




# California Youth Experiences with Mental Health

*Key Findings from a Statewide Survey  
Conducted September 9-18, 2022*



OPINION  
RESEARCH  
& STRATEGY

# Survey Methodology

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Dates</b>                 | September 9-18, 2022  |
| <b>Survey Type</b>           | Online Survey from Opt-In Panels  |
| <b>Research Population</b>   | Californians Ages 18-24   |
| <b>Total Interviews</b>      | 795, including oversamples of 100 African Americans and 100 Central Valley Residents                  |
| <b>Data Collection Modes</b> |  Online Interviews |
| <b>Languages</b>             | English & Spanish   |

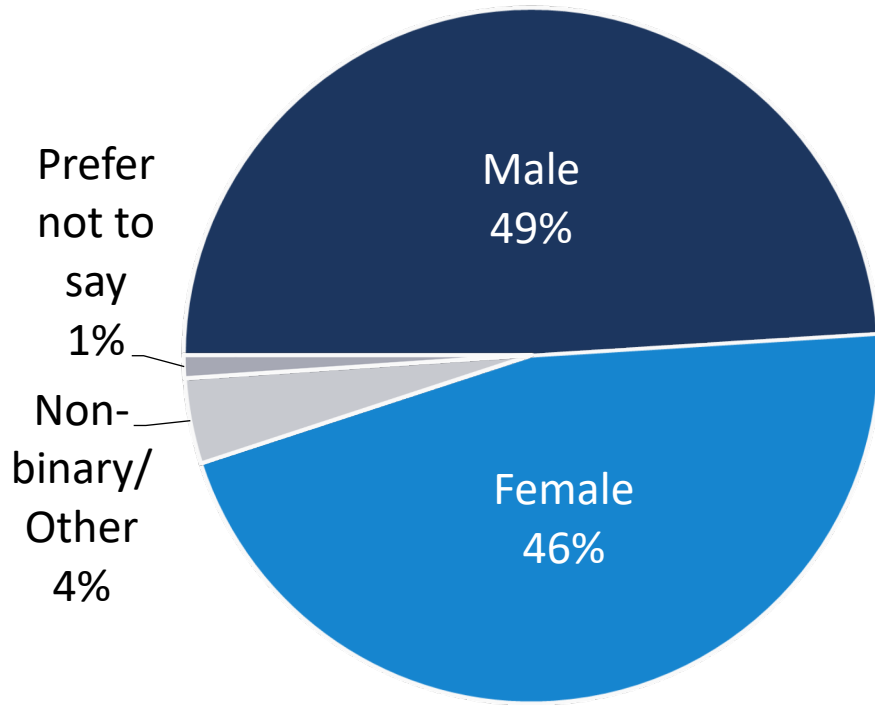
*(Note: Not All Results Will Sum to 100% Due to Rounding)*



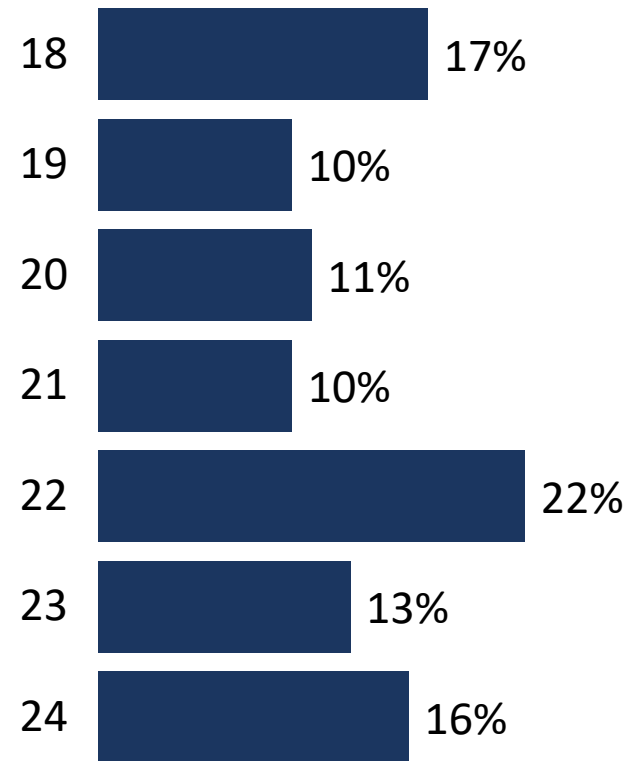
# **Profile of Respondents**

# Respondents were evenly divided by gender and across the age range.

*What is your gender?*

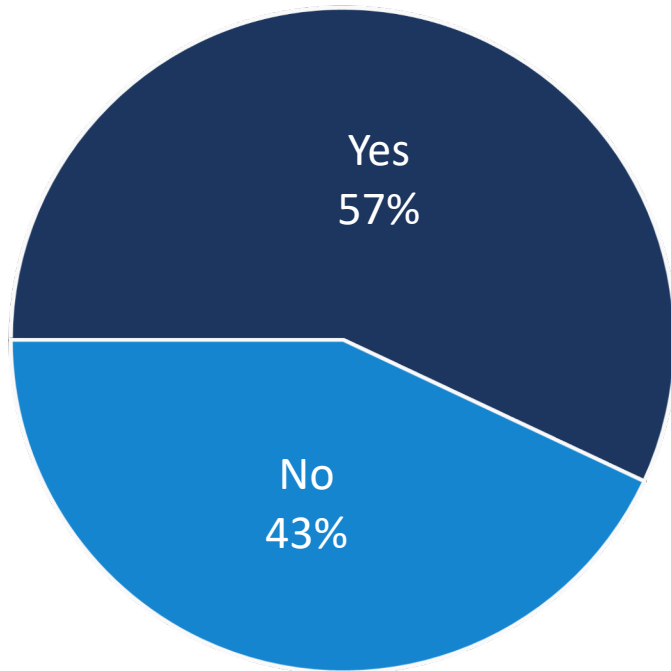


*How old are you?*

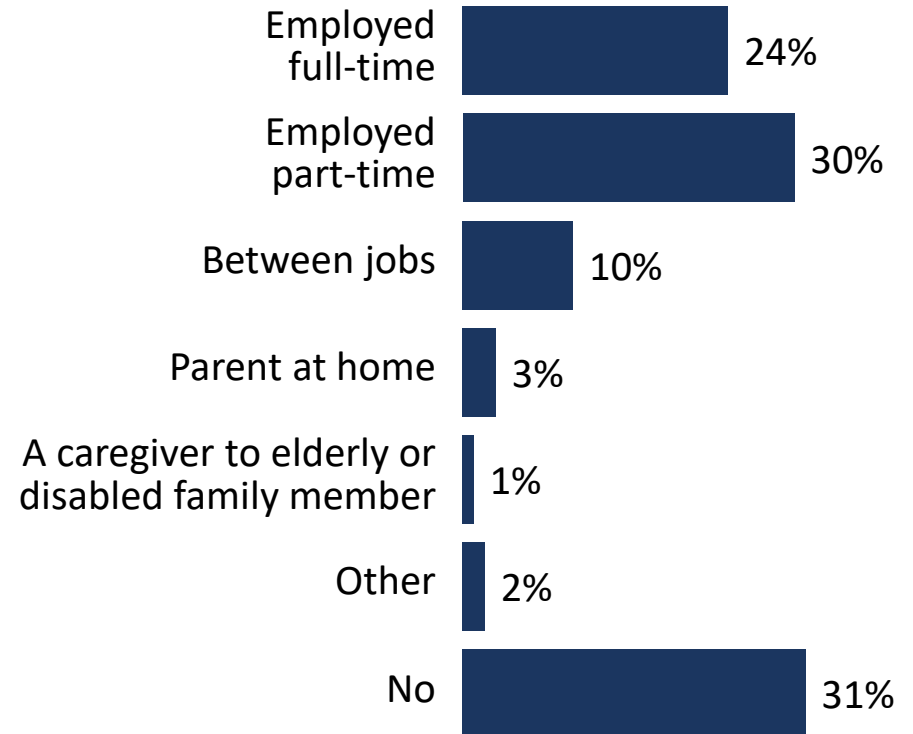


# Three in five respondents were currently students; most were employed in some capacity.

*Are you currently a student?*

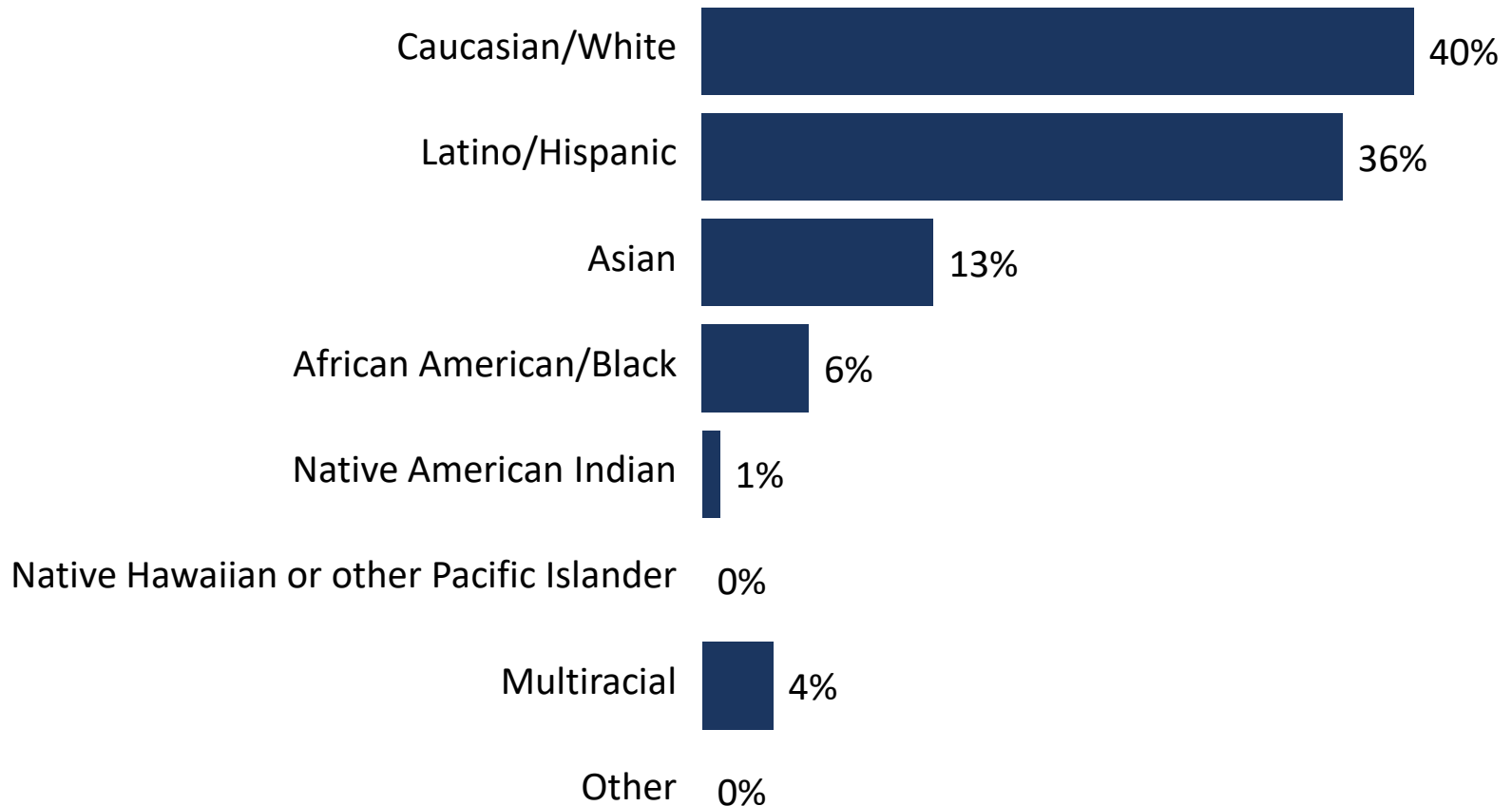


*Are you currently employed full-time, employed part-time, between jobs, or a parent at home raising children?*



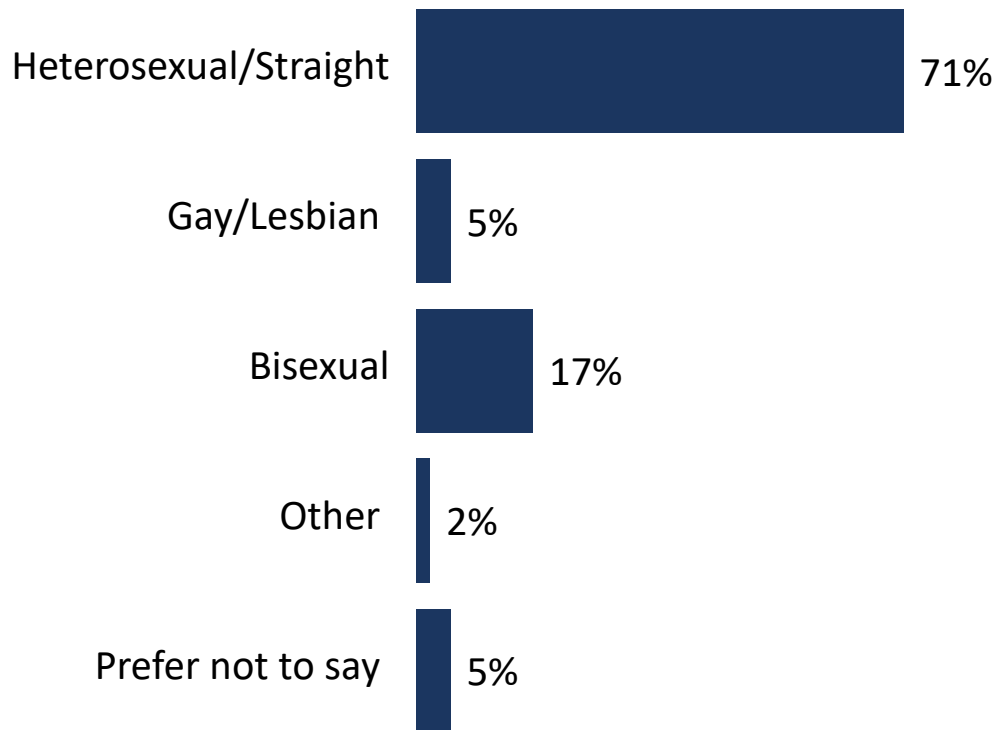
# Most respondents were young adults of color.

*What is your race or ethnicity?*

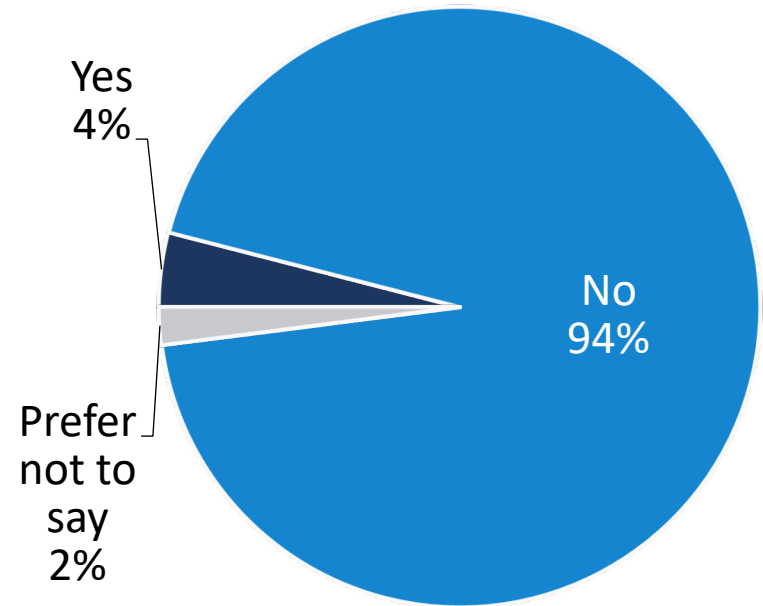


# Roughly one-quarter identified as LGBTQ+.

*Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?*



*Do you identify as transgender?*





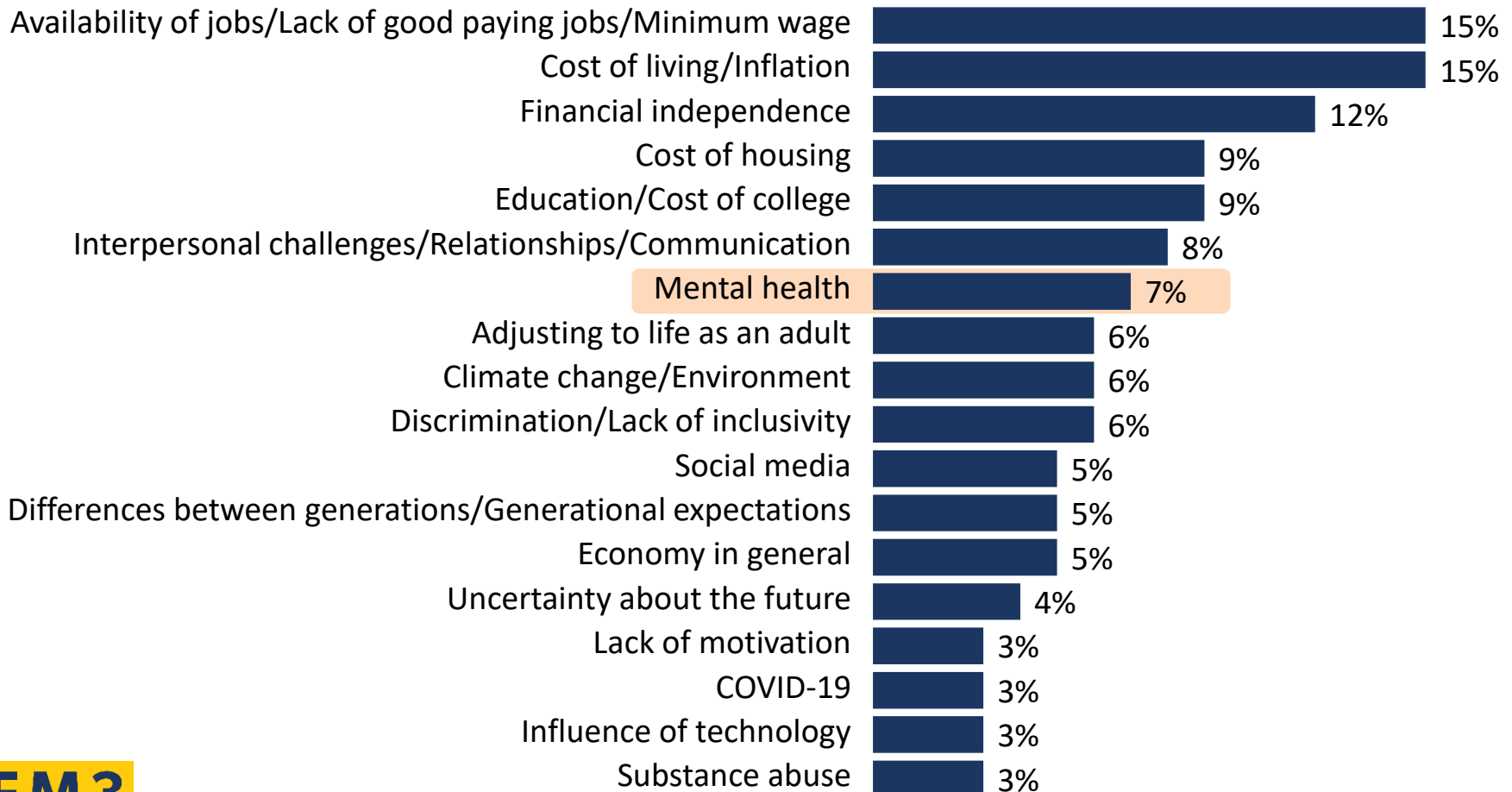
# **Youth Perspectives on Life in California**



# Cost-of-living concerns are top-of-mind for California young adults, but one in ten volunteer concern about mental health.

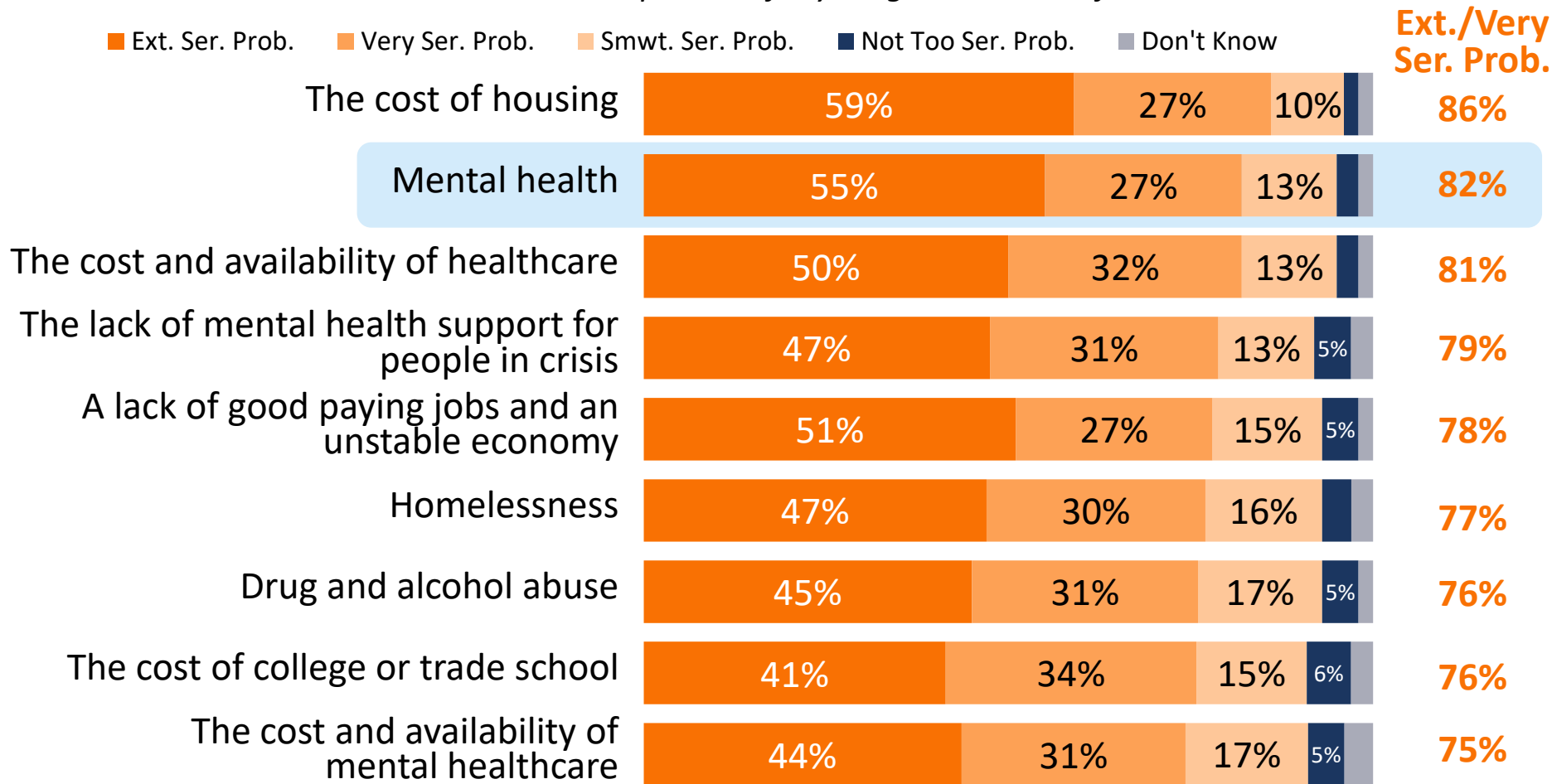
*In a few words of your own, what is the biggest challenge facing your generation – people aged roughly 18 to 24 years old?*

*(Responses 3% and Above Shown)*

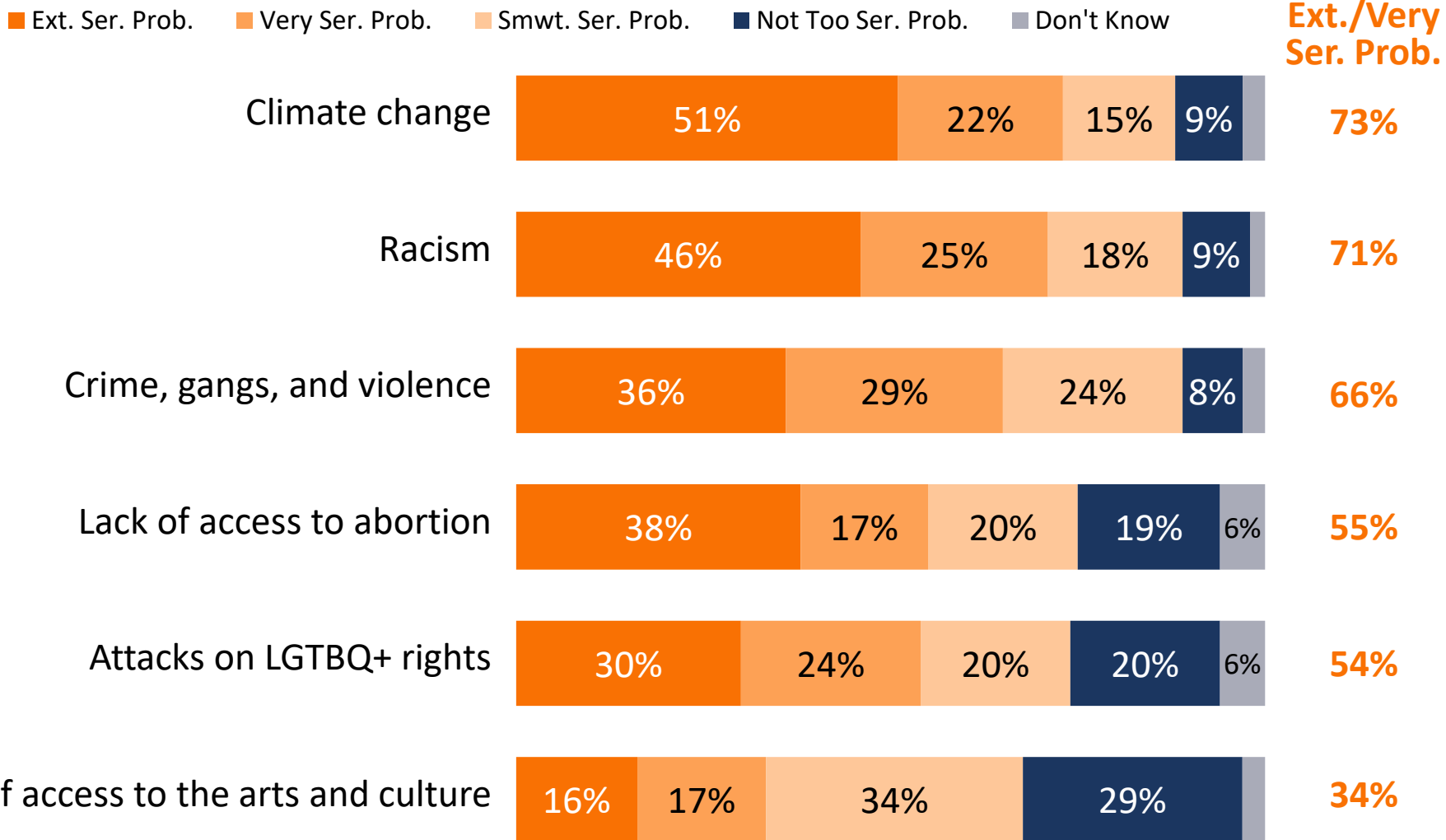


# A wide range of issues prompt intense concern among California young adults, mental health ranking high among them.

Here is a list of issues that young people in California may be facing. Please tell me whether you consider each one to be an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not too serious a problem for young adults in California.



# Lack of access to arts and culture does not register as a major concern.



Q11. Here is a list of issues that young people in California may be facing. Please tell me whether you consider each one to be an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not too serious a problem for young adults in California.

# At least three-quarters across ethnic groups rate mental health as a “very serious” problem.

*Extremely/Very Serious Problem*

| Issue  | All Resp.  | Race/Ethnicity |         |                   |                                    |                    |
|--|------------|----------------|---------|-------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
|  |            | Whites         | Latinos | African Americans | Total Asians/<br>Pacific Islanders | All Youth of Color |
| The cost of housing                                    | <b>86%</b> | 87%            | 88%     | 81%               | 77%                                | 85%                |
| Mental health  | <b>82%</b> | 84%            | 82%     | 85%               | 76%                                | 81%                |
| The cost and availability of healthcare                | <b>81%</b> | 79%            | 84%     | 85%               | 79%                                | 83%                |
| The lack of mental health support for people in crisis | <b>79%</b> | 77%            | 82%     | 83%               | 72%                                | 80%                |
| A lack of good paying jobs and an unstable economy     | <b>78%</b> | 76%            | 82%     | 73%               | 76%                                | 79%                |
| Homelessness   | <b>77%</b> | 79%            | 79%     | 72%               | 64%                                | 75%                |
| Drug and alcohol abuse                                 | <b>76%</b> | 74%            | 79%     | 79%               | 73%                                | 77%                |
| The cost of college or trade school                    | <b>76%</b> | 75%            | 75%     | 74%               | 83%                                | 76%                |
| The cost and availability of <u>mental</u> healthcare  | <b>75%</b> | 76%            | 74%     | 79%               | 71%                                | 74%                |
| Climate change   | <b>73%</b> | 69%            | 75%     | 72%               | 76%                                | 75%                |
| Racism   | <b>71%</b> | 65%            | 77%     | 79%               | 70%                                | 75%                |
| Crime, gangs, and violence                             | <b>66%</b> | 61%            | 74%     | 70%               | 60%                                | 69%                |
| Lack of access to abortion                             | <b>55%</b> | 53%            | 53%     | 63%               | 58%                                | 56%                |
| Attacks on LGBTQ+ rights                               | <b>54%</b> | 50%            | 56%     | 49%               | 61%                                | 57%                |
| Lack of access to the arts and culture                 | <b>34%</b> | 34%            | 41%     | 44%               | 18%                                | 34%                |

Q11. Here is a list of issues that young people in California may be facing. Please tell me whether you consider each one to be an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not too serious a problem for young adults in California.

# Regional variations in concerns are very modest.

*Extremely/Very Serious Problem*

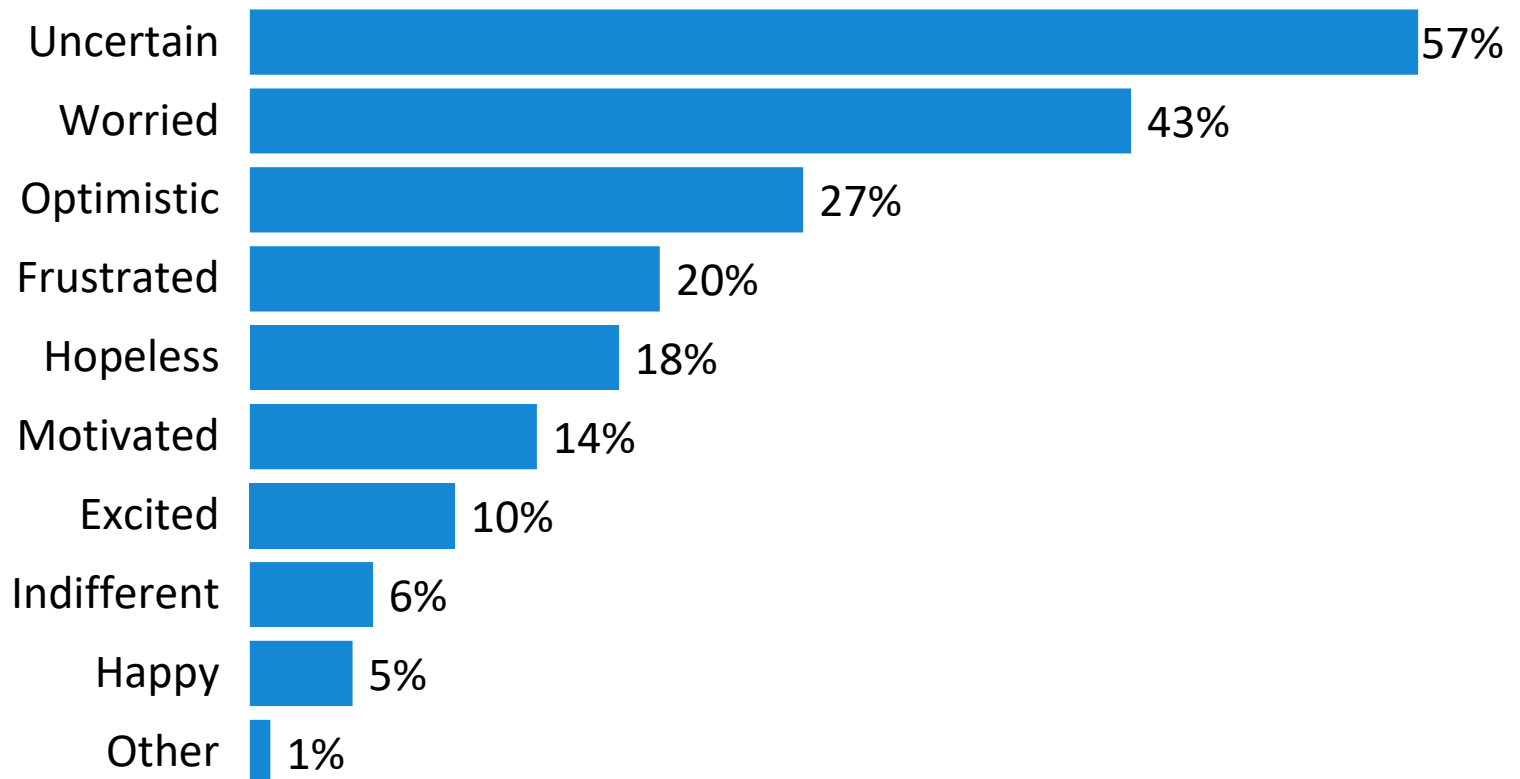
| Issue  | All Resp. | Region             |                                  |          |           |                     |                               |                |
|--|-----------|--------------------|----------------------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
|  |           | Los Angeles County | Counties Surrounding Los Angeles | Bay Area | San Diego | Sacto./ Rural North | Central Valley/ Central Coast | Central Valley |
| The cost of housing                                    | 86%       | 86%                | 87%                              | 84%      | 85%       | 85%                 | 86%                           | 86%            |
| Mental health  | 82%       | 80%                | 89%                              | 75%      | 84%       | 84%                 | 82%                           | 81%            |
| The cost and availability of healthcare                | 81%       | 83%                | 78%                              | 82%      | 92%       | 83%                 | 76%                           | 74%            |
| The lack of mental health support for people in crisis | 79%       | 79%                | 77%                              | 76%      | 78%       | 85%                 | 78%                           | 78%            |
| A lack of good paying jobs and an unstable economy     | 78%       | 78%                | 76%                              | 80%      | 80%       | 78%                 | 77%                           | 76%            |
| Homelessness   | 77%       | 80%                | 74%                              | 75%      | 74%       | 78%                 | 77%                           | 76%            |
| Drug and alcohol abuse                                 | 76%       | 75%                | 76%                              | 67%      | 83%       | 80%                 | 80%                           | 79%            |
| The cost of college or trade school                    | 76%       | 76%                | 80%                              | 77%      | 75%       | 69%                 | 71%                           | 73%            |
| The cost and availability of <u>mental</u> healthcare  | 75%       | 76%                | 76%                              | 74%      | 73%       | 82%                 | 68%                           | 66%            |
| Climate change   | 73%       | 77%                | 66%                              | 76%      | 70%       | 73%                 | 75%                           | 75%            |
| Racism   | 71%       | 79%                | 67%                              | 71%      | 62%       | 69%                 | 71%                           | 69%            |
| Crime, gangs, and violence                             | 66%       | 70%                | 62%                              | 65%      | 61%       | 54%                 | 75%                           | 76%            |
| Lack of access to abortion                             | 55%       | 60%                | 55%                              | 56%      | 39%       | 53%                 | 57%                           | 56%            |
| Attacks on LGBTQ+ rights                               | 54%       | 61%                | 54%                              | 52%      | 47%       | 57%                 | 47%                           | 46%            |
| Lack of access to the arts and culture                 | 34%       | 45%                | 27%                              | 31%      | 20%       | 34%                 | 38%                           | 39%            |

Q11. Here is a list of issues that young people in California may be facing. Please tell me whether you consider each one to be an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not too serious a problem for young adults in California.

# Uncertainty dominates young people's feelings about their generation's future.

Overall, which words best describe how you feel about your generation's future?  
Please pick the 2 that most apply.

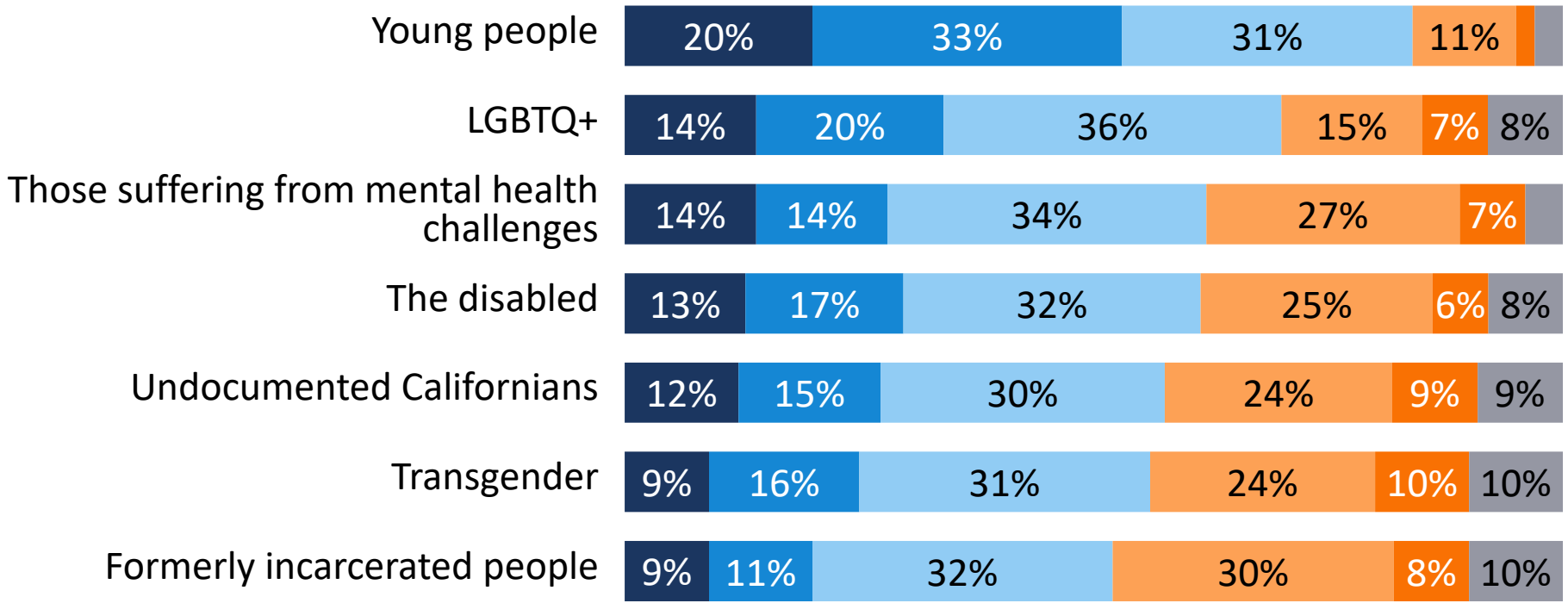
(Multiple Responses Accepted)



# Only about half perceive that young people feel a sense of belonging “most of the time.”

The next question is about the feeling of “belonging,” which often means that all people are welcome, feel included and accepted as who they are, and that together we can achieve a healthier and equitable community for all. Below is a series of various communities in California. Please indicate how often you think these communities feel a sense of belonging: always, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, or never.

■ Always ■ Most of the Time ■ Some of the Time ■ Rarely ■ Never ■ Don't Know



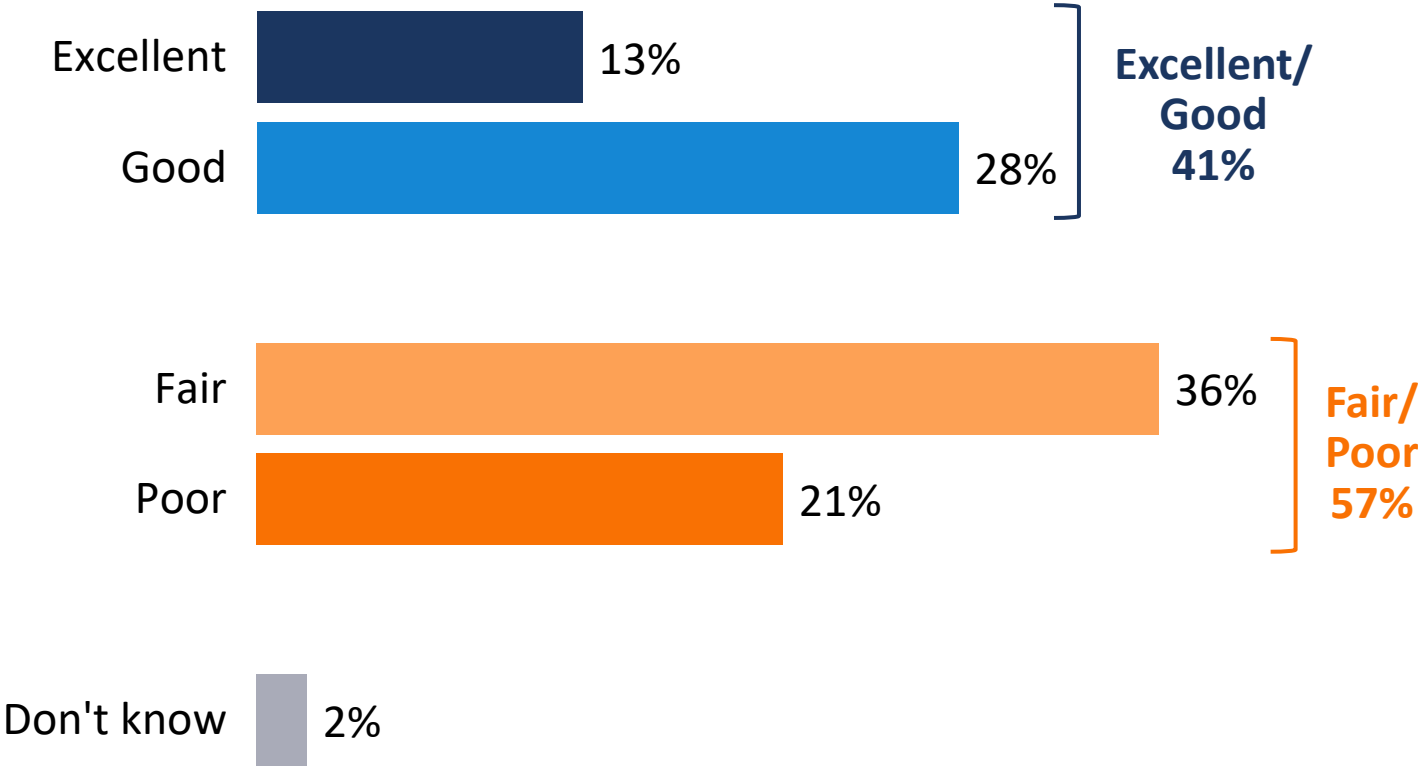


# **Experiences with Mental Health**



# Only a little more than one in ten rate their own mental health as “excellent.”

Overall, how would you rate your own mental health and wellbeing?



# Women and those who identify as LGBTQ are less likely to offer positive evaluations of their own mental health.

| Demographic Group         | Excellent/Good | Fair/Poor |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| All Respondents           | 41%            | 57%       |
| <b>Gender</b>             |                |           |
| Men                       | 51%            | 47%       |
| Women                     | 33%            | 65%       |
| Non-Binary                | 12%            | 88%       |
| <b>LGBTQ+</b>             |                |           |
| Yes                       | 20%            | 77%       |
| No                        | 49%            | 49%       |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity</b>     |                |           |
| Whites                    | 42%            | 55%       |
| Latinos                   | 41%            | 57%       |
| African Americans         | 49%            | 46%       |
| Asians/Pacific Islanders  | 39%            | 30%       |
| <i>All Youth of Color</i> | 40%            | 58%       |
| <b>Age</b>                |                |           |
| 18-21                     | 38%            | 59%       |
| 22-24                     | 43%            | 55%       |

# Those who spend more time online rate their mental health less positively.

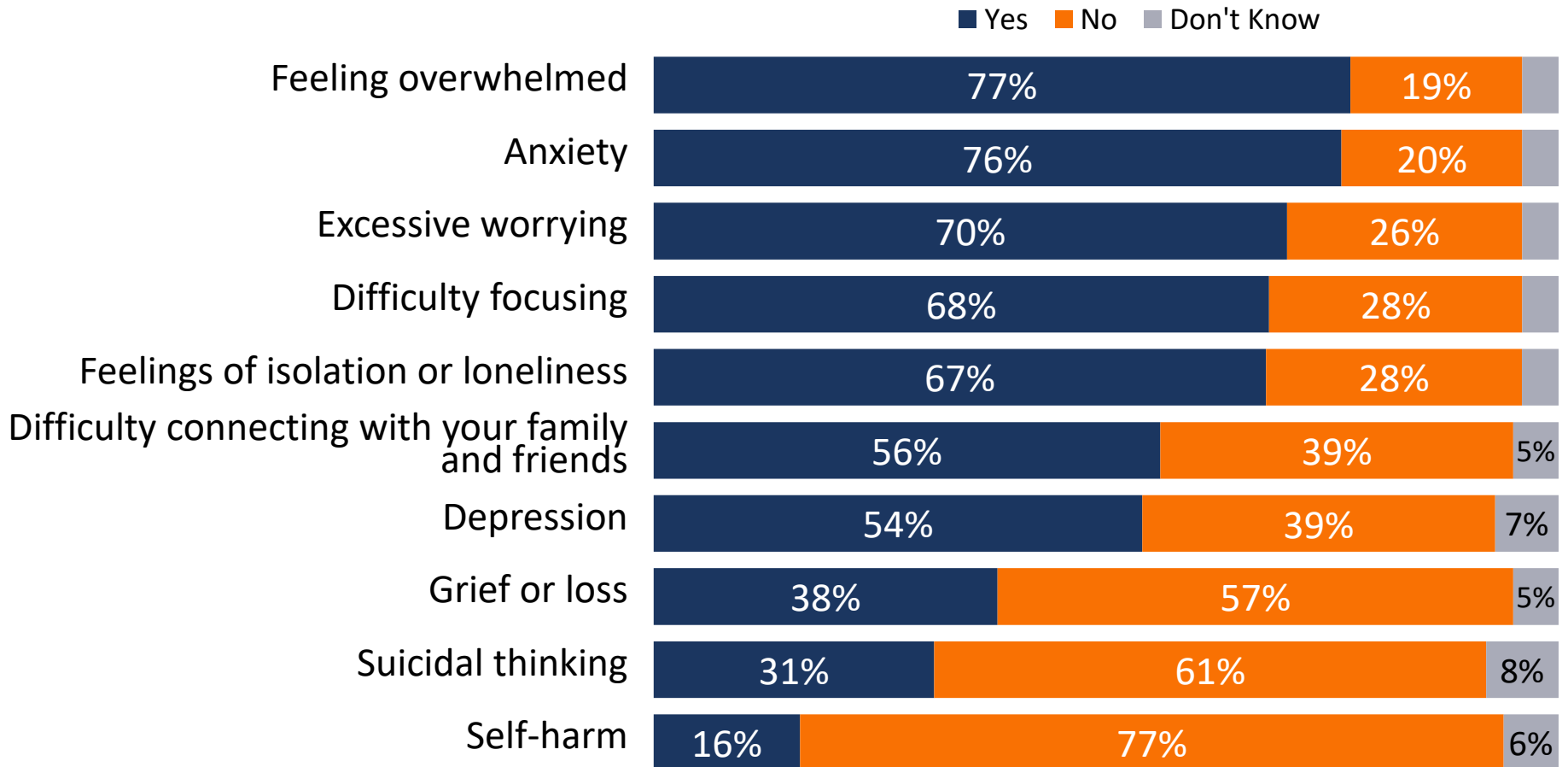
| Demographic Group                | Excellent/Good | Fair/Poor |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| <b>Time Spent Online</b>         |                |           |
| Most of the Day                  | 37%            | 61%       |
| Few Times a Day/Week/Less Often  | 48%            | 50%       |
| <b>Ideology</b>                  |                |           |
| Conservative                     | 54%            | 45%       |
| Moderate                         | 43%            | 54%       |
| Liberal                          | 33%            | 64%       |
| <b>Region</b>                    |                |           |
| Los Angeles County               | 46%            | 54%       |
| Counties Surrounding Los Angeles | 41%            | 56%       |
| Bay Area                         | 34%            | 61%       |
| San Diego                        | 42%            | 56%       |
| Sacramento/Rural North           | 41%            | 56%       |
| Central Valley/Central Coast     | 38%            | 60%       |
| <i>Central Valley</i>            | 39%            | 59%       |
| <b>Community Type</b>            |                |           |
| City                             | 41%            | 56%       |
| Suburban Area                    | 41%            | 58%       |
| Small Town                       | 33%            | 61%       |
| Rural Area                       | 49%            | 48%       |

# Those who live in student housing report better mental health.

| Demographic Group  | Excellent/Good | Fair/Poor |
|--|----------------|-----------|
| <b>Place of Birth</b>  |                |           |
| Foreign Born   | 40%            | 58%       |
| US Born  | 43%            | 52%       |
| <b>Living Situation</b>                                      |                |           |
| Live with Parents or Other Relatives                         | 38%            | 60%       |
| Live in Campus Dorm/Apartment                                | 57%            | 43%       |
| Live in a Household with Other People (Roommates or Friends) | 44%            | 54%       |
| <b>Type of Social Media Used</b>                             |                |           |
| TikTok   | 38%            | 59%       |
| Snapchat   | 42%            | 55%       |
| Instagram  | 41%            | 57%       |
| Twitter  | 39%            | 60%       |
| Facebook   | 43%            | 55%       |
| Reddit   | 37%            | 62%       |
| Another Platform   | 32%            | 66%       |

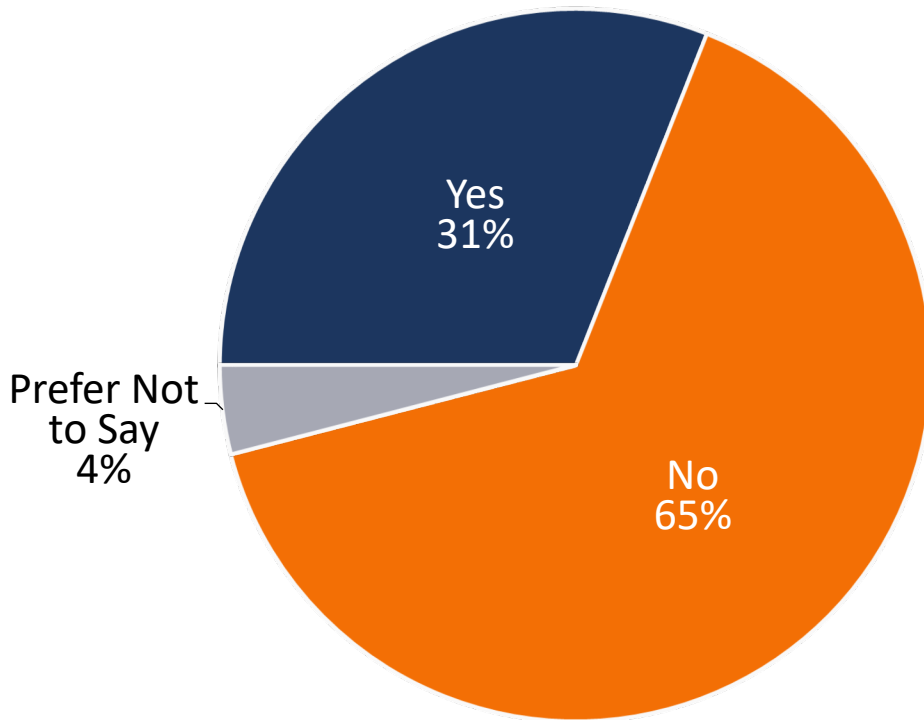
# More than seven in ten report having felt anxious, overwhelmed, or excessively worried.

*Here is a list of mental health challenges.  
Have you experienced any of the following in the last 12 months?*



# Almost one-third are aware of a peer or family member who died by suicide.

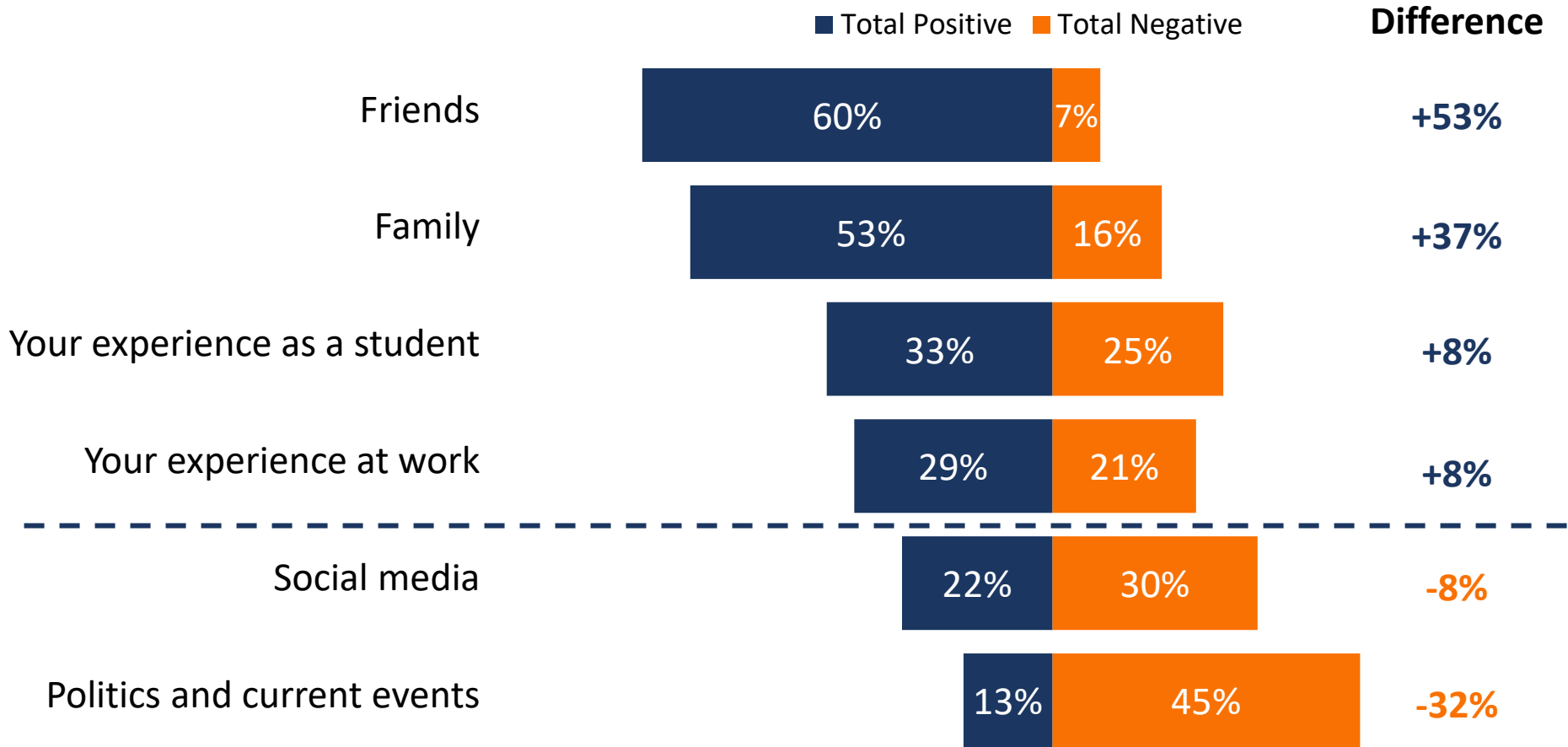
*Do you know of a peer or a family member who has died by suicide?*



Those more likely to know of someone who had died by suicide include those who have self-medicated to deal with mental health strain (48%), women age 22 and over (46%), LGBTQ youth (44%), and white youth (39%).

# Young people say social media and politics have a net-negative impact on their mental health.

Here is a list of items that may impact your mental health. Please indicate what kind of impact each one generally has: very positive, somewhat positive, mixed, somewhat negative, or very negative?





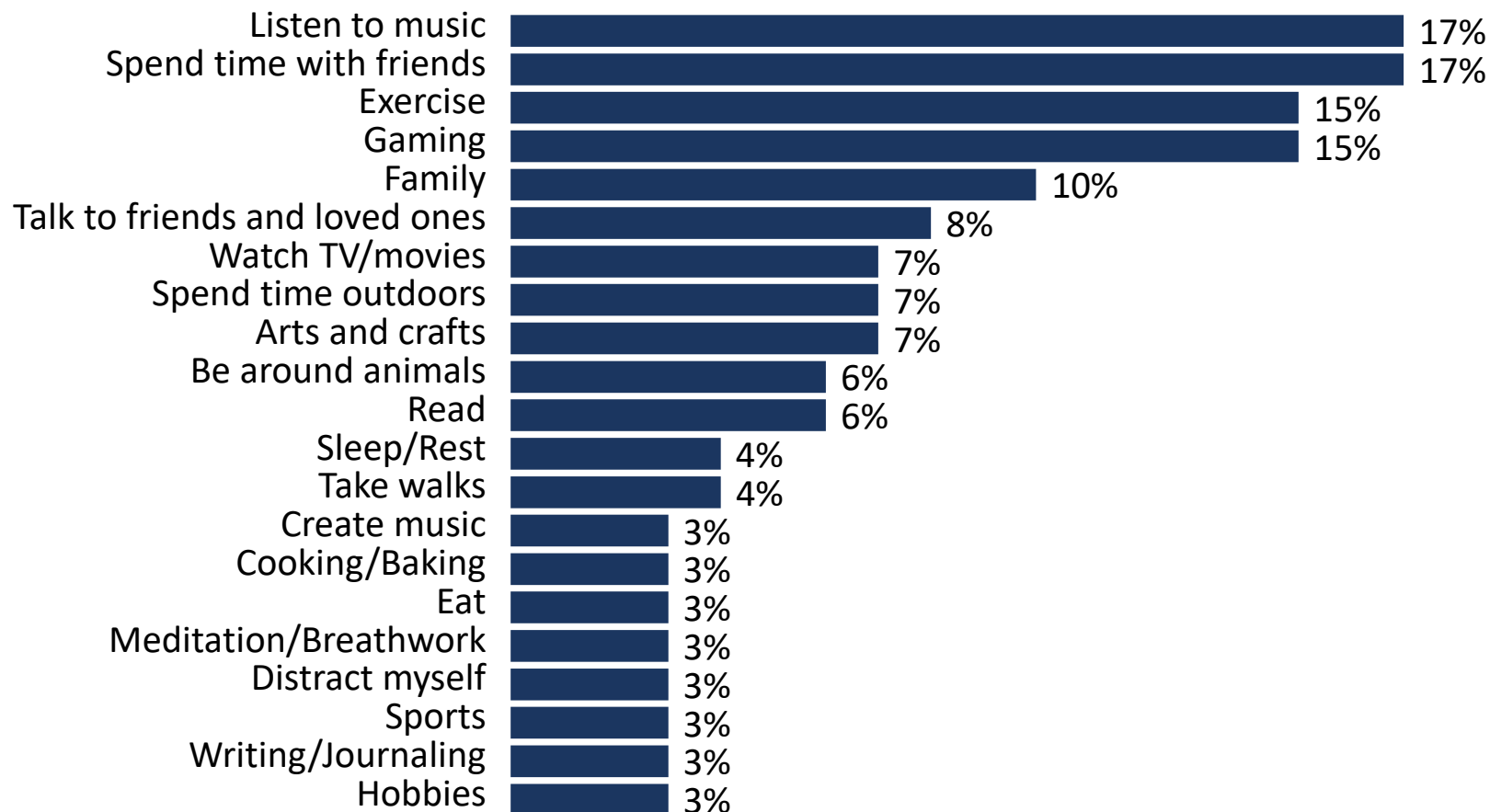
# **Seeking Assistance with Mental Health Challenges**



# Youth identify a variety of activities that help them manage and reduce their stress.

*What are 1 or 2 of the things that you personally do that bring you joy, help manage your stress, and keep you mentally well?*

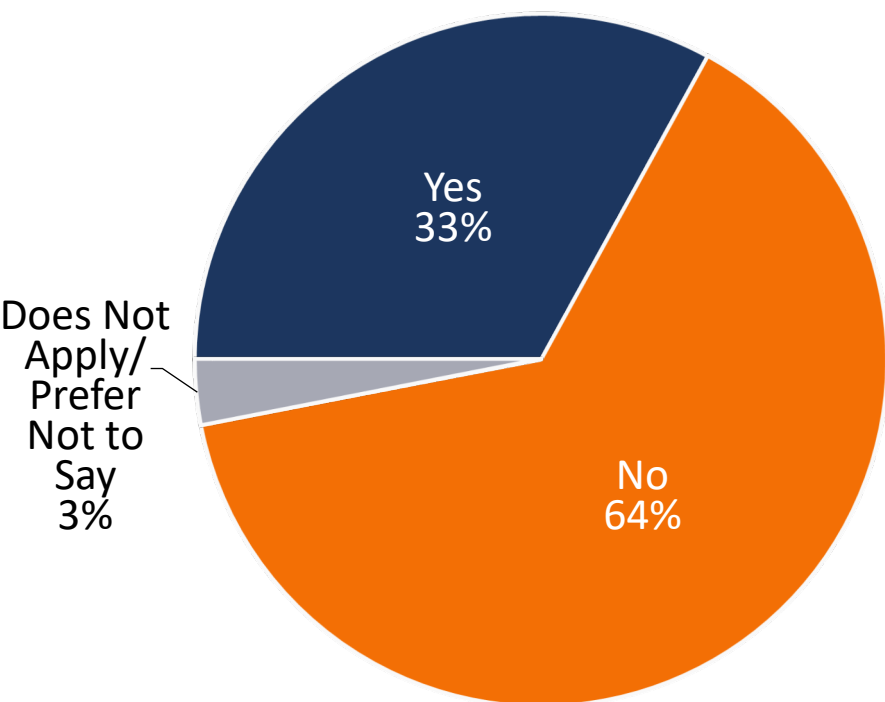
*(Responses 3% and Above Shown)*



# One-third of those who faced a mental health challenge say that they self-medicated.

*When you ever experienced mental health challenges like those listed in the previous question, did you ever “self-medicate” with alcohol or drugs:*

*(Asked of Those Who Experienced a Mental Health Challenge; n=731)*



## Subgroups Most Likely to Have Self-Medicating

LGBT+

Between Jobs

Sacramento/Rural North

African Americans

White Ages 22-24

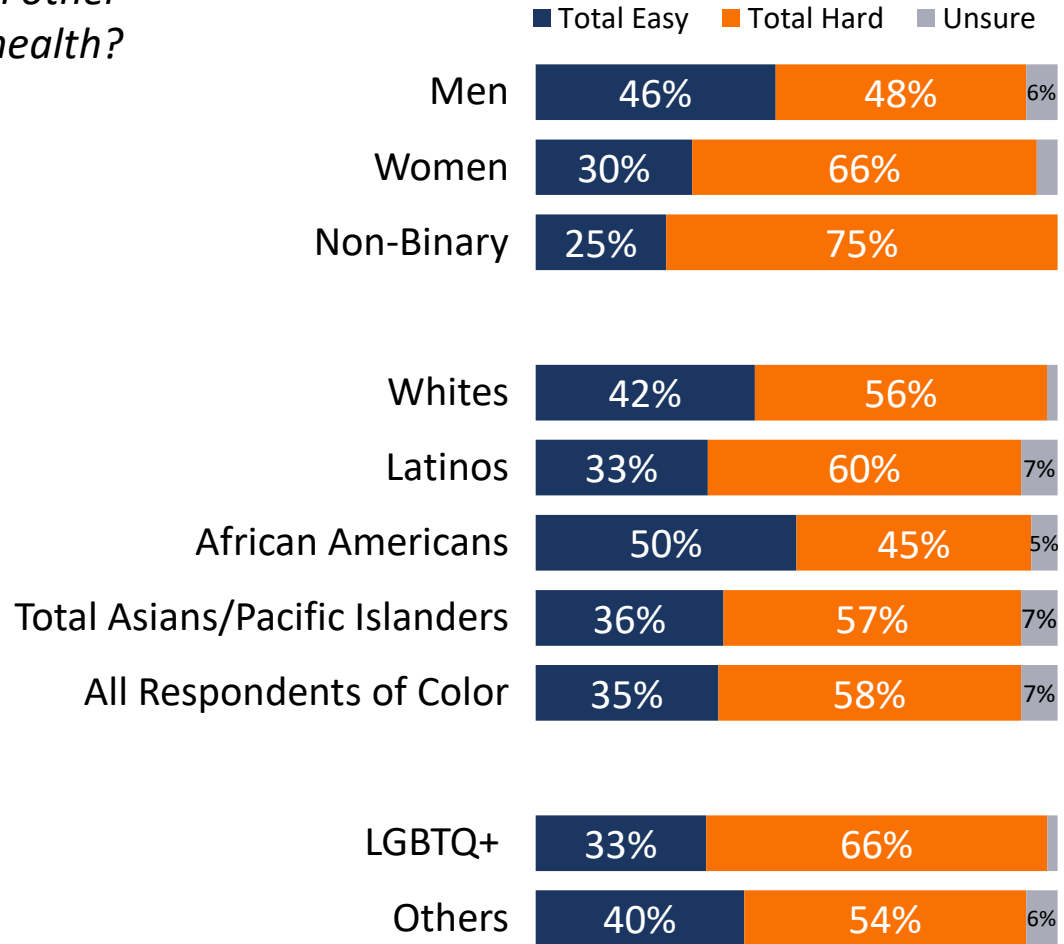
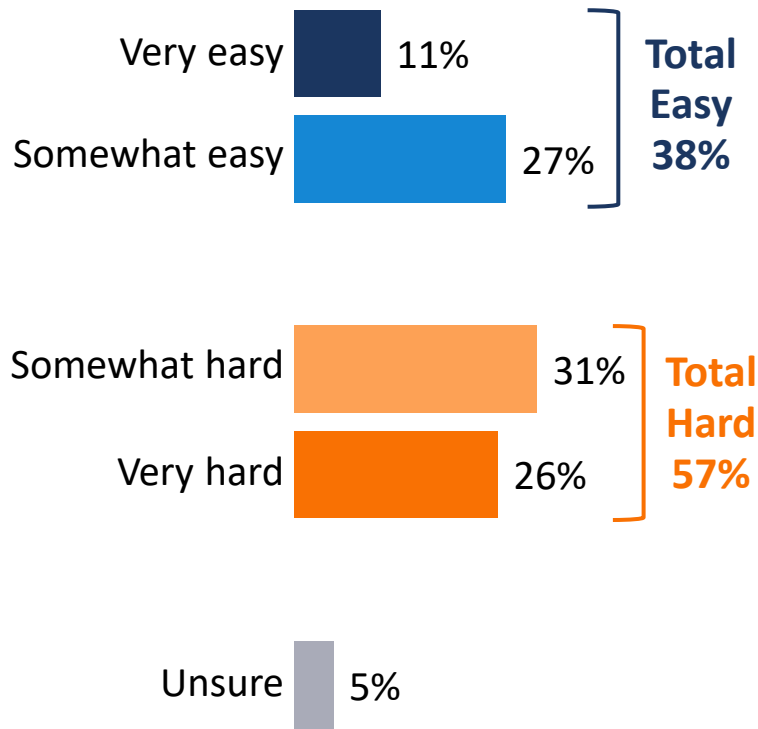
Rural Area

Nonbinary

Whites

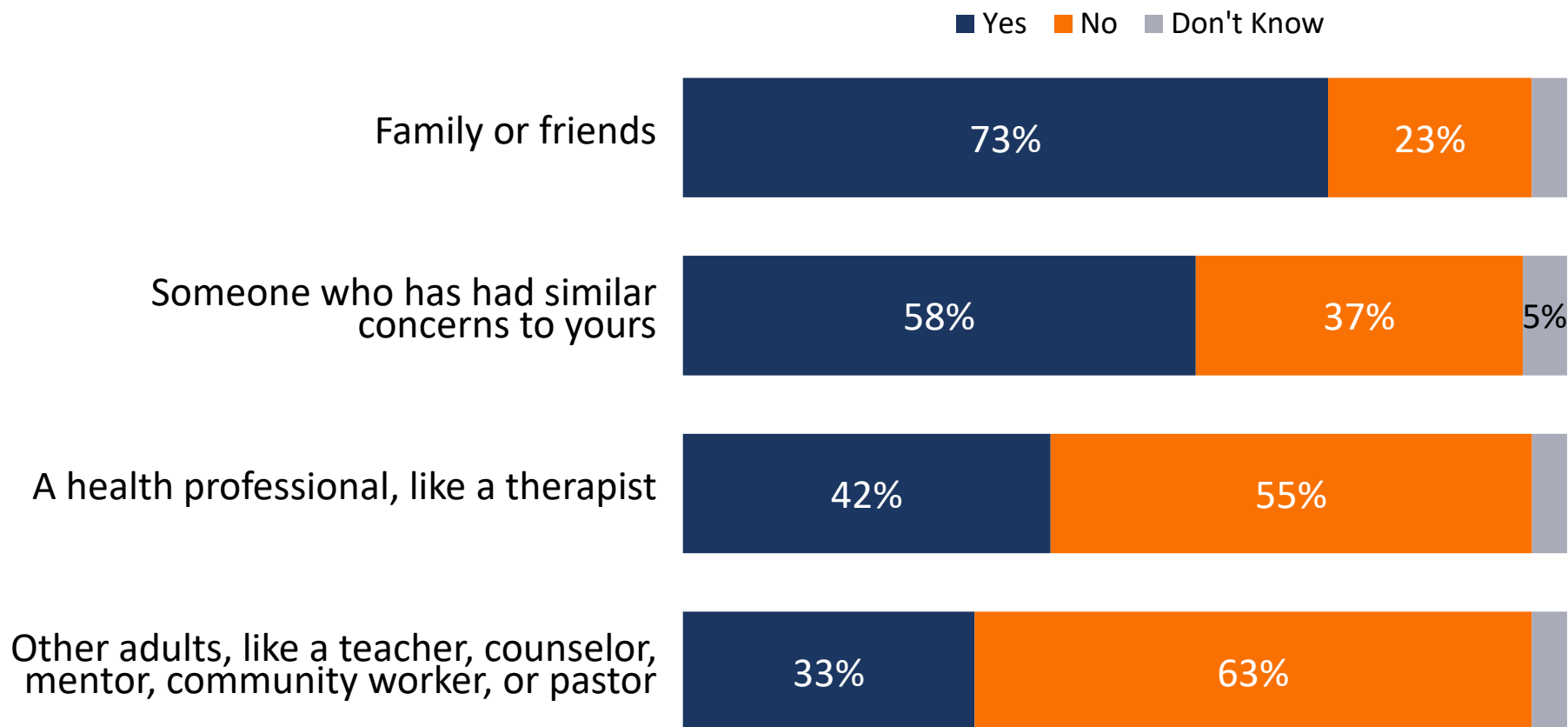
# Most youth say it is hard to talk to other people about their mental and emotional health.

*How easy or hard is it for you to talk with other people about your mental or emotional health?*



# Most have talked to friends or family about mental health, but only two in five to a health professional.

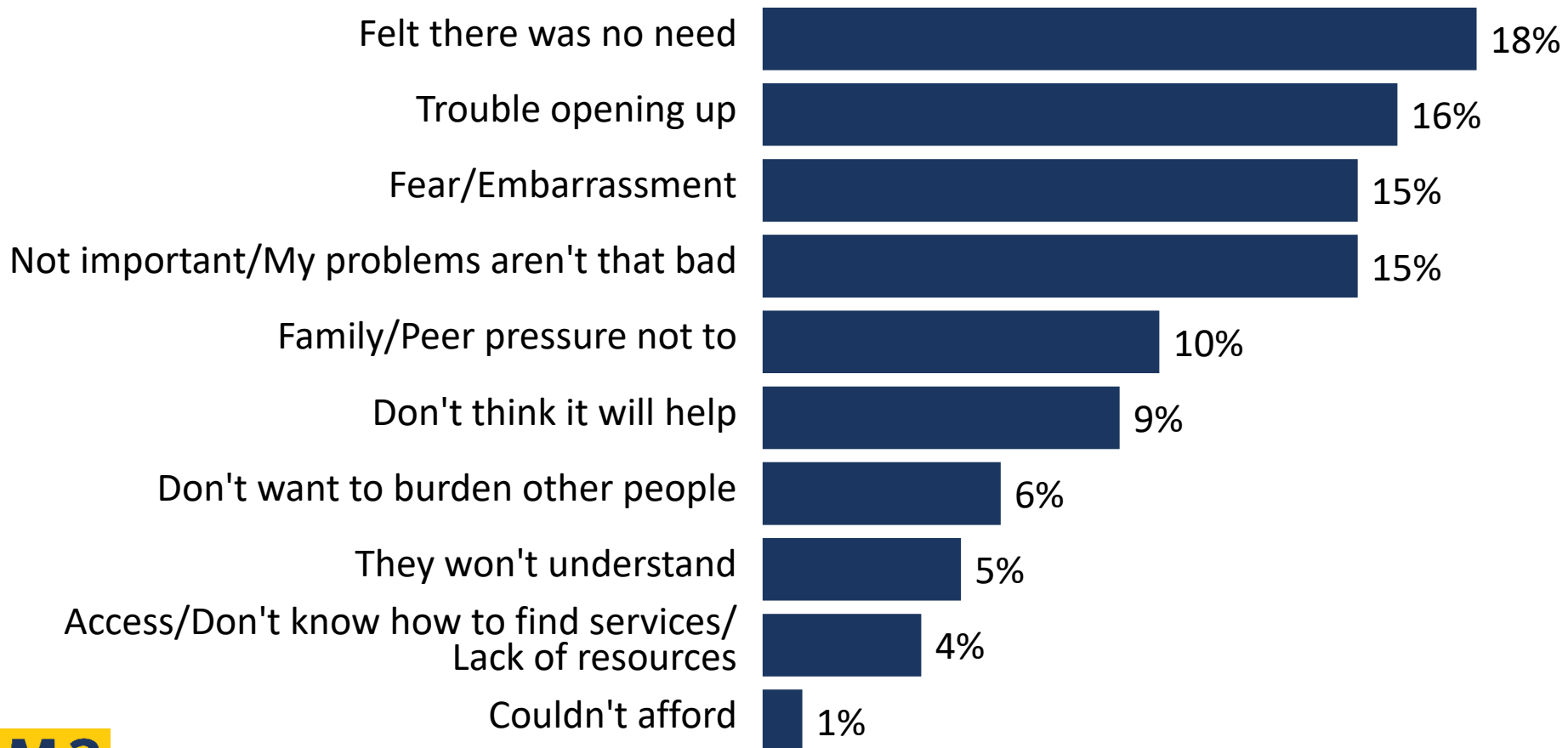
*Have you ever talked to any of the following about your mental health and well-being?*



# Feelings of self-sufficiency or embarrassment have guided those who have not talked to others about their mental health.

*Why have you never spoken about your mental health with any of the people mentioned in the previous question?*

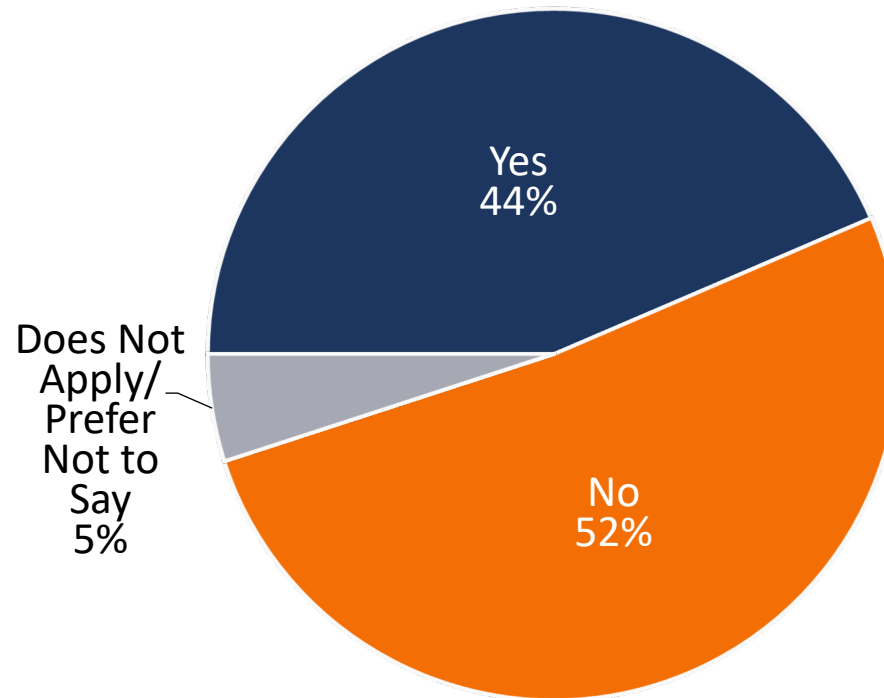
*(Asked of Those Who Have Not Talked to Anyone About Mental Health; n=101)*



# Nearly half of those who have not spoken to a professional have wanted to.

*Have you ever wanted to speak to a health professional like a therapist about your mental health, but been unable to do so?*

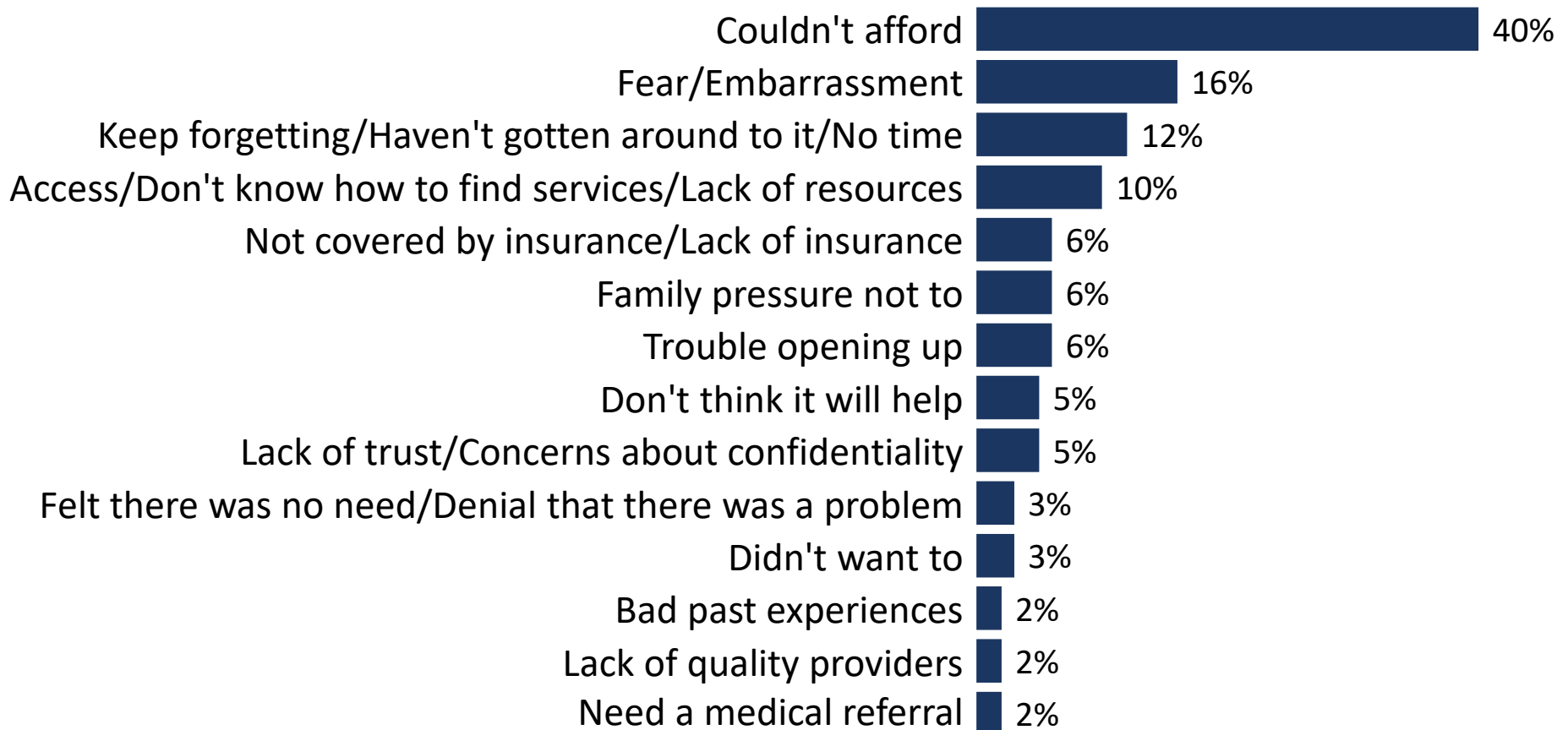
*(Asked of Those Who Have Not Consulted a Health Professional; n=433)*



# Cost was a major factor among this subgroup.

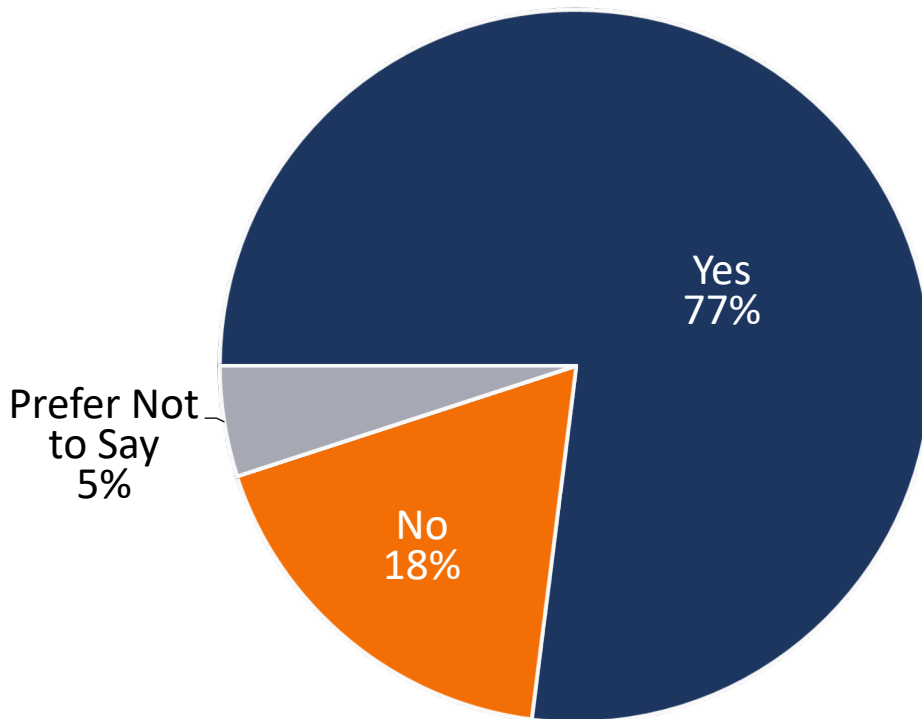
*Why were you unable to speak with a health professional about your mental health, even though you wanted to?*

*(Responses 2% and Above Shown, Asked of Those Who Wanted to Speak to a Health Professional But Have Not; n=189)*



# More than three-quarters say they have offered support to a family member dealing with a mental health issue.

*Have you ever supported or helped a friend or family member who was dealing with a mental health issue?*



**At least two-thirds of those polled among every major demographic and geographic subgroup of California youth indicate that they have provided such support to a friend of family member.**



# California youth suggest increasing access to care and reducing its costs as the best solutions.

*In your opinion, what is the single most important thing that should be done to improve mental health among people ages 18-24 in California?  
(Responses 2% and Above Shown)*

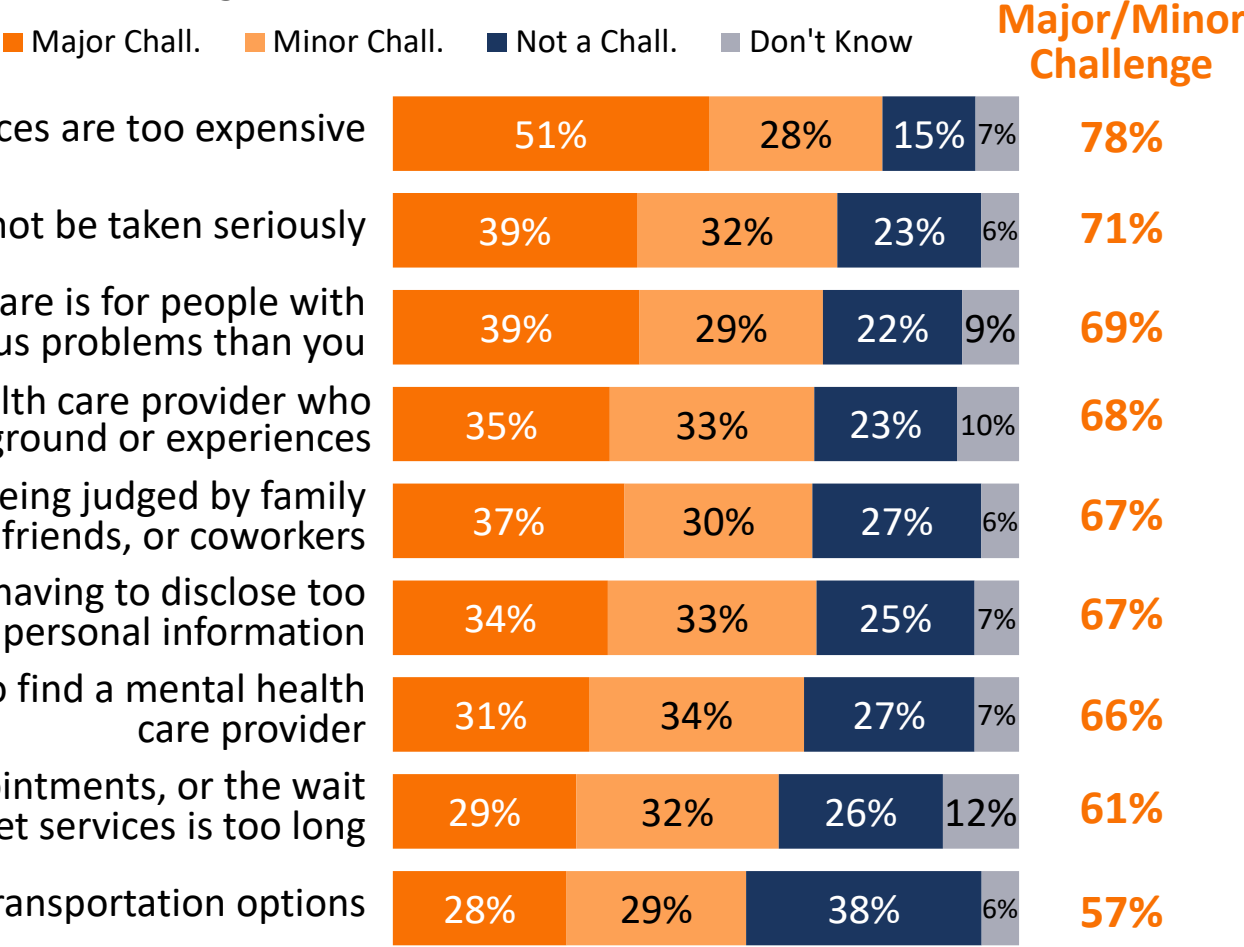




# **Accessing Mental Health Care**

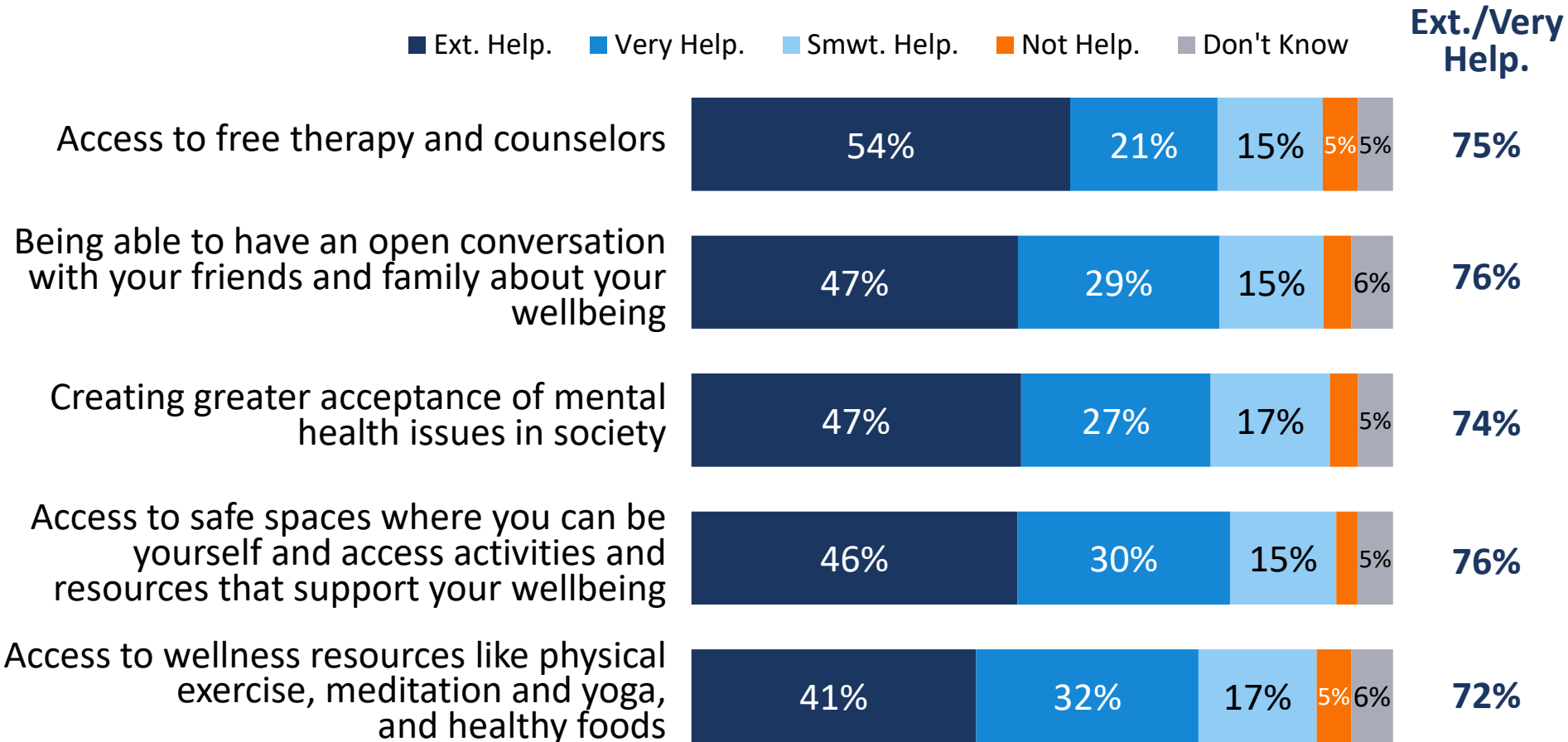
# When asked to identify the major obstacles to obtaining mental health care, costs stand out.

Here are some common challenges people face when trying to get mental health care. Please indicate if this would be a major challenge, minor challenge, or not a challenge for you if you were seeking mental health services

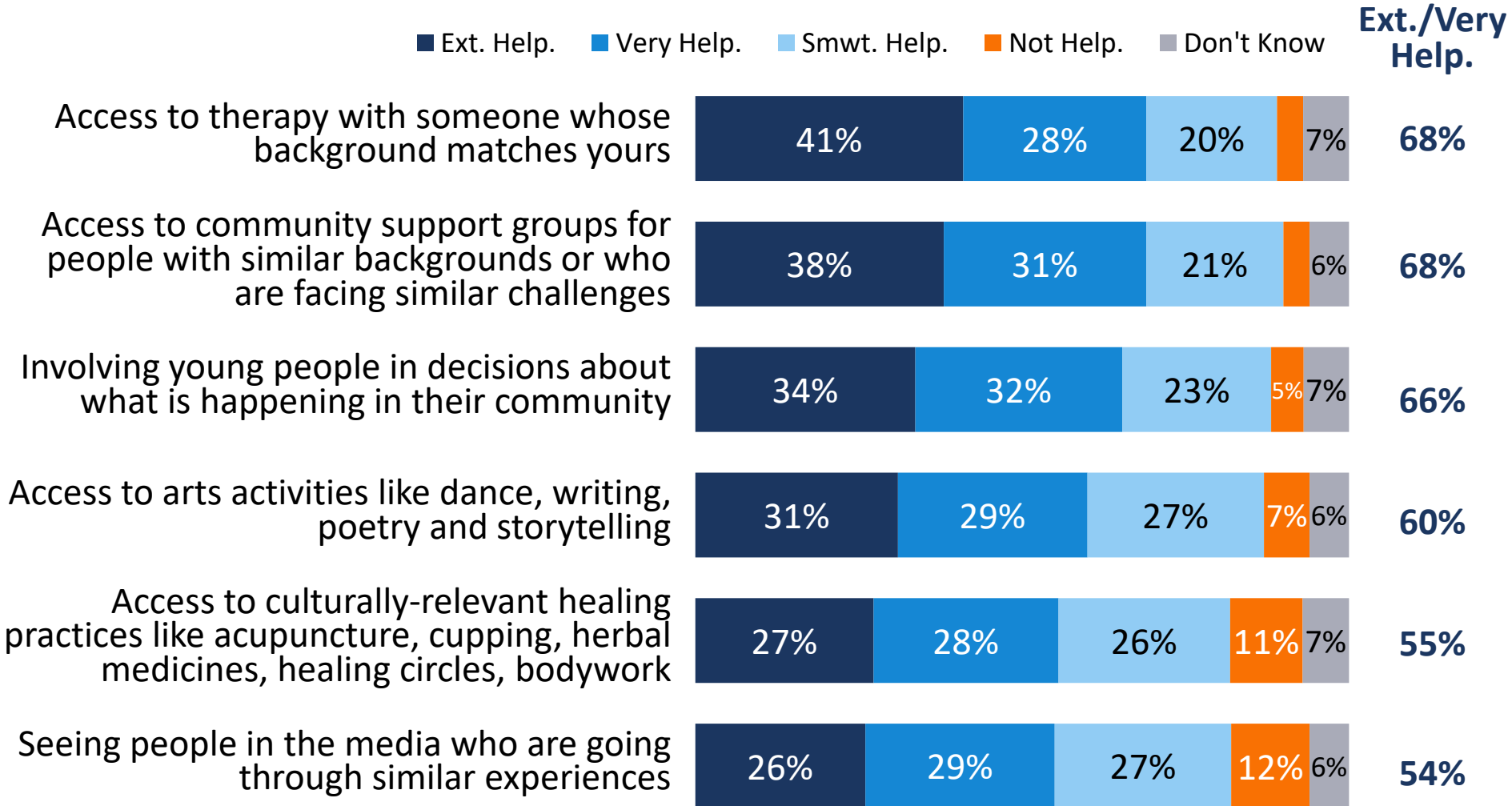


# A majority labels access to free therapy as an “extremely helpful” intervention.

*Below are some things that could help address mental health among young adults under age 25. Please indicate if in your opinion this would be extremely helpful, very helpful, somewhat helpful or not helpful.*



# Majorities rate every type of assistance tested as at least “very helpful.”



# Women and LGBTQ youth express more enthusiasm for each intervention tested.

*Extremely Helpful*

| Statement  | All Resp. | Gender |       |            | LGBTQ+ |     |
|--|-----------|--------|-------|------------|--------|-----|
|  |           | Men    | Women | Non-Binary | Yes    | No  |
| Access to free therapy and counselors  | 54%       | 40%    | 67%   | 72%        | 70%    | 47% |
| Being able to have an open conversation with your friends and family about your wellbeing                              | 47%       | 39%    | 53%   | 56%        | 56%    | 44% |
| Creating greater acceptance of mental health issues in society   | 47%       | 36%    | 57%   | 67%        | 60%    | 43% |
| Access to safe spaces where you can be yourself and access activities and resources that support your wellbeing        | 46%       | 36%    | 53%   | 62%        | 55%    | 42% |
| Access to wellness resources like physical exercise, meditation and yoga, and healthy foods                            | 41%       | 35%    | 46%   | 57%        | 44%    | 40% |
| Access to therapy with someone whose background matches yours  | 41%       | 30%    | 51%   | 49%        | 52%    | 37% |
| Access to community support groups for people with similar backgrounds or who are facing similar challenges            | 38%       | 31%    | 45%   | 34%        | 48%    | 35% |
| Involving young people in decisions about what is happening in their community   | 34%       | 26%    | 41%   | 37%        | 46%    | 30% |
| Access to arts activities like dance, writing, poetry and storytelling   | 31%       | 24%    | 38%   | 33%        | 40%    | 29% |
| Access to culturally-relevant healing practices like acupuncture, cupping, herbal medicines, healing circles, bodywork | 27%       | 21%    | 32%   | 36%        | 31%    | 25% |
| Seeing people in the media who are going through similar experiences   | 26%       | 23%    | 28%   | 29%        | 31%    | 24% |

Q28. Below are some things that could help address mental health among young adults under age 25. Please indicate if in your opinion this would be extremely helpful, very helpful, somewhat helpful or not helpful.

# Racial and ethnic differences in reactions to each type of potential assistance are minimal.

*Extremely Helpful*

| Statement  | All Resp.  | Race/Ethnicity |         |                   |                          |                    |
|--|------------|----------------|---------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
|  |            | Whites         | Latinos | African Americans | Asians/Pacific Islanders | All Youth of Color |
| Access to free therapy and counselors  | <b>54%</b> | 56%            | 53%     | 51%               | 44%                      | 52%                |
| Being able to have an open conversation with your friends and family about your wellbeing                              | <b>47%</b> | 46%            | 45%     | 51%               | 44%                      | 47%                |
| Creating greater acceptance of mental health issues in society   | <b>47%</b> | 49%            | 49%     | 41%               | 34%                      | 46%                |
| Access to safe spaces where you can be yourself and access activities and resources that support your wellbeing        | <b>46%</b> | 44%            | 47%     | 44%               | 41%                      | 47%                |
| Access to wellness resources like physical exercise, meditation and yoga, and healthy foods                            | <b>41%</b> | 43%            | 40%     | 43%               | 30%                      | 39%                |
| Access to therapy with someone whose background matches yours  | <b>41%</b> | 43%            | 40%     | 44%               | 32%                      | 39%                |
| Access to community support groups for people with similar backgrounds or who are facing similar challenges            | <b>38%</b> | 39%            | 38%     | 43%               | 26%                      | 37%                |
| Involving young people in decisions about what is happening in their community   | <b>34%</b> | 35%            | 35%     | 35%               | 21%                      | 33%                |
| Access to arts activities like dance, writing, poetry and storytelling   | <b>31%</b> | 28%            | 38%     | 33%               | 17%                      | 33%                |
| Access to culturally-relevant healing practices like acupuncture, cupping, herbal medicines, healing circles, bodywork | <b>27%</b> | 26%            | 29%     | 34%               | 20%                      | 28%                |
| Seeing people in the media who are going through similar experiences   | <b>26%</b> | 26%            | 26%     | 34%               | 16%                      | 25%                |

Q28. Below are some things that could help address mental health among young adults under age 25. Please indicate if in your opinion this would be extremely helpful, very helpful, somewhat helpful or not helpful.

# There is an ideological dimension as well, with more liberal youth expressing more enthusiasm for each potential source of assistance.

*Extremely Helpful*

| Statement  | All Resp. | Ideology     |          |         |
|--|-----------|--------------|----------|---------|
|  |           | Conservative | Moderate | Liberal |
| Access to free therapy and counselors  | 54%       | 37%          | 39%      | 78%     |
| Being able to have an open conversation with your friends and family about your wellbeing                              | 47%       | 42%          | 39%      | 58%     |
| Creating greater acceptance of mental health issues in society   | 47%       | 37%          | 32%      | 69%     |
| Access to safe spaces where you can be yourself and access activities and resources that support your wellbeing        | 46%       | 36%          | 36%      | 61%     |
| Access to wellness resources like physical exercise, meditation and yoga, and healthy foods                            | 41%       | 41%          | 34%      | 46%     |
| Access to therapy with someone whose background matches yours  | 41%       | 34%          | 31%      | 55%     |
| Access to community support groups for people with similar backgrounds or who are facing similar challenges            | 38%       | 34%          | 31%      | 49%     |
| Involving young people in decisions about what is happening in their community   | 34%       | 30%          | 27%      | 42%     |
| Access to arts activities like dance, writing, poetry and storytelling   | 31%       | 33%          | 25%      | 36%     |
| Access to culturally-relevant healing practices like acupuncture, cupping, herbal medicines, healing circles, bodywork | 27%       | 25%          | 27%      | 28%     |
| Seeing people in the media who are going through similar experiences   | 26%       | 30%          | 20%      | 30%     |

Q28. Below are some things that could help address mental health among young adults under age 25. Please indicate if in your opinion this would be extremely helpful, very helpful, somewhat helpful or not helpful.





# Conclusions

# Conclusions

- California youth express significant concern about mental health; a majority rates it as an “extremely serious” problem for young adults, second only to housing costs.
- Young adults also express concern about their own mental health; nearly three in five rate it as “fair” or “poor,” and more than seven in ten report having recently experienced anxiety, excessive worrying, and feelings of being overwhelmed.
- Pluralities say that politics and social media have a net-negative impact on their mental health.
- Fewer than two in five say that it is easy to talk to others about their mental health and emotional well-being.
- Only about two in five say that they have spoken to a health professional about mental health issues.
- Costs are significant barrier to accessing such care, but many also report feelings of embarrassment about seeking help.
- California youth express enthusiasm about providing more access to no-cost mental health care, reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues, and creating more opportunities for young people to talk with others who will understand their mental health challenges,

**For more information,  
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**OPINION  
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