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Your Voice Matters

Focus on Alberta Emergency Departments

June 2022

>> Study information

Research methodology

- Online survey fielded via the albertapatient online research panel
 - Field dates: June 14 - 24, 2022
 - Sample size: n=4,398
- Results reflect a representative sample of patients in Alberta
- Data was weighted to reflect gender, age and region of Albertans who have used the health care system within the past year
- A random stratified sample of albertapatient.ca panelists were invited to complete the survey. For interpretation purposes, a probability sample of this size would yield a margin of error of +/- 1.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20 at a 95% confidence interval
 - Accuracy of sub-samples of the data decline based on sample size

This research was conducted with and for the albertapatient.ca online community, operated by the Alberta Medical Association and research partner ThinkHQ Public Affairs Inc.

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Perceptions of Alberta Emergency Departments





Perceptions of Alberta Emergency Departments

Quality & Timeliness of Care

There is a strong belief among patients in Alberta that wait times in Alberta's Emergency Departments today are long (84% characterize them as such), and perceived timeliness of care has deteriorated over the past number of years. For instance, the proportion of patients who believe ED wait times are “very long” today has increased by 16 percentage points since 2016.

Fully 71% of those interviewed believe timeliness of care in Alberta's EDs has declined in the past four years (vs. 5% saying “improved”).

When it comes to perceived quality of care at Alberta's EDs, the trend is similar, though more muted. A majority of patients feel that the quality of care in EDs today is “good” (though almost 3-in-10 characterize it as “bad”), however almost one-half (49%) believe the quality of care in EDs has declined over the past four years.



Perceptions of Alberta Emergency Departments

Quality & Timeliness of Care ... continued

Perceptions of quality are closely correlated to timeliness. Those who are most experiencing longer waits at their last trip to an ED provide considerably lower ratings of the quality of care and are more likely to perceive a decline over the past few years.

Other variances include:

- Positive ratings tend to decline with age and are more common among those in the highest income bracket and those without chronic conditions



Perceptions of Alberta Emergency Departments

Understanding Triage at the ED

While most patients generally understand how patients are evaluated and cared for when visiting an ED, there is a substantial minority who are not entirely clear on the process (which likely creates some confusion and frustration).

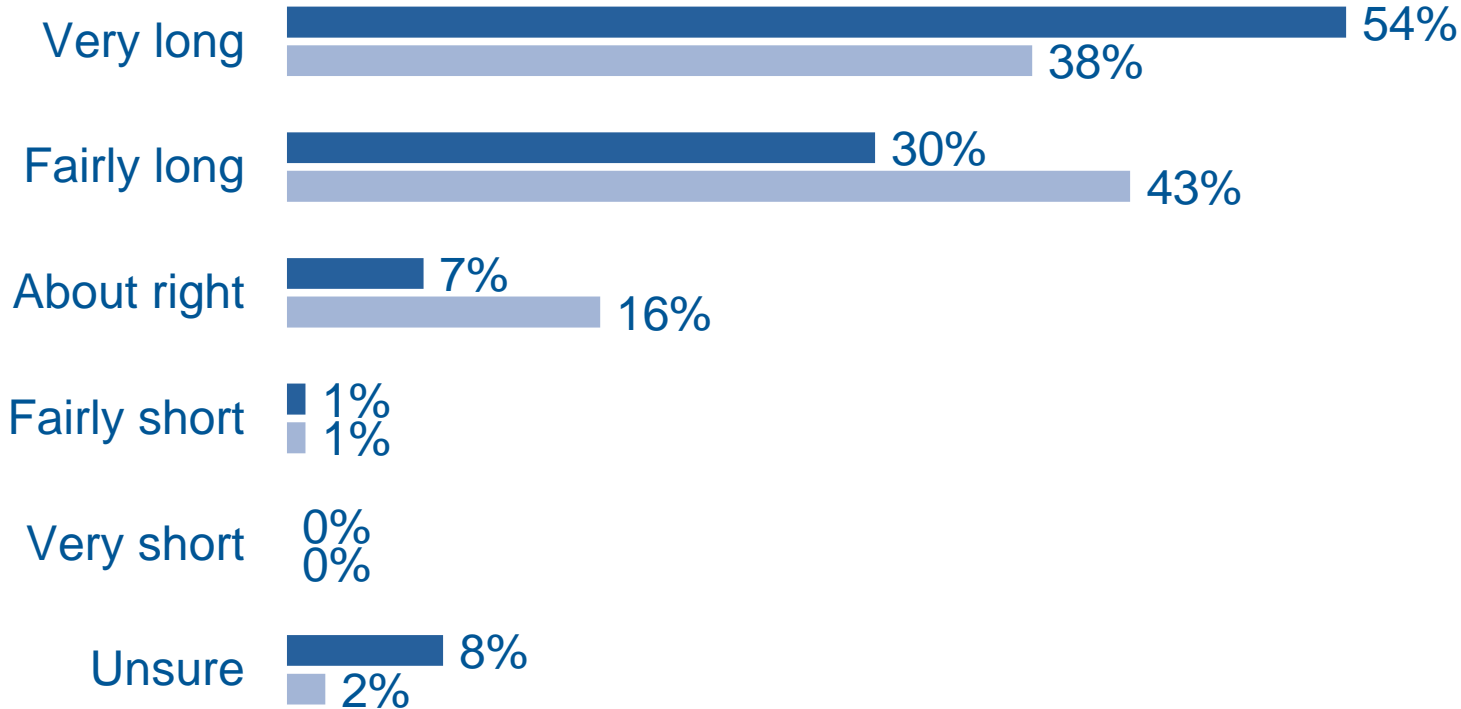
Almost six-in-ten (57%) correctly note that patients at the ED are “always seen in order of medical priority, regardless of arrival time”. In contrast, nearly four-in-ten (38%) believe that “patients with critical medical priorities are seen first, then first-come, first-served”, and 1% think there essentially isn’t any medical triage (with care provided solely on arrival time).

This is re-enforced by more modest understanding of “monitoring and re-prioritizing” among patients, when asked about different ED “check-points” in the system.

>> Perceptions of Emergency Department Wait Times in Alberta

Compared to your expectations of timely care in the health care system, do you think that Emergency Department wait times in Alberta today are long, short or about right?

■ 2022 (n=4,398) ■ 2016 (n=1,350)



	2016	2022
Wait times are long	81%	84%
Wait times are short	1%	1%
NET long*	+80	+83

Base: All respondents | *NET: Long minus short



Perceptions of Emergency Department Wait Times in Alberta

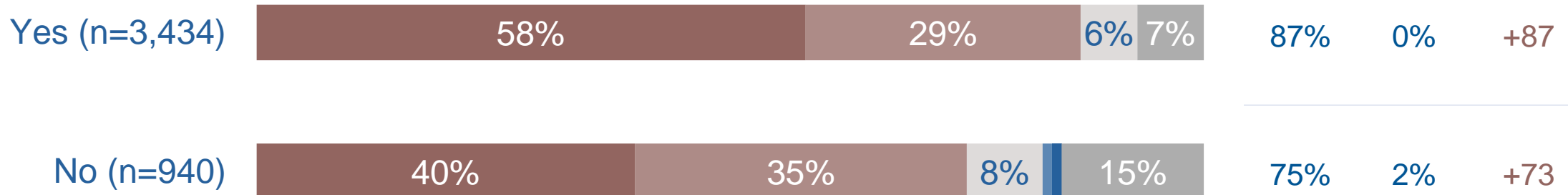
By Questioned going to Emergency Department

Compared to your expectations of timely care in the health care system, do you think that Emergency Department wait times in Alberta today are ...

■ Very long ■ Fairly long ■ About right ■ Fairly short ■ Very short ■ Unsure



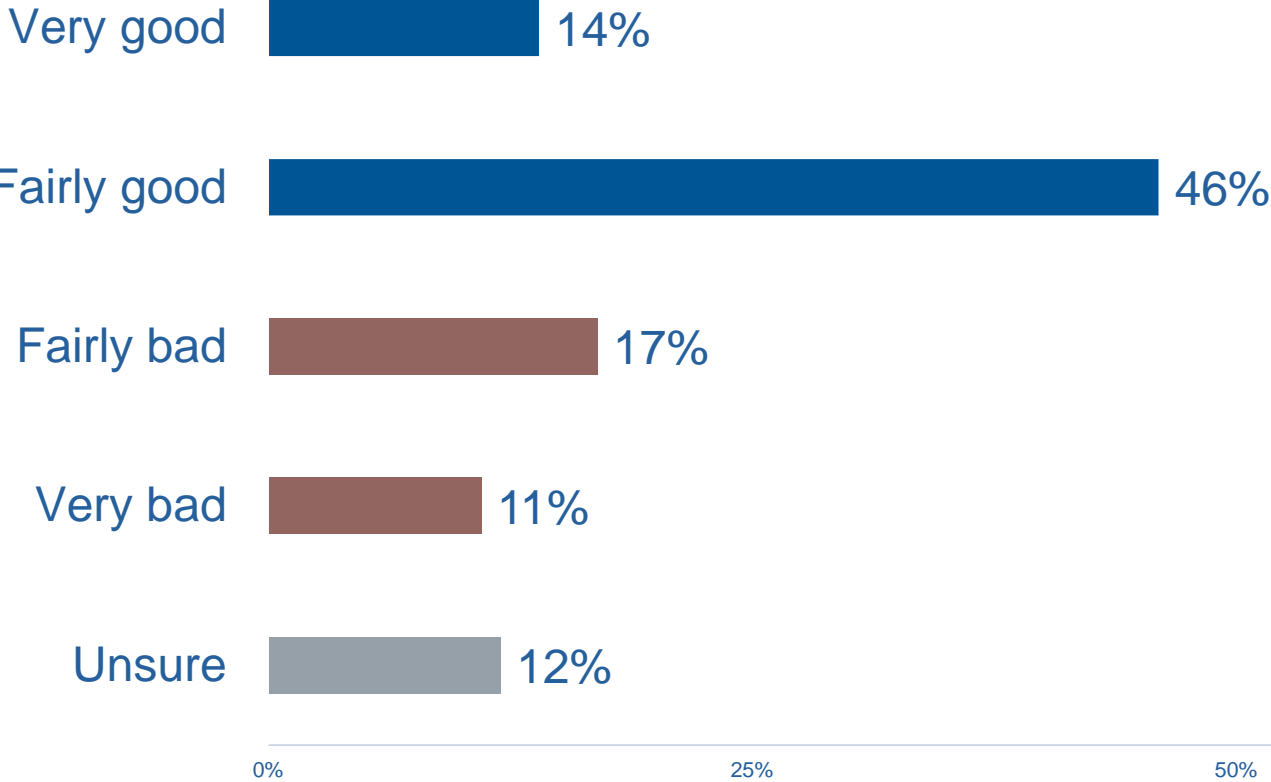
Questioned going to Emergency Department



Base: All respondents | *NET: Long minus short

>> Perceptions of Quality of Care Provided by Emergency Departments

And compared to your expectation of quality care in the health care system, do you think that the quality of care provide by Emergency Departments in Alberta today is good or bad?



Quality of care is good	60%
Quality of care is bad	28%
NET*	+32

Base: All respondents (n=4,398) | *NET Quality of care: Good minus bad

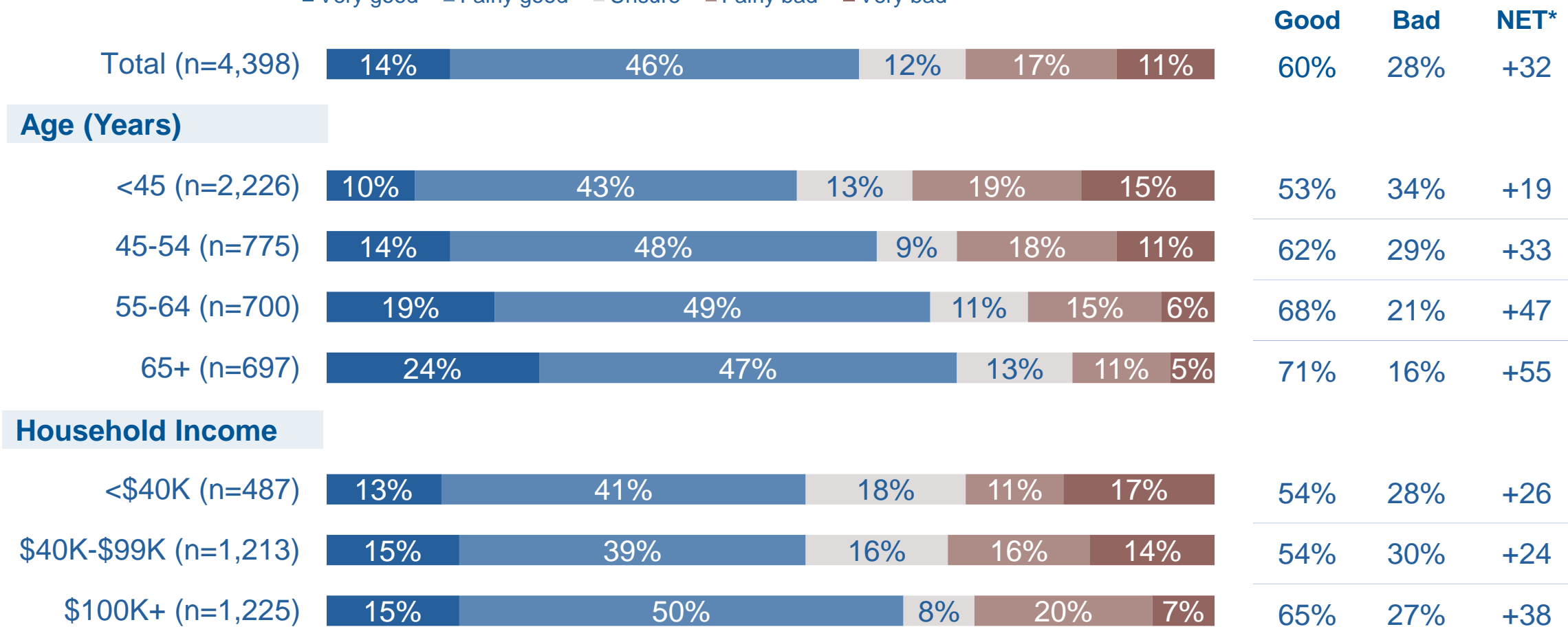


Perceptions of Quality of Care Provided by Emergency Departments

By Age and Household Income

Compared to your expectation of quality care in the health care system, is the quality of care provide by Emergency Departments in Alberta today

■ Very good ■ Fairly good ■ Unsure ■ Fairly bad ■ Very bad



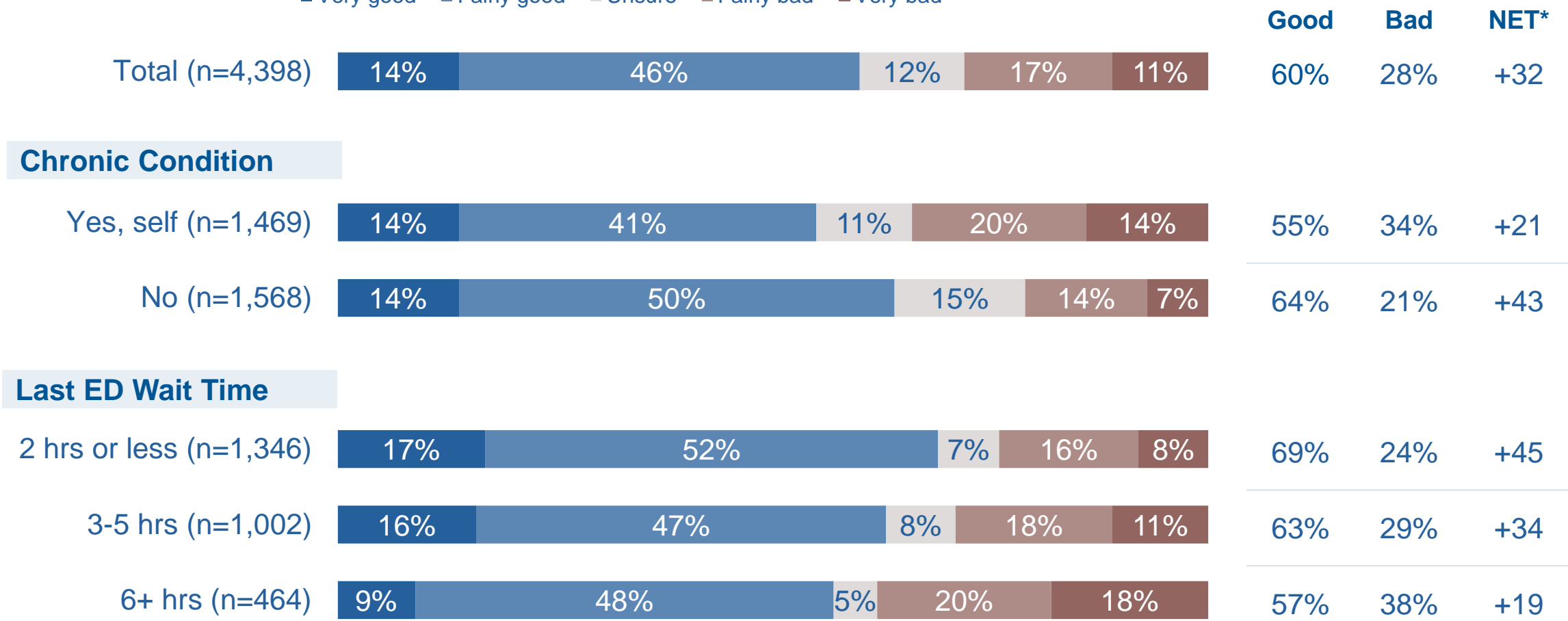
Base: All respondents | *NET Quality of care: Good minus bad



Perceptions of Quality of Care Provided by Emergency Departments By Chronic Condition and Last ED Visit Wait Time

Compared to your expectation of quality care in the health care system, is the quality of care provide by Emergency Departments in Alberta today

■ Very good ■ Fairly good ■ Unsure ■ Fairly bad ■ Very bad



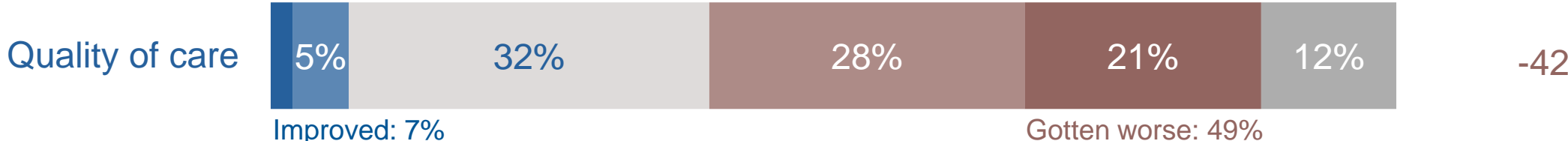
Base: All respondents | *NET Quality of care: Good minus bad

>> Emergency Department Timeliness and Quality of Care

Thinking about these same two elements of care in Alberta's Emergency Departments, timeliness and quality, do you personally feel these have improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse in Alberta over the past four years?

■ Improved a lot ■ Improved a little ■ Stayed the same ■ Gotten a little worse ■ Gotten a lot worse ■ Unsure

NET Improvement*



Base: All respondents (n=4,398) | *NET Improvement: Improved minus gotten worse

>> Emergency Department Quality of Care

By Key Demographics

Thinking about quality of care in Alberta's Emergency Departments...has this improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse over the past four years?

	Total (n=4,398)	Age (Years)				Chronic Condition	
		<45 (n=2,226)	45-54 (n=775)	55-64 (n=700)	65+ (n=697)	Yes (self) (n=1,469)	No (n=1,586)
% say Quality of Care has "Gotten Worse" (a little or a lot)	49%	53%	52%	43%	41%	54%	43%

	Total (n=4,398)	Questioned ED Visit		Last ED Visit Wait Time		
		Yes (n=3,434)	No (n=940)	2 hrs or less (n=1,346)	3-5 hrs (n=1,002)	6+ hrs (n=464)
% say Quality of Care has "Gotten Worse" (a little or a lot)	49%	54%	35%	43%	56%	59%

Base: All respondents



Emergency Department Timeliness of Care

By Key Demographics

Thinking about timeliness of care in Alberta's Emergency Departments...has this improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse over the past four years?

	Education			Income			
	Total (n=4,398)	HS (n=335)	Some PS (n=755)	Uni+ (n=2,382)	<\$40K (n=487)	\$40K-\$99K (n=1,213)	\$100K+ (n=1,225)
% say Timeliness of Care has "Gotten Worse" (a little or a lot)	71%	62%	69%	72%	63%	68%	74%

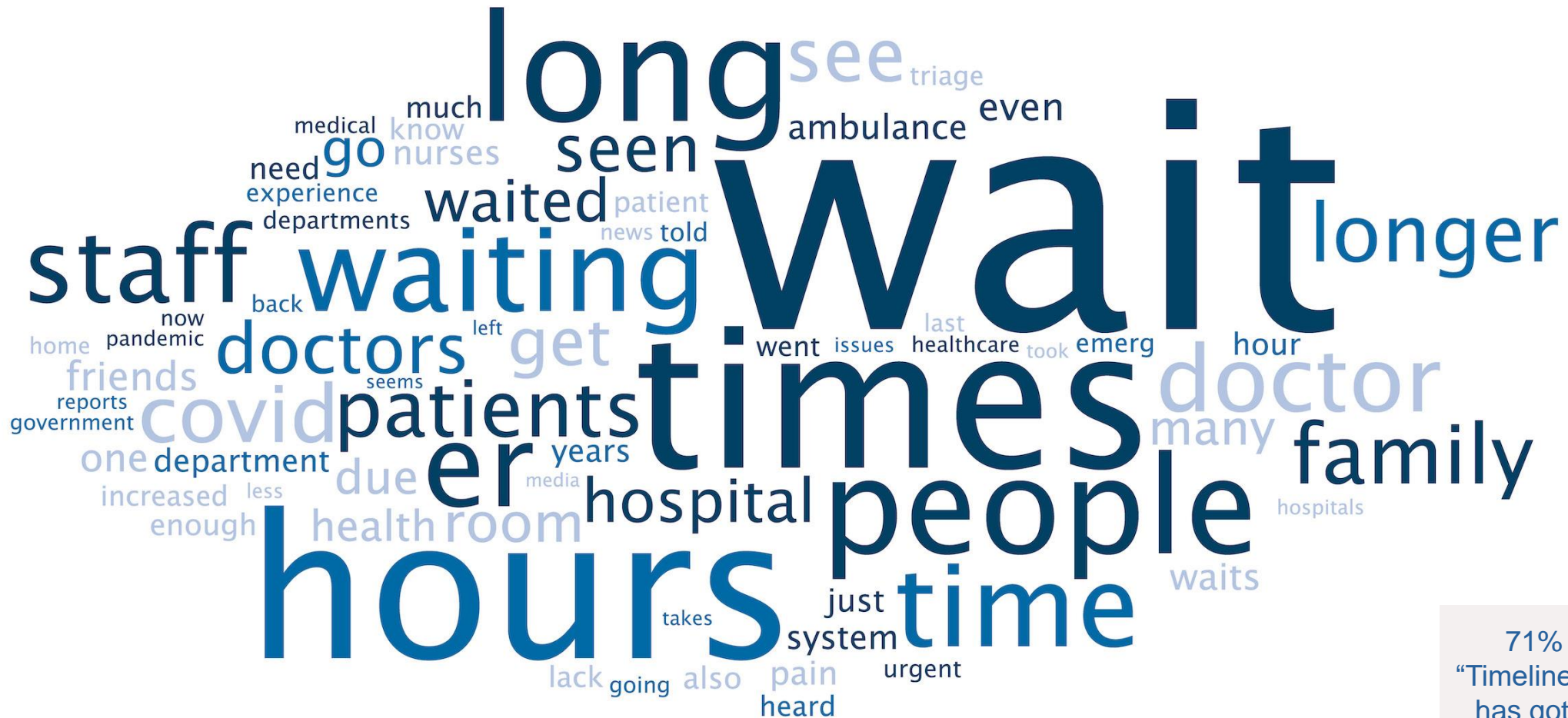
	Questioned ED Visit		Last ED Visit Wait Time			Chronic cond.		
	Total (n=4,398)	Yes (n=3,434)	No (n=940)	2 hrs/less (n=1,346)	3-5 hrs (n=1,002)	6+ hrs (n=464)	Yes (self) (n=1,469)	No (n=1,586)
% say Timeliness of Care has "Gotten Worse" (a little or a lot)	71%	74%	57%	66%	71%	83%	75%	67%

Base: All respondents



Sentiment: Emergency Departments - Worsened Timeliness of Care

You mentioned that you feel the timeliness of care in Emergency Departments has gotten worse in the past few years. Why do you say that?

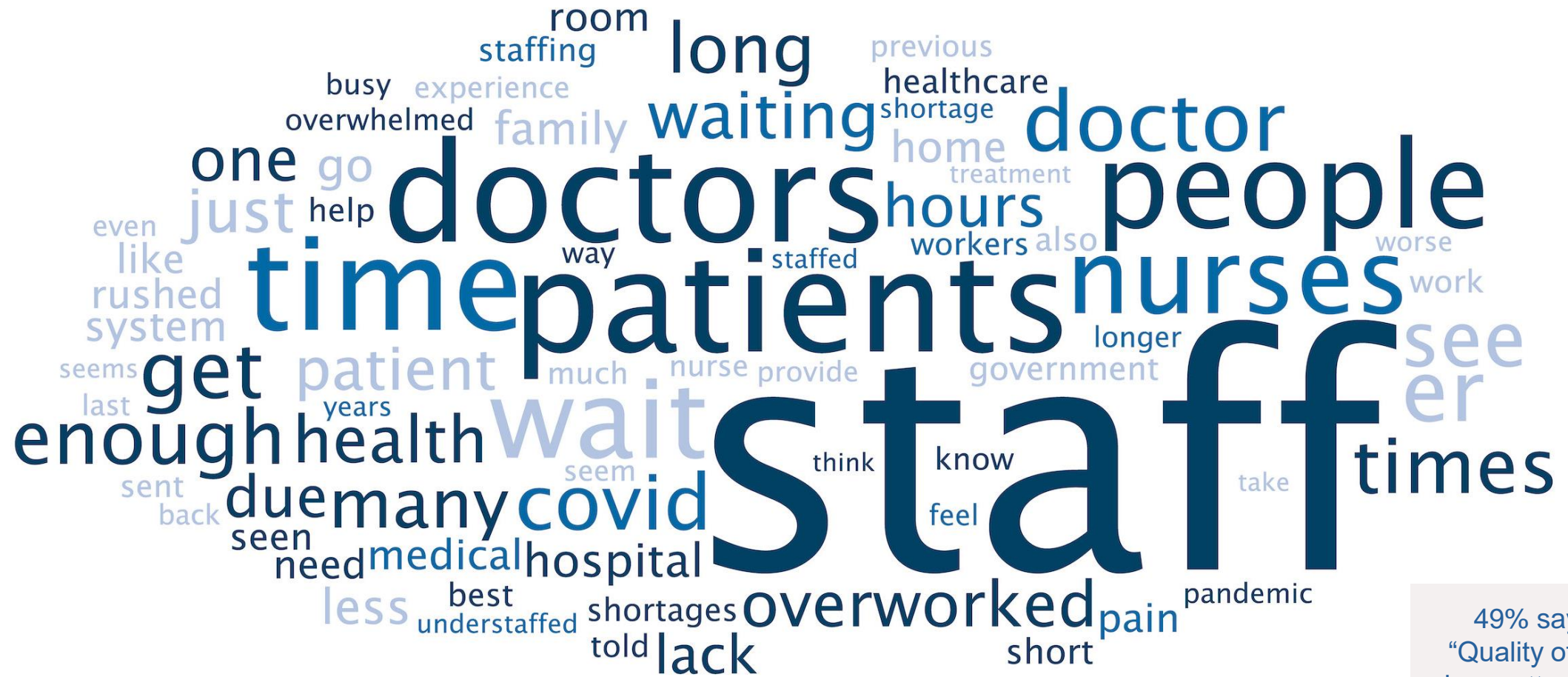


71% say ED
"Timeliness of Care"
has gotten worse

Base: Those who say ED timeliness of care has gotten worse

>> Sentiment: Emergency Departments - Worsened Quality of Care

You mentioned that you feel the quality of care in Emergency Departments has gotten worse in the past few years. Why do you say that?

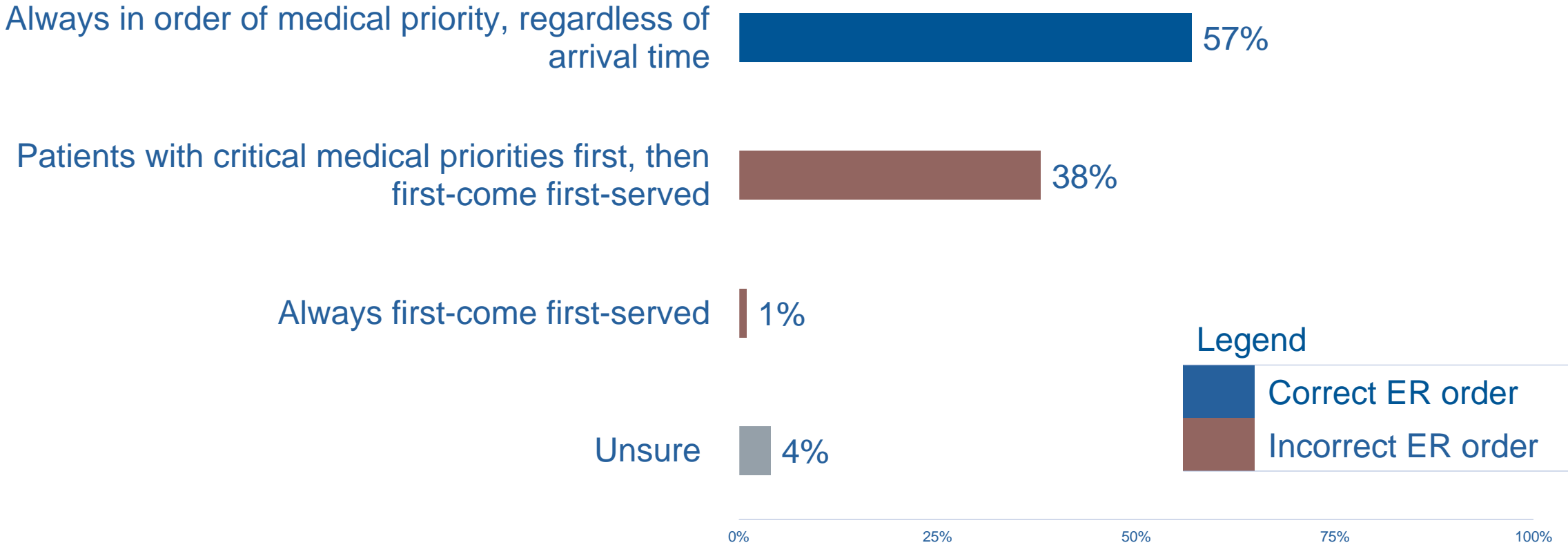


49% say ED
"Quality of Care"
has gotten worse

Base: Those who say ED quality of care has gotten worse

>> Understanding of Emergency Department Priority

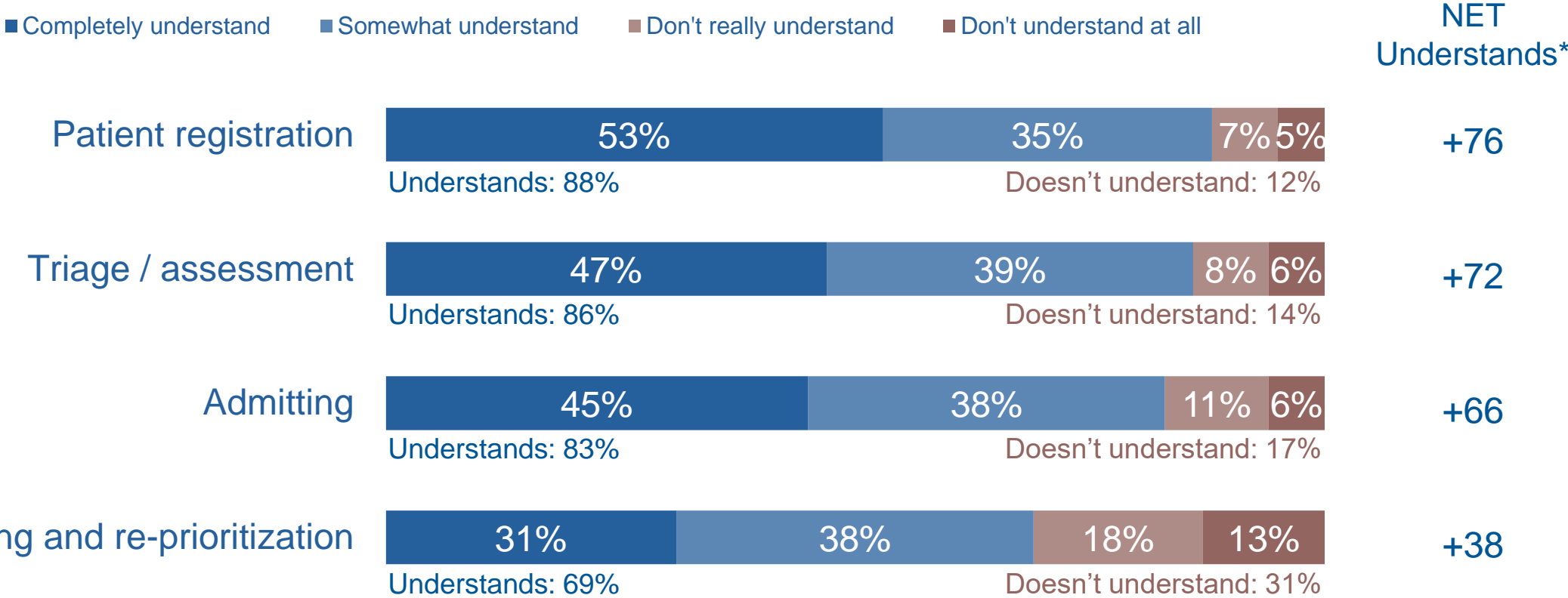
To the best of your knowledge, what is the order in which patients are seen in a hospital Emergency Department?



Base: All respondents (n=4,398)

>> Understanding of Emergency Department Checkpoints

Before being seen by an emergency department doctor, patients are moved through a series of checkpoints. How well do you personally feel you understand how each of the following emergency department checkpoints work?



Base: All respondents (n=4,398) | *NET: Understands minus doesn't understand

Patient Emergency Department Experiences





Patient Emergency Department Experiences

Visitation Profile

Almost three-in-ten (29%) patients report visiting an Emergency Department within the past year, with almost one-half (47%) requiring more than one trip to an ED.

- Incidence of ED visitation in past year is higher in Northern and Central Alberta (as well as rural settings), and lower in Edmonton
- ED visitation in the past 12 months declines modestly with age and is higher among those with chronic conditions (who also show higher than average frequency in visitation).



Patient Emergency Department Experiences

ED Hesitancy

Questioning whether or not a trip to an Emergency Department is appropriate is common among patients. Fully 78% say they personally have faced this situation, with nearly one-half (49%) saying they have at least once decided not to visit the ED for treatment for a medical condition or health concern despite thinking it likely warranted emergency care.

- Interestingly, rates of ED avoidance are very similar to past year usage – it is more commonly reported among patients in the North & Central regions of the province, those with chronic conditions, and declines with age

When asked why someone might question whether or not to seek ED care for a serious or urgent condition/situation, there is an element of “self-triage” among patients in the sense that their situation may not be “serious enough” for a trip to the ED, but nearly as many cite concerns about waiting as a deterrent.



Patient Emergency Department Experiences

ED as a Last Resort

Almost one-half (46%) of patients report that in the past 5 years, they have personally visited an Emergency Department for care, not necessarily because their condition was critical or severe, but because they had no other options available to them at the time (e.g. after hours, family doc/walk-in clinic not available, etc.).

- This tends to be more commonly reported outside of the province's largest urban centres, particularly in Northern and Central Alberta, and by those under the age of 45 and those with more modest incomes



Patient Emergency Department Experiences

Last Visit Evaluations

Most patients provide reasonably positive evaluations of their last visit to the Emergency Department, with favourable ratings outweighing negative ones on most elements of the experience. Fully 62% rate the quality of care from doctors and staff as “good” vs. only 16% saying “bad”.

The Waiting Room is the one exception – 38% rate their last experience on this element as “bad” vs. 29% “good” – and the wait at ED’s tends to be highly correlated to perceptions of quality of care overall. Among those who’s last ED visit had a wait time of 2 hours or less, fully two-thirds (66%) rate the overall experience positively. Meanwhile, among those with longer wait times (6+ hours), only 17% offer a “good” rating of the ED overall.

- Positive ratings of the last ED visit overall tend to increase with age, and are less positive among those who’s most recent visit was in the past year and those with chronic conditions



Patient Emergency Department Experiences

Last Visit Evaluations ... continued

Most patients can expect to wait up to 5 hours for care at an ED, though roughly four-in-ten say their last wait at the ED was 2 hours or less. That said, fully 15% of patients report their last wait at the ED was over 6 hours.

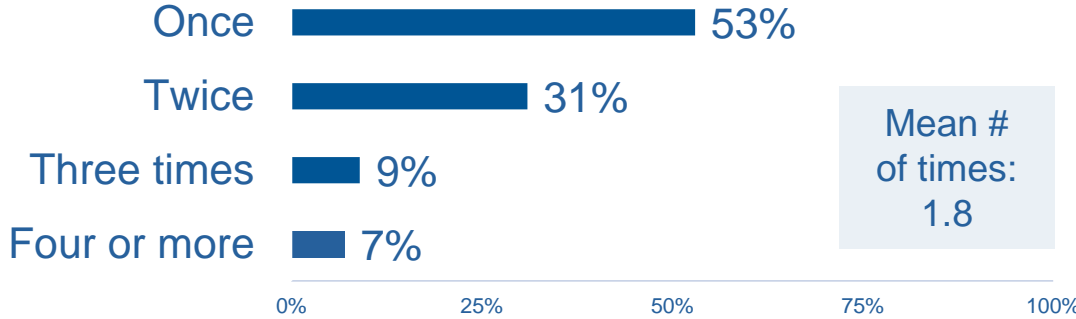
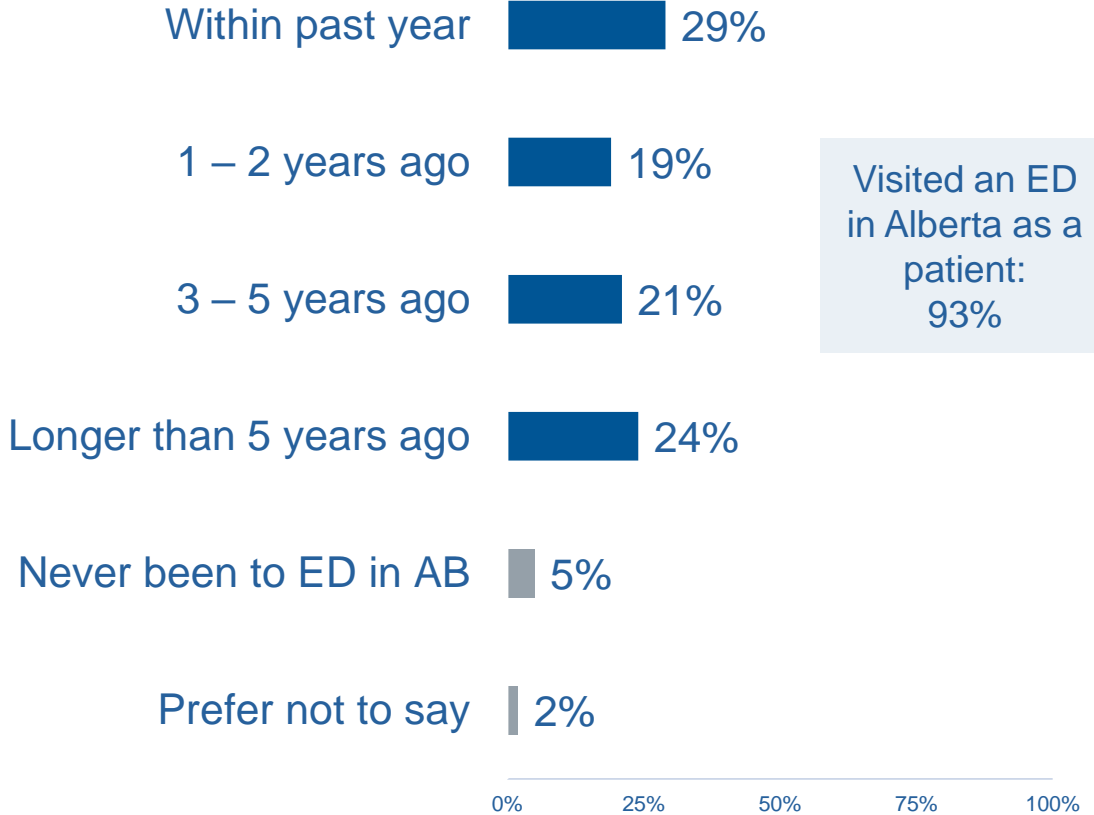
Patients are split in characterizing their last wait time at the ED – equal proportions (48%) feel the wait was “reasonable” and “unreasonable”.

- The proportion saying their last ED wait time was “reasonable” tends to increase with age (under 45 is most likely to feel their wait was “unreasonable”)
- The “tipping point” for wait times seems to sit somewhere around 3 hours. Among those whose wait was 2 hours or less, fully 80% found it “reasonable”. For those waiting 3 – 5 hours, 69% feel it was too long, increasing to 90% for those waiting 6 hours or more
- If you have visited an ED in the past year, your ratings of the wait times tend to be more negative than those whose visits were more than a year ago

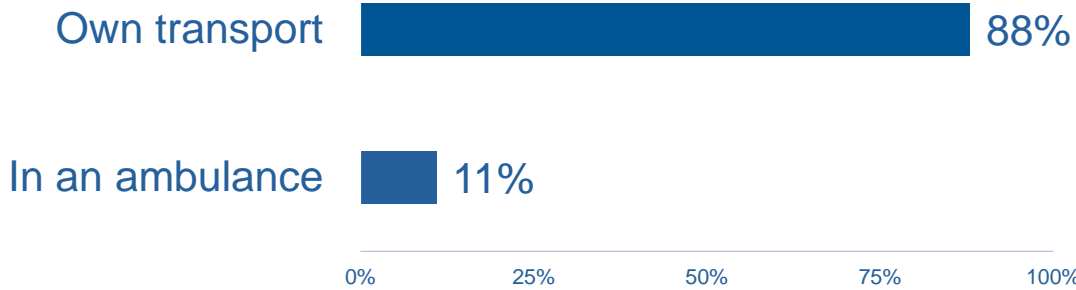
>> Respondent Profile: Emergency Department Visitation

When was the last time you personally visited an Emergency Department as a patient?

How many times have you personally visited an Emergency Department as a patient in the past year?*



Thinking about your last visit to an Alberta Emergency Department as a patient ... how did you arrive there?**



Base: All respondents (n=4,398)

Base: Was an ED patient in: *Past yr (n=1,272) | **Past 5 yrs (n=3,044)



Respondent Profile: Last Year ED Visitation

By Region

How many times have you personally visited an Emergency Department as a patient in the past year?

	Region							
	Total	Calgary	Edmonton	North	Central	South	Small urban	Rural
	(n=4,398)	(n=1,535)	(n=1,388)	(n=530)	(n=492)	(n=453)	(n=1,442)	(n=539)
Past Year Total	29%	32%	19%	41%	36%	27%	27%	45%
	(n=1,272)	(n=484)	(n=268)	(n=217)	(n=179)	(n=124)	(n=392)	(n=240)
Once	53%	59%	60%	51%	39%	36%	42%	51%
Twice	31%	26%	26%	26%	47%	47%	40%	31%
Three times	9%	10%	8%	14%	4%	8%	12%	5%
Four or more	7%	5%	6%	9%	10%	8%	7%	13%
Mean # of times	1.8	1.6	1.7	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.0	2.2

Base: All respondents



Respondent Profile: Last Year ED Visitation

By Age and Chronic Condition

How many times have you personally visited an Emergency Department as a patient in the past year?

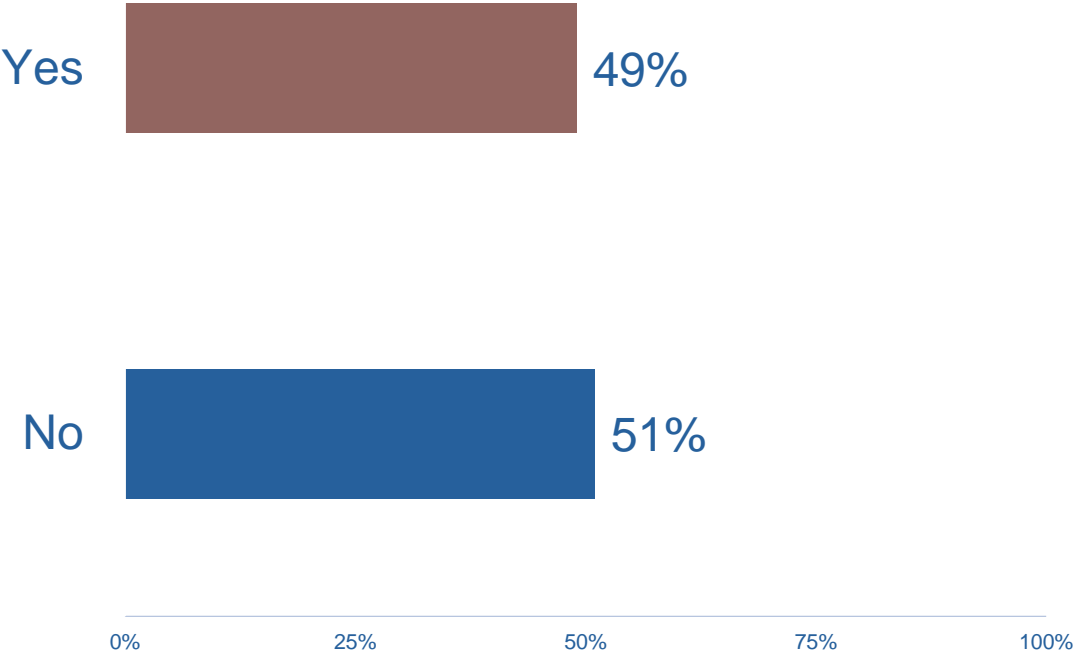
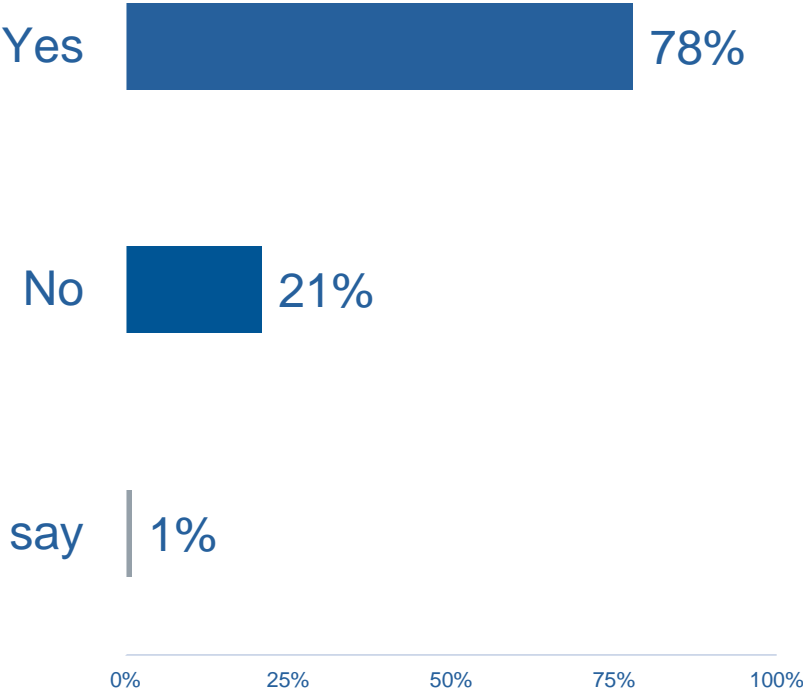
	Age (Years)					Chronic Condition	
	Total	<45	45-54	55-64	65+	Yes (self)	No
	(n=4,398)	(n=2,226)	(n=775)	(n=700)	(n=697)	(n=1,469)	(n=1,586)
Past Year Total	29%	32%	29%	24%	24%	34%	24%
	(n=1,272)	(n=707)	(n=228)	(n=169)	(n=168)	(n=493)	(n=386)
Once	53%	56%	40%	52%	60%	44%	66%
Twice	31%	31%	39%	29%	22%	39%	22%
Three times	9%	9%	10%	9%	11%	9%	9%
Four or more	7%	4%	11%	10%	8%	9%	3%
Mean # of times	1.8	1.7	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.1	1.6

Base: All respondents

>> Hesitation Visiting an Emergency Department in Alberta

Have you personally ever questioned whether or not you should visit an Emergency Department for care of a medical condition or health concern you were experiencing?

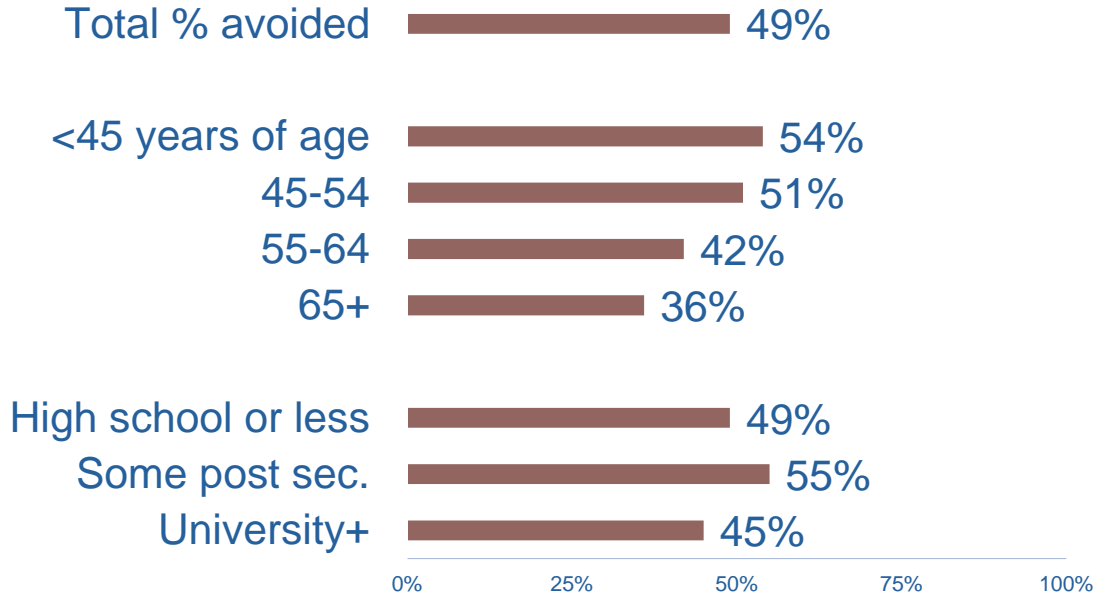
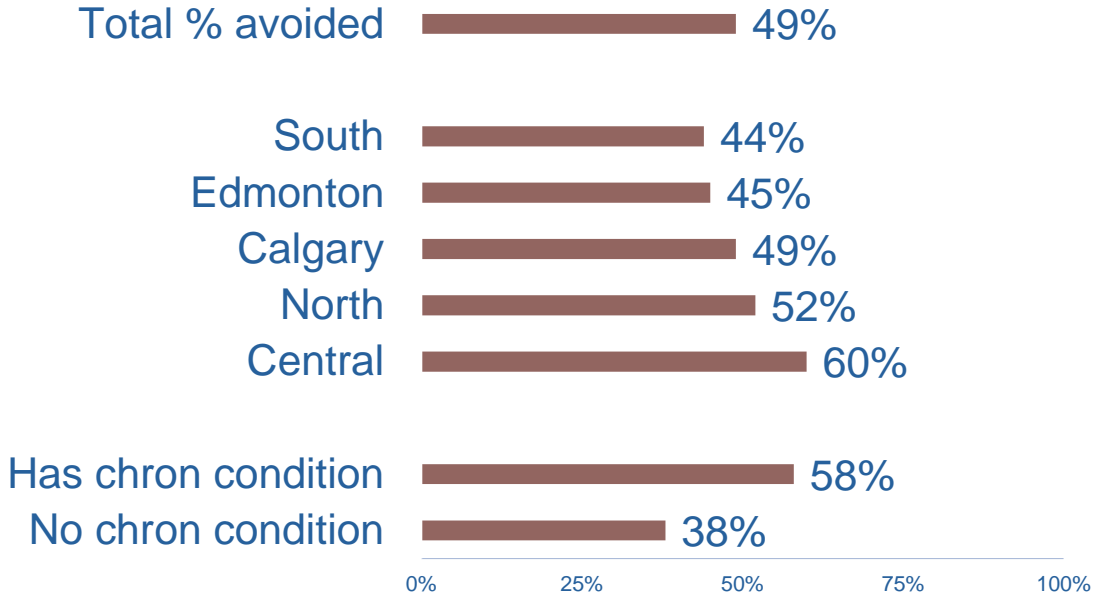
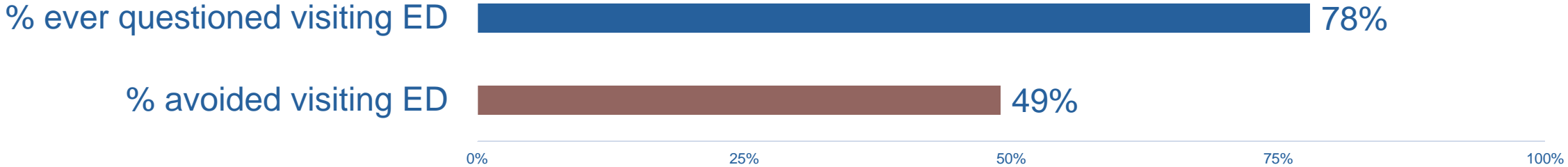
And have you ever decided not to visit an Emergency Department for treatment for a medical condition or health concern that warranted emergency care?



Base: All respondents (n=4,398)

Base: All respondents (n=4,398)

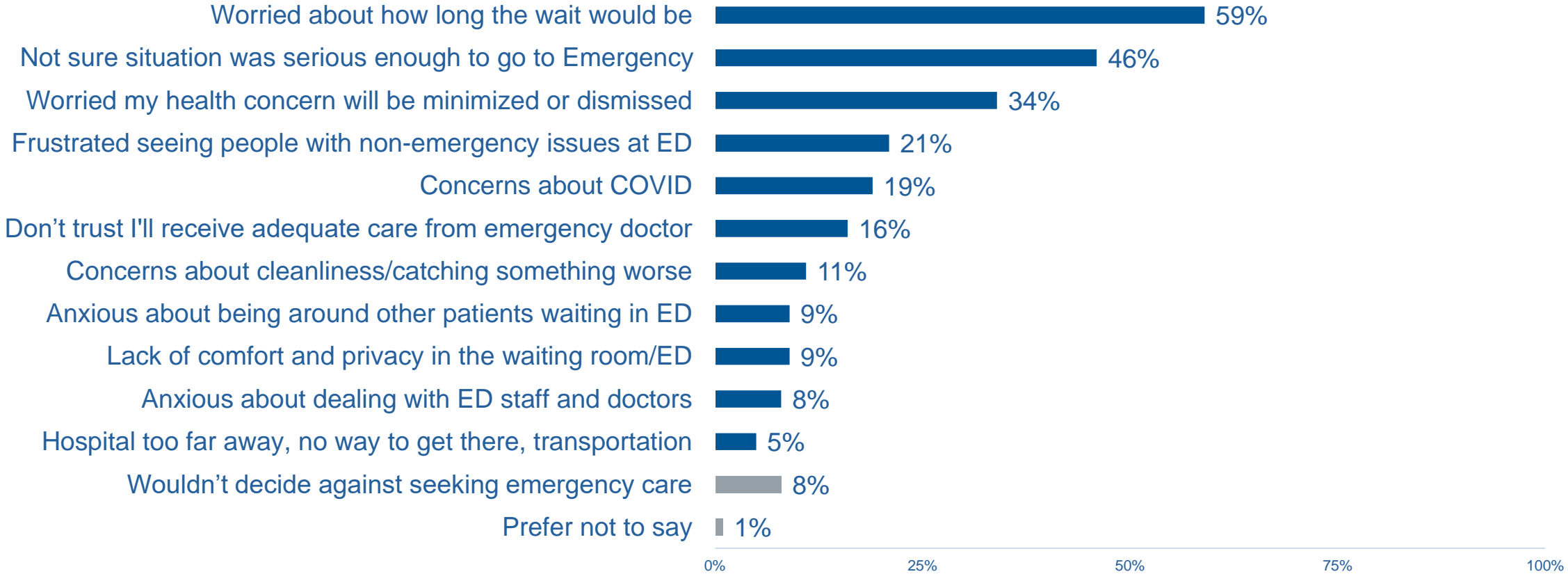
>> Hesitation Visiting an Emergency Department in Alberta



Base: Questioned visiting ED

>> Reasons for Not Visiting Emergency Department

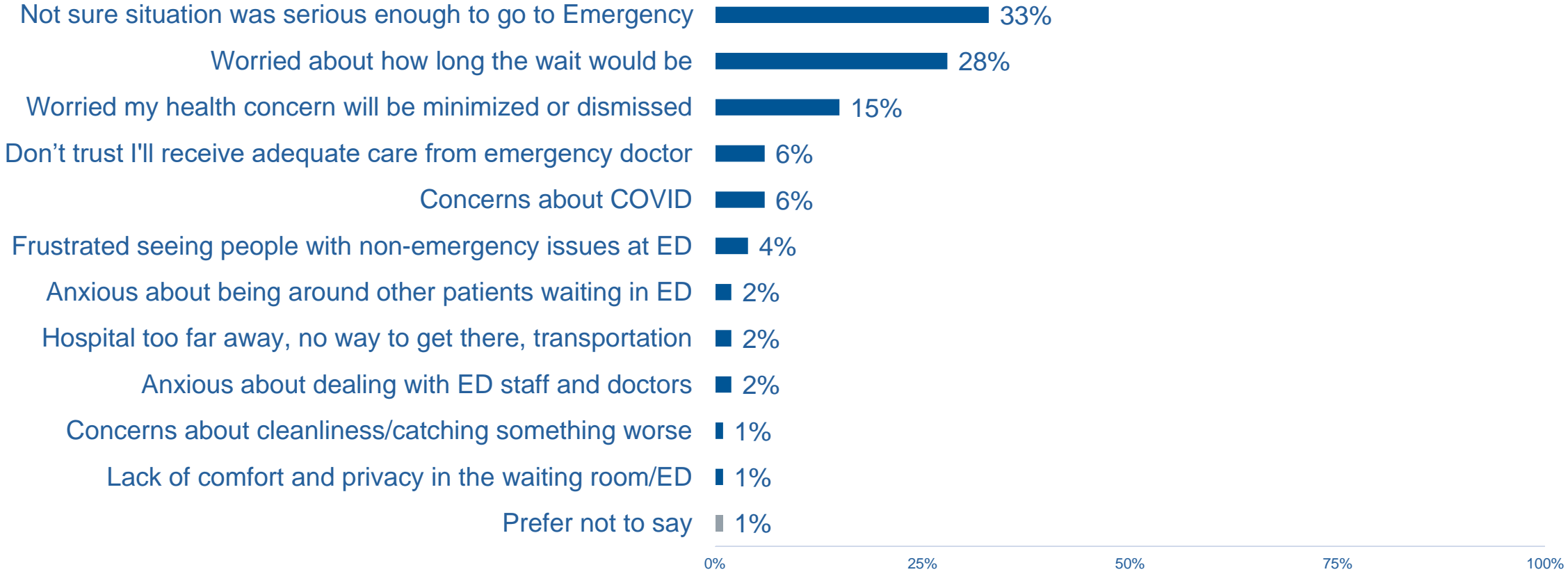
Please select up to three reasons why you might decide against seeking emergency medical care in a serious or urgent medical situation?



Base: All respondents (n=4,398) | MULTIPLE MENTIONS - Rank order by top 3 selections

>> Most Likely Reason for Not Visiting Emergency Department

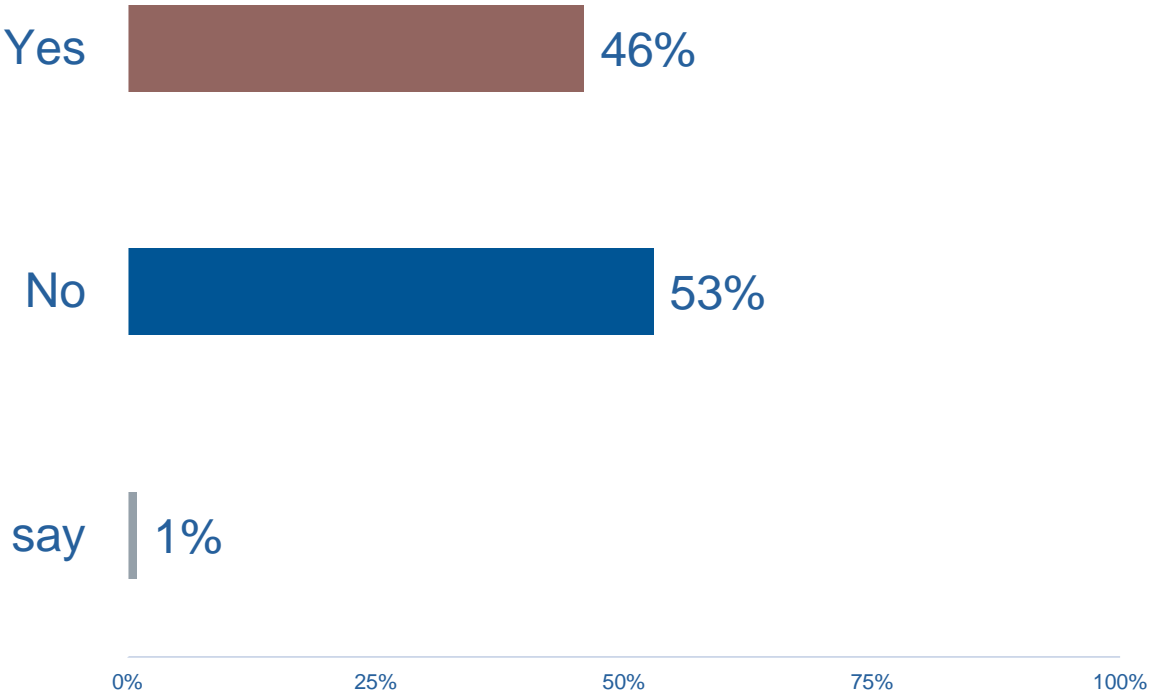
And which of these is the most likely reason why you might decide against seeking emergency medical care in a serious or urgent medical situation?



Base: Would decide against an ED visit (n=4,008)

>> Incidence of Emergency Department Visit as Only Option Available

In the past 5 years, have you visited an Emergency Department, not necessarily because your medical condition was critical or severe, but because you had no other options available at the time (after-hours, family doctor/walk-in doctor not available)?



% saying "Yes"

Region	Age (Years)	Household Income	Chronic Condition
Calgary	<45	<\$40K	Yes (self)
Edmonton	45-54	\$40K - 99K	No
North	55-64	\$100K+	
Central	65+		
South			
Small urban			
Rural			

Base: All respondents (n=4,398)



Assessment of Last Emergency Department Visit

As a Patient

Still thinking about your last visit to an Emergency Department as a patient ...
how would you rate the following aspects of your care?

■ Excellent - 5 ■ 4 ■ 3 ■ 2 ■ 1 - Very poor ■ Unsure / Don't recall

						Good (4,5)	Poor (1,2)	NET* (+/-)	MEAN score (out of 5)
Patient registration	37%	26%	16%	13%		63%	8%	+55	4.0
Care from ED drs / staff	34%	28%	19%	9%	7%	62%	16%	+46	3.8
Arrival at the hospital	29%	29%	21%	9%		58%	12%	+46	3.8
Admitting	32%	23%	19%	13%		55%	13%	+42	3.8
Triage / assessment	29%	26%	24%	9%	7%	55%	16%	+39	3.7
Your ED experience overall	17%	30%	26%	14%	10%	47%	24%	+23	3.3
Monitoring and re-prioritization	19%	19%	21%	14%	10%	38%	24%	+14	3.3
Waiting in ED waiting room	12%	17%	27%	17%	21%	29%	38%	-9	2.8

Base: Visited an ED as a patient within past 5 years (n=3,044) | *NET: Good minus poor



Assessment of Last Emergency Department Visit

By Key Demographics

Still thinking about your last visit to an Emergency Department as a patient ... how would you rate the following aspects of your care?

% saying “Good” (4 or 5 rating)	Total (n=3,044)	Age (Years)				Chronic Condition	
		<45 (n=1,555)	45-54 (n=574)	55-64 (n=465)	65+ (n=451)	Yes (self) (n=1,120)	No (n=968)
Overall ED Experience	47%	41%	50%	49%	61%	45%	52%

% saying “Good” (4 or 5 rating)	Total (n=3,044)	Last ED Visitation			Last ED Visit Wait Time		
		Past yr (n=1,272)	1-2 yrs (n=855)	3-5 yrs (n=917)	2 hrs/less (n=1,346)	3-5 hrs (n=1,002)	6+ hrs (n=464)
Overall ED Experience	47%	41%	53%	50%	66%	41%	17%

Base: Visited an ED as a patient within past 5 years



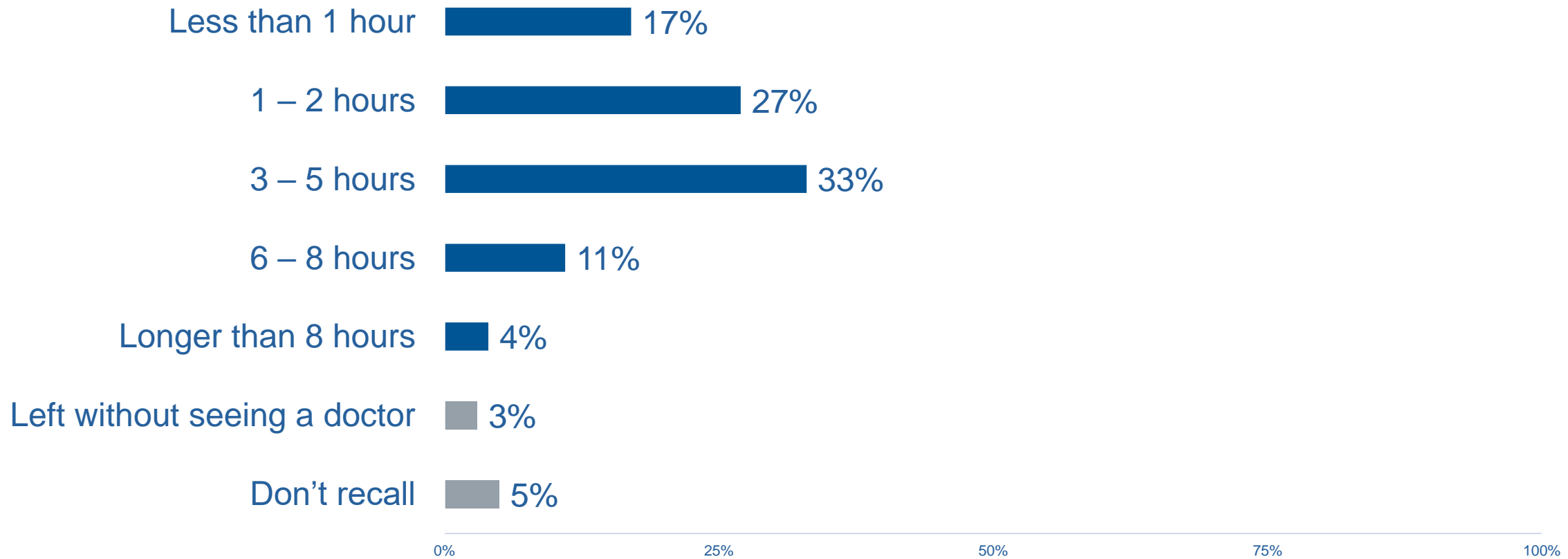
Significantly higher



Significantly lower

>> Wait time at Last Emergency Department Visit

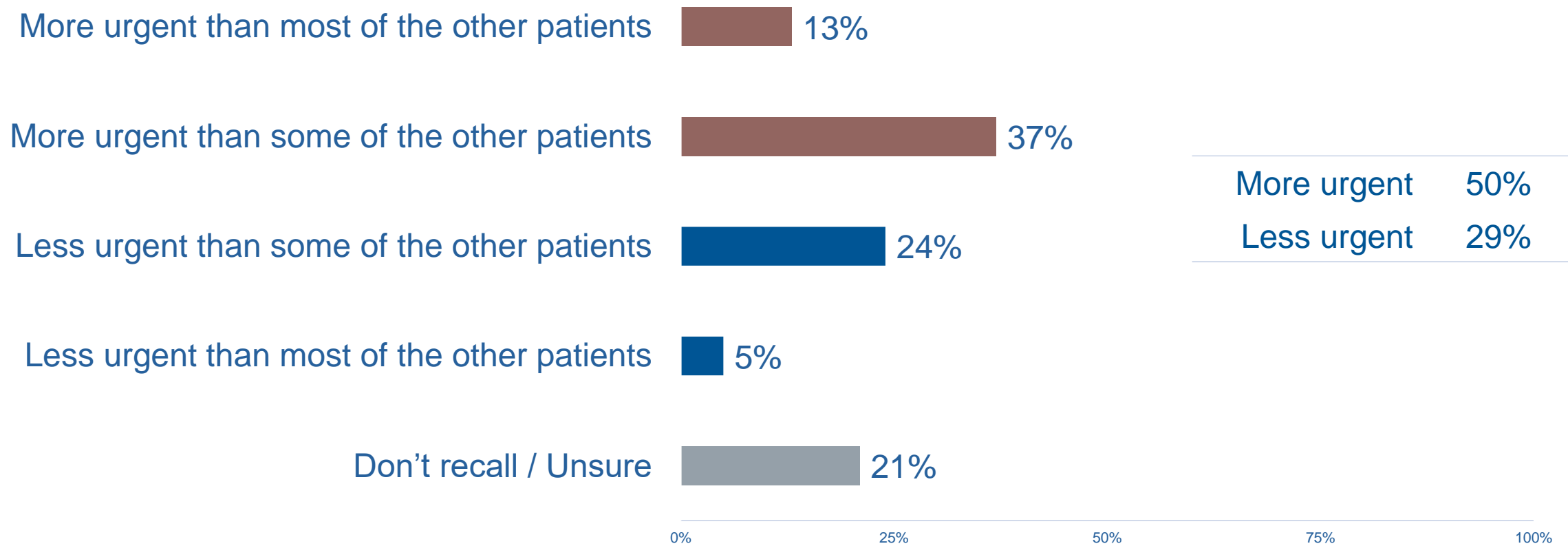
On your last visit to Emergency as a patient, how long would you estimate you waited between the time you arrived and the time you saw the Emergency doctor?



Base: Visited an ED as a patient within past 5 years (n=3,044)

>> Comparative Urgency of Medical Condition at Emergency Department

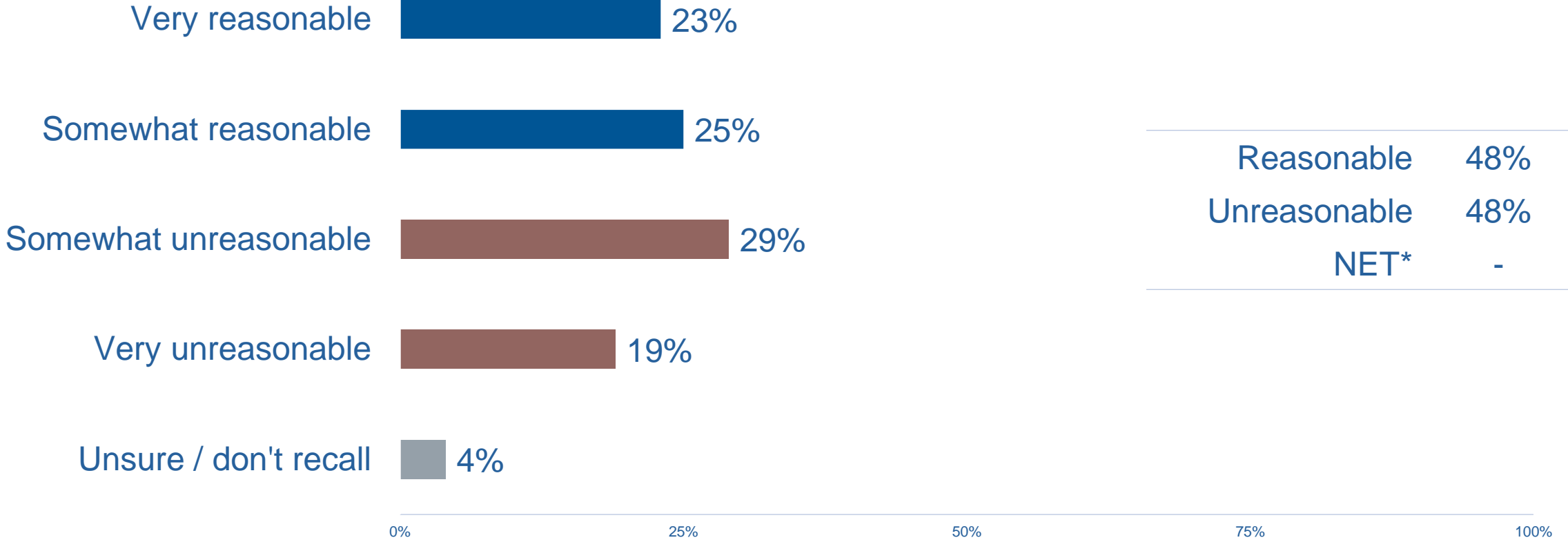
Compared to the other patients in the waiting room at the time, would you say that your medical condition or health concern was more or less urgent?



Base: Visited an ED as a patient within past 5 years (n=3,044)

>> Wait Time of Last Emergency Department - Reasonable?

Considering the nature and urgency of your health condition at the time of your last visit to Emergency, do you consider the amount of time you waited to be reasonable or unreasonable?



Base: Visited an ED as a patient within past 5 years (n=3,044) | *NET: Reasonable minus unreasonable

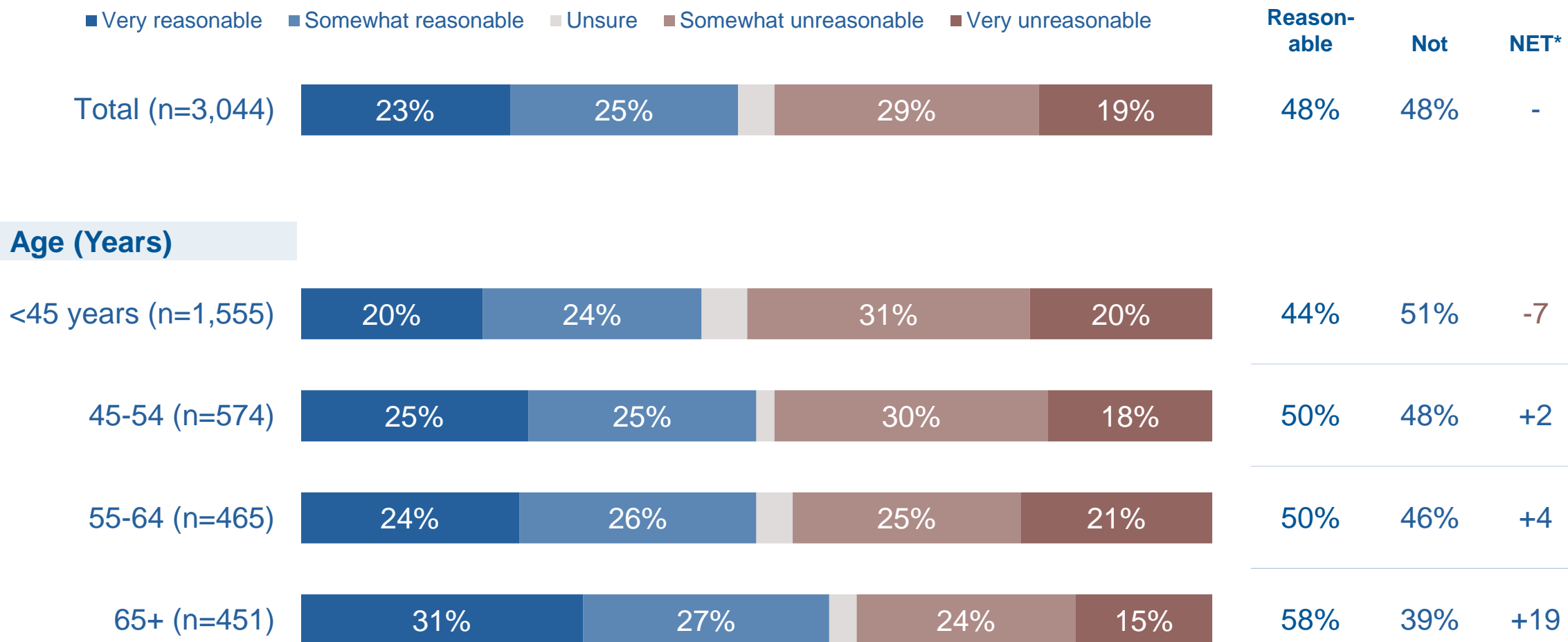


Wait Time of Last Emergency Department - Reasonable?

By Age

Considering the nature and urgency of your health condition at the time of your last visit to Emergency, do you consider the amount of time you waited to be ...

■ Very reasonable ■ Somewhat reasonable ■ Unsure ■ Somewhat unreasonable ■ Very unreasonable



Base: Visited an ED as a patient within past 5 years | *NET: Reasonable minus unreasonable

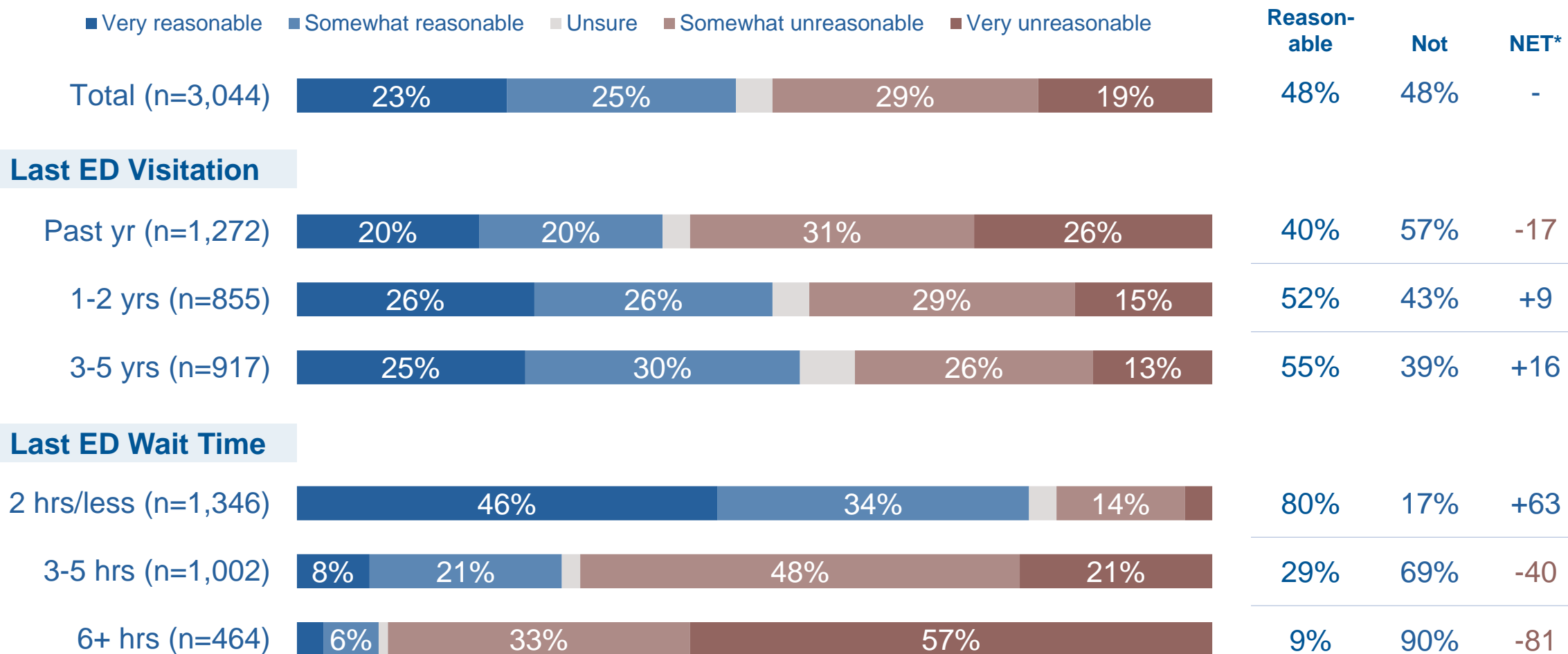


Wait Time of Last Emergency Department - Reasonable?

By Last Emergency Department Visitation and Wait Time

Considering the nature and urgency of your health condition at the time of your last visit to Emergency, do you consider the amount of time you waited to be ...

■ Very reasonable ■ Somewhat reasonable ■ Unsure ■ Somewhat unreasonable ■ Very unreasonable



Base: Visited an ED as a patient within past 5 years | *NET: Reasonable minus unreasonable



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Your Voice Matters

Emergency Department Review - June 2022

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