

Gen Z and Advocacy

Influences, Motivators and Uses of
Social Media to Drive Change



2024

May

M I S S I O N

ABOUT ASA

American Student Assistance * (ASA) is changing the way kids learn about careers and prepare for their futures through equitable access to career readiness information and experiences.

We help middle and high school students to know themselves—their strengths and their interests—and understand their education and career options so that they can make informed decisions. ASA is fostering a generation of confident, crisis-proof young people who are ready for whatever path comes next after high school.

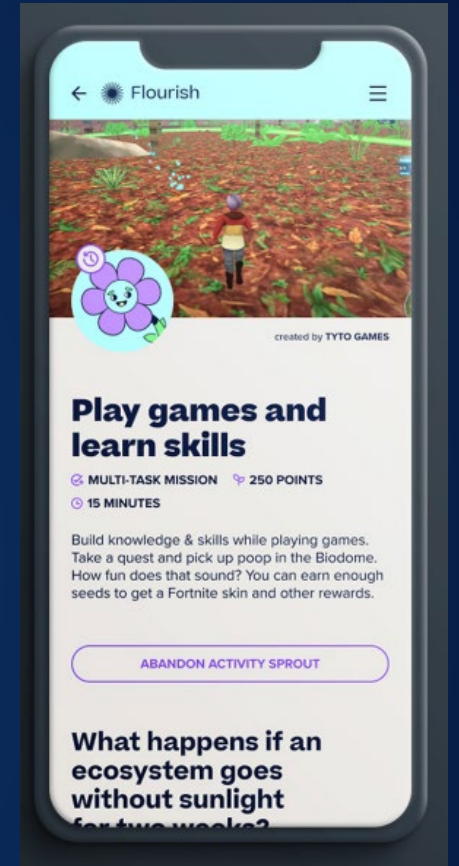
About ASA



Advocacy



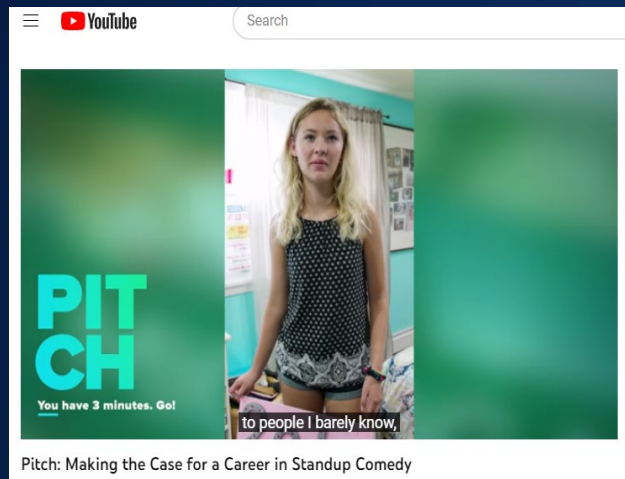
Philanthropy & Impact Investing



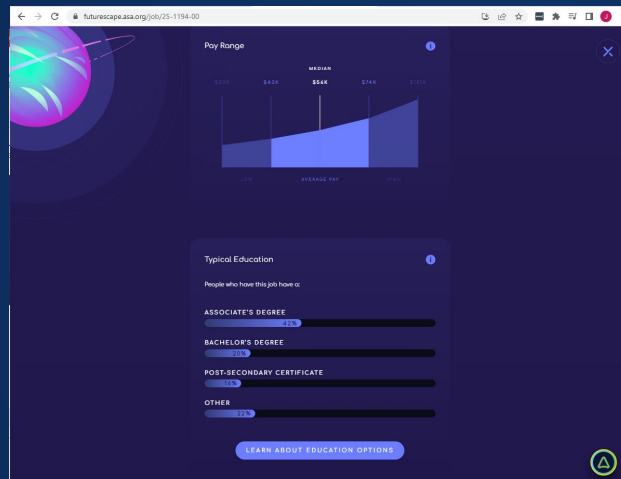
ASA Digital

ASA Digital Resources

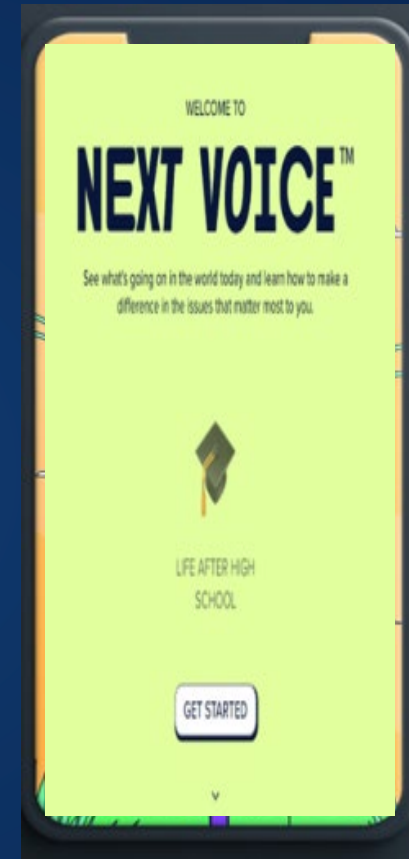
Our ecosystem engages 15 million kids annually and provides access to resources to help them prepare for their future.



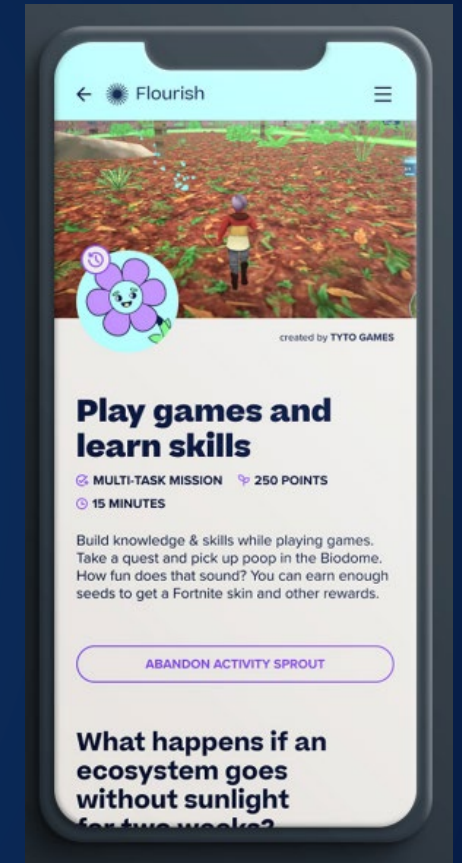
Future Network



FutureScape



Next Voice



EvolveMe

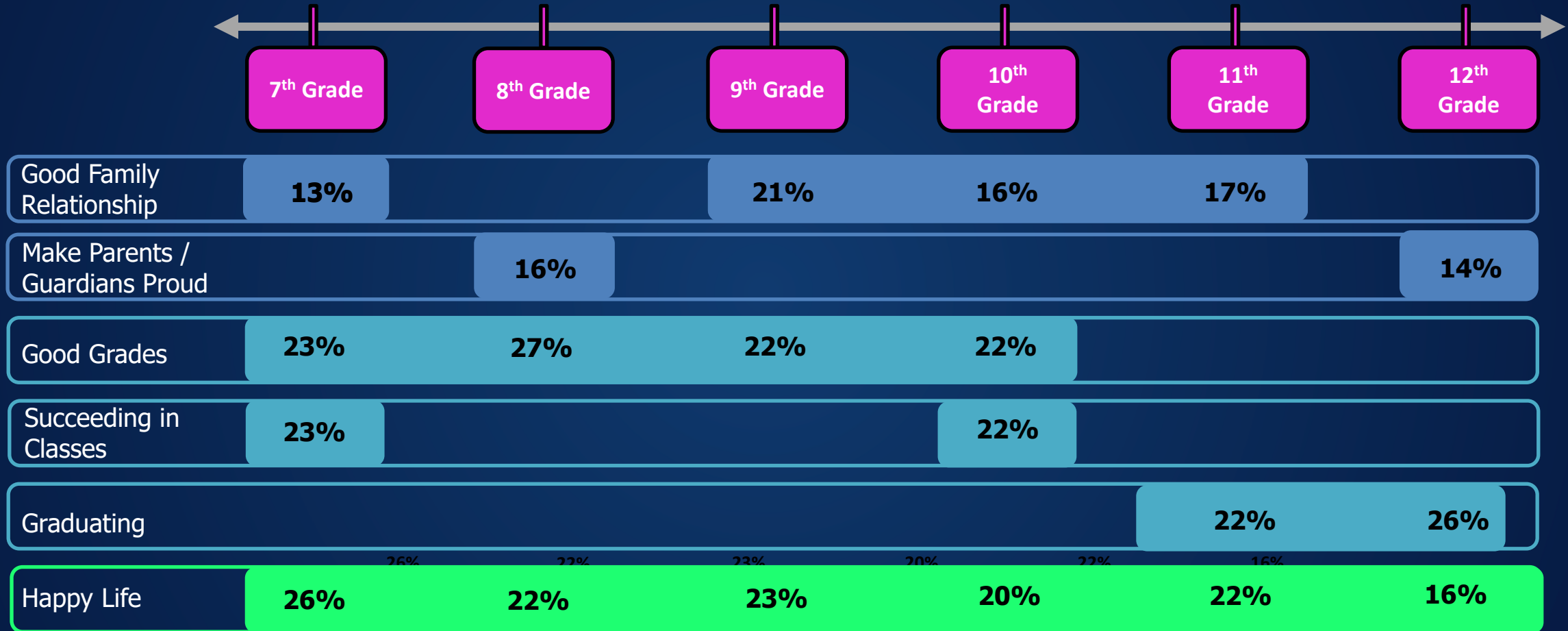
Overview of Gen Z Thinking and Actions

- Gen Z faces many **pressures and stress** in their lives, but they care most about **having happy lives**.
- They care about various **causes** but also **value spending time with friends and taking care of their health**.
- Overall, their **decision-making process** about the future is **cyclical** and riddled with **stress and anxiety**. They **feel better after making a decision** and **seek comfort and validation** from trusted resources.
- There are a number of causes they feel passionate about, but only a few that they care enough to act on.
- They use social media both to gather information, and to act on the causes they care about.

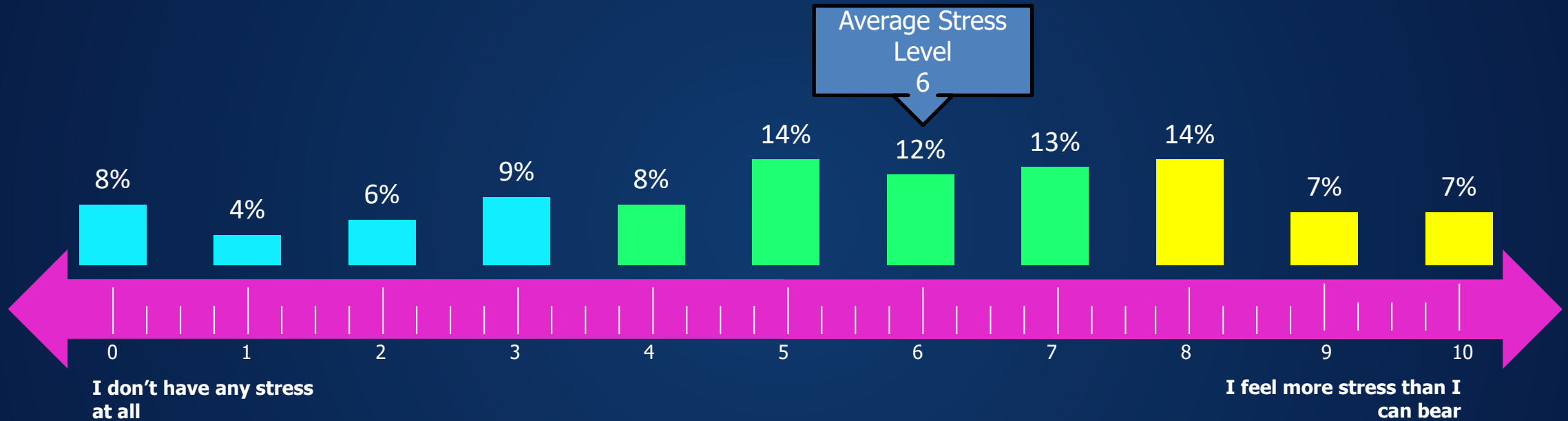
Gen Z and Stress

Pressures Facing Gen Z

Teens face pressure related to their social lives, academics, and their larger environment

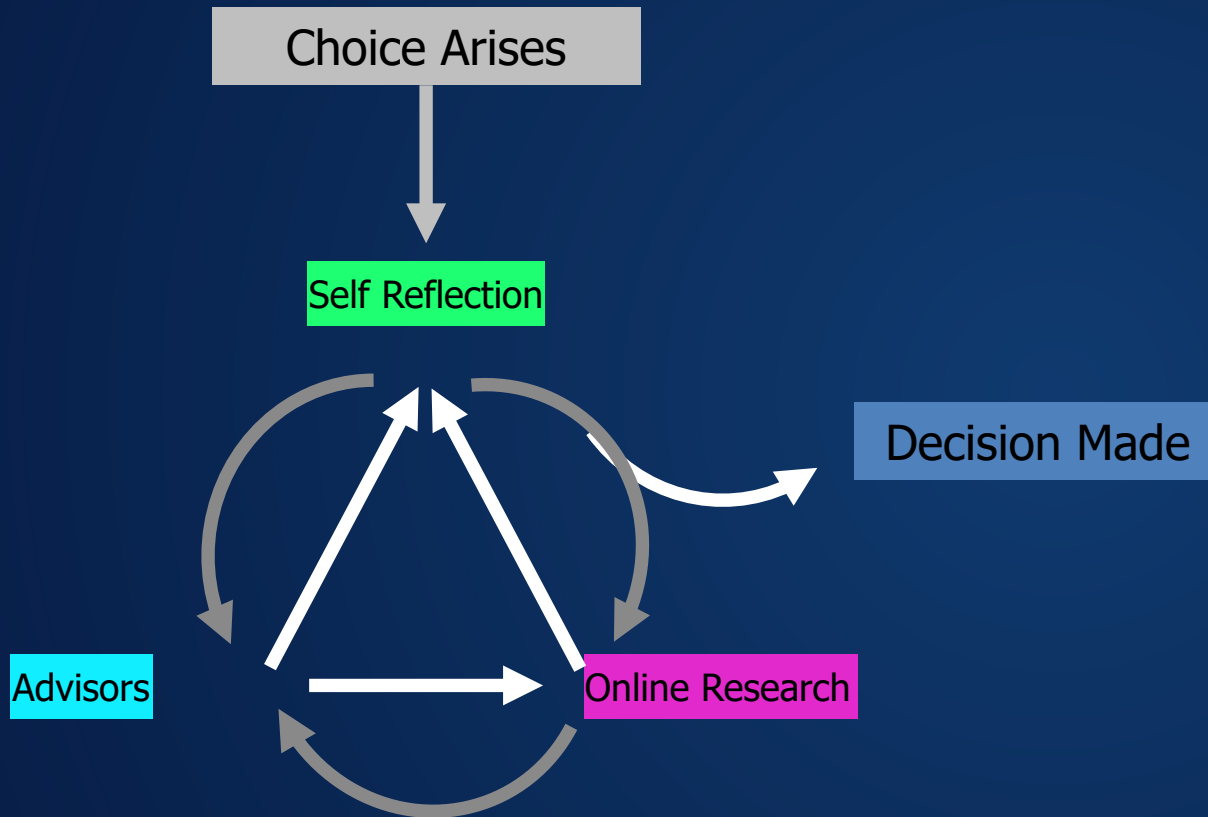


Gen Z Stress Levels



Gen Z Decision-Making

Gen Z Decision-Making Journey



Self-Reflection: ponder what it is they want or need, or what their position is on an issue.

Advisors: Consult with personal connections (parents/guardians, friends, significant others) and those with expertise (teachers, counselors, doctors, religious advisors, professional coaches).

Online Research: Look up information on the internet, including Google/online search, social media, blogs, and industry-specific websites

Gen Z Decision-Making Resources



After self-reflection, Gen-Z ranks their parents / guardians as the resource they consult **first** for financial, education, career, and future-related decisions.

	When I am completely lost about what to do	After researching but before deciding	After I've made a decision and need reassurance	
Personal Connection*	44%	54%	38%	N=915
Media	42%	63%	29%	N=814
Expert	48%	51%	26%	N=699

*6% of Gen-Z informs personal connections of their decisions rather than asks advice

Why Gen Z Turns to Decision-Making Resources

Teens want comfort and validation from personal connections and information from online search

Overall, Gen Z most wants **information** (77%), followed by **comfort** (75%), **validation** (62%), and a **directive** (33%). **Information, comfort, and validation** are sought by more **females** than males, **white** Gen Z than non-white Gen Z, and **full-time students** than part-time or non-students.

N=1,051

From **PARENTS/GUARDIANS**, Gen Z Wants:



Comfort 66%
Validation 66%
Information 56%
Directive 28%

N=548

From **ONLINE SEARCH**, Gen Z Wants:



Information 85%
Comfort 38%
Validation 20%
Directive 16%

N=342

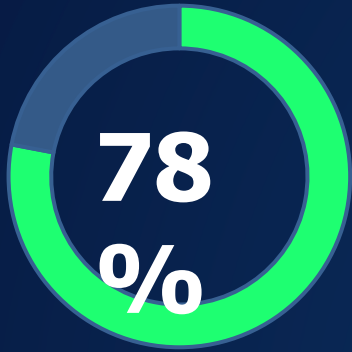
From **FRIENDS**, Gen Z Wants:



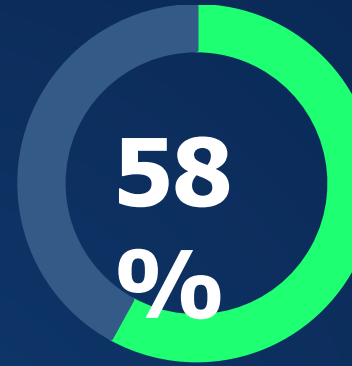
Comfort 71%
Validation 40%
Information 37%
Directive 14%

N=507

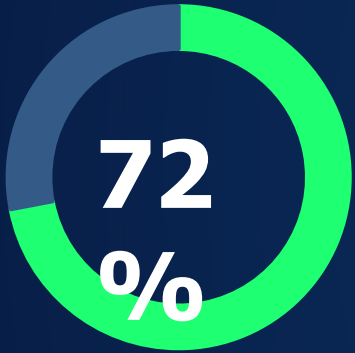
What's most important to Gen Z?



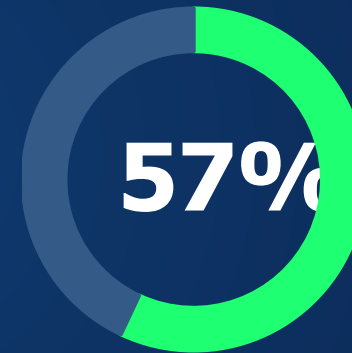
Spending time with friends



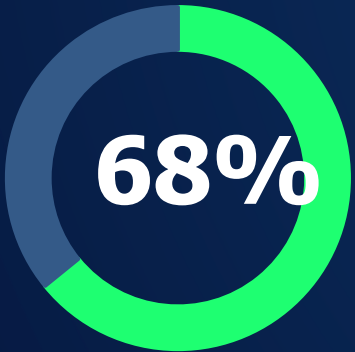
Sports/athletics



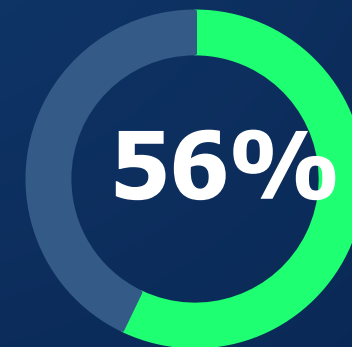
Being fit/ healthy



Giving back to the community

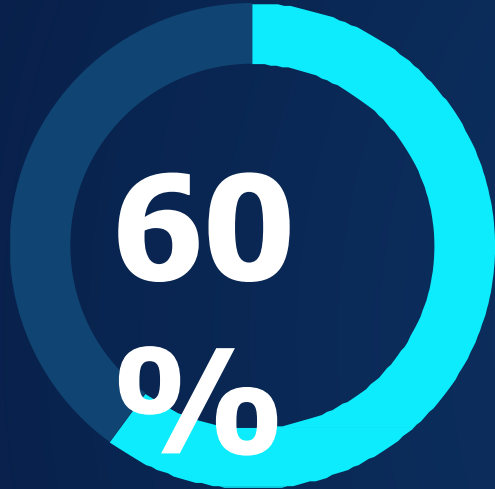


Having an active social life



Social causes/justice

Gen Z and Advocacy

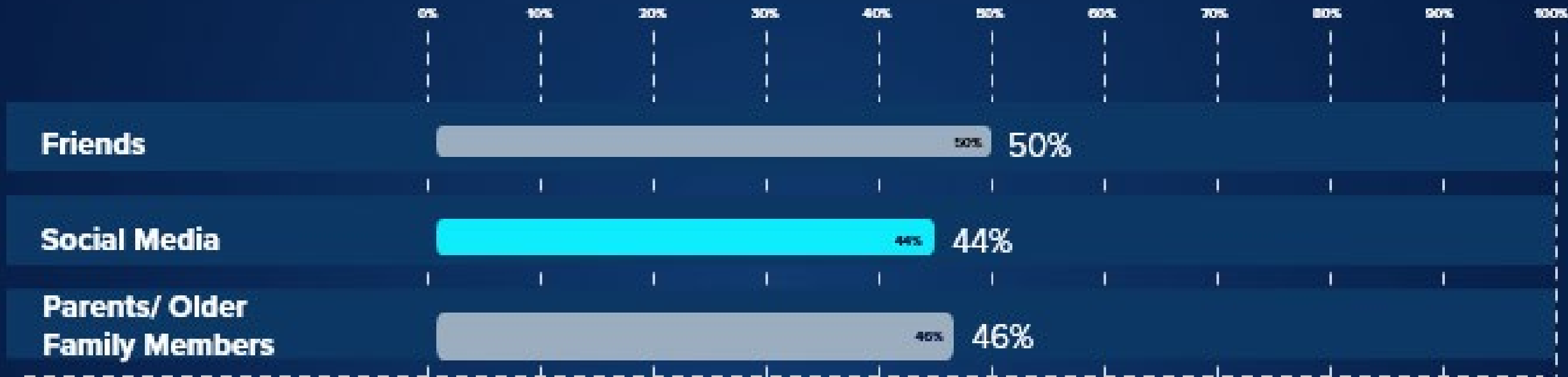


60% of teens learn about social issues on digital platforms, and 42% share content about social issues on these platforms.

There's an important role for trusted adults in connecting Gen Z to social causes

Top Three Sources Teens of Information, Inspiration, & Influence

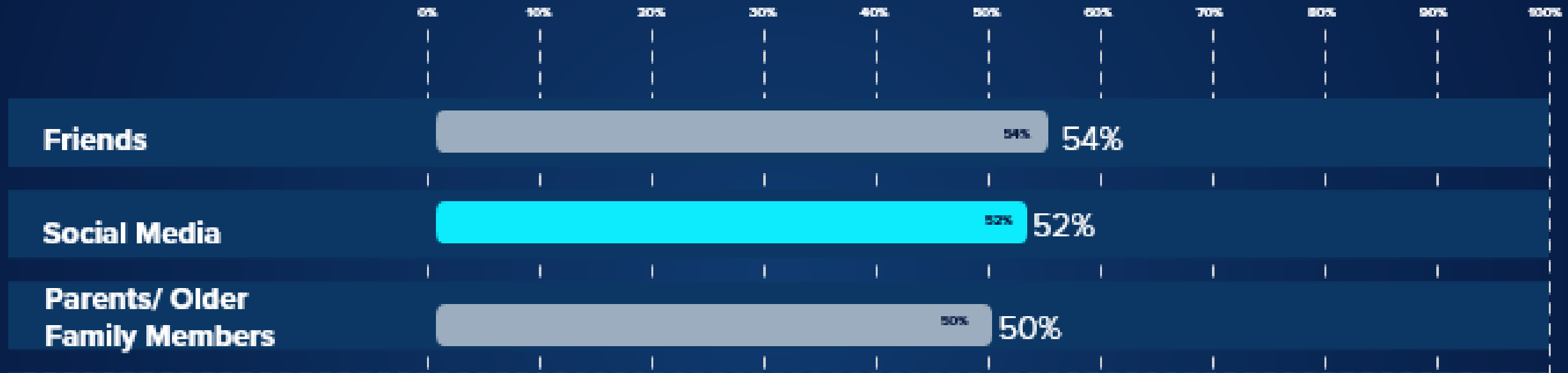
Influenced to take interest in causes:



There's an important role for trusted adults in connecting Gen Z to social causes

Top Three Sources Teens of Information, Inspiration, & Influence

Provide information and inspiration about causes:



Who Gen Z Shares With When They are Passionate About an Issue



60% Family



56% Friends



28% Online Communities



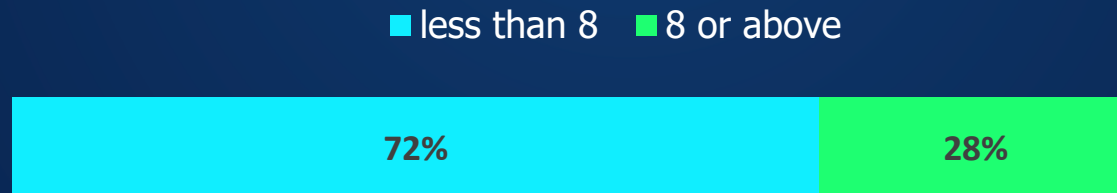
27% Teachers



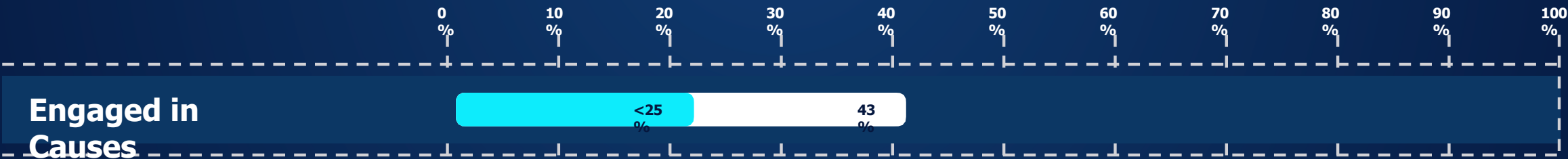
14% Political Figures

Less help is coming from parents and trusted adults about how to advocate

Teens rated degree to which their parents & older family members show them how to advocate on a scale from 1 to 10



43% of teens consider themselves engaged in causes and issues, but less than one quarter actually get involved in the various causes they care about.



The proportion of Gen Z engaged in activism decreases as commitment increases.

	<u>Awareness</u>	<u>Info Seeking</u>	<u>Taking Action</u>
Level 1 Least Engaged "Passive"	57% Aware of social issues and movements on a high level	62% See and read information when I come across it	57% Have not actively engaged in taking action
Level 2 Moderately Engaged "Intentional Activists"	29% Passionate about one or more social issues or movements	27% Actively seek out information about issues I care about	34% Have engaged in taking action for cause at least monthly
Level 3 Actively Engaged "Champion"	14% Very passionate about one or more social issues or movement	10% Actively gather resources to accomplish cause goals	8% Have engaged in taking action for cause at least weekly

Most of Gen Z are “intentional activists”

Gen Z's Activism Level



- Activism level is calculated based on their awareness of issues, likelihood to seek information, and likelihood to take action.
- There are significant differences based on race. BIPOC GenZers are significantly more active than whites.

To Gen Z, advocacy is a balance of local improvements and higher-level policy change



Advocacy is more about improving my community



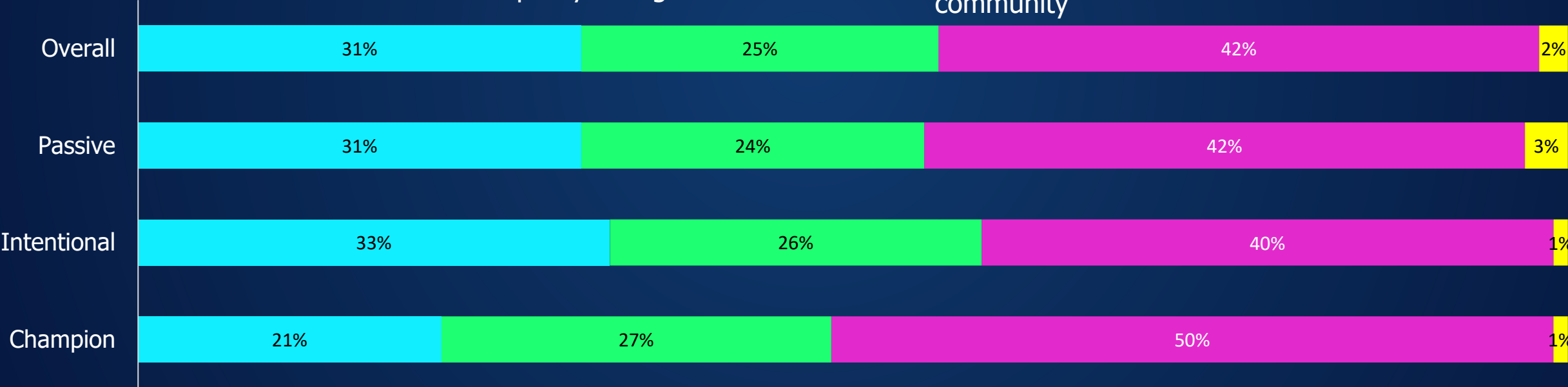
Advocacy is more about making state/ national policy change



Advocacy is equally about making policy change and improvements in my community

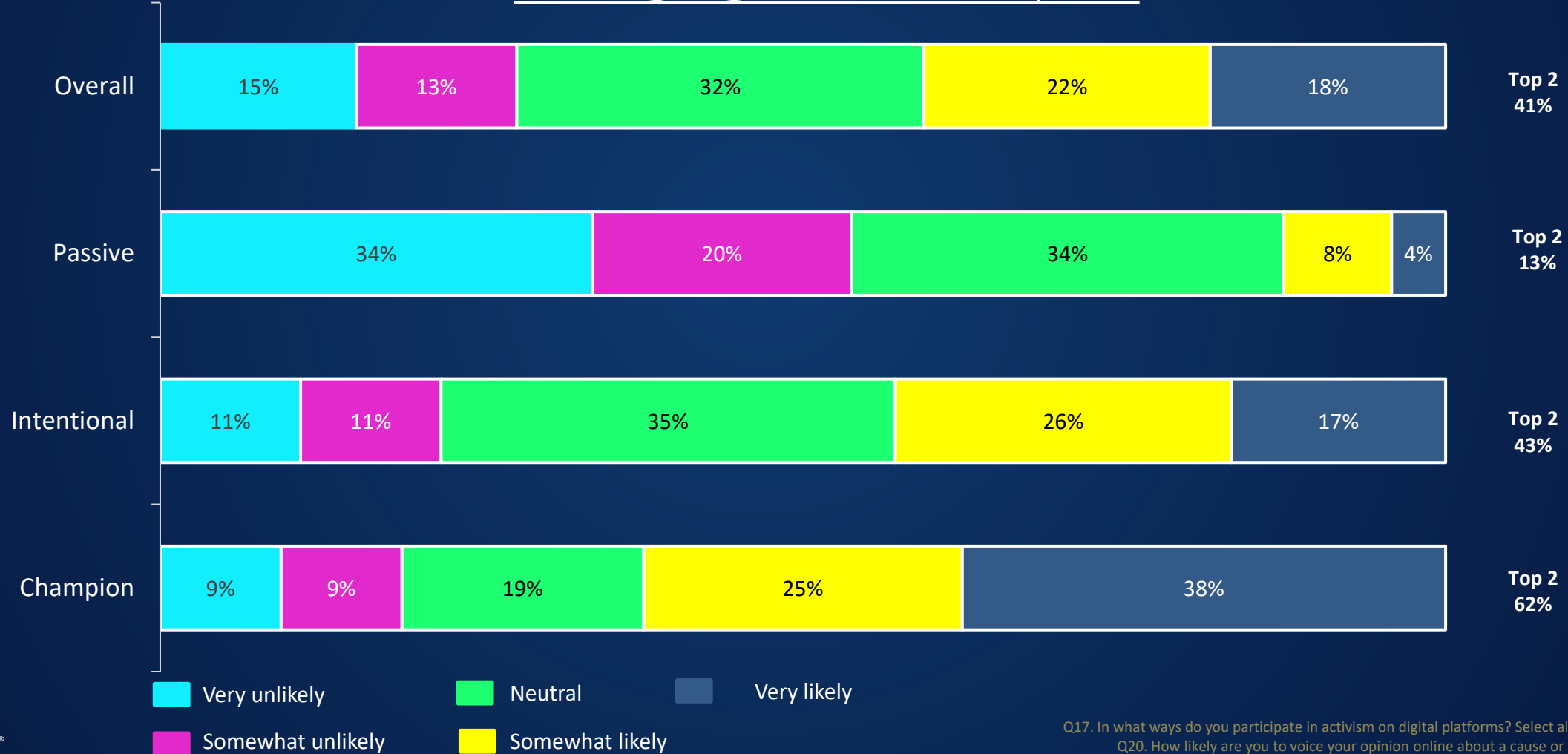


Advocacy means something else to me



Four in ten share content and are likely to share their opinion – more are learning as their form of engagement

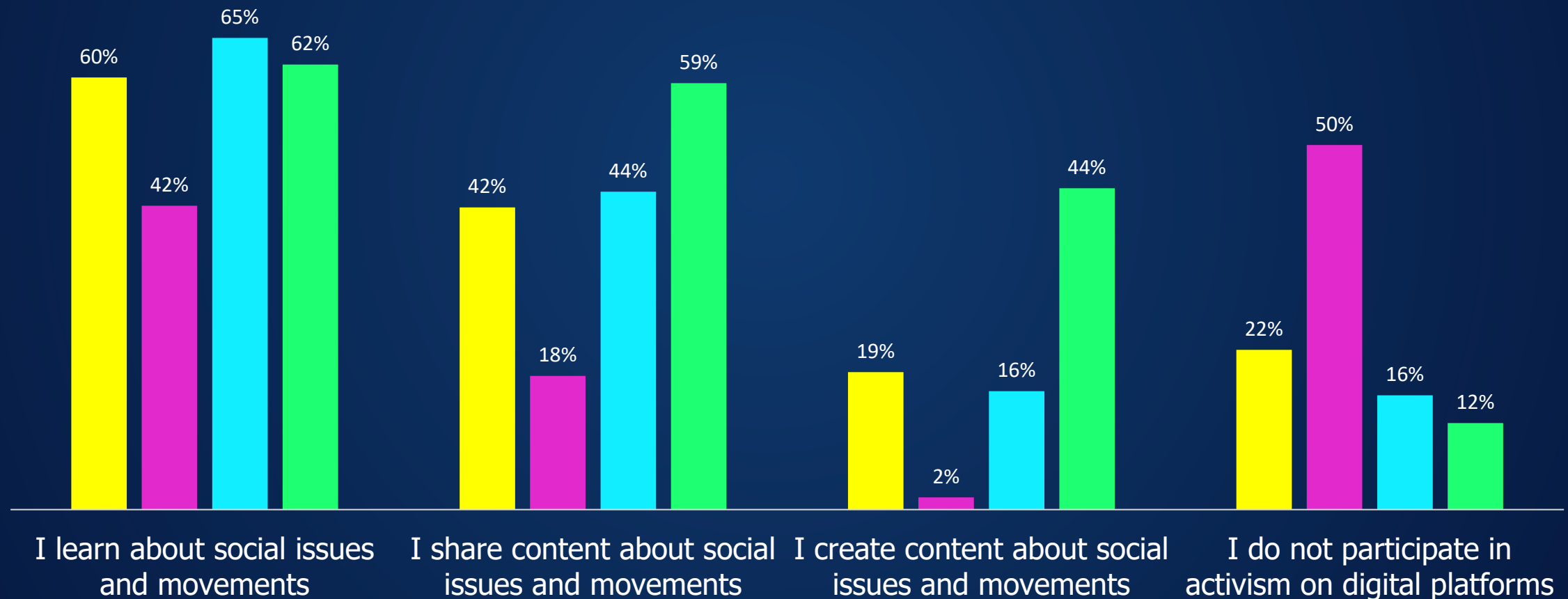
How Likely Gen Z Is to Voice Their Opinions



Q17. In what ways do you participate in activism on digital platforms? Select all that apply.
 Q20. How likely are you to voice your opinion online about a cause or movement?

Four in ten share content and are likely to share their opinion – more are learning as their form of engagement

How Gen Z Participates in Digital Platform Activism



Once they learn about a cause, Gen Z seeks more info



59% - look up more information from other sources



48% - find out what others are saying



44% - share information with friends and family

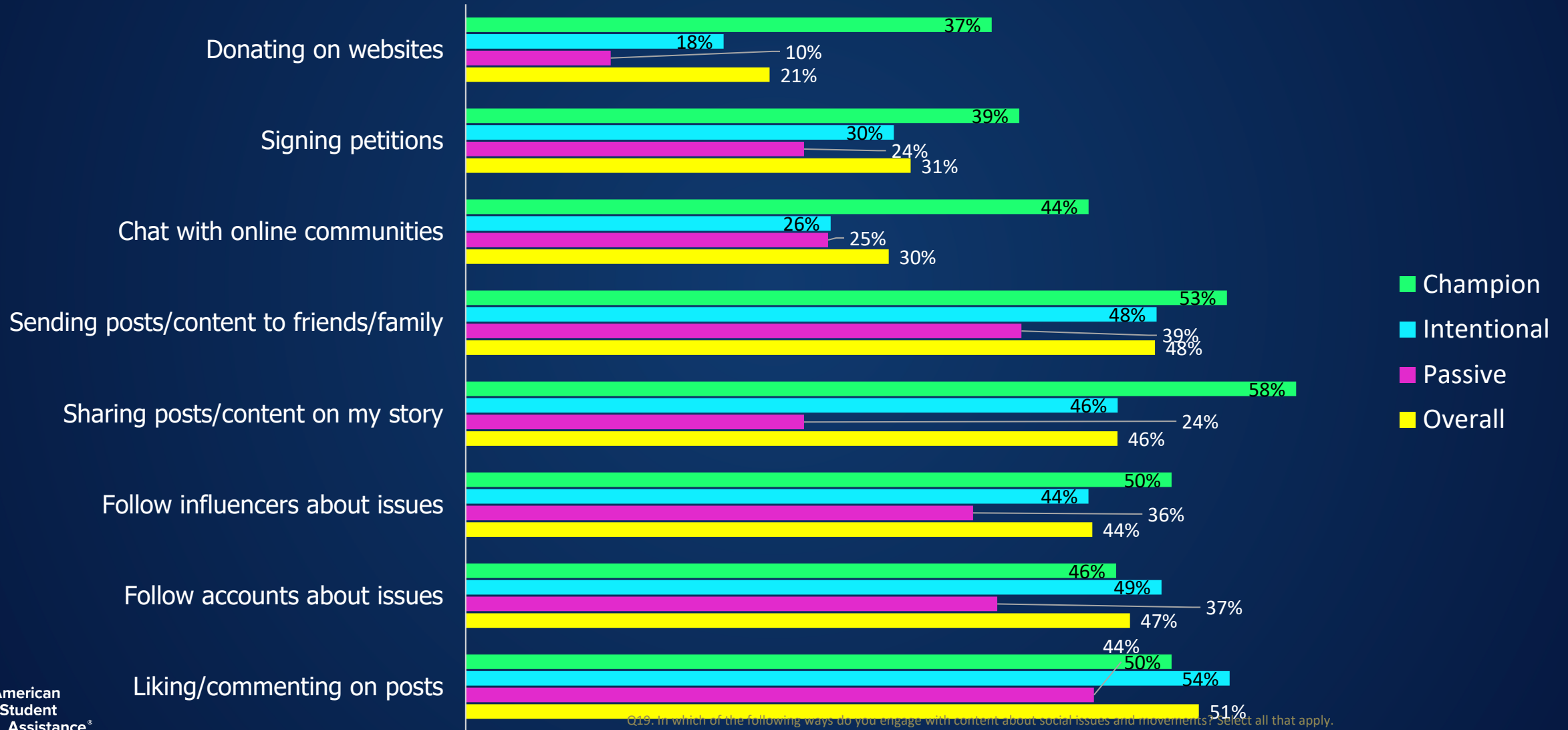


37% - find ways to take action



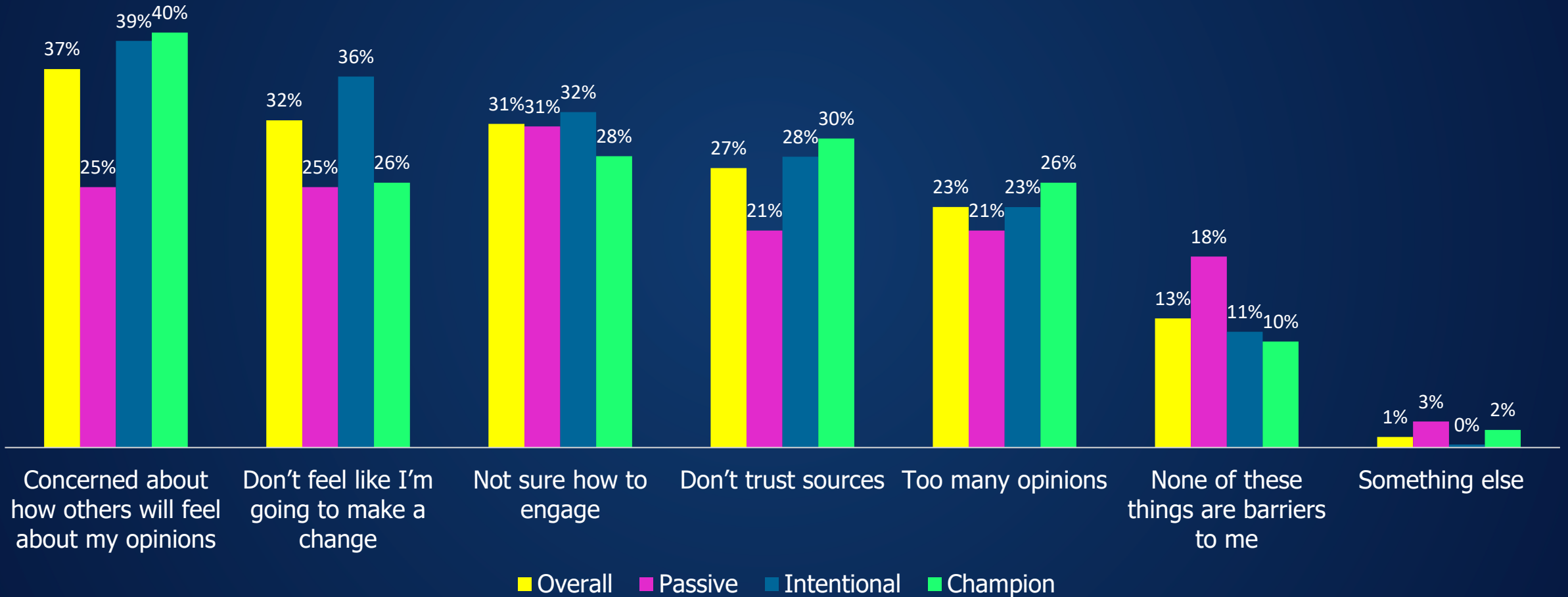
2% - something else

Gen Z engages in activism by liking, following, and sharing on social media. Champion activists take that next active step.

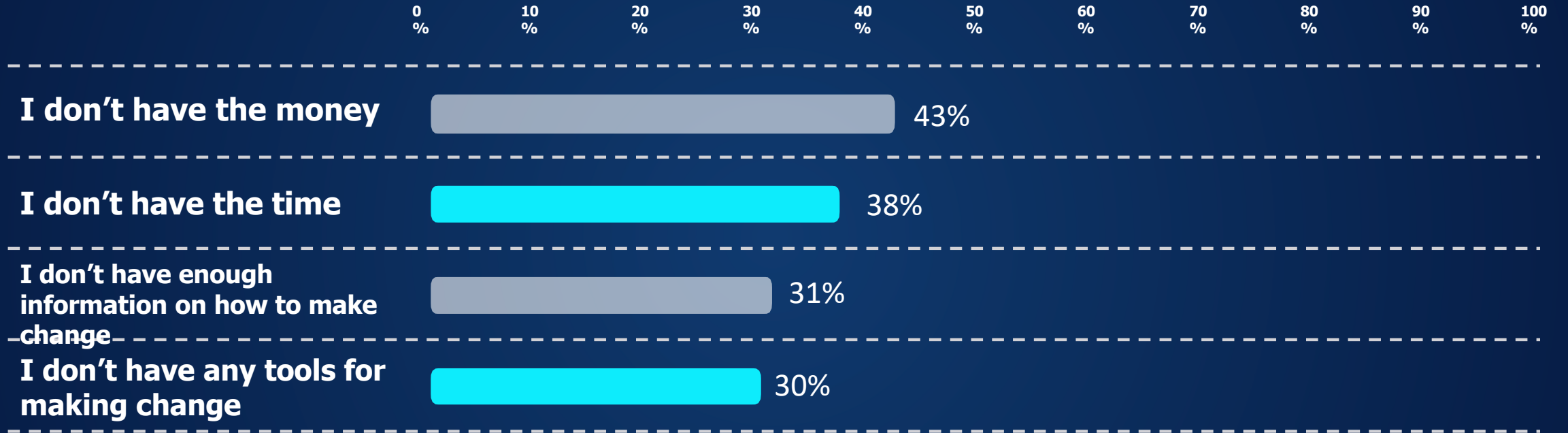


Q19. In which of the following ways do you engage with content about social issues and movements? Select all that apply.
N=455

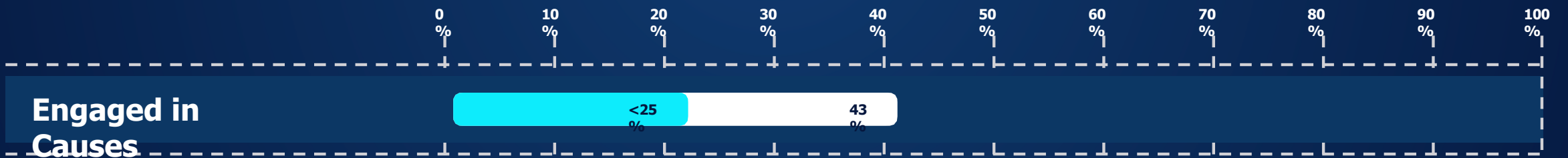
Gen Z's primary barrier to participating in online activism is self-consciousness



Not having money or time also prevent teens from engaging in activism



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Top Issues Gen Z Likely to Act On



Mental Health
34%



Racial Equality
31%

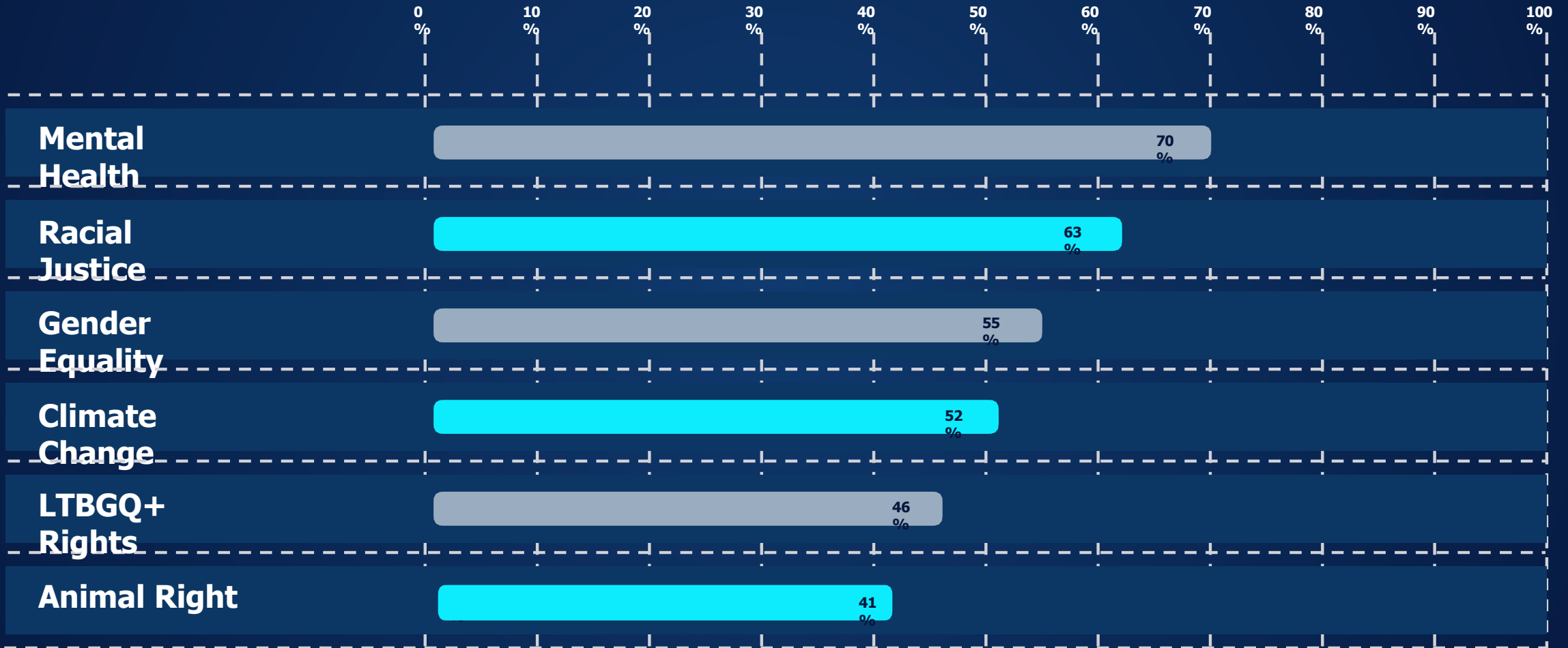


Gender
Equality
26%

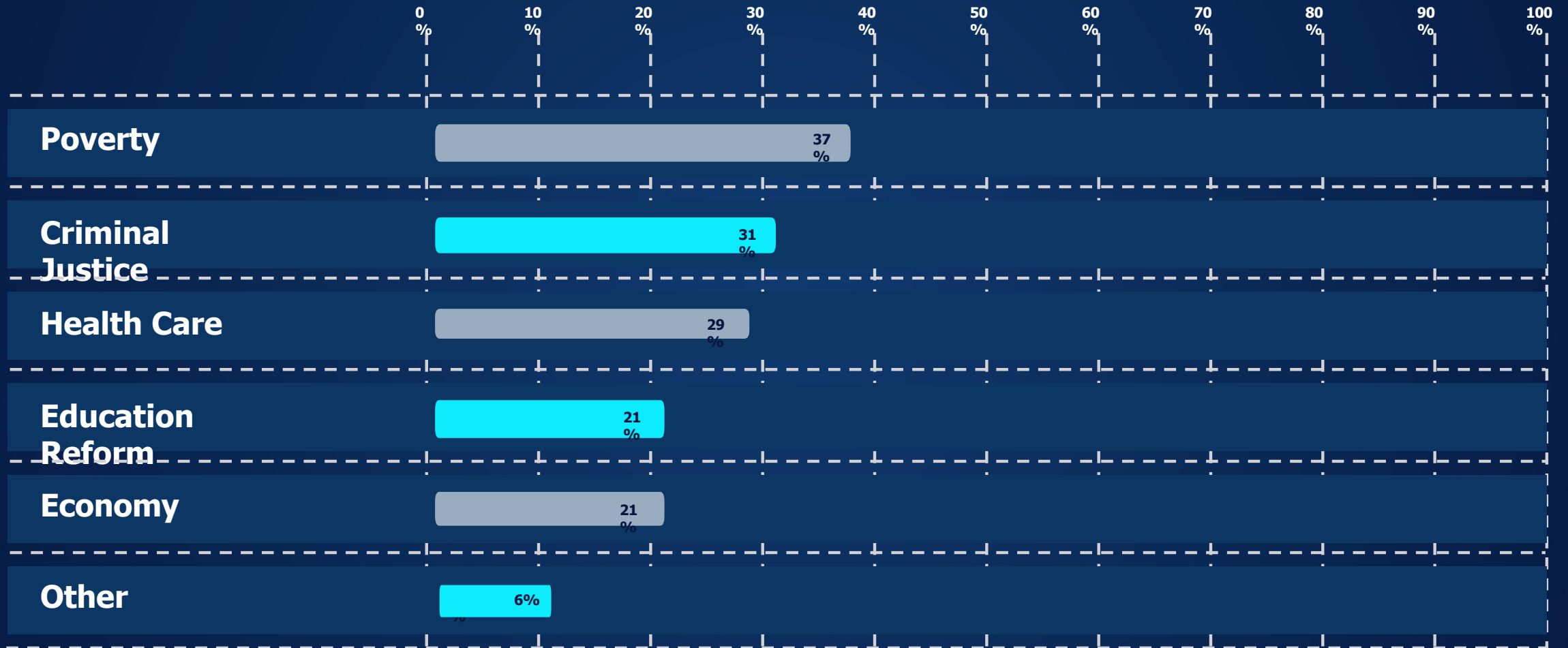


LGBTQ
Discrimination
29%

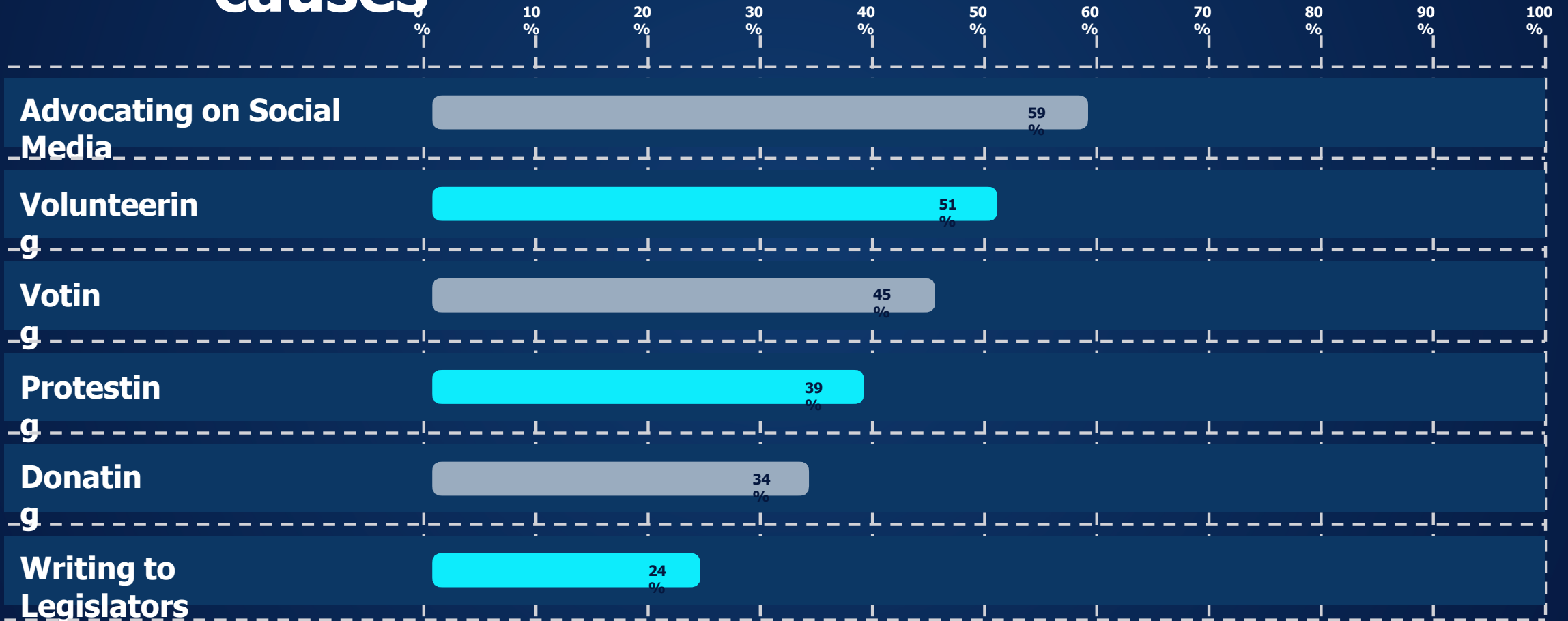
89% of teens care about at least one issue or cause



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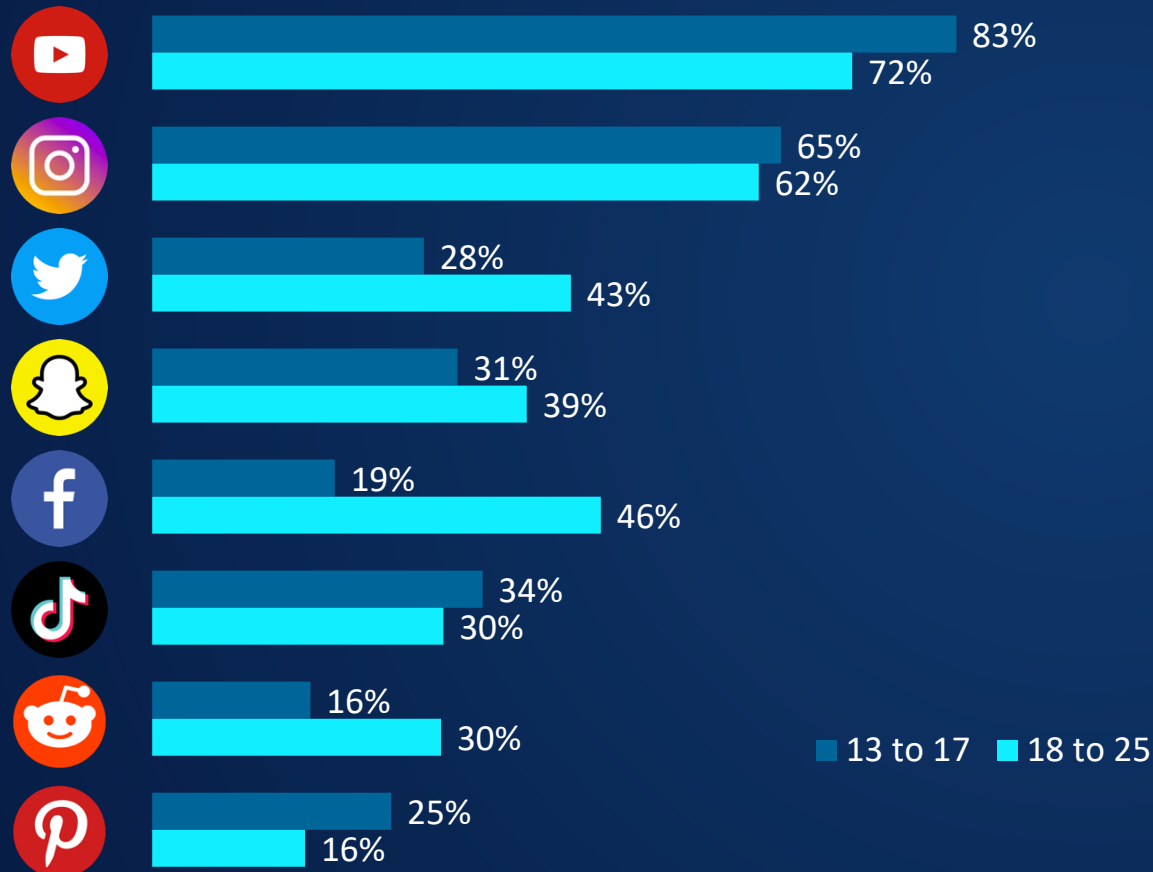


Teens view digital platforms as more effective than other methods to advocate for causes



Gen Z and Social Platforms

Gen-Z Uses Online Research and Social Media While Making Decision

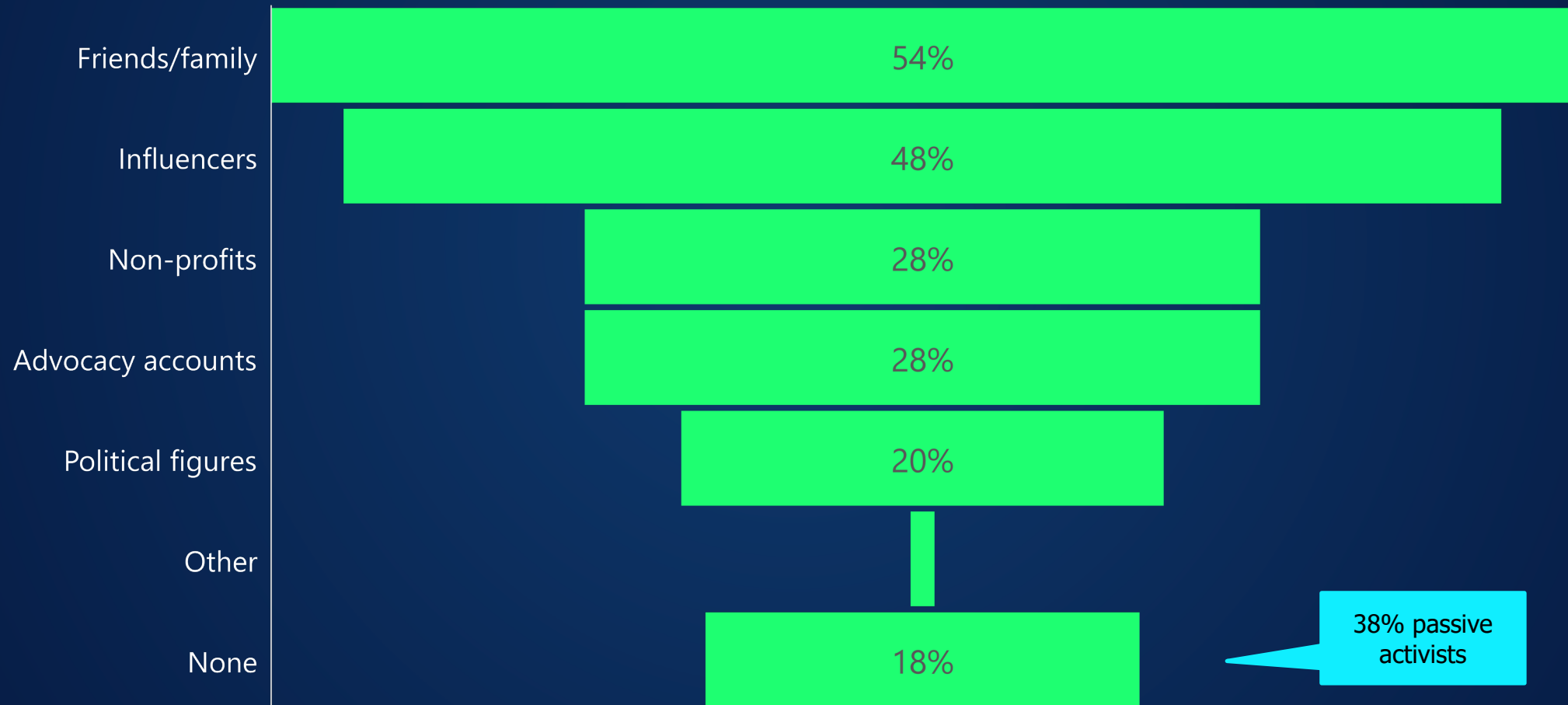


81% of Gen-Z turns to media (websites, social media, or online search) to help with decisions.

Males turn to YouTube more, while females turn to TikTok and Pinterest more.

They do use social media and influencers on social media to engage in advocacy

Who Gen Z Follows on Social Media to Engage in Advocacy



Top 5 Ways Gen Z Learns about Social Movements Online (Platforms)



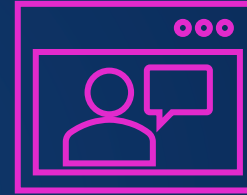
68%
YouTube



66%
Instagram



62%
TikTok

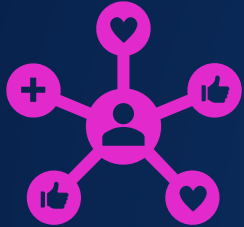


44%
Network Posts



37%
Articles and Blogs

The best ways to get information on supporting causes to Gen Z depend on the cause



Social media collaborations
with influencers



Traditional Media



School

Causes they support in general

LGBTQ+ rights

Gender equality

Racial justice

3rd best way for climate
change

Least effective way for
other causes

Mental health

Climate change

What Best Resonates with Gen Z

Gen Z Voice is key to engagement. They don't like to be talked at but empowered to act. User generated content can be very effective.

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They take diversity, equity and inclusion seriously, and will be more likely to engage if you prioritize these issues as well.

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Gen Z Voice is key to engagement. They don't like to be talked at but empowered to act. User generated content can be very effective.

They take diversity, equity and inclusion seriously, and will be more likely to engage if you prioritize these issues as well.

Happiness is a goal for them, and finding it is a stressor. Can what you're advocating for help them solve for that?

