

Revealing Disparities

Health Care Workers' Observations of Discrimination Against Patients

Webinar: February 15, 2024

The webinar will begin in a few moments.



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Panelists

- **Carla S. Alvarado**, Ph.D., M.P.H.
*Director of Research,
AAMC Center for Health Justice*
- **Joseph Betancourt**, M.D., M.P.H.
President, The Commonwealth Fund
- **Henry Fernandez**, J.D.
*CEO, African American Research
Collaborative*
- **Aletha Maybank**, M.D., M.P.H.
*Senior Vice President and
Chief Health Equity Officer,
American Medical Association*
- **Laurie Zephyrin**, M.D., M.P.H. M.B.A.,
*Senior Vice President, Advancing Health Equity,
The Commonwealth Fund*

About the survey

- Nationally-representative sample of 3,000 self-identified health care workers (HCWs).
- This was a blended poll that contacted respondents online and via telephone.
- There is a margin of error of +/- 1.8% for the full sample
- The poll was conducted from March 14 through April 5, 2023.
- The poll oversamples Black, Latino, and AAPI health care workers. It also includes a large white sample.
- The results are weighted to the 2021 US Census ACS estimates for gender, education, age, and race for health care workers.

Notes: HCWs = health care workers. AAPI = Asian American and Pacific Islander.

Data: African American Research Collaborative survey of health care workers, March 14 to April 5, 2023 (N = 3,000; margin of error = +/- 1.8%).

Source: Henry Fernandez et al., *Revealing Disparities: Health Care Workers' Observations of Discrimination Against Patients* (Commonwealth Fund, Feb. 2024).

How Health Care Workers See Discrimination Against Patients



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The majority of sickle cell patients in our area are African American. When they go into sickle cell crisis, they come to the Emergency Room, and I think it's systemic because, you know they're in pain, and they need their pain medicine. Staff always think it's a drug seeker, even though you know [the patient] is in a sickle cell crisis. But they think [the patient] is seeking drugs, and [the health care worker] is just like, hold off . . . and the [patient] is in agony.”

Black nurse

Pennsylvania hospital



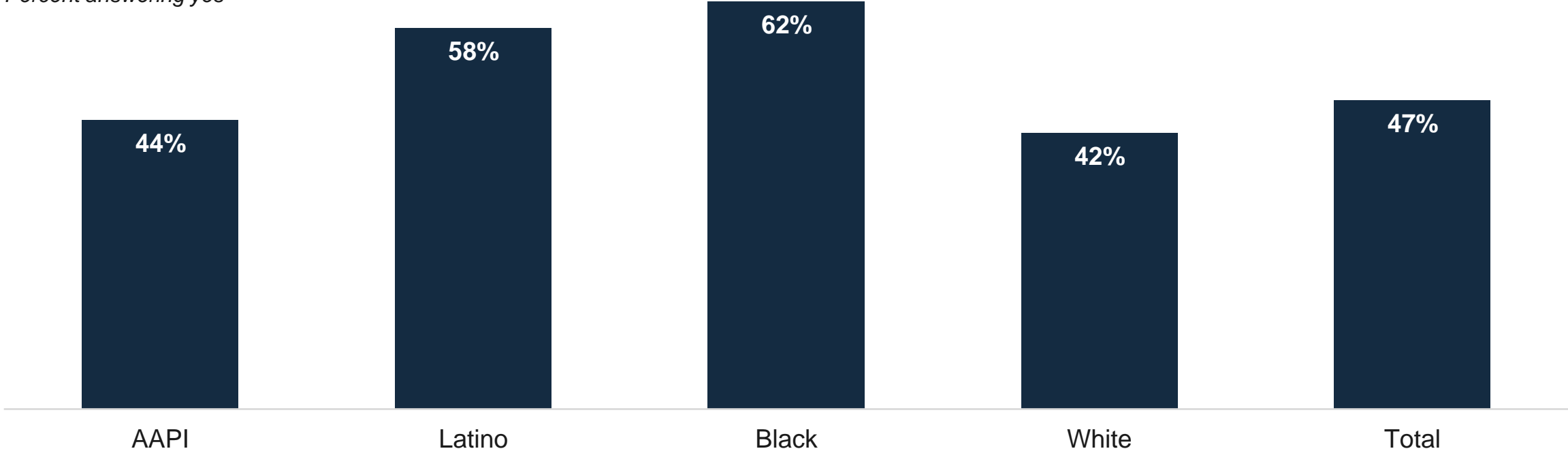
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Many health care workers say they have witnessed racism against patients.

 *In places you have worked, have you ever witnessed patients face racism or discrimination?*

Percent answering yes




Notes: HCWs = health care workers. AAPI = Asian American and Pacific Islander.

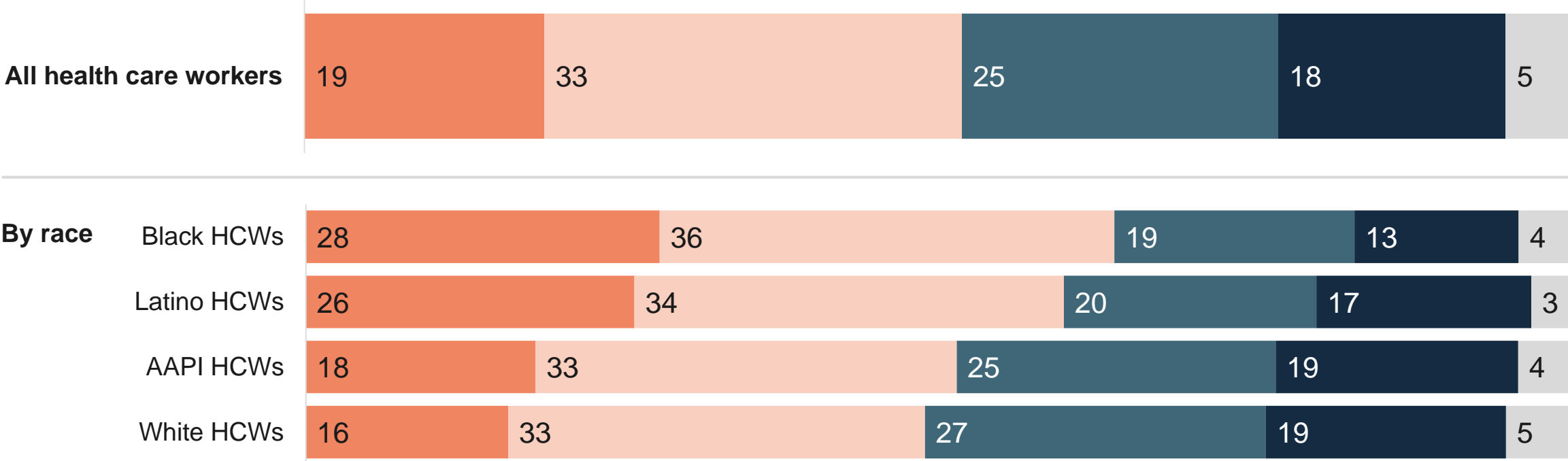
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Half of all health workers say racism against patients is a major problem or crisis.

 *In health care, how big of an issue do you think racism or discrimination based on race or ethnicity against patients is?*

■ A crisis
 ■ A major problem but not a crisis
 ■ Not a major issue, a minor problem
 ■ Not a problem at all
 ■ Don't know




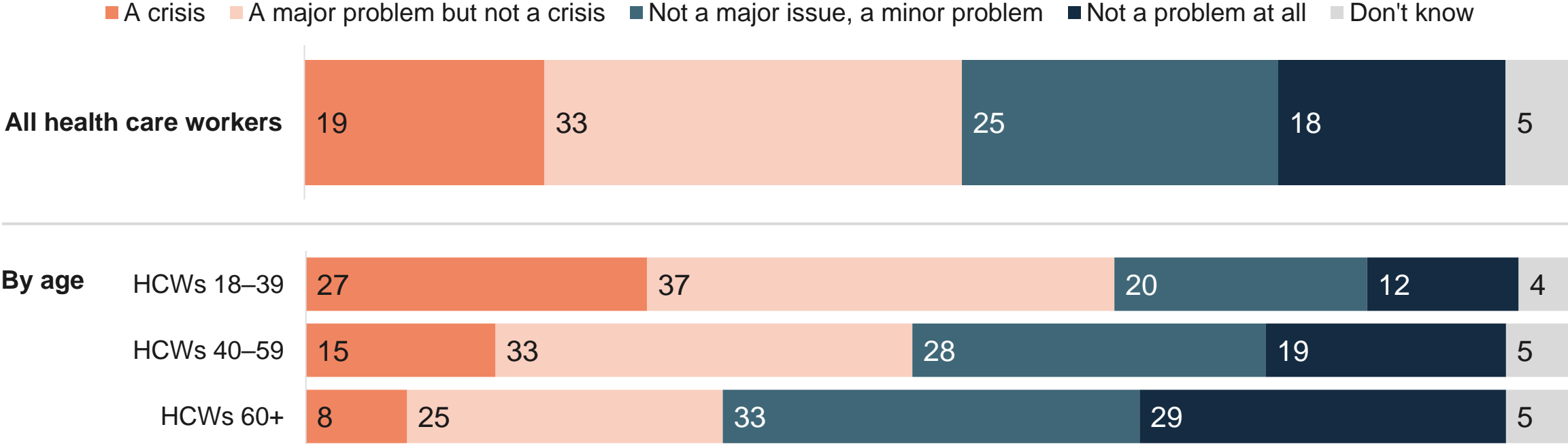
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Perception of racism against patients varies by health care workers' age

 *In health care, how big of an issue do you think racism or discrimination based on race or ethnicity against patients is?*




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Half of health care workers agreed that patients of color and non-English speakers are less well treated

 *Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
(Percentage indicating strongly agree or somewhat agree)*

57%
AGREE

Patients who mostly speak Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Creole, or other languages aside from English may not always receive **equal quality treatment** from health care providers compared to English speaking patients.

50%
AGREE

Patients may be given **fewer options** for their care by health care providers because of how they look.

50%
AGREE

Medical providers can be more accepting of White patients **advocating or speaking up for themselves** than patients of color doing so.

49%
AGREE

Patients of color can be treated differently when they seek **treatment for pain** and may be less likely to receive pain medication than White patients.

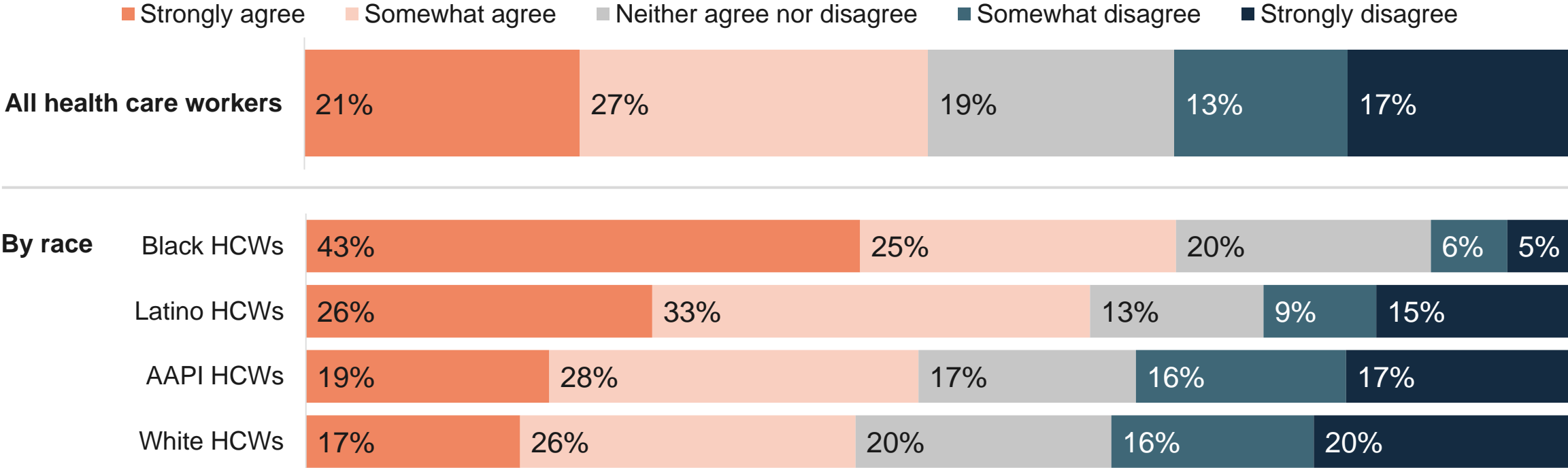
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Nearly half of health care workers agreed providers can be more accepting of self advocacy by white patients than by Black patients

Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree with the following statement... Medical providers can be more accepting of White patients advocating or speaking up for themselves than Black patients doing so.



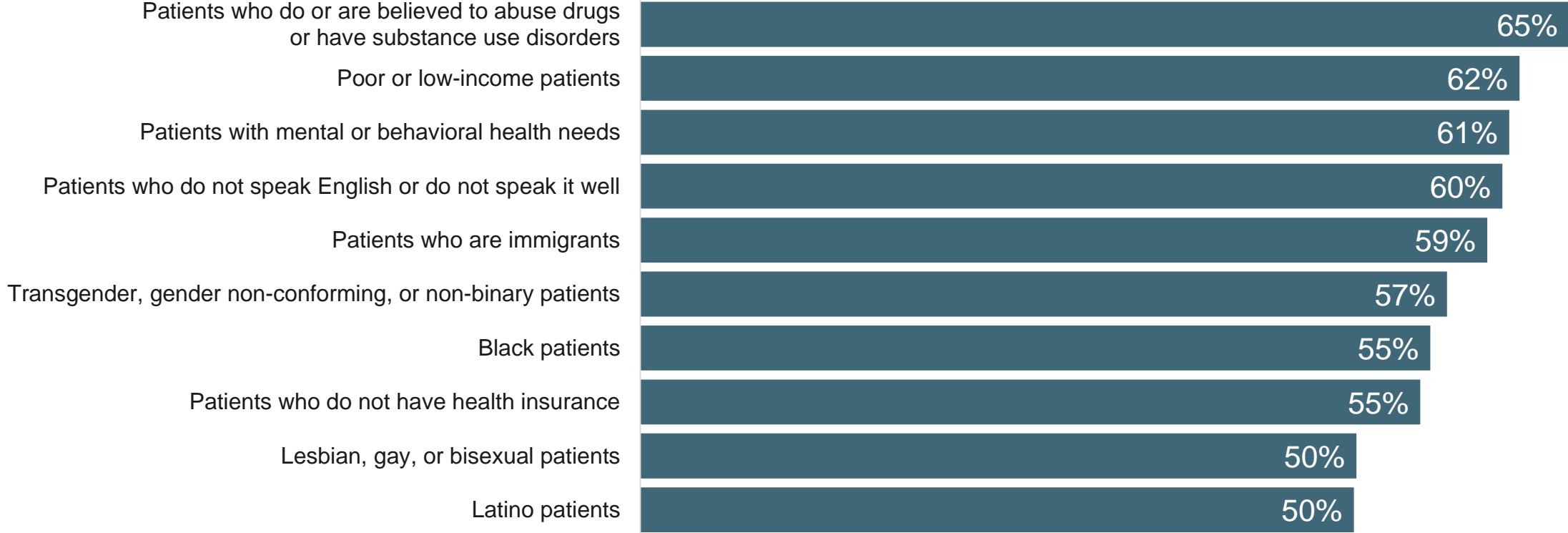
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Majorities of health care workers experience patients facing discrimination based on mental health, income, substance abuse, race, language and gender identity

 *In your experience, how much do each of the following groups experience discrimination when seeking or receiving health care?*

Percent answering very or somewhat discriminated against



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Stress on Health Care Workers

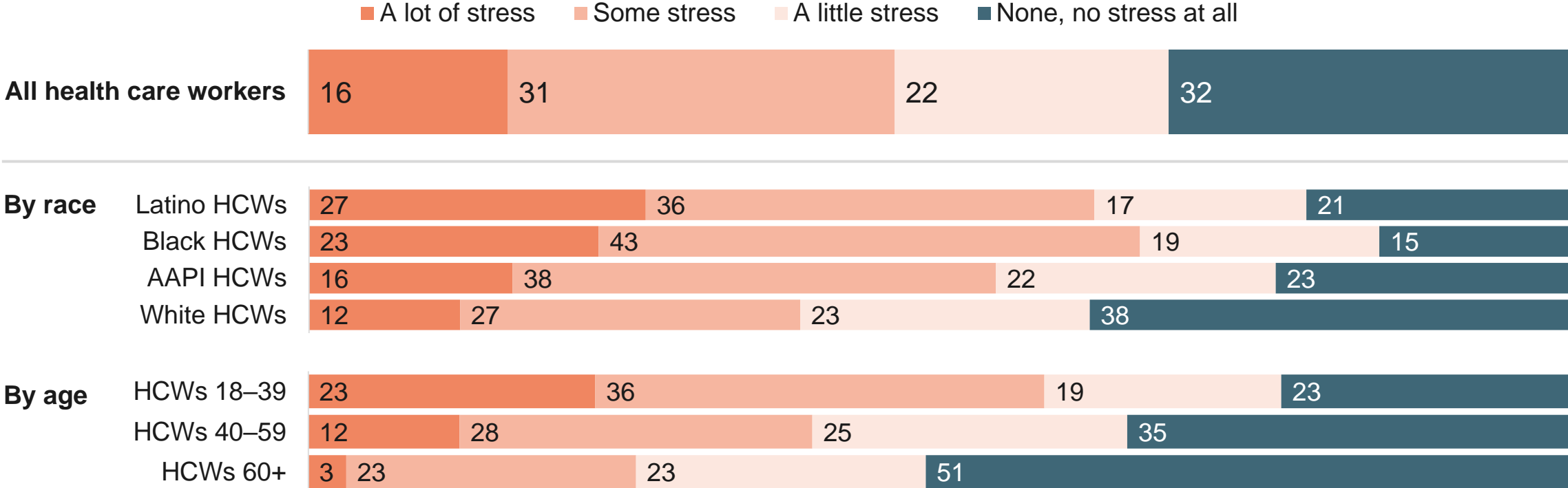


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Health care workers report facing stress because of racism or discrimination based on race or ethnicity in health care.

 *Thinking about your work in health care over the last five years, how much stress does dealing with racism or discrimination based on race or ethnicity create for you?*



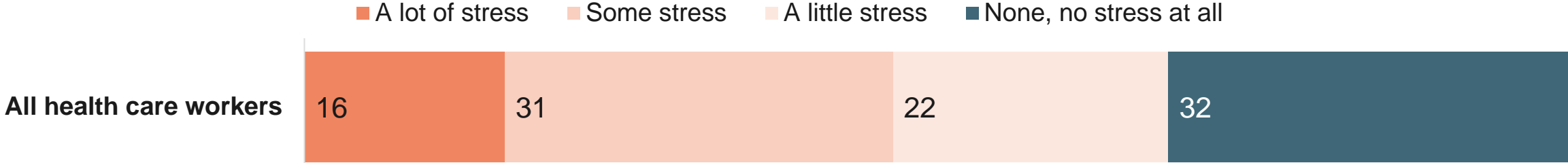
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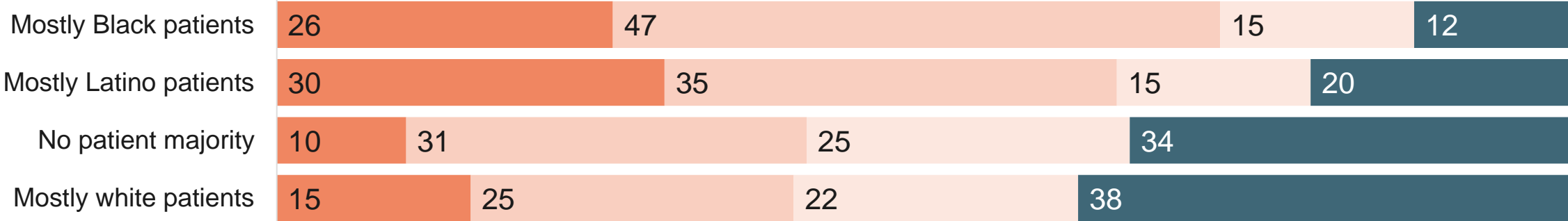
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Employees of a facility with mostly Black or Latino patients were more likely to report experiencing a lot of stress.

 *Thinking about your work in health care over the last five years, how much stress does dealing with racism or discrimination based on race or ethnicity create for you?*



By racial makeup of facility



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What Happens If You Speak Up?



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“

I think a lot of the times. We just see it happen so many times, and we just don't want to be like the target. So, we don't say anything. We don't speak up.

Latina Nurse
Texas Health Clinic



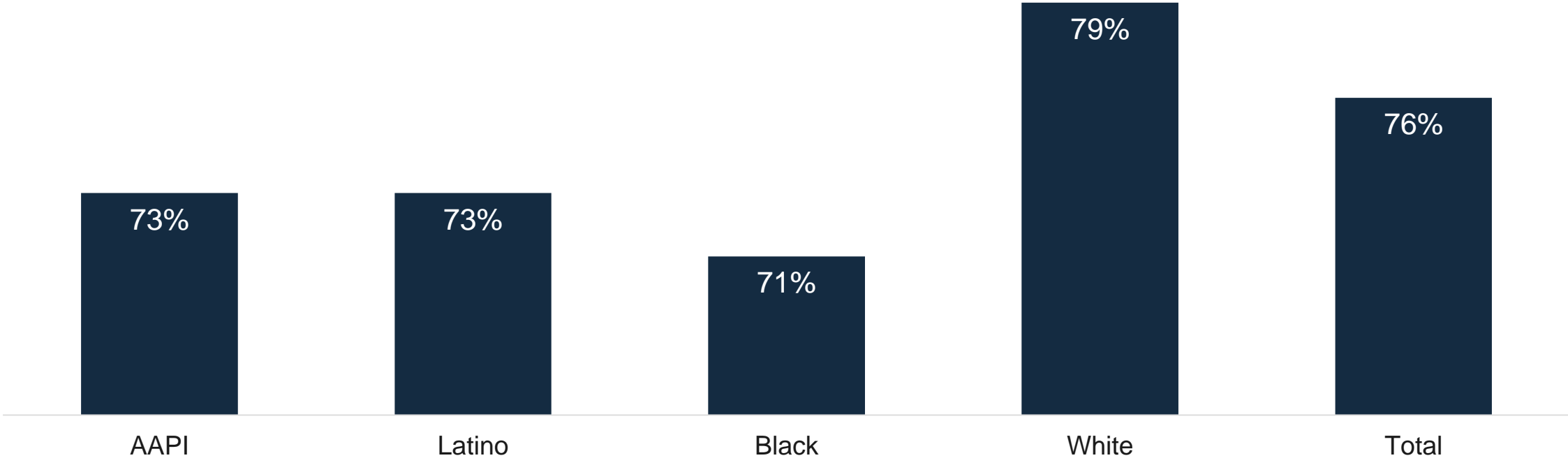
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Most health care workers believe their employer will respond appropriately to racism concerns

 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement... *If I raise concerns about racism or discrimination, I will be listened to, and my employer will take appropriate actions.*

Percent who strongly or somewhat agree




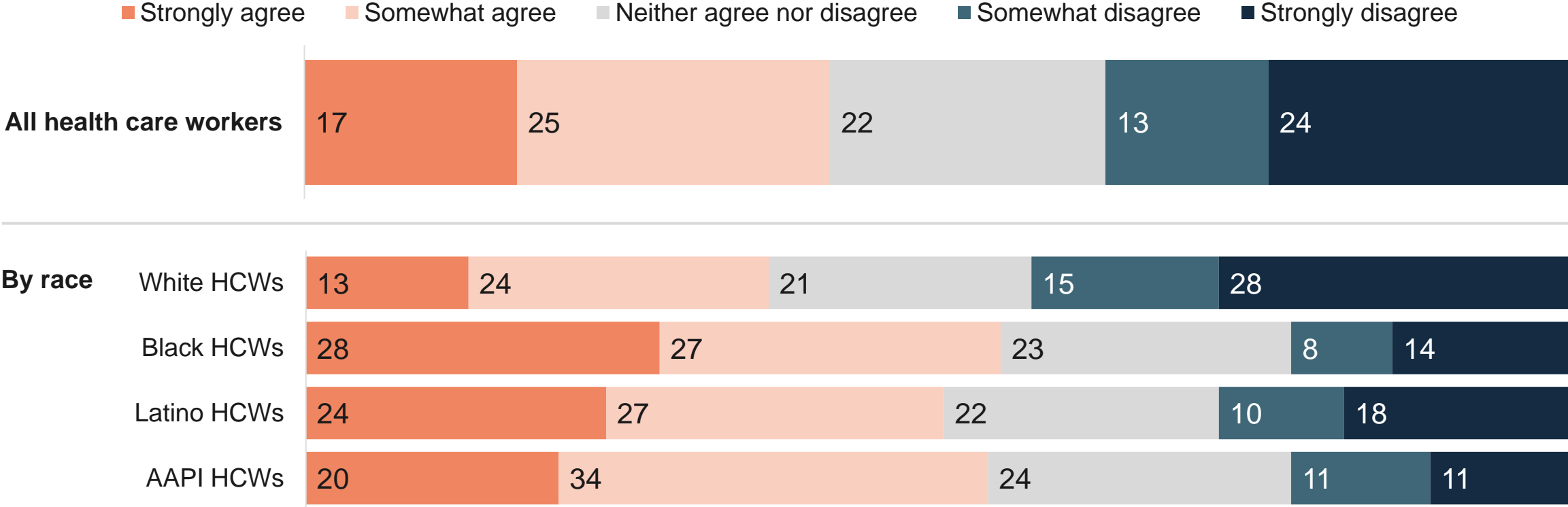
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But a majority of health care workers of color worry about retaliation

 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement... I worry about retaliation or negative consequences for me if I were to report racism or discrimination in the health care setting where I work.



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Strategies to Reduce Racism



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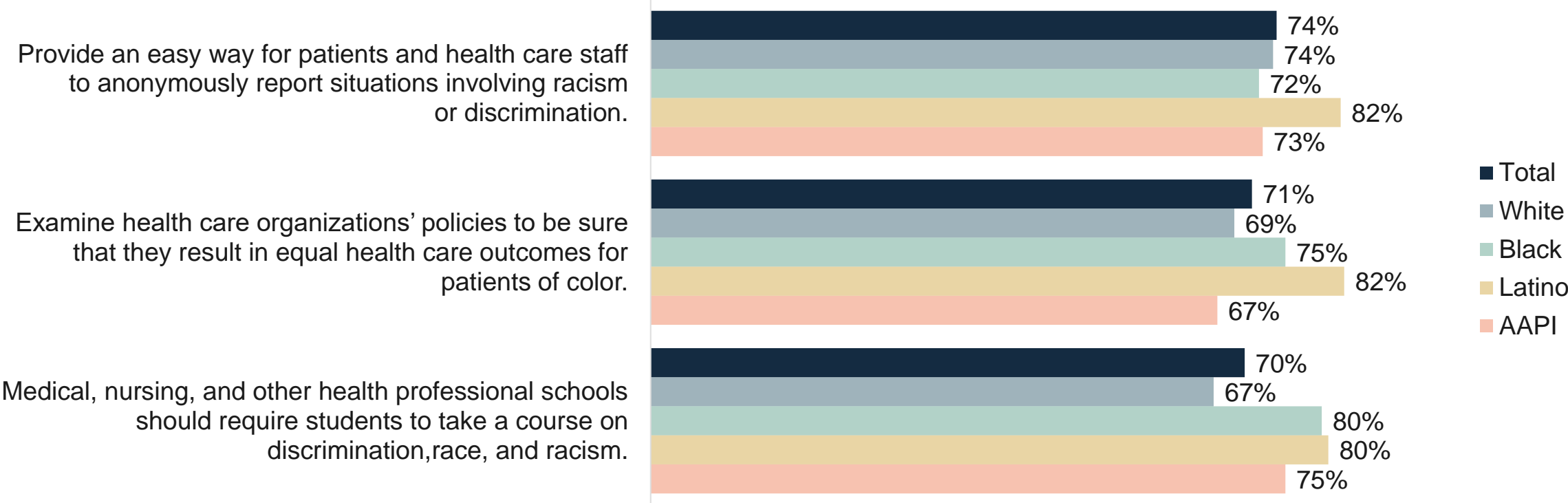
There are a lot of complaints about how our Native Americans were being treated. A lot of stigma about their culture would influence how they were treated medically. The staff made ignorant comments and sometimes the patients heard them. . . . Now, there's a company used to fill out complaints. It's on an [anonymous] number system. Now, [staff] are very careful as to what they say and how people are treated. So, something was done about it and I'm glad.”

Phlebotomist
Montana

Key strategies to reduce racism are broadly supported

How effective do you think each of the following strategies would be at reducing racism or discrimination based on race or ethnicity in health care?

Percent answering very or somewhat effective



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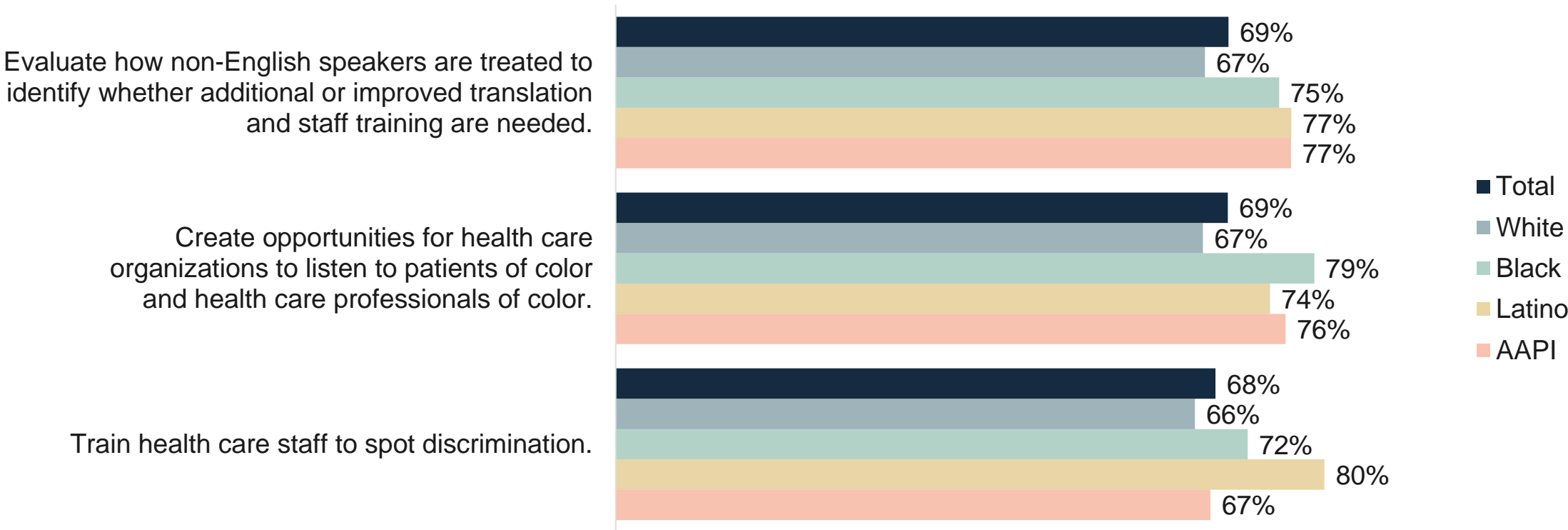
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We treat our patients to recognize the signs and symptoms of stroke, but why can't we pretreat our own internal staff on the signs and symptoms of discrimination?

Director of medical education
California hospital



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Thank You

Analysis completed by

Henry Fernandez – Henry@AfricanAmericanResearch.us

Ray Block Jr. – Ray@AfricanAmericanResearch.us

For more information, and to review the data you are most interested in go to:
HealthWorkerPoll.com

View the full issue brief here: <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2024/feb/revealing-disparities-health-care-workers-observations>



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