

**An Overview of the
Moving to Opportunity (MTO)
Experiment:
A Random Assignment Housing
Mobility Study in Five U.S. Cities**

MTO: A Housing Mobility Experiment

- Operated from 1994 to 1998
- Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York
- Eligible families with children living in:
 - public housing
 - high-poverty neighborhoods (poverty rate \geq 40%)

Random assignment to 3 groups

4,608 eligible families
in public housing

Low-Poverty
Voucher Group (LPV)
(N = 1,800)

Section 8 Group (S8)
(N = 1,350)

Control Group (C)
(N = 1,400)

Offered restricted Section 8
voucher + mobility counseling

Offered conventional
Section 8 voucher

No voucher, existing programs

47% Leased up
(N = 864)

68% Leased up
(N = 918)

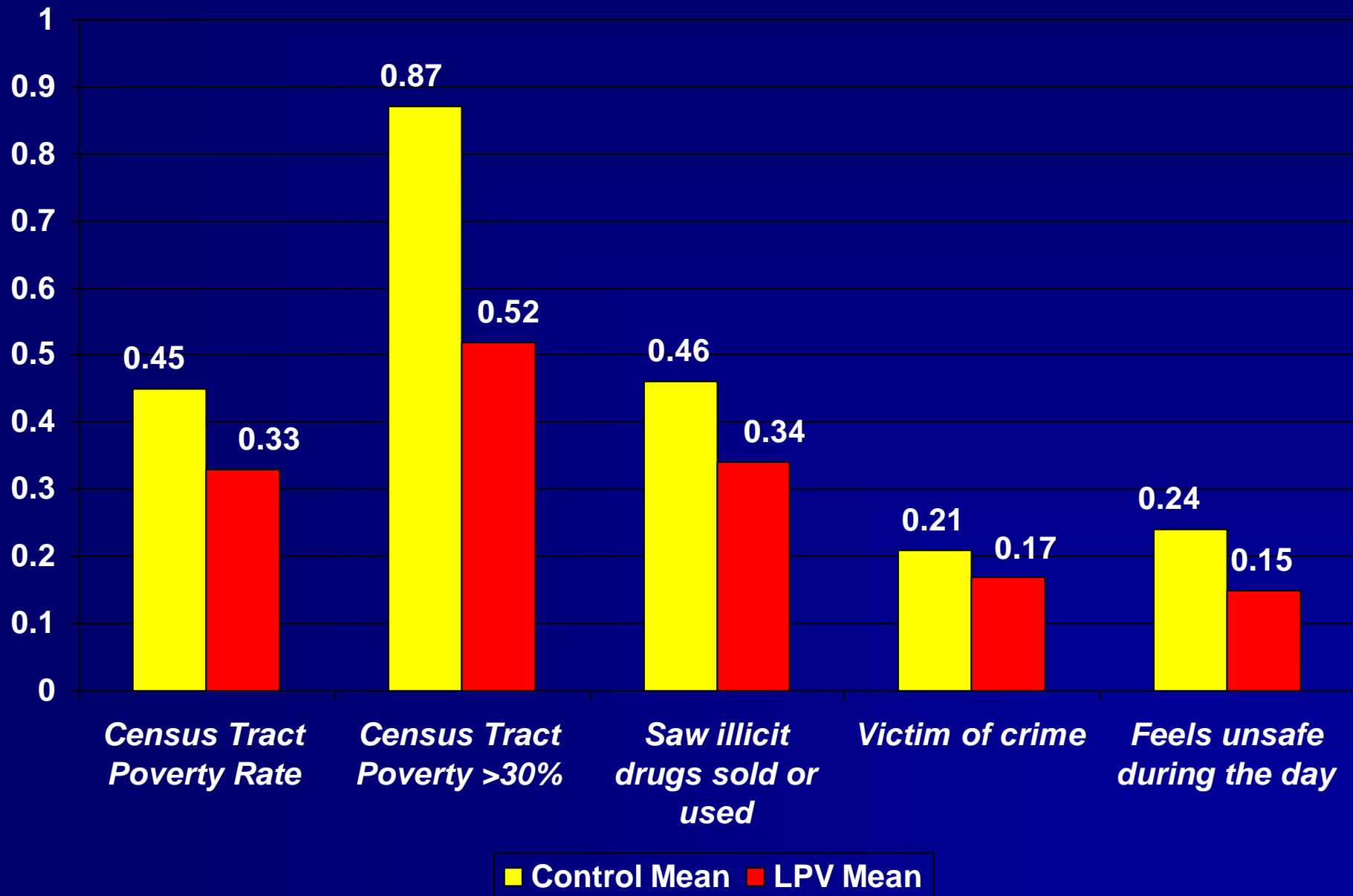
Selected Characteristics of MTO Households

- 22 percent of household heads were employed at baseline.
- 87 percent single-parent female-headed households
- Baltimore and Chicago samples are almost 100 percent black.
- LA, and NY are roughly 50 percent black, 50 percent Hispanic.
- About 20 percent of the sample in Boston is nh-white or Asian.

HUD's 5-Year Evaluation

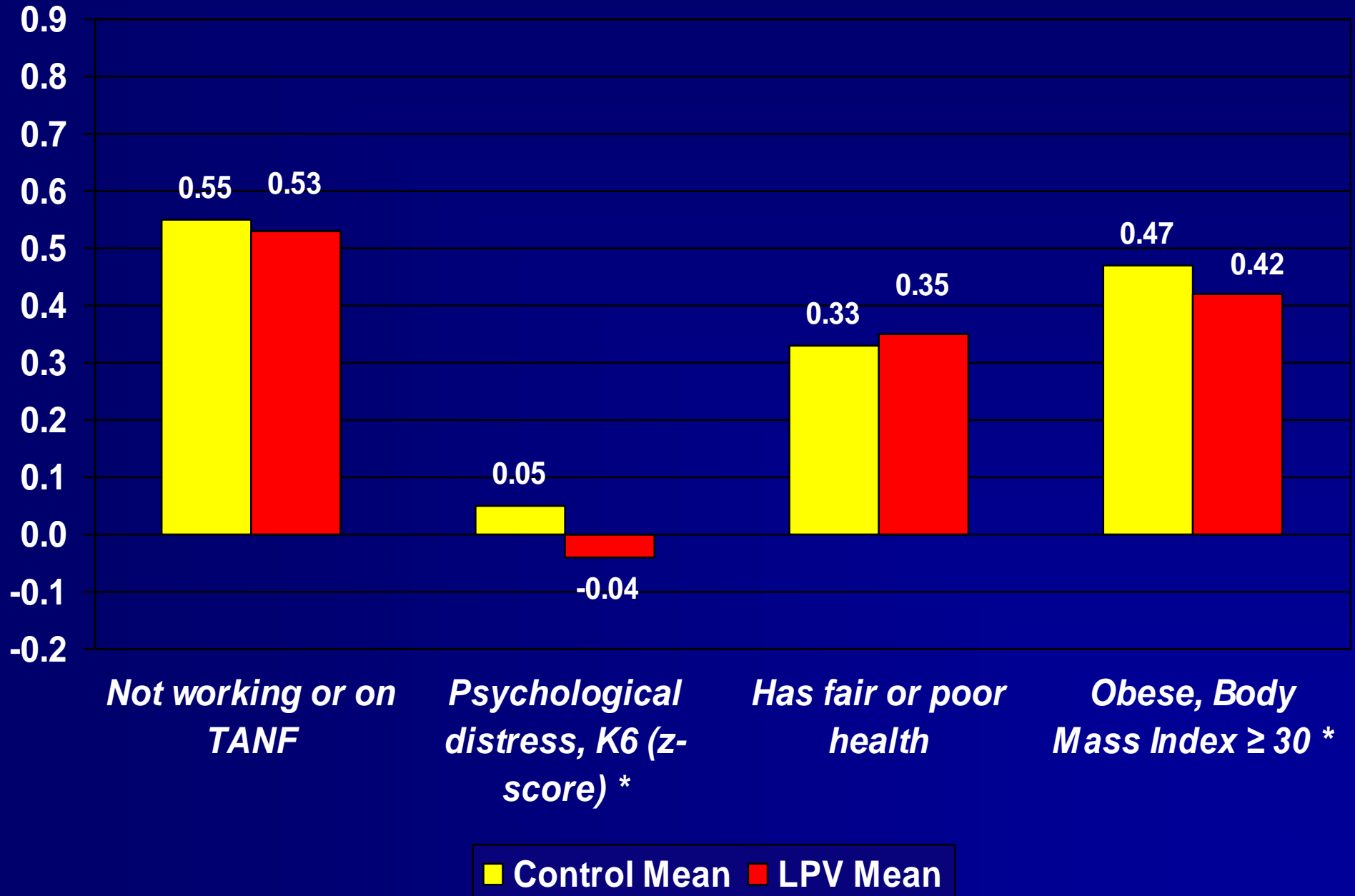
- **Qualitative Studies:** Popkin, Harris, and Cunningham; Also Edin, Clampet-Lundquist
- **Quantitative Study:**
 - Abt (Feins and Orr)
 - NBER (Kling, Liebman, Katz, Sanbonmatsu)
 - Also Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, Ludwig, Whitaker, Psaty
- **Surveys** of household heads, youth ages 12 to 19, and children ages 5 to 11
- **Administrative Data:** earnings, AFDC/TANF and Food Stamps; involvement with criminal justice system (Ludwig)

MTO Interim: Improved Neighborhood Outcomes (ITT)



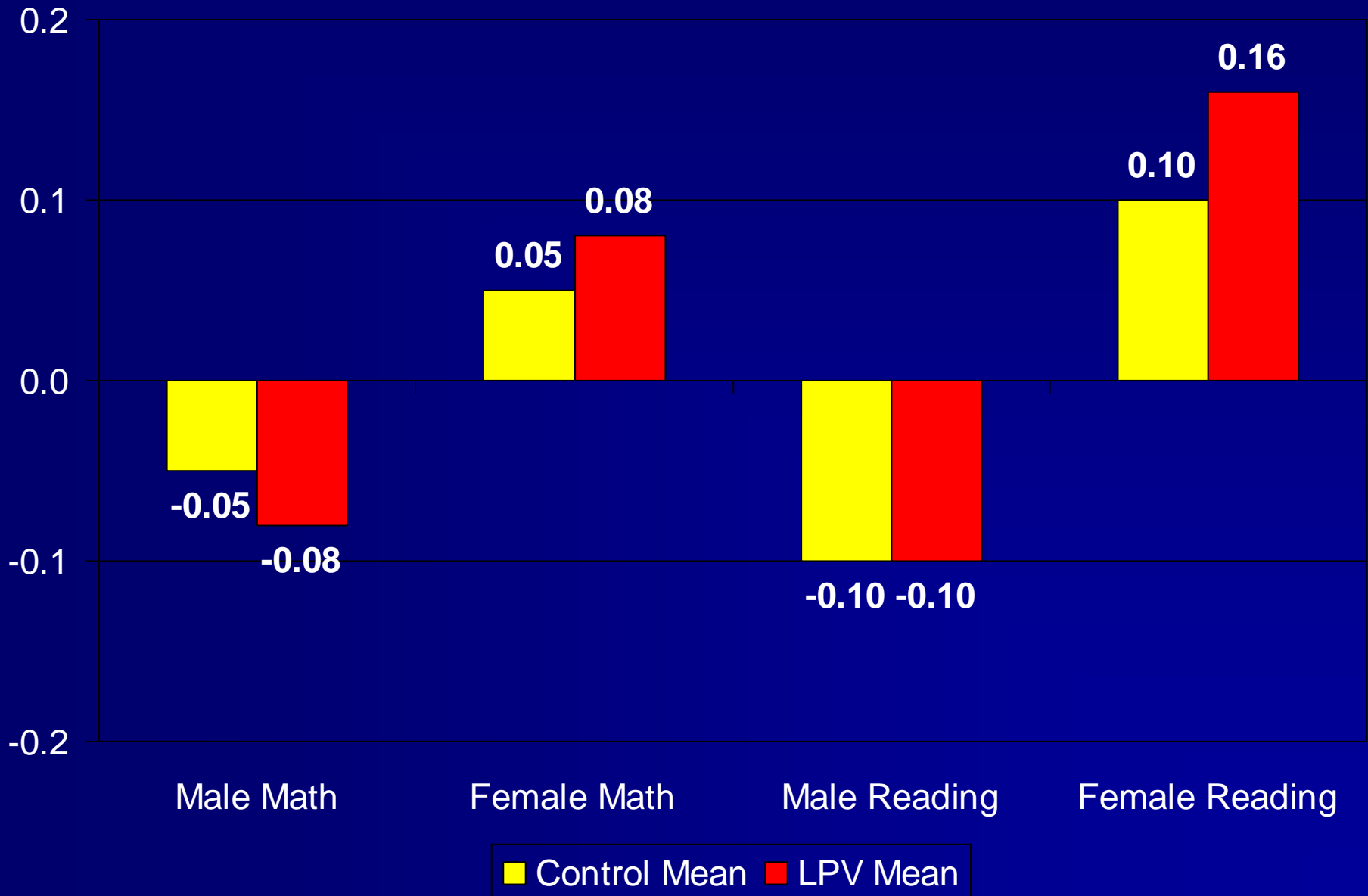
All differences in outcome levels between the LPV group and the control group are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

MTO Interim: No effect on adult labor market outcomes but improved mental and physical health (ITT)



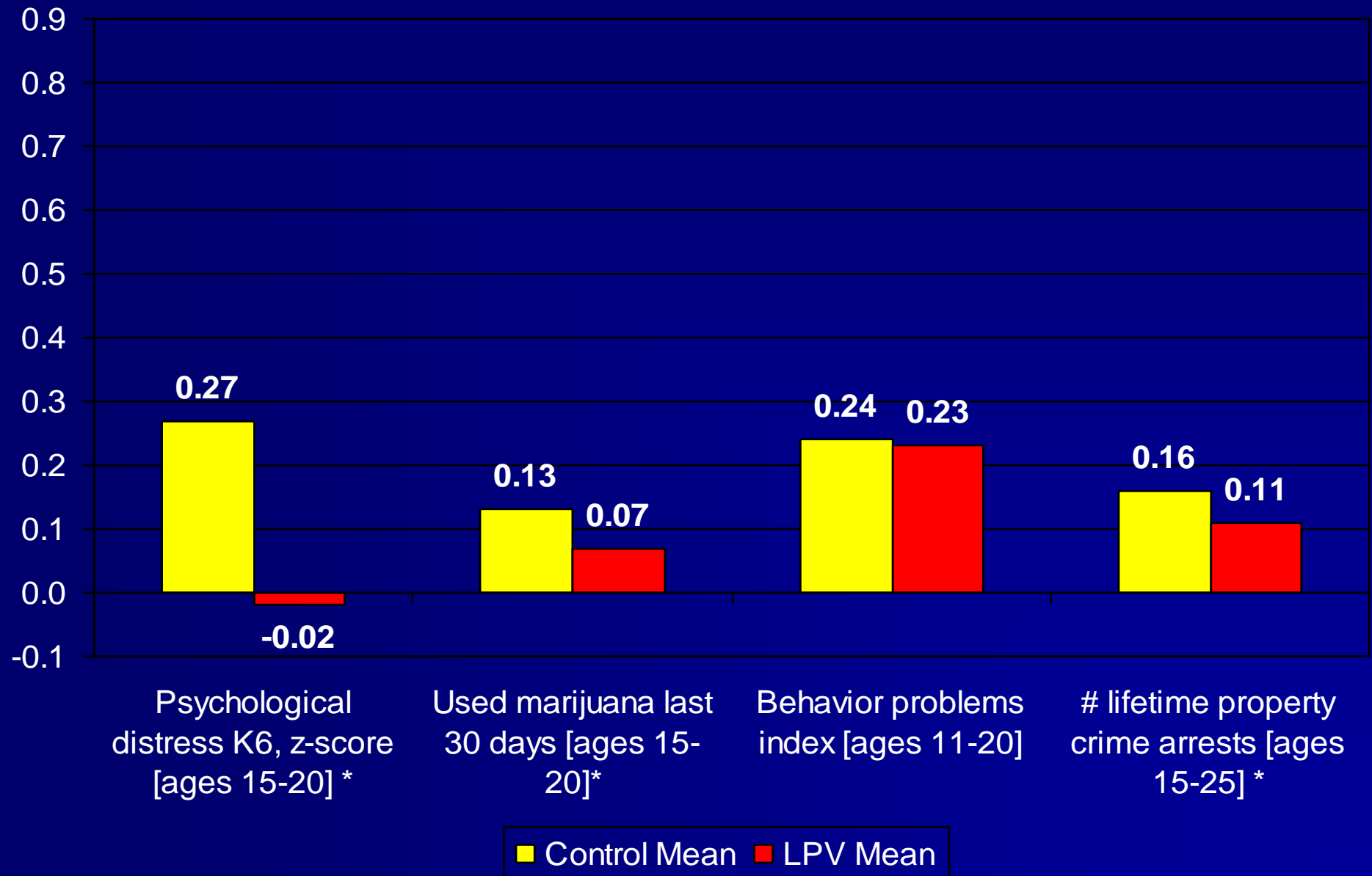
* Difference in outcome levels between the LPV group and the control group is statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

MTO Interim: No effect on youth achievement



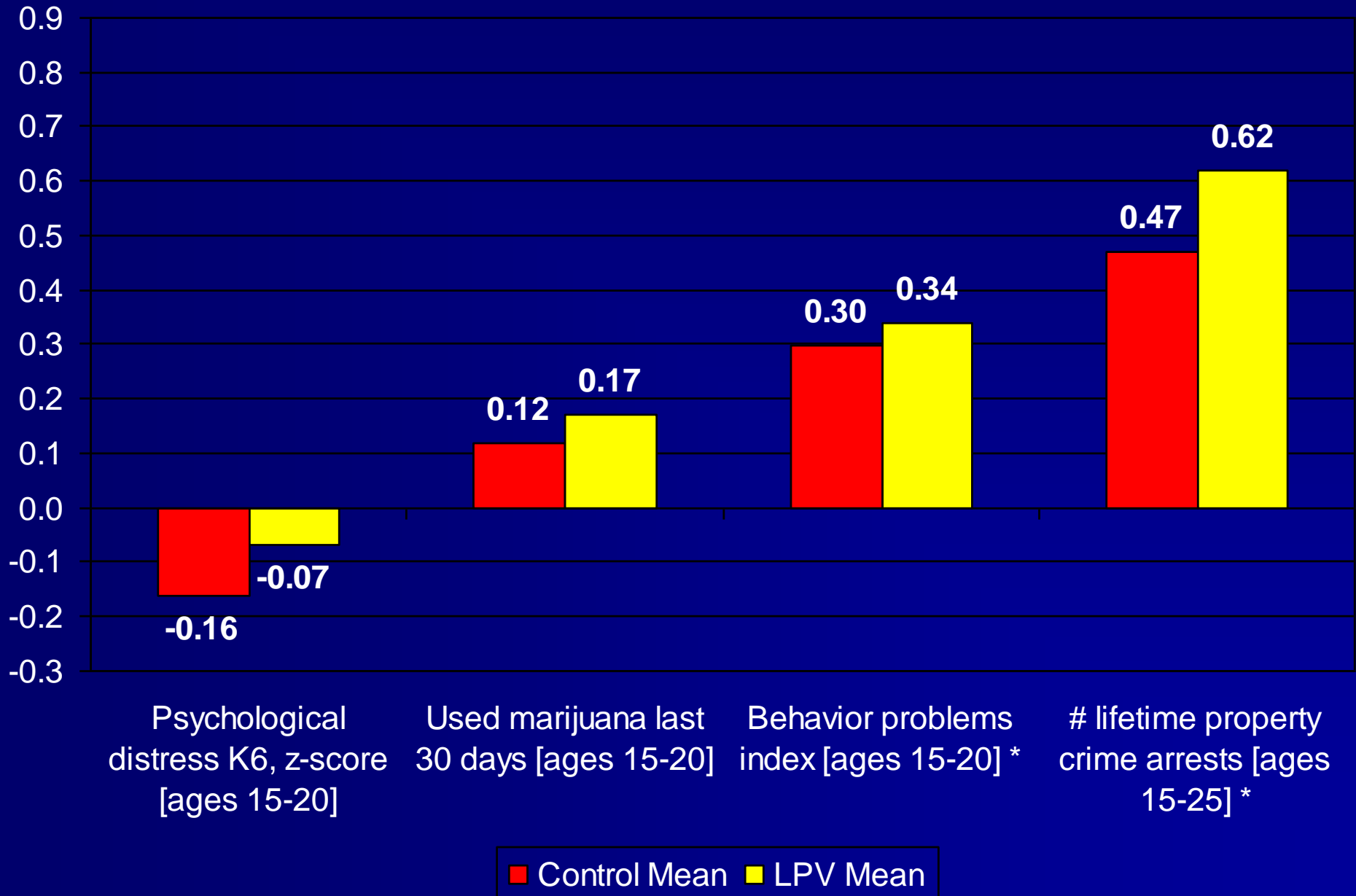
Graph displays Woodcock-Johnson Revised Scale Scores for MTO youth ages 6-20

MTO Interim: Less psychological distress & fewer behavior problems for female teens (ITT)



* Difference in outcome levels between the LPV group and the control group is statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

MTO Interim: Increased risky behavior among male teens (ITT)



* Difference in outcome levels between the LPV group and the control group is statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Summary of MTO interim findings

(and, by extension, moving to low poverty):

- improved housing
- increased safety
- lowered adult depression
- lowered rates of adult obesity
- was good for female teens
- was not so good for male teens
- had little effect on employment or income
- had little effect on children's achievement or schooling

The MTO Final Evaluation: Measuring Impacts 10 to 12 years after random assignment

**The TEAM: National Bureau of Economic Research team:
Lawrence Katz (PI), Jens Ludwig (project director), Greg
Duncan, Lisa Gennetian, Ronald Kessler, Jeffrey Kling, Lisa
Sanbonmatsu**

**Survey data collection by the Institute for Survey Research at
University of Michigan, Nancy Gebler as project director**

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Institute for Education Sciences; and, the MacArthur, Gates,
Annie Casey, and Smith Richardson Foundations.**

MTO Final Evaluation: Key Questions

- What are the long term effects and how do these evolve over time?
- What are the long-term effects of MTO on those who were young children at baseline?
 - Children who grow up in low-poverty areas from infancy and early childhood can be expected to show greater effects than those who move at age 10 or 15.
- What are the mechanisms? Especially for youth by gender?
 - Hypotheses include: retaining social ties, reducing victimization, differences in institutional responses, parental investment, adaptation and decision making, role models

MTO Final Evaluation Design

- **Administrative data matching:** Unemployment Insurance, TANF/Food Stamp, Arrest and educational achievement data from state agencies, assisted housing receipt from HUD
- **Surveys** for female adult caregivers and youth aged 10 to 20 (as of December 2007)
- **Biometric data** for adults: height, weight, waist measurement, blood pressure and blood
- **Achievement assessments** for youth
- **Audio-taping** for language assessments
- **Interviewer observations** of residence & neighborhood

MTO Final Evaluation Outcomes

- **Education:** Includes reading & math achievement tests using assessments developed for ECLS-K
- **Employment**
- **Social program participation & income**
- **Mental and physical health (expansions)**
- **Risky / delinquent behavior**
- **Housing / neighborhood conditions**
- **Mediating measures (expansions)**
 - Try to better understand youth gender difference in MTO impacts
 - Learn more about neighborhood integration by class vs race

MTO Final Evaluation: Timing

- First survey pre-test in November 2007; Second survey pre-test with small sample of MTO families in February 2008
- Survey interviews from June 2008 to September 2009
- Administrative data agreements and matching happening now
- Reports and papers coming out in 2010 and 2011

Why is MTO Important?

- It has potentially significant policy implications, informing poverty de-concentration policies.
- It has broad general appeal: People want to know how important neighborhood is.
- It is a platform for contributing to scientific research on the causal influences of neighborhoods on children and families. **See**
 - www.huduser.org
 - www.mtoresearch.org