

COVID-19 STUDENT SURVEY



Mental Health & Substance Use Topic Summary

Washington State Middle 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 middle school students grades 6-8 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 middle 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 Middle 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 Middle School Participants by Demographic Group

Race and Ethnicity								Disability Status		Migratory Status	
AIAN	Asian	Black	Hispanic	NHOPI	White	Other	Multiple	Yes	No	Yes	No
1,161	1,896	1,369	7,507	407	13,053	2,288	3,868	1,919	24,918	3,160	26,393
(3.7%)	(6.0%)	(4.3%)	(23.8%)	(1.3%)	(41.4%)	(7.3%)	(12.3%)	(6.0%)	(77.2%)	(9.8%)	(81.6%)

Gender Identity					Sexual Orientation					
Male	Female	Transgender	Questioning	Other	Heterosexual	Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual	Questioning	Other
14,614	14,787	287	963	689	20,869	233	609	3,094	1,896	1,144
(45.1%)	(45.6%)	(0.9%)	(3.0%)	(2.1%)	(65.2%)	(0.7%)	(1.9%)	(9.7%)	(5.9%)	(3.6%)

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 Middle School Students Who Took the Survey

- Prolonged feelings of sadness and hopelessness were most common among those students identifying as LGBTQ+, those identifying as having a disability, and those from migratory working families.
- LGBTQ+ identifying youth and those identifying as having a disability reported having seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months more commonly than their peers.
- Overall, 66% of middle school respondents reported being moderately or highly hopeful. Hope was highest among male and heterosexual students.
- Over 83% of middle 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 was lower (0.7%) than other substances (e-cigarettes: 2.0%, alcohol: 1.8%, and marijuana: 1.4%) among middle 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:

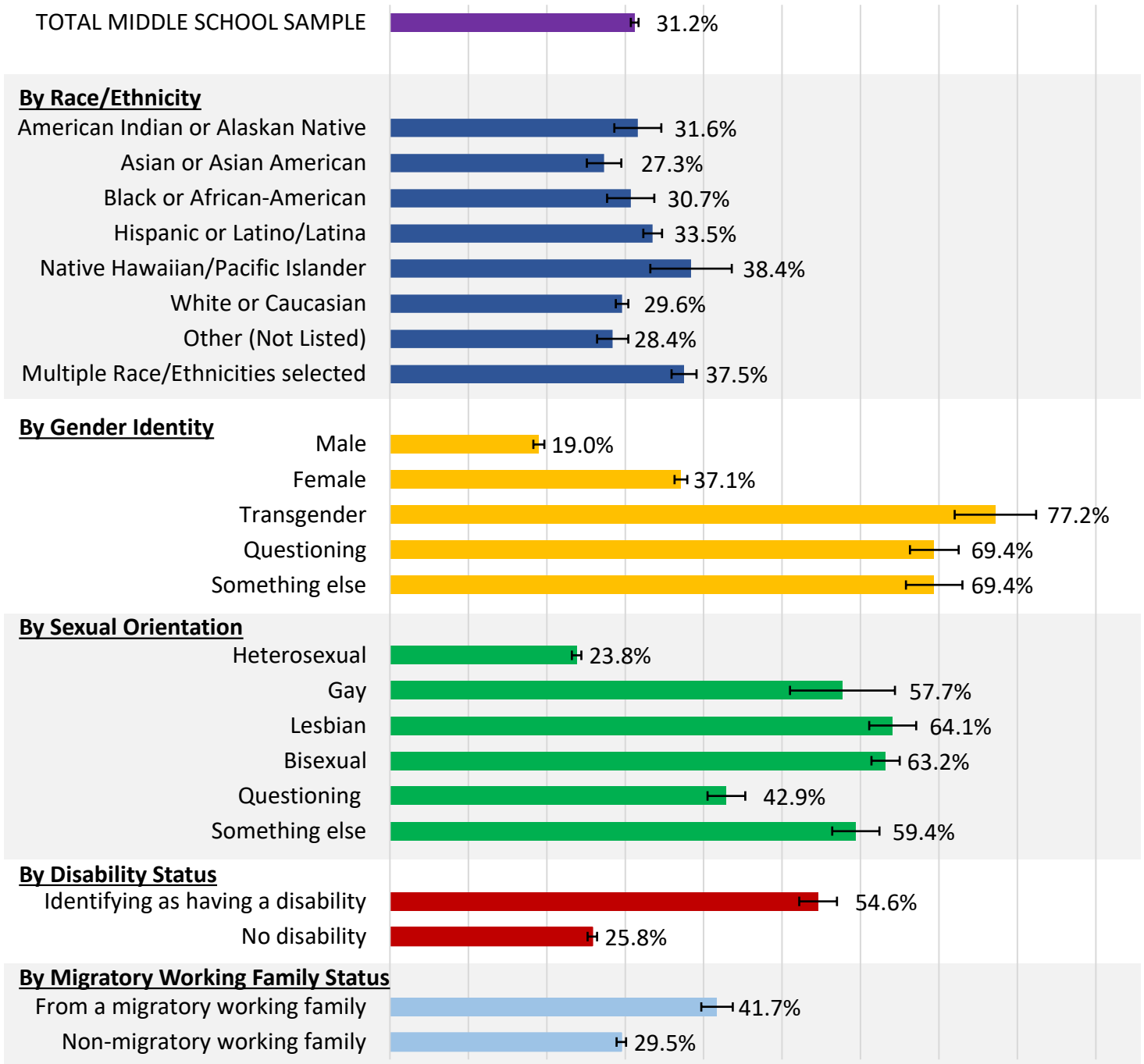
- Washington Teen Link: <https://www.teenlink.org/>
- Crisis Text Line: <https://www.crisistextline.org/>
- You Are Not Alone Network (for Native youth): <https://youarenotalonenetwork.org/>
- The Trevor Project (for LGBT youth): <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
- National Teen Line: <https://teenlineonline.org/>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

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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%



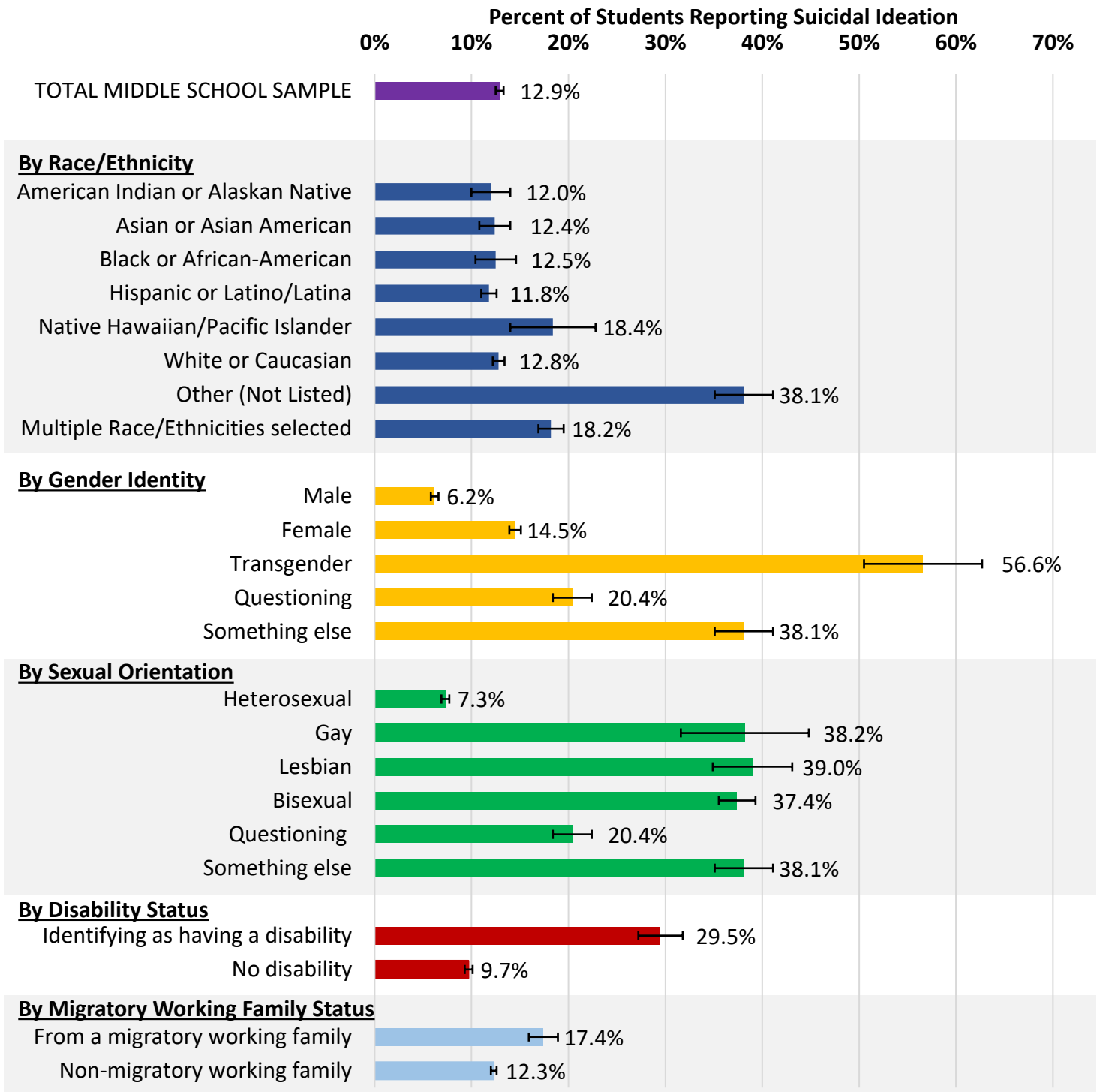
NOTES:

- 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: Middle School Students

Suicidal Ideation

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



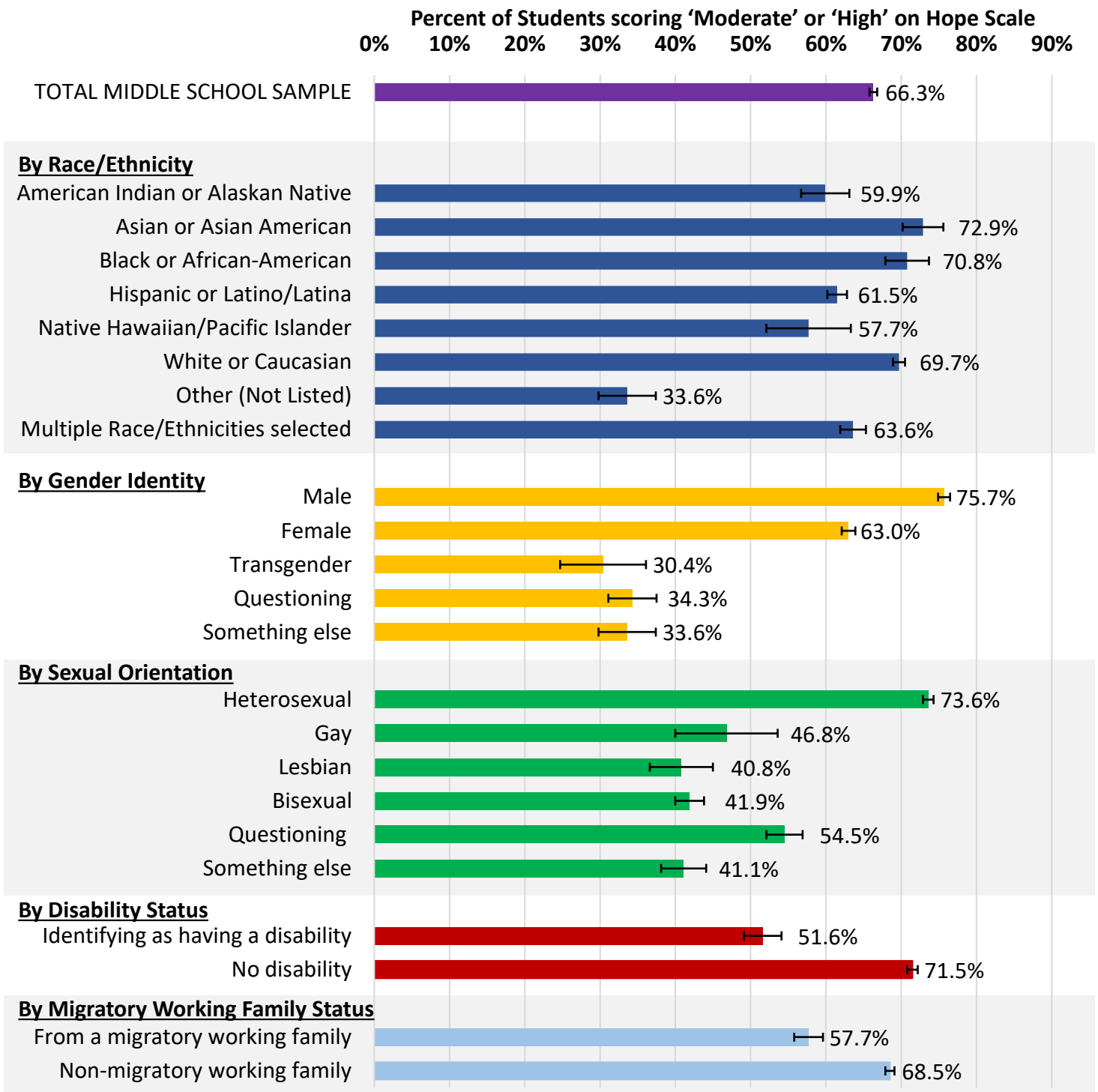
NOTES:

- 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'.
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Mental Health & Substance Use: Middle School Students

Hope Scores

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



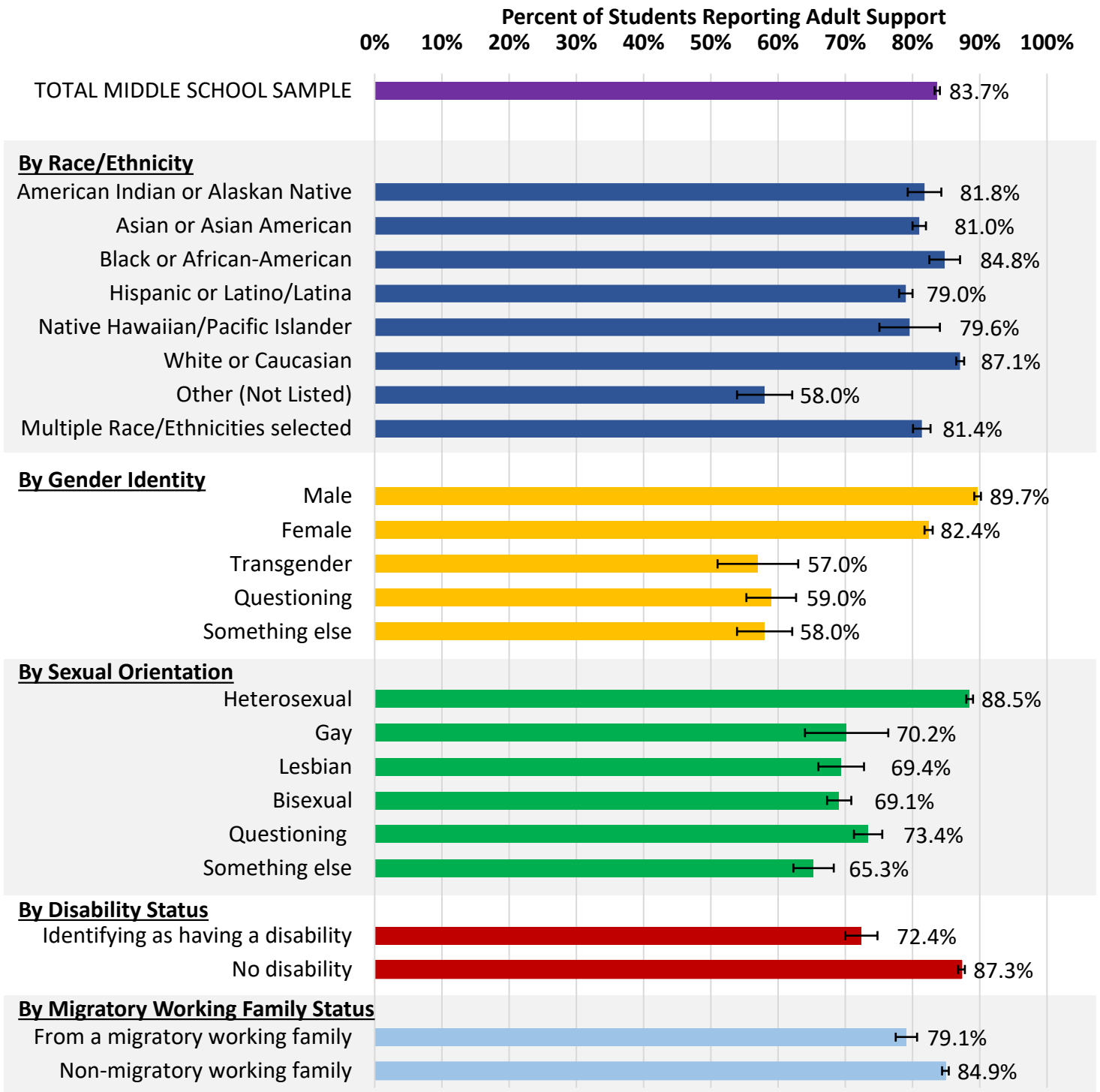
NOTES:

- 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/healthyouthsurvey/pubdocs/HopeScale_HYS.pdf
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

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Adult Support

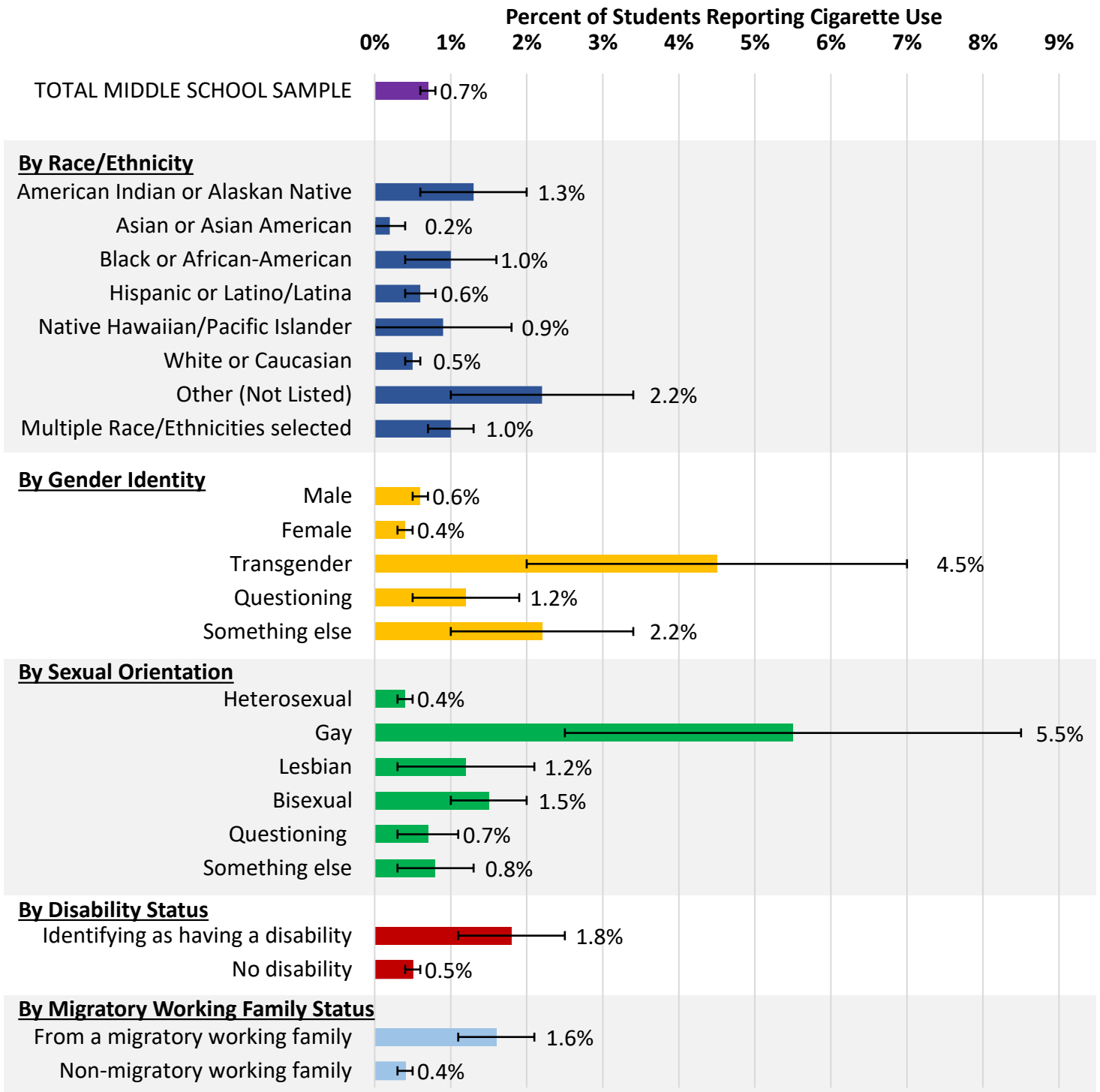
Question: Are there adults you can turn to for help or support if needed?



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).



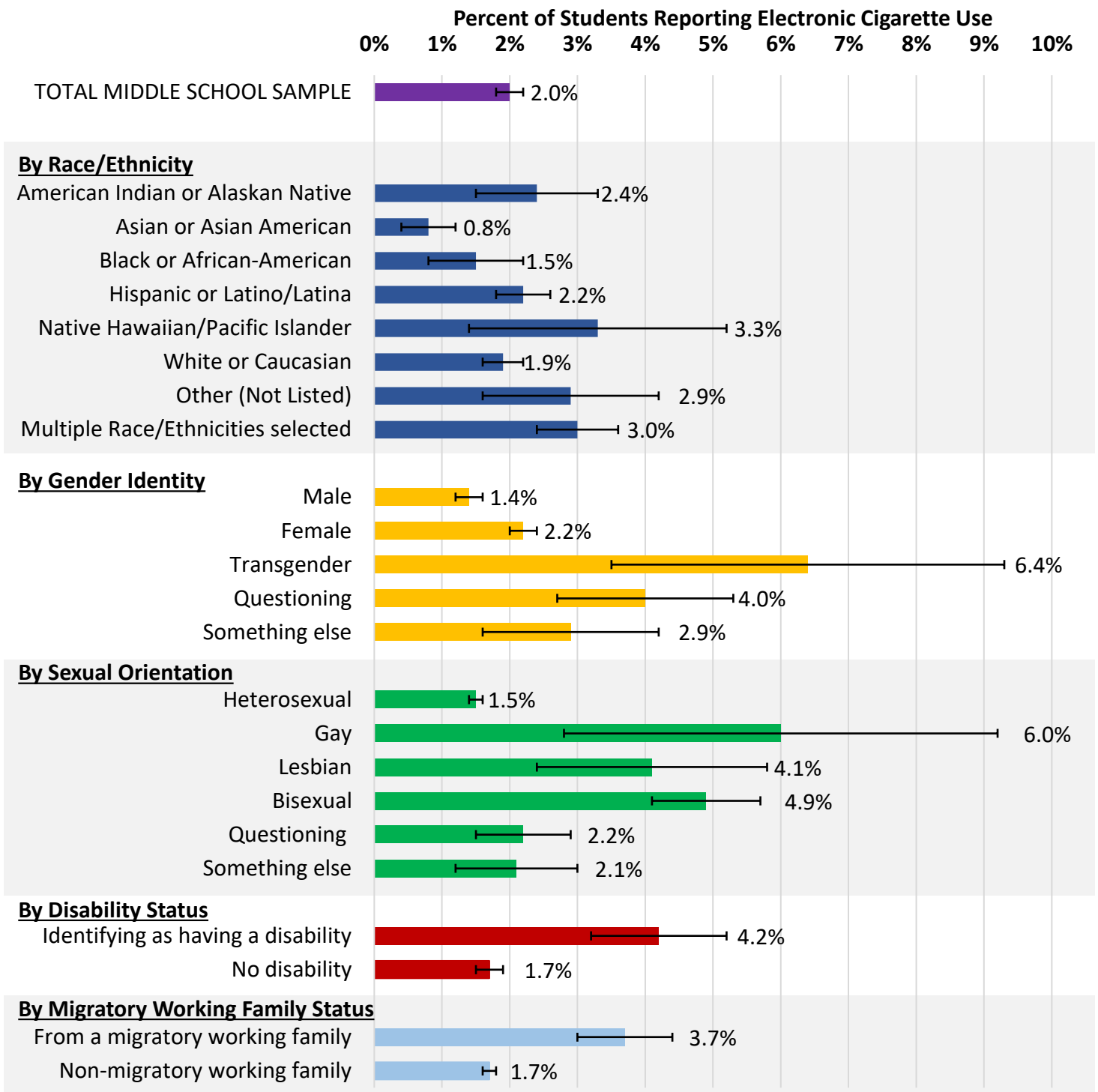
NOTES:

- 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

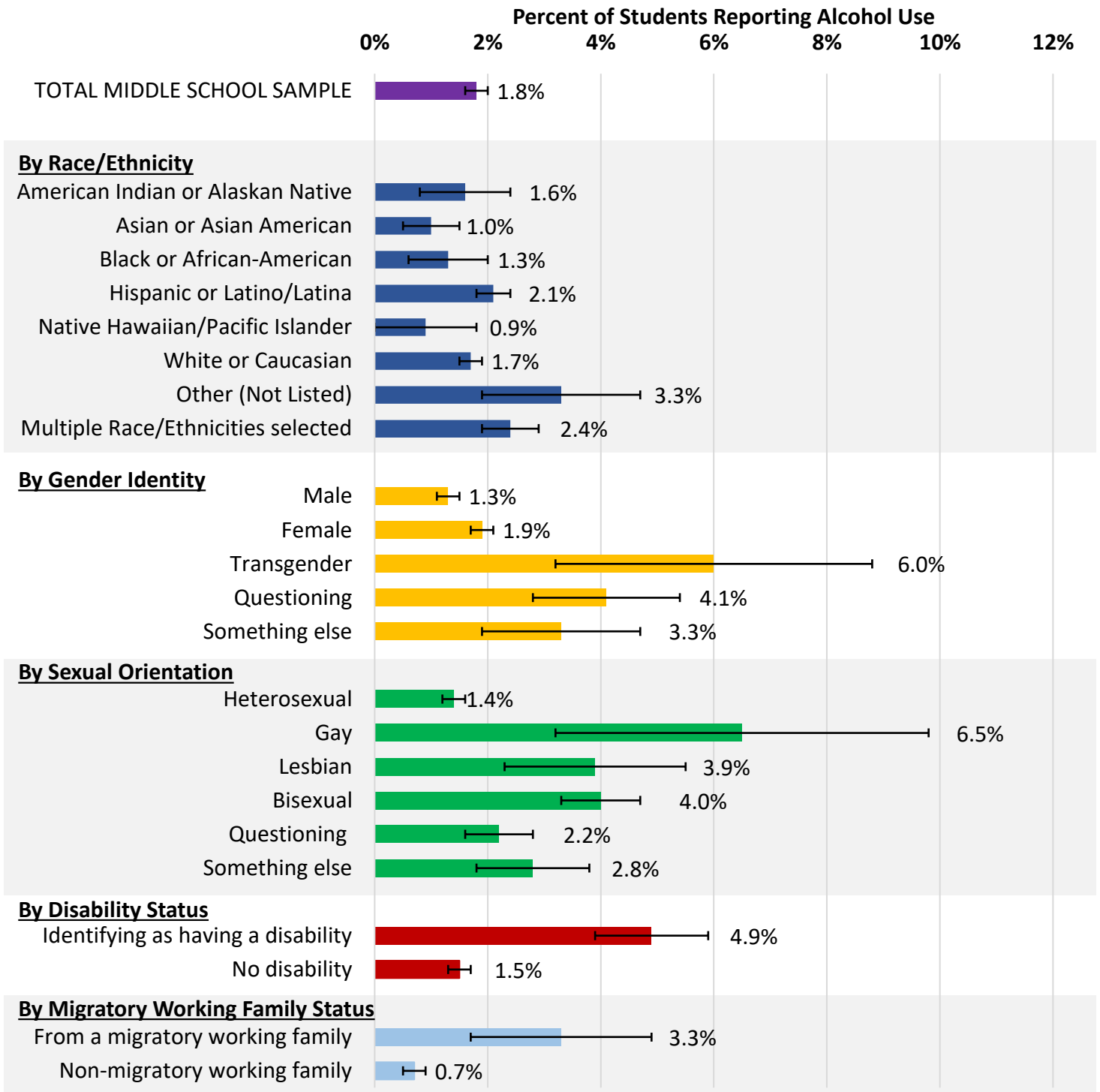
Past 30-day electronic cigarette use (yes/no).



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'.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

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



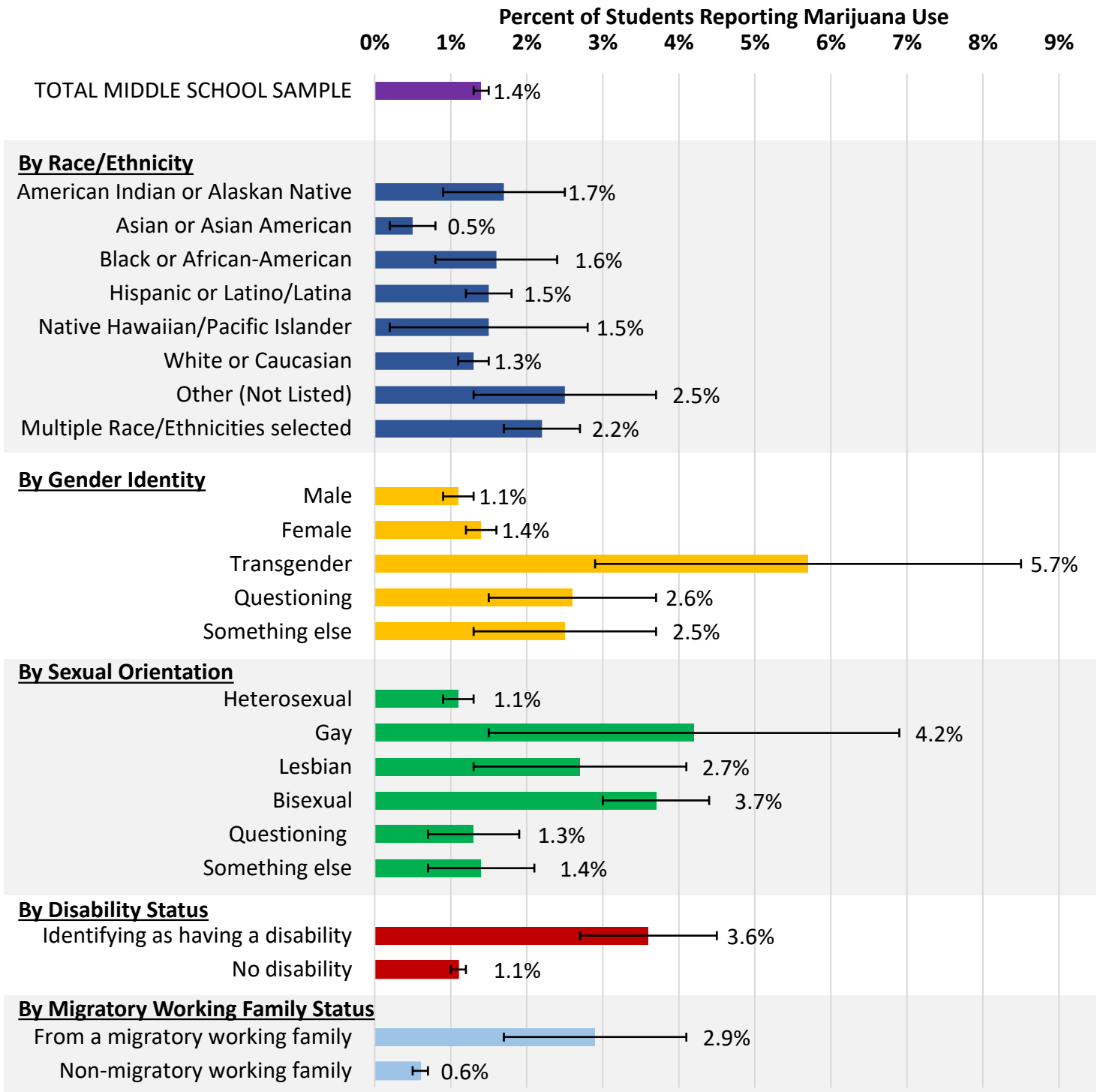
NOTES:

- 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 Middle School Students

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References Cited in this Document:

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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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