

Understanding Advocacy Behaviors of Undergraduate Students: Who Advocates for Whom?

Background

- Advocacy is a mechanism to promote social justice and inclusion.
- From a social justice viewpoint, minority students include people of color; gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning students; women; and students with disabilities.
- Few colleges have examined students' advocacy behaviors.

Objectives

- Explore students' advocacy behaviors and support of the rights of minority groups.
- Examine factors associated with student advocacy engagement and types of advocacy performed.
- Investigate the degree to which students report confronting statements that are sexist, racist, homophobic, intolerant of a specific religion, and put down people with disabilities.

Methods

- Online survey collected information about students' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding advocacy. The survey also collected exposure to diversity.
- 108 undergraduate students participated.

Created Scales

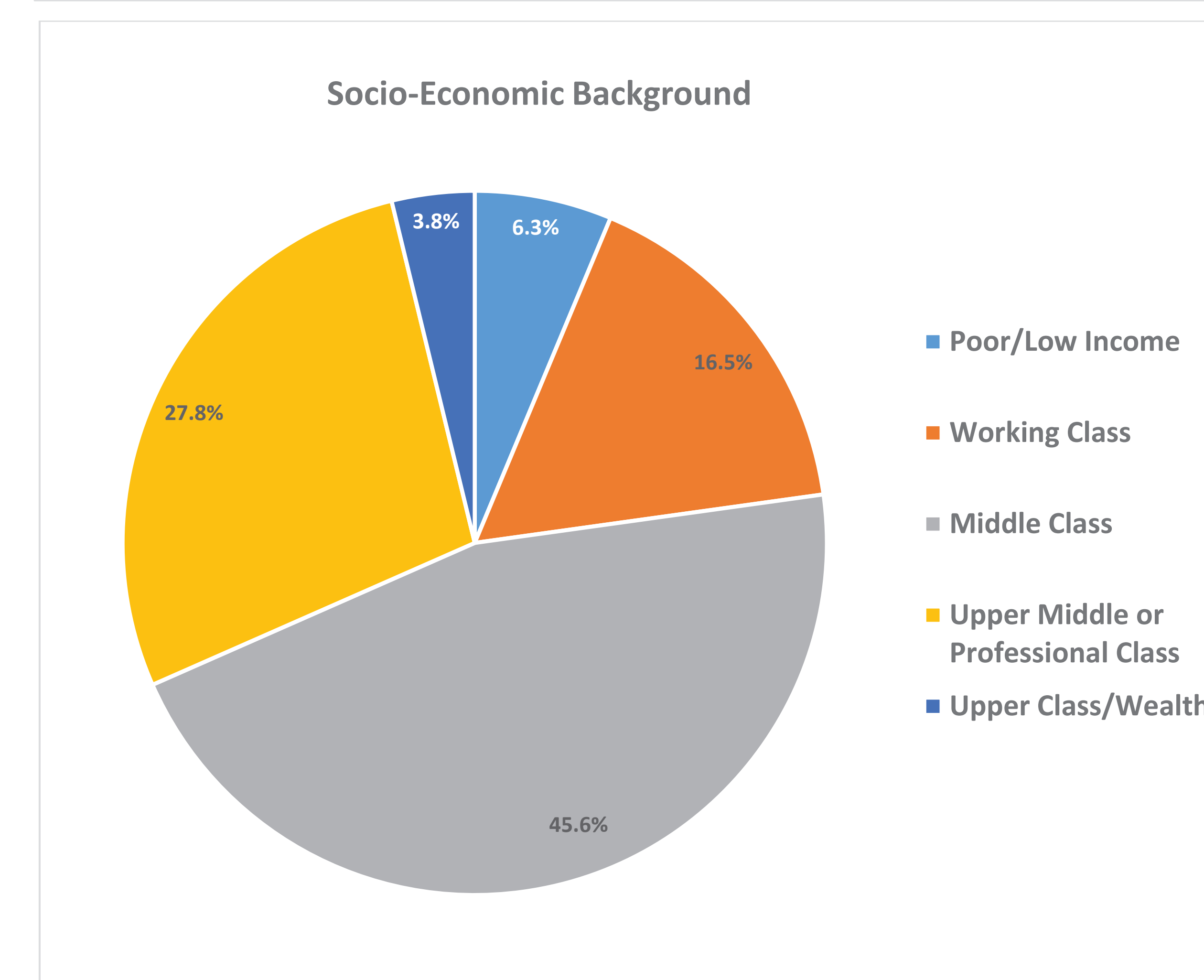
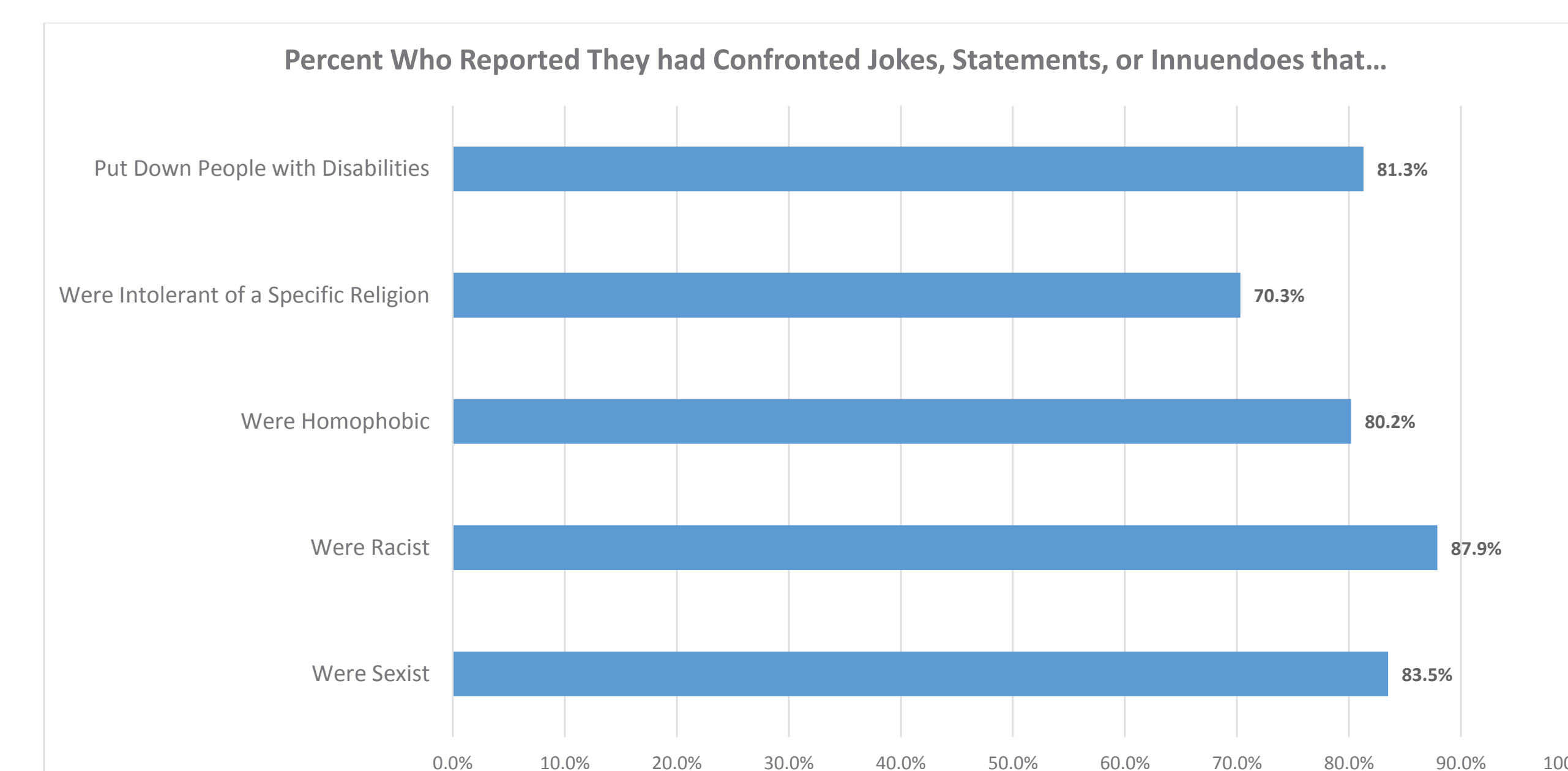
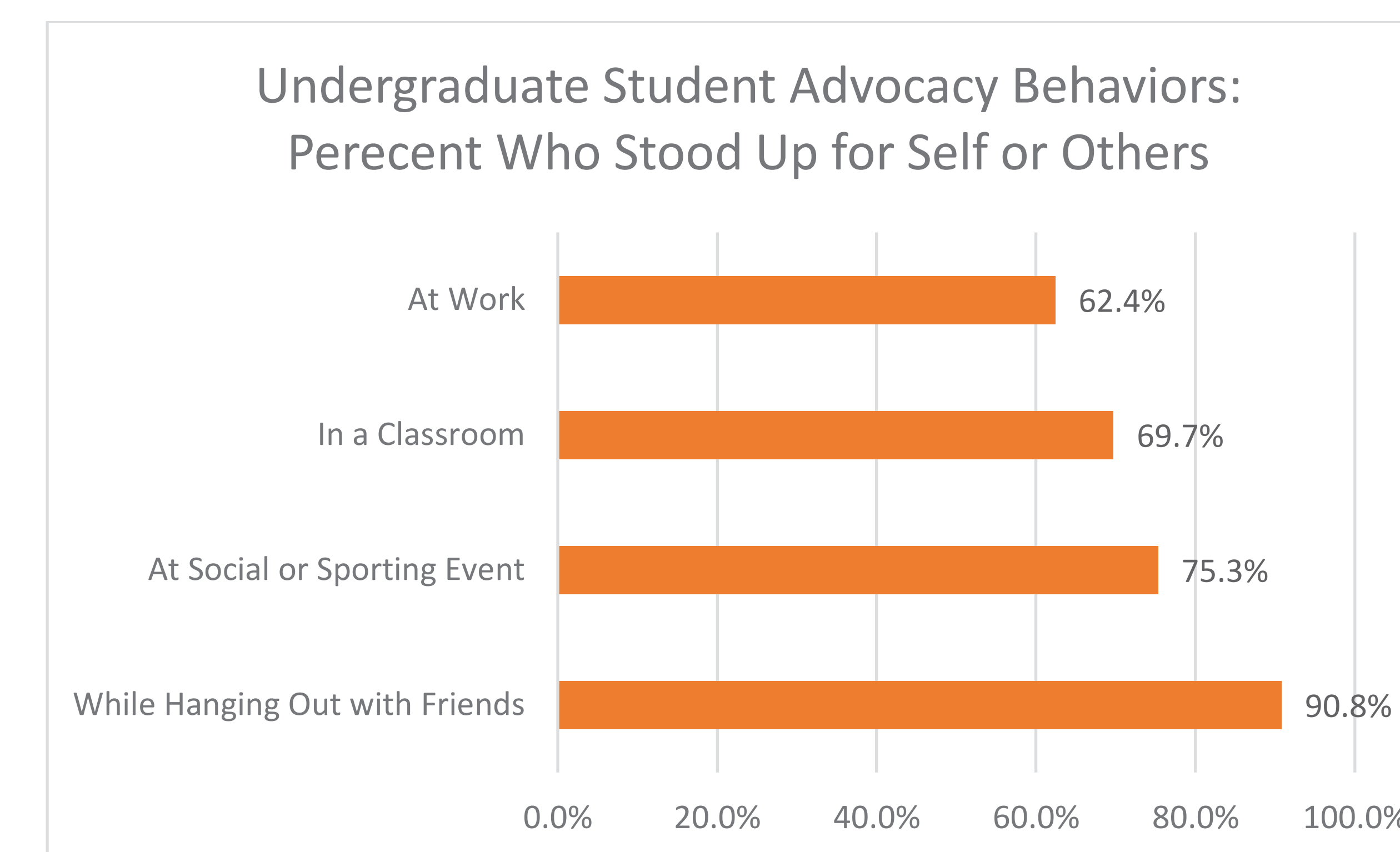
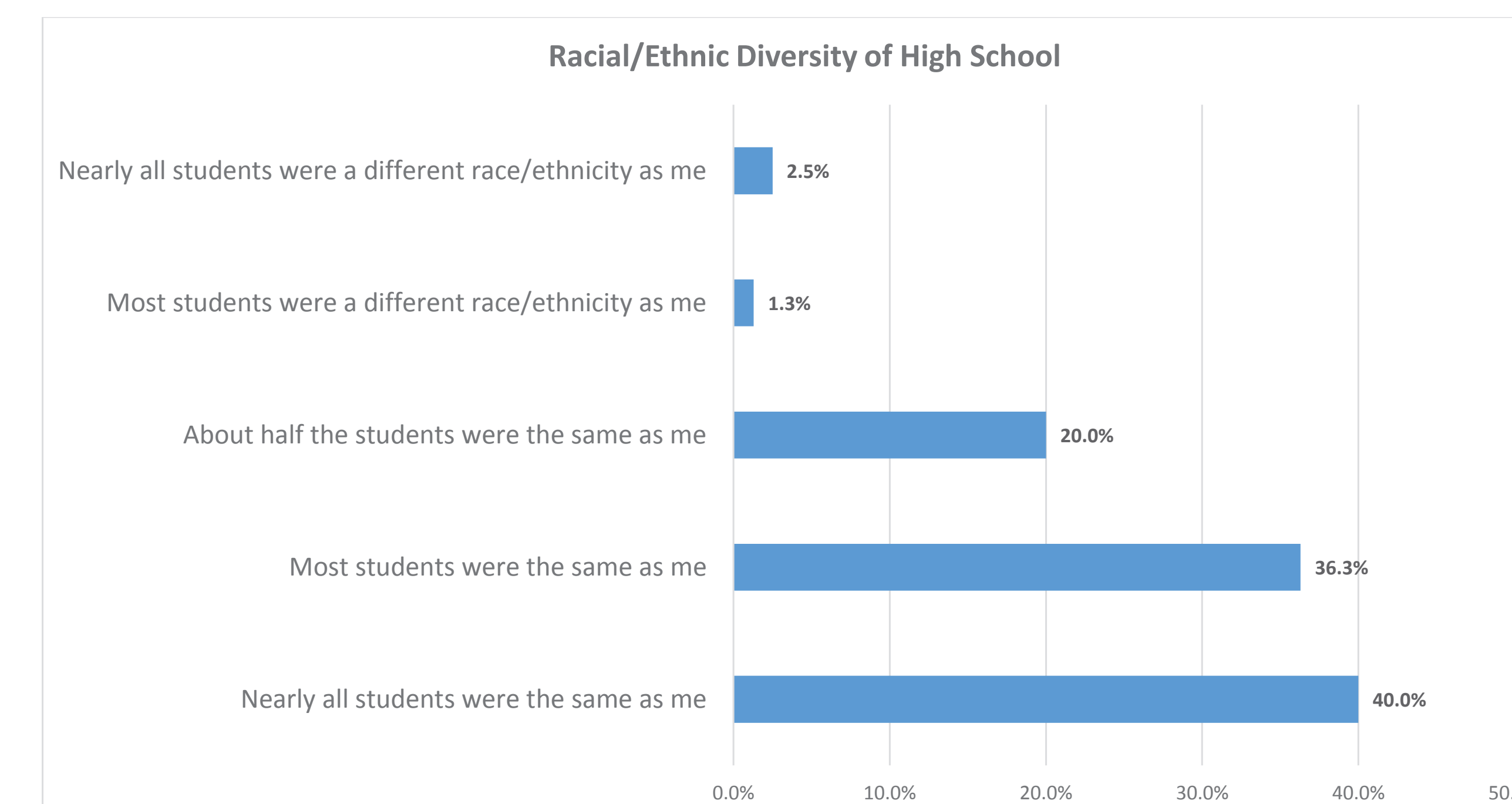
Advocacy Behaviors Scale (Cronbach Alpha=.55): Have you ever stood up for others in the following situations: in a classroom, at work, at a social or sporting event, and while hanging out with friends

Perceptions Scale (Cronbach Alpha=.87):

- It is my responsibility to advocate for others, if needed
- It is my responsibility to confront colleagues who discriminate against individuals with disabilities
- It is my responsibility to confront colleagues who discriminate against minority groups (racial, ethnic, or religious groups)

Attitudes Scale (Cronbach Alpha=.82):

- Growing up, advocating for oneself was supported in my family
- My close friends support advocating for oneself
- The university community supports advocating for oneself
- Advocating for others is something my family supports
- Advocating for others is something my close friends support
- The university community supports advocating for others



Most participants were female (79.0%), white (88.6%), Christian (54.3%), and straight (79.0%).



Advocacy Behaviors

Most students reported they had stood up for themselves or others in several situations:

- 71.4% reported they had intervened with someone who was being **verbally abusive** to another person.
- 48.3%, reported they had intervened with someone being **physically abusive** to another person.

Advocacy Perceptions

- A majority of students agreed or strongly agreed it is their responsibility to:
 - Advocate for others if needed - 72.8%
 - Confront colleagues who discriminate against individuals with disabilities - 86.4%
 - Confront colleagues who discriminate against minority groups - 86.4%
- Advocacy attitudes are correlated with perceptions in a positive direction ($r_s = .341, p < .025$).
- Socio-economic background is related to advocacy attitudes ($r_s = .343, p < .025$), with those having more affluent backgrounds more likely to report positive advocacy attitudes.
- Advocacy behaviors were not correlated with perceptions or advocacy attitudes, nor were behaviors correlated with exposure to diversity.
- No differences in advocacy behaviors were found based on disability.

Conclusions

- Further study is warranted to develop a richer understanding of the factors associated with student advocacy engagement.
- Understanding the characteristics that affect college students' advocacy behaviors may suggest ways to change social inequalities and assist groups at risk for exclusion.

References

Smith, D.G. (1990). Women's colleges and coed colleges: Is there a difference for women? *Journal of Higher Education*, 61(2), 181-197.

Watson, L. (2002). *How minority students experience college: Implications for planning and policy*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.