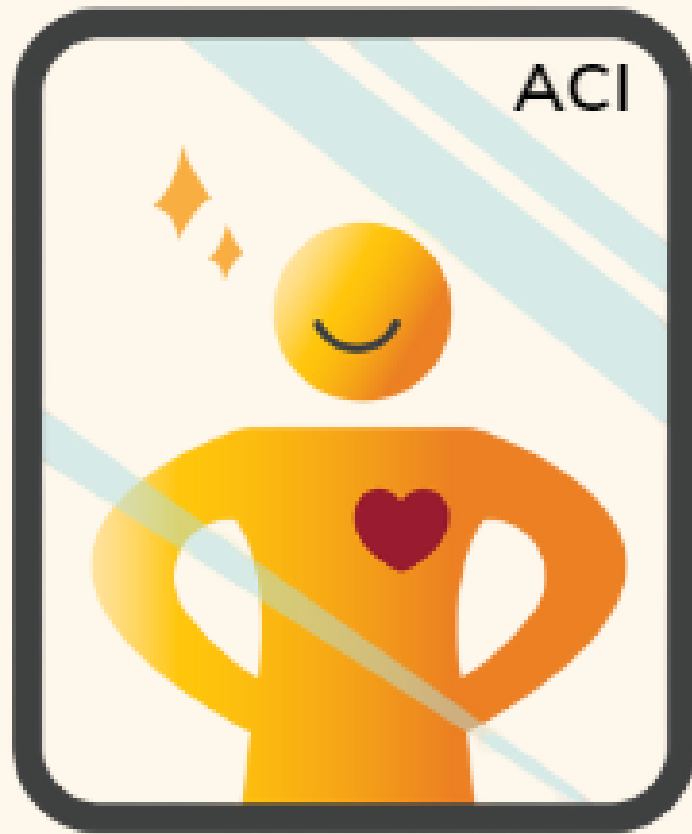




Arthritis NZ
Mateponapona
Aotearoa



Arthritis Confidence Index

2024 Report

Arthritis Confidence Index

2024 Report



Authorship

This report was prepared by Dr Richard Griffiths, Research Manager at Arthritis NZ Mateponapona Aotearoa, with the support of colleagues from across the organisation.

We are extremely grateful to the 1,220 respondents who shared their lived experience and views for the inaugural “Arthritis Confidence Index” (ACI) survey of 2024.

We also very warmly acknowledge the members of our LINK Group who participated in our pilot (initial test) survey to provide their input to ensure the final version of the survey was appropriate and engaging for other members of our consumer community.

Please use the following citation when referencing this report:

Griffiths, Richard (2025). *Arthritis NZ Mateponapona Aotearoa 2024 Arthritis Confidence Index Report*.

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Arthritis NZ has developed a new survey called the “Arthritis Confidence Index” (ACI) to:

- Help us get a better understanding of the challenges our consumer community faces
- What is going well with their arthritis throughout the year and over time
- Inform our work, including advocacy activities and relationships with the health sector.

Key Details

A total of **1,220 consumers** completed our inaugural ACI survey.

The survey was formally launched on World Arthritis Day (Saturday 12th October 2024) and was available to members of our consumer database to complete for five weeks.

The questions covered the six month period of April to September 2024.

Topics asked about included diagnosed conditions, wait times for consults, quality of life and everyday activities, and what health and financial issues people have experienced.

The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Respondents could choose to enter a weekly prize draw for a \$50 supermarket voucher.

The development of the ACI was generously supported by grants from the Room-Simmonds Trust and Perpetual Guardian Foundation.

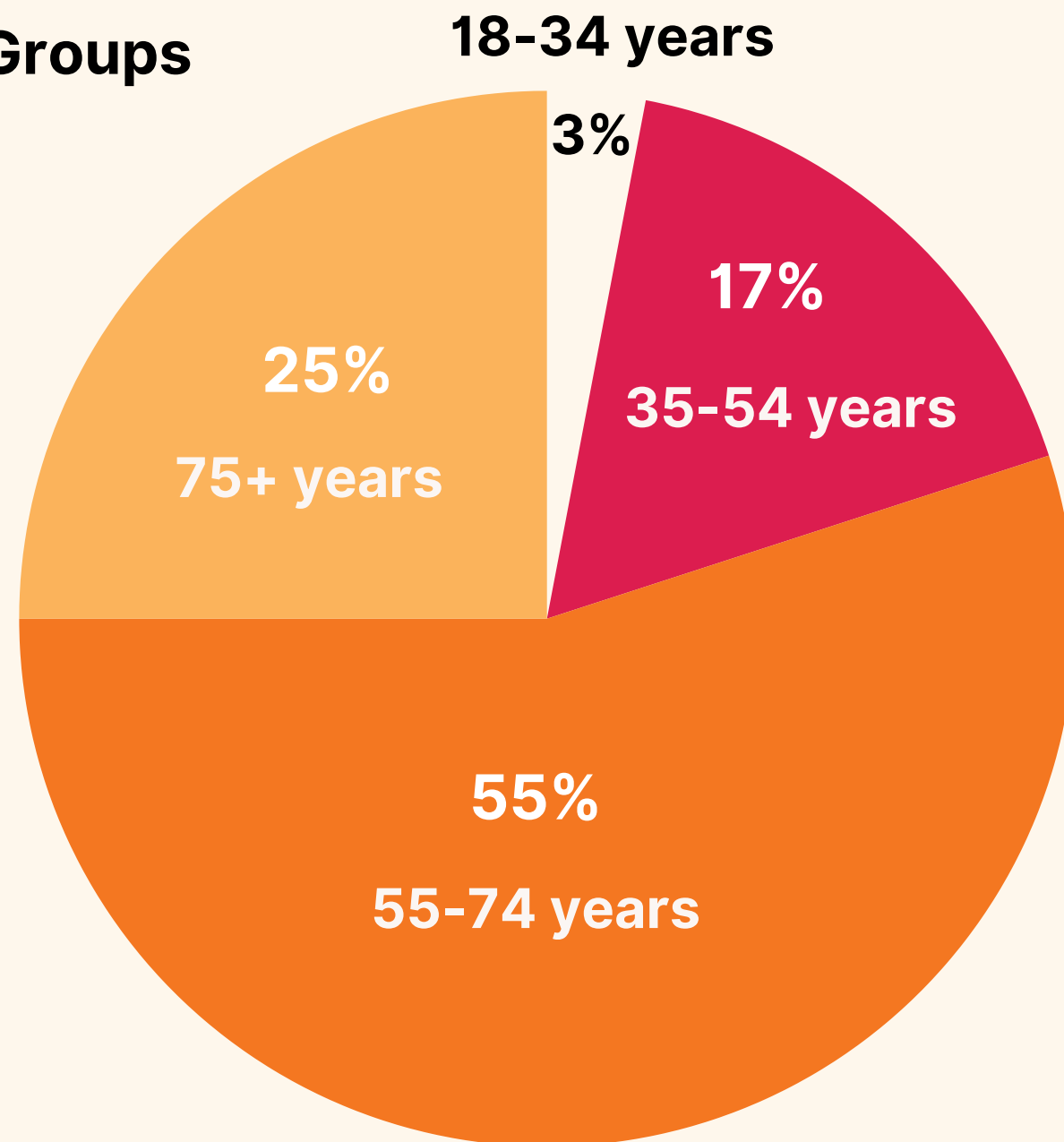
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Arthritis Confidence Index consumer demographics

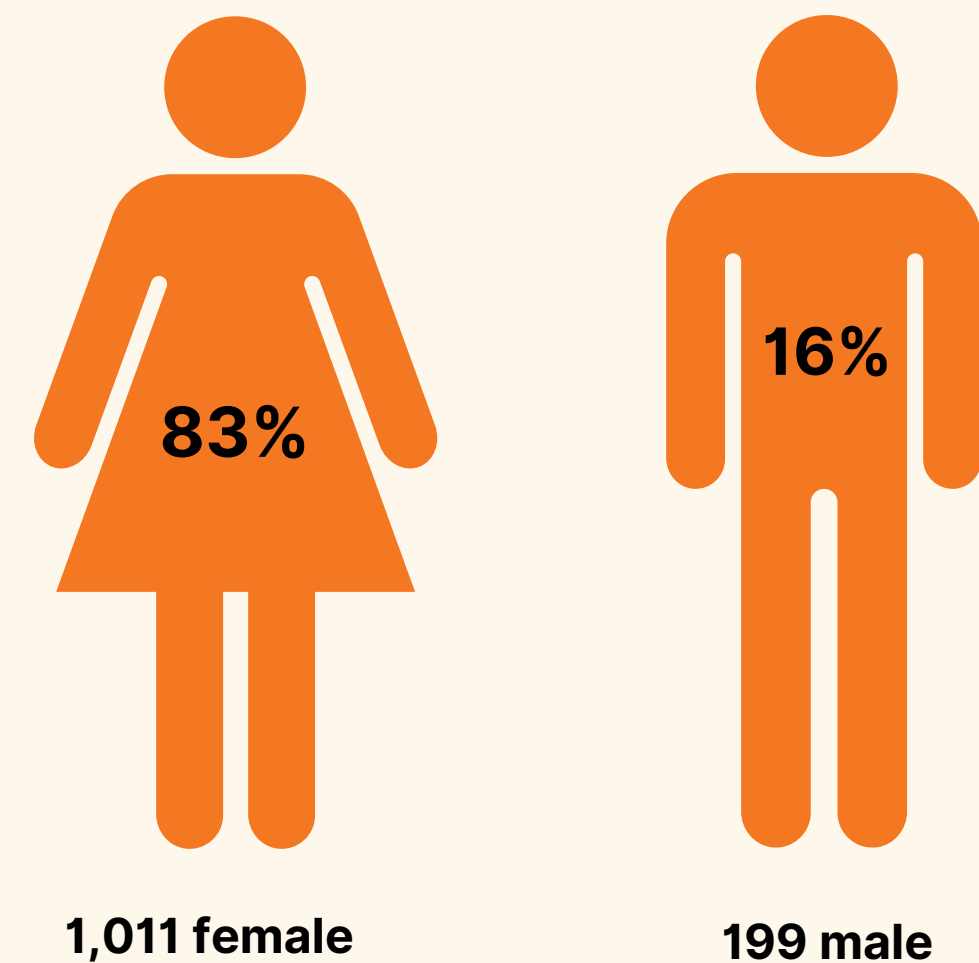


Age Groups



'Which age group are you?' (n=1,220 total sample)

Gender



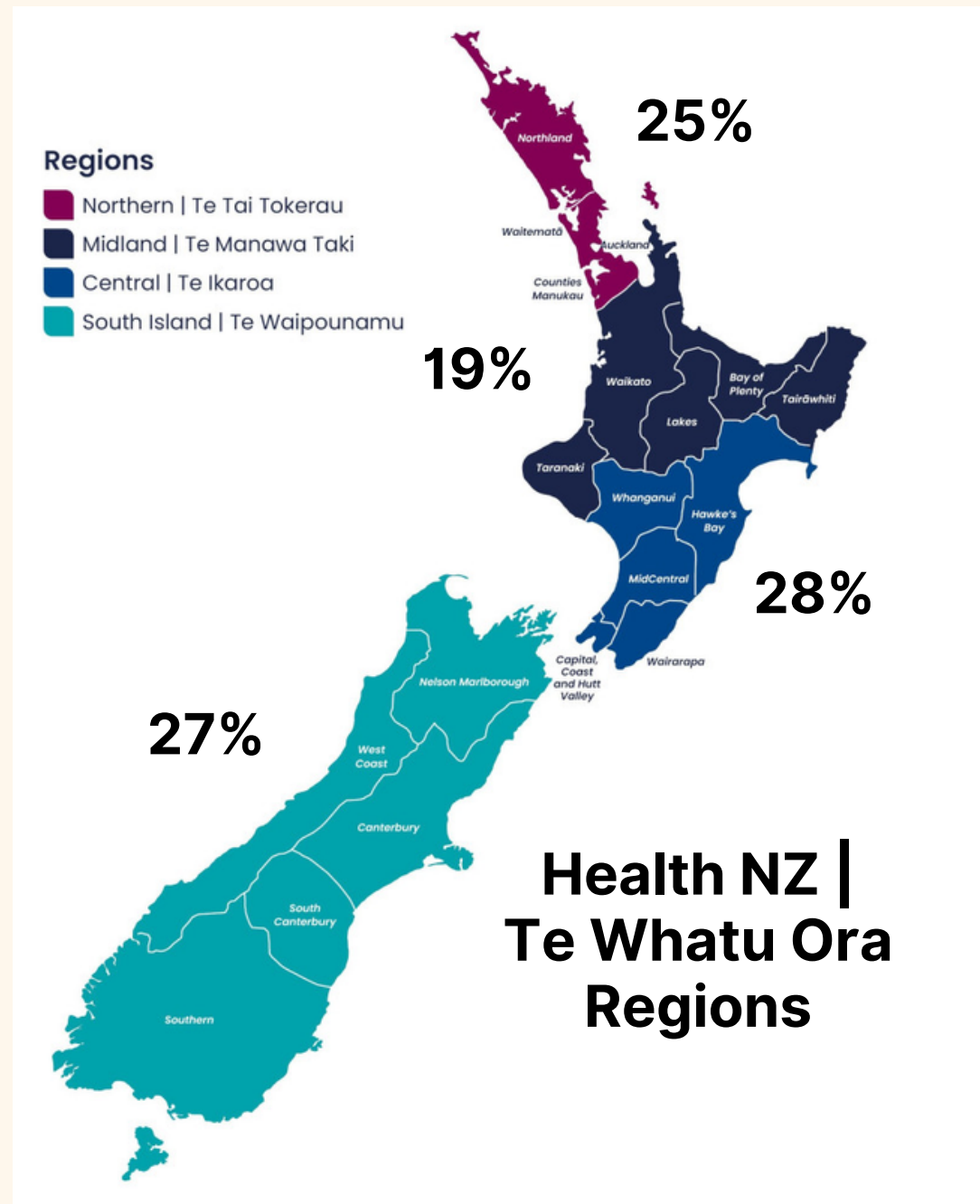
1% of respondents selected 'Prefer not to say';
n=3 identified as gender diverse

'What is your gender?' (n=1,220 total sample)

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Arthritis Confidence Index consumer demographics



Ethnicity



- NZ European/Pakeha - 90%
- Māori - 6%
- Pasifika - 1%
- Asian - 1%
- Middle East/Latin America/African - 1%

'Which of the following ethnic groups do you identify with? (n=1,285 total sample; respondents could select multiple options)

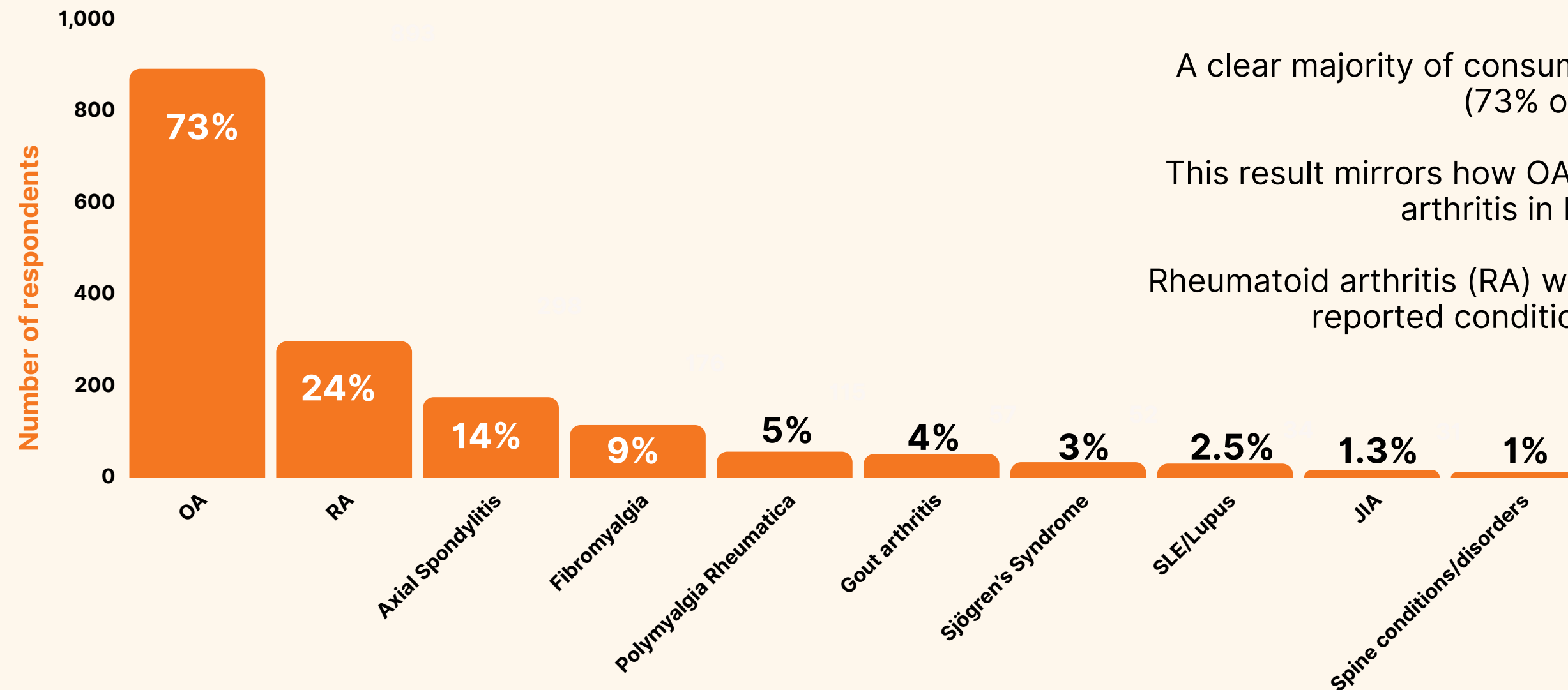
'In which Health NZ | Te Whatu Ora district do you live? (n=1,220 total sample)

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OA is the most commonly reported condition across all types



A clear majority of consumers indicated they have OA (73% or n=893).

This result mirrors how OA is the most common type of arthritis in New Zealand.

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) was the second most commonly reported condition (24% or n=298).

A total of 34 different forms of arthritis and related conditions were reported by our consumer community.

The other conditions that were noted had base figures too low to report as percentages. They included scleroderma (n=6), CPPD or “pseudo gout” (n=4), spondylolisthesis (n=4), and palindromic rheumatism (n=1).

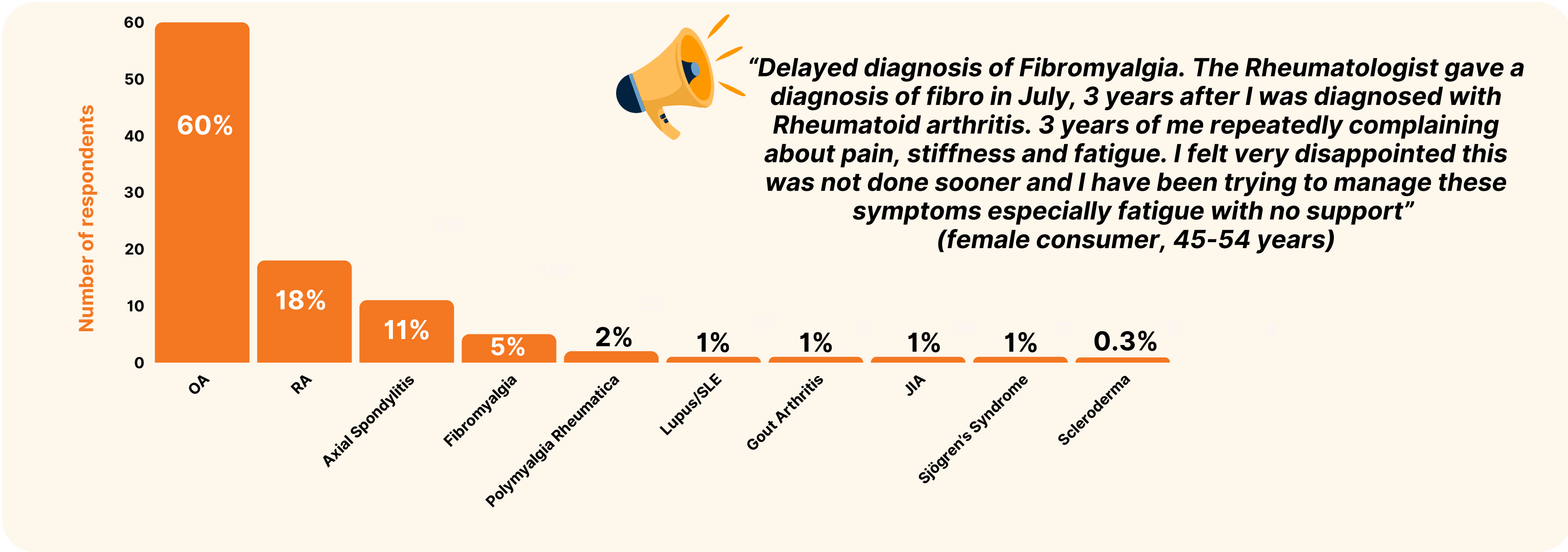
‘Which of the following forms of arthritis or related conditions do you have?’ (n=1,220 total sample)

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OA is the most commonly reported *main* condition



"I am on a 9-year waiting list for knee surgery for a replacement knee due to Osteoarthritis, has got worse are having to use a walking cane to get a round not sure how long i can keep my full time job"
(male consumer, 55-64 years).

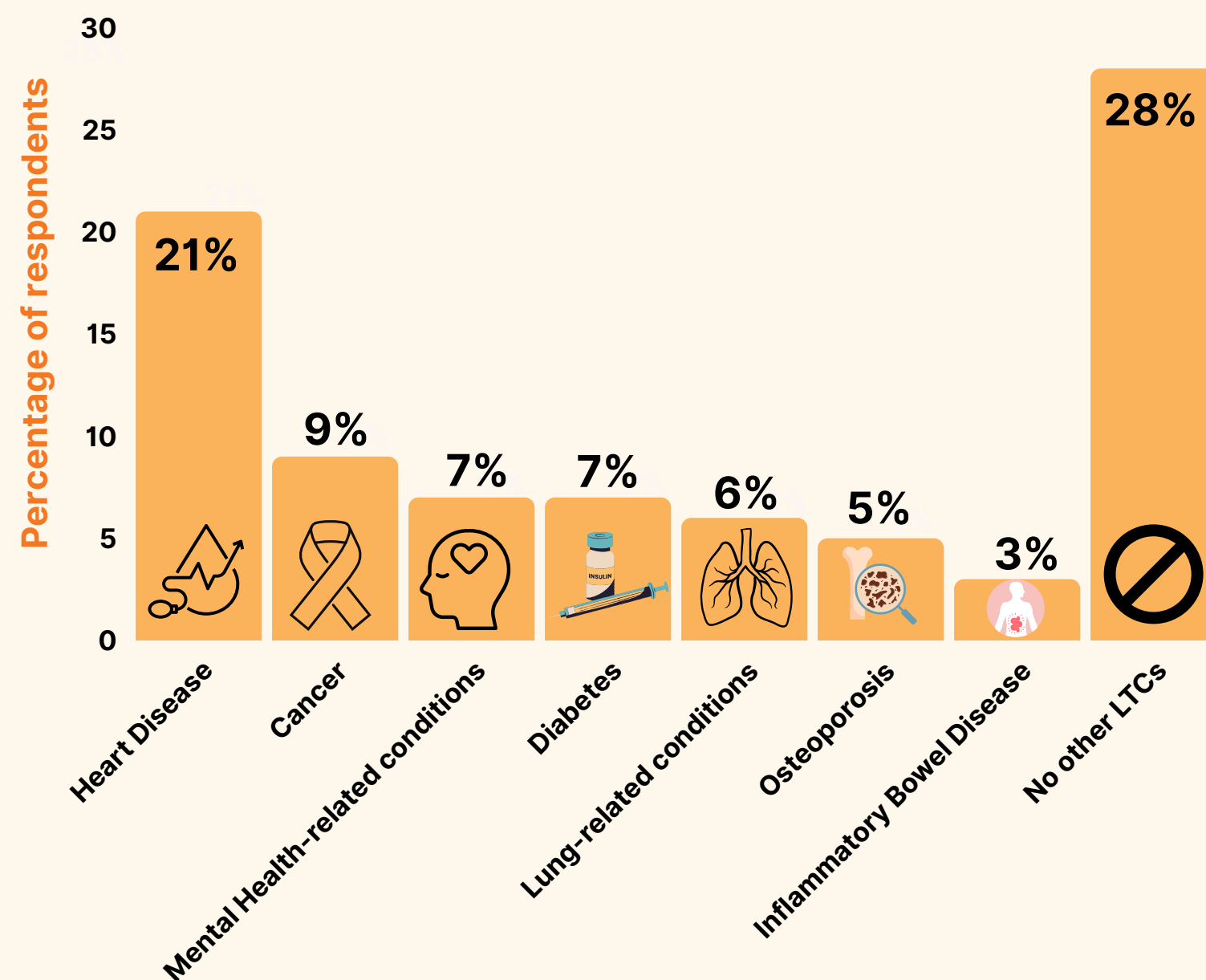
'Which form of arthritis or related condition affects you the most in your daily life?' (n=1,220 total sample)

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Heart disease is the most common other long-term condition



Heart disease was the most commonly reported long-term condition or LTC (21%), followed by cancer (9%), diabetes and mental health-related conditions (7% each).

Twenty-eight percent of consumers indicated they have never been diagnosed with an LTC.



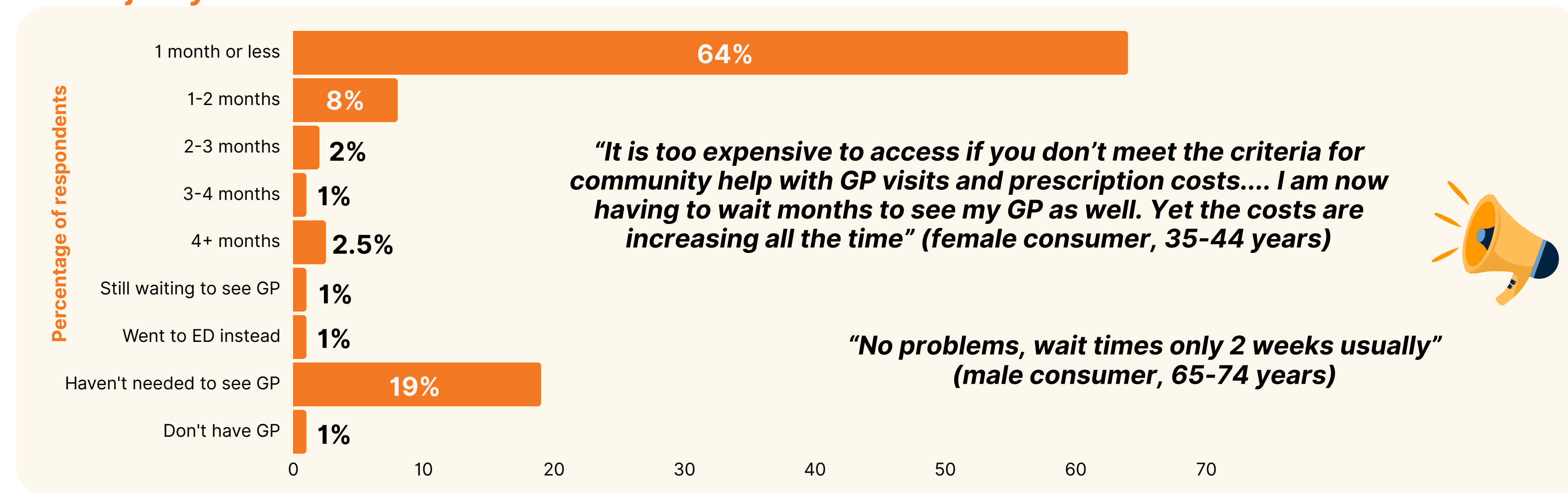
"Arthritis is low on the list of medical concerns: not as sexy as is the case with heart problems, diabetes and cancer. Just pain in the eyes of the public which is seen to afflict older people which is not the case" (female consumer, 75-84 years)

'In addition to this form of arthritis, have you been diagnosed with any other long-term health conditions?' (n=1,214 total sample)

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The majority of consumers saw their GP within a month or less



Although nearly two-thirds of consumers told us they had been able to see a GP at their medical centre within a month or less for an arthritis-related issue, many people noted wait times were getting longer.

The significant increase in the cost to attend their medical centre was also acknowledged by numerous people.

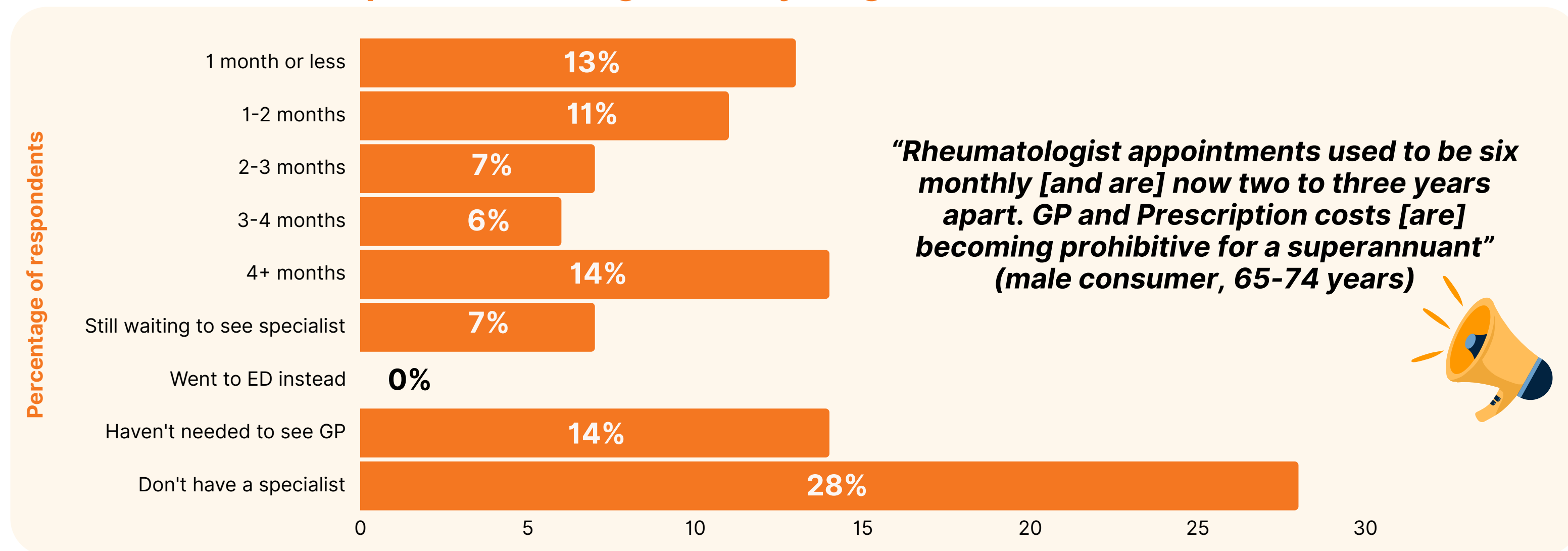
'What is the longest you have had to wait to see a doctor/GP at the medical centre or clinic you usually attend for an arthritis-related issues during the previous 6 months?' (n=1,220 total sample)

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Wait times to see a specialist are significantly longer than a GP



Consumers indicated that accessing a specialist was much harder than a GP.

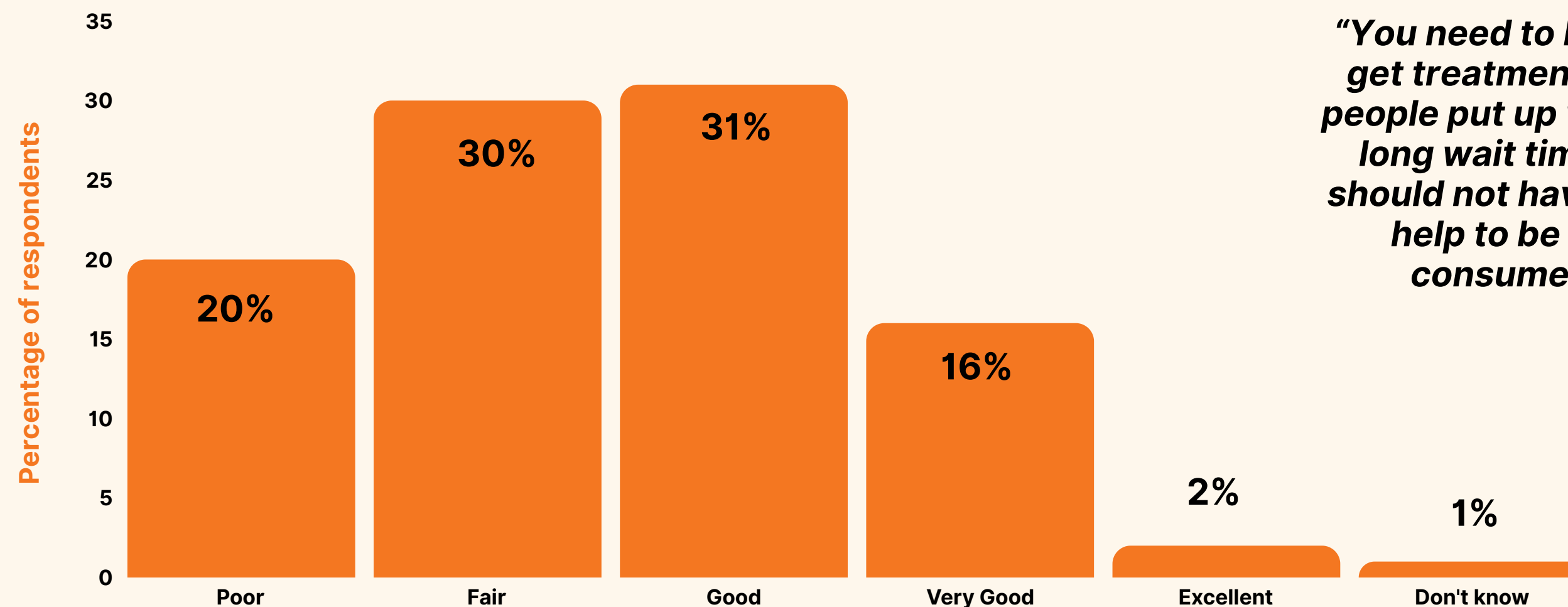
21% of respondents had been waiting for four+ months or were still waiting. Twenty-eight percent reported they do not have a specialist that treats their condition(s).

'What is the longest you have had to wait to see your main specialist for an arthritis-related issue during the previous 6 months?' (n=1,220 total sample)

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One in five respondents reported poor personal health



"You need to be very proactive to get treatment for arthritis. Most people put up with a lot of pain and long wait times to be seen. We should not have to keep crying for help to be treated" (female consumer, 55-64 years)



Fifty percent reported their personal health status as being either 'poor' (20%) or 'fair' (30%).

A combined 49% of our sample indicated their personal health status was either 'excellent' (2%), 'good' (31%), or 'very good' (16%) at the current time.

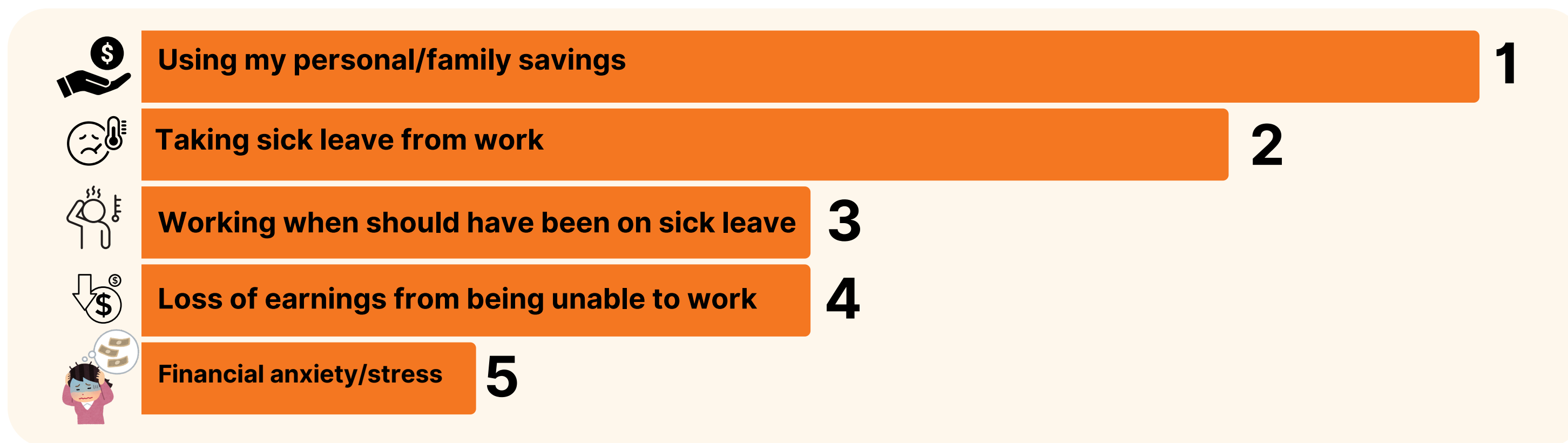
'Which of the following best describes how you currently feel about your personal health status?' (n=1,220 total sample)

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Having to use personal/family savings was the number one financial issue



The most commonly reported financial-related issues or burdens were ‘using my personal/family savings’ (#1 rank) and ‘taking sick leave from work’ (#2 rank).

The third and fourth issues were also employment based: ‘working when I should have been on sick leave’ (#3 rank) and ‘loss of earnings from being unable to work’ (#4 rank). General ‘financial anxiety/stress’ ranked fifth.

117 respondents reported facing at least five financial challenges.

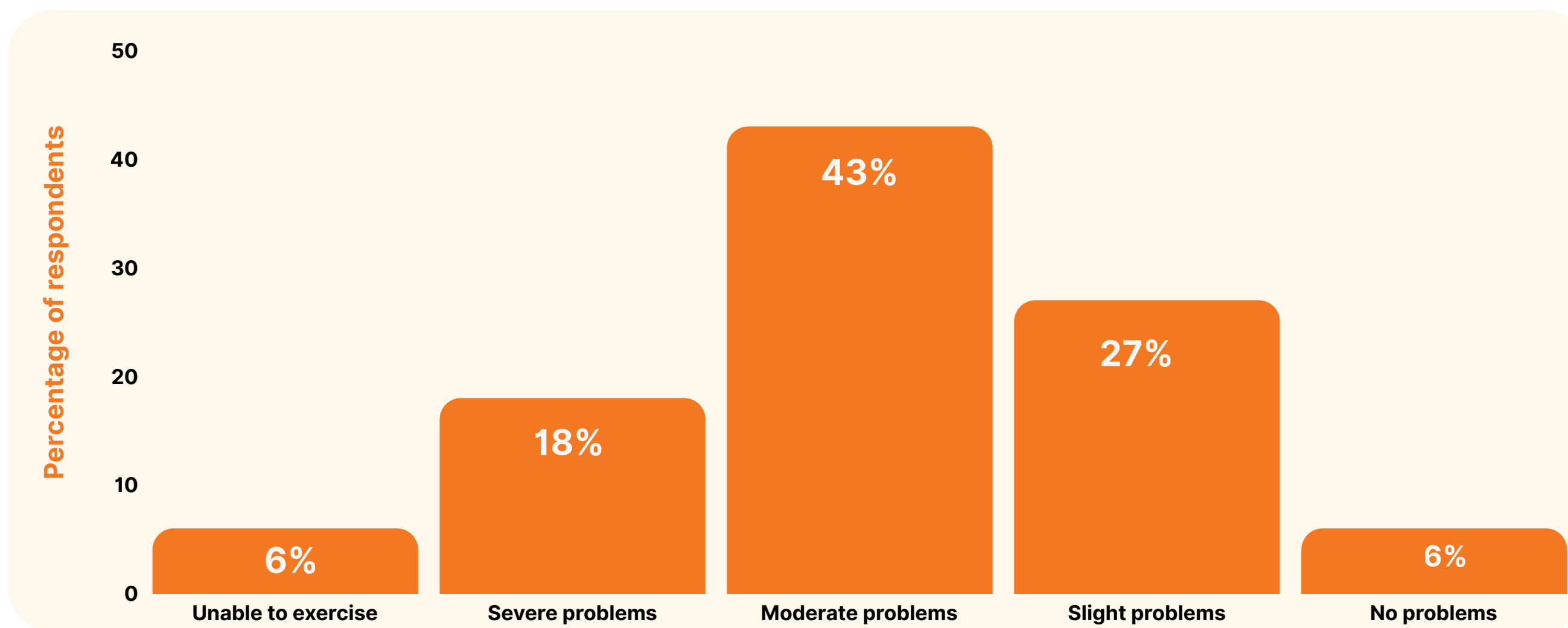
81 respondents told us they faced at least six financial challenges during the previous six months.

‘Which of the following financial-related issues or burdens have you experienced over the previous 6-month period?’ (n=1,205 total sample)

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A quarter of respondents face significant barriers to exercise



“One doctor I had said that this is what happens when you get old, he didn’t offer any treatment or exercise plan.... We need places where we can go to exercise in groups where the instructor understands our disability”
(female consumer, 65-74 years)



Twenty-four percent of consumers reported having either ‘severe problems’ (18%) or are ‘unable to exercise’ (6%). This is an extremely concerning finding as exercise is a vital aspect of people being able or empowered to self-manage their arthritis.

Seventy percent of our respondents indicated they experienced either ‘moderate’ (43%) or ‘slight problems’ (27%) when exercising during the previous 6-month period.

‘Which of the following best describes your current ability when it comes to doing exercise?’ (n=1,220 total sample)

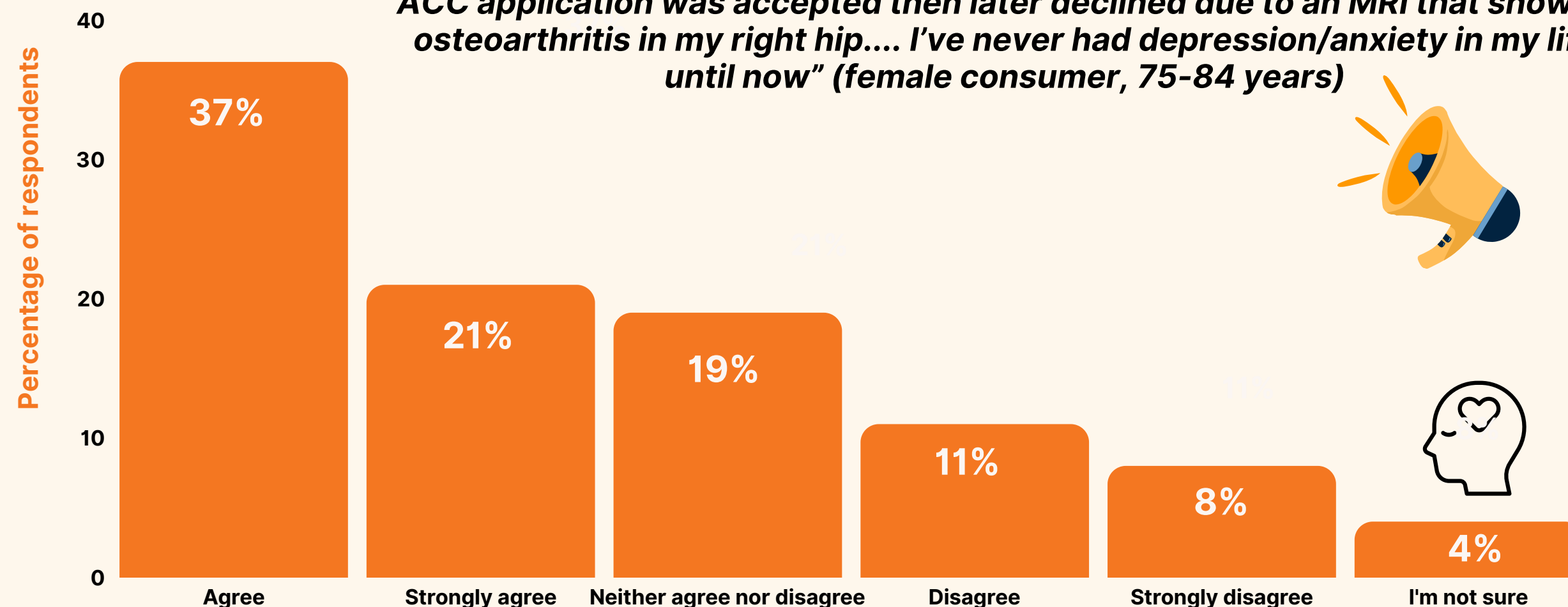
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Arthritis has an adverse impact on many peoples' mental health



"I'm quite devastated really - I was once a fit/healthy active 58 year old female who has been employed from the age of 17. I tripped and fell two years ago. My ACC application was accepted then later declined due to an MRI that showed osteoarthritis in my right hip.... I've never had depression/anxiety in my life until now" (female consumer, 75-84 years)



"I feel there is a greater need for funded long term mental healthcare to be attached to our arthritis care. I have experienced a lot of grief, depression and low self-esteem on my journey" (female consumer, 45-54 years)

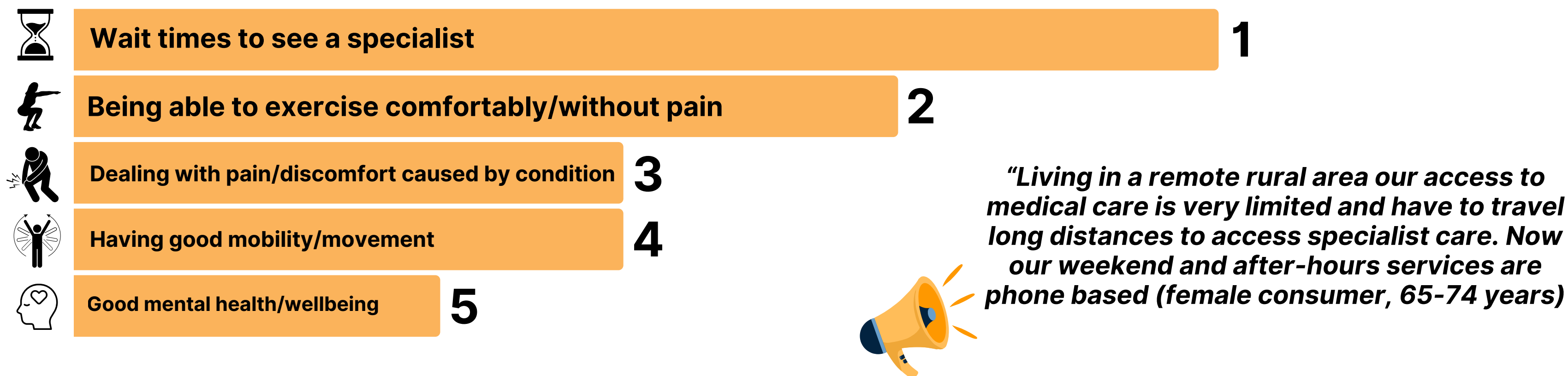
A majority of our respondents' mental health and wellbeing (58%) are adversely affected by their arthritis: 37% 'agreed' or 21% 'strongly agreed' with our mental health statement.

'Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "My mental health and wellbeing are adversely affected by my arthritis" (n=1,220 total sample)

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Waiting to see a specialist was the most important personal health issue



‘Wait times to see a specialist’ was the most frequently reported personal health issue (#1). ‘Dealing with pain/discomfort caused by my condition’ was also top of mind (#3).

‘Being able to exercise comfortably/without pain’ (#2), ‘having good mobility/movement’ (#4) and ‘good mental health/wellbeing’ (#5) were important for consumers from an aspirational and self-management point of view.

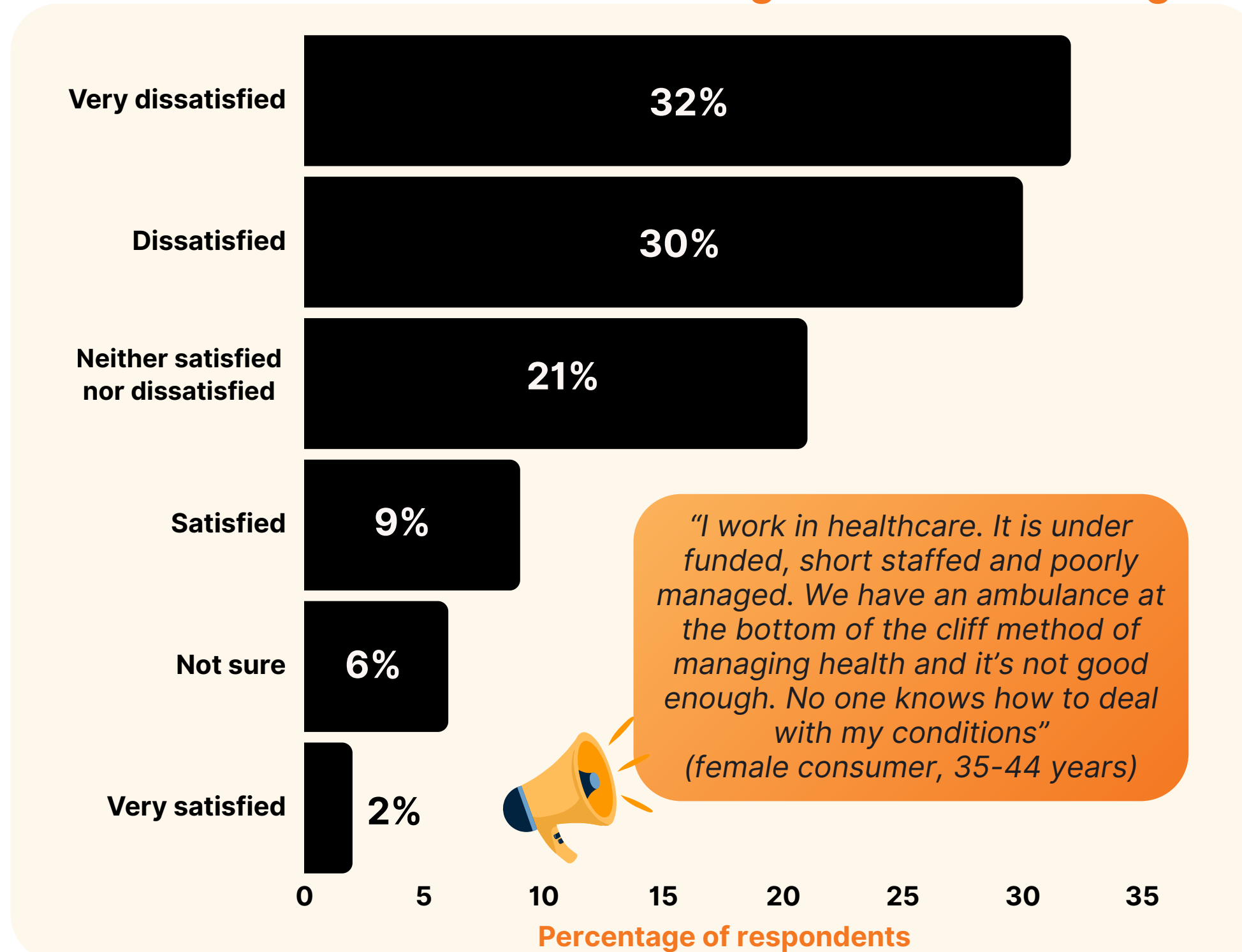
‘Looking at the following list, what are the five most important health-related issues for you personally?’ (n=1,220 total sample)

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Consumers are not satisfied with the government's management of the health sector



Consumers were explicit in how they viewed the government's overall management of the health sector and healthcare-related issues between April to September 2024.

Dissatisfaction is high with 32% selecting 'Very dissatisfied' or 30% choosing "Dissatisfied" to describe the government's management of health (62% combined).

"I feel like I'm just a burden to this government as I'm not fully fit and currently unemployed. I don't feel I can ask for anything more than the basic benefit which does not cover my weekly expenses"
(female consumer, 45-54 years)



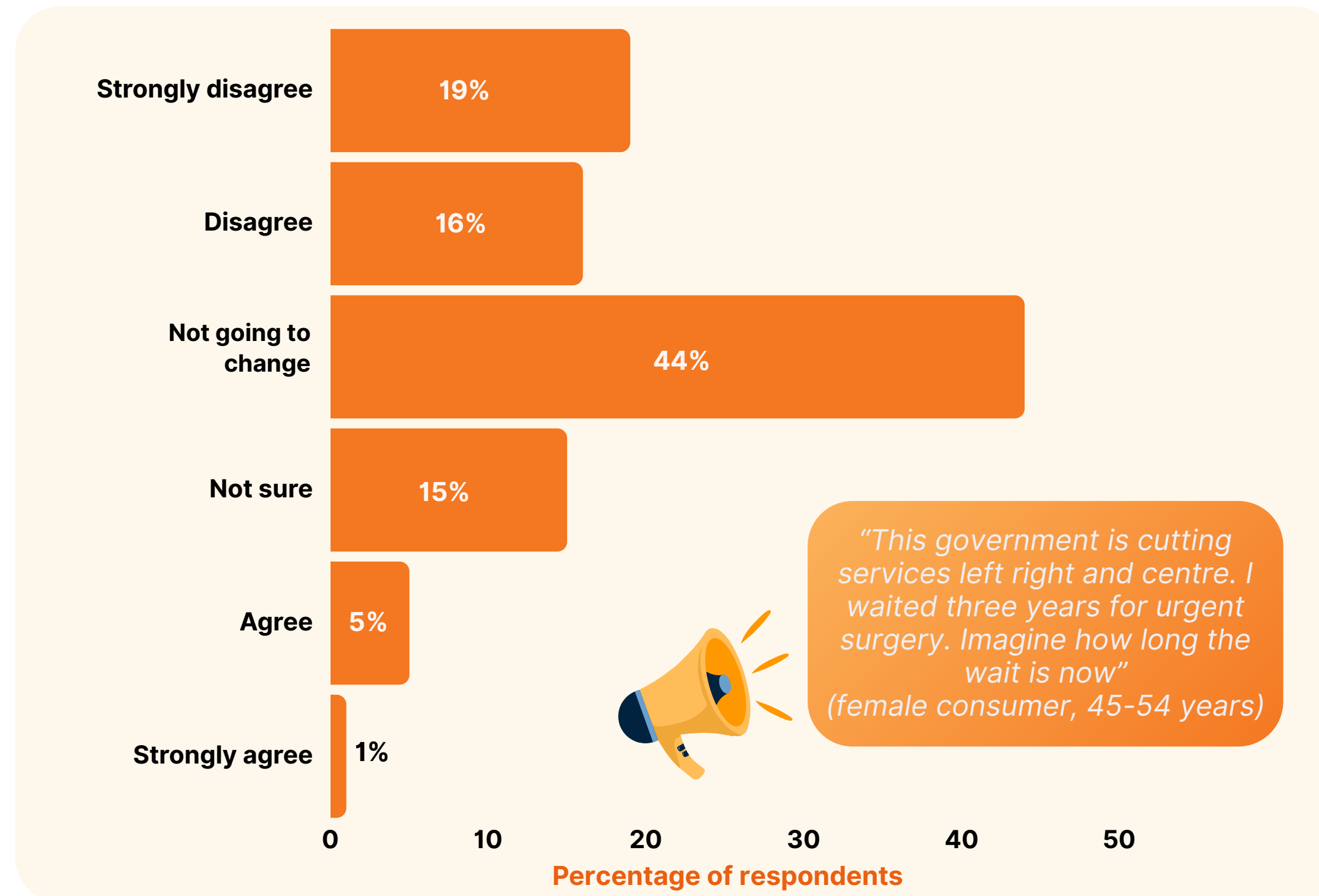
'How satisfied are you with the government's overall management of the health sector and healthcare-related issues during the previous 6-month period?' (n=1,220 total sample)

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Consumers aren't sure whether life will be better for people with arthritis in six months time



Consumers are not entirely sure whether life will be better within six months' time. Many felt this was too short a period for change to take place.

Over a third of respondents felt life won't have improved for people with arthritis ('Strongly disagree' - 19% and 'Disagree' - 16%).

"It takes time for things to change and 6 months is too short a time frame for adequate change to happen with the state of the health system at this present time" (female consumer, 55-64 years)



'Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "I have confidence that life will be better for people living with arthritis in New Zealand 6 months from now" (n=1,220 total sample)

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Final Reflections

Arthritis NZ very warmly thanks everyone from our consumer community who completed the first Arthritis Confidence Index survey. The personal perspectives and experiences you have shared reveal many significant things, including:

- Each person's arthritis journey is unique regardless of where they live in New Zealand.
- Arthritis and its associated conditions do not just affect older people and physical or mental health. The findings show it can adversely impact people at any stage of life, whether it be young adults, seniors, or those of working age.
- While access to timely and appropriate arthritis healthcare differs across the country, it is clearly taking longer to see GPs or specialists and becoming more challenging and expensive every year. This is particularly evident in more remote, rural locations.
- Importantly, not all individuals who have arthritis are frustrated or struggling. Many consumers are thriving and very confident in the way they manage life with arthritis.
- New Zealanders with arthritis in 2024 represent a wide range of people, hopes and concerns. While some are uncertain of what 2025 will bring, others are keeping an open mind as to what the months ahead could look like.

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Next Steps for the ACI



“Doing this survey just highlights exactly what people are concerned about, I hope it has a positive impact on what needs to happen” (female, 55-64 years).

The sentiment expressed in the comment above was repeated by many respondents who participated in our survey. Having never offered a survey of this kind before, Arthritis NZ has the following long-term goals for our Arthritis Confidence Index survey:

- To use the results and insights in our everyday work so our team is even better informed about the challenges but also the things that are working well in relation to arthritis care.
- To share the results and insights via our different communication channels so that your experiences are honored, visible and available to anyone who is living with arthritis or those who want to better understand everyday life with arthritis (e.g. family or friends).
- To share the results and what you have said with news and health media, politicians and healthcare professionals. This will ensure that publicly available information about arthritis reflects the current lived experience of people affected by arthritis.
- To run the next ACI survey at the same time in 2025 (October to November).