

STUDENTS, ALCOHOL AND DRUGS 2024-25

Survey research with students studying in higher
education in the UK



STUDENTS
ORGANISING FOR
SUSTAINABILITY
UNITED KINGDOM

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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 11894 responses from students in higher education were achieved in 2024-25 through promotion of the survey locally by universities and students' unions. The survey was promoted by NUS to students in the TOTUM discount cardholder 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.

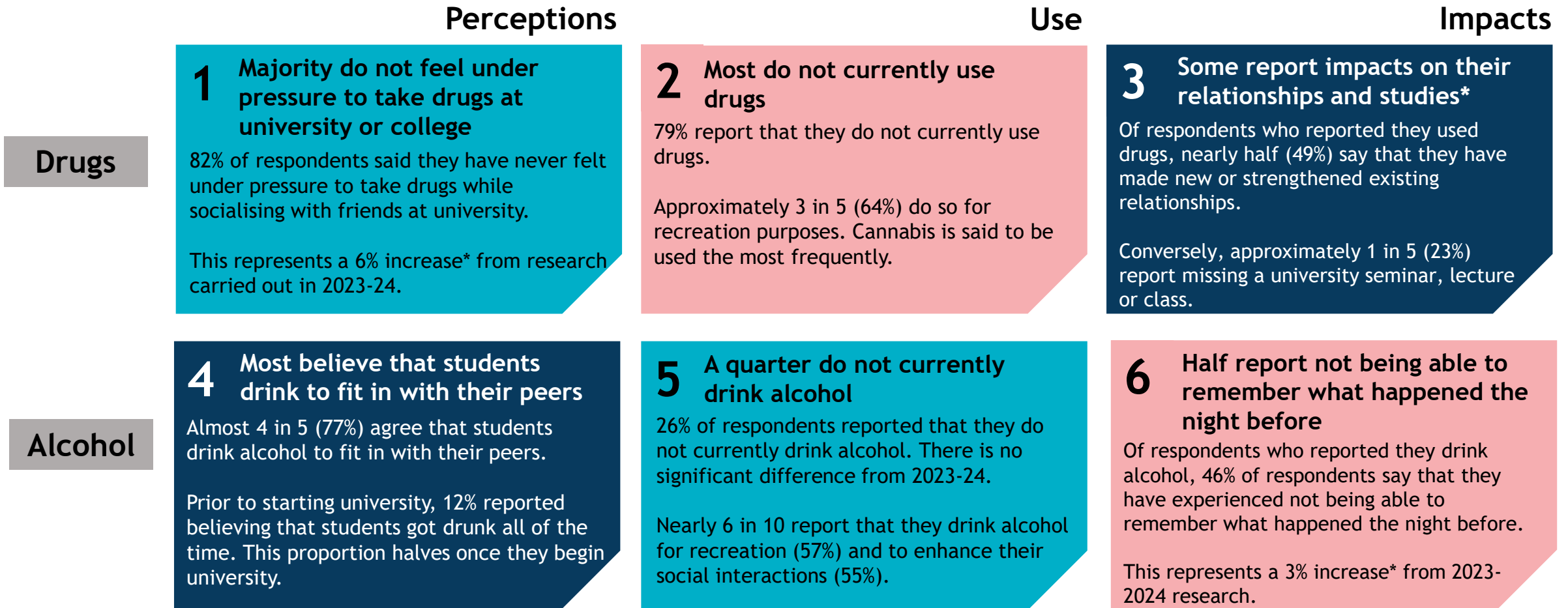
The programme builds upon the success of Alcohol Impact, which since 2015 has supported 30 university and students' union partnerships to create lasting positive change around responsible alcohol consumption. Although progress has been made in improving drinking cultures on campus, there's still work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

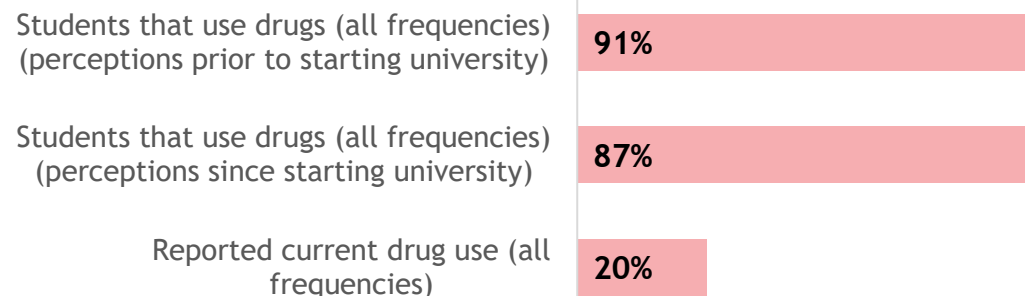
SUMMARY

We asked students in higher education in the UK about their experiences of drugs and alcohol during their time at university. 11,894 respondents completed an online survey in November and December 2024.

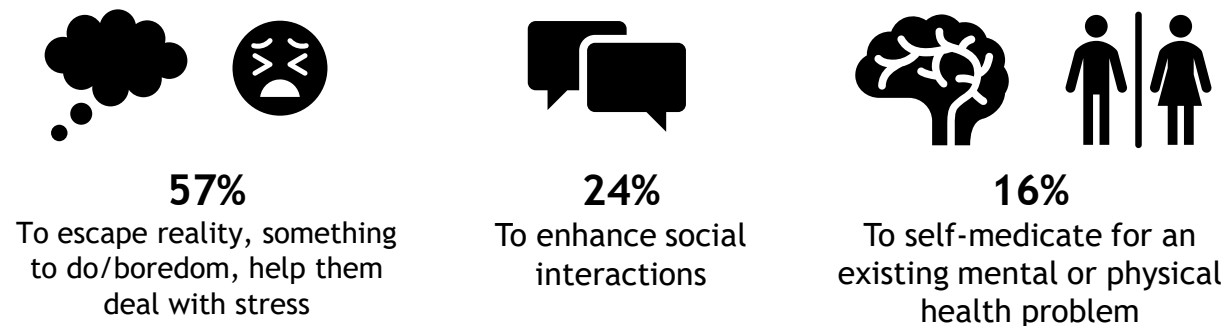


*Statistically significant change over 2023-24 research at 99% confidence level.

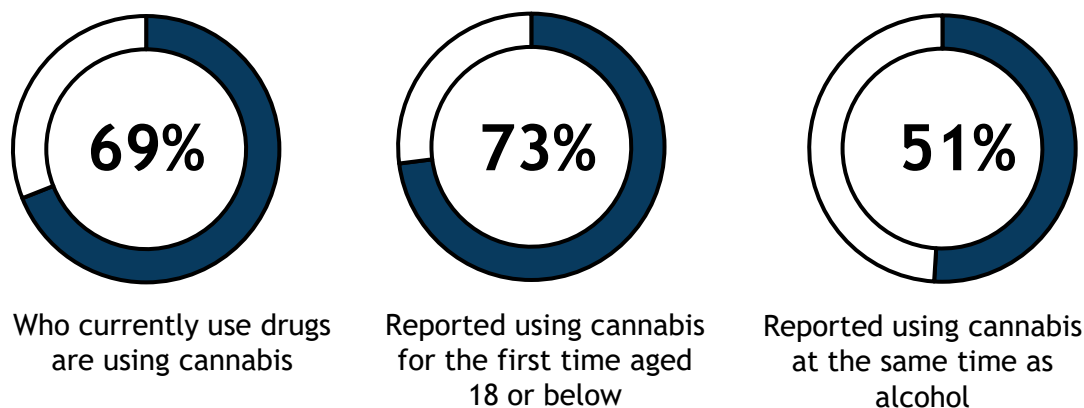
Respondents' perceptions of student drug use increases once they become a student, however, is significantly* higher than reported use.



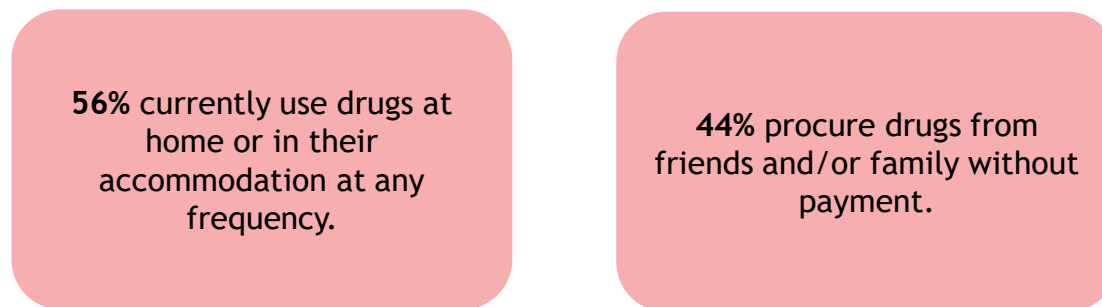
While the top reason for using drugs is recreation (64%), other reasons include...



Cannabis is most common drug for current use...



The most frequently reported location and procurement of drugs is...



Reflecting on the impacts of drug use, respondents who currently use or previously used drugs as a student say...



23%
...it has resulted in missing a university seminar / lecture / class



16%
...it's improved a mental health condition but...
13% say it has made a condition worse



49%
...it helped them make new friends



21%
...they enjoyed the experience of sex on drugs

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

87%
disagree that

'I feel under pressure to take drugs at university / college'.

49%
agree that

'Students take drugs to fit in with their peers.'

48%
agree that

'I do not have a problem with students taking drugs recreationally'.

Most respondents (79%) do not currently use drugs. Reasons for stopping drug use include:

Concern about the long term effects of drug use on my health

49%

Worried about the effect using drugs will have on me

49%

Thinking of drugs and their place of study...



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

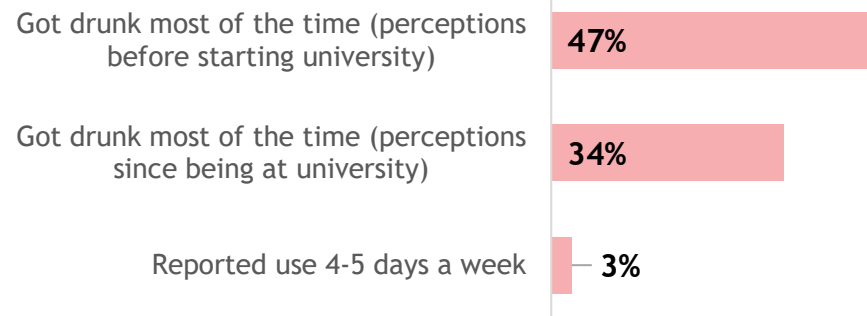


43% say they feel confident that if they turned to their university for support with drug use that it would be dealt with appropriately



47% say their university / college should not be punishing students who take drugs

Respondents' perceptions of student alcohol lowers once they begin university, but overestimates reported use...



While the top reason was recreation (57%), other common reasons are focused on socialising and relationships with their peers, including...



55%

To enhance my social interactions



30%

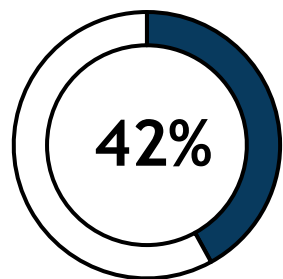
To improve my confidence



20%

Because friends, family or people I was with were drinking alcohol and I wanted to fit in

Respondents' drinking behaviour varies...



24%

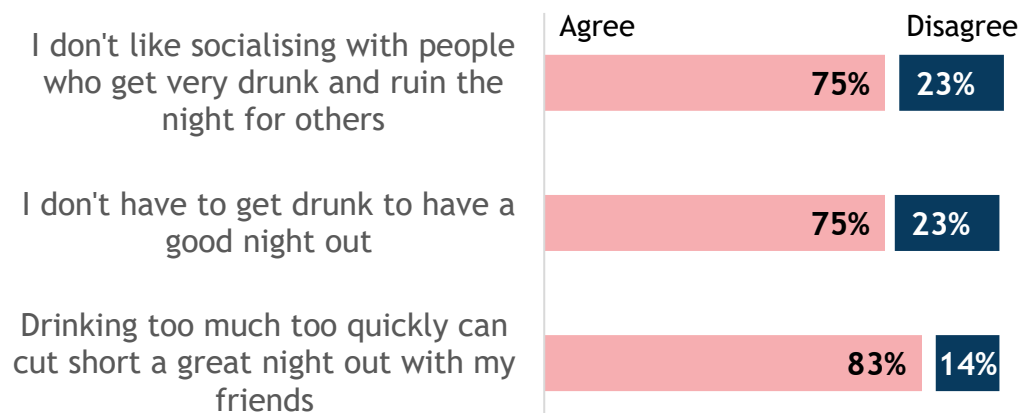
Report getting drunk without the intention about once a week.

50%

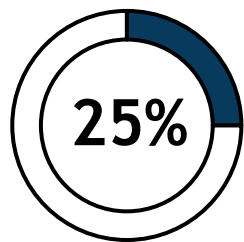
Report getting drunk with intention less than once a week.

Something they do regularly is start drinking alcohol in their house / friend's house before they go out

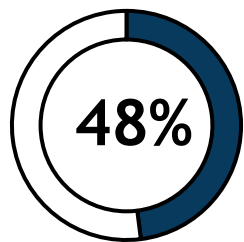
Among all respondents, perceptions of drinking and getting drunk behaviour varied...



26% of respondents do not currently drink. Reflecting on the reasons why, and the impact of their choice on university life, they say...



Do not currently drink for religious or cultural reasons



Agreed that not drinking has had a positive impact on their life at university in general

37% of respondents who drink alcohol agreed it can be difficult to drink too much on a night out. Reasons included...

62% reported that it can be difficult because it's easy to get caught up in rounds.

58% because drinking helps them to relax and/or socialise.

Respondents who drink shared the impacts of drinking alcohol...



73%
...it has resulted in missing or arriving late to a university seminar / lecture / class.



69%
...it has resulted in making new friends.



30%
...have experienced unwanted sexual attention from a stranger or someone I know.

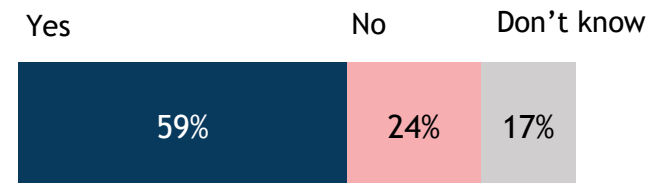


33%
...got into an argument with someone they know or a stranger.

All respondents reported different experiences around responsible consumption initiatives at their university...

41% are aware of communications related to drinking alcohol responsibly.

Are there enough social events for you at university that do not involve drinking or getting drunk?



The sample

77% of respondents are undergraduates

44% of participants are White English and over three quarters are UK citizens who study in the UK.

35% of students live in a privately rented house or flat with friends

74% of participants are 18-22 years old

11894 HE students in the UK completed the survey

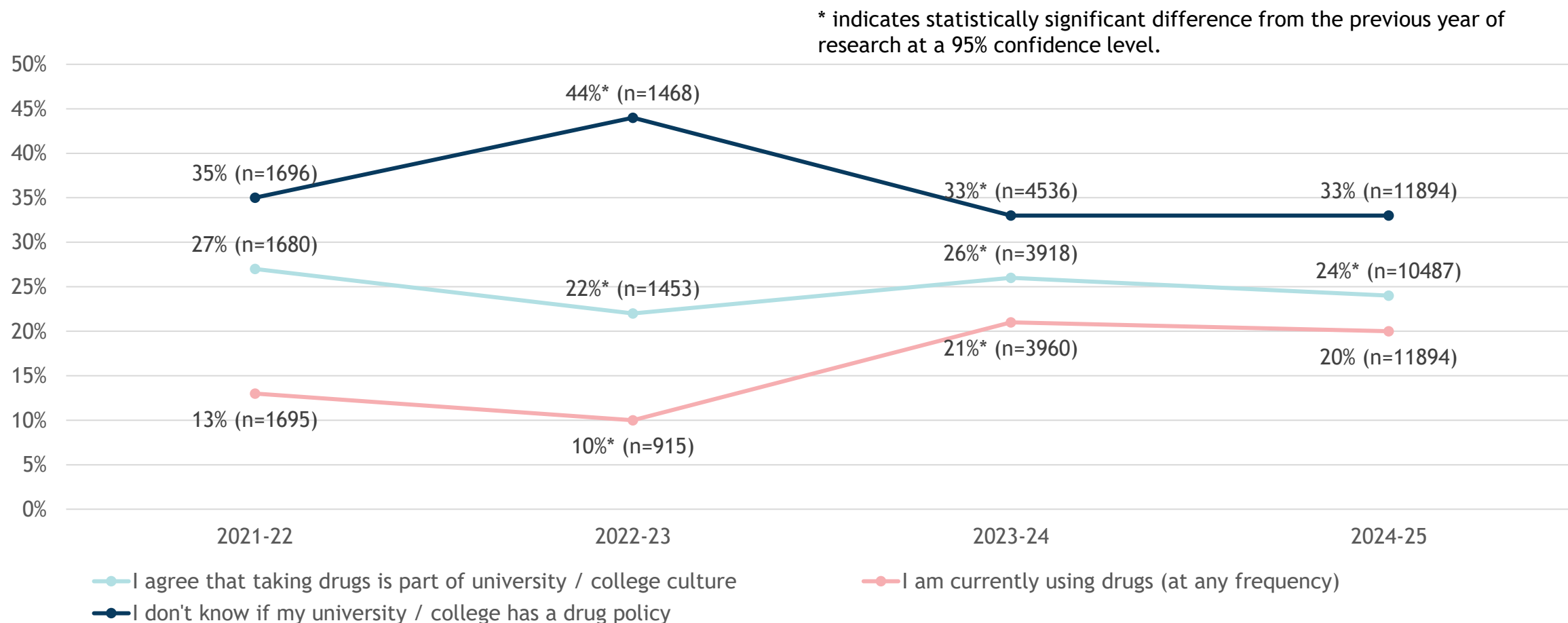


31% are undergraduates in their first year of study

30% of students live in the North of England

TRACKING CHANGES- RESEARCH FROM 2021-2025

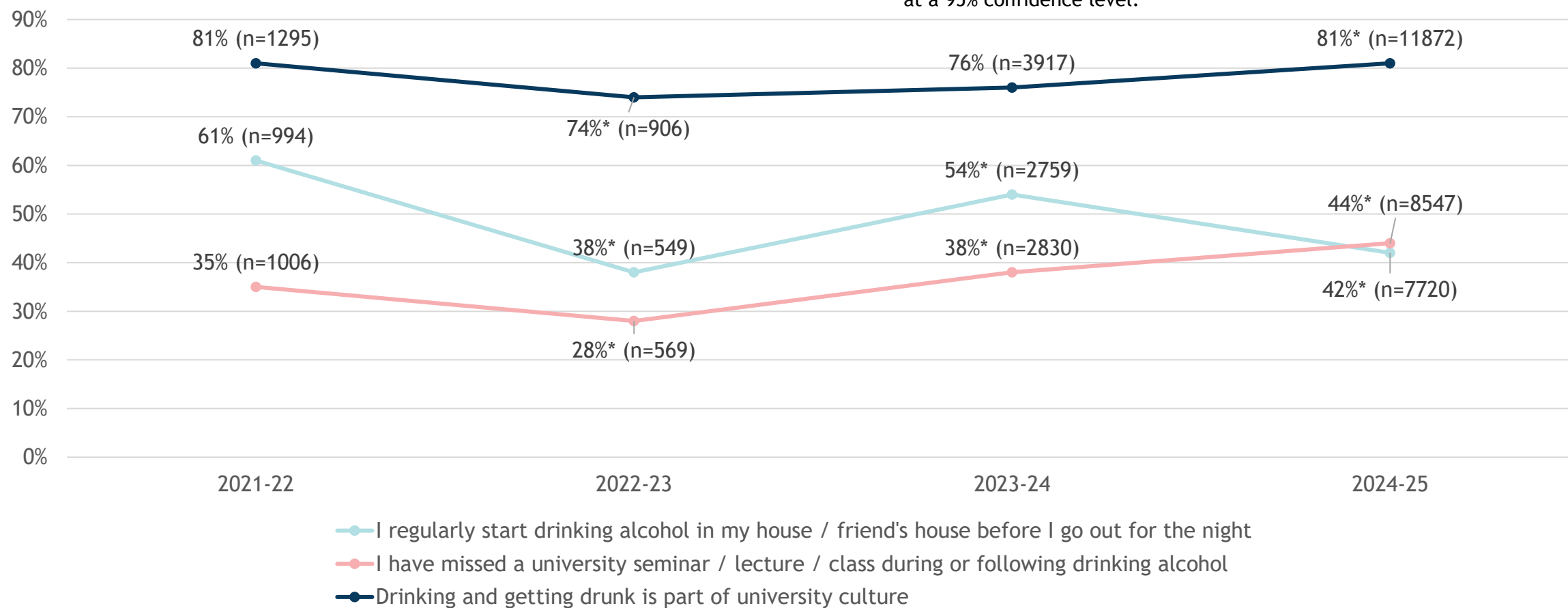
Looking across the 4 years of survey research shows fluctuations in perceptions of drugs within university/college culture, use of drugs and awareness of their institution's drugs policy, though it is worth noting the respondents to the survey vary year on year.



Q. Which of the following describes your current frequency of drug use? Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements? Taking drugs is part of university / college culture. Q. How much, if anything, do you know about the policy / policies your university has on drugs? I don't know if my university / college has a drugs policy. [Base: In brackets]

Looking alcohol related behaviours and perceptions across the 4 years of survey research shows fluctuations in pre-drinking at home before nights out, the impact of drinking on academic life and the perception of alcohol in university culture. Again, it is worth remembering the change in sample for each year of the survey.

* indicates statistically significant difference from the previous year of research at a 95% confidence level.



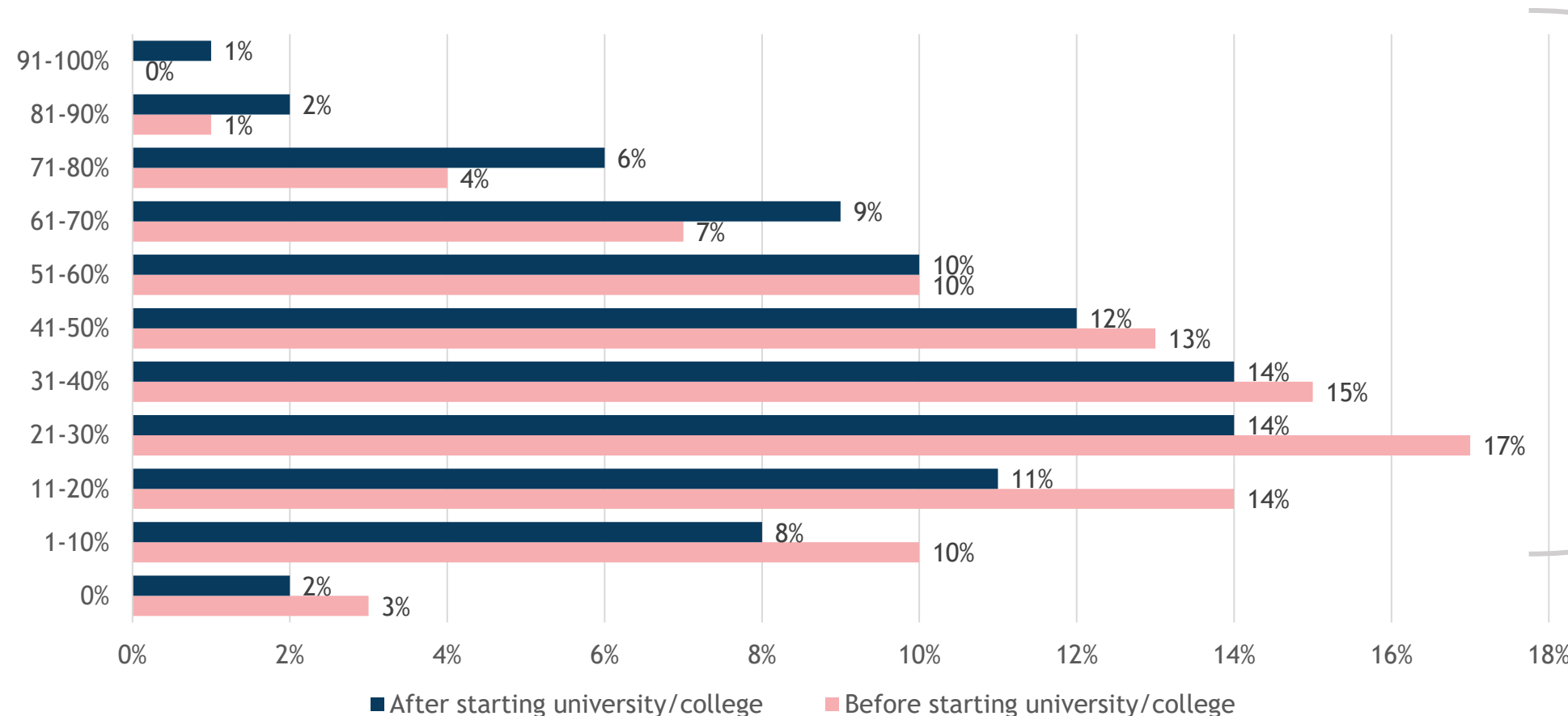
Q. Do any of the following describe your drinking behaviour? Start drinking alcohol in your house / friend's house before you go out for the night. Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements. Drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture. Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university, during or following the consumption of alcohol? Missed a university / seminar / lecture / class. [Base: In brackets]

RESEARCH FINDINGS: DRUGS

Perceptions of student drug use and campus drug culture

When reflecting on their perceptions of student drug use before starting university/college, 91% of respondents said they thought students used drugs at any frequency. Their perception of student drug use decreases* after starting university/college, reporting that students use less drugs (87%).

* indicates statistically significant difference at a 95% confidence level.



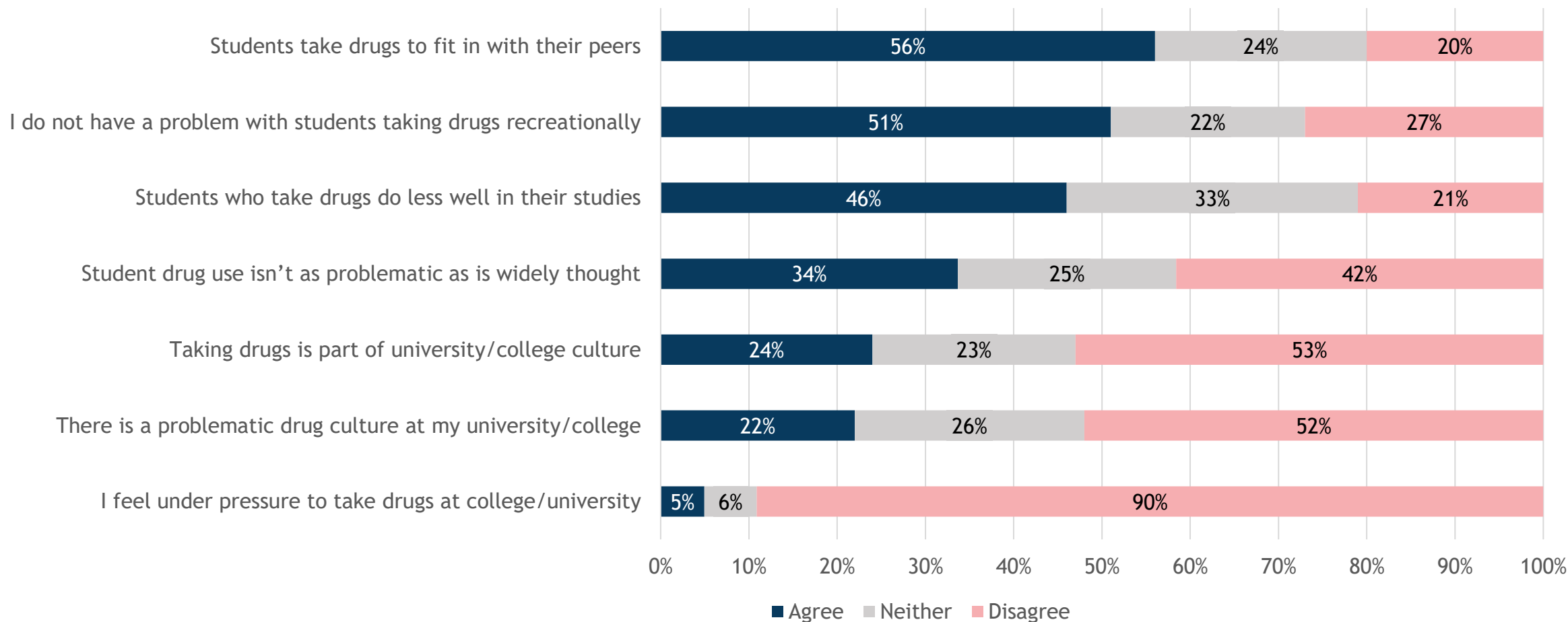
Before starting university/college **91%** thought students used drugs at any frequency

After starting university, **87%** think their peers use drugs at any frequency

Q. Please select the phrase which best describes your perceptions: Before starting at university/college, did you believe that students... [Weighted base: 11871 Balance: No response, Don't know]. Scale changed from previous year.

Q. And now you're a student at university/college, which of the following best matches your experiences of drug use? [Weighted base: 11863 Balance: No response, Don't know]. Scale changed from previous year.

Over half of respondents (56%) say they think students take drugs to fit in with their peers, while the majority disagree (90%) that they feel pressure to take drugs at college/university. 51% agree that they do not have a problem with students taking drugs recreationally.



Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements? [Weighted base: c.10487. Balance: No response, Rather not say]

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

Taking drugs is part of university/college culture

- Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduate students to agree that taking drugs is part of university/college culture.
- UK citizens and international students from the EU are more likely to agree than international students from outside the EU.
- Respondents who identify as gay are more likely to agree than heterosexual respondents.
- Respondents who identify as people of colour are more likely to agree than those from white identities.
- Respondents aged between 18-22 are more likely to agree than those between 40-49.

Students take drugs to fit in with their peers

- UK citizens are more likely to agree than international students from outside the EU.
- Respondents who are women are more likely to agree than respondents who are men.
- Undergraduate respondents in their fourth year are more likely to agree than those in first year.
- Respondents who are people of colour are more likely to agree than those from white identities.
- Respondents aged between 18-22 are more likely to agree than those between 40-49.

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

Further key differences include:

I do not have a problem with students taking drugs recreationally

- Undergraduate students are more likely to agree than postgraduate students.
- UK citizens are more likely to agree than international students from within and outside the EU.
- Undergraduate respondents in their first year of study are more likely to agree than postgraduate students studying for a Masters.
- Respondents who identify as lesbians are more likely to agree than heterosexual respondents.
- Respondents who identify as people of colour are more likely to agree than those from white identities.

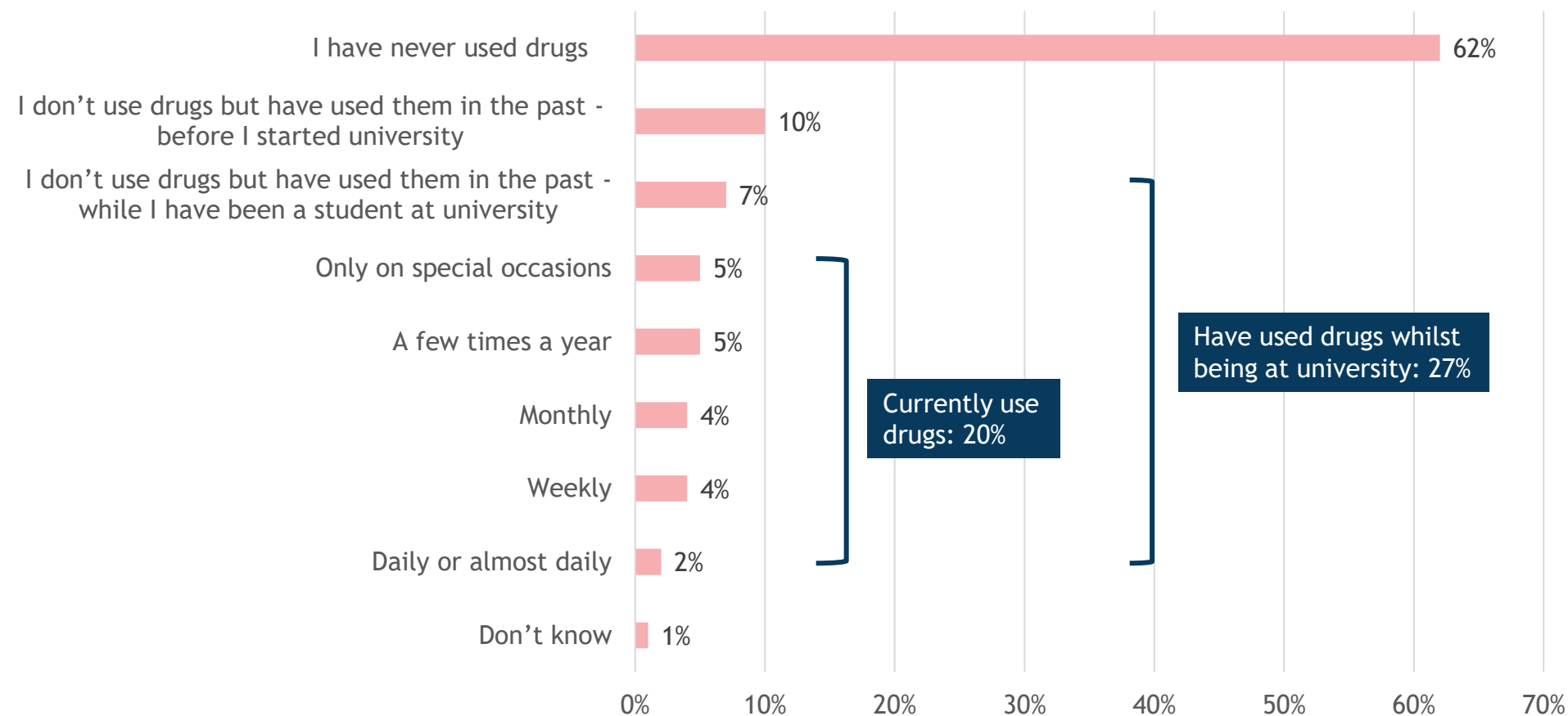
Student drug use isn't as problematic as is widely thought

- Undergraduates are more likely to agree than postgraduate students.
- UK citizens are more likely to agree than international students within and outside the EU.
- Respondents who are men are more likely to agree than respondents who are women.
- Undergraduate respondents in their first year of study are more likely to agree than postgraduate students studying for a PhD.
- Respondents who identify as gay are more likely to agree than heterosexual respondents.
- Respondents aged between 18-22 are more likely to agree than those between 40-49.

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

Student drug use

79% of respondents do not currently use drugs. Over a quarter have used drugs whilst at university (27%), and 2% use drugs daily or almost daily.



Do not currently use drugs: 79%

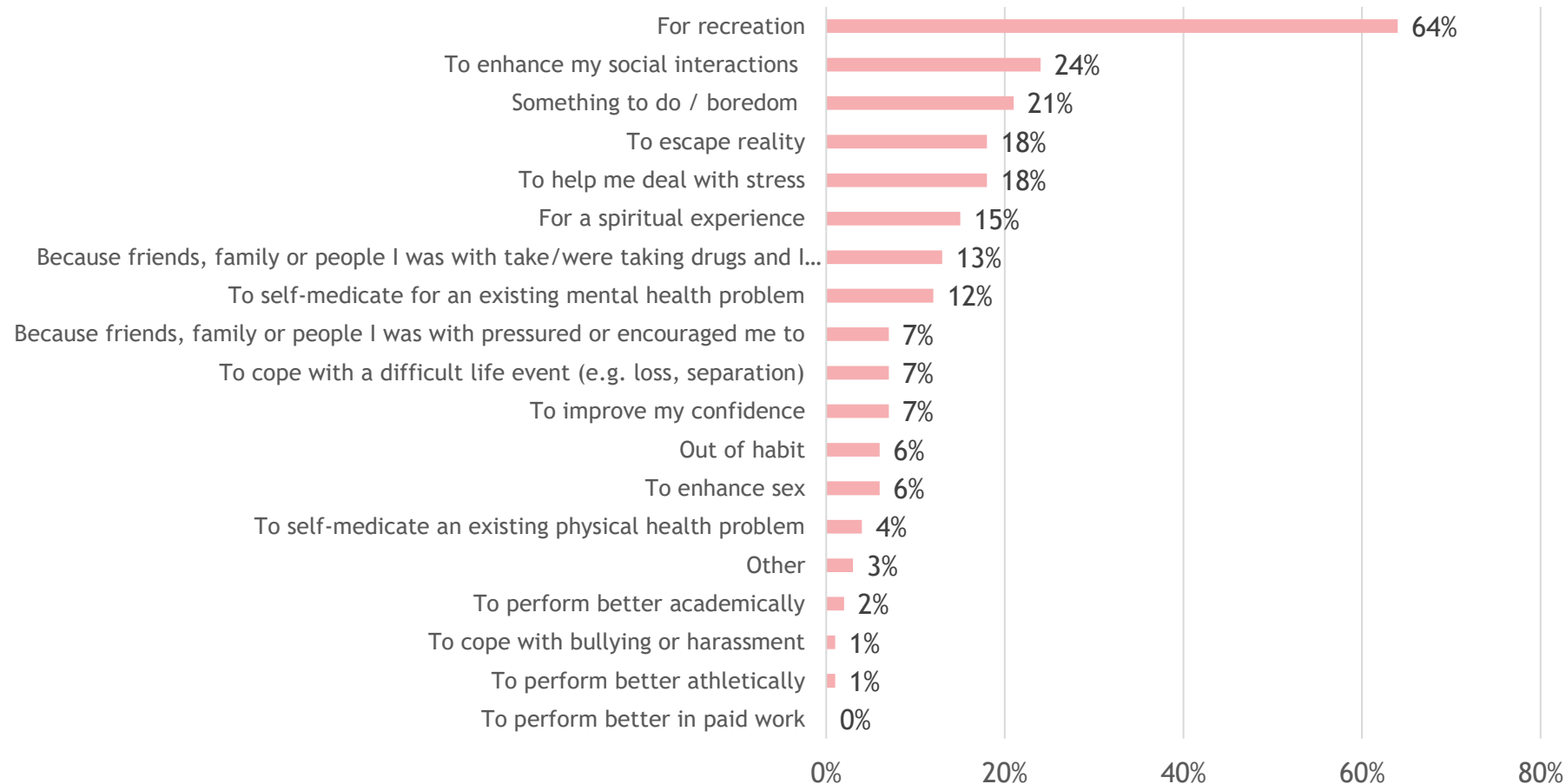
Non-EU respondents are more likely to say they have never used drugs than UK citizens.

Respondents who are women are more likely to have never used drugs than respondents who are men.

Respondents who identify as heterosexual are more likely to say they have never used drugs than those who identify as gay.

Q. Which of the following best describes your current frequency of drug use? [Weighted base: 11894 Balance: No response]

The majority of respondents (64%) use drugs for recreation, with nearly a quarter (24%) to enhance their social interactions. Only 1% reported that they used drugs to cope with bullying or harassment or to perform better athletically.



International students from within the EU are more likely to use drugs to perform better academically than UK citizens.

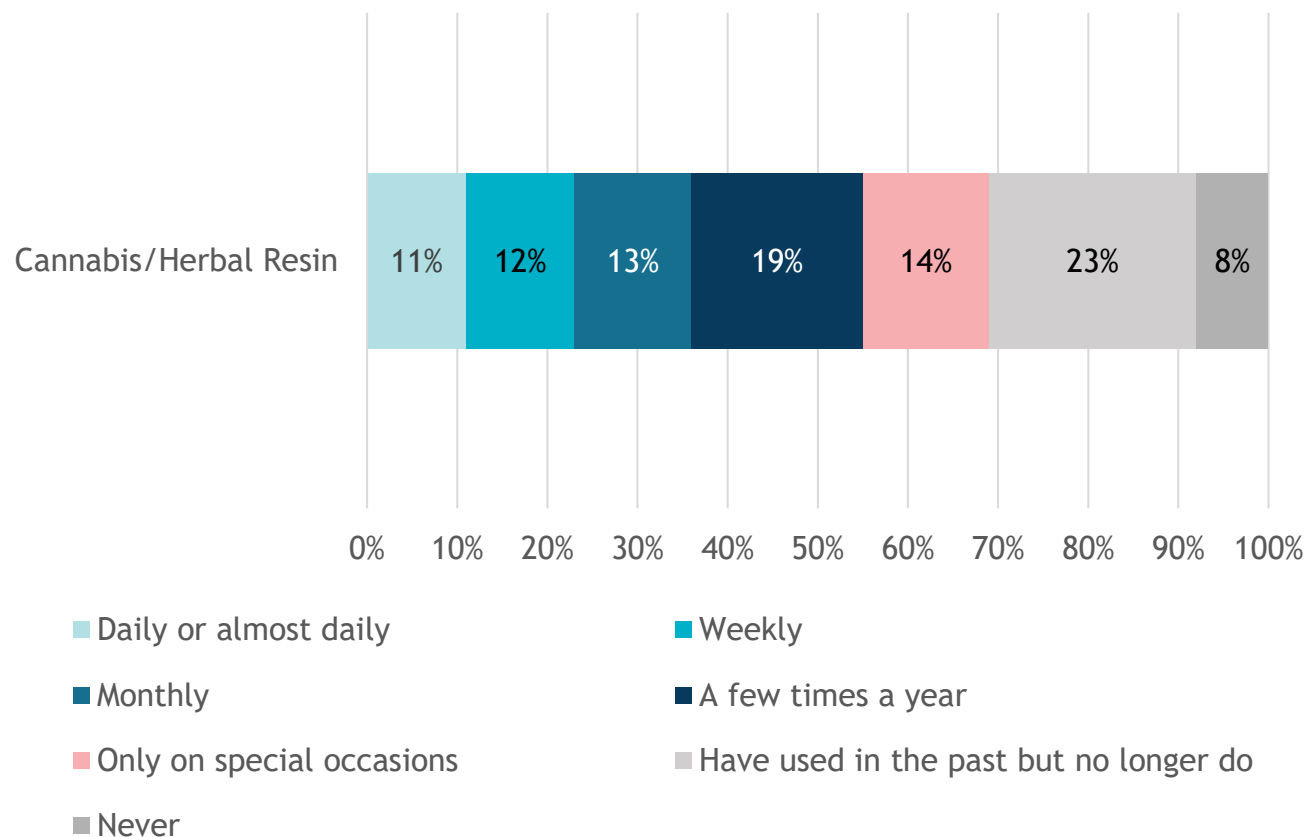
Disabled students are more likely to self-medicate for an existing physical or mental health problem, compared to those who don't identify in this way.

Respondents who are men are more likely to use drugs for recreation than women respondents and for something to do / boredom, while respondents who are women are more likely to when friends / family / people are with were taking drugs and wanting to fit in.

Respondents who identify as people of colour are more likely to use drugs for recreation than those from white identities.

Q. Which of the following best describes why you use / have used drugs? [Weighted base: 3257 Balance: No response, Never have used drugs and None of these - I have used drugs in the past but not since I have been a student)

Cannabis is the most frequently reported drug for those who currently or have used drugs in the past as a student, with over two thirds saying they use the drug. 11% of students report using cannabis daily or almost daily.



69%
who currently use drugs are using cannabis

Undergraduate students are more likely to use cannabis daily or almost daily than postgraduate students.

UK citizens are more likely to use cannabis daily or almost daily than non-EU and EU international students studying in the UK.

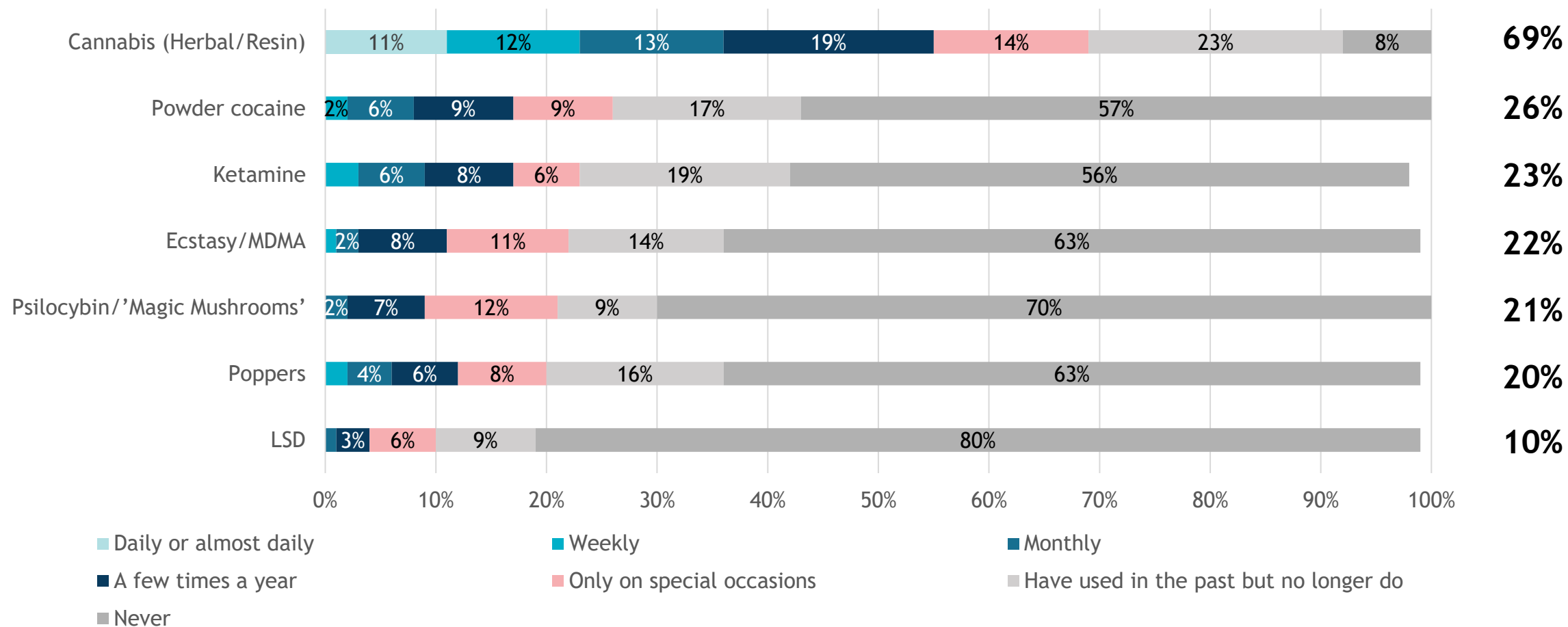
Men respondents are more likely to use cannabis daily or almost daily than women respondents.

Disabled students are more likely to use cannabis daily or almost daily than non-disabled students.

Q. Still thinking about your time at university/college, which of the following best describes your frequency of particular drug use? [Weighted base: 6427 Balance: No response]

Looking at the full range of drugs used by respondents, 69% who currently or have used drugs in the past whilst as a student report using cannabis. This is followed by powder cocaine (26%), then ketamine (23%).

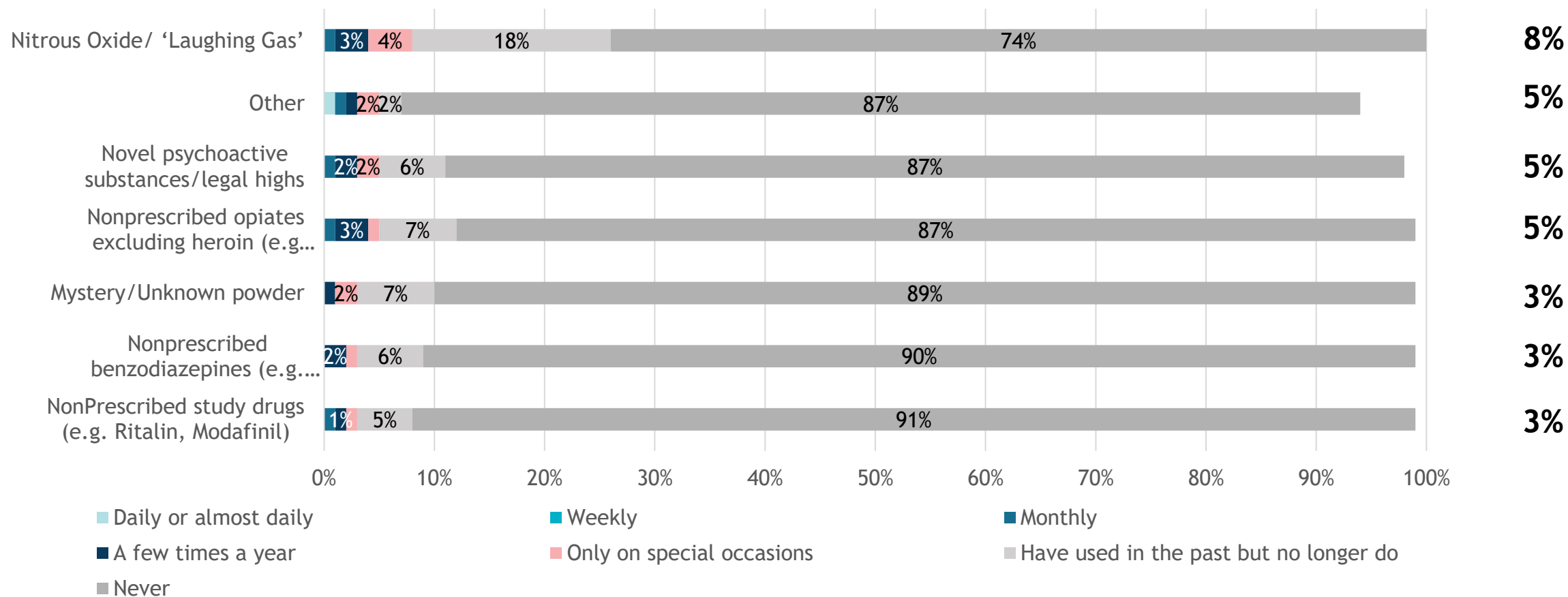
Total current
use only



Q. Still thinking about your time at university/college, which of the following best describes your frequency of particular drug use? [Weighted base: c. 3049. Balance: Rather not say]

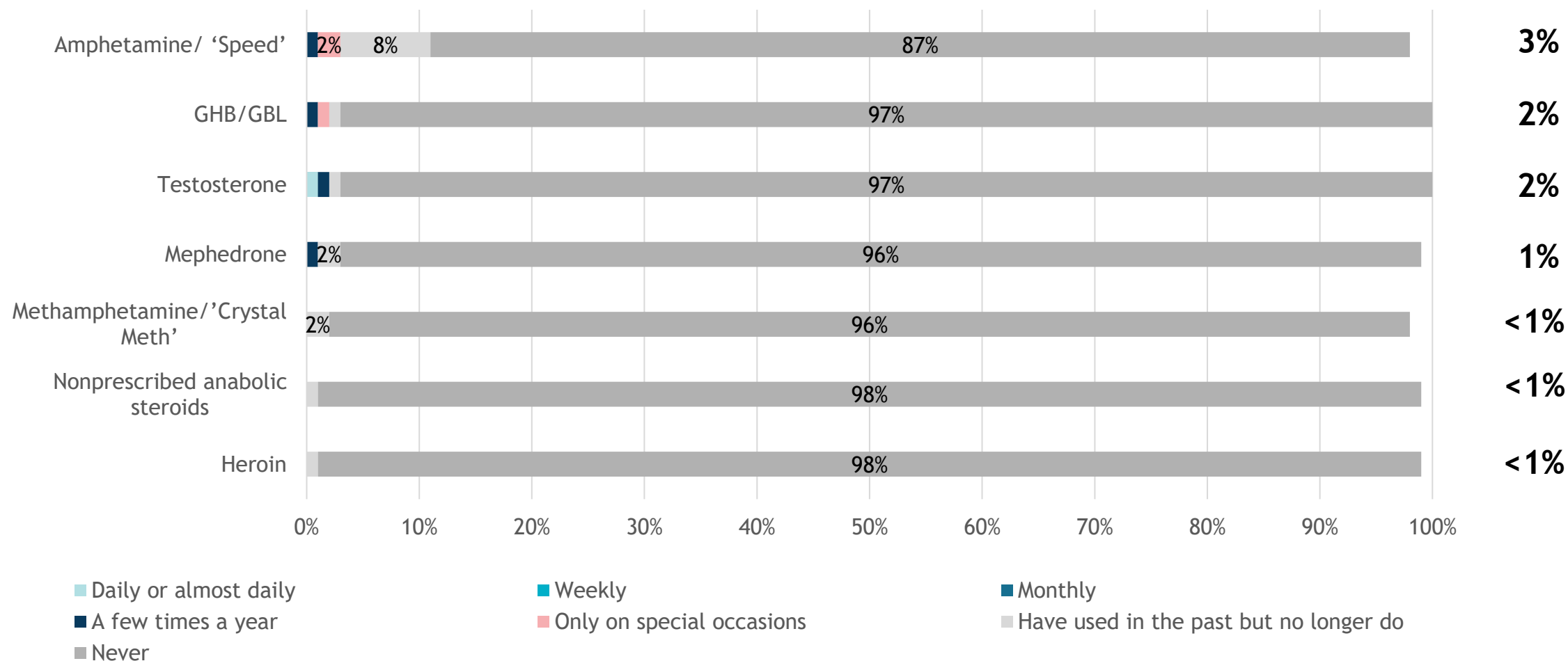
Still looking at the range of drugs used by respondents, 8% report using nitrous oxide currently, while 74% have never used it. Only 5% of respondents currently report using Other drugs, novel psychoactive substances and nonprescribed opiates.

Total current
use only



Q. Still thinking about your time at university/college, which of the following best describes your frequency of particular drug use? [Weighted base: c. 3049. Balance: Rather not say]

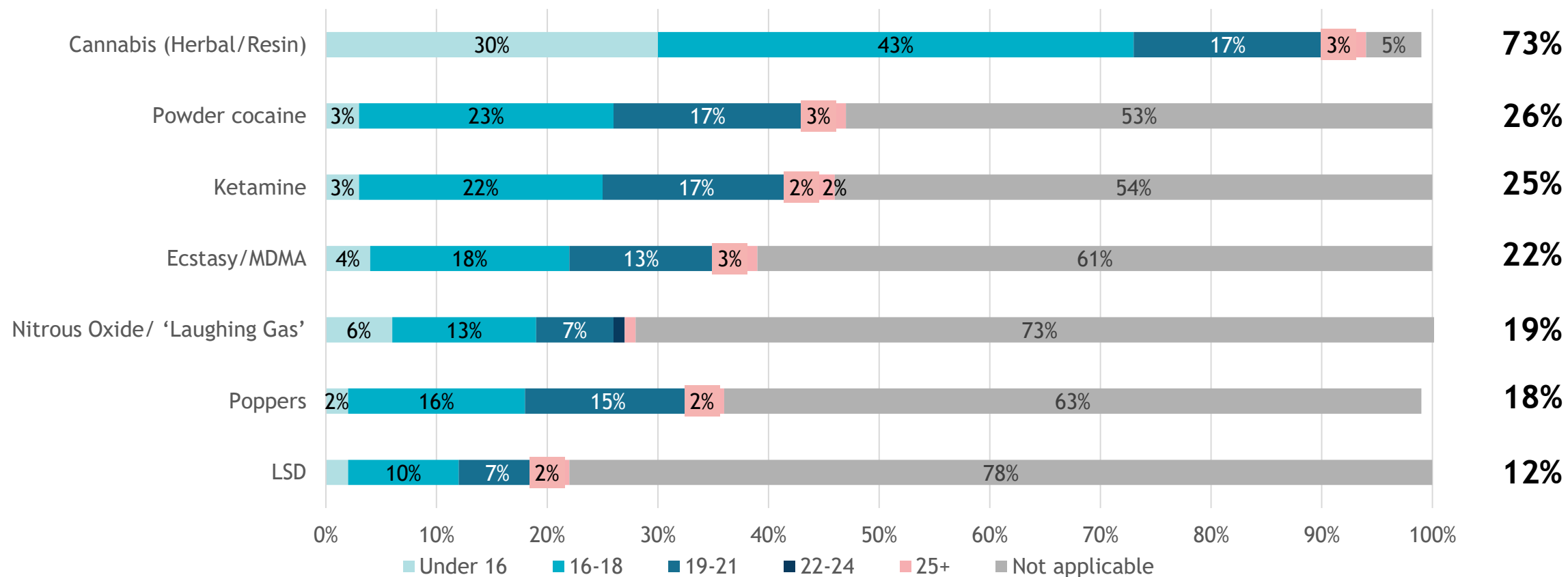
From the full list of drugs shown to respondents, low levels of use were reported for amphetamines with 3% of respondents report currently use amphetamines, followed by 2% for GHB and testosterone.



Q. Still thinking about your time at university/college, which of the following best describes your frequency of particular drug use? [Weighted base: c. 3049. Balance: Rather not say]

Cannabis is reported to be used by 73% of respondents for the first time aged 18 or below. Around a quarter (26%) of respondents used powder cocaine for the first time aged 18 or below, and 25% of respondents for ketamine. 17% of respondents report using cannabis, powder cocaine and ketamine for the first time during the ages they're likely to be at university/college (aged 19-21).

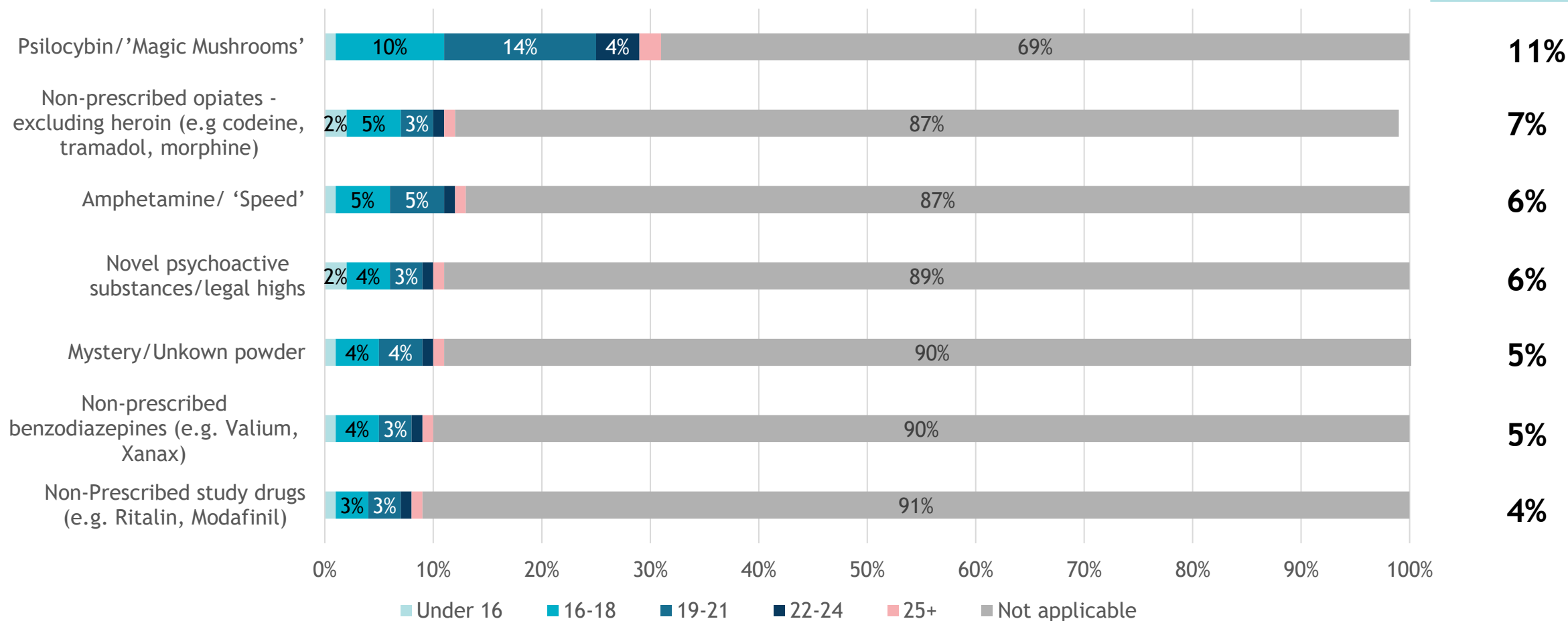
First time use
aged 18 or
below



Q. How old were you when you first used these drugs? [Weighted base: c. 2846 Balance: No response]

Over a tenth (11%) of respondents report using psilocybin for the first time aged 18 or below. 14% first used it between the ages of 19-21. For most of the drugs listed below, 5% or fewer say they first used the drug during the typical undergraduate age range of 19-21 years.

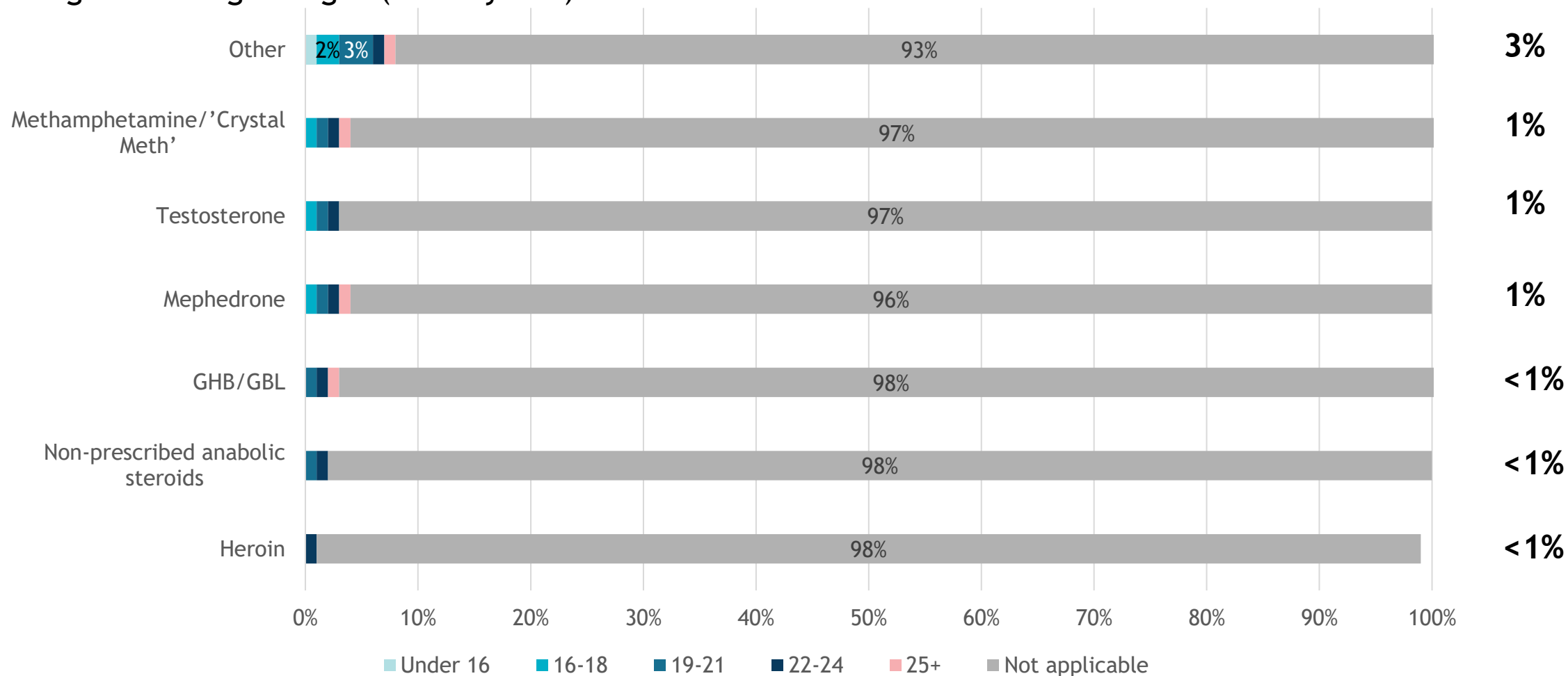
First time use
aged 18 or
below



Q. How old were you when you first used these drugs? [Weighted base: c. 2846 Balance: No response]

<1% of respondents reported using GHB, non-prescribed anabolic steroids or heroin aged 18 or below, and similarly low levels of respondents report first using the drugs below during typical undergraduate age ranges (19-21 years).

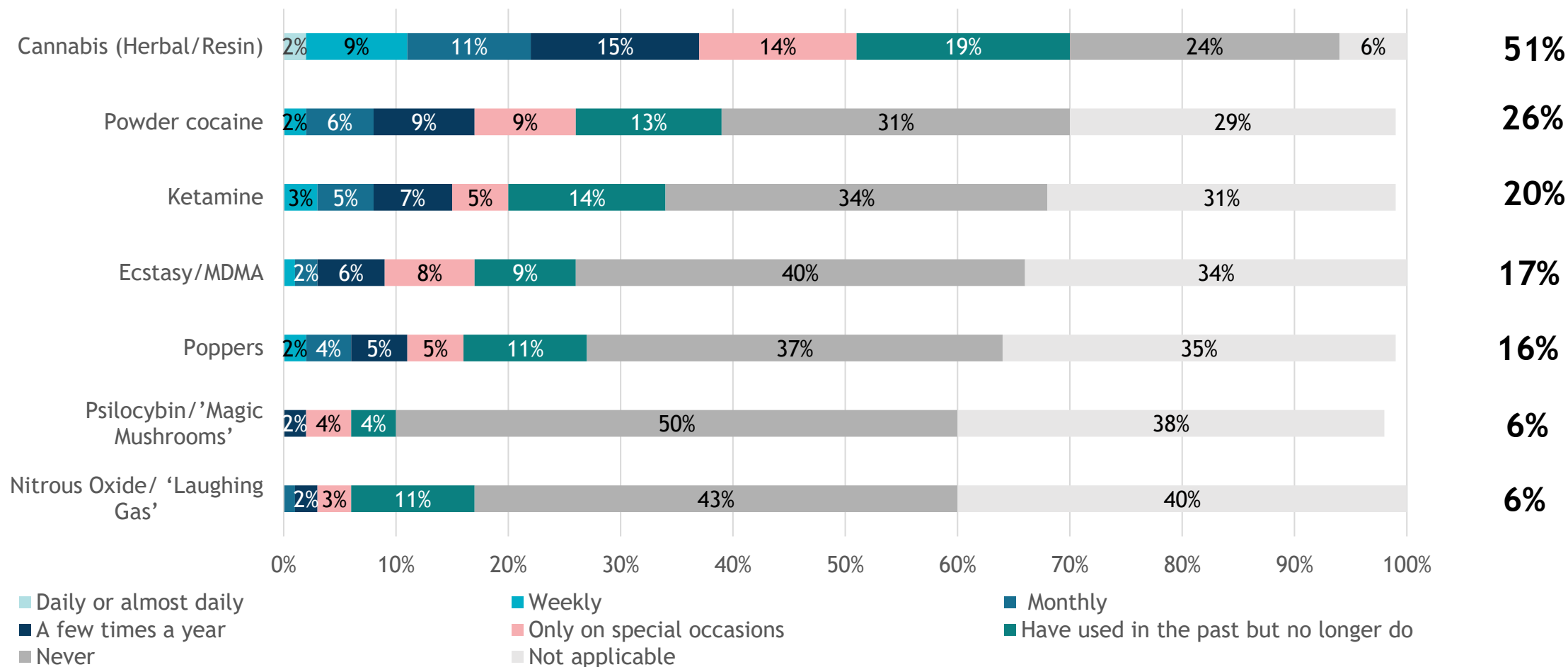
First time use
aged 18 or
below



Q. How old were you when you first used these drugs? [Weighted base: c. 2846 Balance: No response]

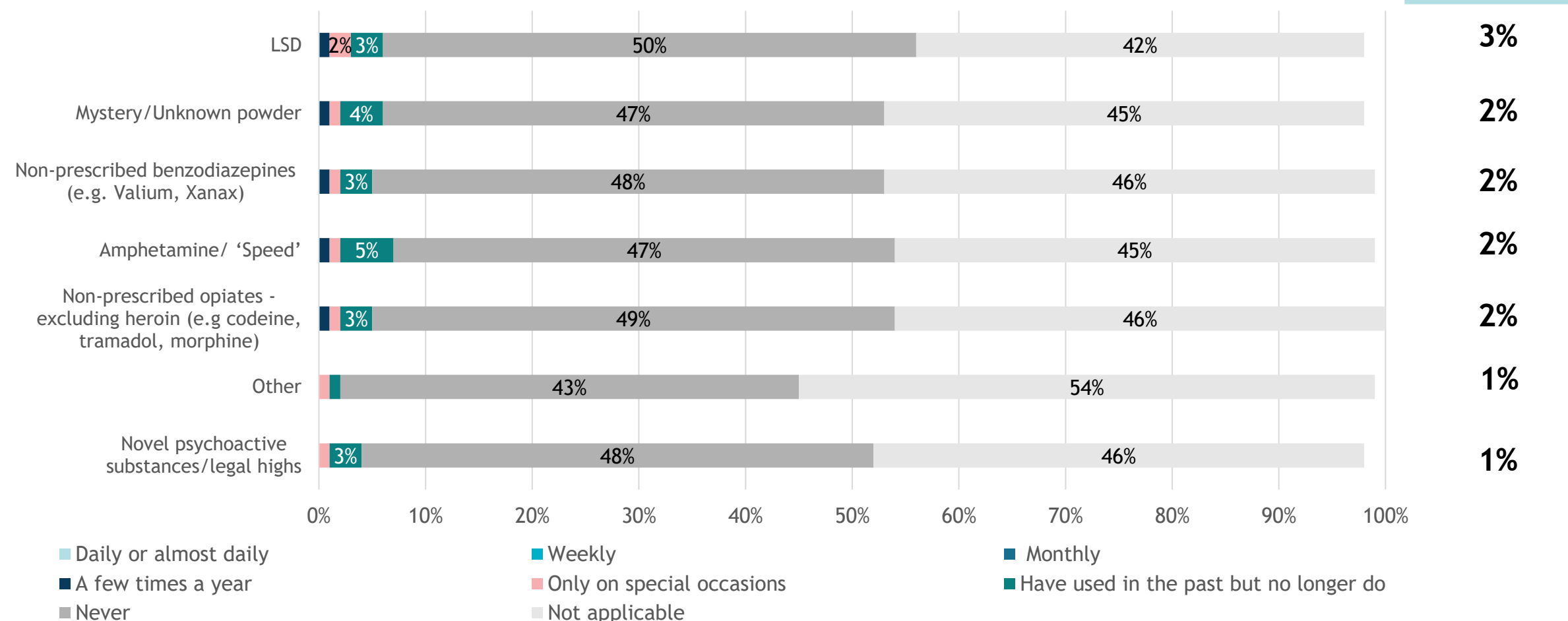
Respondents were asked about their drug use in combination with alcohol. Over half (51%) of respondents who currently use drugs reported using cannabis with alcohol, with 2% doing so weekly. Over a quarter (26%) reported using powder cocaine with alcohol.

Total current use with alcohol



Q. Still thinking about your time at university/college, approximately how often do you use the following drugs with alcohol? [Weighted base: c. 2769. Balance: Rather not say]

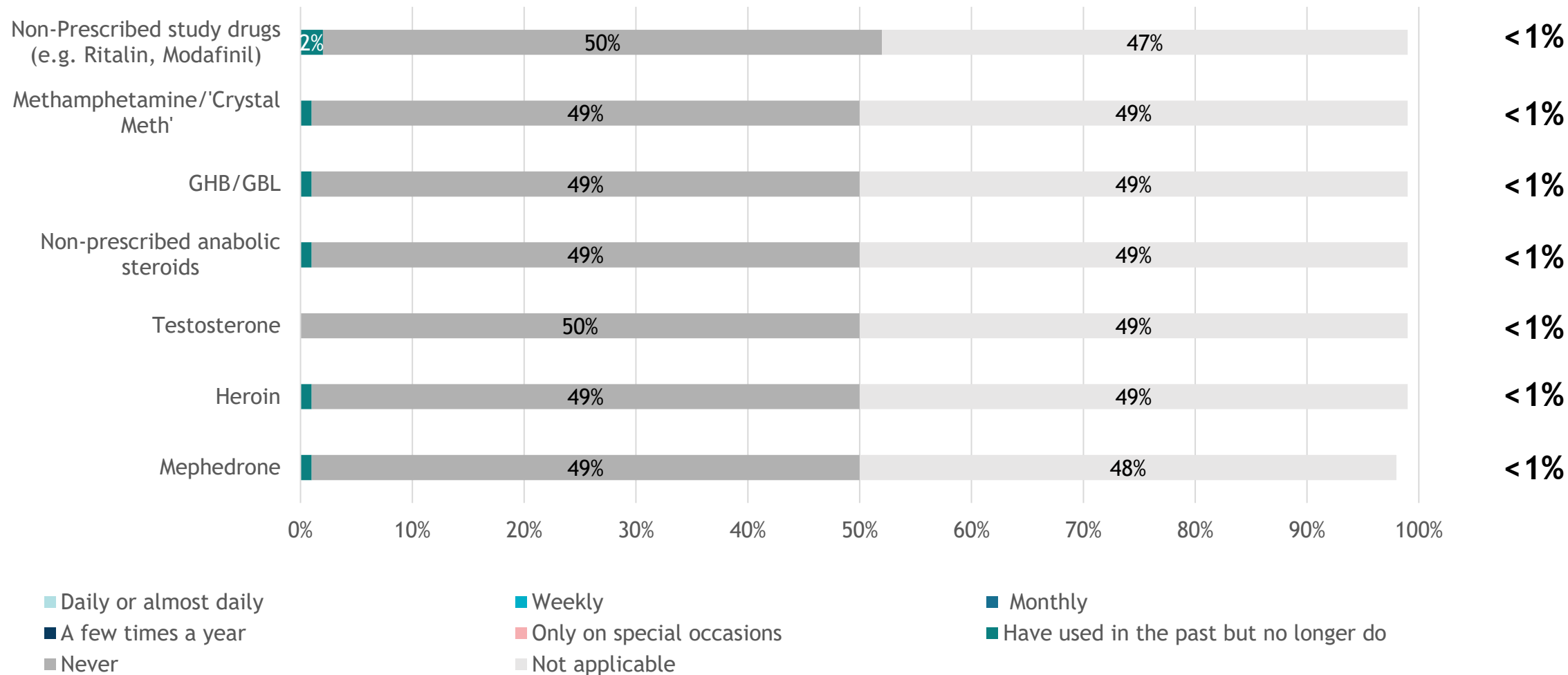
3% of respondents who currently use drugs use LSD in combination with alcohol. 2% report using alcohol with mystery/unknown powder, non-prescribed benzodiazepines, amphetamine and non-prescribed opiates.



Q. Still thinking about your time at university/college, approximately how often do you use the following drugs with alcohol? [Weighted base: c. 2769. Balance: Rather not say]

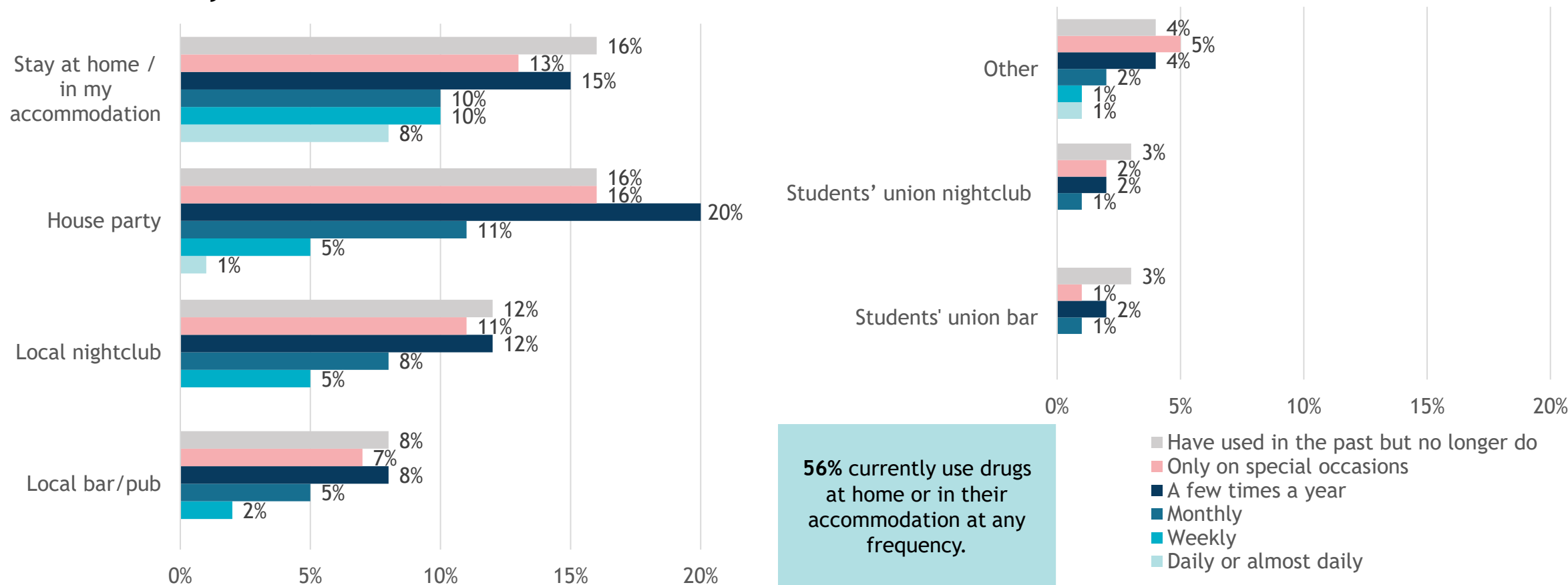
Less than 1% of respondents reported using any of the following drugs in combination with alcohol currently. 2% reported using non-prescribed study drugs in the past but no longer do.

Total current use with alcohol



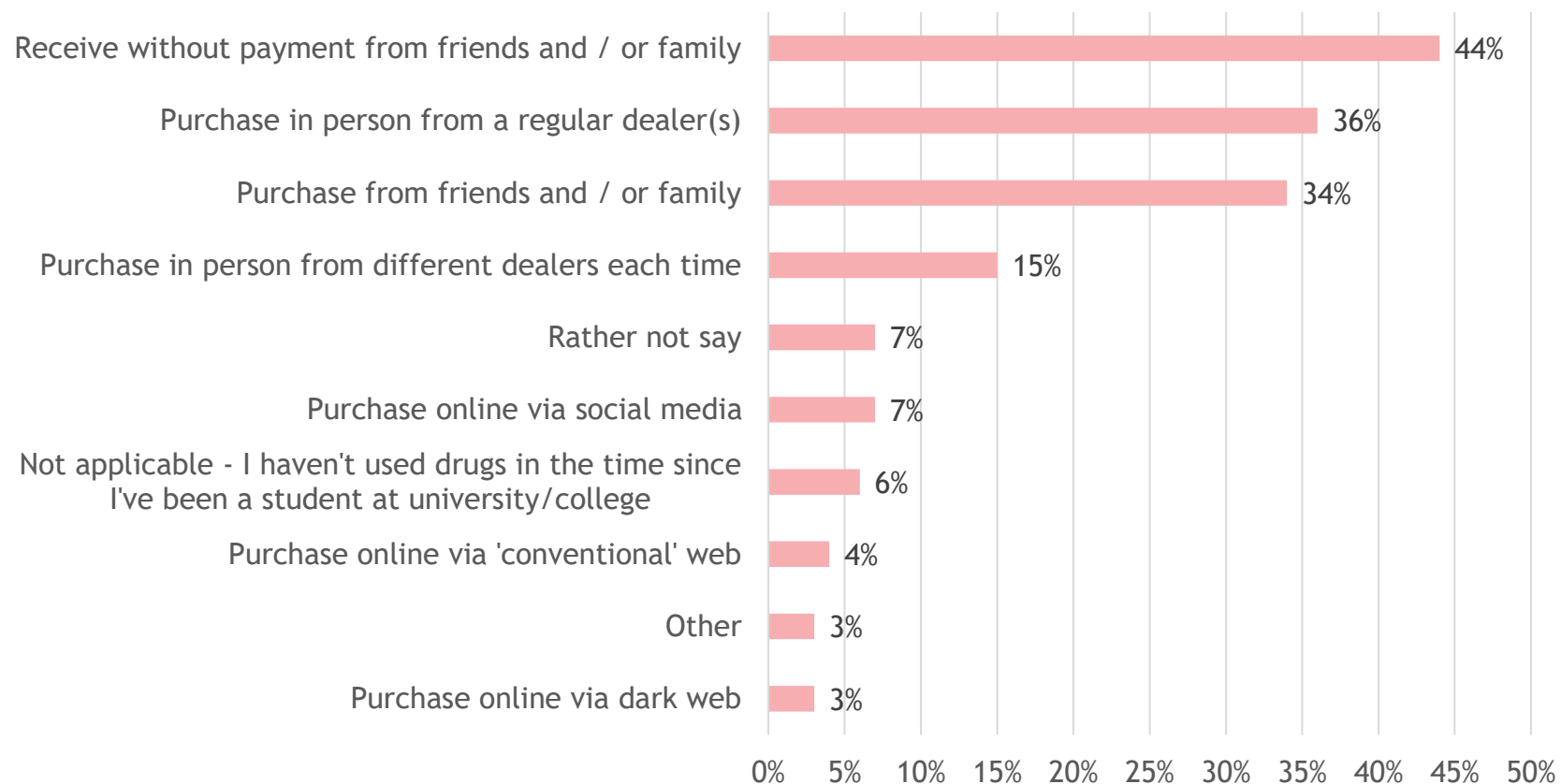
Q. Still thinking about your time at university/college, approximately how often do you use the following drugs with alcohol? [Weighted base: c. 2769. Balance: Rather not say]

When asked where they take drugs, the most prevalent response is in their homes or accommodation, with 8% doing so daily or almost daily. 5% of respondents use drugs weekly at house parties and fifth (20%) do this a few times a year.



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? [Weighted base: 2842, Balance: No response, Rather not say and Never have used drugs]

The most common method of procuring drugs is through friends/family without payment (44%), followed by purchased in person from a regular dealer(s) (36%).



Undergraduate students are less likely to have purchased drugs online via the dark web than postgraduate and PhD students.

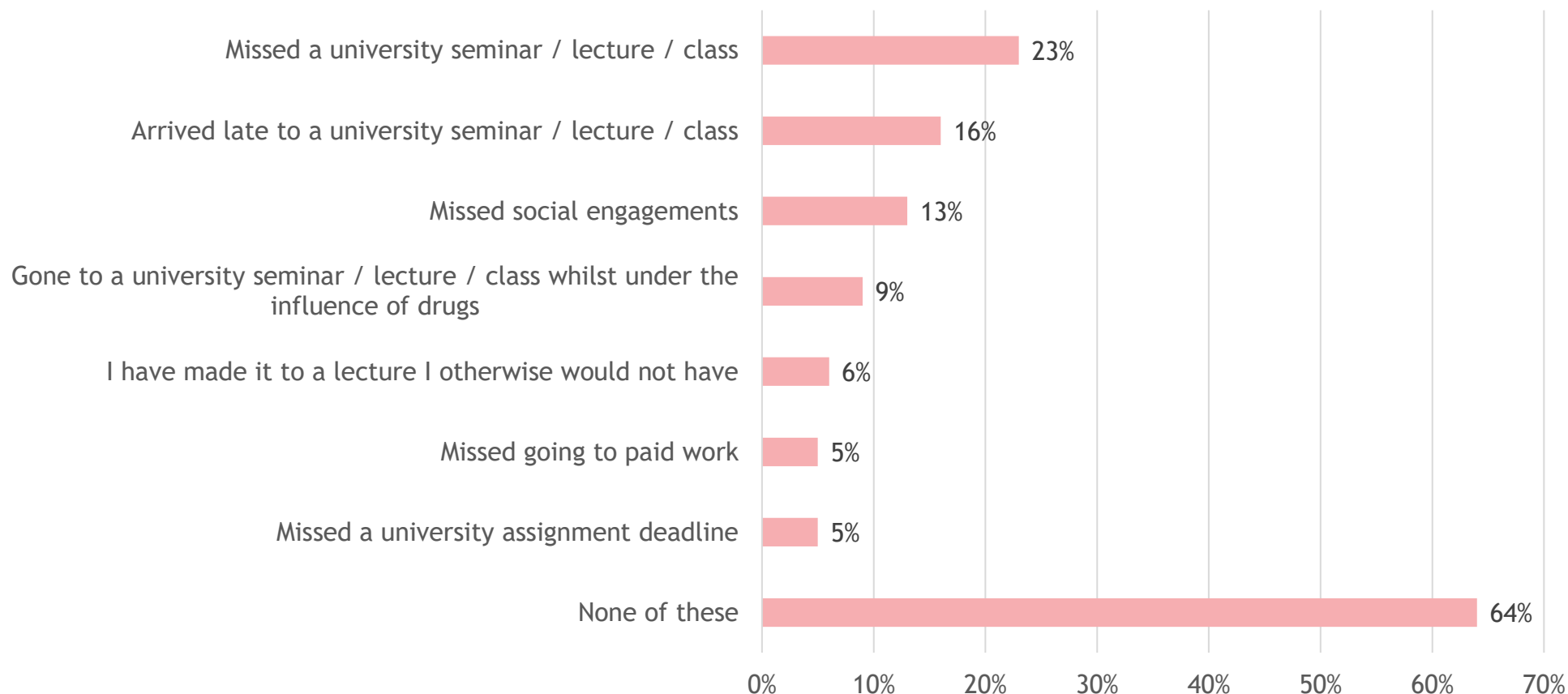
UK citizens are more likely to purchase drugs in person from a regular dealer(s) than international students from within the EU.

Respondents who are women are more likely to receive drugs without payment from friends and / or family than men respondents.

Q. Thinking of your experiences since you started university, which of the following describes where or how you acquire or have acquired drugs? [Weighted base: 3214 Balance: No response, other and never have used drugs]

Impacts of drug use

The most reported academic impact following or during drug use is missing a university seminar / lecture / class (23%), then arriving late (16%). 5% reported missing a university assignment deadline.

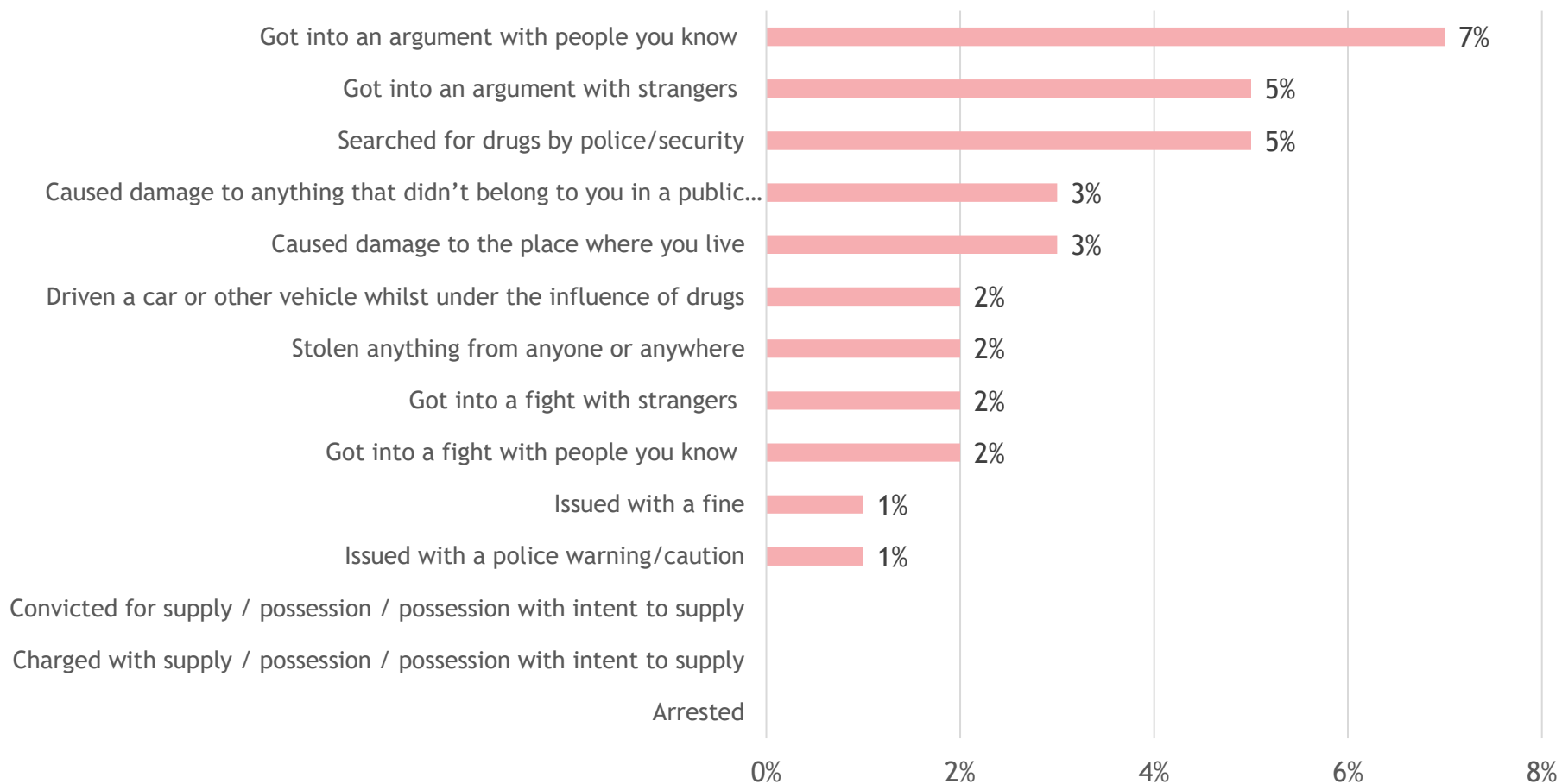


Respondents aged between 23-29 are more likely to report that they missed going to paid work than those between 18-22.

Undergraduate respondents in their second year are more likely to report missing a university seminar / lecture / class than those in their first year.

Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university / college during or following taking drugs? [Weighted base: 3228 Balance: No response, Rather not say 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%), and being searched by security/ police (5%) are the most reported impacts following or during drug use related to crime and anti-social behaviour.

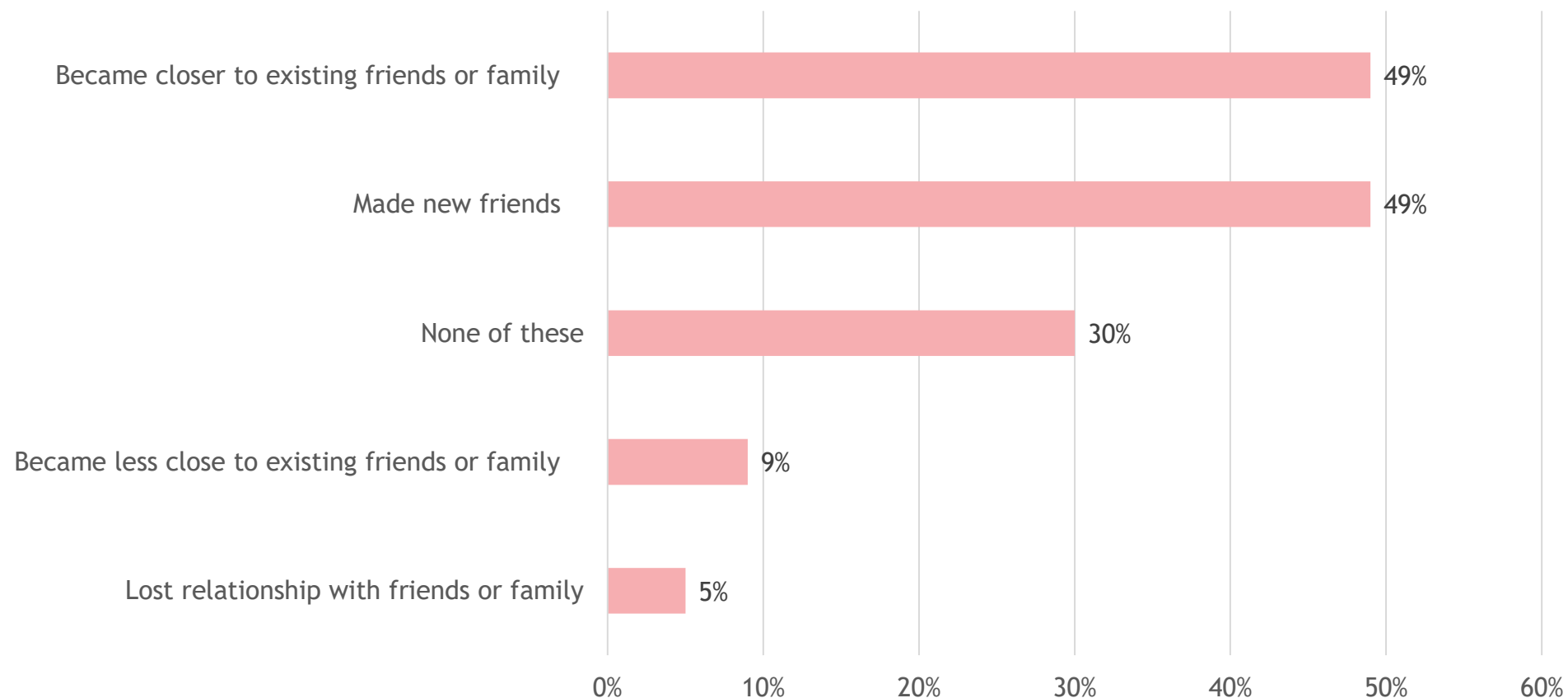


Respondents who are UK citizens are more likely to report getting into an argument with strangers than respondents who are international students from outside the EU.

Respondents who identify as gay are more likely to report stealing anything from anyone or anywhere than heterosexual respondents.

Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university / college during or following taking drugs? [Weighted base: 3187 Balance: No response, None of these, Rather not say, Never used drugs]

Amongst respondents, nearly half (49%) reported becoming closer to existing friends or family and making new friends during or following taking drugs. Conversely, 9% reported becoming less close to friends and family and 5% losing relationships with friends or family.

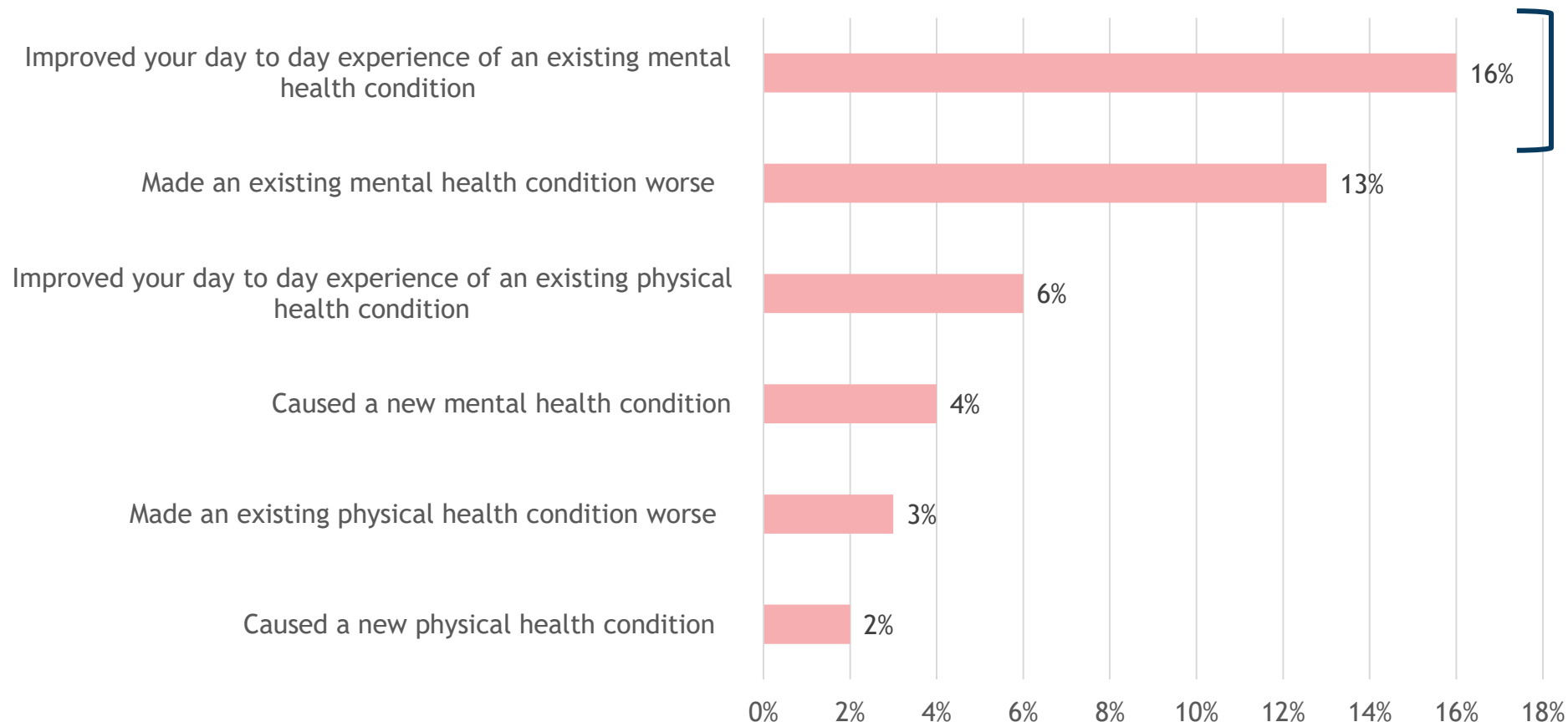


Respondents who identify as bisexual are more likely to report becoming closer to existing friends or family than heterosexual respondents.

Respondents aged between 18-22 are more likely to report becoming closer to existing friends or family than those between 30-39.

Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university / college during or following taking drugs? [Weighted base: 1818 Balance: No response and Never used drugs]

Amongst respondents who currently or have previously used drugs whilst a student, 16% report that using drugs improved their experience of an existing mental health condition. Conversely, 13% say it made an existing mental health condition worse.

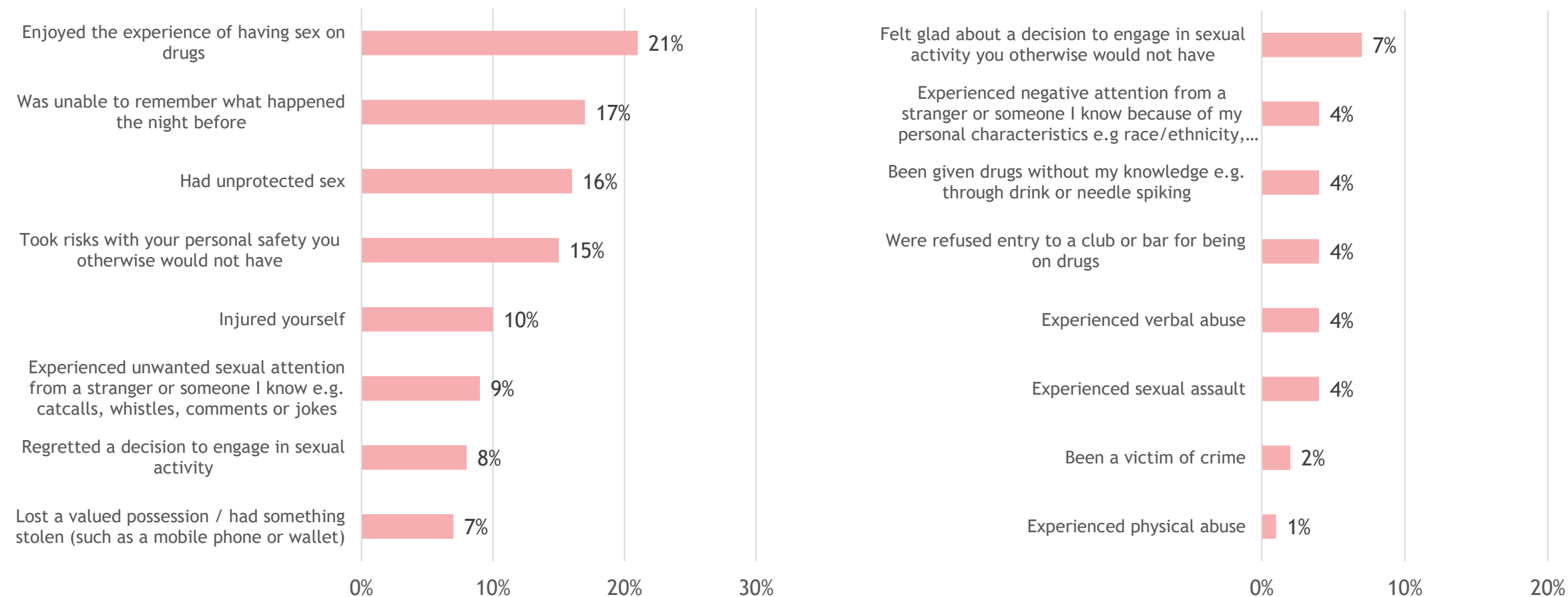


In 2023-24, 20% of respondents reported that drugs improved their experience of an existing mental health condition. This decreases by 4%* in 2024-25.

Respondents who are men are more likely to report drugs improving their experience of an existing physical health condition than women respondents.

Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university / college during or following taking drugs? [Weighted base: 3199 Balance: No response, None of these, Rather not say and Never used drugs] *Statistically significant difference to a 95% confidence level.

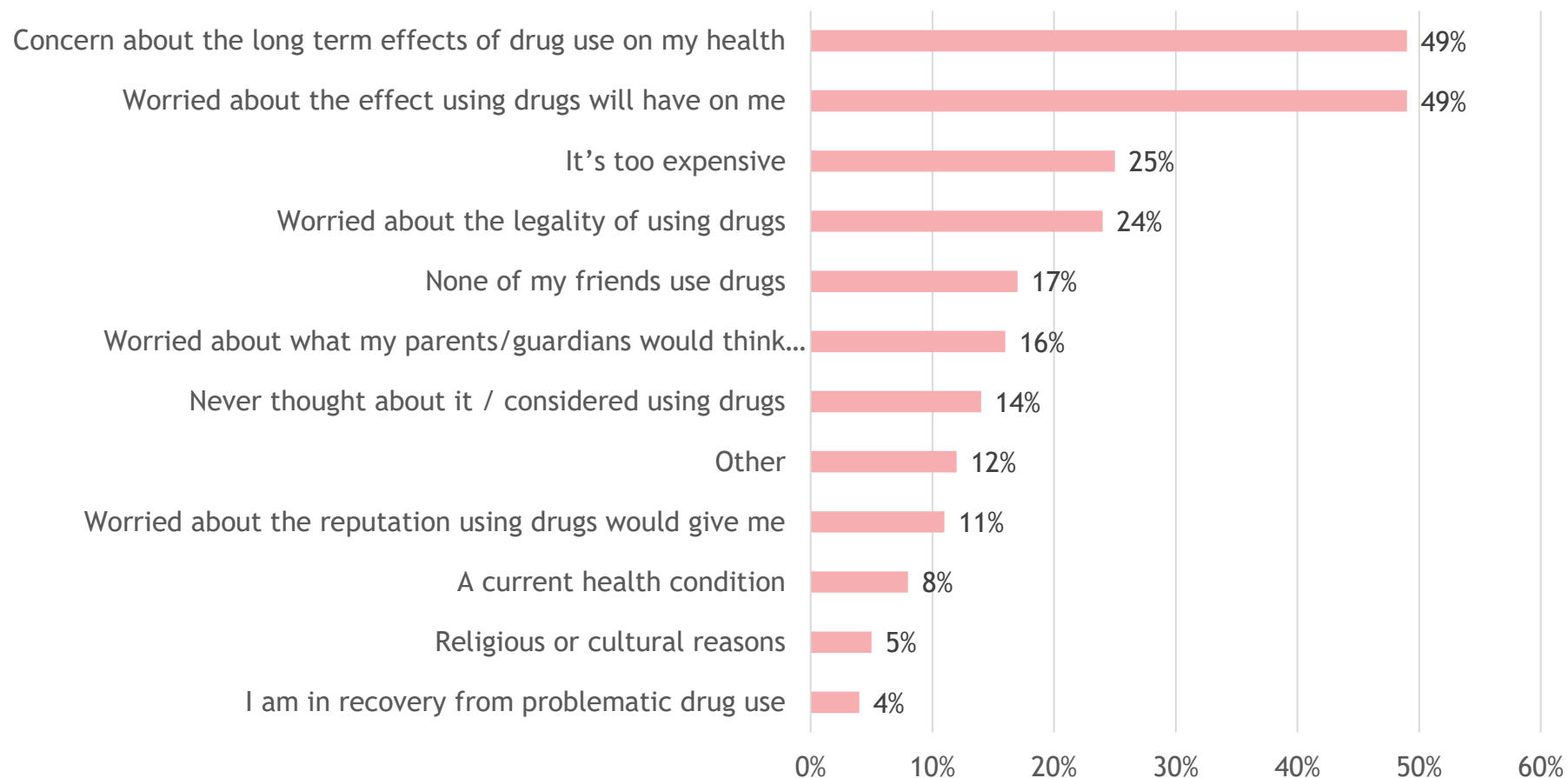
Amongst respondents who currently or have previously used drugs whilst a student, nearly a quarter (21%) said that they enjoyed the experience of having sex on drugs. 17% had experienced being unable to remember what happened the night before during or following taking drugs.



Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university / college during or following taking drugs? [Weighted base: 3194 Balance: No response and Never used drugs]

Students who have stopped taking drugs

For those that don't currently use drugs but have done previously, the most common reasons for stopping are because of concern about the long-term health impacts (49%), worry about the effect using drugs will have on them (49%), and high costs (25%).

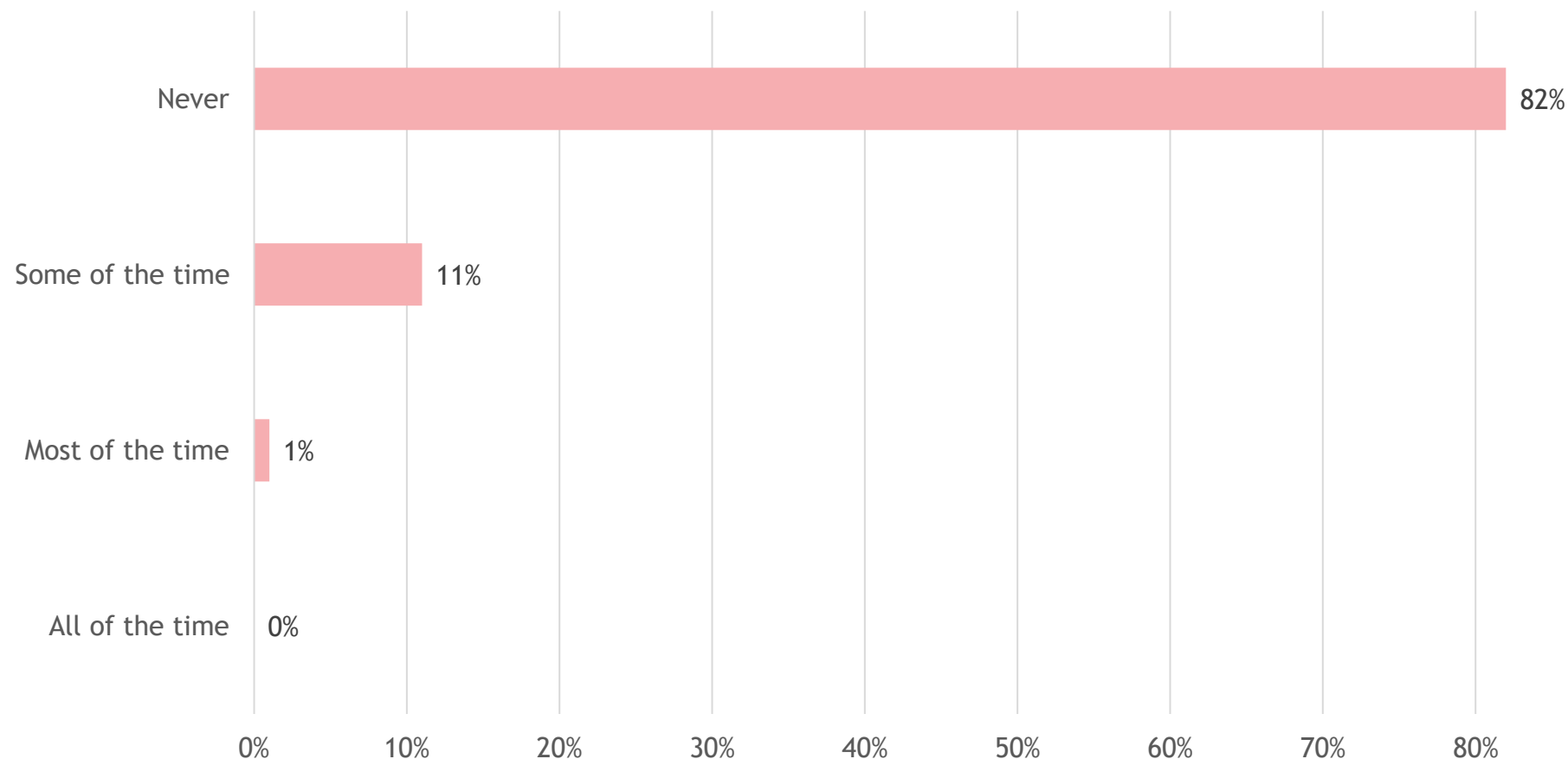


Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduate respondents to stop using drugs because they are worried about what their parents or guardians would think.

Women respondents are more likely to stop using drugs than men respondents because they are worried the effect of using drugs will have on them.

Q. What would you say are your main reasons for not using drugs or stopping using drugs? [Weighted base: 2009 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 (82%).



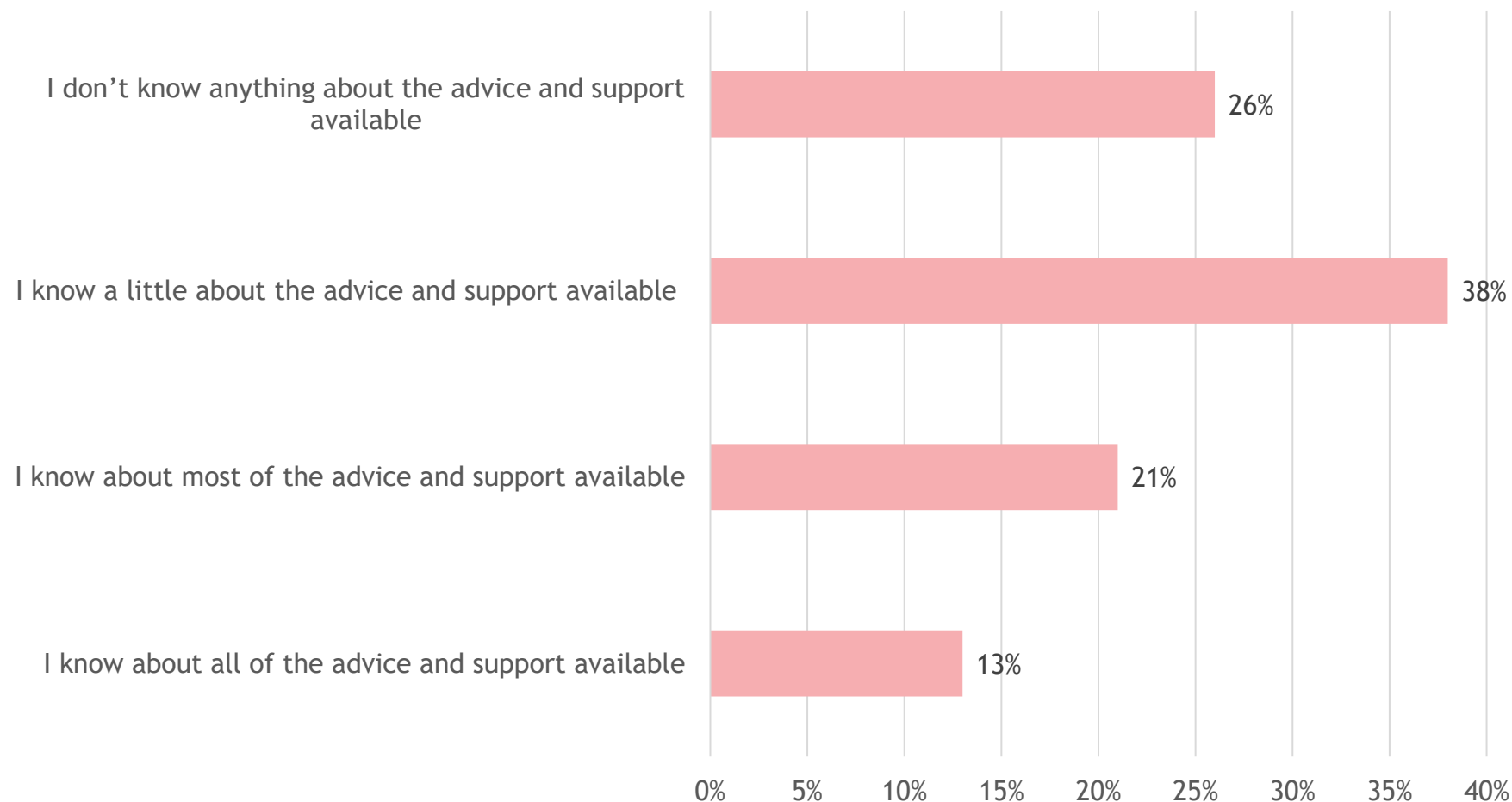
In 2023-24, 79% of respondents said that they never felt pressure to use drugs when socialising with friends. 2024-5 represents an increase of 3%*.

Respondents aged between 18-22 are more likely to say they felt pressure some of the time than those aged between 30-39.

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? [Weighted base: 2008 Balance: No response, Currently use drugs, Rather not say and Don't know] *Statistically significant difference to a 95% confidence level.

Drug harm reduction and support

Around a quarter (26%) of respondents do not know anything about the advice and support available. 13% reported that they know about all of the advice and support available.

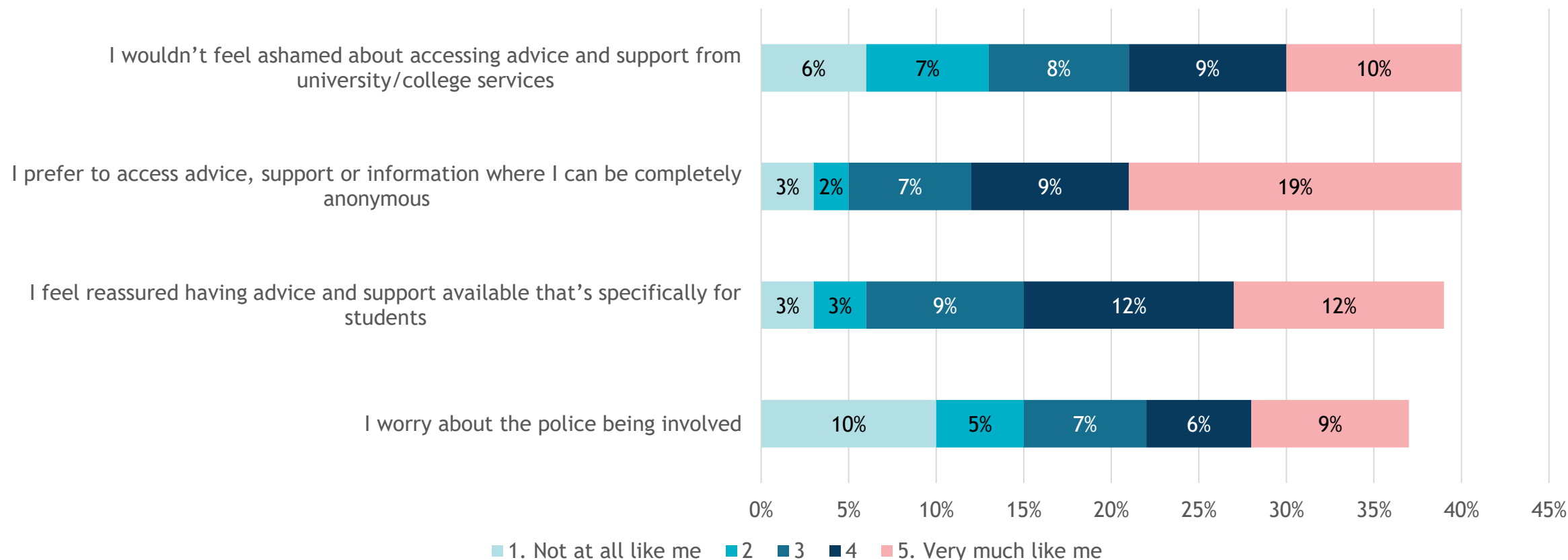


PhD students are more likely to report not knowing anything about the advice and support available than undergraduate and postgraduate respondents.

Respondents who are more men likely to say they know about all the advice and support available than women respondents.

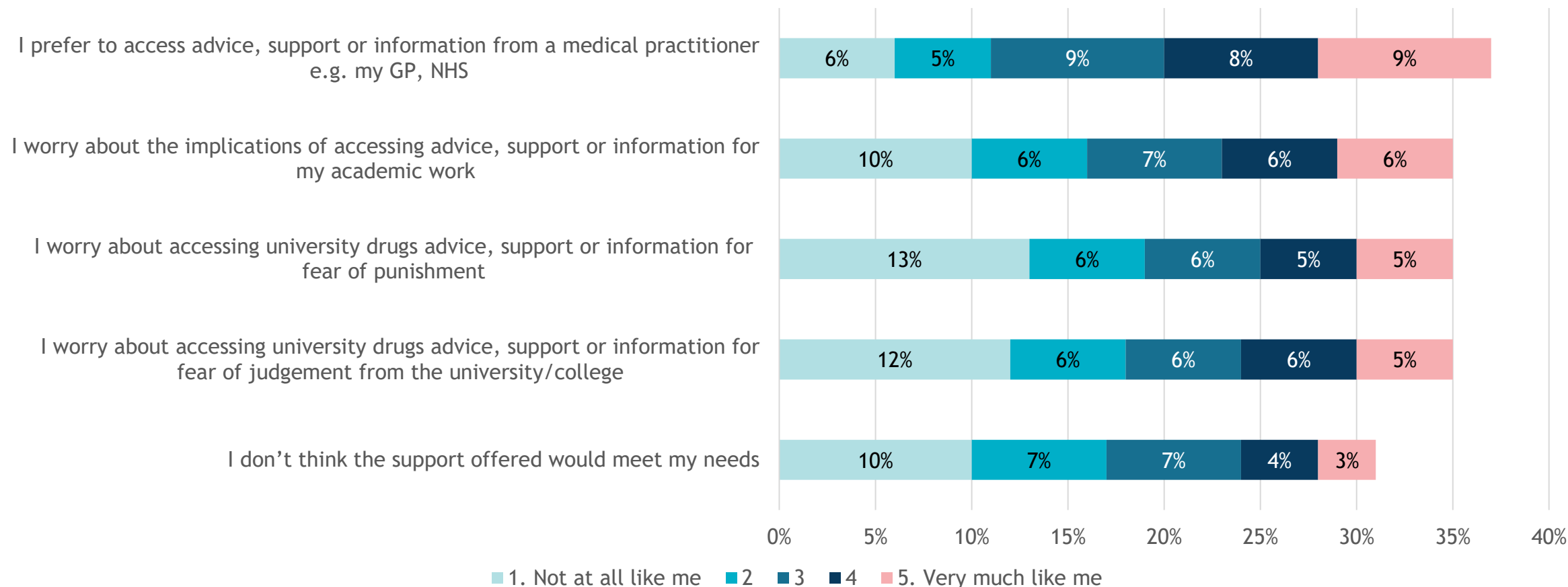
Q. Which of the following statements best describes your awareness of advice, information and support on drugs at your university? [Weighted base: 11712 Balance: No response]

Thinking about accessing advice and support on drugs, 28% report that it is like them (4 and 5 on the scale below) to prefer to be able to access advice, support or information where they can be completely anonymous. 24% reported that it is like them to feel reassured having advice and support that's specifically for students (4 and 5 on the scale below).



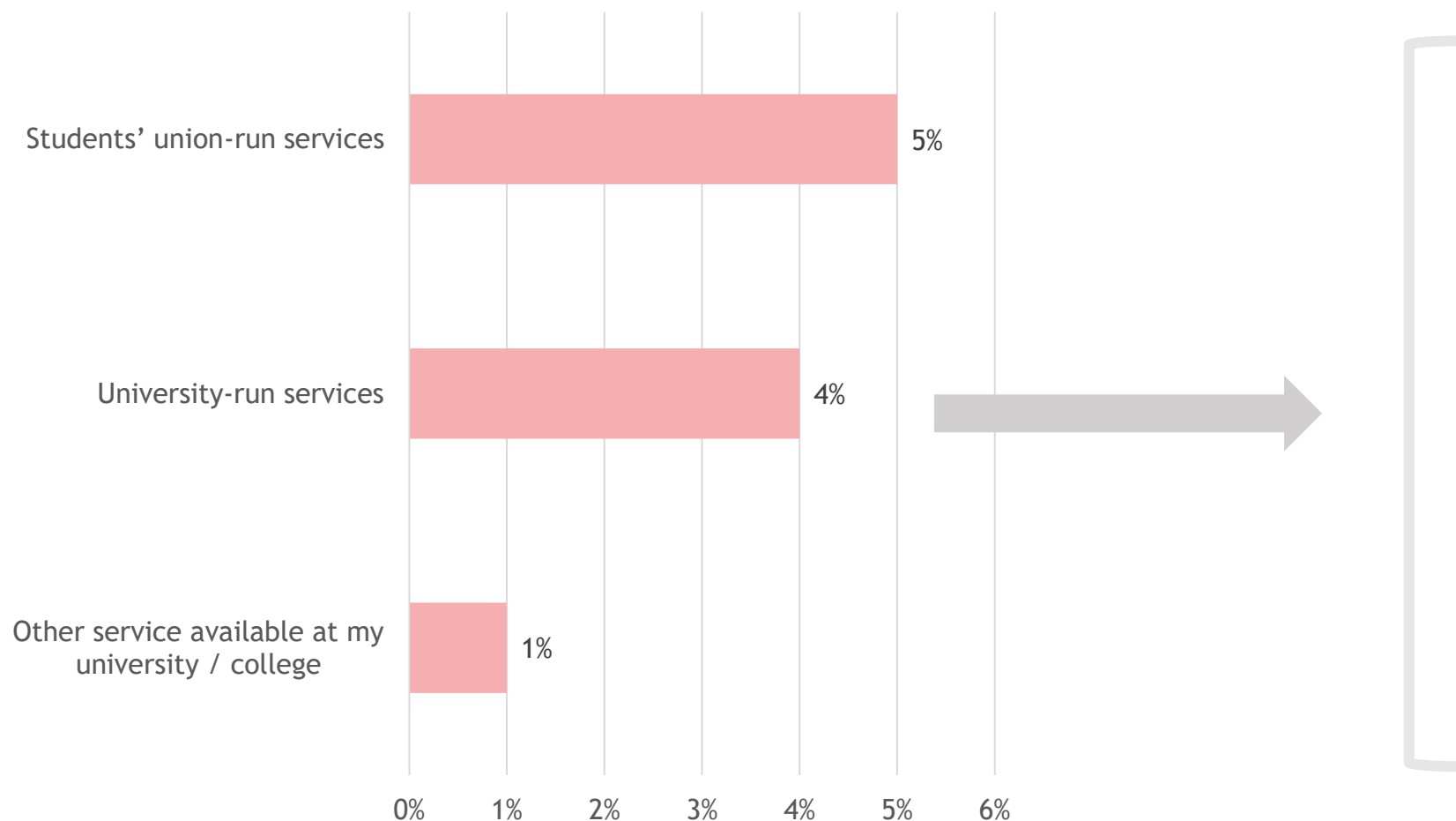
Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements when thinking about accessing any advice or support on drugs at your university? [Weighted base: 11736
Balance: No response, Don't know, Not applicable - I've not needed drug advice support]

Still thinking about accessing support or advice on drugs, 10% reported that it is like them (4 and 5 on the scale below) to worry about accessing university drugs advice, support or information for fear of punishment. 11% said it was like them (4 and 5 on the scale) to worry about accessing this for fear of judgement from the university/college.



Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements when thinking about accessing any advice or support on drugs at your university? [Weighted base: 11736
Balance: No response, Don't know, Not applicable - I've not needed drug advice support]

5% reported using students' union-run services, compared to 4% who said they used university-run services for advice and support on drugs. 1% reported using other services available at their university / college for advice, information and support on drugs.



EXAMPLE RESPONSES OF 'OTHER'

Therapy /
counselling

Samaritans

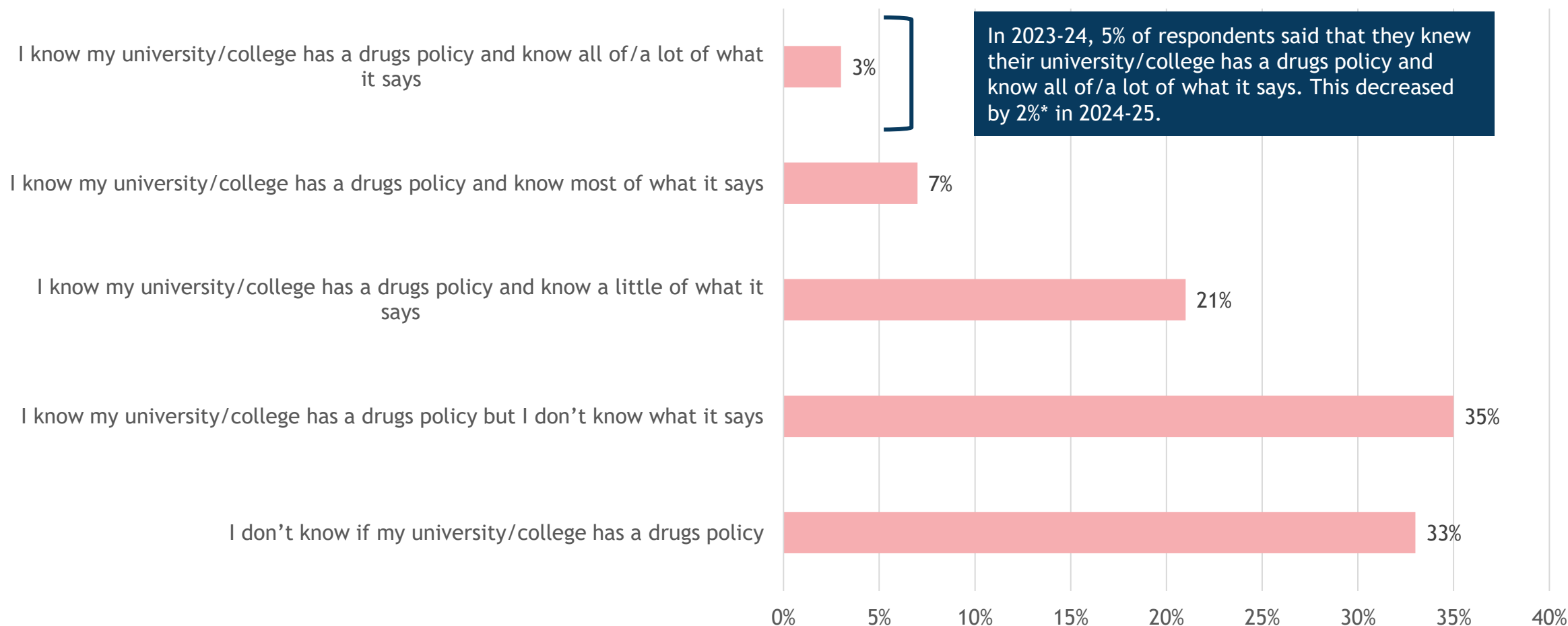
Addiction
Anonymous

FRANK

Q. Which of the following sources, if any, have you used for advice, information or support on drugs? [Weighted base: 10101 Balance: No response, Not applicable - I've not accessed drug advice, support or information]

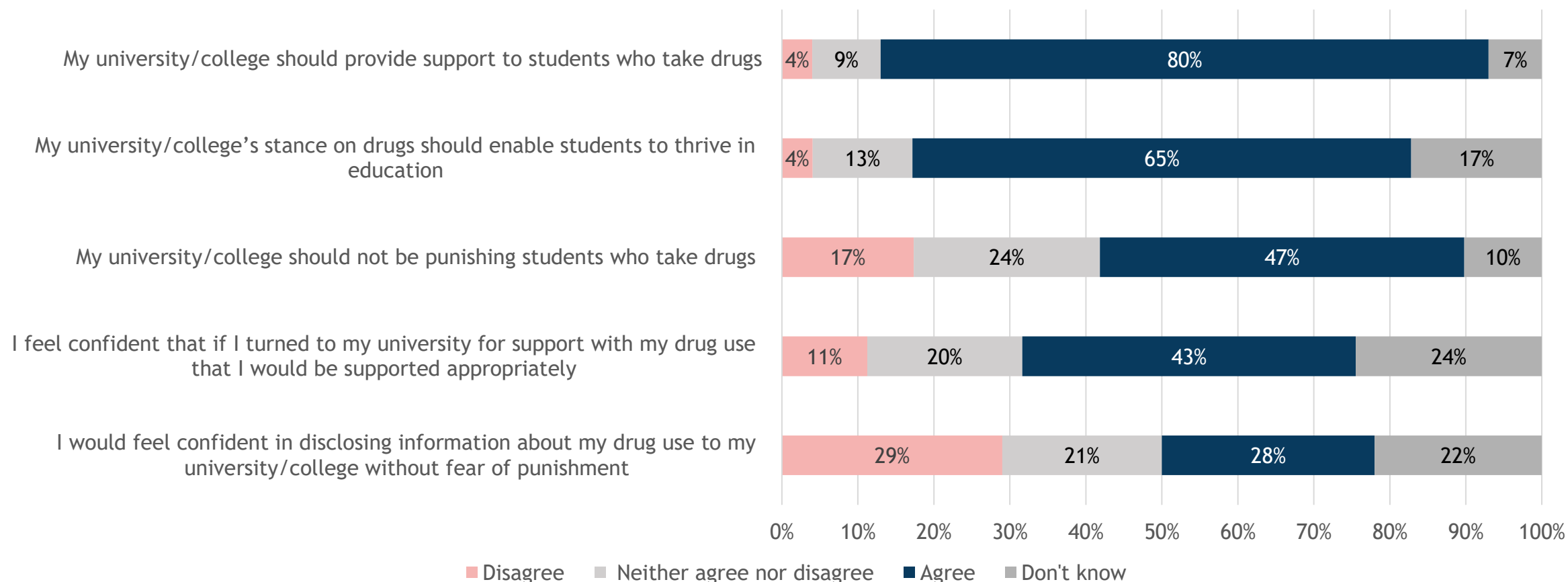
Drug policies

Over a third (35%) of respondents reported that they know that their university/college has a drugs policy, but they don't know what it says. Similarly, 33% do not know whether their university/college has a drugs policy.



Q. How much, if anything, do you know about the policy / policies your university has on drugs? [Weighted base: 11894 Balance: No response] *Statistically significant difference over the 95% confidence level.

80% of respondents agree that their university/college should provide support to students who take drugs, and 65% agree that their stance of drugs should enable students to thrive in education. 43% agreed that they would feel confident that they would be supported appropriately by their university.

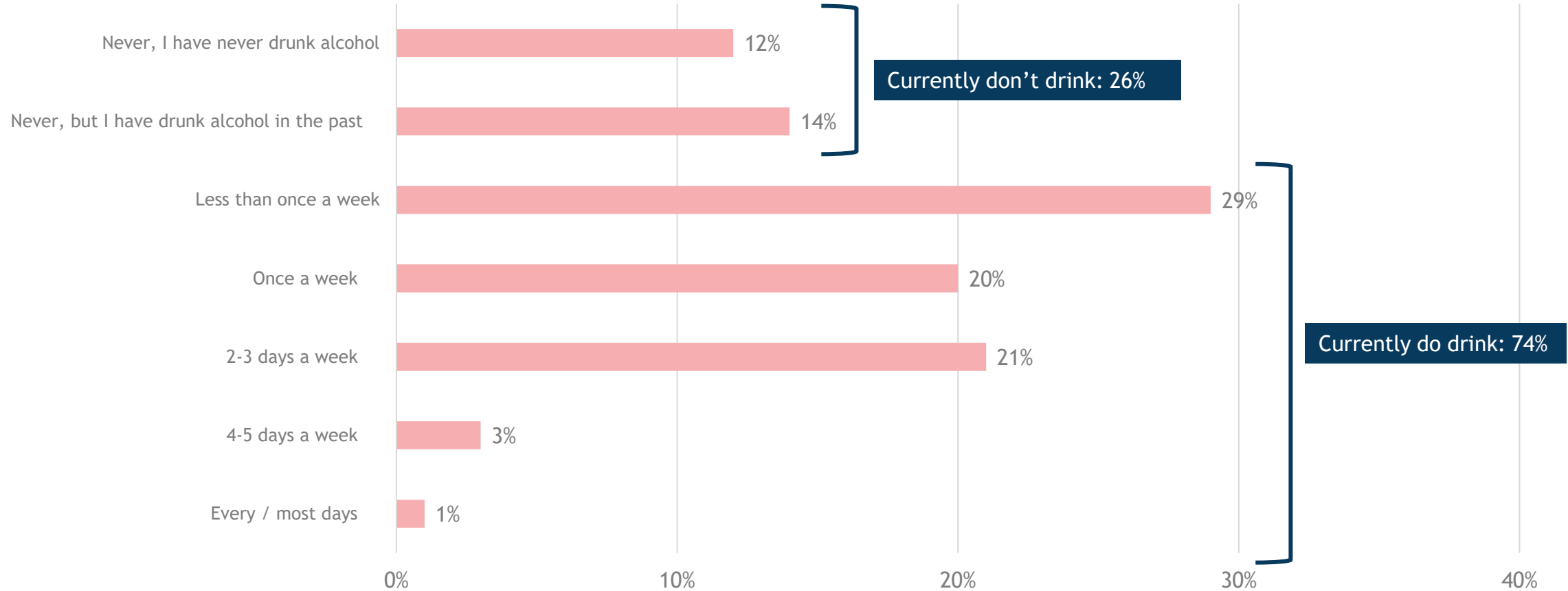


Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements? [Weighted base: 11719 Balance: No response and Rather not say]

RESEARCH FINDINGS: ALCOHOL

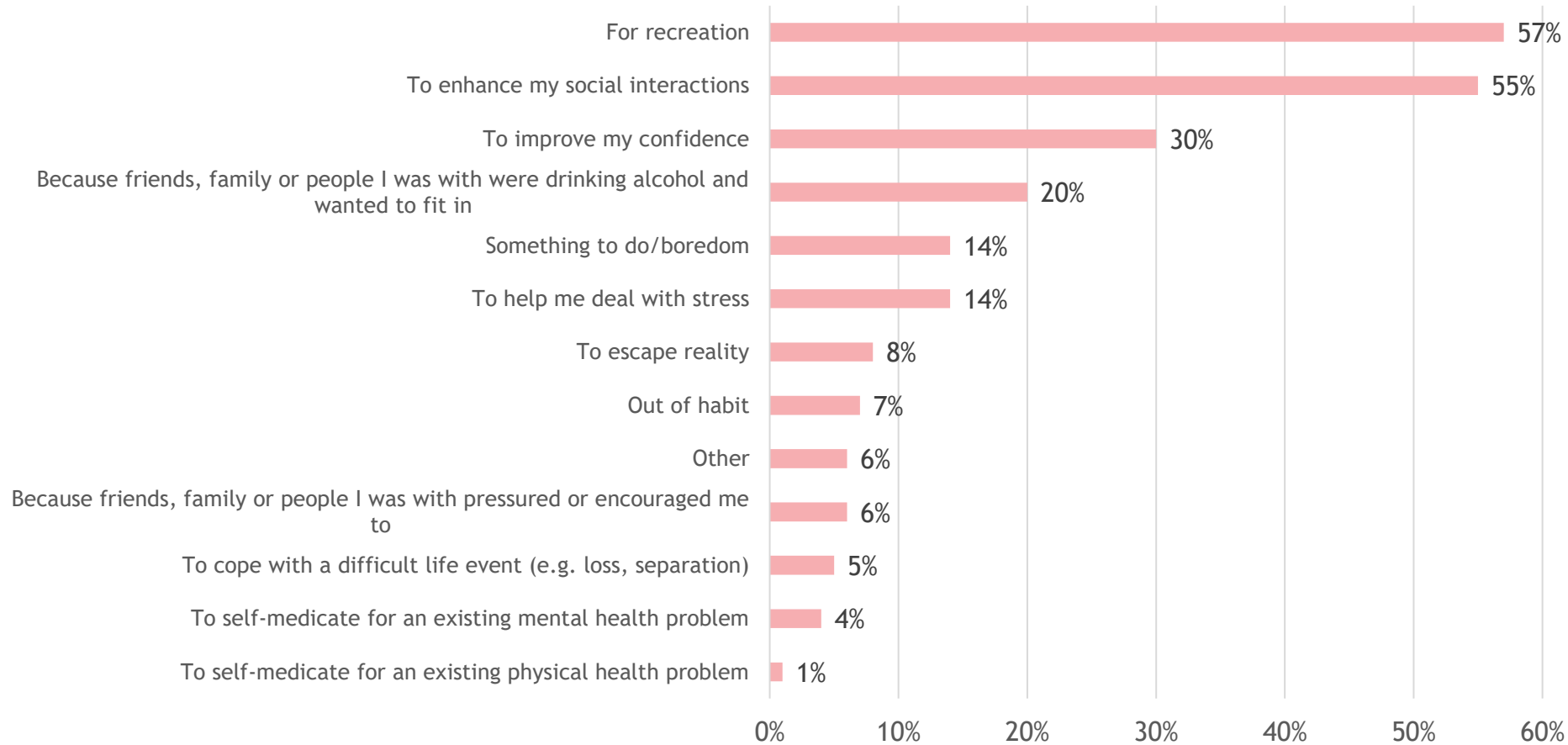
Patterns and practices of alcohol consumption

Over a quarter (26%) of respondents currently do not drink alcohol. Nearly three quarters (74%) currently drink alcohol, with 1% reporting that they drink every or most days.



Q. How often, if at all, do you drink alcohol? [Weighted base: 12614 Balance: No response]

The most common reasons cited by respondents for drinking alcohol are for recreation (57%), to enhance social interactions (55%) and to improve their confidence (30%). 4% reported that they drink alcohol to self-medicate for an existing mental health problem, and 1% a physical health problem.



Undergraduate students are more likely than postgraduate students to drink alcohol to improve their confidence.

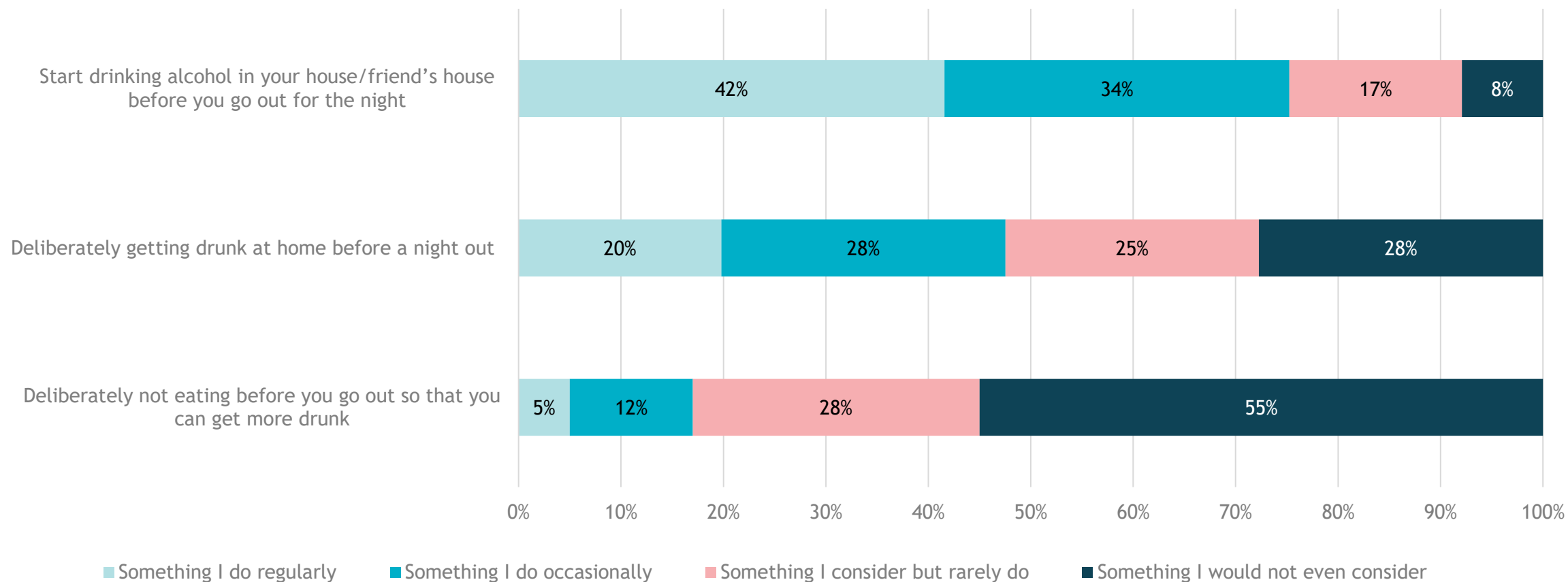
International students from outside the EU are more likely to drink alcohol to help them deal with stress than UK citizens and international students from the EU.

Disabled students are more likely to drink alcohol to self-medicate for an existing mental health problem.

Respondents from white identities are more likely to drink alcohol to help them deal with stress than respondents who are people of colour.

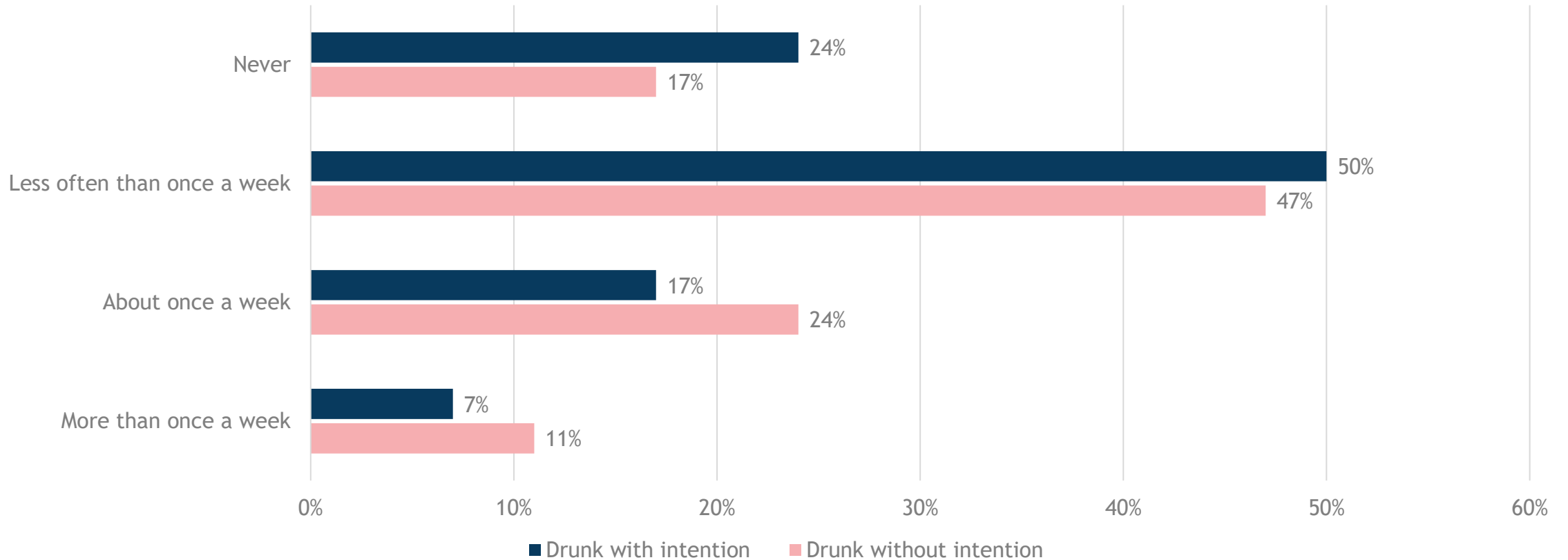
Q. Which of the following best describes why you drink alcohol? [Weighted base: 8522 Balance: No response, and have never drunk alcohol]

Nearly half (42%) report that something they do regularly is start drinking alcohol in your house / friend's house before they go out for the night. 20% say that deliberately getting drunk at home before a night out is something they do regularly.



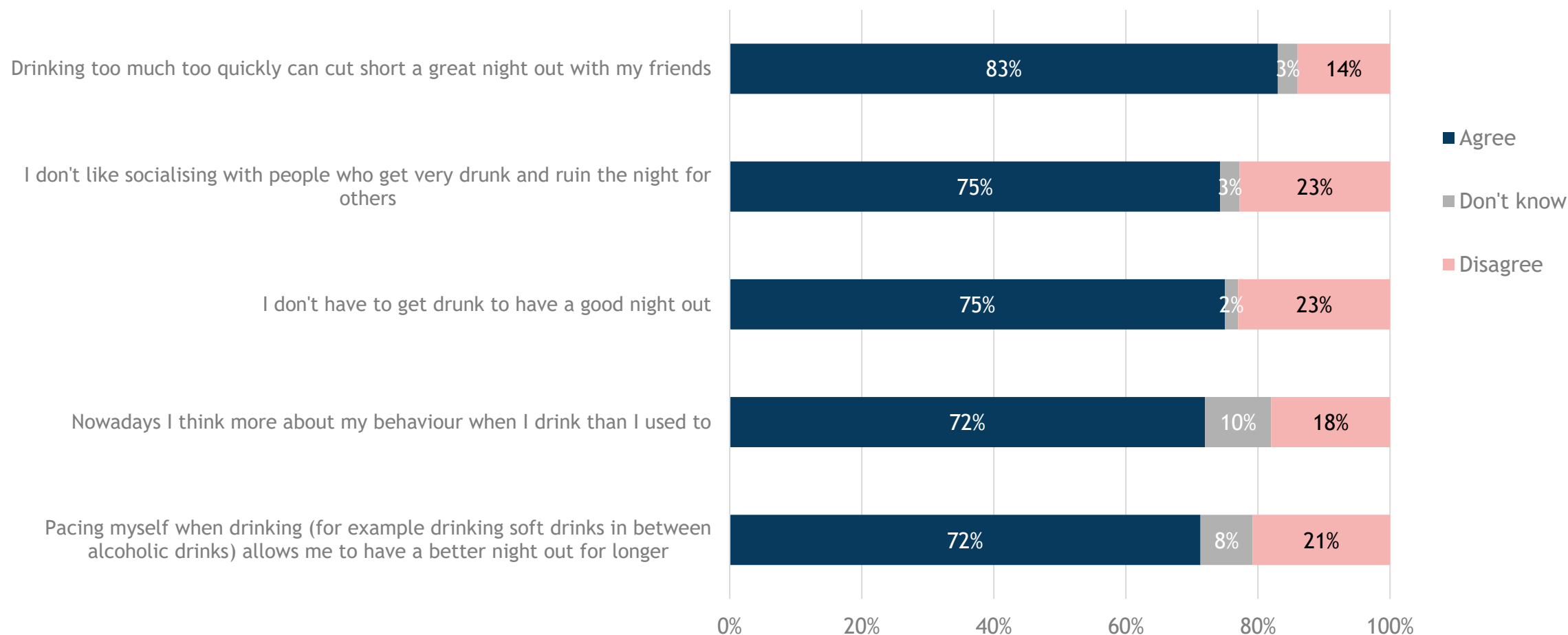
Q. Do any of the following describe your drinking behaviour? [Weighted base: c. 7619 Balance: No response]

Approximately half of respondents' report drinking with the intention of getting drunk (50%), and without the intention but getting drunk anyway (47%), less often than once a week. 7% report drinking with the intention of getting drunk more than once a week. 11% say they get drunk unintentionally more than once a week.



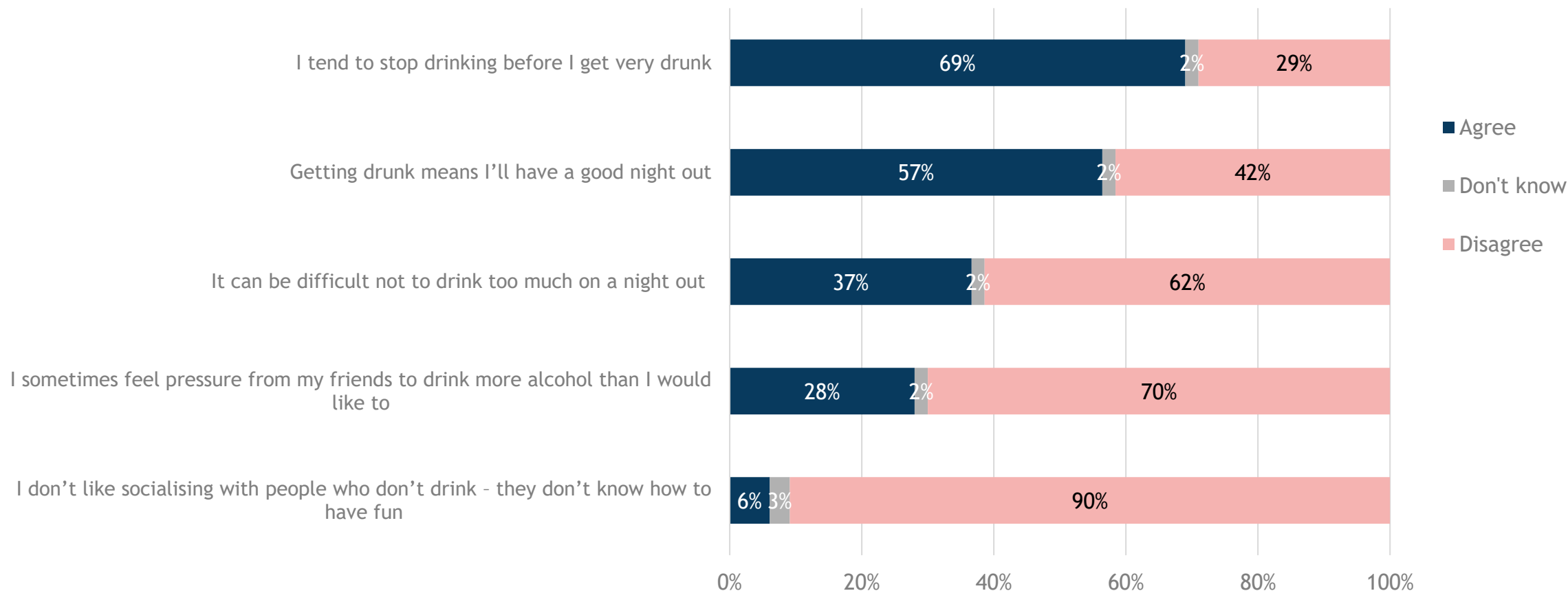
Q. Approximately how often do you drink alcohol with the intention of getting drunk / drink alcohol without the intention of getting drunk but end up getting drunk anyway? [Weighted base: 8481 / 8488 Balance: No response, Don't know]

Most respondents' (83%) agree that drinking too much too quickly can cut short a great night out with friends. Three quarters (75%) agree that they don't have to get drunk to have a good night out, and that they don't like socialising with people who get very drunk and ruin the night for others.



Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements [Weighted base: c. 8350 Balance: No response]

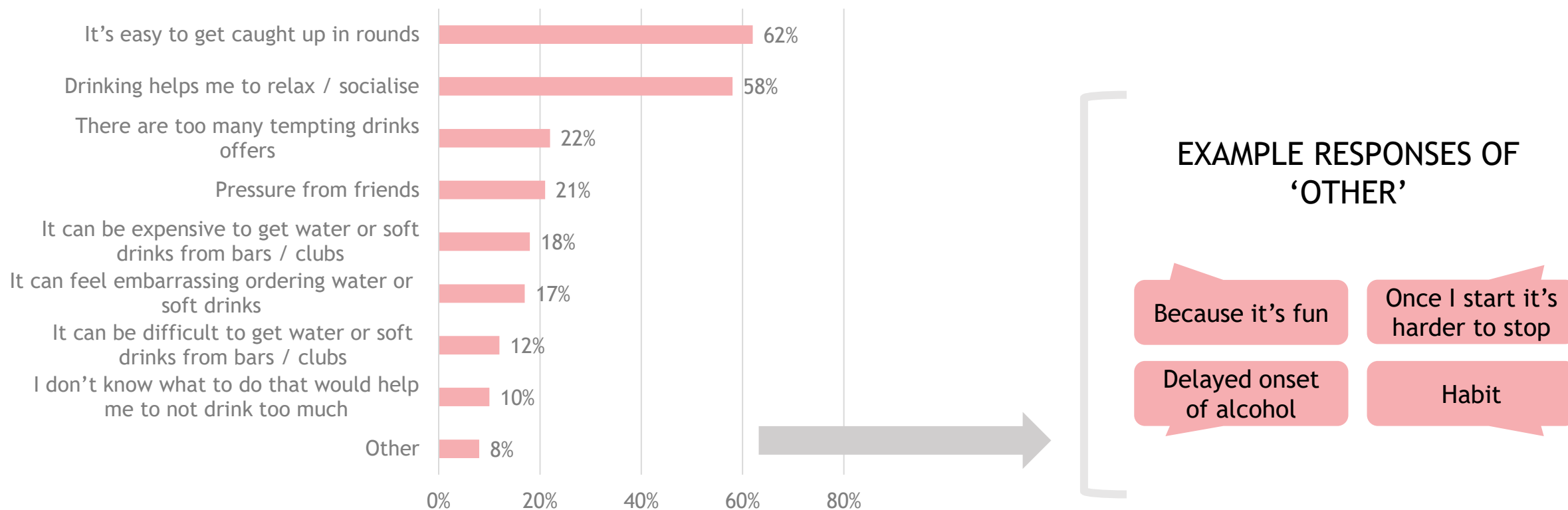
The majority (90%) disagree that they don't like socialising with people who don't drink. 70% of respondents disagree that they sometimes feel pressure from their friends to drink more alcohol. Despite 75% agreeing they don't have to get drunk to have a good night out (pg. 59), over half agreed that getting drunk means they'll have a good night out (57%).



Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements [Weighted base: c. 8350 Balance: No response]

Over half (62%) of respondents who say it can be difficult not to drink too much on a night out report that this is because it's easy to get caught up in rounds. 58% say it is because drinking helps them to relax and socialize, and nearly a quarter (22%), because there are too many tempting drink offers.

37% of respondents agreed it can be difficult not to drink too much on a night out. When asked why, they said...



Q. You agreed it can be difficult not to drink too much on a night out - why do you think that? [Weighted base: 3027 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

- Respondents who are women are more likely than men respondents to report deliberately getting drunk at home before a night out as something they do regularly.
- Women respondents are more likely than men respondents to agree that pacing myself when drinking allows me to have a better night out for longer.
- Women respondents are more likely than men respondents to strongly agree that drinking too much too quickly can cut short a great night out with my friends.

Differences by study level

- Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduate students to report drinking alcohol 4-5 days a week.
- Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduate and PhD students to report drinking with the intention of getting drunk more than once a week.
- Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduate students to strongly agree that it can be difficult not to drink too much on a night out.

Differences by nationality

- UK citizens are more likely than EU and non-EU international students to say that they start drinking alcohol in their house / friend's house before they go out for the night.
- UK citizens are more likely than non-EU international students to drink alcohol, without the intention of getting drunk, but ending up getting drunk anyway more than once a week.

Differences between disabled and non-disabled respondents

- Disabled students are more likely than non-disabled students to report deliberately not eating before you go out so that you can get more drunk as something I do regularly.
- Disabled students are more likely than non-disabled students to slightly disagree that getting drunk means they'll have a good night out.
- Disabled students are more likely than non-disabled students to strongly agree that they don't like socialising with people who get very drunk and ruin the night for others.

Further key differences include:

Differences by sexuality

- Respondents who identify as bisexual are more likely to report drinking 2-3 days a week than heterosexual respondents.
- Respondents who identify as gay are more likely to report deliberately getting drunk at home before a night out as something they do regularly than heterosexual respondents.
- Respondents who identify as lesbian are more likely to strongly agree that pacing themselves while drinking allows them to have a better night out for longer.

Differences by race and ethnicity

- Respondents who identify as people of colour are more likely to report drinking 2-3 days a week than those from white identities.
- Respondents who identify as people of colour are more likely to strongly agree that drinking too much too quickly can cut short a great night out with their friends than those from white identities.
- Respondents who identify as people of colour are more likely to strongly agree that it can be difficult not to drink too much on a night out than those from white identities.

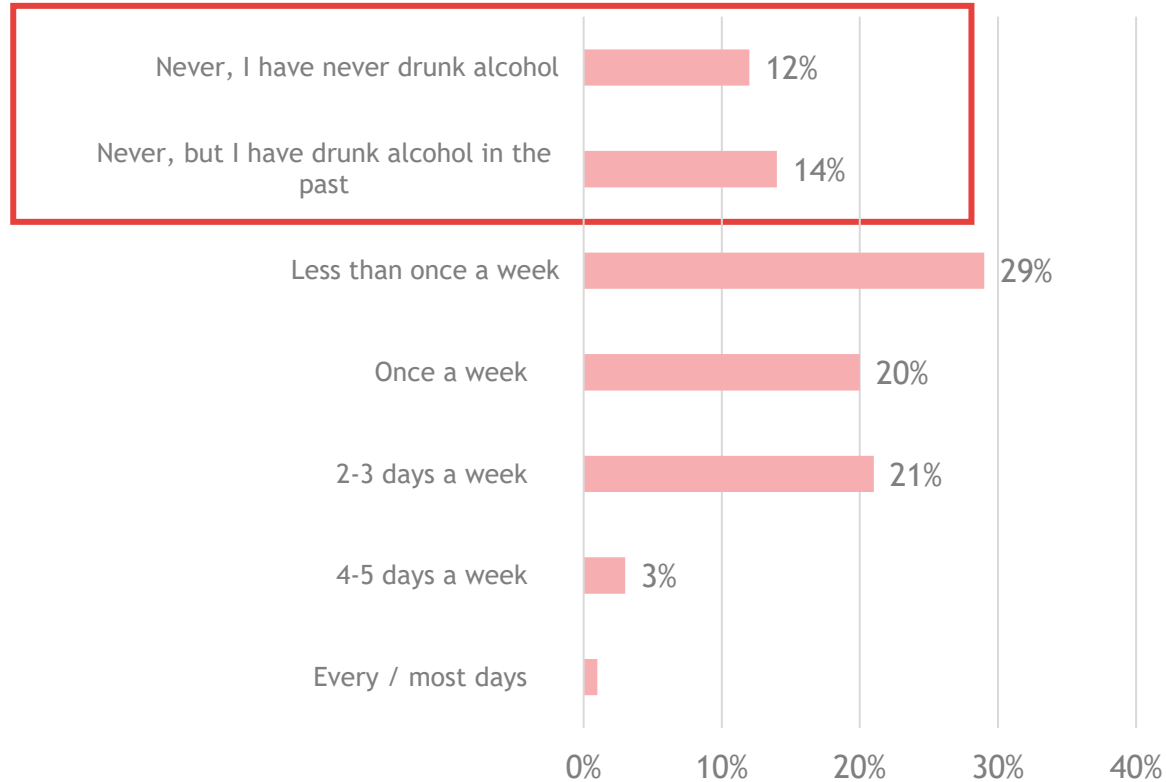
Differences by year of study

- Postgraduate respondents studying for a Masters are more likely to report drinking less than once a week than undergraduate respondents.
- Undergraduate respondents in their first year of study are more likely to report drinking alcohol without the intention of getting drunk but getting drunk anyway more than once a week than postgraduate students studying for a PhD.
- Undergraduate students in their first year of study are more likely to strongly agree that getting drunk means they'll have a good night out than postgraduate students studying for a PhD.

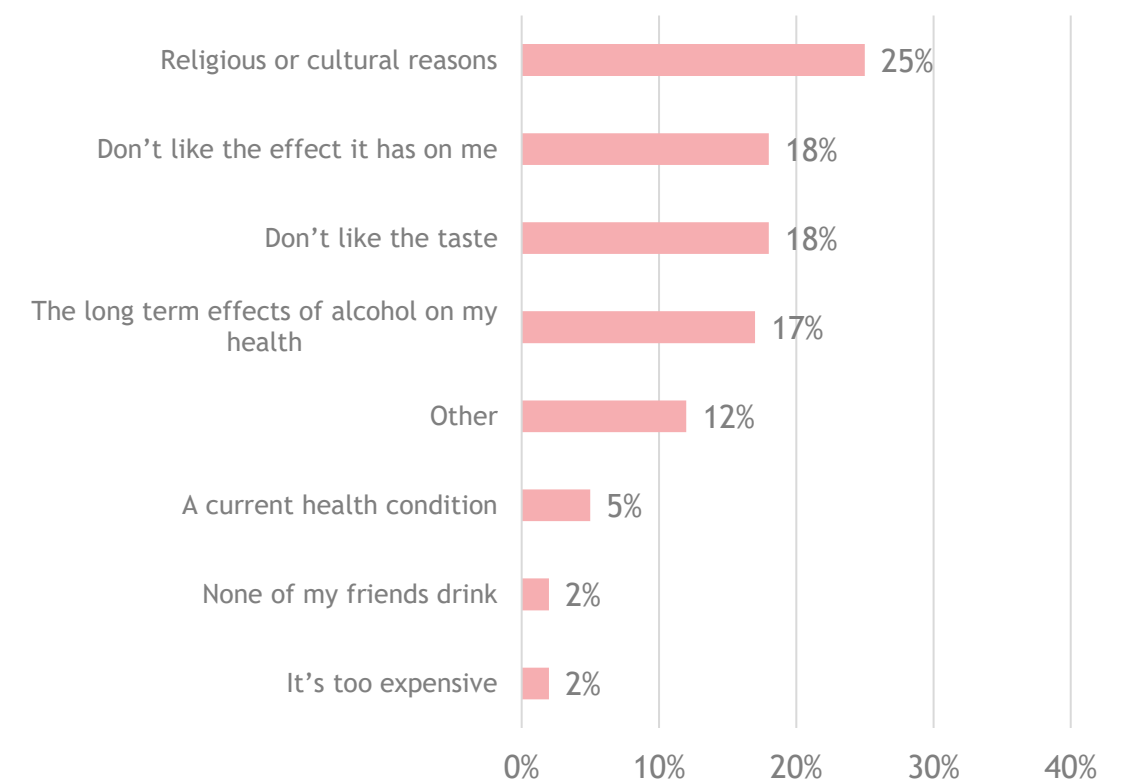
Differences by age

- Respondents aged 60+ are more likely to report drinking every / most days than those aged between 18-22.
- Respondents aged between 18-22 are more likely to strongly agree that getting drunk means they'll have a good night out than those between 30-39.
- Respondents aged between 50-59 are more likely to report drinking to help them deal with stress than those between 18-22.

26% of respondents report that they do not currently drink alcohol, including those that have never drunk alcohol, and those who have in the past. The most common reasons for not drinking is not liking the effect it has on them (18%) and not liking the taste (18%).



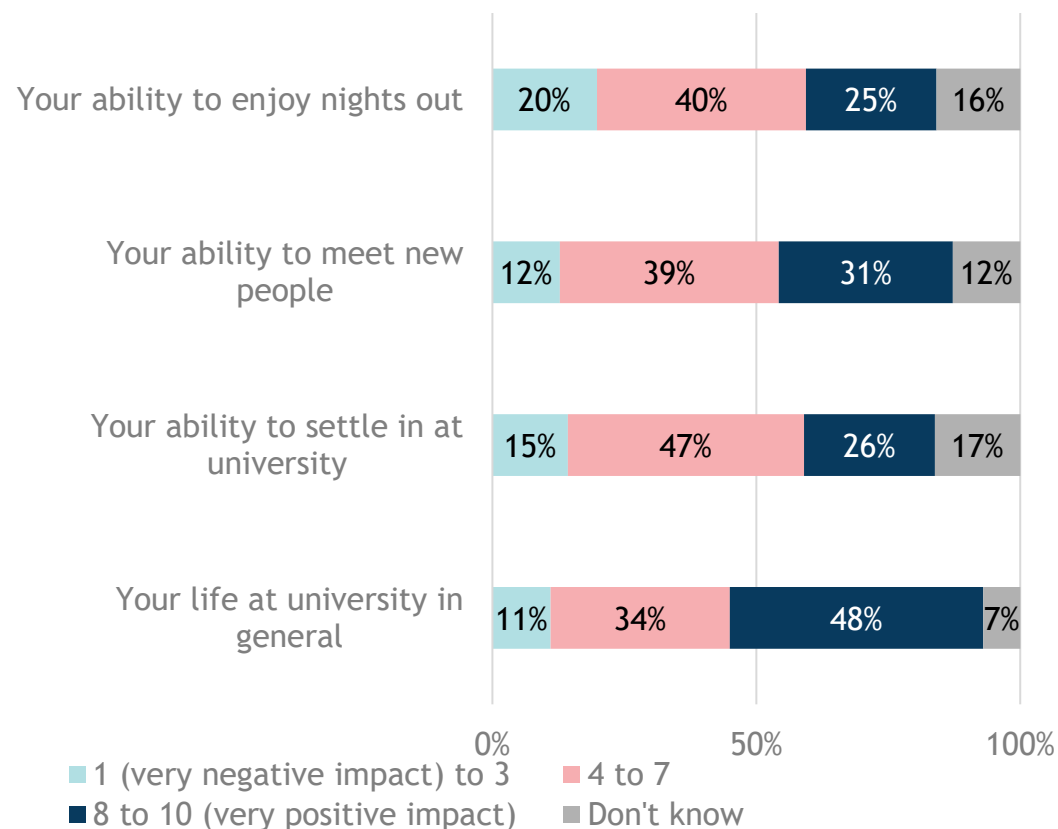
Q. How often, if at all, do you drink alcohol?
[Weighted base: 12614 Balance: No response]



Q. What would you say is your main reason for not drinking, or stopping drinking, alcohol? [Weighted base: 2839 Balance: No response]

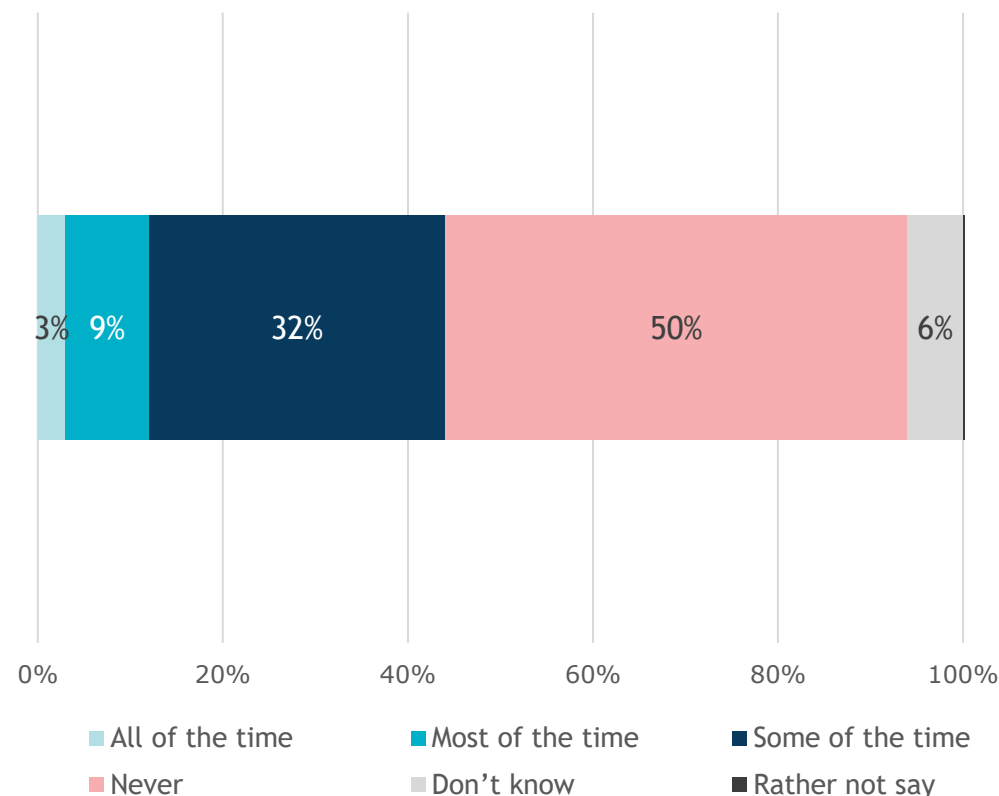
Nearly half (48%) of non-drinkers reported that not drinking had a positive influence on their life at university in general. Half (50%) say they never feel like their friends expect them to drink alcohol.

IMPACTS OF NOT DRINKING



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: c. 2846 Balance: No response, don't know]

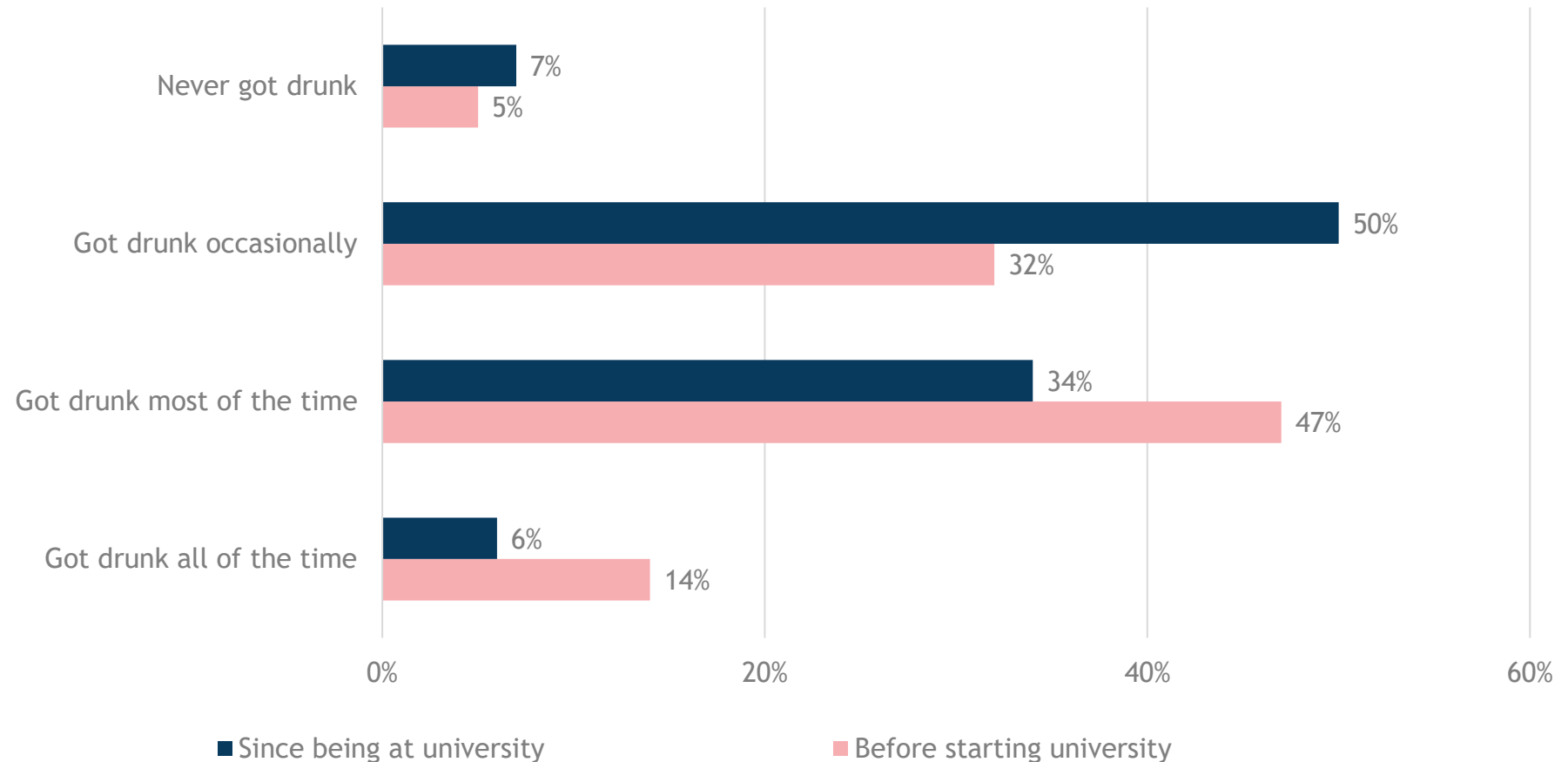
PERCEPTIONS OF PRESSURE TO DRINK



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? [Weighted base: 2840 Balance: No response]

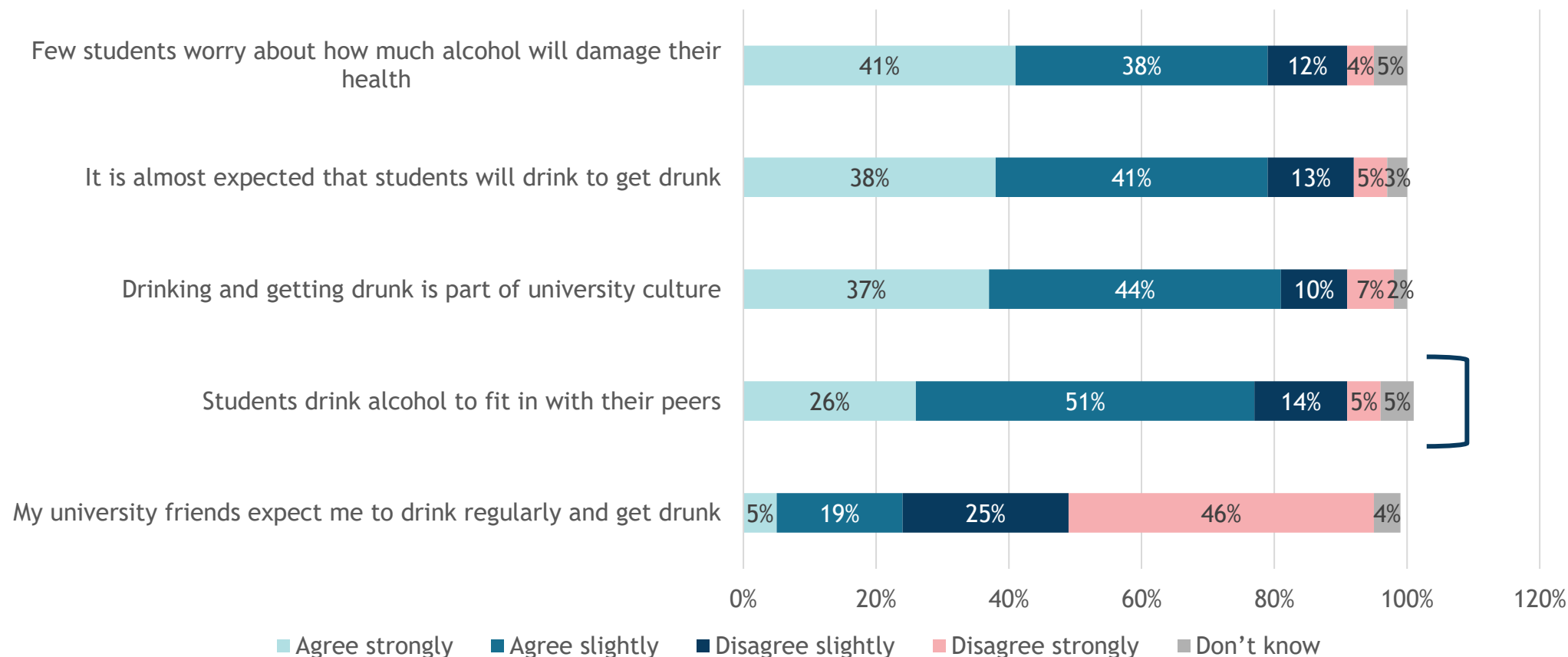
Perceptions of alcohol consumption on campus

Almost half of respondents (47%) believed that, before starting university, students got drunk most of the time. Since being at university, this falls to 34%.



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. [Weighted base: 11856 Balance: No response, non-drinkers, don't know and rather not say]

The majority (81%) of respondents agree that drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture. 79% agree that few students worry about how much alcohol will damage your health, and that it is almost expected that students will drink to get drunk.



When asked what reason best describes why they drink alcohol, 20% of respondents say because friends, family or people I was with were drinking alcohol and I wanted to fit in (see page 56).

Q. Thinking specifically about drinking alcohol at university, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? [Weighted base: 11872 Balance: No response and non-drinkers]

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

- Women respondents are more likely than men respondents to strongly agree that it is almost expected that students will drink to get drunk.
- Respondents who are men are more likely than women respondents to believe that, since being at university, students get drunk all of the time.

Differences by study level

- Postgraduates are more likely to strongly agree than undergraduate students that students drink alcohol to fit in with their peers.
- Undergraduates are more likely to strongly agree than postgraduate and PhD students that few students worry about how much alcohol will damage their health.

Differences by nationality

- UK citizens are more likely to strongly agree that their university friends expect them to drink regularly and get drunk than non-EU international students.
- UK citizens are more likely to strongly agree than EU and non-EU international students that drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture.

Differences between disabled and non-disabled respondents

- Disabled students are more likely to strongly agree than non-disabled students that students drink alcohol to fit in with their peers.
- Non-disabled students are more likely to strongly disagree than disabled students that it is almost expected that students will drink to get drunk.

Further key differences include:

Differences by sexuality

- Respondents who identify as bisexual are more likely than heterosexual respondents to believe that, prior to starting university, students got drunk all of the time.
- Respondents who identify as gay are more likely than asexual respondents to strongly agree that drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture.

Differences by race and ethnicity

- Respondents who identify as people of colour are more than likely than those from white identities to believe that, prior to starting university, students got drunk all of the time.
- Respondents who identify as people of colour are more than likely than those from white identities to strongly agree that drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture.

Differences by year of study

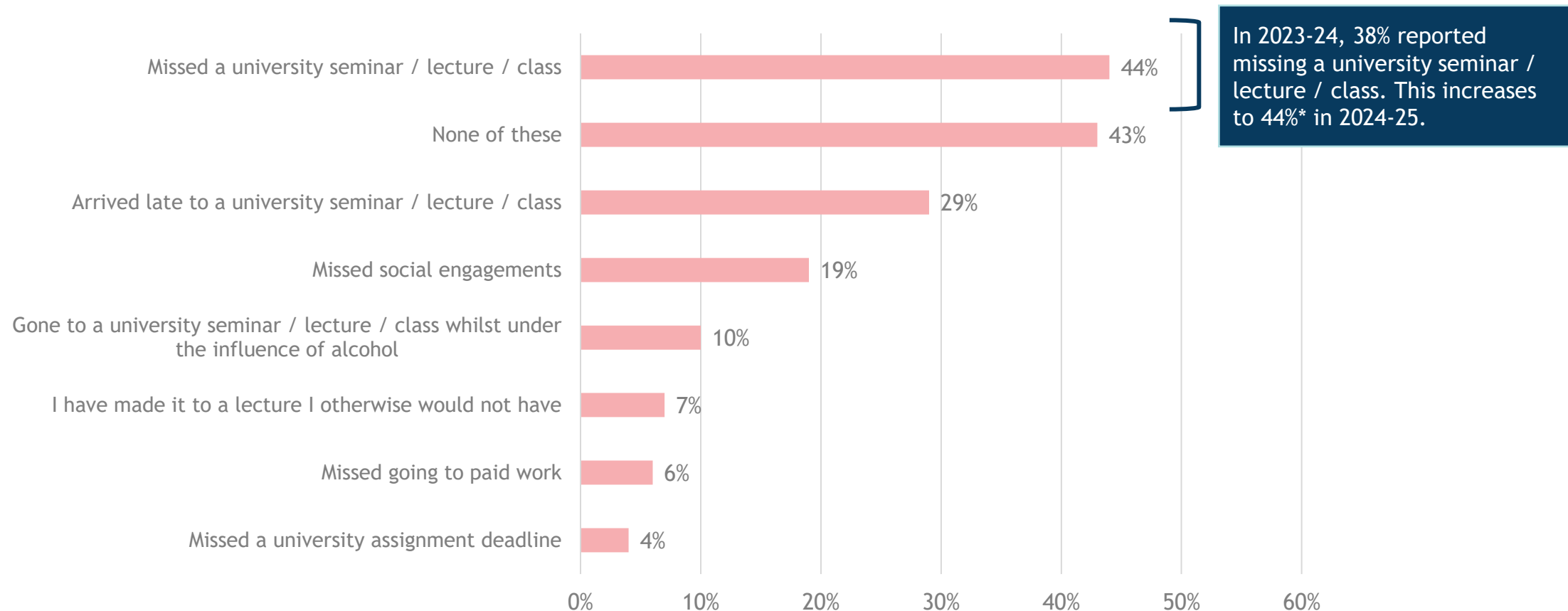
- Undergraduate students in their first year are more likely than postgraduate students studying for a PhD to strongly agree that it is almost expected that students will drink to get drunk.
- Undergraduate students in their first year are more likely than postgraduate students studying for a PhD to strongly agree that few students worry about how much alcohol will damage their health.

Differences by age

- Respondents aged between 18-22 are more likely to strongly agree than those between 40-49 that their university friends expect them to drink regularly and get drunk.
- Respondents aged between 23-29 are more likely to strongly agree than those between 50-59 that drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture.

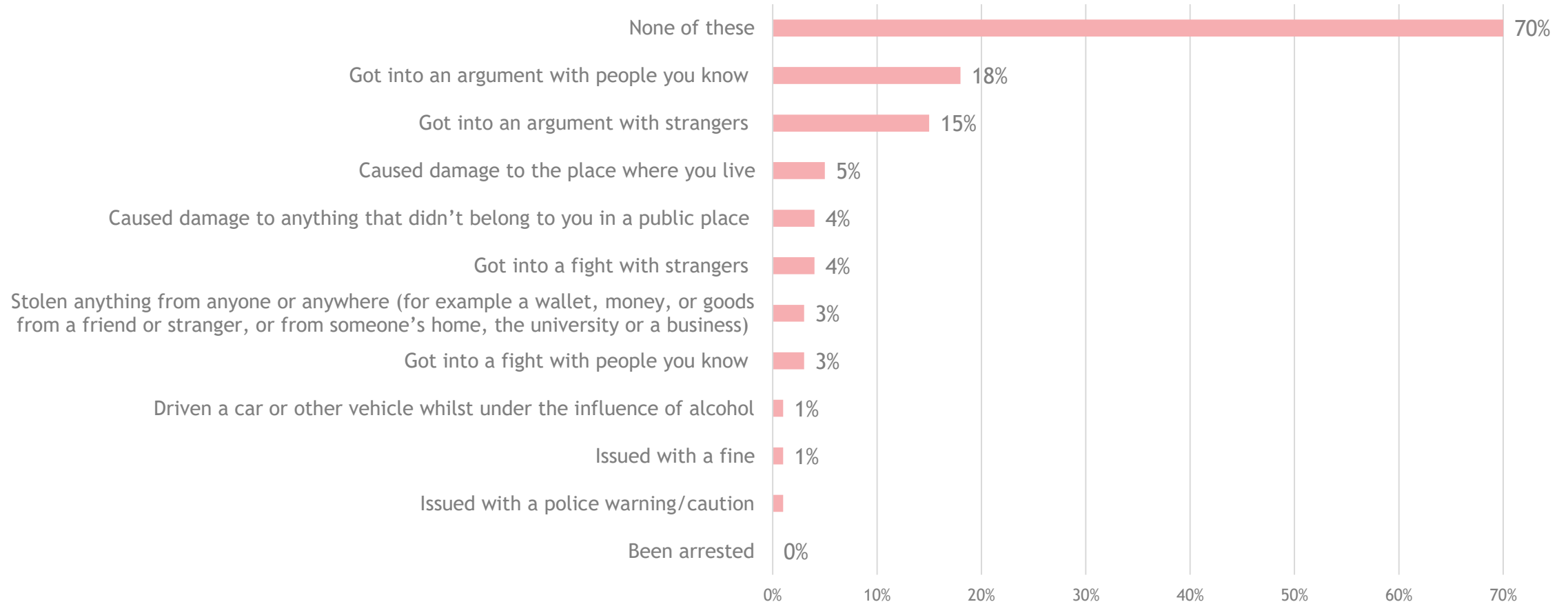
Impacts of alcohol consumption

Thinking about the academic impacts of alcohol consumption, nearly half (44%) reported that they missed a university seminar, lecture or class during or following the consumption of alcohol. 43% of respondents experienced none of the impacts listed.



Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university, during or following the consumption of alcohol? [Weighted base: 8547. Balance: No response and non-drinkers, rather not say.] *Statistically significant difference over 95% confidence level.

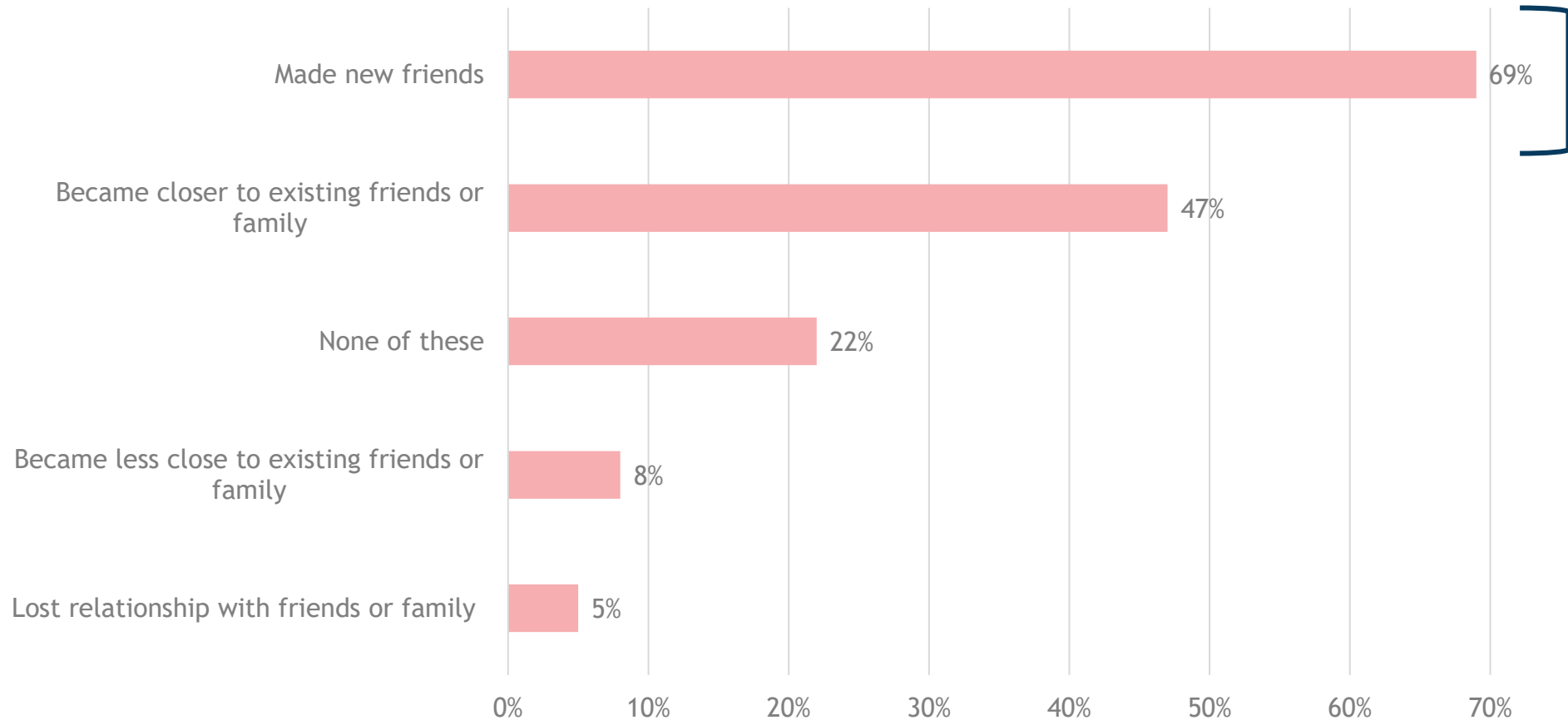
The most common experience related to crime and anti-social behaviour reported during or following drinking alcohol was getting into arguments with known people, with 18% reporting arguments with people they know and 15% with strangers. 5% reporting causing damage to the place they live in. 70% said they hadn't experienced any of the impacts listed.



Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university, during or following the consumption of alcohol? [Weighted base: 8502.

Balance: No response and non-drinkers]

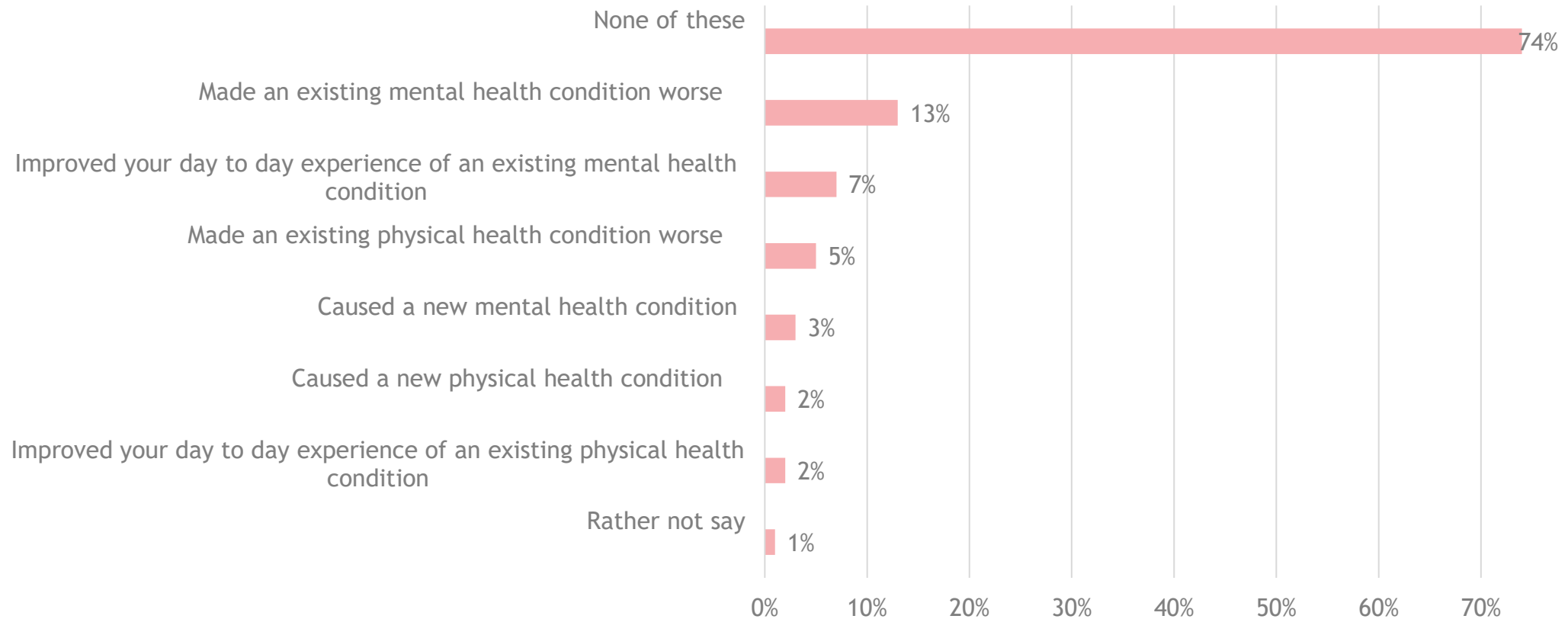
Thinking about the social impacts, over two thirds of respondents reported making new friends during or following the consumption of alcohol (69%). 47% reported becoming closer to friends and family. However, 8% report becoming less close to friends and family.



In 2023-24, 62% reported making new friends during or following the consumption of alcohol. This increases by 7%* in 2024-25.

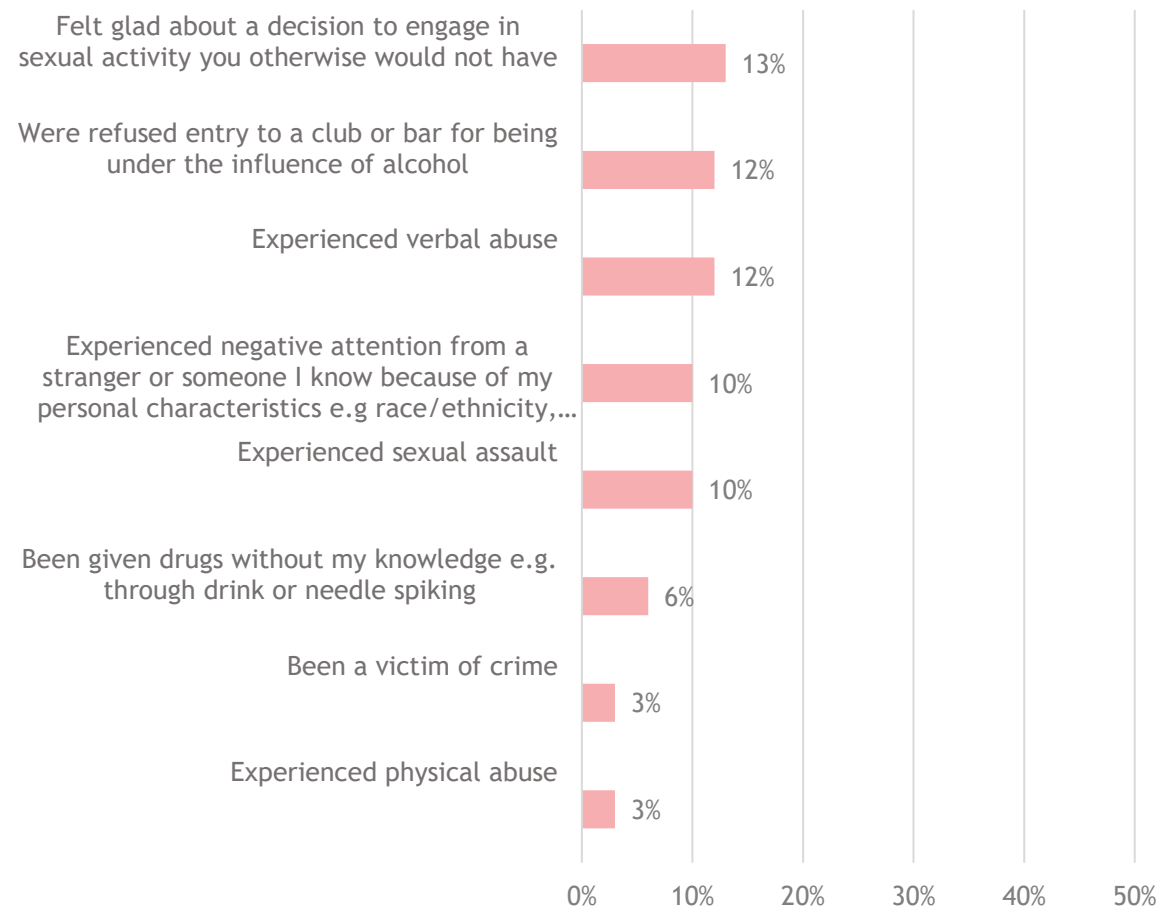
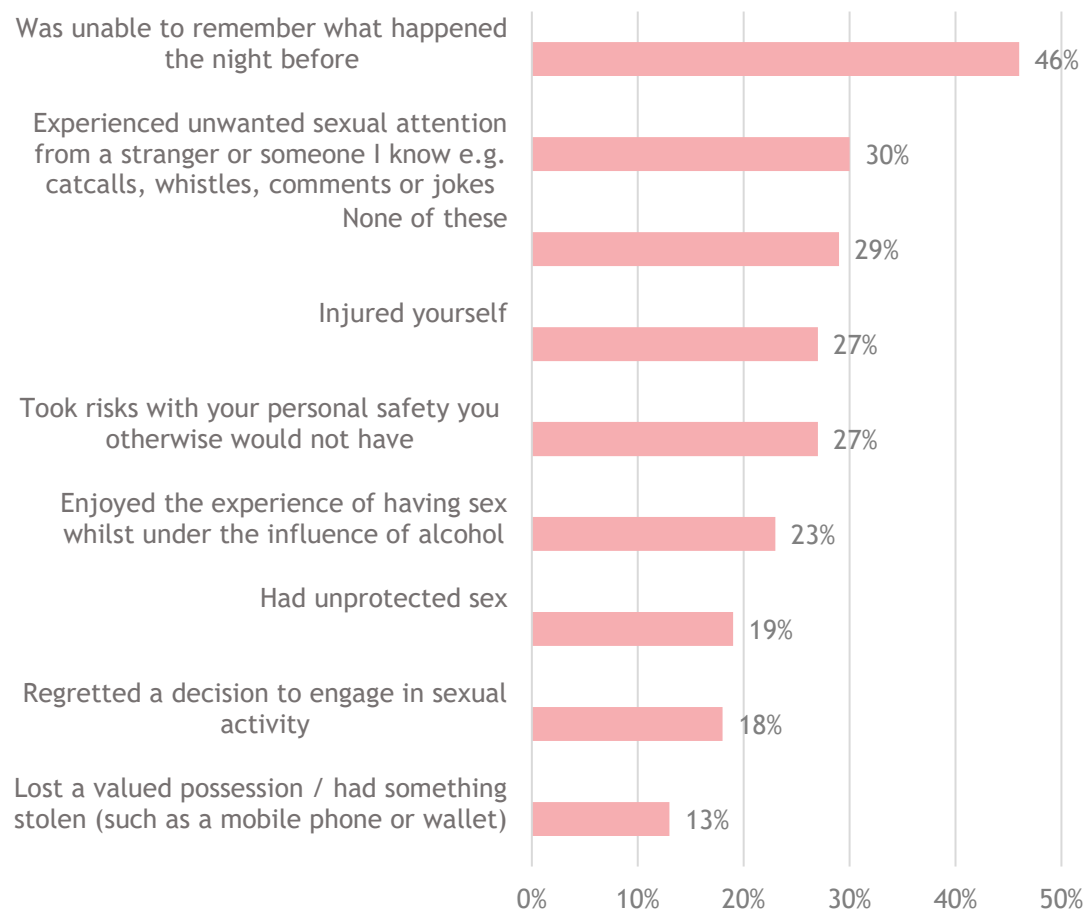
Q. Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university, during or following the consumption of alcohol? [Weighted base: 8548. Balance: No response and non-drinkers, rather not say.] *Statistically significant difference over the 95% confidence level.

Focusing on health impacts, 13% of respondents identified that drinking alcohol (during or following) had made an existing mental health 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: 8497. Balance: No response and non-drinkers]

Thinking about wellbeing impacts of alcohol consumption, 46% of students reported being unable to remember what happened the night before, 30% experienced unwanted sexual attention. 29% experienced none of these.



Q Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university, during or following the consumption of alcohol? [Weighted base: 8537. 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

- Respondents who are men are more likely to report getting into a fight with people they know than women respondents.
- Non-EU international students are more likely to report that alcohol improved their day to day experience of an existing mental health condition than UK citizens.
- Undergraduate respondents are more likely to report taking risks with your personal safety you otherwise would not have than postgraduate students.
- Undergraduate respondents in their first year are more likely than postgraduate students studying for a Masters to report that alcohol created a new mental health condition.

Paid work and study

- Undergraduate respondents are more likely to report arriving late or missing to a university seminar, lecture or class than postgraduate and PhD students.
- Women respondents are less likely to report missing a university assignment deadline than respondents who are men.
- UK citizens are more likely to report missing paid work than non-EU international students.
- Respondents who identify as people of colour are more likely than those from white identities to report missing paid work.

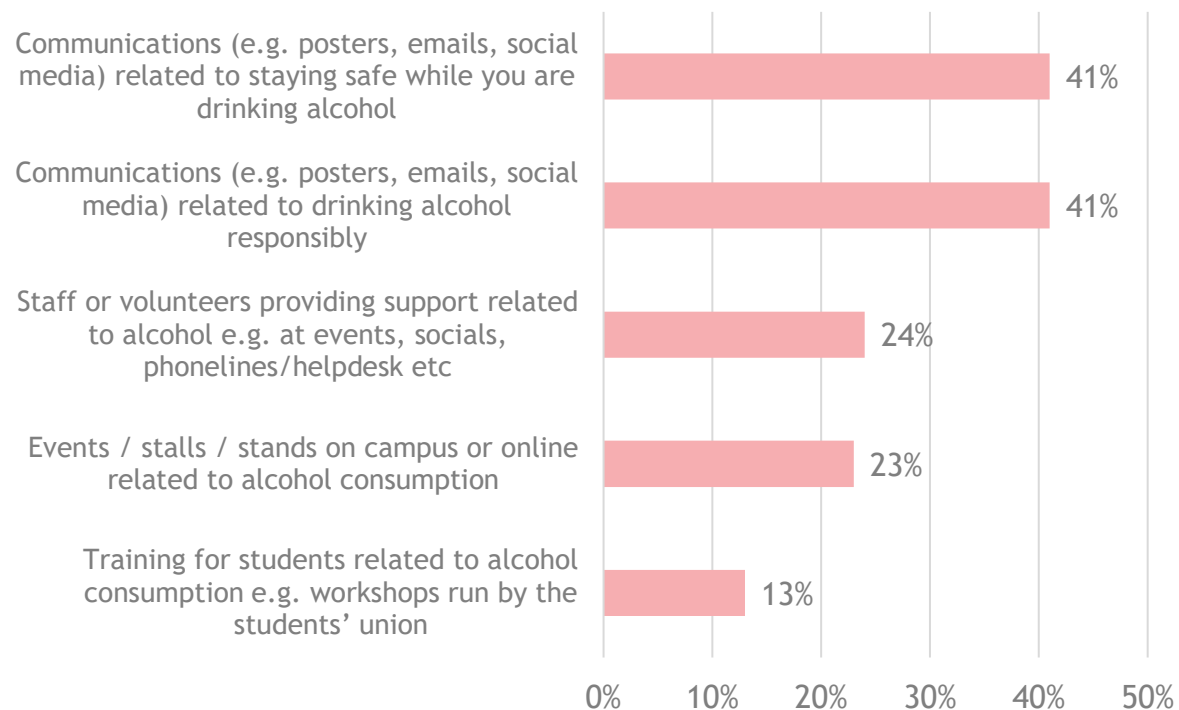
Relationships

- UK citizens are more likely to report getting into an argument and a fight with people they know than non-EU citizens.
- Respondents who are men are more likely to report stealing anything from anyone or anywhere than women respondents.
- Undergraduate respondents are more likely to report making new friends as a result of alcohol than postgraduate and PhD students.
- Disabled students are more likely to report missing social engagements than non-disabled students.
- Respondents who identify as gay are more likely than heterosexual respondents to report experiencing unwanted sexual attention from a stranger or someone they know.

Reducing impacts through responsible consumption

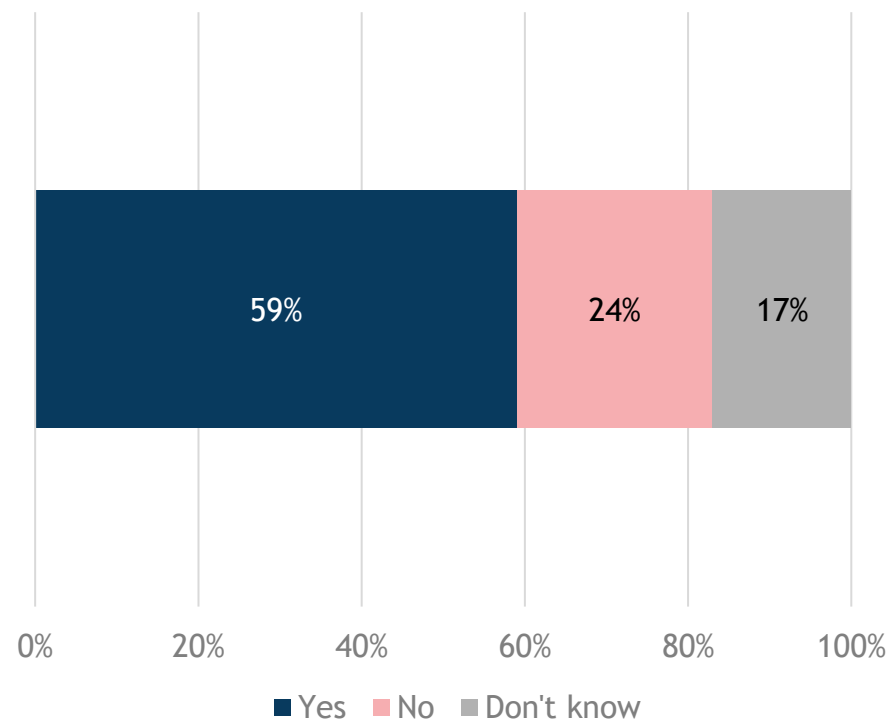
41% of respondents say they are aware of communications related to staying safe while they are drinking alcohol and drinking alcohol responsibly. Over half (59%) feel that there are enough social events for them at university that do not involve having to drink or get drunk.

AWARENESS OF ACTION ON RESPONSIBLE DRINKING



Q. Are you aware of any safe or responsible drinking campaigns, projects or activities at your university? [Weighted base: 11743 Balance: No response, Other, Don't know]

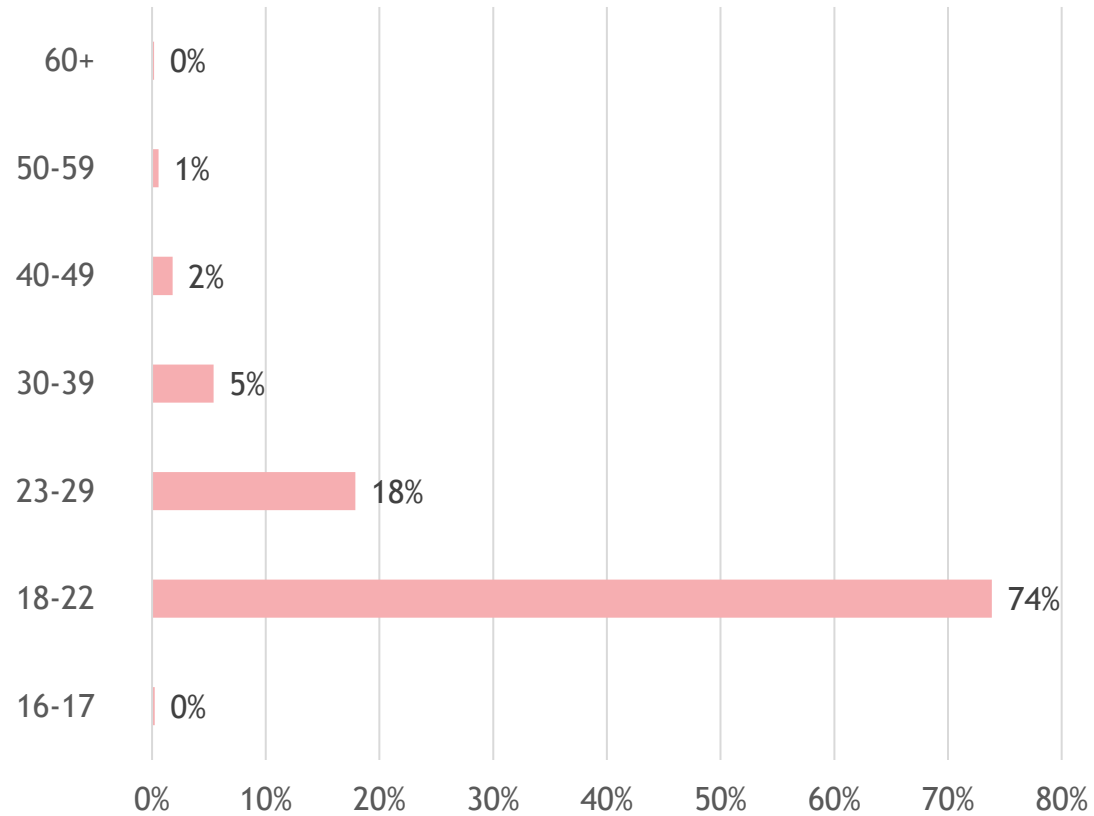
ALCOHOL-FREE SOCIAL EVENTS



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: 11390 Balance: No response]

Respondent demographics

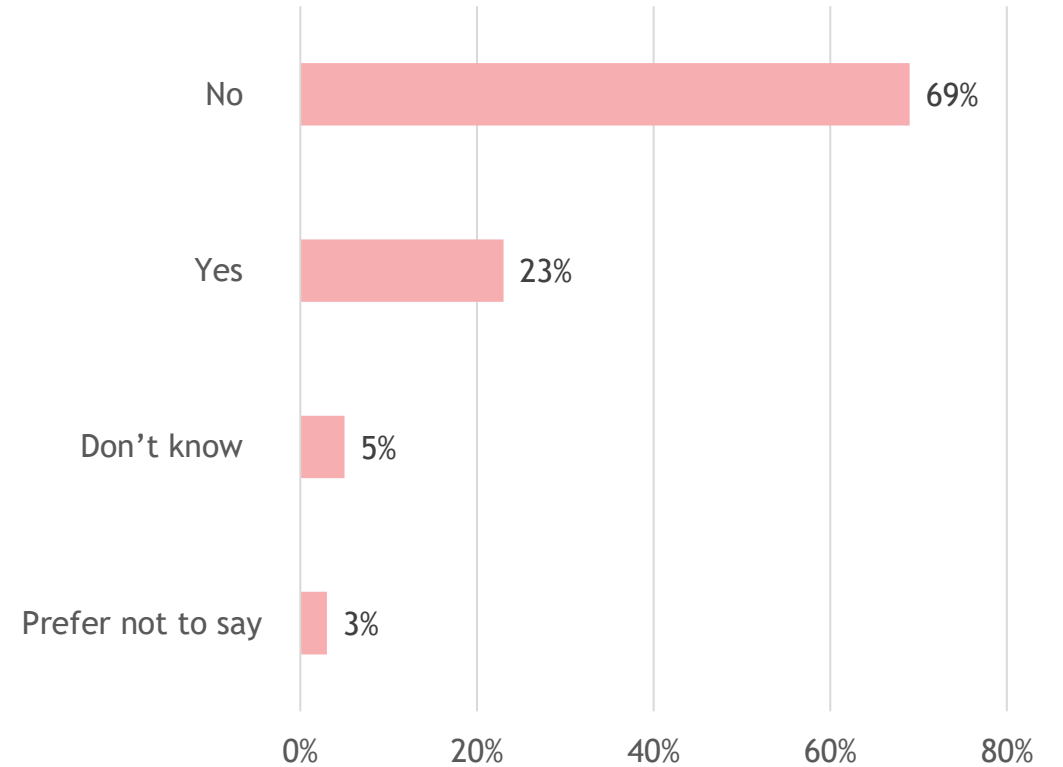
AGE



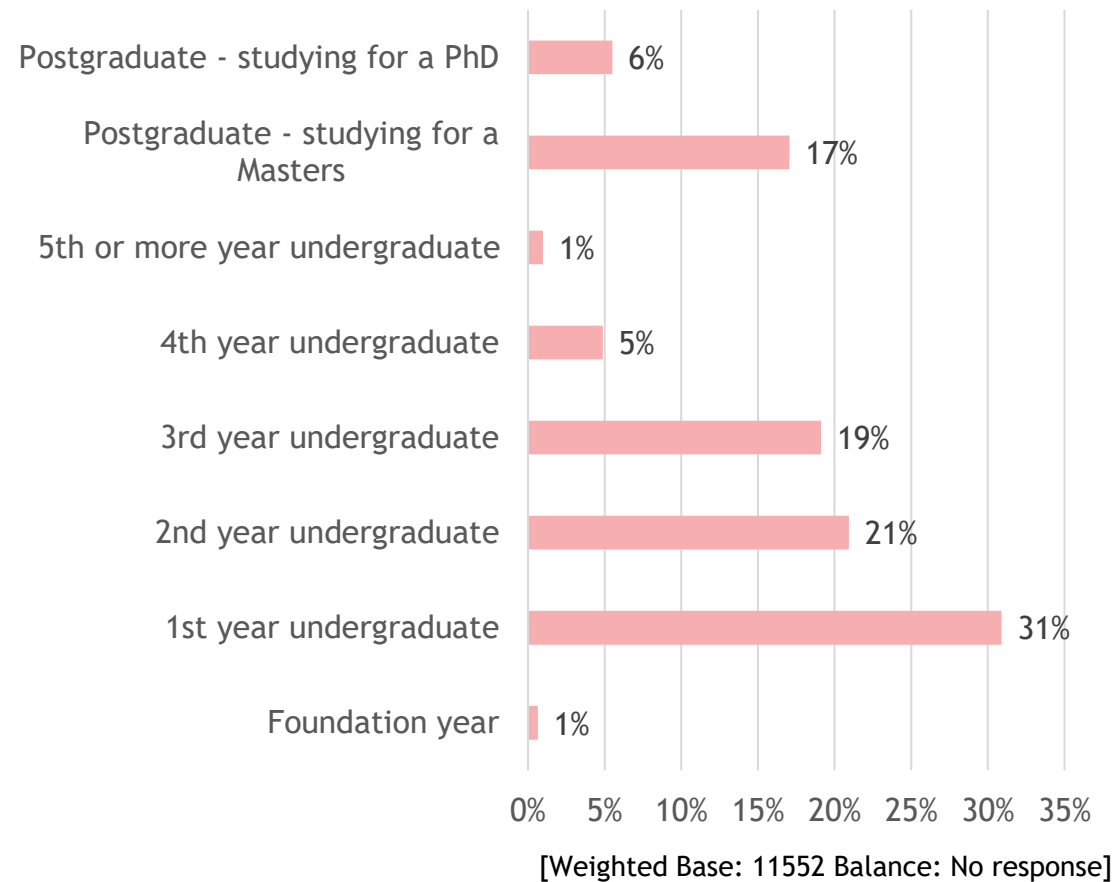
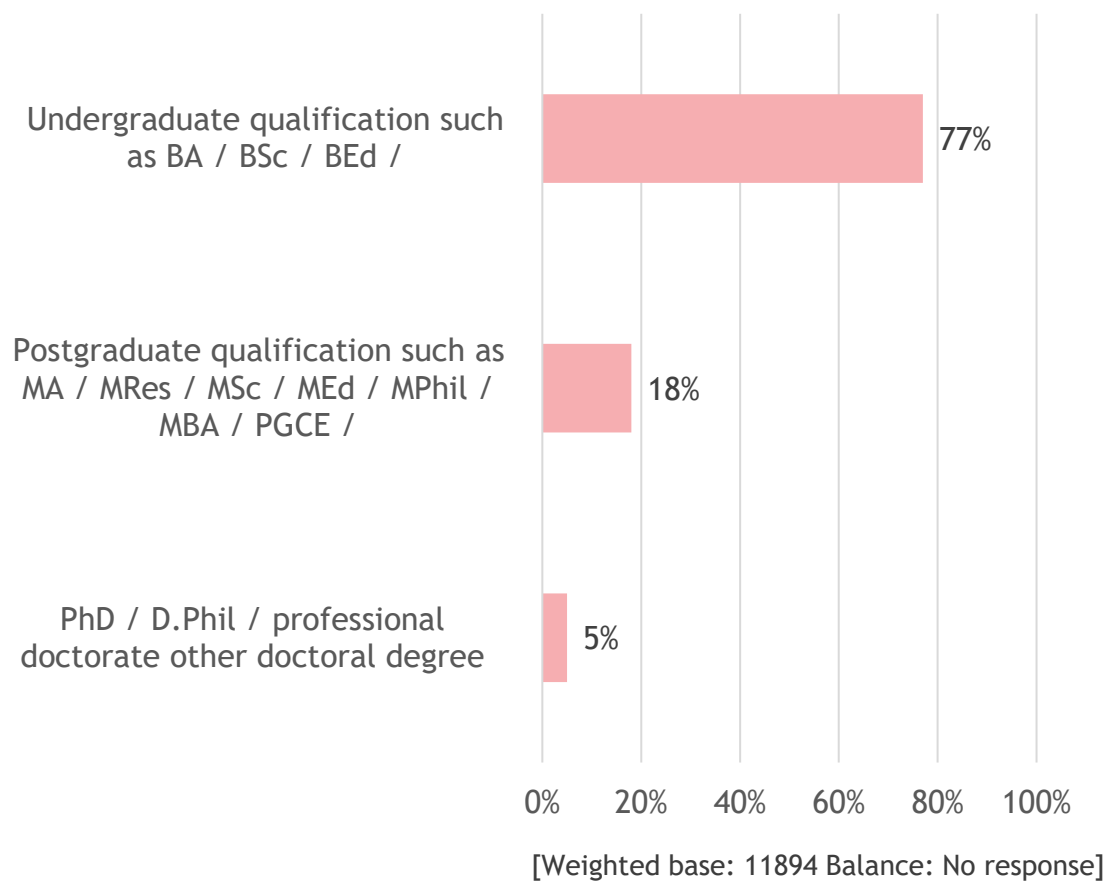
[Weighted Base: 11894 Balance: No response]

DISABILITY

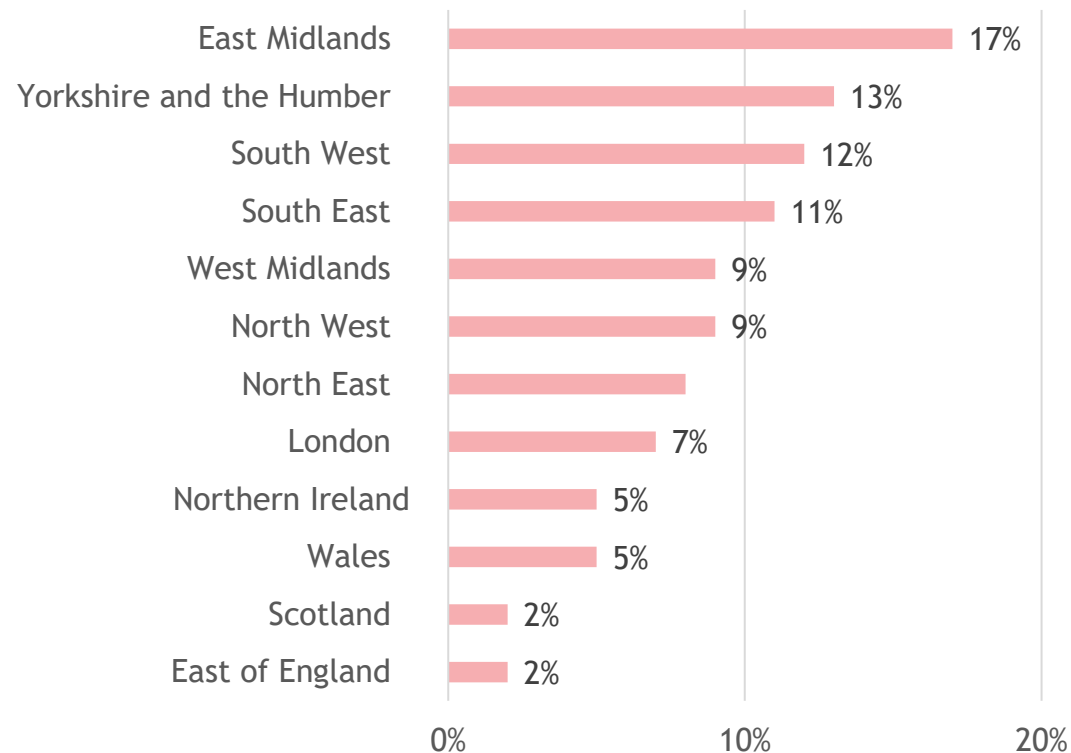
Nearly a quarter (23%) identify as disabled. Nearly half that identify as disabled (47%)* experience mental health difficulties *[Base: 2772]



STUDY LEVEL (HE ONLY)

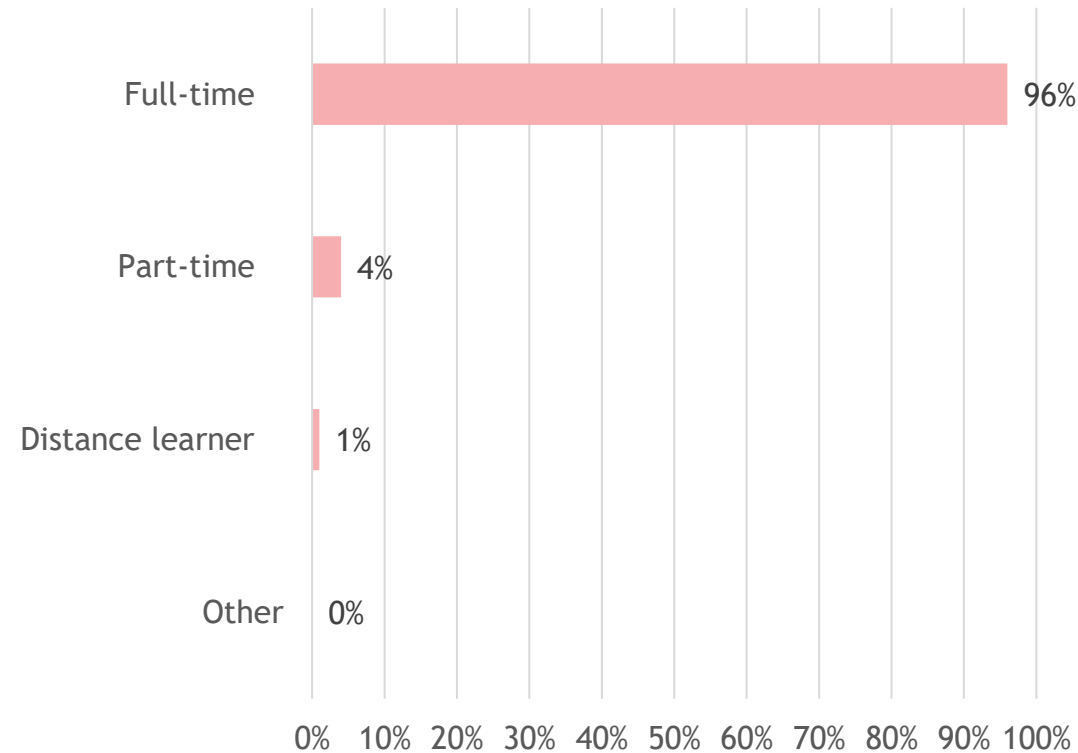


STUDY LOCATION



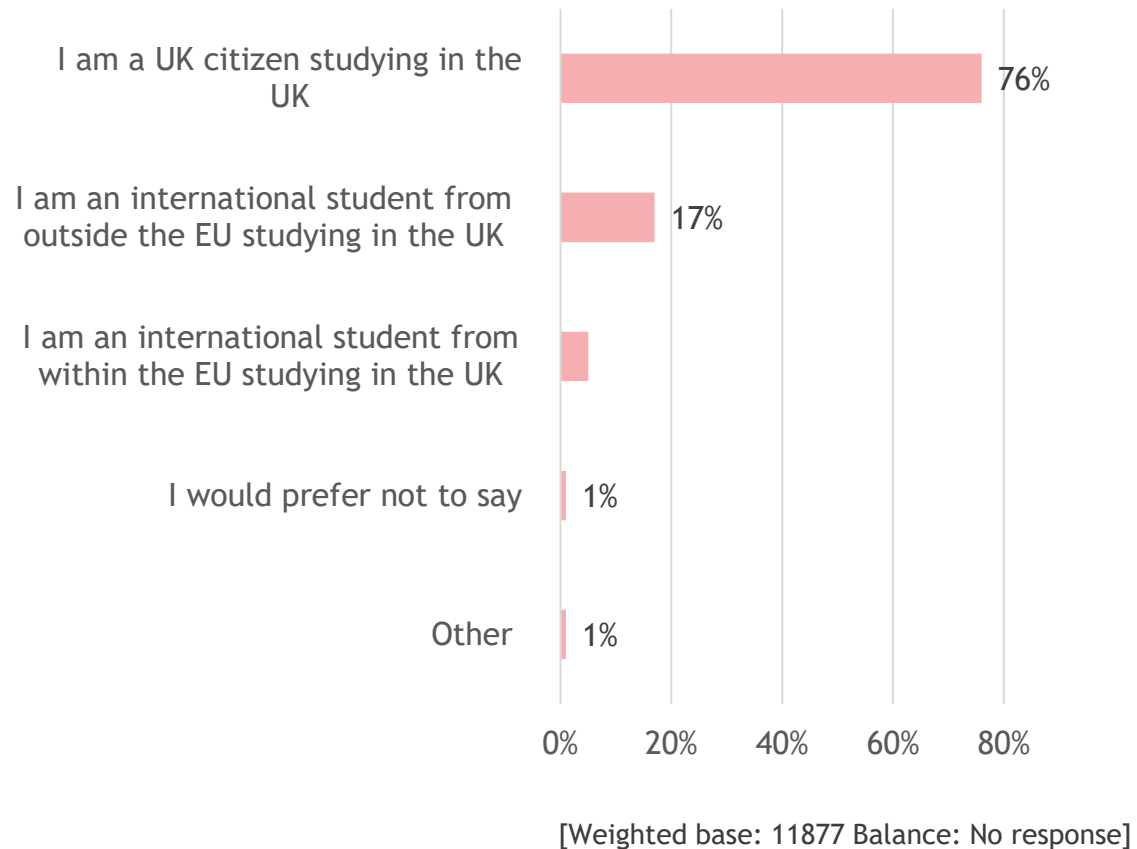
[Weighted base: 11773 Balance: No response]

STUDY TYPE

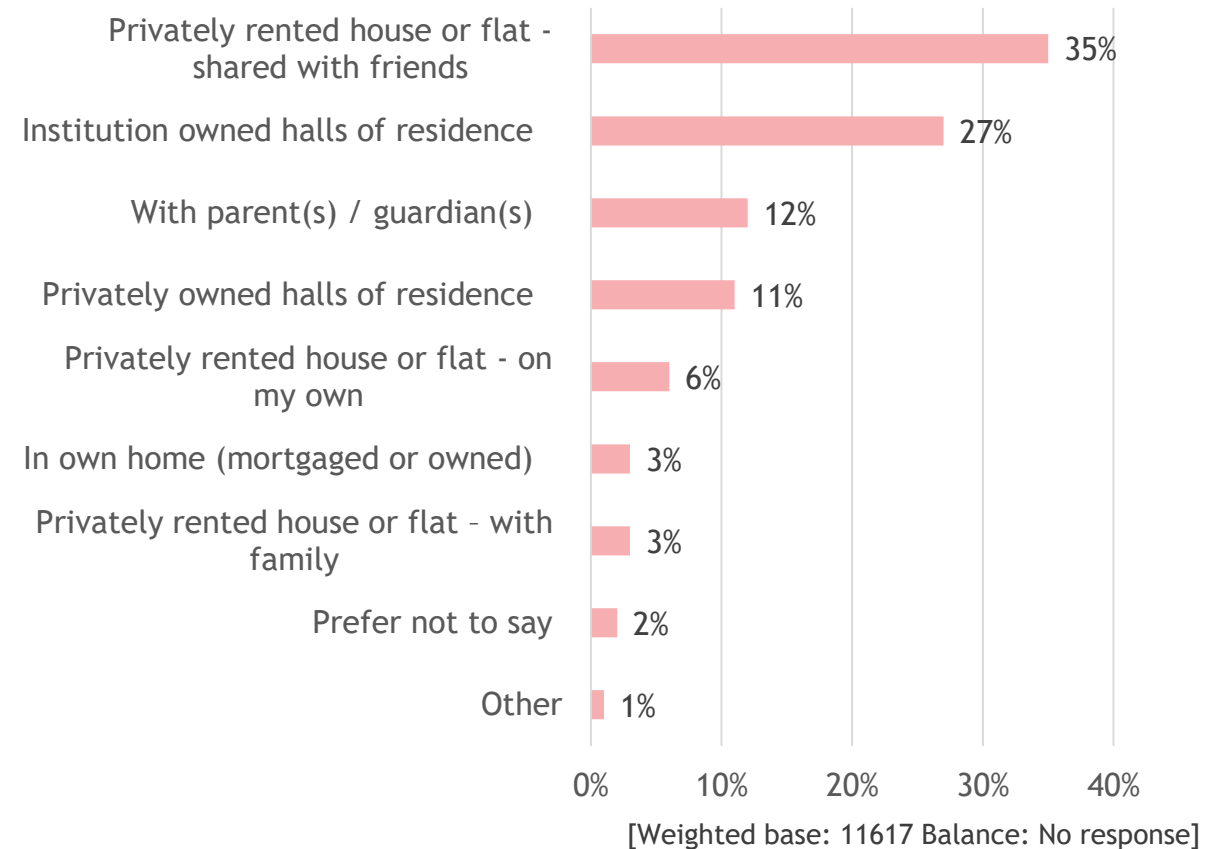


[Weighted base: 11880 Balance: No response]

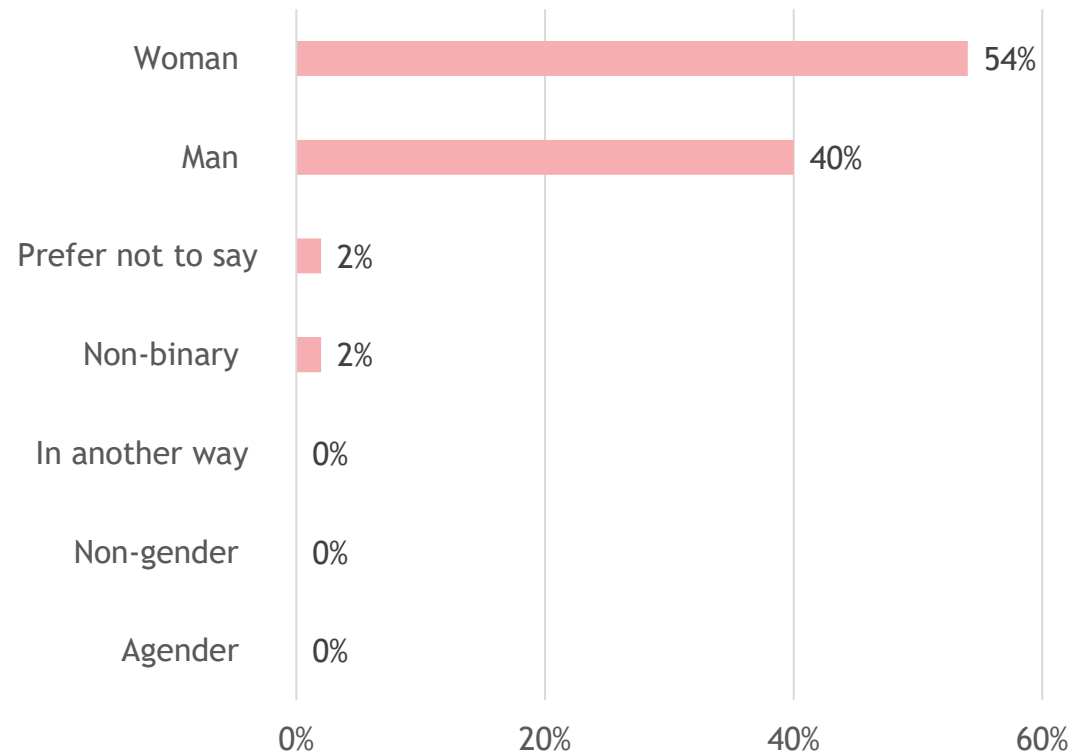
NATIONALITY



ACCOMMODATION TYPE

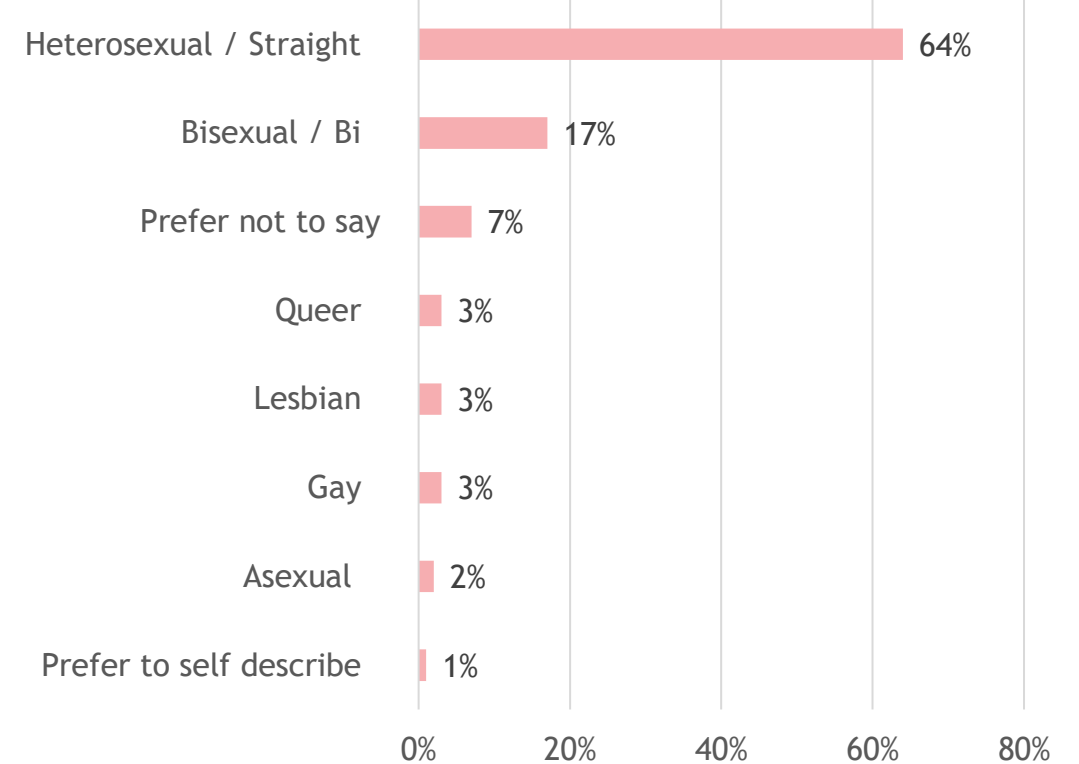


GENDER IDENTITY



[Weighted base: 11894 Balance: No response]

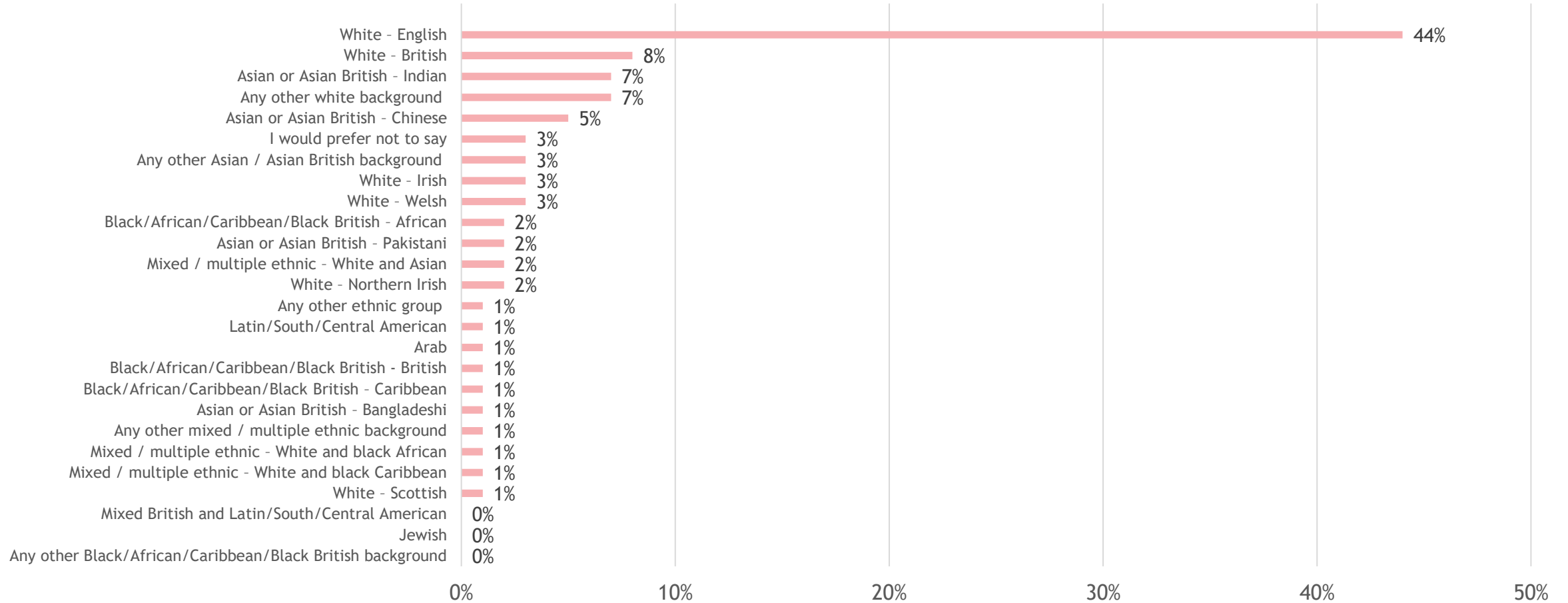
SEXUALITY



[Weighted base: 11873 Balance: No response]

RACE / ETHNICITY

61% of respondents identify as white ethnicities.



[Weighted base: 11869 Balance: No response]

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