

# More Antisocial Drinking (M.A.D.) During COVID-19

## UCSD Student Perceptions of Peer Drinking Behavior

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### Background

There is a high prevalence of alcohol consumption in college-age students, and we hypothesize a change in such consumption as it coincides with the trends towards a decline in general mental well-being due to shifts in social behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic. As alcohol consumption has been linked to poor mental health<sup>1</sup>, and drinking can be a coping mechanism for the stressors of the pandemic<sup>2</sup>, our study finds trends that link the exposure of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health with the outcomes of drinking behaviors that we observe in young adults of college-age.

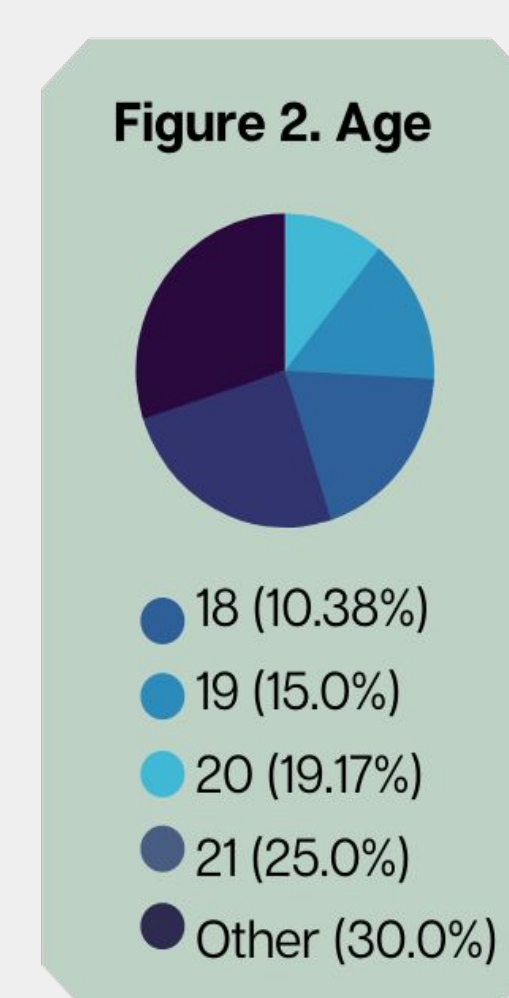
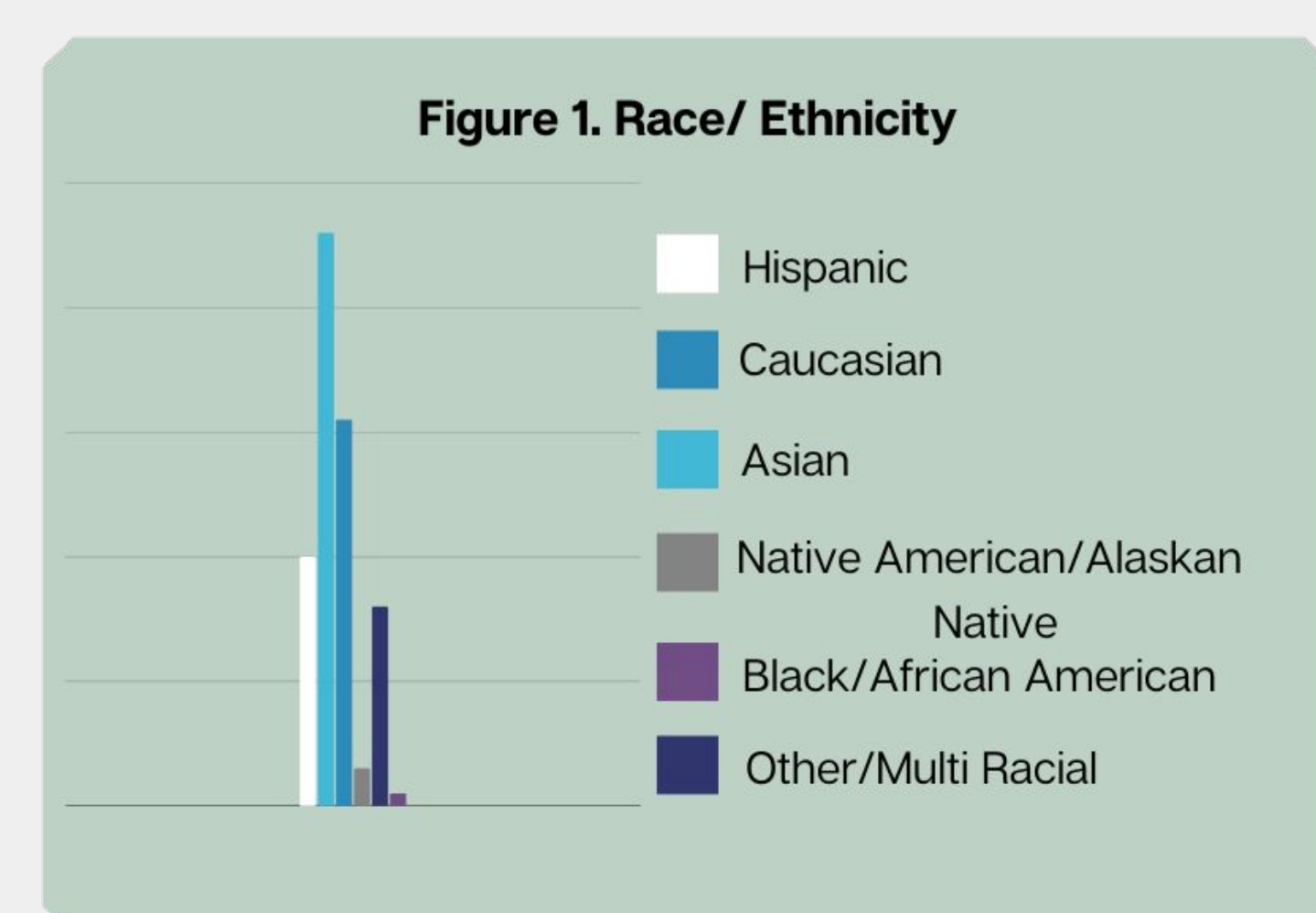
### Objective

To investigate UCSD students' perceptions of how their peers' drinking habits have been impacted by stress from the COVID-19 pandemic

### Methods

- ❖ A cross-sectional study (exposure: stress during the COVID-19 time period, outcomes: alcohol usage) was conducted among UCSD students (N=175).
- ❖ A 15-question survey was distributed to student-run Facebook, Discord, and Reddit pages at the end of April 2022.
- ❖ Our survey included both scalar and open-ended questions.
- ❖ Additionally, survey asked demographic questions.

### Results



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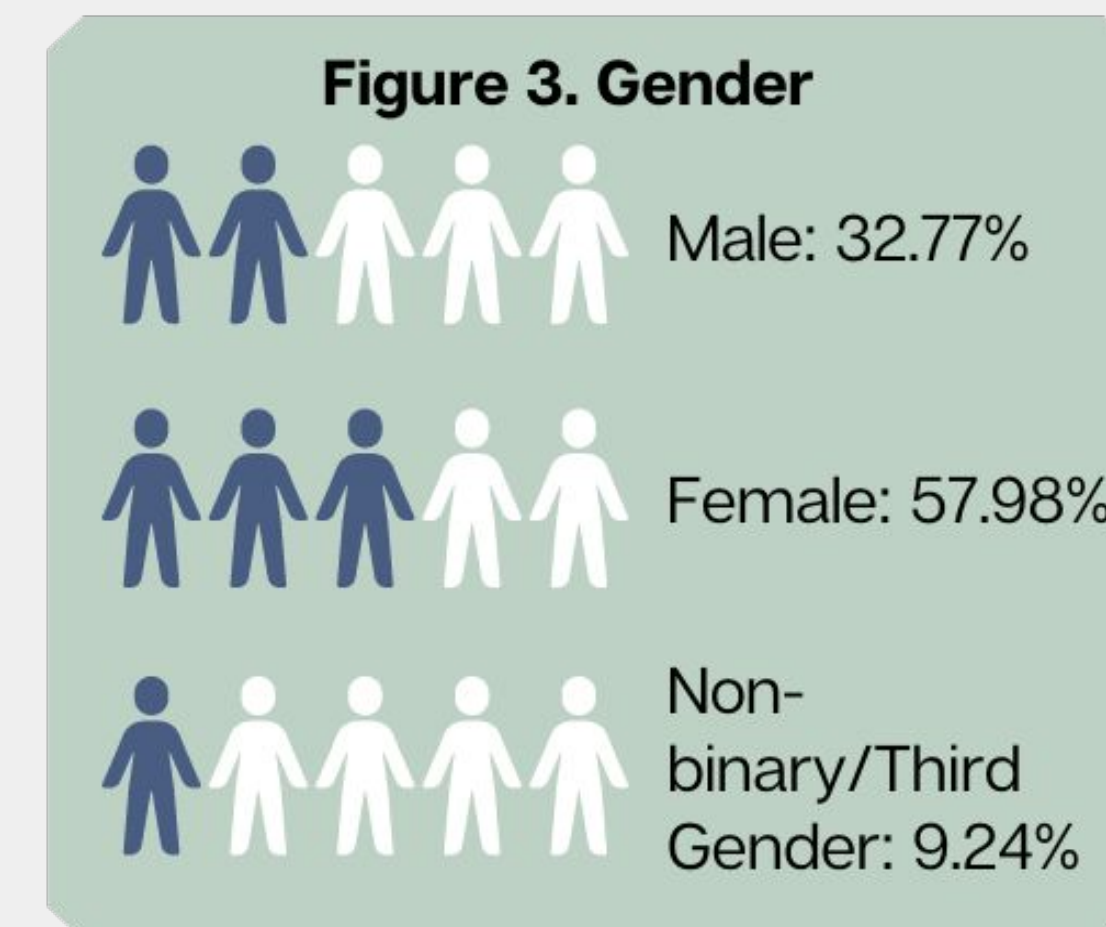


Figure 4. Common Phrase(s) Used in Questions 14 and 15 (see key...)

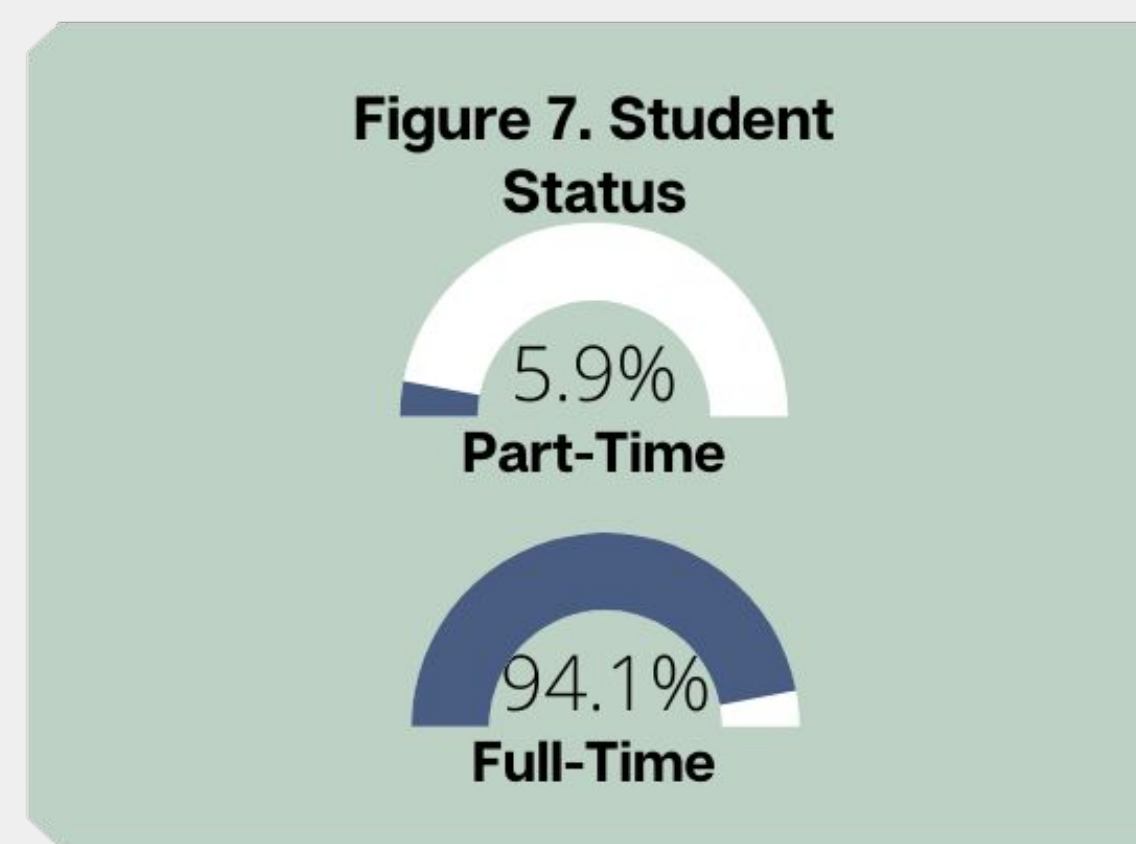
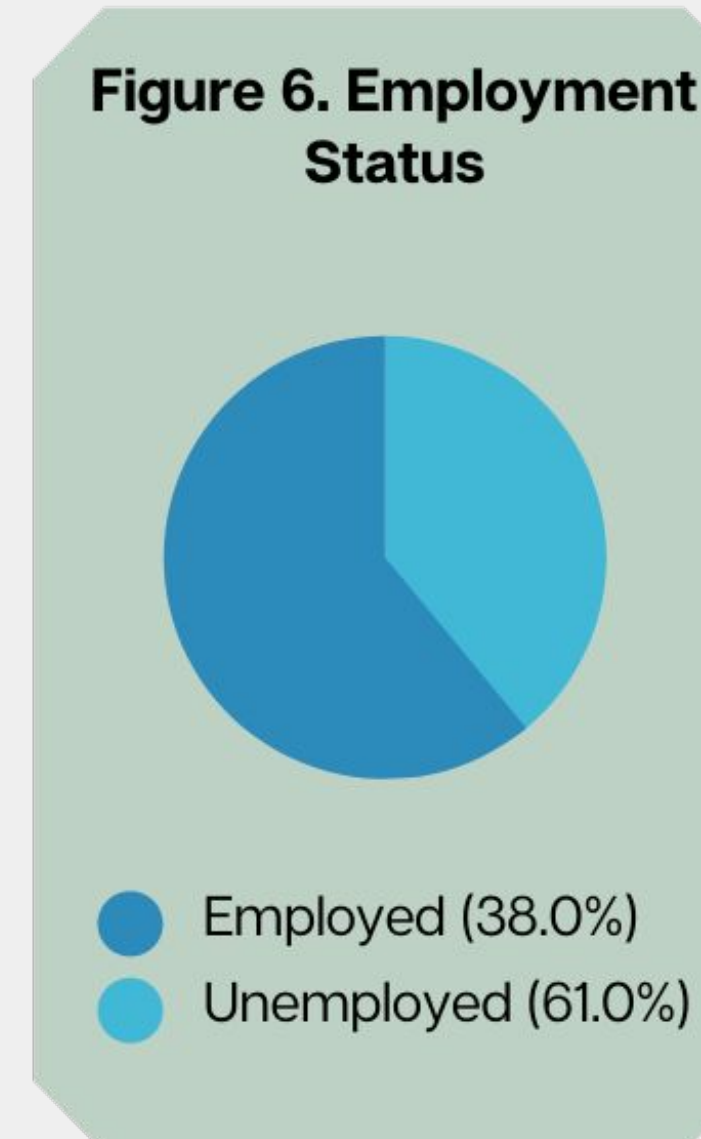
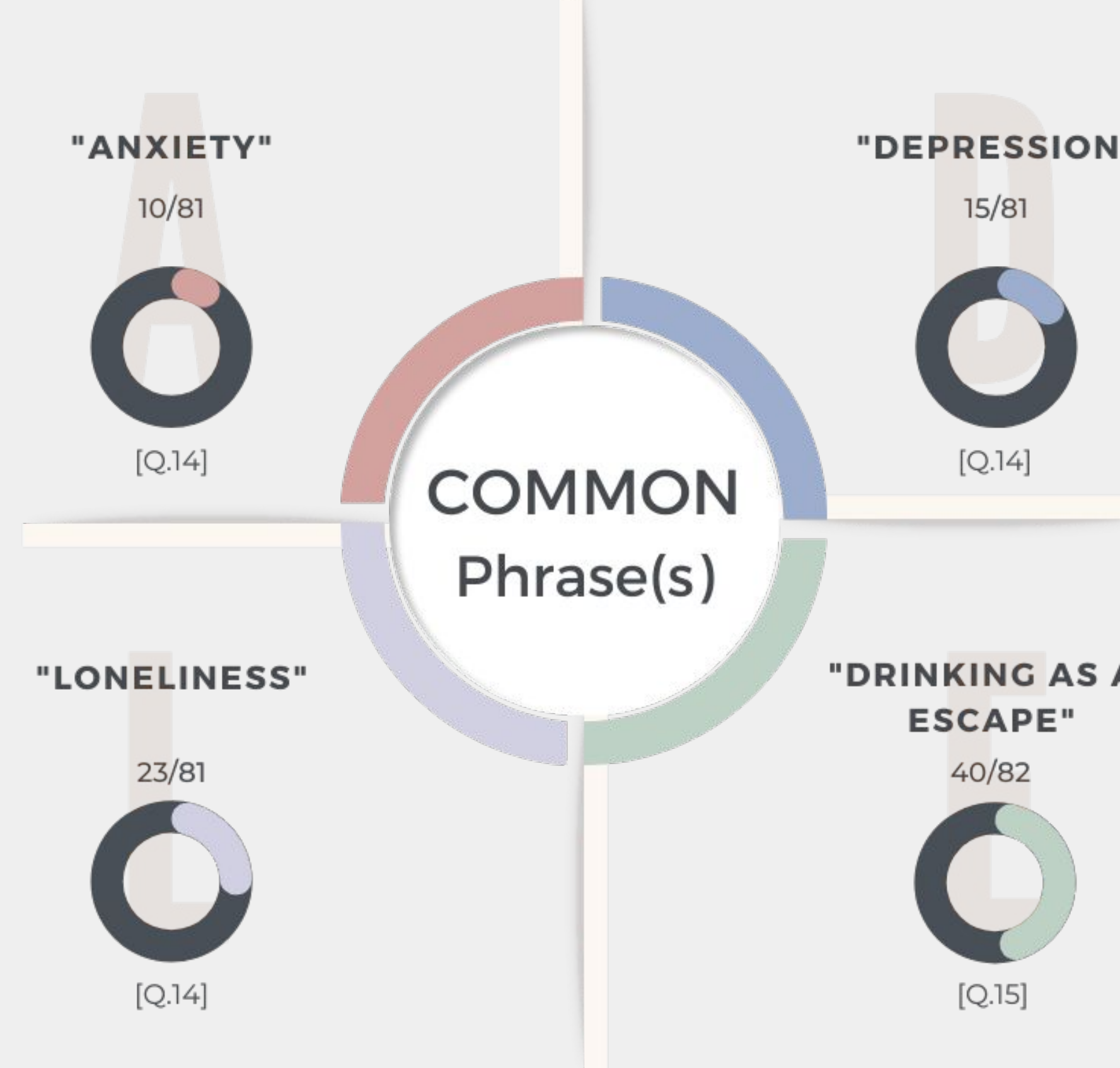


Figure 8. Response to Question 15 (see key...)



63 OF OUR 82 RESPONDENTS THINK THAT DRINKING INCREASED DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

#### Questions Key

- ❖ Q.14: How do you think the mental health of students was affected due to COVID-19 shutdown?
- ❖ Q.15: How do you think student stress has affected drinking behavior?

Figure 9. Housing Status Before and During COVID

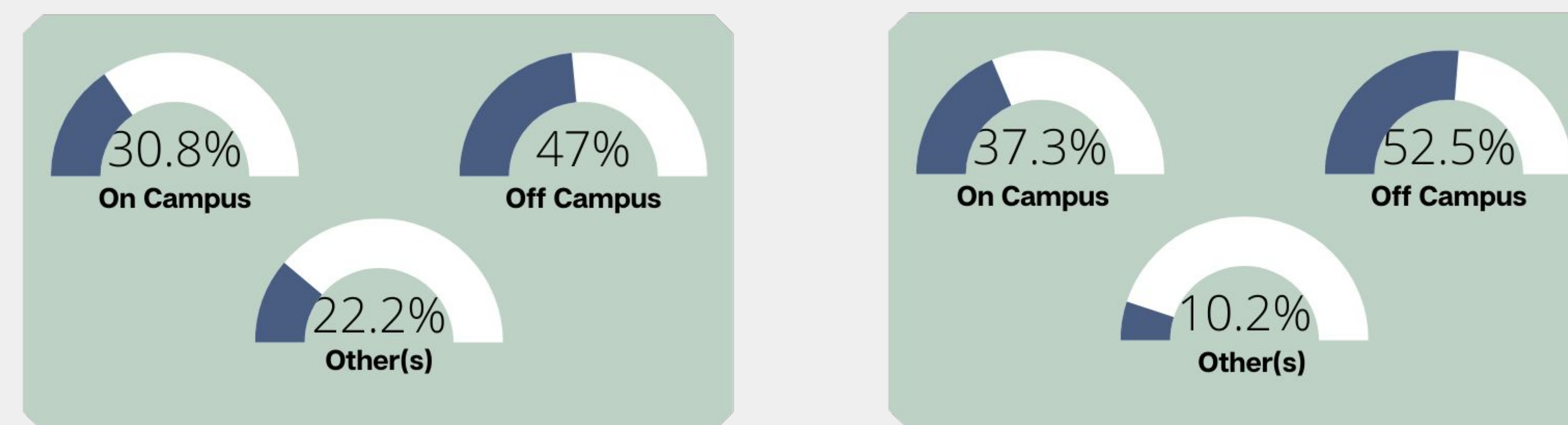
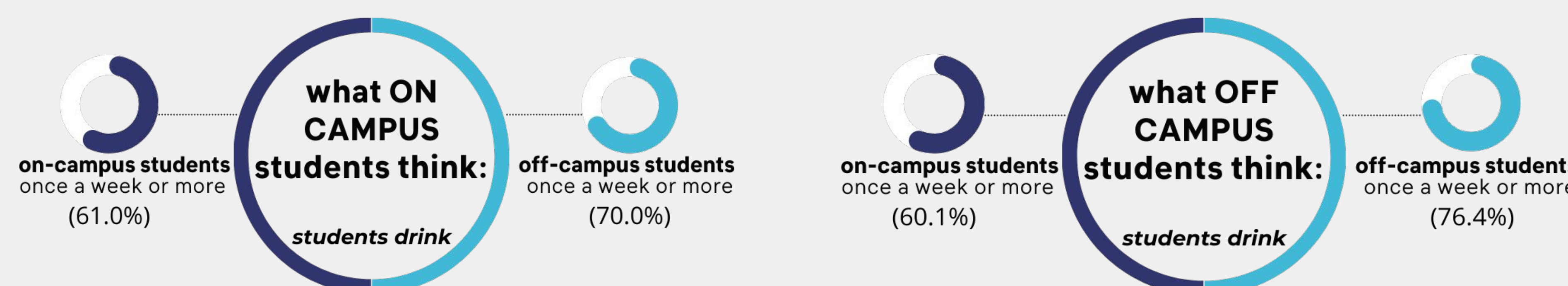


Figure 10. On Campus and Off Campus Student Perceptions



### Conclusion

- ❖ UCSD students' perceived an increase in peer alcohol consumption post-pandemic compared to pre-pandemic drinking rates.
- ❖ Students' perceptions of increased usage of alcohol during the pandemic was correlated with declining mental health rates.

### Policy Implications

- ❖ Implement a new policy to require the university to redirect the current policy of student health services funds to instead focus on interventions that provide students with mental health resources for adapting to these circumstances.
- ❖ This could be done through future policies that provide students with a personal therapist based on their college free of charge during times of mental health crisis.

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### References

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2. Hawes, M. T., Szenczy, A. K., Klein, D. N., Hajcak, G., & Nelson, B. D. (2021). Increases in depression and anxiety symptoms in adolescents and young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. Psychological medicine, 1–9. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291720005358>