

Understanding Student Substance Use

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SOS-UK



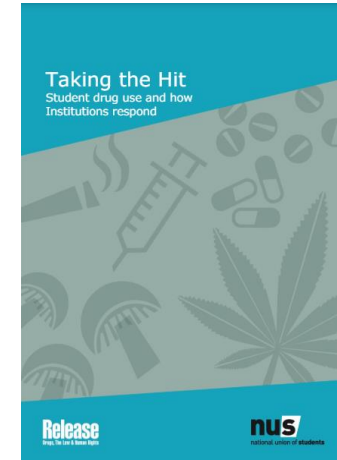
STUDENTS
ORGANISING FOR
SUSTAINABILITY
UNITED KINGDOM

Overview of session

- Brief look back at previous student drug and alcohol research
- Preview of the SOS-UK Students, Drugs and Alcohol Survey findings from this year
- Collecting and using data at a local or institutional level

Overview of student substance use research

- No consistent student drug and alcohol use research prior to SOS-UK in the UK. Evidence was institution-specific, anecdotal, and varied hugely
 - National Union of Students (NUS) & Release Taking the Hit research in 2018 - not a prevalence study
 - Drug Use in Higher Education in Ireland survey in 2021 (DUHEI) - students in Ireland only
 - Alcohol research tends to focus on young people more broadly, or younger age groups e.g. 11-15 year olds



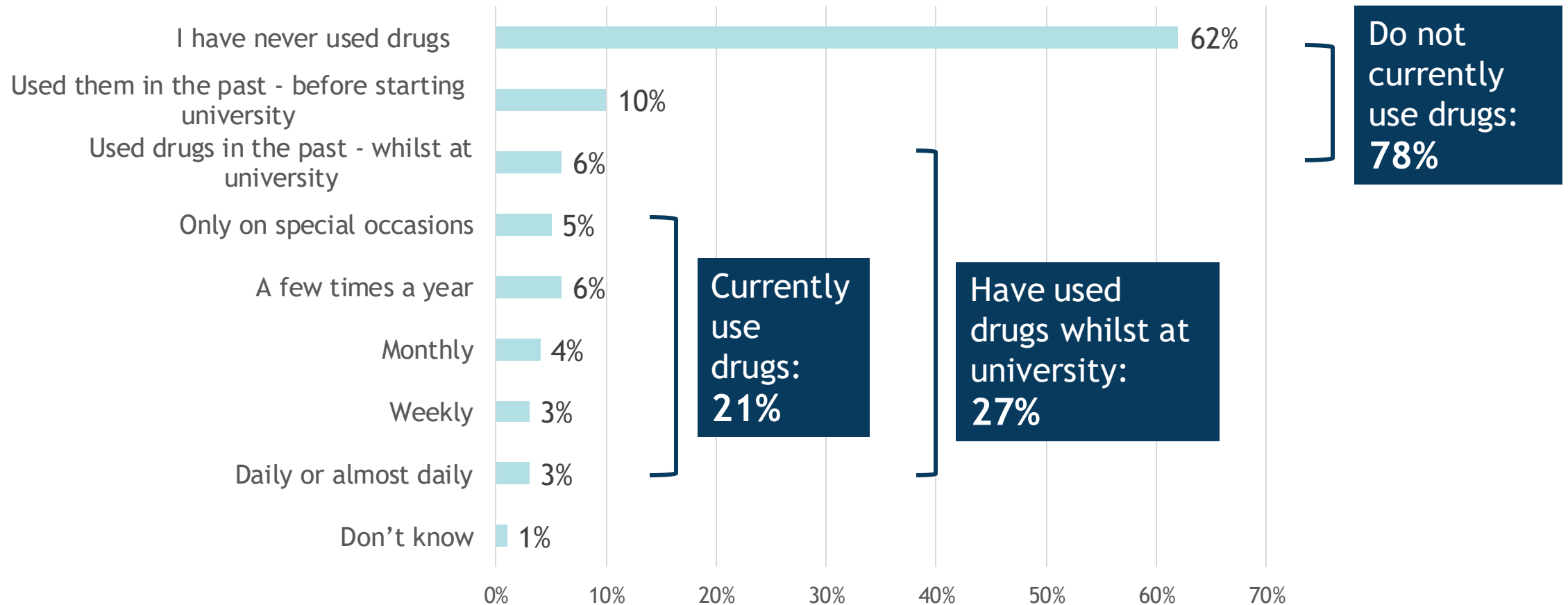
Introduction to the SOS-UK Students, Drugs and Alcohol Survey

- Survey runs each year as part of Drug and Alcohol Impact and Alcohol Impact programmes
- Designed to identify students' relationship with alcohol and drugs, with the aim of providing a means to **understand changes in attitudes and behaviours of students**
- Survey is promoted at the start of each academic year through universities and students' unions to the students and through the NUS TOTUM cardholder database - responses from students studying in HE across the UK, including institutions participating in our programmes
- Institutions who promote the survey and receive 100 or more responses from their students are eligible to receive a copy of the data for their students - taking part in SOS-UK's programmes isn't compulsory to be part of the research
- **4069** HE student respondents for **2023-24 survey** - **report published in the coming weeks**
- The 2024-25 survey will run from **November 18th - December 8th**

Key findings 2023-24

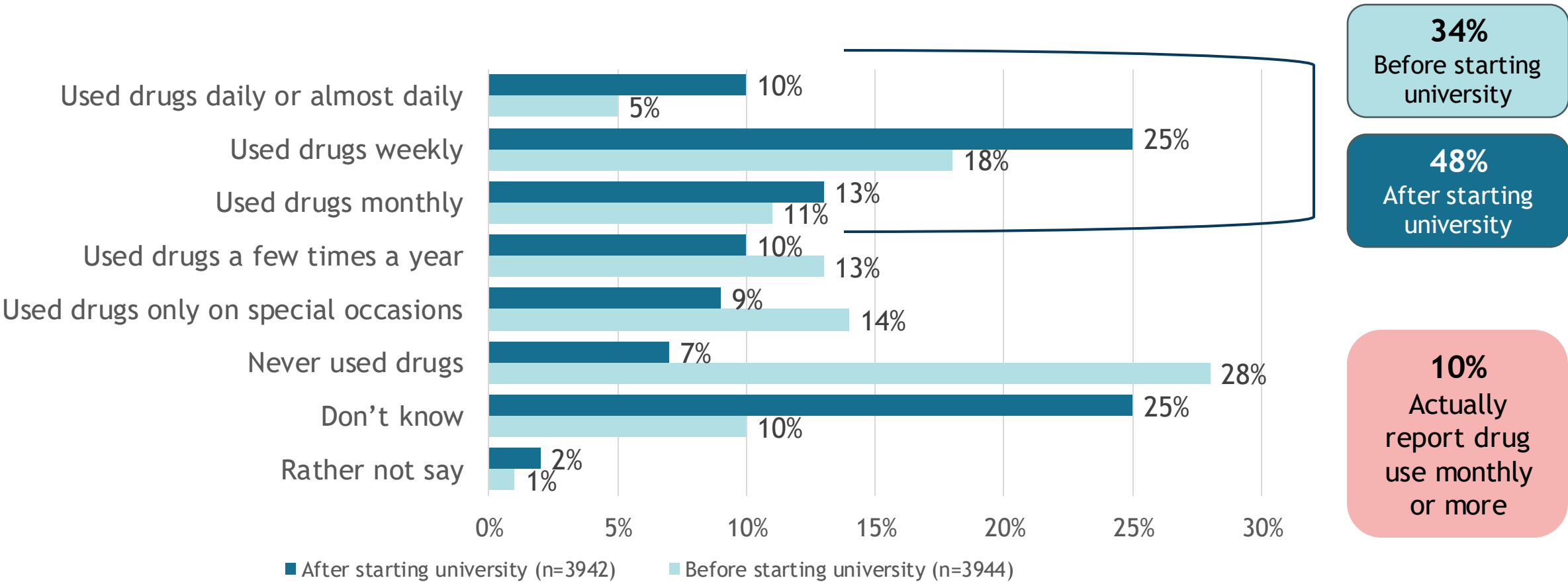
Drugs

21% of students report currently using drugs



Q. Which of the following best describes your current frequency of drug use? [Base:3960 Balance: No response]

We found a shift in perceptions of drug use amongst their peers before and after starting university....



Q. Please select the phrase which best describes your perceptions: Before starting at university/college, did you believe that students... [Base: 3944 Balance: No response]

Q. And now you're a student at university/college, which of the following best matches your experiences of drug use? [Base: 3942 Balance: No response]

Reported impacts during or following drug use...

...related to academic work

- 22%** report missing a university seminar/lecture/class
- 16%** report arriving late to a university seminar/lecture/class
- 16%** report missing social engagements

...related to crime and antisocial behaviour

- 7%** report getting into an argument with people they know
- 5%** report getting into an argument with strangers
- 5%** report being searched for drugs by policy/security

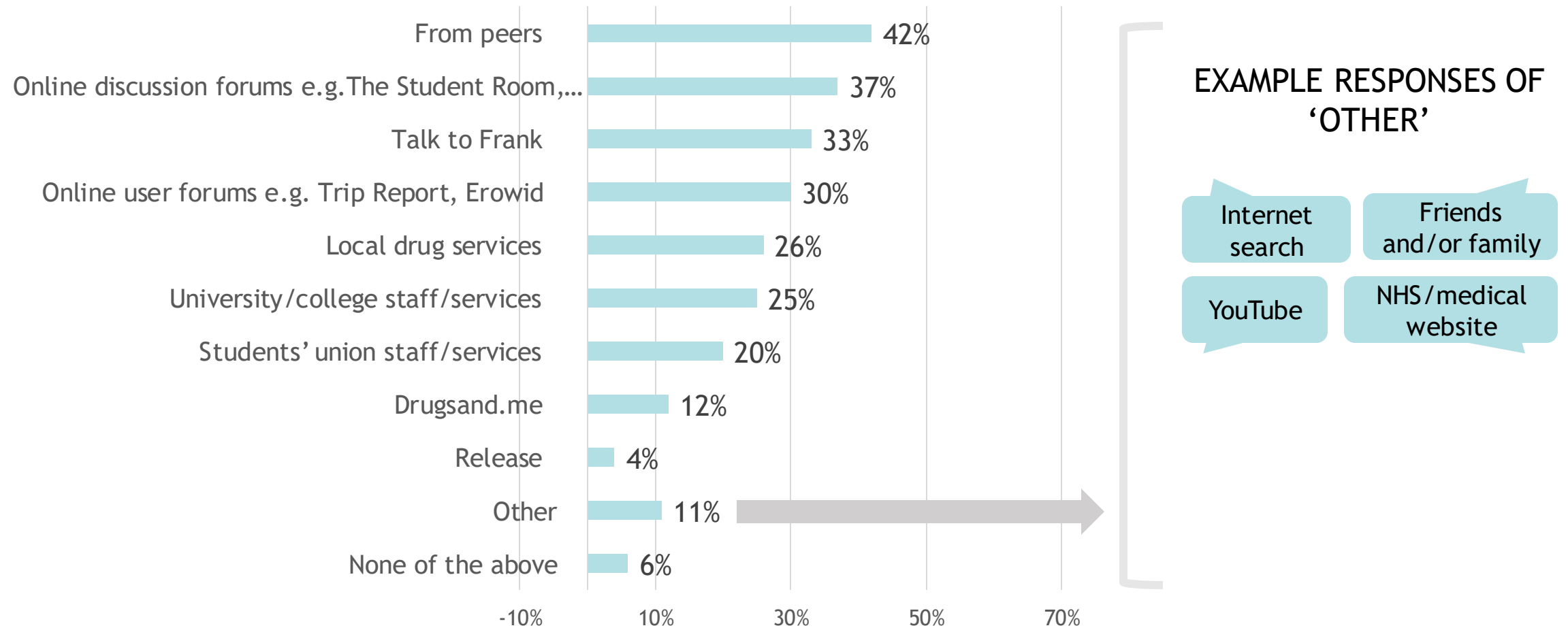
...related to health

- 20%** report an improvement in their day-to-day experience with an existing mental health condition
- 14%** report an existing mental health condition becoming worse
- 7%** report an improvement in their day-to-day experience with an existing physical health condition

...related to social behaviour

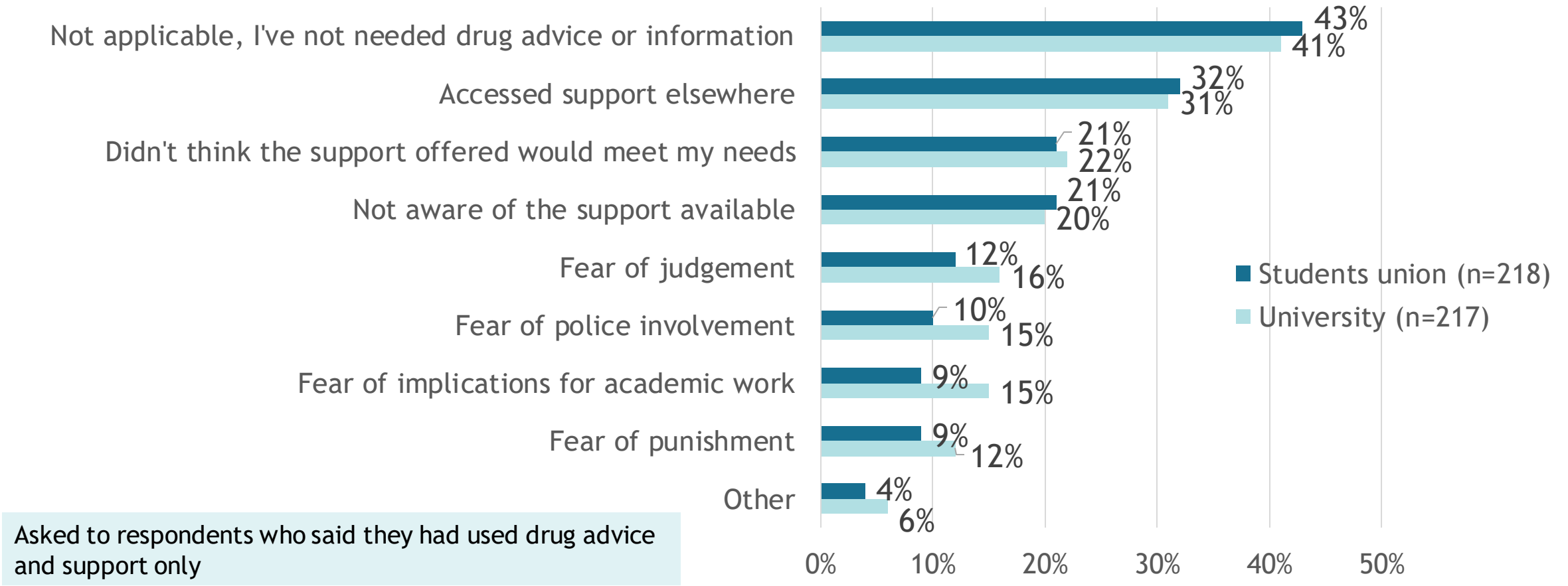
- 22%** report enjoying the experience of having sex on drugs
- 19%** report being unable to remember what happened the night before
- 18%** report taking risks with their personal safety they otherwise would not have

Where do students who access advice and information about drugs get their information from?



Q. Which of the following best describes where you access drug advice and information? Base:319 Balance: No response, and not aware of drug advice and information

Respondents say they haven't used the drug information and advice services offered by their university/students' union due to accessing support elsewhere, not believing it would meet their needs and not being aware of the support available

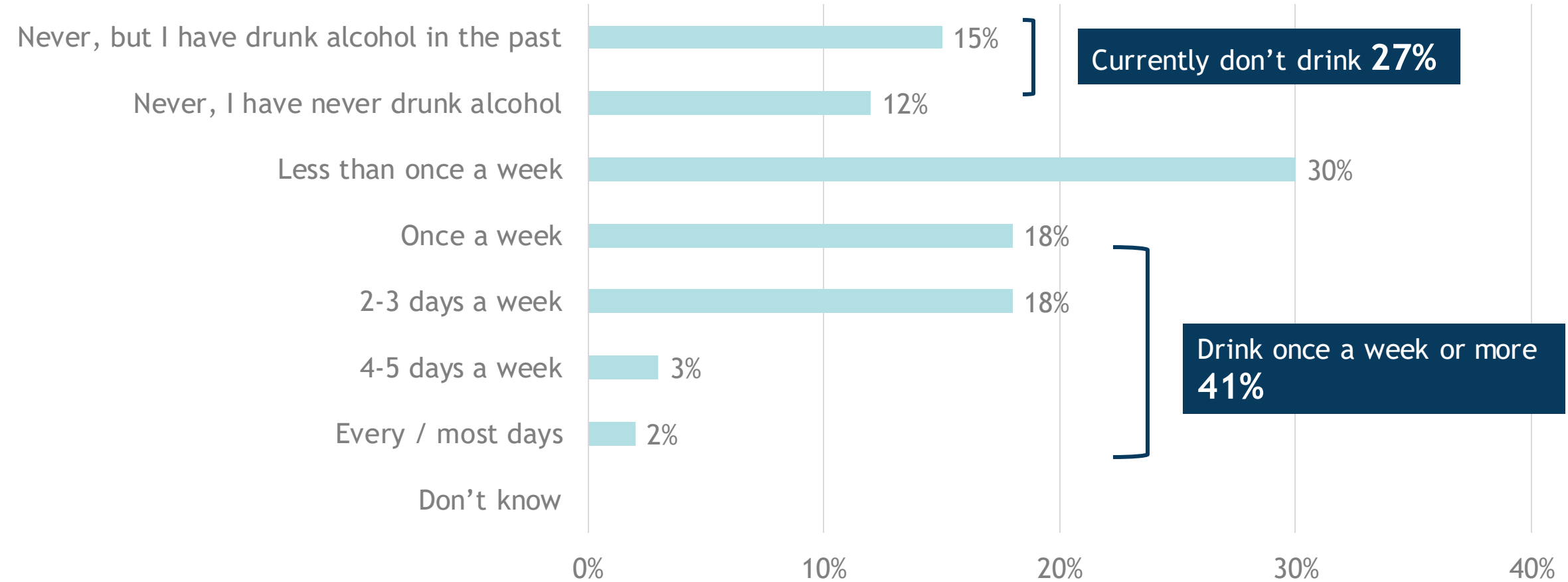


Q. Which of the following reasons best describes why you haven't used drug information and advice services offered by your university/students' union? Base: see graph Balance: No response

Key findings 2023-24

Alcohol

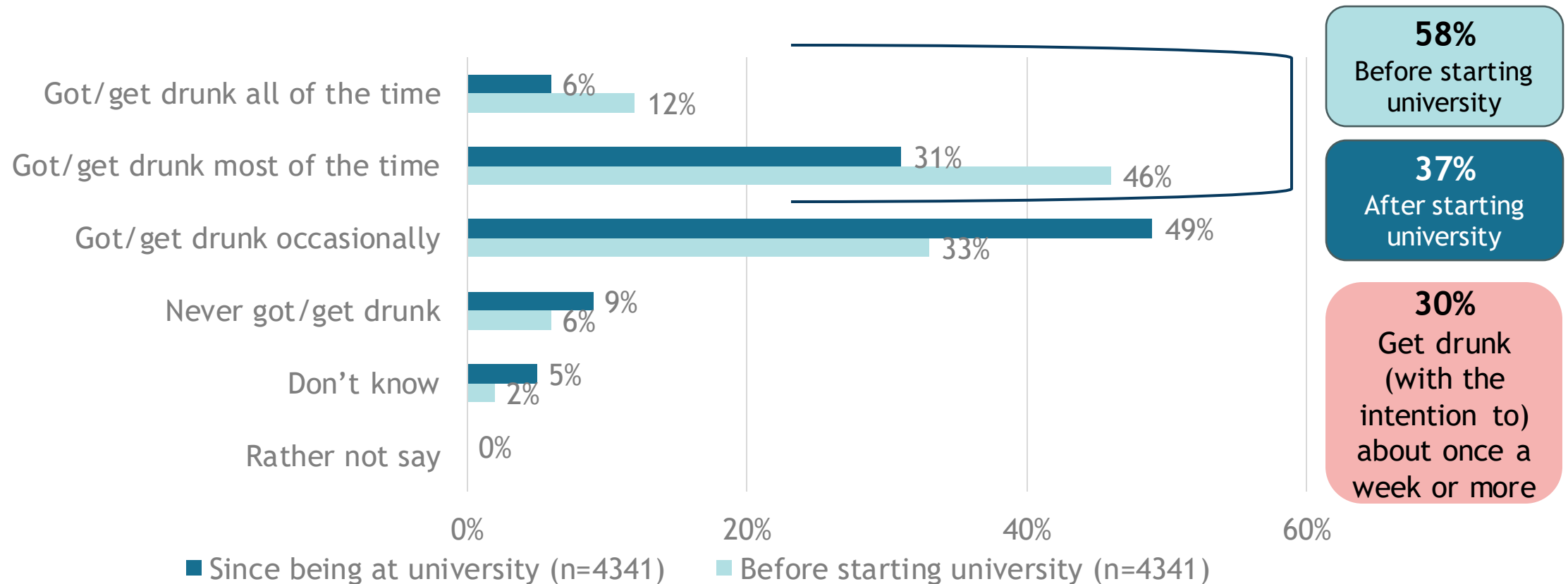
Just over a quarter of respondents told us they don't currently drink alcohol, two fifths drink once a week or more



Q. How often, if at all, do you drink alcohol? Weighted base: 3945 Balance: No response



Perceptions of frequency of getting drunk change when comparing perceptions before and after starting university...



Q. Please select the phrase which best describes your perception...Before arriving at University, did you believe that students.../ And now you're a student at university, which of the following best matches your experiences of students. Balance: No response and non-drinkers

Reported impacts during or following alcohol use...

...related to academic work

- 38%** report missing a university seminar/lecture/class
- 26%** report arriving late to a university seminar/lecture/class
- 18%** report missing social engagements

...related to crime and antisocial behaviour

- 18%** report getting into an argument with people they know
- 14%** report getting into an argument with strangers
- 5%** causing damage to the place they live

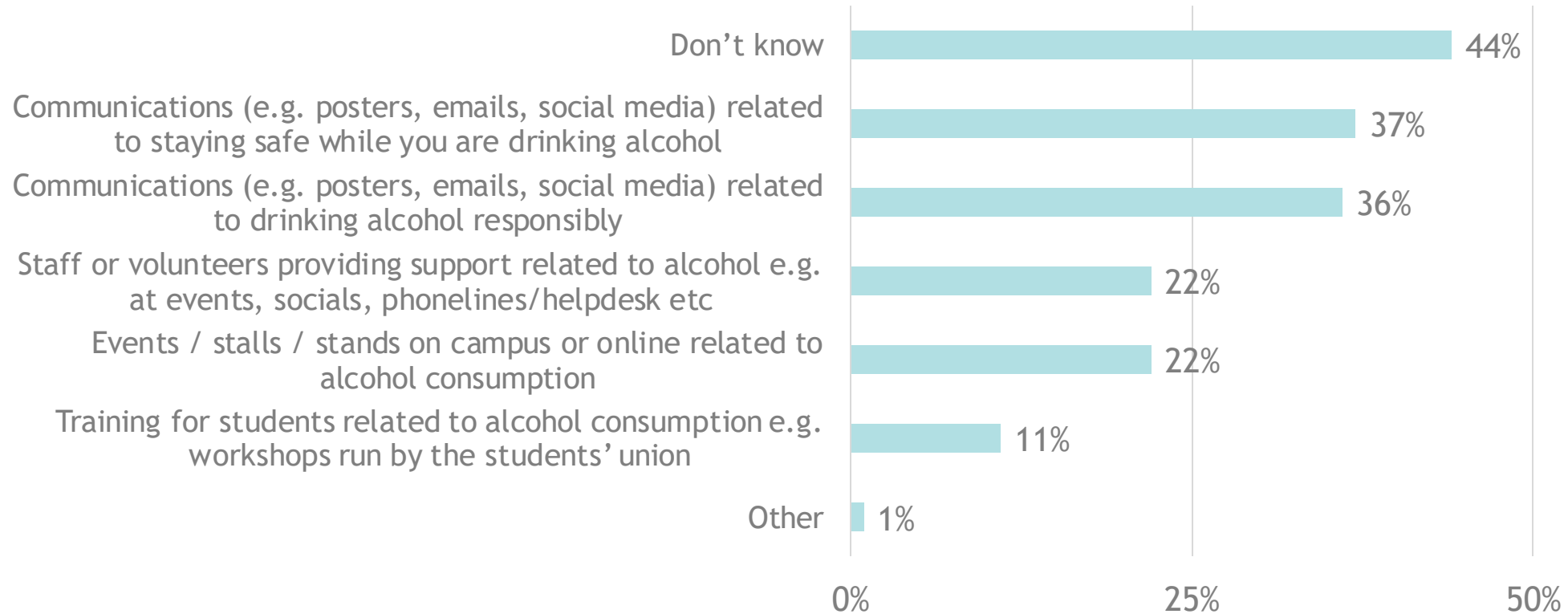
...related to health

- 14%** report an existing mental health condition becoming worse
- 7%** report an improvement in their day-to-day experience with an existing mental health condition
- 4%** report an existing physical health condition becoming worse

...related to social behaviour

- 43%** report being unable to remember what happened the night before
- 27%** report experiencing unwanted sexual attention from a stranger or someone they know
- 27%** report injuring themselves

We found that 44% of students aren't aware of any campaigns relating to safe or responsible drinking at their place of study



Q. Are you aware of any safe or responsible drinking campaigns, projects or activities at your university?

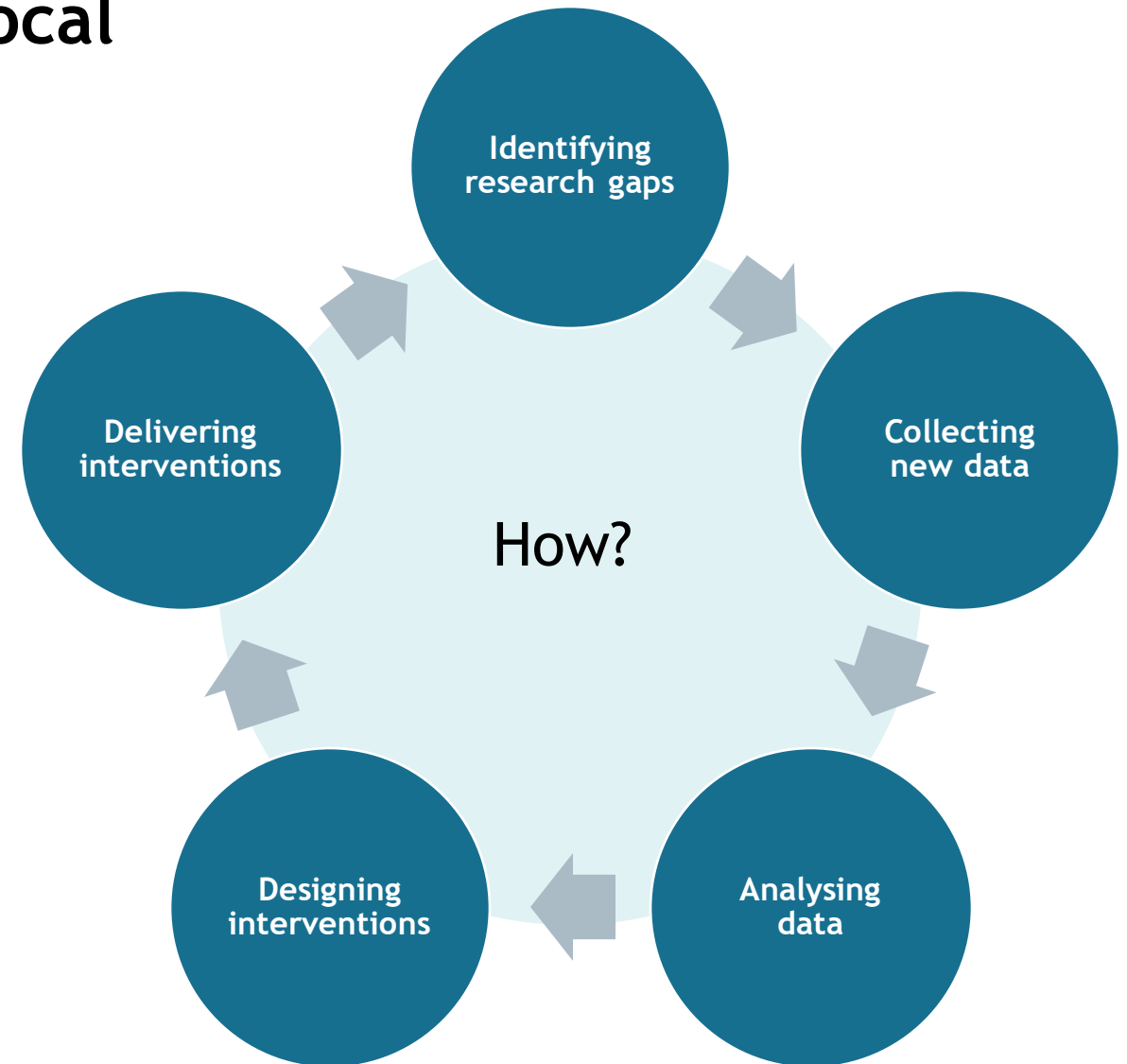
Weighted base: 3904 Balance: No response, Other

Collecting and using your data

Why & how to use institutional/local data in drug and alcohol work

Why?

- Provides local context
- Respond to trends
- Identify groups with most risk
- Targeted interventions & communications



Collecting data on campus

You possibly already collect:

- Anonymous data from student services
- Incident reports from residences
- Anecdotal reports of drug or alcohol issues
- Sales of alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks at venues on campus
- Drug and alcohol use in wellbeing surveys or focused events

New sources of data:

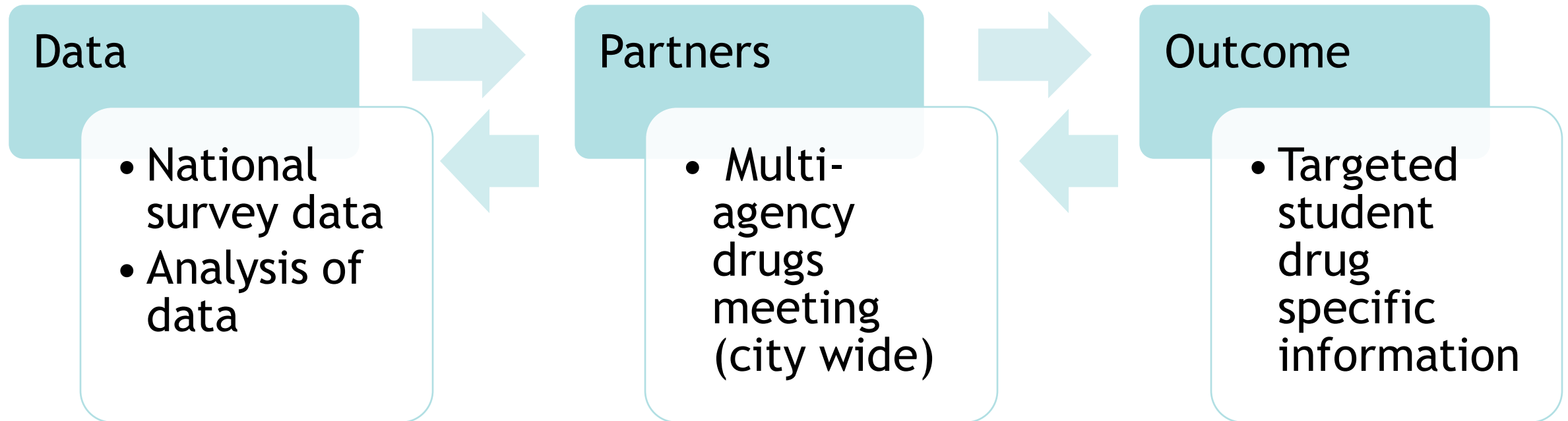
- Social media polls
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Local drug and alcohol services/partners who collect local data

How to collect your own data: SOS-UK National Students, Drugs and Alcohol Survey

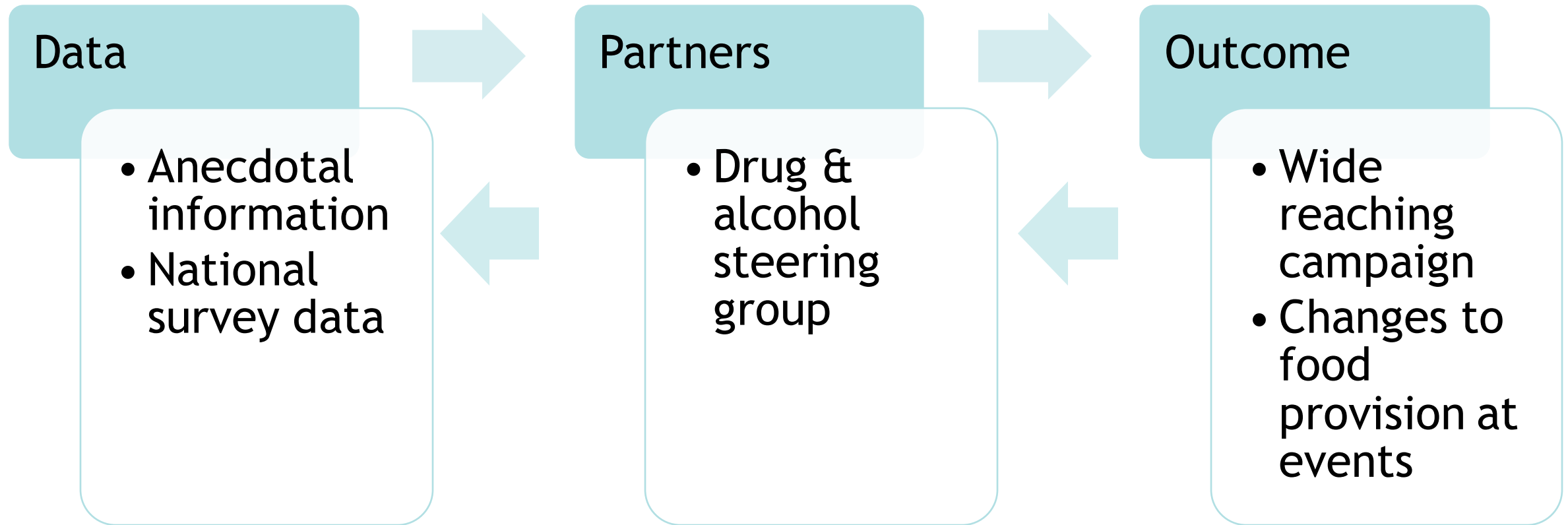


Let us know you wish to take part, or find out more information by emailing Tracy.Lumb@SOS-UK.org

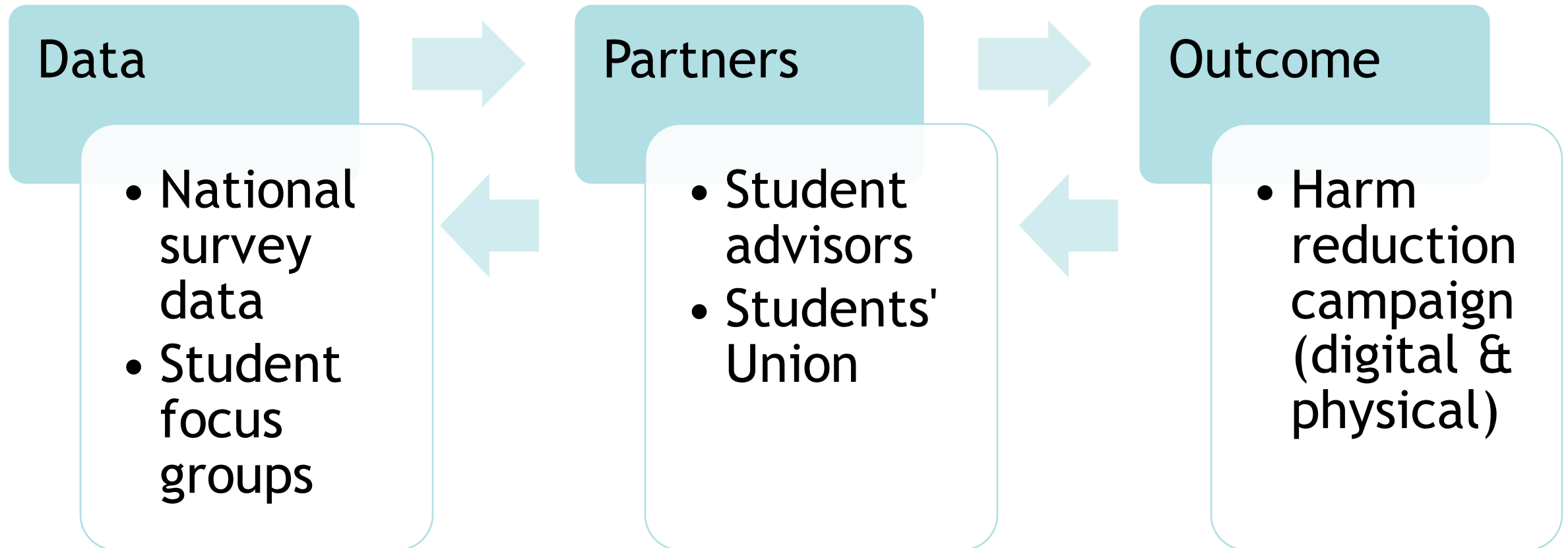
Case study: data and the role of external partners



Case study: data and the role of internal partners



Case study: data and the role of students as partners



The Nation Student Drug & Alcohol Survey 2024-25 will open on the **18th November 2024**, and run until **8th December**.

To receive more info, or sign up to promote the survey on your campus, please email:

Tracy.Lumb@SOS-UK.org

Thanks for listening!
Any questions?