



May 2022: Check Up

- Children and COVID
- Pediatric Mental Health

May 2022

>> Study information

Research methodology

- Online survey fielded via the albertapathients online research panel
 - Field dates: May 4 - 17, 2022
 - Sample size - Have children at home n=713
- 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 albertapathients.ca panelists were invited to complete the survey. For interpretation purposes, a probability sample of this size would yield a margin of error of +/- 3.7 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 albertapathients.ca online community, operated by the Alberta Medical Association and research partner ThinkHQ Public Affairs Inc.

To learn more about albertapathients or to register as a member, please visit our website at www.albertapathients.ca.

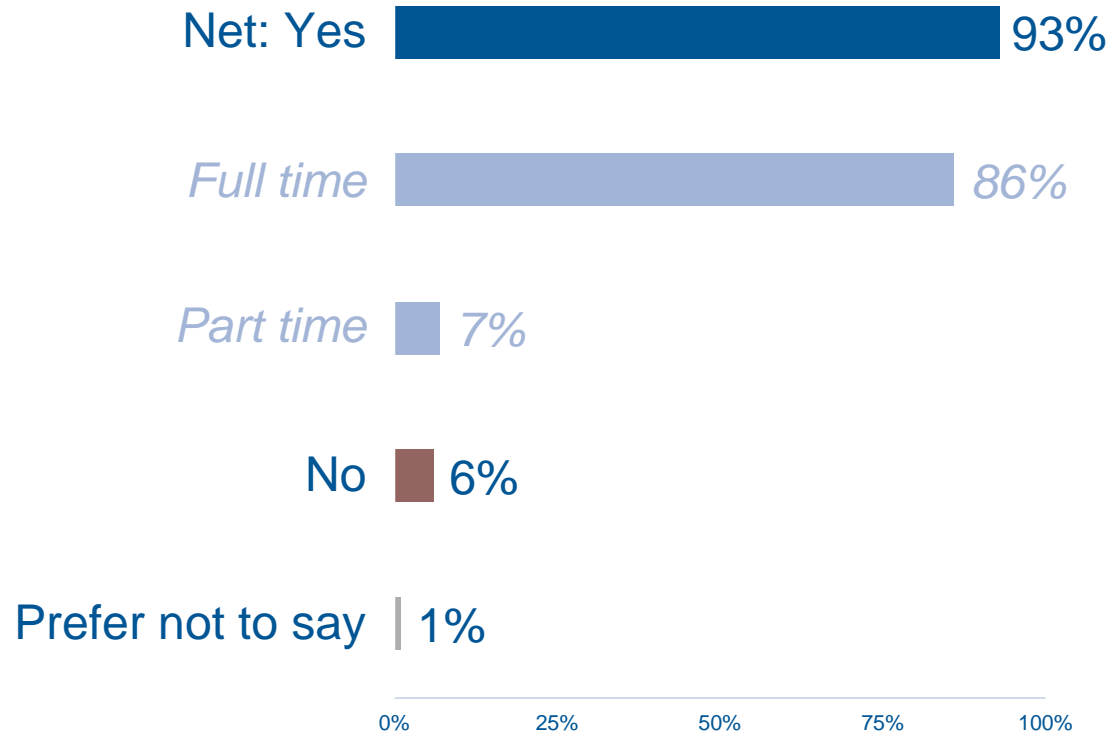
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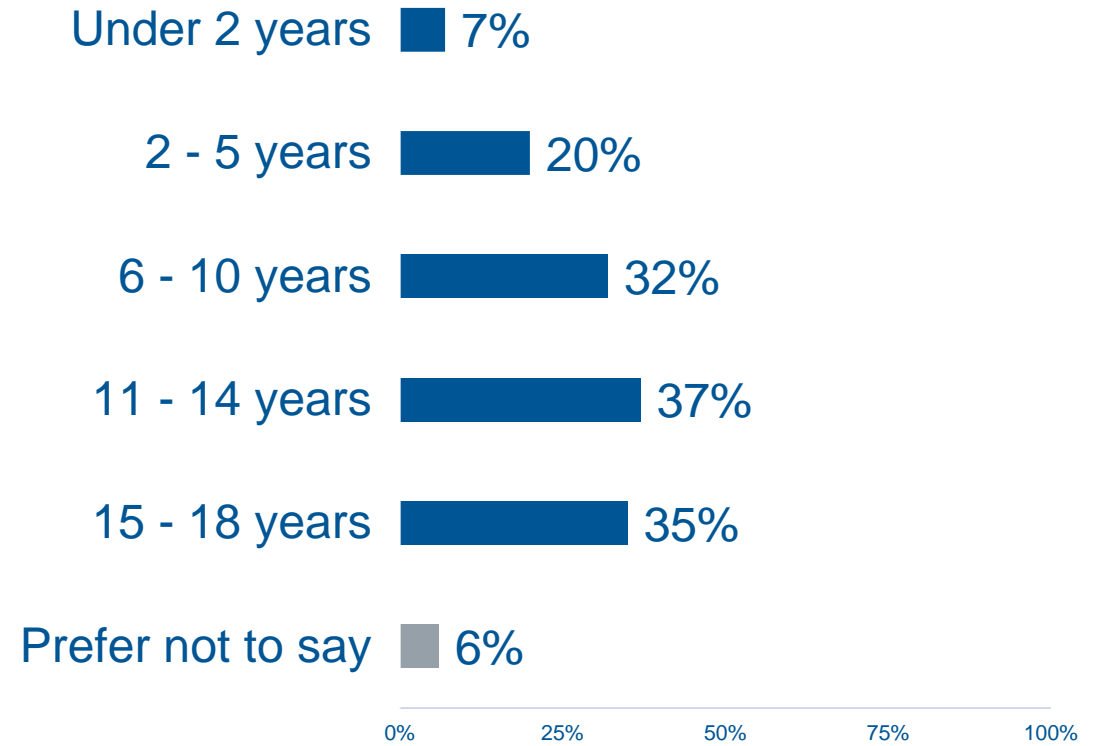
>> Profile: Respondent's Children

Do your children currently reside with you?



Base: All respondents with children (n=713)

What are the ages of your children?



Base: All respondents with children (n=713) | MULTIPLE MENTIONS

Children and COVID



>> Children and COVID

According to parents, COVID-19 and its response has had a significant impact on the well-being of their children.

Physical Health

In terms of physical health, over four-in-ten (43%) report a decline compared to pre-COVID, with 11% saying their child's physical health is "much worse" and 32% "somewhat worse" than before the pandemic.

- There is a notable increase in negative physical health impacts with the age of kids. Only one-third (33%) of those with kids aged under 6 report deteriorations in physical health, climbing to nearly six-in-ten (57%) among older teens

Parents cite issues such as inactivity and inability to participate in sports and exercise as the chief drivers of deteriorating pediatric physical health in their children.

>> Children and COVID

Mental Health

Negative mental health impacts on Alberta children are deeply troubling. Fully two-thirds (65%) of parents report that at least one child in their care has suffered from a deterioration in their mental health as a result of the pandemic, with one-quarter (26%) saying a child's mental health is "much worse" and 39% "somewhat worse".

- Negative mental health consequences of pandemic response are directly related to a child's age, increasing notably among kids over the age of 10. One-half (51%) of parents with kids under age 6 report some mental health declines in their children, compared to a staggering 77% reported by those with children aged 15+. Indeed, four-in-ten (40%) parents of older teens say their child's mental health is "much worse" today than before the pandemic

Many parents report fear and anxiety among their children when it comes to COVID, along with depression and feelings of isolation without interactions at school, sporting activities and even just spending time in-person with their friends.

>> COVID Pandemic Impacts on Children's Physical and Mental Health

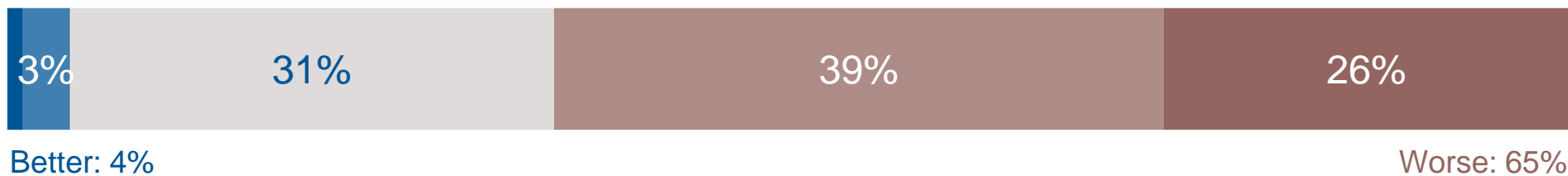
Compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, would you say the physical / mental health of your child / children is ...

■ Much better ■ Somewhat better ■ About the same / Prefer not to say ■ Somewhat worse ■ Much worse

Physical health



Mental health



0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Base: All respondents with children (n=713) | NET: Better minus worse

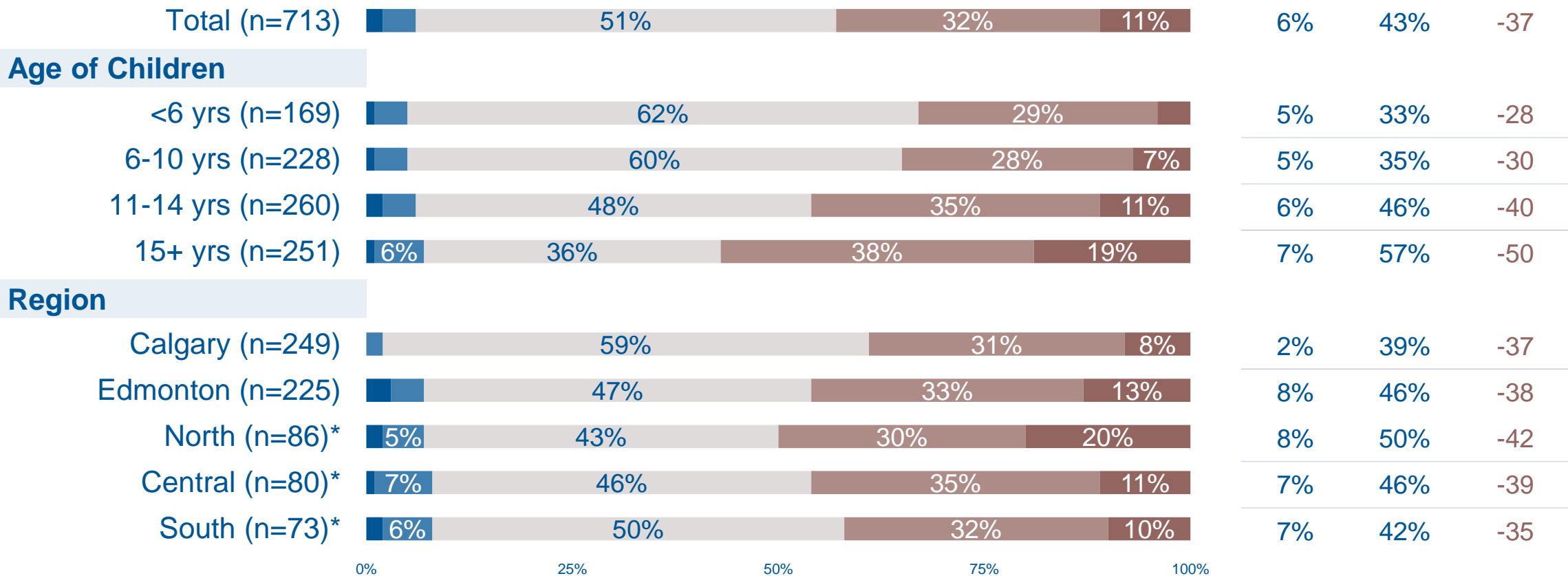


COVID Pandemic Impacts on Children’s Physical Health

By Age of Children and Region

Compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, would you say the physical health of your child / children is ...

■ Much better ■ Somewhat better ■ About the same / Prefer not to say ■ Somewhat worse ■ Much worse



Base: All respondents | NET: Better minus worse | *Caution: Small sample size

>> Sentiment: Reasons for Children's Worsened Physical Health

Why do you say that your children's physical health is worse now than before the pandemic?



43% say their children's physical health is worse today

Base: Say children's physical health is worse today | Open-ended question: Voluntarily offered a comment

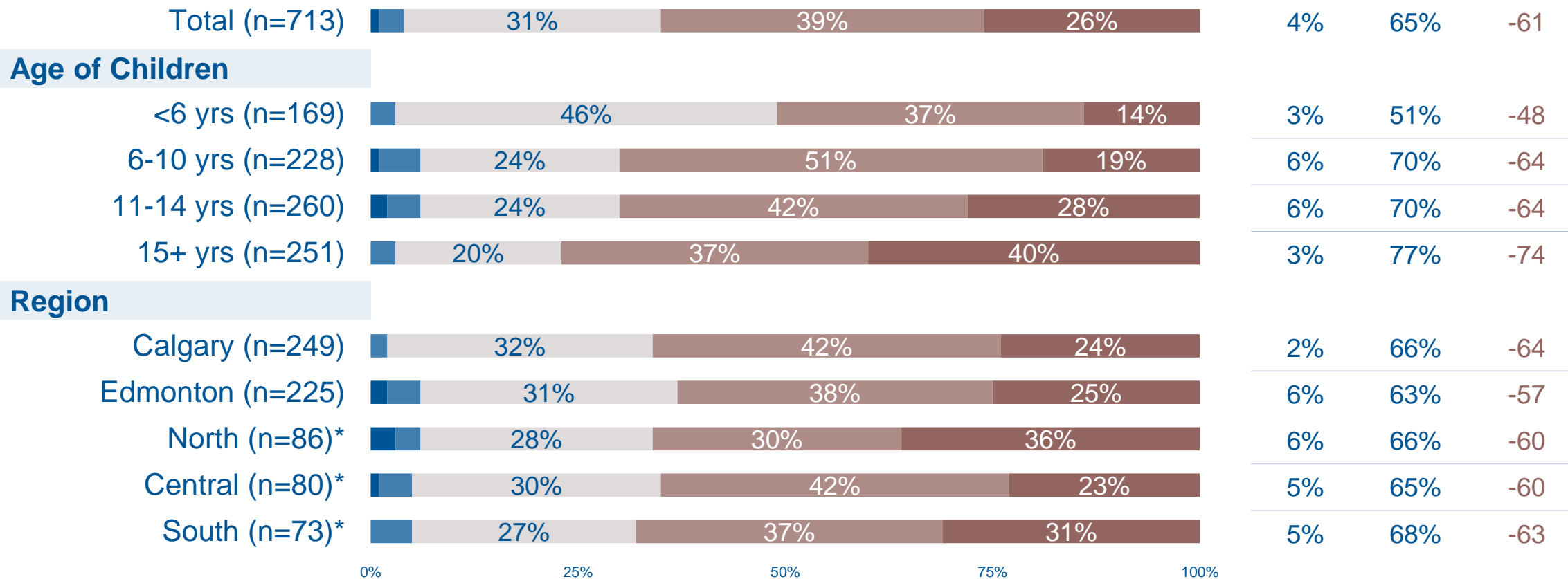


COVID Pandemic Impacts on Children’s Mental Health

By Age of Children and Region

Compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, would you say the mental health of your child / children is ...

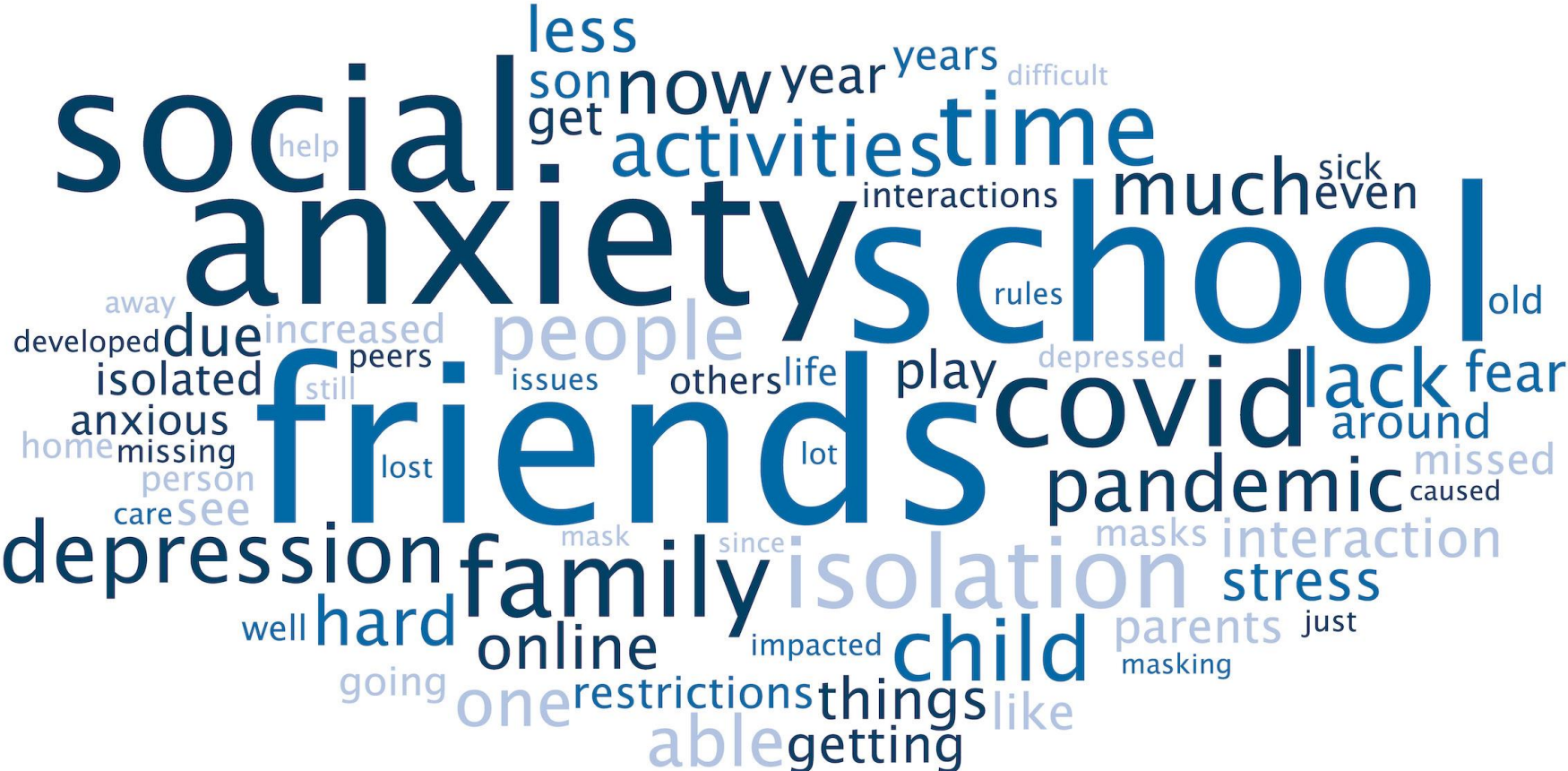
■ Much better ■ Somewhat better ■ About the same / Prefer not to say ■ Somewhat worse ■ Much worse



Base: All respondents | NET: Better minus worse | *Caution: Small sample size

>> Sentiment: Reasons for Children's Worsened Mental Health

Why do you say that your children's mental health is worse now than before the pandemic?



65% say their children's mental health is worse today

Base: Say children's mental health is worse today | Open-ended question: Voluntarily offered a comment

Pediatric Mental Health





Pediatric Mental Health

An Epidemic of Pediatric Mental Health COVID Consequences

Fully 58% of Alberta parents interviewed report that at least one of their children are currently suffering from/diagnosed with a mental health concern.

- Incidence of mental health issues rises directly with age – fully 72% of parents with kids under the age of 6 report no concerns, compared to only 26% among those with children aged 15+

Chief among the issues noted are anxiety and panic disorders (34%) followed by ADHD (30%), depression (18%) and learning disorders (15%).

- Anxiety and depression increase directly with age, along with incidents of self-harm, PTSD, substance abuse and gender identity concerns

Among those who report a child experiencing mental health concerns, almost two-thirds (63%) report receiving or seeking care for the issue. Over one-half (51%) report care through their family doctor, 38% with a psychologist, 33% a mental health counsellor/therapist, and 23% with a psychiatrist. Almost one-in-five (19%) report being on a waiting list for a referral/appointment with a specialist physician, while another 15% are waiting for a referral/appointment with a counsellor/therapist.



Pediatric Mental Health

An Epidemic of Pediatric Mental Health COVID Consequences ... continued

COVID and COVID response have clearly amplified levels of mental health concerns among Alberta's children. Four-in-ten (39%) parents report their child's concern pre-dated the pandemic, while over one-quarter (28%) say the concerns emerged after March 2020 and an identical proportion saying some issues arose both before and after the start of the pandemic.



Pediatric Mental Health

Evaluating Pediatric Mental Health Services in Alberta

Parents with kids experiencing mental health concerns have a very harsh appraisal for the resources available to them and their children. Fully 72% characterize the overall quality of Alberta's health care system in meeting their child's needs as "bad" (with nearly four-in-ten (38%) saying "very bad"), compared to only 16% who feel they system is doing at least a "good" job.

Among the poorest rated attributes of care is the ease of navigating the system for mental health supports (68% offer a "bad" rating), along with a lack of timely referrals to specialists (61% negative), supports for parents and guardians of kids experiencing mental health concerns (64% "bad"), timely access to specialist appointments once a referral has been made (59% negative), and access to therapists/councillors (60% bad).

A majority of parents also do not believe the system is doing a good job with regard to collaboration and coordination of mental health professionals (52% rate as "bad"), and 50% feel the coverage of care through insurance is lacking.

- When it comes to system coverage of the mental health supports children are receiving, roughly one-quarter (26%) of parents report their kid's care is publicly funded, 32% funded through private insurance and 40% a combination of public/private funding



Pediatric Mental Health

Evaluating Pediatric Mental Health Services in Alberta ... continued

When it comes to accessing on-line resources for pediatric mental health needs, parents are more divided – 36% say the system does a “good job” vs. 35% “bad job” and 29% are unsure.

A majority of parents with kids suffering with mental health concerns (57%) feel the care for pediatric mental health in Alberta has declined in the past two years (29% feel it is “much worse”).



Pediatric Mental Health

Parent Feedback on Pediatric Mental Health Challenges & Priorities

According to their open-ended responses, the most significant challenges identified by parents of kids with mental health concerns is timeliness in the system/wait times (cited by 21%), along with quality-of-care concerns in a stretched system (20%), the lack of availability/access to health care professionals (19%), and costs not covered by the health care system (18%).

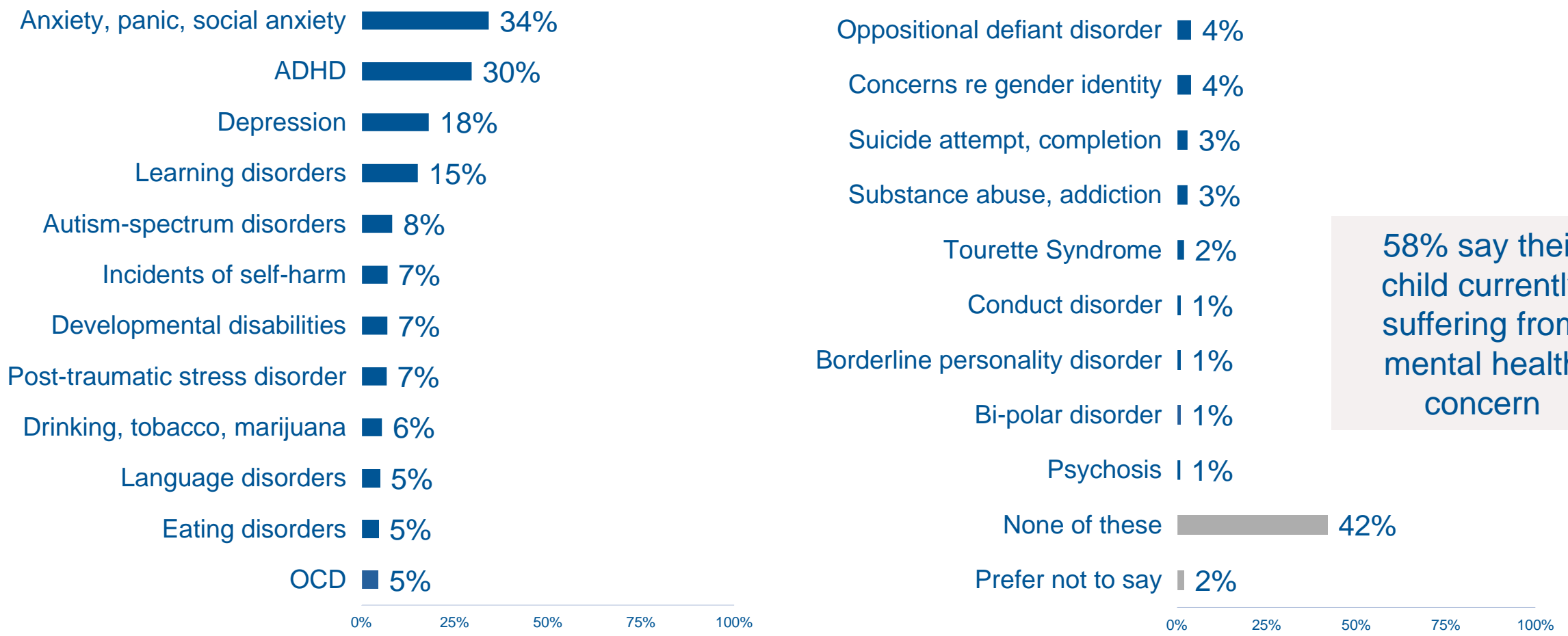
Other concerns include difficulty in navigating the health care system for their kids, mentions specifically about the government and its priorities, and the lack of programs and support for their kids and themselves as parents.

When parents with kids suffering from mental health concerns are asked (open-ended) for their priorities for pediatric mental health in Alberta, fully one-quarter (25%) say there needs to be more availability/access to care/professionals, while 11% say access needs to be timelier.

Others (15%) say there needs to be additional public funding of the system and reduction in financial barriers to care, along with more staffing generally (12%), and more school supports (10%).

>> Children's Mental Health Profile

Do any of the children in your care suffer from or have a diagnosis of any of the following?



58% say their child currently suffering from mental health concern

Base: All respondents with children (n=713) | MULTIPLE MENTIONS



Children's Mental Health Profile

By Age of Children

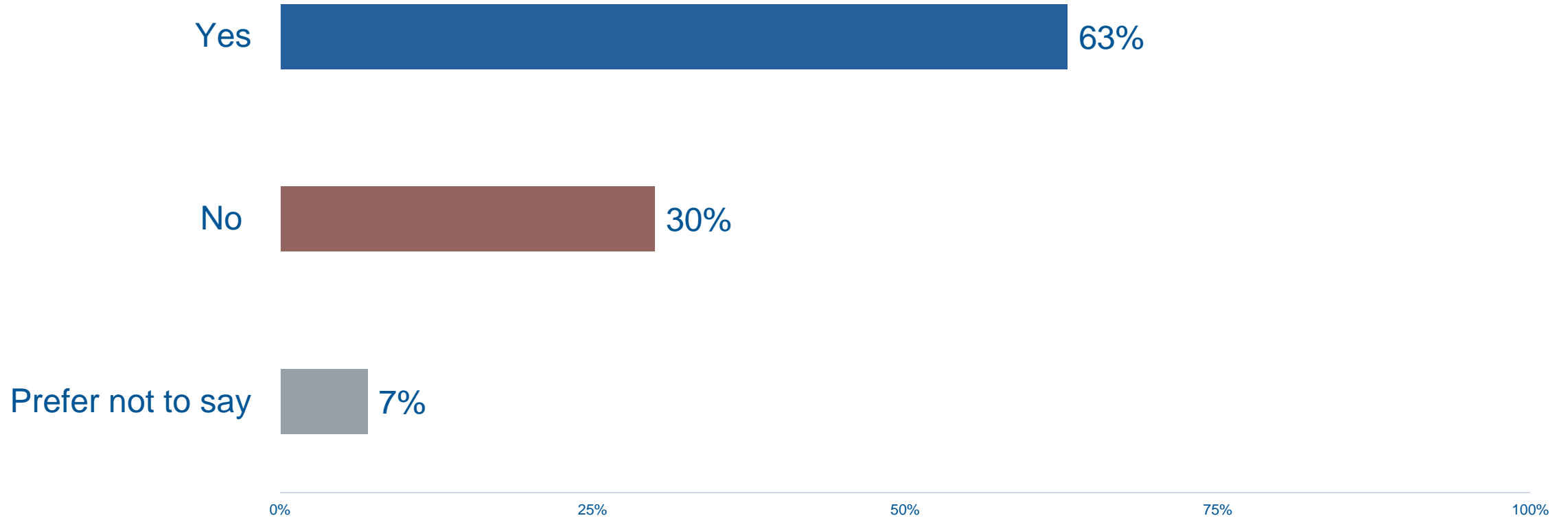
Do any of the children in your care suffer from or have a diagnosis of any of the following?

	Age of Children (Years)						Age of Children (Years)				
	Total (n=713)	<6 (n=169)	6-10 (n=228)	11-14 (n=260)	15+ (n=251)		Total (n=713)	<6 (n=169)	6-10 (n=228)	11-14 (n=260)	15+ (n=251)
Anxiety, panic	34%	12%	36%	46%	51%	OCD	5%	-	3%	6%	7%
ADHD	30%	14%	35%	39%	35%	ODD	4%	2%	4%	6%	5%
Depression	18%	4%	11%	19%	35%	Gender identity conc.	4%	1%	1%	5%	10%
Learning disorders	15%	6%	18%	19%	20%	Suicidal	3%	-	1%	3%	6%
Autism-spectrum	8%	4%	8%	11%	9%	Substance addiction	3%	1%	1%	2%	6%
Self-harm	7%	1%	3%	7%	14%	Tourette syndrome	2%	1%	1%	3%	4%
Develop. disabilities	7%	5%	10%	9%	7%	Conduct disorder	1%	-	1%	2%	1%
PTSD	7%	1%	5%	7%	13%	Borderline person.	1%	1%	-	1%	3%
Drinking, marijuana ..	6%	-	3%	3%	15%	Bi-polar disorder	1%	-	-	1%	1%
Language disorders	5%	7%	9%	4%	3%	Psychosis	1%	-	1%	1%	1%
Eating disorders	5%	1%	3%	6%	7%	None of these	42%	72%	41%	33%	26%

Base: All respondents with children | MULTIPLE MENTIONS

>> Children Receiving or Seeking Mental Health Supports

Is your child / children currently receiving or are you seeking any medical or counselling support for their mental health concerns?



Base: Child has a diagnosed mental health issue (n=398)

>> Types of Mental Health Supports Received

Which of the following mental health supports is your child / children receiving for their concerns?



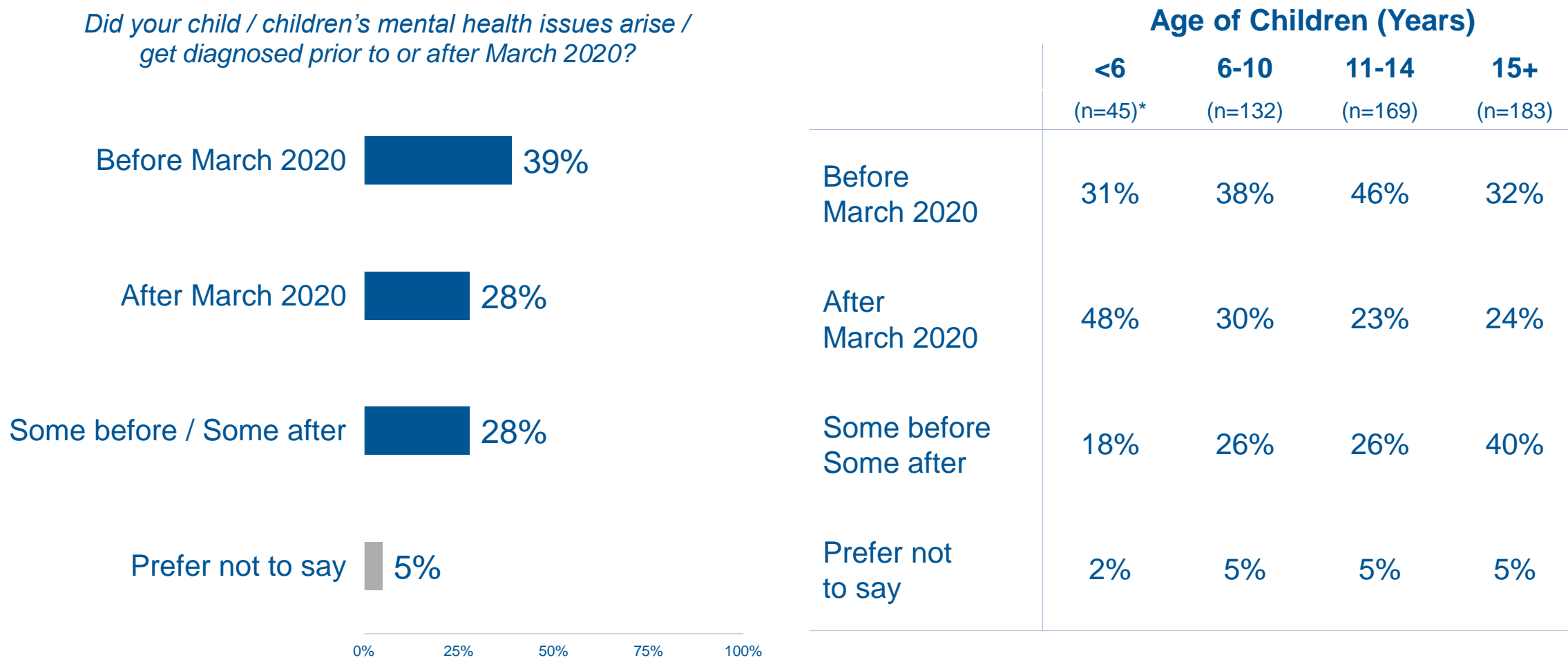
Base: Child is seeking mental health support (n=251) | MULTIPLE MENTIONS



Diagnosis Timeline of Children’s Mental Health Issues

By Age of Children

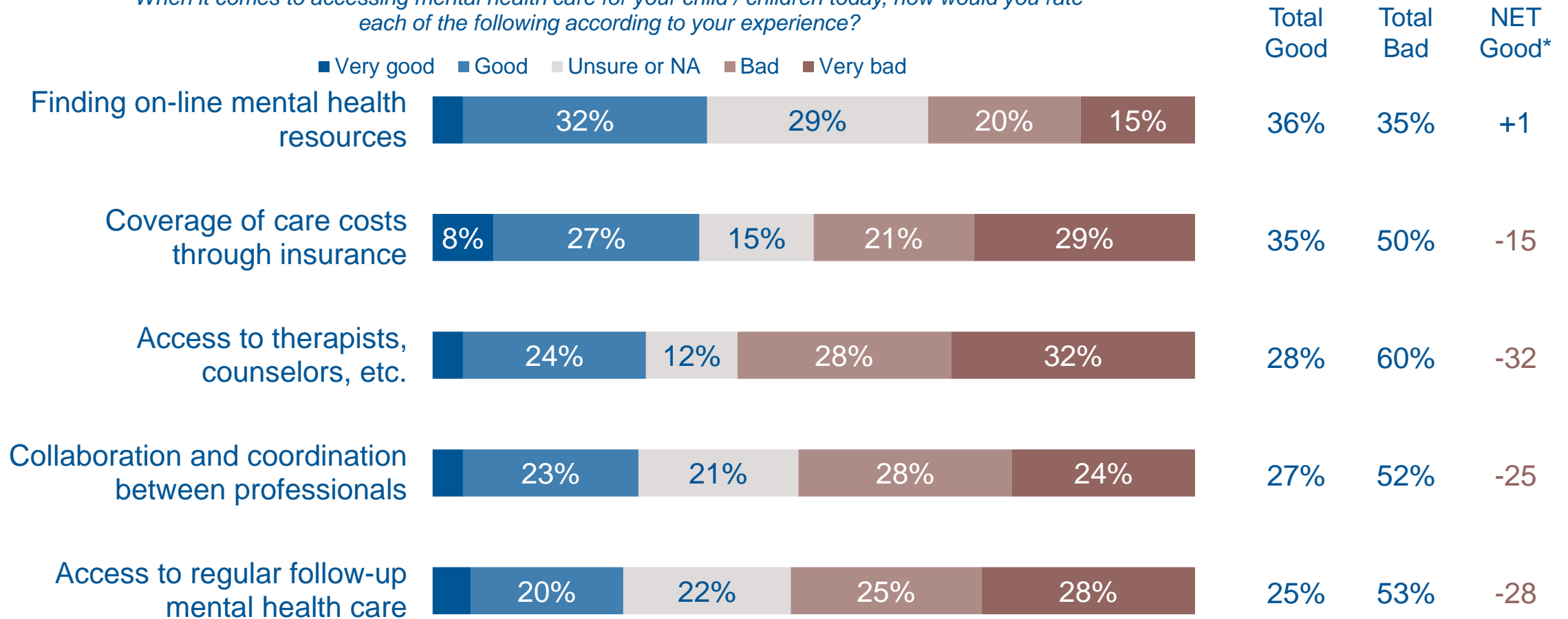
Did your child / children’s mental health issues arise / get diagnosed prior to or after March 2020?



Base: Child has a diagnosed mental health issue (n=398) | *Caution: Small sample size

>> Children's Mental Health Care - Attributes of Care Ratings

When it comes to accessing mental health care for your child / children today, how would you rate each of the following according to your experience?

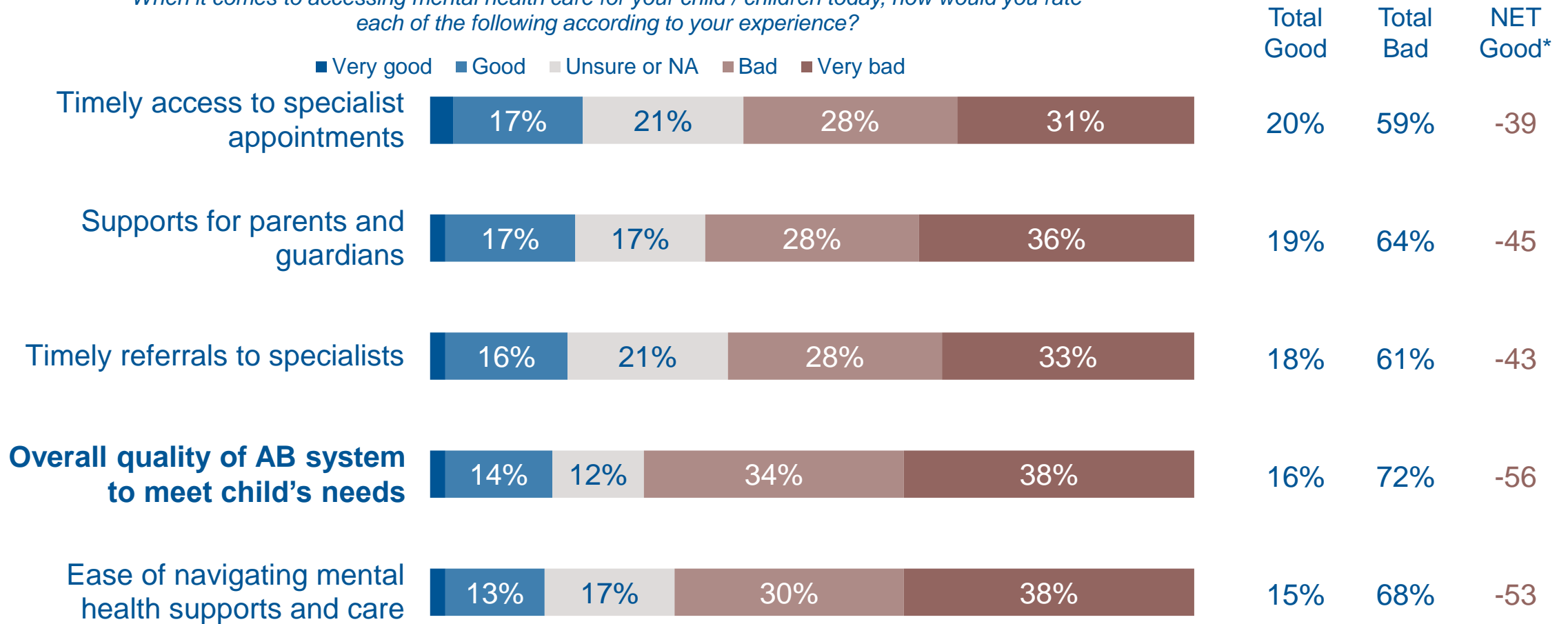


Base: Child has a diagnosed mental health issue (n=398) | *NET: Good minus bad

>> Children's Mental Health Care - Attributes of Care Ratings

When it comes to accessing mental health care for your child / children today, how would you rate each of the following according to your experience?

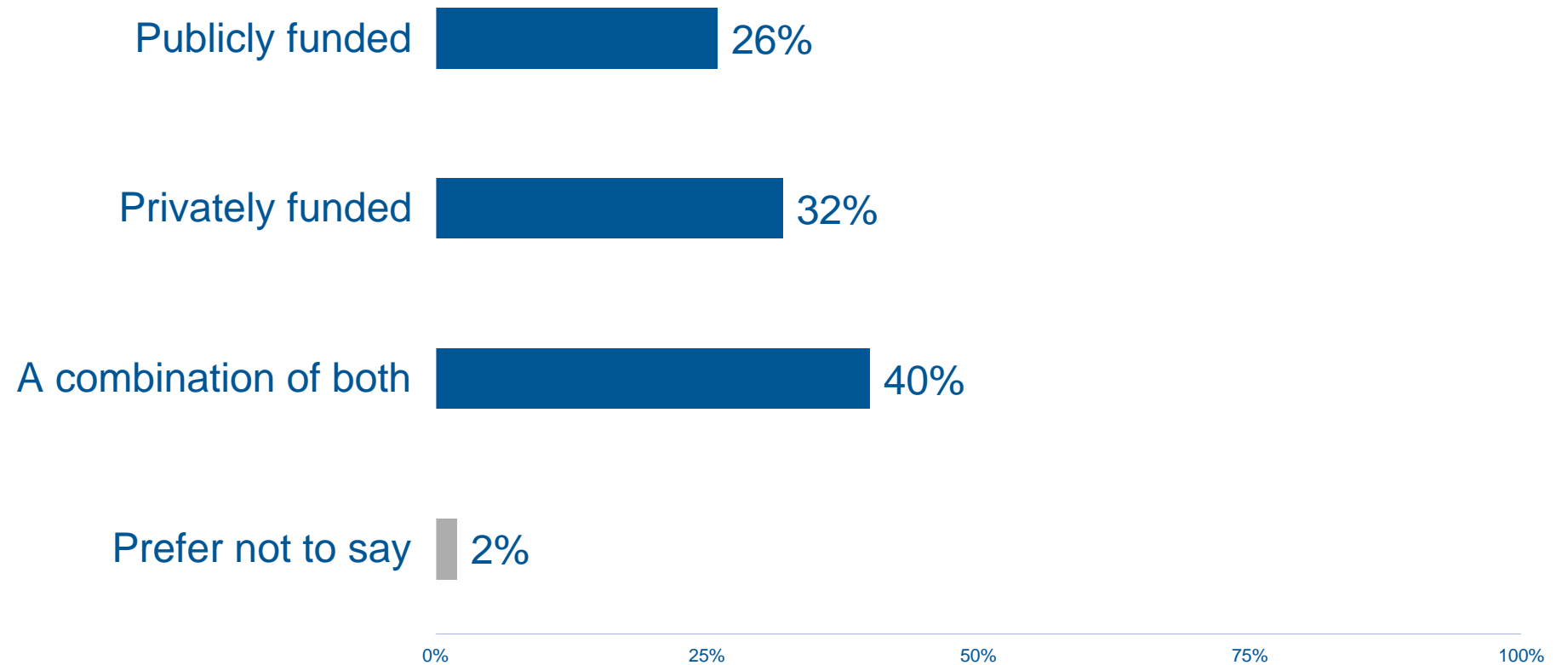
■ Very good ■ Good ■ Unsure or NA ■ Bad ■ Very bad



Base: Child has a diagnosed mental health issue (n=398) | *NET: Good minus bad

>> Types of Mental Health Supports Received

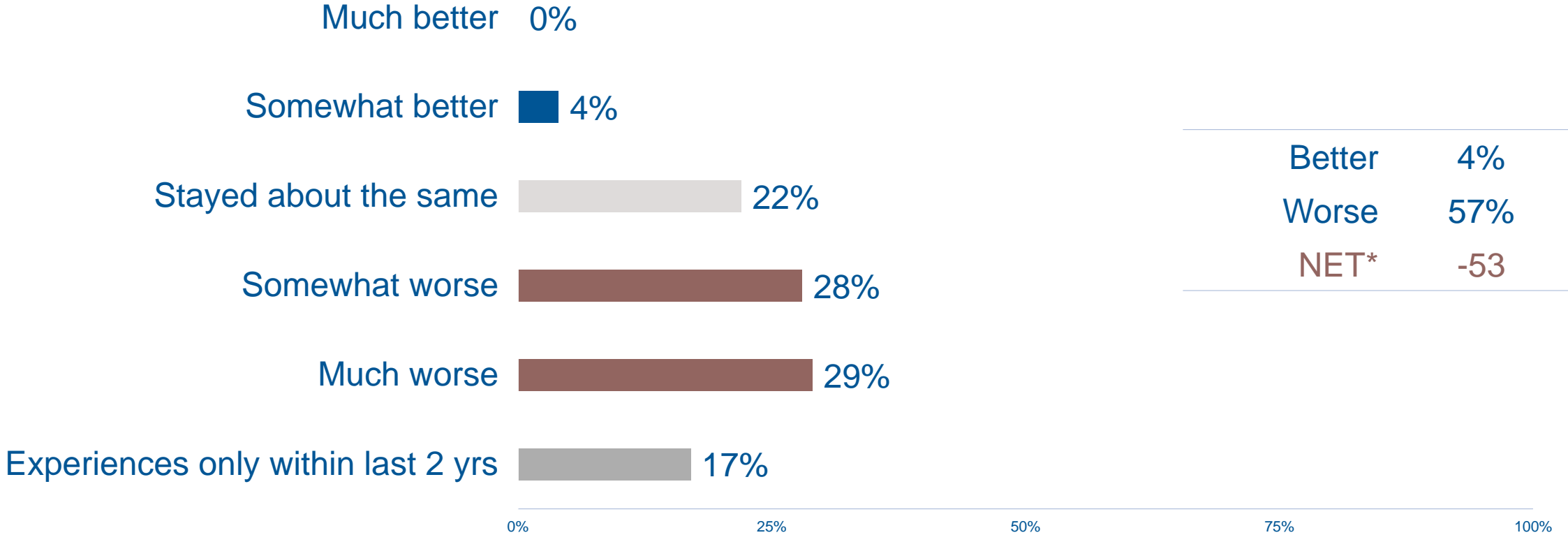
Are the mental health services you've accessed / sought for your child's / children's concerns publicly funded, privately funded or a combination of both?



Base: Child is receiving mental health support (n=244)

>> Perceived Change in Children’s Mental Health Supports - Last 2 Years

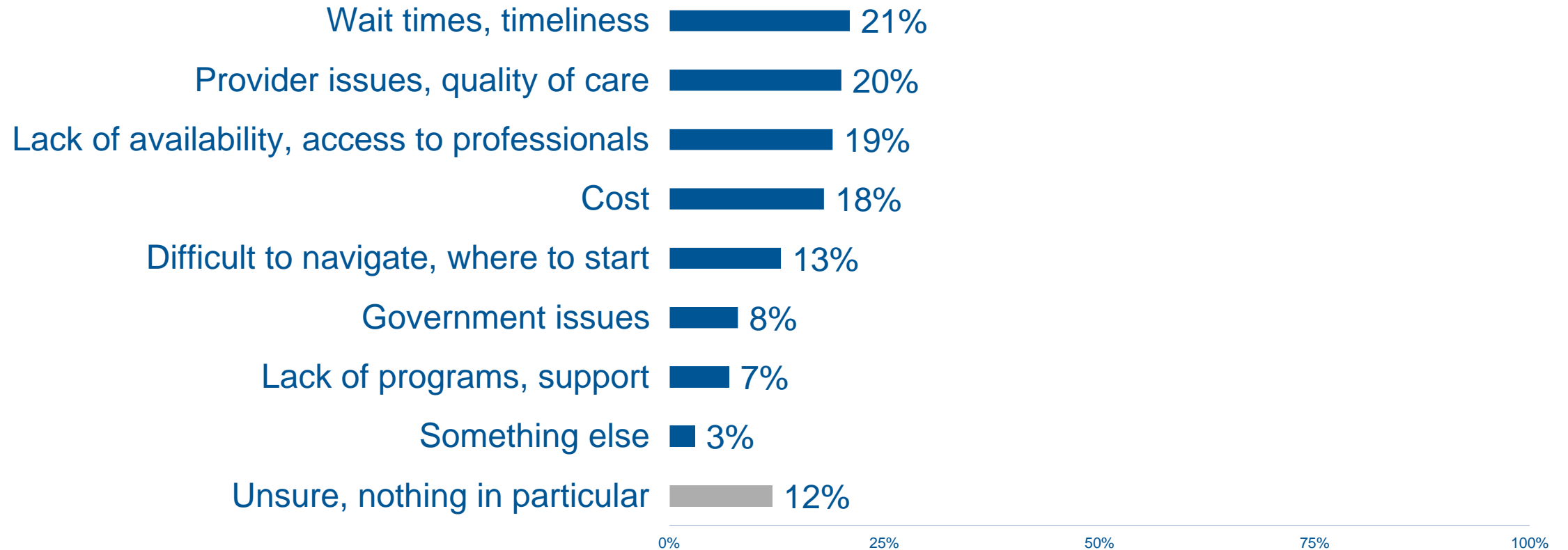
Based upon your experiences or impressions, compared to two years ago, do you think mental health care and supports for children in Alberta is better, worse or about the same as it was?



Base: Child has a diagnosed mental health issue (n=398) | *NET: Better minus worse

>> Sentiment: Challenges with Children's Mental Health Care and Supports

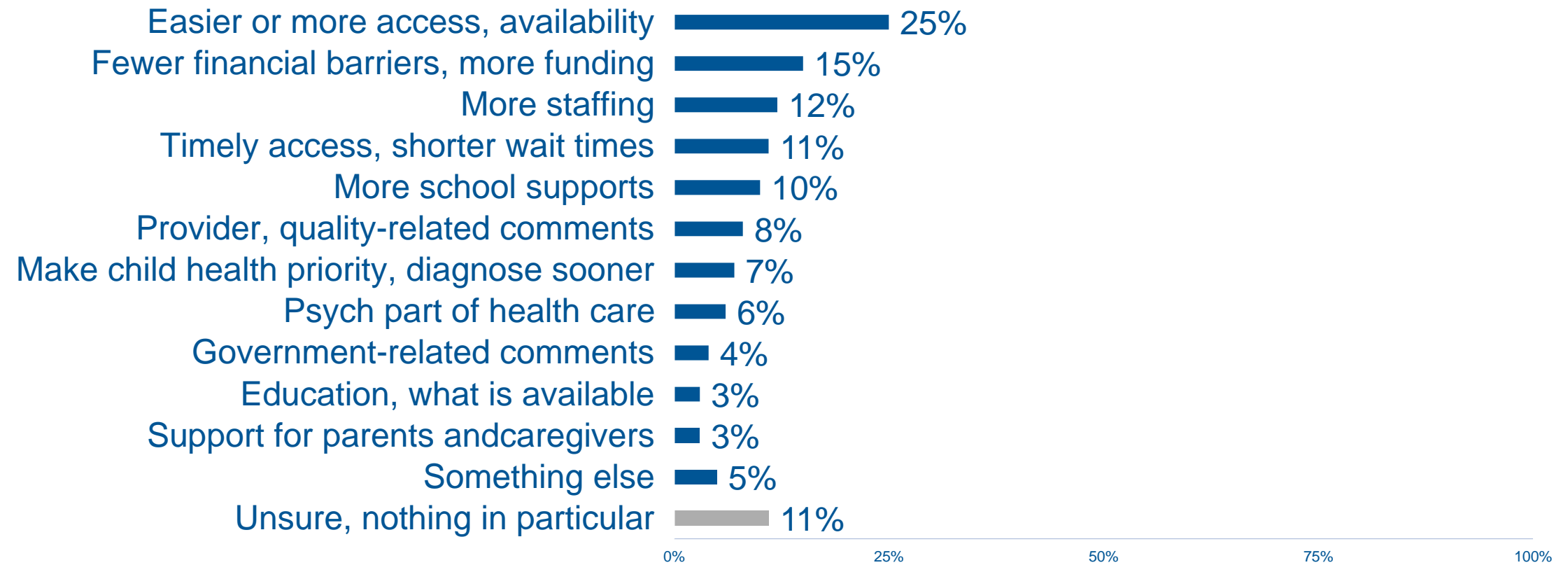
What would you say are the most challenging things about about getting care and supports for your child's mental health needs in Alberta today?



Base: Child has a diagnosed mental health issue (n=398) | Open-ended question: Coded into common themes mentioned | MULTIPLE MENTIONS

>> Sentiment: Priorities for Children's Mental Health in Alberta

What would you say are the most important priorities for Alberta's health care system when it comes to improving care and supports for the mental health needs of children?



Base: Child has a diagnosed mental health issue (n=398) | Open-ended question: Coded into common themes mentioned | MULTIPLE MENTIONS



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Your Voice Matters

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