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Assigning Value to Peel Regional Police's School Resource Officer Program

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Outline

- What we did
- Why we did it
- How we did it
- Key findings

The What

- Objective of the research:
 - The research was designed to quantify the value delivered to students, school administrators and the community by the Peel Regional Police's School Resource Officer (SRO) program

Why Did We Do This Study?

- The study was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
 - Part of a Partnership Development Grant looking at the sustainability of policing in Canada
 - Costs of policing are high, but it is often difficult to assign a value to what police do
 - What is the value of something not happening?

Peel Regional Police's SRO Program

- Has been operating for 22 years
- Two officers “share responsibility” for two different high schools in Peel Region
 - All high schools in the region have full time SRO officers
- Costs of this program are visible and significant
 - \$9 Million a year
- But value provided by this type of proactive, community-based policing initiative harder to quantify

Peel Regional Police's SRO Program

*“The primary responsibility of the **School Resource Officer (S.R.O.)** is to strive to create a safe learning environment at our Secondary Schools. This is achieved by forming positive partnerships with students and school administration. It is encouraged that officers use a proactive style of policing and interact with youth in a non-enforcement manner on a regular basis.”*

Data That Inform Our Conclusions

- Our study was
 - longitudinal (2014-2017)
 - multi-method
 - quantitative (survey)
 - qualitative (interviews)
 - ethnographic (ride-alongs)
 - SROI analysis (financial analysis)

Data That Inform Our Conclusions

- 5 high schools in Peel Region participated in this study
 - Schools selected to reflect the diversity of the region
 - Two were designated “urban-grant” schools and were located in socio-economically challenged areas in Peel Region;
 - One school was in an affluent community
 - Two schools were situated in “middle class” communities

Data That Inform Our Conclusions

- The challenge: The program has been running for 22 years
 - Cannot do before and after comparisons
- Solution:
 - Middle schools do not have full time SROs
 - Compare student's attitudes, perceptions, and intentions when they start in Grade 9 in Sept. to attitudes, perceptions and intentions end of first semester

Data That Inform Our Conclusions

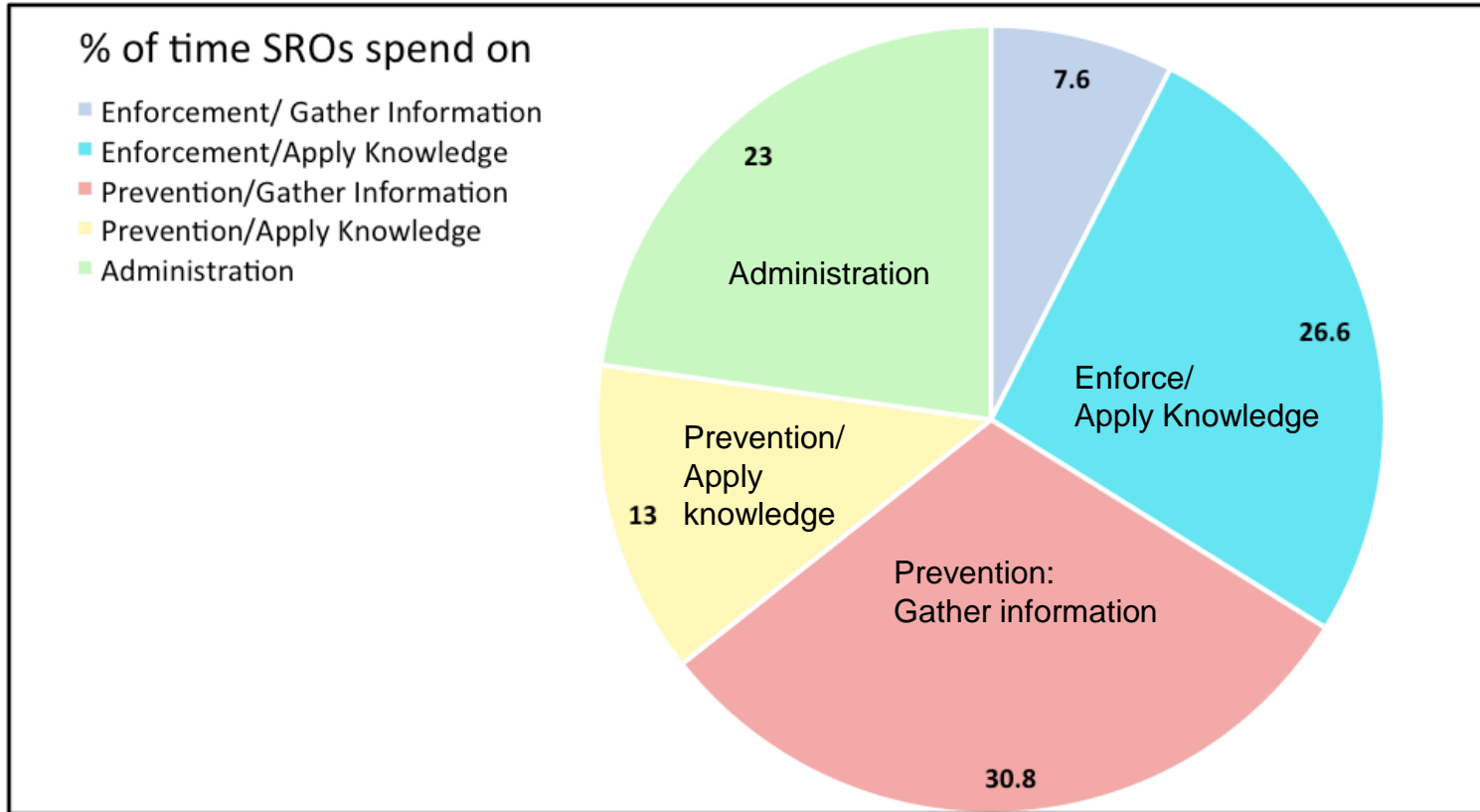
	2014	2015	2016
Qualitative (interview) data	10 SROs	5 SROs and 5 school administrators (August), 10 school administrators (December)	29 school administrators (January-March) 8 SROs (January-March) 11 Peel police stakeholders (Sergeants and Staff Sergeants) (March-April) 8 student interviews (April)
SRO activity data		Daily records kept by SROs working in the 5 participating high schools (September-December)	Daily records kept by SROs working in the 5 participating high schools (January-February)
Quantitative (student surveys) data		Surveyed students in Grade 9 in the 5 participating high schools in September (beginning of term) (n = 610)	Surveyed students in Grade 9 in the 5 participating high schools in March (end of term) (n = 655)
Ethnographic data		5	4

What do SRO's Do? LOTS!!!

- ***Reactive versus proactive activities:***
 - Officers engage in reactive activities as a response to something that has already happened at the school or the school's catchment area.
 - Officers engage in proactive activities to prevent a crime, avert the victimization of other students or forestall anti-social activity.
- ***Information Gathering Versus Activities that Use Information Skills and Training:***
 - Information gathering activities contribute to the development of positive relationships with key stakeholders
 - Activities that involve the use of information, skills and training enhance the credibility of these officers within a variety of stakeholder groups.

What do SRO's Do?

Proactive policing and relationship building



What do SROs do?: Proactive

- Gather Information/Relationship Building
 - Walk around the school with the school administrators
 - Patrol neighborhood around the school
 - Engage in Extra-curricular activities with students/community
- Use Information and Expertise/Build Credibility
 - Respond to requests from members of school's broader community
 - Play education role in the school/emergency preparedness
 - Stop criminal activity from occurring

What do SROs do?: Reactive

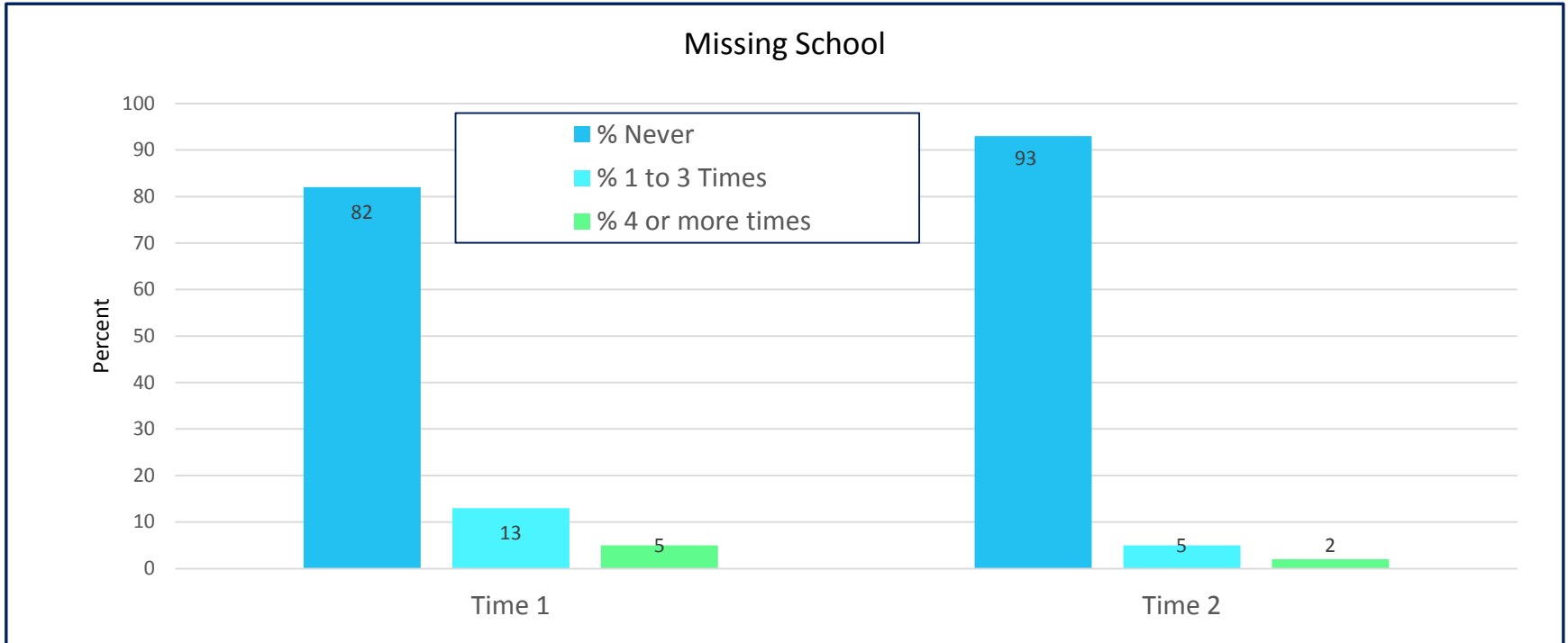
- Gather Information/Relationship Building
 - POP projects within their community
 - Assist other bureaus with related requests
- Use Information and Expertise/Build Credibility
 - Respond to criminal (drugs, robberies) and non-criminal (trespassing, liquor, fighting, suicide attempts) calls for service in school and school catchment area
 - Deal with critical incidents in the school involving behavioural problems and mental health issues

Value of the Program

- Students and administrators feel safer at school
 - Deterrence
 - Faster Response Time
 - De-escalation
- While all students experience this benefit of the SRO program, who have been bullied or victimized in the past (17% of sample) most likely to experience this source of value

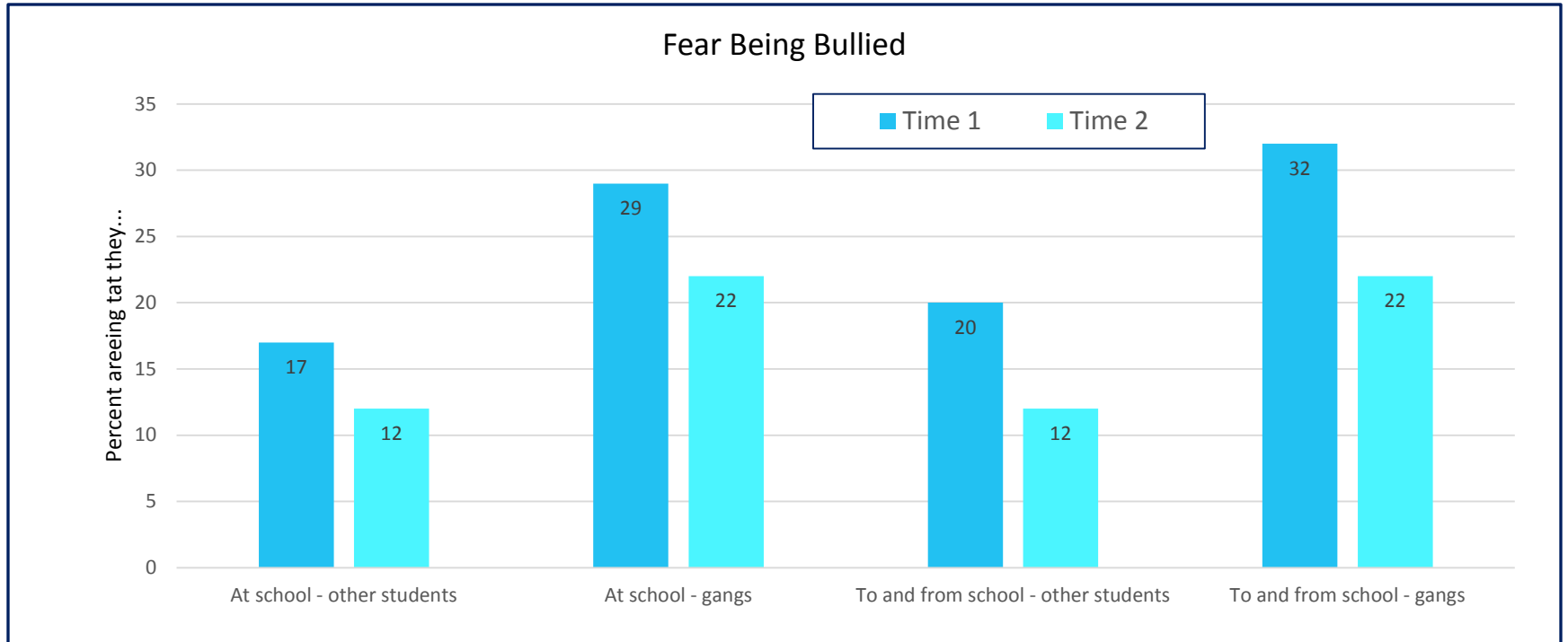
Value of the SRO Program

The Likelihood that Students will Miss School Because of Bullying Decreases Over Time



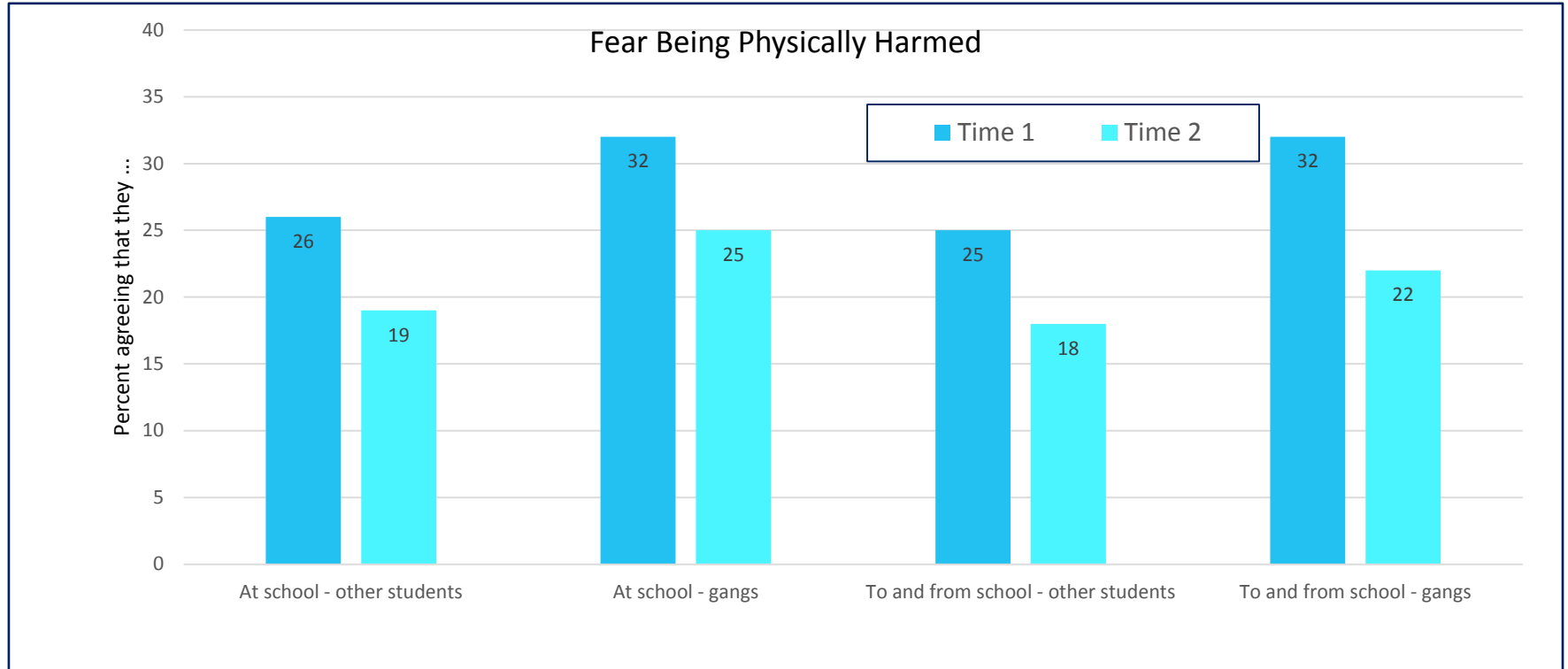
Value of the Program

Student's Fear of Being Bullied Decreases over Time



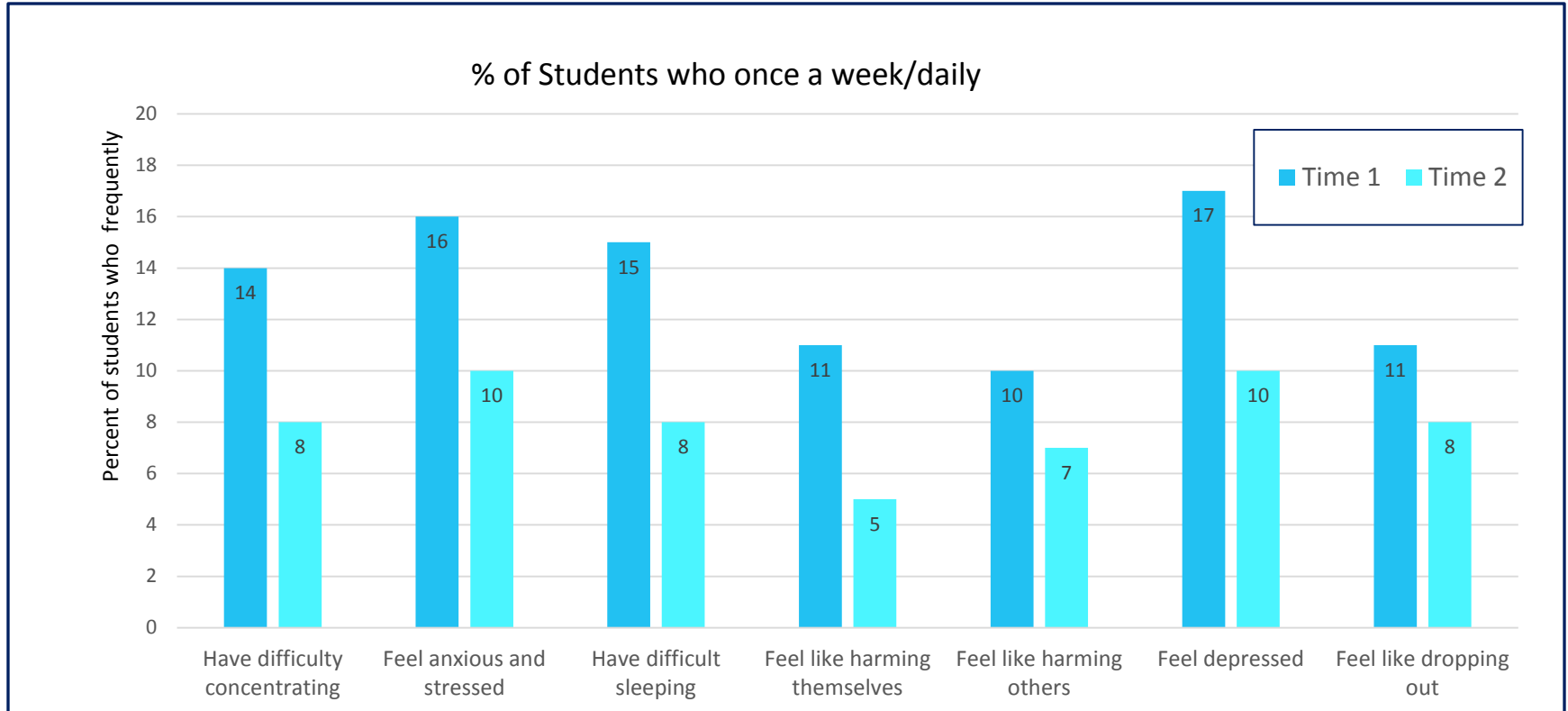
Value of the Program

Student's Fear of Being Physically Harmed Decreases Over Time



Value of the Program

Student's Mental Health Improves Over time



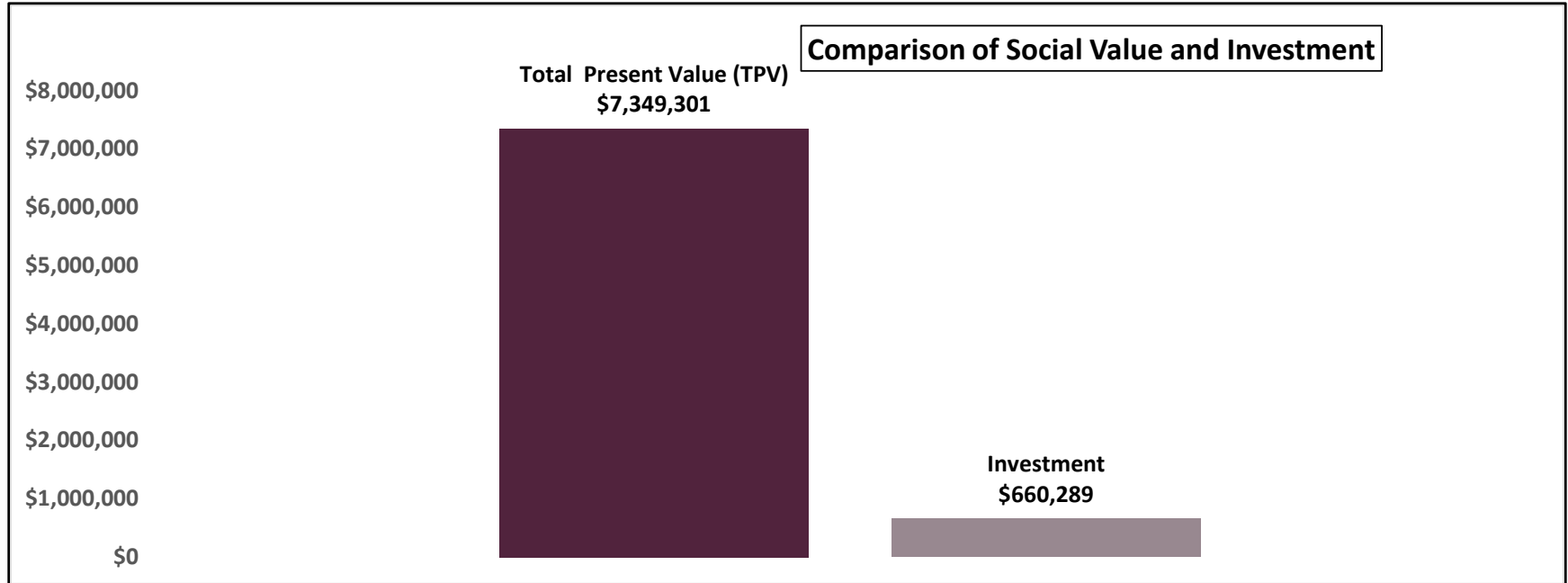
Other Sources of Value

- Officers have unique ability to use diversion

*“A **diversion program** in the criminal justice system is a form of sentence in which the criminal offender joins a rehabilitation **program**, which will help remedy the behavior leading to the original arrest, and avoid conviction and a criminal record”*
- Relationship building
- Collaborative problem solving

Value: SROI Analysis

Done for data collected on the 5 Schools

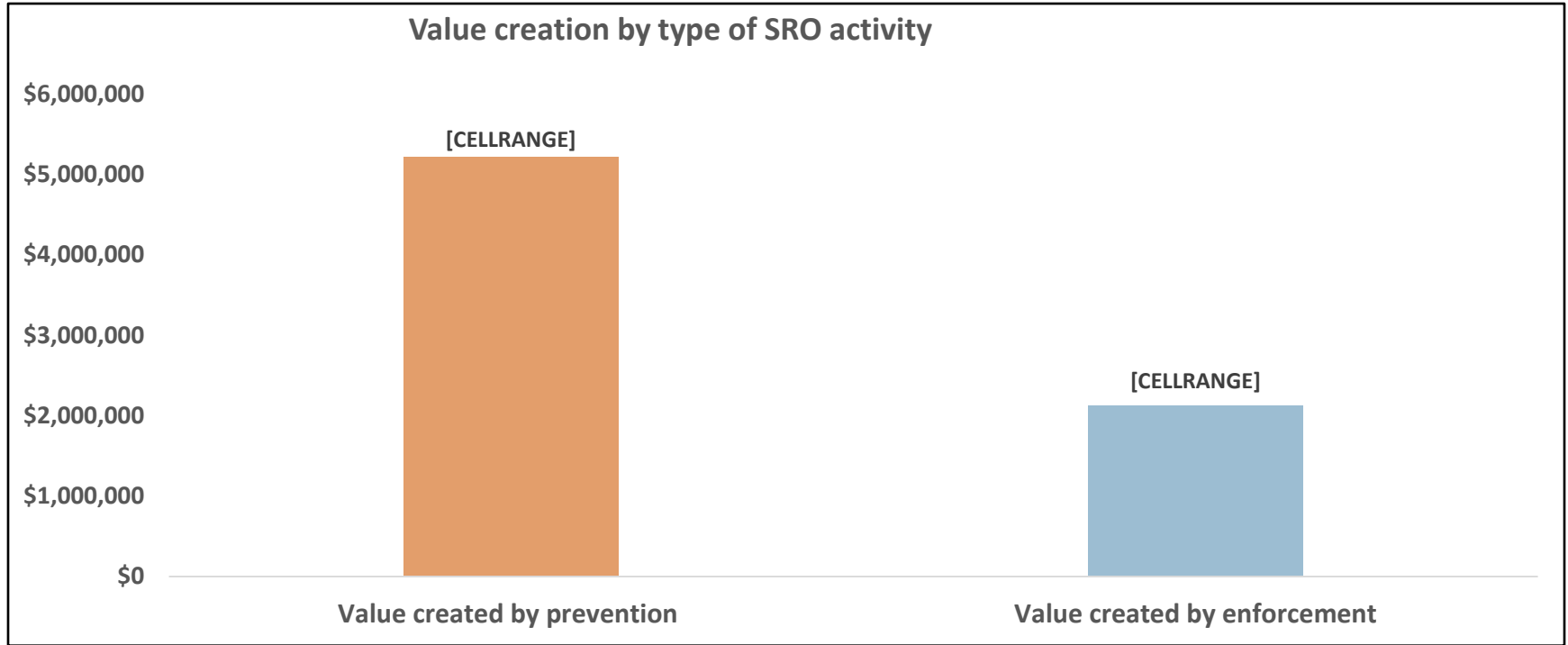


SROI Analysis

- For every dollar invested in the Peel SRO program, a minimum of \$11.13 of social and economic value is created

NOTE: This is conservative estimate

Value Created By Type of SRO Activity



In their own words: SROs

“I think one of the big challenges is connecting with the kids... there is a lot of negativity about the police on the TV.. So you kind of try and break that barrier and try to build positive relationships with them and show that we are here for them”

“You’re not looking to arrest kids.. You don’t benefit from that. You’re actually trying to help them out.”

In their own words: SROs

“Just our mere presence in the school.. Just that alone. I mean, who knows how much we deter just from that? How much bullying or criminal offenses and misbehaviours just do not happen because of us being there.”

In their own words: SROs

“You’re not going to win over every kid, but you put the effort in. You’re at the school every day. You’re walking the hall-ways, you’re connecting with them... I think that’s all you can do is just keep trying.”

In their own words: SROs

“They see us and they get to know us, they call us by first names. We get to know the schools. We get to know the students as well as the parents and extended families, and you’re not see as such a negative thing.”

In their own words: Grade 9 Students

“I was bullied throughout last year and that was a big issue for me. Like all of Grade 8... this school is a lot safer compared to the other school.”

“I can focus on my studying and long term goals without worry ... “

In their own words: Grade 9 Students

“Would you talk to the police? Absolutely. My friends who go to schools where there are no police have a pretty different view though.. Like the police are bad and they don’t want to have any communication with them. Here it’s more like they are your friends; you speak to them if you have problems.”

In their own words: Administrators

“The value is they know the kids, they understand the community needs, and they work really hard to work for the kids and not against the kids.”

“It offers the opportunity for early intervention and deterrence for those students who have made mistakes but are willing to change their ways.”

In their own words: Administrators

“I think a lot of students in our area are raised to be fearful of police authority, so it’s nice for them to have that opportunity to build that relationship with an officer and feel that sense of safety.”

“The SRO really adds to the sense of safety so that everyone in the school can focus on education.”

“Without the SRO we would be calling 911 all the time”

Confidence in our Findings

- The fact that the findings from all the stages of this study were essentially the same gives us great confidence in the validity of our findings

Conclusions

- Peel Regional Police's SRO program provides real value to its key stakeholders: students, the school and the community
- Should it be continued: Yes
- Should other communities and other police services consider implementing this type of program in their high schools:
 - Yes – but it has to be the same type of program

Final Thanks

- This type of research takes time and commitment from a variety of people and organizations
- We could not have done this without the help of
 - Peel Regional Police
 - SROs and data analysts in particular!
- Peel District School Board and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
 - School administrators in particular!
- The help of our PhD students