

# 2013 The Freshman Survey:

## Diversity

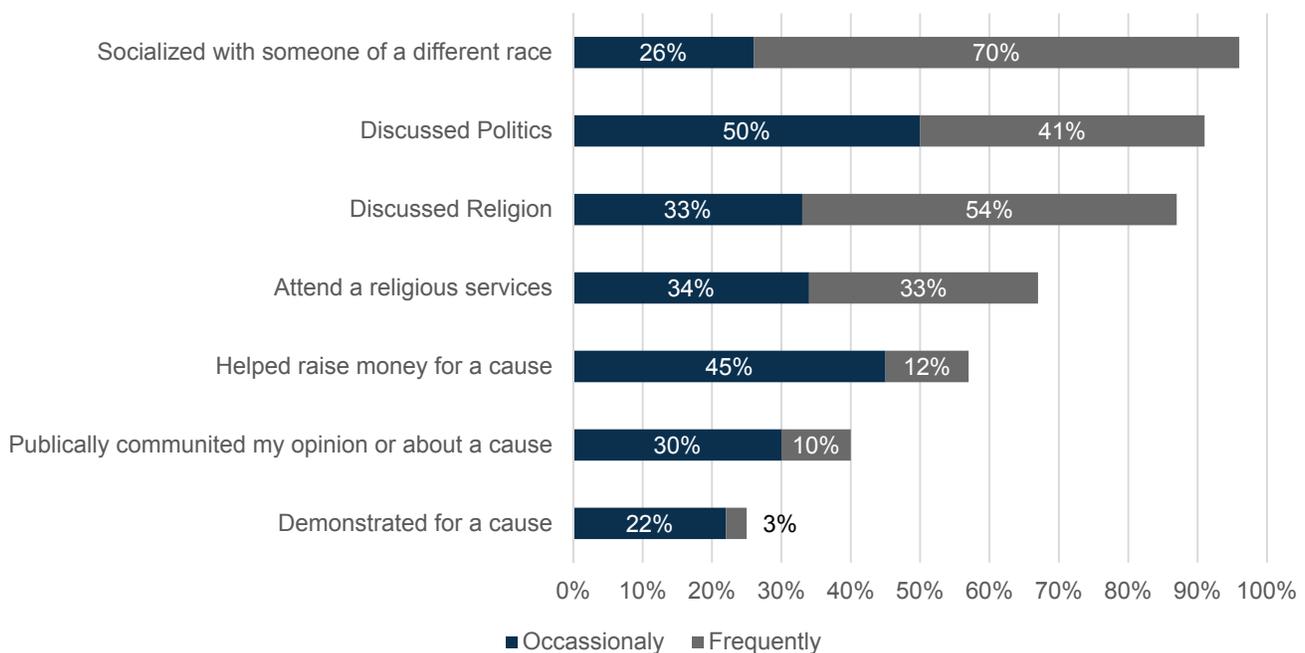
### Introduction

In summer and fall of 2013, first-year students enrolled at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) were asked to complete the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's *The Freshman Survey (TFS)*. The survey covers a variety of topics related to students' experiences, beliefs, and expectations prior to entering college. Only first-time, first-year students who were 18 years and older were eligible to participate.<sup>1</sup> This reports examines the diversity (broadly defined) and related experiences of the incoming class.

### Diversity

Students were asked a range of items regarding their behaviors in the past year. The results pertaining to diversity are highlighted in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Behaviors in the past year



When compared to students at peer institutions<sup>2</sup>, CWRU students reported they more frequently socialized with someone of another race. CWRU students reported they less frequently helped to raise money for a cause and to have publically communicated an opinion about a cause when compared to peers.

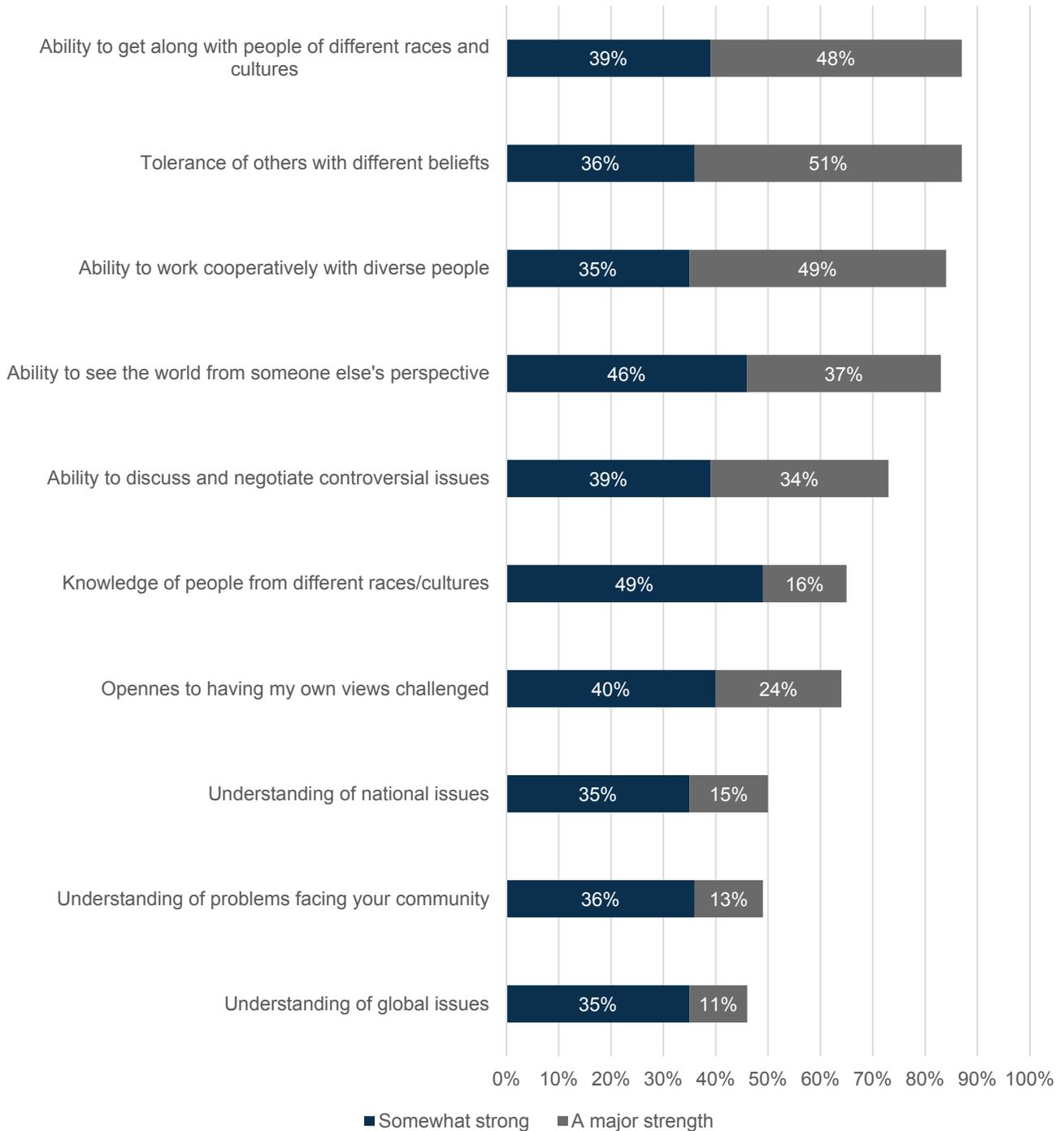
<sup>1</sup> Of the 1,021 eligible students, 522 completed the survey resulting in a 51% response rate. Compared to their peers, women, White/Asian students, and domestic students were more likely to participate in the survey.

<sup>2</sup> Peer universities included: Boston College, Brown University, California Institute of Technology, Duke University, Emory University, Northeastern University, Northwestern University, Rice University, Tulane University, University of Notre Dame, University of Rochester, University of Southern California, and Vanderbilt University.

## Self-Ratings

Students were asked to rate themselves compared to the average person their age on a range of traits related to diversity. CWRU students were no different than peers on these measures. Results are shown in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Strengths

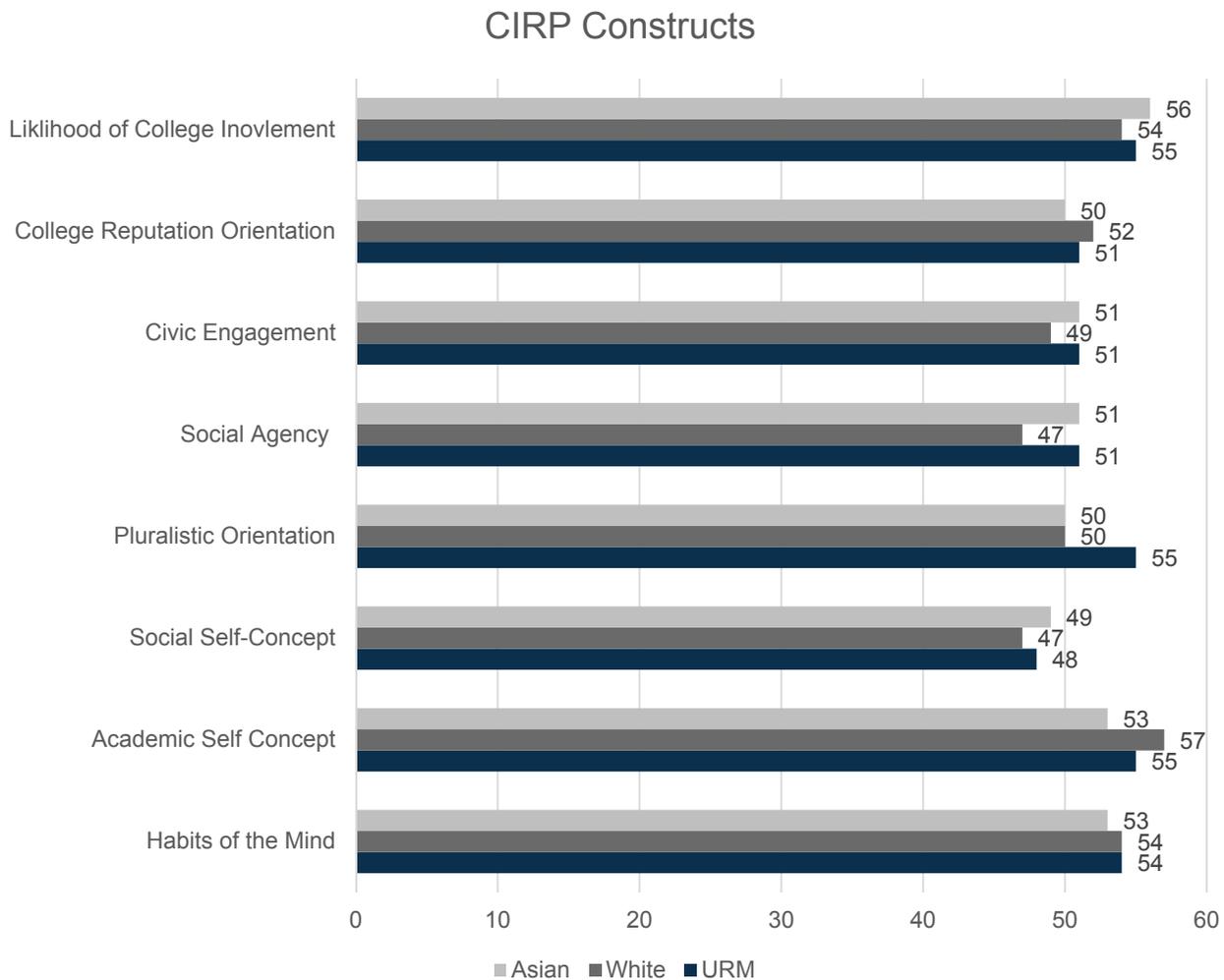


## Racial/Ethnic Diversity

At CWRU, Hispanic/Latino students, African-American students, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans are considered under-represented minorities. Due to the relatively small number of these students who complete the survey, groups were aggregated into one ‘under-represented minority’ (URM) group and compared to Asian and white students. International students and multi-racial students are excluded from the analyses below.

### CIRP Constructs<sup>3</sup>

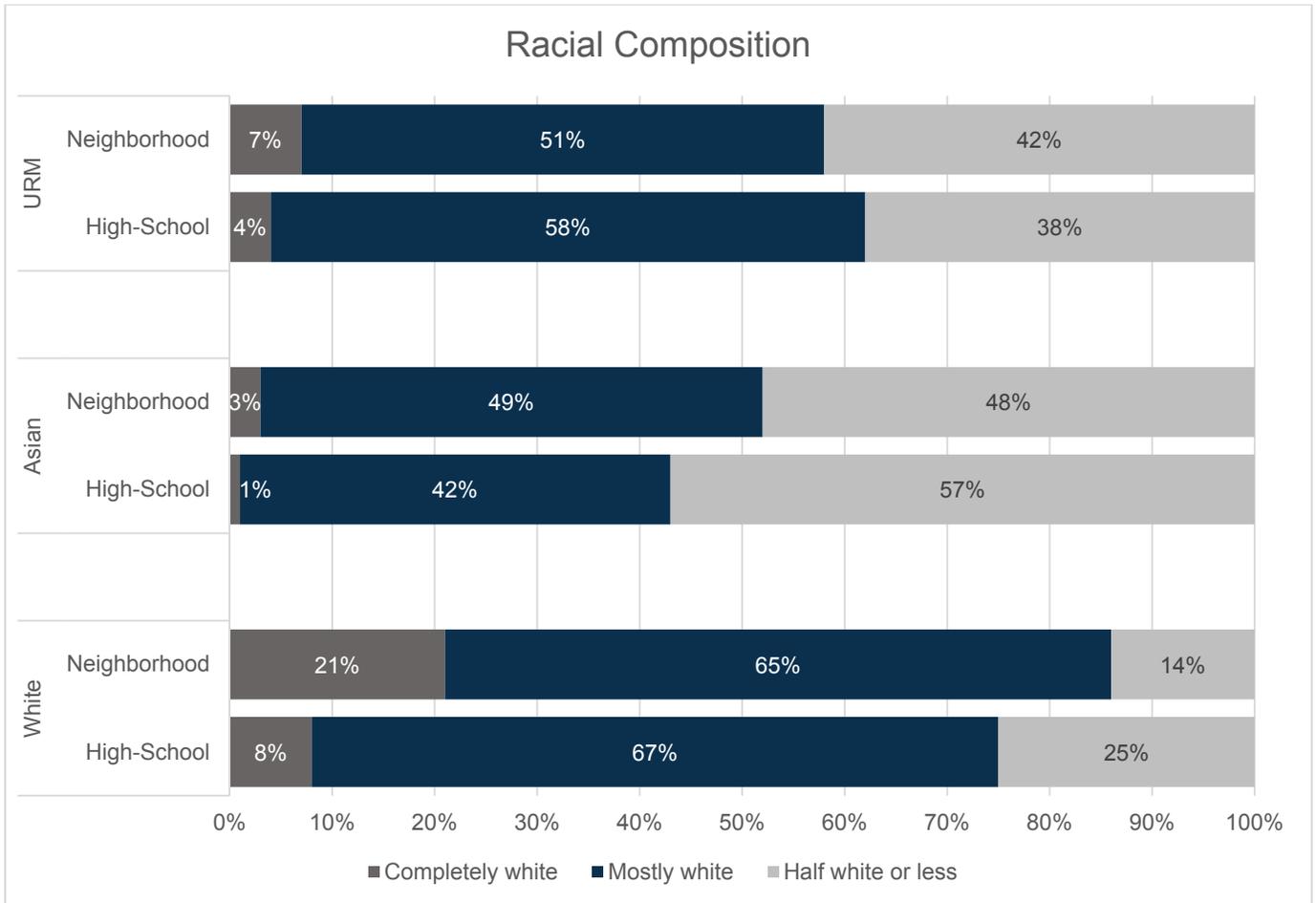
Figure 2 highlights differences in CIRP construct scores between Asian, White, and URM students at CWRU. URM students had significantly higher scores on pluralistic orientation when compared to Asian and White students. White students had significantly higher scores on academic self concept when compared to URM and Asian students. However, white students had significantly lower scores on social self-concept when compared to Asian and URM students.



<sup>3</sup> CIRP constructs are designed to capture the experiences and outcomes institutions are often interested in understanding, but that present a measurement challenge because of their complex and multifaceted nature. Constructs are particularly useful for benchmarking and allowing stakeholders to determine if the experiences and outcomes for CWRU students differ from comparison group.

*Racial compositions of neighborhood and high school*

CWRU students were asked to describe the racial compositions of their high schools and communities (Figure 3). White students reported that their neighborhoods were completely white or mostly white at significantly higher levels than did URM and Asian Students. White students reported that their high schools were significantly “more white” than did Asian students. CWRU students were not different from students at peer institutions on these items.



*Financial Concerns*

*The Freshman Survey* contains several items pertaining to financial concerns. “The cost of attending this college” was significantly more important to Asian and URM in their decision to attend CWRU. Asian students were significantly less likely to be offered aid by their first choice. Additionally, Asian students were significantly more likely to report they could not afford their first choice when compared to white students.

As a whole, CWRU students were significantly more concerned than students at peer institutions in their ability to finance college. CWRU students also reported that the current economic situation affected their college choice to a greater extent when compared to peers. There were no significant differences detected between white, Asian, and URM students on these measures.

## Religion

Table 1 shows the breakdown of incoming students religion. While most students reported some religious affiliation, 36% of students reported “no religion” on the TFS. When compared to their parents, incoming reported they were not religious at significantly higher levels. Roman Catholic was the single largest religious group on campus. Other Christians made up 29% of the student body and Jewish students made up the largest non-Christian religious group.

<i>Religious Preference</i>	Student	Father	Mother
<i>No Religion</i>	36%	24%	19%
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	22%	25%	29%
<i>Other Christian</i>	26%	34%	36%
<i>Jewish</i>	6%	6%	5%
<i>Hindu</i>	5%	5%	6%
<i>Muslim</i>	1%	1%	1%
<i>Buddhist</i>	1%	3%	2%
<i>Other Religion</i>	3%	1%	2%

## Sexual Orientation

For the first time in 2013, CWRU included an item that allowed students to self-report sexual orientation<sup>4</sup>. The item included the following answer choices:

- Lesbian, gay, or homosexual
- Straight or heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Something Else
- Not Sure

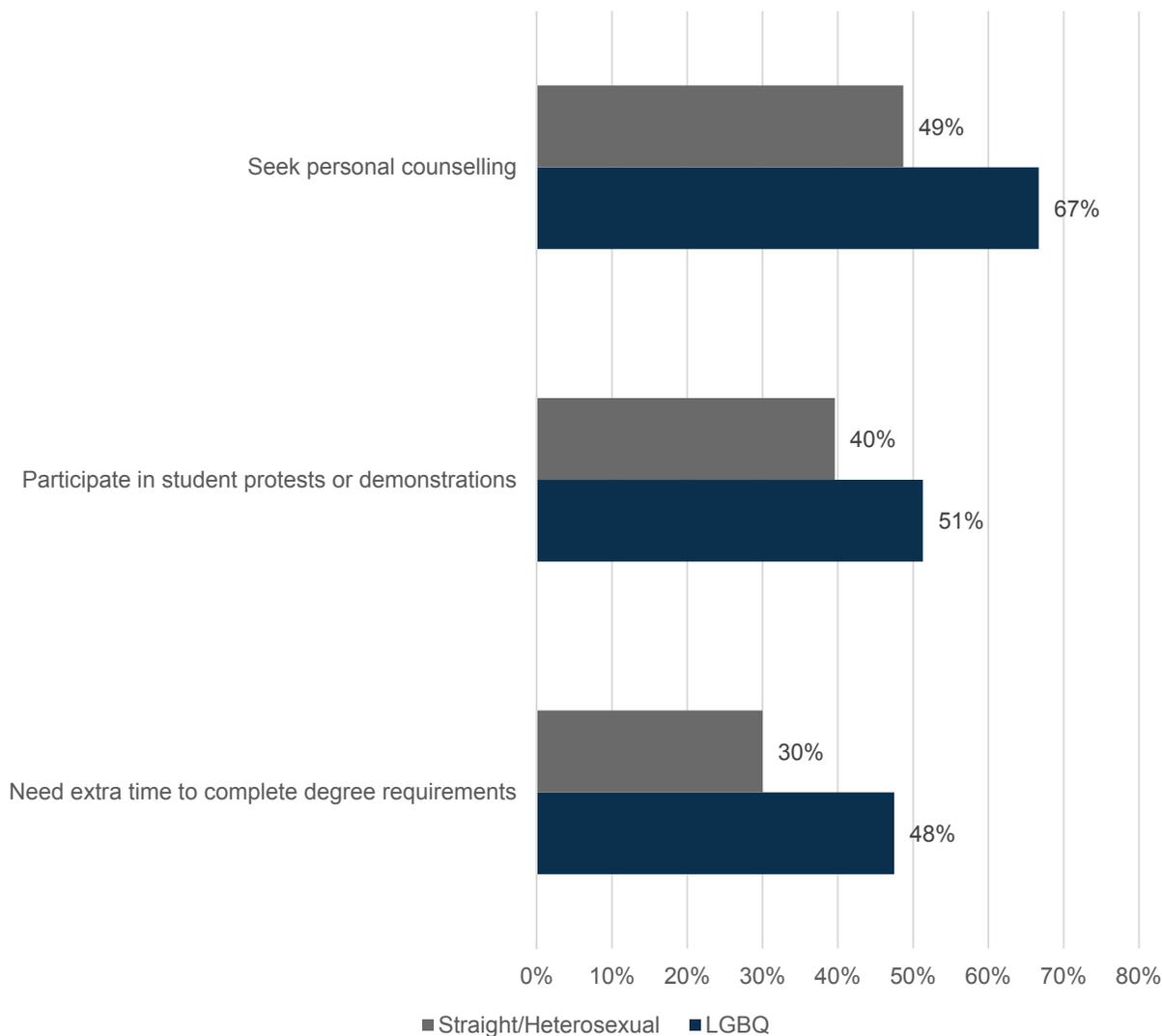
While the vast majority of students identified as straight or heterosexual (92%), 2% identified as lesbian, gay or homosexual, 1% identified as bisexual, 1% identified as something else, and 3% identified as not sure. In order to improve statistical power, students who self-identified as heterosexual/straight were compared to the students who identified as something else (LGBQ).

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<sup>4</sup> Sexual orientation and gender identity are distinct concepts. While this item assessed sexual orientation, the instrument did not allow students to self-report gender identity/expression in ways that could identify students as transgender, trans-sexual, or trans. After internal discussions, an item that included these categories was ultimately excluded from the instrument a) in an effort to reduce survey burden b) a likely lack of variation in responses and c) insufficient numbers of students who identified as transgender to do meaningful analysis on this population. This decision should not indicate that such difference is not valued at CWRU.

When compared to straight/heterosexual students, LGBQ students believed they were more likely to seek personal counseling, participate in student protests or demonstrations, and to need extra time to finish degree requirements while at CWRU.

Figure 3: Future Act Some Chance or Very Good Chance



Prior to entering college, LGBQ students reported higher levels of depression. They also reported they raised money for a cause at significantly higher levels than their straight/heterosexual peers. LGBQ students were no different than their peers on CIRP constructs.

Students were asked to indicate the importance of some common goals for college students. LGBQ students indicated that writing original works and creating artistic works were significantly more important to them when compared to heterosexual/straight students. Additionally LGBQ students put significantly less importance on wanting to raise a family when compared to their straight peers. LGBQ students and Heterosexual students did not differ significantly on the importance they placed on items such as influencing the political structure, being very well off financially, or developing a meaningful philosophy of life.

## Political Orientation

The Freshman Survey includes several items on political orientation and views. Figure 4 shows the self-reported political orientation of incoming students. While most students identified as “middle of the road”, a similar amount indicated they were on the political left (39%). Those leaning politically right made up 19% of the incoming class, with 18% identifying themselves as ‘conservative’ and 1% as ‘far right’.

The CIRP also includes a set of items pertaining to student’s views of current events. The CIRP changes these items on a somewhat regular basis. Figure 5 shows how the incoming class responded to these items.

When compared to peers, CWRU students more strongly believed the wealthy should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now, that a national health care plan is needed to cover everybody’s medical expenses, and that addressing global warming should be a federal priority.

Figure 4: Political Orientation

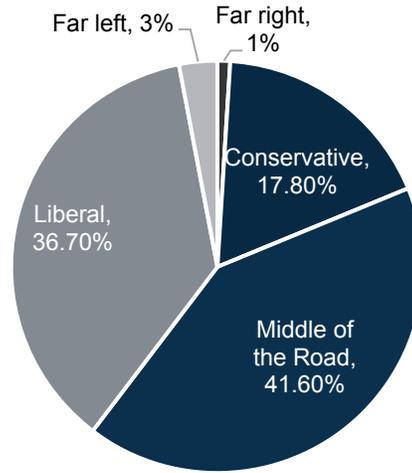


Figure 5: Views on Current Issues

