

THE QUARTERLIFE CRISIS: SUPPORTING YOUNG ADULT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING DURING THE COLLEGE-TO-CAREER TRANSITION

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The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research

Acknowledgements

The mission of the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research is to promote the full participation in socially valued roles of transition-age youth and young adults (ages 14-30) with serious mental health conditions. We use the tools of research and knowledge translation in partnership with this at risk population to achieve this mission.

Visit us at: <http://www.umassmed.edu/TransitionsACR>

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The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research

Our Objective

Gain a better understanding of the challenges college graduates face, including challenges to their emotional and mental health, as they transition to the workforce.



Why is this work important?

- Research on this topic is rare
- Expanded focus to include those with and without diagnoses
- College-to-career transition occurs during an age associated with mental health concerns
 - Young Americans (18-33 years old) experience the most stress of any generation and admit they are not managing it well.¹
 - 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.²
 - The % of adults seriously considering suicide is highest (7.4%) between ages 18 to 25.³



METHODS



The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research

Methods – National Survey

- National telephone survey – approx. 20 minutes long
- Informed by literature review
- Conducted by Harris Poll

- Sought information related to:
 - Specific challenges young adults experienced during the college-to-career transition
 - Existing strategies to support young adults and their emotional health



Methods – National Survey

- 1,929 interviews across 3 groups (April-July 2017)
 - College seniors
 - Recent college graduates
 - Employers of recent graduates
- Respondents were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys – limitation in representation



Examples of Questions

College Seniors

- How would you describe your senior year of college?
 - (lengthy list of adjectives to choose from)

Recent Graduates

- Rate level of agreement: “I had the support and resources I needed to help me deal with the transition out of college”
 - (multiple choices: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree)

Employers

- How well do you feel your company trains new hires?
 - (multiple choices: not at all well, not very well, somewhat well, very well)



PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS



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College seniors (n=421)

Eligibility Requirements:

- US resident
- Age 20-26
- Currently in their final year at a 2 or 4 year college in the U.S.
- Attend all/most classes in person

Respondent Demographics:

Gender	
Male	55%
Female	45%
Transgender	1%

Race/Ethnicity	
White	54%
Hispanic/Latino	19%
Black/African American	13%
Asian/Pacific Islander	8%
Other/declined to answer	6%



Recent college graduates (n=1,008)

Eligibility Requirements:

- US resident
- Age 19-27
- Graduated from a 2 or 4 year college between 2013 and 2016
- Currently employed or have been employed since graduation

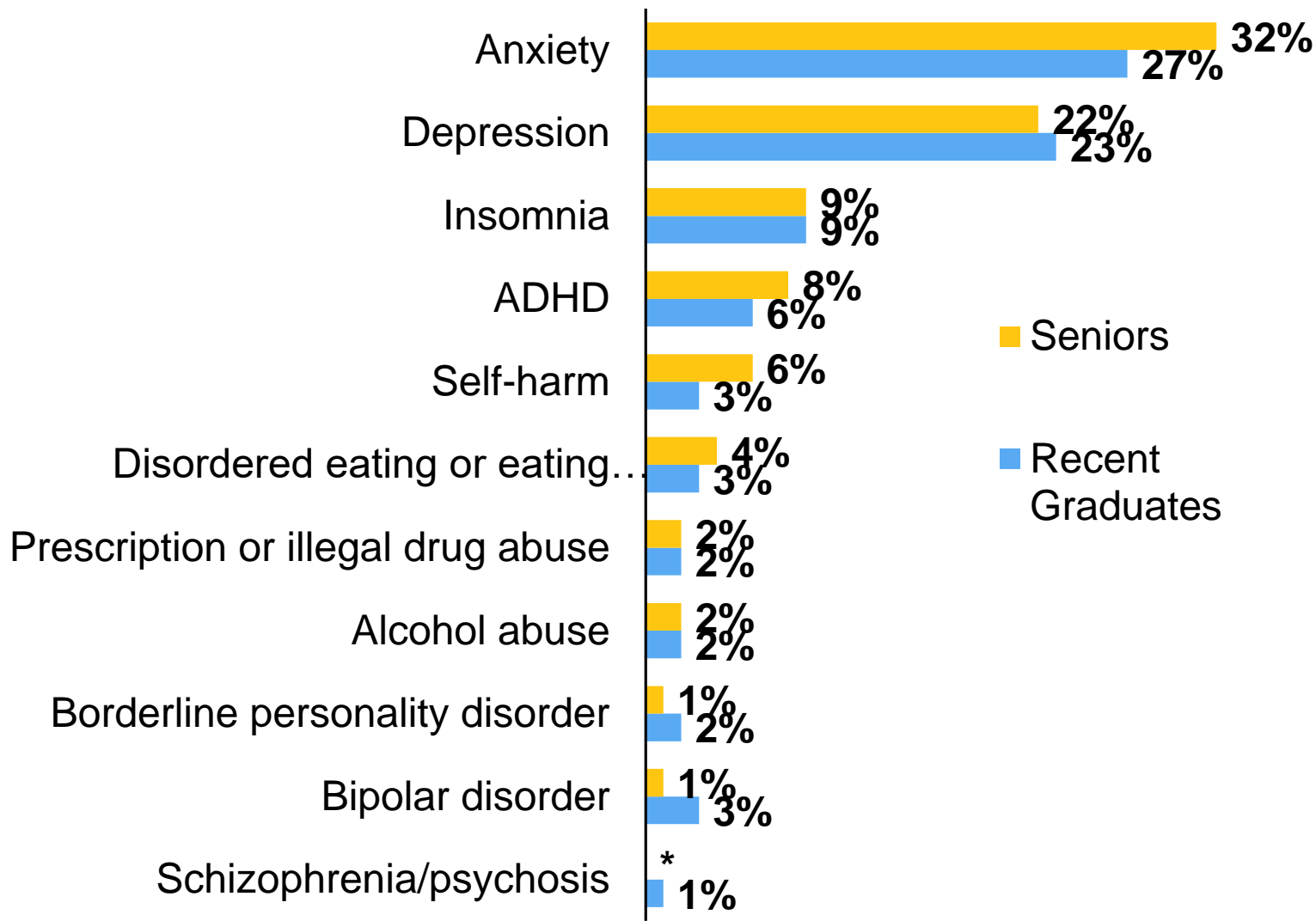
Participant Demographics:

Gender	
Male	43%
Female	57%
Transgender	1%
Another gender not listed	1%

Race/Ethnicity	
White	69%
Hispanic	11%
Black/African American	8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7%
Other/declined to answer	5%



Mental Health Diagnoses



Employers (n=500)

Eligibility Requirements:

- US resident
- Age 18+
- Employed full or part time
- Manage at least 1 employee who graduated from a 2 or 4 year college and has been working for 0-4 years

Respondent Demographics:

- Mean age: 42 years old
- 56% Male, 44% Female
- 75% White, 12% Hispanic

Industry	
Professional services, (e.g., legal, engineering)	21%
Service industries (e.g., retail, hospitality)	19%
Manufacturing	13%
Healthcare	10%
Transportation, communications, utilities	7%
Education	7%
Agriculture, mining or construction	6%
Some other type of business	16%



FINDINGS:
**EMOTIONAL WELLBEING DURING
THE COLLEGE-TO-CAREER
TRANSITION**



College seniors are ambitious and confident!

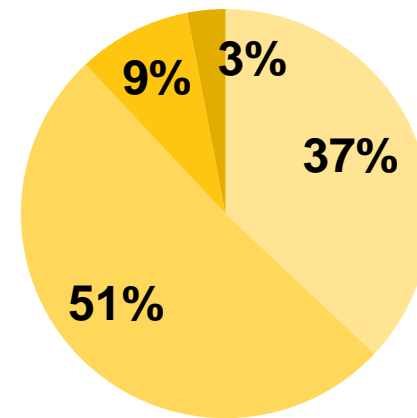
- The majority of seniors know what they want to do after graduation, and they are generally confident they will succeed.
- Almost 3 in 4 trust in their ability to make any big decisions related to their career



Nearly all seniors stressed during final year

- Nearly 4 in 10 seniors describe their final year of college as very stressful.
- Over 70% of seniors report stress over how much is unknown about the next few years

STRESS OF FINAL YEAR OF COLLEGE



- Very Stressful
- Somewhat Stressful
- Not Very Stressful
- Not at all Stressful



Young adults (college seniors and grads) feel pressure to succeed

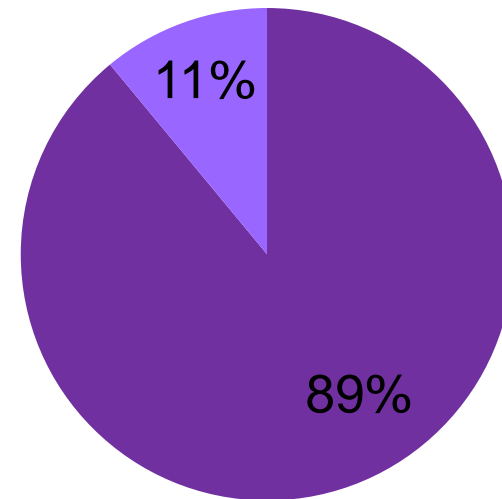
**“I feel pressure to succeed in
the professional world.”**

87% of young adults



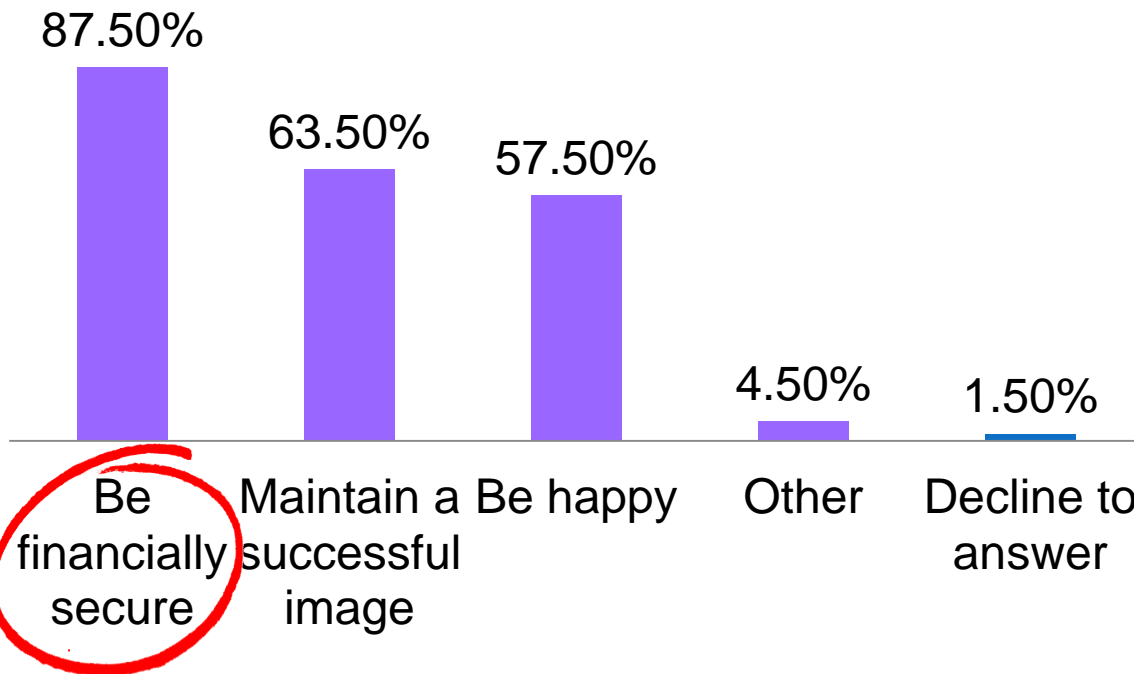
I feel pressure from...

■ Myself ■ Others



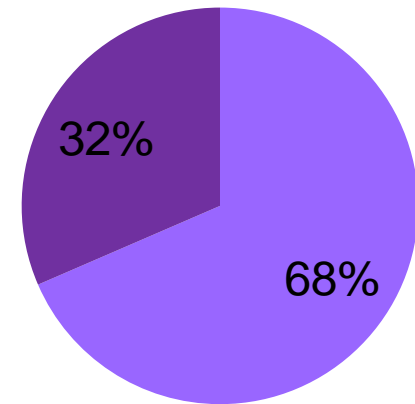
Financial Stress of Young Adults

"I feel pressure to..."



Stress of Current Finances

- Very or somewhat stressful
- Not very or not at all stressful



Recent grads are relatively satisfied with their jobs

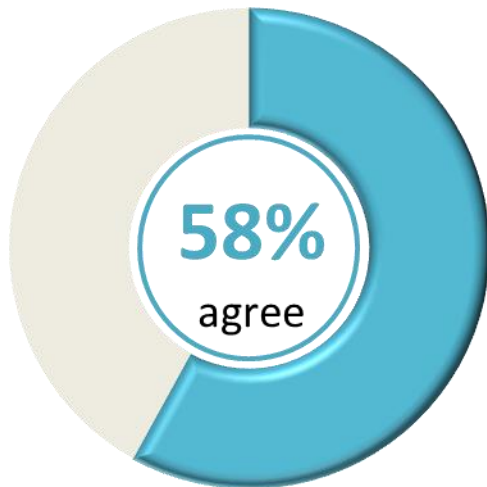
- Recent grads - relatively high level of satisfaction with most aspects of their job
 - relationship with their boss
 - workplace culture
 - job security
 - work-life balance
- Over 8 in 10 recent grads feel:
 - proud to tell people what they do
 - they are gaining valuable skills for the future



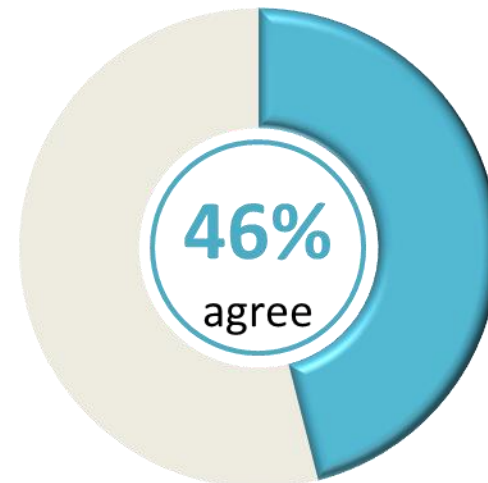
Expectation Gaps

- At the same time, >50% say their job right now does not match up with their long-term goals

“My current job is not what I expected to be doing post-graduation.”

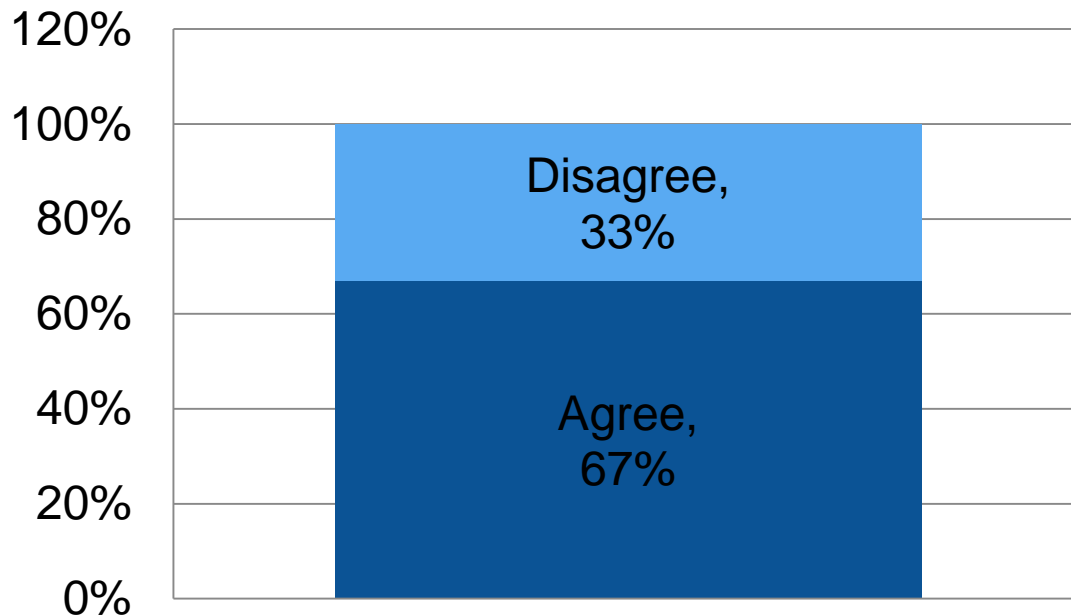


“I have been frustrated by the lack of advancement in my first few years in the workplace.”

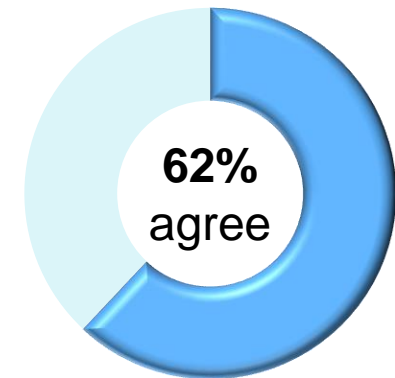


Recent grads wish they had more support with transition

“I had the support and resources I needed to help me deal with the transition out of college.”



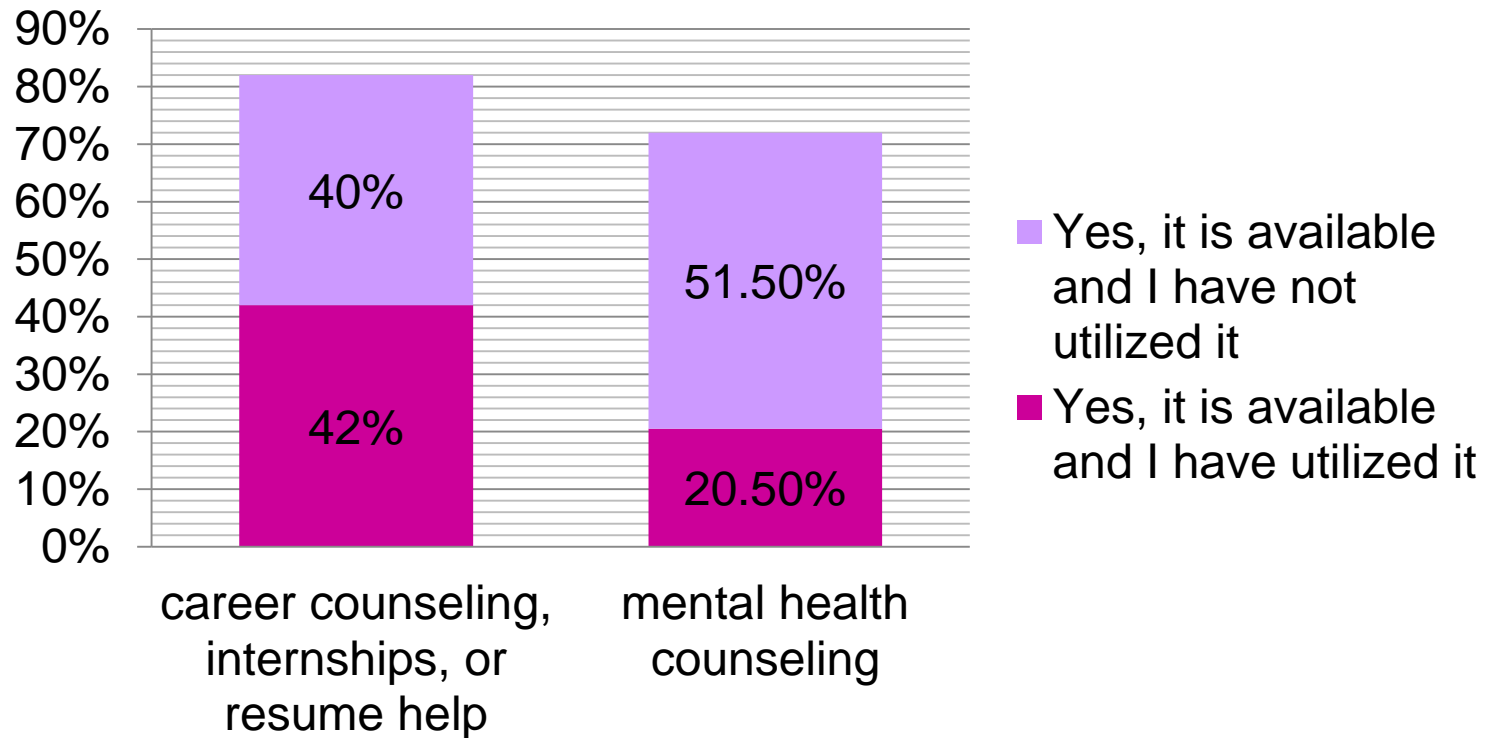
“I wish I had more help preparing to transition to the workforce after college”



FINDINGS: PREPARATION FOR THE COLLEGE- TO-CAREER TRANSITION



Variety of Services Available at College, Though Not Many Young Adults Take Advantage



- Most common reasons for not utilizing services were:
 - Lack of time
 - Thinking one doesn't need help

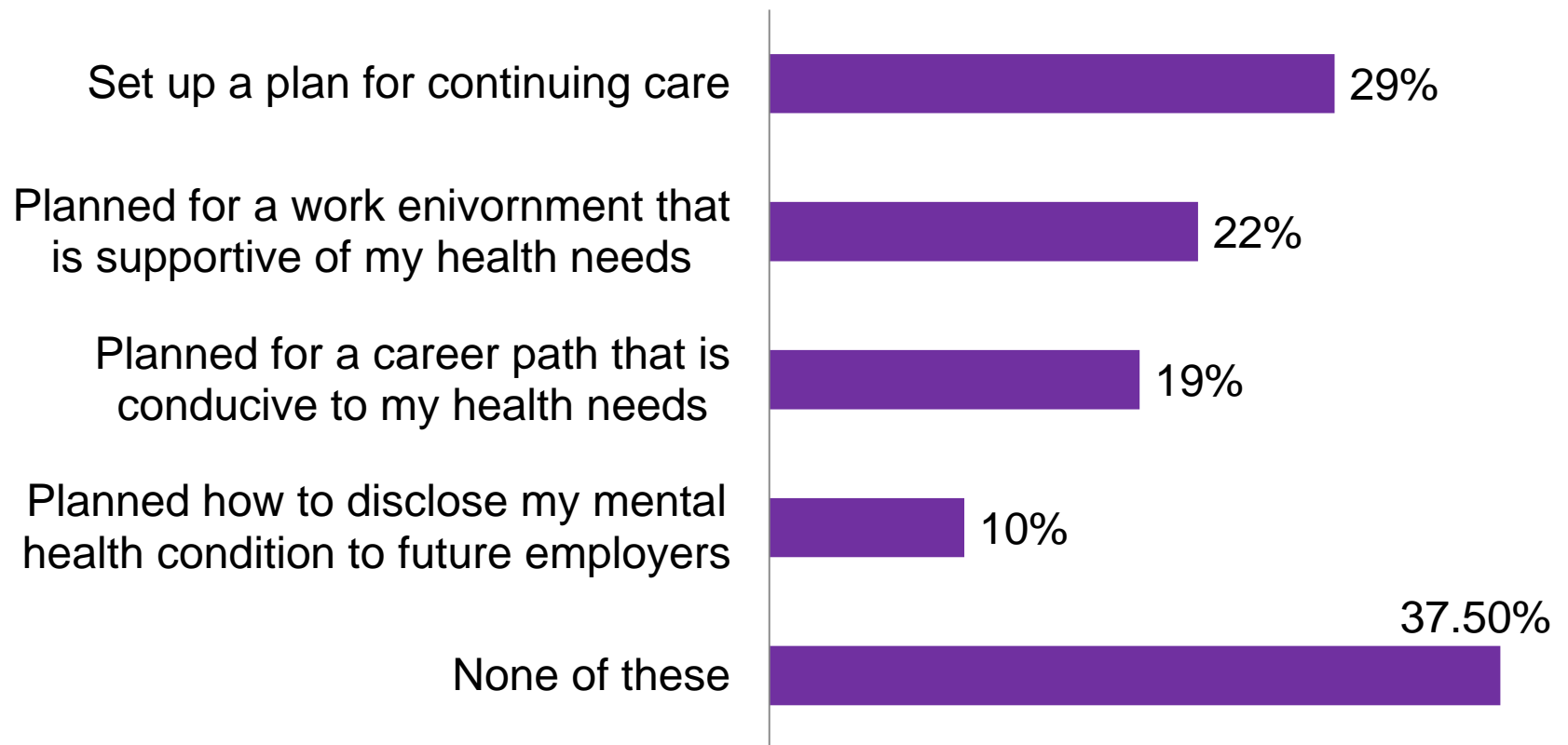


Preparation for Transition out of College










	Action Taken	Young Adults
1.	Talked with my family	66%
2.	Talked with peers and/or friends	62.5%
3.	Talked with my professors and/or professional mentors	48%
...		
10.	Talked with a mental health professional	15%



Preparation for College Graduation (among those with a diagnosed mental health condition)



Perceived Top Job Concerns of Young Adults

	Seniors	Recent Grads	Employers
1.	 Making Enough Money 71% (27%)	 Making Enough Money 69% (31%)	 Time Management 56% (14%)
2.	 Creating Work/Life Balance 69% (13%)	 Creating Work/Life Balance 61% (16%)	 Understanding Employer Expectations 55% (13%)
3.	 Meeting Employer Expectations 61% (12%)	 Decrease in Physical Activity 56% (13%)	 Creating Work/Life Balance 53% (12%)



KEY TAKEAWAYS



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For Young Adults

- Take advantage of services offered by school and work, including mental health services!
- Plan early for the college-to-career transition
- Set ambitious yet realistic career goals
- Learn about state of finances & student loans before graduation – strategize to avoid \$\$ stress
- Add self-care to the list of to-do's! Don't only focus on achieving post-graduation benchmarks (e.g., getting a job, living independently)



For Young Adult Supporters

Work with young adults to...

1. Set realistic & practical expectations for post-grad life
2. Create game plans for maintaining emotional health
 - in particular a transitional treatment plan for young adults with mental health conditions
3. Tap into a variety of support services available to cultivate a comprehensive support system (college counseling, employee benefits, etc.)
4. Increase financial literacy/access financial resources, and recognize the affect of \$ issues on mental health



References

1. American Psychological Association. (2012). *Stress by generation*. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2012/generations.aspx>.
2. Center for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Protection. (2015). *Suicide: Facts at a glance*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/suicide-datasheet-a.pdf>.
3. Mistler, B.J., Reetz, D.R., Krylowicz, B., & Barr, V. (2012). *The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors annual survey*. The Association for University and College Counseling Center. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/06/college-students.aspx>.



Thank You!

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