

I'm a Believer: Climate Change Opinions on Villanova's Campus

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INTRODUCTION

- Climate change is the measured increase in global temperature, ocean temperature, relative sea level rise, and glacial melting.
- Not all people believe in the existence of, nor the anthropogenic impact on climate change.
- We hypothesize that a correlation exists between student's beliefs regarding climate change and demographics such as school/college and/or political affiliations.
- We hypothesize that the amount of daily green activities students perform is higher among climate change believers and those who believe it is anthropogenically caused.
- With the majority's support of climate change as an issue, economic and political decisions can more successfully take anthropogenic influences into account when forming environmentally policy.

METHODS

- From February 3rd to March 10th of 2016, a Villanova campus-wide survey was issued regarding climate change beliefs and practices via SurveyMonkey.
- The survey was distributed through email, Facebook, and professors.
- Overall, 521 surveys were collected, representing students of both genders, all grade levels in Villanova's Bartley School of Business (VSB), and the Colleges of Nursing, Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS), and Engineering (ENG).
- Data were collected and analyzed in Microsoft Excel to determine correlations between climate change beliefs based on school, political party, and environmental practices.

RESULTS

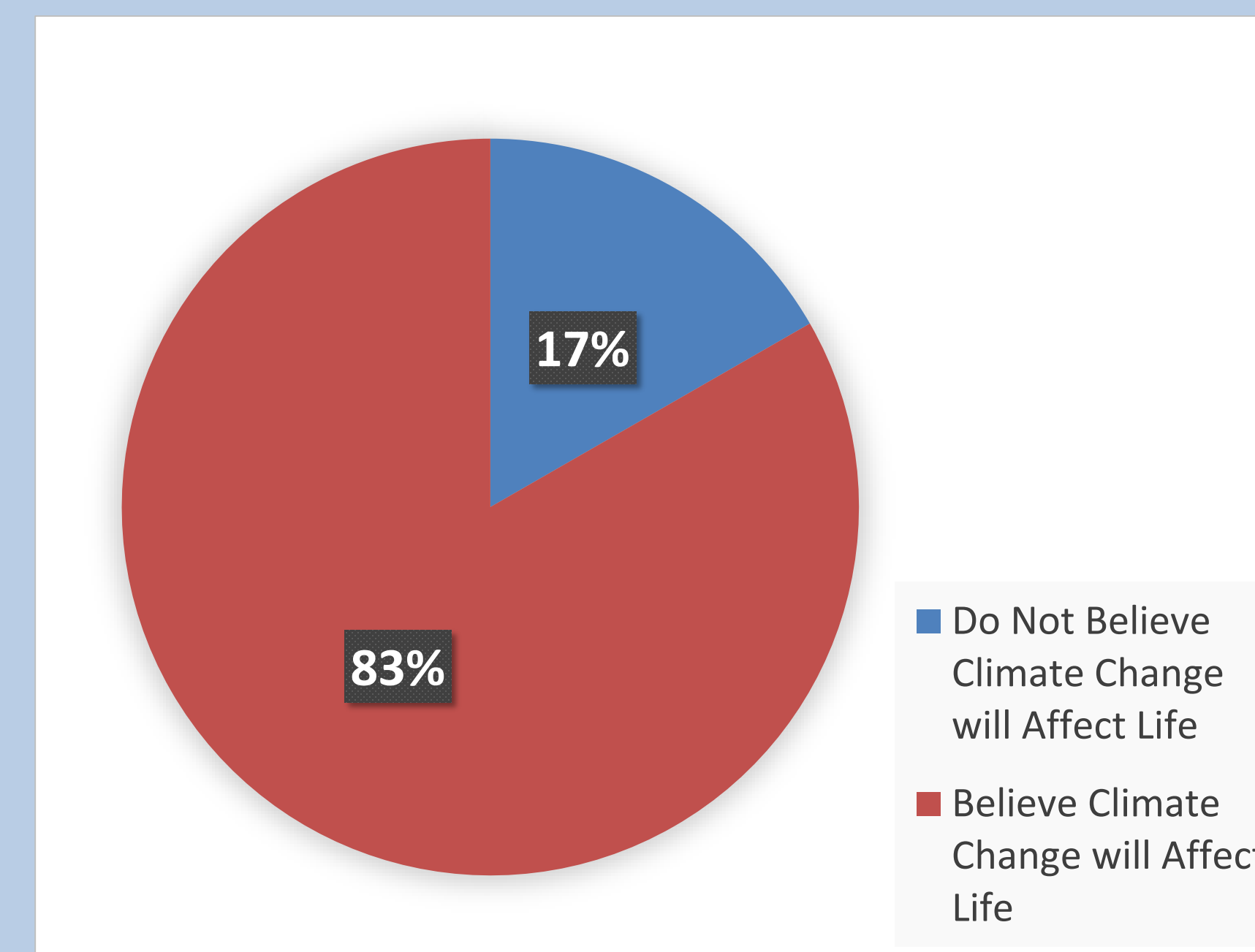


Figure 1. Percentage of total survey population who believe climate change will impact life as they know it vs. those who do not (n=522).

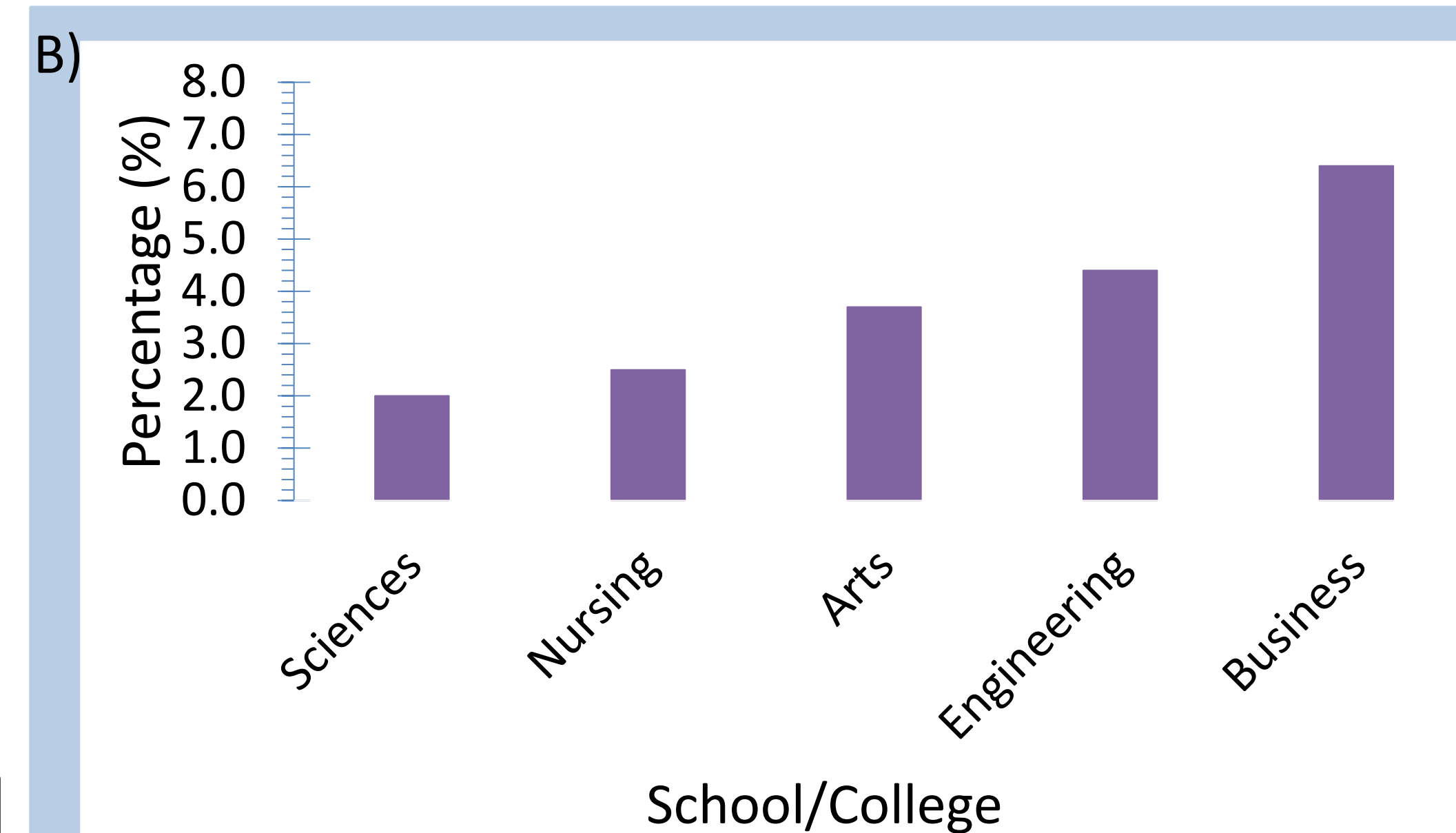


Figure 2: Percentage of students from corresponding school/college who do not believe in climate change

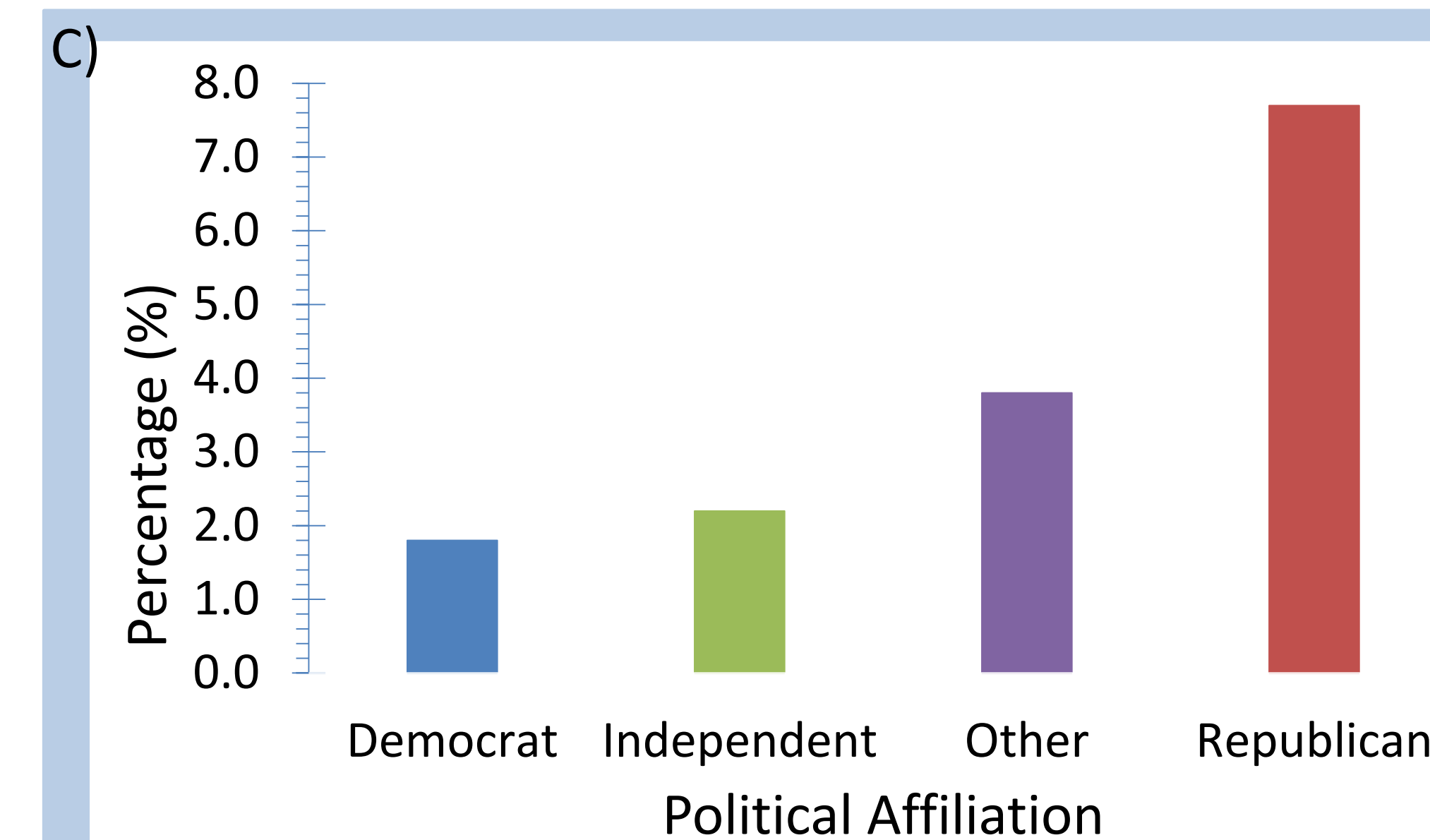


Figure 3: Percentage of students with their corresponding political affiliation who do not believe in climate change

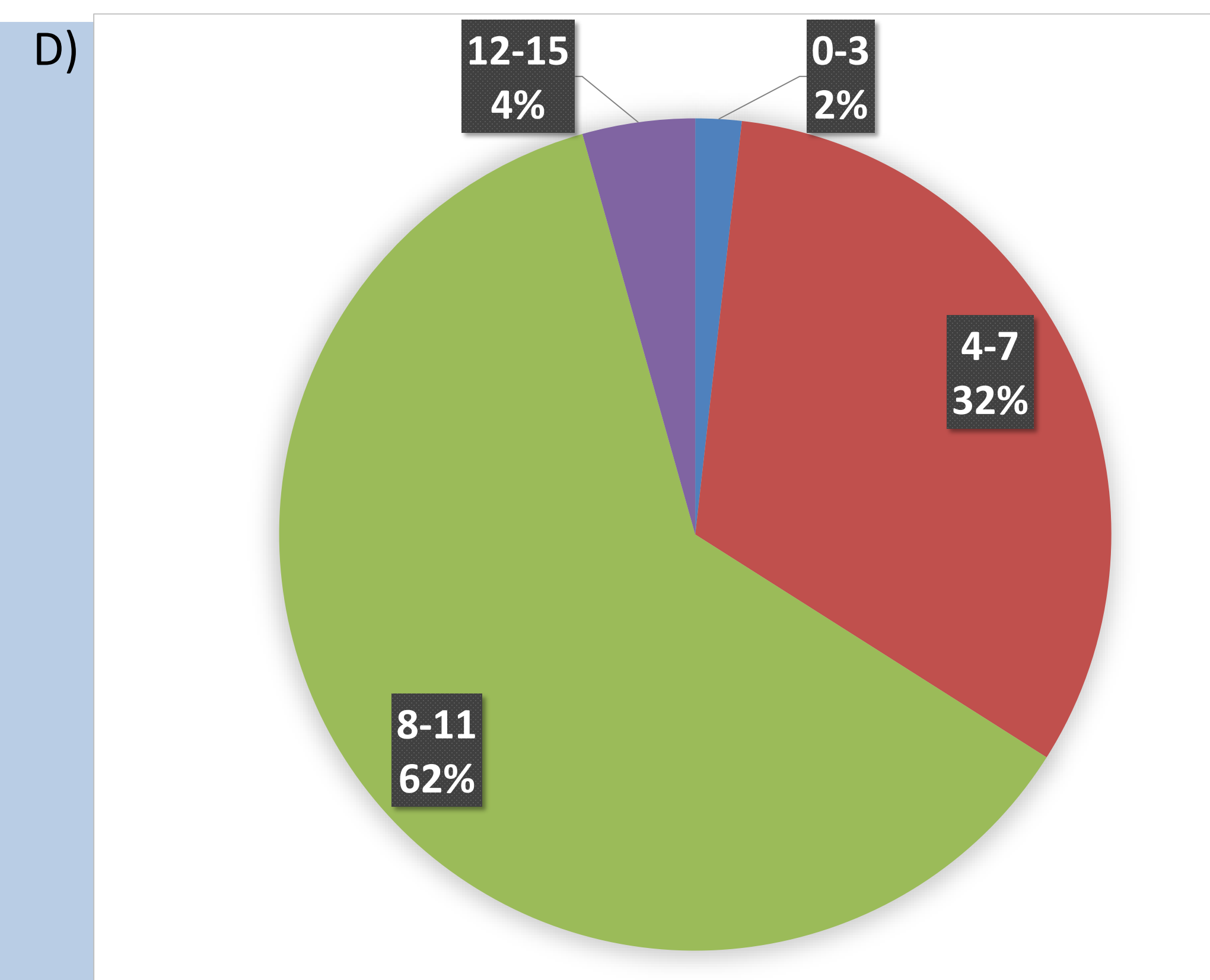


Figure 4: Percentage each range of sustainable actions is performed by respondents who believe in human impact of climate change (n=503)

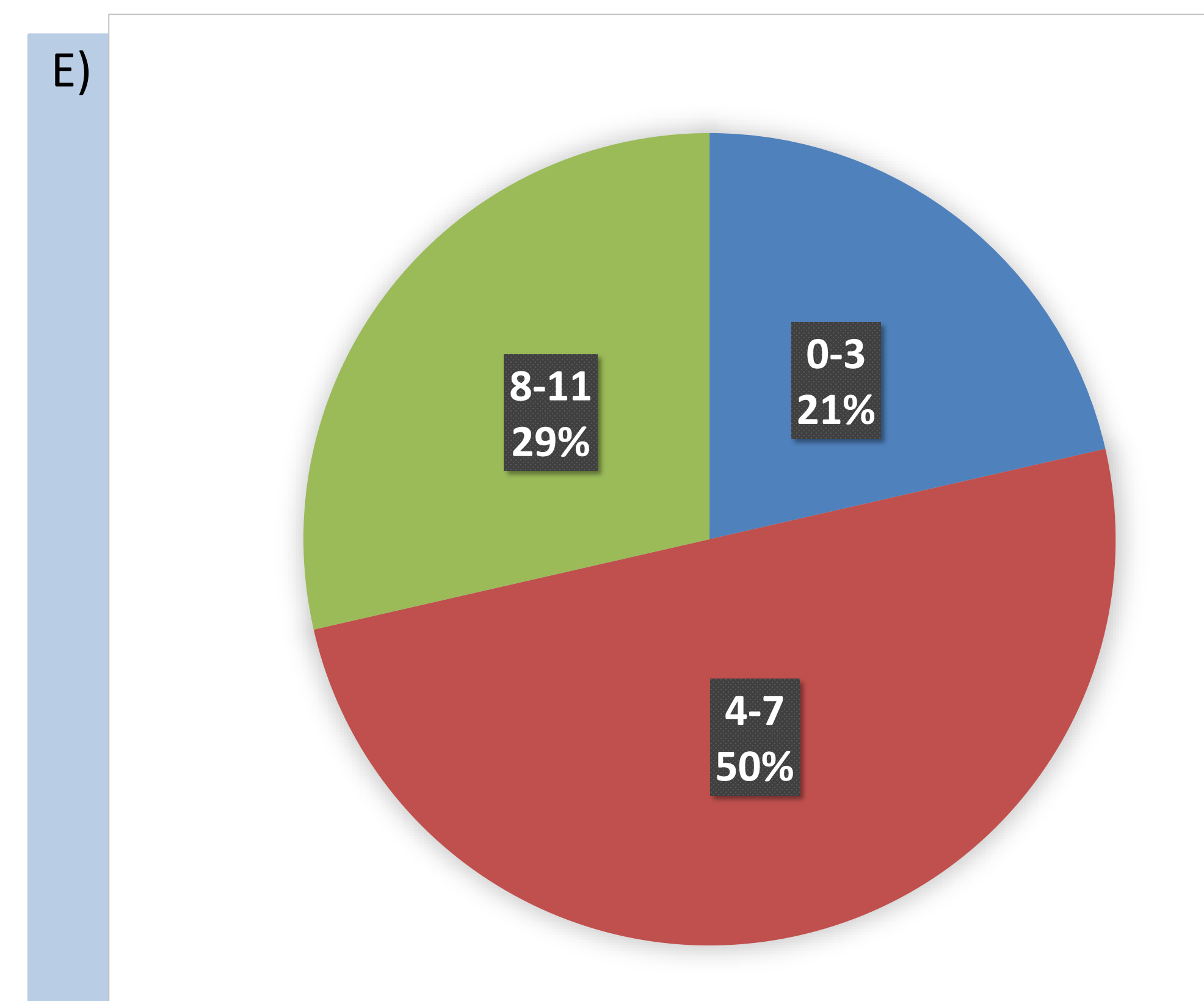


Figure 5: Percentage each range of sustainable actions is performed by students who don't believe in human impact of climate change (n=28)

DISCUSSION

- School/College:** VSB had the highest percent of respondents that do not believe in climate change (6.4%), while the Sciences had the least (2.0%). These results are consistent with national data where science degree holders believe in climate change at a higher rate than any other degree type (Funk, 2016), which could imply that the majority of business majors value a growing economy while science majors value environmental issues.
- Political Affiliation:** Republicans were recorded as having the greatest percentage of climate change non-believers (7.7%) followed by the "other" party, which includes those identifying as Libertarian, Socialist, or Green Party (3.8%). These results mirror National statistics, demonstrating that 41% of Republicans, but only 11% of Democrats are non-believers (Funk, 2016), which may be due to the conservative and traditional beliefs upheld by Republicans compared to the liberal nature of Democrats.
- Sustainable Actions:** Non-believers of human impact on climate change did not perform more than 11 sustainable options, while 4% of believers performed 12-13 sustainable actions daily, more than 75% of the time.
- Overall Trends:** Survey results indicate that Villanova students have a higher percentage of climate change believers compared to the national average. This is likely due to the age group of Villanova's students compared to the average age of U.S. citizens as climate change is more recognized by younger generations. Conservative catholic values might also play a role in increasing students' awareness of the world around them

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