

Research Questions

America's colleges are struggling to respond to what is widely-perceived to be a growing mental health crisis on their campuses. Increasing mental illness rates harm all students but may affect first-years uniquely as they adjust to college life. We focus on anxiety and depression because it is the most-reported concern on college campuses. We investigate:

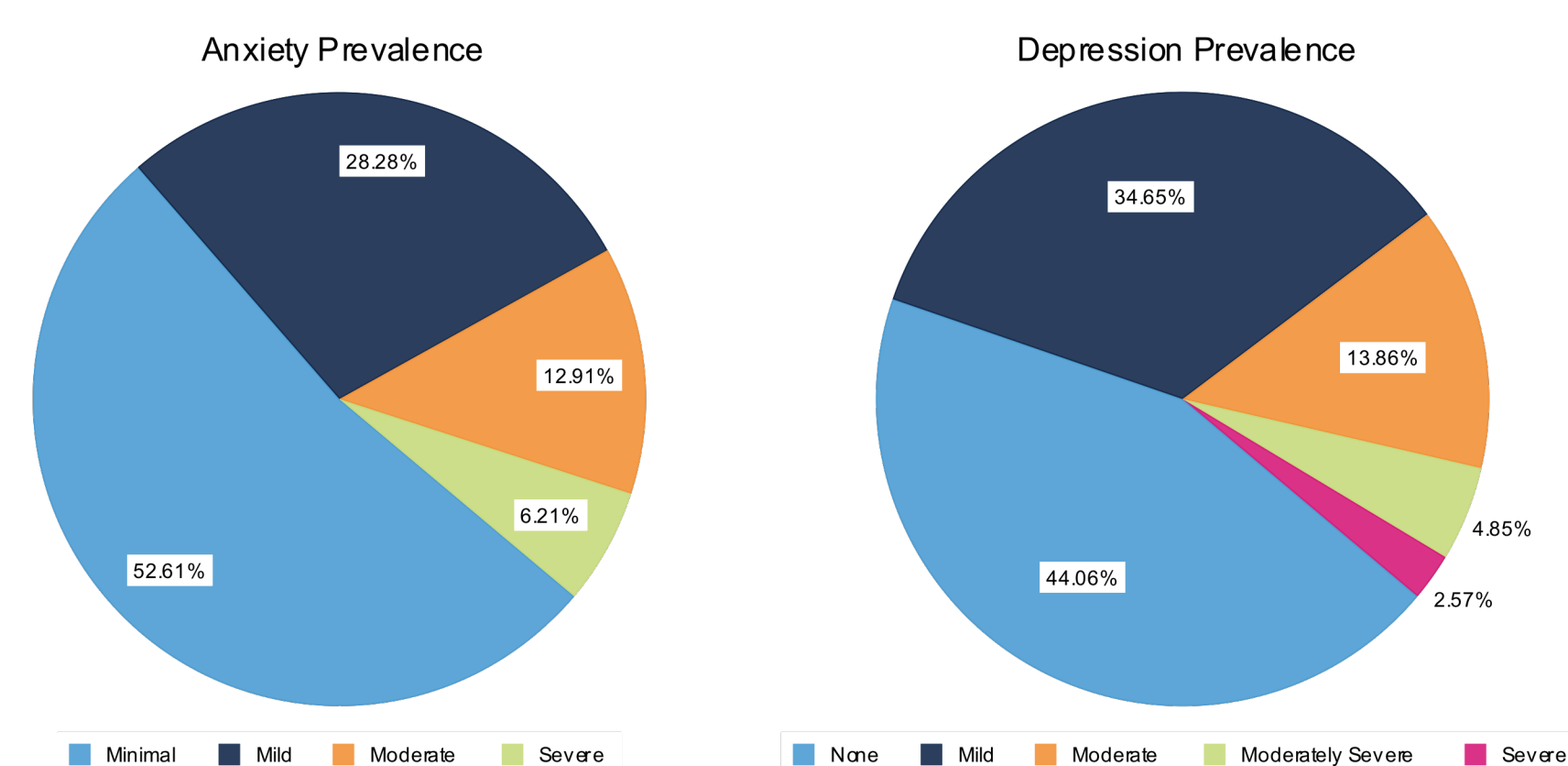
1. How prevalent are symptoms of anxiety and depression in UNC first-year students?
2. To what extent do anxiety and depression disproportionately affect at-risk populations?
3. What are key stressors among first-years?
4. What coping strategies do students use to combat anxiety and depression?
5. To what extent are campus mental health services utilized by those in need and what populations are under-served?

Data & Methods

For this study, we sent a Qualtrics survey to all UNC first-year students 18 or over. The response rate for the survey was about 30% and our sample of 1124 is roughly representative of the current first-year demographics. We complement survey findings with interviews to delve more deeply into mechanisms of effects. This poster presents preliminary findings from the survey.

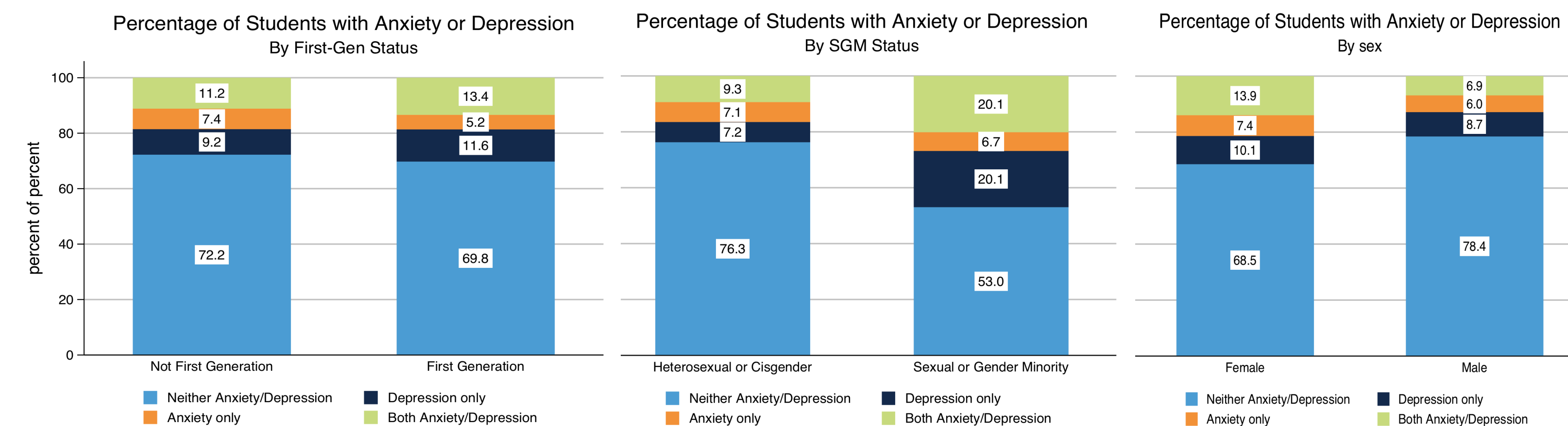
Prevalence

- 19.0% of the sample report moderate to severe anxiety symptoms, and 21.0% report moderate to severe depression symptoms. Overall, 28.7% of the sample report moderate to severe anxiety and/or depression symptoms.



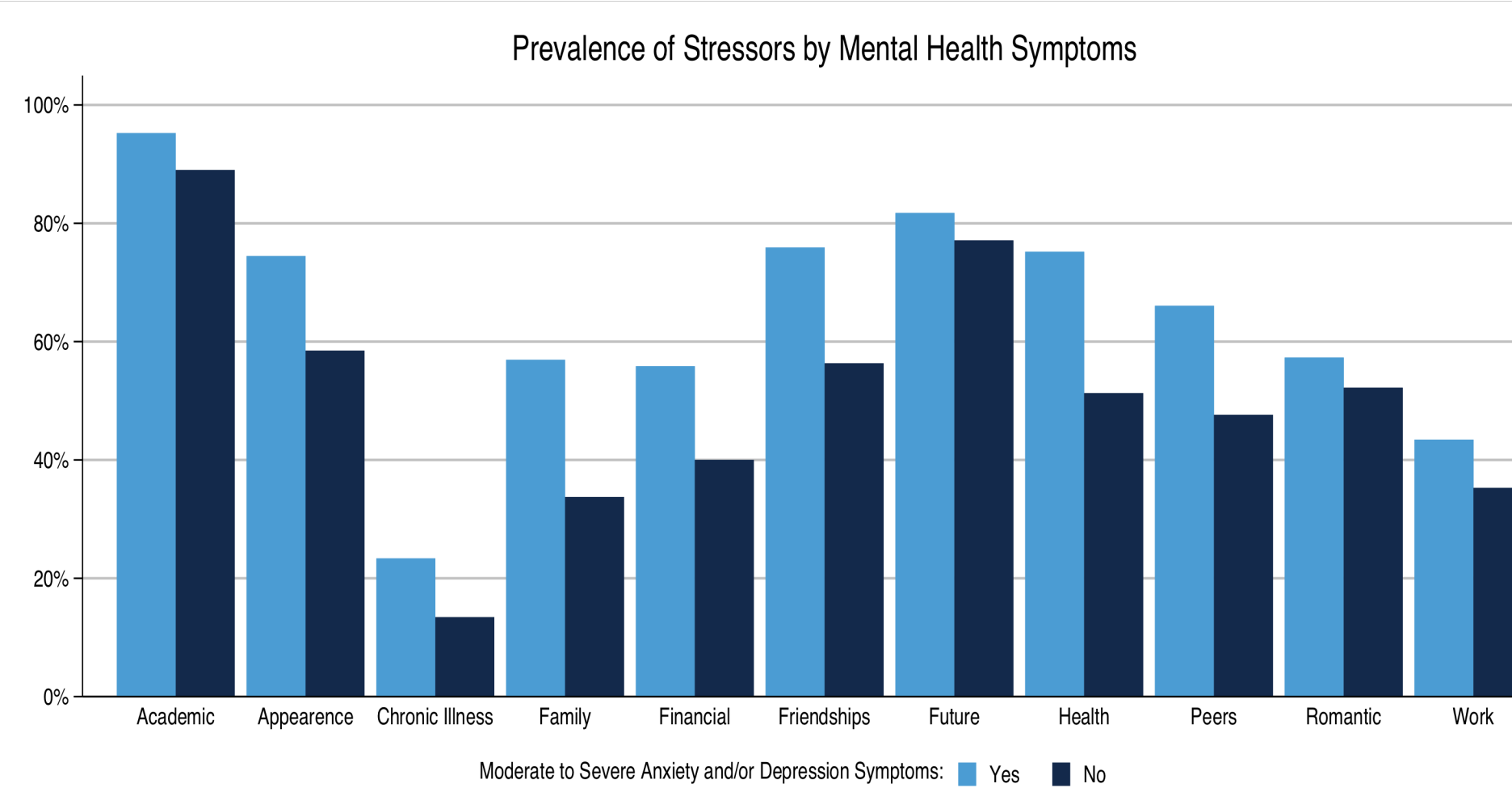
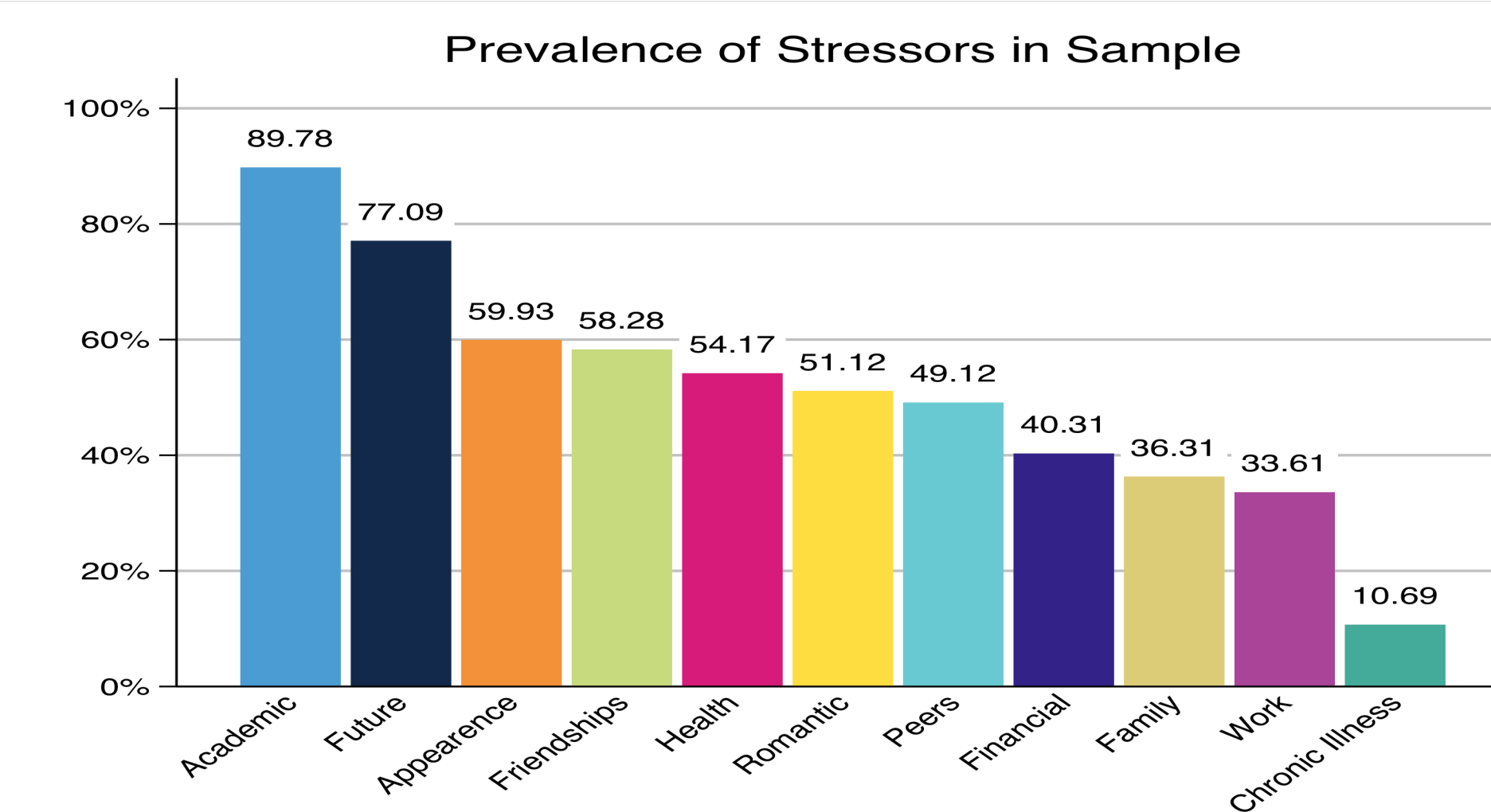
Disparities

- Our sample displays that black and mixed-race students experience the highest rates for symptomology of anxiety and/or depression.
- Our sample displays first generation and non-first-generation students having roughly the same rates for symptomology of anxiety and/or depression.
- Our sample shows that sexual gender minority (SGM) students, as characterized by non-binary constructs of sexual orientation, gender, and/or sex, demonstrate more symptomatic behavior of anxiety and/or depression than non-SGM students.
- Female students sampled show higher rates of anxiety and/or depression symptomology than male students.



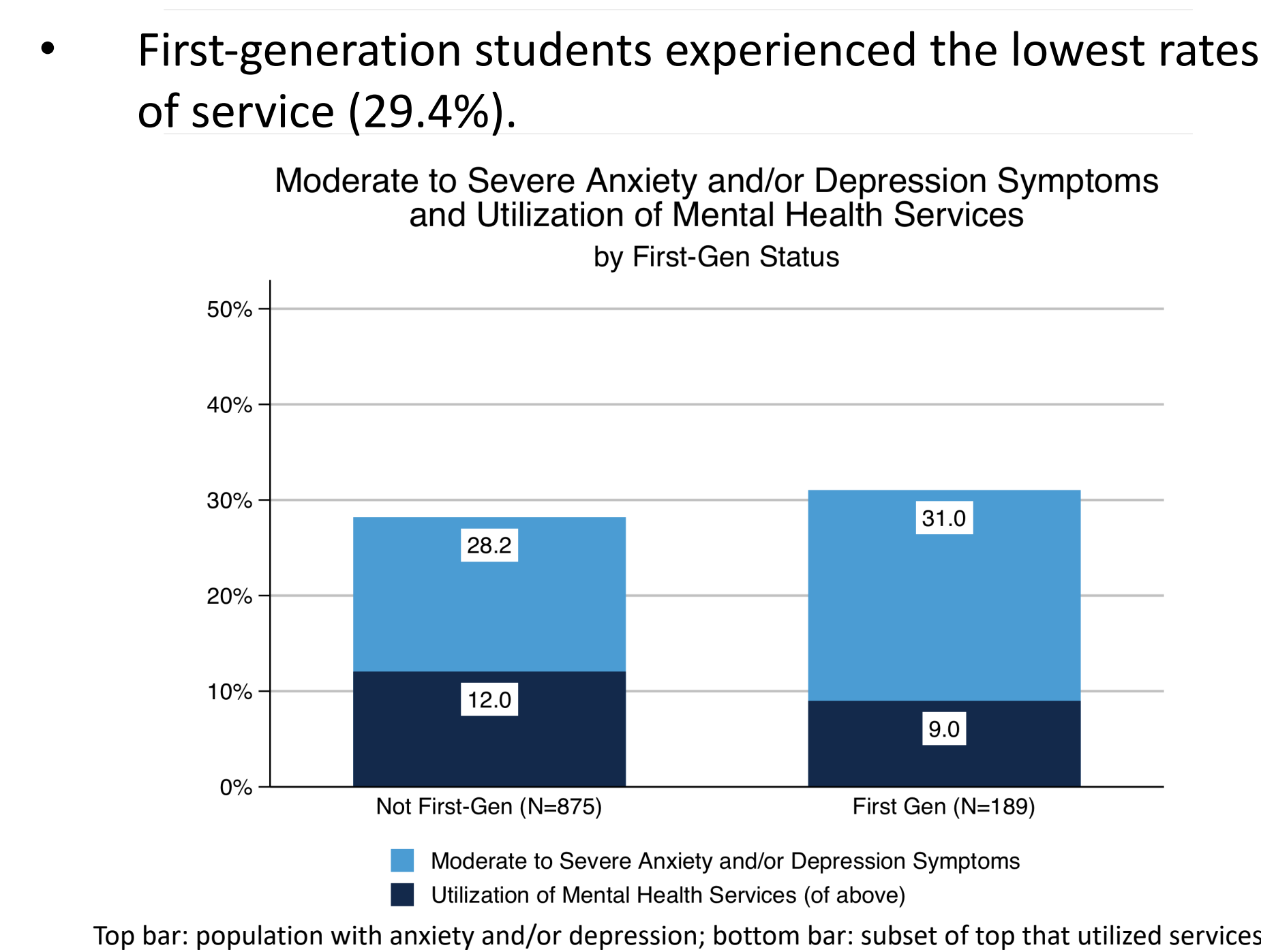
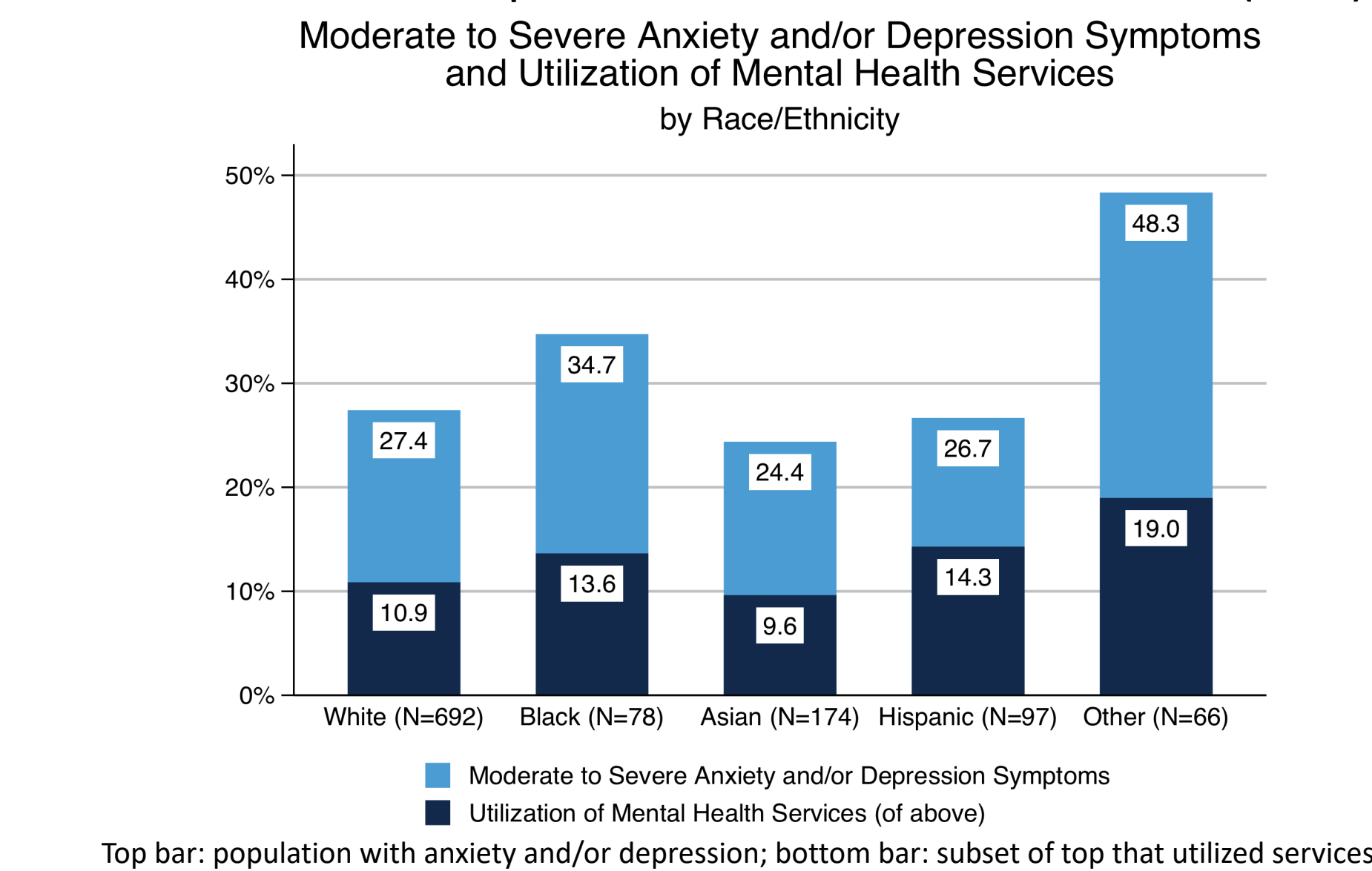
Key Stressors

- The entire sample's top stressors were academics, the future, and appearance.
- Those with anxiety and/or depression symptoms had different top stressors than the general population and higher rates of every stressor sampled.
- Minorities, in terms of sexuality, gender identity, and race, had higher rates of most stressors tested.

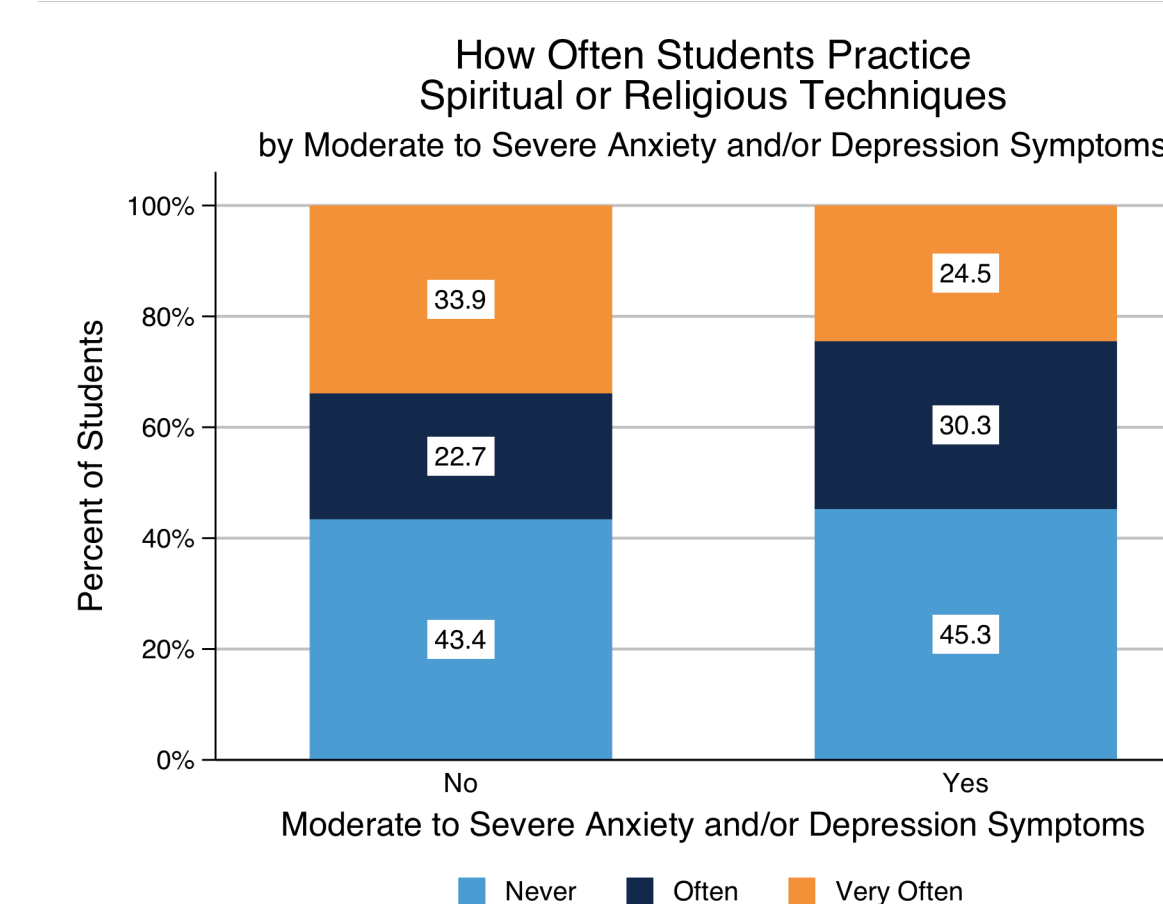


Utilization

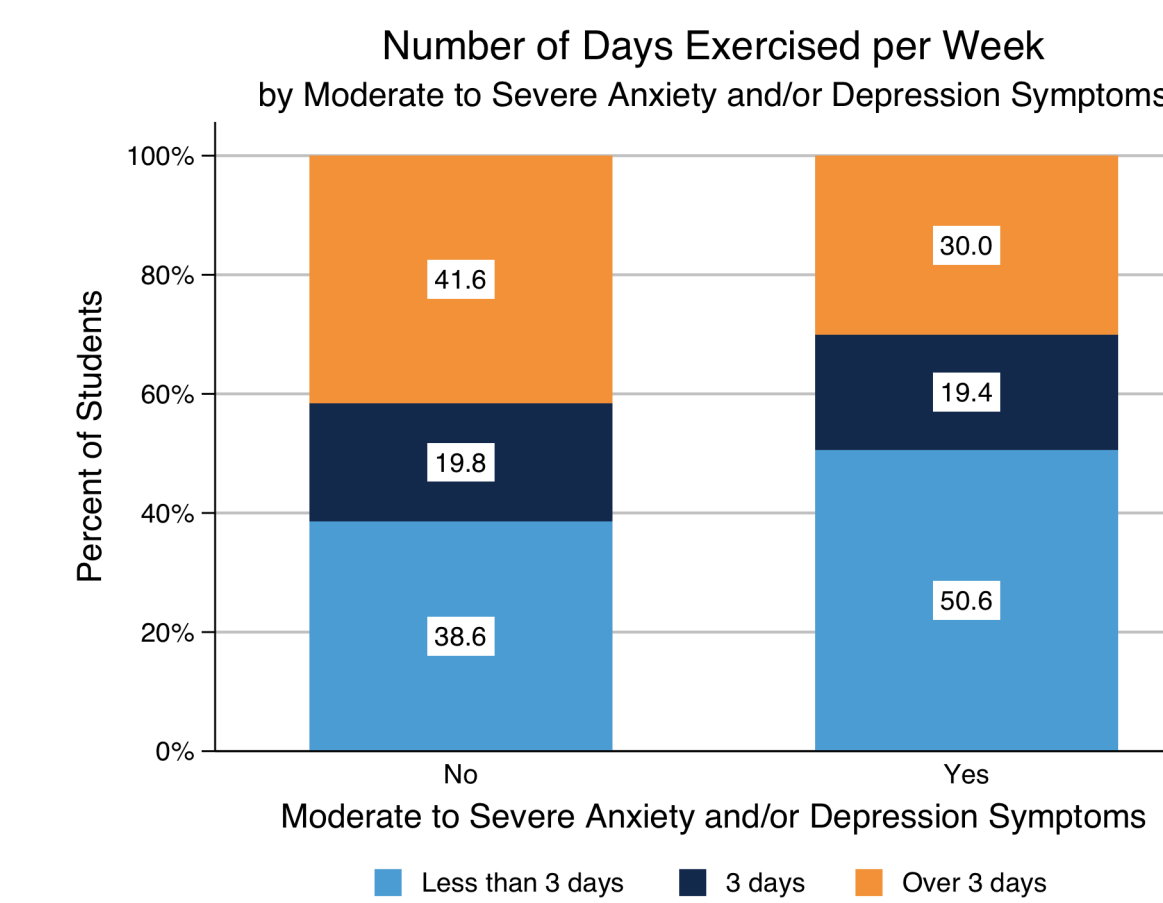
- Underrepresented minorities as a whole experienced equivalent rates of service to Caucasian students (41.5%).
- Black students experienced lower rates of service (38%).



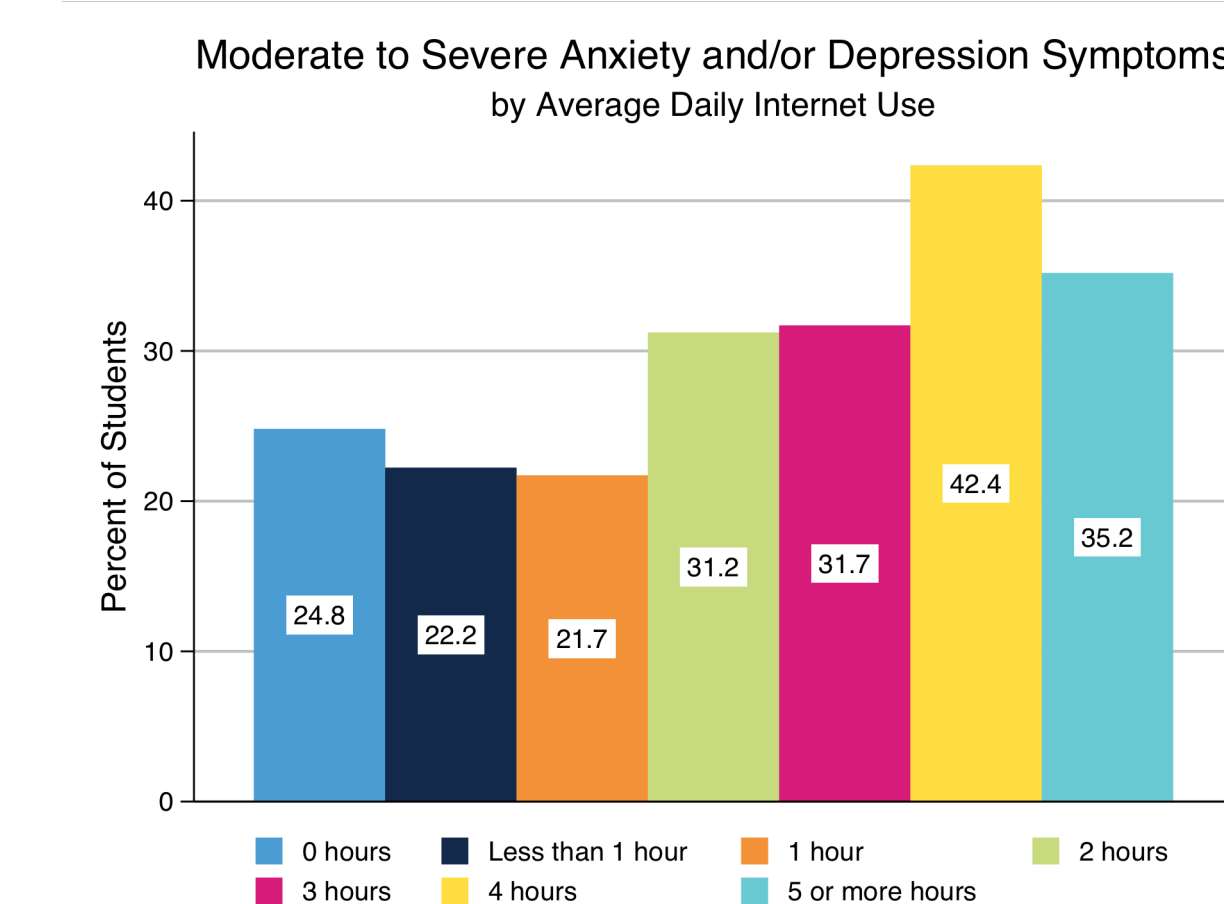
Behaviors



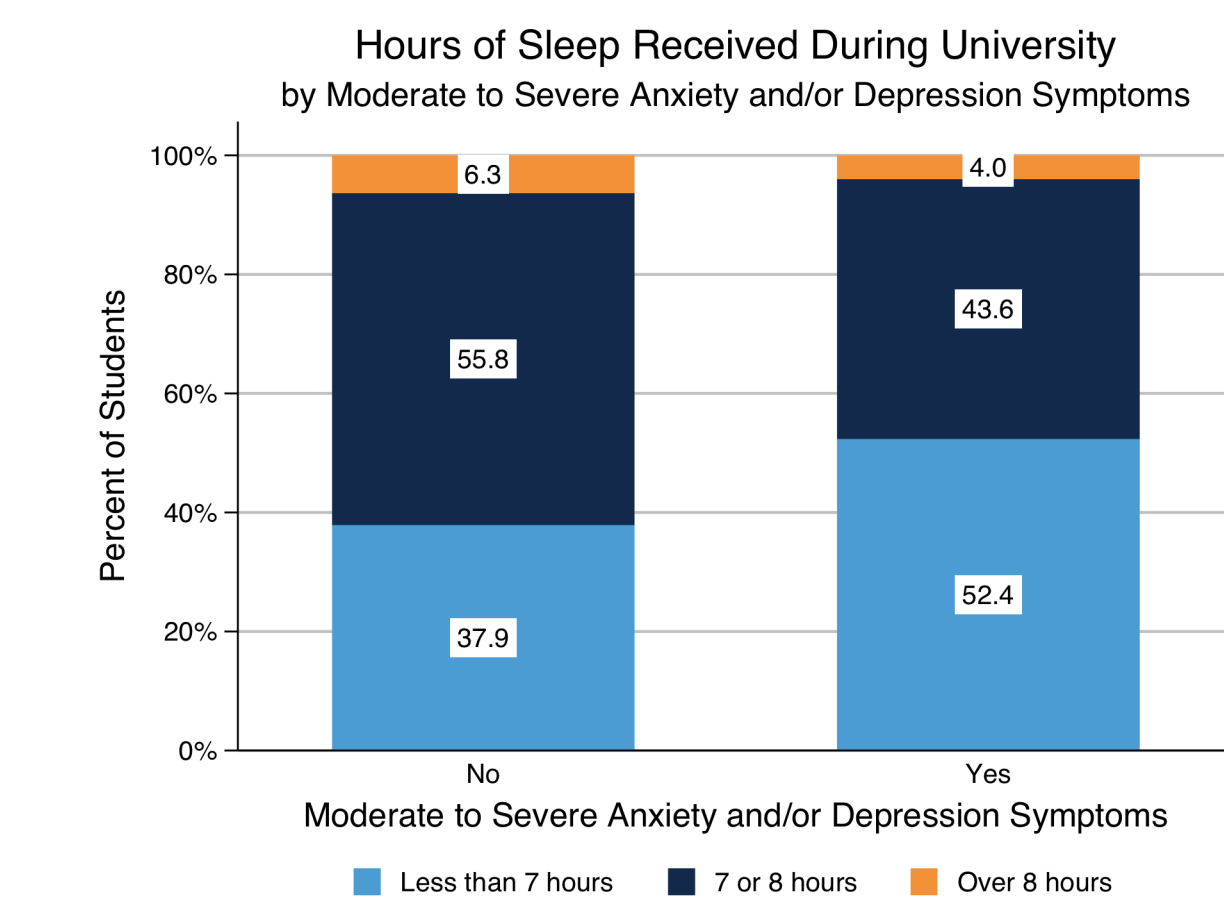
- Practicing spiritual or religious techniques is related to lower levels of anxiety and/or depression.



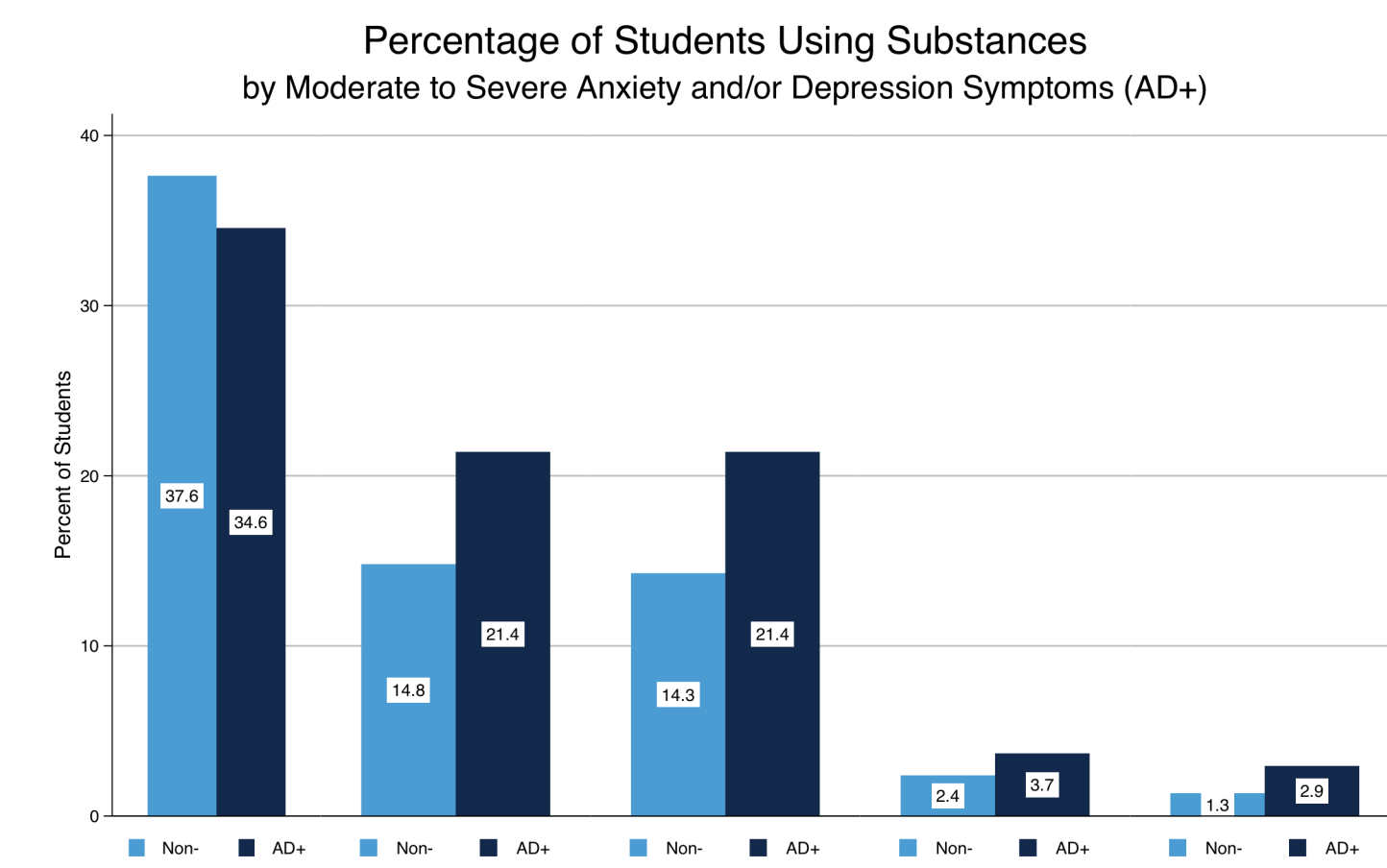
- Exercise is related to lower levels of anxiety and/or depression.



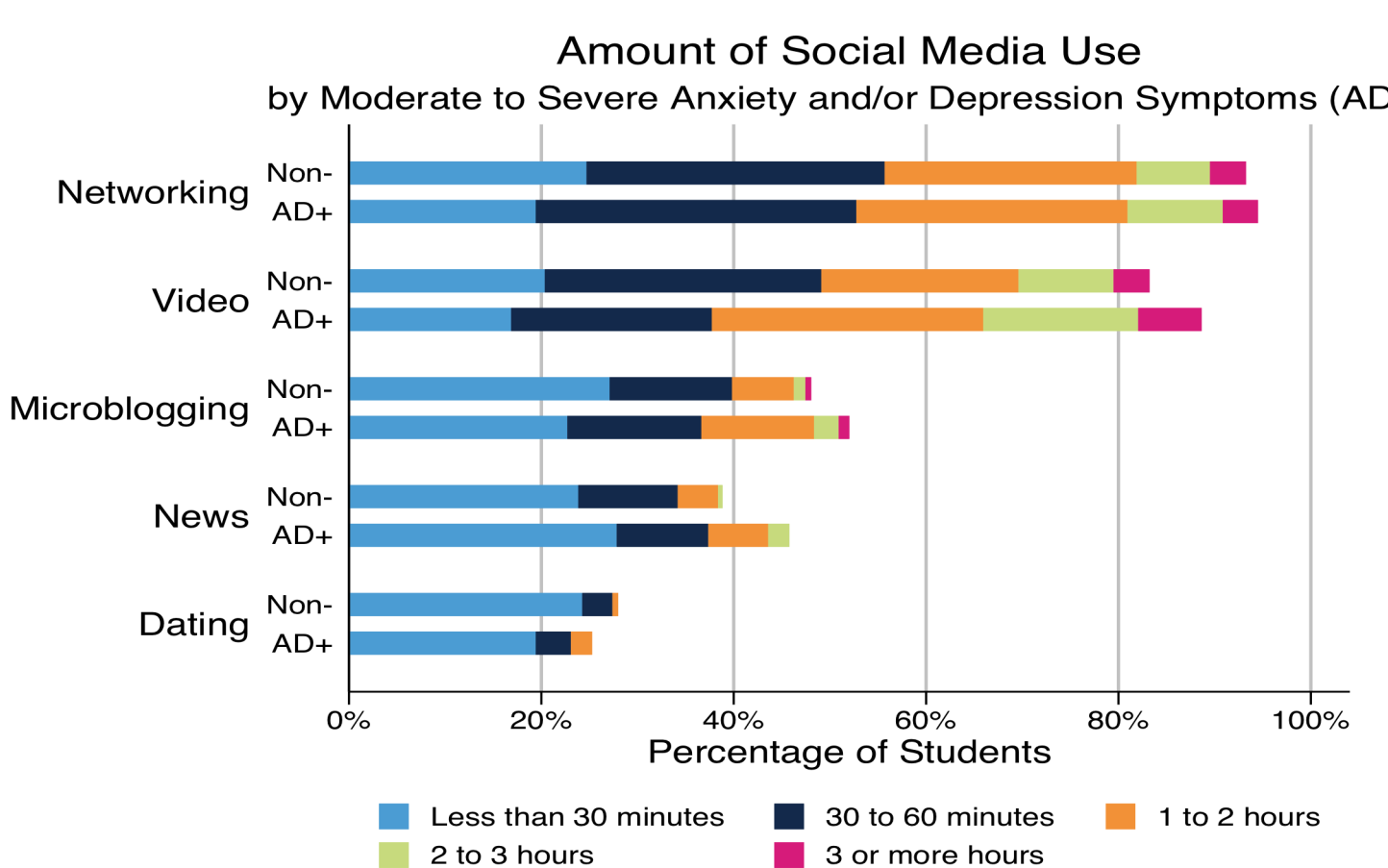
- Students who spent more time on the internet had higher levels of anxiety and/or depression.



- Decreased sleep quantity is related to increased anxiety and/or depression.



- For all drugs except for alcohol, use is associated with increased levels of both anxiety and/or depression.



- Increased social media use is related to increased anxiety and/or depression.

Conclusions

- Our key contributions to research on college student mental health:
 - Combine validated measures of anxiety and depression symptoms with information on a comprehensive set of coping strategies
 - Include information on types of stressors students face to help inform how best to improve mental health during the first year of university
- Preliminary evidence suggests that
 - Sexual/gender minorities are particularly vulnerable population that need support
 - Adaptive coping strategies such as exercise, sleep, meditation, reduced social media use and less drug use are all more prevalent in the population that does not exhibit symptoms of anxiety or depression.
 - At risk black students and first-generation students in particular under-utilize mental health services on campus and should be targeted for support
- Our team hopes the UNC administration use these findings to inform changes to CAPS services, mental health programing, and the curriculum of the new required First-Year seminar course.

Acknowledgements

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