

COVID-19 STUDENT SURVEY



Mental Health & Substance Use Topic Summary

Washington State High School Students

Release Date: August 2021



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



Washington State Department of
Health

Washington State
Health Care Authority

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UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Brief Overview of the COVID-19 Student Survey:

In March 2021, over 32,000 high school students grades 9-12 completed an online survey to assess behaviors and attitudes across a number of health domains during the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

The purpose of this document is to describe mental health and substance use during the COVID-19 pandemic within subpopulations of our high school sample to help assess whether certain populations have been affected differently than others. Specifically, this report will look at behaviors, feelings, and perceptions by racial and ethnic categories, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, and by migratory working family status.

Background on Mental Health and Substance Use:

- Having good mental health in childhood and adolescence is important for developing emotional wellbeing and coping skills to deal with problems.
- Approximately 50% of mental health disorders develop before age 14 (Kessler et al., 2005).
- Adolescents who experience more COVID-19-related worries, more online learning difficulties, and more conflict with parents/family may be at greater risk for mental health concerns (Magson et al., 2021).
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, social interactions and other factors related to substance use behaviors may have changed. Understanding patterns of substance use among adolescents is important for promoting health and wellbeing.

What Does the High School Sample Look Like?

Survey participation was voluntary at both the school and student level. Therefore, this is a convenience sample and is not intended to be generalized to the state population. It is important to be thoughtful in how you interpret and use these results. When framing the findings, you might consider using language such as “Among participating students...” or “Of students who took the COVID-19 Student Survey...”.

The proportion of participating students within each demographic category are described in the table below.

Note that percentages may not equal 100% because students who reported “I do not know what this question is asking” or “I prefer not to answer” were not included in the analyses described in this document.

Sample Size and Proportion of High School Participants by Demographic Group

Race and Ethnicity								Disability Status		Migratory Status	
<u>AIAN</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>NHOPI</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Multiple</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
516	1,857	1,001	6,580	401	16,379	678	4,328	2,475	25,988	1,717	29,183
(1.6%)	(5.9%)	(3.2%)	(20.7%)	(1.3%)	(51.6%)	(2.1%)	(13.6%)	(7.8%)	(81.7%)	(5.4%)	(91.6%)

Gender Identity					Sexual Orientation					
<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Transgender</u>	<u>Questioning</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Heterosexual</u>	<u>Gay</u>	<u>Lesbian</u>	<u>Bisexual</u>	<u>Questioning</u>	<u>Other</u>
14,429	15,345	274	676	675	22,859	384	635	3,759	1,293	1,052
(45.3%)	(48.1%)	(0.9%)	(2.1%)	(2.1%)	(72.1%)	(1.2%)	(2.0%)	(11.9%)	(4.1%)	(3.3%)

Key: AIAN = American Indian and Alaska Native, NHOPI = Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. For Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation, “Other” refers to students who indicated that “Something else fits better”.

Survey Items to Identify Student Subgroups

Race/Ethnicity

Students were asked, "How do you describe yourself?" They were shown a list of racial and ethnic categories and encouraged to select one or more responses. Students who selected more than one racial or ethnic group were included in the Multiple Race/Ethnicity category.

Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation

For both gender identity and sexual orientation, students were asked to select a response that best described themselves. Students were asked, "how do you currently identify yourself?" and "which of the following best describes you?" They were shown a list of responses, and they were given the option of selecting "I do not know what this question is asking" and "I prefer not to answer." Students who did not know what the question was asking or who preferred not to answer were not included in the analyses for these respective subgroup comparisons.

- **LGBTQ+:** In this document, we use LGBTQ+ to describe a diverse and encompassing range of minority sexualities and gender-identities that include (L)esbian, (G)ay, (B)isexual, (T)ransgender, (Q)uestioning and (+) additional gender identities and sexual orientations.

Students identifying as having a disability or long-term health condition

Disability status was defined by whether a student selected the item, "Are you limited in any activities because of a disability or long-term health problem including physical health, emotional, or learning problems expected to last 6 months or longer?"

Students from a migratory working family

Migratory working family status was defined by whether a student selected the item, "Have you or your family moved in the past 3 years to another school district or city for **temporary or seasonal** work in agriculture, dairy or fishing?"

Legal requirements: Federal and Washington state regulations prohibit discrimination against LEP individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, or visually impaired. Read HCA [Policy 01-27](#) "Language Access Services" and [Policy 01-30](#) "Equal Access to Services for Individuals with Disabilities" for more information. If you have a question about an accommodation, please contact the HCA Prevention Section at prevention@hca.wa.gov.

Key Takeaways from High School Students Who Took the Survey

- Prolonged feelings of sadness and hopelessness were most common among students identifying as LGBTQ+, those identifying as having a disability, and those from migratory working families.
- LGBTQ+ identifying youth as well as those identifying as having a disability reported having seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months more commonly than their peers.
- 68% of high school respondents reported being moderately or highly hopeful. Hope was highest among male and heterosexual students.
- 82% of high school respondents said they had an adult to turn to if they needed help. Students identifying as LGBTQ+, those reporting having a disability, and those from a migratory working family reported less adult support than their peers.
- Past 30-day use of cigarettes (1.7%) was lower than other substances (e-cigarettes: 7.3%, alcohol: 7.7%, and marijuana: 7.9%) among high school students who completed the survey.
- Overall, past 30-day substance use was more common among students identifying as LGBTQ+, those reporting having a disability, and those from a migratory working family.

Students who indicated any suicidal ideation during the past year immediately received a list of support resources. These included:

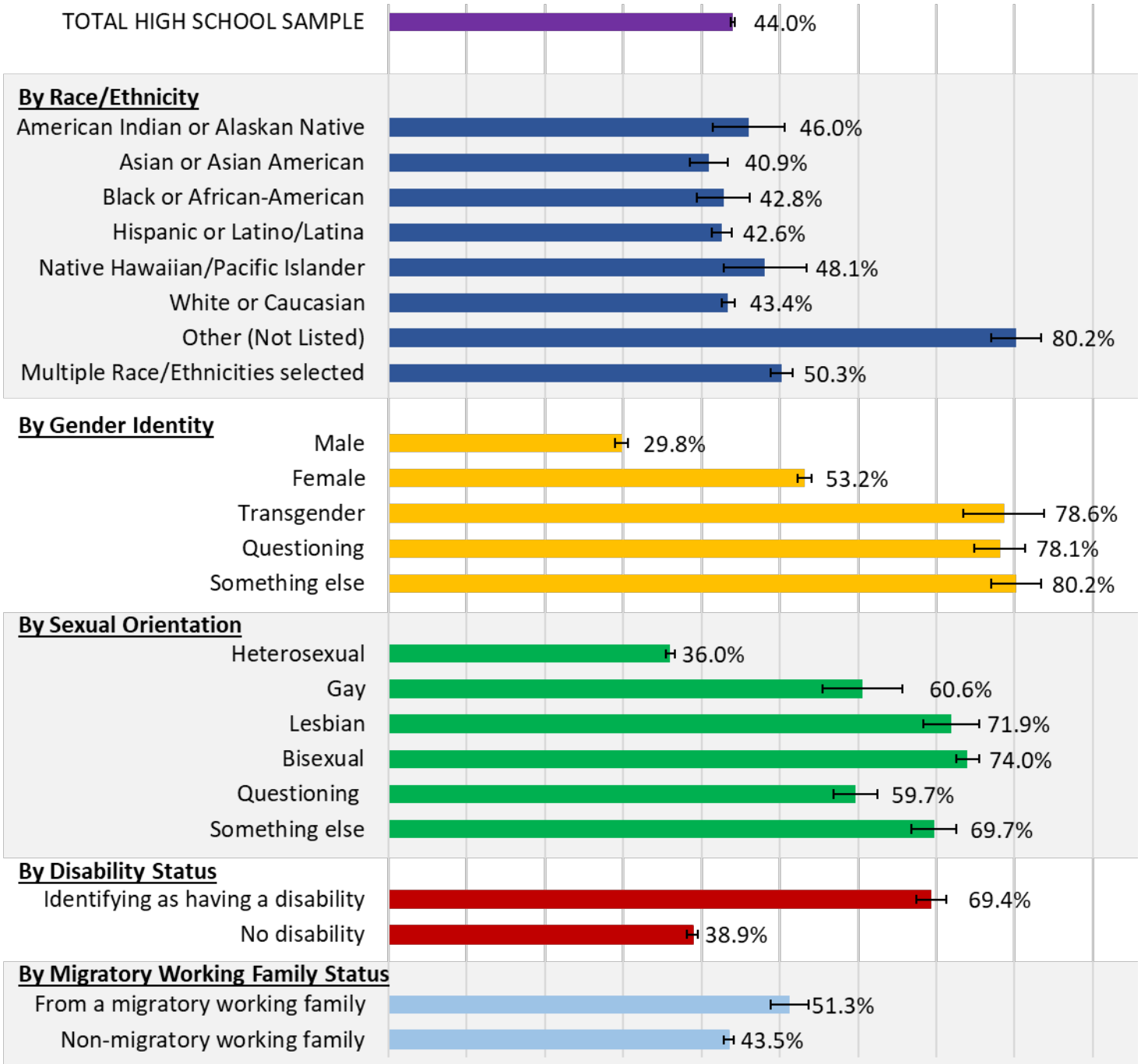
- Washington Teen Link: <https://www.teenlink.org/>
- Crisis Text Line: <https://www.crisistextline.org/>
- You Are Not Alone Network (for Native youth): <https://youarenotalonenetwork.org/>
- The Trevor Project (for LGBT youth): <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
- National Teen Line: <https://teenlineonline.org/>
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255 (TRS: 1-800-799-4889)

Mental Health & Substance Use: High School Students

Prolonged Feelings of Sadness/Hopelessness

Question: During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?

Percent of Students Reporting Feelings of Sadness/Hopelessness
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90%



NOTES:

- Higher percentages indicate more students reported feelings of sadness/hopelessness.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options to this item included: ‘NO!’, ‘No’, ‘Yes’, and ‘YES!’. Percentages shown above indicate those who selected ‘YES!’ or ‘Yes’.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

Mental Health & Substance Use: High School Students

Suicidal Ideation

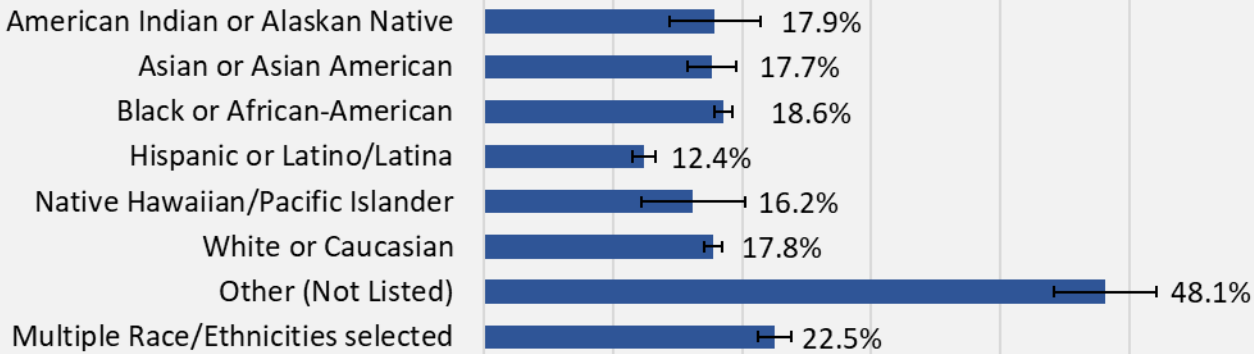
Question: During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?

Percent of Students Reporting Suicidal Ideation

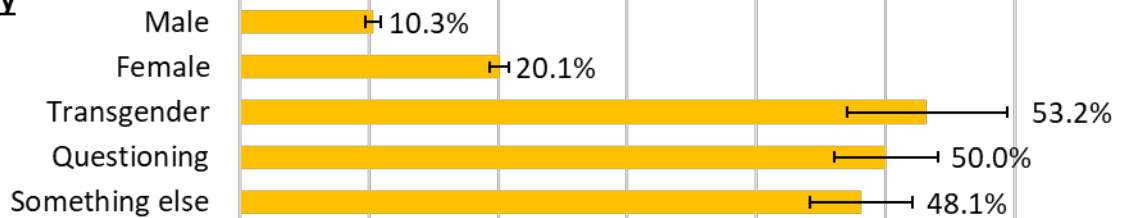
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

TOTAL HIGH SCHOOL SAMPLE 17.2%

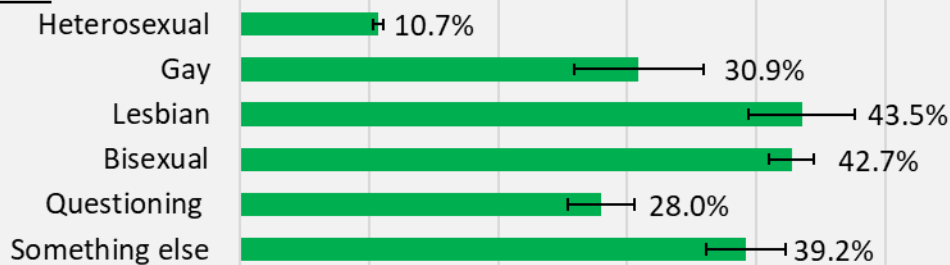
By Race/Ethnicity



By Gender Identity



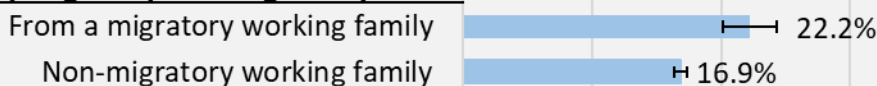
By Sexual Orientation



By Disability Status



By Migratory Working Family Status



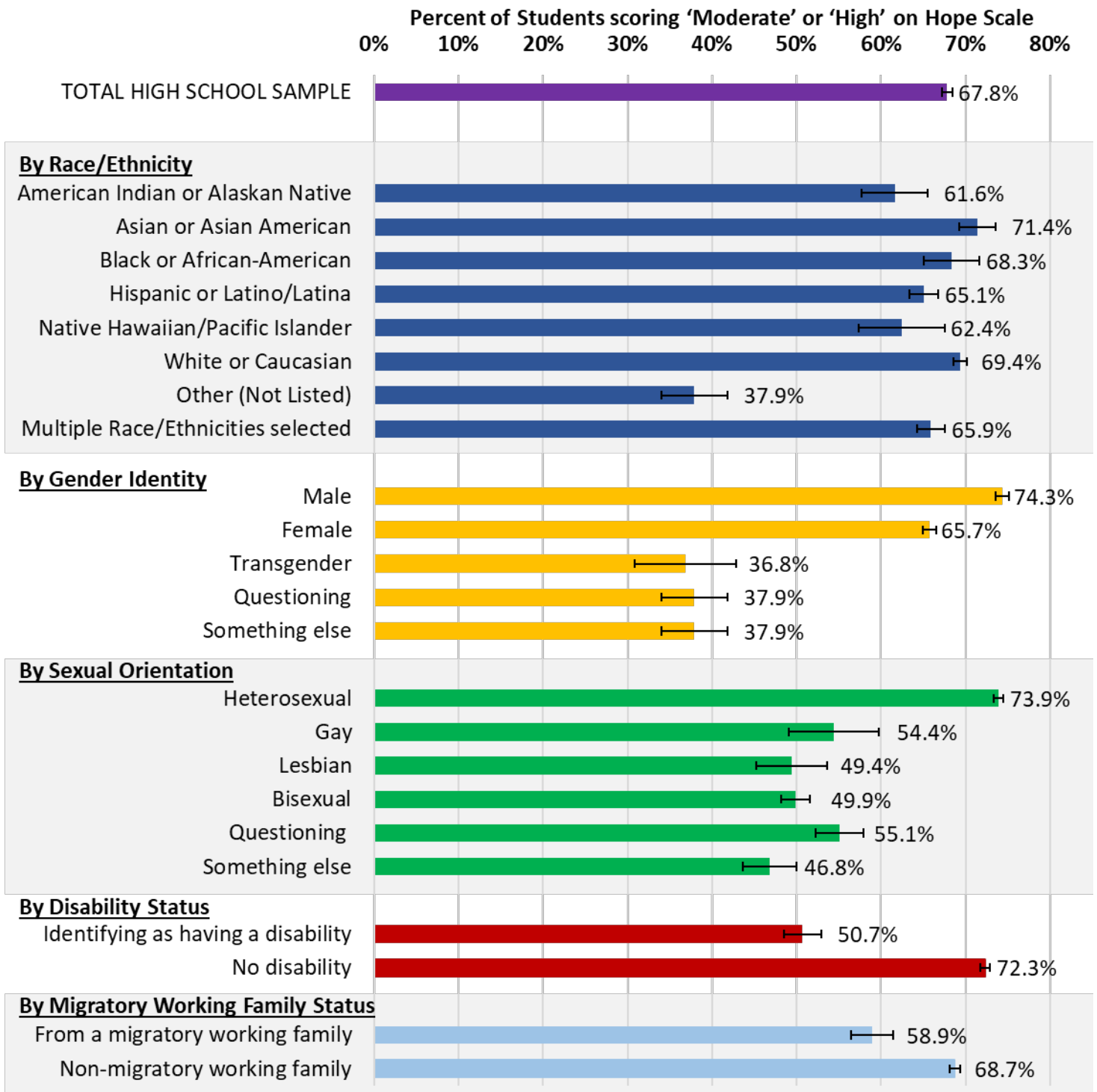
NOTES:

- Higher percentages indicate more students reported considering attempting suicide.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options to this item included: 'No' and 'Yes'. Percentages shown above indicate those who selected 'Yes'.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

Mental Health & Substance Use: High School Students

Hope Scores

Questions: Hope scores based upon an abbreviated 4-item Children’s Hope Scale.



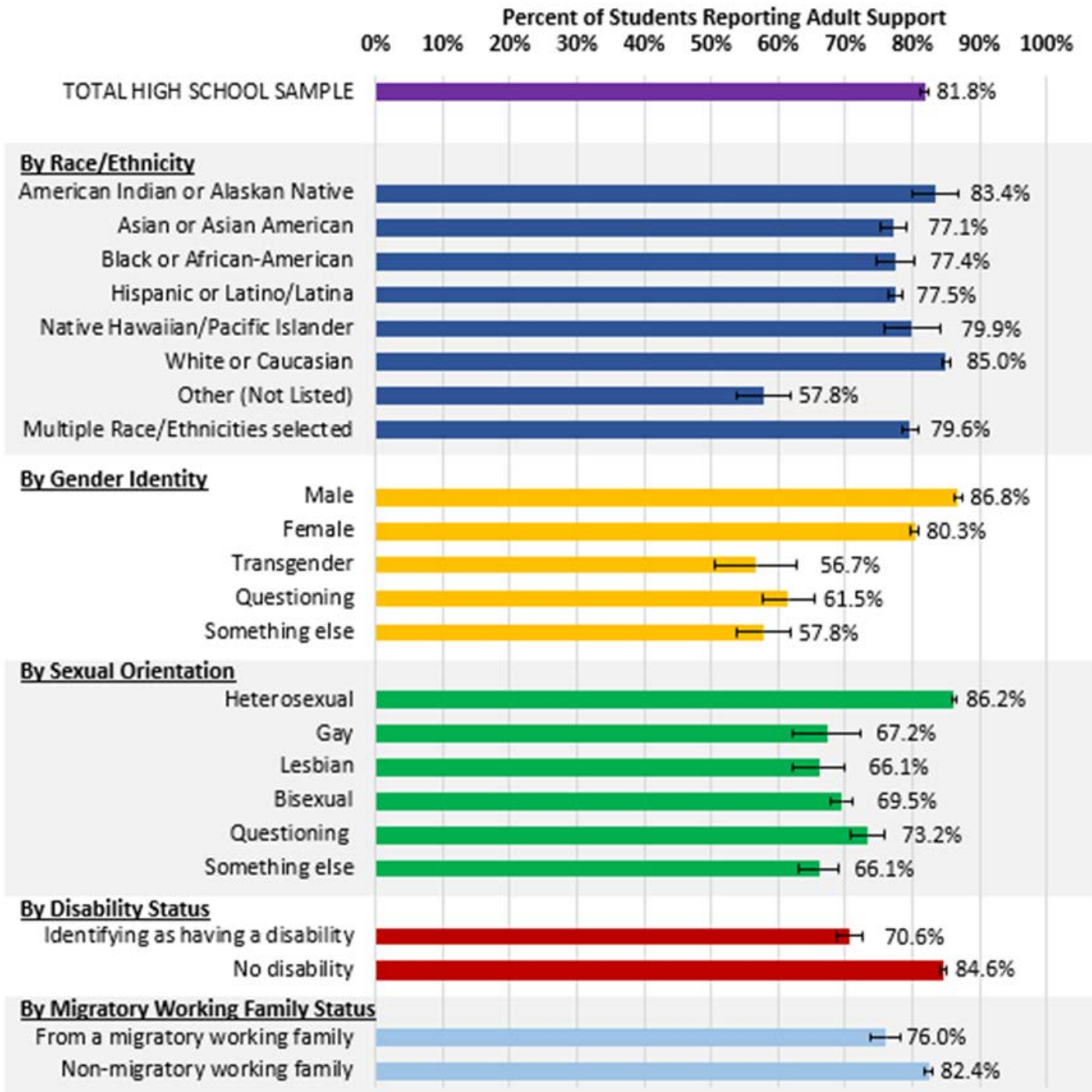
NOTES:

- Higher percentages indicate more students reported moderate to high hope.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Hope scale items derived from a measure created by Snyder (1997). For more information on this scale, visit: https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/ossi/k12supports/healthyyouthsurvey/pubdocs/HopeScale_HYS.pdf
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Adult Support

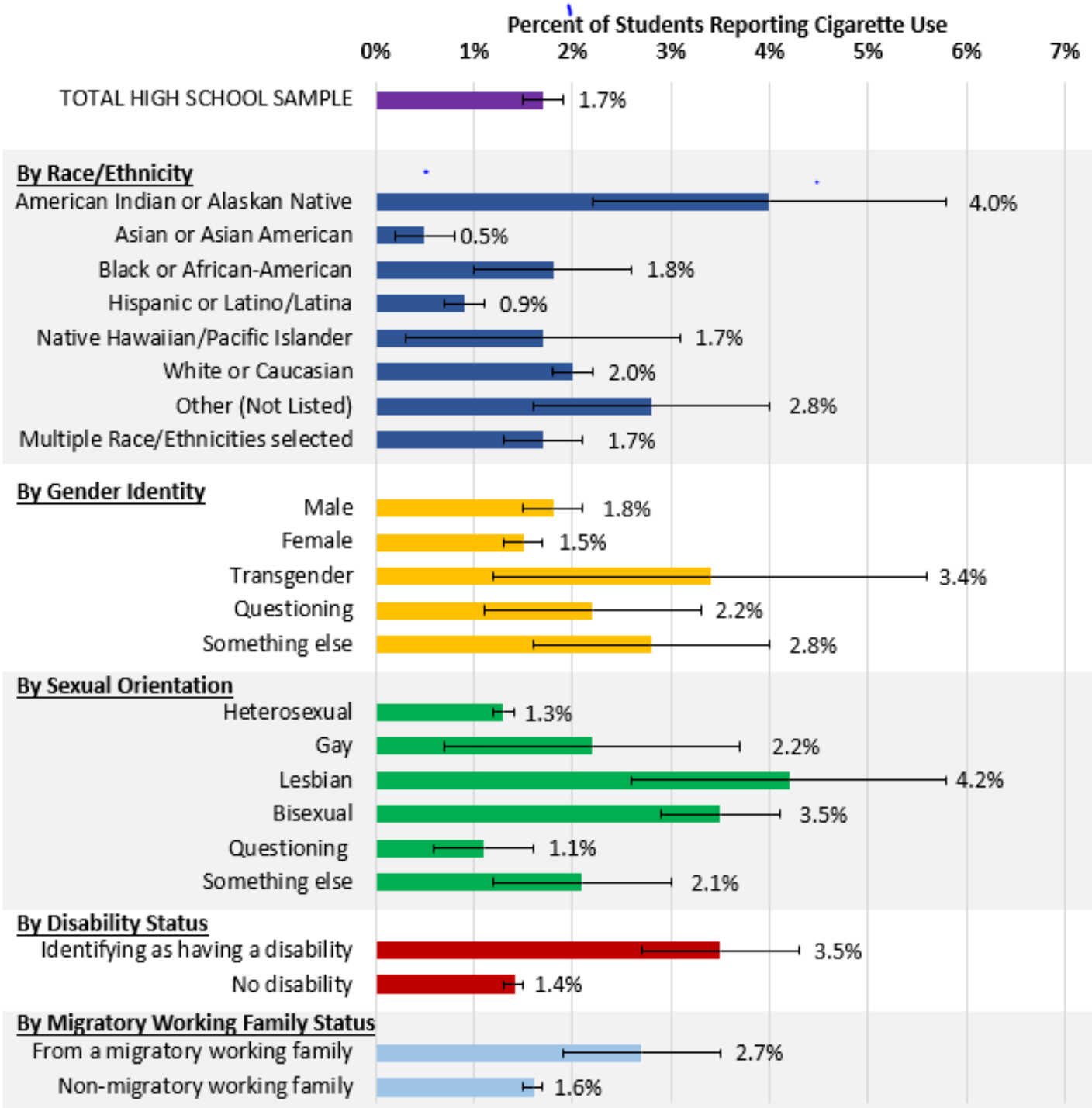
Question: Are there adults you can turn to for help or support if needed?



NOTES:

- Higher percentages indicate more students reported having an adult they could turn to for help/support.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options to this item included: 'No', 'Yes', and 'I am not sure'. Percentages shown above indicate those who selected 'Yes'.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

Past 30-day cigarette use (yes/no).



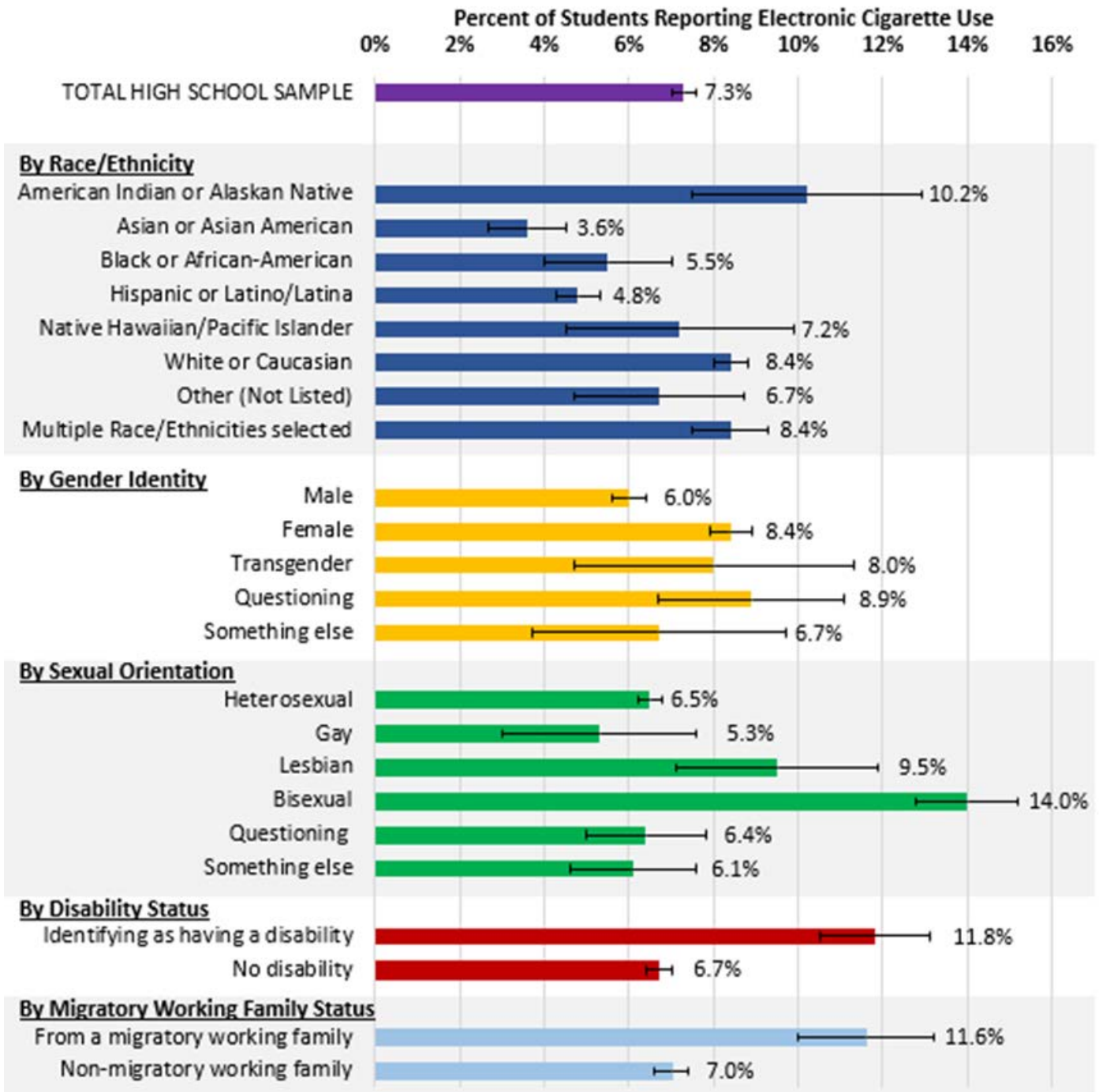
NOTES:

- Higher percentages indicate more students reporting using cigarettes in the past 30 days.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options to this item included numeric responses ranging from '0 days' to 'All 30 days'. Percentages shown above indicate those who selected a response greater than '0 days'.
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Substance Use – Electronic Cigarettes

Past 30-day electronic cigarette use (yes/no).



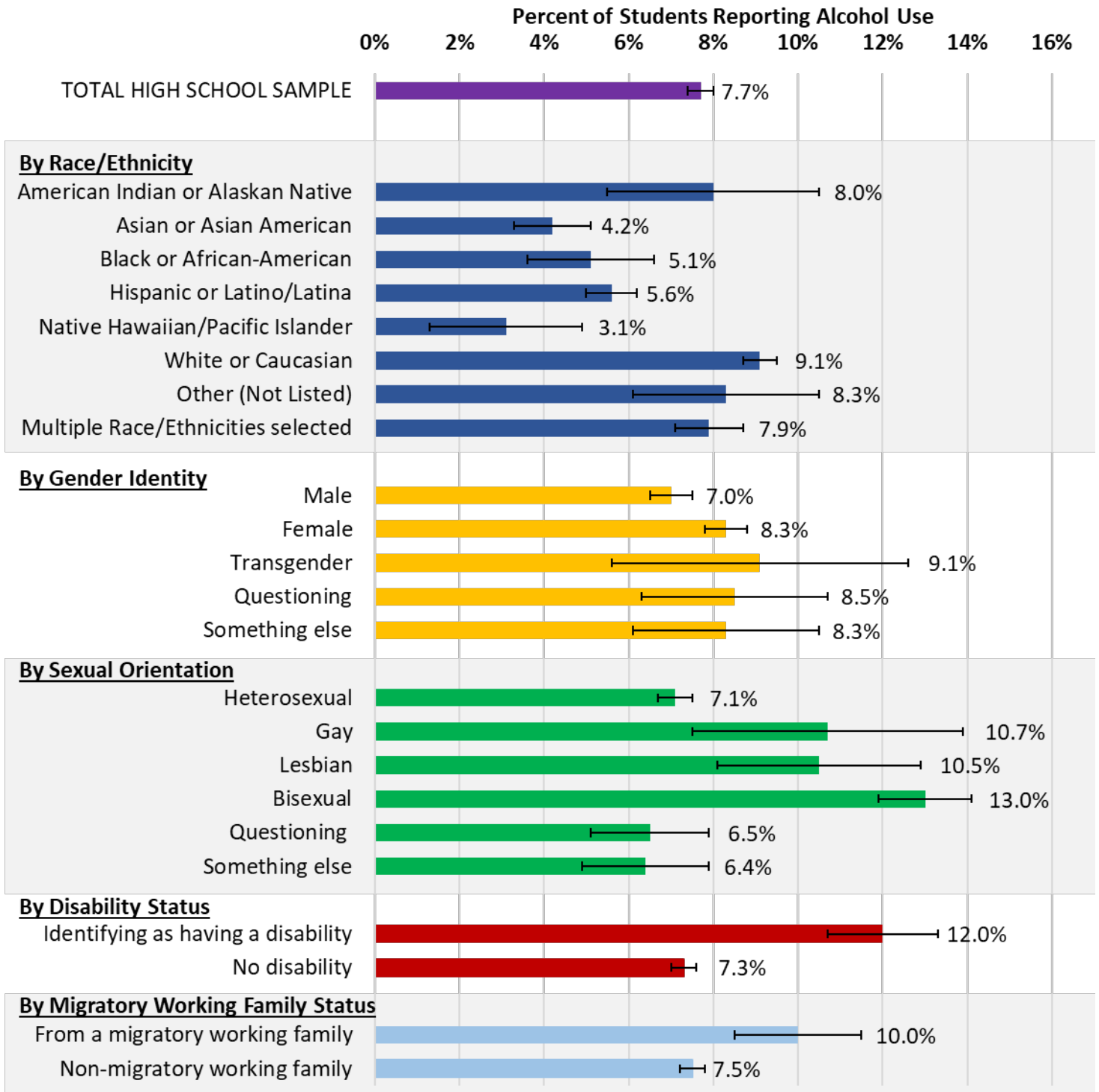
NOTES:

- Higher percentages indicate more students reporting using electronic cigarettes in the past 30 days.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options to this item included numeric responses ranging from '0 days' to 'All 30 days'. Percentages shown above indicate those who selected a response greater than '0 days'.
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Substance Use – Alcohol

Past 30-day alcohol use (yes/no).



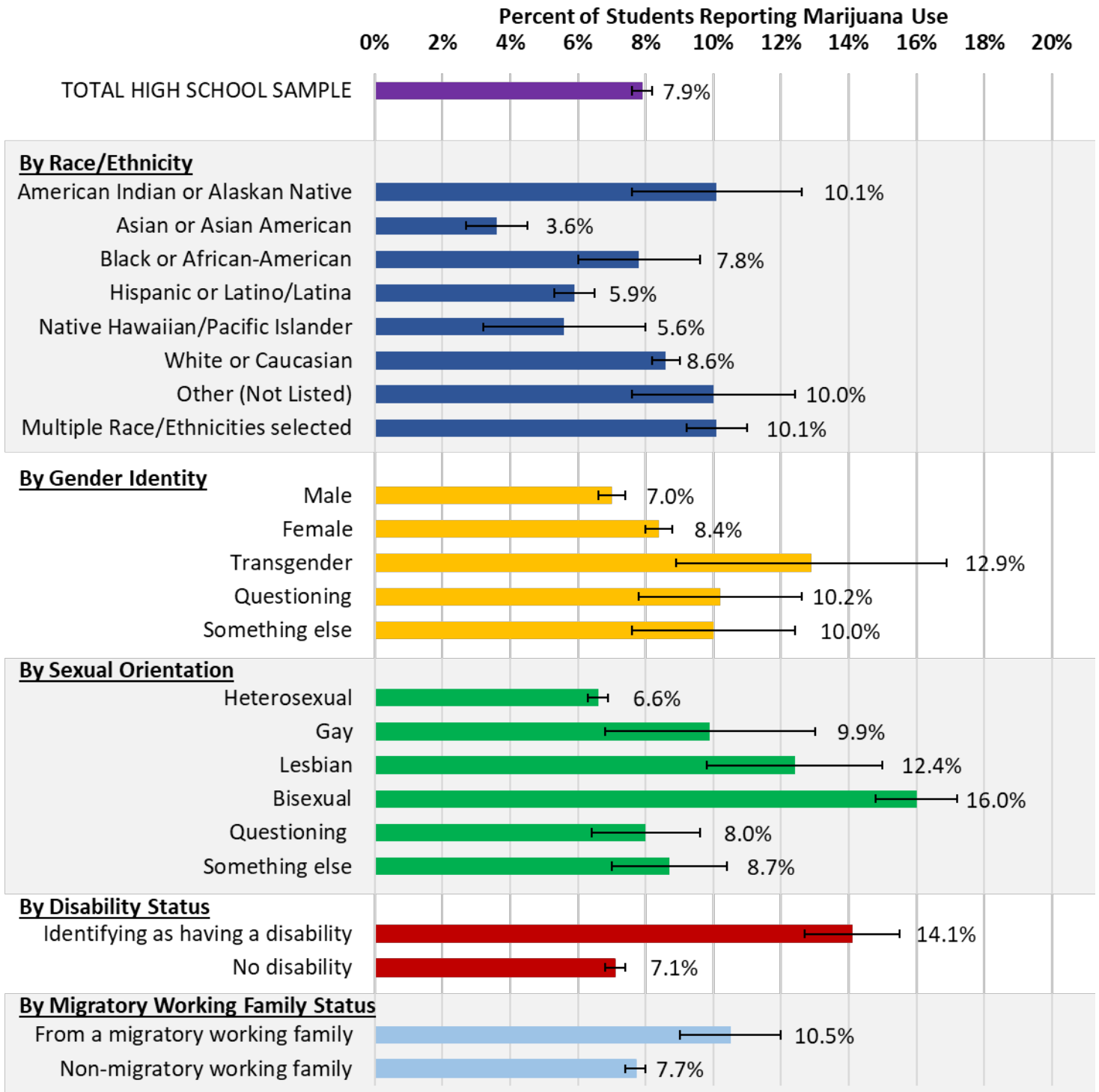
NOTES:

- Higher percentages indicate more students reporting using alcohol in the past 30 days.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options to this item included numeric responses ranging from '0 days' to '10 days or more'. Percentages shown above indicate those who selected a response greater than '0 days'.
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Substance Use – Marijuana

Past 30-day marijuana use (yes/no).



NOTES:

- Higher percentages indicate more students reporting using marijuana in the past 30 days.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options to this item included numeric responses ranging from '0 days' to 'All 30 days'. Percentages shown above indicate those who selected a response greater than '0 days'.
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Mental Health & Substance Use Topic Summary Washington State High School Students

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1. Kessler, R. C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K. R., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62, 593-602. <http://archpsyc.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?doi=10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593>
2. Magson, N. R., Freeman, J. Y. A., Rapee, R. M., Richardson, C. E., Oar, E. L., & Fardouly, J. (2021). Risk and protective factors for prospective changes in adolescent mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50, 44-57. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01332-9>
3. Snyder, C. R., Hoza, B., Pelham, W. E., Rapoff, M., Ware, L., Danovsky, M., ... & Stahl, K. J. (1997). The development and validation of the Children's Hope Scale, *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 22, 399-421.

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