How Podcasts Can Change Views on Anxiety and Depression

Oscar Scherer[1], Peter Beller[2]
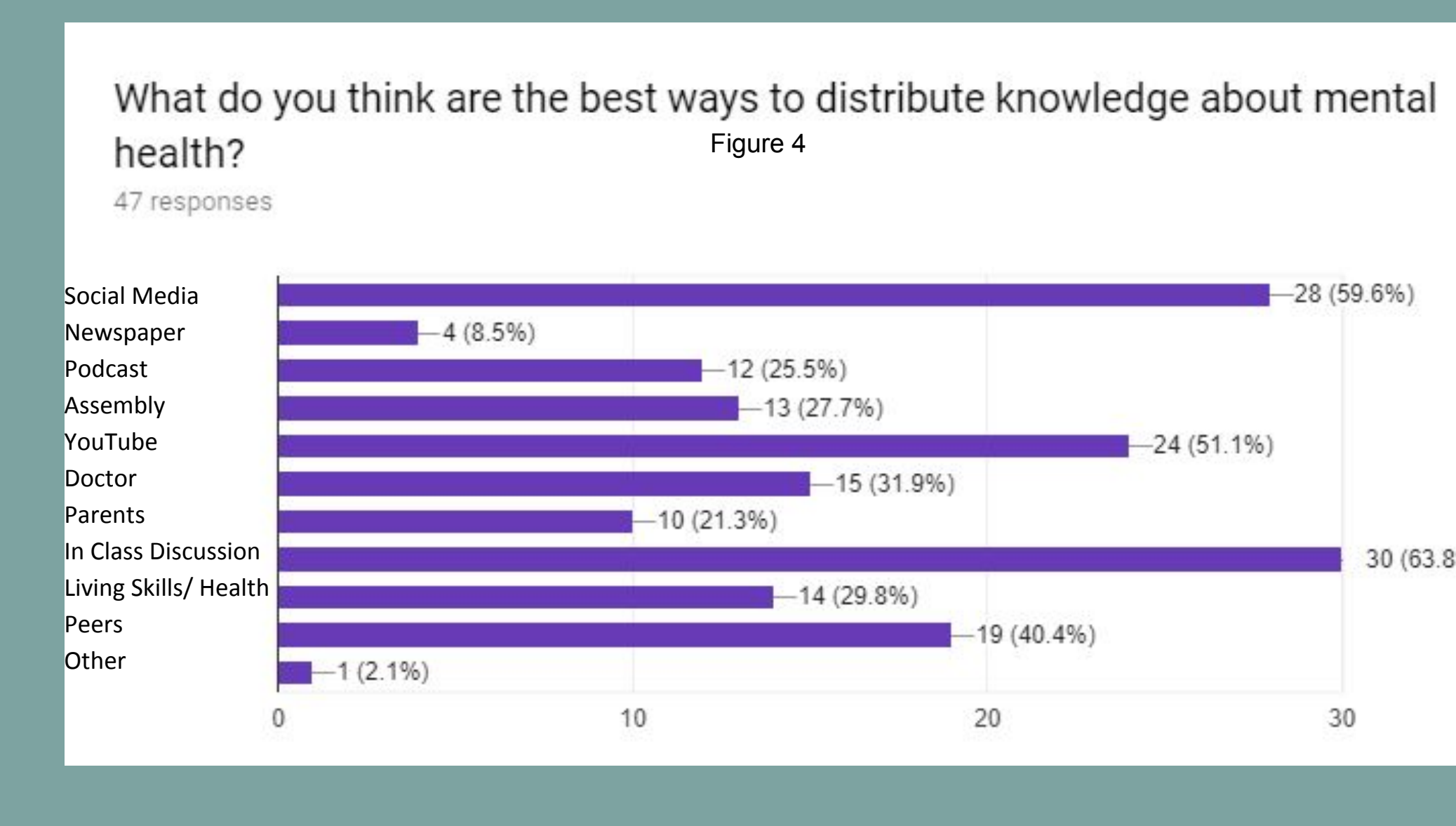
[1]Palo Alto High School, [2]Embarcadero Media
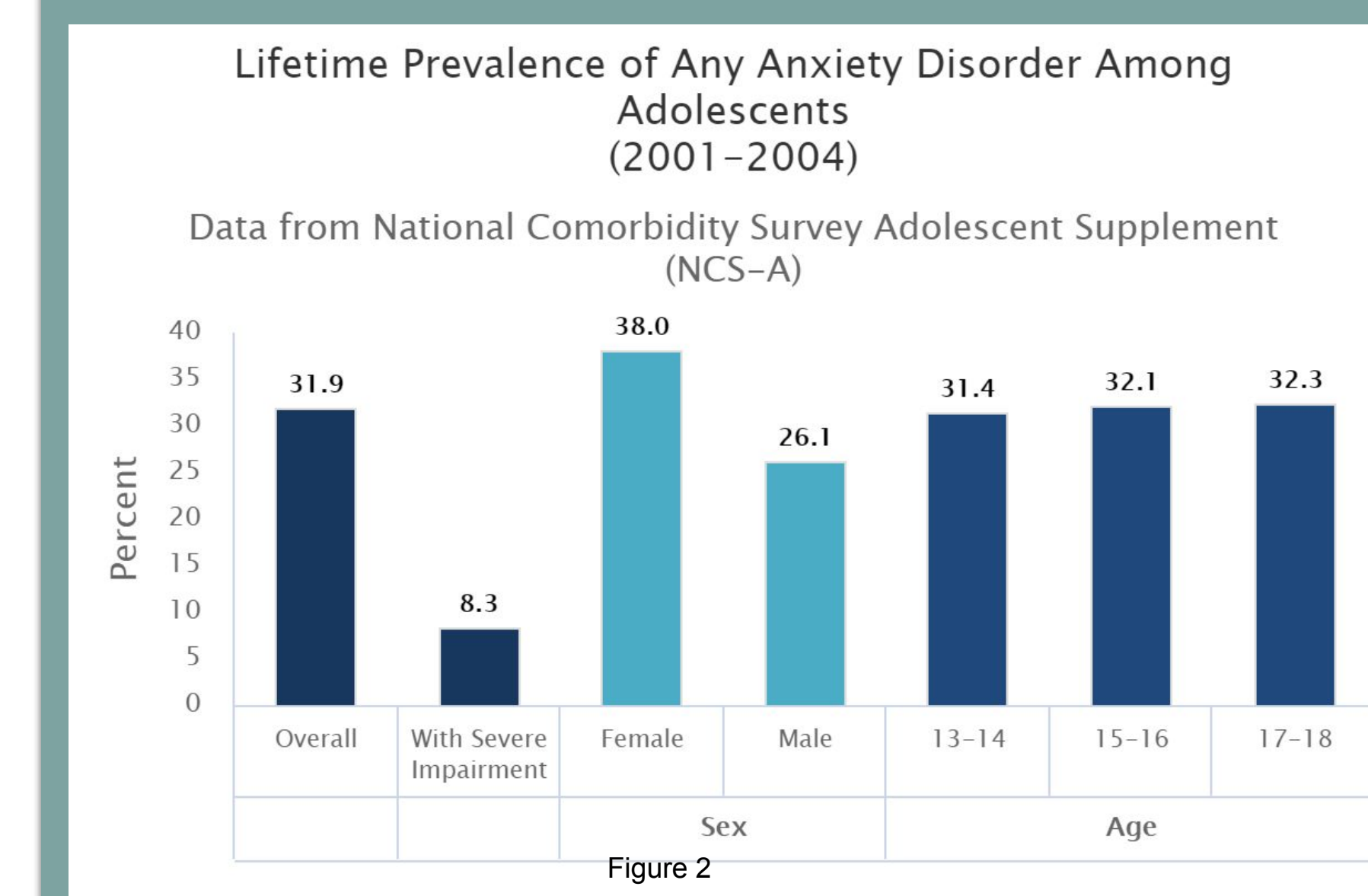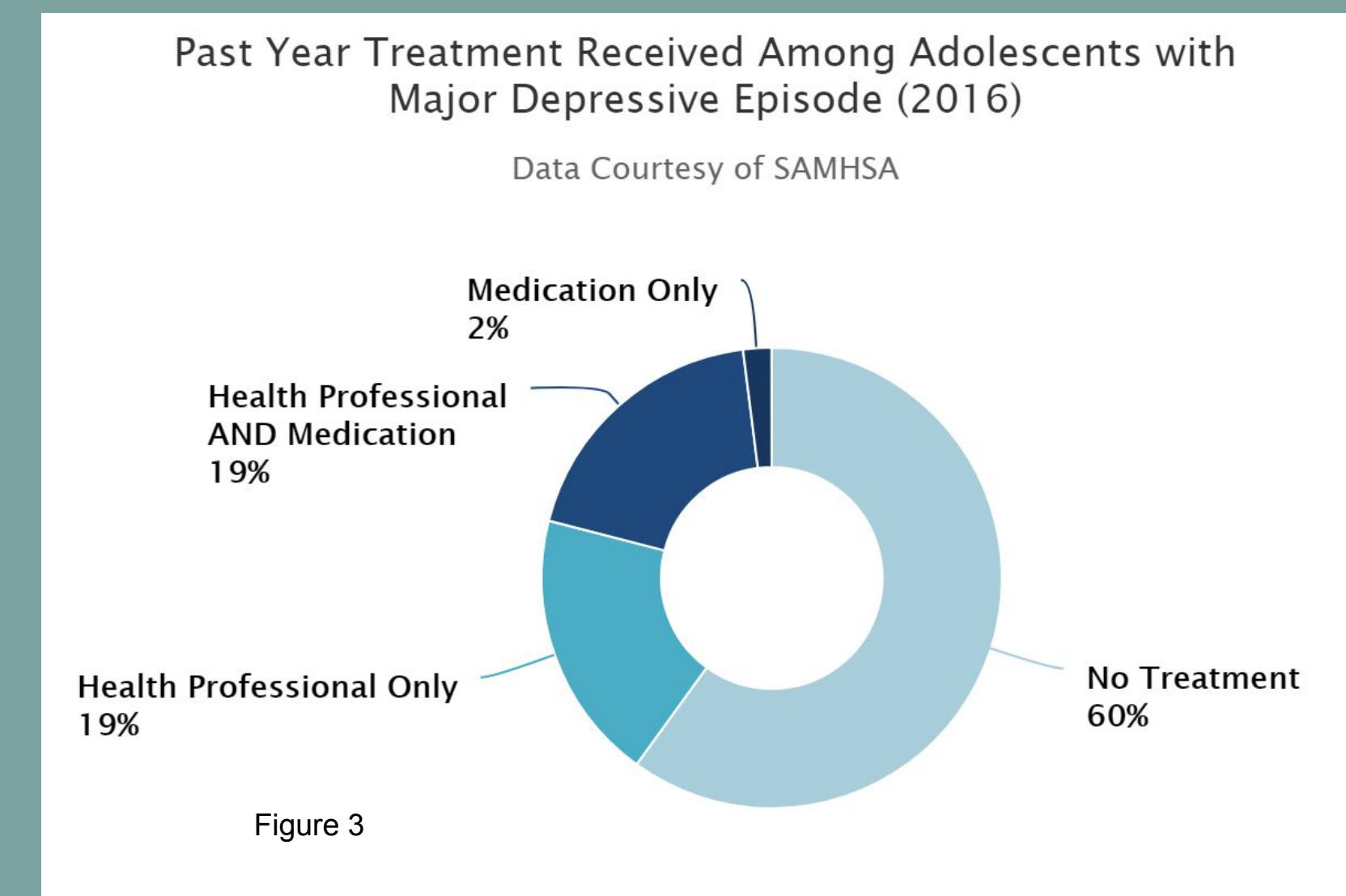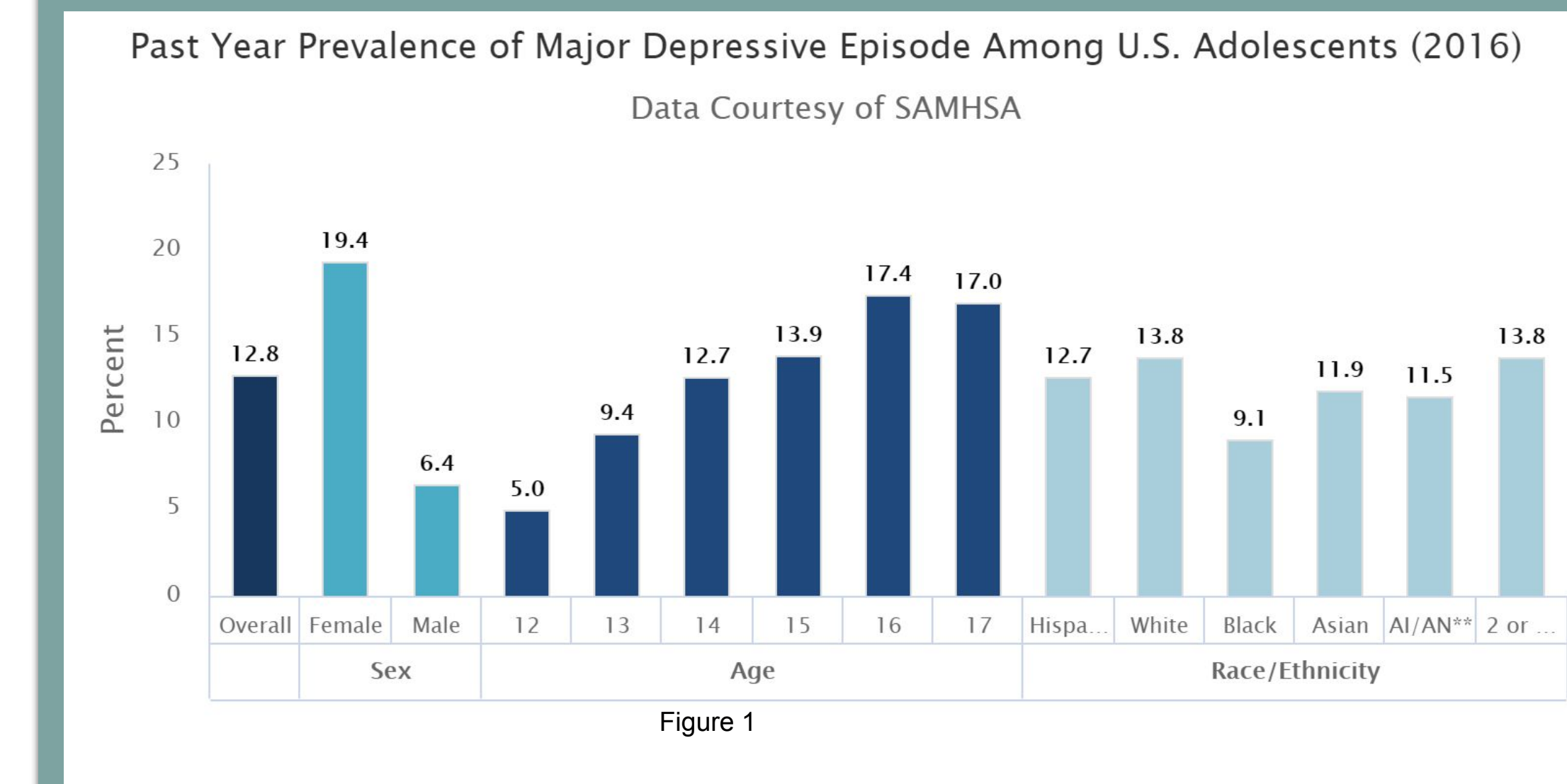
INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, there have been many public discussions about mental health. Specifically, people are asking how we can identify mental illnesses in teenagers before they pose a threat to themselves and others.

Mental health is a very **complicated issue** and does not have one clear solution. In addition, people are often reluctant to talk about their mental health issues because of fear of stigmatization.

Depression is a mental disorder that can change people's behavior and cause them to have problems at school, substance abuse, low self esteem, and more. Anxiety has a very broad definition, but it is a behavioral disturbance that interferes with daily activities. Anxiety and depression are fairly common among high school students, with about **17% of 16 and 17 year olds** having major depressive episodes (Figure 1) and **32.3% of 17 and 18 year olds** experiencing some form of anxiety (Figure 2).

Even though these mental illnesses are common among young adults, **60% of teens do not receive treatment** (figure 3).

DATA AND FINDINGS

Past Year Prevalence of Major Depressive Episode Among U.S. Adolescents (2016)
Data Courtesy of SAMHSA
Figure 1

Lifetime Prevalence of Any Anxiety Disorder Among Adolescents (2001–2004)
Data from National Comorbidity Survey Adolescent Supplement (NCS–A)
Figure 2

Past Year Treatment Received Among Adolescents with Major Depressive Episode (2016)
Data Courtesy of SAMHSA
Figure 3

What do you think are the best ways to distribute knowledge about mental health?
Figure 4
47 responses

Figure 1 shows the prevalence of depression in teens.

Figure 2 shows the prevalence of anxiety in teens.

Figure 3 shows how few people actually get treatment for mental health.

Figure 4 shows the preferred medium for distributing information.

Survey results

I had 62.5% male and 37.5% female people respond to survey 1. The race breakdown was 33.3%, 11.1% hispanic, and 55.5% white. The Mental Music podcast had two thirds of the people listened to the full podcast and everyone thought the podcast was relevant. The ADAA podcast had 55.5% of the people listen to it and nobody thought it was entertaining. For the overall section 55.5% of the people wanted to hear people age 22-35 on podcasts.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall, podcasts can be a good way to talk about mental health, but they most likely are not going to reach many high school students. There are ways to increase the number of high school kids listening to podcasts, such as advertising on social media. By increasing the number of teens who listen to podcasts on the subject, the stigmatization and fear mental illnesses can be decreased.

In order to talk more in depth about this subject, I will create a podcast based on some of the data that I have gathered and data from other sources. By finding out what people like in a podcast I can create a better and more entertaining podcast.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

For my inquiry, I used action research: along with the two surveys that I conducted, I created a podcast to summarize my data. The first survey was much longer and had people listening to two podcasts. Both of the podcasts were on the same broad topic of anxiety and depression. The second survey was much shorter; it asked about the best way to spread information on mental health.

The first **survey was split into four sections**: **Intro/demographics, Mental Music podcast, ADAA podcast, and an overall section.** The Mental Music podcast was a longer podcast that was created by high school students. The ADAA podcast was a shorter podcast and was created by doctors and psychologists.

I did not get as many responses as I hoped to on the first survey, so I created a much shorter survey to determine the medum teens though was most effective for distributing information.

DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

When I created and distributed the first survey, I did not get a sufficient number of responses. I created the second survey to determine whether the first survey was not being taken because teens do not like podcasts or because the survey was too long.

The second survey showed that **25.5% of the people who took the survey thought that podcasts were effective** (Figure 4), which provides some indication that the podcasts were not the issue with the first survey. I came to the conclusion that the first survey was just too long and not many people have enough time to take it.

More people listened to the Mental Music podcast than the ADAA podcast, despite the fact that the Mental Music podcast was longer. People seem to like to hear personal experiences more than raw medical facts. It surprised me to see that more people would listen to a podcast that is about three times as long as the other.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

Special thanks to Peter Beller for making this project possible.

Works Cited:

"Teen Depression." *I Need a Lighthouse*, 2008, www.ineedalighthouse.org/

National Institute of Mental Health. Nov. 2017, www.nimh.nih.gov/health/ statistics/major-depression.shtml. Accessed 26 Mar. 2018.

National Institute of Mental Health. Nov. 2017, www.nimh.nih.gov/health/ statistics/any-anxiety-disorder.shtml. Accessed 26 Mar. 2018. depression-suicide/teen-depression/. Accessed 26 Mar. 2018.

Rosin, Hanna. "Silicon Valley Suicides." *The Atlantic*, Dec. 2015, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/12/the-silicon-vall ey-suicides/413140/. Accessed 17 Nov. 2017.

Taghva, Arsia. "Stigma Barriers of Mental Health in Iran: A Qualitative Study by Stakeholders of Mental Health." *Iran J Psychiatry*, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29062367. Accessed 5 Nov. 2017.