



# Catch Me If You Can: Cheating Among Public Health Majors at UCSD, 2022

Lani Botros, Hewlett Pham, Maliha Safdar, Viviana Vargas-Santana, Dr. Nancy Binkin, MD, MPH

B.S. Public Health Honors Practicum | University of California, San Diego | Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science

## Background

- 78% increase in reported academic integrity (AI) violations between 2004 and 2021
- Evaluation of undergraduates conducted to better understand:
  - Frequency and types of observed and self-reported violations
  - Impact of online classes
  - Student willingness to report observed violations

## Methods

- Selected professors shared the mixed methods Qualtrics survey link with their students in March 2022
- Quantitative analysis performed using SPSS
- Thematic analysis and coding of open-ended questions
- Response rate among BSPH students = 32% (210/650)

## Results

- 28% believe that >50% of their peers had engaged in some form of cheating during current academic year
- 71% agreed that cheating is more common online
- Most common violations:
  - Looking up solutions online during closed-book exams (peers 67%; self-reported 43%)
  - Getting questions or answers from someone who had taken the exam (peers 57%; self-reported 19%)
  - Providing questions or answers to someone after an exam (peers 53%; self-reported 22%)
- 69% stated they were “very unlikely” to report observed AI violations
- Qualitative themes:
  - Campus culture encourages cheating
  - Academic dishonesty is frequent, especially online
  - Students are reluctant to report cheating

## Conclusion

- Academic integrity violations common among BSPH majors
- Many AI violations hard to detect, and students reluctant to report peers
- Efforts needed to create an environment that encourages learning while maintaining principles of integrity

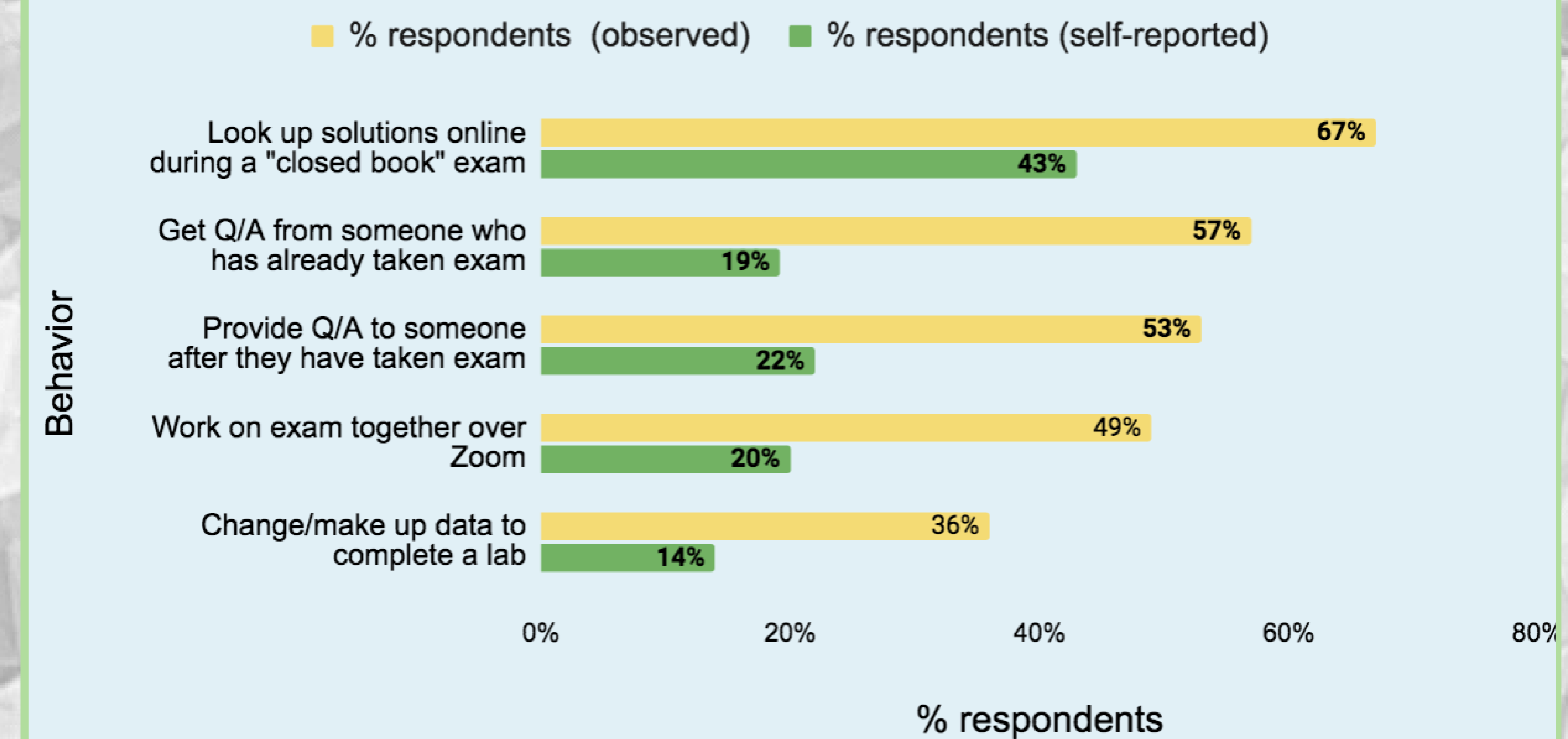
**Academic integrity violations are common among public health majors, but students reluctant to report**



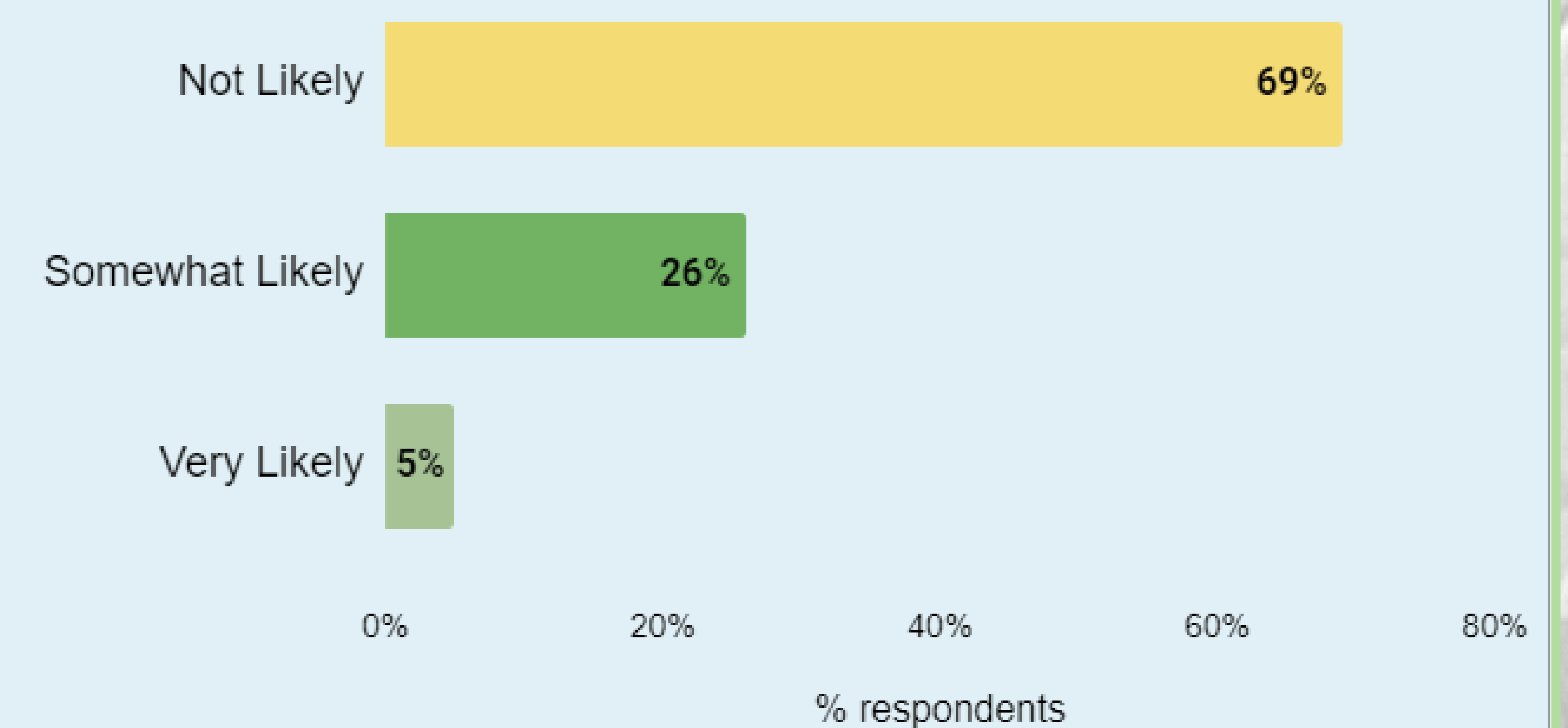
**Cheating should be recognized as a potentially important public health crisis**

## Figures & Findings

Frequency of observed and self-reported cheating behaviors



Likelihood of reporting observed cheating



## Qualitative Analysis

"...the campus culture is lowkey toxic. There is this constant pressure to do something because if you don't you are going to be left behind. I think cheating is a way to cope with this because sometimes that's the only way to "survive" in this school"

"...the reason that so many people cheat, myself at times included, is because we know that everyone else does and there is no point in not doing it if that just means your grade is going to suffer compared to everyone else's."

"I've seen students using their phone for in-person exams to look up answers but have never reported because (1) I don't want to snitch (2) it's not my business (3) I wonder what they're personally going through."