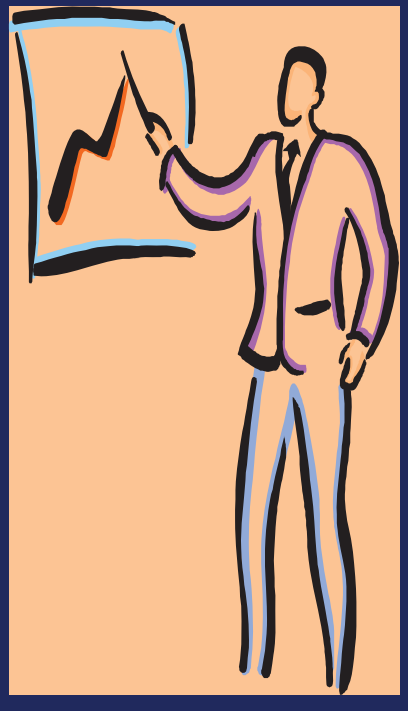
Research on Adult Drug Courts in the U.S.

Douglas B. Marlowe, J.D., Ph.D.

National Association of Drug Court Professionals

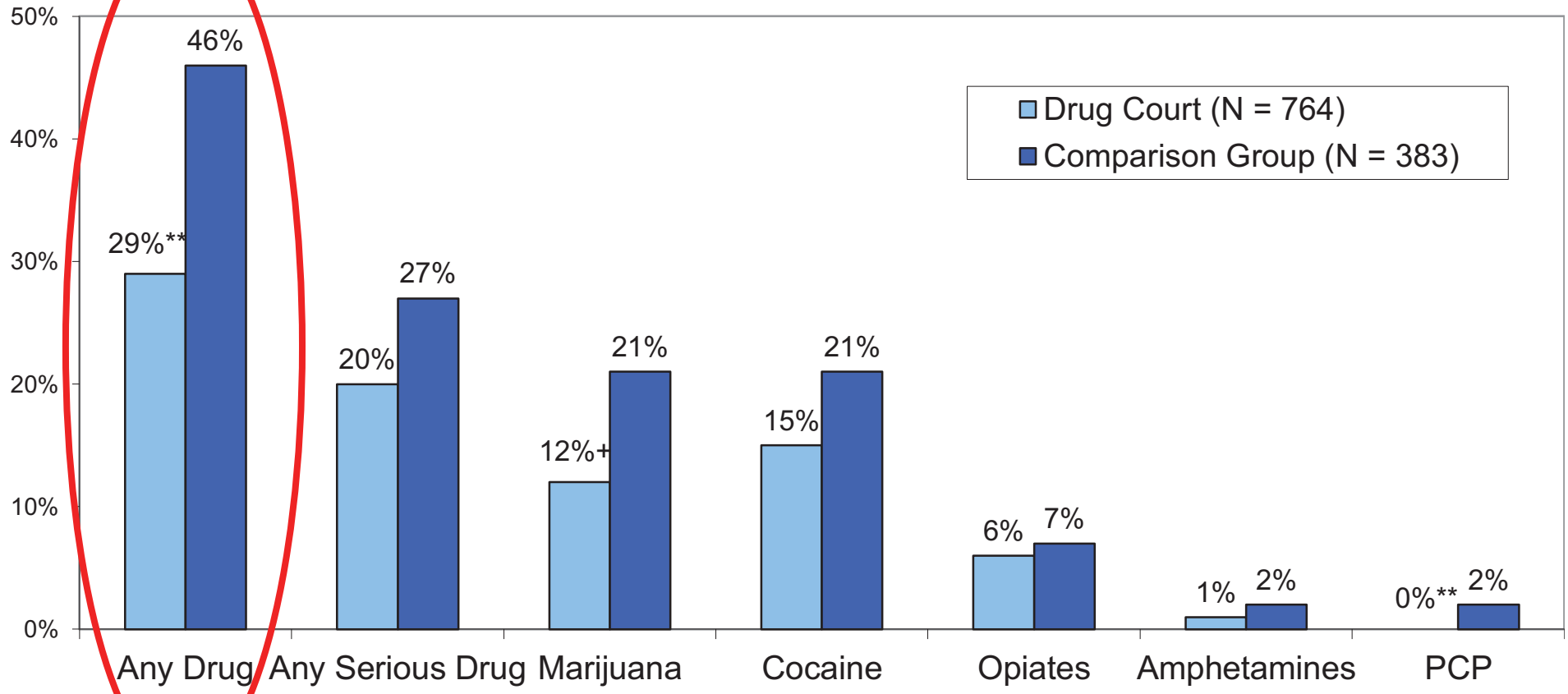




Crime Reduction

Citation	Institution(s)	No. Drug Courts	Crime Reduced
Mitchell et al. (2012)	U.S.F., G.M.U. & Penn. State	92	12%
Rempel et al. (2012)	Urban Institute, CCI & RTI	23	13%
Wilson et al. (2006)	Campbell Collaborative	55	14%
Latimer et al. (2006)	Canada Dept. of Justice	66	9%
Shaffer (2010)	University of Nevada	76	9%
Lowenkamp et al. (2005)	University of Cincinnati	22	8%
Aos et al. (2006)	Washington State Inst. for Public Policy	57	8%

Saliva Drug Tests at 18 Months



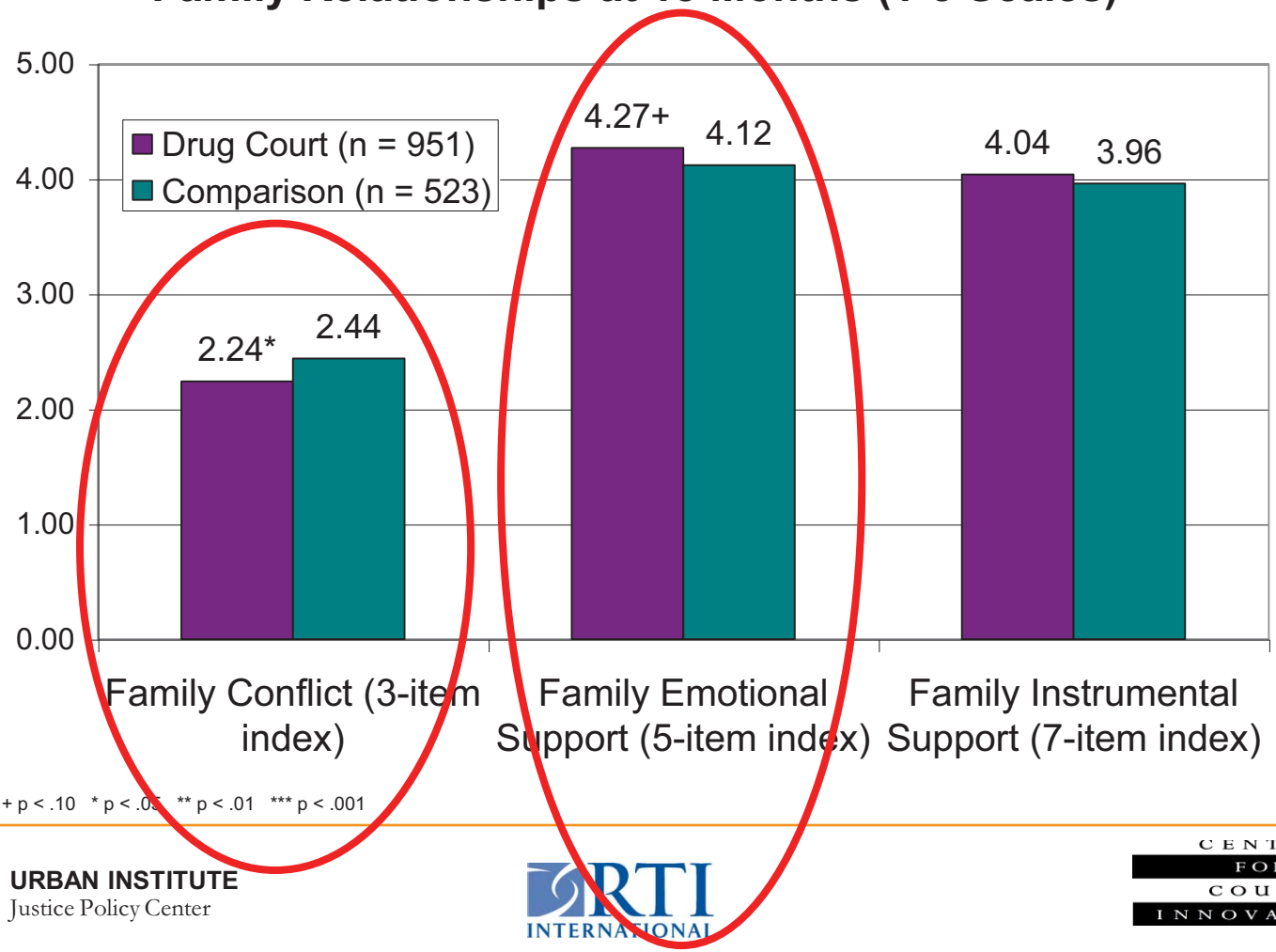
+ p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

URBAN INSTITUTE
Justice Policy Center

RTI INTERNATIONAL

CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION

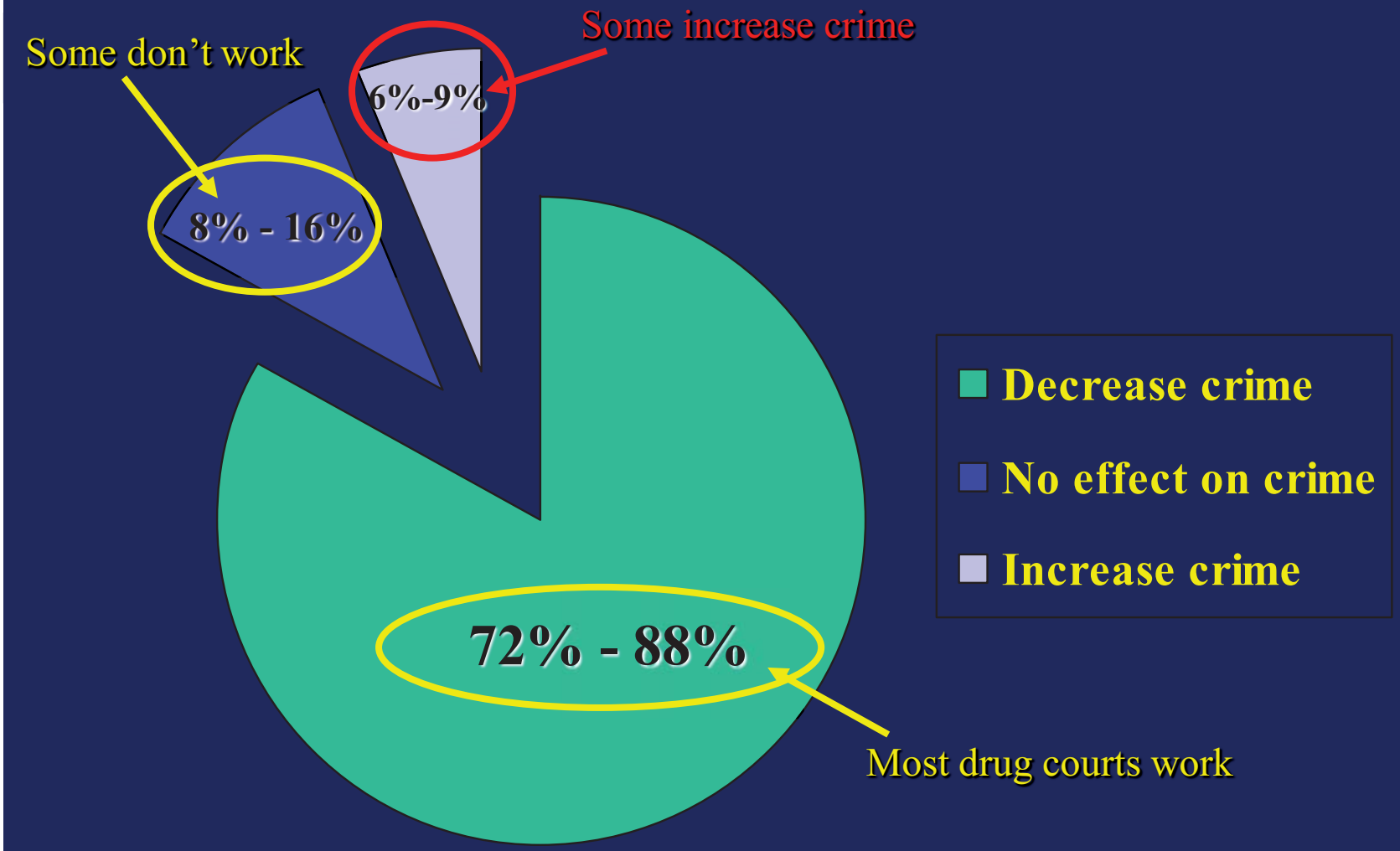
Family Relationships



Cost Effectiveness

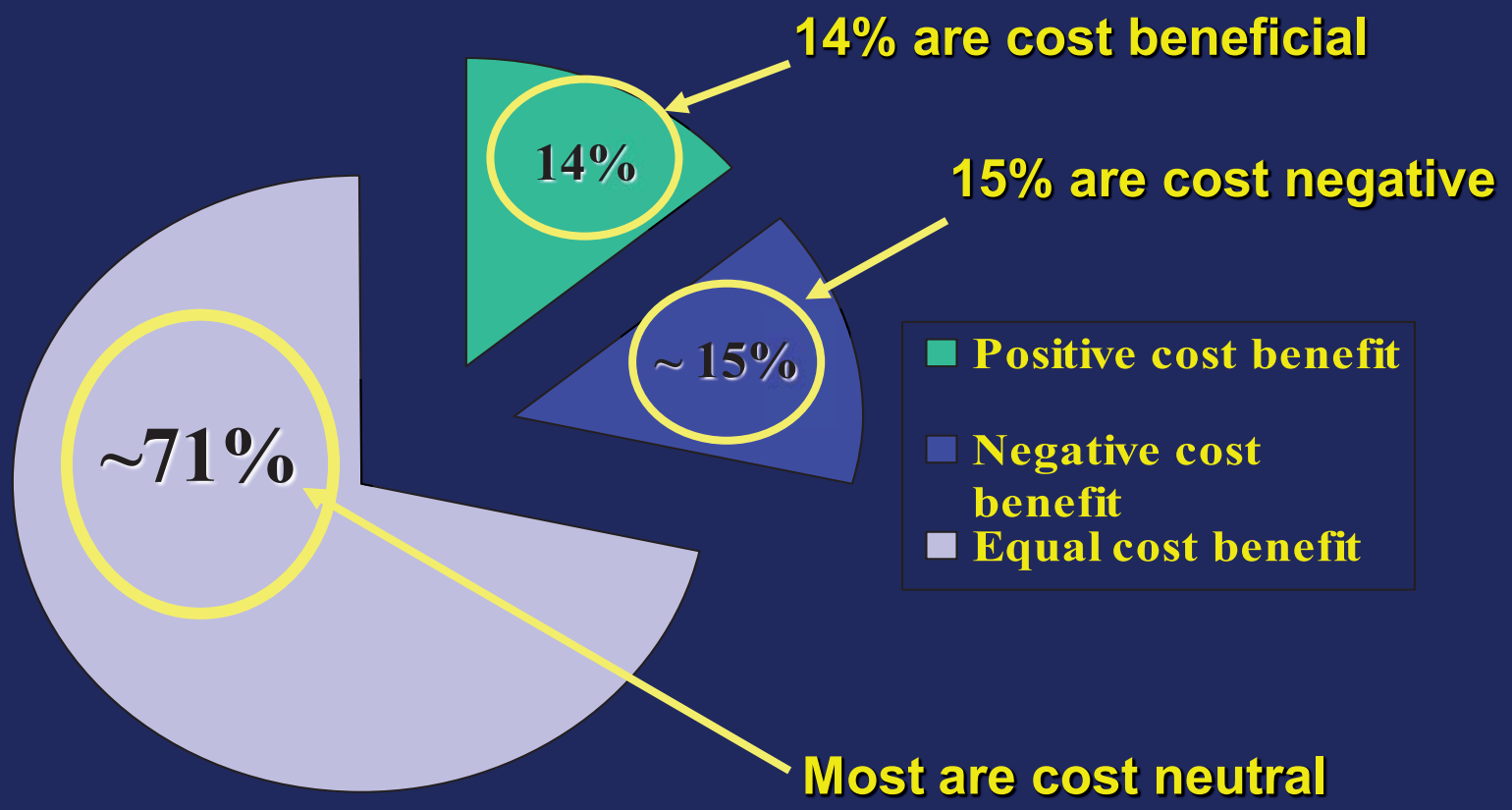
Citation	# Drug Courts	Avg. Benefit Per $1 Invested	Avg. Cost Saving Per Client
Rossman et al. (2011)	N = 23 (National Sample)	$2.00	$5,680
Bhati et al. (2008)	National Data	$2.21	N/A
Aos et al. (2006)	National Data	N/A	$4,767
Carey et al. (2006)	N = 9 (California)	$3.50	$11,000
Barnoski & Aos (2003)	N = 5 (Washington State)	$1.74	$2,888

Variable Effects



(Carey et al., 2012; Downey & Roman, 2010; GAO, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2012; Shaffer, 2010)

Variable Cost Benefits



(Downey & Roman, 2010)

Target Population

- High Risk Offenders
  - ≤ 25 years of age
  - Prior felony convictions
  - Prior treatment failures
  - Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD)
- High Need Offenders
  - Addicted to drugs or alcohol (≠ abusers or mis-users)
  - Lack of job skills or illiteracy (≠ unemployed)
  - Major Axis I psychiatric disorder (co-occurring tracks only)

Best Practices

- Multidisciplinary team involvement
- Court hearings every 2 weeks
- Twice-weekly random drug testing
- Manualized evidence-based treatment
- Graduated incentives & sanctions
- Continuous staff training
- Ongoing evaluation and improvement

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