



EDC/AFSP

Public Perception of Suicide Prevention Survey Results

September 2018



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Background & Objectives

The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance) and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) commissioned The Harris Poll to conduct baseline public perception testing to ultimately assess the impact of unified suicide prevention messaging efforts over time.

The initial baseline survey strove to...

Assess the public's knowledge about suicide and the role they may play in being there for someone who is struggling or in crisis.

Uncover the public's perception of barriers that may prevent individuals from trying to help someone at risk for suicide.



Research Method

Mode:

Online survey



Length:

21 questions



Qualification Criteria:

- US residents
- Adults Ages 18+



Weighting:

Data weighted to ensure results are projectable to U.S. adults ages 18+



	All Respondents
Sample Size:	n=2,015
Field Dates:	August 28 – 30, 2018

Method Statement *(to be included in all press materials):*

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of EDC and AFSP from August 28-30, 2018 among 2,015 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and postsurvey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Poll avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Poll panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.



Executive Summary



Mental Health Beliefs & Experiences

Mental health is equally important to physical health, but not treated as such by healthcare system

80% say mental health and physical are equally important to their own health, but just 27% feel both are treated equally in the health care system – most (55%) feel the health care system treats physical health as more important

Half feel seeing a mental health professional is a sign of strength, but many also see it as inaccessible

Just 16% of adults have seen a medical health professional in the last year

Majority of adults have personal experiences with mental health

Most commonly depression (36%) and anxiety (35%)

Many adults personally touched by suicide

Over half know someone with suicidal thoughts/tendencies



Attitudes Towards Suicide




Most believe suicide is preventable and many want to know what they can do to help

- 94% feel suicidal is preventable at least sometimes
- 78% would be interested in learning how to play a role in helping someone who may be suicidal



There are many intervention points available where a person's risk of suicide is increased

- Depression (80%), feeling hopeless (74%), and being bullied (71%) are the top risk factors



While a majority feel people show signs before committing suicide, relatively few feel they can identify those signs

- 7 in 10 feel suicidal people show signs
- 3 in 10 feel they can tell when someone is suicidal



Vast majority feel there is room to decrease suicides

- Many feel suicidal people do not seek help due to embarrassment and lack of belief they can be helped



Conversations Around Suicide

About half of those who have had a conversation found the experience beneficial

Around 4 in 10 have ever talked with someone else about suicide

Comfort with talking about suicide (or lack thereof) may be a barrier

Just 6 in 10 feel comfortable talking with friends and family

56% are comfortable talking openly about mental health in public

Adults show greater comfort levels talking about mental health than suicide

Majority say there are barriers that prevent them from discussing suicide with others

Not knowing the right words (22%) and not having enough knowledge (22%) are top barriers

45% are comfortable talking openly about suicide in public



Coping With Suicide

When faced with a specific situation of someone they know dealing with mental health or suicidal issues, a vast majority say they would do something

- 91% would do something if they were worried about someone's mental health
- 94% would do something if someone close to them was thinking about suicide



Most would encourage someone to visit a mental health professional or simply listen to their concerns

However, over 6 in 10 do say there are barriers to helping someone with suicidal thoughts

- 28% fear they would make them feel worse



If personally dealing with suicidal thoughts, nearly three quarters would tell someone

- A spouse (33%) or mental health professional (33%) are most common options

In seeking resources for personal coping, or to help someone else cope, about half would turn to a mental health provider





Detailed Findings



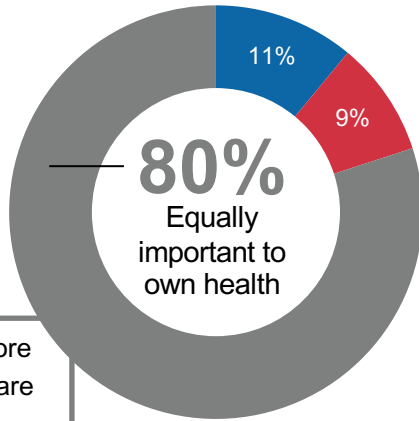
Mental Health Beliefs & Experiences



Eight In 10 Say Physical And Mental Health Are Equally Important To Own Health

However, just over 1 in 4 feel they are treated as equally important by our current health care system.

Importance of Physical and Mental Health to Own Health

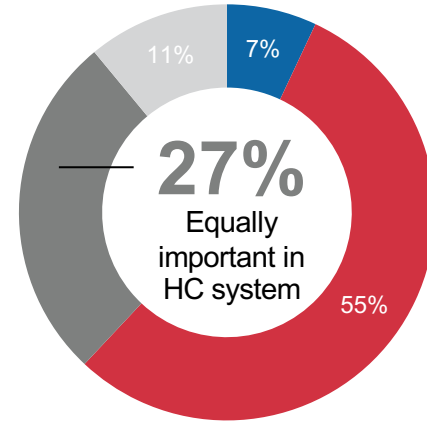


Young adults ages 18-34 (20%) more likely to say mental health is more important

Women (83%) more likely to say they are equally important

- Mental health is more important than physical health.
- Physical health is more important than mental health.
- They are equally important.

Importance of Physical and Mental Health in Current Health Care System



- Mental health is treated as more important than physical health.
- Physical health is treated as more important than mental health.
- Physical and mental health are treated as equally important.
- Not sure

BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2015)

Q10 Considering your own health, do you think that mental health or physical health is more important, or are they equally important?

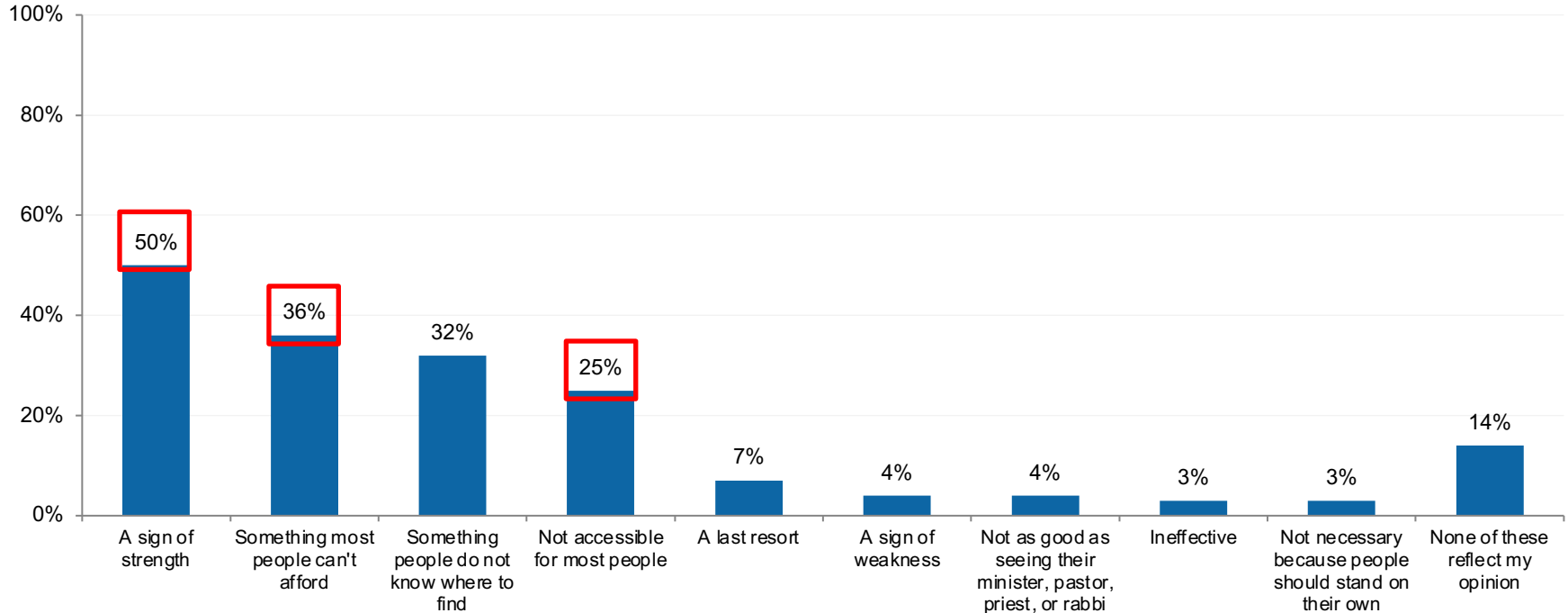
Q15 Which of the following best describes how you think the importance of mental health and physical health are treated in our current health care system?



Seeing Mental Health Professional Is Sign Of Strength, But Inaccessible

While half see it as sign of strength, more than one in three feel it is something most people cannot afford and one quarter say it is not accessible for most people.

Seeing A Mental Health Professional Is...



BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2015)

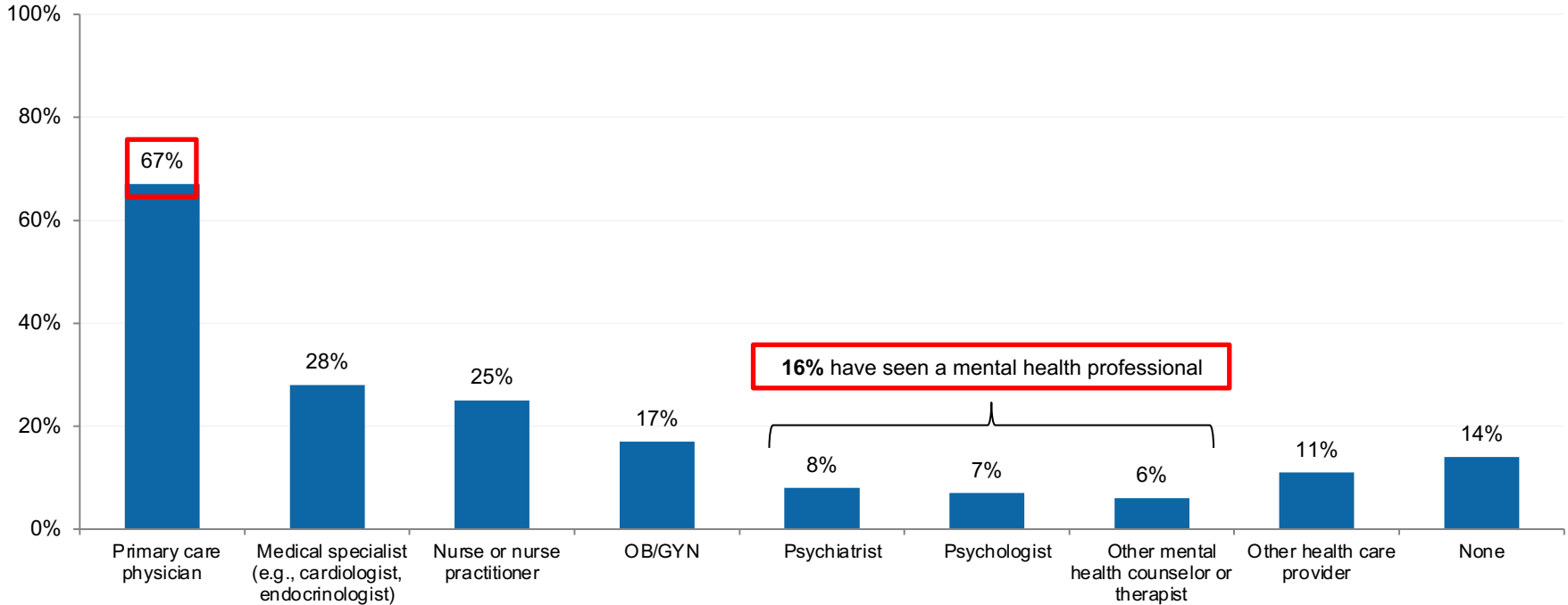
Q20 Which of the following best reflects your opinion? Please select all that apply.



Few Have Seen A Mental Health Professional In Past Year

However, two thirds have seen a primary care physician.

Health Care Providers Seen In Past 12 Months



BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2015)

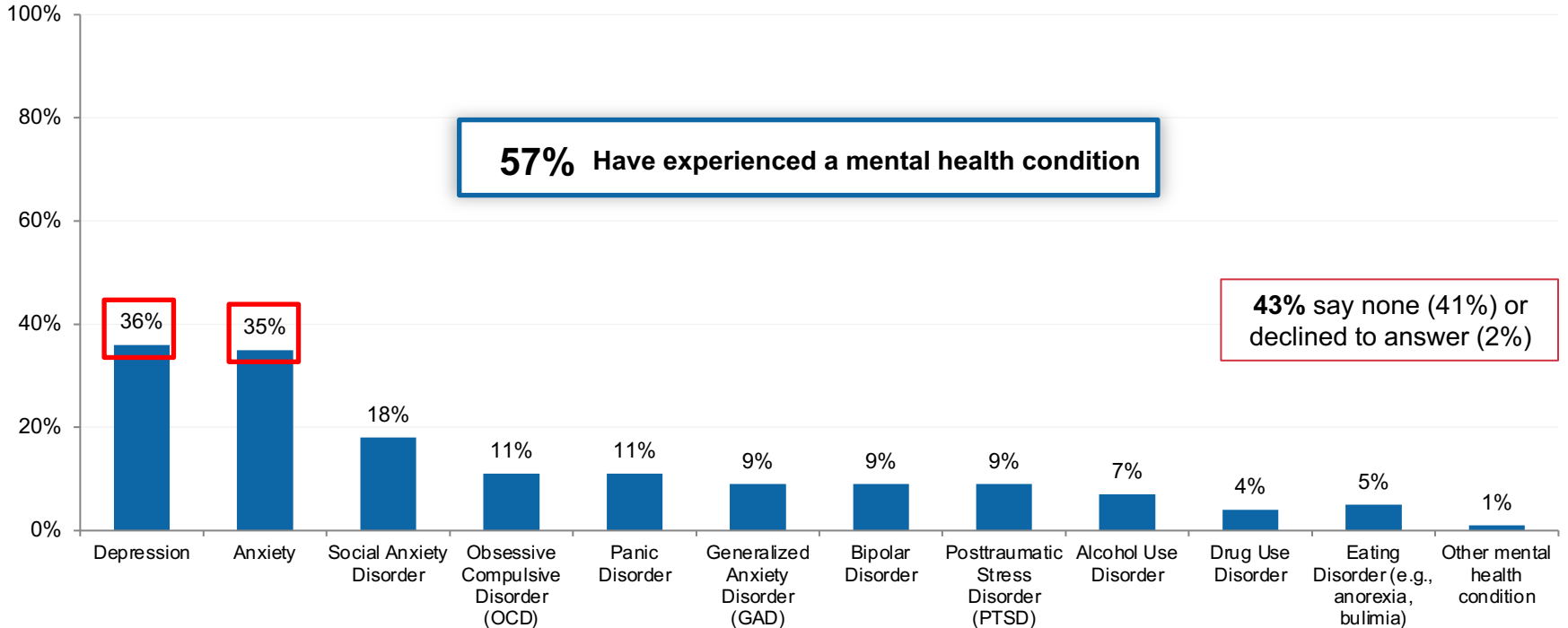
Q05 Which of the following health care providers did you see in the past 12 months? Please select all that apply.



Depression And Anxiety Are Most Common Mental Health Issues

Nearly six in 10 have thought they have a mental health condition.

Mental Health Issue Experienced



BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2015)

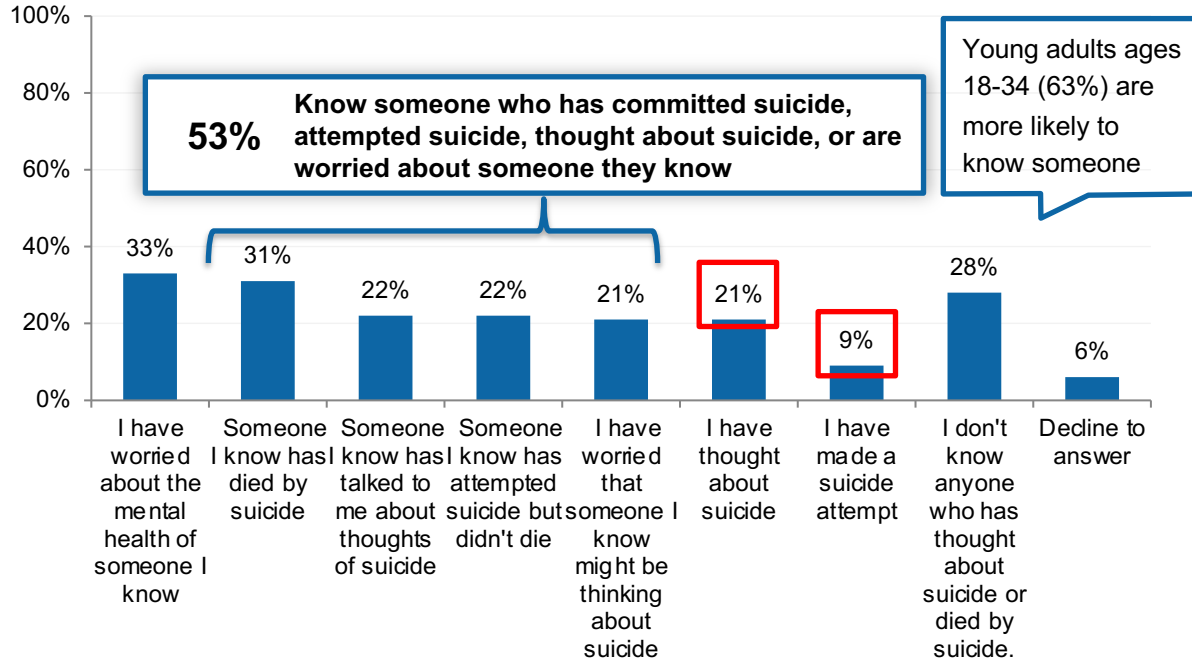
Q30 Have you ever thought that you have any of the following? Please select all that apply.



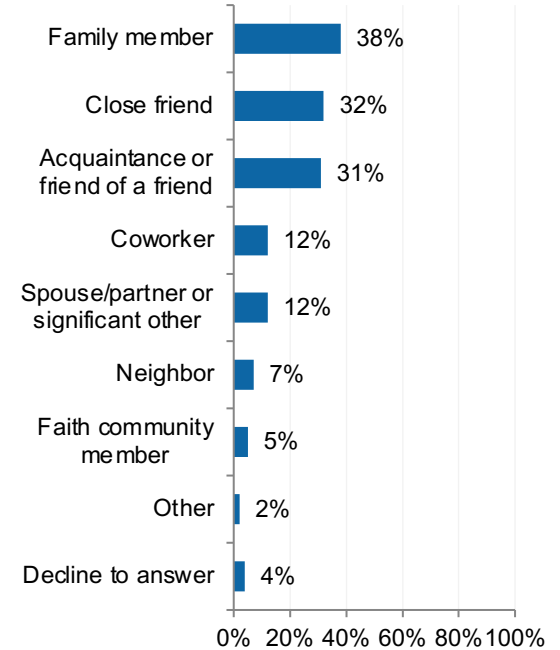
About One In Five Adults Have Thought About Suicide; One In 10 Attempted

Over half know someone with personal experiences with suicide.

Personal Experiences with Suicide



Person Known



BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2015)

Q90 Which of the following are true for you? Please select all that apply.

BASE: KNOW SOMEONE (n=1107)

Q125 You indicated that someone you know has, talked about, attempted, or died by suicide. What is your relationship to the individual(s) you know who has (have) thought about or died by suicide? Please select all that apply.

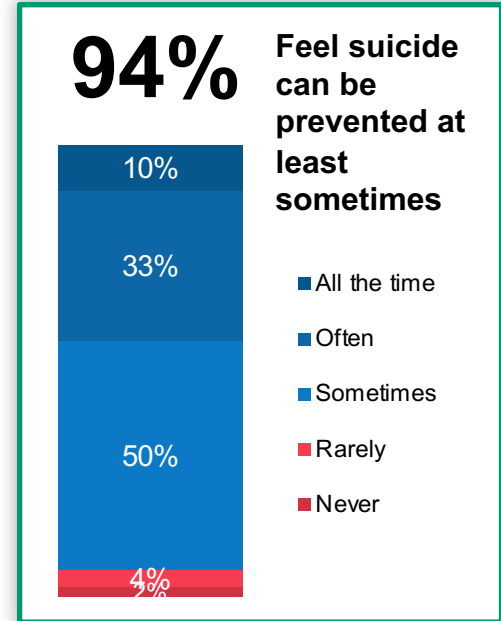
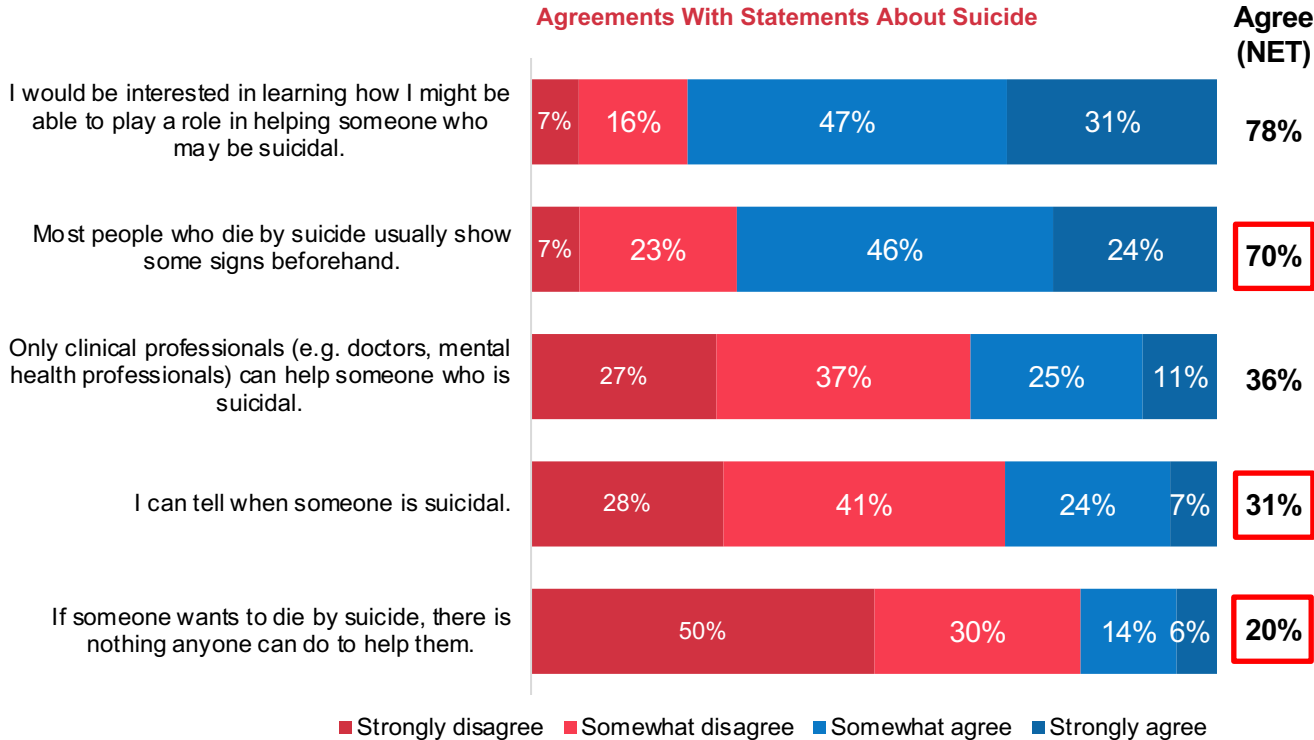


Attitude Towards Suicide



Eight In 10 Disagree That If Someone Wants To Die, Nothing Can Be Done

Seven in 10 feel most suicidal people usually show signs beforehand, but only three in 10 feel they can tell. The vast majority feel suicide is preventable.

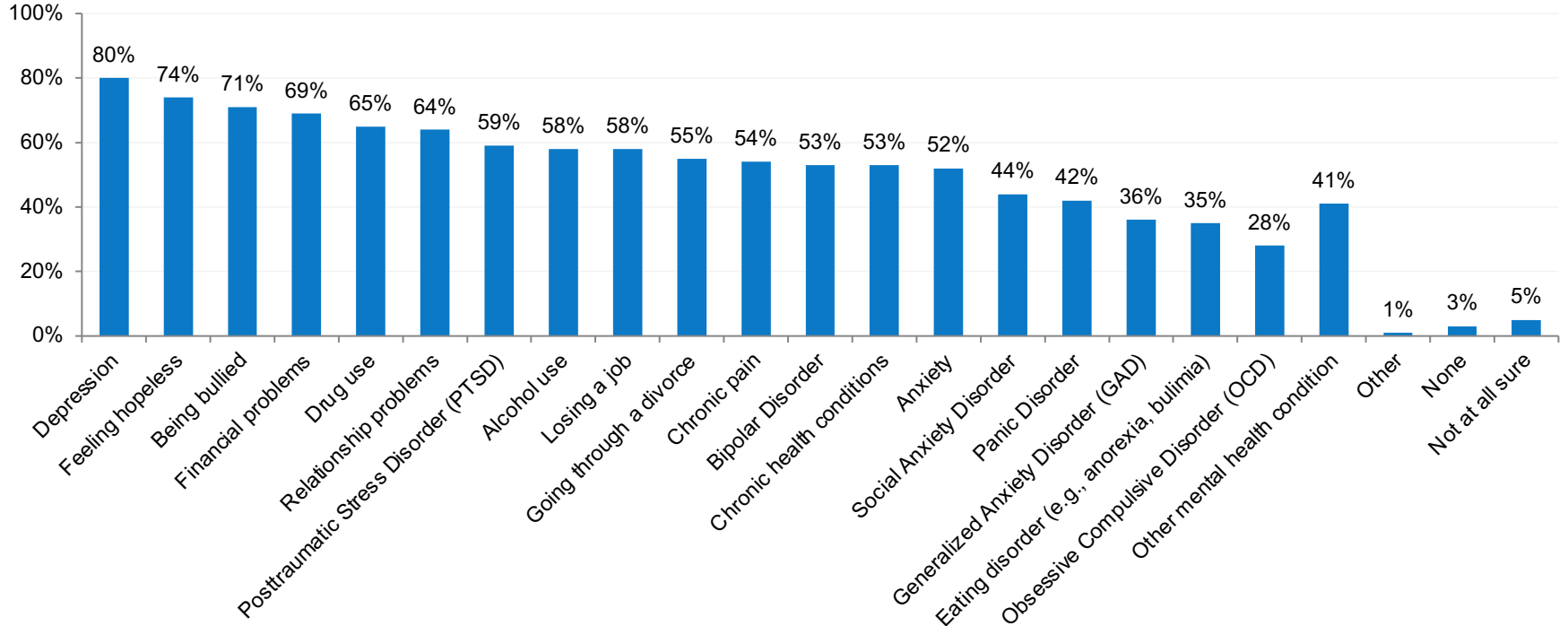




Most Adults Are Aware of Various Risk Factors For Suicide

Adults feel the most common mitigating factors are depression, feeling hopeless, being bullied, financial problems, drug use, and relationship problems.

Factors That Increase Risk Of Suicide



BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2015)

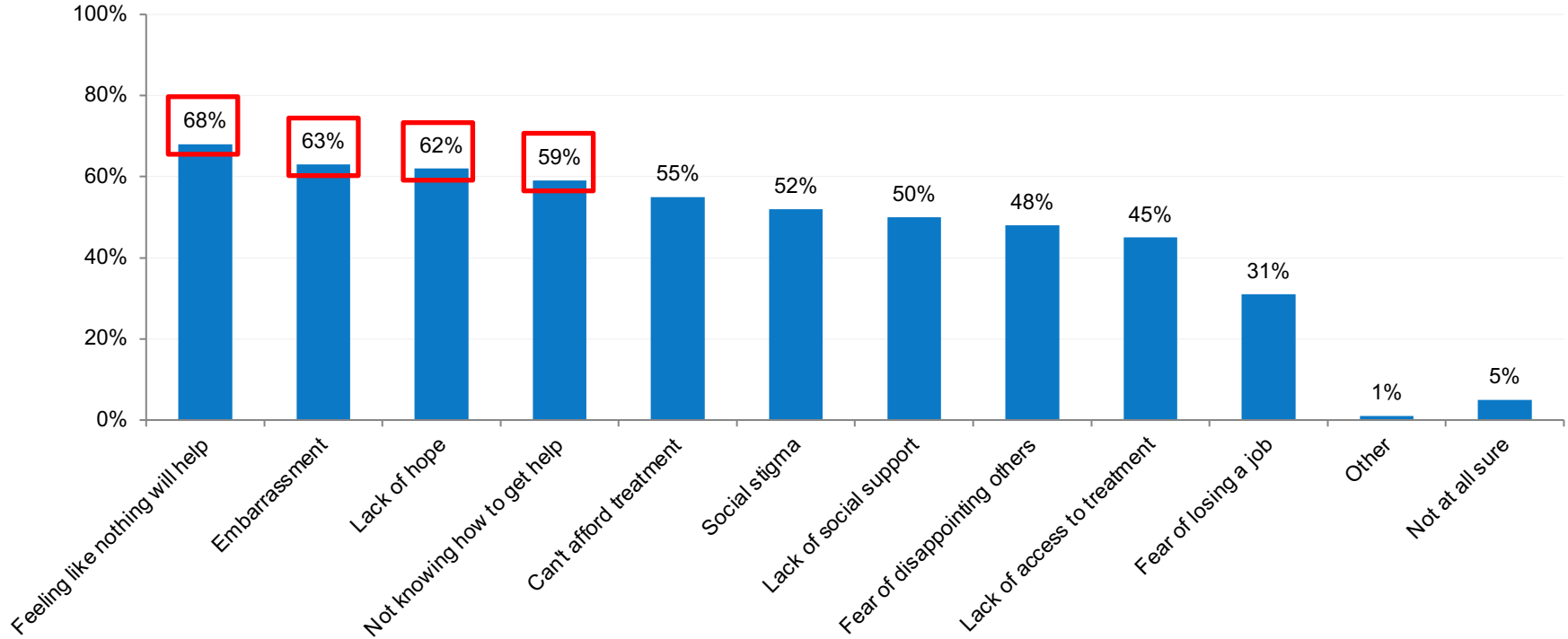
Q65 As far as you know, which of the following increase a person's risk of suicide? Please select all that apply.



Adults See Many Barriers Keeping Suicidal People From Seeking Help

Top factors include feeling like nothing will help, embarrassment, lack of hope, and not knowing how to get help.

Factors That Prevent Suicidal People From Seeking Help



BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2015)

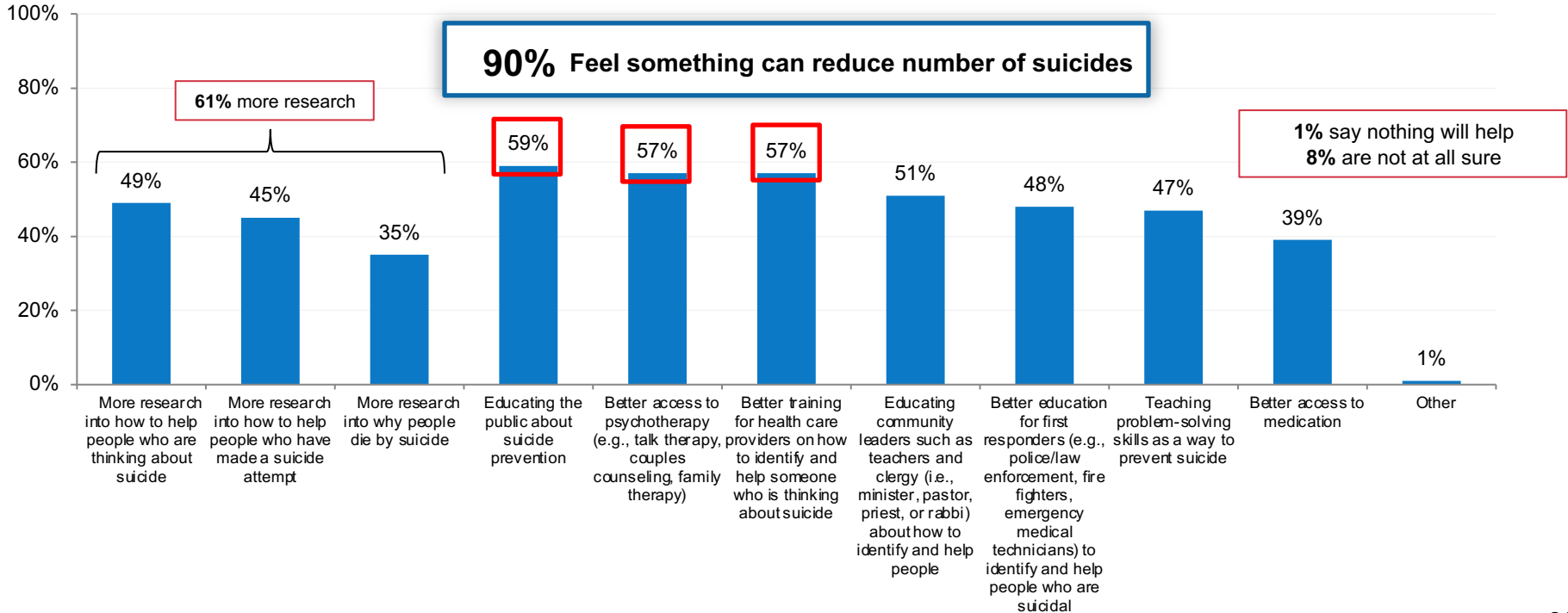
Q70 What do you think are some of the barriers that prevent people who are thinking about suicide from seeking help? Please select all that apply.



More Research, Better Education Top Areas For Reducing Number Of Suicides

Overall, nine in 10 feel the number of suicides can be reduced.

Actions That Would Help Reduce Number Of Suicides





Conversations Around Suicide



Over Four In 10 Adults Have Had A Conversation About Suicide

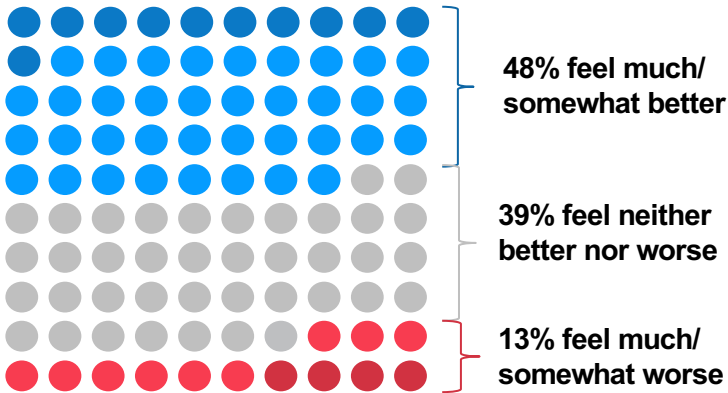
However, just 12% of adults have talked with a mental health provider. Nearly half of those who conversed with others say the conversation made them feel better.

42%

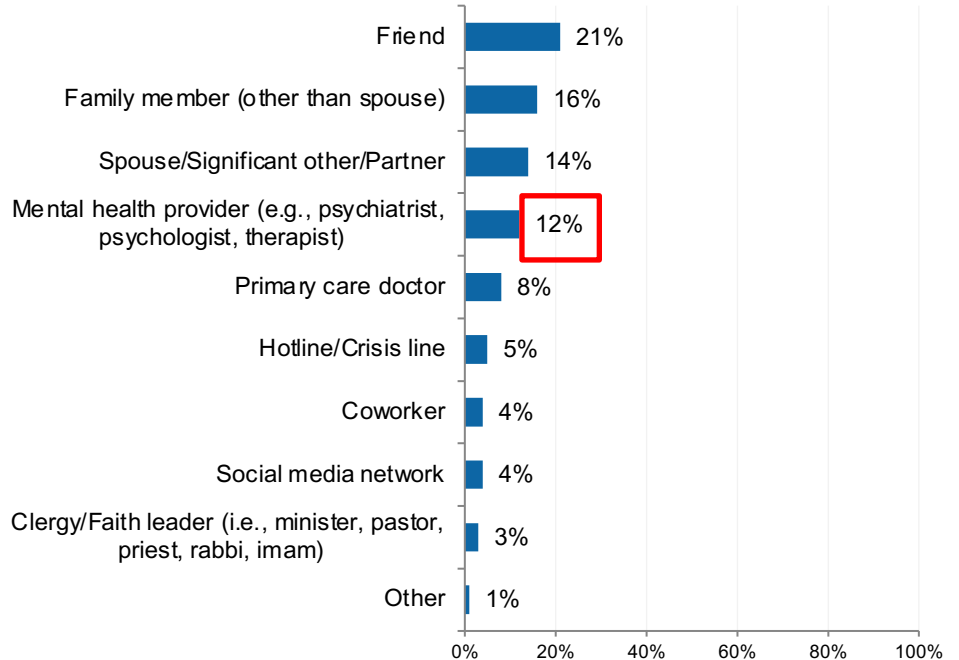
Have talked with someone else about suicide

55% talked with no one
3% declined to answer

Impact of Talking about Suicide



Person Talked With



BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2015)

Q130 Have you talked to any of the following people about suicide? Please select all that apply

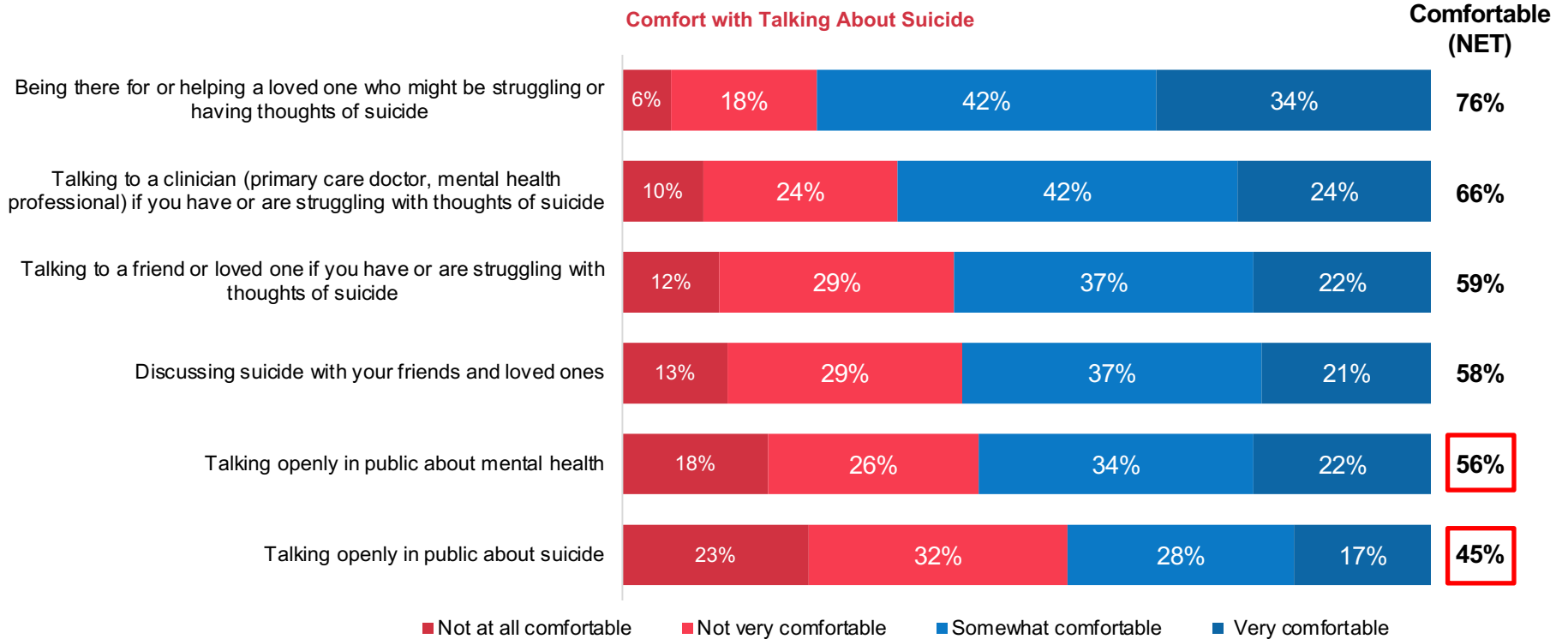
BASE: SPOKEN WITH OTHERS ABOUT SUICIDE (n=873)

Q135 How does talking about suicide with others make you feel?.



Low Comfort Levels With Talking About Suicide May Be A Barrier

Greater comfort levels exist for talking about mental health publicly, compared to suicide.

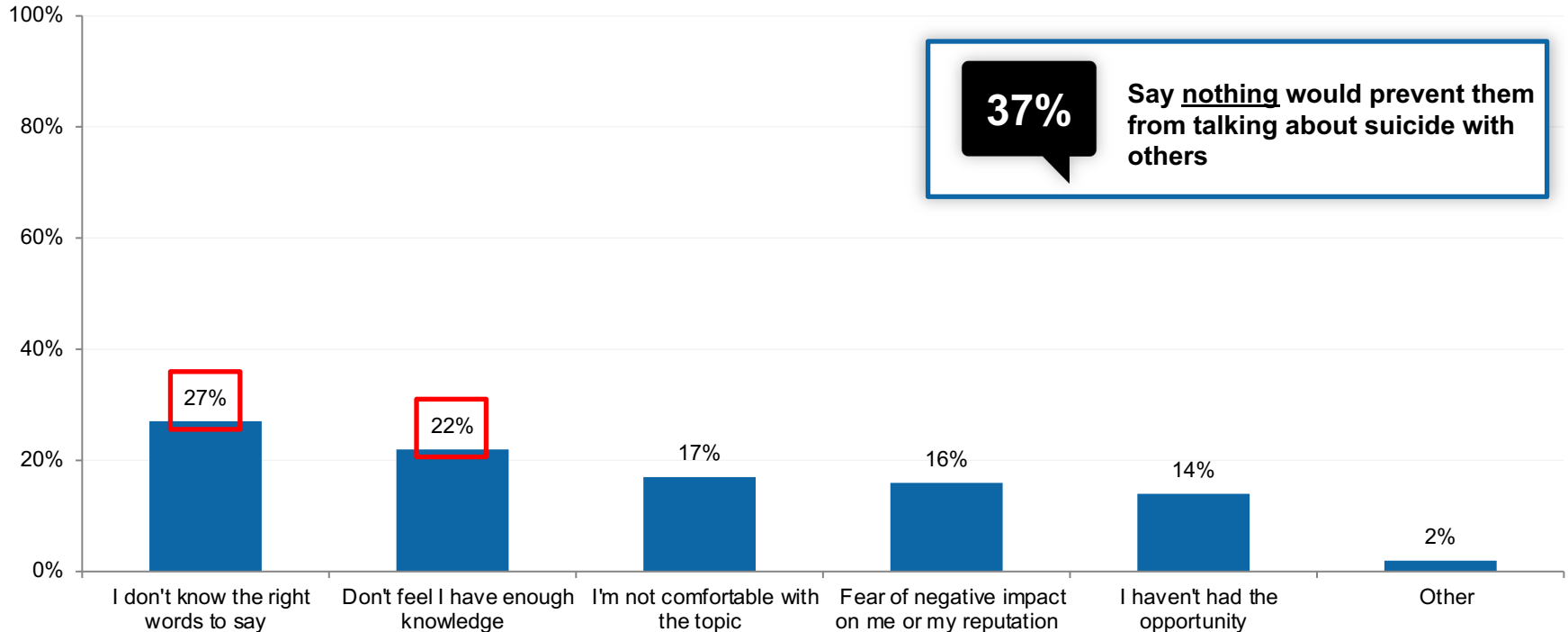




Over Six In 10 Say Something Would Keep Them From Talking About Suicide

The top barrier is not knowing the right words to say, followed by not having enough knowledge.

Barriers to Taking About Suicide with Others



BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2015)

Q140 Which of the following would prevent you from talking about suicide with others? Please select all that apply.




Coping with Suicide



Nine In 10 Would Take Action If Worried About Someone's Mental Health

Most commonly, adults would encourage seeking help from a mental health professional or primary care doctor, or offer to listen to concerns.

91% 
 Would do something if they were worried about someone's mental health

Top Actions for When Worried About Someone's Mental Health

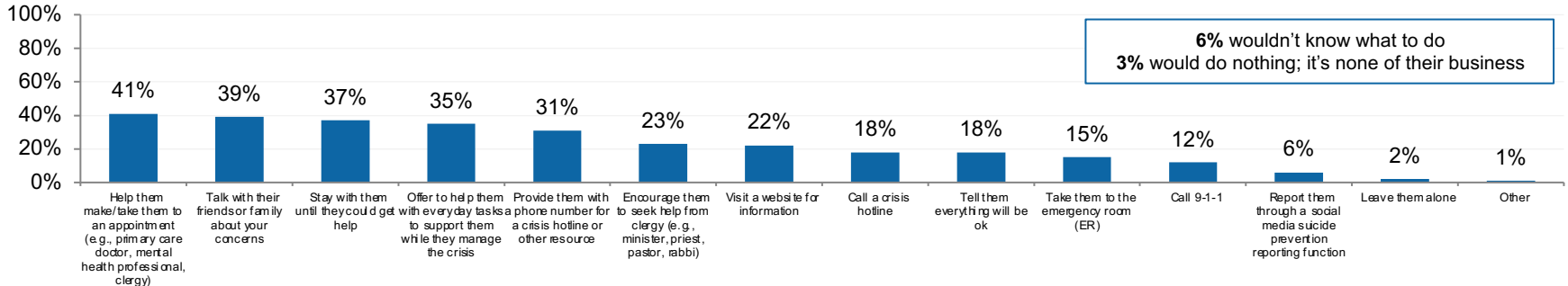
58%
 Encourage them to seek help from a mental health professional

52%
 Offer to listen to their concerns

47%
 Encourage them to seek help from a **doctor** or **primary care health professional**

45%
 Tell them I am worried about them

Additional Actions Taken




BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2015)

Q105 Which of the following describe what you would do if you were worried about the mental health of someone you know? Please select all that apply.



Most Would Encourage Seeking Help Or Offer To Listen To Someone Suicidal

Overall, an overwhelming 94% would take action if someone close to them was considering suicide.

94% 
Would do something if someone close was thinking about suicide

Top Actions for Dealing with Someone Close Thinking of Suicide

64%
Encourage them to seek help from a mental health professional

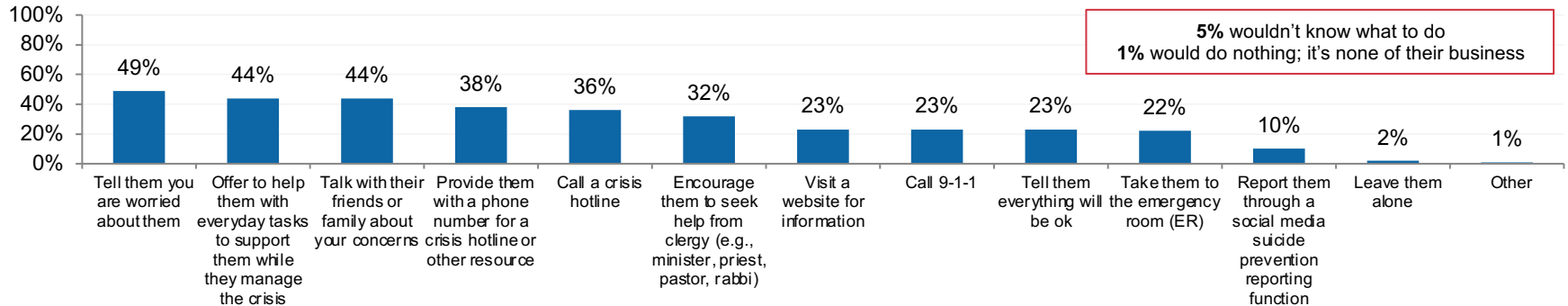
60%
Offer to listen to their concerns

53%
Encourage them to seek help from a doctor or primary care health professional

50%
Help them make/take them to an appointment (e.g., primary care doctor, mental health professional, clergy)

50%
Stay with them until they could get help

Additional Actions Taken





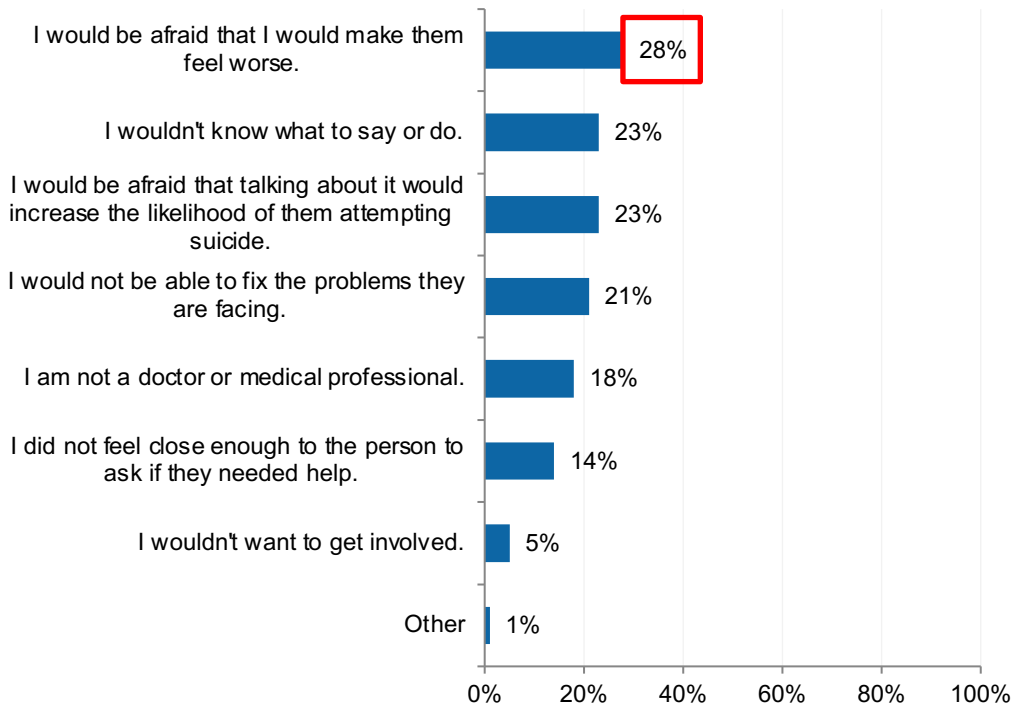
Six In 10 Say Something Might Stop Them From Helping Someone Close

Nearly three in 10 adults would be afraid they would make their friend/loved one feel worse.

39% Say nothing would prevent them from trying to help

61% Feel barriers exist to helping someone who is thinking about suicide

Barriers to Trying to Help Someone Close with Suicidal Thoughts

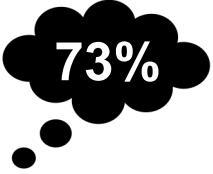




Nearly Three Quarters Say They Would Talk About Suicidal Thoughts

Most commonly, adults would talk to their spouse/significant other or a mental health provider.

Admitting Suicidal Thoughts

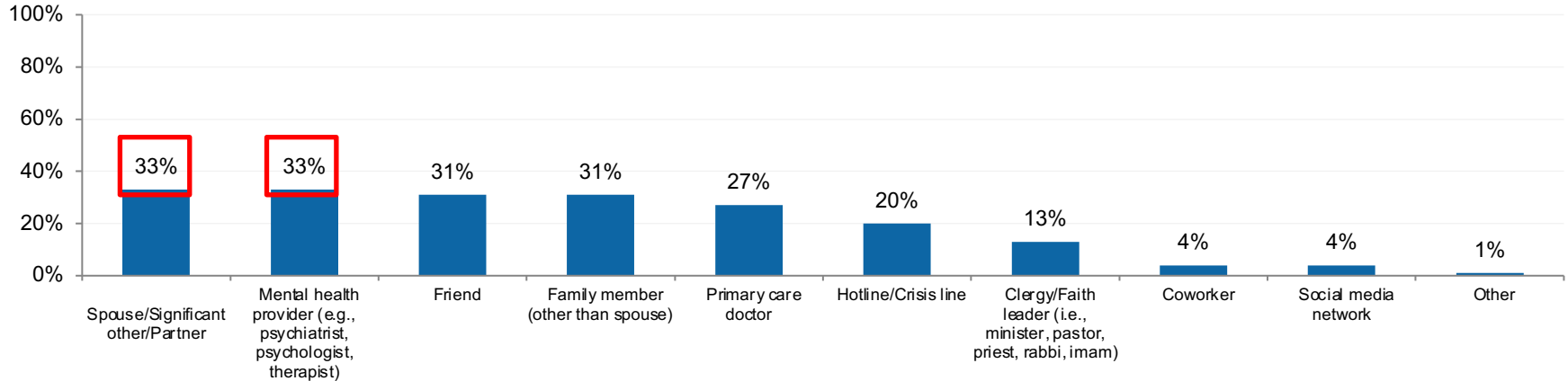


73%

Would tell someone if they were having thoughts of suicide

12% would tell no one
13% are not sure
2% declined to answer

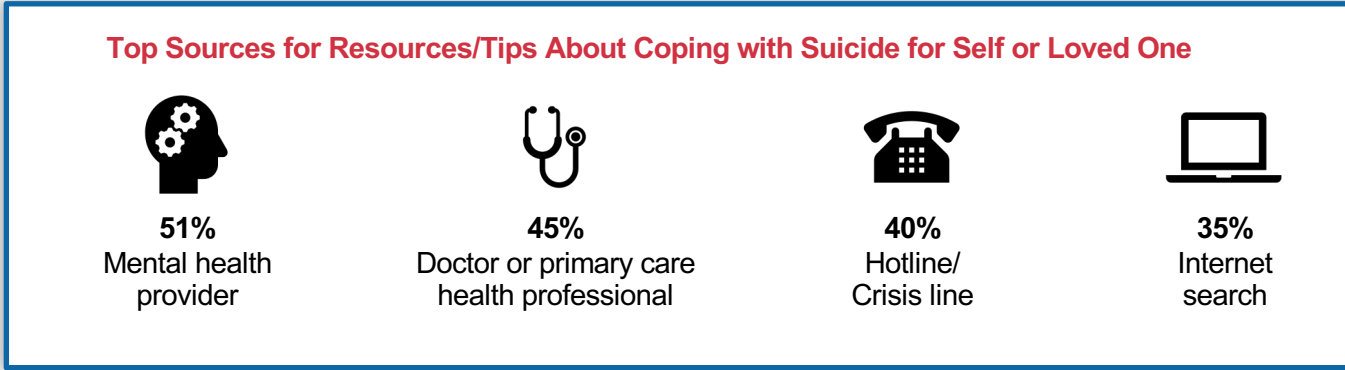
Person Told



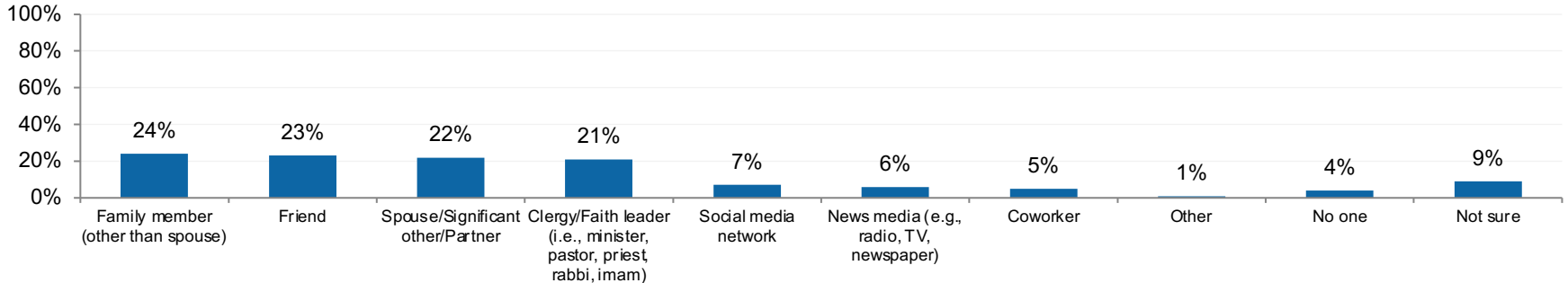


Adults Would Seek Resources From Mental Health Or Primary Care Provider

Additional sources for coping tips are a hotline/crisis line and internet searches.



Additional Sources



BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2015)

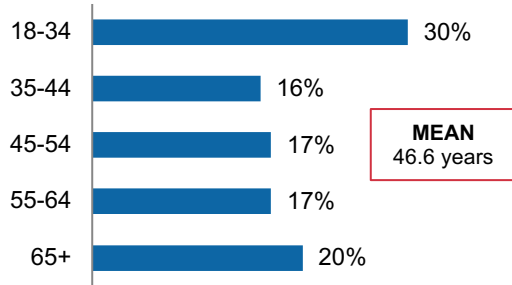
Q150 Where would you go to obtain helpful resources or tips about coping with thoughts of suicide or helping a loved one who might be struggling with thoughts of suicide? Please select all that apply.



Demographics



Age



Race

- 67% White
- 12% Black or African American
- 3% Native American/Alaskan Native
- 7% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 10% Other race
- 1% Decline to answer

Hispanic Ethnicity

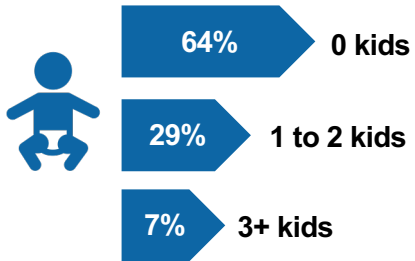
- 16% Yes, of Hispanic origin
- 83% No, not of Hispanic origin
- 1% Decline to answer

Gender

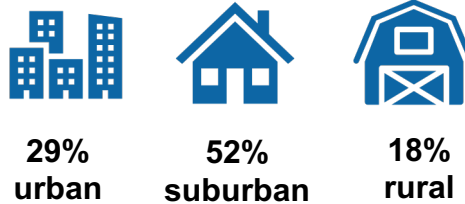
 **48% male**

 **52% female**

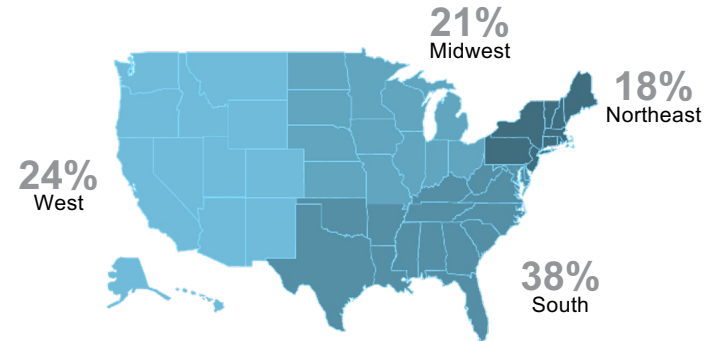
Children in HH



Locale

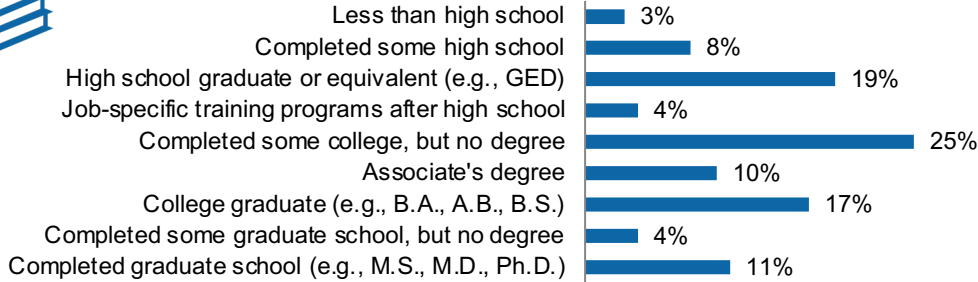


Region

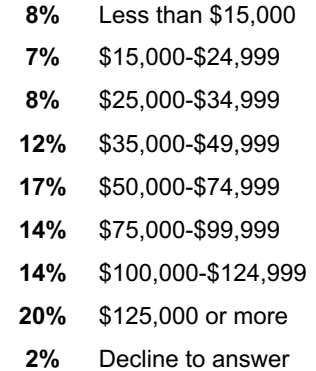




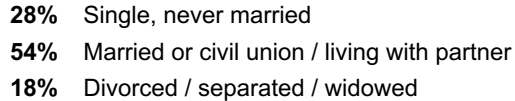
Education



Income



Marital Status



Employment

