

The Well-Being of Adolescents in Northern Canada

Peter Burton, Angela Daley and Shelley Phipps
Department of Economics, Dalhousie University
angela.daley@dal.ca

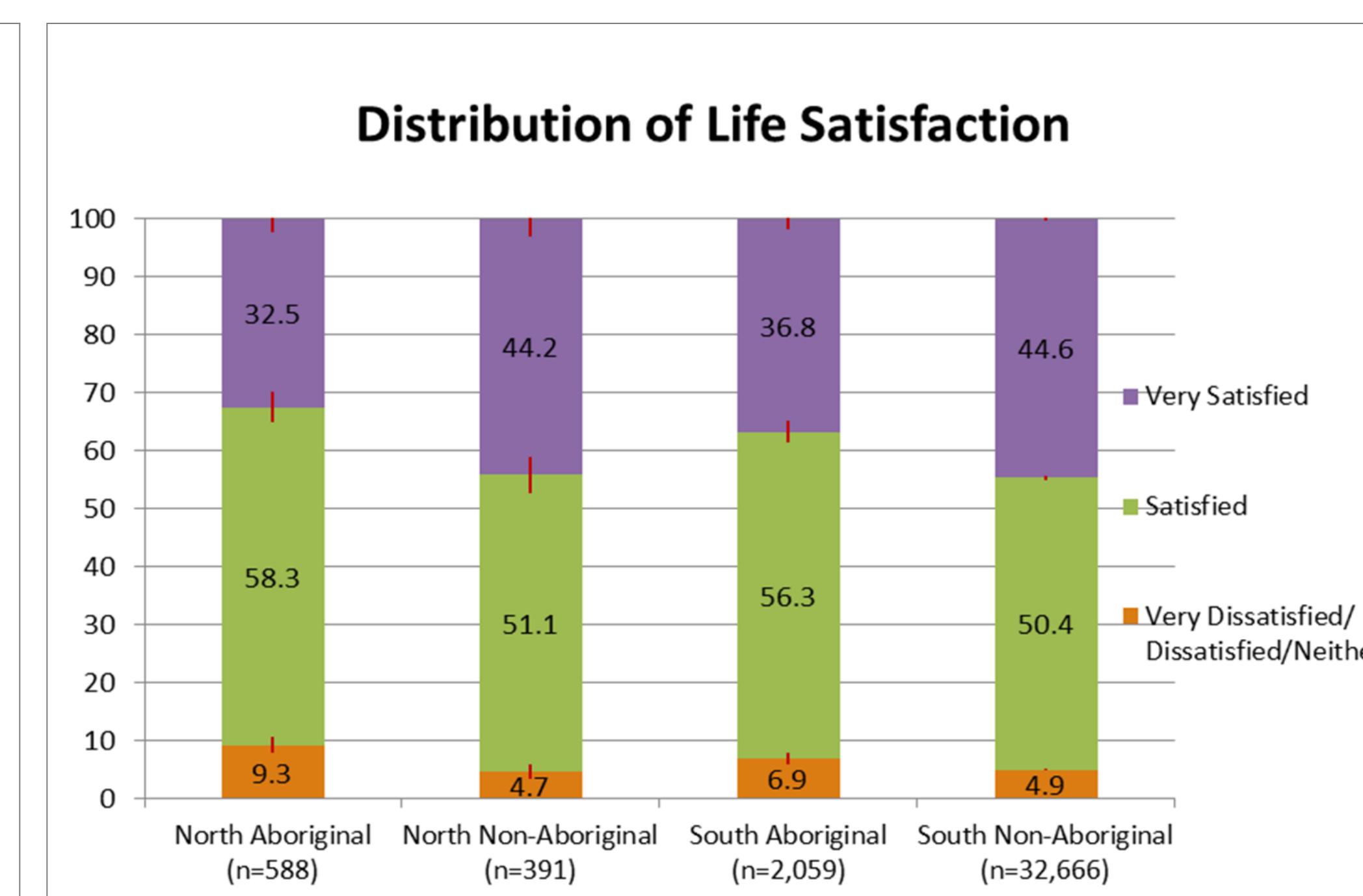
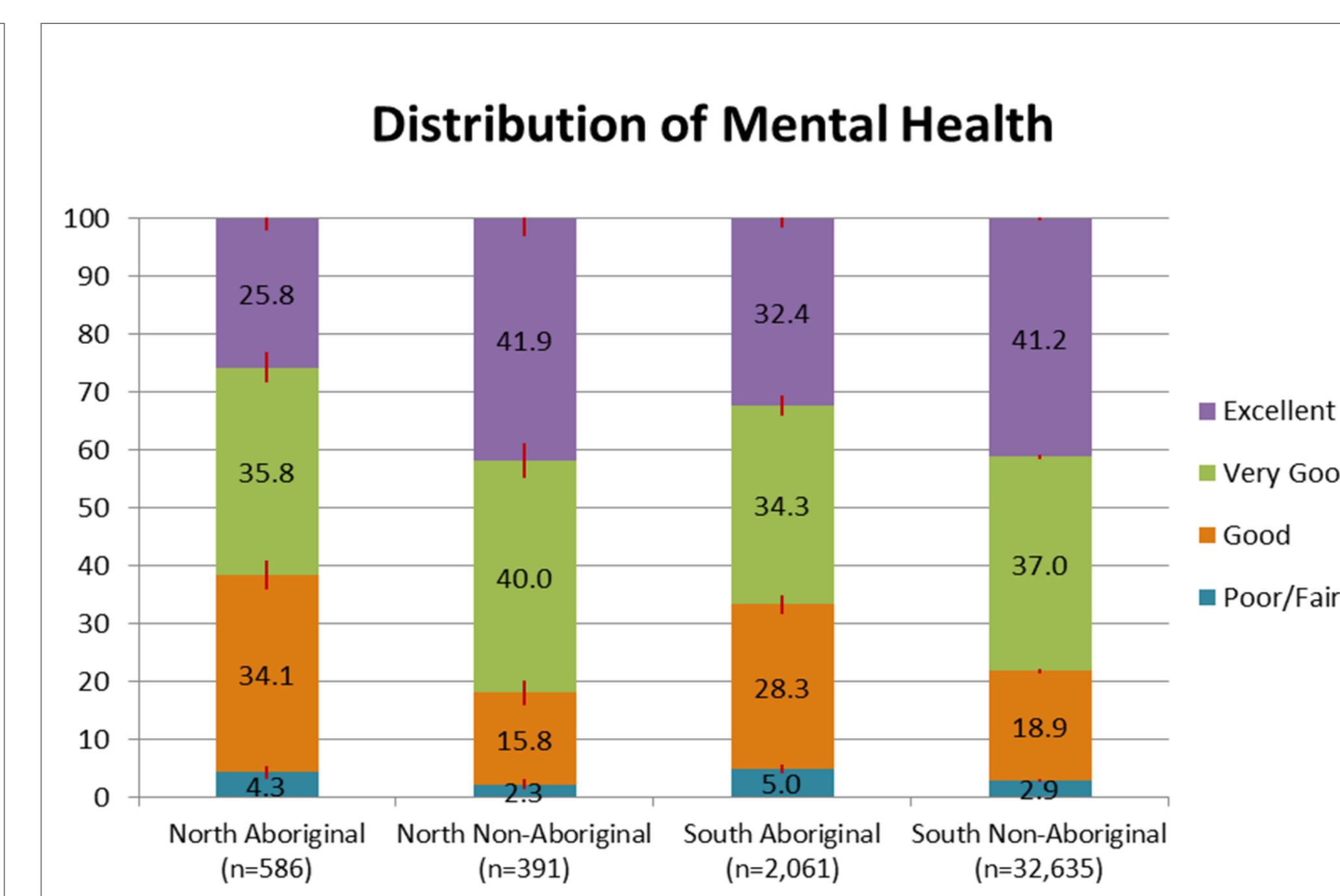
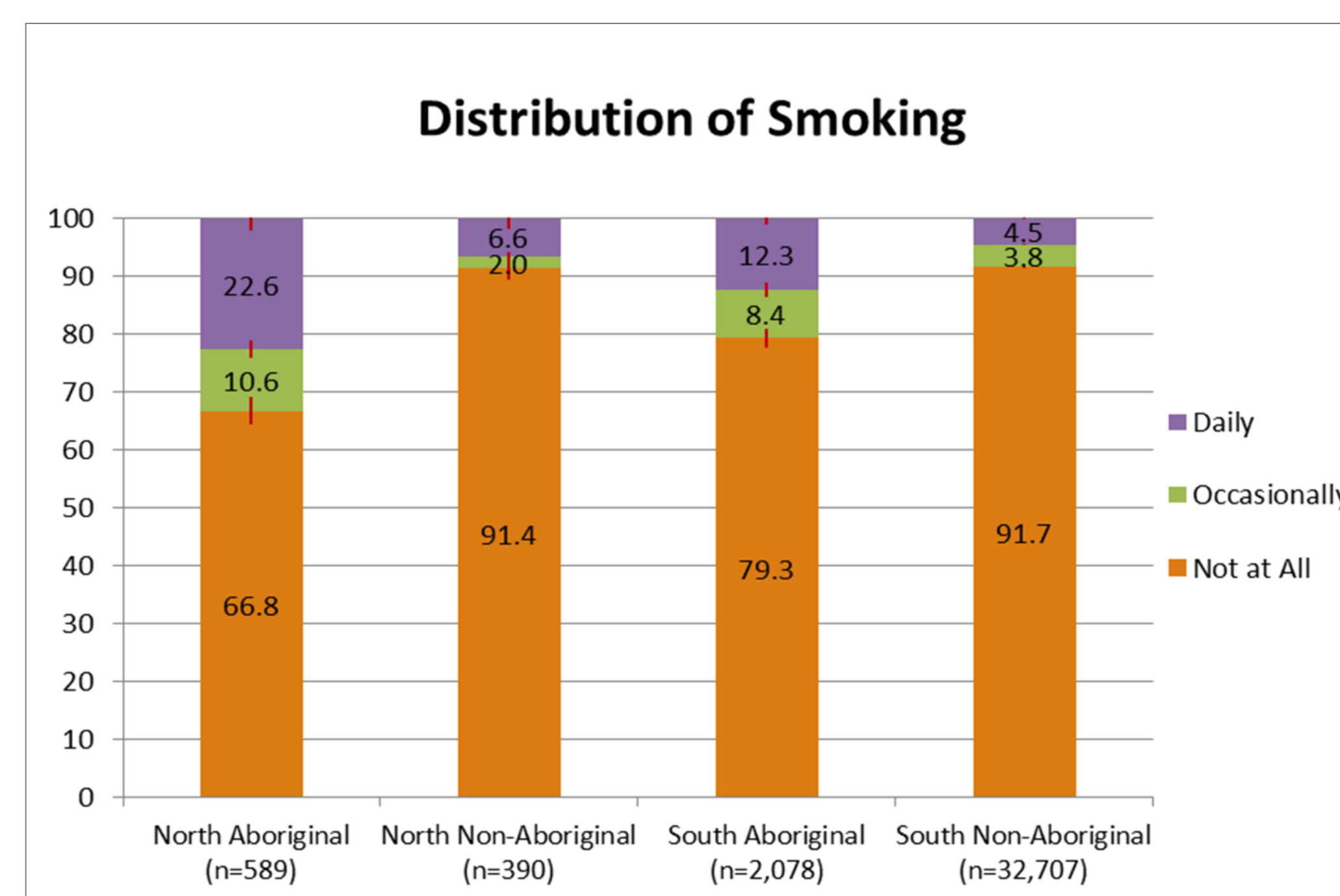
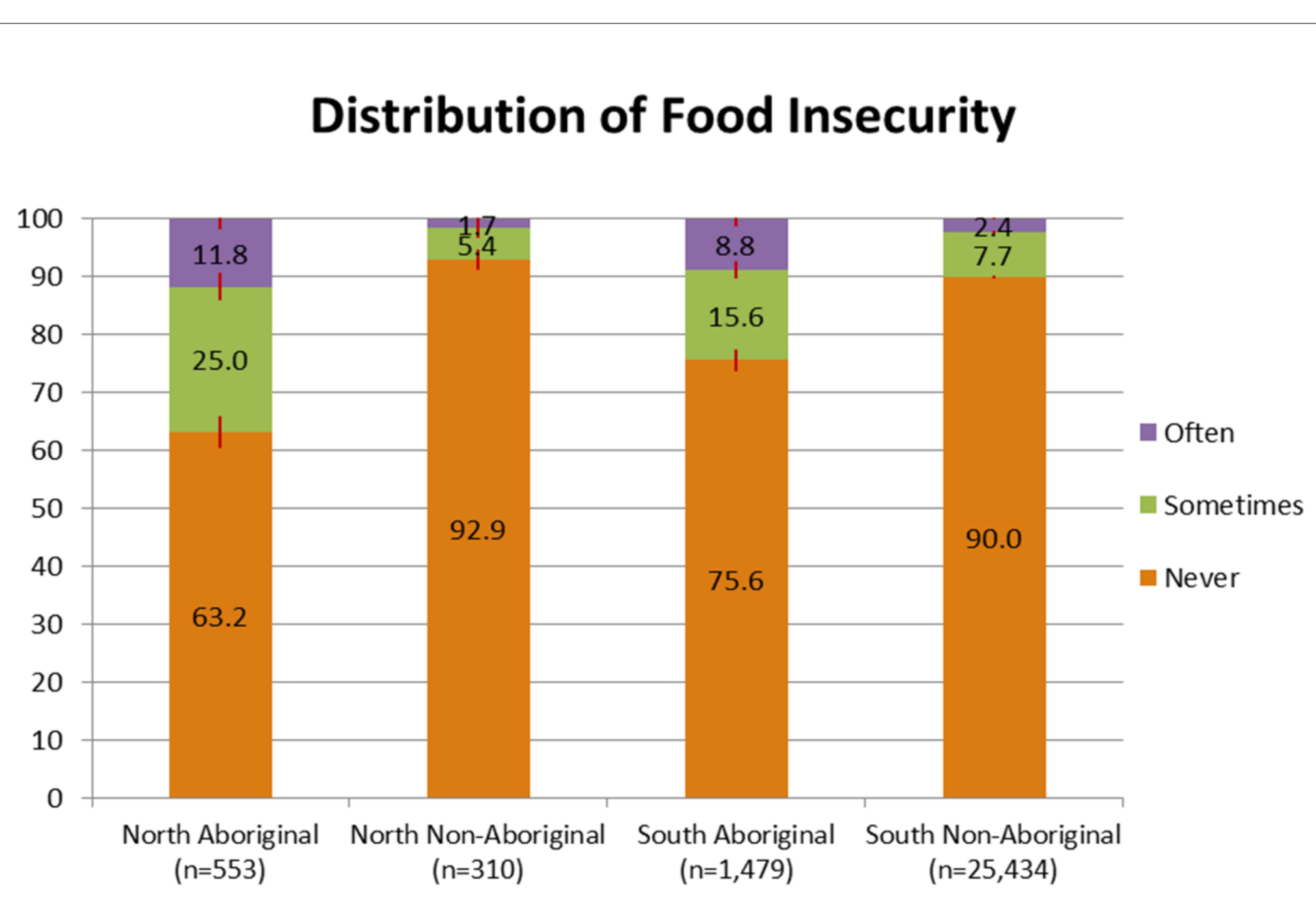
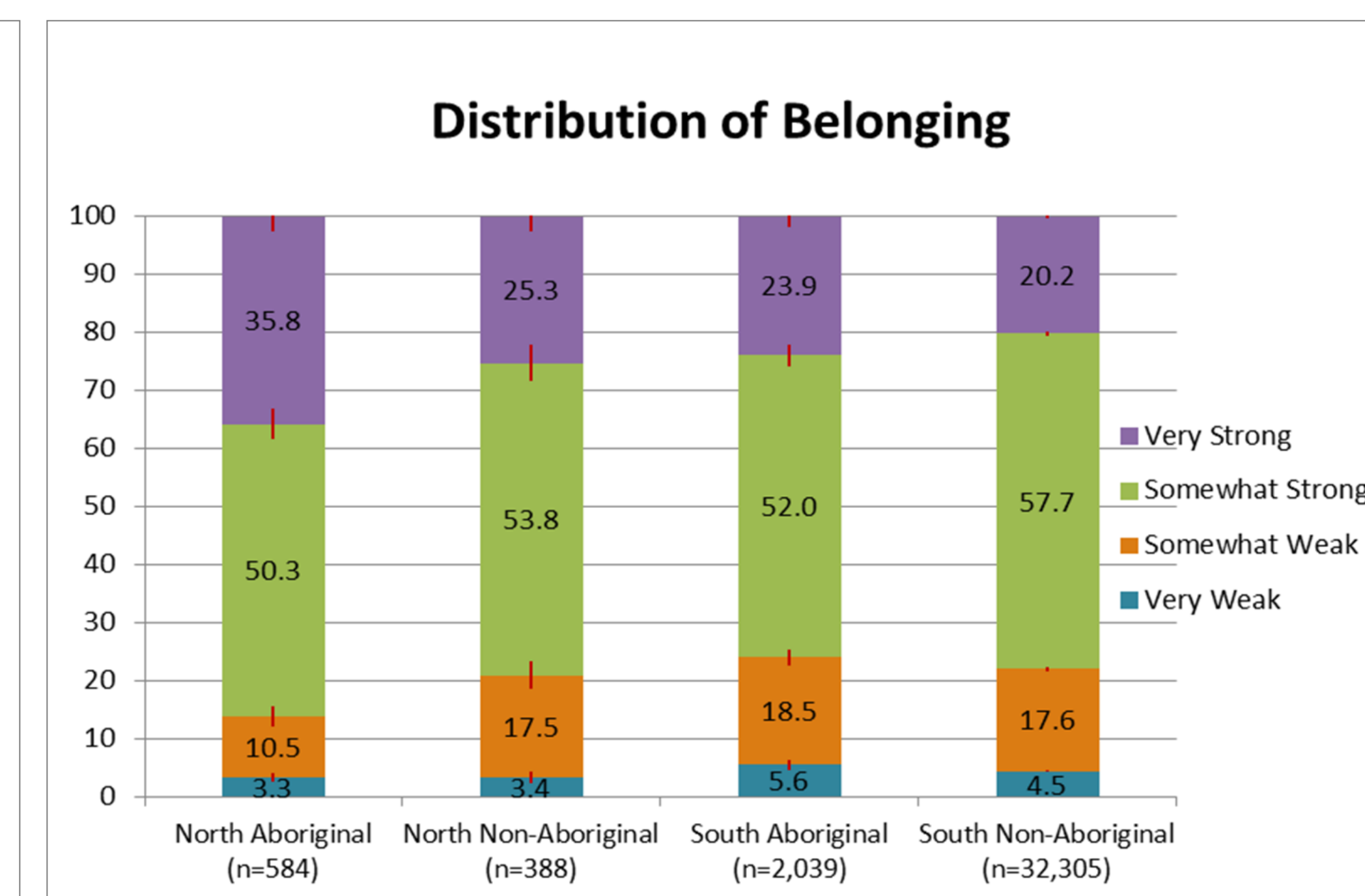
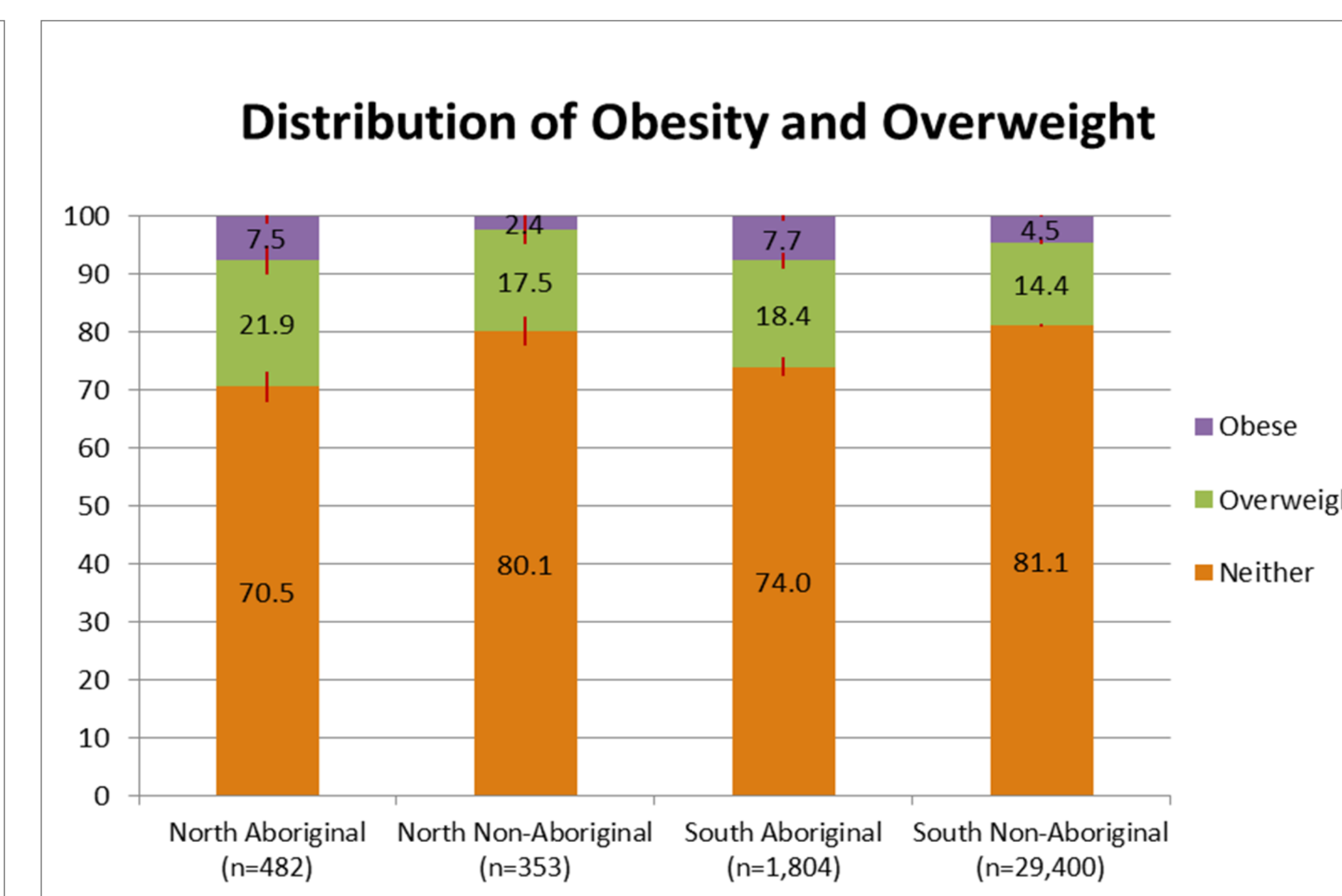
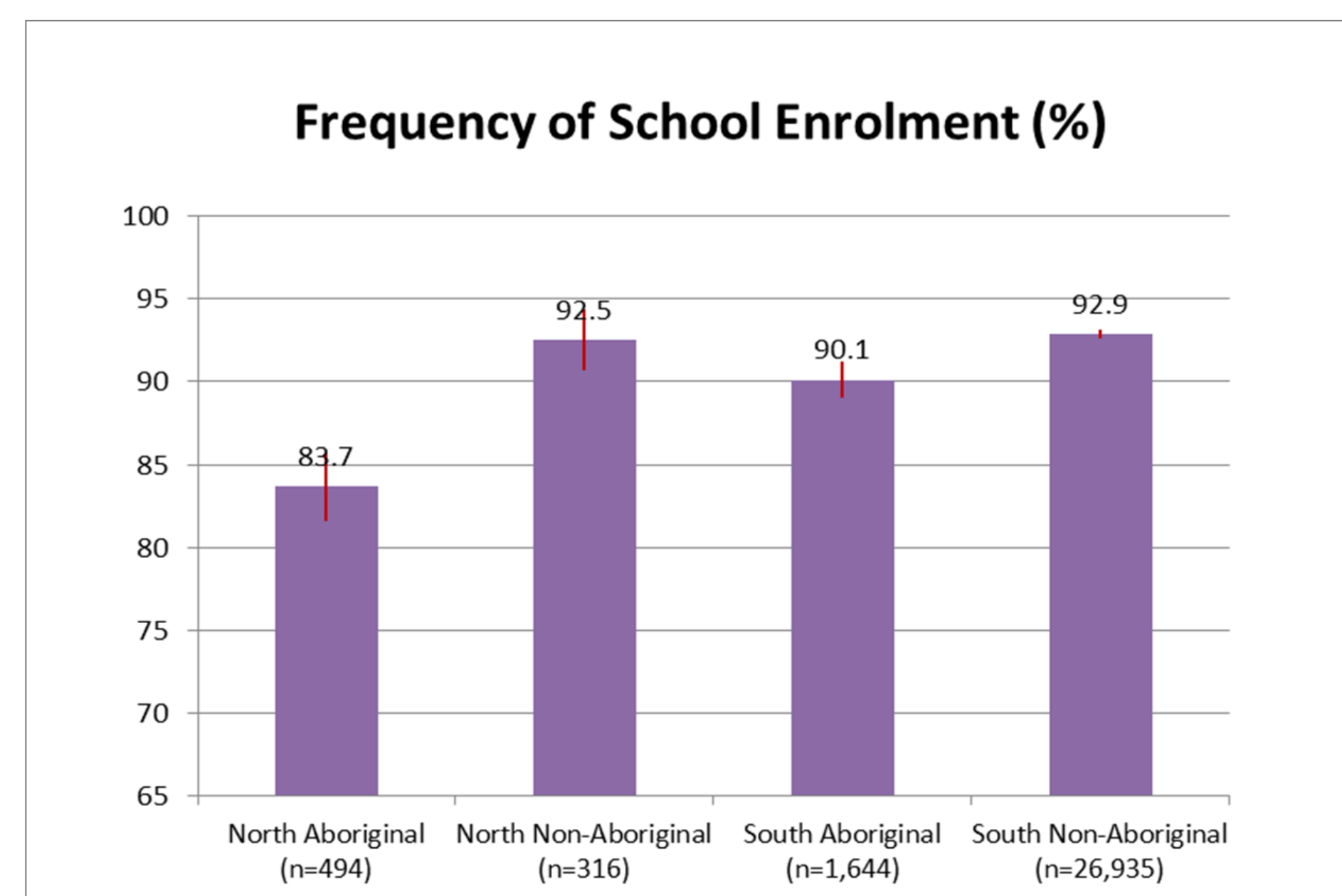
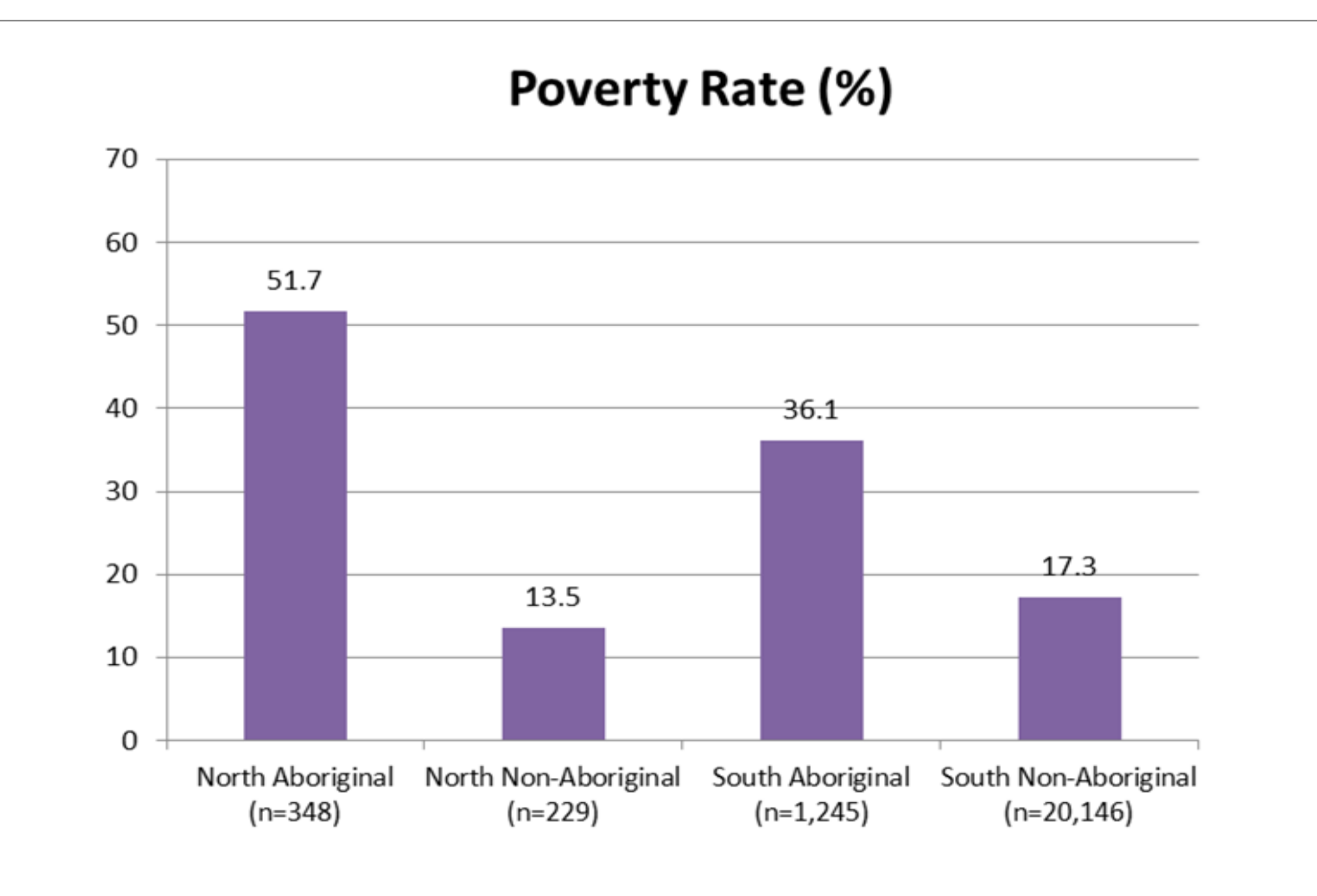
Introduction

The Territorial North (i.e. Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut) is markedly different from the rest of Canada. Yet, there is little statistically reliable information about adolescent well-being in the region, especially direct comparisons with Southern Canada; this is largely because the North is excluded from most population-level surveys. The objective of this paper is to create a portrait of adolescent well-being in the Territorial North, benchmarked against the same indicators for Southern Canada.

Methodology

We pool Cycles 2.1 (2003), 3.1 (2005), 4.1 (2007) and 2008 of the Canadian Community Health Survey. Unlike many other population-level surveys, these data include most of the North. And, adolescents report on their own well-being. Our sample includes youth aged 12 to 17. We examine 23 indicators of well-being by region and Aboriginal identity. We illustrate differences across study groups using bar charts. This analysis is purely descriptive; we do not infer relationships between indicators or explain differences across study groups.

Findings



In the paper, we also consider the following indicators of well-being: income; depth of poverty; household education; family structure; crowding; exposure to second-hand smoke; fruit and vegetable consumption; physical activity; drinking; sexual activity; asthma; activity limitations; oral health; overall health; stress; and body image.

Conclusions

There are few North/South differences in well-being among the non-Aboriginal population. And, most indicators are substantially worse for Aboriginal youth, especially in the Territorial North. However, there are exceptions (i.e. fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, stress, body image, belonging). It is important to remember that the standard of well-being in the South is not necessarily the best that can be achieved, especially considering that Canada ranks seventeenth of 29 affluent countries in a recent UNICEF study (UNICEF Office of Research, 2013). It does, however, provide a benchmark for equality of well-being among Canadian adolescents.

Reference

UNICEF Office of Research (2013). Child well-being in rich countries: A comparative overview. *Innocenti Report Card 11*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.

Acknowledgements

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