



 MORNING CONSULT

**PAN** Foundation

**MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS AMONG  
SENIORS WITH CHRONIC ILLNESSES**

**May 2021**

# BACKGROUND

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## Research Goals

The research conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Patient Access Network (PAN) among seniors with chronic illnesses sought to understand the prevalence of mental health concerns among seniors with chronic illnesses, barriers to receiving counseling, treatment or help for their mental health concerns, access to care, and the impact of current events on their mental health.

## Methodology

This poll was conducted between April 22-May 4, 2021 among a sample of 1,000 seniors on Medicare with chronic conditions. The interviews were conducted online and the data unweighted. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

## Screening Criteria

- Age 65+
- Covered by Medicare
- Diagnosed with one or more chronic conditions

*For simplicity, this audience is referred to as seniors.*

## Key Findings: Overall

1. **Seniors are particularly concerned about preventing the transmission of COVID-19 and addressing their health conditions.** Two thirds of seniors say they are concerned about preventing the transmission of COVID-19 (66%) and addressing their health conditions (67%). A plurality of seniors say that addressing their health conditions (34%) is the most concerning to them personally.
2. **Cost is a main barrier to receiving help or treatment to care.** Two thirds (67%) of seniors say they are comfortable seeking help or treatment for mental health conditions. Of the obstacles tested, seniors are most likely to say the cost of ongoing therapy (32%) and cost of seeing a health care provider (20%) are obstacles for seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition. Seventeen percent of seniors also say that cost of prescription medications is also an obstacle for seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition. Sixteen percent of seniors say the cost of ongoing therapy would be the largest obstacle for them if they were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition.
3. **Seniors have a lot of trust in their primary care doctor and health care providers for information on mental health.** Nearly all (92%) seniors with say they trust their primary care doctor or health care provider, including 59% that say they have a lot of trust. Three in five seniors (60%) say they trust patient advocacy organizations for information on mental health. Half of seniors say they would go to their primary care doctor (52%) first if they were dealing with a mental health condition and a strong majority say they are comfortable speaking with their primary care doctor (89%) if they were dealing with a mental health condition.
4. **The COVID-19 pandemic and gun violence have both impacted the mental health of seniors.** During the last year, seniors have experienced feeling tired or having less energy (60%) and difficulty sleeping (46%) among other symptoms of mental health conditions. When asked to rate how much of an impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on their mental health on a scale of 1-10, a quarter of seniors (28%) rated 7-10, indicating heavy to extreme impact. Two thirds (66%) of seniors agree that gun violence should be considered a public health issue, including 45% that *strongly agree*.

## Key Findings: Barriers and Access to Resources

- 1. Mental health impacts various aspects of the personal lives of seniors.** Based on their experience, seniors say that their mental health impacts their overall life satisfaction (48%) and ability to handle their health conditions (45%). Two in five seniors also say mental health impacts their relationships with friends and family members (40%).
- 2. Despite having considered seeking counseling or treatment, seniors say their social circles attach stigma to seeking treatment or help for mental health.** One third (36%) of seniors say they have considered seeking counseling or treatment for a mental health condition. Four in five (83%) seniors say they are confident that they would know where to look for mental health resources. However, A fifth of seniors say that their family members (19%) and friends and acquaintances (20%) attach stigma to seeking treatment or help for mental health
- 3. A majority of seniors have never been screened for a mental health condition, and those that have been screened are screened infrequently.** A majority (71%) of seniors have never been screened for a mental health condition. Among those who have been previously screened for a mental health condition, a majority say the last time they were screened was over two years ago (67%). Half of seniors (50%) are unsure of how frequently they are typically screened for a mental health condition.
- 4. A quarter (24%) of seniors say they have been diagnosed with a mental health condition and all are likely to say one on one therapy would be helpful.** Seniors say one on one therapy (81%) and referrals to available resources (74%) would be helpful to helping them with their mental health concerns. Seniors are divided on whether social support networks or group therapy would be helpful to helping them with their mental health concerns.
- 5. Despite feeling confident on where to look, seniors are not accessing resources for their mental health concerns.** A majority (63%) of seniors have not accessed a tested resource for their mental health concerns. Of the services tested, seniors are most likely to say they frequently use medication assistance (67%), spiritual guidance (61%), and telehealth (54%). Four in five (44%) seniors also say they use social support networks frequently.

AGENDA

CONCERN AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS ON  
MENTAL HEALTH

RESPONDENT PROFILE

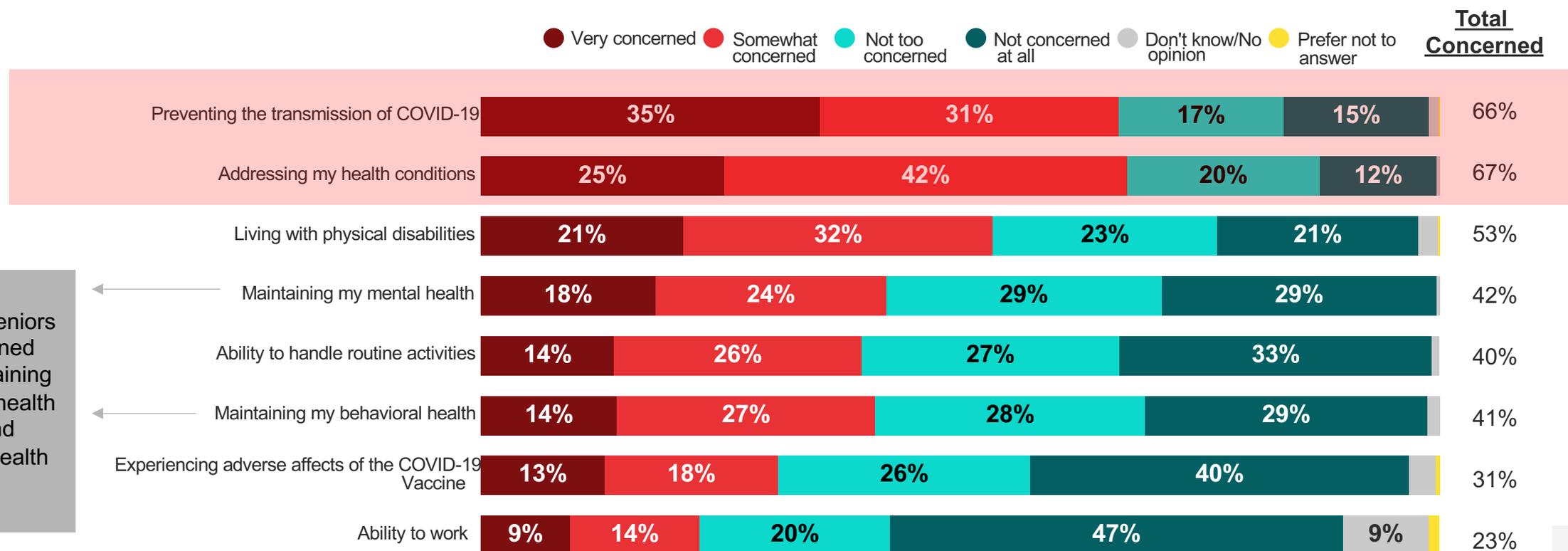


CONCERN AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

Two thirds of seniors say they are concerned about preventing the transmission of COVID-19 (66%) and addressing their health conditions (67%).

Throughout the survey, behavioral health describes the connection between behaviors and the health and well-being of the body and the mind. Mental health refers to someone’s emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Often, mental health is considered a subset of behavioral health.

How concerned are you personally about the following, if at all?

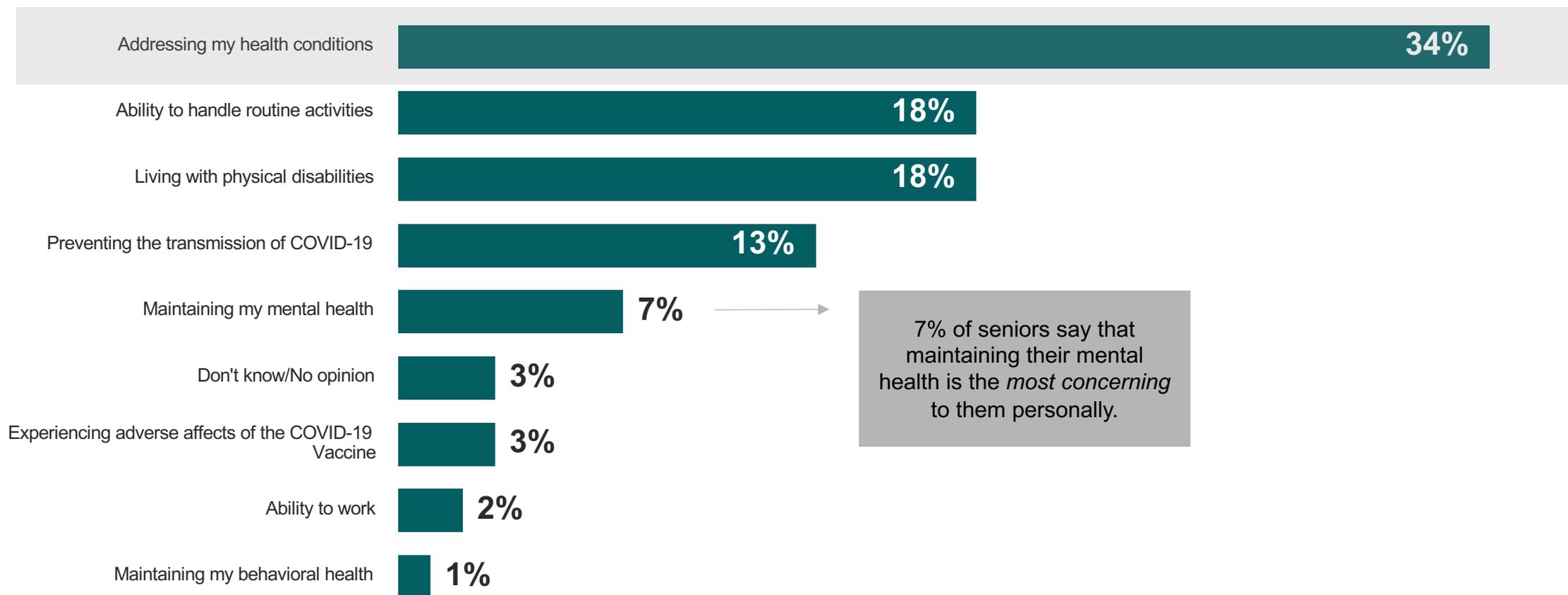


Two in five seniors are concerned about maintaining their mental health (42%) and behavioral health (41%).

CONCERN AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

A plurality of seniors say that addressing their health conditions (34%) is the *most concerning* to them personally.

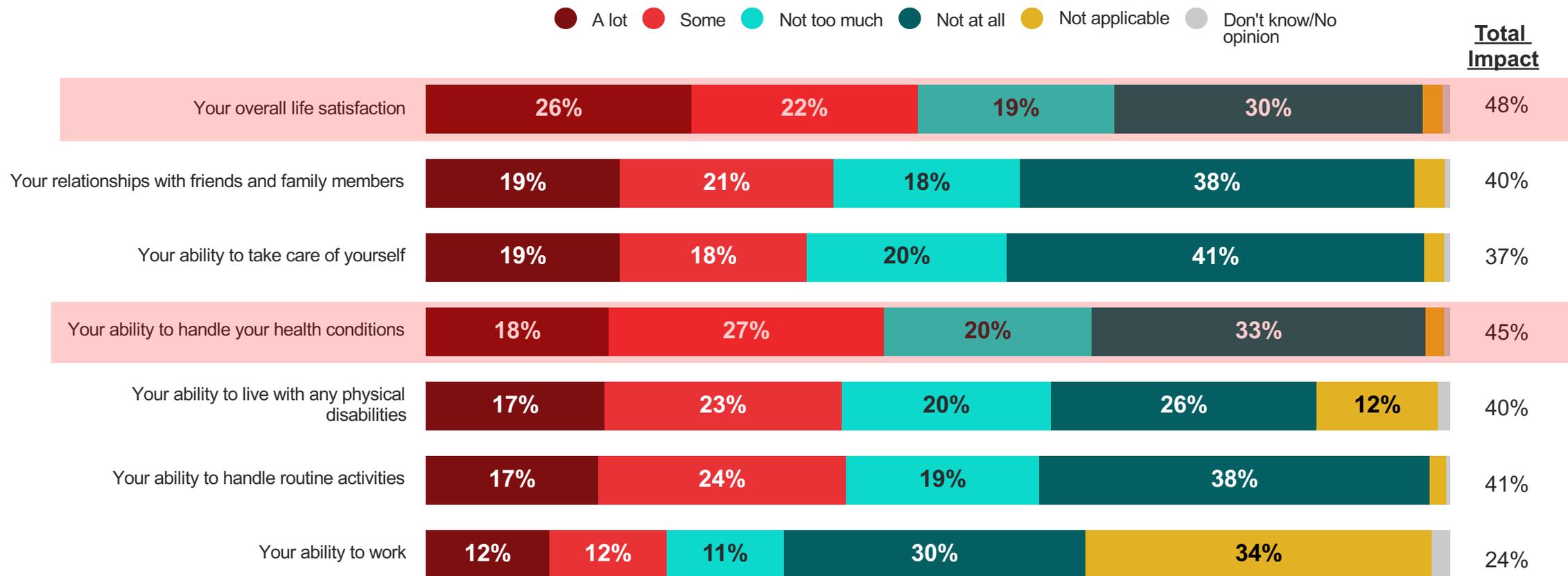
Which of the following is most concerning to you personally?



CONCERN AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

Based on their experience, seniors say that their mental health impacts their overall life satisfaction (48%) and ability to handle their health conditions (45%).

Based on your experience, how much does your mental health impact each of the following, if at all?



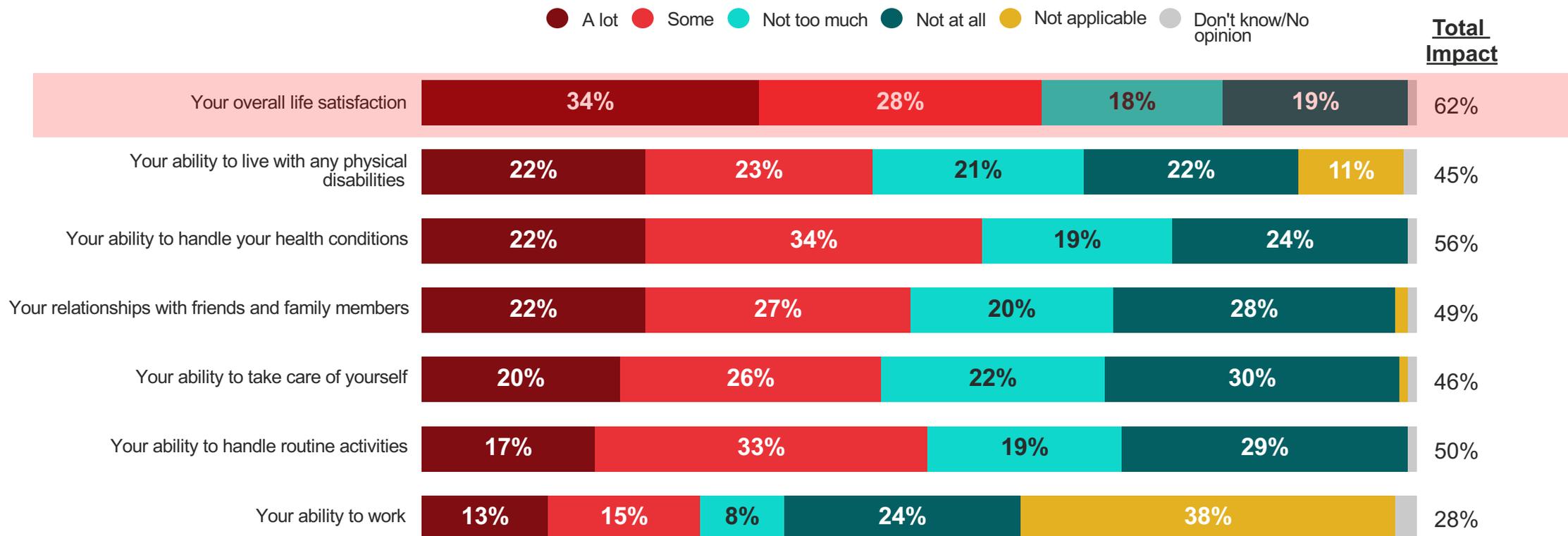
Two in five seniors also say it impacts their relationships with friends and family members (40%), their ability to live with any physical disabilities (40%) and their ability to handle routine activities (41%).

CONCERN AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

Based on their experience, three in five (62%) seniors who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition say their mental health impacts their overall life satisfaction, including 34% who say their mental health impacts their overall life satisfaction *a lot*.

Based on your experience, how much does your mental health impact each of the following, if at all?

SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION, n= 236



Seniors who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition are more likely than other seniors to say they have been impacted by all tested options.

AGENDA

CONCERN AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS ON  
MENTAL HEALTH

RESPONDENT PROFILE

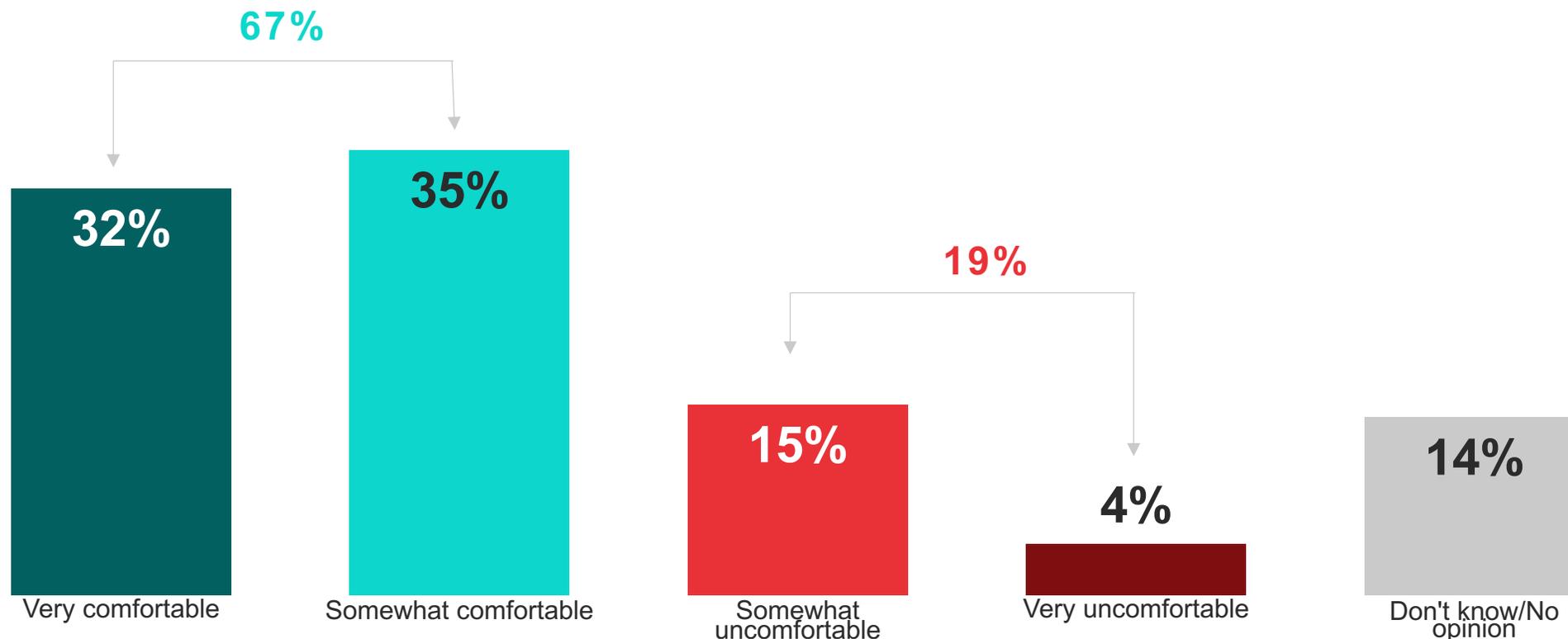


BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

Two thirds (67%) of seniors say they are comfortable seeking help or treatment for mental health conditions.

As a reminder, behavioral health describes the connection between behaviors and the health and well-being of the body and the mind. Mental health refers to someone’s emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Often, mental health is considered a subset of behavioral health.

How comfortable or uncomfortable are you seeking help or treatment for mental health conditions?

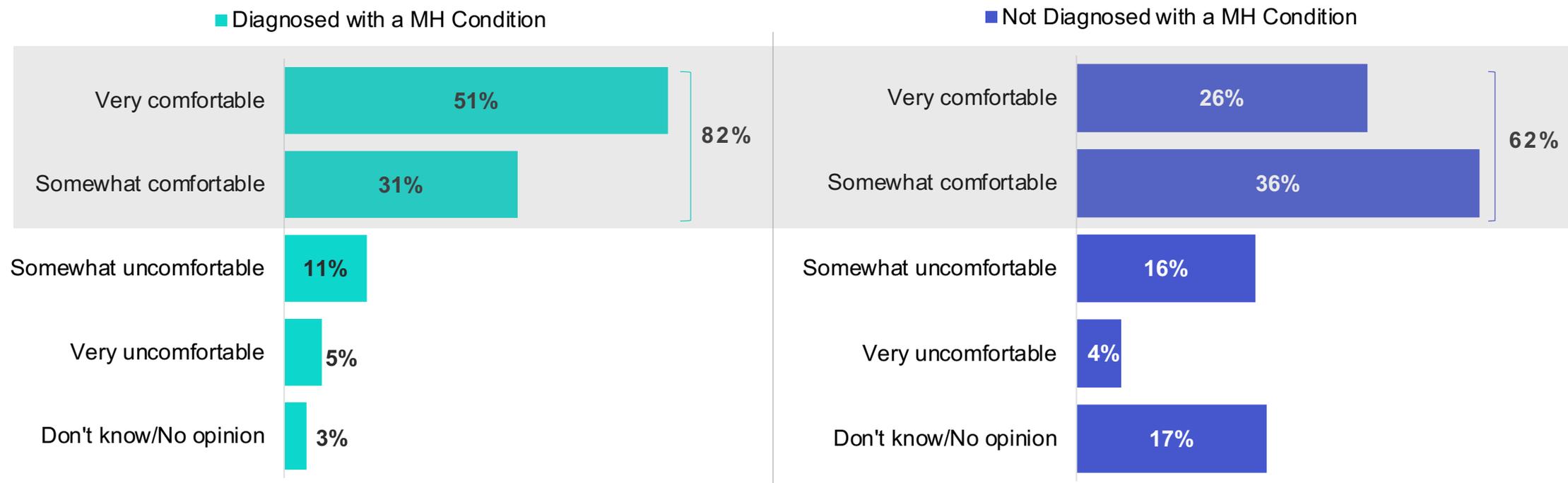


BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

Those diagnosed with a mental health condition (82%) are more likely than those not diagnosed with a mental health condition (62%) to say they are comfortable seeking health or treatment for mental health conditions.

As a reminder, behavioral health describes the connection between behaviors and the health and well-being of the body and the mind. Mental health refers to someone’s emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Often, mental health is considered a subset of behavioral health.

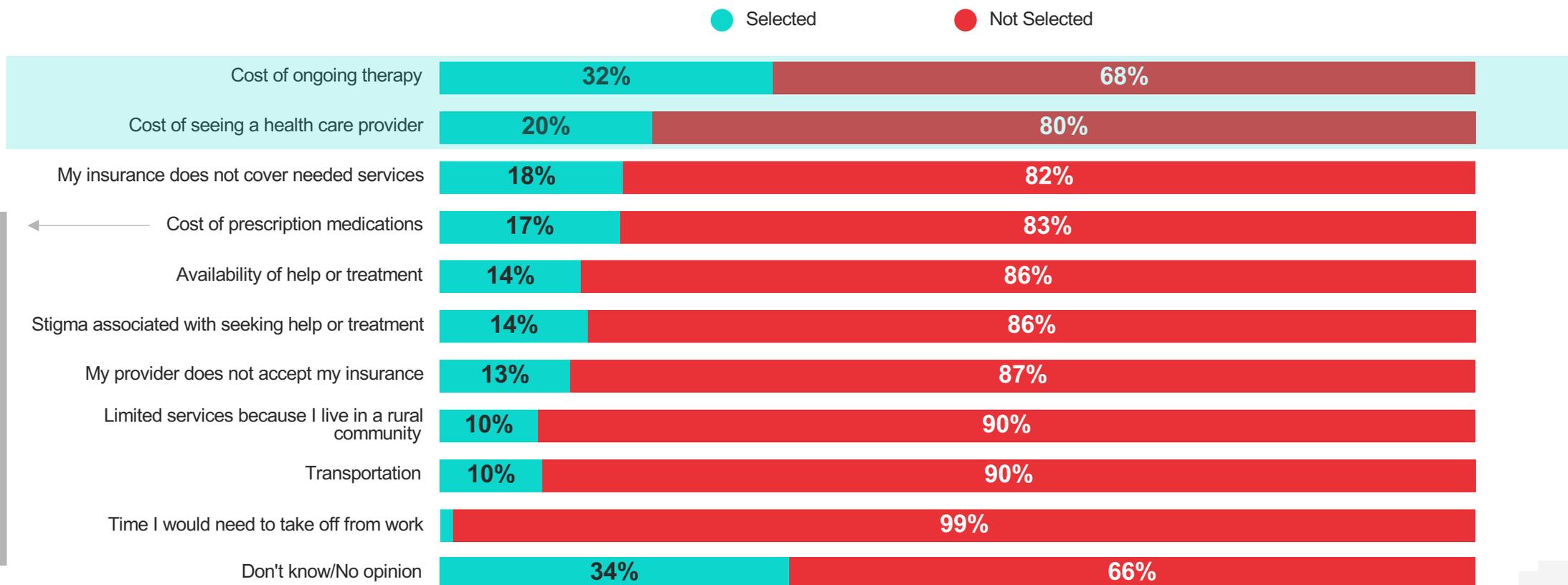
How comfortable or uncomfortable are you seeking help or treatment for mental health conditions?



BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

Of the options tested, seniors are most likely to say the cost of ongoing therapy (32%) and seeing a health care provider (20%) are obstacles for seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition.

Some say the following are obstacles to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition. Which of the following would be an obstacle for you if you were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition?

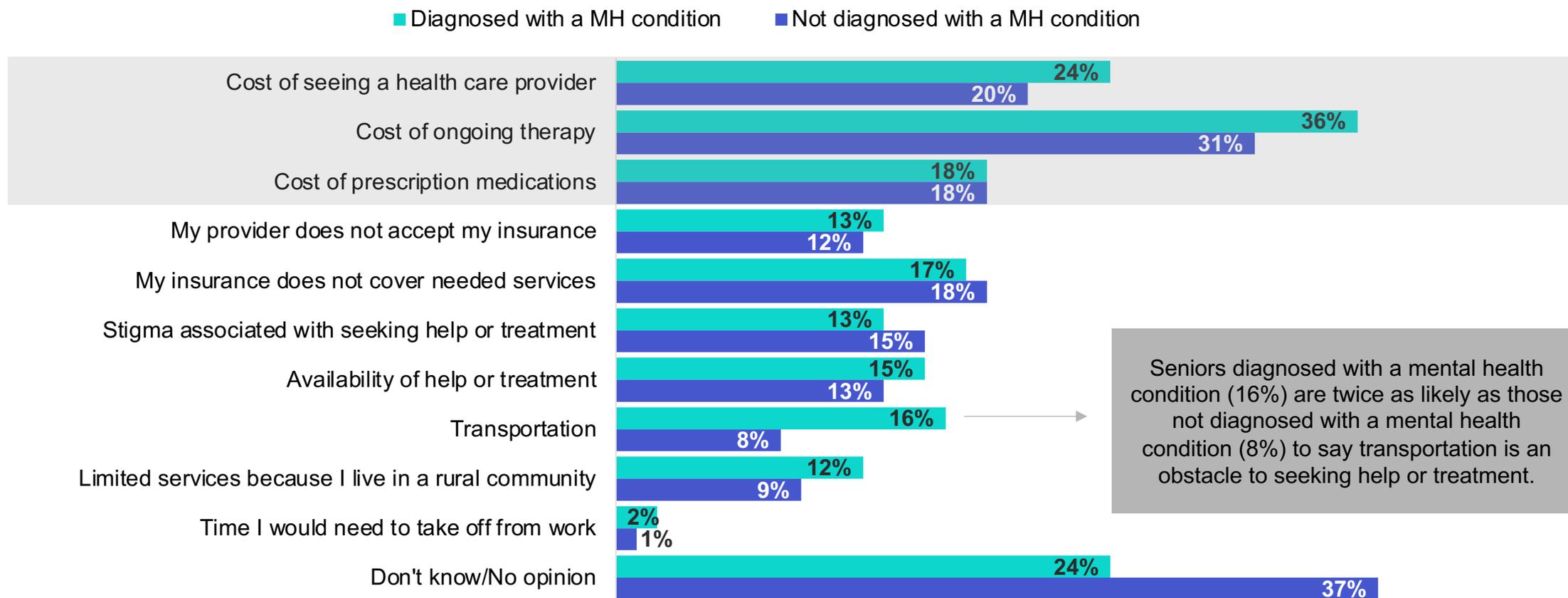


17% of seniors also say that cost of prescription medications is also an obstacle for seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition.

BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

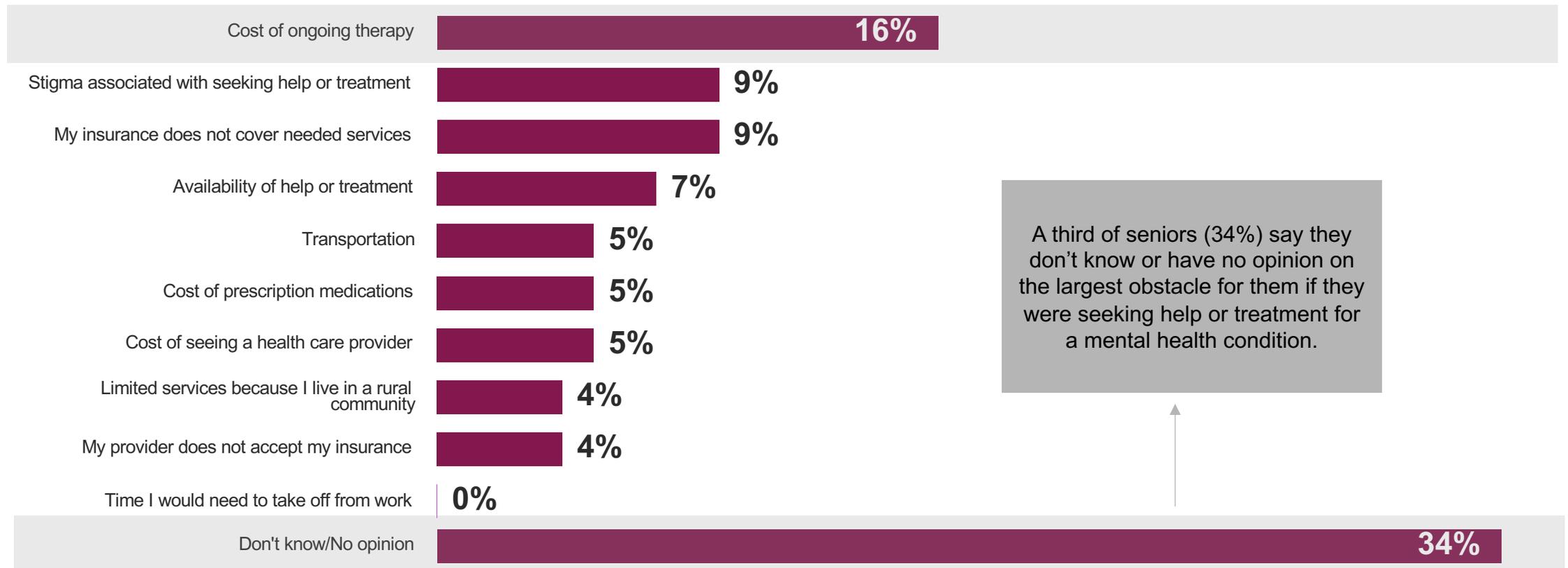
Those diagnosed with a mental health condition are as likely as those without a mental health condition to identify the cost of seeing a health care provider, ongoing therapy, and prescription medications as obstacles to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition.

Some say the following are obstacles to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition. Which of the following would be an obstacle for you if you were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition?



Sixteen percent of seniors say the cost of ongoing therapy would be the largest obstacle for them if they were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition.

And, which of the following would be the largest obstacle for you if you were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition?

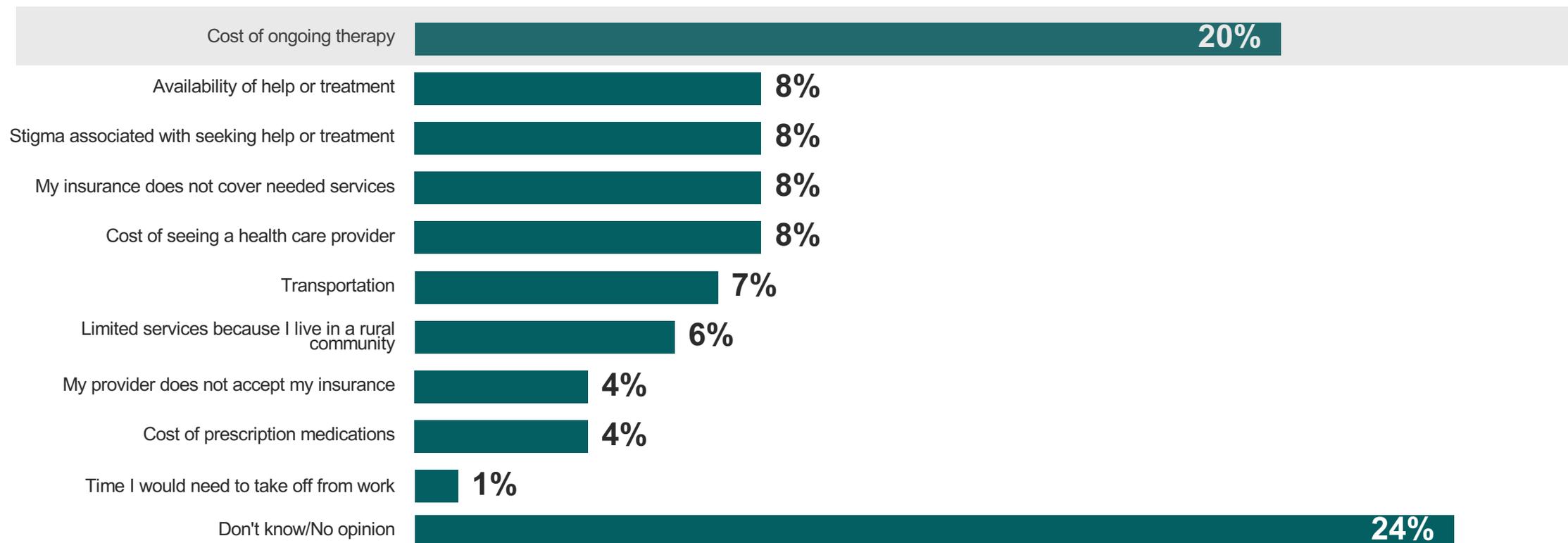


BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

A fifth of seniors (20%) who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition say the cost of ongoing therapy would be the the largest obstacle for them if they were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition.

And, which of the following would be the largest obstacle for you if you were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition?

SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION, n= 236

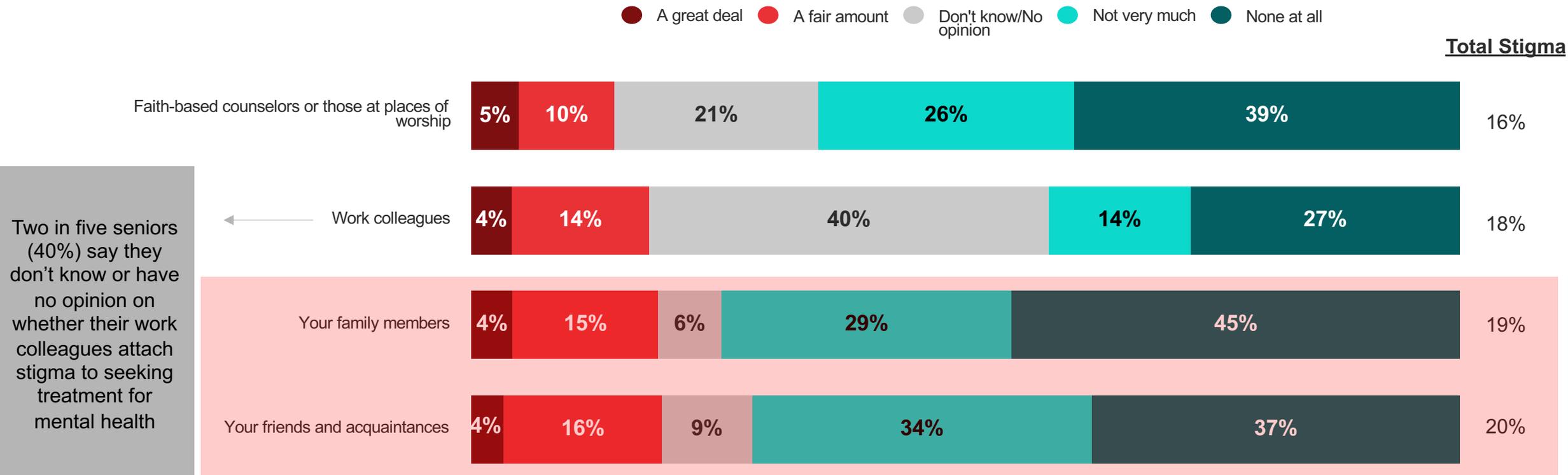


BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

A fifth of seniors say that their family members (19%) and friends and acquaintances (20%) attach stigma to seeking treatment or help for mental health.

As you may know, stigma is discrimination against a group of people, a place, or a nation. Stigma often comes from a lack of knowledge, a need to blame someone, fear and gossip that spreads rumors and myths.

In your opinion, how much stigma, if any, do the following groups attach to seeking treatment or help for mental health?



## BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

Rural (20%) and suburban (21%) seniors are more likely than urban (15%) seniors to say their friends and acquaintances attach stigma to seeking treatment or help for mental health.

As you may know, stigma is discrimination against a group of people, a place, or a nation. Stigma often comes from a lack of knowledge, a need to blame someone, fear and gossip that spreads rumors and myths.

In your opinion, how much stigma, if any, do the following groups attach to seeking treatment or help for mental health?

### *Community Type*

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Your family members	18%	20%	17%
Your friends and acquaintances	15%	21%	20%
Work colleagues	15%	19%	19%
Faith-based counselors or those at places of worship	14%	14%	16%

AGENDA

CONCERN AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS ON  
MENTAL HEALTH

RESPONDENT PROFILE

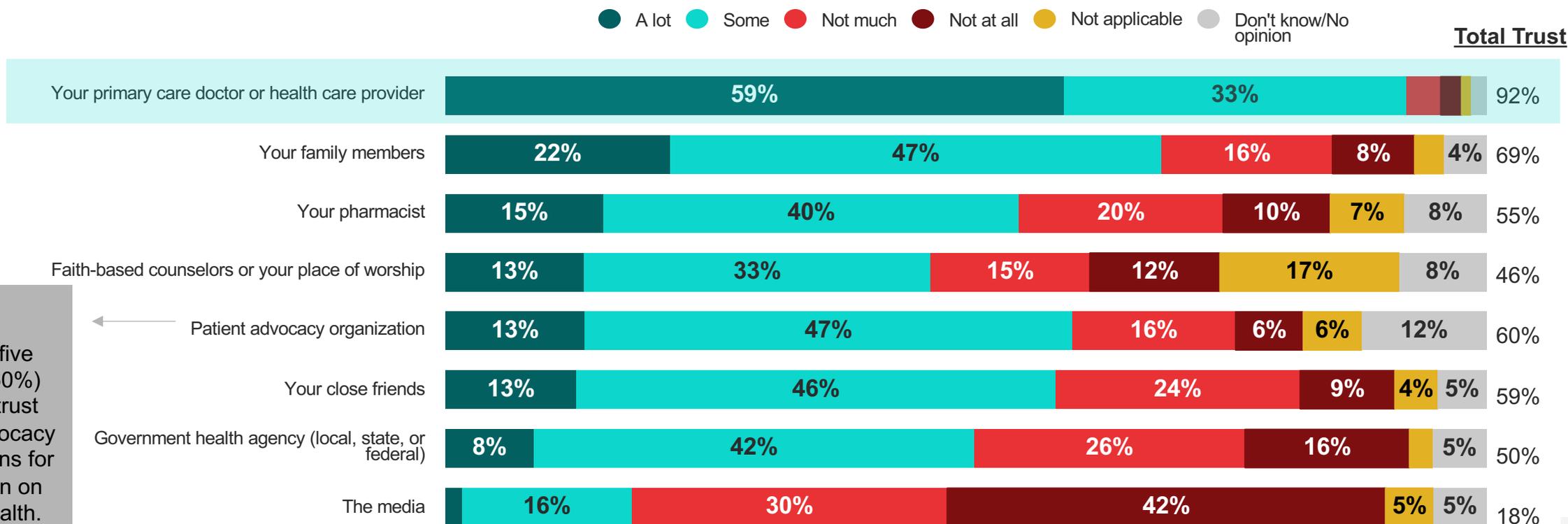


ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Nearly all (92%) seniors say they trust their primary care doctor or health care provider for information on mental health, including 59% that say they have *a lot* of trust.

As a reminder, behavioral health describes the connection between behaviors and the health and well-being of the body and the mind. Mental health refers to someone’s emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Often, mental health is considered a subset of behavioral health.

How much do you trust, if at all, the following sources for information on mental health?



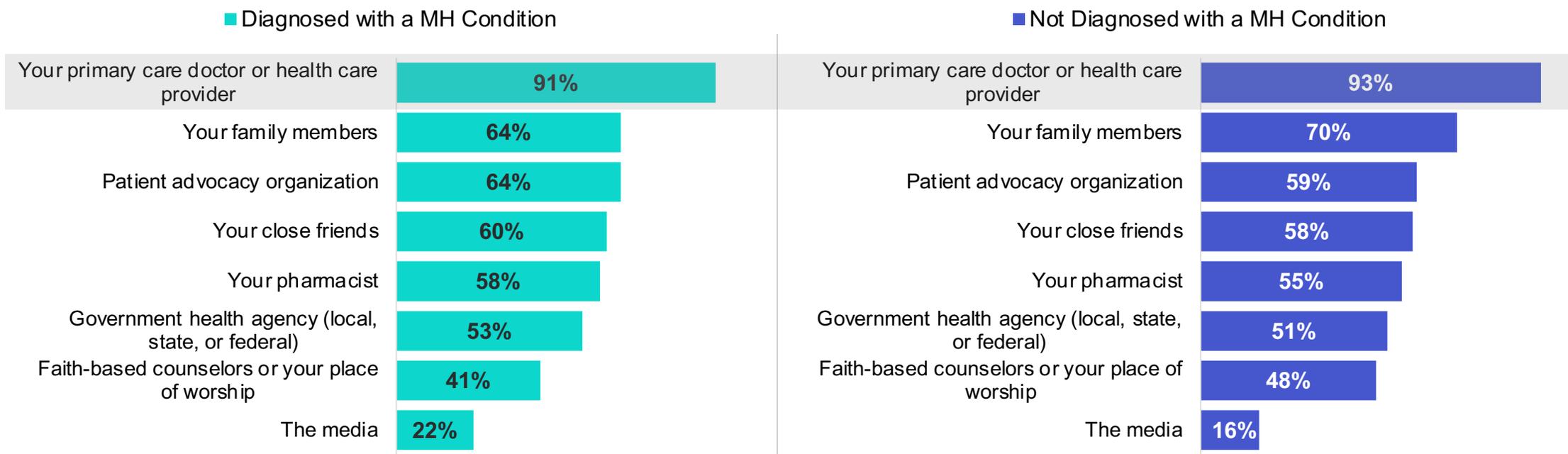
Three in five seniors (60%) say they trust patient advocacy organizations for information on mental health.

BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

Nearly all of those diagnosed with a mental health condition (91%) and those not diagnosed with a mental health condition (93%) say they trust their primary care doctor or health care provider for information on mental health.

As a reminder, behavioral health describes the connection between behaviors and the health and well-being of the body and the mind. Mental health refers to someone’s emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Often, mental health is considered a subset of behavioral health.

How much do you trust, if at all, the following sources for information on mental health? **Total Trust**

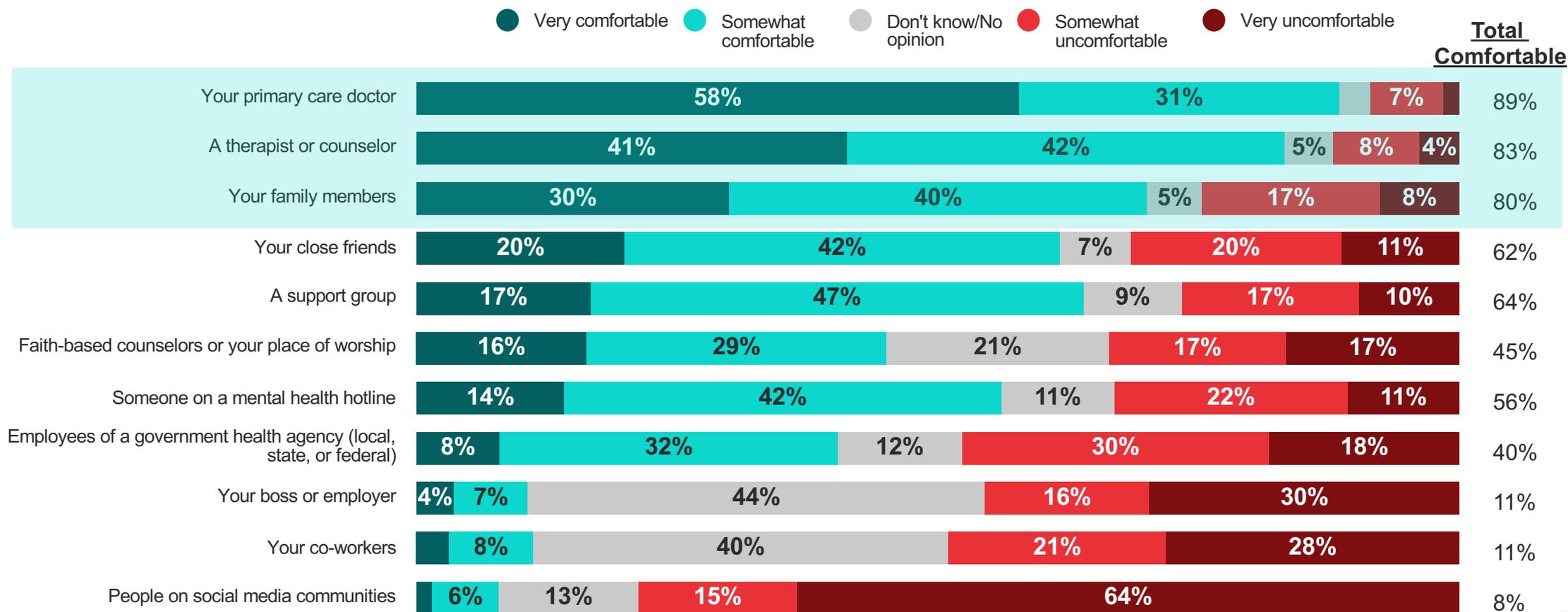


→ A majority of seniors diagnosed (64%) and undiagnosed (59%) with a mental health condition say that they trust a patient advocacy organization for information on mental health.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

A majority of seniors say they are comfortable speaking with their primary care doctor (89%), a therapist or counselor (83%) and their family members (80%) if they were dealing with a mental health condition.

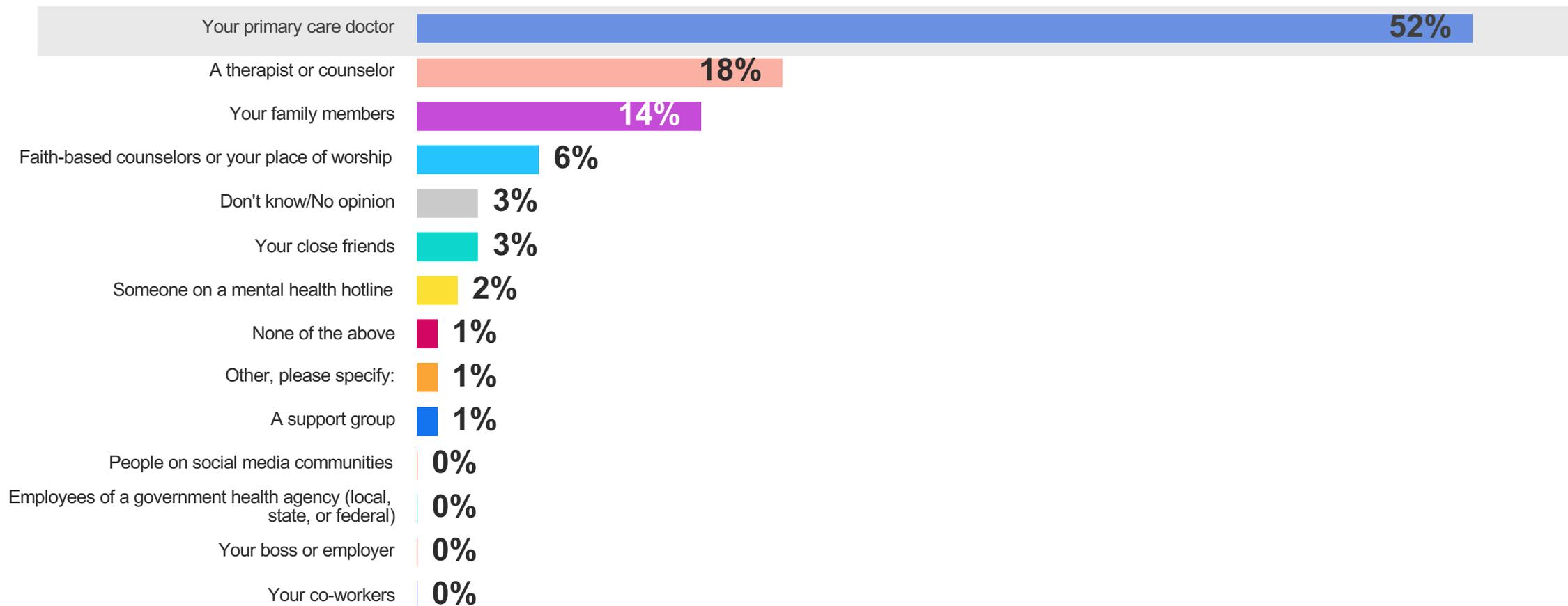
If you were dealing with a mental health condition, how comfortable or uncomfortable would you be talking with each of the following?



ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Half of seniors say they would go to their primary care doctor (52%) first if they were dealing with a mental health condition.

And, if you were dealing with a mental health condition, which of the following would you go to first?

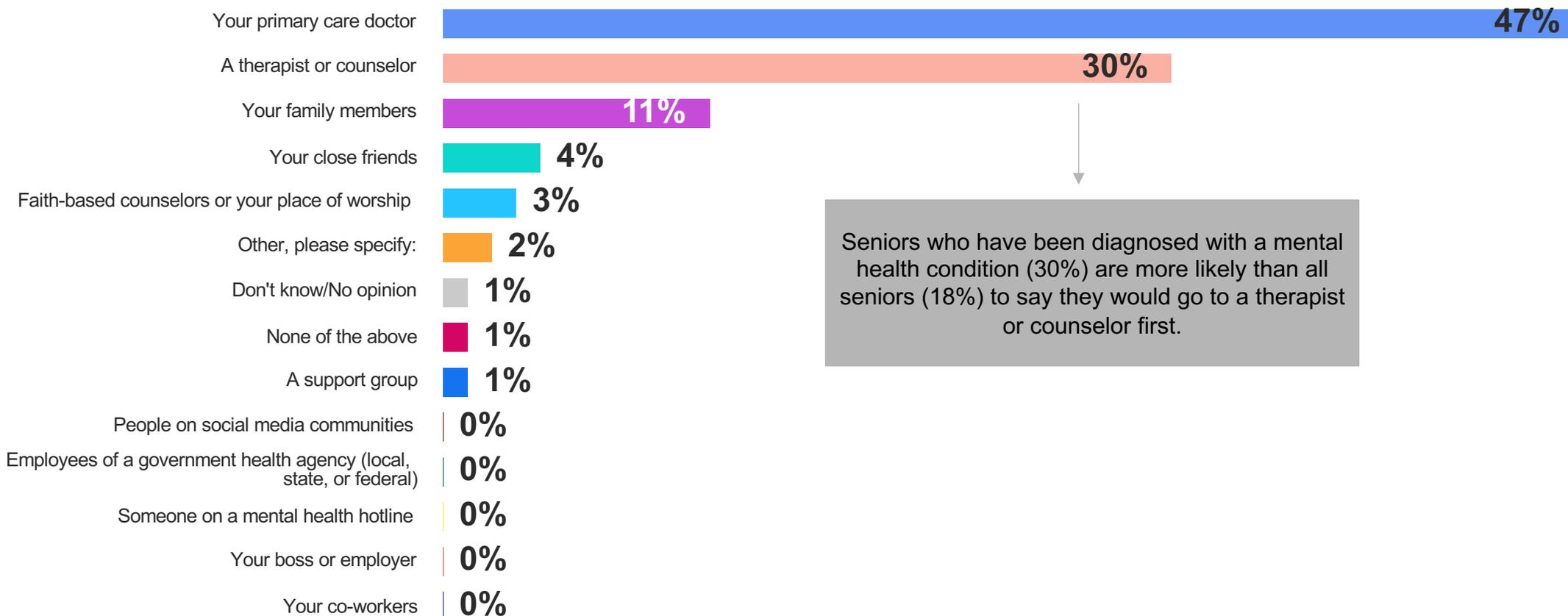


ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Of the options tested, seniors who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition are most likely to go to a primary care doctor (47%) or a therapist or counselor (30%) first if they were dealing with a mental health condition.

And, if you were dealing with a mental health condition, which of the following would you go to first?

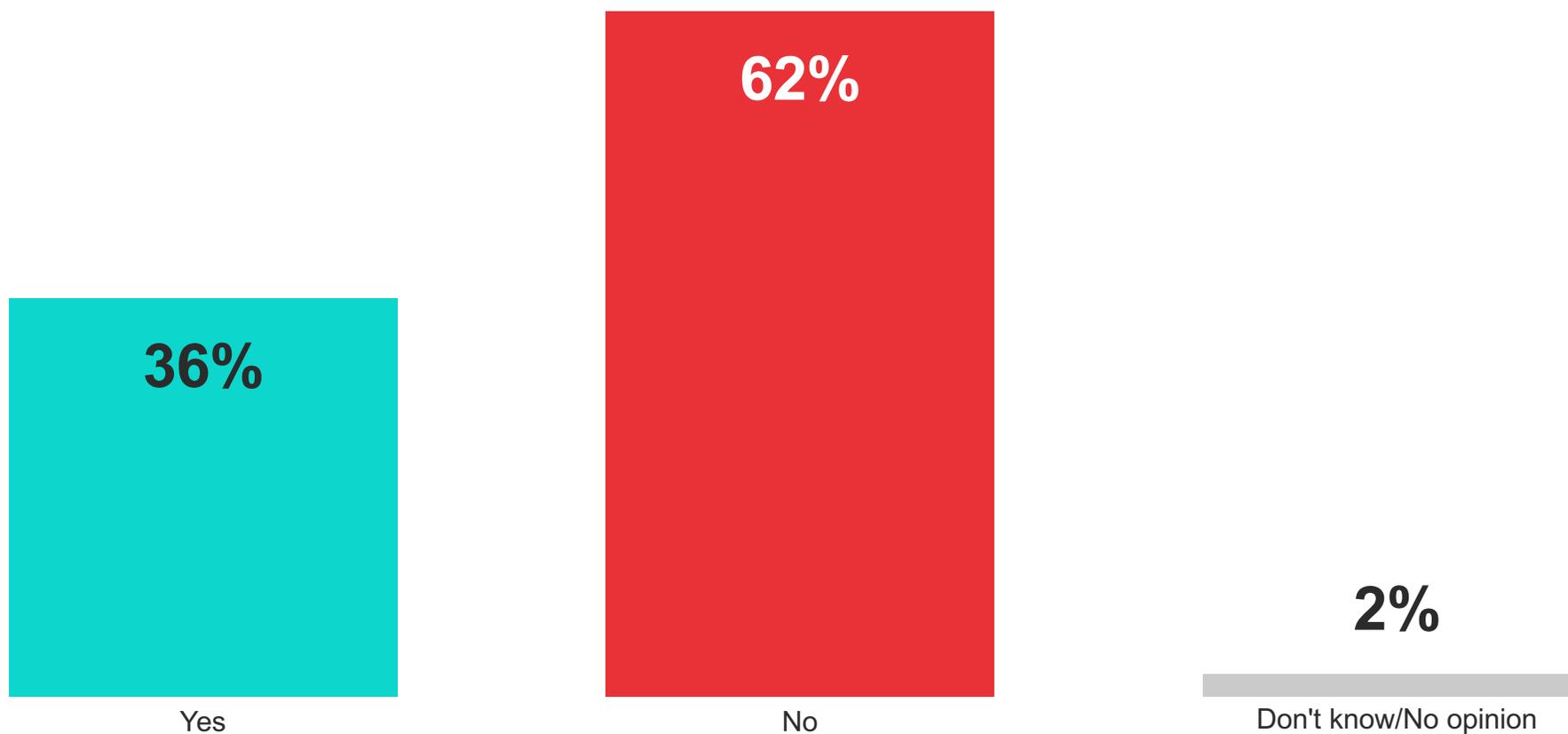
SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION, n= 236



## ACCESS TO RESOURCES

One third (36%) of seniors say they have considered seeking counseling or treatment for a mental health condition.

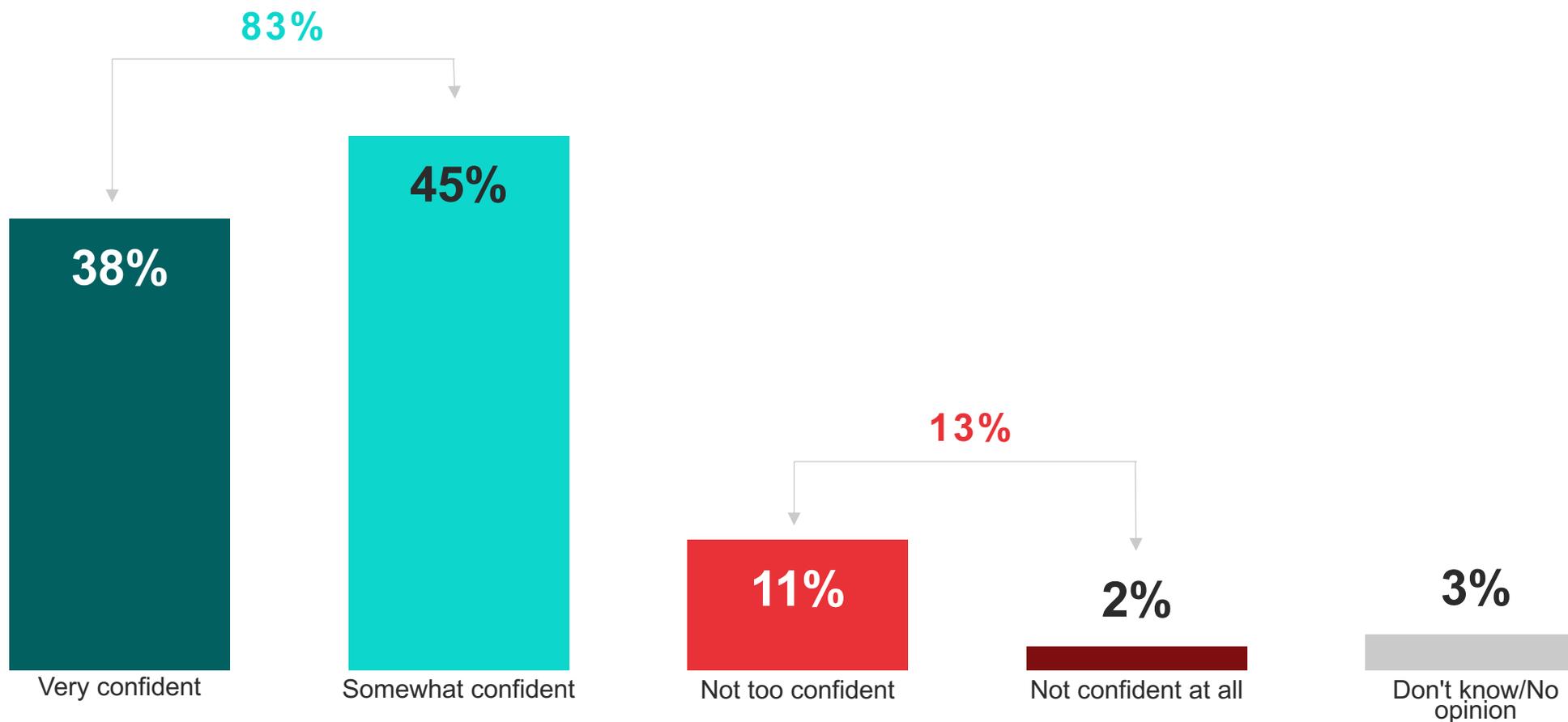
Have you ever considered seeking counseling or treatment for a mental health condition?



ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Four in five (83%) seniors say they are confident that they would know where to look for mental health resources.

How confident are you, if at all, that you would know where to look for mental health resources?

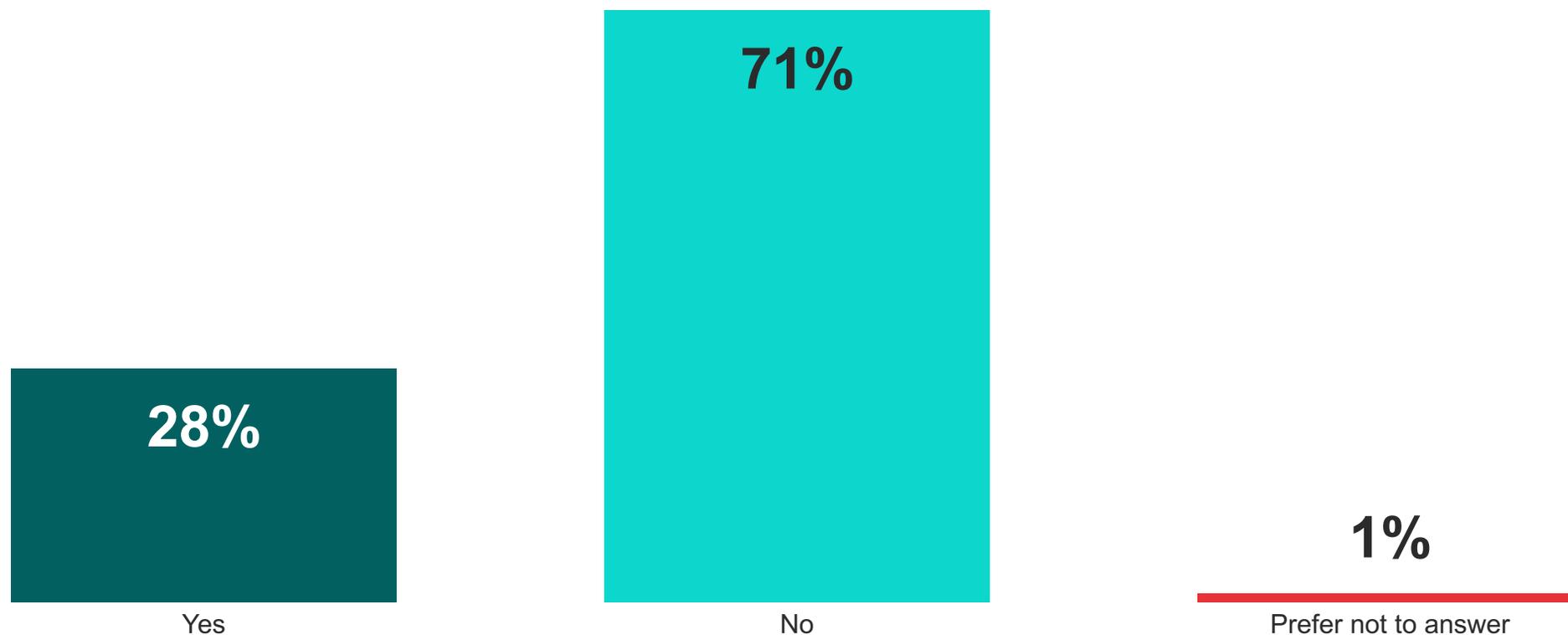


## ACCESS TO RESOURCES

A majority (71%) of seniors have never been screened for a mental health condition.

As a reminder, behavioral health describes the connection between behaviors and the health and well-being of the body and the mind. Mental health refers to someone's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Often, mental health is considered a subset of behavioral health.

Have you ever been screened for a mental health condition?

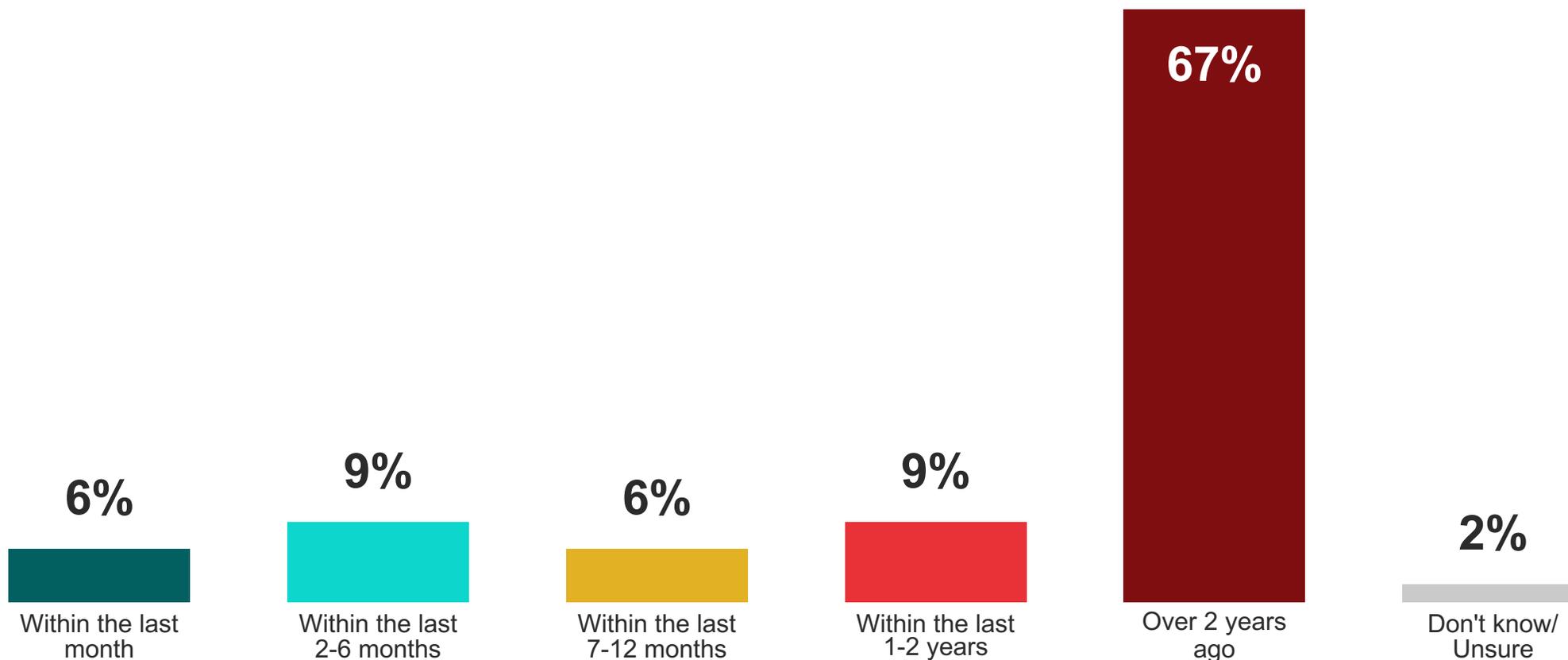


## ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Among those who have been previously screened for a mental health condition, a majority say the last time they were screened was over two years ago (67%).

You mentioned earlier that you have previously been screened for a mental health condition. When was the last time you were screened for a mental health condition?

SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE BEEN SCREENED FOR A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION, n= 282

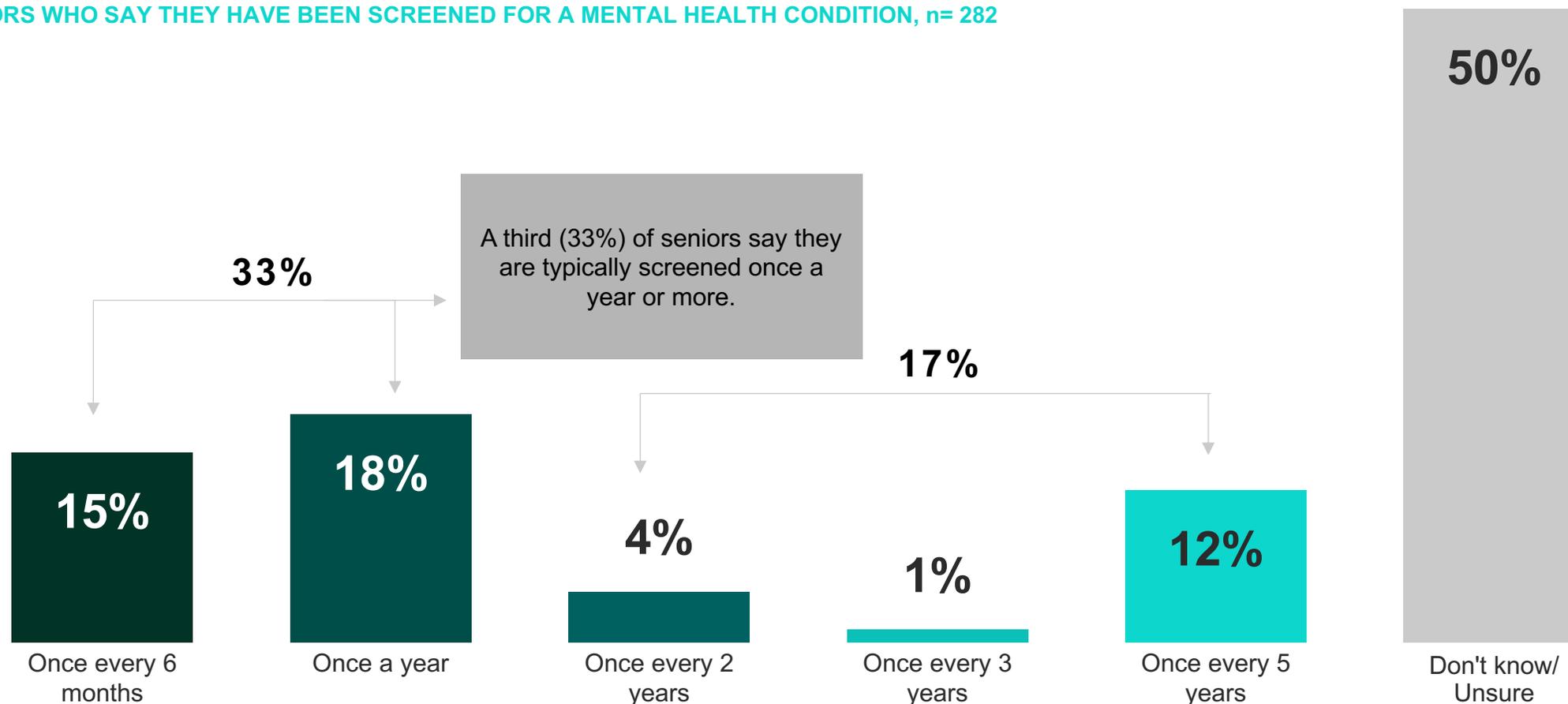


ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Among those who have been screened for a mental health condition, half of seniors (50%) are unsure of how frequently they are typically screened for a mental health condition.

How frequently are you typically screened for a mental health condition?

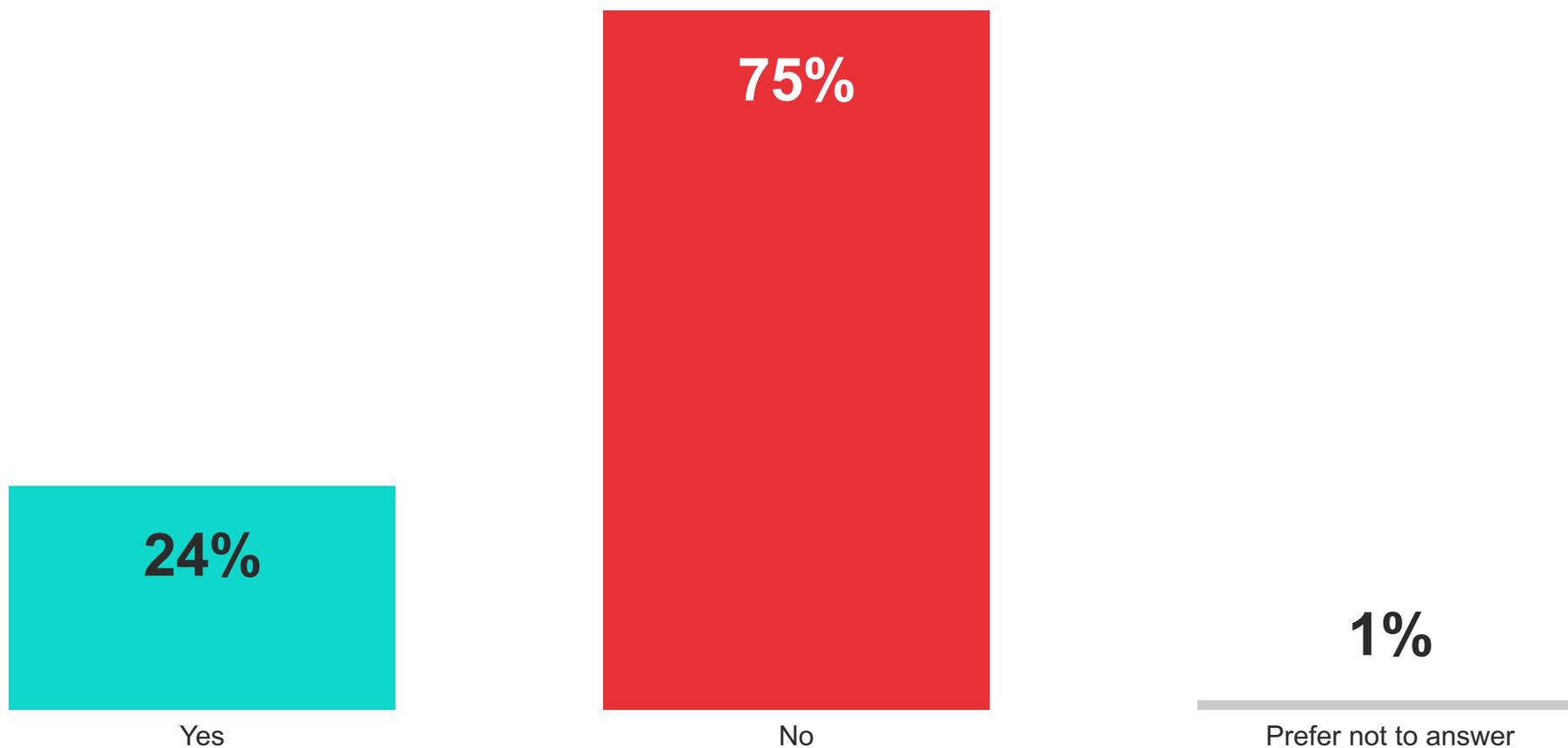
SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE BEEN SCREENED FOR A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION, n= 282



## ACCESS TO RESOURCES

A quarter (24%) of seniors say they have been diagnosed with a mental health condition.

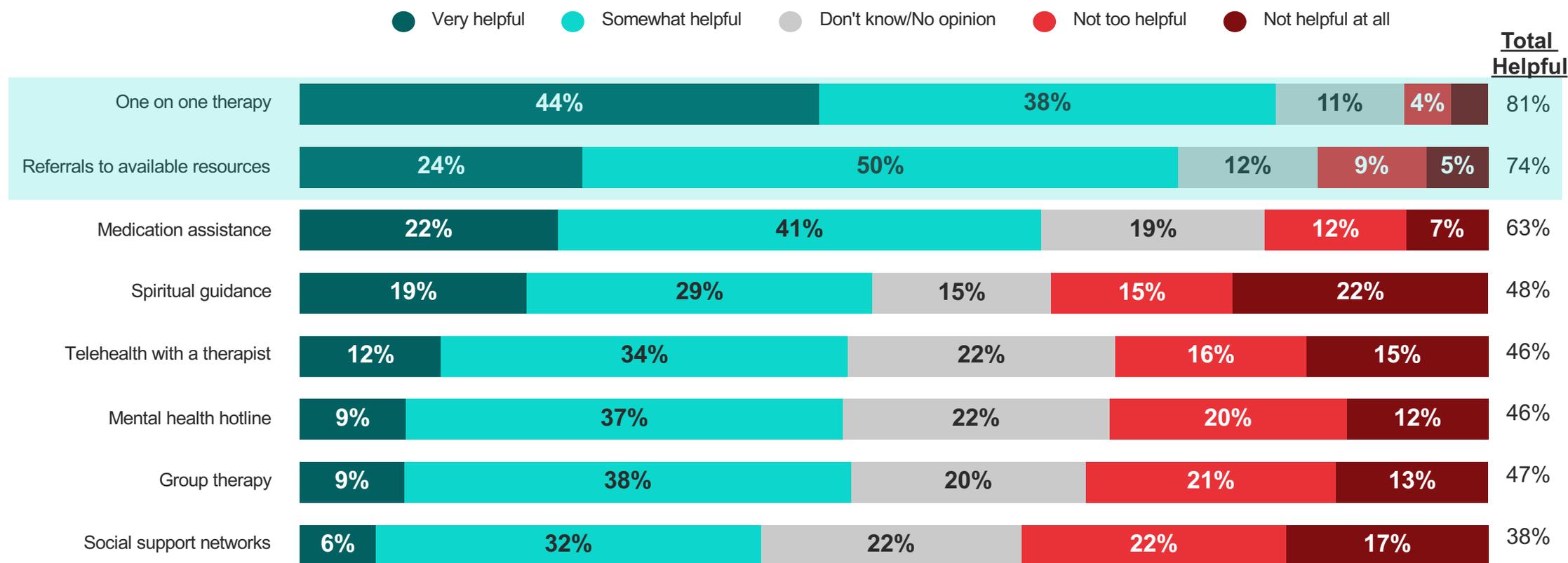
Have you ever been diagnosed with a mental health condition?



ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Seniors say one on one therapy (81%) and referrals to available resources (74%) would be helpful to helping them with their mental health concerns.

How helpful would the following resources be to helping you with your mental health concerns, if at all?



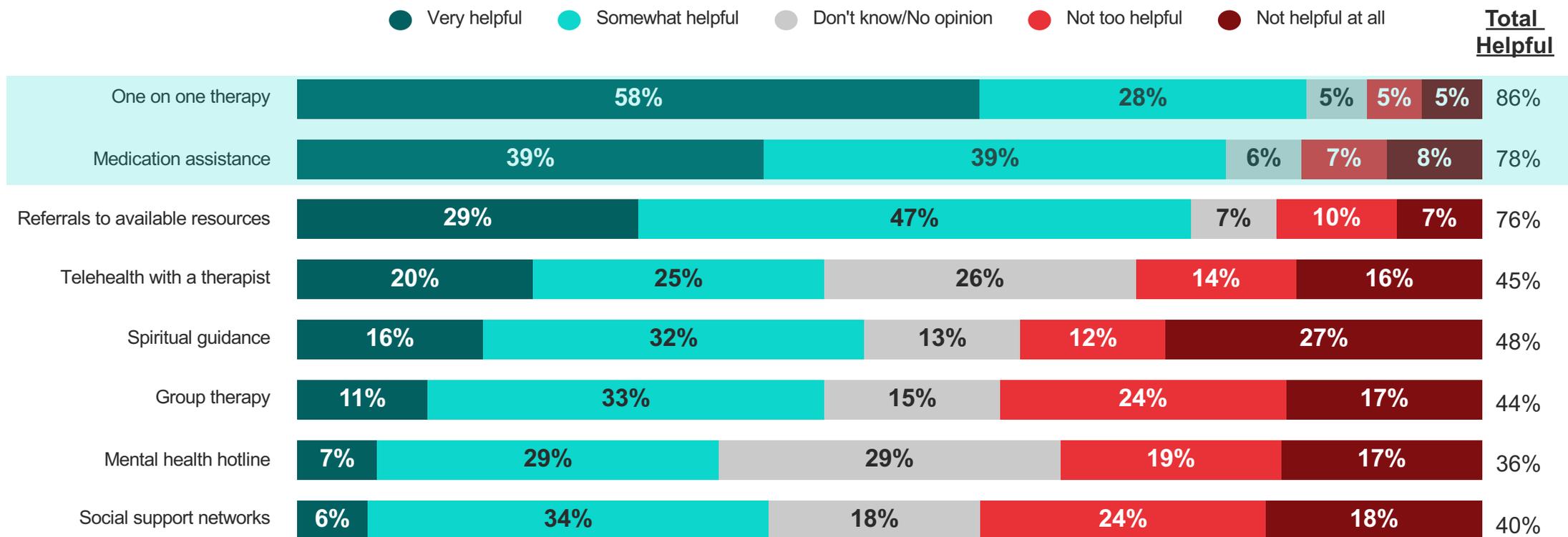
Seniors are divided on whether social support networks or group therapy would be helpful to helping them with their mental health concerns.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

A majority of seniors diagnosed with a mental health condition say one on one therapy (86%) and medication assistance (78%) would be helpful to helping them with their mental health concerns.

How helpful would the following resources be to helping you with your mental health concerns, if at all?

SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION, n= 236



Seniors who say they have been diagnosed with a mental health condition (78%) are more likely than all seniors (63%) to say that medication assistance would be helpful to helping them with their mental health concerns.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

A quarter of seniors (23%) say they have already accessed one on one therapy for their mental health concerns, while a majority (63%) say they have not accessed a tested resource.

Which of the following resources, if any, have you already accessed for your mental health concerns?



ACCESS TO RESOURCES

A majority of seniors who have been diagnosed with mental health concerns have already accessed one on one therapy (67%) and medication assistance (58%) for their mental health concerns.

Which of the following resources, if any, have you already accessed for your mental health concerns?

SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION, n= 236

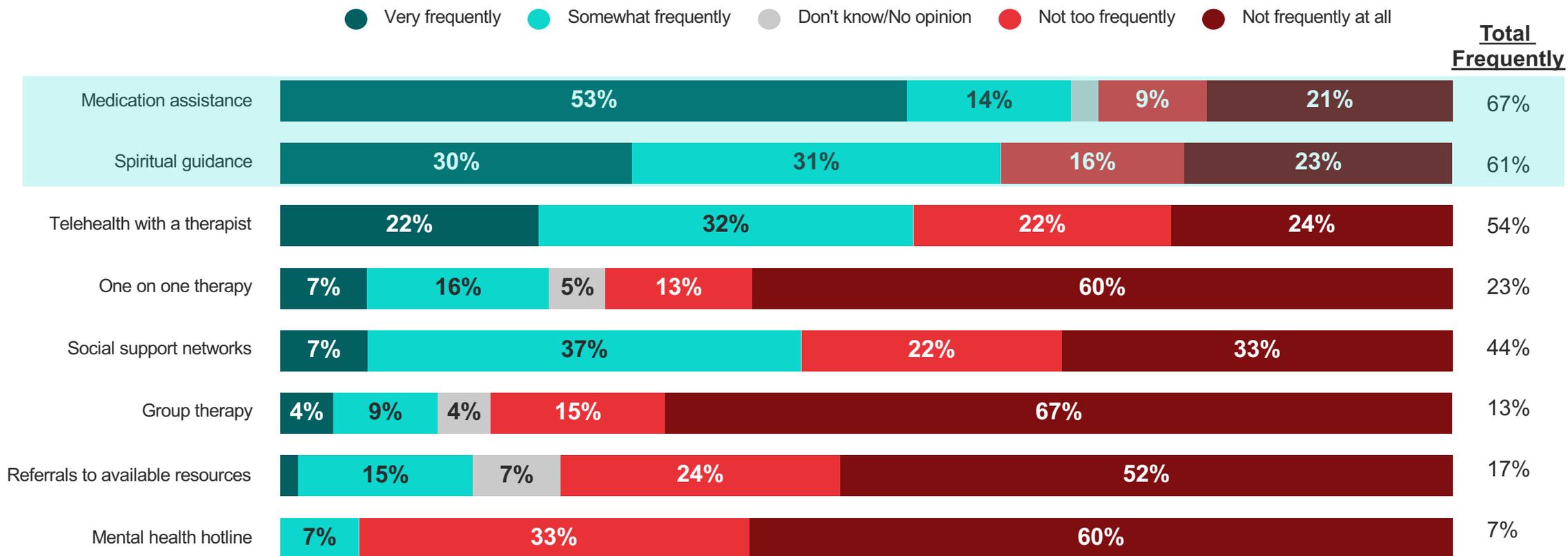


A fifth of seniors (18%) who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition have already accessed telehealth with a therapist for their mental health concerns.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Of the services tested, seniors are most likely to say they frequently use medication assistance (67%), spiritual guidance (61%), and telehealth (54%).

And, how frequently, if at all, do you use these services?



→ 44% of seniors say they use social support networks frequently.

AGENDA

CONCERN AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS ON  
MENTAL HEALTH

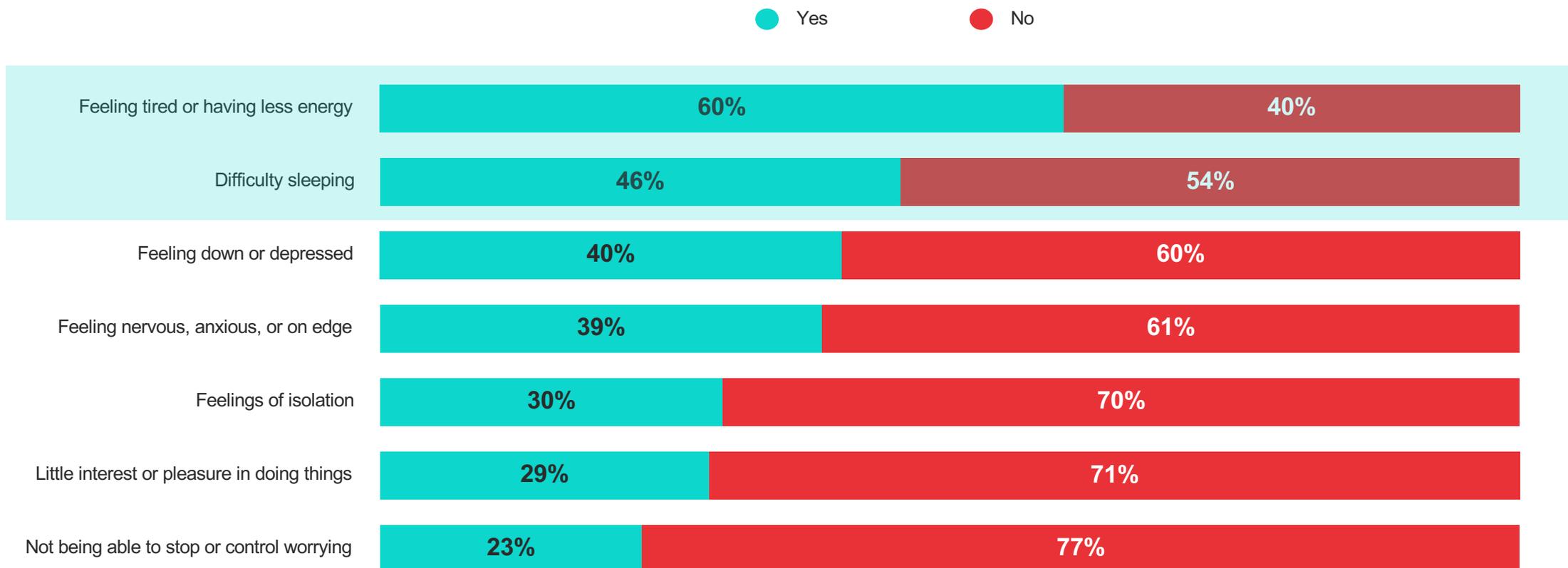
RESPONDENT PROFILE



IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

During the last year, seniors have experienced feeling tired or having less energy (60%) and difficulty sleeping (46%) among other symptoms of mental health conditions.

Have you experienced any of the following during the last year?

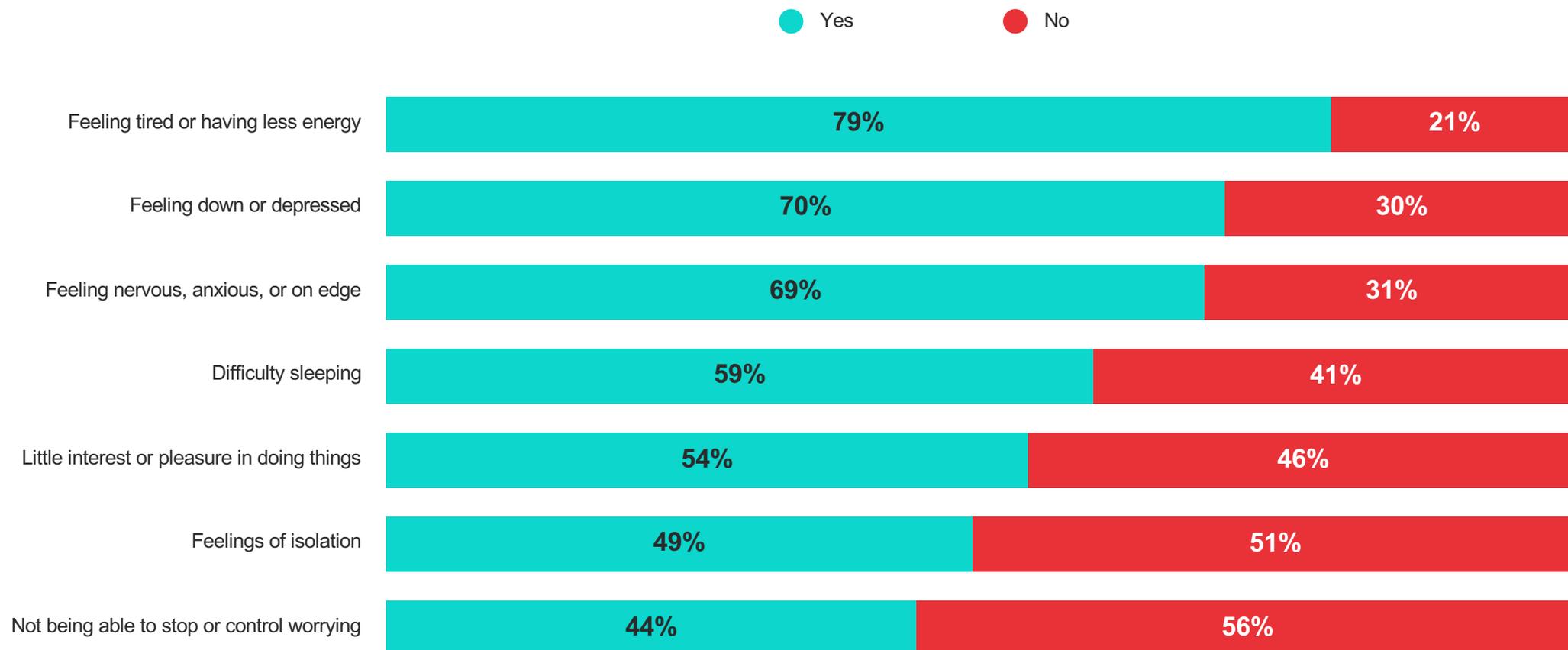


IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Seniors who say they have been diagnosed with a mental health condition are more likely than all seniors to say they have experienced mental health symptoms.

Have you experienced any of the following during the last year?

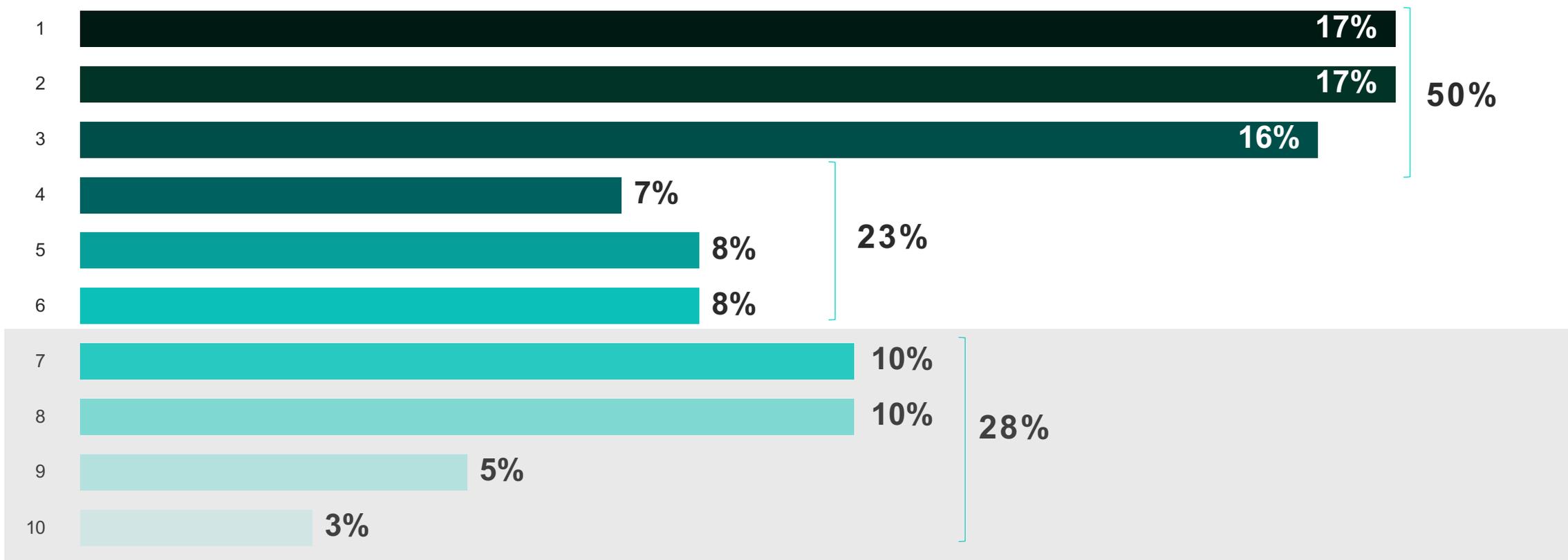
SENIORS WHO SAY THEY HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION, n= 236



IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

When asked to rate how much of an impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on their mental health on a scale of 1-10, a quarter of seniors (28%) rated 7-10, indicating heavy to extreme impact.

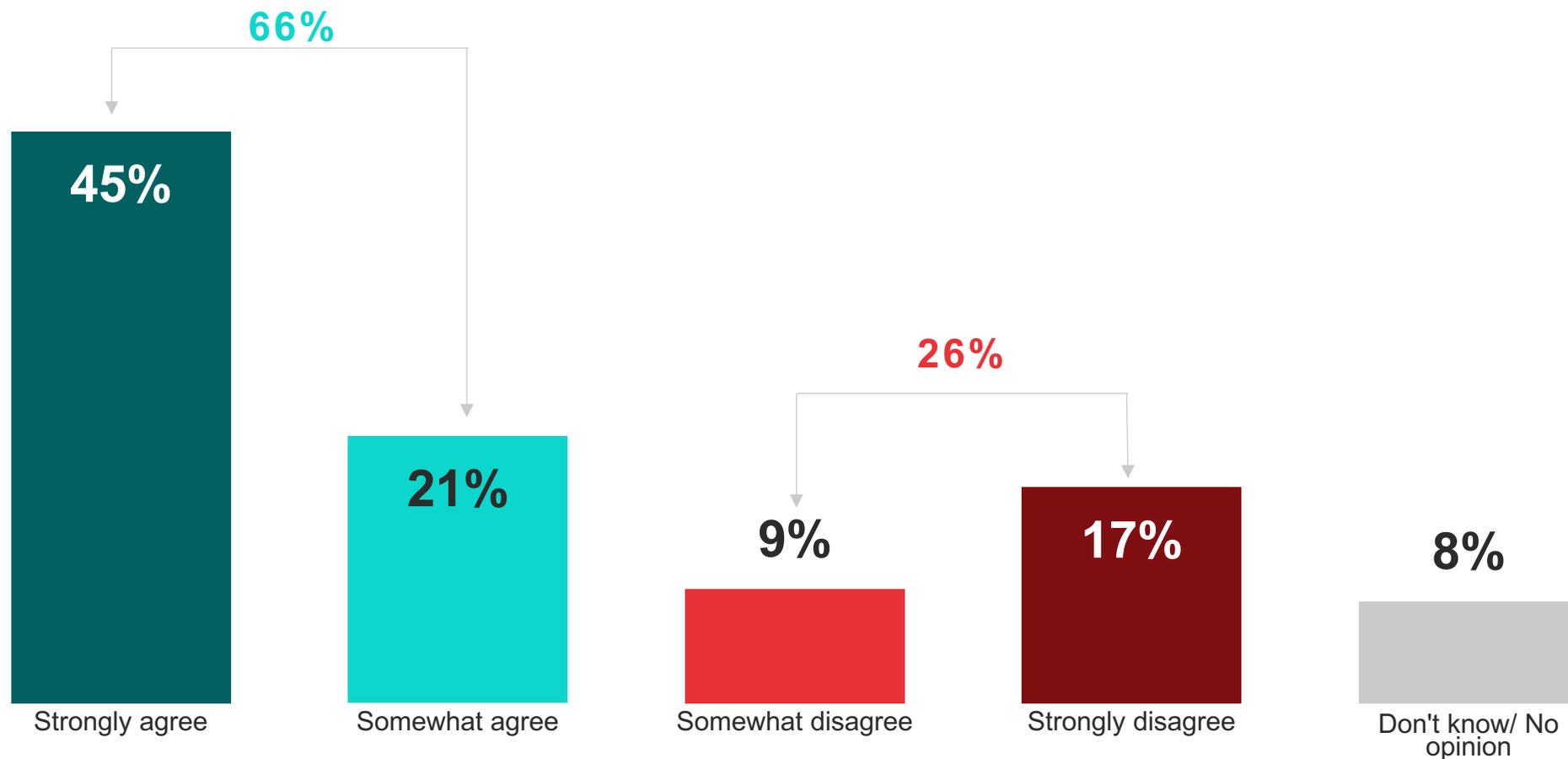
On a scale from 1 to 10, how much of an impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on your mental health, where 1 indicates it has had no impact and 10 indicates it has had an extreme impact on your mental health.



## IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Two thirds (66%) of seniors agree that gun violence should be considered a public health issue, including 45% that *strongly agree*.

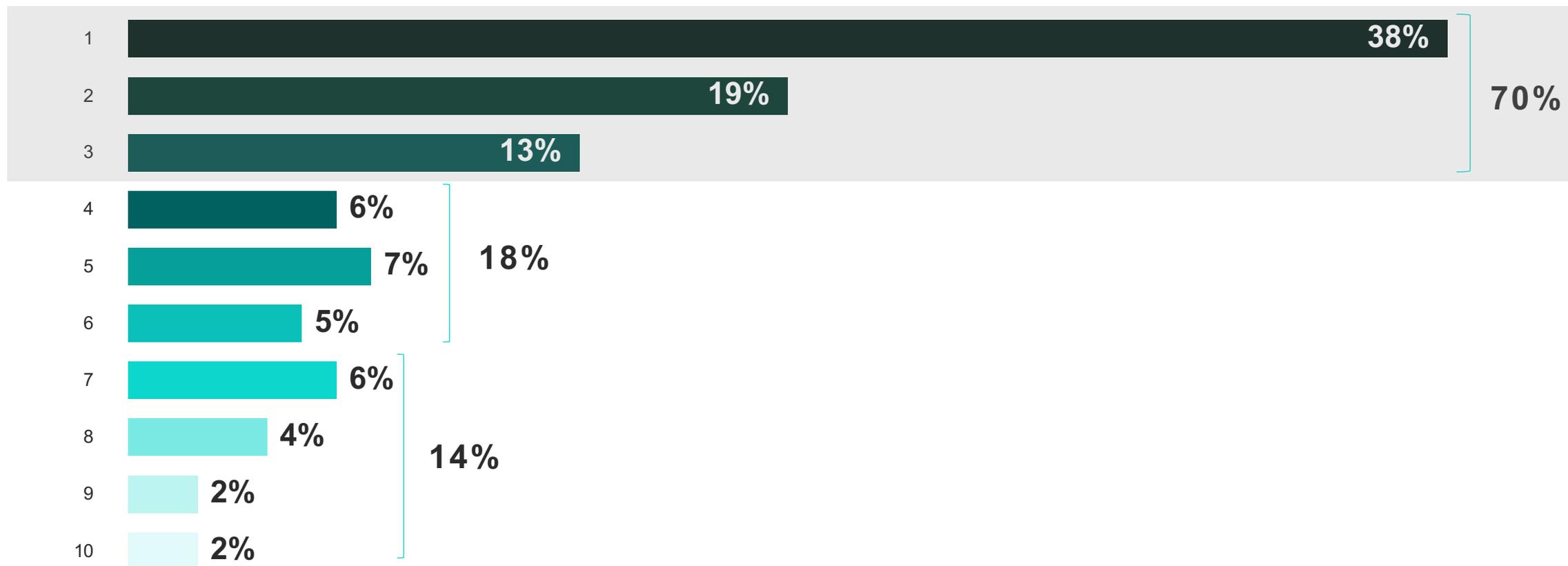
Do you agree or disagree that gun violence should be considered a public health issue?



IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

When asked to rate how much of an impact gun violence has had on their mental health on a scale of 1-10, 70% of seniors rated 1-3, indicating little to no impact.

On a scale from 1 to 10 how much of an impact has gun violence had on your mental health where 1 indicates it has had no impact and 10 indicates it has had an extreme impact on your mental health.

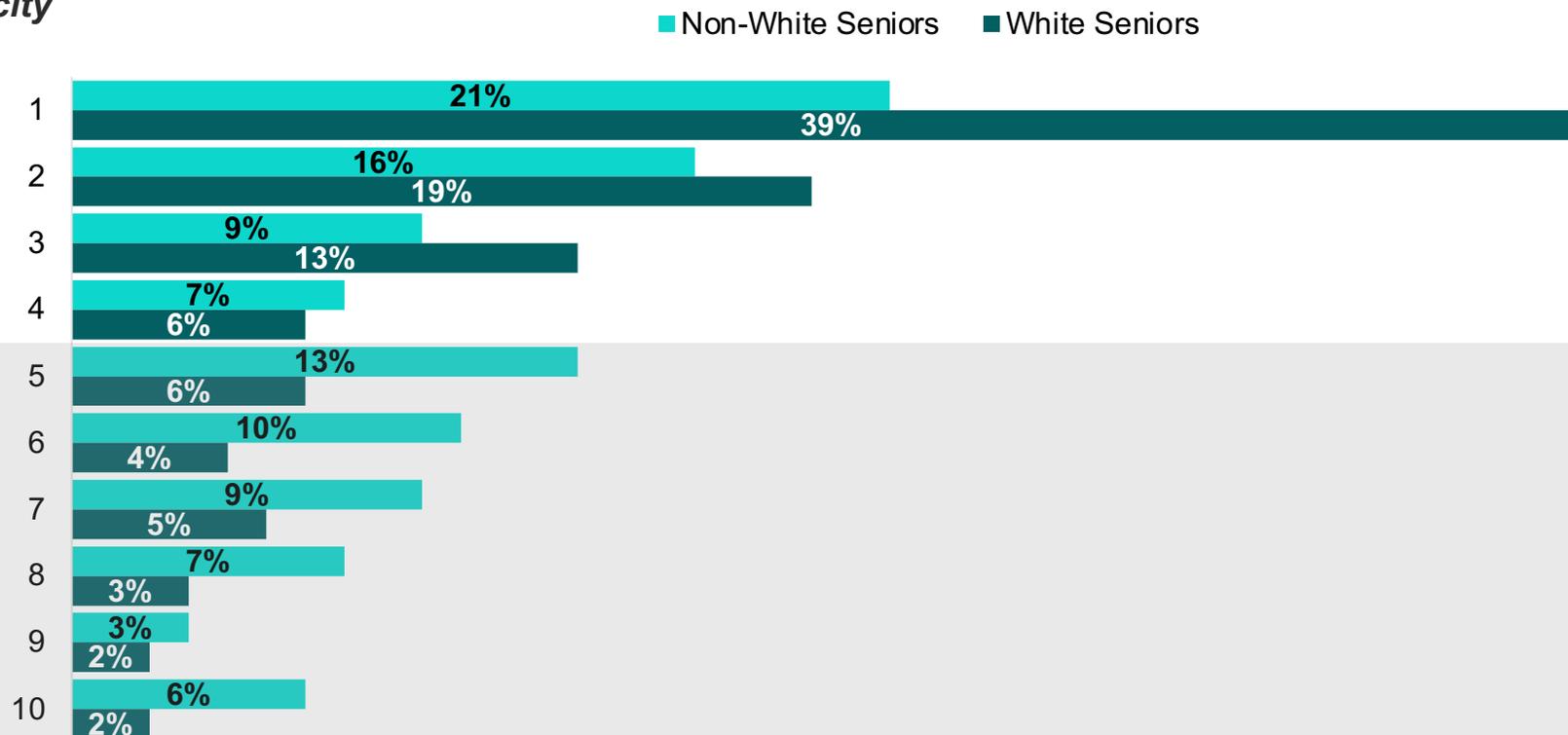


IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

When asked to rate how much of an impact gun violence has had on their mental health on a scale of 1-10, non-white seniors are more likely than white seniors to rate the impact 5-10, indicating some to extreme impact.

On a scale from 1 to 10 how much of an impact has gun violence had on your mental health where 1 indicates it has had no impact and 10 indicates it has had an extreme impact on your mental health.

**Ethnicity**



AGENDA

CONCERN AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS ON  
MENTAL HEALTH

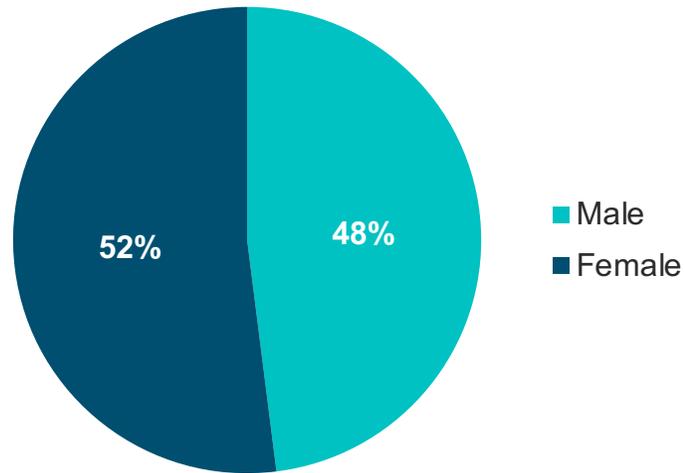
RESPONDENT PROFILE



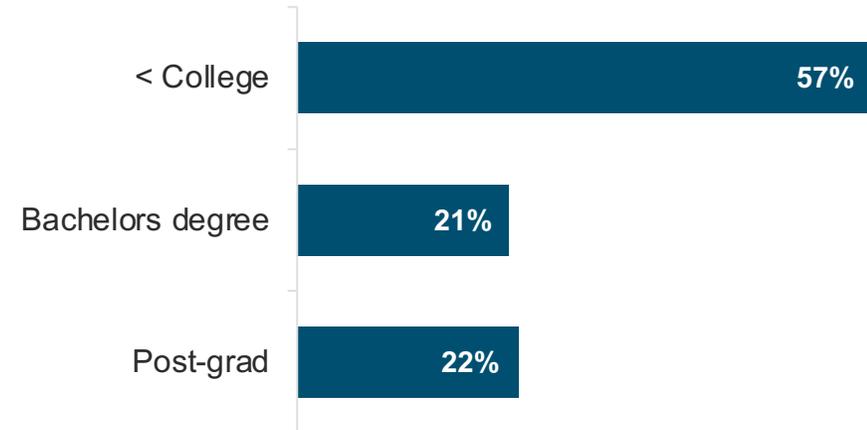
RESPONDENT PROFILE

Demographic Information

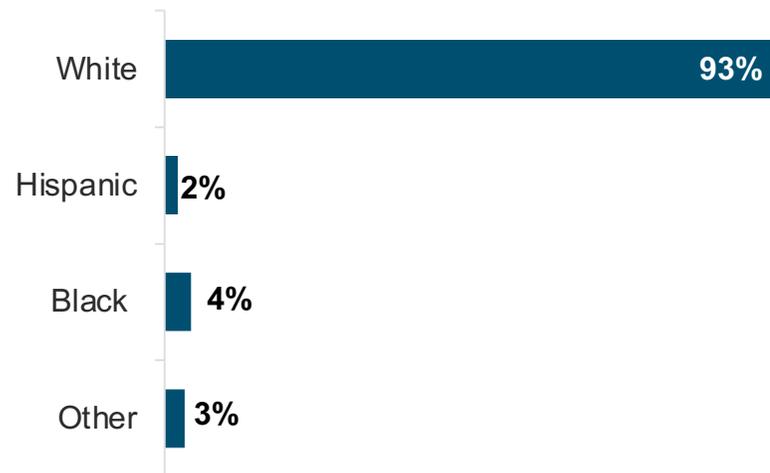
Gender



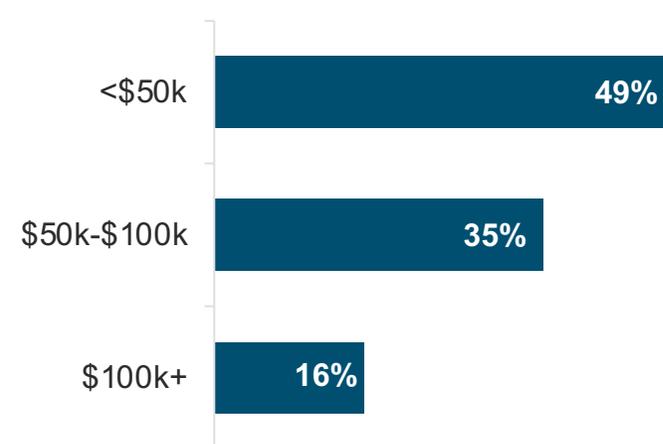
Education



Race/Ethnicity



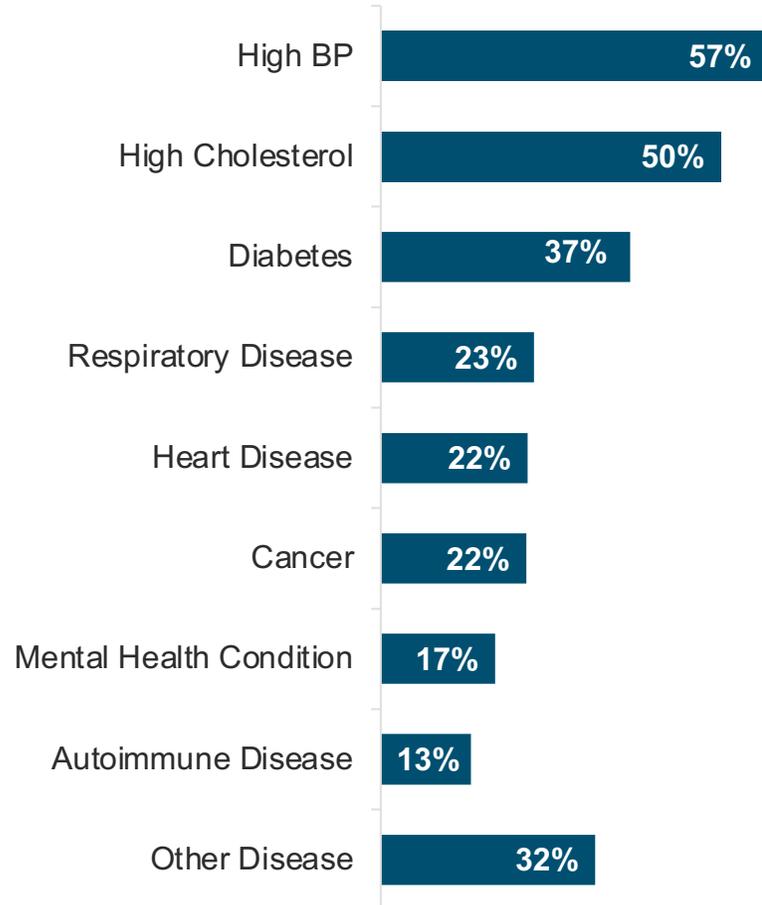
Income



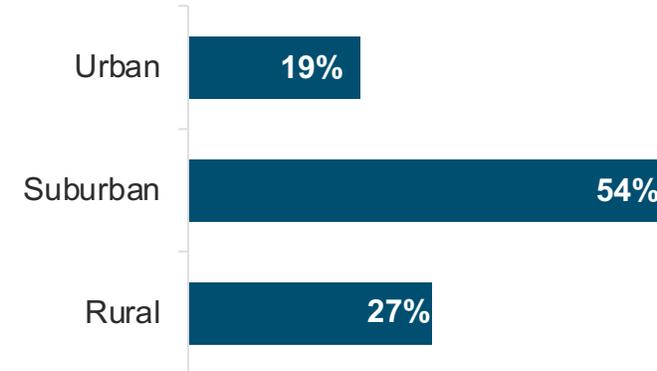
RESPONDENT PROFILE

Demographic Information

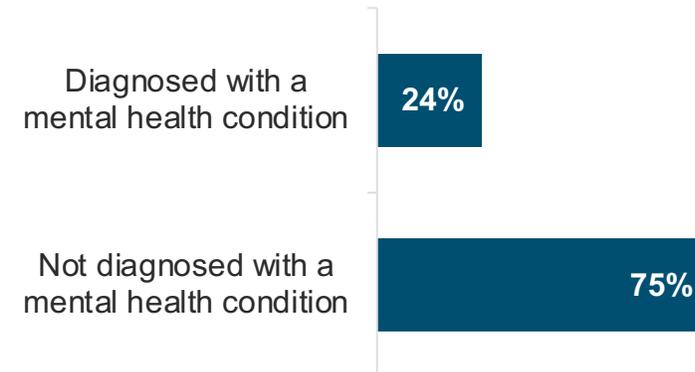
*Chronic Illnesses*



*Community Type*



*Mental Health Diagnoses*





**MORNING CONSULT<sup>®</sup>**