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The Students' Union at UWE

Drug and Alcohol Survey Findings 2022-2023

**THE STUDENTS'
UNION**
AT UWE

Drug & Alcohol
Impact

Key Details and Demographics

- 340 respondents in total, 95% increase on 21/22
- Age:
 - 65% were 18-22 year olds
 - 23% were 23-29
 - 15% were 30+
- Degree
 - 96% Undergraduates
 - 1% Postgraduate
 - 3% other (Foundation year, PhD)

35% - privately rented house with friends

19% - Halls of Residences

14% - with parents or guardians

9% - rented flat on own

7% - own home with mortgage

6% - rented flat with family

5% - privately-owned halls of residences

51% White British

13% BAME British

8% Asian

70% home, 20% outside EU, 8% in EU

Almost identical gender split to 21/22:

64% Defined as female

31% Defined as male

2% non-binary

70% heterosexual

15% bisexual

3% queer

3% asexual

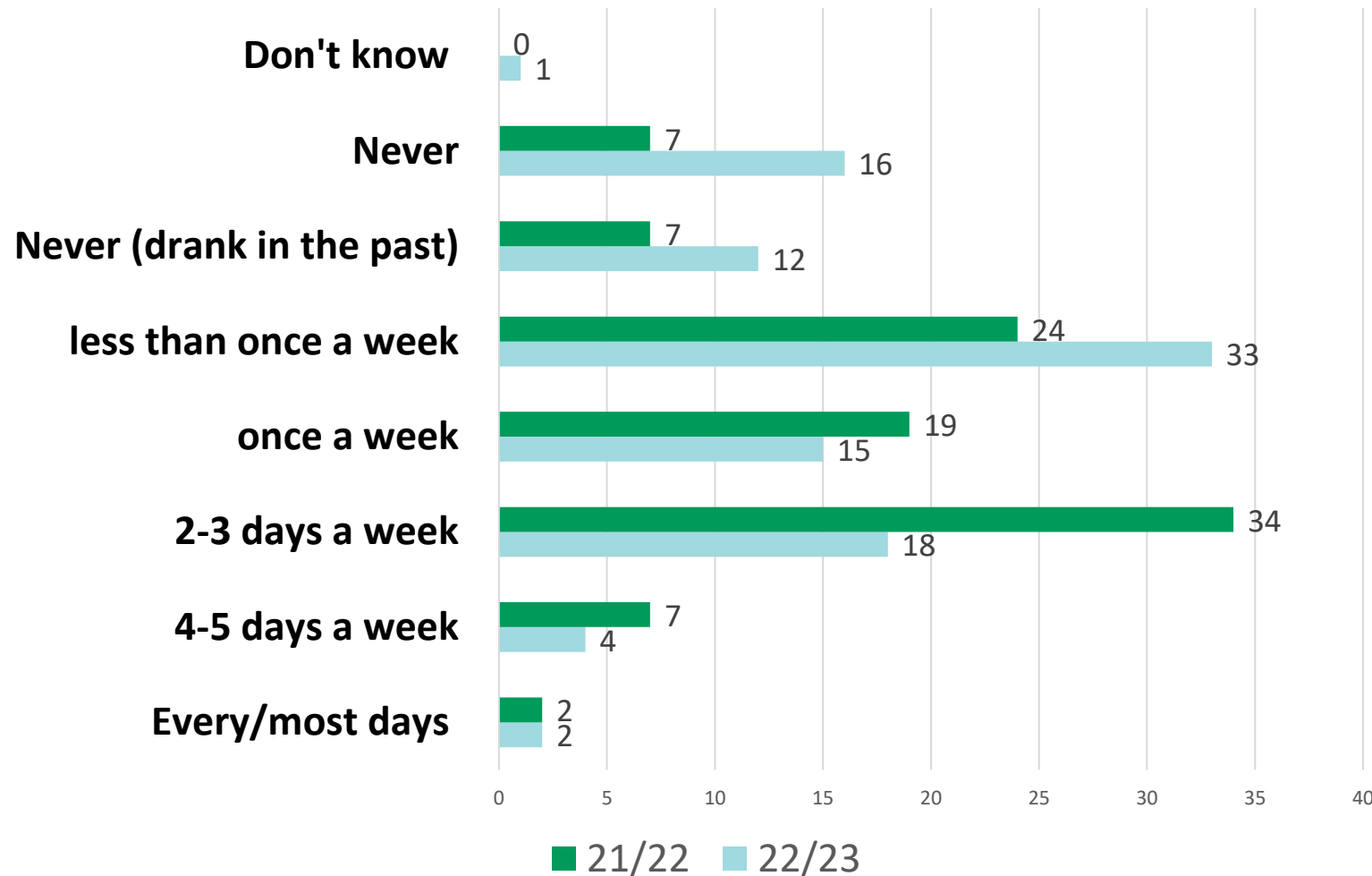
20% declared a disability or long-term health condition of these:

47% mental health

49% learning difficulty

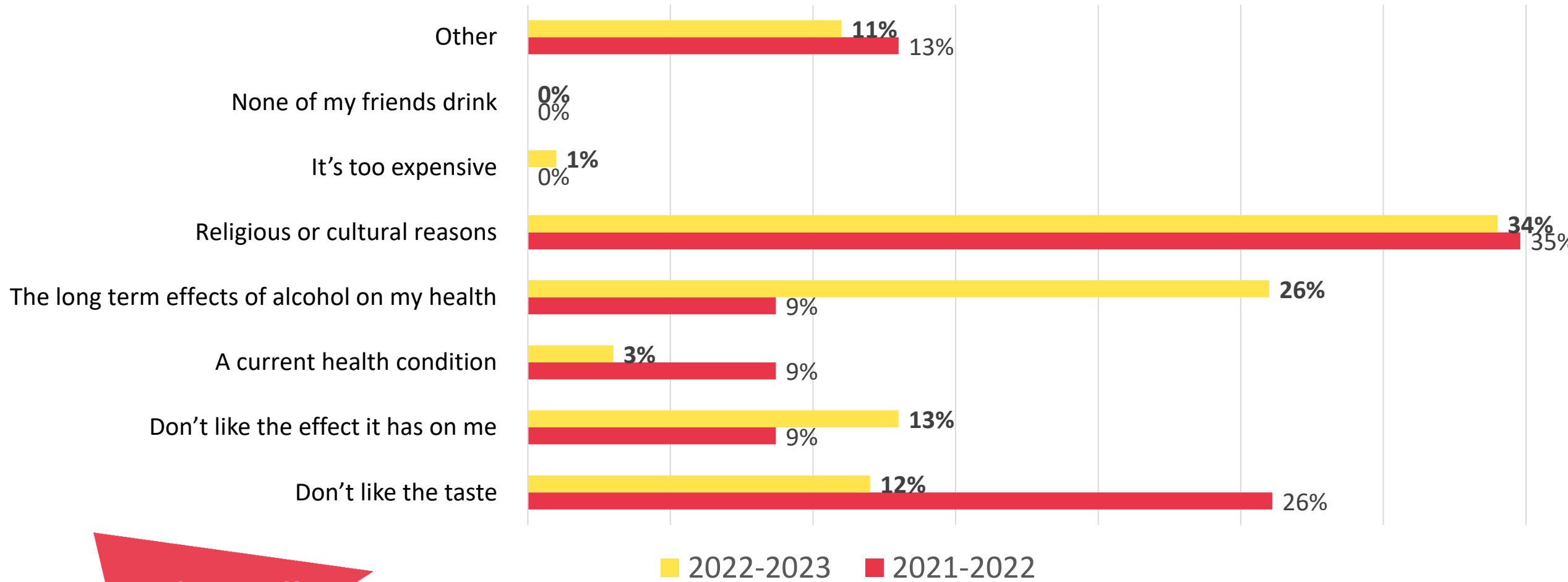
Alcohol

How often, if at all, do you drink alcohol? (%)



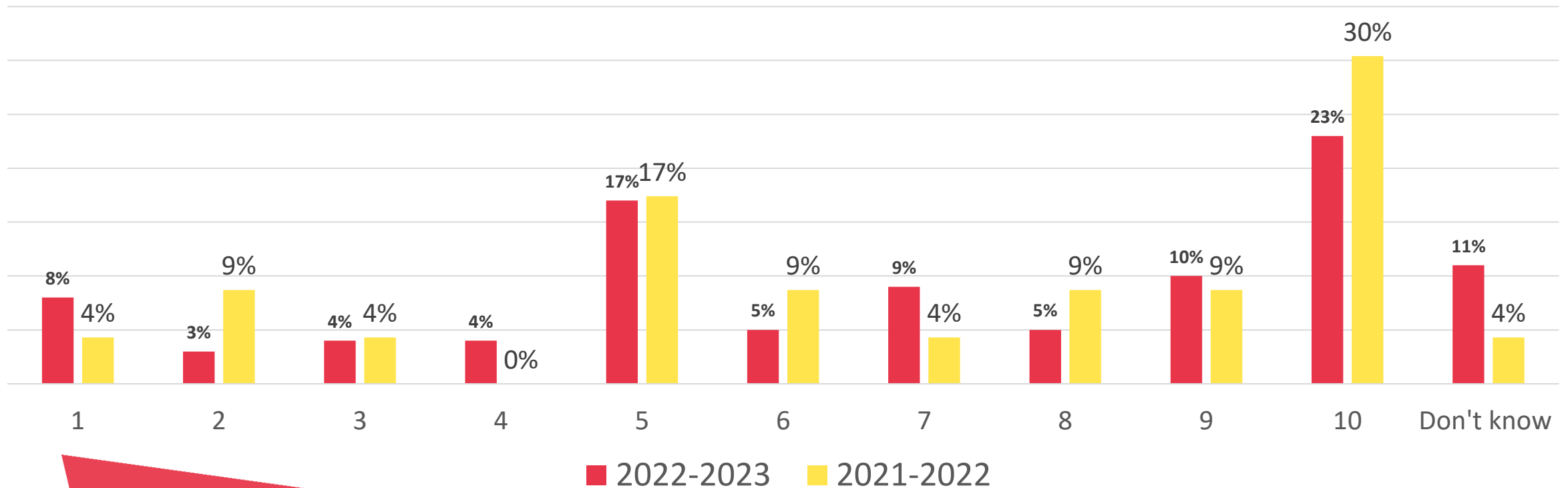
- 28% students are non drinkers, 14% increase on last year (14%, had been stable for a few years)
- Small shift in times a week drinking, seeing a reduction to less than once a week
- 33% of students drink alcohol less than once a week, 18% 2-3 days a week

What would you say is your main reason for not drinking or stopping drinking, alcohol?



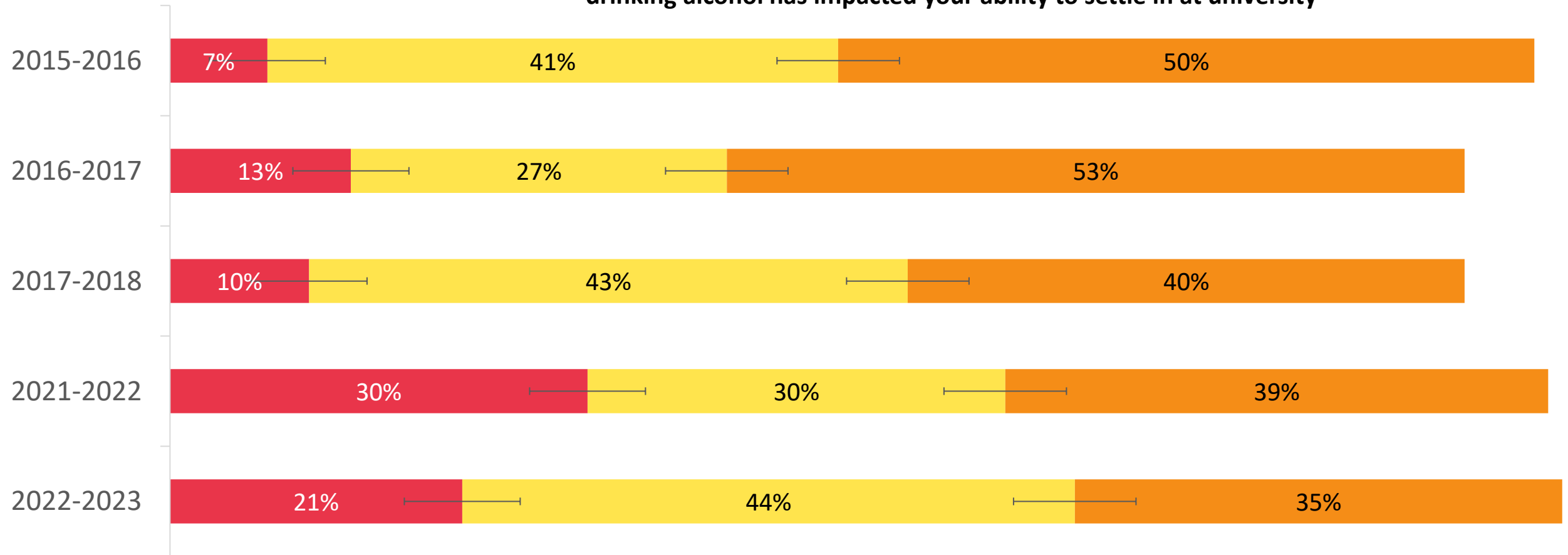
28% students are non-drinkers. 17% increase in consideration for long term effects of alcohol on health.

On a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 = a very negative impact and 10 = a very positive impact
 How do you think that not drinking alcohol has impacted your life at Uni in general



29% say negative impact on ability to meet people
 56% say positive impact on ability to meet new people

On a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 = a very negative impact and 10 = a very positive impact, how do you think that not drinking alcohol has impacted your ability to settle in at university

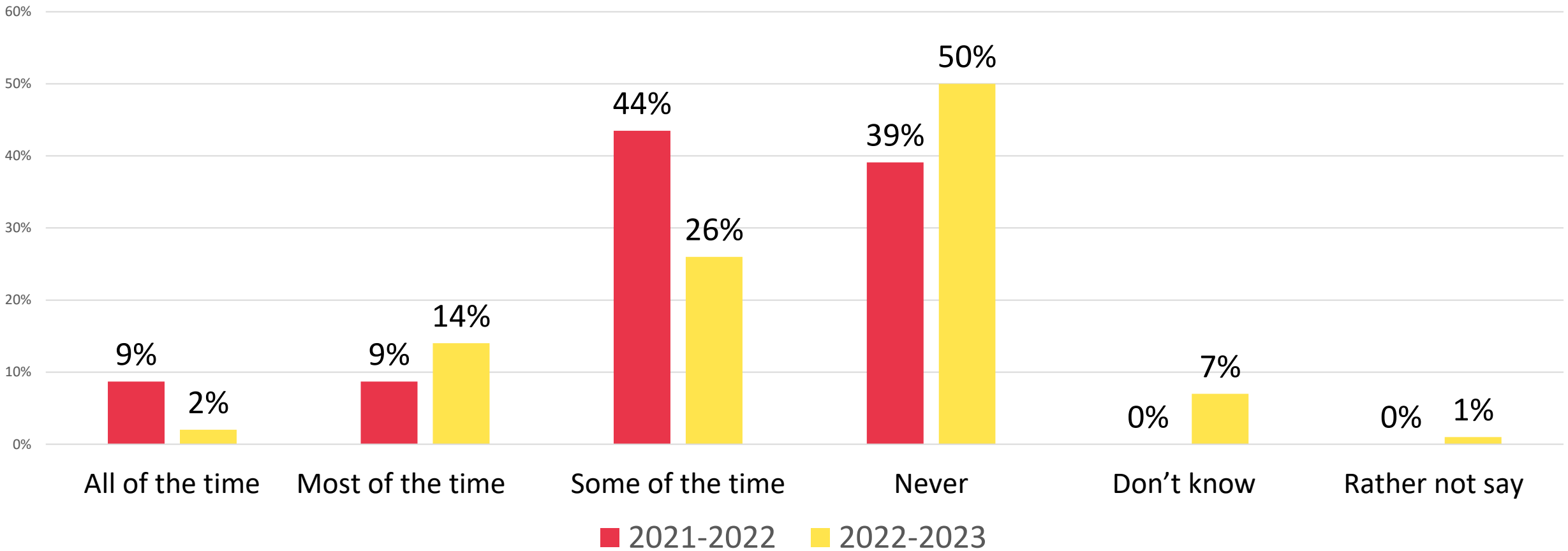


■ 0 - 3 very negative ■ 4 to 7 ■ 8 to 10



9% decrease in very negative impact, still up 11% on pre covid levels.
 Decrease seen year on year for positive impact on ability to settle in.

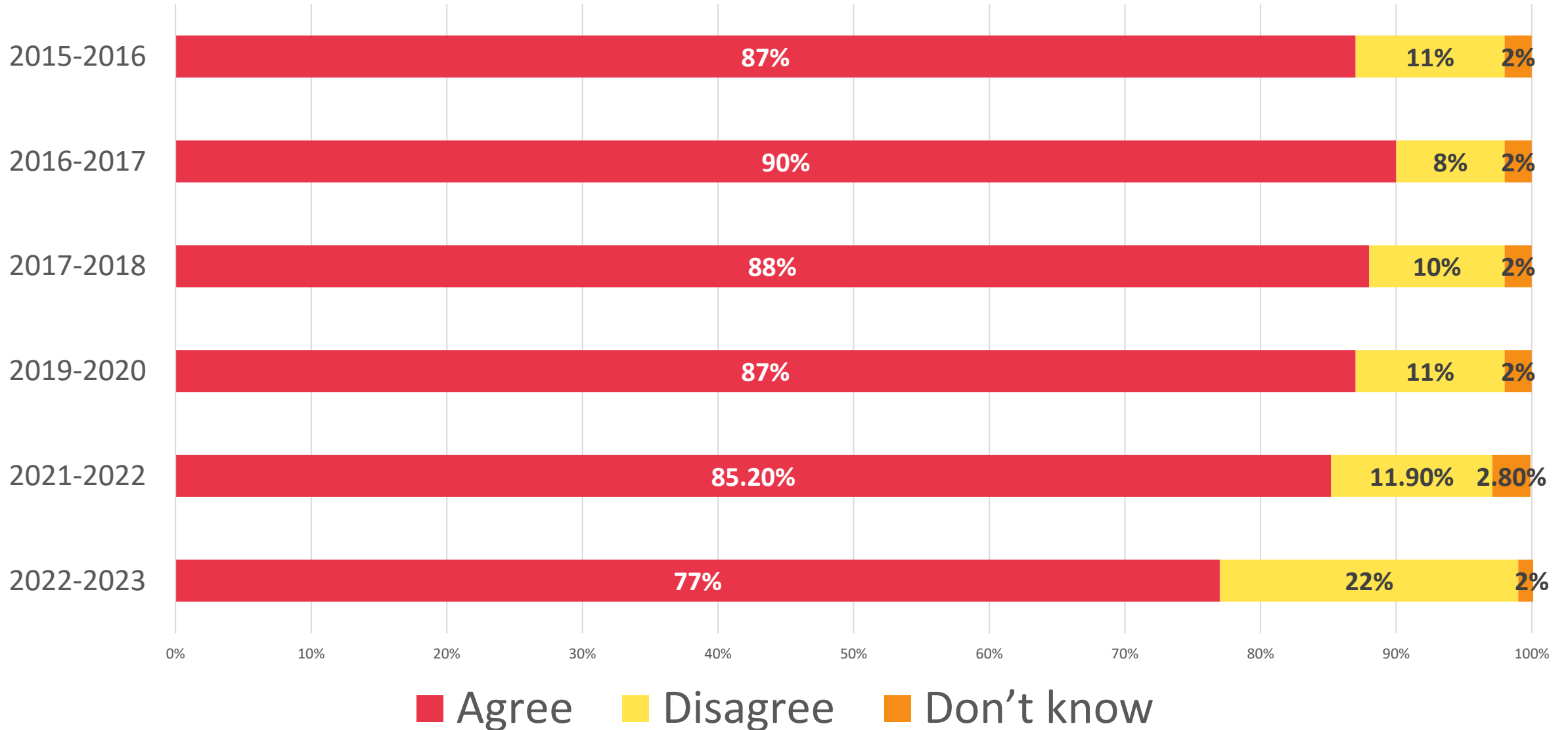
Thinking about the most recent university term, when you were socialising with other students, how often did you feel that your friends expected you to drink alcohol?



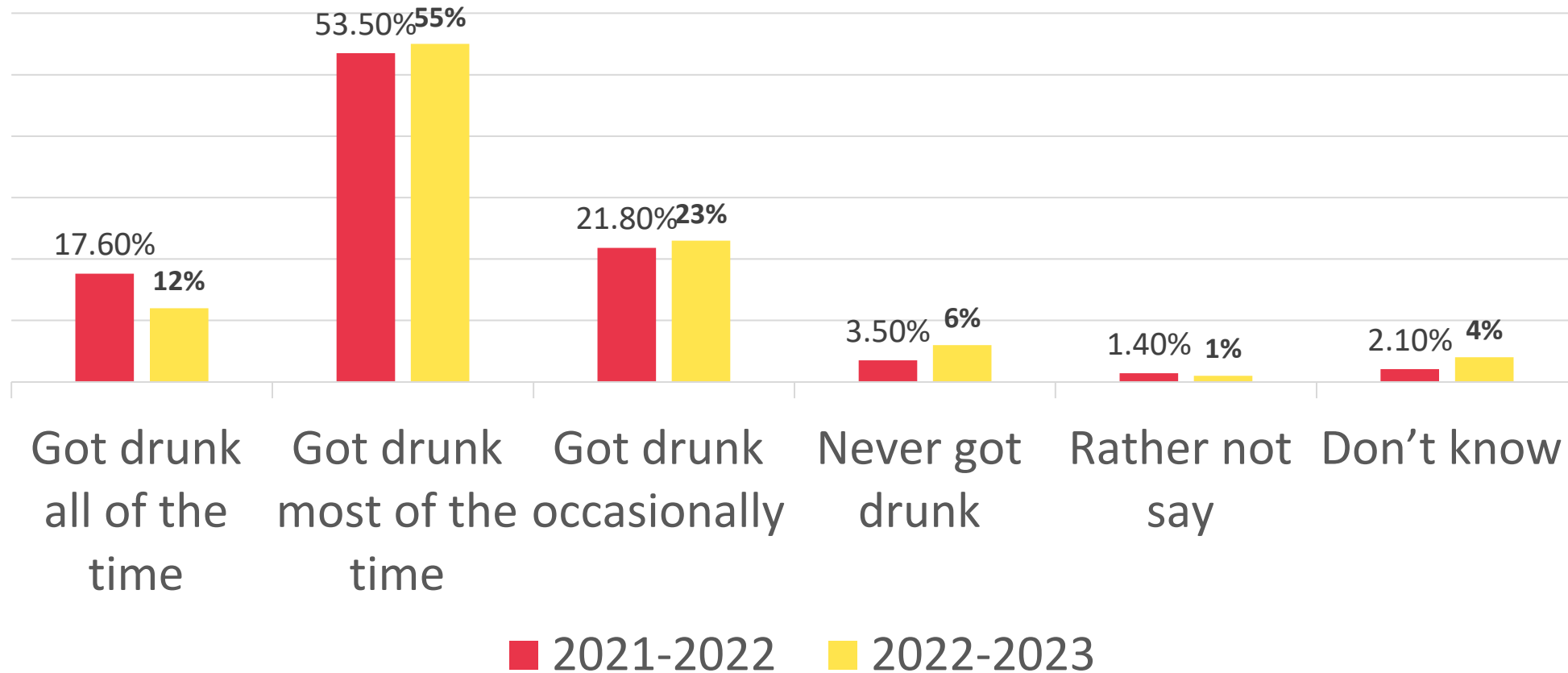
11% increase in students never feeling expected to drink alcohol (up to 50%)



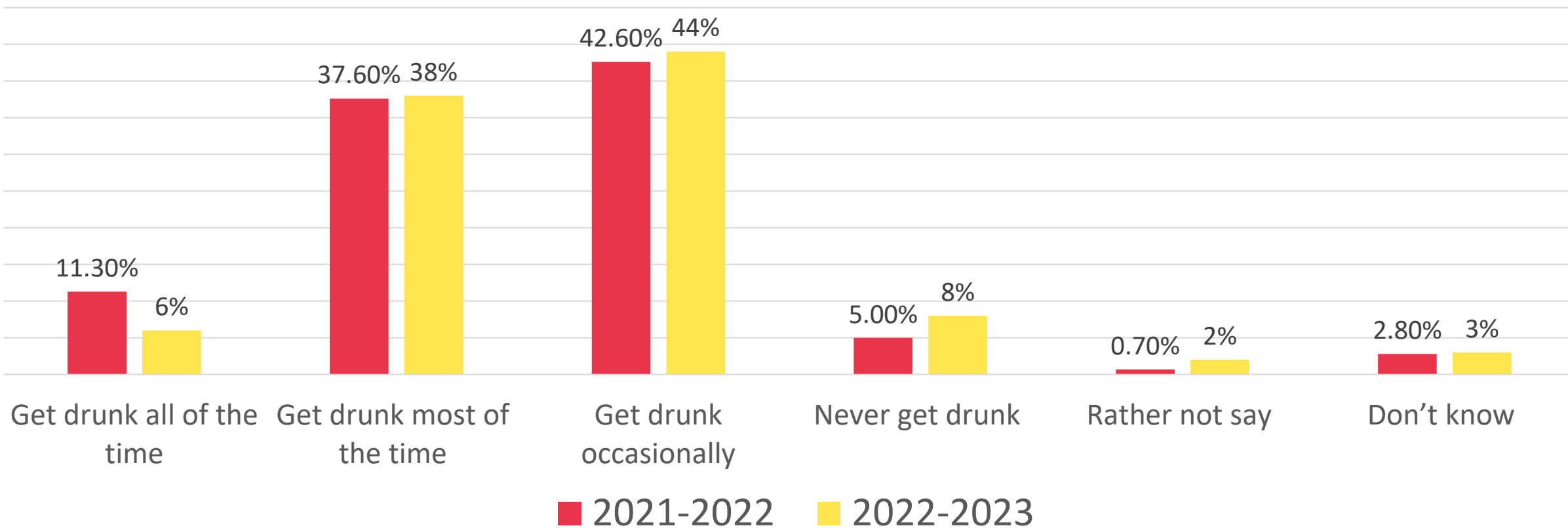
Drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture



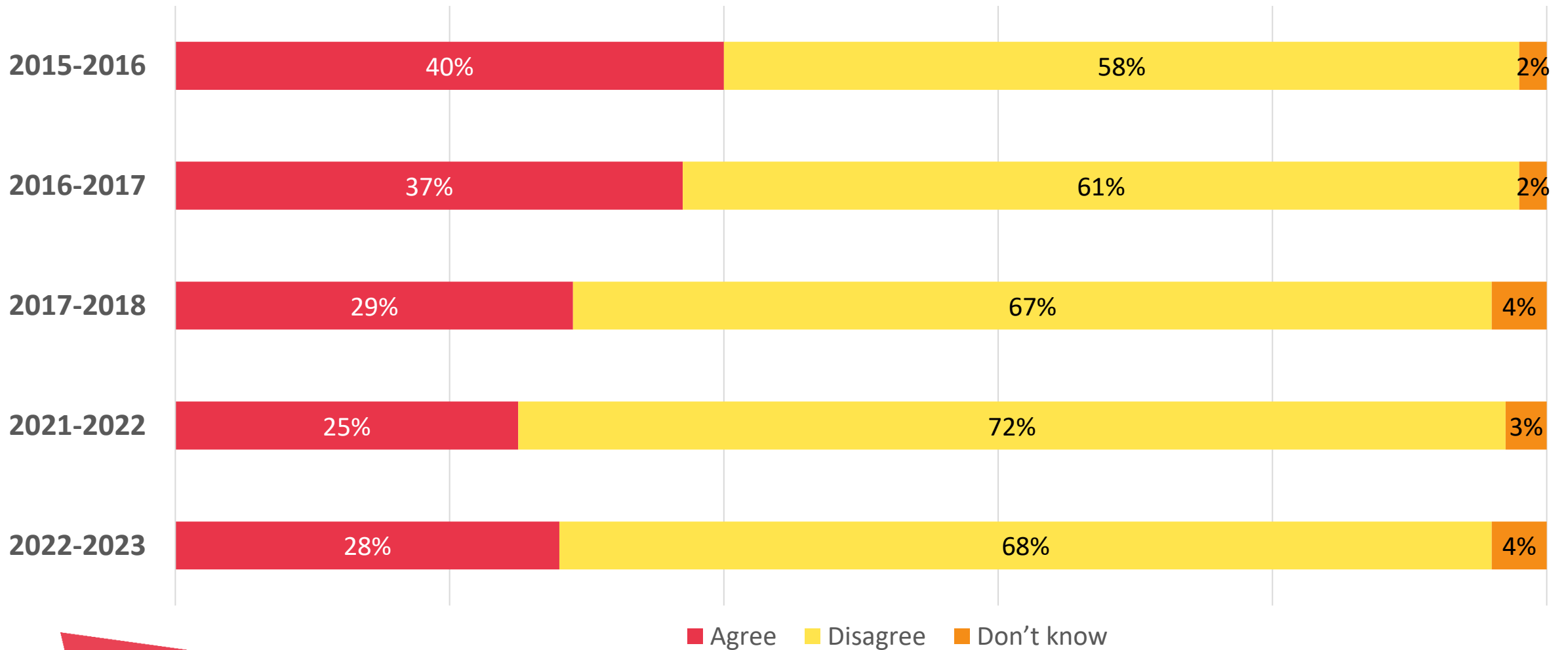
Before arriving at University, did you believe that students...



And now you're a student at university, which of the following best matches your experiences of students?

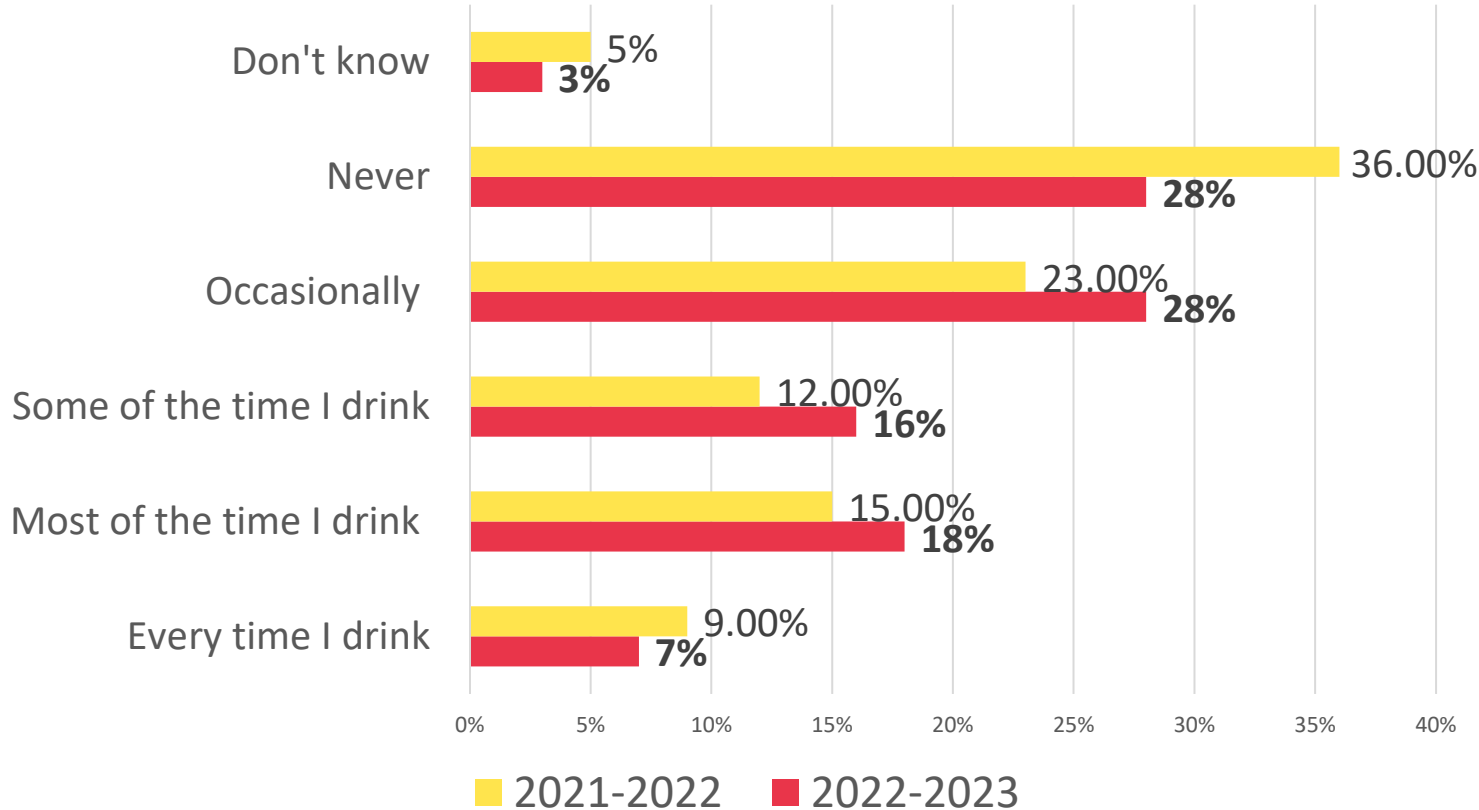


My university friends expect me to drink regularly and get drunk



68% disagreed that friends expect them to drink regularly and get drunk.

How often you felt that your friends, who you were socialising with, expected you to drink alcohol



43% of students agree slightly that getting drunk means they will have a good night out, 7% agree strongly, 50% disagree.

69% agree that pacing yourself means you'll have a better night out for longer (2018 - 61%)

44% (down 10% on 21/22) think it can be hard to not drink too much on a night out, 54% disagree (up 9%).

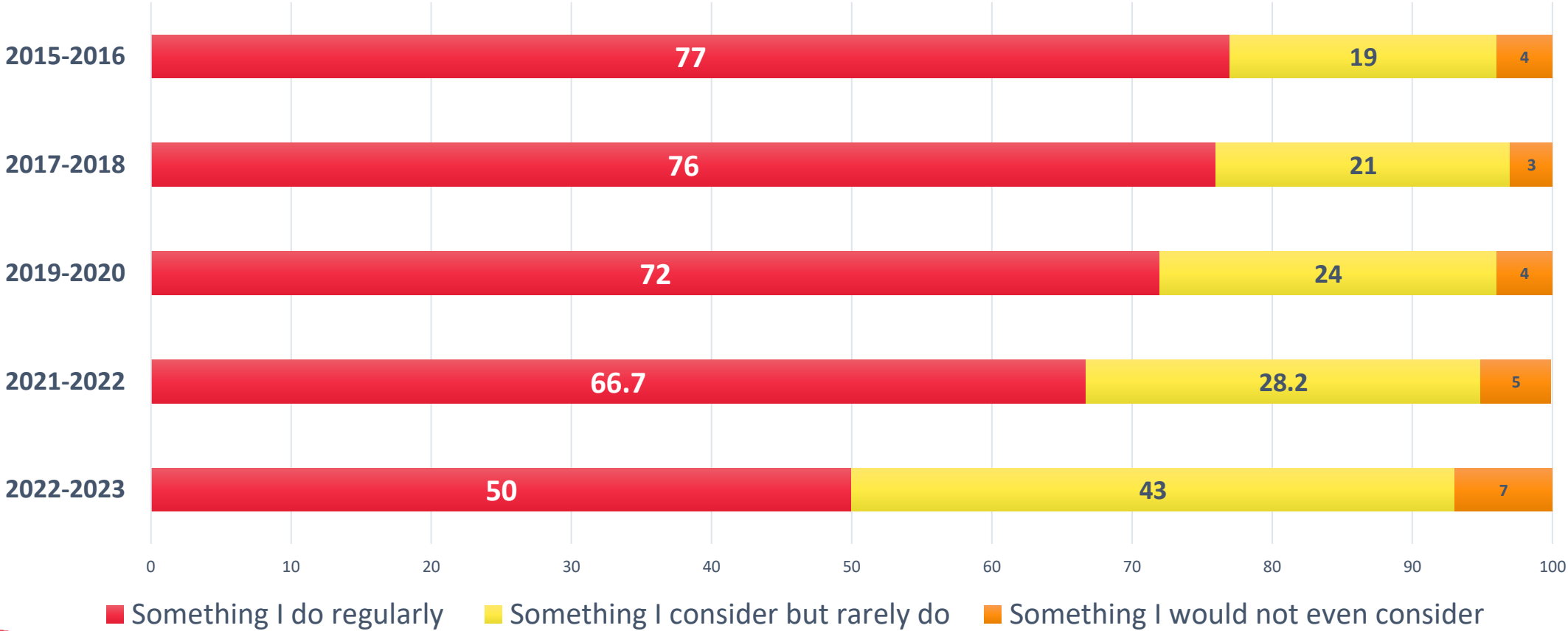
82% agree that drinking too much too quickly can cut short a night out (2% decrease)

79% (72%) do **not** have to get drunk to have a good night out.

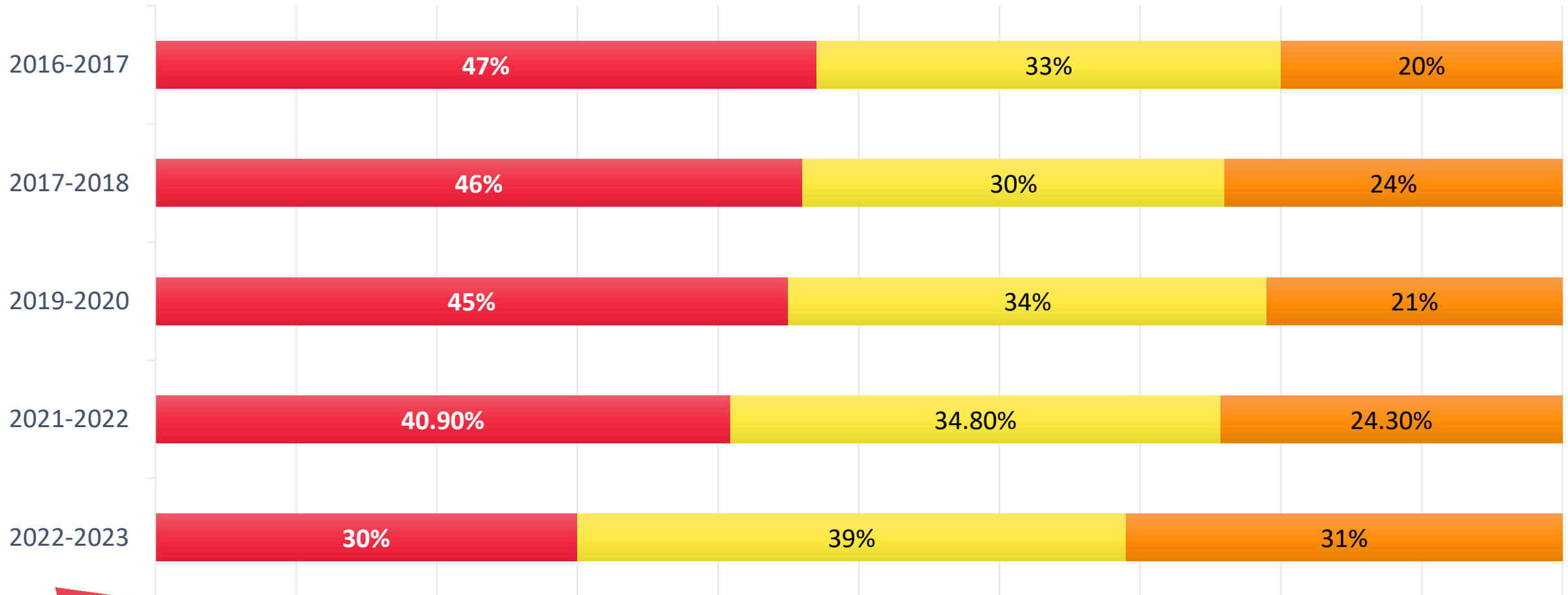
79% don't like socialising with people who get very drunk and ruin the night for others (increase 9%)

89% students agree non drinkers can be fun on a night out (2% decrease).

Start drinking alcohol in your house/friend's house before you go out for the night (%)



Deliberately getting drunk at home before a night out (%)

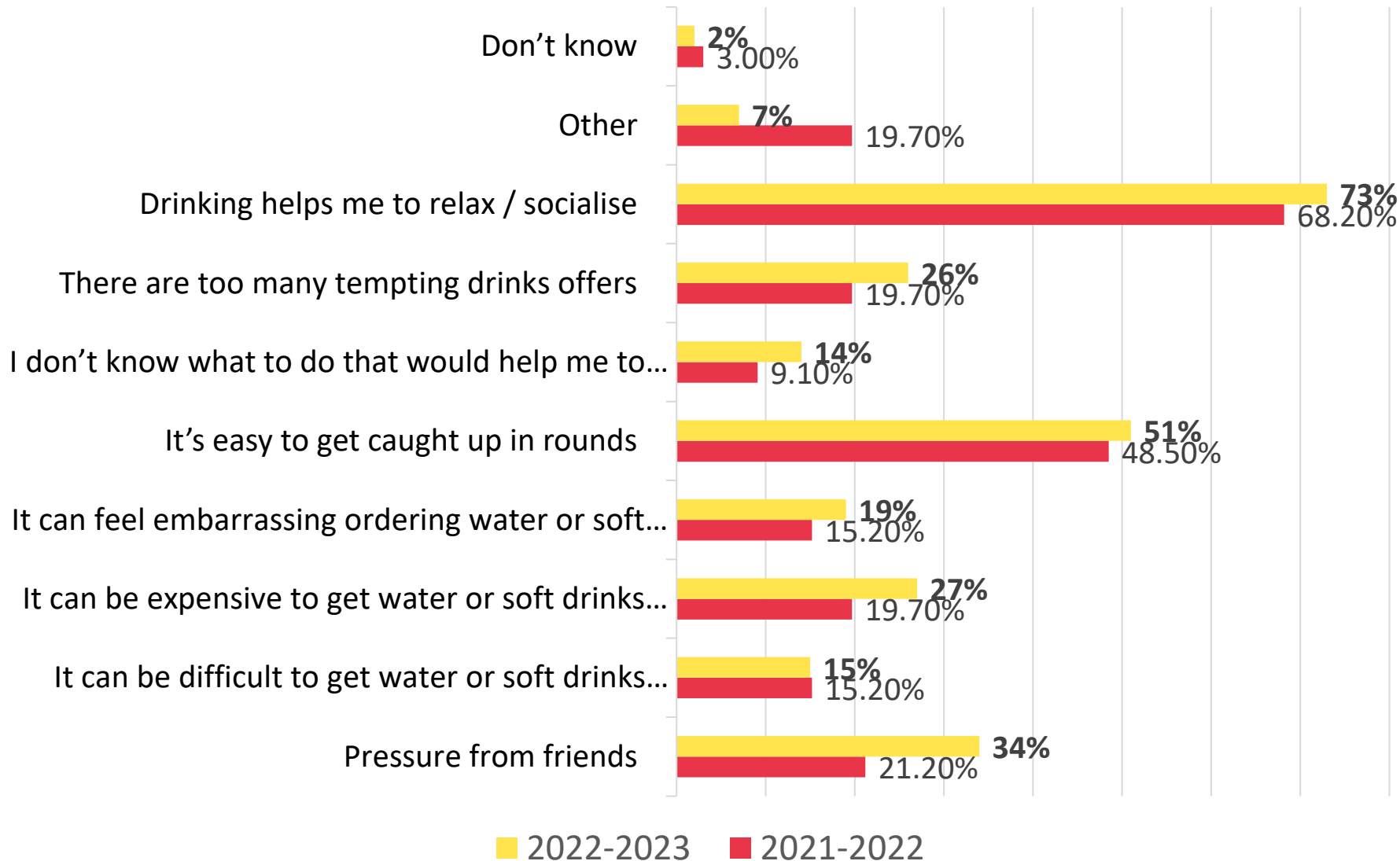


■ Something I do regularly

■ Something I consider but rarely do

■ Something I would not even consider

You agreed it can be difficult not to drink too much on a night out – why do you think that? *Please select all that apply*



Drinking to help relax and socialise has increased by 19% in 21/22 and risen a further 5%.

Drinks offers had decreased by 32% as a motivator in 21/22, rising again, cost of living?

8% increase in pointing to cost of non-alcoholic drinks.

74% drink to fit in with their peers (up from 66%, 12% increase)

Pressure from friends has increased by 13%

76% say student drink to fit in with their peers.

****Recommend campaign on pressure****

Factors to drink more alcohol?

- 16% (down from 22% 21/22) - end up drunk once a week when they were not planning to be.
- 36% (29%) students occasionally take part in drinking games, 19% (28%) some of the time they drink, 15% (19%) most of the time they drink and 7% always.
- 60% students rarely or never buy in rounds, 12% do it most of the time
- 18% students are influenced most of the time to buy larger measures due to deals
- 35% decrease in students taking advantage of happy hours most of the time they drink (26.4% to 17%)
- 68% agree that they tend to stop drinking before they get very drunk, 30% disagree.

77% (84%) agree they think about their behaviour when they drink, compared to 73% in 2018.

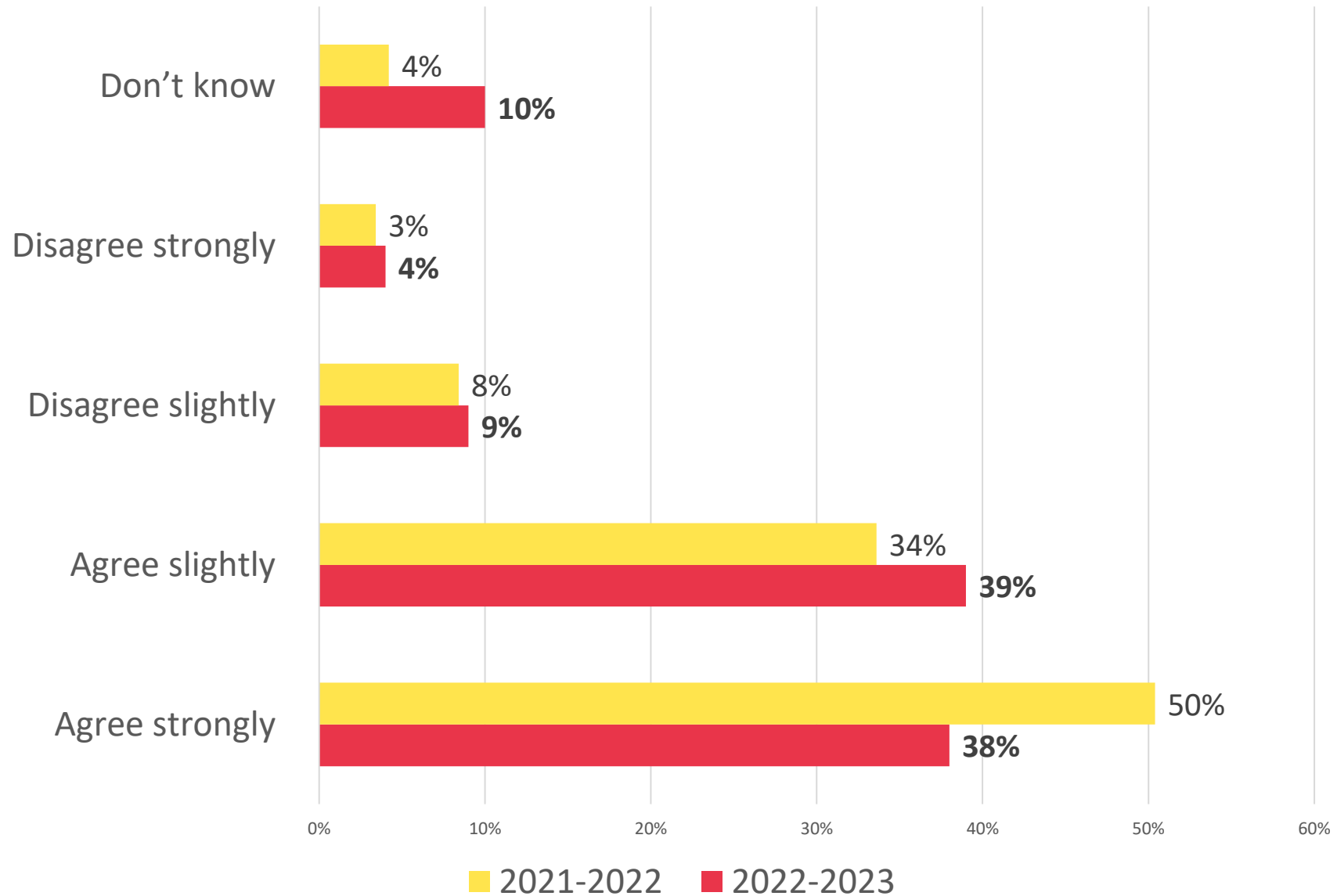
How can we make more students aware of their behaviour?

77% (86%) agree that students don't worry enough about how much alcohol will damage their health, 18% (8%) disagree.

Starting to shift to more health conscious in the short term?

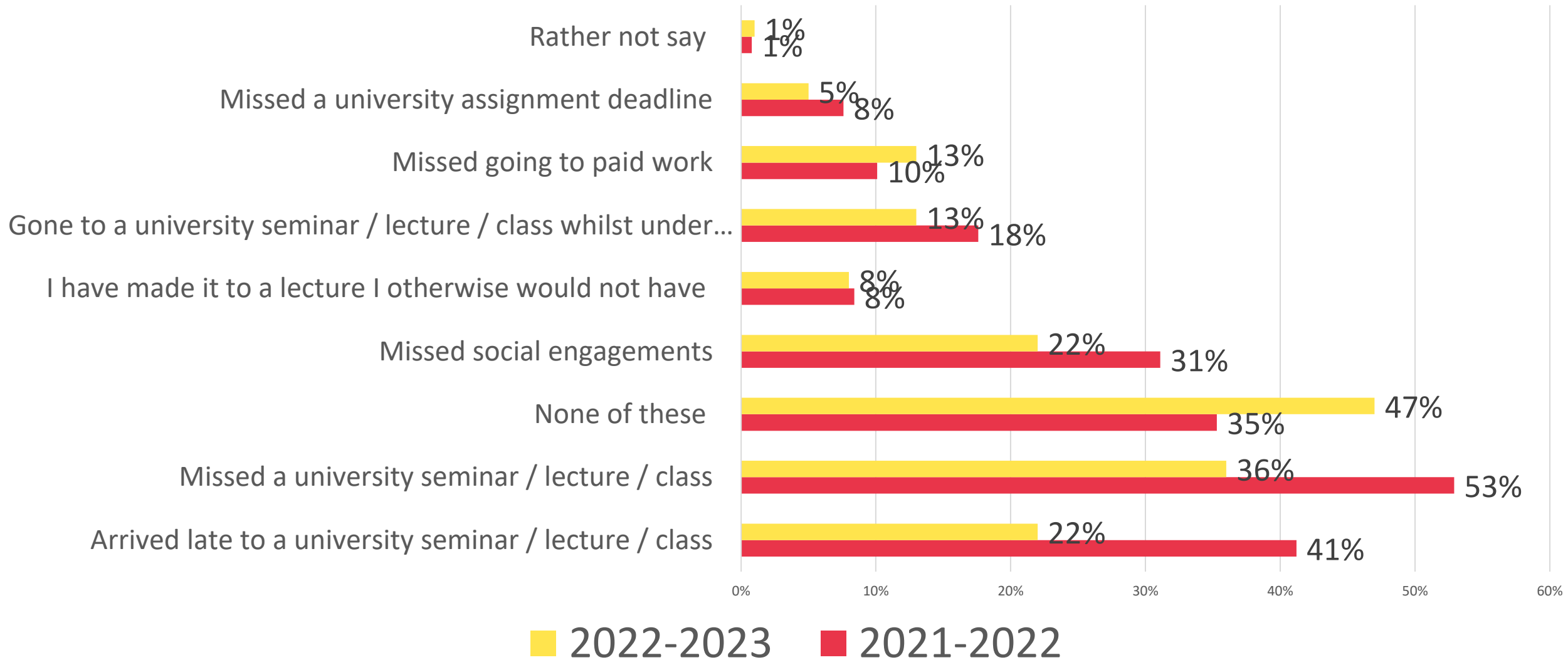


"Nowadays I think more about my behaviour when I drink than I used to"

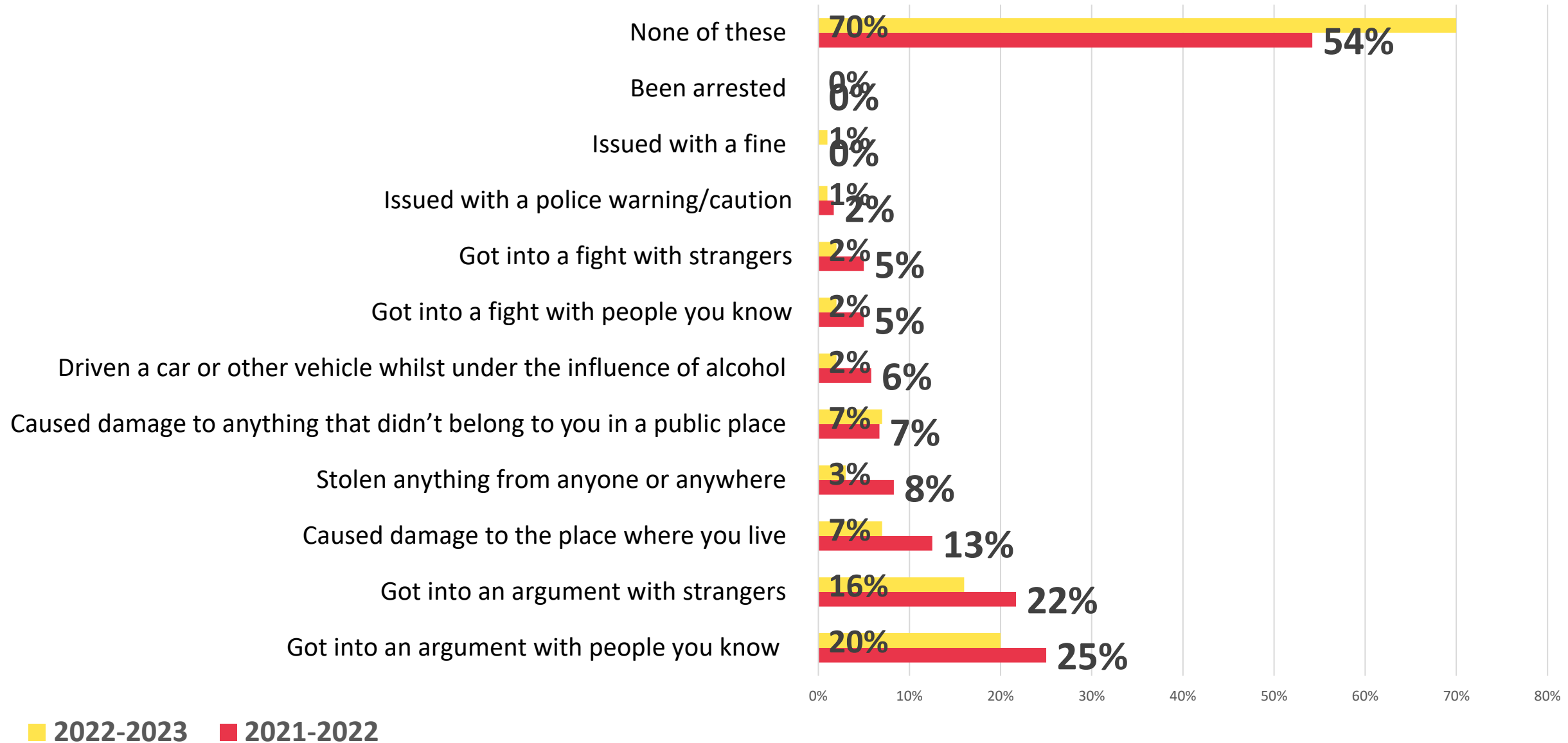


CONSEQUENCES

Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university during or following the consumption of alcohol?

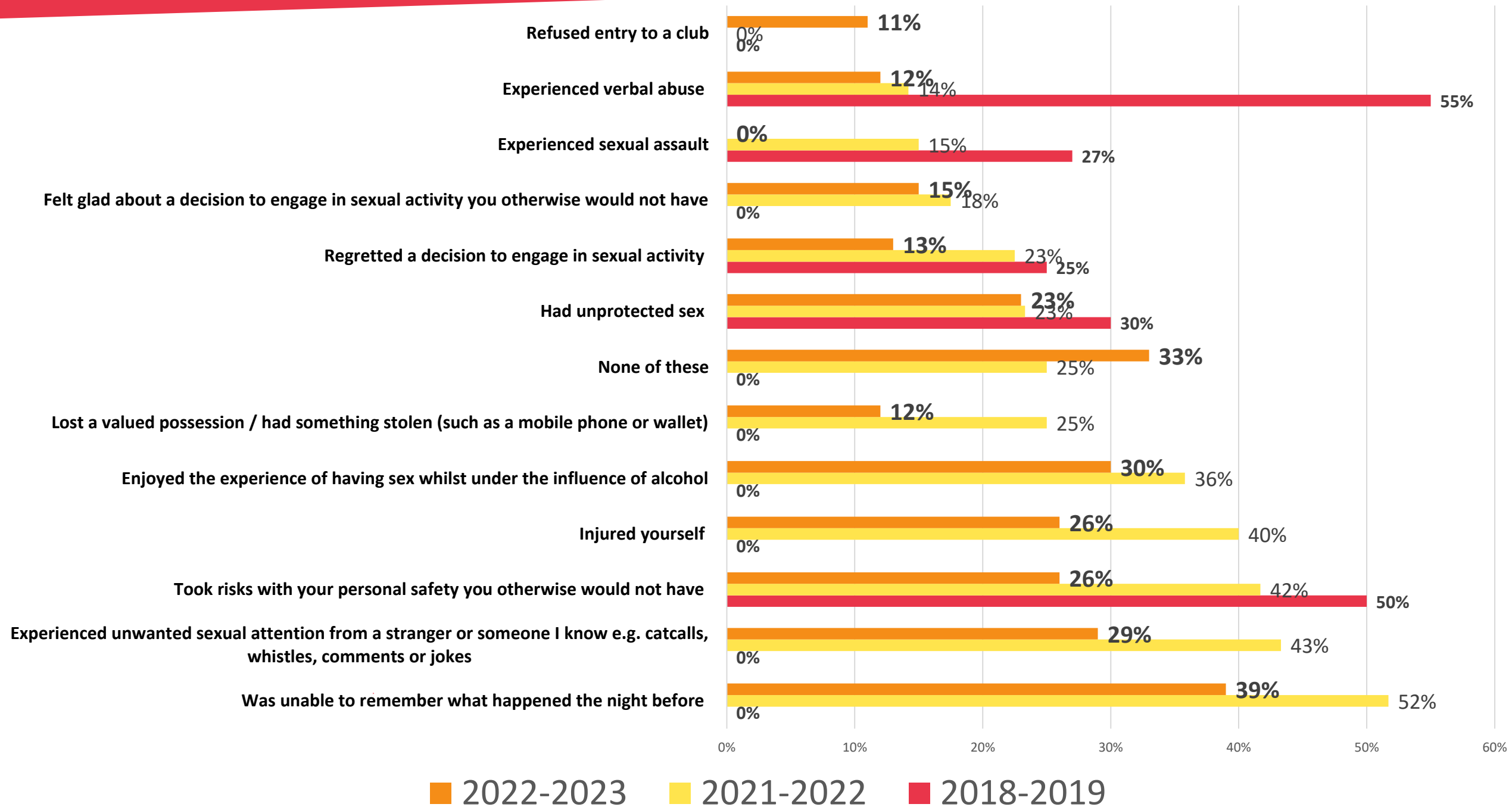


Which of the following have you experienced since you have been at university during or following the consumption of alcohol?

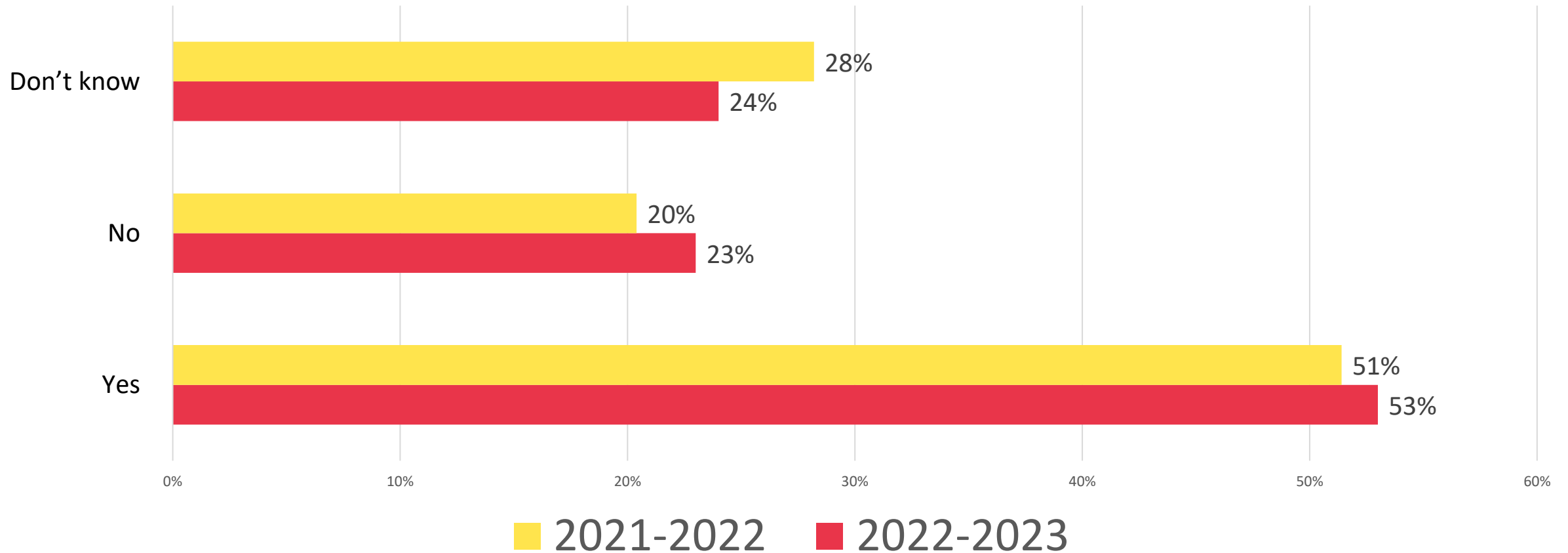


- Down 7% on 21/22, 20% of students said that after consuming alcohol it made existing mental health conditions worse or caused a new mental health condition.
- 63% said alcohol helped them make new friends (down 10% on 21/22), or 40% said it brought them closer to friends and family.
- 7% lost relationships due to consuming alcohol.

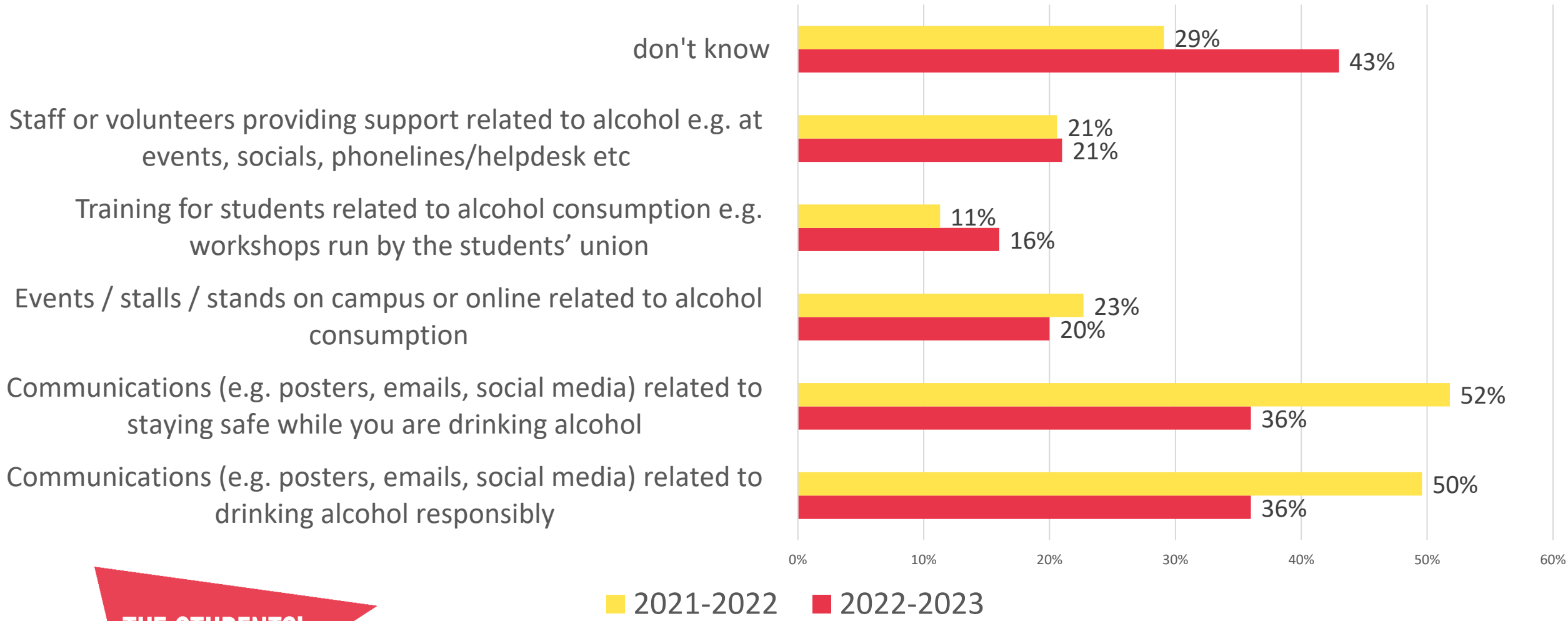




Do you feel that there are enough social events for you at university that do not involve having to drink or get drunk?



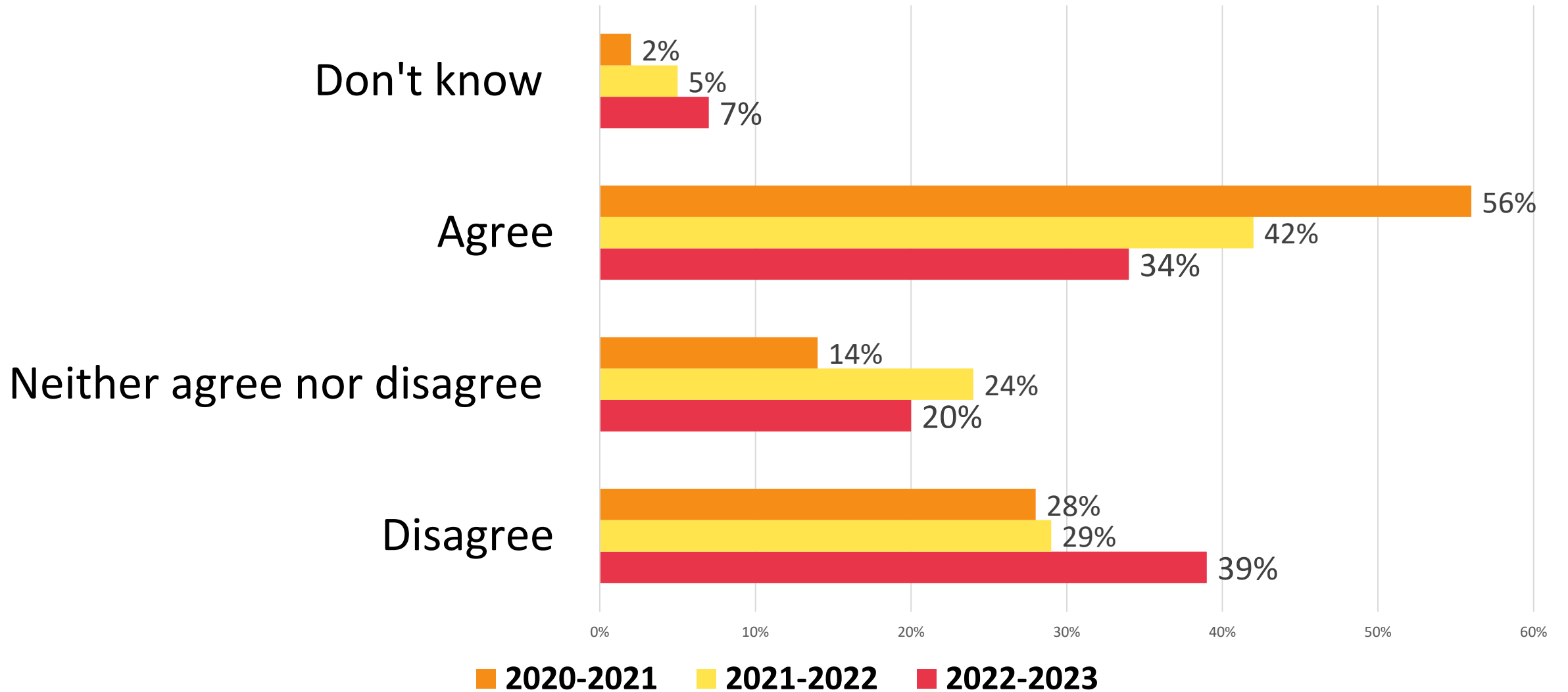
Awareness of responsible drinking campaigns



70% respondents were aware in 2021/2022, reduced to 57% aware. *Halls posters factor?*

Drugs

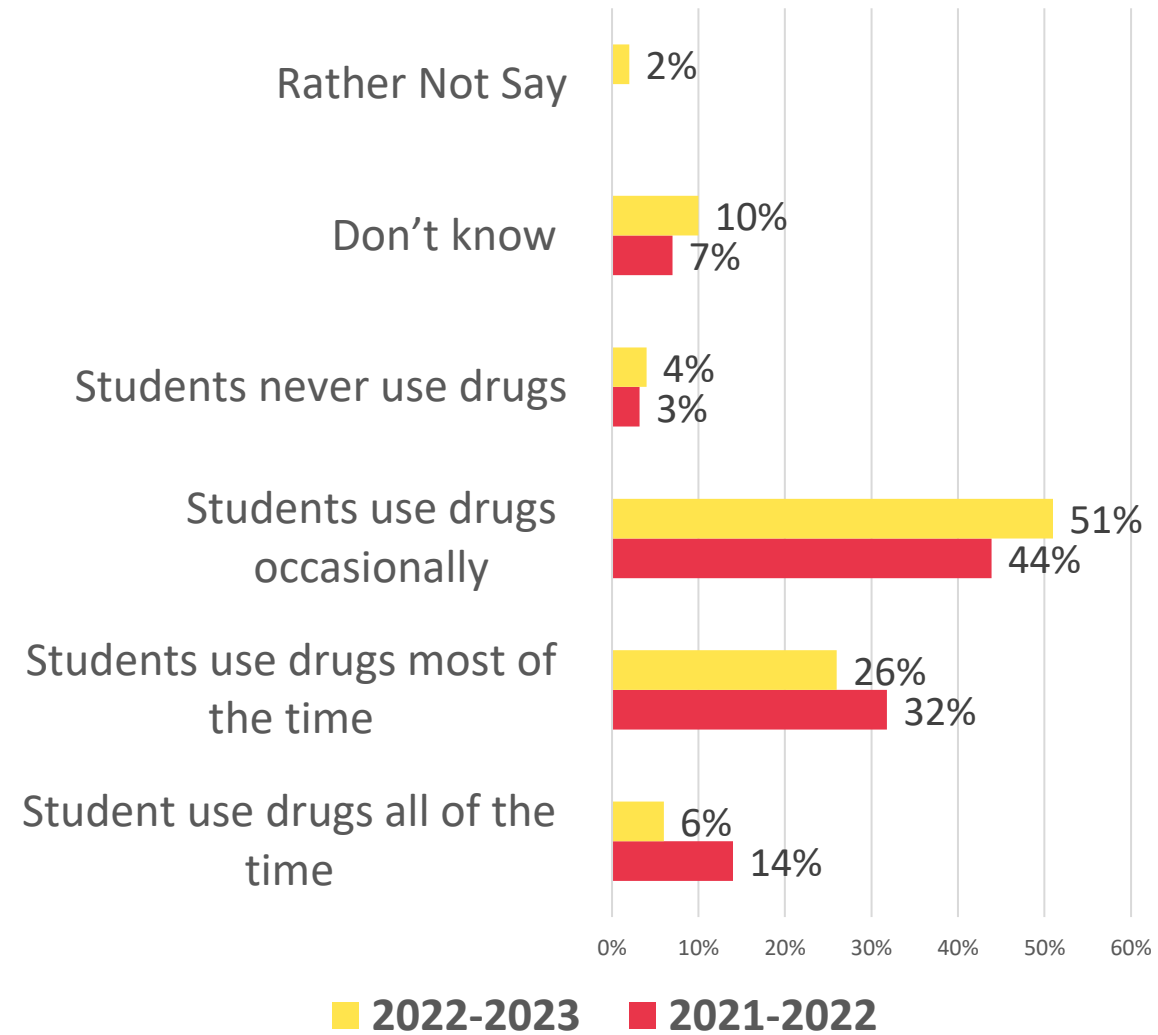
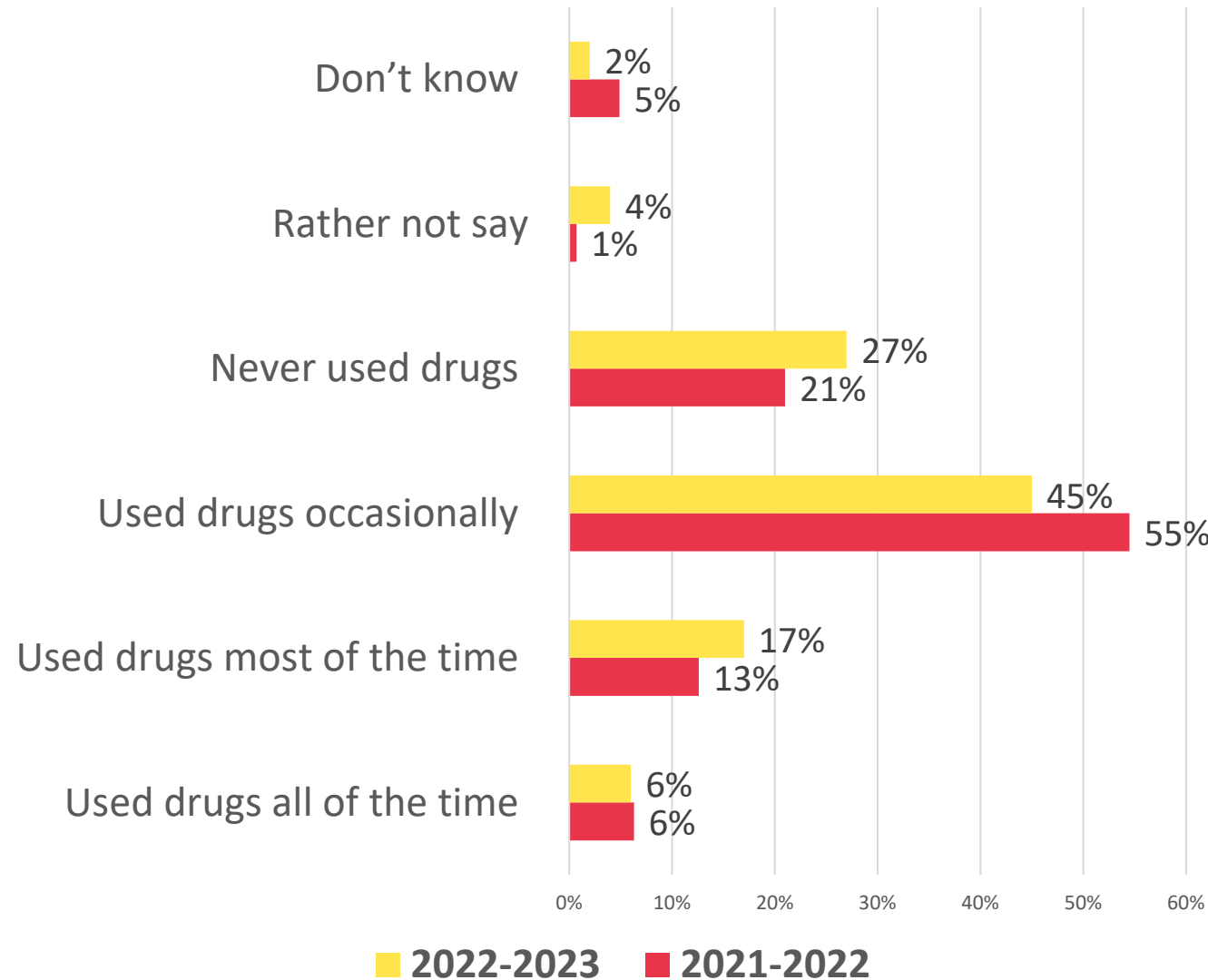
Taking drugs is part of university/college culture



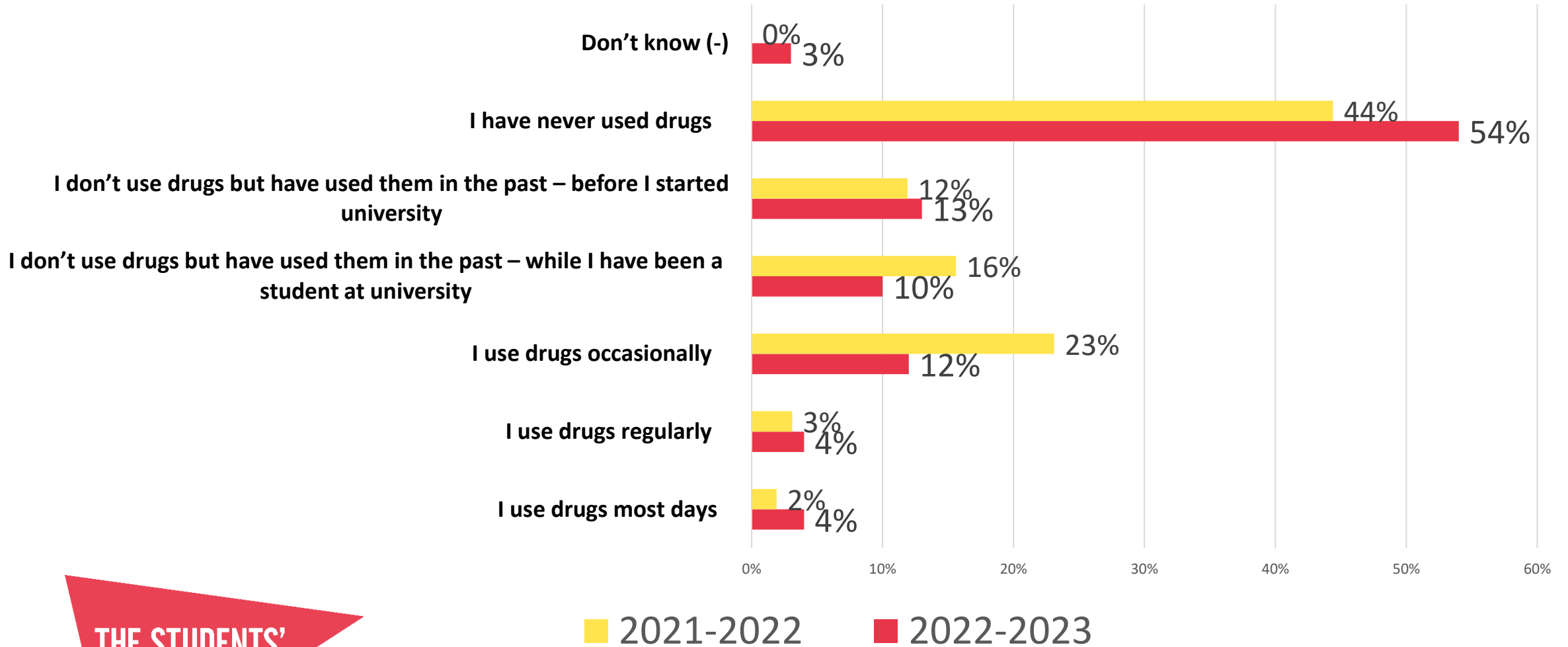
Drug Use: perceptions and perceived reality

Before starting at university/college, did you believe that students...

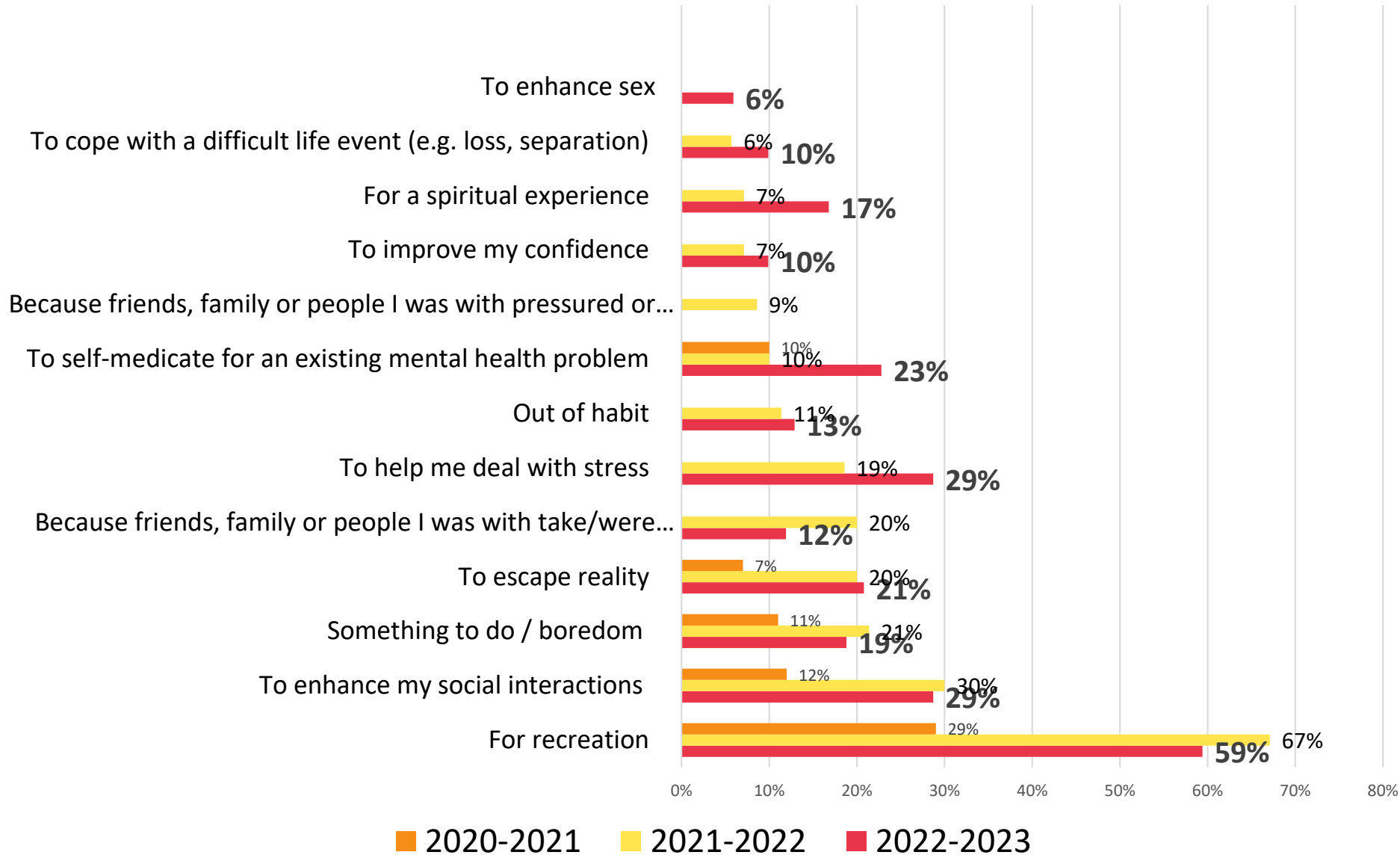
And now you're a student at university/college, which of the following best matches your experiences of drug use?



Which of the following best describes your current frequency of drug use?



Which of the following best describes why you use / have used drugs?



For recreation increased from 29% to 67% last year, it has dropped 8% to 59%.

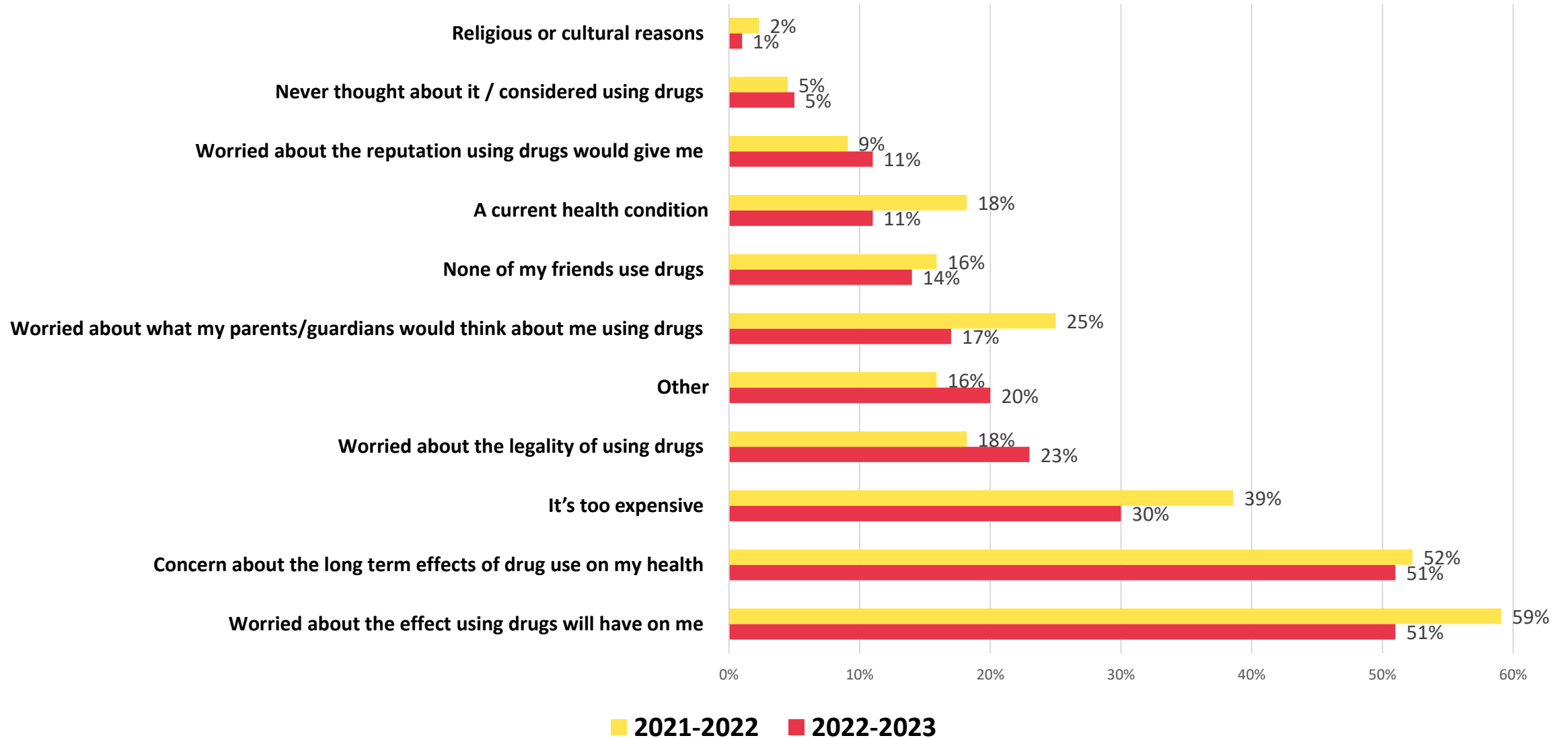
To enhance social interactions has stayed the same (29%)

Dealing with stress increased by 10% (29%)

To self medicate increased by 13%, up to 23%

Escape reality went up from 7% to 20% and has maintained at 21%, with an extra 19% saying it gives them something to do/they are bored

What would you say are your main reasons for not using drugs or stopping using drugs?



- 79% (73%) do not feel pressure to take drugs, 7% (12%) did feel pressure
- 51% agree that student take drugs to fit in with their peers, reduction of 15% in last two years, 16% disagree.
- Year on year reduction in students who do **not** have a problem with students taking drugs recreationally, 47%, (14% reduction in last 2 years). 25% of students disagree and have an issue with drug use.
- 31% (26%) agree that students who take drugs do less well in their studies, 10% increase in last year years. 21% disagree.
- 33% (19% reduction in last two years) agree there is a problematic culture of drugs at UWE, 7% disagreed (many students sitting on the fence or do not know)
- 26% agree that student drug use isn't as problematic as is widely thought, 45% disagree

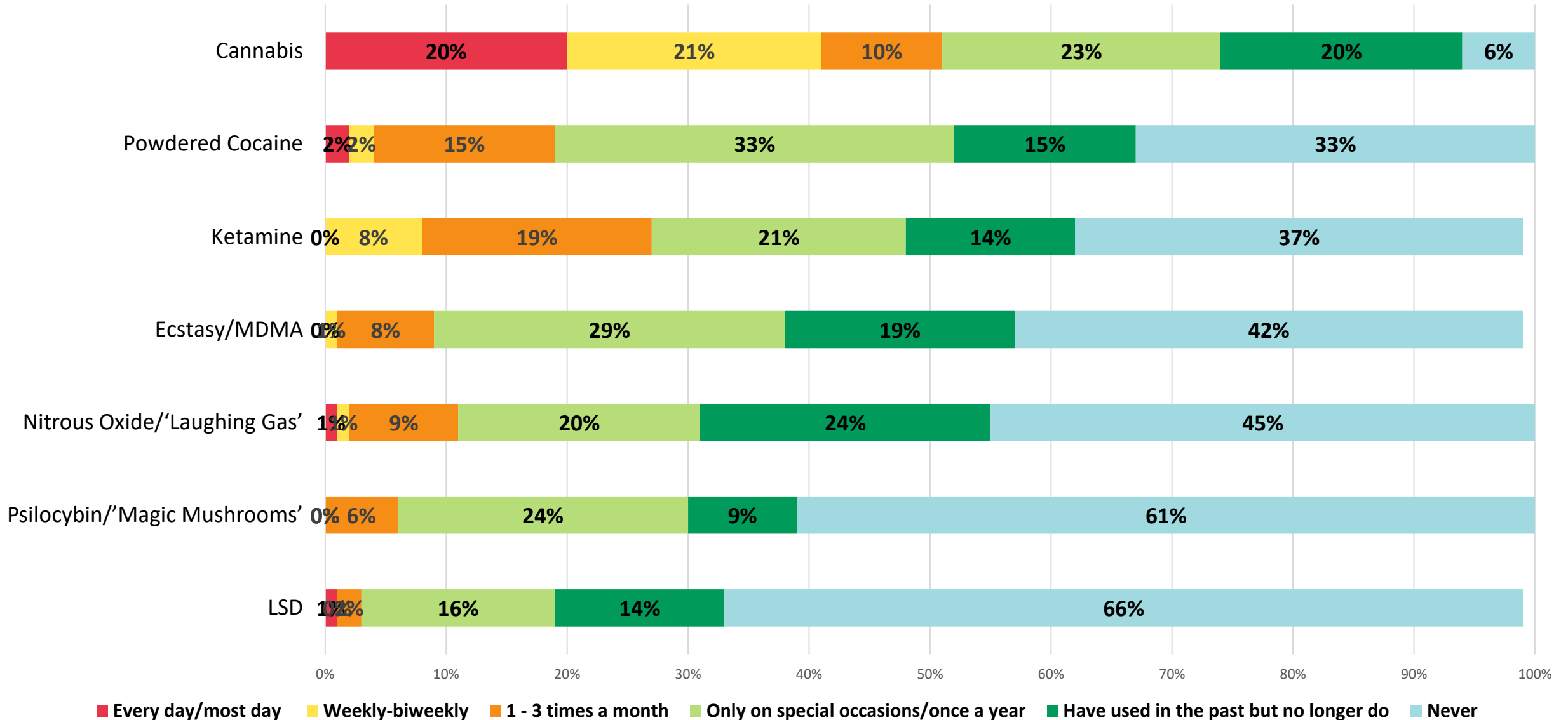
Reflecting on the last semester, students said:

- 73% (80%) of students never felt that their friends expect them to do drugs
- 18% (16%) do feel pressure some of the time
- 1% (2%) feel pressure most of the time

Where do students take drugs most frequently?

- Stay at home/Accommodation: 40% (34%) on a weekly or monthly basis, 24% never (14% every day)
- Local Nightclub: 34% (24%) on a weekly or monthly basis, 38% never
- House Party: 32% (34%) on a weekly or monthly basis, 19% never
- Local Pub/Bar: 24% (15%) on a weekly or monthly basis, 53% never
- Other: most common was in nature, in the woods: 14% (10%) on a weekly or monthly basis
- Students' Union, Union 2: 1% take there most days - 94% never take drugs there

Thinking about your time at university/college, which of the following best describes your frequency of particular drug use?



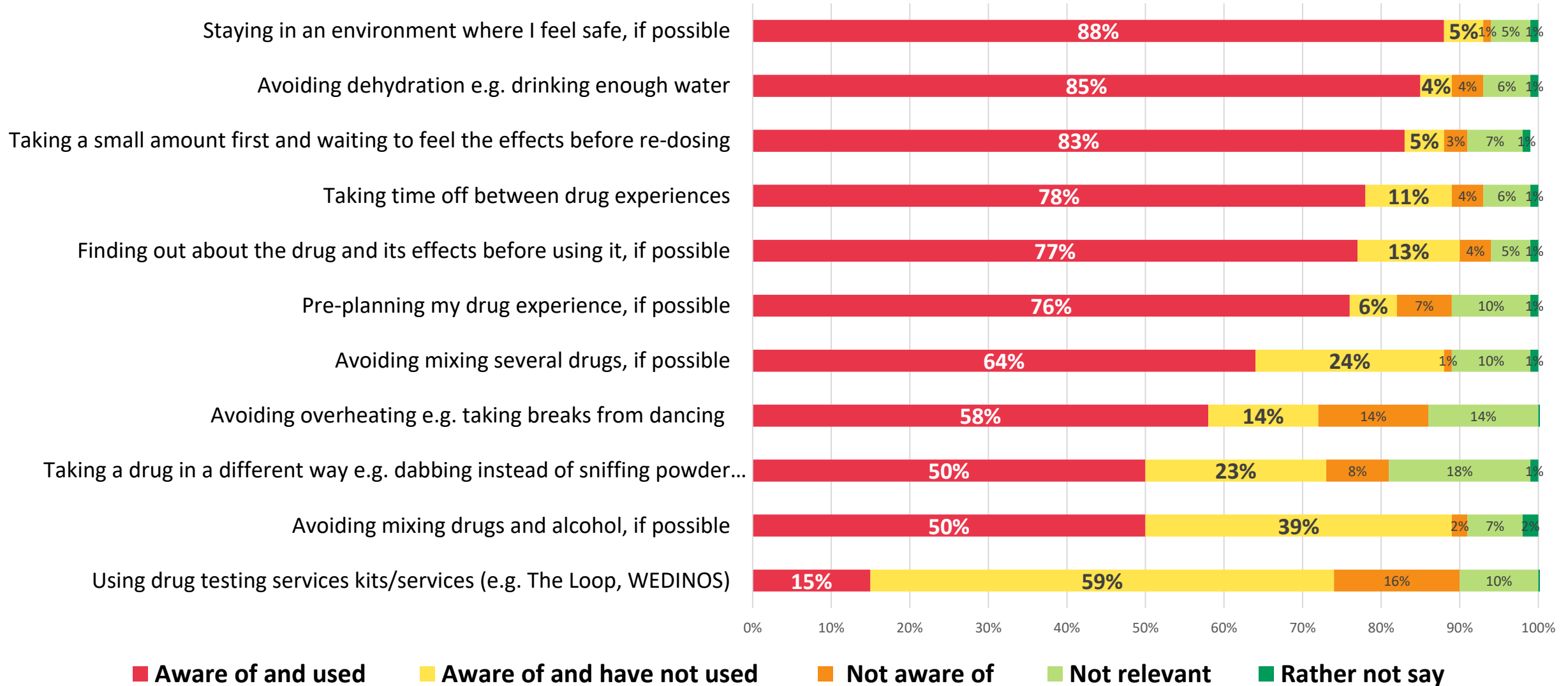
Mixing Drugs

- 50% of students were aware of avoiding mixing drugs and alcohol and have used this strategy
- A further 39% of students were aware of this and haven't used the strategy
- Only 2% were not aware of this as way to reduce the potential harm of taking drugs

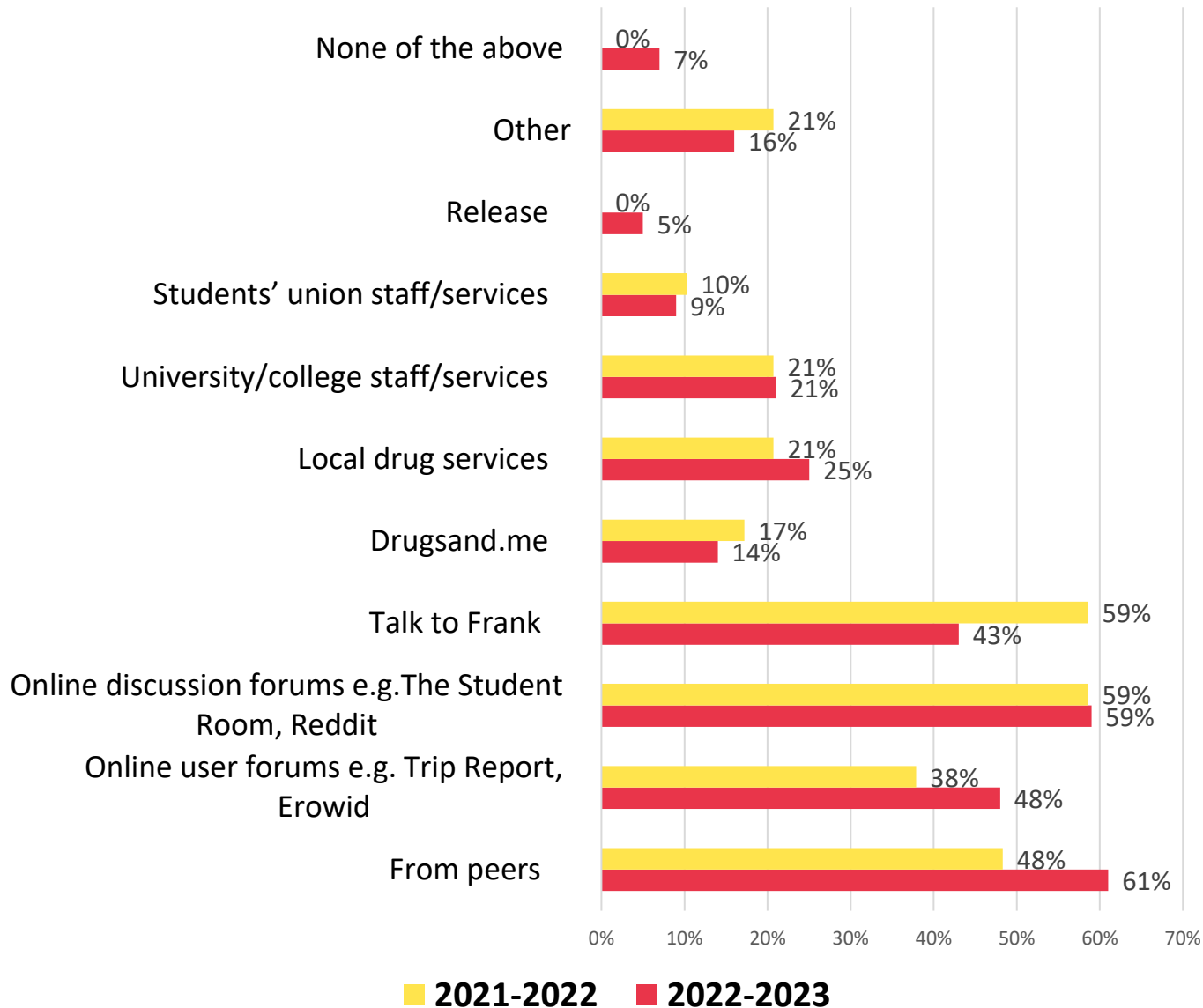
- 64% of students were aware of and have used avoiding mixing several drugs to reduce harm
- Only 1% were not aware of this



Which of the following steps, if any, are you aware of/do you take to reduce the potential harm caused by taking drugs?



Which of the following best describes where you access drug advice and information?



Students get information from their peers (61%), online discussion forums (e.g. Reddit – 59%), User Forums (48%) and Talk to Frank (43%)

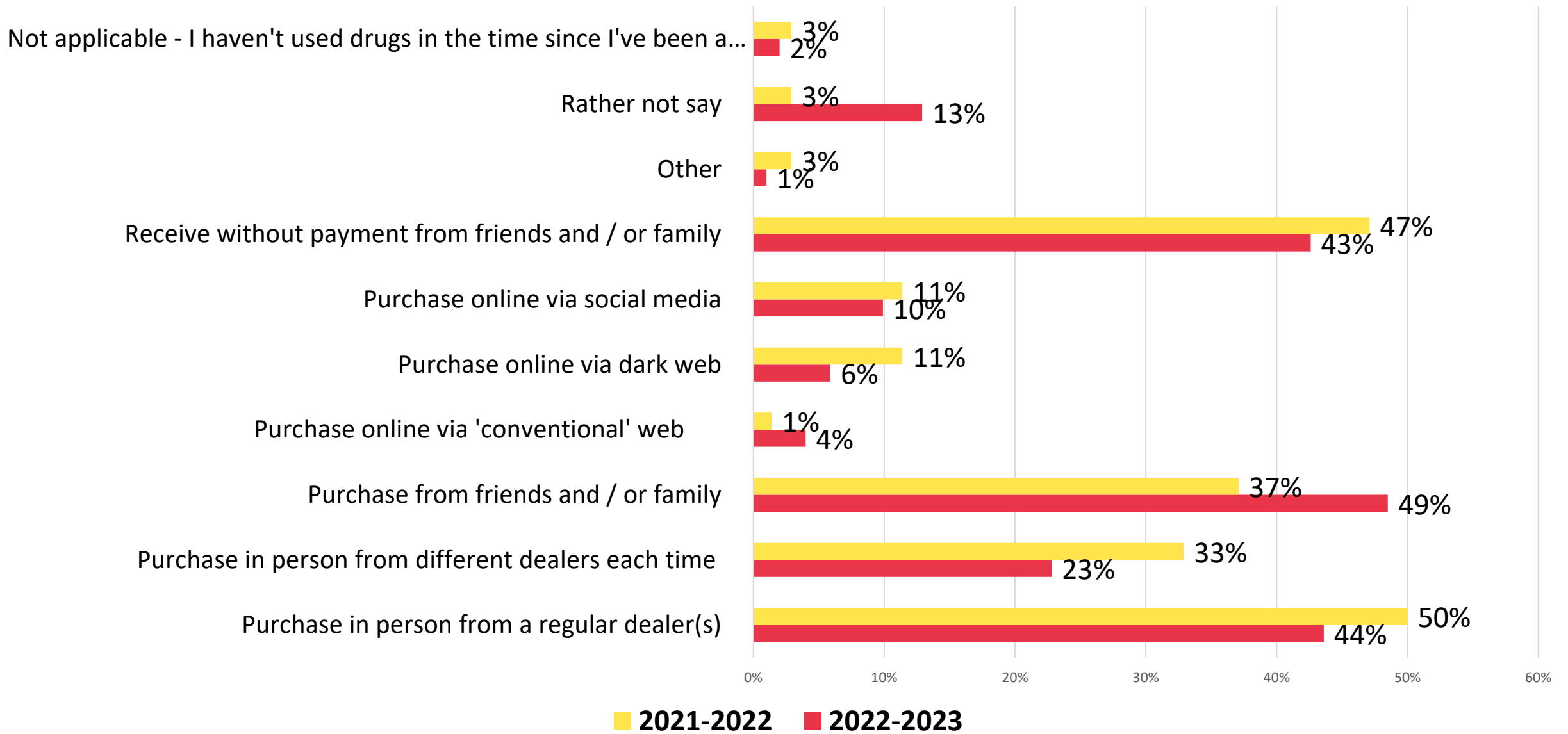
11% were not aware of the support available through UWE Bristol compared to 75% last year!

48% of students said “I know where to access any advice on or educational information about drugs (informally or formally) but don’t need it” (increase 4%)

13% of students said “I know where to access any advice on or educational information about drugs (informally or formally) and have used it” (decrease 5%)

6% of students said “I don’t know where to access any advice on or educational information about drugs (informally or formally) but would like to” – this is a reduction of 4% on last year (10%).

Which of the following describes where or how you acquire drugs? Please select all that apply



University Drugs Policy

75% (73%) of students are aware that the university has a drugs policy and 40% of students know at least a little of what the policy says.

Students believe:

- The university should not be punishing students who take drugs (44% agree, 21% disagree, 15% don't know)
- Feeling confident in disclosing information about my drug use to my university/college without fear of punishment (32% agree, 28% disagree, 17% don't know)
- 50% students feels that if they turned to UWE for support, they would get the right support, 13% disagree
- 78% believe that the University should provide support to students who take drugs

Consequences experienced during or following taking drugs?

- 32% were unable to remember what happened the night before
- 31% missed a University lecture or 19% arrived late
- 25% took risks with personal safety they would not have otherwise done
- 22% has unprotected sex
- 16% made an existing mental health condition worse
- 14% lost relationships or became less close with friends and family
- 13% injured themselves
- 14% missed social engagements
- 8% (13%) missed paid work
- 8% (11%) searched for drugs by police/security
- 3% (8%) caused a new mental health conditions
- 51% made new friends
- 46% became closer to existing friends or family
- 29% enjoyed the experience of having sex on drugs
- 13% (16%) improvement in day to day mental health condition

Cost of Living impact on Drugs and Alcohol

Due to the cost of living crisis....

- I think I'll drink alcohol **more** this academic year: 8% agree, 53% disagree
- I think I'll use drugs more this academic year: 7% agree, 24% disagree (59% not applicable, don't use drugs)
- I think I'll drink alcohol **less** this academic year: 41% agree, 19% disagree
- I think I'll use drugs less this academic year: 18% agree, 9% disagree (62% not applicable, don't use drugs)
- I plan to go out less this academic year: 58% agree, 14% disagree
- I plan to engage in more social activities that don't involve alcohol: 40% agree, 18% disagree
- Affected an existing health issue (mental or physical) which has made me more reliant on the drugs I use: 11% agree, 22% disagree

I am a mature student studying my first year of undergraduate. I am 12 years older than most of my peers. We do not socialise in a manner where drugs are used, sold or discussed

I feel like it is normalised for people to get high for attention, like in a boring lecture being the class clown being high and not understanding what is going on and things like that

People take drugs. I don't anymore because I get panic attacks but It's a part of growing up.

I will use alcohol or drugs regardless of cost of living crisis. Drug and alcohol use are a symptom of a larger socio-economic problem, I would expect these behaviours to persist or even increase with the cost of living crisis. Excessive alcohol and drug use in a party atmosphere by students cannot be conflated with excessive alcohol and drug use as a means of coping with life, mental health etc.