



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
JUSTICE RESEARCH INITIATIVE

VERMONT PRISON CLIMATE SURVEY

2022

Prison Research
and Innovation
Network (PRIN)

go.uvm.edu/justiceresearch



ABOUT - 2022

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.

Phase II (January 2022 – June 2024). The Vermont Department of Corrections launched an innovation process using findings from phase I to identify priority areas for change and implement and test changes in the pilot facility to make prison environments more humane and rehabilitative. As part of this effort, the Vermont Prison Climate Surveys are administered in SSCF throughout the duration of the PRIN project, providing the opportunity for researchers to evaluate the impact of innovations and build the evidence-base for change. In June 2022, one year after baseline, the PRIN surveys were administered for a second time. **Results of the 2022 correctional staff and incarcerated persons surveys are presented in this report.**



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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

PRIN Surveys - 2022 Overview

This report details the full 2022 survey results for the VT-PRIN study. Many of the findings did not significantly change from the 2021 results. To help highlight areas of potential change we have flagged each question on the 2022 survey results where there was a statistically significant, or trend towards statistical significance, change from the 2021 results. These flags are based on average scale differences between the two years, and may or may not represent meaningful changes.

- There is a red box next to the questions where there was a negative change (i.e., things got worse).
- There is a green box next to the questions where there was a positive change (i.e., things got better).

Survey questions are presented in the order that they were asked on the survey itself. It's important to note that the survey was largely unchanged between 2021 and 2022, with the exception of a slight difference in questions and order related to Covid-19.

Overall, perceptions of facility climate have trended downward. There were several noteworthy trends in perceptions among correctional staff, including: their mental health and well-being have declined, and there are increased concerns with job satisfaction and workplace culture. Amongst incarcerated persons, there was a perception of less availability of prison activities including those focused on preparation for release, as well as an increased dissatisfaction with healthcare services.

It is important to bear in mind that these results express opinions, feelings, and perceptions of facility climate. As we consider how to use these findings to inform and evaluate meaningful systems change, UVM researchers plan to conduct further analyses, as well as conduct a series of interviews and focus groups to create a more complete picture.

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2022: SURVEY RESPONDENTS - STAFF



65%

of correctional staff completed the survey.

- Age: 43 years (median)
- Race: 88% white
- Ethnicity: 87% white
- Gender identity: 19% female, 81% male
- Employer: 95% corrections, 5% contractor
- # Years working at SSCF
 - 38% 0-5 years, 62% 6+ years
- # Years working in Corrections
 - 29% 0-5 years, 71% 6+ years

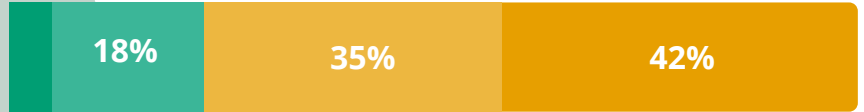
The Correctional Staff Vermont Prison Climate Survey was administered to staff working in Vermont's Southern State Correctional Facility in June 2022. Surveys were paper-based, confidential, and anonymous. Of 116 eligible correctional staff, 75 completed the survey (65% response rate). The demographic data presented here are self-reported.



JOB SATISFACTION

Always Often Sometimes Never

1. I look forward to coming to work.



Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

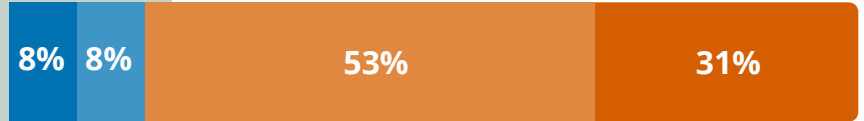
2. I take pride in my job.



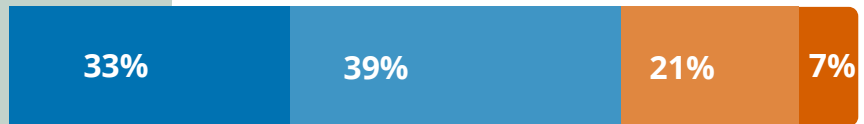
3. It is clear what it means to be successful in my job.



4. I have the skills I need to do my job well here.



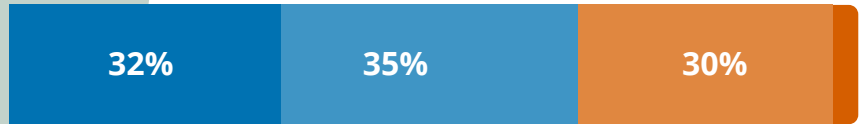
5. Leadership in this prison shows appreciation for staff in meaningful ways.



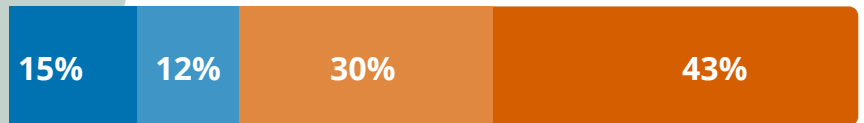
6. My supervisors are invested/interested in my career path and help me achieve my career goals.



7. Promotions in this prison are done fairly.



8. If I have a chance, I will change to some other job outside of corrections at the same rate of pay.



9. Staff in this prison are fairly compensated for the duties and tasks they are required to perform.

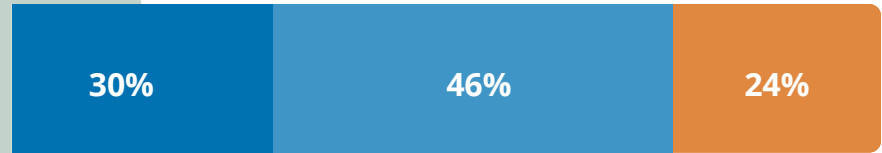




THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS ("CENTRAL OFFICE")



10. The Department communicates a clear vision (mission) for Corrections.



11. There are discussions involving all staff about the vision for Corrections and ways to achieve it.



12. The Department has a clear understanding of what it's like for staff to work in this prison.

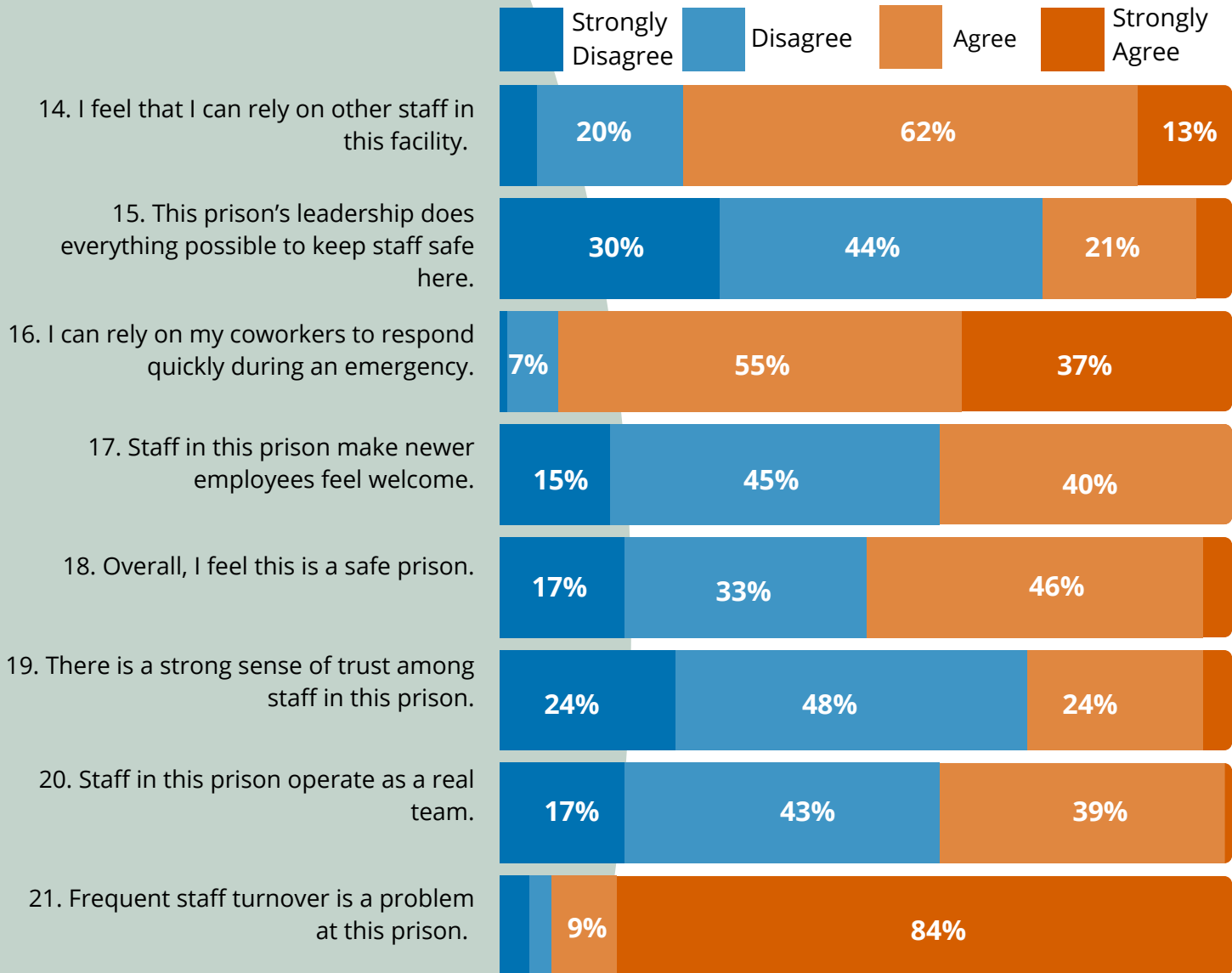


13. The Department takes the things I say seriously and treats me and my ideas with respect.



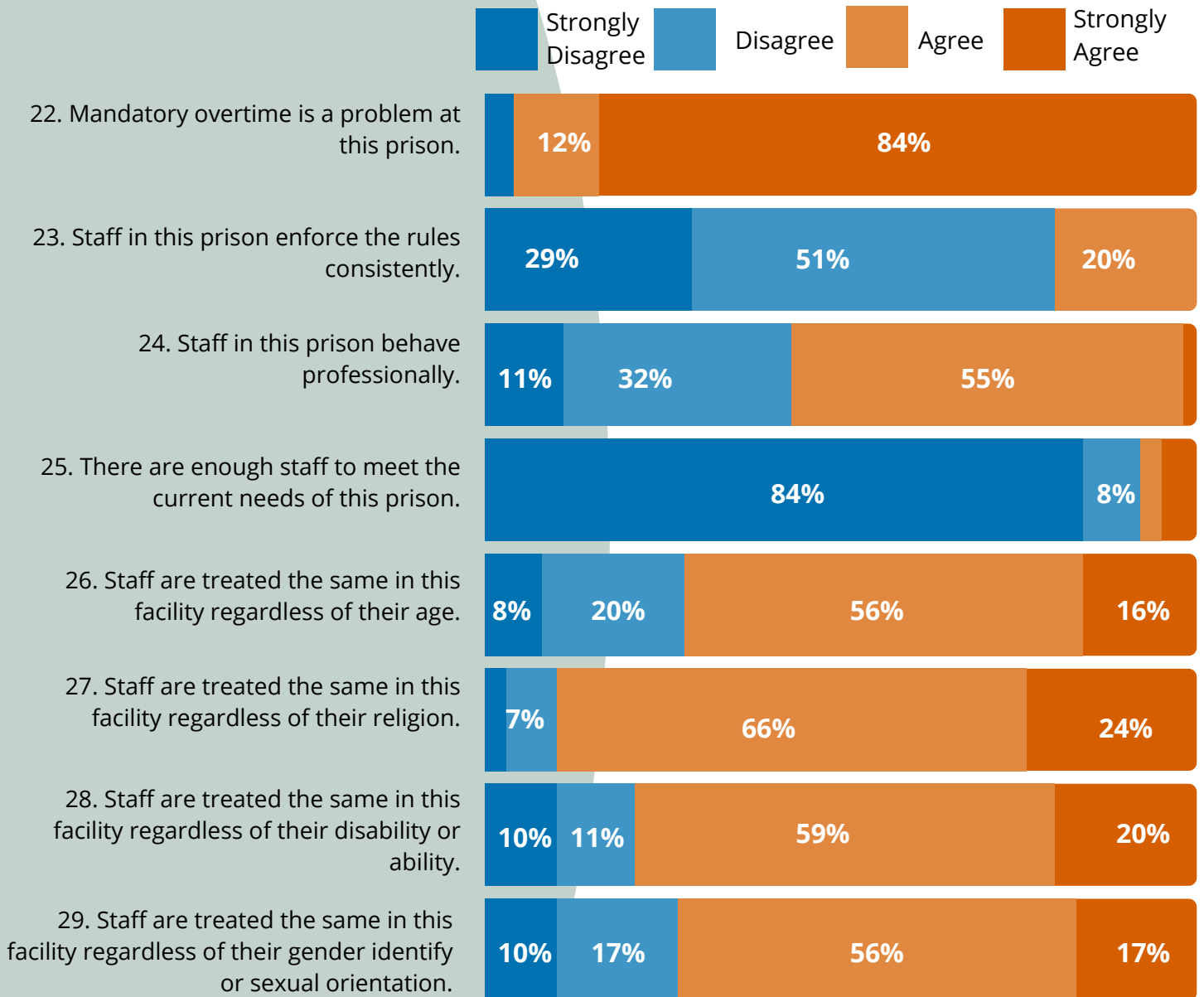


WORKPLACE CULTURE (1/4)



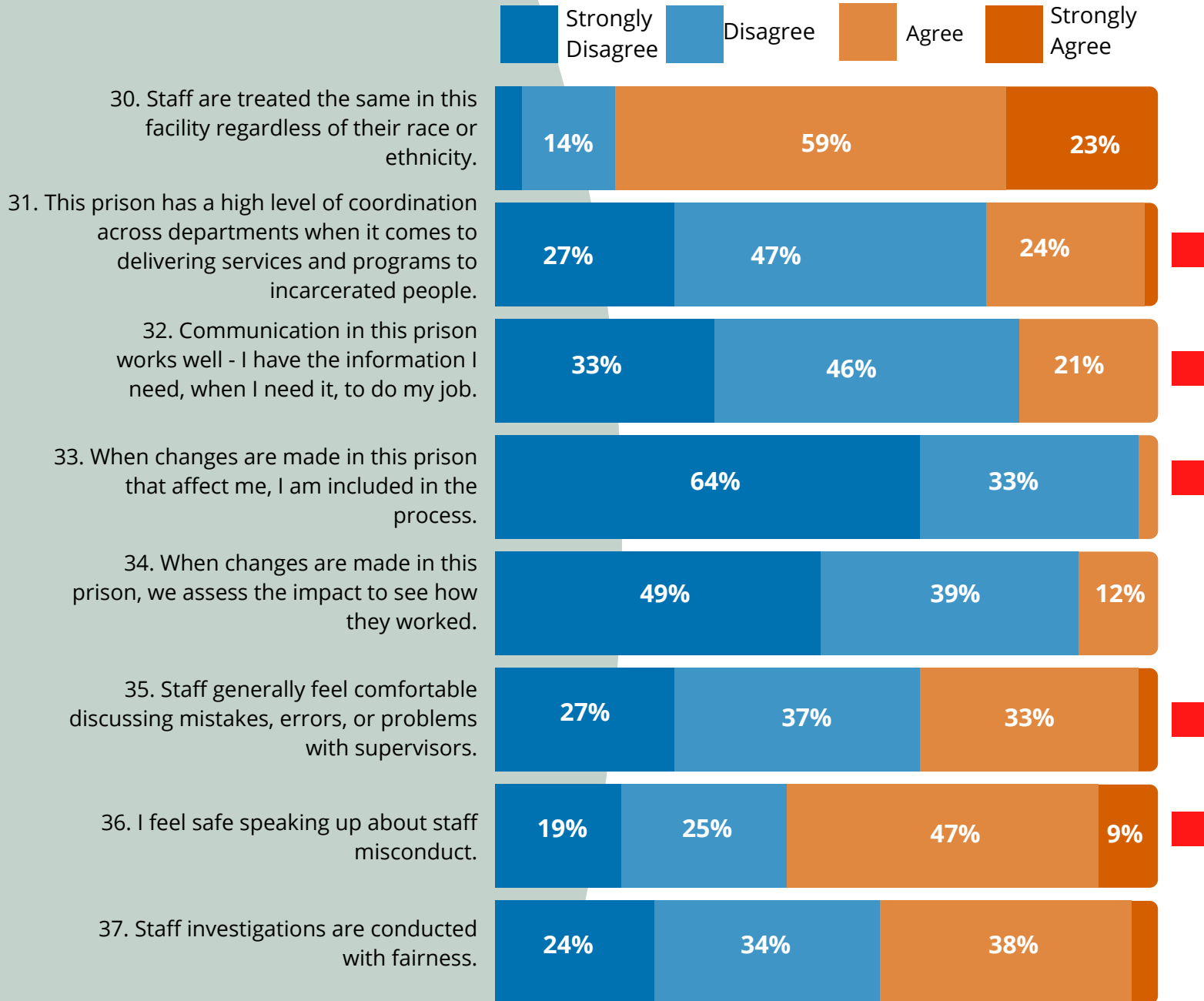


WORKPLACE CULTURE, Continued (2/4)



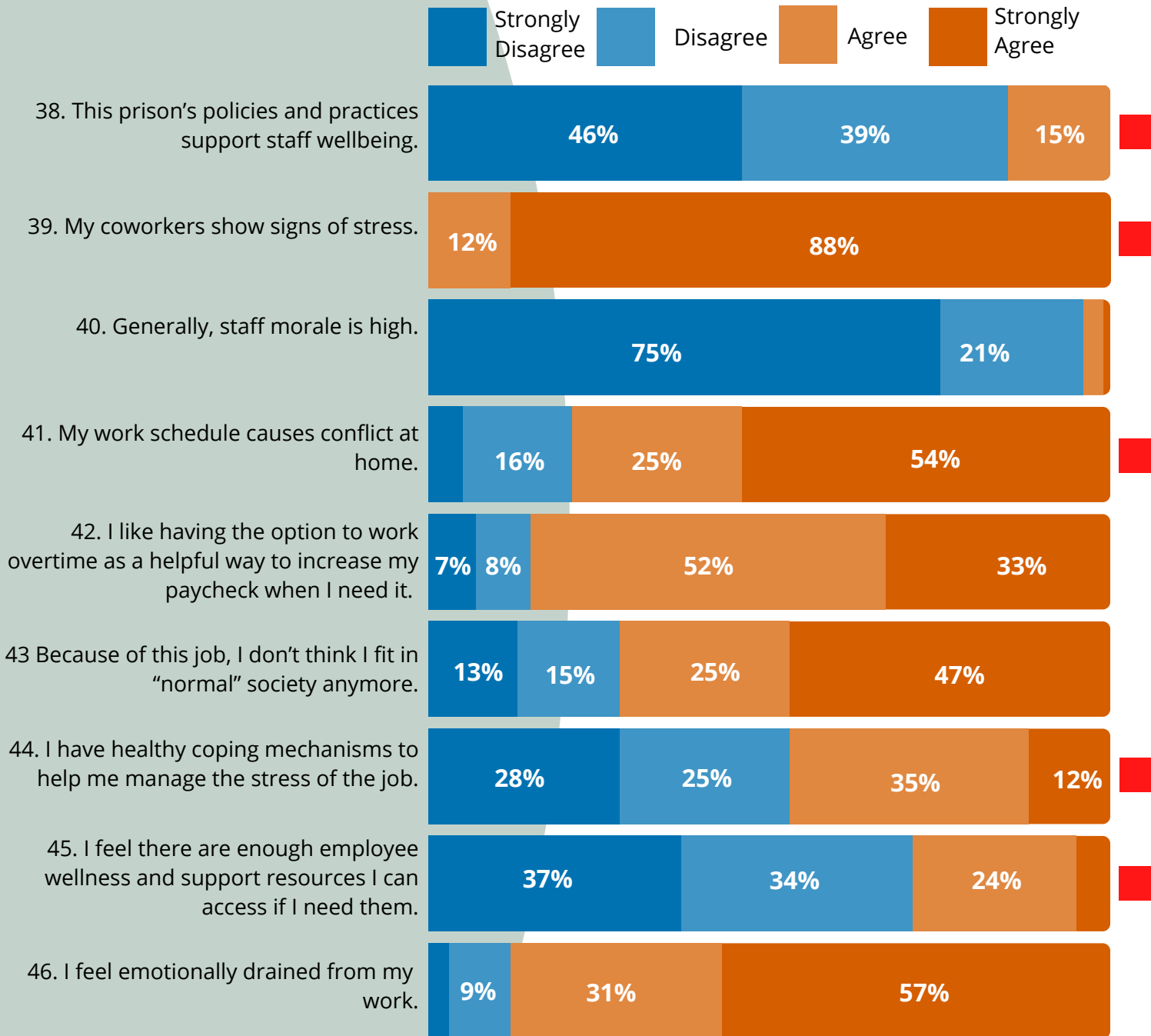


WORKPLACE CULTURE, Continued (3/4)






WORKPLACE CULTURE, Continued (4/4)

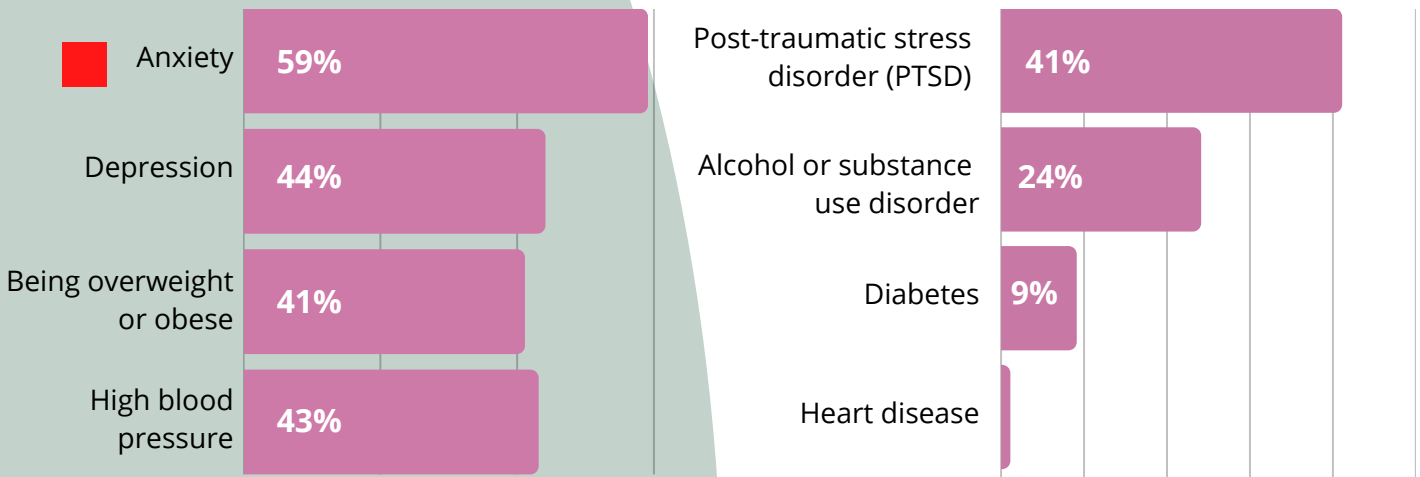




STAFF HEALTH

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

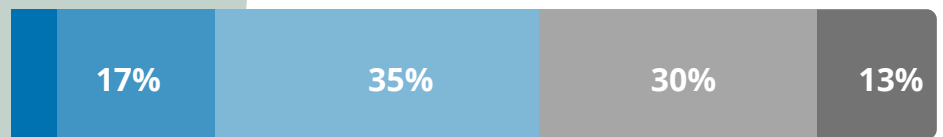
 % Yes



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?



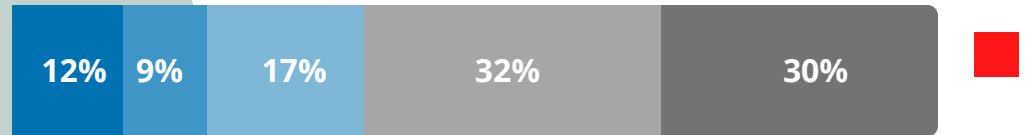


STAFF HEALTH, Continued

Mental Health



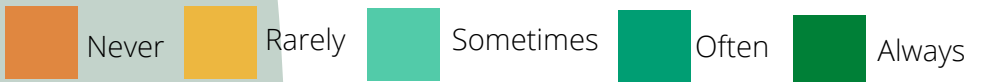
50. In general, how would you rate your mental health, including your mood and your ability to think?



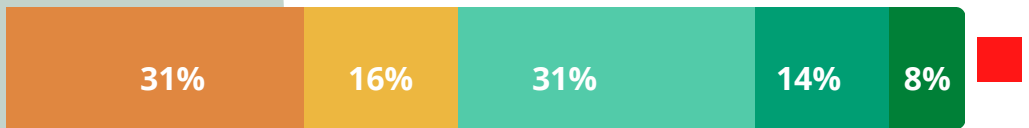
51. In general, how would you rate your satisfaction with your social activities and relationships?



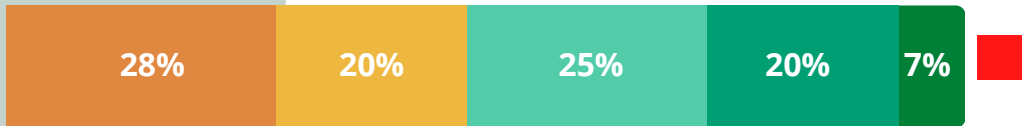
In the past 7 days...



52. I felt worthless...



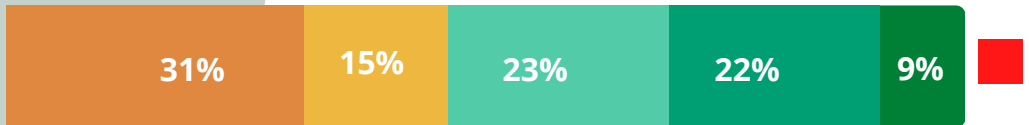
53. I felt helpless...



54. I felt depressed...



55. I felt hopeless...



Suicidal Thoughts

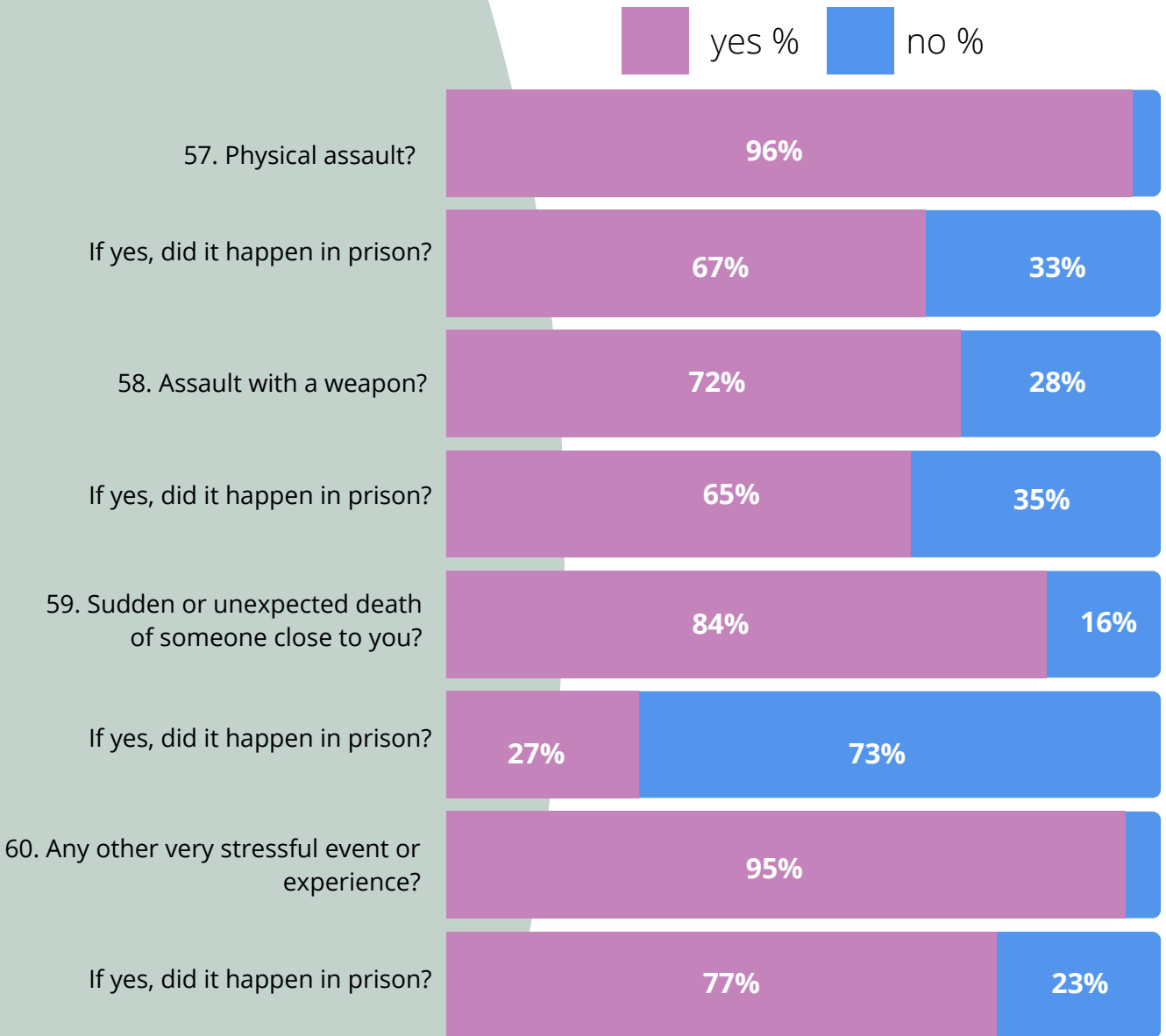
56. At any time in the last 12 months did you seriously think about trying to kill yourself?





TRAUMA

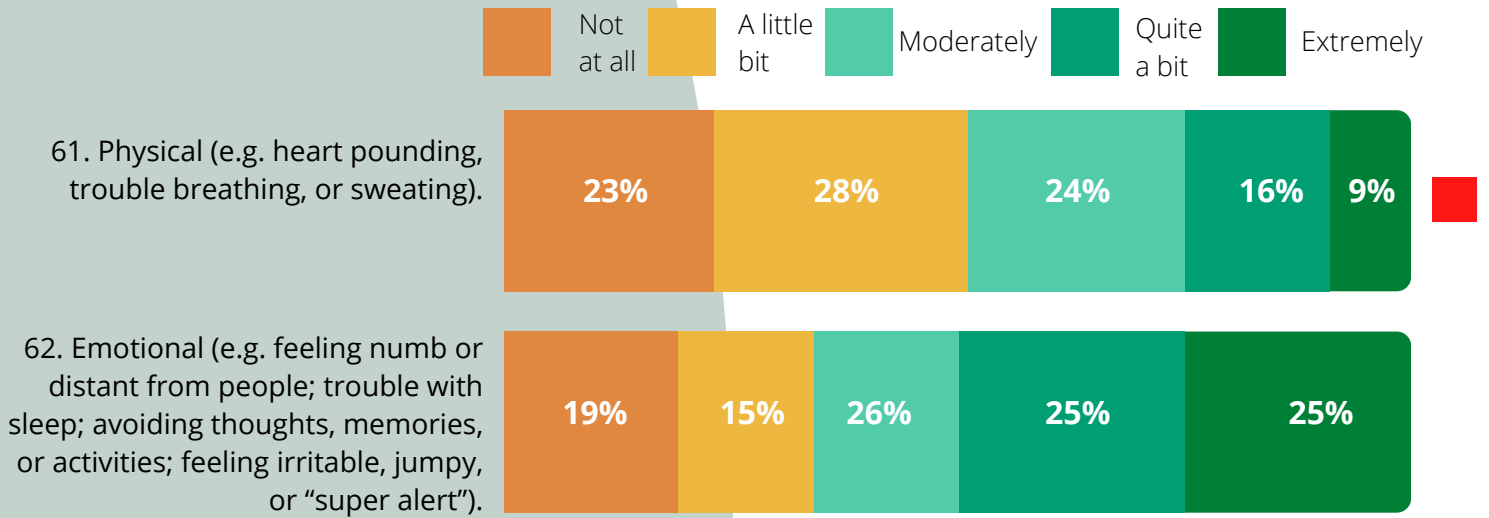
*Consider your entire life, have you experienced?
(happened to you or witnessed it)*





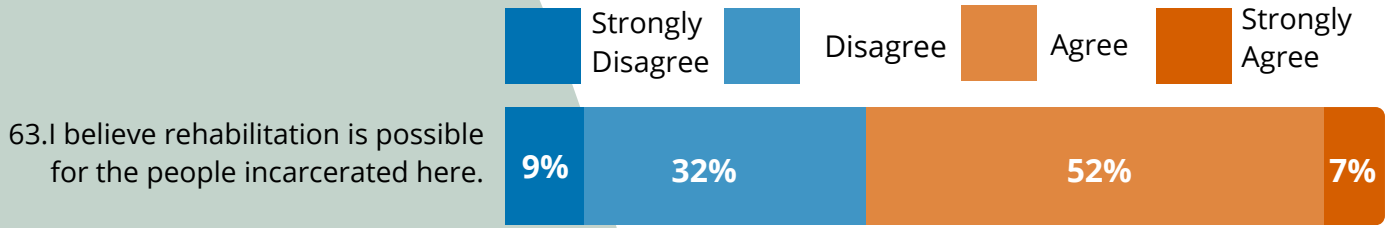
TRAUMA, Continued

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?

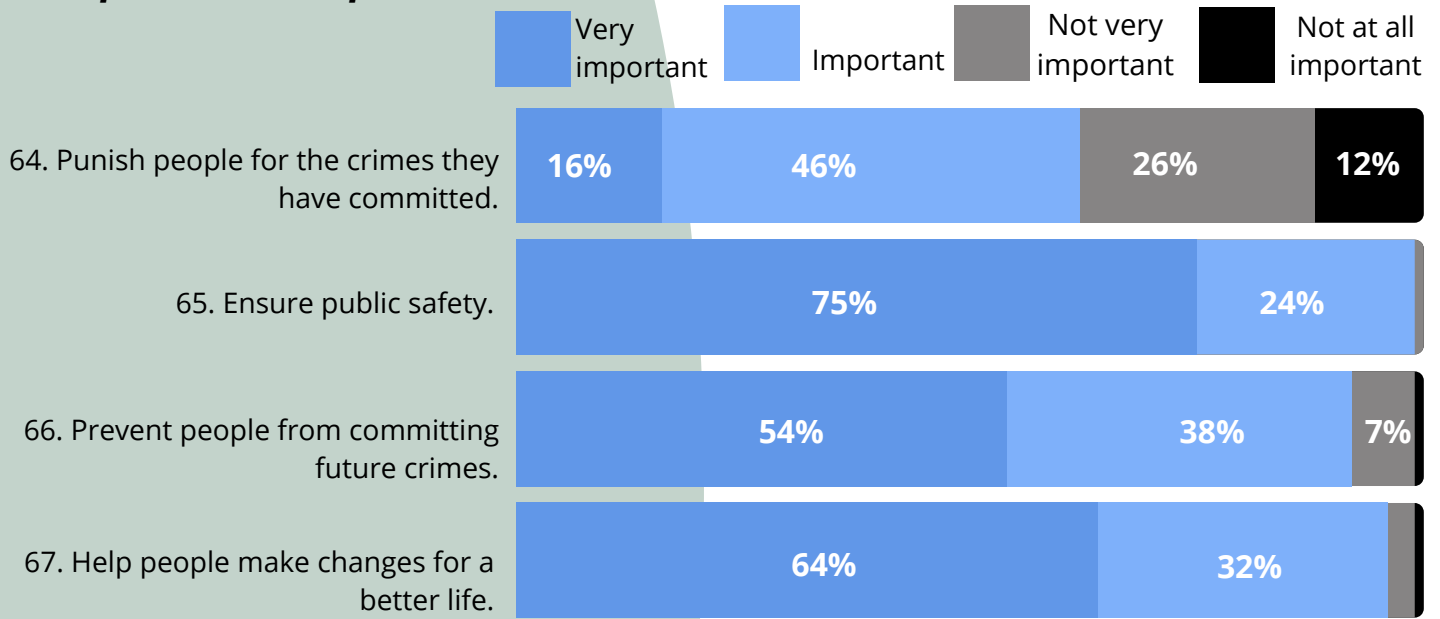




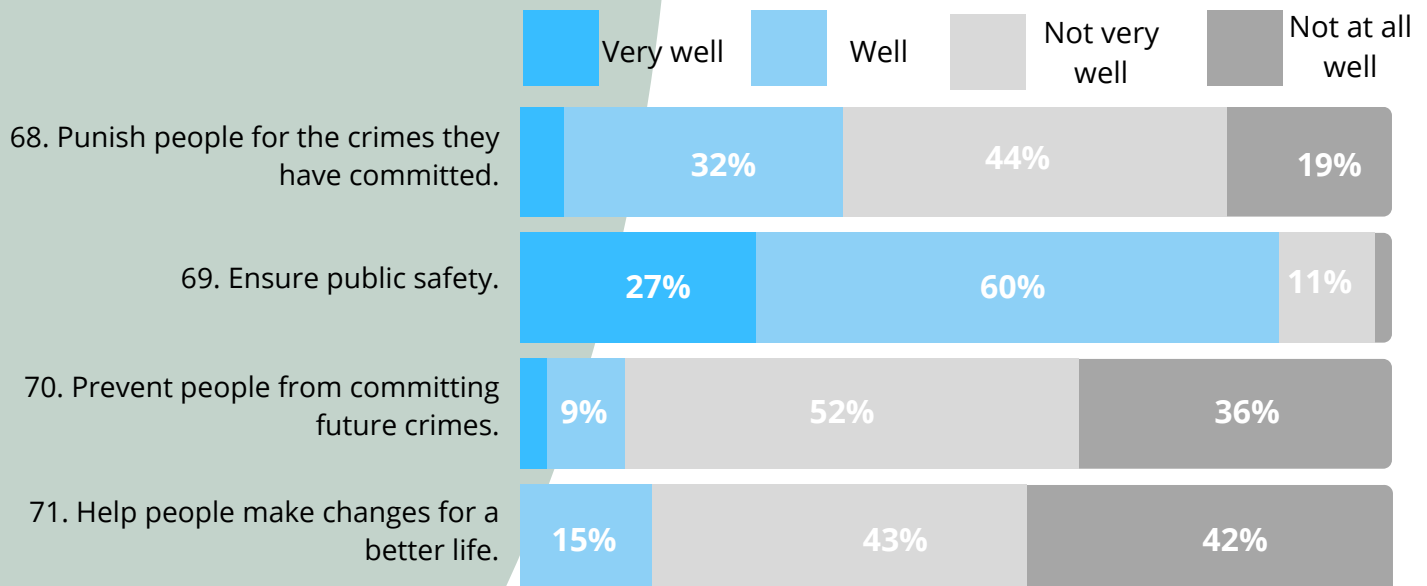
PURPOSE OF PRISON



It is important that prisons...




How well does this prison do these things?

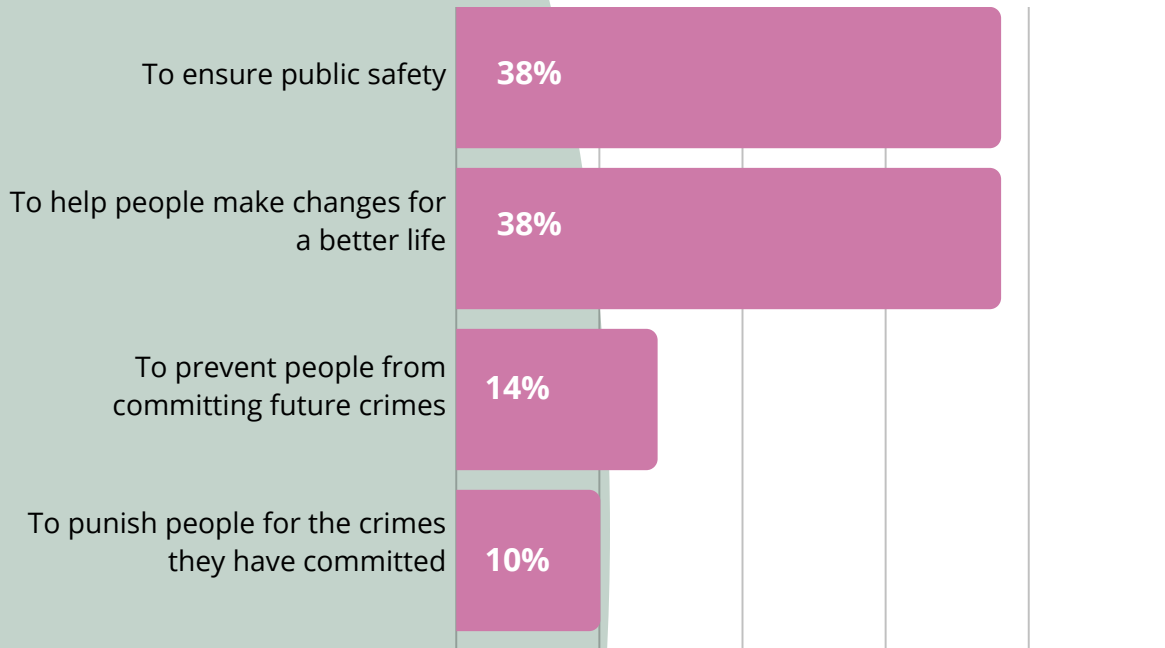




PURPOSE OF PRISON, Continued

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

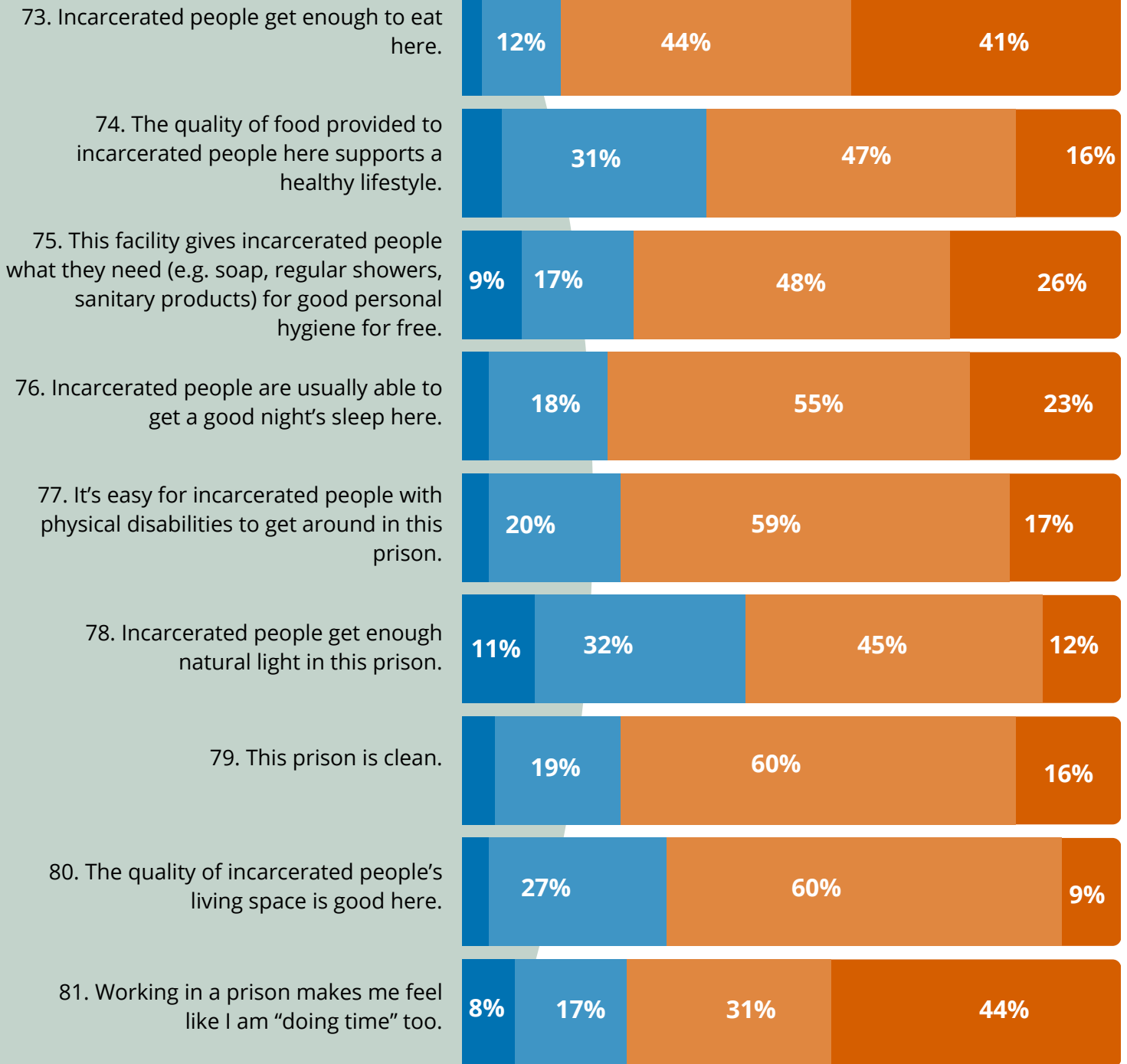
 % Yes





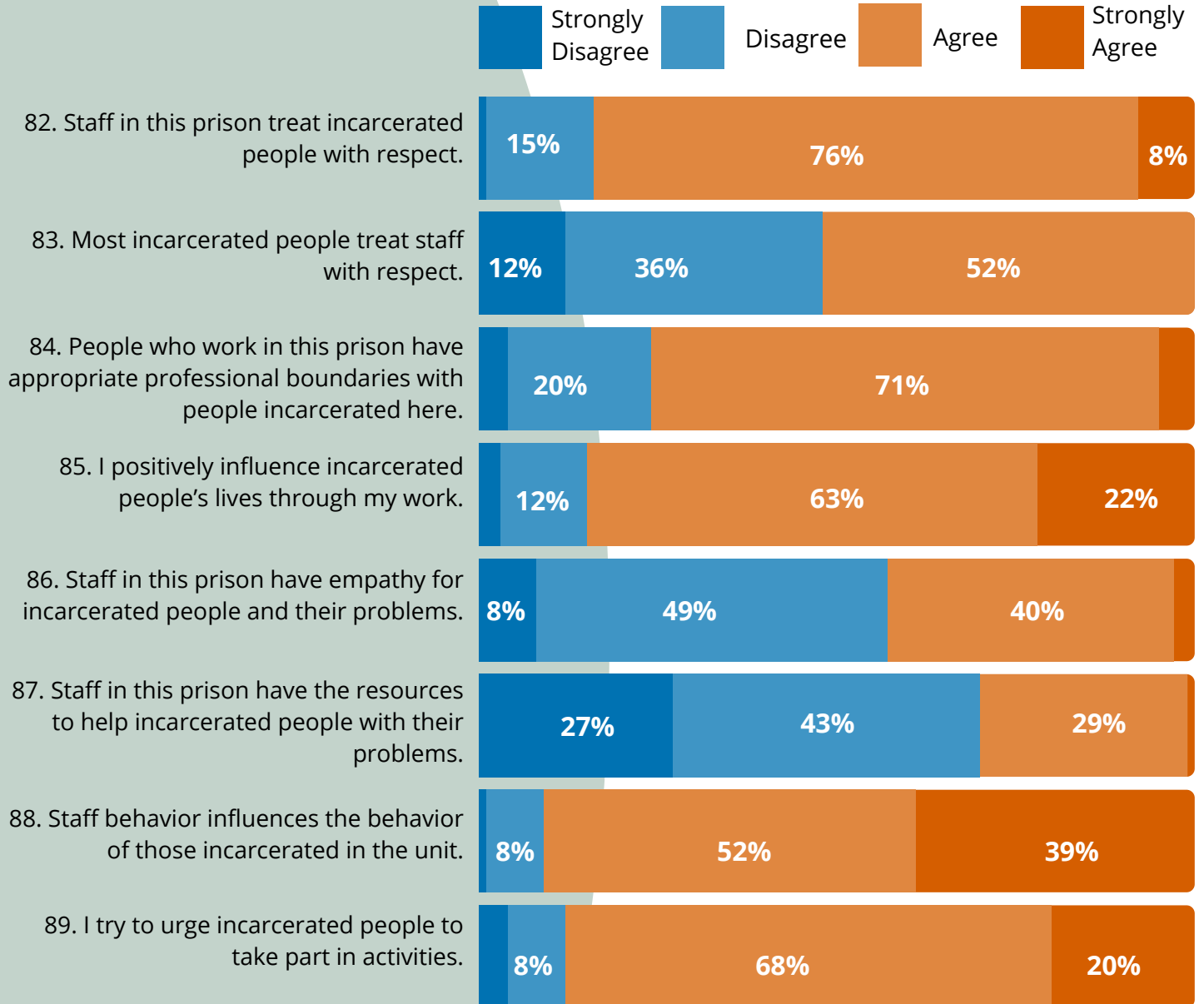
PRISON CONDITIONS

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree





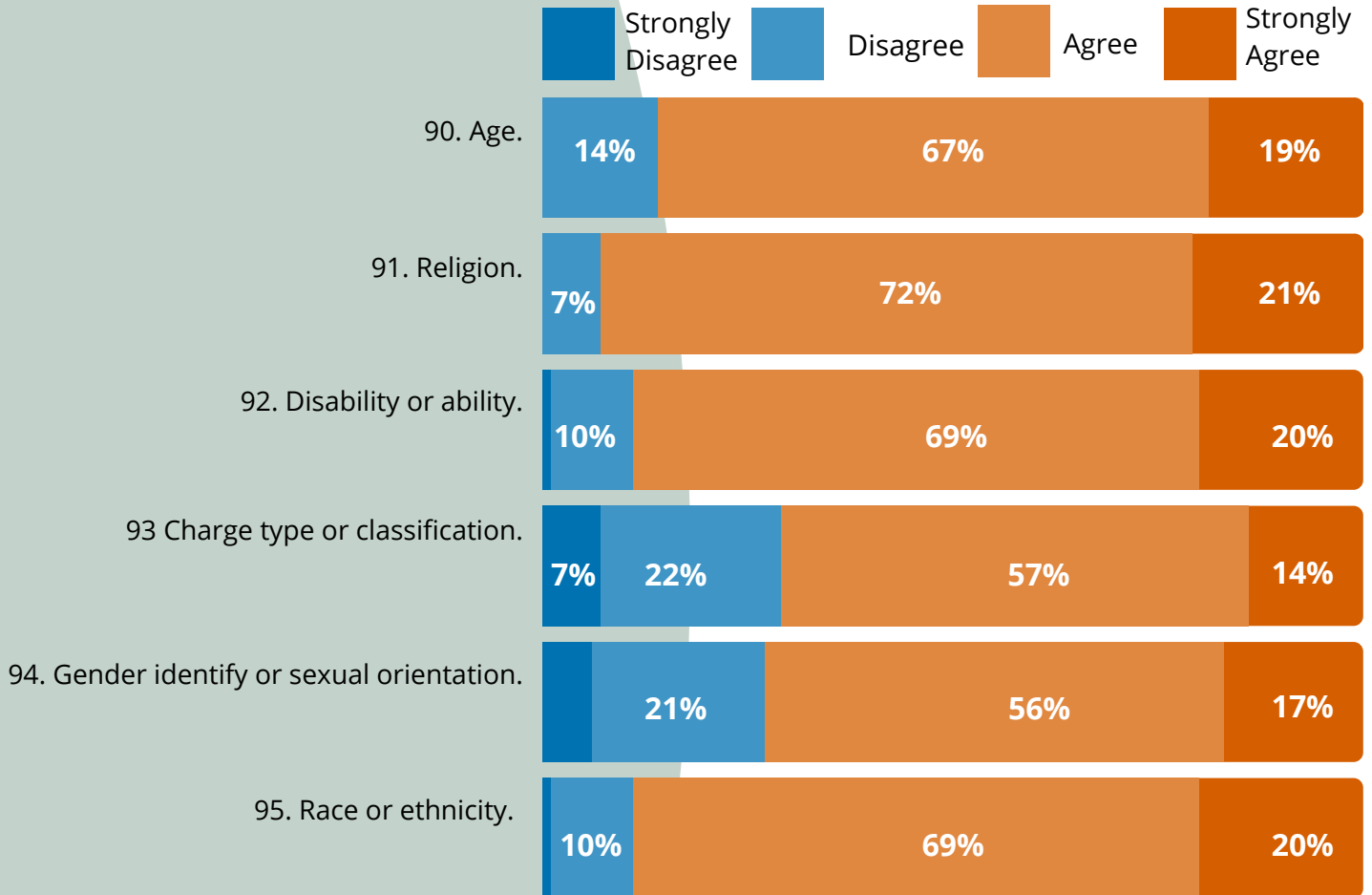
STAFF-INCARCERATED INTERACTIONS





STAFF-INCARCERATED INTERACTIONS, Continued

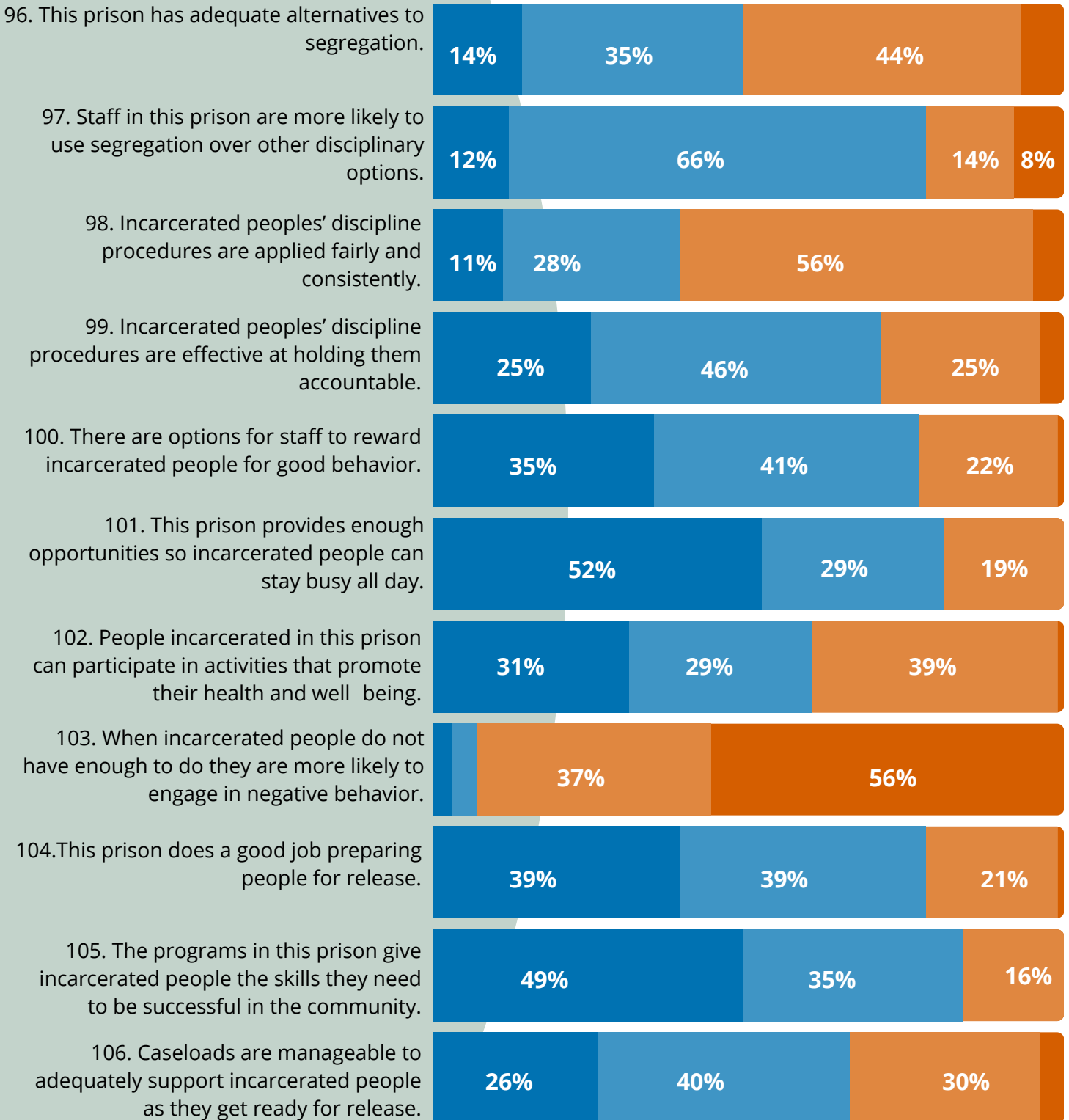
Staff in this prison treat incarcerated people the same regardless of the incarcerated persons'...





CORRECTIONAL PRACTICES AND SANCTIONS

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

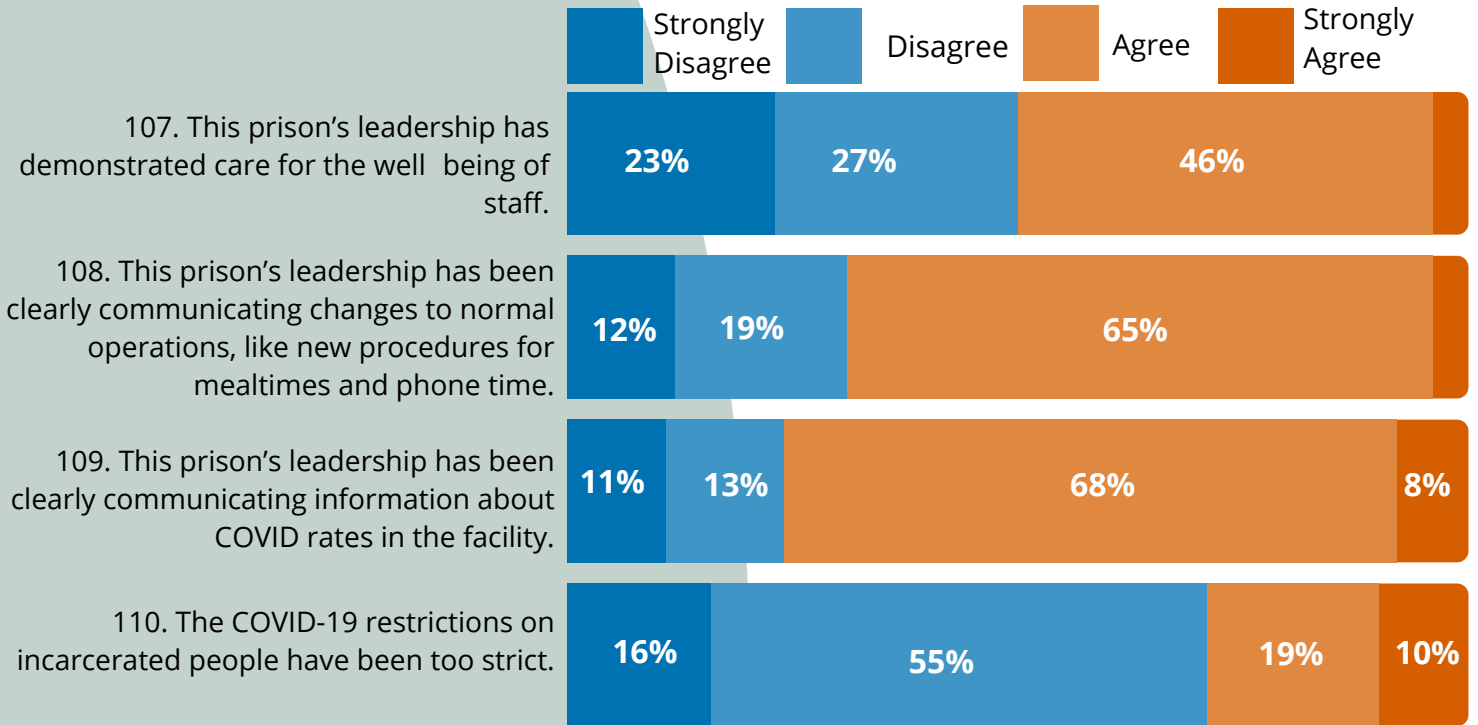




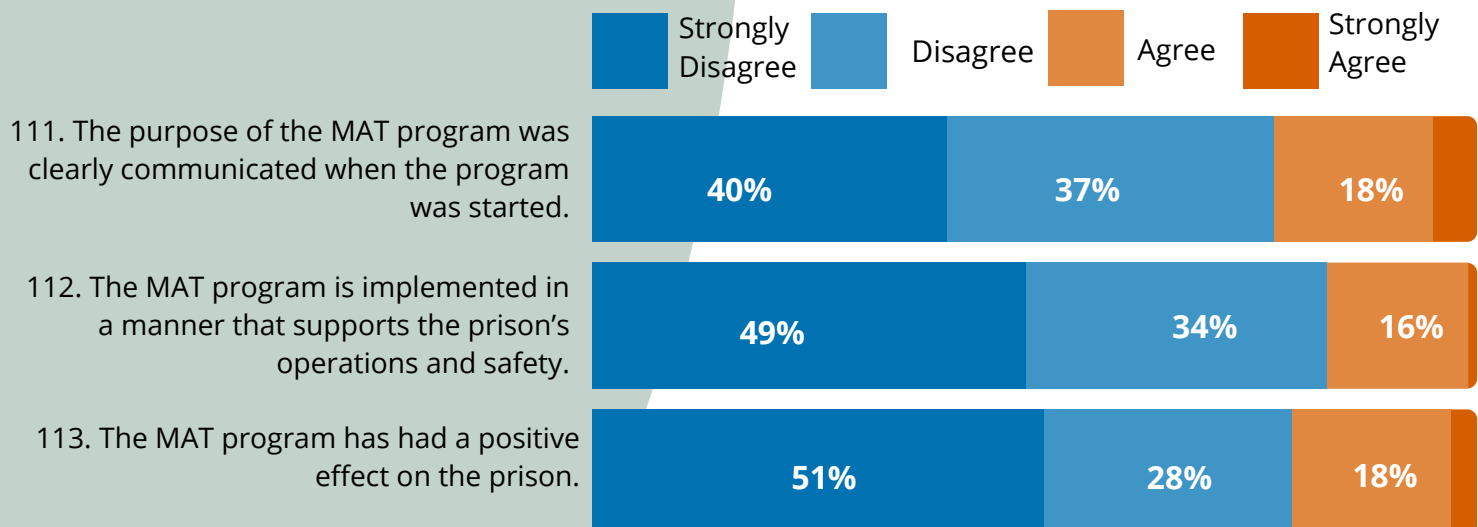
107a. Did you work in this prison before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic?



DURING COVID-19,...



MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT (MAT) PROGRAM





2022: SURVEY RESPONDENTS - INCARCERATED PERSONS



72%

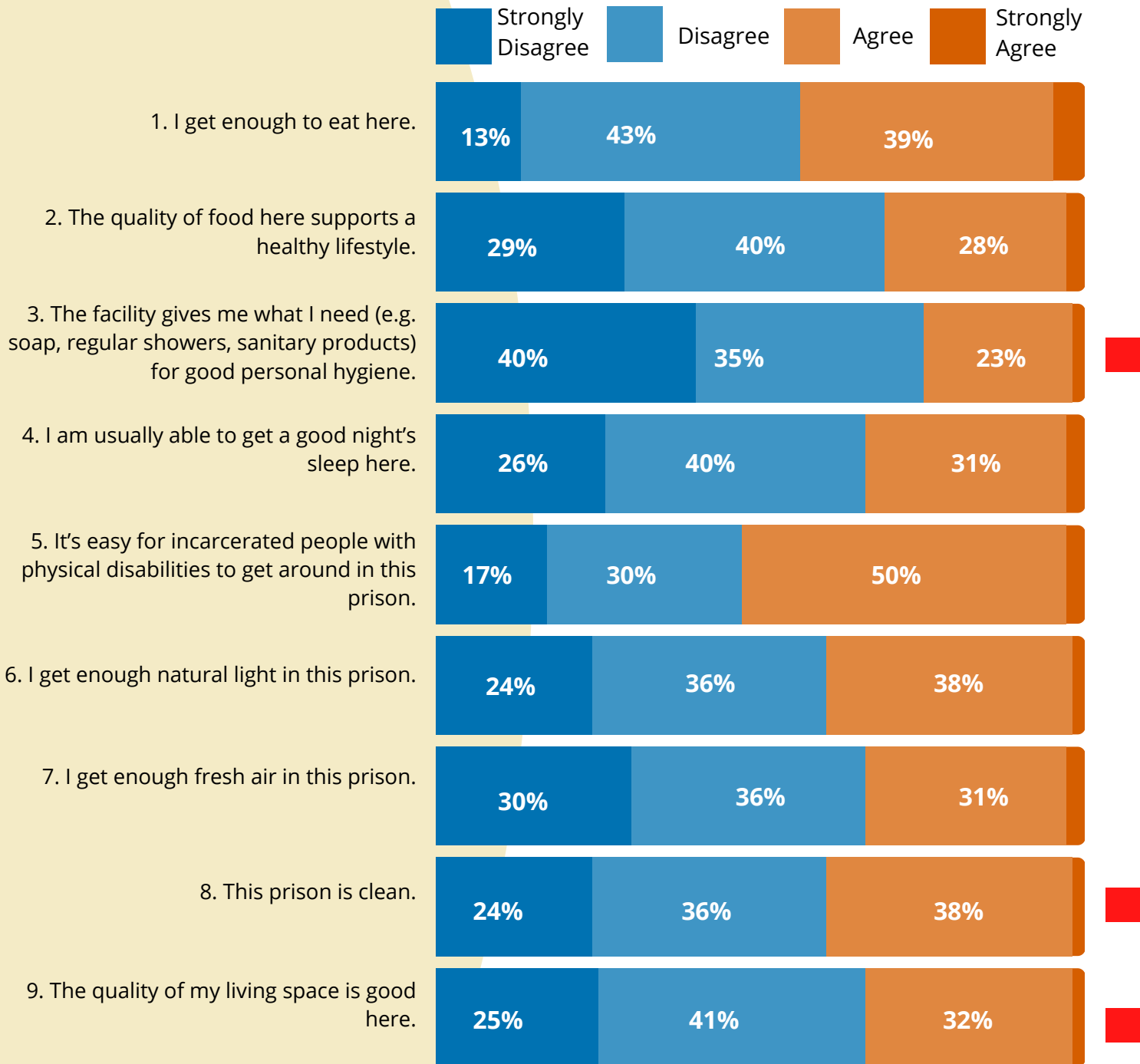
of incarcerated
persons
completed the
survey.

- Age: 38 years (median)
- Race: 75% white
- Ethnicity: 73% white
- Gender identity: 87% male
 - Transgender: 5%
- Status:
 - 30% Detained, awaiting trial
 - 46% Serving sentence
 - 24% Incarcerated for a violation of conditions
- # Years incarcerated at SSCF
 - 81% 0-5 years, 19% 6+ years

The Incarcerated Persons Vermont Prison Climate Survey was administered to people incarcerated in Vermont's Southern State Correctional Facility in June 2022. Surveys were paper-based, confidential, and anonymous. Of 293 eligible incarcerated people, 212 completed the survey (72% response rate). The demographic data presented here are self-reported.

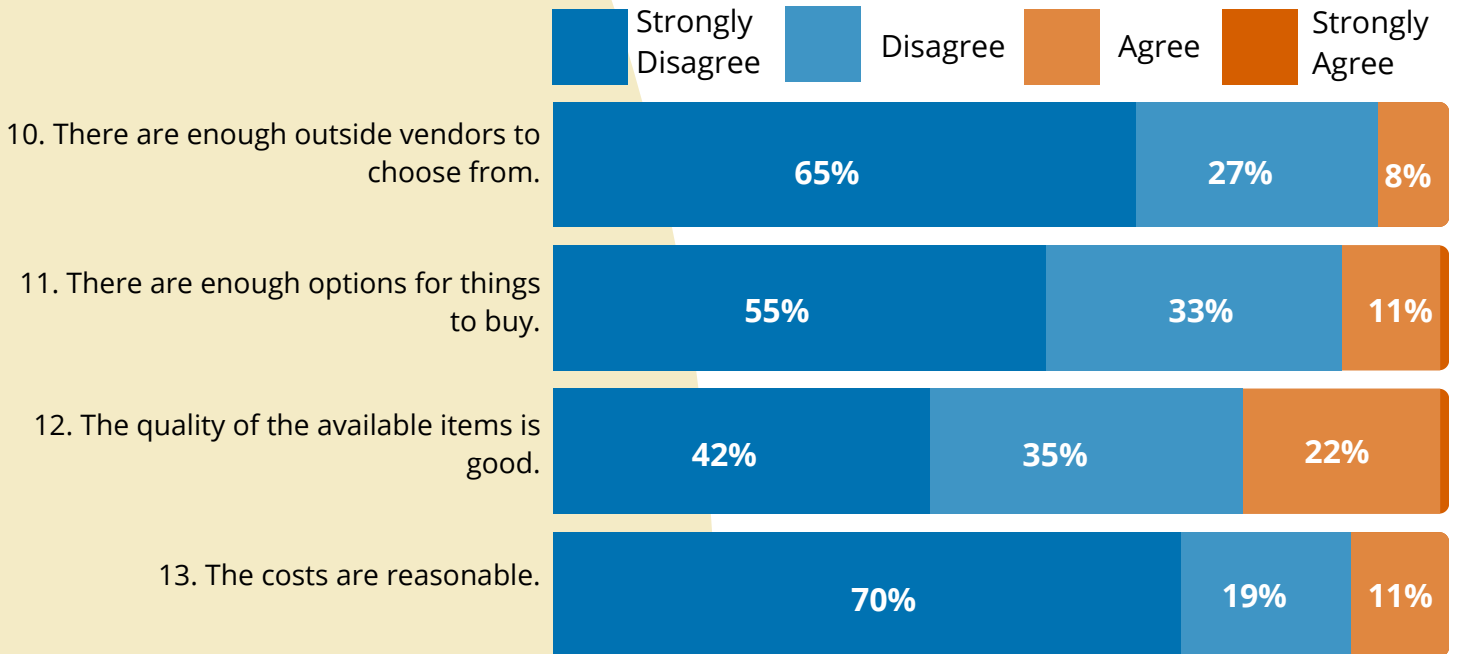


PRISON CONDITIONS & ENVIRONMENT





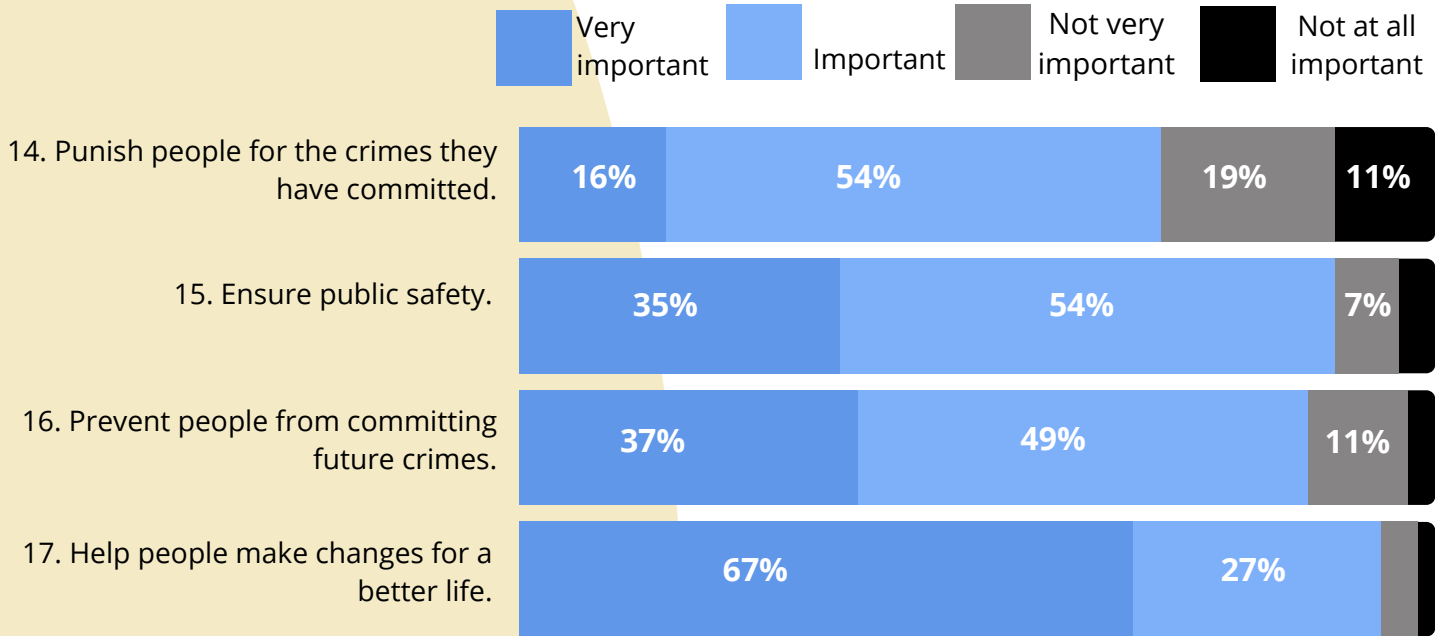
COMMISSARY



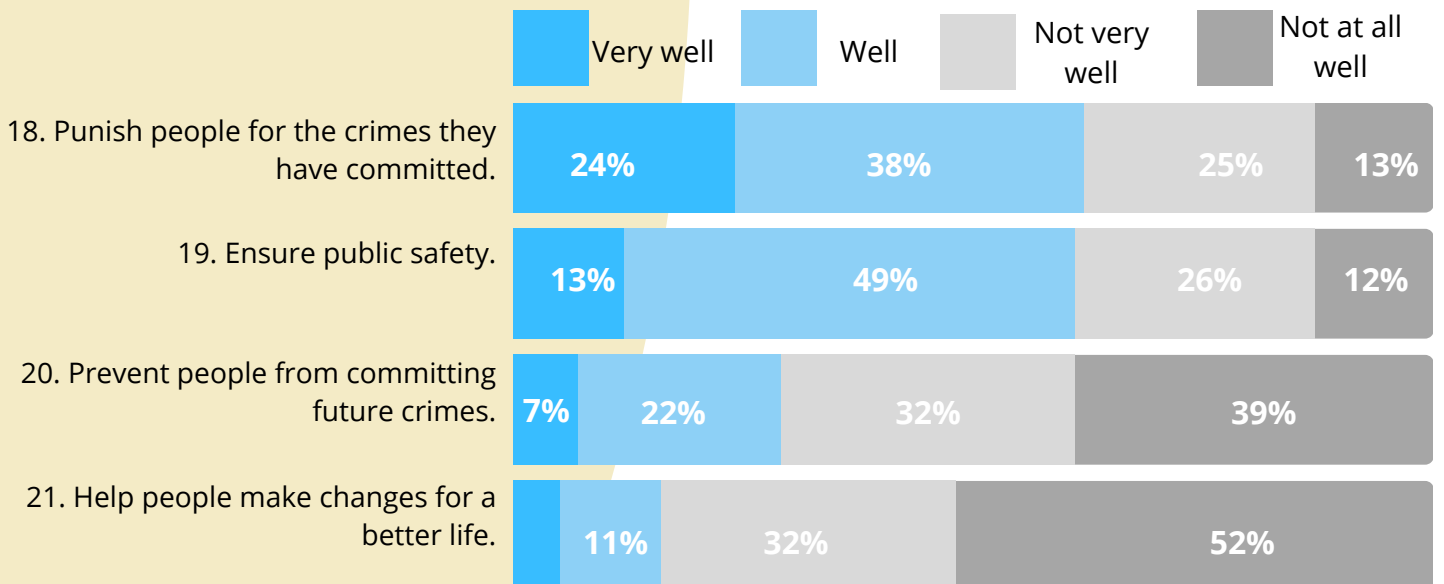


PURPOSE OF PRISON

It is important that prisons...




How well does this prison do these things?

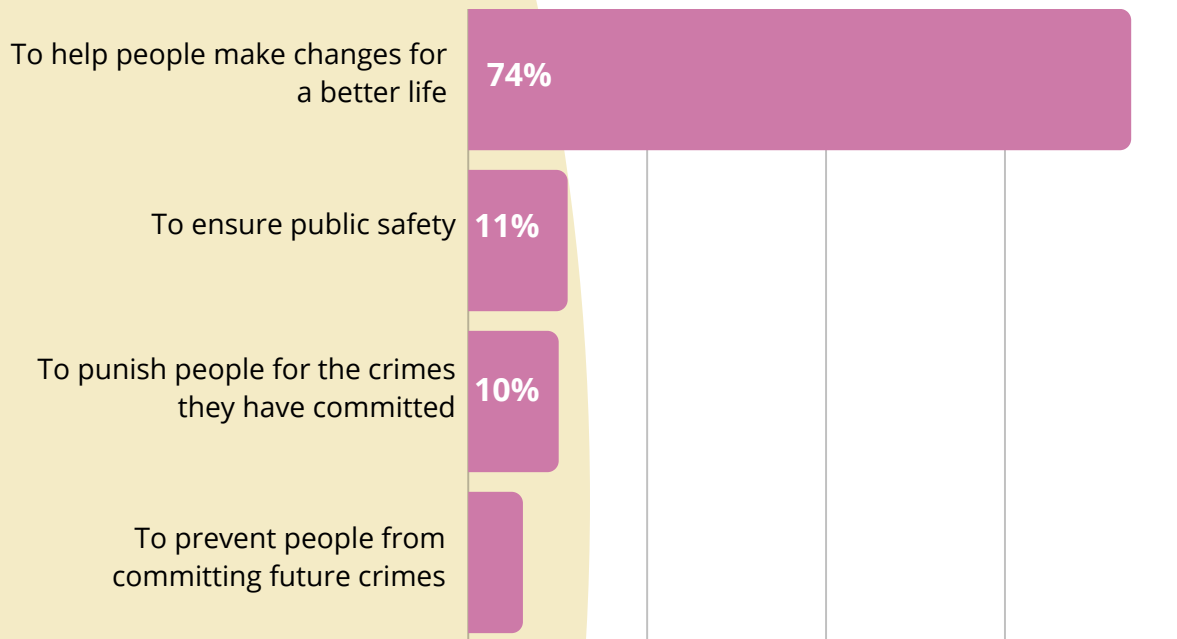




PURPOSE OF PRISON, CONTINUED

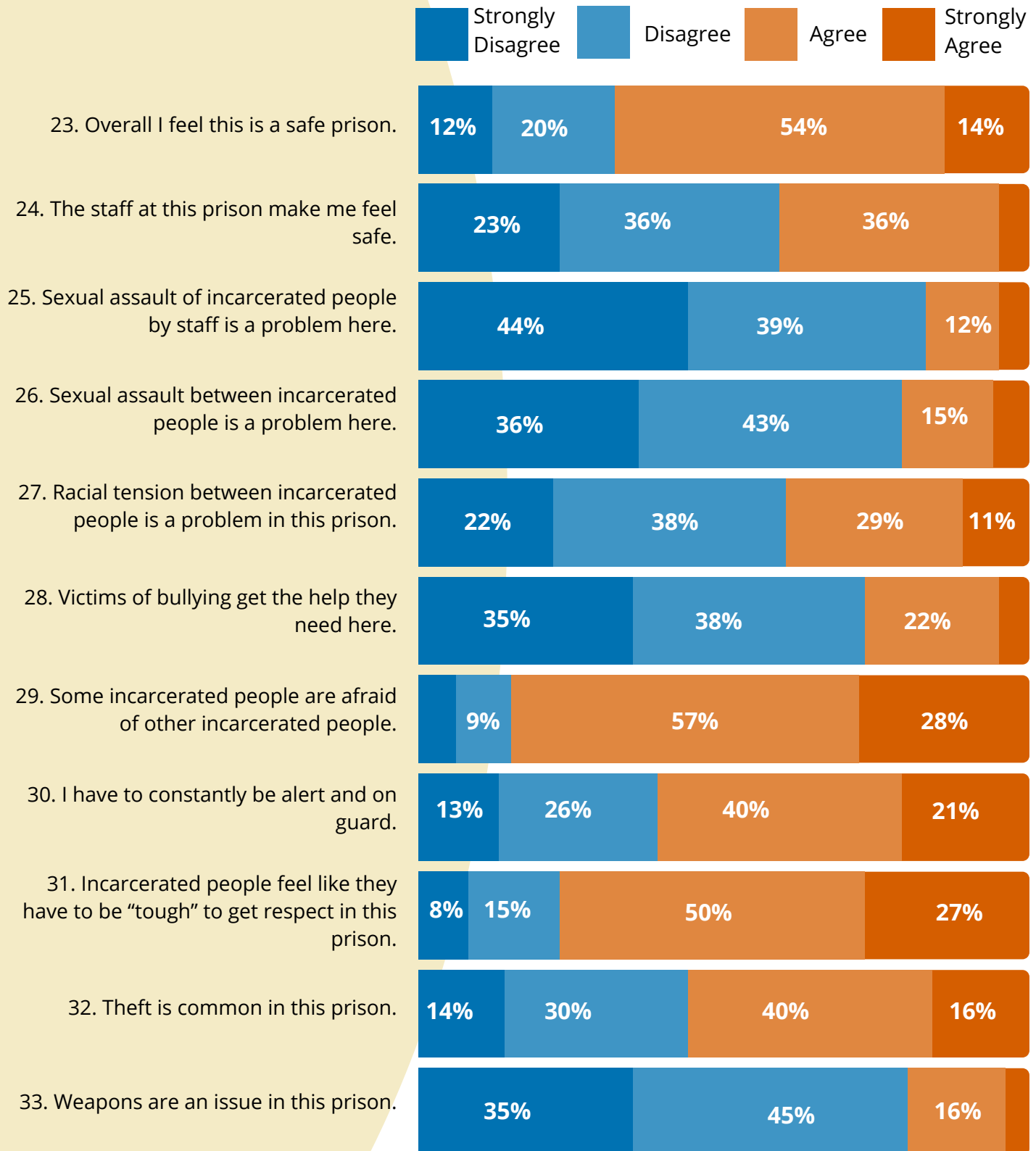
22. Which of these things should be the most important purpose of prison? (choose one)

 % Yes



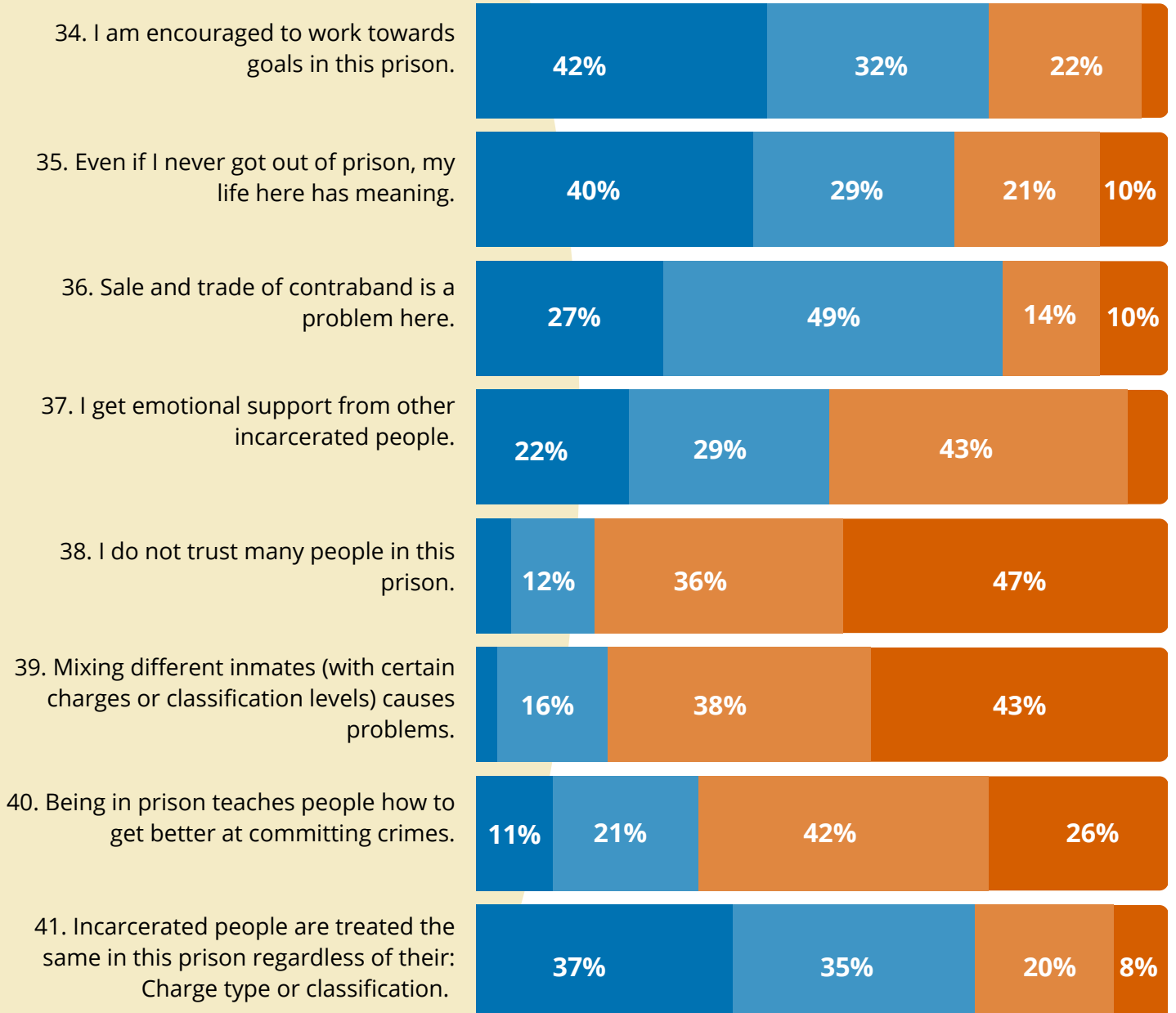


PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL SAFETY



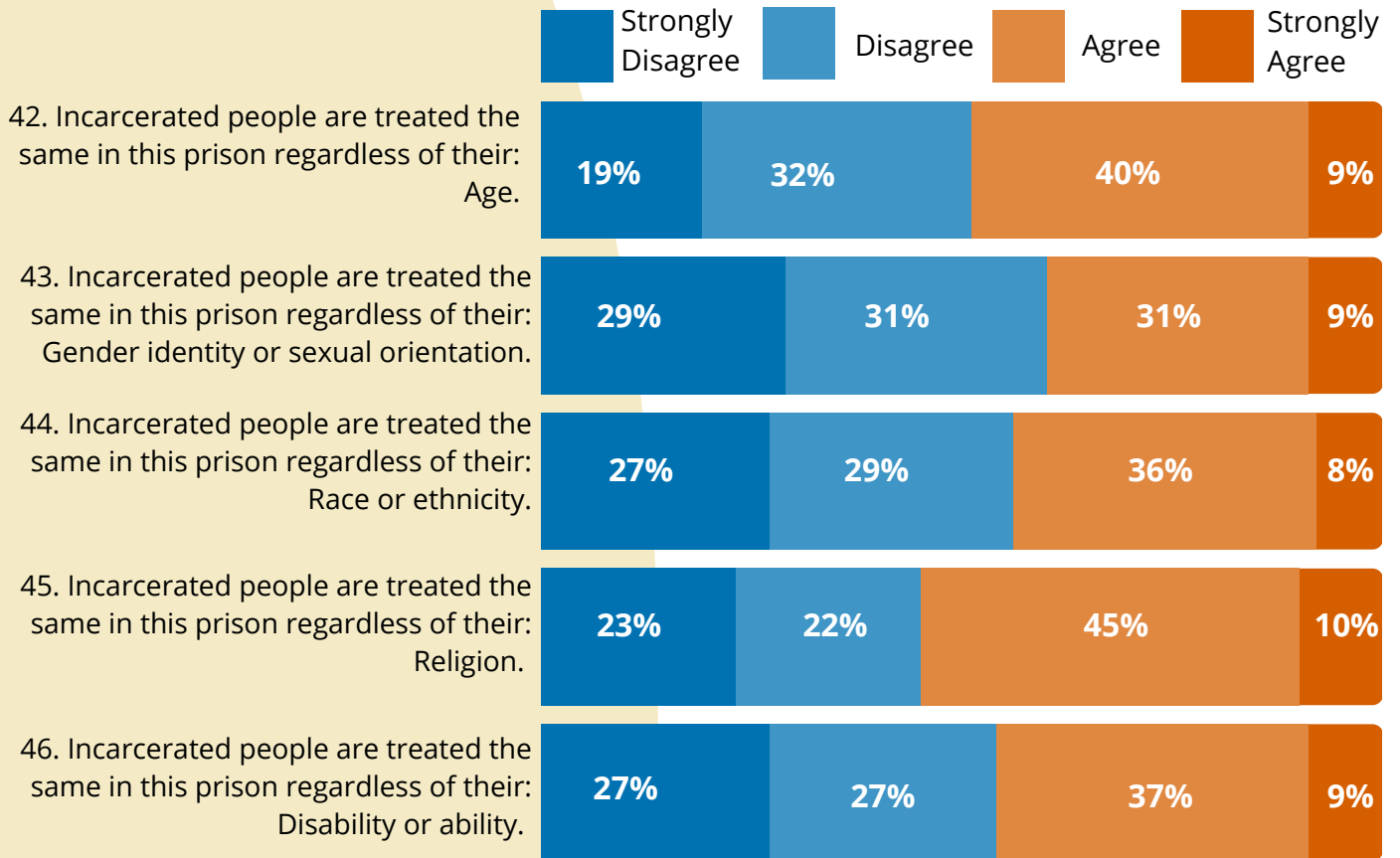


PRISON CULTURE



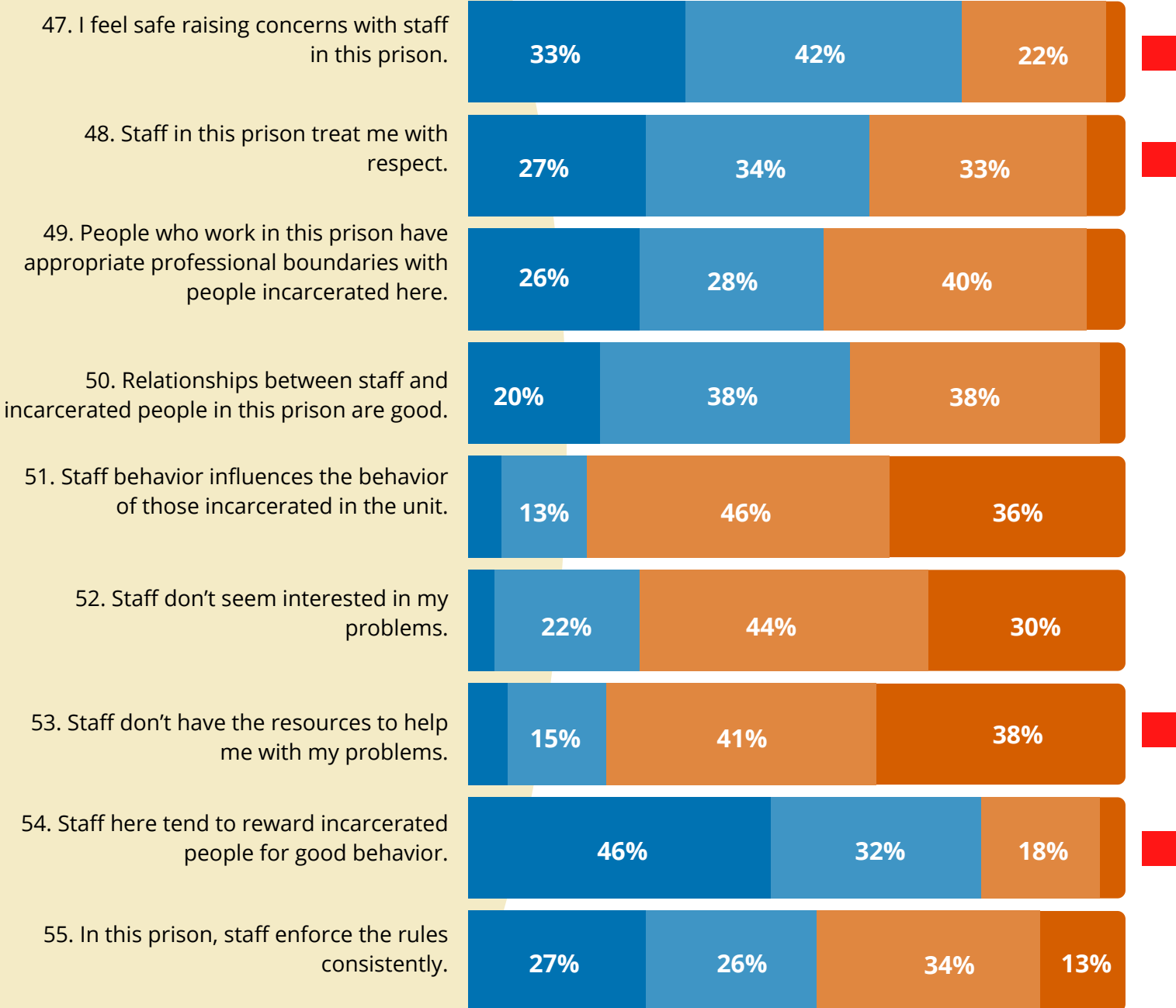


PRISON CULTURE, CONTINUED



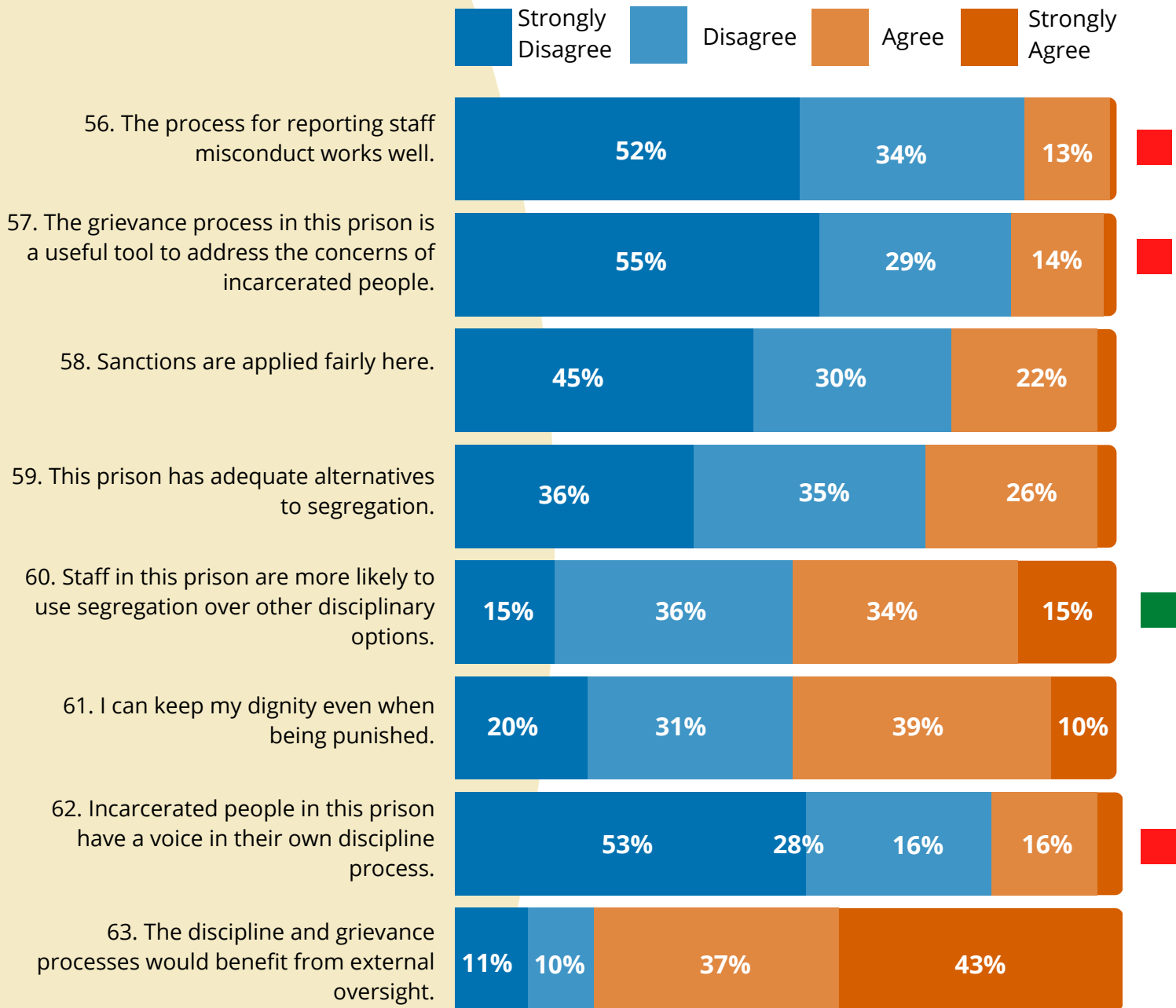


CORRECTIONAL STAFF AND PRACTICES



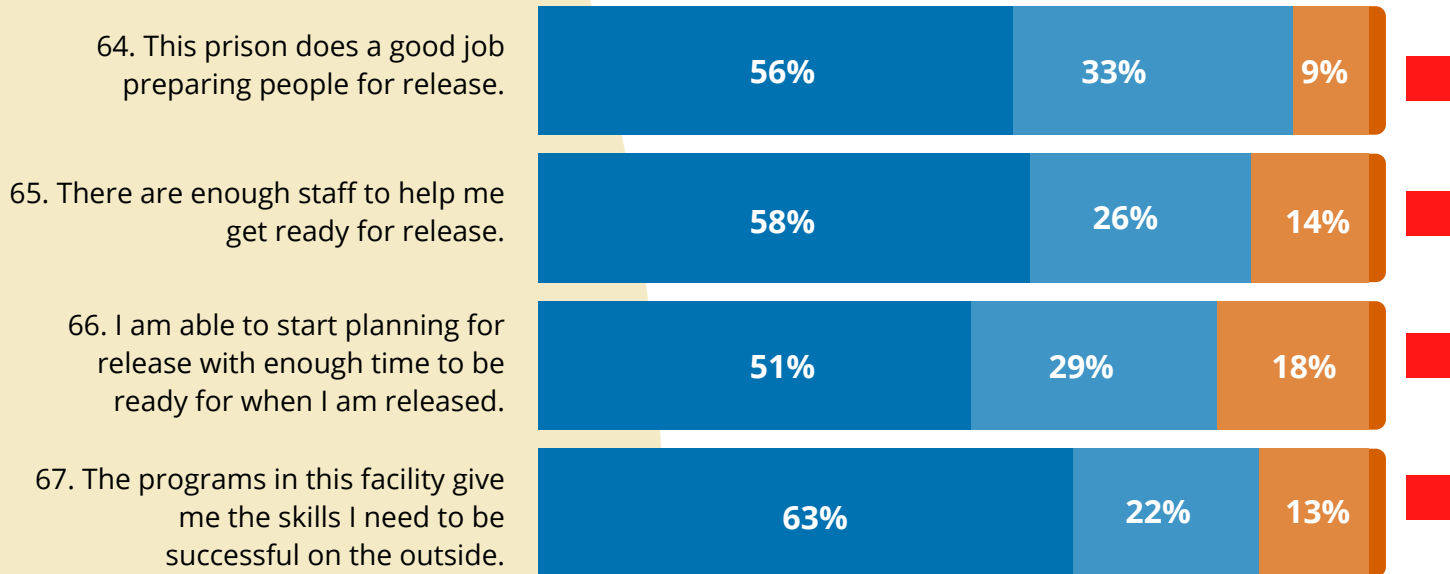


DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES



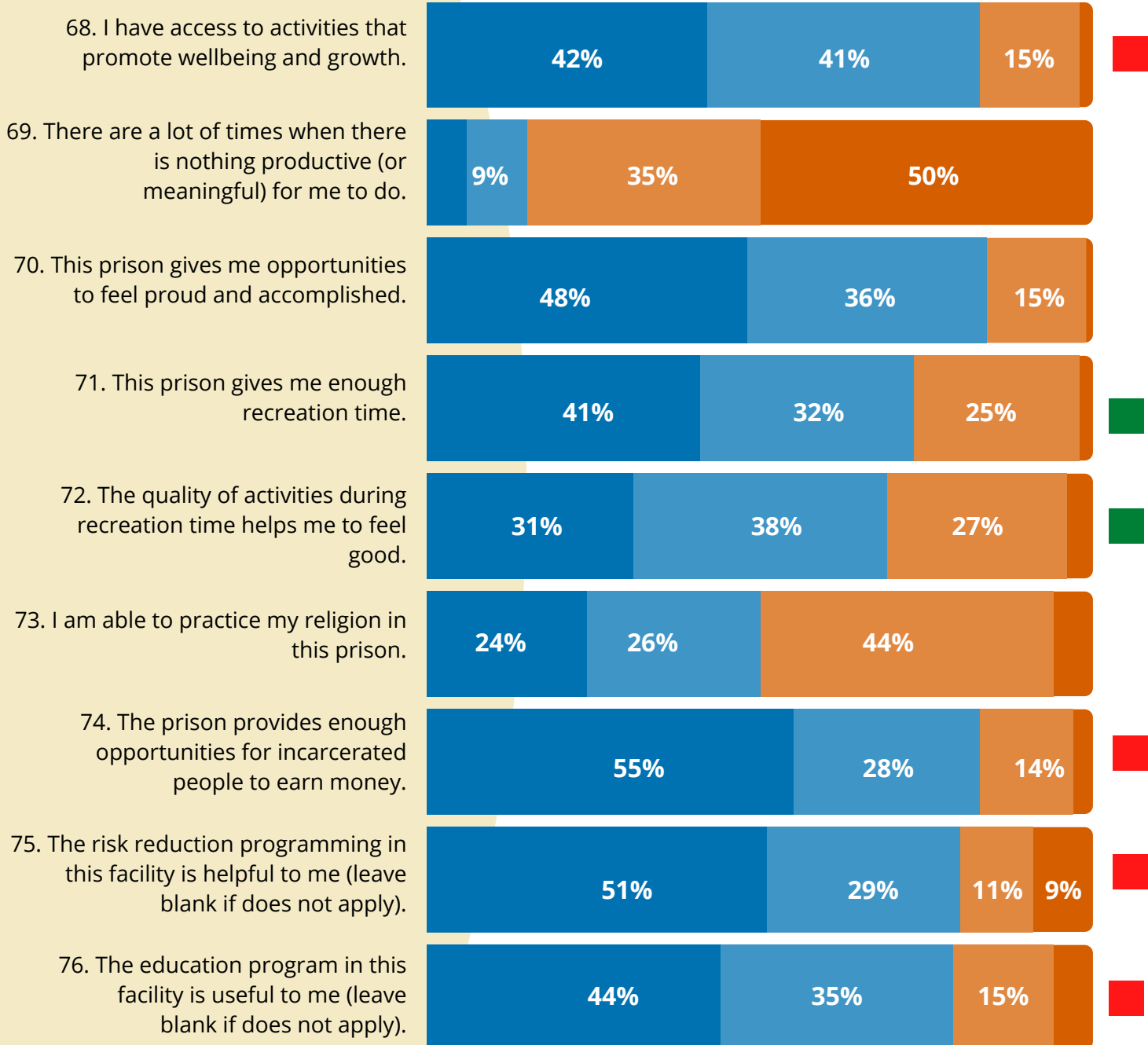


PLANNING FOR RELEASE





PRISON ACTIVITIES





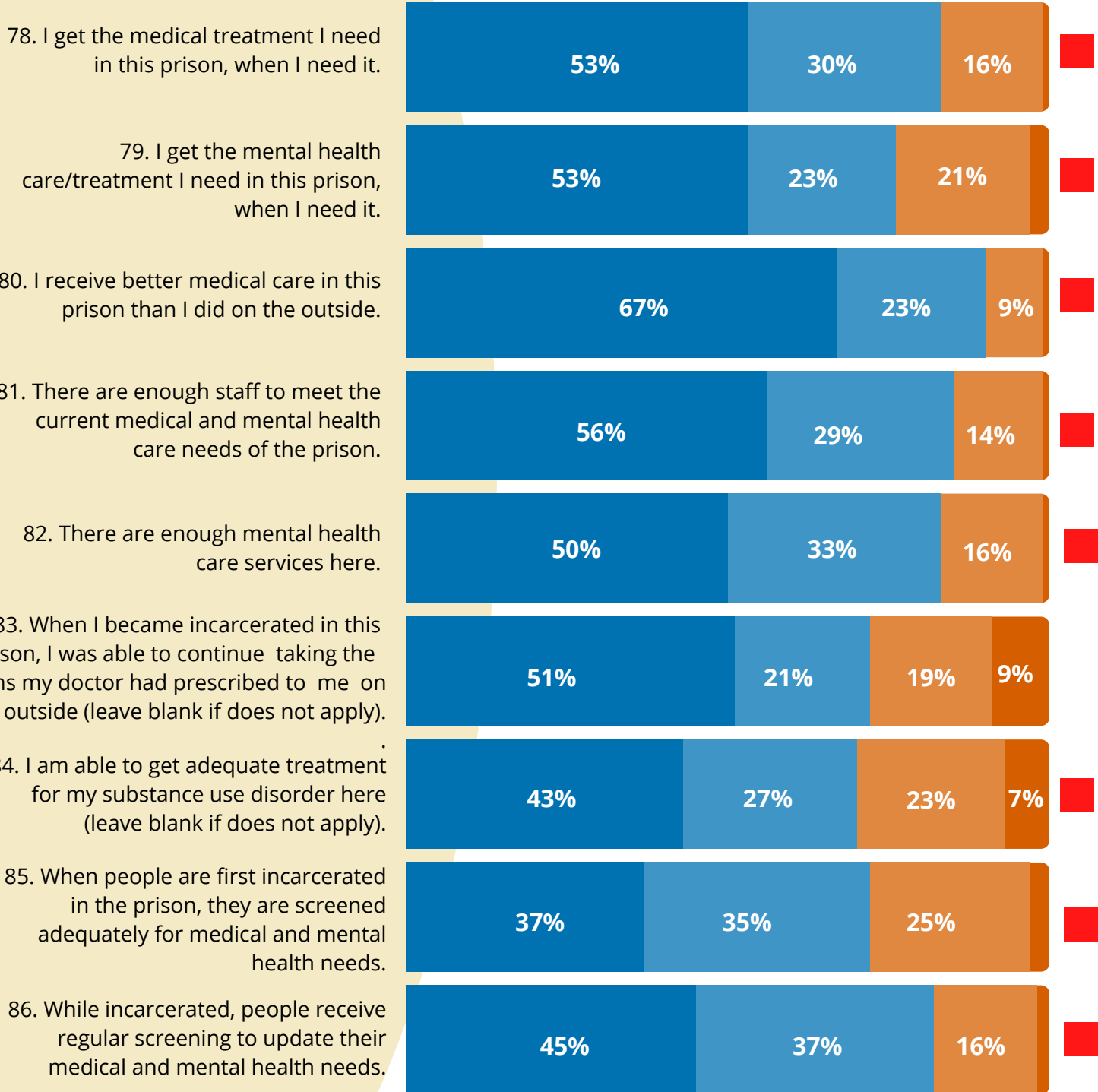
PRISON ACTIVITIES, CONTINUED

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



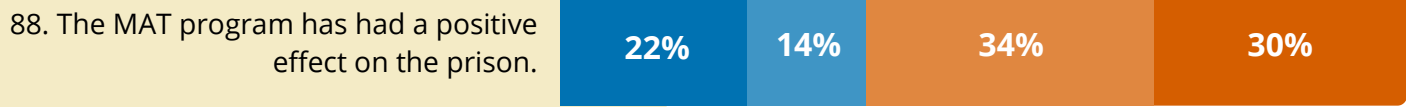
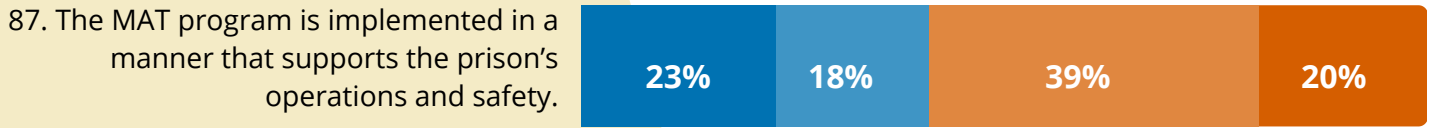


MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTHCARE

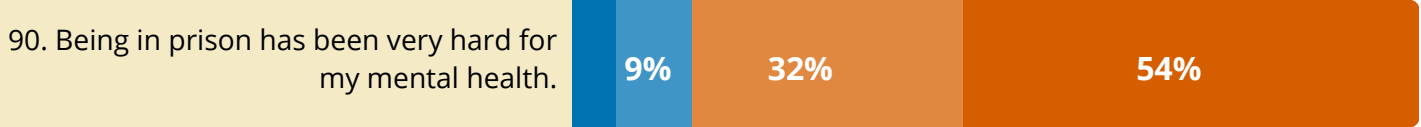
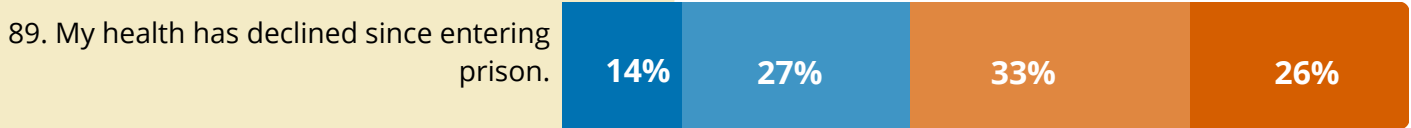




MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT (MAT) PROGRAM



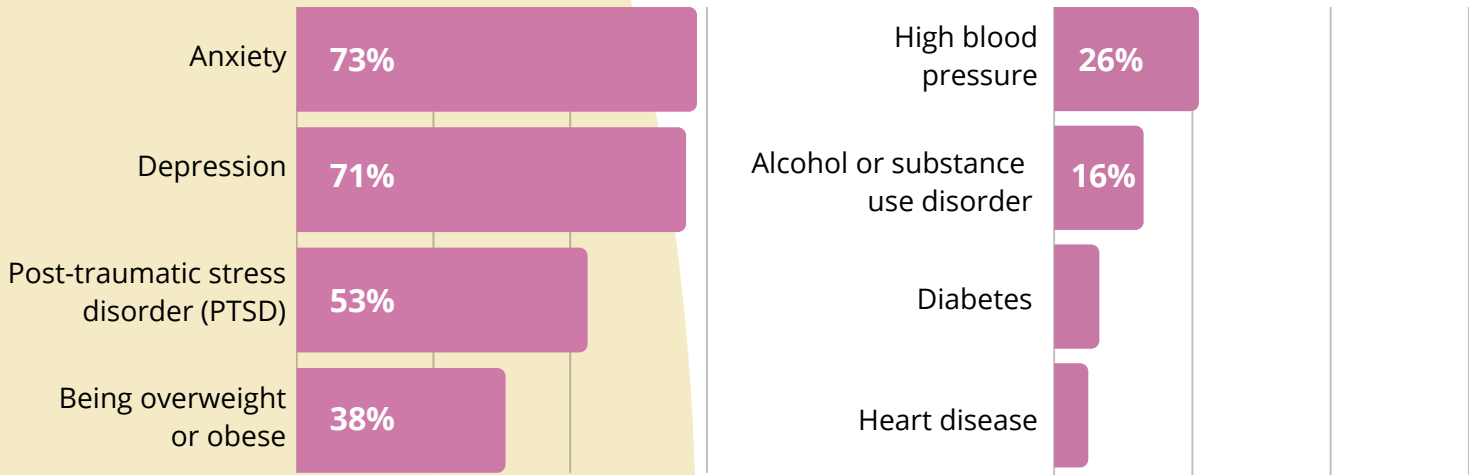
HEALTH AND WELLBEING



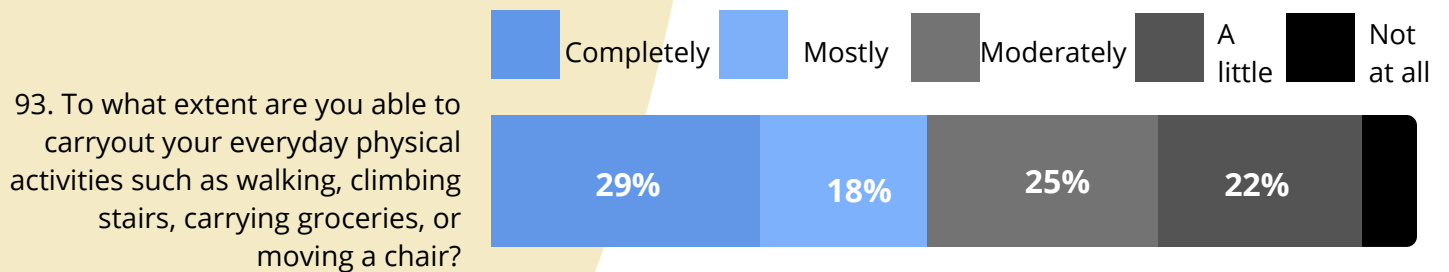
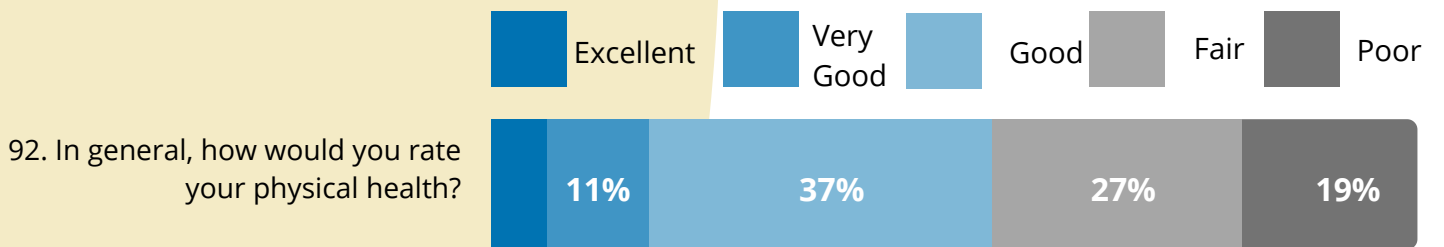


HEALTH AND WELLBEING, CONTINUED

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



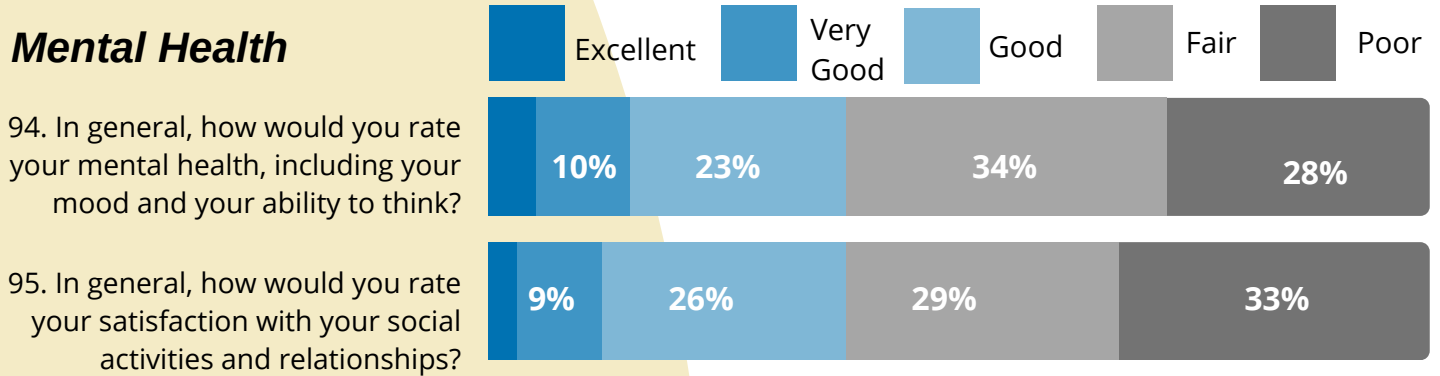
Physical Health



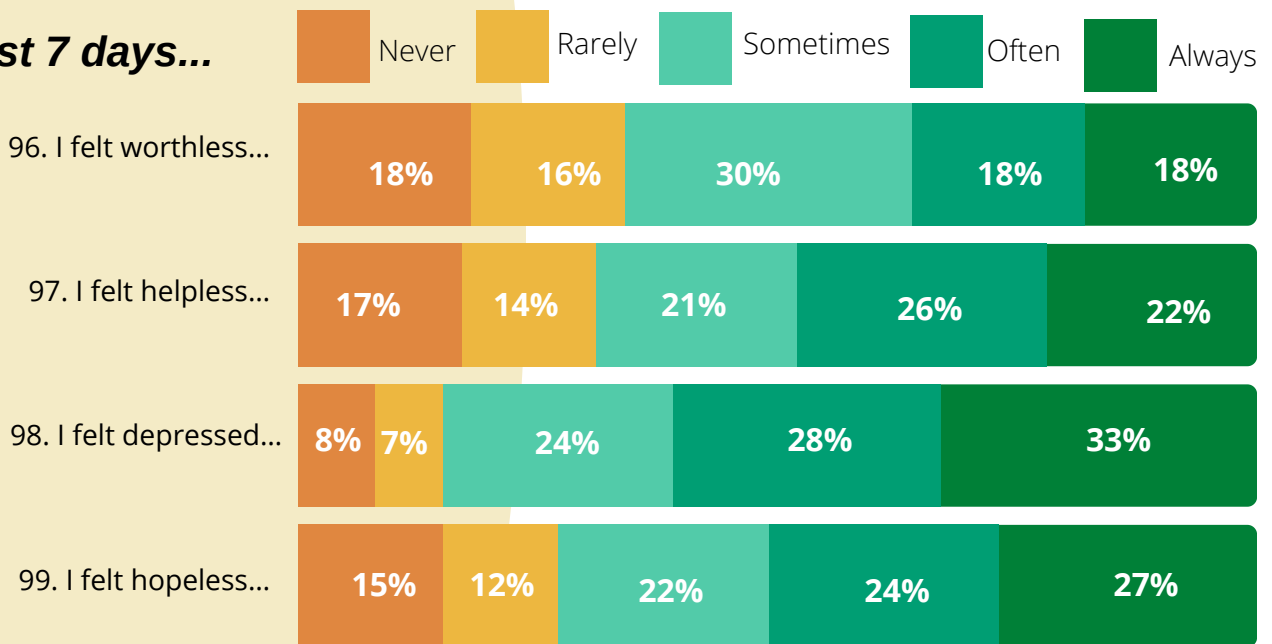


HEALTH AND WELLBEING, CONTINUED

Mental Health



In the past 7 days...



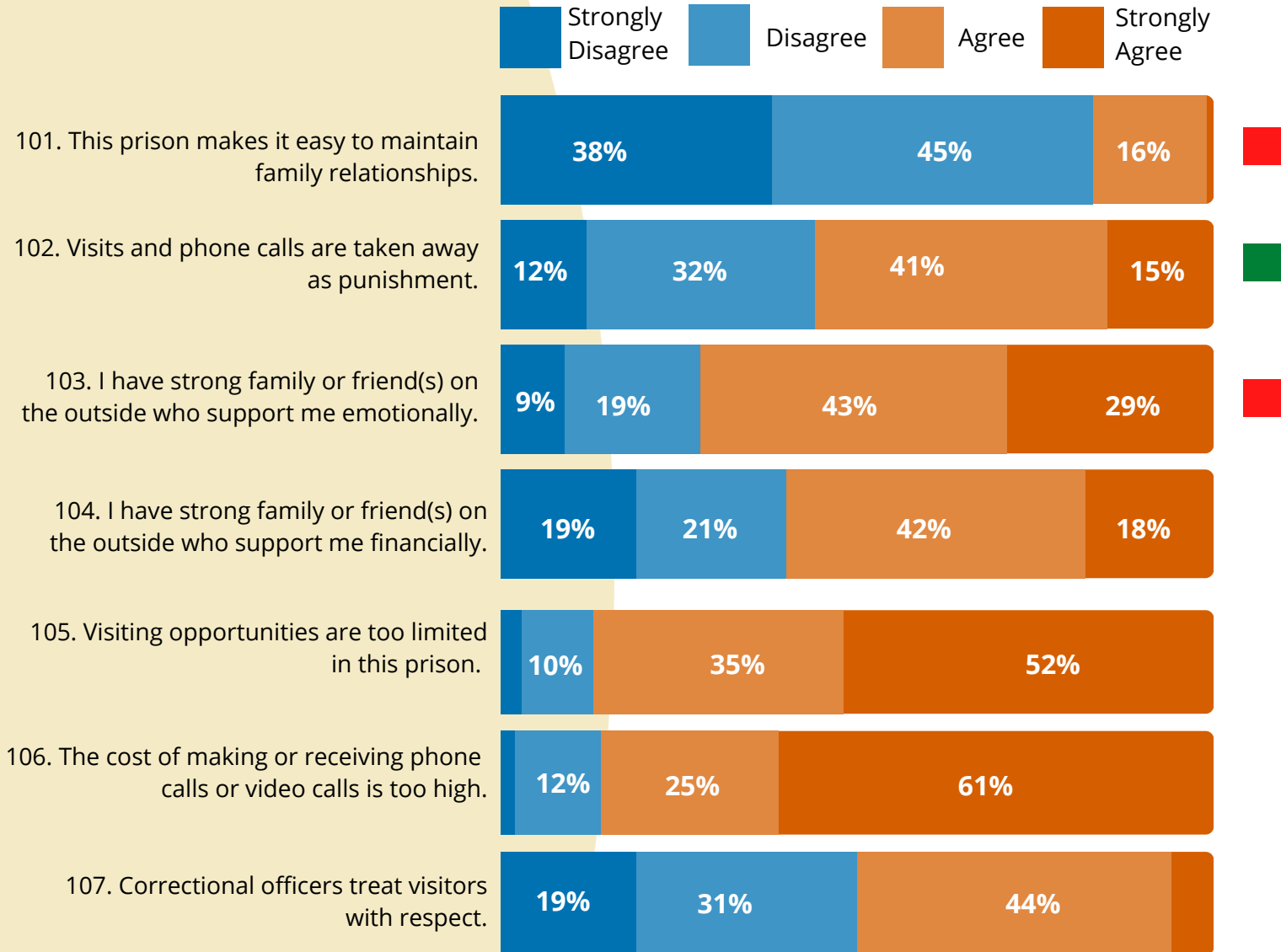
Suicidal Thoughts

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





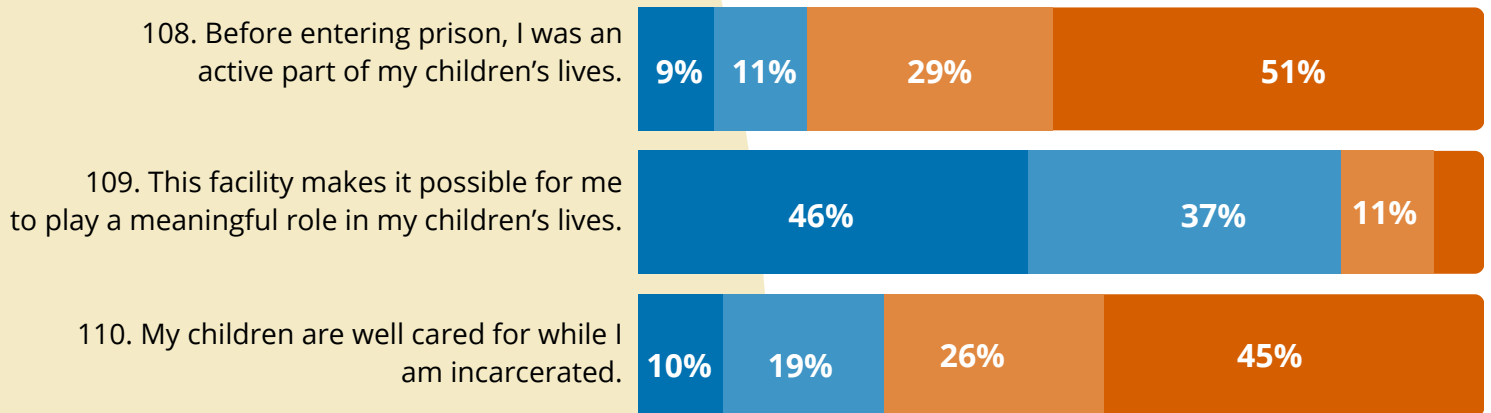
CONTACT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS





CONTACT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS, CONTINUED

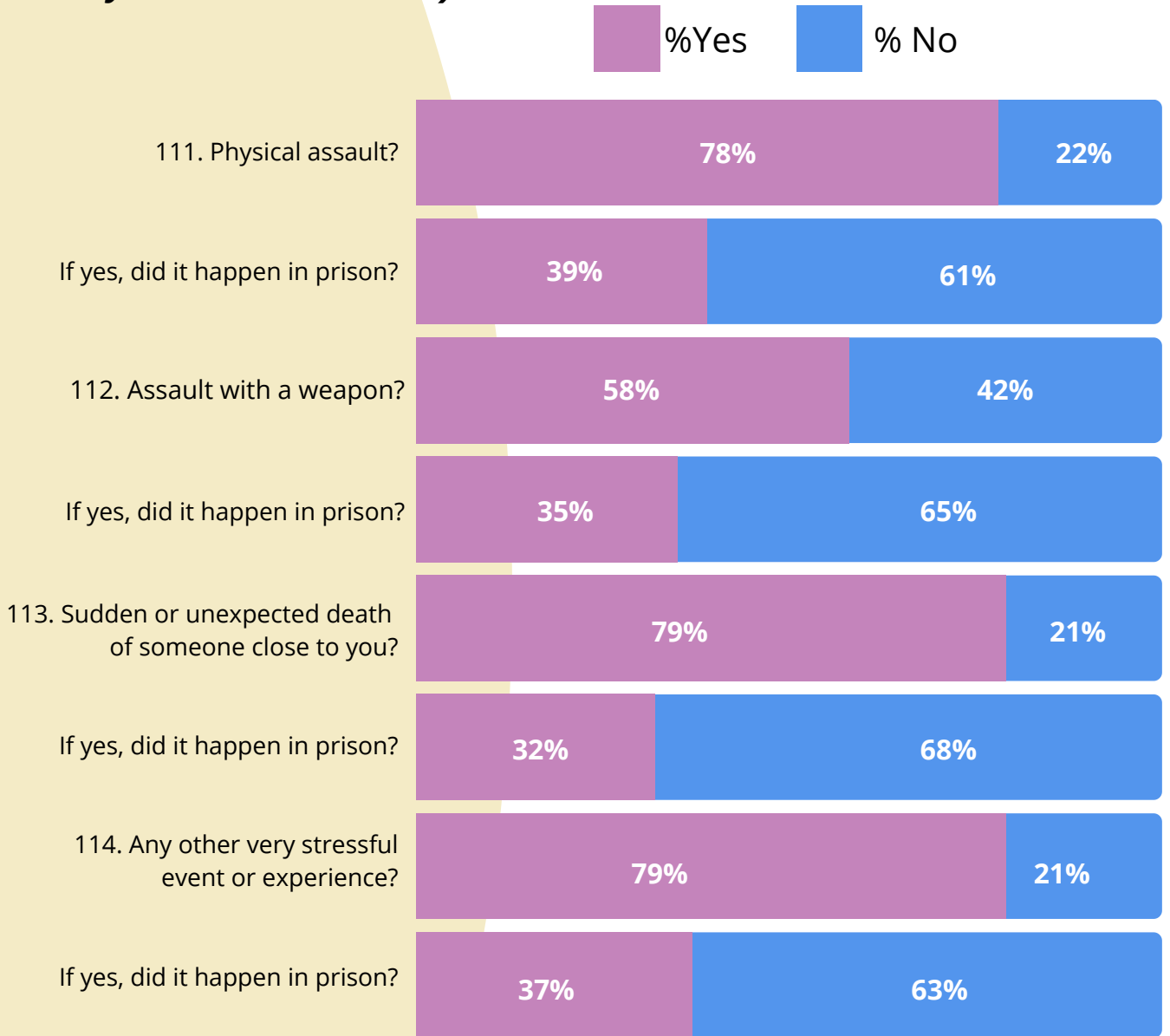
If you have children under the age of 18 years old:





TRAUMA

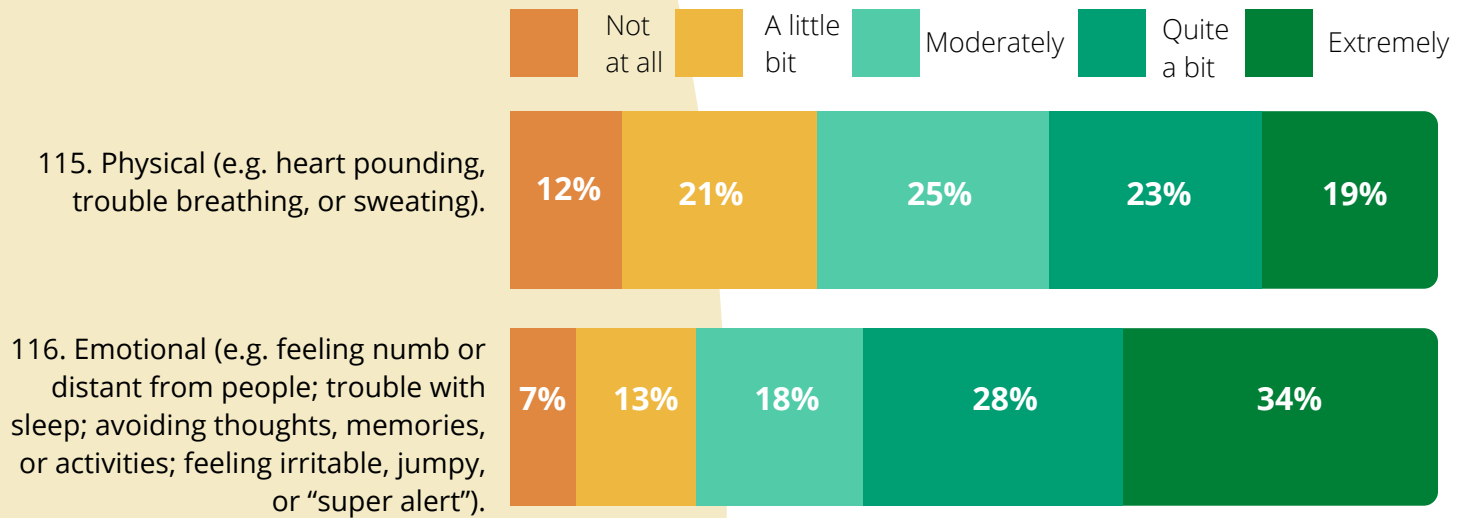
*Consider your entire life, have you experienced ?
(happened to you or witnessed it)*





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?





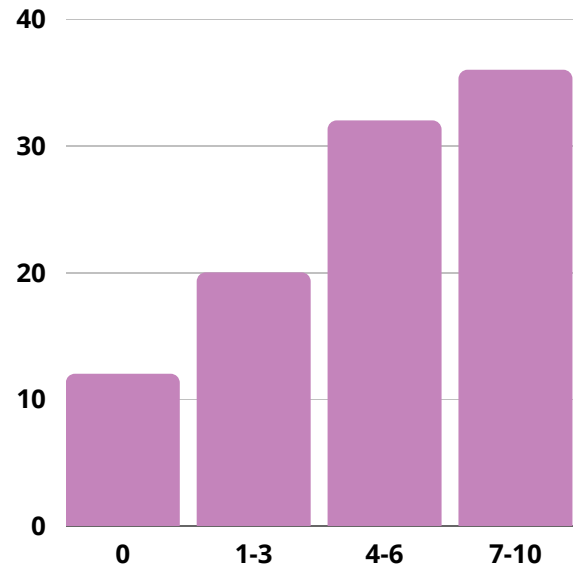
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACE)

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.

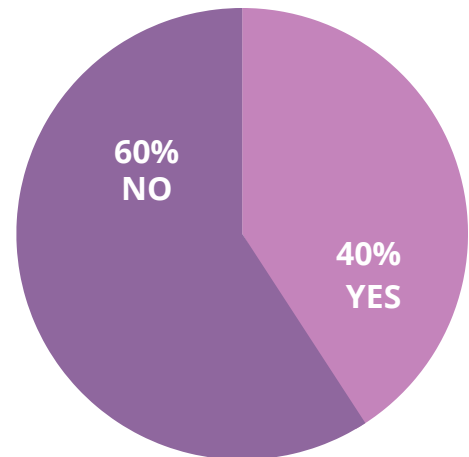
One point is assigned for each “yes” response, and then points are summed to calculate a total ACE score.

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





COVID-19,...

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

