



Social and Emotional Support Data in Wisconsin

Older Adults and People with Disabilities

The Wisconsin Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness, Measurement and Research Work Group leverages data and learning to better understand both the causes of and solutions to social isolation and loneliness.

Key Findings

- In recent years levels of perceived social support have been trending worse for adults with disabilities and remaining steady for older adults.
- Adults ages 75 and older were the most likely to lack the social support they needed.
- Regardless of age, adults with disabilities were more likely to lack the social support they needed compared to those without disabilities.
- Among adults ages 18–64 with disabilities, those who were Black, had low income, and an ACE score of 4 or more were the most likely to lack the social support they needed.
- Among adults ages 65 and older, those who were LGBTQ, people of color, or had an ACE score of 4 or more were the most likely to lack the social support they needed.
- Among adults ages 18–64 with disabilities, the level of social support was strongly associated with mental health and life satisfaction. These associations were less pronounced for older adults.

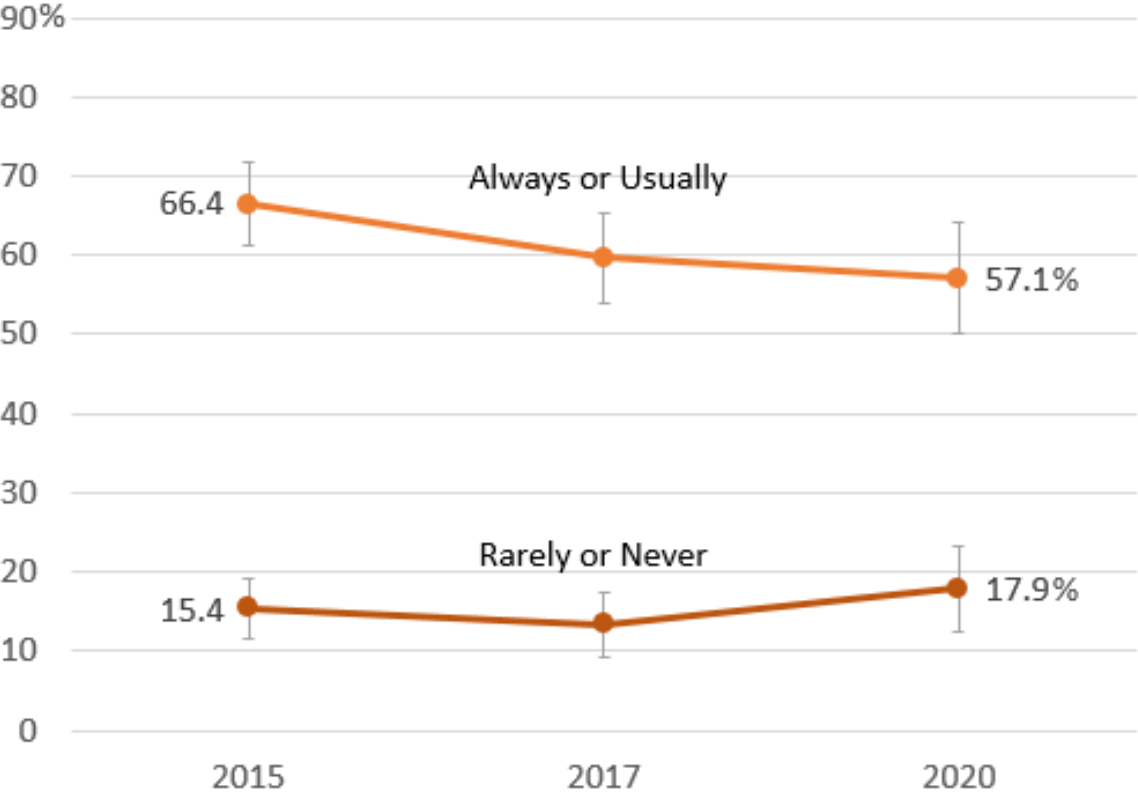
About the Data

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual random-digit dial telephone survey of noninstitutionalized U.S. adults ages 18 years and older. This survey is a collaborative project between the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and each of the states to gather information about important health behaviors and other health risk factors. Responses are anonymous, and individuals are not tracked over time.

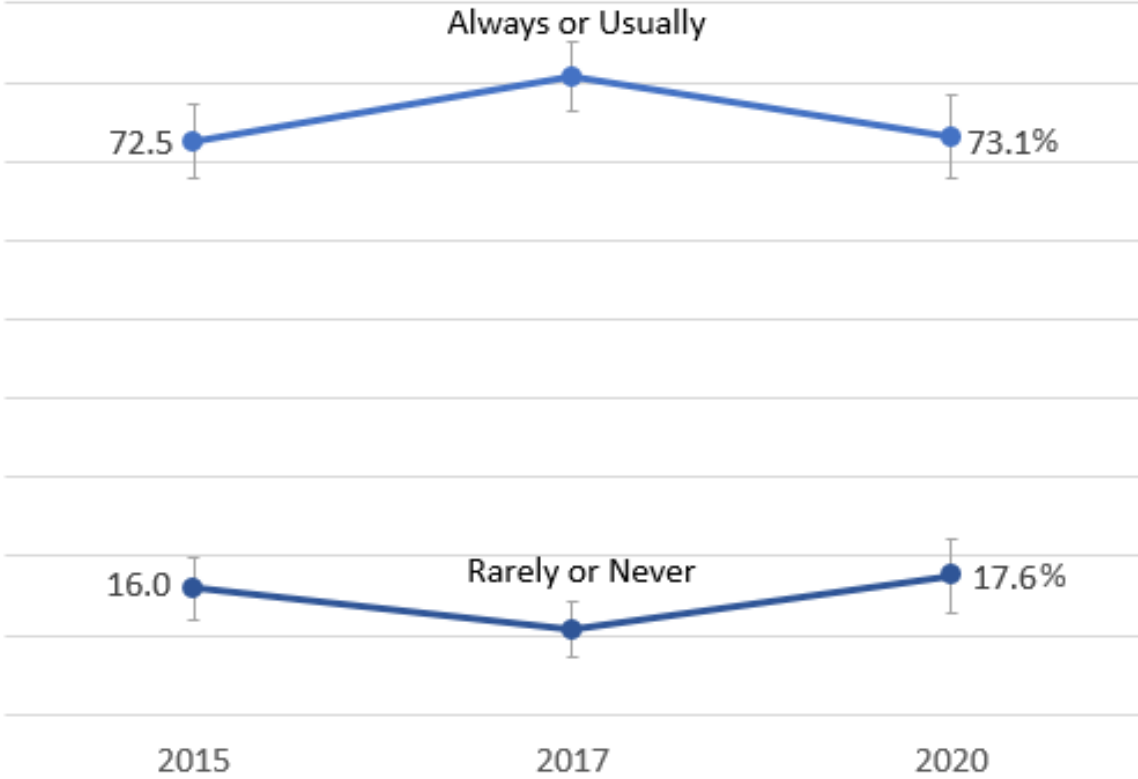
From 2015 to 2020, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services contracted a survey research agency to conduct the telephone survey, and responses were weighted to produce data representative of the state. There were about 5,000 people surveyed each year. The survey question about social and emotional support was only asked in 2015, 2017, and 2020. Specifically, the question asked respondents, “How often do you get the social and emotional support you need? Would you say always, usually, sometimes, rarely, or never?”

In recent years levels of social support have been trending worse for adults with disabilities and remaining steady for older adults.

Percentage of adults with disabilities (ages 18–64) by frequency of **social and emotional support** and by year, WI

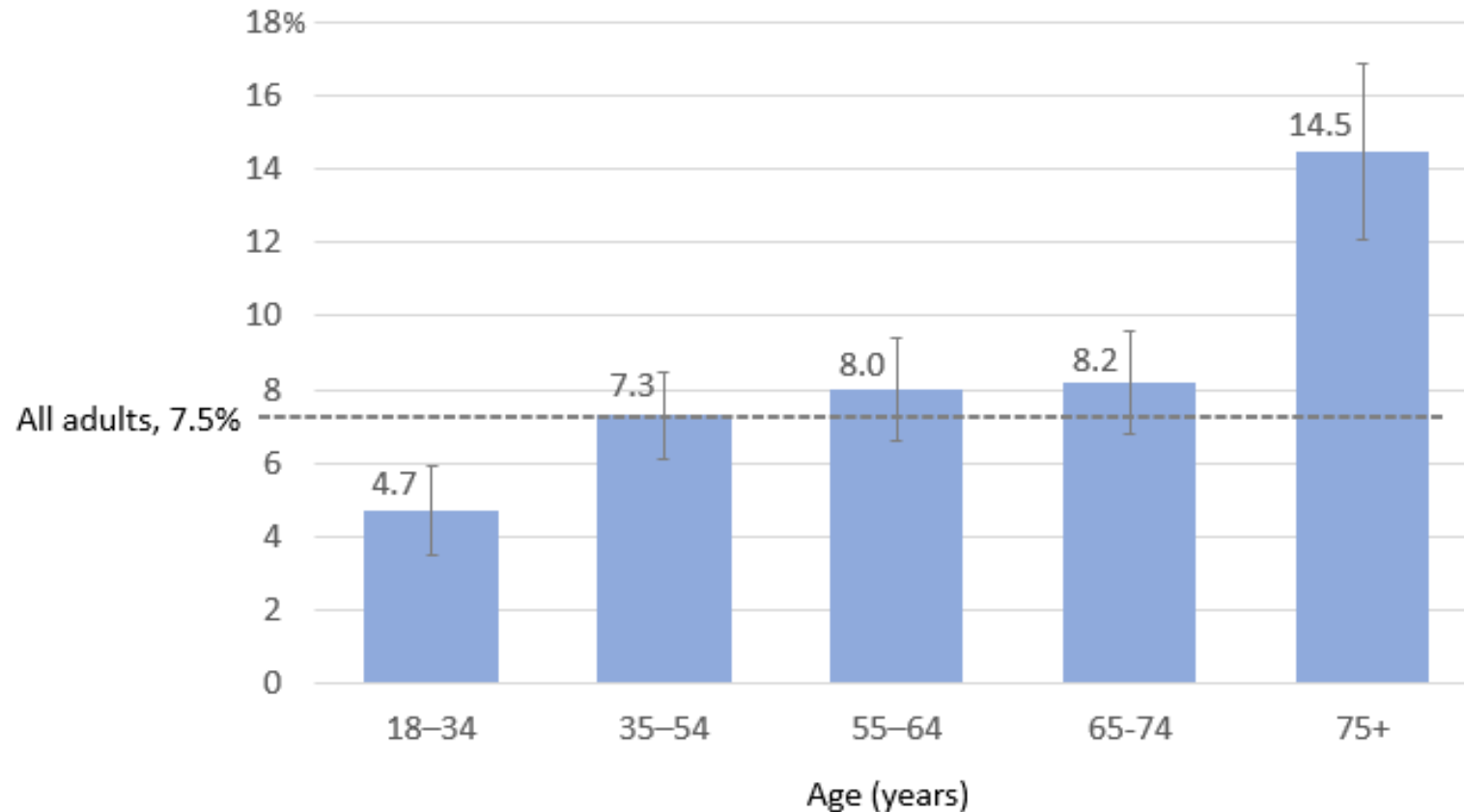


Percentage of adults ages 75 and older by frequency of **social and emotional support** and by year, WI



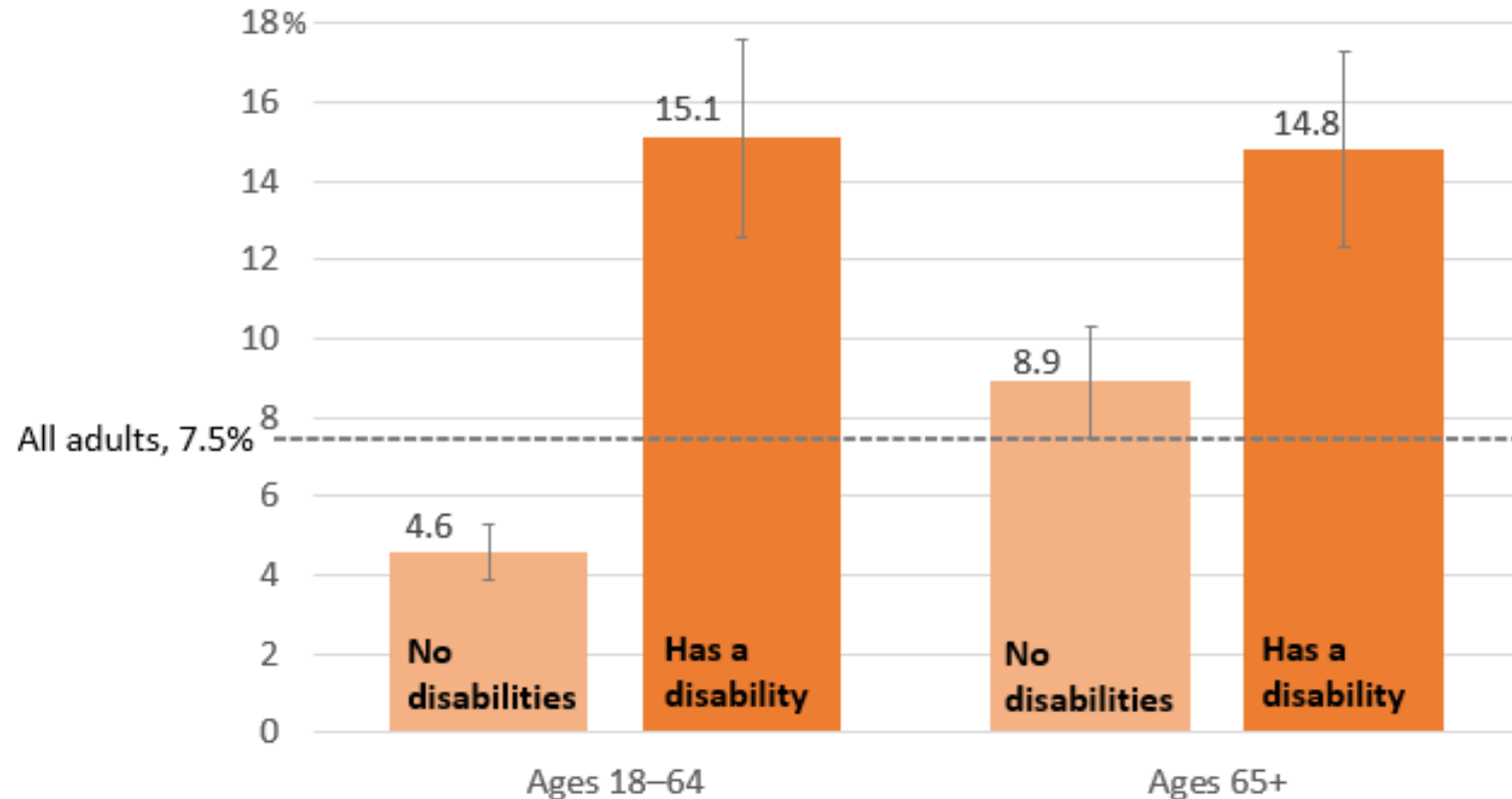
Adults ages 75 and older were the most likely to lack the social support they needed.

Percent of adults who **rarely or never get the social and emotional support they need** by age group, WI, 2015, 2017, and 2020 combined



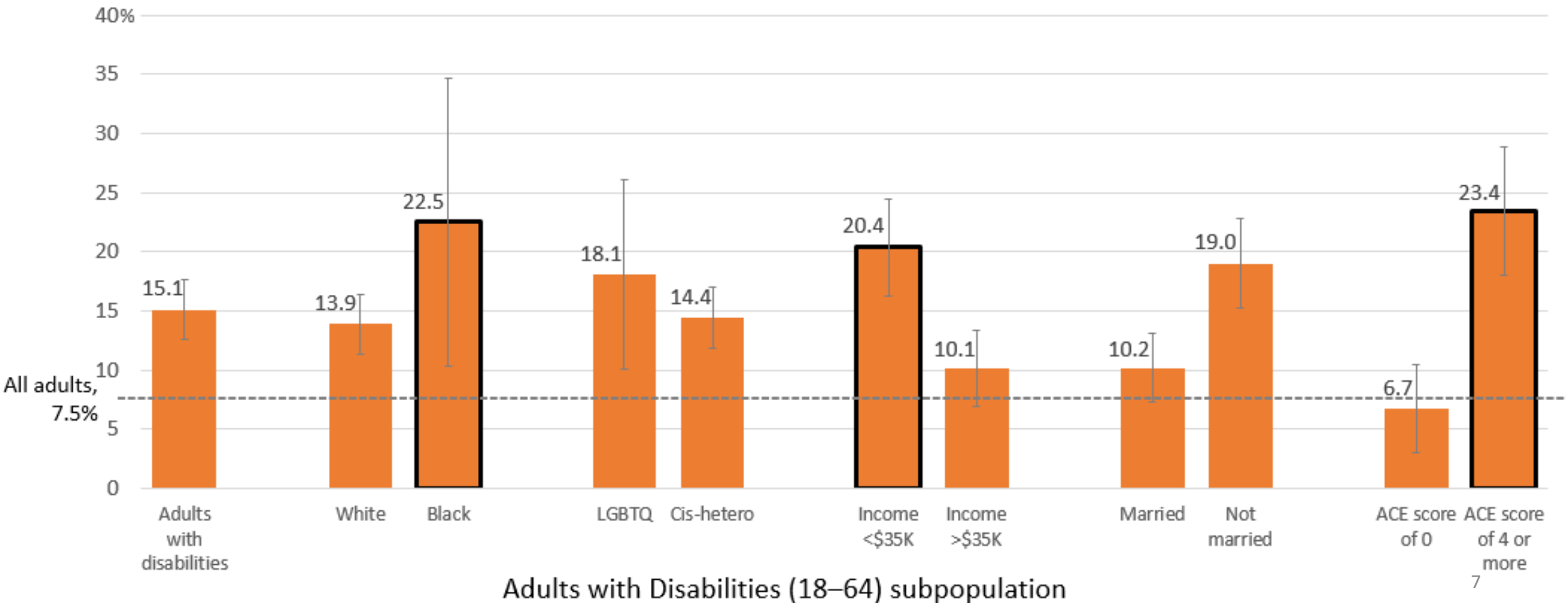
Adults with disabilities were more likely to lack the social support they needed regardless of age.

Percent of adults who **rarely or never get the social and emotional support they need** by age group and disability status, WI, 2015, 2017, and 2020 combined



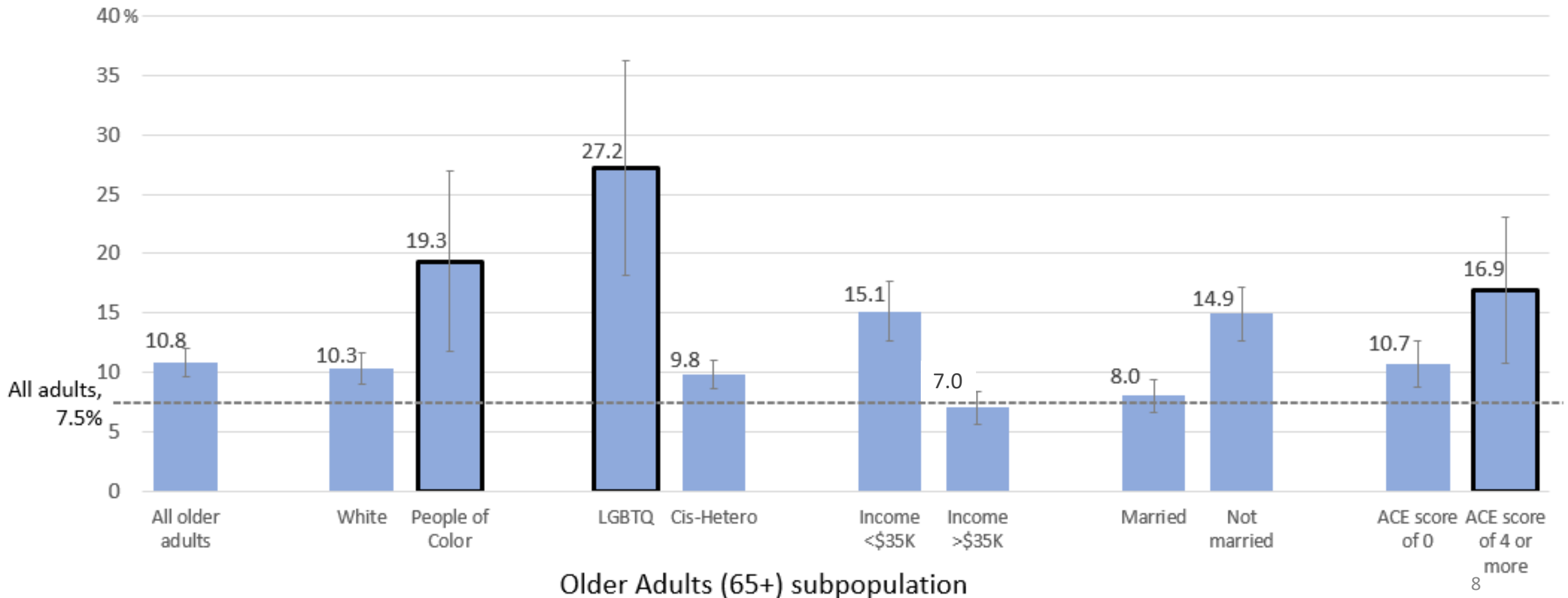
Among adults ages 18–64 with disabilities, those who were Black, had low income, and an ACE score of 4 or more were the most likely to lack the social support they needed.

Percent of adults with disabilities ages 18–64 who **rarely or never get the social and emotional support they need** by select characteristics, WI, 2015, 2017, and 2020 combined



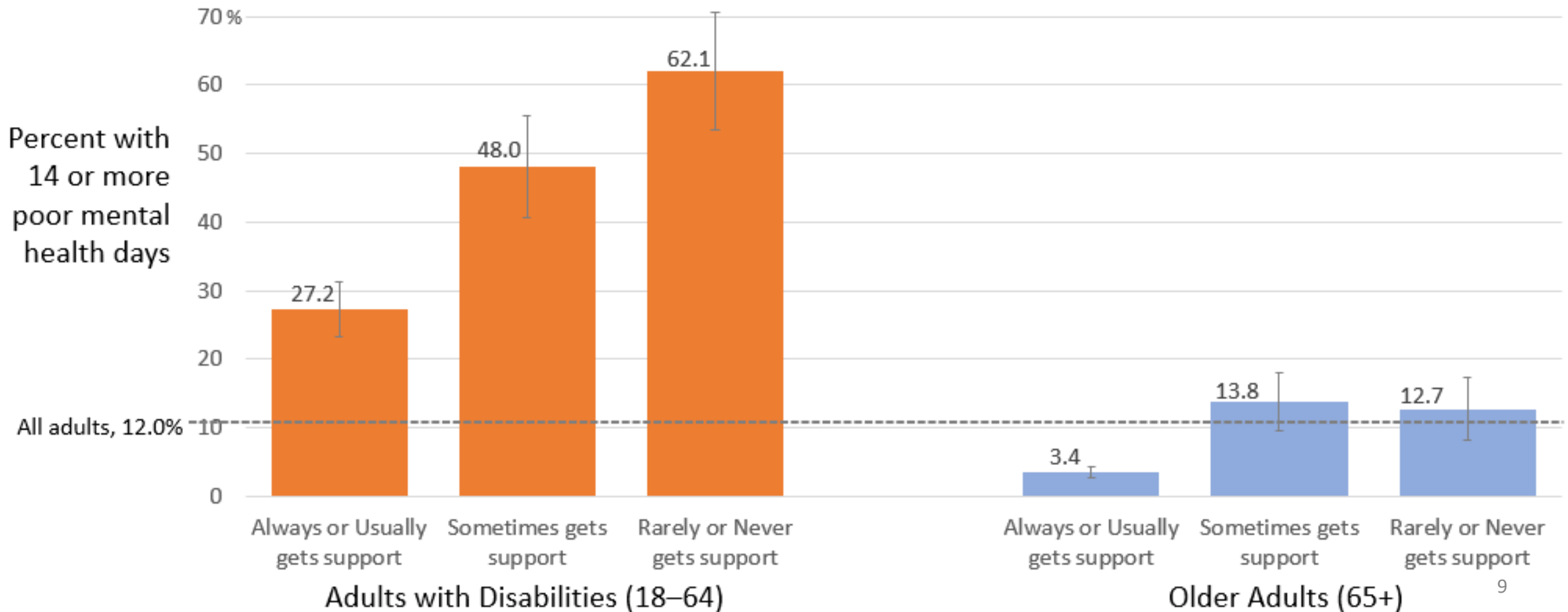
Among adults ages 65 and older, those who were LGBTQ, people of color, or had an ACE score of 4 or more were the most likely to lack the social support they needed.

Percent of adults ages 65 and older who **rarely or never get the social and emotional support they need** by select characteristics, WI, 2015, 2017, and 2020 combined



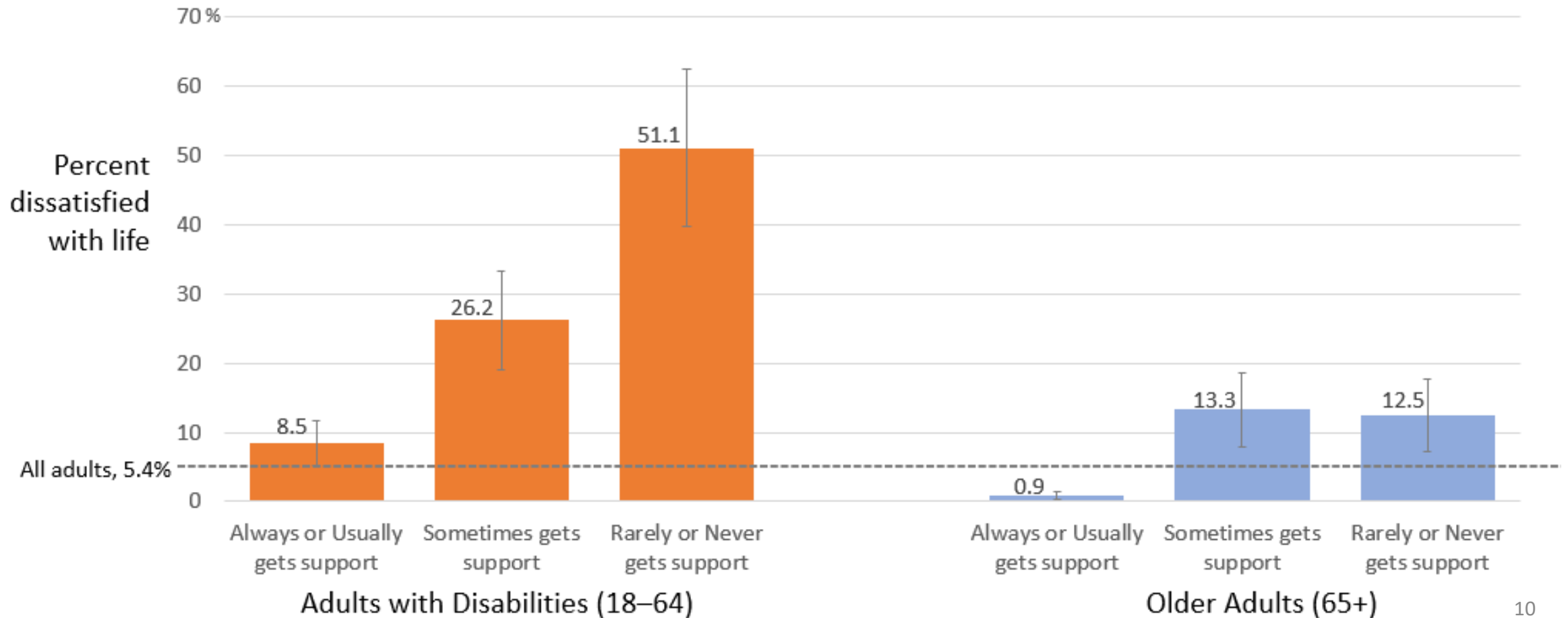
The level of social support greatly affects the number of days with poor mental health for younger adults with disabilities.

Percentage of respondents with **14 or more poor mental health days** in the last month by level of social support for adults with disabilities and older adults, WI, 2015, 2017, and 2020 combined



The level of social support greatly affects life satisfaction for younger adults with disabilities.

Percentage of respondents **dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with life** by level of social support for adults with disabilities and older adults, WI, 2017 and 2020 combined



Technical notes

Weighted estimates—Estimates are weighted to represent the statewide demographics of the adult population. This increases the generalizability of the statistics.

Error bars—Since the data come from a random sample, error bars are provided on the graphs to communicate the uncertainty of each population estimate. We are 95% confident the population estimate falls within the range provided. If the error bars of two estimates do not overlap, the difference between the two is statistically significant.

Disability status—Disability is defined as having serious difficulty with one or more of the following: hearing, seeing, walking or climbing stairs, cognition, self-care, or independent living. (The 2015 survey did not ask about being deaf or hard of hearing).

ACEs—The number of adverse childhood experiences a respondent reported out of the following: parental divorce, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, mental illness of an adult caregiver, illicit drug use or alcoholism of an adult caregiver, incarceration of a household member, or physical violence between adult caregivers.

Poor mental health days—The number of days respondents reported that their mental health was not good during the past 30 days. Mental health is described as including stress, depression, and problems with emotions.

Life satisfaction—The degree to which respondents were satisfied with their life in general, with response options of very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied.

Social and Emotional Support—The frequency respondents expressed getting the social and emotional support they needed, with response options of always, usually, sometimes, rarely, or never.

Recommended Citation

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