

# The 73% Report

A report that looks at the state of independent music makers' mental health and wellbeing.



This report is based on a study comprising 1 489 independent music makers. Their answers were conducted by a web survey between the 21st of March and 2nd of April 2019.

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## A word from our CEO

Record Union has helped independent music makers to release their music to the world for more than ten years. By providing digital music distribution we are aiming at strengthening the independent music community and making the music industry more democratic, accessible and transparent for the many, not just the few.

To stay up to date on what is happening within the industry, we are continuously researching our field. Something that has been bothering us for a long time is what seems to be an increasing amount of music makers that are suffering from mental illness. To investigate our thesis, we have asked almost 1 500 independent music makers about their mental health and wellbeing and the results are disheartening.

More than **seven out of ten (73%)** independent music makers said that they have experienced negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and/or depression in relation to their music creation. Out of those, as many as **one out of three (33%)** said that they have experienced panic attacks.

Only **one out of five (19%)** said that they think the music industry is working to create a sustainable climate with healthy artists. The rest we asked: What do you think the music industry could do more of to create a sustainable music climate with healthy artists? We got almost a thousand open answers – some of them you can read throughout this report.

Other conclusions that could be drawn from the results are that there is still a taboo around mental illness within the music industry and that many independent music makers are suffering from loneliness and destructive behaviour.

Something needs to change and it is time to put the state of our artists' mental health on the agenda, before streams and commercial success. We as an industry must wake up and ask ourselves: What is our responsibility in all this and what can we do to create a healthier music climate?

**Johan Svanberg**  
CEO of Record Union





**"There needs to be a culture change, of art before profit, of encouraging variety, of benevolence, of selflessness. Feeding cultural diversity is good for everyone, but putting money first starves the industry of flames, of diversity and sustainability."**

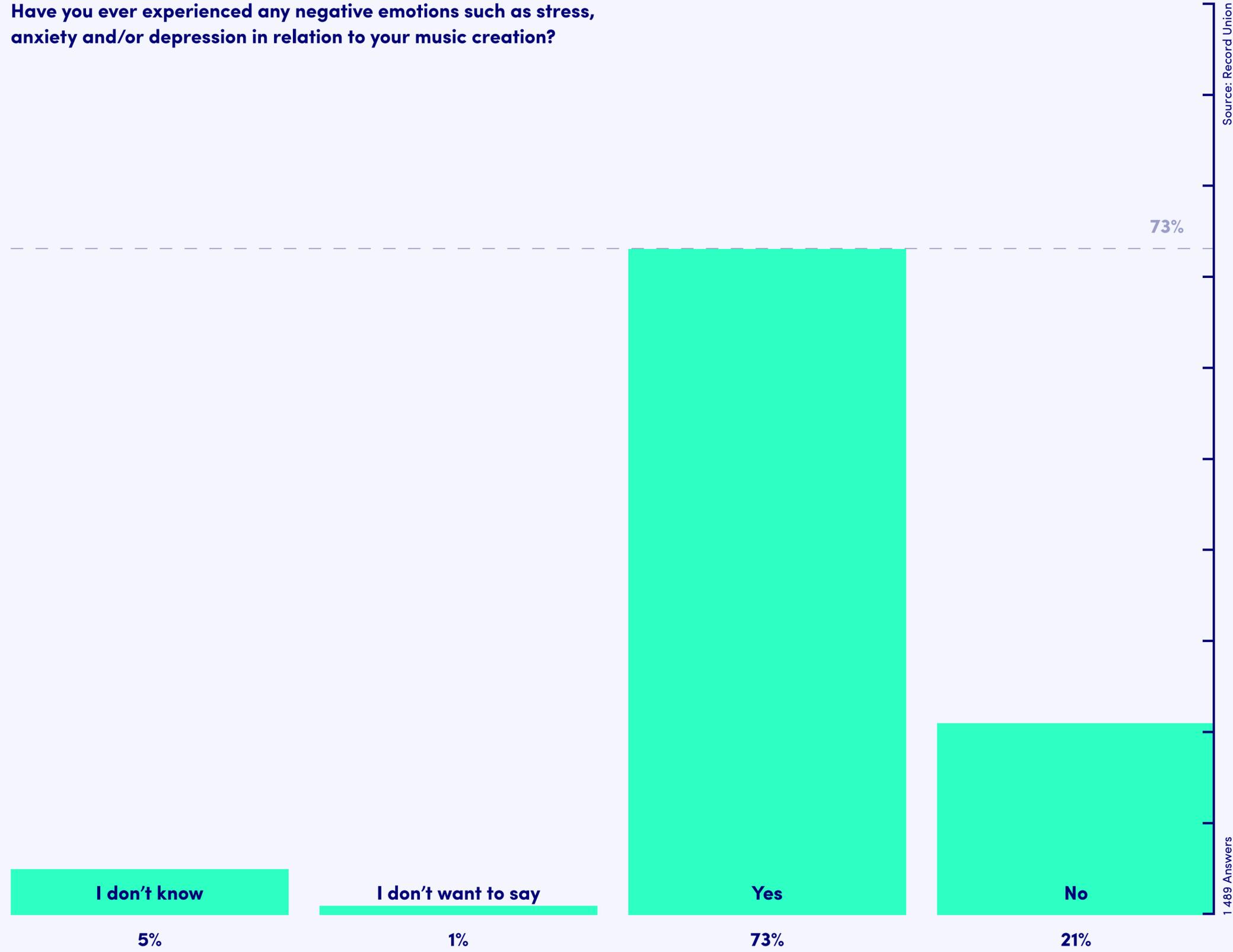
**- Independent music maker**

**Chapter 1**

**Negative emotions and  
music creation**



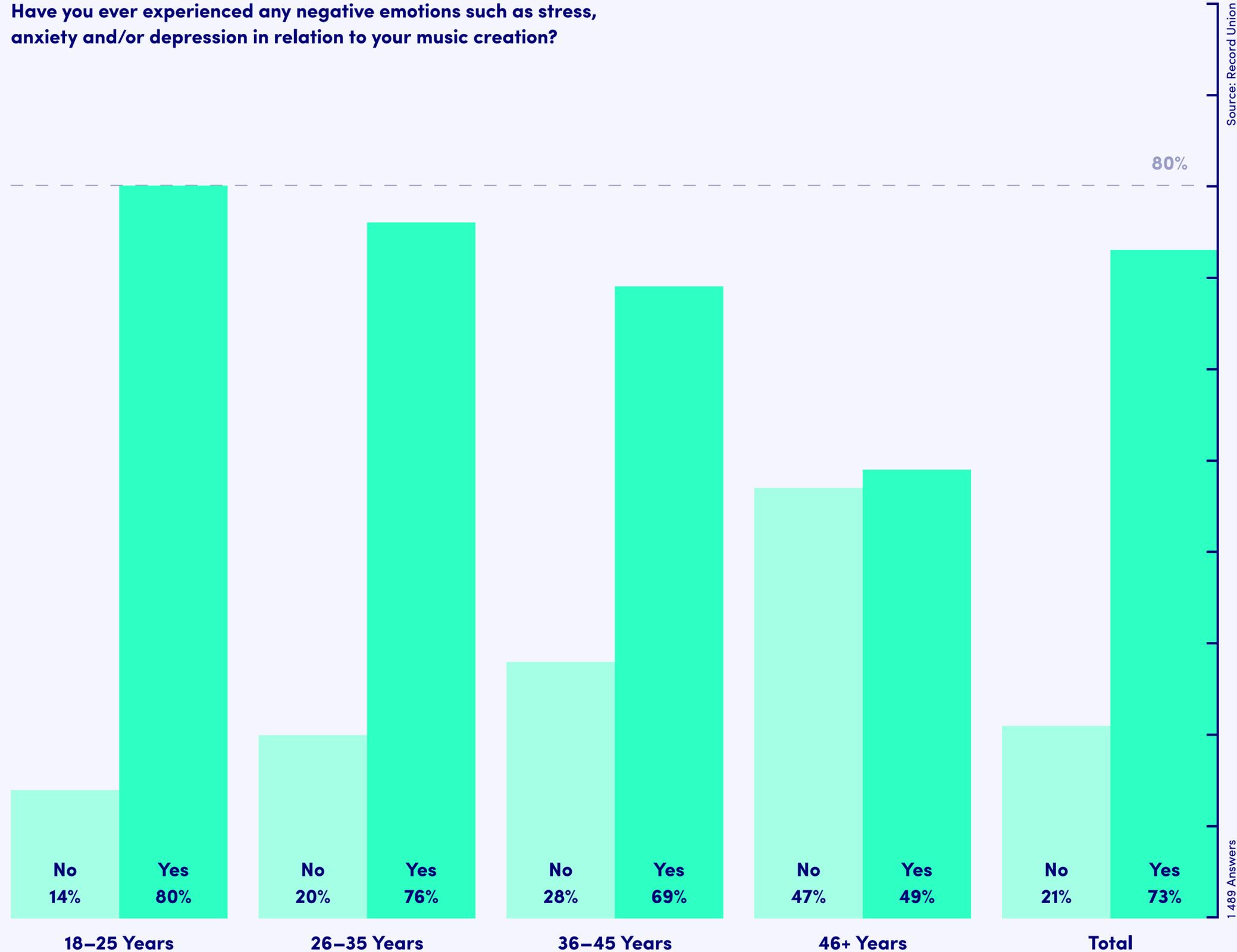
Have you ever experienced any negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and/or depression in relation to your music creation?



## Many artists suffer from mental illness

More than **seven out of ten (73%)** independent music makers said that they have experienced negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and/or depression in relation to their music creation.

Have you ever experienced any negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and/or depression in relation to your music creation?



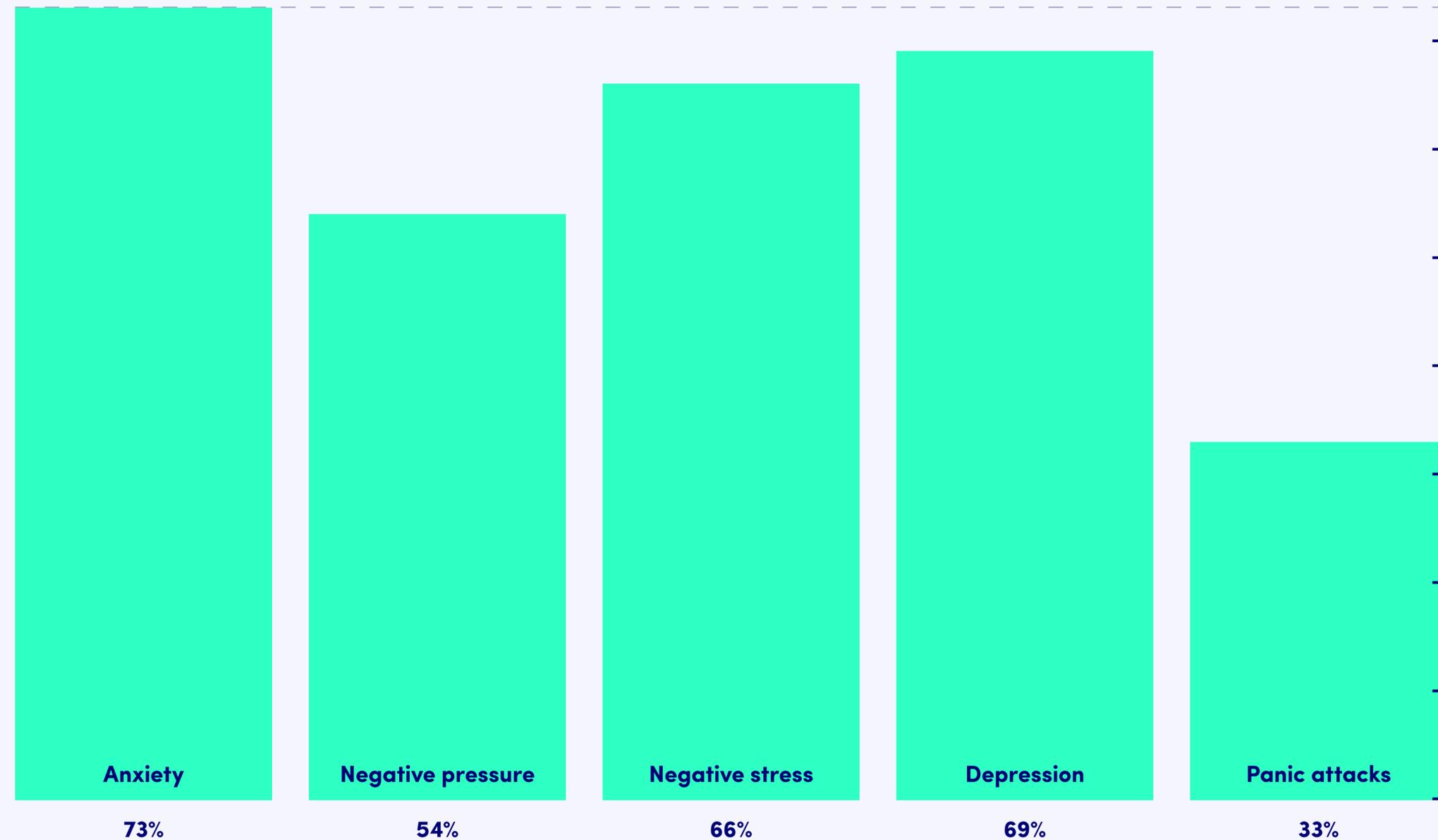
### Younger artists suffer more

The number is even higher among younger artists. As many as **four out of five (80%)** among the respondents in the age of 18–25 said that they have experienced negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and/or depression in relation to their music creation.

## Panic attacks are not unusual

Anxiety and depression top the list of symptoms, but as many as **one out of three (33%)** respondents that said that they have experienced negative emotions in relation to their music creation, said that they have experienced panic attacks.

Which of the following symptoms have you been experiencing?



Source: Record Union

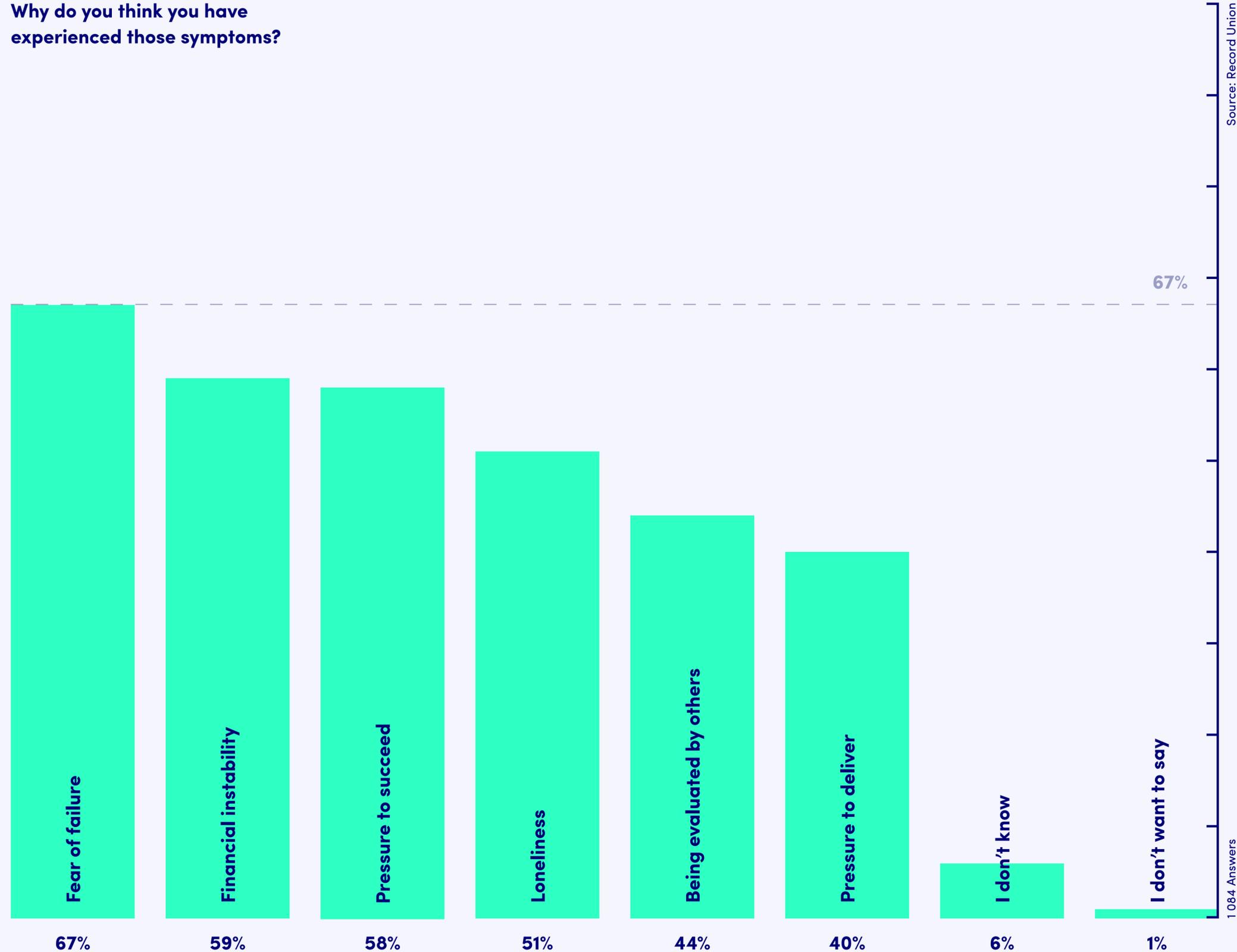
1 084 Answers



**“Consider musicianship a job that is deserving of salary benefits just like the people that run the industry. Would be cool if the people that fueled the industry with their art were taken care of.”**

**- Independent music maker**

Why do you think you have experienced those symptoms?



## Main drivers behind negative emotions

Fear of failure and financial instability were the two most common explanations of why independent music makers think that they have experienced symptoms such as anxiety, depression and panic attacks. Pressure to succeed, loneliness and being evaluated by others were also common.

**Chapter 2**

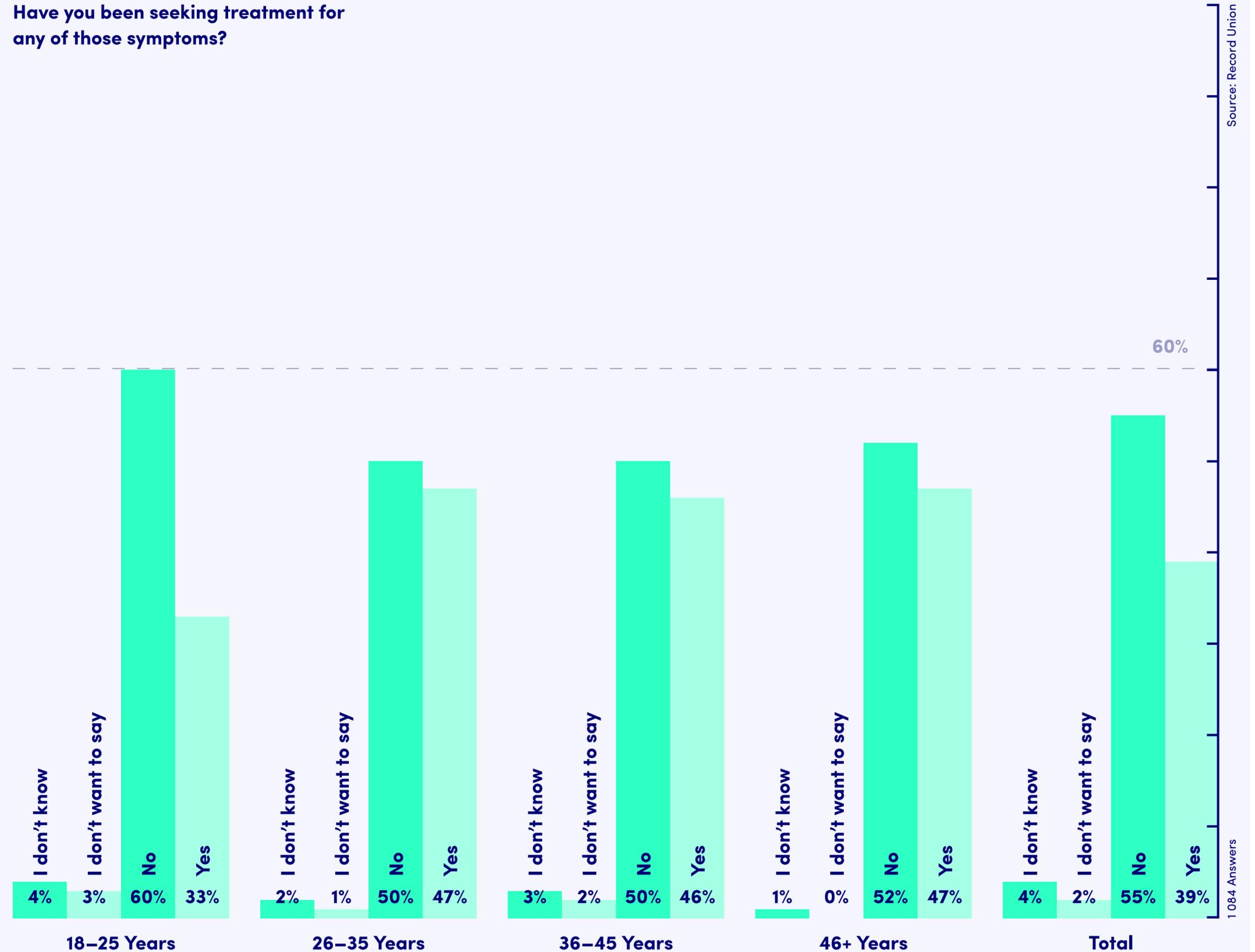
**Seeking treatment  
and self-medication**



## Younger artists least likely to seek treatment

Only **two out of five (39%)** independent music makers, that said that they have experienced negative emotions in relation to their music creation, said that they have been seeking treatment for their symptoms. The youngest respondents were those least likely to have been seeking treatment – only **one out of three (33%)** in the age of 18–25 claimed to have done so.

Have you been seeking treatment for any of those symptoms?



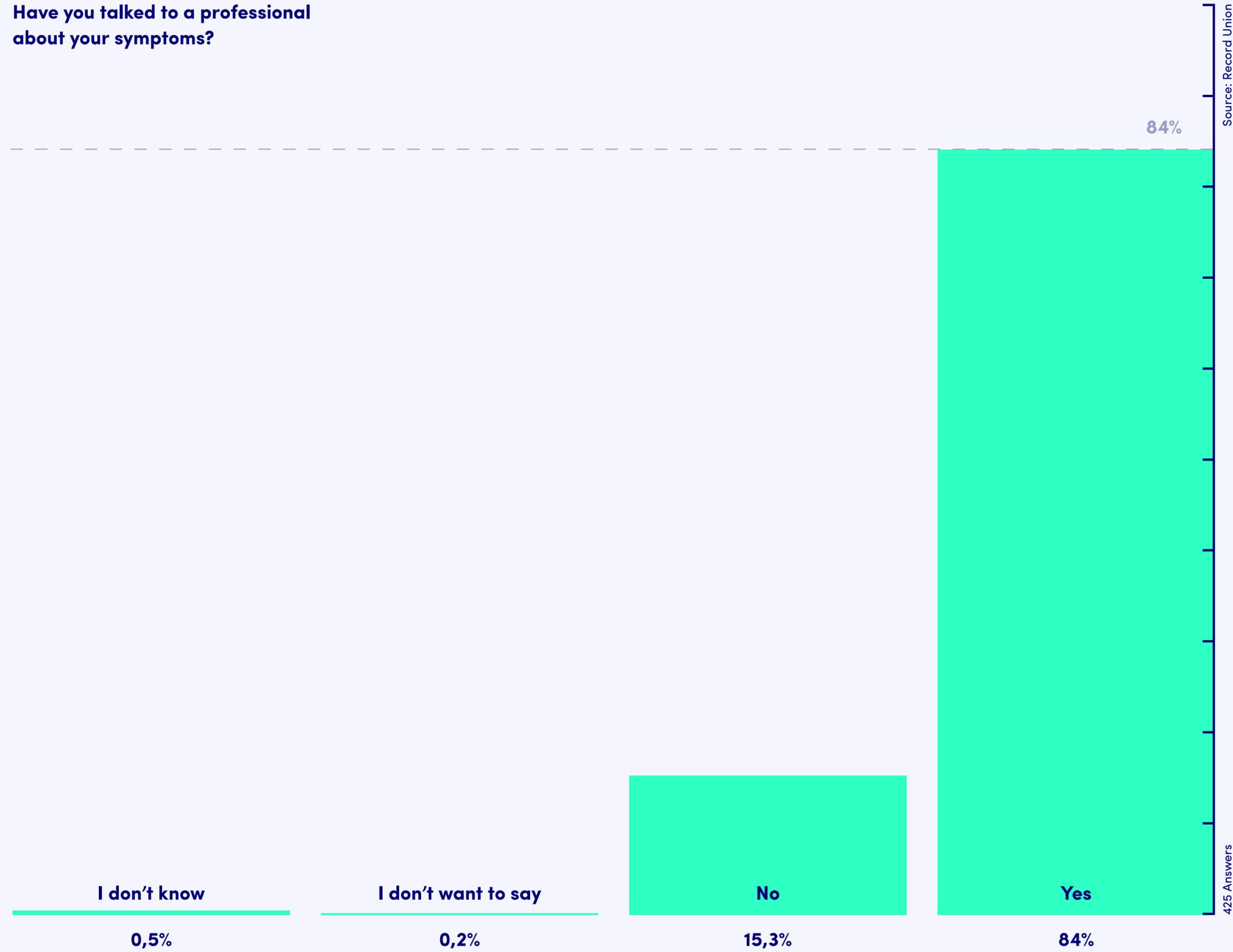


**“Quit glamorizing drugs and  
this big party lifestyle for new  
artists, they go into it all  
too deep and come out fucked.”**

**- Independent music maker**

Photo: Michael Discenza

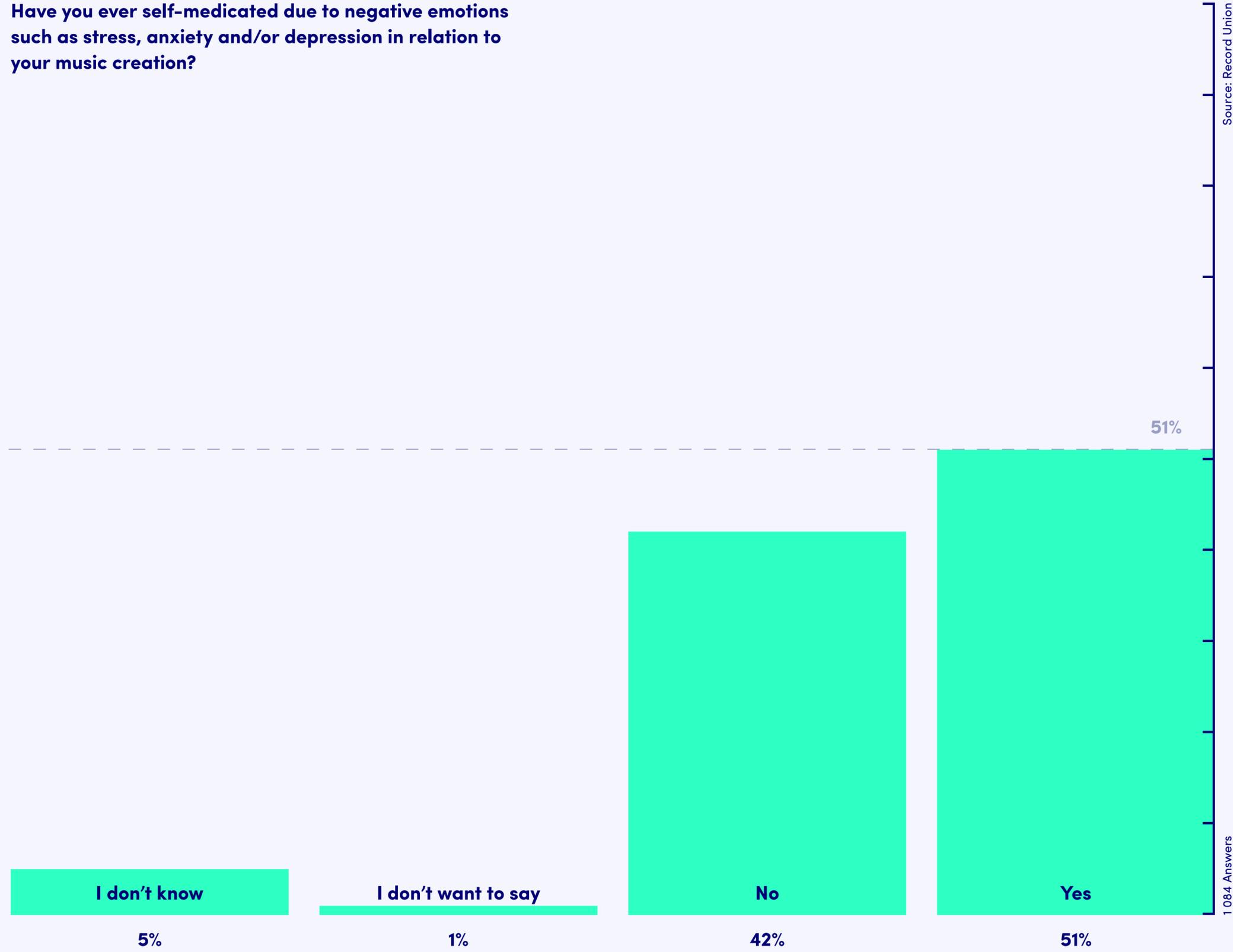
Have you talked to a professional about your symptoms?



## Many have seen a professional

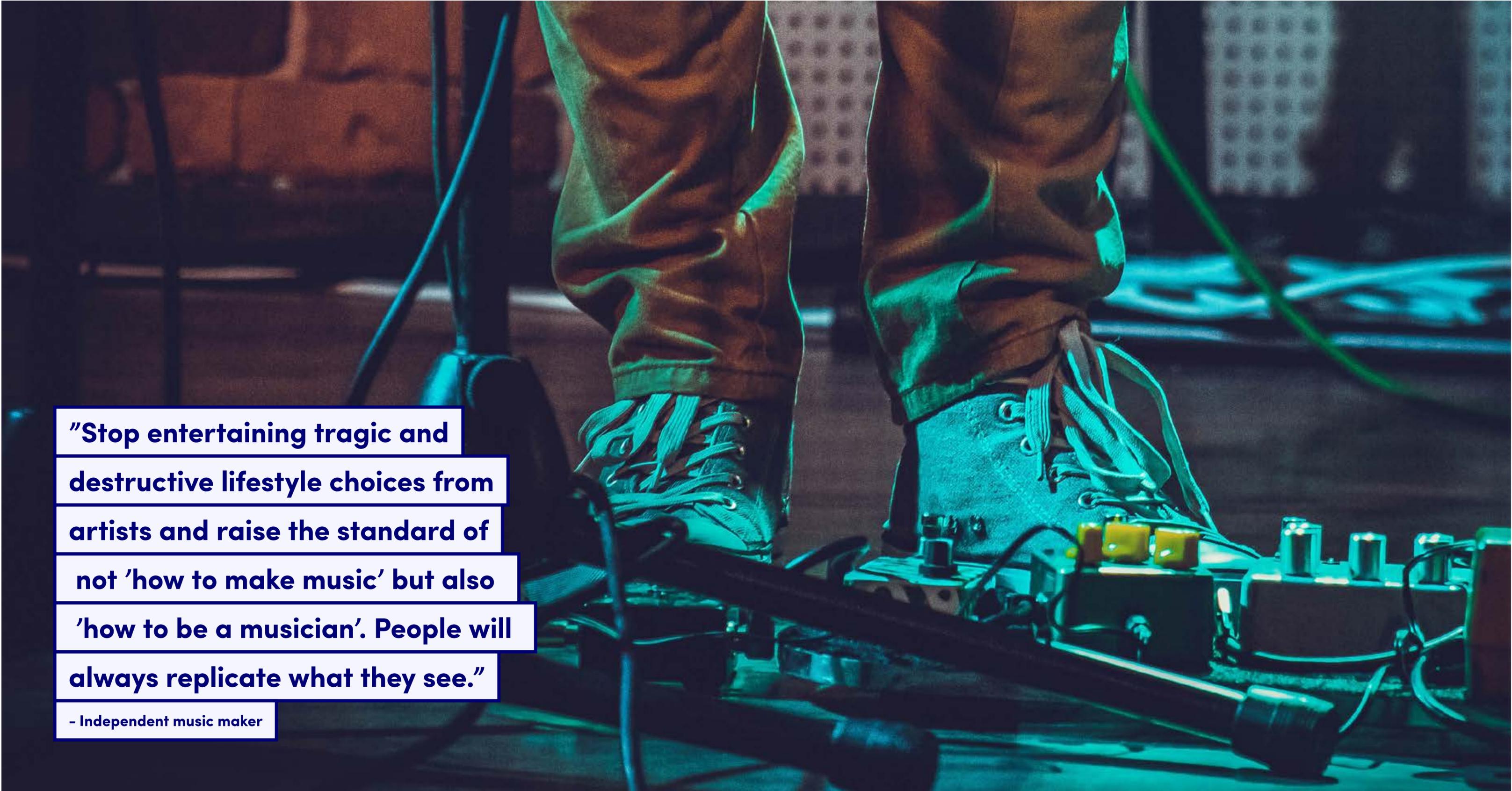
Of those who have been seeking treatment, more than **eight out of ten (84%)** said that they have been talking to a professional about their symptoms.

Have you ever self-medicated due to negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and/or depression in relation to your music creation?



## Self-medication used as alternative treatment

About **one out of two (51%)** of the respondents, that said that they have experienced negative emotions in relation to their music creation, claimed to have self-medicated due to their symptoms.



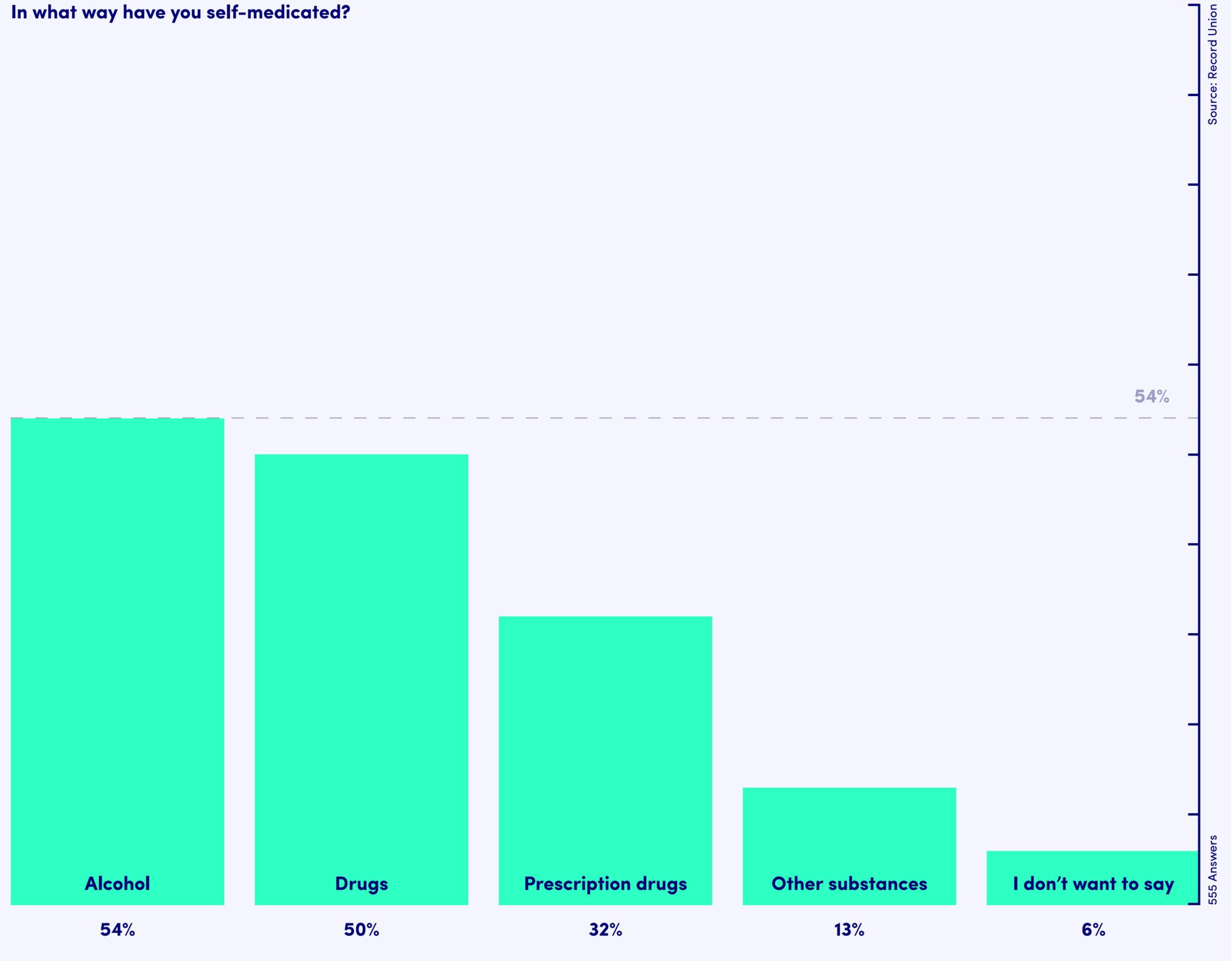
**“Stop entertaining tragic and destructive lifestyle choices from artists and raise the standard of not ‘how to make music’ but also ‘how to be a musician’. People will always replicate what they see.”**

**- Independent music maker**

## Alcohol and drugs mostly used

Those who said that they have self-medicated were most likely to have done so through the use of alcohol (54%) and drugs (50%).

In what way have you self-medicated?



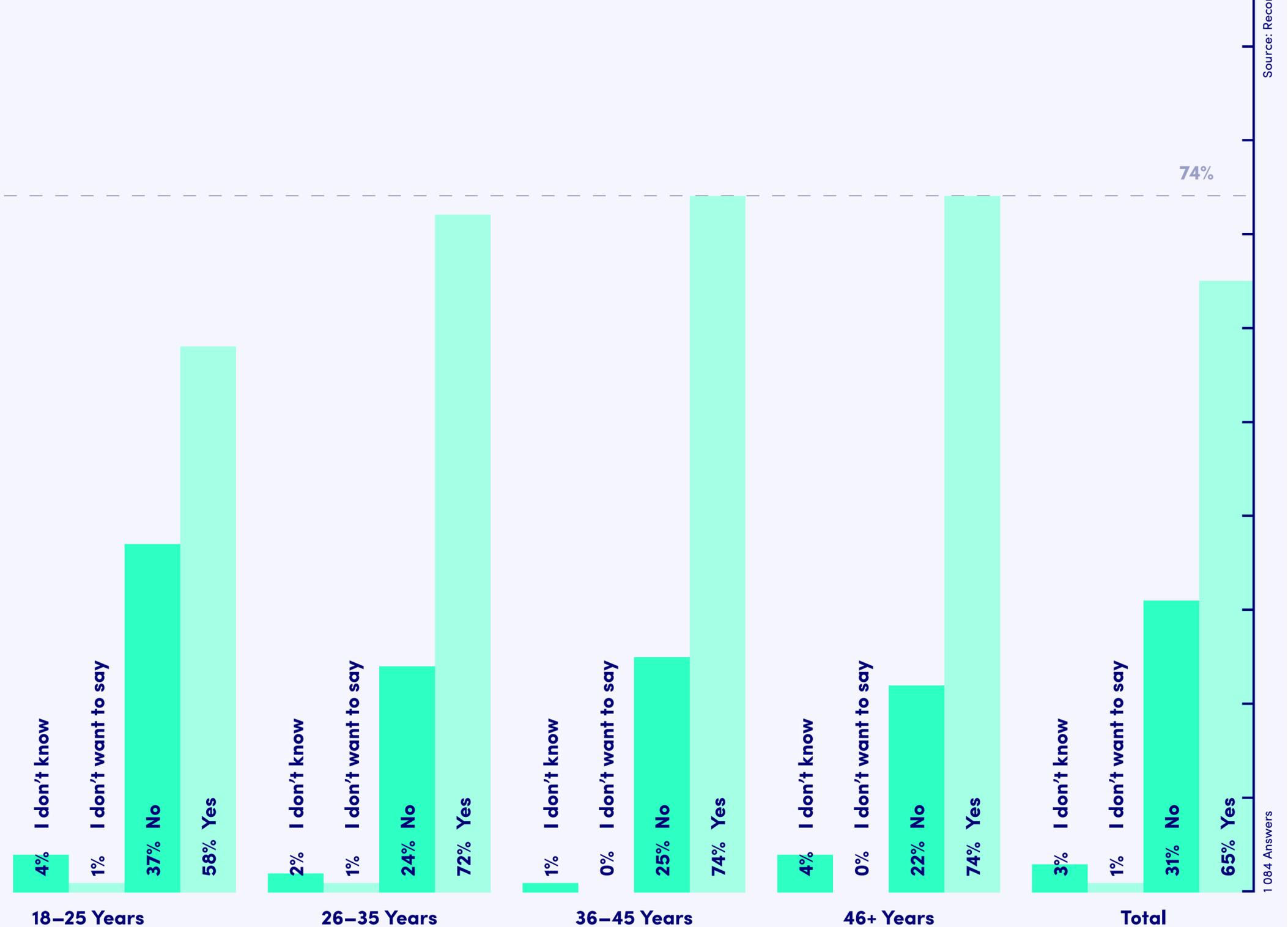
**Chapter 3**

**Openness around  
mental health**

## Younger artists least likely to talk about their mental health

Those who said that they have experienced negative emotions in relation to their music creation were fairly likely to talk about mental health and wellbeing with the people around them, although it differed between ages. The numbers were the lowest among independent music makers in the age of 18-25 (58%) and highest among those older than 36 (74%).

Do you talk to the people around you about mental health and wellbeing?

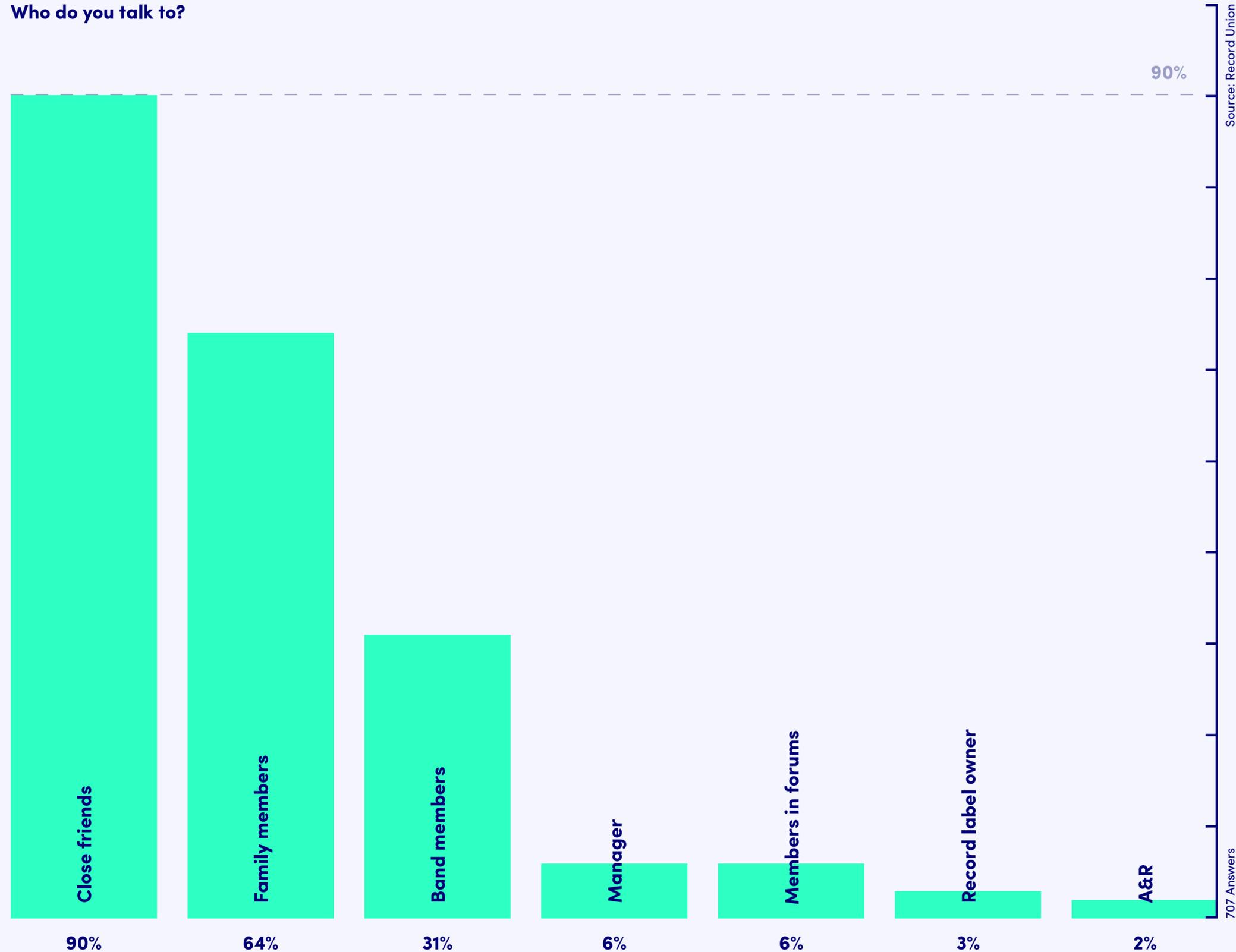




**"I think the best way the industry can work at creating a sustainable healthy industry is by setting workshops with recognized record labels around the world on awareness concerning health, stress and other factors and ways to tackle them and how to best go about having a good healthy music career."**

**- Independent music maker**

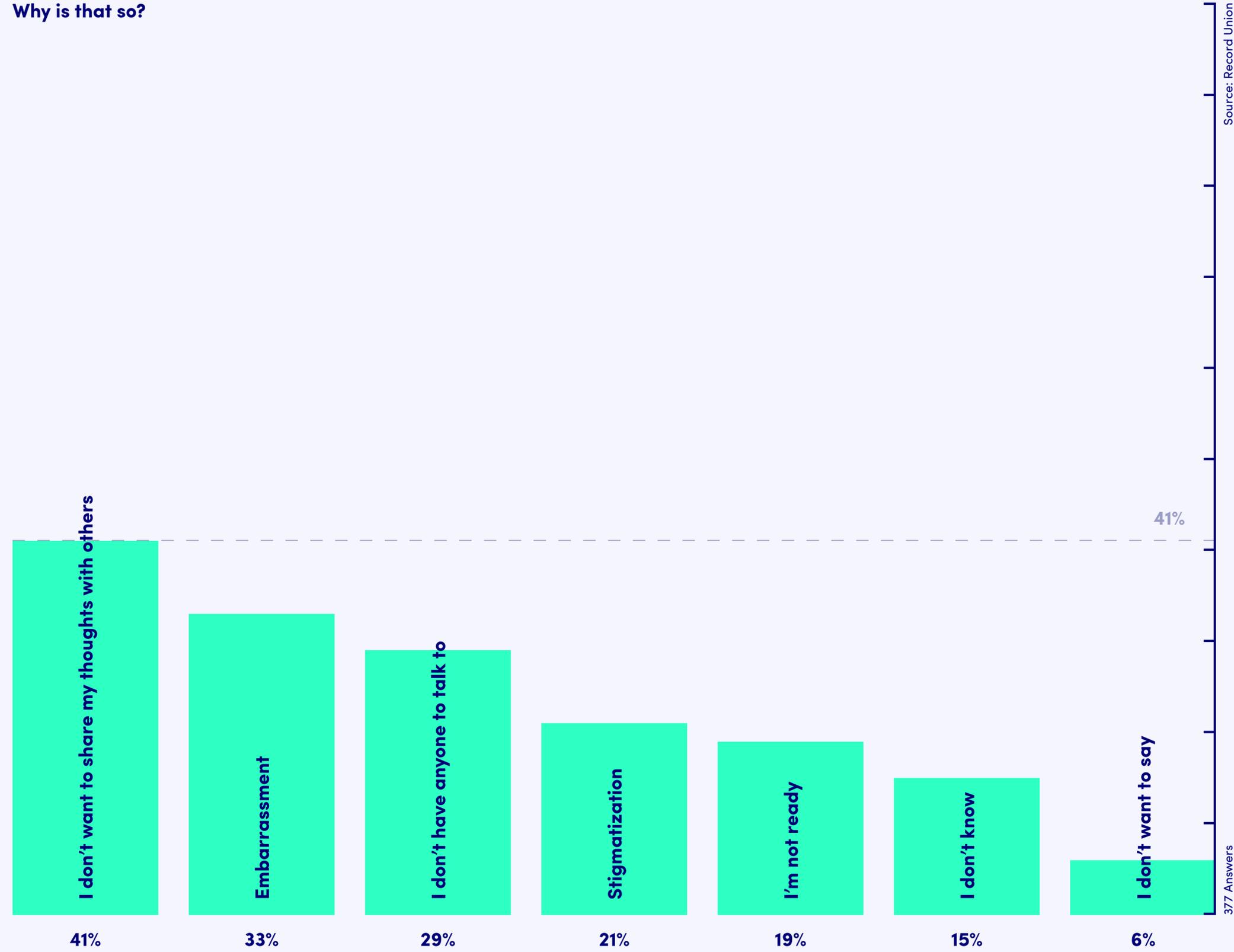
Who do you talk to?



## Artists rather talk to private than professional contacts

Those that were likely to talk about their mental health and wellbeing preferred to do this with private rather than professional contacts. Of the independent music makers who did talk to the people around them, **nine out of ten (90%)** claimed to talk to close friends and **three out of five (64%)** to family members, whereas only **one out of three (31%)** claimed to talk to band members and not even **one out of ten (6%)** to their manager.

Why is that so?



## Loneliness a reason why artists do not talk

Those who did not talk about their mental health and wellbeing did not do so mainly because they do not want to share their thoughts with other (41%). As many as **one out of three (29%)** said that they did not talk about their mental health and wellbeing because they do not have anyone to talk to.

**Chapter 4**

**Mental health  
creates worry**

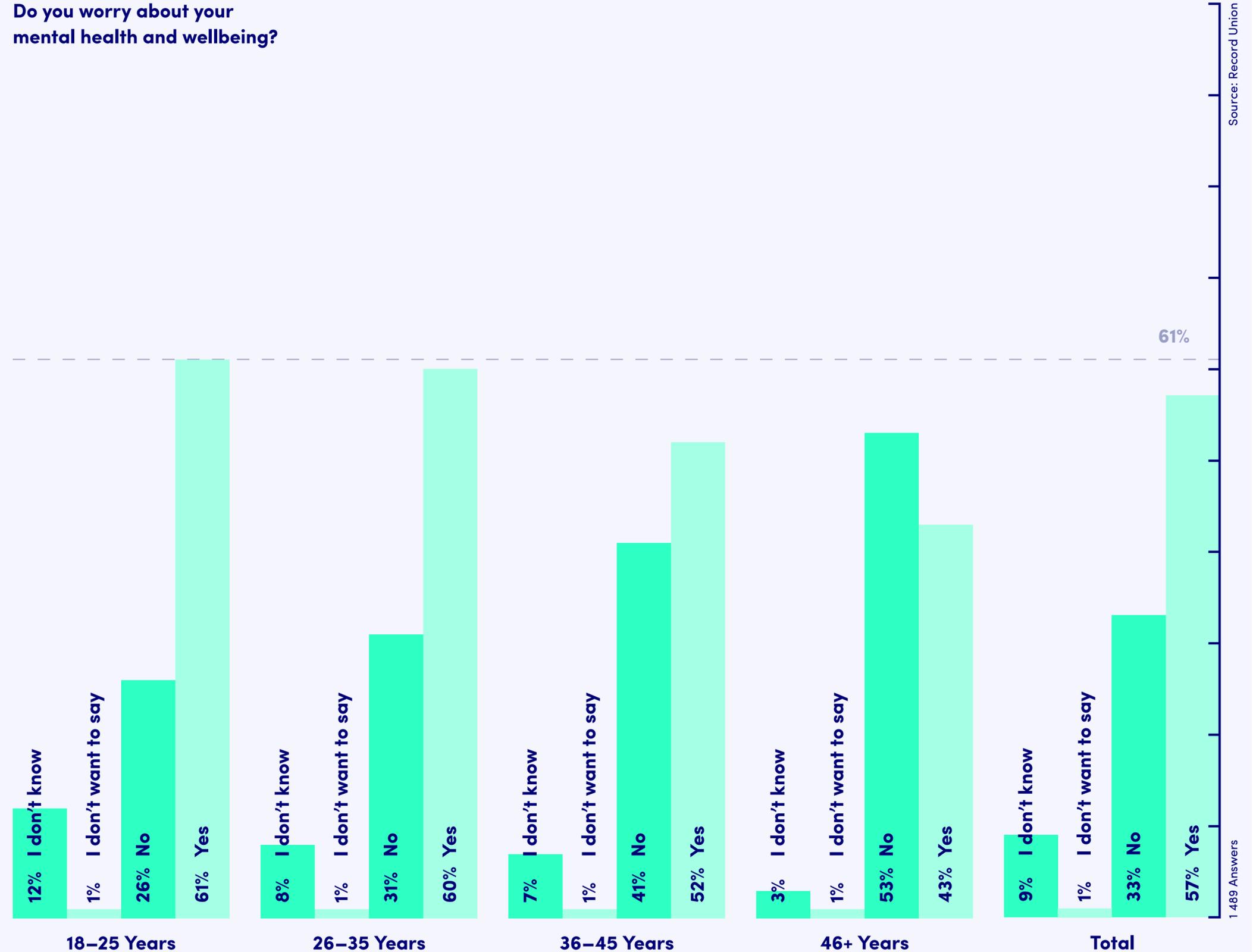


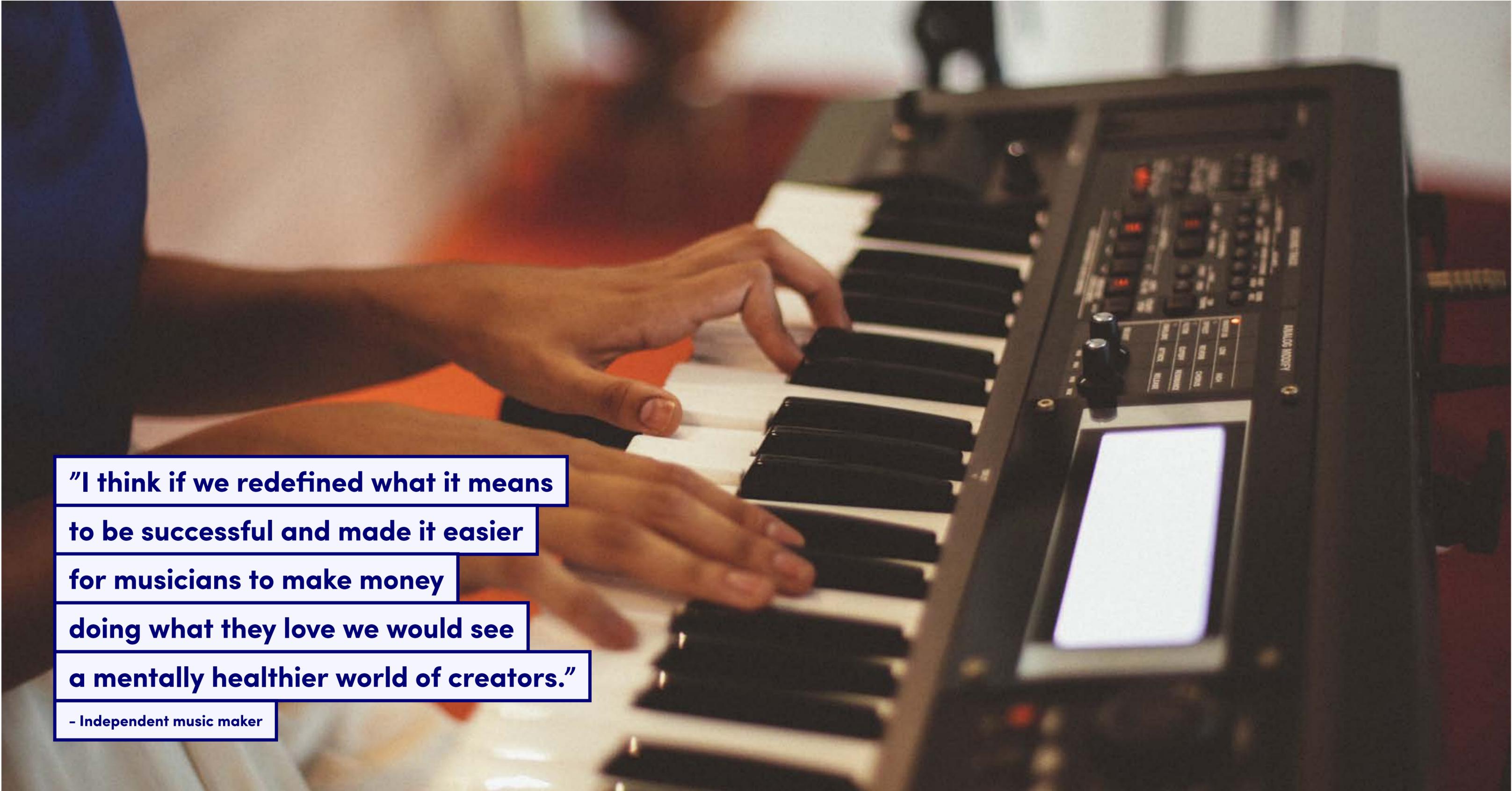
Photo: Edward Cisneros

## Younger artists worry more

Almost **three out of five (57%)** of the respondents said that they worry about their mental health and wellbeing. Younger artists in the age of 18–25 were even more likely to worry (**61%**).

Do you worry about your mental health and wellbeing?





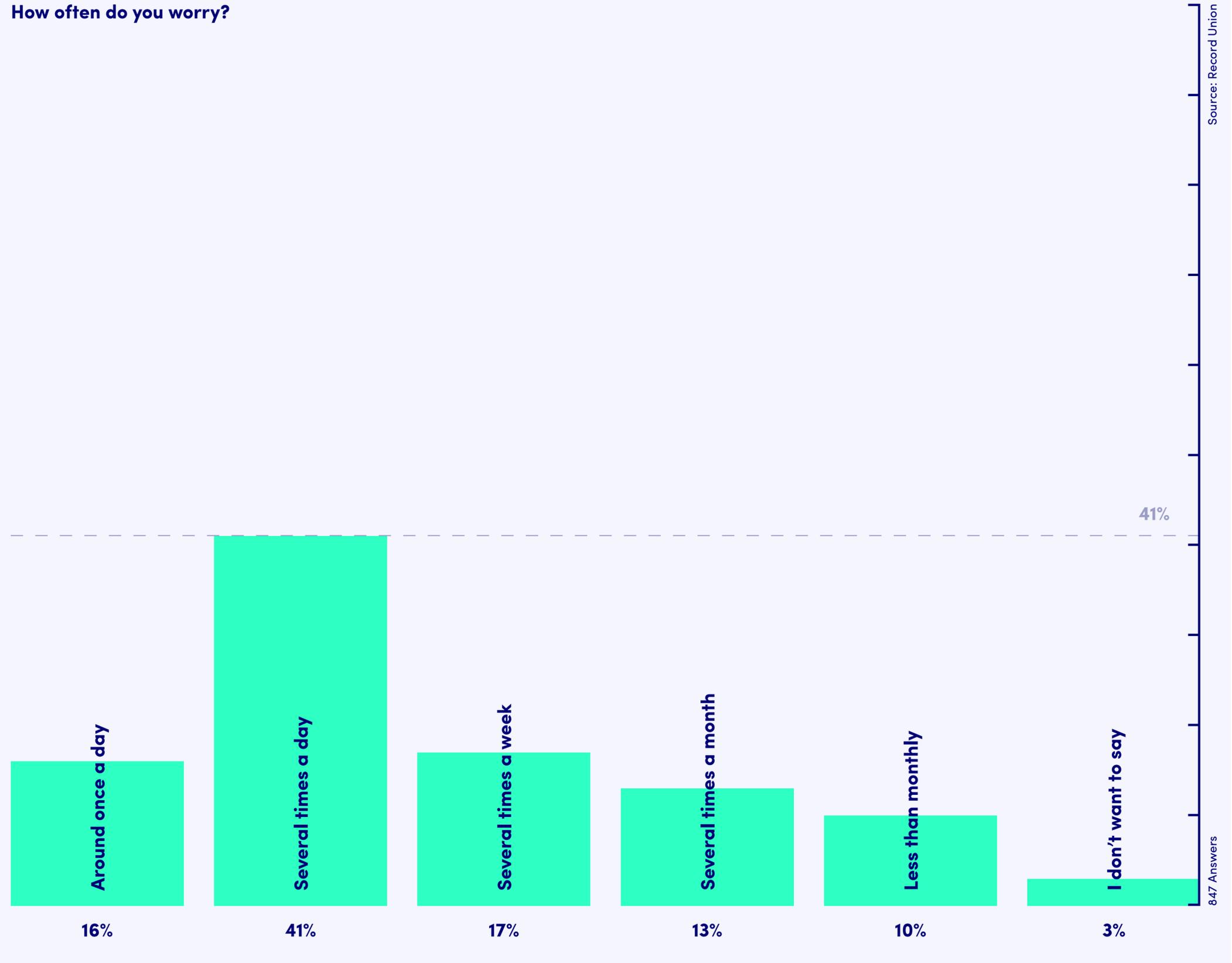
**"I think if we redefined what it means  
to be successful and made it easier  
for musicians to make money  
doing what they love we would see  
a mentally healthier world of creators."**

**- Independent music maker**

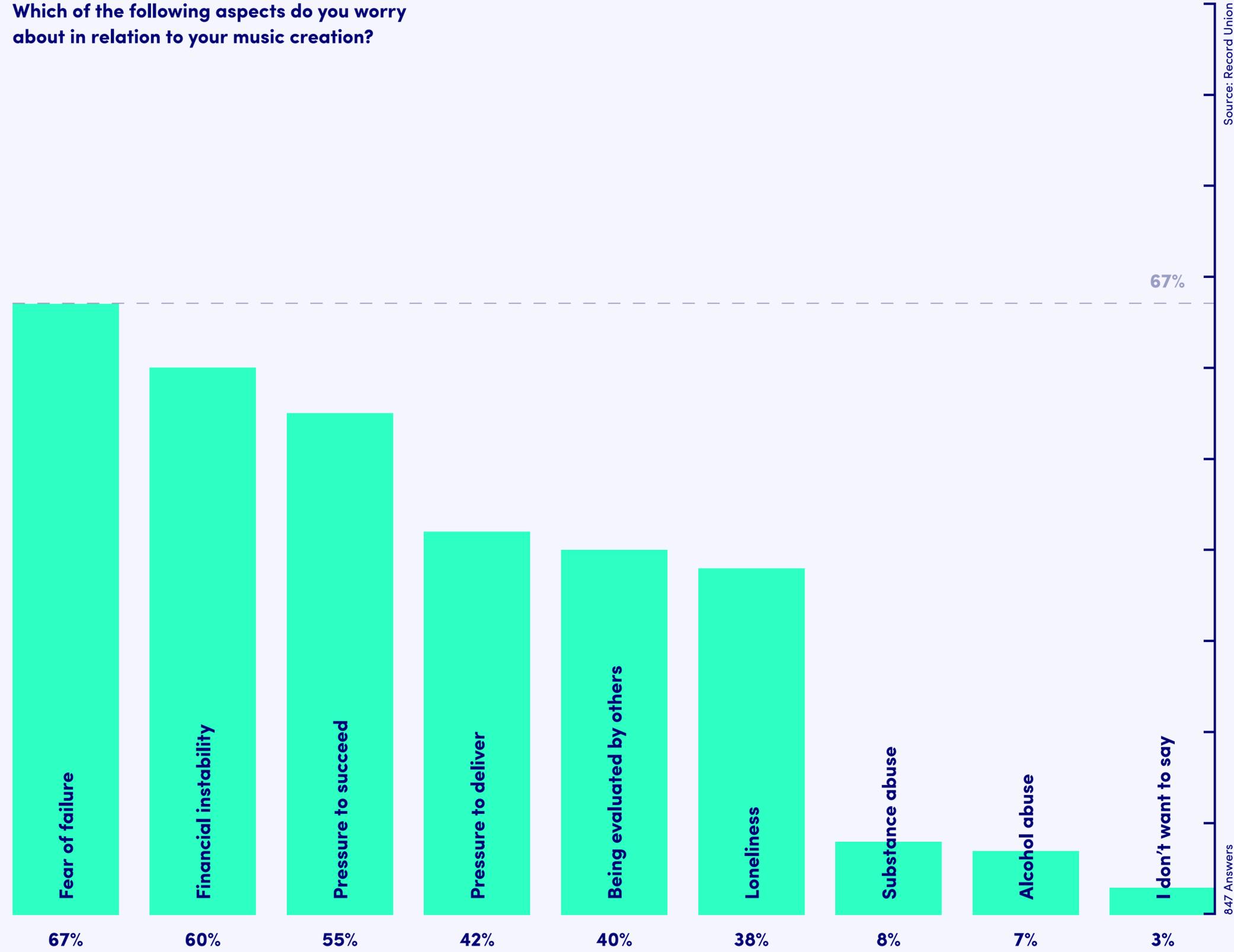
## Some artists worry everyday

There is no clear pattern in how often independent music makers worry, however **two out of five (41%)** claimed to worry several times per day.

How often do you worry?



Which of the following aspects do you worry about in relation to your music creation?



## Failure and money main reasons to worry

Fear of failure and financial instability were the two major drivers behind the respondents' worries.

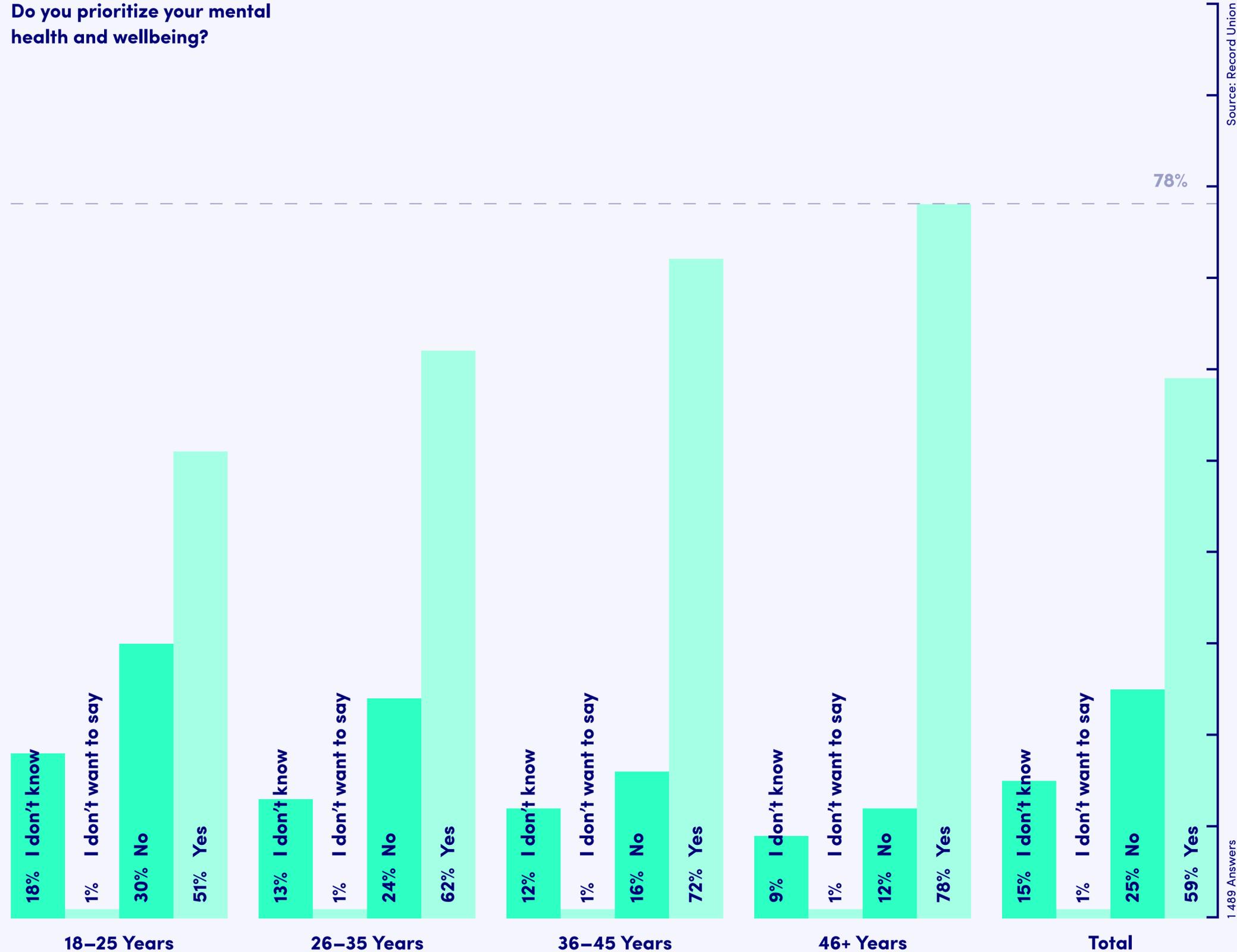
**Chapter 5**

**Prioritization of  
mental health**



Photo: Ian Schneider

Do you prioritize your mental health and wellbeing?



## More prioritized among older artists

Only **one out of two (51%)** of the respondents in the age of 18–25 said that they prioritize their mental health and wellbeing, while more than **three out of four (78%)** in the age of 46 or higher said the same.

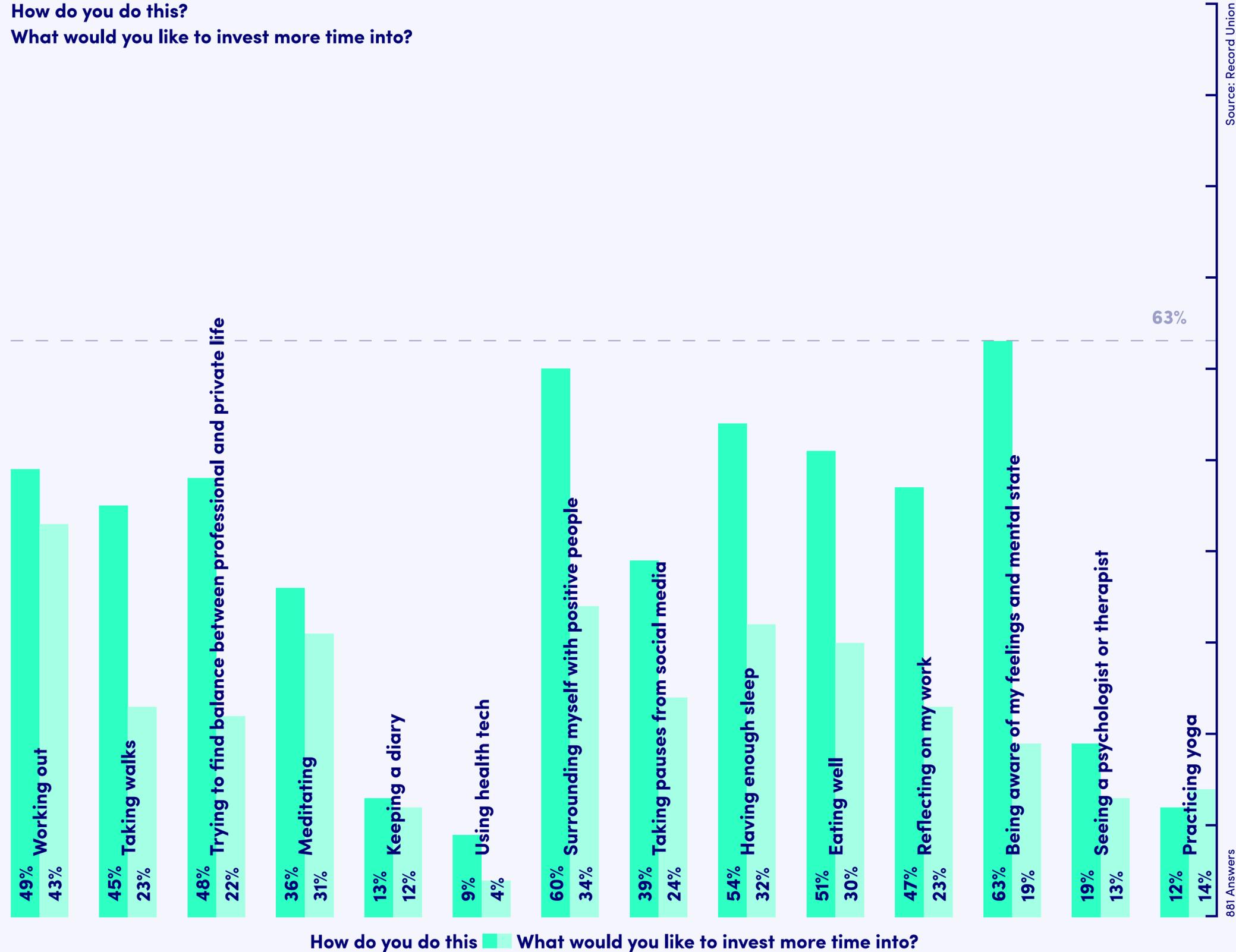


**"Lead people on a more positive and sustainable path. There is a demand and a push for a negative lifestyle expression. The negative content in music has an effect on the life of the artist because they tend to live out what they speak, such as drugs, adultery, fornication which can lead to**

**diseases, immortality, objectifying women, violence etc. But this is often what labels and big shots want out because it sells. People are concerned with what sells, rather than what is good for artists and society, and so they contribute to the degradation of youth and adult morality."**

**- Independent music maker**

How do you do this?  
What would you like to invest more time into?



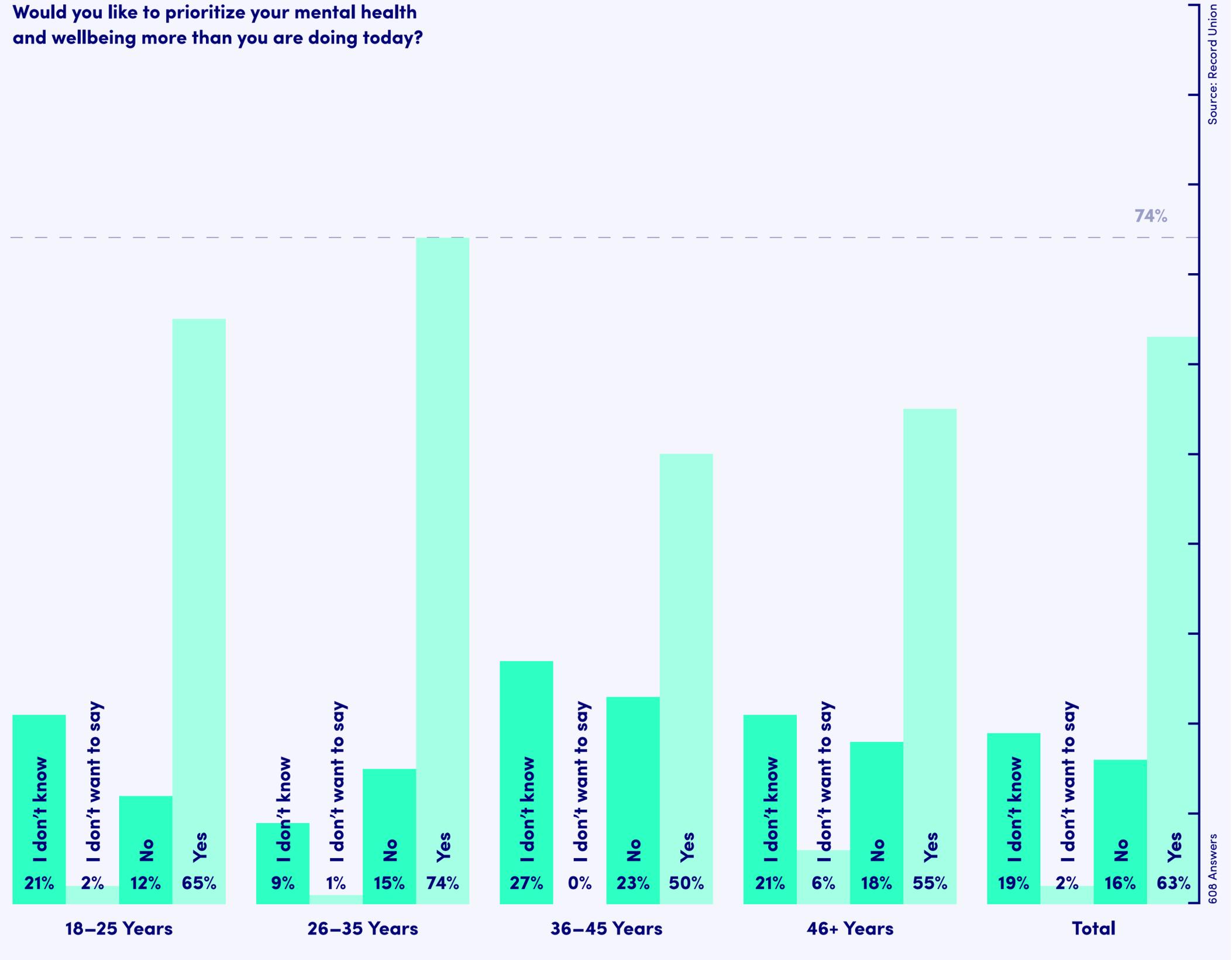
## Awareness of feelings and positive people

Of those who claimed to prioritize their mental health and wellbeing, more than **three out of five (63%)** said that they do so by being aware of their feelings and mental state. **Three out of five (60%)** said that they do so by surrounding themselves with positive people.

# Many want to prioritize mental health more

Out of those who claimed not to prioritize their mental health and wellbeing, more than **three out of five (63%)** said that they would like to prioritize their mental health and wellbeing more.

Would you like to prioritize your mental health and wellbeing more than you are doing today?





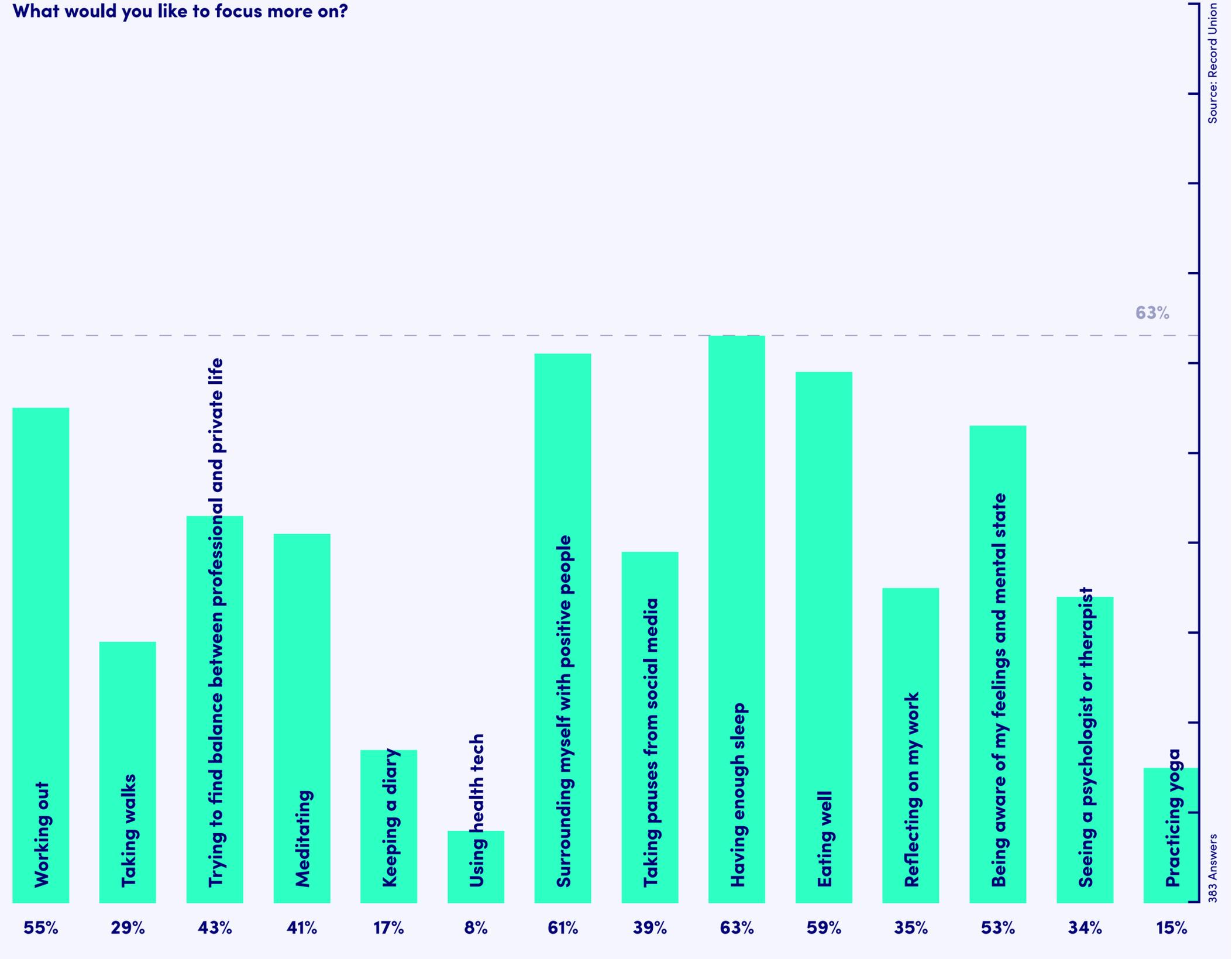
**“Don’t stress everyone to be artists.  
Many musicians just want to play and don’t  
want to be in the middle of attention.”**

**- Independent music maker**

## The need for basic things

Those who said that they would like to prioritize their mental health and wellbeing more, would preferably do so by working out, having enough sleep, eating well and surrounding themselves with positive people.

What would you like to focus more on?



**Chapter 6**

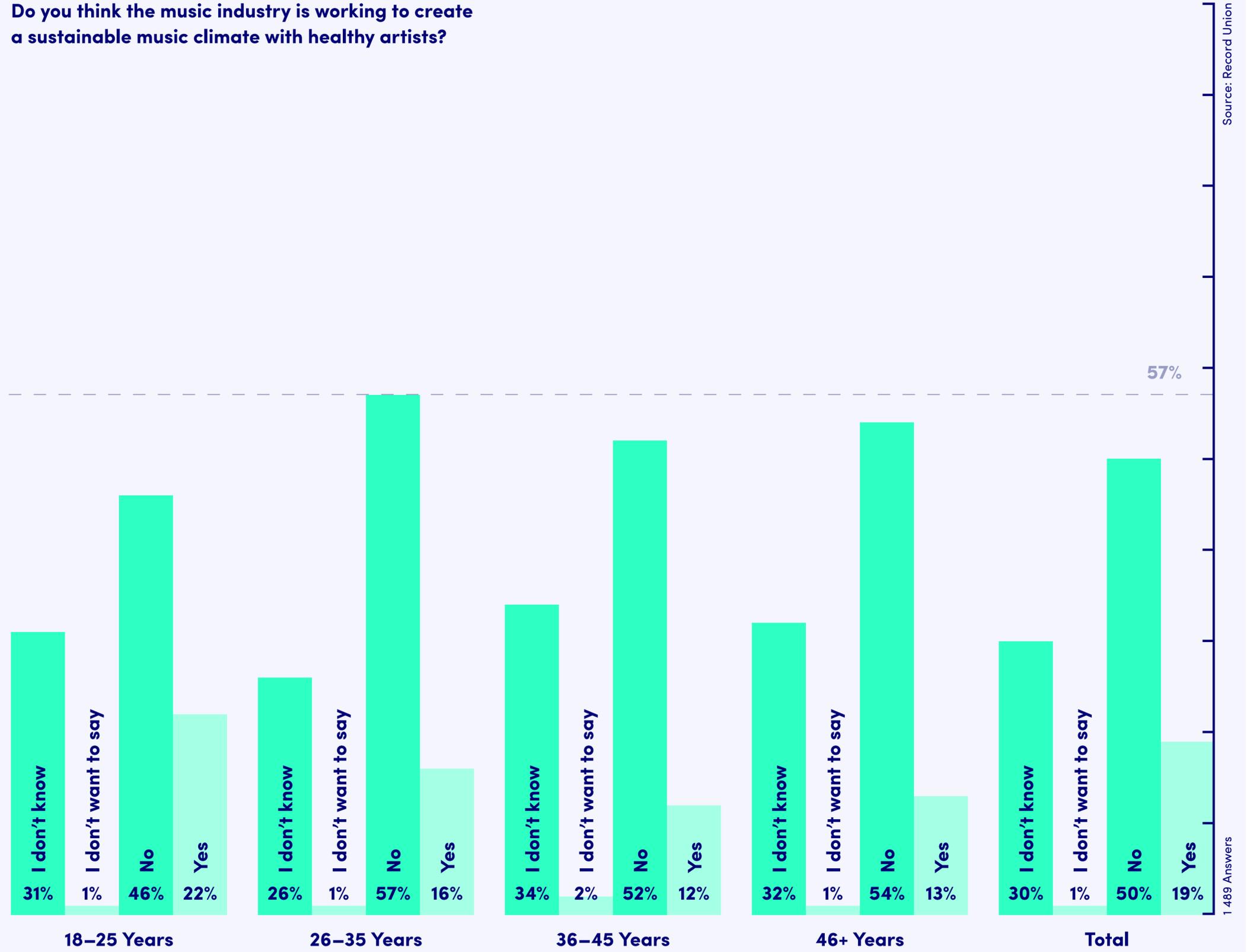
**The music industry and  
mental health**



# The industry could do more

Only **one out of five** (19%) said that the music industry is working to create a sustainable music climate with healthy artists.

Do you think the music industry is working to create a sustainable music climate with healthy artists?





**“Stop treating artists as products  
100% of the time and talk to them like  
they were human beings with  
feelings. Regular check-ups and  
people who are quick to notice  
any of the aforementioned symptoms.”**

**- Independent music maker**

# The **73**% Report

Record Union

Liberating music since 2008  
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