

**Data From The
2001-2002
Somerville High School
Teen Health Survey**

METHODS

WHO CONDUCTED THE SURVEY?

- The Somerville Public Schools in collaboration with the Cambridge Health Alliance, the Somerville Health Department, and Dr. Robert Shaw of Brown University.

HOW AND WHEN WAS THE SURVEY CONDUCTED?

- The survey was administered as a questionnaire in February of 2002 to all Somerville public school students in grades 9 through 12.

WHO RESPONDED?

- The total number of respondents was 1,466. The number of respondents in each grade is as follows: 9th = 382, 10th = 402, 11th = 344, and 12th = 327 (11 other or unknown).

WHAT DID THE SURVEY ASK ABOUT?

- Background characteristics such as gender, age, and grade level.
- Student use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- Other issues related to student health such as violence and safety, depression and suicide, sexual behavior, dietary behavior, and vehicle-related risk behavior.

CAVEATS

VALIDITY

- Research indicates that student responses to such surveys are reasonably accurate provided that the survey is voluntary and confidential. The Somerville survey met these conditions.
- Completed questionnaires were reviewed to identify frivolous responses; such cases were removed.
- Many of the items are based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (*YRBS*), a standardized and reliable instrument.

NON-RESPONDENTS

- Results can be generalized only to students who were present when the survey was administered and may not reflect responses from youth who were truant or dropped out of school.

TRENDS

- Because this is the first administration of this Somerville YRBS, trend data for the entire high school population are not available.

COMPARATIVE DATA

- Limited comparisons can be made to Massachusetts as a whole using the most recent available state *YRBS* data (Spring 2001).

WHO HAS THE PROBLEM?

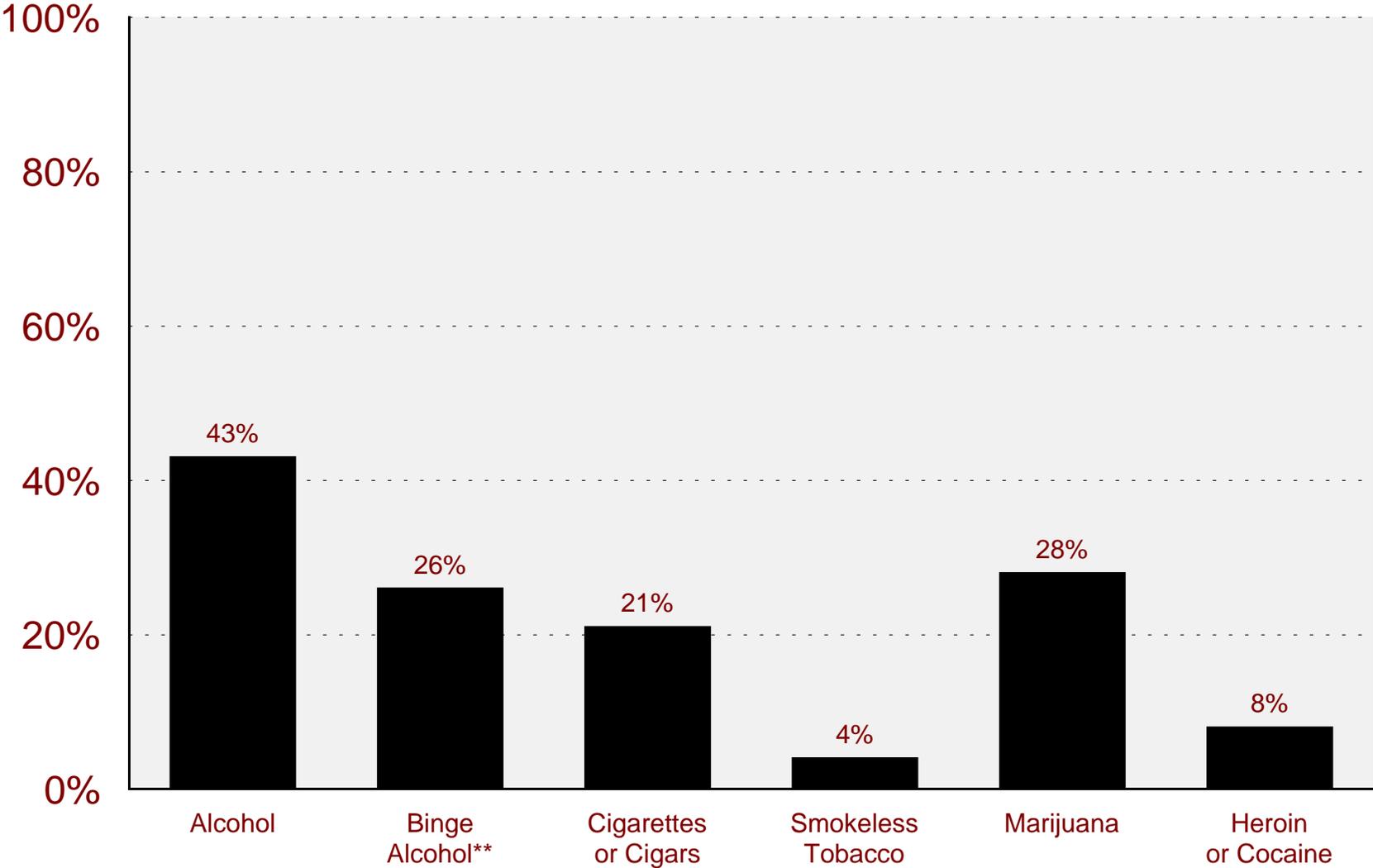
- Although the survey was administered to students in school, the risky behaviors addressed are not confined solely to youth.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

- These are community issues that require the attention of all community members and organizations, not merely the schools.

**Alcohol,
Tobacco,
and
Other Drug Use**

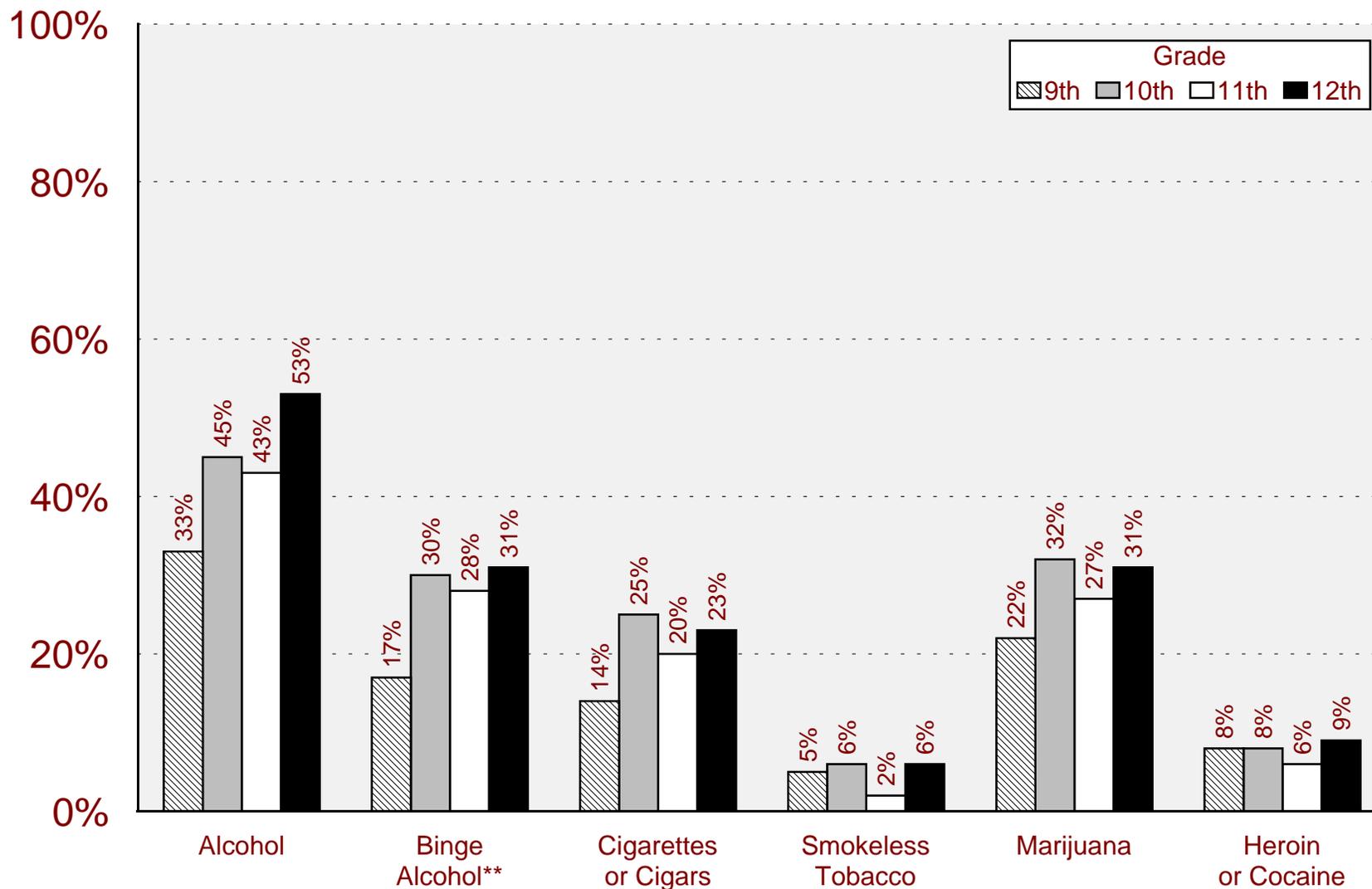
Current* Substance Use for Somerville High School Students (2002)



* Current Use is any use in the 30 days prior to the survey.

** Binge Alcohol use is defined in the survey as having 5 or more drinks of alcohol within a couple of hours.

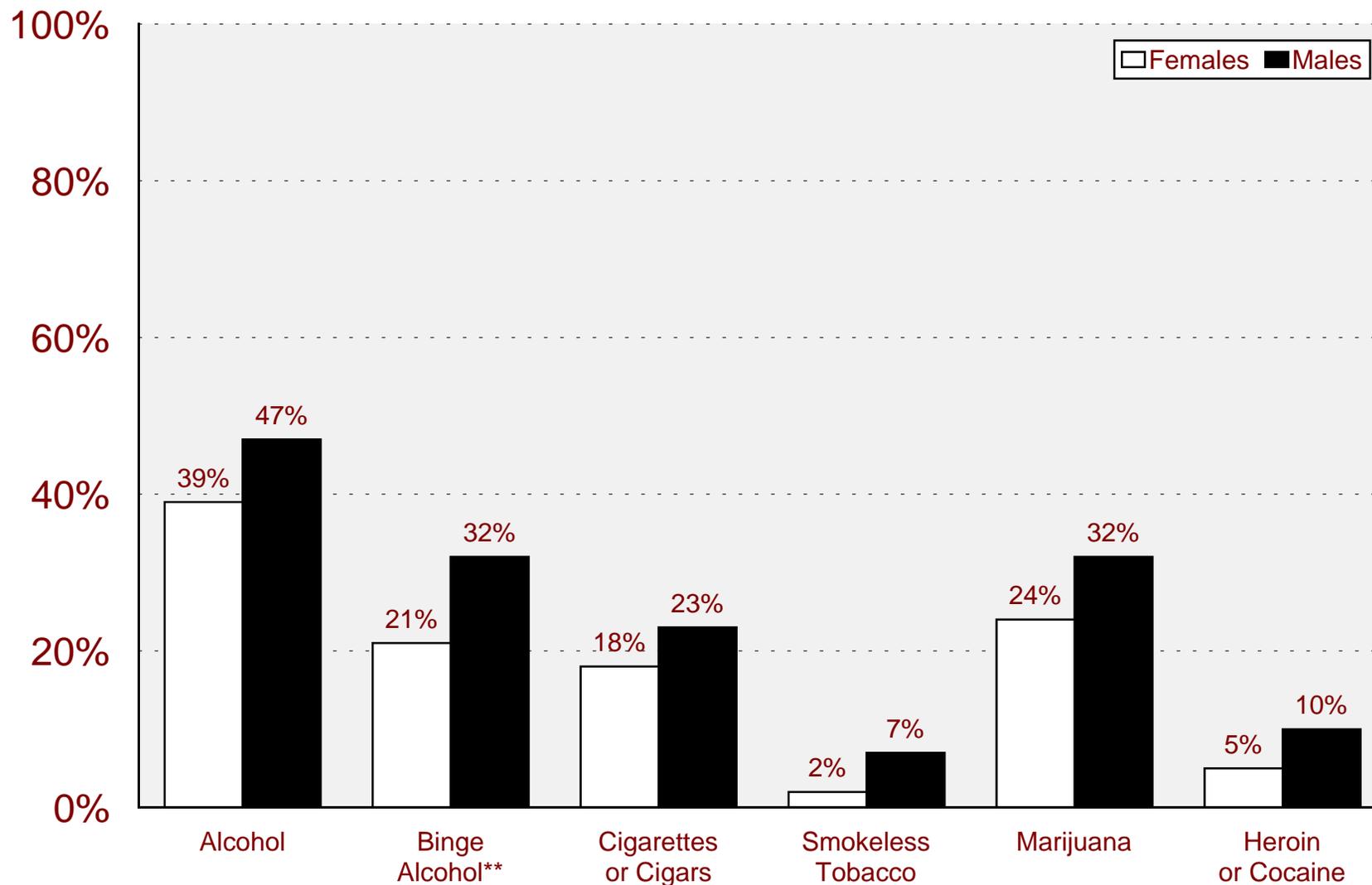
Current* Substance Use for Somerville High School Students, by Grade (2002)



* Current Use is any use in the 30 days prior to the survey.

** Binge Alcohol use is defined in the survey as having 5 or more drinks of alcohol within a couple of hours.

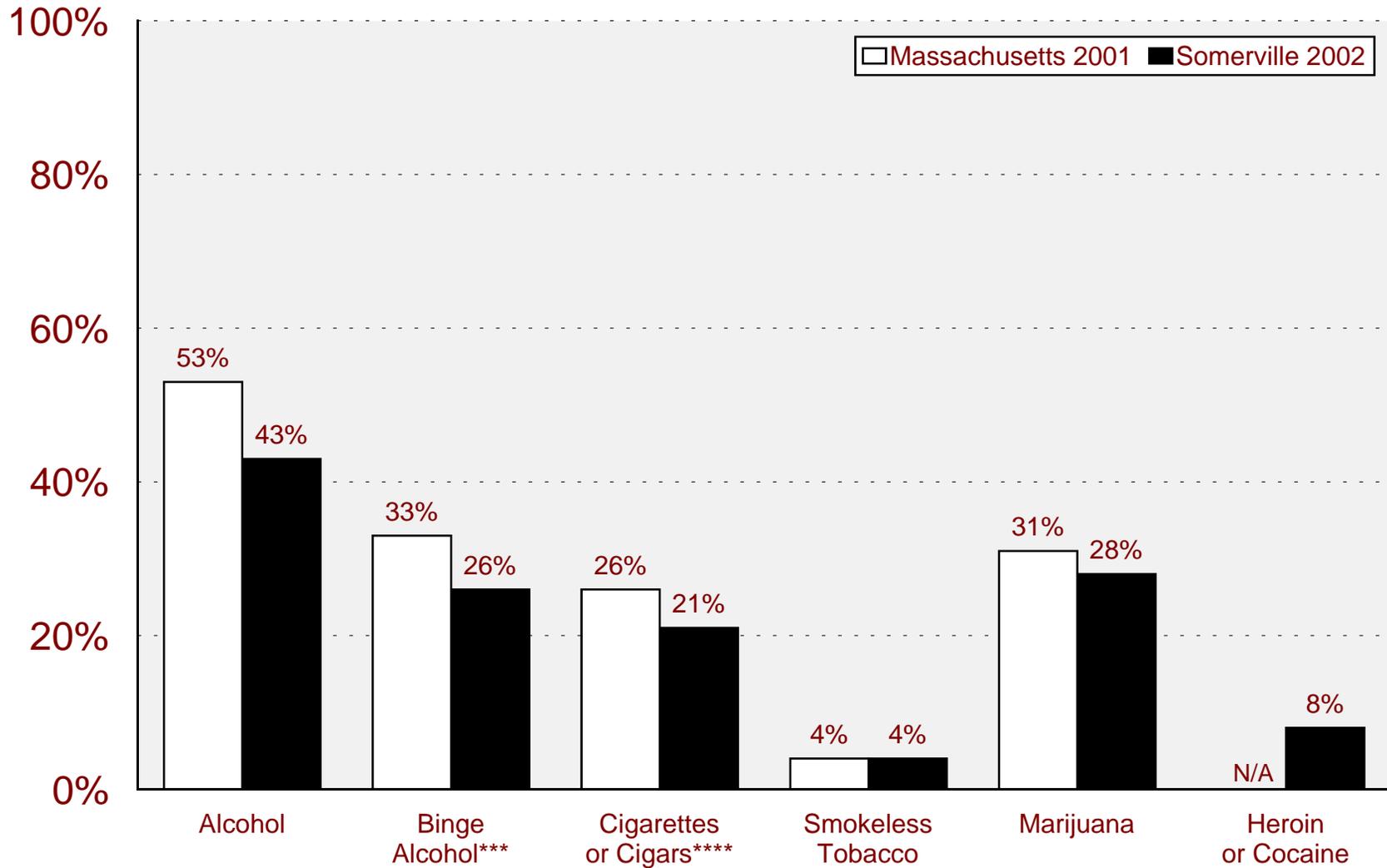
Current* Substance Use for Somerville High School Students, by Gender (2002)



* Current Use is any use in the 30 days prior to the survey.

** *Binge Alcohol* use is defined in the survey as having 5 or more drinks of alcohol within a couple of hours.

Current* Substance Use for Massachusetts High School Students (2001)** and Somerville High School Students (2002)



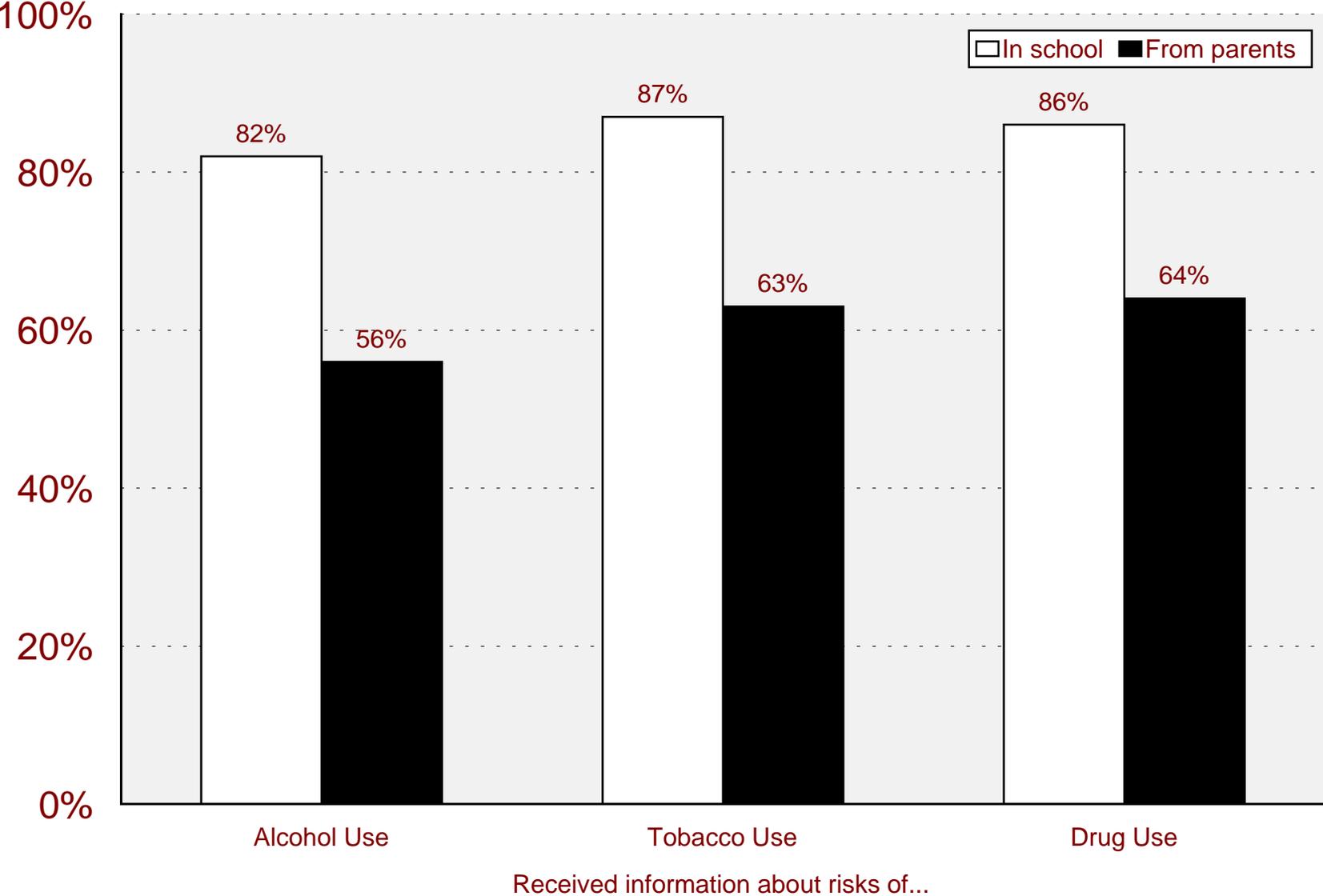
* *Current Use* is any use in the 30 days prior to the survey.

** Massachusetts high school data are from the 2001 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted by the MA Department of Education in the Spring of 2001.

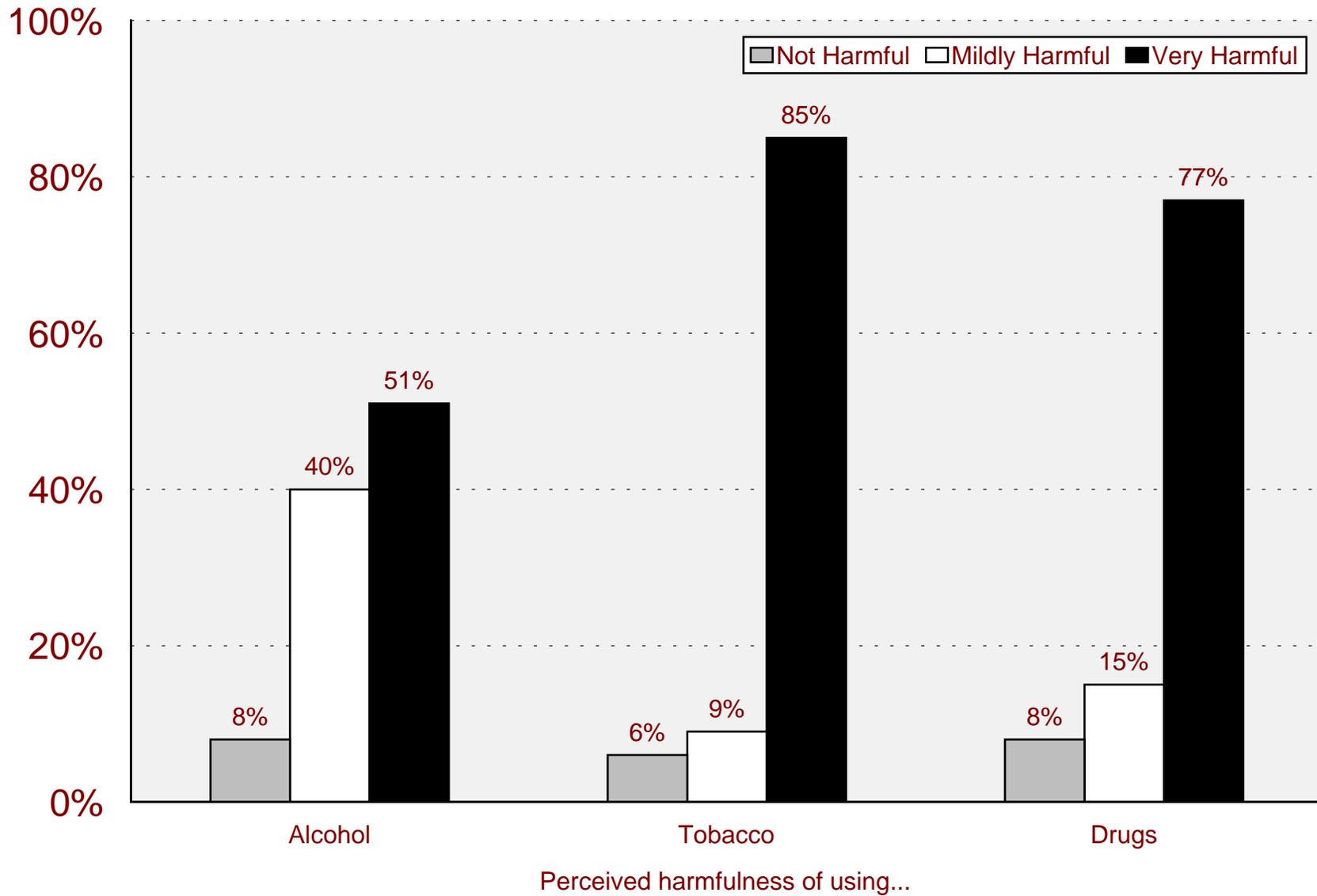
*** *Binge Alcohol* use is defined in the survey as having 5 or more drinks of alcohol within a couple of hours.

**** While the Somerville survey combined the use of cigarettes and cigars, the Massachusetts YRBS asks about these items separately. The percentage displayed represents the percentage of MA high school students who reported current use of cigarettes only.

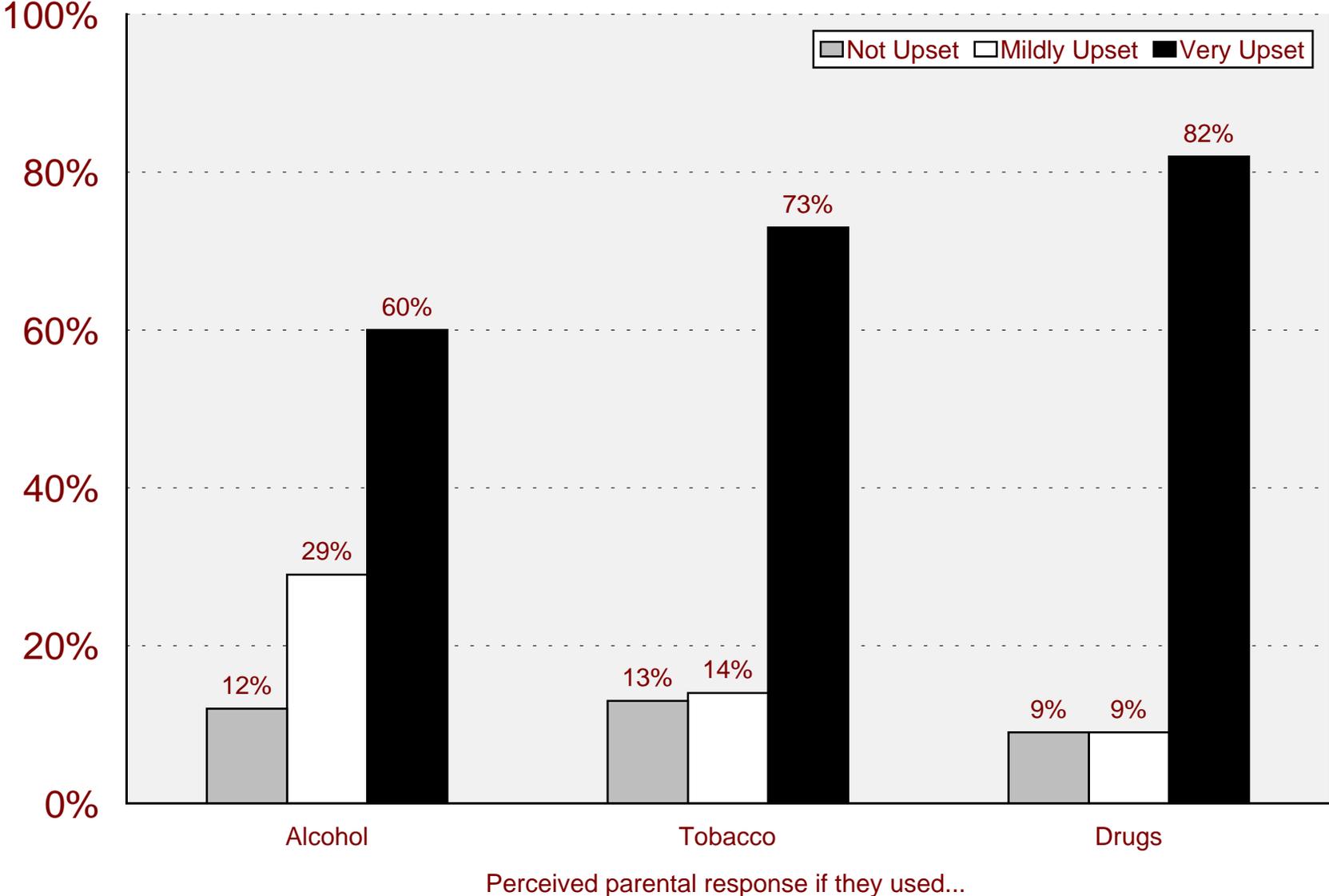
Percentage of Somerville High School Students Who Reported Receiving Information About the Risks of Substance Use (2002)



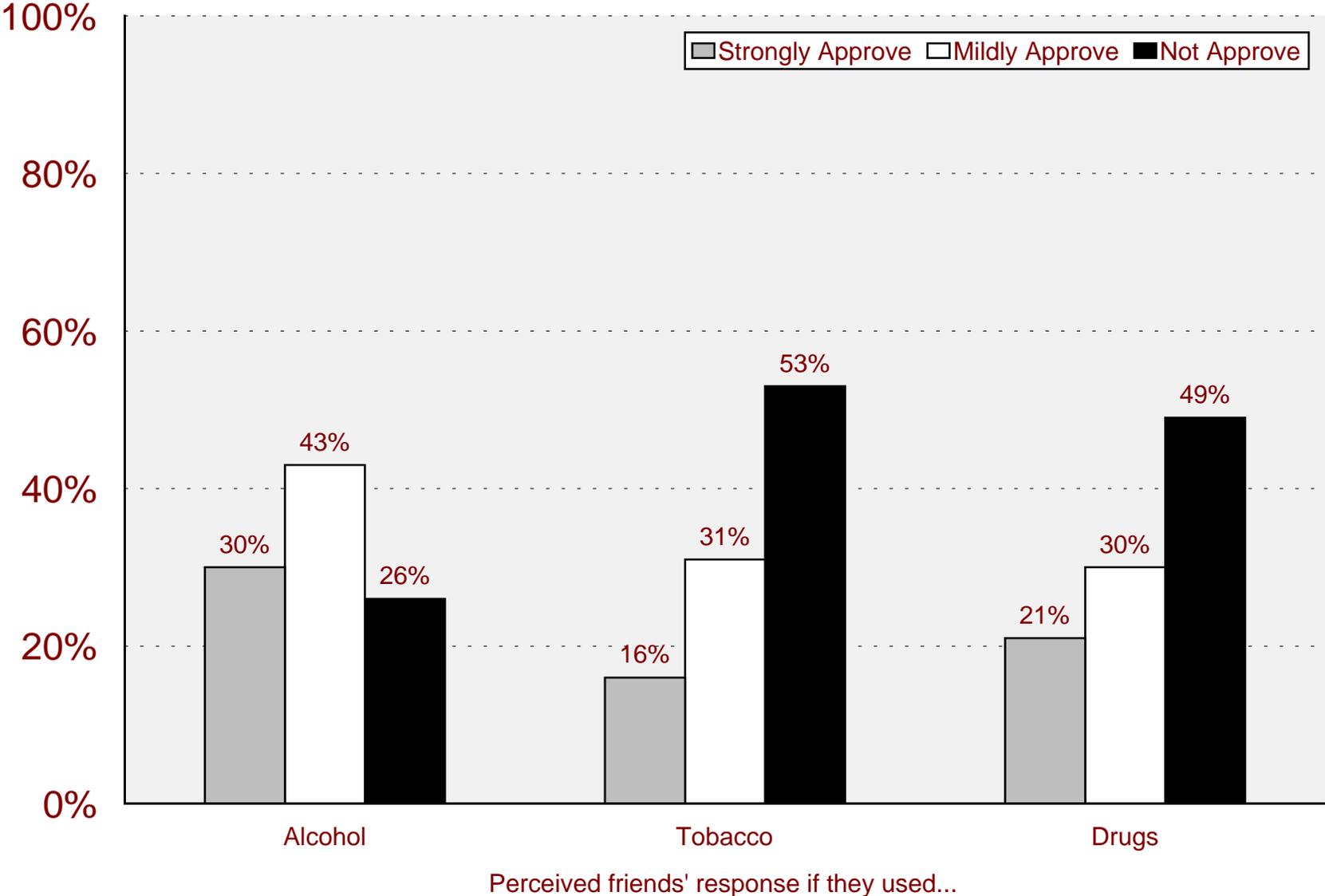
Perceived Harmfulness of Substance Use to Their Body by Somerville High School Students (2002)



Perception of Parental Response if They Used Substances by Somerville High School Students (2002)

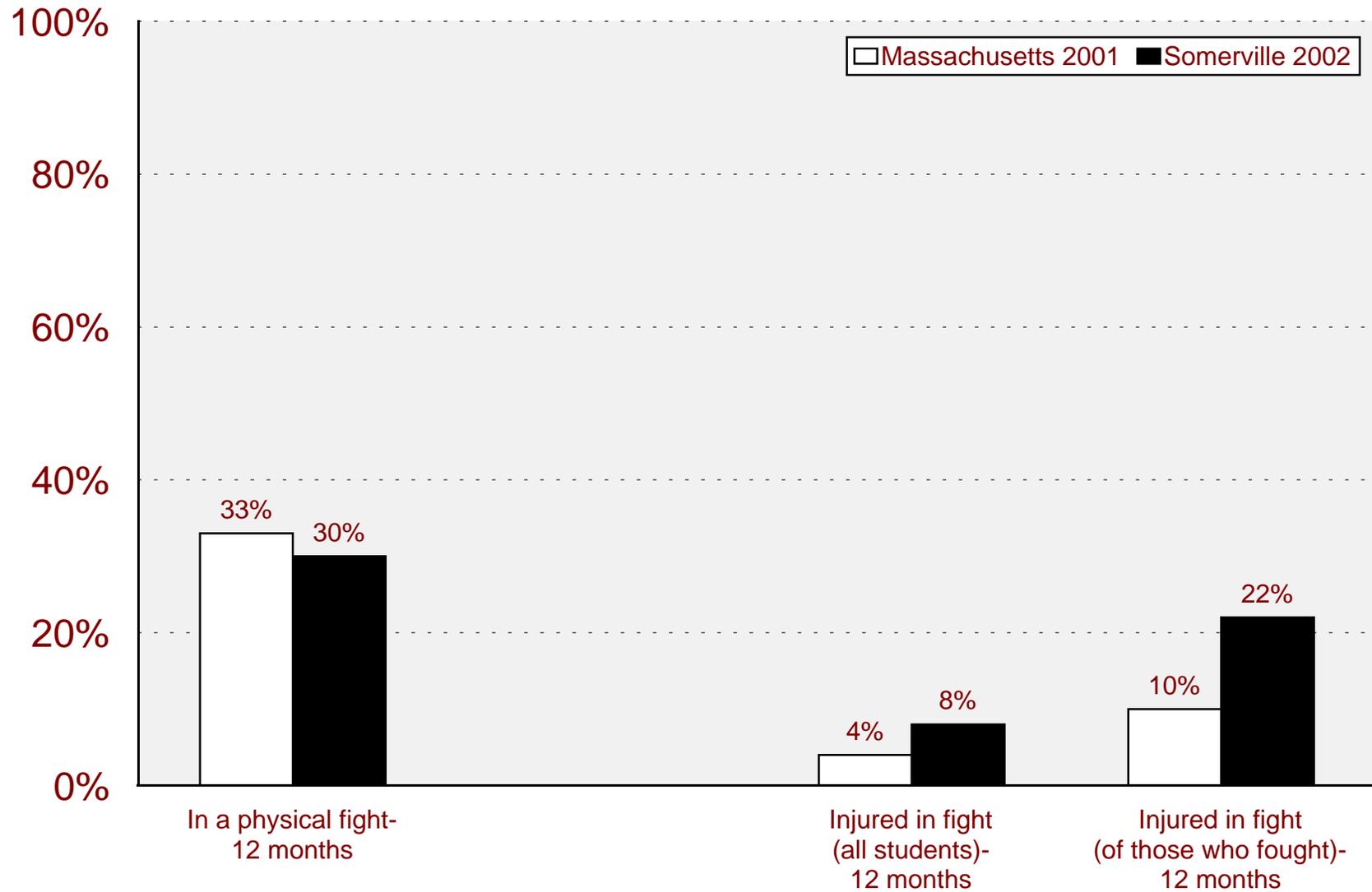


Perception of Friends' Response if They Used Substances by Somerville High School Students (2002)



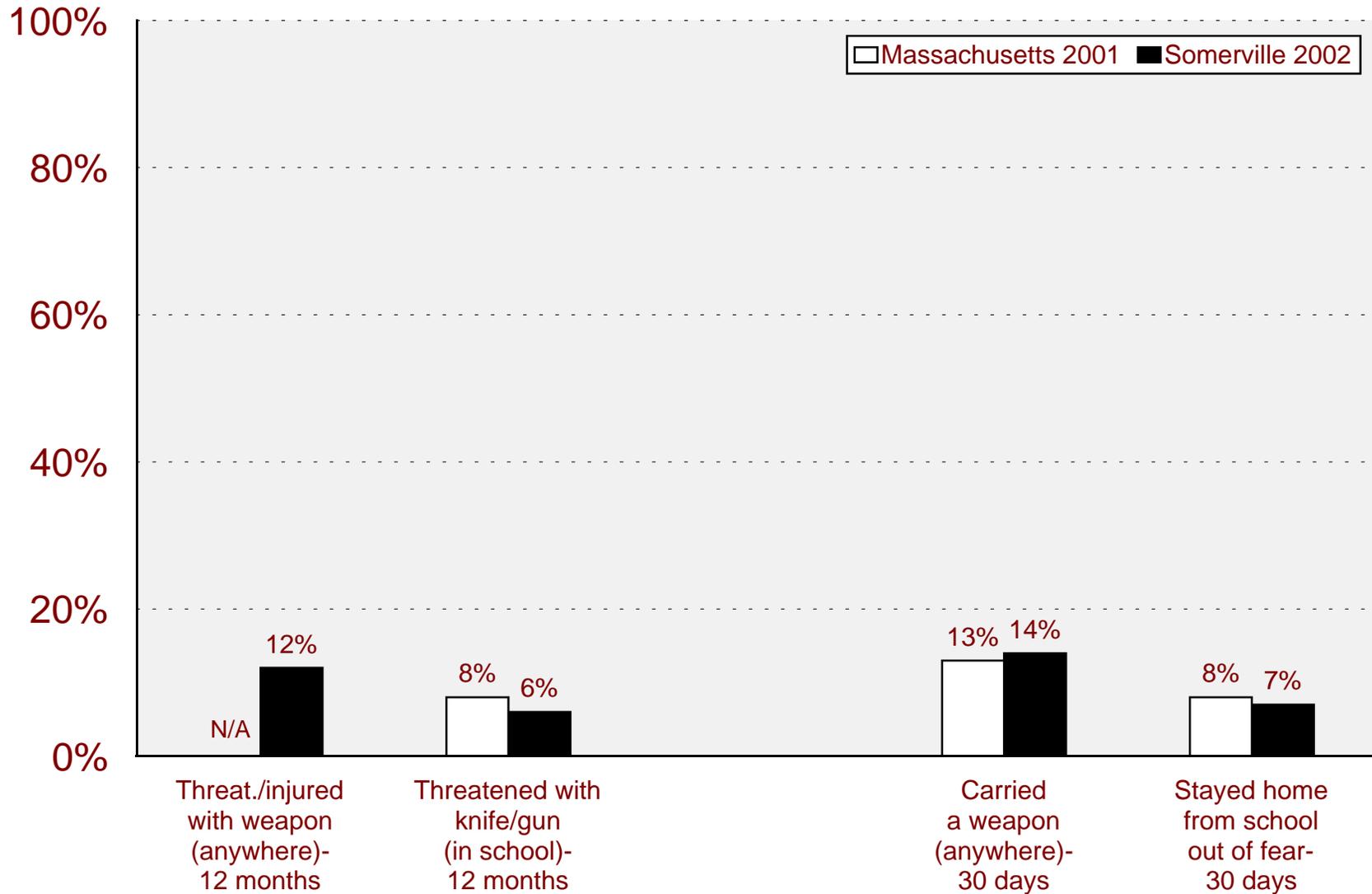
Violence and Safety

Percentage of Massachusetts* (2001) and Somerville (2002) High School Students Who Reported Fighting-Related Experiences



* Massachusetts high school data are from the 2001 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted by the MA Department of Education in the Spring of 2001.

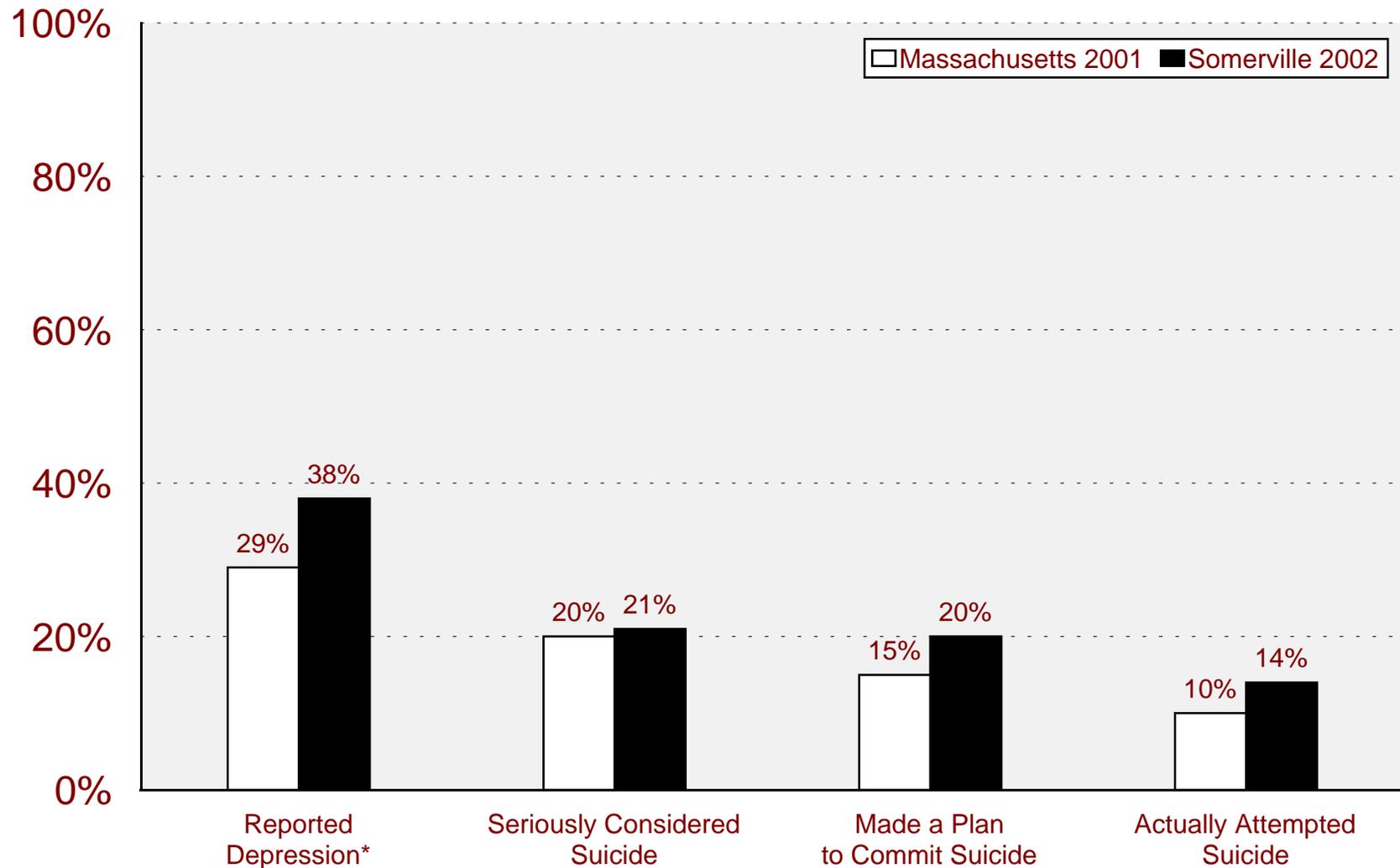
Percentage of Massachusetts* (2001) and Somerville (2002) High School Students Who Reported Weapon- or Safety-Related Experiences



* Massachusetts high school data are from the 2001 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted by the MA Department of Education in the Spring of 2001.

Mental Health Issues

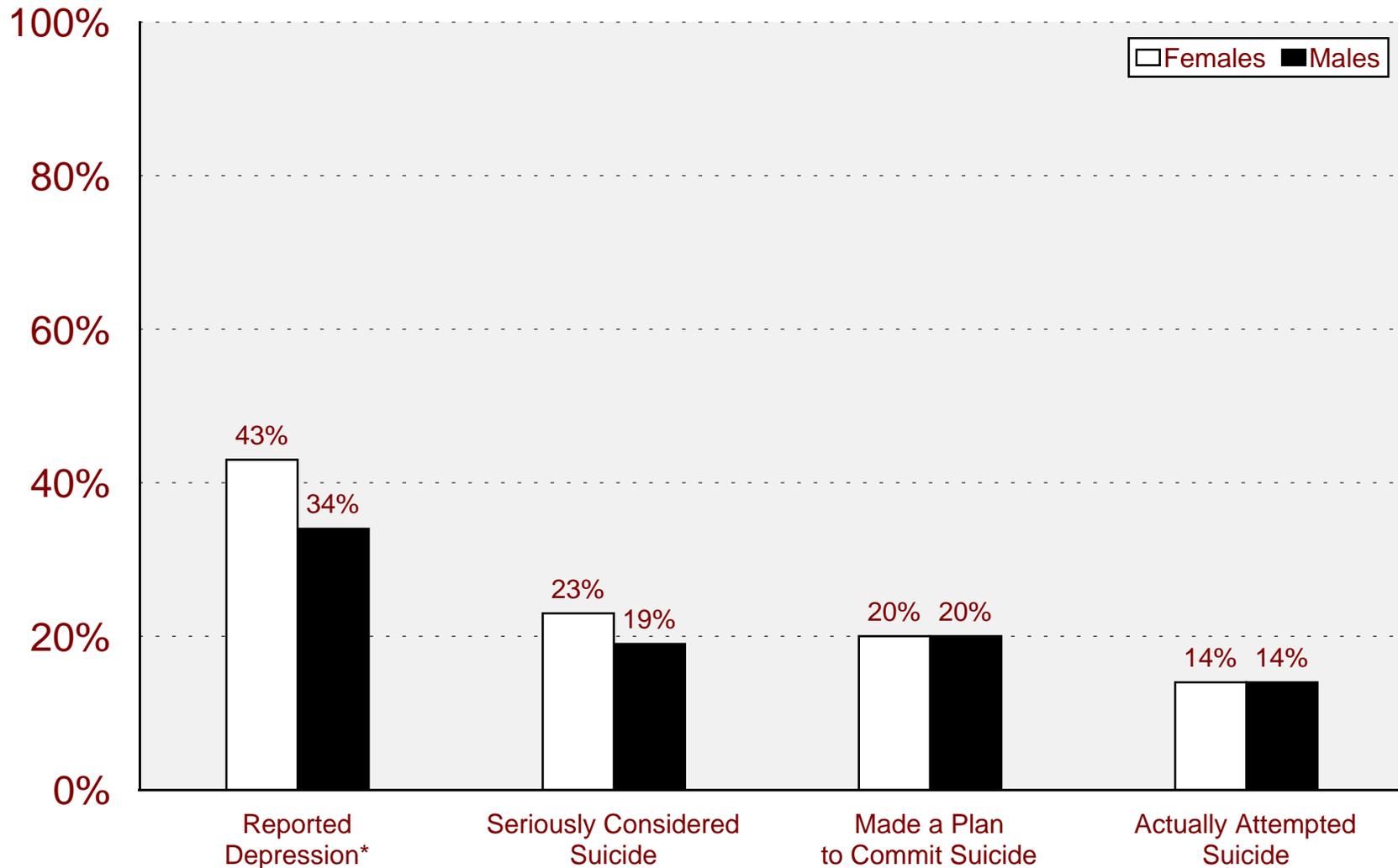
Percent of Massachusetts* (2001) and Somerville (2002) High School Students Who Reported Depression** and Considering, Planning, and Attempting Suicide in the Past 12 Months (2002)



* Massachusetts high school data are from the 2001 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted by the MA Department of Education in the Spring of 2001.

** Respondents were asked if in the past 12 months they had felt "so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that [they] stopped doing some usual activities."

Percent of Somerville High School Students Who Reported Depression* and Considering, Planning, and Attempting Suicide in the Past 12 Months, by Gender (2002)



* Respondents were asked if in the past 12 months they had felt "so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that [they] stopped doing some usual activities."

MAIN POINTS

ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND OTHER DRUG USE

- The substance of choice among Somerville high school students is alcohol.
- Use of virtually all substances increases as youth age.
- Males are somewhat more likely than females to engage in substance use.
- Rates of current substance use among Somerville high school students are slightly lower than state averages (although the comparison is imperfect due to the difference in scheduling of the surveys).
- Somerville youth are more likely to receive information about the risks of substance use in school than they are at home.
- On average, youth perceive (1) *tobacco* to be more harmful to them than drugs or alcohol, (2) their parents to be more concerned about their use of *drugs* than of tobacco or alcohol, and (3) their friends to disapprove more of their use of *tobacco* than drugs or alcohol.

VIOLENCE AND SAFETY

- While rates of physical fighting in Somerville are similar to state averages, a greater proportion of Somerville students are being injured in fights, indicating that these fights may be more severe.
- Rates of other issues such as weapons-carrying, being threatened by a weapon, and staying home from school out of fear for safety are similar in Somerville and Massachusetts overall.
- Males and younger students are most likely to report violence-related experiences such as physical fighting and weapons carrying.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

- A larger percentage of Somerville than Massachusetts high school students report mental health concerns such as depression, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behavior.
- There are no consistent differences by age/grade in the percentage of students reporting these mental health issues.
- Female students are more likely to report depression and considering suicide; however, there are no differences by gender in the percentage who report planning suicide or attempting suicide.

*The
End*