

Findings from the 2025 Holyoke Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth graders

Prepared by the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts for Holyoke Public Schools



What are the Youth Health Surveys?

The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts and Holyoke Public Schools administered the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to youth in grades 10 and 12 (4/14/25-4/17/25) in Holyoke Public Schools. See the [webpage](#) for methods and responses to all questions. This report contains information about students in 10th and 12th grade who took the YRBS.

What were students asked?

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey asked a variety of questions focused on health outcomes and behaviors, as well as risk and protective factors. [Click here](#) to view the full surveys and responses to all questions.

What did we look at?

Demographic characteristics of the survey respondents were similar to those reported by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). In order to have enough participants to report, we combined the 10th and 12th grade respondents. Additionally, where possible, we compared to the [2023 MA Youth Health Survey](#).



Methods

Survey Design and Administration

The survey is a modified version of the MDPH Youth Health Survey, adapted by the Planning Team based on local needs and priorities. The survey consisted of a set of core questions and two modules. All students completed the core questions and were then randomized to one of the two modules.

The survey was administered youth in grades 10 and 12 in April of 2025 (4/14/25-4/17/25). Students took the survey online during school hours using Alchemer. The schools had the discretion to determine when to administer the survey within a given time frame. Some schools chose to administer the survey on a single day and others chose to administer over multiple days. Guardians were able to opt out through a passive consent process. Students also had the ability to opt out of the survey on the day of administration. Some students were absent during the survey period which may bias the results if these students are significantly different from their peers.

Data Cleaning

The survey results presented in this document have not been evaluated for logical consistency. Logical consistency means that responses to related questions - such as drinking behaviors - match or make sense logically. For example, if a student reported never drinking in the last 30 days in the core module, they should have also reported that they did not engage in binge drinking in the last 30 days in the module. Results presented are based on how the students responded and may include inconsistent reporting.

Identity Data Definitions

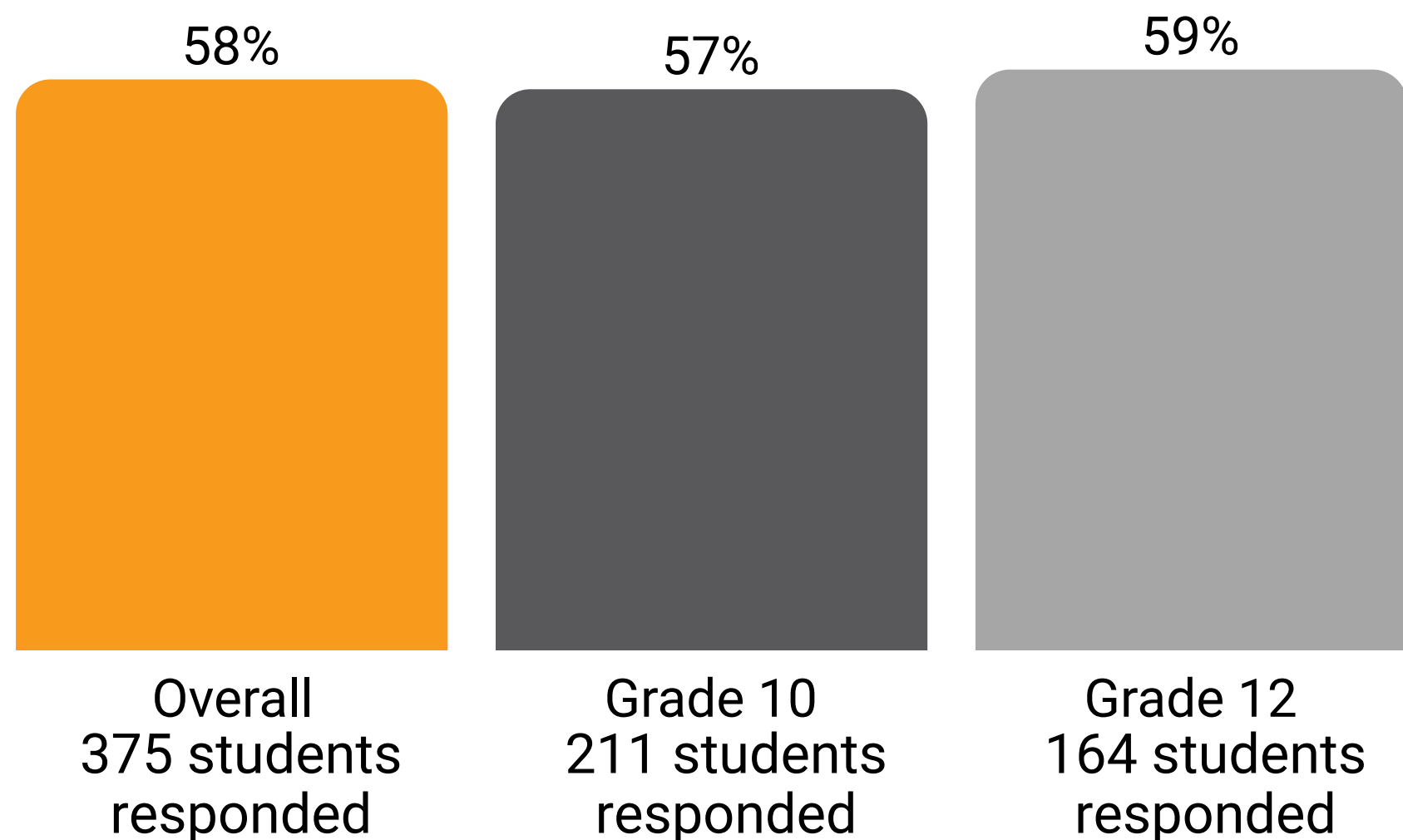
- LGBTQ+: participants were categorized as “LGBTQ+” if they reported that they identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, asexual, or pansexual. We acknowledge that transgender experience and sexual orientation are separate experiences, but have combined them due to similarity in responses and to improve sample size.
- Nonbinary or Questioning: participants were categorized as non-binary or questioning if they reported that they identified as nonbinary, questioning, or identified some other way.

Suppression

In order to protect the identities of individual respondents, questions with less than 30 responses overall or less than 5 respondents in any category have been suppressed.



Response rates by grade



We calculated participation rates based on enrollment data at Holyoke Public Schools. Guardians were able to opt out through a passive consent process, and students could opt out of the survey on the day of administration. Additionally, some students were absent during the survey period, which may bias the results if these students were significantly different than their peers.

Due to low response rates, these responses are not representative of all students at Holyoke Public Schools. Interpret data with caution.

A note about this slide deck



The data in these slides is the same as what is presented in the [data tables](#) for the 2024 Holyoke Youth Risk Behavior Survey. These slides are meant to be a more accessible way to take in the Holyoke Youth Risk Behavior Survey data, **not** to provide additional analyses and interpretation.



Who took the survey?

- **58% (375) of students in grades 10 and 12 at Holyoke Public Schools participated.**
 - Although we cannot confidently say that this represents the entire 10th and 12th grade population of Holyoke Public schools, it does give us a good baseline to work with.
- Demographic distribution was aligned with HPS population (as reported by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education)
- Where possible, responses have been compared to statewide MYHS results from 2023



Survey topic areas:

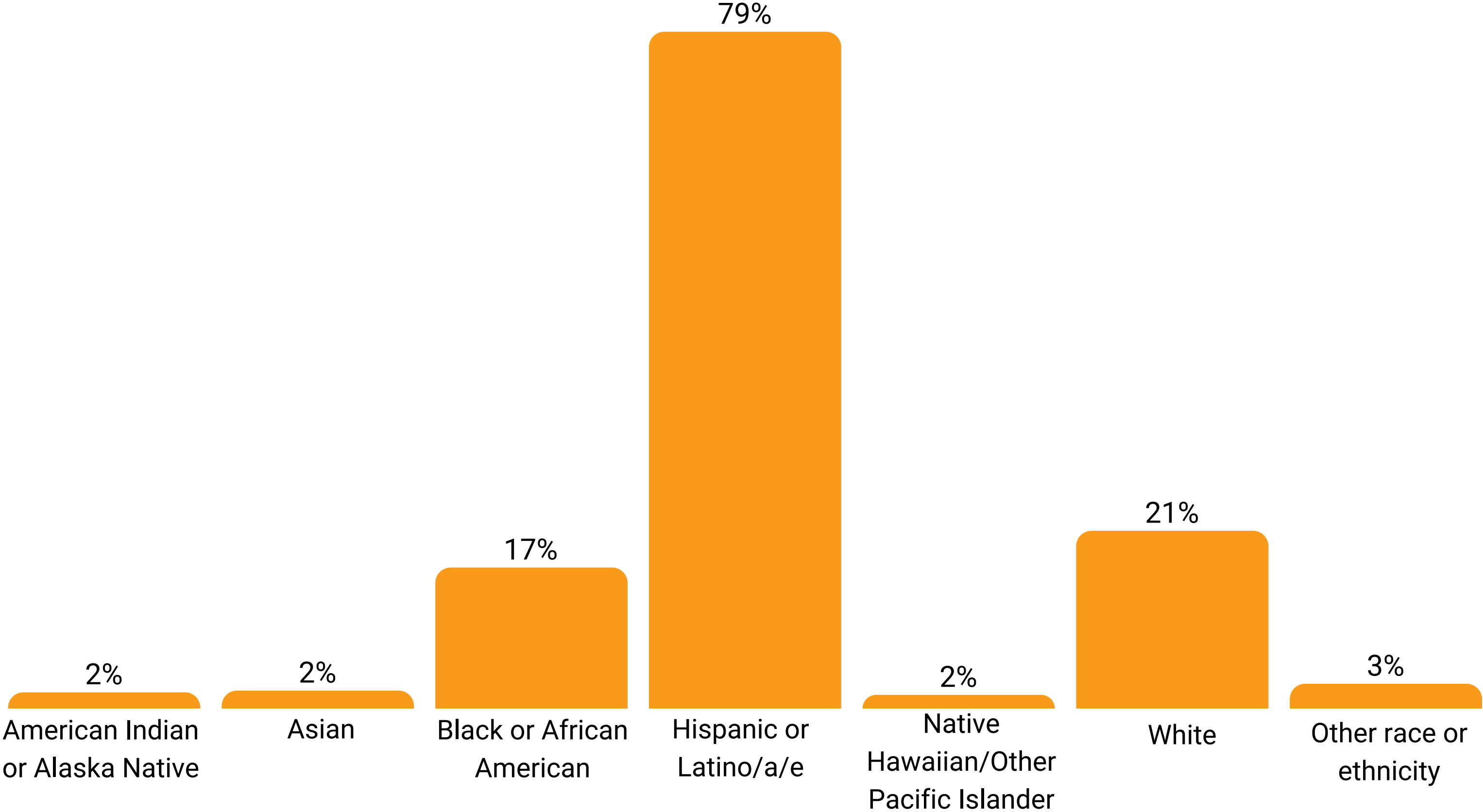
All students were shown a set of core questions. All students received a core set of questions. Additionally, students were randomized to one of two modules in order to reduce survey length. Please see the frequency tables for more information on our methods. [Click the text to navigate to the section.](#)

- Demographics - slide 8
- Diet and physical activity - slide 13
- Belonging - slide 18
- Mental health - slide 21
- Gambling - slide 36
- Sexual activity - slide 38
- Sexual violence - slide 43
- Social media and news - slide 46
- Violence - slide 54
- Lifestyle - slide 60
- Substance use - slide 65

Demographics



What is your race/ethnicity? (Select all responses that you identify with.)

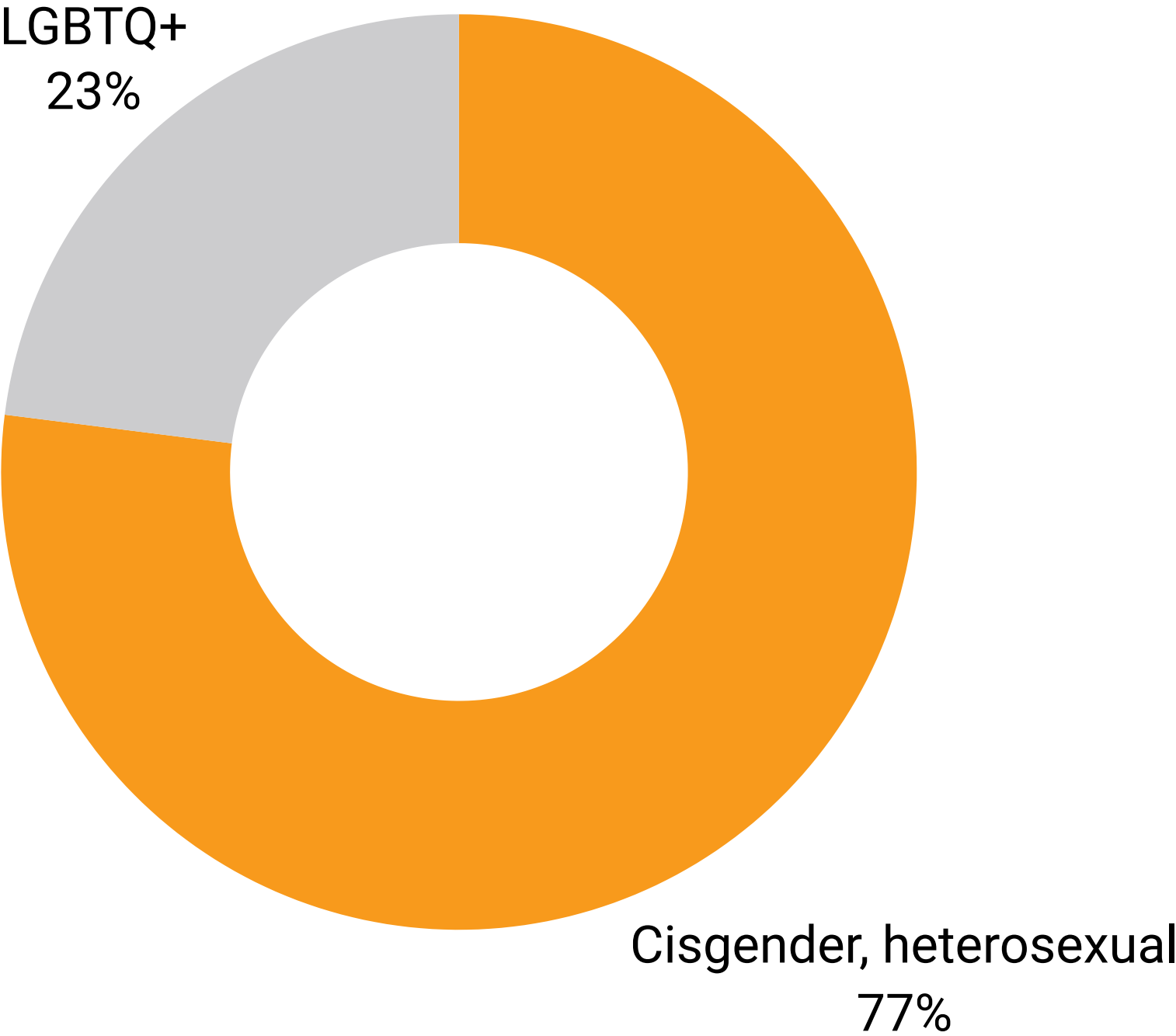


*These percentages do not add up to 100 because students were able to select more than one option.



Demographics: Sexual orientation

One in four (23%) of participants identified as LGBTQ+. The remaining 77% identified as cisgender and heterosexual.



Sexual orientation of LGBTQ+ participants:

- Asexual: 3.6%
- Bisexual: 7.1%
- Gay or lesbian: 2.7%
- Pansexual: 3%
- Questioning or not sure: 4.7%
- Queer 1.4%

Derived from: This question asks about sexual identity. Which of the following best describes you? AND Some people describe themselves as transgender, an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity and expression does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth. Are you transgender? AND What is your current gender identity? Responses for students who selected "Queer" or "I describe my sexual identity in some other way" are not reflected here due to a small number of responses.



Demographics: Gender identity



2%
of students identified
as transgender

Nonbinary, genderqueer, questioning, other

Derived from two questions: 2%

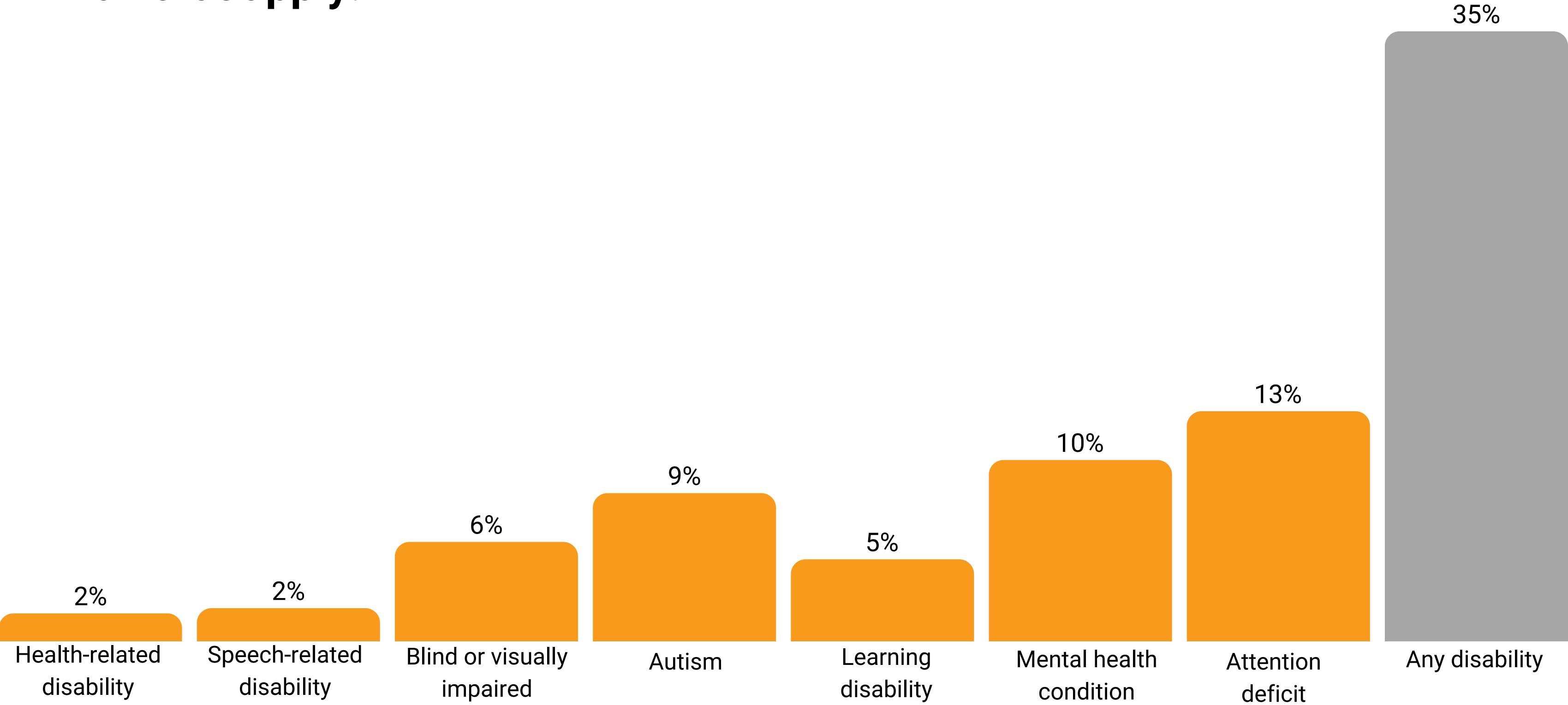
What is your current gender identity?

Some people describe themselves as transgender, an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity and expression does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth. Are you transgender?



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Do you have any of the following disabilities or chronic conditions? Select all that apply.



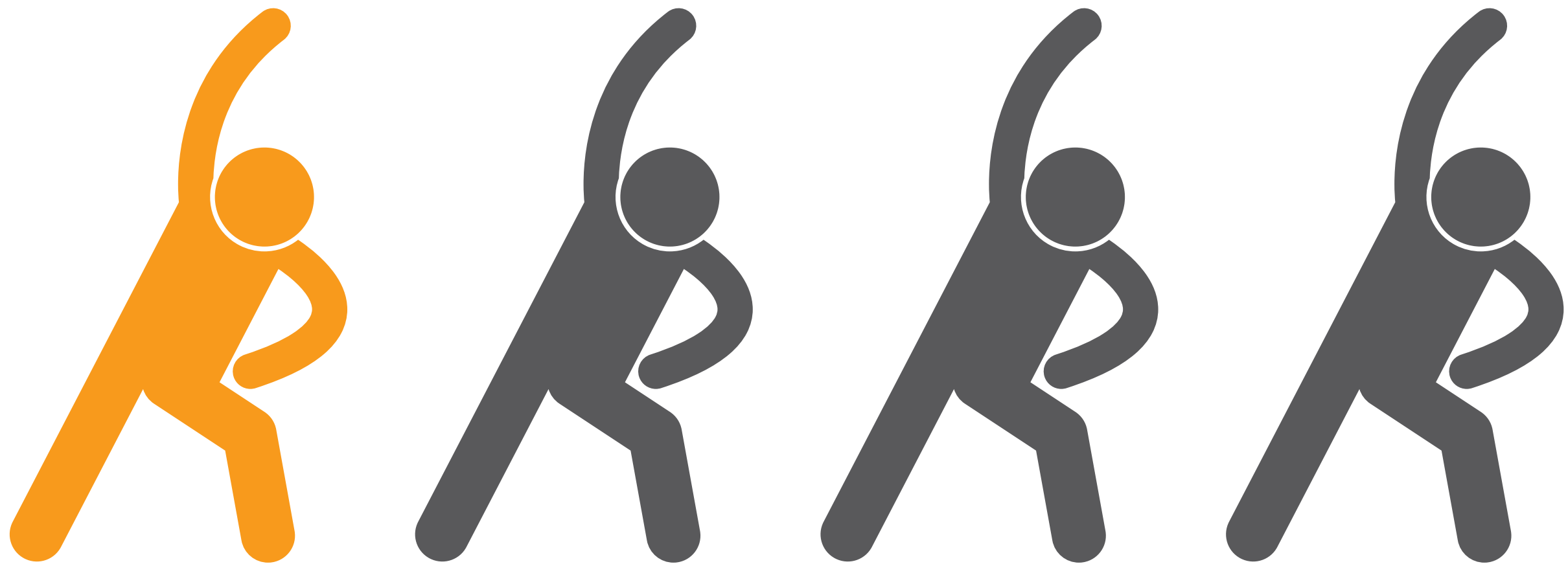
These percentages do not add up to 100 because students were able to select more than one option. Students were able to write in an “other” response for this question. These responses are not reflected here. Additionally, some responses may be hidden due to low numbers in order to protect students’ identities.

Diet and physical activity



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One quarter (27%) of students reported being physically active for a total of 60 minutes all 7 days in the past week.



Statewide: 23%
[CDC guidelines for physical activity](#) recommend that all children and adolescents aged 6-17 are physically active at least 60 minutes per day.
Derived from: During the past 7 days, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day?



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Roughly two in ten (18%) students ate vegetables 2 or more times in the past day.



Statewide: 49%

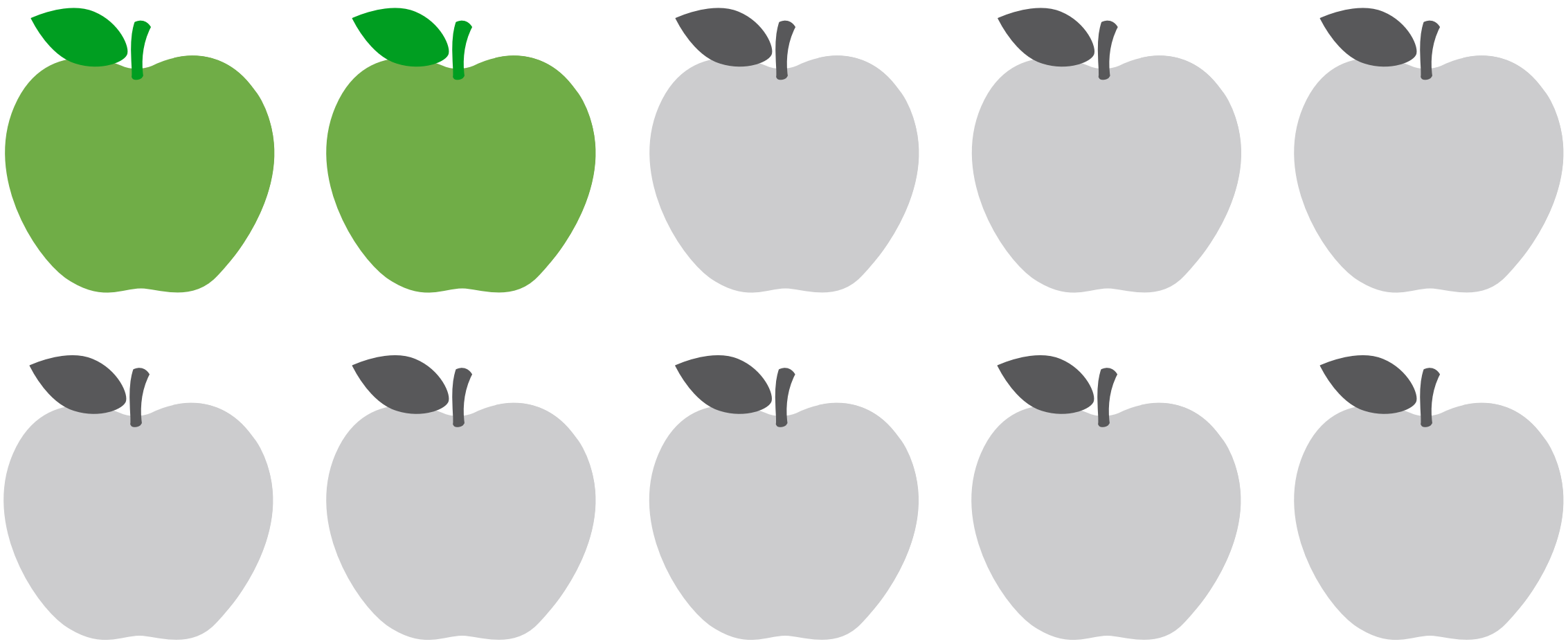
[General recommendations for vegetable consumption](#) by age suggest between 2.5-4 cups of vegetables per day, dependent on sex.

Derived from: During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat vegetables?



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Roughly two in ten (23%) students ate fruit two or more times in the past day.



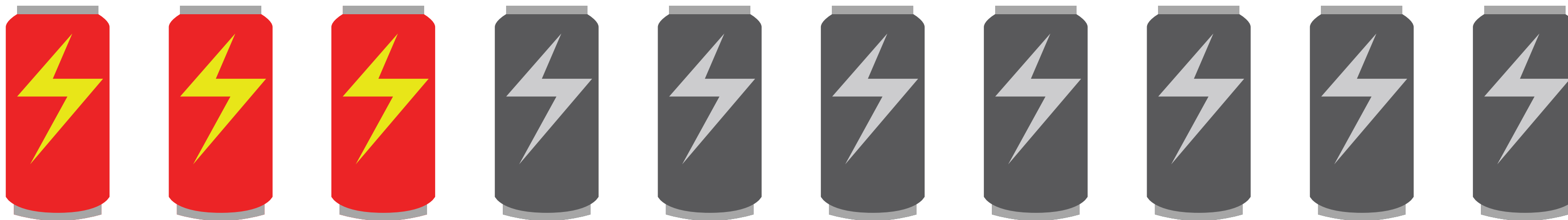
Statewide: 51%
[General recommendations for fruit consumption](#) by age suggest between 1.5-2.5 cups of fruit per day, dependent on sex.
Derived from: During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat fruit?



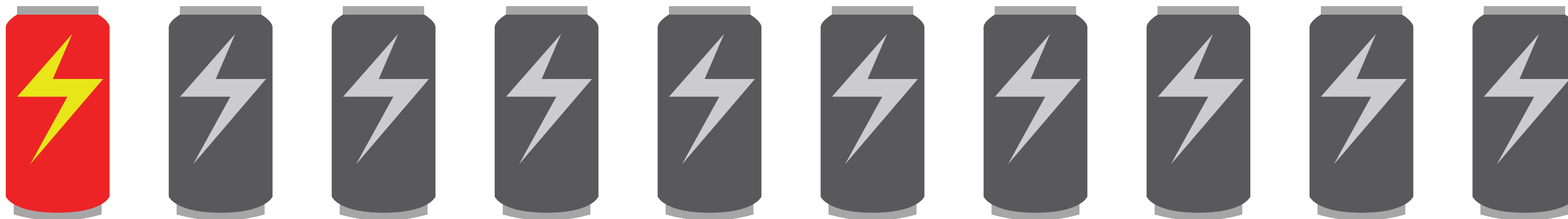
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In the past 7 days, how many times did you drink a can, bottle, or glass of an energy drink?

Three in ten (34%) students reported consuming energy drinks in the past week.



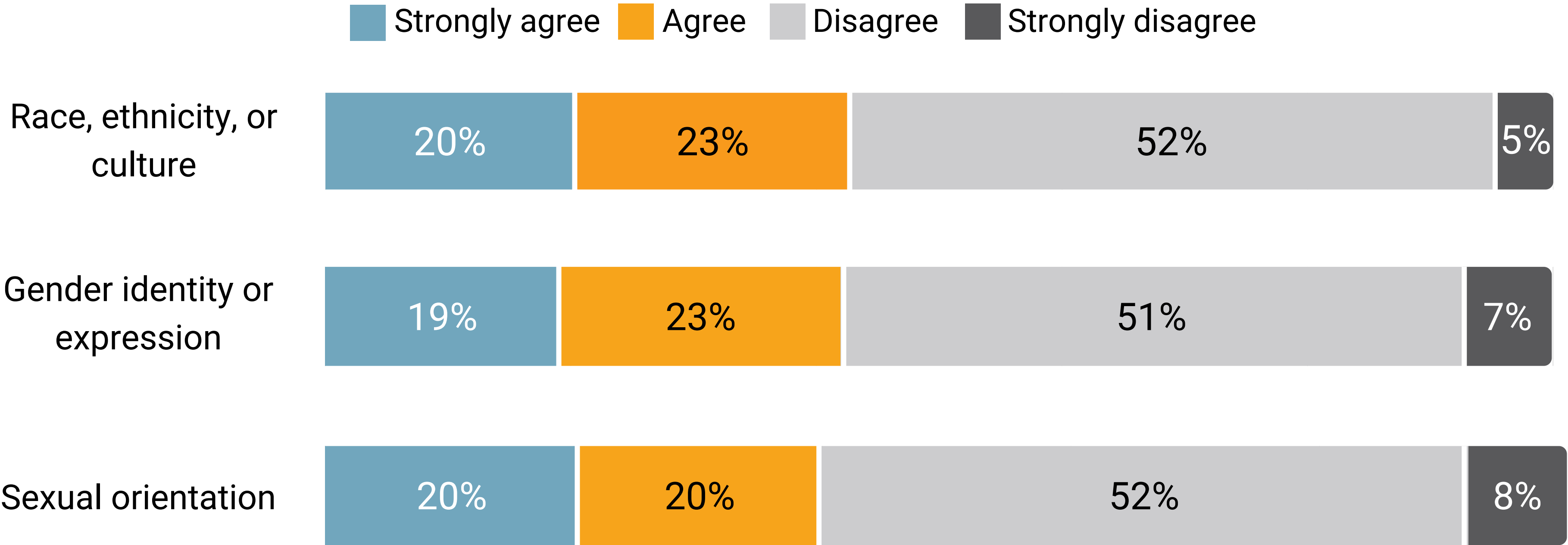
One in ten (11%) students reported consuming energy drinks **one or more times per day** in the past week.



Belonging



**The next set of questions ask how you think students are generally treated at school.
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school?
Students are treated differently due to their...**

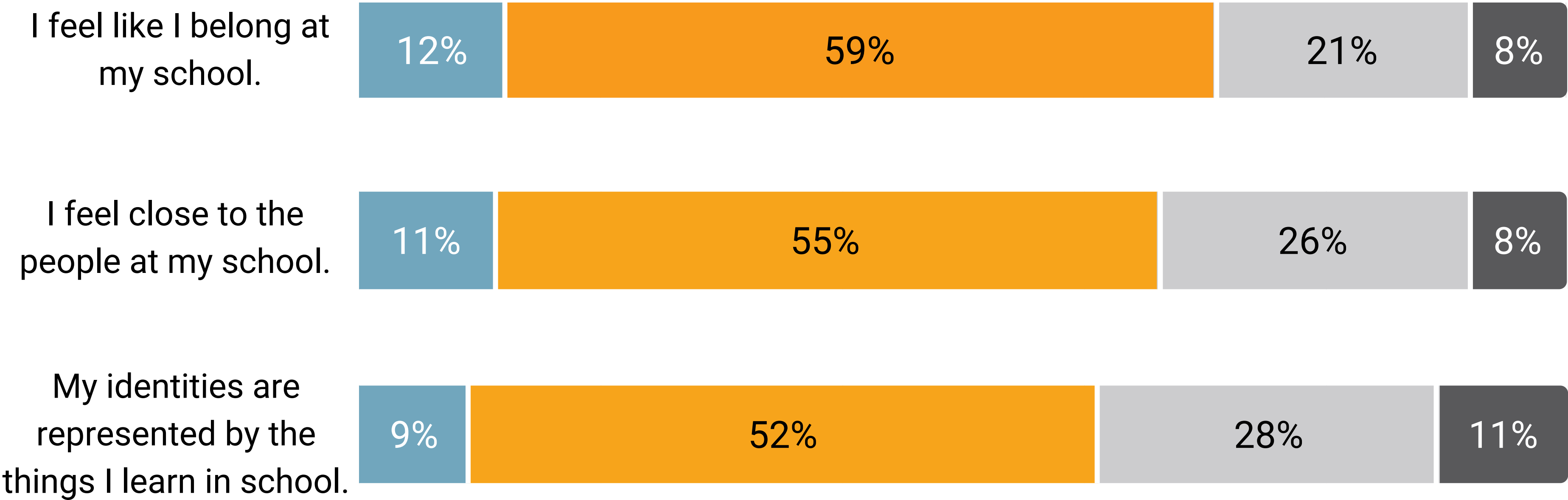


Note: No statewide comparison is available for these questions.



The next questions ask about feelings of belonging at school. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school?

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

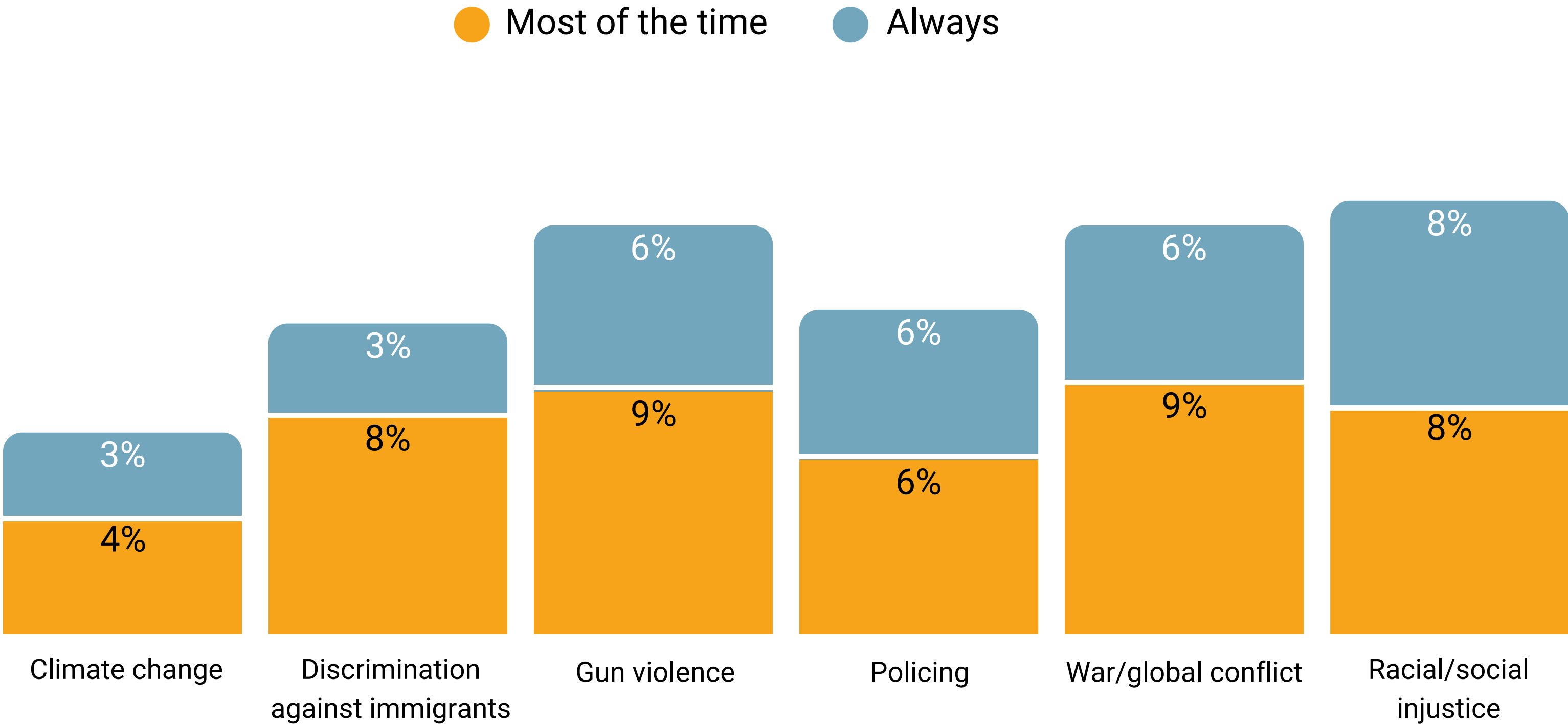


Mental health



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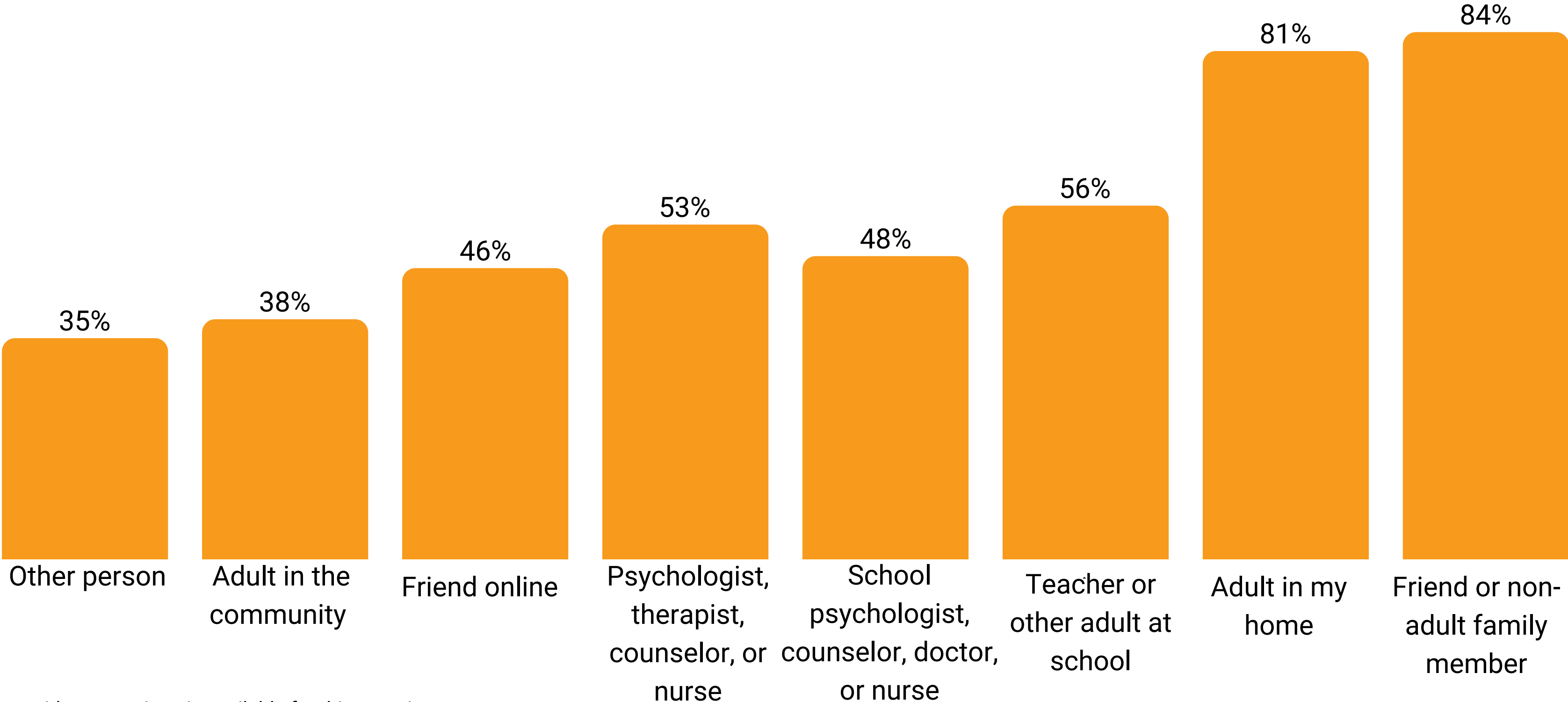
During the past 12 months, how often were you so worried about each of the following issues that you could not sleep at night?



Note: In this question series, participants were also given an open response option. These write-in responses are not reflected here
Note: No statewide comparison is available for these questions.



Do you feel like you could talk to the following people if you needed help with a personal problem?

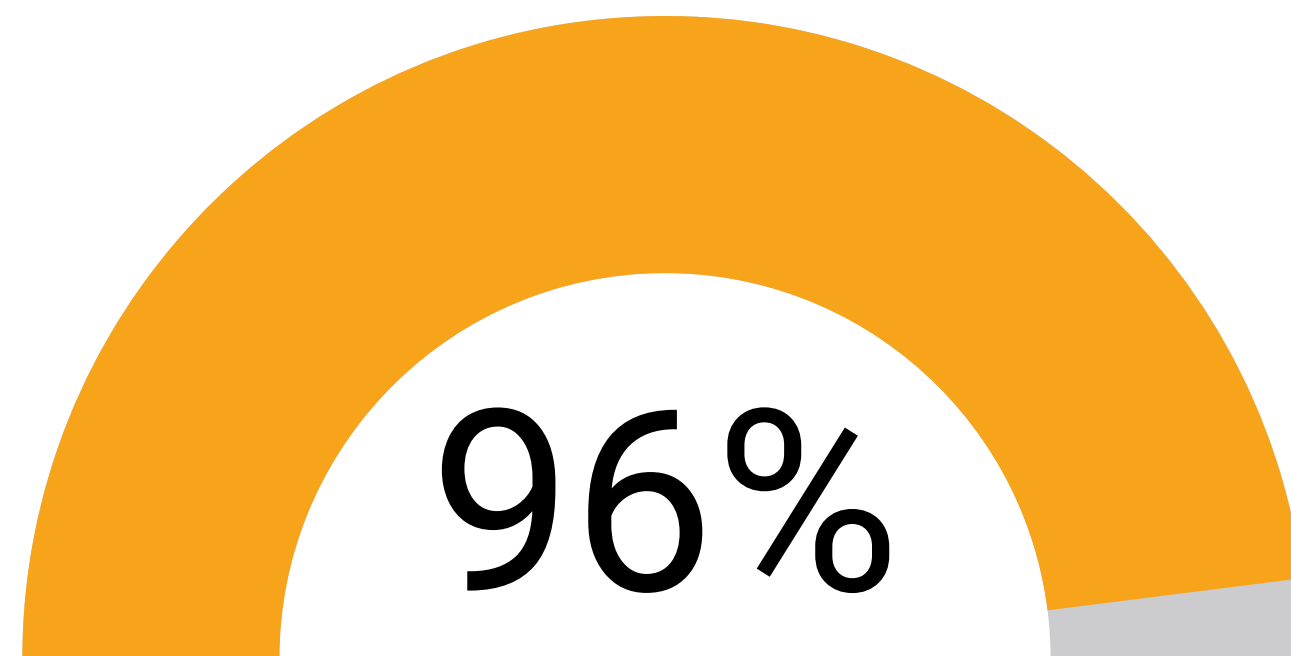


Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



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Most students felt they had someone to turn to if they needed help.



The percentage of students overall who feel like they have someone to talk to if they need help with a personal problem

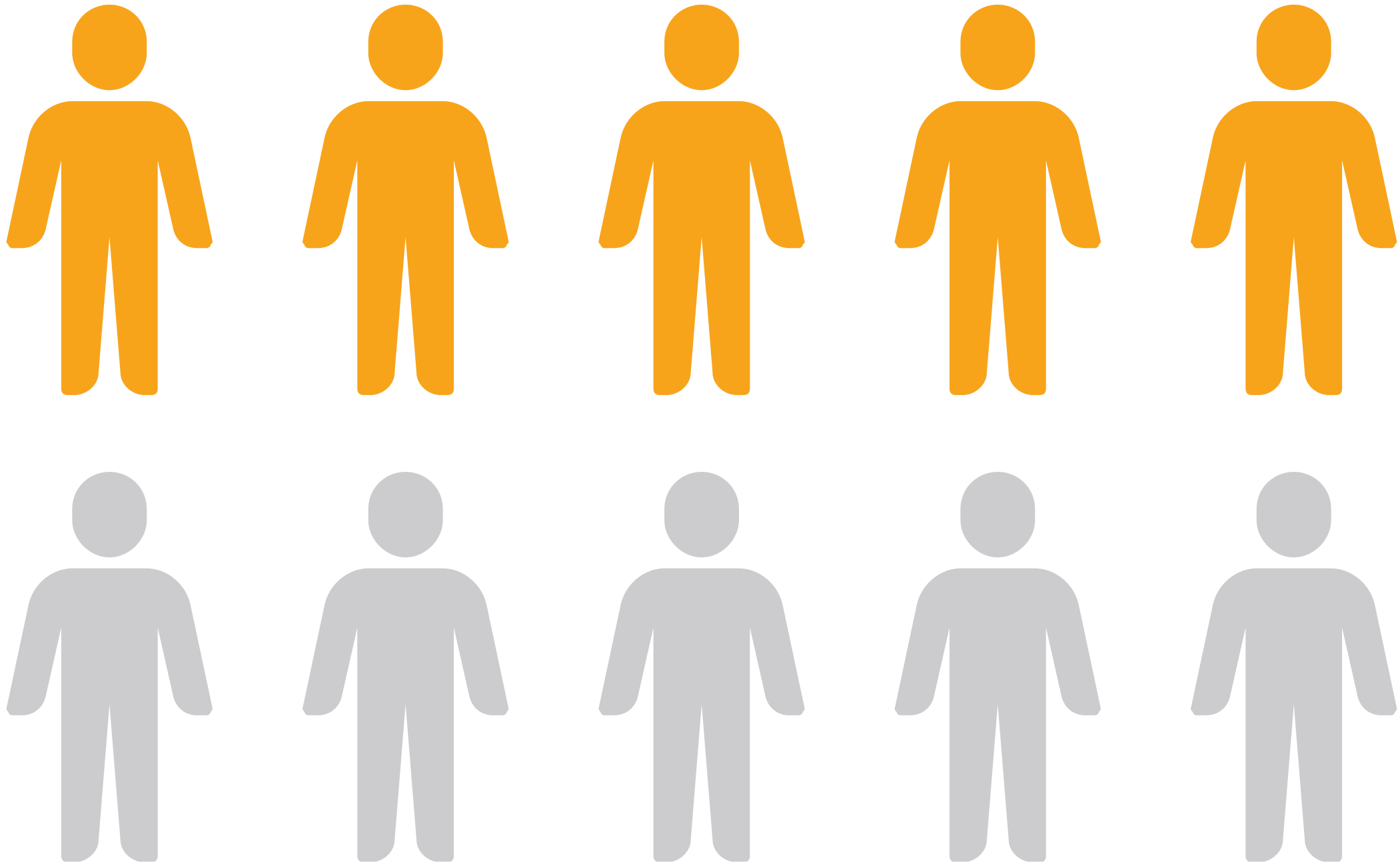
Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question

Derived from: Do you feel like you could talk to the following people if you needed help with a personal problem?



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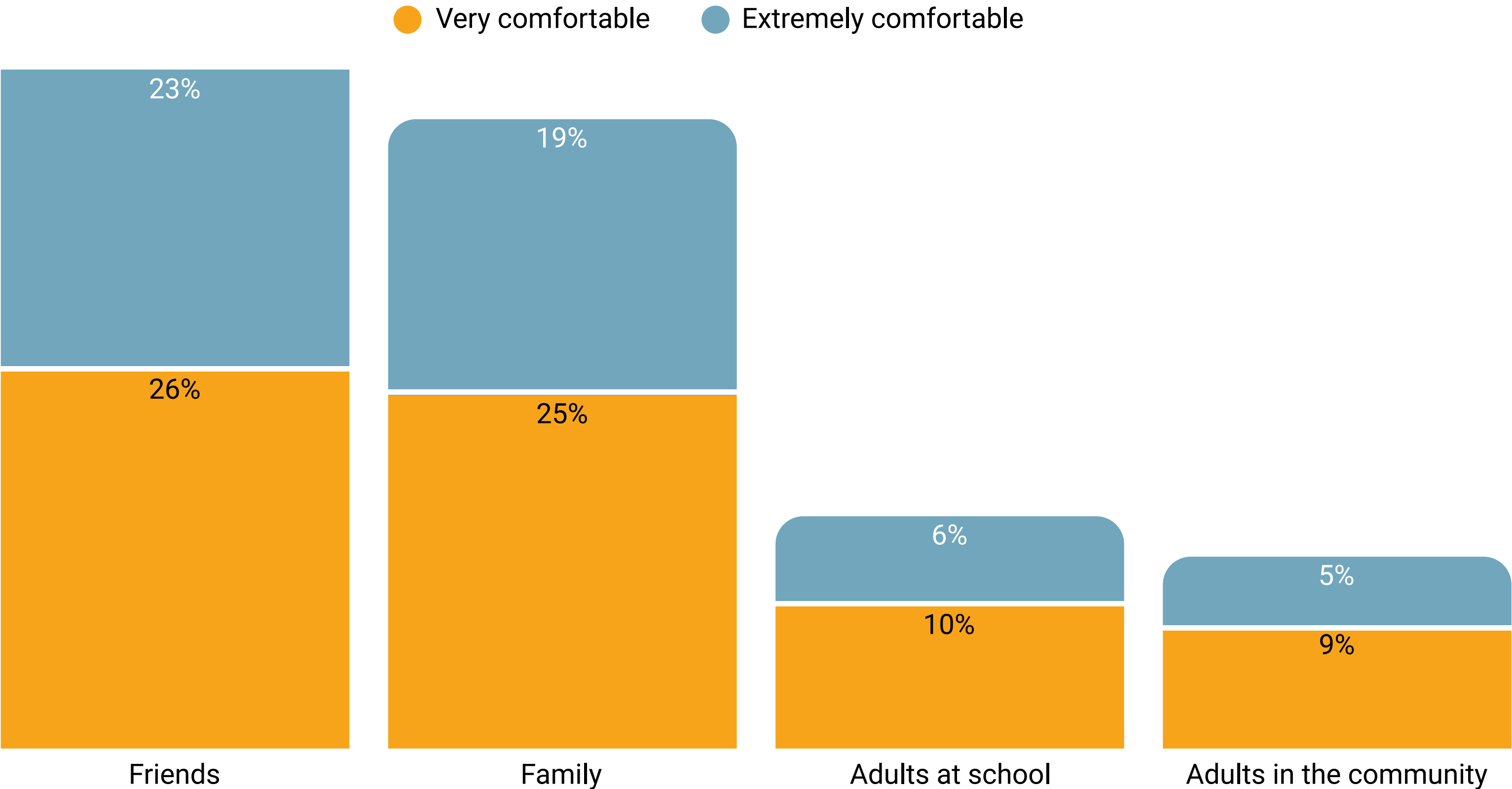
About half of students (52%) needed someone to talk to.





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How comfortable would you be talking about your mental health and emotional wellbeing with each of the following?

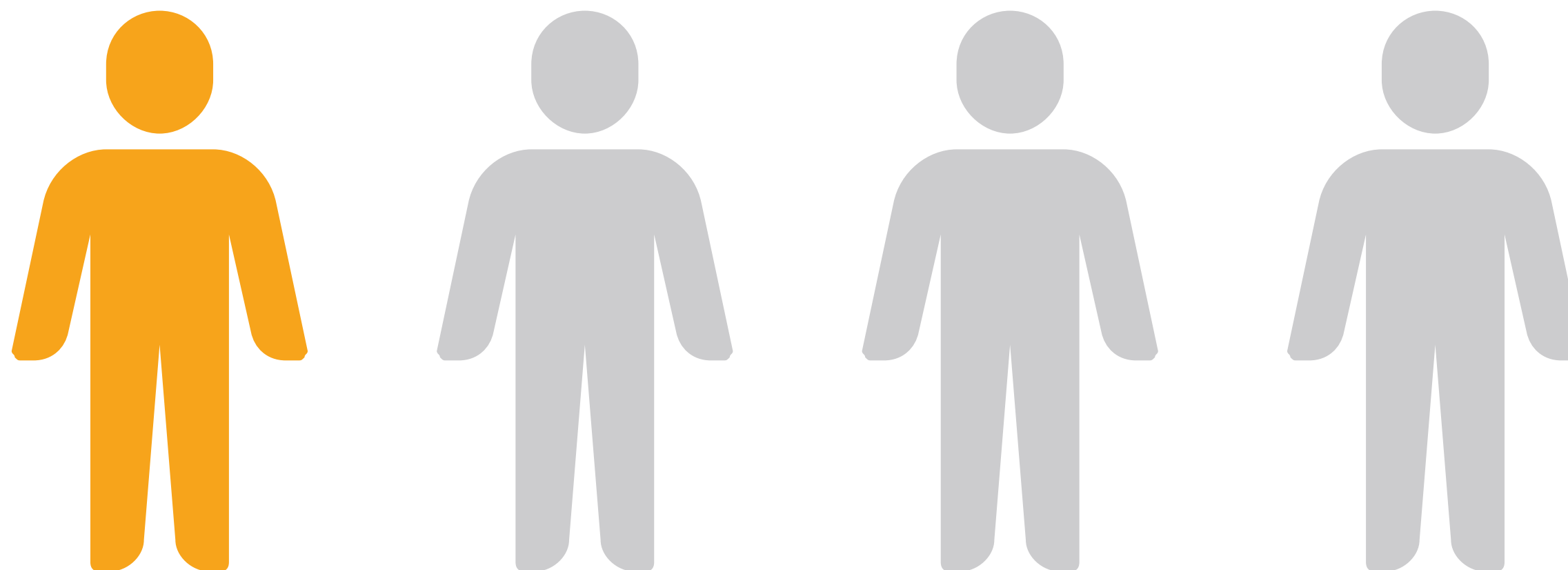


Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

**One in four (25%) tenth and twelfth graders reported feeling lonely
“most of the time” or “always” in the past year.**



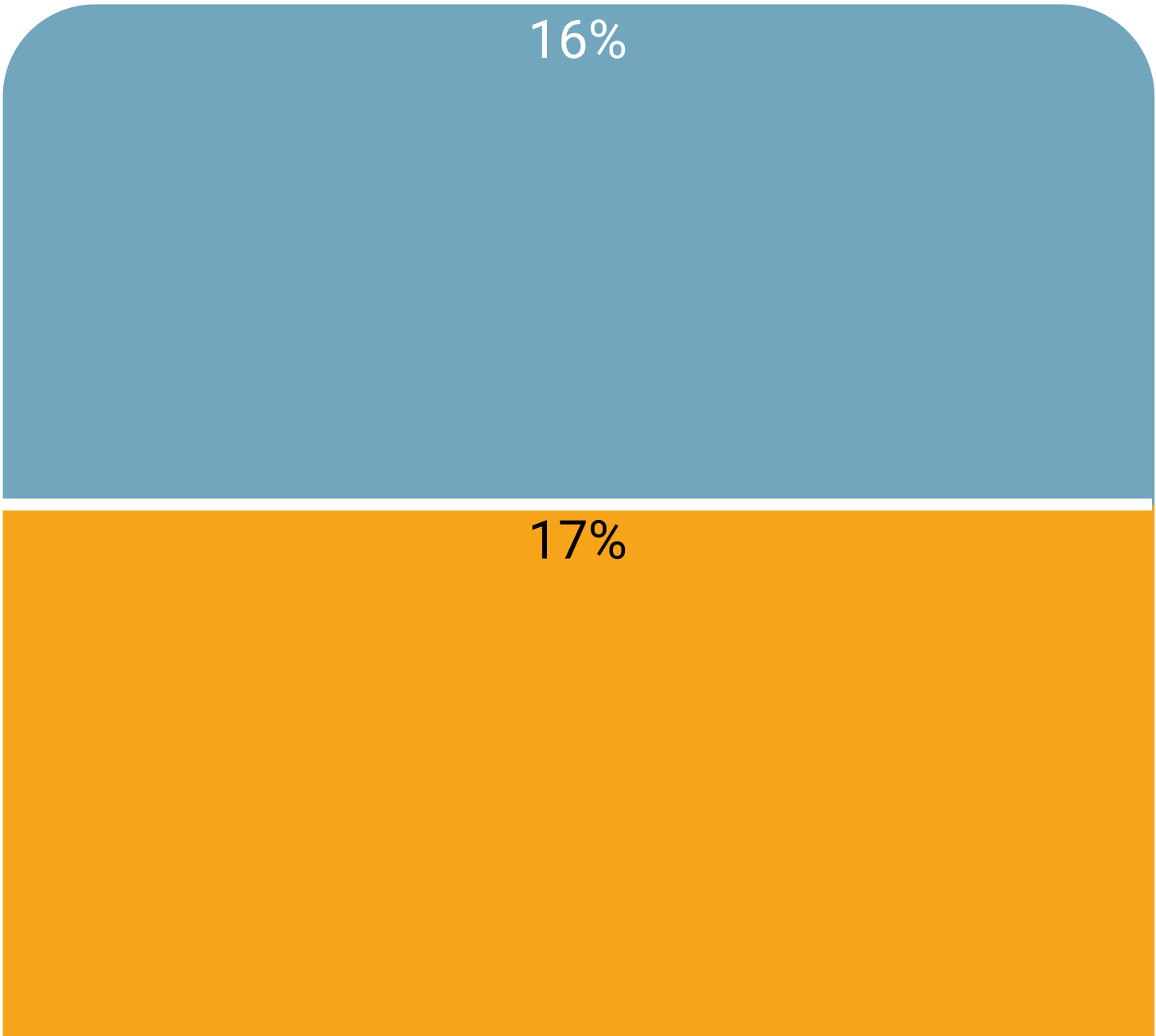
Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question

Derived from: During the past 12 months, how often did you feel lonely?

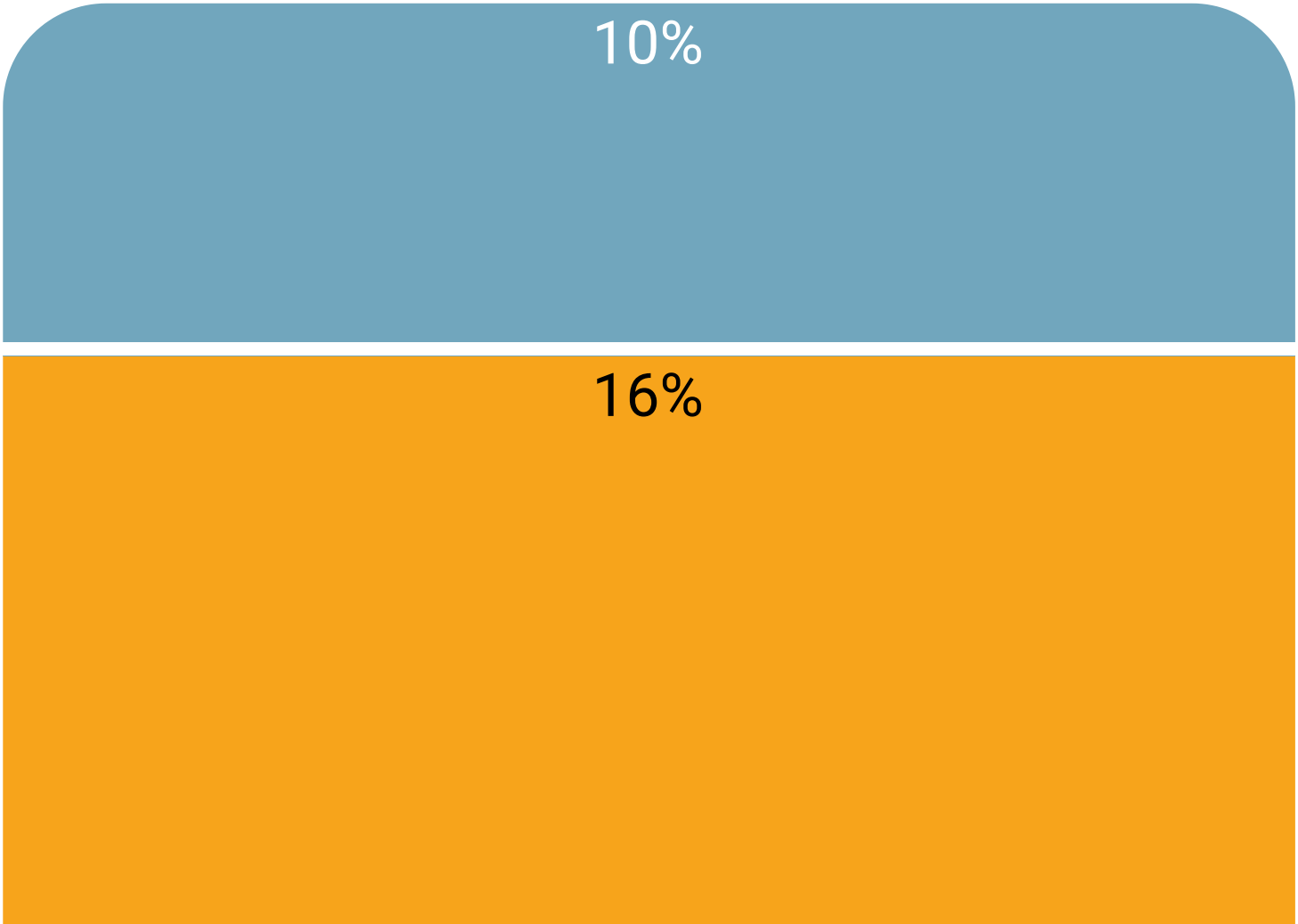


How often over the last 2 weeks, were you bothered by:

● More than half the days ● Nearly every day



Feeling anxious, nervous, or on edge



Not being able to stop or control worrying

Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



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Four out of ten (40%) students reported feeling sad or depressed most days in the past year.

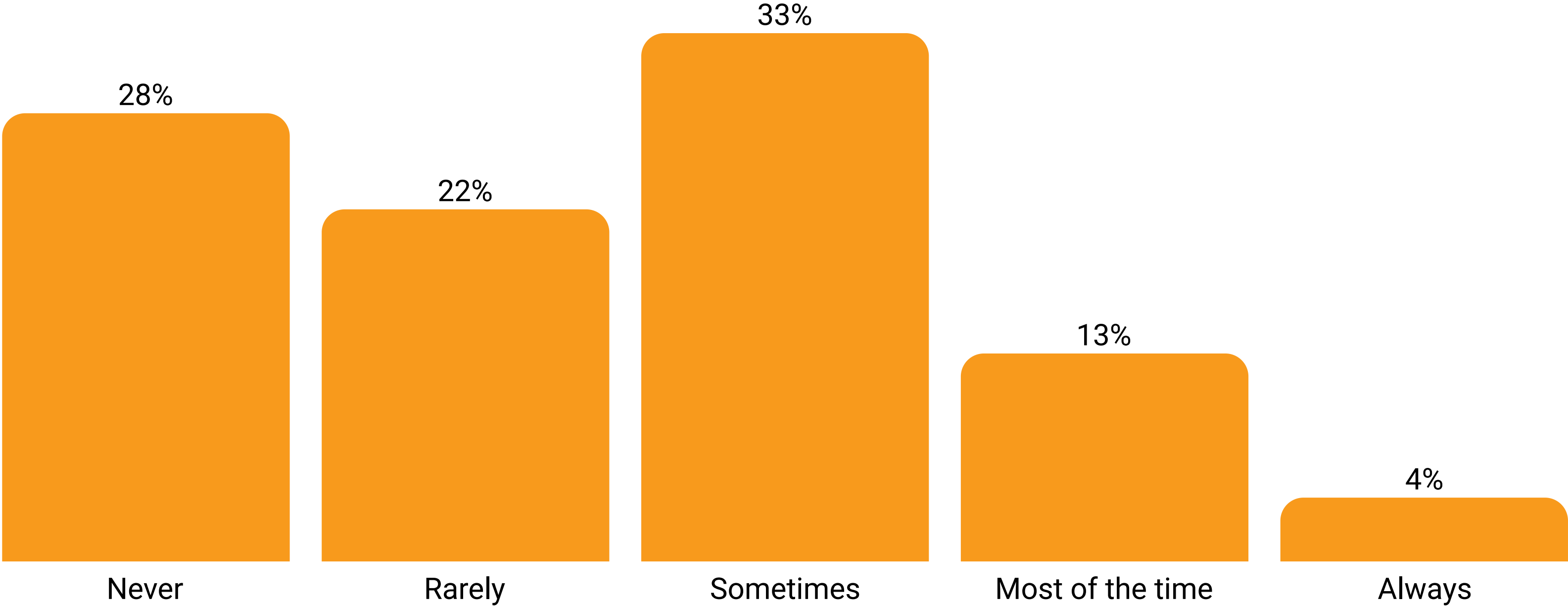


Statewide, a similar question was asked, and 28% of students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row and stopped doing some usual activities.



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**During the past 30 days, how often was your mental health not good?
(Poor mental health includes stress, anxiety, and depression.)**



Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question.



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

Eight out of ten (78%) students “strongly agree” or “agree” that they tend to bounce back and recover quickly after hard or stressful times.



Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question
Derived from: Rank your agreement with the following statement. ‘I tend to bounce back or recover quickly after hard or stressful times.’



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

One in ten (10%) students reported self-harm in the past 12 months.



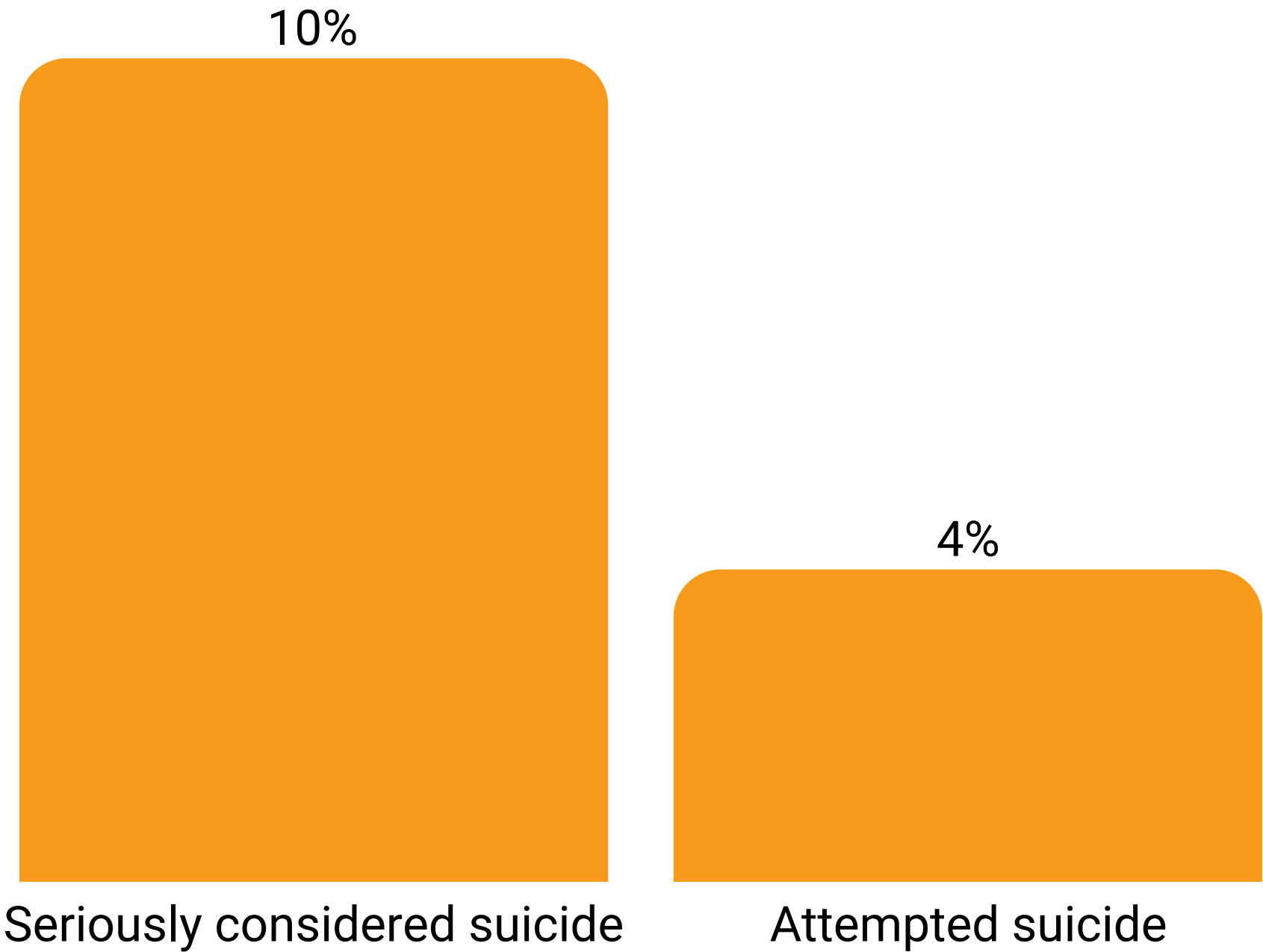
Statewide: 25%
Note: These questions are not asked in the same way at the state level as in our survey.
Derived from: During the past 12 months, how many times did you do something to purposely hurt yourself without wanting to die, such as cutting, burning, or bruising yourself on purpose?



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?

One in ten (10%) participants reported seriously considering suicide in the past twelve months, while 4% reported attempting suicide.



Statewide: 12% reported seriously considering suicide in the past twelve months; 9% reported attempting suicide in the past 12 months.
“Attempted suicide” derived from: If yes, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

One in ten (9%) students experienced bullying at or on the way to school in the past 12 months.



Statewide, 37% of students reported having been bullied at school one or more times.

Note: These questions are not asked in the same way at the state level as in our survey.

Derived from: During the past 12 months, have you ever been bullied at school or on your way to or from school?



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

Less than one in ten (7%) students have experienced bullying electronically (texting, online gaming, or social media) in the last twelve months.



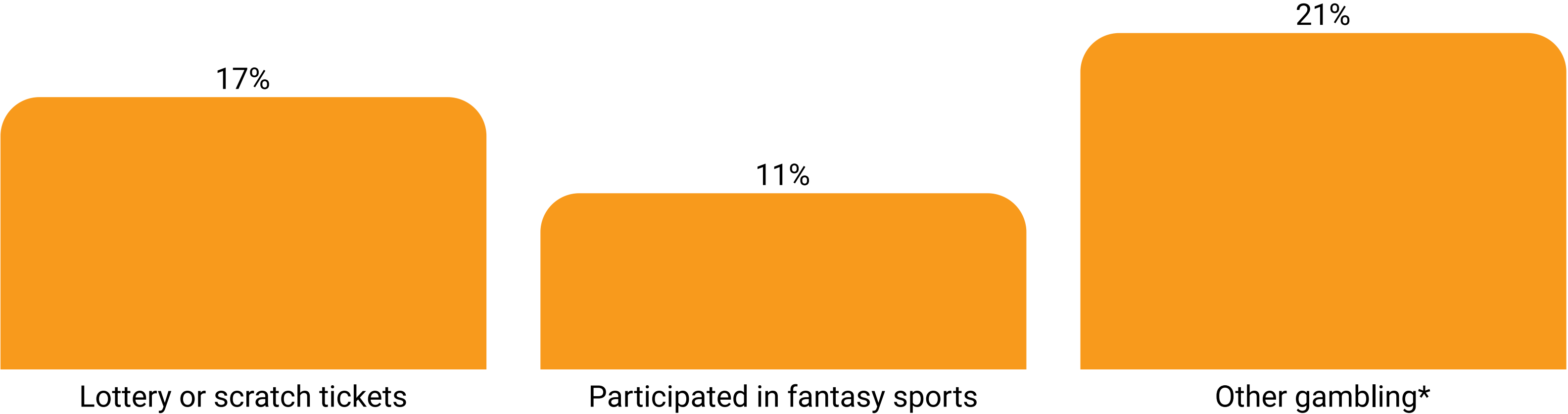
Statewide, one in five (18%) have experienced cyberbullying in the past twelve months.
Note: These questions are not asked in the same way at the state level as in our survey.
Derived from: During the past 12 months, have you ever been electronically bullied? Count being bullied through texting, online gaming, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media.

Gambling



Gambling

The percent of students who reported engaging in the following gambling behaviors in the past year:



Omitted “Don’t know” responses; casino gambling not pictured as numbers were too small to report
* “Other gambling” refers to activities like: betting on sporting events, games of personal skill (pool, bowling, dominoes, or darts), dice games, horse or animal races, video poker or other gambling machines, playing cards or bingo for money or prizes, gambling on the Internet
Statewide: Lottery or scratch tickets: 41%; gambling at a casino: 13%; fantasy sports: 24%; other: 31%

Sexual activity



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

Seven out of ten participants (68%) reported that they have never had sex.



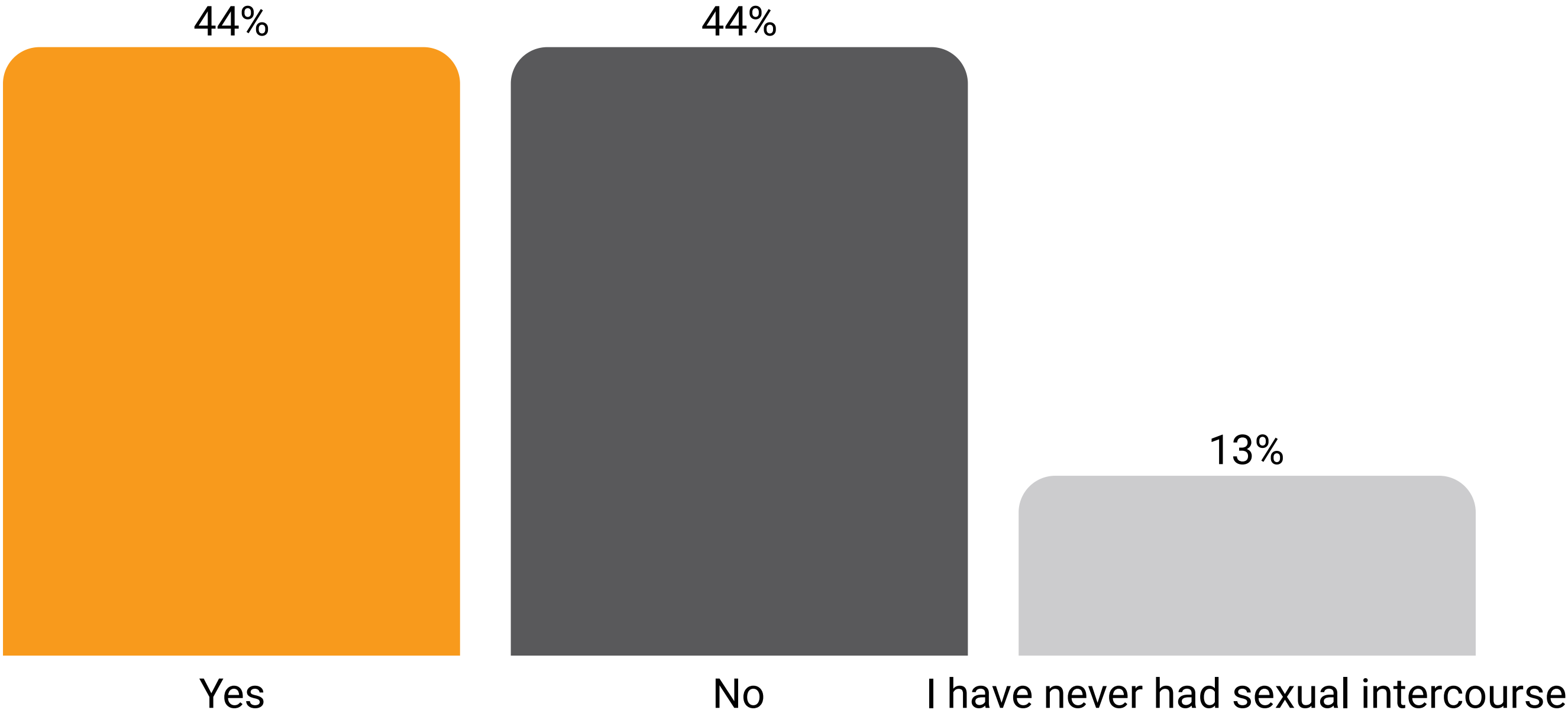
6% of students reported drinking alcohol or using drugs before the last time they had sex.

Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question
Derived from “How old were you when you had sex for the first time? (If you have never had sex, select “I have never had sex”).”



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

The last time you had sexual intercourse, did you or your partner use a condom?*

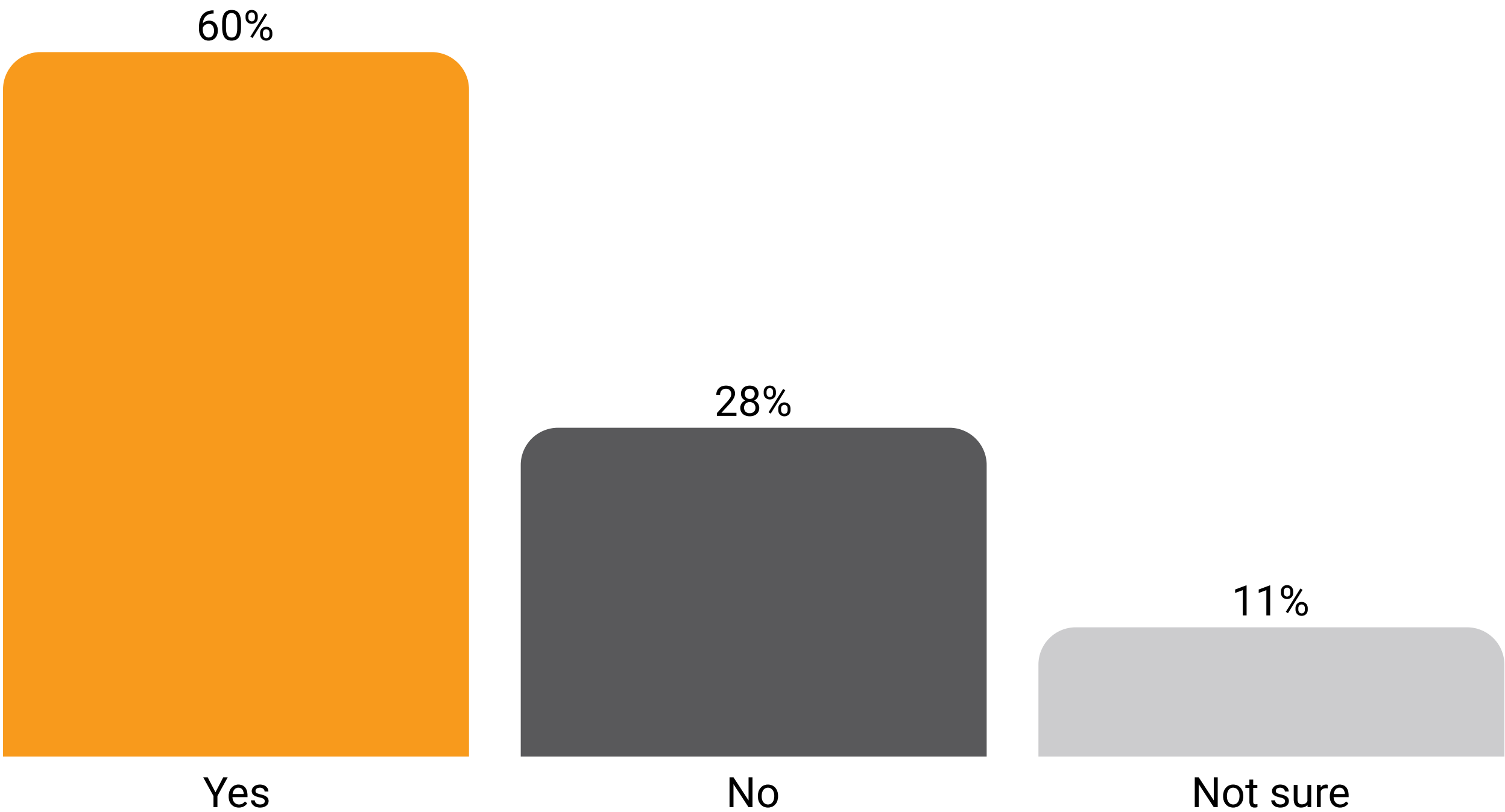


*Just under half of students answered this question.
In a similar question statewide, 44% of students reported using a condom, dental dam, or other barrier the last time they had sexual contact.



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Have your parents, guardians, or other adults in your family ever talked to you about what they expect you to do or not to do when it comes to sex?



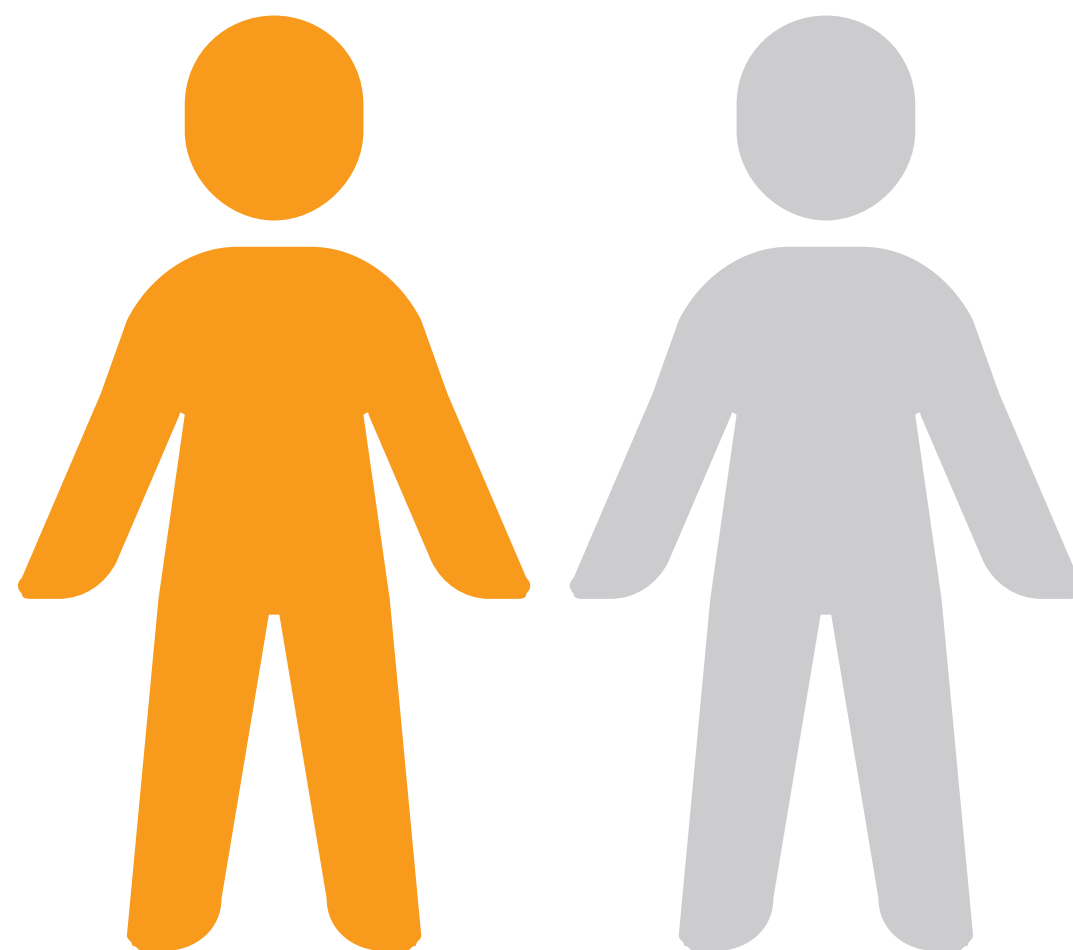
Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

Have you dated or gone out with anyone during the past 12 months?

Half of students (55%) reported dating or going out with someone in the past twelve months.

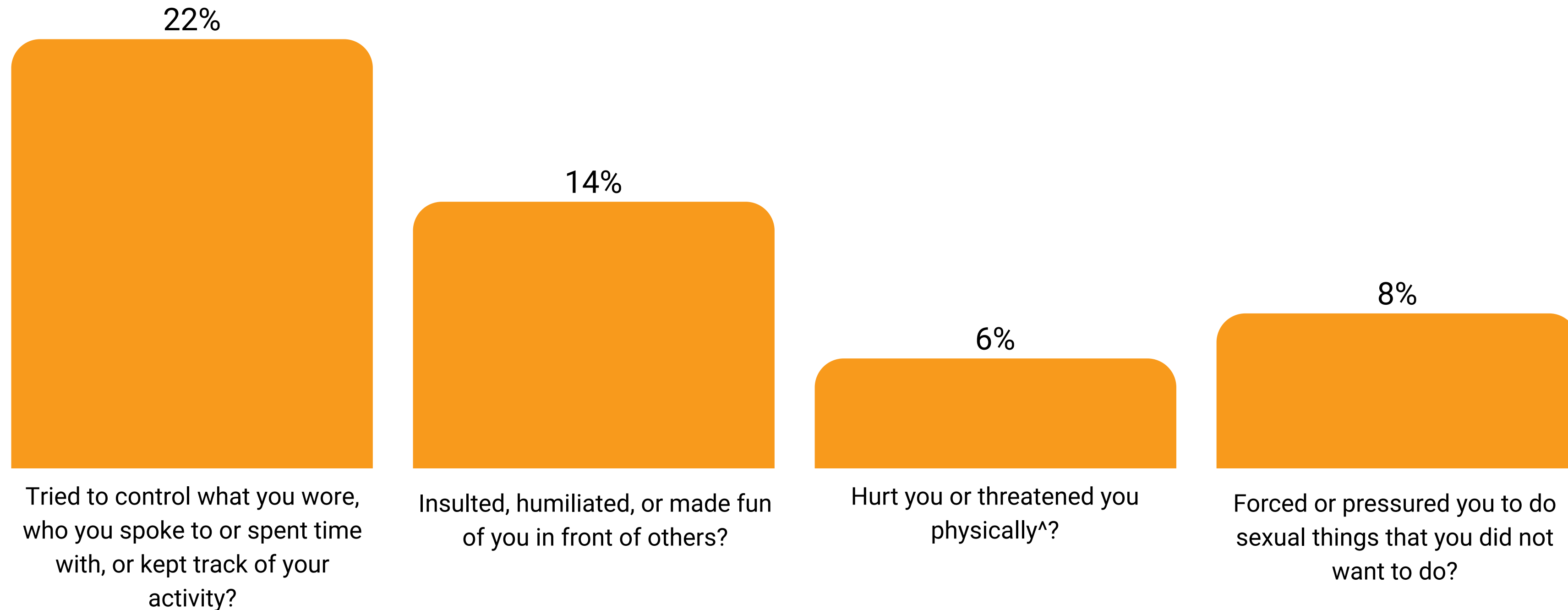


Sexual violence



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

In the past 12 months, has someone you were dating or going out with* ever...



* These questions were asked of students who reported having dated or gone out with anyone in the past 12 months

Note: "I don't know" responses omitted due to low number of responses

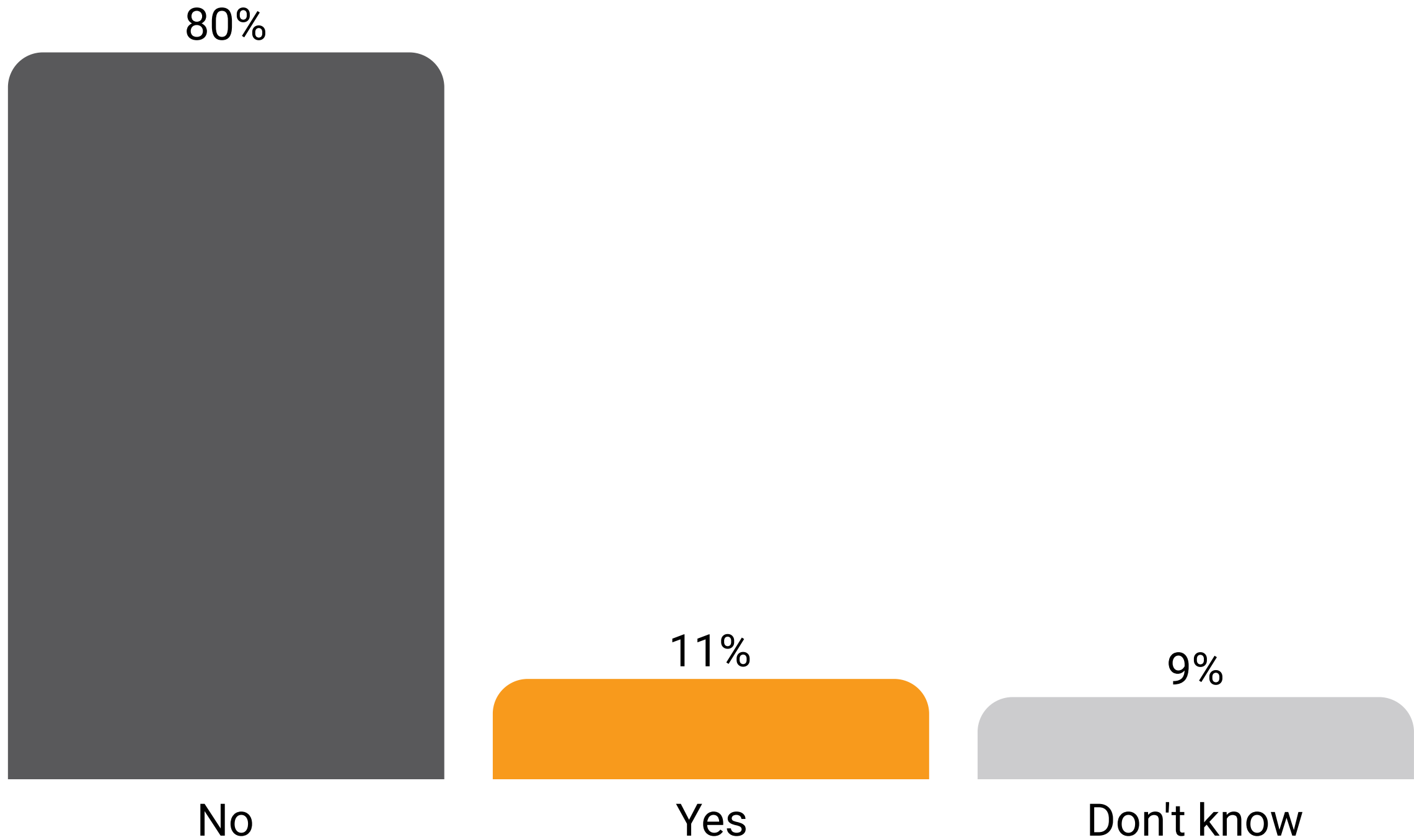
Note: no statewide comparison is available for this question

^Full text: Slapped, pushed, shook, punched, kicked, beat you with an object, choked, burned you intentionally, threw something at you to hurt you, or used or threatened you with any sharp object or weapon?



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

Have you ever been physically forced, pressured, or coerced to have sex or engage in other sexual activities when you did not want to?



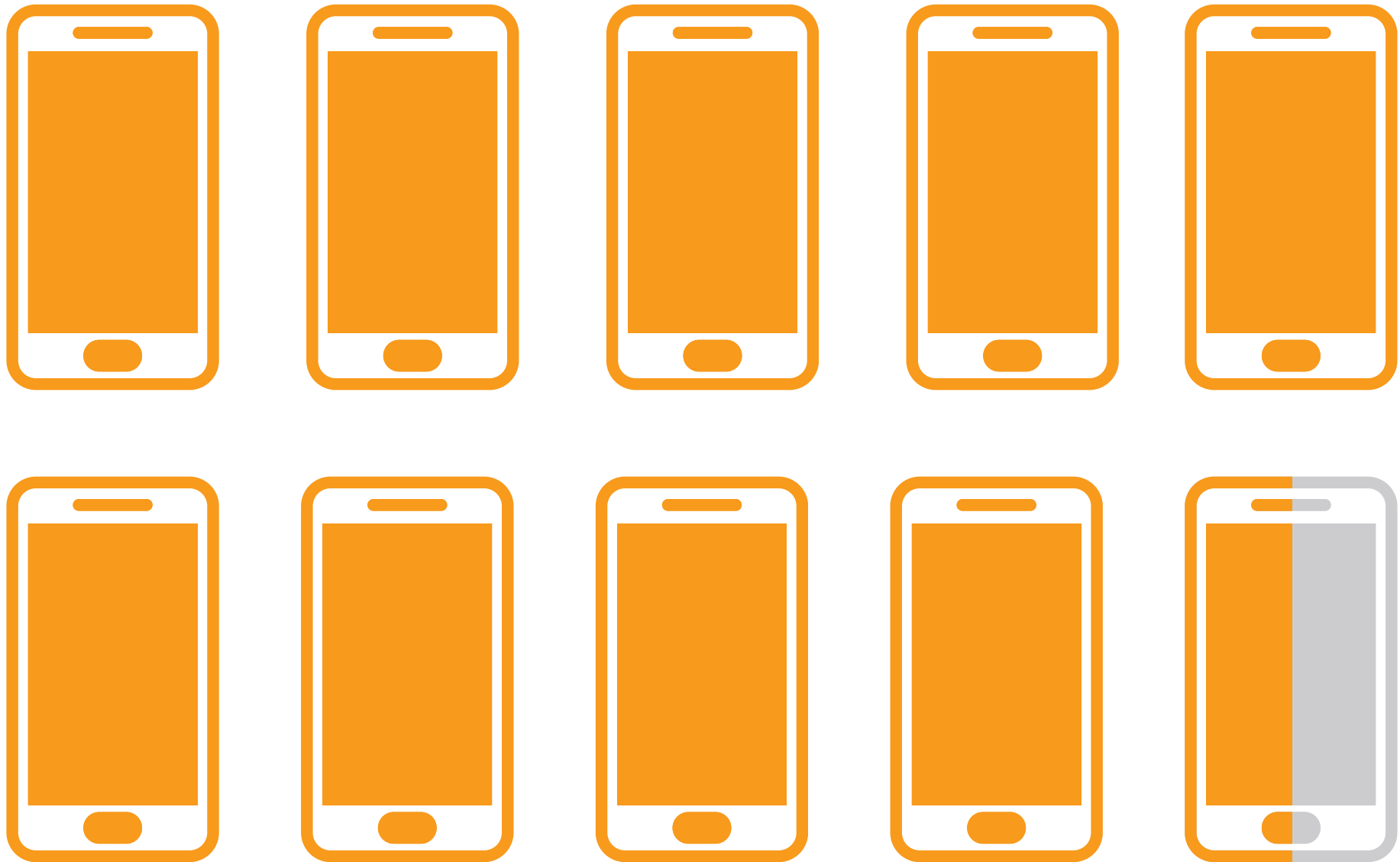
Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question

Social media and news



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

More than nine out of ten (95%) of participants reported using social media.

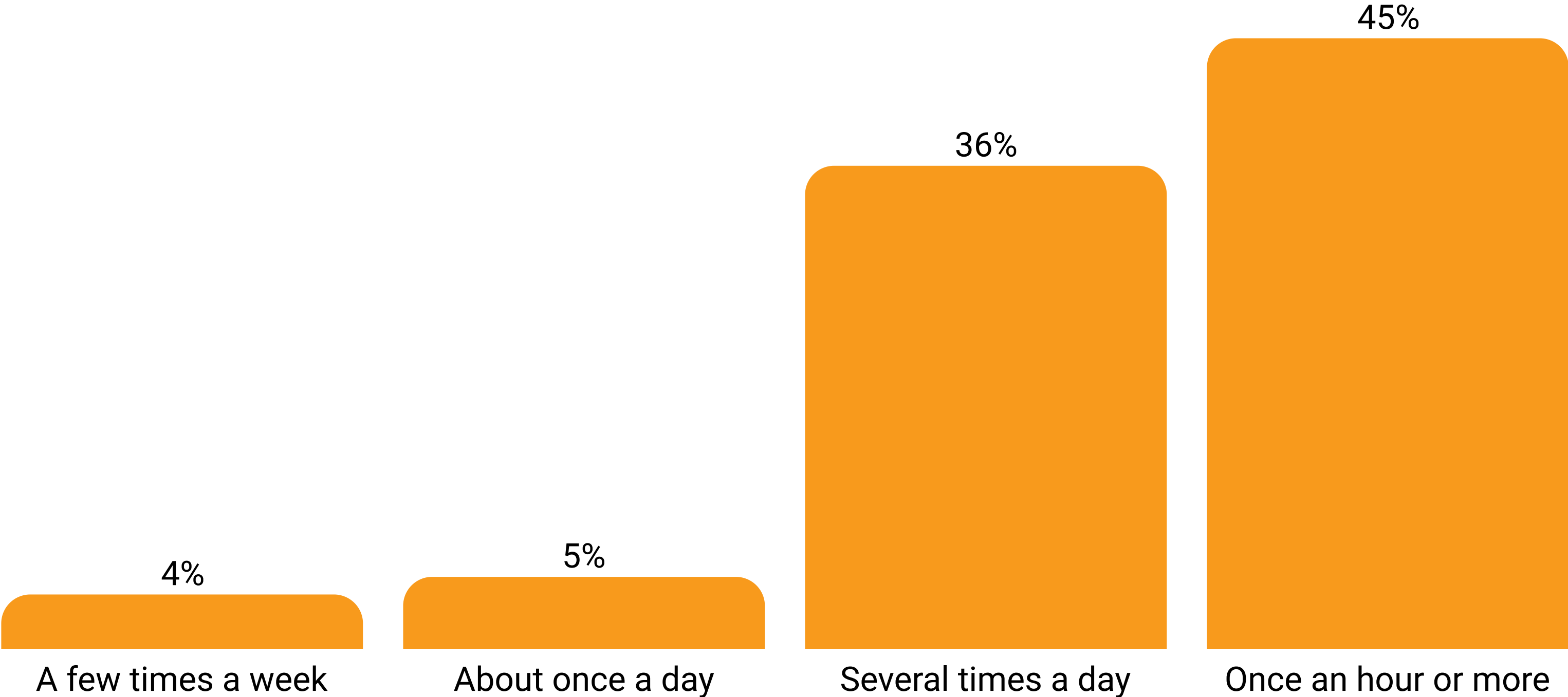


Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question
Derived from “How often do you use social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and Tiktok?”



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

How often do you use social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and Tiktok?



Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

Have you ever found yourself in a risky/unwanted situation because of information you shared electronically?

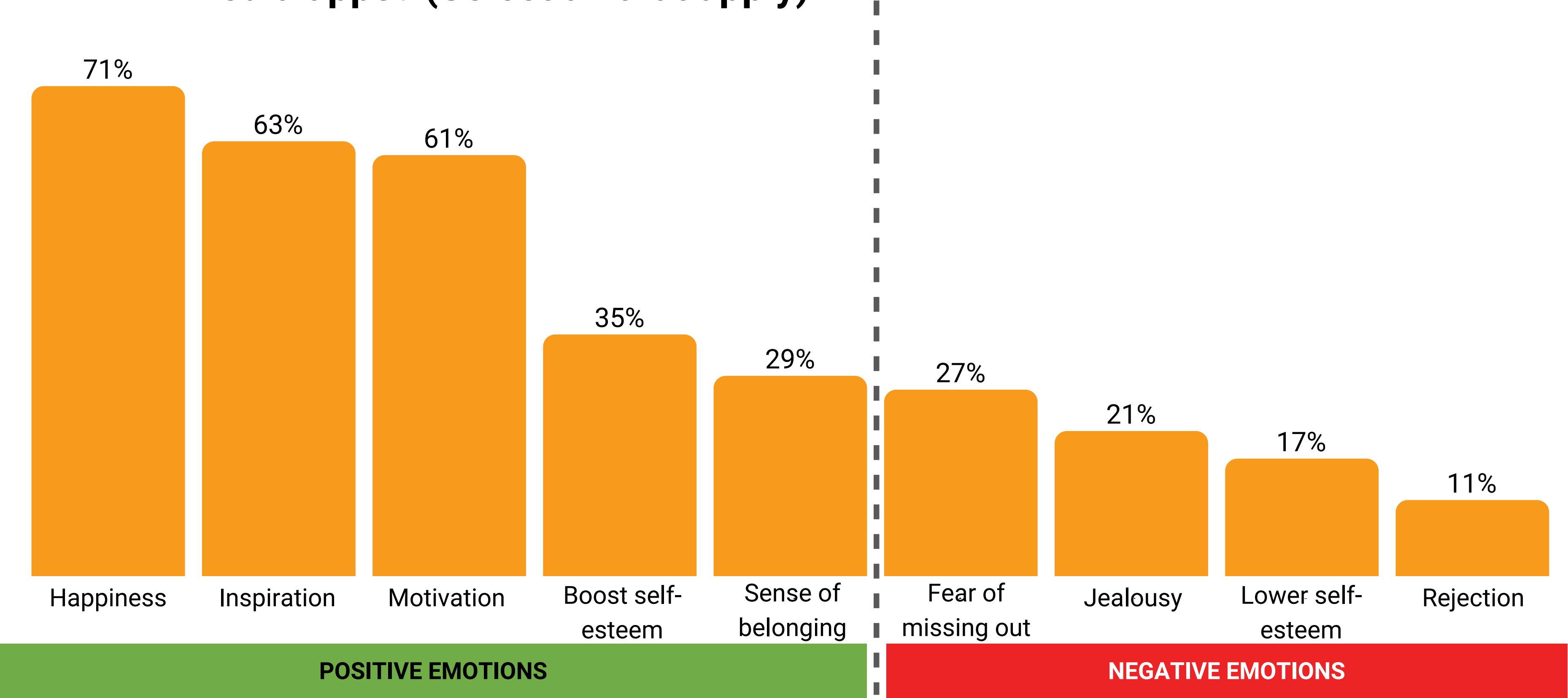
More than one in ten (15%) participants reported finding themselves in a risky or unwanted situation because of information they shared electronically.





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What emotions do you experience when using social networking/social media apps? (Select all that apply)

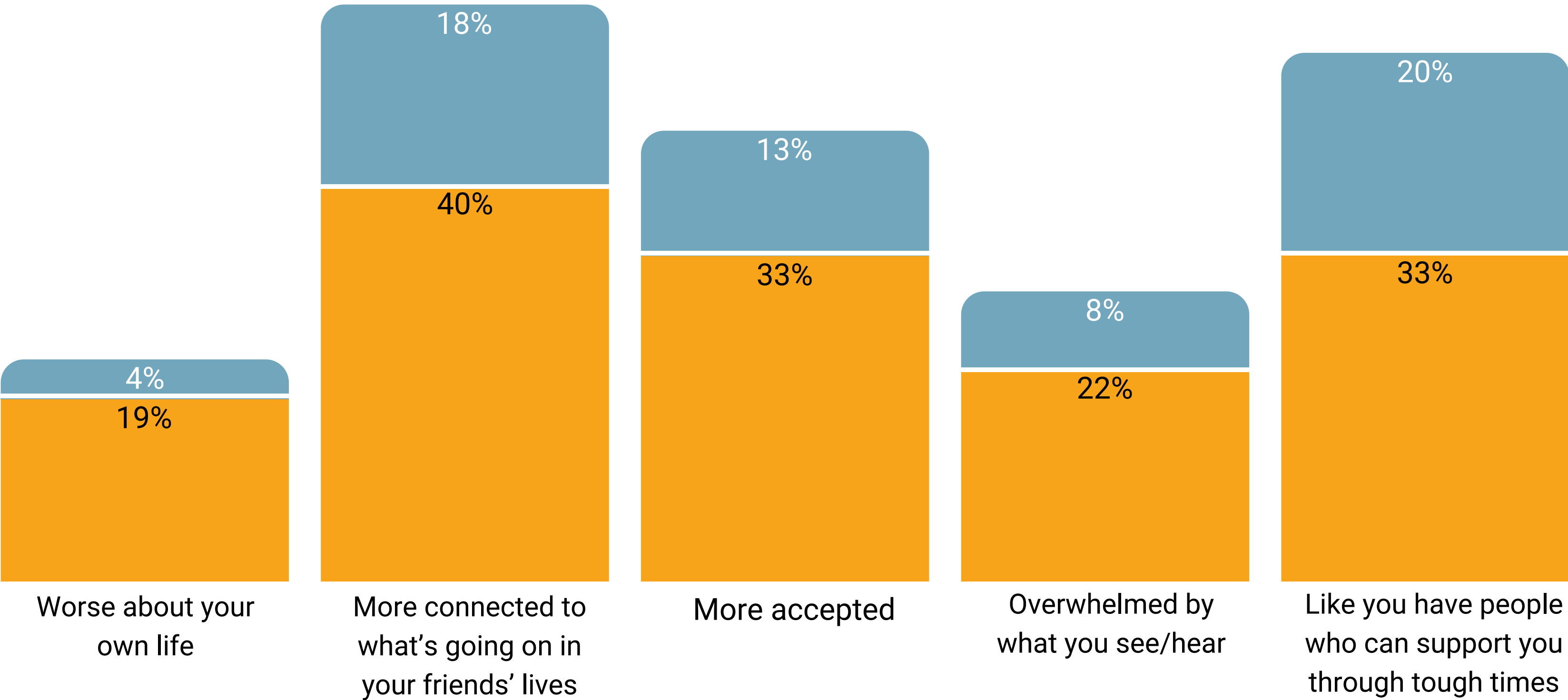


Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question
Note: These percentages do not add up to 100 because students were able to select more than one option.



In general, does what you see on social media make you feel...

● Yes, a little ● Yes, a lot



Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



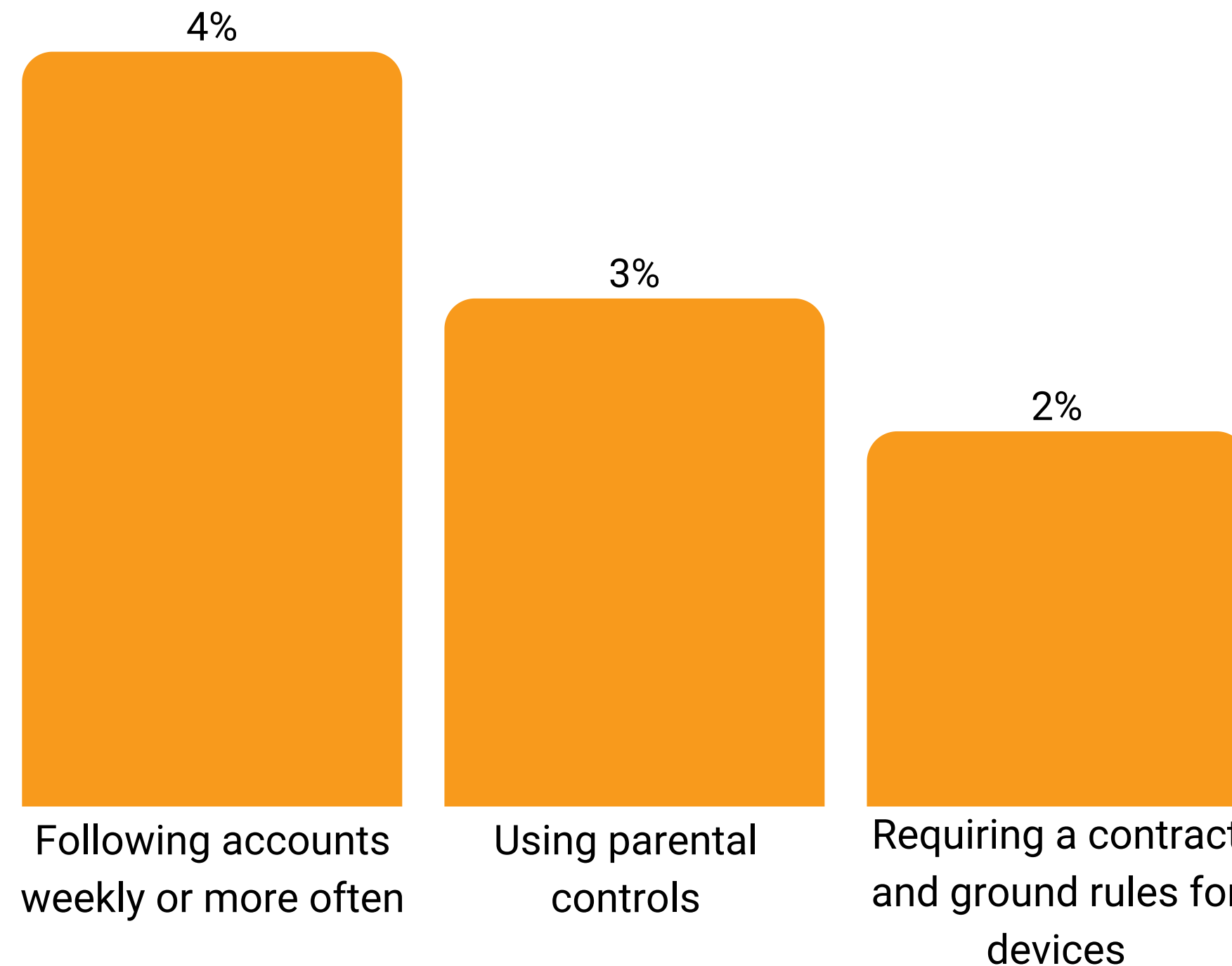
2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

How do your parents or guardians monitor your social media accounts or how you use social media? (Select all that apply)

Top methods of monitoring social media use:*

91%

of participants reported that their parents do not monitor their social media use*

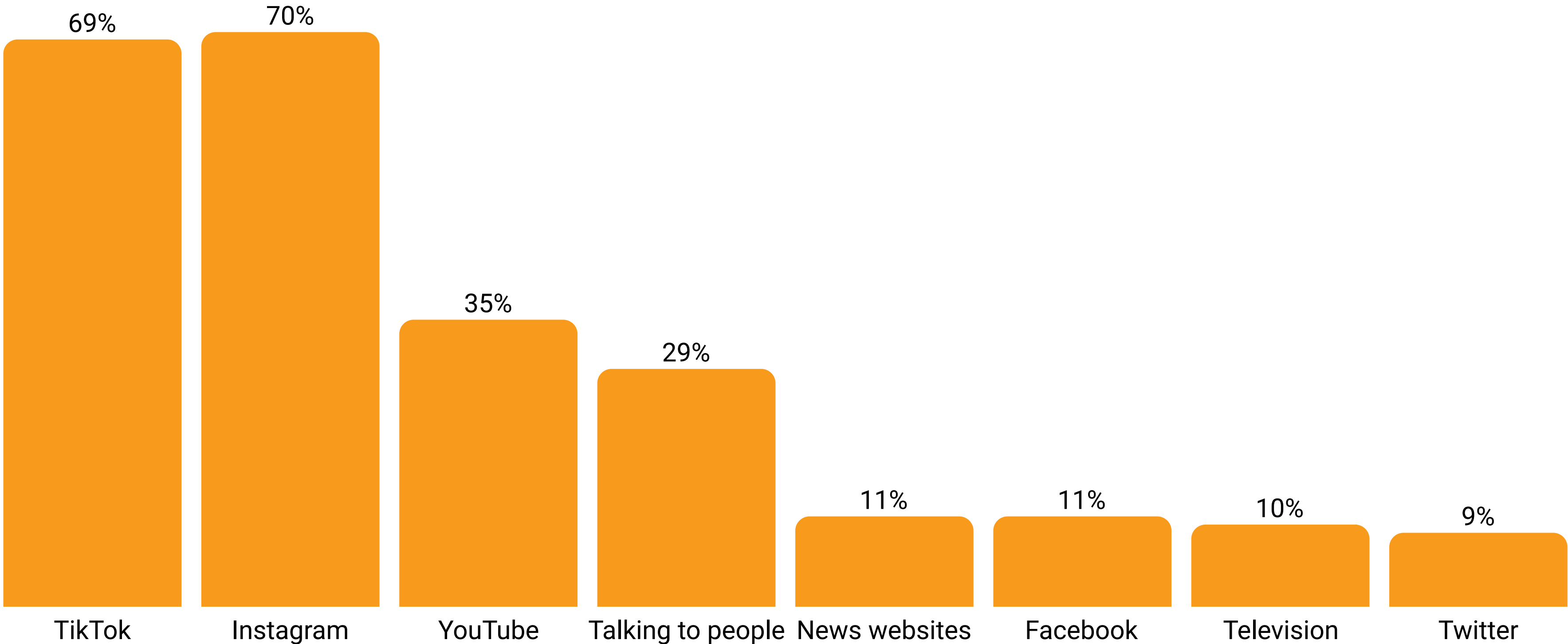


* These percentages do not add up to 100 because participants were able to select more than one option.

Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



How do you usually get your news or learn about what's going on? Select your top three.



Note: these percentages do not add up to 100 because participants were able to select more than one option (up to three).
Sources less than 5% of students reported using for news are not captured here.
Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question

Experiences of violence



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Most students (95%) did not report carrying a weapon, such as a gun or knife, in the past 30 days.



Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

One in ten students (10%) reported missing at least one school day in the past month because they felt they would be unsafe at school or on their way to or from school.



Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

Most students (95%) were not threatened or injured with a weapon, such as a gun, knife, or other weapon on school property.



Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight?

Just over 1 in 10 participants (14%) reported being in a physical fight at least once in the past year.



Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



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Have you ever witnessed someone being physically harmed in your neighborhood (for example with a gun, knife, or other weapon, or in a physical fight)?

The majority of students (68%) had **never** witnessed violence in their neighborhood, while the remaining three in ten (32%) reported having witnessed this.

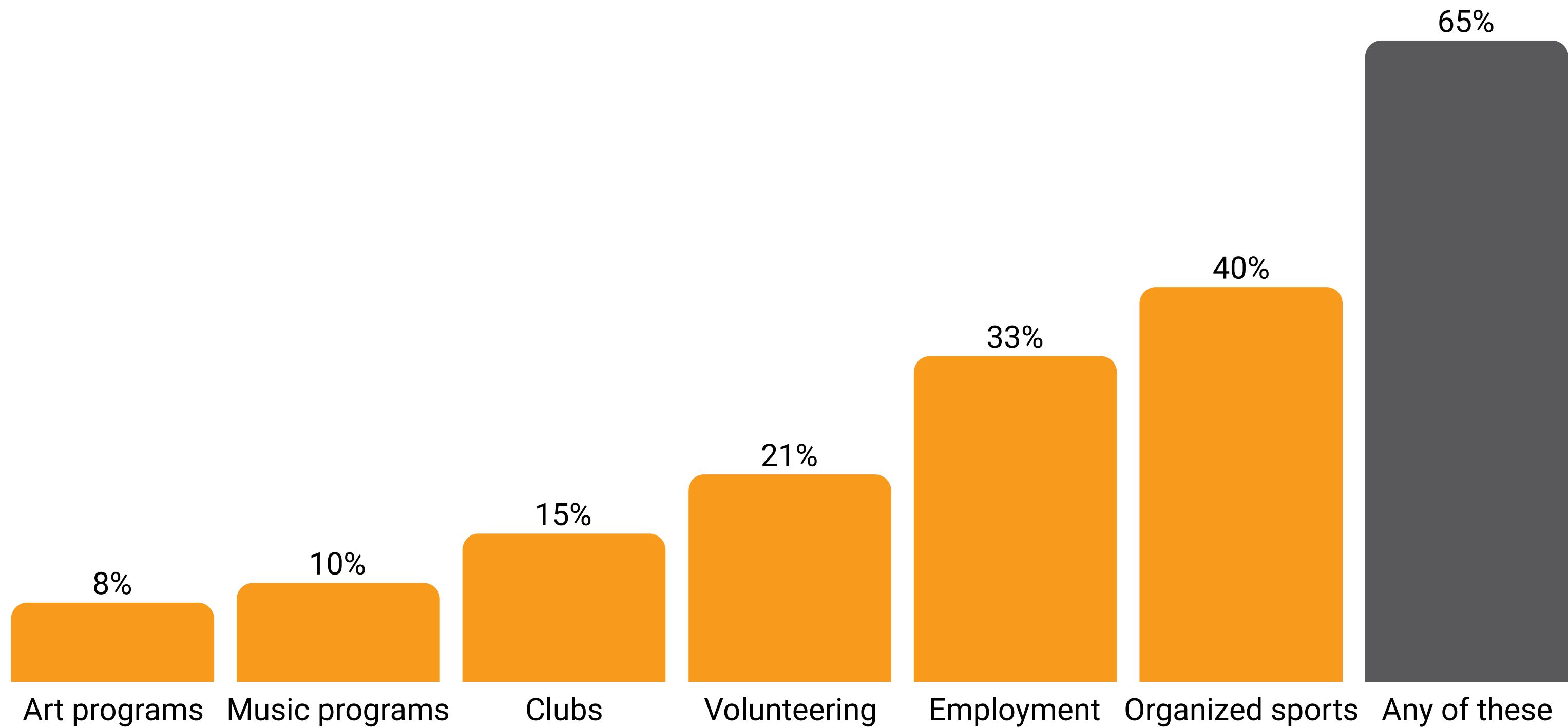


Lifestyle



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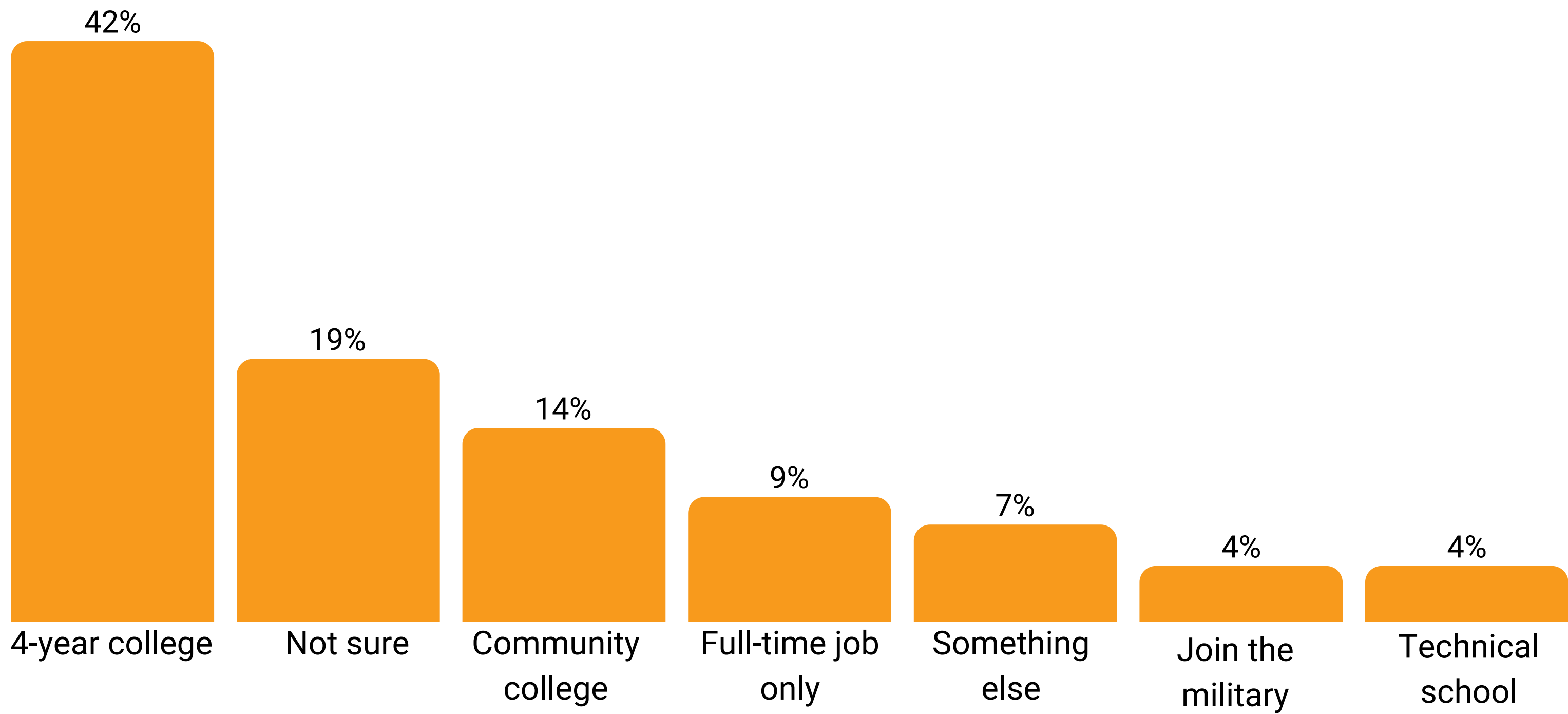
Do you participate in any of the following activities after school OR on the weekends?



Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question
These percentages do not add up to 100 because students could select more than one answer.



Which of the following are you most likely to do after you complete high school?

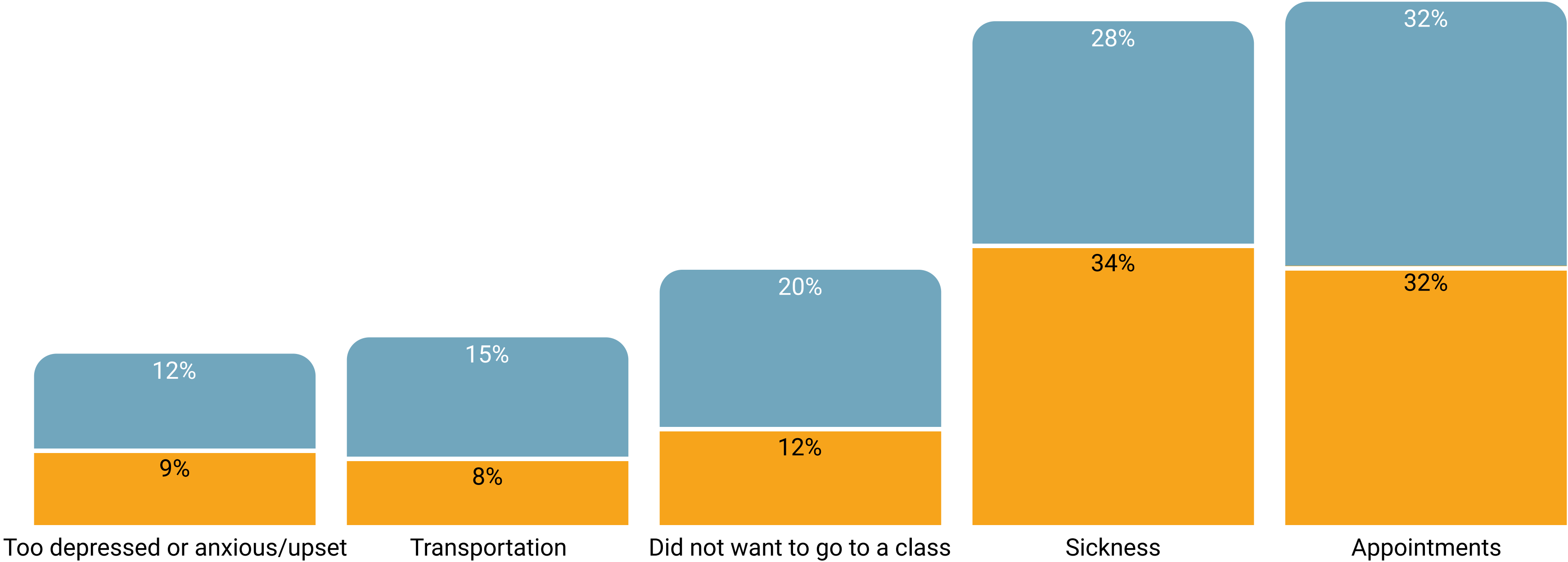


Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question



Top five reasons for missing school:

Usually Sometimes



Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question
Derived from: Please rate each statement as being Never, Rarely, Sometimes, or Usually the reasons you miss school.

Substance use



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Nine out of ten students (91%) have never smoked a cigarette.



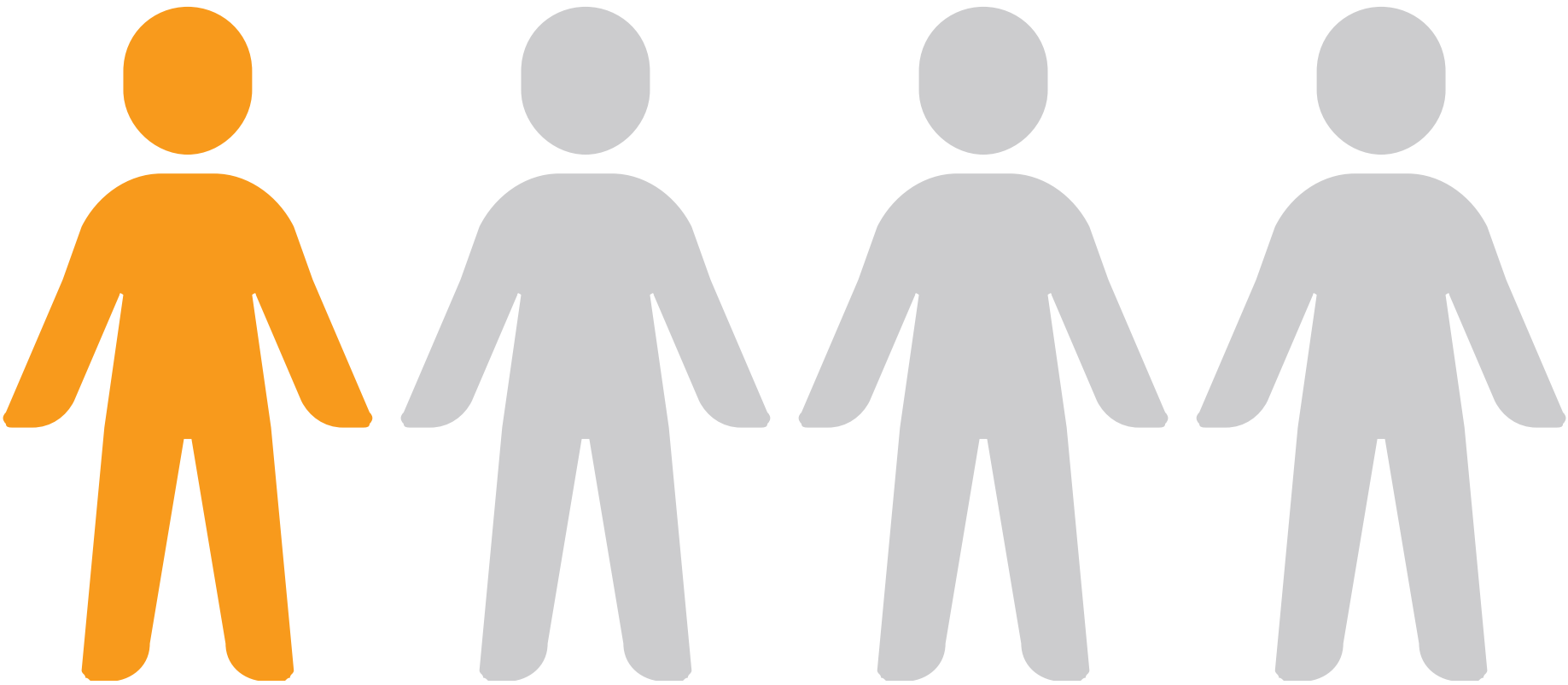
Statewide: 95%
Note: These questions are not asked in the same way at the state level as in our survey.
Derived from “How old were you when you first smoked a cigarette, even one or two puffs?”



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Have you ever used an electronic nicotine vapor product, such as JUUL, Vuse, NJOY, Puff Bar, blu, or Bidi Stick?

One in four (22%) students reported ever using an electronic nicotine vapor product.



Statewide: 15%
Note: These questions are not asked in the same way at the state level as in our survey.



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One half of students (54%) that reported any e-nicotine use have used at least one day in the past 30 days.

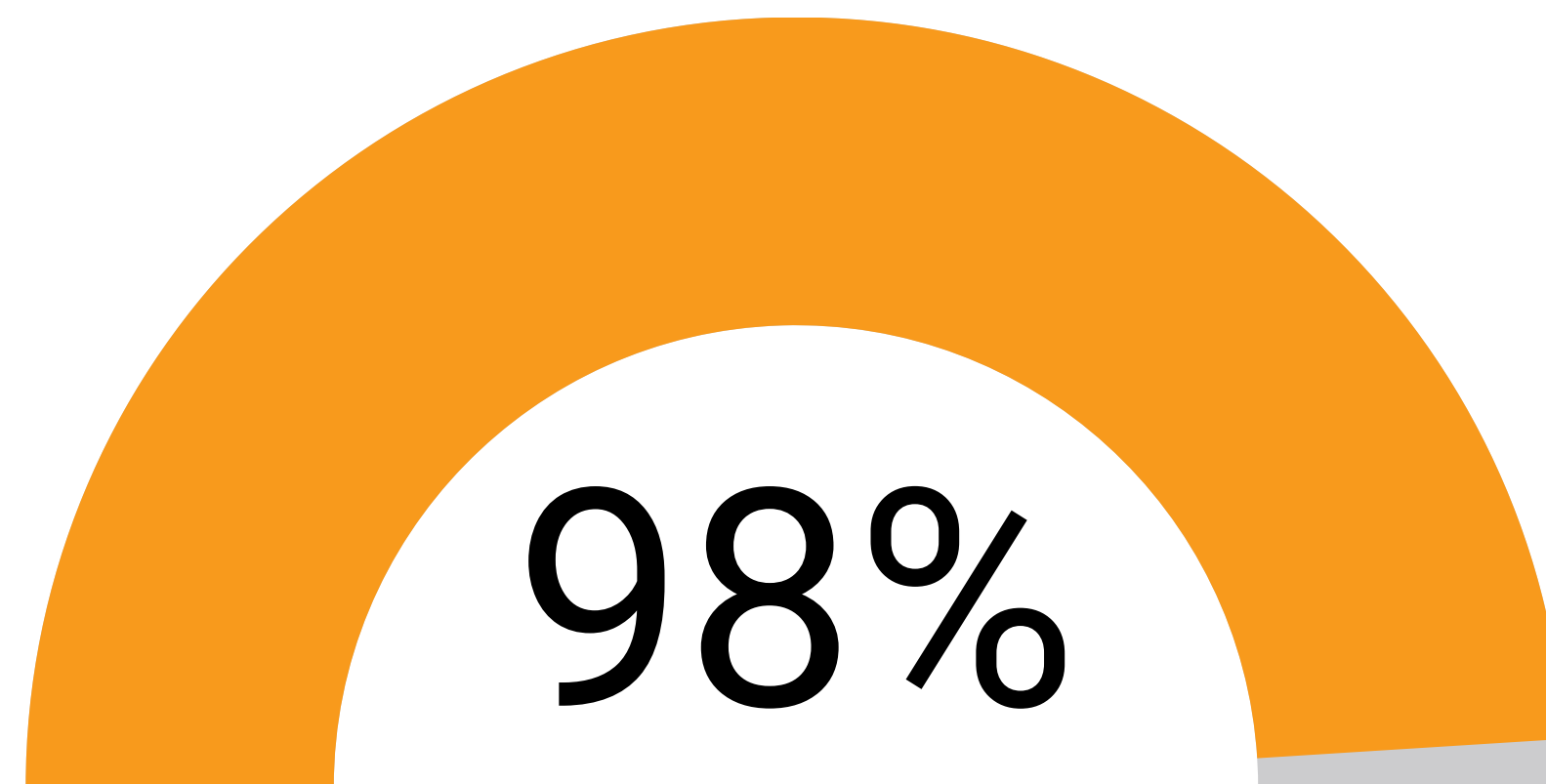


Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question
Derived from “During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use an electronic nicotine vapor product such as JUUL, Vuse, NJOY, Puff Bar, blu, or Bidi Stick?”



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

Most students have not used dissolvable tobacco products in the past 30 days.



The percentage of students who have **NOT** used pouches, snus, or dissolvable tobacco products in the past 30 days

Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question

Derived from "During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use nicotine pouches, snus, or dissolvable tobacco products such as Zyn, Copenhagen, Grizzly, Skoal, Camel Snus, on!, or Velo? (Do not count any electronic vapor products)."



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

Seven out of ten (70%) students have NEVER had a drink of alcohol.



Statewide: 78%
Derived from “How old were you when you had your first drink of alcohol other than a few sips?”



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

Four out of ten (37%) students who reported any alcohol use have had at least one alcoholic drink in the past 30 days.

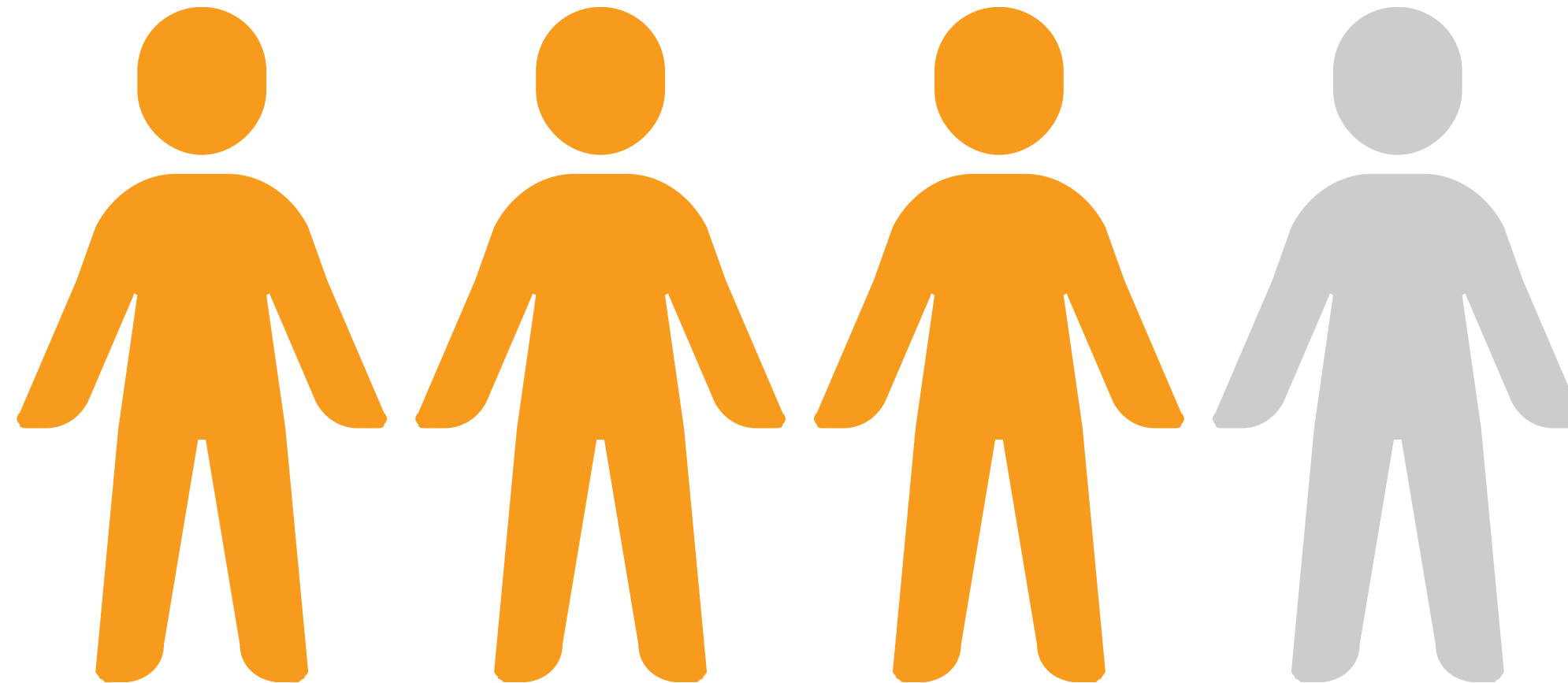


Note: No statewide comparison is available for this question
Derived from “During the past 30 days, how many days have you had at least one alcoholic drink?”



2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

Three out of four students (74%) have NEVER used marijuana.

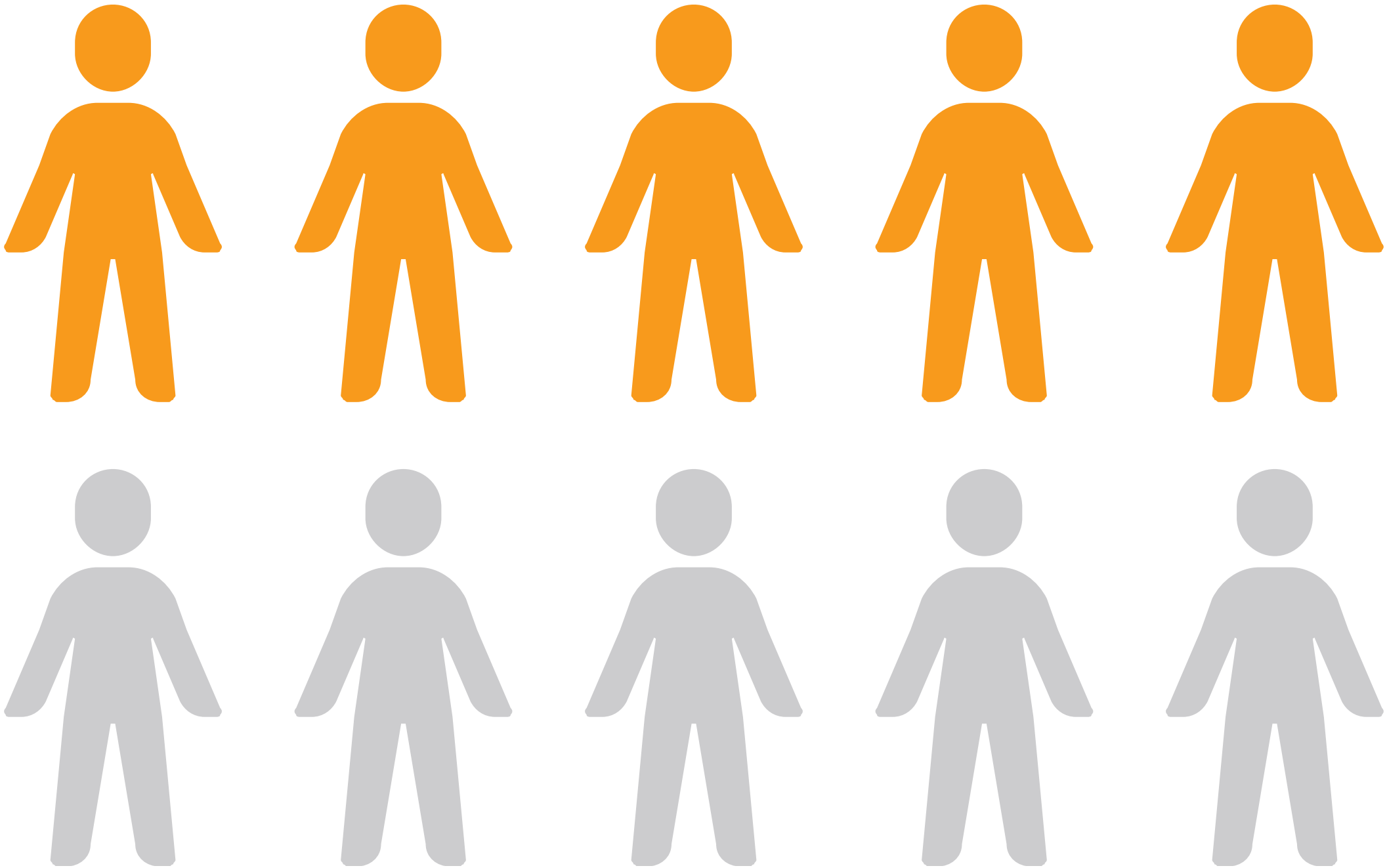




2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of tenth and twelfth grade students in Holyoke

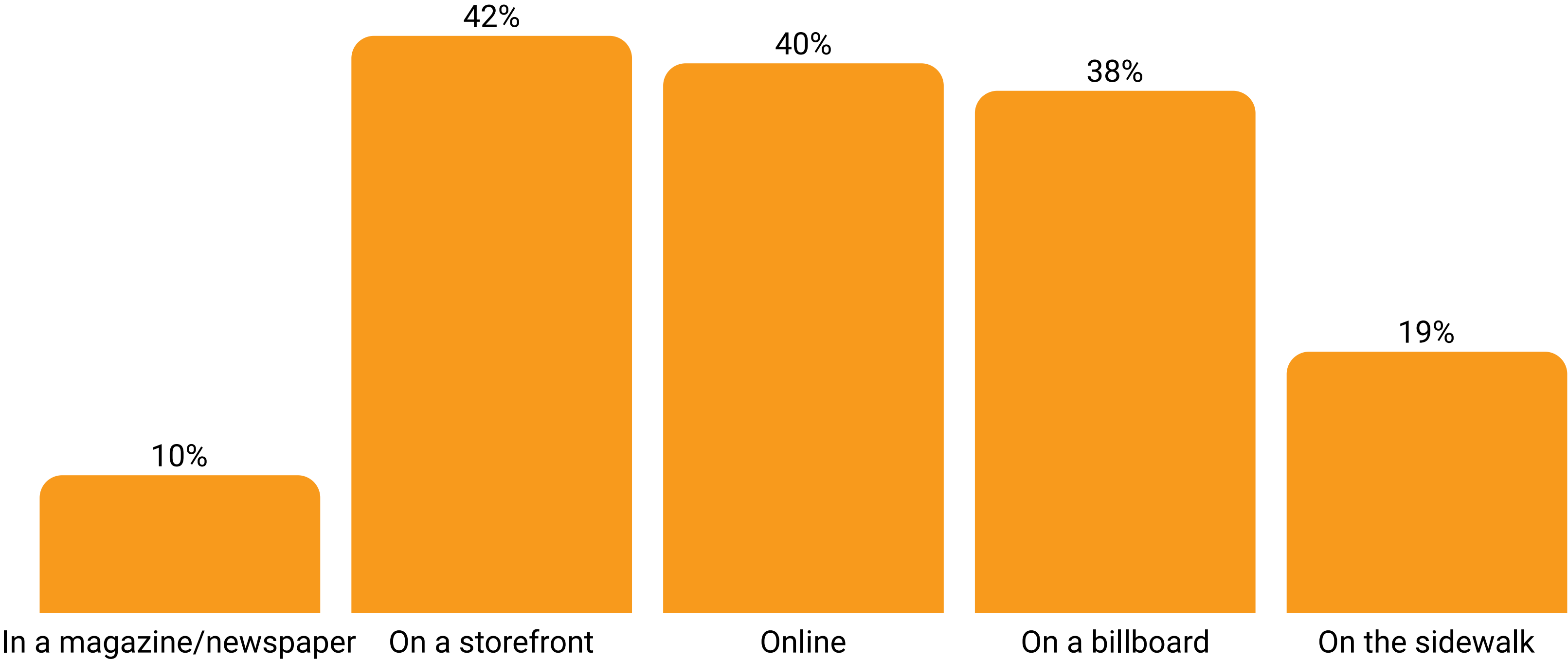
During the past 30 days, how many times did you use marijuana or cannabis products?

Five out of ten students (50%) who reported any marijuana use have used cannabis products at least once in the past 30 days.





During the past 30 days, have you seen an advertisement for marijuana products or stores:



RESOURCES

Youth Mental Health Roadmap

In 2024, the Public Health Institute of Western MA released the Western MA Youth Mental Health Roadmap with a focus on mental health wellness promotion and prevention of mental health conditions.

[Learn more!](#)



Five key focus areas to support the mental wellbeing of young people in our region:



Destigmatizing
and Normalizing
Mental Health



Strengthening
Social
Connections



Building Social
Emotional
Learning Skills



Promoting
Healthy and
Safe Social
Media usage



Supporting
Community-
Clinical
Linkages

Thank you!

Learn more about the Youth Health Survey Initiative and download responses to all questions

The 2025 Holyoke Youth Health surveys were administered with support from the Springfield Department of Health and Human Services.