

# Barriers to Higher Education for Utah High School Students

*High School Survey Results 2023*



Stephanie Ott [steph.ott@envisionutah.org](mailto:steph.ott@envisionutah.org)  
Jason Brown [jbrown@envisionutah.org](mailto:jbrown@envisionutah.org)



# Research Design + Methodology

Phase 1: Focus Groups	Phase 2: Survey	Methodology
<p>Mode: mostly in-person, some online</p> <p>Length: About 50 minutes</p> <p>Dates: Spring 2023</p> <p>Geography: Utah</p> <p>Audience: high school students, with our best attempt to get juniors and seniors</p>	<p>Mode: Online</p> <p>Length: About 22 minutes</p> <p>Dates: Spring 2023</p> <p>Geography: Utah</p> <p>Audience: Students living in Utah, (n = approx. 1200), about 2/3 were 11<sup>th</sup> graders – Just graduated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To ensure a representative sample, quotas were imposed on key demographics such as gender, age and ethnicity</li><li>• Weighted to reflect population of Utah on ethnicity</li><li>• In the segment analysis, seventh (n=31) and eighth (n=74) graders were included. They were not included in the overall results.</li></ul>	<p>For categorical data, Pearson’s Chi-Squared Test was utilized to determine whether the frequencies under consideration differed significantly by segment variable. In cases where a large number of segments renders the expected counts too low for a standard chi-squared test, Monte-Carlo simulation under the null hypothesis was used to create simulated p-values. Among the results established that varied by segment, a Post-Hoc Fisher’s Exact Test was performed to determine what particular differences are driving the trend.</p> <p>For scalar data, a Kruskal-Wallis One-Way ANOVA was used, which tests segmented data against the hypothesis that they come from the same distribution. Kruskal-Wallis is robust against non-normality, unequal variances, outliers, and a variety of other problems. In cases where there were two-part segments, Kruskal-Wallis is equivalent to the Wilcoxon Rank-Sum Test, the standard for comparison tests, so it was unnecessary to change our methods. A Post-Hoc Dunn’s test was applied to those that were significant under Kruskal-Wallis, once again narrowing down the source of the differences detected in the broader test.</p> <p>In order to avoid the multiple comparisons problem (in which asking many questions statistically leads to the possibility of proportionally many false positives), the false discovery rate was controlled using the Benjamini-Hochberg adjustment at the level of .01.</p>



# Executive Summary

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## 1. Students see cost as a huge barrier

- However, this barrier goes beyond merely the cost of tuition. Students are also concerned about housing, cost of living, and textbooks, etc.

## 2. Students have large knowledge gaps about post-secondary education

- Students are confused about what is needed to obtain financial aid
- Students are divided on what to do if they don't know what to study

## 3. Mental health and attitudes about school shape students' decisions

- Students planning on attending college are much more likely to believe they'd be successful
- School shootings and emotional bullying are top safety concerns for students



# Student Profiles



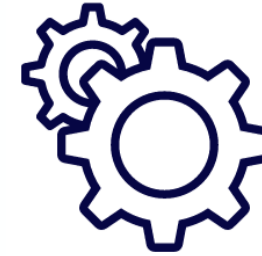
## 4-year school

- ▶ Believe continued learning will provide them with job stability, higher incomes, and the ability to pursue a career in a field that interests them
- ▶ Consider higher education to be well worth the cost



## 2-year school

- ▶ Motivated to pursue higher education, as it will provide them with the means to support their future families and allow them freedom and flexibility
- ▶ Recognize the cost associated with higher education



## Trade/tech school

- ▶ Only somewhat satisfied with their high school experience
- ▶ Intend to pay for their education and are unlikely to go into debt or accept free financial aid



## No education plans

- ▶ Perceive higher education to be a risk that could cost them valuable time and money
- ▶ Desire financial security in adulthood and feel they can best attain this through entering the workforce immediately after high school



## Unsure of plans

- ▶ May have experienced mental health challenges, which, in turn, could affect their decision to pursue higher education.
- ▶ Have not saved money for school, nor do they understand the financial assistance available to them or how to acquire such aid.

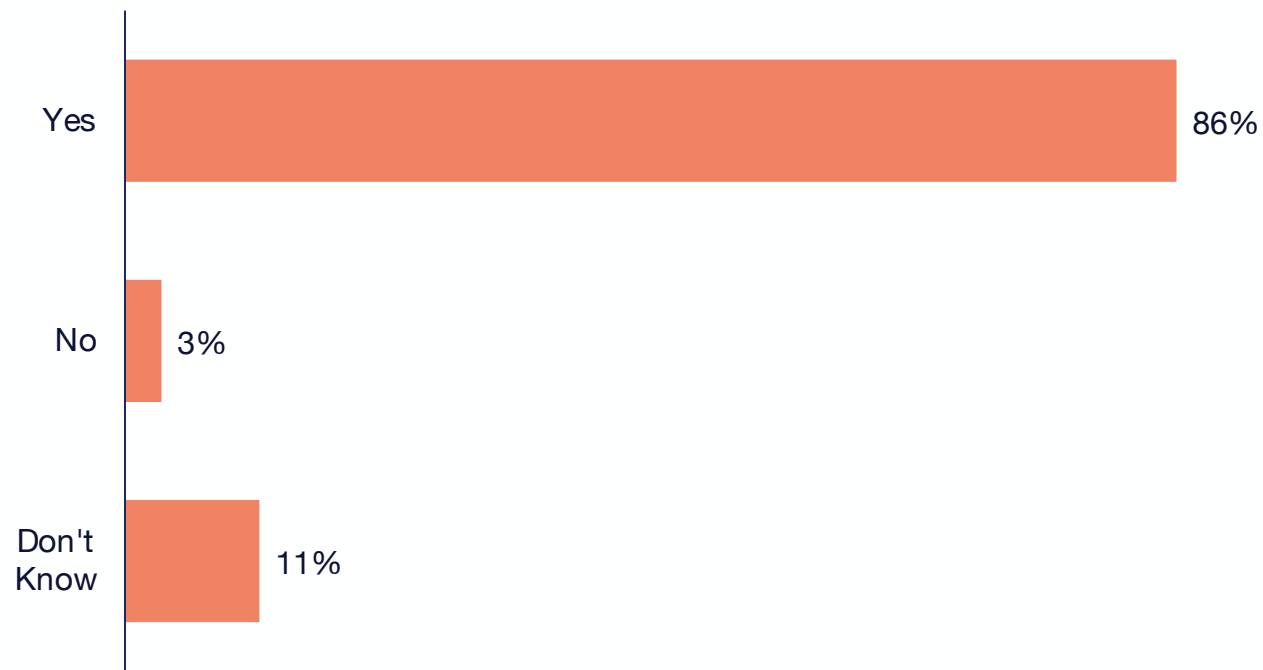


**Plans After High  
School**



# Most students plan to get more education or training after high school

Do you plan to get more education or training after high school?

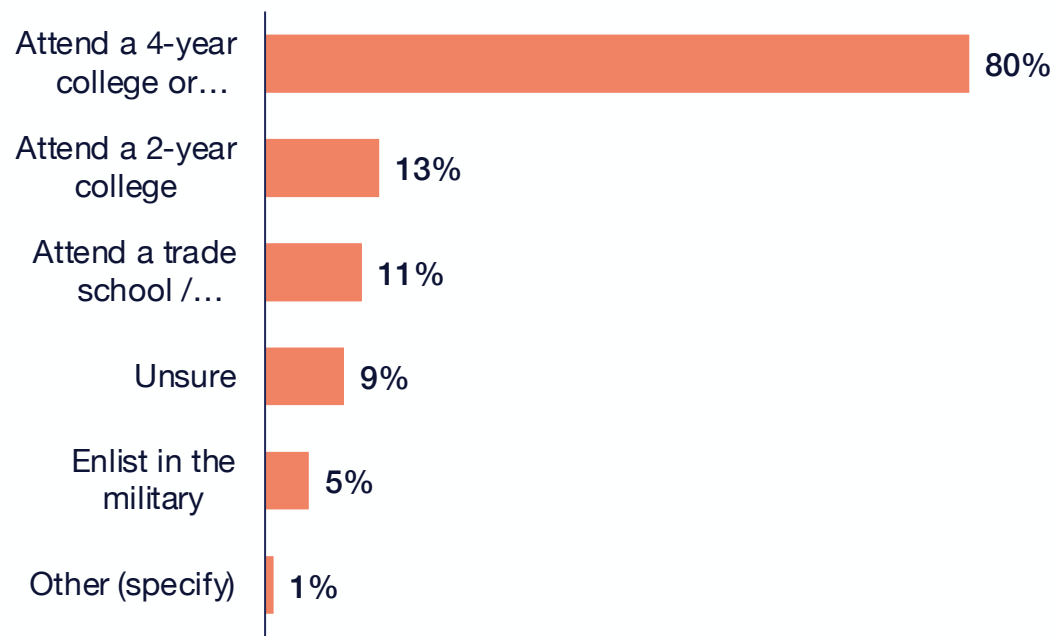


*\*According to data on USHE's website, about 53% of Utah high school graduates enroll at a USHE institution within three years.*

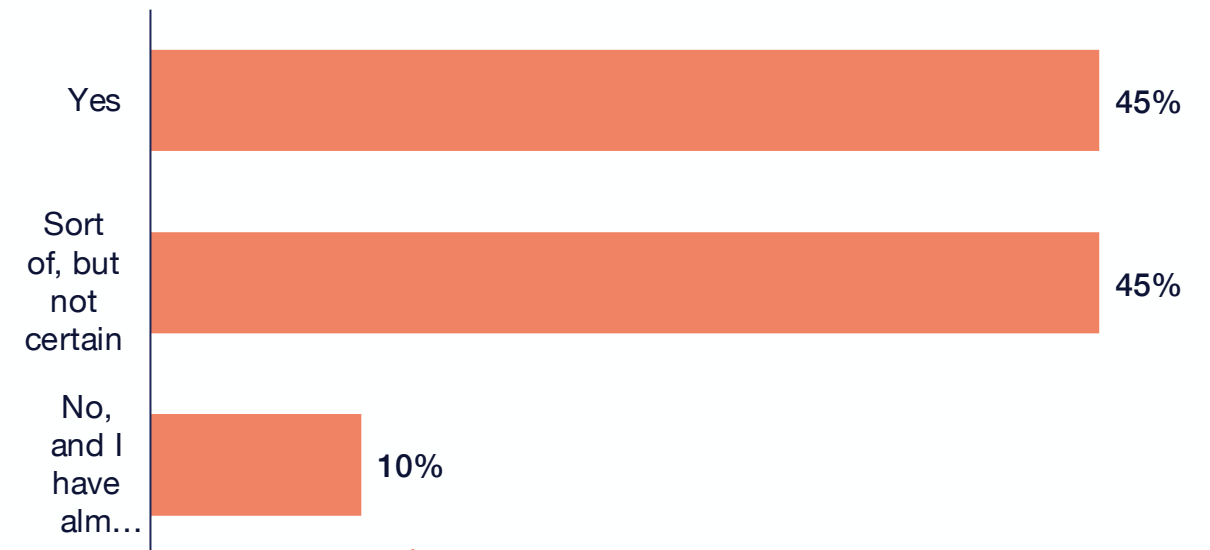


# Most students planning on more education/training plan on attending a 4-year college or university and have some idea of what they'd like to study

What are your plans for more education or training after high school?



Have you decided what you want to study / what degree you'd like to earn?

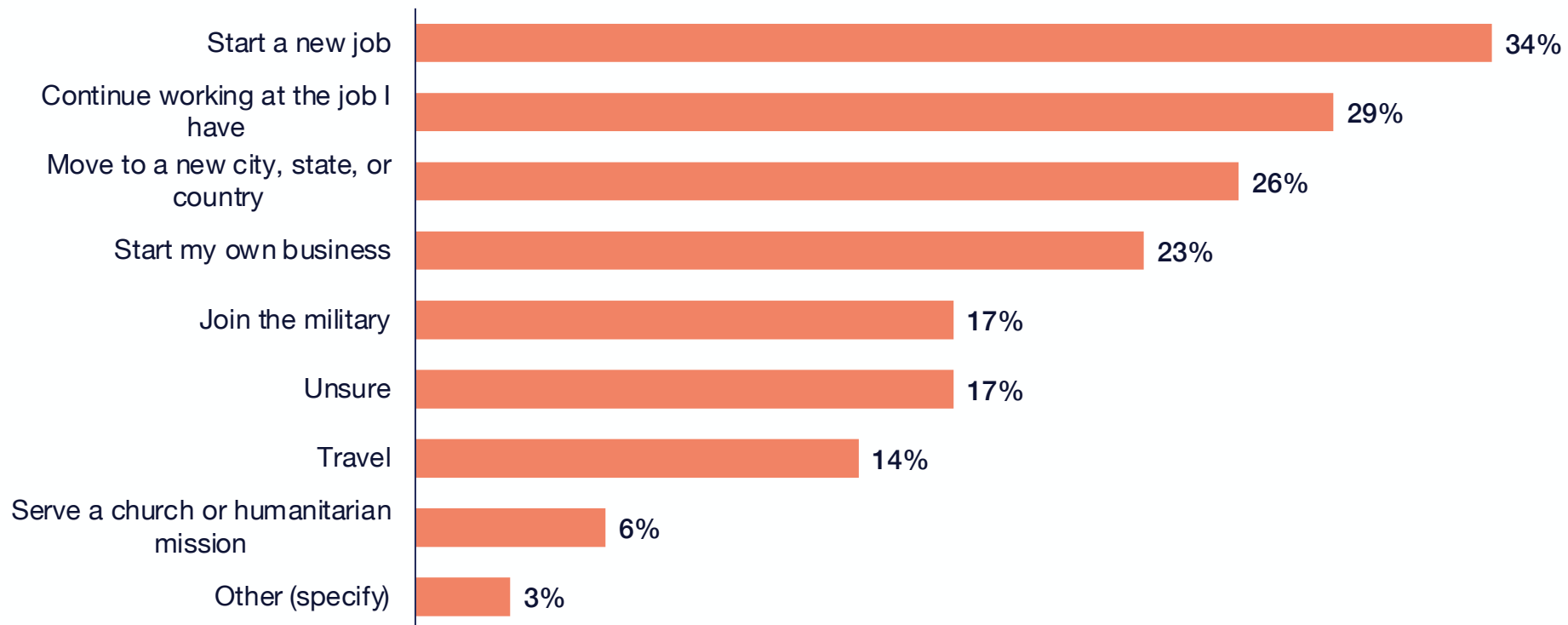


*\*In general, the more education the respondent's parents have, the more likely they were to plan to attend a four-year college or university.*



# Most students not planning on getting more training or education plan to work after high school

What are your plans for the first year or so after high school?

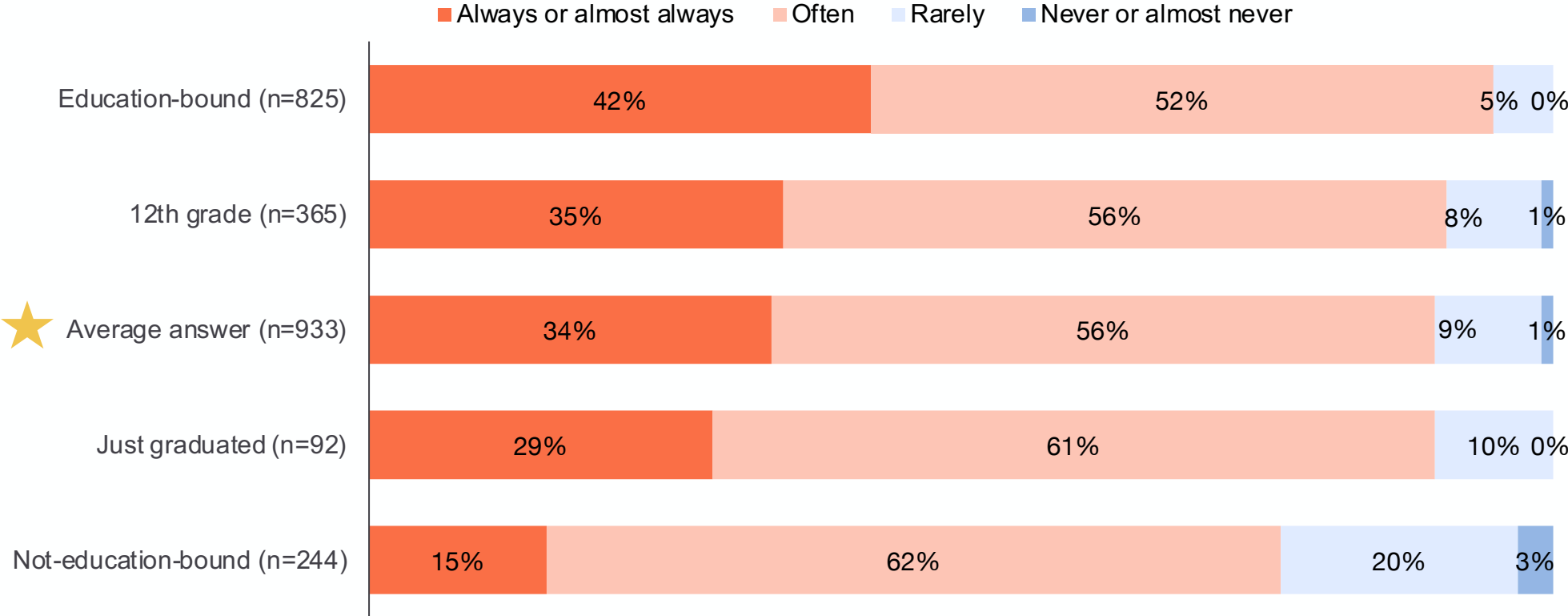






# Not-education-bound students are much less likely to say education is always or almost always worth the cost

Do you believe education/training after high school in Utah or technical certification is generally worth the cost?



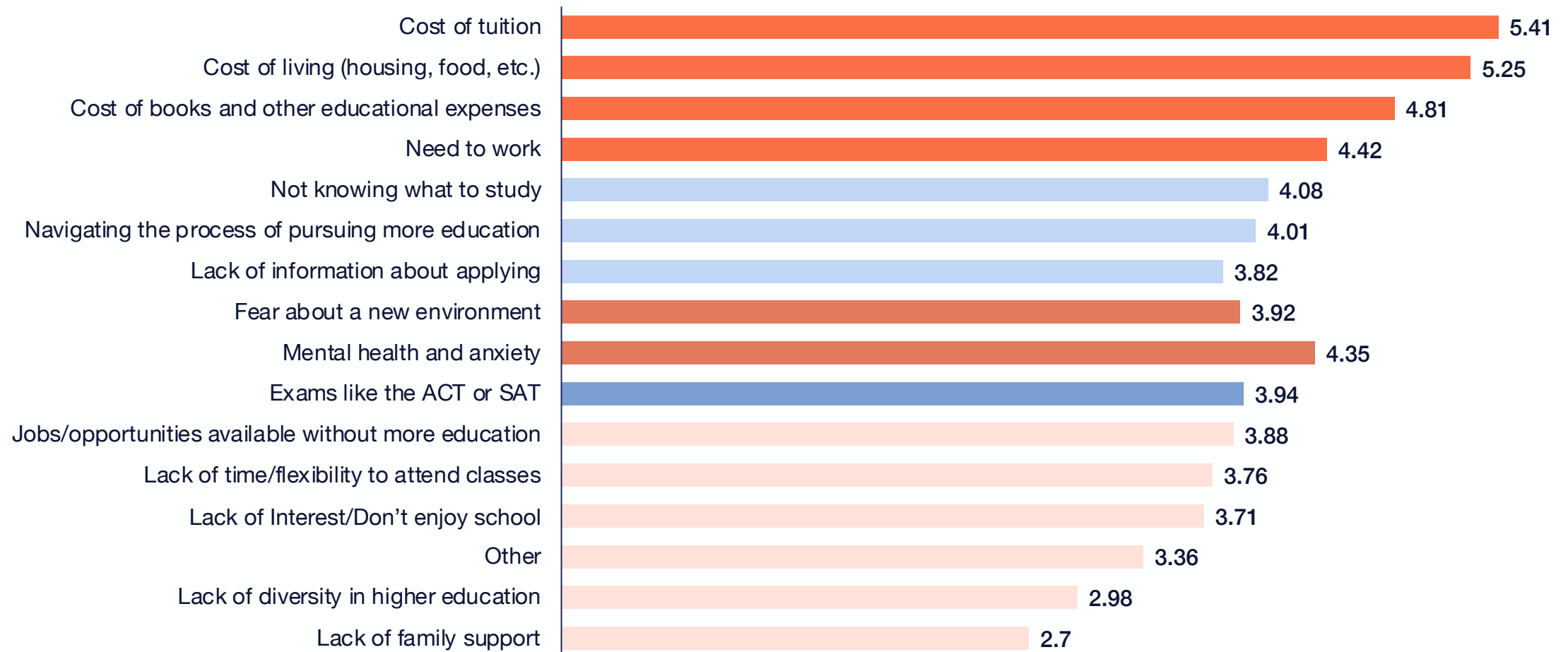


**1. Students  
see cost as a  
huge barrier**



# The top four largest barriers relate to cost

What are the biggest challenges/barriers someone like you faces when you think about pursuing education or training after high school?





# Students' stresses about cost go beyond tuition

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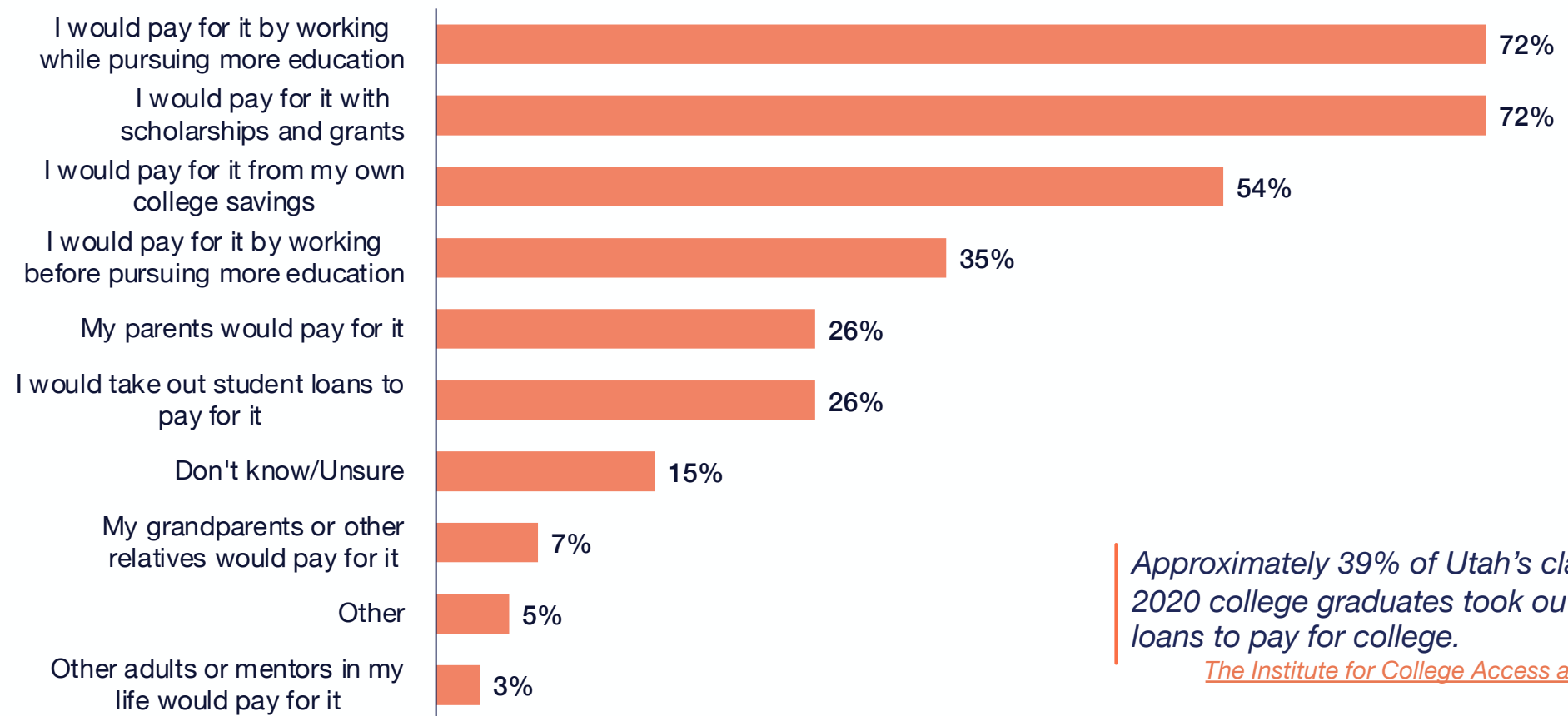
“Looking at rent or dorms and meal plans, all me and my friends talk about is how much [we] have to work this summer, so that we can pay for everything. And we barely, or if anything, we're not able to pay for everything. So there's going to be loans. And student loans scare me so badly ... So I think the financial part is definitely more prominent, at least in my head.” –Rural Utah student focus group participant





# Most students plan to work and use scholarships/grants to pay for post-secondary training and aren't relying on others for financial help

If you were to pursue education/training after high school, how do you expect you would pay for it? Select all that apply.



*Approximately 39% of Utah's class of 2020 college graduates took out student loans to pay for college.*

*[The Institute for College Access and Success](#)*



# Planning early helps build confidence

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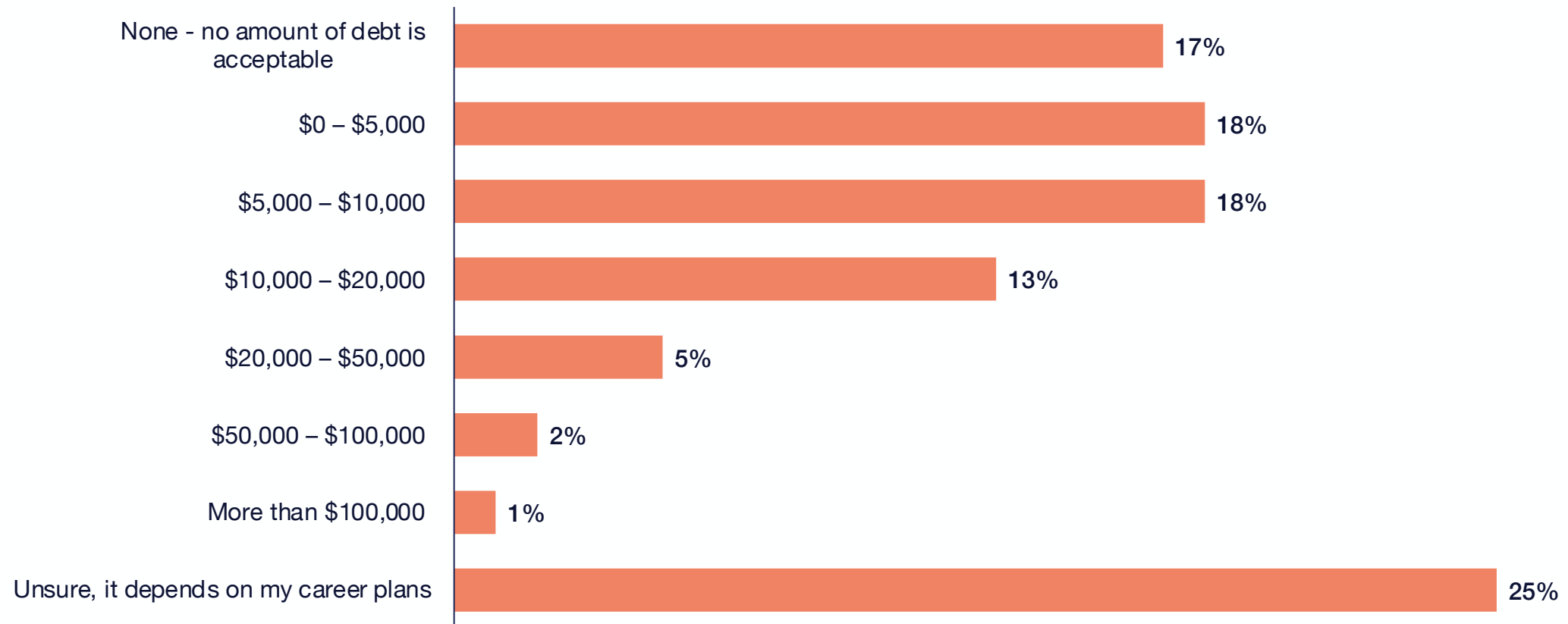
“I’m a part of AVID, that’s basically a college prep class. And so I’ve been in that since the seventh grade. So I’ve had a lot of opportunities with that. I’ve applied for about five scholarships, I think. And I did receive two of them. So I already have some scholarships.” –Underrepresented student focus group participant





# More than half of students say no more than \$10K is worth the investment

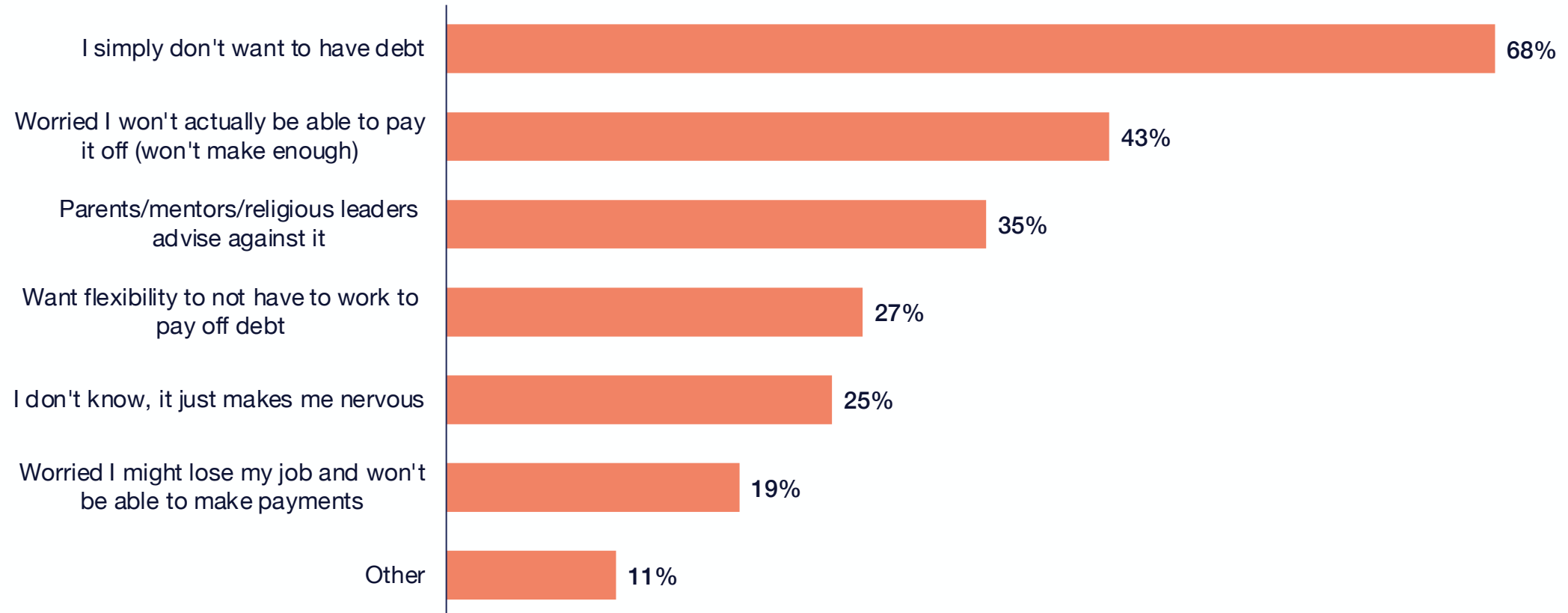
Approximately how much college debt do you personally think is worth the investment for a college or trade/technical education?





# Most students who don't think debt is acceptable, just simply don't want to have debt

Why do you think no amount of student loans would be worth the investment? Select all that apply.





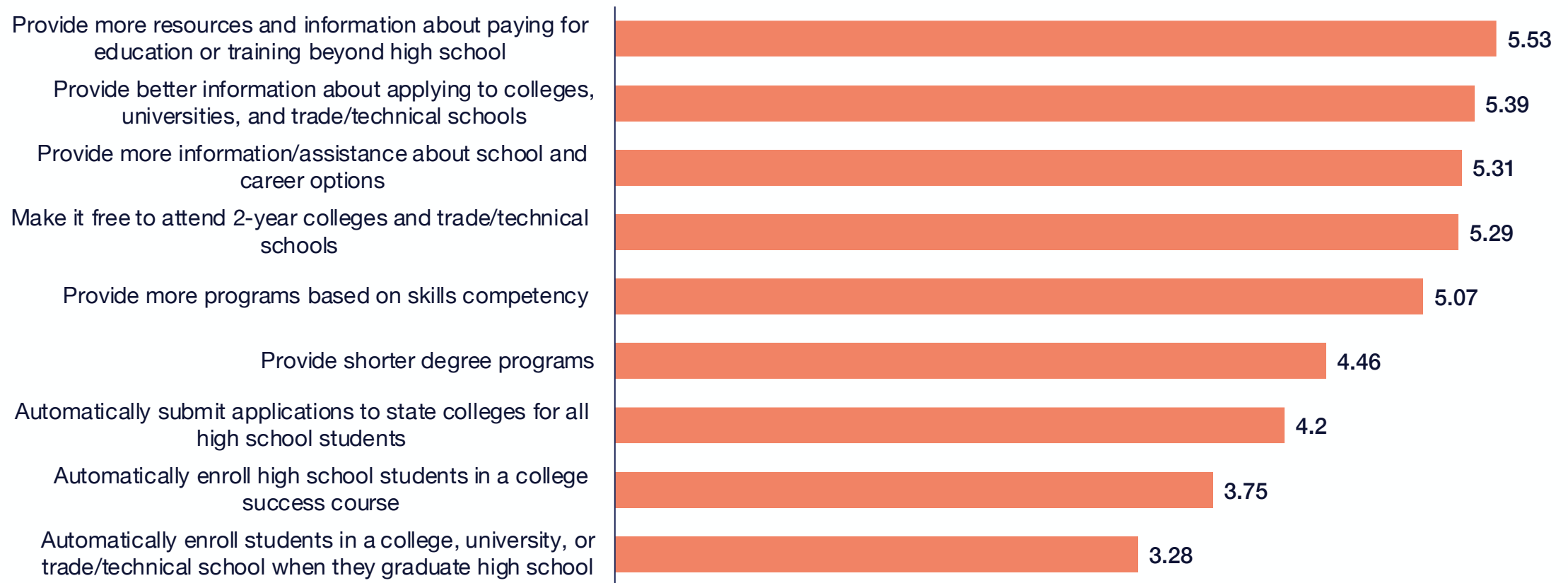


**2. Students have  
large knowledge  
gaps about post-  
secondary  
education**



# Students think having more information would benefit more than anything else to help students pursue higher education

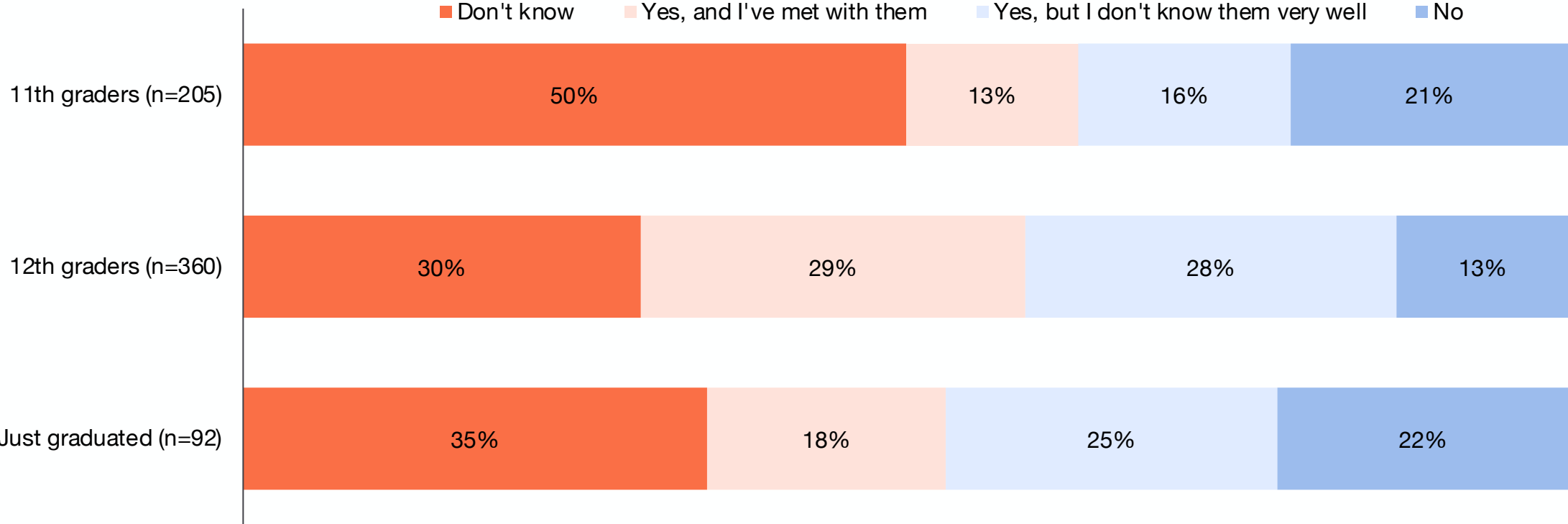
How effective do you think the following ideas would be?





# More than half of 12<sup>th</sup> graders at least know of their College Access Advisor

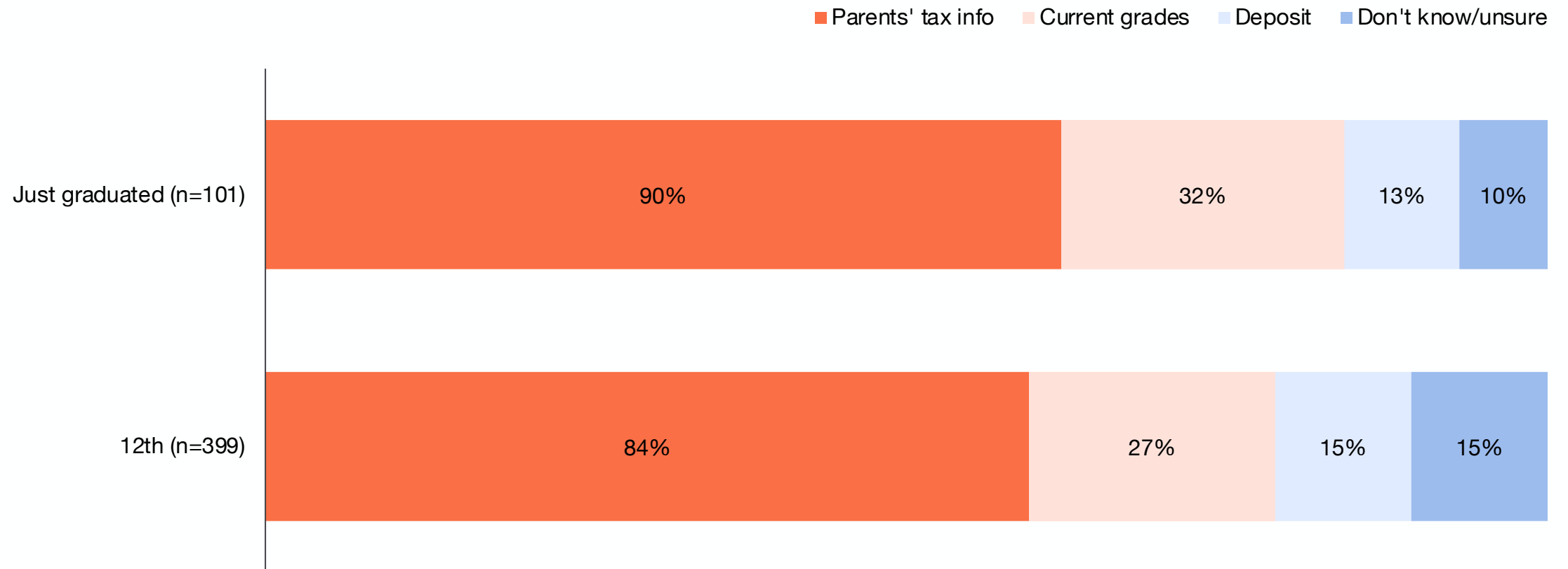
Do you have a College Access Advisor?





# Older students still have some confusion about what is needed for the FAFSA

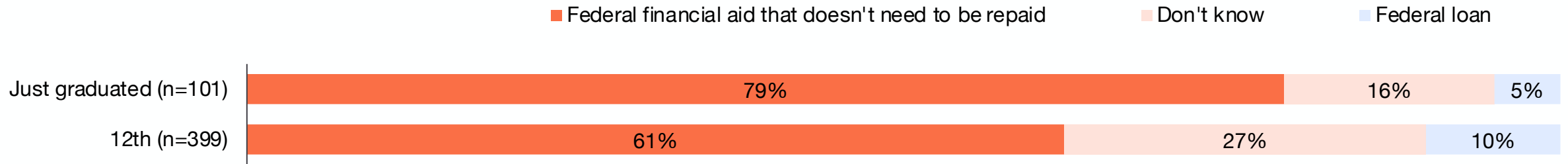
What information do you need to fill out the FAFSA? Select all that apply.



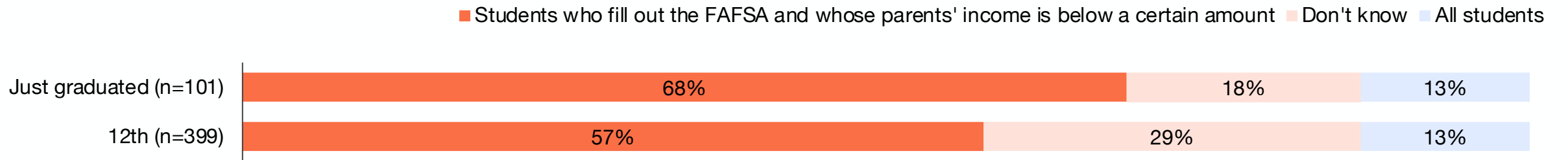


# Students do not fully understand Pell grants

## What is a Pell grant?



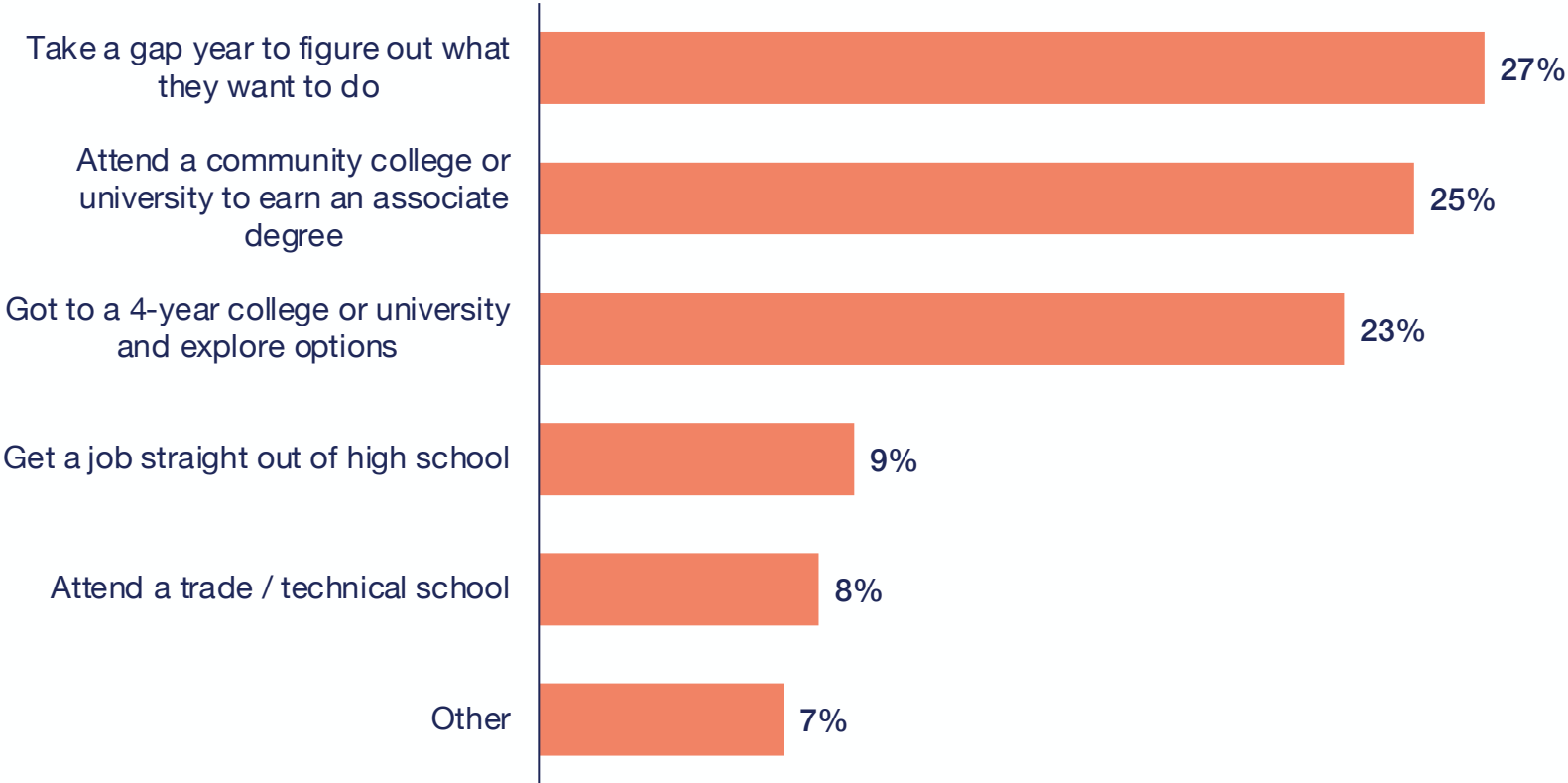
## Who can receive Pell grants?





# Students are fairly divided on what the best option is if a student doesn't know what to study

If someone doesn't know what they want to study at a college or trade/technical school, what do you think is their best option?





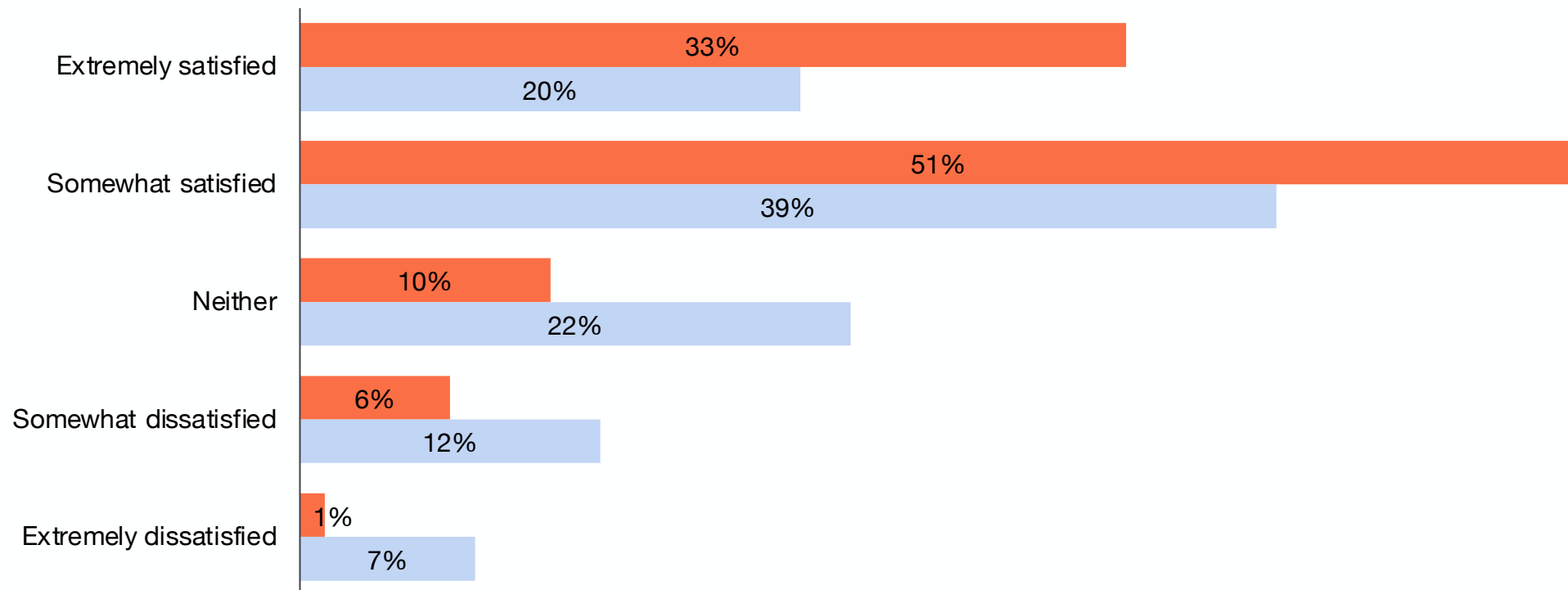
**3. Mental health  
and attitudes about  
school shape  
students' decisions**



# Students planning on attending college are more likely to be extremely satisfied / satisfied with the quality of their education

Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the education you've received in Utah?

Education-bound (n=967) Not-education bound (n=314)

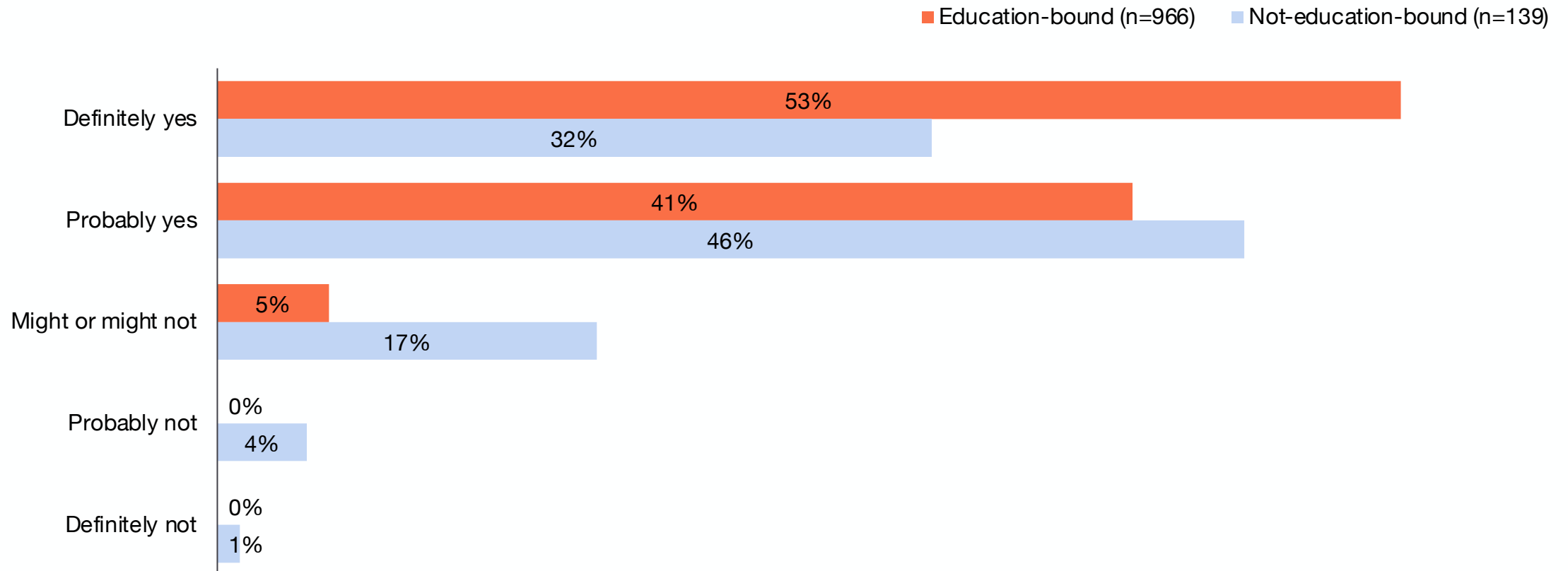






# Education-bound students are much more likely to believe they'd be successful in their classes and graduate

Regardless of your plans, if you were to attend a 4-year college/university, do you believe you'd do well in your classes and graduate from that college?





# Students are afraid to leave their community

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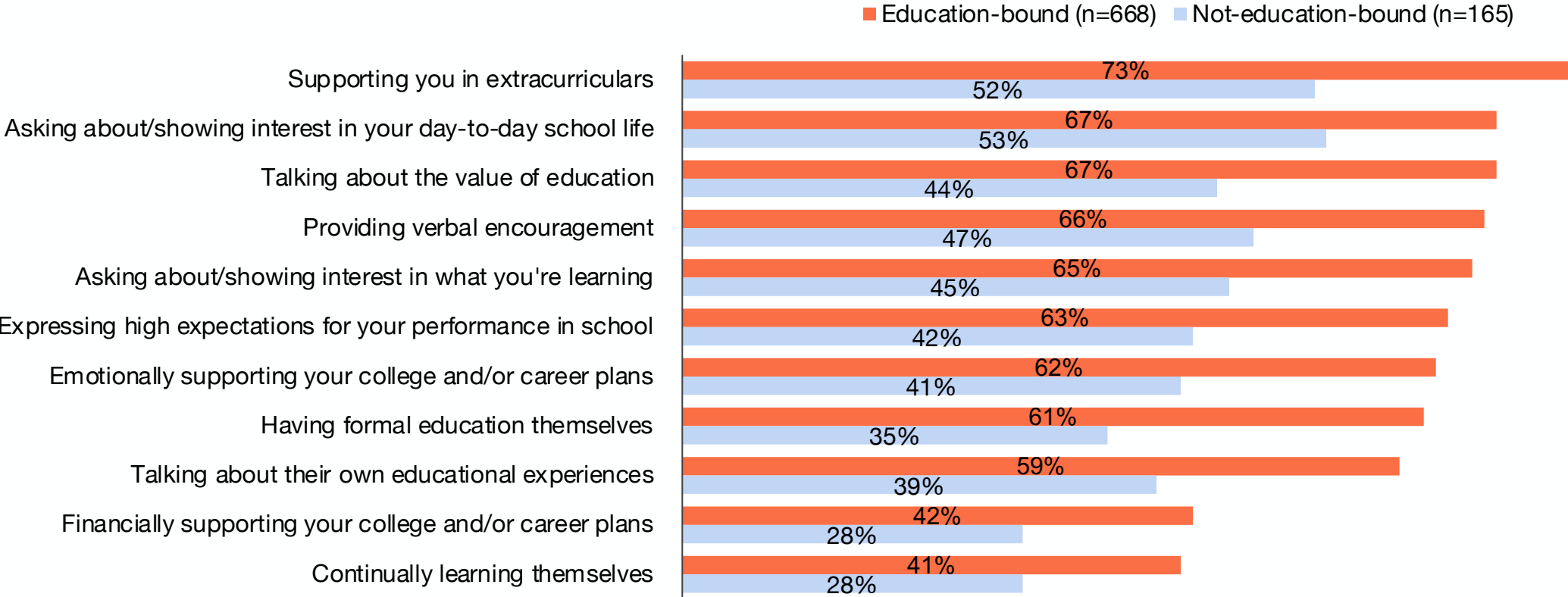
“A lot of students are scared, especially here, ... to go so far away from family, people that we know. It’s the culture that we have to go to Snow or SUU. And when you don’t, people are like, ‘oh my goodness, you’re not gonna do very good’ and you just think everyone is doubting you.” –Rural Utah student focus group participant





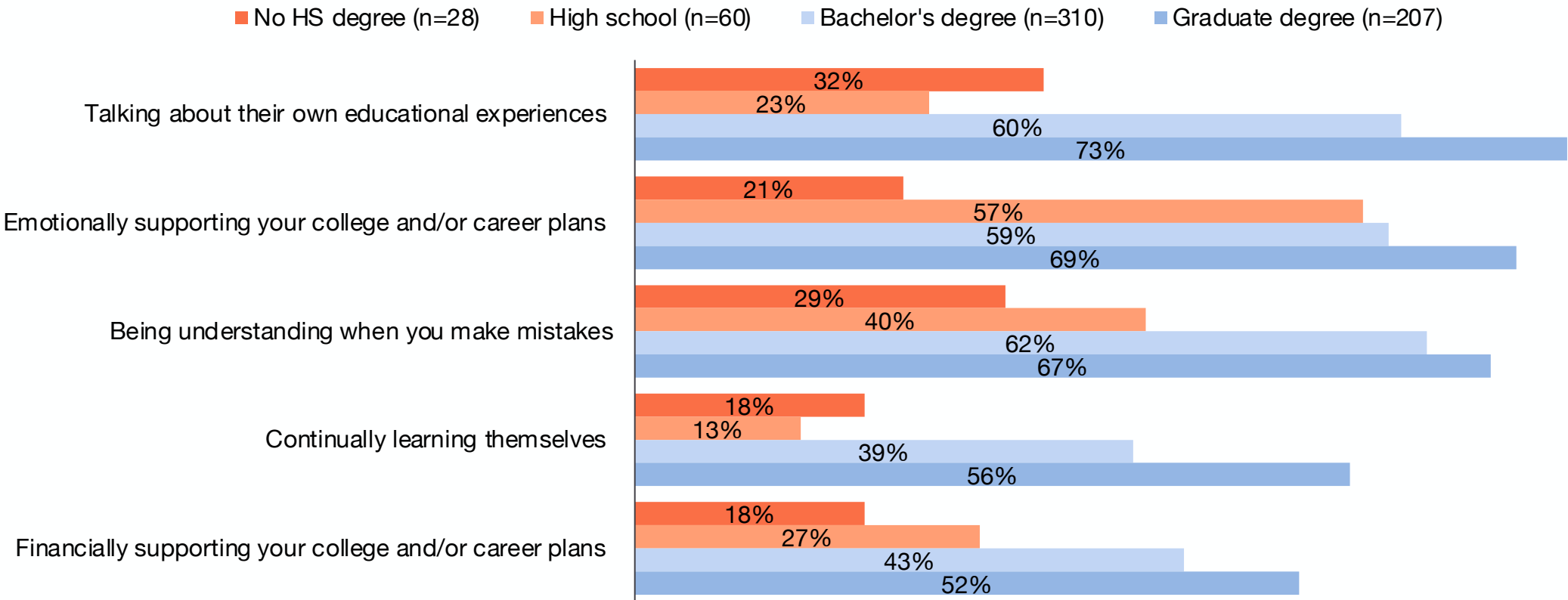
# Education-bound students say their parents/guardians support them in more ways than non-education bound students

Which of these do your parents or guardians do?





# Education-bound students say their parents/guardians support them in more ways than non-education bound students (continued)





# Students don't always get the emotional support they need

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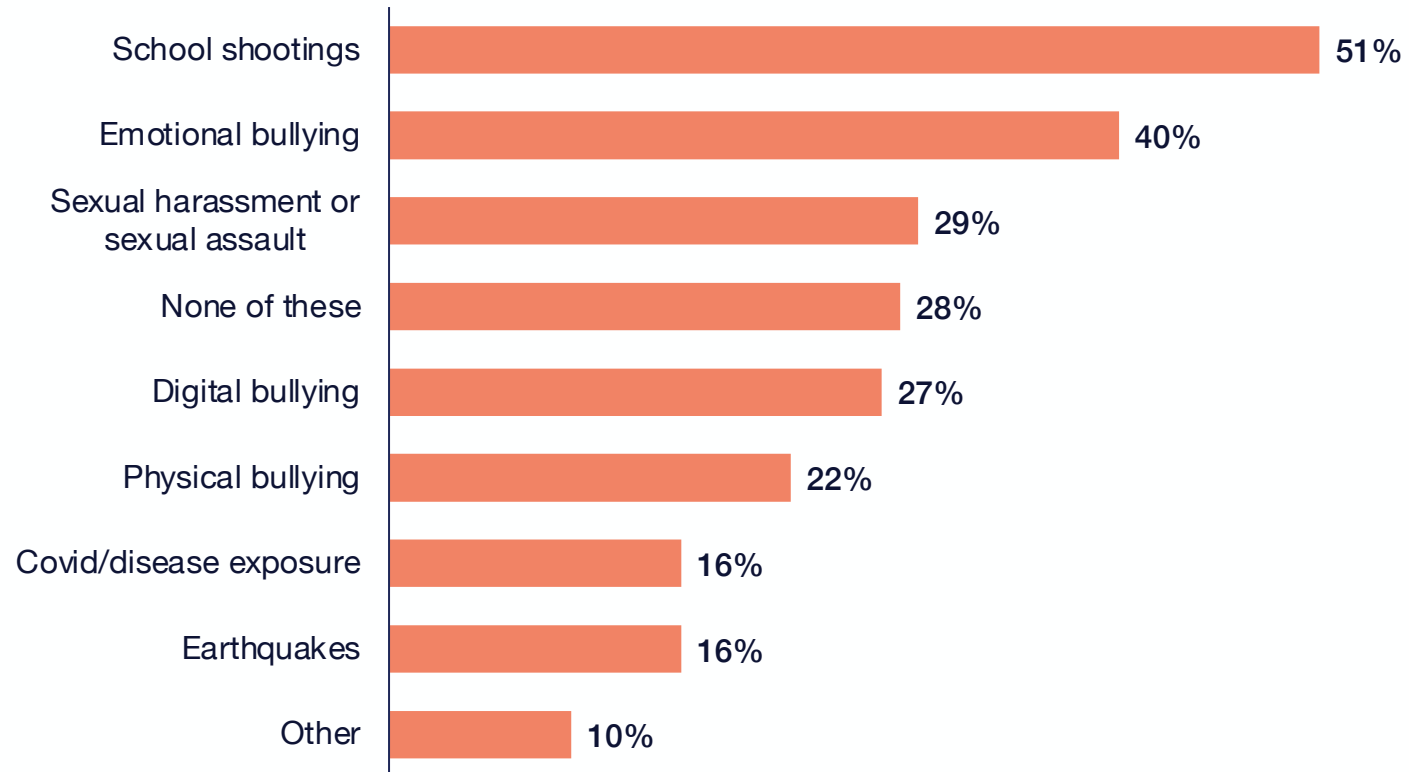
“I get home in tears. And I feel like I just can't say anything to my parents or my siblings. Because I don't wanna tell my parents because I know they work so hard, especially because they're immigrants and one is a refugee, and it's hard to be so stressed because I know they've worked so hard.” –Underrepresented student focus group participant





# School shootings and emotional bullying are the top safety concerns for students

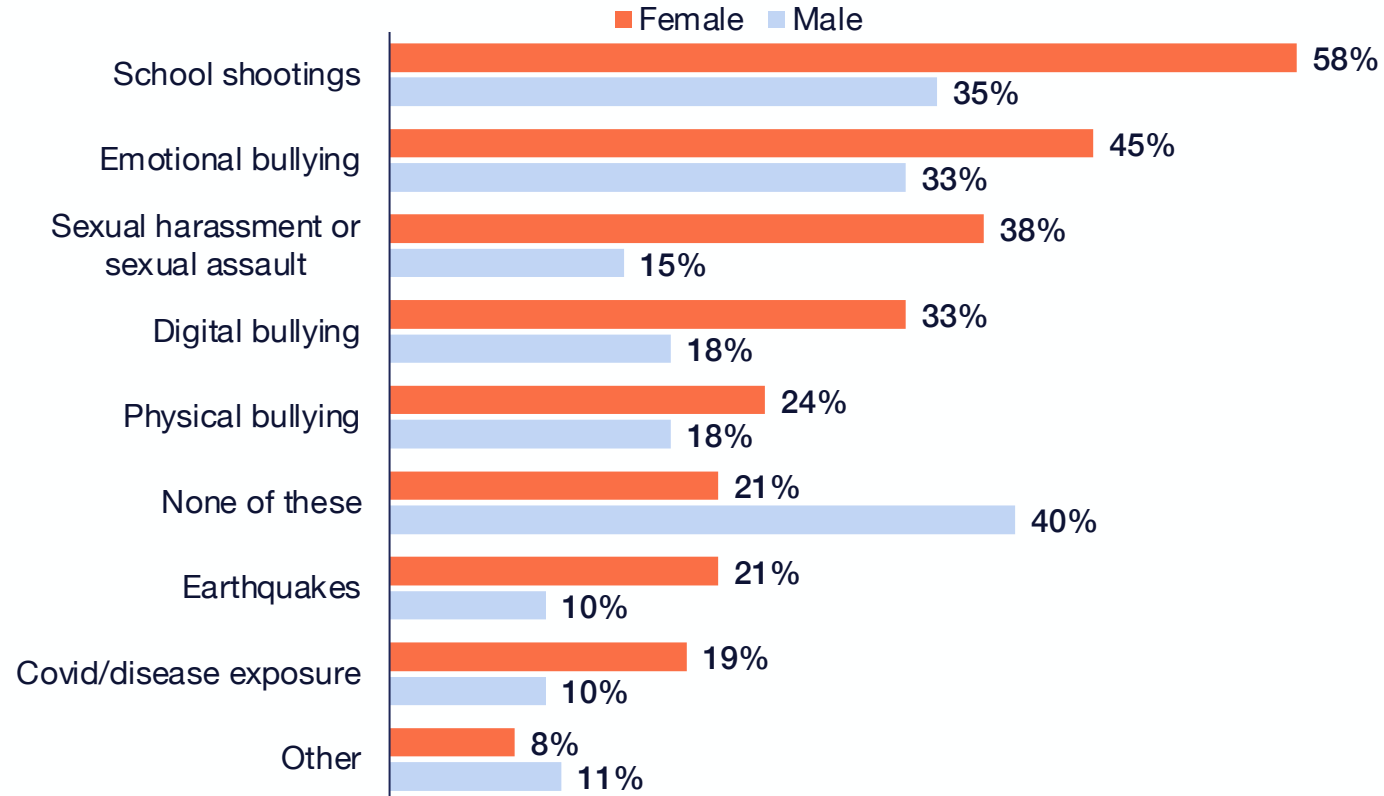
Which safety issues at school are a concern to you? Select all that apply.





# Females are more concerned about safety issues

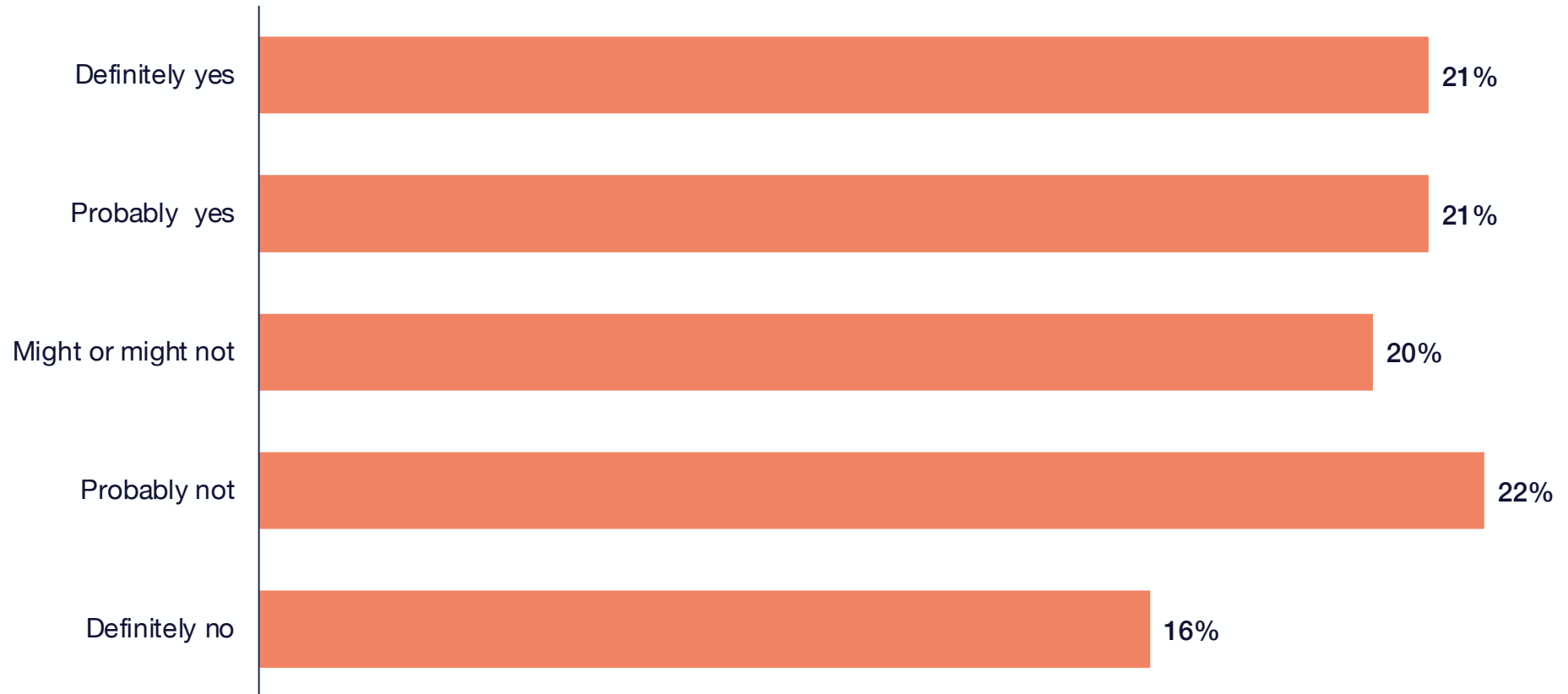
Which safety issues at school are a concern to you? Select all that apply.





# 41% of students say they definitely/probably have a mental health challenge that impacts their school experience

Do you have mental health challenges that impact your high school experience?

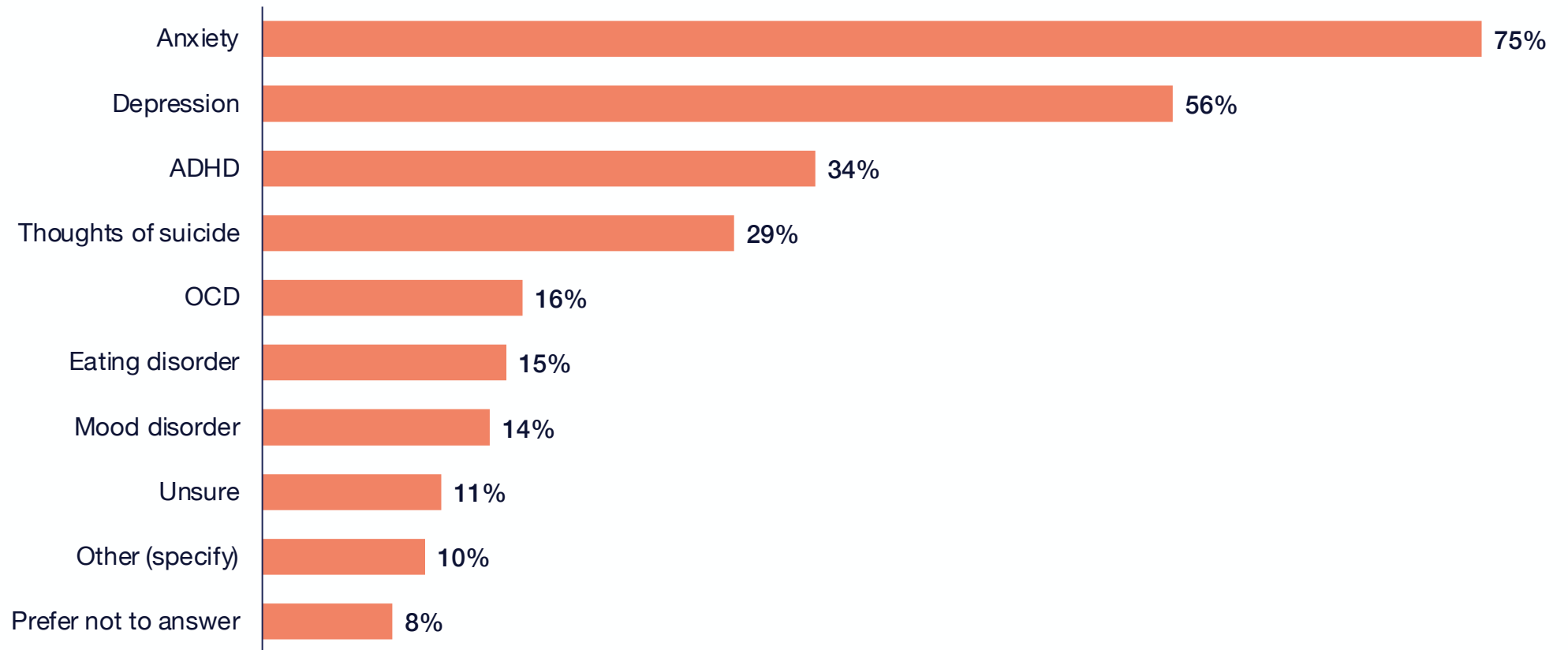






# Students struggling with mental health struggle the most with anxiety and depression

What mental health challenges are you facing? Please select all that apply.



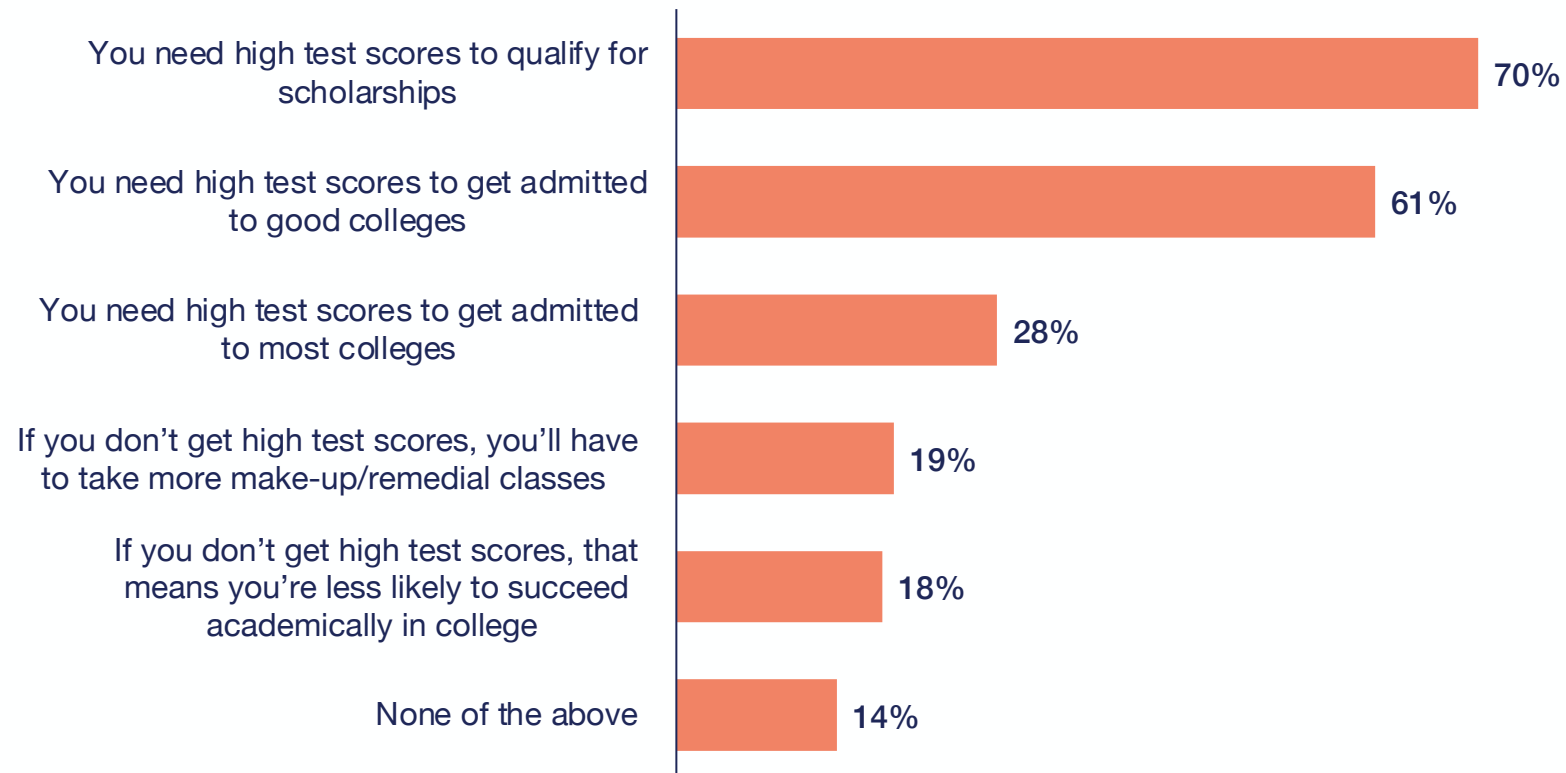


**Additional Data**



# 28% of students think you need high ACT/SAT scores to get into most colleges

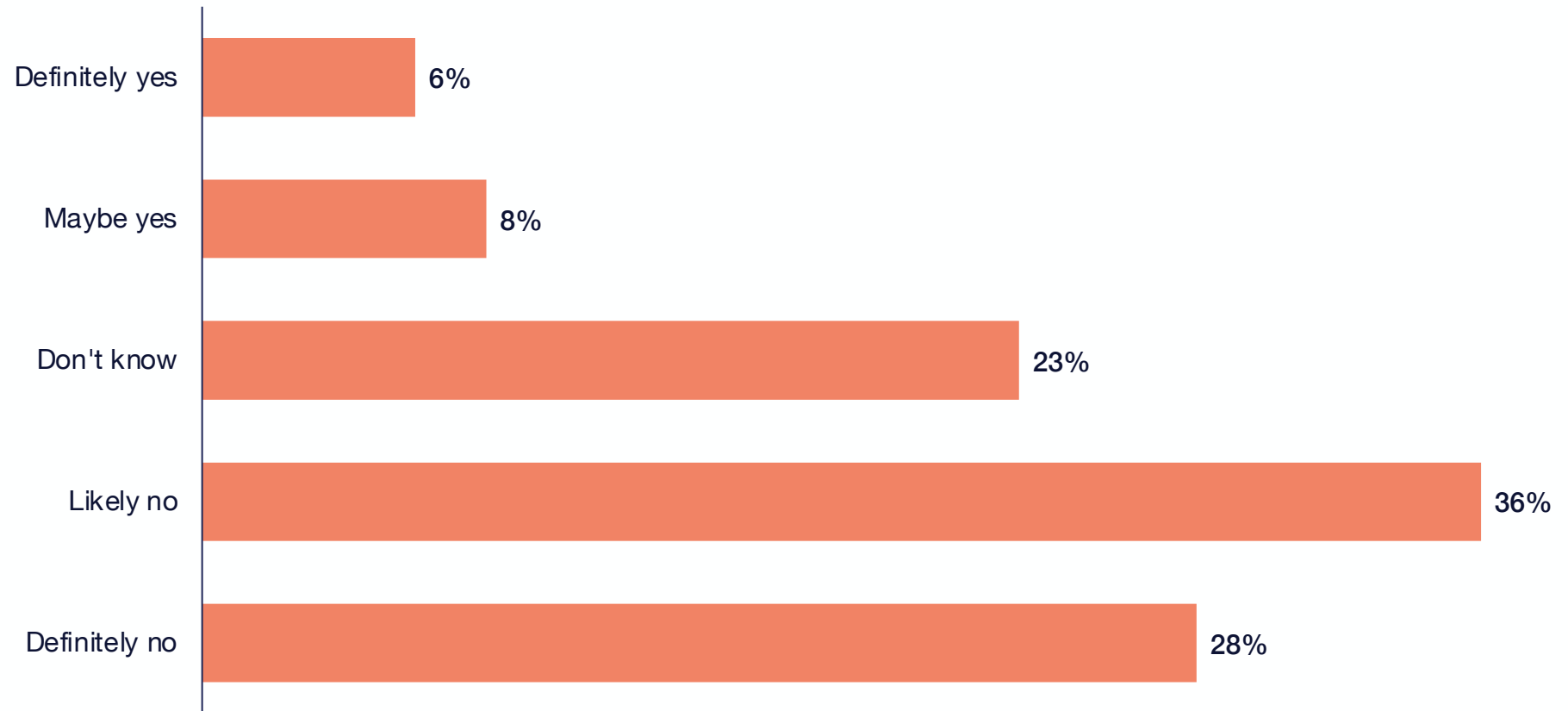
What role do you think entrance tests like the ACT or SAT play in education after high school? Select all that apply.





# 37% of students may consider becoming a teacher

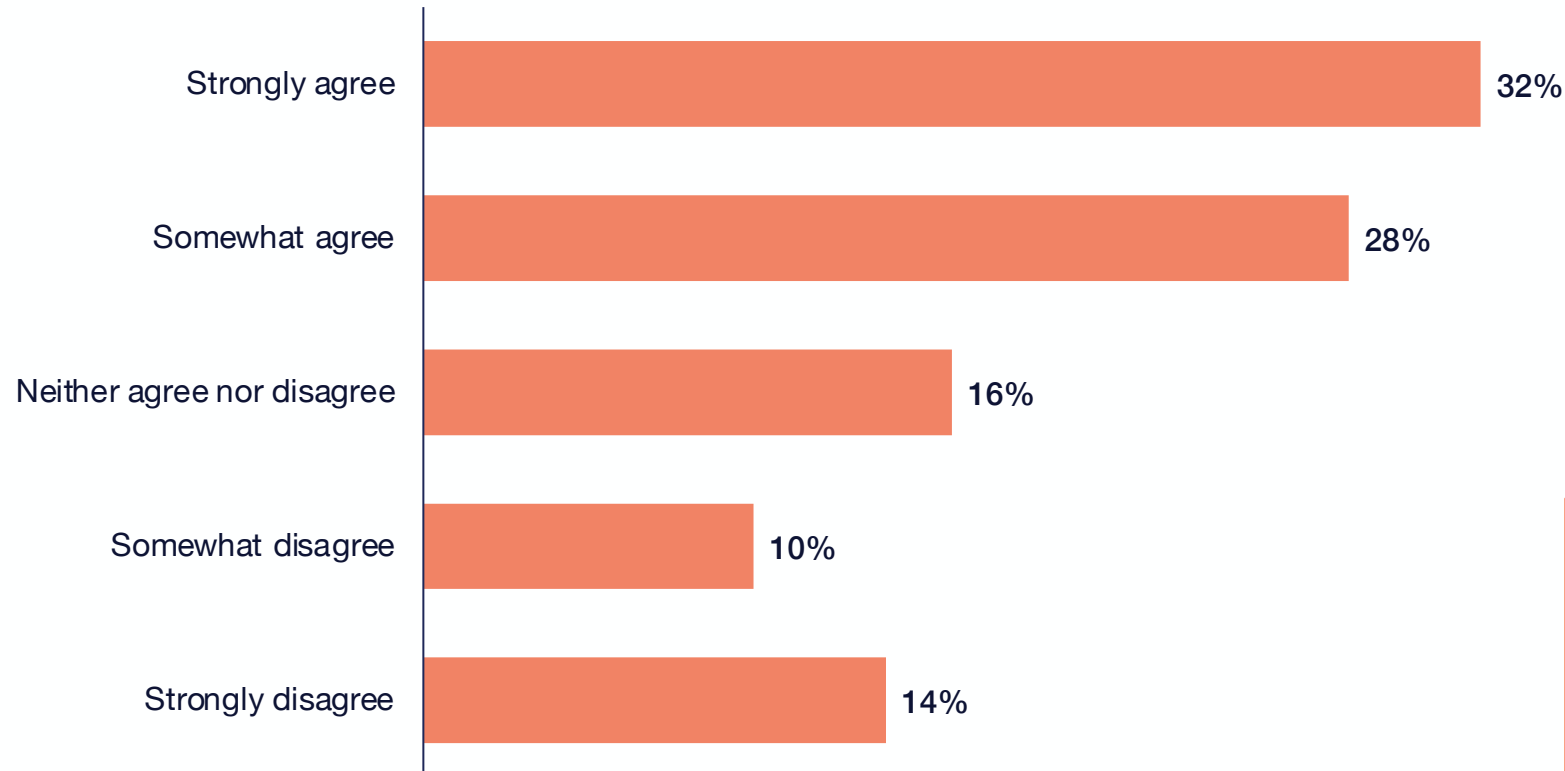
Are you considering becoming a teacher yourself?





# Most students would be more likely to consider becoming a teacher if they were paid more

I would be more likely to consider becoming a teacher myself if teachers were paid more.



*\*Education-bound students were more likely to “strongly” or “somewhat” agree, while not-education-bound students were more likely to “neither agree nor disagree” or “strongly disagree.”*

# Thank You

Please reach out with any questions!

Stephanie Ott [steph.ott@envisionutah.org](mailto:steph.ott@envisionutah.org)

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