# DEI Tech Collective

**2nd Annual Town Hall**

**April 10, 2023**

# Introduction to the DEI Tech Collective

Representation and inclusion disparities exist in the technology groups of computing, data & computational sciences, and engineering **within and outside of Boston University.**

We came together in recognition of this with 3 major organizing principles:
- Community
- Educate
- Data

**The DEI Tech Collective's mission**:

- Align with broader Boston University diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives

- Increase the collective knowledge of racism and bias of all forms

- Create an inclusive and equitable community for tech, computing & data science stakeholders at BU

- Foster a shared sense of responsibility in creating a culture of inclusion

The Collective is an **opportunity** for tech and computing groups to unite around efforts to **educate** each other and **address inequity issues** in sector

## Departments in Collaboration

**CAS Computer Science**: Abraham Matta, *Chair, Department of Computer Science*

**CAS Math & Stats**: Debra Borkovitz, *Clinical Professor*, Glenn Stevens, *Chair & Professor*, & Daniel Sussman, *Assistant Professor*

**Center for Antiracist Research**: Hannah McKinney, *Research Manager* & Sanaz Mobasseri, *Associate Director for Antiracist Tech Initiative*

**Computing & Data Sciences**: Azer Bestavros, *Associate Provost*

**Engineering**: Roscoe Giles, *Professor of Electrical & Computer Engineering*, William Carl, *Chair & Professor,* Karen Hennessey, *ECE Department Director*

**Hariri Institute for Computing**: Stephen Thomas Brown, *Director of Finance and Administration*

**IS&T**: Tracy Schroeder, *Vice President and Chief Data Officer,* Sara Lubin, *SIS Training Manager*

**Questrom**: Bin Gu, *Professor of Information Systems,* Jeffrey Allen, *Professor of Information Systems*

**Physics**: Indara Suarez, *Assistant Professor*

**BU Spark!**: Ziba Cranmer, *Director*

*...and you!*

# Milestones

**DEI** Tech Collective

**Fall 2020**

Collective Formation

**Fall 2021 - Spring 2022**

Student Culture Survey

**Fall 2022**

Focus Groups

*Coded Bias*, Shalini Kantayya

**Spring 2021**

Inaugural Town Hall

**Spring 2022**

2nd Annual Town Hall

**Spring 2023**

# Next Steps

- **Align with other DEI initiatives in the University (ex. BU Belonging Survey)**

- **Incorporate focus group trends into the official report**

- **Continue working with computing department leaders to help drive change in our community**

# Check us out!

# bit.ly/BUDEITC

- **Event Calendar**

- **Contact Us**

DEI Tech Collective

# Focus Groups

# Context

- December 2022
- 3 Groups; 15 students across demographics, majors & departments
- Voluntary
- Anonymous
- Questions informed by patterns in the survey

Example Questions

- Are there ways you feel emotionally or socially supported in the classroom and in your learning?
- Have you heard of the concept of 'weed out classes'?
  - Any initial reactions to this?
  - Has anyone experienced this, or heard about friends going through a class like this?
- Do you regularly engage with your advisor? And in what kinds of ways do they help you or offer support?
- If you ever encounter issues related to problematic behavior, mistreatment, bias, or harassment, do you know where you would go to report something or to ask for help?
- Do you have any experiences within your school or within BU in general that have made you feel included or welcomed?

Activity Considerations:

- **Students** in these statements refer to the students in our focus groups
  - Trends are from the focus group participants
- Focus Group disclaimers: self selection

_____

Activity Sample:

- Pepperoni is the most popular pizza topping in the US.
  (TRUTH !)
- The blue whale is the biggest animal to have ever lived.
  (TRUTH !)
- The Earth is Flat!
  (False !)
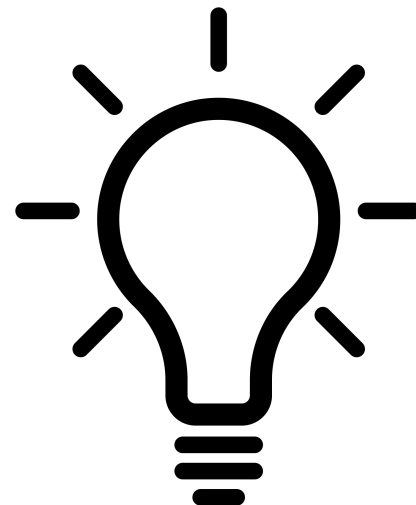
Set 1

- Many students wish their faculty were more diverse. Truth!

- Many students report that their departments don't organize, or aren't aware of, activities to create a sense of community. Truth!

- Most students know where to go to report, or get support around, an encounter of bias or discrimination. Lie!

# Summary

**Trends:**

- In speaking to the lie first, almost none of the participating students knew where to go with a problematic encounter.
- Other patterns we saw were that students recognize that the size of BU and some of these departments, especially during COVID, makes it challenging to create welcoming environments. Many turn to clubs for this kind of community.
- And many students perceive that other areas around the university are much more diverse in student and faculty makeup than the tech related areas they are in.
- Specifically with faculty, many students pointed to seeing diverse faculty leave quickly because it seems that they aren't getting support.

**Ideas from Students:**

For reporting or getting support around discriminatory behavior:
- Centralizing the possible channels for support; have one central resource center/staff that knows who to direct you to based on the need. Equipping advisors with this information would be beneficial.
- Include an online process that doesn't require in person reporting, and provides an option for anonymity. Link to this on every syllabus.

For increasing diversity of underrepresented faculty:
- Include students in the hiring process for faculty. Consider additional contemporary, broader types of technical skill sets and knowledge.

# Set 2

• When students need help with class related items, proactively engaging with the academic resources offered (such as faculty office hours or email, TA's, & advisors) is a dependable way to receive the support needed. Lie!

• Students typically wish for more availability and broader help from their advisors. Truth!

• Most students recognize that TA's are not always given the proper guidance or coaching on how to be effective TA's. Truth!

# Summary

**Trends:**

One of the most common experiences we heard about was the difficulty in getting assistance for a wide range of academic and administrative tasks. To highlight, here is one quote that's quite reflective:

"It's kind of insulting honestly, the amount of times I got ping ponged to get to the right person. It was something messed up with my scholarship. So it took me two weeks to get a meeting with the advisor. Having the meeting with the adviser, they tell me to talk to the director. It takes me two weeks to get a meeting with the director. The director tells me to schedule a meeting with the advisor, the advisor tells me to go back to the director. Then the director tells me to go to the registrar. Another week for the registrar, tells me to go back to the director…It's like, will you go to school next semester, who knows? Deadline's passed…so it was bad."

- For advisor interactions, a few students had some very positive relationships with their advisors, but many shared that their engagement with advisors was low.
- Many students communicated awareness of the heavy workloads that advisors are assigned. There were similar observations for the volume of students TA's manage as well.

**Ideas from Students:**

The suggestions students had included items to benefit staff, faculty, and students:
- Increase the number of advisors and TA's. Expand the number of TA's from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Provide both groups with more comprehensive training on how to effectively work with students, as well as clearer guidelines around important institutional information.
- Keep websites up to date with relevant information (there were examples of students pulling info from a website and it just being inaccurate).

# Set 3

- Many students indicate that there are valid reasons for the existence of weed out classes. Truth!

- Many students believe that it's reasonable for faculty to not provide any help or resources in weed out classes. Lie!

- There is concern from students that weed out classes disadvantage first generation students, students whose first language is not English, and students coming from high schools that don't have computing or technical resources. Truth!

# Summary

**Trends:**

- Overall, there were varied and complicated feelings around weed classes; students cited both the need for them and the downsides to them.
- Many students reported interactions where they would proactively reach out to the professor seeking understanding, and were instead just told to drop the course.
- There was often a concern around historically excluded students being pushed out of courses and majors because of weed out classes. Many believe the level of difficulty is unfair especially in the context of the added challenges for international and first gen students trying to adjust to American college life as freshman, and students facing language barriers.

**Ideas from Students:**

- Offer resources: don't use weed out classes as a justification for providing no support.
- Conduct mid semester check ins to review where students are and possible actions for any knowledge gaps.

# Department Shares

# DEI Tech Collective Townhall

Rafik B. Hariri Institute for Computing and Computational Science & Engineering

## Yannis Paschalidis

**Director, Hariri Institute**

**Distinguished Professor of Engineering (Electrical & Computer, Systems, and Biomedical),**

**Founding Professor, Computing & Data Sciences**

Ongoing Efforts:

❏ Hiring Processes (constantly looking for more resources!)



❏ Require all staff & faculty to complete bias and DEI training.
❏ Provide managers with best practices for interviewing and evaluating candidates, seeking to reduce/eliminate bias.
❏ Posting jobs to diversity job boards.

❏ Hariri Featured Events



❏ Accommodation requests offered for all events.
❏ Live captions enabled for all virtual events.
❏ Communicate to speakers to create mindful presentations.
❏ HIC featured events request that organizers be mindful of diversity when selecting speakers.



❏ BWWC: Annual racial and gender wage gap analysis for participating companies.

Upcoming Efforts:

❏ SAIL: Hosting Upward Bound Math/Science Students later this month
  ❏ Upward Bound is a part of a federally funded program that provides academic support to low-income, first-generation college bound students.
  ❏ SAIL is conducting technical, hands-on workshops for 10 high school students in the 9th, 11th, and 12th grade with varying levels of CS exposure.
❏ BWWC: Hosting an event with the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement (MOWA) Boston's Equal Pay Day (April 20, 2023) entitled "Bridging the Opportunity Gaps in Hiring and Advancement for Women and Marginalized Workers" (6-8pm in Roxbury)
  ❏ Discuss barriers of industry in recruiting/retaining under-represented candidates, identify new strategies and existing resources.
❏ Admin: Working on finding a date later this year for an in-person DEI workshop via University of Pittsburgh troupe with ENG departments.

DEI Tech Collective
Townhall
# Information Services & Technology

Tracy Schroeder
VP, IS&T

- Hired a DEI Coordinator
  - Lost them about 4 months later
- Revised, expanded Gender Affirming Identity Data collection and use
- Participated in HR "Improving with you" pilot of DEI-focused stay and exit interviews, synthesis, and recommendations
- Continued work on university Antiracism Working Group
- AS&IR Co-leading university Belonging & Culture Survey
- Lessons learned: Keep Trying!

## Plans for the Future

- Hire another DEI Coordinator
- Launch new SIS using Gender Affirming Identity Data
- Implement some recommendation(s) from HR "Improving with you"
- Support sharing of university Belonging & Culture Survey results

DEI Tech Collective
Townhall

# CAS Computer Science

## Abraham Matta
Professor & Chair of Computer Science, College of Arts & Sciences

In the past year, we have:

- Continued our support for student attendance at Tapia and Grace Hopper
- Hosted listening sessions
- Completed our Broadening Participation in Computing (BPC) plan for NSF grant submissions and had it verified
- Launched and continued to update the DE&I webpage on our website
- Invited new staff members onto our DEI committee

Moving forward, our committee plans to:

- Continue our support for attendance at Grace Hopper and Tapia (applications will open in mid-late May!)
- Connect faculty with BPC initiatives
- Implement a CAS Staff Institute project that highlights historic and diverse contributors to the field of computer science
- Work with CAS to provide DEI training to teaching fellows and teaching assistants

# PROMYS Pathways: An outreach program of the Program in Mathematics for Young Scientists (PROMYS)

Glenn Stevens, Li-Mei Lim, Demi Dubois

PROMYS, Boston University

Pathways provides students from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in STEM with deep mathematical experiences.

- Teacher alumni run extracurricular math circles in their schools.
- Regular events bring students together on BU's campus for activities run by undergraduate and graduate students in the Mathematics Department.
- 14 students have attended PROMYS on full or partial scholarships.
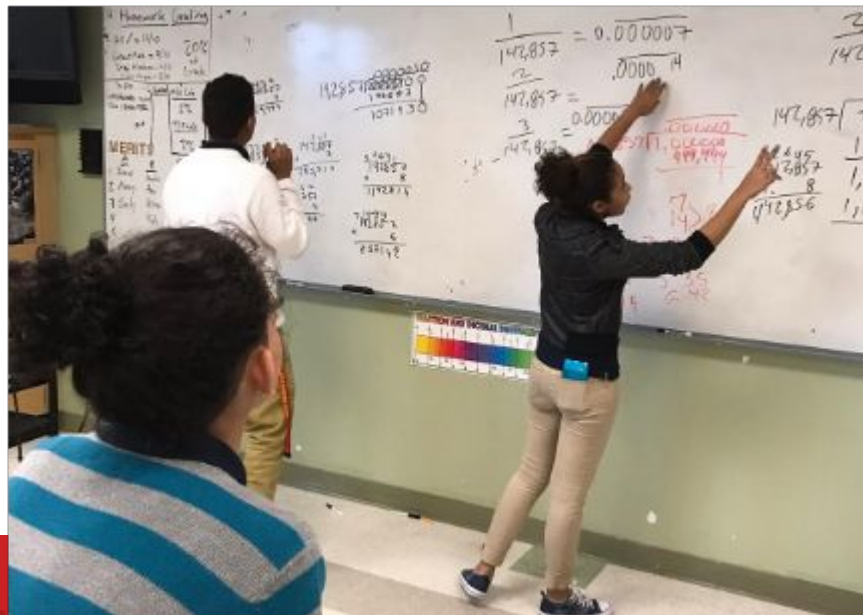
# PROMYS 2019

# Math Field Day Events

# Pathways
# Summer Program
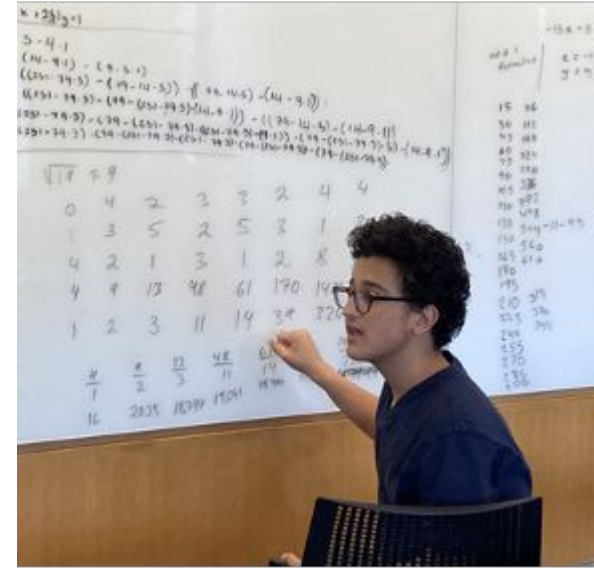




For a second summer, PROMYS will host a FREE 4-week commuter  program for students from low-income backgrounds or underrepresented  in STEM. The Pathways Summer Program will run Monday - Friday,  July 3 - 28, 10:30 am - 3:30 pm. Lunch and public transportation costs will be provided to participants. Visit www.promys.org for more info.

DEI Tech Collective

Townhall

# Faculty of Computing & Data Sciences

Lydia Holck, Spark! Operations Director

Ziba Cranmer, Director of BU Spark!

## Curricular:

- DS291: Exploring DEI in Tech (2CR)
- XC410 B1: Spark! DS4G Practicum
- XC410 A1: Spark! Justice Media
- DS381: Social Justice for Data Science (Fall '23)
- DS 587: Data Science in Human Context (Fall '23)

## Students:

- Spark! JEDI Programming
- PreHacks/TechTogether Fall 2022
- Civic Tech Hackathon with Howard University
- AGNCY: Spark! collaboration to build inclusive community @Spark!

## Faculty/ Staff:

- Emerging Scholars program (2023-2024)
- Spark! team DEI Learning + Action training

# Challenges/ Opportunities

- Staff/ faculty capacity to implement initiatives
- Skill building: need for team-wide level 2 D&I Training

# Plans for the future

- Campus-wide broadening participation plan
- Implement Emerging Scholars Program
- Expansion of PreHacks Fall 2023
- MassMutual collaboration including funding for student travel to national conferences e.g. AfroTech
- Computing community student climate survey for 2023 – TBD with DEI in Tech Collective

DEI Tech Collective

Townhall

# University Service Center

Vincent Crotwell

Associate Director

# What is the University Service Center?

- It's the place to go if you don't know where else to
- Specializes in leave of absences and withdrawals
- Can direct you to other on campus resources that fit your needs

Call us: 617-358-1818

Email: usc@bu.edu

Office: 881 Commonwealth Avenue, Lower Level

Learn more: bu.edu/usc/welcome-terriers/

# Data: Survey & Focus Groups

# Mixed Methods + Goals

## Climate Survey

- Collect data around student experiences and interactions
- Identify any existing disparities
- Publicly share findings
- Administer the survey regularly to analyze changes

## Focus Groups

- Collect more personal stories to humanize the data
- Give students a forum to express their feelings and experiences
- Brainstorm ideas

Broadly, survey data patterns were somewhat favorable

+

Enough indication of negative interactions across different types of students

+

Unfavorable experiences tended to be overrepresented in historically excluded populations

# Department & Community

# Please rank your major department on a scale between 1-5:
## "1 = Unwelcoming and 5 = Welcoming"
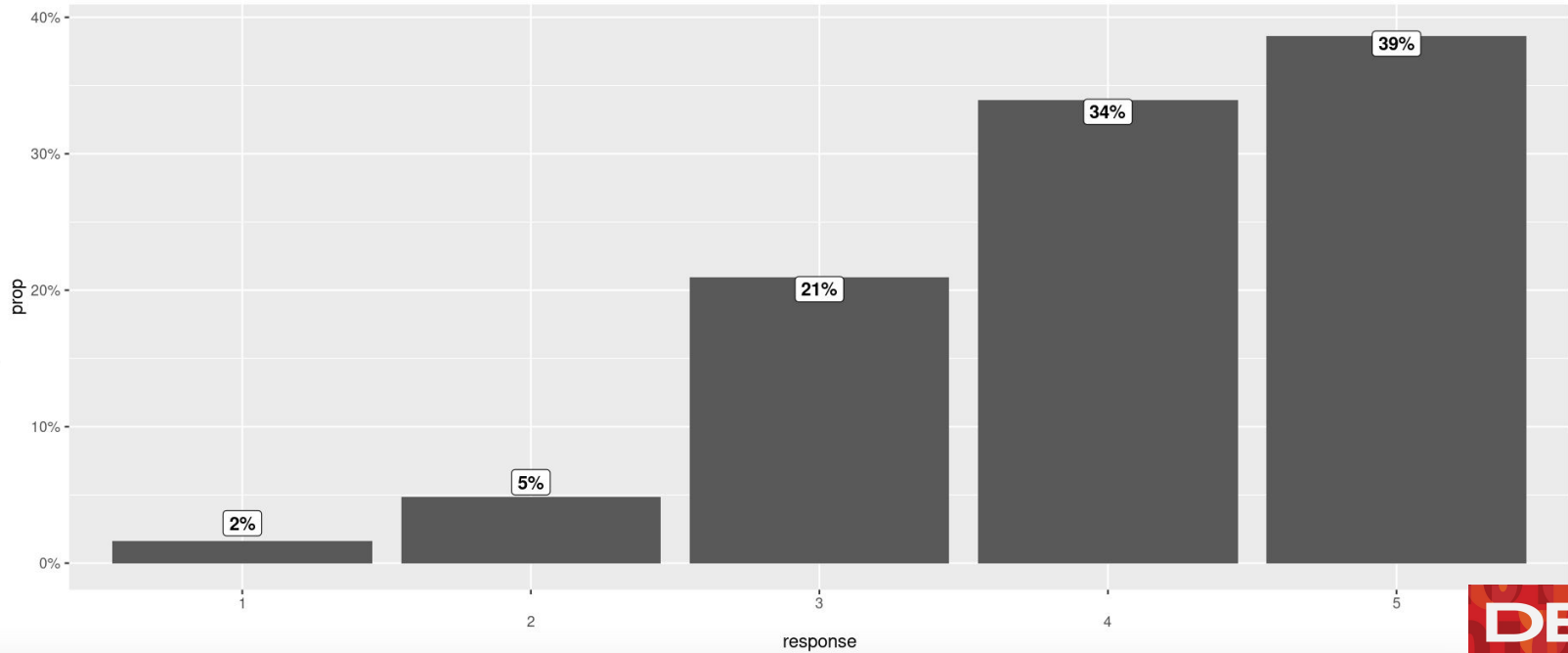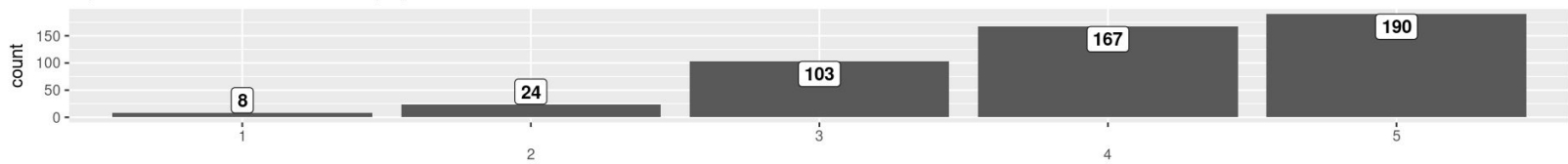
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "I am satisfied with my personal experience regarding diversity and inclusion in my major's department."
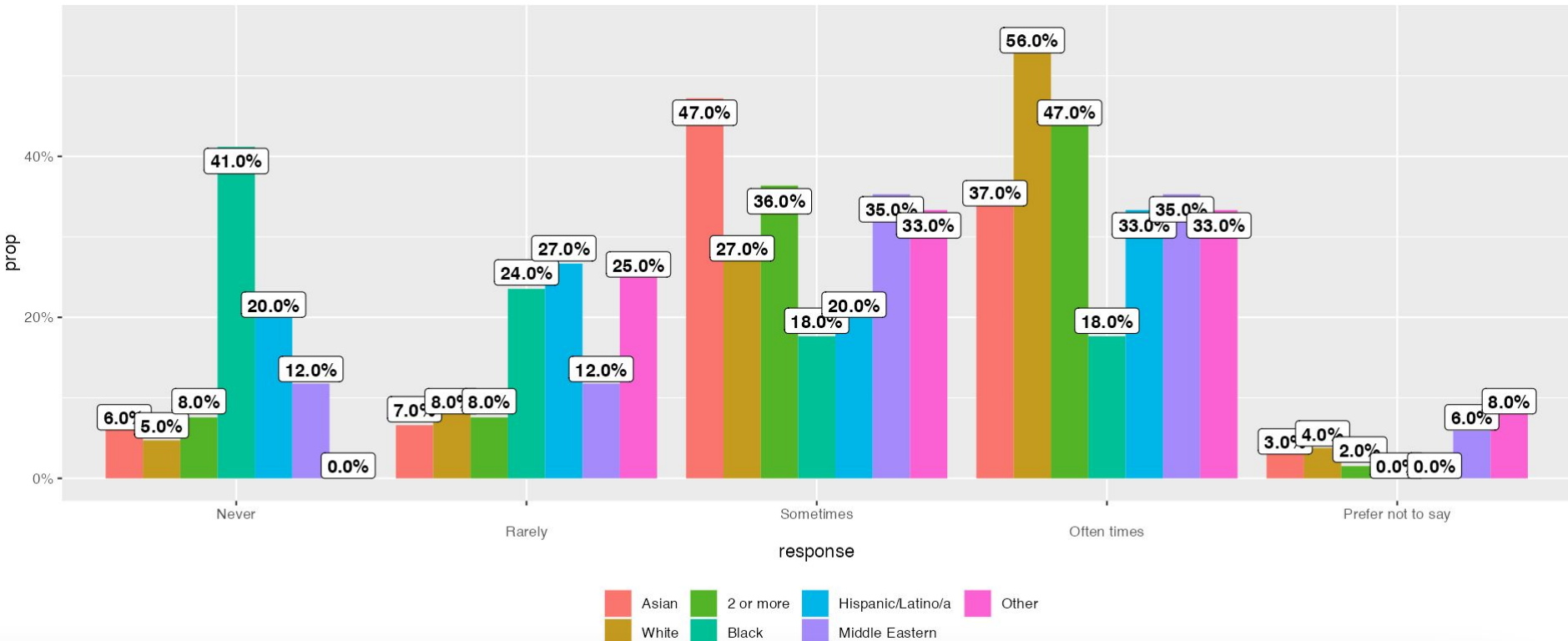
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:
"I am satisfied with the social climate at my major's department"
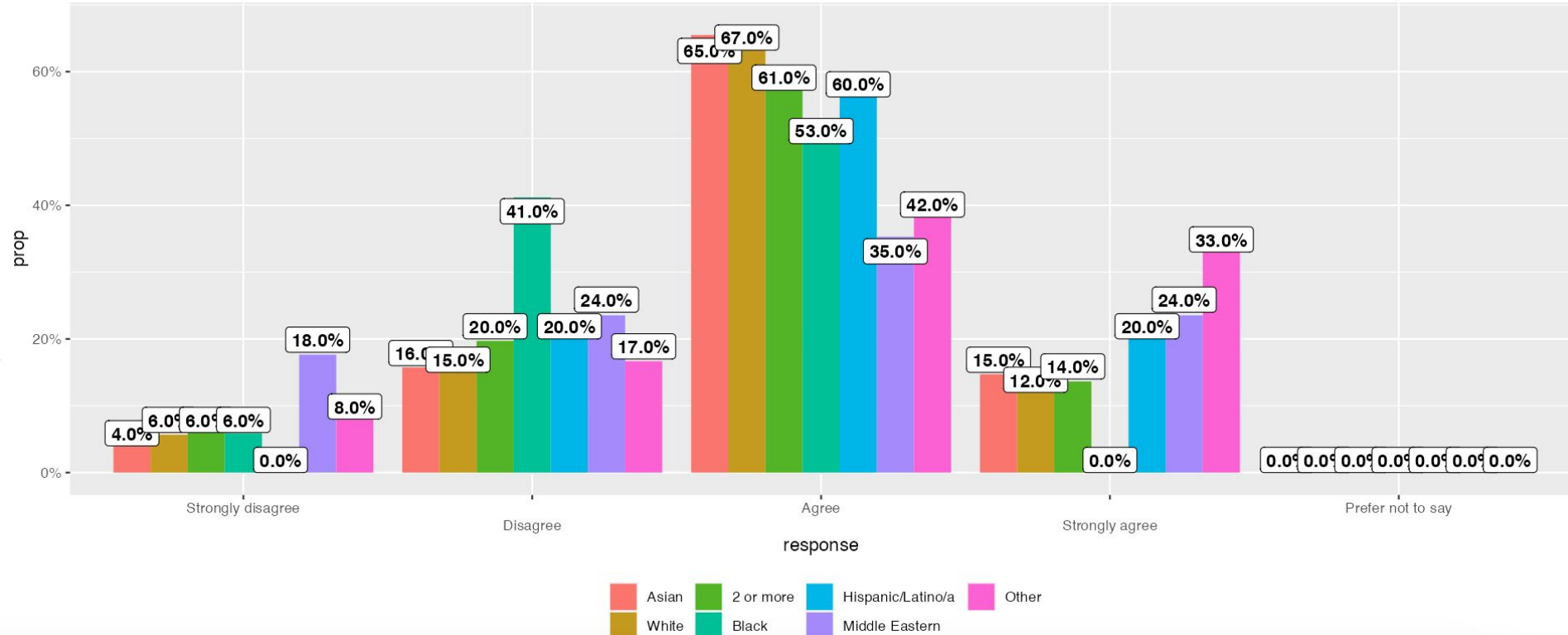
# Please rank your major department on a scale between 1-5:
## "1 = Sexist and 5 = Non-sexist"
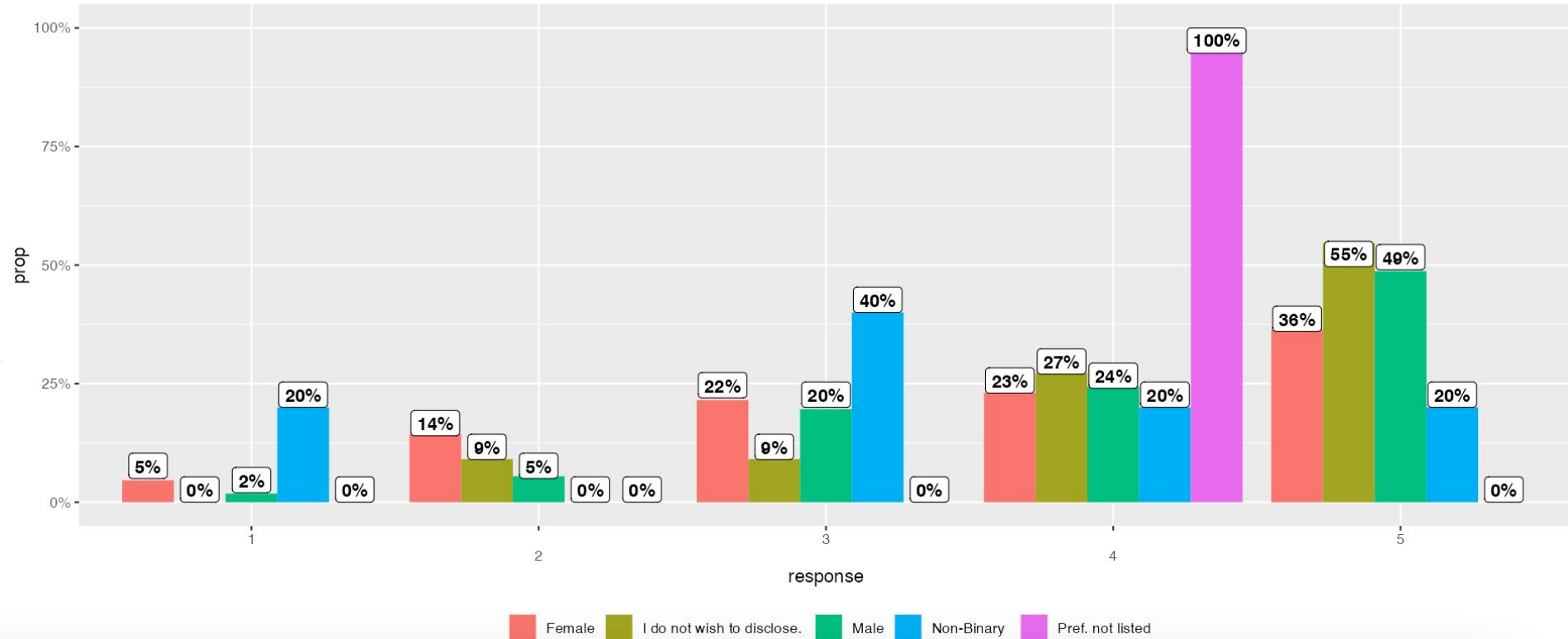
# Please rank your major department on a scale between 1-5:
## "1 = Sexist and 5 = Non-sexist"
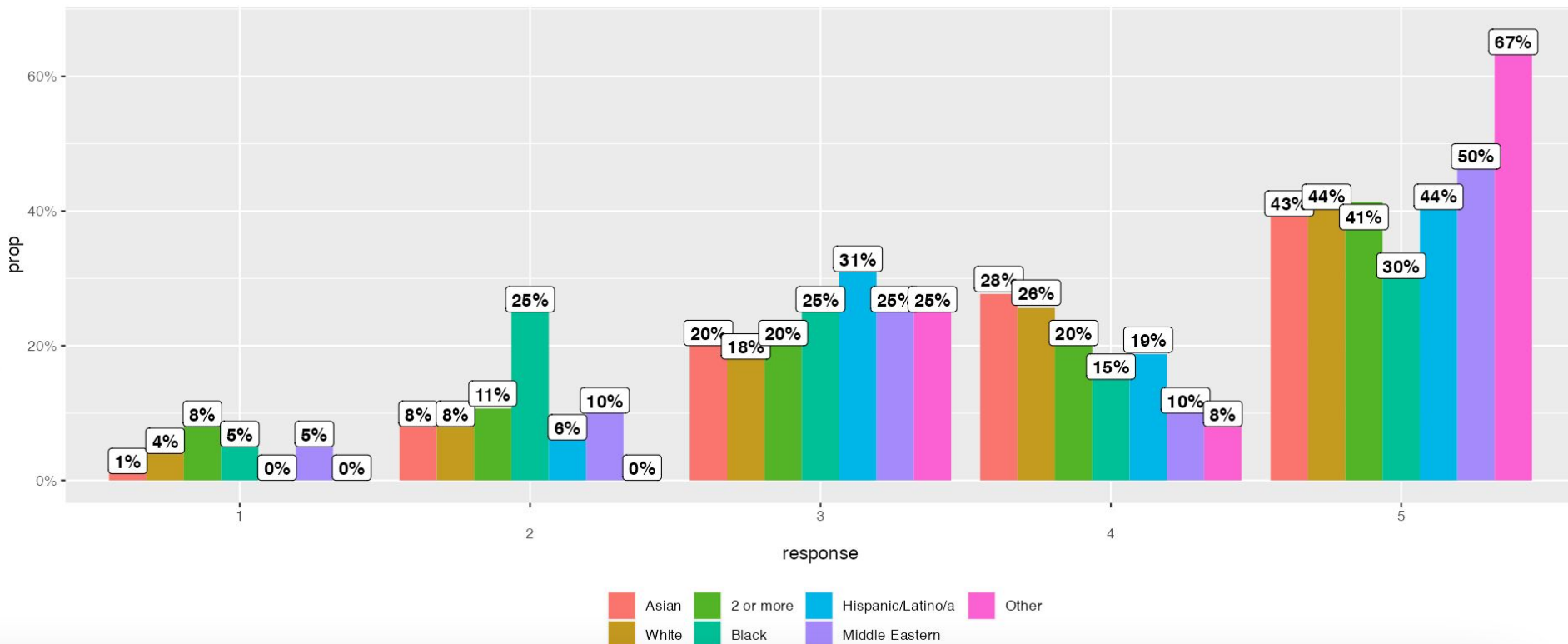
# "Have you ever experienced discrimination or disrespectful/inappropriate behavior in your major department? This includes while being in lecture, office hours, or any other related space on campus."
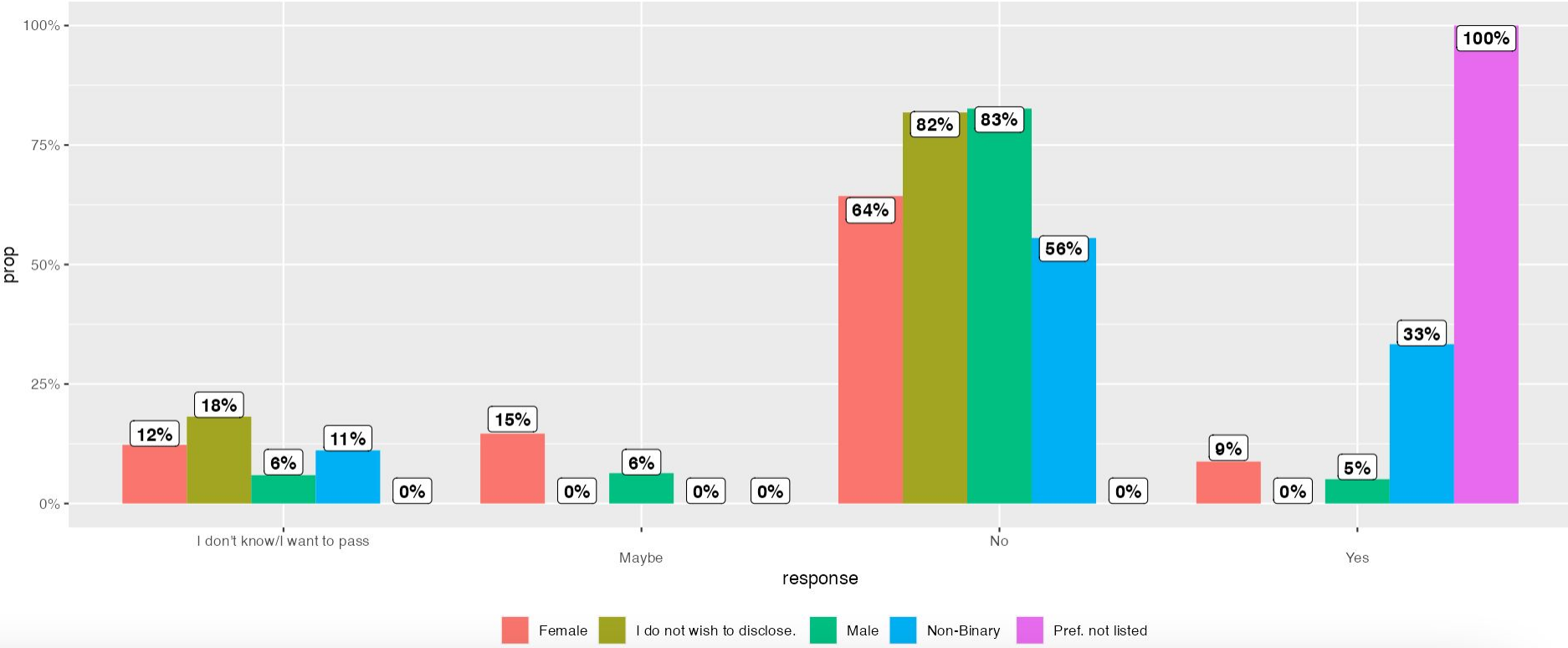
Please rank your major department on a scale between 1-5:
"1 = Competitive and 5 = Cooperative"
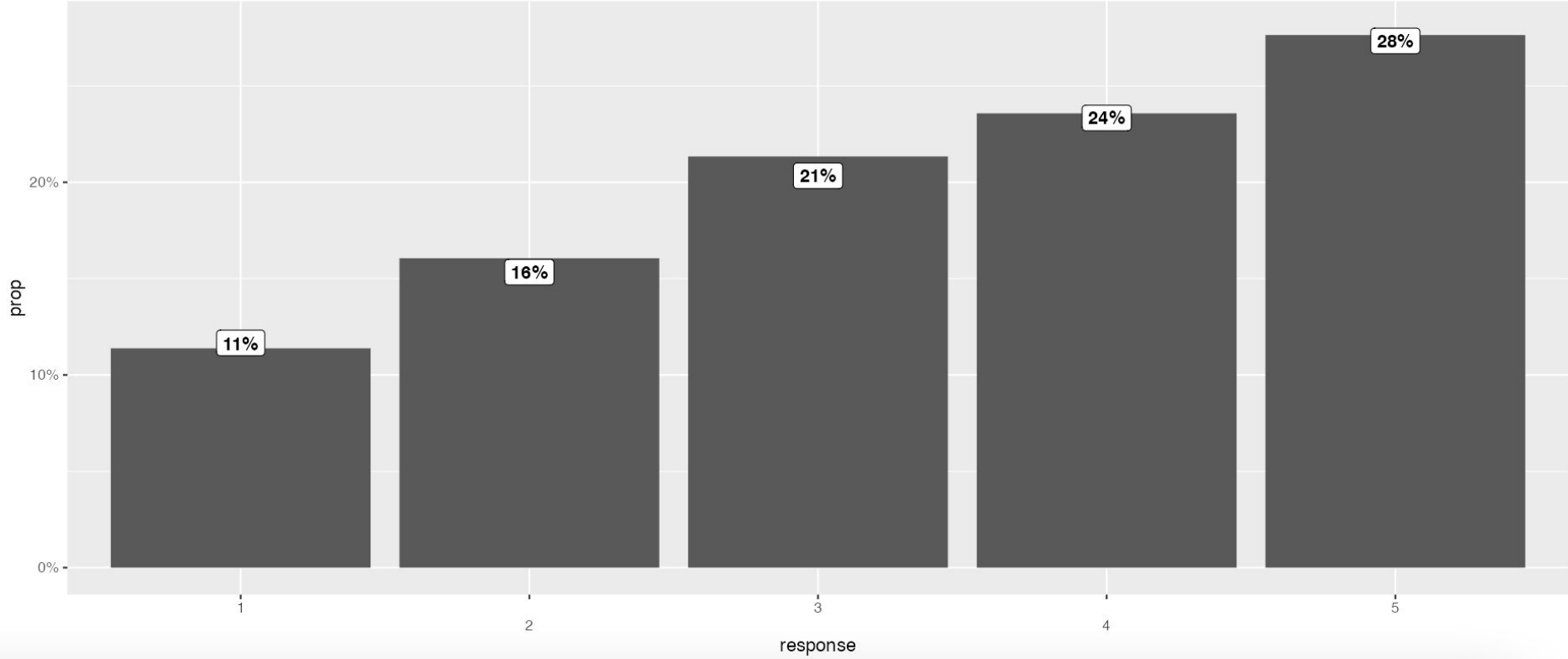
# Support

# Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:
## "I feel stressed"
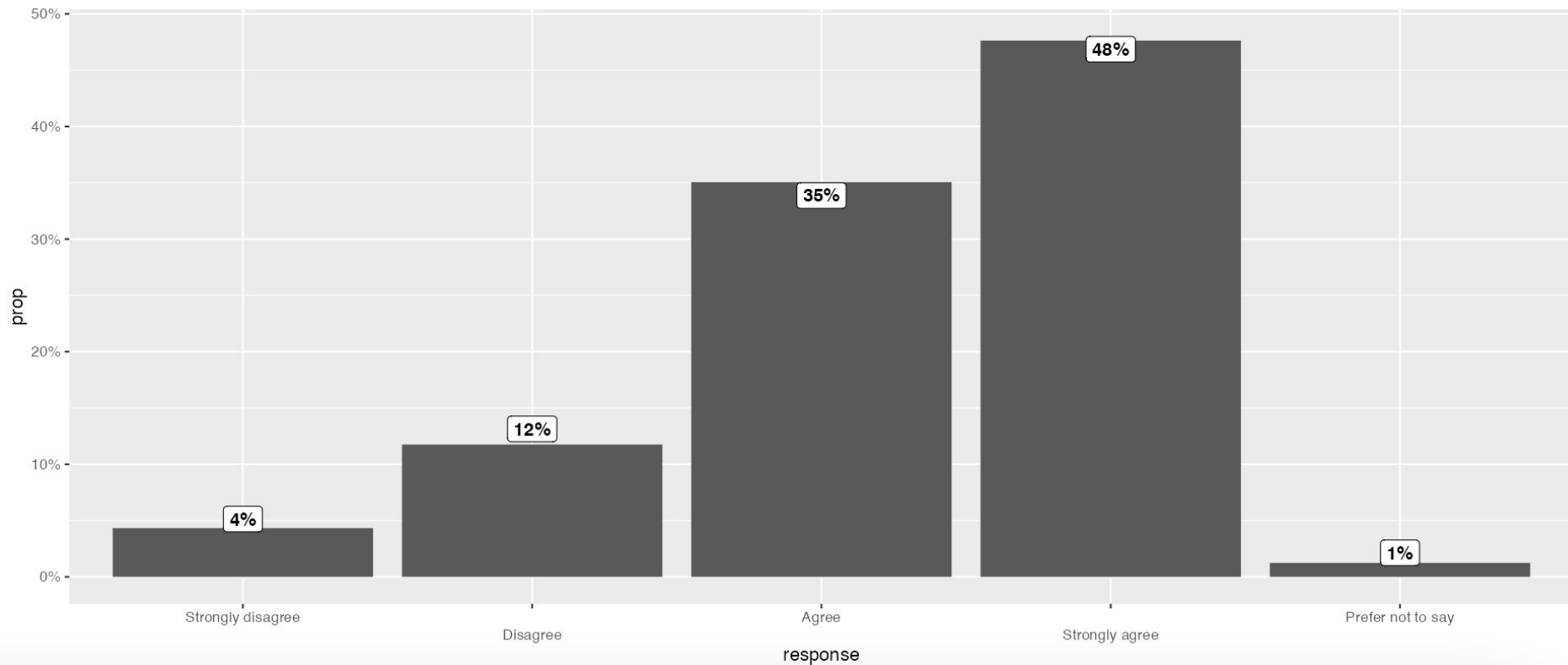
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "I am comfortable going to my advisors for my major"
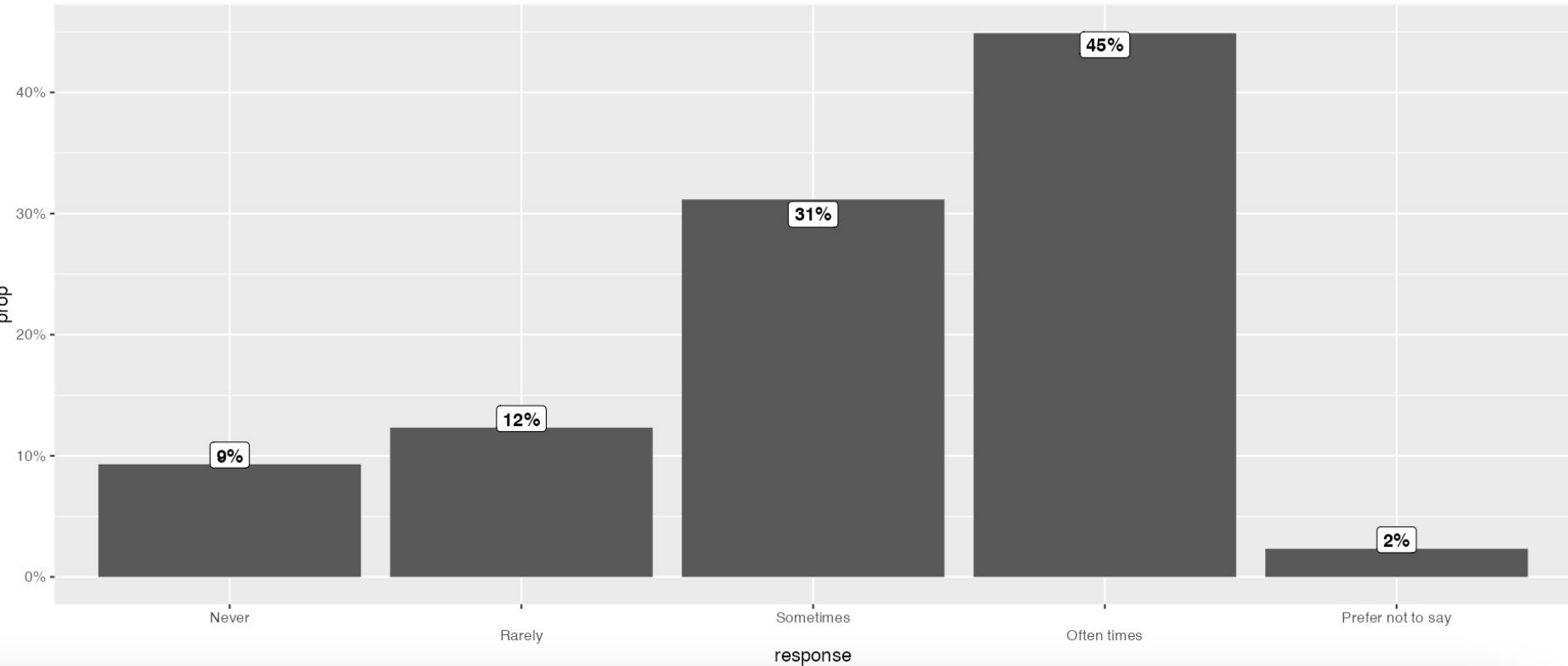
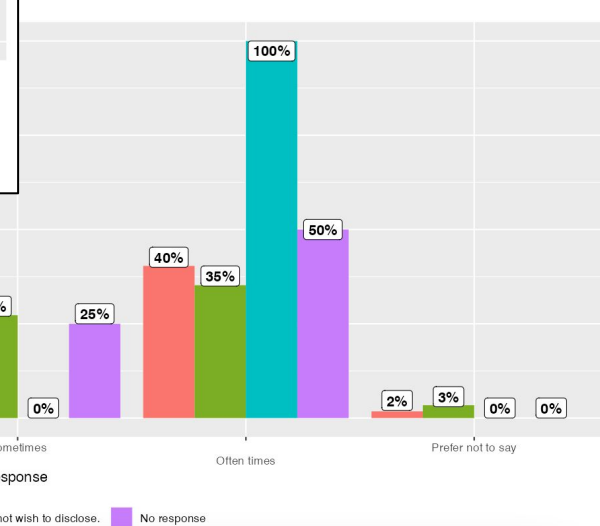Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:
"I am comfortable going to my advisors for my major"
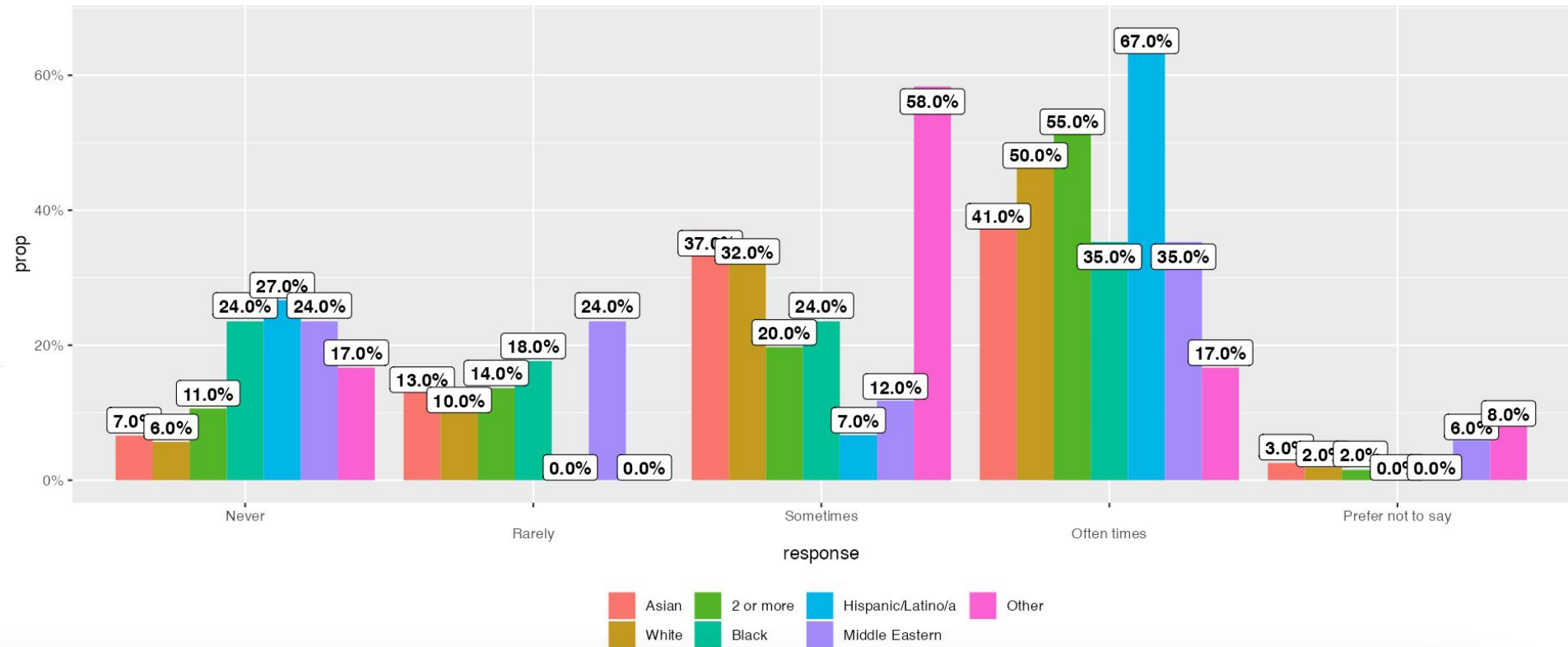
# Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:
## "My advisors for my major are helpful"
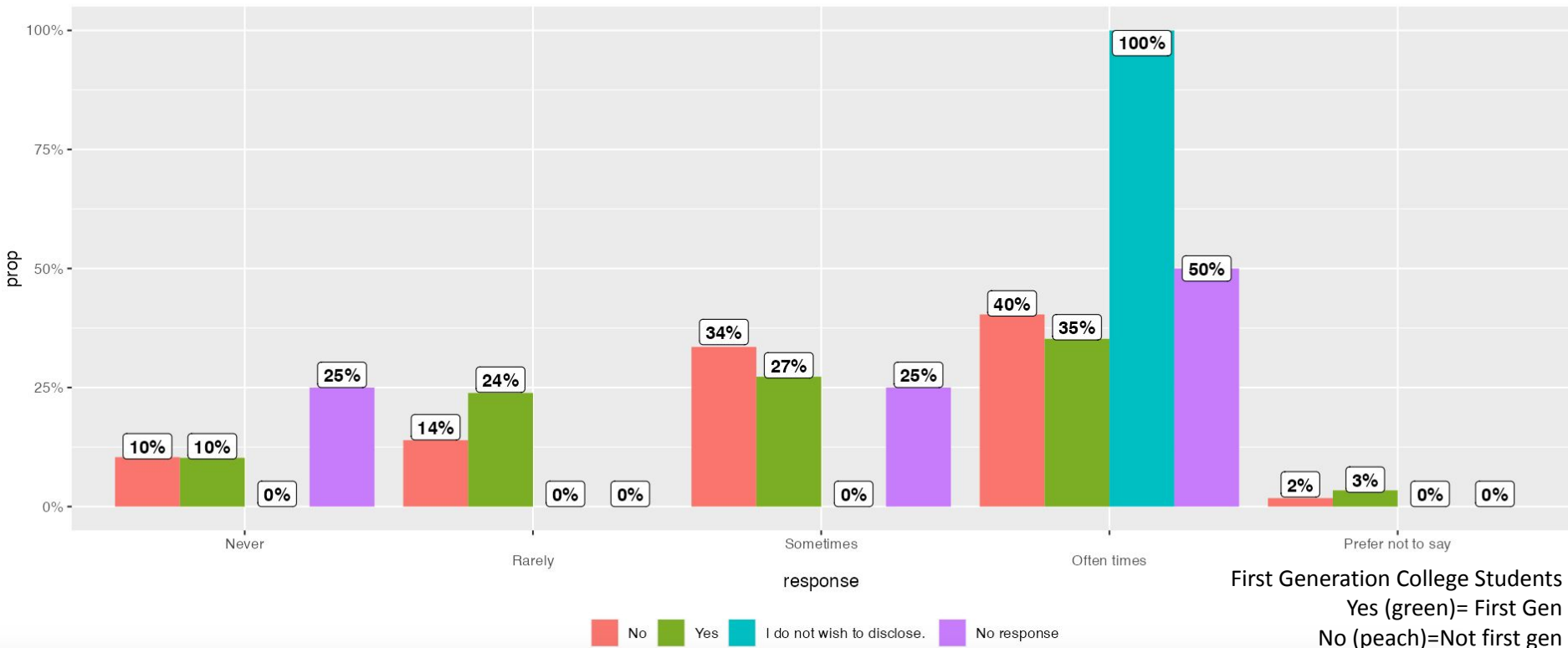


First Generation College Students
Yes (green)= First Gen
No (peach)=Not first gen

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:
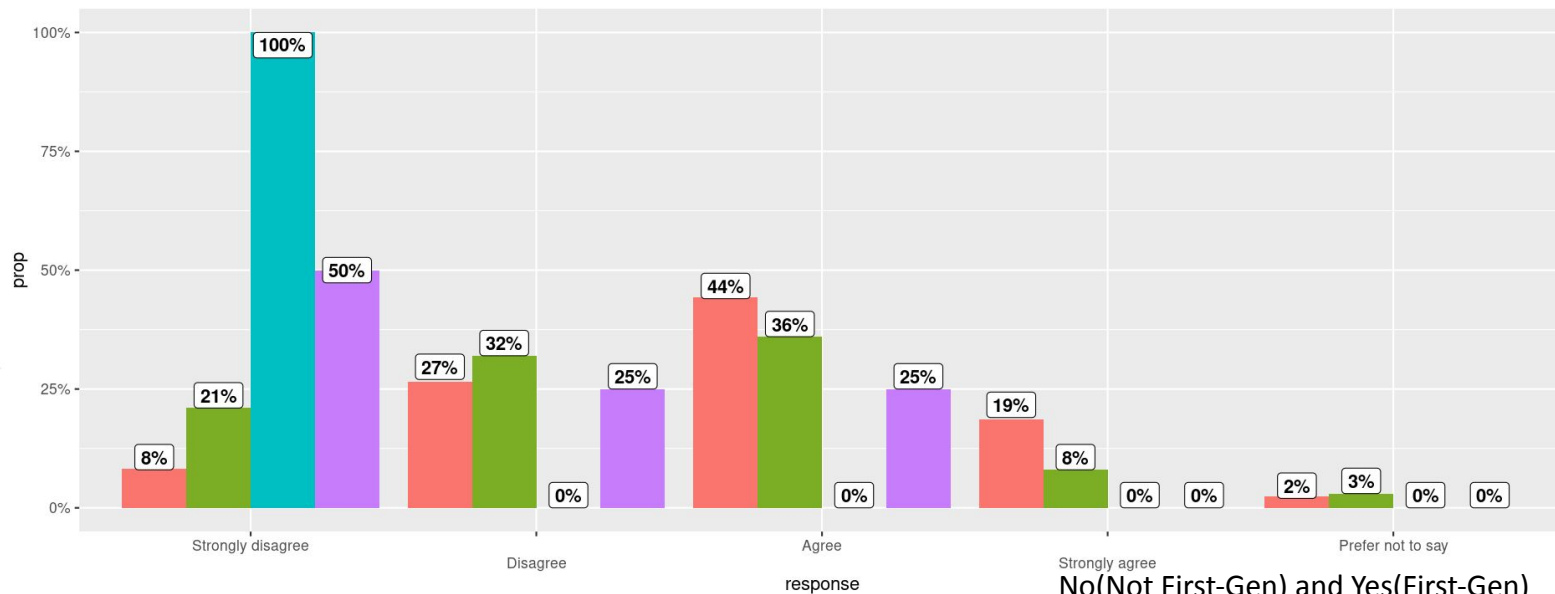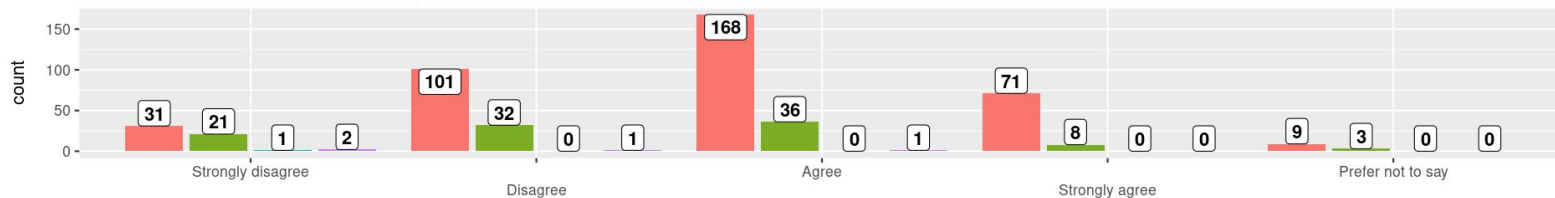"My advisors for my major are helpful"

# Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:
## "I had an easy transition from high school to college"



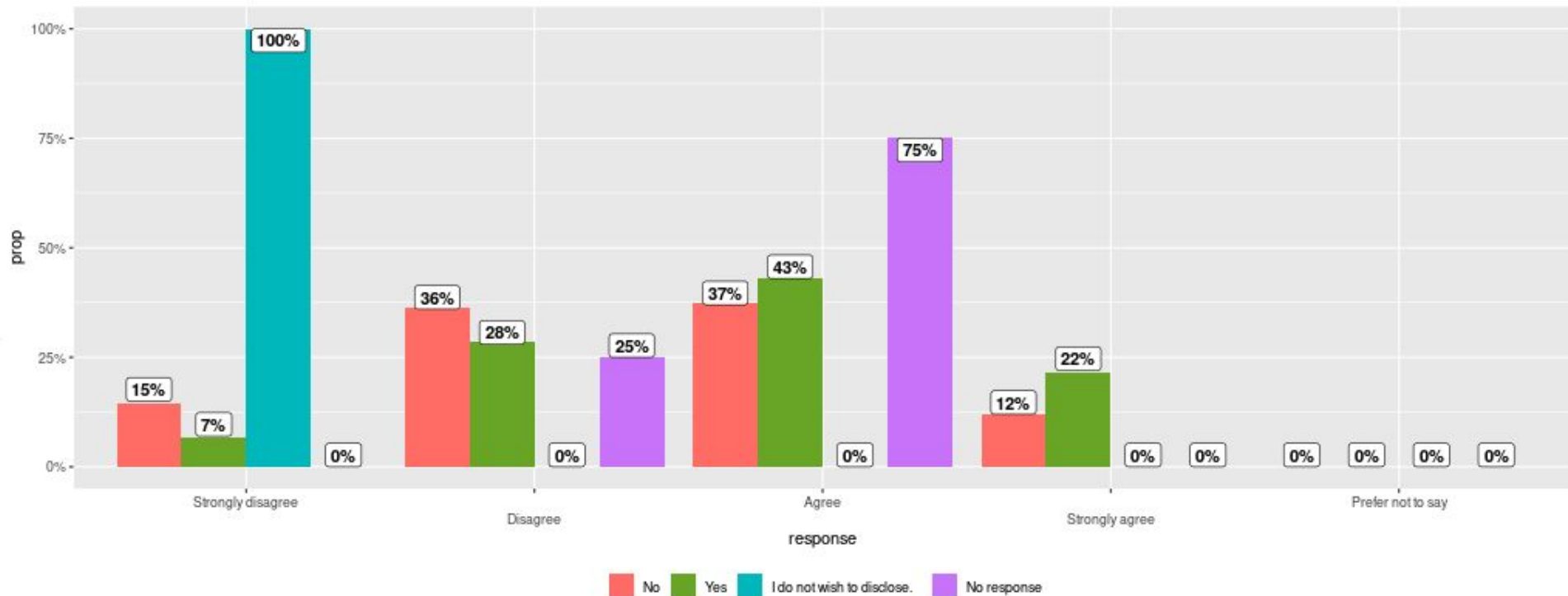No(Not First-Gen) and Yes(First-Gen)

Legend: No | Yes | I do not wish to disclose. | No response
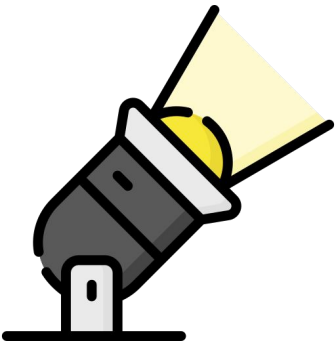
# Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:
# "I have to work harder than others to be valued equally within my major"



No(Not First-Gen) and Yes(First-Gen)

# Report

# Your Voice

Is there anything meaningful or surprising to you about the data?

Any experiences to share? Or reactions to the experiences you've heard about?

What areas do you see needing attention? What kinds of change do you want to see? Any ideas or solutions you'd like to share?

# Thank You

deitech@bu.edu
bit.ly/BUDEITC