



2020 HEALTHY LIVING DURING EXTRAORDINARY TIMES: CHARTBOOK

June 2020

AARP[®]
Real Possibilities

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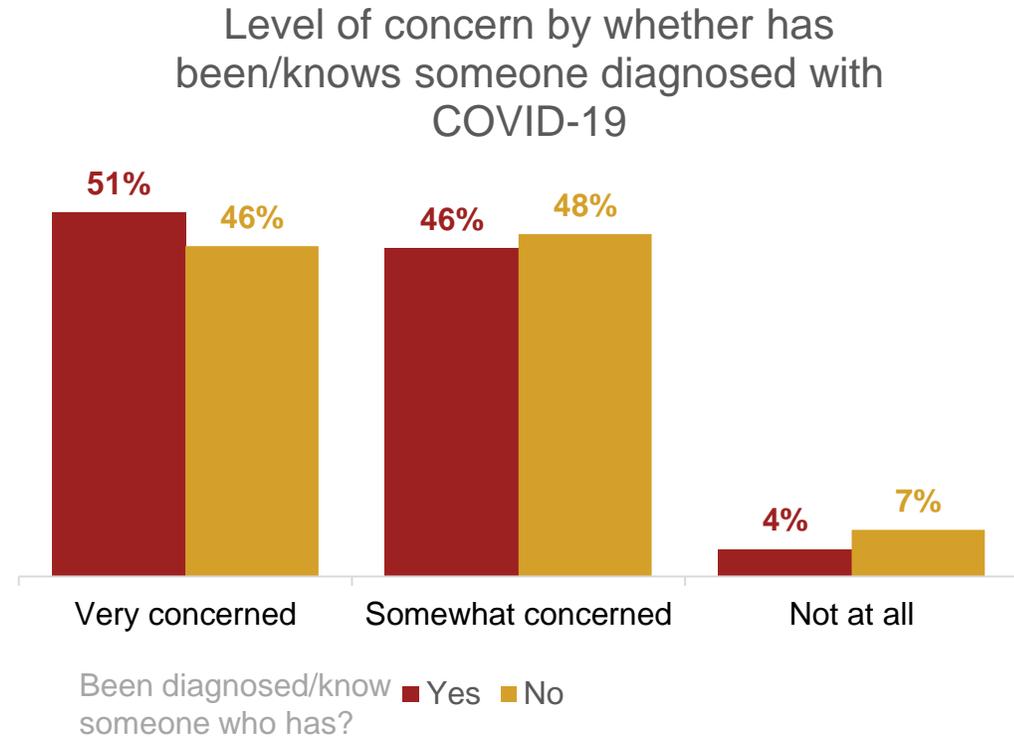
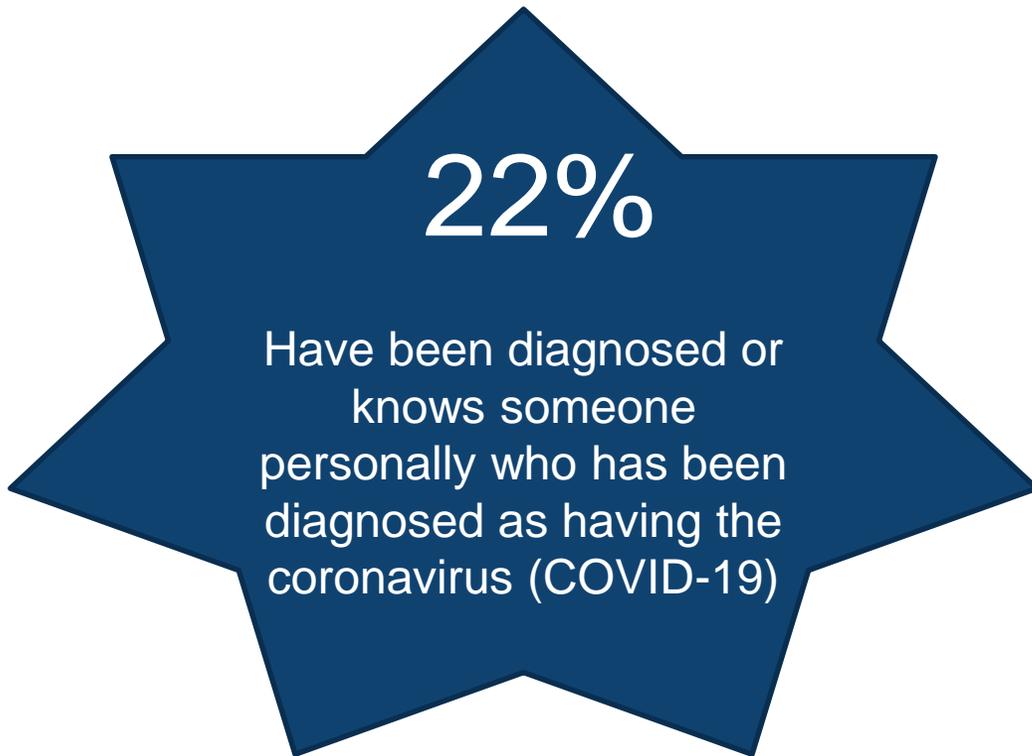




**DETAILED RESULTS:
SOCIALIZATION AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Concern about COVID-19 related to experience with the virus

Just over one in five (22%) of respondents have been diagnosed or know someone who has been diagnosed as having the coronavirus (COVID-19). While the vast majority (94%) of older adults say they are at least somewhat concerned about coronavirus (COVID-19), those who have been diagnosed or know someone who has been diagnosed as having the virus are more likely to say they are very concerned about the virus (51% vs. 46% of those who do not have any experience with the virus).

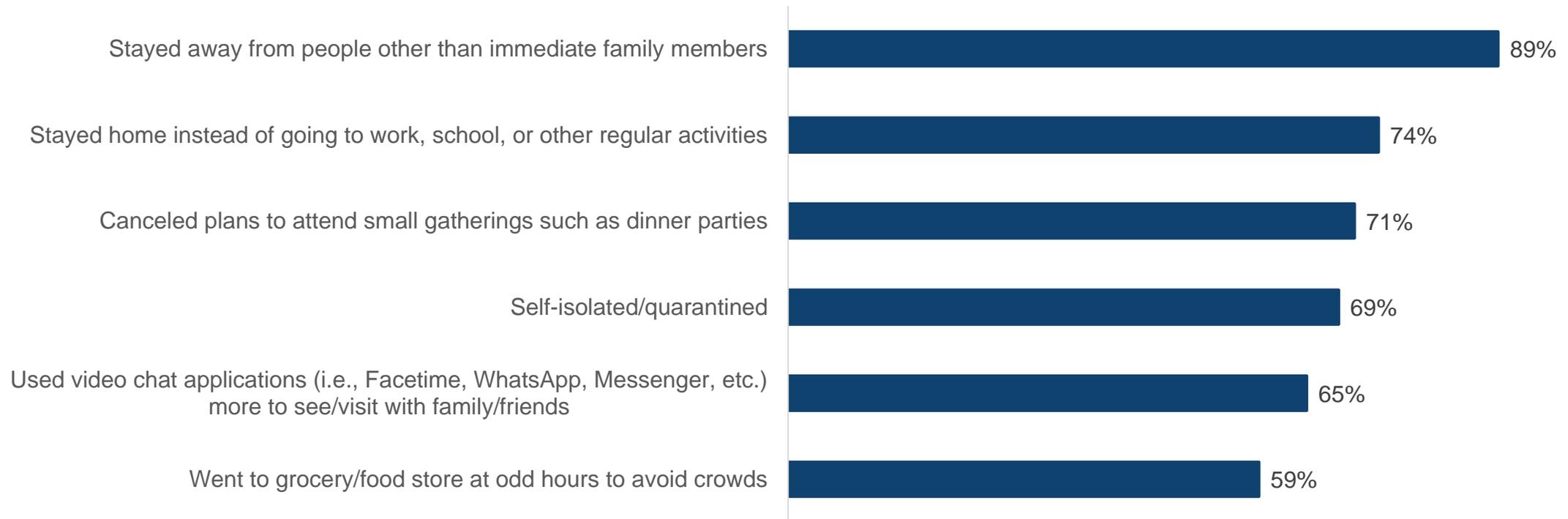


Q32: How concerned are you about the coronavirus (COVID-19 virus)?

Q33: Have you or someone you know personally been diagnosed as having the coronavirus (COVID-19 virus)?

Most followed social distancing recommendations in response to COVID-19

Nine in ten (89%) of older adults age 50 and older say they stayed away from people other than immediate family members in response to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and about three quarters (74%) say they stayed home instead of going to work, school or other regular activities. Seven in ten cancelled plans for small gatherings (71%) and self-isolated (69%).

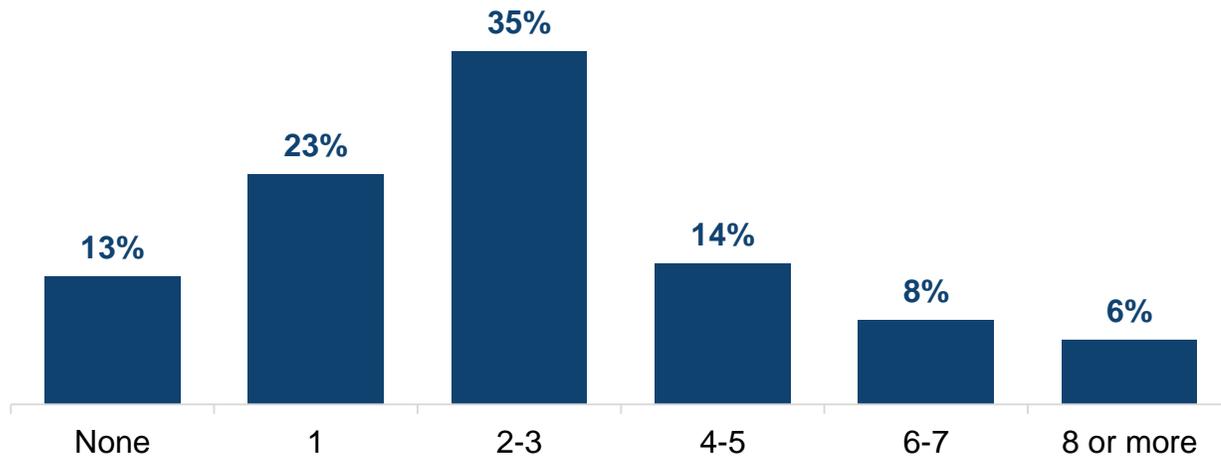


Q5: Which, if any, of the following actions have you taken because of the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak?

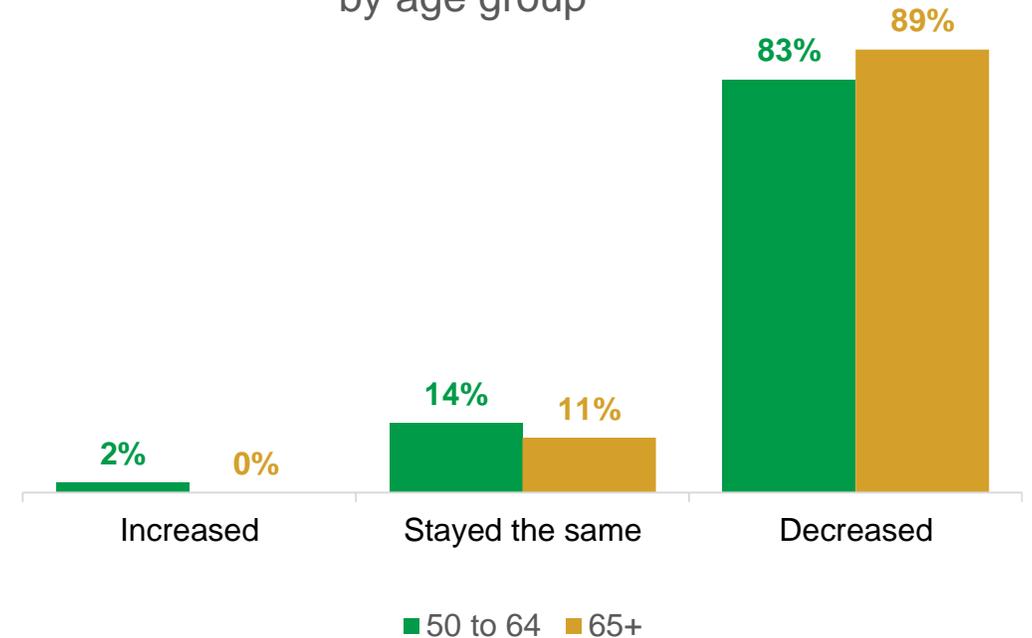
Vast majority say number of times they have left home decreased

In tandem with following social distancing guidelines, older adults report the number of times they left their homes in a typical week has decreased since the pandemic. The majority (58%) say they left their home one to three times in the past seven days to run errands, exercise, etc. Compared to those age 50 to 64, adults in the older age cohort (age 65+) are significantly more likely to say since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak the number of times they have left the house in a typical week has decreased.

Number of times left home past 7 days



Change in # time left in typical week by age group

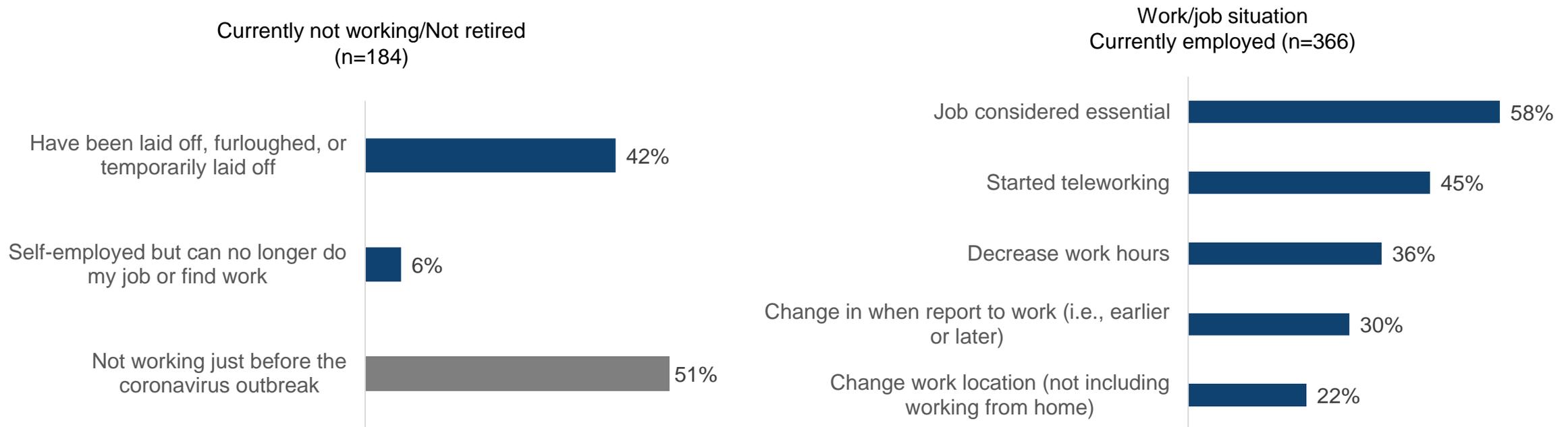


Q6: During the past 7 days, how many times did you leave your home to shop, run errands, exercise, visit friends or family, dine out, or for entertainment?

Q7: Since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) has the number of times you've left your home in a typical week to shop, run errands, exercise, visit friends or family, dine out, or for entertainment increased, stayed the same, or decreased?

Many change work habits in response to COVID-19

Nearly half (48%) of those age 50 and older who are currently not working have been laid off (42%) or are self-employed and can't find work (6%) as a result of the recent coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Of those who are employed many have had an alteration to their work including working from home (45%), decreased hours (36%), a change in when they report to work (30%), and a change in where they report to work (22%). The majority (58%) of older adults say they work in positions that are considered essential meaning they are required to go into work when others in their company are not going into work.



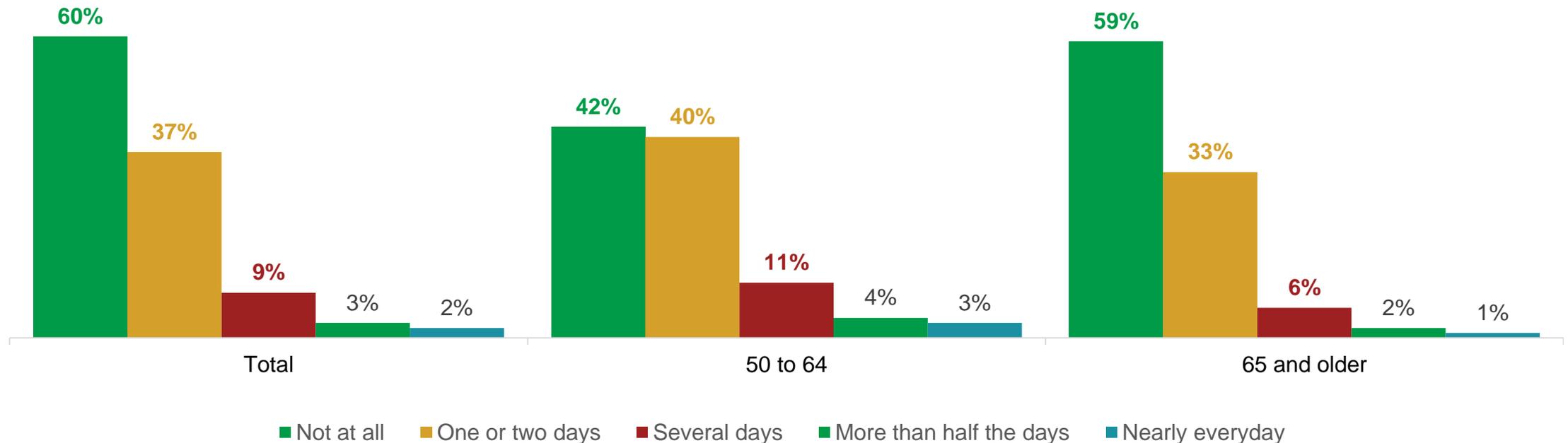
Q33a: Were you working just before the coronavirus outbreak and social distancing impacted the economy? [Asked if indicated currently not employed or not retired]

Q34: [If employed]. Is your job considered essential and thus you are required to go into work even when others in your company are not going into work?

Q35: [If employed]. As a result of the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, have you experienced any of the following?

Few feel bothered by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless

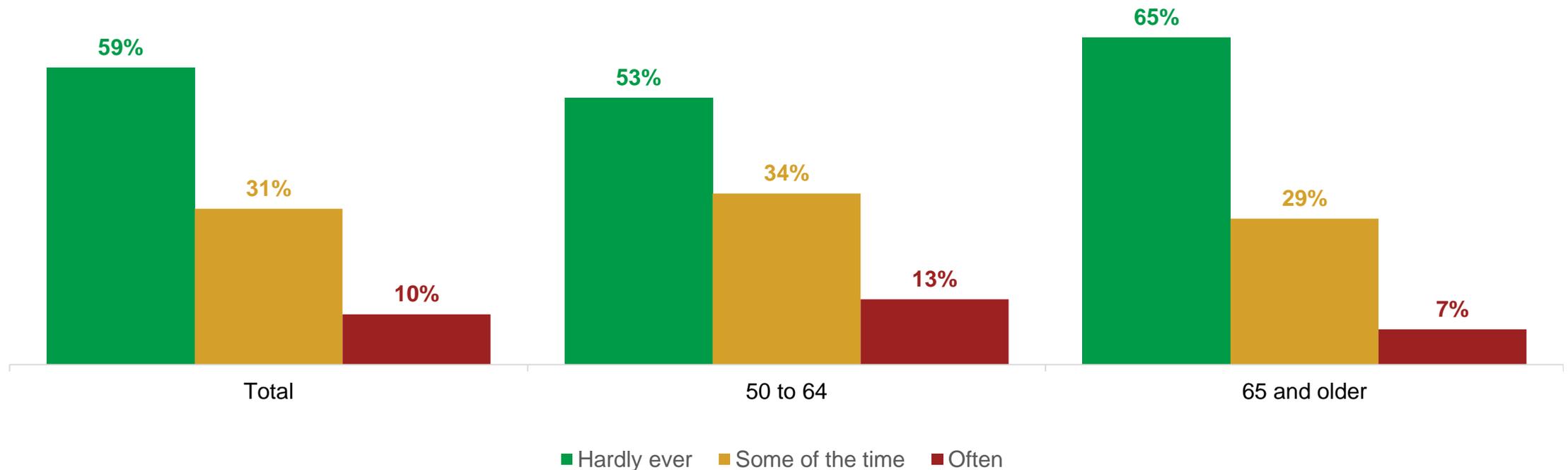
Even during the COVID-19 outbreak, half (50%) of older adults age 50 or older report they hardly ever felt down, depressed or hopeless in the past two weeks. Compared to the younger cohort (age 50 to 64), adults in the older age cohort (age 65 and older) were more likely to say they hardly ever felt this way (59% vs. 42%). One in ten (11%) older adults age 50 to 64 report they have had these feelings several days over the past two week compared to 6% of those in the older age cohort.



Q4: Over the past two weeks, including today, how often have you been bothered by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?

Few feel a lack companionship during this health crises

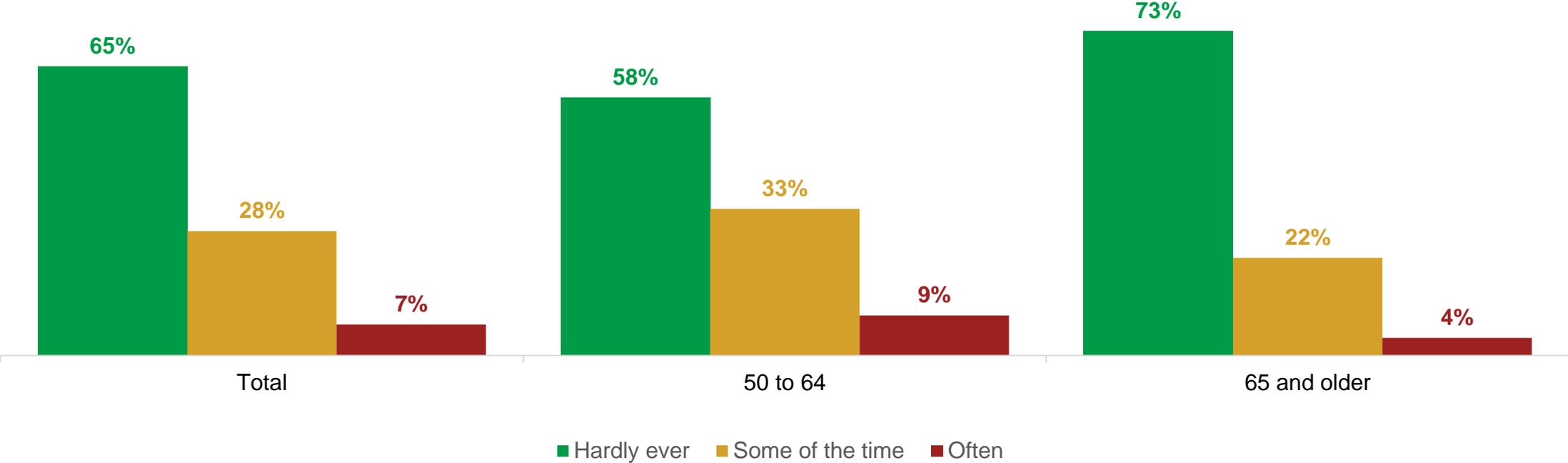
While most are following the social distancing recommendations as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, the vast majority (90%) of older adults age 50 or older report they hardly ever (59%) or only sometimes (31%) feel a lack of companionship. The older age cohort (age 65 and older) is significantly more likely than the younger cohort (50 to 64) to say they hardly ever feel a lack of companionship (65% vs. 53%). Still, one in ten (10%) older adults say they have often felt a lack of companionship.



Q28: How often do you feel you lack companionship?

Adults age 65+ much more likely to say they do not feel left out

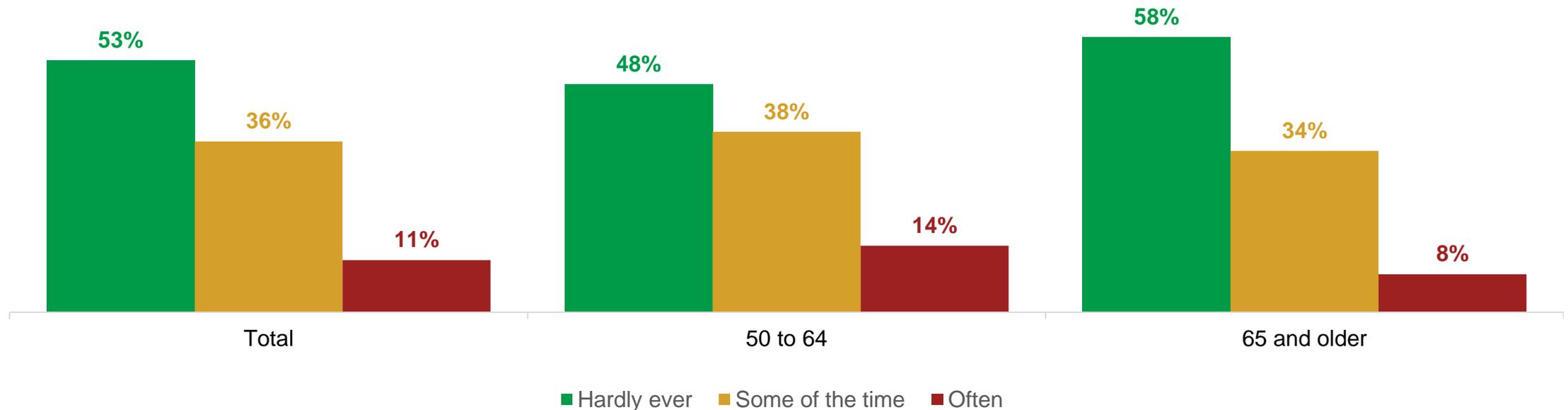
Similarly, the vast majority (93%) of older adults age 50 or older report they hardly ever (65%) or only sometimes (28%) feel left out. Again, the older age cohort (age 65 and older) is significantly more likely than the younger cohort to say they hardly ever feel left out (73% vs. 58%). About one in ten (9%) older adults age 50 to 64 say they have often felt left out compared to 4% of those in the older age cohort (age 65+).



Q29: How often do you feel left out?

Half of those age 50-64 feel isolated at times

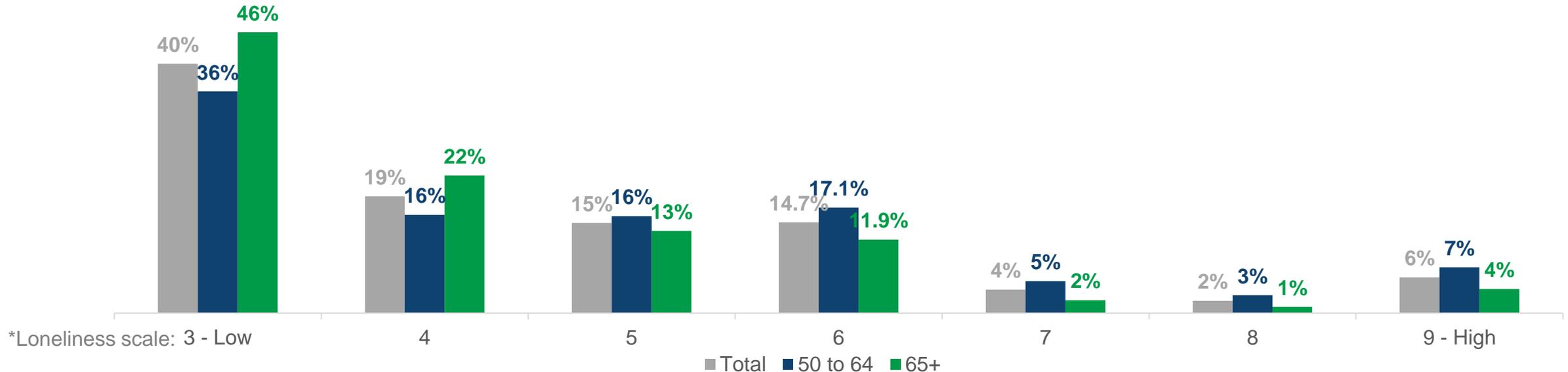
Even while following the social distancing recommendations as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, nine out of ten (89%) older adults age 50 or older report they hardly ever (53%) or only sometimes (36%) feel isolated from others. As was seen with the other measures of loneliness, the older age cohort (age 65 and older) are significantly more likely than the younger cohort to say they hardly ever feel isolated from others (58% vs. 48%).



Q30: How often do you feel isolated from others?

Some older adults score high on a loneliness scale

While most older adults are on the lower range of the loneliness scale (5 or lower out of 9), with a little more than one in ten (12%) are on the higher end of the scale (7 or more) and six percent scoring at the highest level of 9 out of 9.* Those in the older age cohort (age 65+) are significantly more likely than the younger cohort to have lower loneliness scores. For example, nearly half (46%) of those age 65 and older had the lowest possible score (3 out of 9) compared to 36% of the 50 to 64 age cohort.

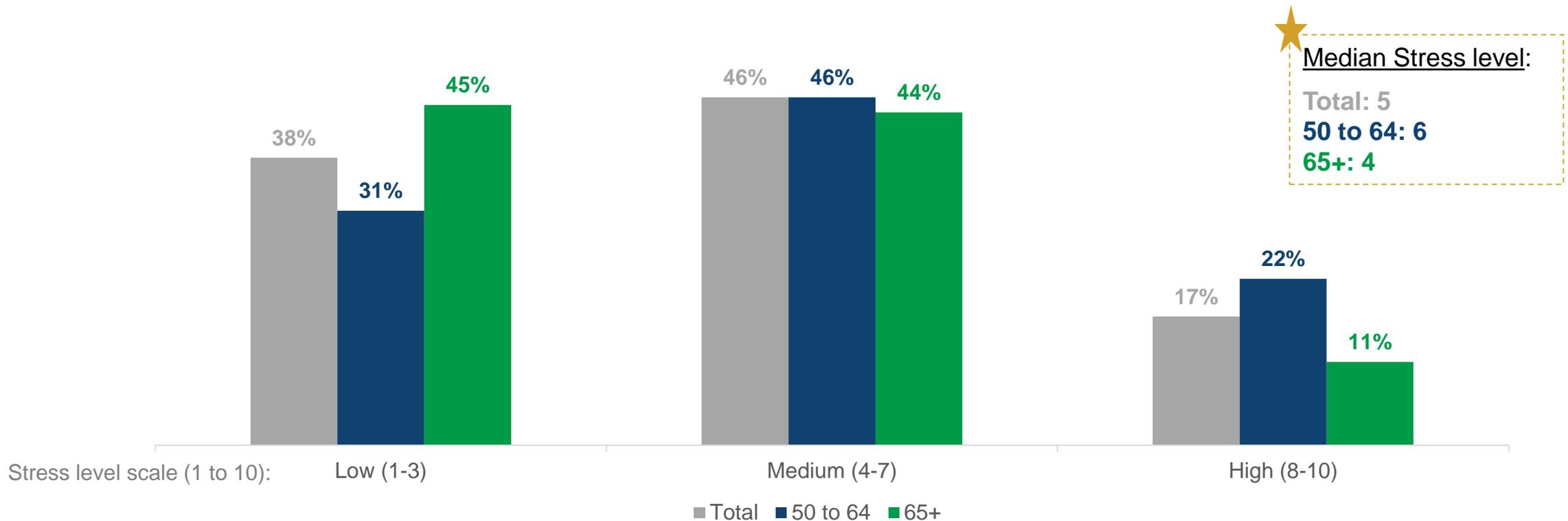


*This is measured by combining three questions and using a scale from 3 (“hardly ever” experiencing the feeling) to 9 (“often”). Q28: How often do you feel you lack companionship? Q29: How often do you feel left out?; Q30: How often do you feel isolated from others? Scale: Hardly ever = 1; Some of the time = 2; Often = 3

See: Hughes ME, Waite LJ, Hawkey LC, Cacioppo JT. A Short Scale for Measuring Loneliness in Large Surveys: Results From Two Population-Based Studies. *Res Aging*. 2004;26(6):655-672. doi:10.1177/0164027504268574

Younger age cohort more likely to report higher levels of stress

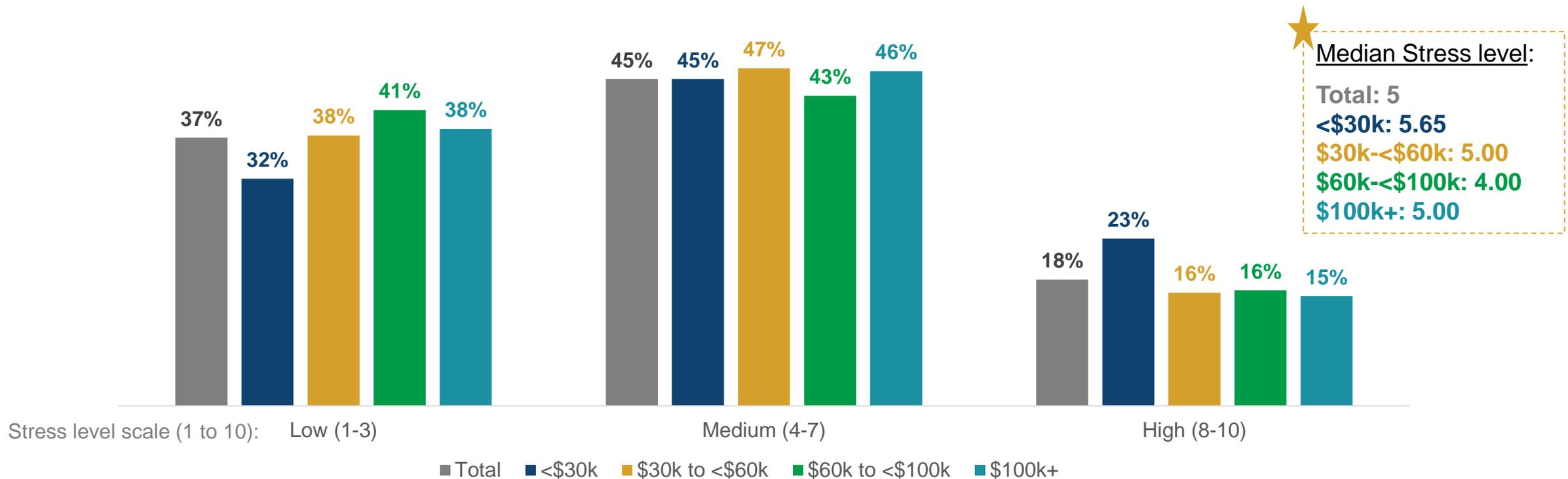
Understandably, during this pandemic, most older adults report stress levels that tend to trend on the higher side with over three in five (63%) reporting stress levels at four or more out of a possible high of ten. While there is little difference in the percentage of adults reporting a medium range of stress (4 to 7 out of ten), the younger age cohort (age 50 to 64) are significantly more likely to report a stress level of 8 to 10 (22%) compared to the older cohort (11%).



Q22: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely low and 10 is extremely high, please rate the overall level of stress in your life today.

Older adults with lower income more likely to report higher levels of stress

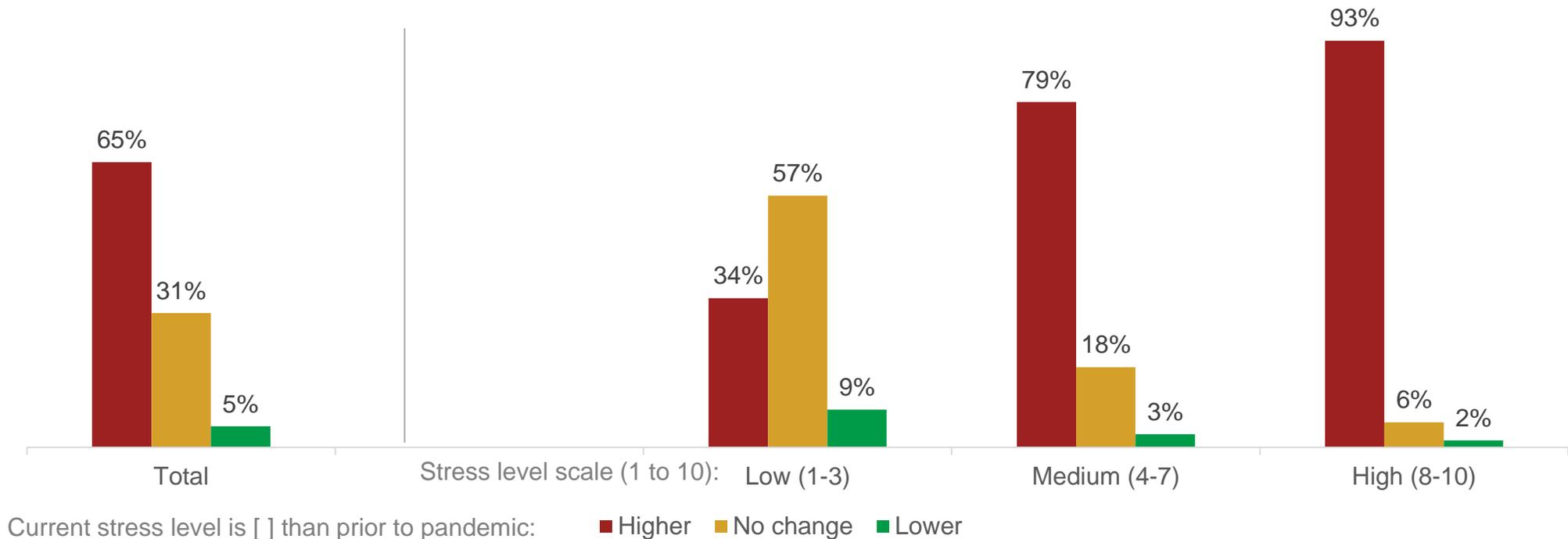
While the median stress level for adults age 50 and older is 5 out of a possible high of 10, those in the lower income bracket (total household income of less than \$30k) are more likely to report, on average, a slightly higher stress level of 5.65. Correspondingly, compared to other income brackets, a higher proportion of older adults in the lower income bracket report a high level of stress (8 to 10 out of 10 -- 23 percent for those in the lower income bracket compared to about one in six (between 15% and 16%) of those in higher income brackets.



Q22: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely low and 10 is extremely high, please rate the overall level of stress in your life today.

Higher levels of stress attributed to COVID-19 outbreak

When asked how stress levels have changed as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the majority (65%) of older adults age 50-plus report their stress levels have increased. The extent to which stress levels have increased is related to current stress level. All most all (93%) of those who currently report high stress levels (8+ out of 10) say their level of stress has increased since the pandemic. Interestingly, the majority (66%) of those reporting lower stress levels (1 to 3 out of 10) say their stress level hasn't changed (57%) or has decreased (9%) since the outbreak.



Q22: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely low and 10 is extremely high, please rate the overall level of stress in your life today.

Q23: How has your stress level changed, if at all, as a result of the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak?

Watching TV is the #1 stress reliever for older adults

While older adults report they aren't typically overly stressed or depressed, when they do have such feelings over half (54%) say they watch or stream TV shows or movies to combat these feelings. A little less than half (48%) say they listen to music and over two in five (45%) say they exercise or walk to combat these feelings of stress and/or depression. Interestingly, over a quarter say they change their eating habits. This coincides with findings discussed in the diet/eating section which suggests some older adults are eating more snacks now than prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Top ten activities to combat feelings of stress/depression

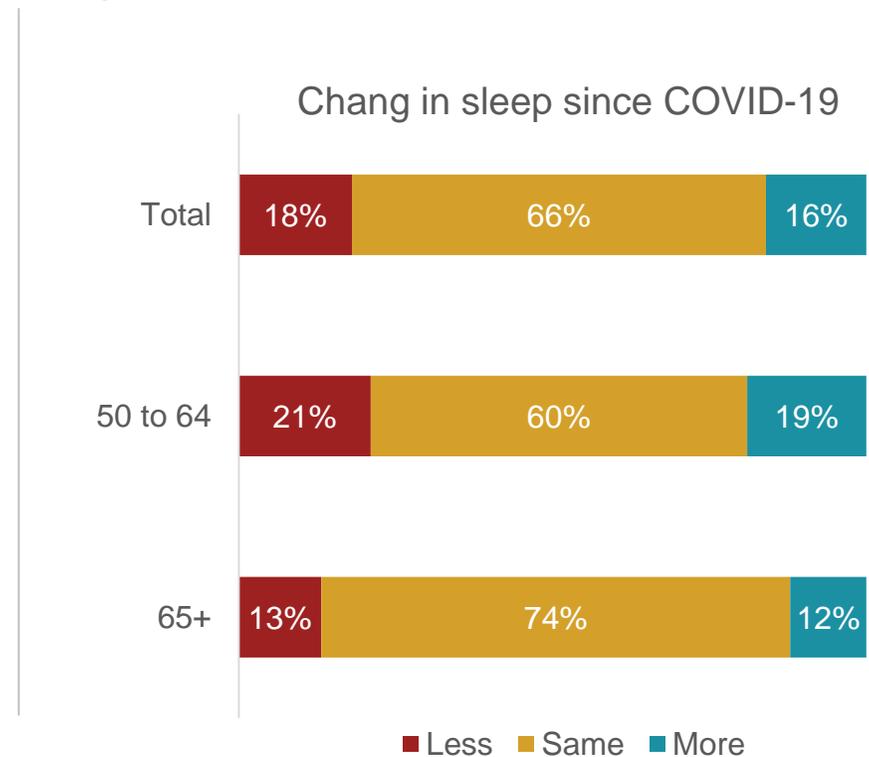
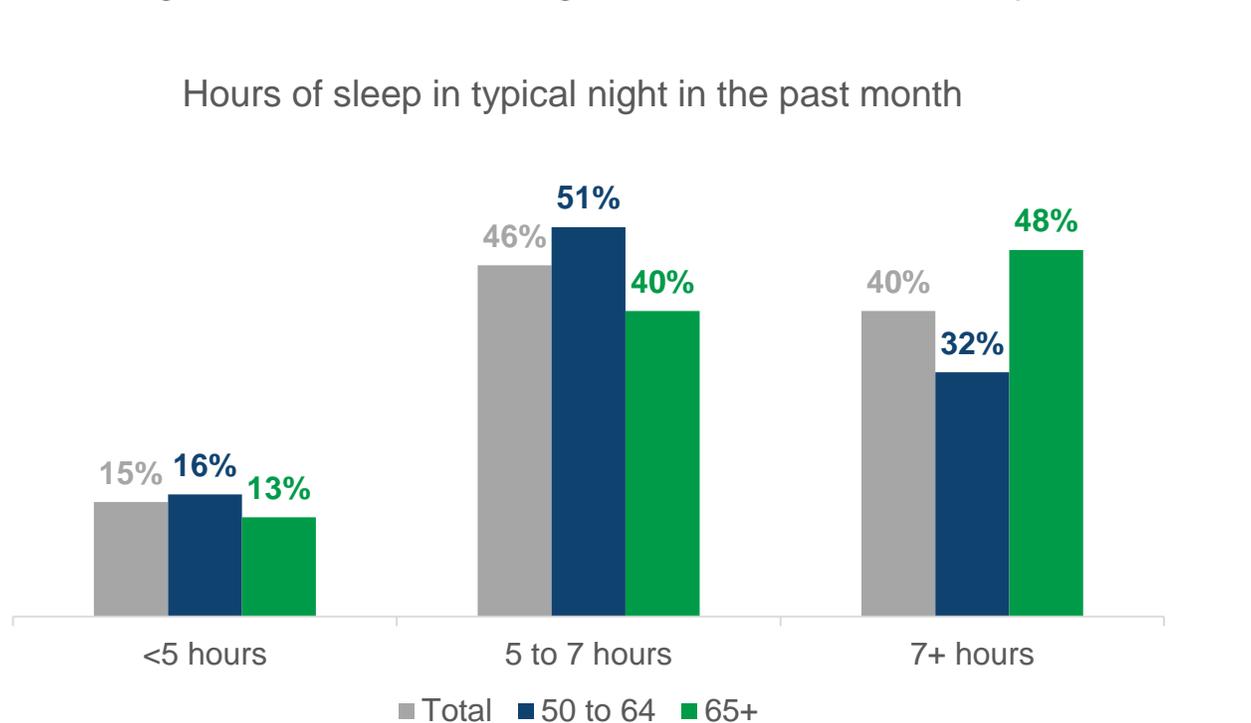
Activity	Total	50 to 64	65+
Watch/stream TV/movies	54%	54%	54%
Listen to music	48	49	47
Exercise/walk	45	43	48
Go online/Use social media	41	41	42
Meditate/pray	36	35	38
Read a book/magazine	37	29	46
Sleep in/Go to sleep/Nap	34	35	33
Eat comfort foods	27	29	25
Eat unhealthy foods	25	28	22
Get in touch with family/friends	23	20	26



Q24. When facing challenges or problems in your life that may be stressful, anxiety-producing, or cause you to be sad or depressed, which, if any, of the following activities do you engage in to combat these feelings?

Younger age cohort more likely to report less sleep

While most older adults report they typically get five or more hours of sleep, about one in six (15%) say they get less than five hours of sleep. Since the pandemic, most (66%) report the amount of sleep they get has stayed the same. The younger age cohort (age 50 to 64) is more likely to report they are getting less sleep now compared to six months ago (21% vs. 13% for those age 65+). This coincides with earlier findings that suggests compared to older adults age 65+, adults age 50 to 64 are feeling more stress; which may lead to less sleep.



Q25: In the past month, on a typical night, how many hours of sleep did you get?

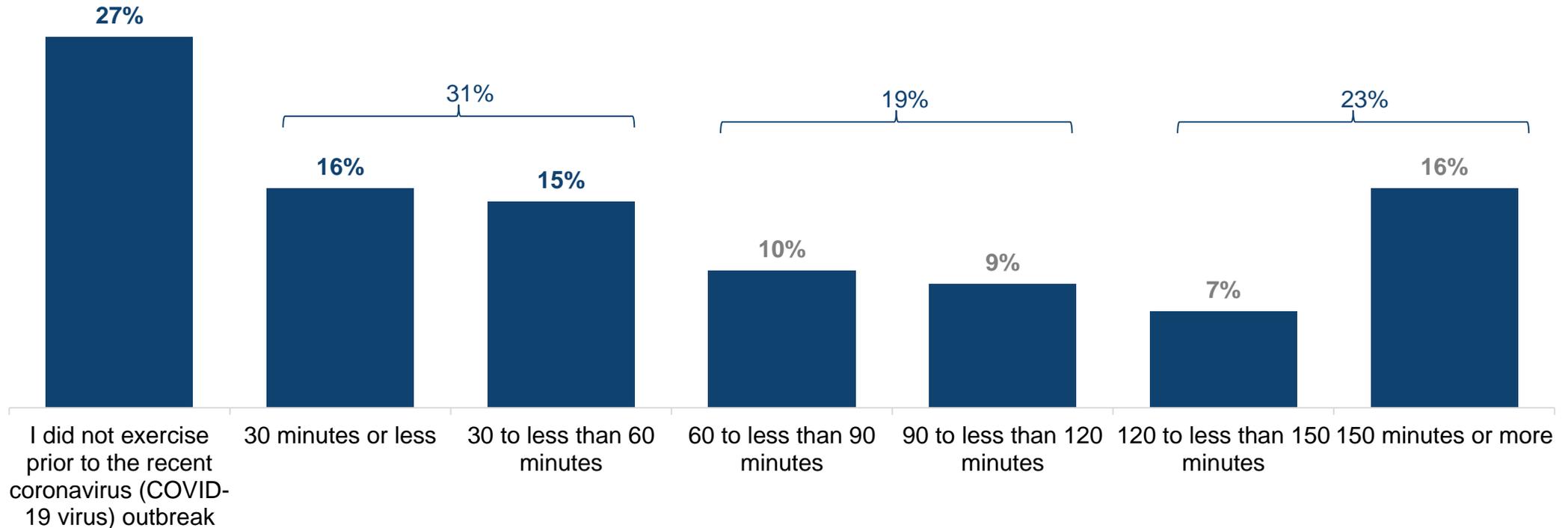
Q26: How has the amount of sleep you got on a typical night in the past month changed from six months ago?



**DETAILED RESULTS:
CHANGE IN EXERCISE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Exercise Prior to COVID-19

The majority (73%) of older adults age 50 or older report they maintained a regular exercising routine prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Three in ten (31%) report they exercised up to 60 minutes a week. Nearly one quarter (23%) reported they exercised at least 120 minutes per week, with about one in six (16%) reporting they exercised at least 150 minutes per week prior to the COVID-19 outbreak.

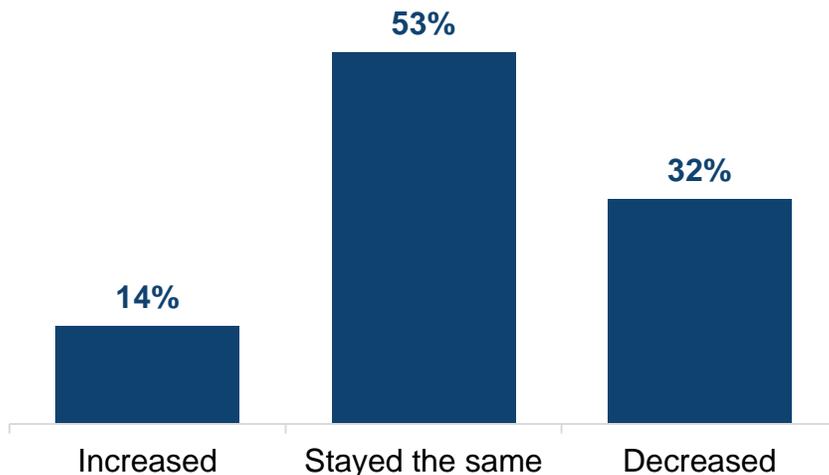


Q12: Prior to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, during a typical week, how many minutes did you spend exercising?

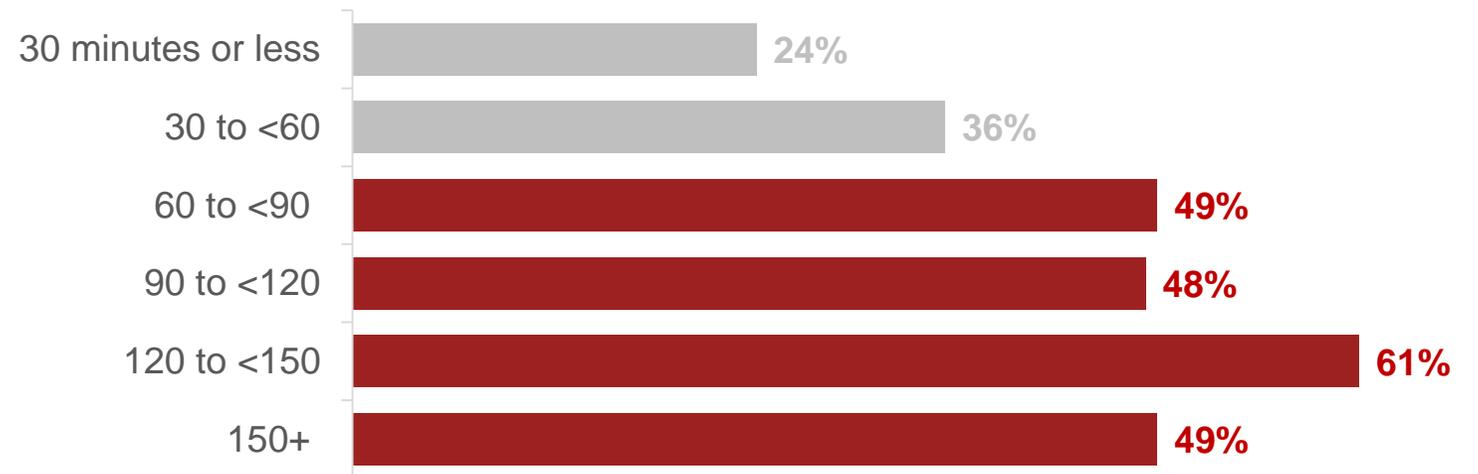
COVID-19 negatively impacts some regular exercisers

The vast majority of older adults report their level of exercise has either increased (14%) or stayed the same (53%) since the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. However, one third (32%) report a decrease in their routine physical activity. Half or more of those who previously exercised at least 60 minutes a week report a decrease in exercise since COVID-19.

Overall change in amount of exercise per week since COVID-19



% Decrease in amount of exercise since COVID-19 by amount of exercise per week prior to COVID-19

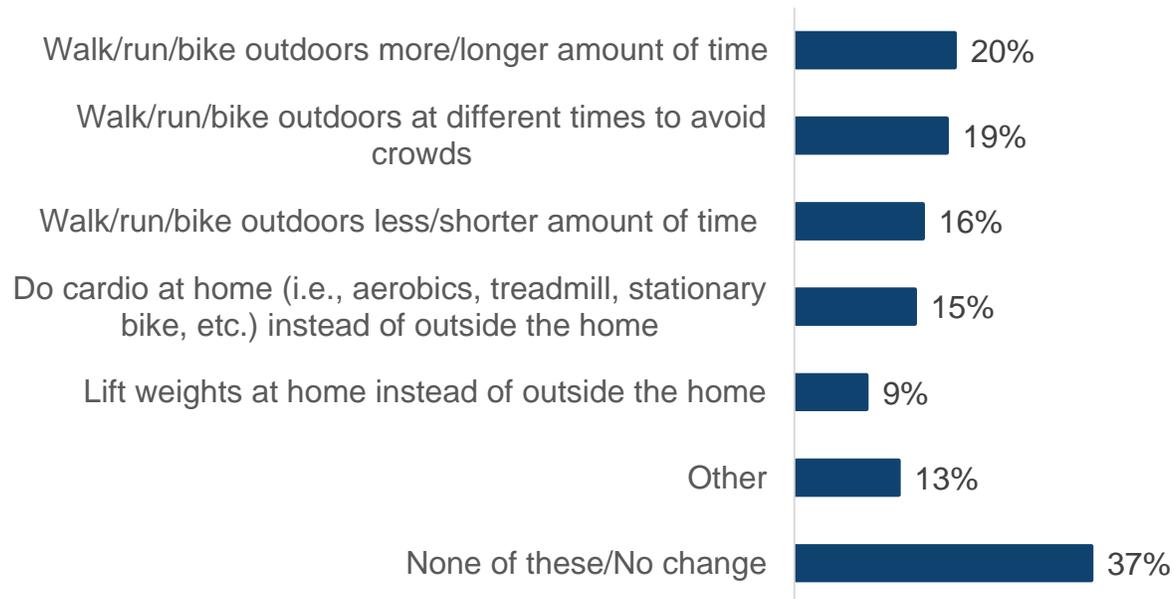


Q12: Prior to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, during a typical week, how many minutes did you spend exercising?

Q13: Since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, has the number of minutes you spent exercising during a typical week increased, stayed the same, or decreased?

Cleaner house & yard...How older adults augment exercise

While over one third (37%) of older adults report there has been no change in their physical activity, many report they run, bike or walk longer (including walking the dog) (20%). One in five (19%) who run, bike or walk also report differing their timing in an attempt to avoid crowds. Older adults also report they work around the house (inside and outside) more to increase physical activity during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.



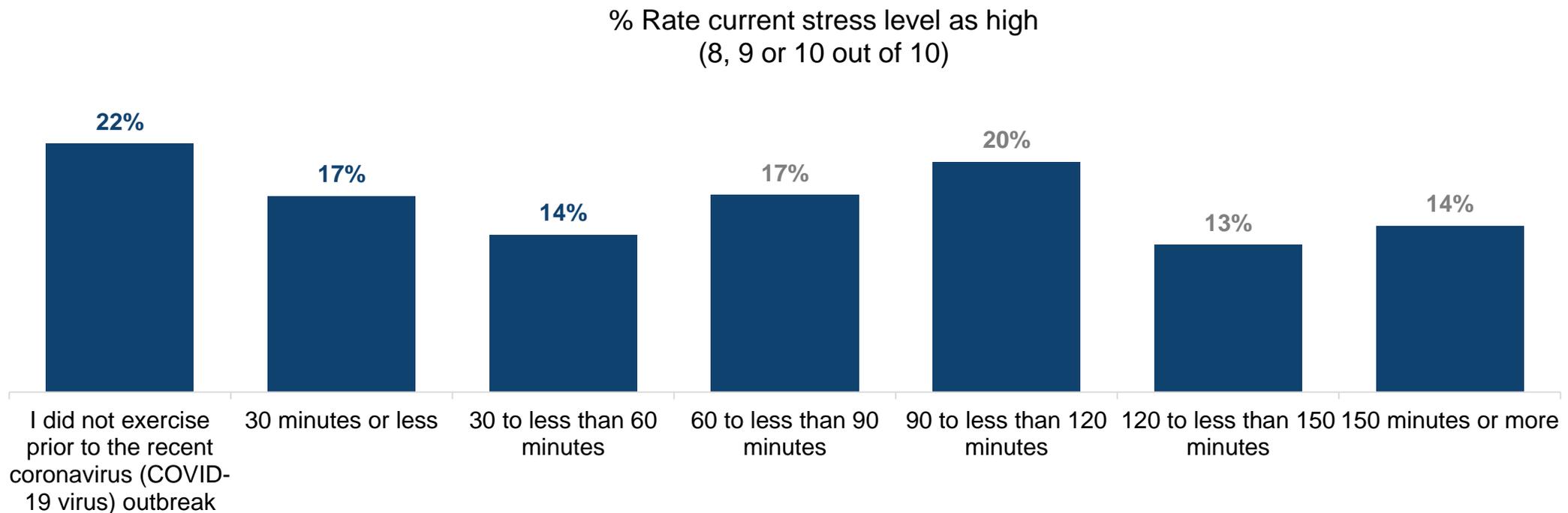
Other changes in activities:

- ✓ **Increased gardening/yard work**
- ✓ **Increased housework**
- ✓ Increased yoga/tai chi/stretching
- ✓ Added isometrics/strengthening
- ✓ Use online videos more
- ✓ Attend classes via video conferencing
- ✓ Walk dog more
- ✓ Stopped golfing/tennis/swimming

Q14: How has your physical activity changed, if at all, in the past few weeks because of the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak? (Select all that apply)

More “home” exercise may translate to lower stress level

Few (17%) older adults report high levels of stress (8, 9 or 10 out of 10). Those who report not exercising regularly before the coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) are more likely to say their current stress levels is high (8, 9, or 10 out of 10). Fewer regular exercisers report high stress levels which may be related to the reported change in activities like increased housecleaning, gardening, yoga, and tai chi in an effort to maintain exercising while staying home.

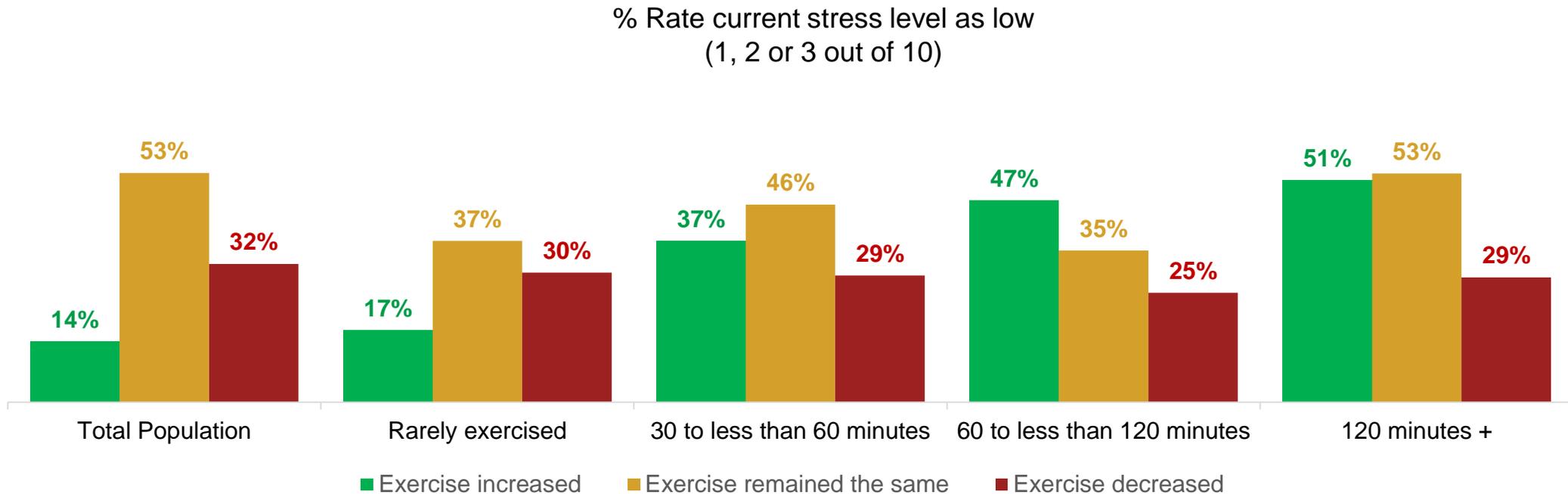


Q12: Prior to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, during a typical week, how many minutes did you spend exercising?

Q22: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely low and 10 is extremely high, please rate the overall level of stress in your life today.

Exercisers who decrease activity less likely to report low stress

About two in five (38%) older adults report extremely low levels of stress (1, 2 or 3 out of 10) during this pandemic. When looking at change in exercise habits generally, those who have either increased or kept their exercise routine the same are more likely to report lower levels of stress than those who have decreased their level of exercise. Interestingly, over half of those who exercise for two hours or more are more likely to say they have low stress levels even through the current coronavirus pandemic.



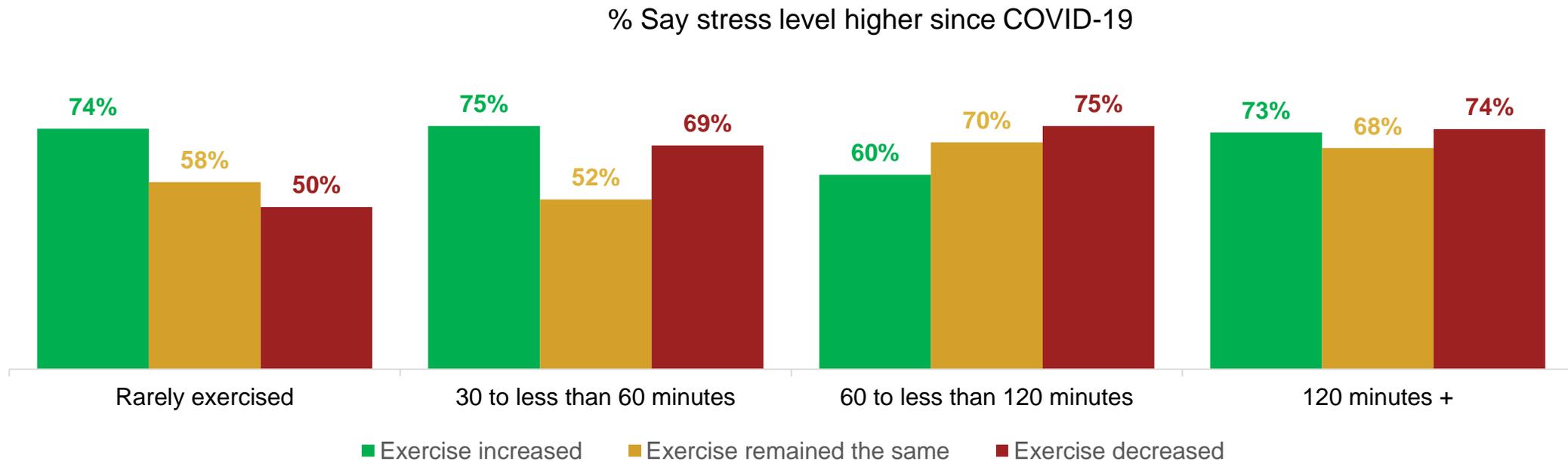
Q12: Prior to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, during a typical week, how many minutes did you spend exercising?

Q13: Since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, has the number of minutes you spent exercising during a typical week increased, stayed the same, or decreased?

Q22: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely low and 10 is extremely high, please rate the overall level of stress in your life today.

Stress level has increased regardless of exercise level

Although few older adults report extremely high levels of stress as a result of the pandemic, understandably, most (65%) report their stress level is currently higher than prior to the pandemic. While there is some slight variation in those who say their current stress level is higher than normal, there is no real correlation between the amount of exercise or change in exercise and whether an older person is currently experiencing a higher level of stress. We do know however, stress seems to be mitigated by exercise. Therefore while older adults are experiencing a higher level of stress, for some, it could be even higher absent regular physical activity.



Q12: Prior to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, during a typical week, how many minutes did you spend exercising?

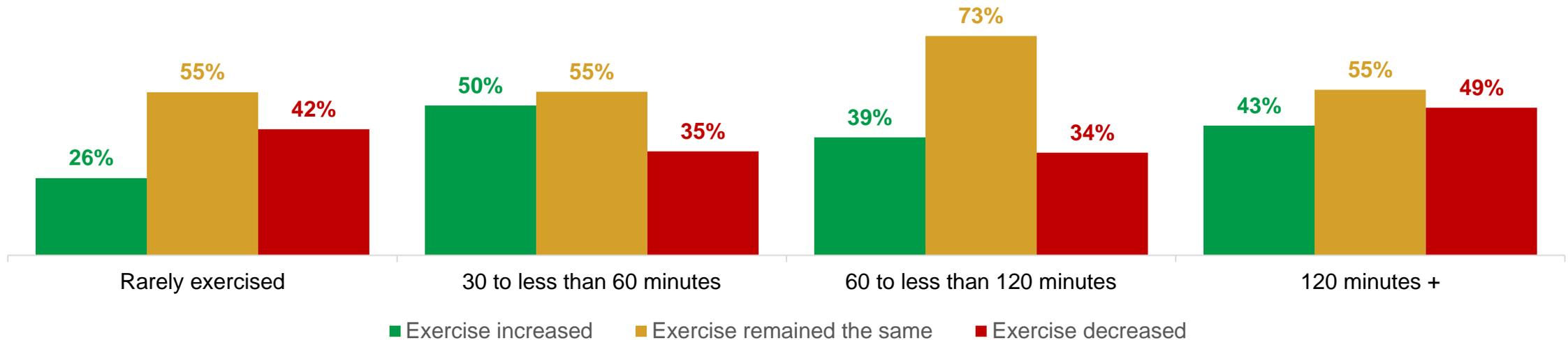
Q13: Since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, has the number of minutes you spent exercising during a typical week increased, stayed the same, or decreased?

Q23: How has your stress level changed, if at all, as a result of the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak?

Maintaining exercise routine may help stave off negative feelings

Despite the anxiety usually associated with the current pandemic, the vast majority (87%) of older adults report not being bothered at all (50%) by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless in the past two weeks; or only being bother on one or two days (37%). For the most part, compared to those who recently decreased their exercise routine, those who either increased or maintained their physical activity were more likely to report not being bother by these negative feelings.

% Say “Not at all depressed in past two weeks”



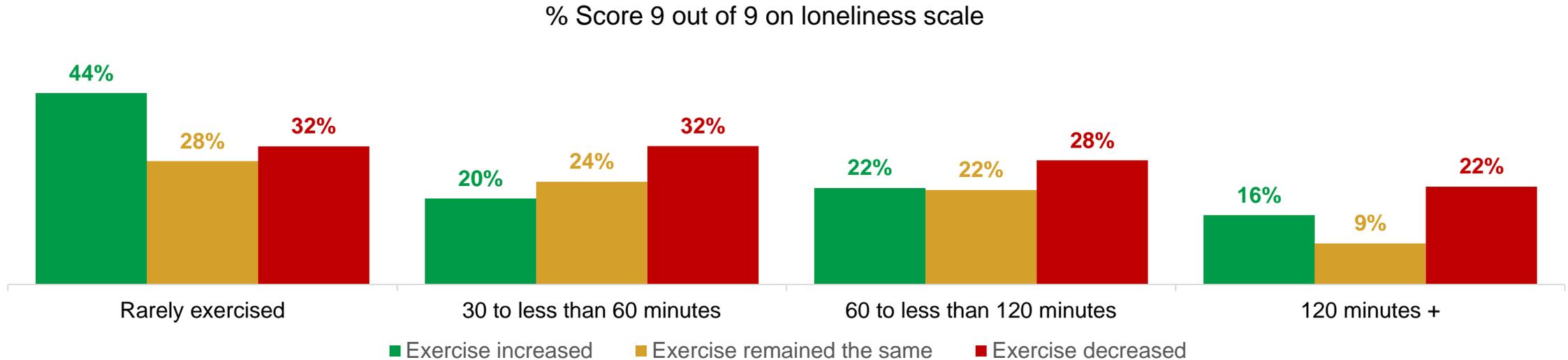
Q4. Over the past two weeks, including today, how often have you been bothered by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?

Q12: Prior to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, during a typical week, how many minutes did you spend exercising?

Q13: Since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, has the number of minutes you spent exercising during a typical week increased, stayed the same, or decreased?

Maintaining exercise routine may help with feelings of loneliness

As with a feeling of hopelessness, the vast majority of older adults say they never (40%) or hardly ever (19%) have feelings of loneliness. This is measured by combining three questions and using a scale from 3 (“hardly ever” experiencing the feeling) to 9 (“often”). Again, we see, compared to those who increased or maintained their physical activity, those who recently decreased their exercise routine are more likely to score high (9 out of 9) on the loneliness scale.



Q28. How often do you feel you lack companionship?

Q29. How often do you feel left out?

Q30. How often do you feel isolated from others?

Q12: Prior to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, during a typical week, how many minutes did you spend exercising?

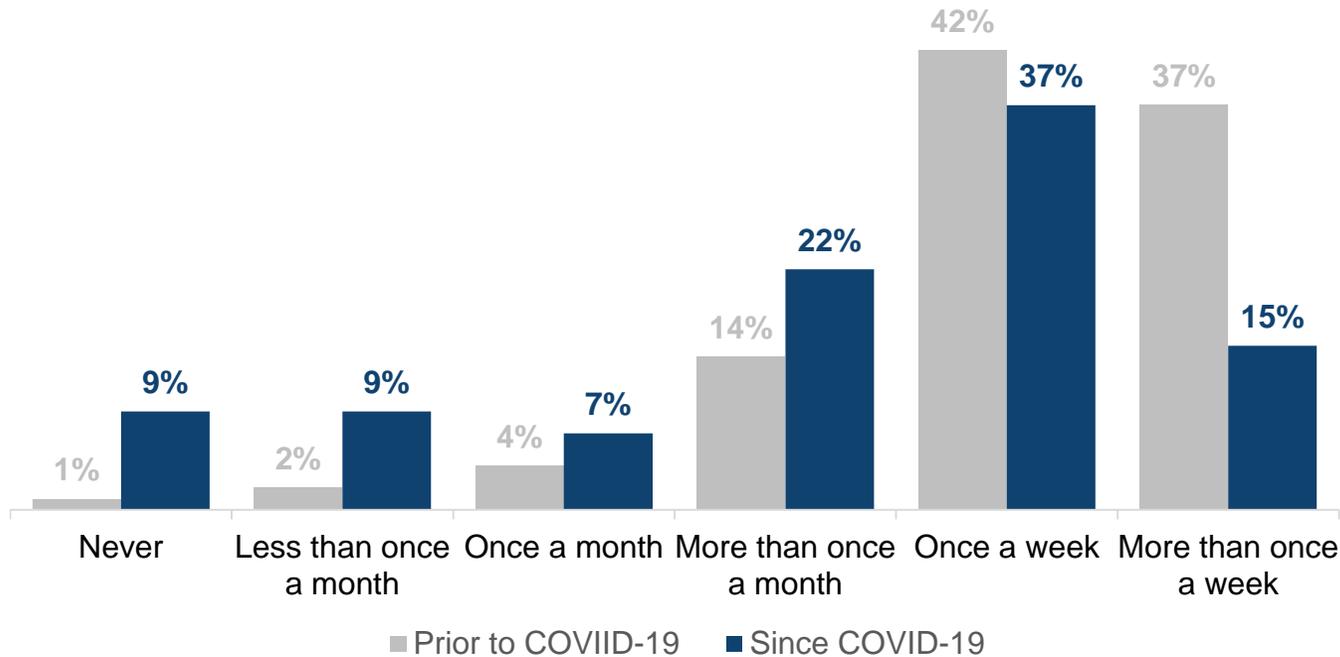
Q13: Since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, has the number of minutes you spent exercising during a typical week increased, stayed the same, or decreased?



**DETAILED RESULTS:
CHANGE IN DIET, EATING & SHOPPING HABITS**

Change in shopping habits: Grocery store visits decrease

The number of times older adults frequent the grocery store has decreased since the pandemic. While over one third (37%) say they went to the grocery store more than once a week prior to the outbreak, now about one in seven (15%) say they go to the grocery store several times a week. Interestingly, nearly one in ten (9%) say they never go to the grocery store since the recent coronavirus outbreak.

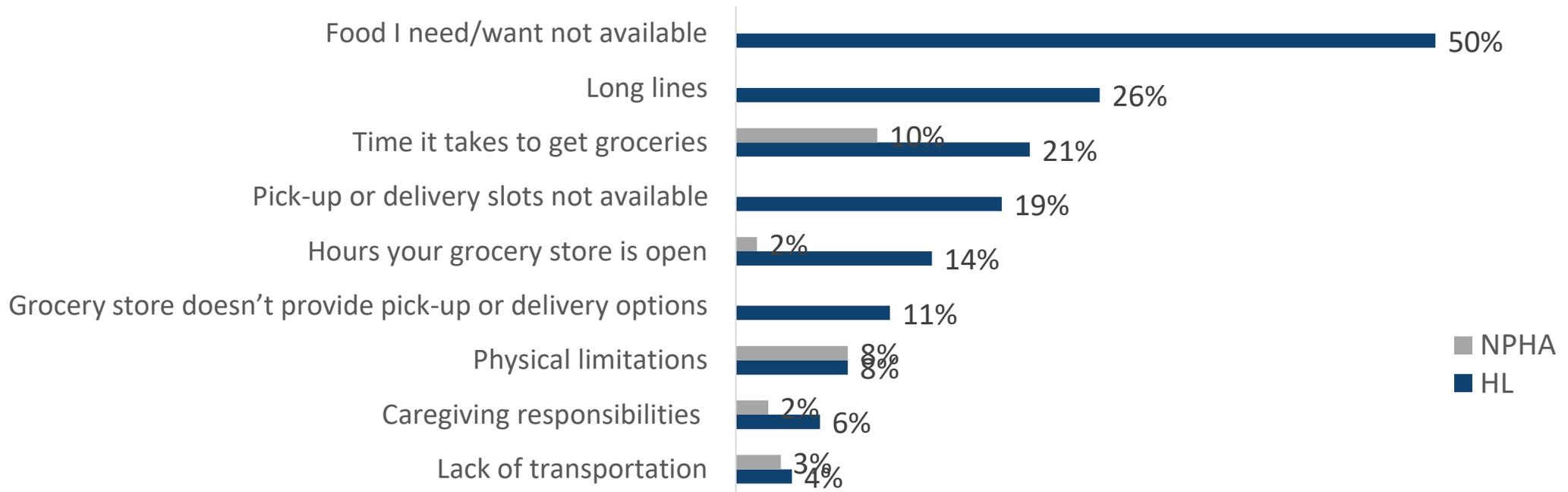


Q8: Prior to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, about how often did you go to the following types of stores?

Q9: Since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, about how often do you go to the following types of stores?

Limited selection is an impediment to grocery shopping

Half (50%) of adults age 50-plus say an impediment to getting groceries is the food they want is not available. A quarter (26%) say currently, long lines makes it difficult to get groceries. When comparing data collected through the National Poll on Healthy Aging (NPHA)* in December 2019, significantly more older adults say the hours of operation is an impediment to grocery shopping.

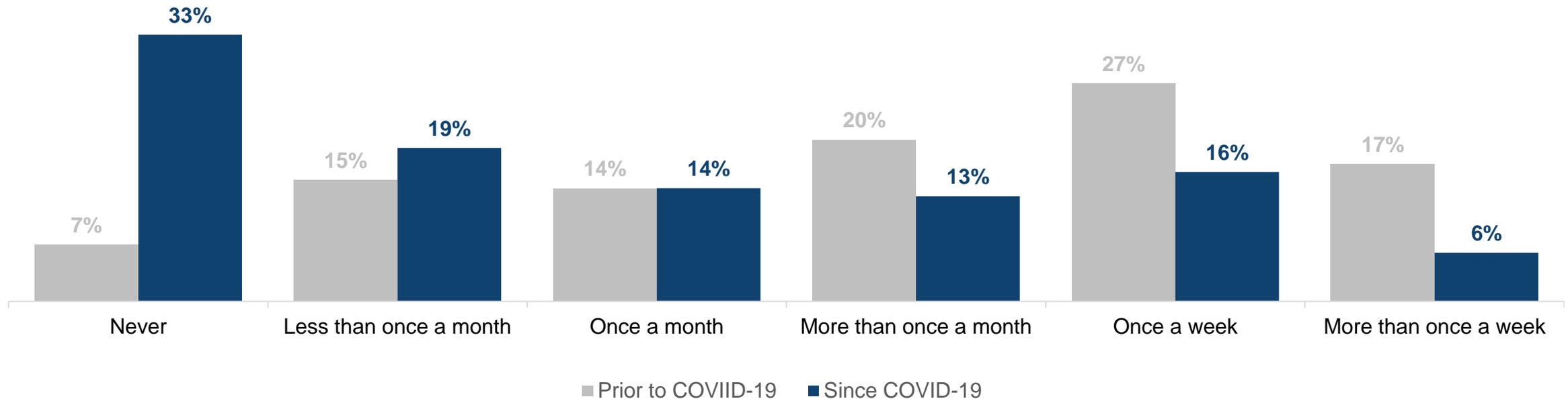


Q17: Do the following make it difficult for you to get groceries?

* See: Wolfson, J, Kullgren J, Singer D, Kirch M, Malani P, Solway E, Leung C. The Joy of Cooking and its Benefits for Older Adults. University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging. June 2020. Available at: <https://www.healthyyagingpoll.org/report/joy-cooking-and-its-benefits-older-adults>; options without NPHA data points were not asked in the NPHA survey.

General department stores seeing far fewer older adults

When asked about their change in shopping habits related to going to general department stores like Walmart and Target, a third (33%) of older adults say they currently never go to these type of stores compared to only 7 percent who said they didn't go to these types of stores prior to the outbreak. Similarly while over a quarter (27%) say they went to these types of stores about once a week prior to the outbreak, now only one in six (16%) go to these stores as often.

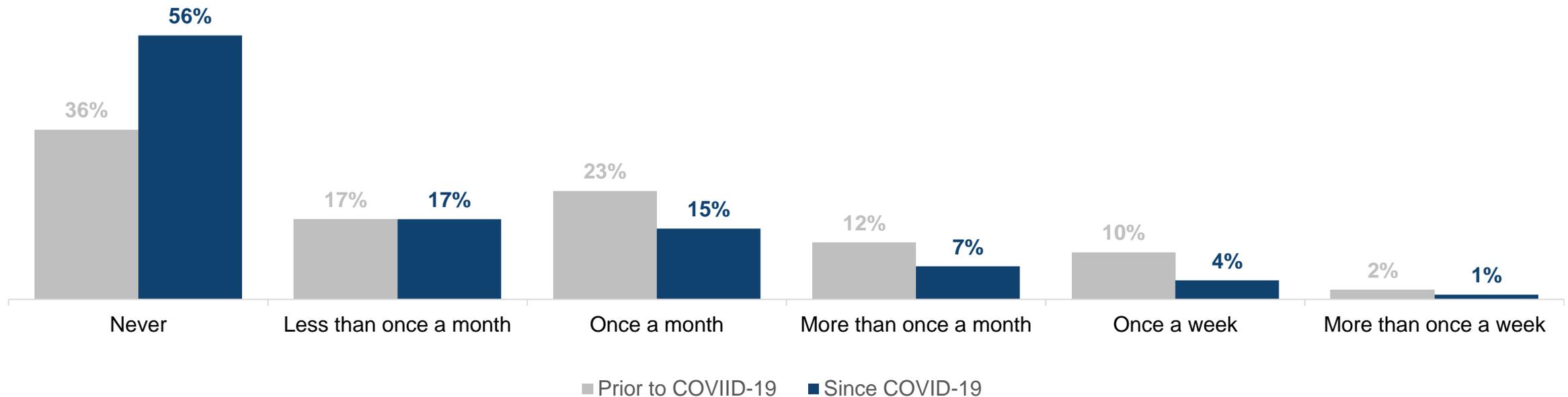


Q8: Prior to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, about how often did you go to the following types of stores?

Q9: Since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, about how often do you go to the following types of stores?

Warehouse club stores seeing significantly fewer older adults

While a little more than one-third (36%) of older adults age 50 and older say they never visited large warehouse club stores like Sam's Club or Costco, that percentage has increased to over half (56%) since the pandemic. Similarly about a quarter (23%) shopped at these types of stores about once a month prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, now less than one in six (15%) say they shop at these stores once a month.

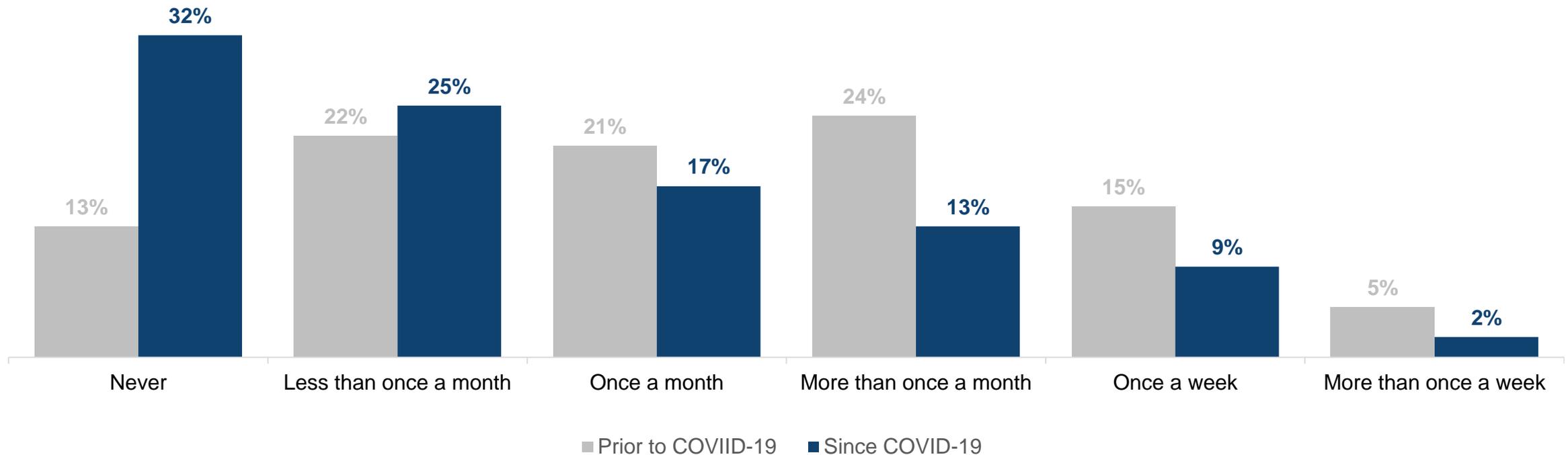


Q8: Prior to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, about how often did you go to the following types of stores?

Q9: Since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, about how often do you go to the following types of stores?

Older adults now less likely to shop at pharmacies

Older adults are less likely to shop at pharmacies like CVS or Walgreens since the recent coronavirus outbreak. One-third (32%) say they never shop at these type of stores since the pandemic compared to 13 percent who say they didn't shop at pharmacies prior to the pandemic. One in five (22%) say they went to these type of stores less than once a month prior to the outbreak and a quarter (25%) say they currently go to these types of stores less than once a month.

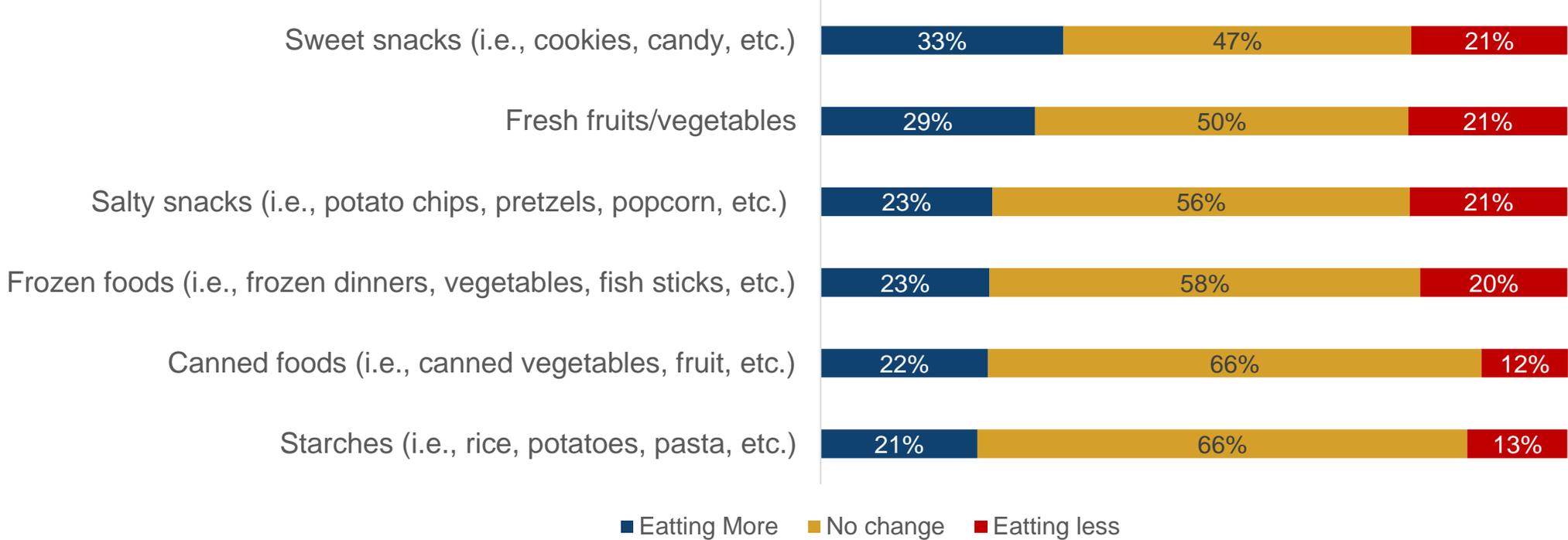


Q8: Prior to the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, about how often did you go to the following types of stores?

Q9: Since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak, about how often do you go to the following types of stores?

Eating habits change for some; including eating more sweets

The vast majority (86%) of older adults say their diet is either very healthy (22%) or somewhat healthy (64%) and most report their eating habits have not changed much since the recent coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. When asked about specific types of foods, one third (33%) say they are now eating more sweets like cookies and candy, while one in five (21%) say they are eating less sweets. While 3 in 10 (29%) say they are currently eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, one in five (21%) say they are eating less. This could be related to the decreased number of visits to grocery stores.

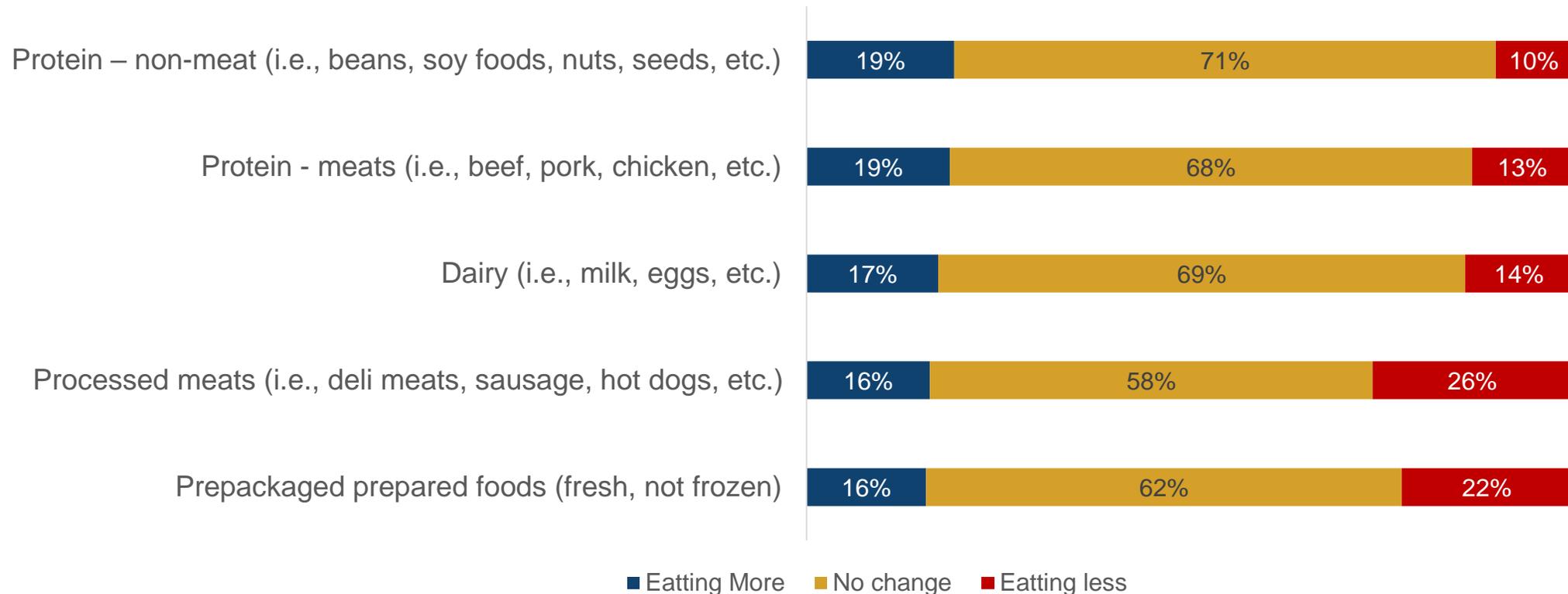


Q10: In general, how healthy is your overall diet?

Q11: How has your diet or eating habits changed, if at all, in the past few weeks because of the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak?

Many now eating less processed meats and prepackaged foods

A quarter (26%) of older adults say since the recent pandemic they have eaten less processed meats like deli meats and sausages. One in five (22%) say they have cut back on eating freshly prepared prepackaged foods. This makes sense as we have also seen a significant increase in meals being prepared at home (see next slide). Perhaps those who used to get fresh meals on the go, now have more time to cook at home.

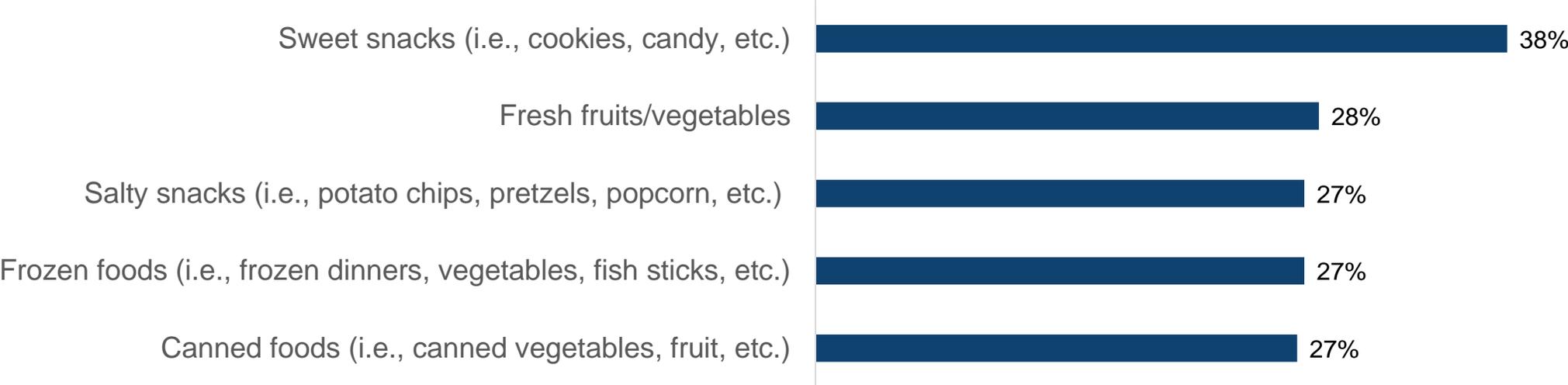


Q11.: How has your diet or eating habits changed, if at all, in the past few weeks because of the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak?

Higher stress levels impact eating habits for some

When looking at the change in stress levels as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, nearly two in five (38%) with higher stress levels say they have started eating more sweets like cookies and candy and more than one-quarter (27%) of those with higher stress levels say they have been eating more salty snacks like potato chips and pretzels. On the healthier side, nearly three in ten (28%) older adults with higher than usual stress levels also report eating more fruits and vegetables.

% Eating more and have higher than normal stress levels since the

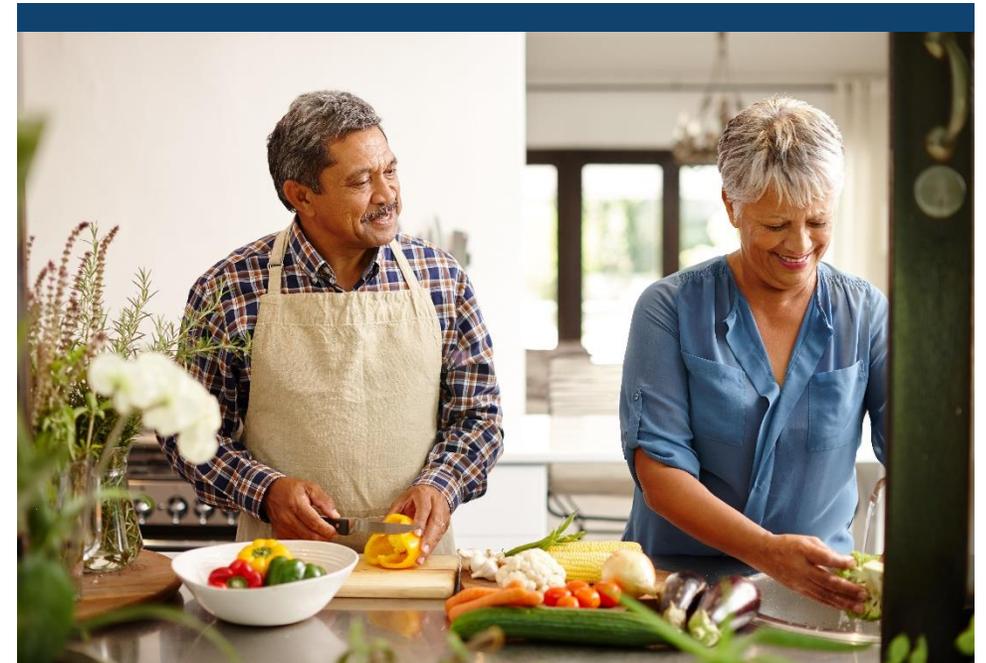
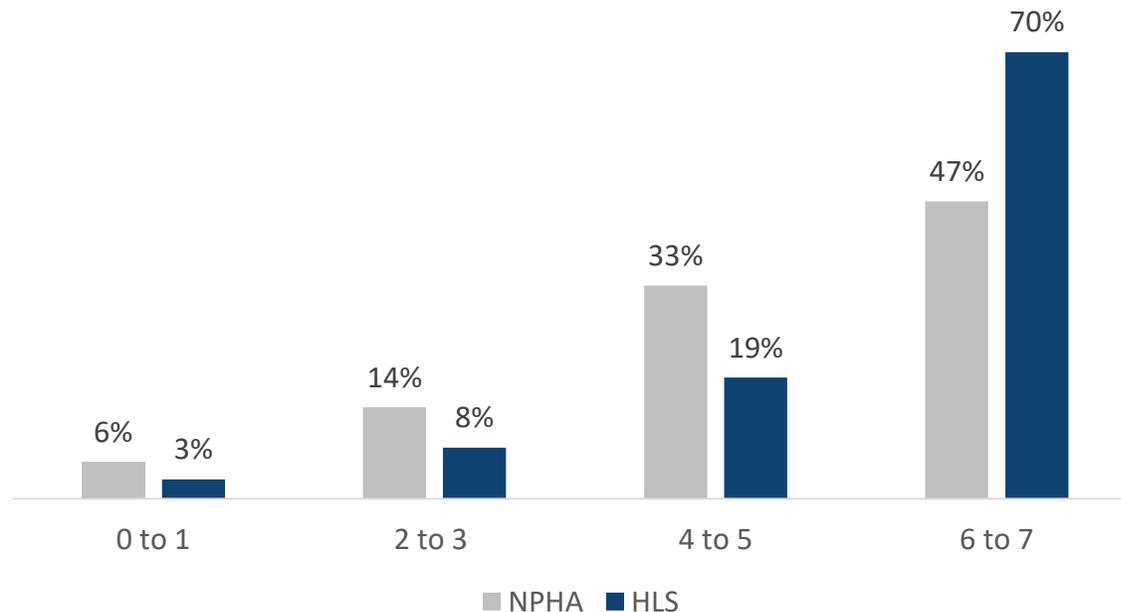


Q11.: How has your diet or eating habits changed, if at all, in the past few weeks because of the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak?

Q23. How has your stress level changed, if at all, as a result of the recent coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) outbreak?

Home cooking is the #1 go-to for the evening meals

The number of times older adults eat home cooked meals for dinner/supper has increased significantly since the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Compared to data collected through the National Poll on Healthy Aging (NPHA)* in December 2019, the number of older adults age 50 and older say they now eat 6 to 7 evening meals prepared at home increased by 23% (47% vs. 70%).

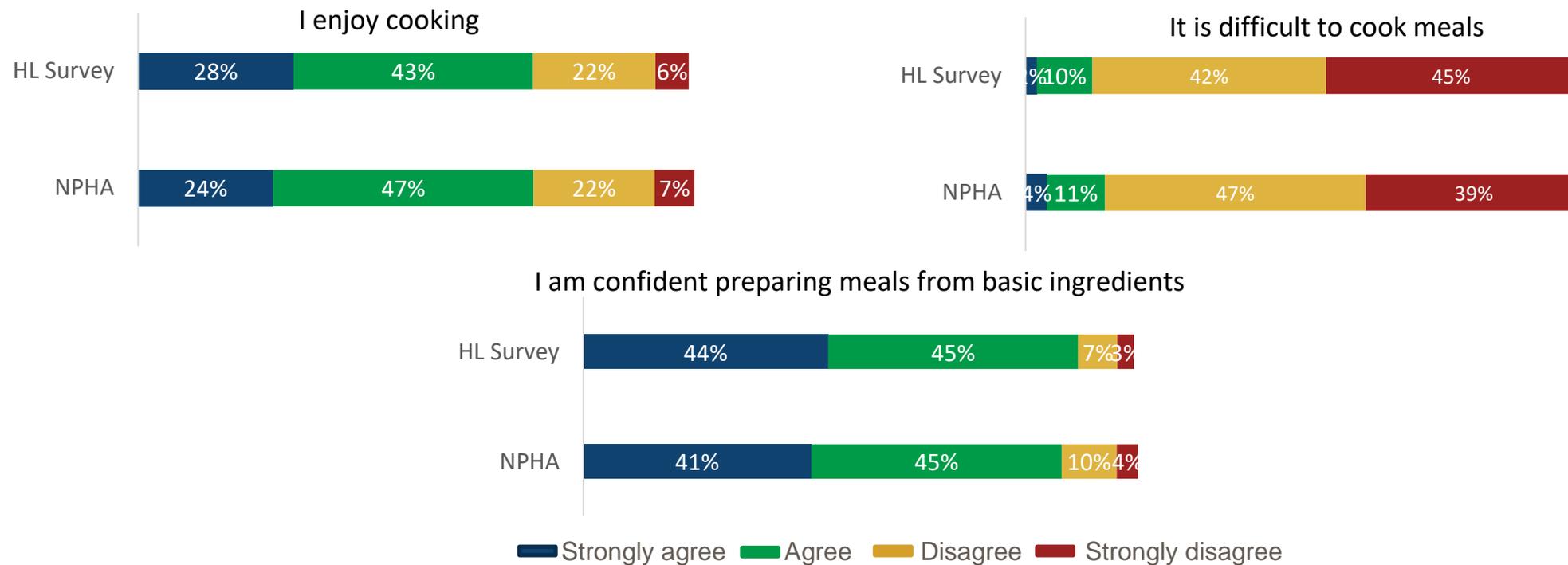


Q14A: During the past 7 days, how many times did you, or someone else in your family, cook food for dinner or supper at home?

* See: Wolfson, J, Kullgren J, Singer D, Kirch M, Malani P, Solway E, Leung C. The Joy of Cooking and its Benefits for Older Adults. University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging. June 2020. Available at: <https://www.healthyagingpoll.org/report/joy-cooking-and-its-benefits-older-adults>

Positive feelings about cooking correlates with more home cooking

More older adults are cooking meals at home and when comparing data collected through the National Poll on Healthy Aging (NPHA)* in December 2019, the percentage of older adults who express positive feelings related to cooking has increased since the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. More say they enjoy cooking (24% “strongly agree” in the NPHA survey vs. 28% in the Healthy Living survey), are comfortable preparing meals (41% vs. 44%), and more strongly disagree with the statement “It is difficult to cook meals” (39% vs. 45%).

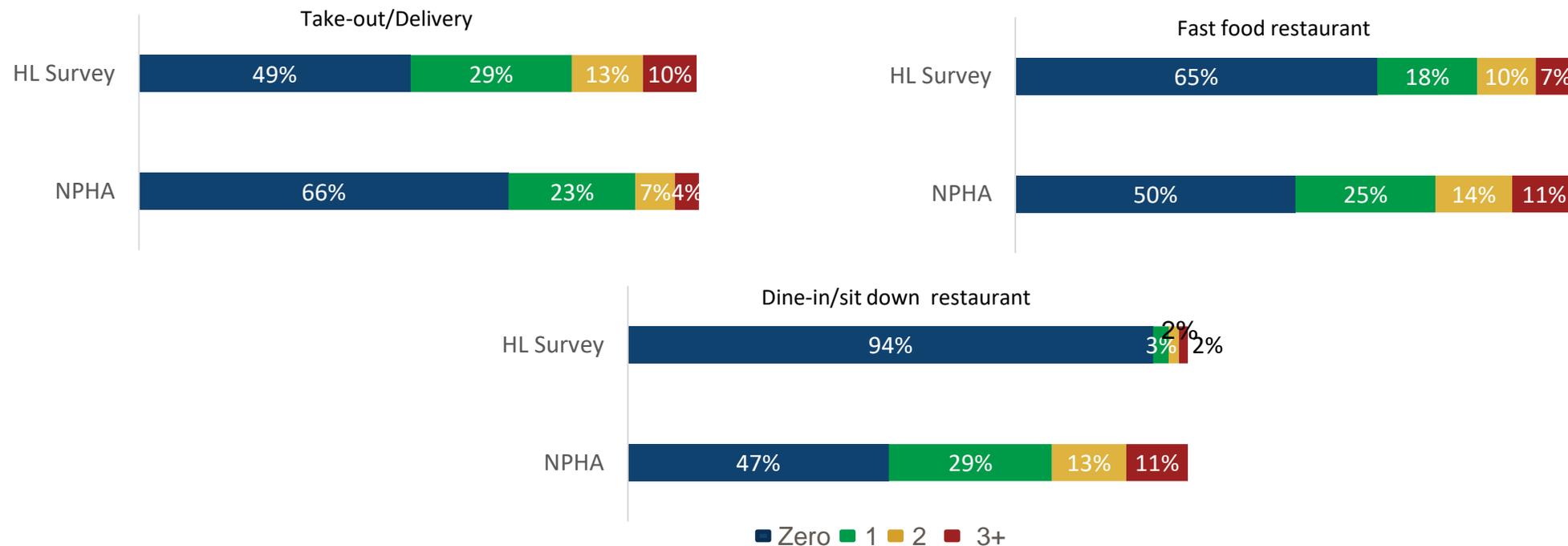


Q21: How much do you agree with the following statements?

* See: Wolfson, J, Kullgren J, Singer D, Kirch M, Malani P, Solway E, Leung C. The Joy of Cooking and its Benefits for Older Adults. University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging. June 2020. Available at: <https://www.healthyagingpoll.org/report/joy-cooking-and-its-benefits-older-adults>

Increase in number of meals from take-out/delivery

With the exception of take-out/delivery meals, when comparing data collected through the National Poll on Healthy Aging (NPHA)* in December 2019, the majority of older adults have significantly decreased the number of meals from restaurants since the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Few (3%) older adults say they eat meals from delivery services like Blue Apron and Freshly. This coincides with the finding that the vast majority of older adults are eating home cooked meals during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

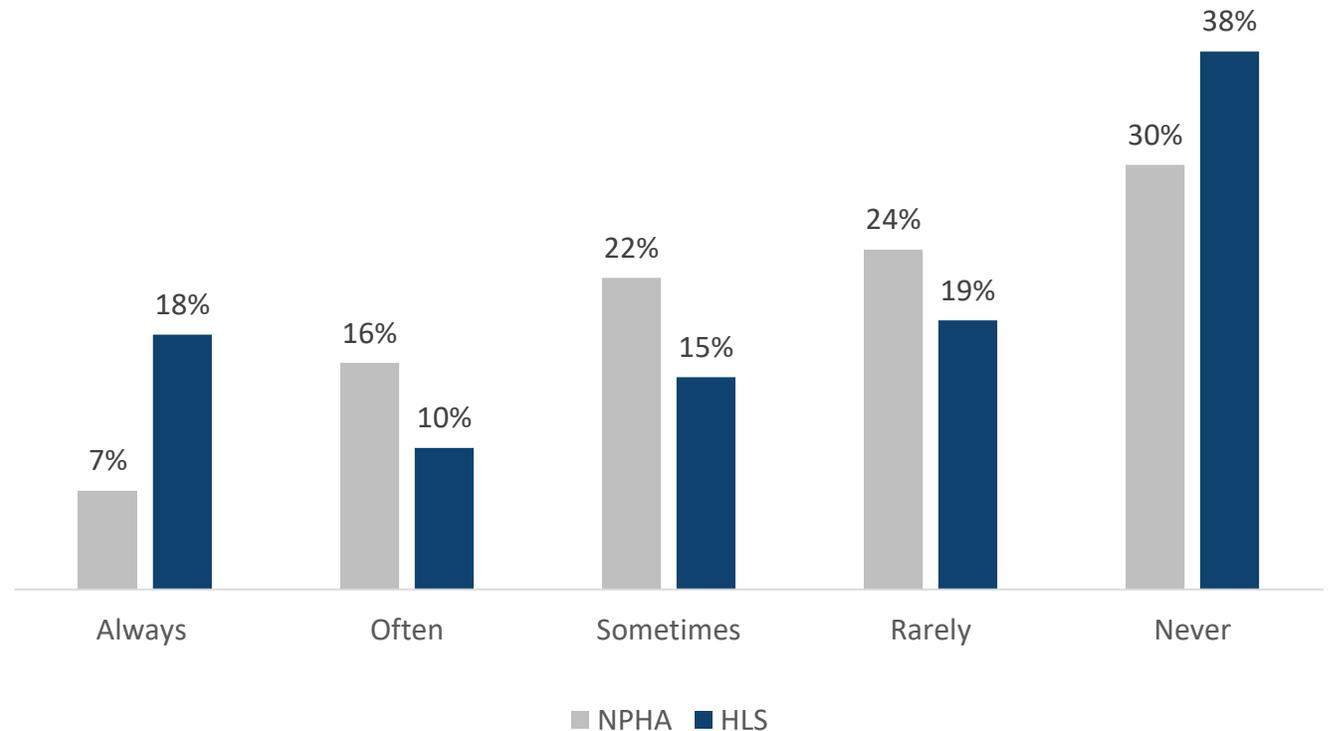


Q18: During the past 7 days, how many meals did you eat from...

* See: Wolfson, J, Kullgren J, Singer D, Kirch M, Malani P, Solway E, Leung C. The Joy of Cooking and its Benefits for Older Adults. University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging. June 2020. Available at: <https://www.healthyingpoll.org/report/joy-cooking-and-its-benefits-older-adults>

More solitary meal consumption during pandemic

Limiting meals eaten out means an increased number of solitary meals consumed by older adults age 50 and older. When comparing data collected through the National Poll on Healthy Aging (NPHA)* in December 2019, the percentage of those reporting “always” eating meals alone in the past seven days, more than doubled (from 7% to 18%). Conversely, compared to the previous survey, significantly more older adults now say they never eat a meal alone (30% vs. 38%).



Q20: During the past 7 days, how often did you eat alone?

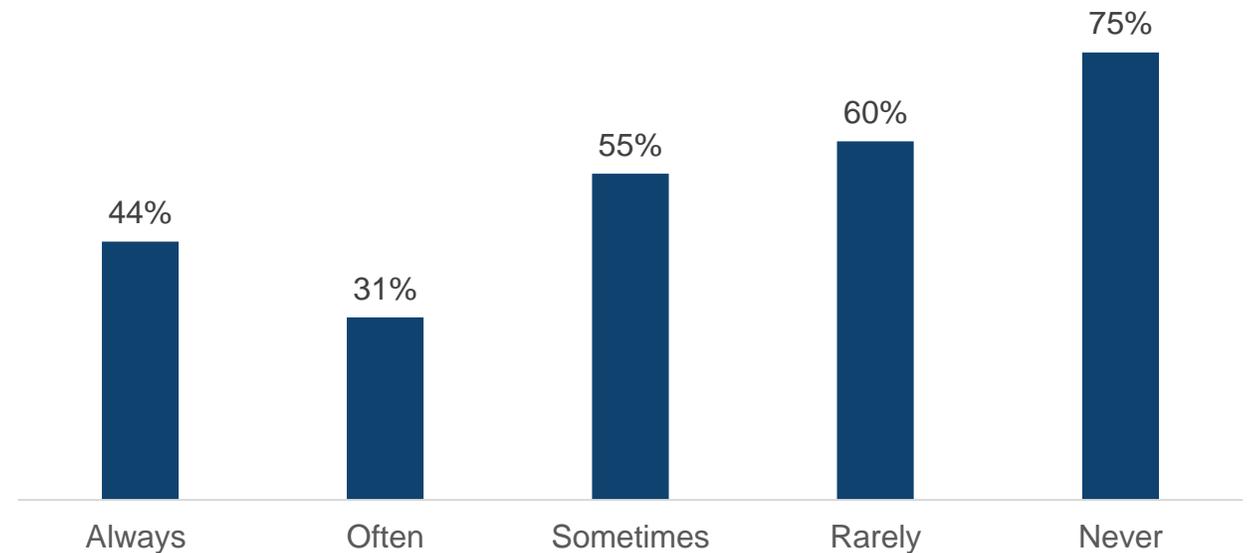
* See: Wolfson, J, Kullgren J, Singer D, Kirch M, Malani P, Solway E, Leung C. The Joy of Cooking and its Benefits for Older Adults. University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging. June 2020. Available at: <https://www.healthyagingpoll.org/report/joy-cooking-and-its-benefits-older-adults>

Loneliness related to solitary meal consumption

While most older adults in the survey score in the lower range of the loneliness scale*, those who report eating alone are less likely to score low (3 or 4 out of 9). While over two in five (44%) older adults who report often eating alone during the pandemic also scored low on the loneliness scale, that percentage jumps to three in five (60%) for this who say they rarely eat alone.



% scoring low (3 or 4) on Loneliness Scale by frequency of eating alone



Q20: During the past 7 days, how often did you eat alone?

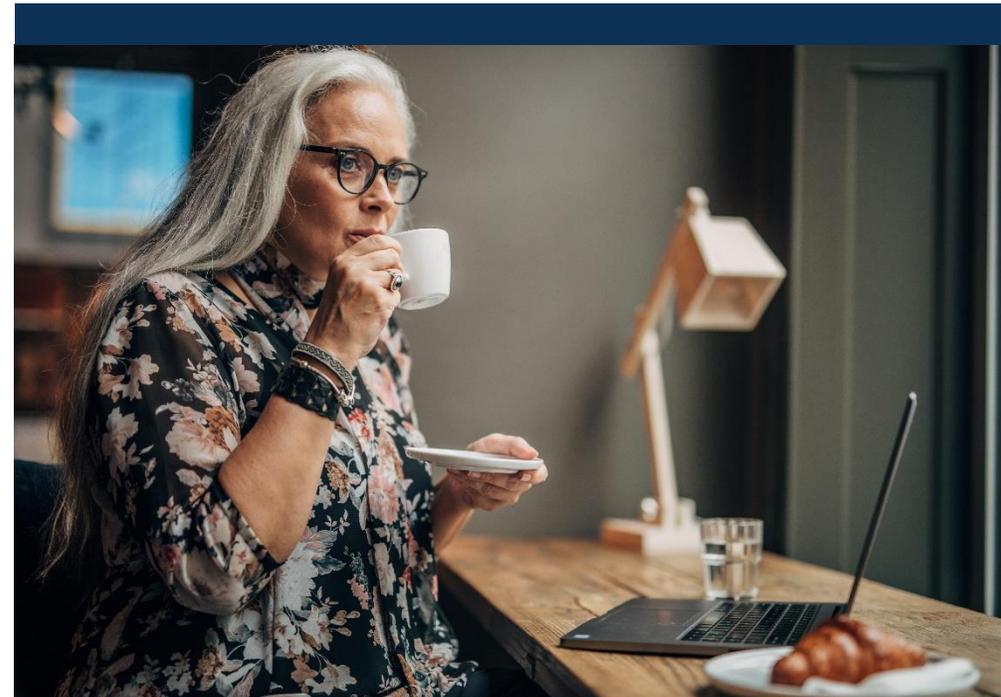
“Loneliness” is measured by combining three questions and using a scale from 3 (“hardly ever” experiencing the feelings) to 9 (“often”). Q28: How often do you feel you lack companionship? Q29: How often do you feel left out?; Q30: How often do you feel isolated from others? Scale: Hardly ever = 1; Some of the time = 2; Often = 3

See: Hughes ME, Waite LJ, Hawkey LC, Cacioppo JT. A Short Scale for Measuring Loneliness in Large Surveys: Results From Two Population-Based Studies. *Res Aging*. 2004;26(6):655-672. doi:10.1177/0164027504268574

Lone eaters average significantly higher loneliness scores

While the average score for older adults on the loneliness scale (ranging from 3 to 9)* is 4.52, those who report always eating alone have an average score that is significantly higher (5.12). In fact, the average loneliness score for those who say they always eat alone is significantly higher than those who say they only sometimes, rarely or never eat alone. Older adults who report they never eat alone have the lowest loneliness scores, on average.

Average loneliness score by frequency of eating alone	
	Average Loneliness score
Total	4.52
Eat alone...	
Always	5.12
Often	5.78
Sometimes	4.66
Rarely	4.28
Never	3.95



Q20: During the past 7 days, how often did you eat alone?

"Loneliness" is measured by combining three questions and using a scale from 3 ("hardly ever" experiencing the feelings) to 9 ("often"). Q28: How often do you feel you lack companionship? Q29: How often do you feel left out?; Q30: How often do you feel isolated from others? Scale: Hardly ever = 1; Some of the time = 2; Often = 3

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METHODOLOGY

Methodology

- **Objectives:** This study evaluates how older adults, age 50 and older, are maintaining a healthy mind, body and soul during emergency situations, with an emphasis on the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Methodology:** Online probability-based survey via NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panel.
- **Qualifications:** Adult age 50 or older
- **Sample:** NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panel, n=1101.
- **Interviewing Dates:** April 14 – 17, 2020.
- **Weighting:** Panel weights are raked to external population totals associated with age, gender, education, race/ethnicity, housing tenure, telephone status, and Census Division. The external population totals are obtained from the Current Population Survey.
- **Questionnaire length:** 13 minutes (median).
- **Confidence Interval:** Total sample: ± 4.06 percentage points.



About AARP

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation's largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

About the NPHA

AARP is a co-sponsor of the University of Michigan's National Poll on Healthy Aging (NPHA). The NPHA started in 2017 and is a recurring, nationally representative household survey of adults age 50 to 80. The goal of the NPHA is to measure perspectives of older adults and their caregivers on a variety of topics. The insights are used to inform the public, health care providers, policymakers, and advocates on issues related to health, healthcare, and health policy affecting older adults in the U.S. To learn more, visit <https://www.healthyagingpoll.org/> or follow @UM_IHPI on social media.



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This research was designed and executed by AARP Research