



REAL TALKS PEEL

PATH TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

A community-based research project about youth safety and engagement with police in Peel Region.

This report was prepared by:



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1. PREFACE

Peel Regional Police (PRP) have long believed that robust youth engagement can lead to overall stronger and safer communities. Some argue a youth engagement strategy is much more than a simple decision to work or interact with young people—it requires meaningful commitment to change with sustained involvement from all parties.

Therefore, effective youth-police engagement must promote understanding, build community trust, a sense of ownership and enthusiasm. It must also bring about mutual respect between police officers and the young people they are there to serve and protect.

The young people of today have a voice: nothing about youth, without youth.

In 2020, Peel Regional Police dismantled its long-running SRO program – the placement of police officers in schools intended to create safer schools and a stronger rapport between students and PRP – when a public consultation uncovered that the program in fact caused harm to certain student populations.

Whether tackling anti-racism, accountability or closing the trust-gap between police and marginalized communities, young people, parents and community leaders are ready to talk authentically about topics that can lead to tangible action on policing issues. In return, Peel Regional Police are keen to hear and learn from groups to bridge the trust gap, support community safety and to help change the culture and perception of policing.

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our sincere thanks to the many community members, parents, Peel Regional Police members, and community agencies who contributed to the Real Talks Peel research project.

We would especially like to thank the young people across Brampton and Mississauga for their considerable efforts, time, innovative ideas and guidance.

3. INTRODUCTION

Real Talks Peel is a research project that was conducted from April through July 2024 on behalf of Peel Regional Police (PRP). The purpose of the project is to offer an independent and unbiased lens on youth safety, policing and police interaction with youth from members of the public within Mississauga and Brampton.

The findings from this research is intended to build a path for PRP to create a transformative Youth Engagement Strategy.

The research is designed to collect youth-centric perspectives and experiences in alignment with the four pillars of the *Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy Framework* as follows:

- I. Risk Intervention - Understand public perceptions
- II. Incident Response - Probe youth interaction with police
- III. Prevention - Identify risks to safety
- IV. Social Development - Explore trust between youth and police

The opportunity

Unleash the perspectives of individuals on youth safety and policing issues that explore equity, trust and reconciliation.

The challenge

Obtain a balanced participation among equity-seeking young people experiencing the widest trust-gap with police.

The outcome

- Uncover important narratives and common themes on safety, policing and engagement.
- Draw comparisons between the views of the community and PRP.
- Inform the direction of youth engagement.
- Set benchmarks for future measurement.



4.1 METHODOLOGY

Real Talks Peel research used a *mixed-method* approach:

- **Online surveys** to establish benchmarks and measure attitudes broadly from a variety of individuals in a limited period of time.
- **Small virtual focus groups** to get a deeper understanding on key topics not captured from the survey.

Non-probability sampling was used to select participants from the population within Mississauga and Brampton:

- Through *purposive* selection, specific groups of individuals were invited through outreach to community and partner organizations, and through Pages For Good's own network.
- Through *quota* selection, community youth agencies and school boards were approached to promote the online survey and recruit individuals with characteristics required for the focus groups. And at select community centres, incentives were used to entice patrons to take the survey on-site.

4.2 METHODOLOGY



Research participants

- Youth aged 15-24
- Parents of school-aged children 6 years & up
- Community leaders working with youth
- Peel Regional Police members

Recruitment tools

- Online recruitment through a dedicated website
- In-person survey solicitation during two community “Ice n’ Music” events with the help of 12 volunteer youth from Peel.
- Flyer distribution via email to partner agencies
- Targeted networking calls and virtual meetings

Participant incentives

- \$25 e-gift card for focus group participants
- Chance to win \$100 e-gift card for survey respondents
- Free ice cream on-site at community centres

4.3 METHODOLOGY

Research data tools

- Google Forms were used to build the surveys.
- Google Sheets were used to extrapolate and analyze survey data.
- Google Meet provided the platform, audio recording and transcription for all virtual focus groups.
- QR code allowed survey-takers to use their own devices.

The results to this report was obtained using the following methods of analysis:

- For the surveys: *measure of frequency* for fact-based questions and *measure of tendency* for attitude-based questions.
- For the focus groups and one-on-one interviews: *narrative* and *thematic analysis* were used to narrow central themes and patterns of experiences or points of view.

Research limitations

- Some of the collected viewpoints during focus groups were influenced by *group think* as participants were grouped based on common characteristics, such as, age or their affiliations to social programs, thus resulting in agreeable discussions.
- Survey respondents do not represent the exact population mix of Mississauga and Brampton as the respondents were primarily recruited through outreach to specifically chosen communities and through partner agencies based on their relevance to the research project.
- Fewer youth aged 18-24 participated in the research as recruitment in post-secondary schools coincided with their exam period and the end of the school year in May.

4.4 METHODOLOGY



5. Field Work By The Numbers

Outreach

50+

Community partners &
educational institutions

4

Community centres
stops

Output

45

Focus group &
interview participants

550

Completed surveys





6. DEFINING YOUTH & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

How we define youth

For the purposes of this research, youth is defined as young persons from the ages of 6 and 24 years, unless otherwise indicated.

Proportion of youth population by municipality

(Statistics Canada, Census 2021)

25% Mississauga

27.6% Brampton

How we define youth engagement

Youth engagement is about empowering all young people as valuable partners in addressing and making decisions about issues that affect them personally and/or that they believe to be important.

The kind of activity in which young people is engaged can be almost anything - sports, the arts, music, volunteer work, politics, social activism - and it can occur in almost any kind of setting.

7. WHAT WE FOUND

Community Survey Results

7.1. The state of safety for community members

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender identity

49.4% Male
48.3% Female
2.3% Other / Prefer not to say

Location

57.4% Brampton
35.4% Mississauga
4.8% Other
2.4% Prefer not to say

Ethnicity

36.4% South Asian
28.8% Black
11.9% Southeast Asian
10.4% White
3% Middle East
1.9% Latino
7.6% Prefer not to say

Age

29% 15-17 yrs
16.9% 18-24 yrs
45.4% Parents
8.7% Adults working with youth





SUMMARY

On the whole, about half of all 538 community survey respondents from Mississauga and Brampton do not feel there is a great risk to their safety where they live, work, learn or play in Peel. However, for the other half of respondents who feel a moderate to high risk to their safety, they feel a slightly greater risk to safety where they live and play.

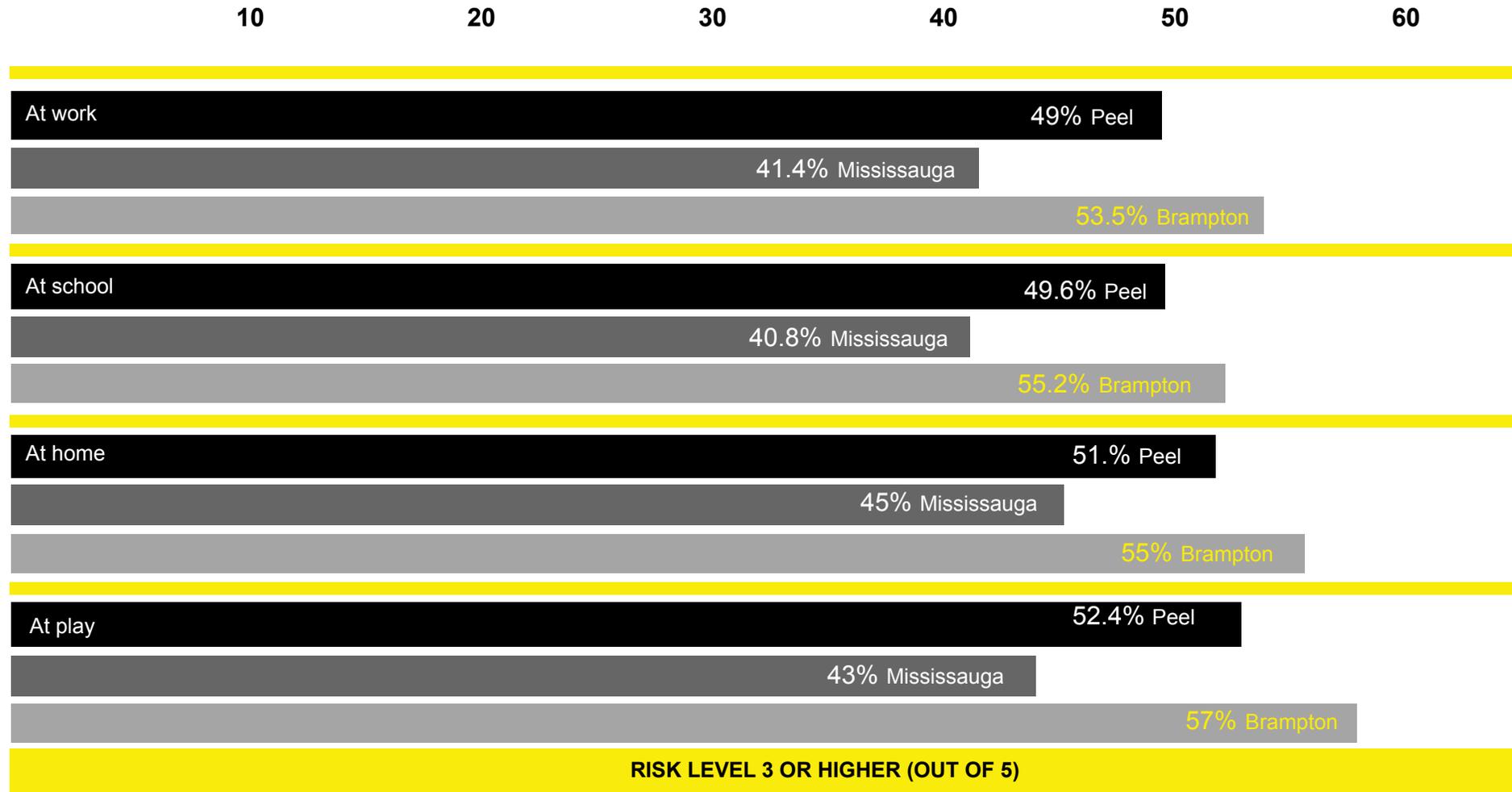
When comparing the sense of safety among respondents from Brampton to Mississauga, those who reside in Brampton were more likely to indicate there is a moderate to high risk to their safety across all places. Those who identified as male were 5% more likely to indicate a moderate to high risk to safety at school than those who identified as female.

The three most concerning safety issues for all respondents are theft, dangerous driving, and guns & weapons. Theft was selected over 50% more frequently by respondents among their top 3 most concerning safety issue than guns & weapons or dangerous driving.

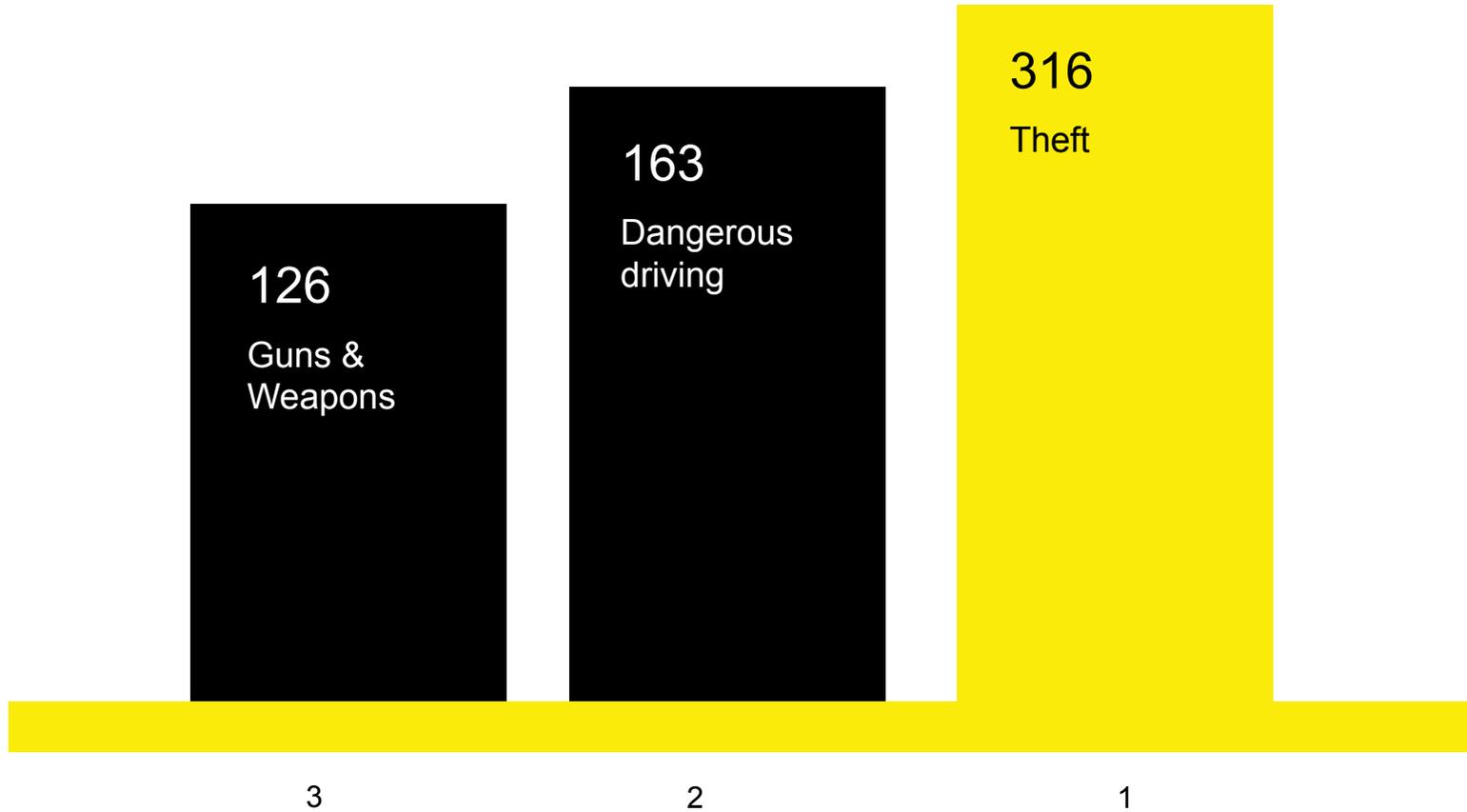
The least chosen safety issue is cybercrime, followed closely by domestic violence and hate crime.

More than half of all respondents believe that there is the right amount of police presence in Peel. Those from Brampton were more likely to believe there is too little police presence than those from Mississauga.

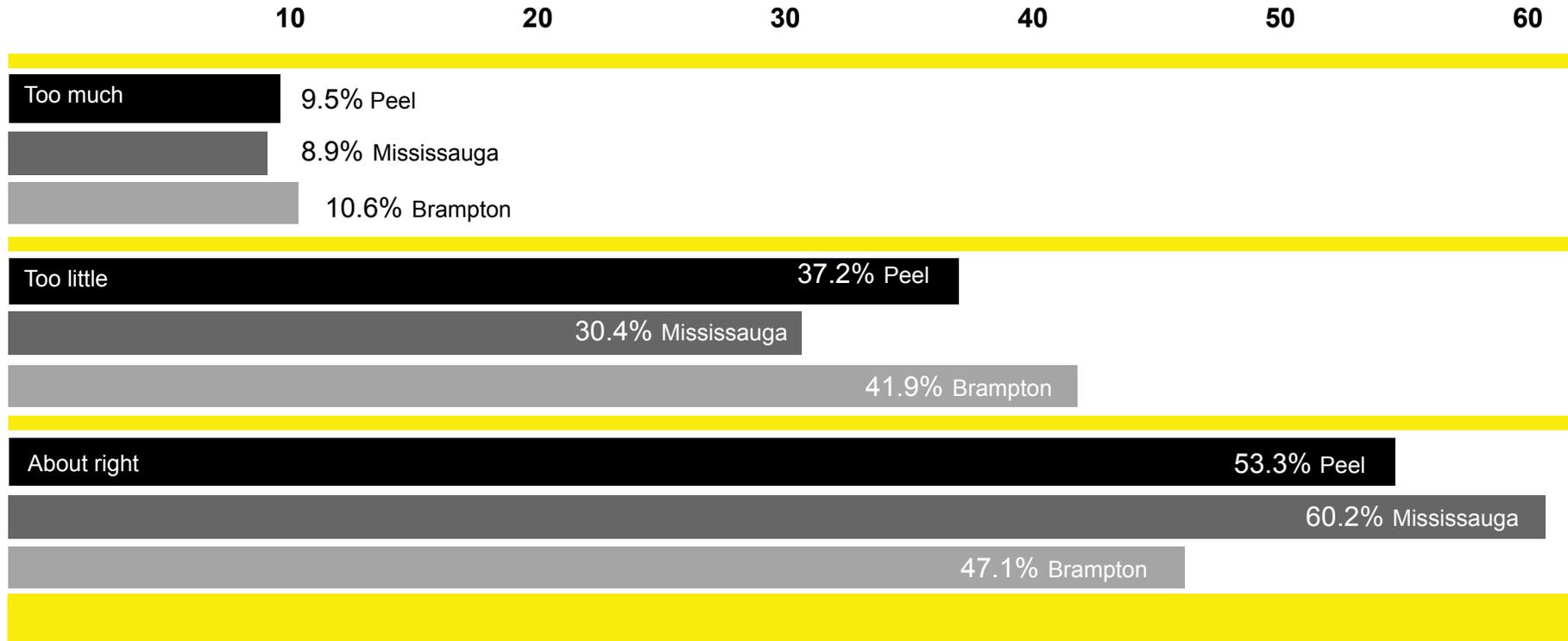
RISK TO SAFETY



TOP 3 SAFETY ISSUES



POLICE PRESENCE



7. WHAT WE FOUND

Community Survey Results

7.2. Perceptions & experiences with PRP



SUMMARY

As many as 40% of all respondents gave Peel Regional Police a high rating (4 or 5 out of a possible five) in keeping the community safe. Mississauga residents have a more favourable stance on PRP's performance in keeping the community safe than their neighbours in Brampton.

As many as 42.5% of youth gave a rating of 4 or more to PRP's performance on community safety compared to 38.5% of parents.

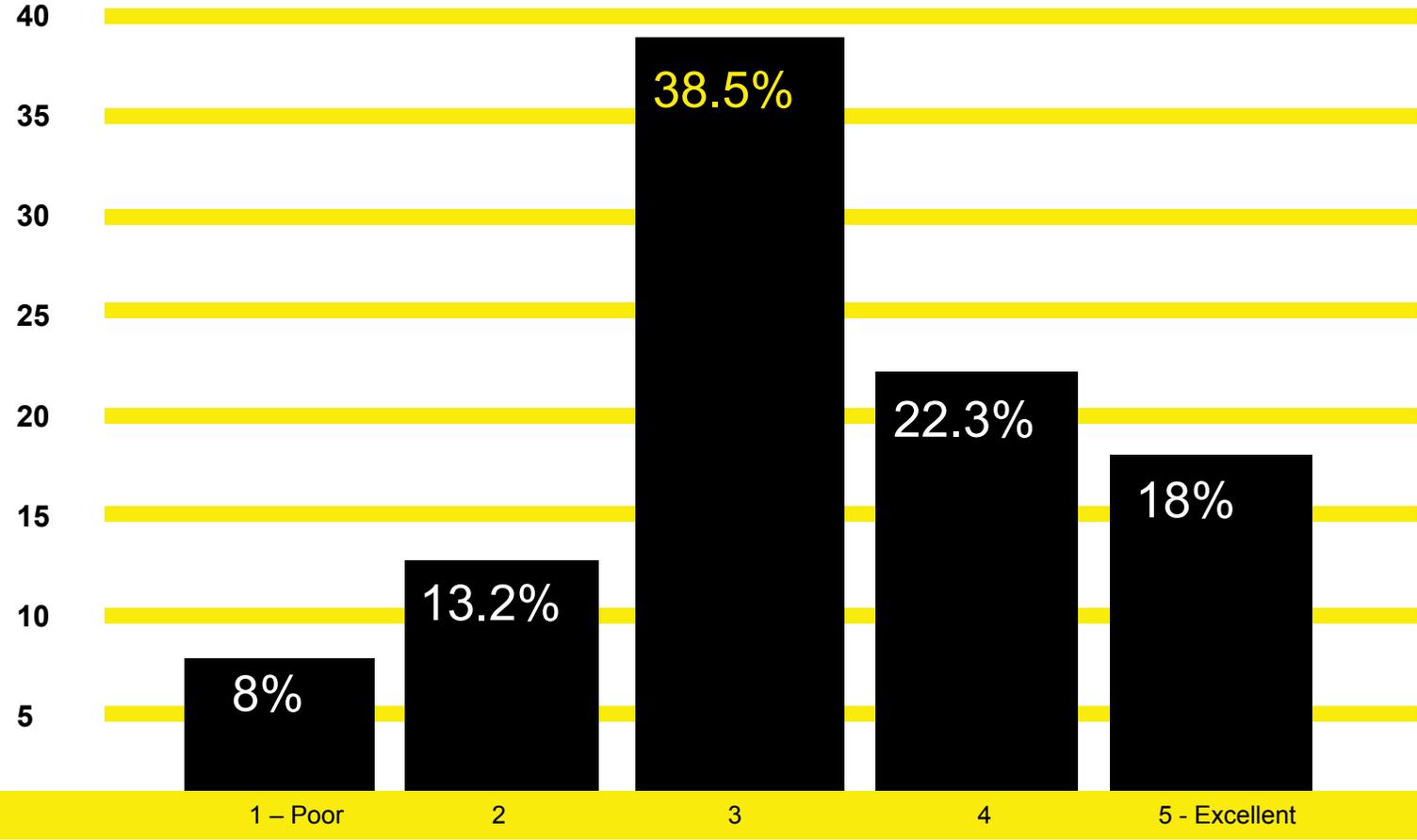
The proportion of respondents who had the lowest ratings (1 or 2) for police performance is listed by ethnicity as follows:

- 14.3% White
- 19.9% South Asian
- 20% Latino
- 21.9% East/Southeast Asian
- 25% Middle Eastern
- 25.2% Black

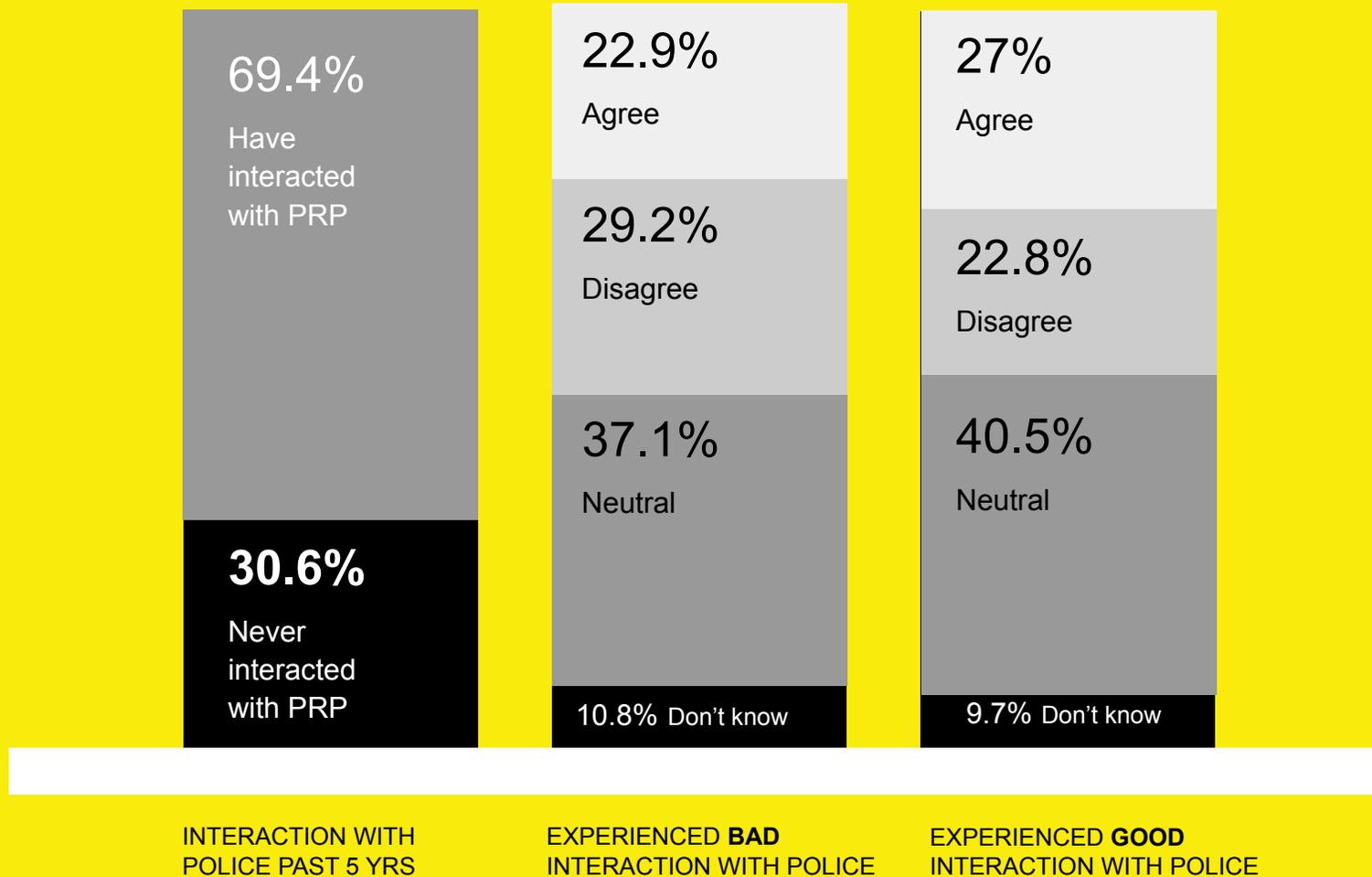
The proportion of respondents who interacted with PRP in the last 5 years by age group is as follows: 81.2% youth versus 66% adults.

Among those who interacted with PRP, 19.6% of adults aged 25+ have had or know a youth who has had a bad interaction with police compared with 23.6% of youth aged 15-17 and 25% of youth 18-24.

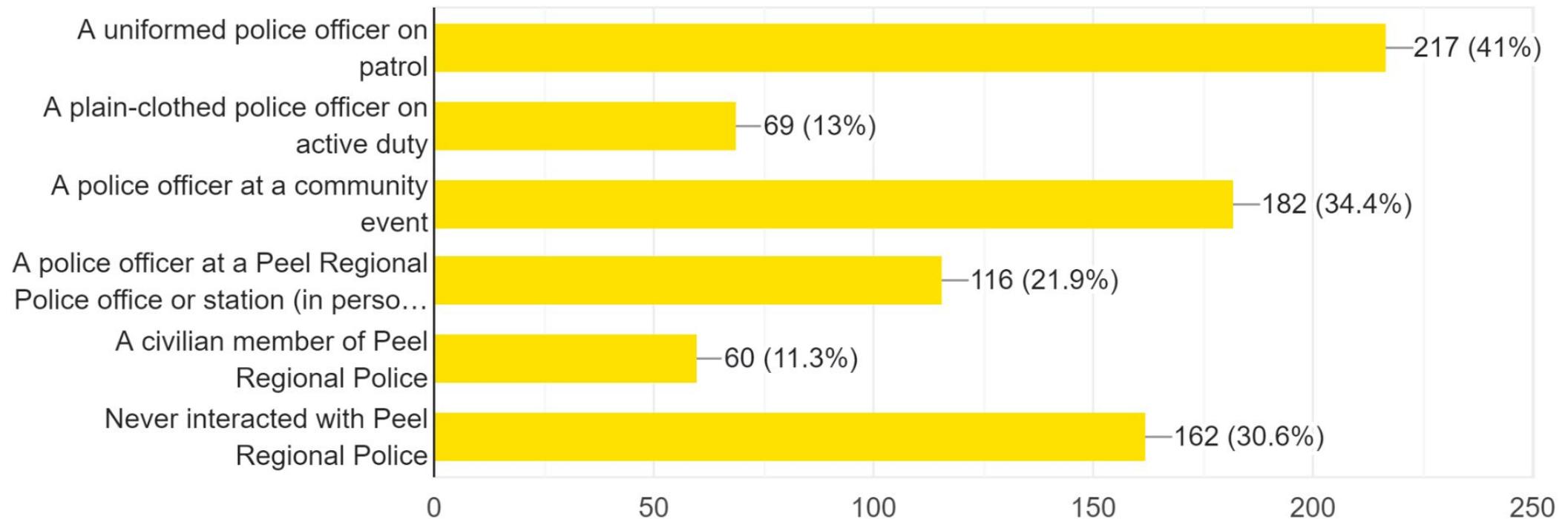
POLICE PERFORMANCE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY



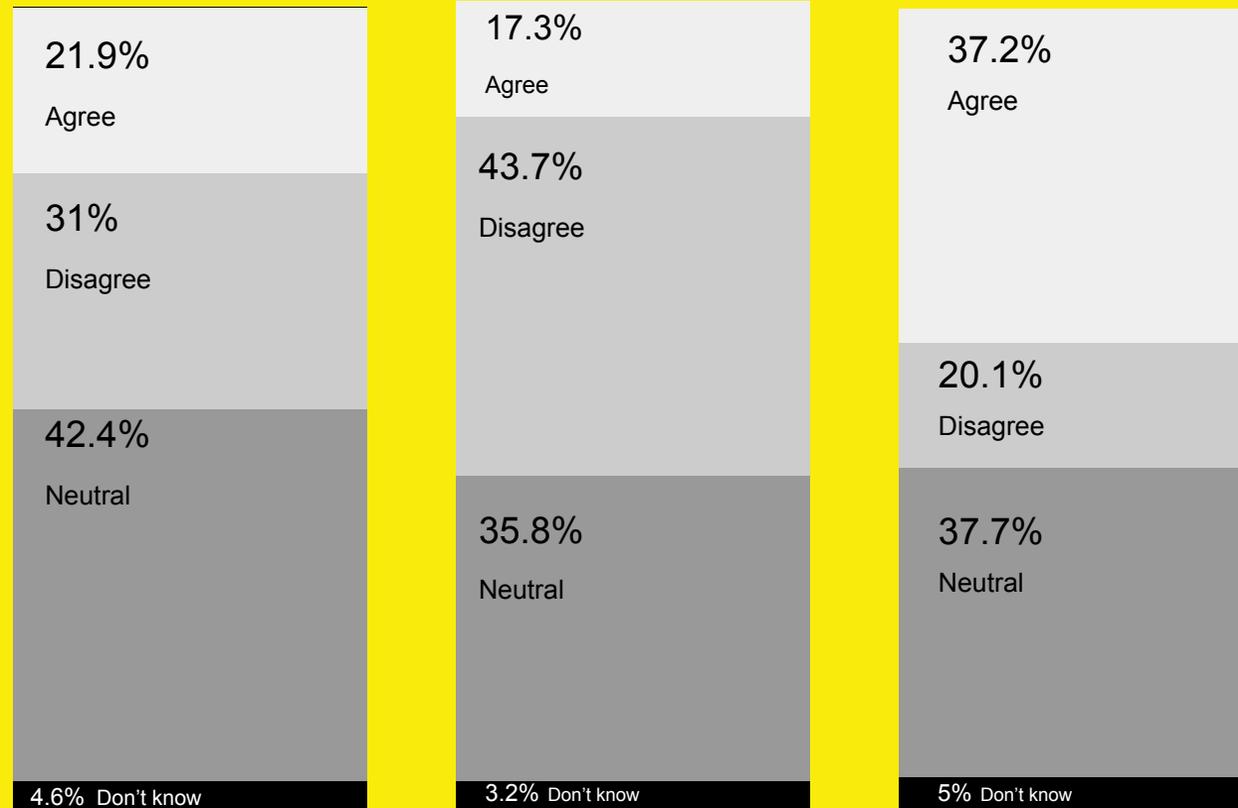
EXPERIENCE INTERACTING WITH POLICE



INTERACTION WITH POLICE IN LAST 5 YEARS



PERCEIVED POLICE INTERACTION WITH YOUTH

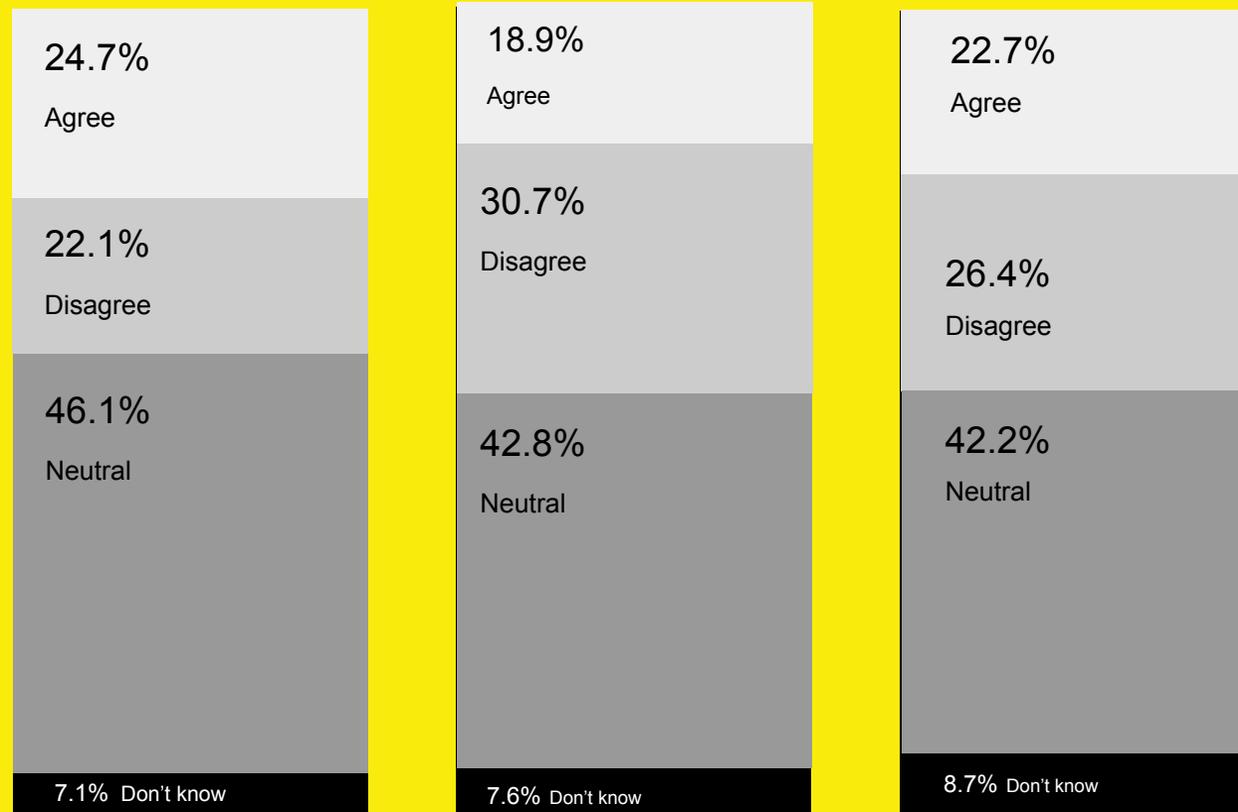


MORE POLICING OF YOUTH
THAN NEEDED

YOUTH KNOW THEIR RIGHTS

YOUTH'S PHYSICAL IDENTITY
INFLUENCES POLICE
INTERACTION

MOST COMMON POLICE INTERACTION WITH YOUTH



CRIME

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

CRIME TIPS

7. WHAT WE FOUND

Community Survey Results

7.3. Level of trust and confidence in PRP



SUMMARY

Trust and confidence in PRP is generally greater among adults 25+ than in youth 15-24.

About one quarter of all respondents believe that PRP is doing everything it can to keep youth safe. However, more youth 15-24 disagreed (29.4%) than adults 25+ (21.2%) that PRP is doing all it can to keep youth safe.

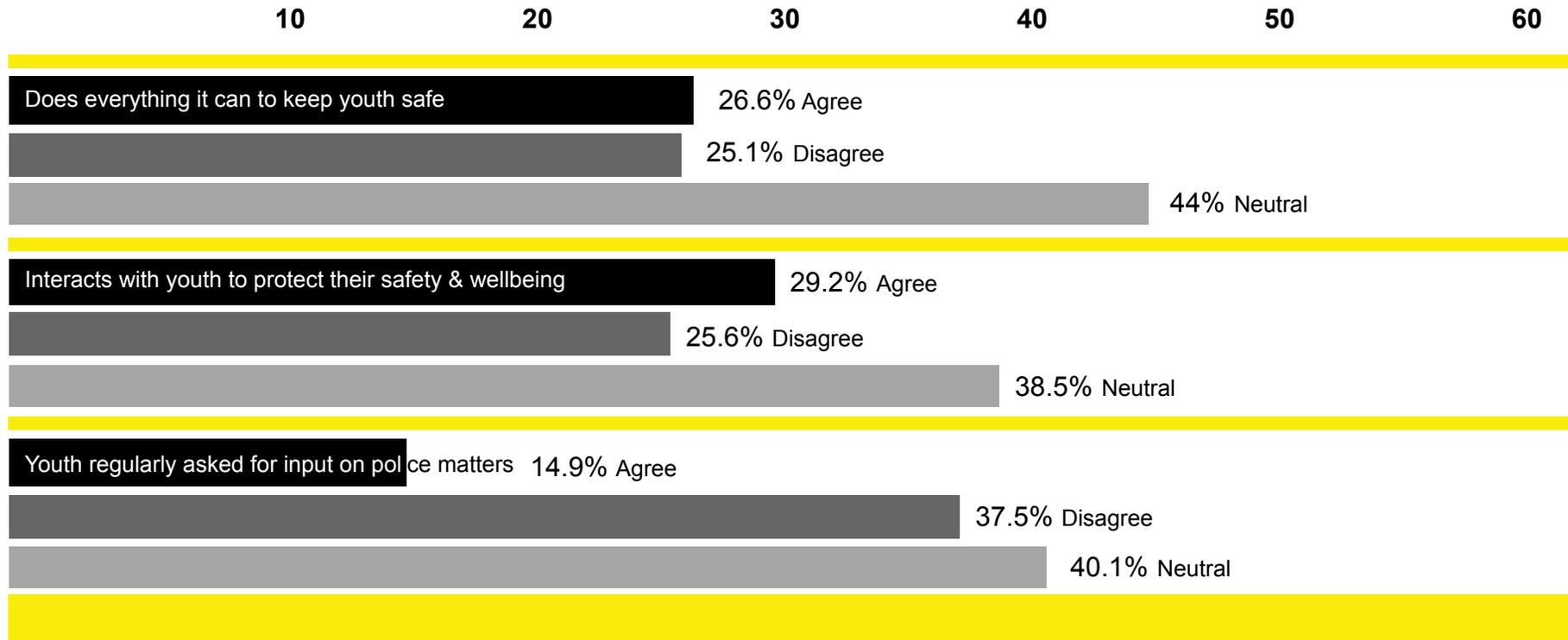
Nearly 40% of youth 15-24 do not believe they are given the opportunity to provide input on police-related matters that affect them.

Fewer than 25% of all respondents believe that PRP makes youth-related decisions based on facts. Moreover, only about one third of youth 15-24 feel comfortable contacting PRP compared to 55% of adults 25+.

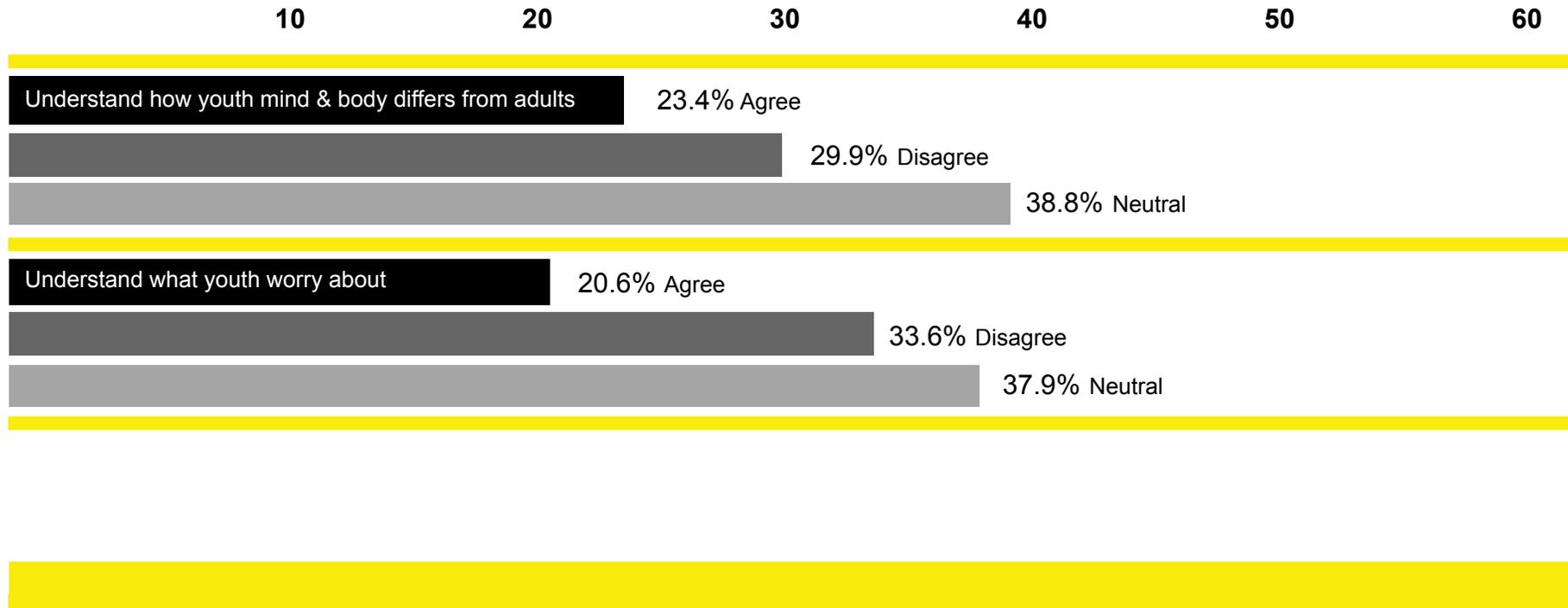
If given the opportunity, nearly half of all adults 25+ would be willing to participate in an activity with PRP compared to youth 15-24 (30.2%).

Overall, respondents are more likely to feel PRP does not have a grasp on youth - the youth mind and body or what youth worry about.

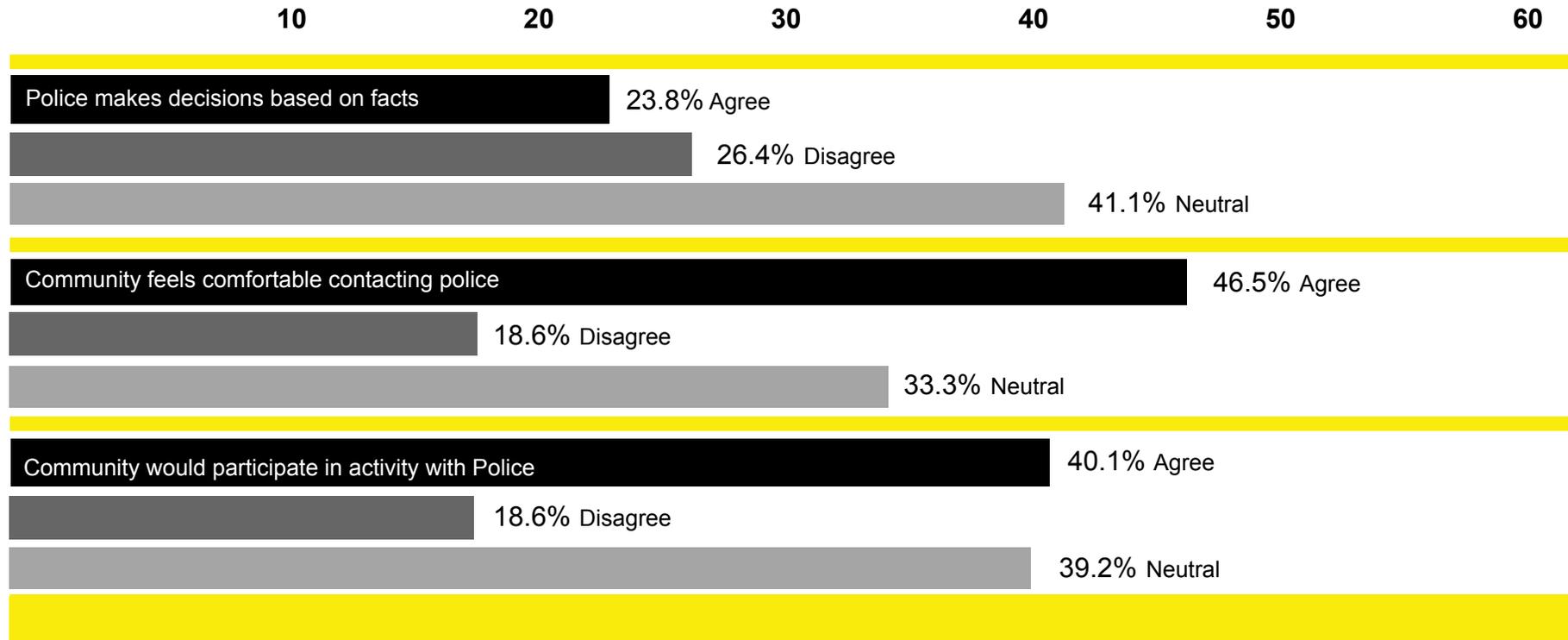
CONFIDENCE IN PEEL REGIONAL POLICE



POLICE UNDERSTANDING OF YOUTH



TRUST IN PEEL REGIONAL POLICE



7. WHAT WE FOUND

Community Survey Results

7.4. Looking ahead at youth engagement



SUMMARY

The vast majority of community respondents (70.8%) believe that a younger cohort of youth, under 16 and under 18, should be the focus of the police's youth engagement efforts. That is in contrast to one quarter of respondents who felt that the focus should be on young adults aged 21-24.

Over half of all community respondents believe that offering some level of education is more important than doing any other type of engagement activity. Specifically, the most important engagement action community respondents would like to focus on is to teach young people about their rights, followed closely by education on youth safety.

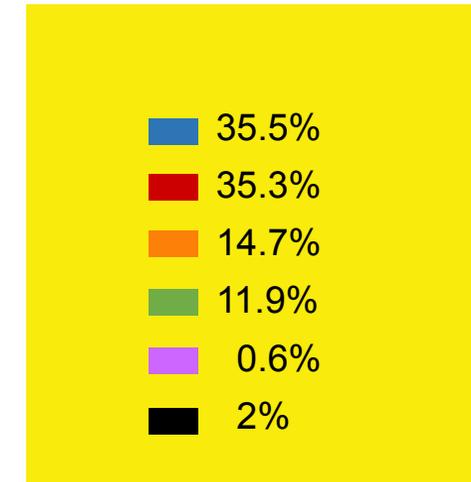
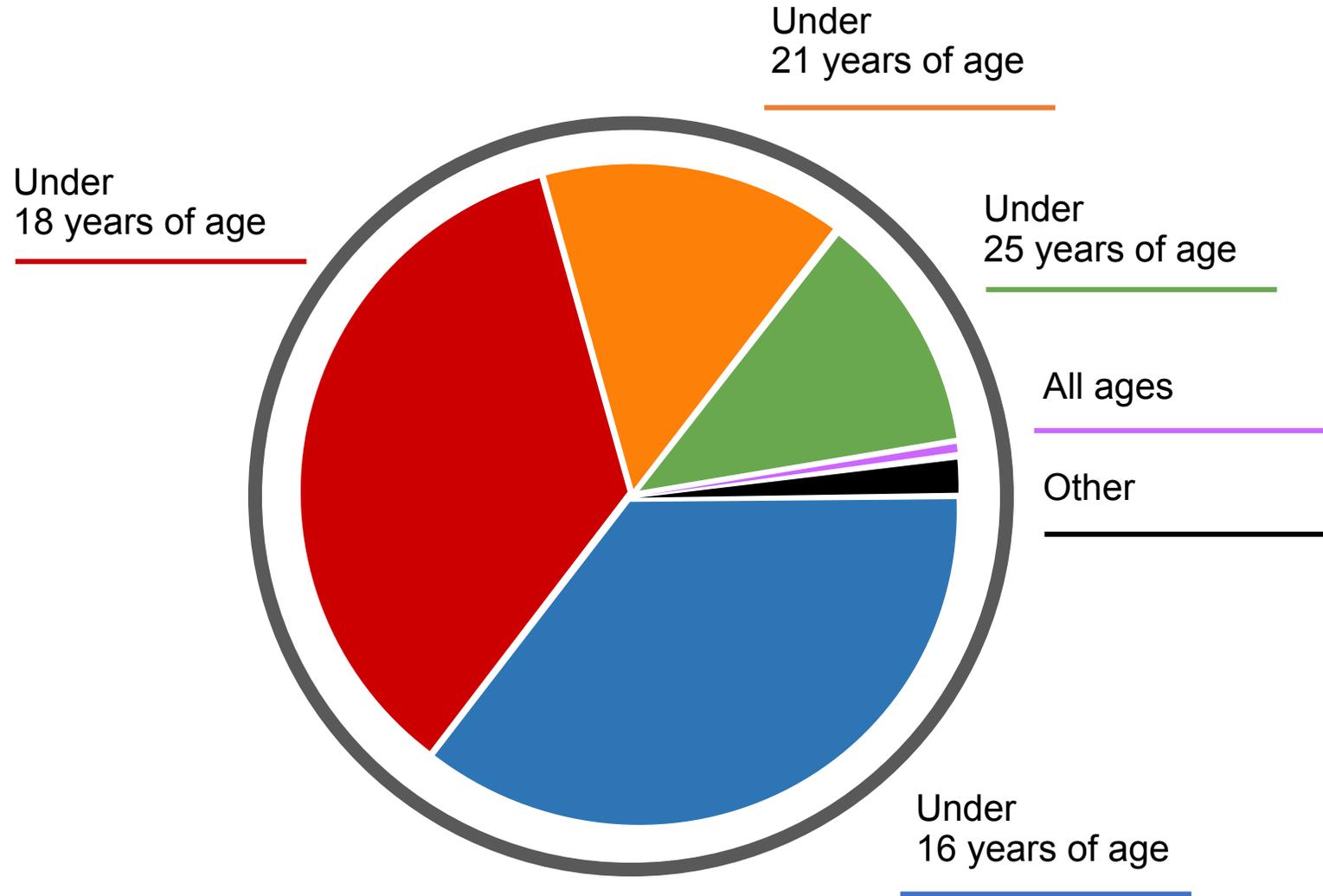
Among all suggested engagement actions, offering activities for youth to do with their parents was selected by 42 of 538 respondents, receiving the fewest votes from respondents.

Although this action did not reach the top three most important activities, as many as 28% of respondents selected stopping racism, discrimination, and oppression within Peel Regional Police as a top action - making this the fourth-most important action for community respondents. A couple of respondents listed the School Resource Officer program (which was not among the choices) as being their top action the police should bring back as their selection for "Other".

TOP 3 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS TO FOCUS ON



AGE GROUP POLICE SHOULD FOCUS ON



COMMUNITY MESSAGE TO POLICE
Theme: **Gratitude**

“

We appreciate you and hope we can collectively keep the community a safe place.

”

- Brampton resident

COMMUNITY MESSAGE TO POLICE
Theme: **Intimidation & Fear**

“

A lot of youth are scared of police because they think they are out to get them in trouble.

”

- Mississauga resident

COMMUNITY MESSAGE TO POLICE
Theme: **Discrimination & Respect**

“

Don't prejudice based on experiences. Treat the individual as a human being.

”

- Peel resident

8. WHAT WE FOUND

Police Survey Results

8.1. Their state of safety compared to the community

POLICE SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender identity

58.3% Male
33.3% Female
8.3% Other / Prefer not to say

Ethnicity

50% White
16.7% Middle Eastern
8.3% Black
8.3% Southeast Asian
16.7% Prefer not to say

Location

8.3% Elsewhere in Peel
8.3% Guelph
8.3% Milton
8.3% Halton
8.3% Oakville
8.3% Georgetown
8.3% Brampton
8.3% Mississauga
33.3% Prefer not to say





SUMMARY

There is a noticeable difference between the perceived level of risk police respondents indicated compared to those within the community. The proportion of community residents feeling a moderate to high level of risk to their safety where they live, learn and play is nearly double that of police respondents.

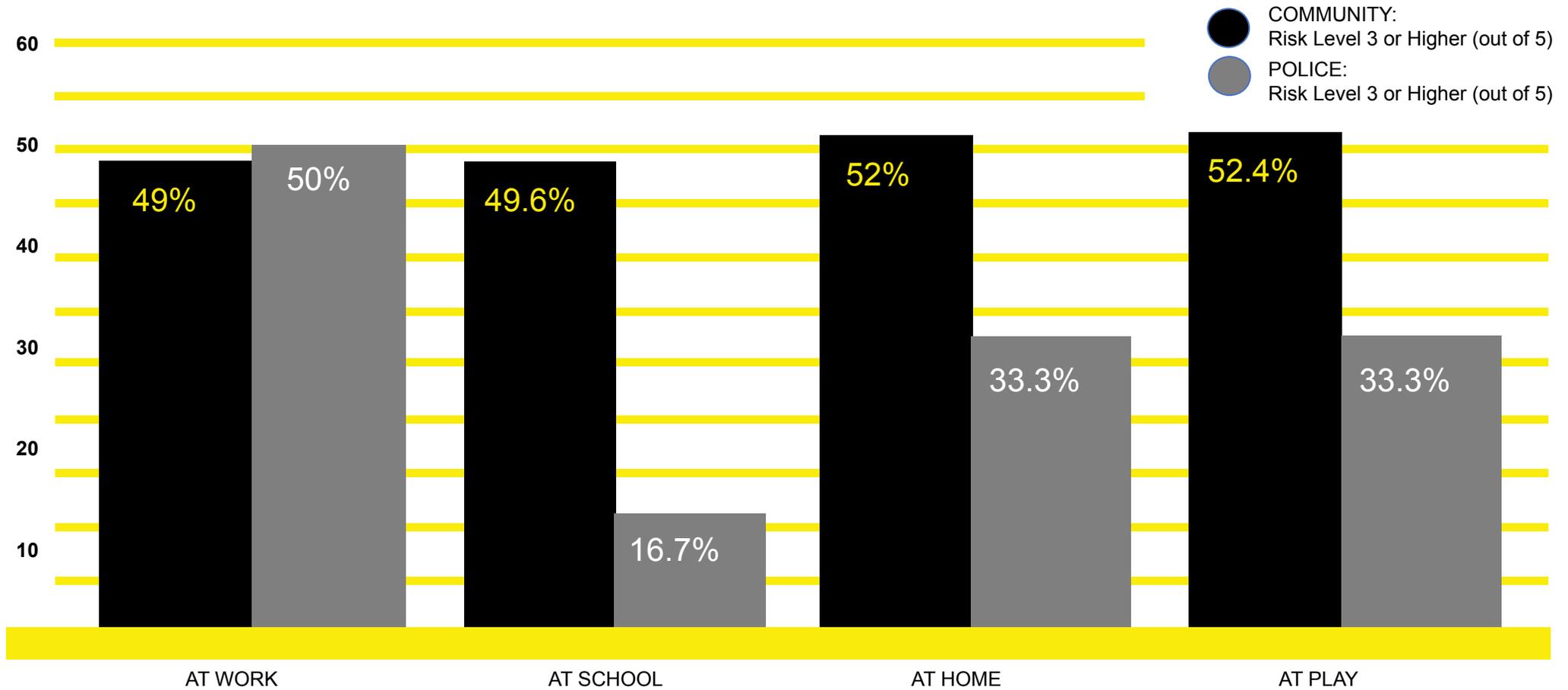
The only category where police respondents exceeded the community's perceived level of risk is at work with 50% indicating a moderate to high level of risk to safety, compared to 49% among community respondents. Note: most police respondents indicated they do not reside in Brampton or Mississauga, but their place of work is in Peel.

Police respondents chose mental health crisis as the most concerning issue to public safety in Peel - an issue that did not appear among the top 10 most concerning issue for community respondents.

Dangerous driving was the second-most concerning issue to public safety for both police and the community.

The vast majority of police respondents believe there is too little police presence in Peel in sharp contrast to the community where most feel there is about the right amount.

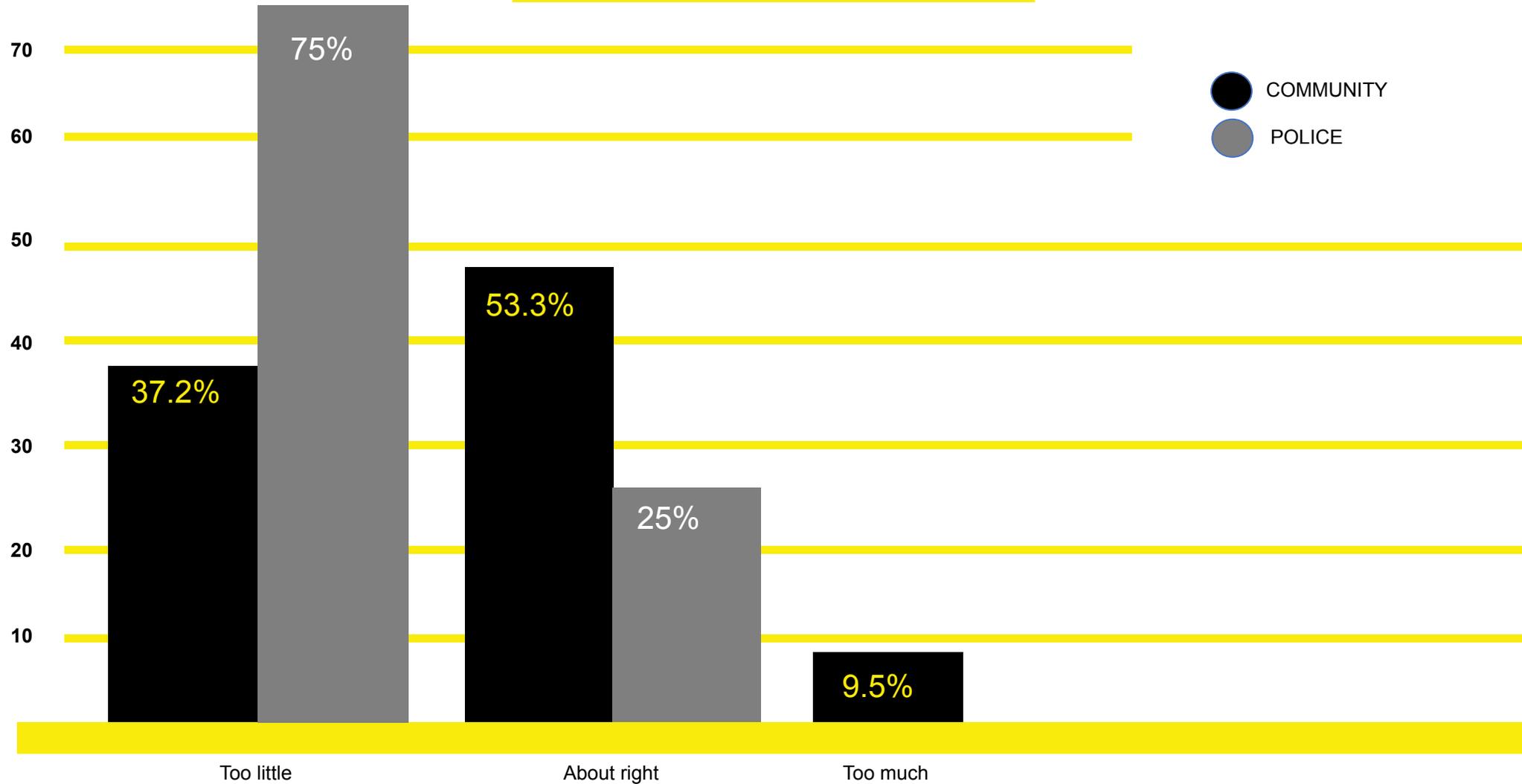
SENSE OF SAFETY



TOP 3 SAFETY ISSUES



POLICE PRESENCE



8. WHAT WE FOUND

Police Survey Results

8.2. Their perception on police performance and interaction with youth compared to the community



SUMMARY

Overall, police respondents have a higher perception that the police is doing a good job keeping the community safe. Over 80% of police respondents gave a rating of 4 or higher (out of 5) compared to 40% from community respondents.

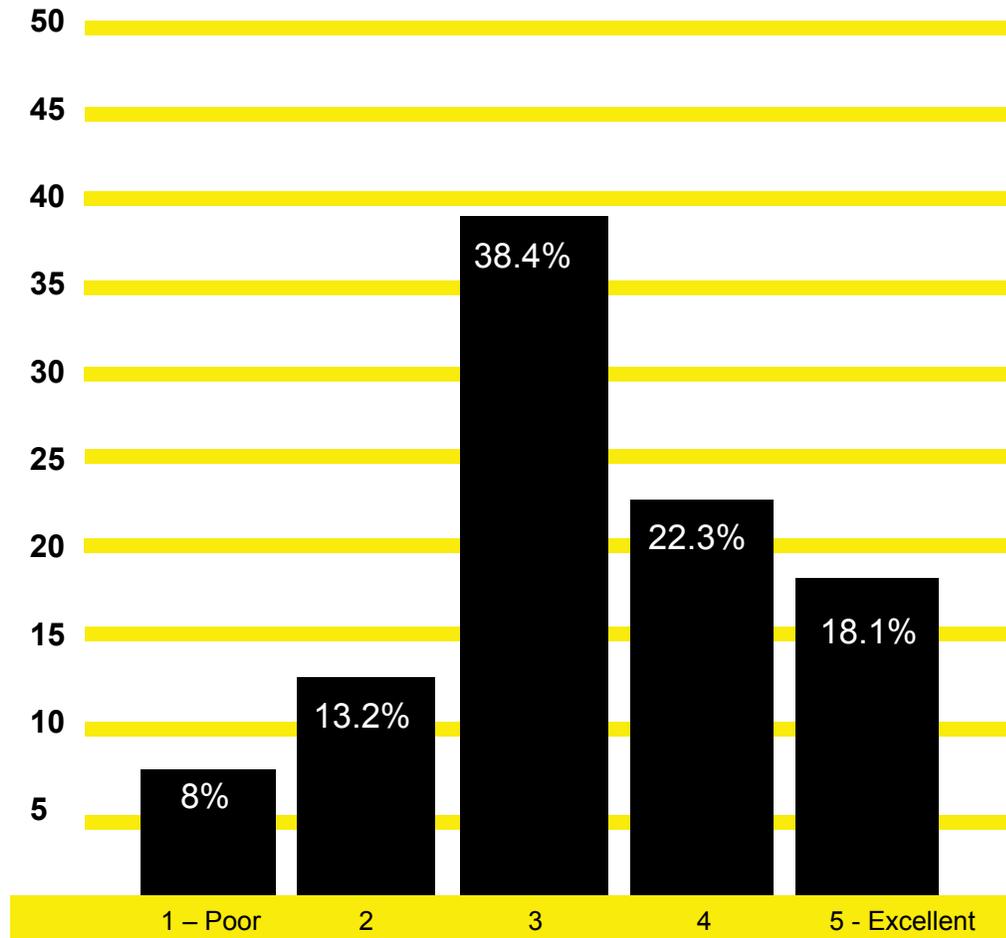
Police are slightly more likely to believe that youth have personally experienced a good interaction with PRP rather than a bad one. This is fairly consistent with the community's response to the same question.

The majority (90%) of police respondents do not believe that there is more policing of youth than needed. This is in sharp contrast with the community where only 31% disagree while 21% agree with the statement.

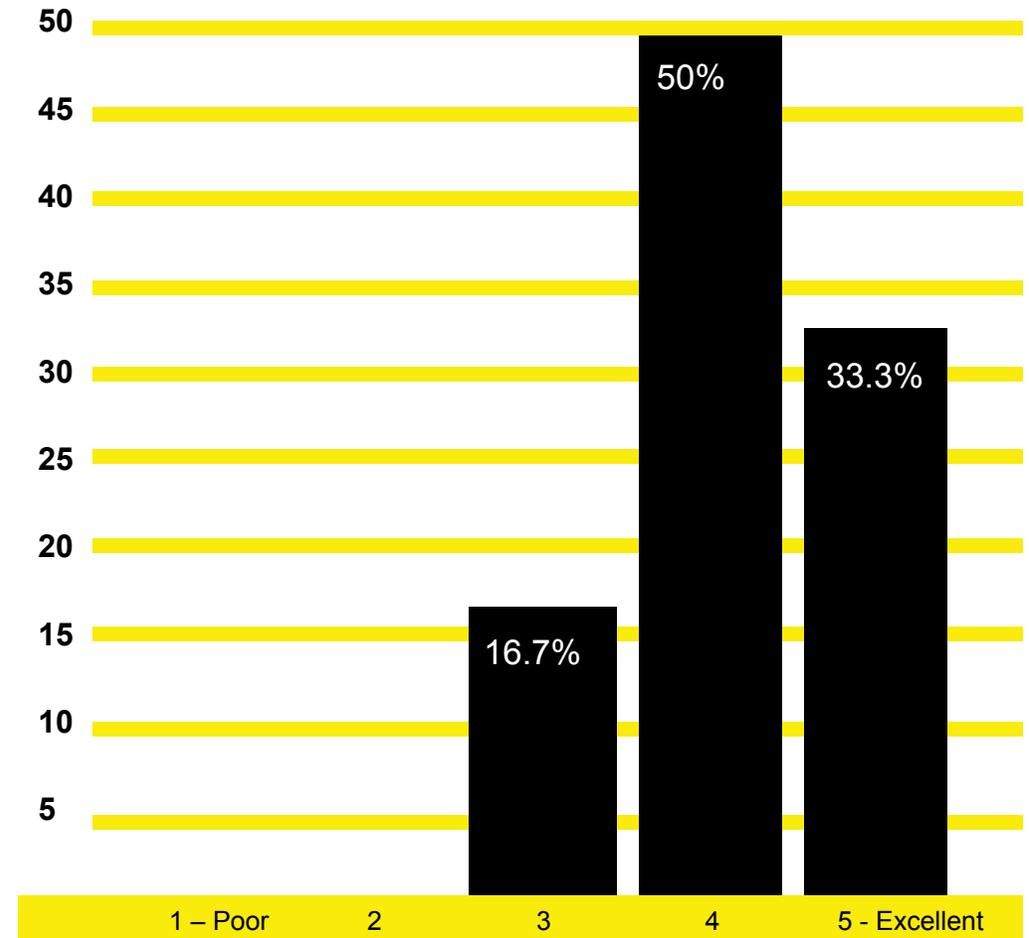
Police are twice as likely to believe that youth know their rights when interacting with police than the community whereas both police and the community agree at about the same rate that physical identity can influence what happens during an interaction with police.

In all questions related to youth interaction with police, there is a considerable difference between PRP's perception compared to the community's. That includes perceptions on the most common police interaction with youth to the level of confidence, understanding and trust in police when interacting with youth.

POLICE PERFORMANCE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY

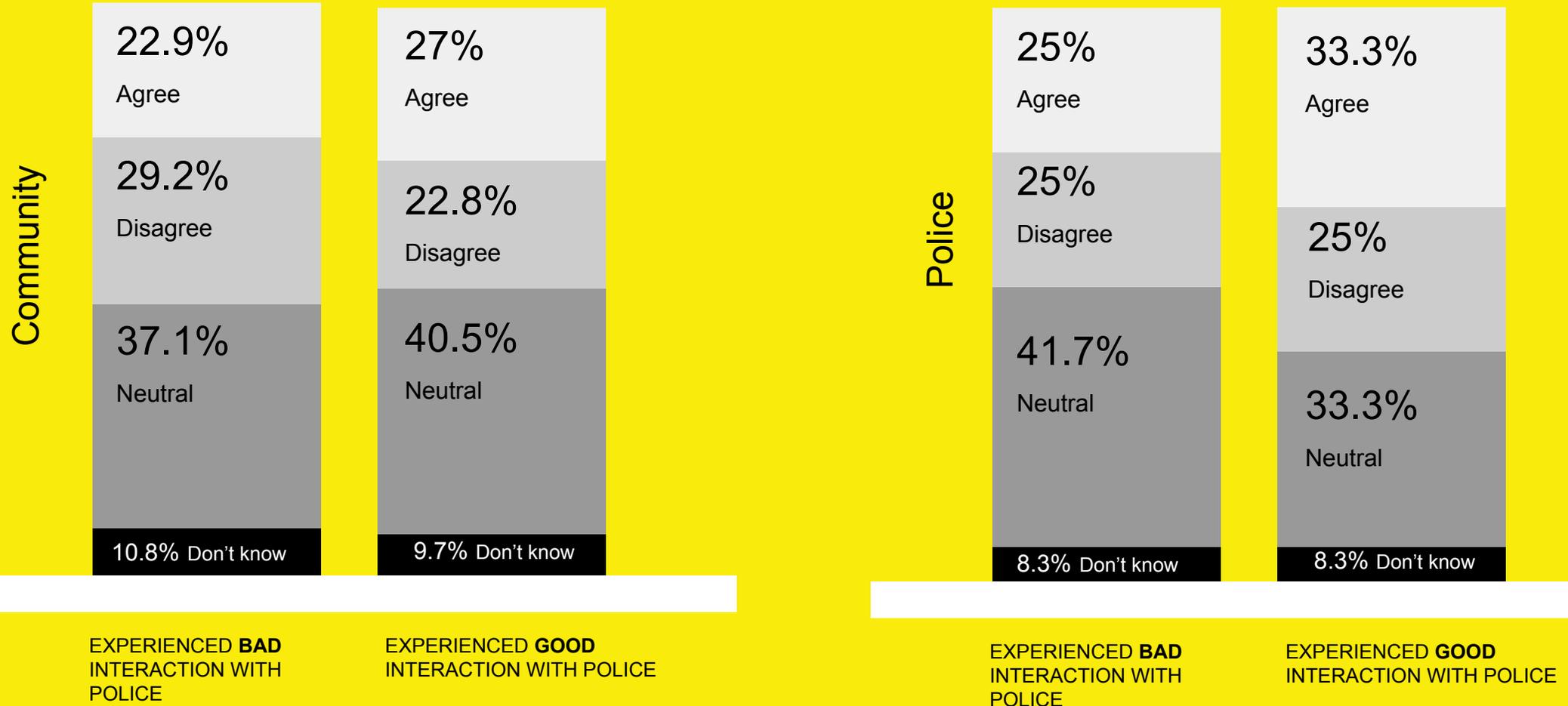


Community

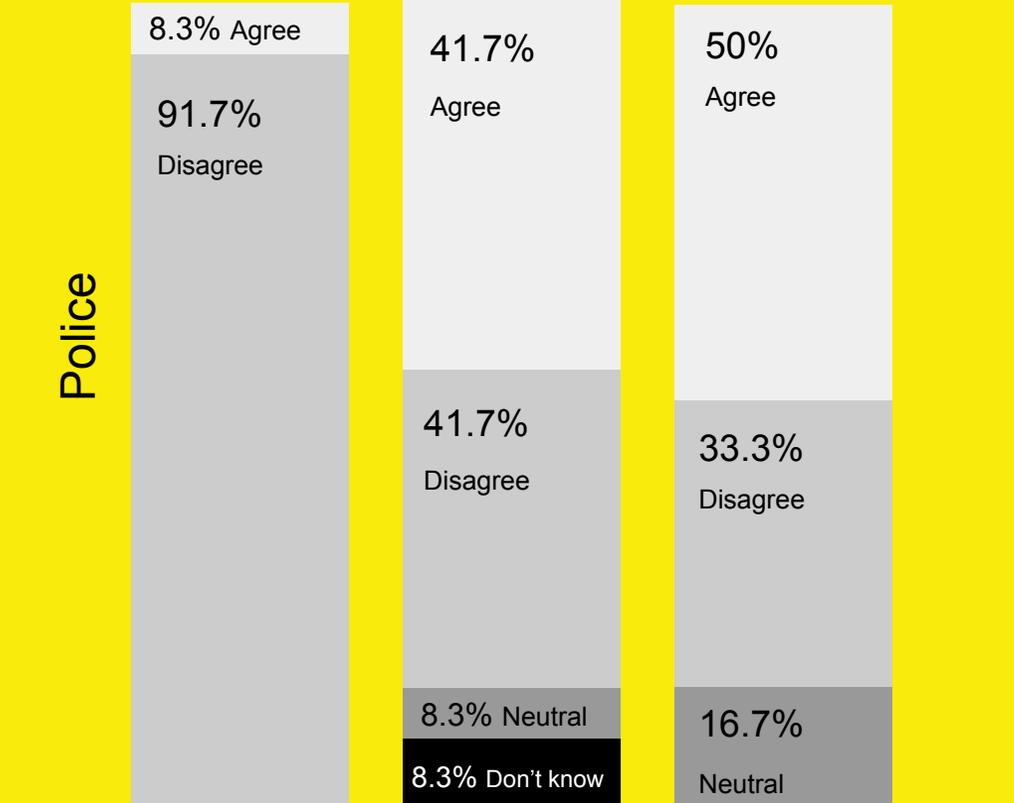
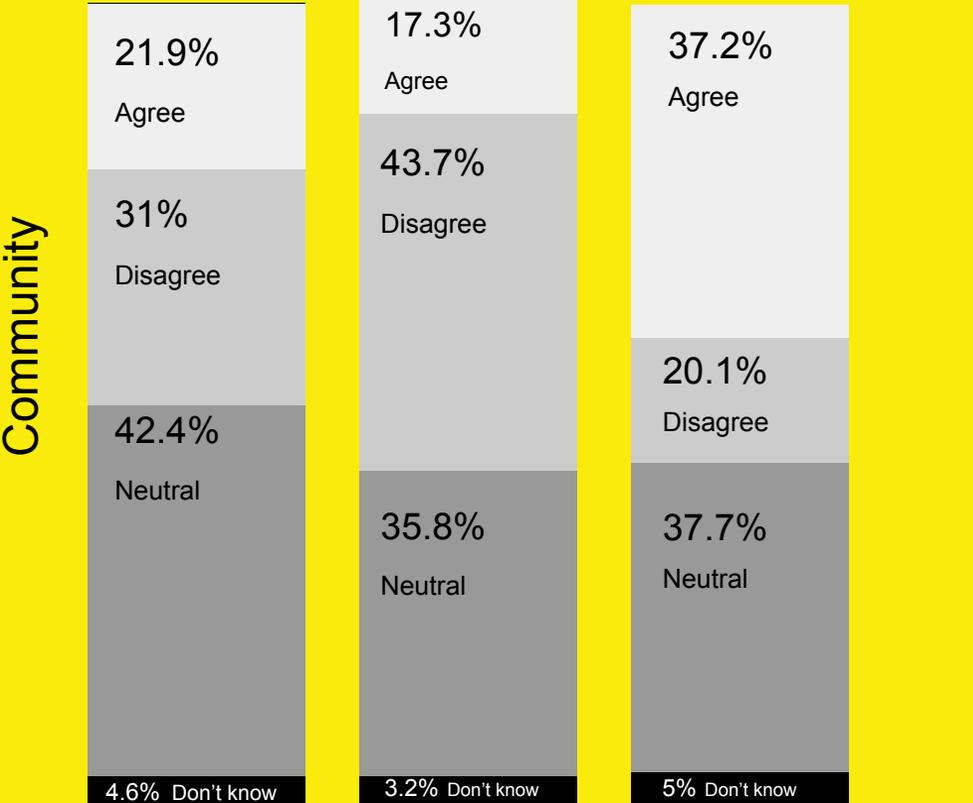


Police

EXPERIENCE INTERACTING WITH POLICE



PERCEIVED POLICE INTERACTION WITH YOUTH



MORE
POLICING OF
YOUTH THAN
NEEDED

YOUTH KNOW
THEIR RIGHTS

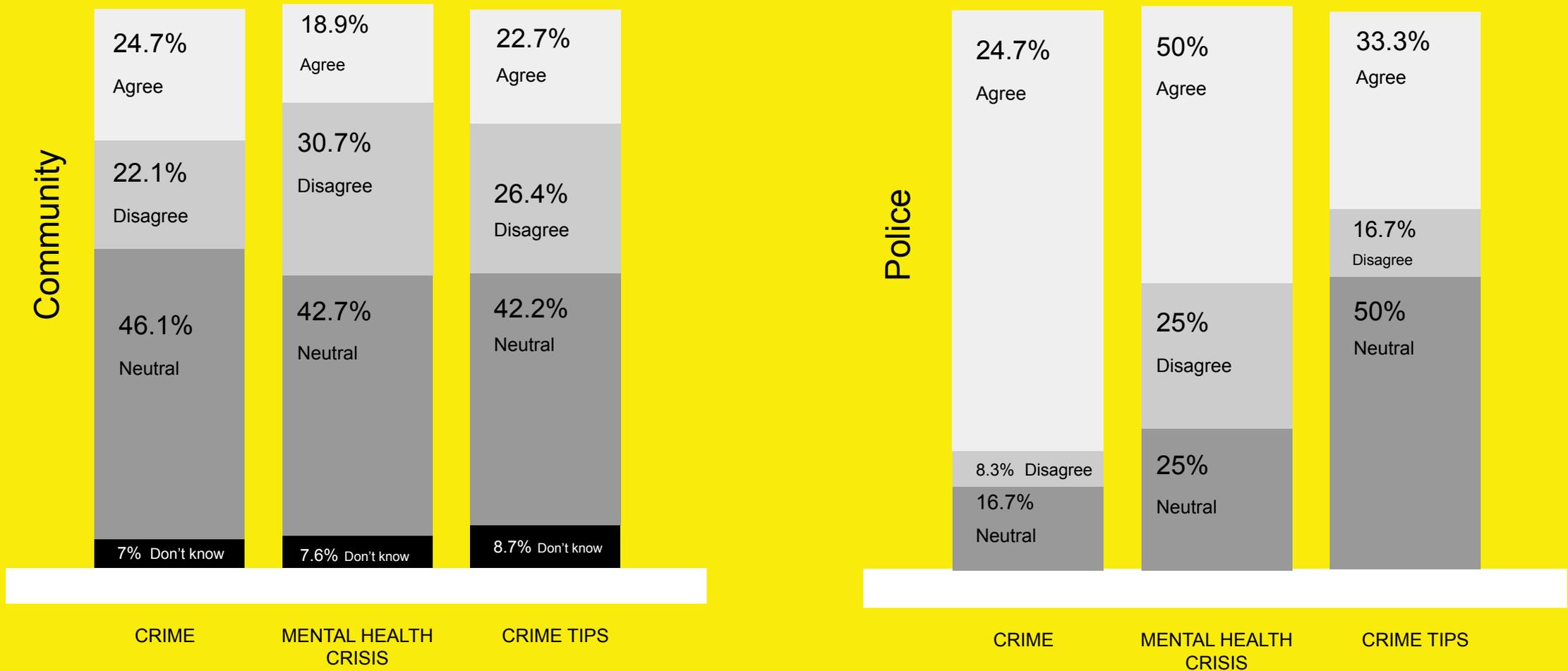
YOUTH'S
PHYSICAL
IDENTITY
INFLUENCES
POLICE
INTERACTION

MORE
POLICING OF
YOUTH THAN
NEEDED

YOUTH KNOW
THEIR RIGHTS

YOUTH'S
PHYSICAL
IDENTITY
INFLUENCES
POLICE
INTERACTION

MOST COMMON POLICE INTERACTION WITH YOUTH



8. WHAT WE FOUND

Police Survey Results

8.3. Their outlook on youth engagement compared to the community



SUMMARY

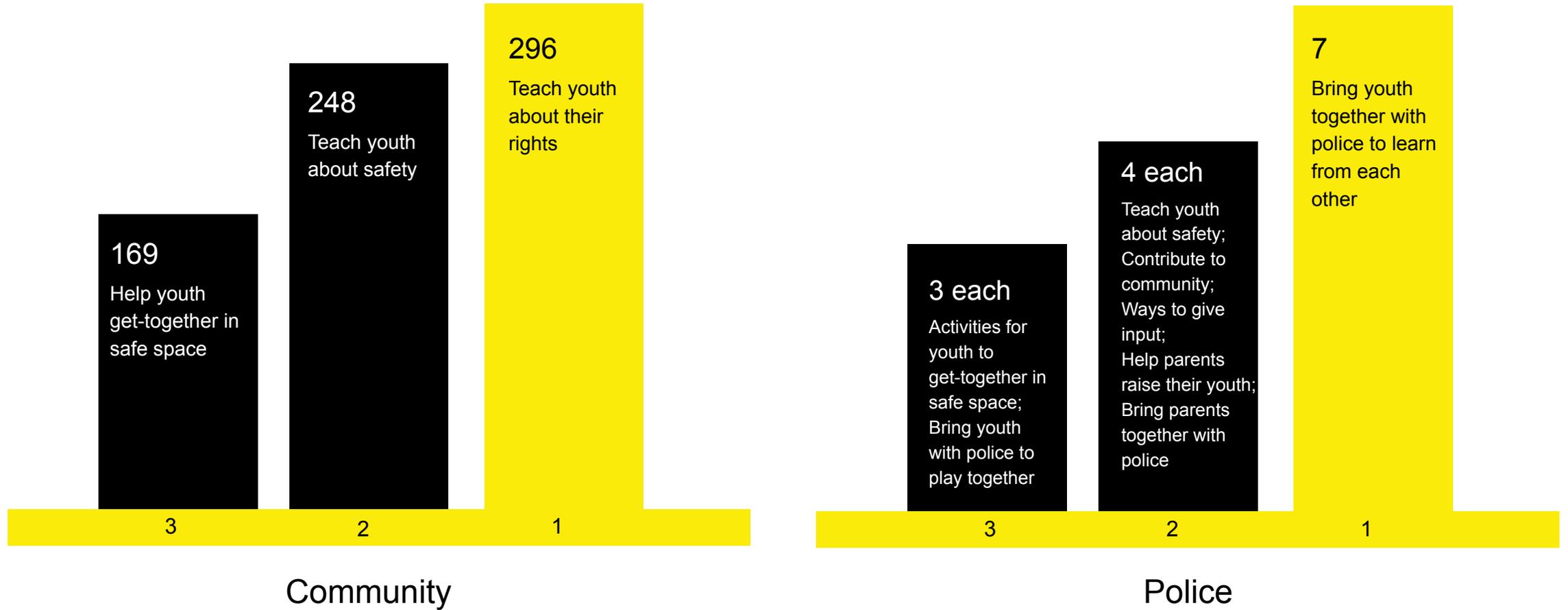
For police respondents, the future of youth engagement is one that prioritizes collaborative work with the community, particularly with younger youth. They focused on activities such as bringing youth together with police to play, to learn from each other and opening lines of communication for youth input.

The only common top priority police respondents identified that matches that of the community is educating youth about their safety.

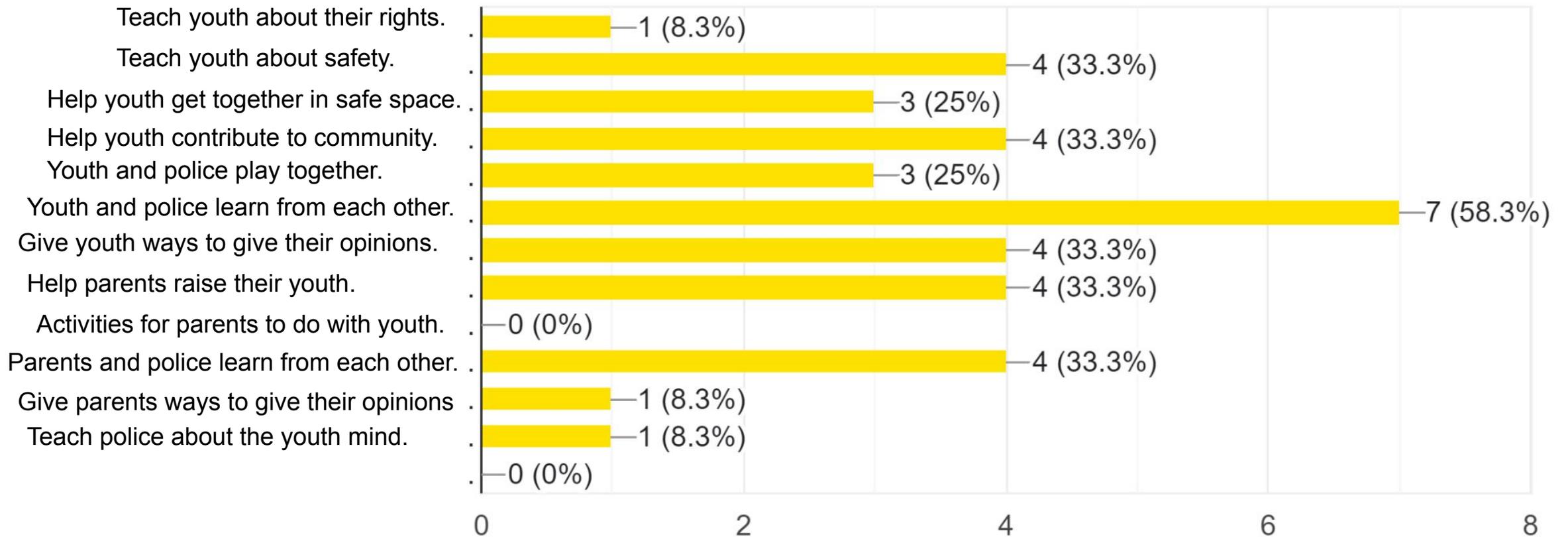
Youth under 16 received the greatest votes (50%) from police respondents as being the age group that would benefit most from support offered by Peel Regional Police. On the whole, 75% of police believe that youth under 18 would benefit most from their support compared to 25% of young adults aged 18-24. In contrast, community respondents were evenly split between prioritizing youth under 16 and those under 18.

Concerns from police respondents focused on having opportunities with youth to regain their trust, particularly since the SRO program was stopped, and having more police training to improve interactions with youth.

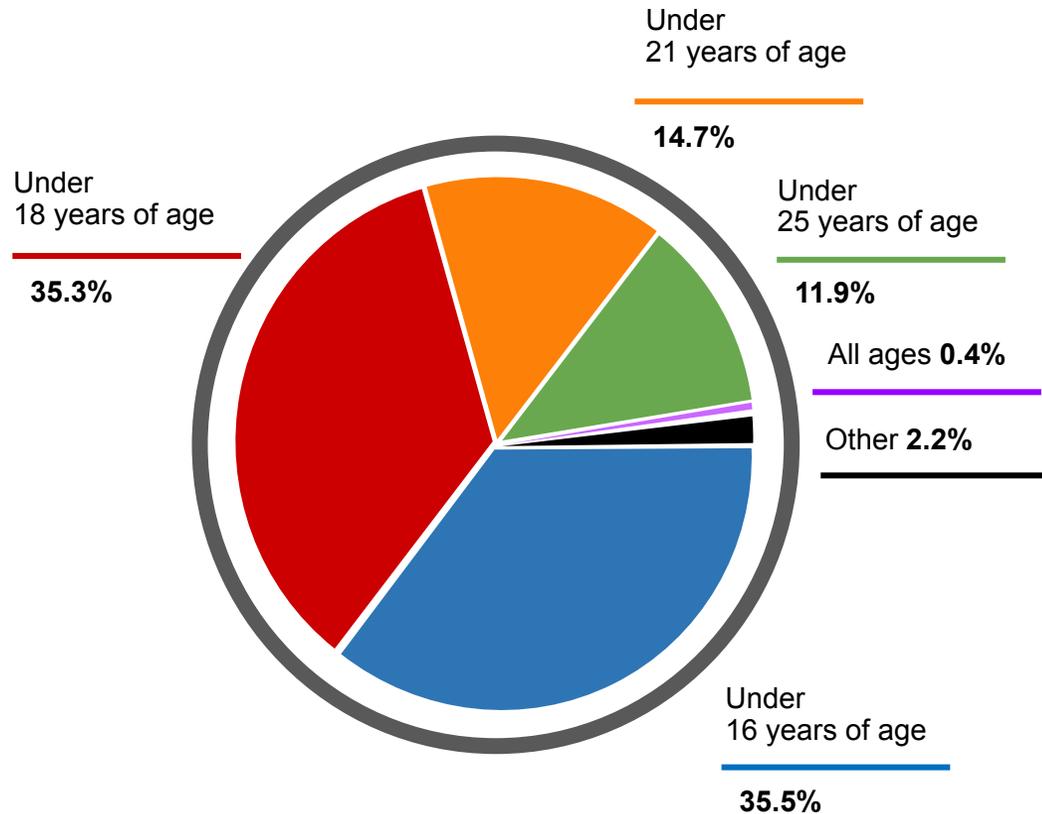
TOP 3 ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS TO FOCUS ON



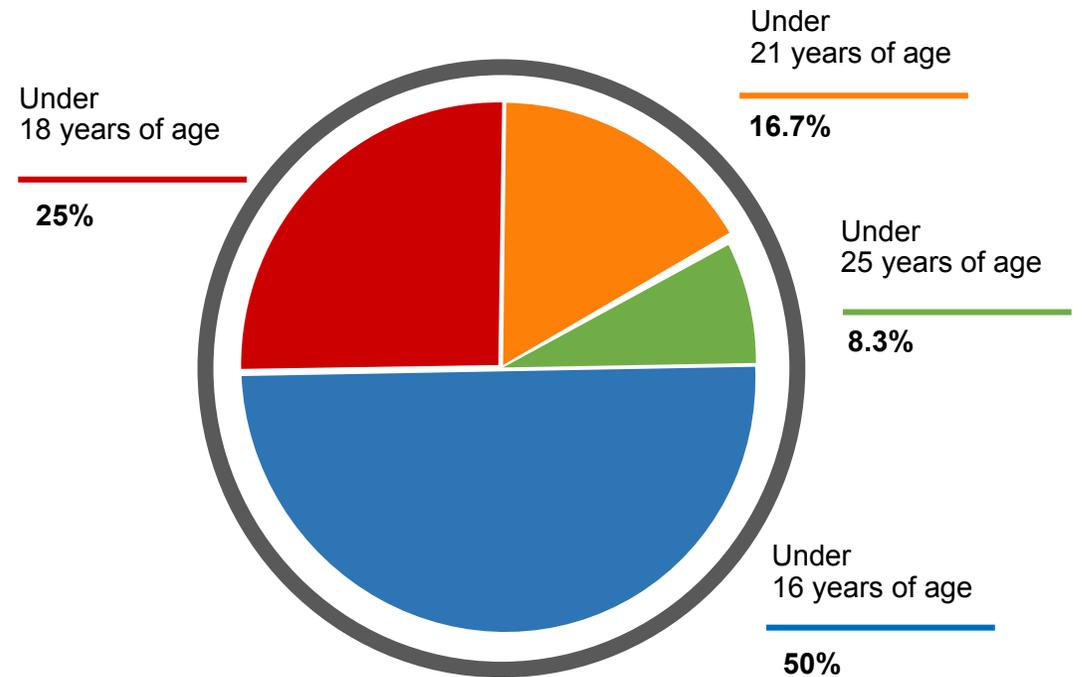
ACTIONS POLICE SHOULD FOCUS ON



AGE GROUP POLICE SHOULD FOCUS ON



Community



Police

PRP MESSAGE TO POLICE
Theme: **Regain trust**

“

Police need an opportunity for positive interaction with youth.

”

- Police

PRP MESSAGE TO POLICE
Theme: **More training**

“

Have training on the youth mind -
developmentally and issues facing them.

”

- Police

PRP MESSAGE TO POLICE
Theme: **Improve officer selections**

“

Start putting the right officers in
community-facing positions.

”

- Police

PRP MESSAGE TO POLICE
Theme: **Return to schools**

“

Since PRP stopped attending [schools], huge losses have been felt of the many opportunities for engagement.

”

- Police

9. WHAT WE FOUND

Focus Group Results

9.1. Delving into perceptions of police performance and rapport with youth



SUMMARY

Among all focus group participants, community leaders and youth reported higher levels of interests in safety and youth-police rapport. Police and parents displayed a more elevated sense of concern across all areas discussed, and were more often critical of various issues, particularly on the topic of police in schools.

Police participants addressed challenges such as public perceptions and ensuring equitable treatment for all community members. They tended to feel that community perception of police is negative when it comes to law enforcement but positive when it comes to community police work.

While parents were generally more critical of youth safety and interaction with police, they put the emphasis on the need for activities that involve both parents and youth to foster better relationships and trust with police.

Community leaders were relatively grateful for the work and collaboration with the police to date while also recognizing that there are gaps and important issues that should be addressed to further improve youth and community safety.

Among the youth who participated, the majority had little to no interaction with police, but believed strongly that police is not connected to youth.

Police performance on community safety

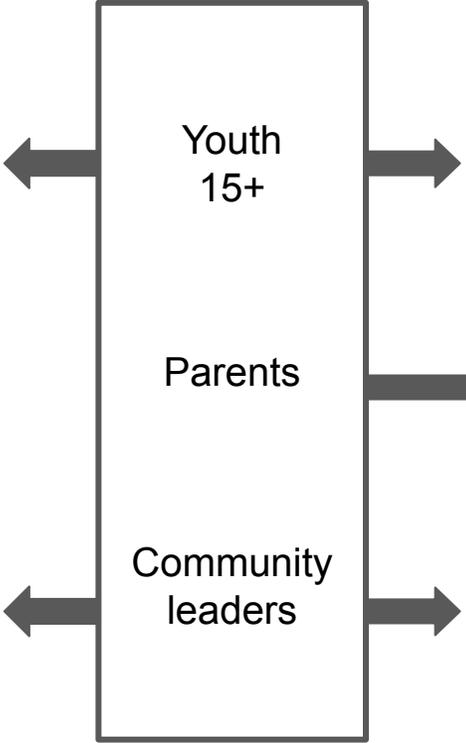
Highlights

Praise

Pain Points

“Okay.”
“Adequate.”
“There is not a significant threat.”
“There is a happy medium of presence.”

“Pretty safe.”
“They made good strides.”



“Would like to see police responding more proactively.”

“An assumed correlation between youth and crime.”
“Not well for Black youth, constant racial profiling.”
“Not well at all.”

“More police training is required to better handle mental health issues / diverse backgrounds and homes”
“PRP need more cultural competency.”

Youth

“I feel safe in public, so I think they do a decent job.”

Parents

“Instead of keeping them safe, police pose a threat.”

Community leaders

“Pretty safe, but police need more training.”

Police performance on community safety

Praise

Peel Regional Police

Pain Points

“**D**oing great and trying to do more”

“**O**verall corporate response is positive”

“**I**n general, PRP is doing an adequate job”

“**P**rograms are positively received”

“**S**ome think the PRP aren't doing enough, especially marginalized communities”

The police feels underappreciated

“**M**ore two-way communication is needed”

“**O**fficer should react to their interaction not their behaviour “

Highlights

“The average person, they're not afraid to live in Peel”

“Making efforts in the right direction, but haven't hit the mark yet with issues that youth are exposed to”

“Perceptions vs reality have a gap”

Police rapport with youth

Praise

“I still feel comfortable calling PRP in an emergency.”
 “Hope in the future there are more programs like “Real Talks Peel.”
 “There’s a sense that they are always trying to help.”

“They want to be all things to all people.”

“Growing rapport, outreach and intentional consultation are definitely a benefit and will support growth.”
 “Great job with YIPI program.”



Pain Points

“Feel like police communication is more with younger children.”
 “Don’t know much about PRP - their mode of operation.”
 “Fairly distant, so distant in fact I've only seen one officer.”

“Talk without action, using children like props.”
 “When Black youth are no longer perceived as cute or young, they are instead seen as a threat”

“Police need to do work in-house before they return/continue/increase interactions with youth.”
 “There needs to be adequate alternative to SROs to keep connection between youth-police.”

Highlights

Youth

“Police position themselves as a threat to youth.”

Parents

“White kids can make mistakes; Black kids can lose their lives with same mistakes.”

Community leaders

“Some youth don’t want to engage with police, they might come off as intimidating.”

Police rapport with youth

Praise

Peel Regional Police

Pain Points

“**D**efinitely doing a good job (no doubt)”

“**P**eople believe that PRP are keeping people safe.”

“**P**ositive based on initiatives not law enforcement.”

“**T**here is room for improvement”

“**N**ot as strong since NPU (SROs) stopped” - “**A** huge loss”

“**L**ess face-to-face time now”

“**P**olice mindset needs to change; children are there to be seen not heard, mentality is a barrier.”

Highlights

“Uniforms are a trigger, could be positive or negative, could be a sense of safety or potential harm.”

“There really are no positives when seeing police in general in non community aspect.”

“Feel that the 5% of those who don’t agree with PRP are the ones dictating change.”

9. WHAT WE FOUND

Focus Group Results

9.2. A closer look at trust between youth and police



SUMMARY

Youth provided insightful and positive feedback. Many youth were reluctant to turn on their cameras during focus groups, however, indicating a possible hesitancy or lack of comfort. Many referenced that police are primarily there to uphold the law and their authority can pose a threat to any youth, including those historically and racially targeted.

For the police, they highlighted the importance of proactive community policing, mentorship programs, and educational outreach to foster better relationships with youth. At the same time, the police was most critical of the work still ahead to mend trust, create better rapport with youth and improve public perception of Peel Regional Police.

Community leaders working with youth felt that addressing racism, discrimination, and oppression within police force was highlighted as a critical step toward improving trust and safety.

Perhaps the most vocal on this topic were parents of youth, some of whom stressed that police have the power to cause harm to youth when interacting with them no matter the situation. And this imbalance of power can have irreversible consequences for some youth.

Youth trust in Police

Praise

“Even just one good interaction with one police officer can influence your opinion.”

“They [police] have potential to be role models.”

“Youth feel best when police are working with them, not against them.”
“Best interactions happen when police are informing youth about their rights.”

Pain Points

“Reading about situations of police brutality creates fear that police will unnecessarily escalate a situation and cause harm to [youth].”
“When you look at a police officer, you only see the uniform first - it’s hard to see them as a person.”

“Youth have the idea that police will assume [youth] are guilty, even if they are innocent.”

“Police elicit fear from youth.”
“A uniformed officer is a reminder of unequal authority.”

Highlights

Youth

“Will [PRP] be violent or mean.”

Parents

“Building trust would take a lot of time.”

Community leaders

“Racial profiling and surveillance - specifically with Black male youth.”

Youth trust in Police

Praise

“**B**eing seen as a human or friend”

“**O**nce they have positive interactions with youth, perceptions change”

Pain Points

“**L**ack of trust”

“**N**ot so much interaction anymore”

“**P**revious negative interactions with police (first hand, or heard from others”

“**P**eer pressure / learned behaviour to not like PRP, even if they haven’t had interactions with PRP“

“**Y**outh don’t want to be police officers anymore.”

Highlights

“We are bad at promoting what we do; we don’t explain the differences to the public.”

“Different policing types affect public perception”

“Social media exacerbates this because it perpetuates ideas without the ability for two-way communication”

9. WHAT WE FOUND

Focus Group Results

9.3. Exploring the future of youth engagement



SUMMARY

In all focus group sessions, youth highlighted a desire for more educational initiatives to understand their rights and improve safety, and the importance of positive engagement with PRP to build trust and understanding. They believe that engagement with police is not a one-time event, but a continuous and an everyday process that happen in neutral environments and not necessarily in schools.

For community leaders, they perceive youth-police engagement as a critical tool to uphold youth and community safety. Their discussion underscored the effectiveness of some of the current initiatives and emphasized the need for police to understand youth perspectives, create safe spaces for youth activities, and offer programs supporting parents.

Parents, on the other hand, expressed skepticism, discussing the history of racial bias in policing and the negative impacts of the School Resource Officer program. Many parents were apprehensive about police interactions with youth, emphasizing that police should focus on policing rather than taking on roles better suited for trained mental health and social workers or coaches and mentors.

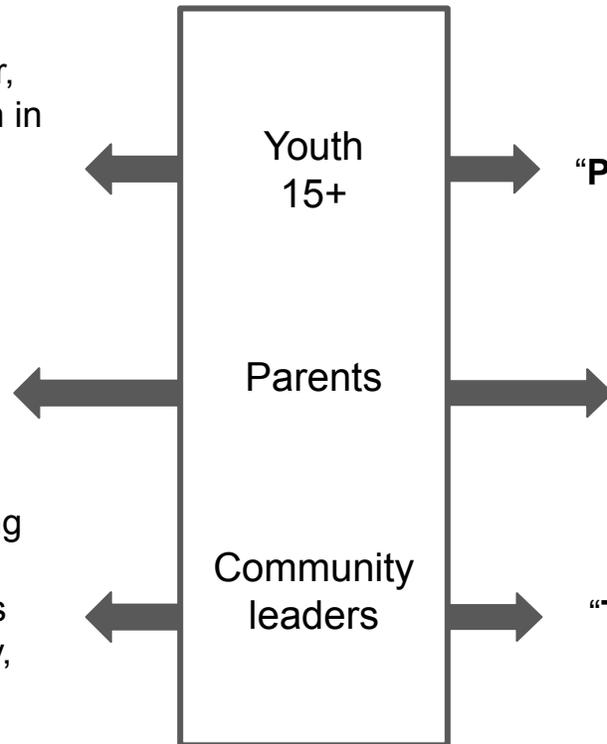
Future of youth engagement

What it is

“Interaction needs to be regular, continuous — needs to happen in a neutral space not on police territory, not in schools.”
“Youth knowing their rights.”

“Reallocation of funds from police to community experts, organizations.”
“Referral of youth from police to appropriate services of support.”

“Rehabilitation, not just enforcing the law.”
“Being able to have discussions between youth and police freely, without fear of legal repercussions.”
“Seeing youth crime rates drop.”



What it isn't

“Enforcing the law in less forceful ways, less use of weapons, decreased use of deadly force.”
“Police need to be more considerate to the unique challenges and experiences that youth face.”

“Police are not the sole agency needed to do this [youth engagement] work.”

“For police to not always be there.”
“Taking over existing spaces is scary and invasive.”

Highlights

Youth

“We don't need increased engagement, we need meaningful [existing] engagement.”

Parents

“Do not police, criminalize one group of youth more than another

Community leaders

“Seeing police as allies and mentors.”

Future of youth engagement

What it is

Peel Regional Police

What it isn't

“**S**ocial media outreach; less formality, more casual; connecting with other supports (community partners); connecting with vulnerable communities.”

“**T**wo-way communication.”

“**C**entralized / accessible hub of police officers specifically for youth to get help, mentorship.”

“**P**ositive interactions; proactive approach to engaging with youth.”

“**L**ack of trust”

“**N**ot so much interaction happening anymore.”

“**P**revious negative interactions with police (first hand, or heard from others.”

“**P**eer pressure / learned behaviour to not like PRP, even if they haven't had interactions with PRP.”

Highlights

“Having a positive opinion of PRP; youth and police actively engaging with each other.”

“Being allowed back into school; being welcomed into youth spaces.”

“Events to relate with youth in a less enforcement capacity; attendance at events from communities; more promotion of programs internally and externally.”

Youth engagement opportunities

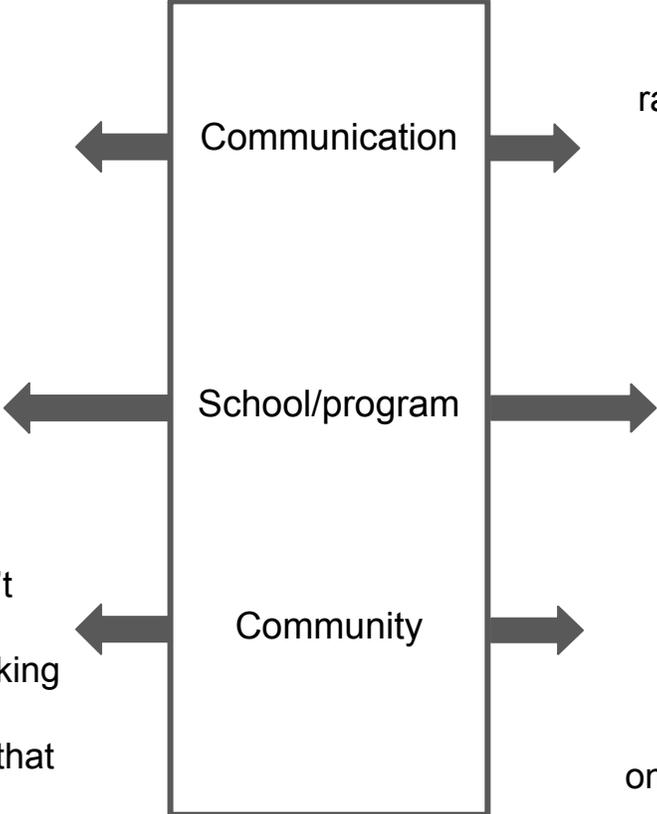
Youth

Grown-ups

“**M**ore and better communication between youth and police.”
“**M**ore social media presence where we can hear from PRP firsthand.”
“**O**penly taking feedback from youth.”

“**G**oing to schools and talking about their [police] perspectives.”
“**P**revious police presence in school was not harmonious with the school environment. They need an active role in schools, not a passive one.”

“**C**asual, relatable interactions which aren’t strictly educational.”
“**G**oing out more in the community and talking to kids.”
“**F**ree accessible events hosted by police that are open to the community.”



“**A**pproach all youth, regardless of racialization, class, gender with the same process and application.”
“**I**nteractions in plain clothes.”
“**P**olice should not engage with youth.”

“**Y**outh leadership programs.”
“**Y**outh advisory boards.”
“**M**entorship programs.”
“**A**fter-school programs. Sports.”

“**C**reating new spaces for connection to happen.”
“**V**olunteer opportunities and apprenticeships.”
“**W**orking in partnership with other orgs, one organisation/agency can't do it alone.”



Youth engagement opportunities

Peel Regional Police

“Getting back in schools, restarting SRO programs.”

“Integration of police into other programs like partnerships with other organizations.”

“Expansion of YIPI program.”

“Career days”

“Hub in 21 Division”

“Regular encouragement from principals wanting police to come into schools.”

10. COMPETING NARRATIVES

Social media

The impact of social media was referred to a few times both from comments received through the survey and from discussions during the focus groups.

- Youth perception: social media is powerful and what circulates about police through social channels influence youth perception of police, no matter if what is seen as local or not.
- Youth feedback: PRP should be on social media more so youth can hear from them firsthand.
- Police perception: social media doesn't allow for two-way communication to control what's being said about police.

School Resource Officer (SRO) program

Conflicting point of views about the now defunct SRO program in schools came up particularly from parents, community leaders, and the police.

- Parents' view: some parents said the SRO program did more harm than good. Others, hoped the SRO program would return to schools for kids' safety.
- Police's take: most police participants believed that the SRO program is instrumental to building a rapport with youth, but also recognized that the program needed adjustments such as ensuring the right officers are placed in the SRO role.
- Community leaders: some felt that with the loss of the SRO program, police lost the opportunity to connect with youth in a positive way.
- Youth's perspective: having police in "their" spaces is intimidating and that engagement activities should happen in new or neutral spaces.



11. CONCLUSION

The Real Talks Peel project has illuminated the complex and multifaceted nature of youth safety and engagement with the Peel Regional Police. Through comprehensive community and police surveys, focus groups, and interviews, this research has revealed significant insights into the current state of trust, safety, and perceptions of police performance within Peel Region.

It has also fostered a deeper understanding of the current landscape and challenges ahead.

The findings and feedback are not just a culmination of data but a call to action. They remind us that police-youth interactions can change lives— for better or worse.

Peel Regional Police's commitment to listening, learning, and adapting will be crucial in shaping a safer and more inclusive community. However, it requires collaboration from multiple entities. Done correctly, youth can be empowered to live without fear, be treated with dignity in crises, and face the future with courage, confidence and support.

While PRP members and many share a common desire to get youth engagement right, there is a misalignment about what this looks like. Building trust between youth, community and police is the agent of change for youth engagement. Lack of trust is the most significant recurring theme and could hinder future efforts. Without trust, meaningful youth engagement cannot exist.

12. ABOUT PAGES FOR GOOD

OUR WORK WITH PEEL REGIONAL POLICE

Pages For Good is a strategic consulting and communications team that specializes in developing and promoting comprehensive reports that drive impact and foster change. Our services encompass every stage of the process, from initial research, stakeholder engagement and ideation to expert writing, innovative design, and engaging presentations. We go beyond report creation by managing promotions, organizing impactful events, handling media relations, and conducting thorough evaluations to measure success. At Pages For Good, we are deeply committed to applying Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles in every aspect of our approach, ensuring that our work elevates diverse voices and promotes equitable outcomes for all communities.

Our collaboration with Peel Regional Police aims to inform a transformative Youth Engagement Strategy that promotes mutual respect, trust, and safety. By addressing internal culture, managing public perceptions, and involving youth, parents and community leaders in the engagement process, we strive to build a more inclusive and supportive environment for all living, working or going to school in Peel Region.

Working together, we can create a community where mutual respect and trust are the foundations of our collective safety and well-being. We thank everyone who contributed to this vital conversation.