

# Young people and climate change:

## A national survey of middle and high school students

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**This project was sponsored by the Boston Museum of Science**



**Museum of Science**

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# Survey Background

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- Results based on a national survey of 1,501 middle and high school students (grades 6 through 12).
- The survey was conducted March 28 through April 12, 2024. Survey invitations were sent to parents and caregivers, who were asked for permission for the student to participate in the survey.
- Results were weighted by student race, age, gender, and geography, as well as caregivers' education level.
- This project was sponsored by the Boston Museum of Science.

# Key findings

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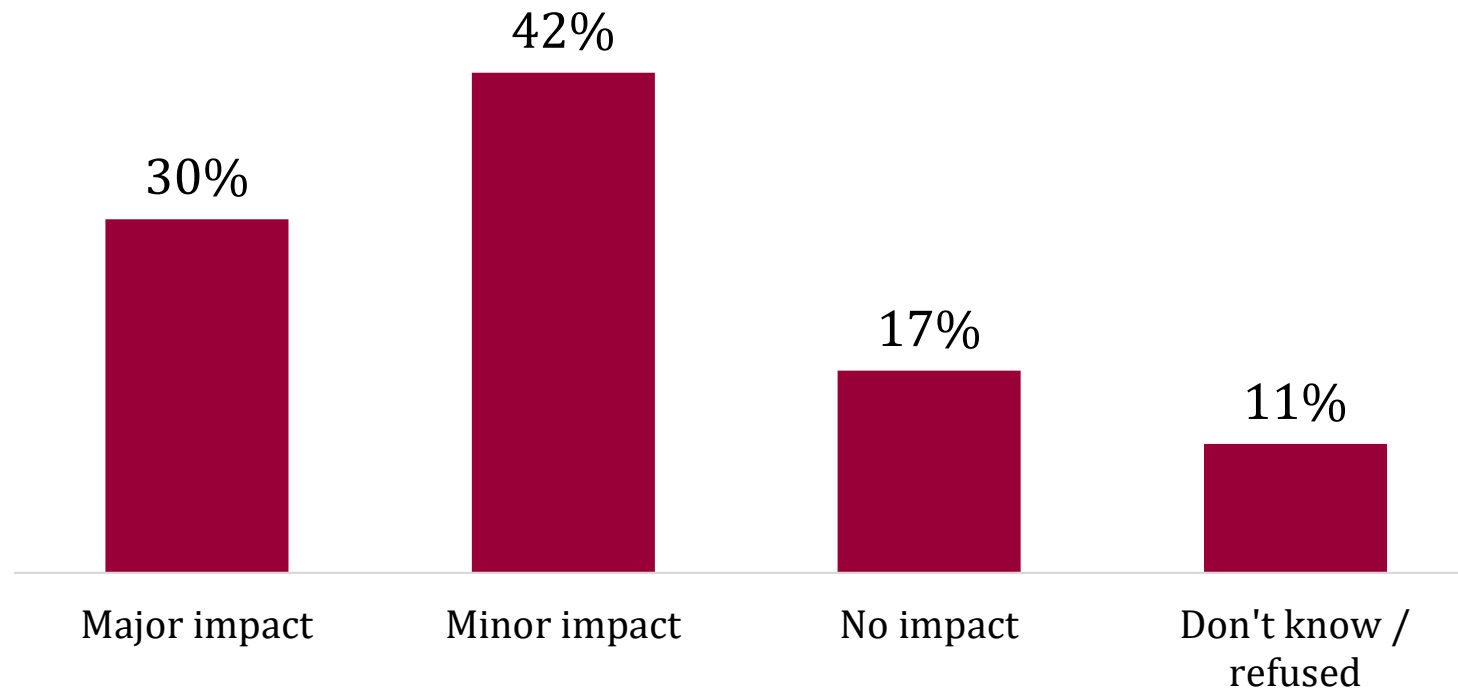
- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of students think climate change is having an impact on their lives currently; 53% think it will be a major problem in their lifetime.
- Most students don't think or talk about climate change very frequently. When they do think about it, they are most likely to feel sad, uneasy, and helpless.
- Students don't think adults are doing enough right now, but most are at least cautiously optimistic their generation will be able to solve the problem.
- Those who think about it the most are also the most hopeful that solutions can be found.

# Current impacts of climate change

- A large majority (72%) of middle and high school students say climate change is already having an impact on their lives.

## Most see climate change currently impacting their lives

*% who say climate change is having a \_\_\_\_\_ on their lives*

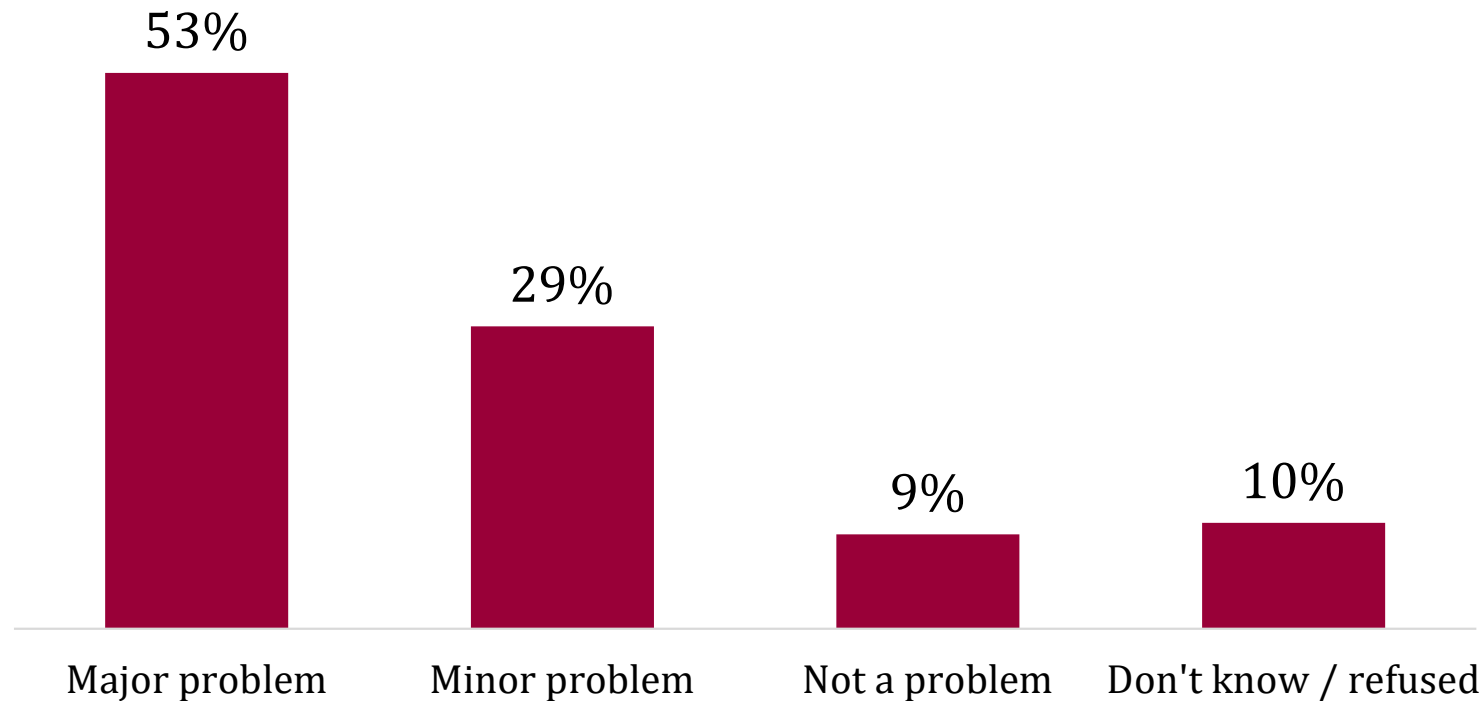


# Climate as problem in their lifetime

- About half (53%) say climate change will be a major problem during the course of their lives.

## About half say climate change will be a major problem in their lifetime

*% who say climate change will be a \_\_\_\_\_ in their lives*

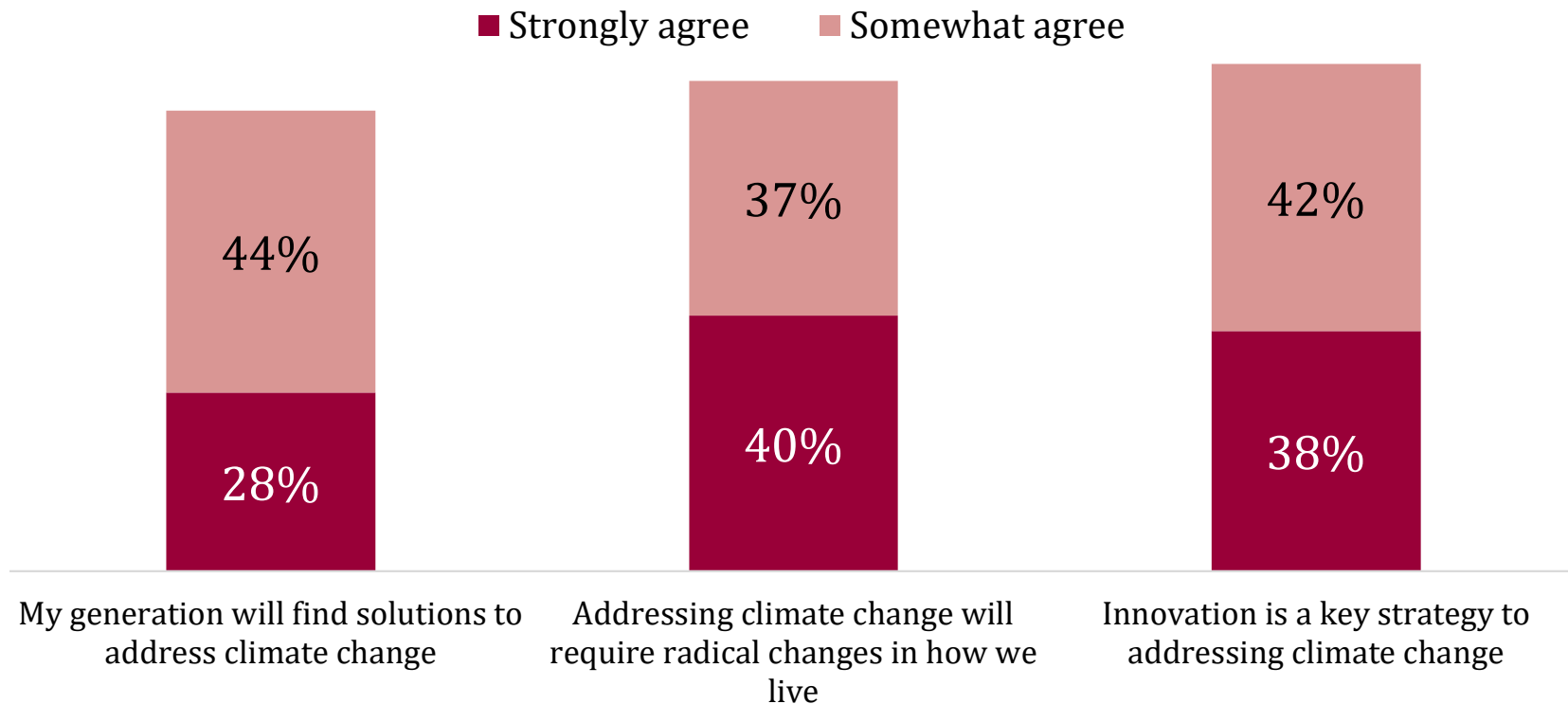


# Hope for climate solutions

- Most (73%) students at least somewhat agree their generation will find solutions to climate change.
- But most also agree that addressing climate will require innovation (80%), and changes to how we live now (77%).

## Students see solutions coming from their generation

*% who agree their generation will find solutions*



# Students of color more concerned

- Students of color are more concerned about climate impacts.
- They are also more likely to say climate will impact their communities more than others.

## Students of color see more impacts of climate change, more concerned

*% of students who express each view*

	White	Black	Latino	AAPI
Will have to live differently	68%	77%	78%	77%
Will be a major problem in your lifetime	50%	54%	58%	60%
Think about all the time / often	31%	36%	42%	43%
Is having a major impact on your life	26%	35%	37%	33%
More vulnerable to climate impacts	23%	30%	32%	30%

*Q: Do you think we will have to live differently as the impacts of climate change grow?*

*Q: How much of a problem do you think climate change will be in your lifetime?*

*Q: How often do you think about climate change?*

*Q: How much of an impact do you think climate change is having on your life?*

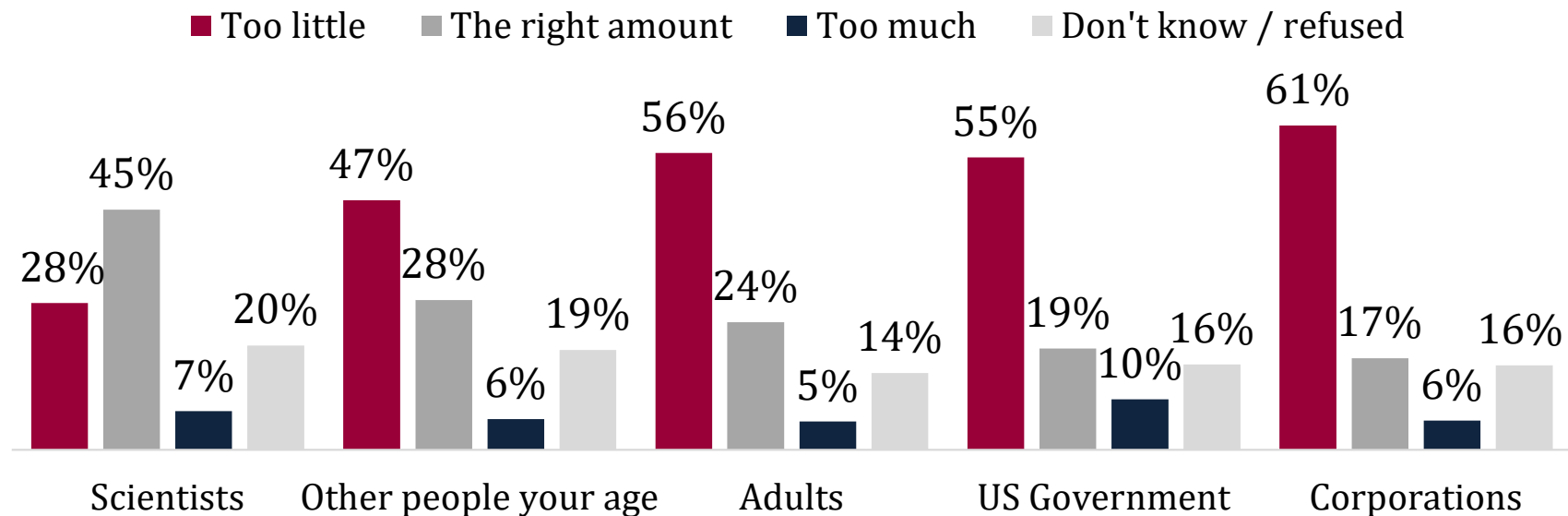
*Q: Compared to other places, do you think the area where you live is [more / less vulnerable] to the impacts of climate change?*

# Most adults seen as not doing enough

- Majorities think all adults (56%), the government (55%), and corporations (61%) are doing too little to address climate change.
- Scientists get the best reviews when it comes to who is doing enough to combat climate change.

## Students mostly think each group should be doing more

*% of students who think each group are doing \_\_\_\_\_ on climate*

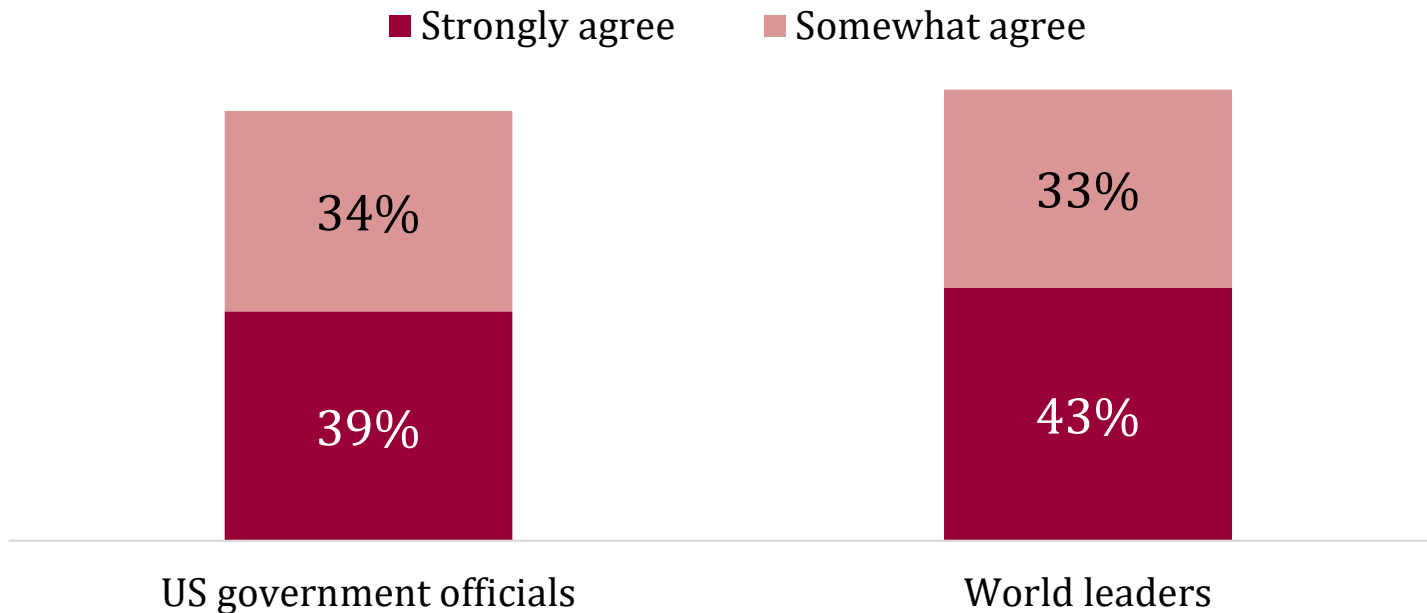




# Priority for leaders

- Students want to see US government (72%) and world leaders (76%) make climate change their top priority.

**Students want to see leaders giving higher priority to climate change**  
*% who agree \_\_\_\_\_ should make climate a top priority*

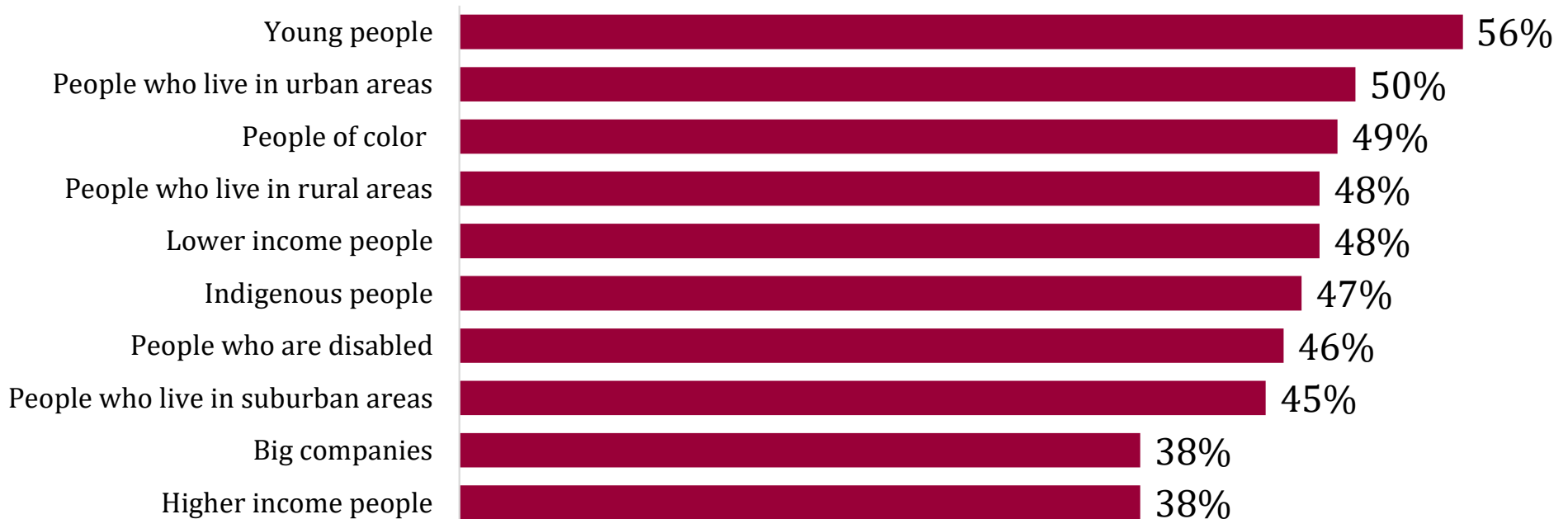


# Students want to be heard on climate

- Students think that leaders need to listen “a lot” to the idea of young people when addressing climate change.
- They think big companies and higher-income people’s ideas should be given less priority.

## Students think leaders need to listen to young people on climate change

*% who think leaders need to listen to each group “a lot” when addressing climate change*

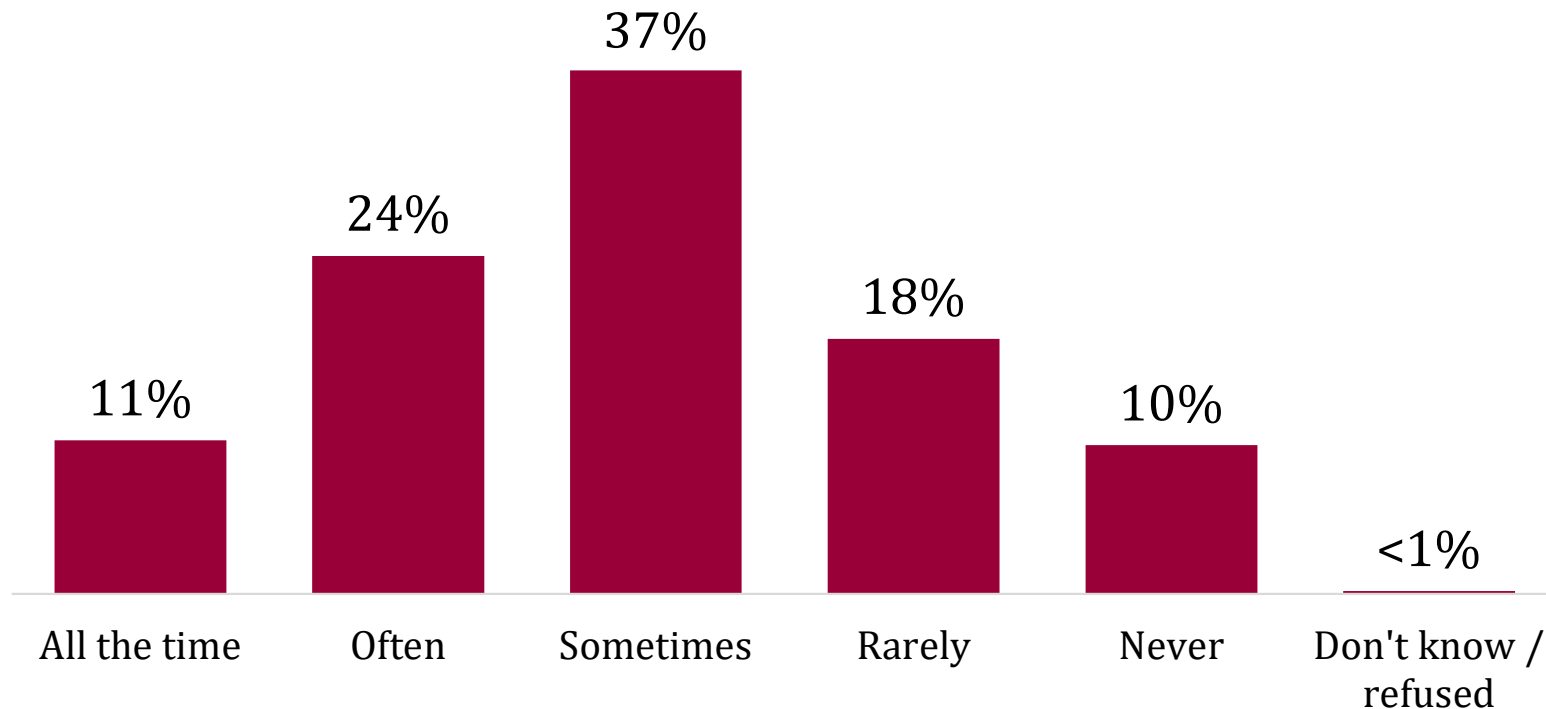


# Thinking about climate change

- Most students (71%) say they think about climate change at least sometimes, but only 35% think about often or all the time.

## Students say climate change is regularly on their minds

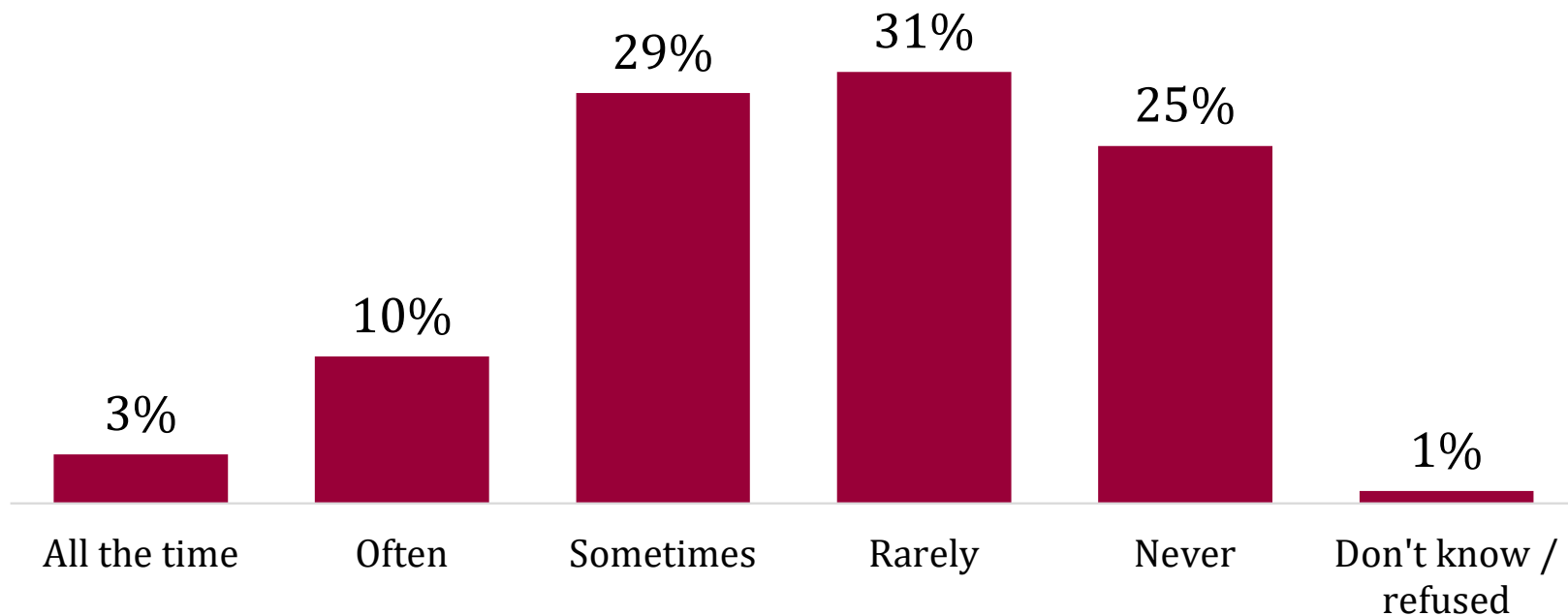
*% of students who say they think about climate change \_\_\_\_\_*



# Not discussed often

- Few say their peers discuss climate change often. Most (86%) say “sometimes” or less often.

**Conversations about climate change are less frequent than thoughts about it**  
*% who say they discuss climate change with their friends \_\_\_\_\_*

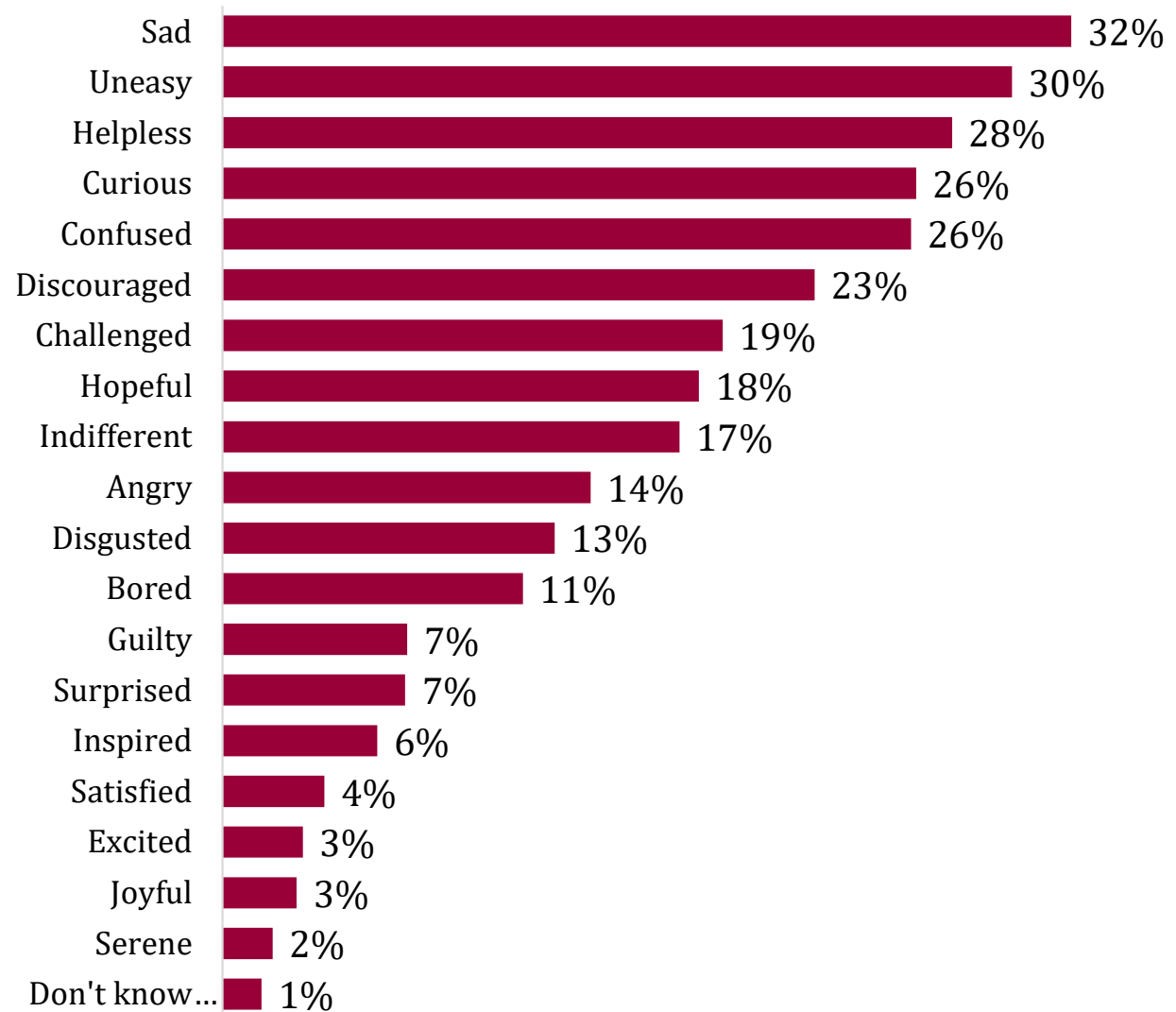


# Emotional reactions to climate change

- When students do think about climate, the emotions they feel tend to be negative and troubling: sadness, unease, helplessness.

## Climate change brings troubling emotions

*% who say they feel \_\_\_ when thinking about climate*

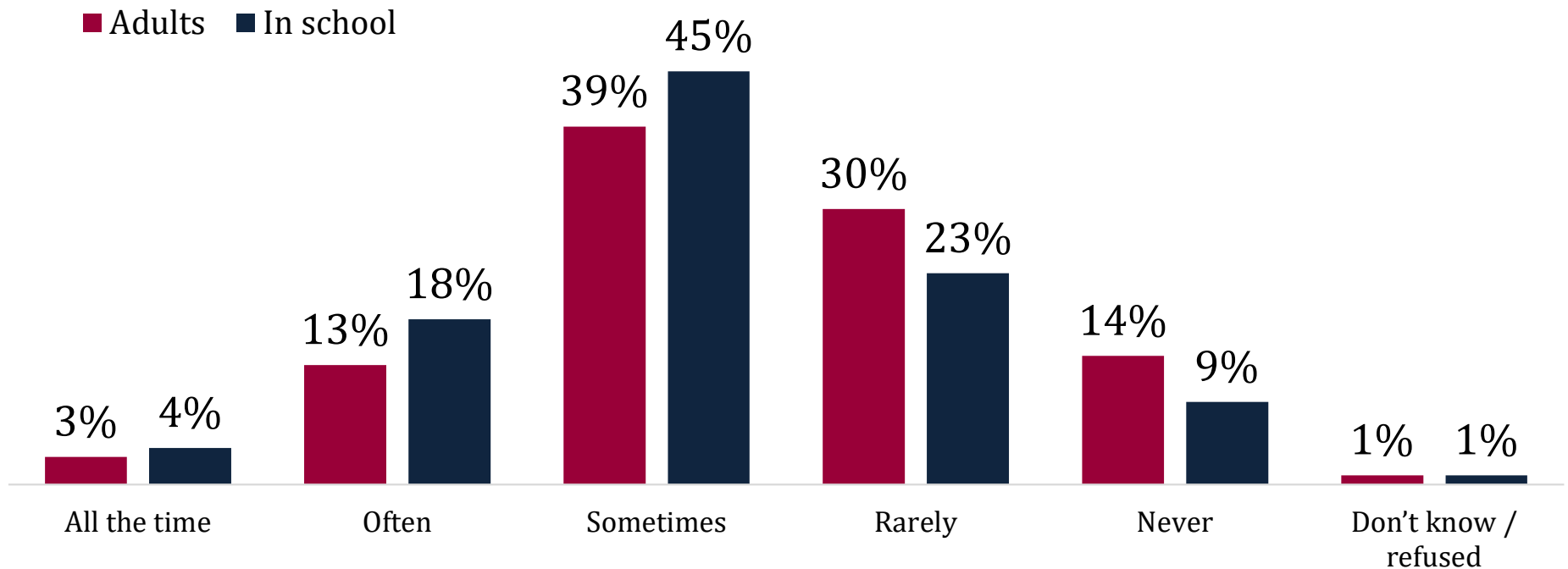


# Adults, school discussing climate

- Students are not hearing about climate very often in class at school or from adults in their lives.

## Students are not hearing about climate very often from adults, in class

*% of students feeling \_\_\_\_ impact who agree with each statement*

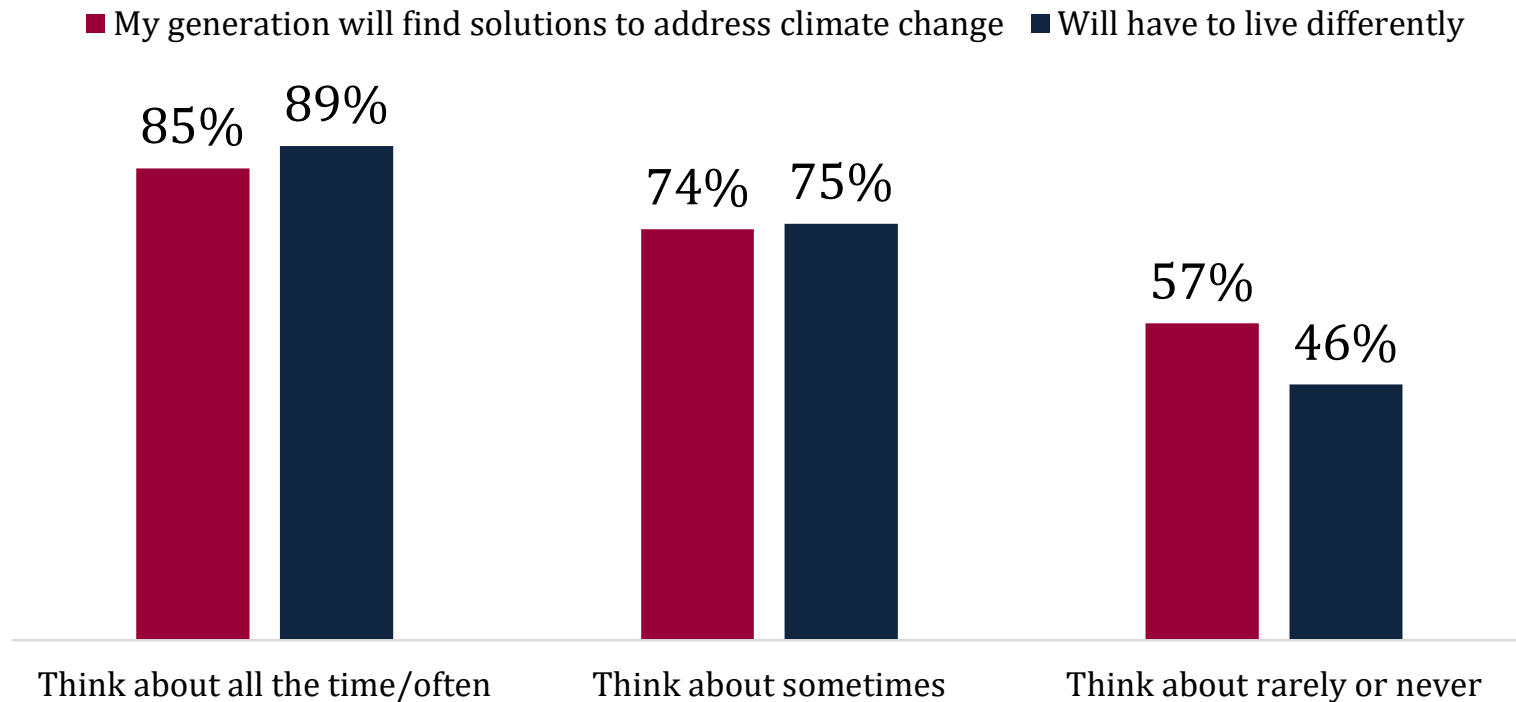


# The most engaged are more hopeful

- Those who think about climate change the most are also most likely to see solutions – and changes – ahead.

## Those thinking most about climate also most optimistic

*% of students who feel \_\_\_\_ impact who at least somewhat agree with each statement*

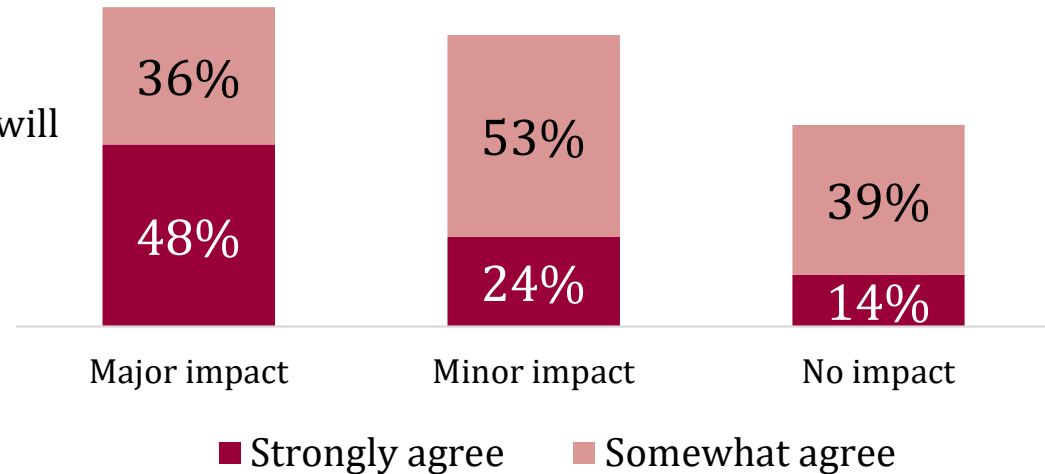


# Most affected also more hopeful

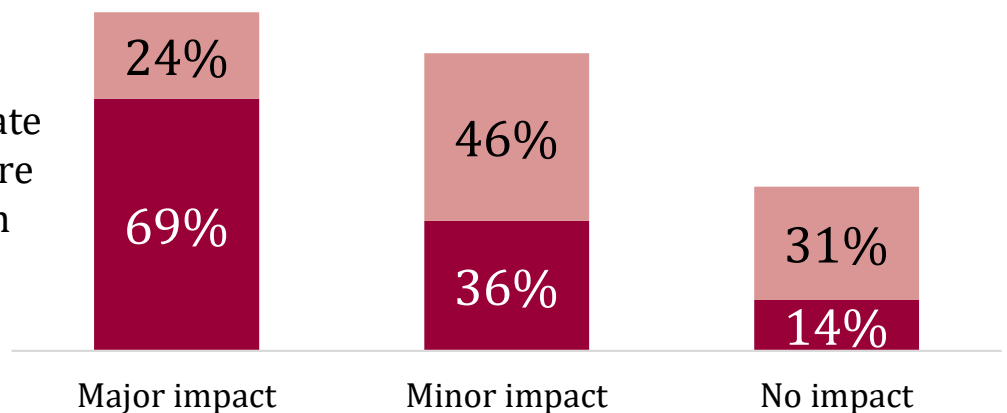
- Students who are feeling the greatest impact from climate change already are also the most optimistic that solutions will be found.
- They also recognize addressing climate change will require changes to how we live.

**Those feeling the most impact are also the most optimistic**  
*% of students feeling \_\_\_ impact who agree with each statement*

“My generation will find solutions to address climate change”



“Addressing climate change will require radical changes in how we live”



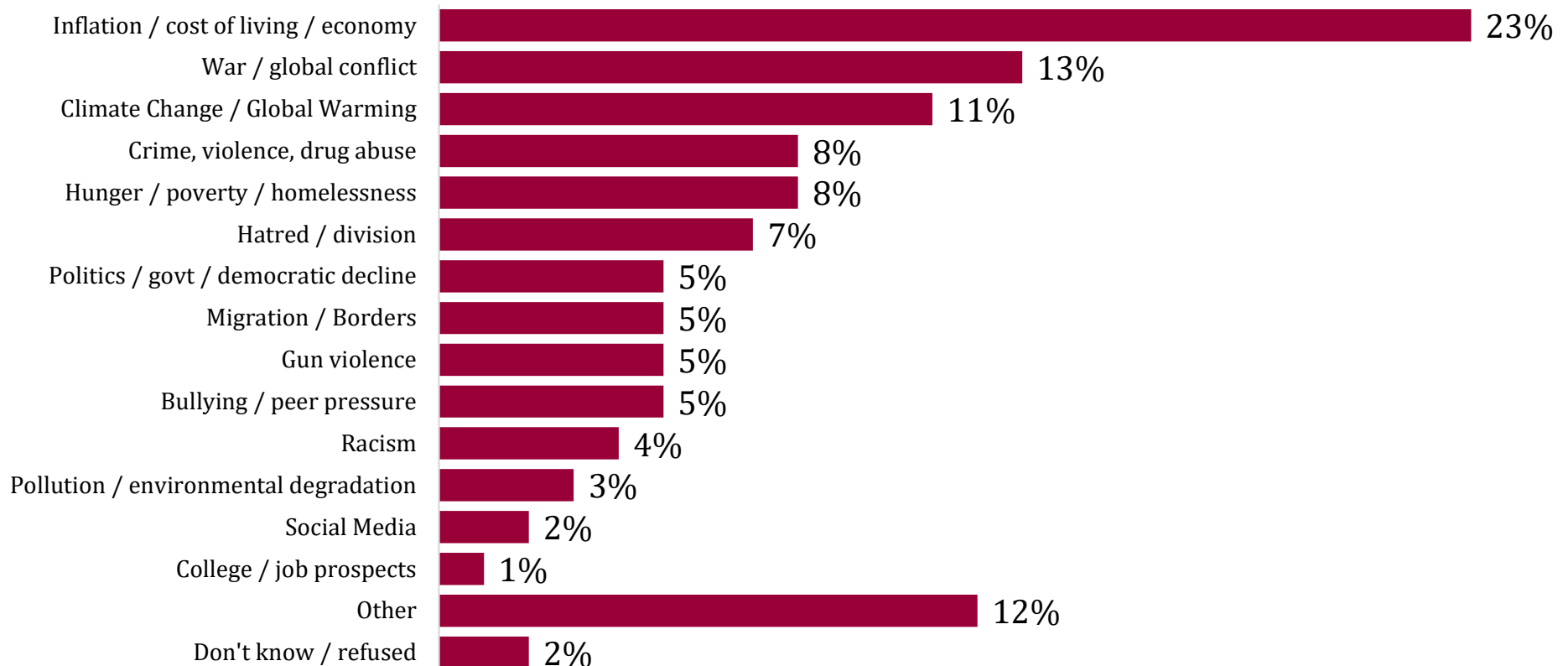


# Students' most important issue

- Climate change is a top-3 issue for students, behind economic issues and war.
- Another 3% cited pollution or other environmental issues

## Climate is a top-3 global issue for students

*% of students who cited each as the biggest issue facing the world right now*





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