

Universal Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Maltreatment: Knowledge and Decision-Making for Child Advocacy Studies (CAST) and Non-CAST Students

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Study Objectives

- 1 Develop statutorily guided child maltreatment vignettes for non-professional audience.
- 2 Assess non-professionals' reasonable suspicion judgements and reporting decisions.
- 3 Compare CAST and non-CAST students' reporting decisions.

Method

14-Item Knowledge Questionnaire

True False I don't know

Adapted from Lecroy & Milligan-Lecroy, 2020; Mathews et al., 2017; Walsh & Jones, 2016

13-Item Attitude Questionnaire

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly Agree 10

Adapted from Humphreys et al., 2021; Mathews et al., 2017

Reasonable Grounds Baseline

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Adapted from Levi & Crowell, 2010

13 Vignette Scenarios

8 Maltreatment

5 Non-Maltreatment

Developed based on Florida's Child Maltreatment Index (Florida DCF, 2024)



Reasonable Grounds to Suspect?

No Yes

Reasonable Grounds to Suspect

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Likelihood of Harm

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Contact Likelihood

CPS or Hotline 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Police 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Friend or Family 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Someone Else 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Report to the Hotline?

No Yes

Describe Why

Free Response

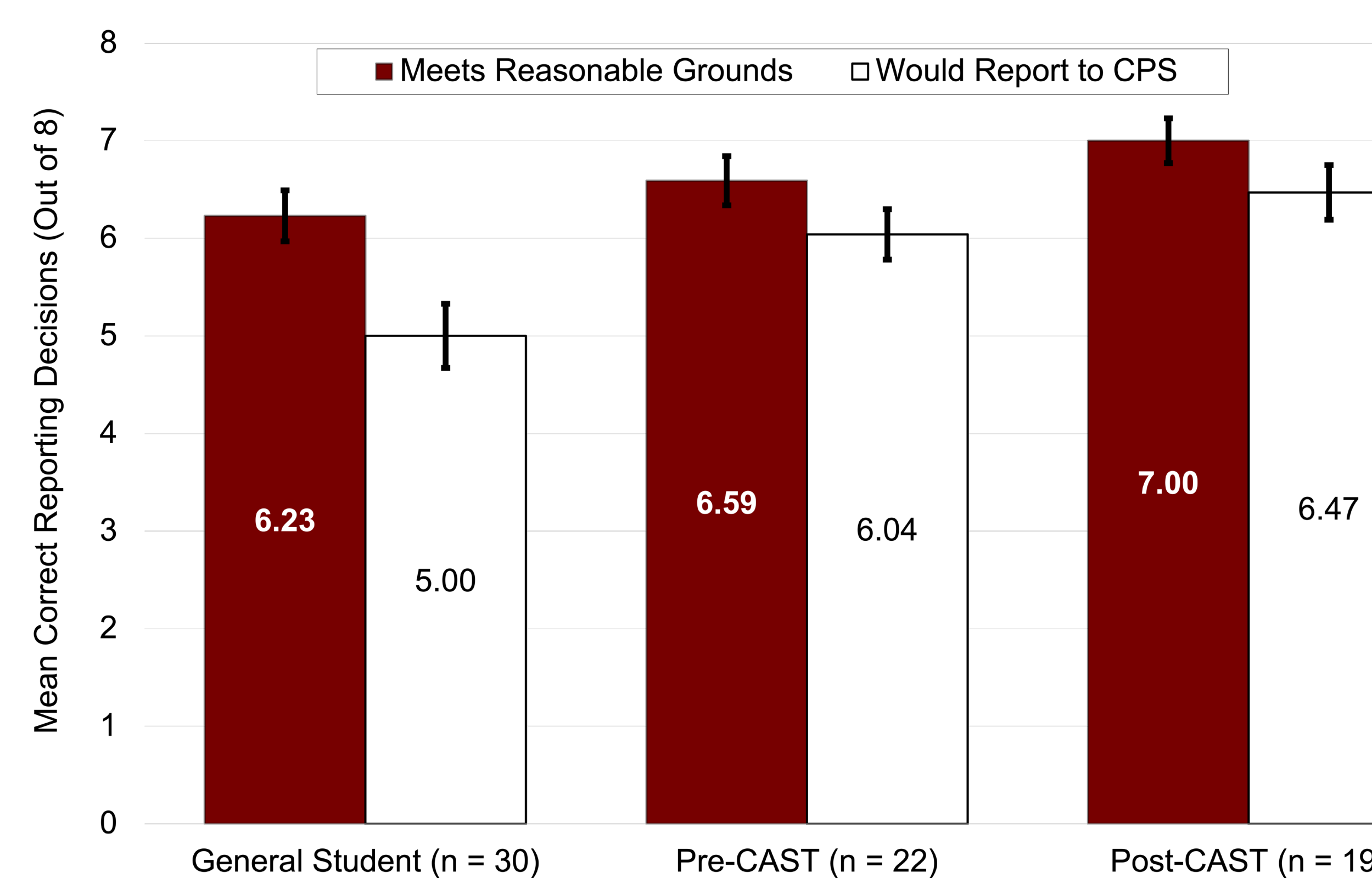
Participants

Post-CAST Group: Near or recent graduates who completed the core CAST minor courses
• $n = 19$ (16 women); $M_{age} = 22.16$ years-old

Pre-CAST Group: Students enrolled in PSY 3551 Introduction to Child Advocacy, at the start of the core CAST minor courses
• $n = 22$ (21 women); $M_{age} = 19.27$ years-old

General Students Sample: Non-CAST Florida Tech students recruited through the Sona System subject pool
• $n = 31$ (23 women); $M_{age} = 20.29$ years-old

Figure 2. Mean Number of Correct Reporting Decisions to Child Maltreatment Scenarios



Note. Error bars show standard error. No significant differences were found across groups for amount of correct reasonable suspicion decisions, Welch $F(2, 44.30) = 2.43, p = .10, \eta^2 = .06$. However, the general student were found to report significantly fewer child maltreatment scenarios to CPS than pre-CAST ($p = .04$) and post-CAST ($p = .004$) groups, $F(2, 68) = 6.43, p = .003, \eta^2 = .16$.

Conclusion

Non-professionals appear capable of recognizing reasonable suspicion of child maltreatment, but training is critical for translating recognition into appropriate mandated reporting action

Table 1. Results for Mandated Reporting Knowledge, Attitudes, and Reasonable Suspicion Measures

| Measure | Post-CAST $M (SD)$ | Pre-CAST $M (SD)$ | General Student $M (SD)$ |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Mandated Reporting Knowledge Overall Score (Sum Correct out of 14) ¹ | 13.21 (0.92) | 9.77 (2.51) | 7.97 (2.56) |
| Mandated Report Attitude Scale (Average of 13 10-point items) ² | 8.78 (0.94) | 7.58 (1.00) | 7.20 (1.18) |
| Reasonable Suspicion Threshold (0 to 100 Slider) ³ | 47.68 (24.13) | 64.82 (13.57) | 65.19 (19.20) |

¹ Welch ANOVA, $F(2, 40.87) = 62.58, p < .001, \eta^2 = .49$; Post-CAST > Pre-CAST > General Student

² $F(2, 69) = 13.17, p < .001, \eta^2 = .28$; Post-CAST > Pre-CAST = General Student

³ Welch ANOVA, $F(2, 39.97) = 4.14, p = .023, \eta^2 = .14$; Post-CAST < Pre-CAST = General Student

Figure 1. Percentage of Affirmative Responses to Scenario Meeting Reasonable Grounds and Would You Immediately Report it to Child Abuse Hotline Between CAST Status Groups

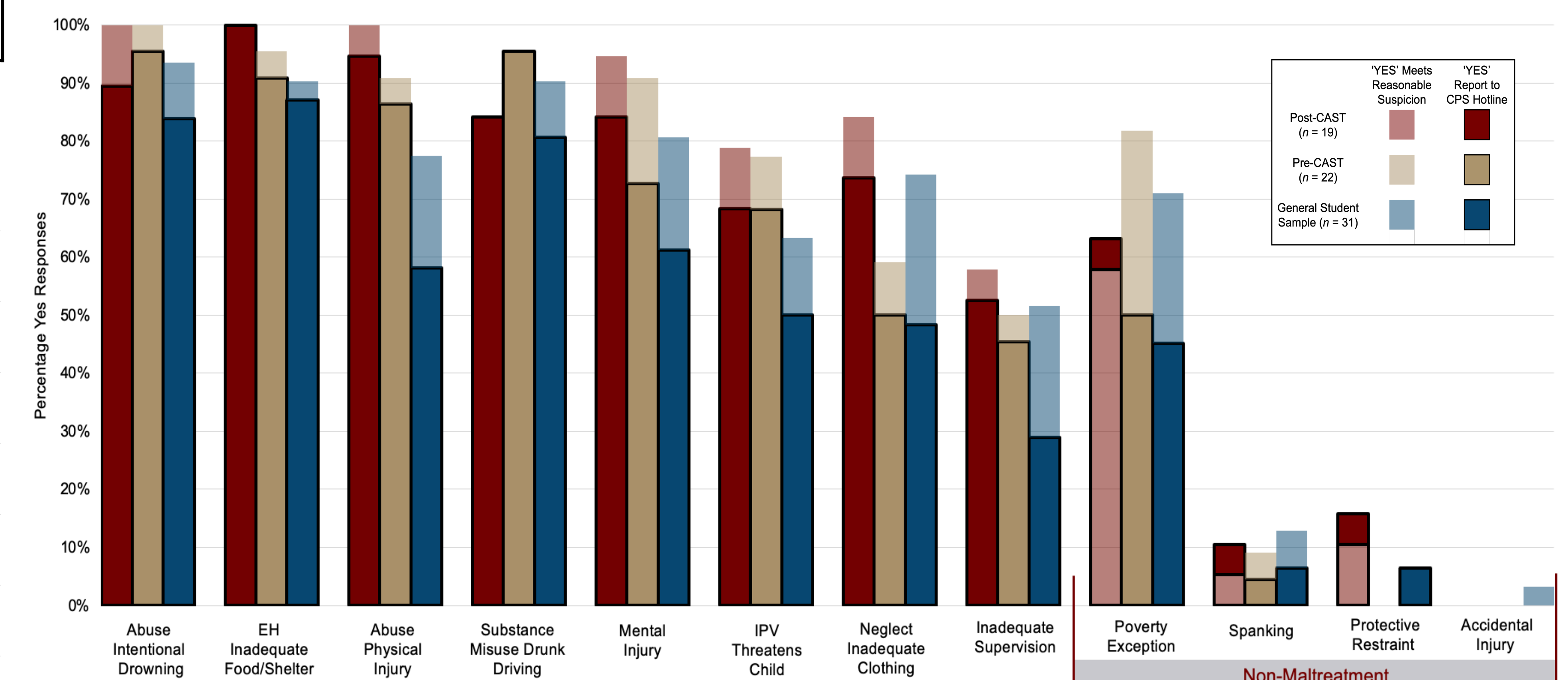
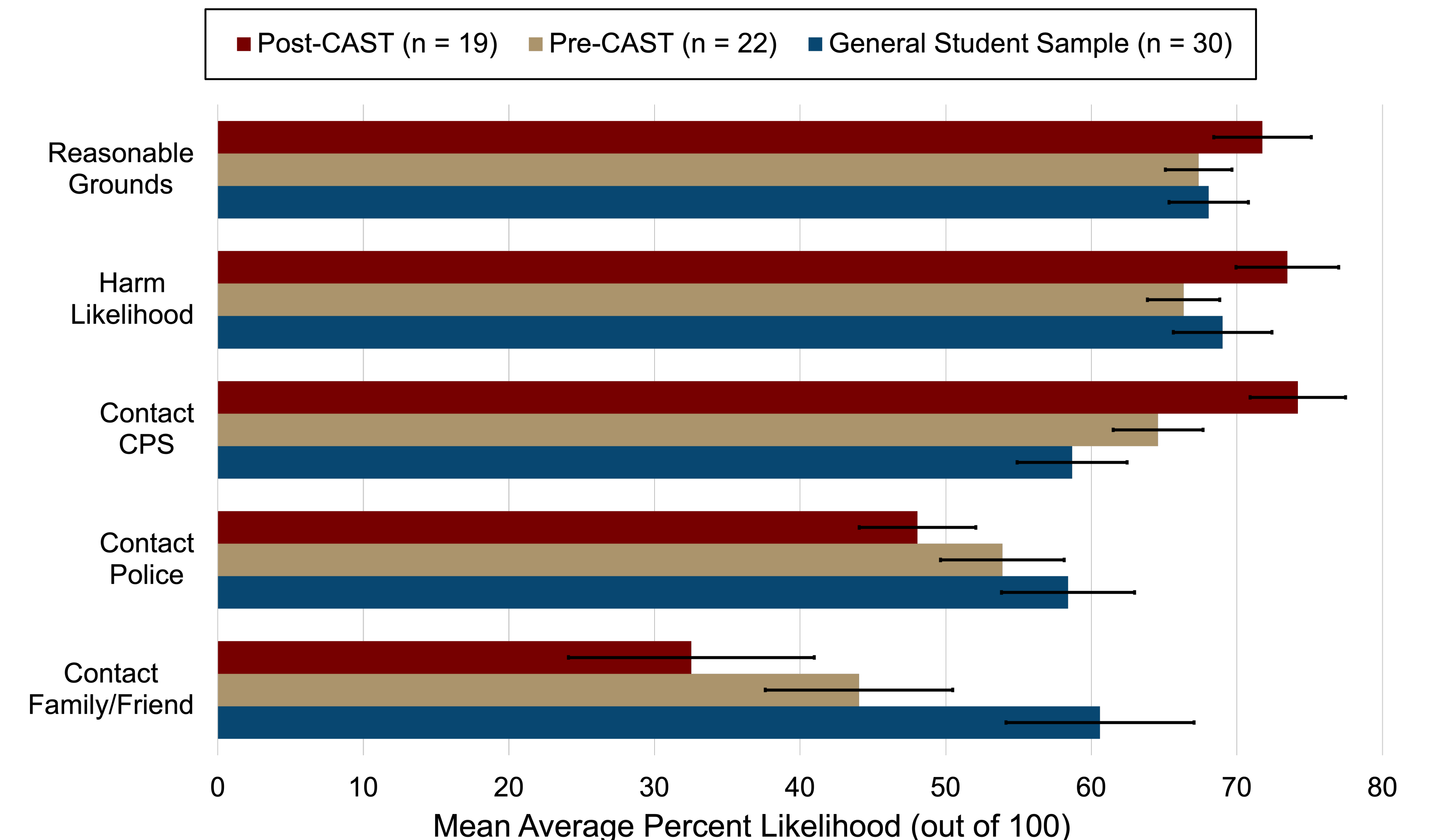


Figure 3. Mean Average Mandated Reporter Decision Likelihood Responses for Child Maltreatment Scenarios



Note. Average percent likelihood values were calculated by taking participants average rating across the eight child maltreatment scenarios for each evaluation item. For each presented scenario, participants rated on a scale of 0 (absolutely not) to 100 (absolutely) whether the scenario meets reasonable grounds standard, child had suffered or is at risk of significant harm, and would contact CPS or make a report, contact police, or contact a friend or family member to ask them for help or advice. Error bars show standard error.