

Youth Protective Factors Study: Supervision Based on Risks, Strengths, and Development

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<https://www.umassmed.edu/lawandpsychiatry/law-and-psychiatry-research/NIJ-Youth-Protective-Factor-Study/>

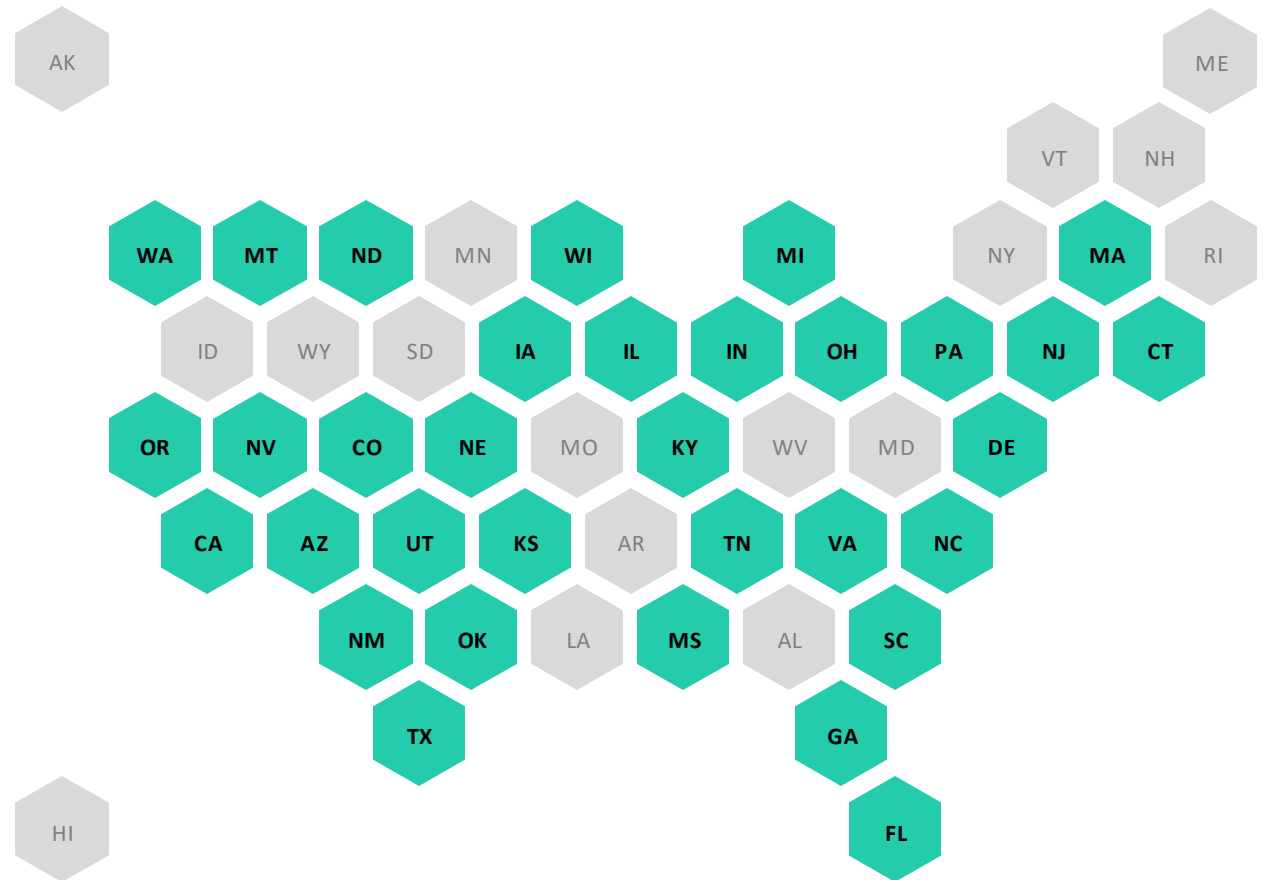


About the CSG Justice Center

A national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, representing all three branches of state government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies to increase public safety and strengthen communities



We've helped improve outcomes for millions of youth and families in contact with the juvenile justice system across the country, navigating increasingly partisan politics.



Background, About the Study, and Initial Findings



2abc BALTIMORE
WHAR

HOMEPAGE SHOWCASE

'You can't keep letting them get away with it': Addressing juvenile crime

MOJO 360

Opinion

Opinion: To fix our juvenile system, we need accountable offenders

Montgomery County has an obligation to fix the juvenile justice system and prevent recurring incidents

by **Dawn Luedtke**

November 18, 2023 11:00 am

By: Elizabeth H

At our Oct. 30 County Council Public Safety Committee meeting, we discussed the juvenile justice system and the need for accountability.

NEWS & POLITICS

Cops say masked teens with a thirst for violence and

are termed
reveals a
al evidence

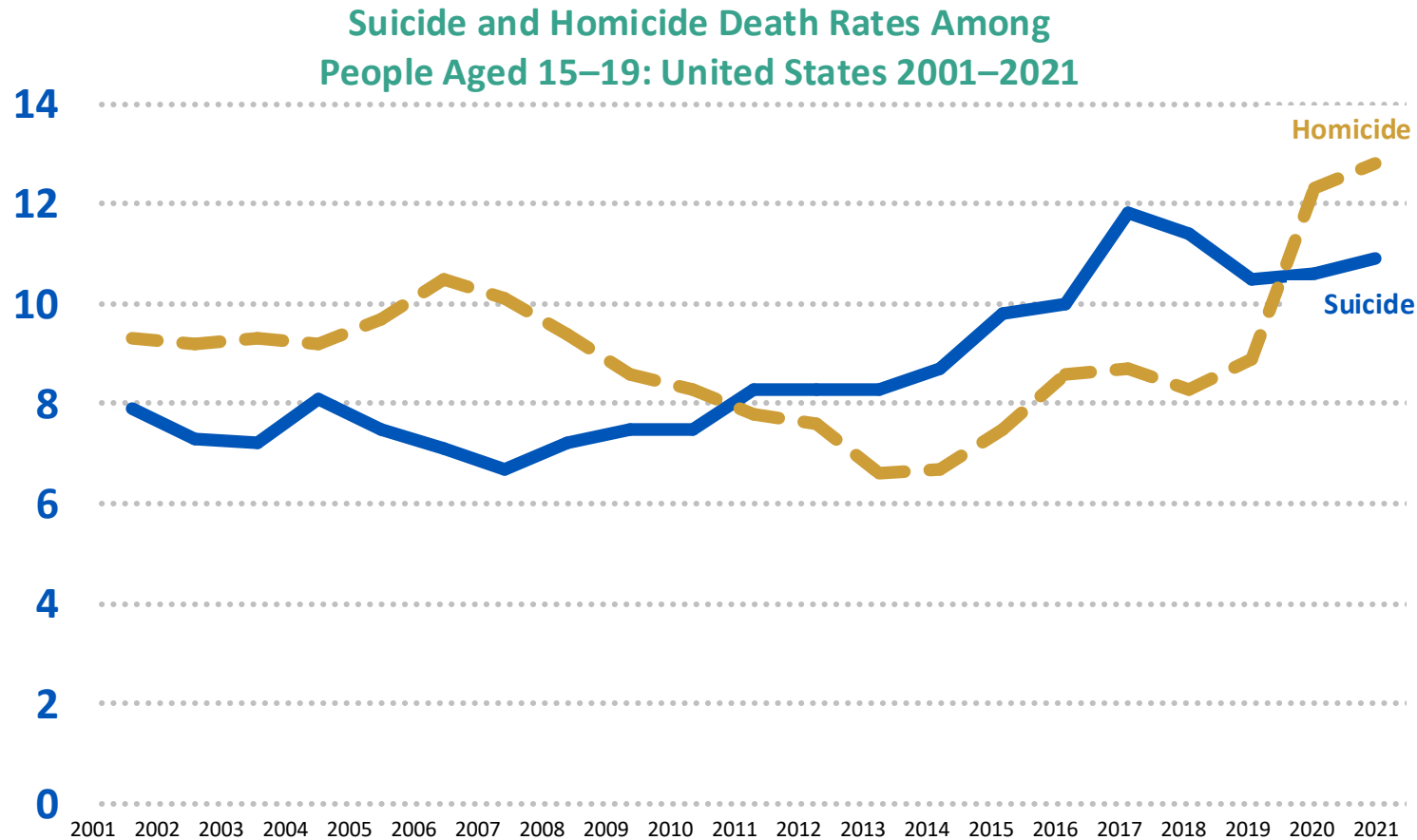
Dukmas
2021

Violence among children has soared across the country since 2020. One consequence: a mounting toll of young victims.

By [Dan Frosch](#) and [Zusha Elinson](#) / Photographs by José A. Alvarado Jr. for
The Wall Street Journal
Jan. 23, 2023 10:06 am ET

IN FOCUS

Homicide and suicide are now the leading causes of death among children and young adults, particularly among youth of color.



- In half of all cases in which a minor committed a violent crime, the victim was also a minor.
- The rate of firearm deaths among Black youth is 20 times higher than White youth.
- Rates of gun violence victimization for Black youth in rural areas are now equal to urban areas.

Adolescents are experiencing unprecedented mental health challenges, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



29%

Reported that their **mental health was not good** “most of the time or always.”



20%

Seriously considered attempting suicide.



40%

Felt sad or hopeless, compared to 26% in 2009.
This includes 53% of girls and over 65% of LGBTQ youth.



109%

Increase in adolescent drug overdose deaths during the pandemic.

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System 2023, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>.

Public agencies and providers are facing significant staffing challenges that are further undermining their ability to address youth's needs.

> 85%

Cite moderate or severe challenges in hiring and retaining staff.

> 80%

Report moderate or severe staffing challenges among service providers, significantly impacting service availability.

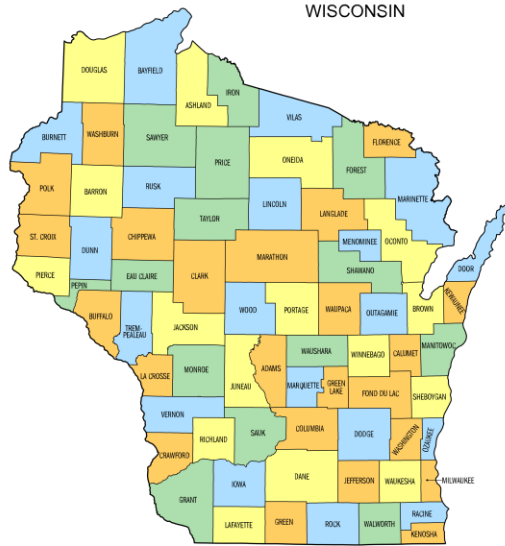
< 10%

Felt their state had a plan to address these staffing challenges.

Josh Weber and Christina Gilbert, "Systems in Crisis: Revamping the Juvenile Justice Workforce and Core Strategies for Improving Public Safety and Youth Outcomes" (CSG Justice Center, 2023), <https://projects.csjusticecenter.org/systems-in-crisis/systems-in-crisis-brief/>.

About the Protective Factor Study

Youth were from 14 counties within 3 states (4 or 5 counties per state) between June 2021 and July 2022. SAMPLE = 3,380 Youth Referred or Adjudicated



RECIDIVISM

Tracked new violent petitions post-supervision for an average 1.5 years

Violent recidivism rates ranged by state: 6.1% to 14.8%

Youth Protective Factors Study: First Brief Key Findings

Finding #1	Most youth referred to the juvenile justice system were assessed as low or moderate risk to reoffend. The majority of these youth did not reoffend after supervision, and of those who did, most did not commit a new serious offense.
Finding #2	The most prevalent risk factors among youth coming into the juvenile justice system were not the factors most likely to predict more serious reoffending after system supervision.
Finding #3	Although substance use weakly predicted reoffending overall, more serious substance use was a relatively strong predictor of person reoffending among younger adolescents.

Second Brief Analysis, Findings, and Implications



PROTECTIVE FACTOR SURVEY ADMINISTERED AT TIME OF RISK/NEEDS ASSESSMENT

9 self-report measures within four domains

Completion Rate: 58.0% of Youth (n = 1961)

- 32.4% Missed by PO
- 8.0% Refused
- 1.5% Could Not Complete

Protective Factor Survey

You are going to be asked many questions about your qualities, relationships, school, community and what you do for fun. These questions will teach us about your likes and hopes for the future. This will take you about 15 minutes. Please be honest with your answers and read each question carefully.

Primary Language

- ☐ English
☐ Spanish
☐ Other: _____

Directions. The following questions are about how you handle events in your daily life. Choose the response that describes how true each statement is of you, on a scale of 1 (Not at all true) to 4 (Exactly true).

	NOT AT ALL TRUE	HARDLY TRUE	MODERATELY TRUE	EXACTLY TRUE
1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	1	2	3	4
2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want. <i>In other words: If someone disagrees with me, I can find ways to get what I want.</i>	1	2	3	4
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals. <i>In other words: It is easy for me to stick to my <u>plans</u> and meet my goals.</i>	1	2	3	4
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	1	2	3	4
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations. <i>In other words: Thanks to my <u>cleverness</u>, I know how to handle <u>unexpected situations</u>.</i>	1	2	3	4
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	1	2	3	4
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities. <i>In other words: I can rely on my ability to <u>get through</u>.</i>	1	2	3	4

Four Protective Factor Domains

1. Prosocial identity

How much does the young person view and value their future possible self as prosocial?

Moral ideal self: “How much does _____ * describe the type of person you really want to be?”

*truthful, respectful, kind, etc.

Moral internalization: “Being someone with these characteristics* is an important part of who I am.”

*caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, hardworking, helpful, honest, & kind



Four Protective Factor Domains

2. Prosocial engagement

Young peoples' sense of purpose + involvement in educational, employment, and community pursuits

Purpose – how much does the person have a sense of purposeful life goals or career pursuits?

Social responsibility – what is the person's attitude about social responsibility (e.g., volunteering) & how involved are they in community activities?

School connectedness – how bonded does the person feel to people at school?



Four Protective Factor Domains

3. Social supports

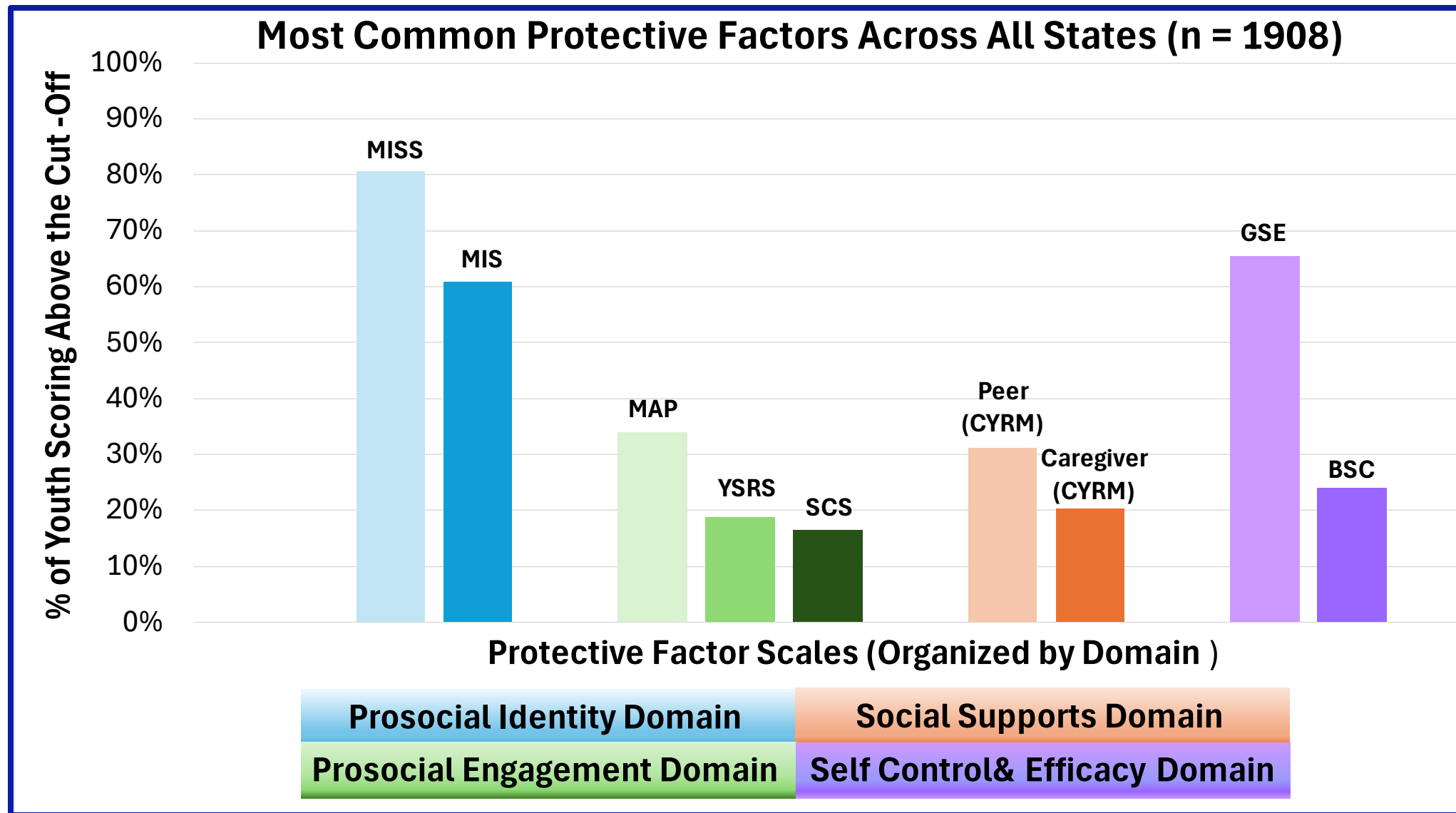
How strong & supportive are the young person's relationships with a) peers and b) caregivers

4. Self-control & self-efficacy

How able is the young person to control their emotional and behavioral impulses?

How much does the young person believe in their own ability to handle life difficulties?





State Youth Samples

(necessitating separate analyses)

STATE # 1

Youth (n = 1,293)

M age= 15 \pm 1.7

72% male

64% non-White

47/44/9 lo/mod/hi risk

25% probation or placed

Post- sup. recidivism

Any= 17%

Violent= 7%

STATE # 2

Youth (n = 252)

M age= 14 \pm 1.6

71% male

39% non-White

43/43/12 lo/mod/hi risk

14% probation or placed

Post-sup recidivism

Any= 21%

Violent= 14%

STATE # 3

Youth (n = 416)

M age= 15 \pm 1.6

76% male

78% non-White

38/40/22 lo/mod/hi risk

27% probation or placed

Post-sup recidivism

Any= 26%

Violent= 17%

RESEARCH QUESTION #1

Which protective factors most strongly (and most uniquely) protect youth against recidivism?
Does this differ by age?



Self control significantly protects against recidivism *across* contexts, but all four domains protect in the *best-powered* context

STATE # 1

Any recidivism

Self control & efficacy
Social support
Prosocial engagements*
Prosocial identity*

Violent recidivism

Self control & efficacy
Social support
Prosocial engagements

STATE # 2

Any recidivism

Self control only

Violent recidivism

Self control only

STATE # 3

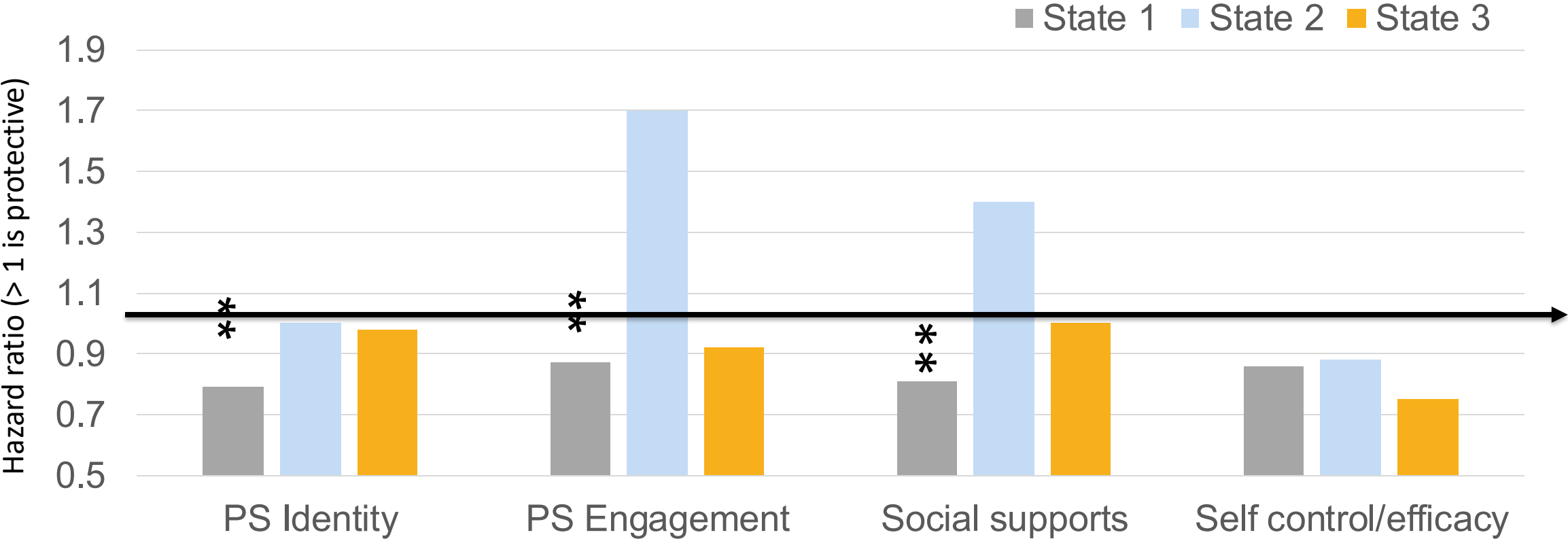
Any recidivism

Self control & efficacy
Peer support only

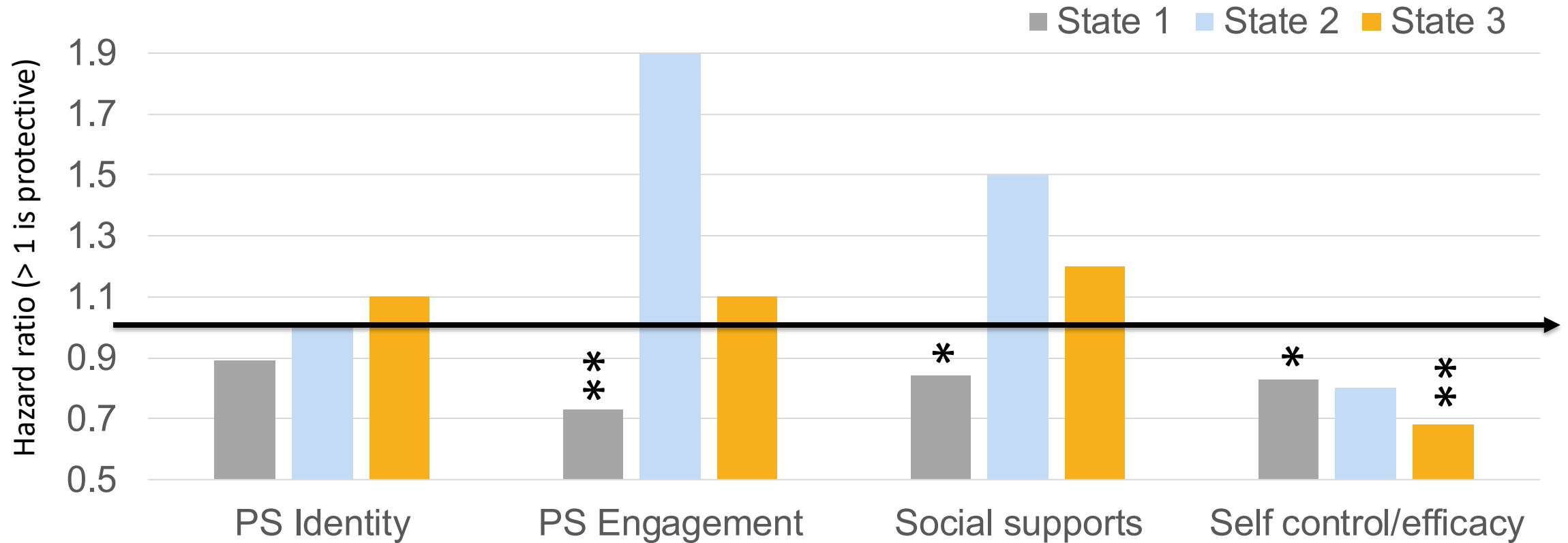
Violent recidivism

Self control & efficacy

Prosocial identity, engagement, and support add unique value to risk in predicting any recidivism in the *best-powered* context



Self- control/efficacy add unique value to risk in predicting violent recidivism *across contexts* – and others matter too, in the *best-powered* context



Younger youth are most strongly protected by school connectedness *across contexts*; and by prosocial identity and purpose in the *best-powered* context

STATE # 1

Any- & violent recidivism
Prosocial identity and purpose protect *younger* youth most strongly

STATE # 2

Any recidivism
Self control and/or self efficacy protect *older* youth most strongly (cross-over)

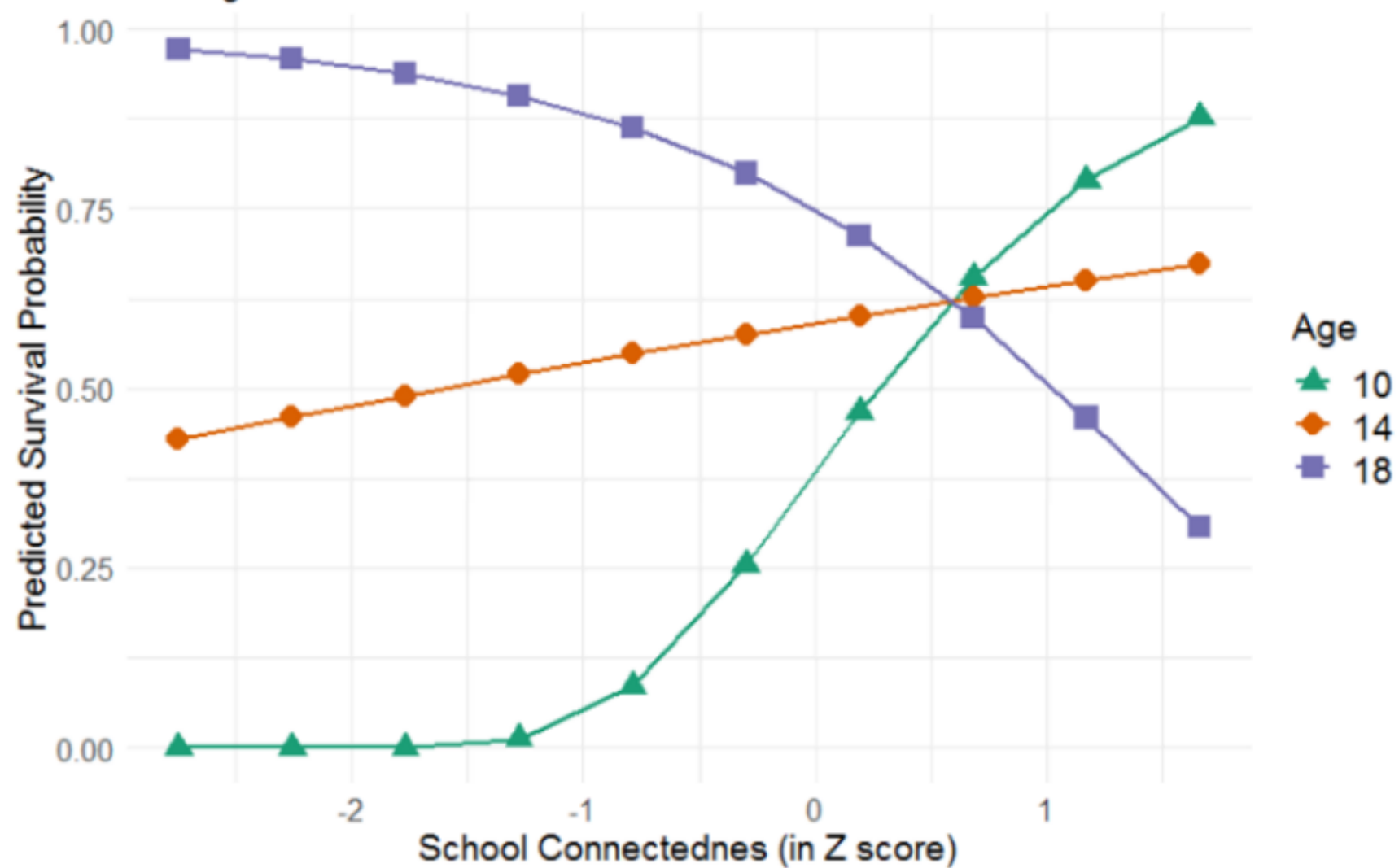
Any- & violent recidivism
School connectedness protects *younger* youth most strongly

STATE # 3

Any- & violent recidivism
Self control and/or self efficacy protect *younger* youth most strongly

School connectedness protects *younger* youth most strongly

Predicted Survival Probability (for Violent Petition) by Age and School Connectedness, Holding Gender as Male and Race as Black



Key Conclusions

- Protective factors can be validly assessed and “matter” in juvenile justice settings for the purposes of recidivism.
- All four domains can protect youth against recidivism, though self control and self efficacy protect most consistently across contexts
- After controlling for cumulative risk,
 - Prosocial identity, prosocial engagement, and social support add value in predicting **any recidivism** in the *best powered context*
 - Self control and self efficacy add value in predicting **violent recidivism** *across contexts*, and other domains also add value in the *best powered context*
- Some protective factors are particularly important for younger youth – including school connectedness, prosocial identity, and purpose

Key Implications for Practitioners and Researchers

- Juvenile justice systems should consider
 - ✓ Adding a survey of protective factors to their intake processes
 - ✓ Targeting influential protective factors like self-control and self-efficacy for case planning and in supervision and service decisions
 - ✓ Potentially prioritize protective factors particularly for younger youth
- Clinicians and researchers should consider
 - ✓ Building the evidence base for “what works” to build strengths that actually prevent recidivism (e.g., Jian & Skeem, 2024)

RESEARCH QUESTION #2

What if any impact does receiving strength-based services have on reoffending?



How Services Were Defined



All rehabilitative services or strengths-based activities in which youth engaged regardless of payer or referrer:

- Self-referred
- Education system
- Child welfare system
- Mental health system
- Probation officer delivered (e.g., Carey Guides, EPICS)
- All services received within placements

Services tracked up to case close or end of study period, whichever came first - M = 283.6 days in services (SD = 215)

Categorizing Strengths-Based Services

Consensus for categorizing services by 3 experts: Mark Lipsey, PhD, Jeff Butts, PhD, Pamela Rose Buckley, PhD

Services promoting
competence and skill building,
prosocial engagements, and/or
prosocial attachment

Examples:

- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Prosocial Skills and Life-Skills Training
- Vocational training
- School-based interventions- extracurricular activities
- Voluntary Volunteer work
- Restorative programs w/victim mediation component

Increased Service Data Recording: Services Entered Before vs After Study Intervention

	State 1		State 3	
	Before	After	Before	After
# Services Entered	1,638	5,705	1,652	1,072
# Services per Youth	.30	2.84	.40	1.31
% Strengths-Based	.8%	25.6%	0%	9.8%
% Risk Reduction	15.6%	73.1%	14.8%	43.2%
% Responsivity	17.8%	56.7%	15.8%	33.9%

Service to youth ratio more than double

Before = Sept 2017 to Dec 2019; After – Jan 2021 to May 2023

Attending Services

- 2,182 youth received ANY services
- 49.5% of those received at least one strengths-based service

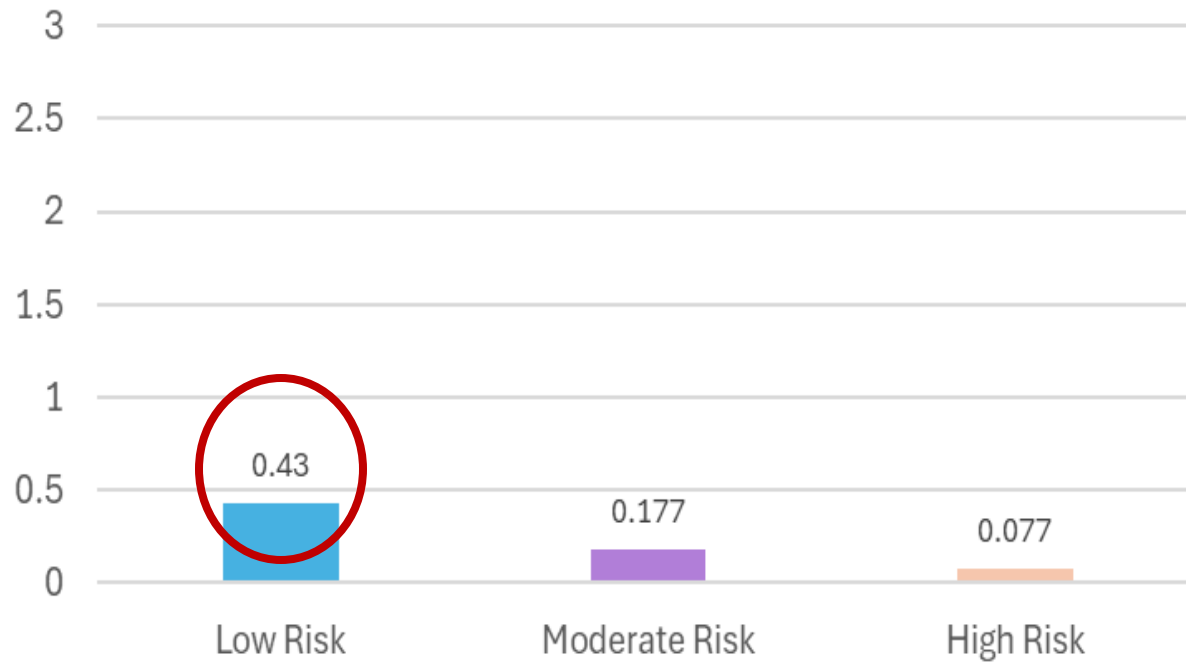
The most common strengths-based services in which youth participated included:

- Work placement/Job Skills Training (22.4%)
 - Structured Recreational Activities (6.4%)
 - Mentoring (6.2%)
-
- Dosage units per month of supervision
Md =.05

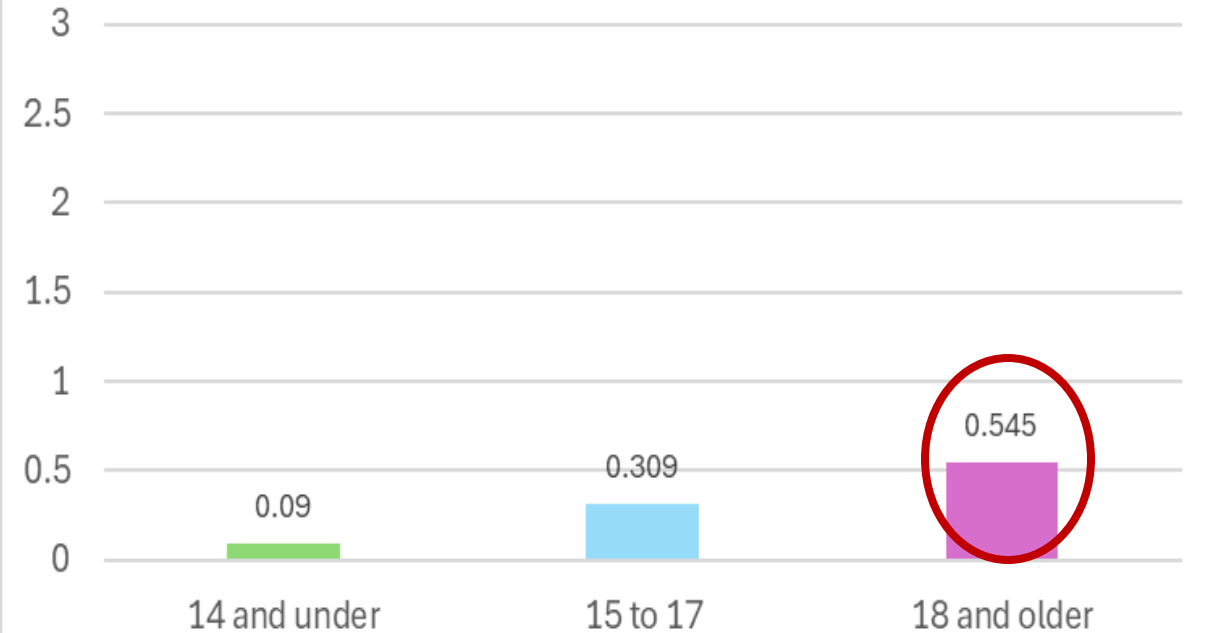


Who Engaged in Strengths-Based Services?

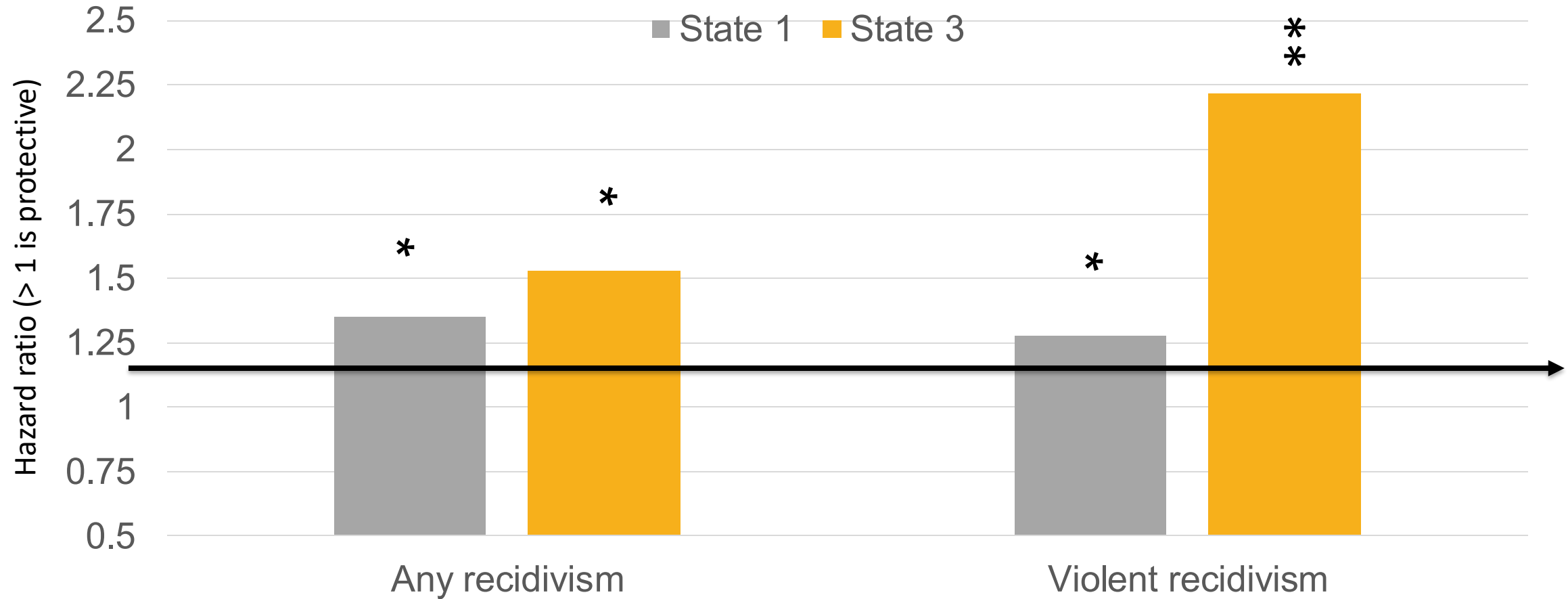
Strengths-based Service Dosage Units per Month of Supervision (z-score) by Risk Level



Strengths-based Service Dosage Units per Month of Supervision (z-score) by Age



Youth who participated in any strengths-based services were *more* likely to re-offend post-supervision than youth who did not



Key Conclusions

- Low risk youth are the most likely to engage in or receive strengths-based services.
- The most common strength-based services in which youth participated —work placements and recreational activities—likely vary widely in focus and quality and don't seek to directly impact the protective factors that matter most (self-efficacy and self-control).
- Strengths-based services increased recidivism. This may be because:
 - The services attended the most were not the services that are evidence-based
 - It is unclear which services enhance priority protective factors (or decrease risk factors)
 - There is little empirical guidance for how best to implement them
 - They may inadvertently exacerbate risk (e.g., peer contagion effects)

***Limitations: observational design cannot support strong causal inference (more refined analyses coming)**

Key Implications for Researchers and Practitioners

- Clinicians and researchers should consider
 - ✓ Building the evidence base for what interventions (broadly) increase priority protective factors and protect against recidivism.
 - ✓ Developing and providing implementation guidance for jurisdictions and providers on strength-based services.
- Juvenile justice systems should consider
 - ✓ That Positive Youth Development, like RNR, is not a one size fits all approach or panacea—this finding reinforces the importance of individualizing the assessment of youth's risk and protective factors, case plan, and services.
 - ✓ Strengthening attention to and investment in service processes/partnerships.
 - ✓ Improving data collection and analysis on service receipt, dosage, and outcomes, and aligning use of limited resources accordingly.
 - ✓ Piloting and evaluating approaches to enhance self-control/self-efficacy.