

Evidence-Based Approaches to Support Student Mental Health

Presented by **Samantha Rosenthal, PhD, MPH**



A Brief Introduction

Training

- B.S. Chemical and Biomedical Engineering, Carnegie Mellon University
- MPH, Brown University
- PhD in Epidemiology, Brown University

Primary Areas of Research:

- Young Adults
- Social Media
- Mental Health

Current Roles:

- **Johnson & Wales University**

- Associate Professor - College of Health & Wellness
- Director - Center for Student Research & Interdisciplinary Collaboration
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- **Brown University**

- Adjunct Associate Professor - School of Public Health
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The Outline

- The Landscape of Student Mental Health
 - Epidemiology of Student Mental Health
 - Needs Assessment
 - Mental Health Services & Barriers to Care
 - Evidence-Based Interventions
 - Activity
-

The Landscape of Student Mental Health

Vulnerability of Young Adulthood

- Independence
 - Financial responsibility
 - Academic pressure
 - Intimate relationships
 - Changes in social relationships
 - Finding employment
-

Vulnerability of Young Adulthood

- Complex developmental changes in neural and hormonal stress-processing systems
 - Accelerate stress-related psychopathology
 - 3 in 4 mental health disorders established by the mid-20s
 - Highest rates of anxiety and depressive symptoms
 - Similar vulnerability to addictive behaviors
-

Vulnerability of Non-Traditional Students

- Financial obligations
 - Employment
 - Academic pressure
 - Family responsibility
 - Caretaking
 - Disability or Illness
-

COVID-19 Pandemic

- **Young adult depression/suicide ideation doubled past 10 years**
 - **New pandemic stressors**
 - Social isolation
 - Disruption to schooling and education
 - Limited access to health and social services
 - Increased food and housing insecurity
 - Sickness, disability and loss of loved ones
-

COVID-19 Pandemic

- **During 2020-2021 school year**
 - 60% had at least one mental health disorder
 - 3 in 4 experienced psychological distress
 - More than 1 in 4 were suicidal

Discrimination and Mental Health

- **Racial discrimination, traumatic stress and psychopathology**
 - Increases in anti-Asian, anti-Arab, anti-Semitic sentiment
 - High profile cases of police brutality against Black Americans
 - **Sexual and gender discrimination linked to poor mental health**
 - Increased anti-LGBTQ sentiment
 - High rates of new anti-LGBTQ policy
 - 1 in 5 young adults identify as LGBTQ
-

Other Collective Trauma

- Drug overdose epidemic
 - Gun violence
 - Climate change
-

Technology

- **98% regularly use social media**
 - Unfavorable social comparisons
 - Increased exposure to social harm
 - Social isolation
 - **Excessive smartphone use**
 - **Addictive variable reward system**
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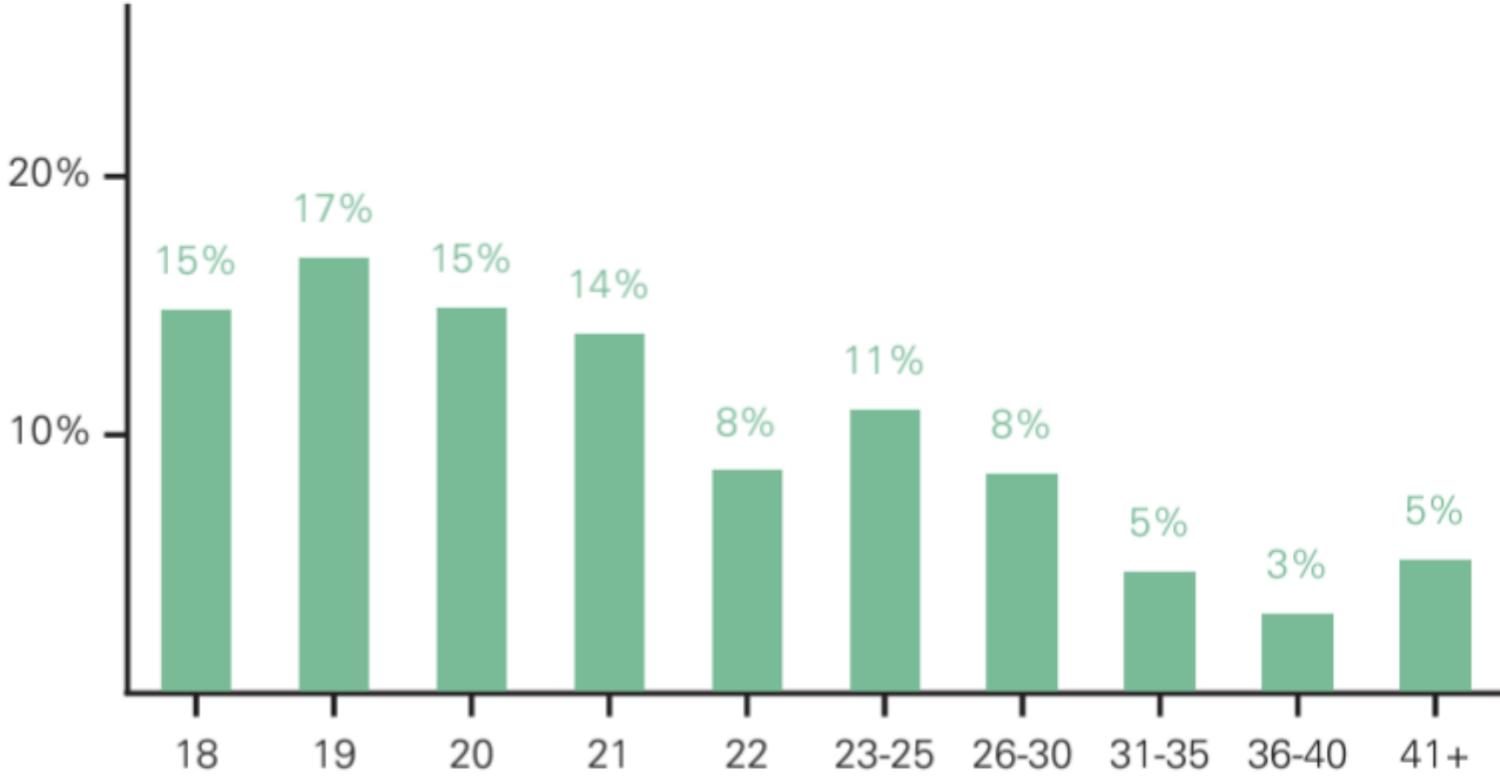
Epidemiology of Student Mental Health

2022-2023 Healthy Minds Study

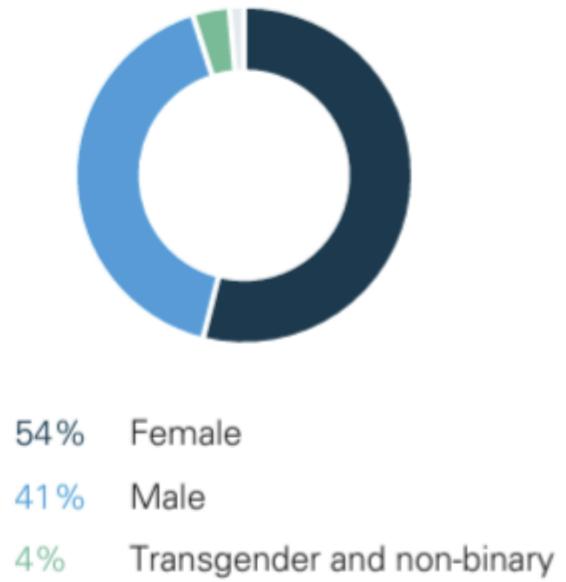
- More than 76,000 students
 - Almost 400 campuses
 - Degrees ranging from Associates to Graduate
 - Online survey
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2022-2023 Healthy Minds Study

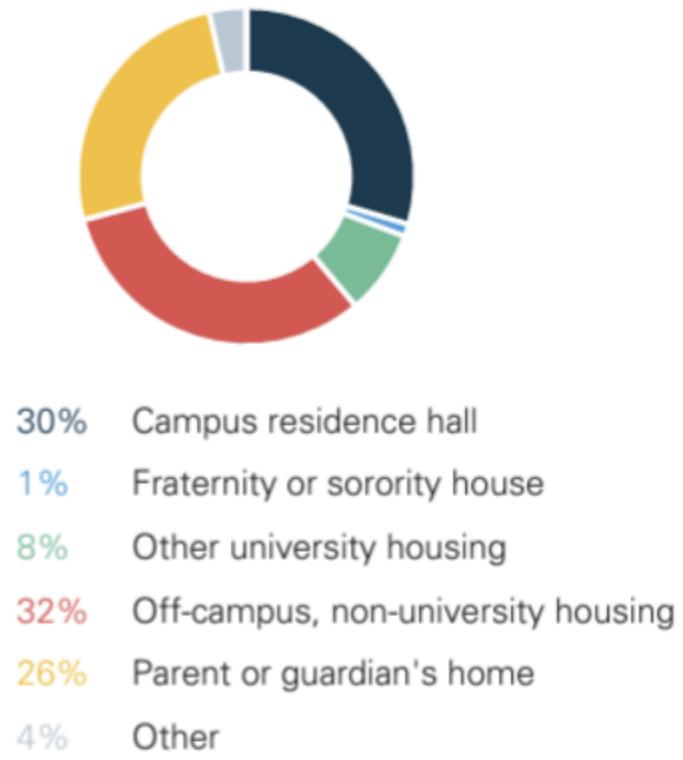
Age (years)



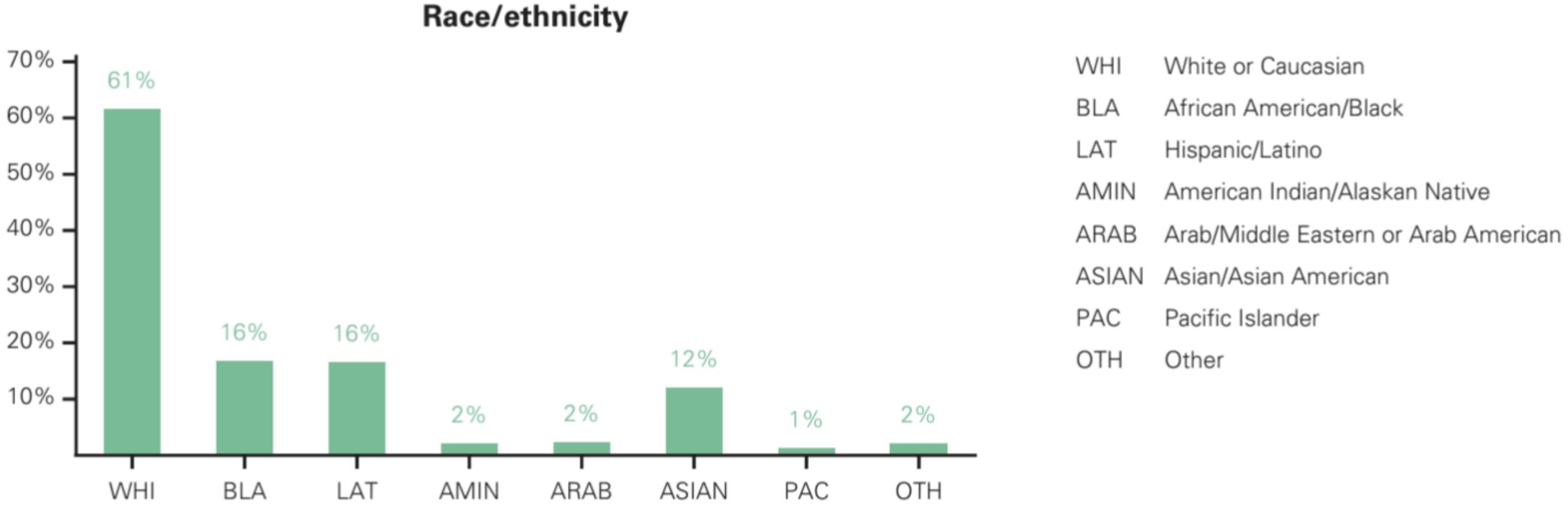
Gender



Living Arrangement

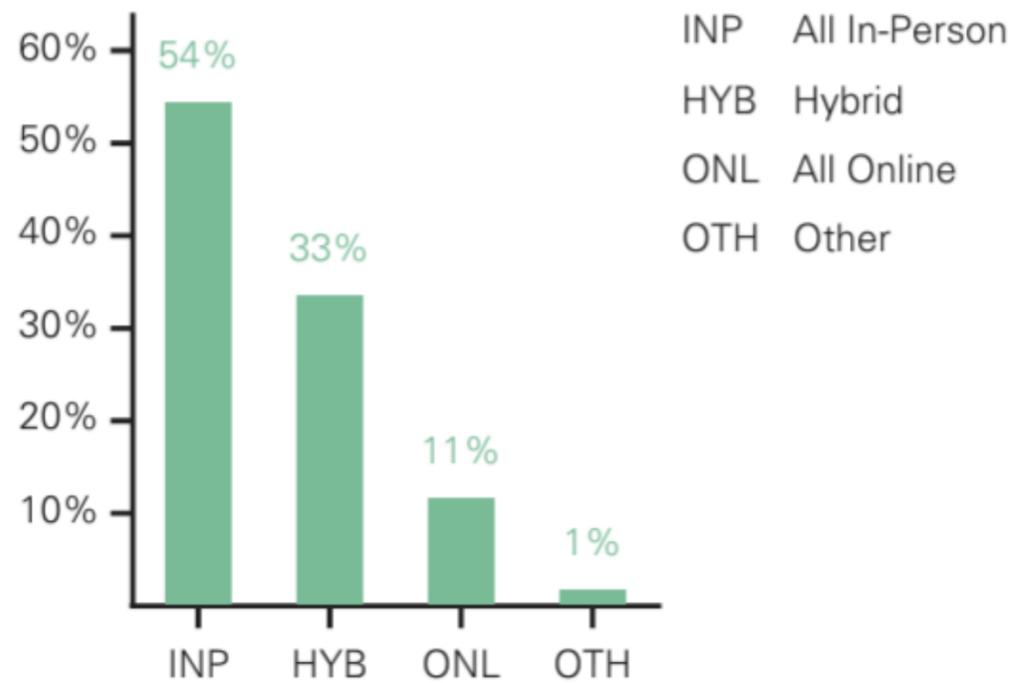


2022-2023 Healthy Minds Study

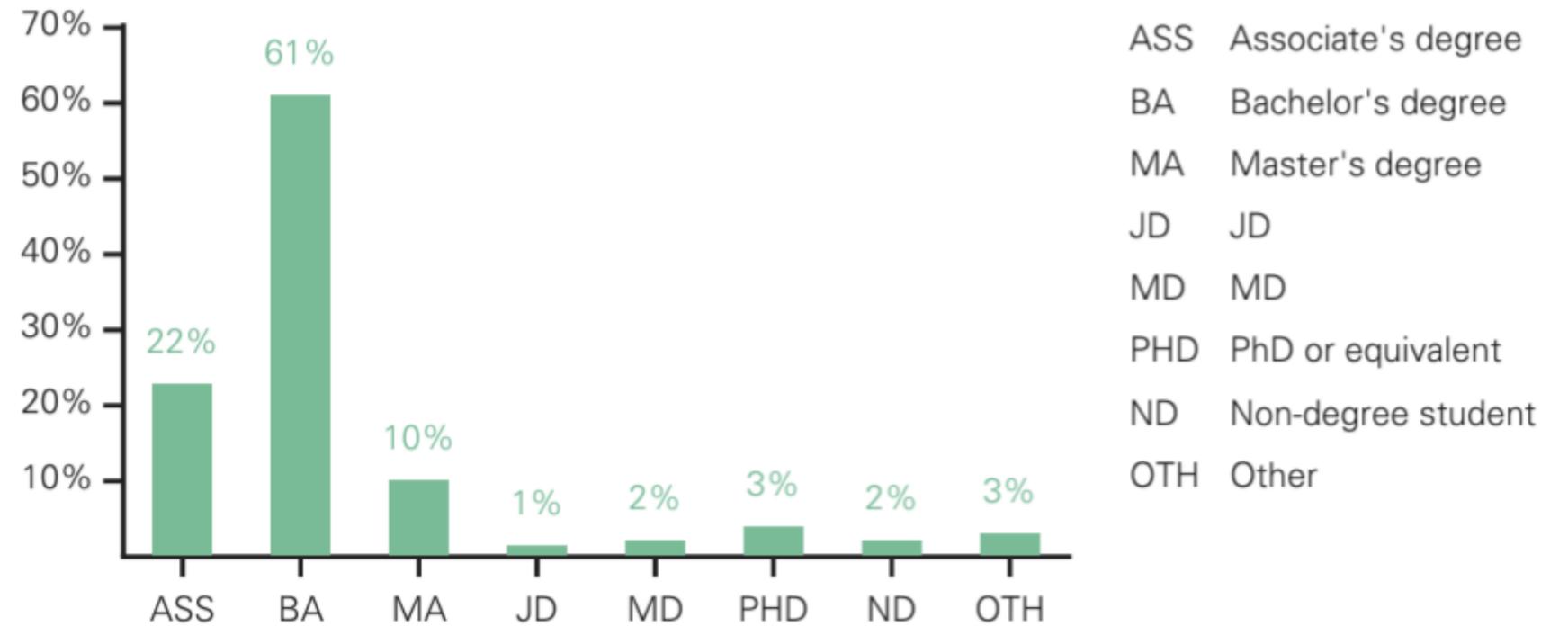


2022-2023 Healthy Minds Study

Class format

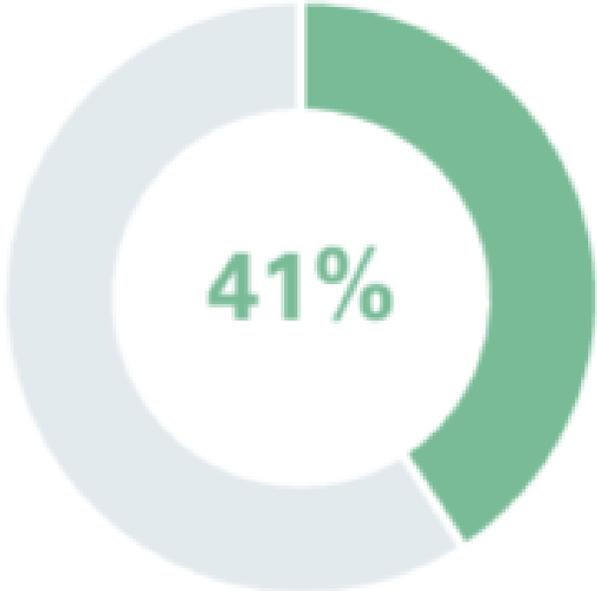


Degree program



2022-2023 Mental Illness

Any depression



Any anxiety

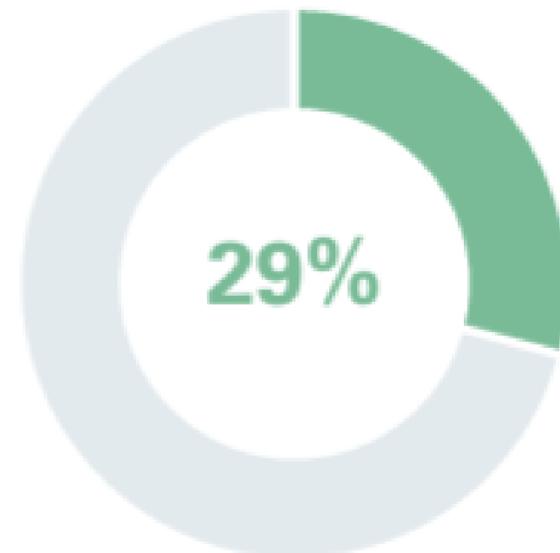


Suicidal ideation (past year)

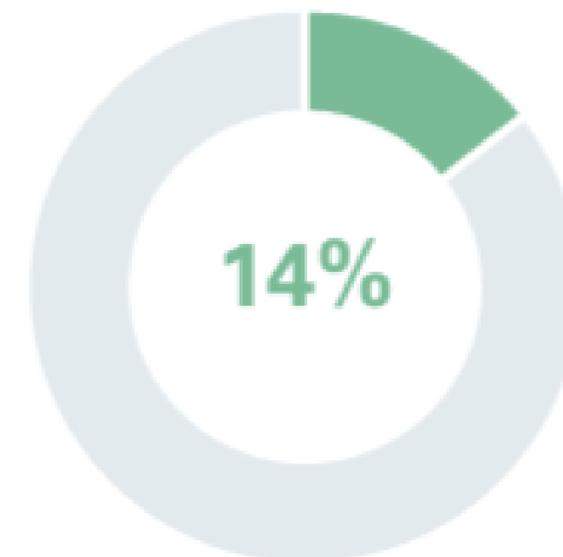


2022-2023 Mental Illness

Non-suicidal self-injury (past year)



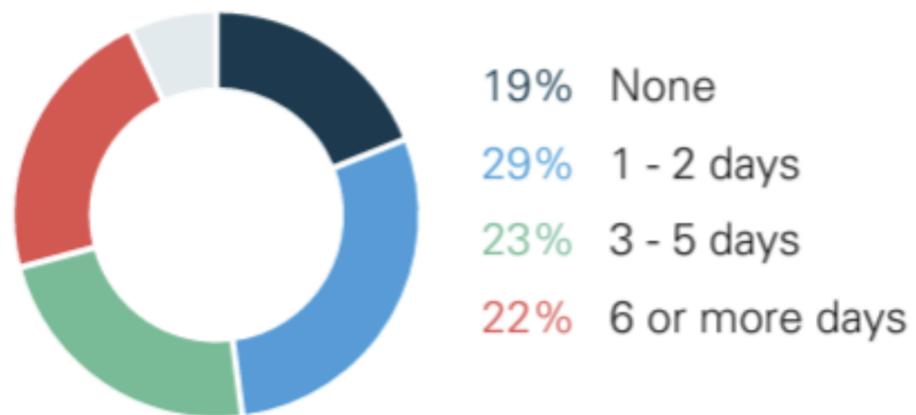
Eating disorders



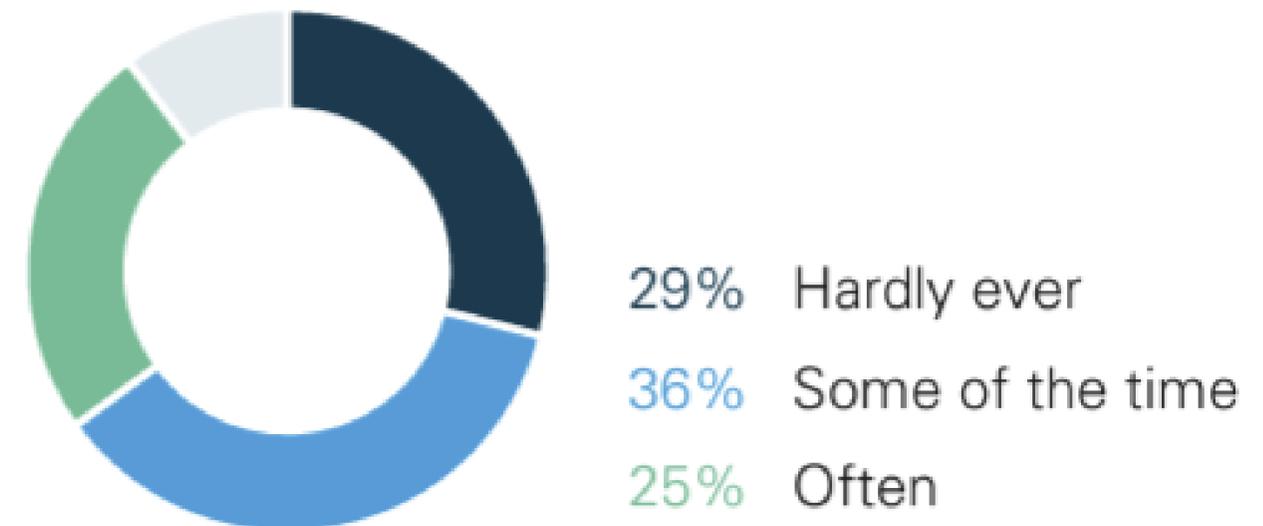
2022-2023 Mental Illness

ACADEMIC IMPAIRMENT

In the past 4 weeks, how many days have you felt that emotional or mental difficulties have hurt your academic performance?



isolated from others



High Risk Populations

- **Race/Ethnicity**

- Arab/Arab American
- Multiracial

- **Financial**

- Financially disadvantaged

- **Disability Status**

- Having a disability

- **Sexual Orientation**

- Sexual minority
- Bisexual

- **Gender Identity**

- Gender minority
 - Female
-

Needs Assessment

Needs Assessment

- **First step in planning a program**
 - **A systematic process**
 - Collecting and analyzing data
 - Identifying areas of need, setting priorities
 - Identifying solutions
 - **Important aspects**
 - Engage stakeholders
 - Use multiple methods to collect data
 - Set priorities
-

Case Study Report

Case Study Report

- Data for this report come from the Mobile Screen Time Project Study, an R15 study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).
 - A total of 586 students from small urban non-profit university in the Northeast were recruited via email in October 2022 to complete this self-report, web-based survey.
 - Each survey respondent was compensated with a \$10 electronic gift card.
 - All effects or disparities included in this report are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$
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Demographics

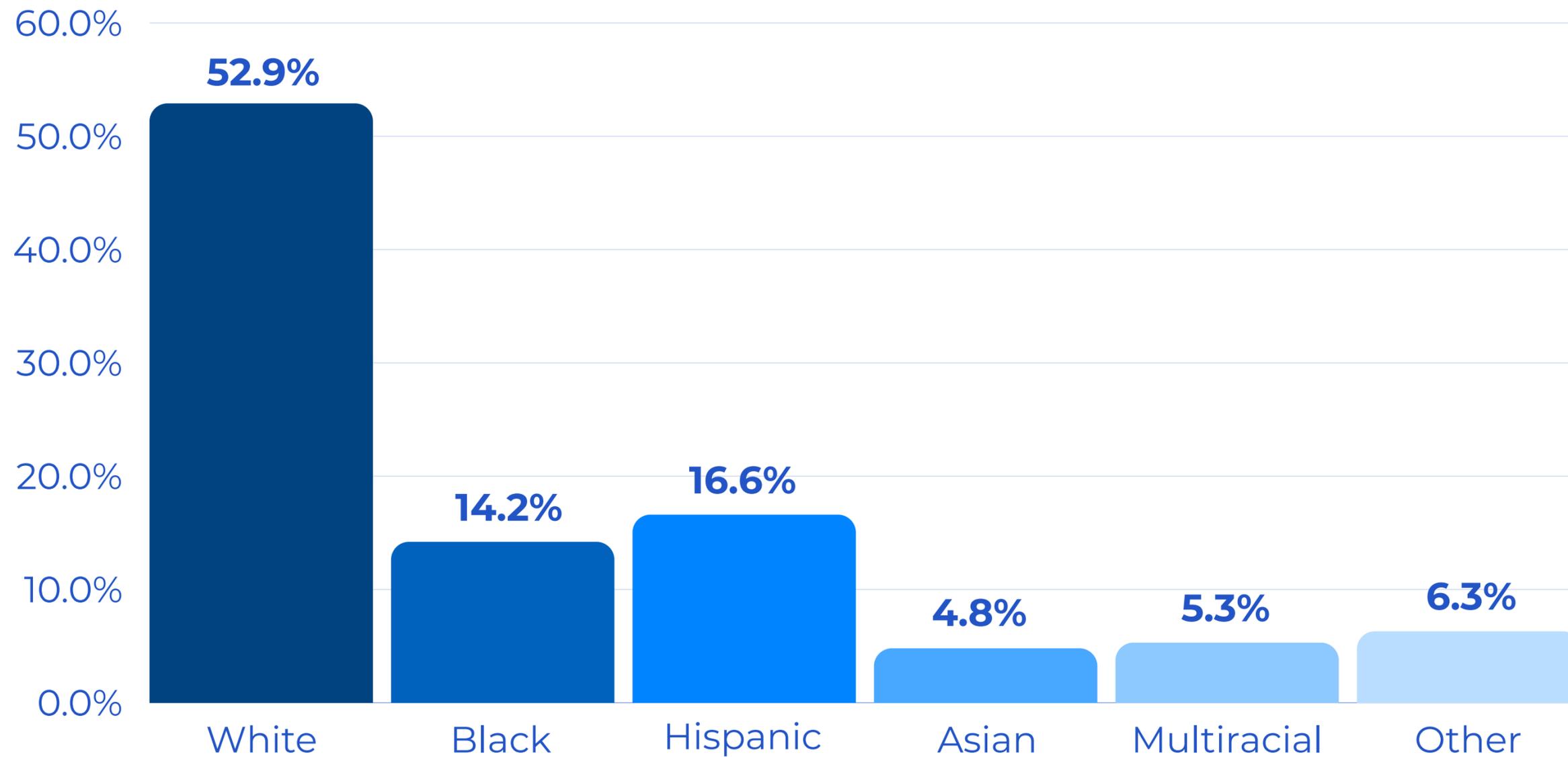
Measures:

- Age
 - Race
 - Ethnicity
 - Sex Assigned at Birth
 - Gender Identity
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Disability Status
 - Year in School
 - Employment Status
 - Living Arrangement
 - First-generation Student Status
 - Full or Part Time Student Status
-

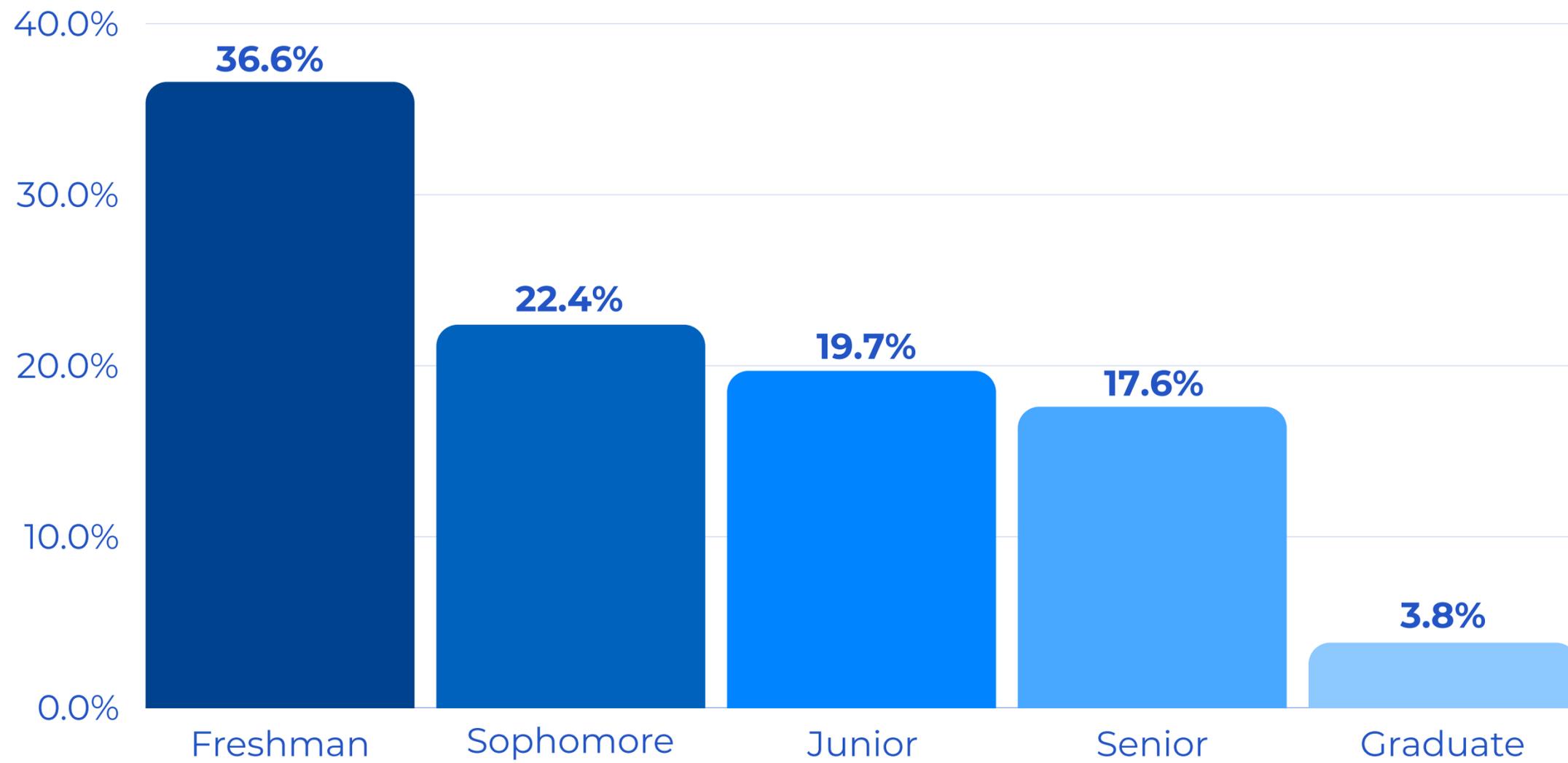
Mental Health Measures

- Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Insomnia
 - Social Support
-

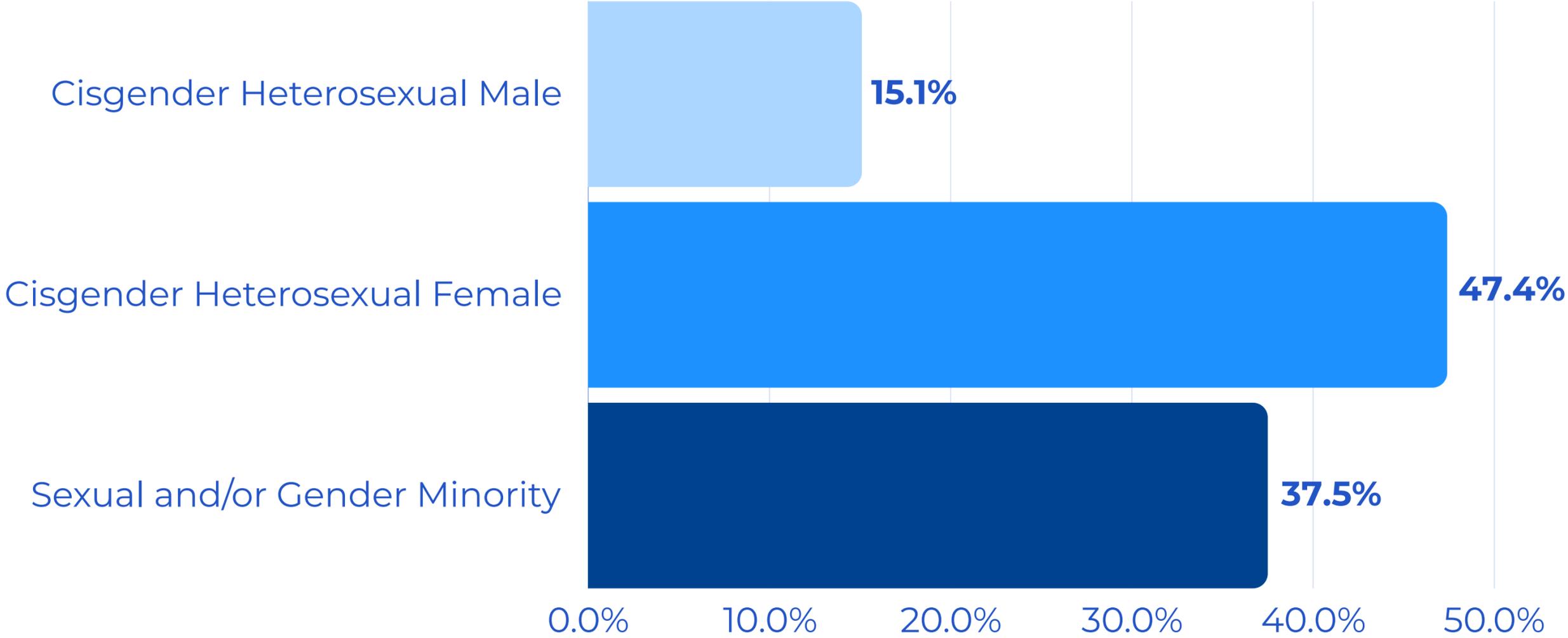
Race & Ethnicity



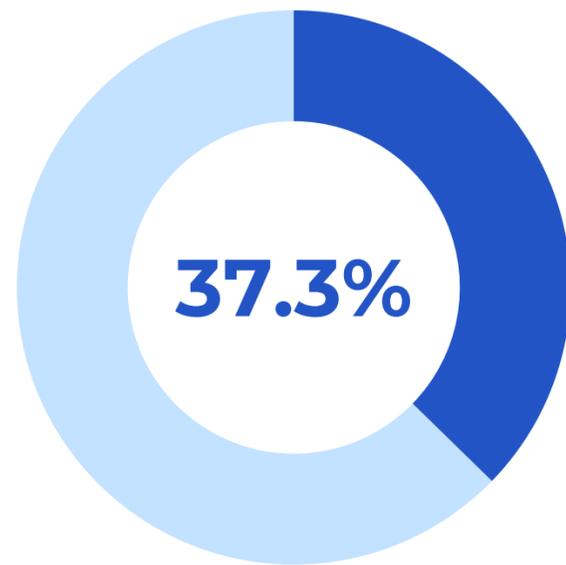
Year in School



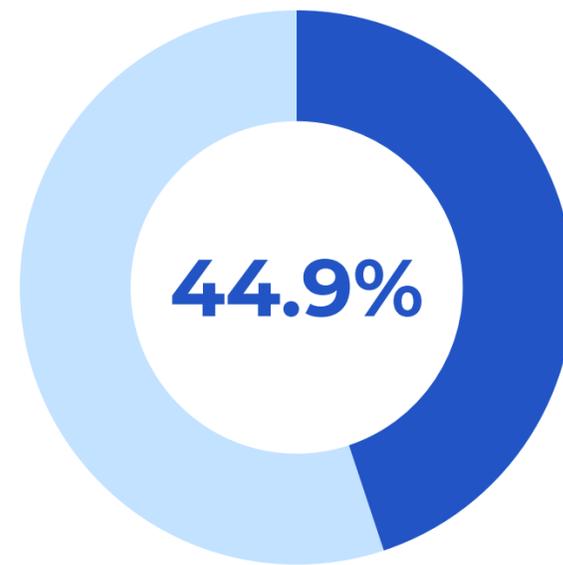
Sexual and Gender Identity



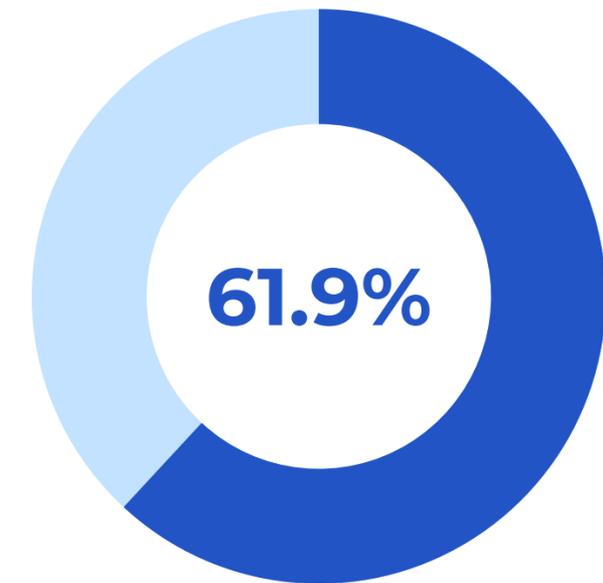
Student Attributes



First Generation

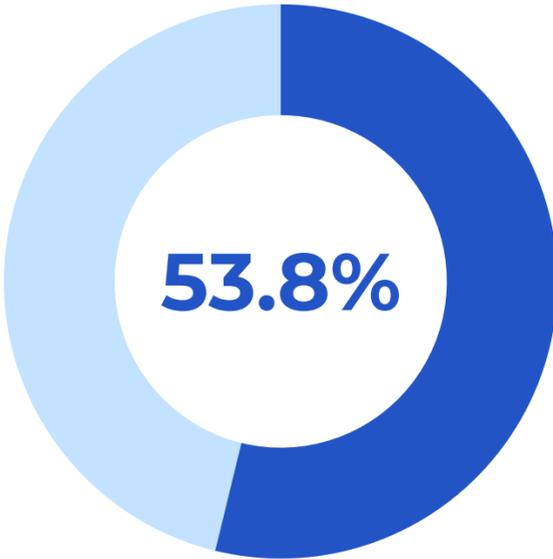


Off-Campus

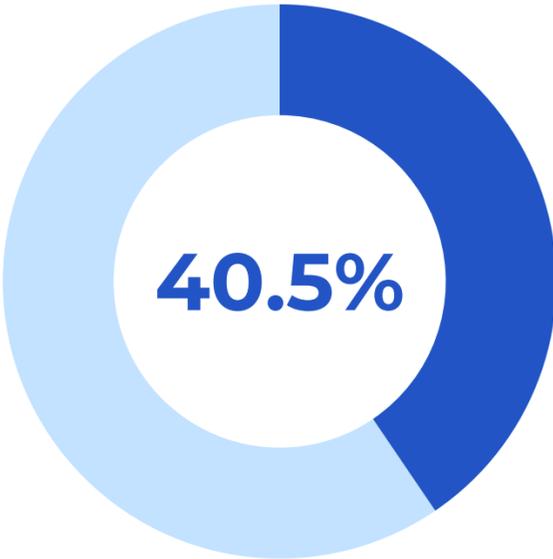


Employed

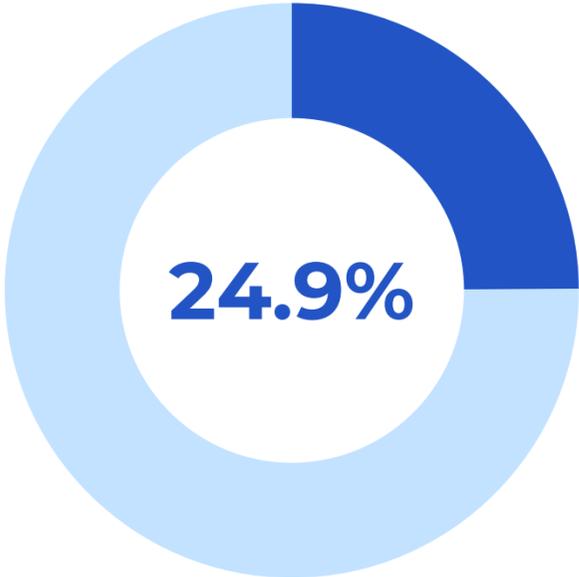
Mental Health



Depression



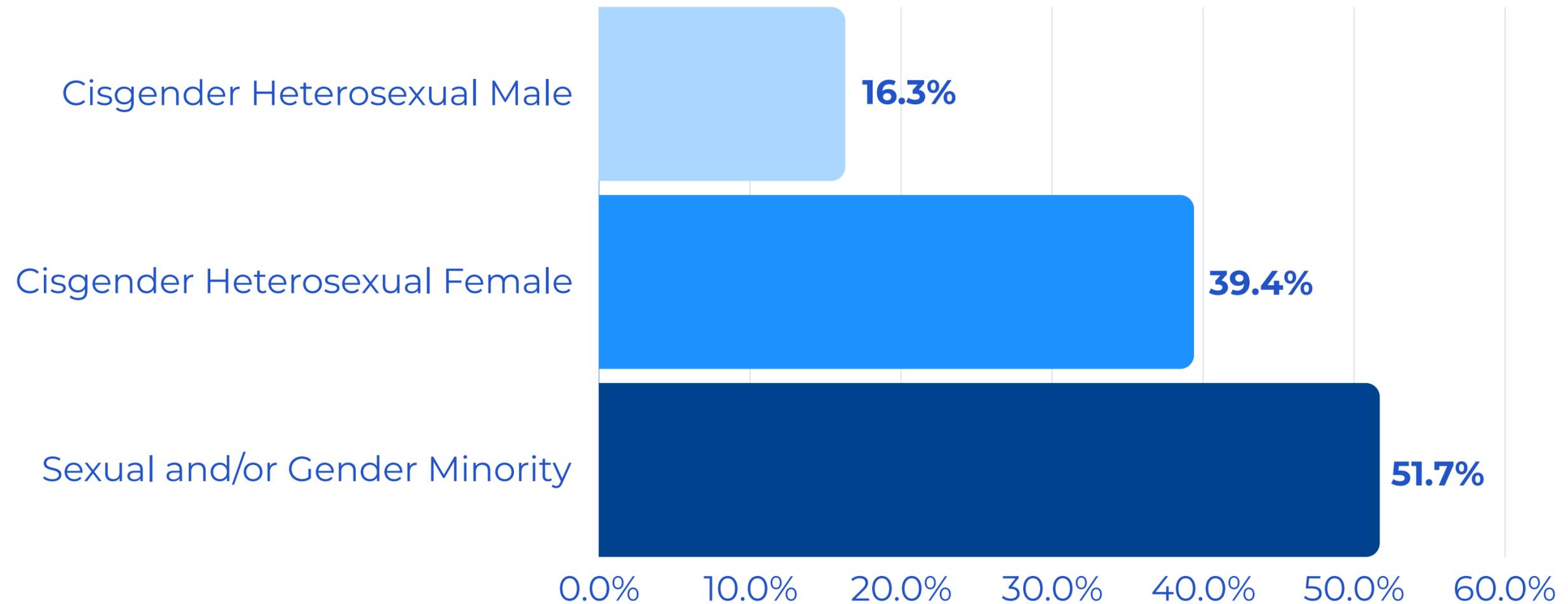
Anxiety



Insomnia

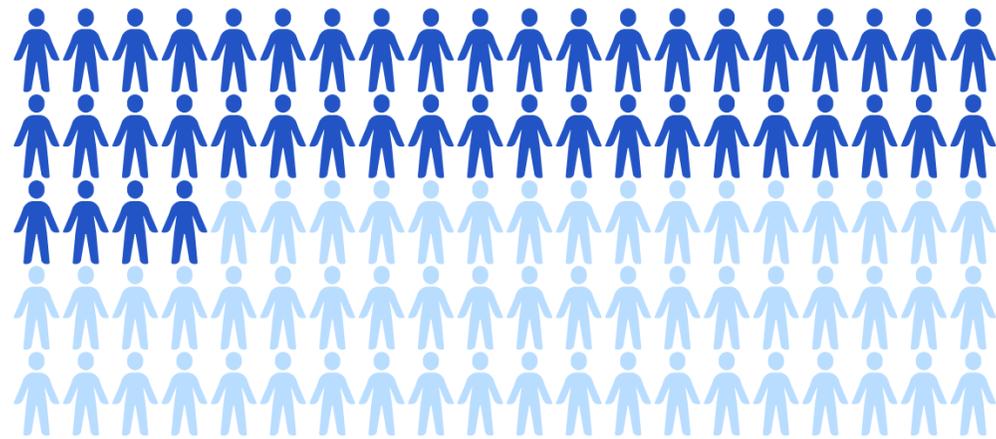
Anxiety

by Sexual and Gender Identity



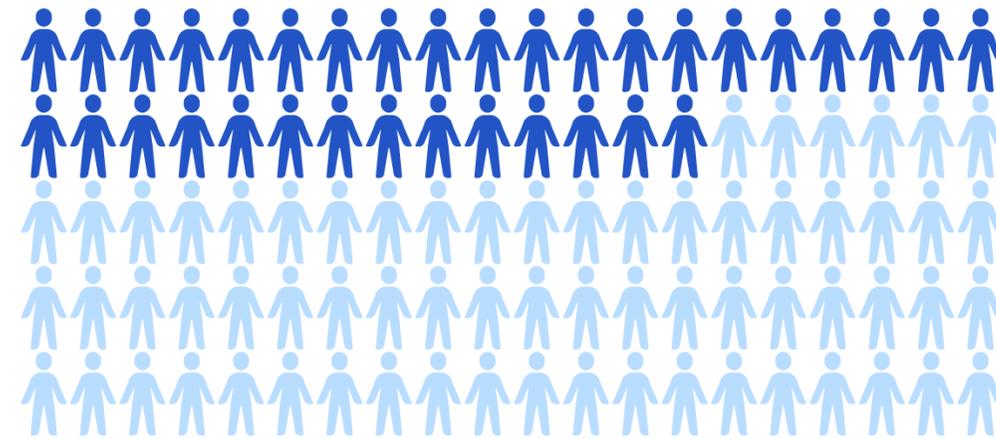
Anxiety

by Employment Status



44%

of students with a job
experience anxiety

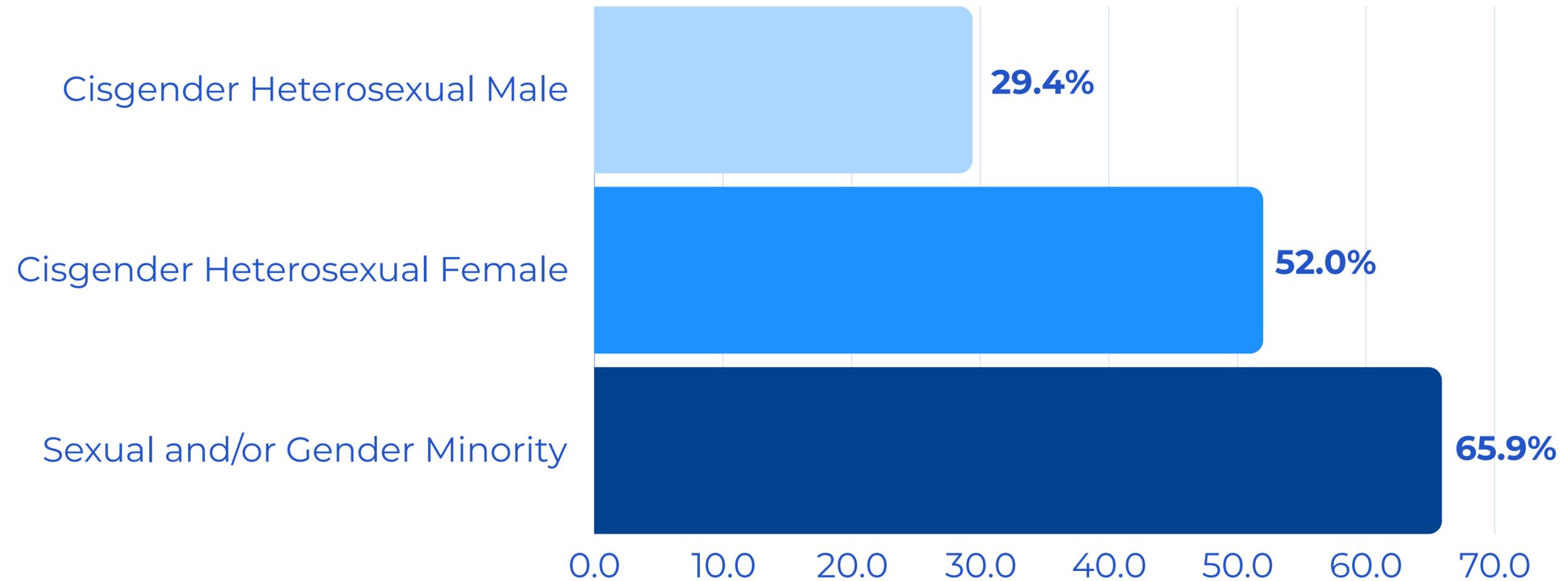


34%

of students without a
job experience anxiety

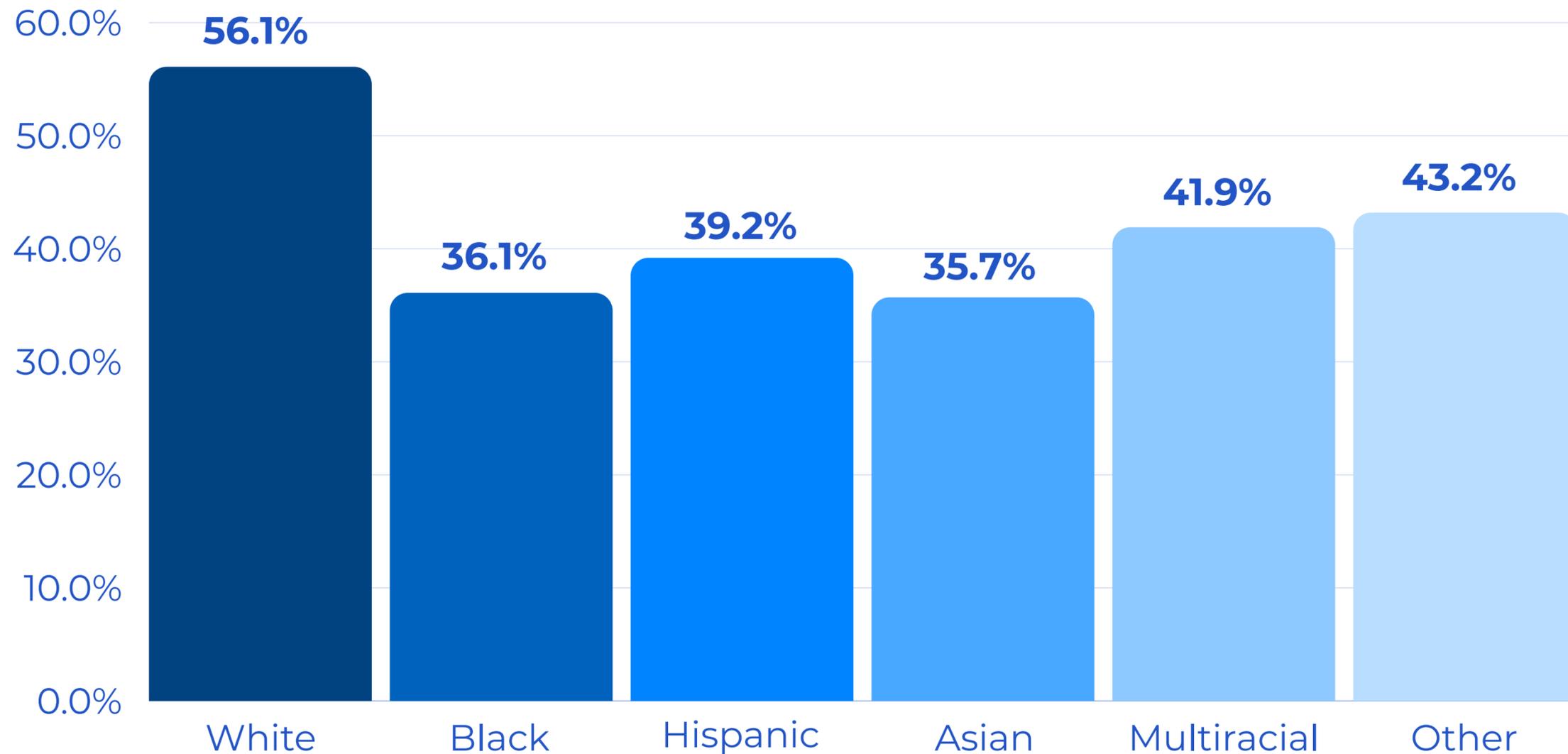
Depression

by Sexual and Gender Identity



Social Support: Usually/Always

by Race & Ethnicity



Benefits of Social Support

Risk of **insomnia** is
reduced by

33%

Risk of **anxiety**
is reduced by

47%

Risk of **depression**
is reduced by

50%

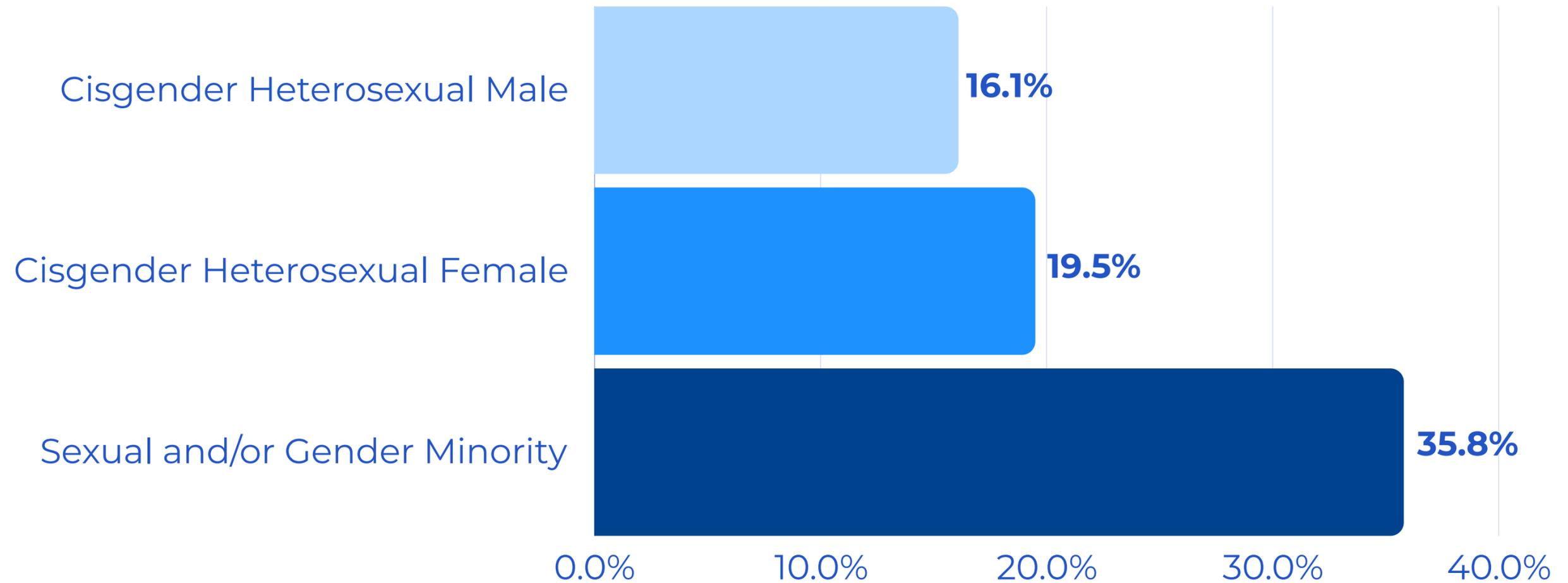
Functional Disability

25%

of students had serious difficulty
concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
due to a health condition

Cognitive Effects of Health Condition

by Sexual and Gender Identity



Main Findings

- The majority of students are depressed
 - Sexual and gender minority students and cisgender-heterosexual women are at higher risk of depression, anxiety, and insomnia
 - 1 in 4 students have cognitive deficits due to a health condition
 - Social support for students is critical for improving mental health
 - Students of color are significantly lacking in social support
-

How does this help us?

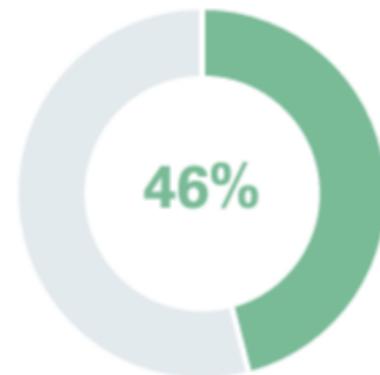
- Describes the population in greater detail
 - Provides insight on overall mental health of student body
 - Allows for identification of disparities in mental health
 - **Supplies data for tailoring supports to the community needs**
-

Mental Health Services & Barriers to Care

2022-2023 Mental Illness

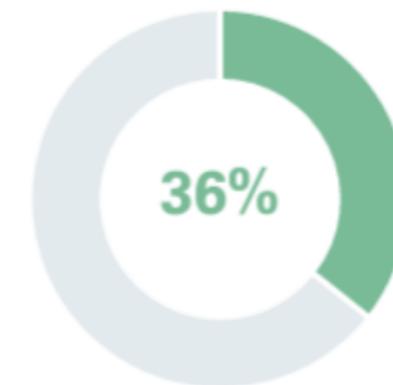
Mental health counseling/therapy among students with positive depression or anxiety screens (past year)

In the past 12 months have you received counseling or therapy for your mental or emotional health from a health professional (such as psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or primary care doctor)?



Mental health counseling/therapy, all students (past year)

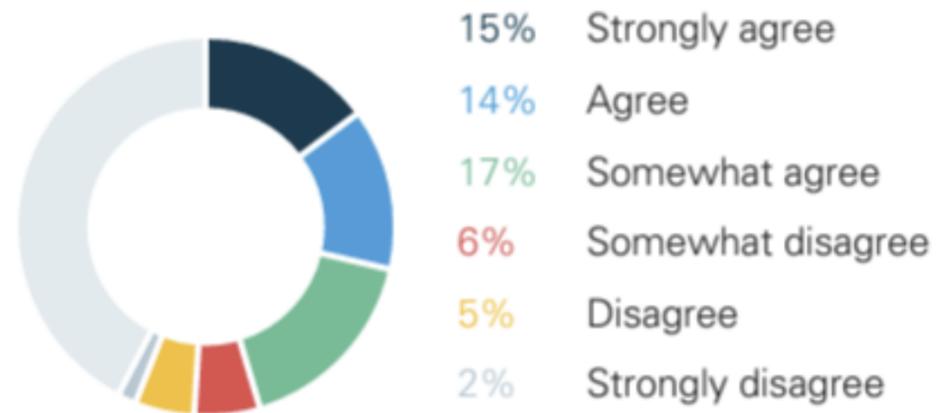
In the past 12 months have you received counseling or therapy for your mental or emotional health from a health professional (such as psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or primary care doctor)?



2022-2023 Mental Illness

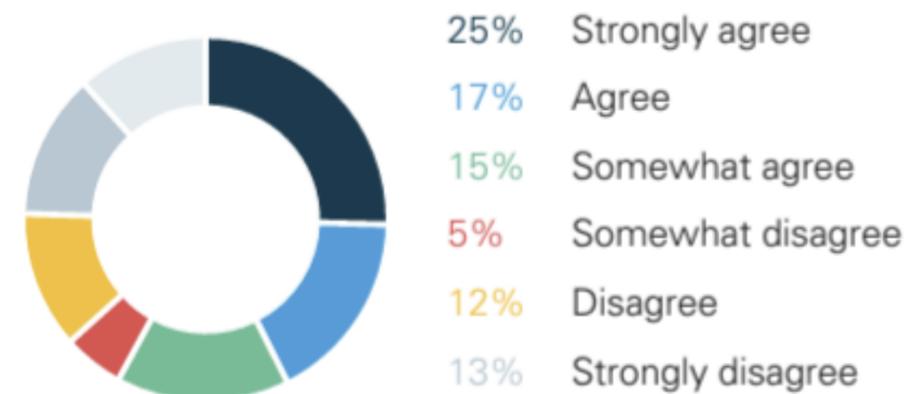
Perceived need (current)

I currently need help for emotional or mental health problems such as feeling sad, blue, anxious or nervous.



Perceived need (past year)

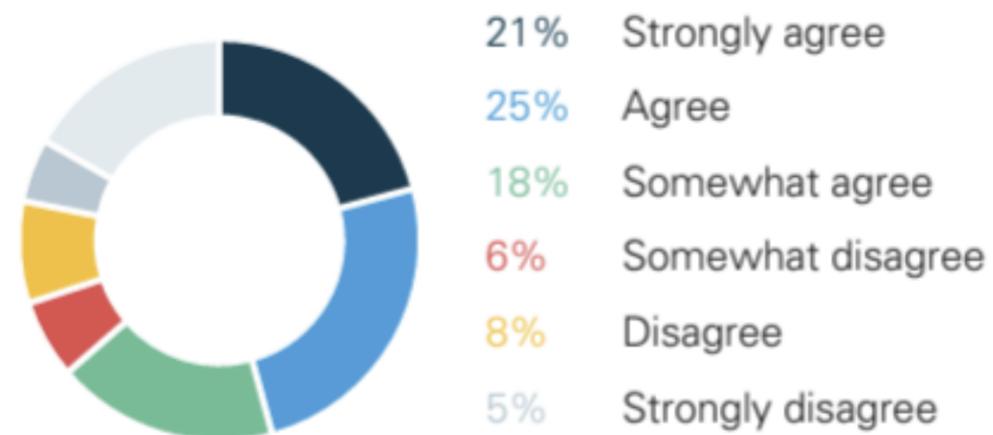
In the past 12 months, I needed help for emotional or mental health problems such as feeling sad, blue, anxious or nervous.



2022-2023 Mental Illness

Knowledge of campus mental health resources

If I needed to seek professional help for my mental or emotional health, I would know where to go to access resources from my school.



Structural Barriers to Care

- Location of physical counseling centers
 - Scheduling conflicts, waitlists, lack of available providers
 - Time commitment
 - Knowledge of available resources
-

Psychological Barriers to Care

- Stigma
 - Loss of motivation when navigating structural barriers
 - Viewed as crisis resource (“last resort”)
 - Health literacy and knowing when to seek help
 - Potential consequences for academic commitments
-

2022-2023 Mental Illness

Barriers to help-seeking

In the past 12 months, which of the following factors have caused you to receive fewer services (counseling, therapy, or medications) for your mental or emotional health than you would have otherwise received? (Select all that apply)

5%	I haven't had the chance to go but I plan to
35%	No need for services
21%	Financial reasons (too expensive, not covered by insurance)
24%	Not enough time
15%	Not sure where to go

11%	Difficulty finding an available appointment
21%	Prefer to deal with issues on my own or with support from family/friends
4%	Privacy concerns
7%	People providing services don't understand me
4%	Other
13%	No barriers

Evidence-Based Interventions

Interventions



- Mindfulness-Based
 - Psychological
 - Psychoeducational
 - Recreation Programs
 - Relaxation
 - Setting-Based
 - Stress Management
-

Mindfulness-Based

Inclusive of exercises that focus on actively attending to the present moment without judgement

Improvement in:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Distress
- Negative Mood



Psychological Interventions

Inclusive of therapy-based strategies such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)

Improvement in:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Distress
- Wellbeing



Psychoeducational Interventions

Inclusive of interventions that aim to educate students on mental health topics

Improvement in:

- Anxiety
- Stress
- Distress



Recreation Programs

Inclusive of programs such as art, exercise, and animal therapy

Improvement in:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Negative Mood



Relaxation Interventions

Inclusive of interventions that focus on relaxing the body, such as progressive muscle relaxation

Improvement in:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Distress
- Negative Mood



Setting-Based Interventions

Interventions employed by institutions that address the environmental, economical, social, and cultural concerns to improve mental health, such as policy changes, addressing the built environment, and curriculum redesign

Improvement in:

- Mental Wellbeing



Stress Management

Inclusive of interventions that are employed by the individual to reduce stress without the assistance of a care provider

Improvement in:

- Stress
- Distress
- Anxiety
- Depression



Additional Recommendations

Create an environment and sense of community on college campuses

- Develop inclusive programming & outreach
 - Minimize barriers to mental health services
 - Support community interventions
 - Increase mental health literacy
 - Reduce stigma
-

Integrate sleep health interventions into campus health services and health education campaigns.

- Consider:
 - Minimizing 8:00am classes
 - Decreasing late-night assignment deadlines
 - Creating safe areas for students to nap
 - Enforcing dormitory quiet hours
 - Requiring all staff to be educated on importance of sleep
-

Create programs to support mental health of off-campus students.

- Create more social and community connectedness.
 - Include off-campus students in mental health conversations
 - Ensure mental health campaigns reach off-campus students
 - Create system of support for off-campus students
-

Activity

Activity

We will take some time to reflect on your own institutions and discuss amongst your table (or breakout room), then come back together to share.

Guiding Questions

- How would you describe your student population?
- What do you think are their major needs?

Time

- 5 Minutes

Activity

We will take some time to reflect on your own institutions and discuss amongst your table (or breakout room), then come back together to share.

Guiding Question

- What high risk or disproportionately impacted populations are most prevalent on campus?

Time

- 5 Minutes

Activity

We will take some time to reflect on your own institutions and discuss amongst your table (or breakout room), then come back together to share.

Guiding Question

- What are the major barriers to mental health services for your student population?

Time

- 5 Minutes

Activity

We will take some time to reflect on your own institutions and discuss amongst your table (or breakout room), then come back together to share.

Guiding Question

- What evidence-based interventions and environmental approaches would work best for your student population?

Time

- 5 Minutes

Activity

We will take some time to reflect on your own institutions and discuss amongst your table (or breakout room), then come back together to share.

Guiding Questions

- What needs to be done?
- Who are the key stakeholders to implement these changes?

Time

- 5 Minutes

Final Thoughts

Thank You

Special thanks to Kelsey Gately, OTD, OTR/L and Rebecca Simon, EdD, OTR/L, FAOTA

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