



albertapatient
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Emergency Department Experiences and Perceptions

October 2016

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This research is conducted for **albertapatients** by the Alberta Medical Association and ThinkHQ Public Affairs Inc.

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>> Research Methodology

- Study fielded via online research panel
 - Field dates: September 29 - October 9, 2016
 - Panel Source: **albertapatient**s
- n= 1350
- Weighted to reflect gender, age and region of Albertans who have used the health care system within the past year.
- This online survey utilizes a non-random sample; therefore, margin of error is not applicable. However, a probability sample of this size would yield a margin of error of +/- 2.7 percentage points at a 95% confidence interval.
- Accuracy of sub-samples of the data decline based on sample size.

>> Key Highlights and Implications

- Perceptions of long wait times at Alberta ERs is pervasive, but perceptions are not entirely consistent with experiences: almost three-quarters saw a doctor within 3 hours on their last visit to emergency.
 - Views are likely based both on experiences (bad) at some point in the past, and lack of information about ER and processes.
- Perceptions and experiences with ER wait times have real implications.
 - Over half of Alberta patients have at some point in the past NOT gone to the ER with a condition requiring urgent care, and many instead self-medicate.
 - A plurality of those who have avoided the ER say that wait times were the reason.
- Many Albertans also have avoided the ER due to issues related to lack of clarity about whether it is warranted.
 - Roughly one-quarter say they didn't go to the ER because they didn't want their condition minimized (i.e., wasn't important enough) or because they are frustrated by seeing individuals at ERs who shouldn't be there.
- Alberta patients generally understand the processes of the ER, but lack enough information about how patients are prioritized and seen - which impacts their expectations and experience.
 - They do not fully appreciate the triaging process, nor do they understand (or see) the process of monitoring and reprioritization.

>> Key Highlights and Implications

- Wait times have a direct impact on ALL ASPECTS of the ER experience in terms of rated performance - the longer the wait, the less satisfaction.
- In the absence of information to the contrary, most patients tend to believe that their condition is more serious than others in the ER which likely contributes to frustration.
- Based upon last visit experiences, a large majority of patients do not receive any indication of their estimated wait, particularly those who waited more than one hour to see a doctor.
- Patients waiting in ERs have a desire for more information about the wait - e.g., how many patients (at what priority) are ahead of them, understanding the nature of triage and how their condition fits into that prioritization (i.e., why patients are being seen before them), number of doctors on shift, etc.

>> Key Highlights and Implications

- This exploratory research provides a strong base to expand upon in consultation with AMA and ER Section, raises additional questions for further research with patients, and suggests direction for improvements (particularly with respect to communication).
- Research suggests there are at least three points where patients would benefit from additional information about the ER and its processes:
 - **The decision to go to the ER**
 - Expected wait estimates are available. AHS online tool is very useful, but research doesn't measure ease of finding/navigating, incidence of use, etc.
 - Conditions which warrant a trip to the ER.
 - How your condition will be assessed - how the ER process works.
 - **Arrival at the ER**
 - Explanation of how the process works, how patients are evaluated and prioritized, etc.
 - **Waiting in the ER**
 - Providing better understanding of where patients sit in terms of priority and why, updates on queue, means of estimating wait, etc.

Perceptions and General Understanding of ER

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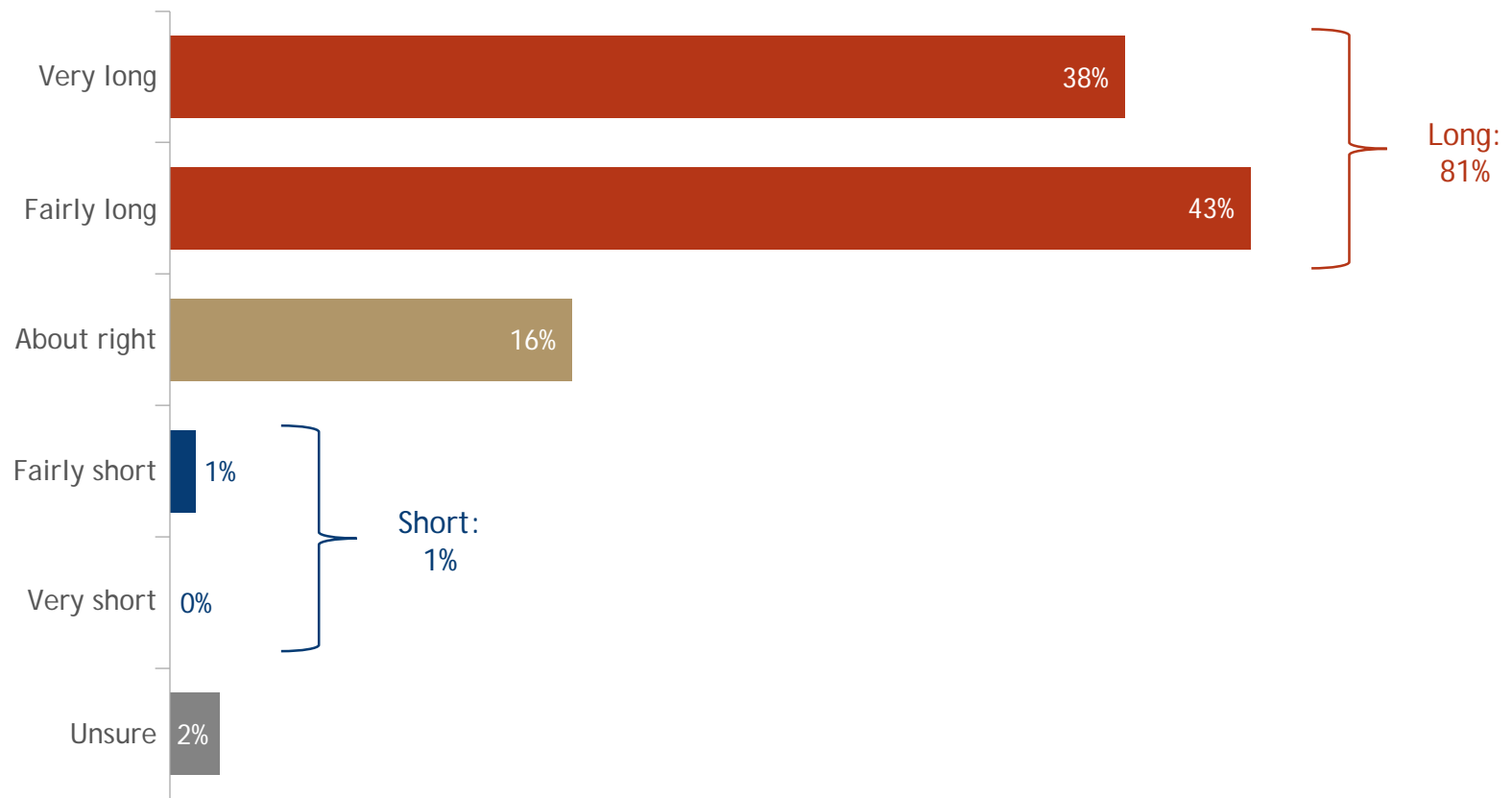


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Perceptions of Emergency Department Wait Times in Alberta

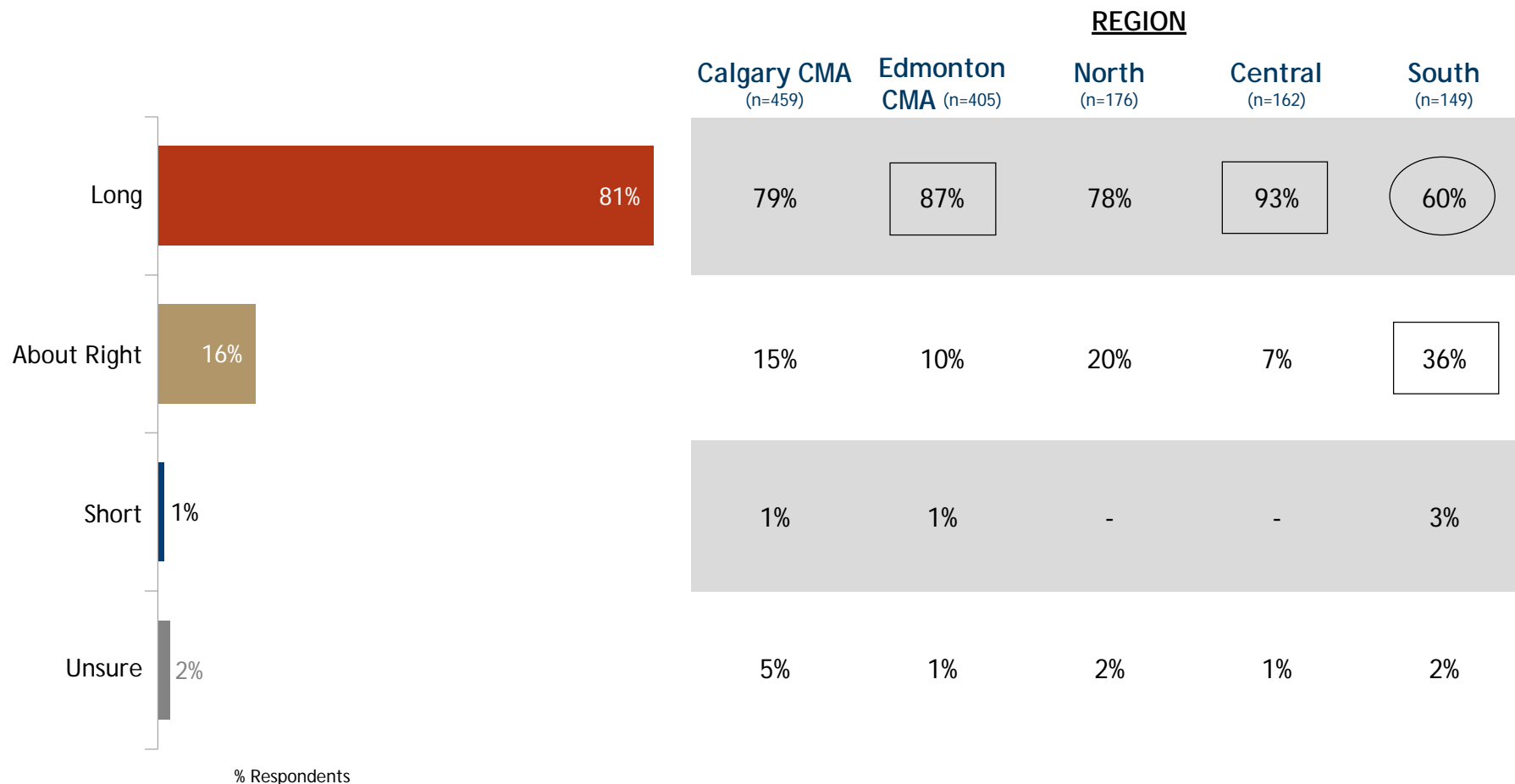
Compared to your expectations of timely care in Alberta's health care system, do you think that emergency room wait times in Alberta today are long, short or about right?



% Respondents

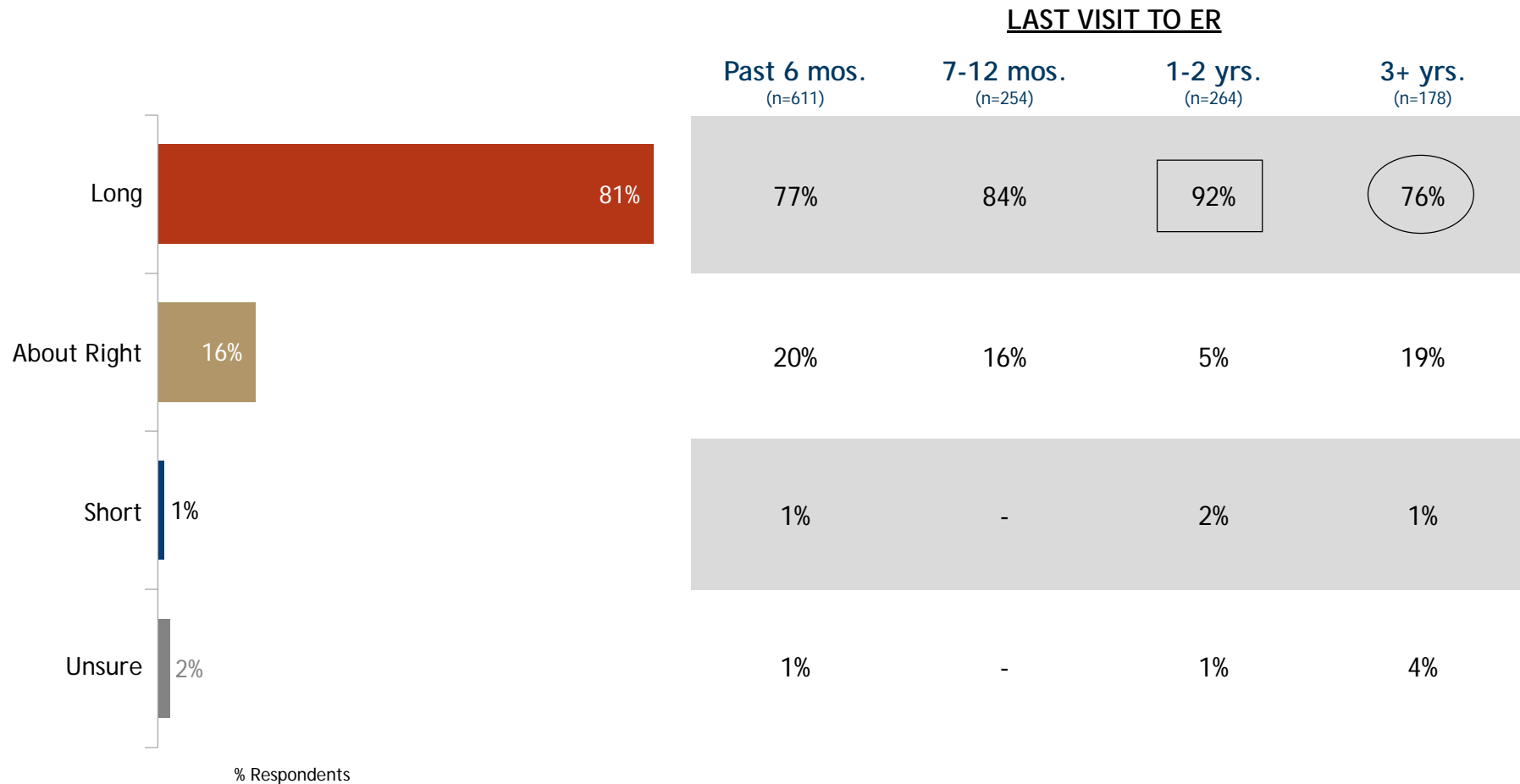
Perceptions of Emergency Department >> Wait Times in Alberta -By Region-

Compared to your expectations of timely care in Alberta's health care system, do you think that emergency room wait times in Alberta today are long, short or about right?



Perceptions of Emergency Department >> Wait Times in Alberta -By Last ER Visit-

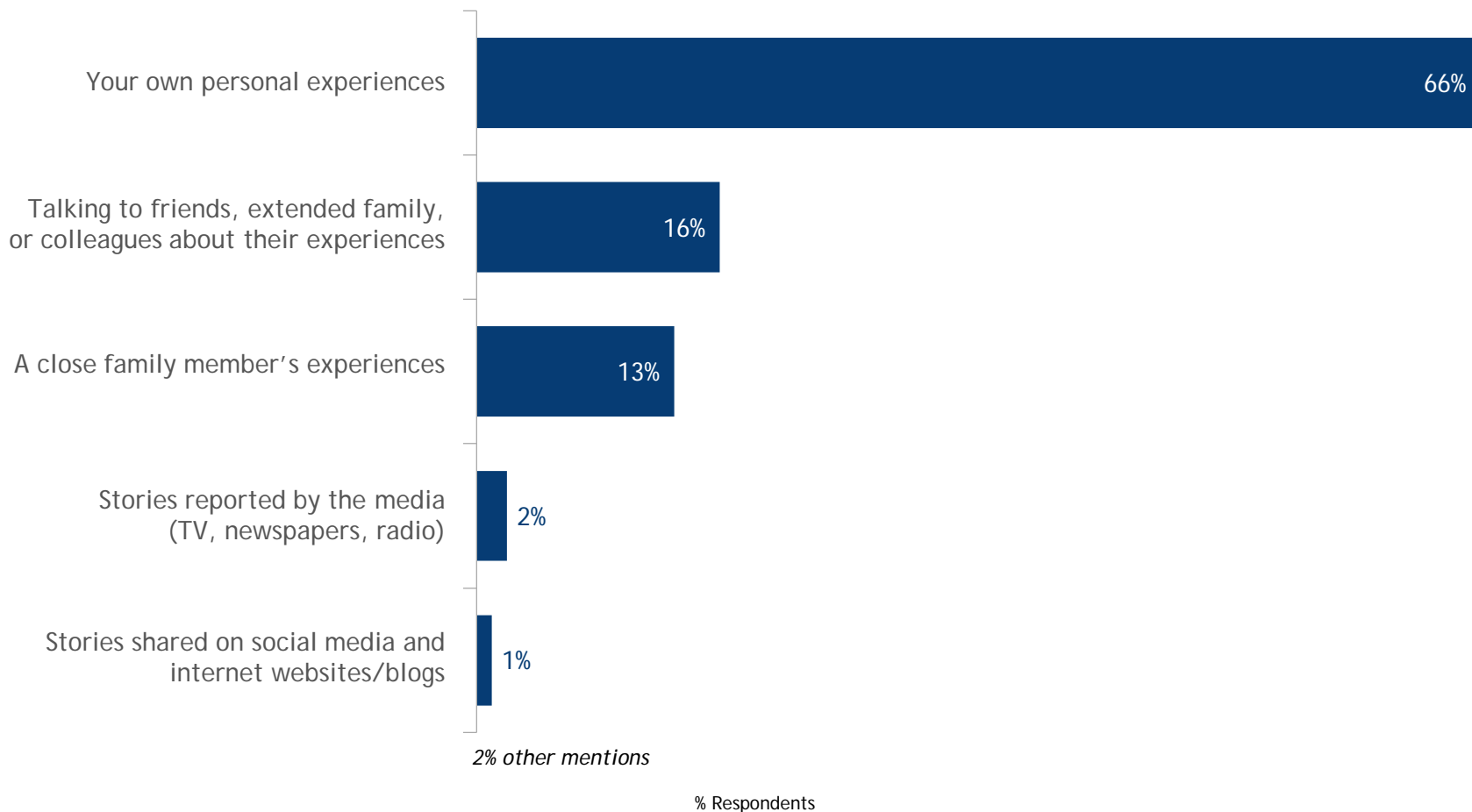
Compared to your expectations of timely care in Alberta's health care system, do you think that emergency room wait times in Alberta today are long, short or about right?





Factors that Influence Personal Perceptions of Emergency Department Wait Times

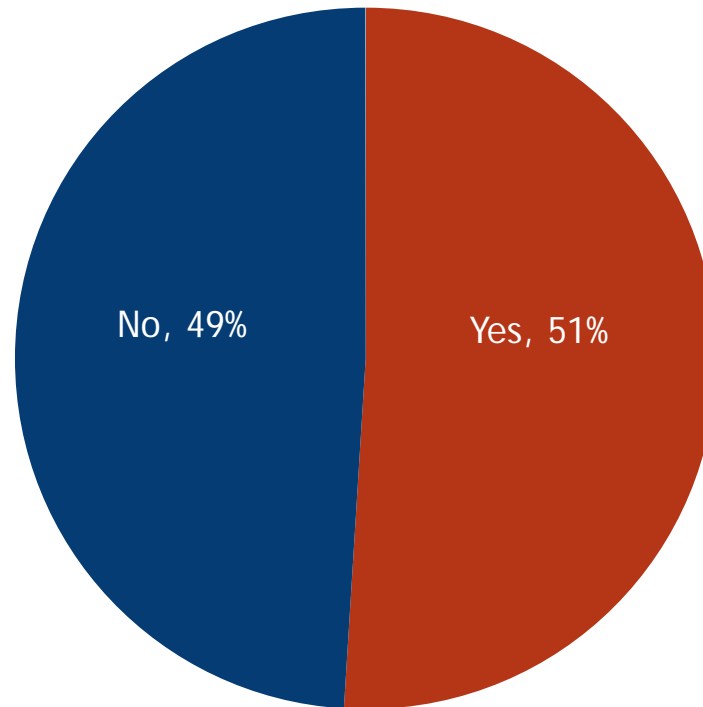
When it comes to your own **personal perceptions** of emergency room wait times in Alberta today, which of the following would you say has had the **biggest influence** on your views?





Have Albertans Avoided an Emergency Department for Emergency Care?

Have you ever decided **not** to visit a hospital emergency department for treatment for a medical condition or health concern that warranted emergency care?

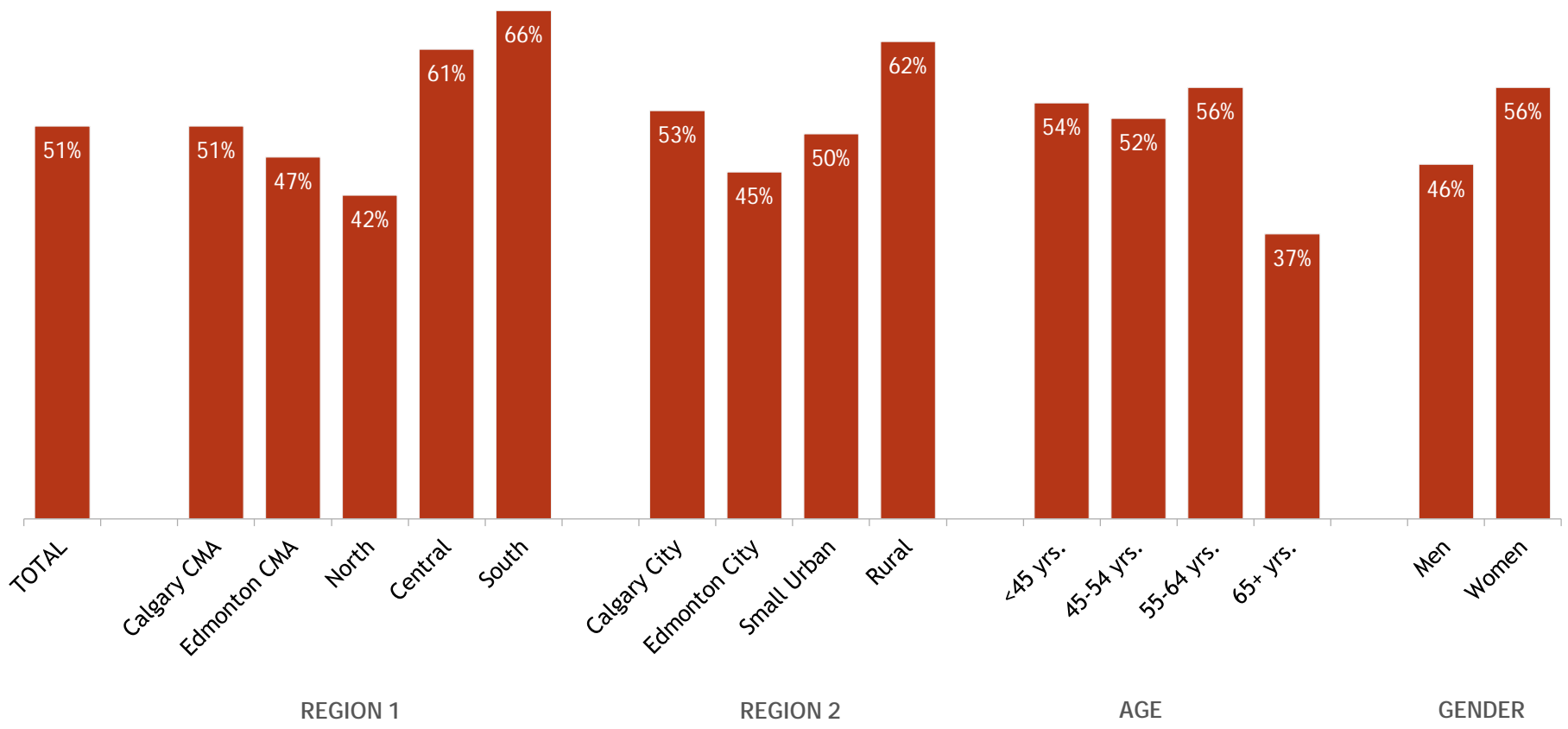


% Respondents

>> Have Albertans Avoided an Emergency Department for Emergency Care? -By Key Demographics-

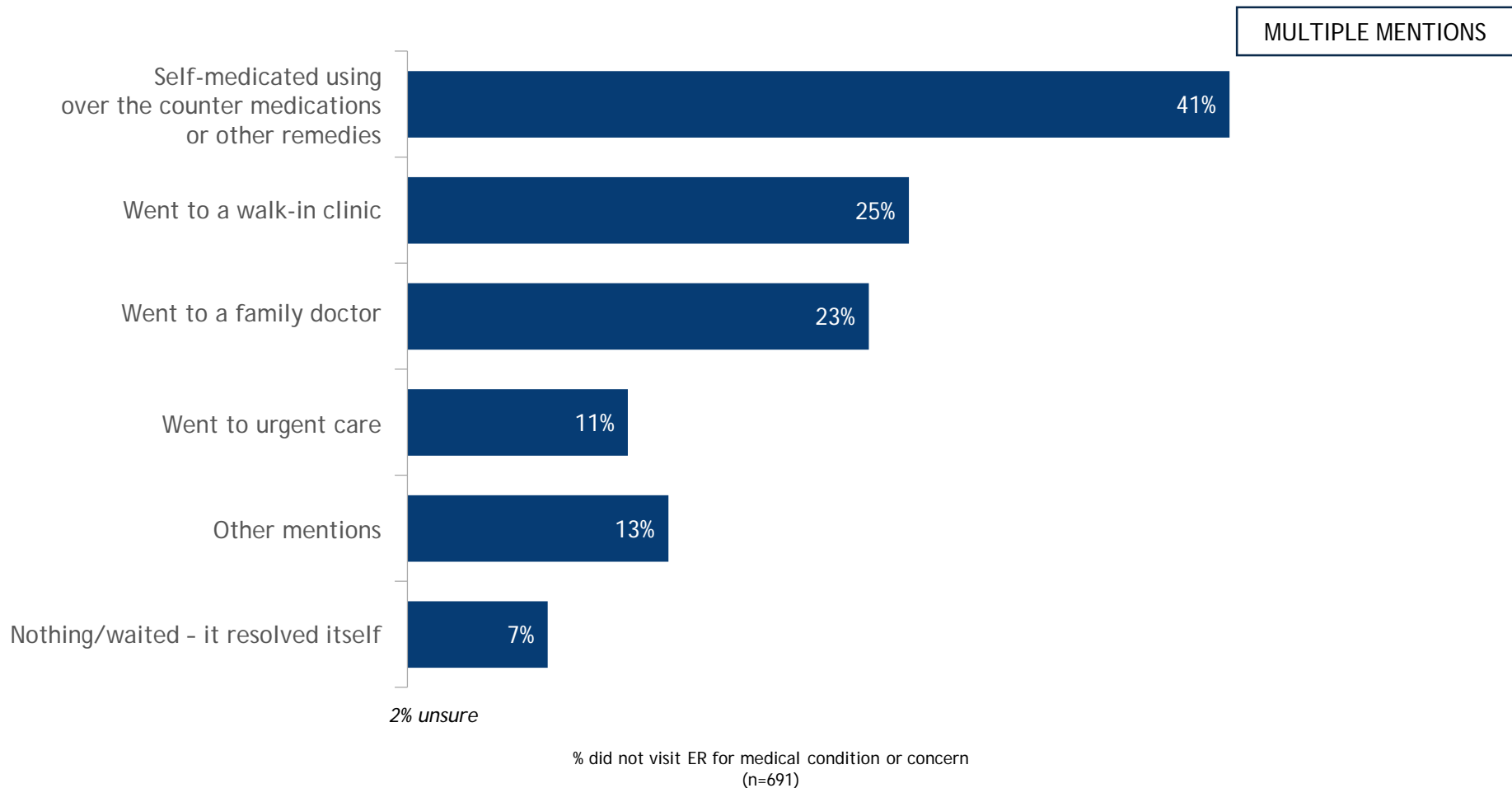
Have you ever decided **not** to visit a hospital emergency department for treatment for a medical condition or health concern that warranted emergency care?

% decided not to visit an ER



>> Chosen Alternatives to Emergency Department Visit

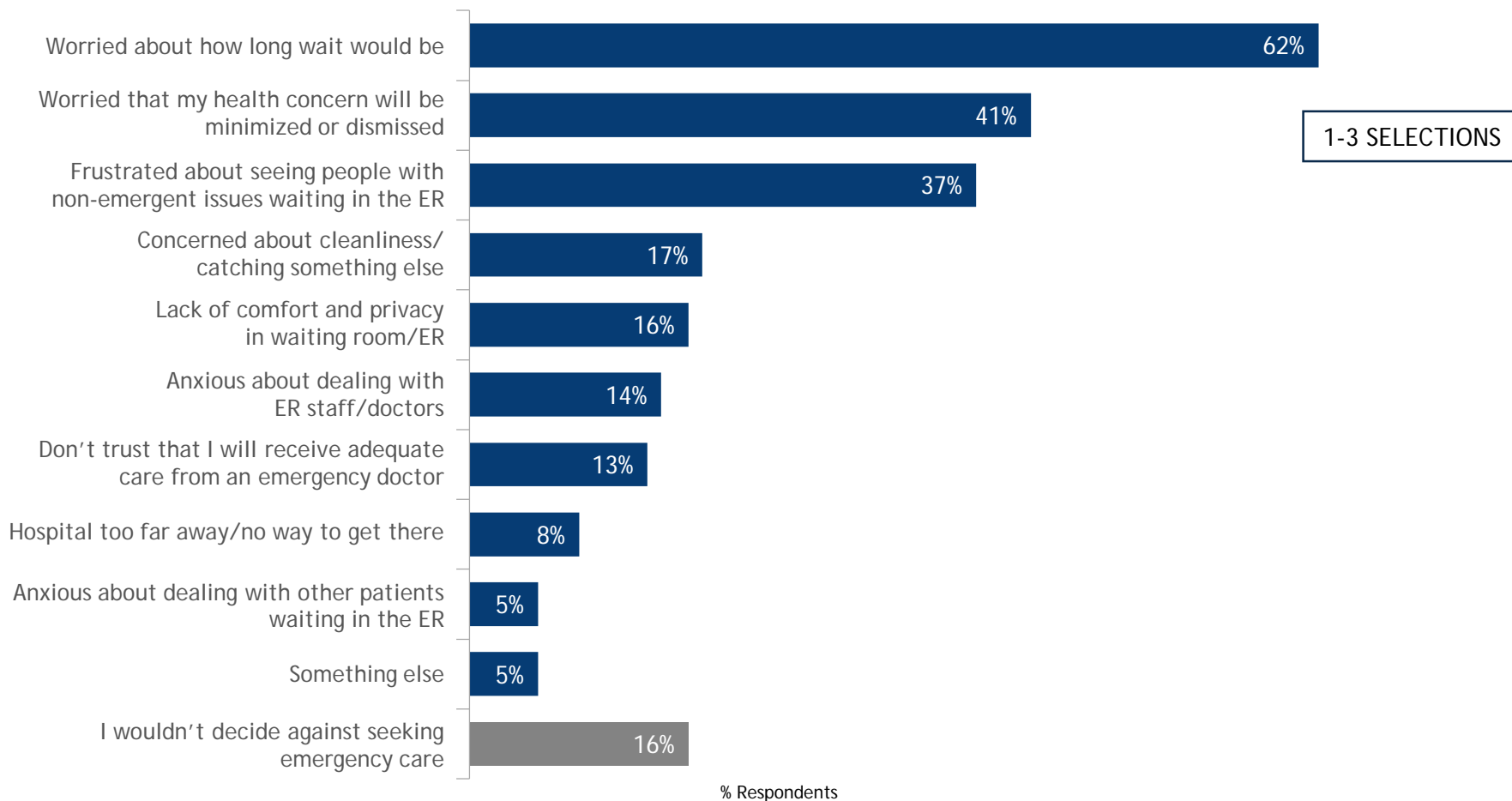
What did you do to manage your medical condition or health concern instead of visiting an emergency room?





Reasons Alberta Patients Might Not Visit an Emergency Department

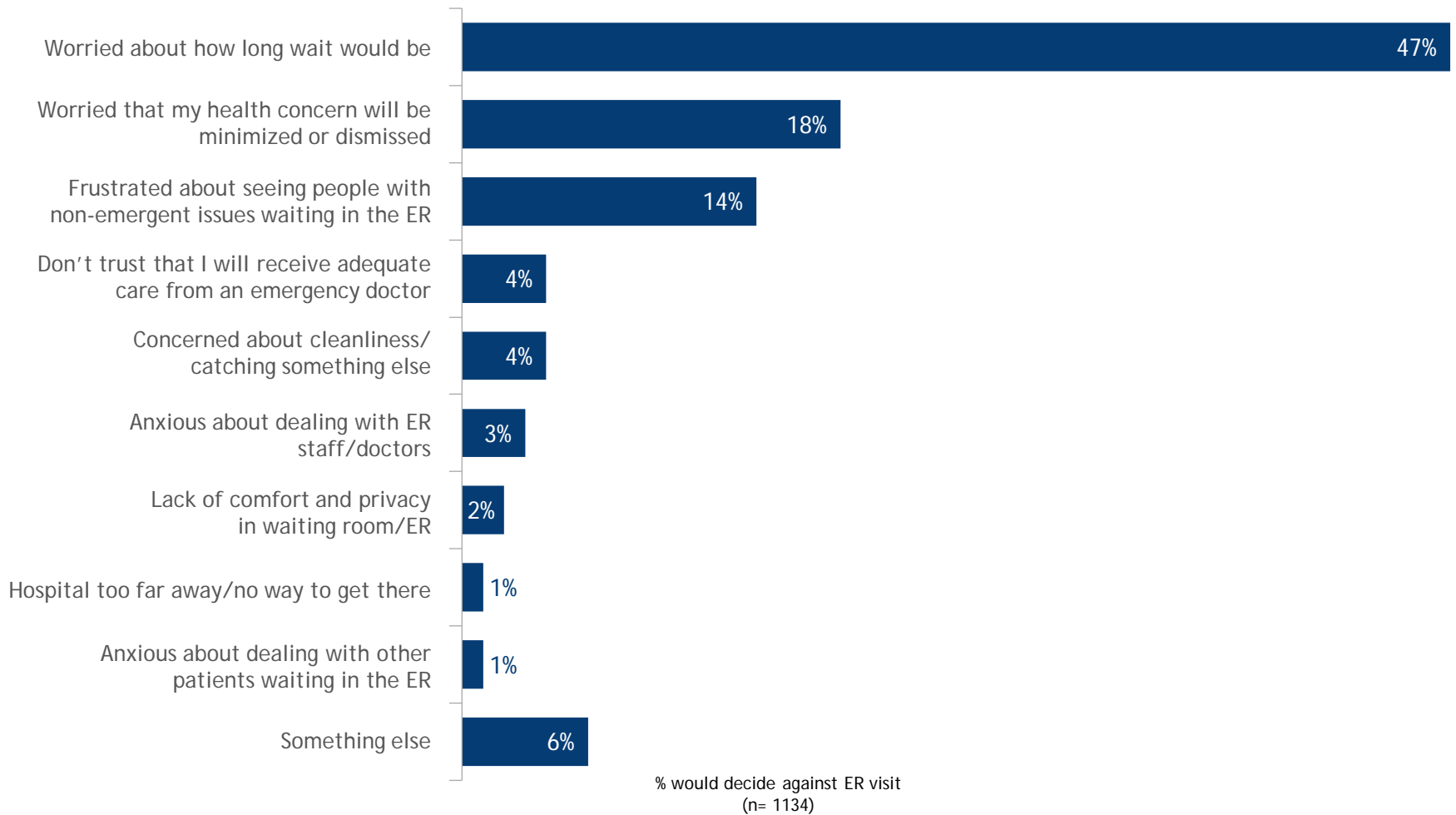
The following are some reasons why a patient might decide **not to visit** an emergency room, despite having a serious or urgent medical concern. Thinking about your own perceptions and experiences, please select **up to three reasons** why you might decide against seeking emergency medical care in a serious or urgent medical situation.





Most Likely Reason Alberta Patients Might Not Visit an 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?



Most Likely Reason Alberta Patients Might Not Visit an Emergency Department -By Region-

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

	TOTAL (n=1134)	Calgary CMA (n=361)	Edmonton CMA (n=333)	North (n=161)	Central (n=144)	South (n=134)	Calgary City (n=318)	Edmonton City (n=273)	Small Urban (n=372)	Rural (n=171)
Worried about how long wait would be	47%	48%	58%	48%	32%	28%	49%	60%	44%	26%
Worried health concern will be minimized/dismissed	18%	21%	16%	25%	14%	14%	19%	12%	19%	24%
Frustrated seeing people w/ non-emergent issues in ER	14%	7%	6%	3%	35%	41%	7%	5%	20%	26%
Don't trust I'll receive adequate care from ER doctor	4%	4%	3%	10%	1%	7%	4%	3%	7%	3%
Concerned with cleanliness/catching something else	4%	5%	5%	4%	1%	2%	5%	6%	2%	2%
Anxious about dealing with ER staff/doctors	3%	5%	1%	2%	1%	3%	6%	1%	1%	3%
Lack of comfort and privacy in waiting room/ER	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Hospital too far away/ no way to get there	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	-	2%	1%	1%	2%
Anxious about dealing with other patients in the ER	1%	-	3%	-	-	-	-	4%	-	-
Something else	6%	7%	5%	4%	15%	3%	7%	6%	3%	12%

% would decide against ER visit

➤ Most Likely Reason Alberta Patients Might Not Visit an Emergency Department -By Gender and Length of Wait-

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

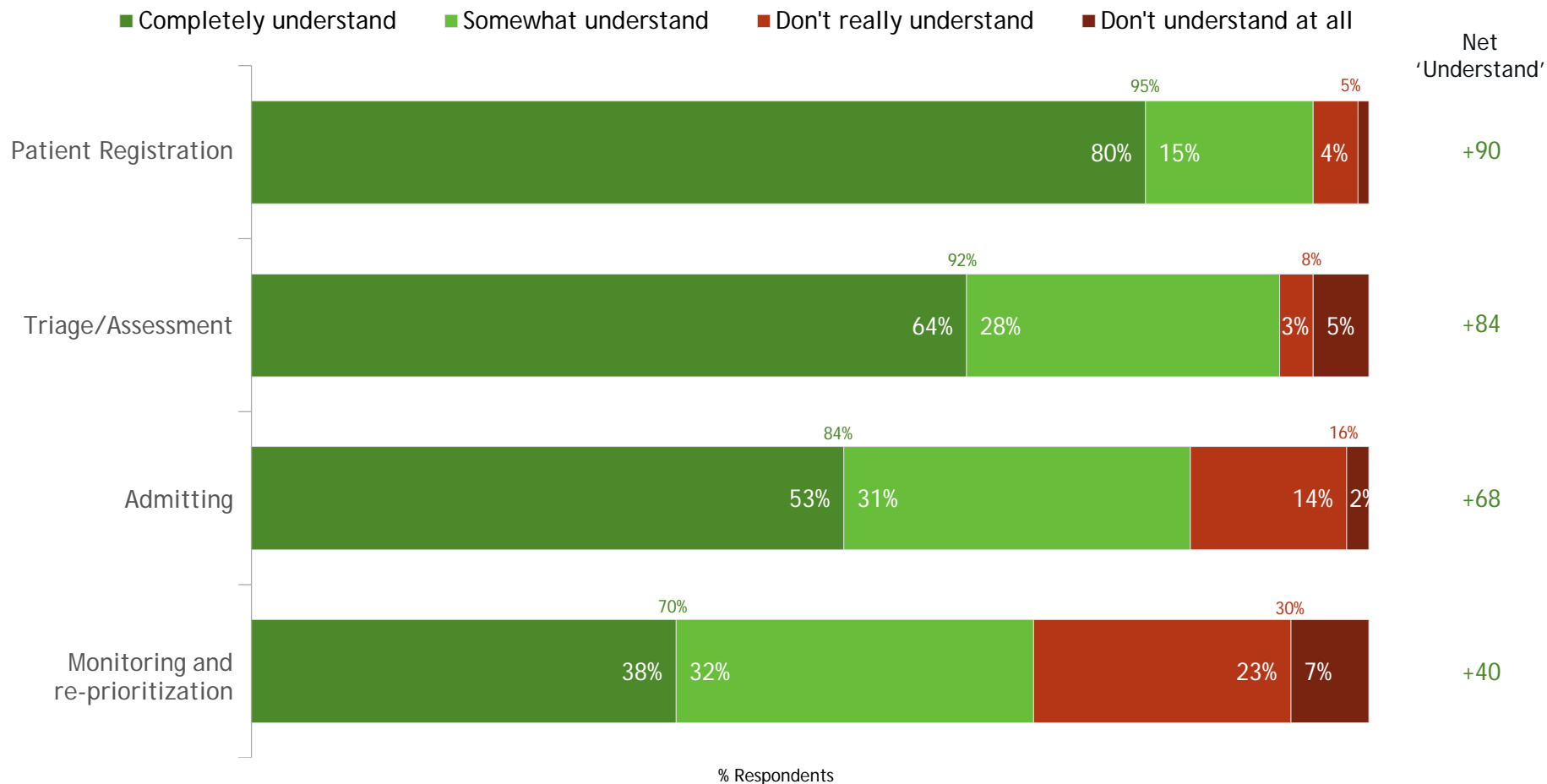
	TOTAL (n=1134)	Men (n=582)	Women (n=552)	LAST VISIT TO ER		
				<1 hr. Wait (n=215)	1-3 hrs. Wait (n=558)	4+ hrs. Wait (n=286)
Worried about how long wait would be	47%	45%	48%	37%	53%	44%
Worried health concern will be minimized/dismissed	18%	13%	23%	26%	16%	17%
Frustrated seeing people w/ non-emergent issues in ER	14%	20%	7%	15%	16%	10%
Don't trust I'll receive adequate care from ER doctor	4%	2%	7%	3%	5%	5%
Concerned with cleanliness/catching something else	4%	5%	3%	4%	1%	6%
Anxious about dealing with ER staff/doctors	3%	3%	3%	5%	1%	5%
Lack of comfort and privacy in waiting room/ER	2%	-	4%	3%	2%	1%
Hospital too far away/ no way to get there	1%	1%	2%	3%	1%	1%
Anxious about dealing with other patients in the ER	1%	2%	-	-	-	-
Something else	6%	9%	4%	6%	5%	11%

% would decide against ER visit



Alberta Patients' Level of Understanding of Emergency Department Checkpoints

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



>> Alberta Patients' Level of Understanding of Emergency Department Checkpoints -By Region-

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

		REGION					
		TOTAL (n=1350)	Calgary CMA (n=459)	Edmonton CMA (n=405)	North (n=176)	Central (n=162)	South (n=149)
Patient Registration	Understand	95%	97%	98%	98%	99%	70%
	Do not understand	5%	3%	2%	2%	1%	30%
Triage / Assessment	Understand	92%	93%	97%	94%	98%	67%
	Do not understand	8%	7%	3%	6%	2%	33%
Admitting	Understand	84%	81%	85%	77%	94%	85%
	Do not understand	16%	19%	15%	23%	6%	15%
Monitoring / Re-Prioritizing	Understand	70%	63%	73%	85%	88%	50%
	Do not understand	30%	37%	27%	15%	12%	50%

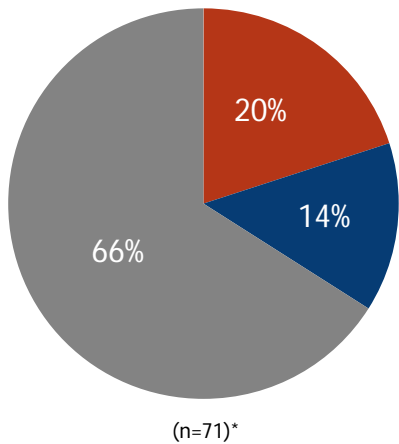


Why Don't Alberta Patients Understand Particular Checkpoints?

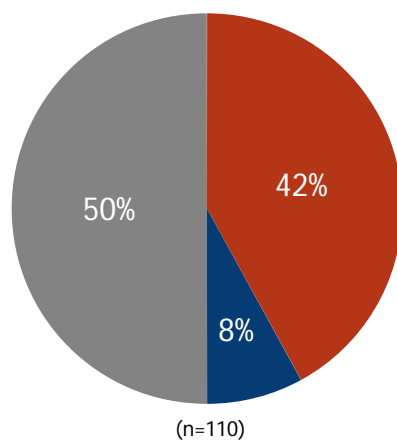
You mentioned that you **don't** have a good understanding of how [a particular checkpoint] works in a hospital emergency department. Would you say this is **more** due to...?

- Not enough information about processes being made available to patients
- Emergency room processes not being consistently followed
- Not having enough personal experience with emergency rooms

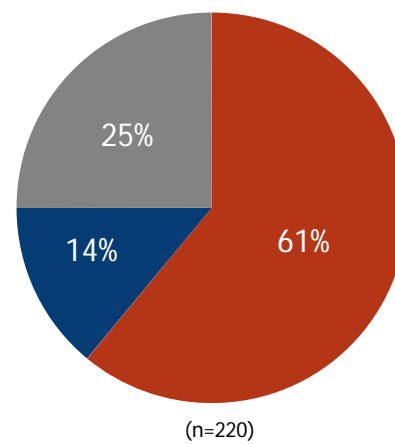
Checkpoint:
Patient Registration



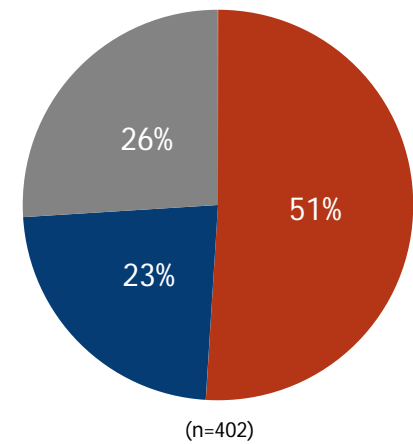
Checkpoint:
Triage/Assessment



Checkpoint:
Admitting



Checkpoint:
Monitoring and Re-prioritizing



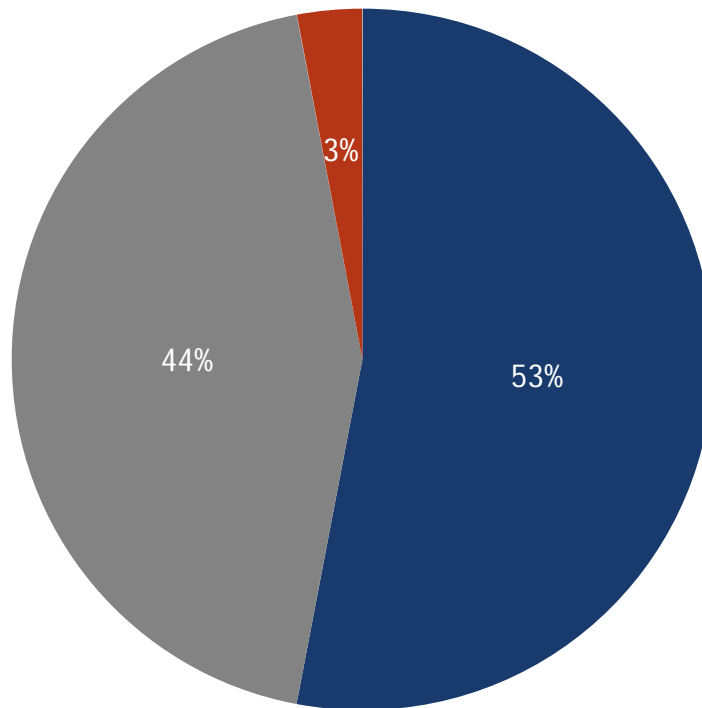
% don't understand how indicated checkpoint works in ER

**Caution: Small sample size*



Level of Understanding of Emergency Department Order

To the best of your knowledge, what is the **order** in which patients are seen in a hospital emergency department?



% Respondents

Correct ER order:
Always in order of priority, regardless of arrival time

Incorrect ER order:
High priority patients first, then first-come, first-served
Always first-come, first-served

Recent Emergency Department Experiences in Alberta

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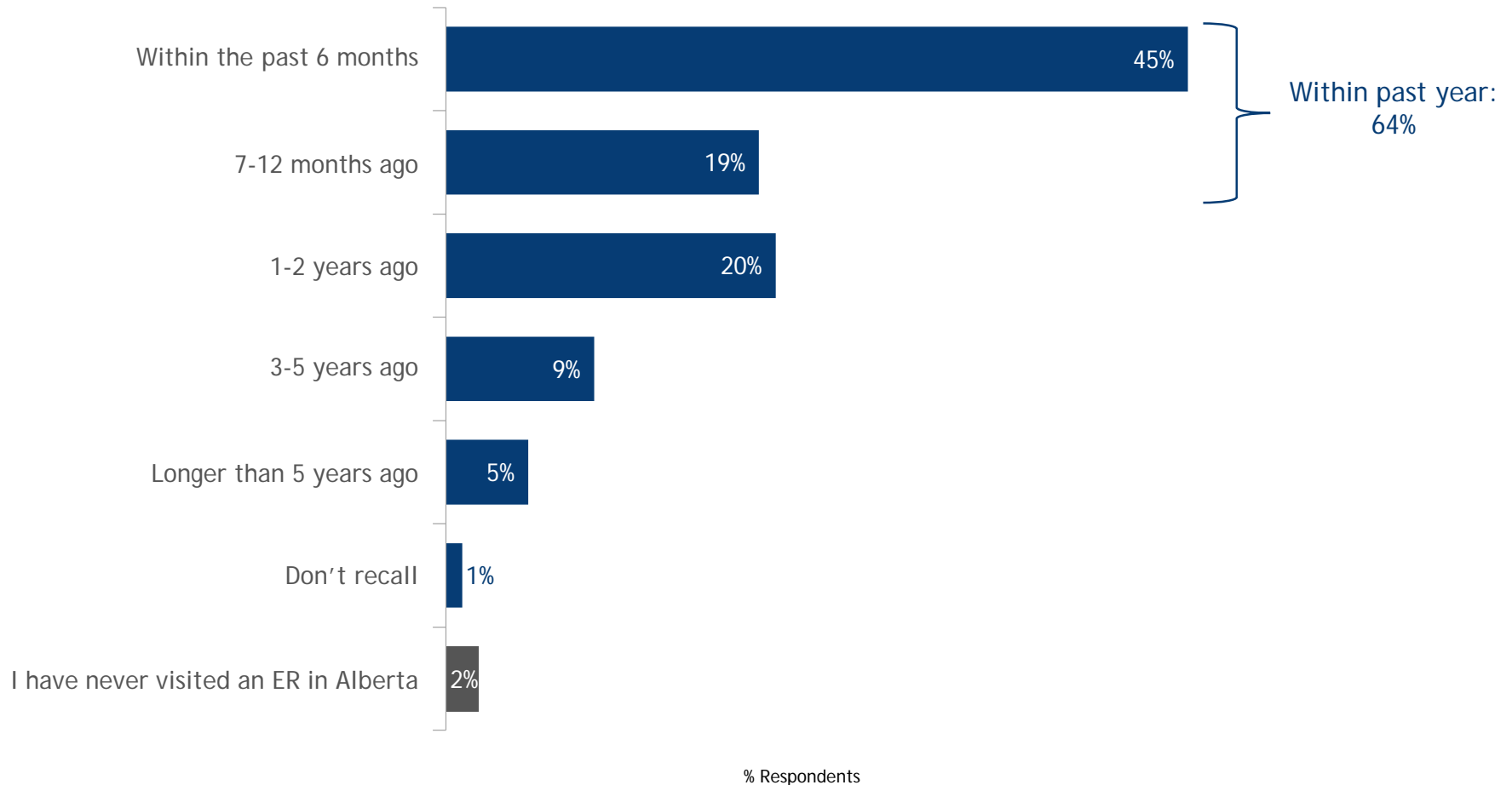


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Timeframe of Last Visit to Alberta Emergency Department

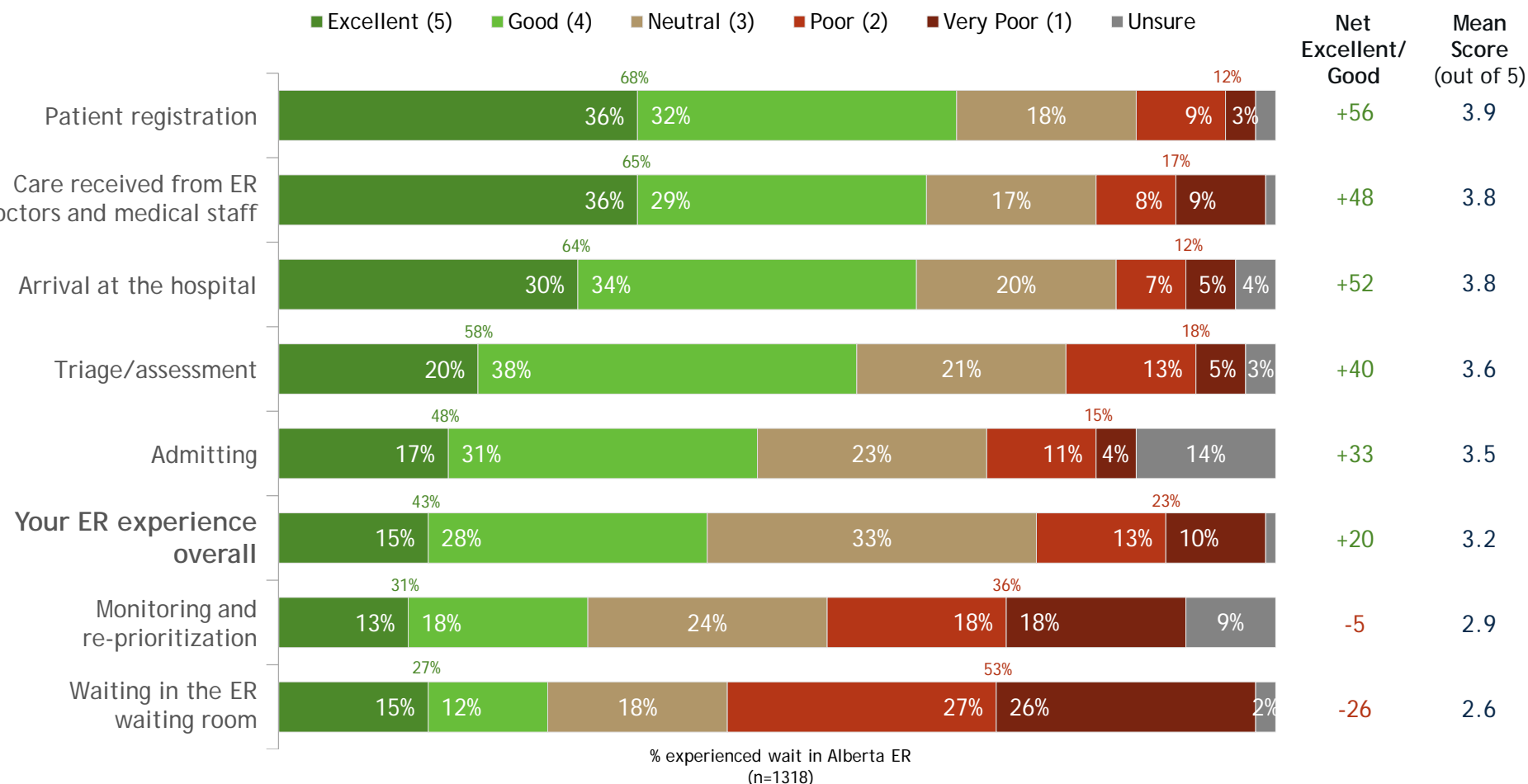
When was the last time you experienced a wait in a hospital emergency department in Alberta, either seeking medical care for yourself or accompanying someone else?





Alberta Patients Assess Aspects of Last Emergency Department Experience

And using a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 means excellent and 1 means very poor, how would you rate the following aspects of your last experience at a hospital emergency room?



Alberta Patients Assess Aspects of Last Emergency Department Experience -By Length of Wait-

And using a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 means excellent and 1 means very poor, how would you rate the following aspects of your last experience at a hospital emergency room?

	TOTAL (n=1318)	LAST VISIT TO ER			ARRIVED VIA EMS	
		<1 hr. Wait (n=297)	1-3 hrs. Wait (n=645)	4+ hrs. Wait (n=318)	Yes (n=338)	No (n=980)
Patient Registration	Excellent/Good	68%	87%	67%	56%	72%
	Neutral/DK	20%	9%	22%	30%	17%
	Poor/Very Poor	12%	5%	10%	14%	11%
Care received from ER Dr.s / medical staff	Excellent/Good	65%	84%	69%	44%	63%
	Neutral/DK	18%	12%	19%	20%	18%
	Poor/Very Poor	17%	4%	12%	36%	18%
Arrival at the hospital	Excellent/Good	64%	80%	64%	54%	67%
	Neutral/DK	24%	16%	24%	29%	21%
	Poor/Very Poor	12%	4%	12%	17%	12%
Triage / Assessment	Excellent/Good	58%	82%	60%	38%	61%
	Neutral/DK	24%	15%	26%	27%	22%
	Poor/Very Poor	18%	3%	14%	35%	17%

% experienced wait in Alberta ER

Continued

Alberta Patients Assess Aspects of Last Emergency Department Experience -By Length of Wait-

And using a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 means excellent and 1 means very poor, how would you rate the following aspects of your last experience at a hospital emergency room?

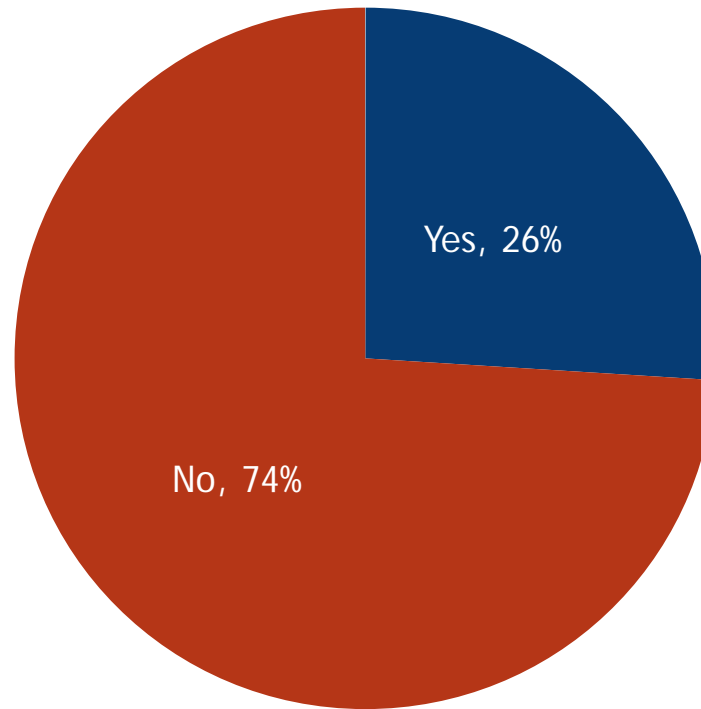
	TOTAL (n=1318)	LAST VISIT TO ER			ARRIVED VIA EMS		
		<1 hr. Wait (n=297)	1-3 hrs. Wait (n=645)	4+ hrs. Wait (n=318)	Yes (n=338)	No (n=980)	
Admitting	Excellent/Good	48%	65%	48%	38%	49%	48%
	Neutral/DK	37%	30%	39%	39%	33%	38%
	Poor/Very Poor	15%	6%	14%	24%	18%	14%
Your ER experience overall	Excellent/Good	43%	78%	43%	13%	39%	44%
	Neutral/DK	34%	18%	39%	39%	40%	32%
	Poor/Very Poor	23%	5%	18%	48%	21%	24%
Monitoring and Re-prioritization	Excellent/Good	31%	70%	25%	10%	32%	30%
	Neutral/DK	33%	21%	46%	17%	27%	35%
	Poor/Very Poor	36%	8%	29%	74%	41%	35%
Waiting in ER waiting room	Excellent/Good	27%	75%	18%	4%	25%	28%
	Neutral/DK	20%	14%	25%	12%	23%	18%
	Poor/Very Poor	53%	11%	57%	84%	52%	54%

% experienced wait in Alberta ER



Percent of Alberta Patients Brought to Emergency Department by Ambulance

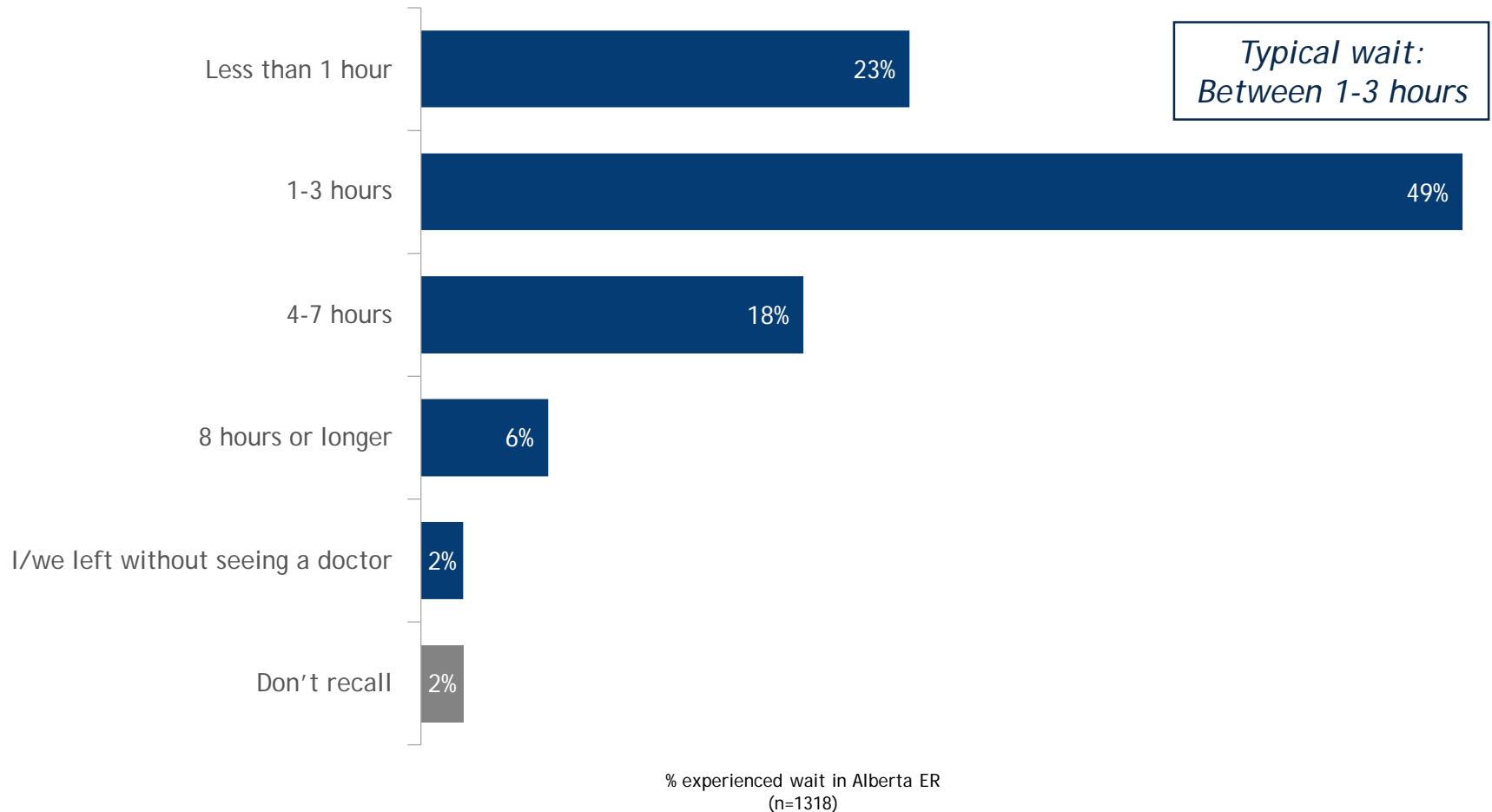
Were you/your loved one brought to the hospital emergency room by ambulance?



% experienced wait in Alberta ER
(n=1318)

>> Alberta Patients' Wait Time to see ER Doctor

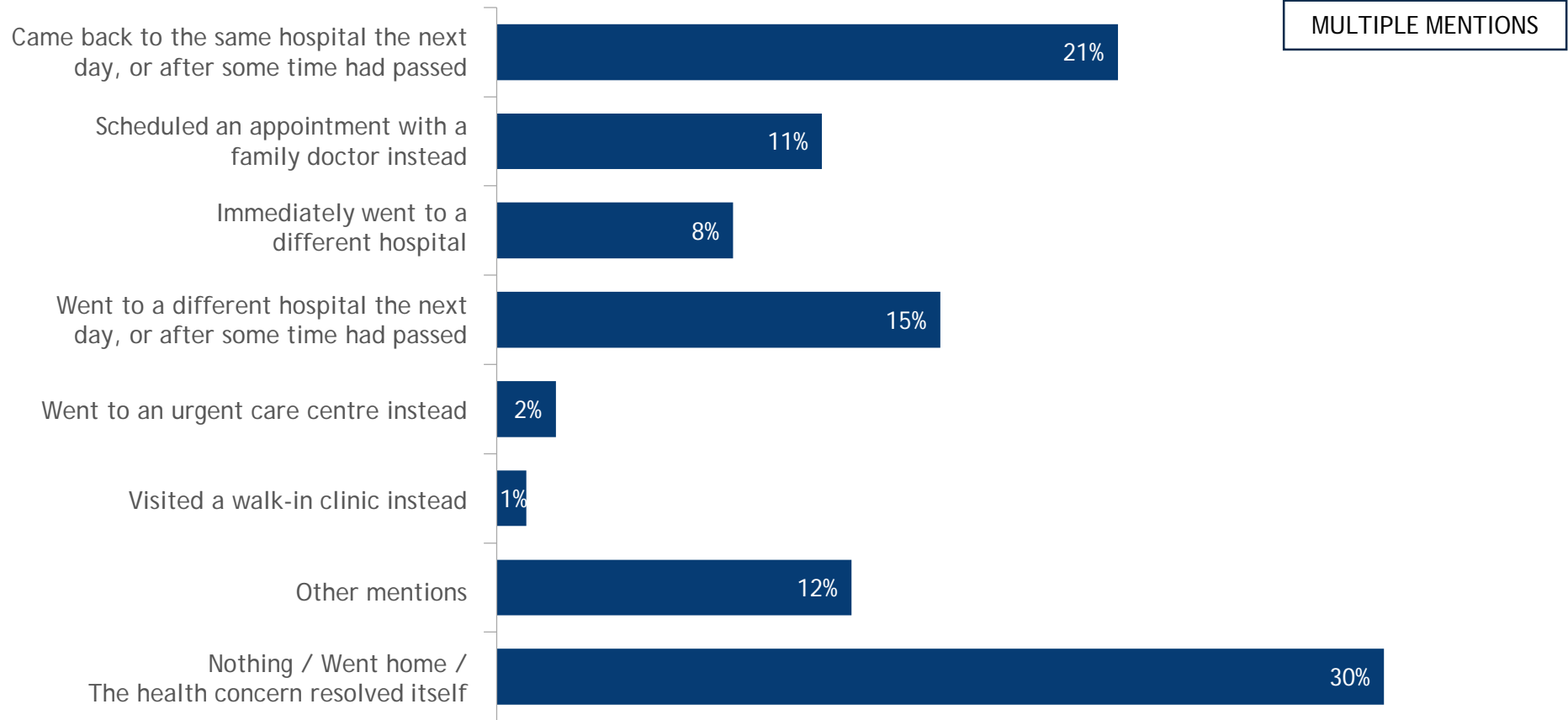
Roughly how long did you/your loved one wait to be seen by an emergency room doctor?





Alberta Patients' Alternatives to Seeing ER Doctor on Initial Hospital Visit

[If "left without seeing a doctor"... What did you/your loved one do instead of seeing a doctor?



MULTIPLE MENTIONS

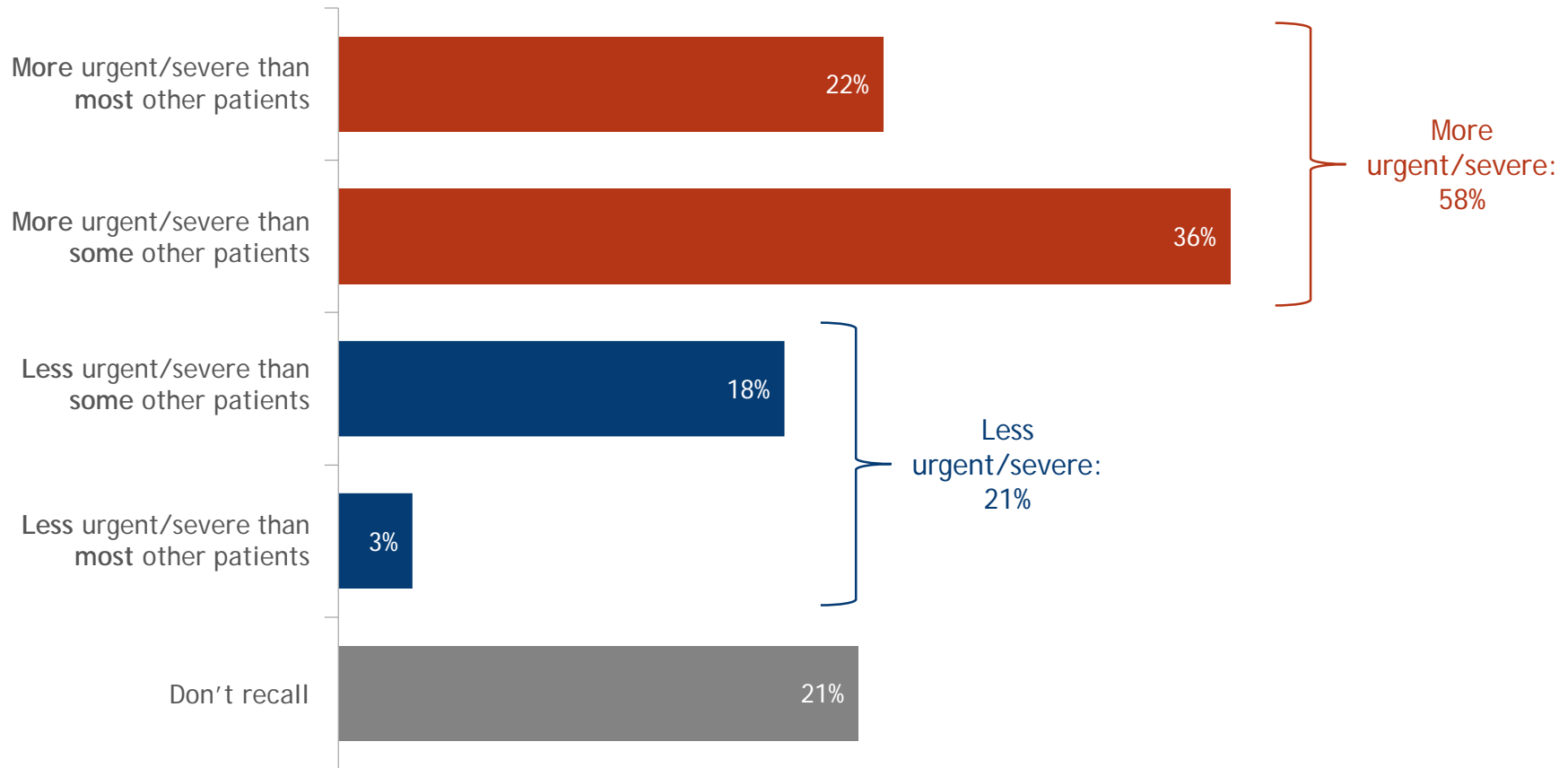
% left ER without seeing a doctor (n=28)*

*Caution: Small sample size



Urgency of Personal Health Condition Compared to Other Emergency Department Patients

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



% experienced wait in Alberta ER (n=1318)

>> Urgency of Personal Health Condition Compared to Other Emergency Department Patients -By Length of Wait-

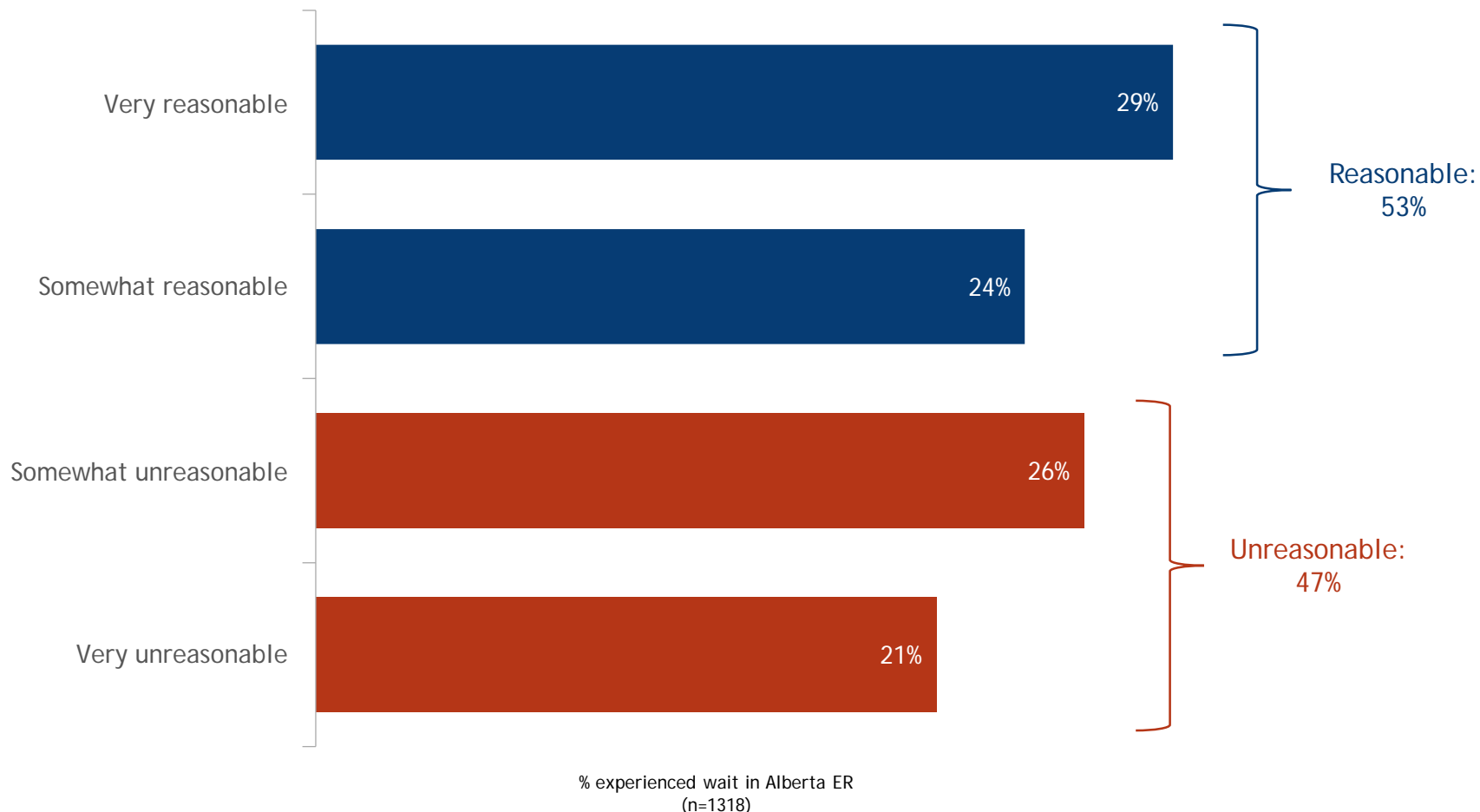
Compared to the other patients in the waiting room at the time, would you say that your/your loved one's medical condition or health concern was more or less urgent/severe?

	TOTAL (n=1318)	LAST VISIT TO ER		
		<1 hr. Wait (n=215)	1-3 hrs. Wait (n=558)	4+ hrs. Wait (n=286)
More urgent/severe than most other patients	22%	43%	16%	14%
More urgent/severe than some other patients	36%	18%	38%	50%
Less urgent/severe than some other patients	18%	8%	20%	25%
Less urgent/severe than most other patients	3%	2%	3%	3%
Don't recall	21%	30%	23%	8%
More urgent	58%	60%	54%	64%
Less urgent	21%	10%	23%	28%
Don't recall	21%	30%	23%	8%

% experienced wait in Alberta ER
(n=1318)

>> Was Emergency Department Wait Time Reasonable?

Considering the nature and urgency of your/your loved one's health condition at the time, do you consider the amount of time you waited to be reasonable or unreasonable?





Was Emergency Department Wait Time Reasonable? -By Length of Wait-

Considering the nature and urgency of your/your loved one's health condition at the time, do you consider the amount of time you waited to be reasonable or unreasonable?

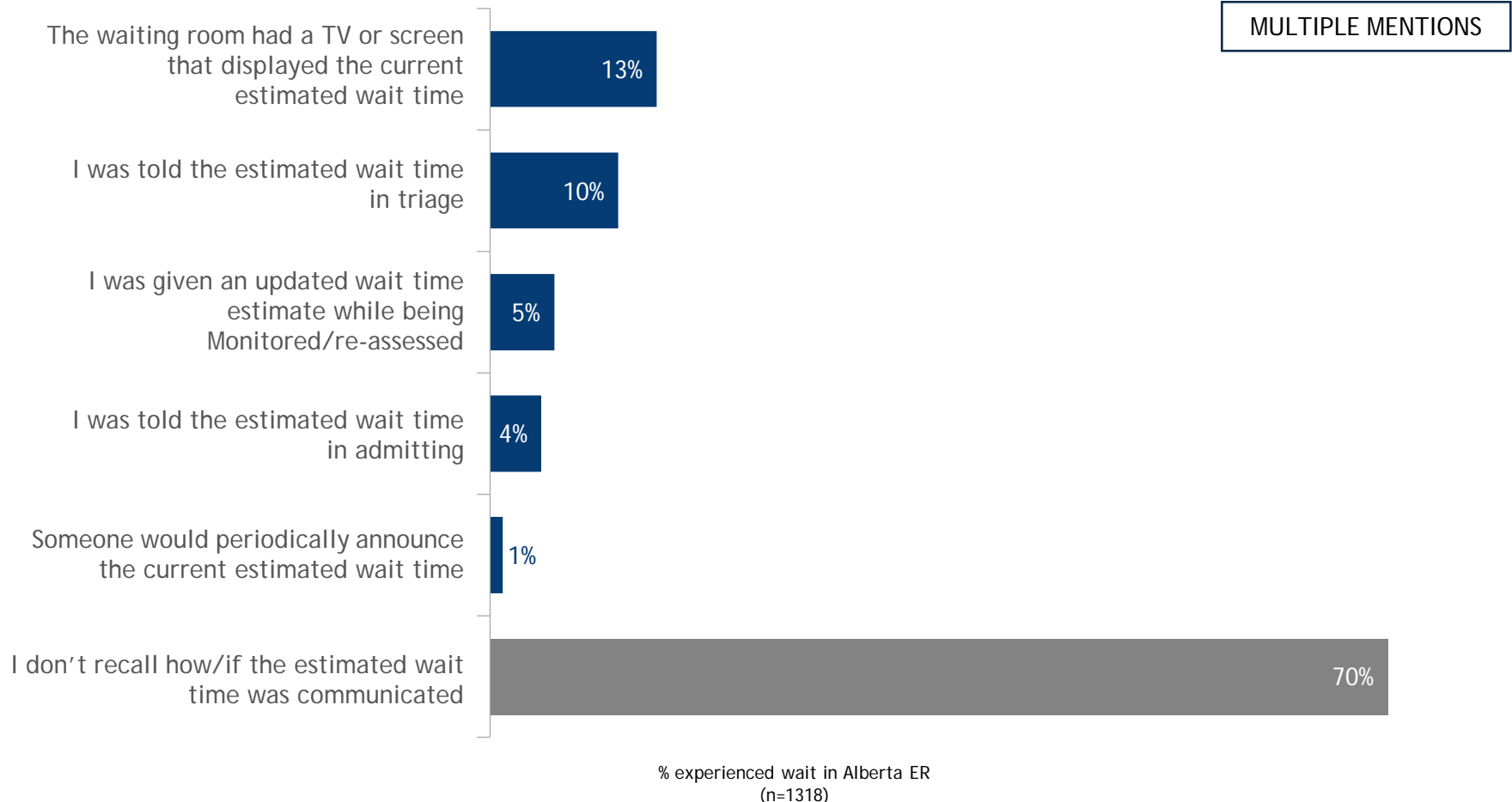
	TOTAL (n=1318)	LAST VISIT TO ER		
		<1 hr. Wait (n=215)	1-3 hrs. Wait (n=558)	4+ hrs. Wait (n=286)
Very reasonable	29%	80%	19%	3%
Somewhat reasonable	24%	18%	36%	6%
Somewhat unreasonable	26%	1%	32%	39%
Very unreasonable	21%	2%	12%	52%
Reasonable	53%	97%	55%	9%
Unreasonable	47%	3%	45%	91%

% experienced wait in Alberta ER
(n=1318)



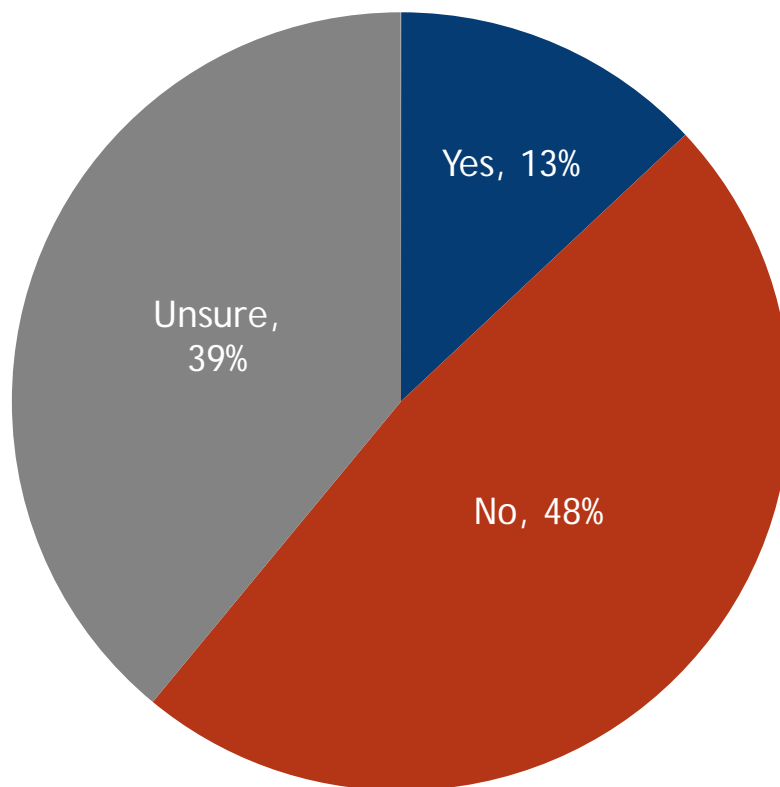
How was Estimated Wait Time Communicated in the Emergency Department Waiting Room?

To the best of your memory, how was the estimated wait time communicated while you were in the ER waiting room?



>> Was Wait Time Updated Frequently Enough?

Do you feel that the estimated wait time was updated frequently enough?

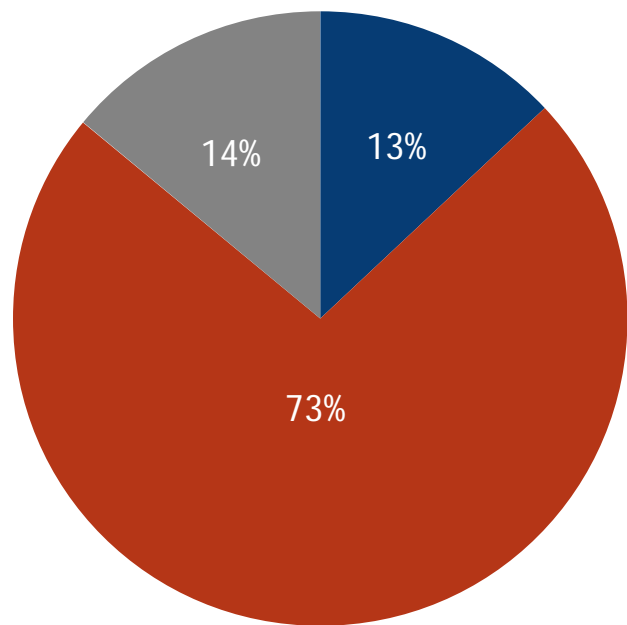


% experienced wait in Alberta ER
(n=1318)



Was Assessed Priority Level Communicated during Wait? -By Length of Wait-

At any point during the wait, did a nurse or medical staff communicate your/your loved one's assessed priority level?



% experienced wait in Alberta ER
(n=1318)

- Yes
- No
- Don't recall

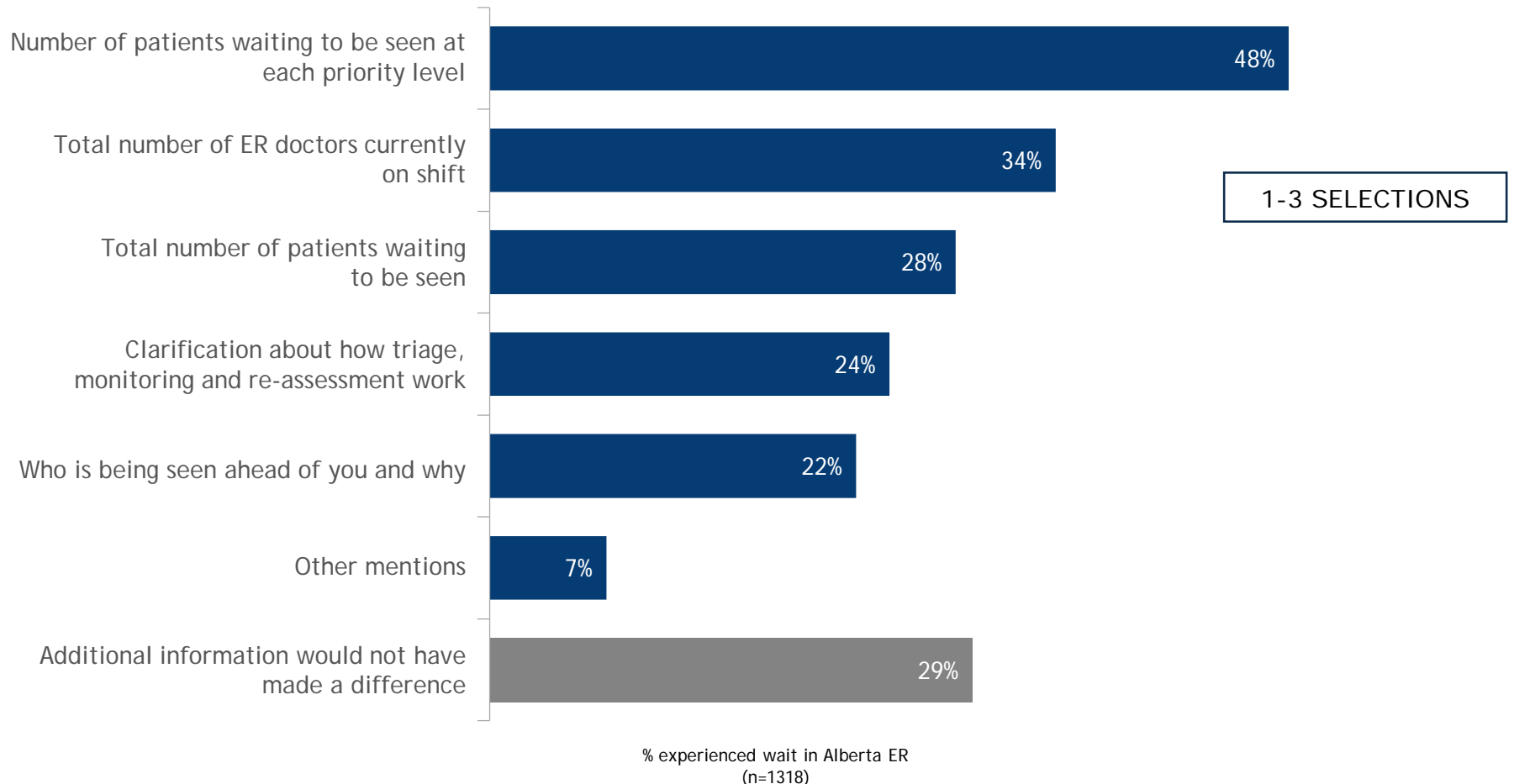
LENGTH OF WAIT TO SEE ER DOCTOR

	<1 hr. (n=297)	1-3 hrs. (n=645)	4+ hrs. (n=318)
Yes	32%	7%	7%
No	45%	81%	87%
Don't recall	22%	12%	6%



Information That Would Have Been Helpful during Last Emergency Department Wait

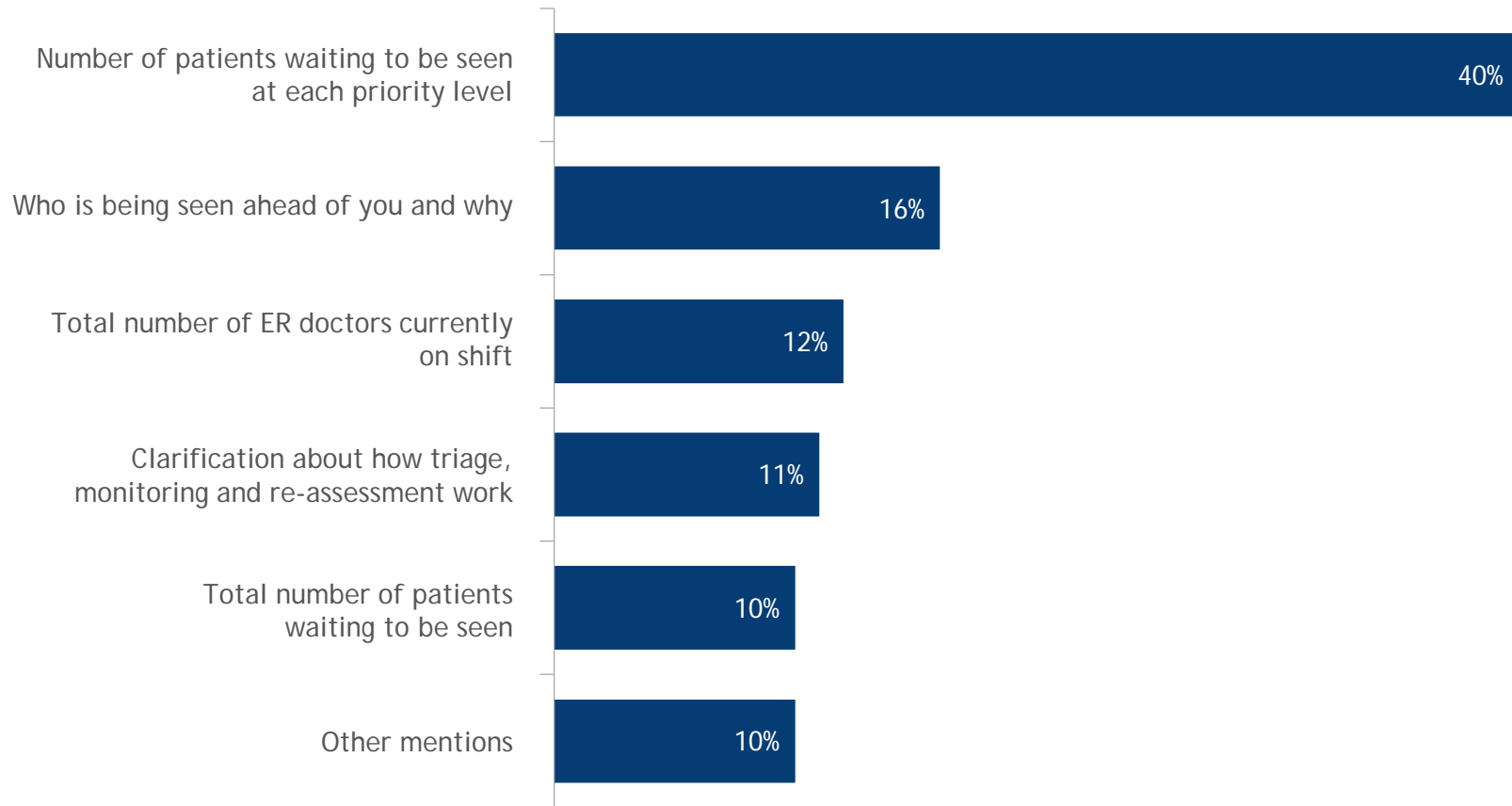
In addition to estimated wait time, please select up to three (3) additional pieces of information that would have been **most helpful** to you as you/your loved one waited for care the last time you were in an emergency room.





Information That Would Have Been Most Helpful during Last Emergency Department Wait

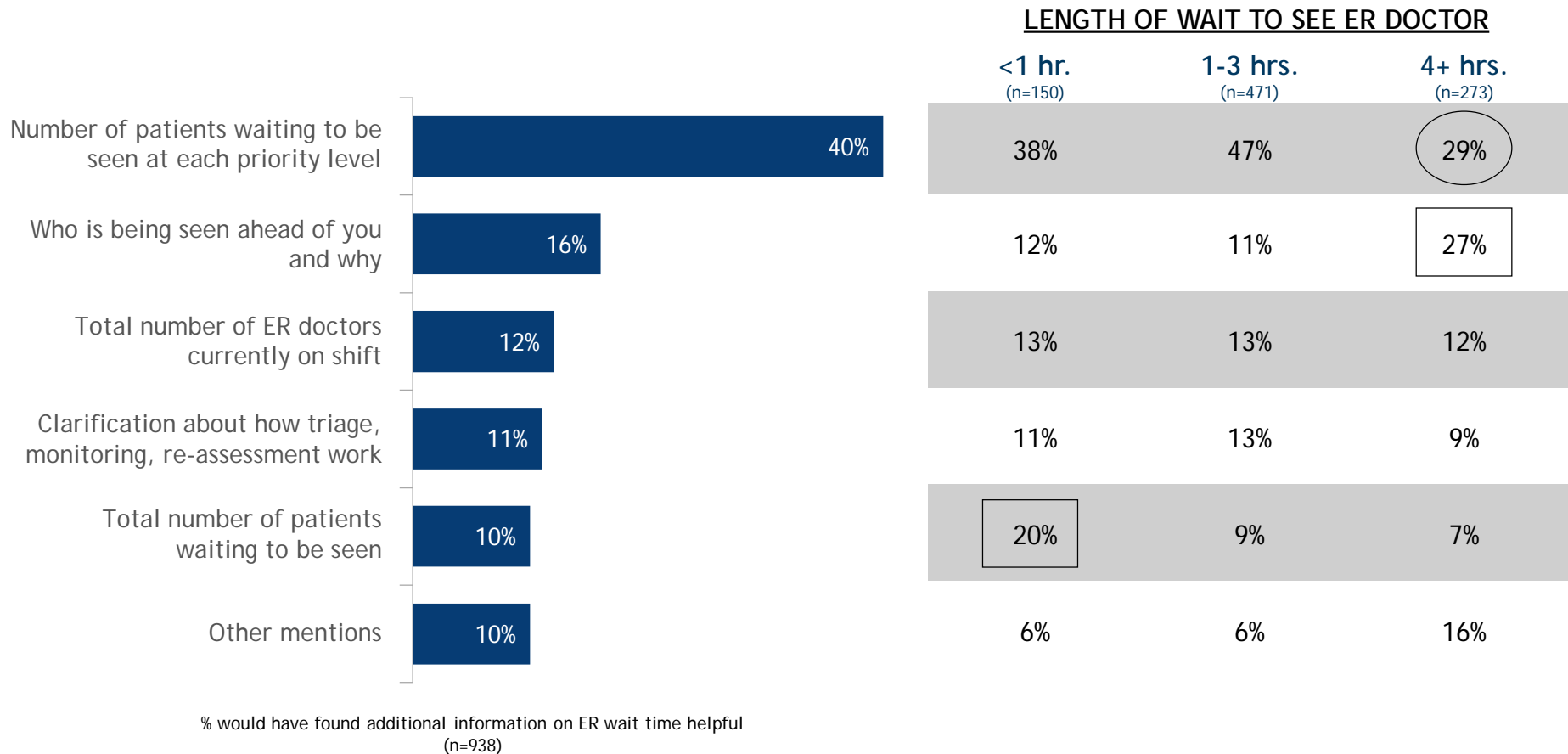
And which of these pieces of information would have been **most helpful** to know during your emergency room visit?



% would have found additional information on ER wait time helpful
(n=938)

>> Information That Would Have Been Most Helpful during Last Emergency Department Wait -By Length of Wait-

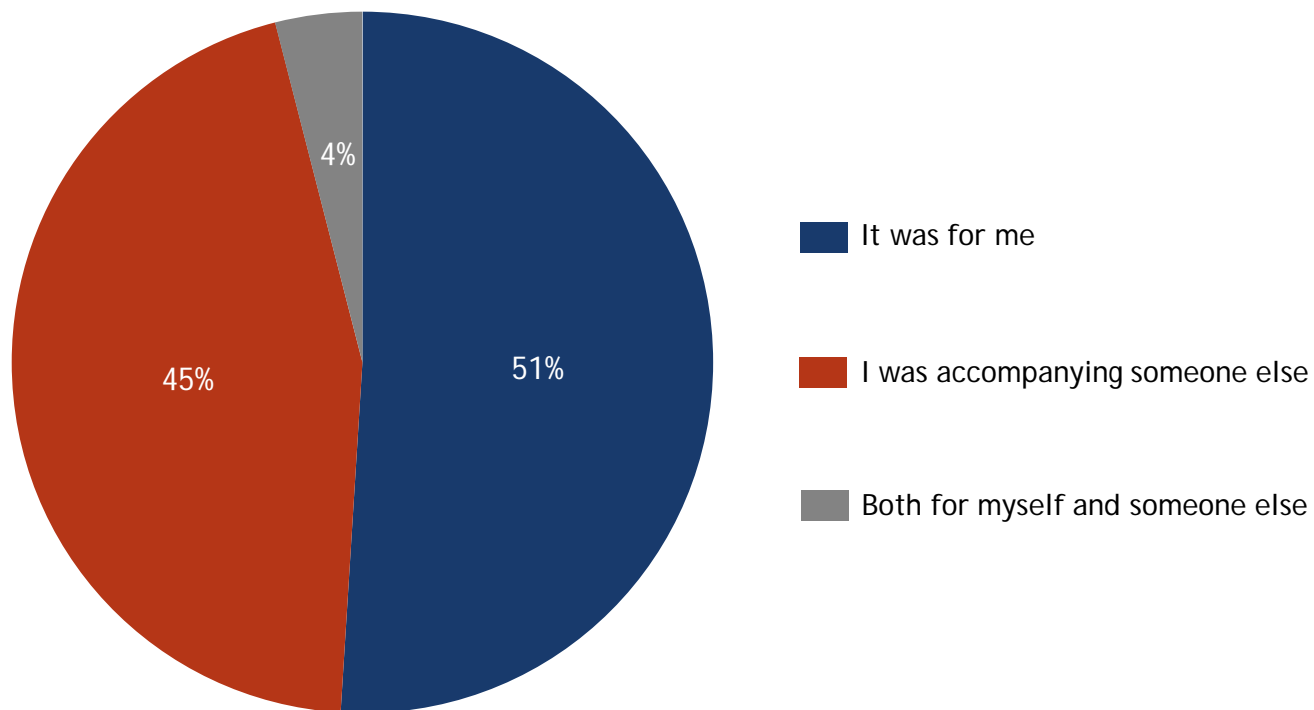
And which of these pieces of information would have been **most helpful** to know during your emergency room visit?





Nature of Last Visit to Hospital Emergency Department

Lastly, was this last visit to a hospital emergency room for yourself, or accompanying someone else?



% experienced wait in Alberta ER
(n=1318)



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