

CHANGING VIOLENT MEN: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MIRABAL PROJECT

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DVPPS: THE STORY SO FAR

- ◉ Widespread scepticism about men who use violence and routes to change - from multiple sources and about both CJS and DVPPs
- ◉ Research findings equivocal - RCTs find no change, other studies find change
- ◉ DVPPs subject to more intense scrutiny other layers of response to domestic violence
- ◉ An unintended consequence is that victim-survivors become the targets of intervention and expectations of change

... EUROPEAN CONTEXT

- ◉ Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence makes explicit reference to perpetrator work.
- ◉ Article 16 requires state parties to *‘set up or support programmes aimed at teaching perpetrators of domestic violence to adopt non-violent behaviours’* and in taking such measures parties *‘shall ensure that the safety of, and support for, the human rights of victims are of primary concern and that, where appropriate, these programmes are set up and implemented in close co-ordination with specialist services for victims’*.

PROJECT MIRABAL: AIMS

- ◉ A research programme with 12 Respect accredited DVPPs
- ◉ *Innovation in research methods and practice*
- ◉ *Locate community based perpetrator programmes within co-ordinated community responses to domestic violence*
- ◉ *Measure change among men on community based DVPPs*
- ◉ *Address two knowledge gaps through linked PhDs*

DVPPS: NOT JUST A GROUP WORK PROGRAMME

- ◉ DVPPs increasingly reliant on contracts with Children's Services, local authorities and CAFCASS
- ◉ Respect accredited DVPPs refuse to allow attendance to be used either as an alternative to CJS proceedings or as an argument for mitigation of sentence
- ◉ Most have 'integrated services'
 - With men - assessment, one to one and group work, case management
 - Women's support service for 11 sites: 959 referrals, 884 successfully contacted and support was accepted by 732
 - Reports and assessments of men for other parts of the CCR: 315 for family court proceedings, 191 for Children's Services, 58 for CAFCASS, 44 for criminal court cases, 41 for child protection conferences

PERPETRATORS ARE NOT STEREOTYPES BUT WE STEREOTYPE THEM

- ◉ Wide range of men on programmes
- ◉ Most don't fit notions of 'monsters' or 'thugs'
- ◉ Some had lengthy criminal justice records, others had none
- ◉ Some had histories of abuse in other relationships, many had not
- ◉ To date most on programmes are white and heterosexual
- ◉ Other agencies are already working with violent men, but become frozen when they are designated 'perpetrators'

HOW WE UNDERSTAND VIOLENCE AND CHANGE

- ◉ Began with pilot study in which we asked ‘what counts as success?’ to extend limited definitions of violence and change
- ◉ 70 interviews - women and men linked to DVPPs, staff and commissioners
- ◉ Domestic violence as it is lived - a pattern of coercive control - our concerns should not just be about women and children’s safety but also their freedom (Stark, 2007)

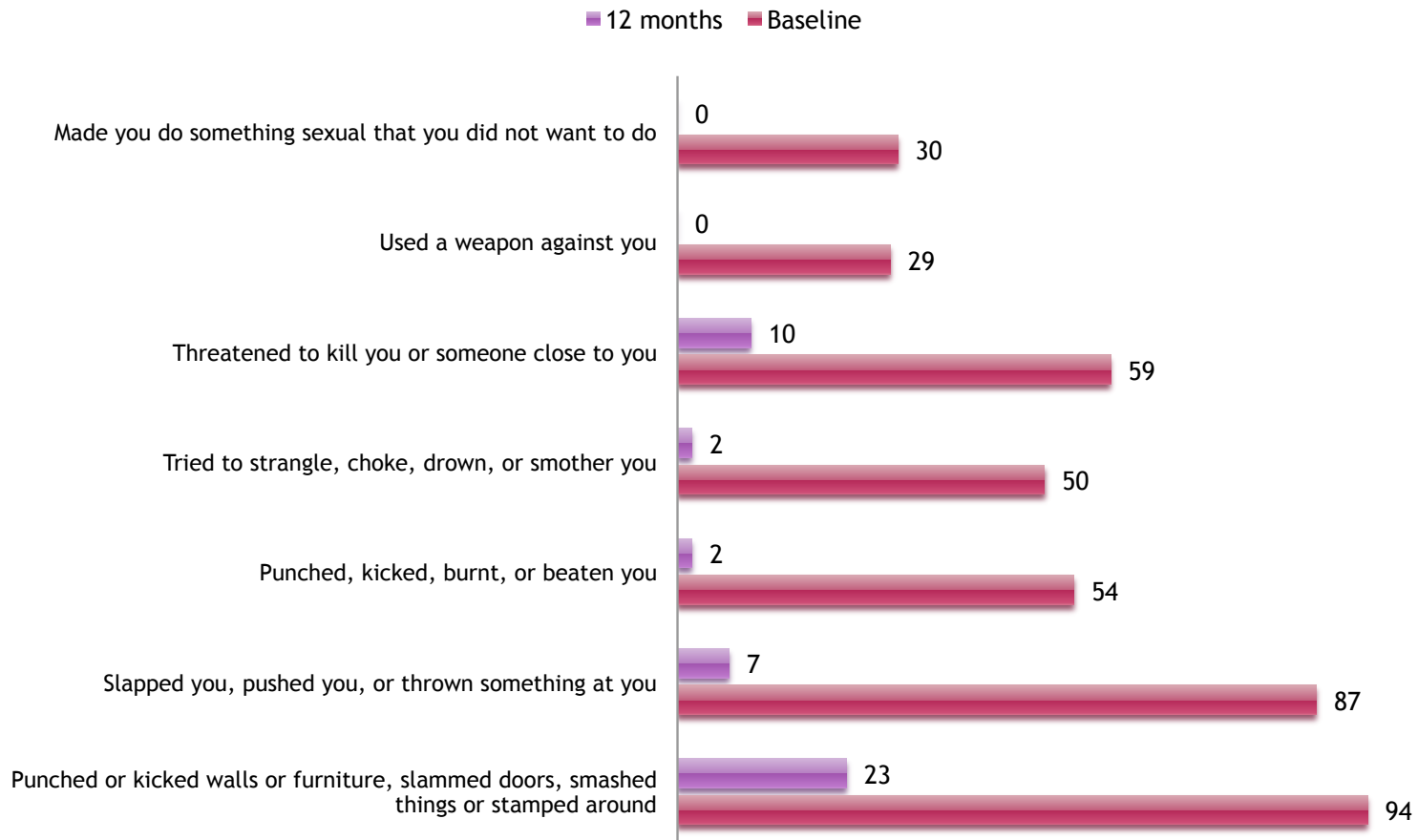
DEFINING SUCCESS

- Six measures of success operationalised through quantitative indicators (100 female partners at 5 time points, last 12 months after start) and discussed in in depth interviews (60 men and 48 women at Time 1 and Time 2)
 - Improved relationship based on respect and effective communication.
 - Expanded ‘space for action’ for women
 - Safety and freedom from violence and abuse
 - Safe, positive and shared parenting.
 - Enhanced awareness of self and others for men.
 - Safer, healthier childhoods
- Expected coercive control would be more difficult than physical violence to change, but is necessary if women and children are to no longer be ‘walking on eggshells’

Headline finding 1: For the majority of women whose partners and ex-partners attended a DVPP the physical and sexual violence stopped completely

REDUCED VIOLENCE AND ABUSE 1

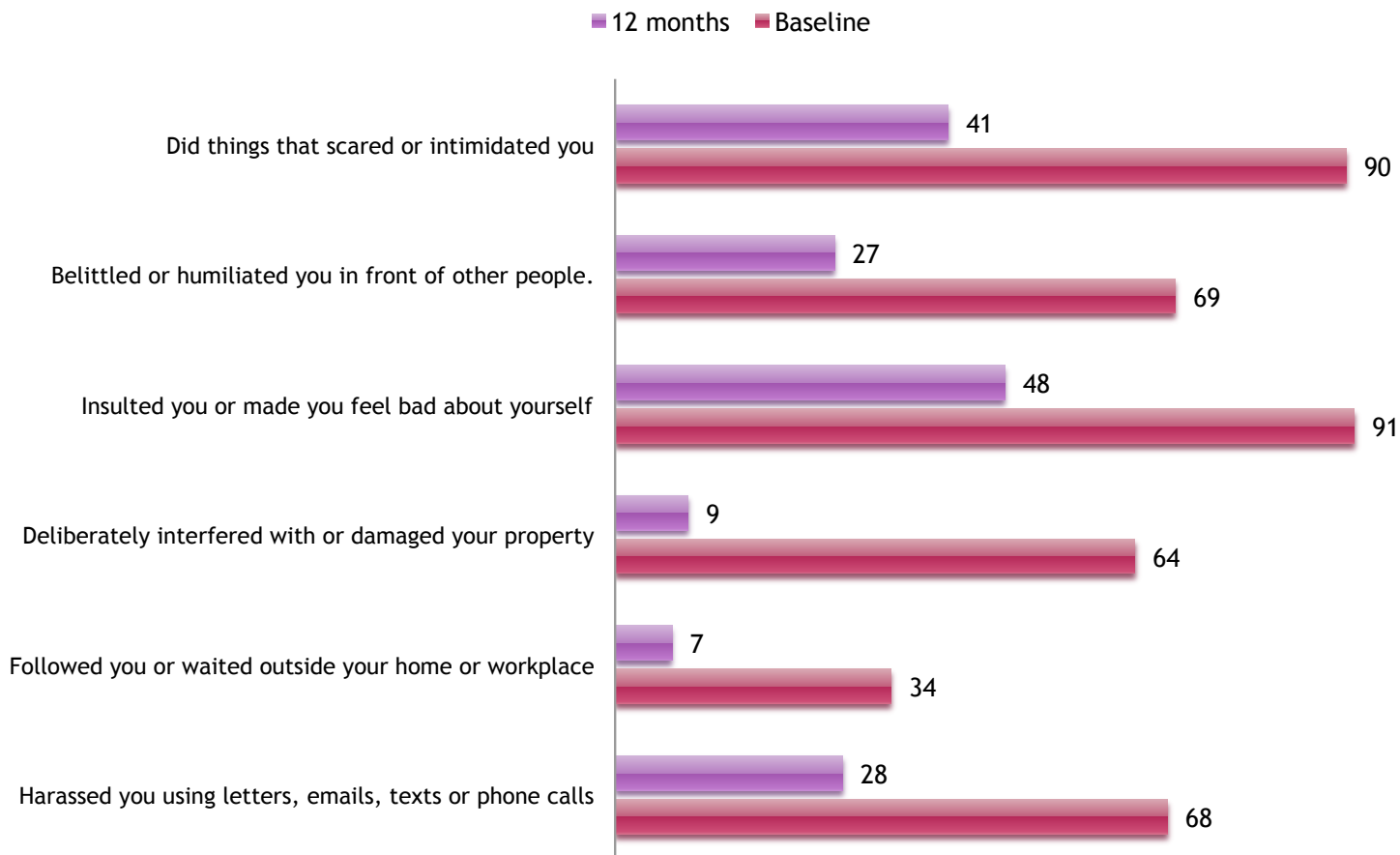
Figure 4. Physical and sexual violence (% yes)



Headline finding 2: whilst the use of coercive control also showed strong and consistent decreases it remained in the lives about half of the women

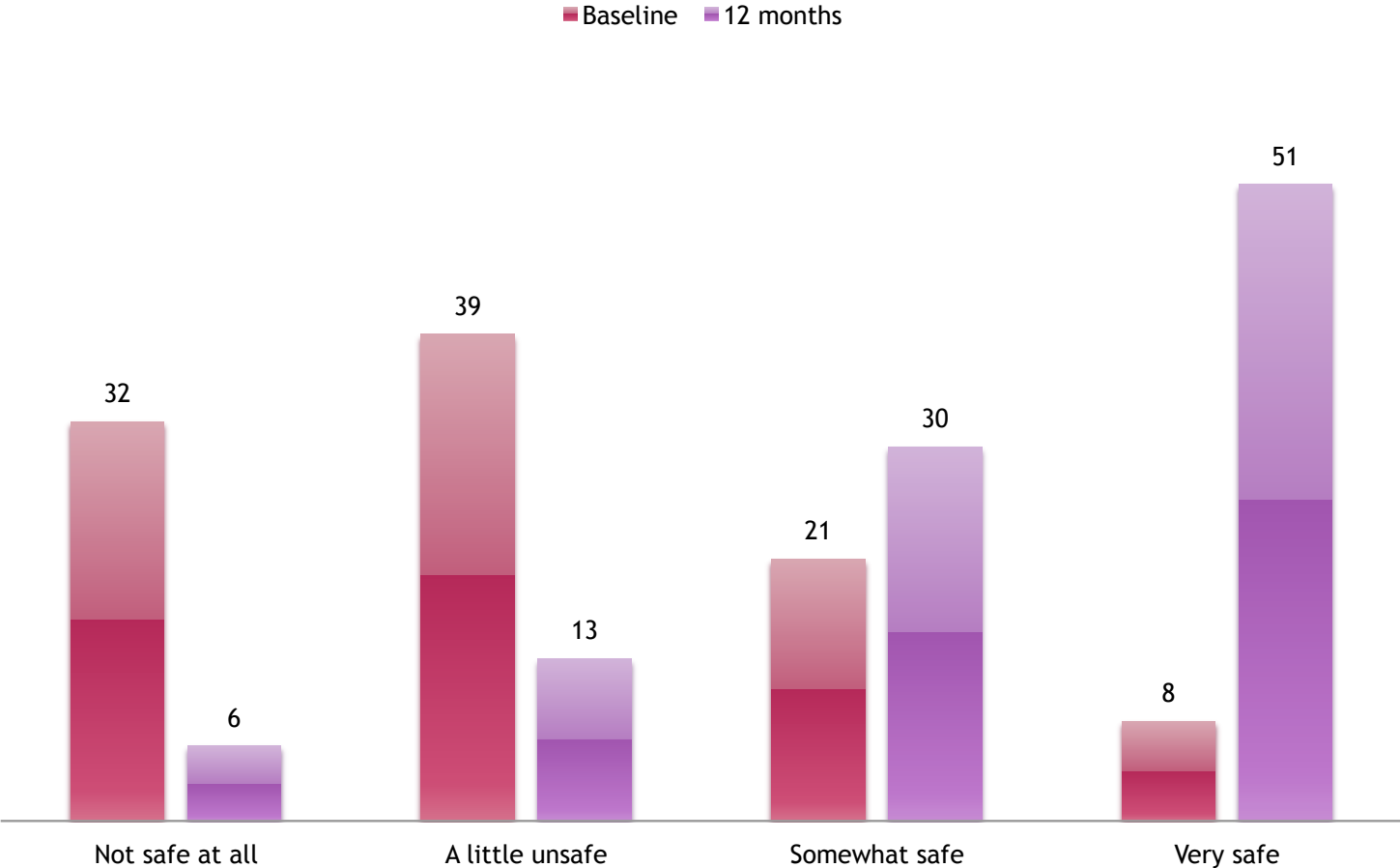
REDUCED VIOLENCE AND ABUSE 2

Figure 5. Harassment and other abusive acts (% yes)



WOMEN'S SENSE OF SAFETY

Figure 6. How safe do you feel? (%)



CHILDHOOD MEASURES

- All indicators showed some improvements, but change was minimal for some measures - especially women worrying about leaving children alone with the man
- Difficult for some men to demonstrate change, as had no contact with children until completion, and others had minimal contact

CHANGE 1: UNDERSTANDINGS OF VIOLENCE

- ◉ One of the areas where change was most evident was men's expanded understanding of violence and abuse
- ◉ *When I first spoke to you... I'd say 'It was only a push' but ... I've learnt a push is still violence... like it's not just me a lot of the others who go like 'Oh well I only push, I only pushed her to get out the door'. But I've learnt on the course a push is still like as bad as a punch or a slap or whatever. (Felix, Time 2)*
- ◉ *How I am around her, what words I use, how I treat her, how my tone of voice is, how controlling I am. These little things that I thought were only little, they are huge but I never thought of that. I thought I was just doing what every other bloke did, ya know and it's just not. (Matthew, Time 2)*

CHANGE 2: WOMEN'S SPACE FOR ACTION

- ◉ For some women the man being on a DVPP in itself created space that they stepped into, regardless of how far he had travelled
- ◉ *He sulked. Like a kid. But I just let him get on with it, I thought, "Well no," you know, just like my children, I'm not gonna respond to negative behaviour [...] And the more I done that, the more confident I got, and the more stronger I got, and - and sort of left his negative behaviour behind, and I moved forward in myself (Adele, Time 2).*

HOW CHANGE HAPPENS 1

- ◉ Not a process that involves a 'lightbulb' moment, but rather a series of sparks – different for each man – some of which do and not light up – hence 'steps towards change'
- ◉ *I don't think there was a moment... during the programme they all say like the penny drops, as it were, all of a sudden this light-bulb moment and there never is... it's like a little fairground machine where you put a coin in and it bounces off various little pegs and it's only working its way to the bottom and the programme is like that... I know that I will be remembering it when I'm in my 70s and my 80s ... But it's never like this light-bulb moment. I always say it's like this little coin that you drop in and it bounces around for ages and it sort of argues with yourself and all of a sudden dink it's in the bottom before you know it. (Kieran Time 2)*

HOW CHANGE HAPPENS 2

- ⦿ Techniques such as ‘time out’ and ‘positive self talk’ were important, especially during the early stages
- ⦿ Men talked about needing time to absorb the content – to understand, reflect, decide to change, practice techniques.
- ⦿ Having to have ‘the want’ to change
- ⦿ The importance of the group – seeing oneself in others and being challenged by peers

HOW CHANGE HAPPENS 3

- ◉ Men had very stereotypical notions of being a man - protector and provider and head of household - which fed a sense that he 'knew best', leading to the micro-management of everyday life
- ◉ Re-making gender was fundamental – understanding and unraveling male privilege and entitlement
- ◉ Learning to be men differently in a heterosexual relationship and as a parent

CHALLENGES AND QUESTIONS

- ◉ Should not safe work with perpetrators be part of co-ordinated community responses?
- ◉ Is it integrated into other strands of work - eg Troubled Families
- ◉ Linking interventions - eg DVPOs and DVPPs
- ◉ Will the desire for shorter and cheaper loose precisely what men say enabled them to change? Risks playing into the instrumental 'tick box' approach so many begin with?

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