

NEURODIVERSITY & PUBERTY

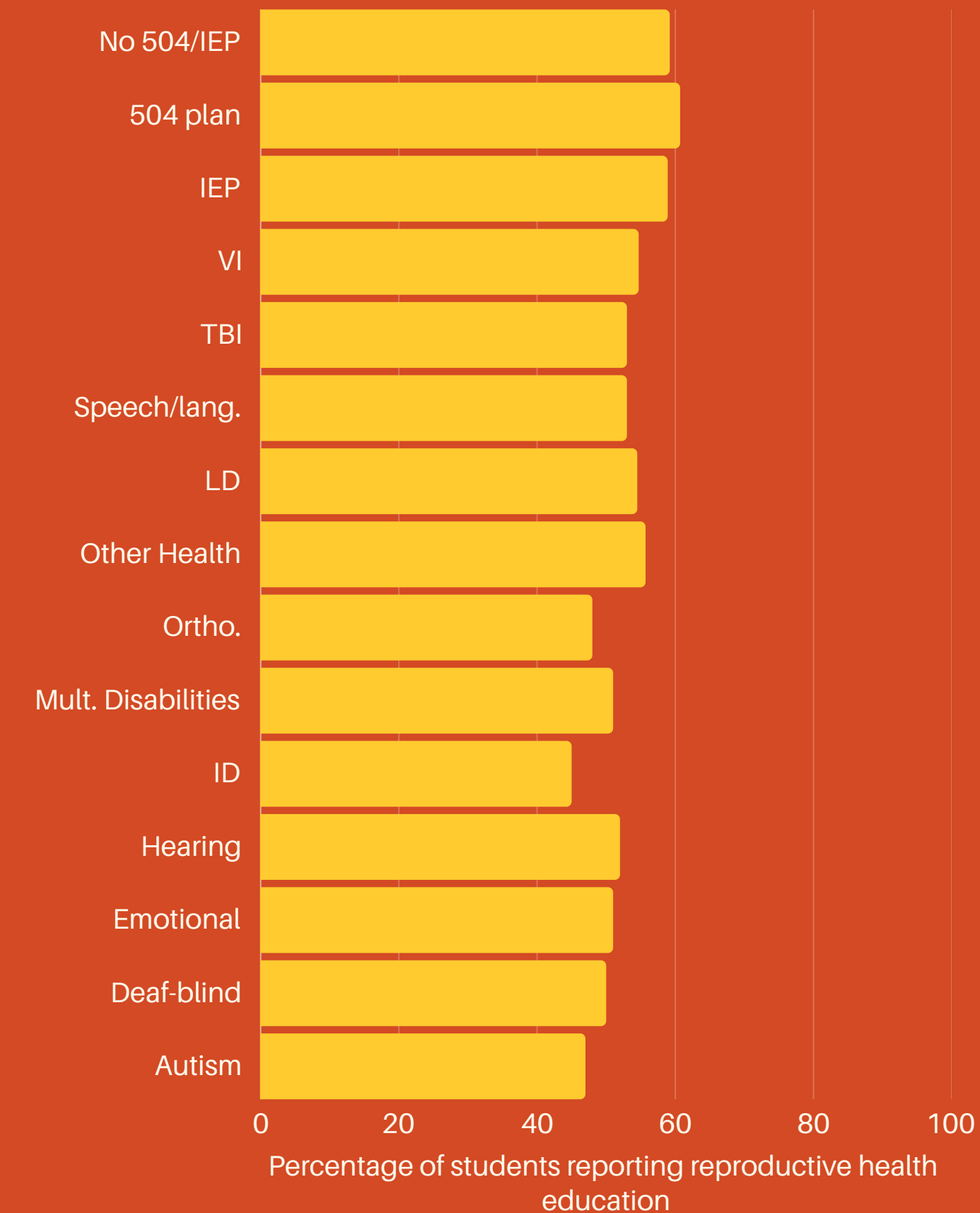
A Needs Assessment

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RECEIPT OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION AMONG U.S. STUDENTS ABLE TO SELF-REPORT VIA INTERVIEW ¹³



GAPS IN SRHE

SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION

- ◆ One size fits all curricula¹⁻³
 - Over emphasis on biological aspects^{1, 4-5}
 - Ineffective teaching methods^{1, 6-7}
- ◆ Communication barriers^{1-2, 8}
 - Use of analogy & euphemism¹⁰⁻¹¹
 - Discomfort & lack of experience^{4, 12}
 - Inconsistent information¹
- ◆ Limited opportunities
 - Gatekeeping^{1, 5, 12}
 - Social stigma & Bias
 - Reliance on others²
 - Restricted information^{1, 5}

Source Figure 1: "National Longitudinal Transition Survey 2012" (NLTS-2012). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Disability & sexuality

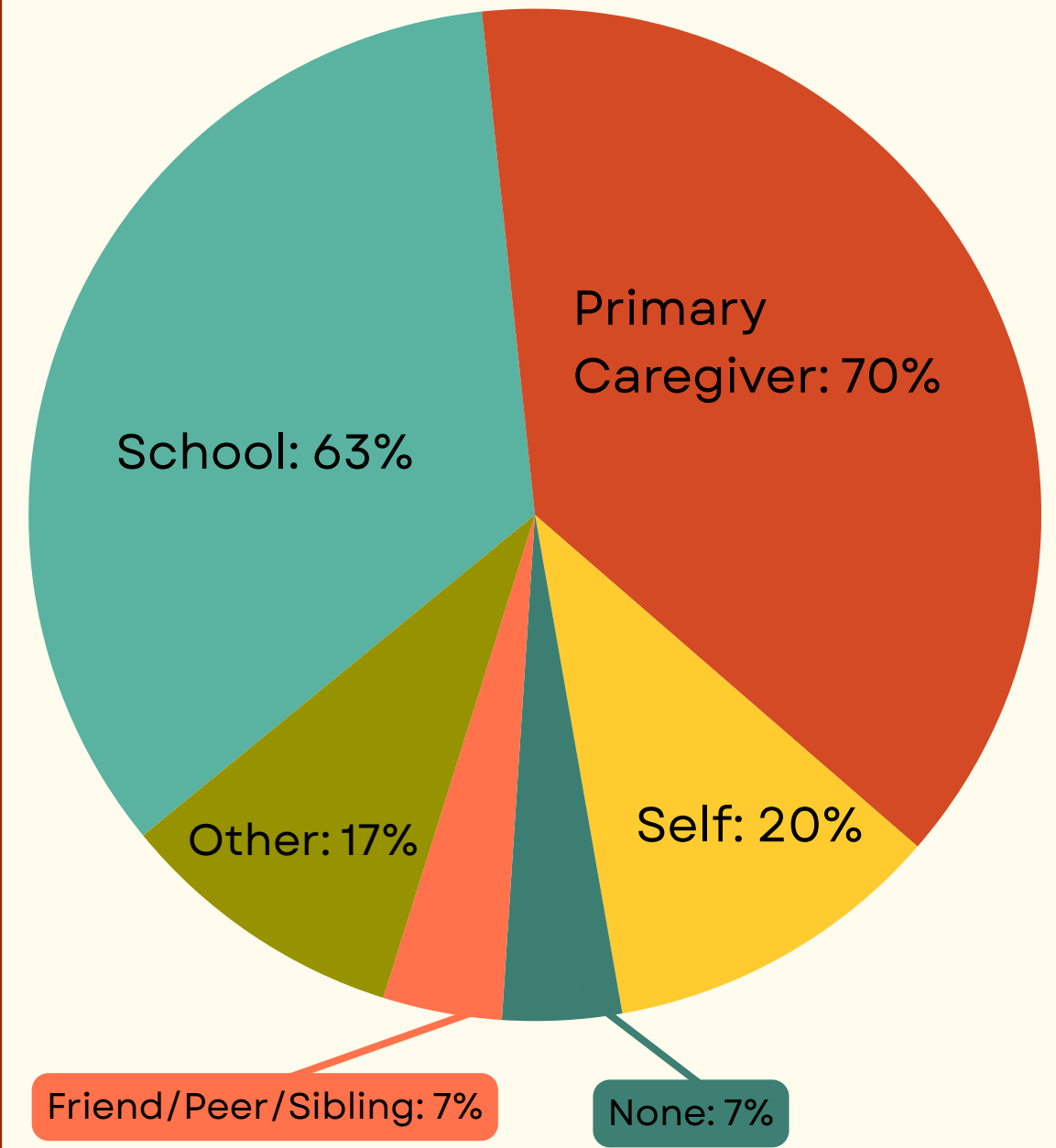
MYTHS¹⁴

- ✘ Atypical sexual behavior is cause & effect of disability
- ✘ Sexually inadequate
- ✘ Asexual
 - No biological sex drive
- ✘ Can't marry or have kids
- ✘ Disabled+non-disabled relationships are exploitative & wrong
- ✘ Can't ovulate, menstruate, orgasm, ejaculate, have erections...
- ✘ Sexual dysfunction is due to disability
- ✘ Hypersexual
 - Uncontrollable urges
- ✘ Should only marry each other
- ✘ Any kind of sexual expression is inappropriate

SURVEY RESULTS

EDUCATION & SUPPORT

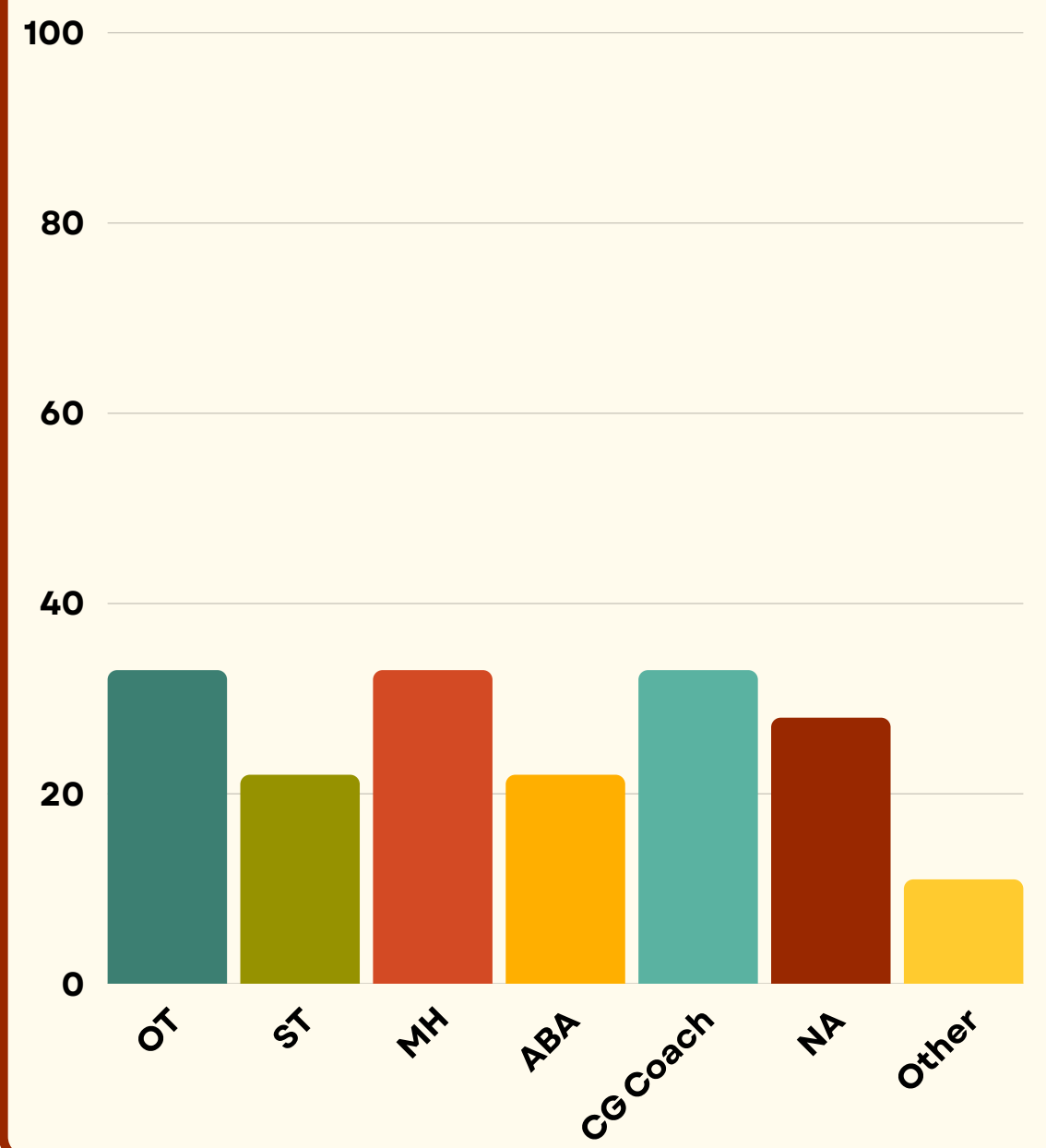
SRHE Providers



Was your education...



Puberty Support Services

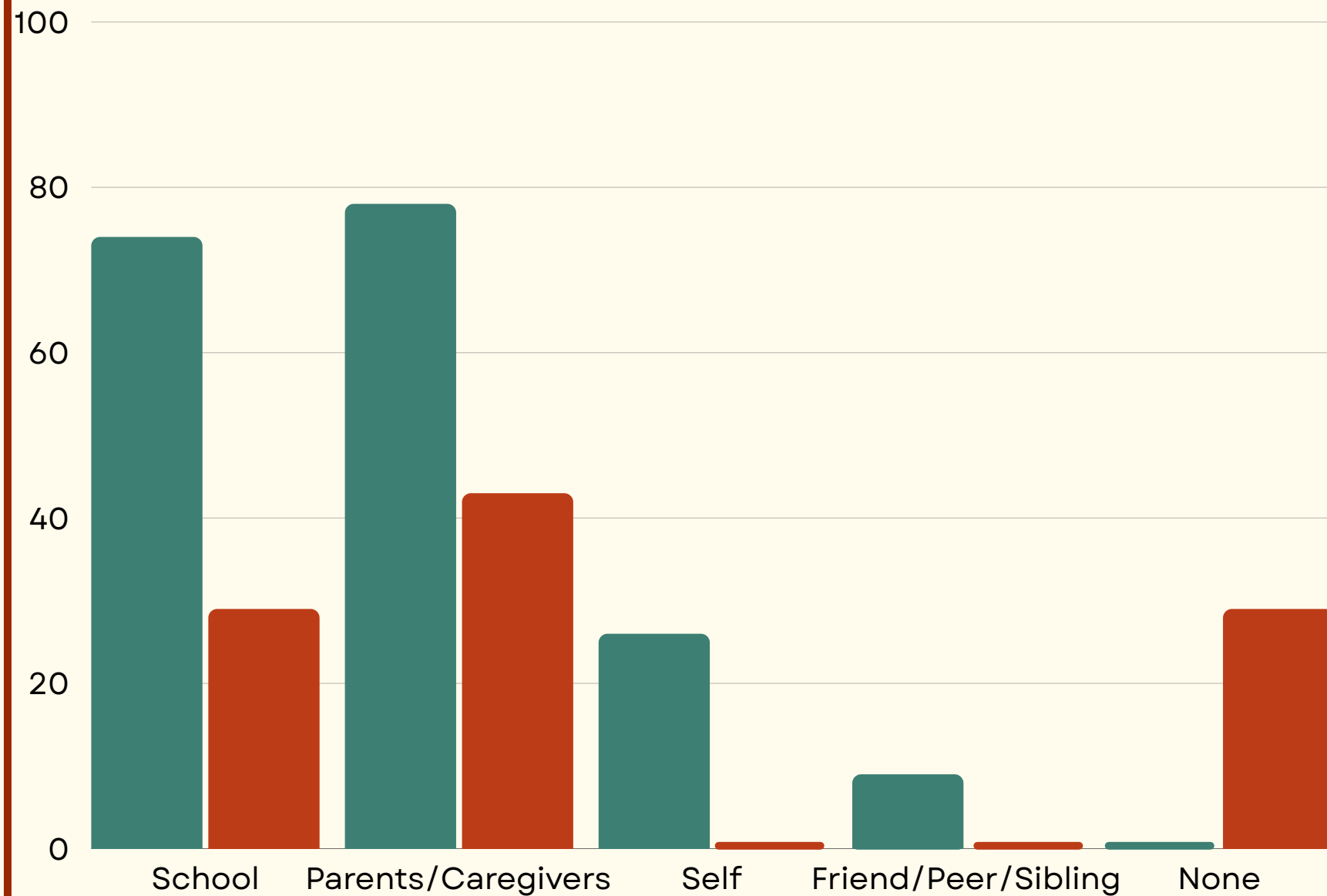


SURVEY RESULTS

EDUCATION & SUPPORT

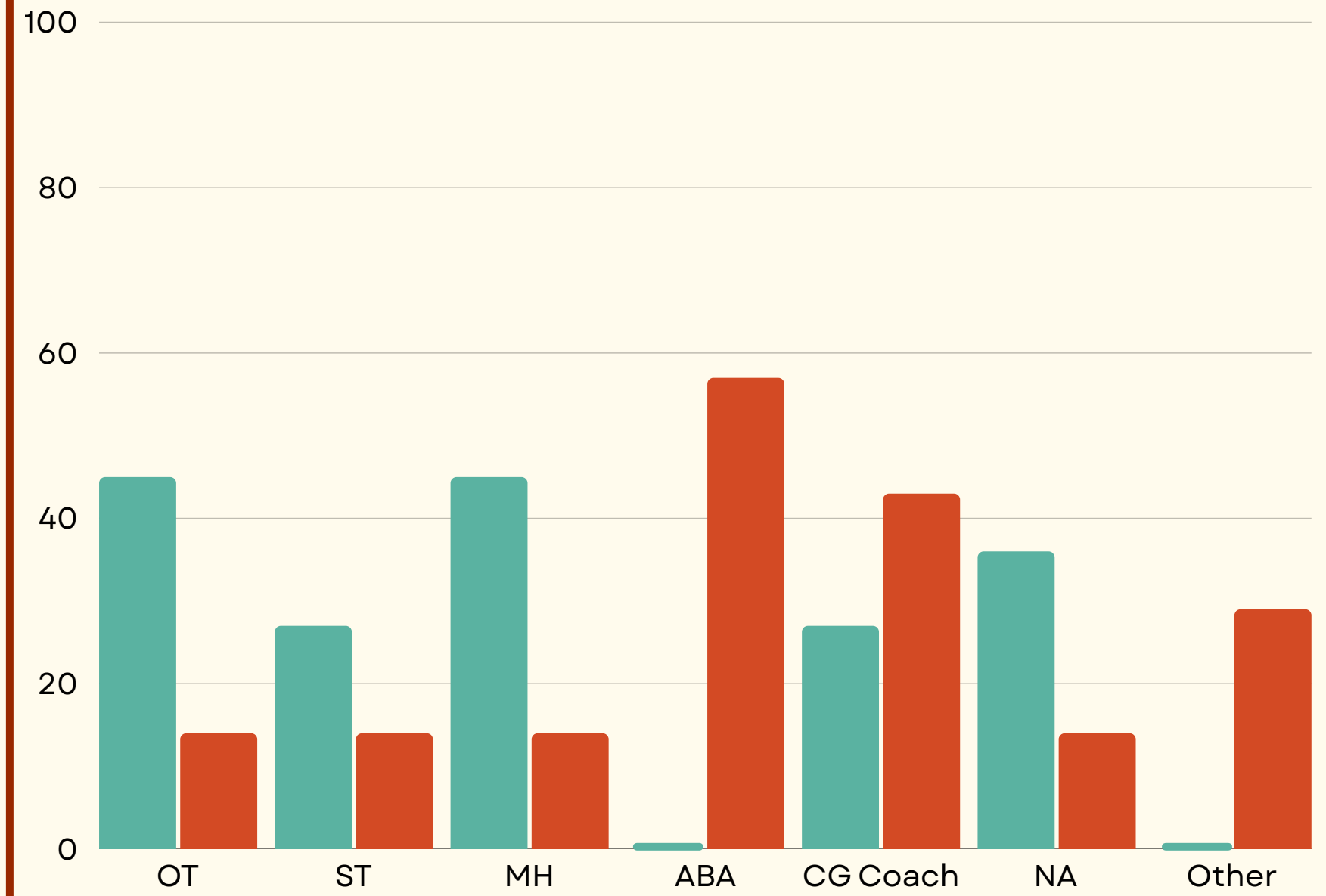
SRHE Providers

● Mod-Low Support Needs ● High Support Needs



Puberty Support Services

● Mod-Low Support Needs ● High Support Needs



Primary

**PUBERTY
RELATED**

Challenges

SENSORY REGULATION

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

MENSTRUATION

INTEROCEPTION

COMMUNICATION

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

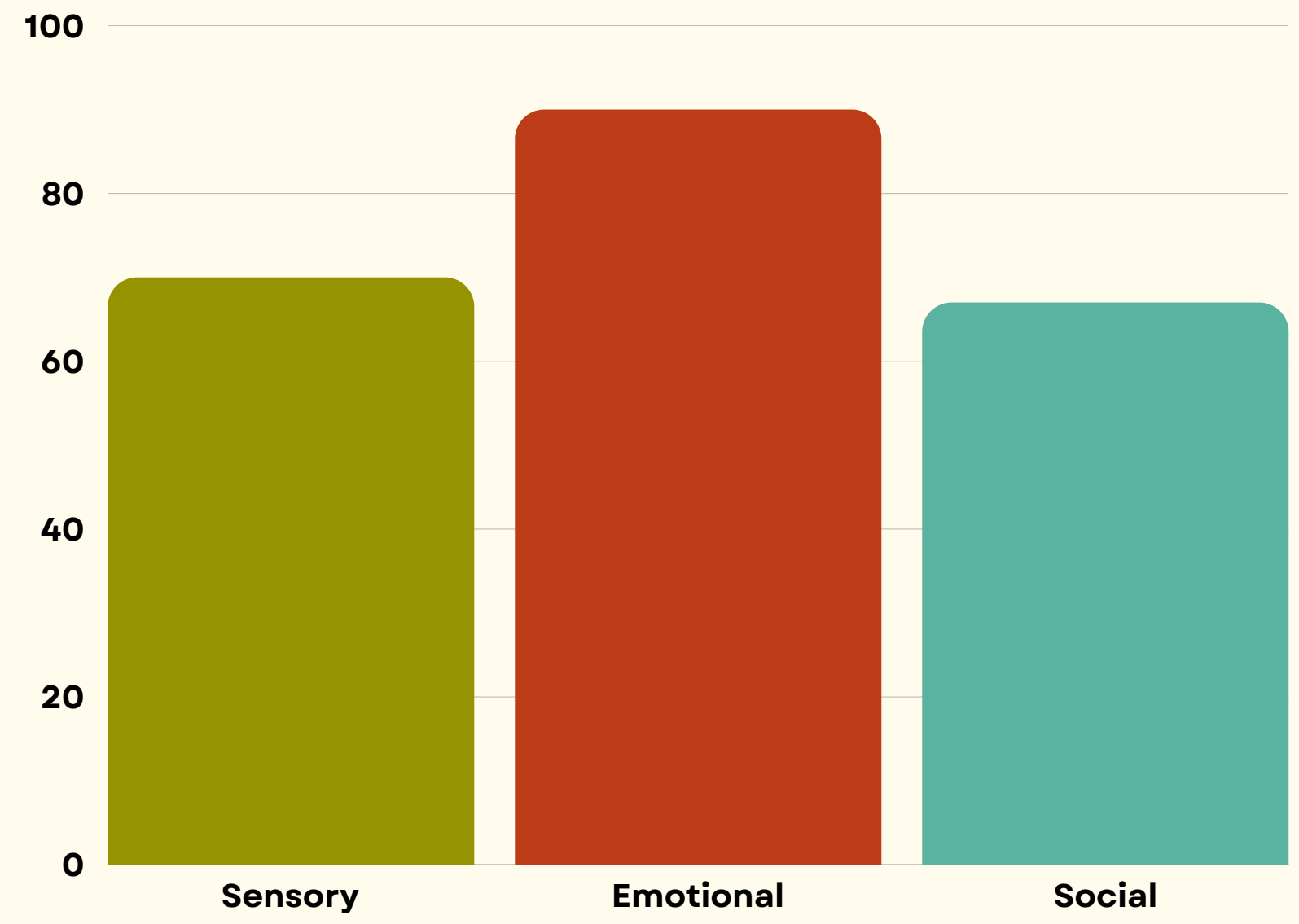
SAFETY

RELATIONSHIPS

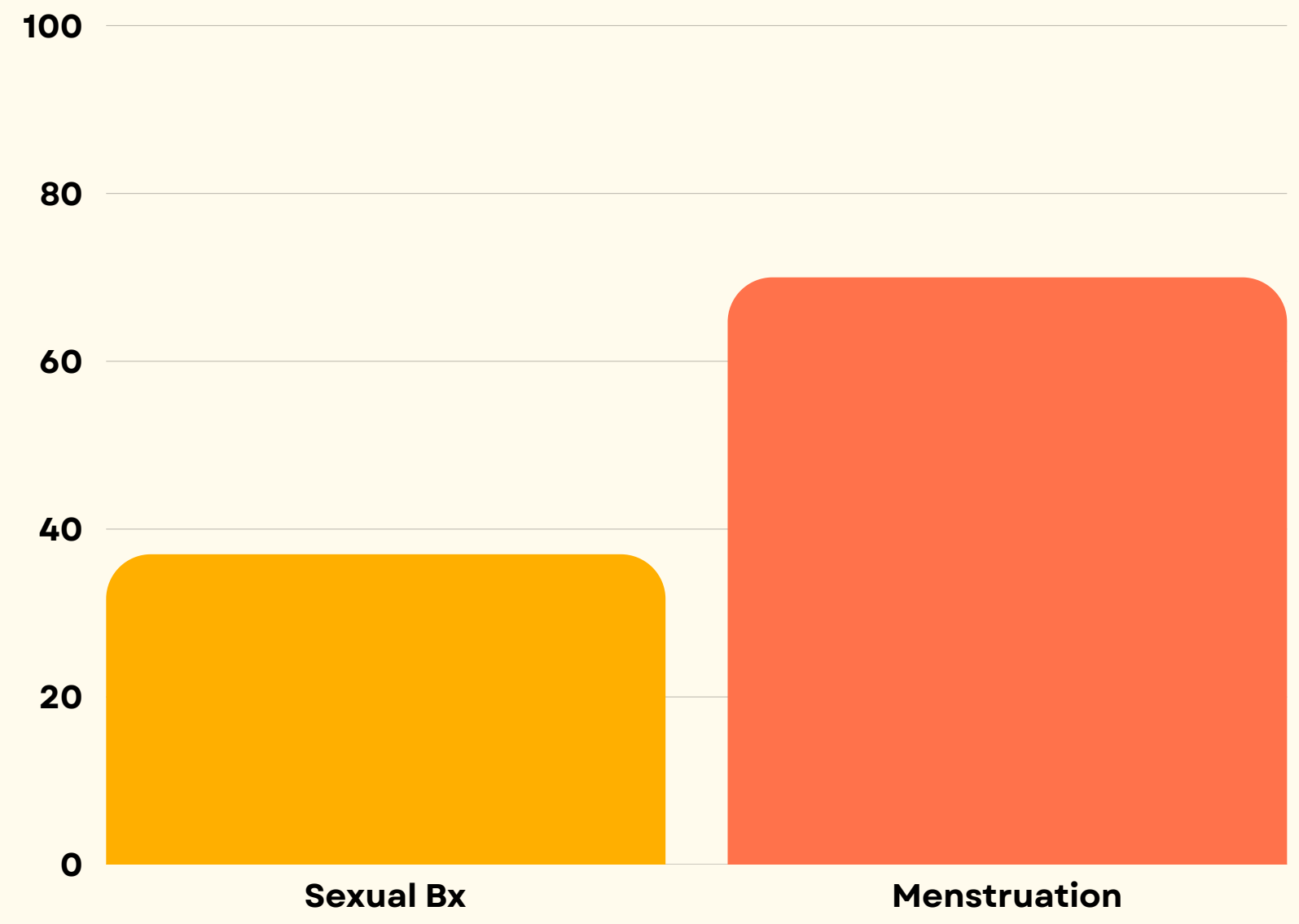
SURVEY RESULTS

PUBERTY RELATED CHALLENGES

Pre-existing Challenges



New Challenges



OCCUPATIONS

IMPACTED BY PUBERTY

ADLs

Bathing

Hygiene

Sex

Eating

Dressing

Social Participation

Intimate partner relatio...

Community partici...

Family participation

Friendships

Peer group

Health Management

Symptom management

Med management

Communication w/ Healthc...

Personal care devi...

IADLs

Communicati...

Safety

Education

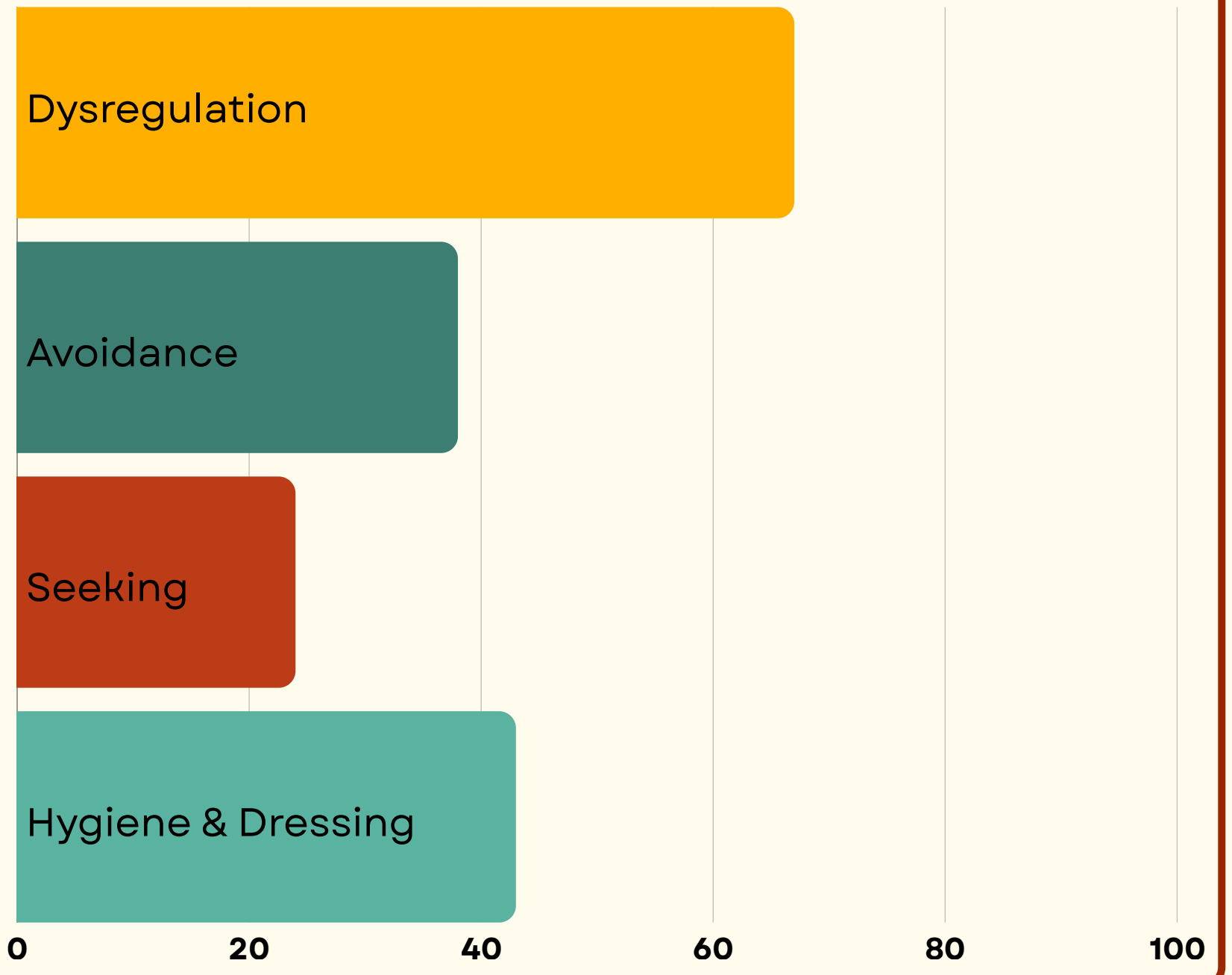
Formal

Infor...

SURVEY RESULTS

SENSORY PROCESSING

Sensory Related Challenges



I feel like I need to remove all my skin when I'm PMSing

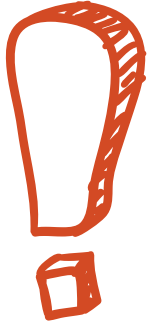
Body hair feels weird but so does shaving...

Puberty can intensify sensory processing issues⁸

SENSORY PROCESSING

HEIGHTENED SENSORY CHALLENGES:

- Greater sensitivities⁸
- Increased seeking
- Intensified dysregulation¹⁵



DRESSING



- Bras & binders^{8,10}
- New clothes
 - Style expectations
 - Growing¹⁶



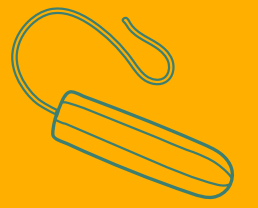
HYGIENE



- Body odor^{8,10,16-17}
 - Showering
 - Genital hygiene
 - Deodorant
- Acne
 - Face washing
 - Treatments
- Body hair
 - Shave it? Wax it? Leave it?



PERIODS

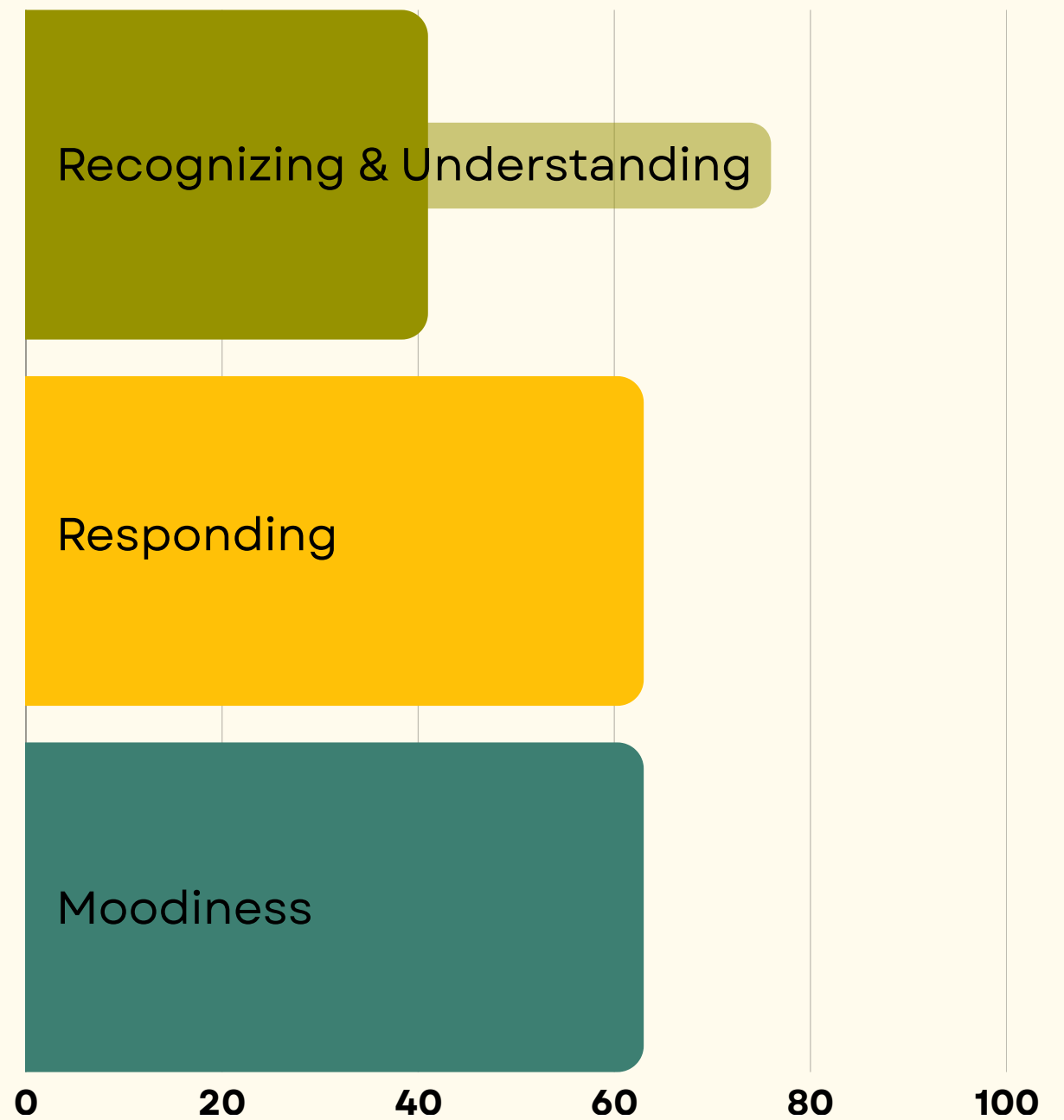


- Physical sensation^{6,9,18}
 - Wet
 - Products
- Smells

SURVEY RESULTS

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Emotion Related Challenges



IN A CONSTANT STATE OF INVISIBLE DYSREGULATION

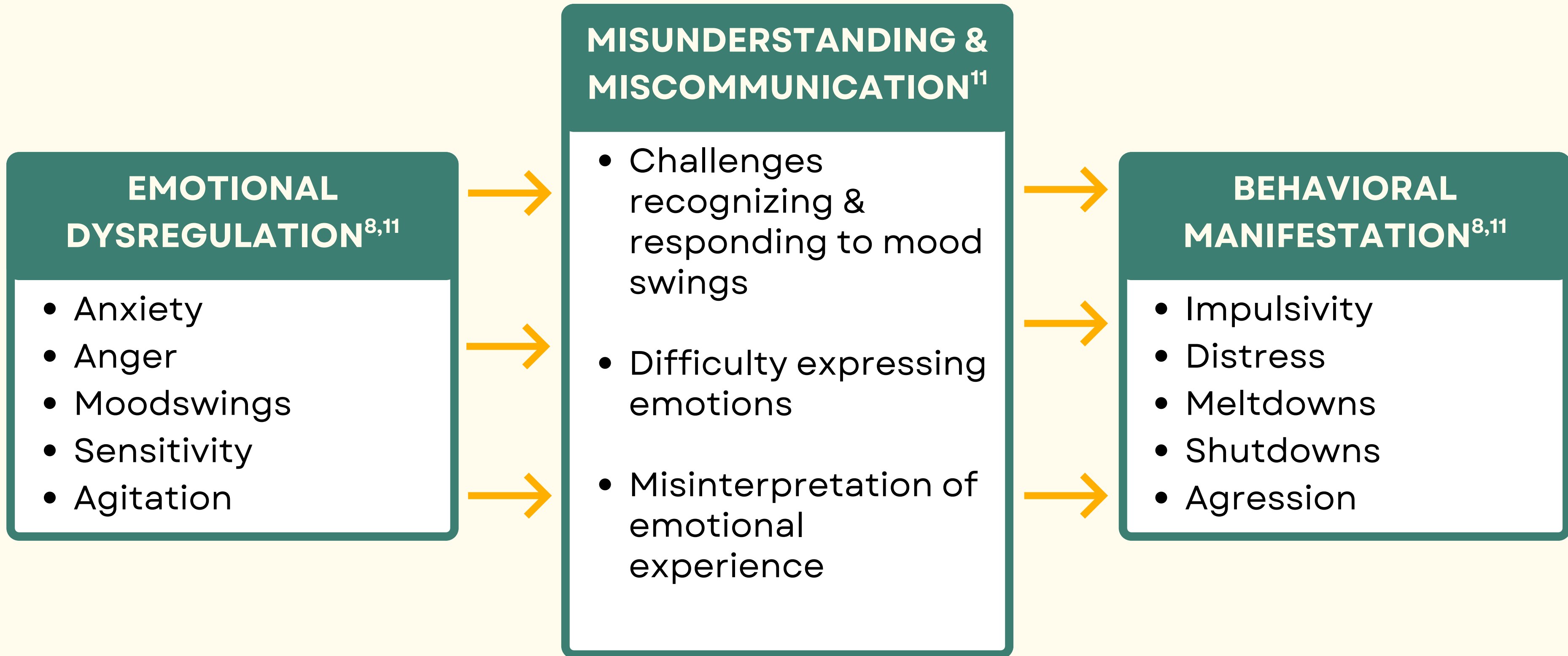
Emotional Regulation got harder in middle school

IT HAS GOTTEN HARDER FOR HIM TO DEAL WITH REQUESTS/DEMANDS AND HE RESPONDS WITH AGRESSION

Behavioral Responses



EMOTIONAL REGULATION



EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION^{8,11}

- Anxiety
- Anger
- Moodswings
- Sensitivity
- Agitation

MISUNDERSTANDING & MISCOMMUNICATION¹¹

- Challenges recognizing & responding to mood swings
- Difficulty expressing emotions
- Misinterpretation of emotional experience

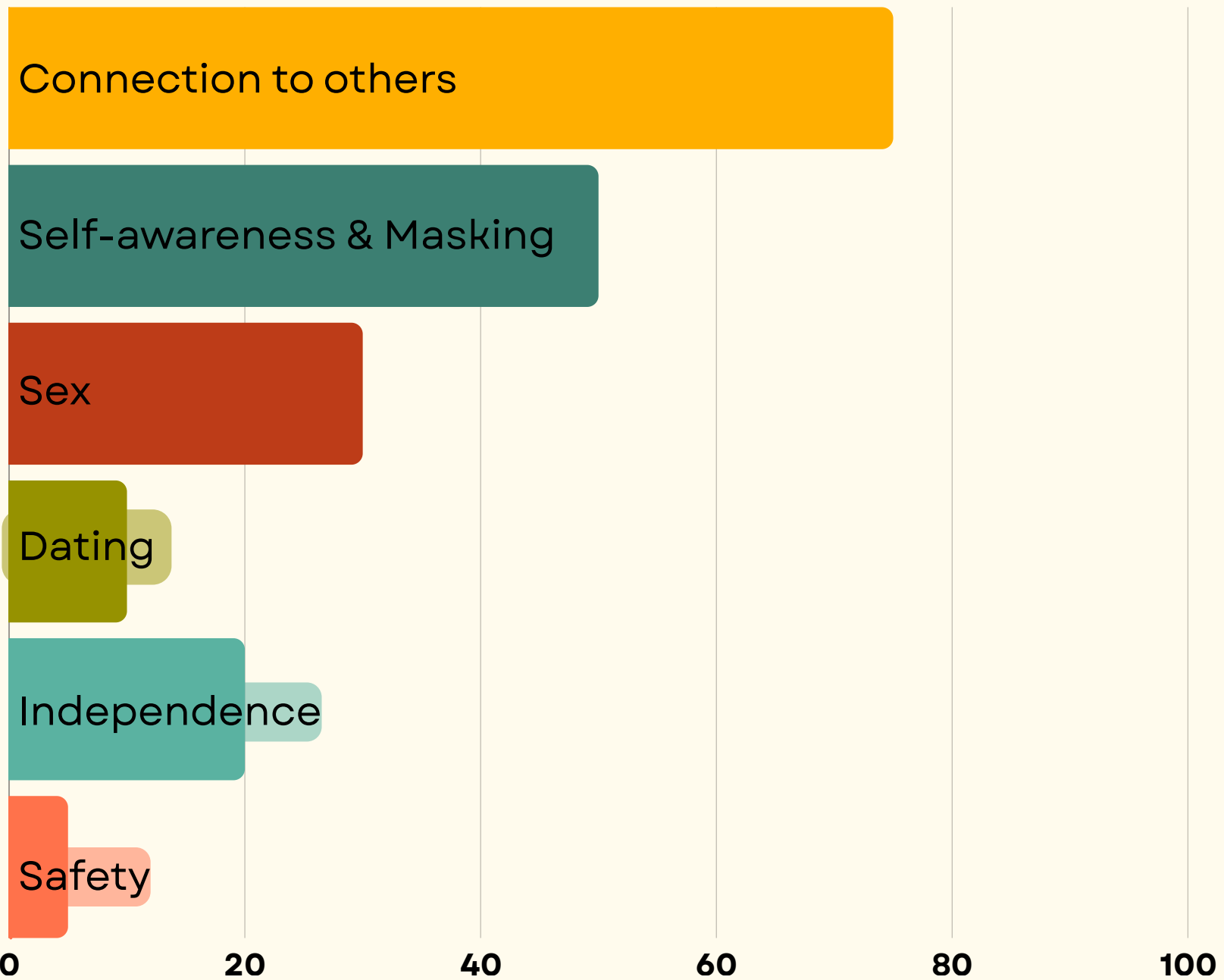
BEHAVIORAL MANIFESTATION^{8,11}

- Impulsivity
- Distress
- Meltdowns
- Shutdowns
- Agression

SURVEY RESULTS

SOCIAL CONNECTION

Social Challenges



I didn't understand anything sexual when I found out I liked it.

You know you're not normal and all you wanted was to be with a normal person

ANXIOUS THAT OTHER KIDS ARE MAKING FUN OF HIM

SHE IS INTENSELY FOCUSED ON DATING, SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

I recognized my social differences and started intentionally masking for the first time



SOCIAL CONNECTION



Social Contexts

- Self-awareness¹⁰
- Use of supports & accommodations¹⁰
- Desire for connection vs. SPINs

Family

- Lack of independence vs. autonomy^{9,11}
- Communication & comfort^{8,19}
- Demand avoidance

Safety

- Danger awareness & recognition^{2,8}
- Vulnerability to abuse & exploitation¹⁹
- Risk of sexual disease^{2,12}

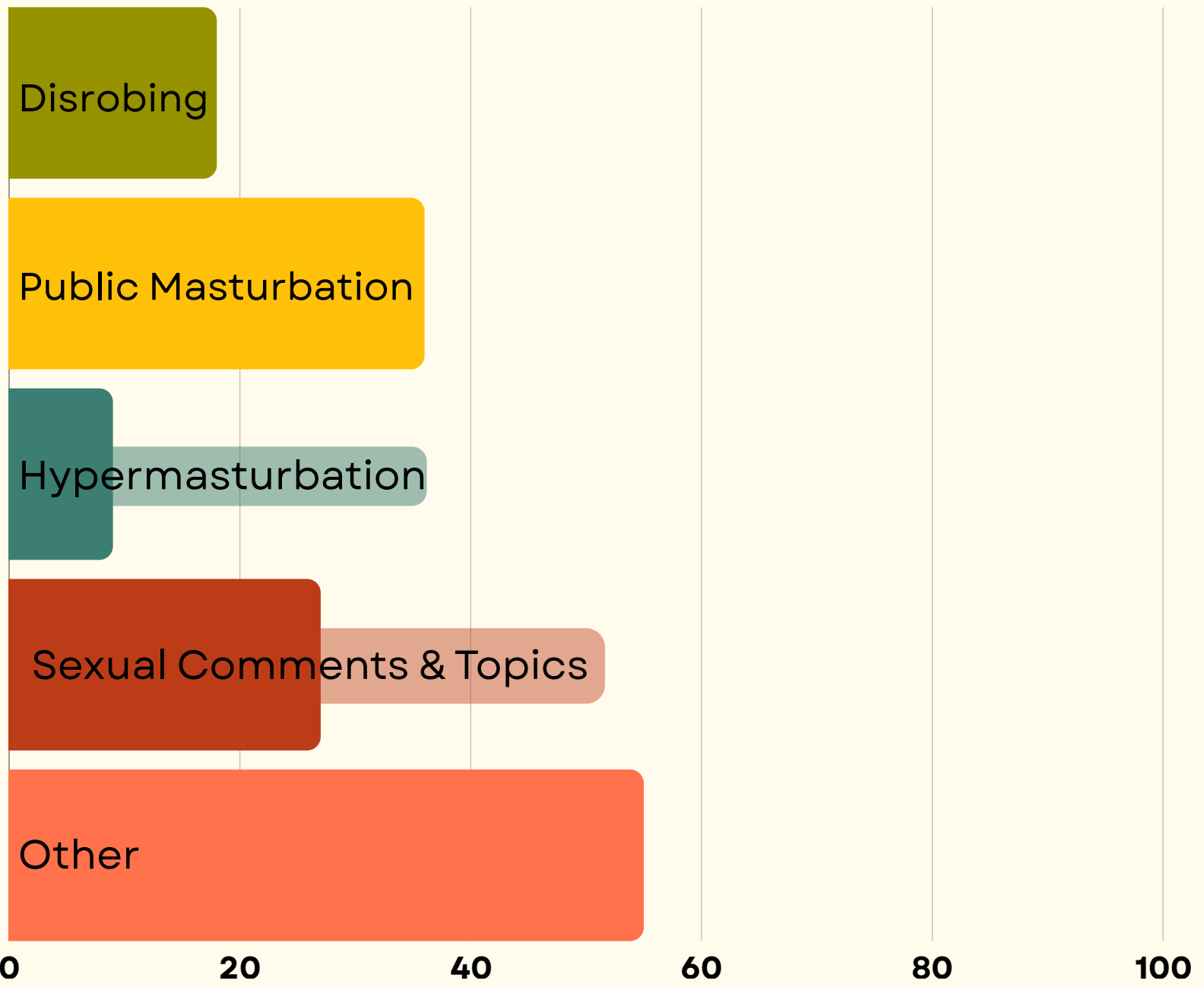
Dating & Sex

- Social norms²
- Non-verbal communication^{8,11}
- Boundaries & consent²¹

SURVEY RESULTS

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Sexual Behavior Challenges



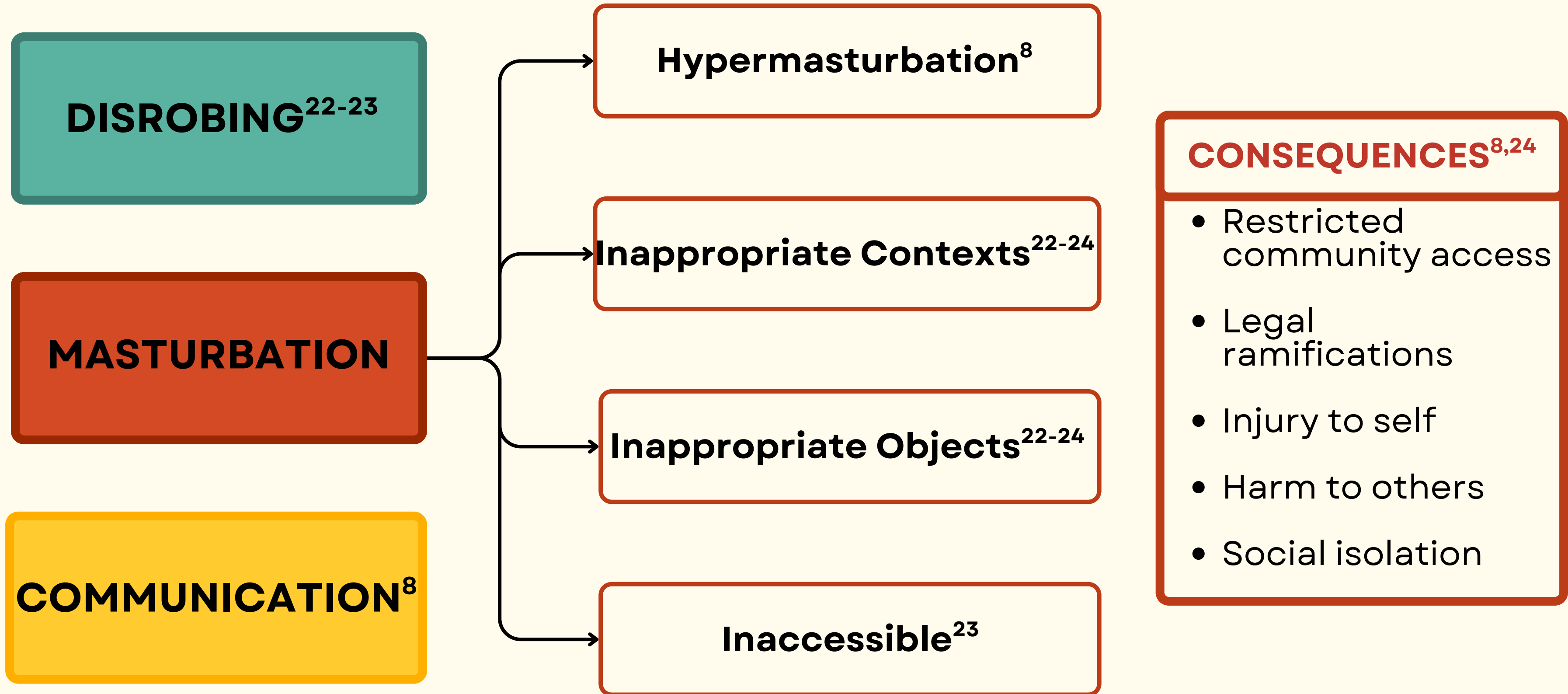
PUBLIC SPACES ARE CHALLENGING FOR US, ESPECIALLY WITH INAPPROPRIATE SELF-STIMULATION

There is a gap in teaching about self-pleasure in a shame-free and developmentally appropriate way

INITIATING CONTACT WITH GIRLS HE FINDS ATTRACTIVE AND WANTING TO HAVE PHYSICAL CONTACT

SHE TALKS A LOT ABOUT PERIOD AND PERSONAL AREAS IN PUBLIC LOUDLY

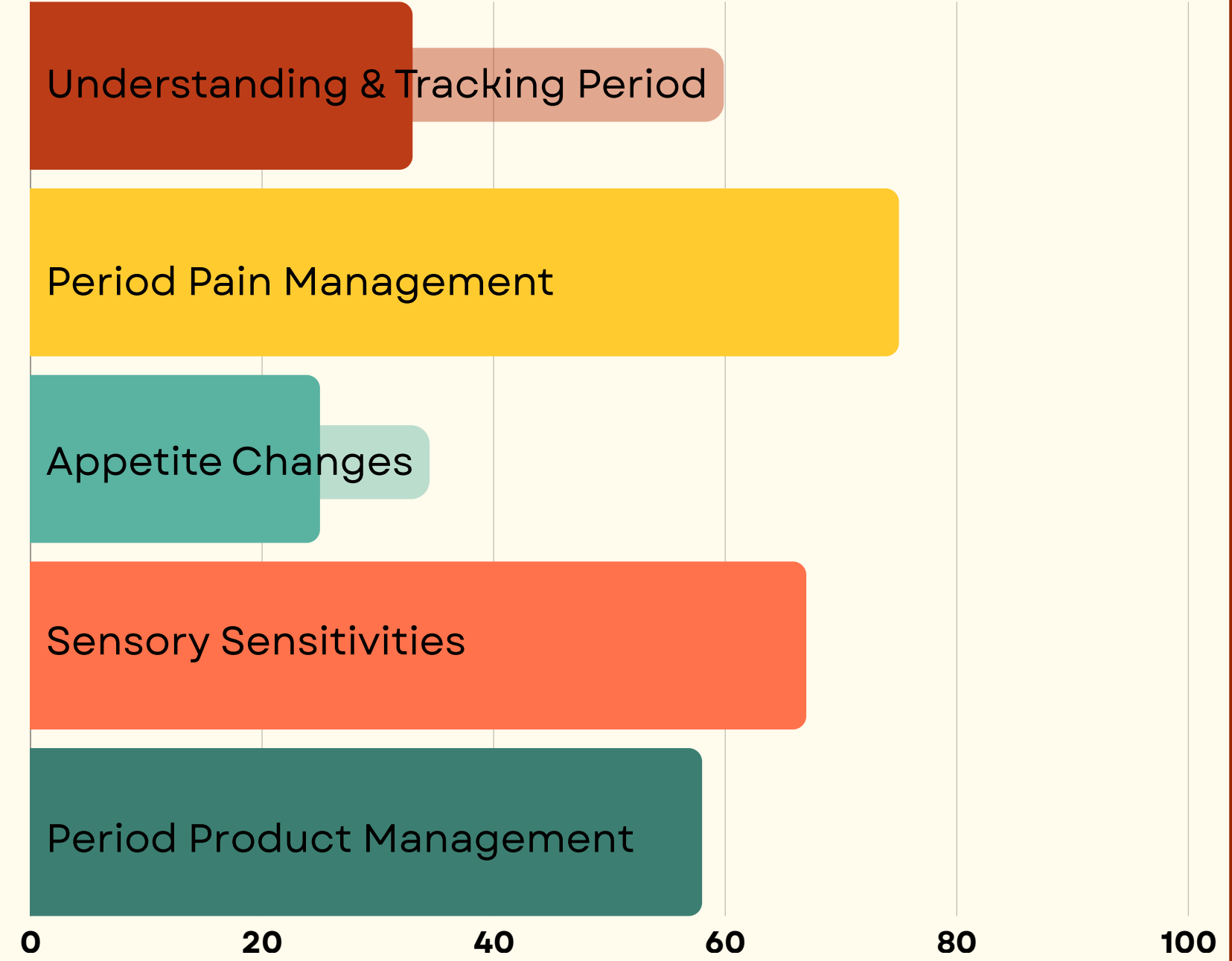
SEXUAL BEHAVIOR



SURVEY RESULTS

MENSTRUATION

Menstruation Related Challenges



DOESN'T WANT
TO GO
ANYWHERE ON
HER PERIOD

I would think about
the smell and the
feeling and needing
to change so much
I couldn't focus.

I thought using
anything other
than tampons
was embarrassing

Parents may
misinterpret
distress related
to menstruation¹¹

MENSTRUATION

Lack of Independence⁸

Negative Impact²⁵⁻²⁶

Tracking Cycle⁸

Isolation

Period Pain¹¹

Managing Products⁸⁻¹⁰

Routine Disruption

Sensory Sensitivities⁸

AND ON TOP OF ALL THAT...

*** *Compounding Challenges*

COMMUNICATION

INTEROCEPTION

PRAXIS

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

What now?

& **MANAGING PUBERTY SUPPORTING SRHE**



**Neurodiversity-affirming
Education**



**Trauma-informed
Approaches**



**Holistic + Client-
centered Interventions**



Specialized training & collaboration^{2-3,11,27}



Tailored curricula⁸



Beyond Biology & toward taboo topics^{1-2,4,27}



Multi-sensory learning & accommodations^{2,10-11,26}



Communication access^{11,26,28-29}

PROJECT OVERVIEW

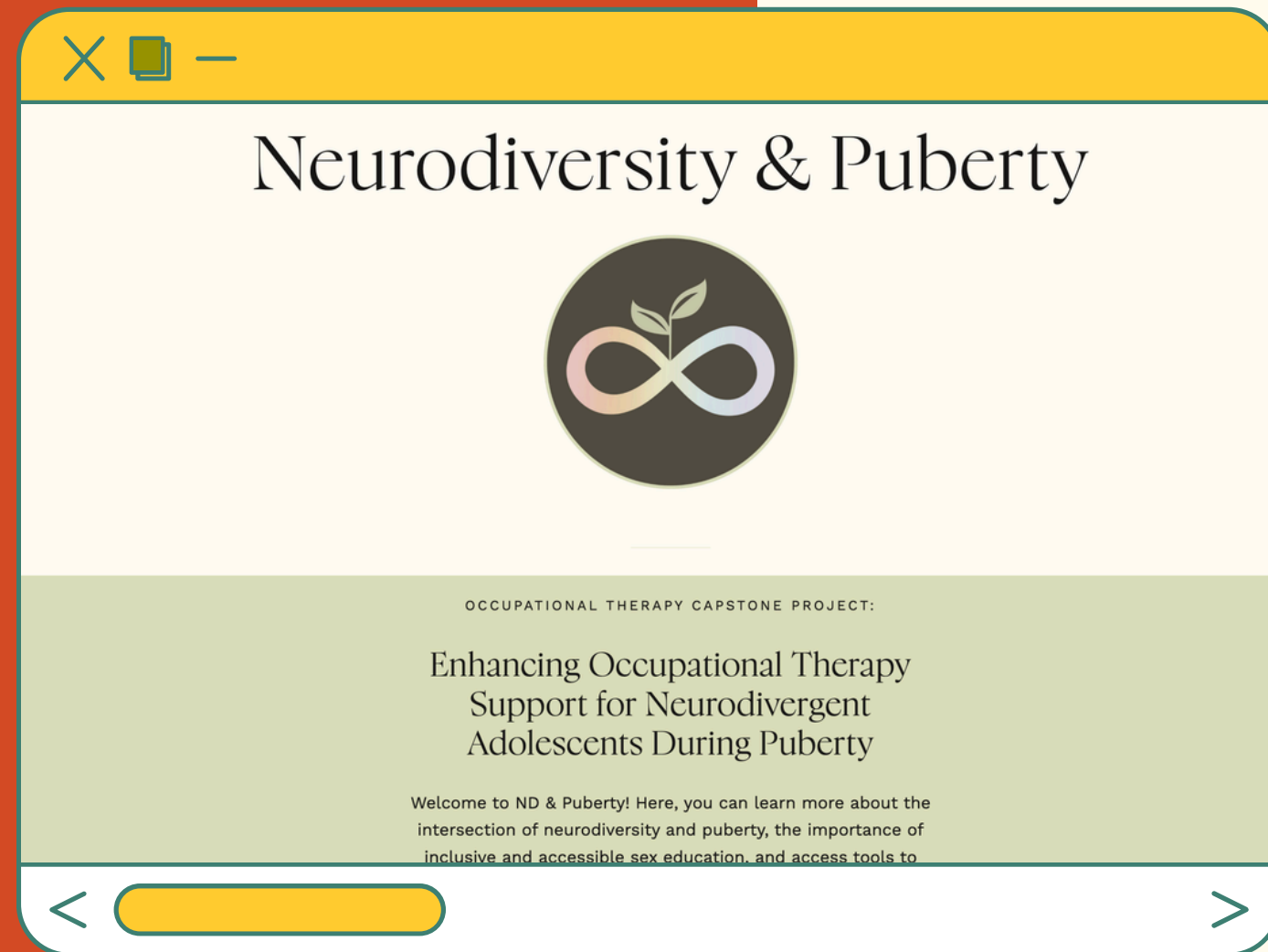
All of the deliverables for this project will be hosted on ndandpuberty.info!

Intervention Guidelines

- ✦ Topic specific interventions
- ✦ Activity templates & physical props
- ✦ Grading and modification suggestions

Educational Resources

- ✦ Information handouts for clients & caregivers
- ✦ Resource lists (books, websites, etc.)
- ✦ Maybe more!



THANK YOU

for listening!

Please scan the QR code or click [here](#) to share your top topic priorities for interventions and resources.



REFERENCES

Please scan the QR code or click [here](#) to find the references page for this presentation.

