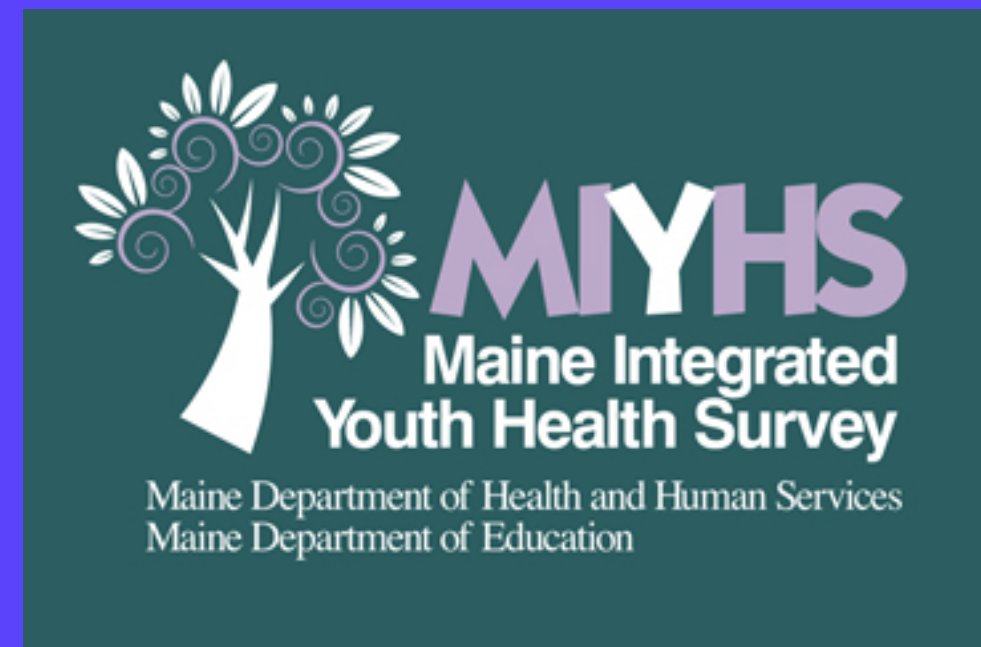


The Importance of Mattering among Youth



Data from the 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey



What does it mean to matter?

In Maine, high school students who take the MIYHS are asked,

Do you agree that: 'I feel like I matter in my community.'

In this databrief we compared students who strongly agreed or agreed to those who were not sure, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.

Among adolescents, higher levels of mattering have been associated with lower levels of suicide ideation/planning,¹ depressive symptoms,² family violence,³ less physical and sexual dating violence,⁴ and better academic performance.⁵



57%
of Maine high school students feel they matter in their community.

Identity Matters

Maine students with certain marginalized identities (females, LGBT students, and multiracial students) are significantly less likely to say they feel they matter in their community.

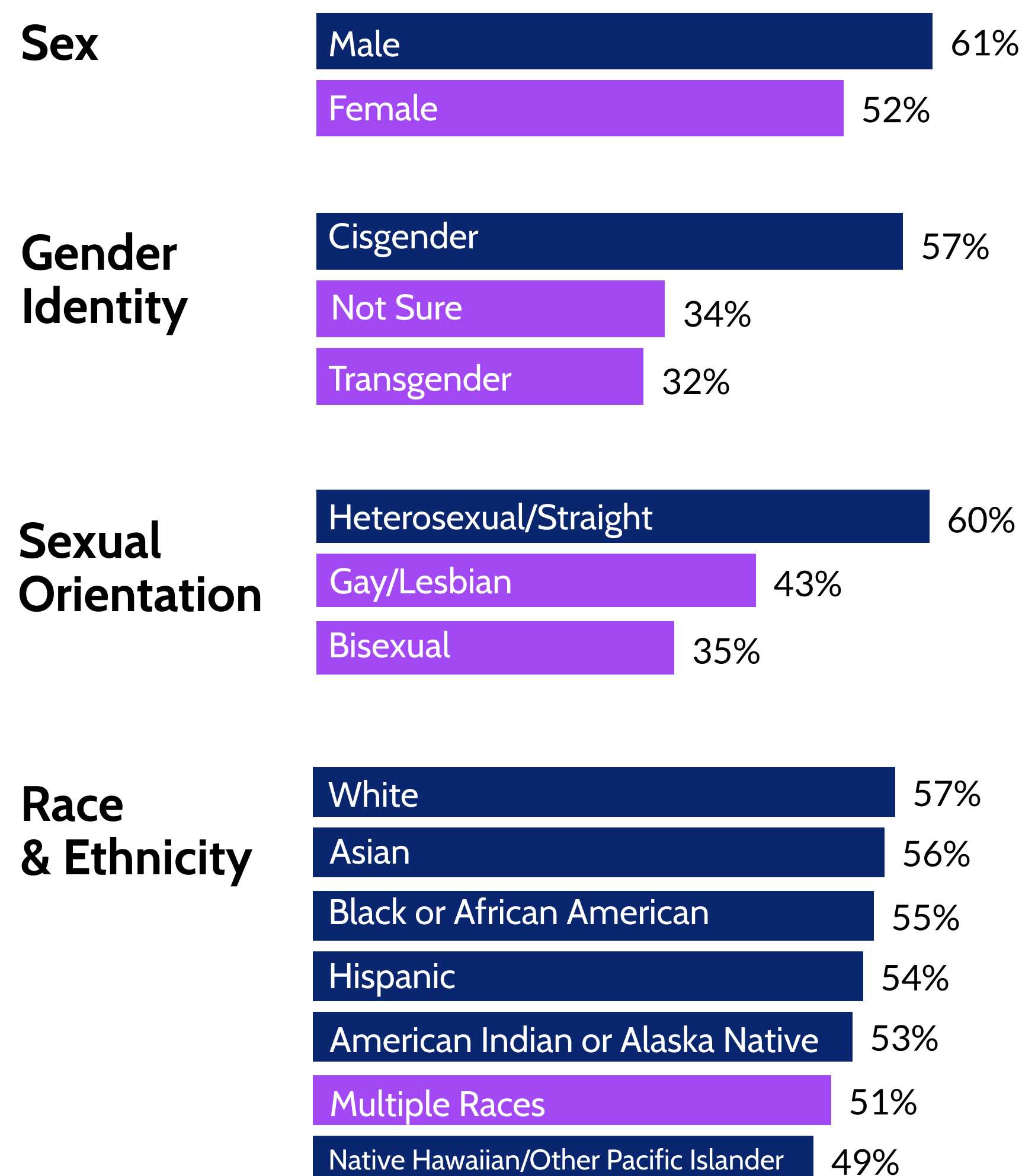
Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and social stigma may contribute to the feeling that one is not valued by peers or adults. However, data suggest that caring adults can have an impact on mattering.

One study of adolescents found that those with higher levels of mattering were more likely to say they had ample resources and opportunities for involvement in their community, autonomy at school, input into decision-making processes in school, support from friends, and good relationships with parents.⁶



Maine High Schoolers Who Feel They Matter

■ = Significantly lower than all Maine high schoolers (57%)



Significant differences are defined as point estimates with non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals.

Mattering and Health



Maine high school students who feel they matter in their community are significantly less likely to engage in risky behaviors, and more likely to get good grades and have better mental health compared to those who feel they don't matter.

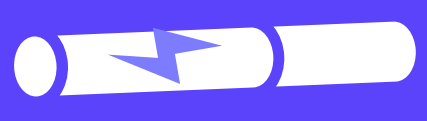
Students who feel they matter in their community are...



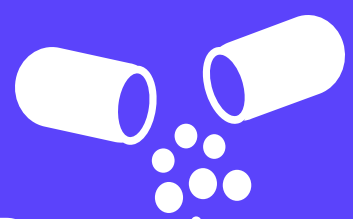
65% less likely to have considered suicide in the past year

57% less likely to have had depressive symptoms in the past year

24% less likely to currently use any substances



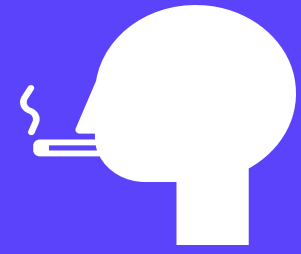
Vaping
24%
less likely



Rx misuse
33%
less likely



Drinking
16%
less likely

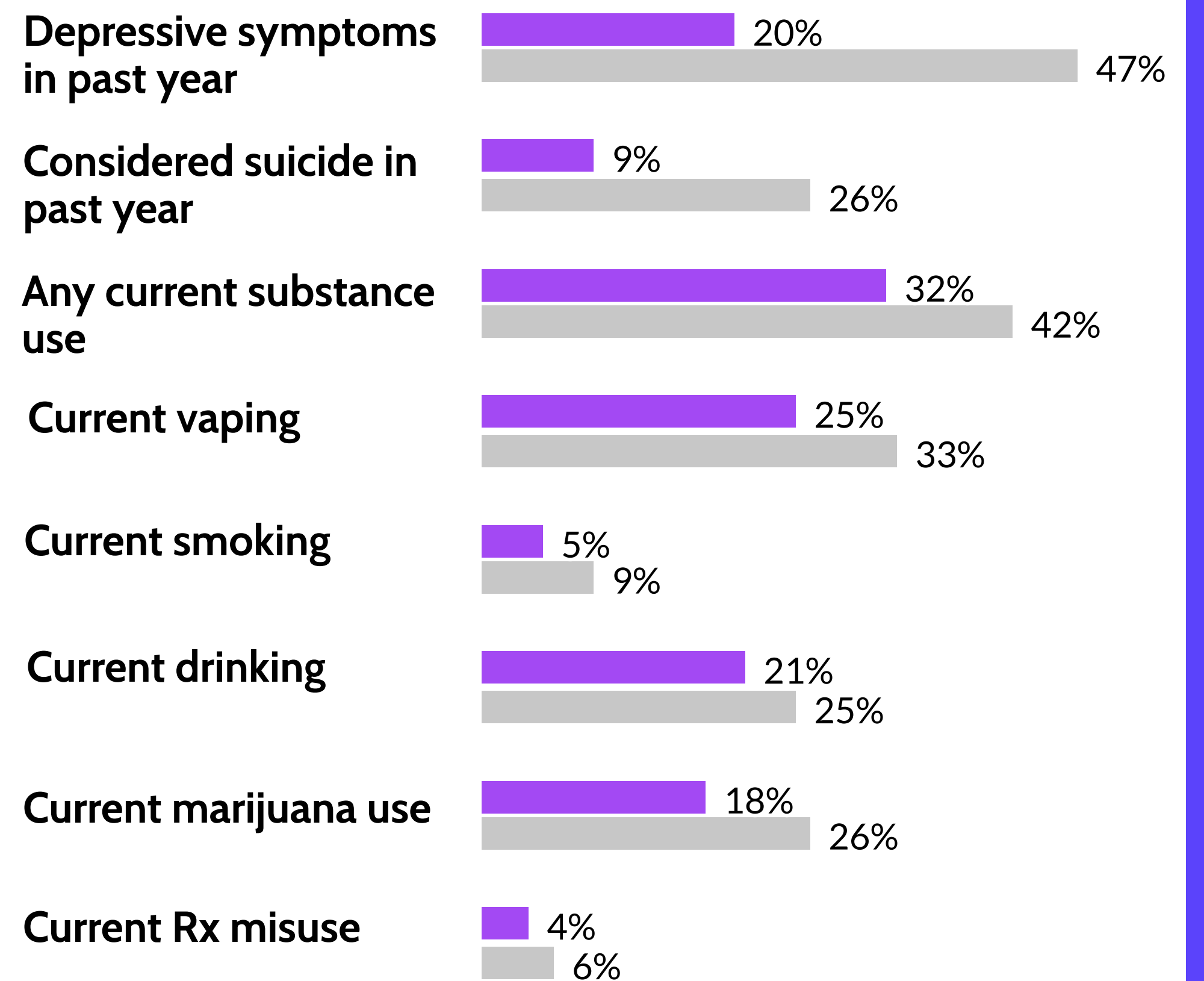


Smoking
44%
less likely

...compared to those who are not sure, disagree, or strongly disagree that they matter in their community.

Risk Factors by Mattering Status

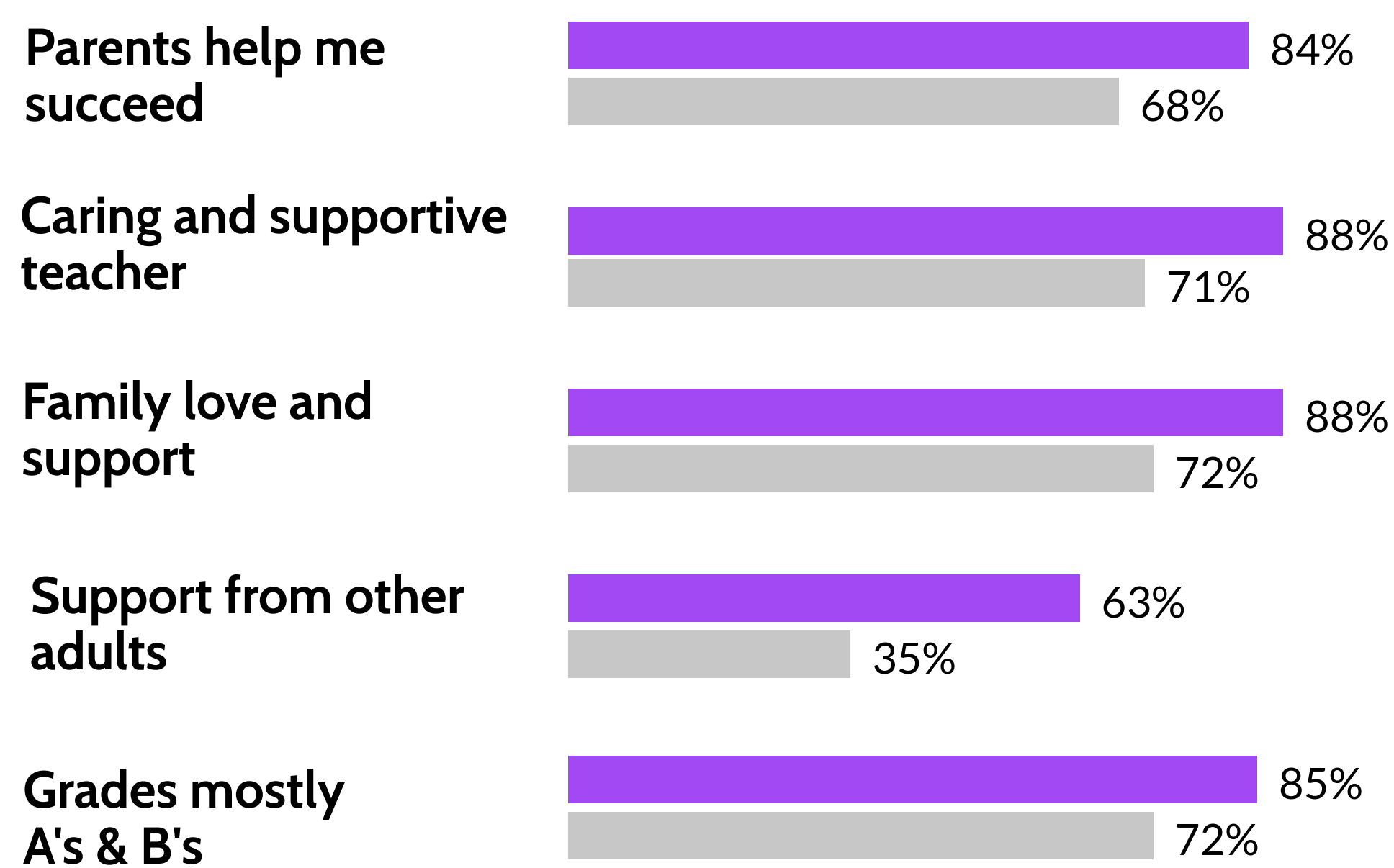
Agree or strongly agree that I matter in my community
Not sure, disagree, or strongly disagree that I matter in my community



Current use is defined as at least once in the past 30 days.

Protective Factors by Mattering Status

Agree or strongly agree that I matter in my community
Not sure, disagree, or strongly disagree that I matter in my community



Students who feel they matter in their community are **22%** more likely to have family love and support

and **80%** more likely to have support from other adults



Parents help me succeed
24%
more likely



Caring & supportive teacher
24%
more likely



Grades mostly A's & B's
18%
more likely

...compared to those who are not sure, disagree, or strongly disagree that they matter in their community.

[1] Katarzyna Olcon, Yeonwoo Kim, et al (2017). Sense of Belonging and Youth Suicidal Behaviors: What Do Communities and Schools Have to Do with It? https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318550148_Sense_of_Belonging_and_Youth_Suicidal_Behaviors_What_Do_Communities_and_Schools_Have_to_Do_with_It.
 [2] Sheila Marshall and Lauree Tilton-Weaver (2015). Adolescents' perceived mattering to parents and friends: Testing cross-lagged associations with psychosocial well-being, *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 43: 6, 541-552. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0165025419844019>.
 [3] Gregory C. Elliott, Susan M. Cunningham, et al (2011). Perceived Mattering to the Family and Physical Violence Within the Family by Adolescents, *Journal of Family Issues*, 32:8, 1007-1029. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241654132_Perceived_Mattering_to_the_Family_and_Physical_Violence_Within_the_Family_by_Adolescents.
 [4] Katie Edwards and Angela Neal (2017) School and Community Characteristics Related to Dating Violence Victimization Among High School Youth, *Psychology of Violence*, 7:2, 203-212. <https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1297&context=carsey>.
 [5] The Maine Office of Substance Abuse (2013). *Academic Performance and Student Health Risk Report*. <https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2013SpecialReports/2013academictechnical.pdf>.
 [6] Carissa J. Schmidt, Sarah A. Stoddard, et al (2020). Examining contextual and relational factors influencing perceptions of societal and interpersonal mattering among rural youth, *Journal of Community Psychology*, 48, 2013-2032. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jcop.22401>.
 All differences discussed in this databrief are statistically significant, defined as point estimates with non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals.
 The Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS) is a biennial survey of Maine students in grades 5 through 12 that monitors health behaviors and attitudes regarding tobacco, alcohol, substance use, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and protective factors.