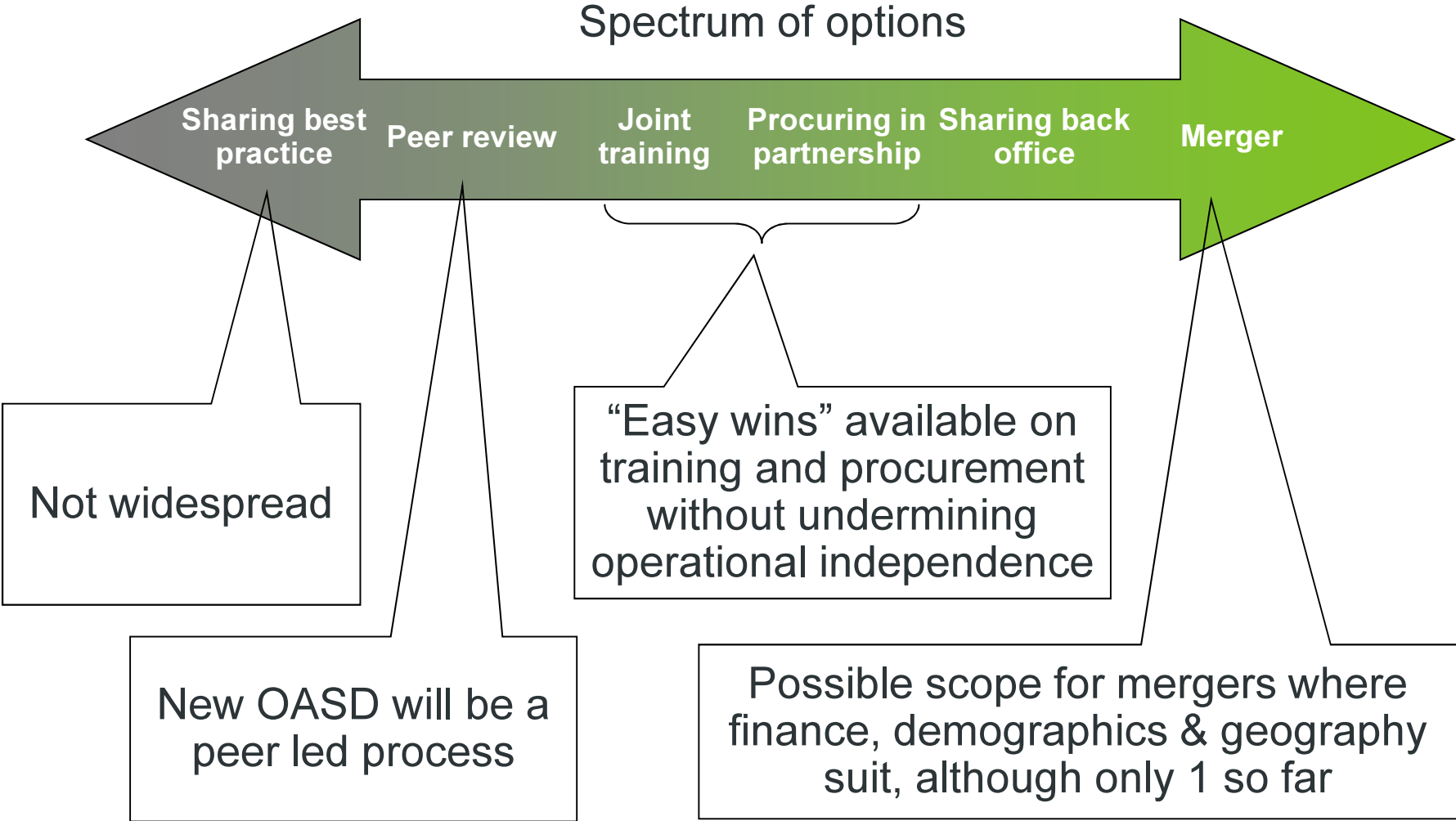
Sickness absence amongst whole time fire fighters, by number of days/shifts lost per person, 2006/07



In 2006/07, FRSs lost an average of 8.3 shifts/days per wholetime firefighter to sickness; down from 9.7 in 2001/02.

But if all FRSs reduced levels to that of the lower quartile (7.2 shifts/days per firefighter), this would equate to 34,000 fewer sick days/shifts.

# A spectrum of collaboration options are open to FRSs...



## ...but we found no strong business case to support regionalisation

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### Operations

- Regionalisation would inevitably be hugely disruptive and present large risks
- FRSs in the same administrative region often have very little in common (Kent & Essex cf. Thames Valley)... and more in common with FRSs in other regions they share borders with (Gloucs and Oxon)

### Economic

- Regional control is not proving to be significantly more economic
- The Devon & Somerset merger may only save around 1% of budget: business case suggests net savings of £3.1m over 5 years

### Political

- Regional Management Boards are considered by almost everyone to be failing to deliver better regional collaboration



## **We found some excellent partnership working... but weaker strategy and performance management**

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- FRSs are often regarded as “ideal partners” and their “can-do” attitude is widely, and rightly, praised
- Many FRSs are working well with partner agencies to reduce the costs and improve the effectiveness of service delivery. Examples include:
  - reducing the costs of smoke alarm installation and HFSCs
  - reducing vehicle arson
- All FRSs we visited were involved in a huge range of projects, but few appeared to know how effective all these projects were, or where to focus resources
- The 2007 performance assessment found nearly half of all FRSs could not demonstrate the costs and benefits of their community fire safety activity

## Most of our findings are not new...

Common recommendations	Holroyd Review (1970)	Home Office (1980)	Audit Commission (1986)	Audit Commission (1995)	Bain Review (2002)	Progress
More emphasis on prevention	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Good
Better use of duty system	✓			✓	✓	Limited changes to deployment
Exploit economies of scale	✓		✓	✓	✓	Limited examples of collaboration
Review conditions of service			✓	✓	✓	Some patchy progress on more flexible contracts, but most FRSs still bound by "Grey Book" rules
Review standards of fire cover		✓		✓	✓	National standards replaced by IRMP, but again changes to cover patchy in practice
Improve equality and diversity					✓	Extremely limited

**... so why has there been limited change, and what can be done to drive further improvement?**

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For discussion...