



Improving Police-Community Relations through Youth-Police Dialogues at Teen Empowerment



Jamie Dougherty, Pamela Flemming, Dr. John Klofas
Center for Public Safety Initiatives

History and Purpose of Project

For 10 years, the Center for Teen Empowerment and the Rochester Police Department have been working together to improve relations between city teenagers and RPD officers.

Their efforts, including dialogues and collaboration between teens and officers and a community survey, culminated in a youth-police summit in 2009. Community action steps were identified.

This current study evaluated the most recent of the continuing dialogues & trainings in 2013-2014. Survey results shown here sum all groups together.

Components

- Phase One Dialogue (4 sessions, Fall 2013)
- Phase Two Dialogue (4 sessions, Spring 2014)
- Police Academy full-day training (1 day, May 2014)

Methodology

- Surveys: Pre/post-test design
- Observations of dialogue and prep sessions
- Focus groups with participants
- Observation and surveys of police academy training
- Meet with Rochester Police Department admin.

From Officer Participants:

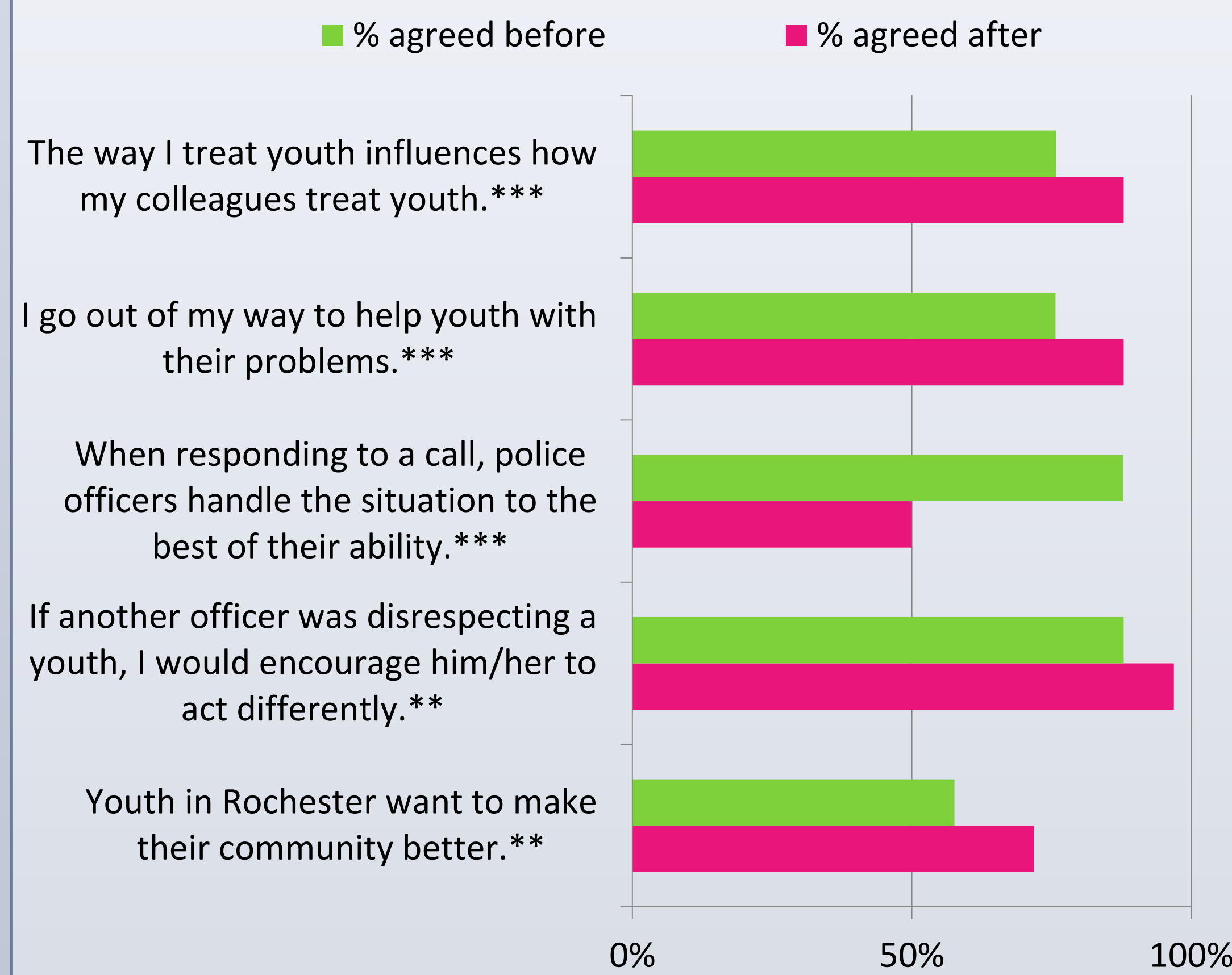
“Prior to the project, I have only come across mostly youth that convey an attitude that they do not care about life, and do not care about the community. It was nice to meet with youth that I could tell cared.. I also learned a lot about the frustrations they have faced as they grew up and that they face on a day to day basis.”

“These kids are articulate, smart, and have to deal with [a lot] to just get through the day.”

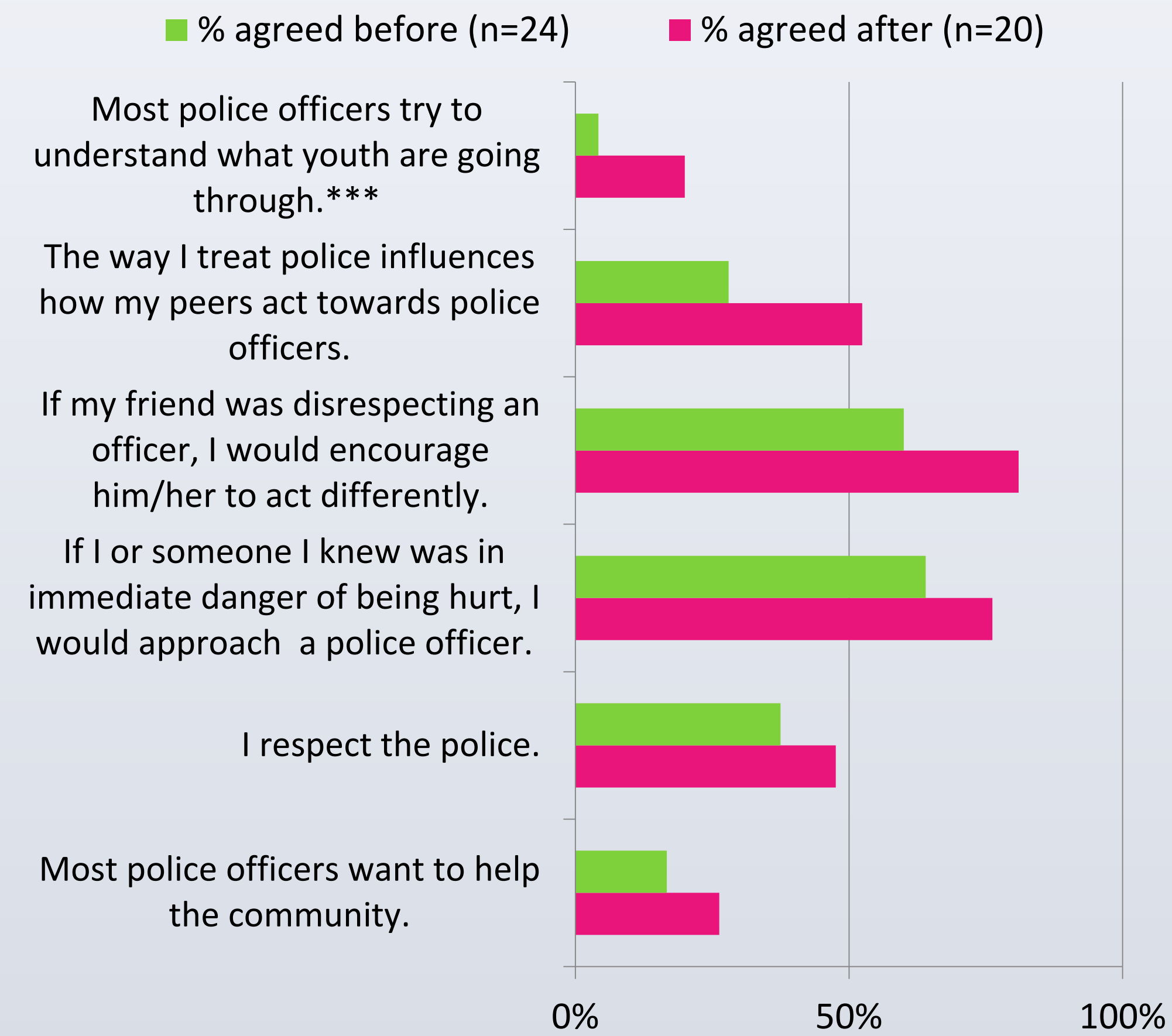
“Race plays a larger role... than I thought.”

Survey Results

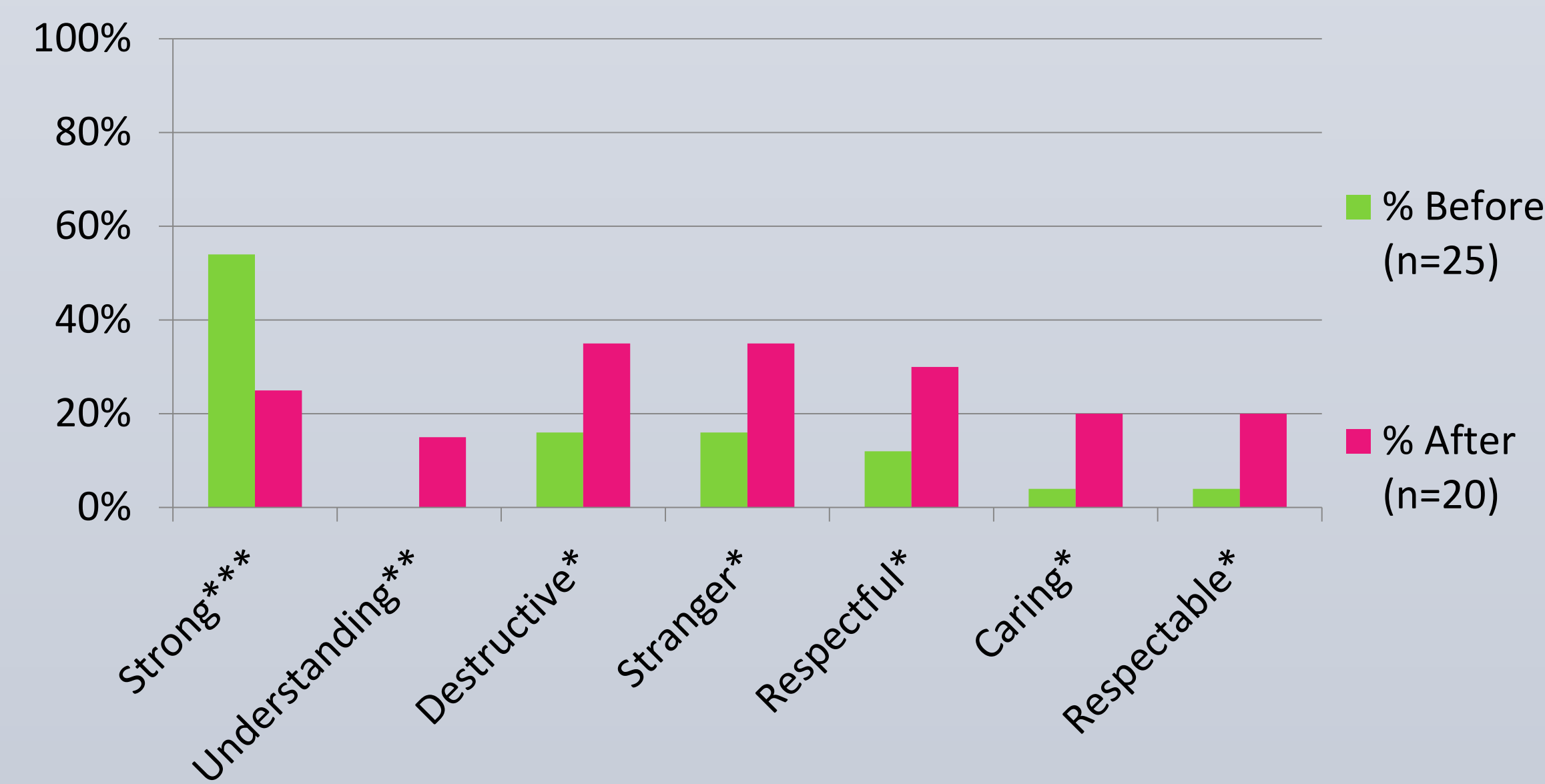
Percentage of Officers Who Agreed with Statement - Significant Changes



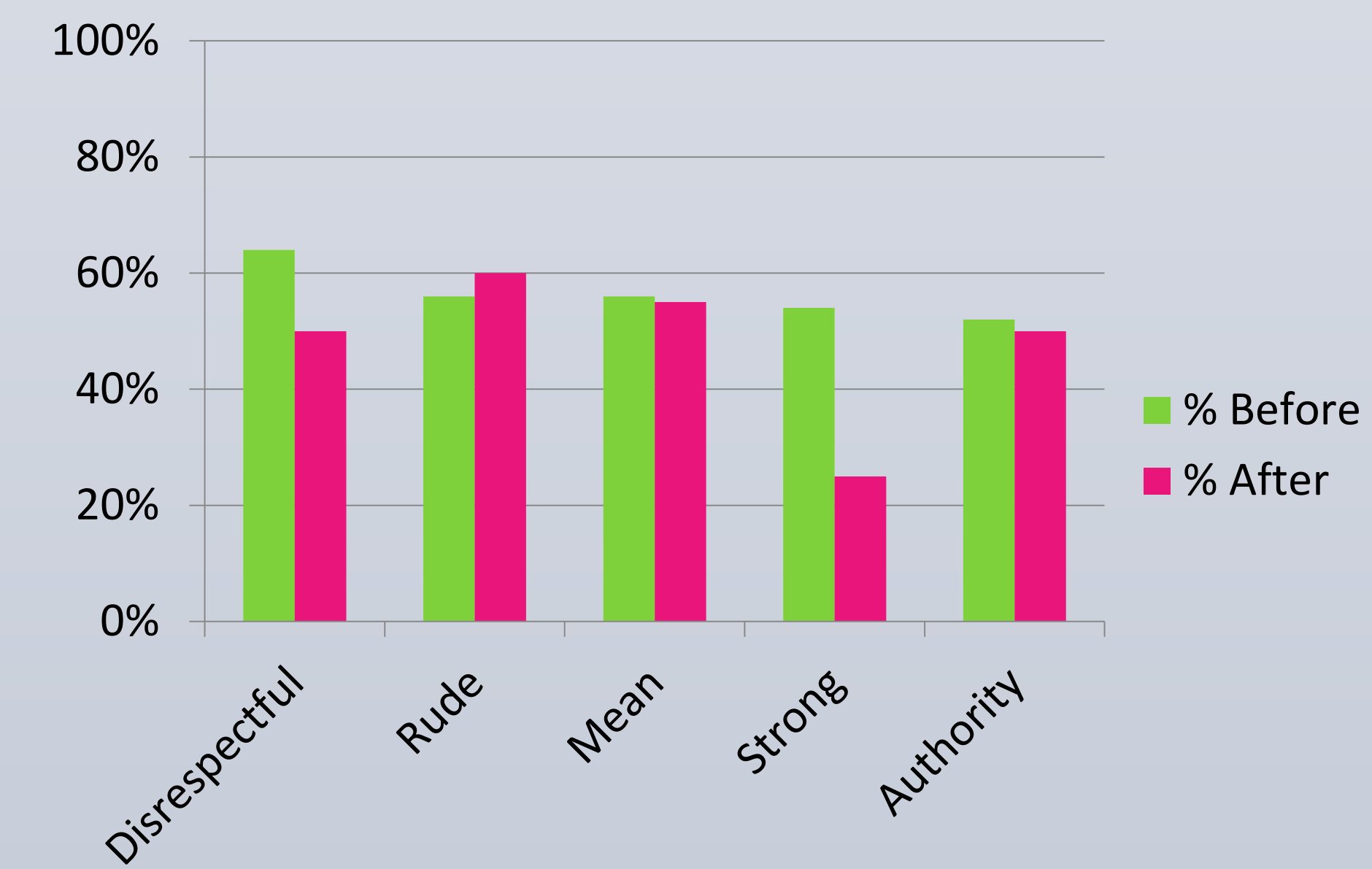
Percentage of Youth Who Agreed with Statement - Large Changes



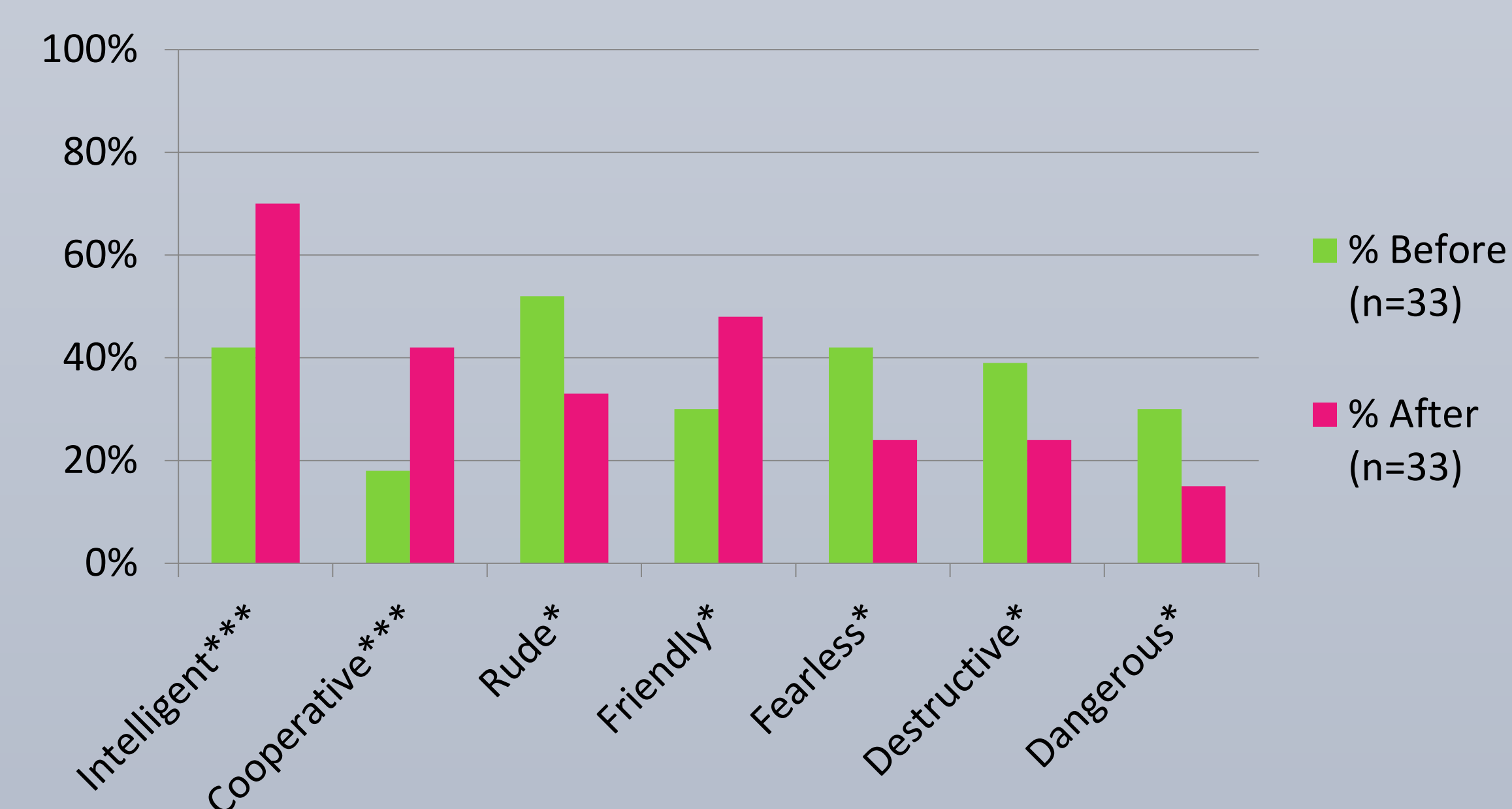
Adjectives Youth Chose to Describe Police - Significant Changes



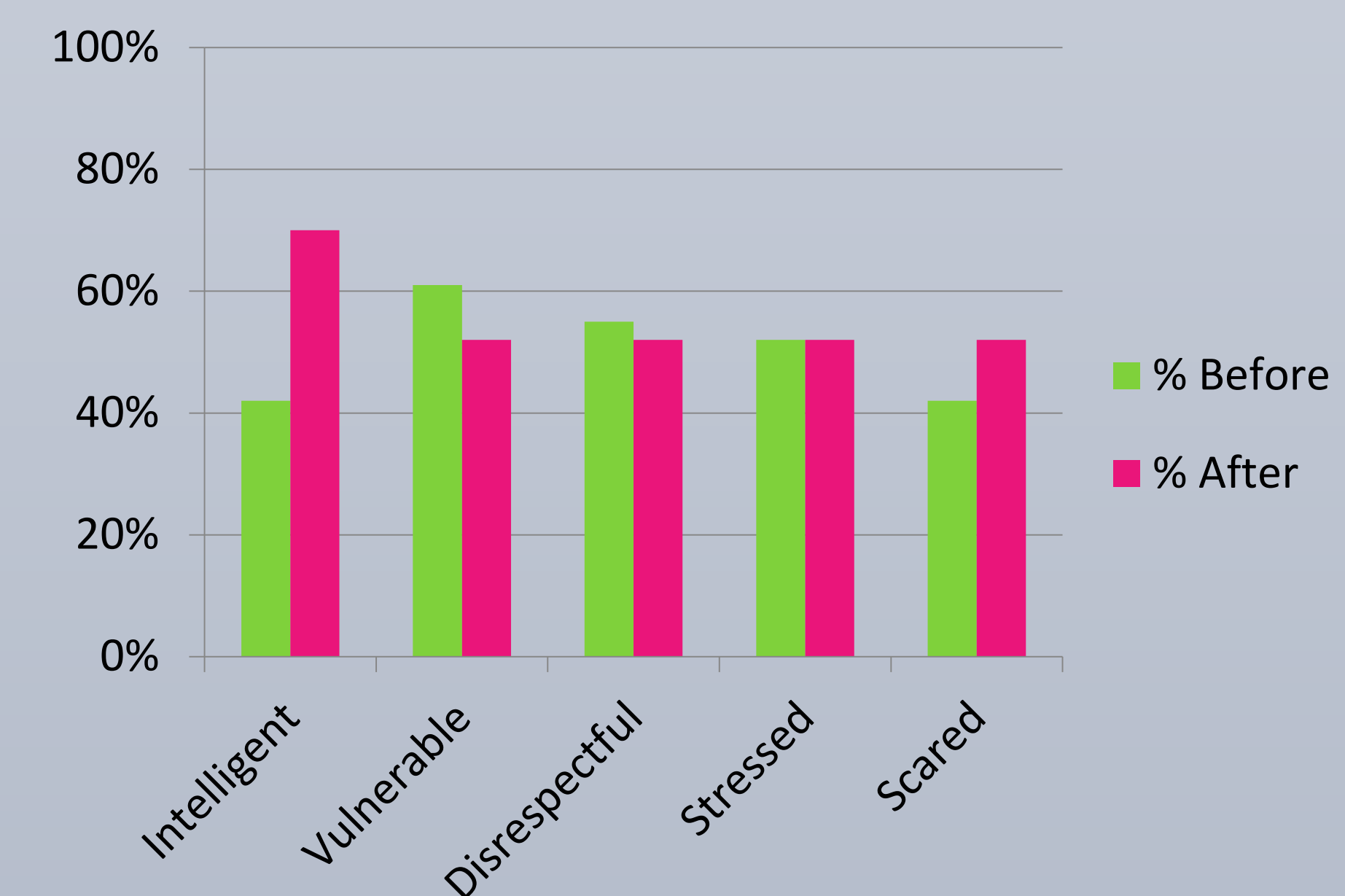
Most Common Words Youth Chose to Describe Police



Adjectives Police Chose to Describe Youth - Significant Changes



Most Common Words Police Chose to Describe Youth



From Youth Participants:

“Our feelings about officers can be changed [because] of the conversations, interactions, dialogues. Relationships are built, respect is gained, and solutions/problems in your life or community can be decreased.”

“There is a possibility and an opportunity that we as a community can improve in police relationships.”

Conclusion

- Youth and Officers were able to identify ways to change their everyday behavior to improve interactions
- Officers seemed to learn more from the youth than vice versa, but important relationships were built for all involved
- Difficult for participants to generalize positive feelings developed in dialogue to others outside the dialogues
- Only takes one bad interaction to undo all the positive ones
- Rochester has made significant strides in supporting this promising program

Next Steps

- Institutionalize youth-relations training with officers in the RPD academy.
- They are also exploring dissemination of this model to other cities.

Acknowledgements



Contact

Center for Public Safety Initiatives
Department of Criminal Justice
Eastman, Building 1, Room 2155
Rochester Institute of Technology
E-mail: jmdgcj1@rit.edu
Phone: (585) 475-5591