

Dane County Youth Assessment (DCYA) 2024: Gun Access

Dane County Youth Commission

August 20, 2025

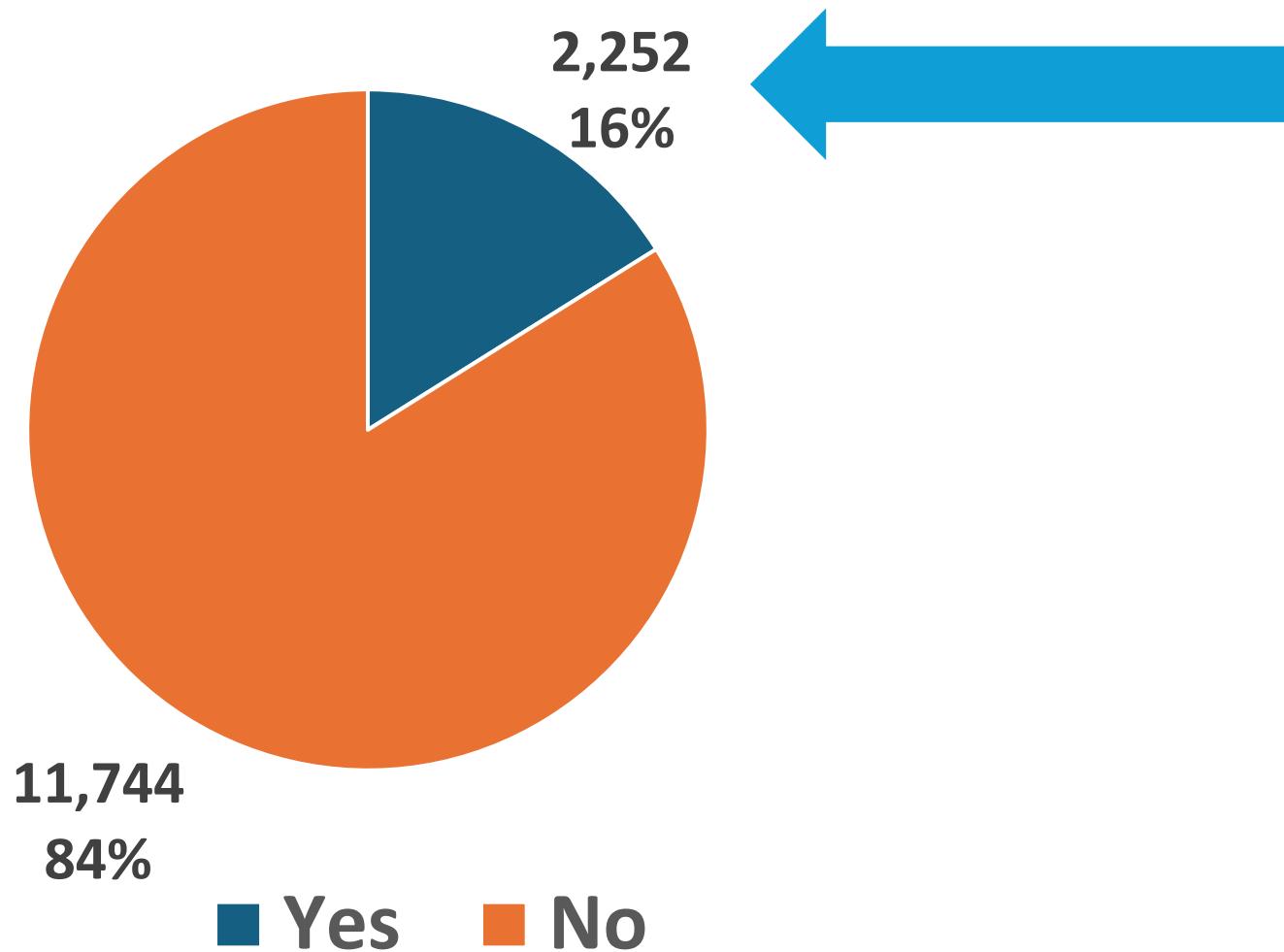
Sensitive Content Notice

- In addition to data related to gun access, data related to mental health, including suicide, will be shared during this presentation

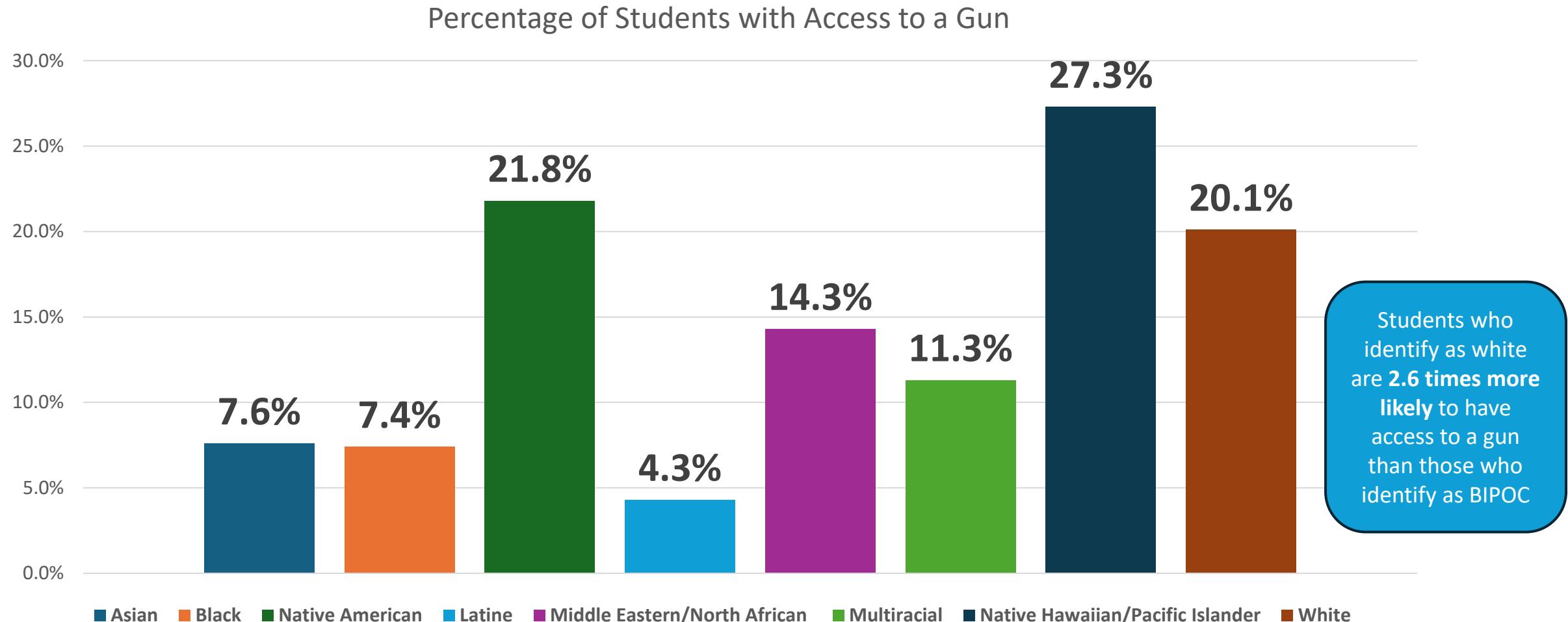
DCYA Background

- Survey conducted among middle and high school students every three years to capture their opinions, concerns, behaviors, attitudes, and experiences on a wide range of topics
- Partners include Dane County, the City of Madison, Public Health Madison Dane County, the United Way of Dane County, and 17 school districts
- 24,471 students in grades 7-12 completed the survey in 2024
 - Most districts captured over 80% of their students

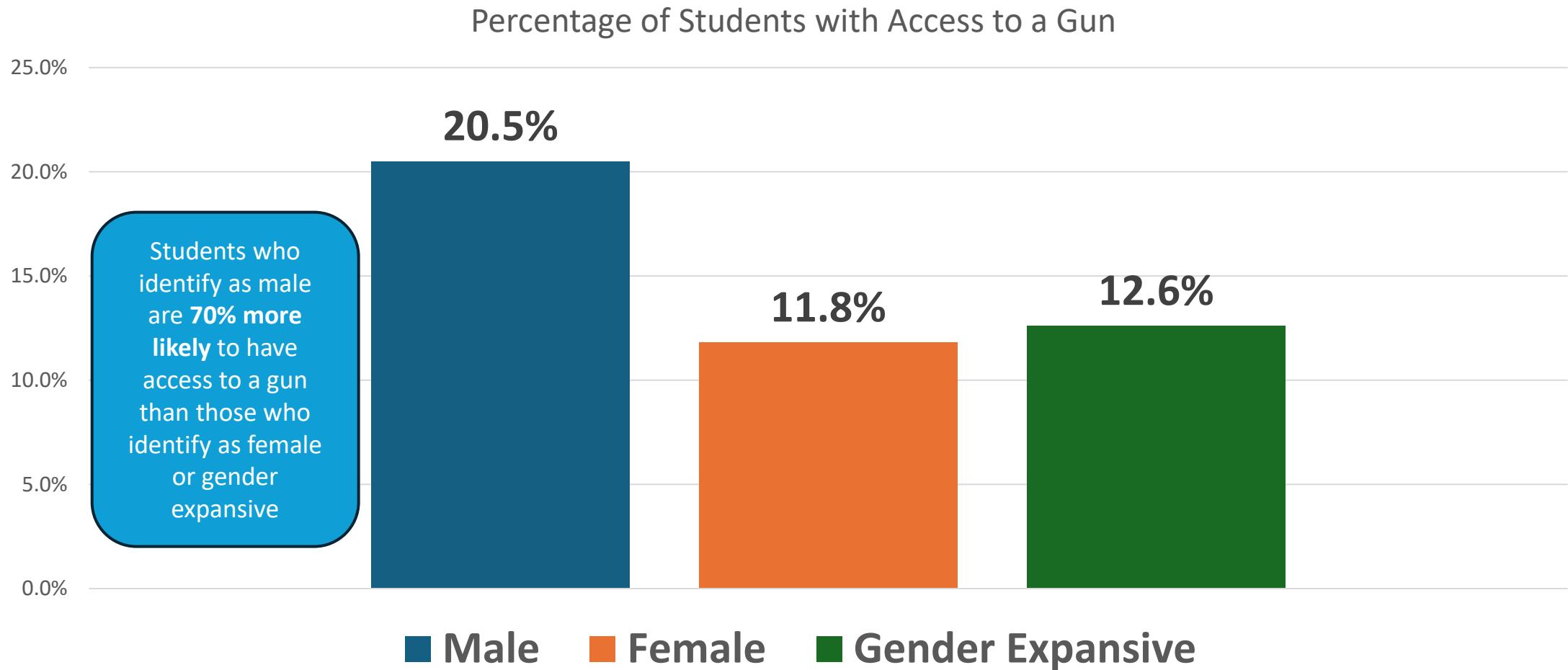
Primary Survey Question of Focus: *Do you have access to a gun? (HS only)*



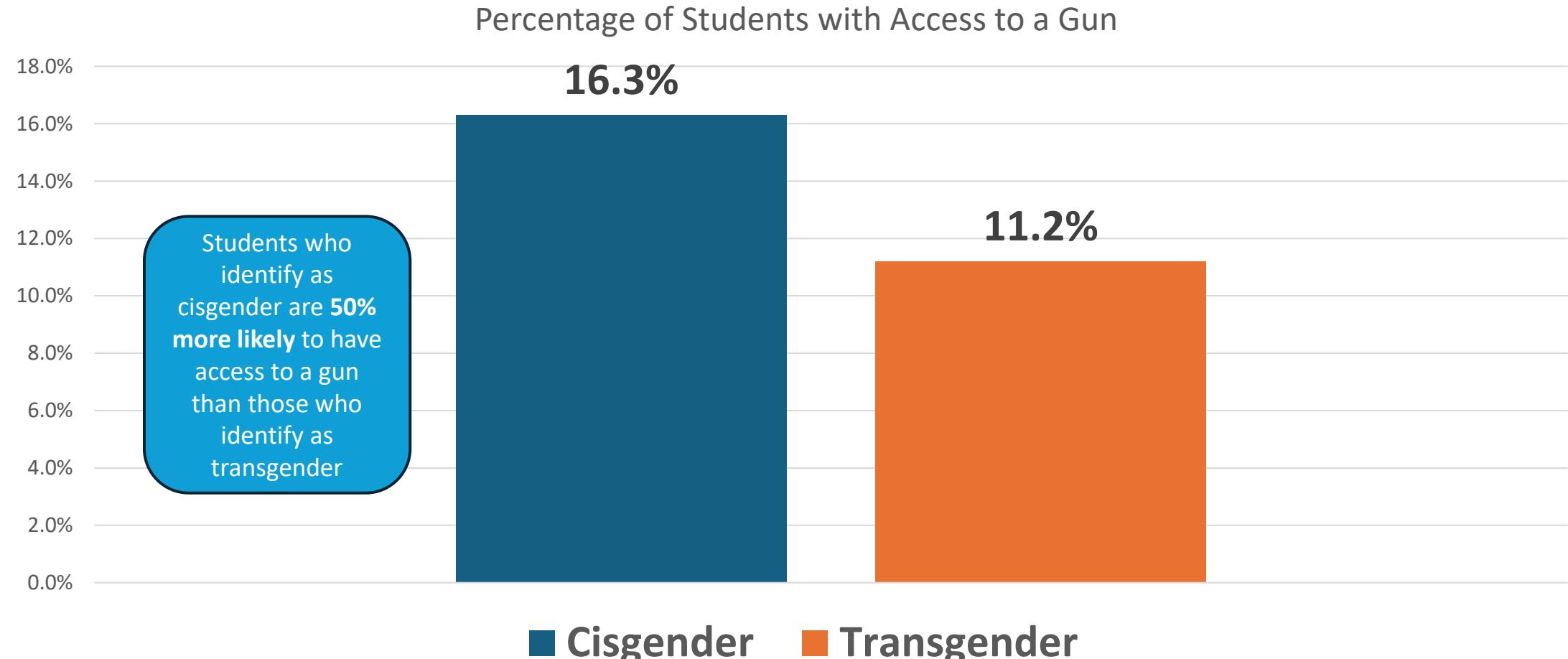
Differences Across Demographics: Race/Ethnicity



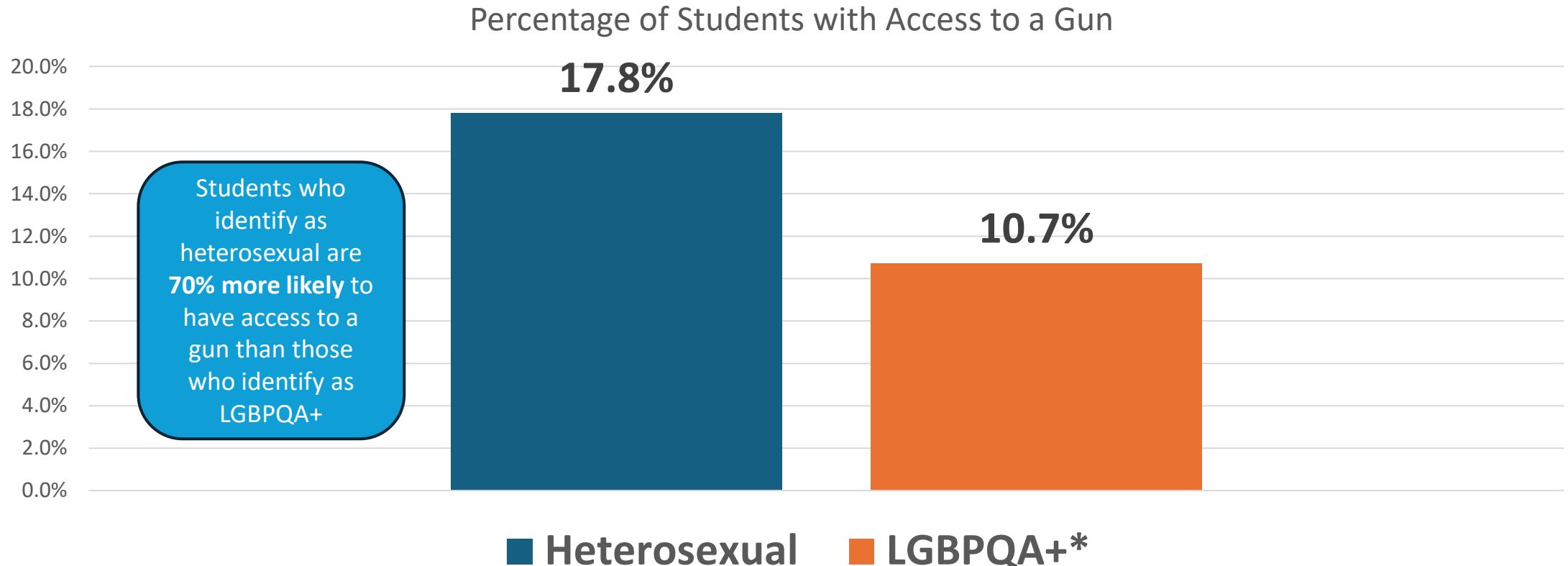
Differences Across Demographics: Gender Identity



Differences Across Demographics: Transgender Identity



Differences Across Demographics: Sexual Orientation



* Data for students who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Questioning, Asexual, or another sexual orientation not listed are combined due to relatively small numbers of students reporting access to a gun across multiple groups

Who is most likely to have access to a gun?

- **25.2%** of white male students reported having access to a gun compared to **11.8%** of all other students
- White male students are **2.1 times** more likely to have access to a gun than all other students combined

Gun Access + School Connectedness

Using a 6-item scale to measure connectedness at school, those who report **not feeling connected** at school are **24% more likely** to have access to a gun than those report feeling connected at school (18.8% vs. 15.2%)

Those who report **not feeling close to people** at school are **5% more likely** to have access to a gun than those who report feeling close to people at school

Those who report **not feeling safe** at school are **7% more likely** to have access to a gun than those who report feeling safe at school

Those who report **not feeling a sense of belonging** at school are **14% more likely** to have access to a gun than those who report feeling a sense of belonging at school

Gun Access + Mental Health

- Using a 3-item scale developed at UCLA to measure loneliness, those who report **feelings of loneliness** are **12% more likely** to have access to a gun than those who don't report feeling lonely
- Those who report **NOT receiving mental health services** are **26% more likely** to have access to a gun than those who report receiving mental health services

Gun Access + Mental Health

- Those who report **suicide ideation** are **42% more likely** to have access to a gun than those who have not thought seriously about killing themselves in the past year
 - Among white males this increases to 51%
- Those who report **making a plan to attempt suicide** are **55% more likely** to have access to a gun than those who have not made a plan to attempt suicide in the past year
 - Among white males this increases to 67%
- Those who report **attempting suicide** are **47% more likely** to have access to a gun than those who have not attempted suicide
 - Among white males, this increases to 220%

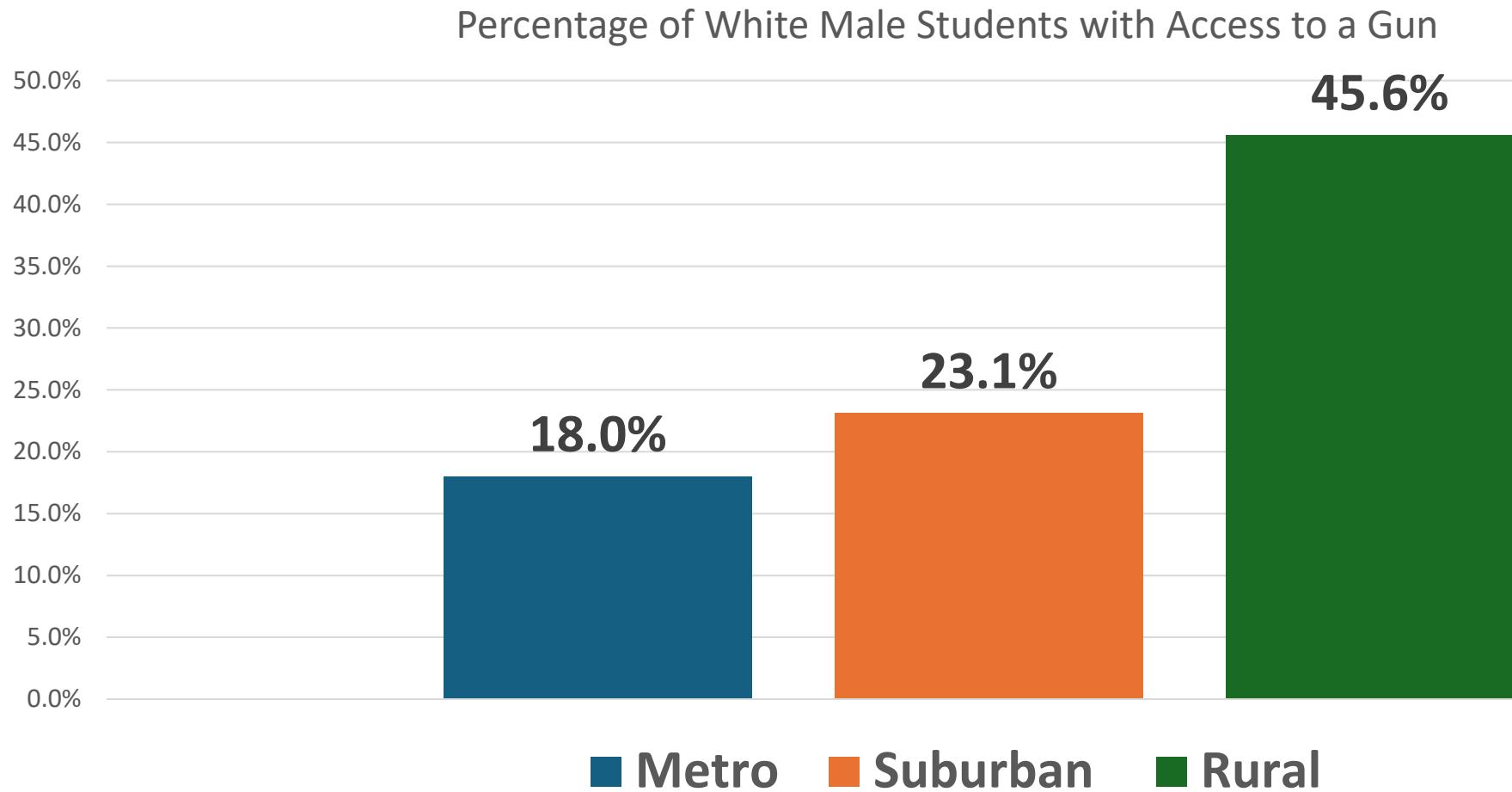
Additional Data to Address Follow-up Questions

February 4, 2026

Do white male students have more access to guns because of hunting?

- The survey does not directly ask any questions about hunting
- In Wisconsin:
 - Men & boys are much more likely to hunt than women & girls
 - People in rural areas are more likely to hunt than people in urban areas, and hunting is more likely to be part of rural cultural identity
- Dane County school districts have been broken down into three geographical areas – Inner Metro, Middle Suburban, and Outer Rural – based on population density, proximity to downtown Madison, transportation & infrastructure, economic patterns, and student demographic diversity

Gun Access by Geography



White male students in rural schools are **2.2x more likely** to have access to a gun than those in suburban and metro schools

Factors Associated with Gun Access among White Male Students

Those who report not feeling connected to school are more likely to have access to a gun

- Similar association for white males in metro/suburban and rural schools

Those who report suicide ideation are more likely to have access to a gun

- Similar association for white males in metro/suburban and rural schools

Those who report making a plan and/or attempting suicide are more likely to have access to a gun

- **Stronger associate for white males in metro/suburban schools than rural schools**

Those NOT receiving mental health services are more likely to have access to a gun

- Similar association for white males in metro/suburban and rural schools