

# **Learning to reach out – young people, mental health literacy and the Internet**

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# Learning to reach out – young people, mental health literacy and the Internet

1. Internet and mental health
2. Focus groups (mental health literacy)
3. User profile survey
4. Recommendations

# Internet and mental health:

## *Types of online supports*

A word cloud of mental health support websites. The text is arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with some words oriented vertically. The colors are primarily dark red and grey. The websites listed include: SpunOut.ie, ReachOut.com, Turn2me.org, headstrong.ie, BeLonGT o.org, Drugs.ie, Aware.ie, Childline.ie, foroige.ie, pleasetalk.ie, mymindmatters.ie, bodywhyhys.ie, and facebook.com/olagola.

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# Support – what's that?



# Internet and mental health:

## *Types of online supports*

Information-  
based  
resources

Peer-to-peer  
support

Online therapy



# Focus groups – what do young people want?

- Ethical approval, University College Cork
- 6 groups of young people
- 2-hour conversations
- Semi-structured case study questionnaire

# Thematic analysis

## Conversation is reactive (not proactive)

- “you might hear about it (mental health) when it’s already happened, when someone has committed suicide...as opposed to the prevention side of things”.

## Importance of listening

- “I had about 3 or 4 days when I just didn’t want to talk to anyone, (I was) just sitting on my own, but when someone did actually come and talk to me I was talking and they were just listening, it made me feel a lot better”.

## Services being user-friendly

- “if I thought I had a mental health problem I’d probably just go online”.

# Mental health literacy

“knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which their recognition, management and prevention” (Anthony Jorm, 1997)

# Case studies

Liam



Niamh



Roisin



Rory



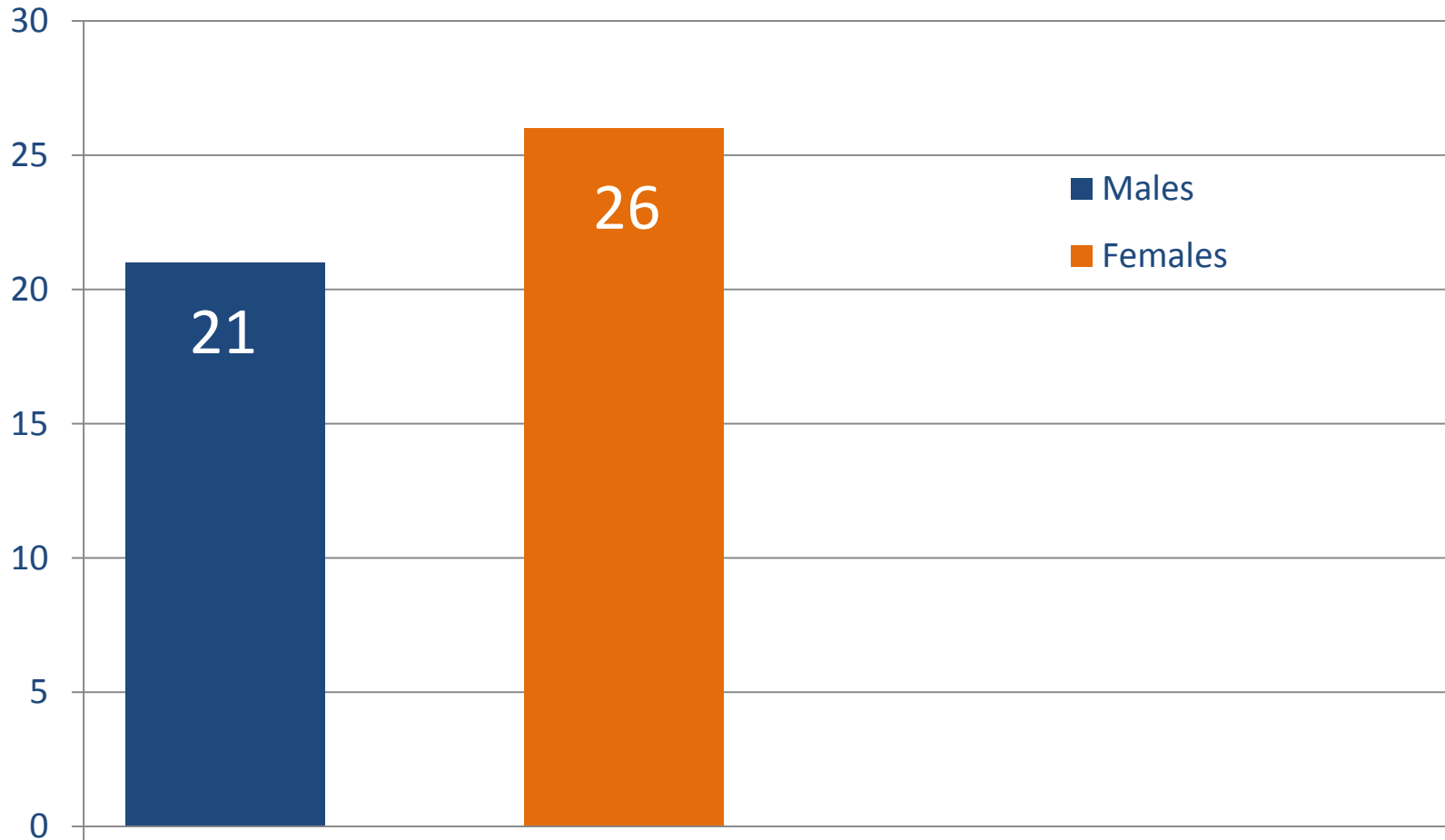
# Liam's story



# Scoring system

UNDERSTANDING THE CASE STUDIES	
Identified the problem clearly	3
Understood the problem	2
Only partly understood the problem	1
Didn't identify or understand the problem	0
IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC SYMPTOMS	
e.g. Poor concentration, loss of appetite	
Etc	
SOURCES OF INFORMAL AND FORMAL SUPPORT IDENTIFIED	
Appropriate formal supports identified	
Etc	

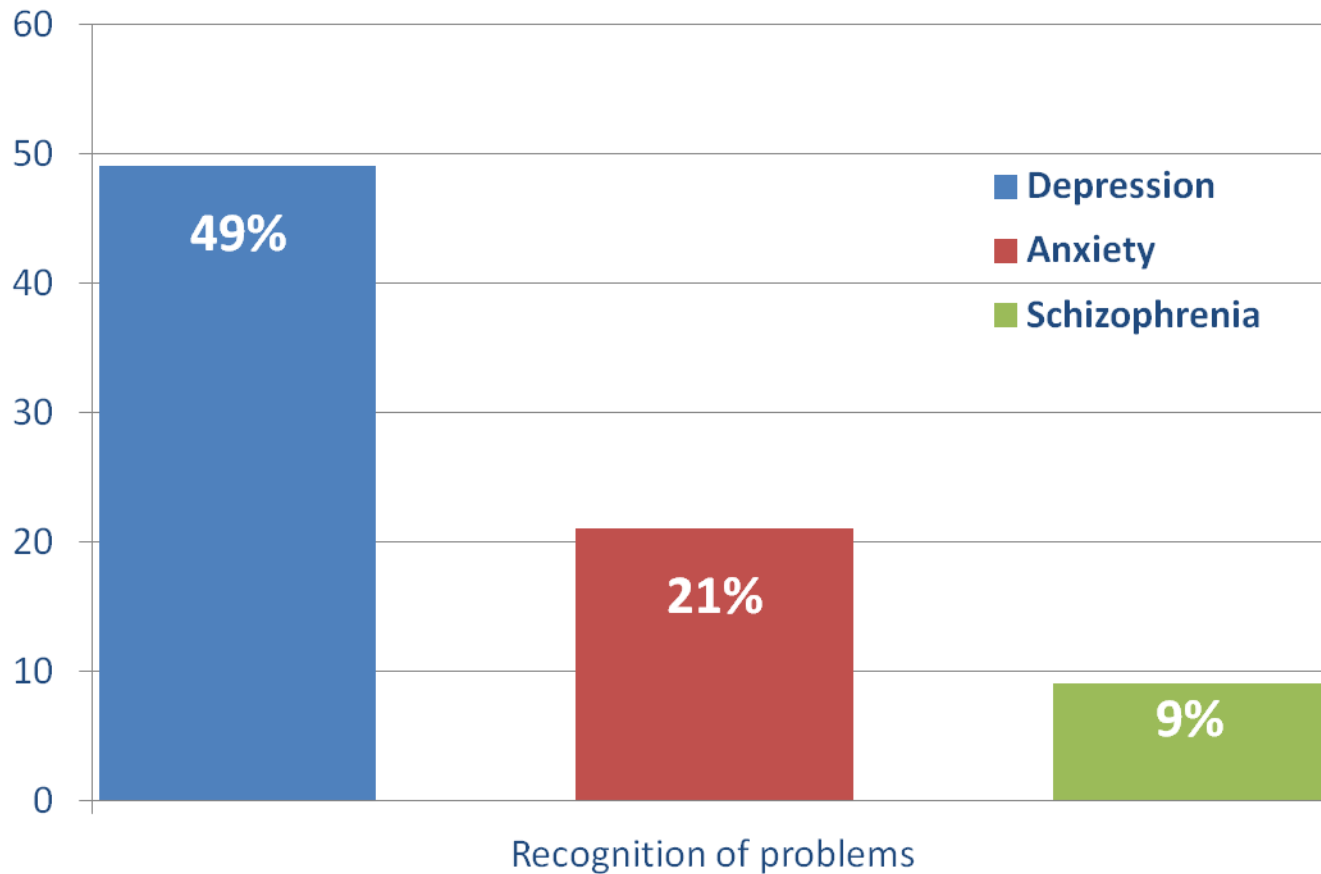
# Mental health literacy – by gender



## Mental health literacy scores

Strong evidence of gender differences ( $p = 0.04$ )

# Recognition of problems



There was strong evidence of recognition variance ( $p = >0.001$ )

# Rory's story



# But...Rory's "tough time" scenario

- "Onset of depression"
- "Rory is clearly suffering from depression".

**42% of the sample thought Rory was experiencing depression.**

"A common understanding of what words and concepts mean is an essential part of mental health literacy" (Leighton, 2009)

# Mental health literacy

## Includes...

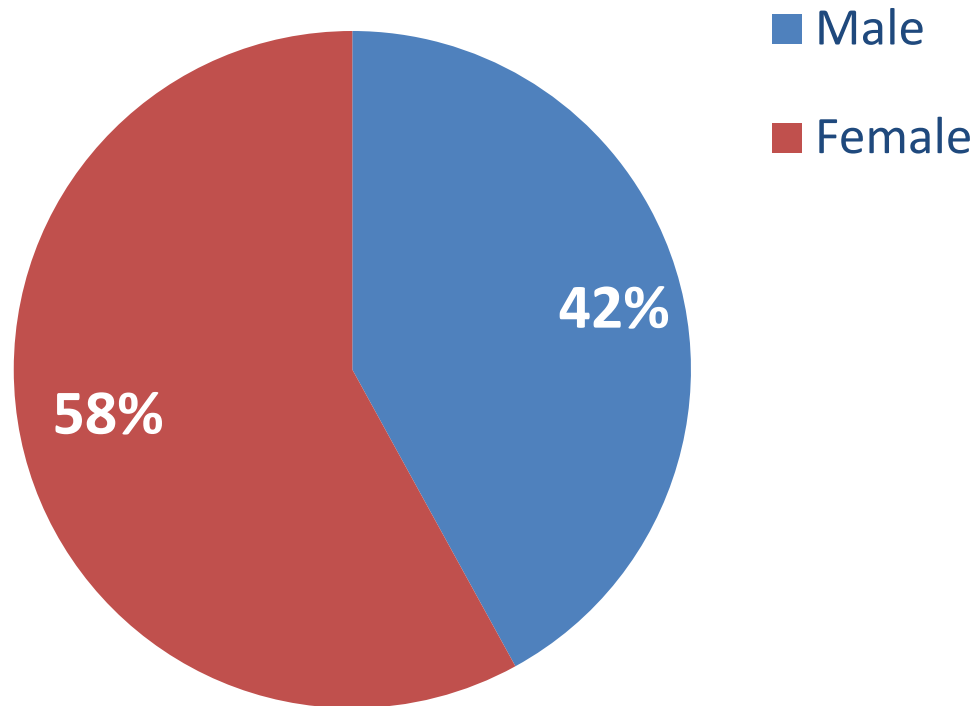
- Knowing how to seek mental health information
- Knowledge of risk factors and causes
- Attitudes that promote appropriate help-seeking



# User-profile survey

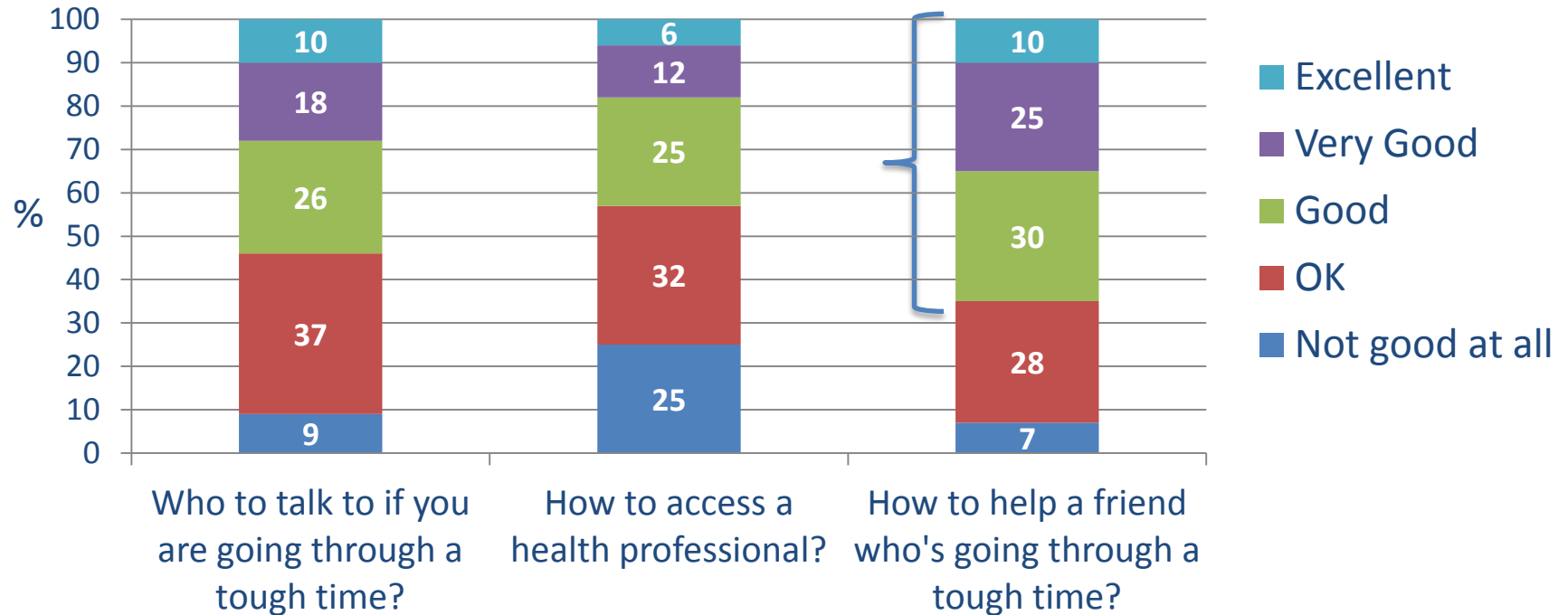
- Ethical approval, University College Cork
- 523 respondents (40% survey completion)
- 30-item questionnaire

# User-profile survey - gender



This compares favourably with the Australian ReachOut.com which attracts a high proportion of females (76%)

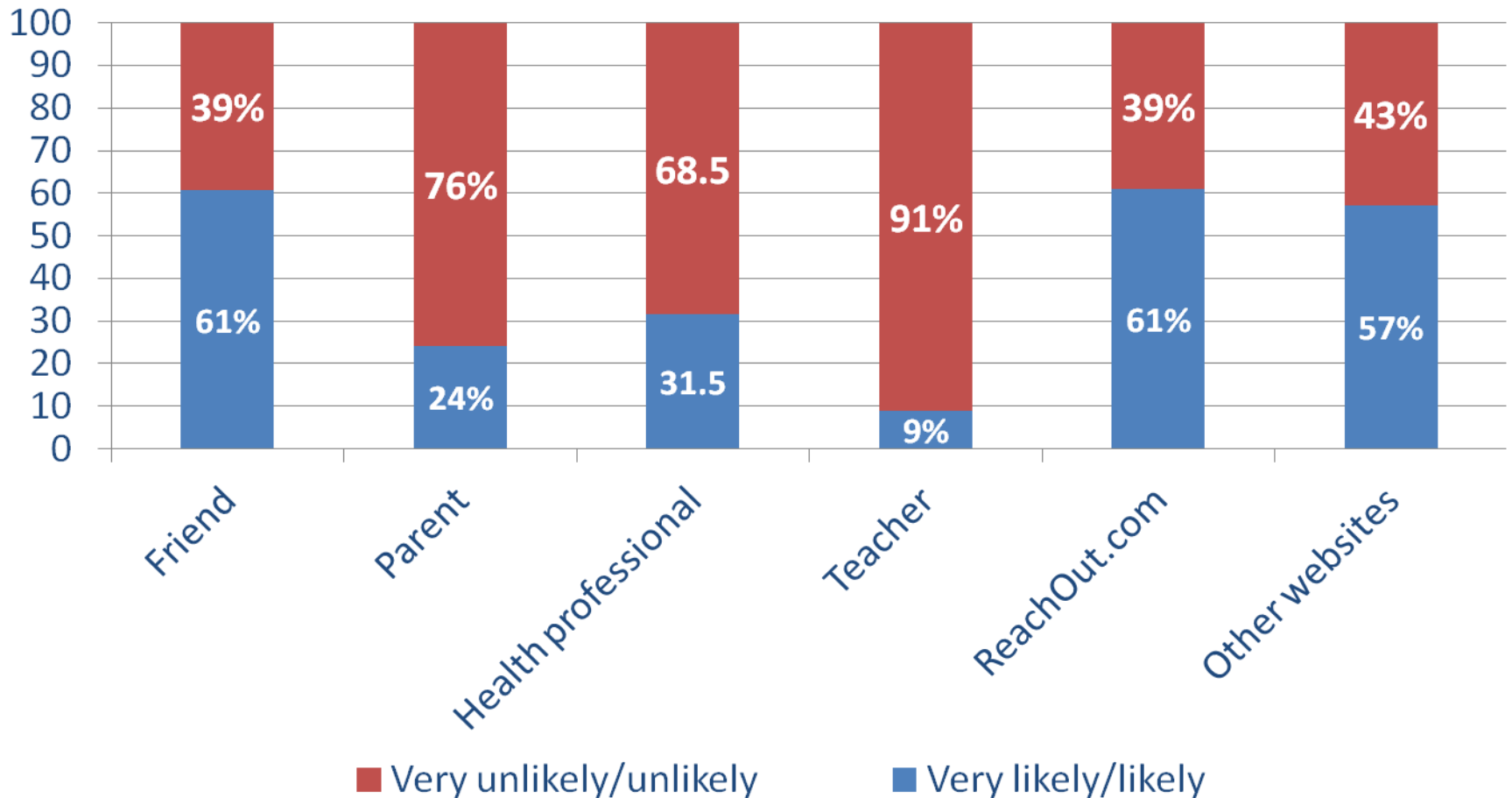
# Rate your understanding of:



**65% have (v.)good / excellent understanding of how to help a friend**

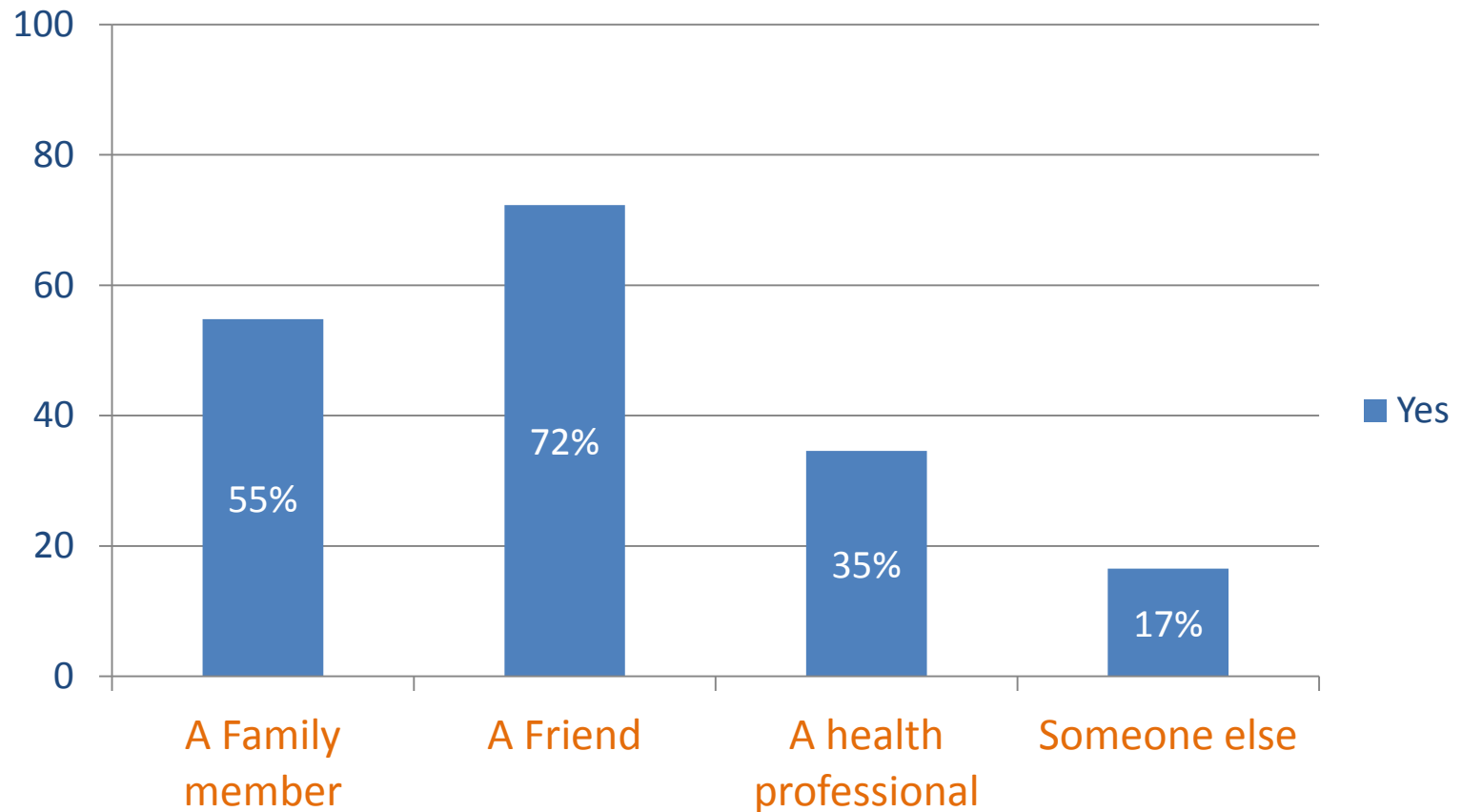
# Help-seeking preferences

How likely are you to look for help from the following to get through a tough time?



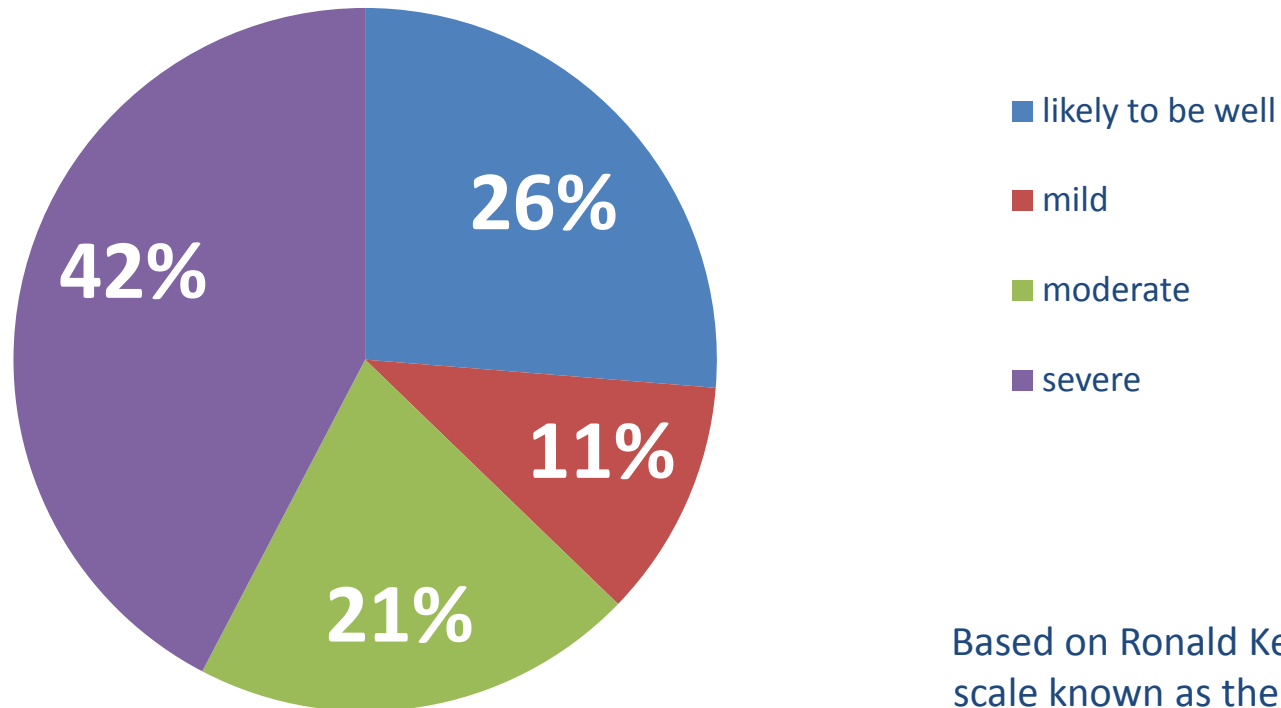
# Previous help-seeking behaviour

Have you ever spoken with any of the following to get help through a tough time?



**41% of those who had seen a health professional were unlikely / very unlikely to seek help from a professional again**

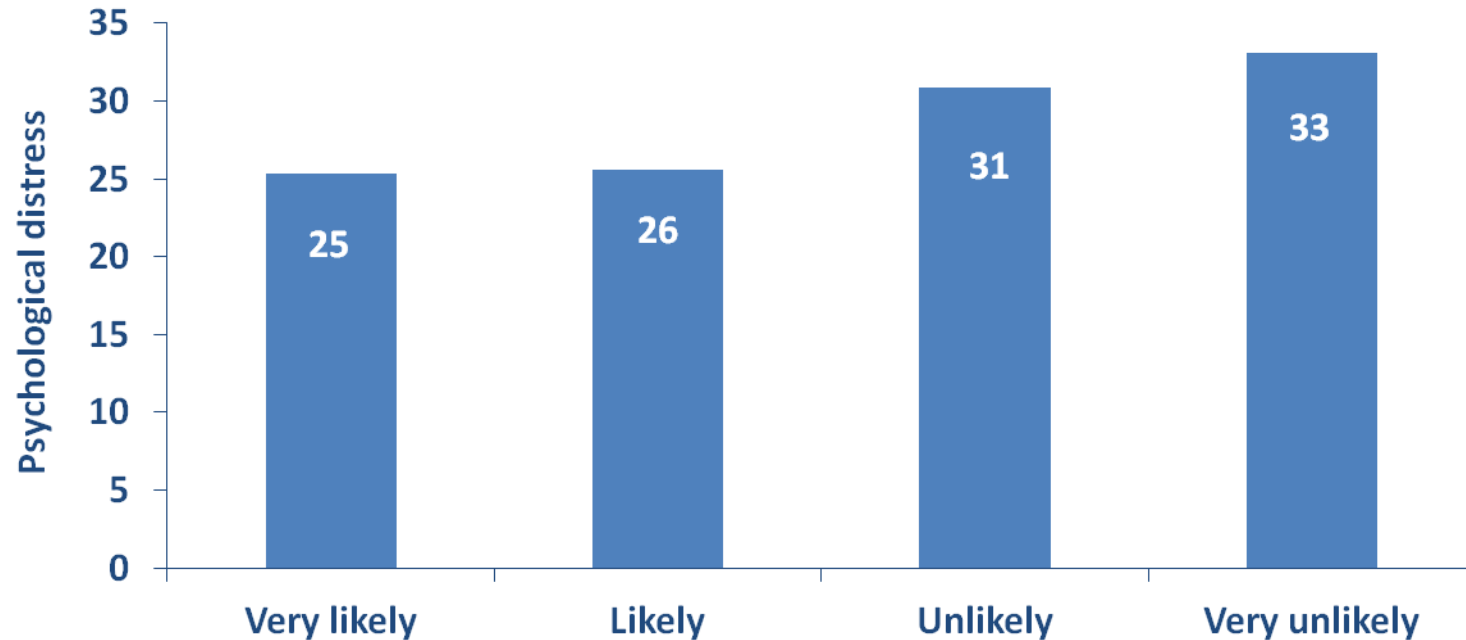
# Psychological distress – among visitors to ReachOut.com



Based on Ronald Kessler's  
scale known as the 'K-10',  
n = 137

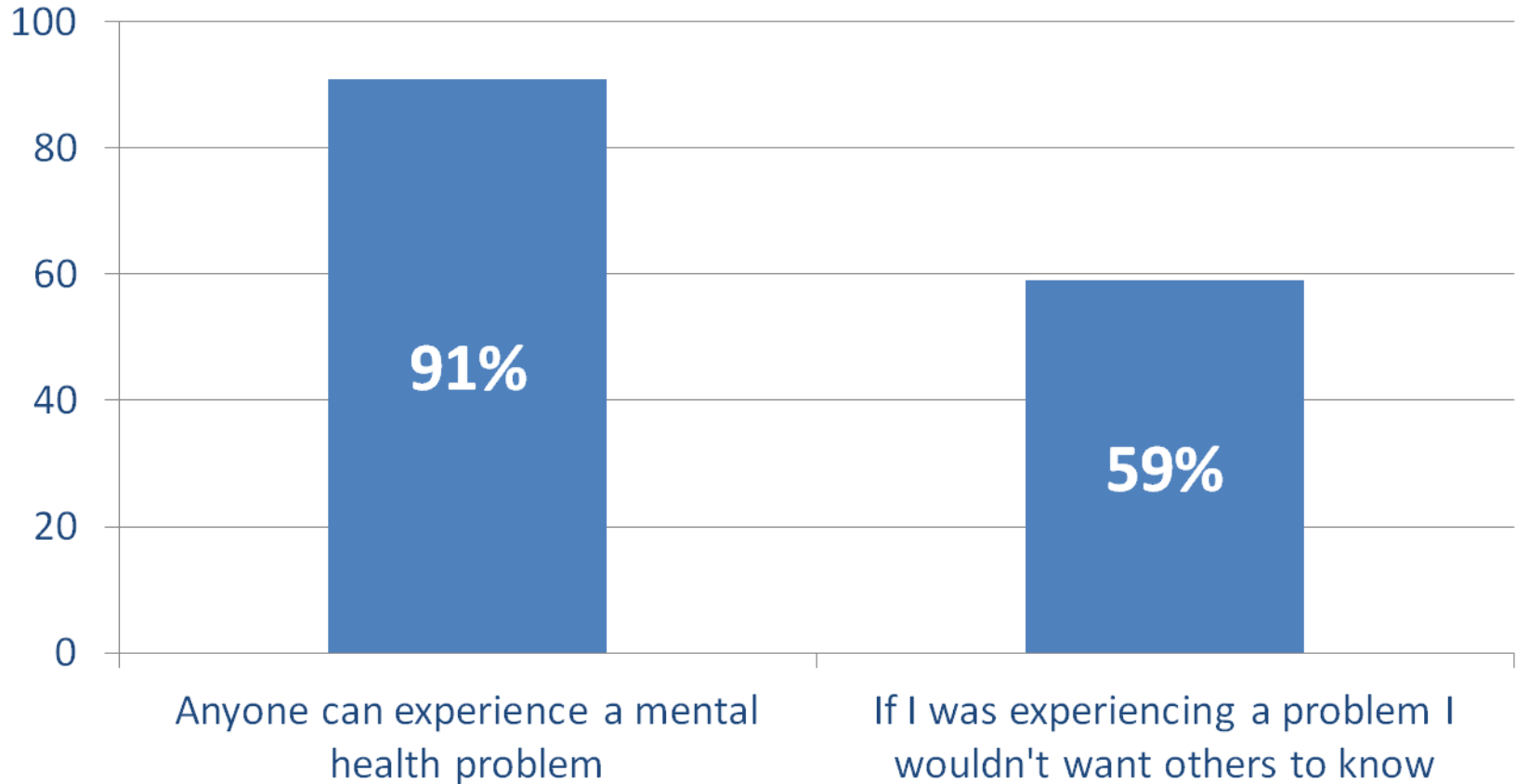
**Nearly 2/3 of respondents scored moderate or severe on the K-10**

# Psychological distress / How likely would you be to talk to a friend if going through a tough time?



The highest psychological distress was among those unlikely or very unlikely to turn to a friend during a tough time ( $p=0.002$ )

# Stigma - attitudes to mental health?



# Presentation conclusion / recommendations

- Online supports are wide-ranging
  - Information / peer-to-peer / online therapy
- Attitudes to mental health are good / knowledge and willingness to access services is poor
- Help-seeking preferences are changing – services must work together so that between us, youth mental health need is met

# Thanks for listening

- For more information:
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  - [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)