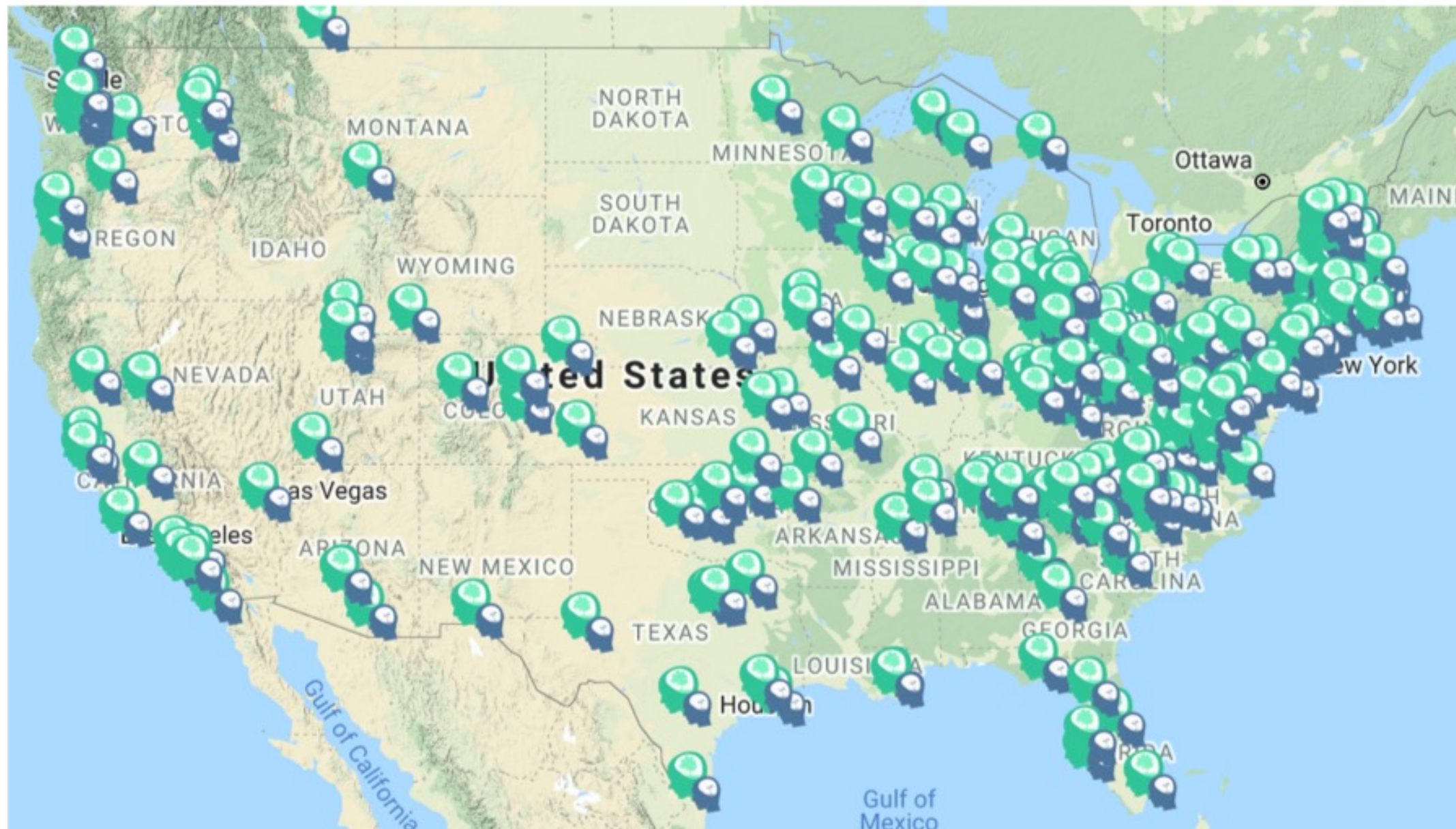# College Student Mental Health Q & A

SARAH KETCHEN LIPSON (SHE/HER), PHD EDM

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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, THE HEALTHY MINDS NETWORK

About the Healthy Minds Study

- ~800 colleges and universities, including community colleges, MSIs
- >750,000 college student respondents
- PIs: Sarah Lipson, Daniel Eisenberg, Justin Heinze, Sasha Zhou
- Based at BUSPH, UM, UCLA
- Random samples recruited from participating schools
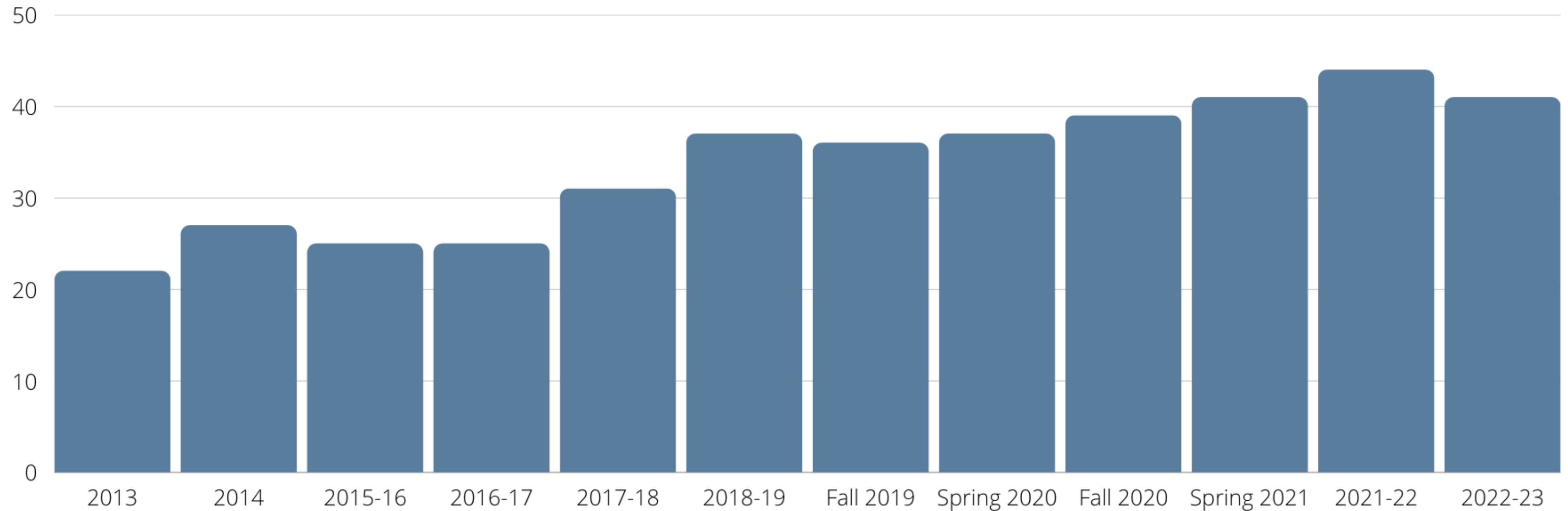- Online survey (Qualtrics)
- Validated screening tools/measures

Decreasing rates of flourishing (positive mental health)
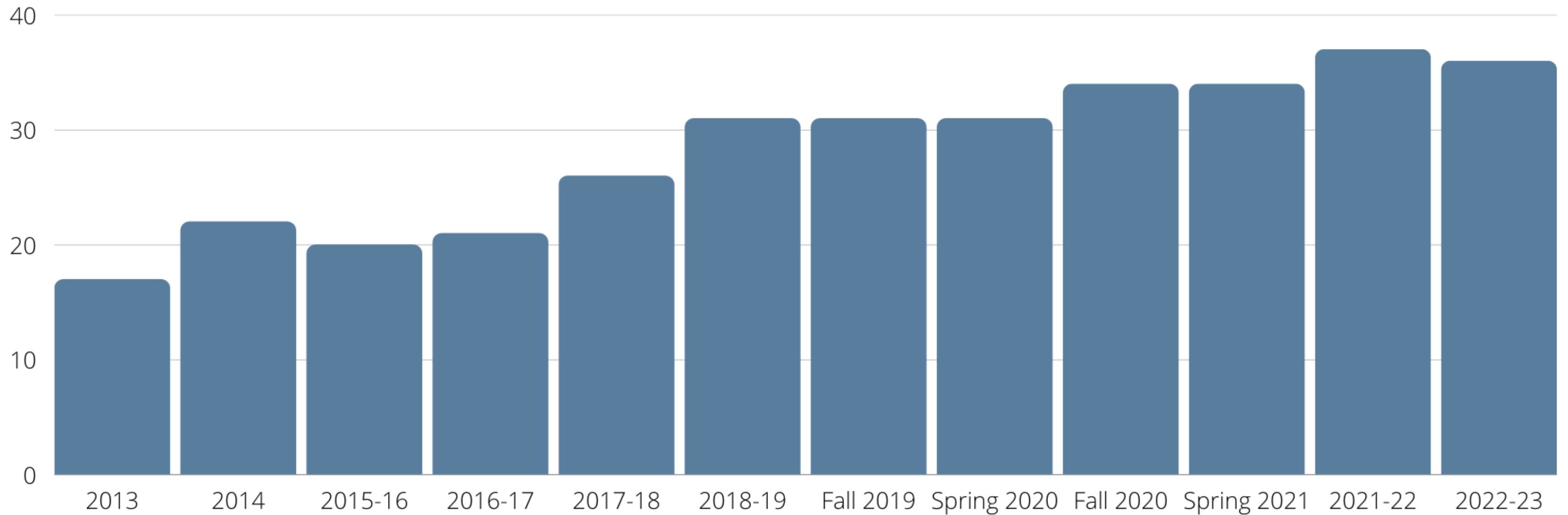## 2012 (57.1%) - 2023 (36%)
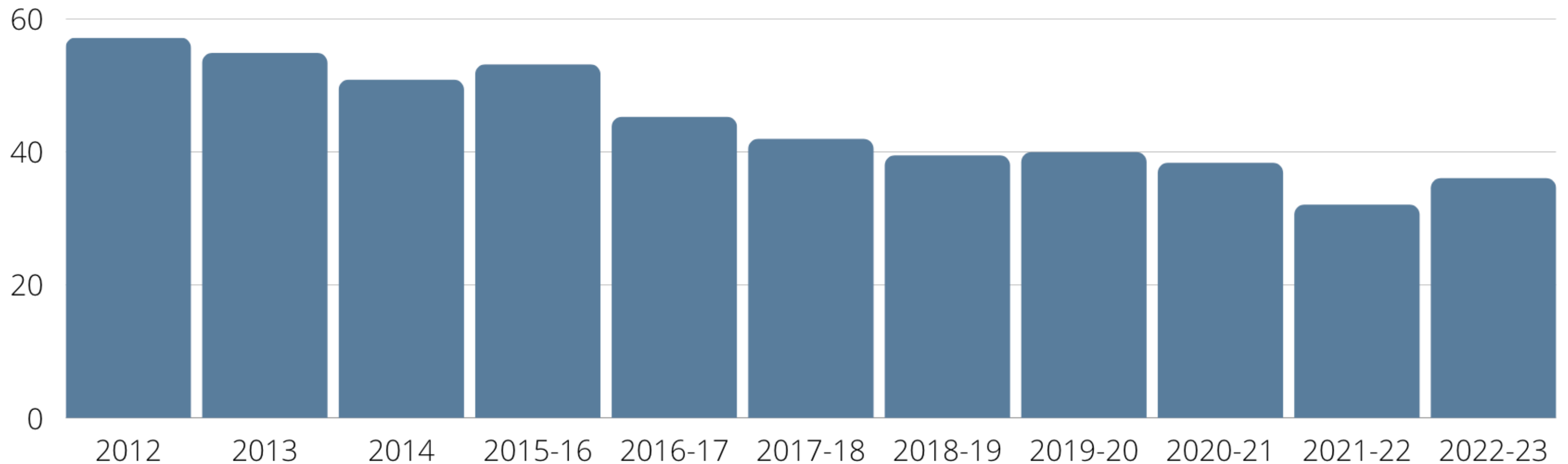
Increasing rates of depressive symptoms
2013 (22%) - 2023 (41%)

Increasing rates of anxiety symptoms
2013 (17%) - 2023 (36%)
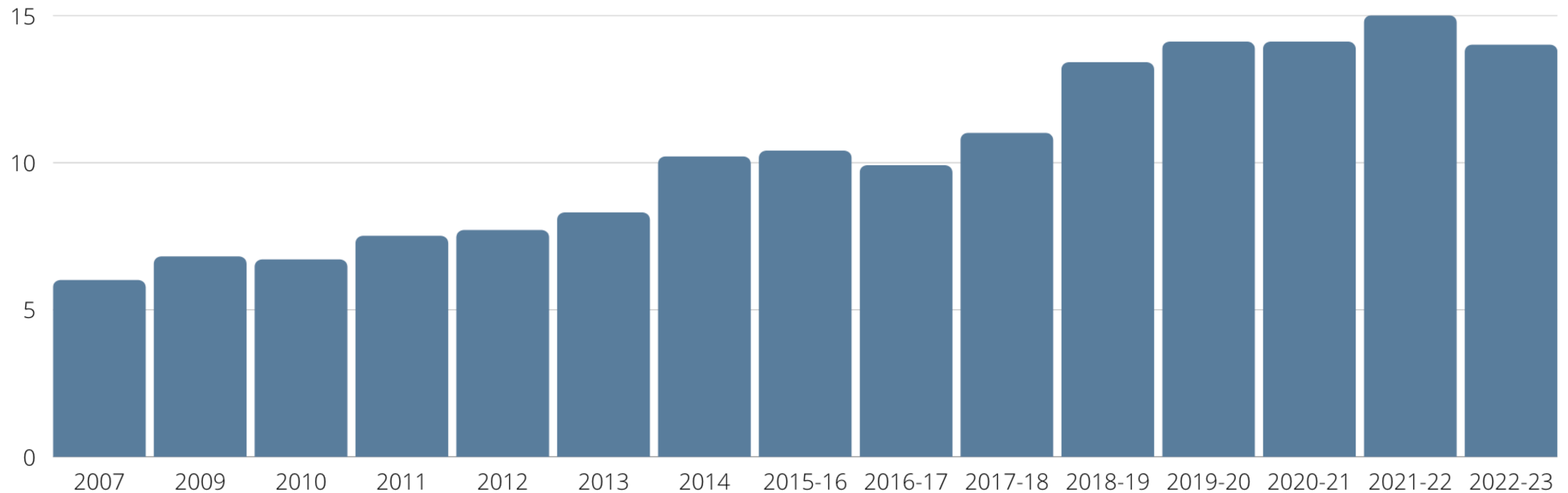
Majority of students report loneliness, AY 2022-23

How often do you feel...

you lack companionship

34%
37%
19%

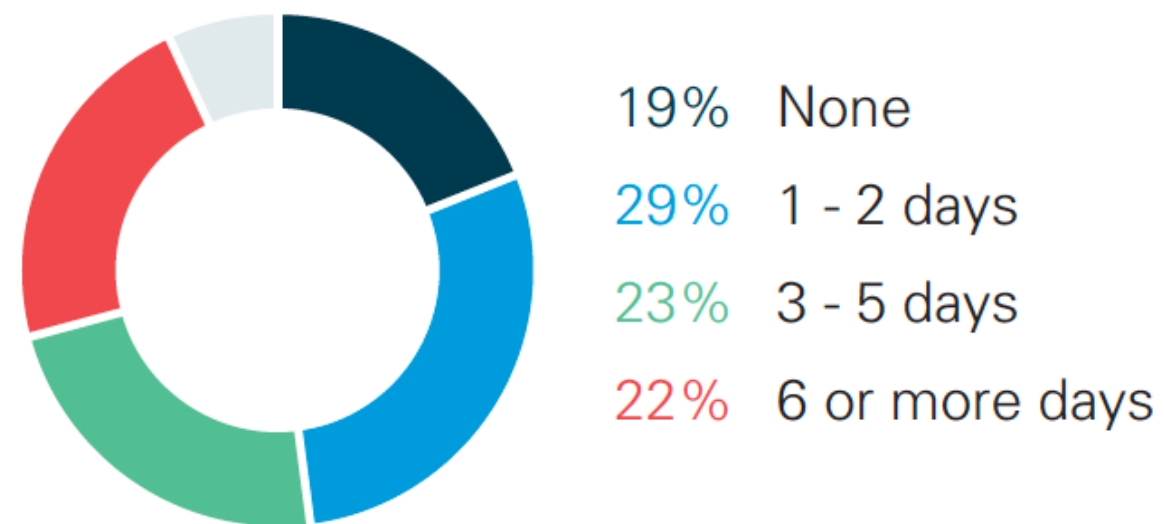### left out

29%
39%
22%

isolated from others

29% Hardly ever
36% Some of the time
25% Often

>80% of students report academic impairment due to mental health concerns, AY 2022-23

ACADEMIC IMPAIRMENT

In the past 4 weeks, how many days have you felt that emotional or mental difficulties have hurt your academic performance?

19% None
29% 1 - 2 days
23% 3 - 5 days
22% 6 or more days

- Poor mental health may decrease one's interest in the future, which would reduce one's willingness to make long-term investments like schooling
- Symptoms may affect the productivity of time in academic activities and overall academic performance

Mental health 'treatment gap' is disproportionately wide for BIPOC students.

■ All students ■ Asian ■ Black ■ Latinx ■ White

Though most students w/ untreated symptoms have positive attitudes & beliefs, there is a lack of urgency around the task of seeking help.
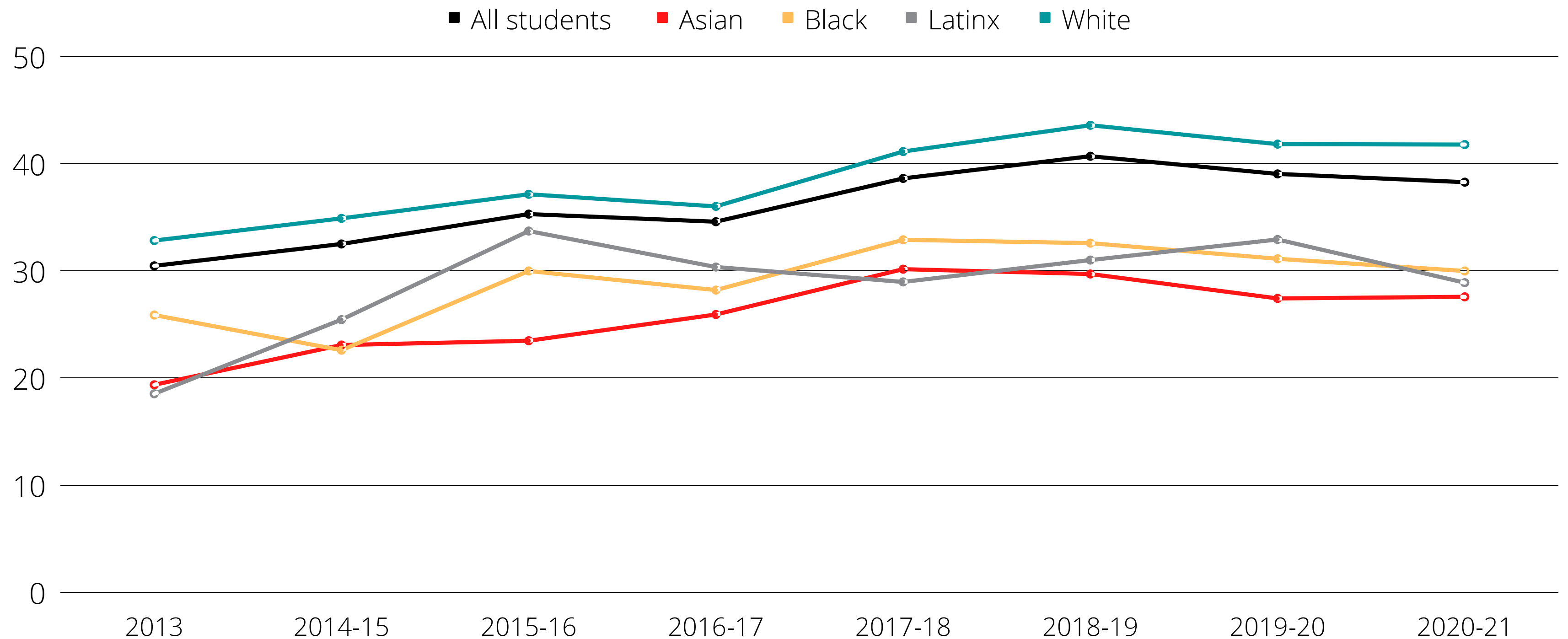
Most commonly reported barriers among students w/ untreated symptoms:

- Haven't had a need (31%)

- Prefer to deal w/ issues on my own (27%)

- Question how serious my needs are (20%)

- Don't have time (17%)

	Percentage change since 2013
Flourishing	-33%
Suicidal ideation	+64%
Depression	+135%
Anxiety	+110%
Tx (students w dep/anx/SI)	+26%

Problem Statement

- Mental health represents an urgent and growing issue in higher ed and many other settings

- Rates of depression and anxiety have approximately doubled in the past decade, suicide rates are rising, and demand for services is overwhelming the system

  - These issues intersect with persistent societal inequities: access to mental health services is particularly low for students of color, first-gen students, students from lower income families (same groups, on average, with lower rates of persistence/retention)

- The only federal program currently available to directly support college students' mental and behavioral health services is the Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grant Program, which recently awarded around $2.3 million to colleges, and only offered up to $102,000 for just 25 institutions this year – far less than the scale of the support needed

- Federal investments supporting mental health needs in our nation's K-12 schools have increased rapidly in recent years, but college students have not had the same support. Students still have significant mental health needs after they leave high school. The growing attention to mental health and stress among college students presents an opportunity for lawmakers to contribute toward student success and achievement through significant new investment in campus mental health efforts.
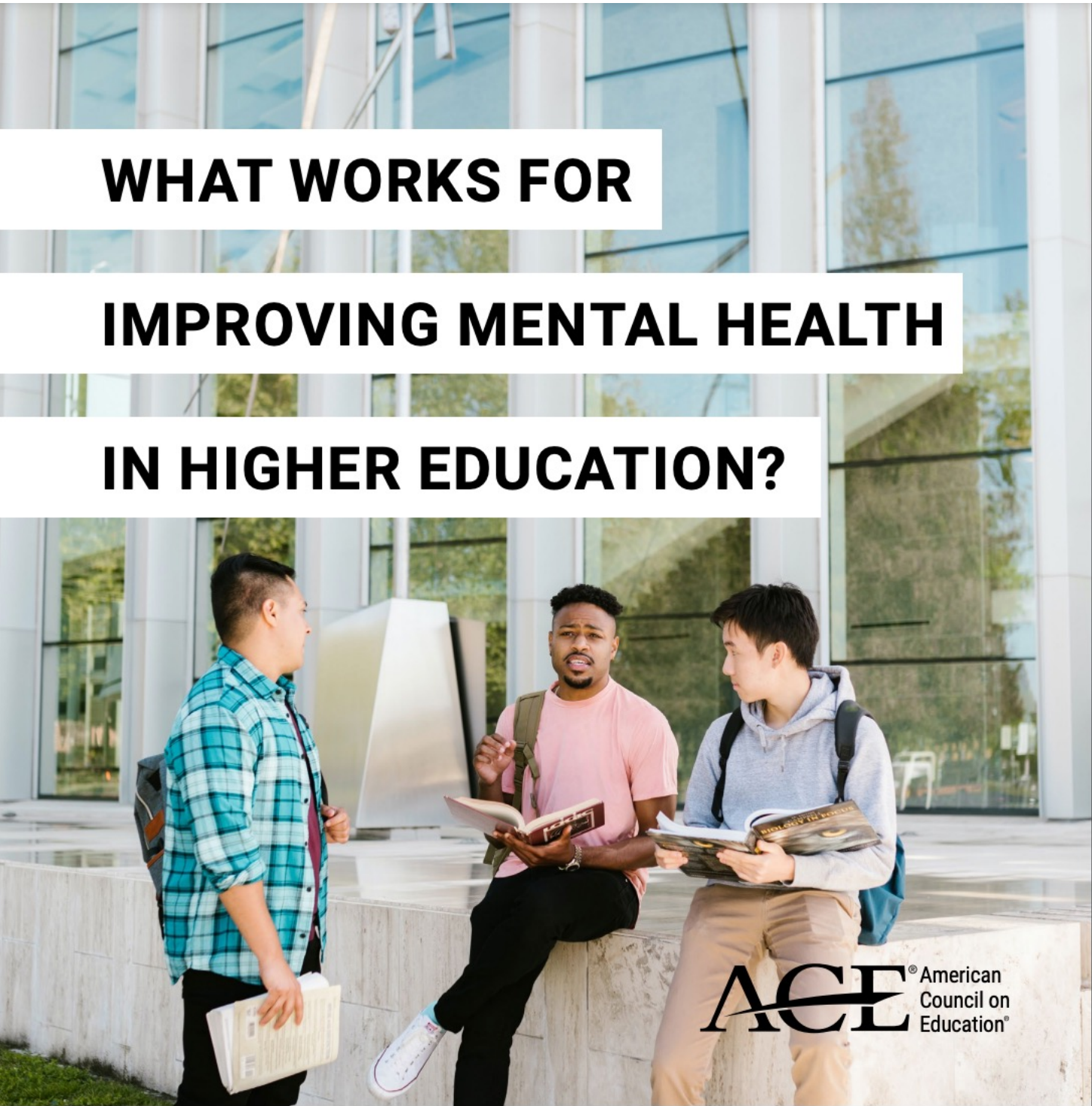
Problem Statement

- Schools, funders, policymakers, and other organizations are increasingly motivated to address this public health challenge, but there is a **frustrating lack of clarity about which strategies–specifically preventive, community interventions–are most effective for improving student wellbeing and success**

  - Bewildering array of options for preventive, population-level intervention – almost impossible to identify which ones work and in what contexts (data about effectiveness is scattered across many sources, is rarely contextualized, and is not translated for practical decision-making)

  - *Enhancing mental health and suicide prevention through campus planning act* would "require the Department of Education to encourage institutions of higher education to develop and implement **evidence-based** comprehensive campus mental health and suicide prevention plans."

- College and university presidents, practitioners, policymakers and others have expressed the need for a **'repository' of best practices** to positively shape mental health in higher education

Mental Health in College Populations:
A Multidisciplinary Review of What Works,
Evidence Gaps, and Paths Forward

Sara Abelson, Sarah Ketchen Lipson, and Daniel Eisenberg

Contents

https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-030-66959-1_6-1

WHAT WORKS FOR
IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH
IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

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https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/What-Works-Mental-Health.pdf

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FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Given the current mental health crisis, higher education leaders need to invest strategically in preventive public health approaches to student mental health, much as they had to apply public health practices to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Strategies to improve student mental health must be guided by data and evidence to the greatest extent possible to maximize returns on investment. In this brief, we offer recommendations that promote the use of data to make evidence-based investments in student mental health. We recommend the following:

1. Use data to regularly assess population-level needs, priorities, and progress
2. Invest substantially in strategies with proven effectiveness
3. Revise or discontinue strategies with proven ineffectiveness
4. Invest modestly in strategies with promising evidence, then evaluate and reassess
5. Contribute to a broader movement toward an evidence-informed approach to student mental health

"What Works" Repository

- To fill this need, we propose to create a comprehensive, user-friendly "What Works" repository in which we collaboratively synthesize and share knowledge about best practices for addressing mental health in college populations

  - **Focus on public health interventions** (programs, practices) rather than individual clinical services (for which evidence is already accessible)

    - The repository will provide a clear summary of the strengths and limitations regarding the evidence of effectiveness for all programs, services, practices, and policies with available evaluation data

    - The repository will dramatically improve access to information about which specific strategies are most effective in addressing mental health using a population-level, public health approach

    - Bridge the gap between research and practice in support of public health strategies for student mental health

  - **Free and public access to information about evidence-based public health prevention and intervention programs**, along with technical support for implementing those practices and collecting rigorous evaluation data

  - **Robust and active learning network** with a shared purpose of supporting the use of the repository and improving its usefulness over time

Benefits and Impact

- **Campus leaders, policymakers, and administrators:** Better information to guide investment of limited resources, resulting in services and programs that more effectively support student health and retention

  - The freely available resource will help equalize access to information and support across institutions; this should be especially beneficial for institutions serving lower-income and more diverse populations, which tend to have less access to this type of information and support

- **Students:** Greater access to high-quality, evidence-based services and programs, resulting in better health, academic, and career outcomes

- **Researchers:** Wider and clearer dissemination of research and evaluations and more effective translation into practice; access to more comprehensive and richer data, resulting in new collaborations and more efficient efforts to address key evidence gaps

- Funding needed to support the development and sustainability of the best practices repository

- **More about the proposed repository: https://healthymindsnetwork.org/best-practices-repository/**

Thank you!

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