

# Navigating Mental Health in the Age of Social Media

APRIL 2025





# Introduction

In an era where social media dominates daily life, its influence on mental health is undeniable—especially for the younger, most digitally-savvy generations. Our survey explores how constant connectivity impacts mental health and relationships, revealing a troubling reliance on social media for mental health advice. Many self-diagnose conditions based on information they see on social media, but some hesitate to seek professional help. Meanwhile, the casual use of “therapy speak” is fueling relationship doubts, leading a number of people to consider digital detoxes. As social media’s role in our mental health continues to evolve, these findings underscore the need for credible information and professional mental health support.



Being “*chronically online*” is pervasive, especially among younger generations.



## Constant Connectivity

### **Social media is a pervasive presence in our daily lives.**

- Over one-quarter (26%) of respondents check social media within five minutes of waking up, and the same portion (26%) spend four hours or more on social media every day.
- Nearly one-third (29%) of respondents report being “constantly connected” to the internet or social media.
- Gen Z (45%) and millennial respondents (39%) are most likely to be constantly connected, compared to respondents from the Gen X (25%) and baby boomer (14%) generations.
- Against this backdrop, more than half (57%) of respondents believe the term “chronically online” accurately describes their relationship with social media, including 80% of Gen Z and 69% of millennial respondents.
- More than one-in-five (21%) respondents report experiencing negative impacts on their mental health as a result of this constant online connectivity. This is felt most amongst the youngest generation, jumping to 28% for Gen Z respondents.





Although many are aware of the prevalence of mental health misinformation on social media, *people still turn to these platforms for advice.*

# Mental Health Misinformation

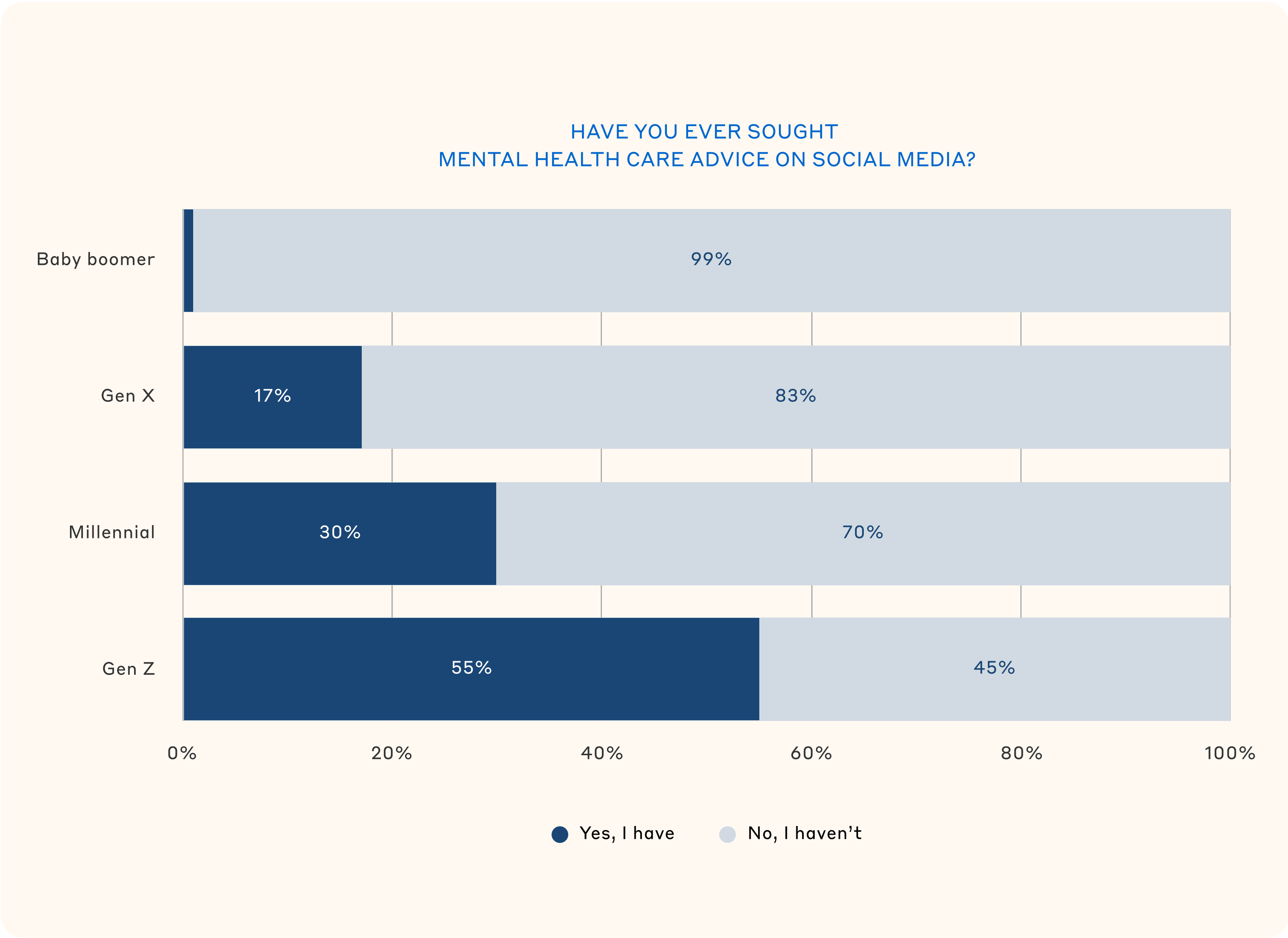
Nearly one-quarter (23%) of respondents have sought mental health advice on social media. This jumps to 55% for Gen Z, and 30% for millennial respondents.

When asked why, 45% say they have turned to social media for mental health advice due to its convenience and immediacy.

Other factors include:

- 43%** wanting to hear from others with similar experiences
- 41%** a desire for anonymous advice
- 36%** the quality of care available on social media platforms

- 29%** the cultural stigma around seeking professional help
- 25%** they weren't sure where to start
- 20%** distrust of health care providers

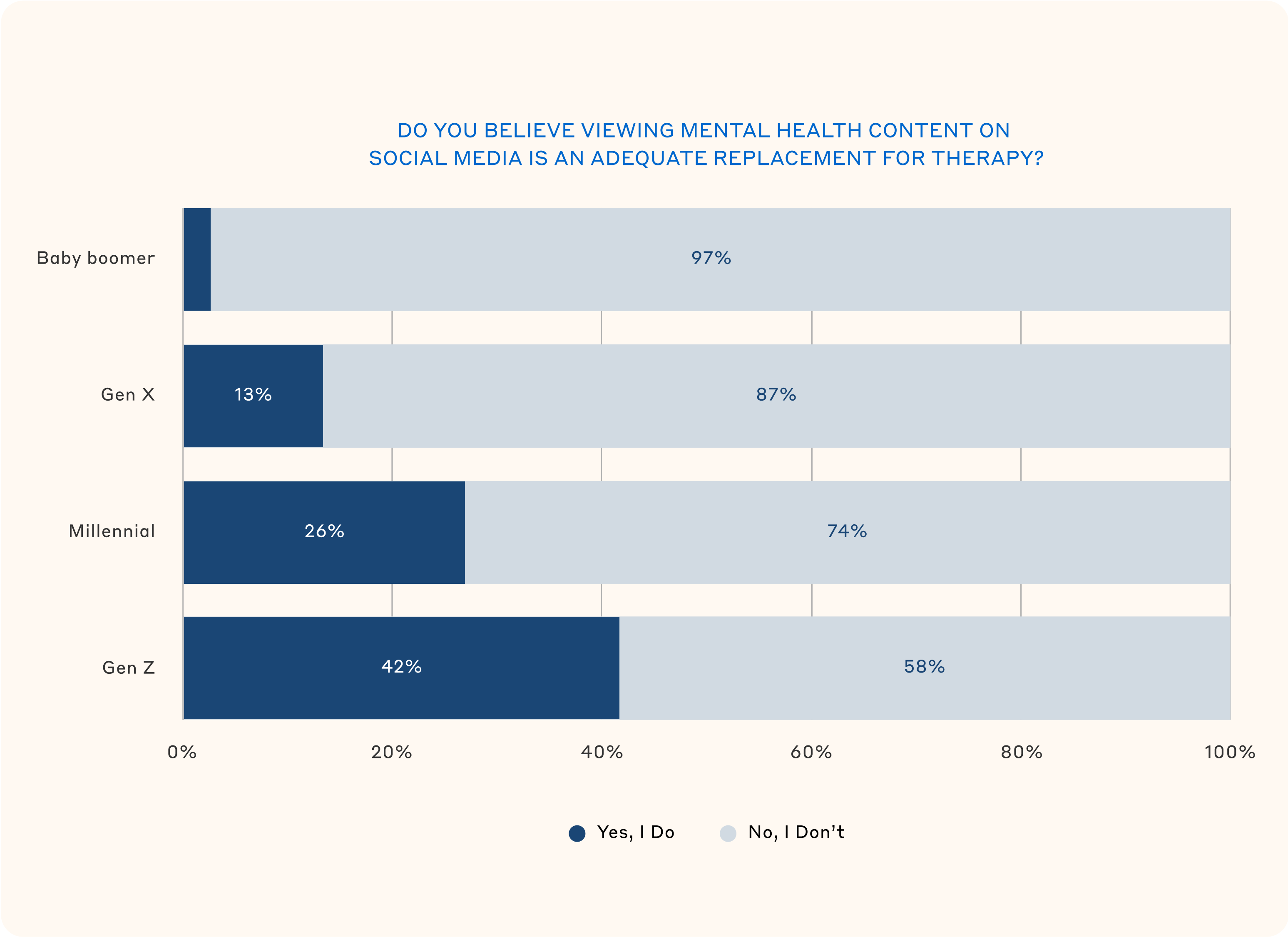


# Mental Health Misinformation

**81%** of respondents do not believe mental health content on social media is an adequate replacement for therapy.

However, opinions vary by generation: 42% of Gen Z respondents believe it is an adequate replacement, compared to just 3% of baby boomer, 13% of Gen X and 26% of millennial respondents.

With the prevalence of non-clinical sources sharing mental health information online, the need for accessible, high-quality care provided by licensed clinicians is crucial to help decipher fact from fiction and develop a clinically-appropriate treatment plan.



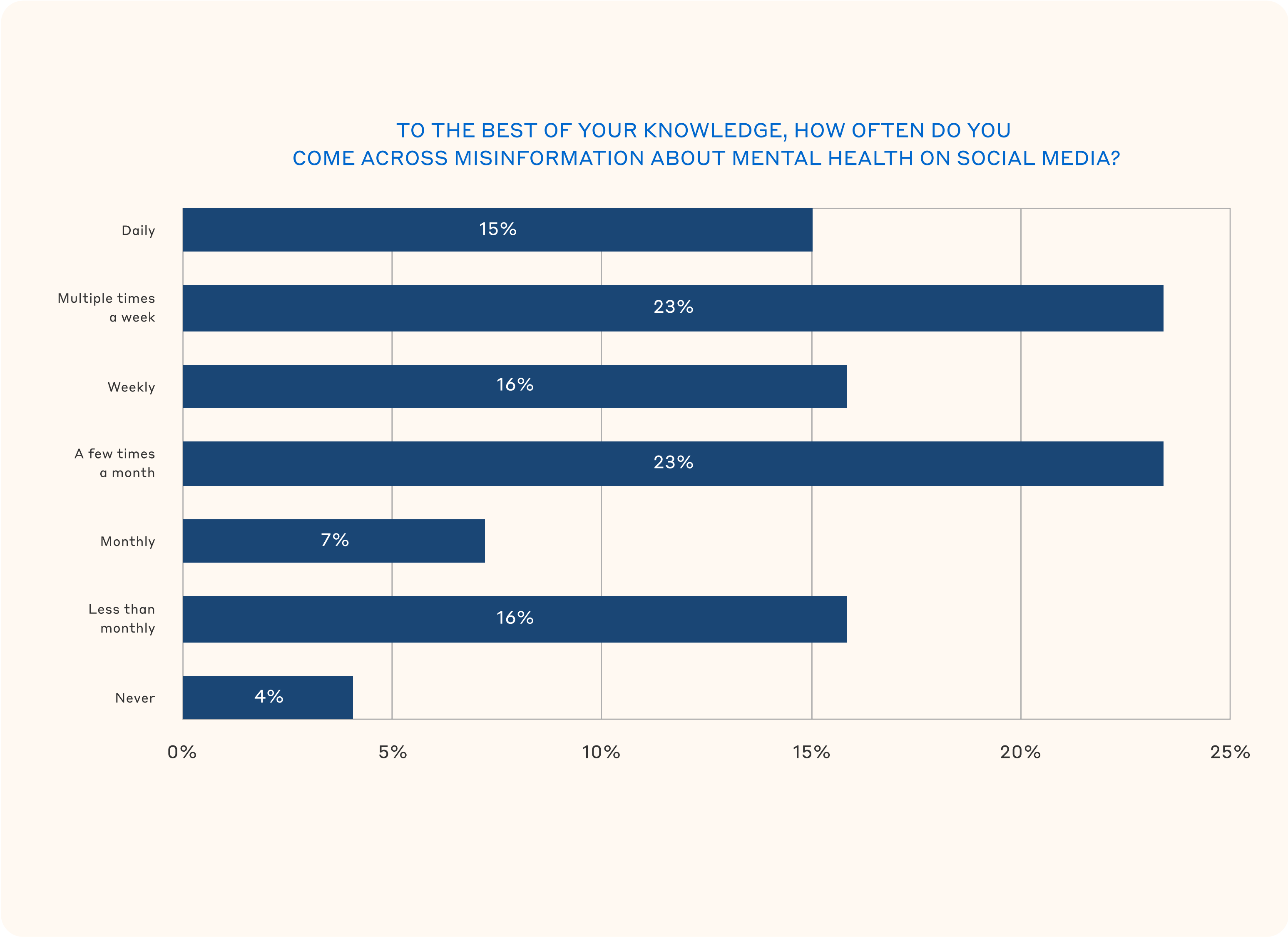
# Mental Health Misinformation

**Respondents recognize that not all information on social media is trustworthy.**

Nearly one-third (31%) perceive mental health information on social media platforms as inaccurate.

More than half (54%) of respondents report seeing misinformation about mental health on social media at least weekly.

Sources matter: 82% trust online information from credentialed health care providers the most, compared to 64% for mental health influencers and 53% for information shared by other social media users.



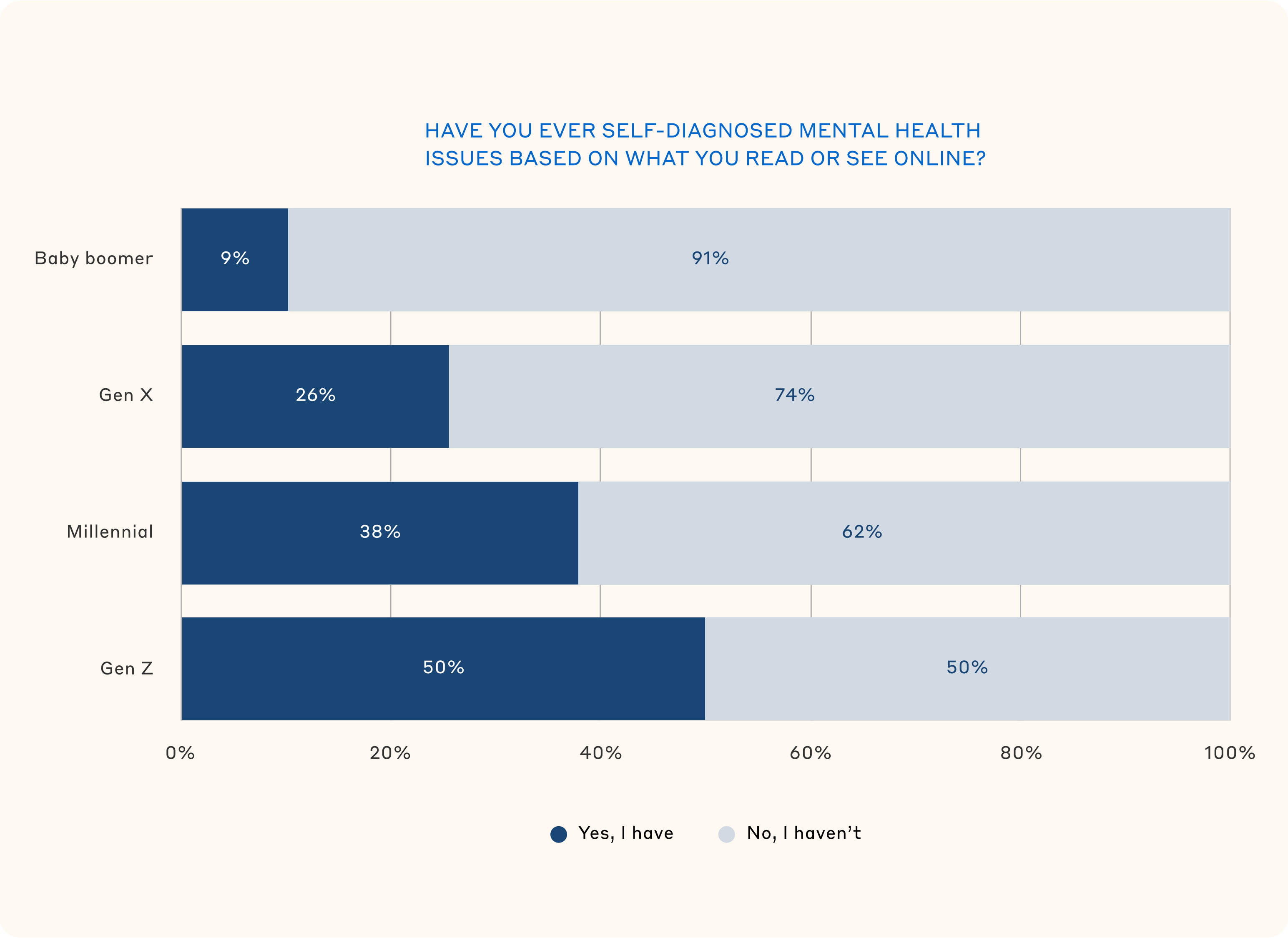


Self-diagnosis from social media is common. However, many respondents who self-diagnose *do not seek professional guidance* from a clinician.

# Self-Diagnosis from Social Media

Nearly one-third (29%) of respondents have “self-diagnosed” mental health conditions based on information they’ve seen online.

Gen Z (50%) and millennial (38%) respondents lead in self-diagnosis, compared to Gen X (26%) and baby boomer (9%) respondents.



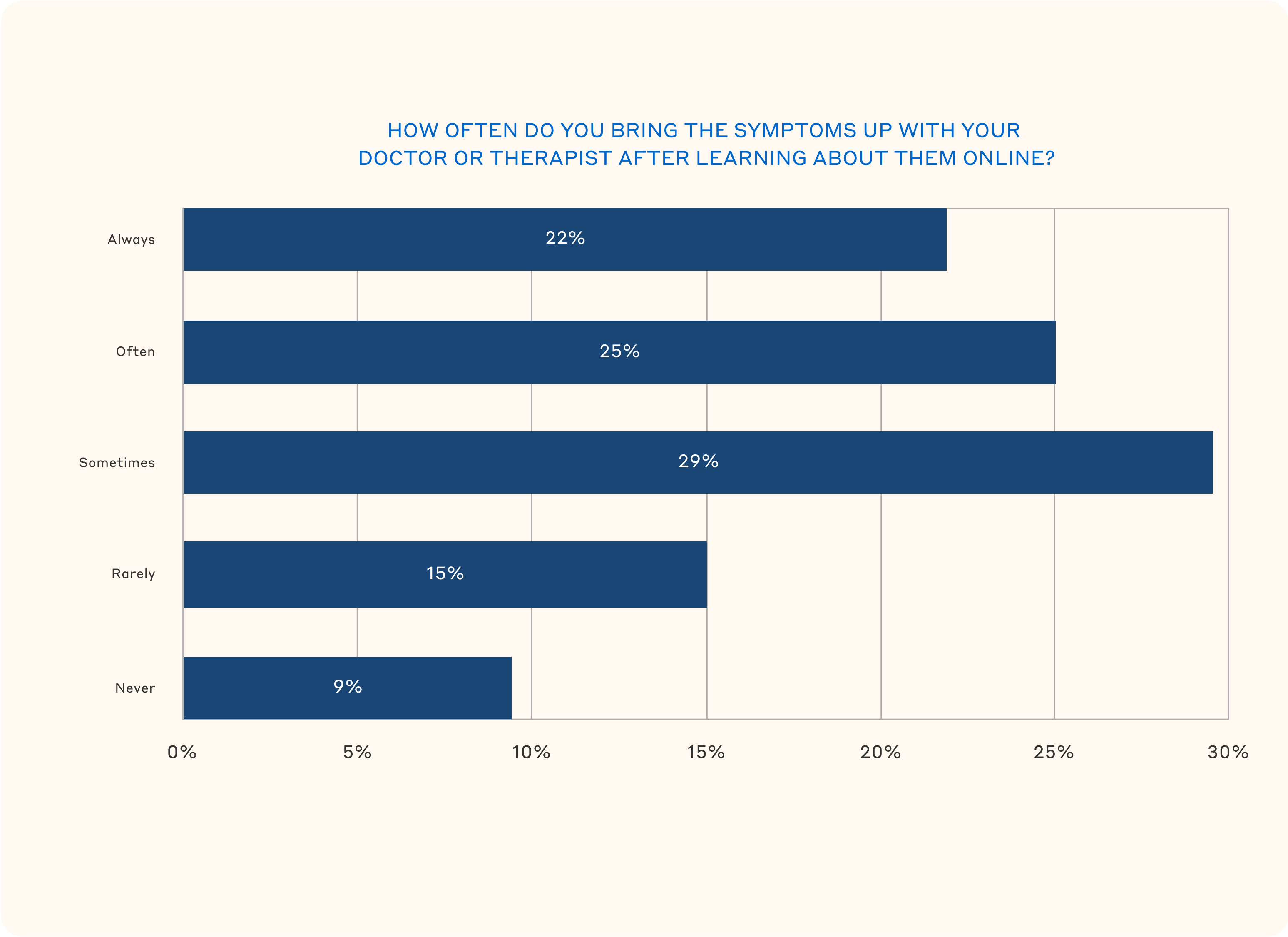


# Self-Diagnosis from Social Media

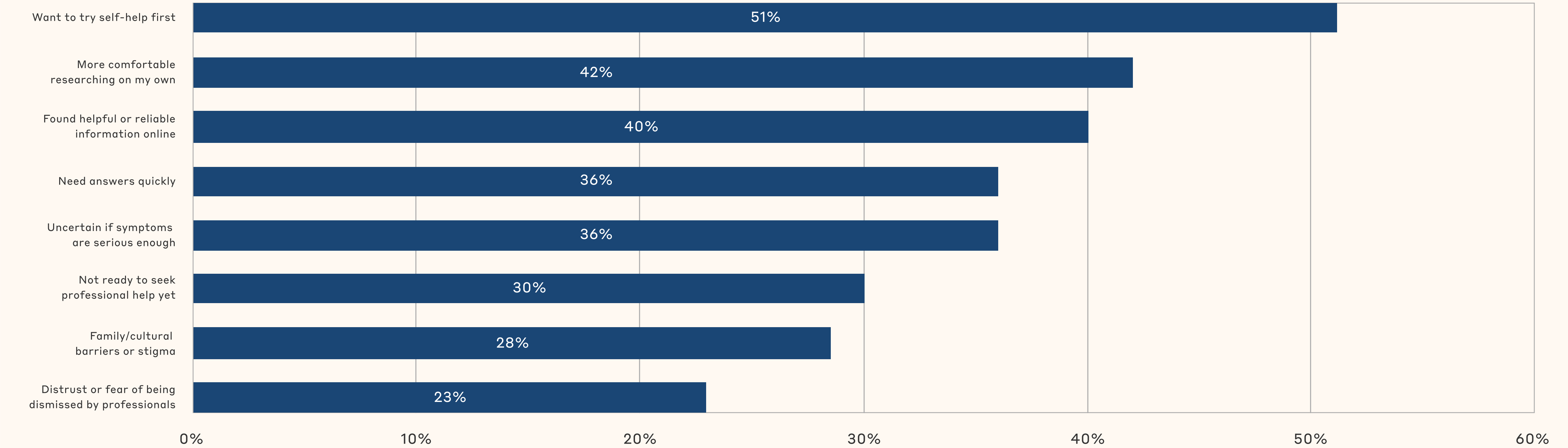
Less than half (47%) of respondents often or always discuss self-diagnosed symptoms with a clinician, and almost a quarter (24%) rarely or never do.

**This highlights a concerning trend where people may misinterpret their mental health needs, delay proper care or forgo treatment altogether.**

Of those who have attempted to self-diagnose, over one-quarter (27%) reported experiencing unnecessary stress or anxiety from doing so.



WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR SELF-DIAGNOSING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES?



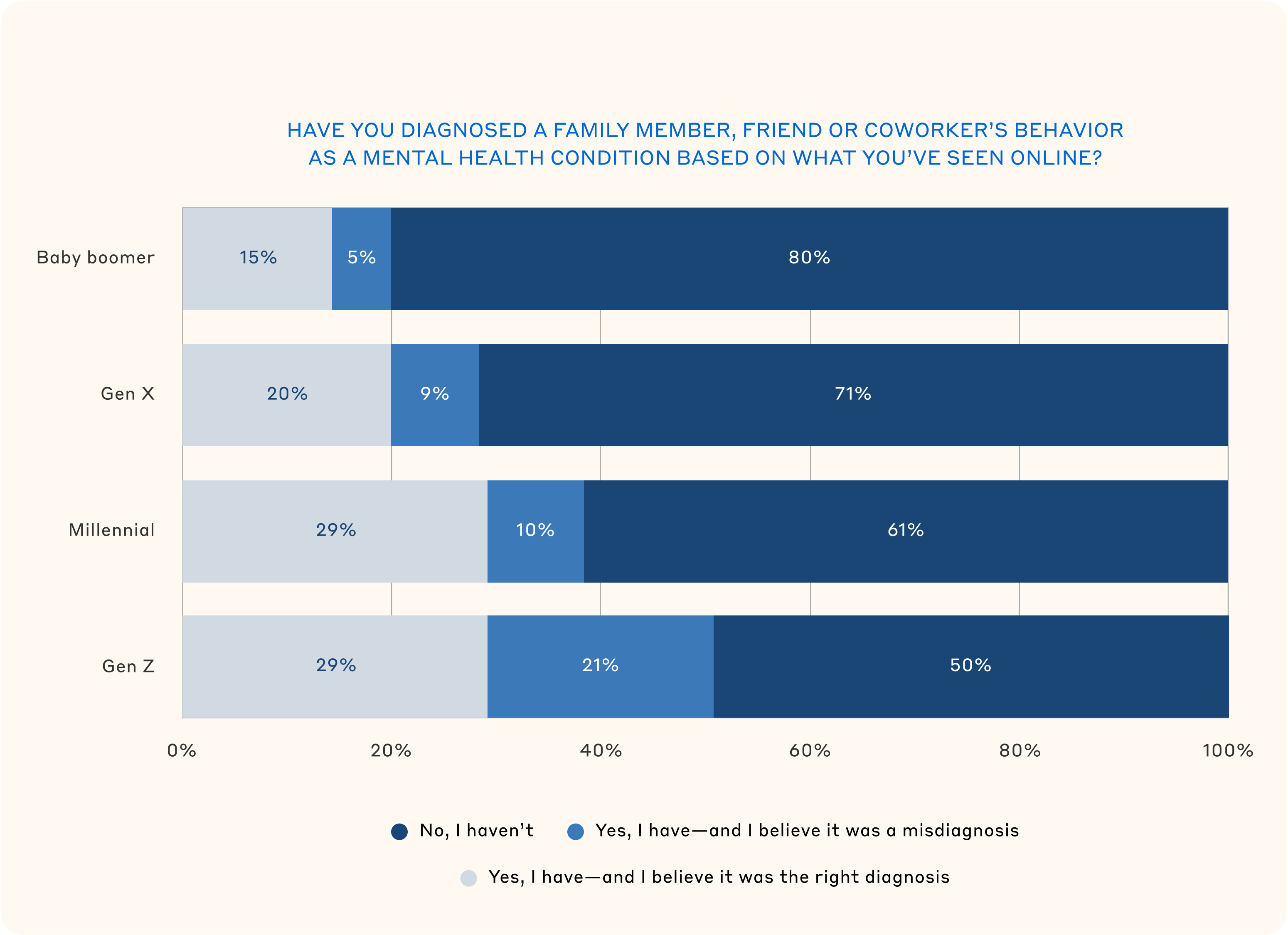


# Self-Diagnosis from Social Media

People are also using social media information to diagnose others.

One-third of respondents have diagnosed a family member, friend or coworker’s behavior as a mental health condition based on what they’ve seen on social media—23% believe they were correct, while 10% now believe it was a misdiagnosis.

Diagnosing friends or family members is most prevalent among Gen Z respondents, with 50% having done so.



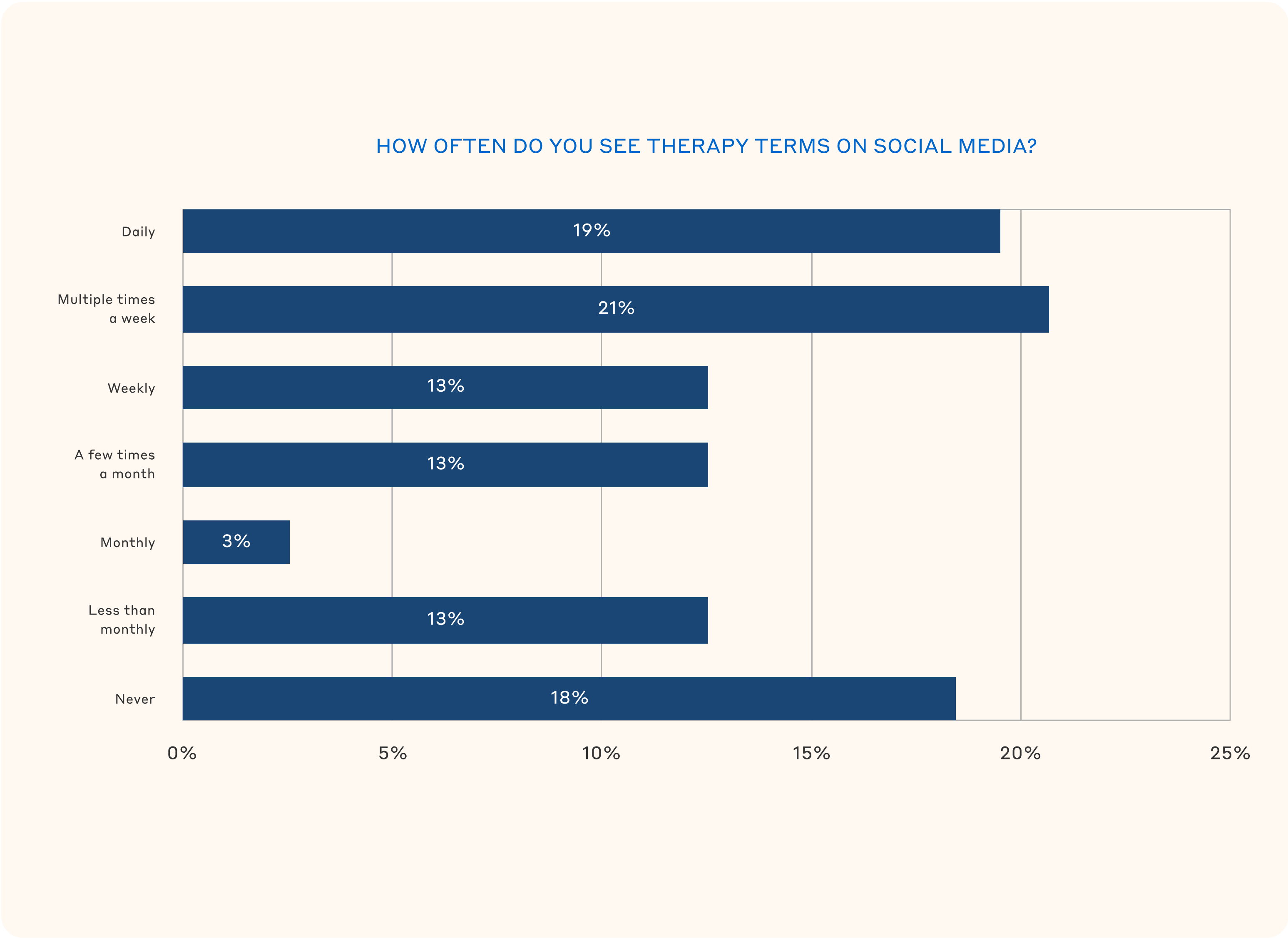
As the casual use of clinical mental health terminology, or “*therapy speak*,” becomes more common in everyday conversations, people are analyzing their relationships through the lens of the language they've seen online.



# “Therapy Speak”

“Therapy speak”—or the casual use of clinical mental health terms, in non-clinical settings—is becoming increasingly prevalent in daily interactions, particularly amongst women and younger generations.

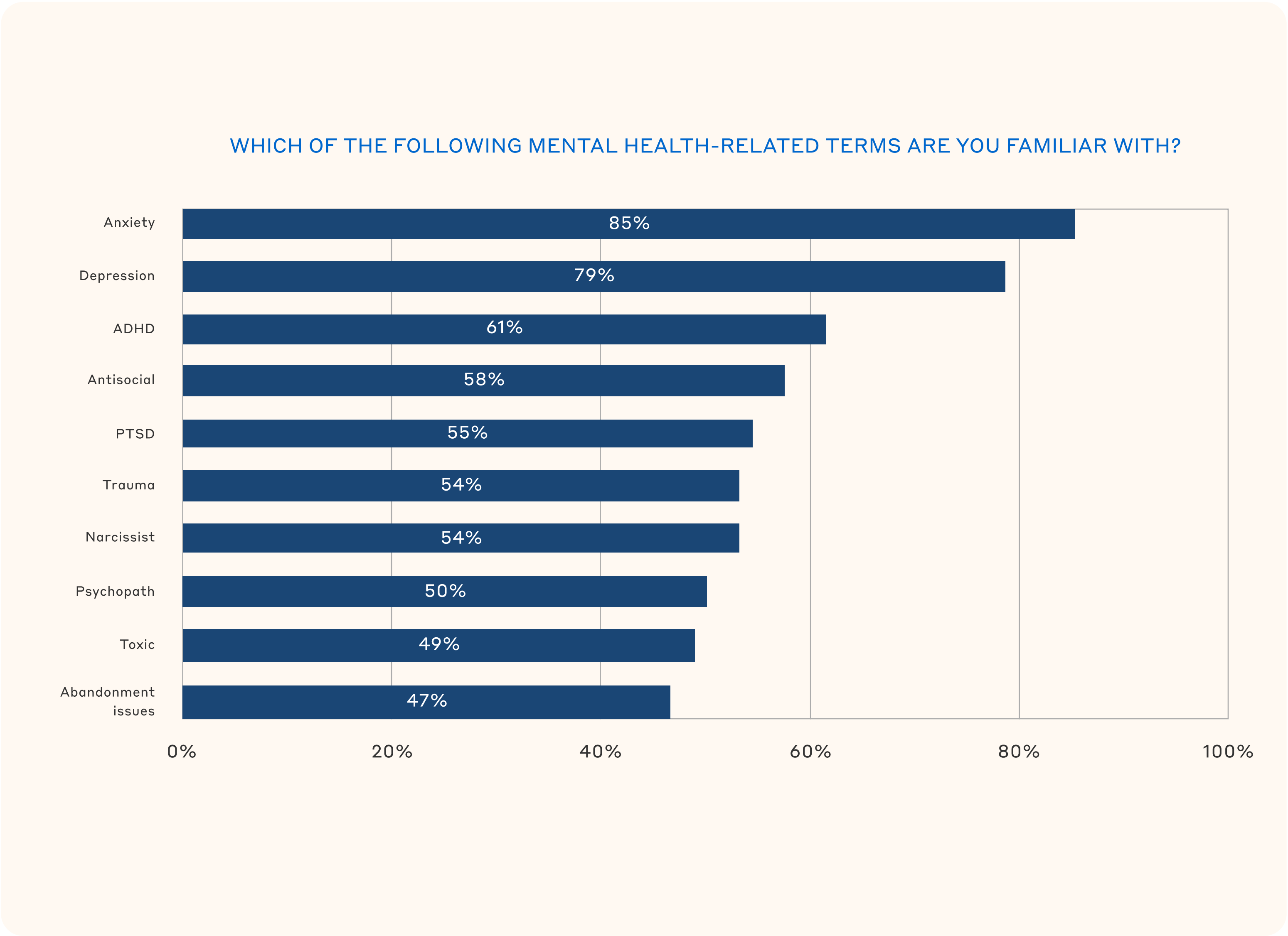
This can be attributed in part to the prevalence of mental health lingo being used across platforms, with 40% of respondents reporting they see terms like “trauma,” “narcissist” and “toxic” on social media daily or multiple times a week.



# “Therapy Speak”

Gen Z (57%) and millennial (49%) respondents were most likely to have learned terms from social media, compared to Gen X (36%) and baby boomer (25%) respondents—versus learning from sources like friends and family, their workplace or school, professional therapy, or mental health websites and apps.

Anxiety (85%), depression (79%) and ADHD (61%) were the top three mental health terms respondents were most familiar with.





## “Therapy Speak”

Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported that they use “therapy speak” regularly in online and in-person conversations, which rose to 30% for female respondents compared to 25% for male respondents.

Gen Z (50%) respondents also reported the highest usage amongst all generations, compared to millennials (35%), Gen X (25%), and baby boomer respondents (11%).

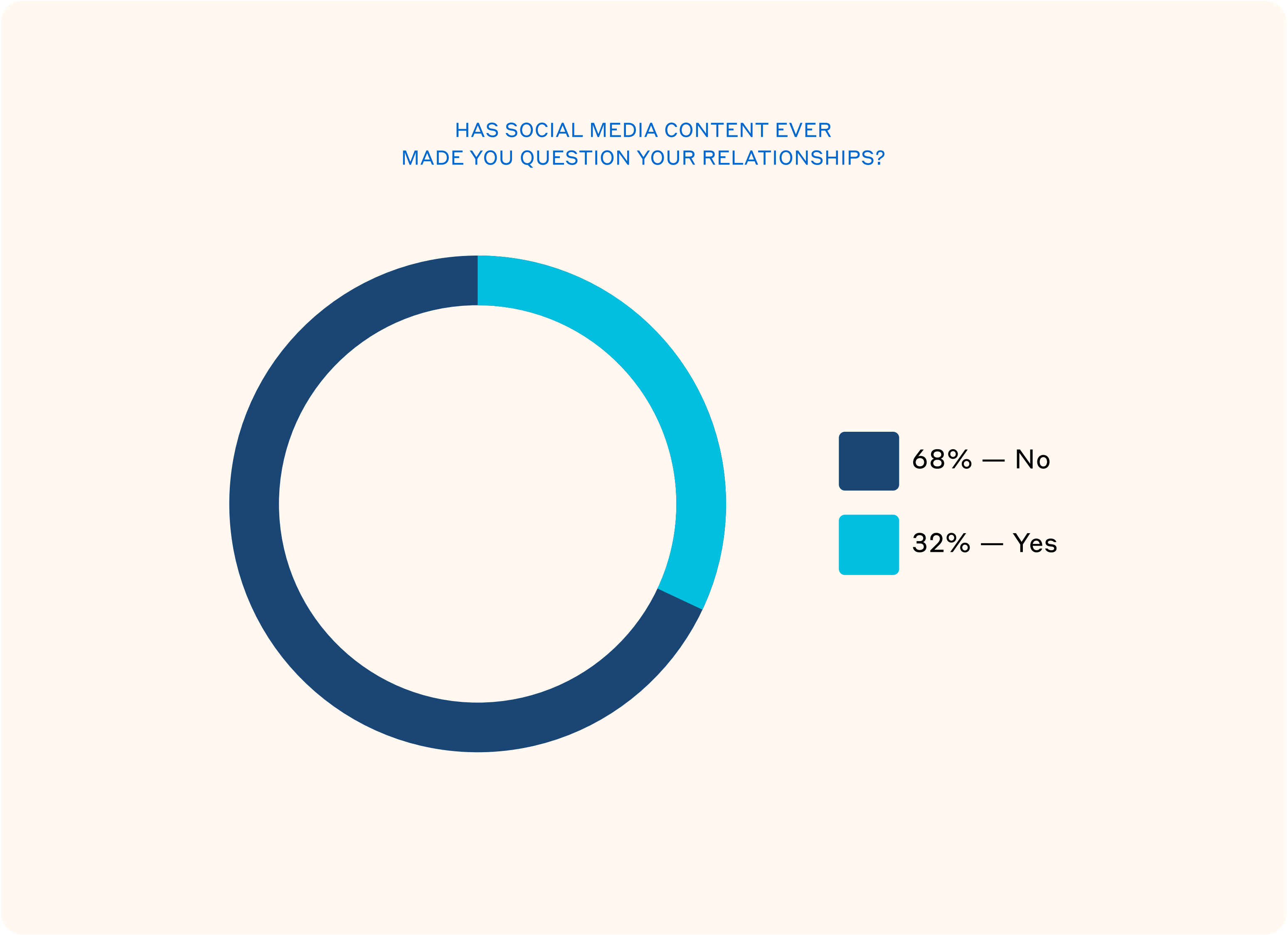




# “Therapy Speak”

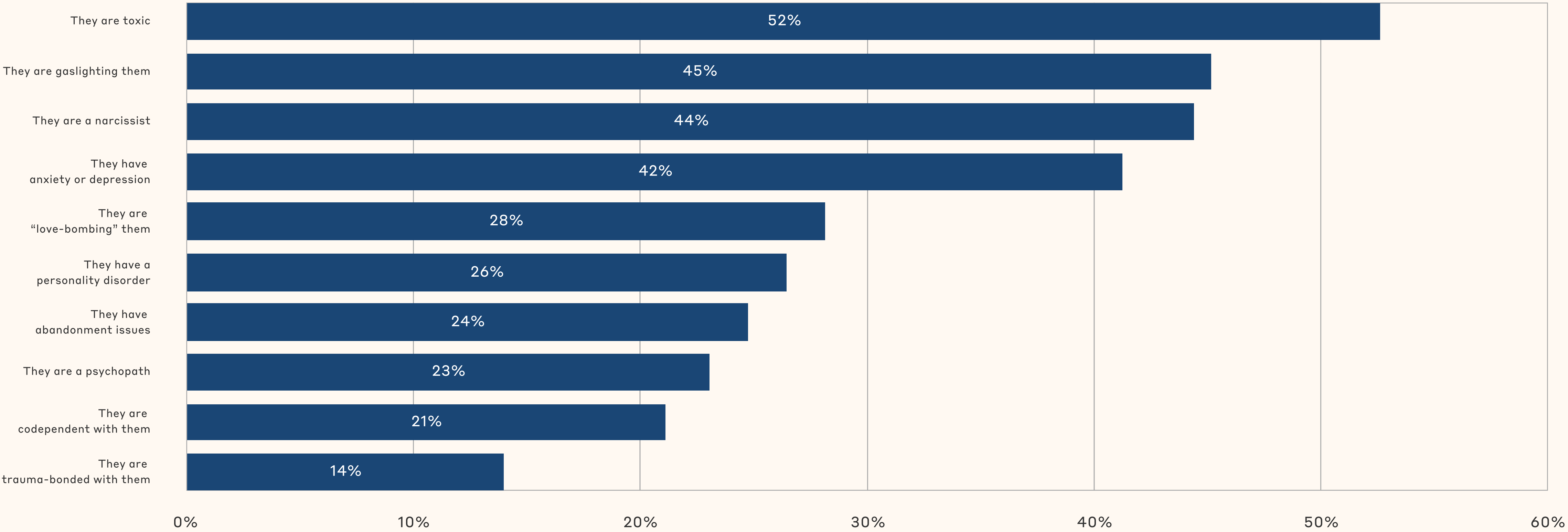
Nearly one-in-three (32%) respondents say social media content has made them question their relationships.

Female (36%) respondents were more likely to question their relationships because of social media content than male (28%) respondents.





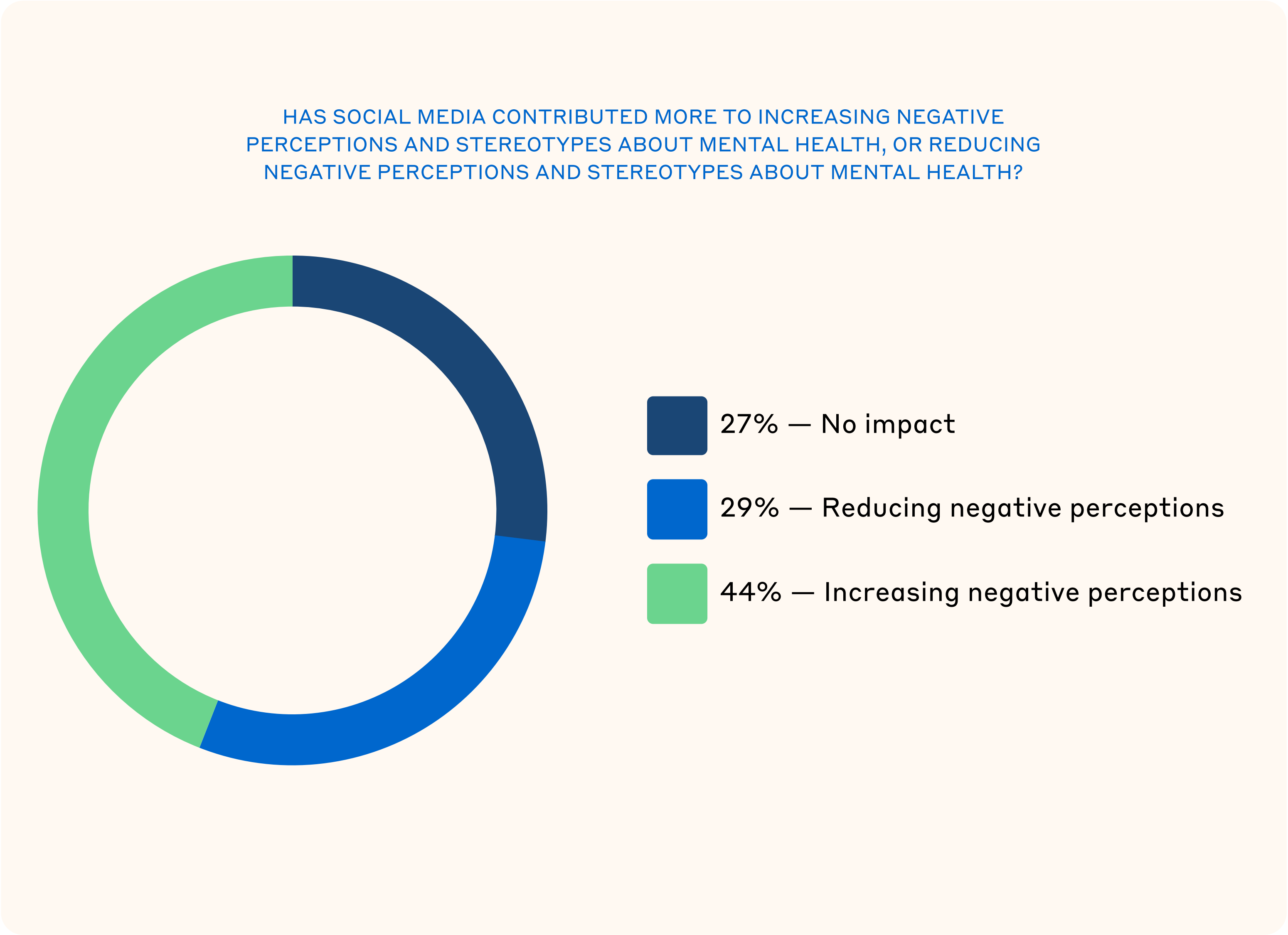
RESPONDENTS INDICATED THAT SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT HAS LED THEM TO BELIEVE THE FOLLOWING ABOUT SOMEONE THEY HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH



Amid increasing anxiety and *stress fueled by social media*, most respondents wish to disconnect, with a significant number expressing interest in a digital detox.

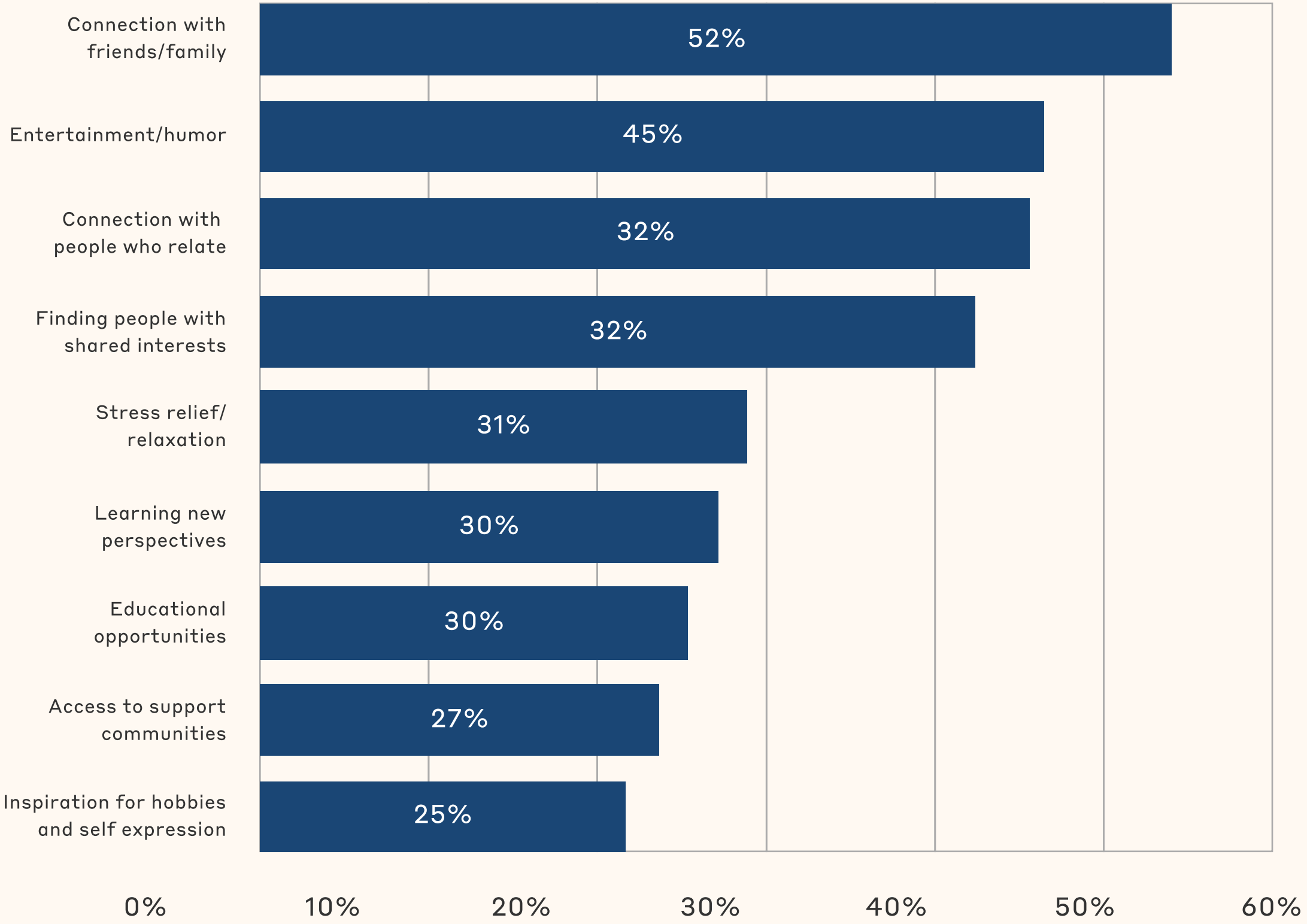
# Stress Fueled by Social Media

While social media platforms have potential to be used for both good and bad, 44% of respondents believe they have done more to increase negative perceptions and stereotypes about mental health than to reduce them.

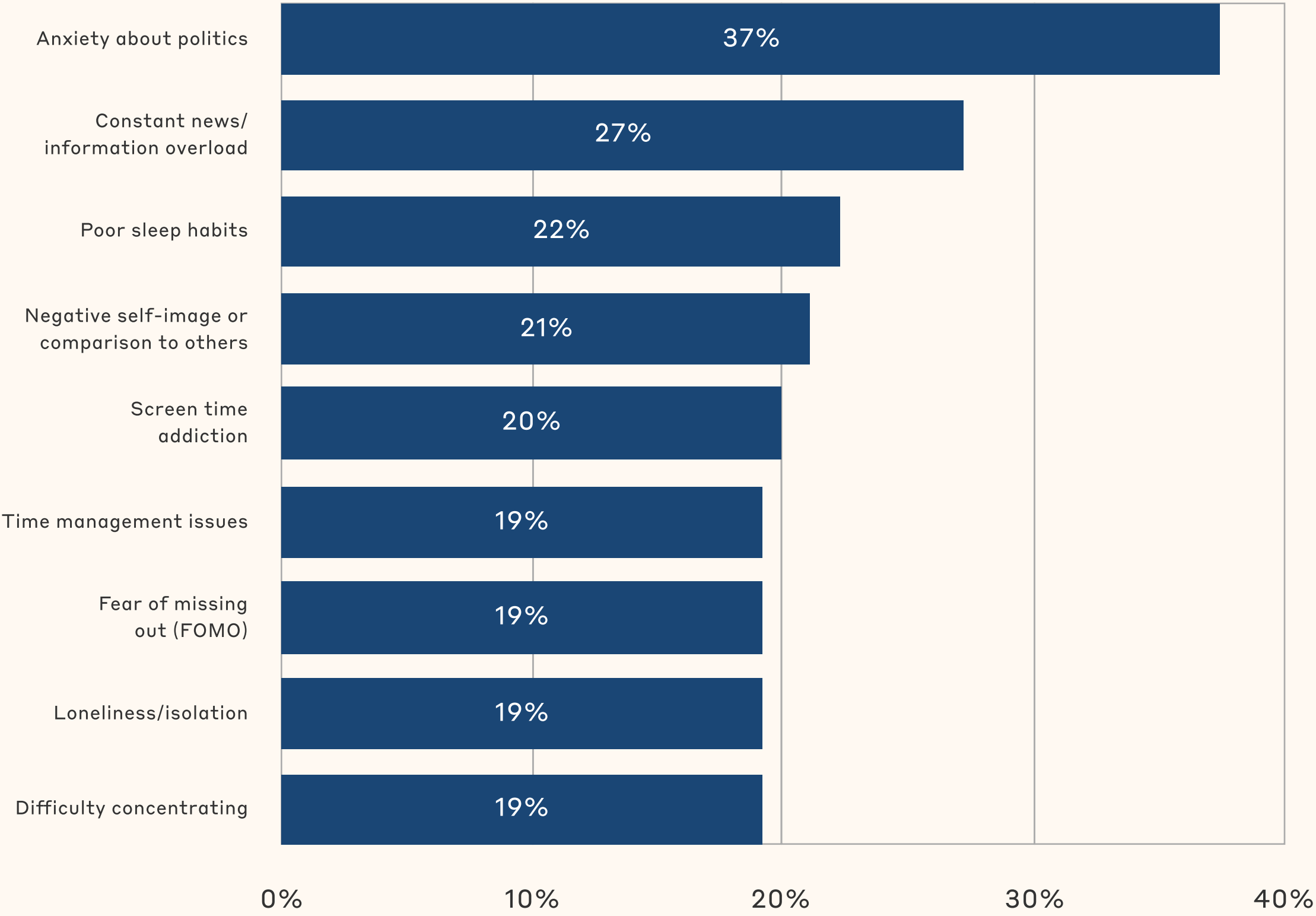




WHAT ASPECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA  
**POSITIVELY** IMPACT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?



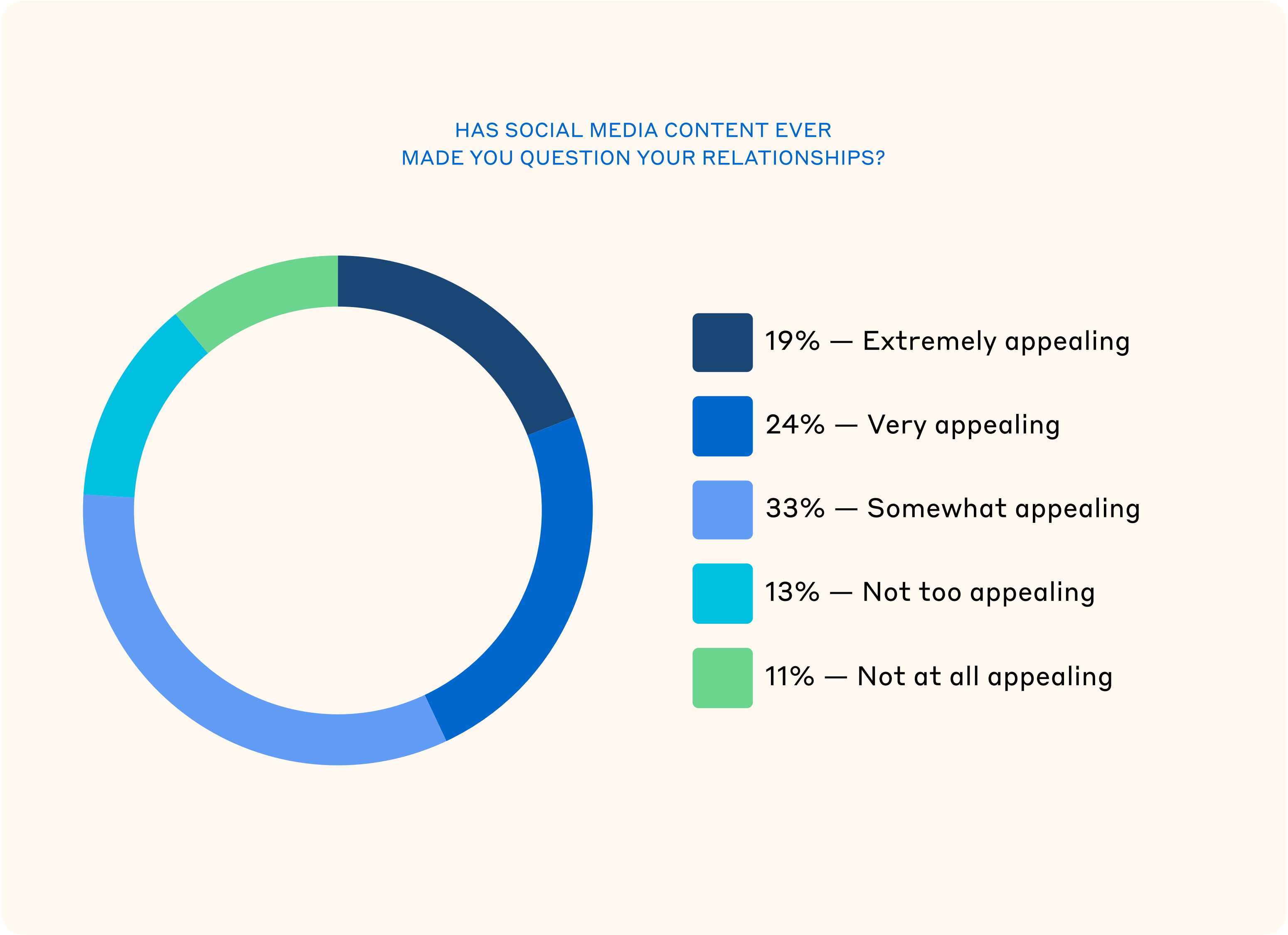
WHAT ASPECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA  
**NEGATIVELY** IMPACT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?



# Stress Fueled by Social Media

Over three-quarters (76%) find the idea of a digital detox appealing, with Gen Z (84%) and millennial (83%) respondents most interested compared to Gen X (77%) and baby boomer (65%) respondents.

More than one-quarter (26%) believe a permanent TikTok ban would positively impact their mental health.



“Social media is a double-edged sword. While it has helped to normalize discussions about mental health, its potential for spreading misinformation poses a threat to individual well-being through the risk of harmful self-diagnosis and delayed professional intervention.

Our survey emphasizes the importance of recognizing the limitations of online content and seeking online information from qualified sources and evidence-based mental health care from licensed clinicians. We must continue working toward ensuring everyone who needs it has access to affordable, high-quality mental health care.”



Dr. Ujjwal Ramtekkar, Chief Medical Officer, LifeStance Health



## Methodology

On behalf of LifeStance Health, Researchscape International conducted an online survey of 1,110 U.S. adults aged 18 or older. The survey was fielded from Jan. 30 to Feb. 9, 2025. The credibility interval is plus or minus 4 percentage points for questions answered by all respondents.

## About LifeStance Health

Founded in 2017, LifeStance (NASDAQ: LFST) is reimagining mental health. We are one of the nation's largest providers of virtual and in-person outpatient mental healthcare for children, adolescents and adults experiencing a variety of mental health conditions. Our mission is to help people lead healthier, more fulfilling lives by improving access to trusted, affordable and personalized mental healthcare. LifeStance and its supported practices employ approximately 7,400 psychiatrists, advanced practice nurses, psychologists and therapists and operate across 33 states and more than 550 centers. To learn more, please visit [www.LifeStance.com](https://www.LifeStance.com).