



# The State of Lockdown Drills in US K-12 Schools

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# My Background



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## EDUCATION

BS, University of Central Florida  
MA, University of Central Florida  
PhD, Texas State University

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## RESEARCH

Mass/School Shootings  
School Safety  
Regional Gun Violence Research Consortium

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## PERSONAL CONNECTION

Parkland/Orlando Mass Shootings





# What Are We Talking About?

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## Lockdown Drills

A specific procedure that is used to respond to an imminent threat inside of a school building. This may be an active shooter but it also may be something else (e.g., parental dispute, dangerous animal).

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## Active Shooter Drills

A blanketed term typically used to describe options-based protocols and used solely for responding to active shooter events



# National Center for Education Statistics (2022)

“

In 2019–20, ... [a]bout 98 percent of public schools had drilled students on a lockdown procedure.



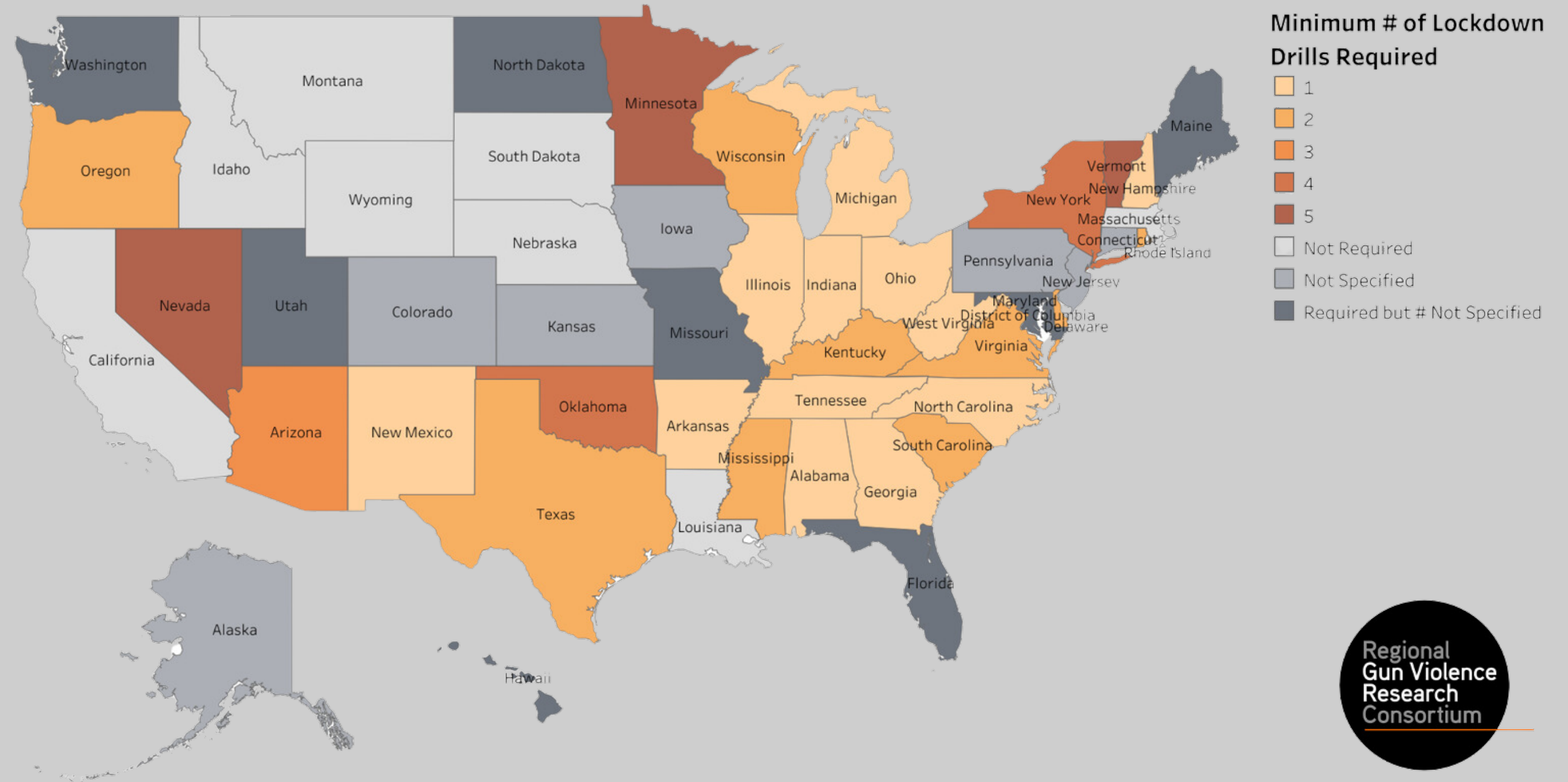
New York (+19)  
Lockdown Drills

Arkansas (+3)  
Active Shooter Drills

Indiana  
Manmade Occurrence Disaster Drills

New Mexico  
Shelter-in-Place Drills

Alabama  
Code Red Drills





# Practical Limitations

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## Countless Options to Choose From

Various governmental entities, non -profits, and for -profit companies have created different response programs

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## Little Standardization or Operational Guidance

Virtually no guidance from US DOE about how to conduct drills, and programs often do not provide operational guidance about how they should be practiced



# Research Limitations

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## Variable Terminology

Most research studies use the blanketed term “active shooter drill” and fail to account for differences in practices

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## Methodological Limitations

Few operationalize what type of practices are being studied, fewer conduct research in connection with an actual drill or with a K-12 school population



# Sandy Hook Advisory Commission (2015)

“

...[T]here has never been an event in which an active shooter breached a locked classroom door.

...however, with the issuance of the Commission continued to hear testimony on all issues having considered [P.A. 13-3](#) and the work of the commissions and task forces that it established, the Commission makes the following additional recommendations:

**RECOMMENDATION NO. 1:** The SSIC Report includes a standard requiring classroom and other safe-haven areas to have doors that can be locked from the inside. The Commission cannot emphasize enough the importance of this recommendation. The testimony and other evidence presented to the Commission reveals that there has never been an event in which an active shooter breached a locked classroom door. Accordingly, the Commission reiterates its recommendation that all classrooms in K-12 schools



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# PROTECTIVE EFFECTS IN REAL-WORLD SHOOTINGS

(Schildkraut, Greene-Colozzi, & Nickerson, 2023)

- 59% fewer total casualties
- 79% fewer on-scene fatalities
- 63% fewer fatalities overall





## RESEARCH STUDY

What are the effects of lockdown drills on those who participate in them?





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## ABOUT THE DISTRICT

- New York's fifth largest district
- 30+ schools
- 20,000+ students (Pre-K to 12th grade)
- 4,300+ employees and community partners





## ABOUT THE PROTOCOL

- Standard Response Protocol
- All-hazards emergency response plan
- Mirrors NYS requirements and US DOE guidance
- Free to schools

# IN AN EMERGENCY TAKE ACTION



## **HOLD! In your room or area. Clear the halls.**

### **STUDENTS**

Clear the hallways and remain in room or area until the "All Clear" is announced  
Do business as usual

### **ADULTS**

Close and lock the door  
Account for students and adults  
Do business as usual



## **SECURE! Get inside. Lock outside doors.**

### **STUDENTS**

Return to inside of building  
Do business as usual

### **ADULTS**

Bring everyone indoors  
Lock outside doors  
Increase situational awareness  
Account for students and adults  
Do business as usual



## **LOCKDOWN! Locks, lights, out of sight.**

### **STUDENTS**

Move away from sight  
Maintain silence  
Do not open the door

### **ADULTS**

Recover students from hallway if possible  
Lock the classroom door  
Turn out the lights  
Move away from sight  
Maintain silence  
Do not open the door  
Prepare to evade or defend



## **EVACUATE! (A location may be specified)**

### **STUDENTS**

Leave stuff behind if required to  
If possible, bring your phone  
Follow instructions

### **ADULTS**

Lead students to Evacuation location  
Account for students and adults  
Notify if missing, extra or injured students or adults



## **SHELTER! Hazard and safety strategy.**

### **STUDENTS**

Use appropriate safety strategy for the hazard

#### **Hazard**

Tornado  
Hazmat  
Earthquake  
Tsunami

#### **Safety Strategy**

Evacuate to shelter area  
Seal the room  
Drop, cover and hold  
Get to high ground

### **ADULTS**

Lead safety strategy  
Account for students and adults  
Notify if missing, extra or injured students or adults

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## YEAR 1 (2018-19)

Implementation of new response protocol  
6 research phases (3 surveys, 2 drills, training)

## YEAR 2 (2019-20)

Implementation of reunification model  
Follow-up round of lockdown drills

## YEAR 3 (2020-21)

Modification of drills to be “COVID safe”  
3 rounds of lockdown drills conducted

## YEAR 4\* (2021-22)

4 rounds of lockdown drills conducted  
Additional survey dissemination\*\*







# Conducting Drills

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## Announcing Lockdowns

Drills are always called as such so that no one thinks it is a real emergency

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## Avoiding Sensorial Tactics

Mock shooters, crisis actors, sounds of simulated gunfire, prop guns, and other stimuli should be avoided

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## Adults Modeling Calm Behavior

Children take their cues from teachers and staff, so remaining calm helps them to feel confident

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## Debriefing Before Concluding the Practice

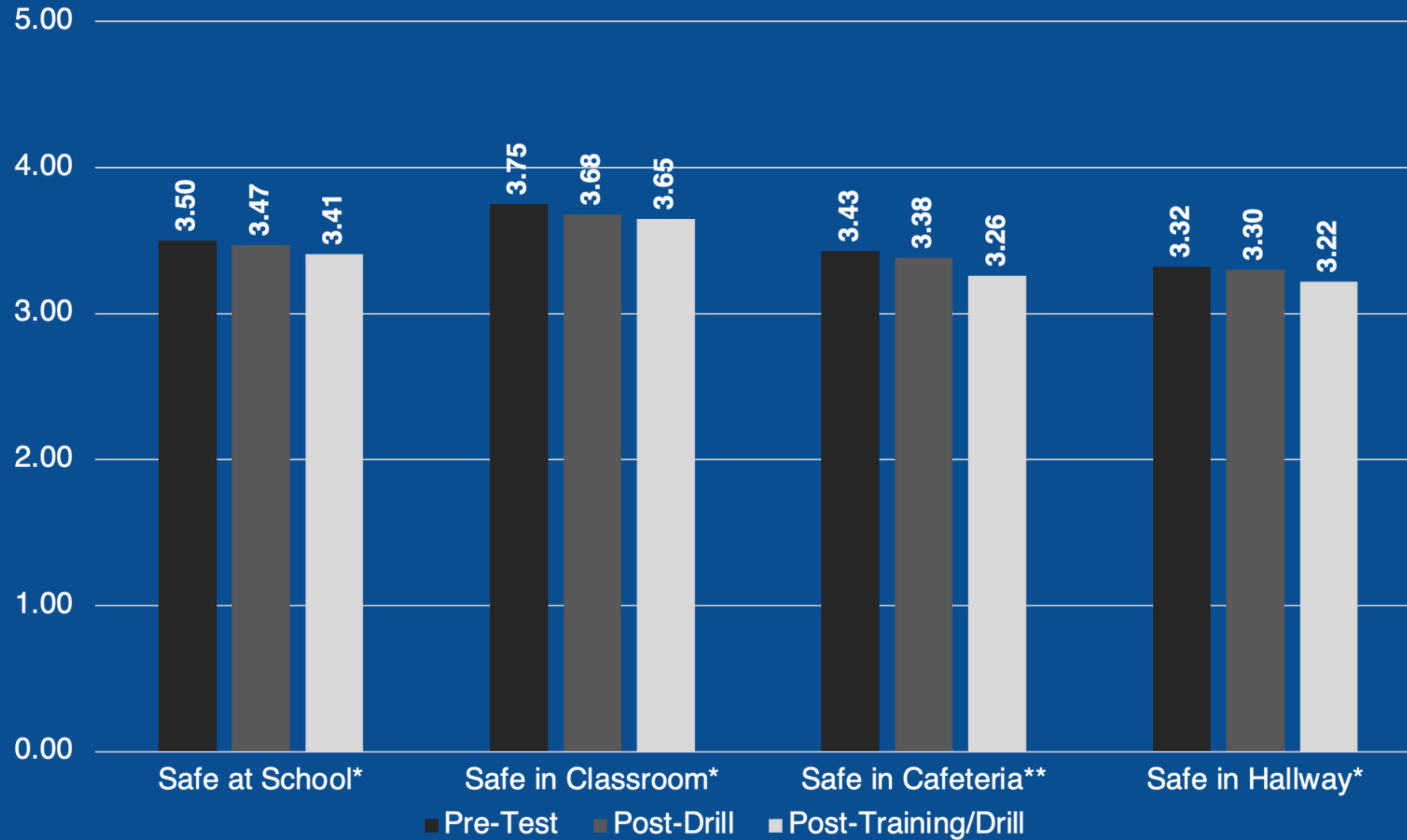
This creates an opportunity to discuss the drill, ask questions, and deescalate before resuming learning



# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL SAFETY



# STUDENTS (N = 10,926)

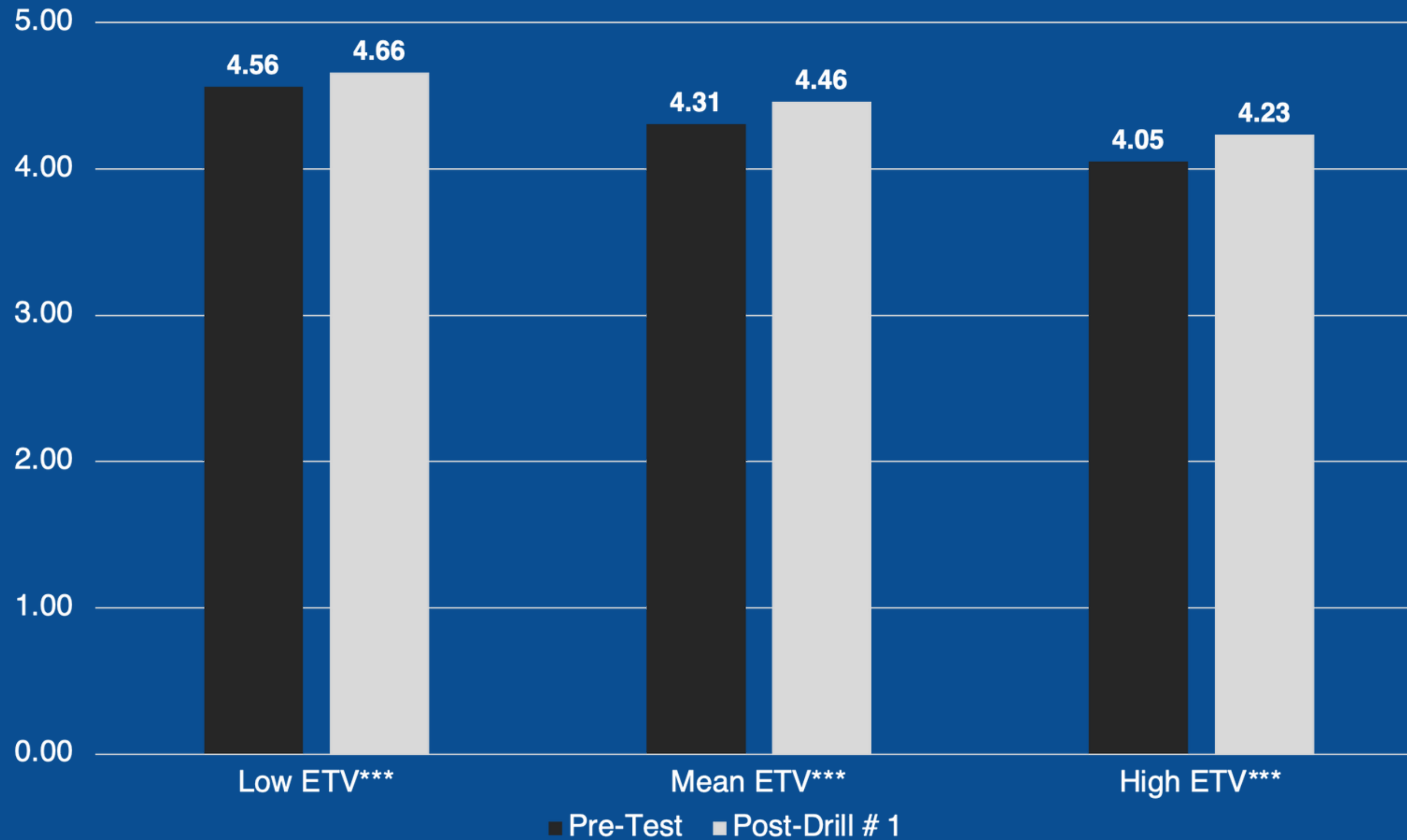


\*T3<T1

\*\*T3<T1, T3<T2

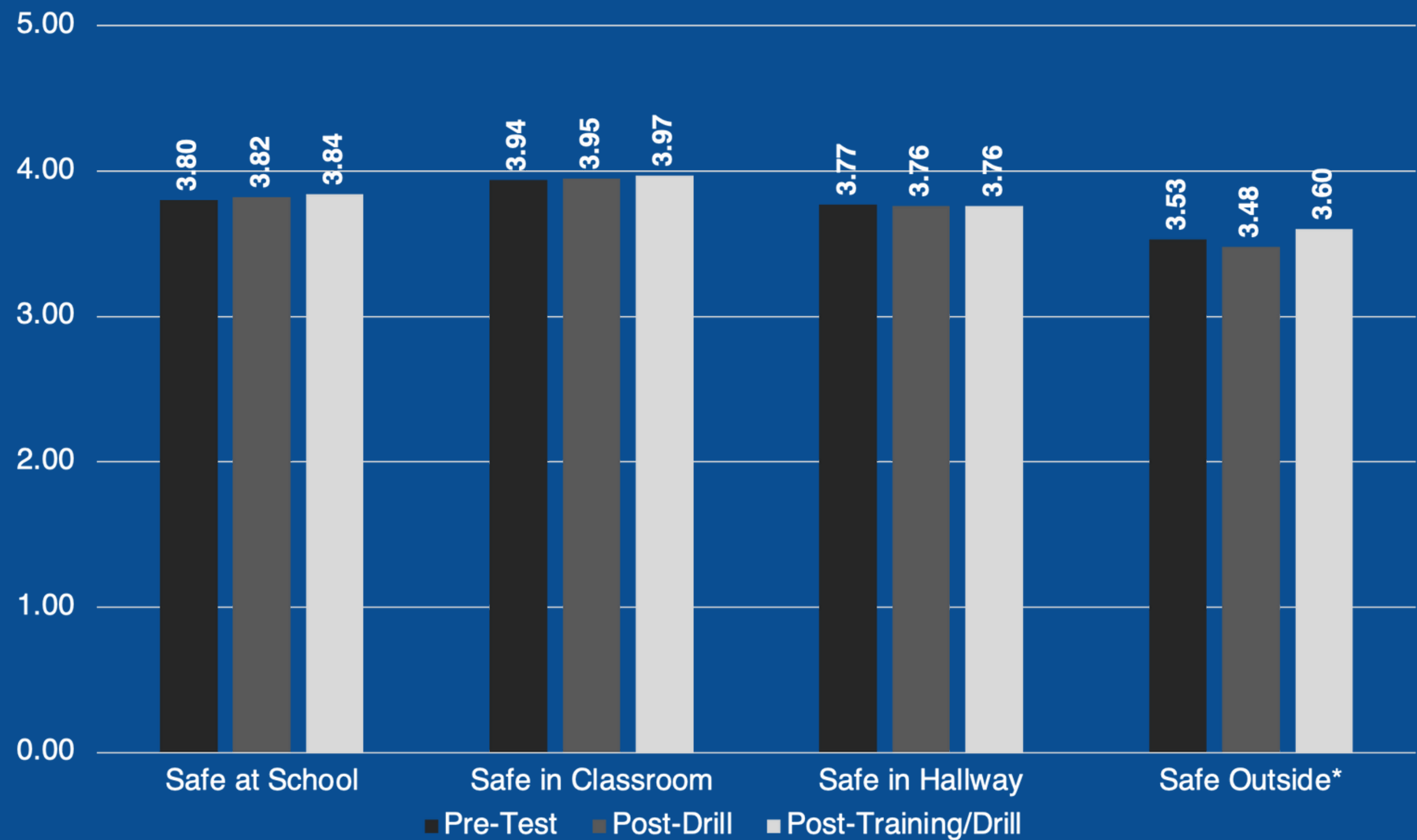


# STUDENTS (N = 8,927)



\*\*\*T1<T2

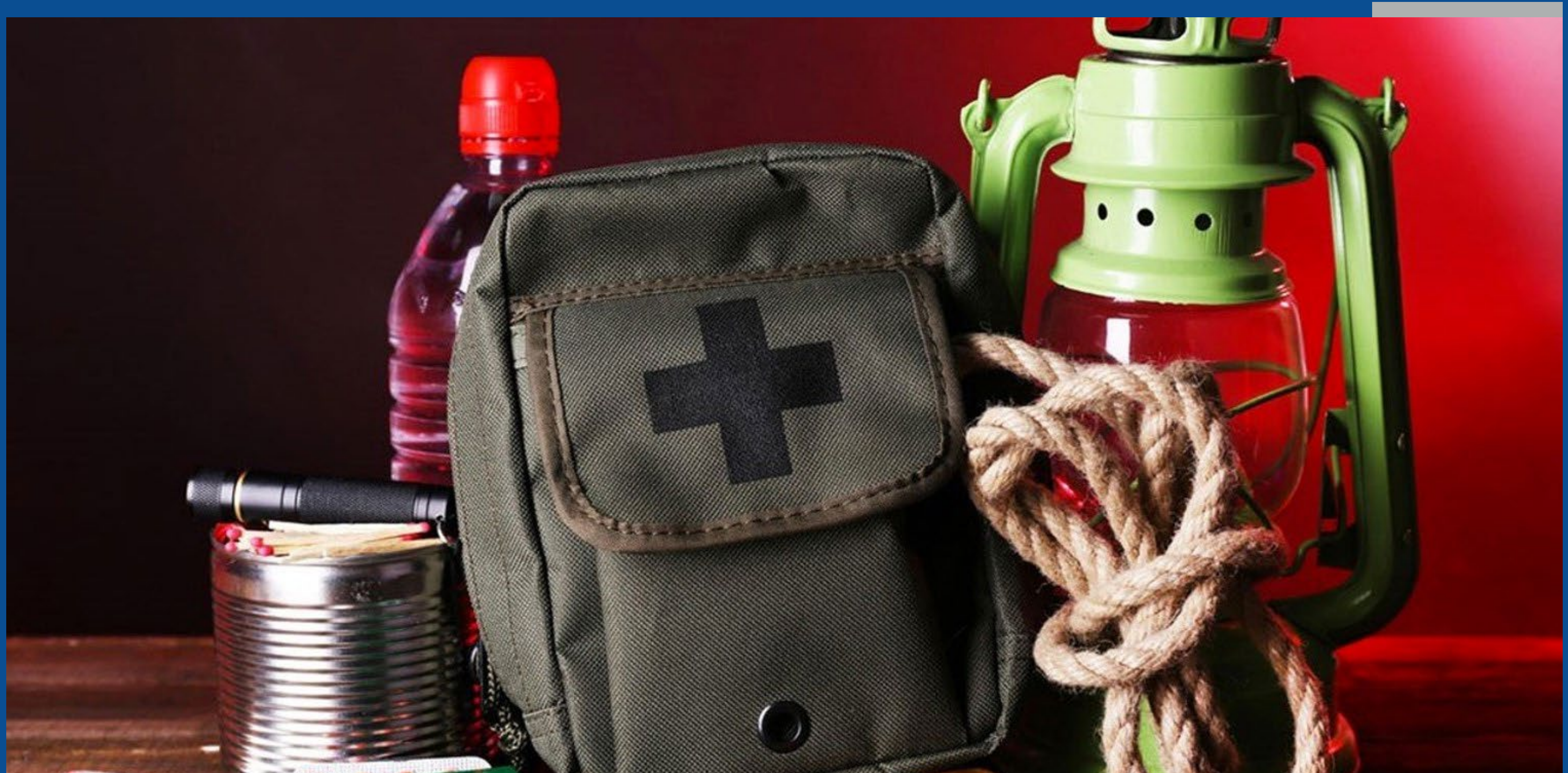
# FACULTY/STAFF (N = 3,000)



\*T2<T3

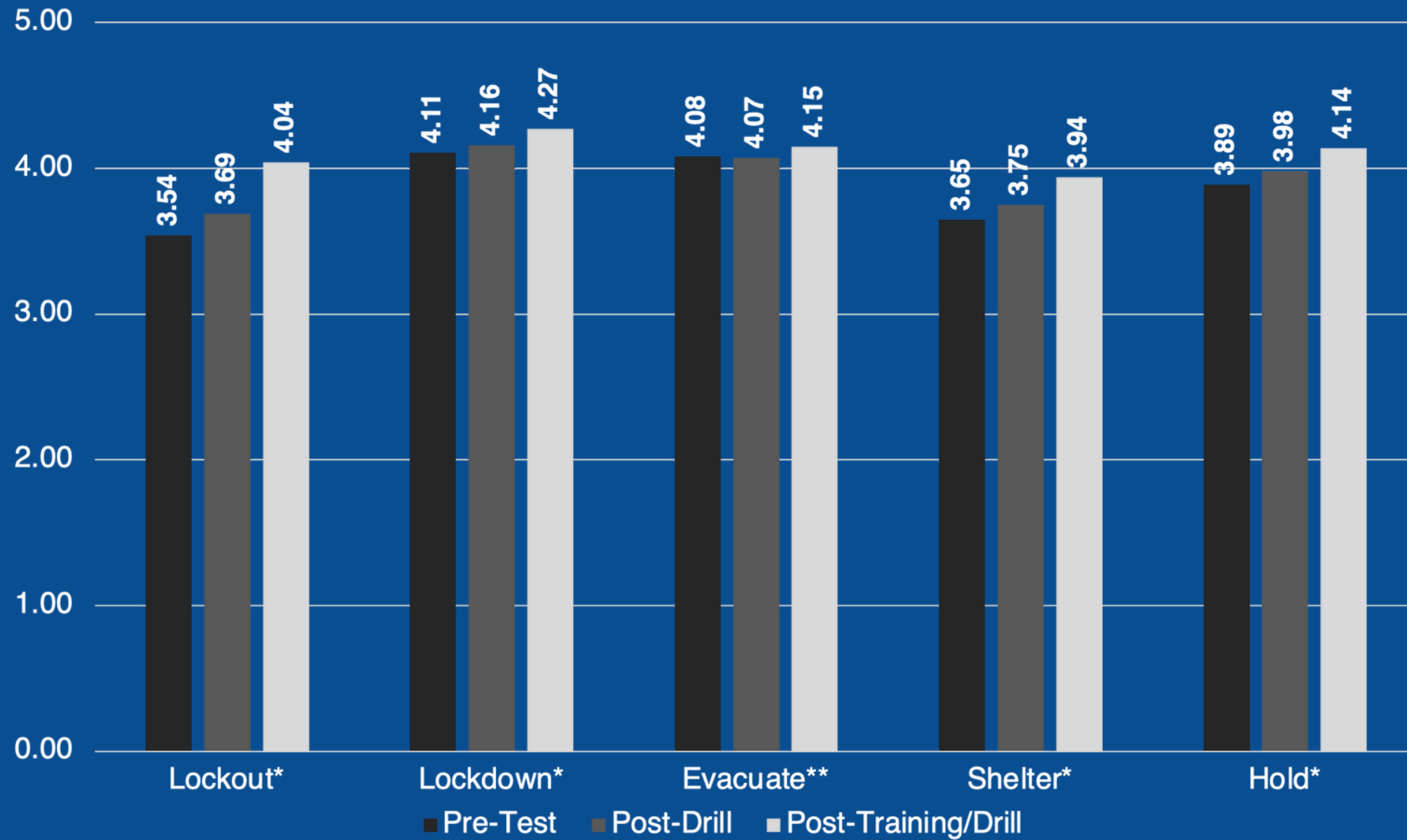


# PERCEIVED PREPAREDNESS





# STUDENTS (N = 10,926)

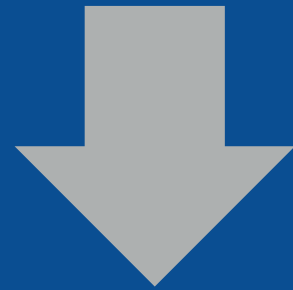


\*T1<T3, T1<T2, T2<T3

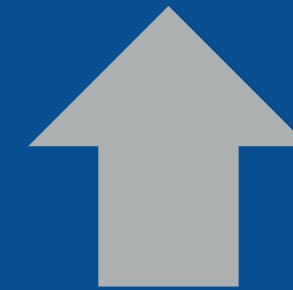
\*\*T1<T3, T2<T3



# PROTECTION MOTIVATION THEORY

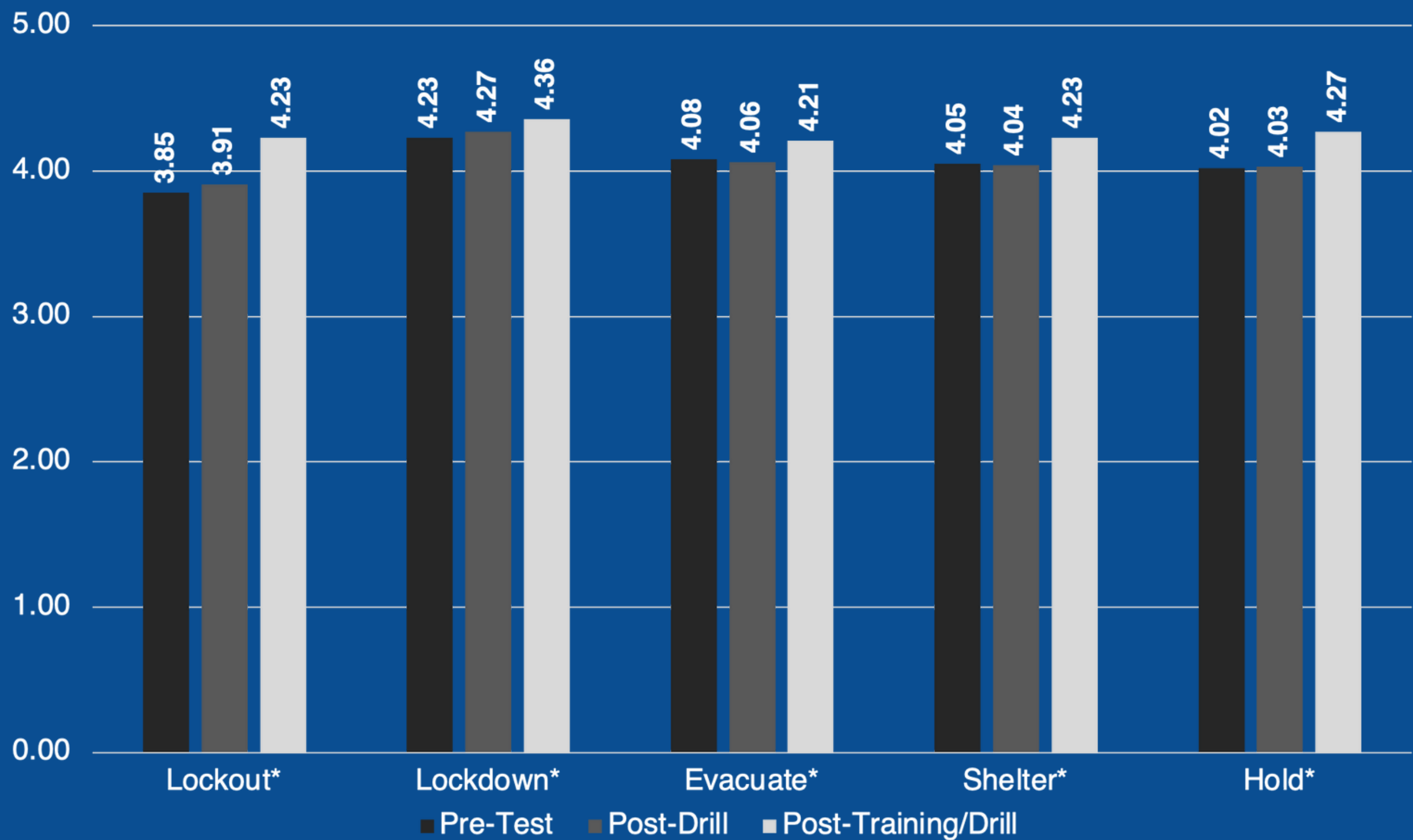


School Safety



Self-  
Protective  
Behaviors

# FACULTY/STAFF (N = 3,000)



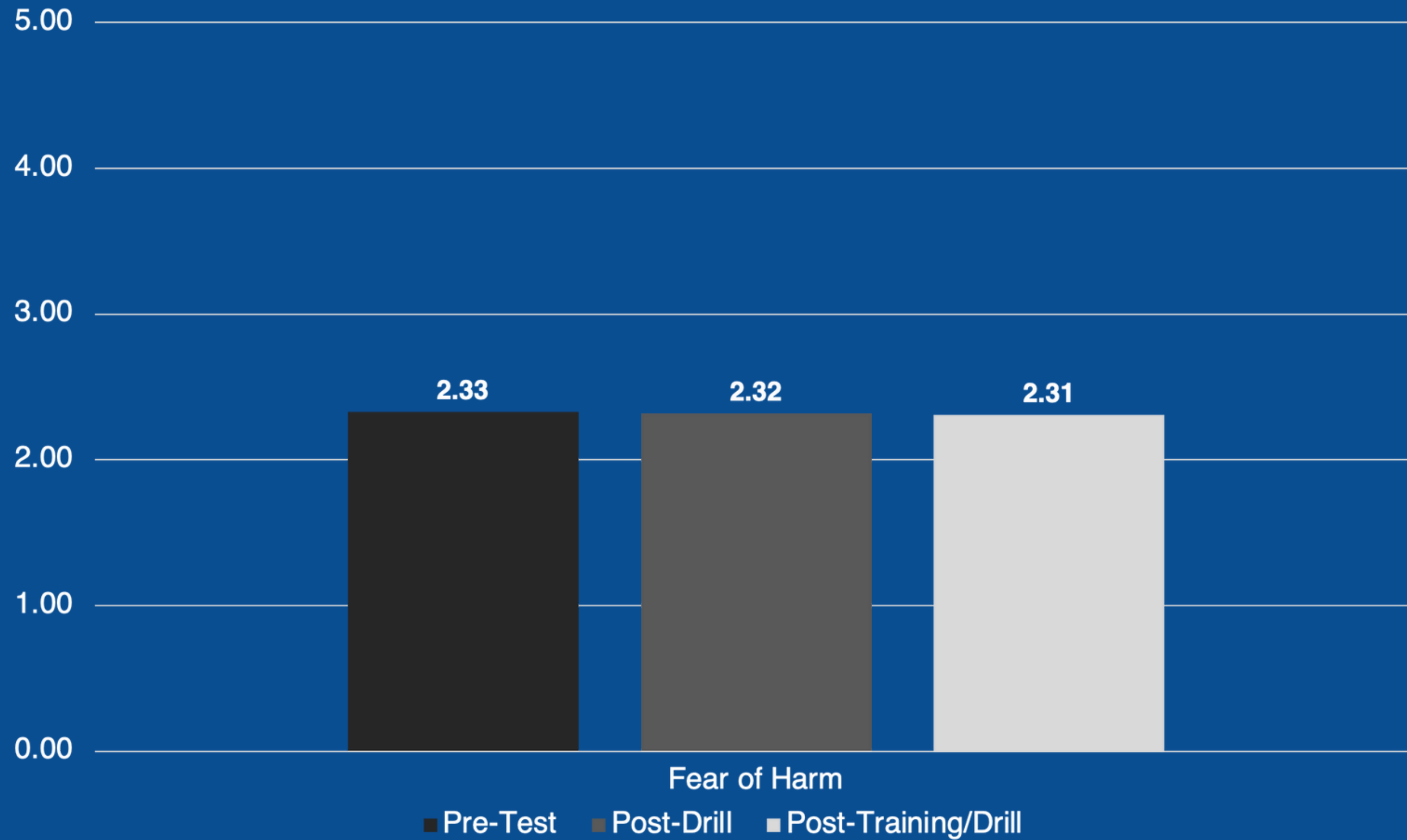
\*T1<T3, T2<T3



# FEAR OF HARM



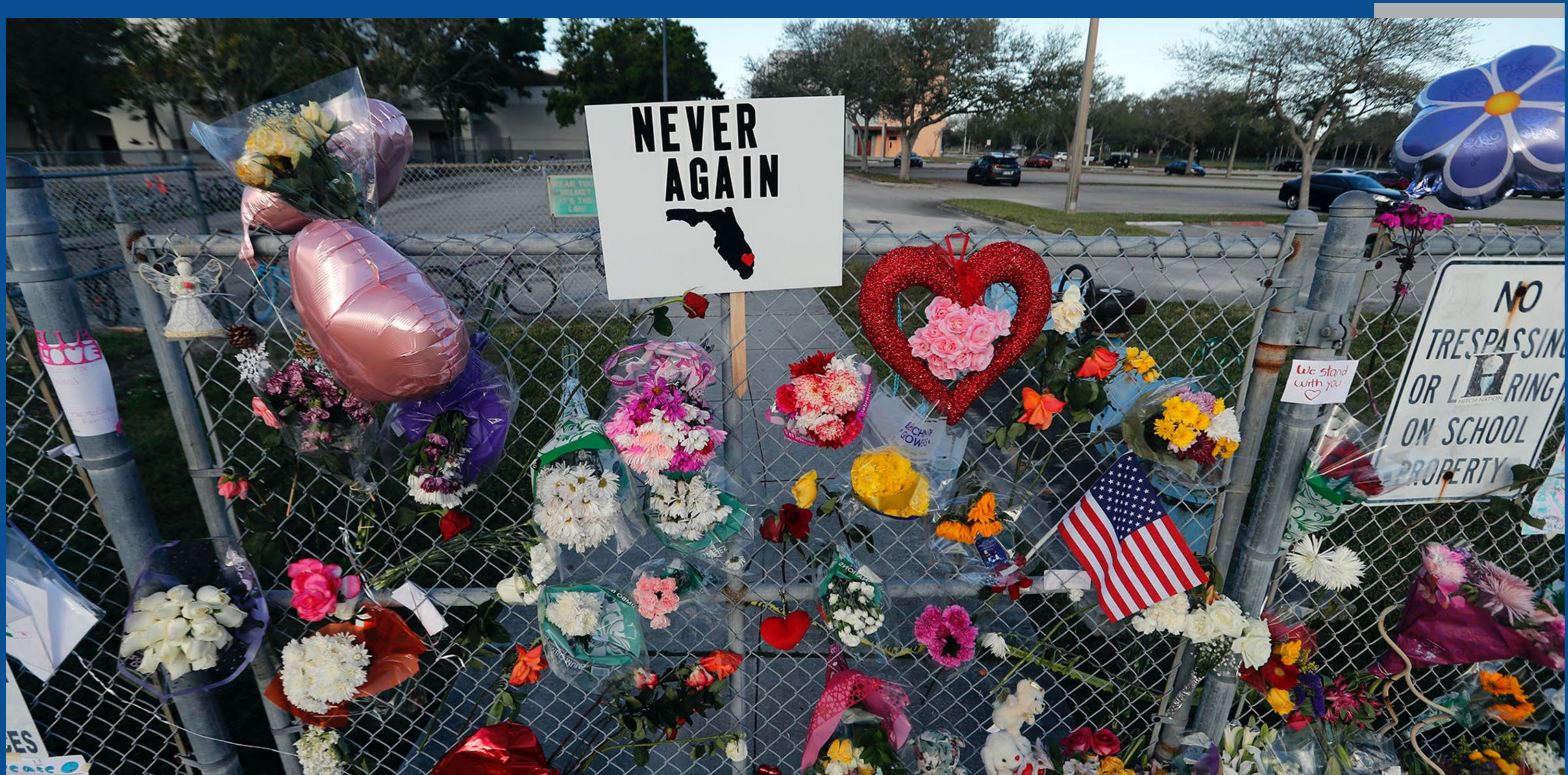
# STUDENTS (N = 10,926)



\*T3<T1

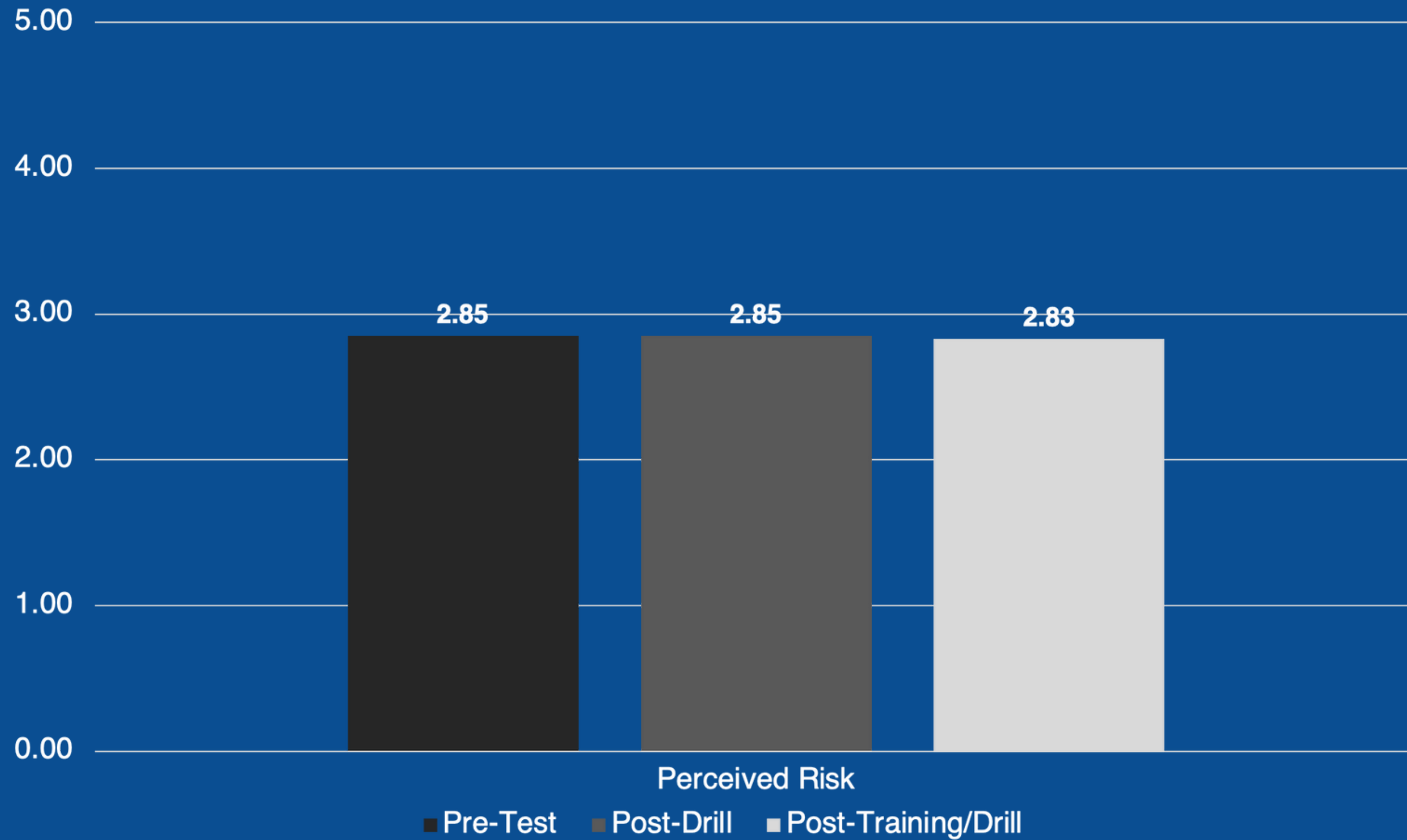


# PERCEIVED RISK





# STUDENTS (N = 10,926)



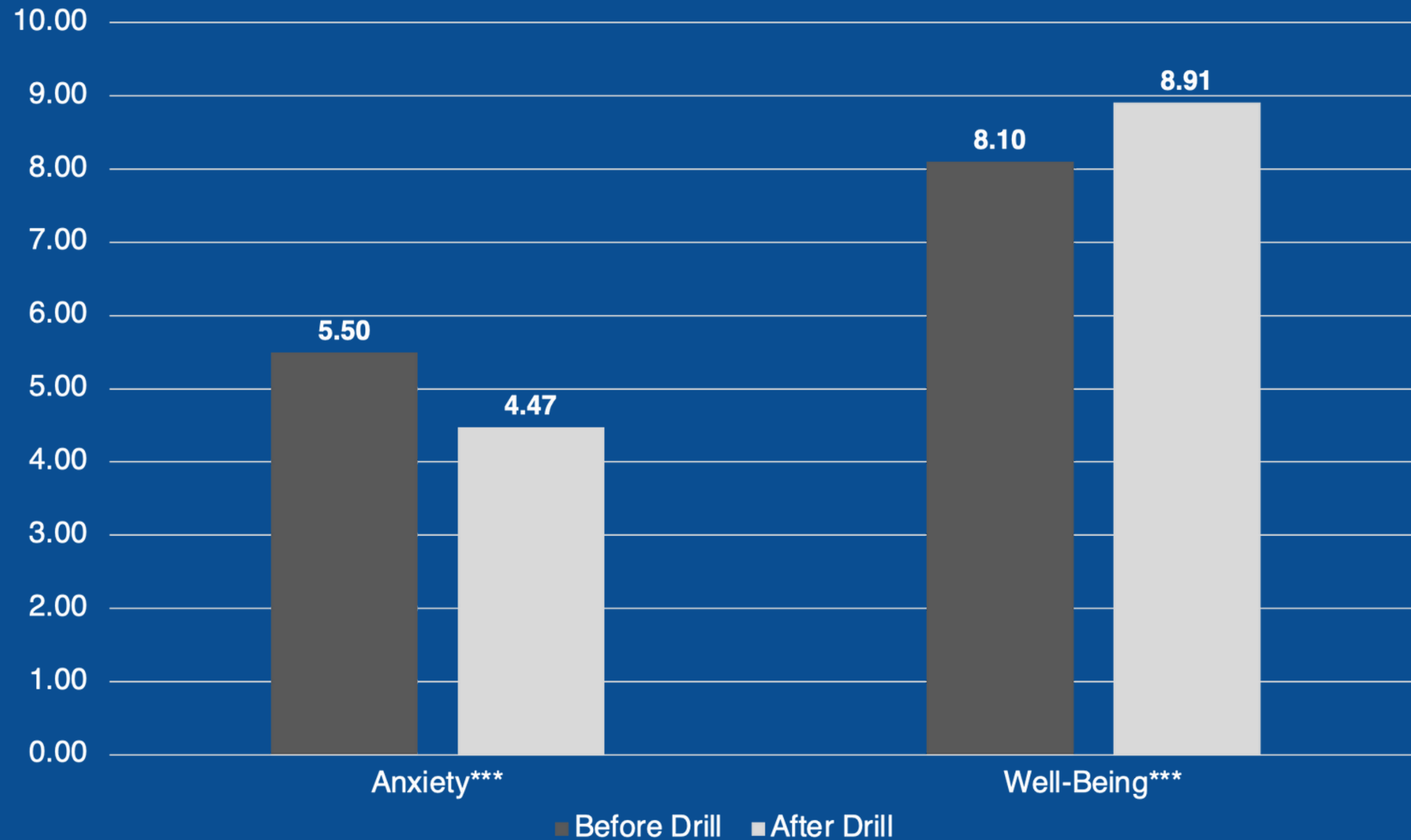
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# ANXIETY & WELL-BEING



# STUDENTS (N = 10,926)



\*\*\*p < .001



# PROCEDURAL INTEGRITY





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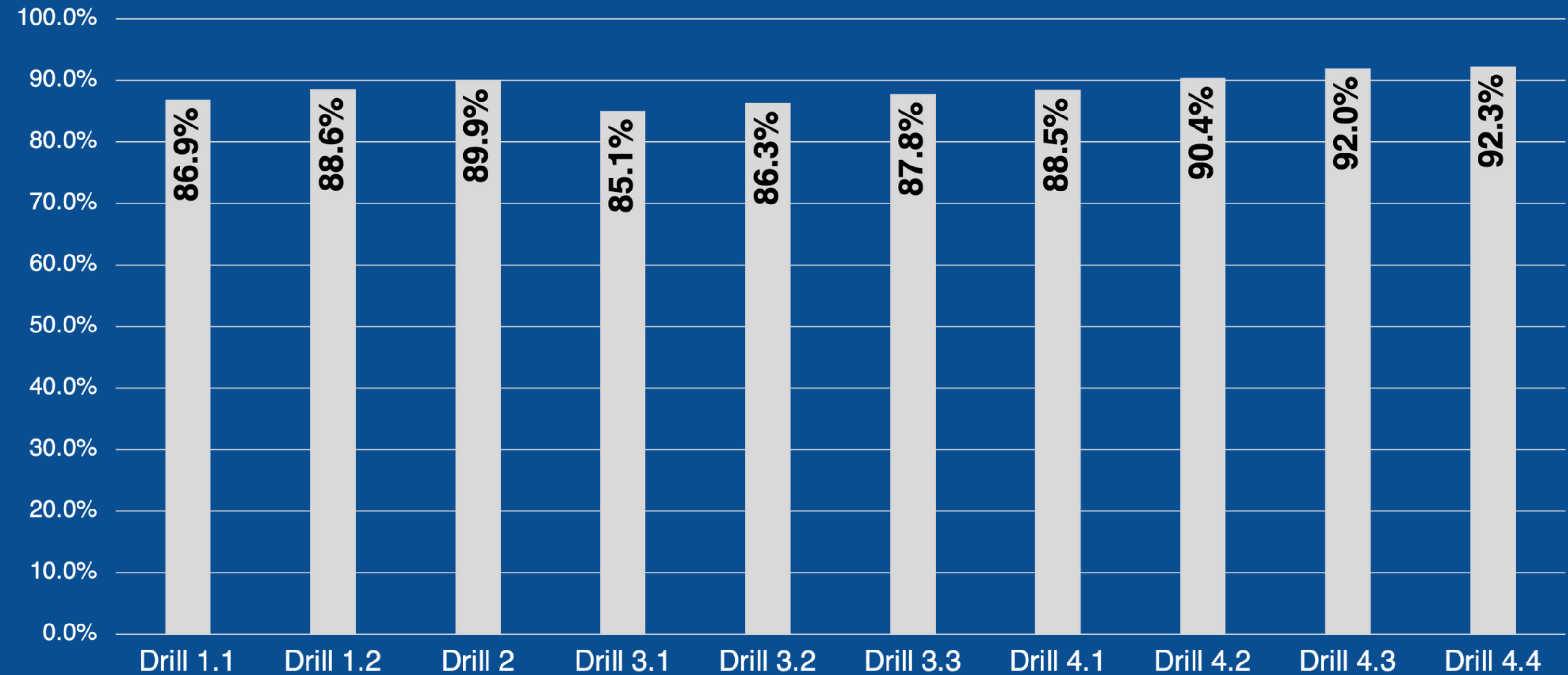
## MUSCLE MEMORY

An individual's ability to perform certain actions correctly even if their thinking is impaired due to stressful situations and stimuli

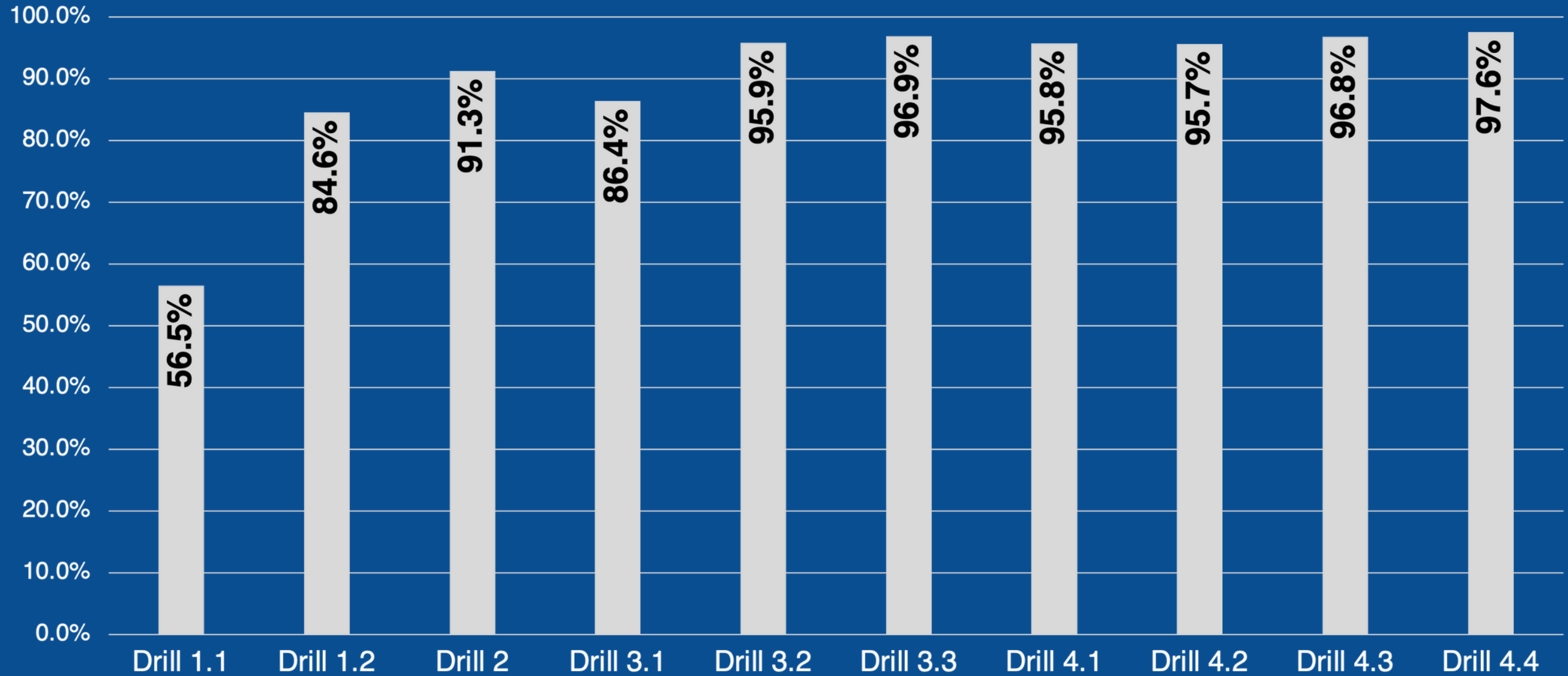




# DOORS LOCKED

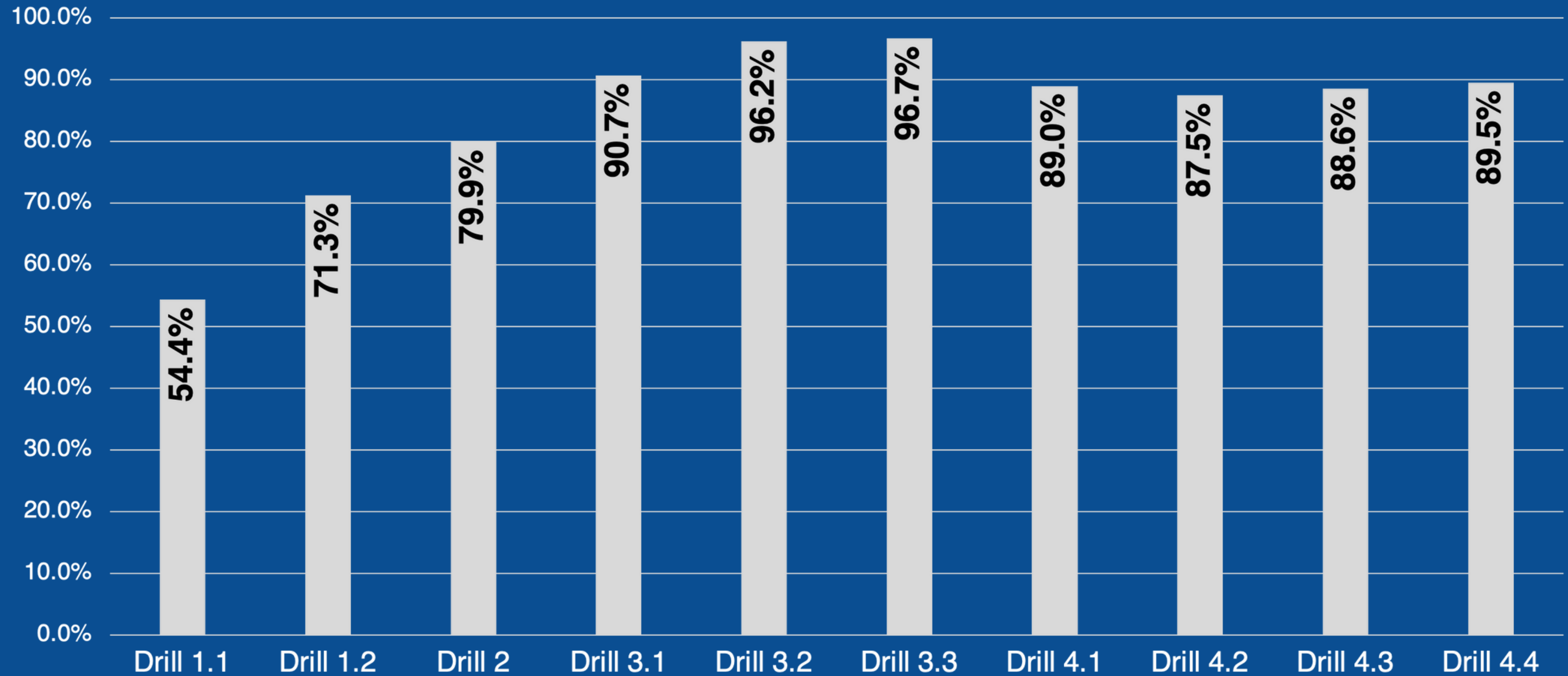


# LIGHTS OFF

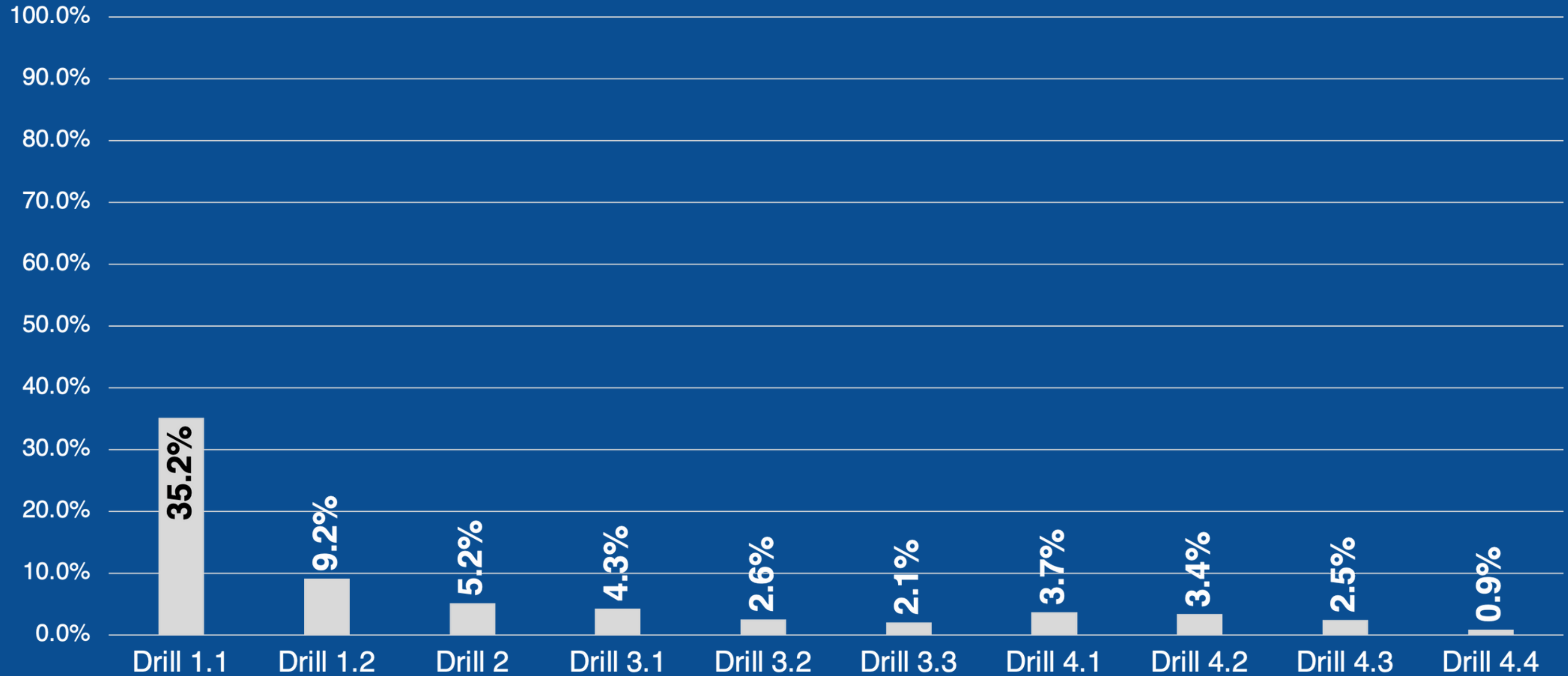




# OUT OF SIGHT

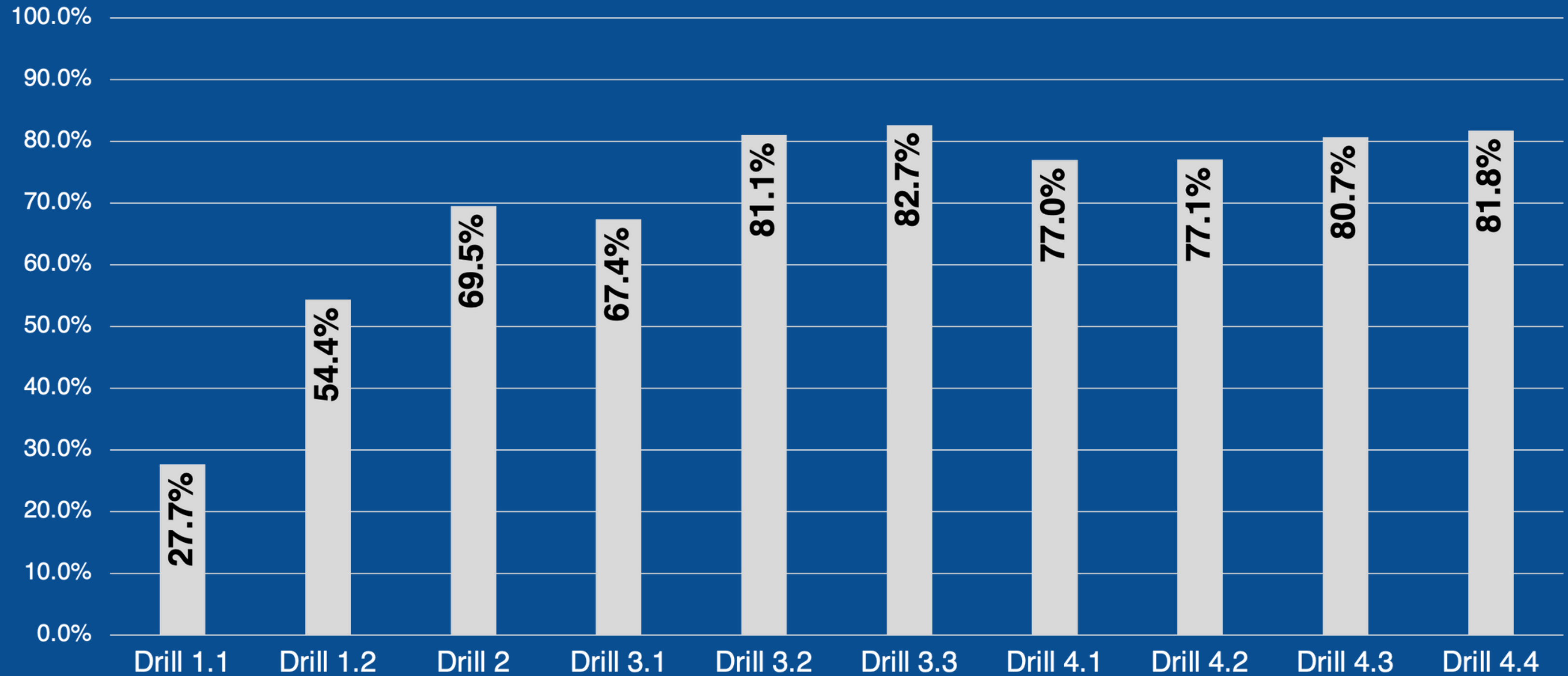


# RESPONDING TO DOOR KNOCKS





# PERFECT CHECKS





# Lessons Learned

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## Preparing without Scaring

Conducting drills in accordance with trauma-informed best practices can yield positive results

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## Planning for Students with Special Needs

It is critical to involve school mental health representatives, parents, and other stakeholders in the planning process to ensure students are supported

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## Role of Assessment and Accountability

Assessing drills helps identify successes and areas of potential improvement while ensuring students and staff are practicing with fidelity