

# STUDENTS, ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

## 2023-24

Survey research with students studying in Higher  
Education in the UK



STUDENTS  
ORGANISING FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY  
UNITED KINGDOM

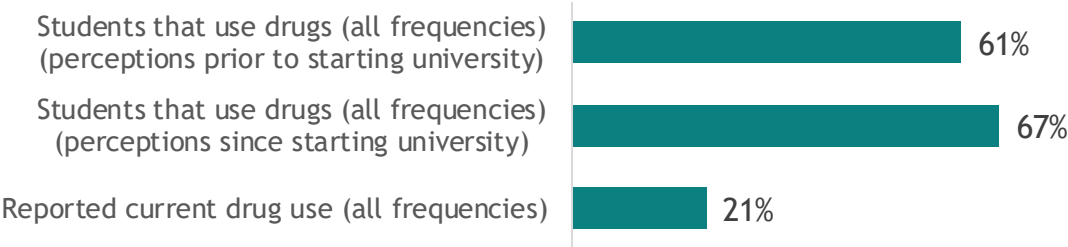
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# SUMMARY

We asked UK students in higher education about their experiences of drugs and alcohol during their time at university. 4069 respondents completed an online survey in November and December 2023.

Respondents’ perceptions of student drug use is higher once they become a student, but underestimates reported current use...



Top reasons stated by respondents that use drugs or have used drugs as a student include...



59%  
For recreation



23%  
To enhance social interactions



20%  
To escape reality, something to do/boredom, help them deal with stress

Amongst all respondents, perceptions of drug use are varied...

47%

Agree that  
“I do not have a problem with students taking drugs recreationally.”

28%

Agree that  
“Student drug use isn’t as problematic as is widely thought.”

48%

Disagree that  
“Taking drugs is part of university / college culture.”

Cannabis is the most frequently reported drug used by respondents who currently use or have previously used drugs as student



- Daily or almost daily\*
- Weekly
- Monthly
- A few times a year\*
- Only on special occasions
- Have used in the past but no longer do
- Never

\*Frequency categories changed from previous research

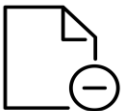
## Thinking of drugs and their place of study...



**33%** say they don't know if their university has a drug policy



**47%** say they feel confident that if they turned to their university for support with drug use that it would be dealt with appropriately



**45%** say their university / college should not be punishing students who take drugs

## Reflecting on the impacts of drug use, respondents who currently use (or previously used) drugs say...



**16%**  
...it has resulted in arriving late to a lecture / seminar / class



**20%**  
...it's improved a mental health condition but...  
**14%** say it has made a condition worse



**47%**  
...it helped them make new friends



**22%**  
...they enjoyed the experience of sex on drugs



**18%**  
...they took risks with their personal safety they would not have otherwise

Considering their experiences with alcohol whilst a student in higher education, respondents told us...



**58%**

Before going to university, half of students surveyed thought students got drunk most/all of the time



**76%**

agree that drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture



**41%**

report drinking alcohol once a week or more



**54%**

Over one third of students regularly drink at home or a friend's house before going out for the night



**51%**

of students surveyed think getting drunk means they'll have a good night out



**78%**

say they don't have to get drunk to have a good night out

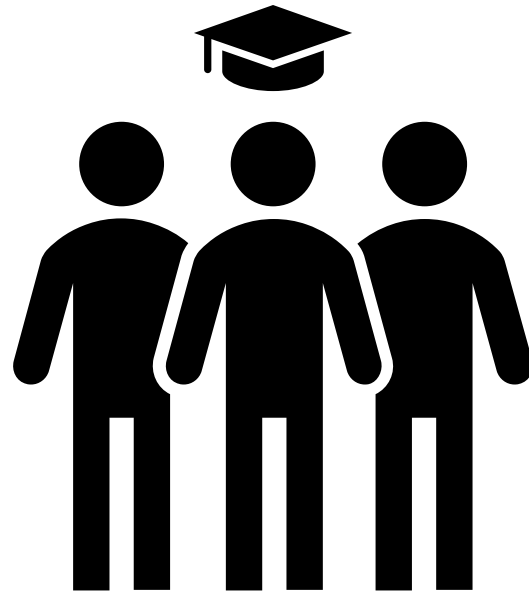
# The Sample

**75% of respondents are undergraduates**

**69% of participants are White British, three quarters are UK citizens who study in the UK.**

**31% of students live in a privately rented house or flat with friends**

**62% of participants are 18-22 years old**



**50% are undergraduates in their first or second year**

**4069 HE students completed the survey**

**36% of students live in the North of England**

# NOTABLE CHANGES (FROM 2022-2023 RESEARCH)

# Drugs: Changes in key findings between 2022-23 and 2023-24 research

The following changes between respondents to research carried out in 2022-23 and 2023-24 are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level. Respondents in 2023-24 are...

More likely to agree that taking drugs is part of university/college culture

**22%**  **26%**  
2022-23 2023-24

More likely to report they are currently using drugs

**10%**  **21%**  
2022-23 2023-24

Less likely to say they don't know if their university/college has a drug policy

**44%**  **33%**  
2022-23 2023-24

More likely to say that they have made new friends as a result of drug use

**36%**  **47%**  
2022-23 2023-24

# Alcohol: Changes in key findings between 2022-23 and 2023-24 research

The following changes between respondents to research carried out in 2022-23 and 2023-24 are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level. Respondents in 2023-24 are...

Less likely to report that they  
have never drunk alcohol

**18%**  **12%**  
2022-23 2023-24

more likely to report that they  
regularly get drunk at home  
before a night out

**16%**  **29%**  
2022-23 2023-24

Less likely to agree that “it can  
be difficult not to drink too  
much on a night out”

**43%**  **36%**  
2022-23 2023-24

More likely to report missing a  
university seminar/lecture/class  
following alcohol consumption

**28%**  **38%**  
2022-23 2023-24

# ABOUT THE RESEARCH

# About the research

This report presents research completed as part of the Drug and Alcohol Impact and Alcohol Impact programmes. The programme is a whole-institution approach and embeds social norms of responsible drinking on our campuses, refocusing the conversation on drugs to be about reducing harm, and building healthier, safer, more productive student communities, involving action by local partnerships of students' unions, universities and community organisations. The programme includes an annual survey, designed to identify students' relationship with alcohol and drugs. The respondents are studying higher education courses at institutions across the UK, including at participating institutions in Drug and Alcohol Impact. The survey is intended to provide a means for understanding changes in attitudes and behaviours.

A total of 4069 responses from students in higher education were achieved in 2023-24 through promotion of the survey locally by universities and students' unions. The survey was promoted by NUS to students in the TOTUM database and to other universities and students' unions wishing to gather data on their students' relationship with drugs.

When reading the results, it is worth bearing in mind the characteristics of the respondents, outlined in the following chapter.

Variations between students with different characteristics, such as gender identity or nationality, are also drawn out throughout the report. Significant differences are reported where base size is greater than 30 and are valid at confidence level of at least 95%.

## About Drug and Alcohol Impact

SOS-UK's student wellbeing programme Drug and Alcohol Impact embeds social norms of responsible drinking on our campuses and refocuses the conversation on drugs to be about reducing harm, and building healthier, safer, more productive student communities.

The programme builds upon the success of Alcohol Impact, which since 2015 has supported 30 university and students' union partnerships to create lasting positive change around responsible alcohol consumption. Although progress has been made in improving drinking cultures on campus, there's still work to be done, and institutions are supported to build on and improve practices in this area.

Drug and Alcohol Impact recognises that despite most universities taking a zero-tolerance approach to drug use, many students still choose to use drugs. The programme supports institutions to explore their own students drug use and design bespoke interventions to identify, educate and reduce harm.

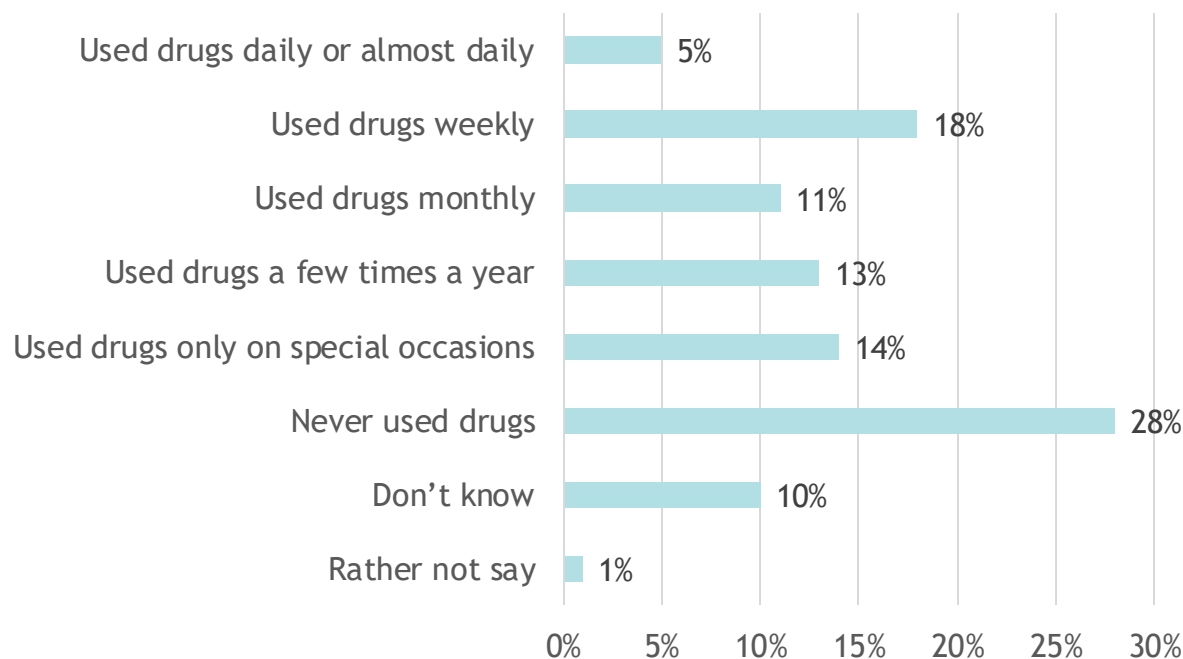
For more information visit our [website](#) or email [hello@sos-uk.org](mailto:hello@sos-uk.org)

# RESEARCH FINDINGS: DRUGS

# Perceptions of student drug use and campus drug culture

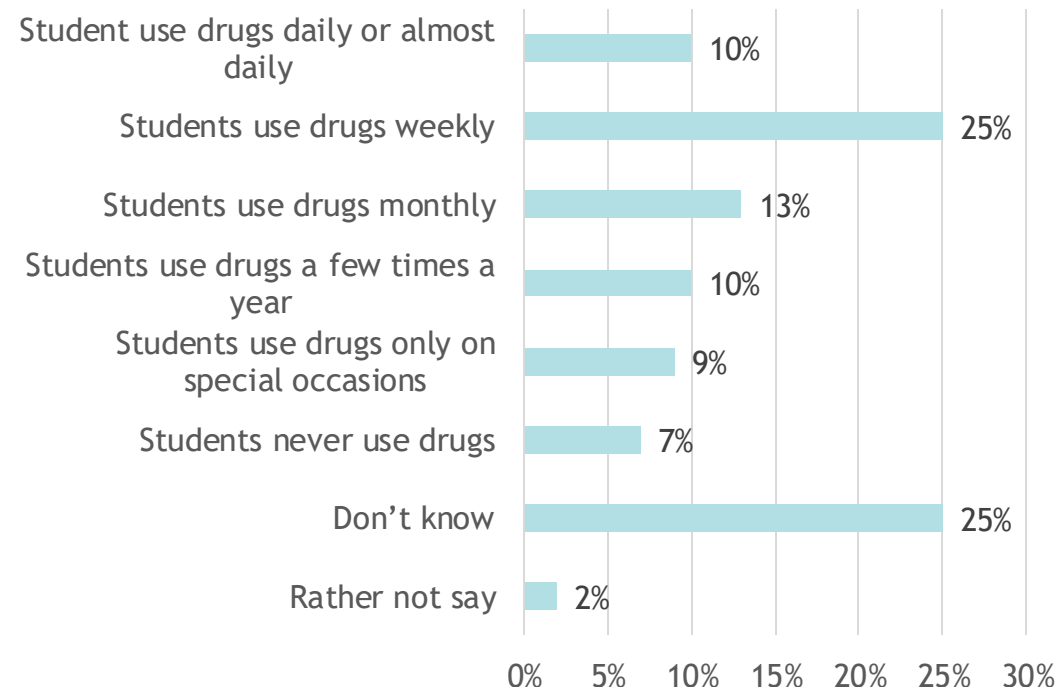
When asked to reflect on their perceptions of student drug use before starting university/college, 61% of respondents say they thought students used drugs (at any frequency). This is slightly higher now they're at university/ college with two thirds of respondents (67%), based on their experiences, saying students use drugs. Less students say that students never use drugs after starting university/college, however more students say they don't know.

### BEFORE STARTING UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE



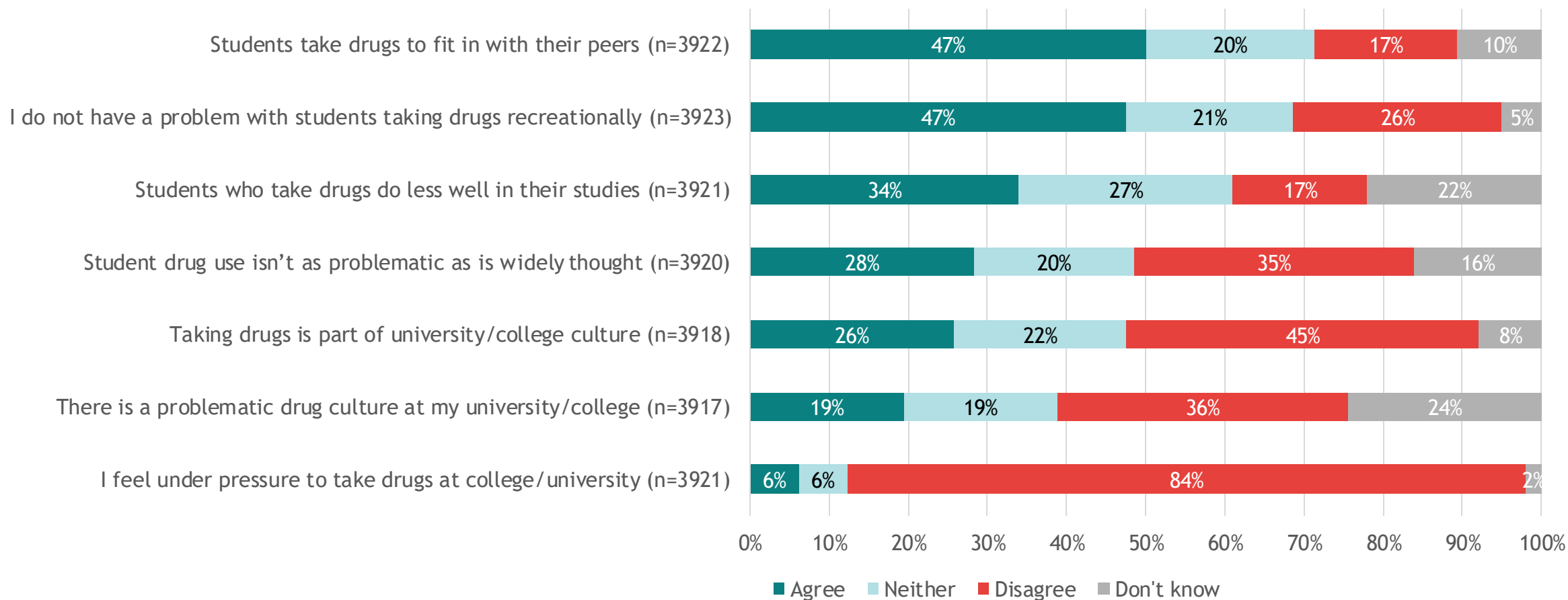
Q. Please select the phrase which best describes your perceptions: Before starting at university/college, did you believe that students... [Base: 3944 Balance: No response]

### AFTER STARTING UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE



Q. And now you're a student at university/college, which of the following best matches your experiences of drug use? [Base: 3942 Balance: No response]

Just under half of the respondents say they think students take drugs to fit in with their peers, however the majority do not feel pressured to take drugs at university/ college. 34% feel that students who take drugs do less well in their studies. Over a quarter of students say taking drugs is part of university/college culture and 19% say that the drug culture at their university/college is problematic.



Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements? [Base: (in brackets) Balance: No response, rather not say]

## Attitudes and experiences towards drug use at university or college vary according to respondent characteristics...

### Taking drugs is part of university/college culture

- Undergraduate students are more likely to agree than postgraduate students.
- UK students are more likely to agree than students from outside the EU.

### Students take drugs to fit in with their peers

- Undergraduate students are more likely than postgraduate students to agree that students take drugs to fit in with their peers.
- UK students are more likely to agree than international students from the EU and outside the EU.

### I do not have a problem with students taking drugs recreationally

- Undergraduate students are more likely to agree than postgraduate students.
- UK students are more likely to agree than international students from the EU and outside the EU.
- Men respondents are more likely to agree than women respondents.

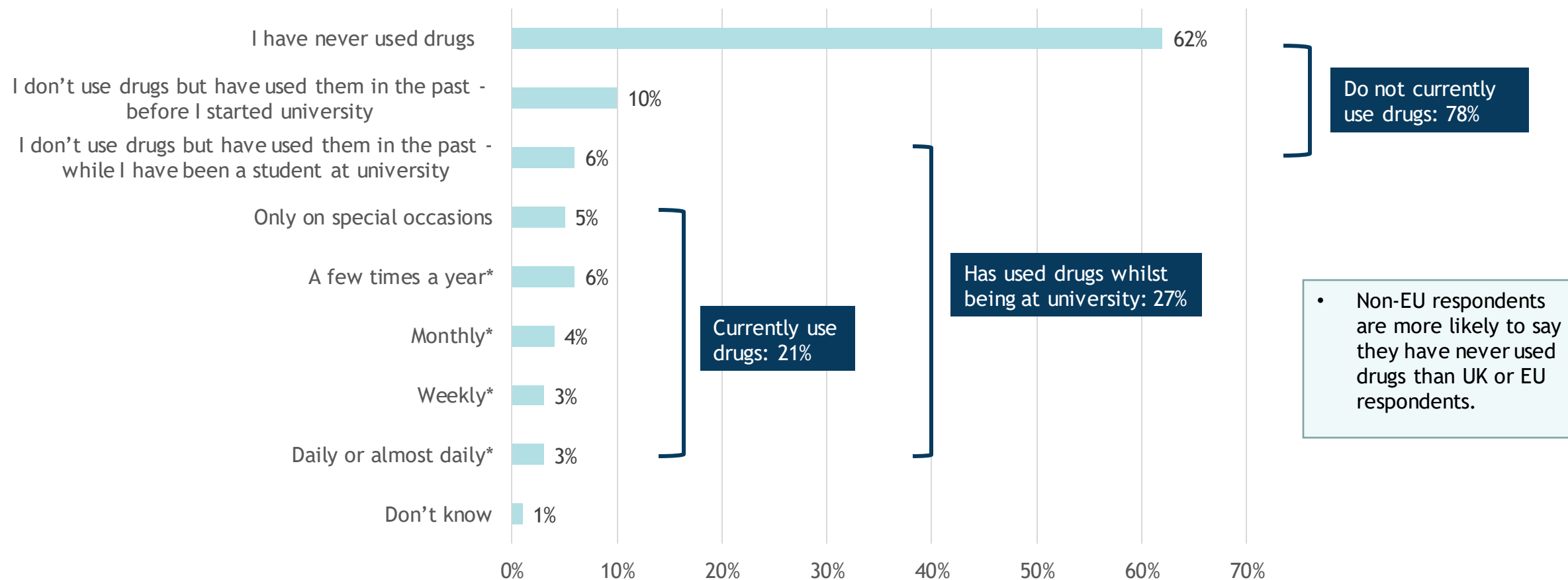
### Student drug use isn't as problematic as is widely thought

- Undergraduate students are more likely to agree than postgraduate students.
- UK students are more likely to agree than international students from the EU and outside the EU.
- Men respondents are more likely to agree than women respondents.

Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements?

# Student drug use

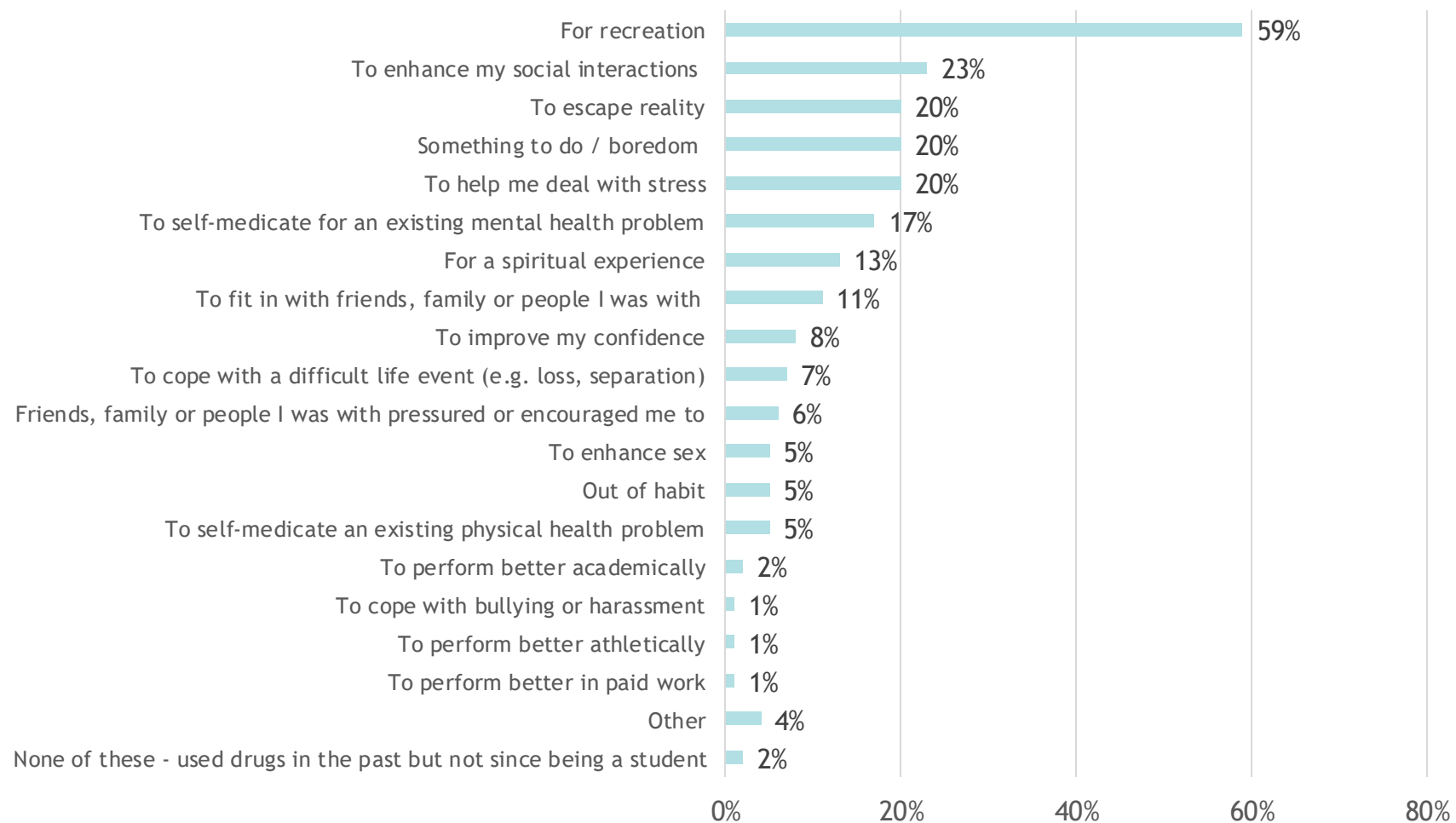
78% of respondents do not currently use drugs. 27% say they have used drugs whilst being at university, with 21% saying they are using drugs currently, 3% of whom are using drugs daily or almost daily.



\*Frequency category terminology changed from previous year

Q. Which of the following best describes your current frequency of drug use? [Base:3960 Balance: No response]

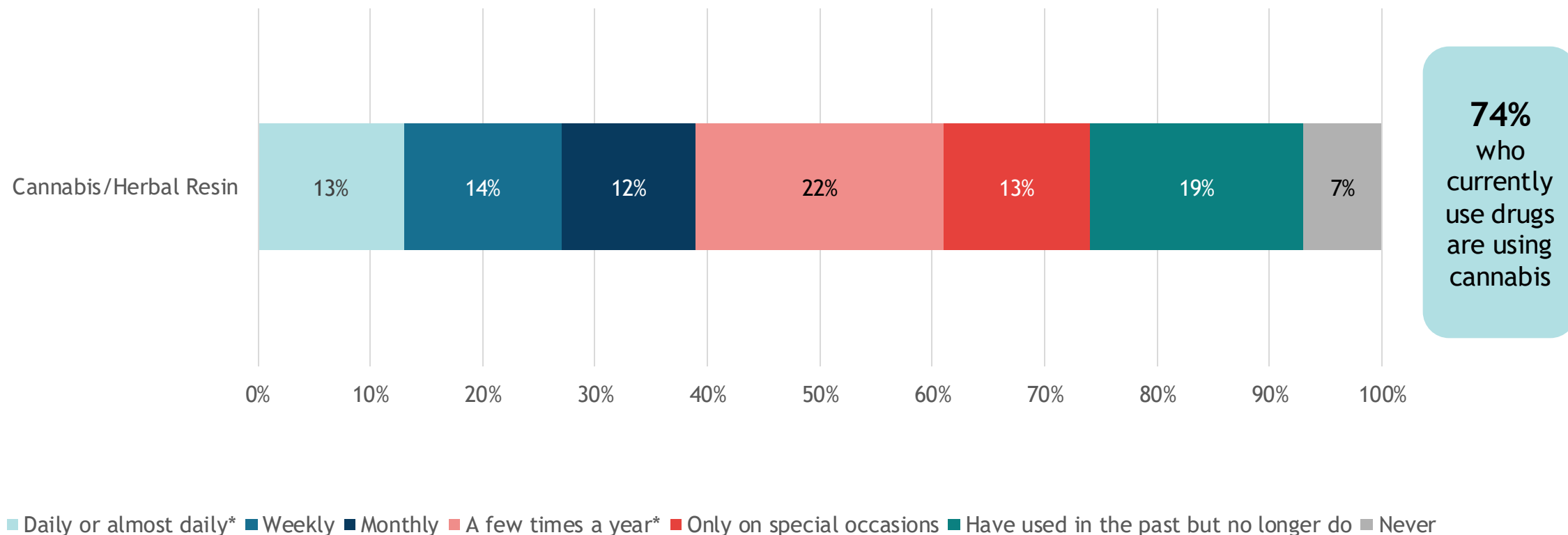
59% of respondents who said they currently use or have used drugs in the past whilst they were students, say they do so for recreation and almost a quarter (23%) do so to enhance social interactions.



- Undergraduate respondents are more likely to say they have used drugs because friends, family or people they were with take/were taking drugs and they wanted to fit in than postgraduate respondents.
- Women respondents are less likely to have used drugs for recreation than men respondents.
- Disabled students are more likely to self-medicate for an existing physical or mental health problem, compared to those who don't identify in this way.

Q. Which of the following best describes why you use / have used drugs? [Base: 1063 Balance: No response, and never have used drugs]

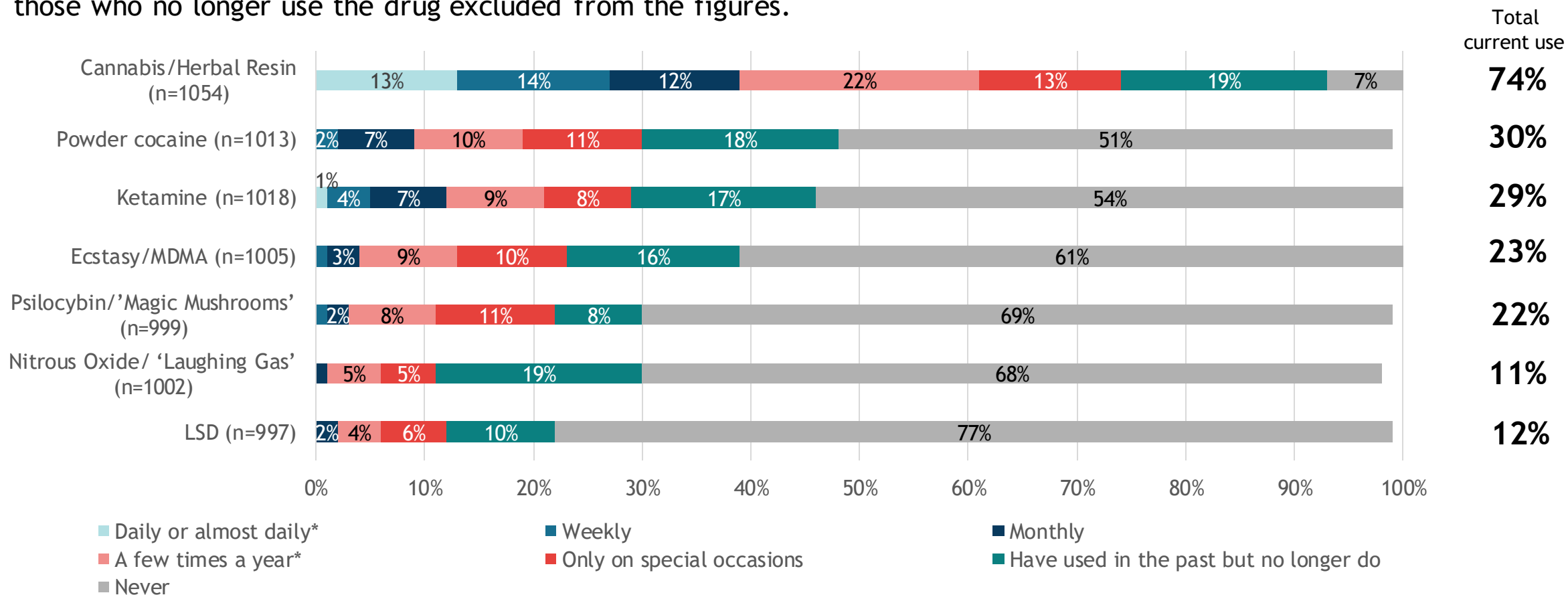
Cannabis is the most frequently used drug reported by respondents who currently use or have previously used drugs. 13% of students use cannabis daily or almost daily.



\*Frequency category terminology changed from previous year

Q. Still thinking about your time at university/college, which of the following best describes your frequency of particular drug use? [Base: 1054 Balance: No response, and never have used drugs]

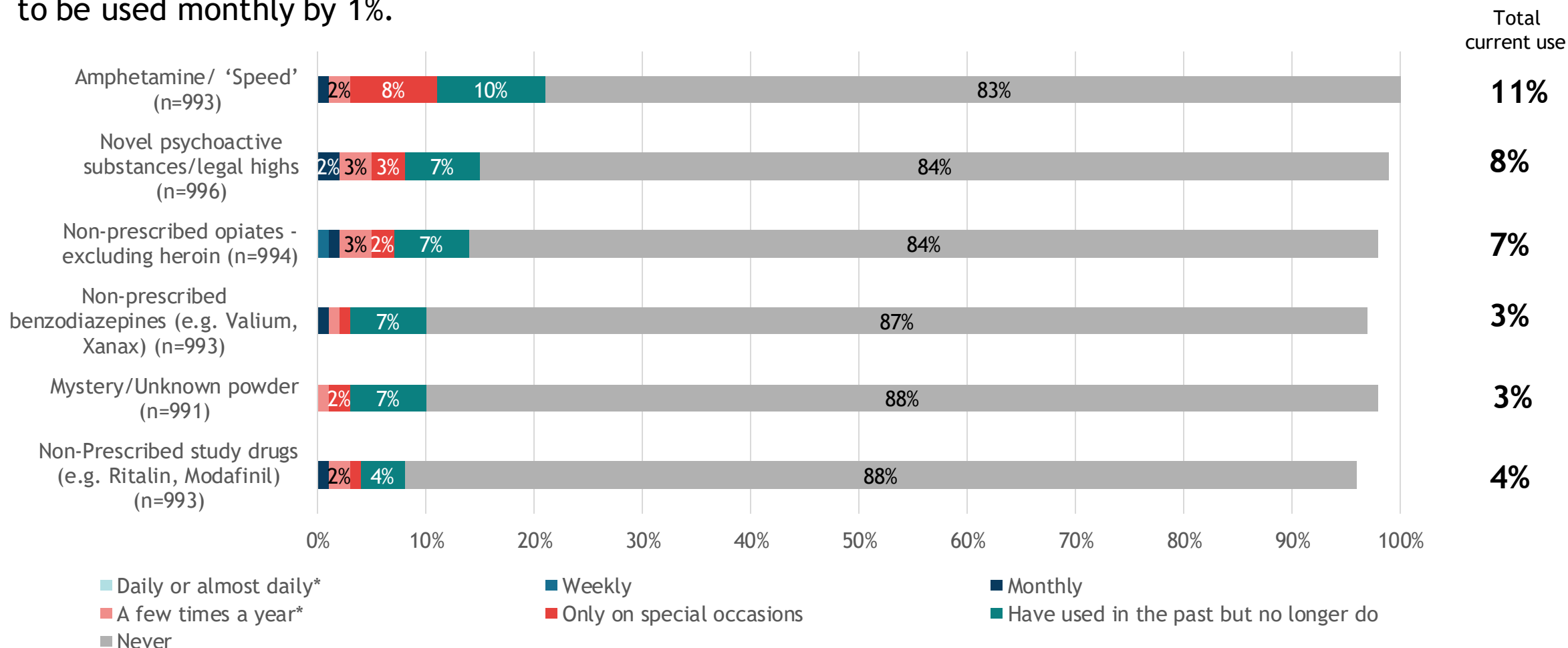
Cannabis, powder cocaine and ketamine are reported to be the top three most frequently used drugs overall. When looking at drugs that are used **daily or almost daily**, cannabis (13%) is the most frequently reported drug, followed by ketamine and testosterone (1%). Cannabis (14%) and ketamine (4%) are also the most frequently reported drugs on a weekly basis. The proportion of respondents who currently use each type of drug is shown at the end of each row, with those who no longer use the drug excluded from the figures.



\*Frequency category terminology changed from previous year

Q. Still thinking about your time at university/college, which of the following best describes your frequency of particular drug use? [Base: (see graph) Balance: No response, never have used drugs, rather not say]

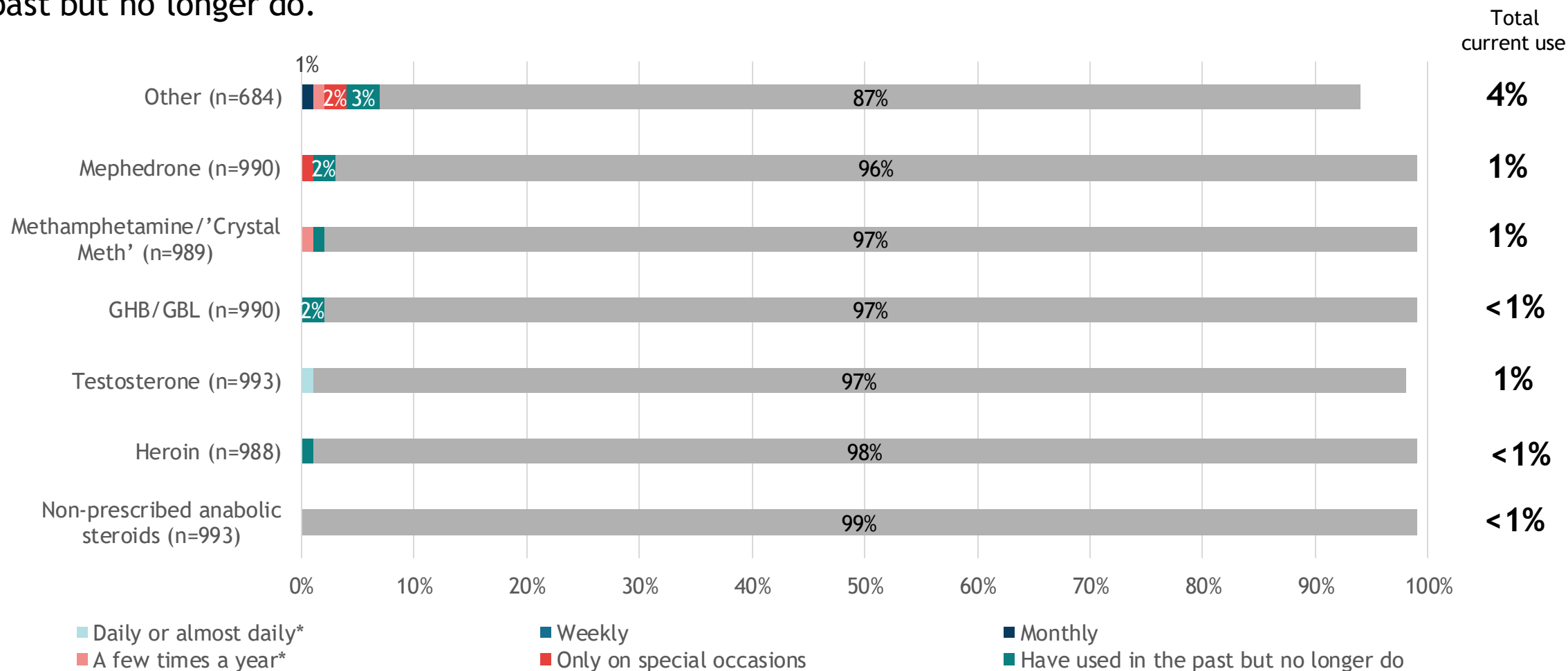
1% of students use non-prescribed opiates - excluding heroin - weekly and the same proportion report using it monthly. Amphetamine, non-prescribed benzodiazepines and non-prescribed study drugs are also reported to be used monthly by 1%.



\*Frequency category terminology changed from previous year

Q. Still thinking about your time at university/college, which of the following best describes your frequency of particular drug use? [Base: (see graph) Balance: No response, never have used drugs, rather not say]

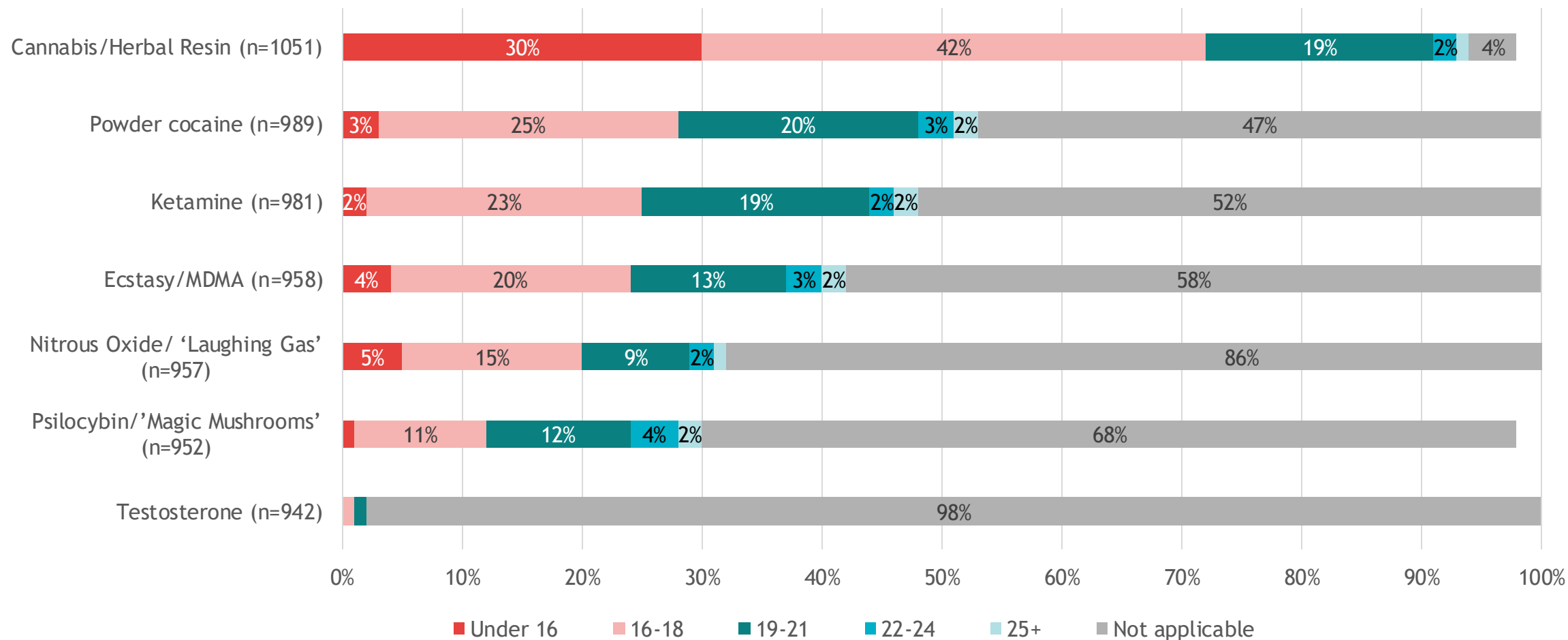
1% of students use other drugs monthly. 1% use methamphetamine a few times a year and 1% have used it in the past but no longer do. 1% of students use mephedrone on special occasions and 2% report using it in the past but no longer do.



\*Frequency category terminology changed from previous year

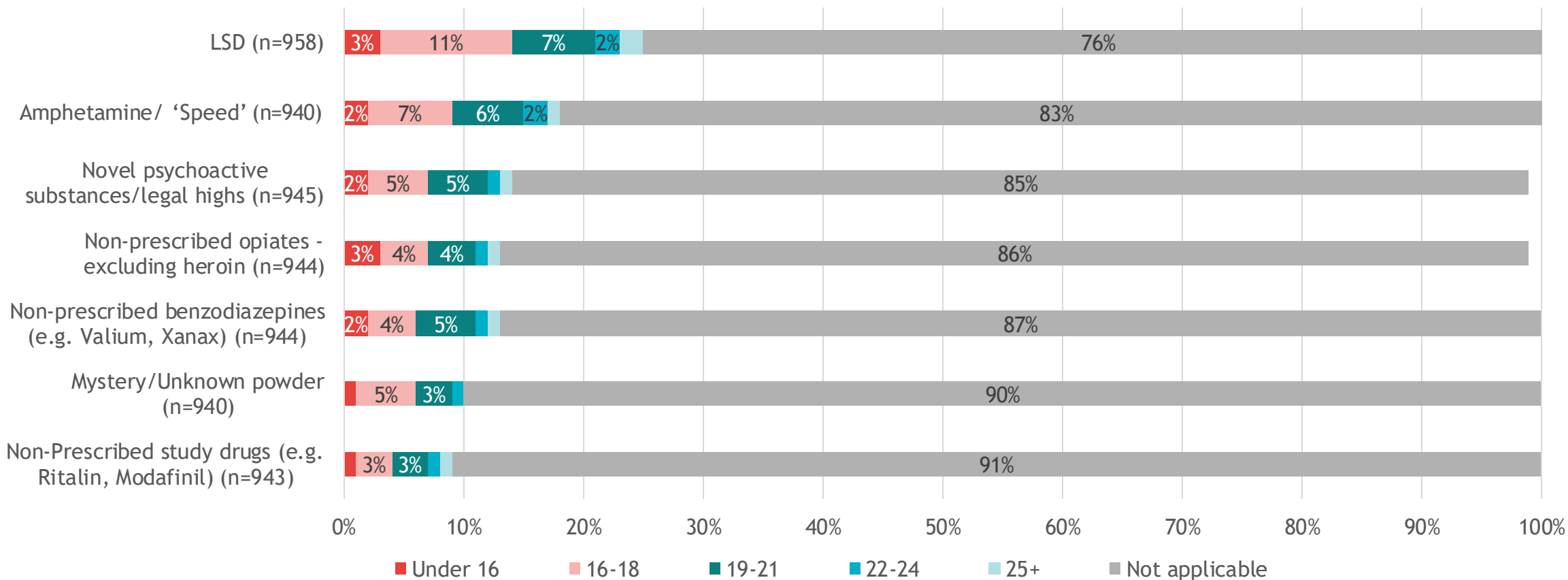
Q. Still thinking about your time at university/college, which of the following best describes your frequency of particular drug use? [Base: (see graph) Balance: No response, never have used drugs, rather not say]

Cannabis is reported to be the drug most used for the first time at the youngest age with 72% of respondents saying they first used it at 18 or younger. 19% of current or past drug users first used it at 19-21 years old. 28% of respondents say they first used cocaine at 18 or younger.



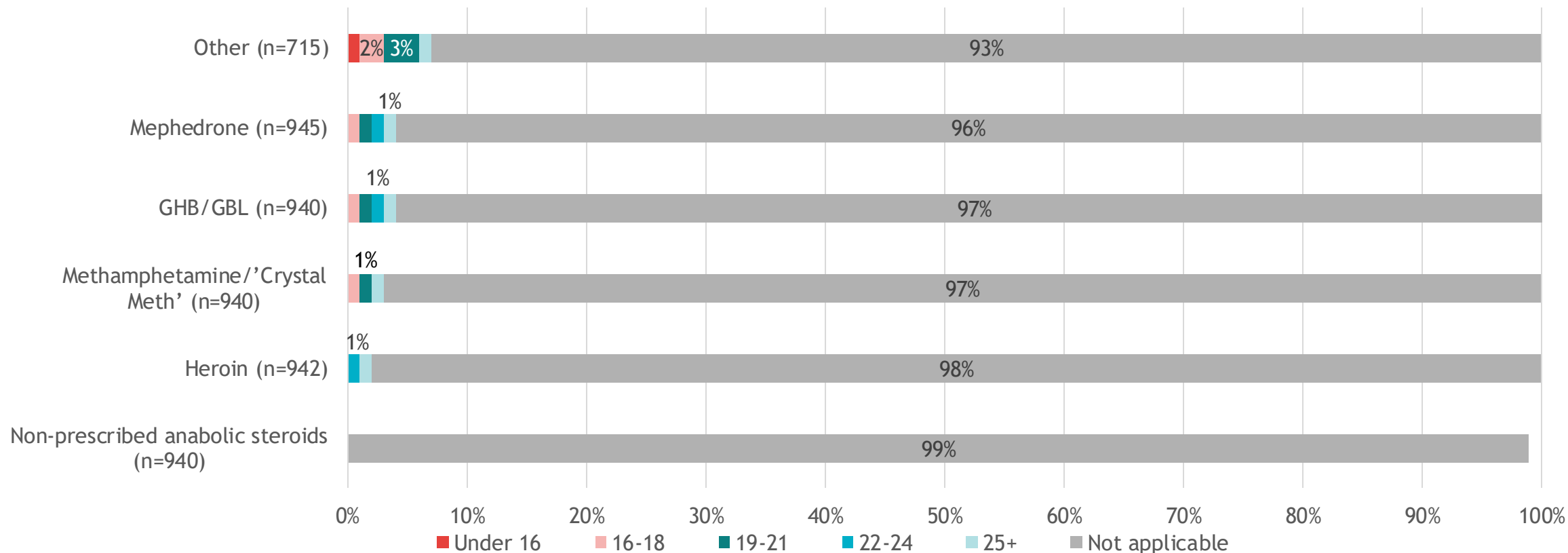
Q. How old were you when you first used these drugs? [Base: (see graph) Balance: No response]

14% of respondents who report using or having used drugs in the past say they first used LSD at 18 or younger, with 7% saying they first used it at 19-21 years old. 6% of current or past drug users first used non-prescribed benzodiazepines at 18 or under while 5% used it at 19-21 years old for the first time.



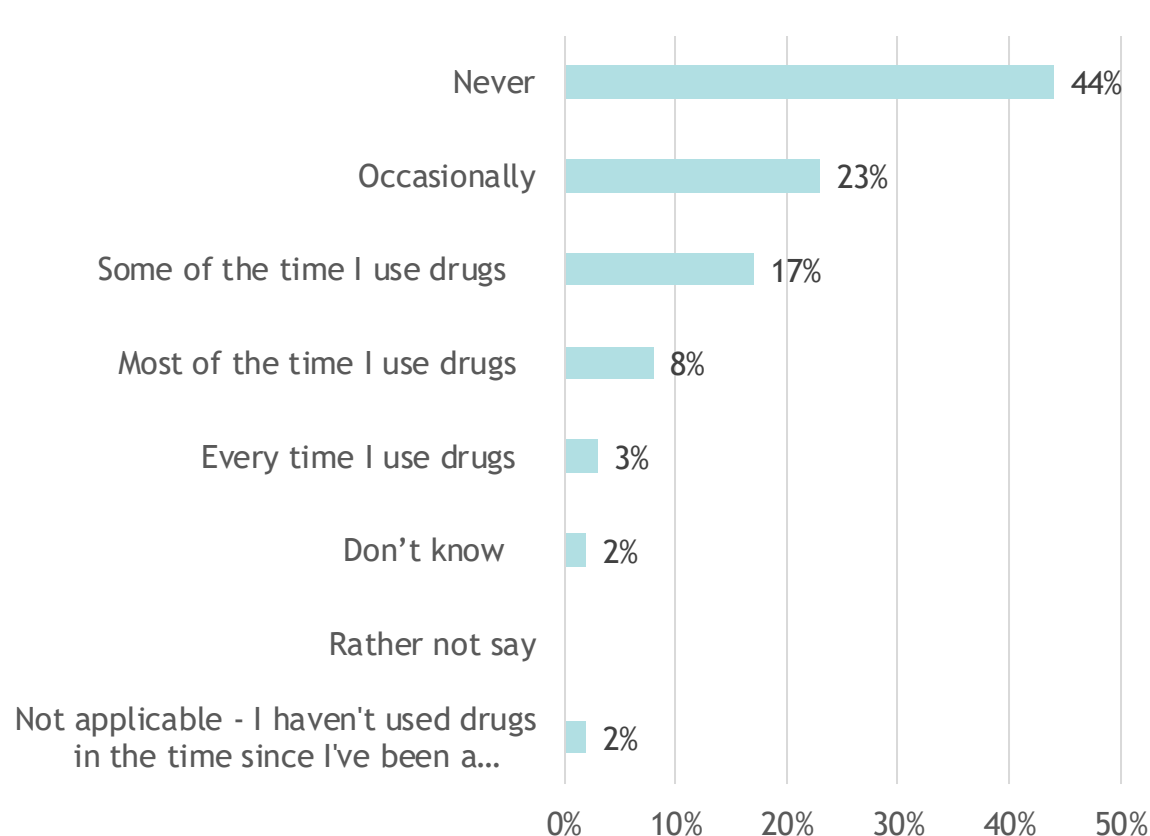
Q. How old were you when you first used these drugs? [Base: (see graph) Balance: No response]

1% of current or past drug users, used mephedrone, GHB/GBL and methamphetamine, respectively, for the first time between 16-18, with another 1% using these drugs for the first time between 19-21. 1% of current or past drug users report using heroin for the first time at 22-24 with another 1% reporting their first time as 25+ years.

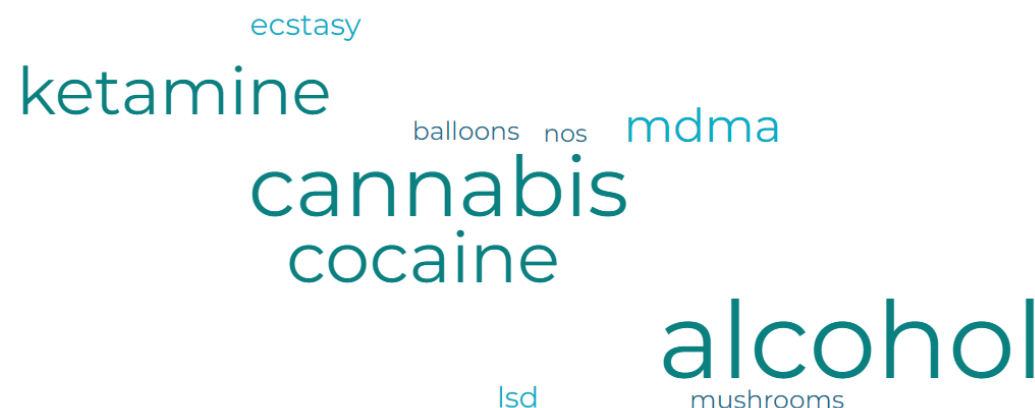


Q. How old were you when you first used these drugs? [Base: (see graph) Balance: No response]

Under half of respondents (44%) who currently use or have used drugs whilst being a student say they have never used two or more drugs at the same time. Nearly a quarter of these respondents (23%) use two or more drugs occasionally. When asked what combinations of drugs they usually take, the most commonly reported drugs are alcohol, cannabis, ketamine and cocaine.



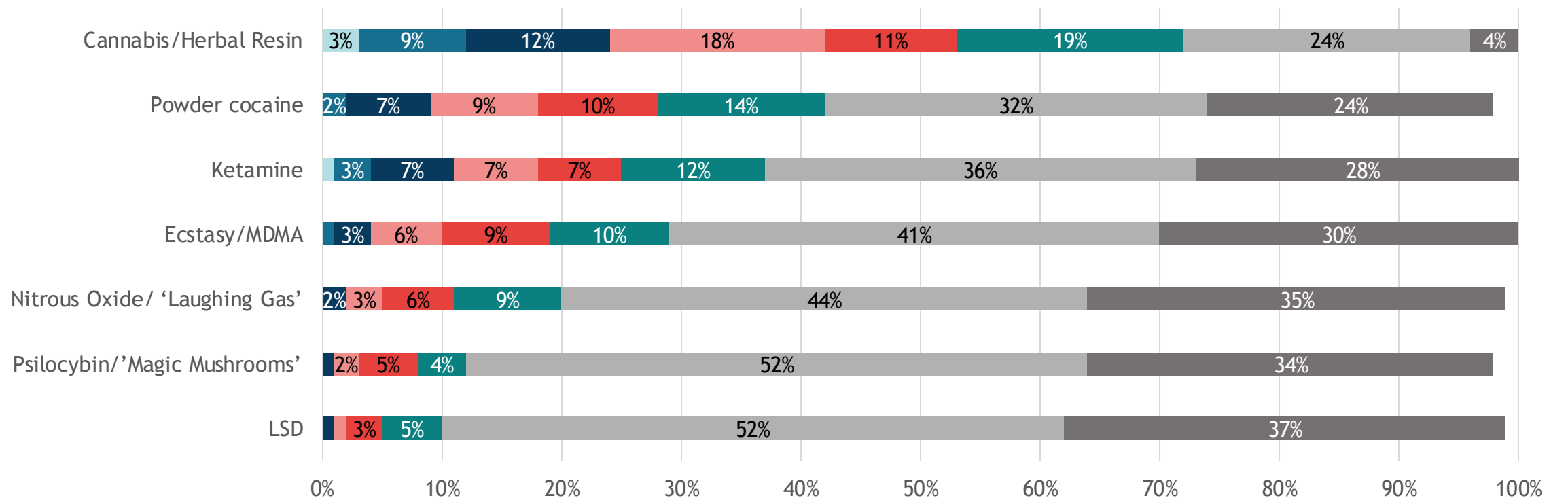
### STUDENTS WHO SAY THEY USE TWO OR MORE DRUGS AT ONCE



NB: Word cloud generated from first 100 responses

Q. Thinking about your time at university, approximately how often, if at all, do you use two or more drugs at one time? Please include alcohol in your answer. [Base:1069 Balance: No response and never have used drugs]

Respondents were asked about their use of drugs in combination with alcohol. 71% of respondents who currently use drugs or have done so in the past report using cannabis with alcohol, with 3% reporting this on a daily basis. 28% report currently using powder cocaine with alcohol, with 2% doing so on a weekly basis.

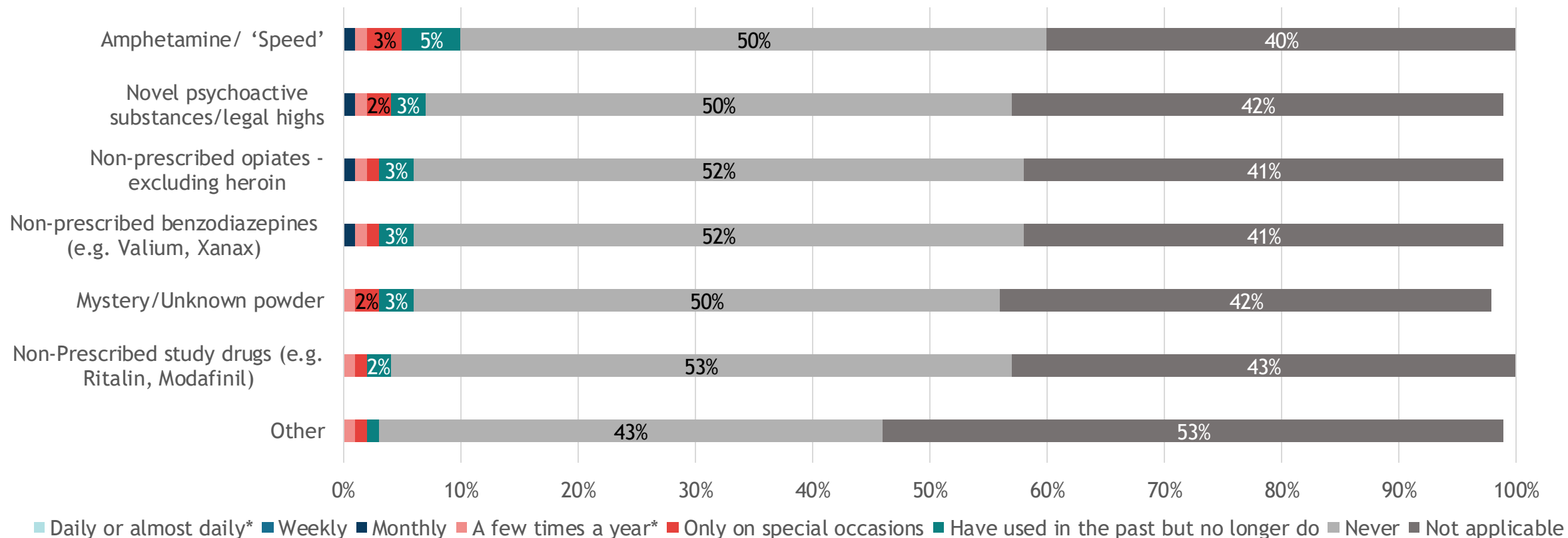


■ Daily or almost daily\* ■ Weekly ■ Monthly ■ A few times a year ■ Only on special occasions ■ Have used in the past but no longer do ■ Never ■ Not applicable

\*Frequency category terminology changed from previous year

Q. Thinking about your time at university, approximately how often do you use the following drugs with alcohol? [Base:1069 Balance: No response, rather not say]

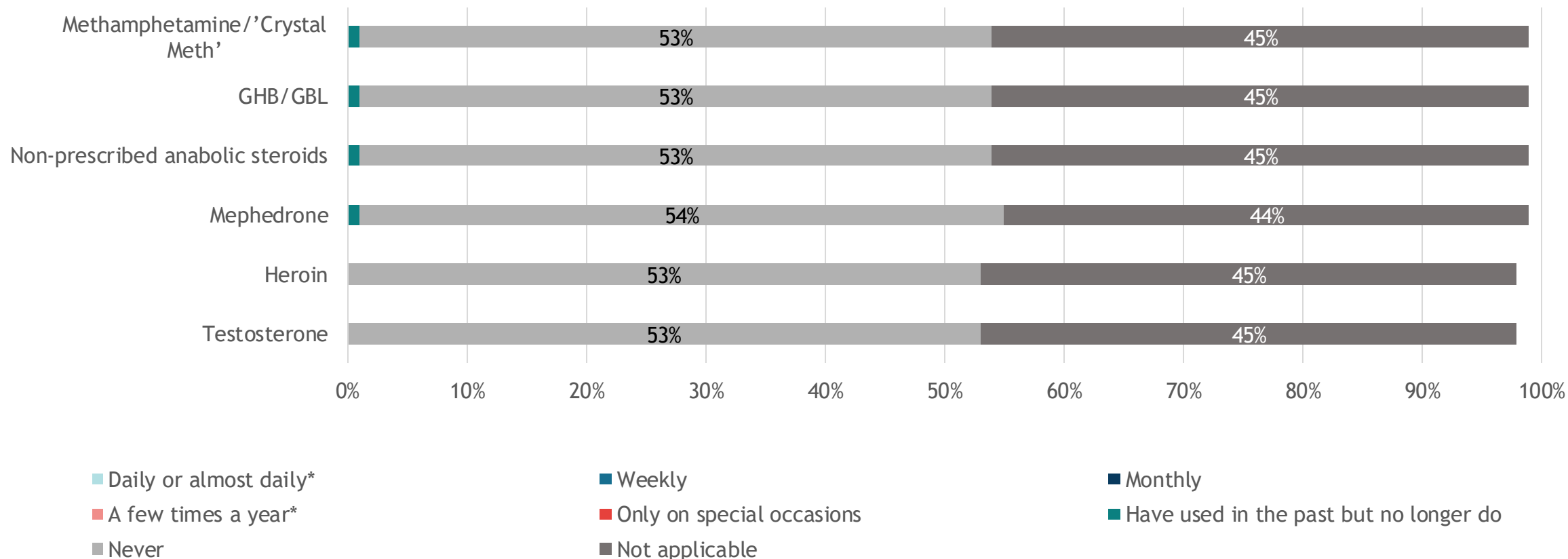
10% of respondents report using amphetamine with alcohol however 5% of these respondents report no longer doing this. 3% report currently using non-prescribed opiates with alcohol, with 1% doing so on a monthly basis.



\*Frequency category terminology changed from previous year

Q. Thinking about your time at university, approximately how often do you use the following drugs with alcohol? [Base:1069 Balance: No response, rather not say]

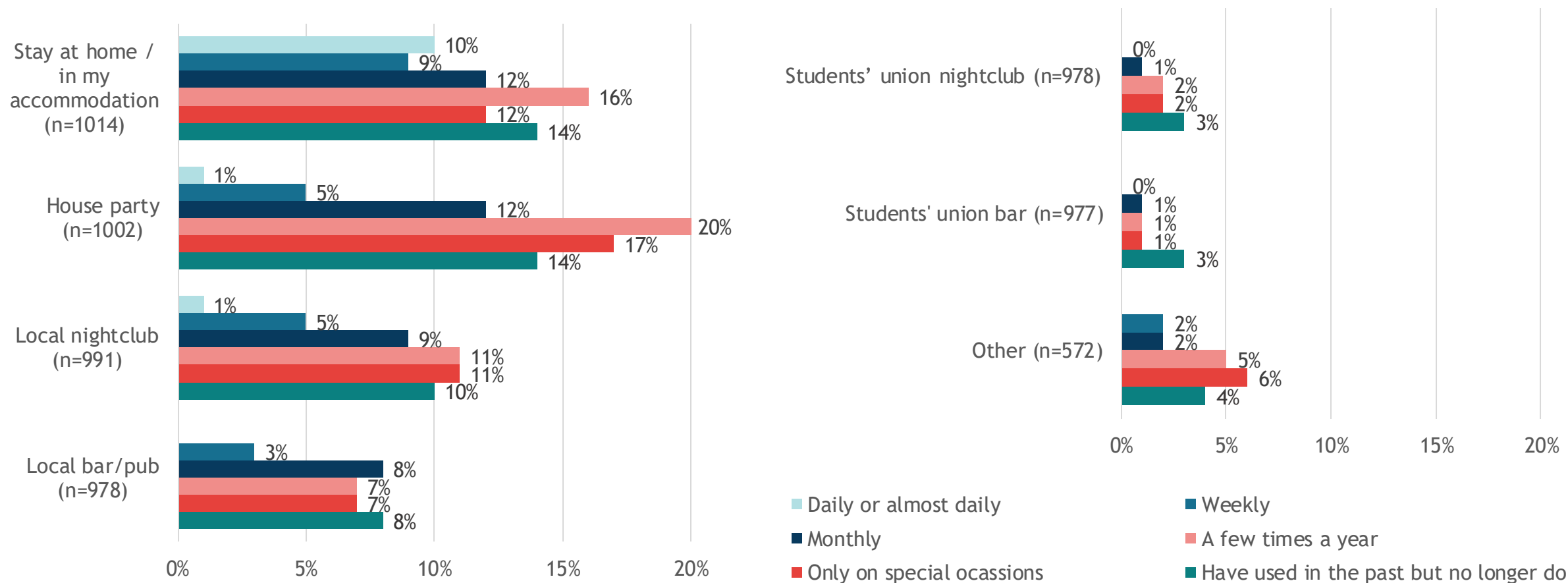
1% of respondents report using methamphetamine, GHB/GBL, non-prescribed anabolic steroids and mephedrone, respectively, with alcohol in the past but no longer do.



\*Frequency category terminology changed from previous year

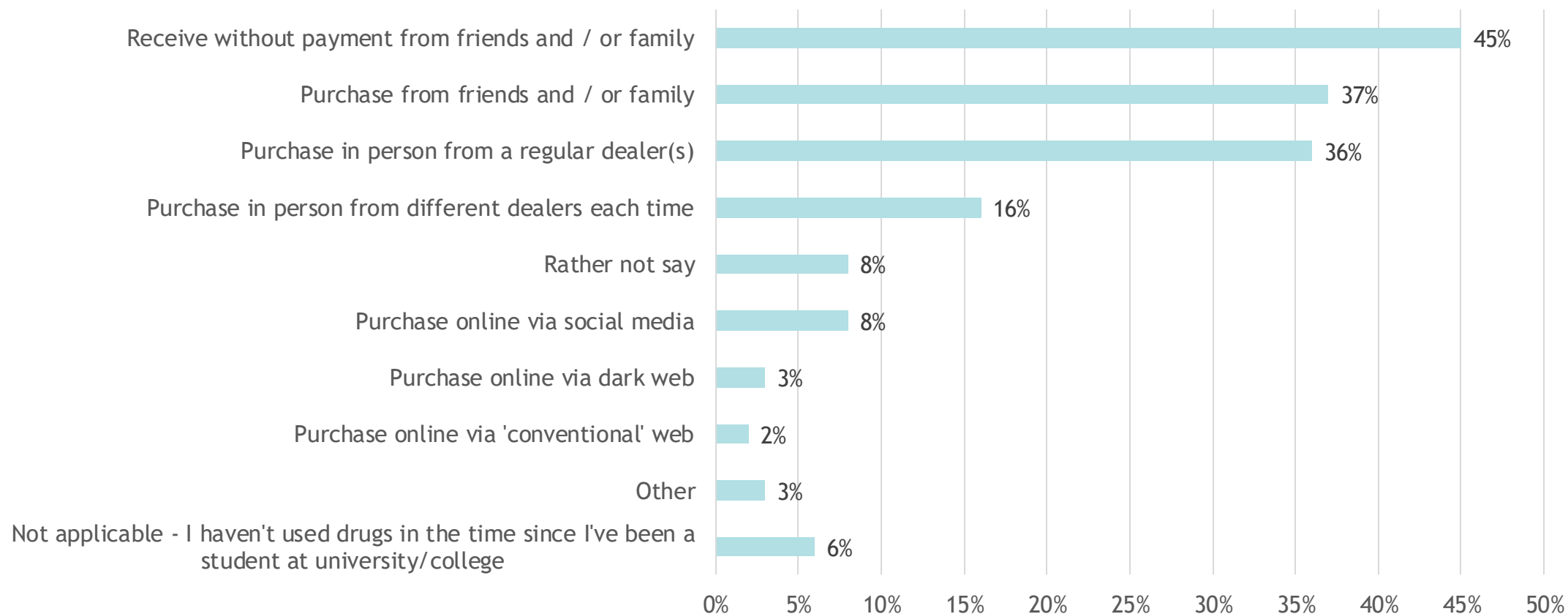
Q. Thinking about your time at university, approximately how often do you use the following drugs with alcohol? [Base:1069 Balance: No response, rather not say]

Drug use is most prevalent in respondents' homes or accommodation with almost one third (31%) of respondents saying they use drugs here monthly or more often. 18% of respondents say they use drugs at house parties on this basis.



Q. Thinking of the time since you have been at university, approximately how often do you tend to take drugs in each of the following places? [Base: see graph, Balance: No response, rather not say and never have used drugs]

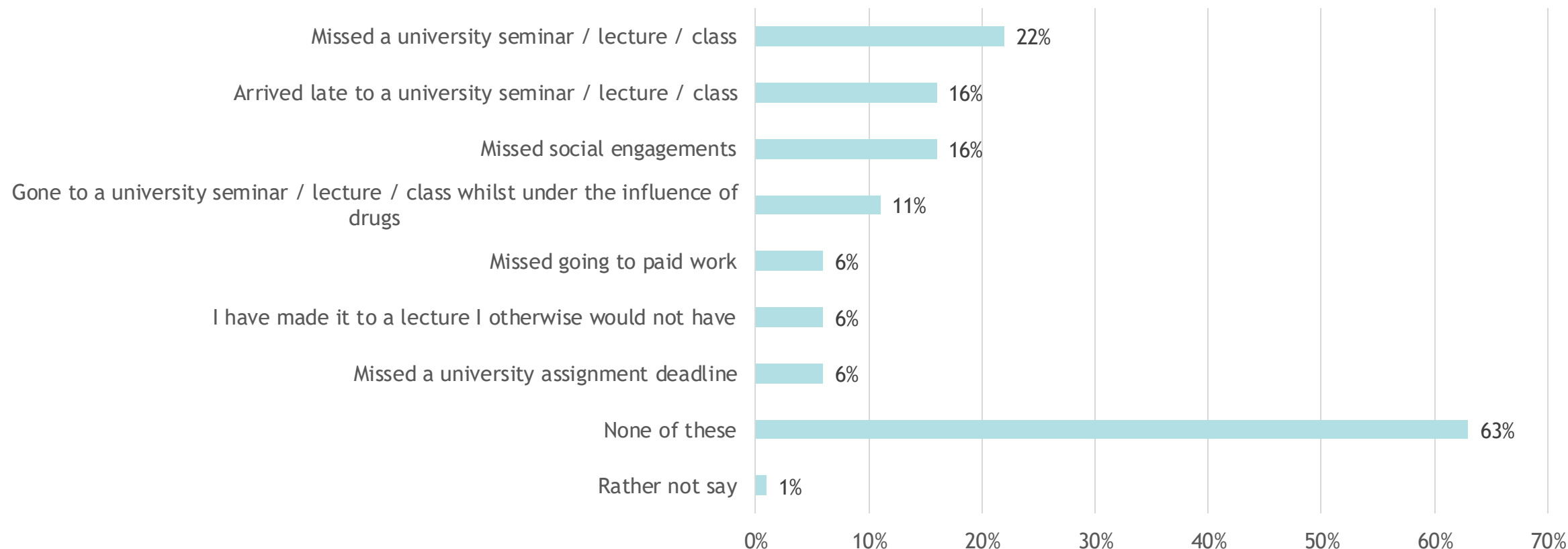
The most common method of procuring drugs is through friends/family without payment (45%), followed by purchases from friends or family (37%).



Q. Thinking of your experiences since you started university, which of the following describes where or how you acquire drugs? [Base: 1058 Balance: No response, other and never have used drugs]

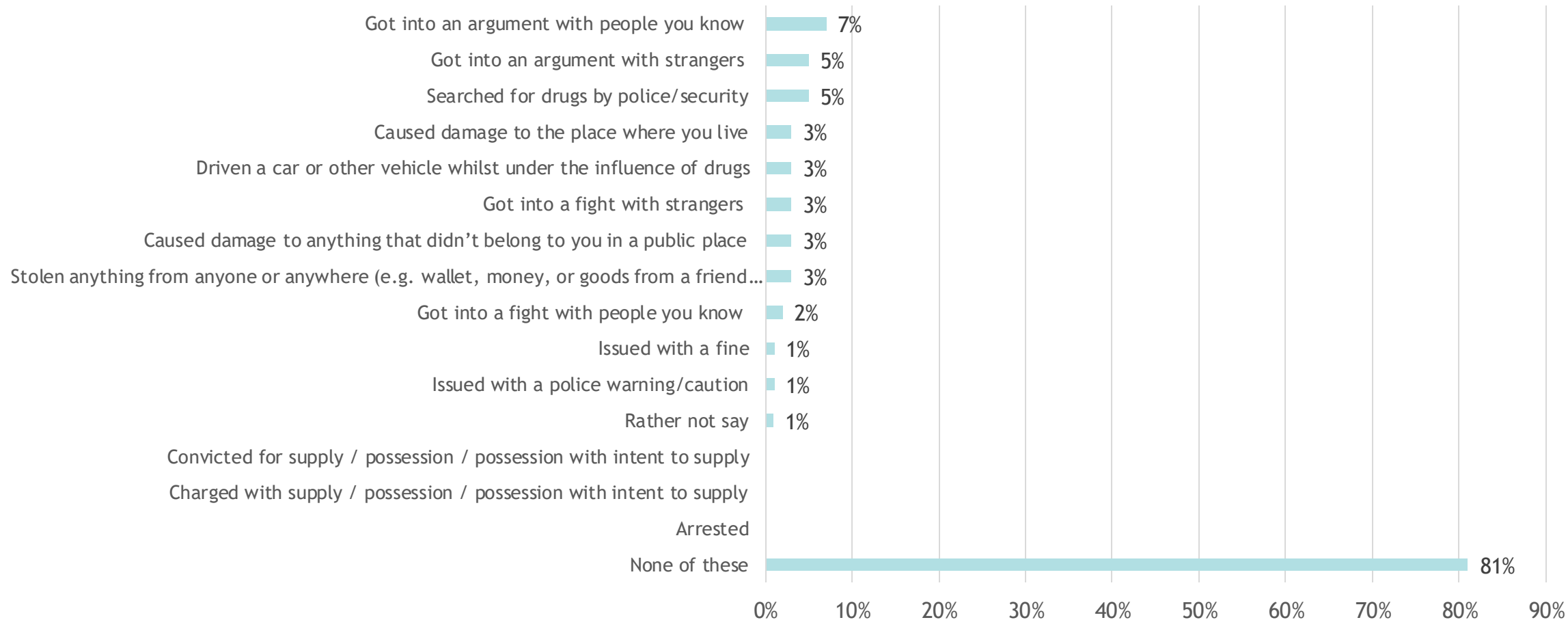
# Impacts of drug use

Amongst respondents who currently or have previously used drugs whilst a student, the most commonly reported academic impact following or during drug use is missing a university seminar, lecture or class (22%). 17% report arriving late to seminars, lectures or classes and 16% report missing social engagements.



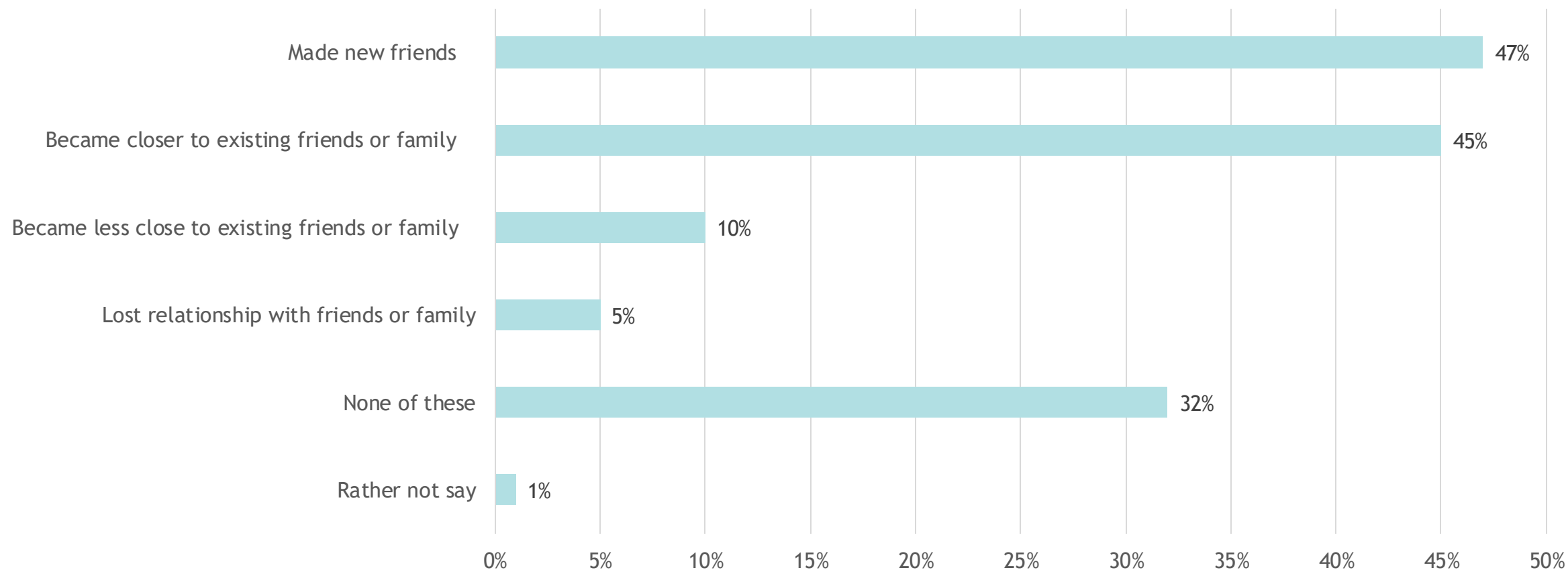
Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university / college during or following taking drugs? [Base: 1060 Balance: No response and never used drugs]

Amongst respondents who currently or have previously used drugs whilst a student, getting into an argument with people they know (7%) or strangers (5%), being searched by security/ police (5%) are the most commonly reported impacts following or during drug use related to crime and anti-social behaviour.



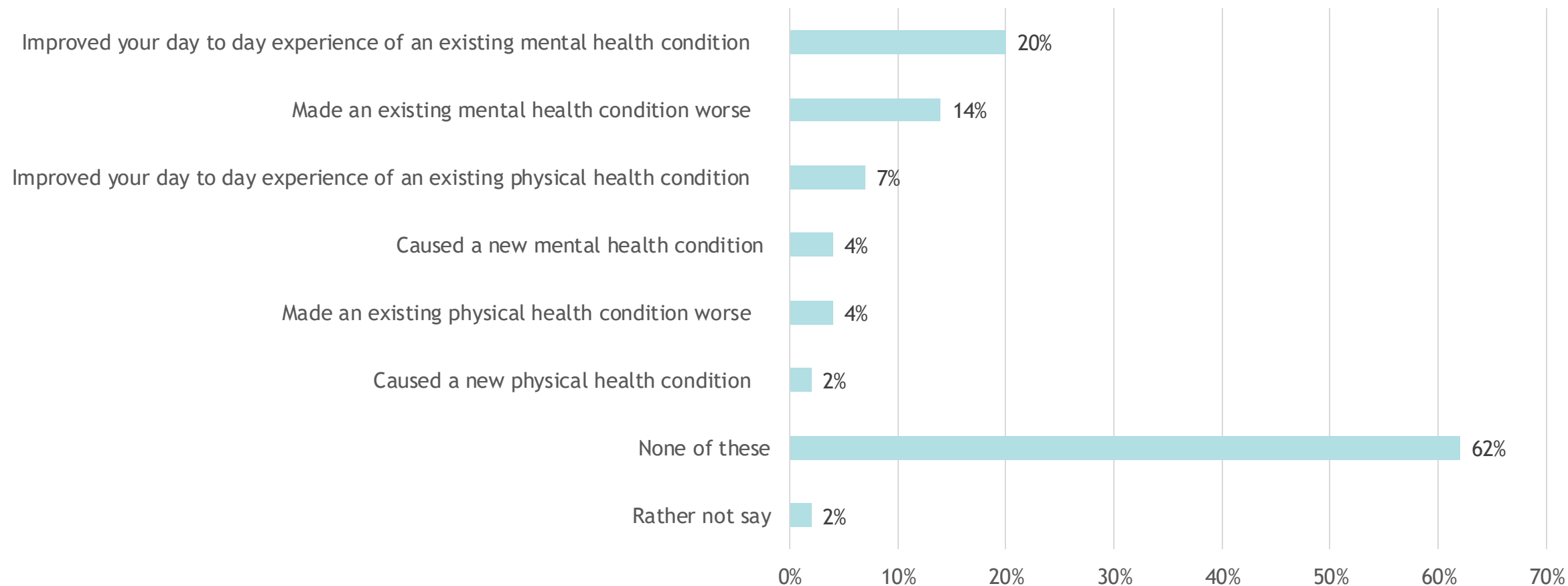
Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university / college during or following taking drugs? [Base: 1050 Balance: No response and never used drugs]

Amongst respondents who currently or have previously used drugs whilst a student, 47% say they have made new friends and 45% report becoming closer to existing friends or family following or during drug use. For a small proportion of respondents, the reverse was reported with 5% reporting to have lost relationships with friends or family.



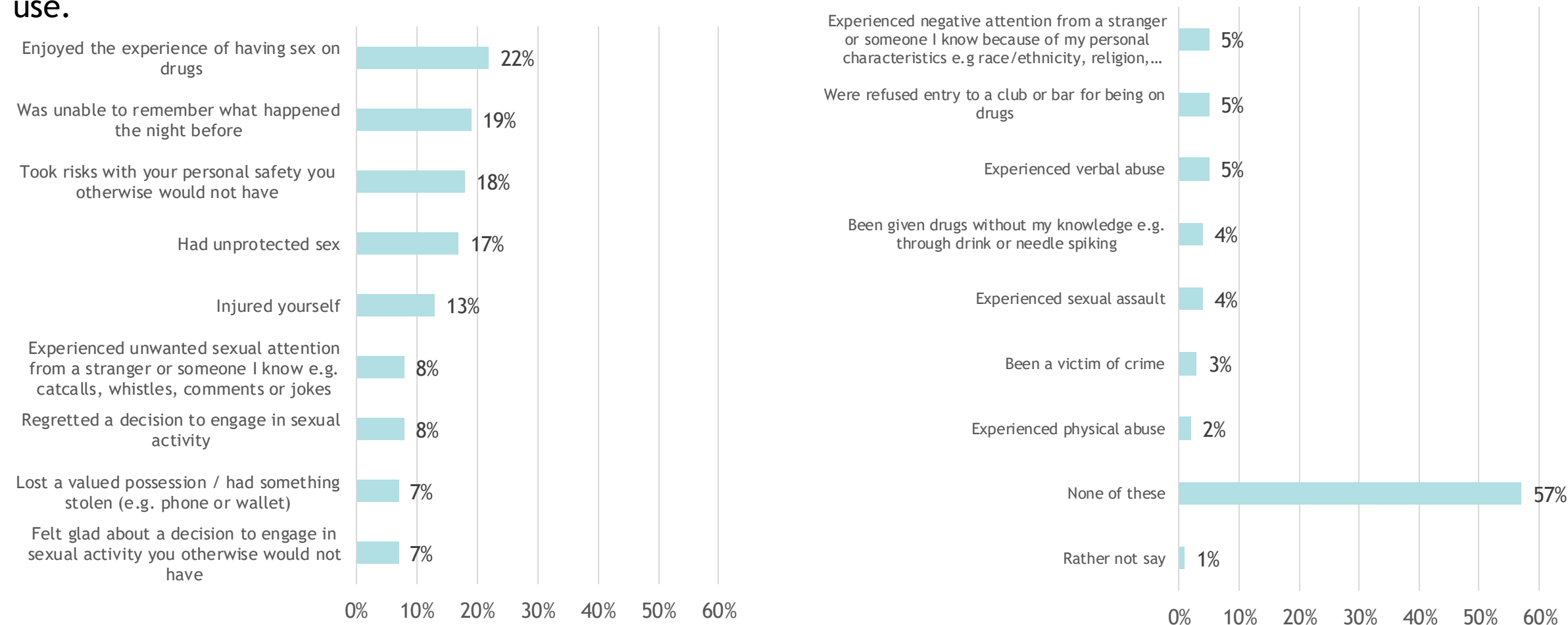
Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university / college during or following taking drugs? [Base: 640 Balance: No response and never used drugs]

Amongst respondents who currently or have previously used drugs whilst a student, 20% say this use has improved an existing mental health condition. However, 14% say it has made a mental health condition worse.



Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university / college during or following taking drugs? [Base: 1054 Balance: No response and never used drugs]

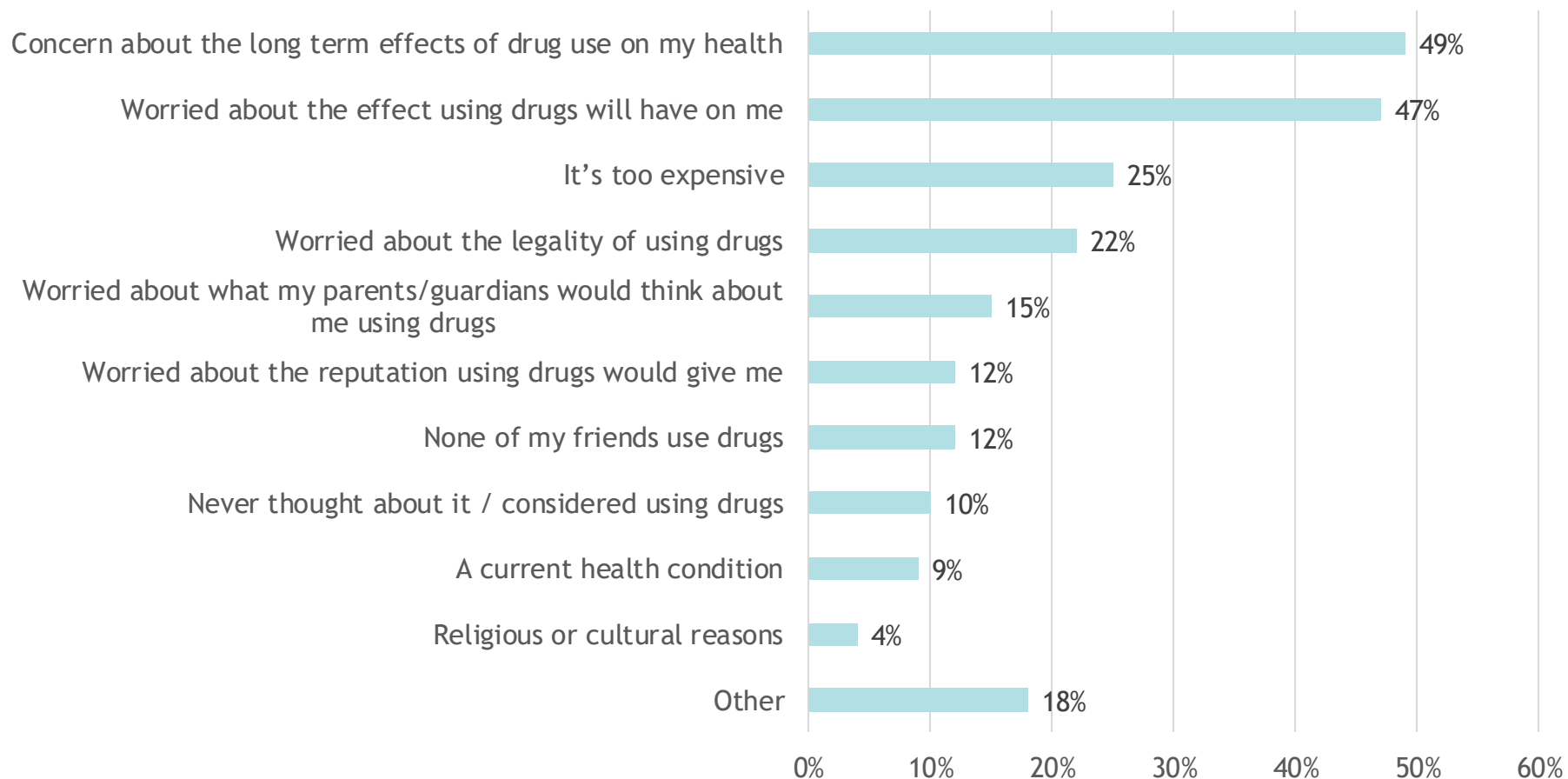
Amongst respondents who currently or have previously used drugs whilst a student, nearly a quarter (22%) say they enjoyed the experience of having sex on drugs. 19% were unable to remember what happened the night before and 18% took risks with their personal safety they otherwise would not have following or during drug use.



Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university / college during or following taking drugs? [Base: 1041 Balance: No response and never used drugs]

# Students who have stopped using drugs

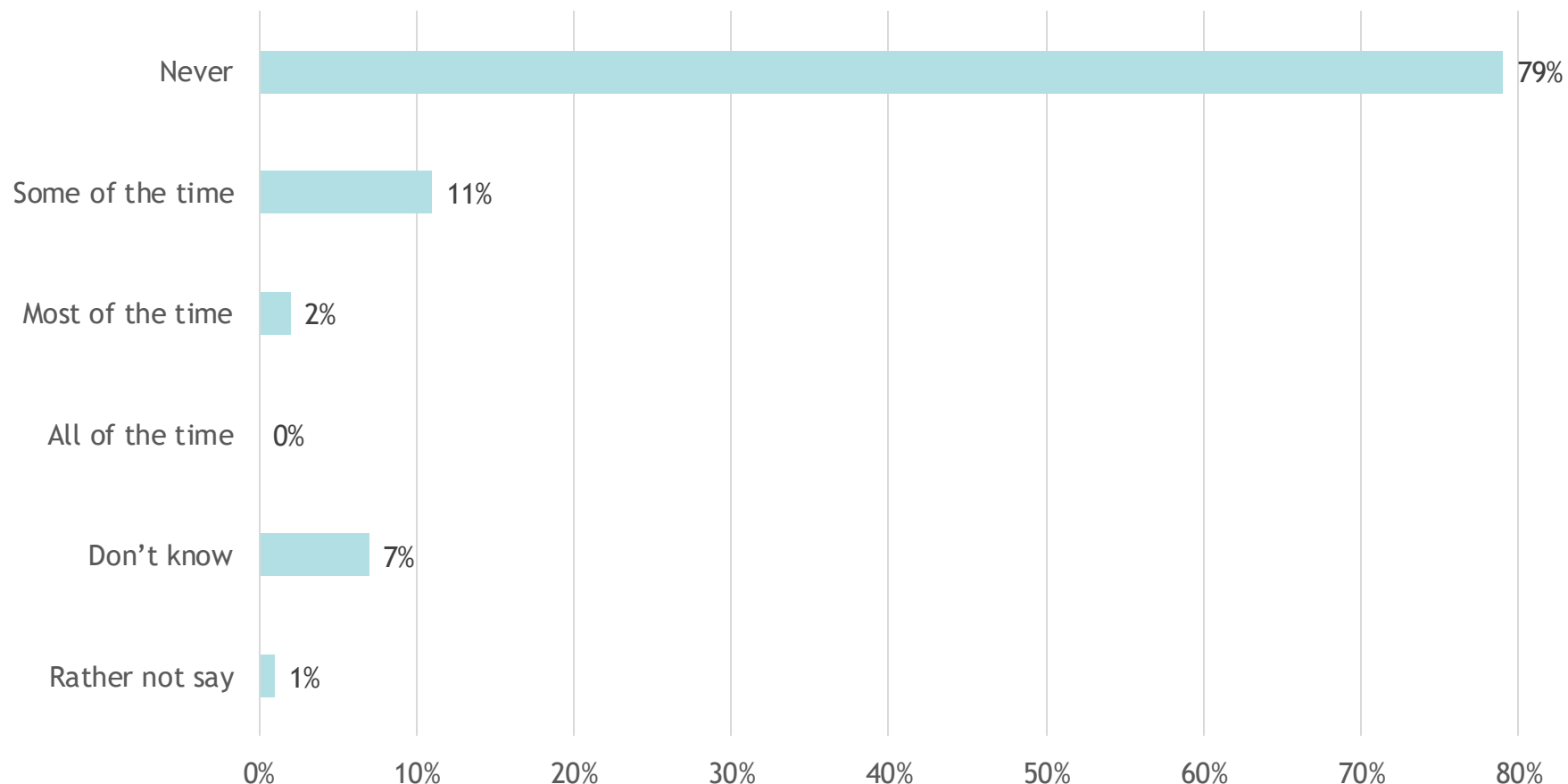
For those that don't currently use drugs but have done previously, reasons for stopping using drugs are concern about the long-term health impacts drugs will have on them (49%) and worry about the effect of using drugs (47%).



- Women respondents are more likely to not use/stop using drugs because they are worried about the effect using drugs will have on them than men respondents.
- PhD students are more likely to say they are worried about the legality of using drugs than undergraduate and postgraduate students.

[What would you say are your main reasons for not using drugs or stopping using drugs? Base: 632 Balance: No response, and currently use drugs]

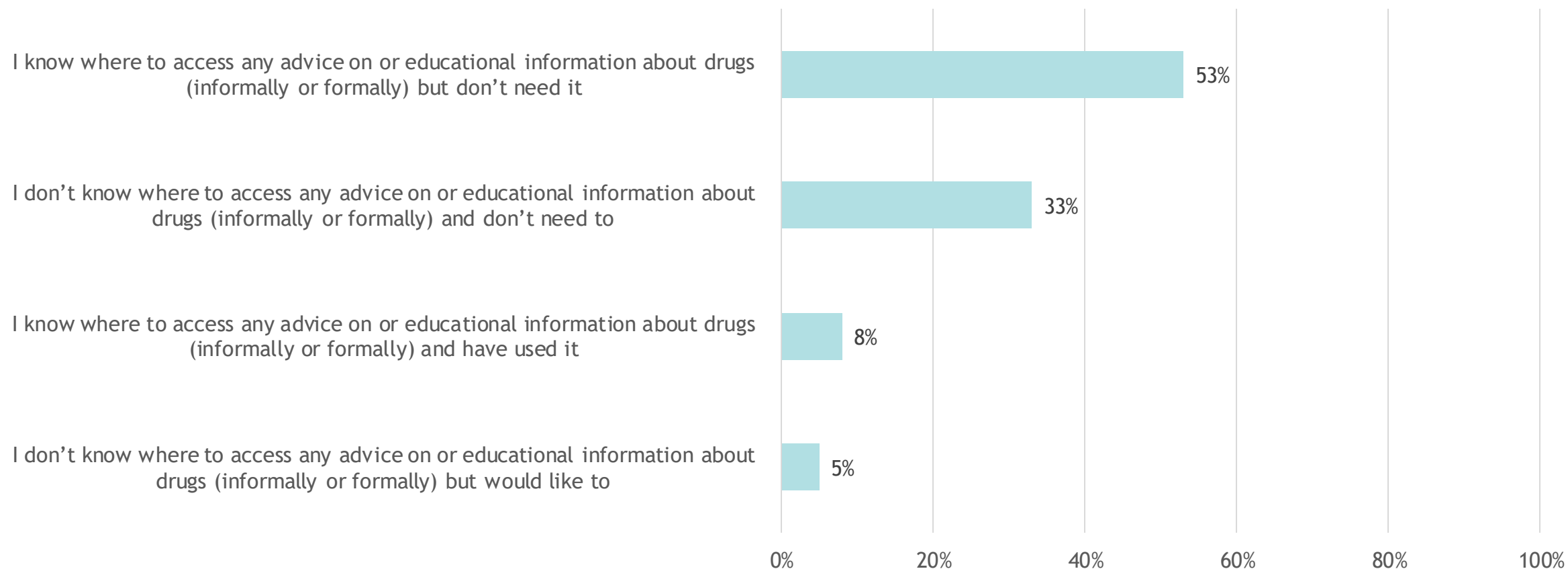
Most respondents who don't currently use drugs but have done previously say they have never felt pressure to use drugs when socialising with friends at university (79%) .



[Q. Thinking about the most recent university term, when you were socialising with other students, how often did you feel that your friends expected you to use drugs? Base: 634 Balance: No response / Currently use drugs]

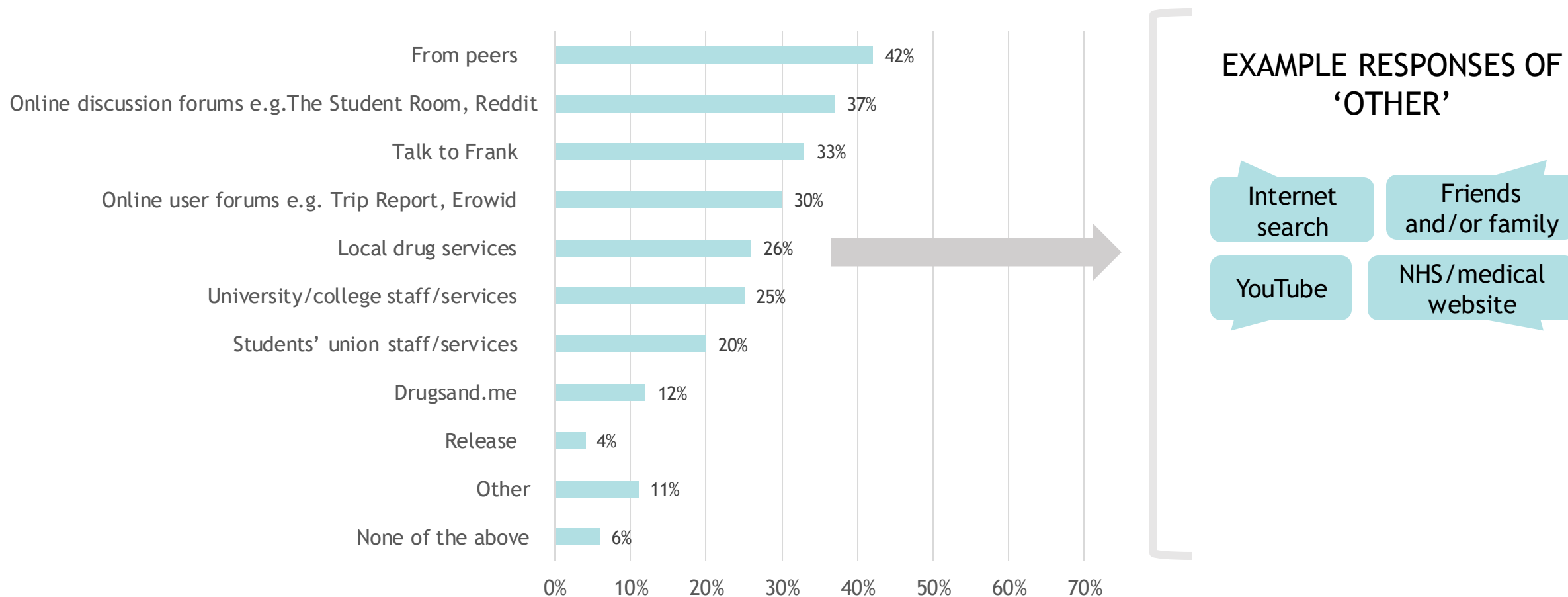
# Drug advice and support

Over half of respondents say they know where to access advice and educational information about drugs, either formally or informally, but don't need it. 5% would like advice or information but don't know where to access it.



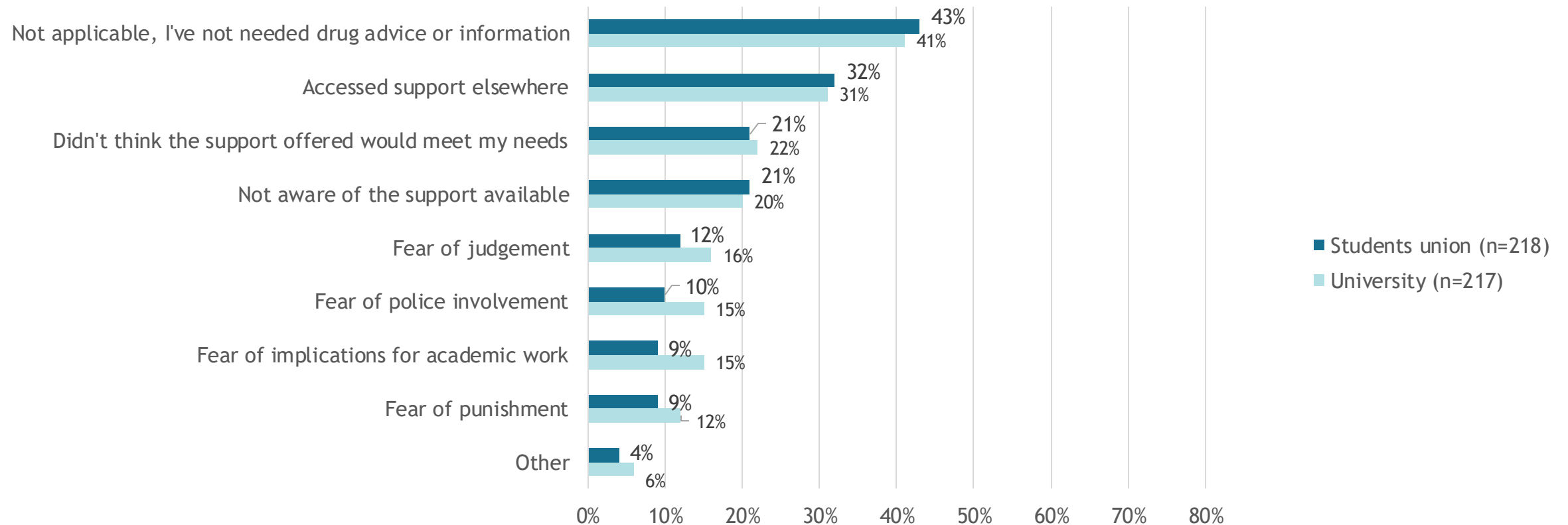
Q. Which of the following statements best describes your access to advice on drugs? Base: 3936 Balance: No response]

Of those who know where to access advice and information about drugs and have used it, 44% gain advice and information from peers and online discussion forums.



Q. Which of the following best describes where you access drug advice and information? Base: 319 Balance: No response, and not aware of drug advice and information

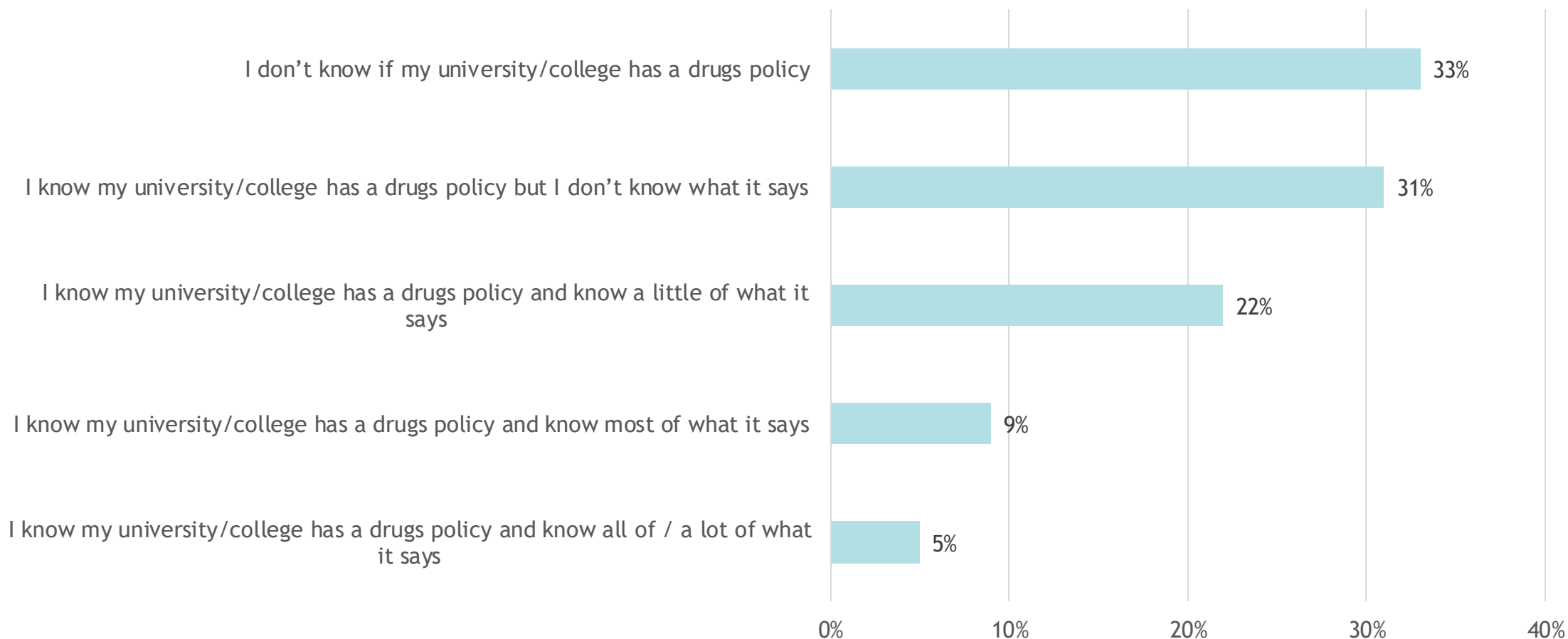
Whilst respondents previously indicated they had accessed drug advice and support, around 40% said their reason for not using university or students' union support services was a lack of need. Generally, respondents reported higher levels of fear of police involvement and implications for academic work as a reason for not accessing university drug advice over student union drug advice.



Q. Which of the following reasons best describes why you haven't used drug information and advice services offered by your university/students' union? Base: see graph Balance: No response

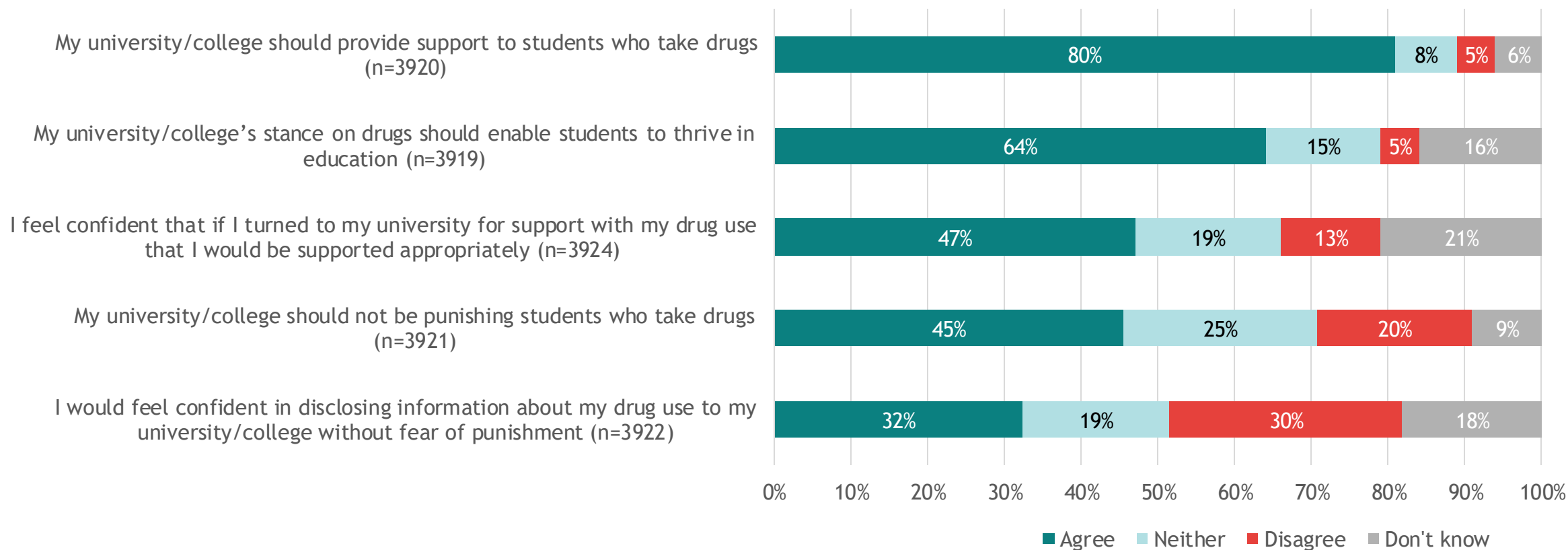
# University or college drug policy

Respondents show fairly low levels of awareness of the details of their institution's drugs policy. A third of students do not know if their institution has a drugs policy. Almost a third (31%) say they are aware of their university/college drugs policy but don't know what it says.



[Q. How much, if anything, do you know about the policy/policies your university/college has on drugs? Base: 4356 Balance: No response]

The majority (80%) of students agree that their institution should provide support to students who take drugs but under half of respondents (47%) say they feel confident that their university would deal with their drug use appropriately if they required support. A similar proportion (45%) agree their institution should not be punishing students who take drugs.

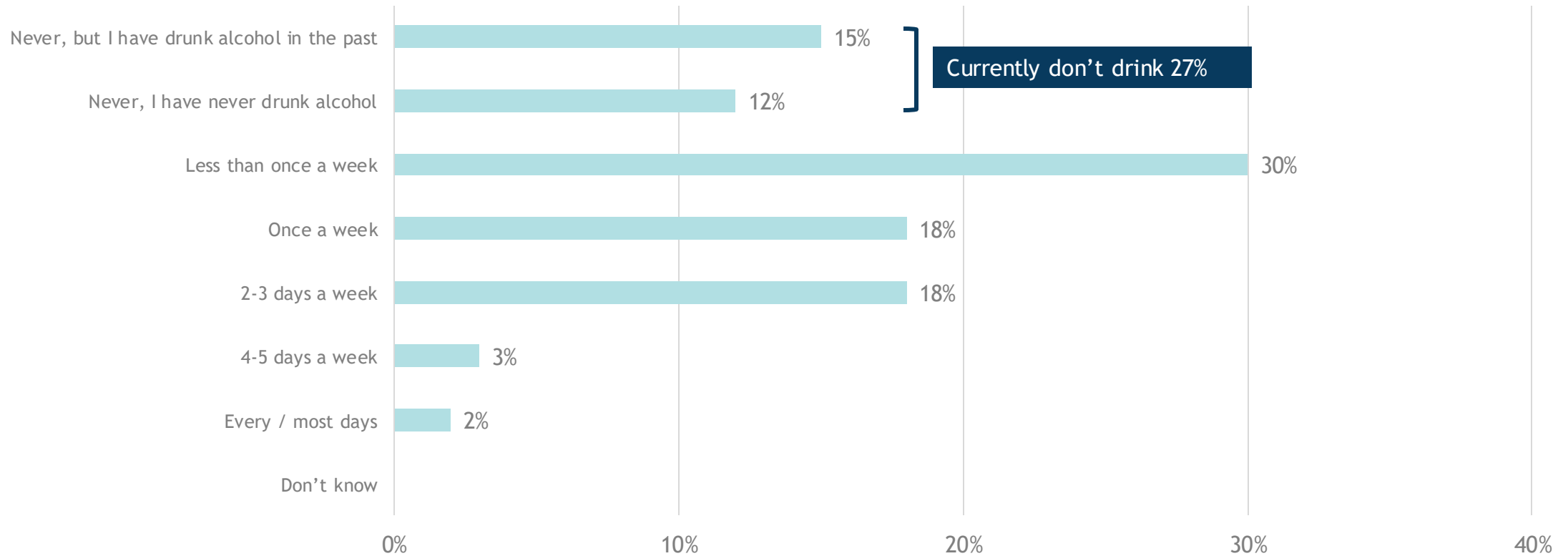


Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements? [Base: see graph Balance: No response, rather not say]

# RESEARCH FINDINGS: ALCOHOL

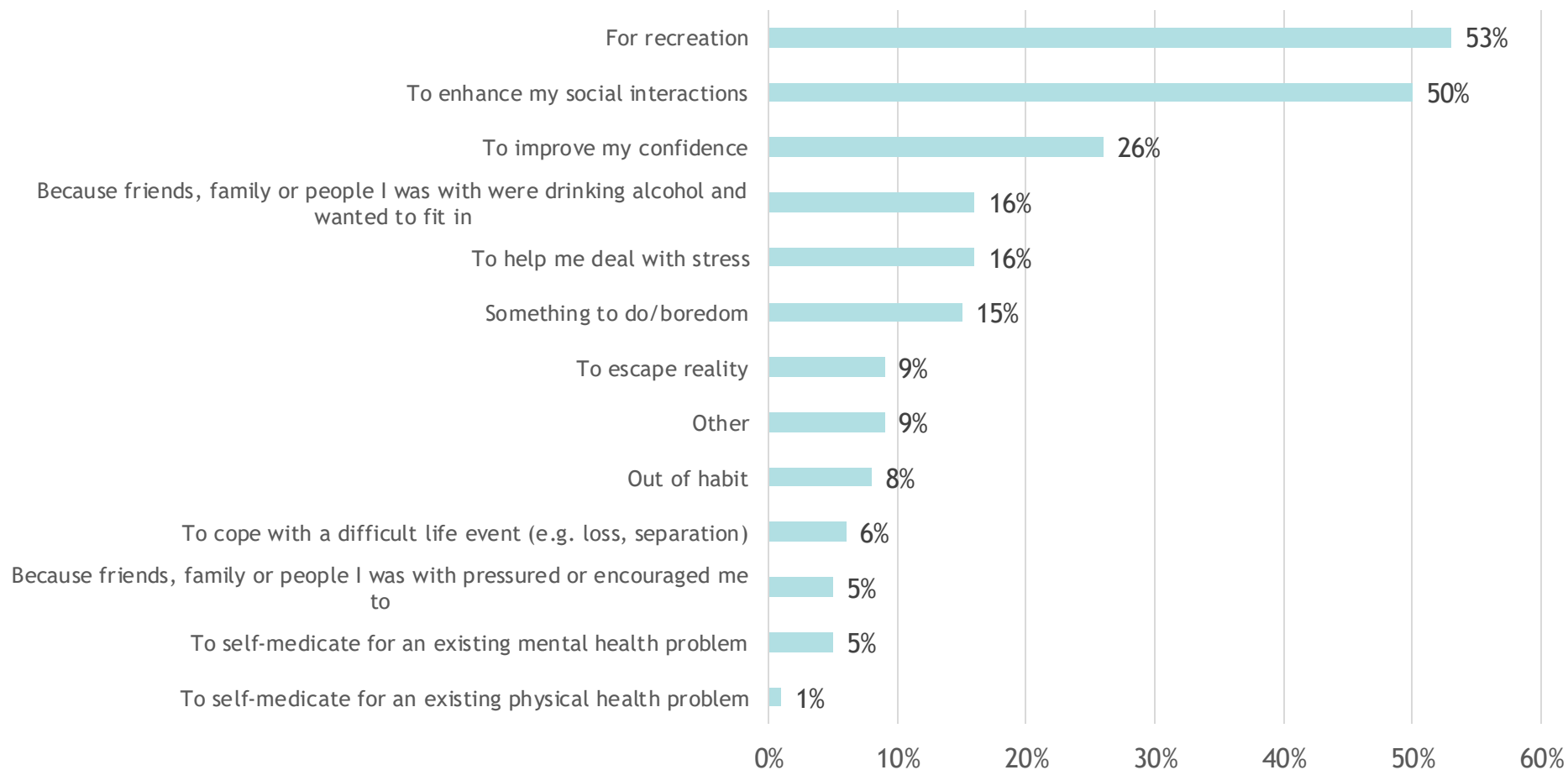
# Patterns and practices of alcohol consumption

Almost one third of students drink less than once a week (30%). 2% of students say they drink every/most days.



Q. How often, if at all, do you drink alcohol? Weighted base: 3945 Balance: No response

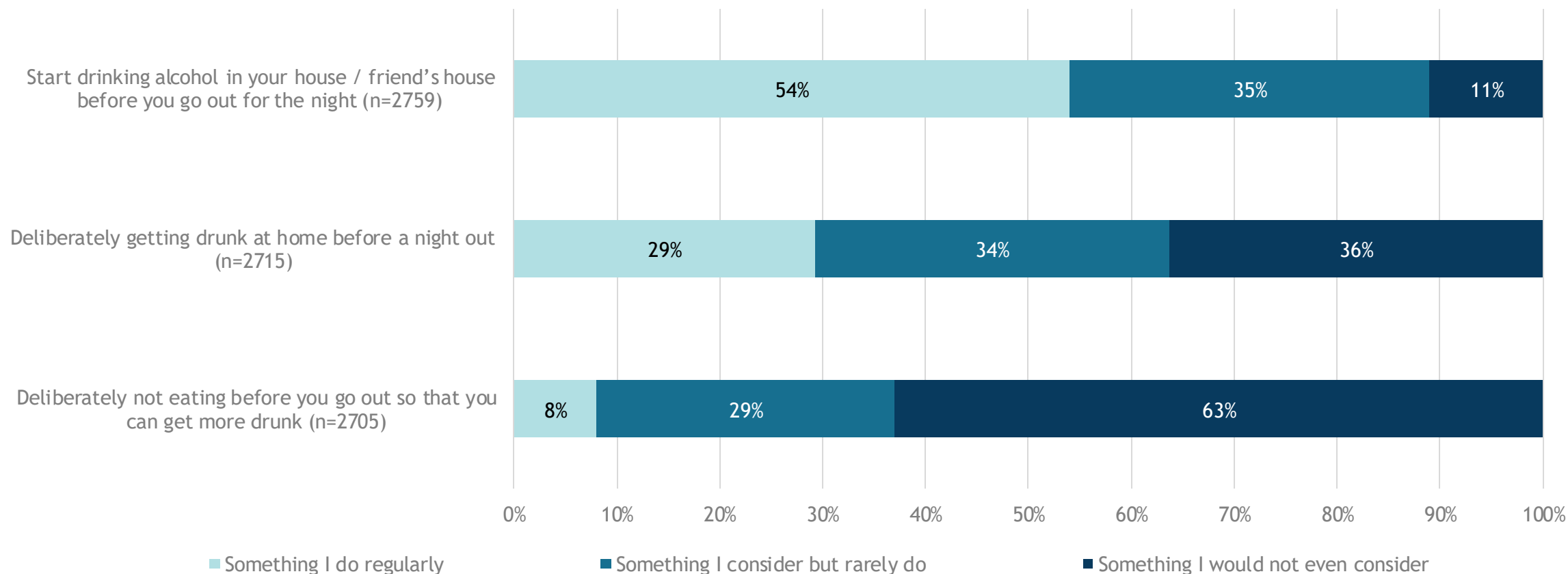
The most common reasons cited by respondents for drinking alcohol are for recreation (53%), to enhance social interactions (50%) and to improve their confidence (26%).



- Postgraduate students are less likely to report drinking to improve their confidence and to enhance social interactions than undergraduate students
- Students from the UK are more likely to say they drink alcohol for recreation than international students from within and outside of the EU
- Male respondents are more likely to drink alcohol for recreation than female respondents

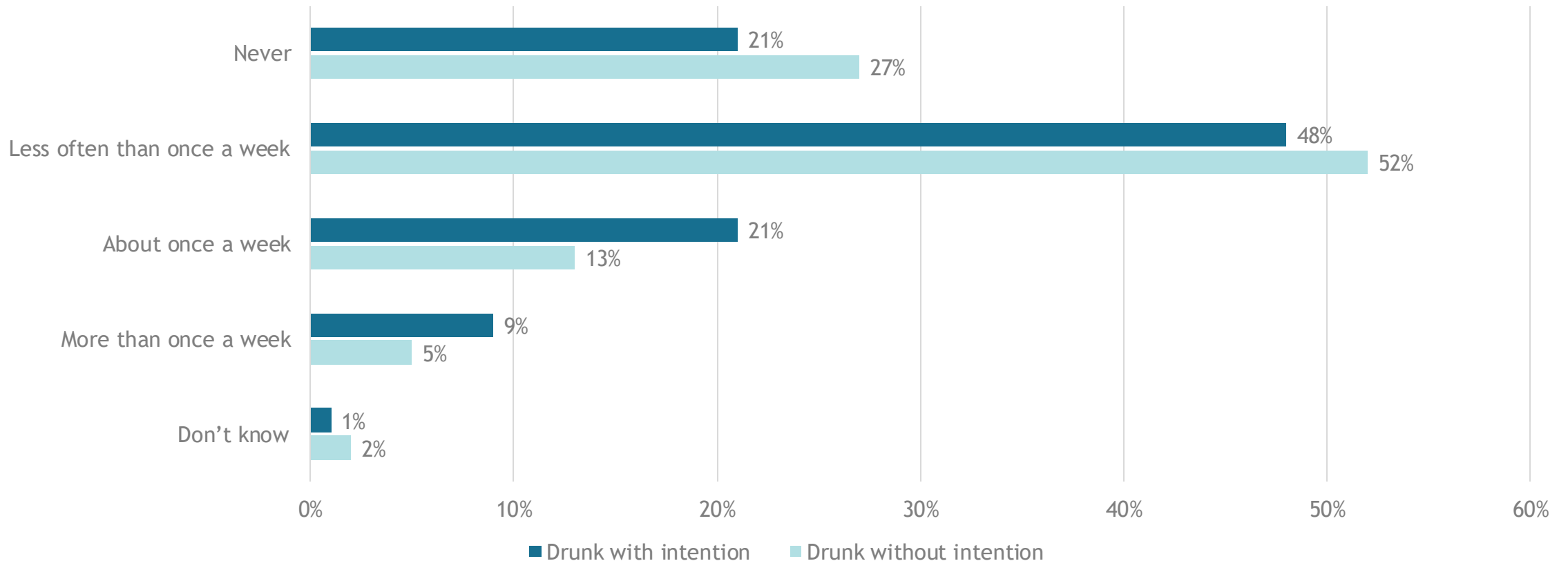
Q. Which of the following best describes why you drink alcohol? [Base: 2839 Balance: No response, and have never drunk alcohol]

More than half of respondents (54%) regularly start drinking at home before they go out for the night (pre-drinking). Over a third of respondents (36%) say they would not consider getting drunk at home deliberately before a night out, but 29% say this is something they do regularly.



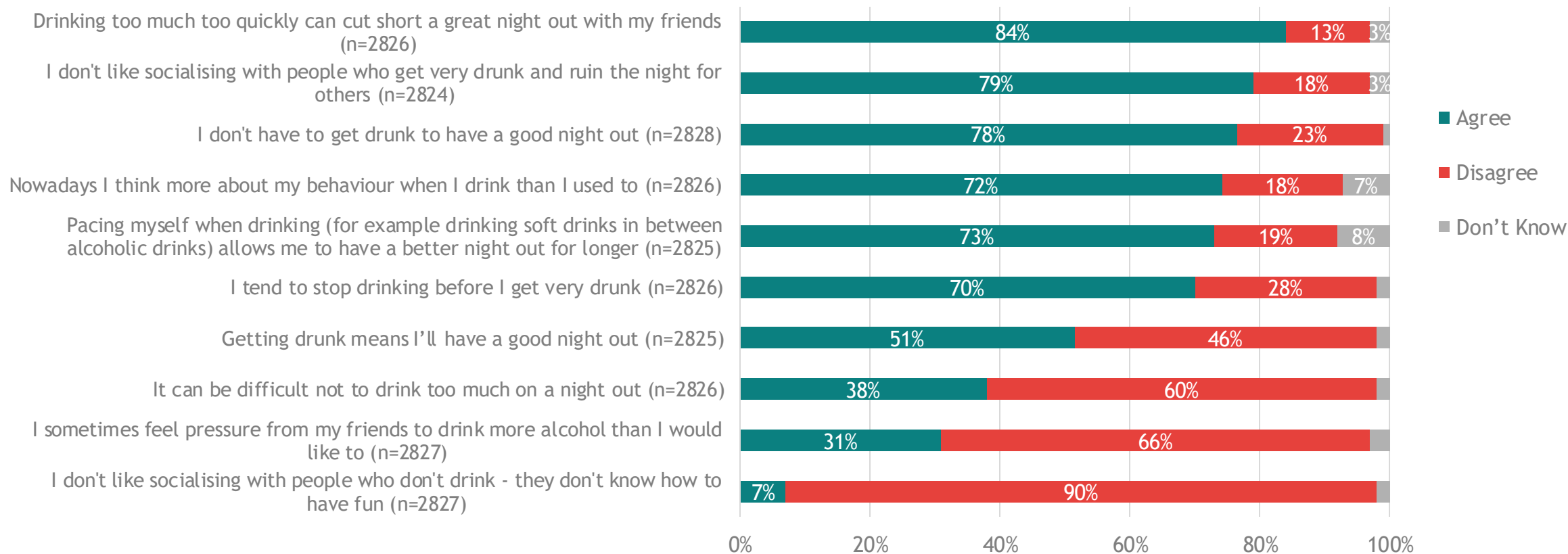
Q. Do any of the following describe your drinking behaviour? Weighted base: (in brackets) Balance: No response

Approximately half of respondents get drunk less often than once a week, either with (48%) or without (53%) the intention to. 9% report getting drunk more than once a week having had the intention to do so and 5% get drunk without intending to more than once a week.



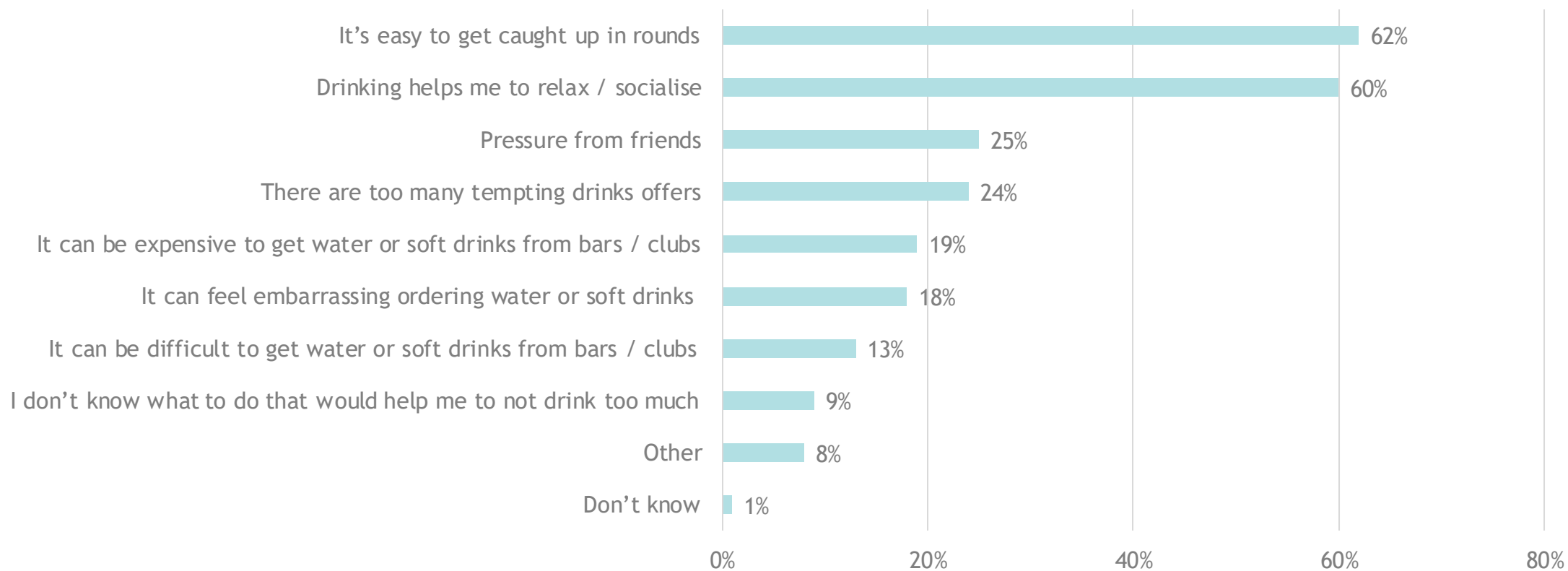
Q. Approximately how often do you drink alcohol with the intention of getting drunk / drink alcohol without the intention of getting drunk but end up getting drunk anyway ? Weighted base: c. 2832 Balance: No response

84% agreed that drinking too much too quickly can cut short a great night. 79% say they don't like socialising with people who get very drunk and ruin the night for others. While 78% say they don't have to get drunk to have a good night out, over half (51%) contradict this by agreeing that getting drunk means they will have a good night out and 38% say it can be difficult not to drink too much on a night out.



Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements Weighted base: (in brackets) Balance: No response

Respondents who indicated they found it difficult not to drink too much on a night out (38%) were asked why. 62% identified the practice of buying drinks in rounds as a reason why they find it difficult not to drink too much on a night out. Drinking to relax/socialize was also identified by 60% of respondents. A quarter cited pressure from friends.



Q. You agreed it can be difficult not to drink too much on a night out - why do you think that? Weighted base: 1077 Balance: No response, non-drinkers and those who did not agree it can be difficult not to drink too much

Further analysis of the survey data has shown significant differences in practices between different groups of respondents. The key differences identified include:

#### Differences by gender

- Men respondents are more likely to report drinking alcohol 4-5 times a week compared to women respondents (5% compared with 2%); but men respondents are more likely to report never drinking to get drunk than women respondents (40% compared to 28%).
- Women respondents are more likely to report that they regularly start drinking at home/at their friend's house before going out for the night than men respondents (57% compared to 50%). Also, women respondents are more likely to report deliberately not eating at home before they go out so they can get more drunk, on a regular basis, than men respondents (10% compared to 5%).
- Men respondents are more likely to report that they drink alcohol with the intention of getting drunk more than once a week than women respondents (12% compared to 8%).

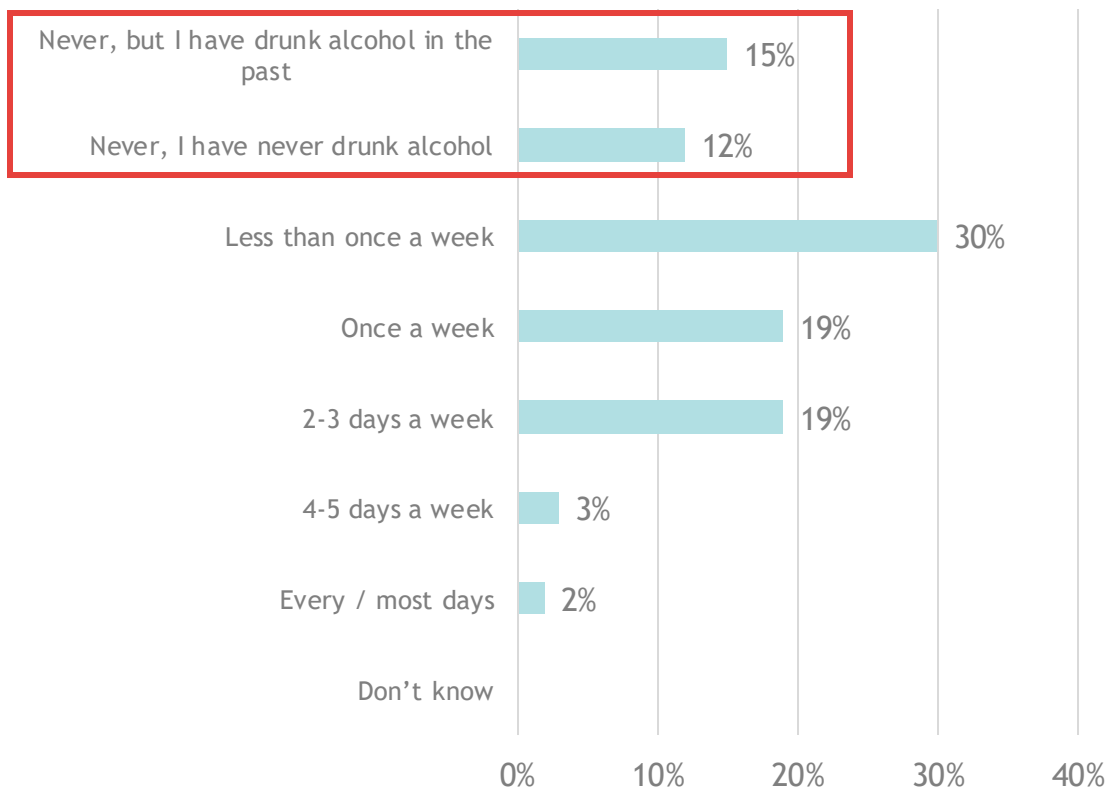
#### Differences by nationality

- International respondents from within and outside the EU are more likely to report never drinking alcohol, but have done in the past, than those from UK (24% non-EU and 19% EU compared with 13%).
- Respondents from outside and from the EU are less likely to report regularly drinking alcohol at home or at a friend's house before they go out for the night compared with respondents from the UK (50% and 42% of EU and non-EU respectively compared to 33% UK).
- Respondents from the UK are more likely to drink alcohol with the intention of getting drunk more than once a week than respondents from the EU and outside the EU (11% compared to 3% of EU and 1% of non-EU respondents).
- Respondents from the UK are more likely to agree that it can be difficult not to drink too much on a night out (43% compared to 26% international respondents from the EU and 17% from outside the EU).

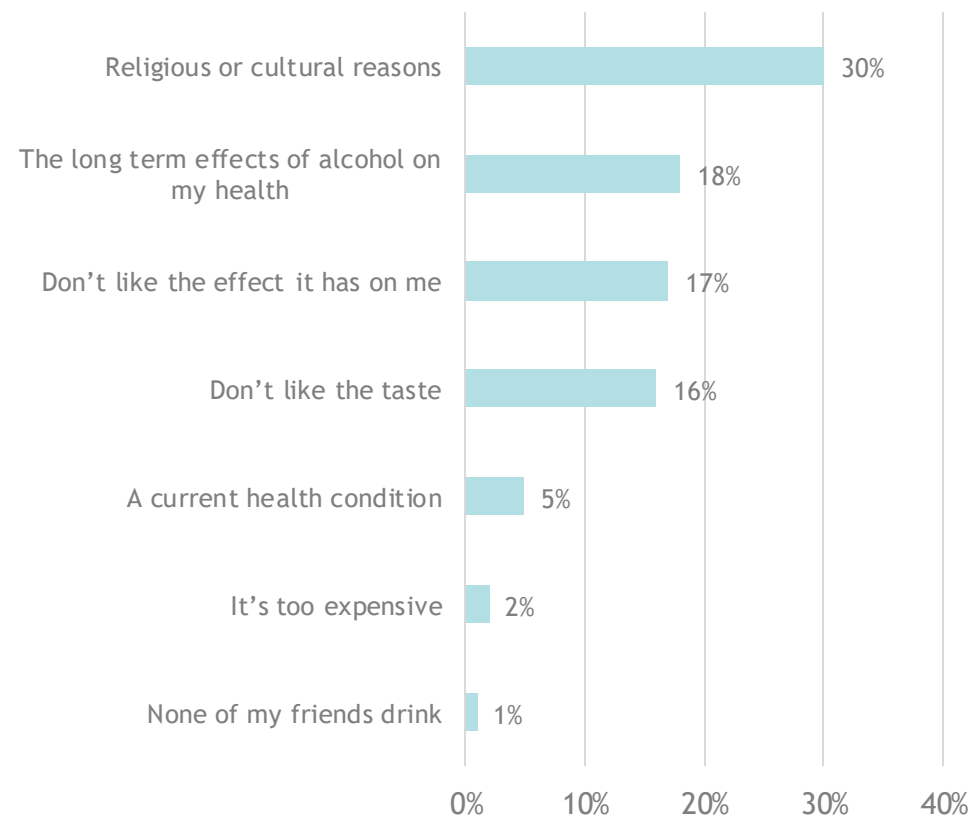
#### Differences by study level

- Undergraduates are more likely to report regularly getting drunk at home before a night out than postgraduates and PhD students (33% compared to 15% and 8%). They are also most likely to report starting drinking alcohol in their house/friend's house before going out for the night (61% compared to 31% postgraduates and 24% PhD students).
- Undergraduates are least likely to report never drinking with the intention of getting drunk compared to postgraduates and PhD students (17% undergraduates compared to 35% postgraduates and 38% PhD students).
- Undergraduates are also least likely to say that they never deliberately don't eat before a night out so that they get more drunk compared to postgraduate and PhD students (59% undergraduates compared to 76% postgraduates and 83% PhD students).

27% of respondents report that they do not currently drink alcohol, including those that have never drunk alcohol, and those who have in the past. This is most commonly due to religious or cultural reasons (30%).

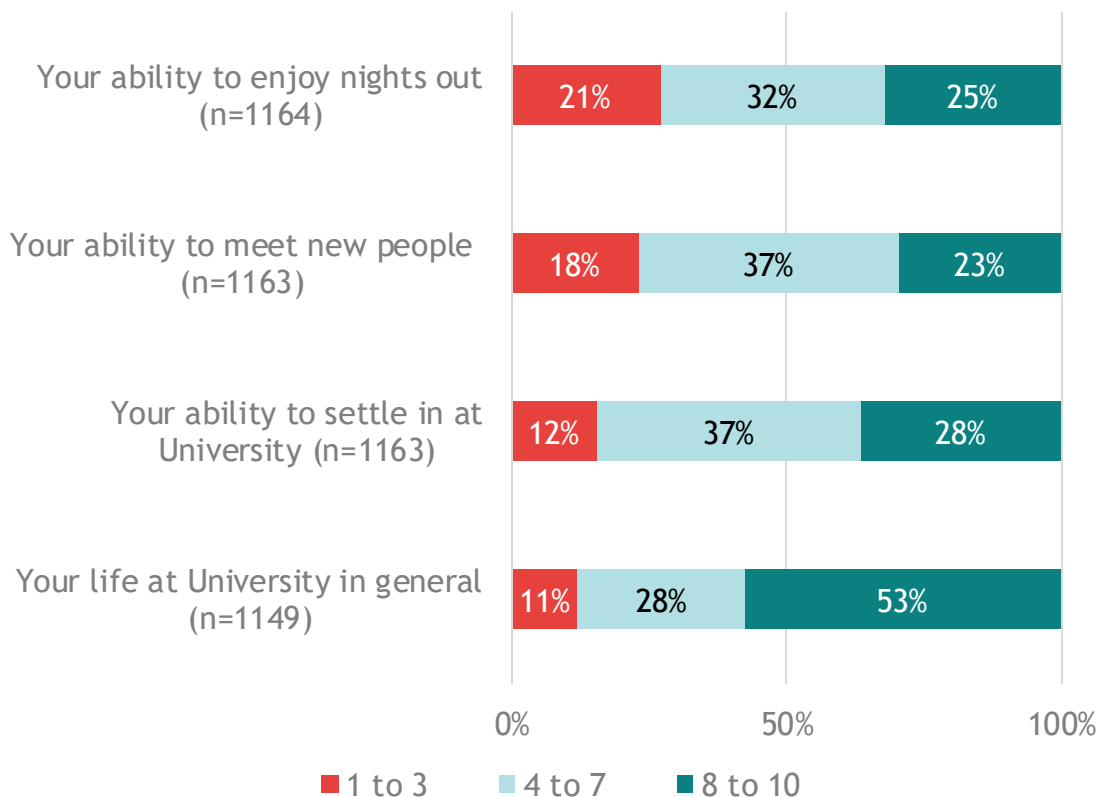


Q. How often, if at all, do you drink alcohol?  
Weighted base: 4340 Balance: No response

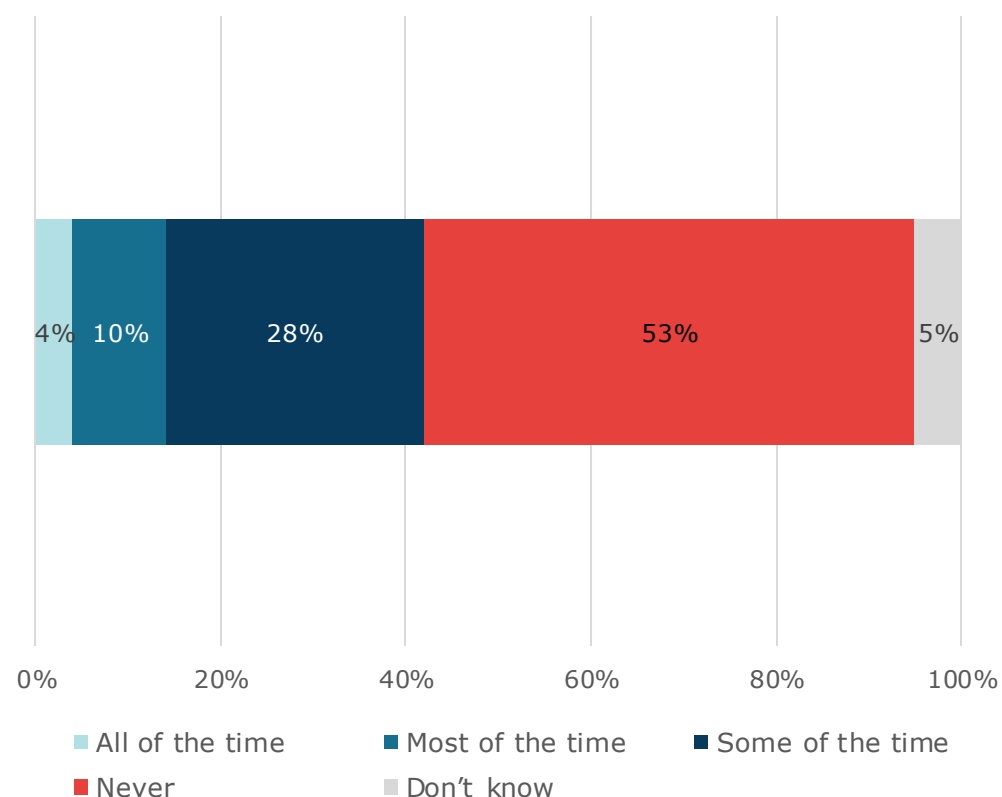


Q. What would you say is your main reason for not drinking, or stopping drinking, alcohol?  
Weighted base: 1173 Balance: No response

Over half of non-drinkers reported that not drinking had a positive influence on their life at university in general. 53% say they never feel like their friends expect them to drink alcohol.



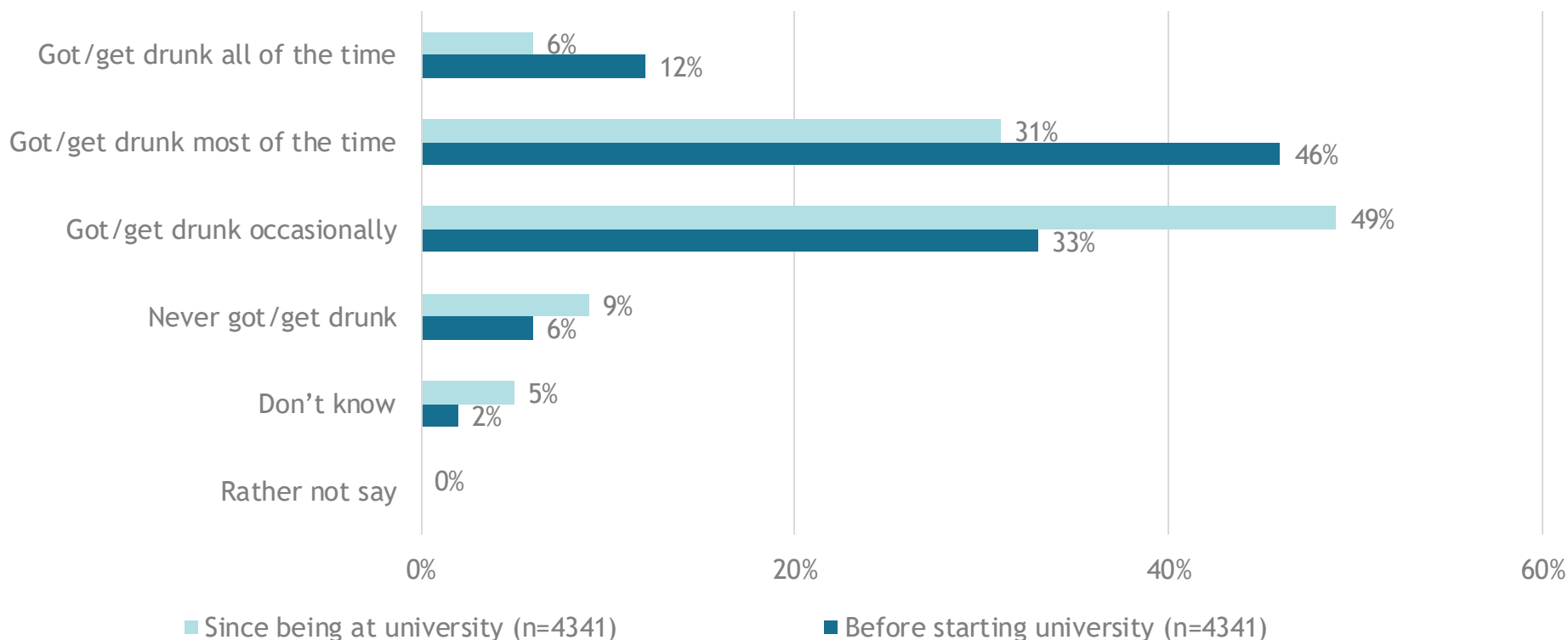
Q. On a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 = a very negative impact and 10 = a very positive impact, how do you think that not drinking alcohol has impacted on the following? Weighted base: see brackets Balance: No response, don't know



Q. Thinking about your most recent university term, when you were socialising with other students, how often did you feel that your friends expected you to drink alcohol? Base: 1173 Balance: No response

# Perceptions of alcohol consumption on campus

Almost half of respondents (46%) report that when thinking back to before they started university they believed that students got drunk most of the time. There is a shift now they are at university, with 31% saying students get drunk most of the time. Prior to starting university, 6% believed students never got drunk, whereas whilst at university 9% say students never get drunk.



Q. Please select the phrase which best describes your perception...Before arriving at University, did you believe that students.../ And now you're a student at university, which of the following best matches your experiences of students. Balance: No response and non-drinkers

78% of respondents agree that few students worry about damage to their health from alcohol. The majority of respondents agree to some extent that it almost expected that students will drink to get drunk (77%), with a similar proportion saying that drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture (76%).

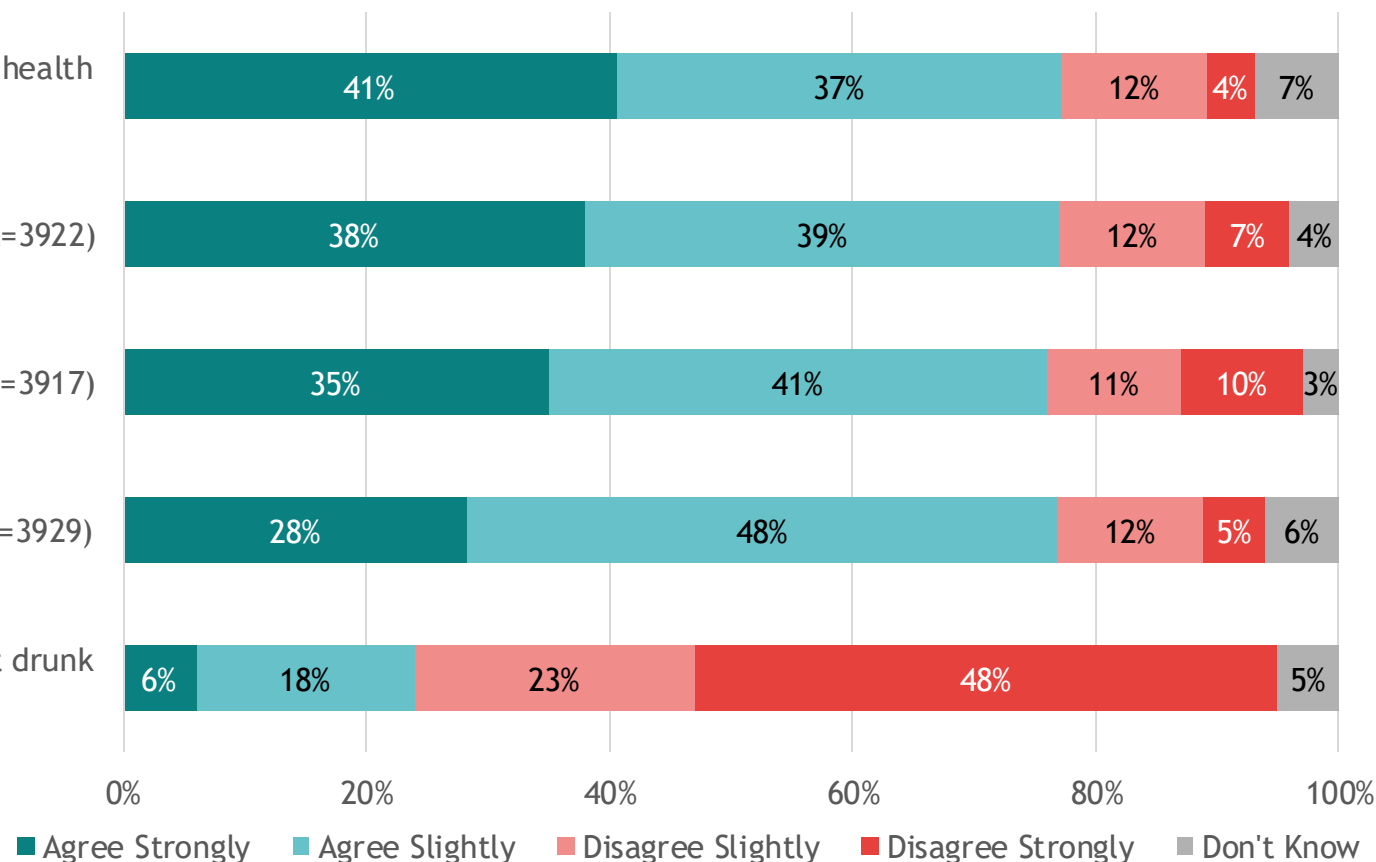
Few students worry about how much alcohol will damage their health (n=3933)

It is almost expected that students will drink to get drunk (n=3922)

Drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture (n=3917)

Students drink alcohol to fit in with their peers (n=3929)

My university friends expect me to drink regularly and get drunk (n=3926)



Q. Thinking specifically about drinking alcohol at university, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: see graph Balance: No response and non-drinkers

Further analysis of the survey data has shown significant differences in perceptions between different groups of respondents. The key differences identified include:

#### Perceptions of peer expectations

- UK students are least likely to disagree that their university friends expect them to drink regularly and get drunk than EU and non-EU international students (69%, compared to 76% of EU and 78% of non-EU respondents).
- Undergraduate students are less likely to disagree on this than postgraduate students (70% compared to 75%).

#### Perceptions of student drinking practices before starting university

- Undergraduate respondents are more likely to believe that students got drunk 'all of the time' before starting university than postgraduates (14% compared to 7%).
- Women respondents are more likely to believe that students got drunk 'all of the time' before starting university than men respondents (15% compared with 10%).

#### Experiences of alcohol consumption culture on campus

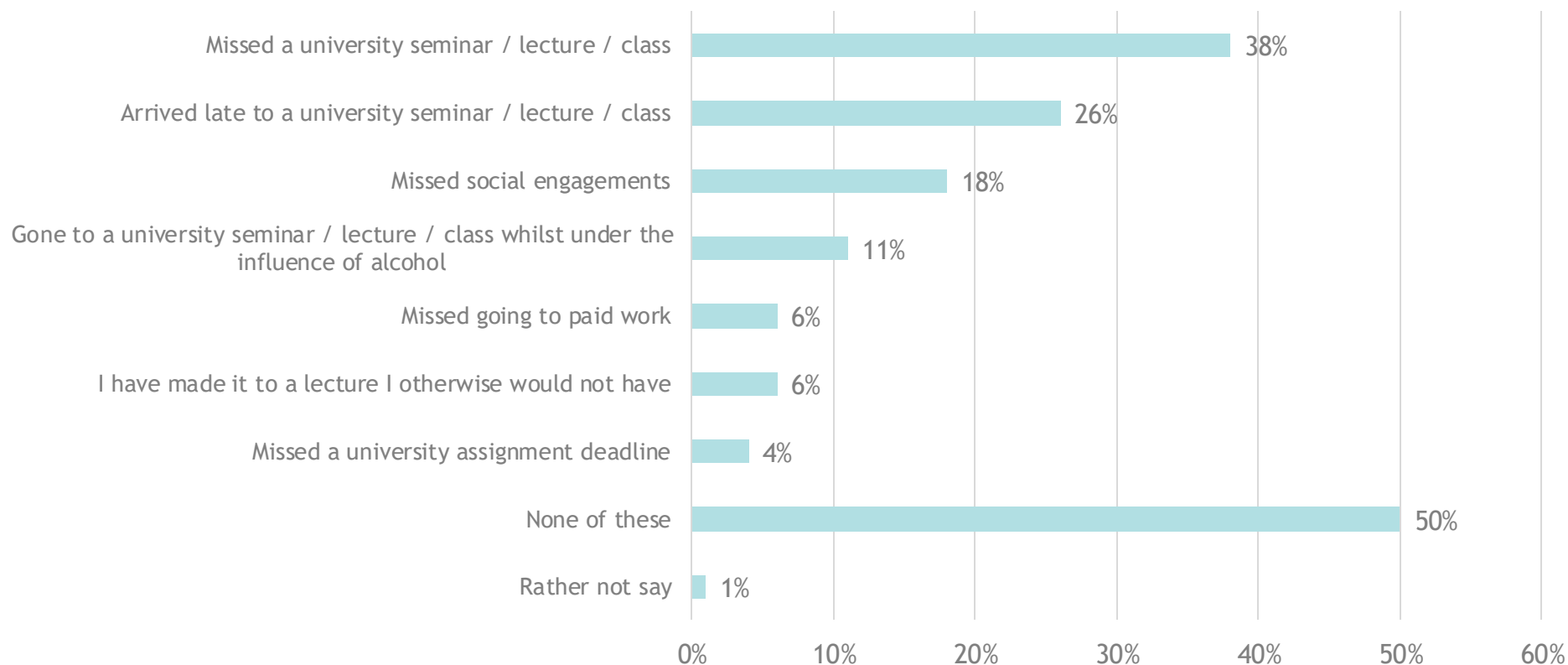
- Undergraduates are more likely to agree that drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture than postgraduates (81% compared to 56%).
- Women respondents are more likely to agree that students drink alcohol to fit in with their peers than man respondents (78% compared to 74%).

#### Experiences of peer pressure

- UK respondents (32%) are more likely to agree they feel pressure from their friends to drink more alcohol than they would like to compared to EU respondents (25%).

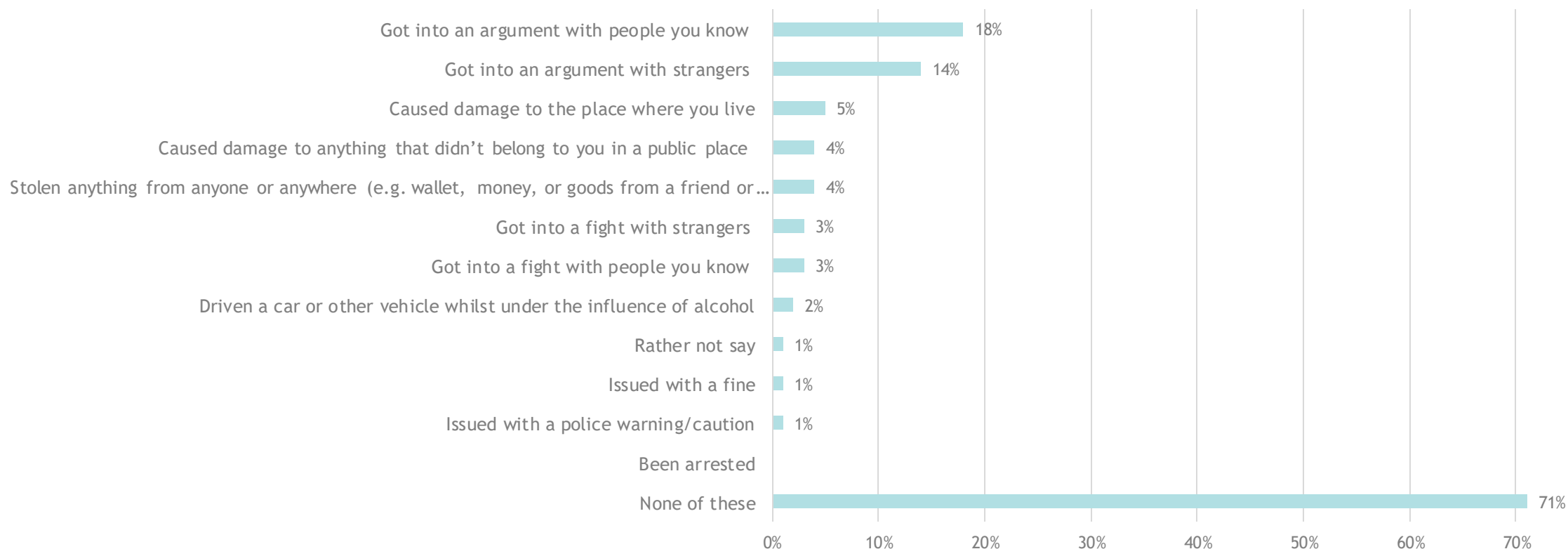
# Impacts of alcohol consumption

38% of students reported that they have missed a university seminar/lecture/class and 26% reported arriving late to a university seminar/lecture/class as a result of alcohol consumption. However, half reported not experiencing any of these impacts related to their studies following alcohol consumption.



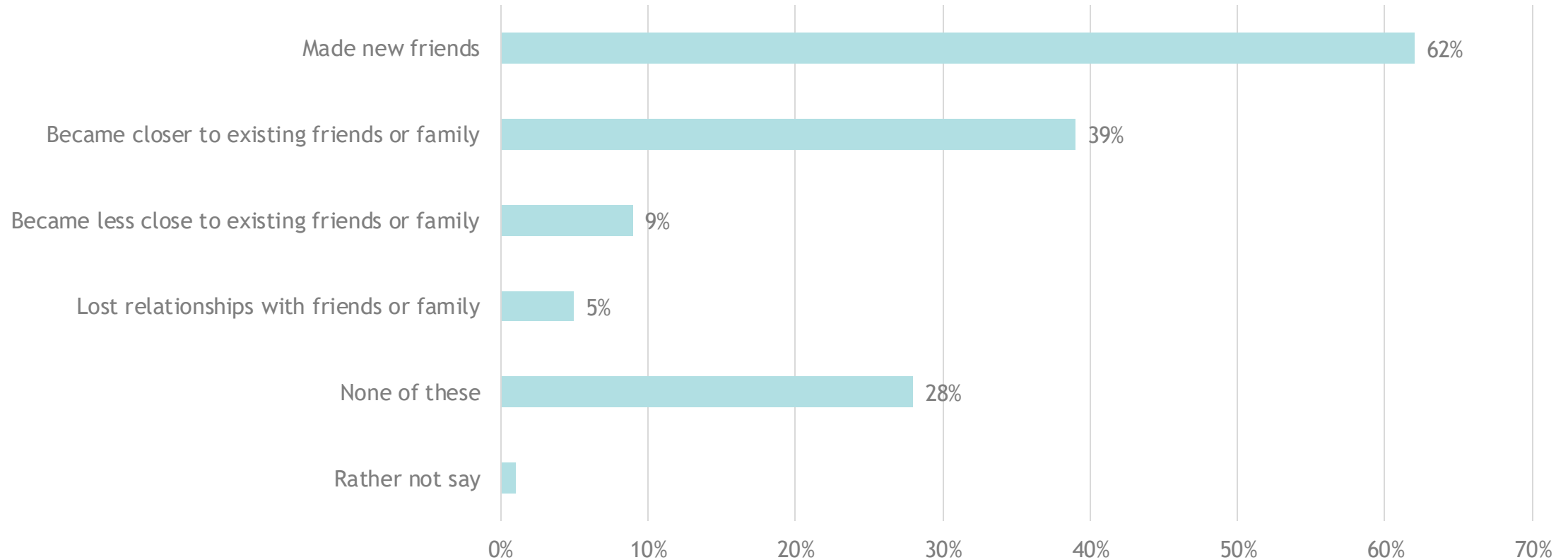
Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university, during or following the consumption of alcohol? Weighted base: 2830. Balance: No response and non-drinkers

The most common experience related to crime and anti-social behaviour reported during or following drinking alcohol was getting into arguments, with 32% reporting this either with people they know or with strangers. However, 71% reported not having experienced any aspect.



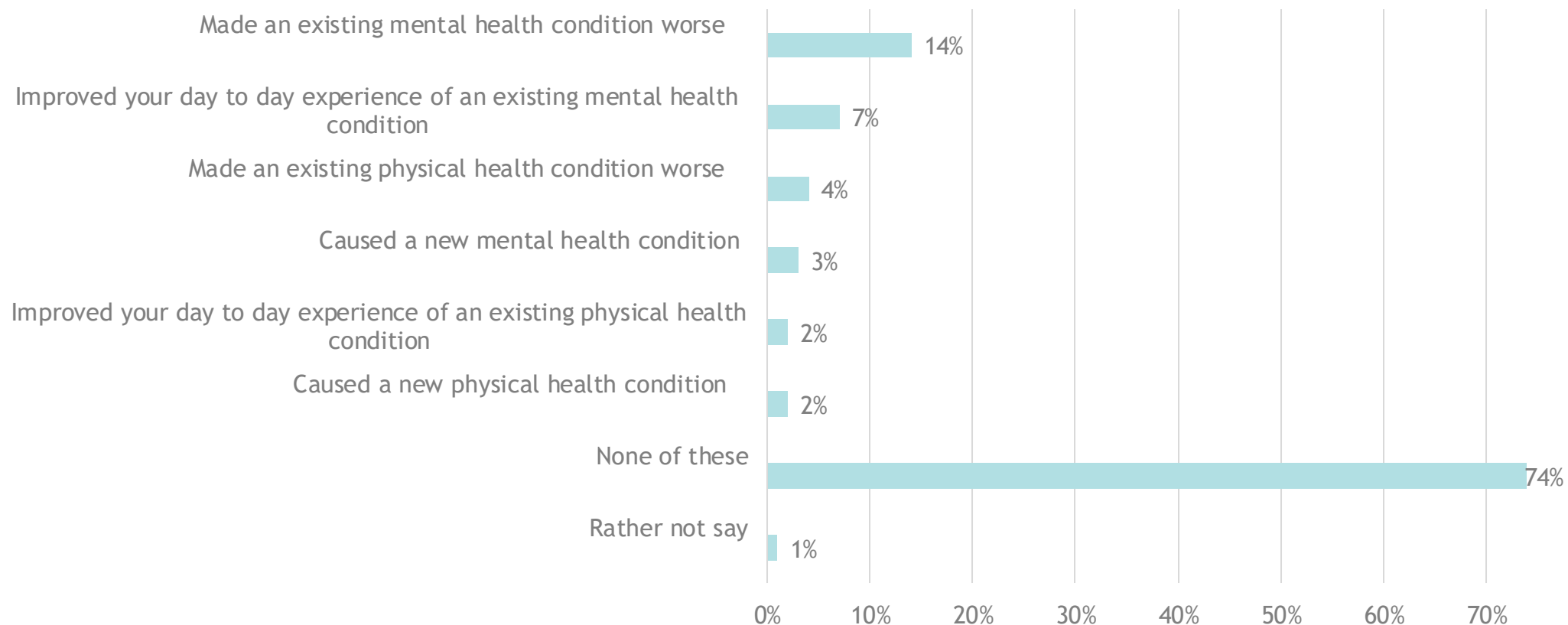
Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university, during or following the consumption of alcohol? Weighted base: 2820. Balance: No response and non-drinkers

Nearly two thirds of respondents reported making new friends during or following the consumption of alcohol (62%). 39% reported becoming closer to friends and family. However, 9% becoming less close to friends and family.



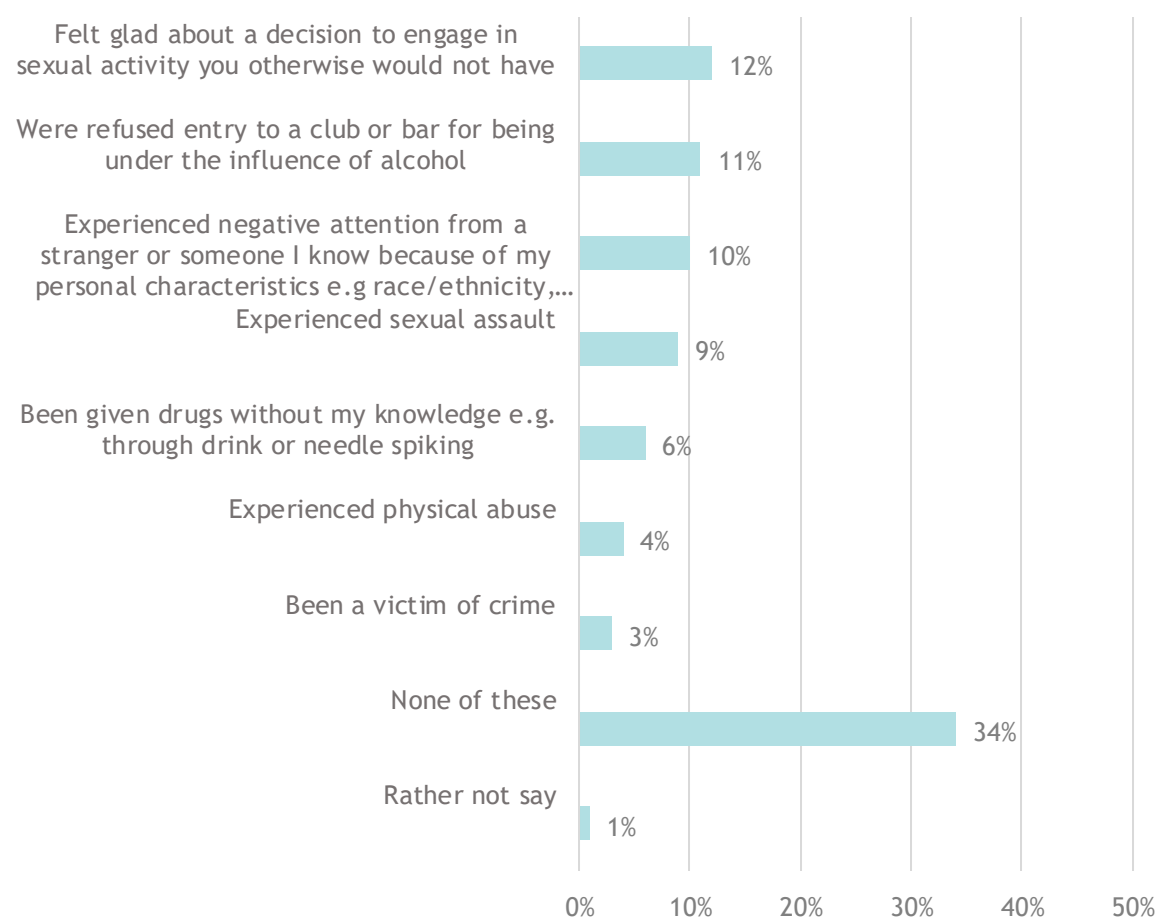
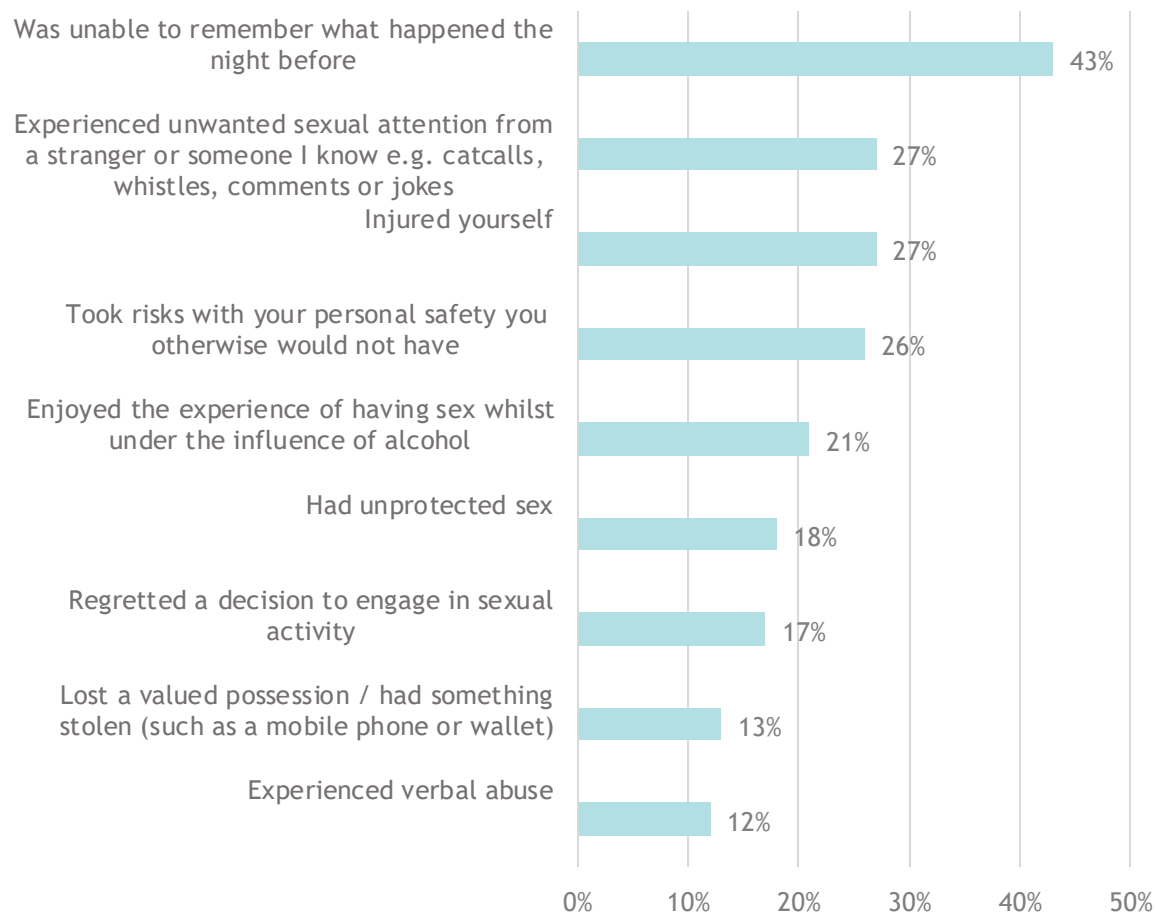
Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university, during or following the consumption of alcohol? Weighted base: 2827. Balance: No response and non-drinkers

14% of respondents identified that drinking alcohol (during or following) had made an existing mental condition worse however 7% found that it improved their day-to-day experience of an existing mental health condition.



Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university, during or following the consumption of alcohol? Weighted Base: 2821. Balance: No response and non-drinkers

43% of students reported being unable to remember what happened the night before, 27% experienced unwanted sexual attention and the same proportion reported injuring themselves following or during alcohol consumption.



Q Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university, during or following the consumption of alcohol?  
Weighted Base: 2819. Balance: No response and non-drinkers

Further analysis of the survey data has shown significant differences in experiences after drinking alcohol between different groups of respondents. The key differences identified include:

#### Health and wellbeing

- Women respondents are more likely to report an existing mental health condition becoming worse compared to men respondents (16% compared to 12%).
- Respondents who identify as disabled are more likely to report an improvement in their day-to-day experience of an existing mental health condition than respondents who don't identify this way (11% compared to 5%).
- Respondents who are undergraduates are more likely to report not being able to remember what happened the night before compared with postgraduate and PhD respondents (46% compared to 30%).
- Women and non-binary respondents are more likely to have experienced sexual assault (12% and 18%, respectively) than men respondents (4%).

#### Paid work and study

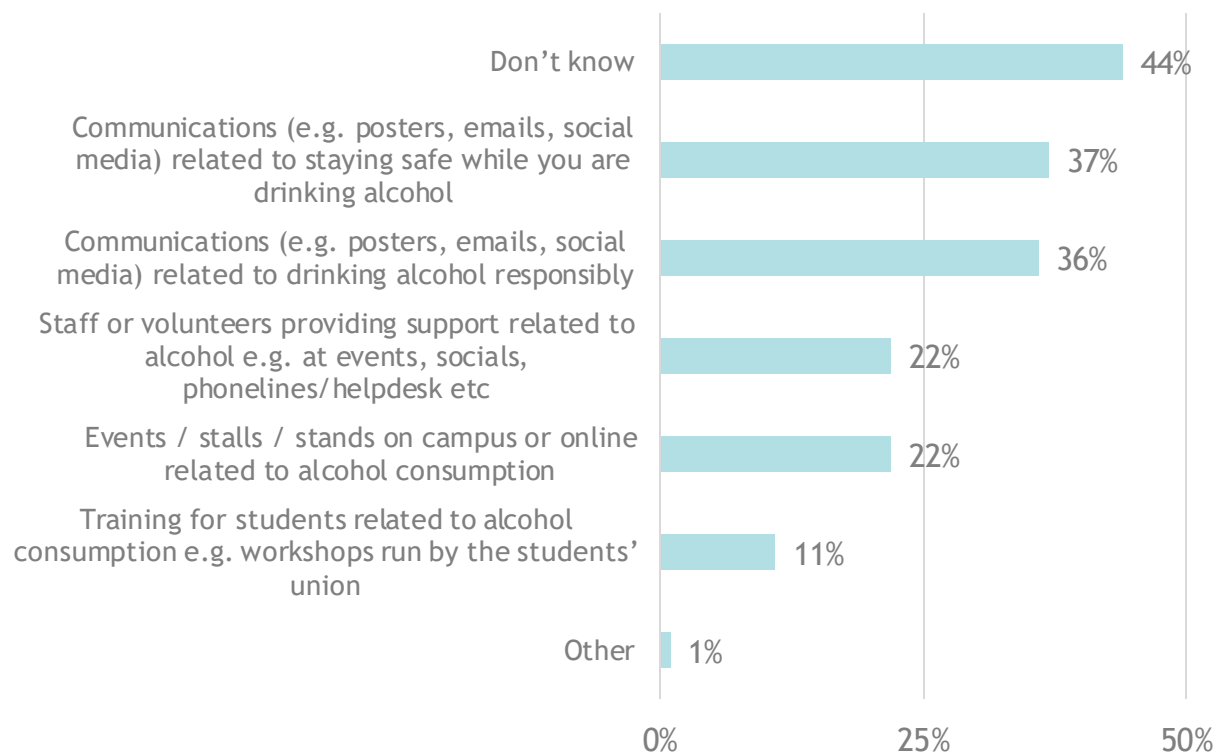
- UK respondents are more likely to report missing a university seminar/lecture/class as a result of alcohol consumption than EU and non-EU international respondents (42% compared to 31% and 16% respectively).
- Women respondents are less likely to report arriving late to a university seminar/class/lecture as a result of alcohol consumption than men respondents (24% compared to 29%).
- Undergraduates are more likely to report missing a university seminar/lecture/class after alcohol consumption than postgraduate and PhD students (43% compared to 21% and 24% respectively).

#### Relationships

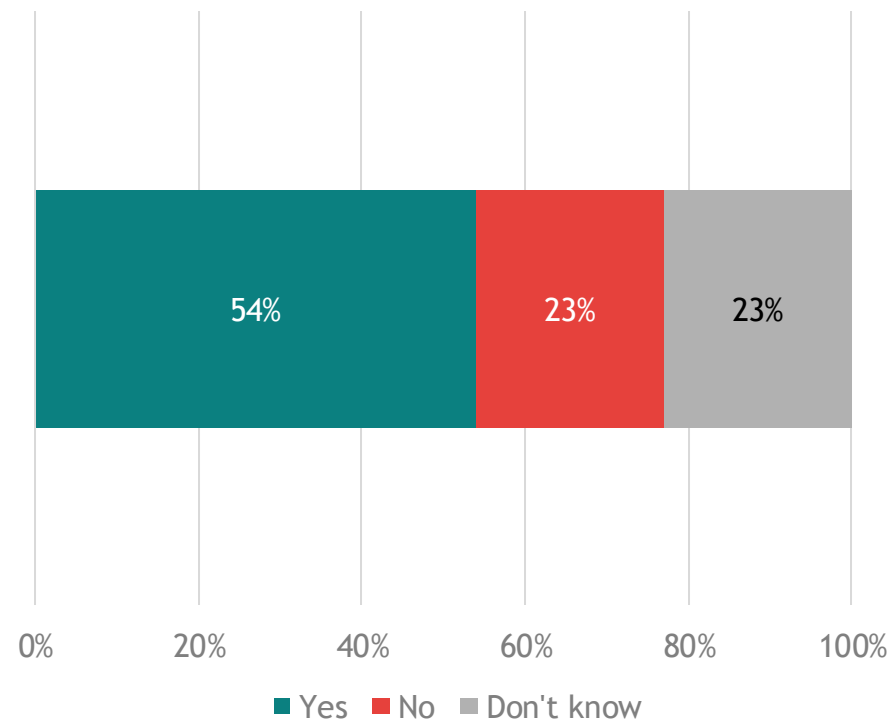
- UK respondents are more likely to report getting into an argument with people they know after alcohol consumption than non-EU international students (20% compared to 5%).
- Men respondents are more likely to report getting into an argument with strangers after alcohol consumption than women respondents (17% compared to 13%).
- Undergraduates are more likely to report becoming closer to existing friends or family than postgraduates (42% compared to 31%).

# Reducing impacts through responsible consumption

Over a third of students (37%) are aware of communication related to staying safe while you drink at their university. However, 44% of students say they don't know of any responsible drinking campaigns, projects or activities at their university. Over half of the respondents (54%) say there are enough social events at their university that don't involve drinking.



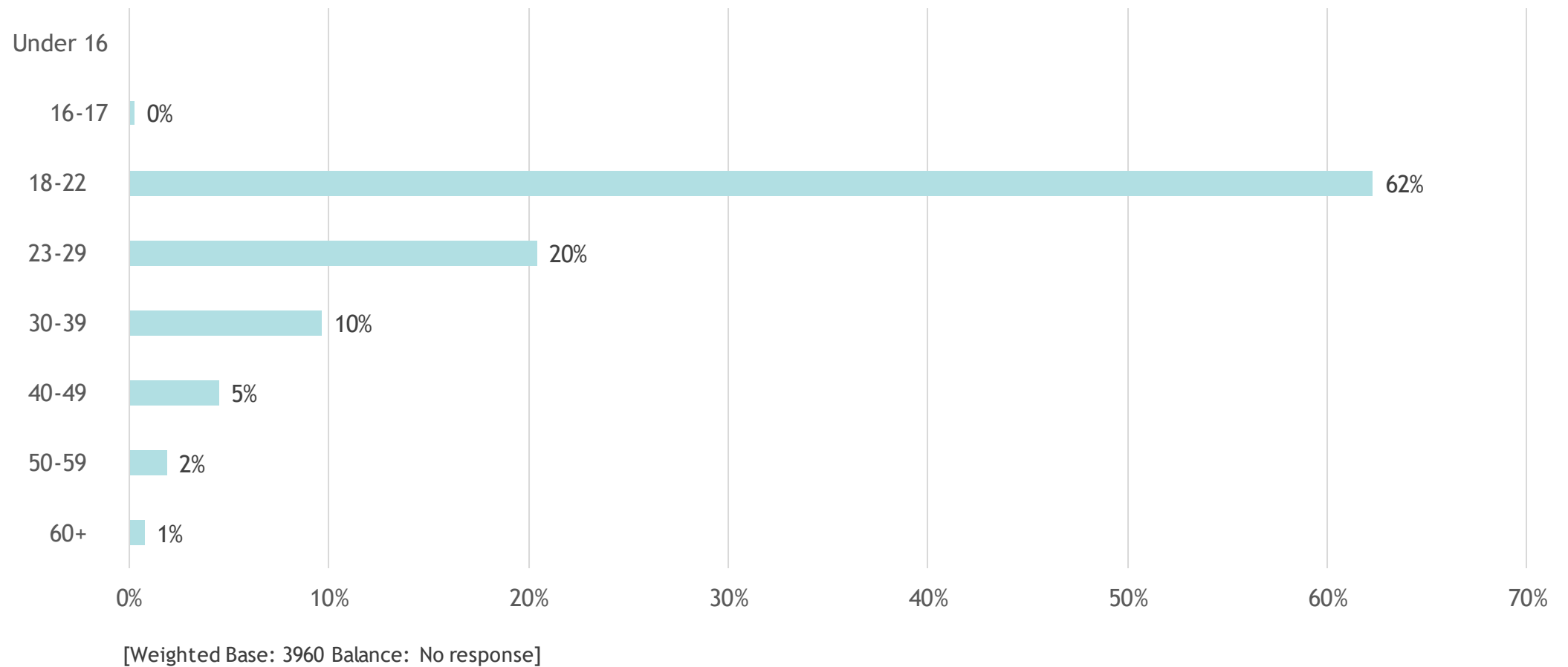
Q. Are you aware of any safe or responsible drinking campaigns, projects or activities at your university?  
Weighted base: 3904 Balance: No response, Other



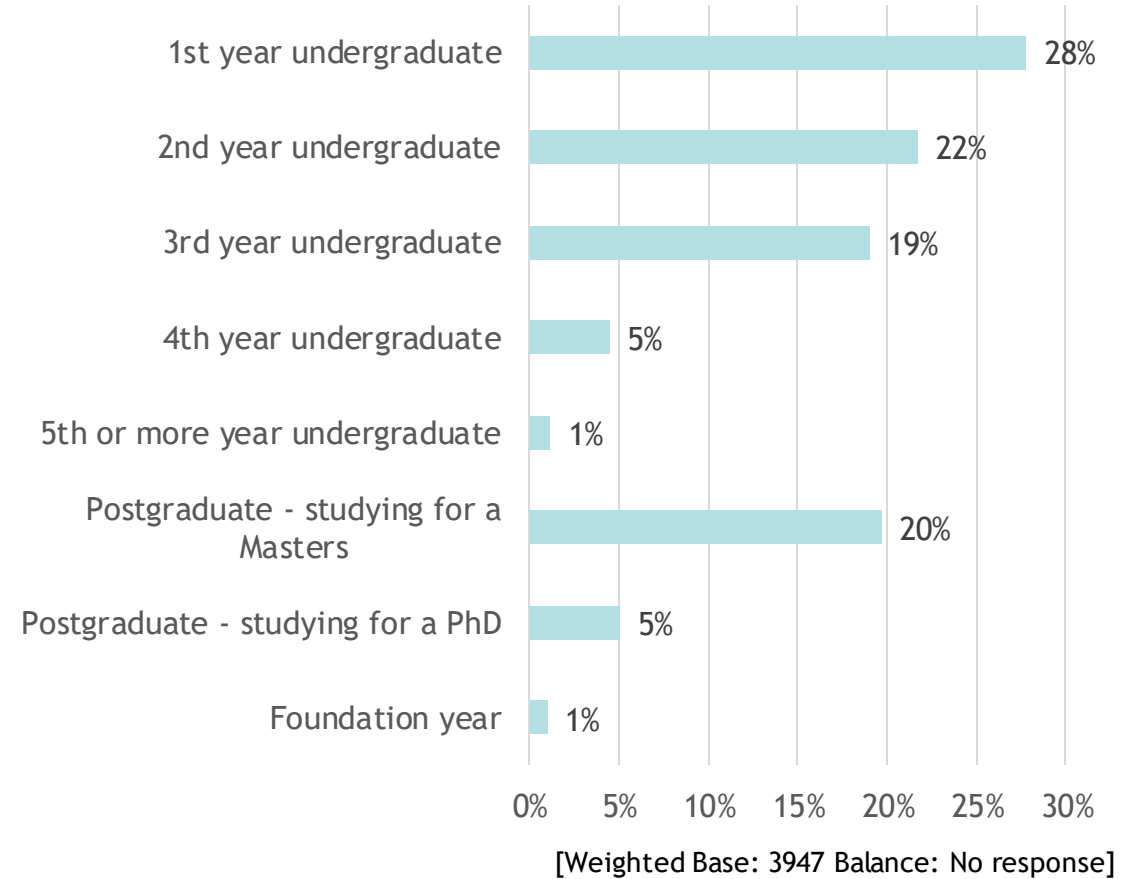
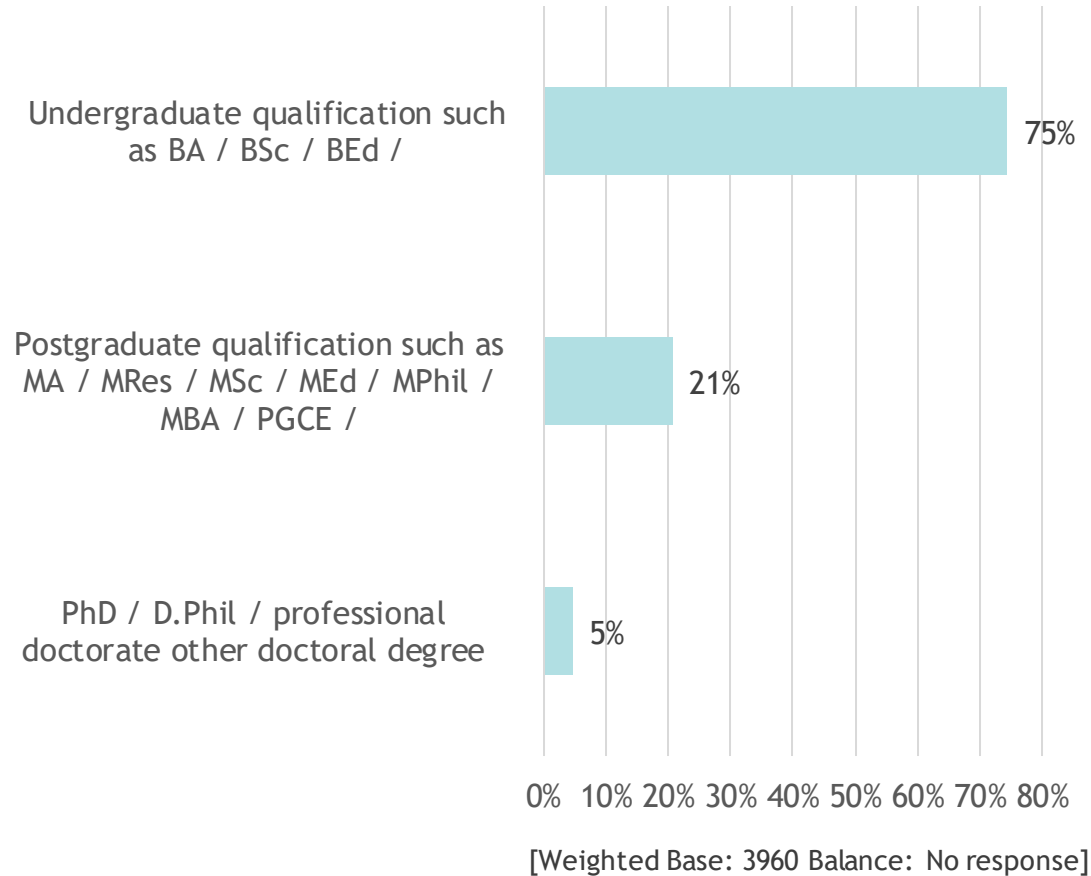
Q. Do you feel that there are enough social events for you at university that do not involve having to drink or get drunk?  
Weighted base: 3943 Balance: No response

# Respondent demographics

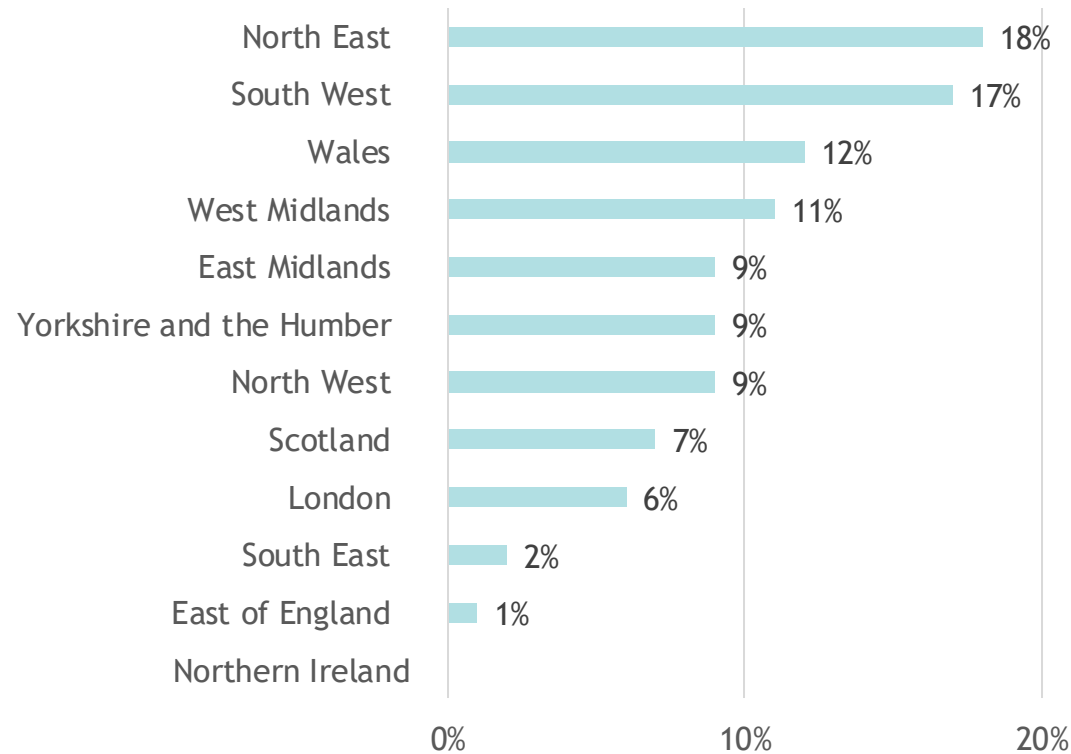
## AGE



## STUDY LEVEL (HE ONLY)

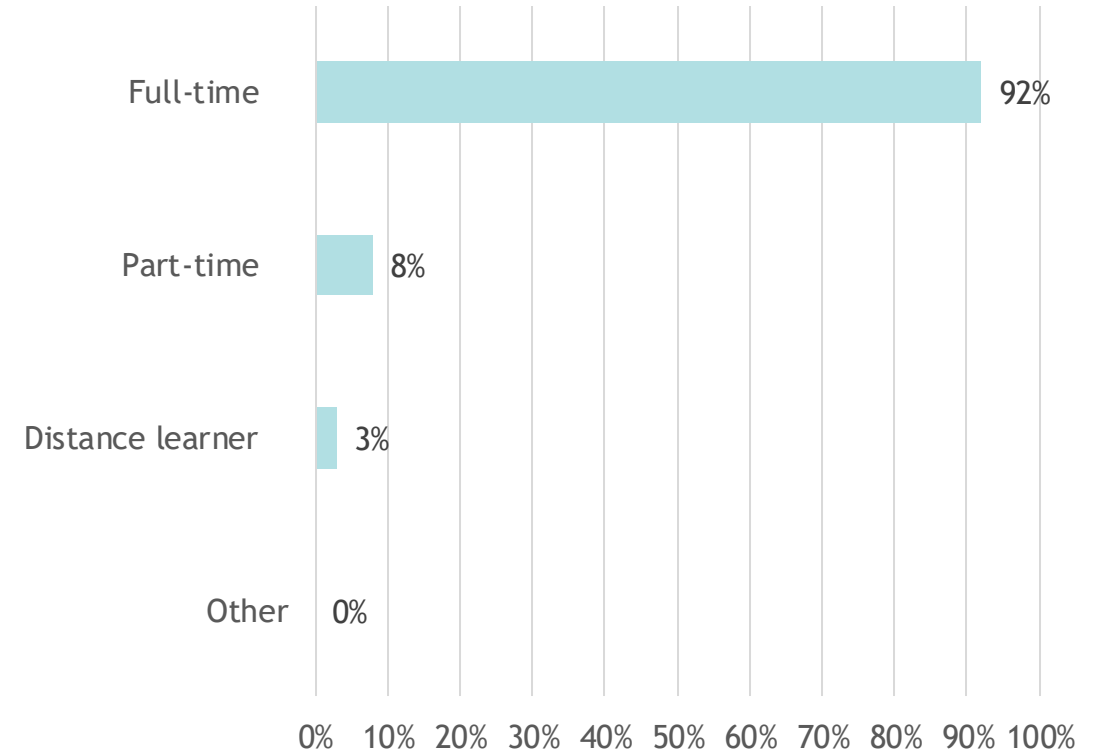


## STUDY LOCATION



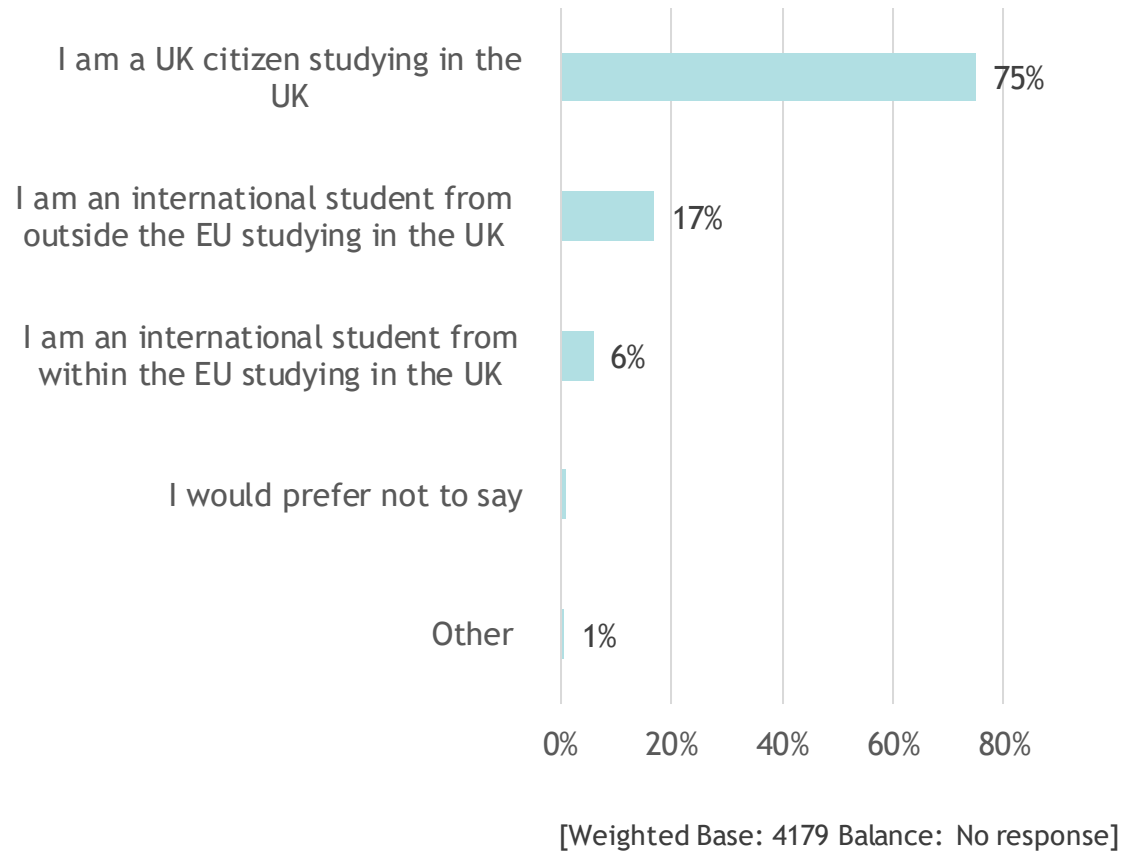
[Weighted Base: 4147 Balance: No response]

## STUDY TYPE

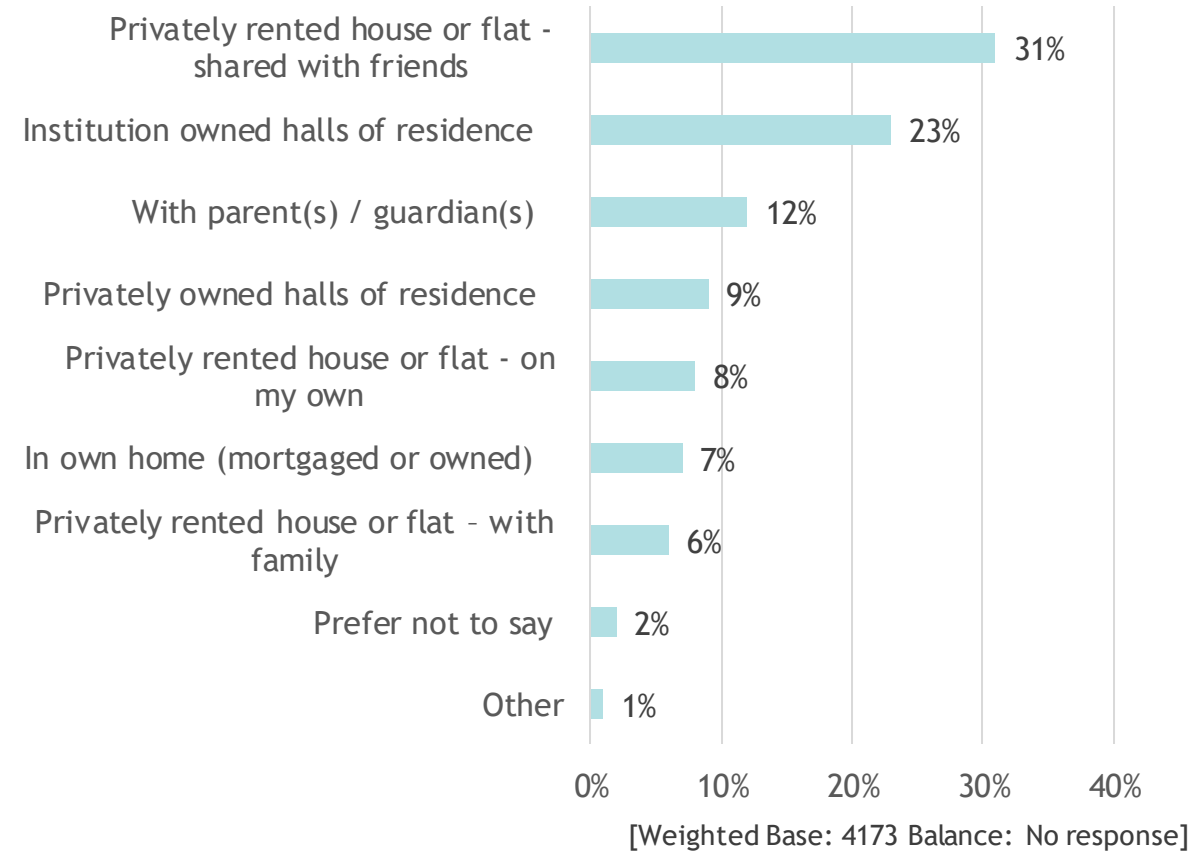


[Weighted Base: 4181 Balance: No response]

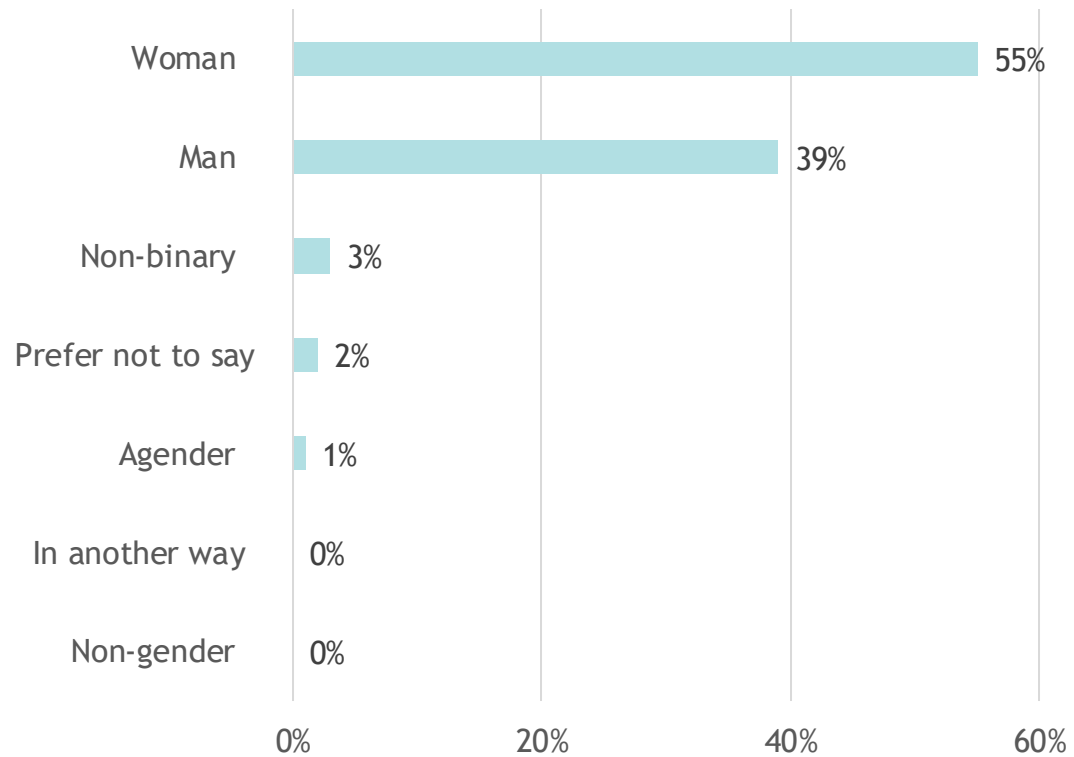
## NATIONALITY



## ACCOMMODATION TYPE

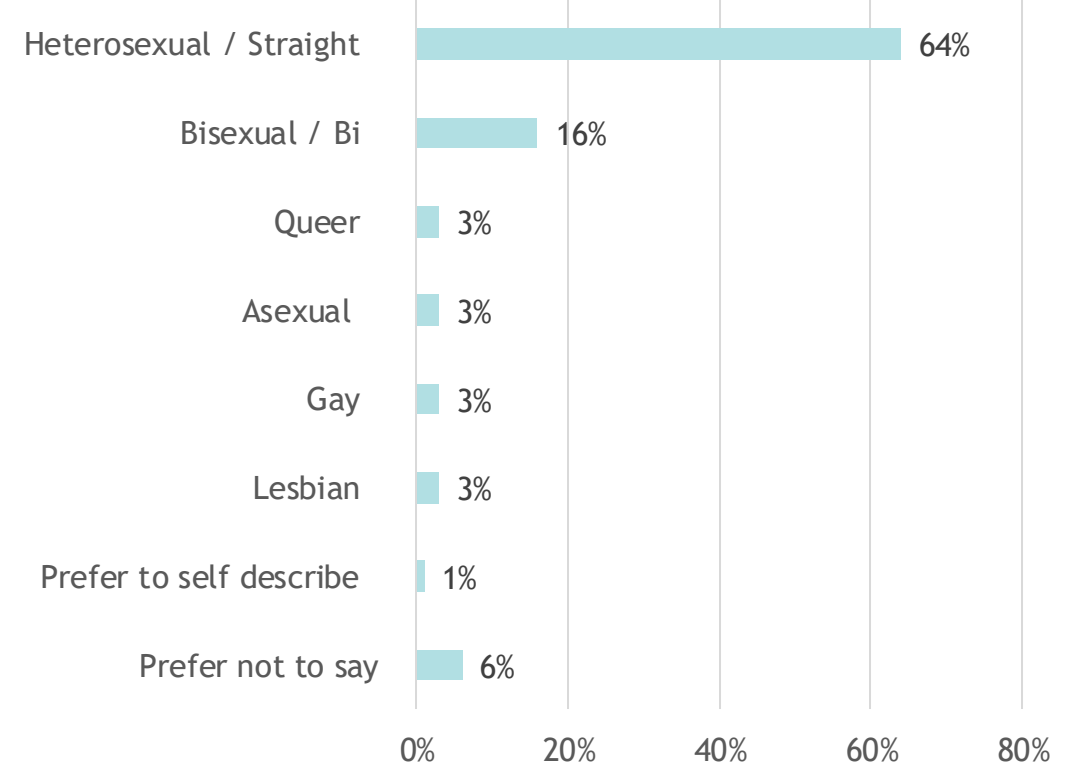


## GENDER IDENTITY



[Weighted Base: 4185 Balance: No response]

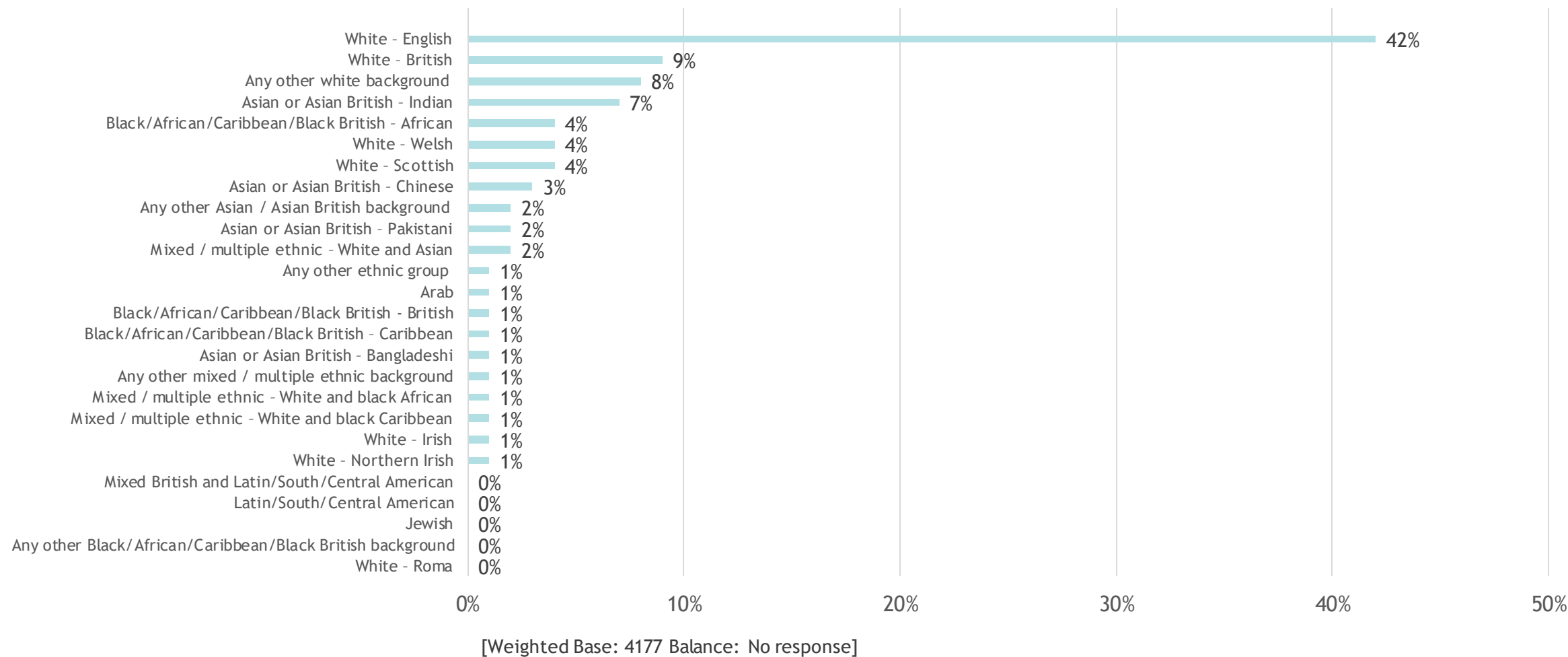
## SEXUALITY



[Weighted Base: 4168 Balance: No response]

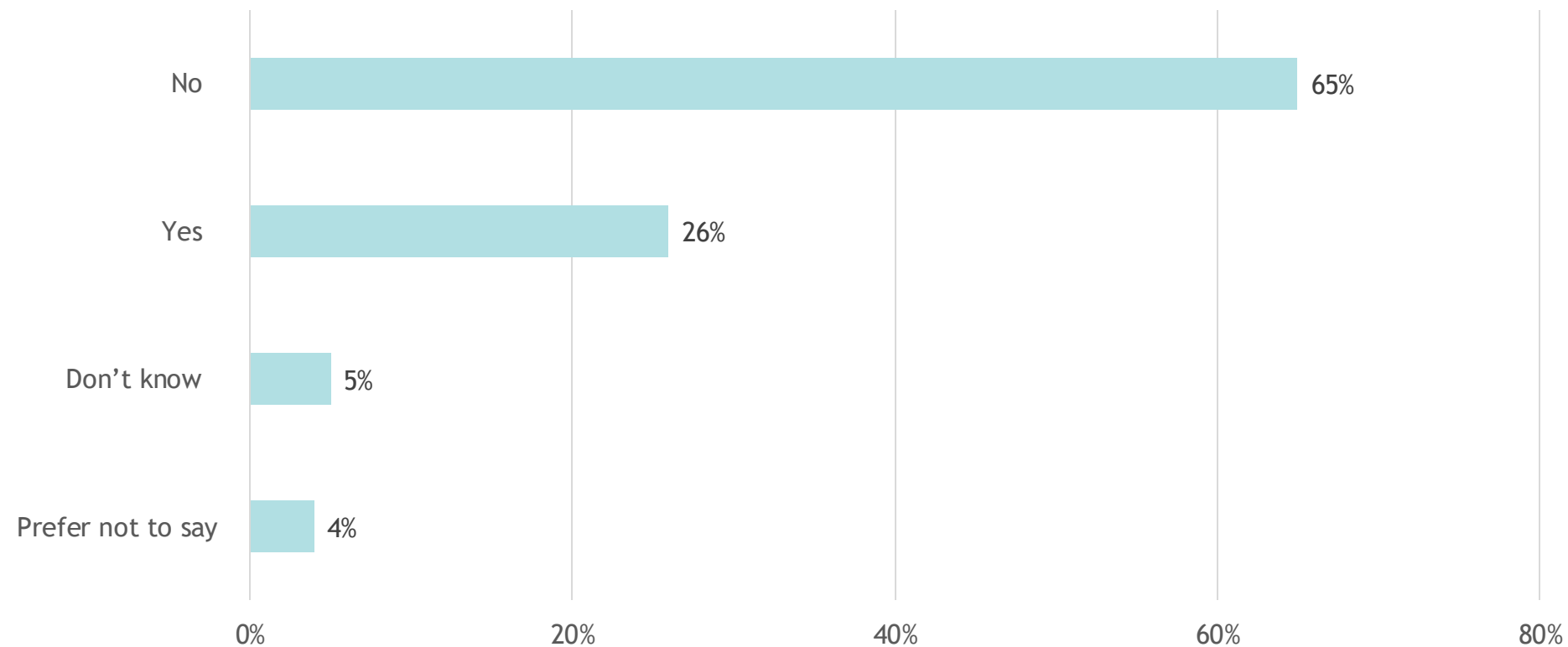
# 69% of participants identify as white ethnicities

## RACE / ETHNICITY



Over a quarter of respondents identify as disabled. Over half of these respondents experience mental health difficulties.

DISABILITY



[Weighted Base: 4179 Balance: No response]



For more information about our drugs and alcohol research and programmes, please visit our website or get in touch at: [hello@sos-uk.org](mailto:hello@sos-uk.org)