

Project With: The
Challenges of
Rigorously
Evaluating an
Intervention for
Justice Involved
Youth

2024WARD: Building Brighter Futures with Today's Youth Leaders

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Able Works

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OBJECTIVES

By the end
of this
workshop
participants
will:

Be able to identify challenges they may encounter implementing and evaluating sexual risk programming with justice-involved youth.

Be able to develop strategies (e.g., flexibility in the face of adversity, thinking outside the box) to use when confronted with challenges implementing and evaluating sexual risk programming with justice-involved youth.

Be able to describe creative aspects of the Project With curriculum that connect with justice-involved youth and help them stay engaged with the curriculum.

Your Story

What is one item you
have that has a story
connected to it?



The Power of storytelling

PROJECT WITH IS INNOVATIVE
IN ITS USE OF STORYTELLING AS
AN INTERVENTION MEDIUM.



Why Stories?



Fig. Istock photo

The Power of the Storyteller!

Project With connects culturally relevant facilitators that have similar backgrounds to the justice involved youth

How does
having similar
experiences to
youth help
create
connection?



Fig. 1 Image of Project With team members



Creating A New Story

Youth who complete Project With are treated to a one-day excursion to the mountains to experience team-building experiences with probation officers and sometimes even ... Snow!

Fig. Participants of Project With



How have you created new stories?



Key Research Question

- **At the end of the lessons, what is the difference between the youth who participated in Project With and the comparison youth on the outcomes of interest? (Did the participants show more improvement than the non-participating comparison youth?)**
 - **Ability to resist temptations and provocations**
 - **Planfulness**
 - **Conflict management skills**
 - **Intentions to engage in risky sexual behavior**

Overview of the Evaluation Design

- **All aspects of the evaluation are reviewed by experts from Mathematica**
- **Quasi-experimental design (vs. a random assignment study)**
 - Randomly assigning group homes to receive Project With would have been challenging
 - *Project With* participants and **comparison youth** surveyed before and after the program
- **“Wave design”**
 - Implement *Project With* in a camp or a group home
 - Wait a period of time (1 week to six months); Some youth are released/leave and new youth arrive
 - Implement *Project With* with a new group of youth
- **Pre-test survey, immediate post-test survey, and a 6-month follow-up survey**
- **Fidelity logs and focus groups with a sample of participants (group homes only)**



Survey Administration Challenges for Pretest and Posttest Surveys

- A high response rate is critical for the evaluation
- Surveys are voluntary and youth frequently leave group homes
- Los Angeles Public Defenders and Research Petition
- Locating Youth Post Release
- Required language from consent form:
 - “It is up to you if you want to be in the study or not. There will be no negative consequences if you don’t participate in the study.”
 - “There are no direct benefits for you if you take part in the study. However, if you complete this consent form you will receive a \$25 gift card and food today whether or not you decide to be in the study.”

Survey Administration Challenges for Pretest and Posttest Surveys

- **Group Home / Placement Locations have issues with drug usage**
- **Particularly difficult for comparison youth who don't participate in Project With**
 - “What's in it for me?”
- **Prior version of consent form said: “The goal of the study is to learn how a program named Project With may help youth [like you] improve their relationships and sexual health.”**

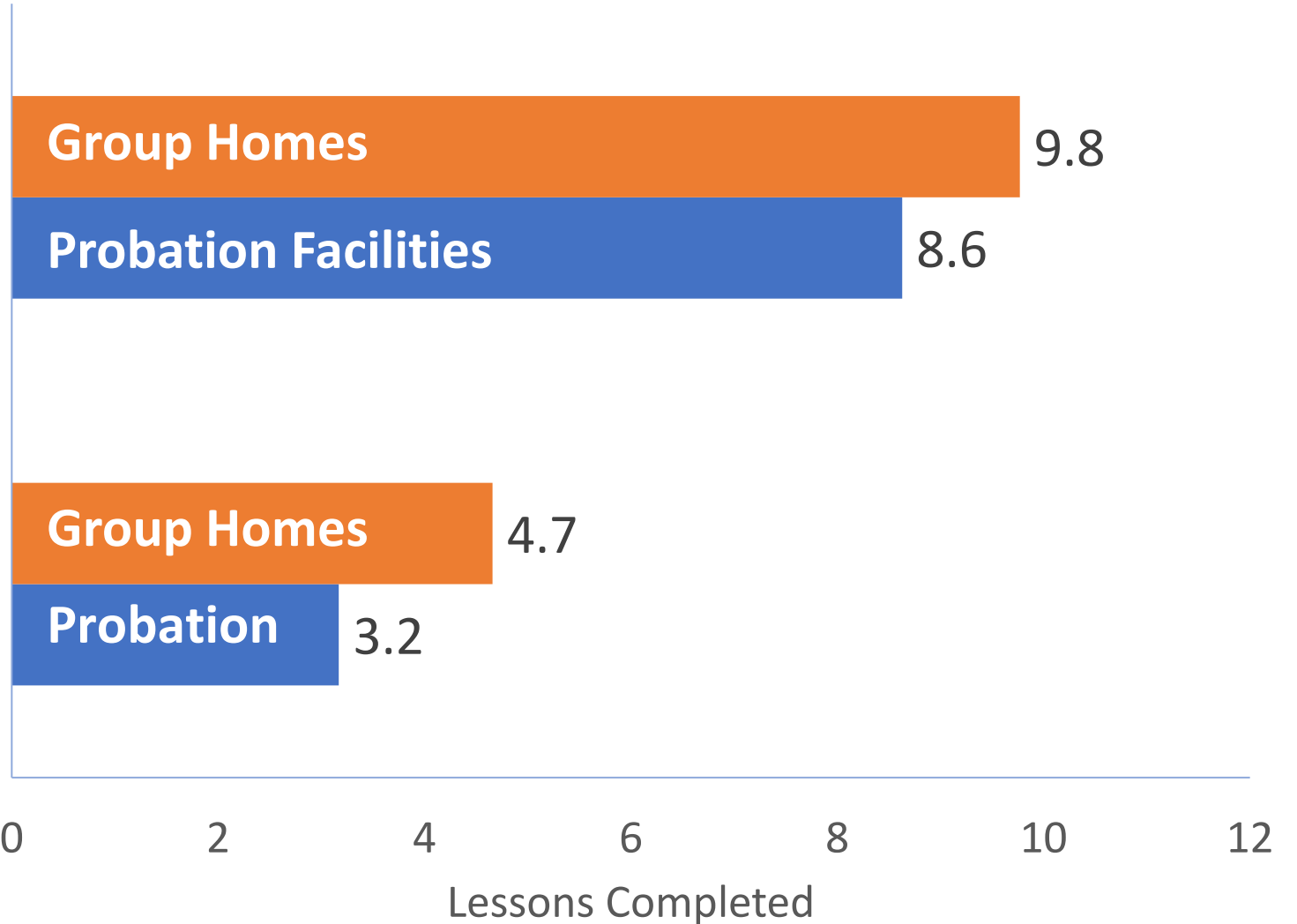
Project With Evaluation Findings

- WestEd is finalizing a journal article based on the results in the next few slides
- The impact results are based on 138 treatment and 87 comparison youth who completed the pre-test and immediate post-test surveys



Average Number of Project With Lessons Completed

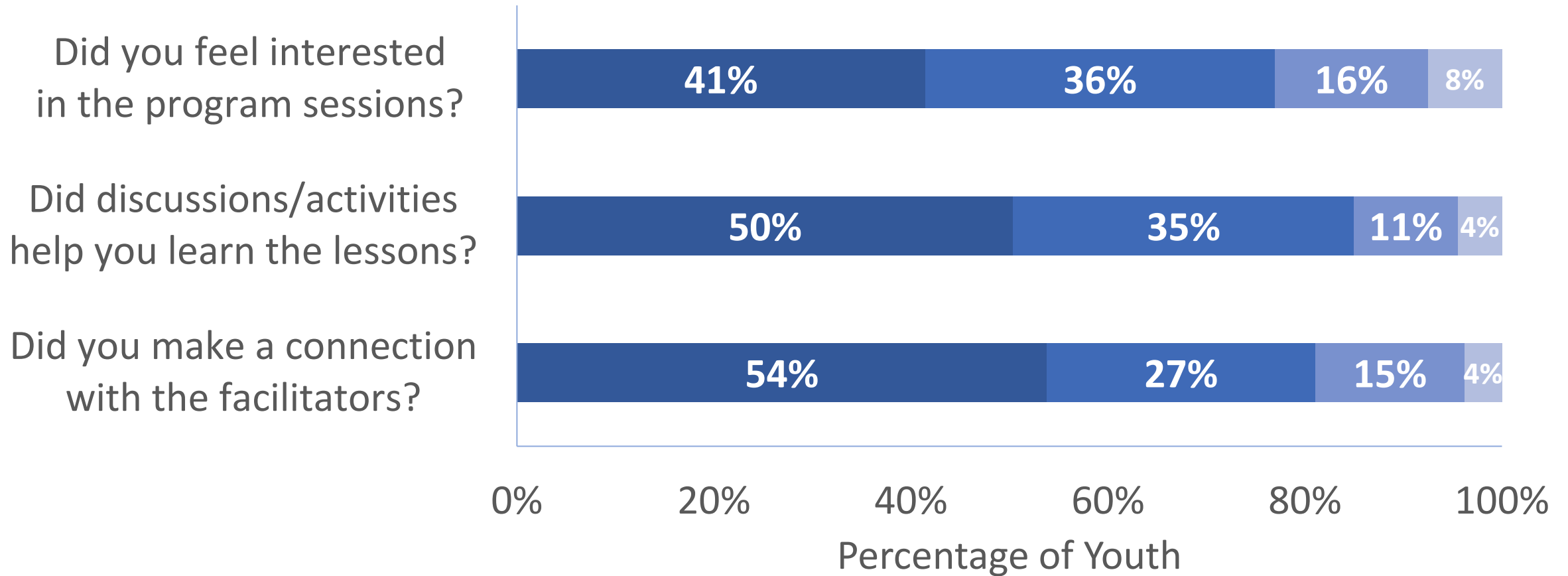
Youth who remained at the sites for the duration of the lessons



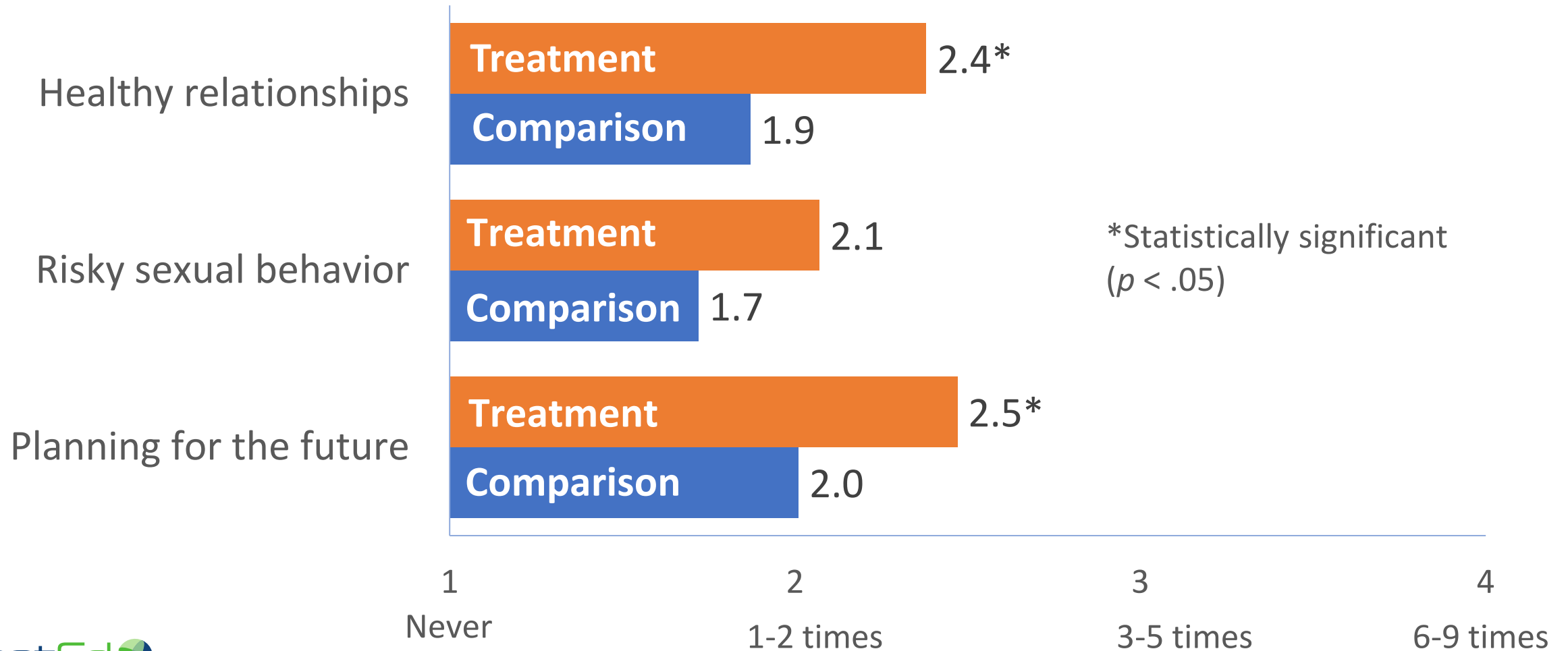
Youth who left the sites before the end of the lessons

Youth Had Positive Perceptions of Project With Implementation

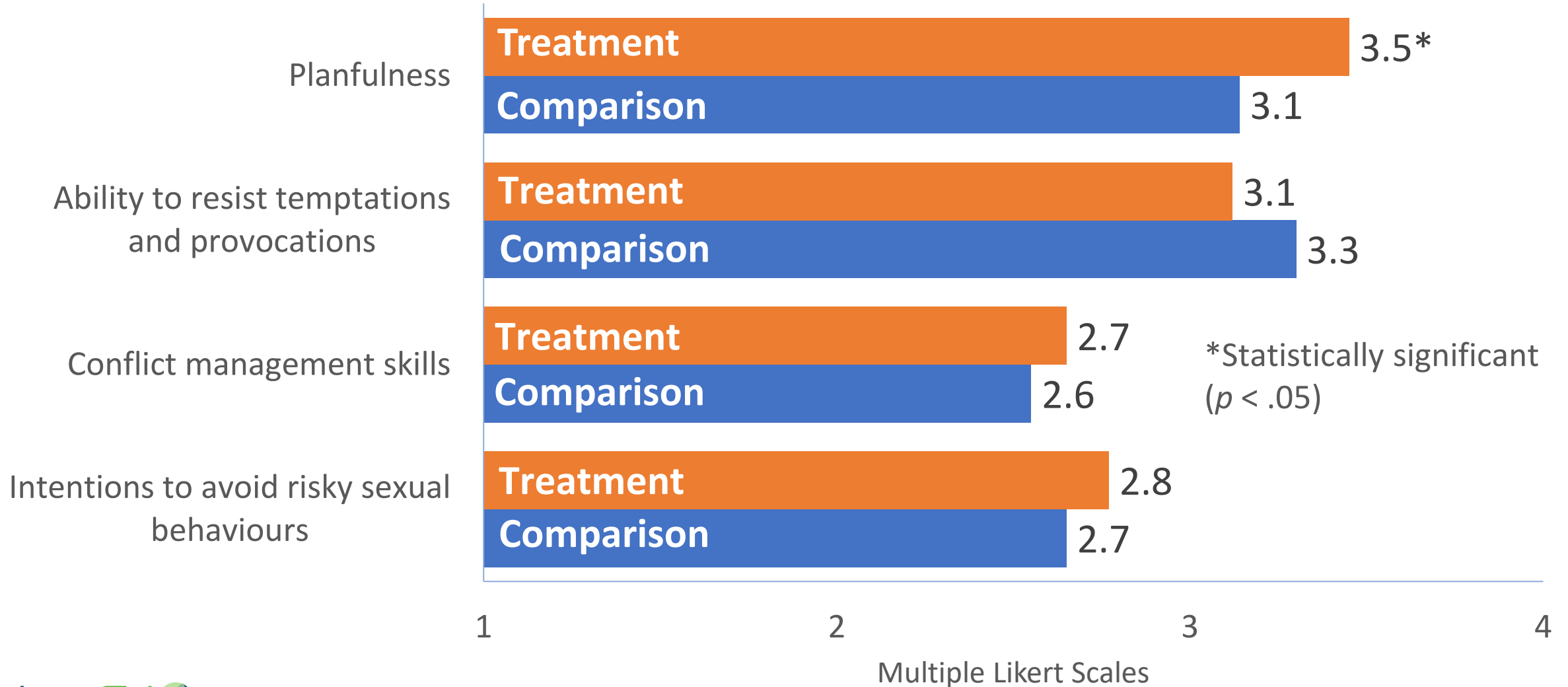
■ All of the time ■ Most of the time ■ Some of the time ■ None of the time



Project With participants reported discussing healthy relationships and planning for the future more than comparison youth



Project With had a statistically significant impact on youth's planfulness



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STAY IN TOUCH!



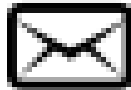
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