

# COVID Check-in



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## COVID-19 Check-in

### COVID Impacts on Patient Care

The Covid-19 pandemic is insidious. Not only is it having direct impacts on Albertans through alarming growth in infections, hospitalizations and deaths, but public health management through social isolating and public concerns about contracting the virus are having serious consequences for the mental and physical health of Albertans. A growing number of patients are feeling a direct deterioration in their own mental and physical disposition, compounded by the fact that many are putting off on-going and preventative care. This will likely have long-term implications for patients and the health care system well beyond the life of the pandemic.

A growing number of patients are saying the COVID pandemic and its response are negatively impacting their health. Indeed, 44% say their physical health is worse now than before the COVID-19 outbreak began (12% say better), while an alarming two-thirds (64%) feel their mental health has declined (only 6% say it has improved).

- Both of these measures are up sharply since June
- Age is directly correlated with those under 45 years of age far more likely to sense a decline, particularly with respect to mental health where a staggering 70% feel worse now than before March. Proportions of patients who report a deterioration in physical and mental health drops with age
- Women and those with chronic conditions (or have family members with these conditions) are more likely to report deteriorations in health

These reports are attributable to patients not eating, exercising and sleeping as well as they should, not being able/willing to access care for new and ongoing medical conditions, as well as many feeling a sense of isolation and anxiety (about the virus as well as economic/financial impacts).



## COVID-19 Check-in

### COVID Disruption of Patient Care

Almost six-in-ten (59%) patients report that the pandemic has created disruptions in their health care. In this, fully one-third (34%) say they have avoided or delayed visits to their family physician, another 21% have put off specialist visits, and one-fifth (20%) have been unable to access lab and diagnostic services in a timely fashion. Roughly one-in-ten patients report that their specialist or family physician has been unable to provide the care they needed due to COVID, along with patients who have had their non-urgent surgical or outpatient medical procedures delayed or cancelled.

Just over one-third (37%) of patients who have had health care disruptions report that they have contributed to a decline in their health (7% “A great deal”, 30% “Quite a bit”). This represents roughly one-fifth of all patients in the province.

- Health impacts due to disruption of care have inched up since June (6 percentage points)
- Care disruption tends to impact patients under the age of 65 more than their older cohorts, as well as women, the least affluent and patients dealing with chronic conditions (particularly those with the condition themselves but also those with family members who have them)



# COVID-19 Check-in

## Attitudinals

### Patient Comfort & Patient Care During Covid

Generally speaking, even with COVID patients feel quite comfortable with the notion of attending an appointment at their doctor's office if needed (80%). That said, the fact that almost one-in-five (18%) do not is somewhat concerning.

Despite this, over one-half (56%) of patients say they have personally "put off" non-essential medical visits until after COVID is less of an issue.

Moreover, there is considerable anxiety about what another growing wave of COVID cases will mean for patient care in the near terms. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of patients fear that a rise in COVID cases will disrupt their usual health care needs.

- Those living in the northern and southern regions of the province are somewhat less concerned about the prospects of in-person medical visits, as are those aged 55+
- Those without chronic conditions (either personal or household) are least likely to say they have put off care due to the pandemic

Continued ... 



## COVID-19 Check-in

Attitudinals ... continued

### A COVID Vaccine is Coming, but its Vaccinations That Count

Two-thirds (66%) of patients report that they want to be vaccinated for COVID when this becomes available over the next 6 - 8 months. Unfortunately, this represents an optimistic estimate. Our past research has shown that a significant proportion of those expressing a desire to perform an action typically do not, and once this standardizing filter is applied to these responses, a more conservative estimate of roughly ~30% is likely.

This will be a communications challenge for public health authorities. Over one-fifth (21%) of patients say they do not wish to be vaccinated for COVID, with 17% strongly opposed to the idea.

- Patients residing outside of Alberta's two largest metropolitan areas express the most reluctance/resistance to taking a COVID vaccine (particularly in the North)
- Women and patients under the age of 55 will likely be a bigger challenge for public health authorities when it comes to implementing a COVID vaccine

Continued ... 



## COVID-19 Check-in

Attitudinals ... continued

### Has The Province got COVID Under Control?

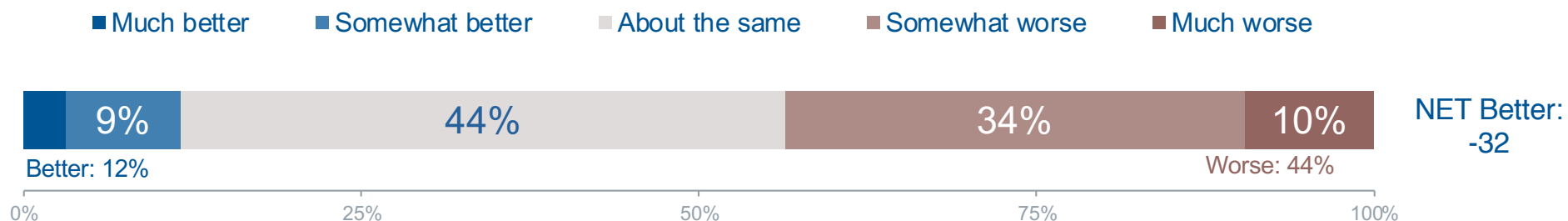
Alberta patients are divided on the issue. Fully 45% agree that even though cases are increasing, health officials seem to have more control over the situation now than they did in the spring. However, an equal proportion (46%) disagree, while another 8% are not sure.

- The proportion of patients who say health authorities have a better handle on the virus now than they did a few months ago tends to increase with age, is more common among men than women, and is higher among those without chronic conditions

# COVID Impacts on Respondent's Physical and Mental Health

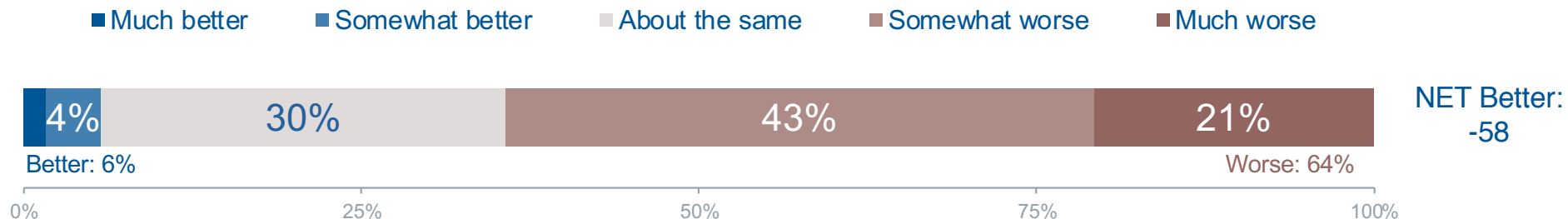
"Compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you rate your physical health today?"

## Physical health



"Compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you rate your mental health today?"

## Mental health



NET Better: Better minus worse | Base: All respondents (n=4,349)



# COVID Impacts on Respondent's Physical and Mental Health

## Tracking

"Compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you rate your physical/mental health today?"

		Nov '20 (n=4,349)	Jun '20 (n=3,618)
<b>Physical health</b>	Better	12%	12%
	Same/not stated	44%	55%
	Worse	44%	33%
<b>Mental health</b>	Better	6%	9%
	Same/not stated	30%	38%
	Worse	64%	53%

 Significantly higher

 Significantly lower

Base: All respondents



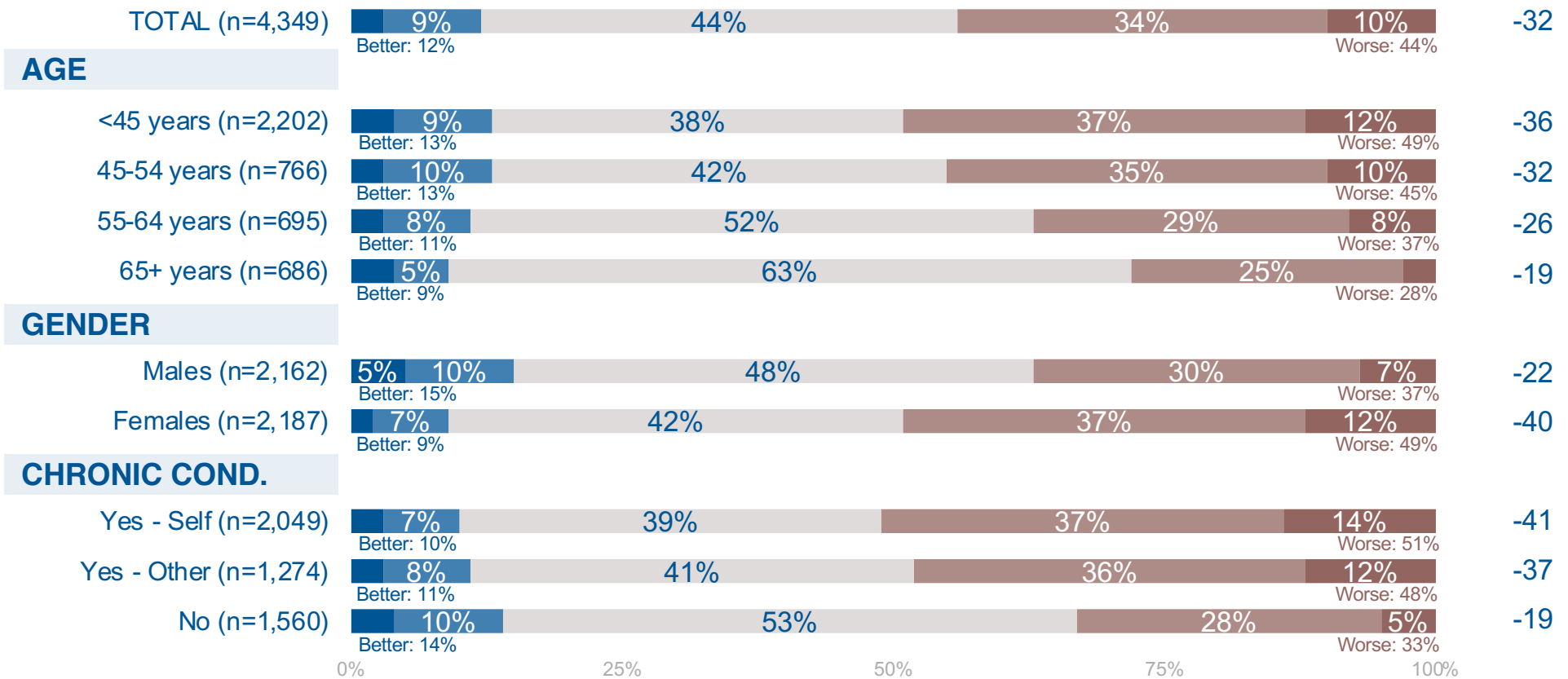
# COVID Impacts on Respondent's Physical Health

## By Age, Gender and Chronic Condition

"Compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you rate your **physical** health today?"

■ Much better ■ Somewhat better ■ The same ■ Somewhat worse ■ Much worse

NET Better



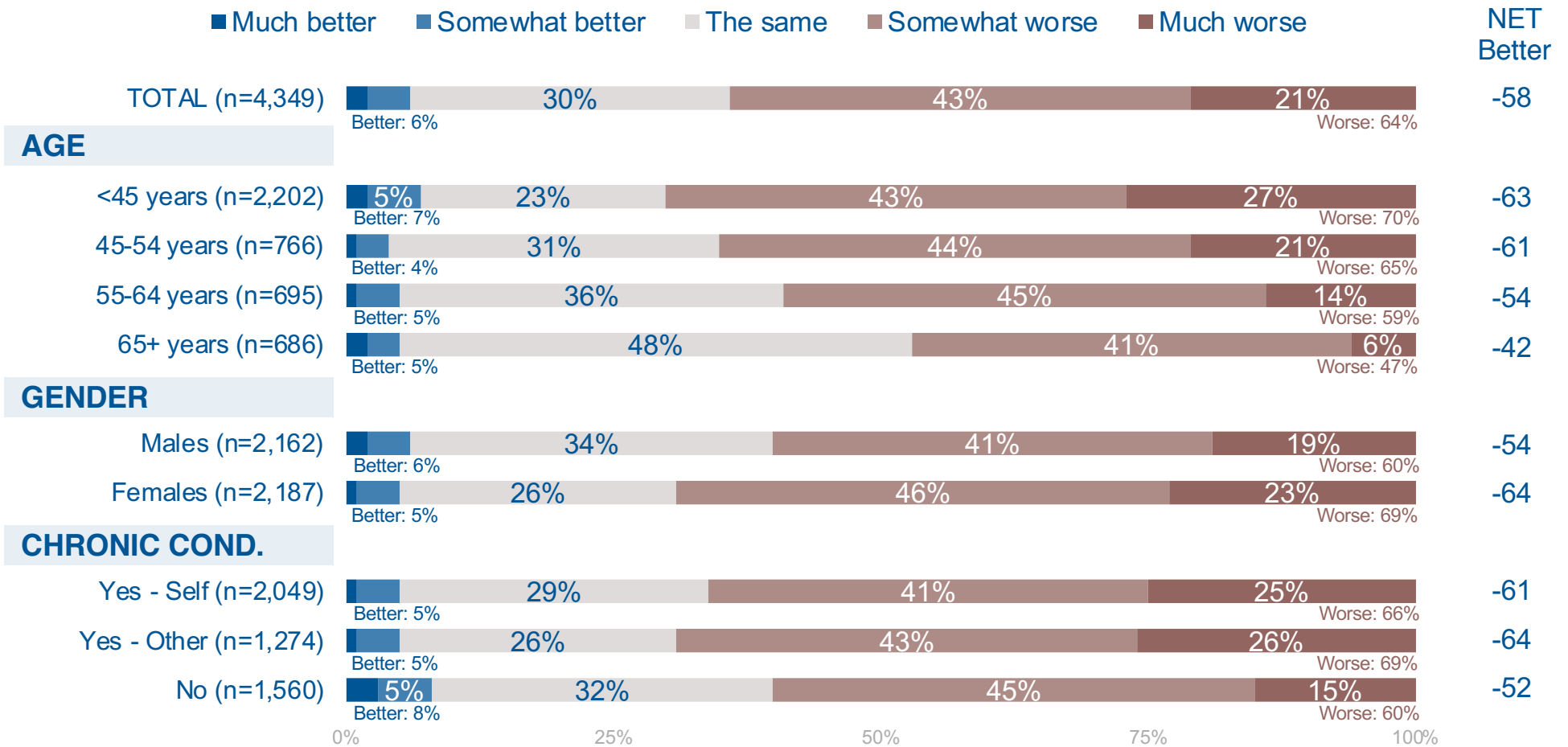
NET Better: Better minus worse | Base: All respondents

# COVID Impacts on Respondent's Mental Health

## By Age, Gender and Chronic Condition

"Compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you rate your **mental** health today?"

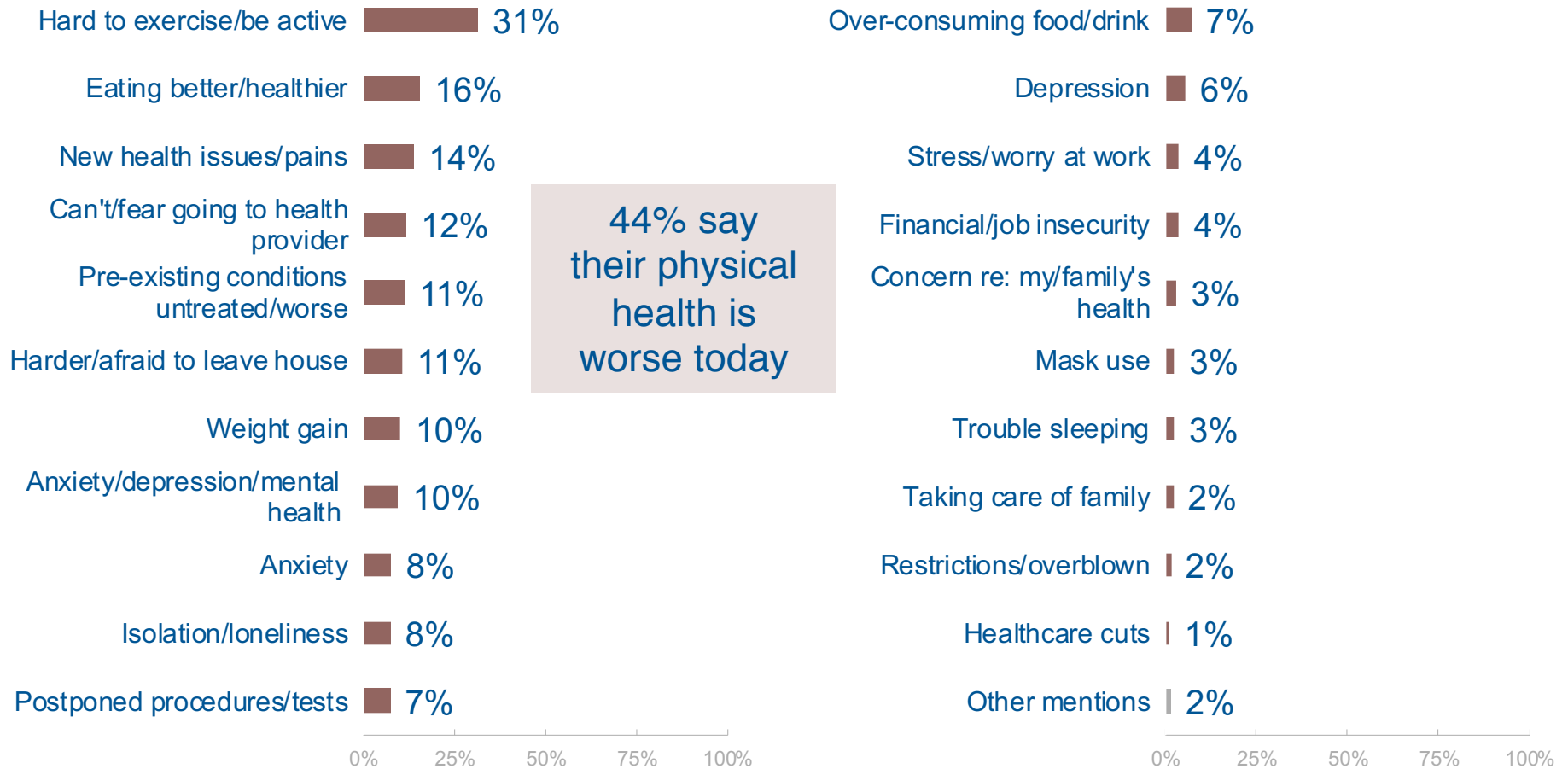
■ Much better ■ Somewhat better ■ The same ■ Somewhat worse ■ Much worse



NET Better: Better minus worse | Base: All respondents

# >> Reasons for Worsened Physical Health

*"And why do you say that your physical health is worse today?"*



Base: Voluntarily offered a comment - physical health is somewhat/much worse today  
 Open-ended question: Comments were coded into common themes mentioned



## >> Reasons for Worsened Mental Health

*“And why do you say that your **mental health** is worse today?”*

- Many patients feel their mental health is worse today as they are worried about their own health and that of family members, both in terms of contracting COVID, or not being able to get proper care for non-COVID related issues as a result
- Many also say it is difficult to not visit with family and friends, and are facing increased feelings of depression and isolation as a result
- Others express worry and anxiety about things like finances and employment, added strains on relationships and being unable to do things they'd like to (such as exercise/sport activities and travel) because of restrictions, along with worry about the future in general
- Still others feel increased stress in regard to their children in terms of their health (both physical and mental) and their school situations

Base: Voluntarily offered a comment - mental health is somewhat/much worse today

## » Reasons for Worsened Mental Health

*“And why do you say that your **mental health** is worse today?”*

*The attempt to maintain an active and social lifestyle has been hampered greatly*

*Stressed, worried about my child back in school. No safe government plan for back to school. Worried about elderly mother*

*Avoiding activities such as travel, shopping in person, seeing friends and relatives*

*I have much more anxiety. Afraid of getting sick. Afraid someone I know will die*

*Stress and anxiety are at all-time highs between the virus and working from home while also caring for my two small children, one of whom is doing online school*

*More periods of feeling down, frustrated over lack of services and socialization due to COVID-19*

*Lonely and uncertain about my financial future*

*Hard to stay positive when every day seems the same - Very lonely and isolated from family and friends*

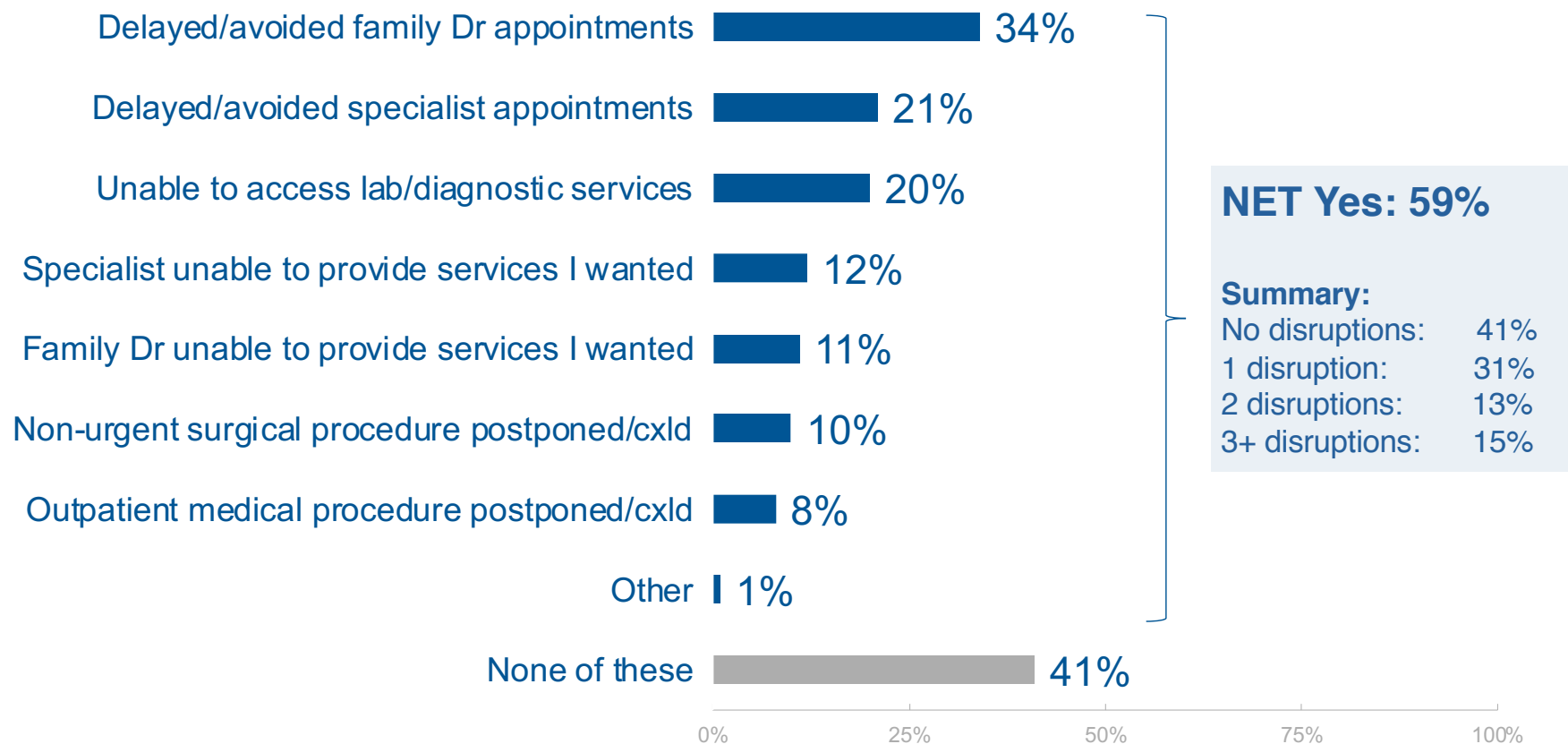
*I'm tired of the restrictions, tired of the mental strain of worrying I'm going to get sick or die, and tired of the mental strain it puts on my relationship*

*Feeling depressed with not having connection personally with family members, and worrying about the future*

Base: Voluntarily offered a comment - mental health is somewhat/much worse today

# >> COVID-19 Disruptions on Regular Health Care Needs

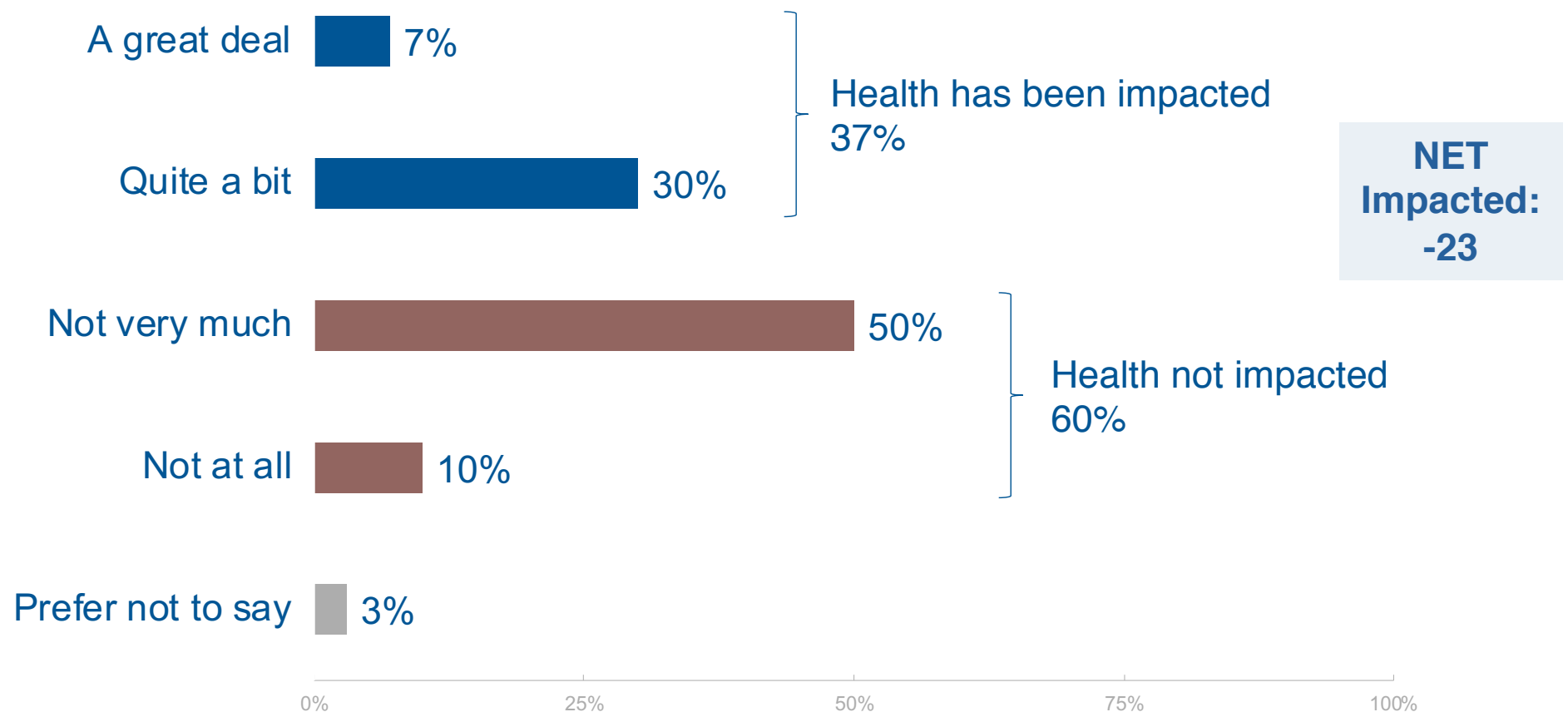
*"Have you personally had your regular health care needs disrupted in any way by COVID-19? Here are some examples, please select any that apply to you personally."*



MULTIPLE MENTIONS | Base: All respondents (n=4,349)

## >> Impact of COVID Health Care Disruptions on Personal Health

*"And how, if at all, has the disruption in your health care access during the COVID situation impacted your health?"*



Base: Health care needs have been disrupted by COVID-19 (n=2,611)





# Impact of COVID Health Care Disruptions on Personal Health Tracking

“And how, if at all, has the disruption in your health care access during the COVID situation impacted your health?”

	Nov '20 (n=2,611)	Jun '20 (n=2,285)
Health has been impacted	37%	31%
<i>A great deal</i>	7%	7%
<i>Quite a bit</i>	30%	24%
Health not impacted	60%	68%
<i>Not very much</i>	50%	55%
<i>Not at all</i>	10%	13%
Prefer not to say	3%	1%

Significantly higher than previous wave

Base: Health care needs have been disrupted by COVID-19



# Impact of COVID Health Care Disruptions on Personal Health

## By Age and Gender

“And how, if at all, has the disruption in your health care access during the COVID situation impacted your health?”

■ Impacted a great deal ■ Quite a bit ■ Prefer not to say ■ Not very much ■ Not impacted at all

NET Impacted



-23

### AGE



-18



-16



-19



-41

### GENDER



-29



-16

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

NET Impacted: Impacted minus not impacted | Base: Health care needs have been disrupted by COVID-19



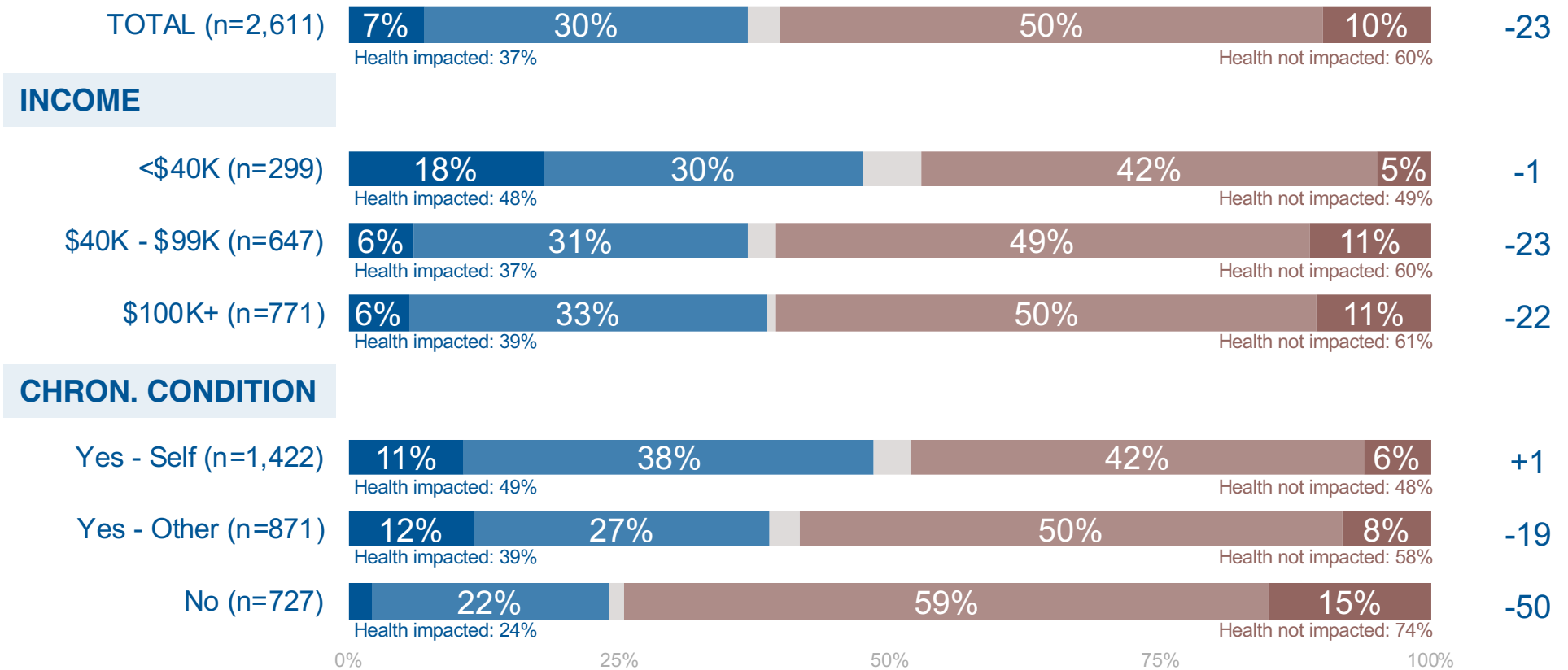
# Impact of COVID Health Care Disruptions on Personal Health

## By Income and Chronic Condition

“And how, if at all, has the disruption in your health care access during the COVID situation impacted your health?”

■ Impacted a great deal ■ Quite a bit ■ Prefer not to say ■ Not very much ■ Not impacted at all

NET Impacted

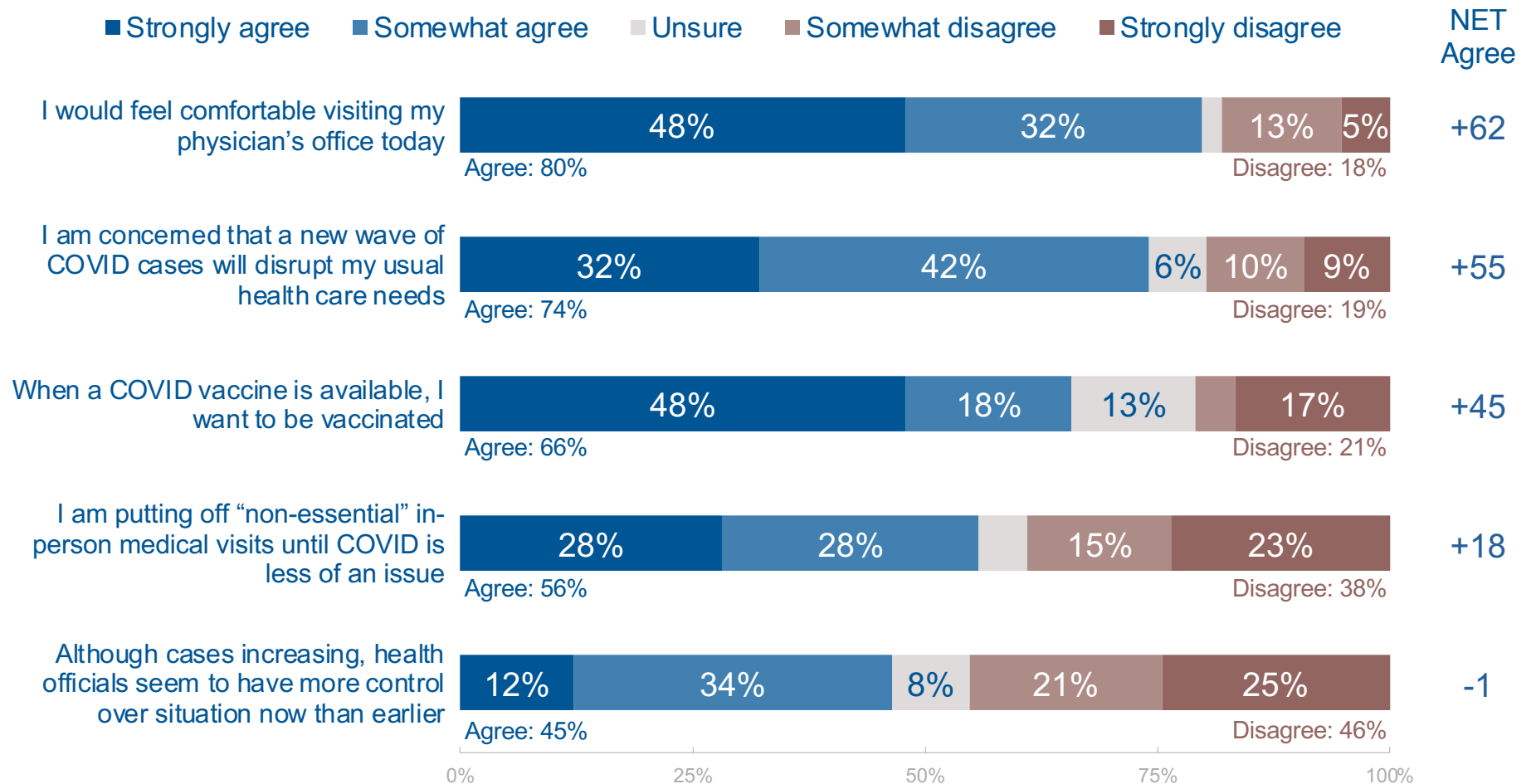


NET Impacted: Impacted minus not impacted | Base: Health care needs have been disrupted by COVID-19

# >> Accessing Health Care during COVID-19

## Attitudinals

“The following is a list of statements that some people might say about accessing the health care system during the COVID-19 pandemic. To what extent do you personally agree or disagree with each?”



# » Accessing Health Care during COVID-19

## Attitudinals by Region

“The following is a list of statements that some people might say about accessing the health care system during the COVID-19 pandemic. To what extent do you personally agree or disagree with each?”

% saying Agree (Strongly or Somewhat)	TOTAL (n=4,349)	Region				
		CGY (n=1,518)	EDM (n=1,372)	North (n=524)	Central (n=486)	South (n=448)
I would feel comfortable visiting my physician’s office today	80%	78%	77%	84%	79%	88%
I am concerned that a new wave of COVID cases will disrupt my usual health care needs	74%	75%	75%	77%	71%	71%
When a COVID vaccine is available, I want to be vaccinated	66%	73%	72%	48%	52%	61%
I am putting off “non-essential” in-person medical visits until COVID is less of an issue	56%	58%	57%	52%	53%	53%
Although cases increasing, health officials seem to have more control over situation now than earlier	46%	47%	43%	46%	52%	47%

□ Significantly higher ○ Significantly lower

Base: All respondents

# » Accessing Health Care during COVID-19

## Attitudinals by Age and Gender

“The following is a list of statements that some people might say about accessing the health care system during the COVID-19 pandemic. To what extent do you personally agree or disagree with each?”

% saying Agree (Strongly or Somewhat)	TOTAL (n=4,349)	Age (Years)				Gender	
		<45 (n=2,022)	45-54 (n=766)	55-64 (n=695)	65+ (n=686)	Male (n=2,162)	Female (n=2,187)
I would feel comfortable visiting my physician’s office today	80%	77%	79%	84%	85%	77%	82%
I am concerned that a new wave of COVID cases will disrupt my usual health care needs	74%	76%	74%	75%	69%	73%	76%
When a COVID vaccine is available, I want to be vaccinated	66%	64%	60%	70%	73%	70%	62%
I am putting off “non-essential” in-person medical visits until COVID is less of an issue	56%	56%	60%	55%	52%	52%	59%
Although cases increasing, health officials seem to have more control over situation now than earlier	46%	43%	44%	51%	56%	50%	43%

□ Significantly higher ○ Significantly lower

Base: All respondents

# » Accessing Health Care during COVID-19

## Attitudinals by Chronic Condition

“The following is a list of statements that some people might say about accessing the health care system during the COVID-19 pandemic. To what extent do you personally agree or disagree with each?”

% saying Agree (Strongly or Somewhat)	TOTAL (n=4,349)	Chronic Condition		
		Yes - Self (n=2,049)	Yes - Other (n=1,274)	No (n=1,560)
I would feel comfortable visiting my physician’s office today	80%	77%	78%	82%
I am concerned that a new wave of COVID cases will disrupt my usual health care needs	74%	80%	77%	66%
When a COVID vaccine is available, I want to be vaccinated	66%	67%	70%	63%
I am putting off “non-essential” in-person medical visits until COVID is less of an issue	56%	59%	63%	50%
Although cases increasing, health officials seem to have more control over situation now than earlier	46%	44%	41%	50%

□ Significantly higher ○ Significantly lower

Base: All respondents

This research was conducted with and for the [albertapatient.ca](http://albertapatient.ca) online community, operated by the Alberta Medical Association and research partner ThinkHQ Public Affairs Inc.

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## >> Research Methodology

- Online survey was fielded via the albertapatient online research panel
  - Field dates: October 26 - November 6, 2020
  - Sample size: n=4,349
- 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



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