

# Graduate Student Happiness & Well-Being Report | 2014

[ga.berkeley.edu/wellbeingreport](http://ga.berkeley.edu/wellbeingreport)

# Background

3 years in the making

Survey administered in Spring 2014 (*n*=790)

First survey of grad well-being in 10 years

15+ briefings with faculty and administrators

# Why Do We Care About Well-Being?

To enable graduate students to do their best work and make the most of their time here.

Balanced, happy people are more productive, more creative, more collaborative, better at long-term goal pursuit, more likely to find employment, more physically and psychologically resilient, and more.

# Targeted Outcomes

## **Satisfaction with Life**

Among the most widely-used well-being measures.

5 items, Diener et al., 1985

e.g. *“The conditions of my life are excellent.”*

## **Depression**

From the Center for Epidemiological Studies and widely used in psychiatric epidemiology.

10 items (shortened), Radloff, 1977

e.g. *“I could not ‘get going’.”*

# Working Model

**30 candidate predictors** for our two targeted outcomes are drawn from happiness and well-being literature, graduate student focus group & consults.

Survey data behaves coherently, with 26 of 30 items related to our two outcomes in expected directions.

**10 demographic items** also included.

# Top Predictors

Satisfaction with Life

Depression

**Living Conditions**

**Sleep**

**Career Prospects**

**Overall Health**

**Financial Confidence**

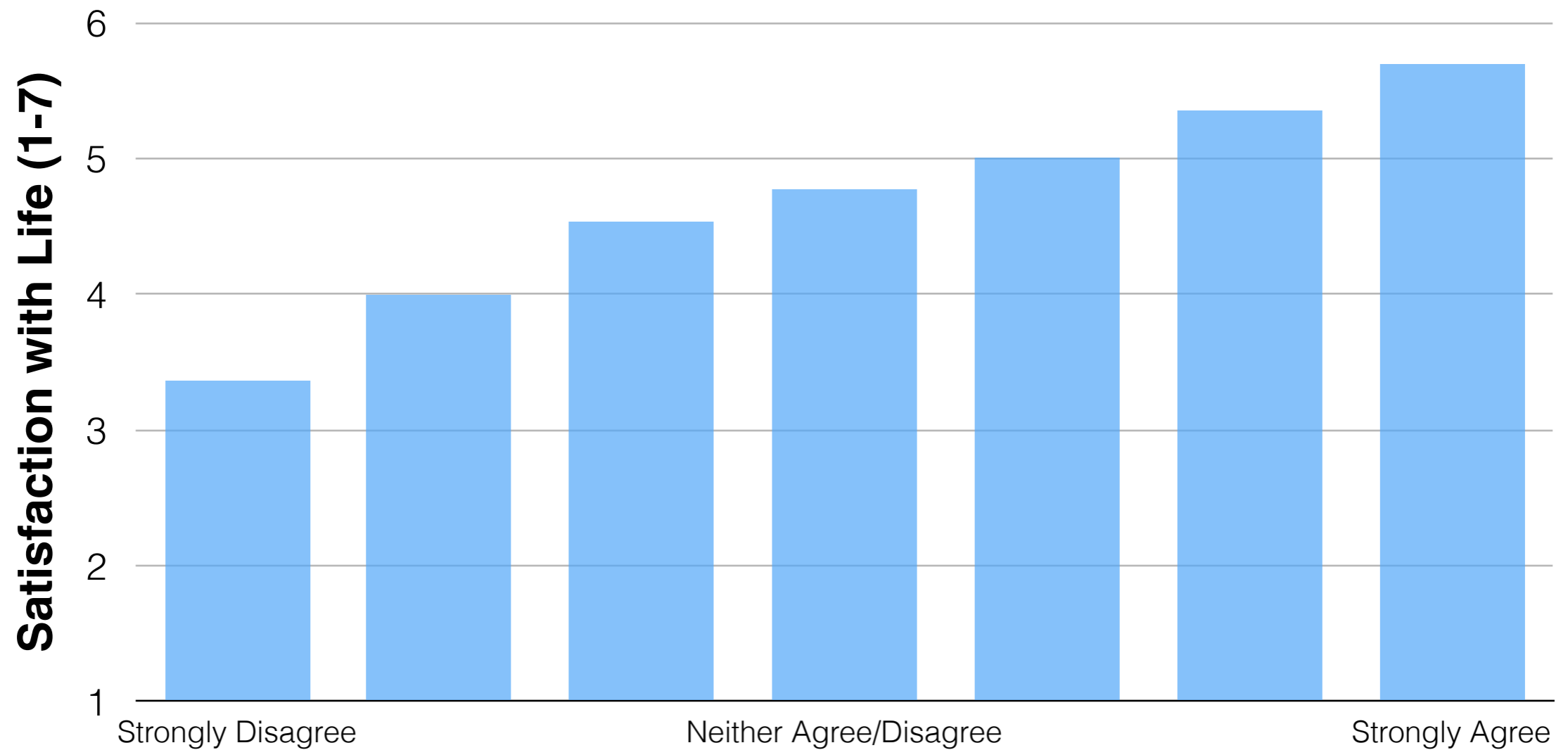
**Academic Engagement**

**Also:** Social Support, Academic Progress & Preparation, Feeling Valued & Included in Department, and Advisor Relationship. Only these latter two top predictors and sleep are not shared by both models.

# 10 Overall Top Predictors

1. Career Prospects
2. Overall Health
3. Living Conditions
4. Academic Engagement
5. Social Support
6. Financial Confidence
7. Academic Progress & Preparation
8. Sleep
9. Feeling Valued & Included
10. Advisor Relationship

# Perceptions about **career prospects** impact satisfaction with life



**“I’m upbeat about my career prospects.” (1-7)**

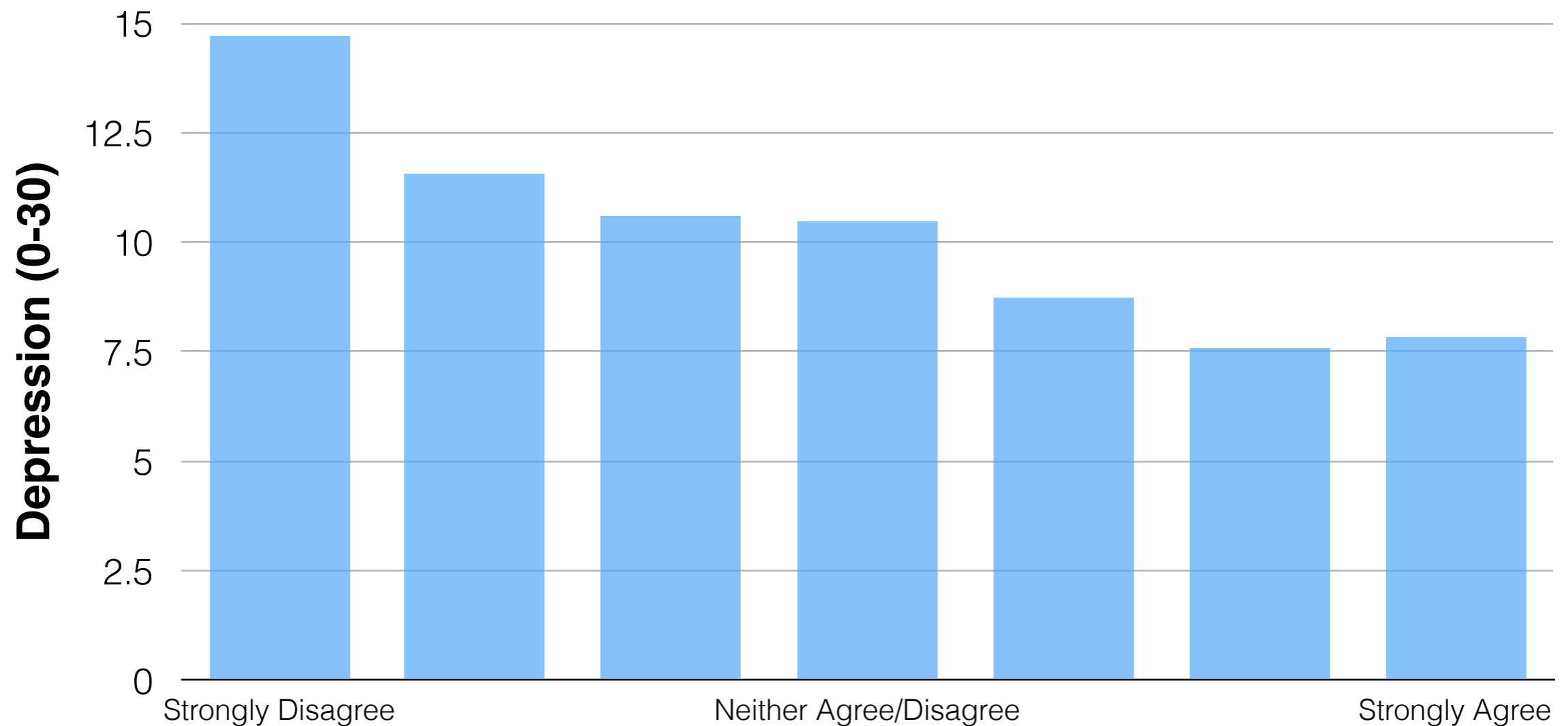
*Average response is 4.5 (Neither/Slightly Agree)*



“The largest source of anxiety for me is my post-grad job outlook. It is tremendously uncertain, and thus fear-inducing.”

“I don’t feel competitive or prepared in any way for academic jobs, and I think in some sense it is a failure of both my advisor and the graduate system to even admit people like me into PhD programs.”

# Getting **enough sleep** to feel fully alert alleviates depressive symptoms

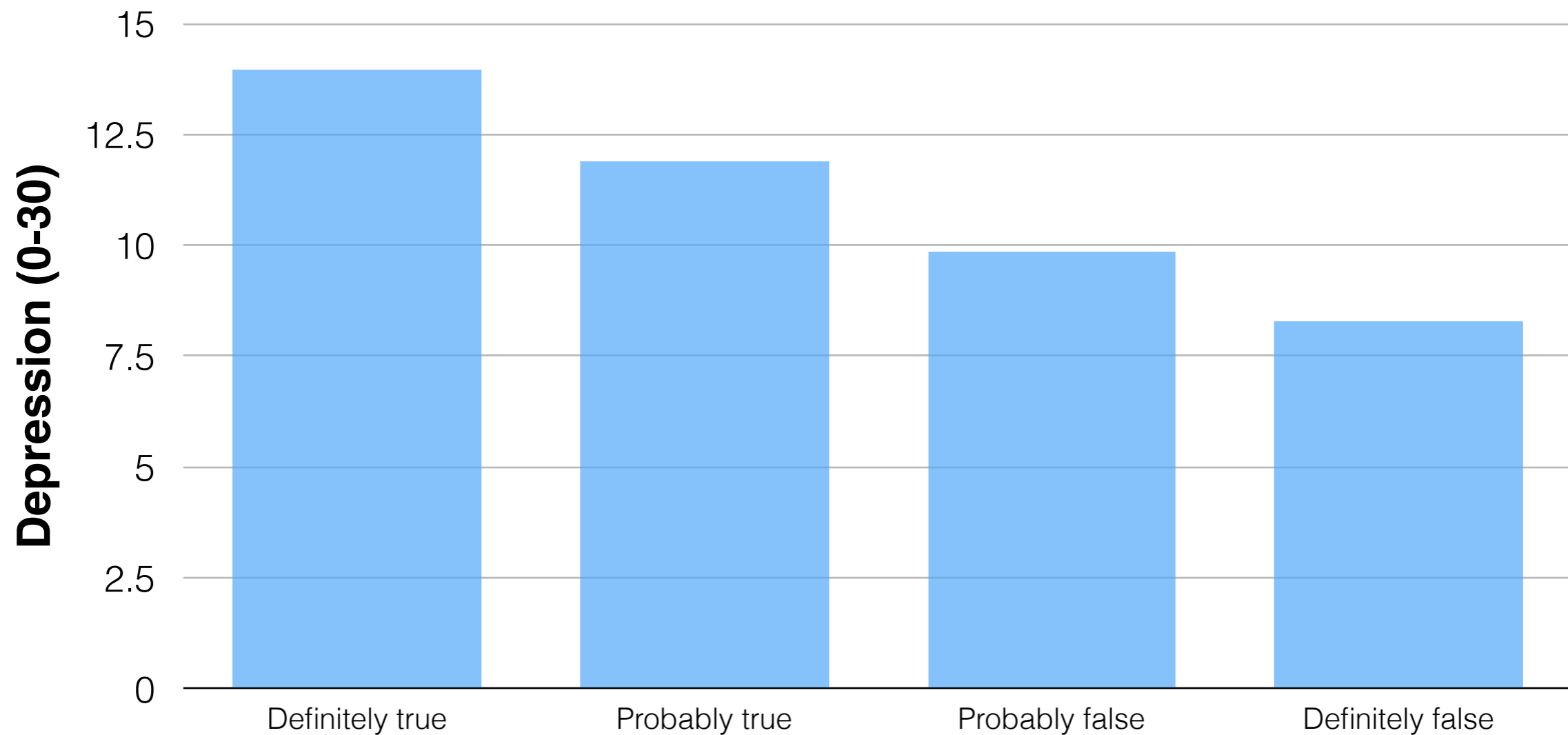


**“During the past week, I’ve been able to get enough sleep at night to feel fully alert and well-rested during the day.”**

*Average response is 4.1 (Neither Agree nor Disagree)*

**Only 20%** of graduate students  
say they get the recommended  
8 hours of sleep.

# **Social support** plays a major role in graduate student well-being



**“I feel there is no one I can share my most private worries and fears with.” (1-4)**

*Average response is 3.2 (Probably false)*

Social support was the second-most discussed topic in comments, behind finances.

“I live on my own for the first time and it is very lonely. I wish there were more exciting ways to meet other grad students.”

# PhDs exhibit lower well-being than Master's and Professional students

Ph.D.s

**47%**

score as depressed

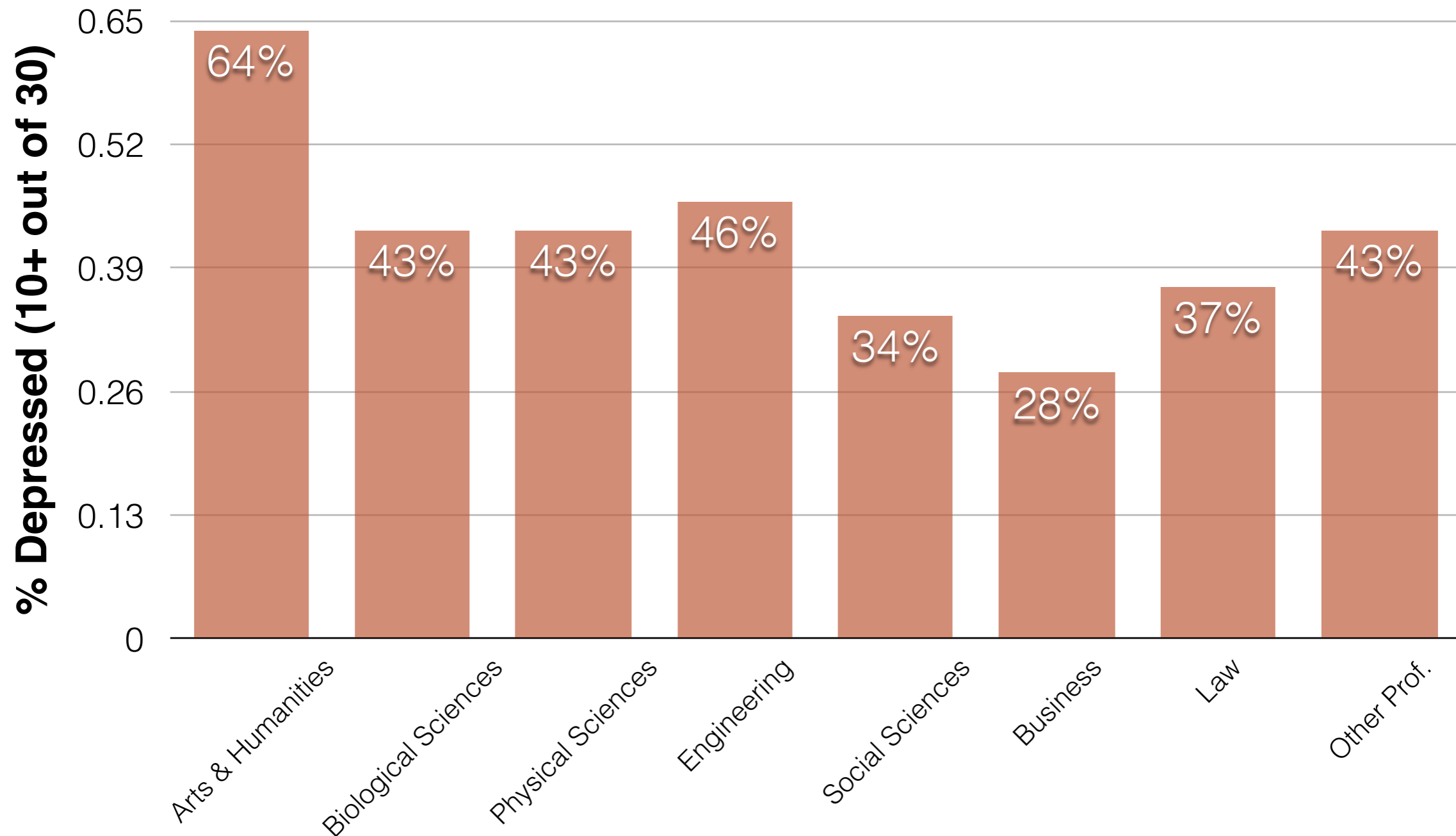
Master's/Professional

**37%**

score as depressed



# Arts & Humanities students fare worse on many indicators



# Demographics of well-being offer some reason for optimism

**Lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer** grad students report lower satisfaction with life and higher depression. Difference persists in top predictor model for satisfaction with life.

Parents and married students fare better. Older and “other” race/ethnicity students fare worse. Except for parents, differences do not persist in top predictor models.

There is **no well-being gender gap** and no gap for non-citizen graduate students.

# Recommendations

Follow the roadmap provided by top predictors

Promote well-being strategies suggested by students

Remove hassles & barriers (*Behavioral Economics*)

Start a dialogue

Institutionalize the survey & promote further research