

**DRINK
SMART™**



SERVE SMART, STAY SMART

Alcohol Awareness, Hidden Burdens, and the Future of Student Support.



The Baseline of Campus Safety

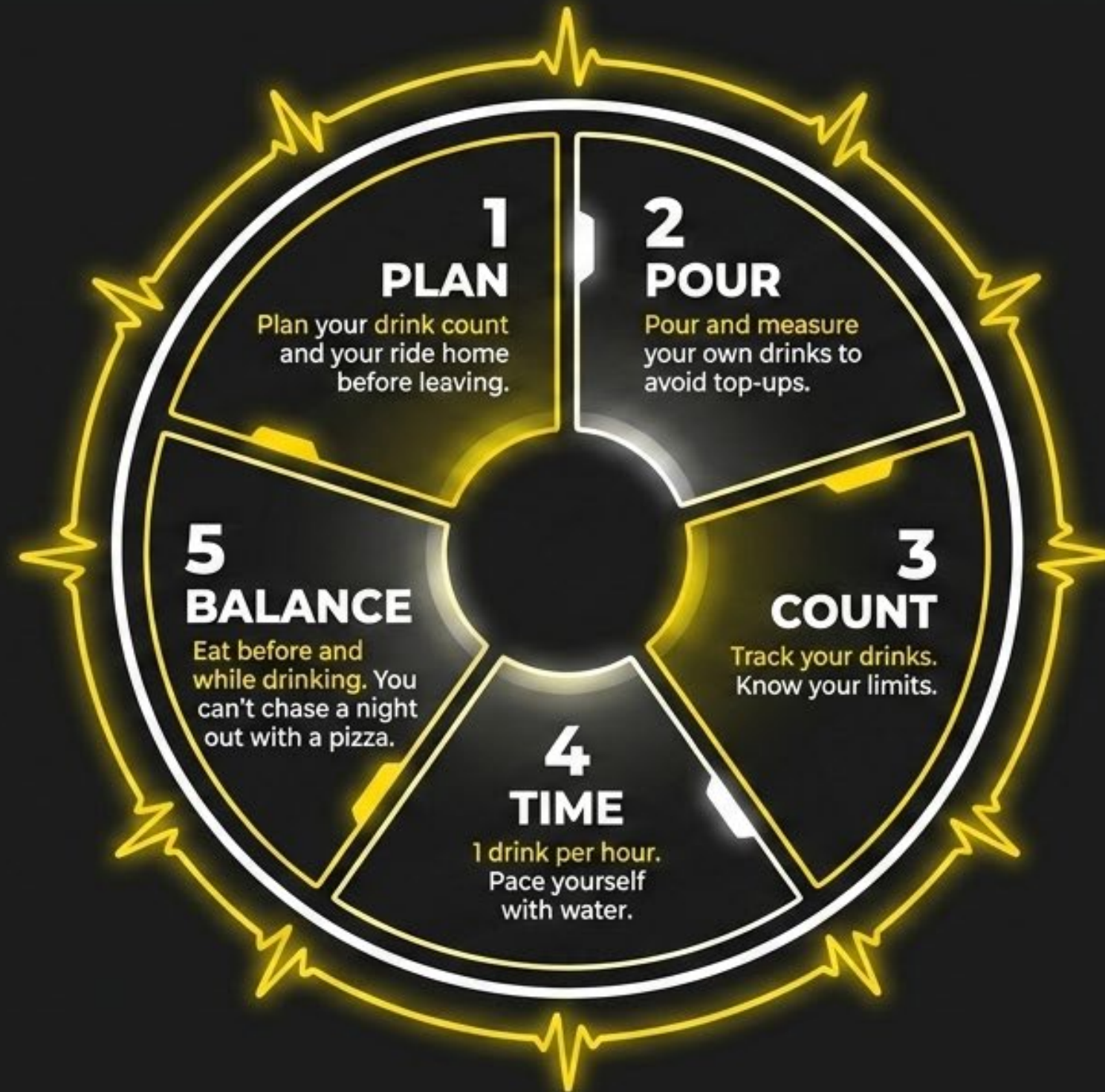
DrinkSmart is a student-led alcohol awareness and education program operating since 2013. We partner with Ontario post-secondary wellness teams, student unions, and campus leaders to promote responsible decision-making and reduce the harms of binge drinking.

**Think.
Inspire.
Change.**

***Don't let your
drinking do
your thinking.***



The Anatomy of a Night Out



The Standard Drink Diagnostic



It takes the body approximately 60-90 minutes to process one standard drink.

Beneath the Surface

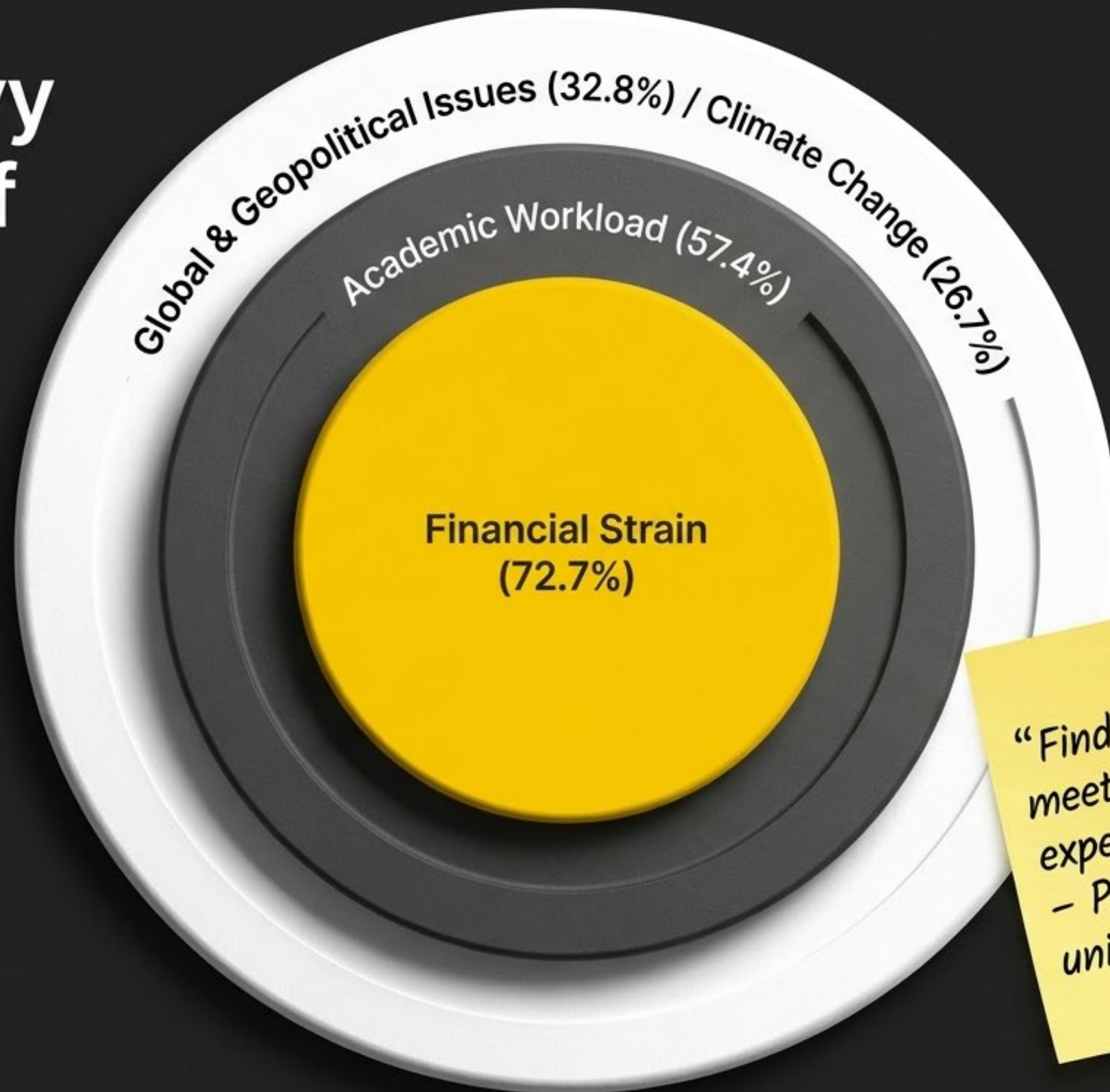
A yellow line graphic resembling an ECG or heart rate monitor. It starts with a flat line on the left, then transitions into a series of sharp, irregular peaks and valleys that extend across the right side of the image, passing behind the text blocks.

To understand student behavior, we have to look at the invisible weight they carry.

3,172 Complete responses analyzed across Ontario Colleges and Universities (Spring 2025).

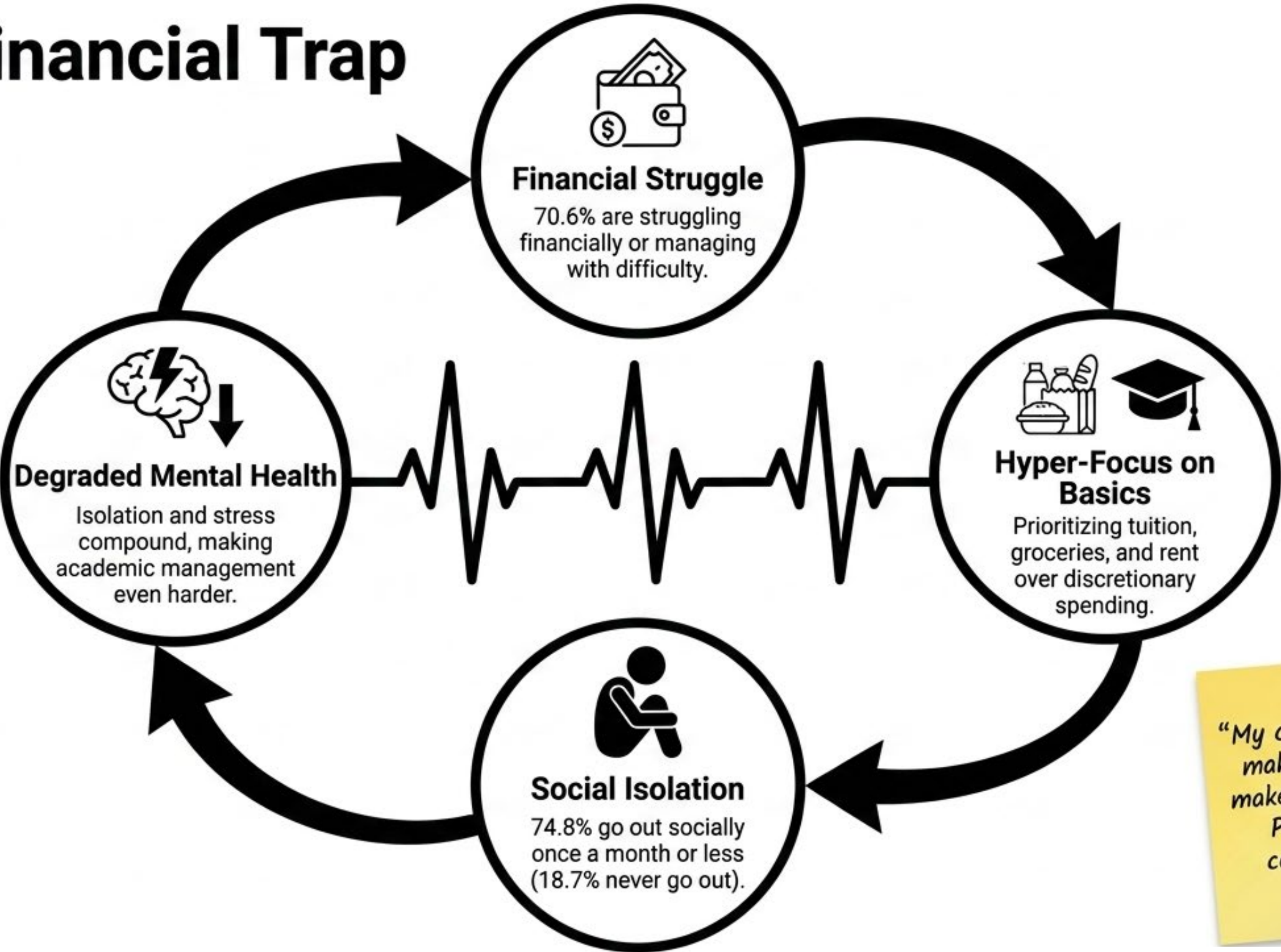
The Reality: Students are carrying immense burdens—but are largely navigating them outside of official institutional support systems.

The Heavy Weight of 2025



“Finding a job and meeting people’s expectations of me.”
– Post-graduate university student

The Financial Trap



"My concerns are not making enough to make ends meet." – Post-graduate college student

A Generation Operating at a Deficit

The Baseline

55.9%



rate their mental health below the "Good" range.

The Constant Weight

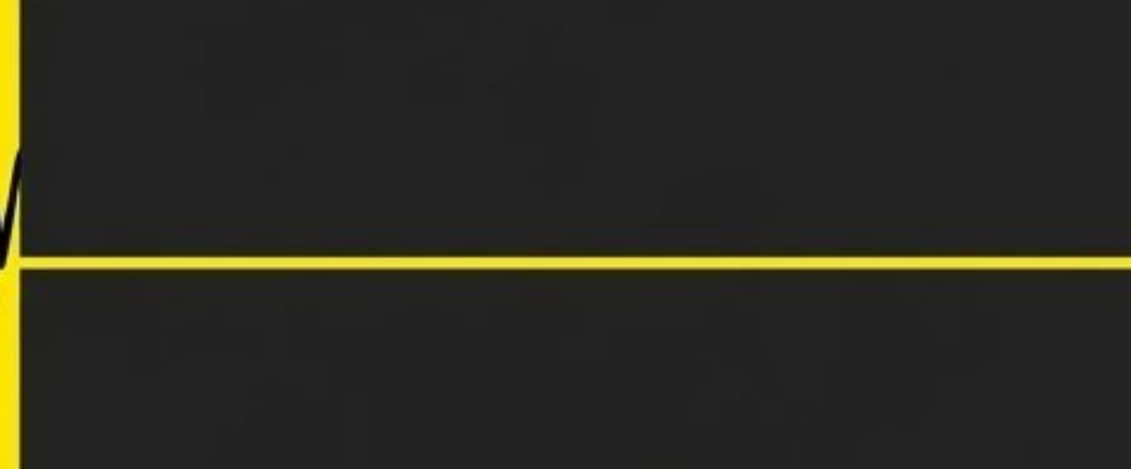
21.1%



report feeling anxious or stressed "always."

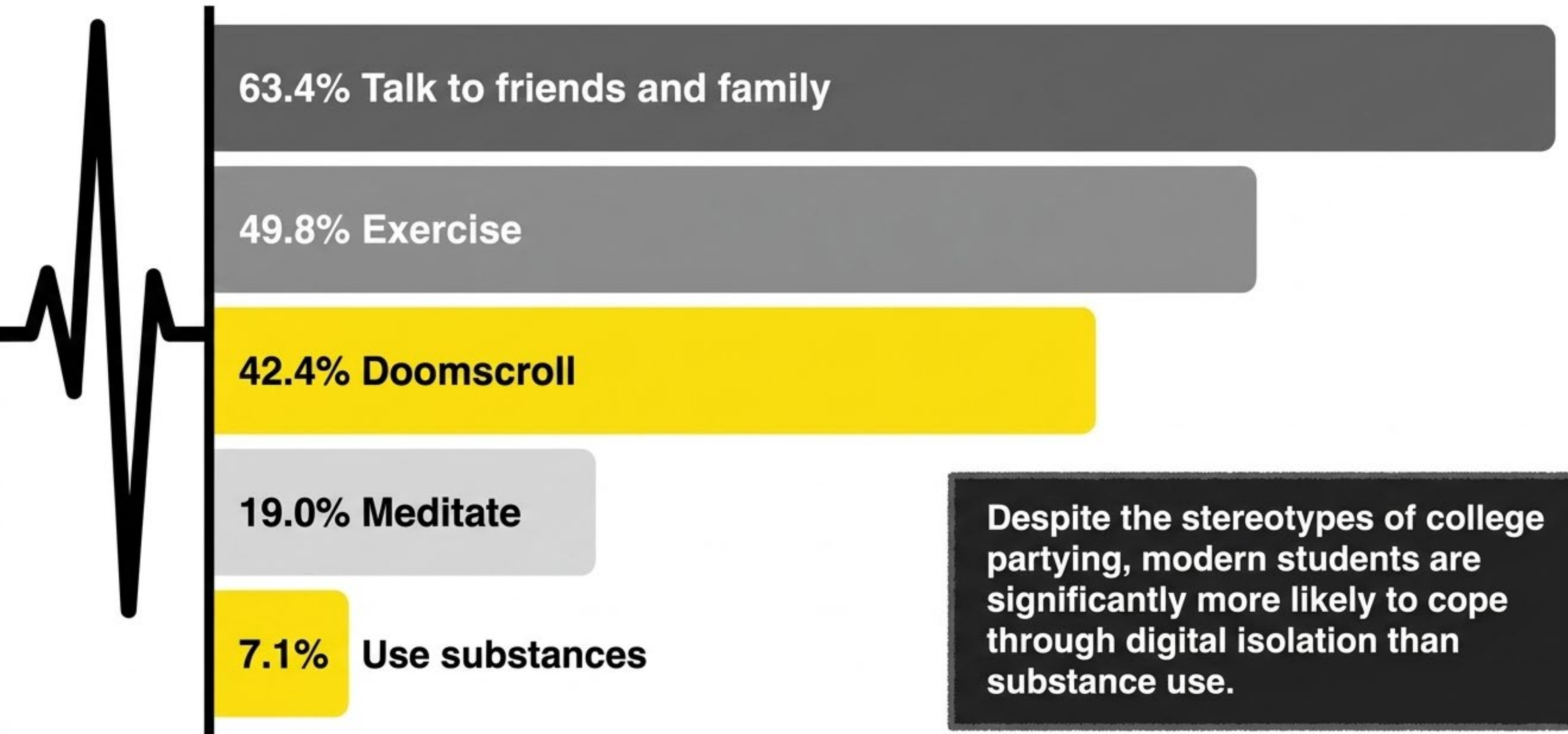
The Crisis Point

14.9%



report having thoughts of self-harm or suicide in the past six months.

How Students Cope: The Digital Escape

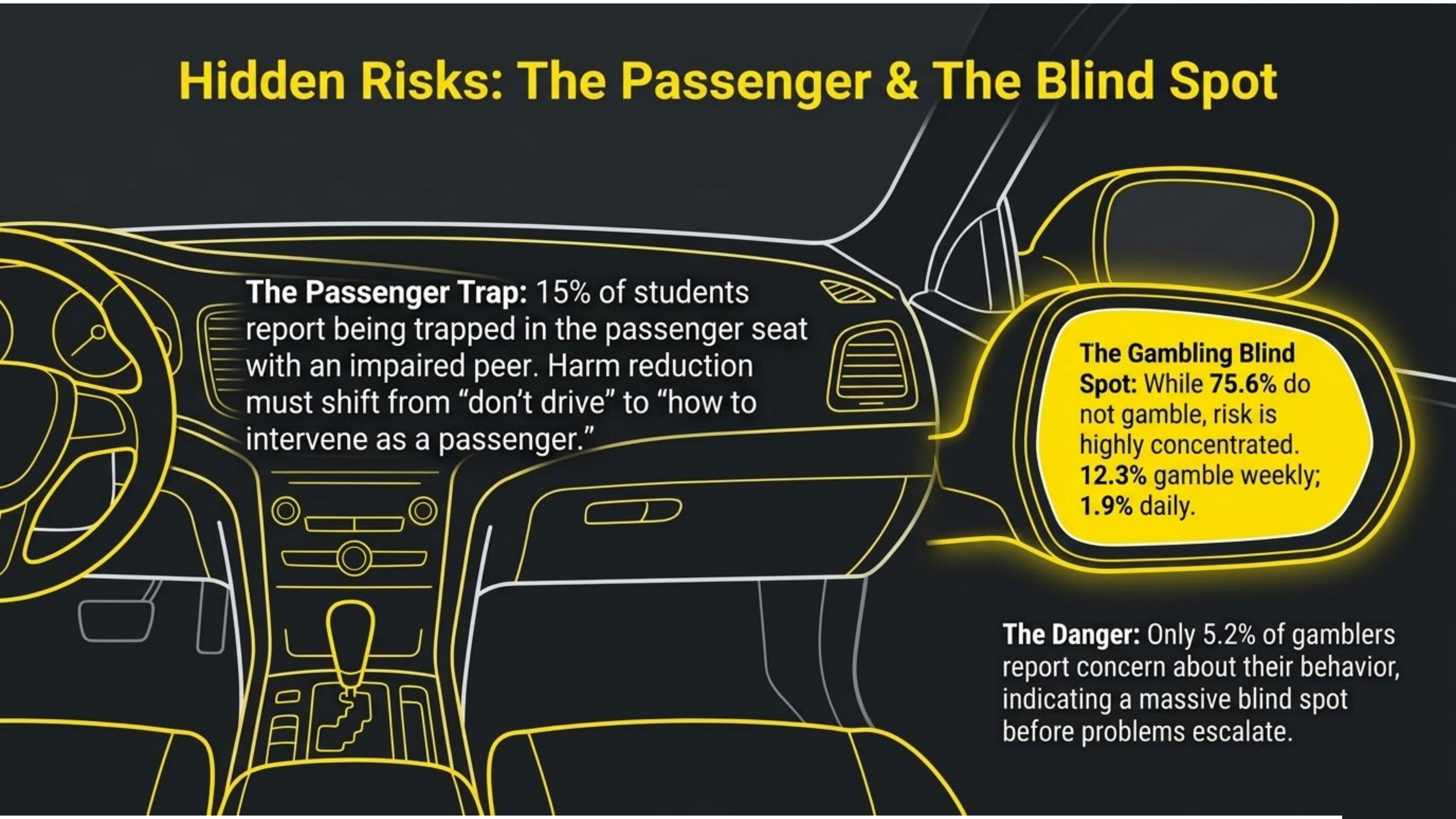


The Campus Nuance Diagnostic

	COLLEGE	UNIVERSITY
Financial Reality	37% Struggling ↑	23% Struggling
Coping Outlets	Exercise 45% / Doomscrolling 34%	Exercise 52% / Doomscrolling 46% ↑
Cannabis Motivation	47% use for Stress Relief ↑	36% use for Stress Relief (57% Recreational)
Social Frequency	25.9% Never go out socially	26.5% go out Weekly

College interventions must lead with financial support; University interventions must target digital isolation.

Hidden Risks: The Passenger & The Blind Spot



The Passenger Trap: 15% of students report being trapped in the passenger seat with an impaired peer. Harm reduction must shift from “don’t drive” to “how to intervene as a passenger.”

The Gambling Blind Spot: While 75.6% do not gamble, risk is highly concentrated. 12.3% gamble weekly; 1.9% daily.

The Danger: Only 5.2% of gamblers report concern about their behavior, indicating a massive blind spot before problems escalate.

Future Outlook: Ambient Anxiety

Ambient Anxiety

54.6% are preparing to **enter the workforce full-time**

32.5% are pursuing post-graduate studies



Hopes

- Stable employment, building a meaningful career, achieving financial security.

"The biggest concern is not being able to find a job and then not being able to pay off OSAP, bank fees, etc..." - 2nd-year university student

Fears

- Unmanageable debt, the soaring cost of living, the inability to find a job in their field.

The Double Shift: Campus Meets Hospitality

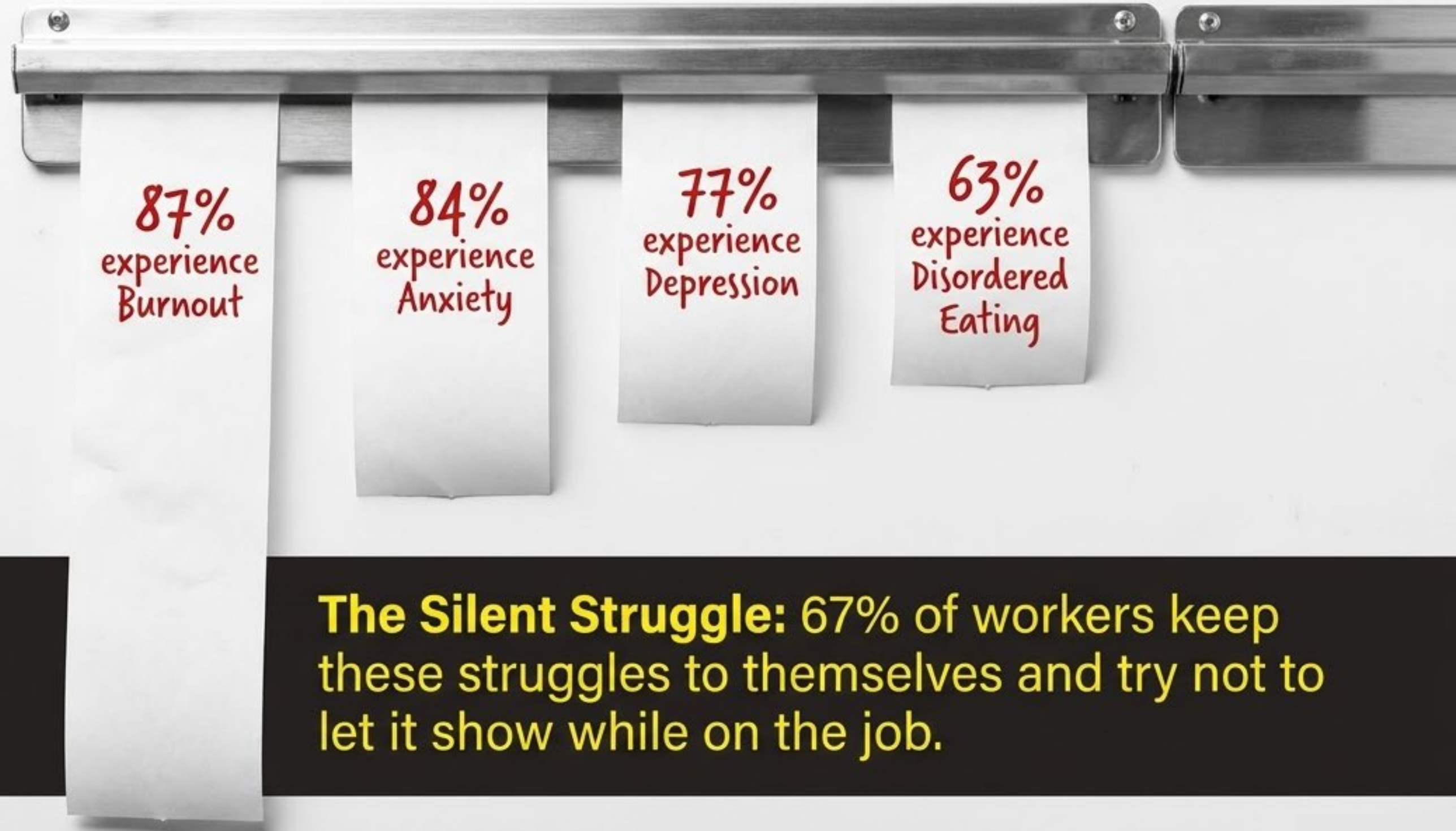


To afford the future, students are working the front lines of the foodservice and hospitality industry—a sector facing its own parallel crisis.

9  5

Introducing the Not 9 to 5 Mental Health Survey (673 hospitality professionals). The systemic issues of the hospitality industry compound the academic and financial burdens students already carry.

The Workplace Reality



The Silent Struggle: 67% of workers keep these struggles to themselves and try not to let it show while on the job.

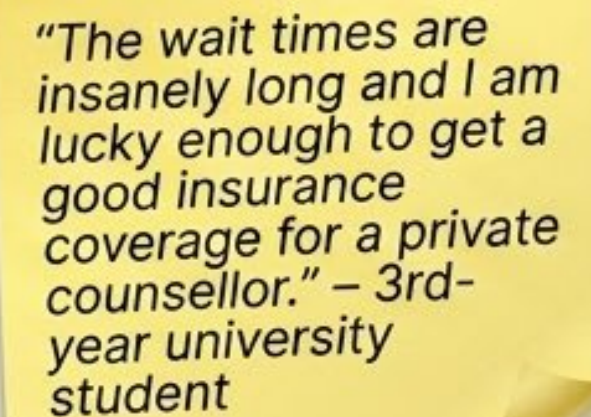
The Institutional Gap

**Top (100%):
The Student Body**

**Middle 1 (55.9%): Reporting
below 'Good' mental health.**

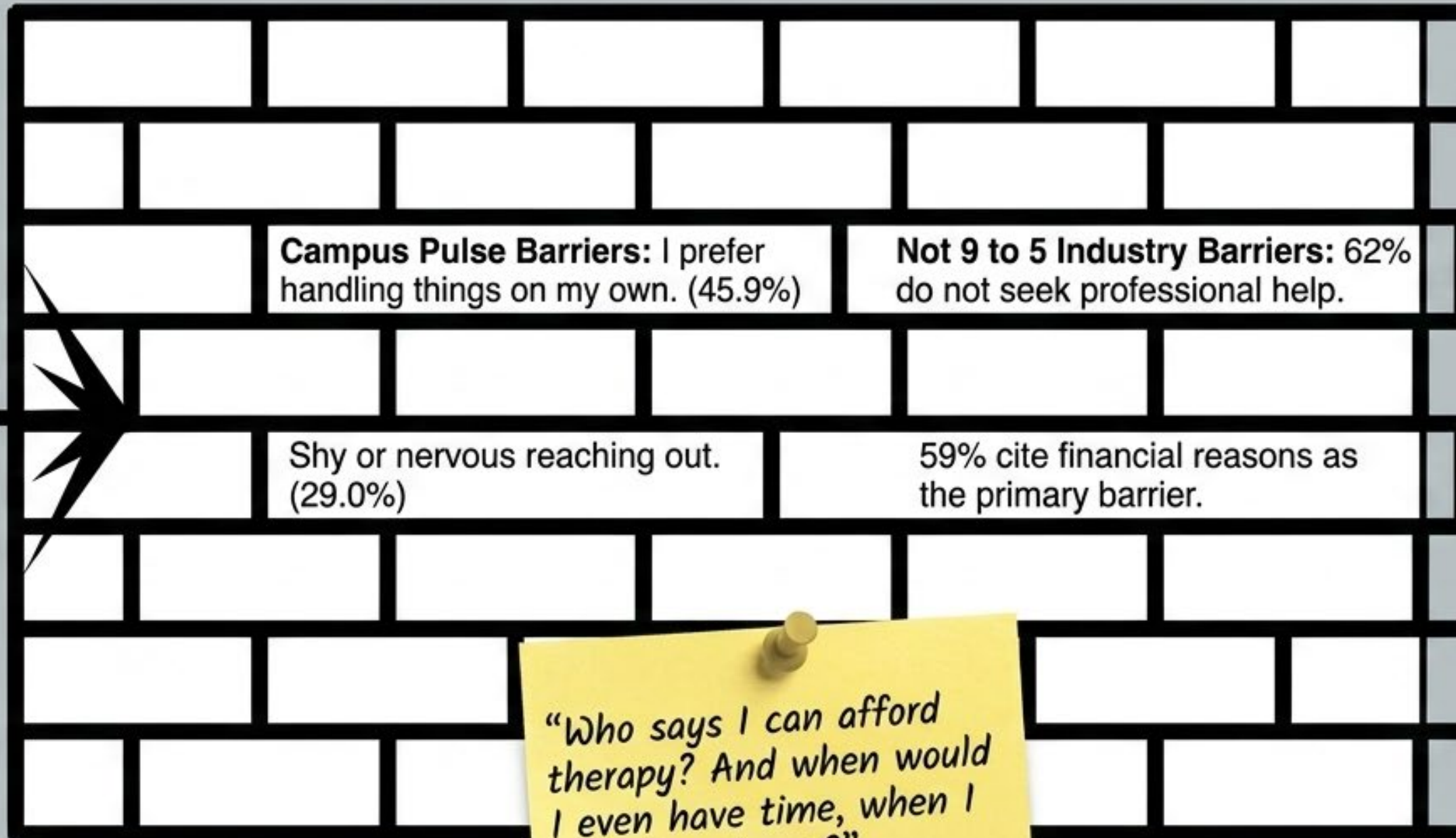
**Middle 2 (29.0%): Actually
comfortable seeking help.**

**The Drip (17.8%): Actively
accessed on-campus
mental health support.**



*"The wait times are
insanely long and I am
lucky enough to get a
good insurance
coverage for a private
counsellor." – 3rd-
year university
student*

The Barriers to Care



“Who says I can afford therapy? And when would I even have time, when I work long hours?”
- Anonymous Hospitality Worker

The Paradox of Peer Support



80% would intervene if concerned about a friend's substance use/gambling.

68.8% actively supported a friend with mental health challenges this year.

Only 29% feel comfortable seeking help for themselves.

Our students are heroic when saving others, but their empathy fails when looking in the mirror.

Bridging the Gap: A Mandate for Leaders



Fix the Friction.

Wait times and hidden costs drive students to "handle it alone." Services must be immediate and seamless.



Leverage the Peer Network.

74% are already advising friends to seek help. We must empower these peer networks as frontline harm reduction workers.



Target the Passenger.

Update risk messaging from "don't drink and drive" to empowering the 15% trapped in the passenger seat.

The Antidote to the Paradox

We know the barriers: cost, wait times, and stigma. To bridge the gap, we must provide a lifeline that is entirely frictionless.

Introducing Smart Serve Cares.



Frictionless Support for Hospitality Workers

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT
**SMART SERVE
CARES**
FOR ONTARIO'S HOSPITALITY

A partnership with GreenShield to provide essential, FREE mental health services to active Smart Serve certificate holders (18+ in Ontario).



Direct Care:

3 hours of free virtual mental health counselling provided by GreenShield Health.



Self-Guided Support:

Online access to GreenShield's self-guided Digital Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).



Continuous Education:

Unlimited access to resources, articles, and expert materials via GreenShield+.



Serve Smart, Stay Smart.

We have uncovered the hidden weight our students carry.
Now, it is time to dismantle the barriers to their well-being.

Share this lifeline with your networks, your students, and your peers.



Learn more and access resources at SmartServe.ca and DrinkSmart.ca

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