

# WOMEN & BEER COMPETITIONS

We need more women as judges,  
entrants, and competition organizers!



MICHELE WONDER | MELISSA MCCANN  
WOMEN'S CRAFT FERMENTATION ALLIANCE



[#HOMEBREWCON](#)



# MELISSA MCCANN

Executive Director

WOMEN'S CRAFT FERMENTATION ALLIANCE (WCFA)

# MICHELE WONDER

Media Director

WOMEN'S CRAFT FERMENTATION ALLIANCE (WCFA)





# Michele Wonder My Beer Journey



**2018**

- Began homebrewing
- Joined my local homebrew club **The Oregon Brew Crew**
- Got job at local homebrew shop (Shout out to **FH Steinbart!**)
- Took & passed **BJCP** Tasting Exam at **2018 Homebrew Con** in Portland
- Attended my first **HBC**

**2019**

- Entered & judged my first homebrew competition (**SheBrew**)
- Poured my beer at first public event (**SheBrew**)
- Became a draft line cleaning technician (**Perfect Pour Services**)
- First year being a home wine maker

**2020**

- Joined the **Pink Boots Society** and did my first collab brew at **Heater Allen**
- Brewed like a crazy person in the first 2 months of lockdown
- Created the **Black Is Beautiful PDX Homebrew Project** (raised \$10,000)
- Joined up with Melissa and several others to create & plan the **Women's International Beer Summit (WIBS)**

**2021**

- Inaugural **WIBS** online summit was held in April
- Co-founded the **WCFA 501(c)(3)**
- Became a Certified Cicerone ®





## Will Travel for Beer

# Melissa McCann

- 2014**
  - Attended first craft beer event
  - Started volunteering at beer events
- 2015**
  - Began judging at events and homebrewing with friends
- 2016**
  - Traveled to Scotland and Ireland
- 2017**
  - Became BJCP Certified
- 2018**
  - Traveled to Belgium
- 2018/19**
  - Director of Queen of Beer
    - Oldest female focused homebrew comp in the country
- 2020**
  - Founded the Women's International Beer Summit
- 2021**
  - First WIBS summit is held
  - Together with Michele and WIBS team formed WCFA
- 2023**
  - First solo brew, first comp entered, first place won



# Presentation Overview

## Homebrewer/Comp Survey

- Where was it distributed
- Results
  - Feedback from participants
  - Observations
- Sharing the data
- Future distributions

## Our Own Experiences

- Becoming a judge
- Entering competitions

## Ideas to Get More Women Involved

- Increase accessibility
- "Being Invited to the Dance vs. Being Asked to Dance"
- Teach the teacher
- Effective communication
- Eliminate the naysayers
- Code of conducts

## Intro to the Evergreen Brewing Initiative

- Initiative overview
- How to:
  - Contribute
  - Participate
  - Support



# Homebrew Competition Survey

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**November 2022 - April 2023**





Survey Open Nov '22 - March '23  
265 Total Respondents

Distributed via the following

- WCFA email list
- WIBS attendees/followers
- Homebrew shops
- Facebook brew groups
- Instagram homebrew influencers
- US female brew groups
- AHA forum
- r/homebrewing subreddit

# How was the survey distributed?

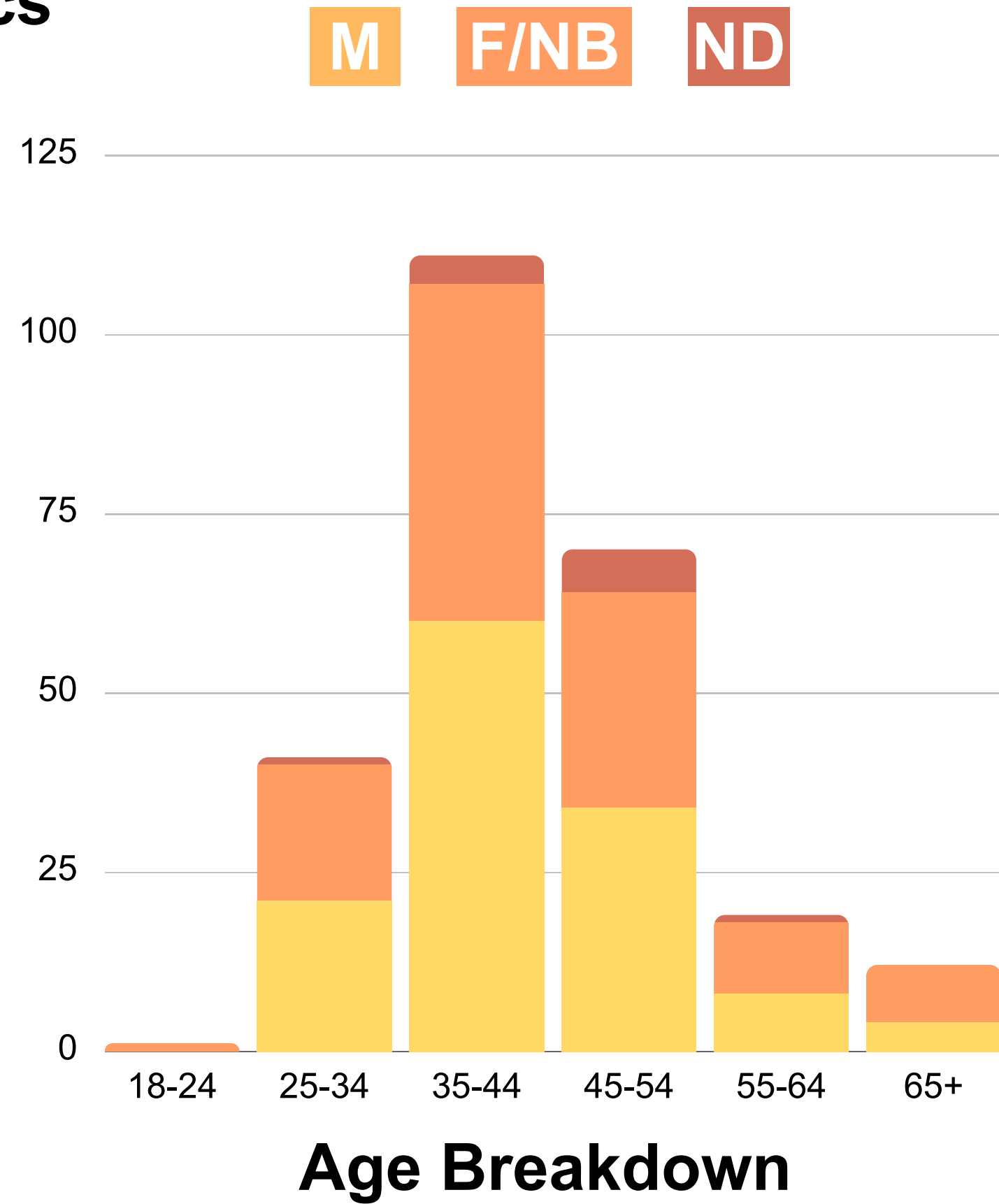
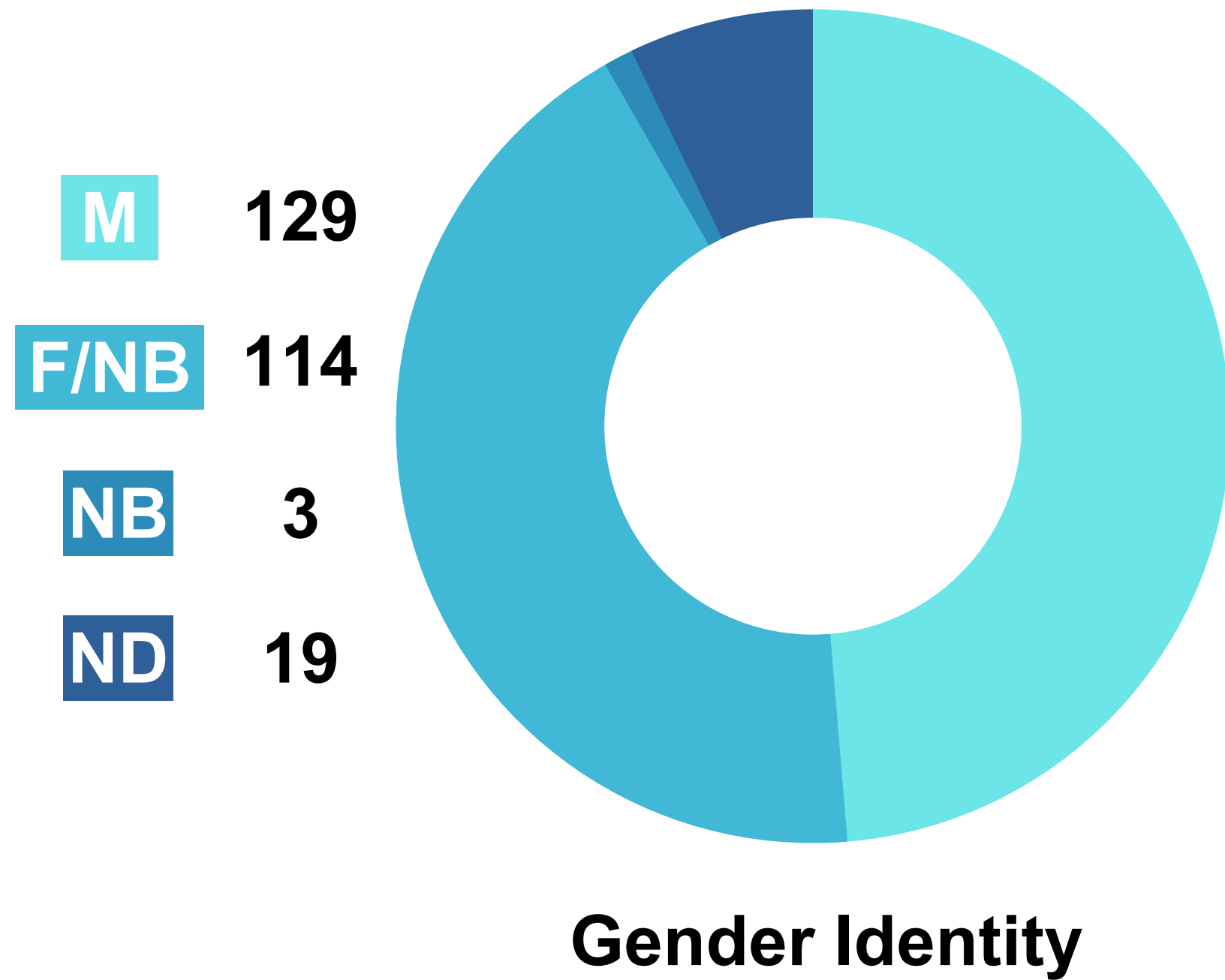
Abbreviations used in presentation:

- **M** = Male
- **F** = Female
- **NB** = Non Binary
- **ND** = Not Disclosed
- **Comp** = Competition



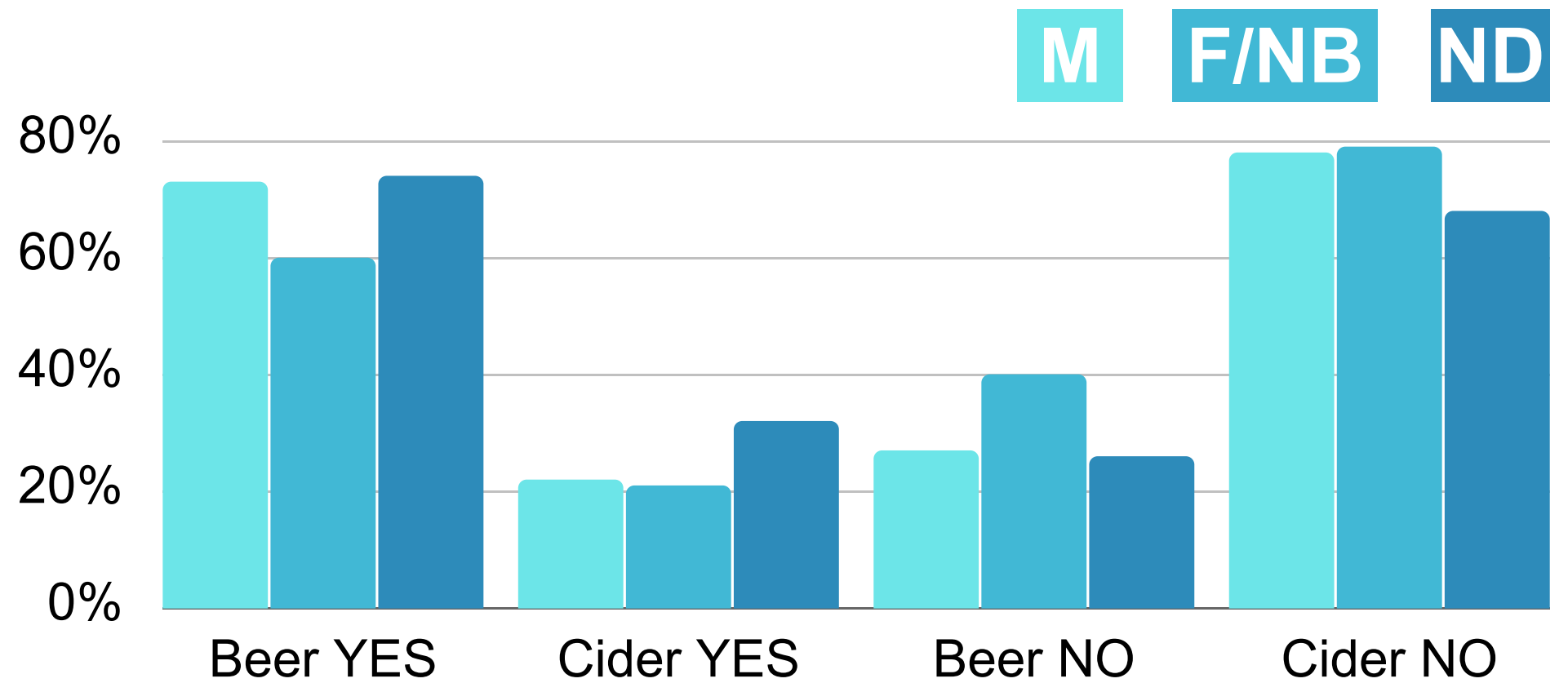
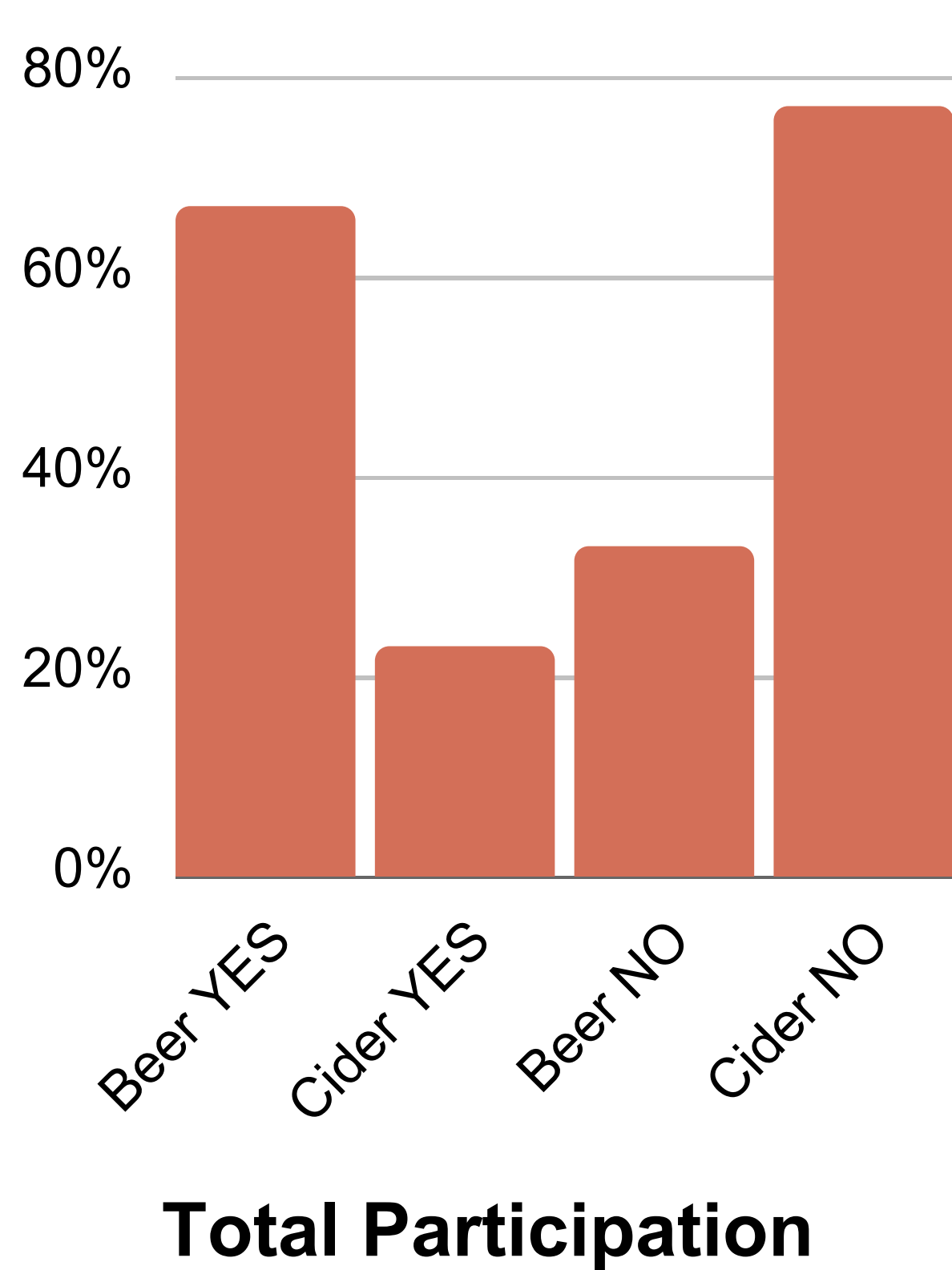
# Survey Results Demographics

Total Respondents: 265

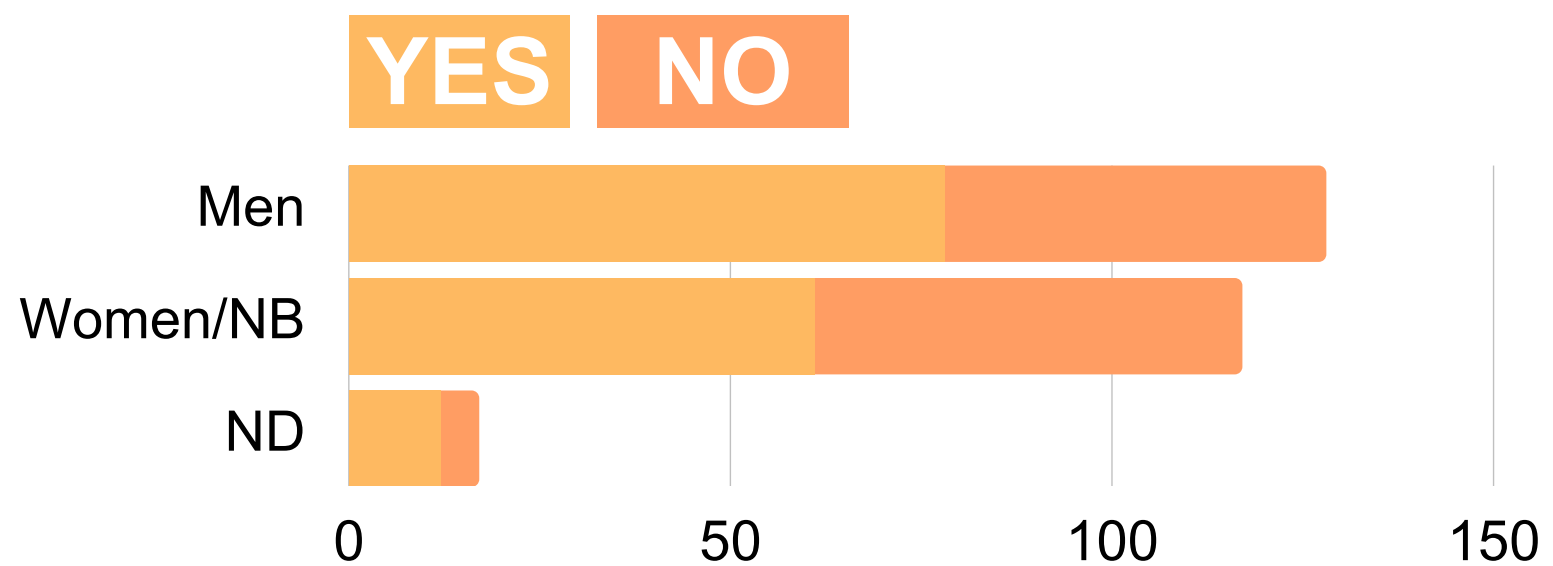




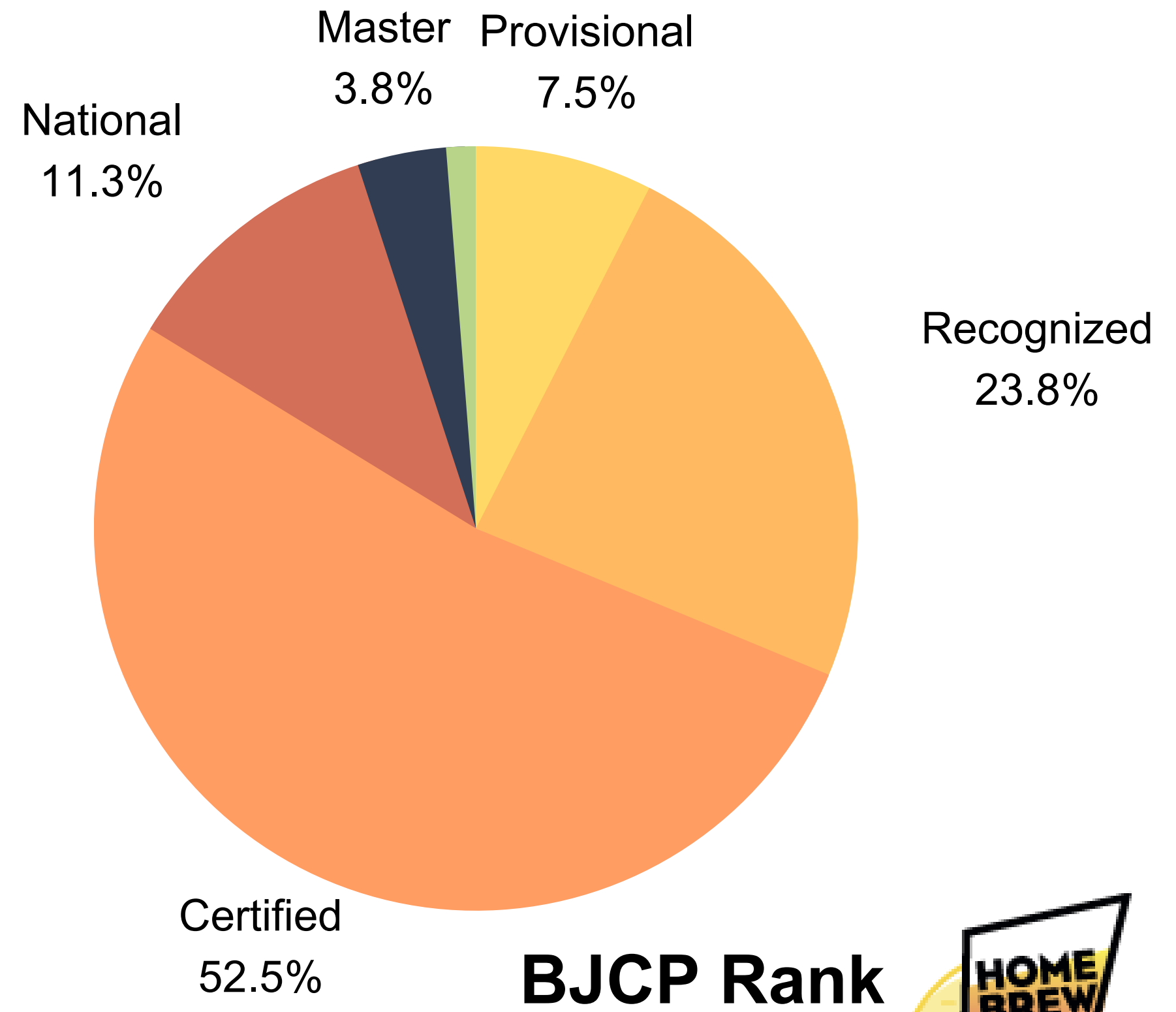
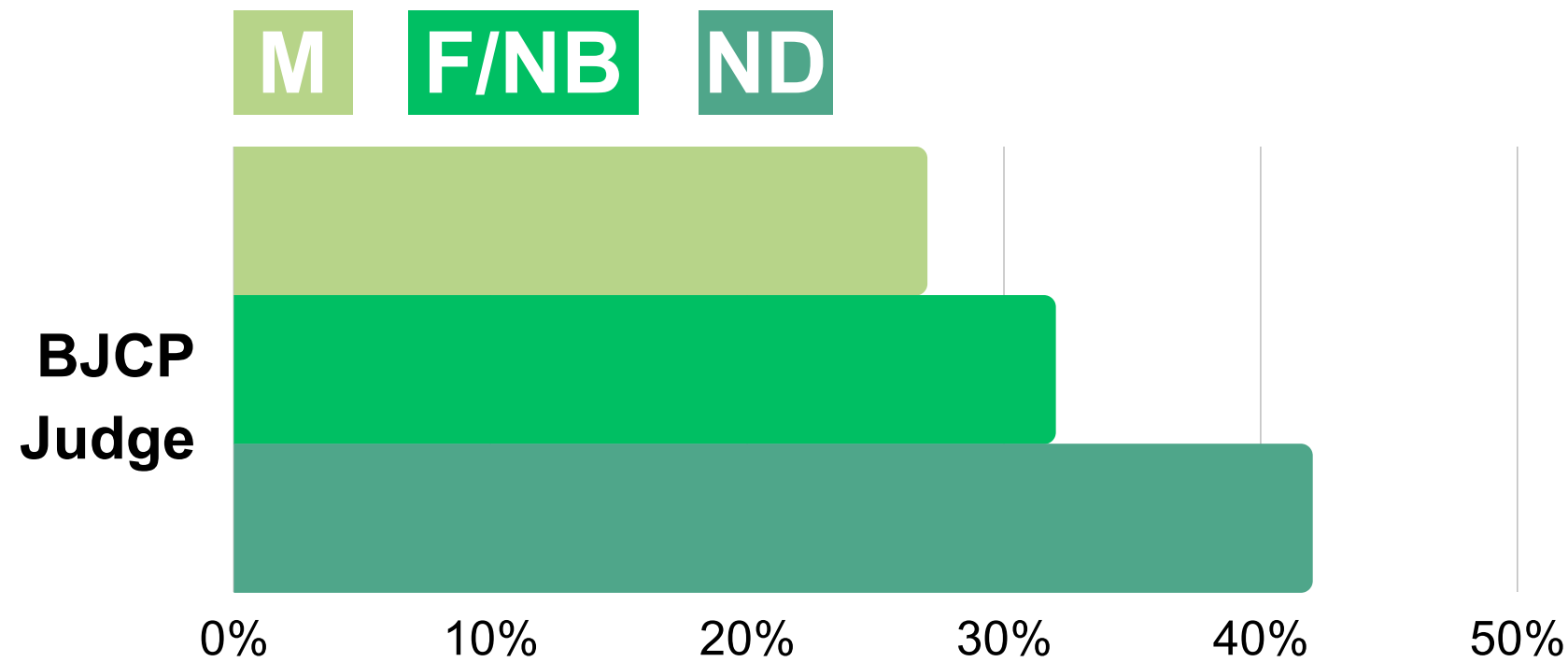
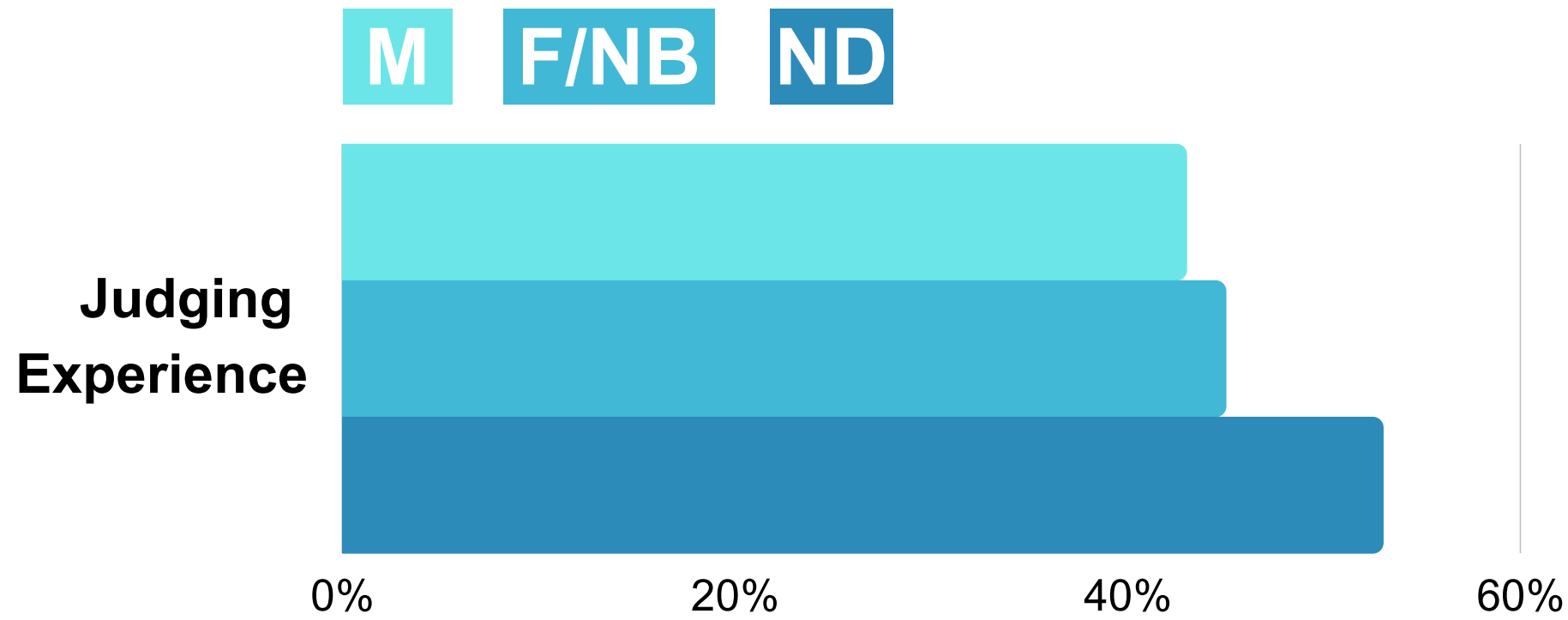
# Survey Results Competition Participation



## Homebrew Club Member

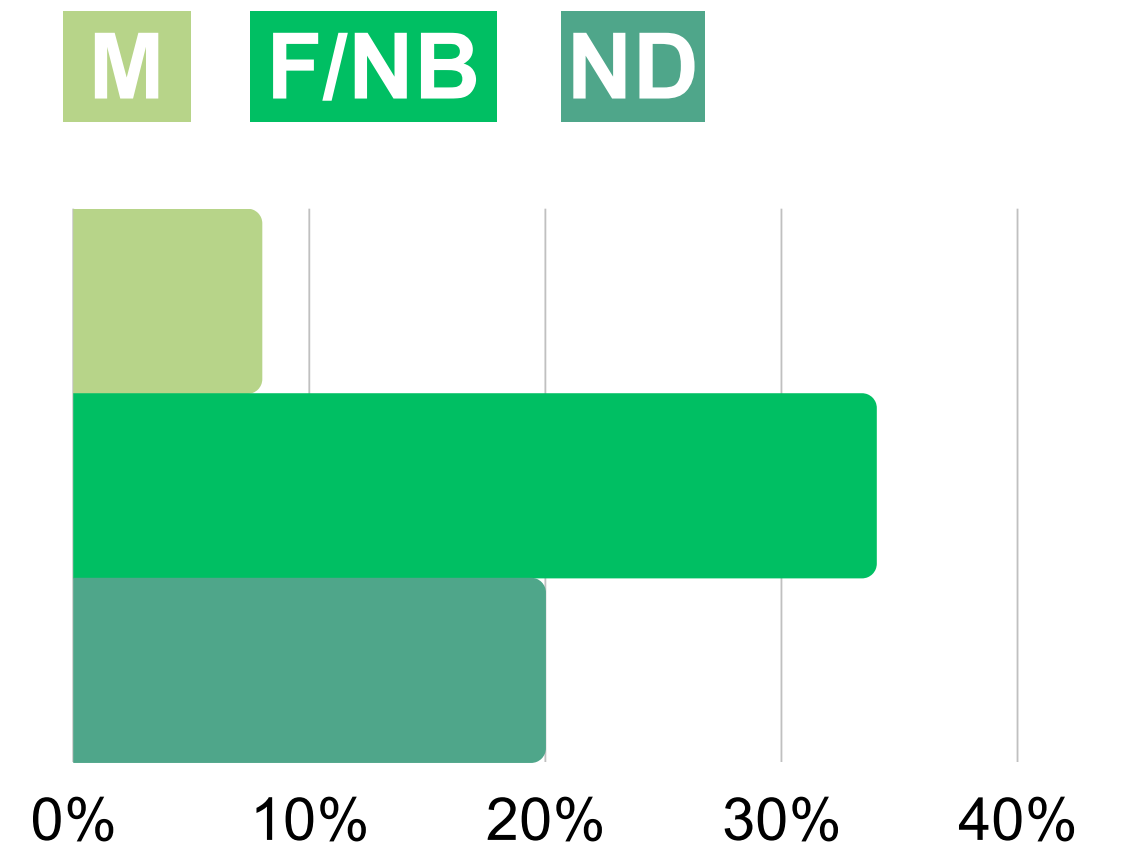
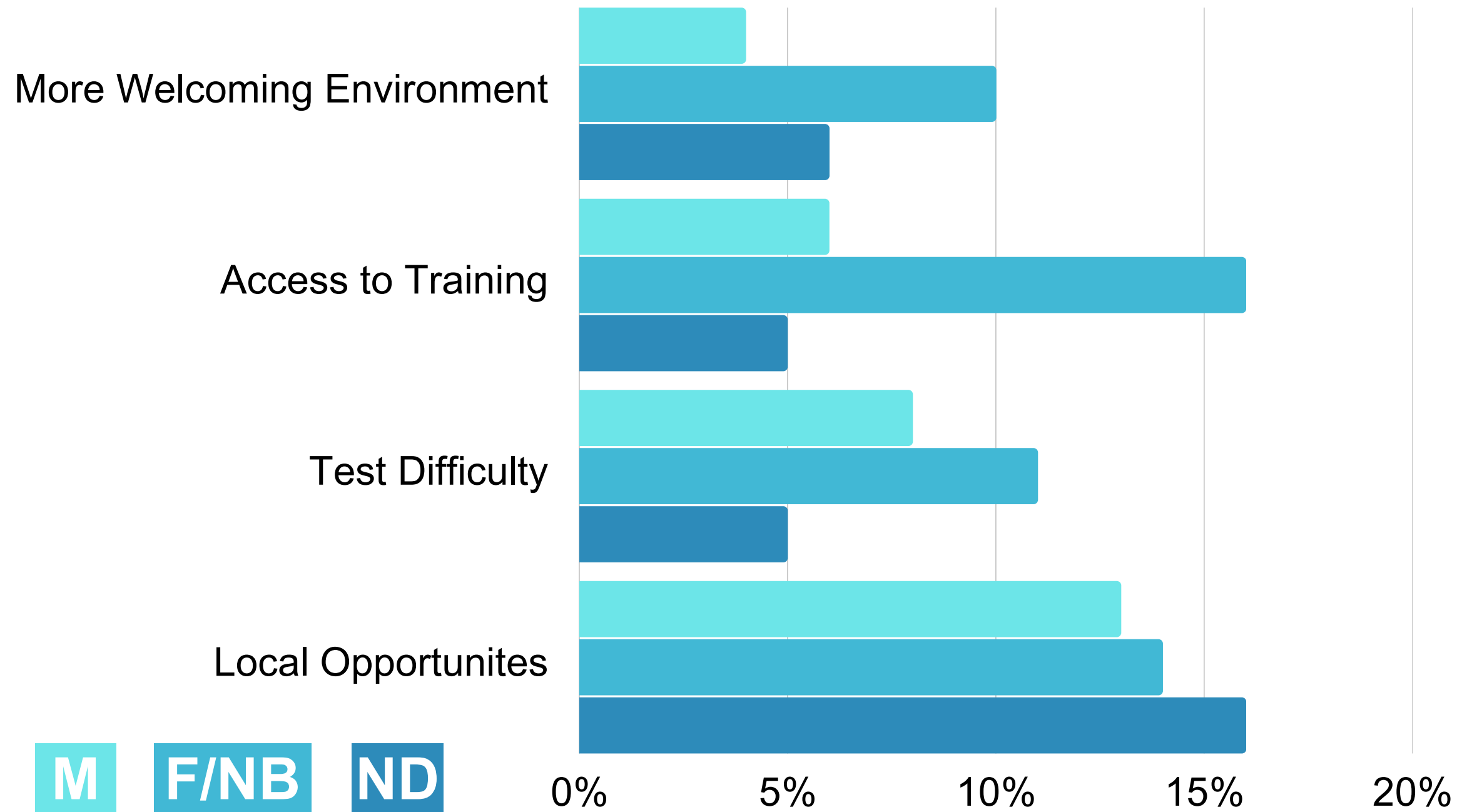


# Survey Results Judging Demographics



# Survey Results Judging Stats

## What would encourage you to judge more comps



## Witnessed sexism or homophobia while judging





# Survey Results Entrant Motivation to Participate

**Simply to Participate**

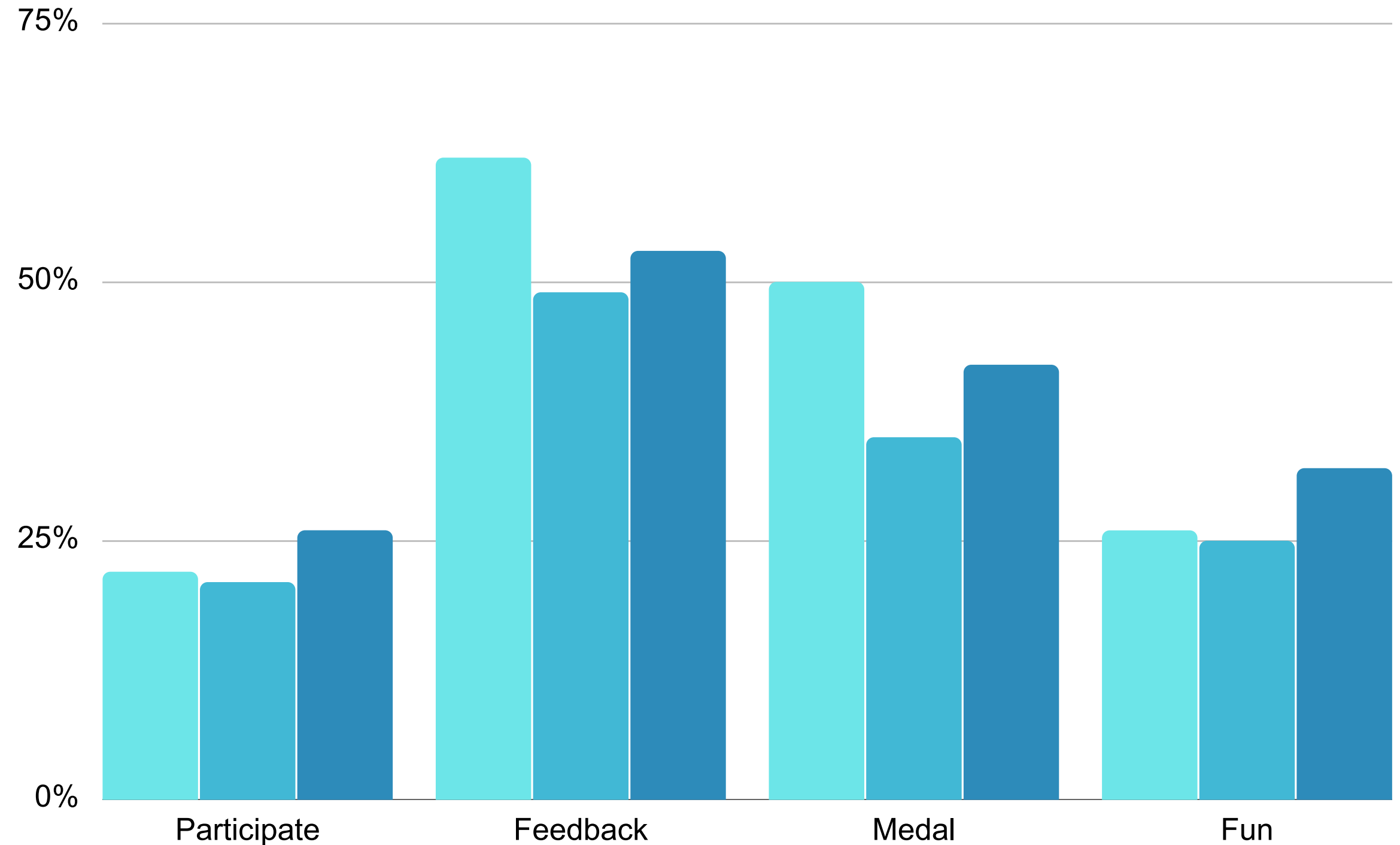
**Receive Feedback**

**To Win A Medal**

**Just for Fun**

**Other**

- To support/represent club
- Fundraiser
- To prove a point
- To see if good enough to go pro



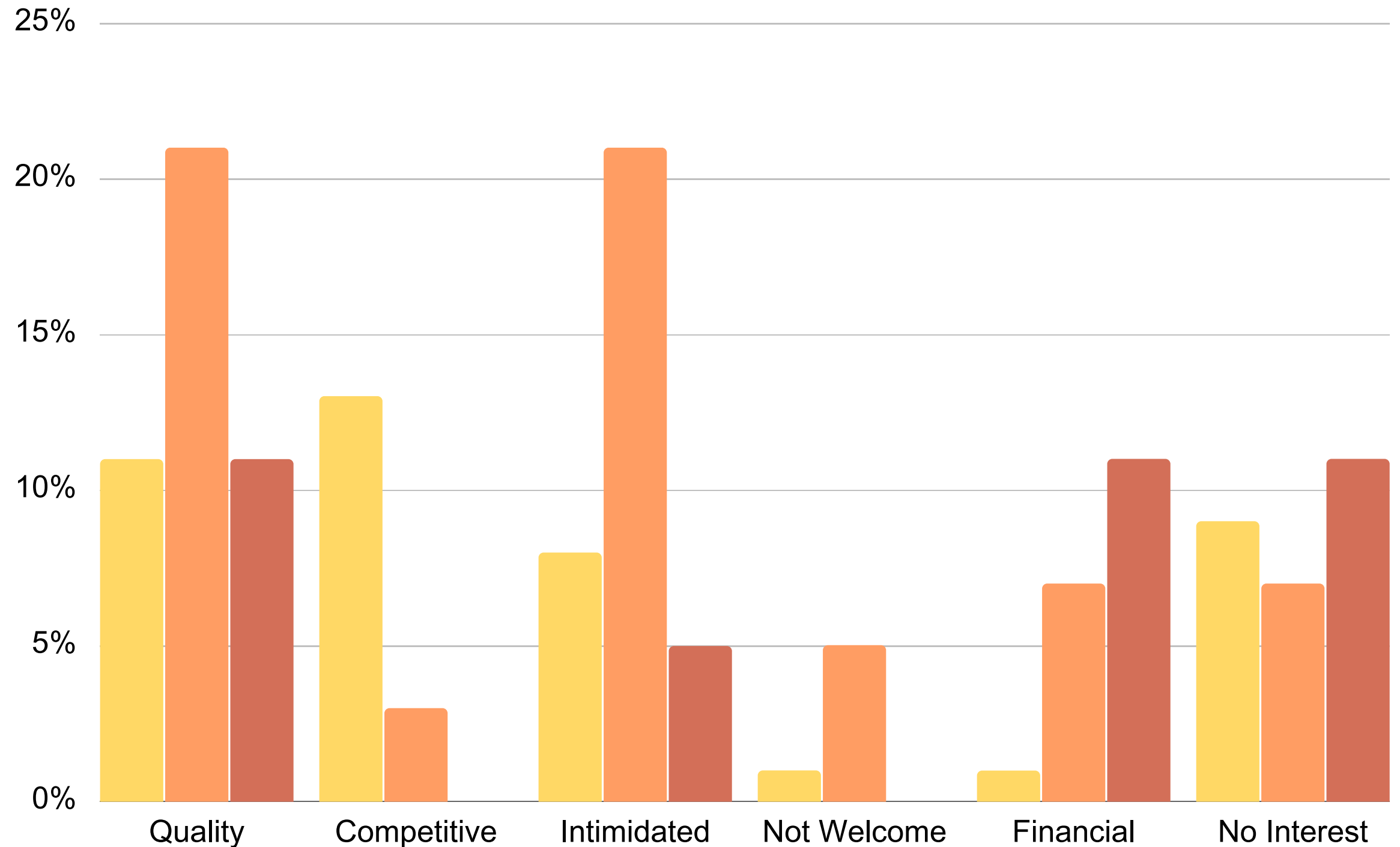
**M** **F/NB** **ND**



# Survey Results Entrant Perceived Roadblocks to Entry

**Beers Not Good Enough**  
**Not Competitive**  
**Intimidated by Process**  
**Doesn't Feel Welcome**  
**Financial Considerations**  
**No Interest**  
**Other**

- Shipping concerns/drop Off
- No comps near me
- Time to brew
- Awareness of comps



M

F/NB

ND



# Survey Results Entrant Perceived Roadblocks to Entry

**Shipping Concerns**  
No Comps Near Me  
**Awareness**

Uncomfortable as Non-Male  
**Poor Feedback from Judges**

No Time To Brew  
**Still a Beginner**

**"Don't feel comfortable shipping entries so if I can't drive there I won't enter." 35-44(M)**

"I still haven't figured out how to bottle from a keg!" 65+(F)

**"Don't know where they are. I may have to travel a long way."**  
35-44(NB)

"I have felt encouraged to participate but the general vibe is mansplaining and egotistical and I just don't have the energy or desire to be around those men" 25-34(F)

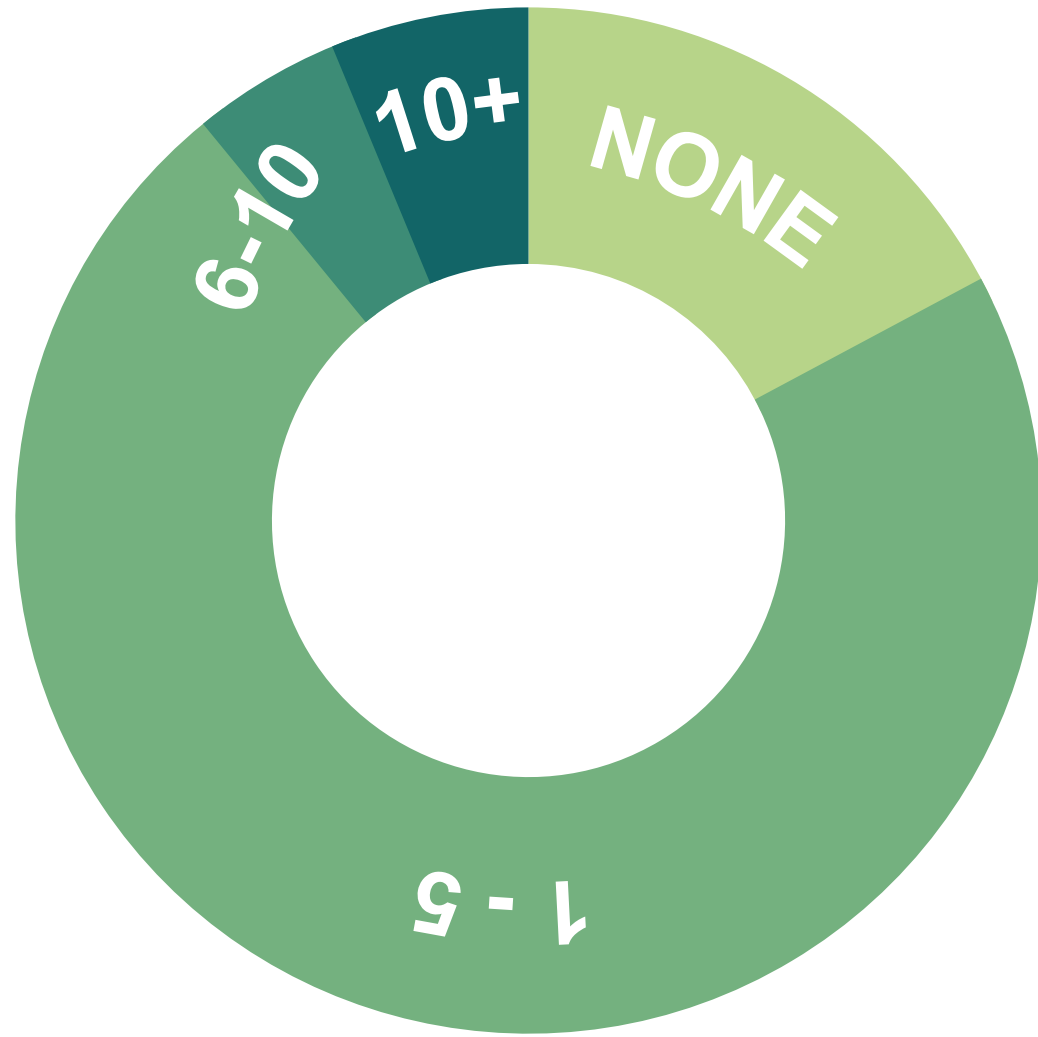
**"I enjoy the hobby, but I am too busy to compete."**  
45-54(ND)

"Also a big reason I don't enter is that I believe most judges aren't really qualified to judge my beer. Plus the idea of shipping my beer where it can get warm/oxidized is a NO for me." 25-34(F)

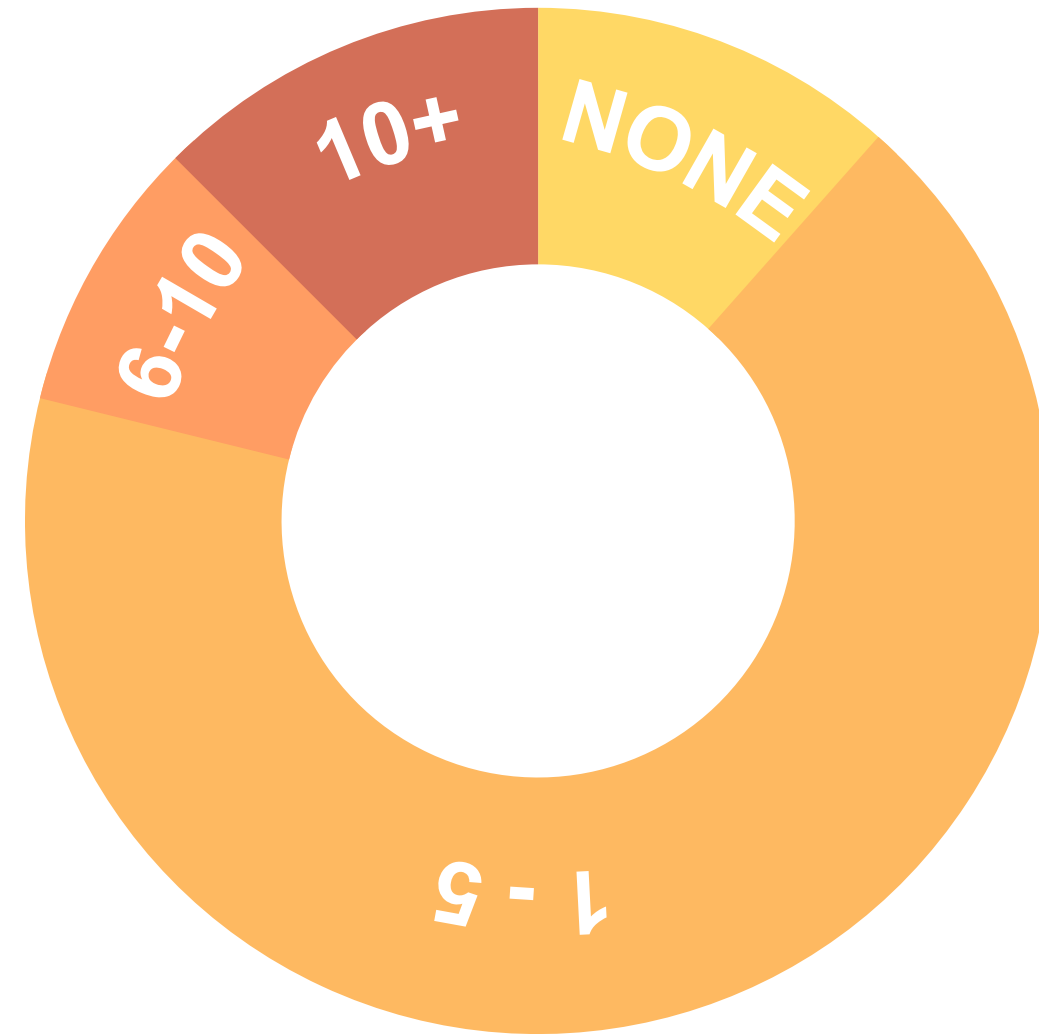




# Survey Results # of Comps Entered per Year



Female & Non-Binary



Men & Non-Disclose



# Survey Results Personal Motivations - Averages

**My beer is good enough to enter**



**Only enter if I can win**



**My beer is good enough to win**



**Intimidated by process to enter**



**I am competitive**



men

women/nb

non disclose

men

women/nb

non disclose

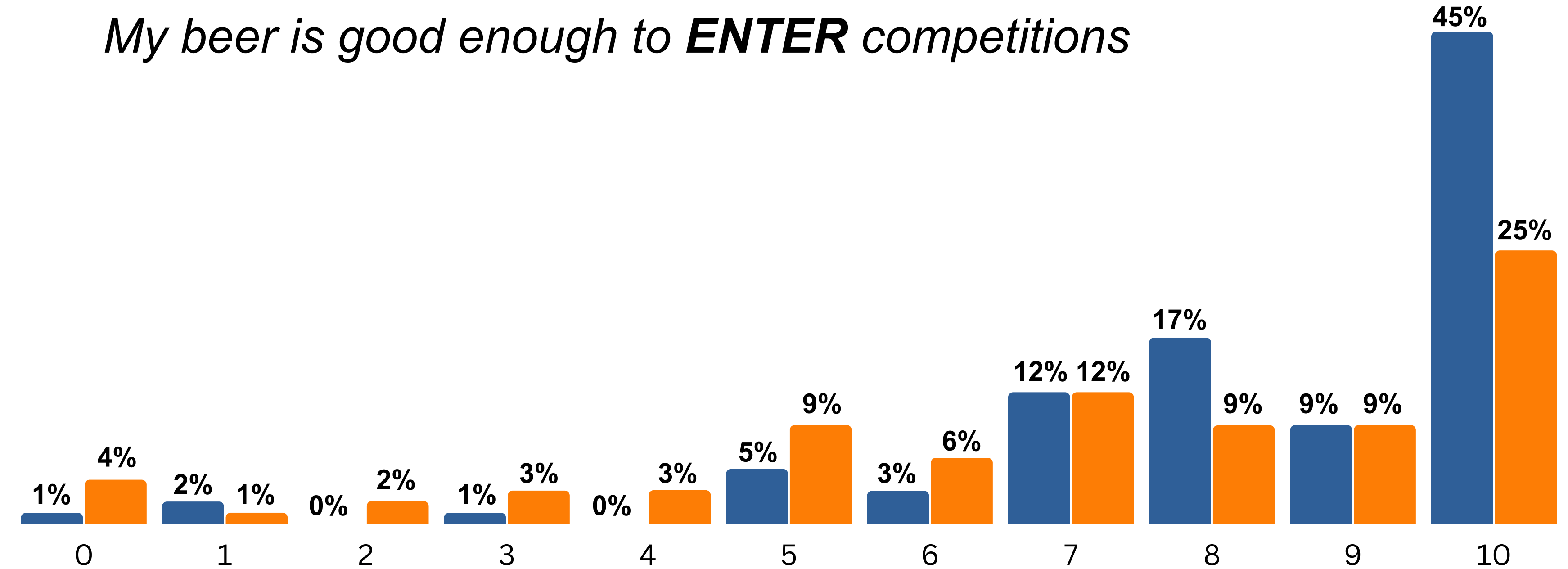


# Survey Results Personal Motivations

M

F/NB

*My beer is good enough to **ENTER** competitions*



0 - do not agree

strongly agree = 10



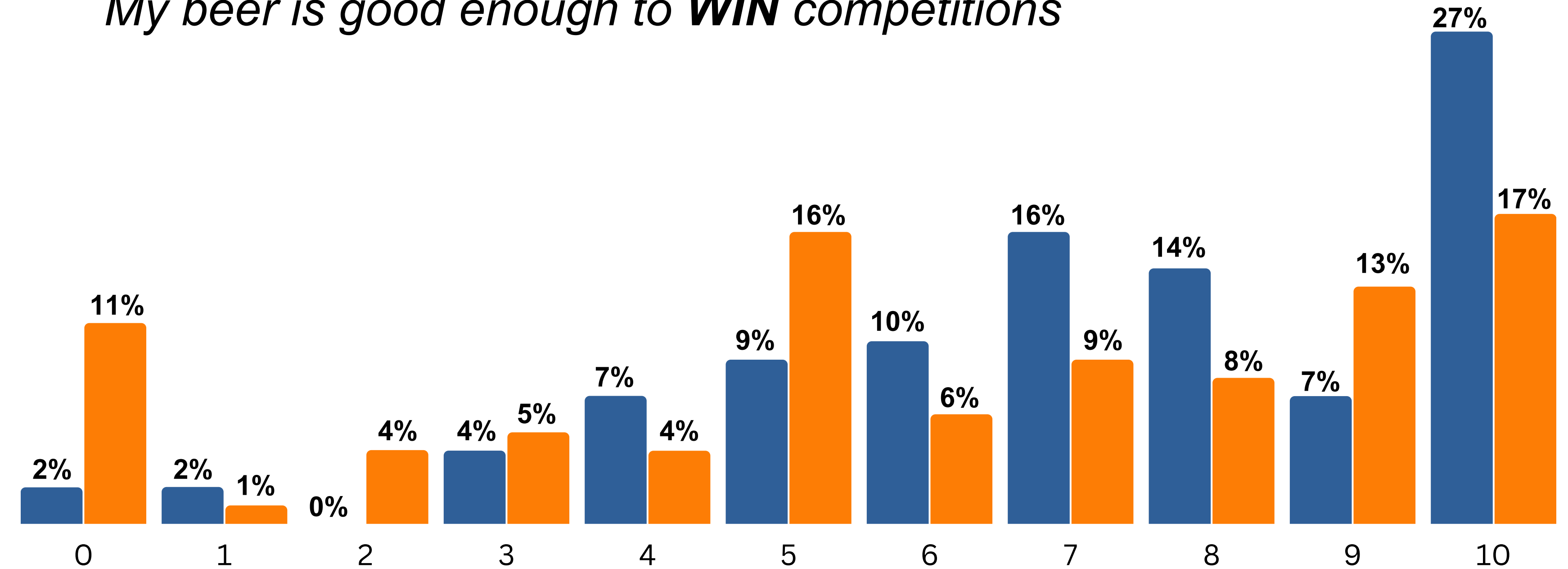


# Survey Results Personal Motivations

M

F/NB

*My beer is good enough to **WIN** competitions*



0 - do not agree

strongly agree = 10

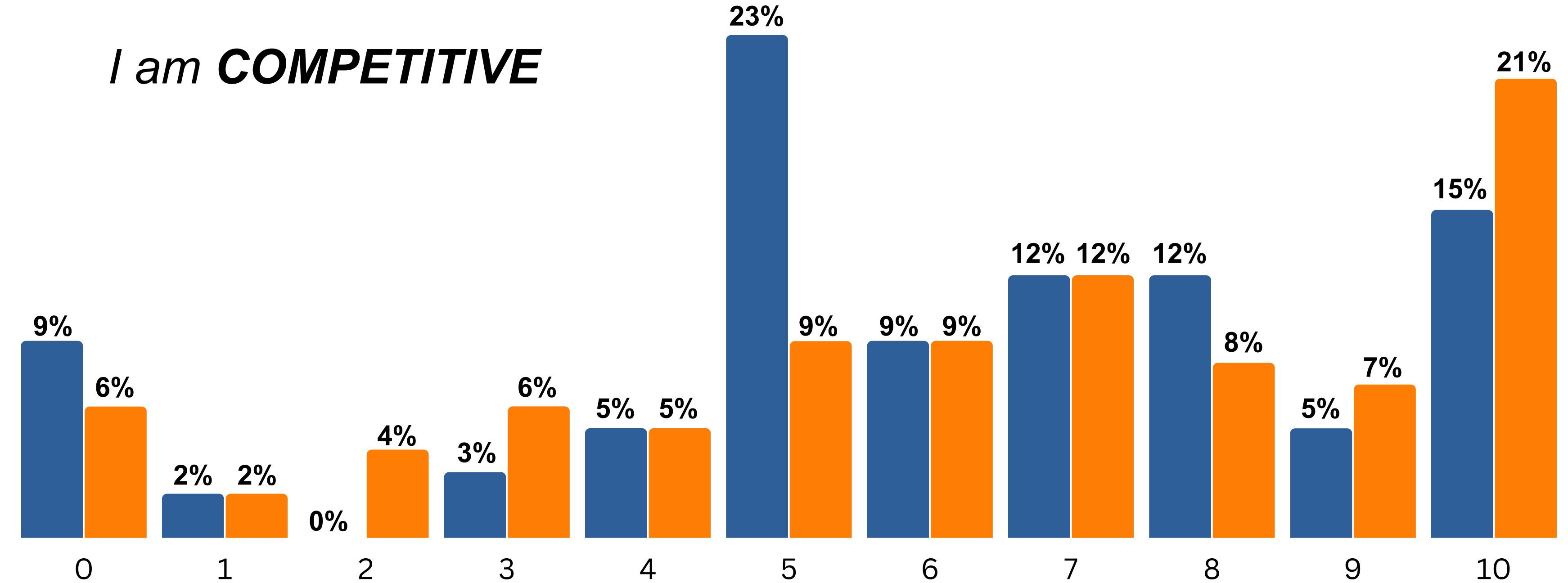


# Survey Results Personal Motivations

M

F/NB

*I am **COMPETITIVE***



0 - do not agree

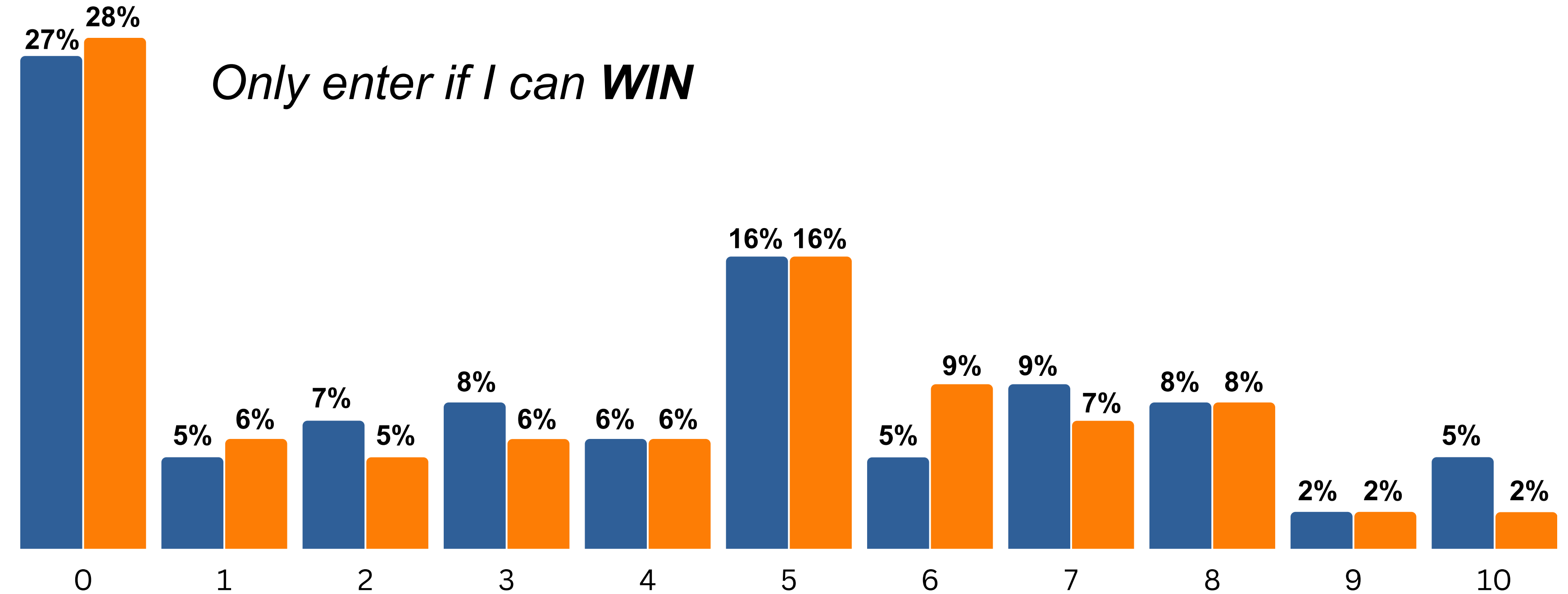
strongly agree = 10



# Survey Results Personal Motivations

M

F/NB



0 - do not agree

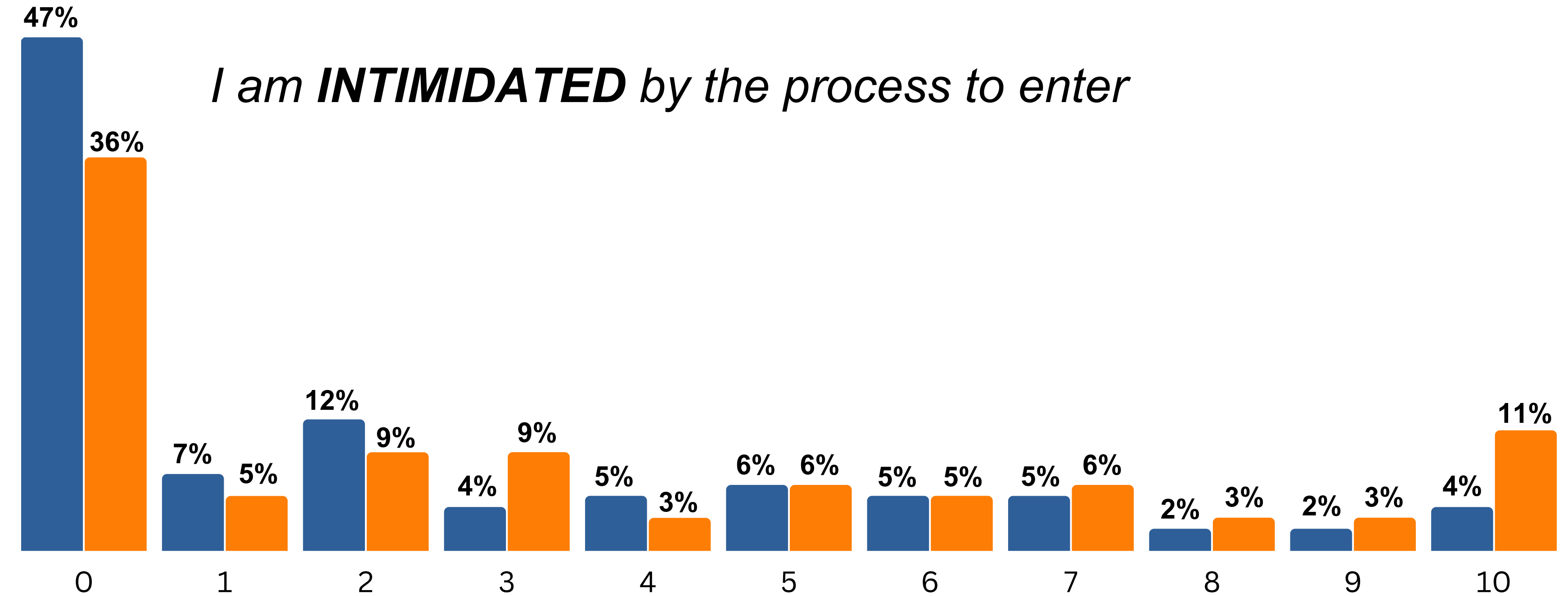
strongly agree = 10



# Survey Results Personal Motivations

M

F/NB



0 - do not agree

strongly agree = 10



# Survey Results Personal Considerations - Averages

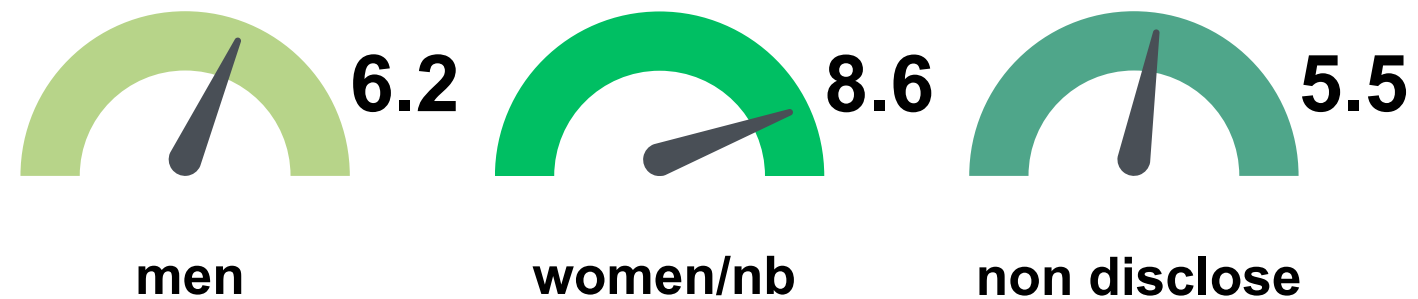
## Overall interest in comps



## Comfort entering any comps



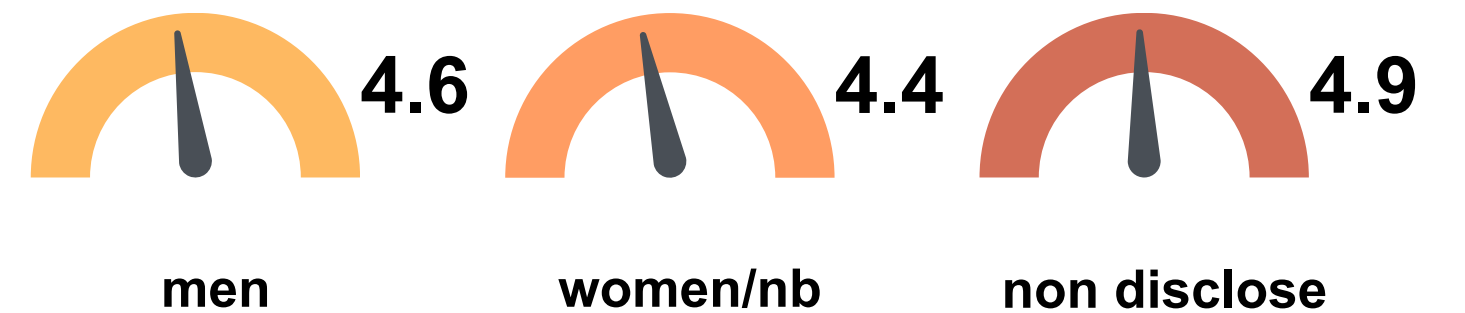
## Comfort entering women/queer focused comps



## Feel the women/queer brewers not welcome at comps



## Financially prohibitive to enter



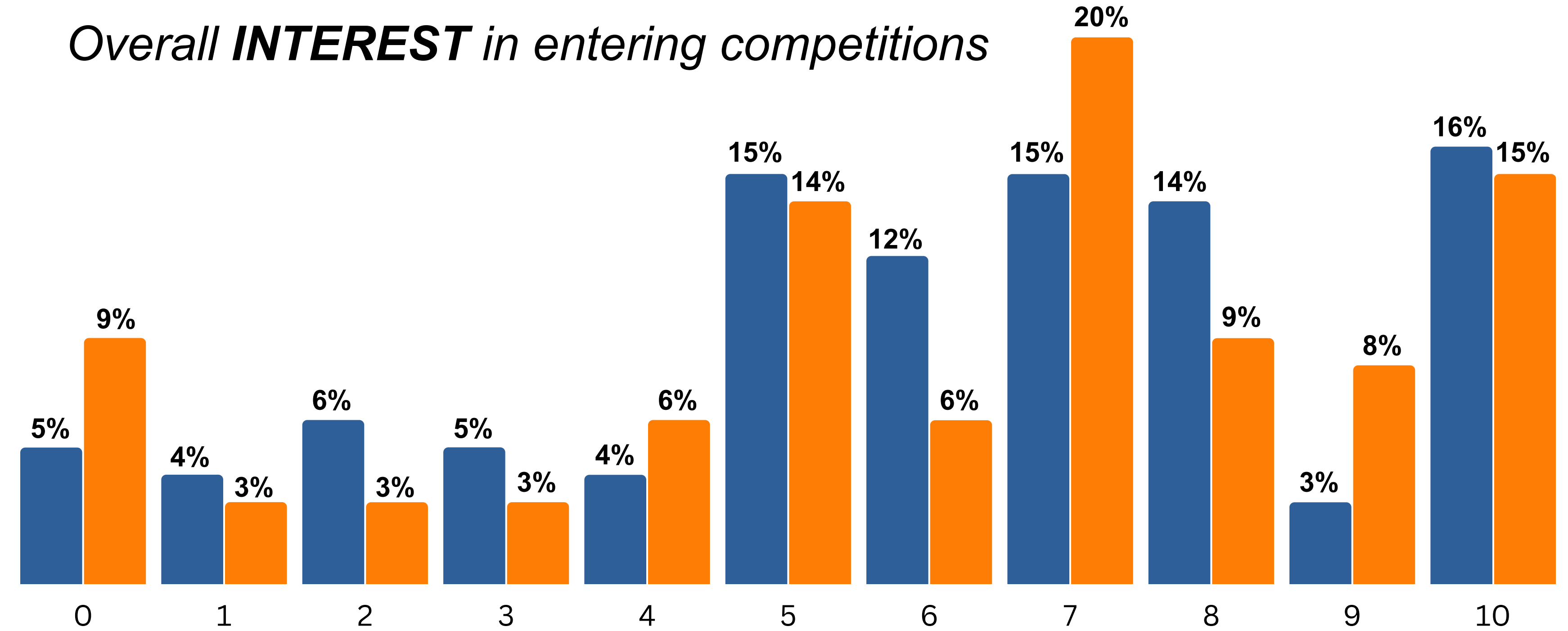


# Survey Results Personal Considerations

M

F/NB

*Overall INTEREST in entering competitions*



0 - do not agree

strongly agree = 10

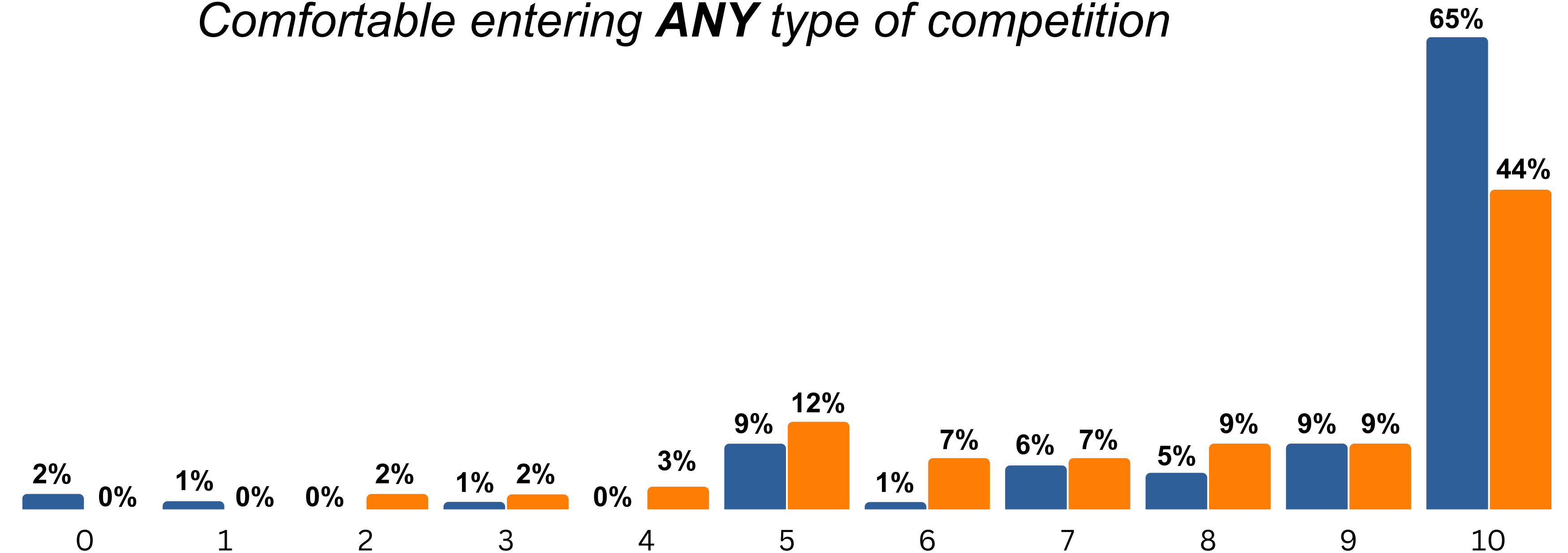


# Survey Results Personal Considerations

M

F/NB

*Comfortable entering **ANY** type of competition*



0 - do not agree

strongly agree = 10

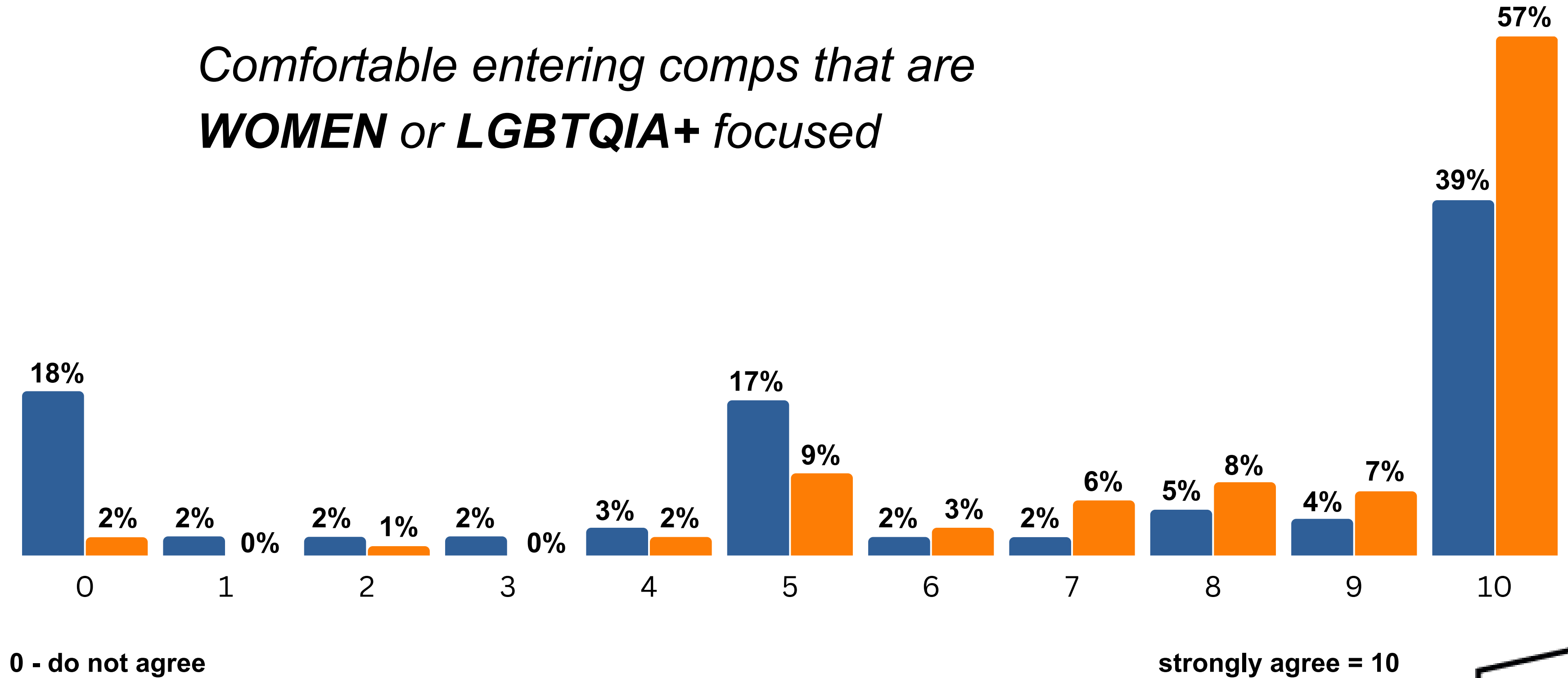


# Survey Results Personal Considerations

M

F/NB

*Comfortable entering comps that are **WOMEN** or **LGBTQIA+** focused*

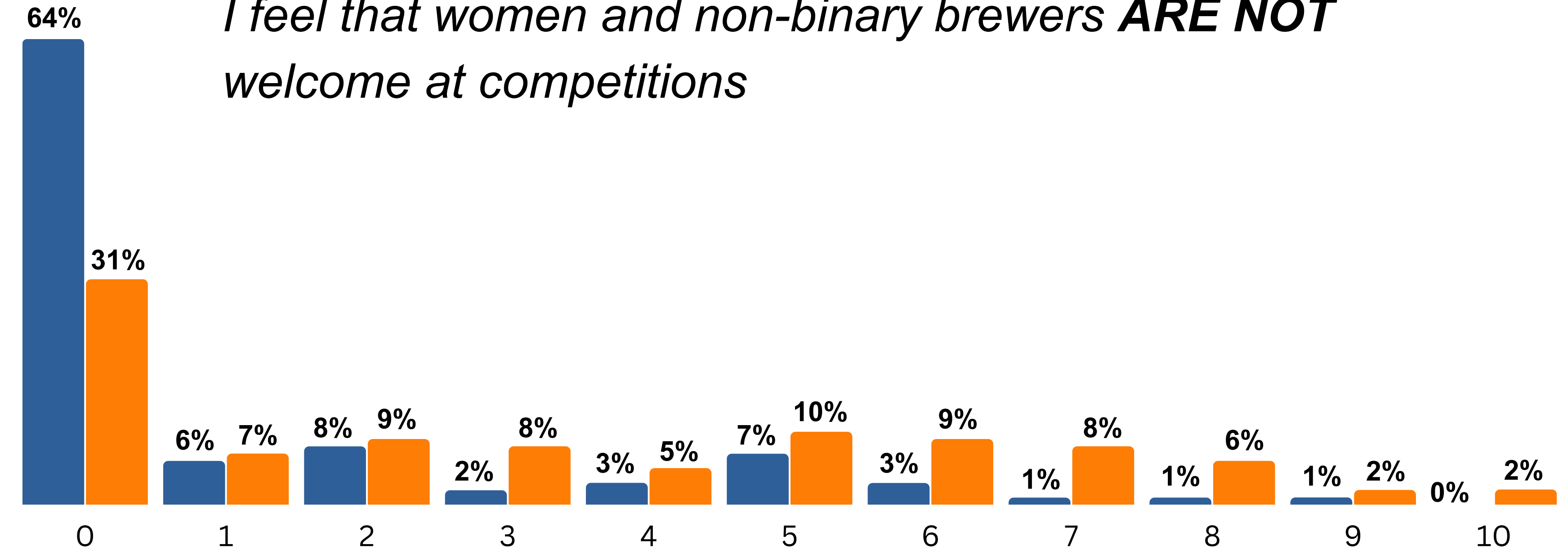


# Survey Results Personal Considerations

M

F/NB

*I feel that women and non-binary brewers **ARE NOT** welcome at competitions*



0 - do not agree

strongly agree = 10

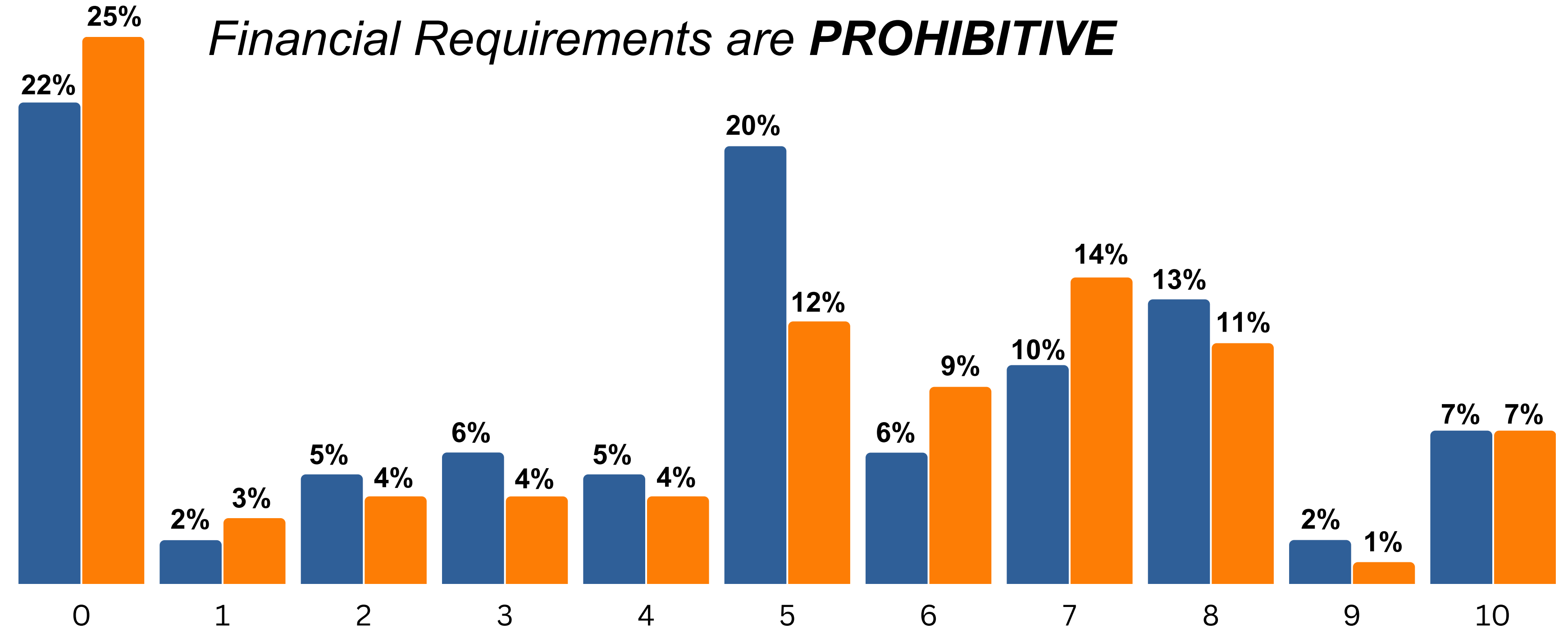


# Survey Results Personal Considerations

M

F/NB

*Financial Requirements are **PROHIBITIVE***



0 - do not agree

strongly agree = 10





# Survey Results Resources for Encouragement to Enter

**"Lower entry fees and less costly shipping, and photos of medals/prizes" 25-34(F)**

"Making the process less intimidating - having guidance on best ways to ship, knowing that other women are participating. "  
25-34 (F)

**"Knowing about them, having a support network, and feeling like I won't be treated poorly for being femme presenting and non-binary." 35-44(NB)**

"A little more brewing experience and some critical feedback prior to entering " 45-54(ND)

**"A legal way to ship homebrew." 25-34(ND)**

"More inclusive advertising " 35-44 (F)

**"Brew Better Beer" 55-64(F)**

"Easier to ship to the competitions." 21-24(F)

**"Guarantee of good, constructive, and detailed feedback on submissions, regardless of competition placement." 35-44(M)**

"If someone would come to my house to package and ship my beer"  
65+(M)

**"Better prizes, Better judging, competitiveness, comprehensiveness, ease of registration, communication, comprehensiveness of tables, "45-54(M)**

"More competitions, easily compete against brewers of comparable level" 25-34(M)

**"If someone who does it could walk me through the process, that would be cool! 35-44(M)**

"Hearing stories from other women about their entry experience. Submitting individual entries, but as part of a group where the focus is on entering a particular competition." 45-54(F)



# Observations

- Everyone looking for **good feedback!**
- **Women** believe their beers are **not good enough** to enter and are intimidated by the process of entering.
- **Women** lean a bit **more competitive** than *men*
- **Interest in entering** is balanced while men feel more comfortable entering.
- The men who answered the survey overwhelmingly believe that women and **LGBTQIA+** folks **are welcome** at comps.
- 37% of women/NB feel they are not welcome.

# Sharing the Data

Visualized data can be found here!



Best viewed via desktop



# Our Experiences with Comps

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- \* **Misogyny at the judging table**
- \* **"Well, it WAS made by a woman"**
- \* **Is my beer good enough?**
- \* **More bravery amongst men**

# Melissa McCann

## Judging & Competition Experiences

First stewarding experience in Sacramento 2014

Steward and Head Steward of many local and national competitions

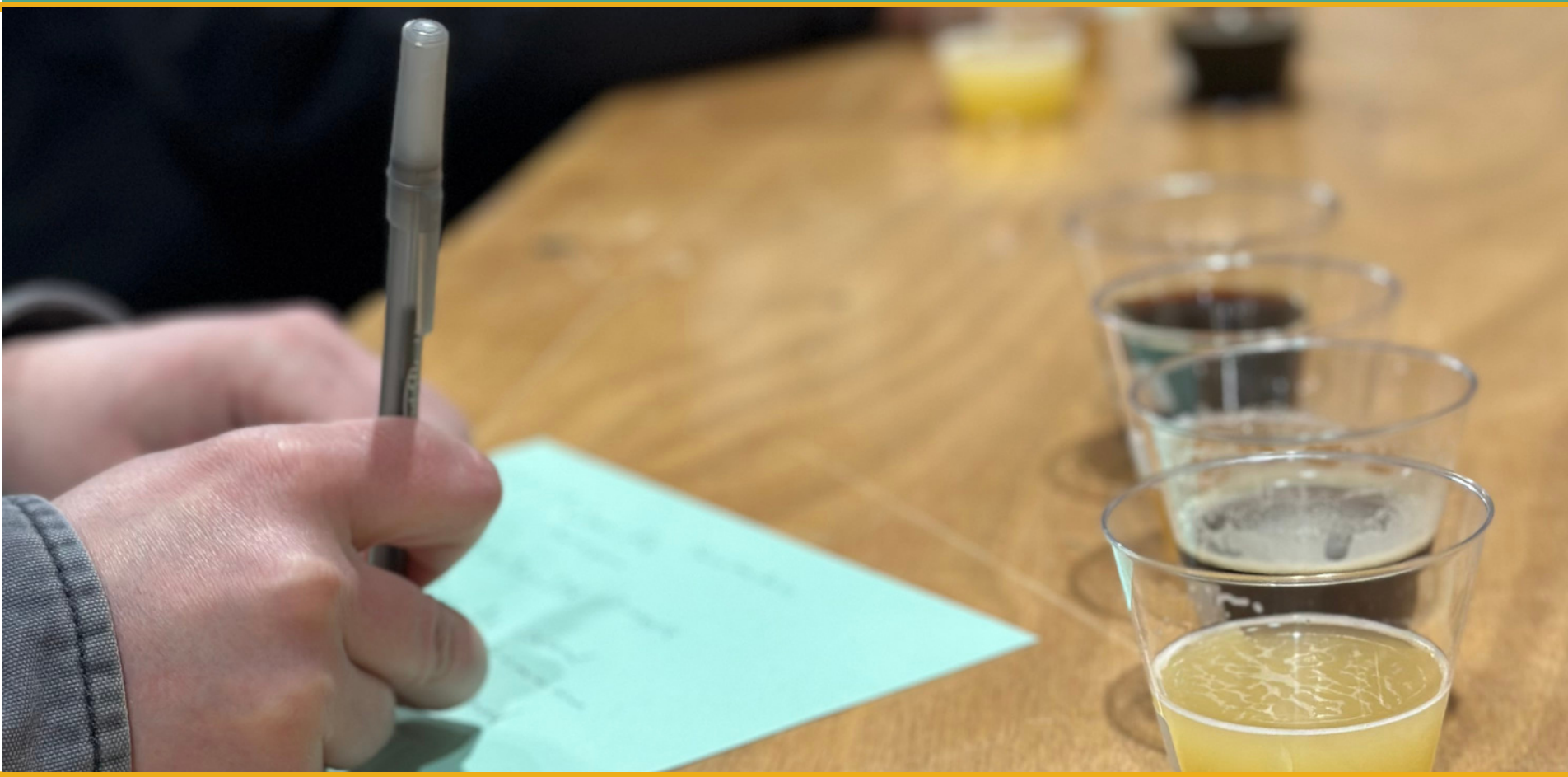
Judged over 20 homebrew and commercial comps

Entered 3 homebrew comps as a collaborator and solo brewer





- \* Only woman in the room
- \* "This is a chick beer for sure"
- \* Questioning my every perception
- \* Received more support than not



# Michele Wonder

## Judging & Competition Experiences

First steward experience was at  
NHC 2018 1st round

Judged 12 homebrew comps

Entered 8 homebrew competitions

Won 8 gold, 2 silver, 5 bronze  
& a People's Choice Award

Stewarded the Oregon Beer Awards multiple years





# How Can Women Get More Women Involved?

The main focus here is to increase accessibility & help women to know that they have a space in this hobby

- **Female "Learn to Homebrew Day"**
  - Mother's Day Brew Day
- **Judging day**
  - Pair with an established homebrewer
  - Beer Judging 101 events
- **Go to their spaces**
  - Local women's beer groups
    - Your area doesn't have one? Start one!
  - Think outside of beer
    - Brew day at a record shop, public park
      - Spots with visibility always spurs inquiry and conversations
  - Research local non profits that serve diverse communities
    - Offer to donate homebrew for fundraising events



# How Can Men Get More Women Involved?

- **We did this and no-one showed up?**
  - How were people invited?
    - The warm hand off
- **Being invited to the dance vs being asked to the dance: TALK to people**
  - Make them feel welcome
  - Think like a beginner
    - What would you need to feel welcome and get involved?
    - Shopping lists
- **Teach the teacher: lead, do not "DO"**
  - Equip people for success
- **Code of conduct**
  - What does that look like for your group?
  - Do people feel welcome?
  - Visible way of showing inclusion and understanding



# How Comp Organizers Can Help

- **Consider donating some free registrations to first time entrants**
  - Donate free registrations to the Evergreen Initiative
- **Make the extra effort to get more women involved in stewarding/judging**
  - Demystify the process
  - Do more than simply emailing the same group of judges you always have
  - Consider creating a judging mentorship program for your comp
- **Code of conduct**
  - What does that look like for your competition?
  - Do people feel welcome?
  - Visible way of showing inclusion and understanding
- **Provide opportunity for feedback from stewards, judges and entrants**
  - Make it anonymous
  - Take action on noted issues



# The Evergreen Brewing Initiative

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Brought to you by the Women's Craft Fermentation Alliance

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**ev·er·green** adjective

2a: retaining freshness or interest

2b: universally and continually relevant : not limited in applicability to a particular event or date



# Basic Framework

## Learning to Brew

- Basic instruction videos, tutorials and brewing resources
- Local group brew days
- Brewing specifically for competitions
  - Demystifying the process
- Recipe creation & feedback

## Mentors & Mentees

- Group discussions
- Individual relationships
  - Direct instruction
  - Collaborative brewing
- Recipe & process feedback
- Learn to make a competition brewing schedule

## Getting to Know Competitions

- Learning about beer styles & BJCP Guidelines
- Steward or guest judge comps to get familiar
- No better way to get started then jumping in
  - See our competition resources for a list of comps near you and when they are scheduled

## Supporters & Sponsors

- Free competition registrations
- Bulk shipping options in different regions
- Supply/Ingredient donation
  - Yeast, hops, malt, bottles, caps
- Access to regional equipment libraries to assist in bottling and/or shipping





# How to Support & Contribute

- **Share the survey data**
  - Discuss with your homebrew club, use it as a conversation starter
- **Sign up to be a mentor**
  - Being a resource for newer brewers can go along way
- **Donate however you can**
  - Supplies, resources, knowledge, funds, free registrations, club memberships, etc.
- **Help us create educational content**
  - Videos, tutorials, group brew days
- **Spread the word and encourage folks to join**

## Sign Up Today!



# THANK YOU!

**MELISSA MCCANN** | [melissa.wcfa@gmail.com](mailto:melissa.wcfa@gmail.com)

**MICHELE WONDER** | [michele.wcfa@gmail.com](mailto:michele.wcfa@gmail.com)

## VISIT US!

Website: [wcfa.beer](http://wcfa.beer)

Instagram: [@wibs\\_wcfa](https://www.instagram.com/wibs_wcfa)

Facebook: [Women's Craft Fermentation Alliance](https://www.facebook.com/WomensCraftFermentationAlliance)

YouTube: [Women's Craft Fermentation Alliance](https://www.youtube.com/WomensCraftFermentationAlliance)

Podcast: [The Craft Fermentation Podcast](https://www.thecraftfermentationpodcast.com)

## JOIN US at WIBS 23: A Craft Fermentation Summit October 21 & 22, 2023

A two day 100% virtual online summit for all who love to make, drink and support beer, wine, cider, sake, kombucha and more!

**BIG THANKS** to Cody Gabbard who created the survey visualization site mentioned in this presentation.

