

COVID-19 Round 14 survey

FINAL REPORT
1 March 2022



YOUR SAY
PANEL



Background

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, research with Canberrans via the YourSay Panel has been undertaken to understand community sentiment and behaviours to inform the public health response, recovery and associated messaging.

This latest round of research (Round 14) is the first survey since the Omicron outbreak and examined community mood and expectations around 'living with COVID', vaccine booster uptake, the use of Rapid Antigen Tests and information needs going forward.

Methodological notes:

- All YourSay Panel members were invited to participate (n=5,865)
- The results have been weighted to reflect relative population proportions based on the ABS Census
- The methodology is biased towards those with internet and computer literacy
- In single choice questions, results may not add up to 100% due to rounding



How many?

2,329

Who?

Canberrans 16+

When?

10 – 20 Feb 2021

How long?

15 minutes

Key take outs

- ▶ There has been a drop in community mood and feeling informed about COVID-19, in line with national trends
- ▶ Over half (55%) of Canberrans are adapting or moving on when it comes to ‘Living with COVID’, but a quarter are feeling uncomfortable and at risk
- ▶ There is a broad acceptance that ‘Living with COVID’ resembles a return to some form of ‘normality’, but one in which adoption of both individual and government-driven precautions can be warranted
- ▶ There remains some appetite for information from the ACT Government – especially information which affects daily lives – and most people would still like to see at least monthly updates on a range of support and operational issues
- ▶ Most panel members understand the likely need for vaccine boosters in the future
- ▶ Most households now have a supply of RATs and feel confident in using them and reporting results if they do test positive

Current mood and expectations of 'Living with COVID'

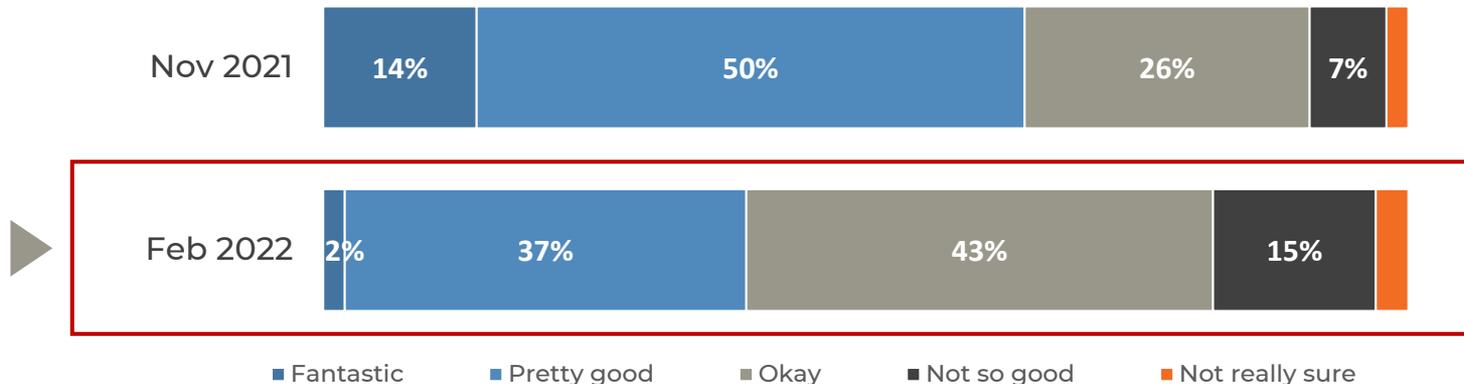


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There has been a significant drop in mood since the Omicron outbreak became established

Q. In general, how are you feeling about things right now?



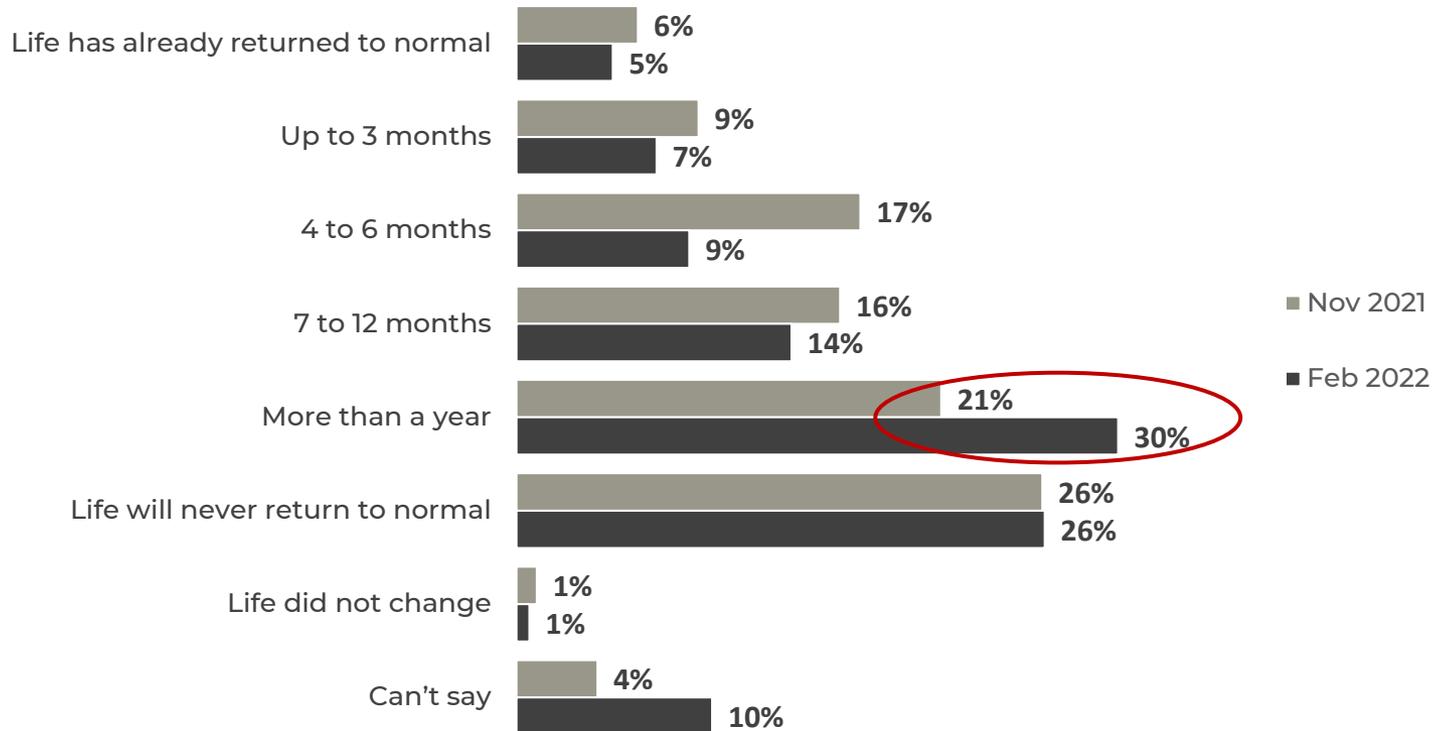
While little variation by age, Canberrans identifying as male are more likely to be in a positive frame of mind (46% fantastic / pretty good) compared with females (33%)

Business owners are more likely to be feeling fantastic or pretty good (49%) compared with non-business owners (39%)



And muted expectations of life returning to 'normal', with more anticipating this will be longer than a year away

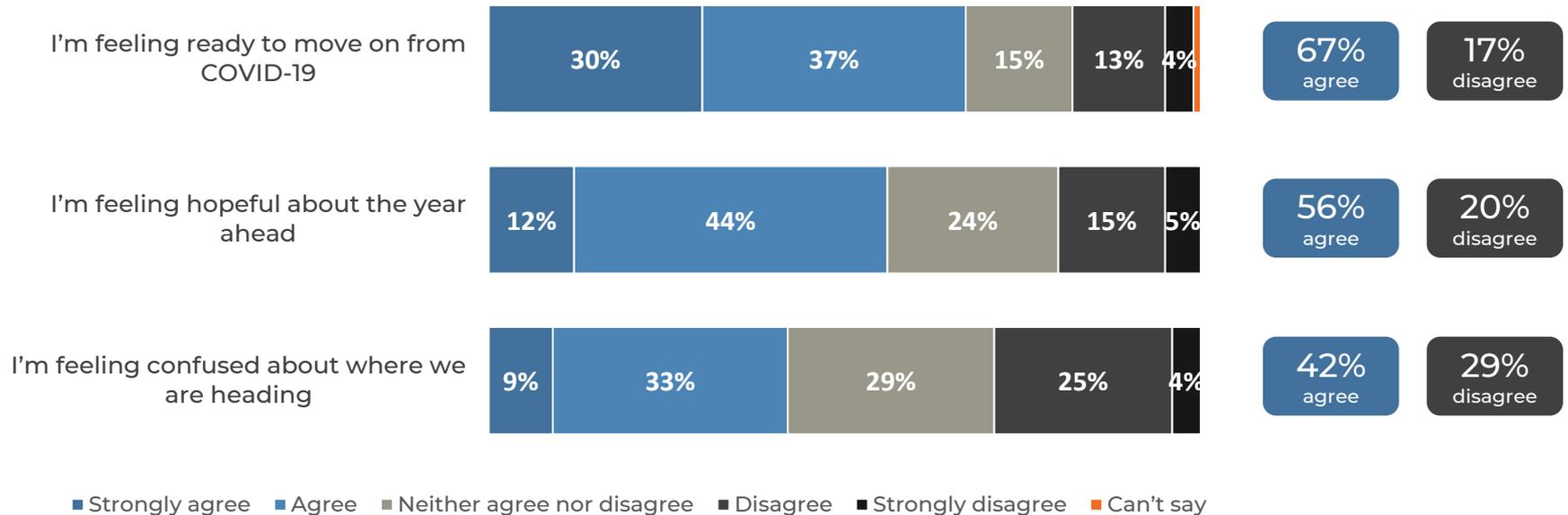
Q. When do you think your life will return to 'normal'?





Majority feel ready to move on from COVID-19, though with some uncertainty about future direction

Q. And to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

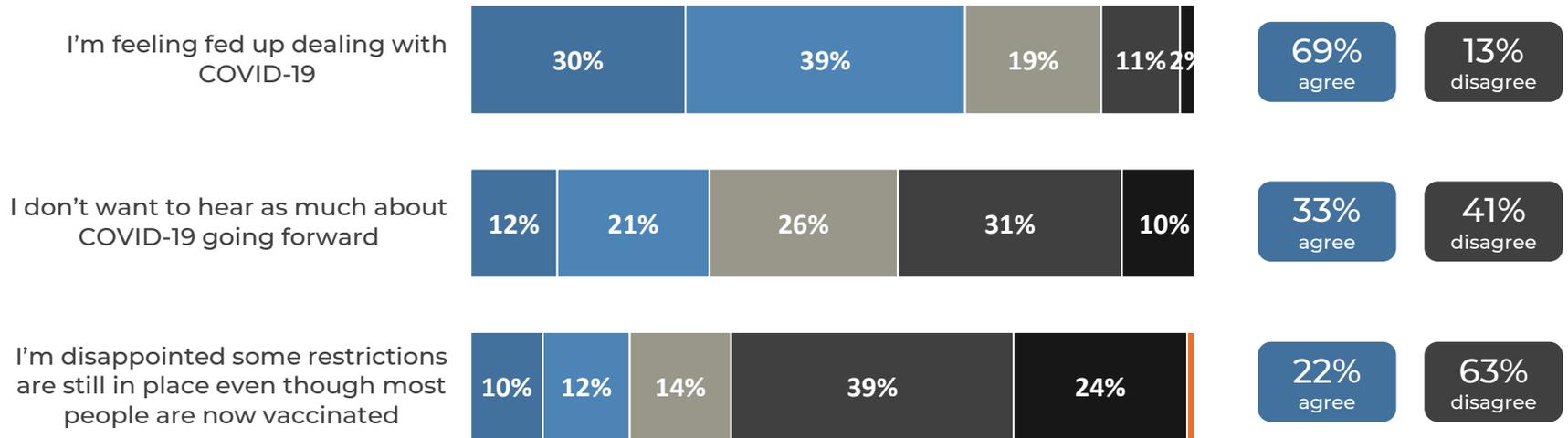


Young Canberrans (16-24) are significantly more likely to strongly agree that they are ready to move on from COVID-19 (41%)



While ‘COVID-fatigue’ is reported by around seven in ten, this does not necessarily translate into disengagement

Q. And to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Can't say

"I am sick of hearing about it but feel the need to hear about it at the same time."

PANEL MEMBER

The concept of 'Living with COVID' garners varied views, from avoidance of disease to moving on with life

Q. What would you say 'living with COVID' looks like?

| Avoiding and resisting | Taking precautions | A balancing act | Accepting it's here | Getting it over with |
|---------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Left on own, feeling vulnerable | Being vaccinated / boosted | Living as normally as possible, regular activities | It's going to be ever-present | Return to life before the pandemic |
| Stringently taking precautions | Individual adoption of precautions | + | Widespread infection | No rules or restrictions |
| Avoiding / minimising contacts | Protecting vulnerable community members | Being cautious, taking 'light touch' precautions | Treating it like the flu | No more mention of COVID |
| | | | Expectation of some deaths | |

Most people appear to think Living with COVID is somewhere in the middle



The concept of 'Living with COVID' garners varied views, from avoidance of disease to moving on with life

Q. What would you say 'living with COVID' looks like?

Avoiding
and resisting

"Apparently 'living with COVID' means everyone's going to get it and we should all give up. I'm not, I'm still being very careful - I'm even tempted to keep my kids home from school."

Taking
precautions

"It should look like continuation of masks indoors, on public transport etc and other precautions such as social distancing but I worry that for most it will be a return to life as usual."

A balancing
act

"Being able to do the majority of things I used to do pre-covid but with enough precautions to keep the at-risk members of the community safe."

Accepting
it's here

"That there is an expectation that people will treat getting COVID the same as influenza. That it will affect some people more than others and that there will also be people who will die of it."

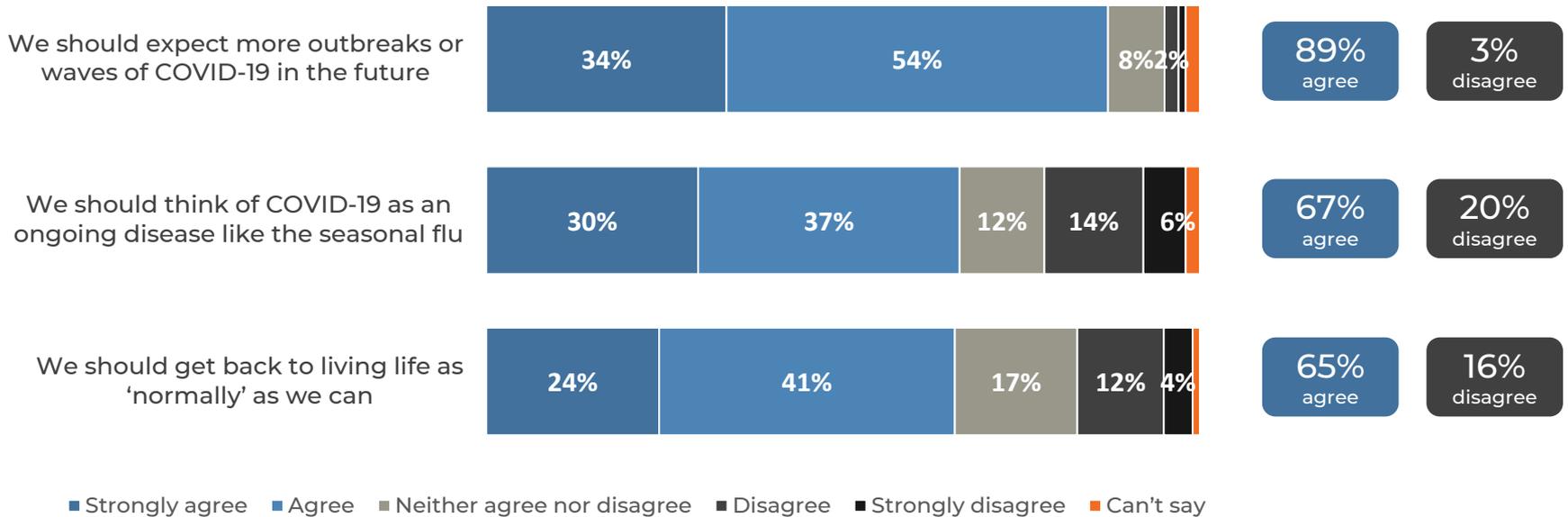
Getting it
over with

"Living with COVID means removal of every single restriction put in place and a return to January 2020. COVID needs to be consigned to the rubbish bin."



There is high expectation of further disease outbreaks as we live alongside COVID, often likened to living with the flu

Q. Thinking about what 'living with COVID' might look like in the future, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?



However, there also remain expectations of protective steps as we live with COVID

Q. Thinking about what 'living with COVID' might look like in the future, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

We should continue to take as many steps as possible to minimise the spread of COVID-19



71%
agree

13%
disagree

It is up to individuals to continue taking steps to minimise the spread of COVID-19



86%
agree

7%
disagree

It is up to governments to continue taking steps to minimise the spread of COVID-19



73%
agree

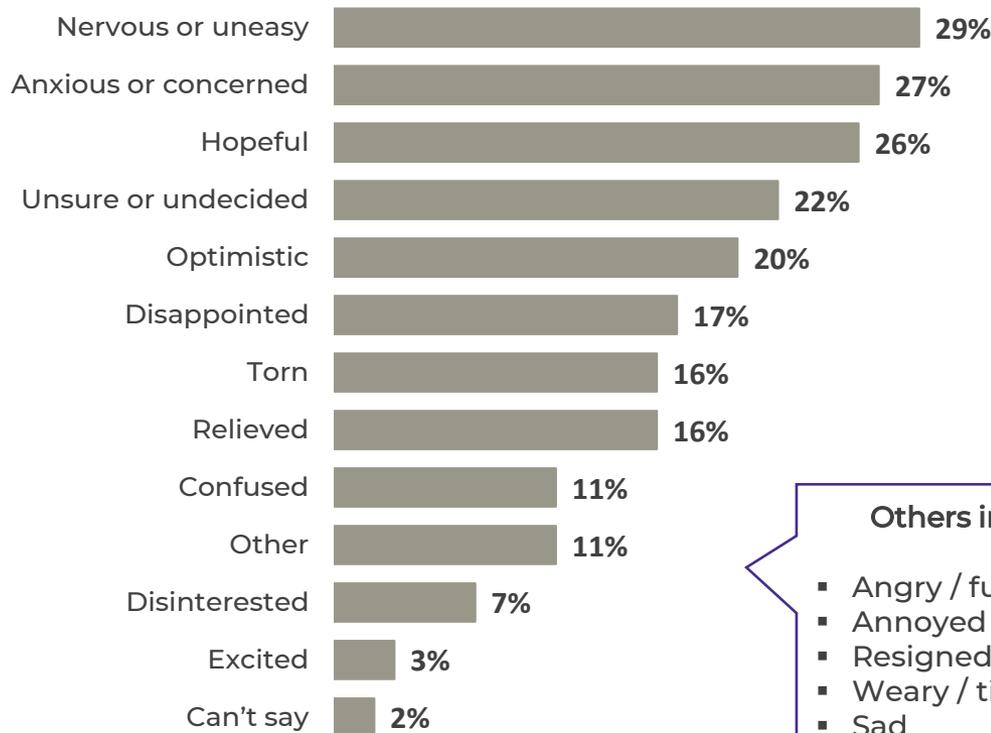
13%
disagree

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Can't say



The term 'Living with COVID' also garners ambivalent emotional responses

Q. And how does the term 'living with COVID' make you feel?



Others include:

- Angry / furious
- Annoyed
- Resigned
- Weary / tired
- Sad
- Nothing

47%

express any
negative
emotion

41%

express any
positive
emotion



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Other ideas for the term 'Living with COVID'

Q. Do you have any views or ideas about other words or phrases that could better describe the current situation instead of 'living with COVID'?

Moving on /
moving
forward
getting on
with life

Living COVID-wise /
Living safely with
COVID / Being
COVID-sensible

Nothing at all

Living with
COVID is fine

The new normal /
COVID-normal

Protecting /
caring for each
other / the
community

Managing
COVID / Dealing
with COVID

Just living

Individual comfort and control



Around three in ten Canberrans feel discomfort towards adjusting to 'living with COVID'

Q. How comfortable do you feel adjusting to 'living with COVID'?



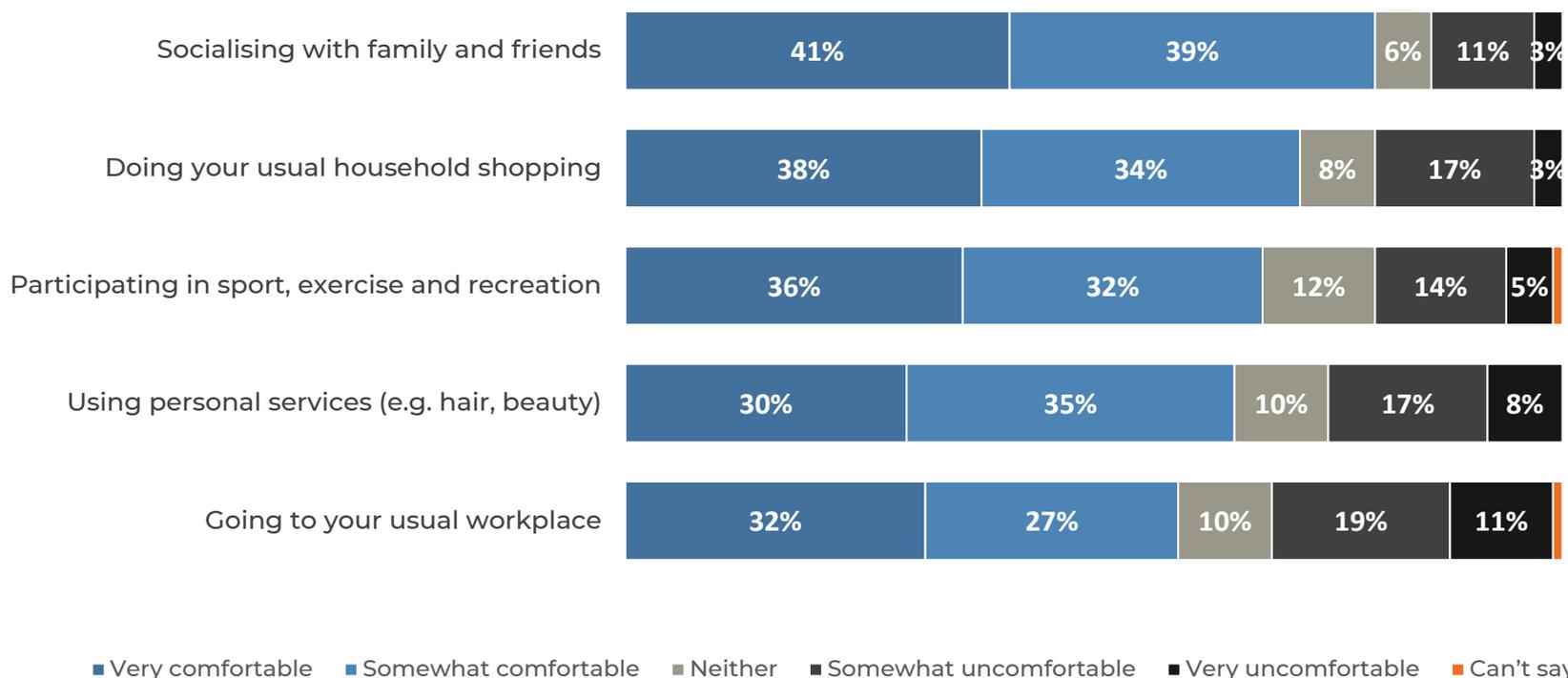
■ Very comfortable ■ Somewhat comfortable ■ Neither ■ Somewhat uncomfortable ■ Very uncomfortable ■ Can't say

Q. What would help you feel more comfortable?

- Keeping sensible precautions (masks, distancing etc)
- Free / subsidised supports – e.g. RATs, N95 masks
- Reinforcing messages around hygiene, distancing etc
- Continue working from home
- Understanding risks better – who gets ill, why etc
- Economic support for workers & businesses affected
- Exposure sites / places I can avoid
- Less news, anti-vax convoys etc
- Nothing – immunocompromised, feel vulnerable

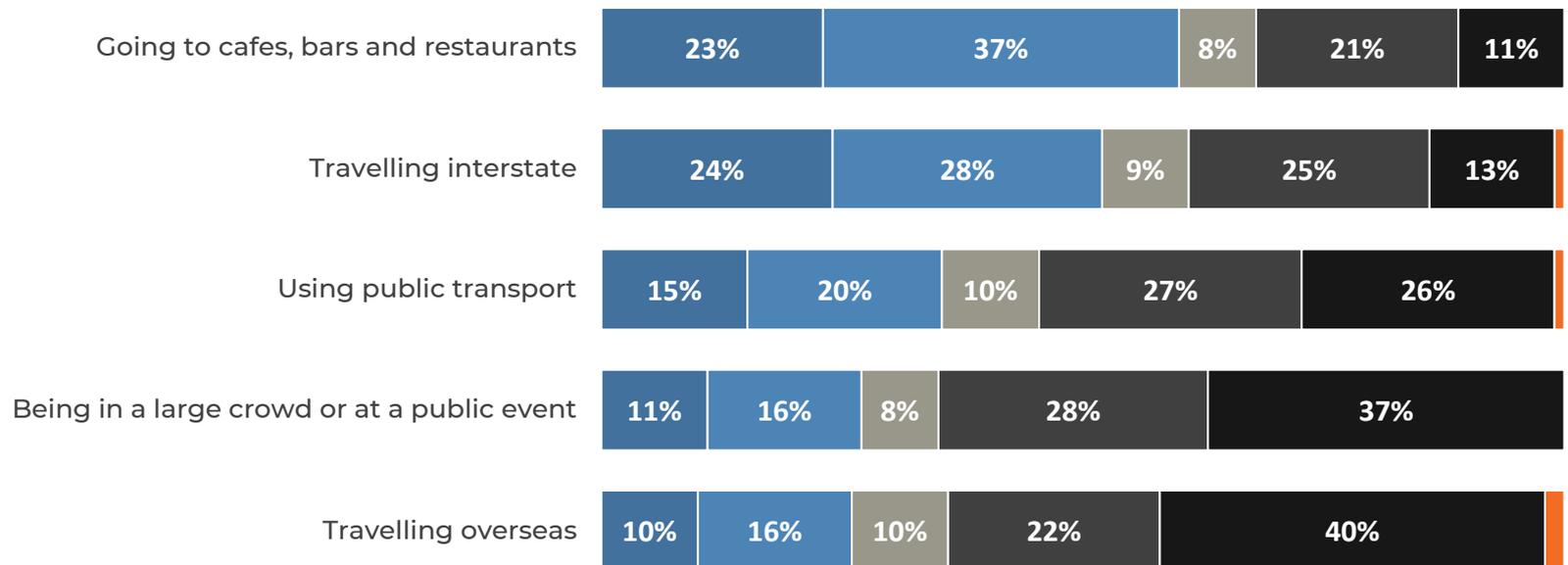
A majority of people are comfortable in certain settings

*Q. And how comfortable do you feel about doing each of the following in the next month?**



Discomfort is more apparent in crowded settings and / or those involving greater unknowns

Q. And how comfortable do you feel about doing each of the following in the next month?

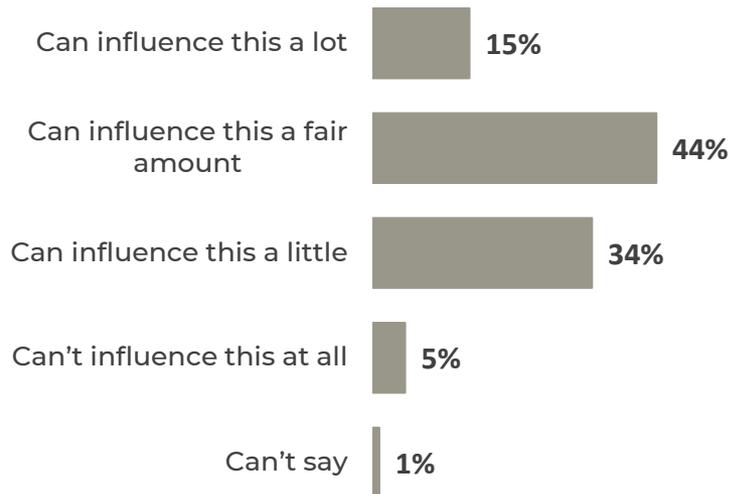


■ Very comfortable
 ■ Somewhat comfortable
 ■ Neither
 ■ Somewhat uncomfortable
 ■ Very uncomfortable
 ■ Can't say

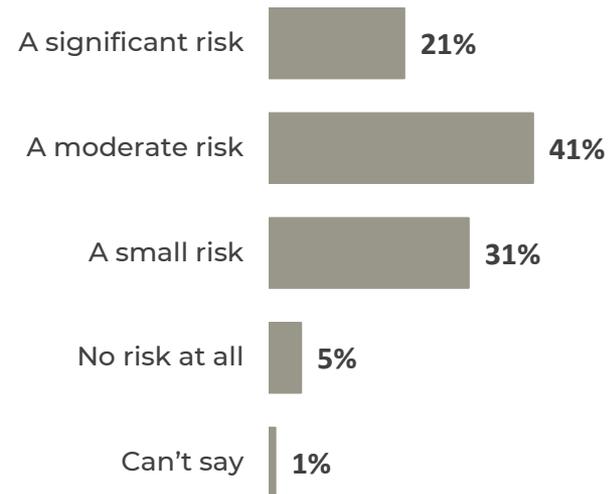


Four in ten Canberrans feel they have little or no influence in avoiding infection, while six in ten consider it a big risk

Q. To what extent do you feel you can personally influence whether you become infected (or reinfected) by COVID-19 or not?



Q. And how big a risk do you feel infection (or reinfection) from COVID-19 would be for you?



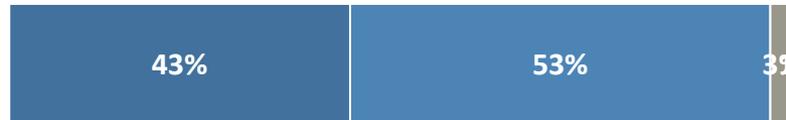
While older Canberrans feel greater risk they are also more likely to indicate they feel they can influence whether they become infected or not



In terms of managing risk, most Canberrans are still actively taking steps aiming to avoid infection

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

I know what steps I can take to reduce my risk of becoming infected by COVID-19



96%
agree

1%
disagree

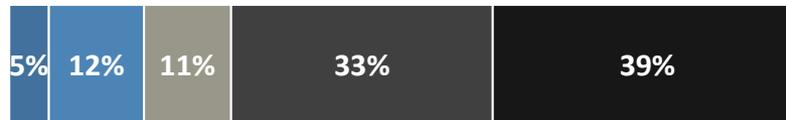
I make conscious choices or decisions to reduce my risk of being exposed to COVID-19



92%
agree

3%
disagree

I'm not too bothered about whether I become infected by COVID-19 or not



17%
agree

72%
disagree

Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Can't say

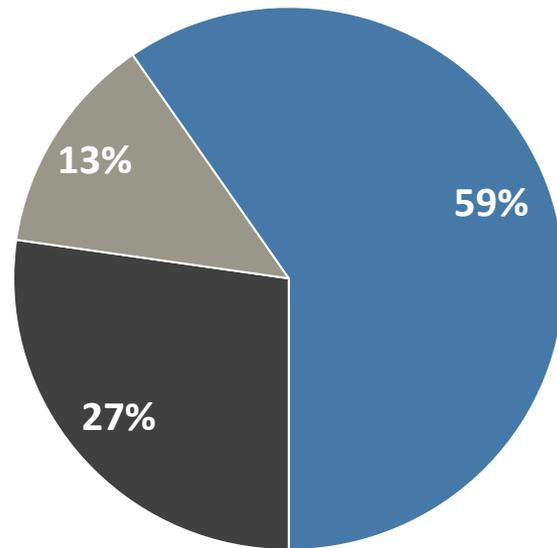
More than a quarter (27%) of 16-24 year olds agree they are not too bothered about catching COVID-19, with this sentiment decreasing with age



Six in ten are taking the same level of precautions than before the Omicron outbreak, with a quarter taking more

Q. Have you been taking precautions to manage risk...

Young people aged 16-24 are significantly more likely than others to be taking fewer precautions (22%)



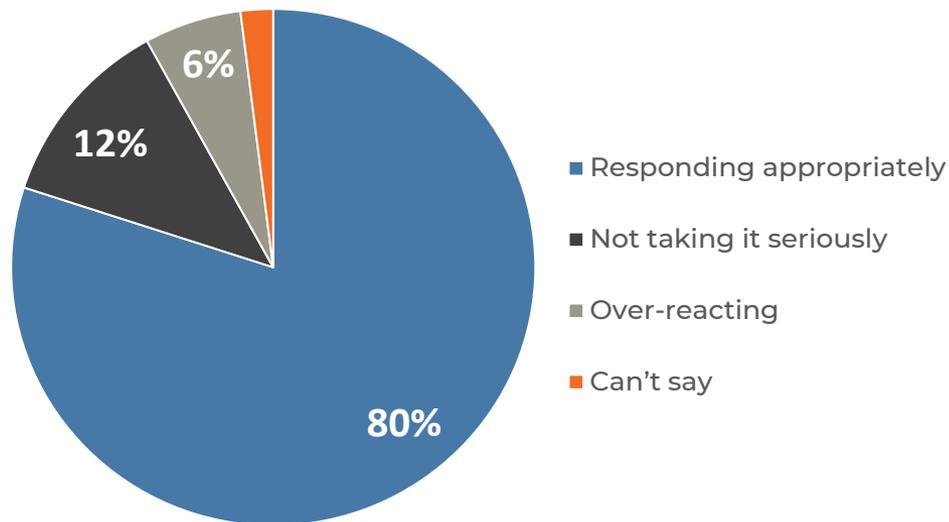
- More often than you did before the Omicron outbreak
- Less often than you did before the Omicron outbreak
- About the same amount as you did before the Omicron outbreak

Response and information needs



Eight in ten Canberrans feel that the community is responding appropriately to the current COVID-19 situation

Q. Overall, how would you describe the Canberra community's response to COVID-19?



Why not taking seriously?

- Lack of adherence to protective measures – masks, distancing, gatherings etc
- People have become complacent / too relaxed
- COVID is still spreading, cases high (e.g. in schools)

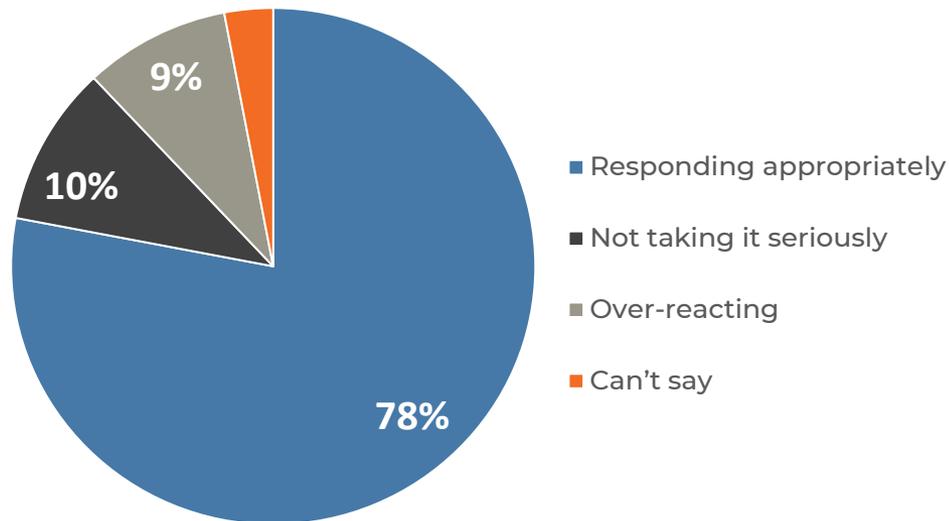
Why over-reacting? *

- Excessive mask wearing
- Highly vaccinated population, well protected
- Fear / paranoia / scaremongering



Similarly, around eight in ten feel that the ACT Government is responding appropriately to COVID-19

Q. Overall, how would you describe the ACT Government's response to COVID-19?



Why not taking seriously?

- Eased restrictions too quickly and / or too much
- Gave up, let COVID run
- No contact tracing, exposure sites, check ins etc
- Return to schools, kids and teachers at risk

Why over-reacting?

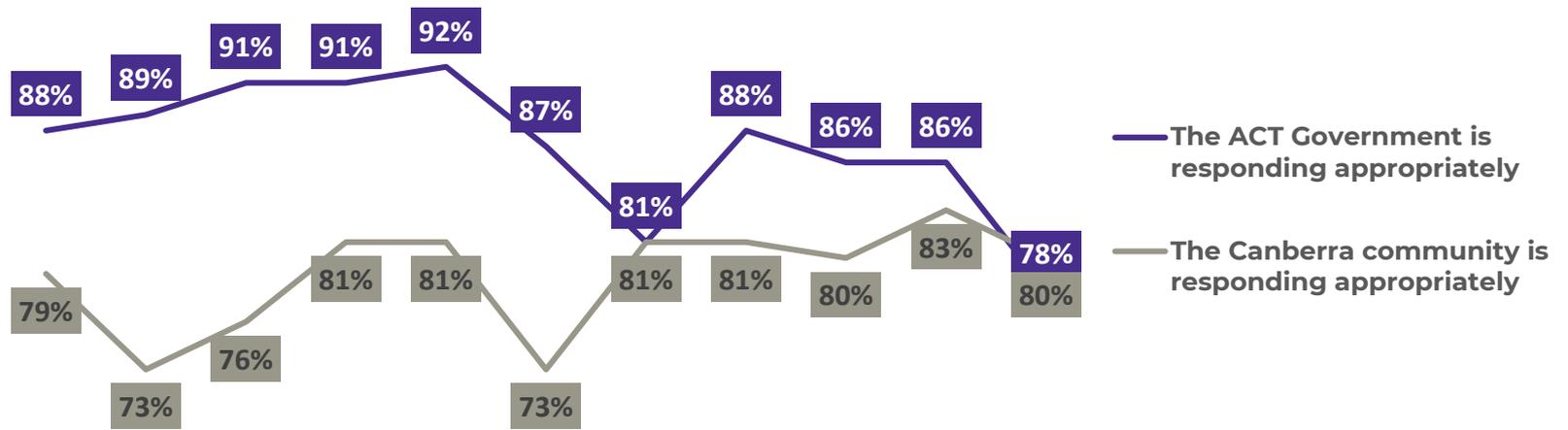
- Continued rules
- More cautious than other states
- Lockdown last year was too much (in hindsight now we have cases)
- It's not a serious disease



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There has been a dip in perceptions, with Government lower than the community response for the first time



Jun 2020 Jul 2020 Aug 2020 Dec 2020 Feb 2021 May 2021 Jul 2021 Sep 2021 Oct 2021 Nov 2021 Feb 2022



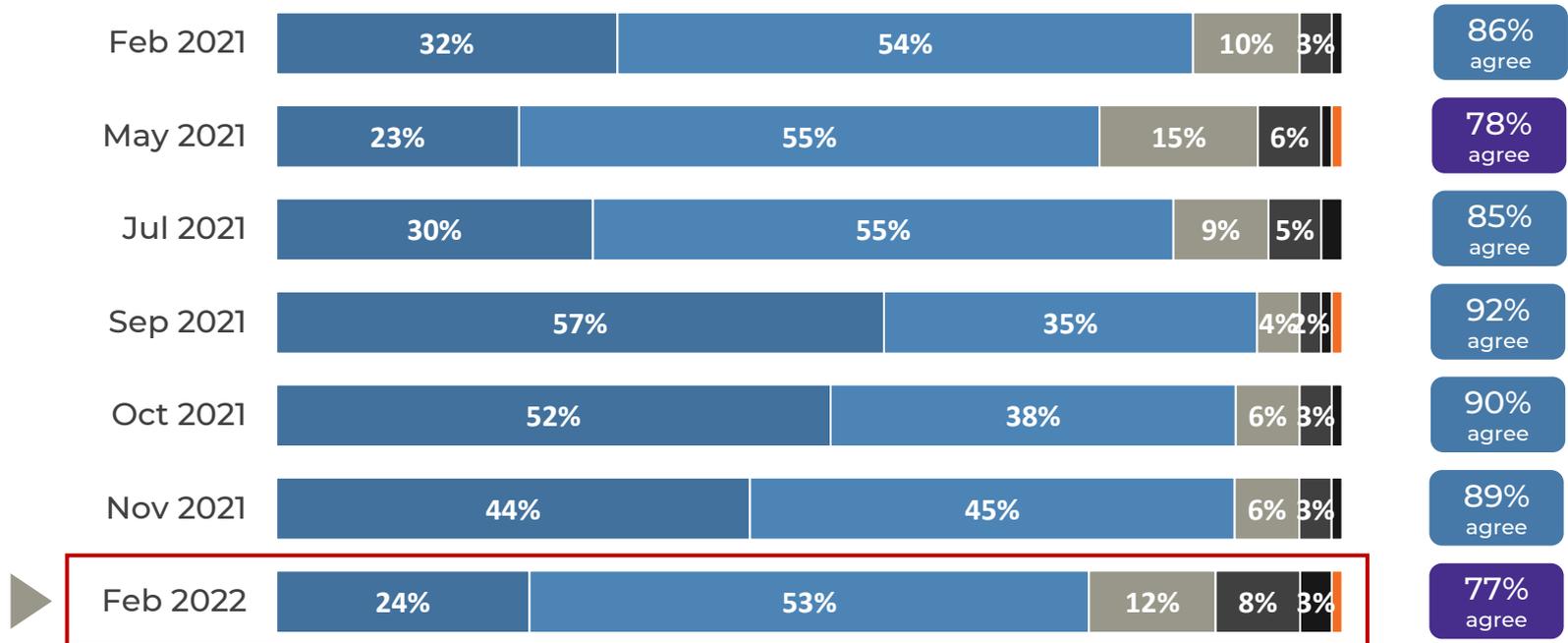
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Three-quarters are feeling well informed by the ACT Government, a drop on some previous results

Q. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Overall, I feel I am being kept well informed about COVID-19 by the ACT Government.

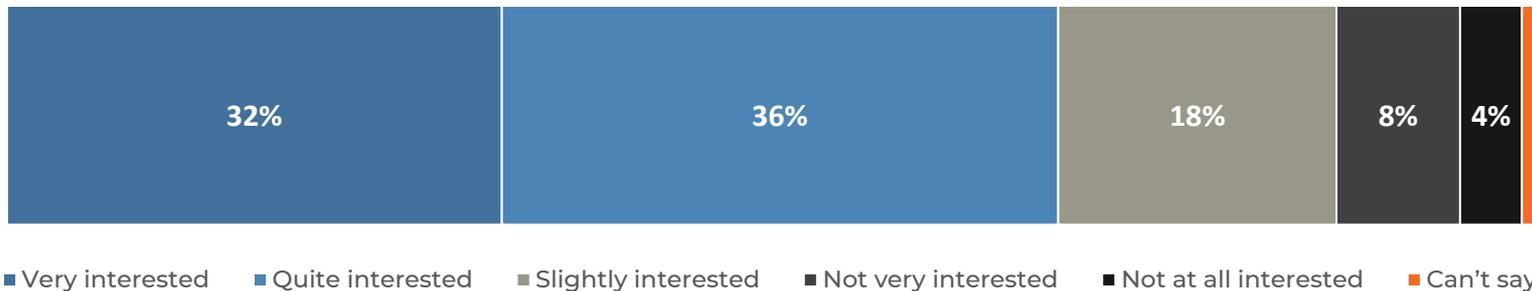


■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Can't say



Around two-thirds of respondents remain very or quite interested in receiving COVID-19 information

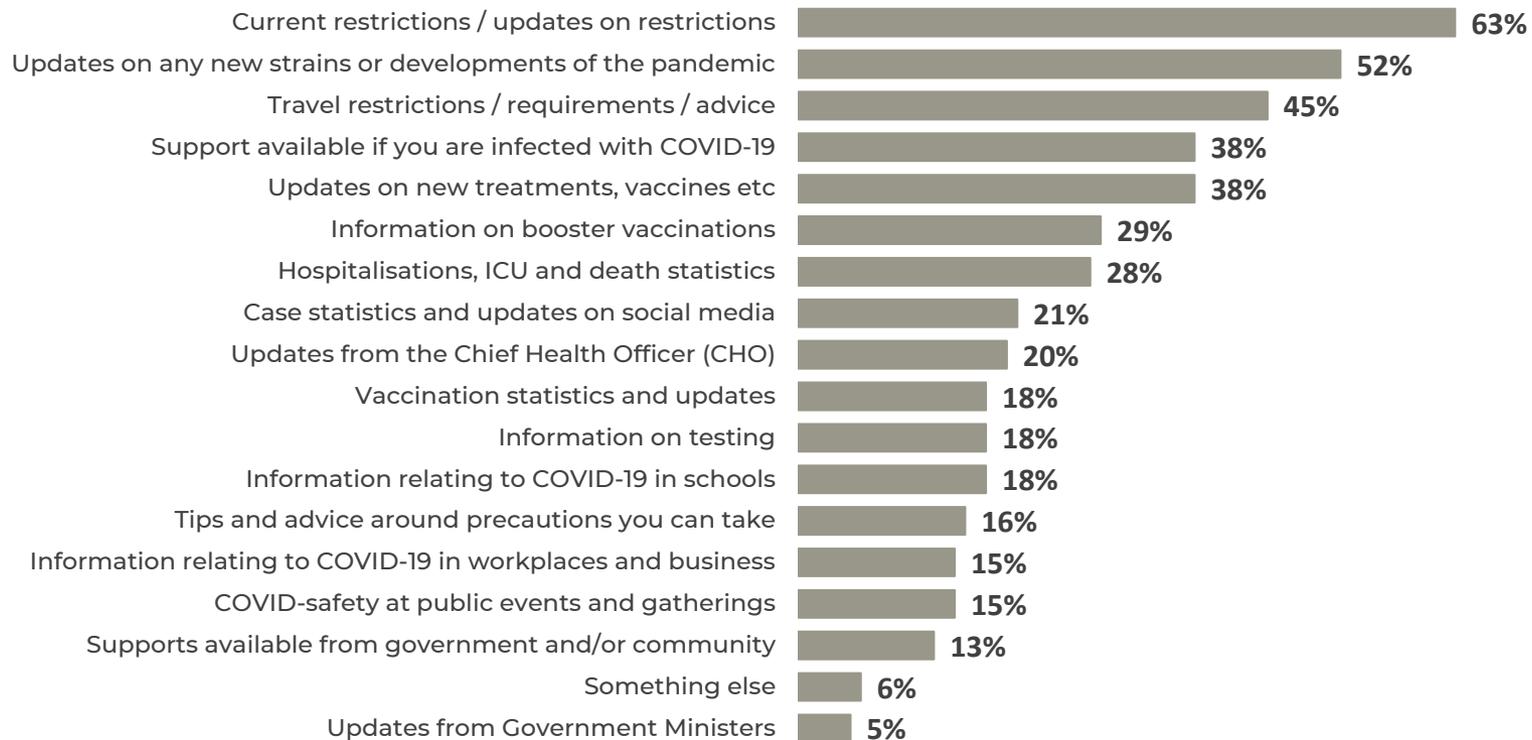
Q. How interested are you in accessing or receiving information about COVID-19 from the ACT Government going forward?



Interest in receiving COVID-19 information from the ACT Government increases with age, from 55% of 18-24 year olds very or quite interested to 85% of those aged 65 or older

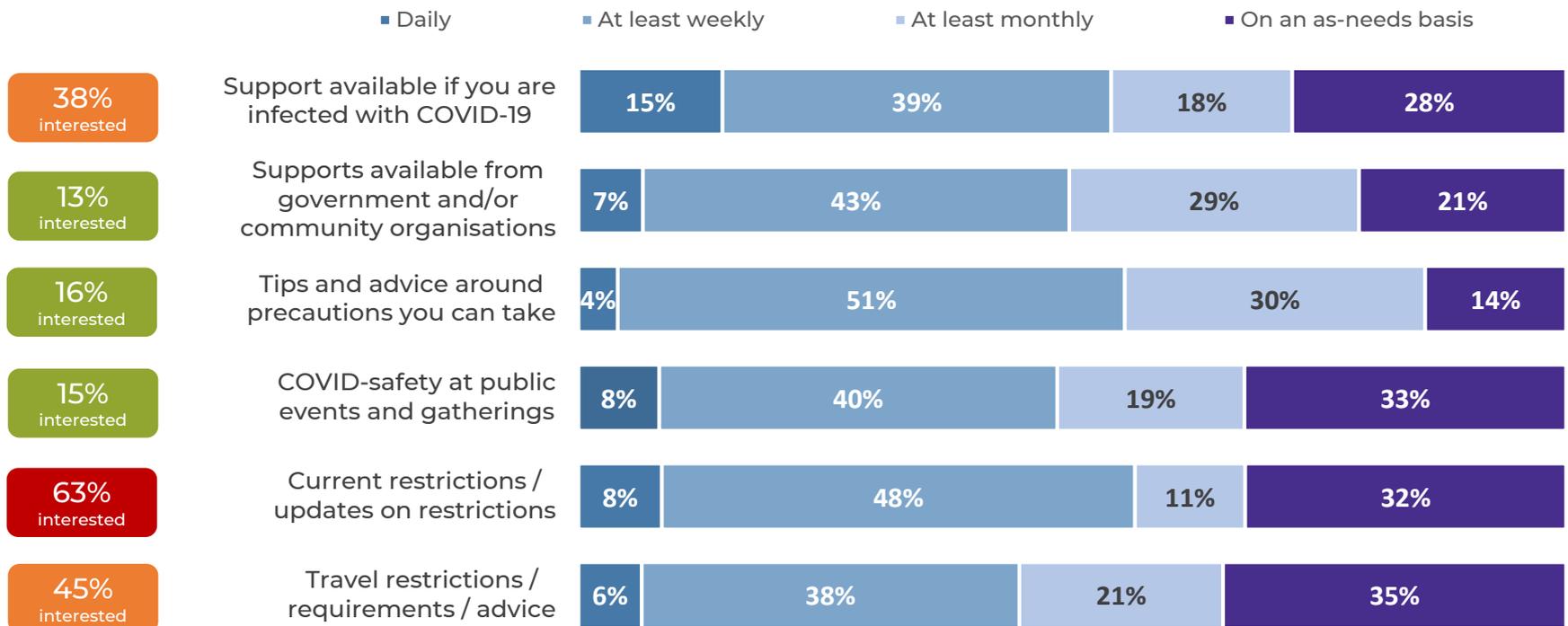
Information priorities tend to relate to issues which may directly impact peoples' lives

Q. What kind of information is of most interest to you going forward?



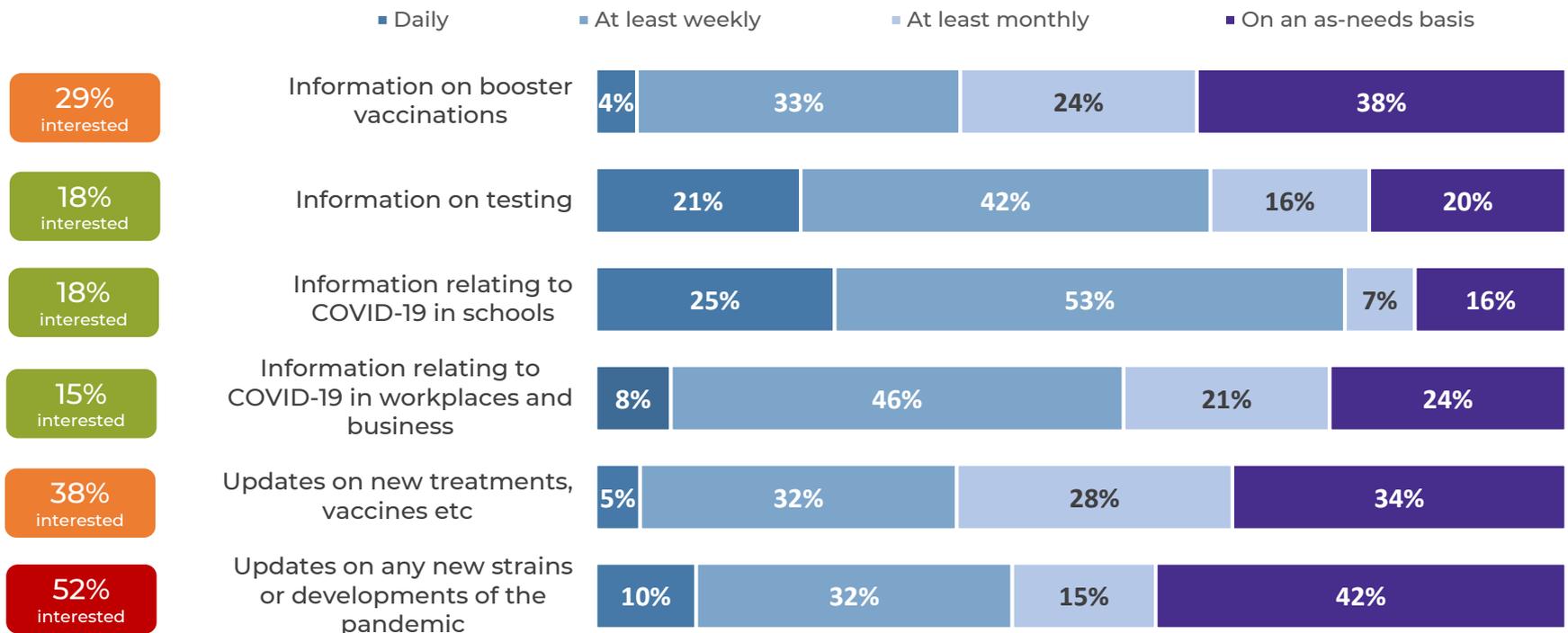
When would like information – support and advice

Q. And around how often would you like to have this kind of information?



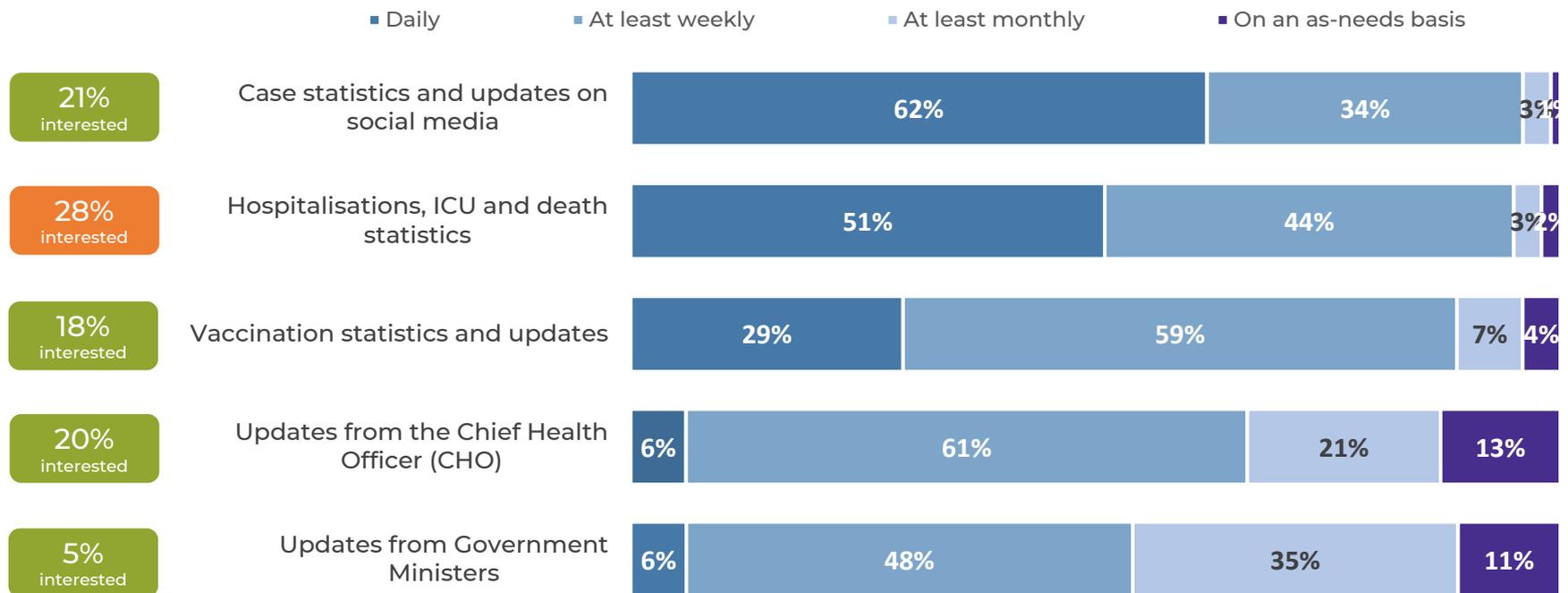
When would like information – general pandemic information and updates

Q. And around how often would you like to have this kind of information?



When would like information – statistics and updates

Q. And around how often would you like to have this kind of information?





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Any other information needs – main themes / areas

Q. Do you have any other comments or preferences relating to information about COVID-19?

Information on
future boosters

Information /
support on where
to get RATs / free
RATs

Work from home
arrangements /
requirements

Notification of
exposure sites /
contact tracing

Comments
about
protestors

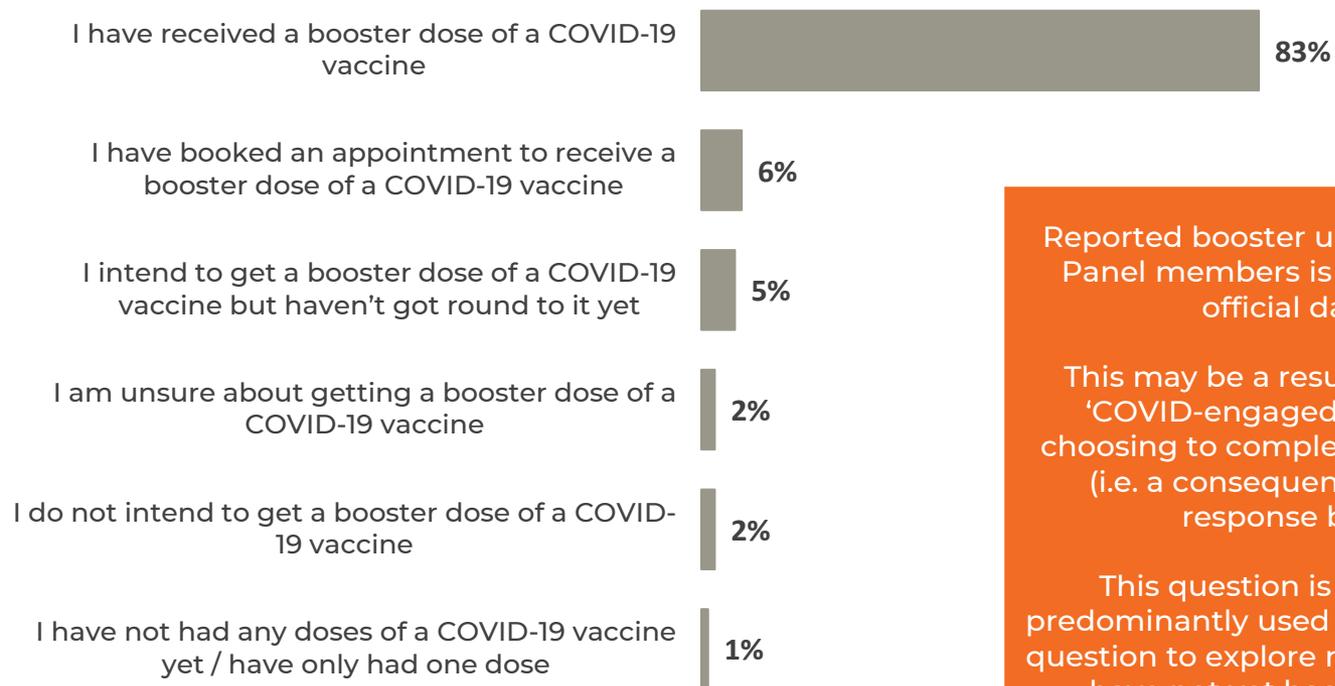
Specific
information
for CALD
communities

Clarity on
testing – i.e.
RAT and / or
PCR

Vaccination boosters

Vaccine booster status is reportedly higher among Panel members taking part in the survey

Q. Turning to vaccine boosters, which of the following applies to you?



Reported booster uptake among Panel members is higher than official data

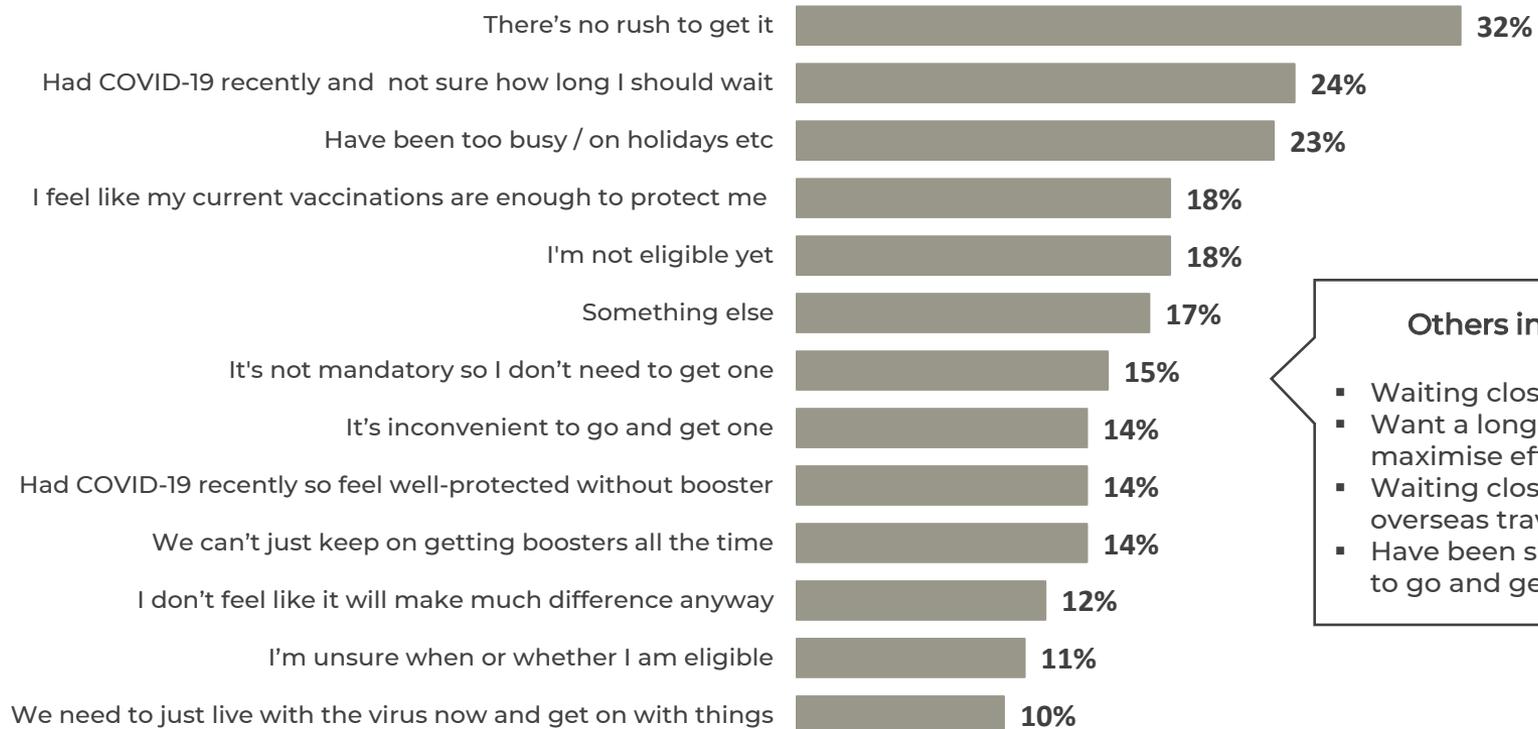
This may be a result of a more 'COVID-engaged' audience choosing to complete this survey (i.e. a consequence of non-response bias)

This question is therefore predominantly used as a screening question to explore reasons people have not yet had a booster



Main reasons for delay include general inertia but also some question marks related to protection and infection

Q. Why have you not got round to getting a booster yet?

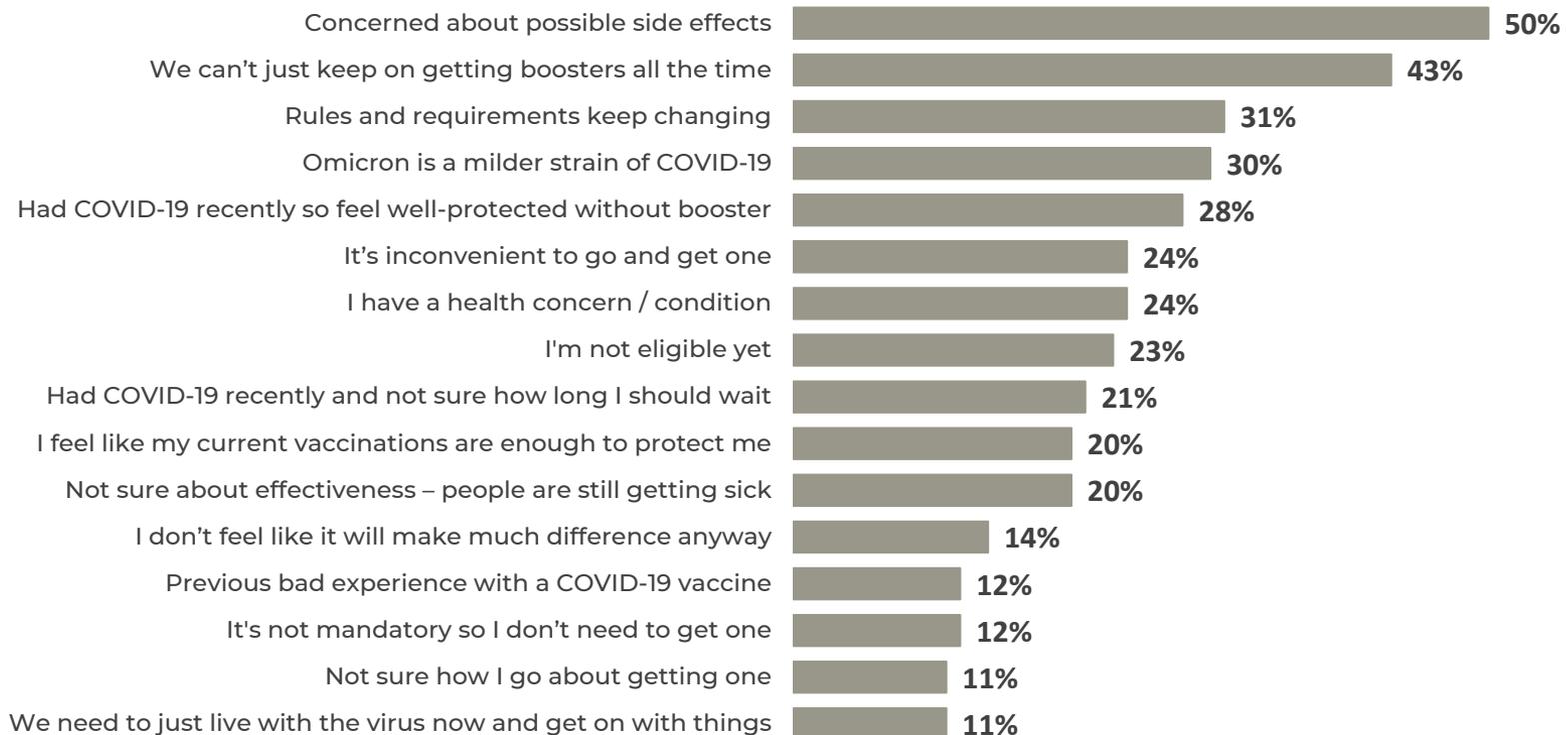


Others include:

- Waiting closer to winter
- Want a longer gap to maximise efficacy
- Waiting closer to overseas travel
- Have been sick / unable to go and get it

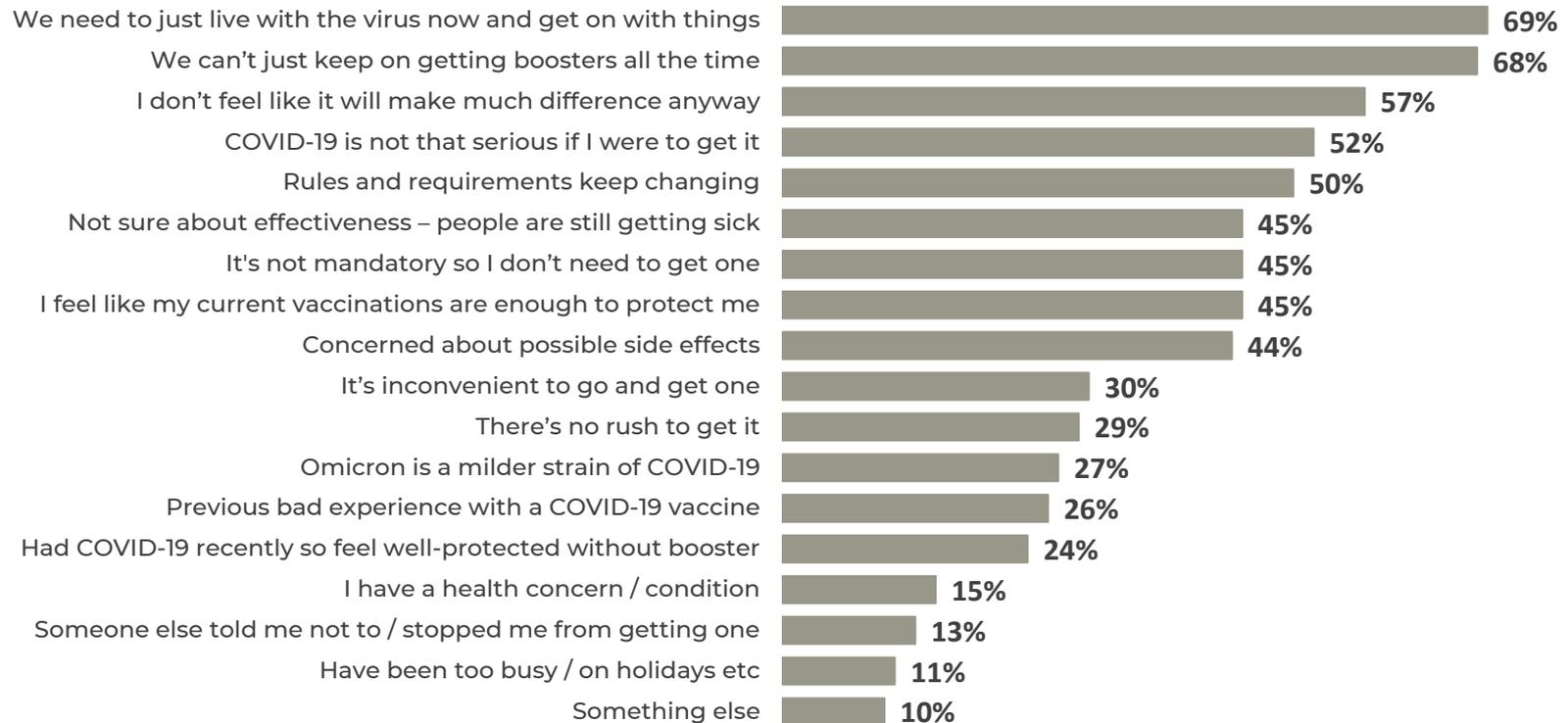
Main reasons for uncertainty include safety concerns, sustainability and perceived need to get one

Q. Why are you unsure about getting a booster?



Main reasons for refusal tend to stem from desire to move on and perceived value in protecting from serious disease

Q. Why are you not intending to get a booster?





What might encourage booster uptake – common themes

Q. What, if anything, will encourage or help you to get a booster shot?

Nothing

Need to be
convinced about
efficacy and safety

Provision of a non-
MRNA booster

Novavax

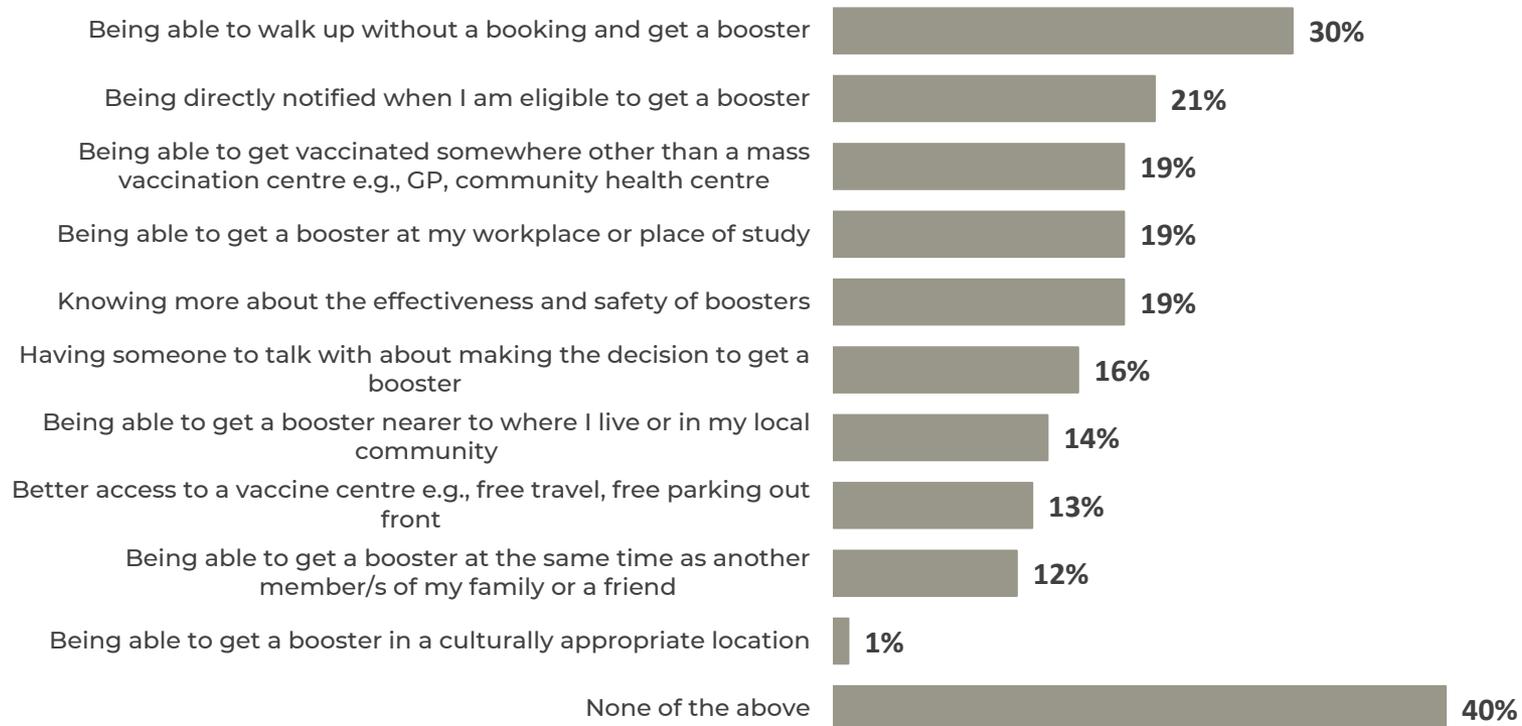
Only if it was mandatory /
necessary for activities
(e.g. work, travel)

Vaccine that is
effective against
new / different
strains

Longer spacing to
optimise protection
– e.g. 6 months

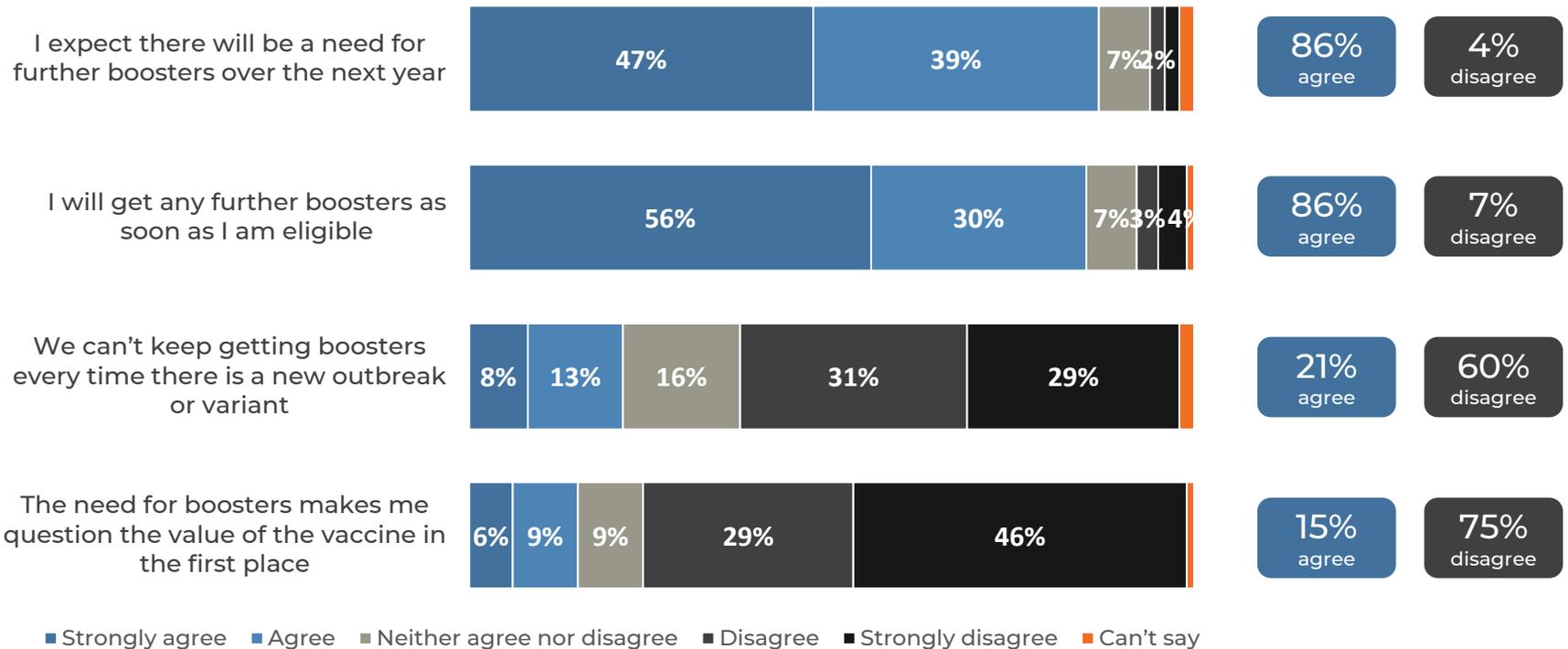
Options for walk-ins and other sites for vaccination can encourage, but four in ten say nothing would prompt them

Q. And would any of the following make you more likely to get a booster or even change your decision to not get one?



Community-wide, there is widespread expectation and anticipation of getting boosters in the future

Q. Thinking more generally about boosters, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

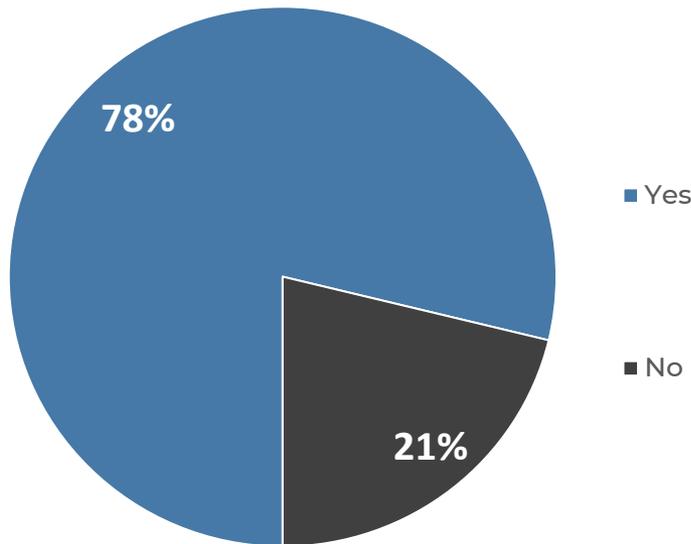


Rapid Antigen Testing

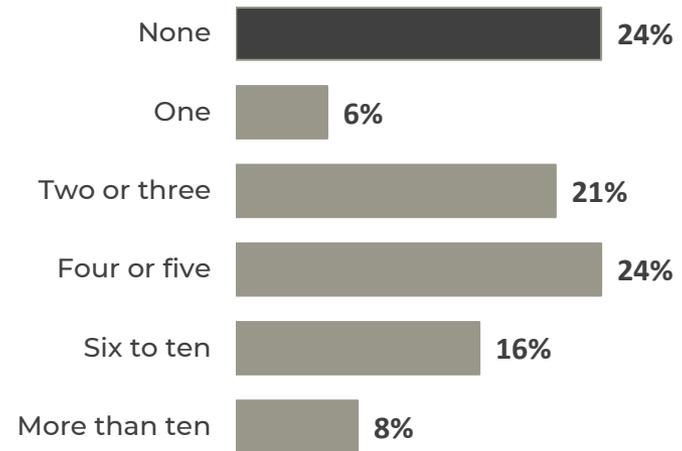


Around three-quarters of households currently have stock of Rapid Antigen Tests

Q. Firstly, have you tried to find Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) for use in your household?



Q. Approximately how many individual RATs do you currently have in your household?

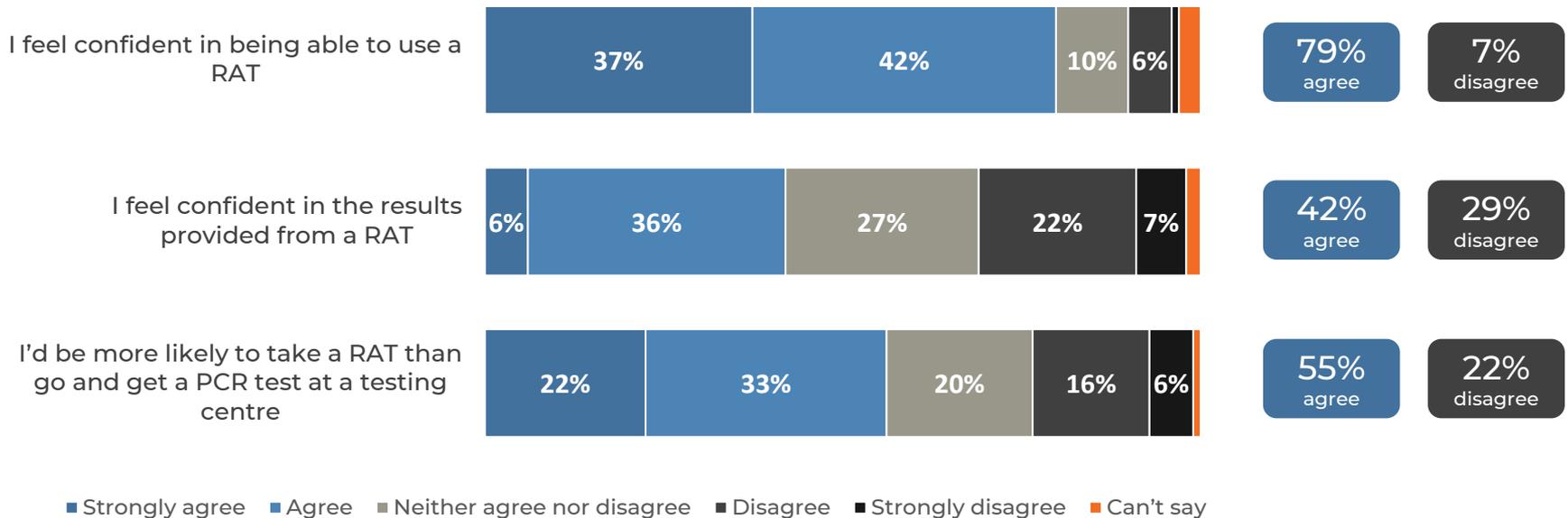


Canberrans aged between 35-54 years tend to have a higher number of RATs in their household, corresponding with the presence of children



Most people are confident in their ability to use a RAT but there is some uncertainty in relation to their accuracy

Q. Thinking in general about the use of RATs, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

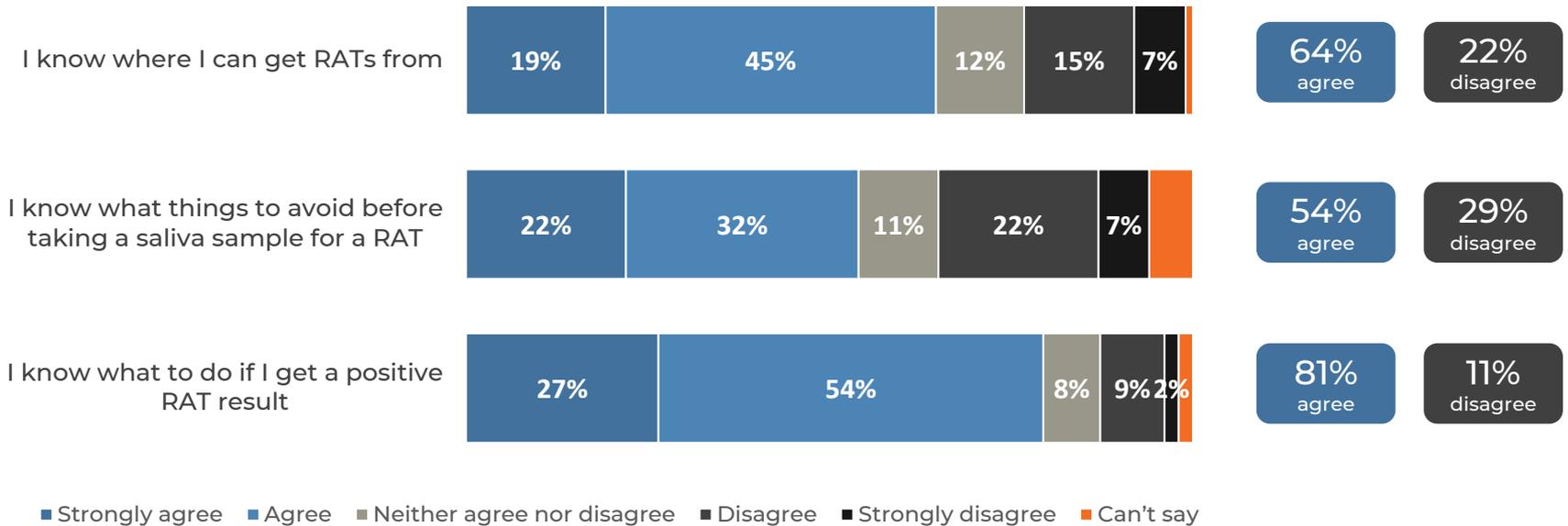


Confidence in ability to use a RAT has increased from 56% in Nov to 79% in Feb



There has been an improvement in awareness of where to get a RAT, and most know how to report a positive result

Q. Thinking in general about the use of RATs, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

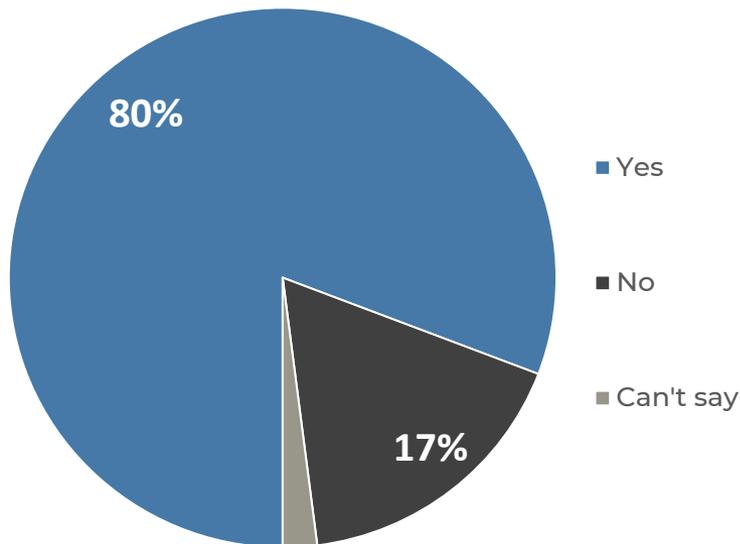


Knowledge about where to get a RAT has increased from 42% in Nov to 64% in Feb



Most parents have used RATs provided by schools, with a small cohort only doing so if children are symptomatic

Q. Have you been using RATs provided by your child/ren's school?

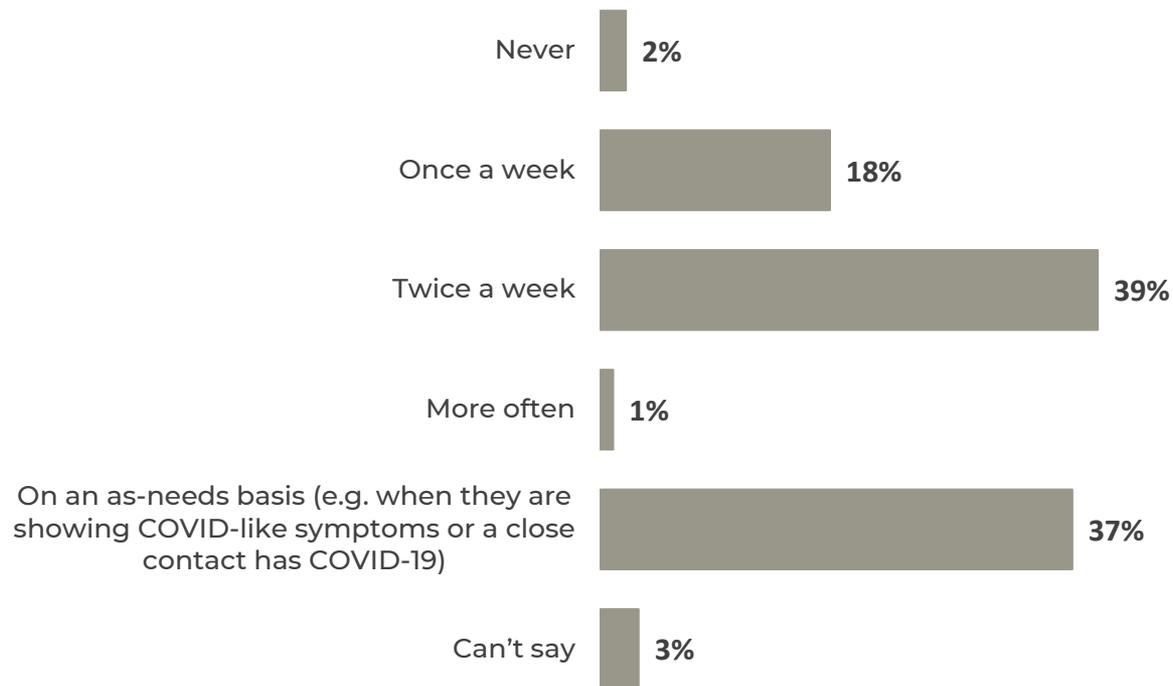


Why not?

- No symptoms / will only use if symptomatic
- Am not the primary carer (e.g. grandparent)
- Limited supply of RATs
- Kids not (back) in school

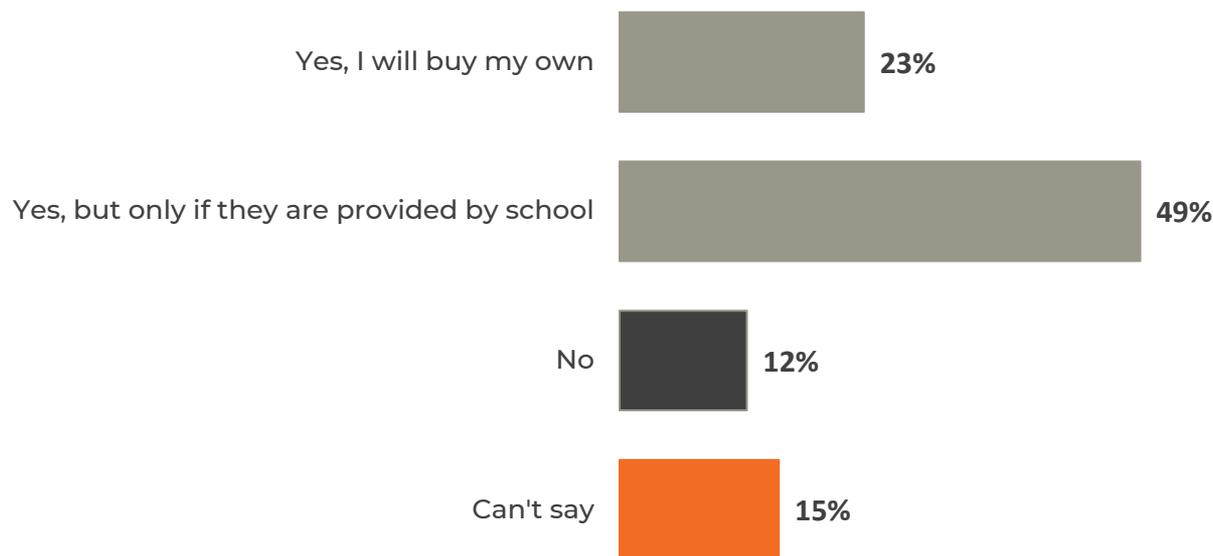
Around six in ten parents expect to administer RATs at least once a week, most others only when symptomatic

Q. And how often are you likely to test your child/ren with the RATs supplied by your school?



Half of parents will continue to use RATs with children on proviso these are supplied by school *

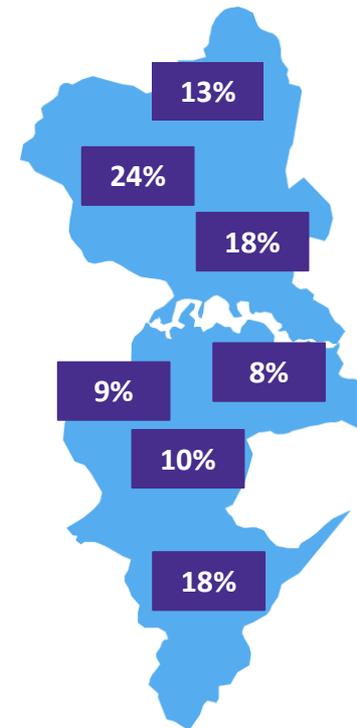
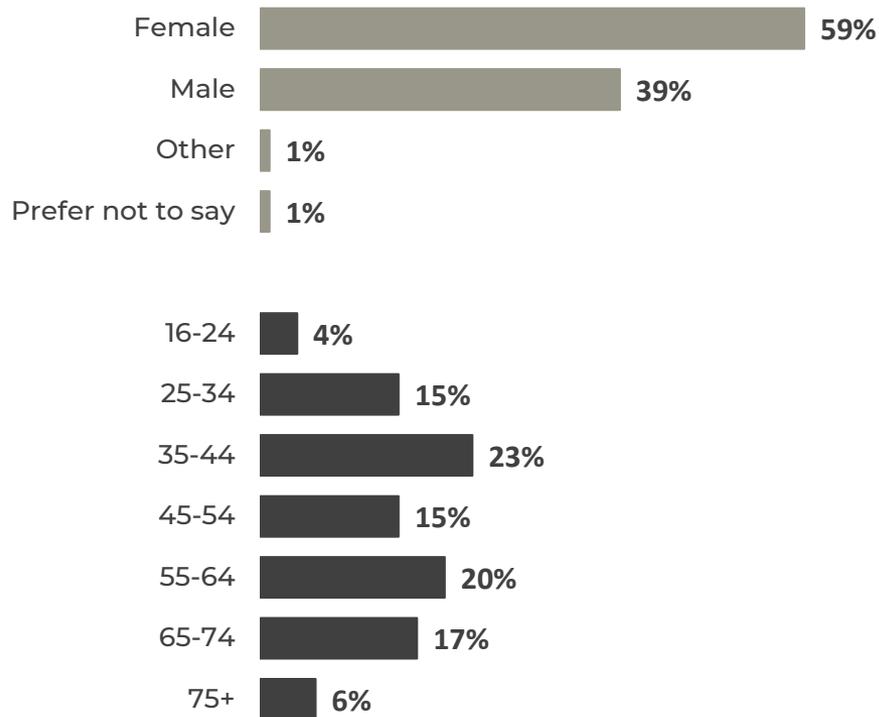
Q. The ACT Government is providing RATs through school for the first four weeks of term. Do you plan to continue testing your child/ren with RATs beyond the first four weeks of school Term 1?



Appendix



Survey sample profile (unweighted)





About the YourSay Panel

- Around **6,000** Canberrans have signed up to have their say through the YourSay Community Panel
- The Panel captures the pulse of the community at a given point in time through regular online surveys about a range of topics
- Panellists are recruited through a mix of online and offline channels but must have internet access and an email account to take part
- The Panel closely resembles the overall ACT population by age, gender, region as well as a range of other demographic characteristics
- Members are invited to take part in approximately two activities per month and participation is completely voluntary
- The membership base is highly active with around 4 in 10 members completing each survey on average
- Regular checks are made to ensure results are accurate by comparing them to other independent survey research

5,865

Current members

35%

Survey response rate

40+

Major surveys
completed

14

Rounds of
COVID-19
tracking research



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