



PUBLIC FORUM

“Boys Under Achievement”



Ministry of Education & St. George's University

MALE UNDERPERFORMANCE IN GRENADA



Dr. Didacus Jules
Registrar
Caribbean Examinations Council
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**WHATS THE STORY WITH THE
BOYS?**

What's the story with the boys?



- Introductory caveats
 - need for more sophistication in the narrative of gender differentials in education
 - male underperformance while real is ***not the full picture***

What's the story with the boys?

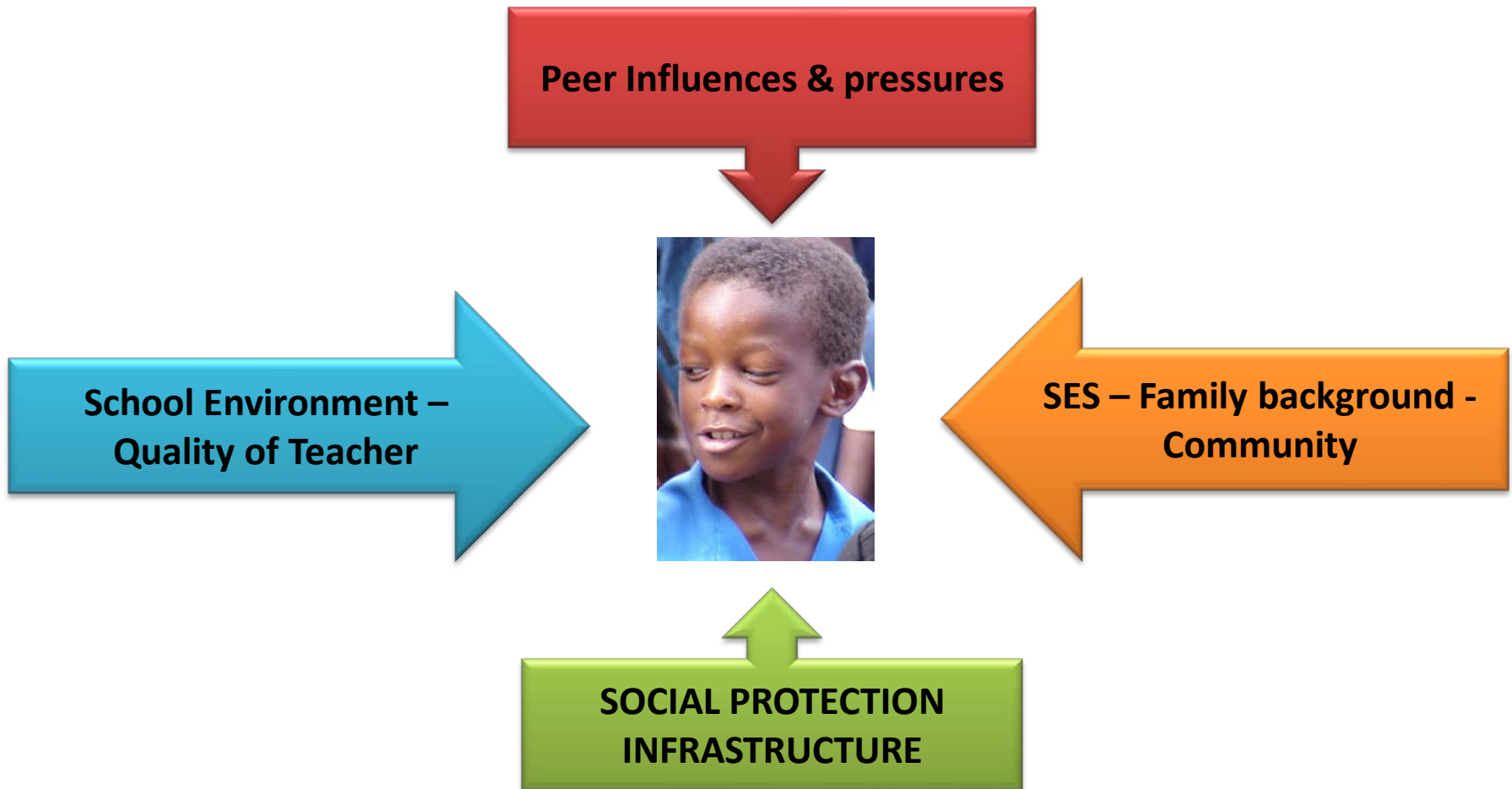
serious weaknesses in our data collection and statistics that enable us to make empirical observations of real trends

– Bailey & Bernard 2009:

- definition of variables not consistent among countries of CARICOM
- unavailability, in most instances, of enrolment ratios which reference enrolment to the relevant age cohort in the general population
- unavailability of data disaggregated by sex for some key indicators
- Needed: consensus on system structure and common definitions for key indicators and, at a minimum, mandatory collection of data disaggregated by sex

What's the story with the boys?

tendency towards simplistic solutions that ignore the inter-relatedness of social phenomena and the need for holistic solutions



What's the story with the boys?

- historical evolution
 - from **women's education** 1990 to **gender and development** 1995 (Stromquist) to **reverse gender gap** 2005
 - “In Latin America and the Caribbean, boys generally have higher repetition rates and lower academic achievement levels than girls, and in some countries, a higher rate of absenteeism”
UNICEF 2004
- common myths about gender differentials

Myths and Misconceptions

- **Myth 1: It is a boys versus girls issue; it is a result of the war of the sexes**
- It is not a boys versus girls issue though it can be understood well by using the gender socialisation lens
- Girls are not necessarily benefitting from the trend
- Both boys' and girls' performance need to be judged against objective criteria of learning



Myths and Misconceptions



- **Myth 2: Focus on girls' education and women's empowerment is impacting boys education negatively**
- boys' underachievement in any of these countries not a result of the secondary position of men or gender under-privileging
- Boys do not face formal discrimination anywhere as has been the case for girls in most societies

Myths and Misconceptions

- **Myth 3: More female teachers mean no role model for boys**
- absence of appropriate or 'right' role models an issue and not the absence of male role models; female teachers have succeeded in changing the situation with appropriate support and preparation (CETT project conclusions support this)



Student Gender Relations

- student perceptions of the school experience - Bailey et al:
 - boys generally felt more unfairly treated than girls, particularly with reference to chores and duties assigned as well as in terms of the punishments meted out to each sex.
 - teachers preferencing of good performing students; teachers tended to prefer brighter students, as well as those who were well behaved
 - female students received far less harsh treatment than their female counterparts: *“Girls get warnings and suspensions. Boys are expelled, suspended and a lot of excessive flogging”*

Student Gender Relations

- student perceptions of the school experience - Bailey et al:
 - Students were well aware of existing class systems within their schools. One accepted that in “*all institutions there is always an elite.*” He noted that “*...there are some elite here that can get away with murder...they can break all the rules and still be here*”

Student Perceptions

- describing the **ideal teacher**, several students indicated that the person would have to be a disciplinarian, who was serious about work and could serve as a good role model.

What's the story – Research Findings

Other adjectives used to describe the ideal teacher included:

- Experienced and well qualified
- Friendly
- Trustworthy
- Down to earth
- Able to relate to students who are having problems
- Fair in treatment
- Able to pass on good values
- Exemplary
- Unbiased
- Smiling and Approachable

What's the story – Research Findings

- certification perceived as more important for females because of the financial independence that it provided; perception that boys did not require as much certification as they could find work easier
- both sexes saw earning capacity as competitive with certification

What's the story – Research Findings

- Miller (1998) and others maintain that on average the pattern is that **boys start their schooling later, attend school more irregularly, repeat more grades, drop out earlier, have lower completion rates and achieve less** than girls while in school.
- Murphy-Graham 2010 citing leading scholars of gender and education has argued that **the real crisis is not about boys per se, but is a crisis of masculinity** (Gilligan, 2006; Kimmel 2004, 2008).

What's the story – Research Findings

- Kimmel 2004 outlines **4 basic rules of masculinity** that have shaped several generations of men (and which I might add - have become more strident in expression in the face of the advancement of women as less qualified men seek to redefine the traditional eroding boundaries of power between the sexes

What's the story – Research Findings



1. 'No sissy stuff!'

1. 'Being a man means not being a sissy, not being perceived as weak, effeminate, or gay. Masculinity is the relentless repudiation of the feminine.'



2. 'Be a Big Wheel!'

2. This rule refers to the centrality of success and power in the definition of masculinity. Masculinity is measured by wealth, status and power.

What's the story – Research Findings



3. 'Be a Study Oak!'

3. What makes a man is that he is reliable in a crisis. And what makes him reliable in a crisis is not that he is able to respond fully and appropriately to the situation at hand, but rather that he resembles an inanimate object. A rock, a pillar, a species of a tree.

What's the story – Research Findings



4. **'Give em Hell!'**

4. Exude an aura of daring and aggression. Live life out on the edge. Take risks. Go for it. Pay no attention to what others think.

given the deeply entrenched psychology involved here - what are the lessons for schools and social institutions in subverting these rules in a redefinition of masculinity?

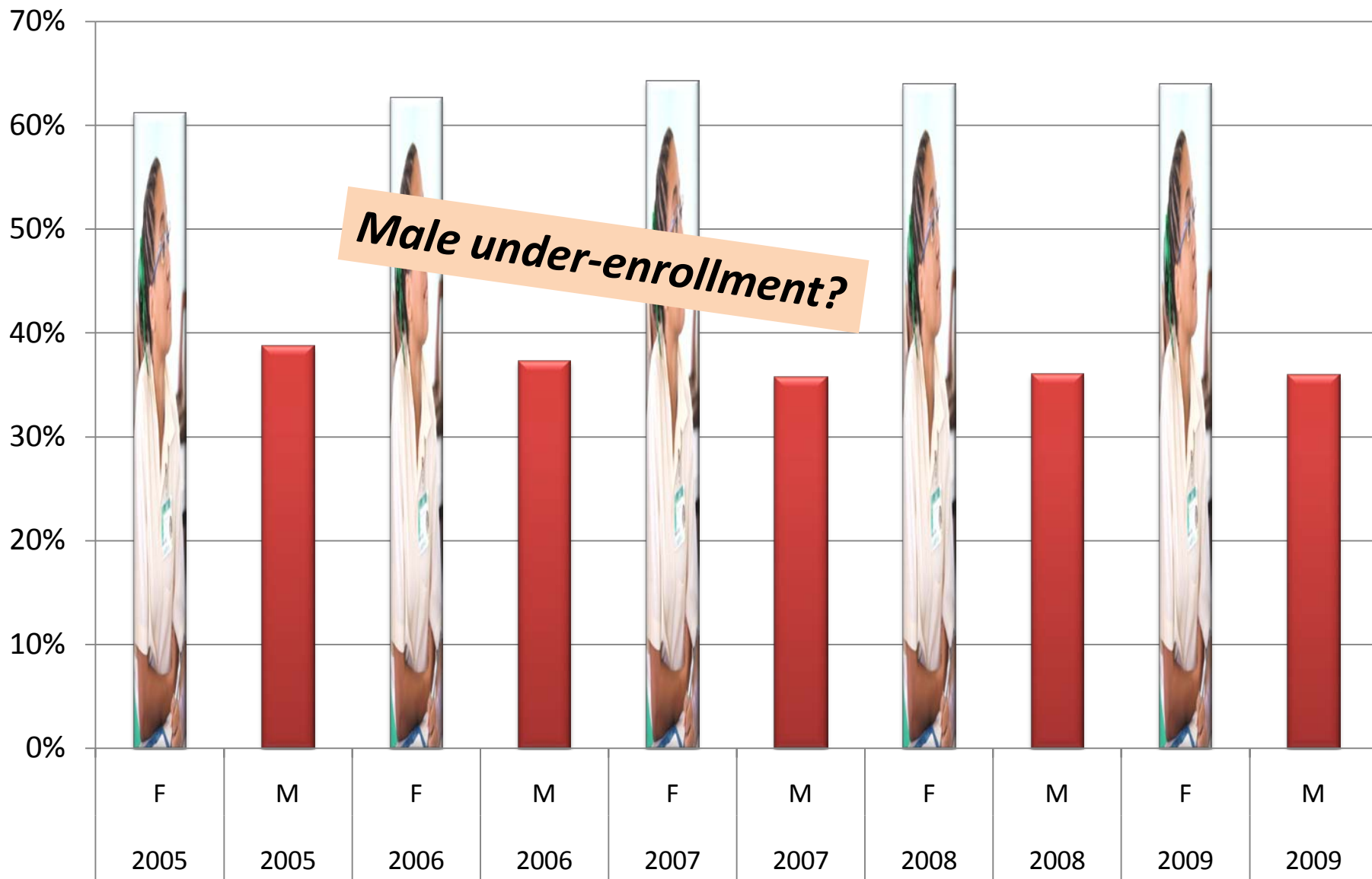
What's the story – Research Findings

in essence what does all of this point to?

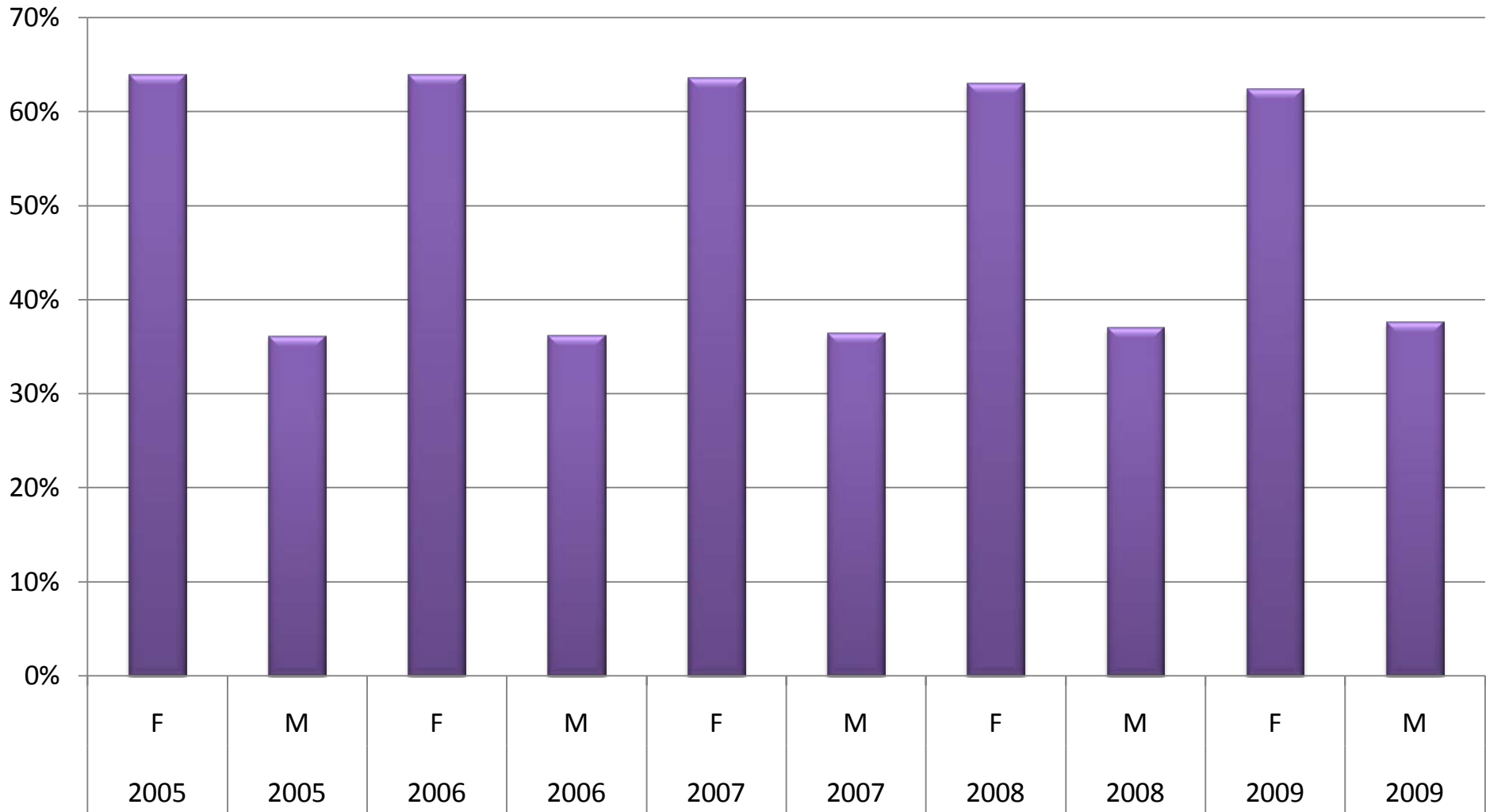
- the crisis of the male in the Caribbean is **ultimately a crisis of the whole society** which also *impacts and threatens the progress made by Caribbean women* in preceding generations
- **male underachievement** in the region and in Grenada is only **a symptom of deep seated gender differentials in society** and **cannot be resolved in the arena of the school alone**

**SECONDARY SCHOOL PERFORMANCE
AS MEASURED BY CSEC RESULTS 2005-
2009**

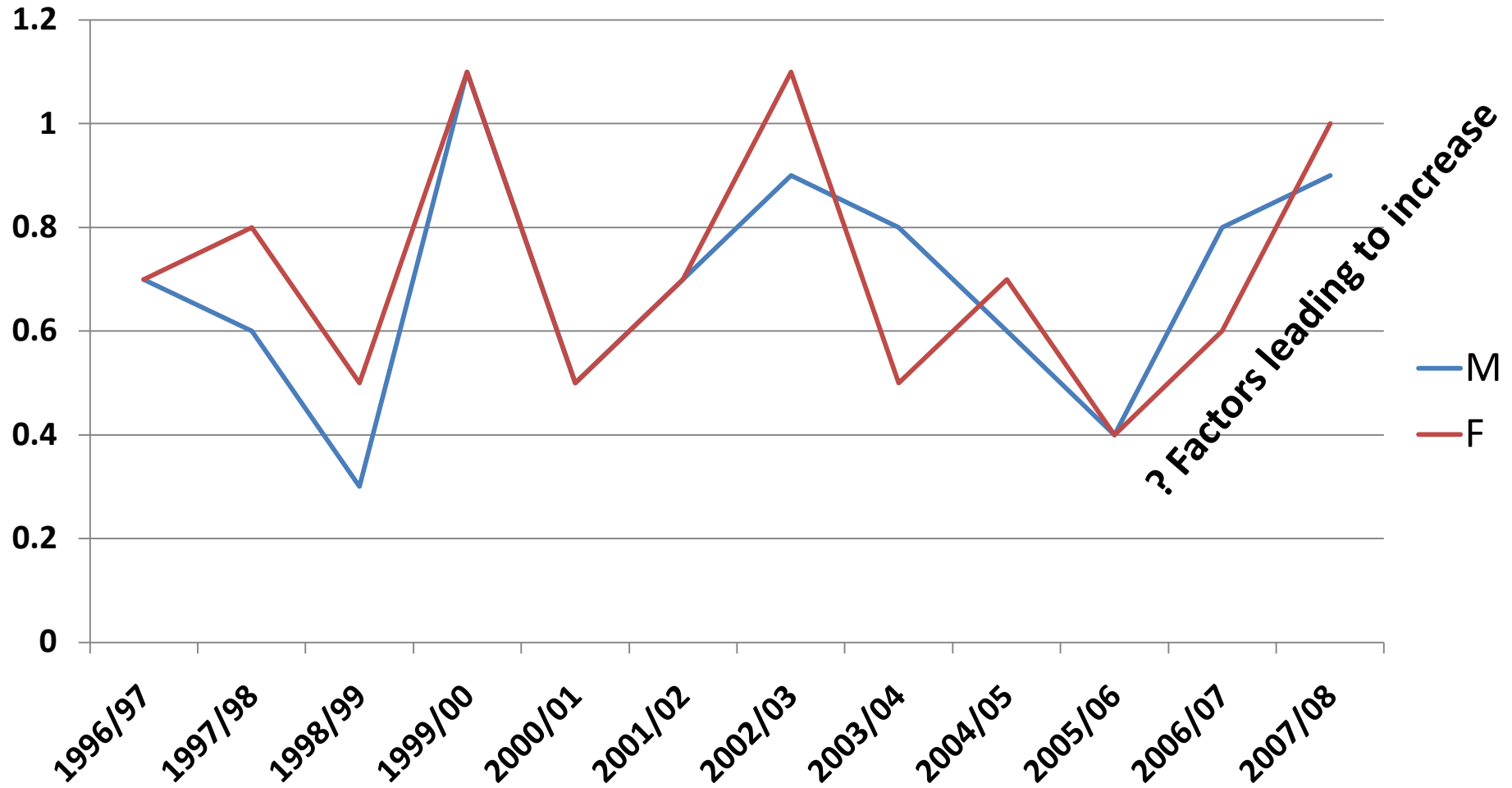
Grenada Registration Total 2005 – 2009



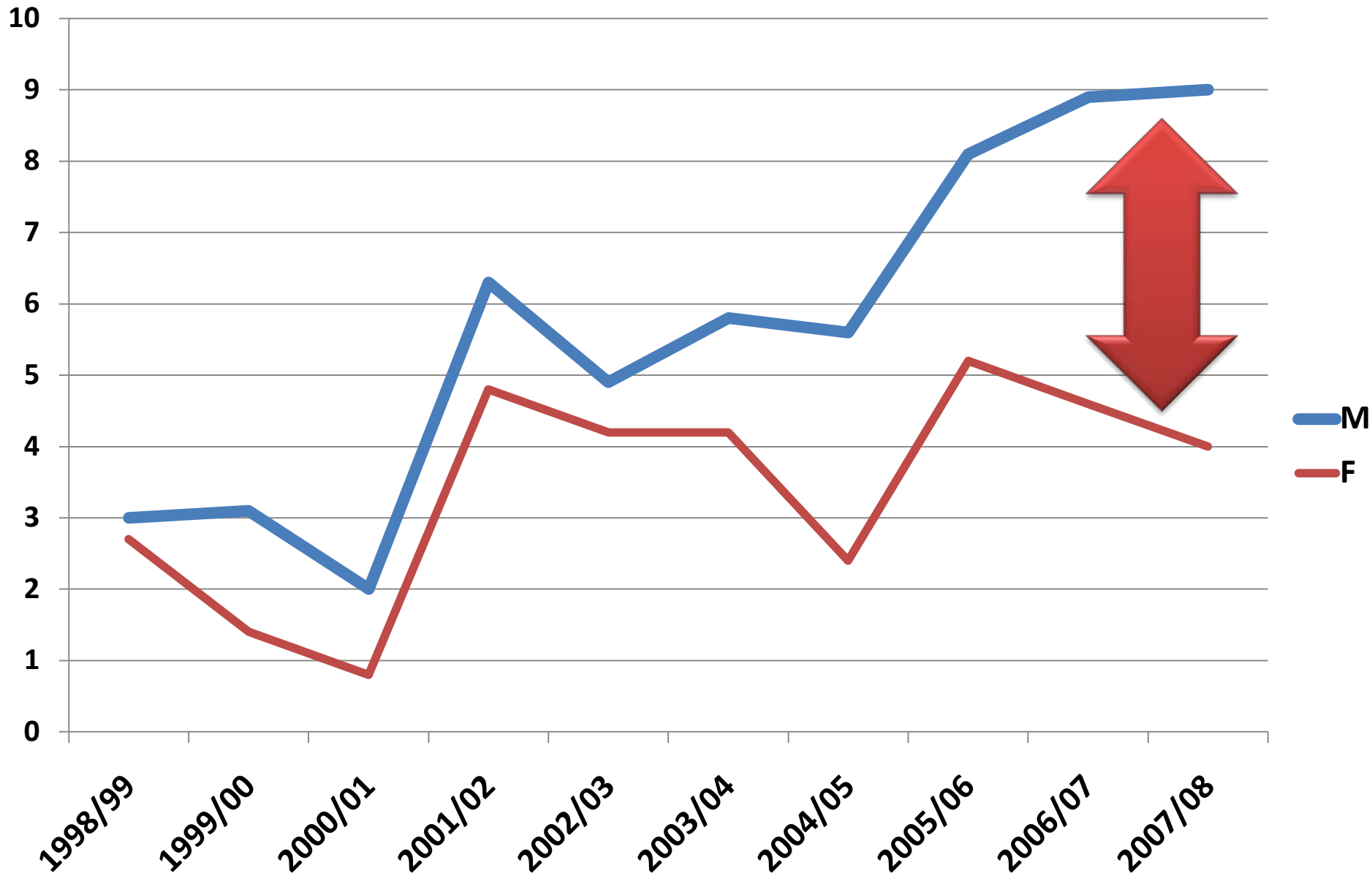
Rest of Region Registration Total 2005 – 2009



Grenada M/F Drop out Rates



Grenada M/F Repetition Rates



All Subject Entries

70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

F M F M F M F M F M
2005 2006 2007 2008 2009

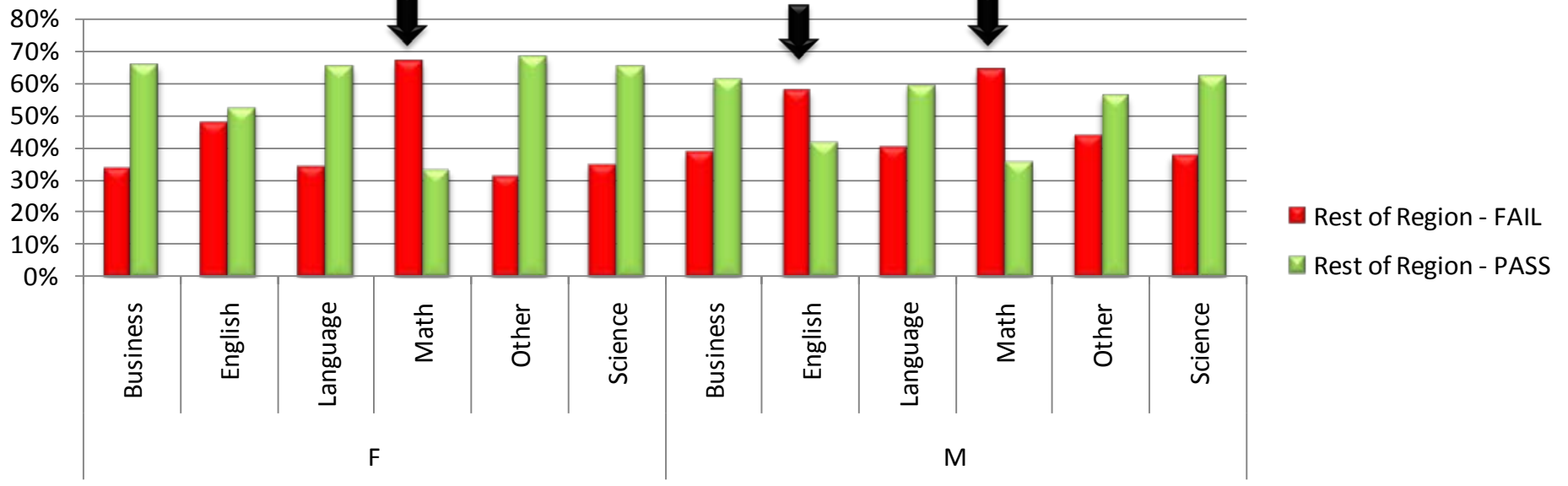
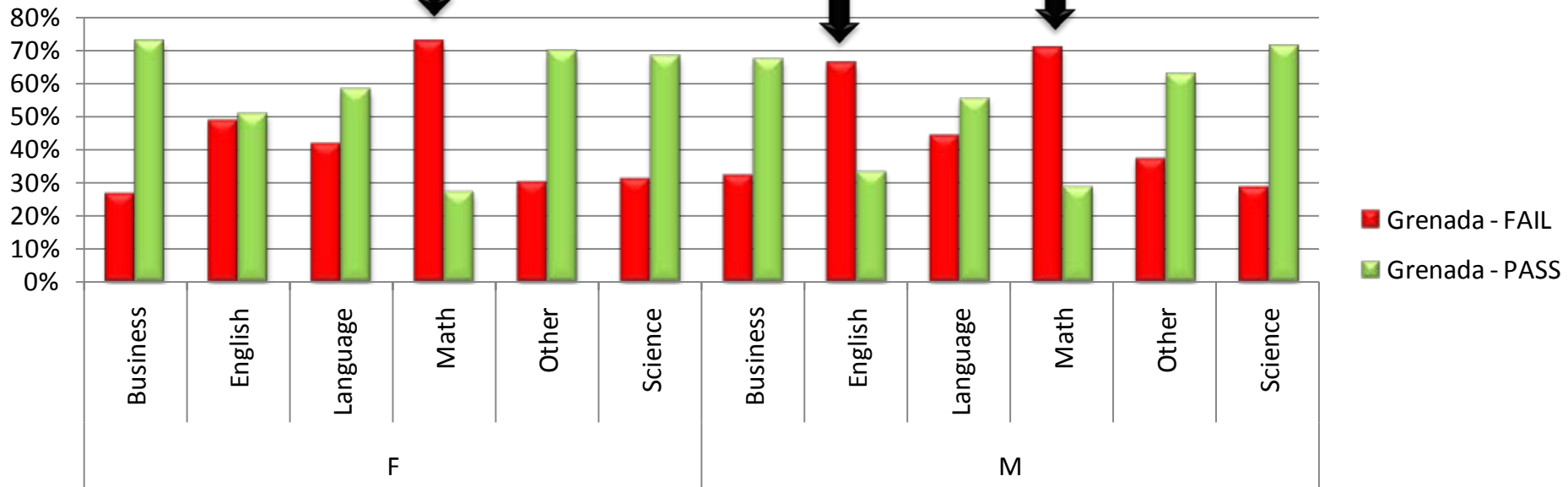
■ Grenada - FAIL
■ Grenada - PASS

70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

F M F M F M F M F M
2005 2006 2007 2008 2009

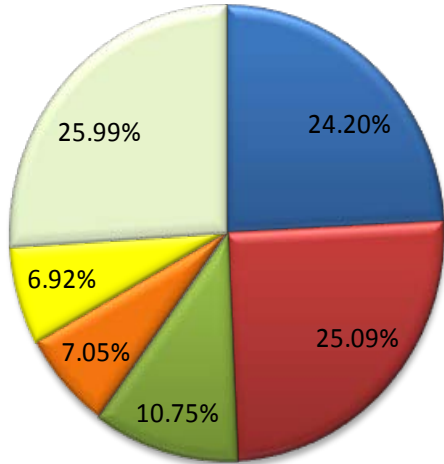
■ Rest of Region - FAIL
■ Rest of Region - PASS

2005-2009 Pass-Fail by Subject group

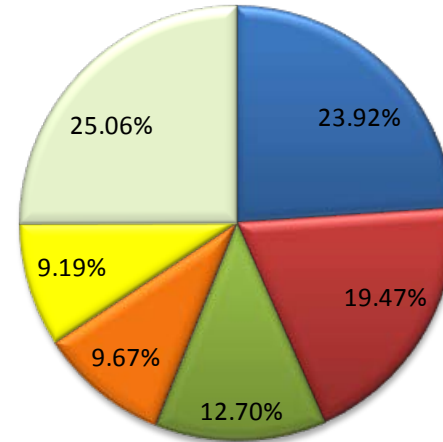


Number of CSEC Passes

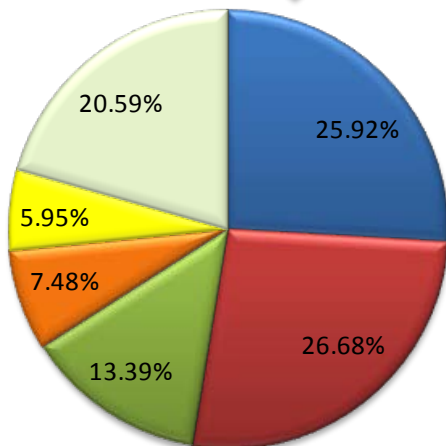
Grenada Females



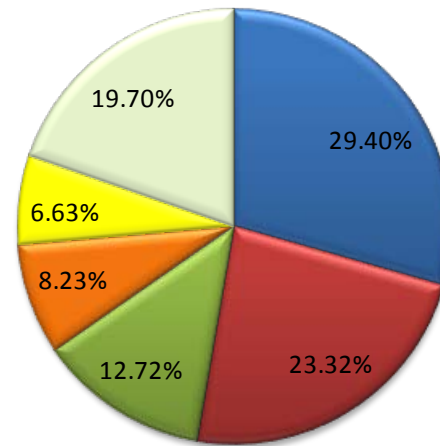
Grenada Males -



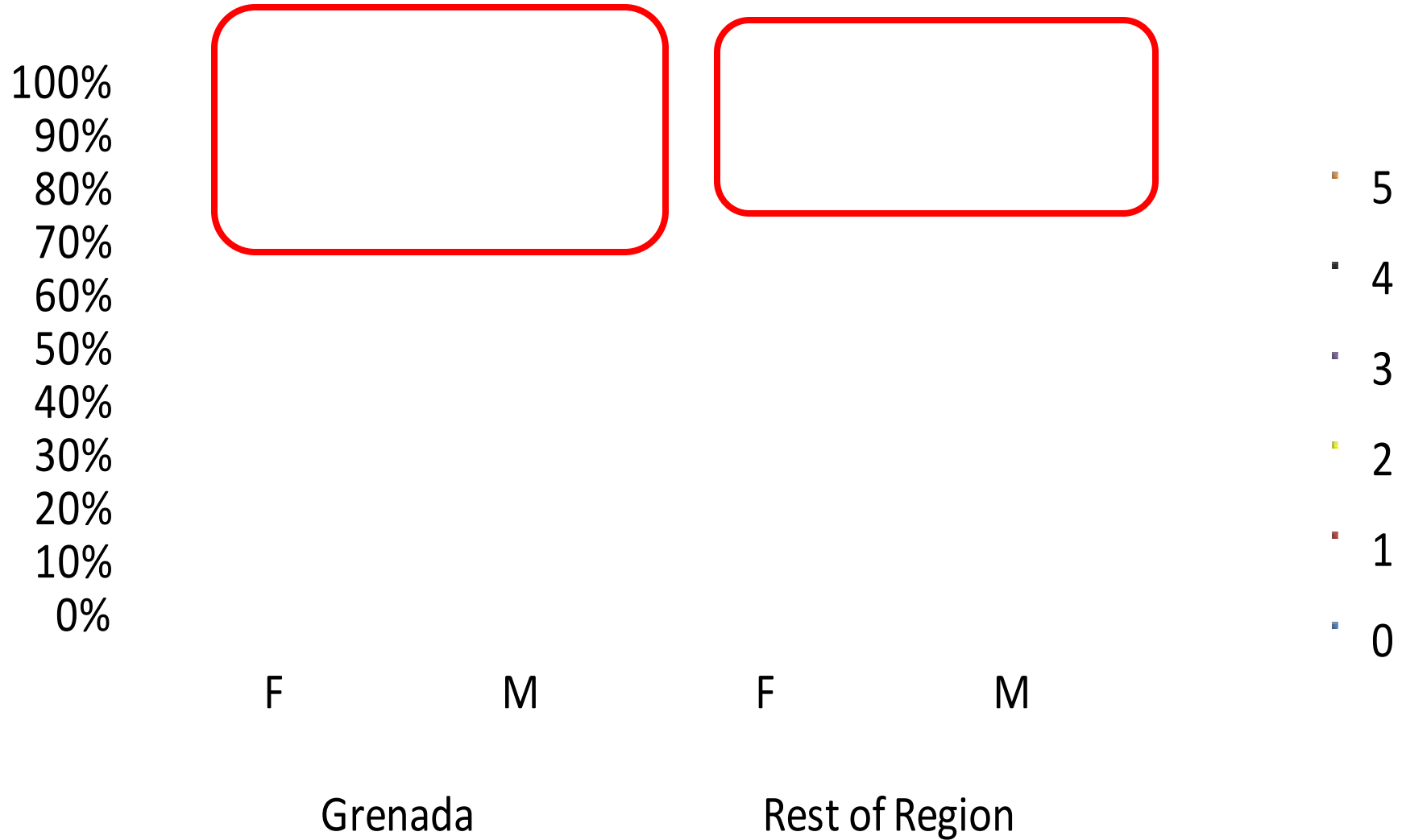
Rest of Region Females



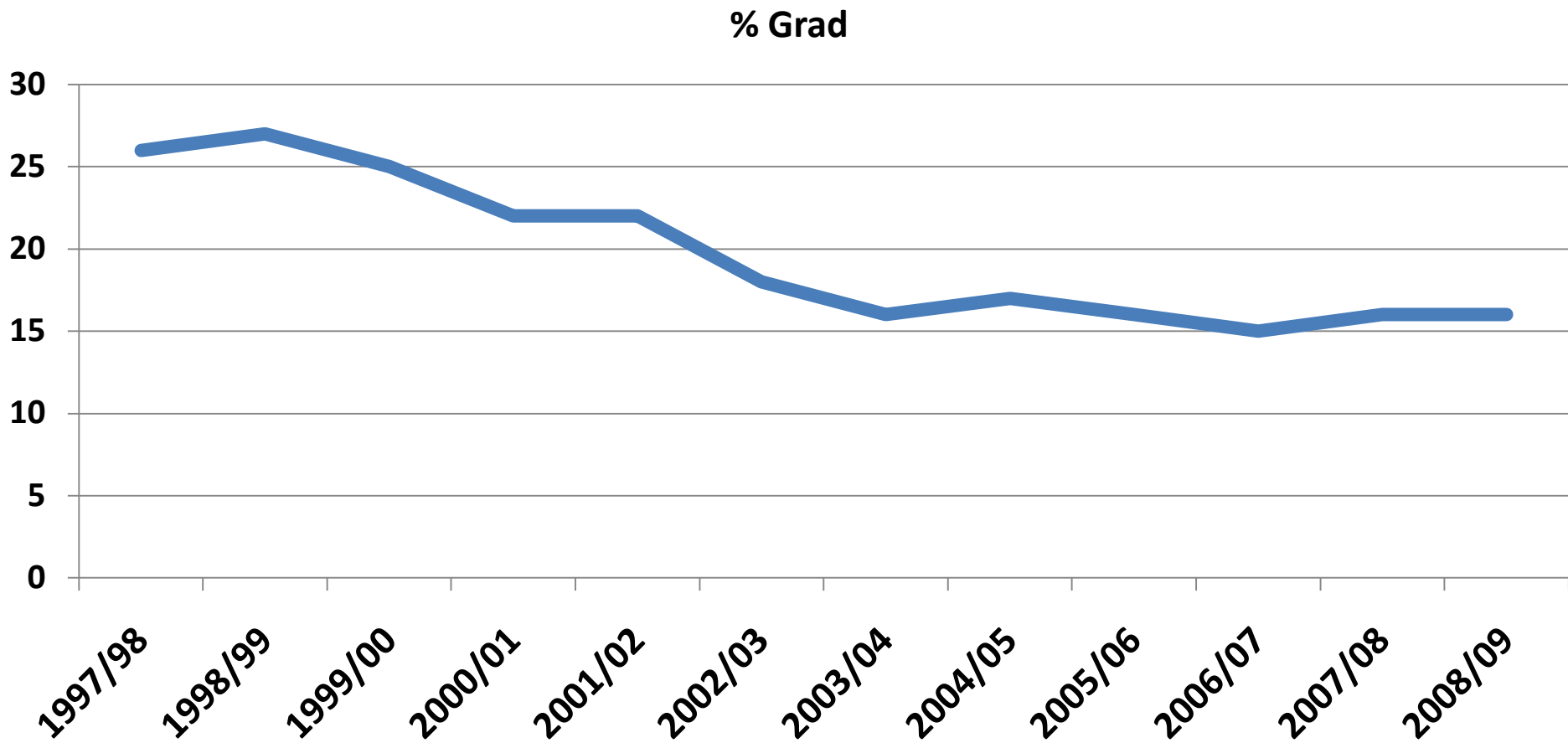
Rest of Region Males



Number of CSEC Passes



Percentage of Grad Teachers - Secondary



Can schools improve if **teacher qualification is dropping?**

**GETTING THE PICTURE RIGHT - FACTORS
IMPACTING GENDER PERFORMANCE IN
THE REGION**

Factors Affecting Gender Performance

hegemonic notions of masculinity bolstered by popular culture and media expressions... reinforced in schools, community and homes by differential treatment and expectations of the sexes

Schools that are under pressure from social dysfunctionalities ... and in which the learning imperative is failing

Factors Affecting Gender Performance

declining school quality...nothing less than the reinvention of school is required. We need to start with a new blue print on the purposes of schooling in this challenging era and customize the school to address both cognitive and affective issues

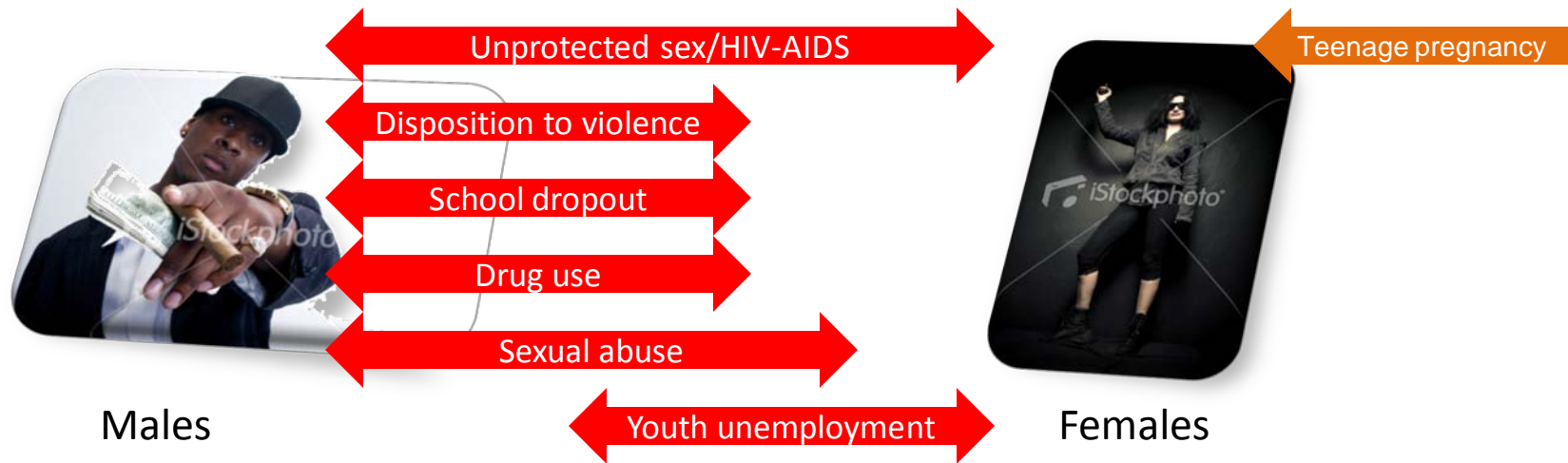
male under-enrollment, high drop out and repetition rates in secondary school

Factors Affecting Gender Performance

inadequate parental involvement and engagement with children/lack of parental contact increases peer dependence and influence

impact of social inequality, race and poverty on opportunity

YOUTH AT RISK: Intersection of Vulnerability & Gender



“a key message is.. **the interconnectedness of factors** that predispose risky behaviour and outcomes.”

Cunningham 2003

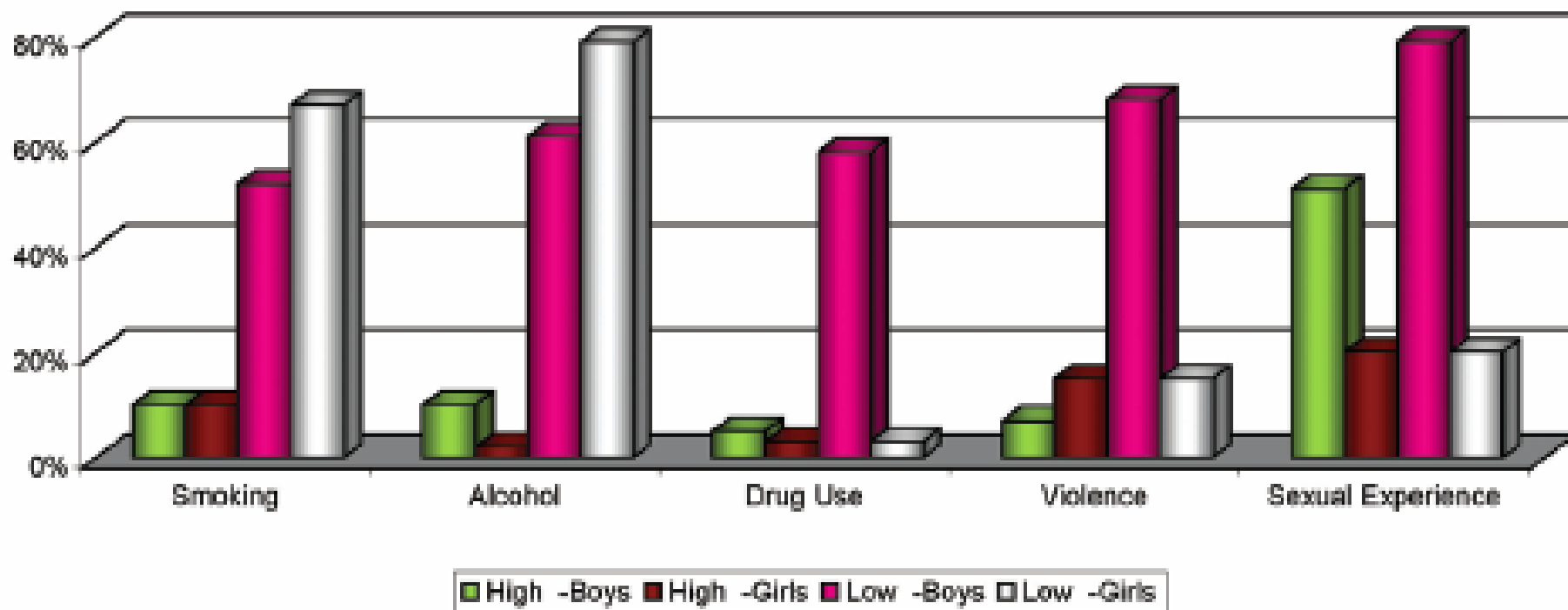
“multiple risks have a **cumulative** effect...”

World Bank 2006

Authority:

- Bailey & Bernard (2009?) **Establishing a Database of Gender Differentials in Enrolment and Performance at the Secondary and Tertiary Levels of the Caribbean Education Systems** – “widespread phenomenon of increased male attrition at higher grade levels” (p.73)
- Correia & Cunningham (2003) **Caribbean Youth Development: Issues and Policy Directions** - sexual abuse: 1 in 10, higher for boys; 40% students reported high rage; high youth unemployment and detachment; one fifth of students carried weapon to school; 20% male and 12% female students in gang; drug and substance abuse with out of school aged 13-19 most at risk.
- Correia & Cunningham (2003) – “if female youth unemployment were reduced to the level of adult unemployment, GDP would be higher by a range of 0.4% in Antigua & Barbuda and 2.9% in Jamaica” (p. xv).

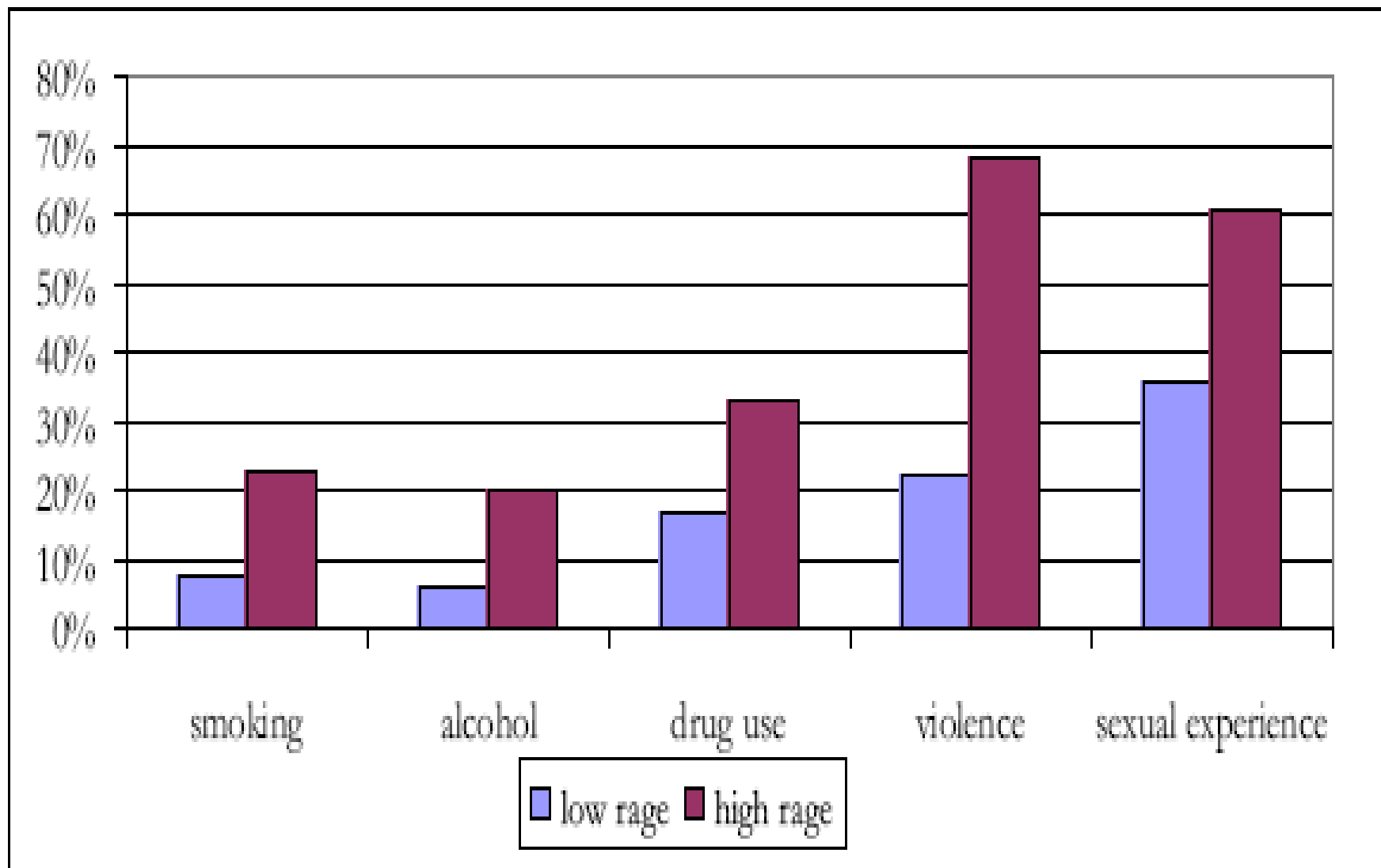
Figure 2: Probability of Engaging in Risk-Taking Behavior by Degree of School Connectedness



Source: World Bank. 2003. Caribbean Youth Development: Issues and Policy Directions. Correia and Cunningham

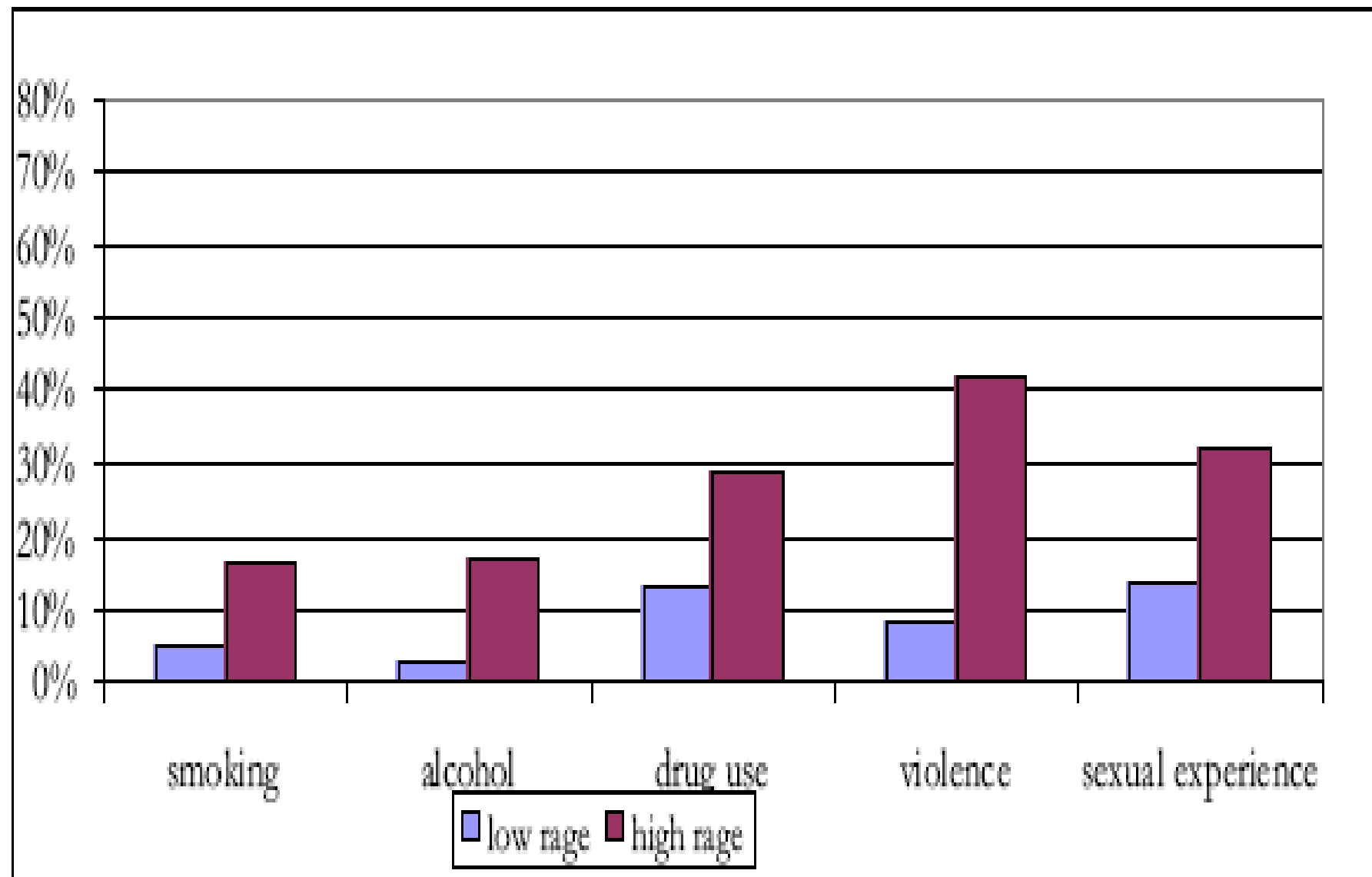
“**school attendance and connectedness** are the **single most important protective factors** identified in reducing risky behaviors. Among youth who feel connected to school, ..the probability of sexual activity *falls* by 30% for boys and 60% for girls, of engaging in violent activity by 60% for boys and 55% for girls, and of drug use by 50% for boys and 30% for girls”

FIGURE 4.1: Predicted Probability of Risk-Taking Behavior by Degree of Rage, Boys



Source: Blum (2002)

FIGURE 4.2: Predicted Probability of Risk-Taking Behavior by Degree of Rage, Girls



Source: Blum (2002)

If the
**problems are
inter-related,**
the
solutions
must be
integrated

“The links between unemployment, pregnancy, domestic violence, interpersonal, and gang violence are especially strong, as is evident from the results of a participatory urban appraisal of violence in Jamaica...

Men said that high unemployment led to frustration and idleness, which in turn led to an increase in gang violence, interpersonal conflict, and domestic violence.

Women on the other hand said that high unemployment led to greater economic dependency on men, which in turn led to an increase in domestic violence”

- Moser and van Bronkhorst 1999

SHAPING SOLUTIONS...



KEEP IT SIMPLE:

- Deeper analysis and monitoring – evidence based policy
- Address inequality and quality
- Reinvent school
- Converge effort: state, civil society, school

**If our males fade
Our society fails...**





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