



OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates

# AAPI Digital Access Survey

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# Introduction



The COVID-19 pandemic greatly exacerbated the disparities and pushed the need to better understand the digital divide among the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Despite this urgency, data on AAPI digital needs remain almost nonexistent.

The AAPI community, numbering 20.6 million (2020 US Census Bureau), is an astonishingly diverse group encompassing over 50 ethnicities and speaking more than 100 languages. Paradoxically, data on AAPIs is often consolidated using statistical terms like "average" and "median," failing to capture the nuances within this varied population. Moreover, research is mainly conducted in English only, and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are rarely represented. This information gap leaves local communities ill-equipped to address the issue, especially given the heightened awareness of the digital divide due to the pandemic.

To shed light on the experiences of AAPIs on the wrong side of the digital divide, OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates (OCA) conducted the AAPI Digital Access Survey. While not designed as a rigorous research study, this effort serves to provide disaggregated data on AAPIs, raise awareness, and foster meaningful conversations.

Our research offers a comprehensive overview of the rough landscape of digital accessibility within the AAPI community. Through our analysis, we found some clarity in areas where gaps in our knowledge of their digital needs and challenges exist. We hope our findings will bring community leaders, policymakers, researchers, internet service providers, and more to work together toward digital equity.

# Key Findings



- 1 Only 53.5% of the AAPI Digital Access Survey respondents are digitally well-connected.** We defined being well-connected as owning more than 2 digital devices as well as having both fixed-residential and cellular internet connection at home.
- 2 Roughly three quarters (76.7%) of respondents have broadband internet at home.** We included fiber, cable, DSL, fixed wireless, and satellite services as broadband.
- 3 Southeast Asian respondents are twice as likely as East Asian respondents to have no internet at home.** While 1.4% of East Asian respondents mentioned that they don't have internet at home, 3% of Southeast Asian respondents said that they don't have internet at home. Similarly, 13.7% of East Asian respondents told us that they only have an internet connection at home through their mobile devices. However, the same response came from 21.3% of Southeast Asian participants.

# Key Findings



- 4** **Having no English proficiency can be a huge barrier to digital access.** 5.4% of respondents with no English proficiency said they don't have internet at home. That percentage shrinks to almost one-fifth, 1.1%, when you have a native/bilingual level of English proficiency. In addition, 4.1% of respondents with no English proficiency told us they own no digital devices. But only 0.1% of respondents with full professional or native/bilingual English proficiency said they don't own any digital devices.
- 5** **Telehealth use drastically increases with age.** 1 out of 4 respondents in the 45-54 age range said that they use telehealth. That increases to 1 out of 3 in the next age range, 55-64. Moreover, half of the respondents of age 65 and over said they are using telehealth with the digital devices they own.
- 6** **Native Hawaiians & Pacific Islanders, South Asians, Southeast Asians, and other ethnicities are more likely to own two devices.** East Asians are most likely to own three digital devices.



# Interview Highlights



Interview with **Maria Kathleen Puente**, Professor and AANAPISI Project Director at Bunker Hill Community College (Top left in image).

**“The laptop (provided by OCA during the pandemic), I could feel symbolized for many of these students that somebody cared for them and there were people willing to show that they cared.”**



**“Many more AAPI students are from low-income families, are first generation with limitations in English proficiency... especially the ones who are Pell (grant) eligible and from the lowest income sectors really stretch the use of any tablet or laptop that they have for as long as they can. And then waiting until the last moment when the tablet or laptop is very worn out to make the decision to even invest in a new laptop. So, the need continues there.”**

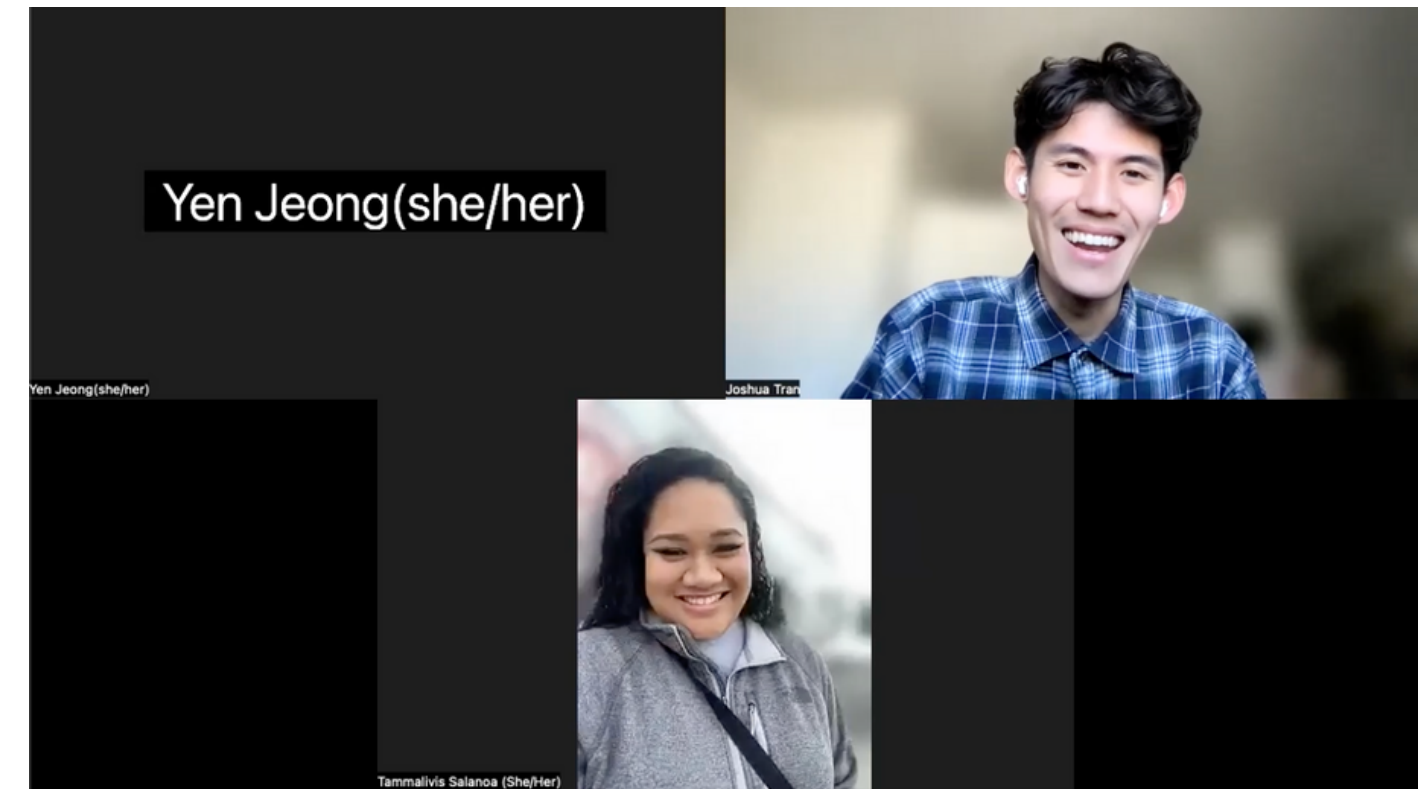


# Interview Highlights



Interview with **Tammalivis Salanoa**, TRIO Student Support Services Program Assistant at the University of Alaska Anchorage (Bottom middle in image).

**“I would say about 70% of our community (in Anchorage) is struggling digital-wise – either getting the devices, getting them set up, or even trying to find information if English isn’t their first language.”**



**“In the rural (Alaska) community, the price of living is so high – their gas is probably \$20-30 a gallon – so just to get supplies to live is expensive. So, on their (list of) needs, broadband is kind of at the bottom, and it’s more of a luxury... That’s why they rely so heavily on libraries and public spaces that offer internet.”**

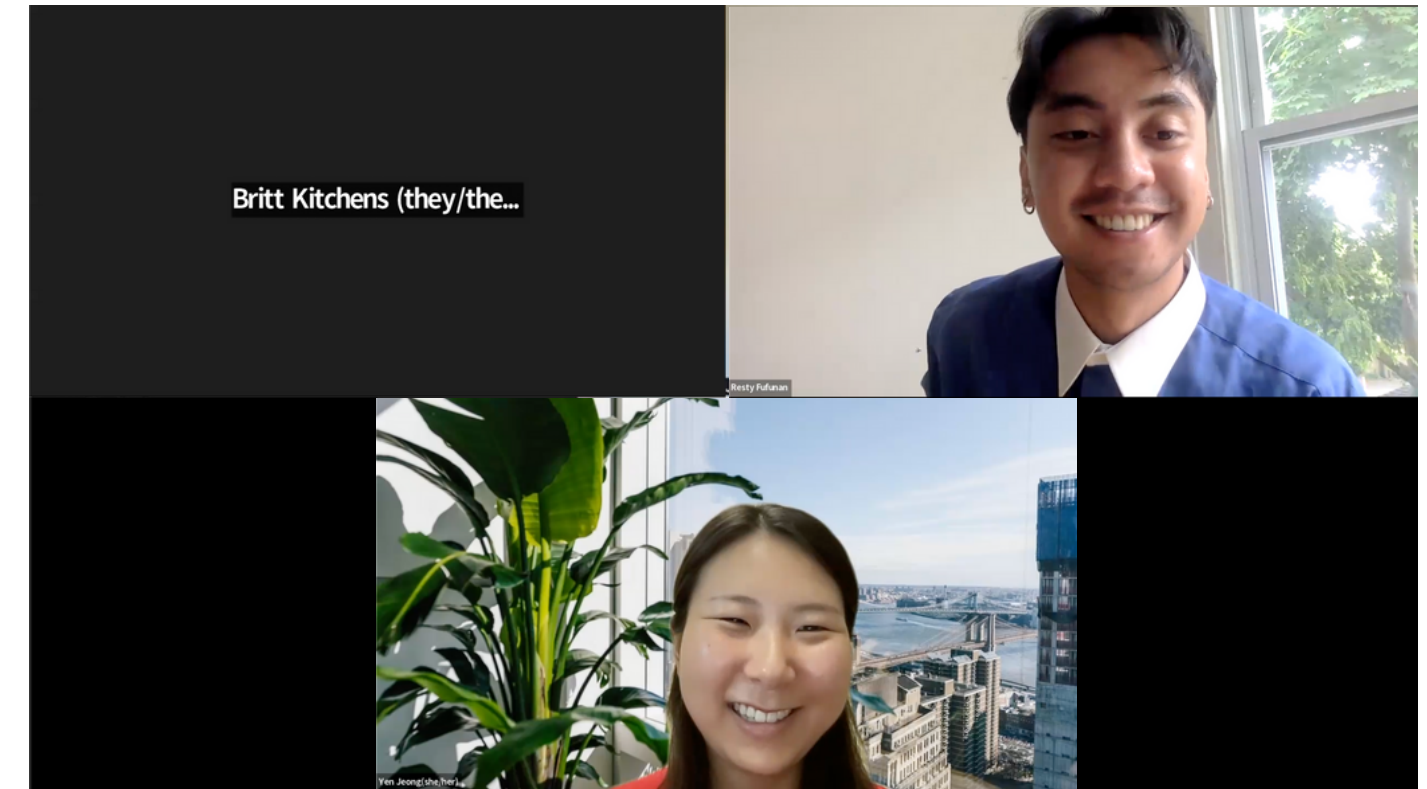


# Interview Highlights



Interview with **Britt (Kitchens) Khamvongsa-Schauer**, Digital Literacy Navigator at the City of Houston.

**“I think there’s a bit of a stigma here (in Houston) against enrolling in the ACP (Affordable Connectivity Program)... It’s still seen as a kind of handout where people think if they’re taking that, they’re lesser than, or that they’re taking something from someone else that needs it.”**



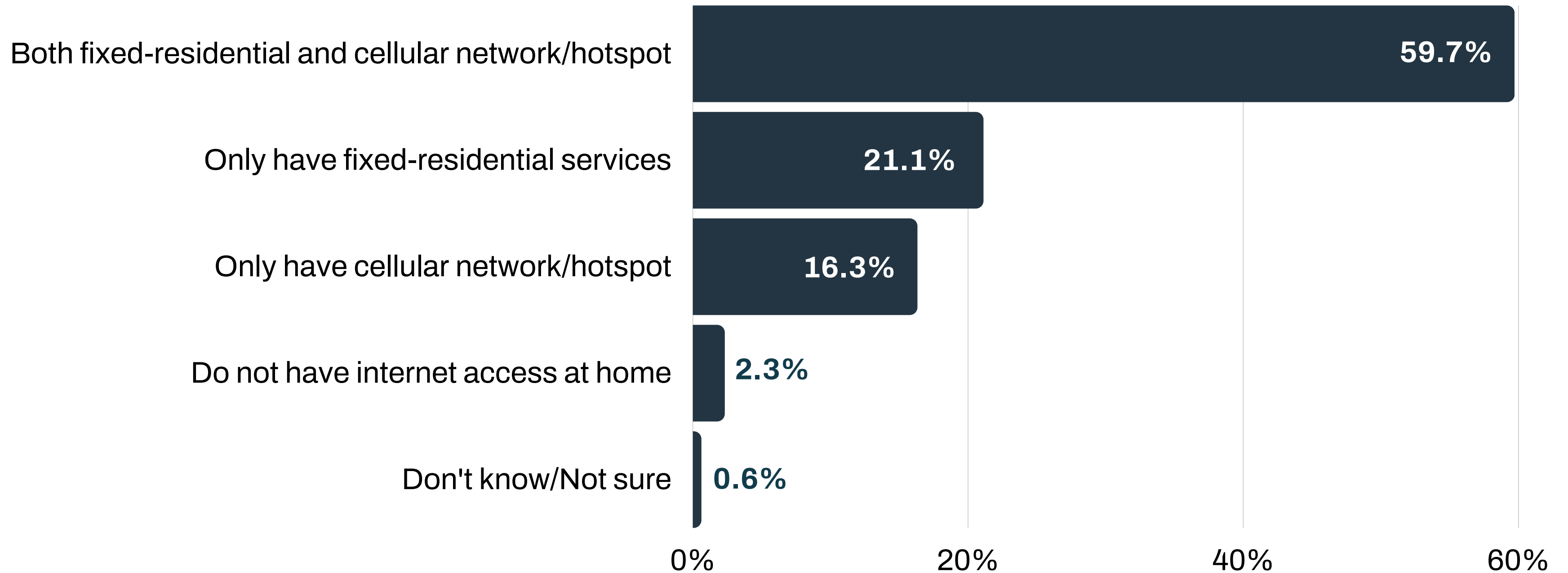
**“One of the biggest strategies (we use) is setting up the keyboards on the smartphone in Lao and Thai languages for them(Lao or Thai people) so that they don’t have the unfamiliarity of a device on top of the unfamiliarity of language. So it’s just one step closer to something that they’re familiar with, so they feel more comfortable.”**



# Results



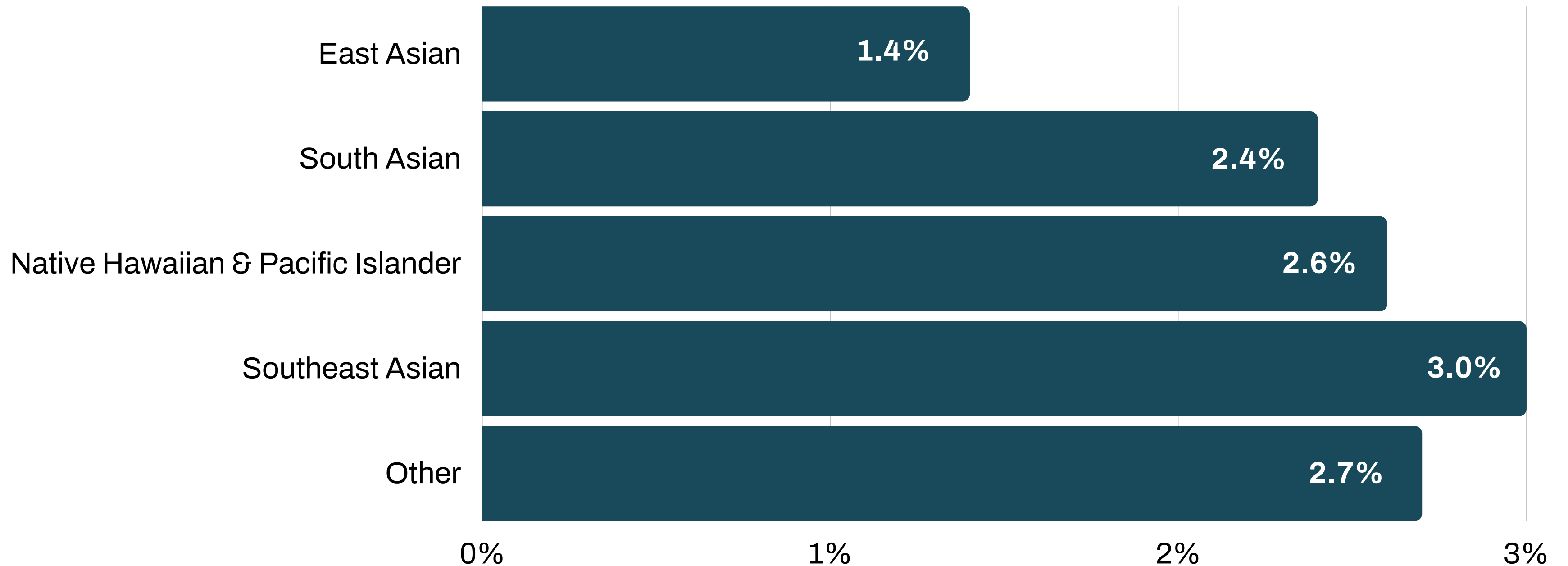
## Internet connection at home (%)



# Results



% of each ethnicity group that do not have internet access at home

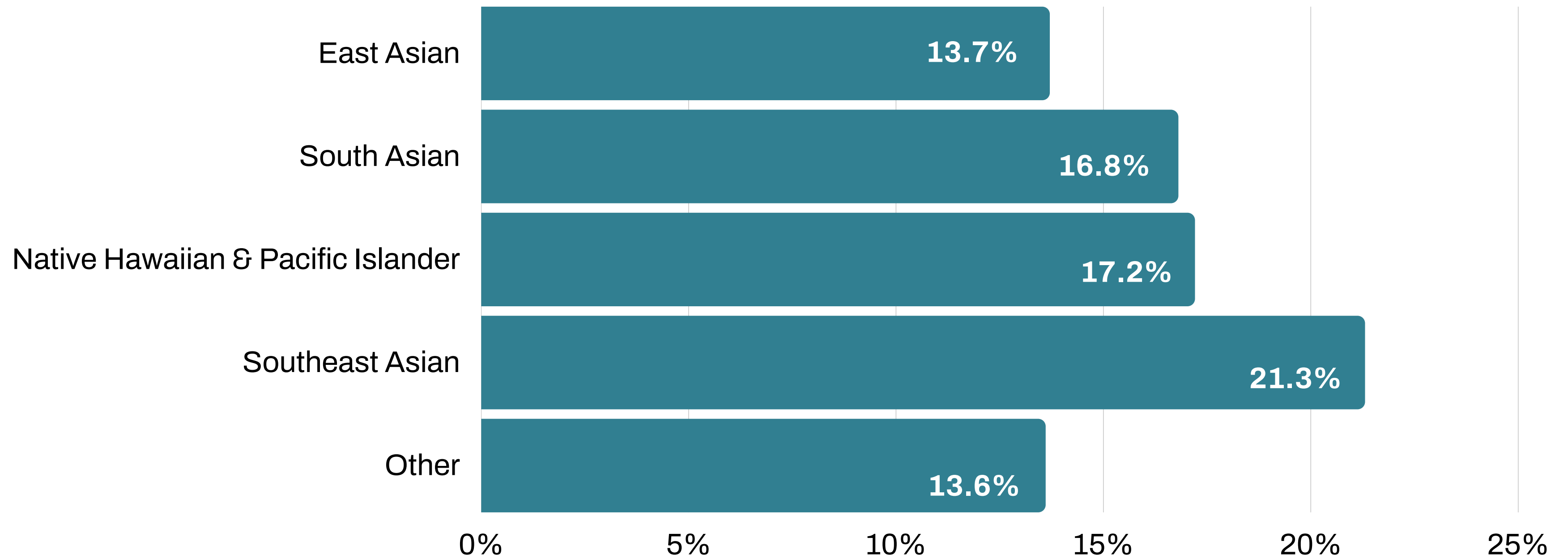




# Results



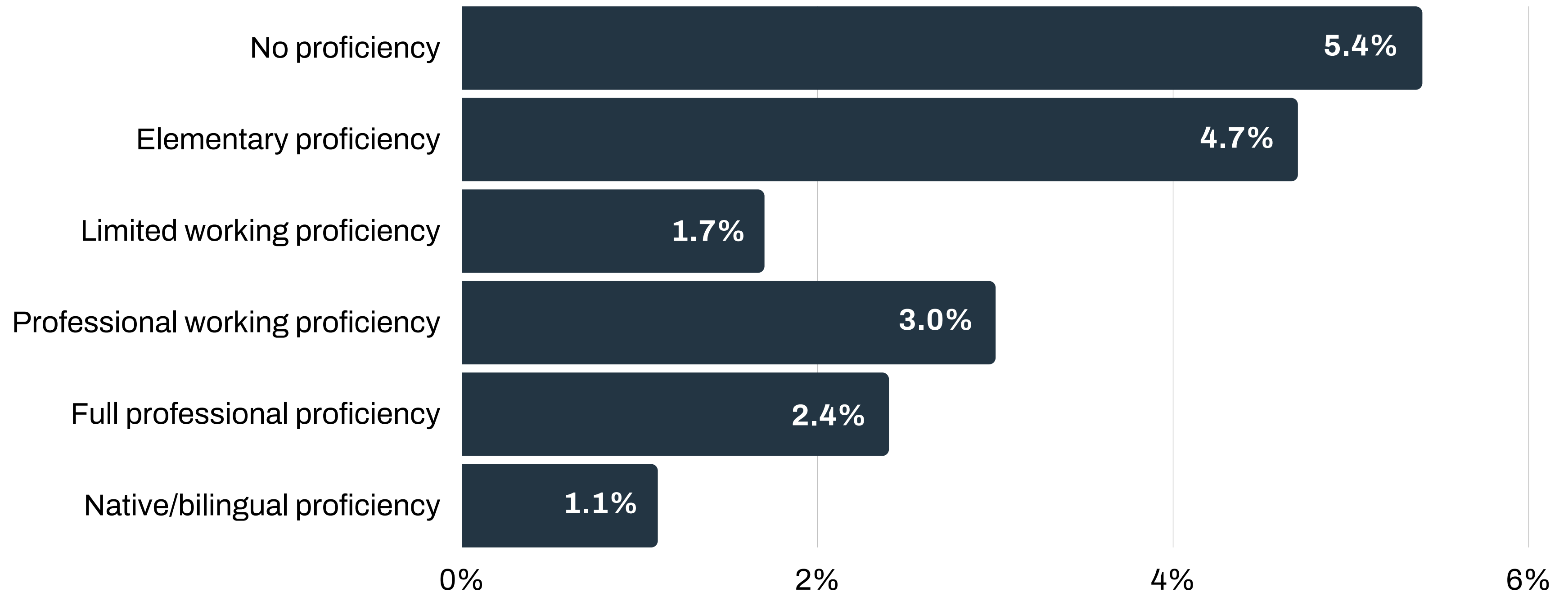
**% of each ethnicity group that only has cellular network/hotspot at home**



# Results



**% of each English proficiency level that do not have internet access at home**

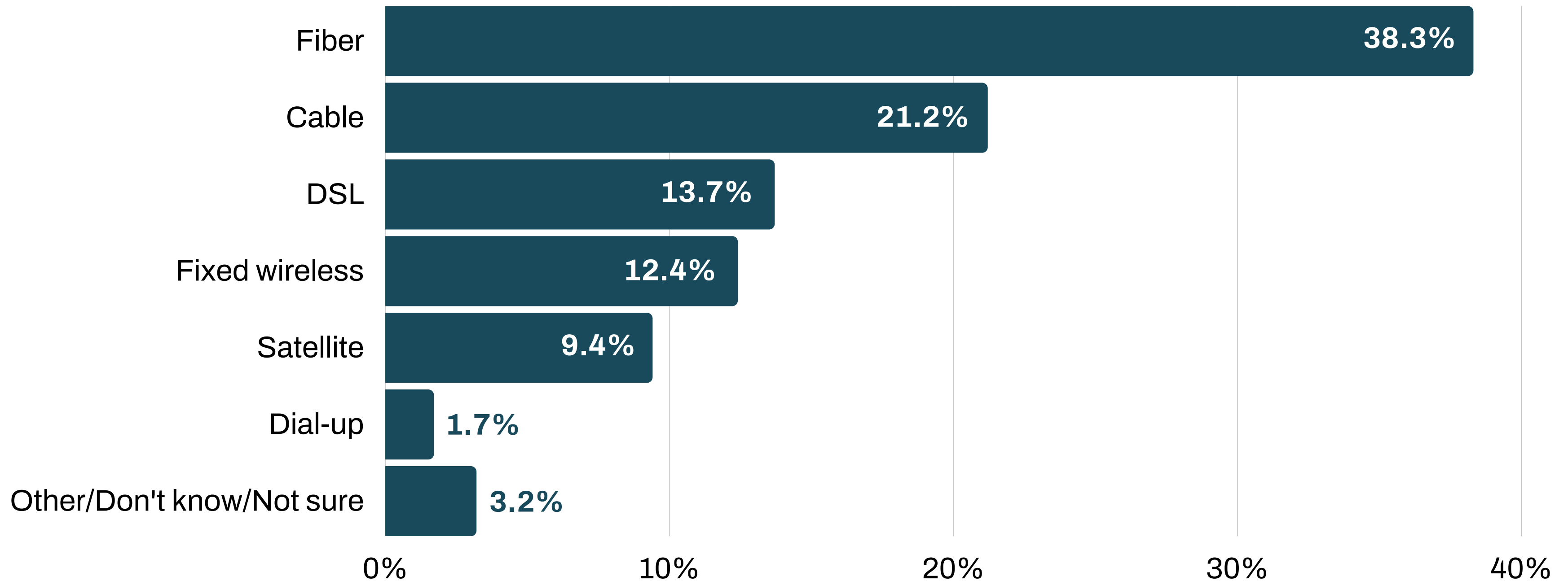




# Results



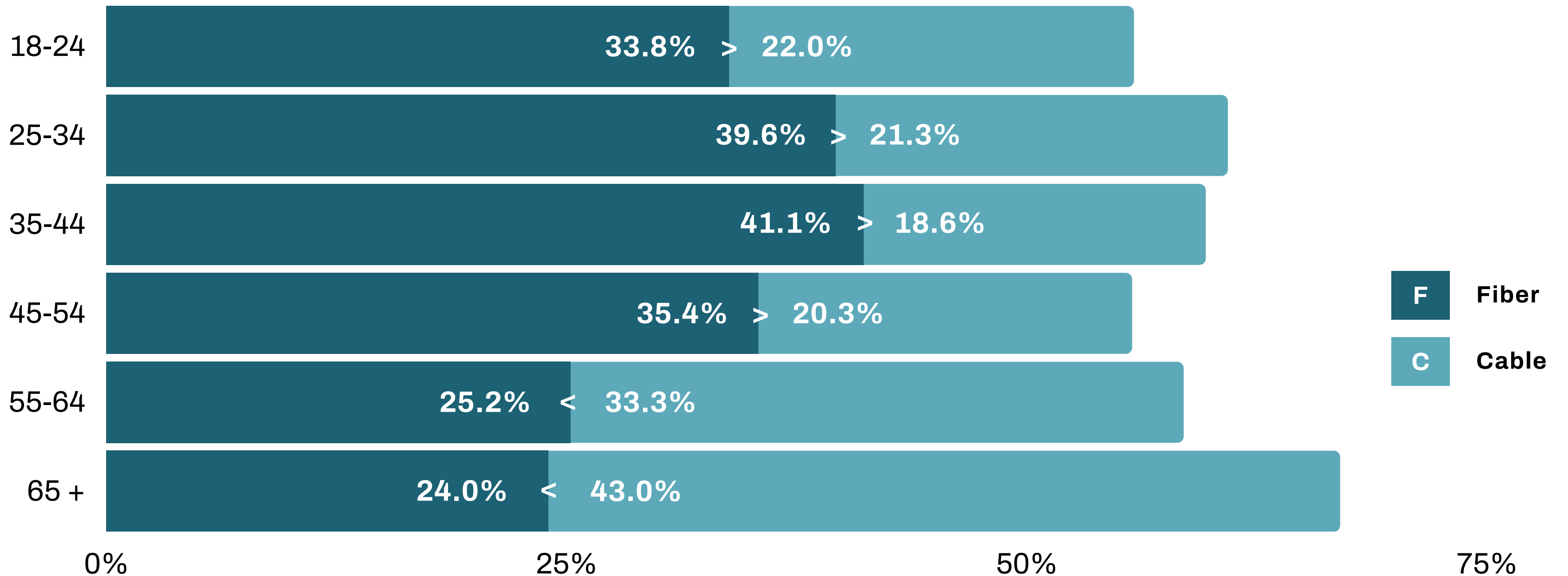
## Type of fixed-residential internet subscription (%)



# Results



% of each age range group with fiber or cable fixed-residential internet subscription

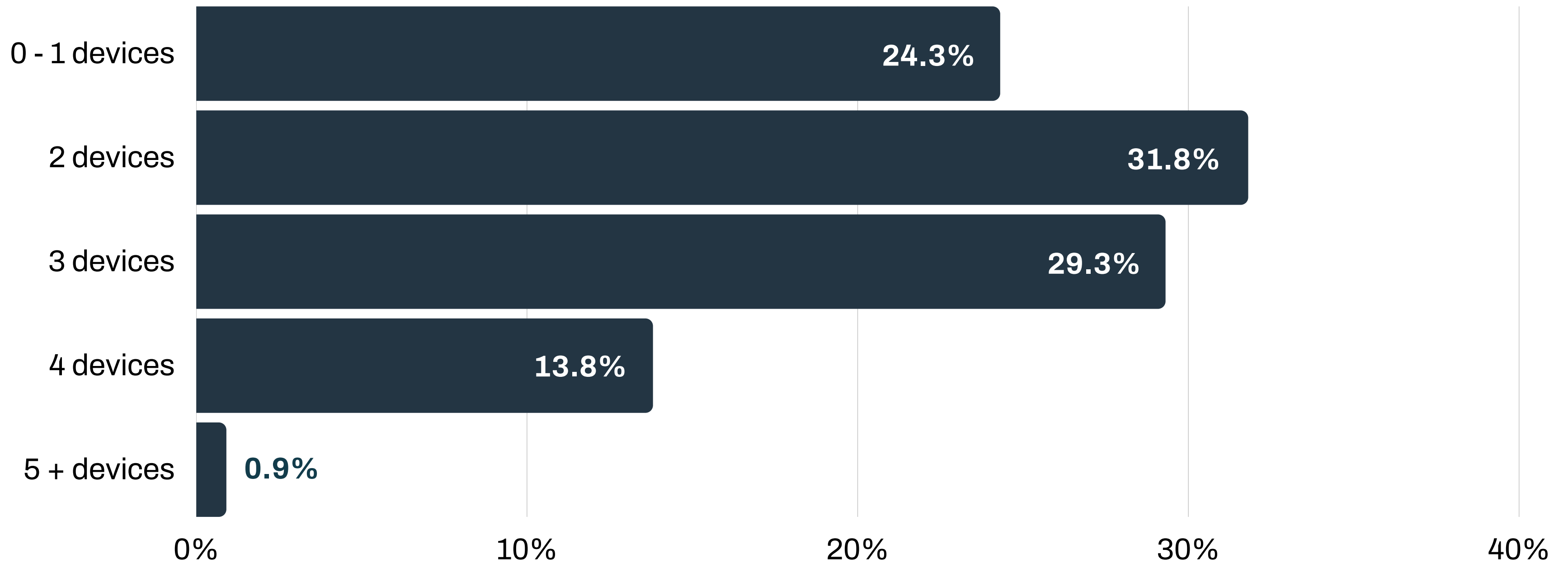




# Results



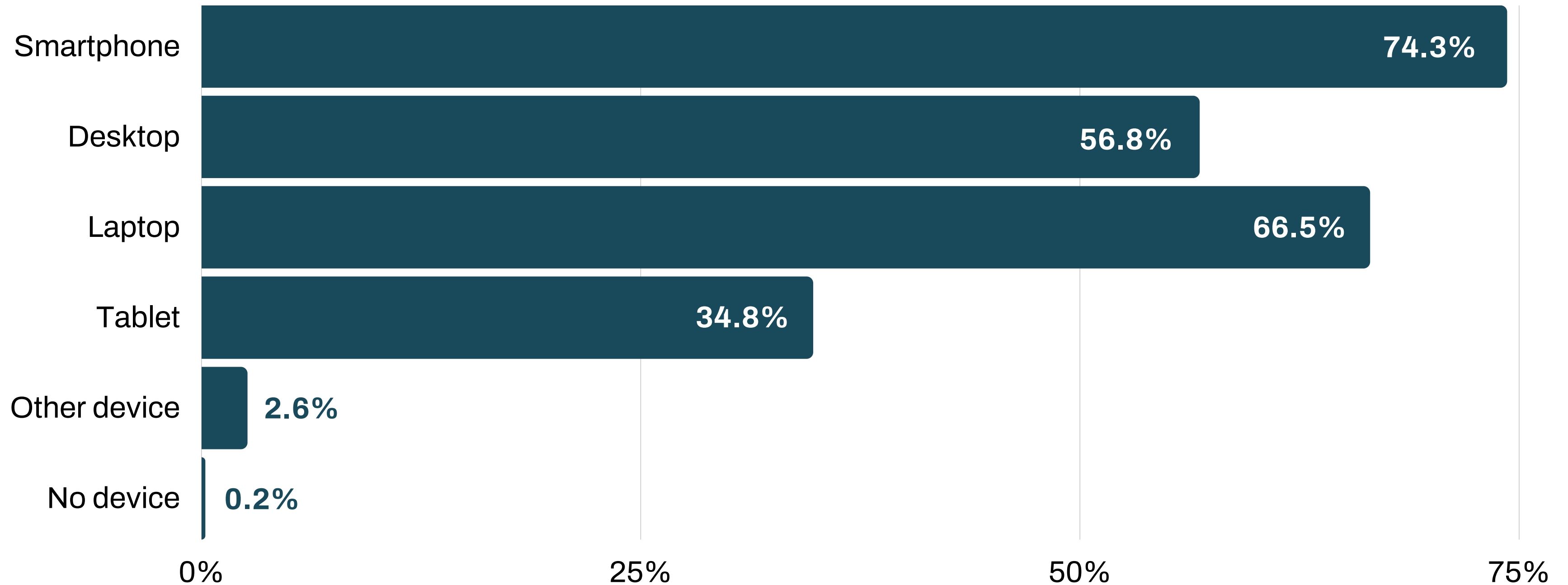
## Number of digital devices owned (%)



# Results



Type of digital devices owned (% , multiple selection)

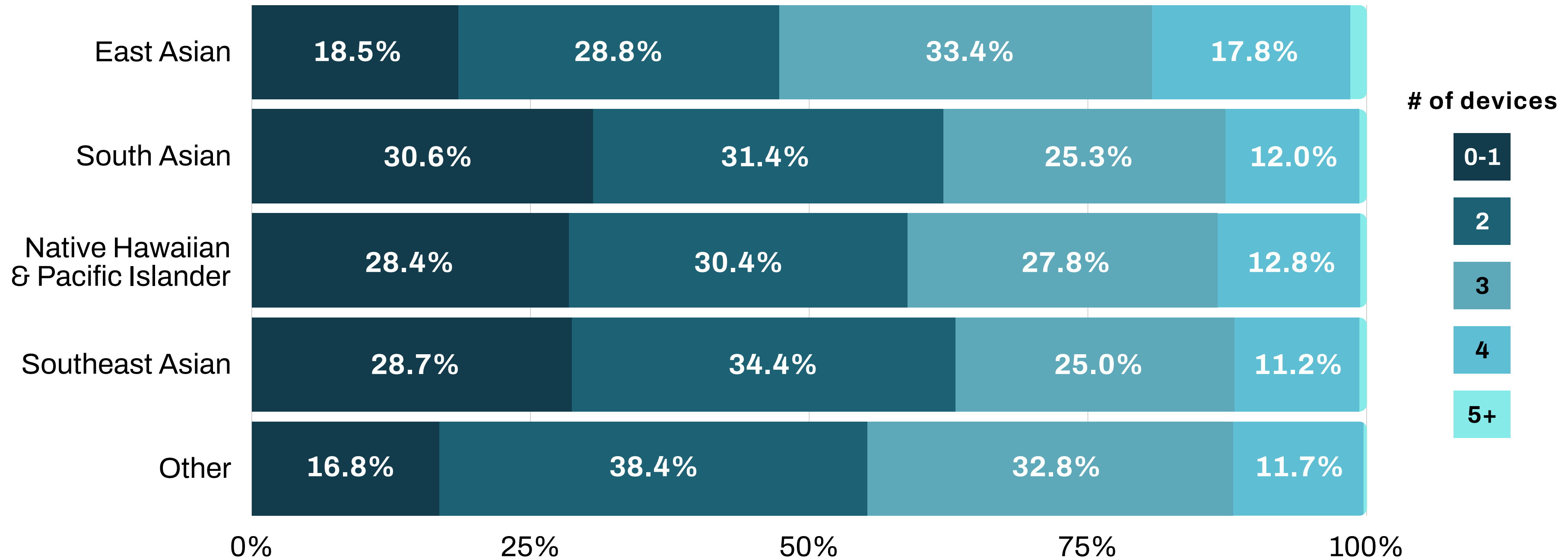




# Results



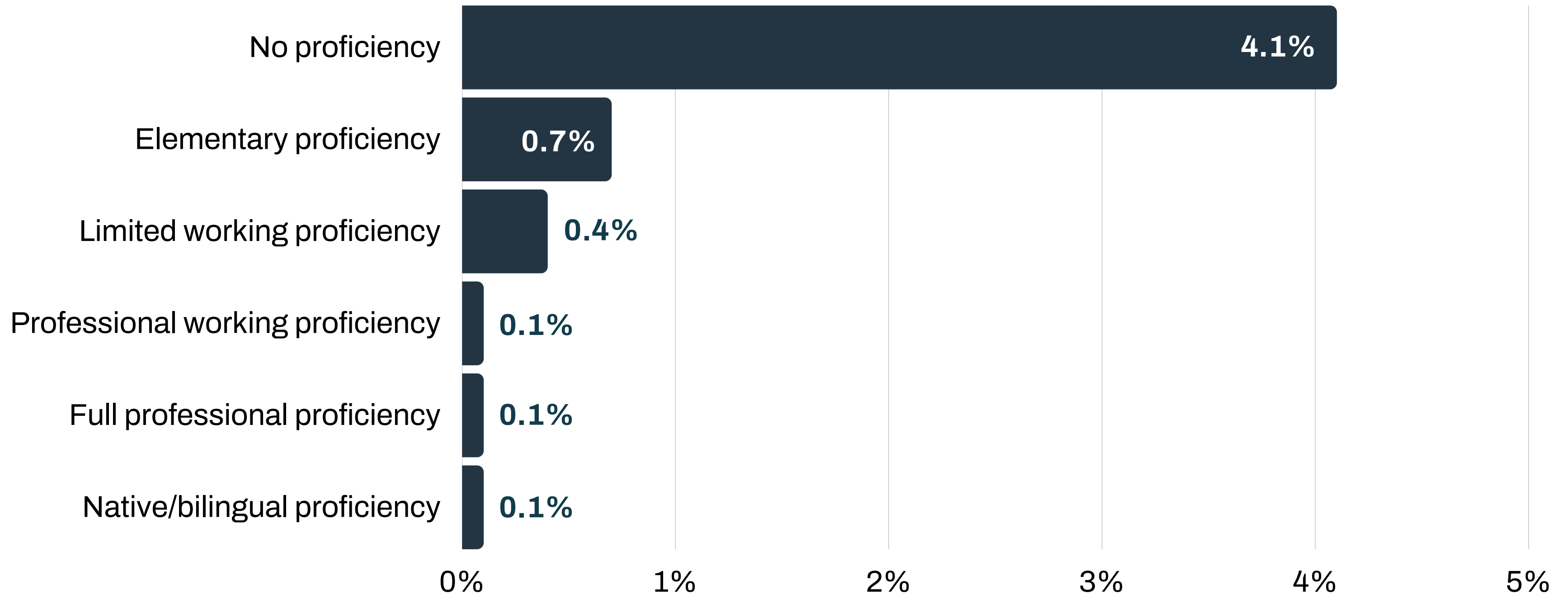
% of number of digital devices owned by ethnicity group



# Results



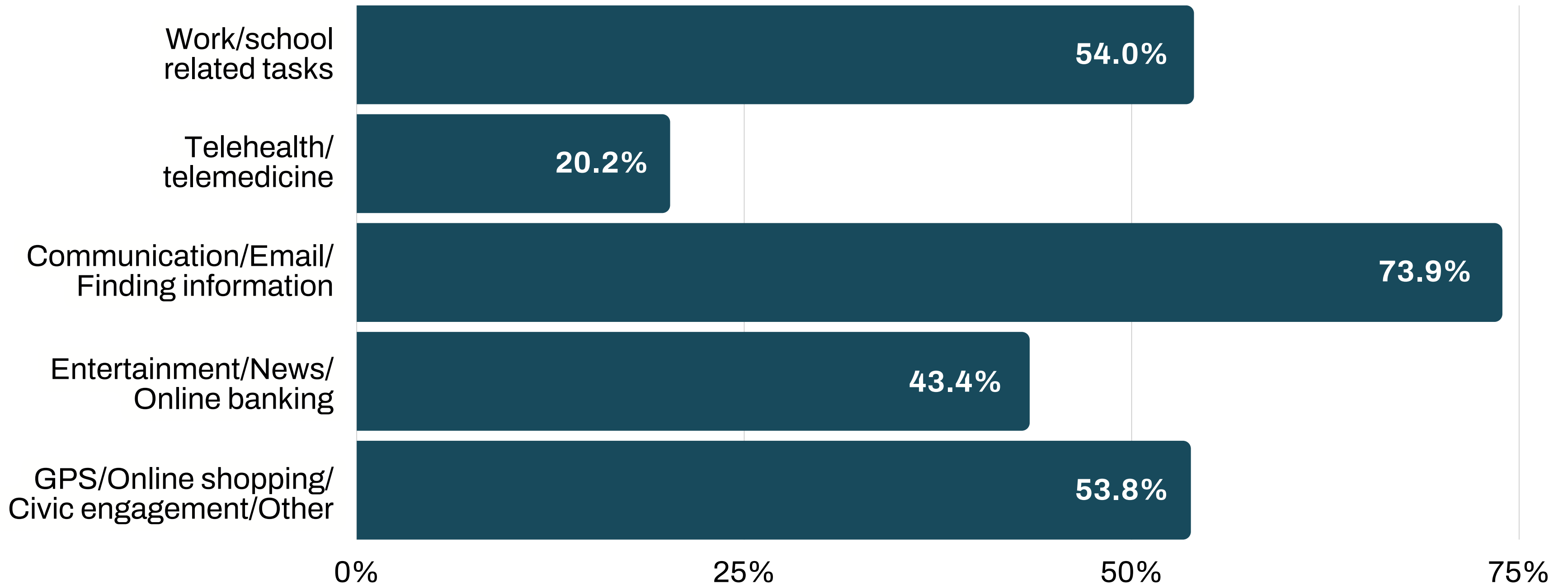
**% of each English proficiency level that do not own any digital devices**



# Results



Type of usage of digital devices owned by respondents (% , multiple selection)

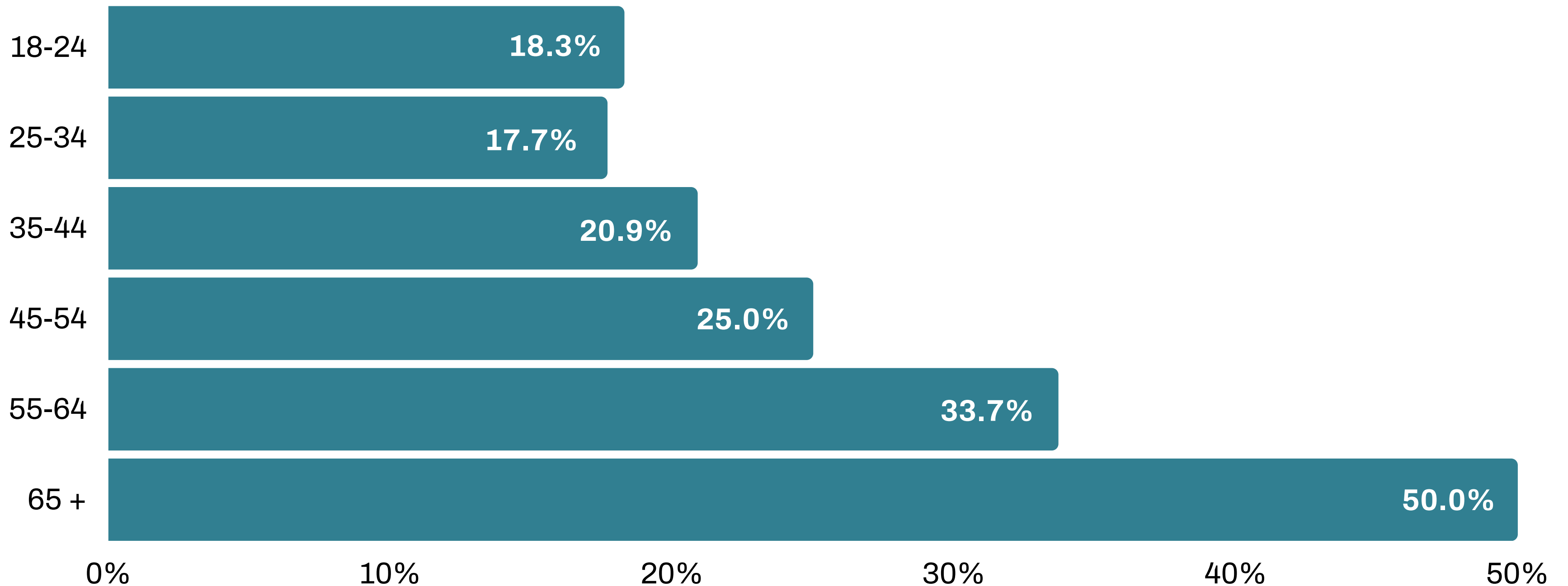




# Results



% of each age range group that uses telehealth/telemedicine with the digital devices they own



# Recommendations for Future Research



- Have a representative AAPI survey sample in terms of state, age range, ethnicity, and English proficiency
- Have 20+ translations available in AAPI languages
- Expand in-person outreach focusing on:
  - Locations with insufficient internet infrastructure
  - Communities with limited English proficiency
- Conduct deeper statistical analysis with significance testing to see whether differences are meaningful
- Add additional questions
  - Do you know any local or national programs that can help you get internet or digital devices?
  - How satisfied are you with the internet services you are using?
  - What is the main reason you do not have an internet connection at home?
  - How much are you paying for internet services per month?

# Methodology



The AAPI Digital Access Survey questionnaire included 10 questions regarding demographics (zip code, age range, ethnic background, gender identity, English proficiency, and household size) and digital accessibility (type of household internet subscription, digital device ownership, and use of digital devices). It also contained an optional section where participants could share their contact information. All of the survey responses were anonymous, and the contact information was solely used to provide incentives, conduct in-depth interviews, and/or share the report.

The nationwide survey was conducted mostly online from December 2022 to April 2023 and was available in 12 languages: English, Khmer, Korean, Nepali, Samoan, Tongan, Marshallese, Urdu, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Hindi, and Punjabi. Anyone self-identifying as of the Asian American & Pacific Islander community regardless of birthplace or citizenship, 18 years and older, and currently living in the U.S. was welcome to take the survey. To encourage participation, we provided an incentive - a chance to enter a raffle to win a \$100 Amazon gift card.

The convenience sampling method was used, and most surveys were distributed online through OCA's 35+ chapters and affiliates nationwide. Some OCA chapters and members distributed paper copy surveys but gathered a minimal portion of the total responses.

In addition to our surveys, we conducted three interviews via Zoom. The interviewees were selected from the survey respondents who expressed interest in getting interviewed. We provided the interviewees with a \$20 Amazon gift card to show our gratitude for their time and expertise. During the interview, we asked questions to learn more about their survey responses and their understanding of the digital needs of the local AAPI community.



# Methodology



The survey response rate is 73.6%, meaning we got 8,275 responses out of 11,244 AAPI Digital Access Survey website views.

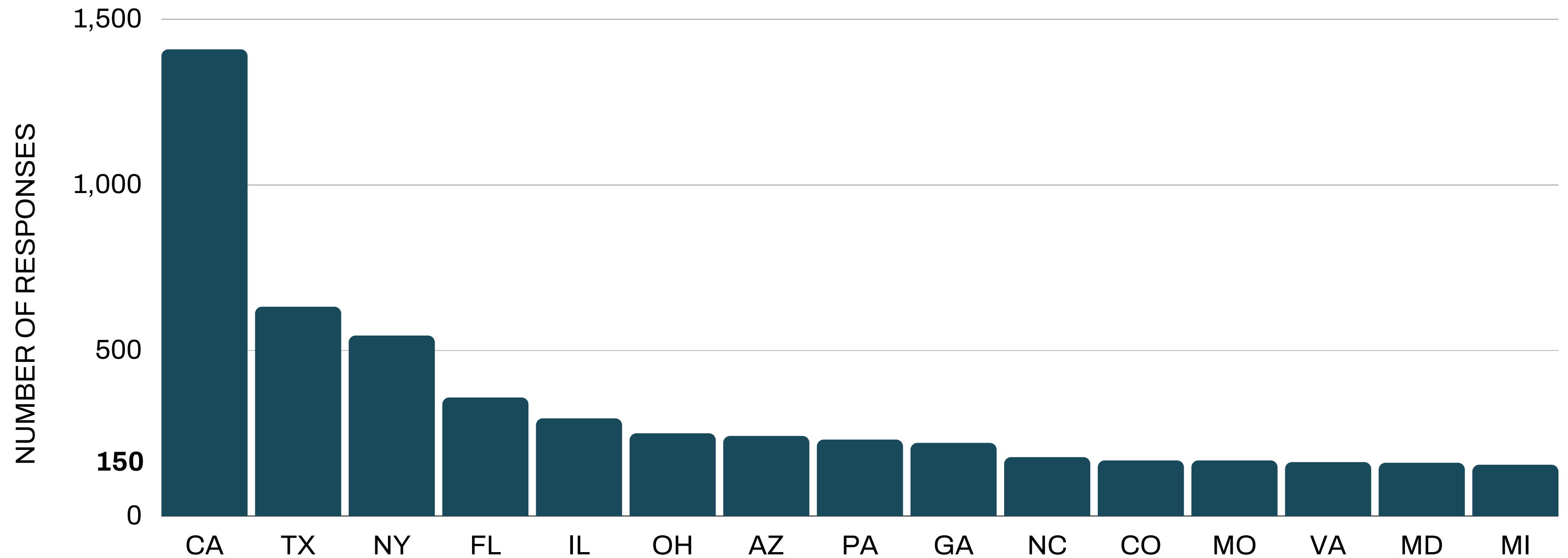
We had over a thousand more responses from the translated surveys: 3,632 were English responses, and 4,643 were in-language responses.

LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
English	3,632	Simplified Chinese	4,414	Tongan	8
Khmer	37	Traditional Chinese	108	Marshallese	2
Korean	49	Nepali	8	Punjabi	3
Urdu	5	Samoan	9	Hindi	0

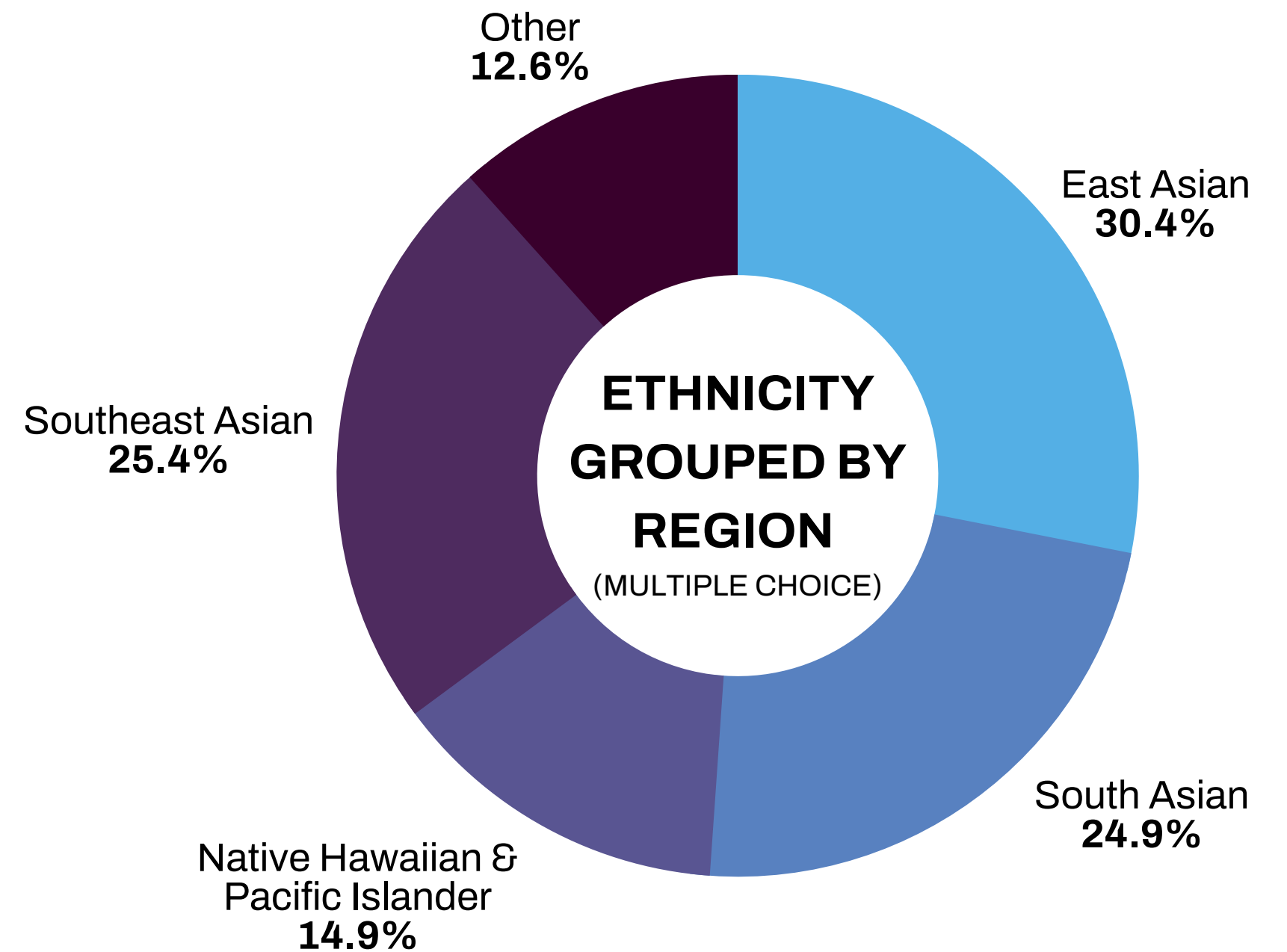
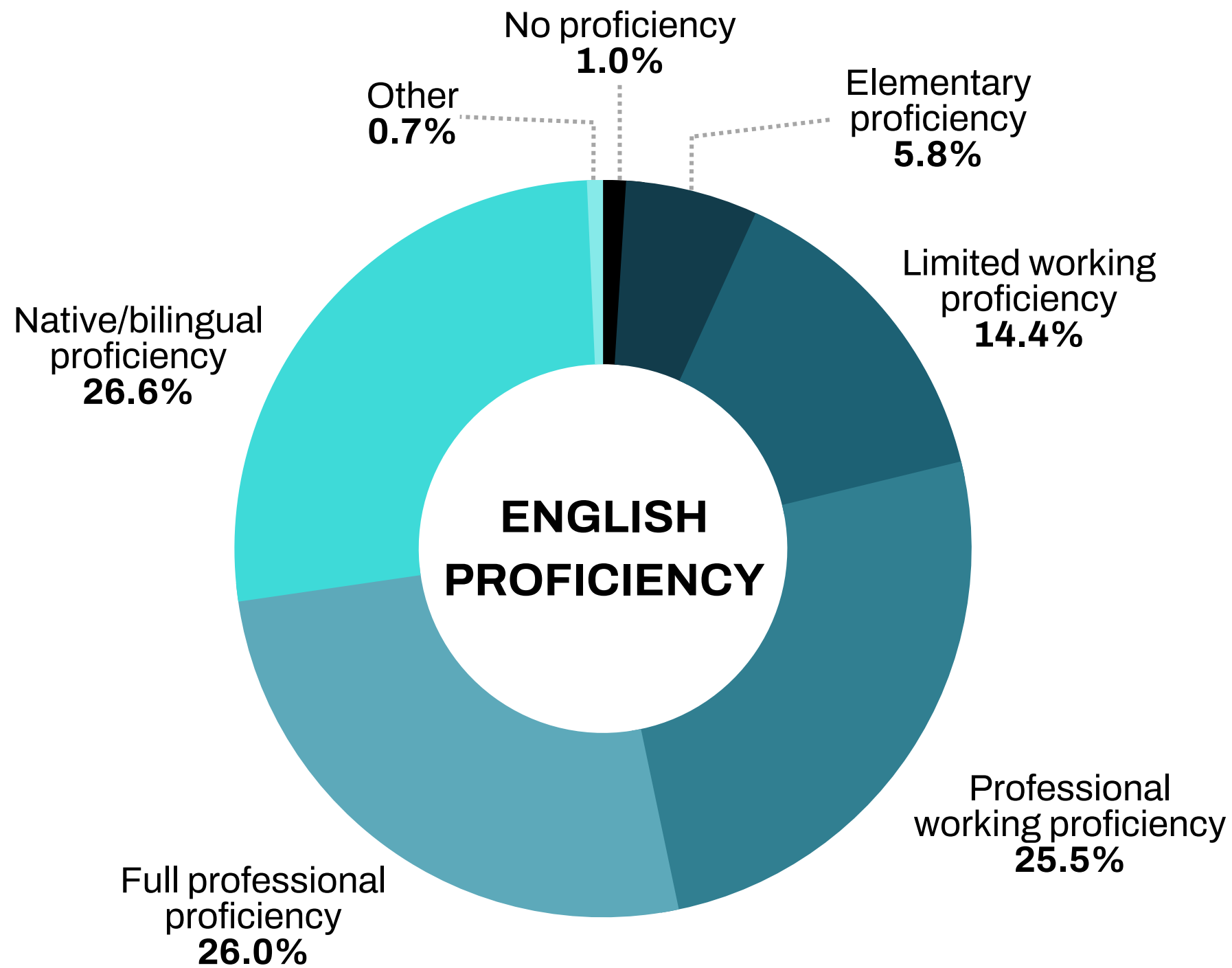
# Methodology



Based on our zip code data, 15 states had more than 150 participants.

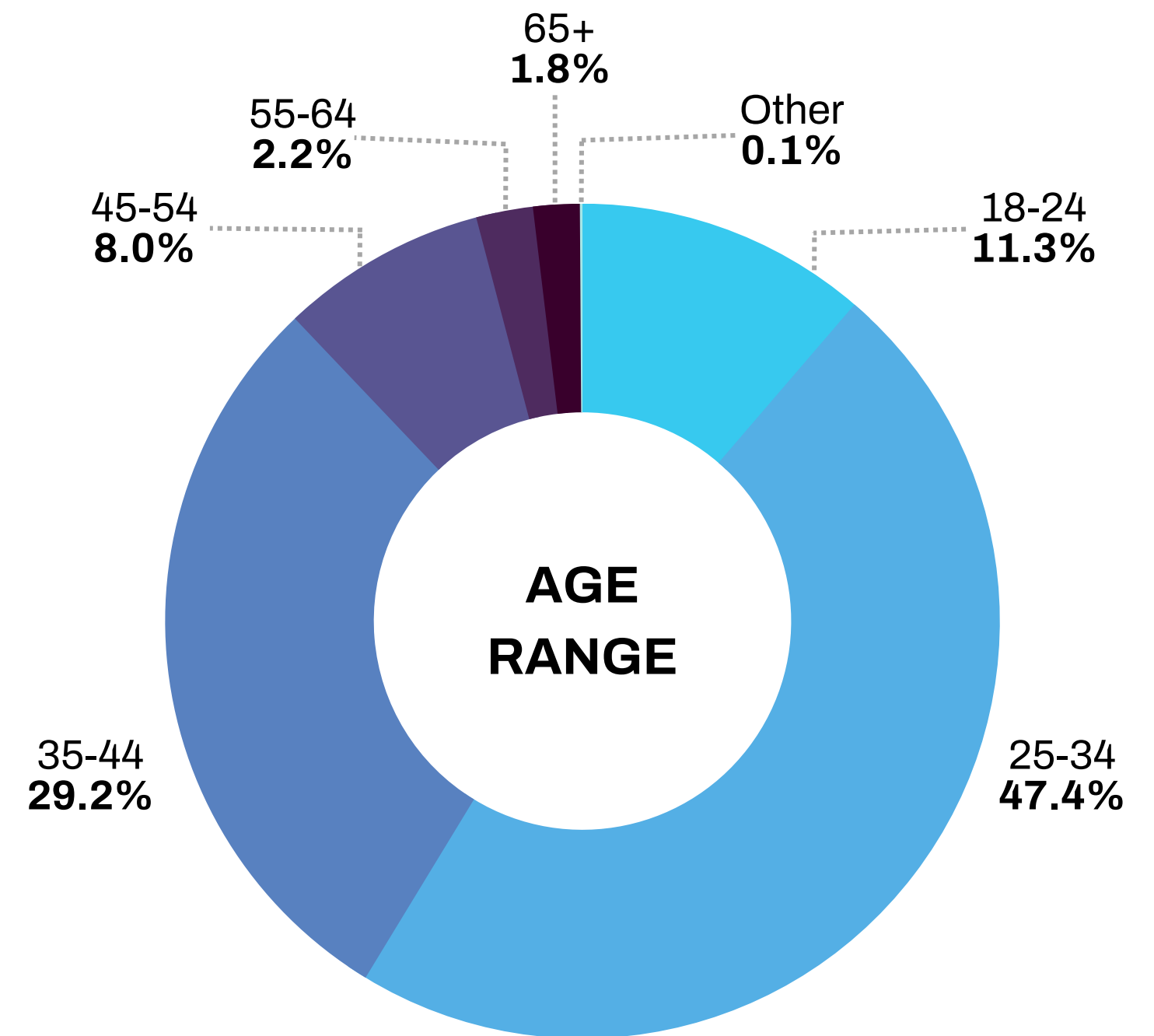
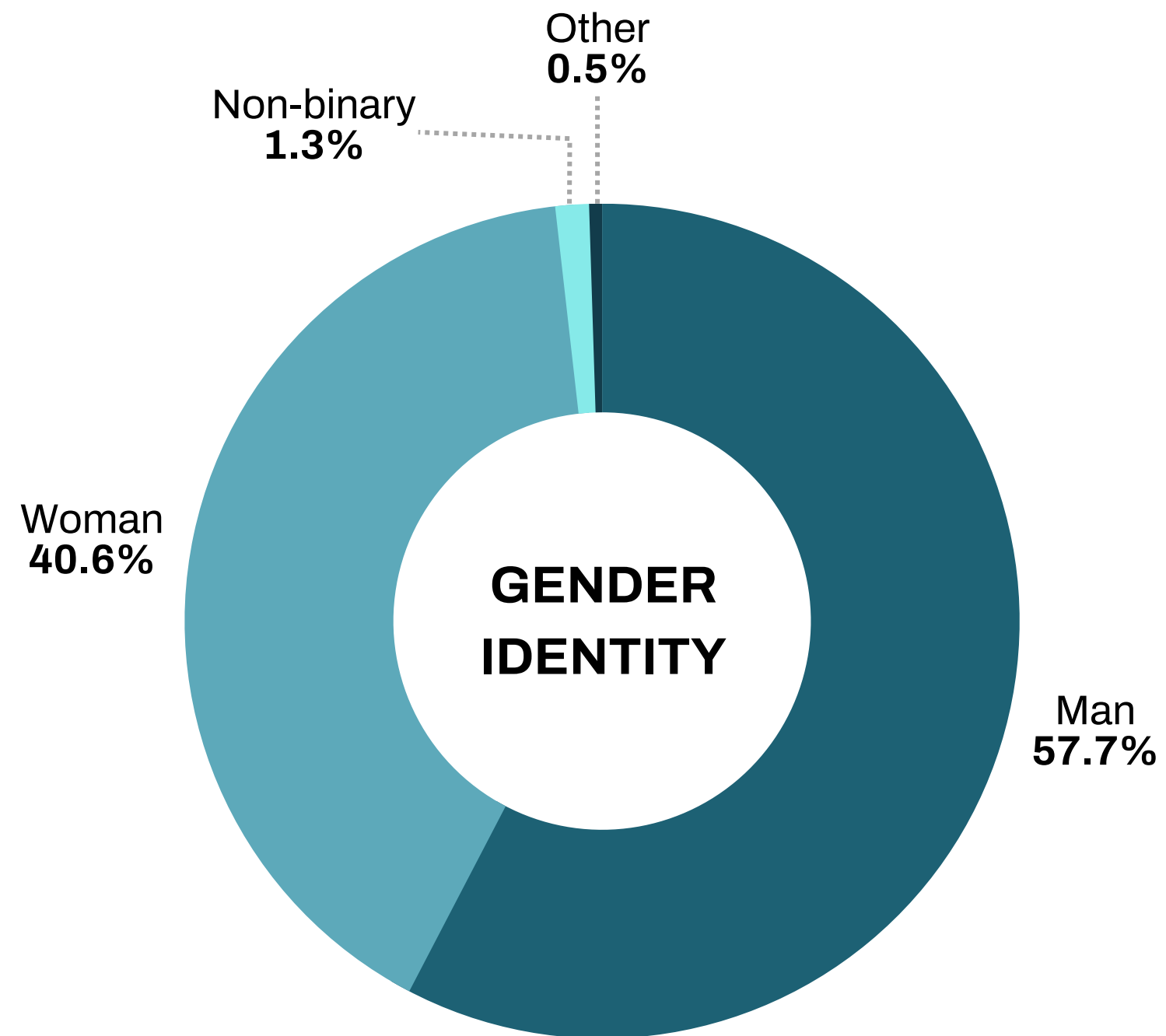


# Methodology





# Methodology



# Methodology



After closing the survey, in-language responses were translated and merged with English survey responses. Paper surveys were also manually entered. To screen out outliers and probable spam responses, the following data were cleaned:

- Responses that reported more than 5 ethnicities
- Responses that reported more than 10 household members
- Responses with invalid zip codes

This resulted in 7,275 responses used in the analysis, which helped to improve statistical reliability. In addition to filtering out some submissions, options within certain variables were condensed for analysis:

- Respondents' ethnicities were condensed by region (East Asian, Southeast Asian, NHPI, etc.)
- Device usage was further grouped: miscellaneous communication includes options *communication*, *email*, and *finding information*; personal use includes *entertainment*, *news*, and *online banking*; and other includes *online shopping*, *GPS*, *civic engagement*, and *other*.

# Acknowledgments



We are grateful to the thousands of individuals who participated in the survey and the three interviewees who shared their experiences and expertise. We would also like to thank all the organizations and individuals who helped us distribute the survey.

Furthermore, we couldn't have done this work without the support of our six partners: NQAPIA (National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance), SALDEF (Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund), Act to Change, LANA (Laotian American National Alliance), NAPAFASA (National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse), and National ACE (National Asian/Pacific Islander American Chamber of Commerce and Entrepreneurship).





# Acknowledgments



This report was written by Ye Eun "Yen" Jeong, with key contributions from Resty Fufunan and Joshua Khai Tran.

**Ye Eun “Yen” Jeong (she/her)** is the Broadband Access and Digital Equity Fellow at OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates. Her work aims to challenge the model minority myth and bridge the digital divide among AAPI communities in today's tech-centric world. She worked with community leaders to understand the diverse digital needs of AAPIs as well as raise awareness and enrollment rates of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a government benefit that helps more households access broadband service and digital devices. Yen holds a master's degree in Educational Equity, Justice, and Social Transformation from the University of Michigan and a dual bachelor's degree in Education and Global Cooperation from Sookmyung Women's University.

**Resty Fufunan (he/him)** is a Yale University student (c/o 2024) studying Ethnicity, Race, & Migration and Statistics & Data Science. He served as the summer Data & Policy Fellow for OCA National Center in 2023 with support from Dwight Hall, Yale's Center for Public Service and Social Justice. He previously served as OCA's summer Policy Intern in 2022 as an IMPACT! Filipino-American Fellow with the US-Asia Institute.

**Joshua Khai Tran (he/him)** grew up in Sacramento, California, and attended the University of California, Irvine. He received a B.A. in Political Science *magna cum laude* in 2021 and an M.A. in Philosophy, Political Science, and Economics in 2022. He is currently a J.D. candidate at Duke Law School where he hopes to continue advocating for the AANHPI community in the legal field. He served as the spring Policy Fellow for OCA National Center in 2023 after serving as a Policy Intern.

# About Us



**OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates (OCA)** is a 501(c)(3) national member-driven civil rights non-profit that celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. OCA is a chapter-based network of more than 50 chapters and affiliates throughout the country and has its national headquarters based in Washington, DC, with full-time staff who work on policy issues (including tech & telecommunications, immigration, education, and racial discrimination) and develop national programs for youth empowerment, professional development, and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) advocacy.

As the second oldest AAPI civil rights and advocacy organization in the country, OCA has been, and continues to be, uniquely positioned to impact policy and advocacy at the national, statewide, and local levels. While the national office provides connectivity to national initiatives with our partners, our network of chapters provides organizational and local impact.





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ADVOCATE