



What does it mean to have a peer who self harms? Examining risk taking behaviors in high school students

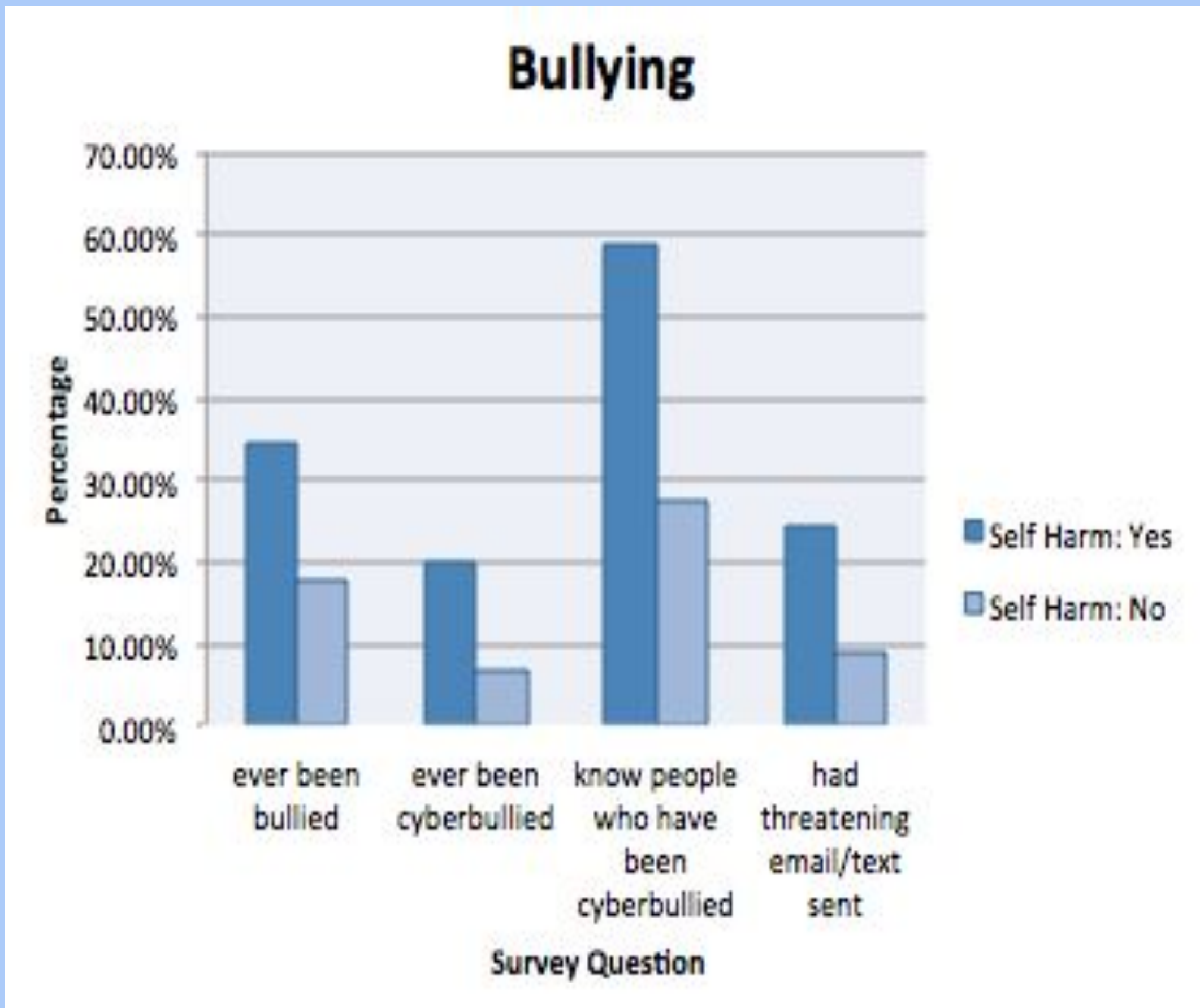
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Purpose
To examine the risk taking behaviors of high school students who reported knowing someone who self-harms or cuts.

Background

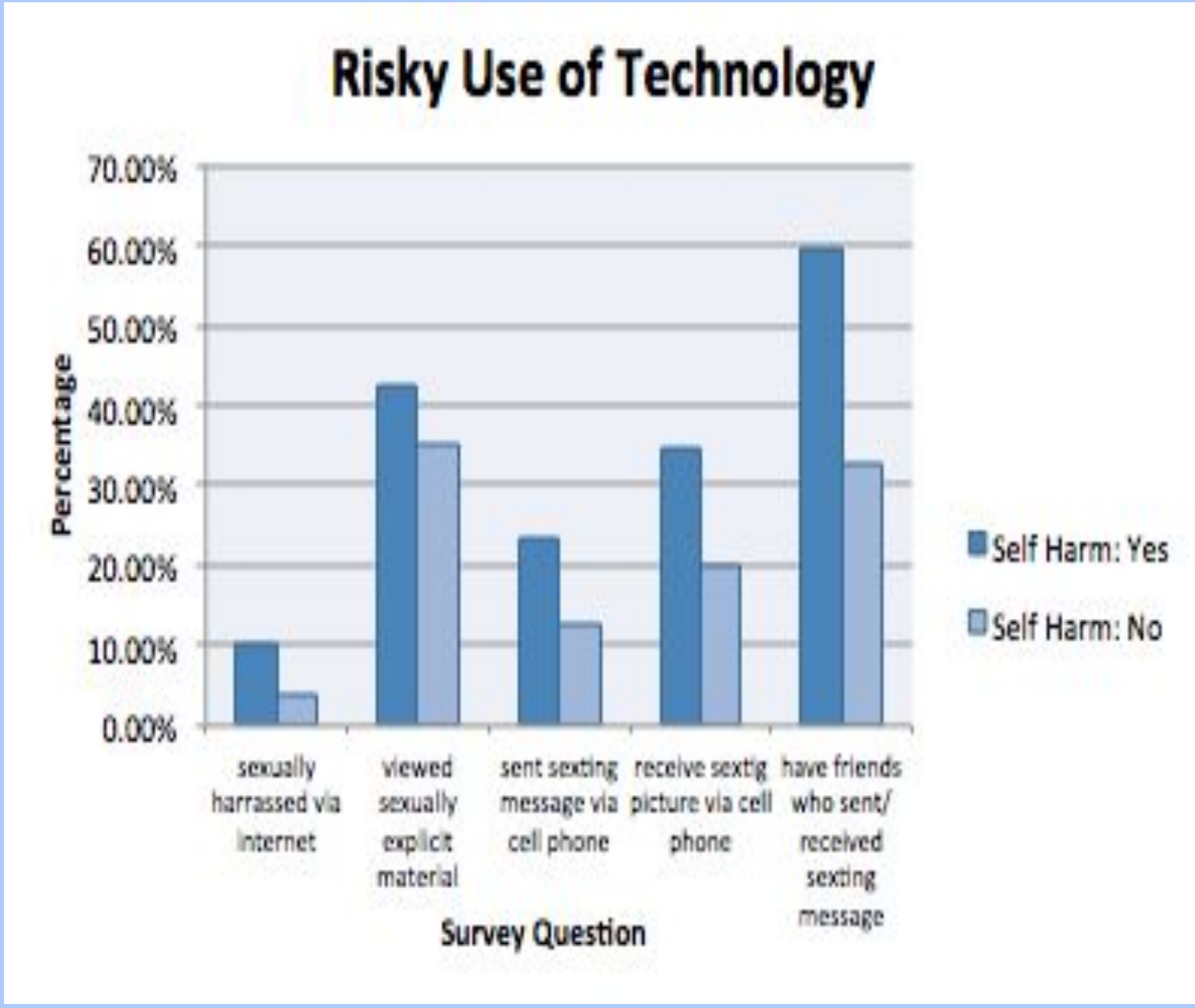
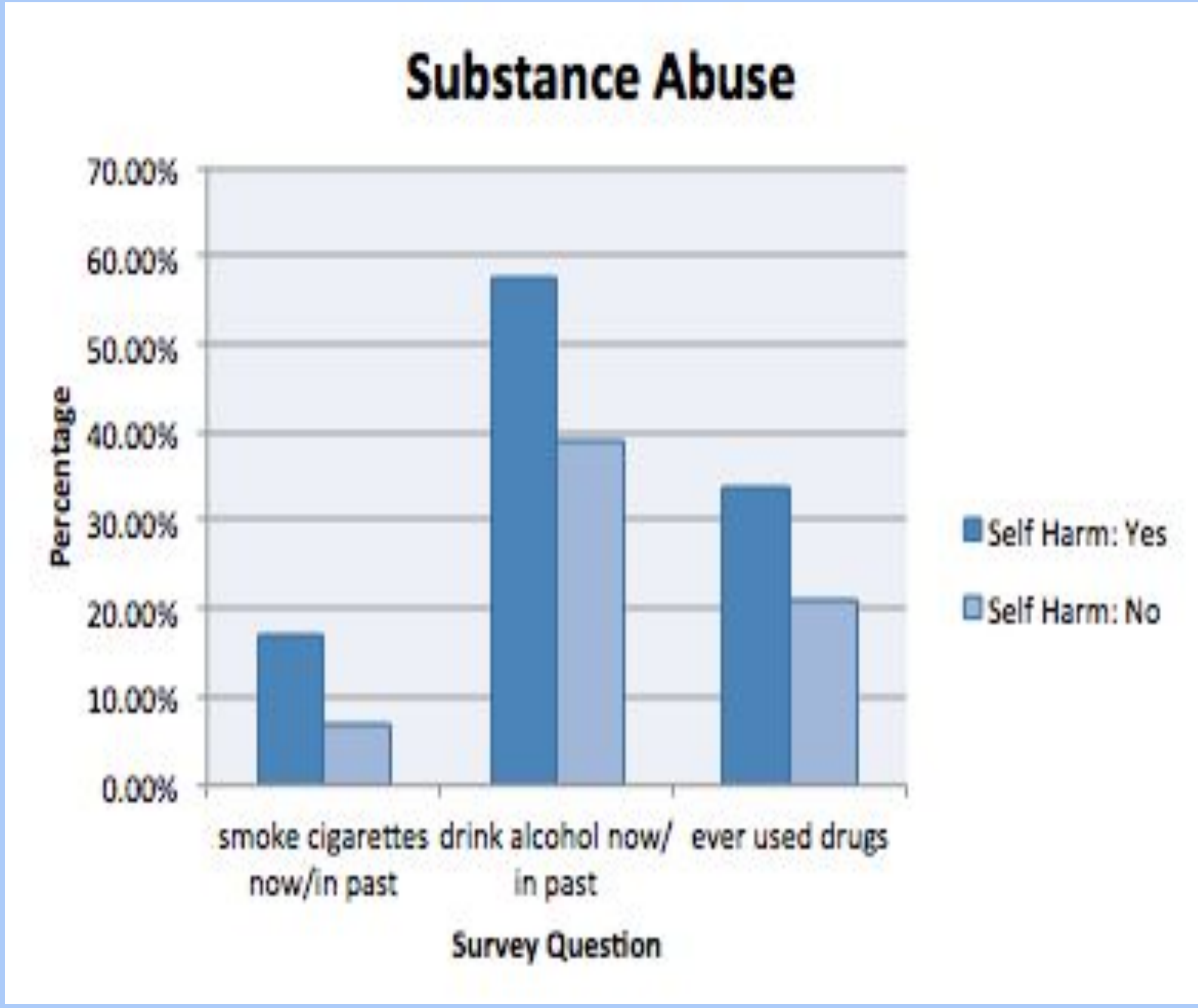
- Among adolescents it is estimated that 17.2% engaging in self-harm behaviors.
- Girls report higher rates of self-harm than boys (Monto, McRee, & Deryck, 2018).
- It is not uncommon for adolescents' to become friends with those who are similar to them, suggesting that troubled teens with risk factors for self-injury may form a friendship or bond over their issues.
- Adolescents who report engaging in self-harm have more friends who self-harm than those that do not participate in this behavior (2010).

Method
A secondary analysis from a 2012 data set containing quantitative data from 5,411 high school students found that **72% (n=3,895) reported knowing someone who has cut themselves or tried to harm themselves.** The sample contained 80.3% of girls and 61.2% of boys and descriptive statistics were used in analysis.



Findings
High school students who knew someone who self-harms had significantly higher rates of:

- Bullying
- Substance abuse
- Risky use of technology



Conclusion & Implications

Findings support:

- Screening all high school students for self-harm behaviors and identification of students who have peers that self-harm.
- Screening all high school students for health risk behaviors and Internet risk behaviors.
- Teaching nurses who work with an adolescent population how to recognize emotional distress, increased anxiety, stress, as well as health risk and Internet risk behaviors.
- The education of teachers, parents, and students on what to do and how to act when faced with a situation of self-harm.
- The development of programs and identification of resources for students who self-harm and for those who have peers that self-harm.
- The encouragement of nurses, educators, and other healthcare providers to act as a liaison for students who self-harm or have a peer who self-harms and their parents.
- Approaching all vulnerable adolescents in a calm and non-judgmental manner to help them feel more comfortable and safe.
- Referring all adolescents who self-harm to a mental health practitioner.

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