

# Montana Farm and Ranch Stress: A New Online Resource & Current Data

Alison Brennan, PhD

Mental Health Specialist, MSU Extension

Michelle Grocke, PhD

Health and Wellness Specialist, MSU Extension

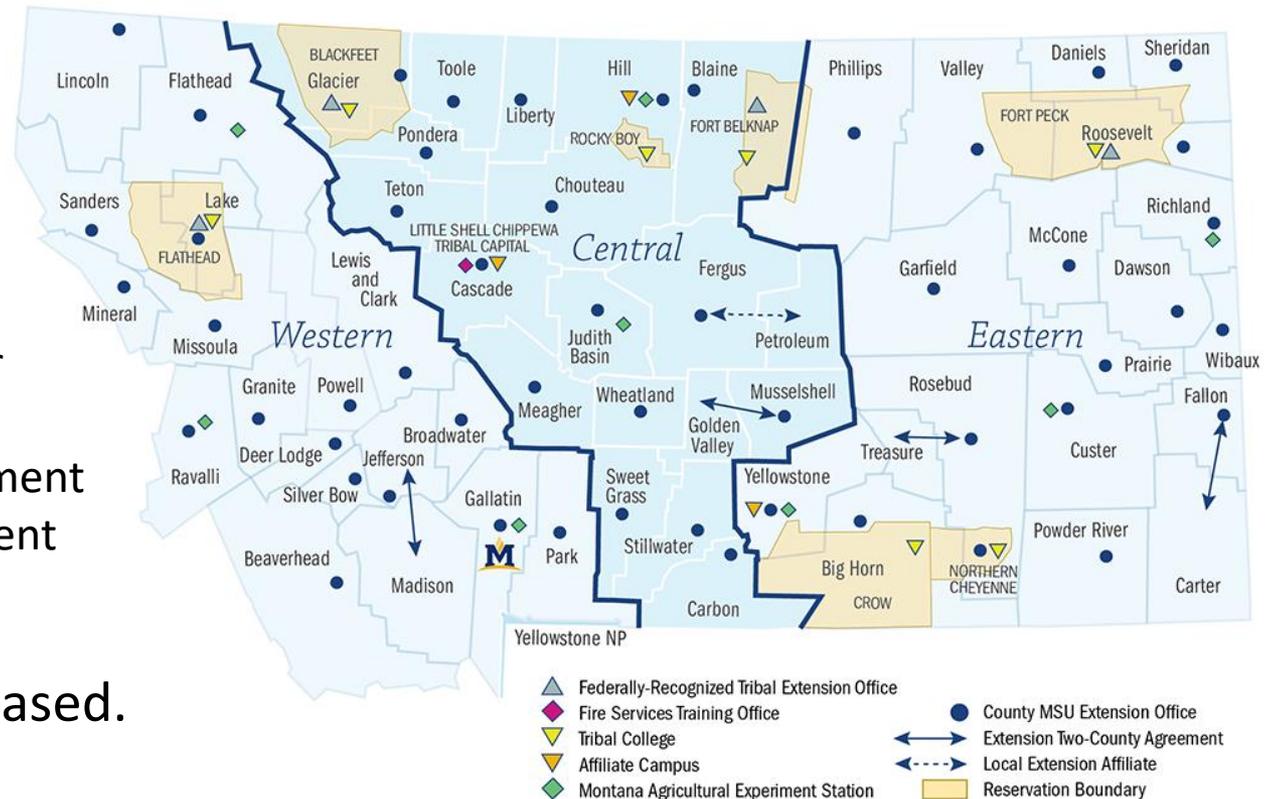


# MSU Extension

Provides evidence-based information/resources and programming to community members around the state to promote the well-being of the people and places of Montana.

Major program areas:

- Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Family and Consumer Sciences
- Community Development
- 4-H/Youth Development



Projects are needs-based.

# The Need

- Stress is common in agricultural occupations
  - Physical stressors
  - External stressors
  - Interpersonal stressors
  - Multiple and chronic
- In 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) listed agriculture as the occupational group with the highest rate of suicide overall (84.5 per 100,000 population).
- In rural communities, negative stigma often exists regarding seeking mental health support and farm/ranch families typically prefer to disclose their problems to family members/friends rather than seeking professional help.
- In many cases, professional help is simply not available in rural areas.
- Despite the stress, farming and ranching is a way of life in Montana, and for that reason, most individuals will not abandon this livelihood.

# The Project

## **Title:**

Working Together to Respond to Farmers & Ranchers Under Stress in Rural Montana

## **Funding Source:**

Montana Healthcare Foundation  
(Partnerships for Better Health Grant)

## **Timeframe:**

Initially a one-year project from 2019-2020  
(one-year extension granted due to COVID-19)

# Project Components

1

- MSU Extension will establish, and serve as the lead facilitator for, a diverse statewide farm/ranch stress prevention advisory council.

2

- MSU Extension will create an online Farm Stress Prevention Website clearinghouse

3

- Create a 'mental wellness conversation curriculum' (MWCC) *\*Funded by another source (WRASAP)*

# Building the Statewide Farm/Ranch Stress Prevention Council

## Initial Partners:

- Montana Farm Bureau
- Montana USDA Farm Service Agency
- Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (CDPHP) Bureau (Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services)
- Custer County Commission
- MSU Extension Local Government Center
- MSU Department of Health and Human Development



## Tasks:

- 1) Each organization agreed to elect one of their members to serve on the project's Statewide Farm Stress Prevention Advisory Council
- 2) All partners agreed to support the project by linking the clearinghouse website to their organization's website and assist with resource dissemination

# Montana Ag Producer Stress Resource Clearinghouse

Since April 2020,  
the site has had  
**7,557** views!



## What is Stress?

Learn what stress is and how it can affect your body and mind.



## Measure Your Stress

Take this short quiz to see how stressed you really are.



## Manage Your Stress

Simple, effective ways to keep stress from overwhelming you.



## What is Mental Health?

Clear explanations of mental health and why caring for it should be part of your daily wellness routine.

work parents weather  
drugs losses schedules  
finances family loans  
crop yield loss of control  
alcohol climate change time  
production money children  
substance abuse

## Learn More About Your Stressors

Identify what types of stressors are impacting you and how/where to get assistance.



## Help a Friend or Family Member

Resources to help you help those you love and care for.



## About This Project

Learn more about the MT Ag Producers Stress Resource Clearinghouse Project.



## Ag Producer Stress in the News

Articles from around the country that touch on subjects related to Ag Producer Stress.

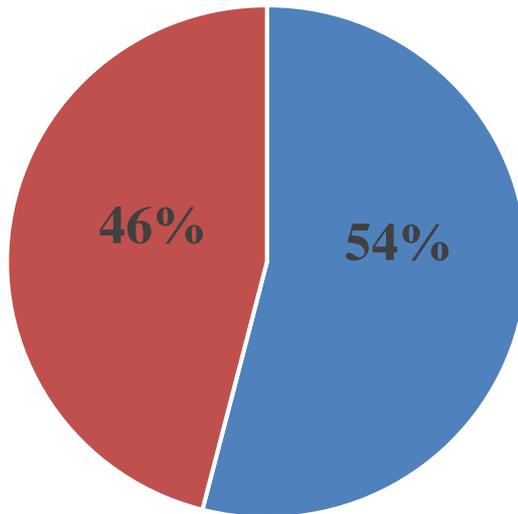
[https://msuextension.org/wellness/stress-management/mt\\_farm\\_stress\\_clearing\\_house/index.html](https://msuextension.org/wellness/stress-management/mt_farm_stress_clearing_house/index.html)

# WRASAP Baseline Ag Producer Survey

- As we continue to promote well-being and stress reduction among ag producers, the data collected through the WRASAP ag producer survey will be a vital source of needs assessment information
- Our preliminary Montana-specific findings suggest we are on the right track with our **existing** as well as **planned** outreach and education efforts
- Let's take a look at some initial findings!

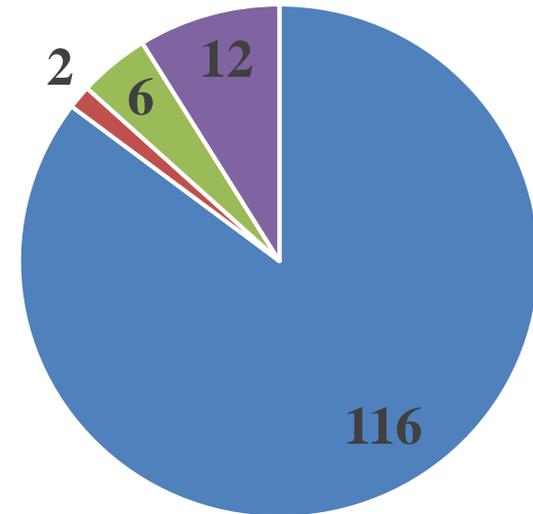
# Demographics

Gender



■ Male ■ Female

Marital Status  
(# of respondents)

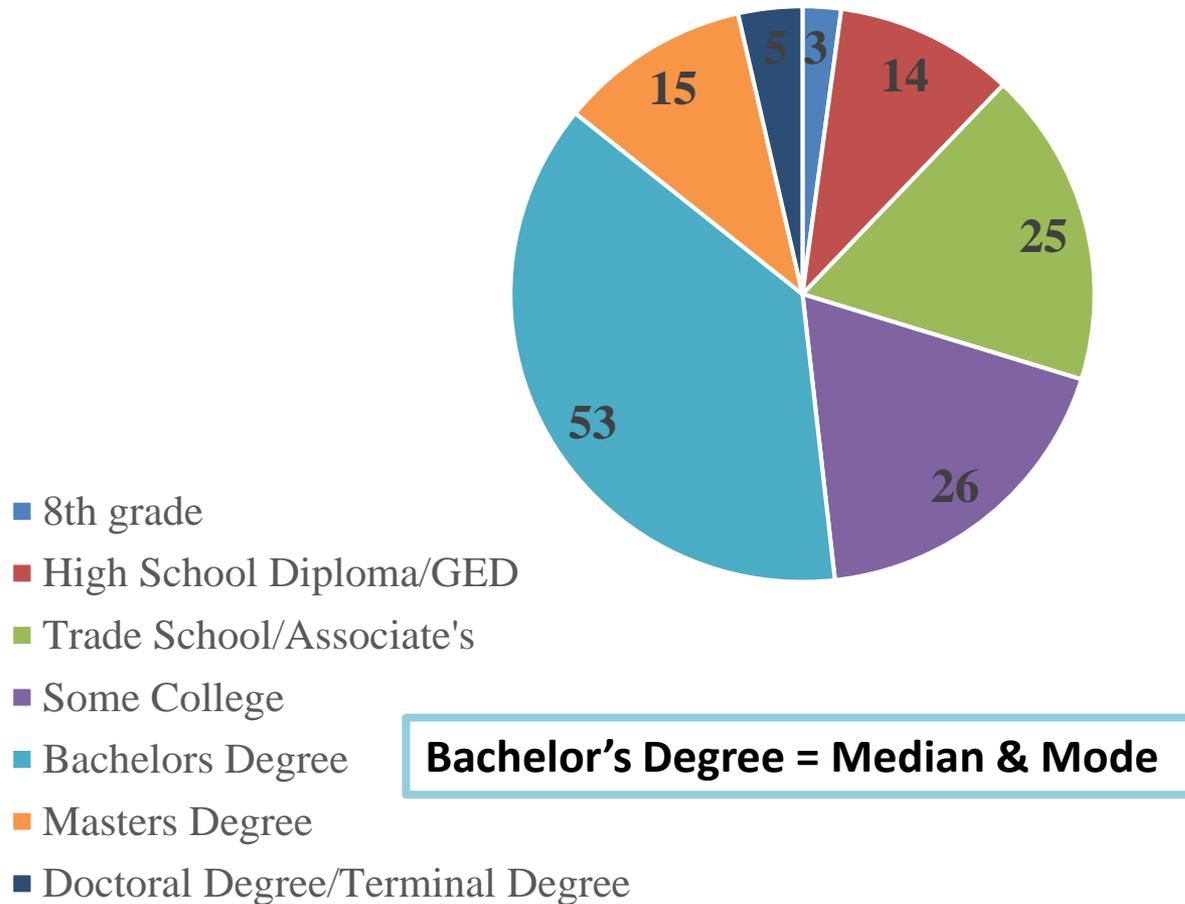


■ Married ■ Cohabiting  
■ Divorced ■ Single

Average age of respondents: **45 years** (range = 21 to 79 years)

Average number of years that respondents have worked in agriculture: **23 years**

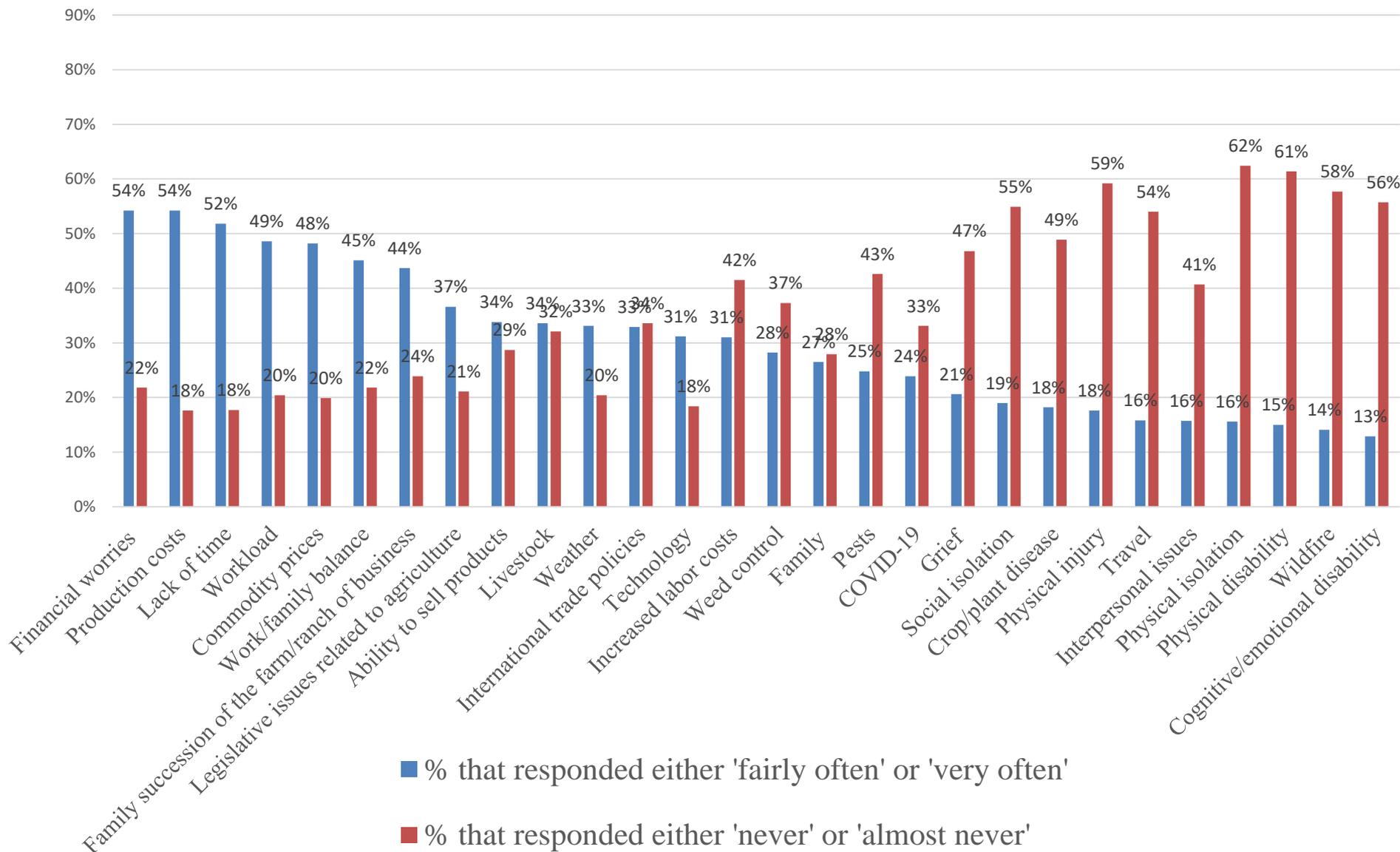
## Highest Level of Education Completed (# of respondents)



Percent of respondents who indicated that someone in the household works outside of the farm/ranch: **52%**

\*The most common field of work outside of farming/ranching is in **EDUCATION**

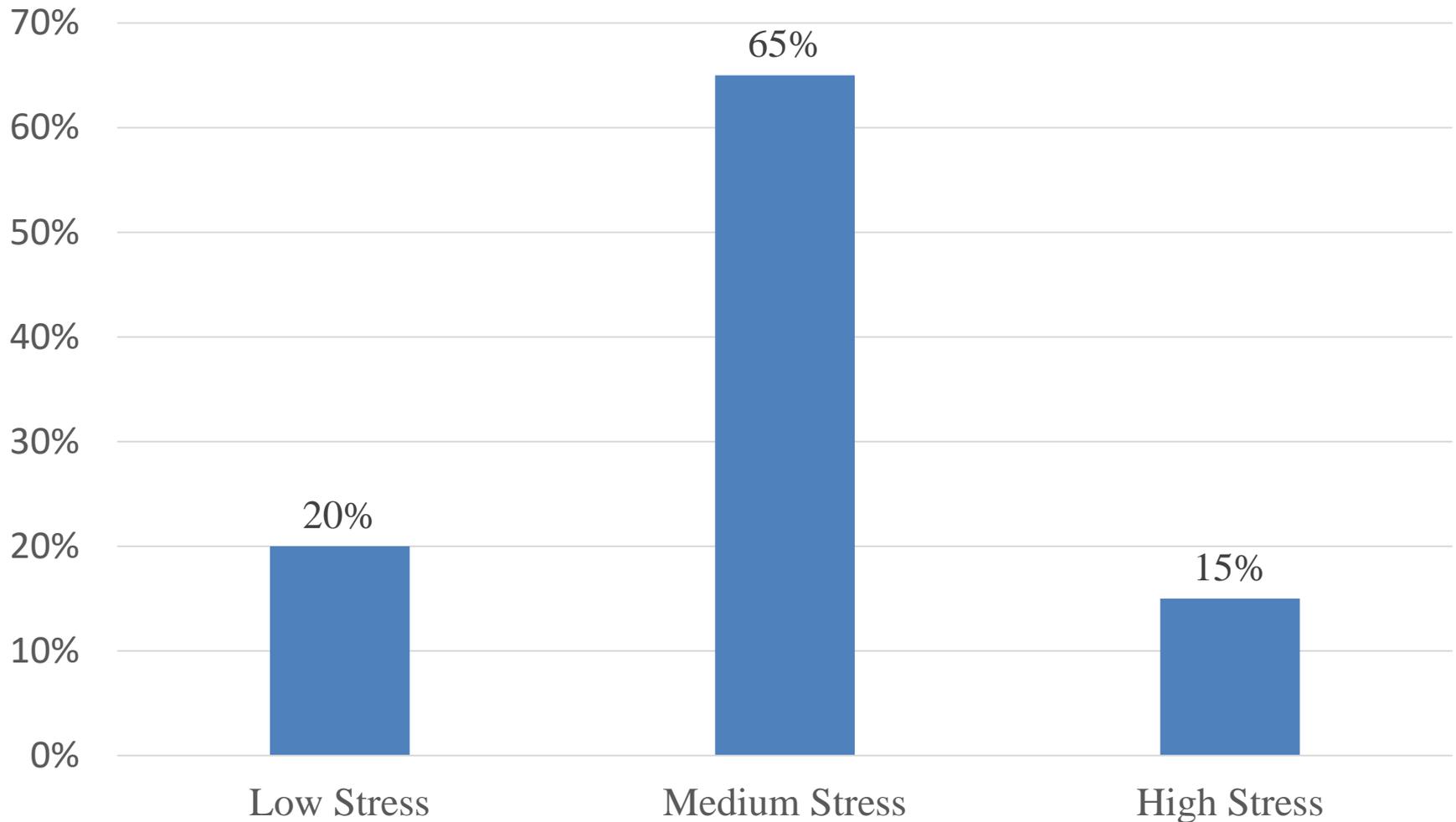
# Within the last year, please indicate how often the following led you to experience stress?



■ % that responded either 'fairly often' or 'very often'

■ % that responded either 'never' or 'almost never'

# Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

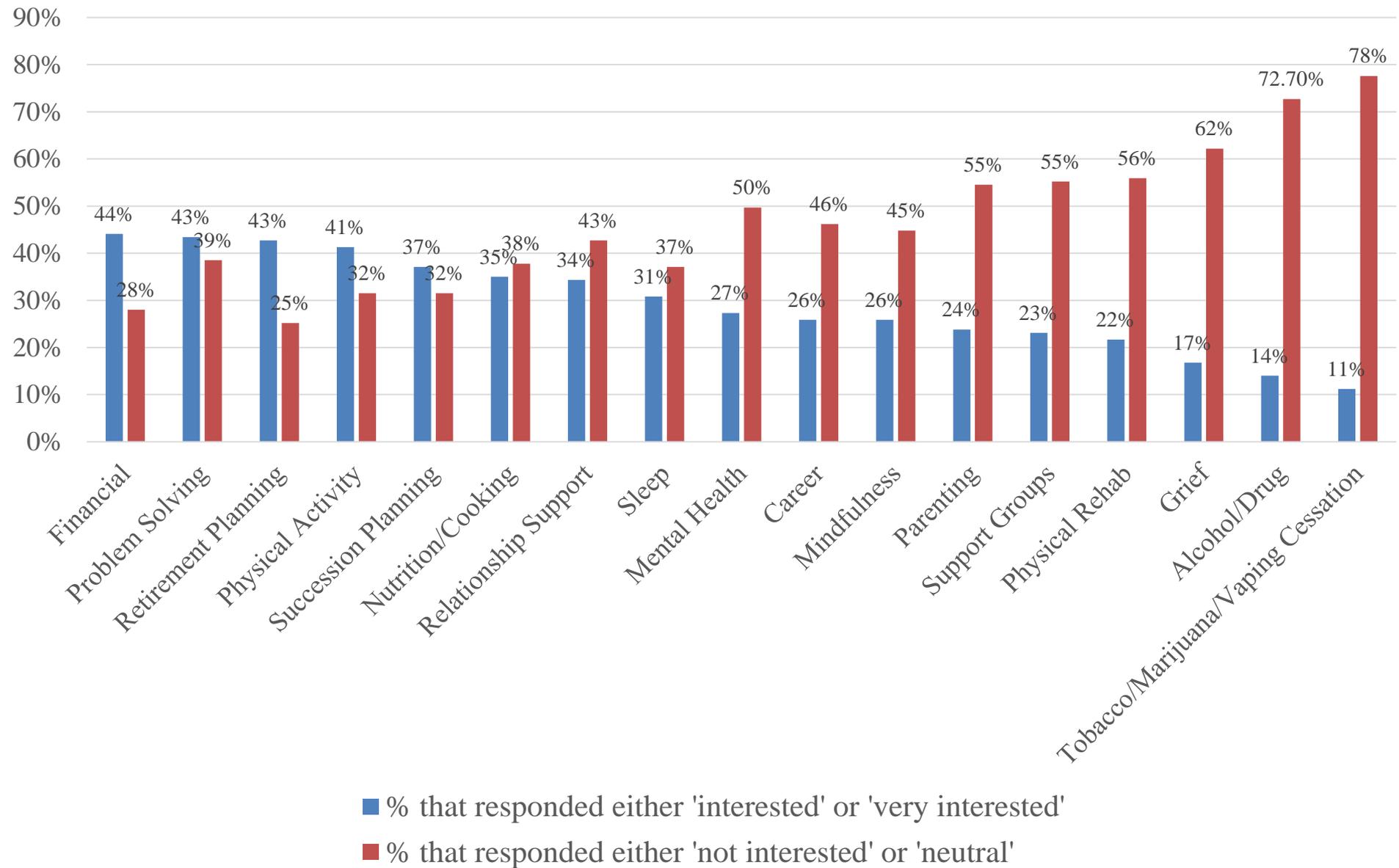


Low Stress = 0 – 13

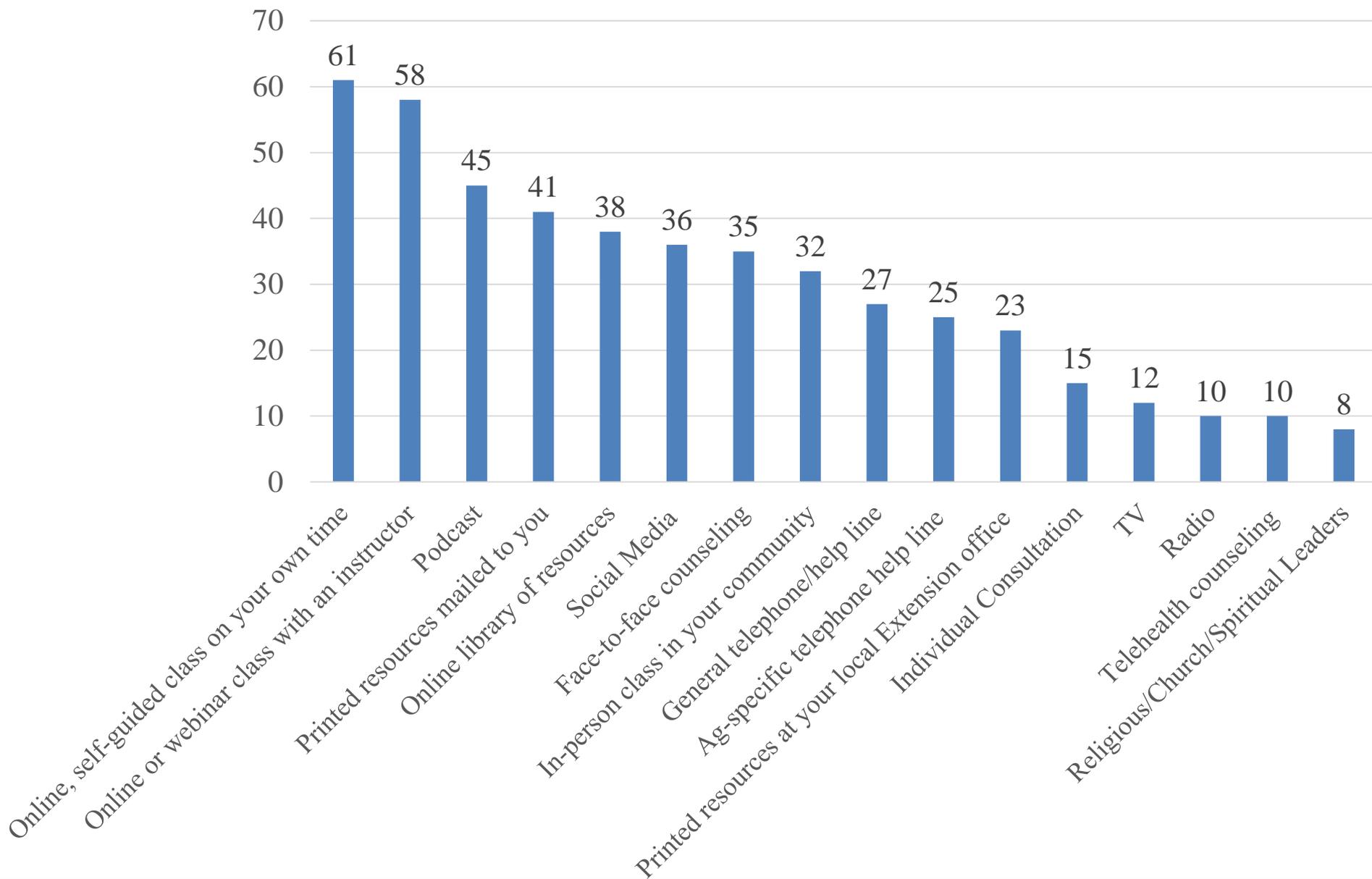
Medium Stress = 14 – 26

High Stress = 27 – 40

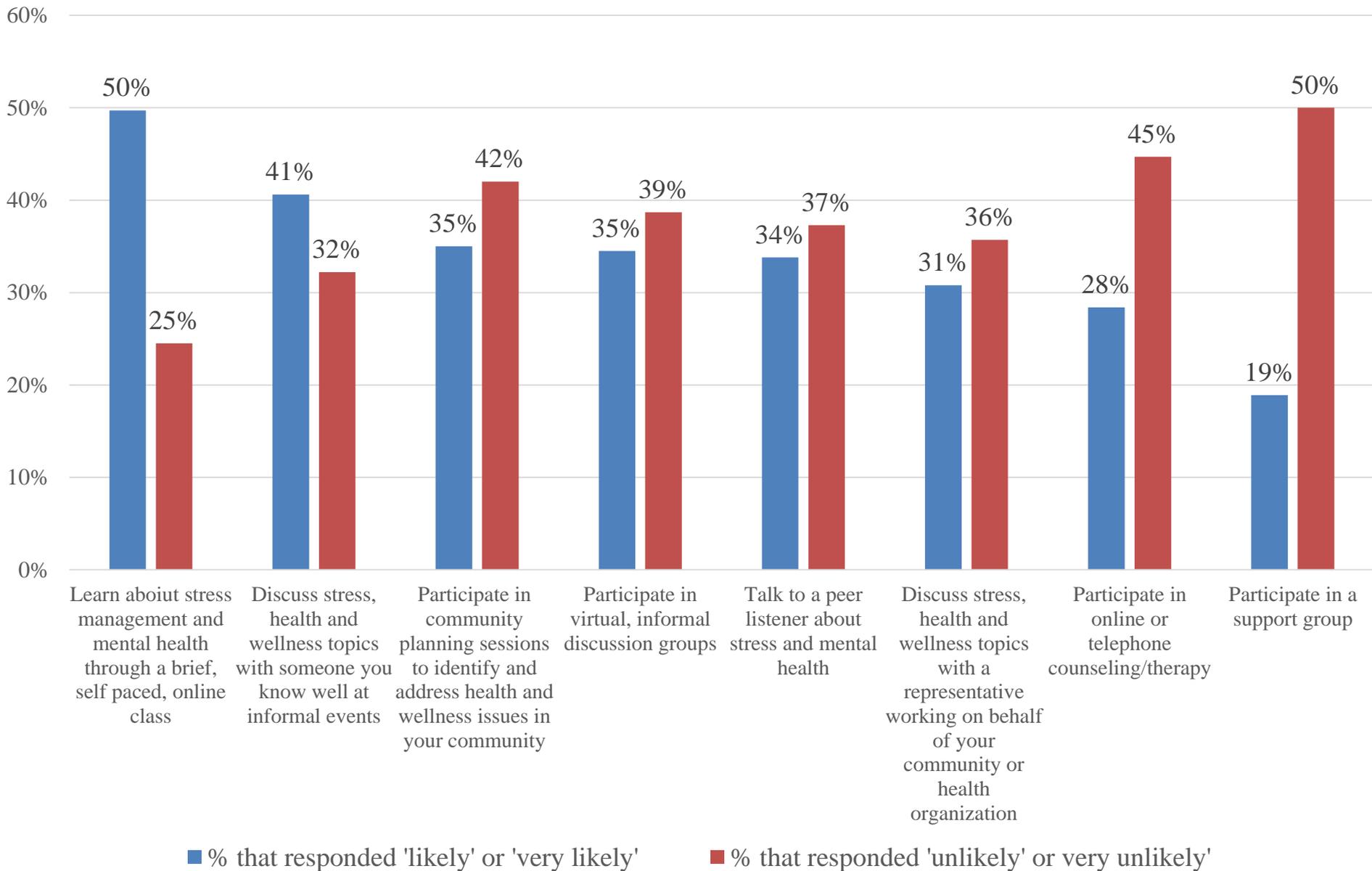
## To help you manage and/or cope with your stress, how interested would you be to learn about the following topics if the content was made available to you?



## In thinking about the topics from the previous question that you are interested in learning about, how would you be interested in receiving this information?



# Likelihood of Participation in Specific Education and Outreach Projects



# Interview Comments

"I guess maybe the only other thing is I do think there's a lot of farmers that listen to **podcasts**, they're in their tractor a lot and that sort of thing. So, **that could be a resource** that could be helpful if it's done from the **right perspective.**"

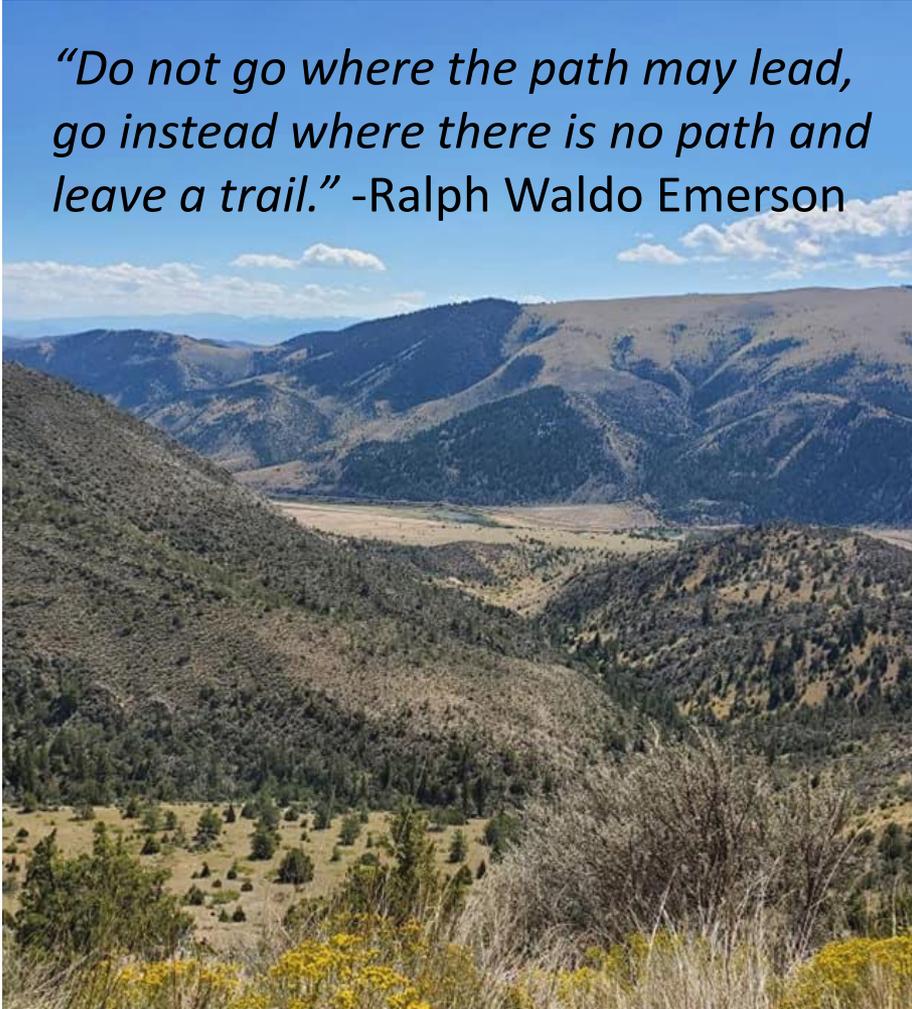
"Because I think there's also kind of a turnoff, if there's the perspective of '**Oh, this is to do with mental health. I don't want to do that.**' But guys that just happened to meet down at the elevator every morning and have a cup of coffee together and have that **connection and interaction**, that's probably far more effective and **it just happens naturally.**"

"So really, it's not your fault that the **commodity prices** are where they're at, but you **feel like a failure** because you feel like, well, **I should have done more.**"

"I have seen a **billboard** near where I live that says something about mental health and **it says to call our local clinic** or something like that. And I think that's nice because a lot of times when you're in a bad place, you need that **anonymous...** Make a **call**. See if they can help...Because it's not something you want to advertise."

# Future Directions

*“Do not go where the path may lead,  
go instead where there is no path and  
leave a trail.” -Ralph Waldo Emerson*



## Baseline Data

- An overall Western Region report will be created from the WRASAP baseline ag producer surveys and interviews
- Individual state/territory reports will be created for those with sufficient data
- Reports will include notes pertaining to alignment of expressed interests/preferences among ag producers and major WRASAP projects

## Education and Outreach

- Creation and pilot testing of the Mental Wellness Conversation Curriculum (MWCC) in WRASAP year 3

# Thank you for attending!

## Questions/Comments?

**Alison Brennan**

Assistant Professor in Health and  
Human Development

Extension Mental Health Specialist

[alison.brennan@montana.edu](mailto:alison.brennan@montana.edu)

406-994-4148

**Michelle Grocke**

Assistant Professor in Health and  
Human Development

Extension Health & Wellness Specialist

[michelle.grocke@montana.edu](mailto:michelle.grocke@montana.edu)

406-994-4711