

Behavioral Health Disparities for People with Disabilities in Delaware

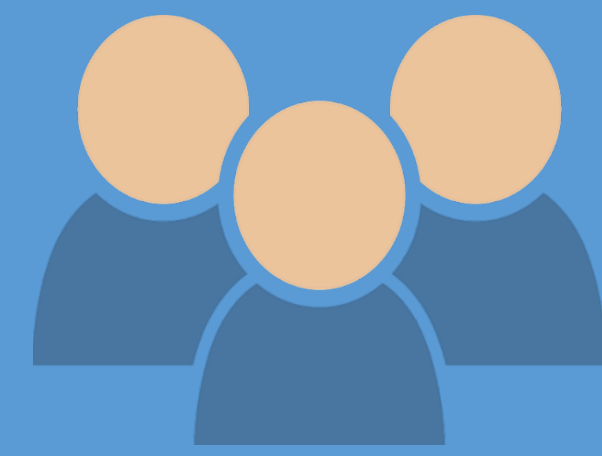
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Adults and youth with disabilities disproportionately use tobacco and other substances, experience behavioral health conditions, and confront barriers accessing behavioral health treatment, compared to those without disabilities.

Disability Prevalence

Nearly **1 in 3 adults** in Delaware report having a disability.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2017



1 in 4 children in Delaware

have at least one functional difficulty.

National Survey of Children's Health, 2017

Prevalence of overall substance use (except alcohol) is higher for people with disabilities than for people without disabilities.¹

Definitions of disability

Functioning in daily life is the essence of the current approach to classifying disability. Data collection standards issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services identify six areas of difficulty in functioning when defining disability status.

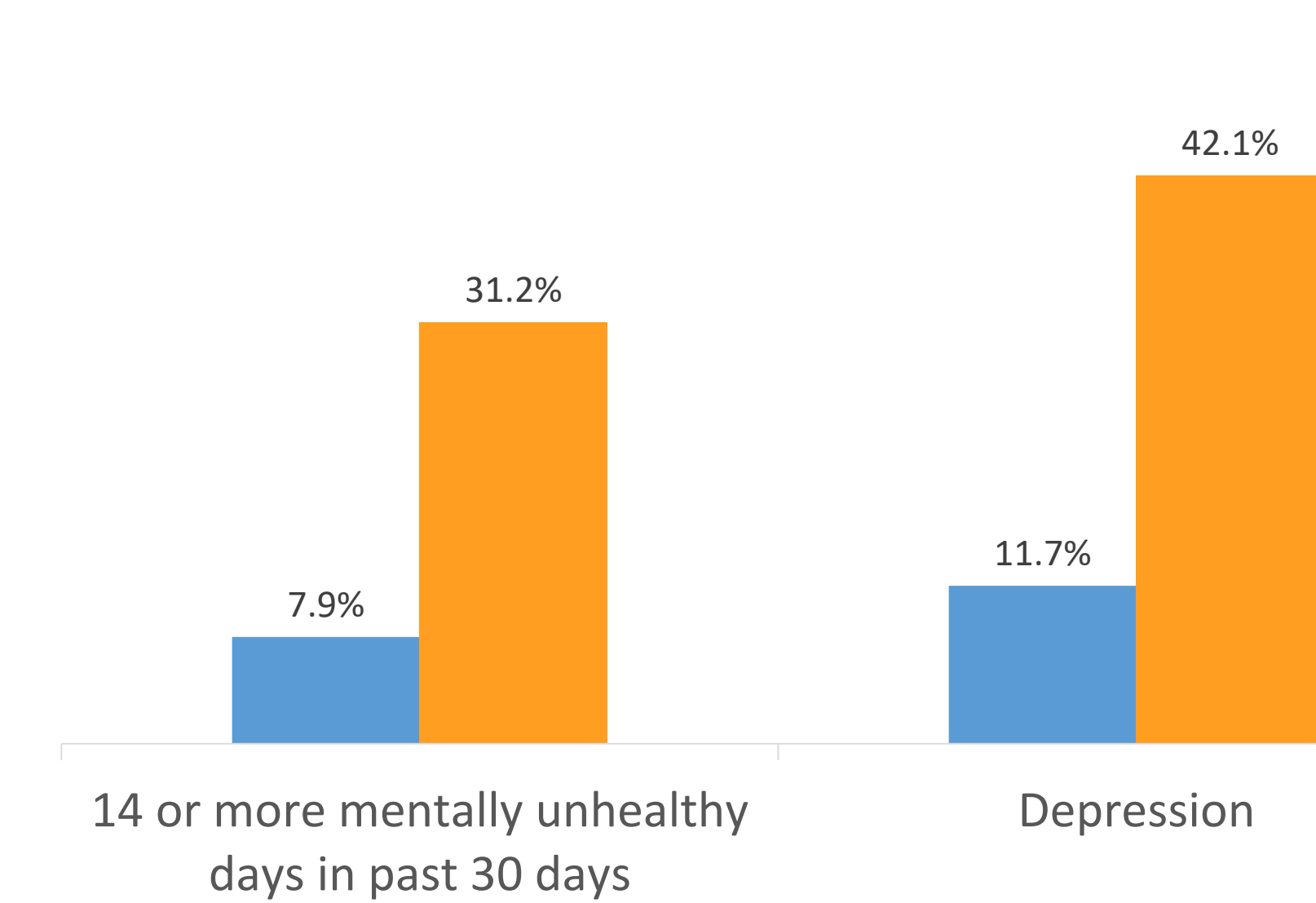
Vision		Ambulatory	
Hearing		Self-care	
Cognitive		Independent Living	

Adult Disparities in Delaware

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2017

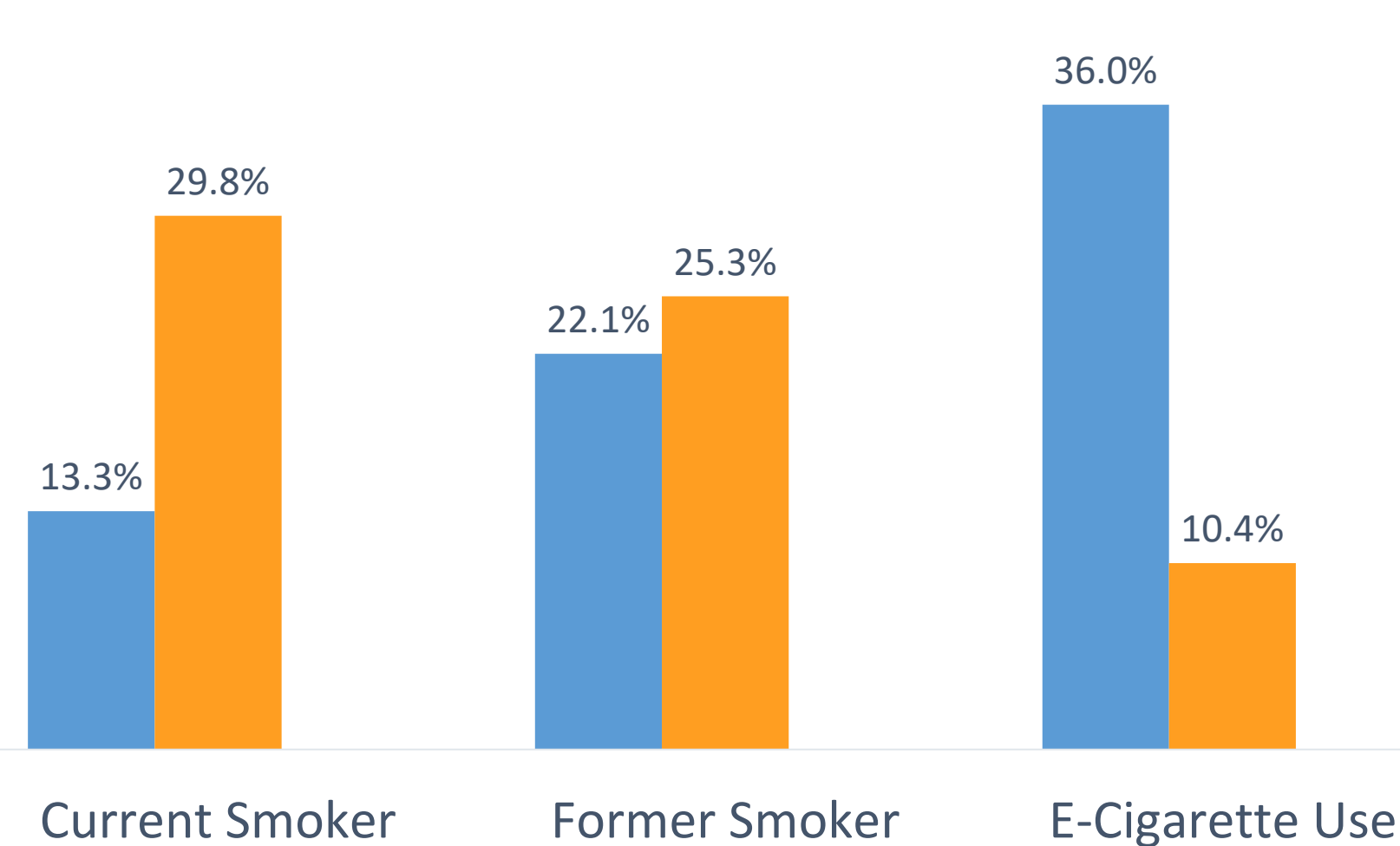
Adult Mental Health Indicators

■ Adults without Disabilities ■ Adults with Disabilities



Adult Tobacco Use by Disability Status

■ Adults without disability ■ Adults With Disability

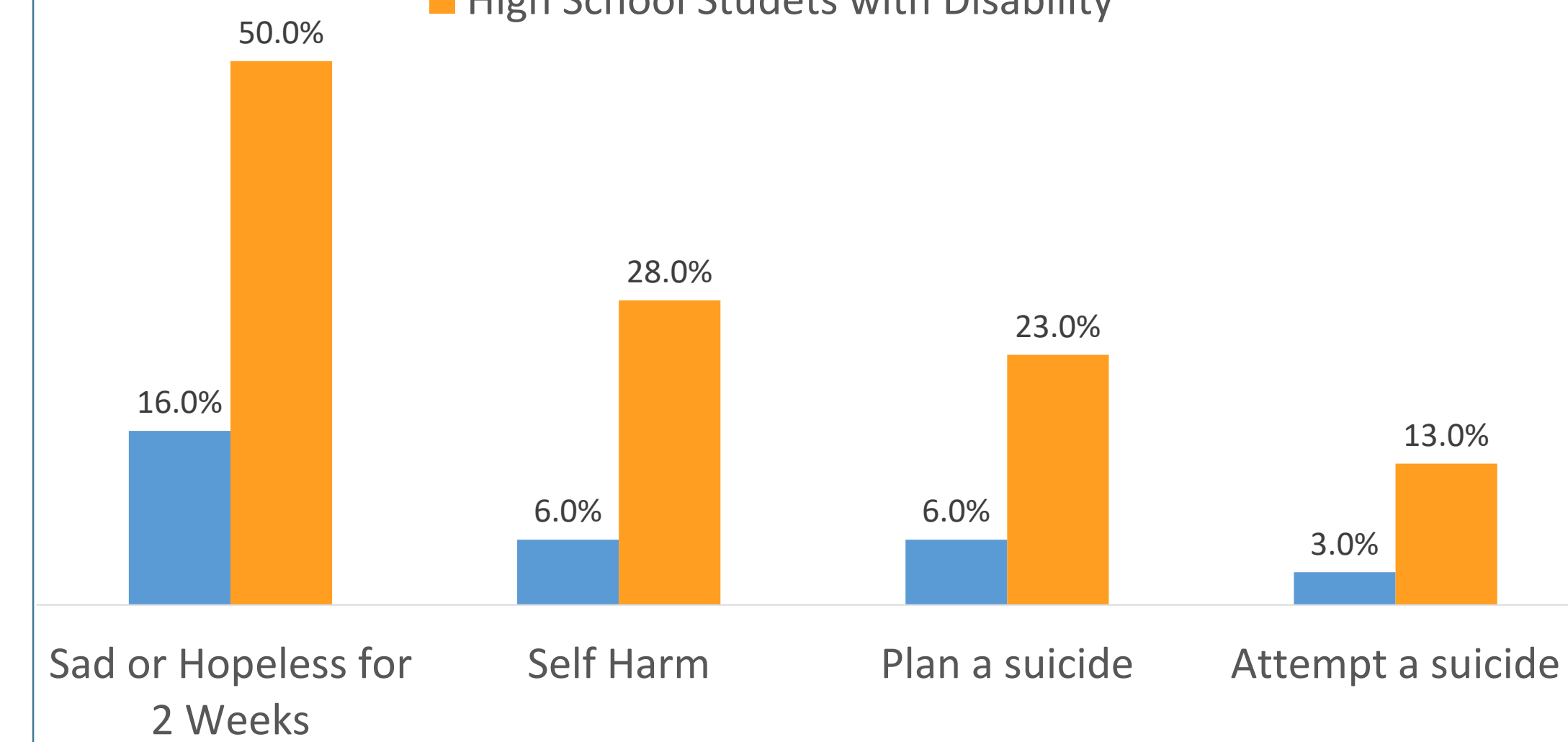


Youth Disparities in Delaware

Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2017

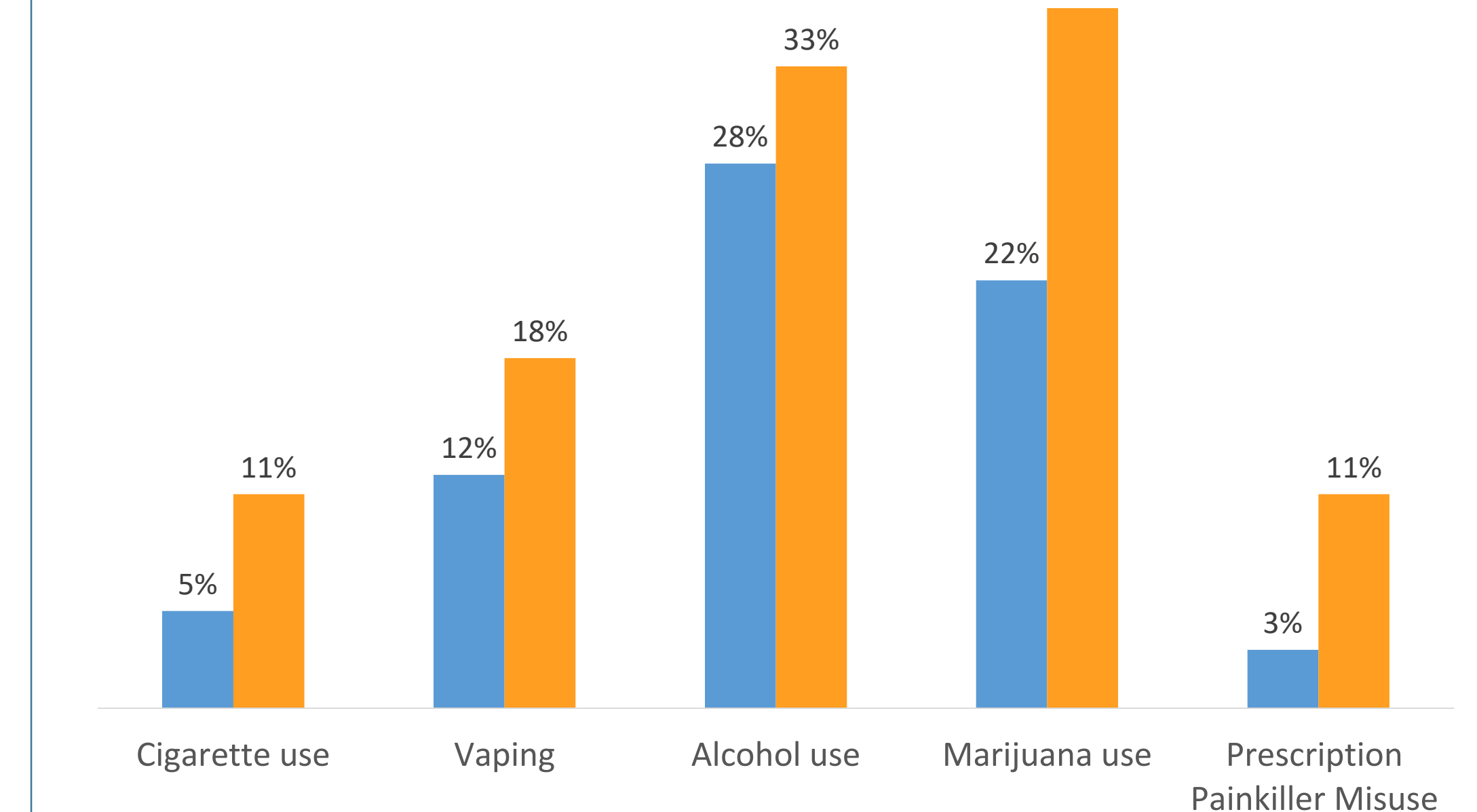
Youth Mental Health Indicators

■ High School Students without Disability ■ High School Students with Disability



Youth Substance Use by Disability Status

■ High School Students without Disability ■ High School Students with Disability



People with Disabilities and Opioids

Nationally, adults with disabilities report higher rates of heroin and oxycodone use than other populations⁴, are prescribed opioids at higher rates⁵, and experience higher mortality related to opioid overdoses⁶. However, people with disabilities are less likely to receive substance abuse treatment than adults without disabilities⁷.

High school students with a disability in Delaware report prescription painkiller misuse at **three times the rate** of students without a disability (*Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2017*).

Barriers to Treatment

People with disabilities seeking treatment for substance use disorders may be denied service or encounter barriers to treatment including physical inaccessibility and a lack of communication materials in alternative formats.^{2,3} Additional barriers include:

- Financial and insurance-related issues
- Practitioner Cultural Competency



Diagnostic overshadowing occurs when clinicians determine that any problems or symptoms expressed by a patient are the result of their disability, without considering other possibilities.

Recommendations

- Enhance **surveillance of disability status** and monitoring of disparities through routine collection of disability indicators in Delaware.
- **Leverage existing DHSS policy** (Policy Memorandum #70) to strengthen efforts to achieve health equity for vulnerable populations.
- Provide resources and training to ensure that **evidence-based public health programming** is inclusive of people with disabilities and reaches at-risk populations to target disparities.
- Ensure that in Delaware **environmental and programmatic design** – in facilities, electronic communication, assistive technology, etc. – is accessible and available to people of all abilities.

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Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health

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