



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT JUSTICE RESEARCH INITIATIVE



VERMONT PRISON CLIMATE SURVEY

2021

Prison Research and
Innovation Network (PRIN)

go.uvm.edu/justiceresearch

ABOUT - 2021

The Vermont Prison Climate Surveys were developed as part of the **Prison Research and Innovation Network (PRIN)** - a consortium of 5 states, each working to establish a model of transparency, accountability, and innovation in prisons. The 5 states participating in the PRIN project are: Vermont, Delaware, Iowa, Missouri, and Colorado.

The purpose of PRIN is to better understand prison environments; enhance prisons' data collection capacities to promote transparency and accountability; and design, implement, and evaluate evidence-based programs and policies to improve conditions for individuals incarcerated in and working in prisons. PRIN is a 4.5 year project taking place from January 2020 to June 2024.

Phase I (January 2020 – December 2021). Researchers at the University of Vermont developed two Prison Climate Surveys - one for correctional staff and one for incarcerated persons. Both surveys were developed using participatory research methods, elevating the voices and perspectives of correctional staff and incarcerated individuals. Surveys were developed and administered in Southern State Correctional Facility (SSCF), the PRIN pilot facility. In June 2021, just over one year into the Covid-19 pandemic, baseline surveys were administered. More than 70% of SSCF staff and incarcerated persons completed the surveys. **Results of 2021 correctional staff and incarcerated persons surveys are presented in this report.**

Phase II (January 2022 – June 2024). The Vermont Department of Corrections will use findings from phase I to identify priority areas for change and implement and test innovations in the pilot facility to make prison environments more humane and rehabilitative. The Vermont Prison Climate Surveys will also be administered in SSCF on an annual basis throughout the PRIN project, providing the opportunity for researchers to evaluate the impact of innovations and build the evidence-base for change.



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www.doc.vermont.gov

This work was completed under the Urban Institute's Prison Research and Innovation Initiative (PRII), supported by Arnold Ventures—a five-year effort to leverage research and evidence to shine a much-needed light on prison conditions and pilot strategies to promote the wellbeing of people who are confined and work behind bars. The views expressed here are those of the author/authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, Arnold Ventures, its trustees, or its funders

www.urban.org/features/prison-research-and-innovation-initiative



2021: SURVEY RESPONDENTS - STAFF



70%

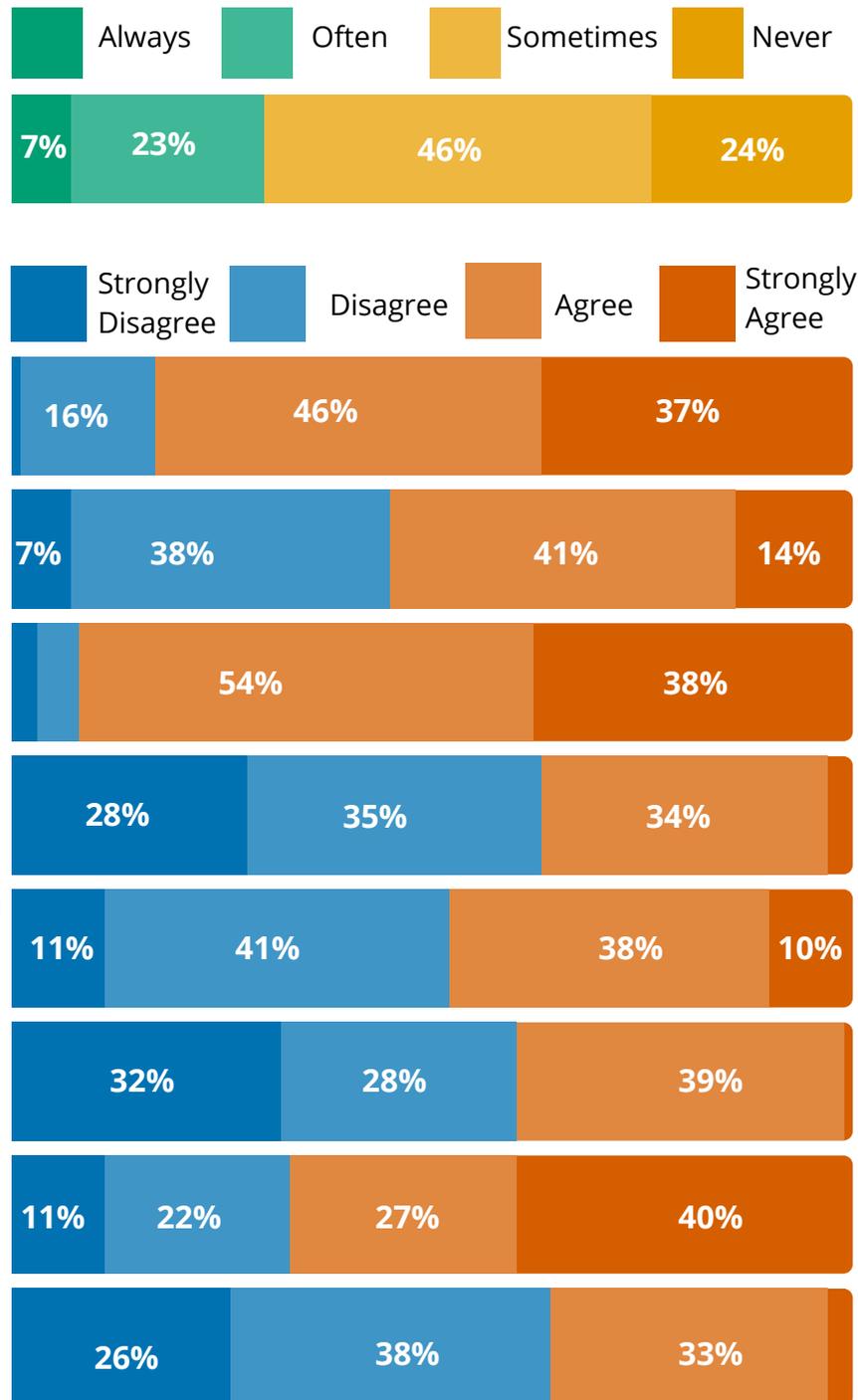
of correctional
staff completed
the survey.

- Age: 42 years (median)
- Race: 91% white
- Ethnicity: 86% white
- Gender identity: 21% female, 79% male
- Employer: 95% corrections, 5% contractor
- # Years working at SSCF
 - 40% 0-5 years, 60% 6+ years
- # Years working in Corrections
 - 33% 0-5 years, 67% 6+ years

The Correctional Staff Vermont Prison Climate Survey was administered to staff working in Vermont's Southern State Correctional Facility in June 2021. Surveys were paper-based, confidential, and anonymous. Of 131 eligible correctional staff, 92 completed the survey (70% response rate). The demographic data presented here are self-reported.

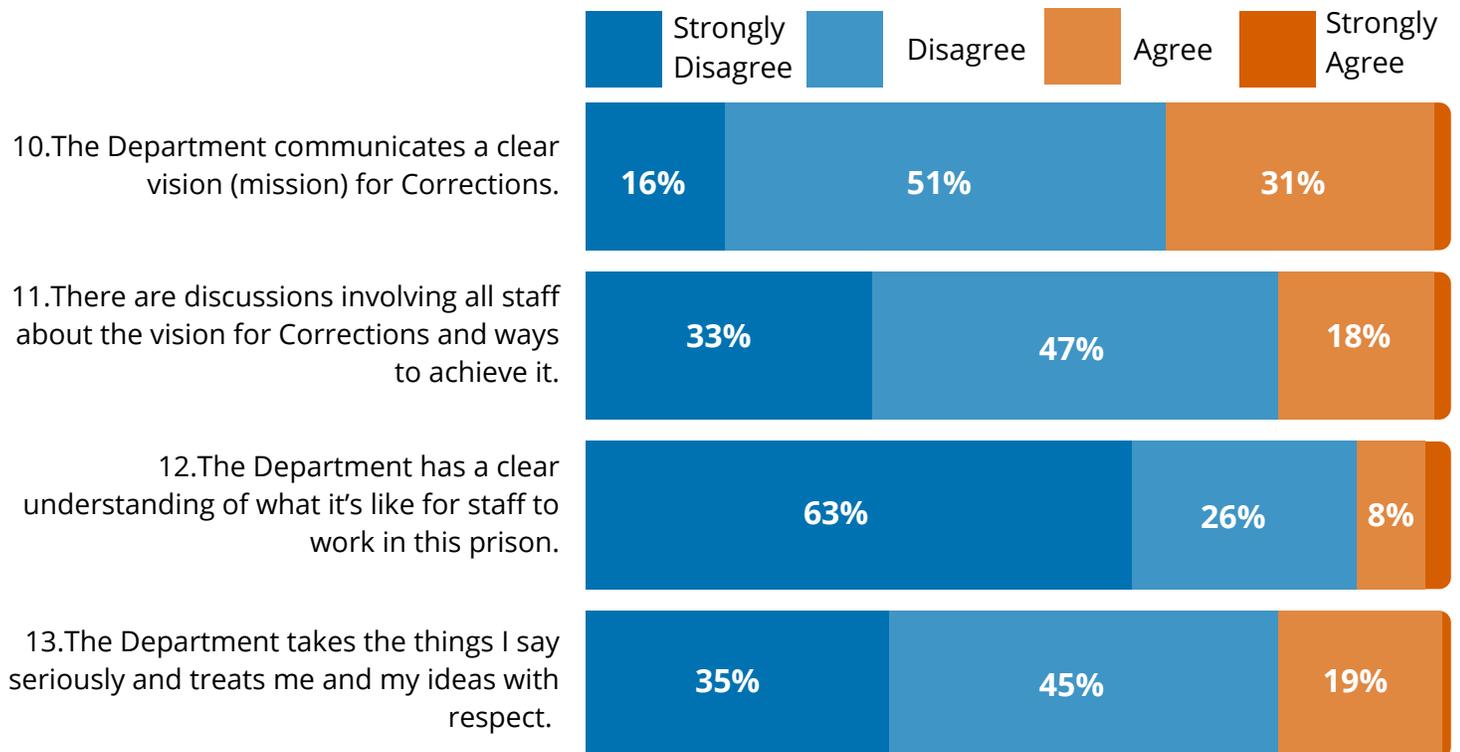


JOB SATISFACTION



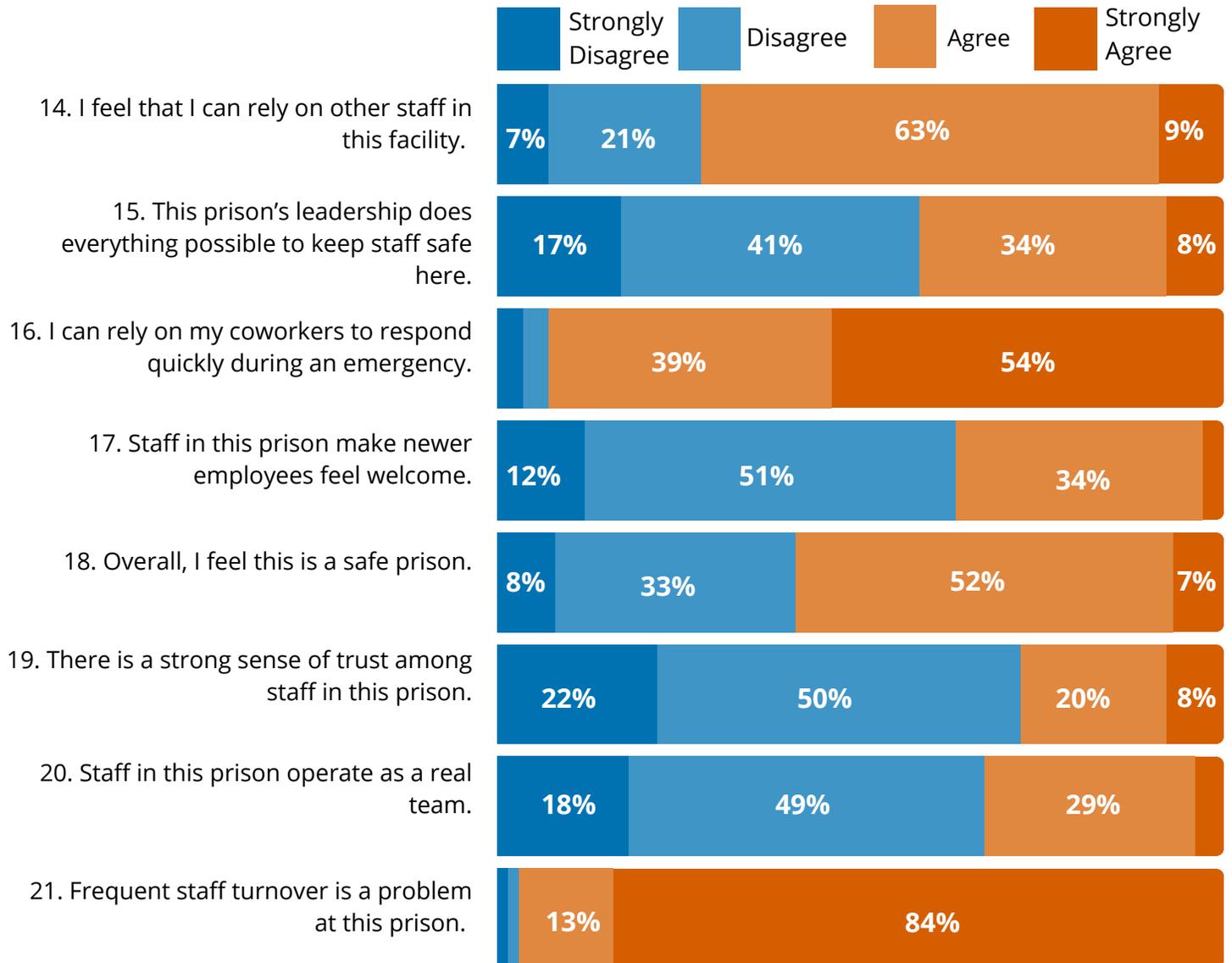


THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS ("CENTRAL OFFICE")



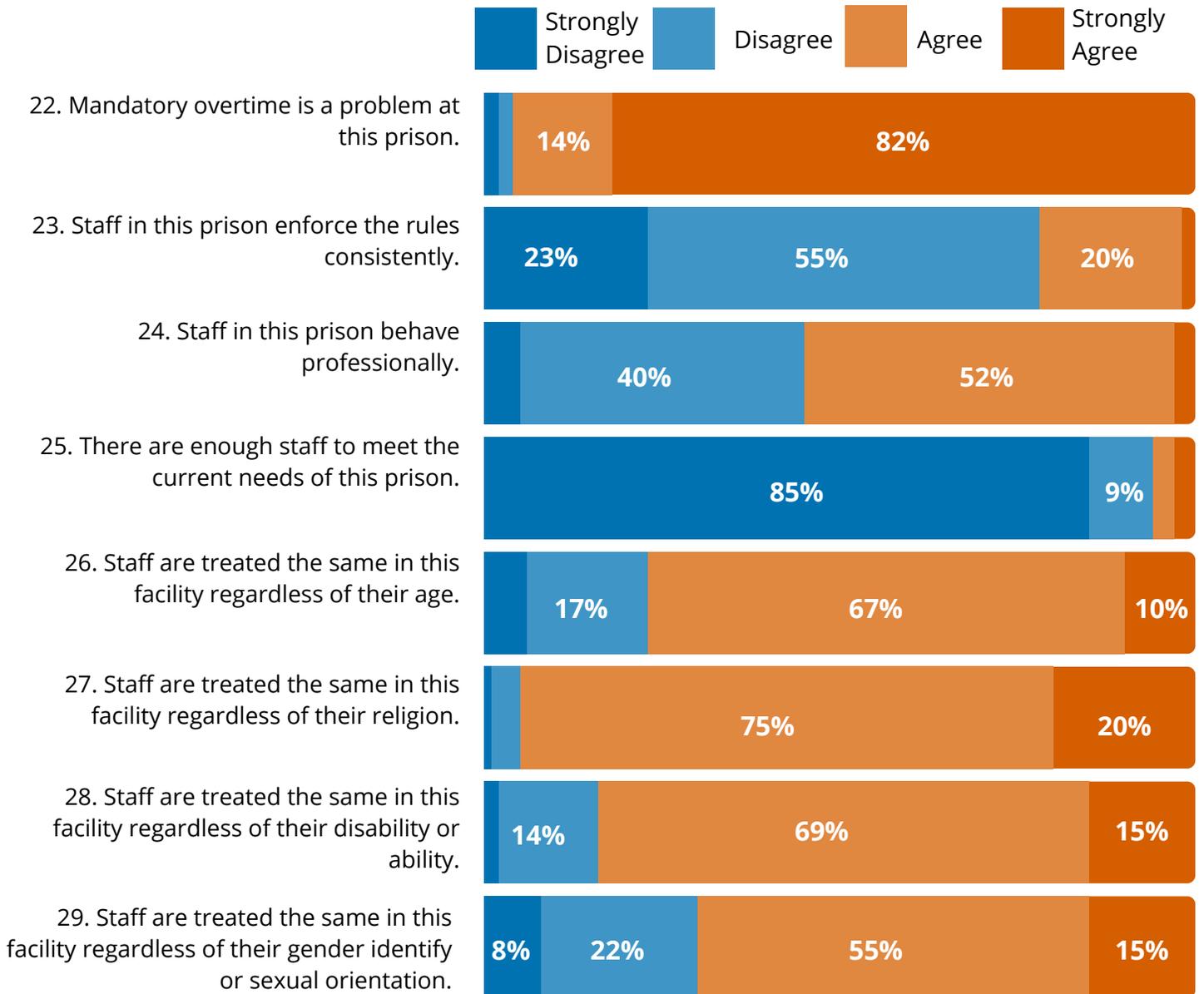


WORKPLACE CULTURE (1/4)



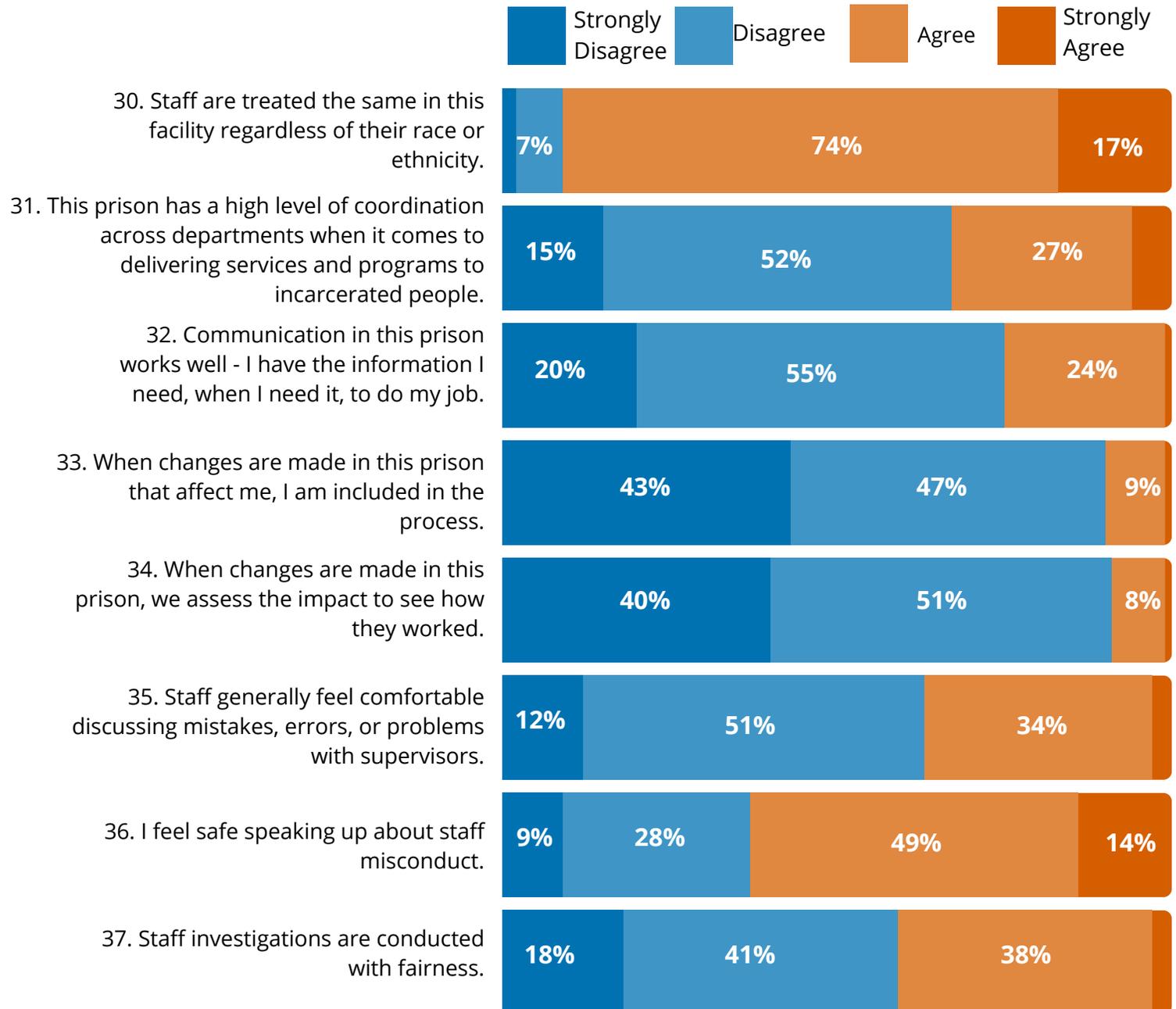


WORKPLACE CULTURE, Continued (2/4)



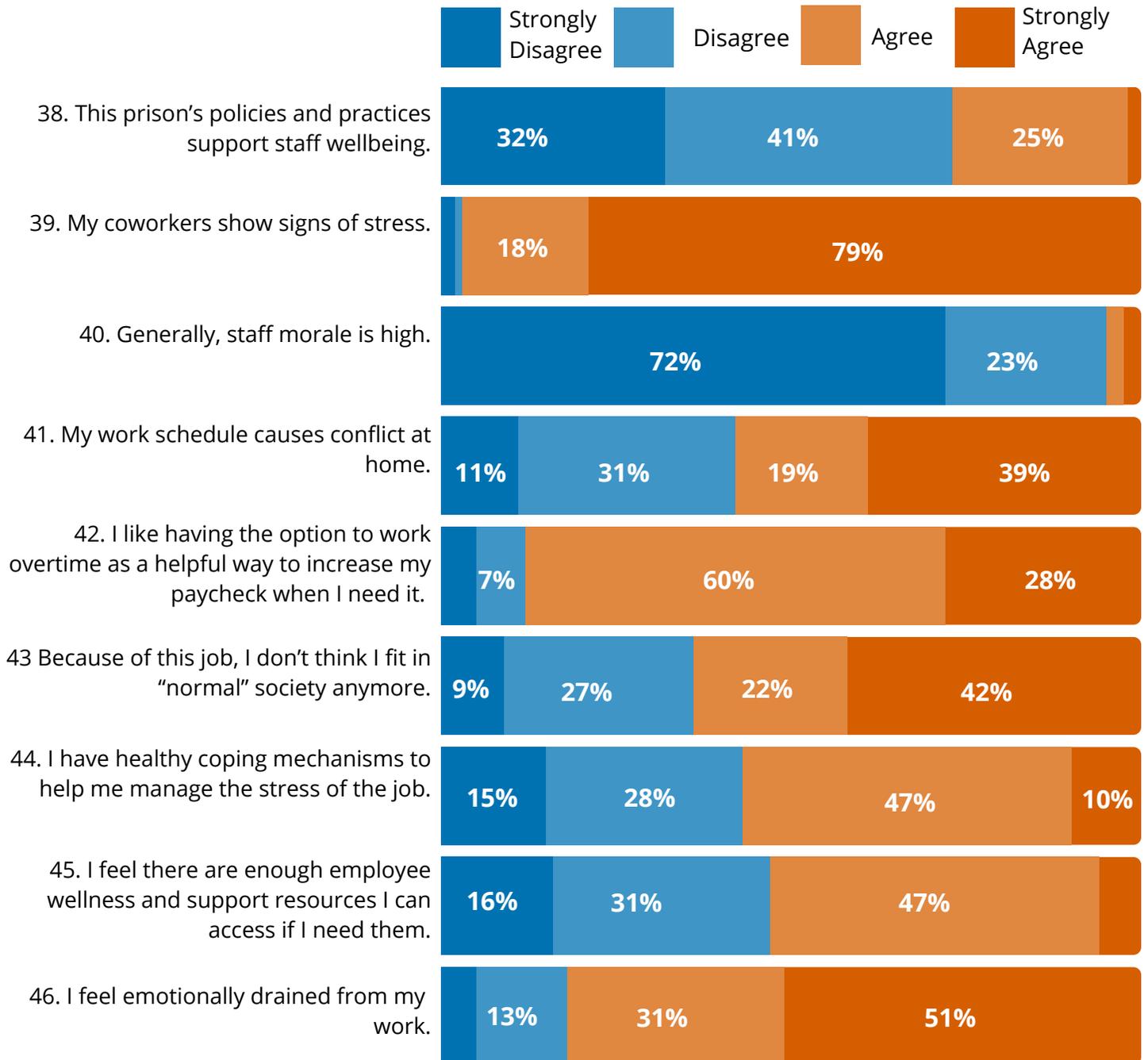


WORKPLACE CULTURE, Continued (3/4)





WORKPLACE CULTURE, Continued (4/4)

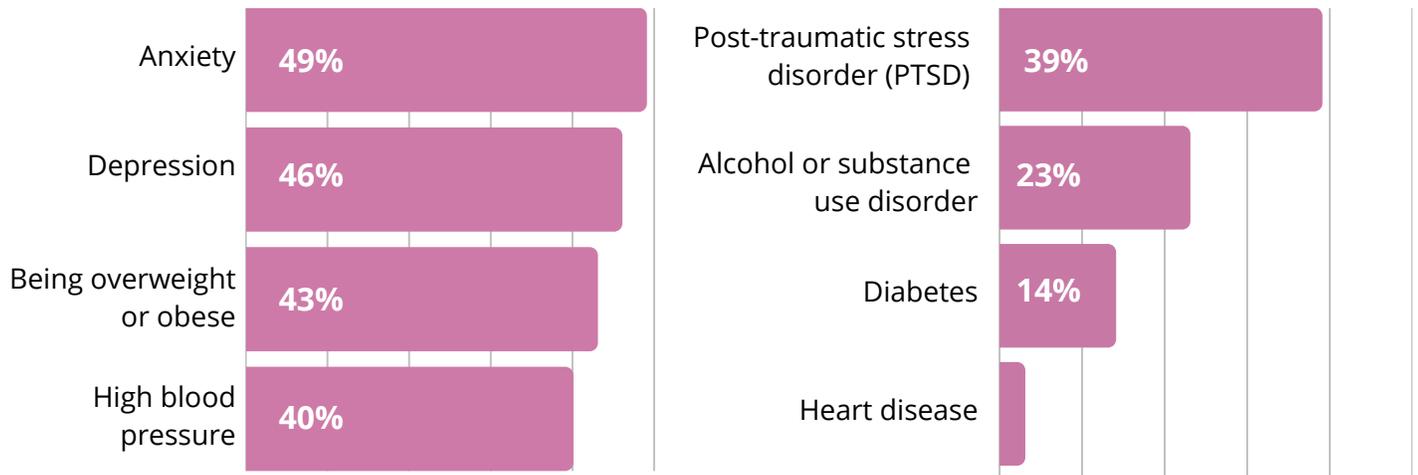




STAFF HEALTH

47. Since starting work in corrections, I have developed the following health conditions (check all that apply):

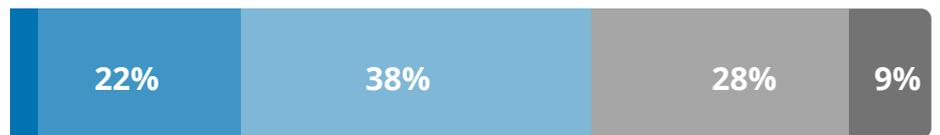
% Yes



Physical Health



48. In general, how would you rate your physical health?



49. To what extent are you able to carryout your everyday physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, carrying groceries, or moving a chair?



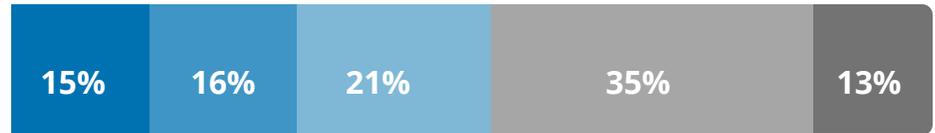


STAFF HEALTH, Continued

Mental Health



50. In general, how would you rate your mental health, including your mood and your ability to think?



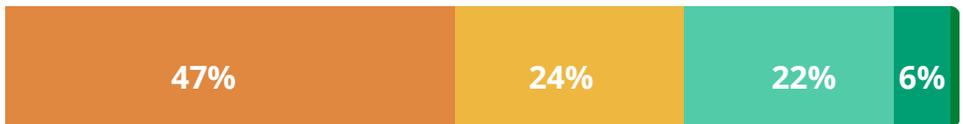
51. In general, how would you rate your satisfaction with your social activities and relationships?



In the past 7 days...



52. I felt worthless...



53. I felt helpless...



54. I felt depressed...



55. I felt hopeless...



Suicidal Thoughts

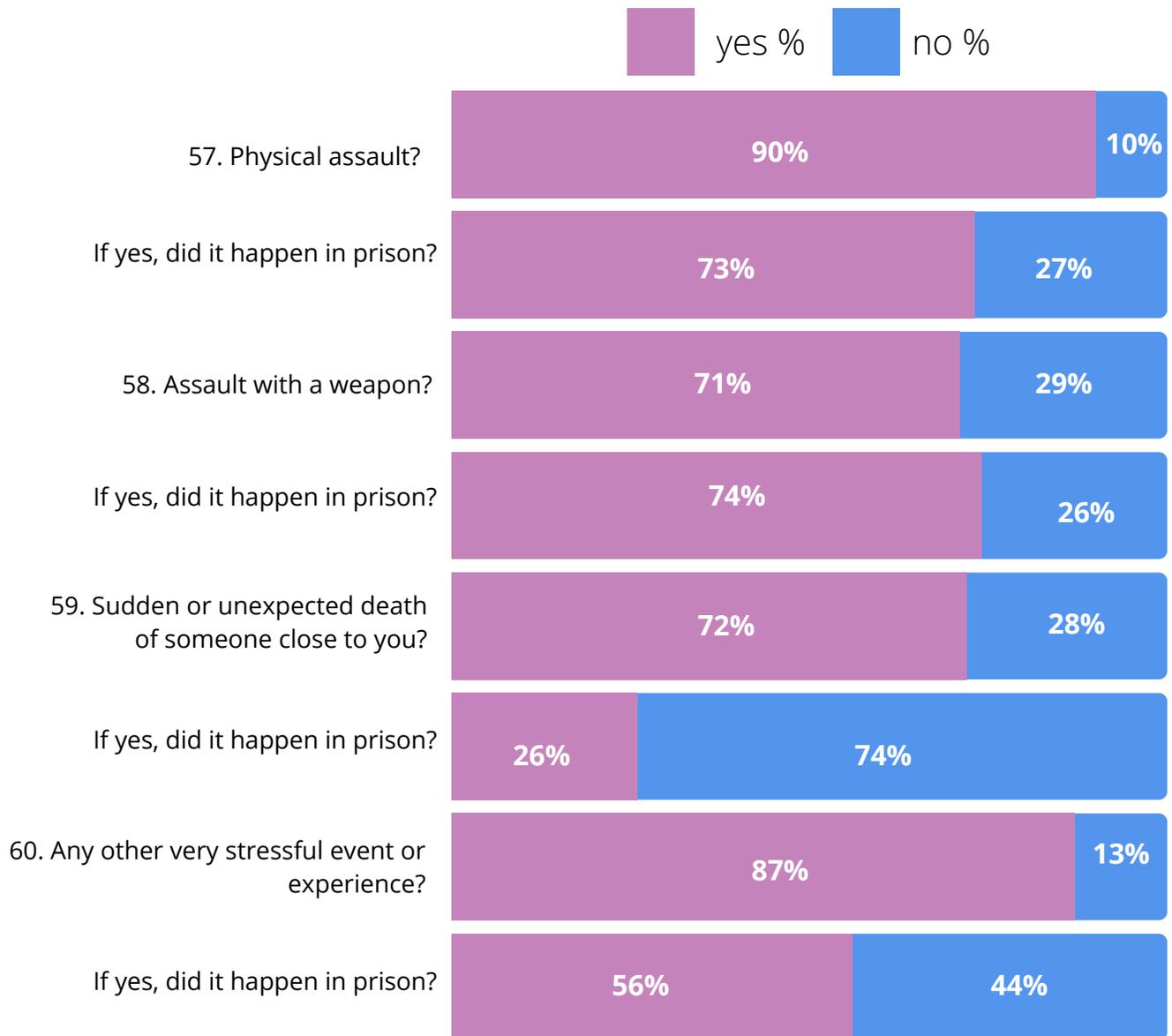
56. At any time in the last 12 months did you seriously think about trying to kill yourself?





TRAUMA

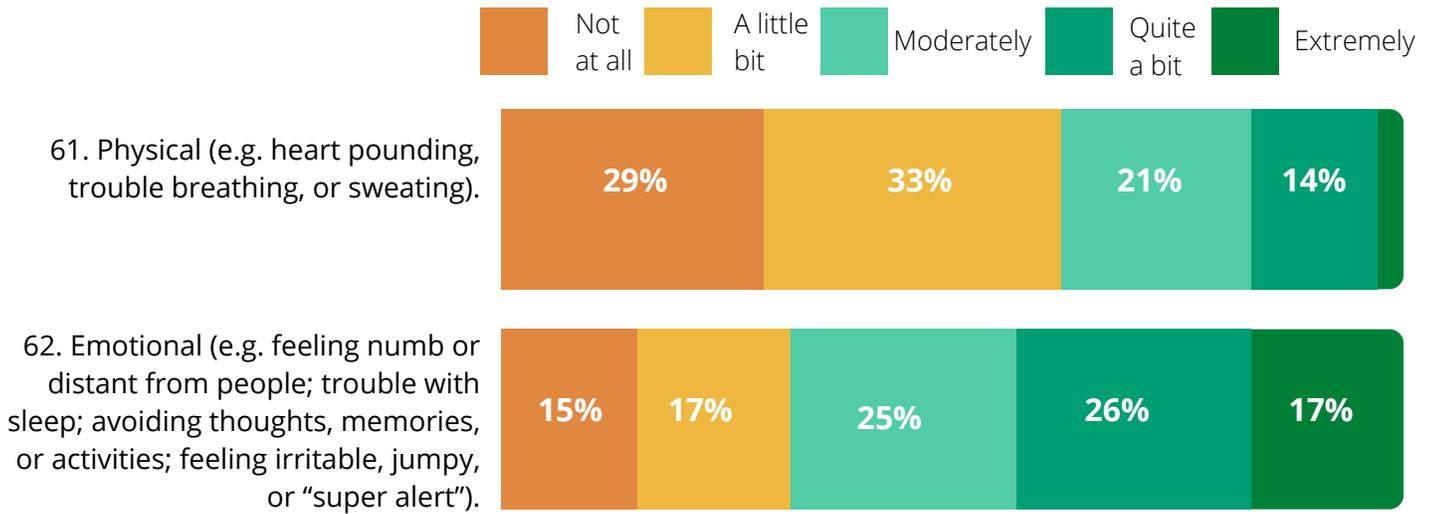
***Consider your entire life, have you experienced?
(happened to you or witnessed it)***





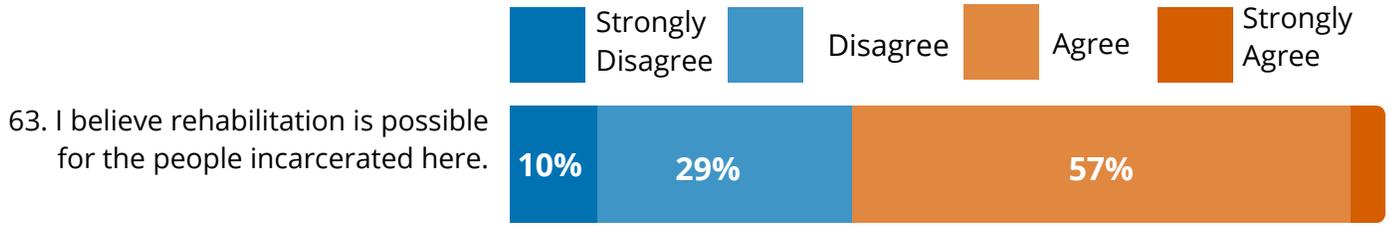
TRAUMA, Continued

In the past month, how much have you been bothered by physical or emotional reactions when something reminded you of a stressful experience from the past?

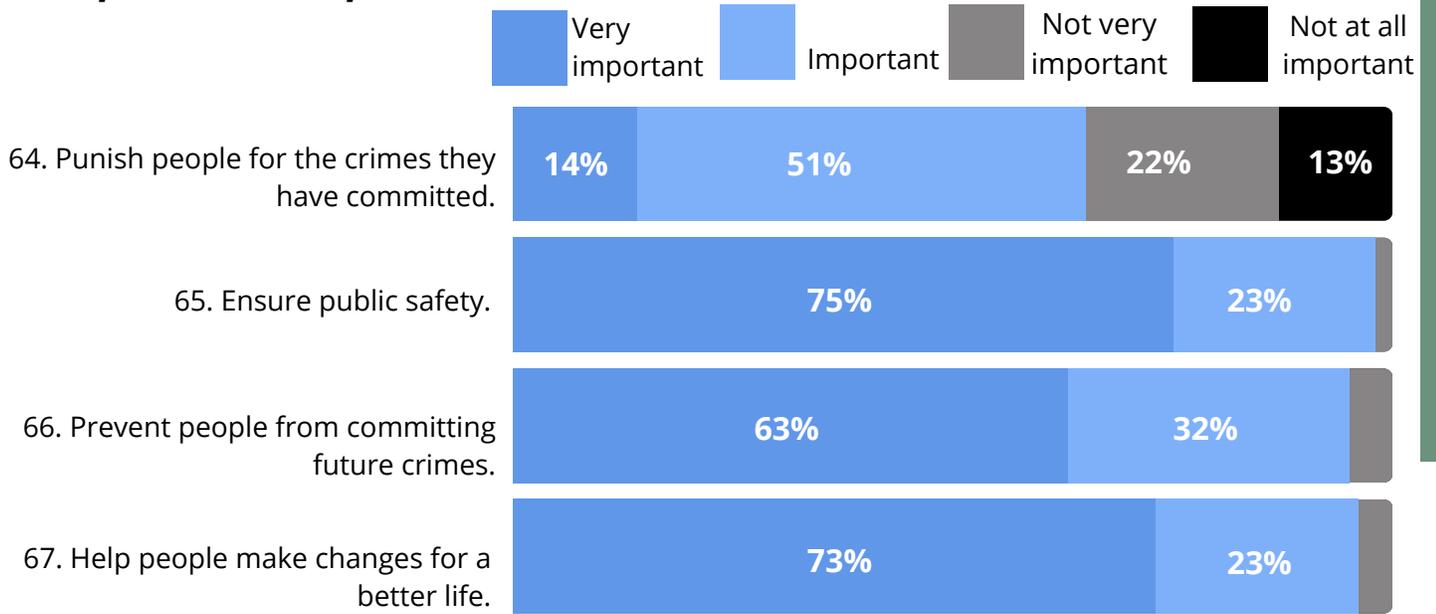




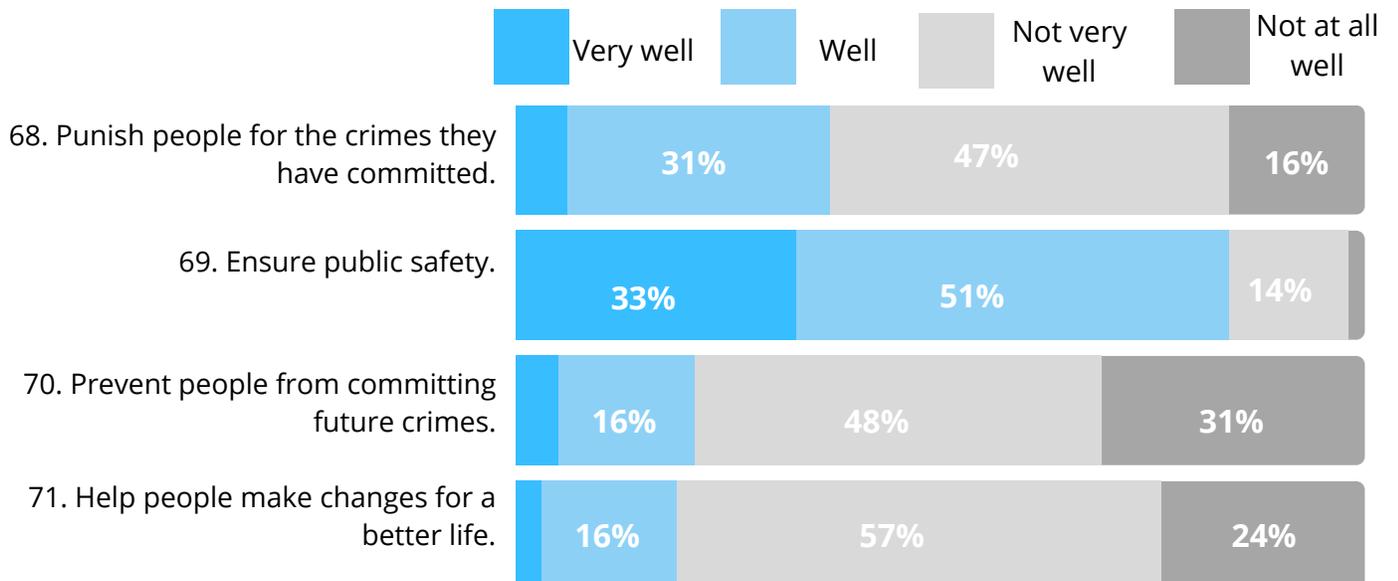
PURPOSE OF PRISON



It is important that prisons...



How well does this prison do these things?

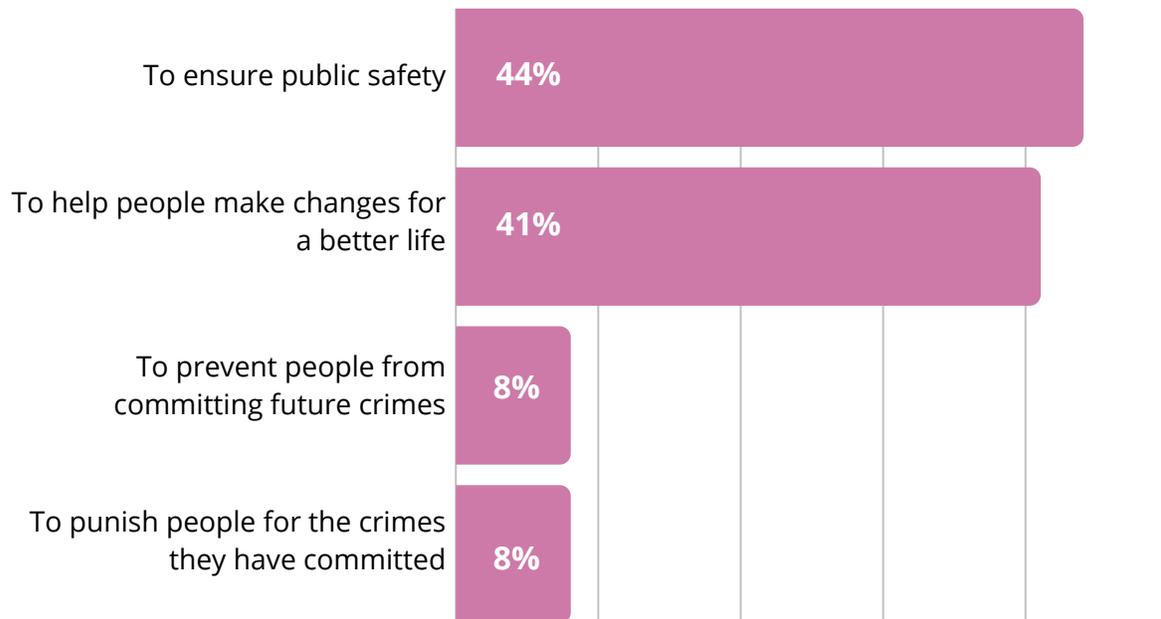




PURPOSE OF PRISON, Continued

72. Which of these things should be the most important purpose of prison? (choose one)

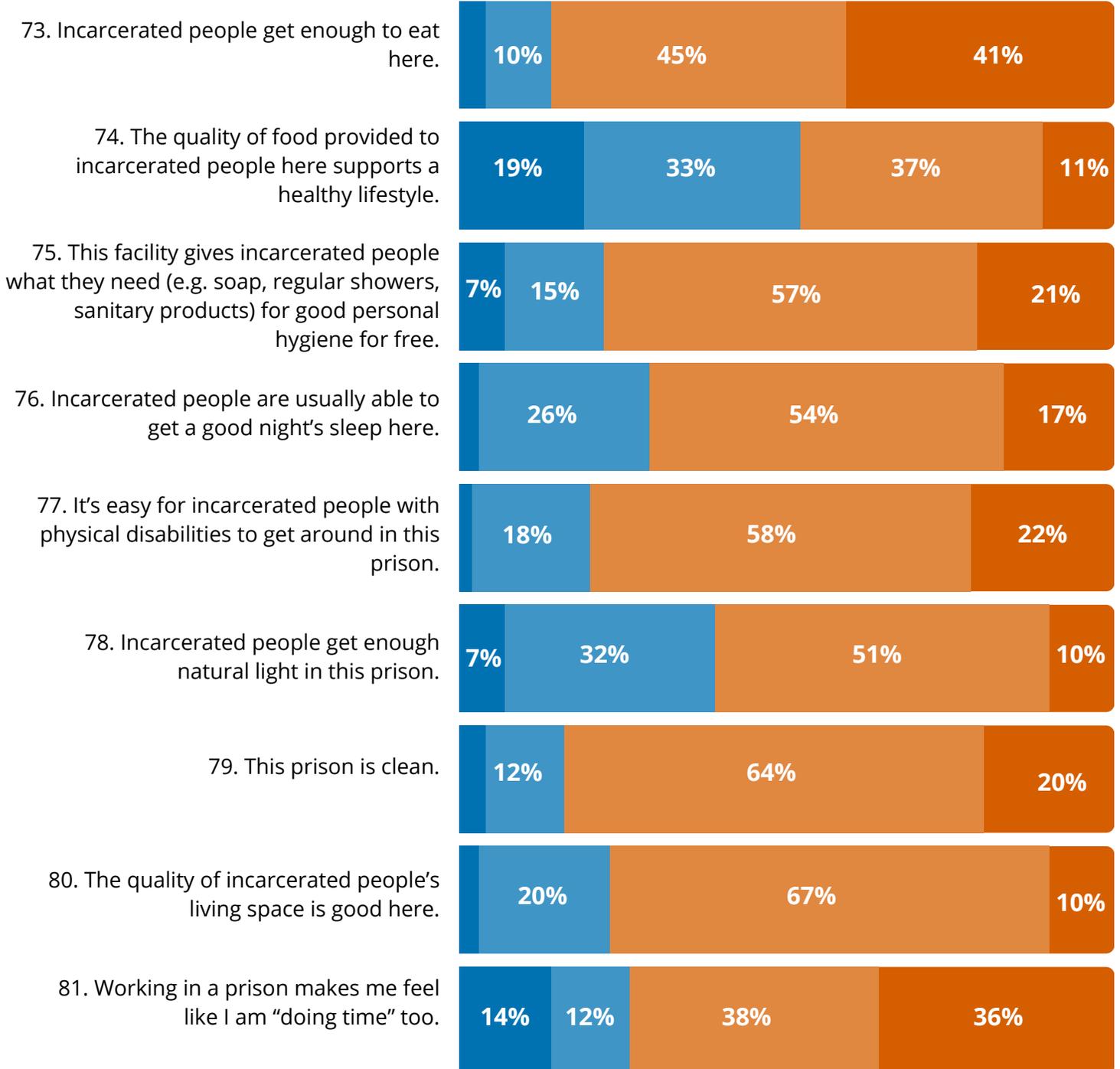
 % Yes





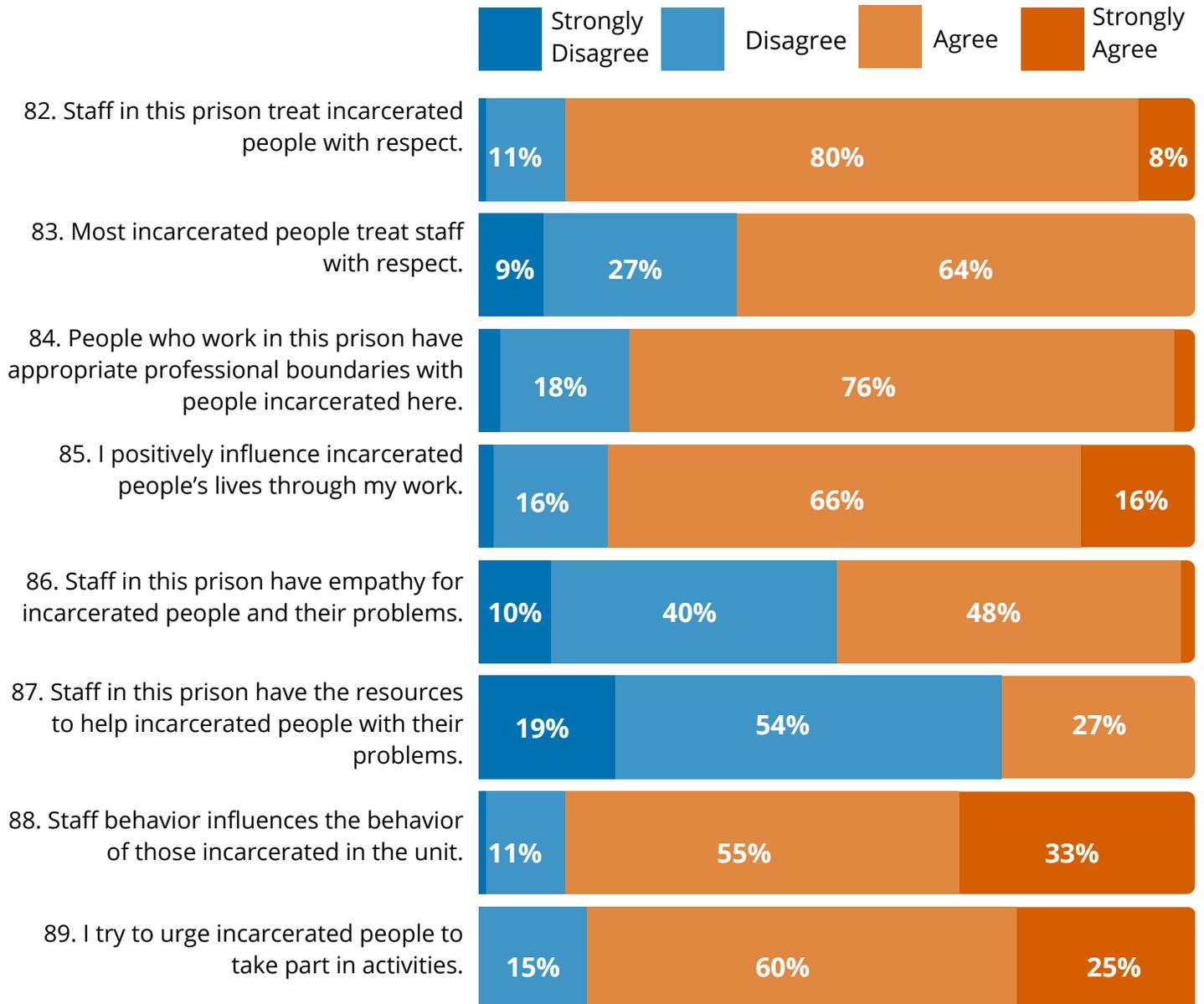
PRISON CONDITIONS

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree





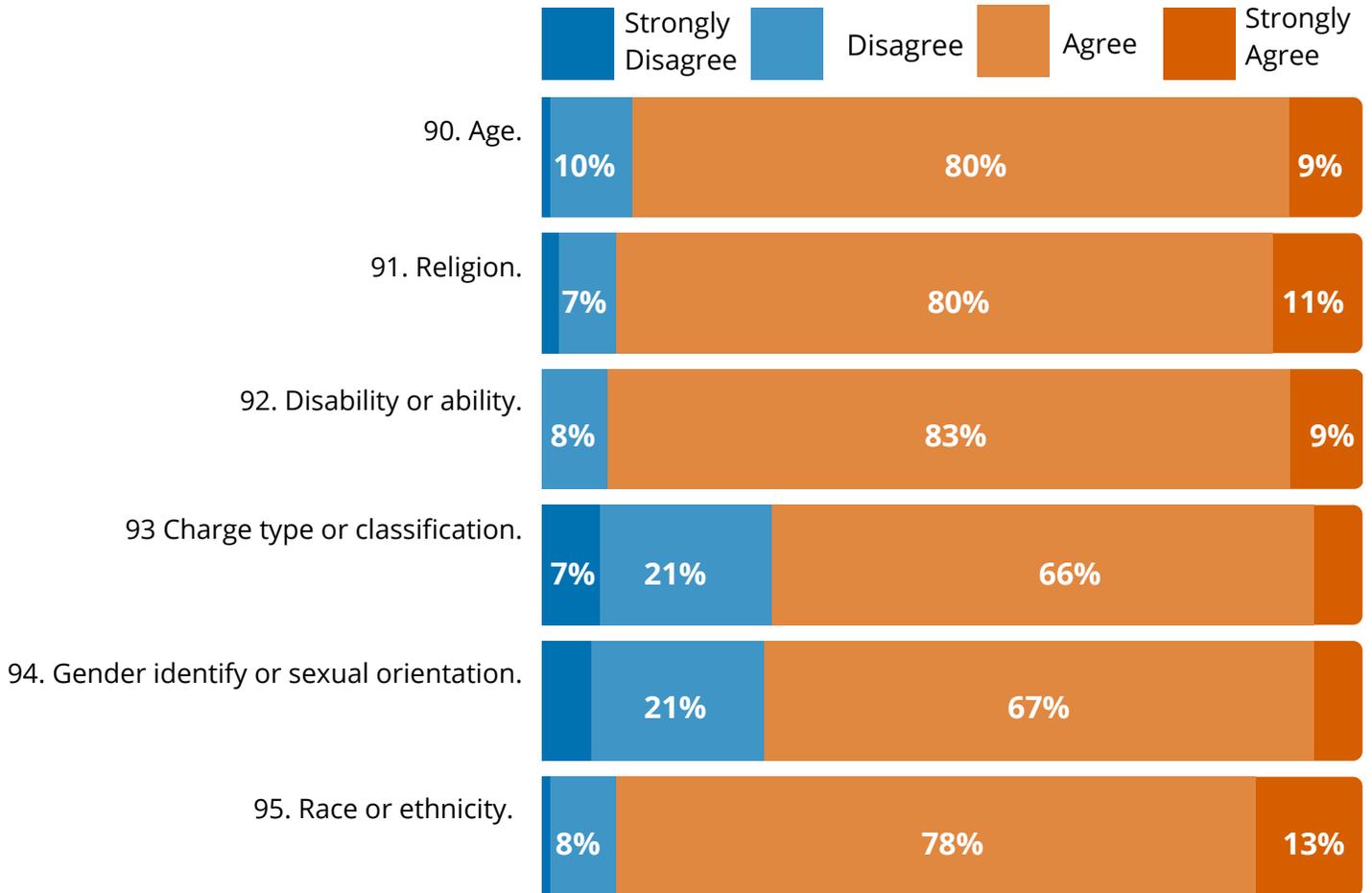
STAFF-INCARCERATED INTERACTIONS





STAFF-INCARCERATED INTERACTIONS, CONTINUED

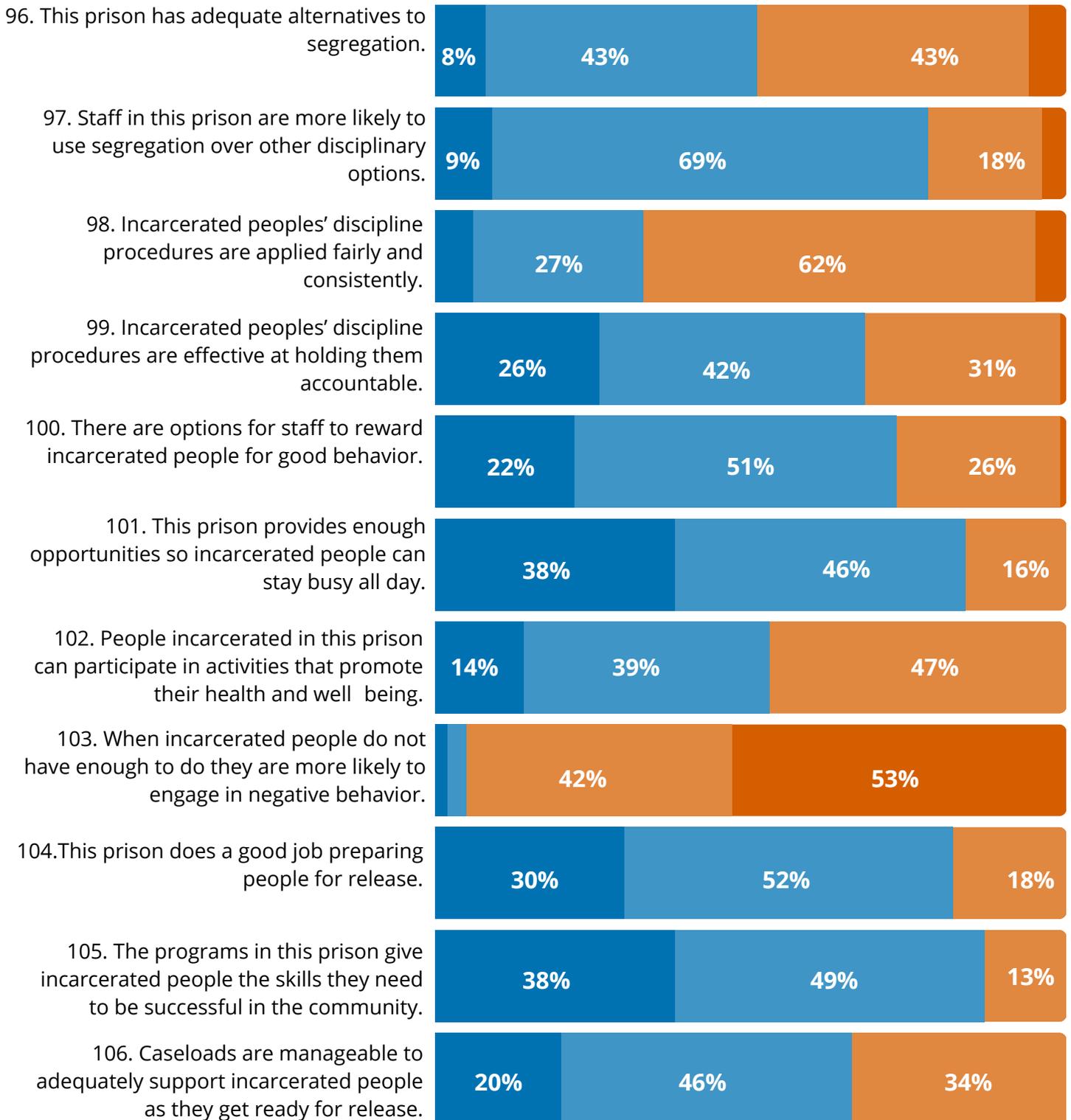
Staff in this prison treat incarcerated people the same regardless of the incarcerated persons'...





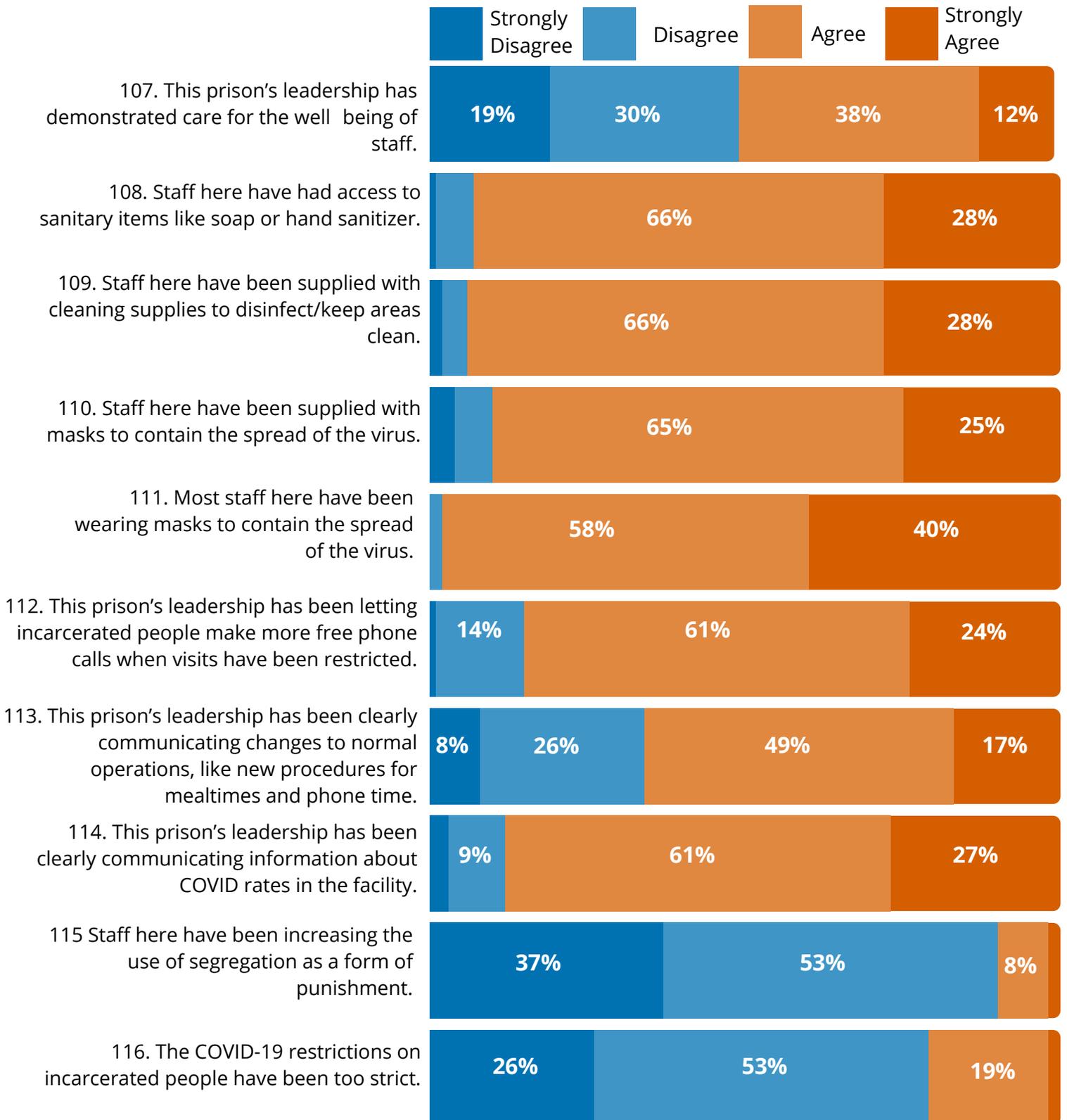
CORRECTIONAL PRACTICES AND SANCTIONS

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree



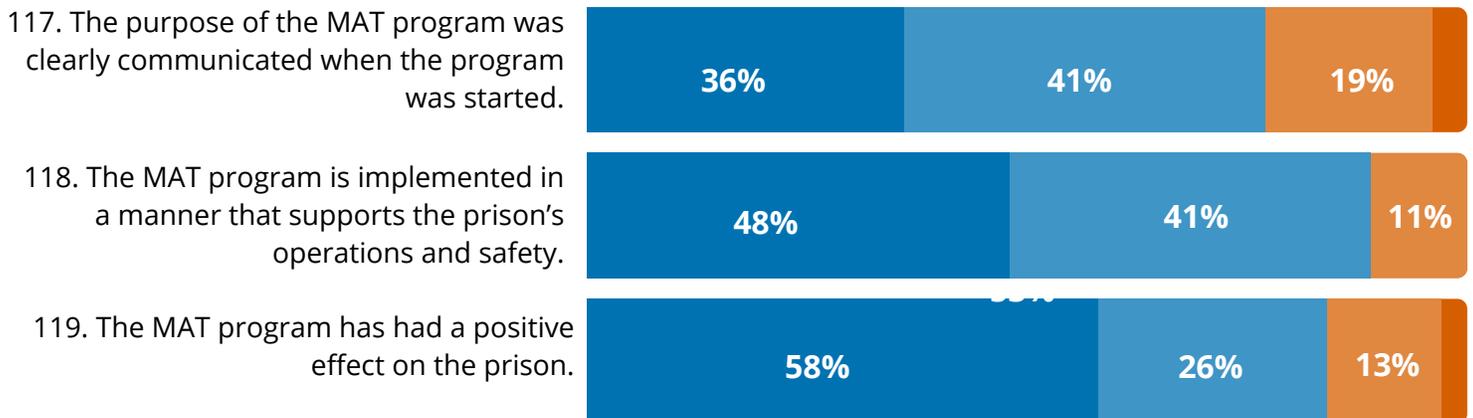


DURING COVID-19,...





MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT (MAT) PROGRAM





2021: SURVEY RESPONDENTS - INCARCERATED PERSONS



70%

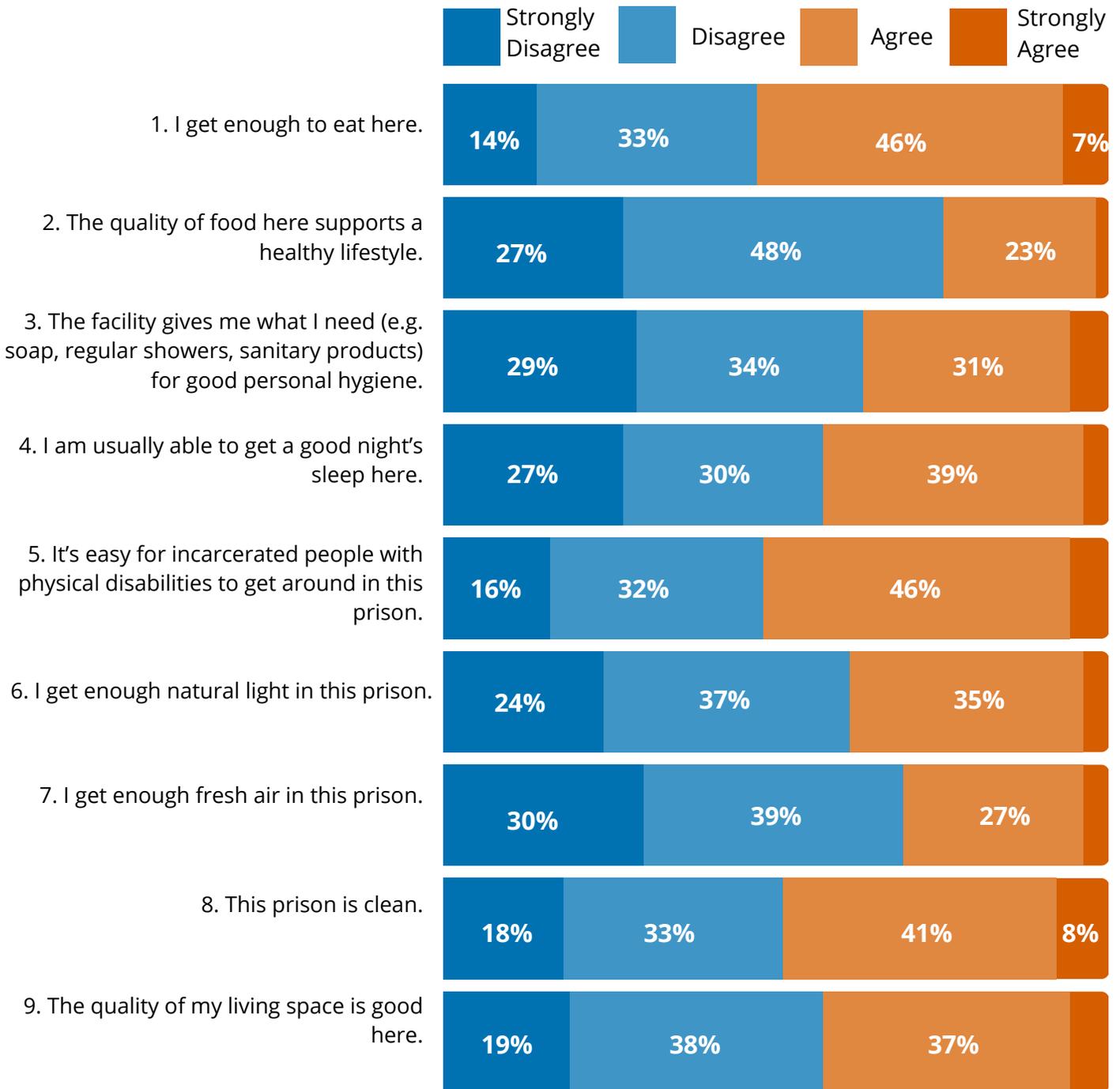
of incarcerated
persons
completed the
survey.

- Age: 39 years (median)
- Race: 80% white
- Ethnicity: 77% white
- Gender identity: 91% male
 - Transgender: 6%
- Status:
 - 27% Detained, awaiting trial
 - 50% Serving sentence
 - 22% Incarcerated for a violation of conditions
- # Years incarcerated at SSCF
 - 85% 0-5 years, 15% 6+ years

The Incarcerated Persons Vermont Prison Climate Survey was administered to people incarcerated in Vermont's Southern State Correctional Facility in June 2021. Surveys were paper-based, confidential, and anonymous. Of 267 eligible incarcerated people, 186 completed the survey (70% response rate). The demographic data presented here are self-reported.

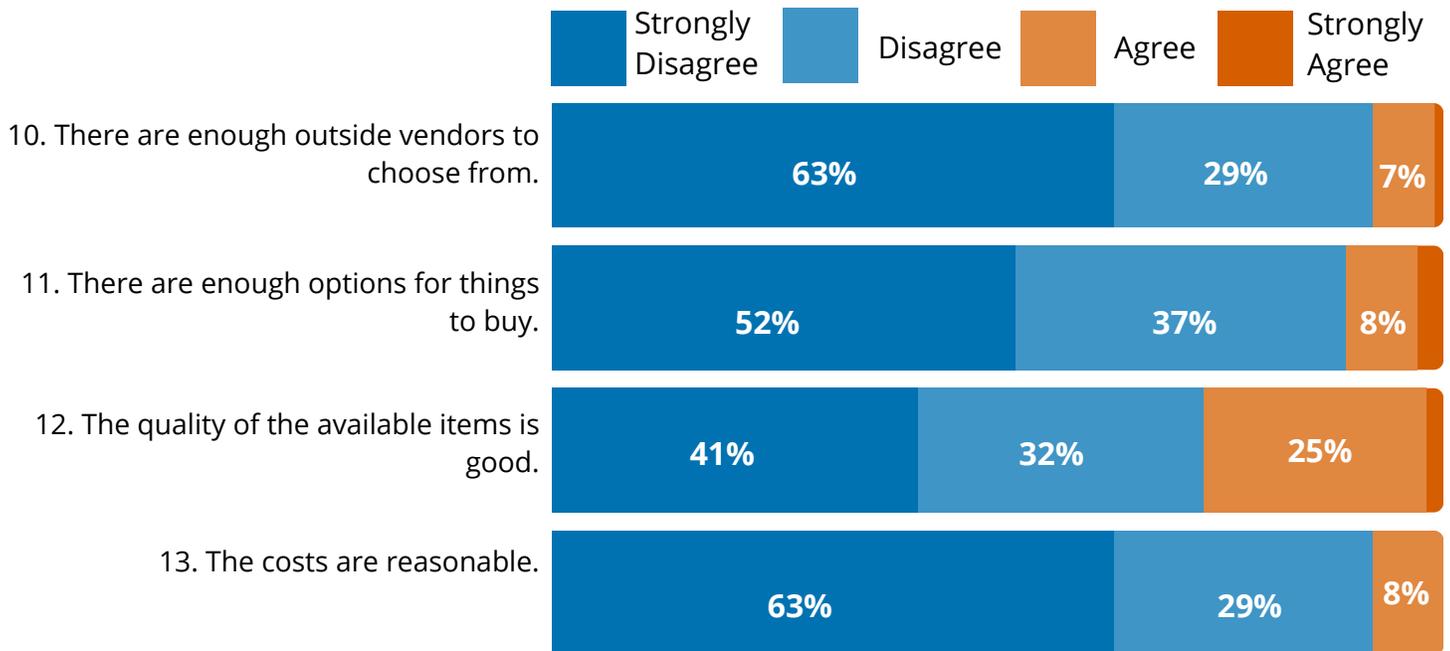


PRISON CONDITIONS & ENVIRONMENT





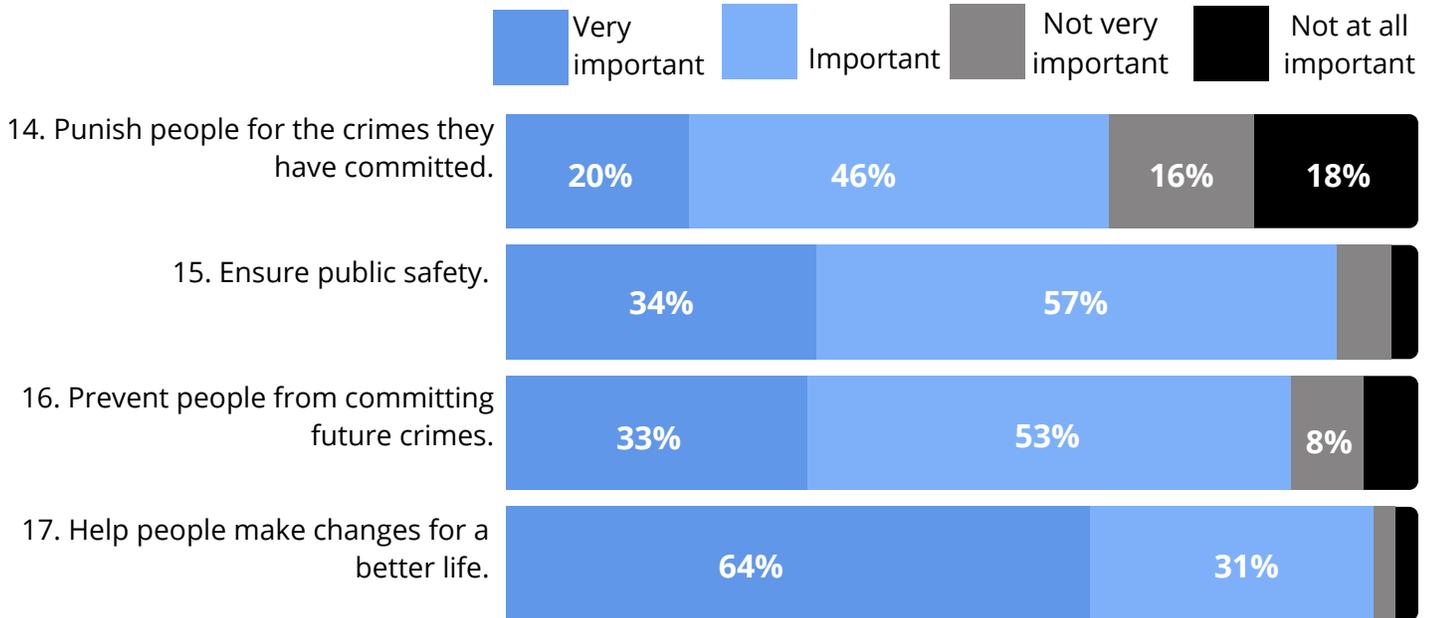
COMMISSARY



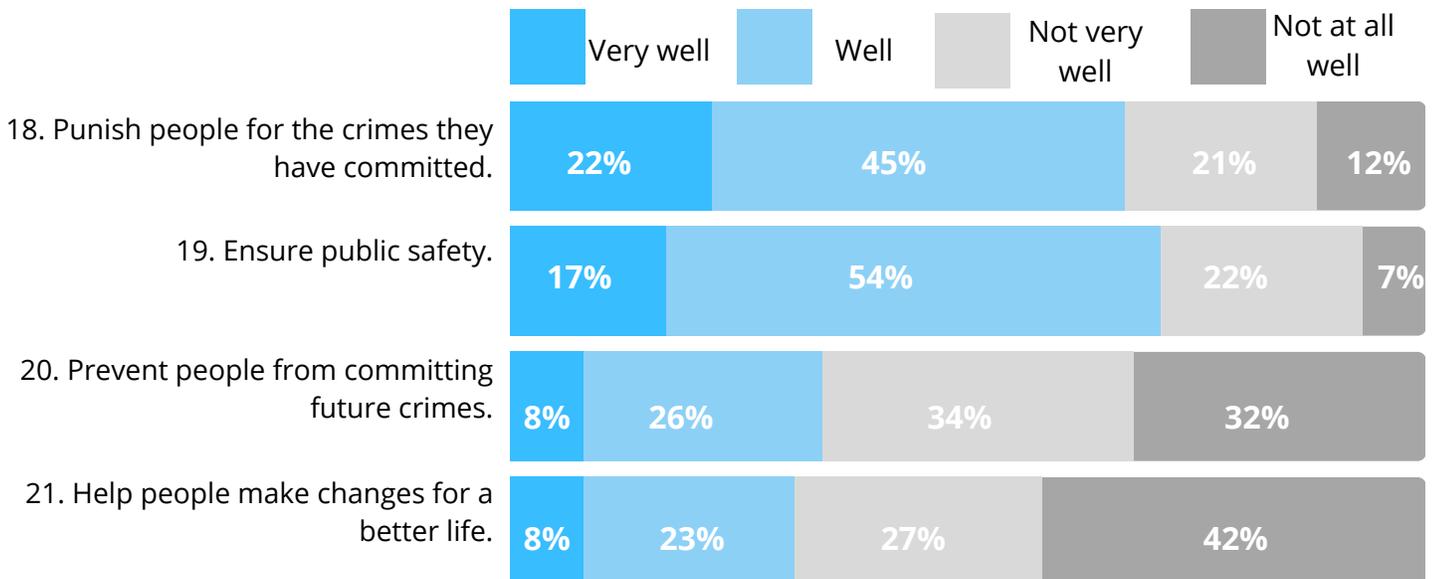


PURPOSE OF PRISON

It is important that prisons...



How well does this prison do these things?

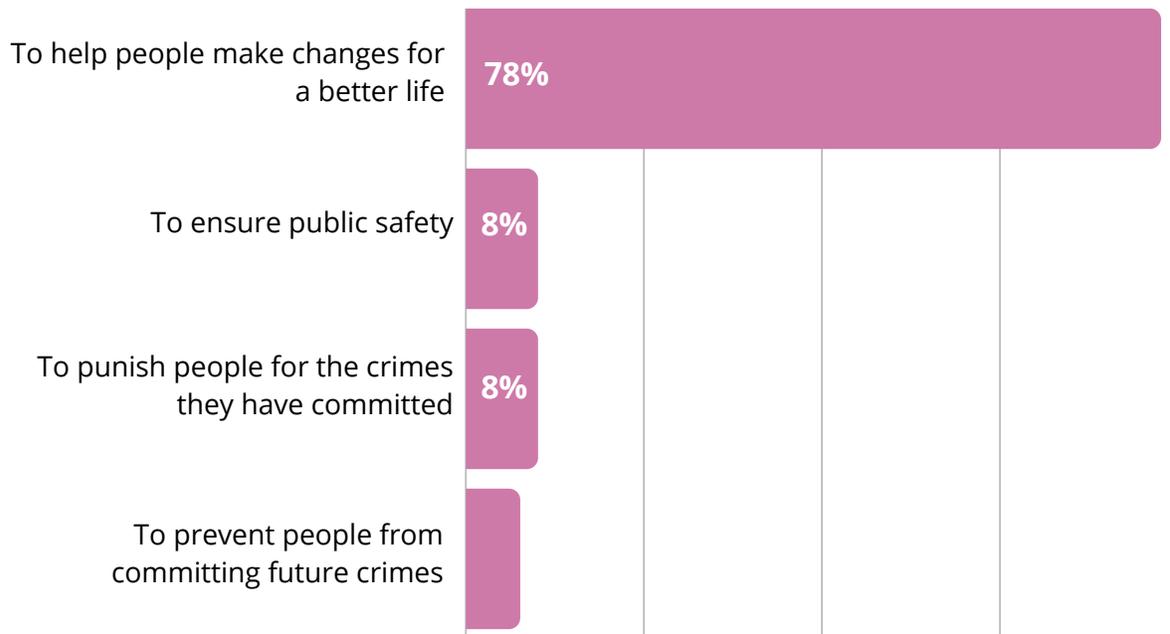




PURPOSE OF PRISON, CONTINUED

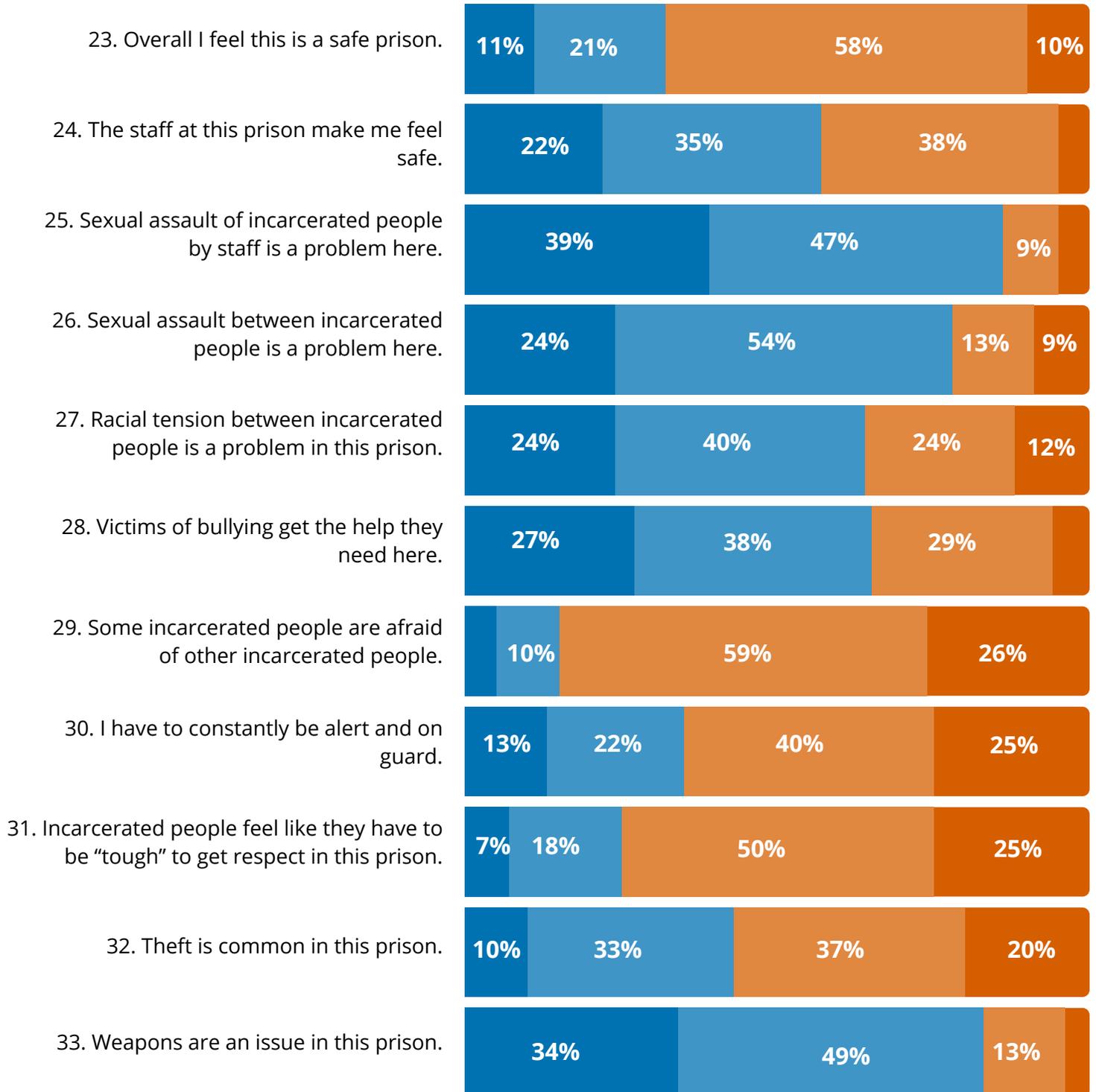
22. Which of these things should be the most important purpose of prison? (choose one)

 % Yes



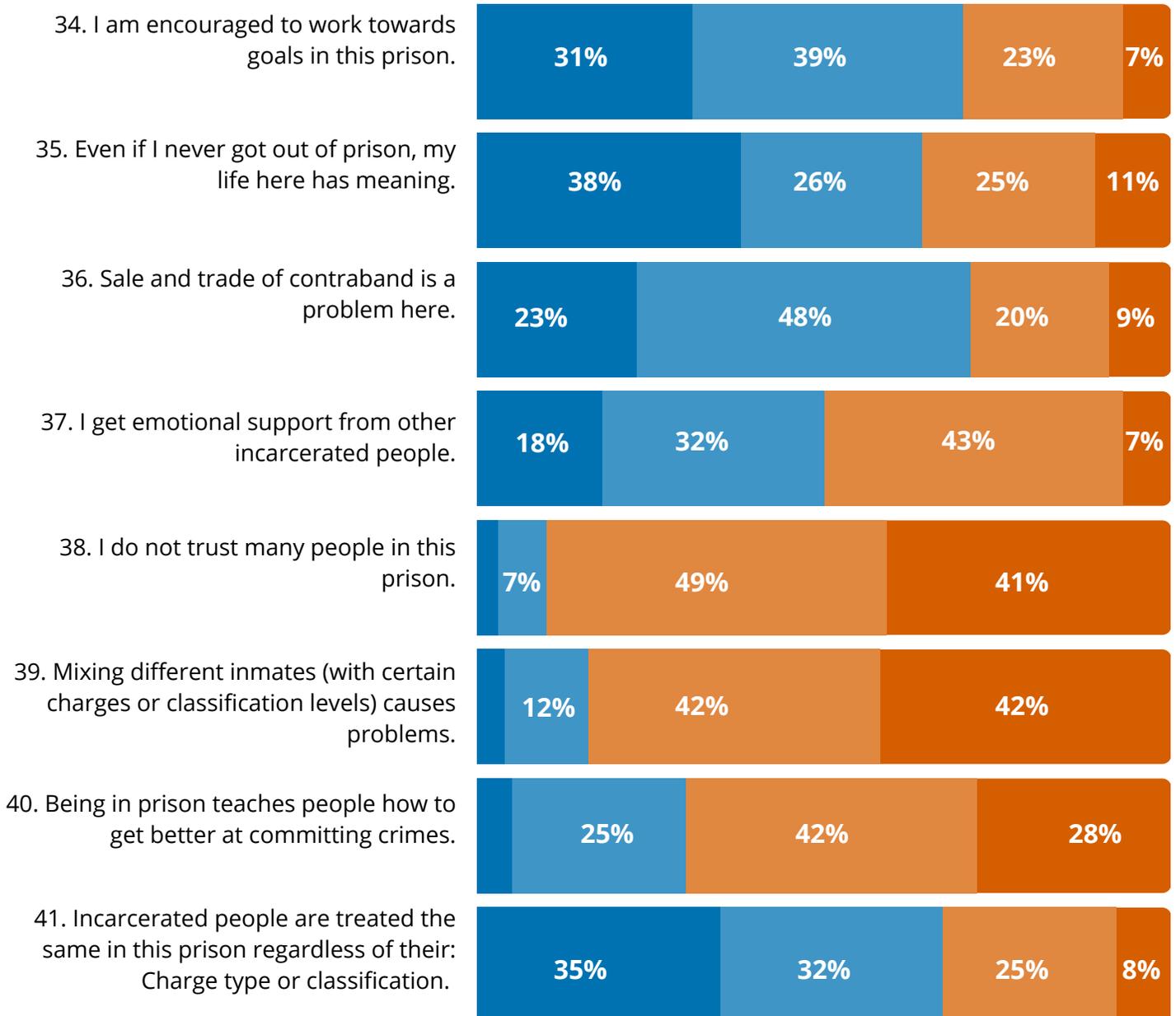


PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL SAFETY





PRISON CULTURE





PRISON CULTURE, CONTINUED

Strongly Disagree
 Disagree
 Agree
 Strongly Agree

42. Incarcerated people are treated the same in this prison regardless of their: Age.



43. Incarcerated people are treated the same in this prison regardless of their: Gender identity or sexual orientation.



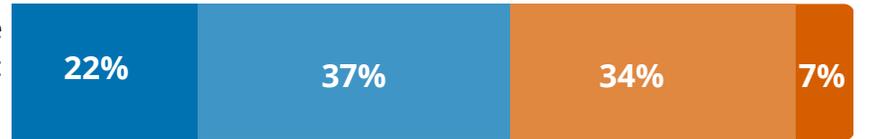
44. Incarcerated people are treated the same in this prison regardless of their: Race or ethnicity..



45. Incarcerated people are treated the same in this prison regardless of their: Religion.

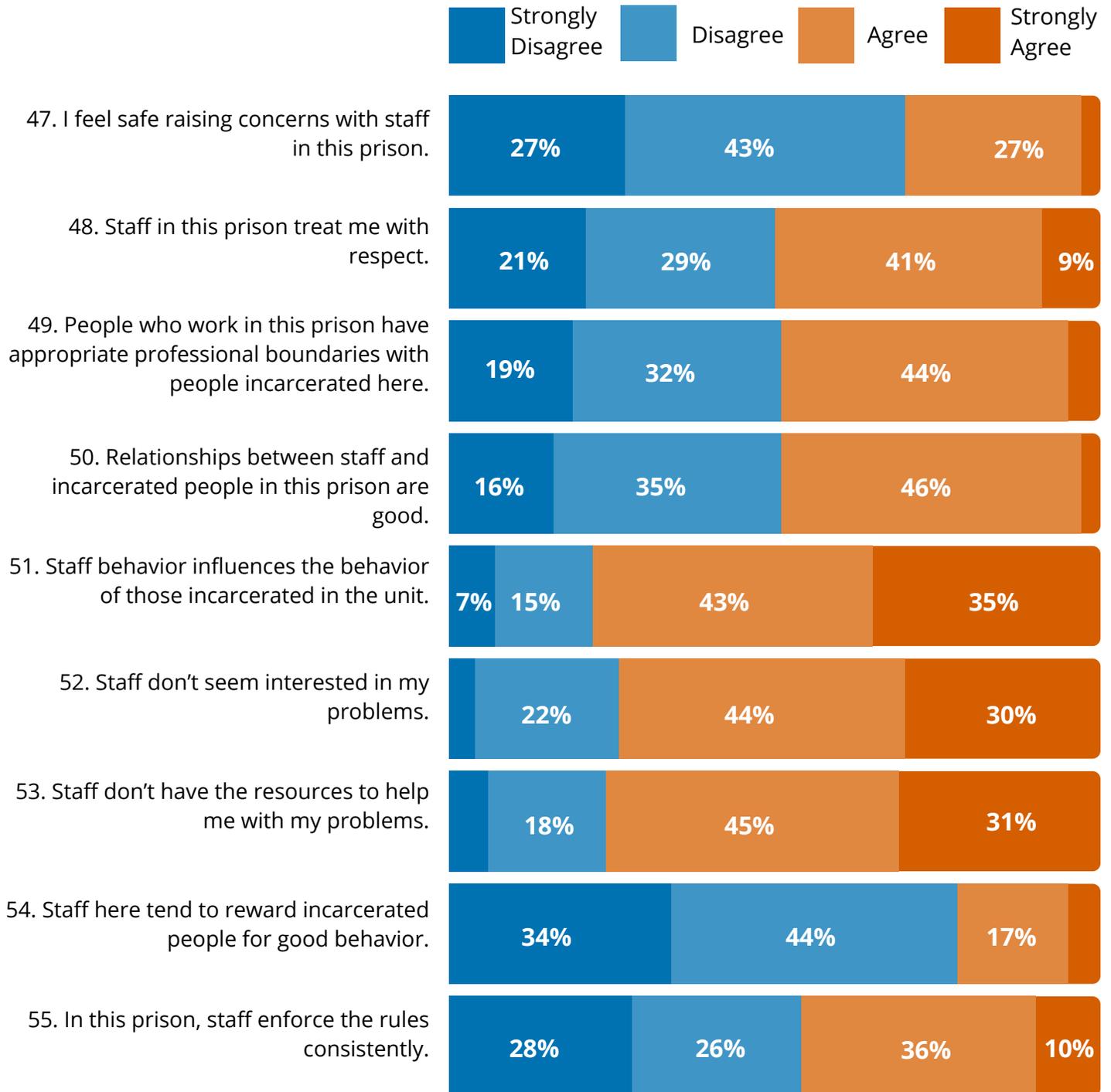


46. Incarcerated people are treated the same in this prison regardless of their: Disability or ability.



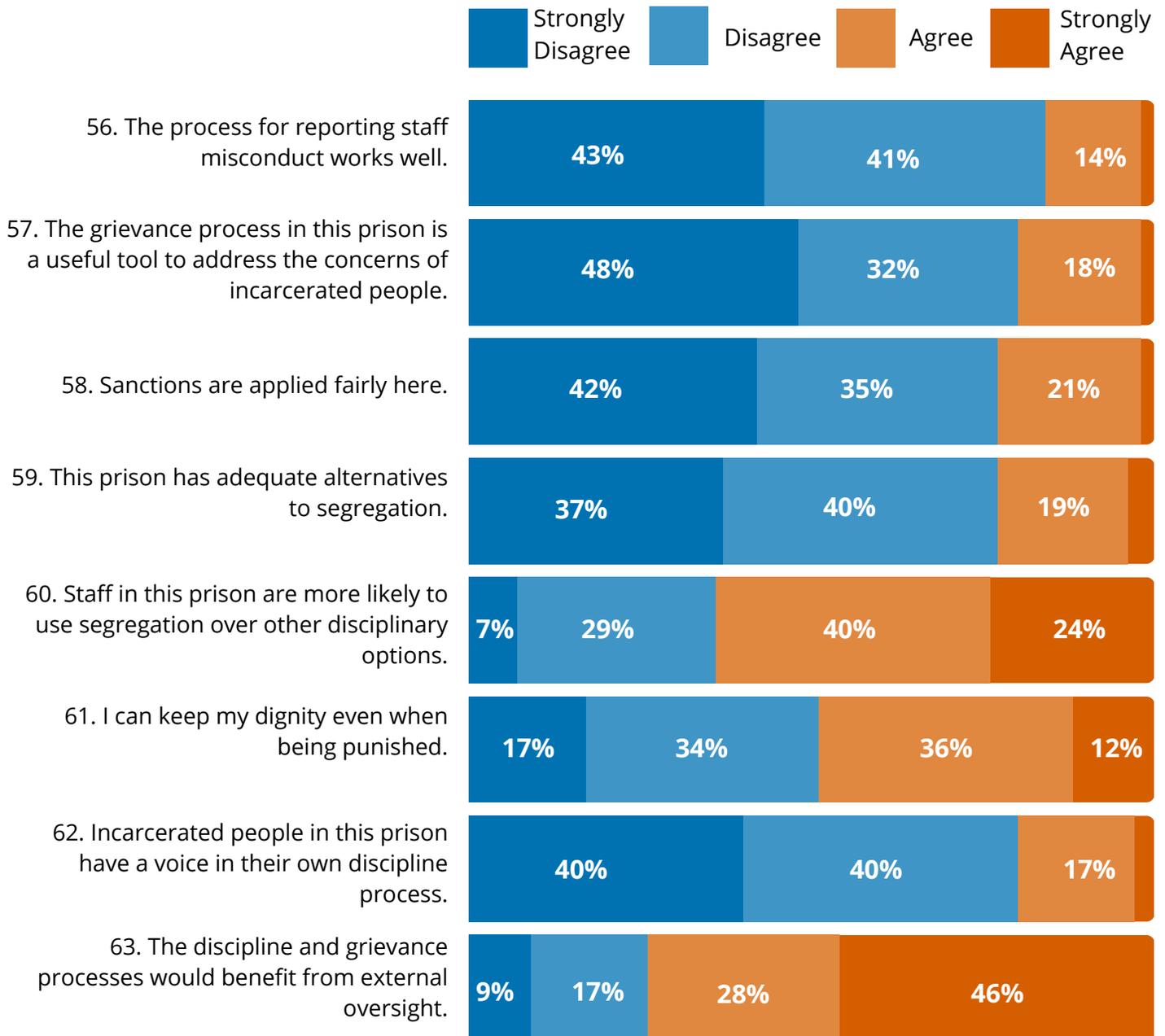


CORRECTIONAL STAFF AND PRACTICES



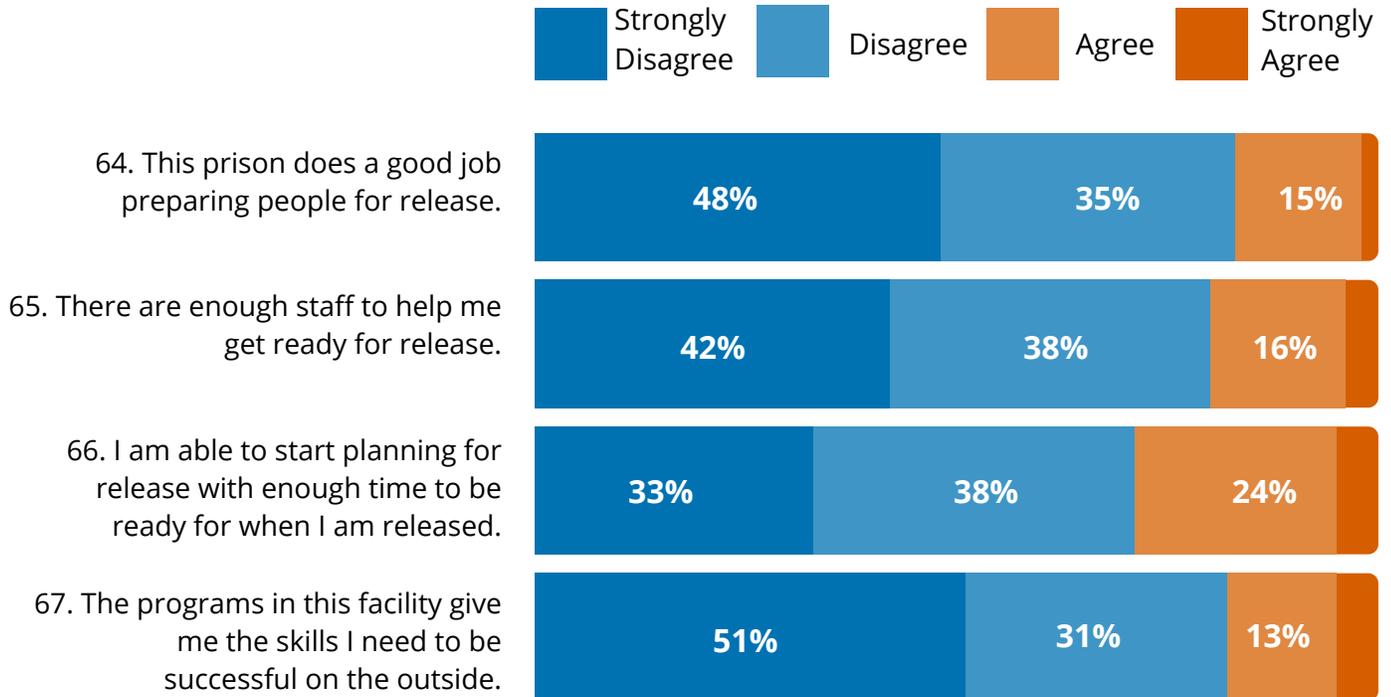


DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES



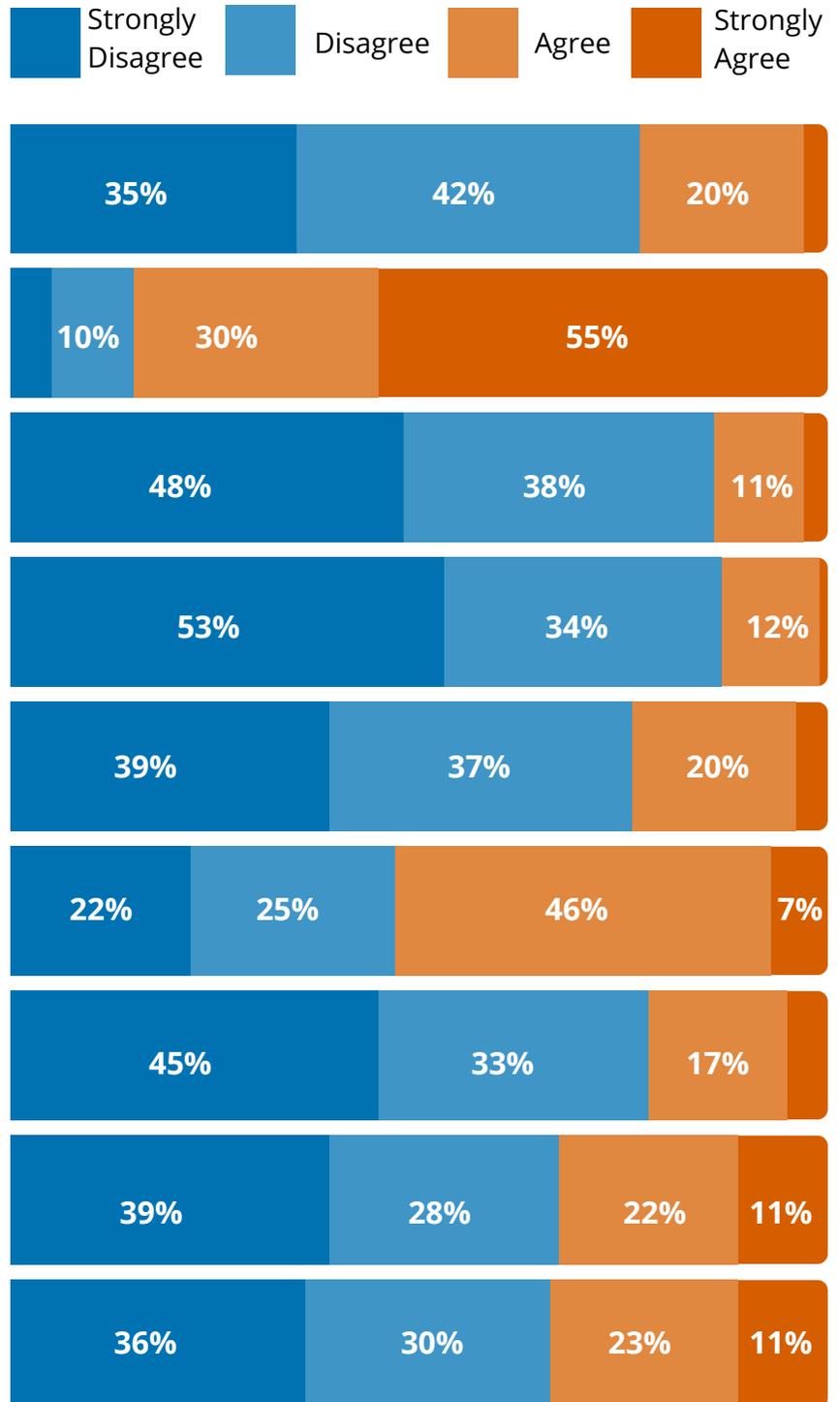


PLANNING FOR RELEASE





PRISON ACTIVITIES





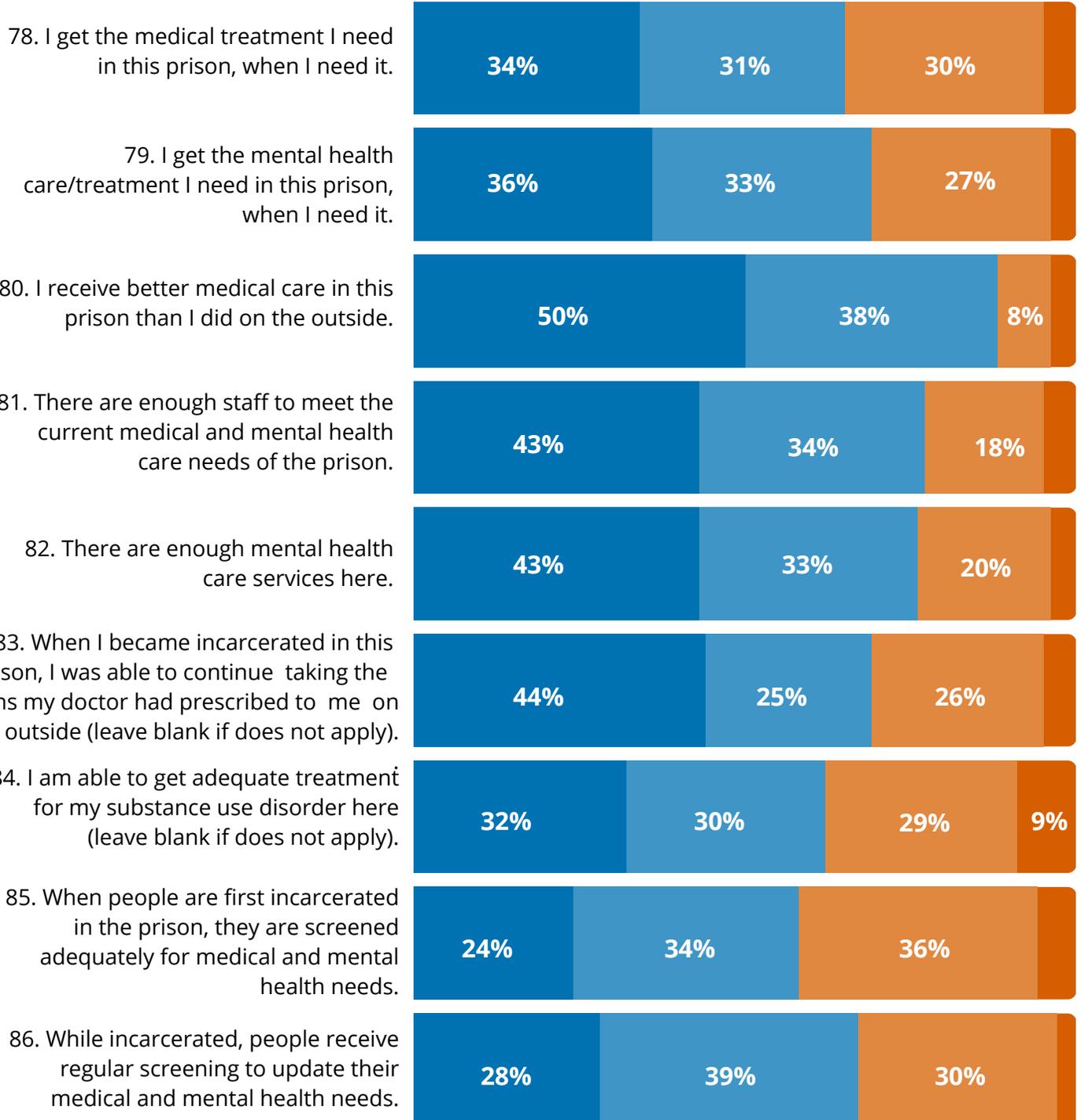
PRISON ACTIVITIES, CONTINUED

77. What types of programs would you find most helpful to meet your needs? (choose up to 3)





MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTHCARE





MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT (MAT) PROGRAM



87. The MAT program is implemented in a manner that supports the prison's operations and safety.



88. The MAT program has had a positive effect on the prison.



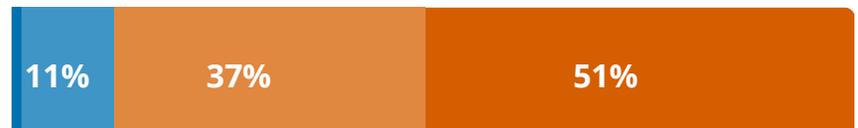
HEALTH AND WELLBEING



89. My health has declined since entering prison.



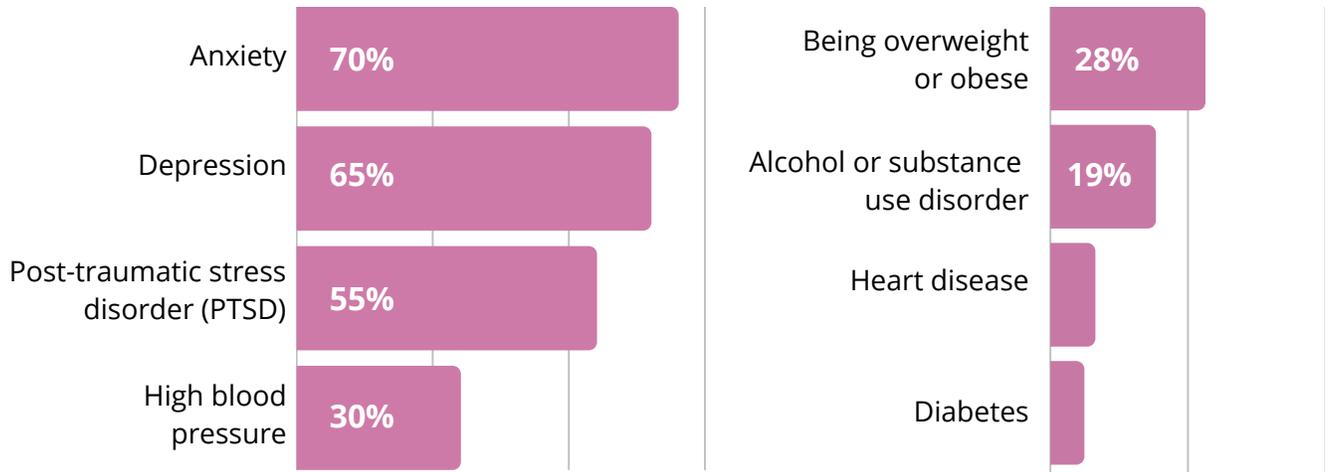
90. Being in prison has been very hard for my mental health.



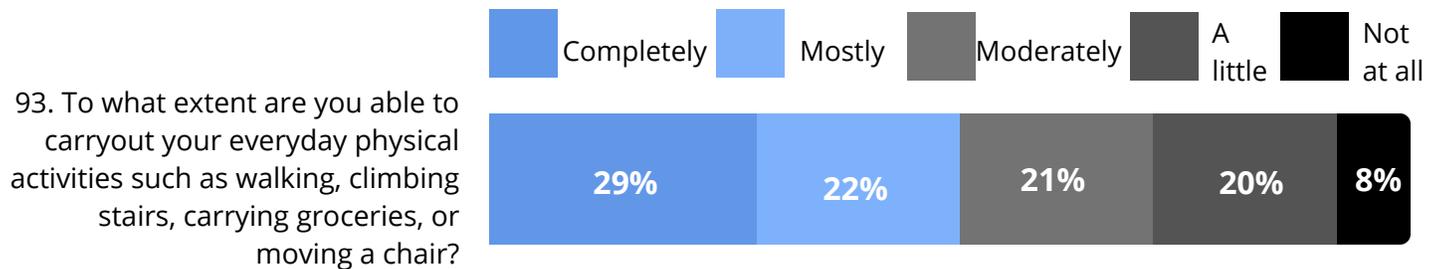
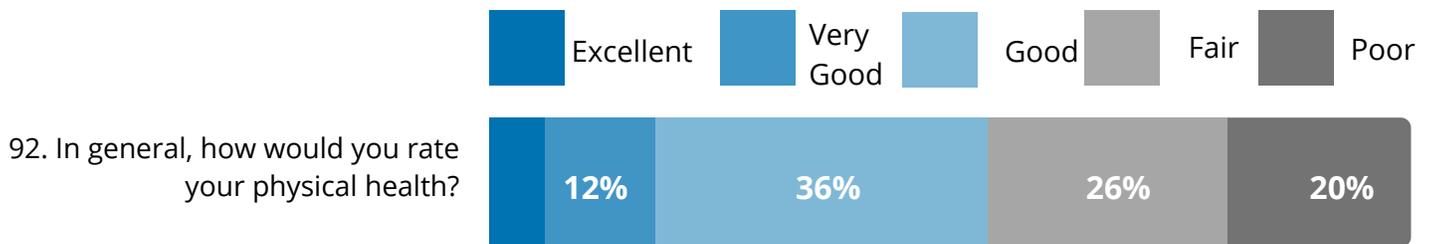


HEALTH AND WELLBEING, CONTINUED

91. *Since entering prison, I have developed the following health conditions (check all that apply):* % Yes



Physical Health





HEALTH AND WELLBEING, CONTINUED

Mental Health



94. In general, how would you rate your mental health, including your mood and your ability to think?



95. In general, how would you rate your satisfaction with your social activities and relationships?



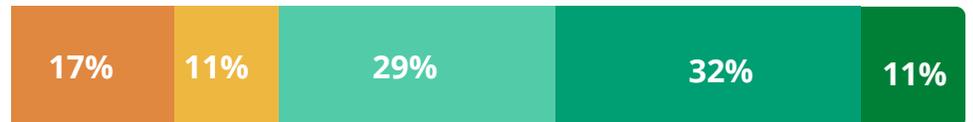
In the past 7 days...



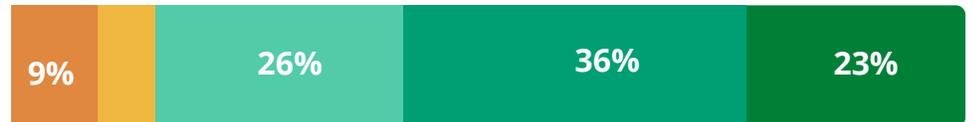
96. I felt worthless...



97. I felt helpless...



98. I felt depressed...



99. I felt hopeless...



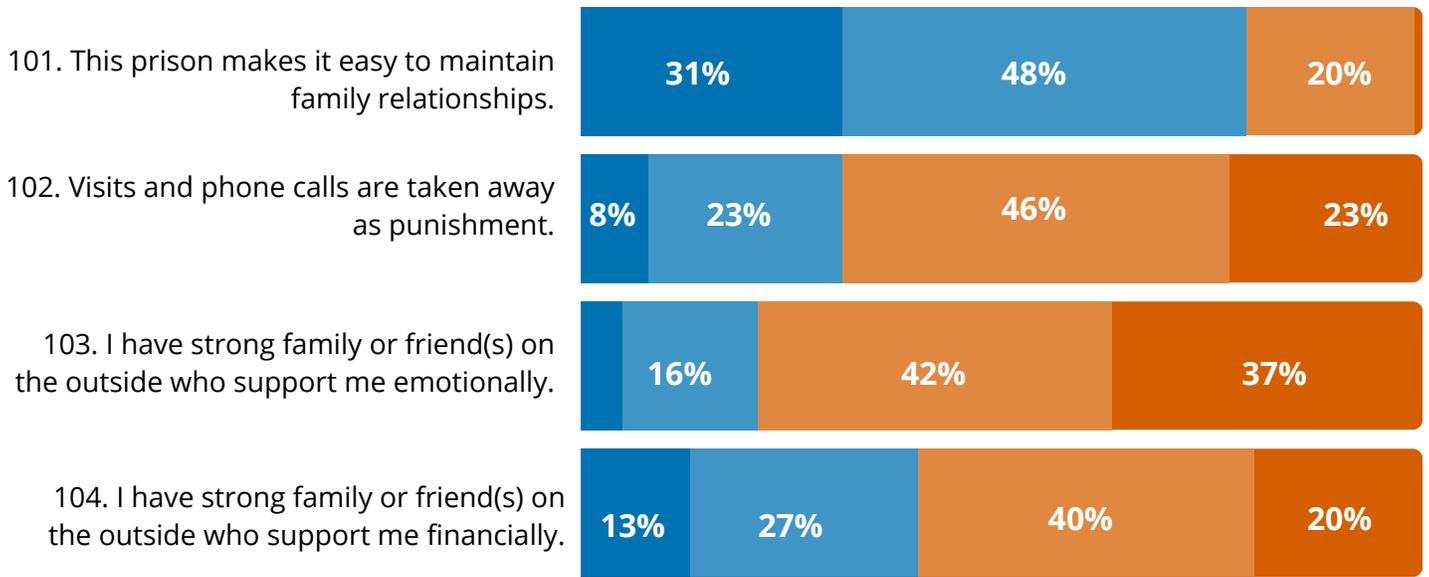
Suicidal Thoughts

100. At any time in the last 12 months did you seriously think about trying to kill yourself?

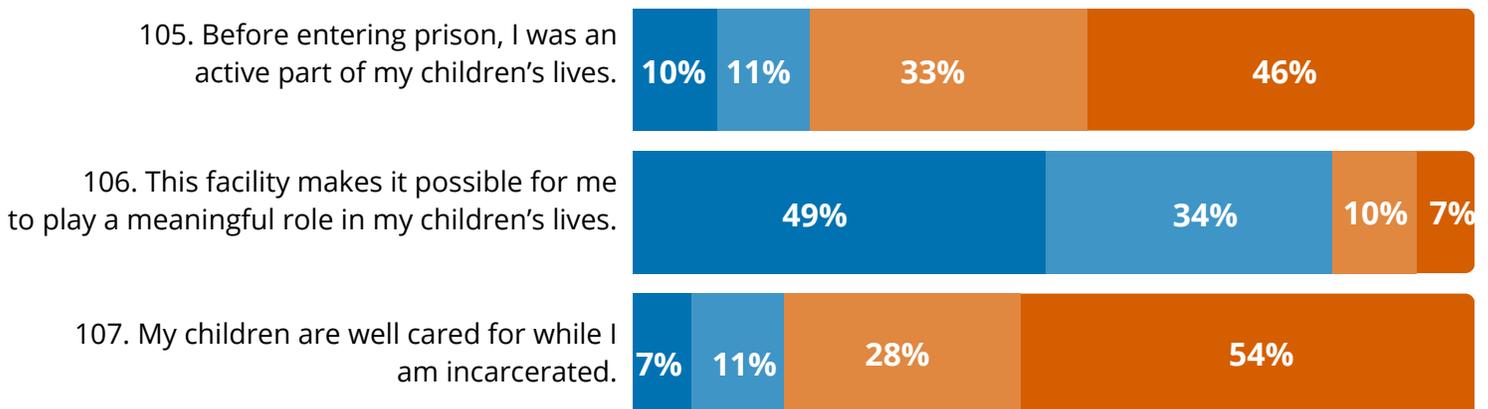




CONTACT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS



If you have children under the age under the age of 18 years old:





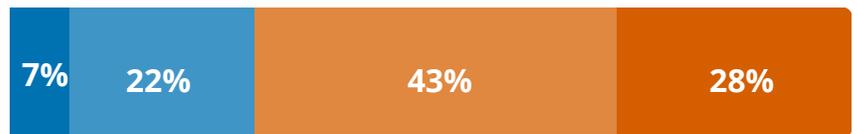
CONTACT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS, CONTINUED

Before Covid-19, ...

108. Were you incarcerated in this prison before the start of the COVID-19?



109. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, visiting opportunities were too limited in this prison.



110. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of making or receiving phone calls or video calls was too high.



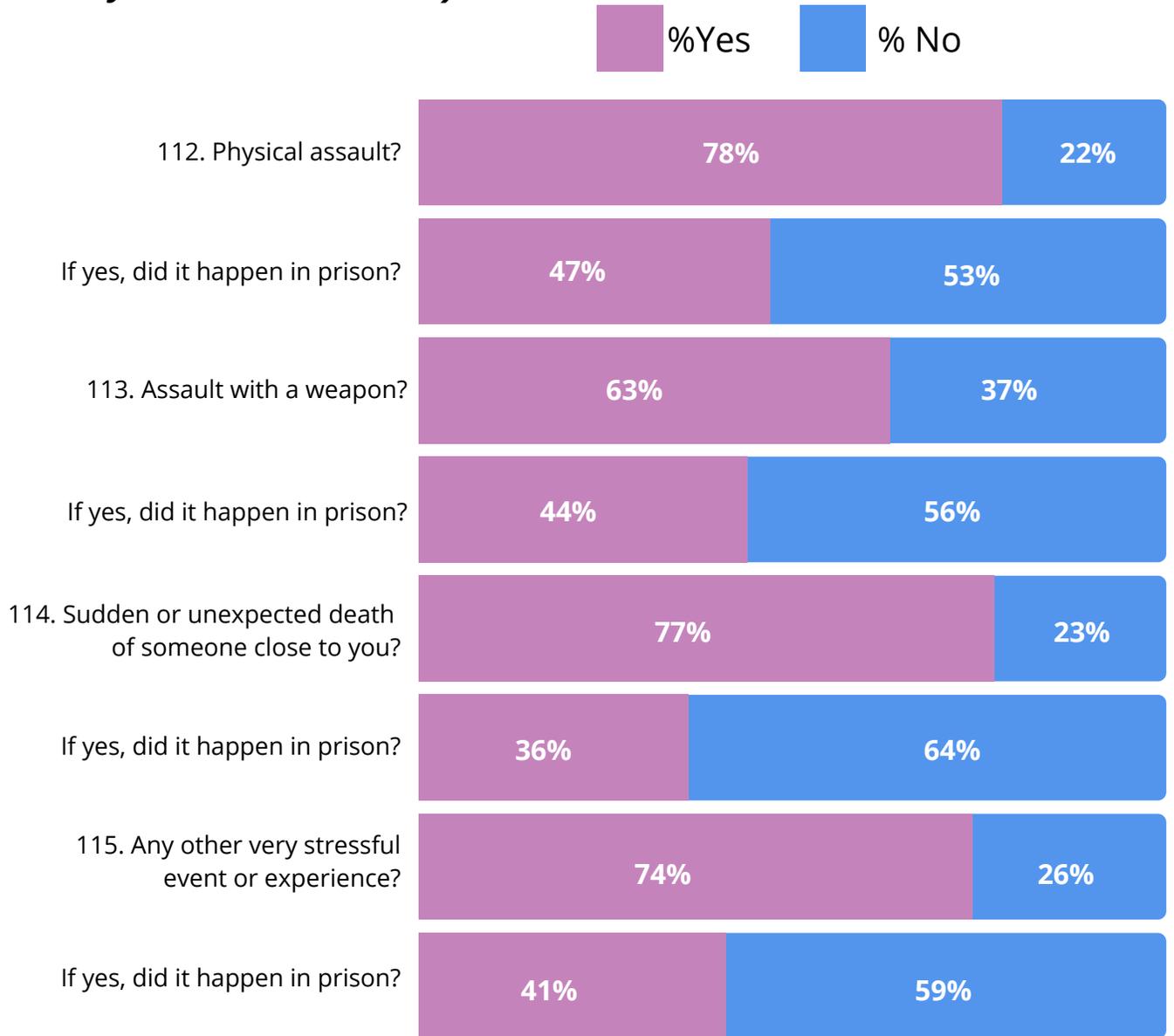
111. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, correctional officers treated visitors with respect.





TRAUMA

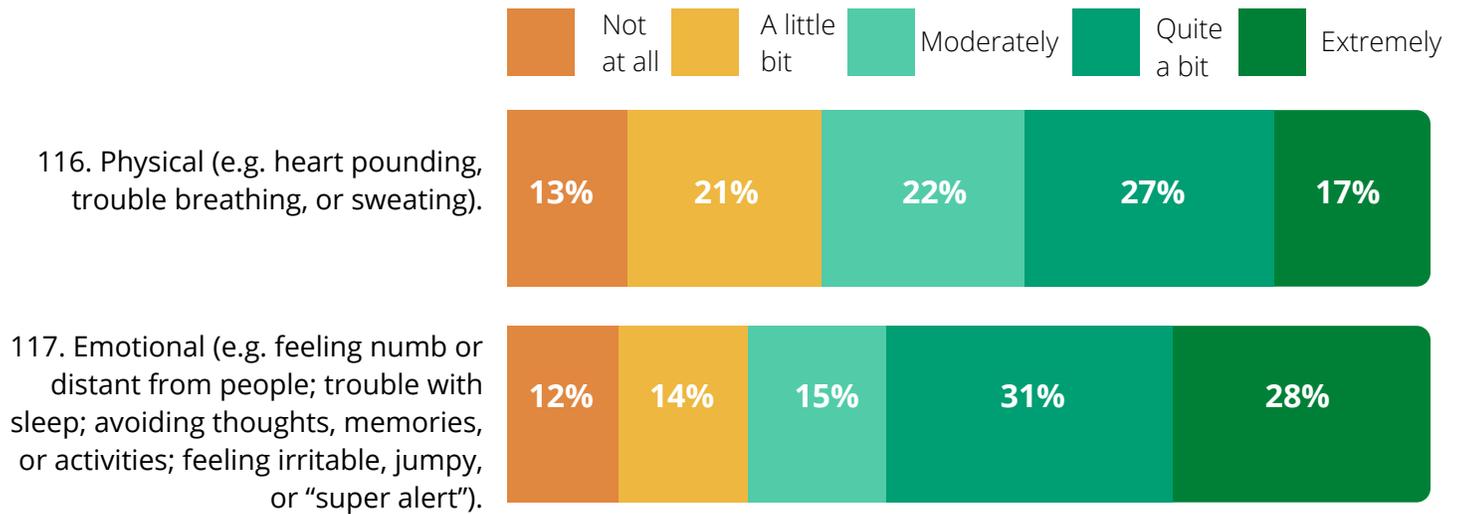
**Consider your entire life, have you experienced ?
(happened to you or witnessed it)**





TRAUMA, CONTINUED

In the past month, how much have you been bothered by physical or emotional reactions when something reminded you of a stressful experience from the past?





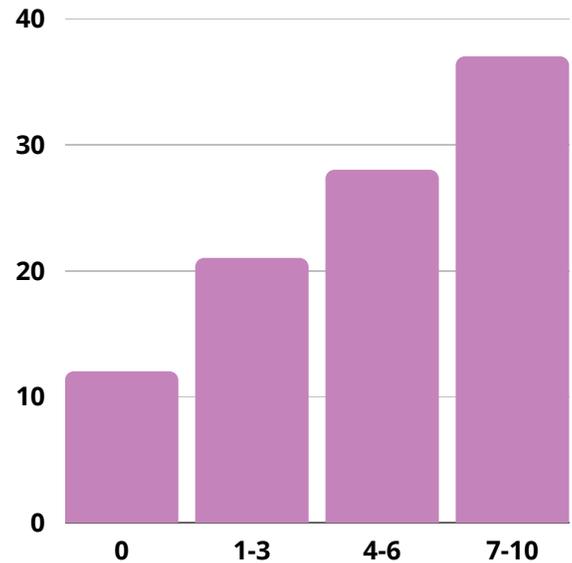
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACE)

A series of 10 questions about difficult or stressful things that sometimes happen to people in their childhood. Respondents are asked to consider the time before they were 18 years old as they go through the questions.

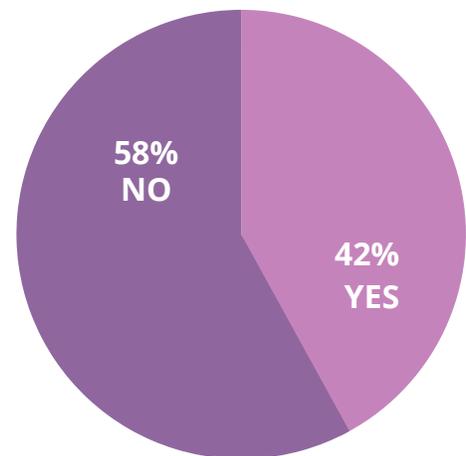
One point is assigned for each “yes” response, and then points are summed to calculate a total ACE score.

ACE scores greater than 4 are associated with significantly negative outcomes. Those with scores greater than 6 are in the most severe category of risk – including having an estimated shortened lifespan by 20 years.

ACE categories



% with history of incarcerated parent





DURING COVID-19,...

