



AUSTRALIAN  
PHYSIOTHERAPY  
ASSOCIATION

# PROJECT GRAVITY



UNDERSTANDING FALLS PREVENTION

February 2025

# Our approach

## 15 questions

A simple exploration of falls prevention: perceptions, impact, and the role of physiotherapy



## N=1,040 sample

A robust, comprehensive exploration of the market



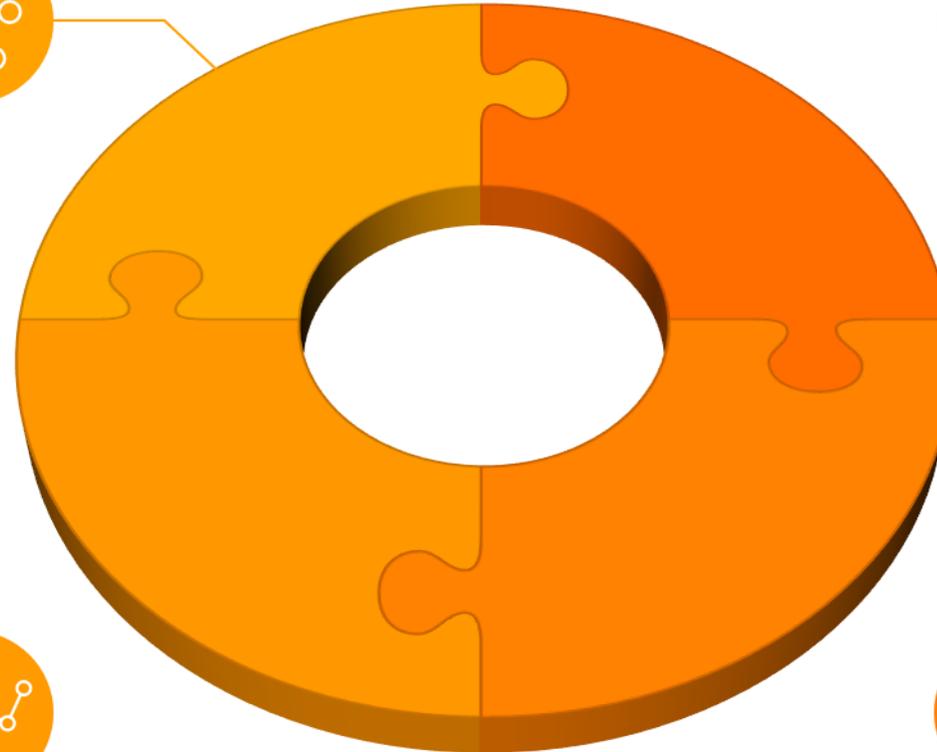
## Weighted data

Sample weighted by age and gender to the 2021 ABS Census to ensure representivity



## Nationally representative

Talking to Australians in all states and territories.



# What are the key themes we're seeing here?

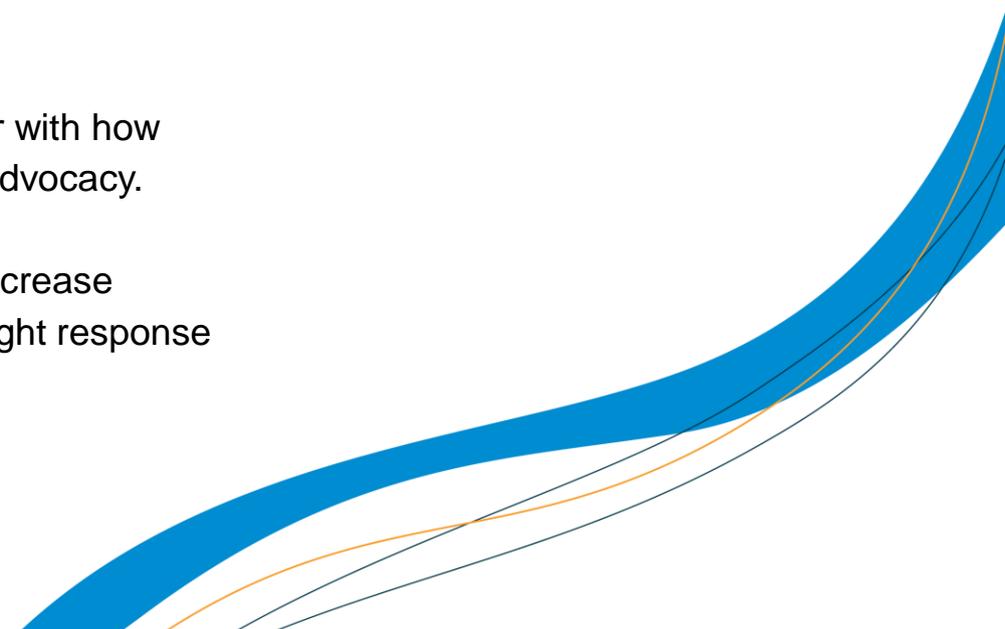
Falls are a major but underestimated risk – Despite being the leading cause of injury-related hospitalisation and death, falls are ranked as the least concerning health risk by more than a third of Australians over 45. There is a clear disconnect between awareness and the actual impact.

The personal impact of falls is significant – More than half of those impacted by a fall in the last year experienced life-changing consequences, including fear, anxiety, and loss of independence. Nearly one in three Australians over 60 have experienced a fall in the past year.

There is strong support for prevention efforts – Nearly three-quarters believe falls can be prevented, and most agree prevention should be prioritised. Nine in 10 feel physiotherapy-led prevention programs should be freely available through Medicare.

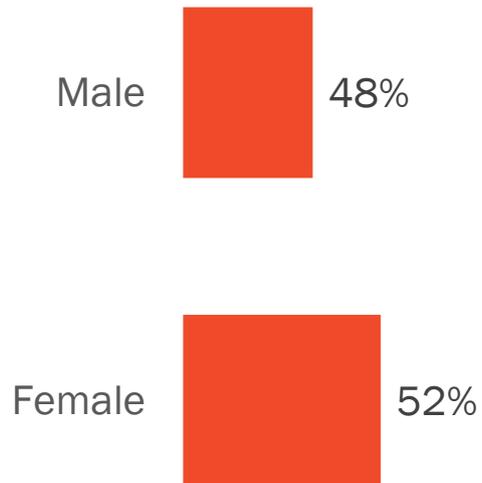
Awareness of physiotherapy's role is low – Only one in 10 Australians are very familiar with how physiotherapy can help prevent falls, highlighting the need for greater education and advocacy.

Government accountability is expected – Nearly half believe the government should increase funding for prevention, and a third see an urgent national prevention program as the right response to the \$5 billion healthcare burden caused by falls.



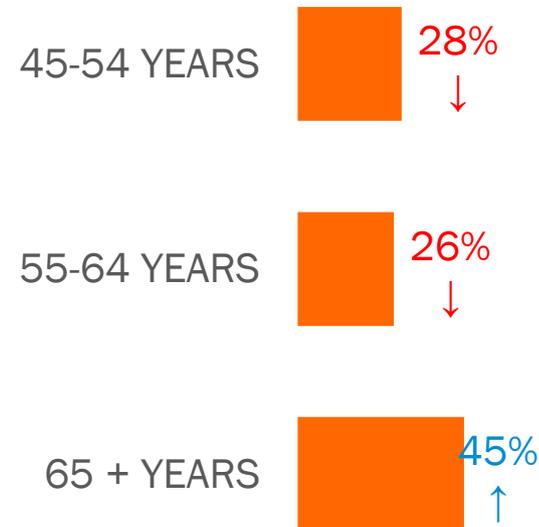
# Who we spoke to...

## Gender



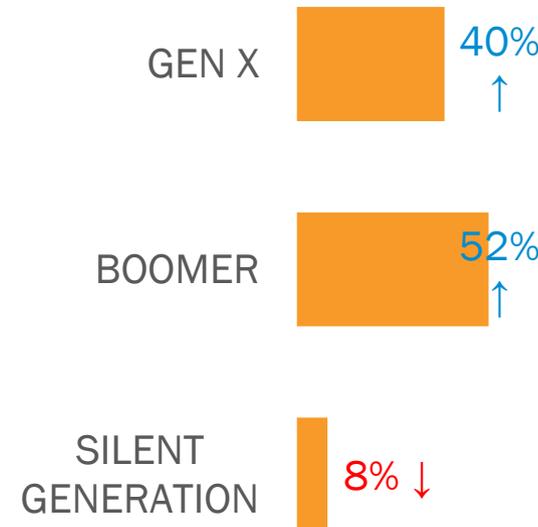
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total sample size = 1040

## Age



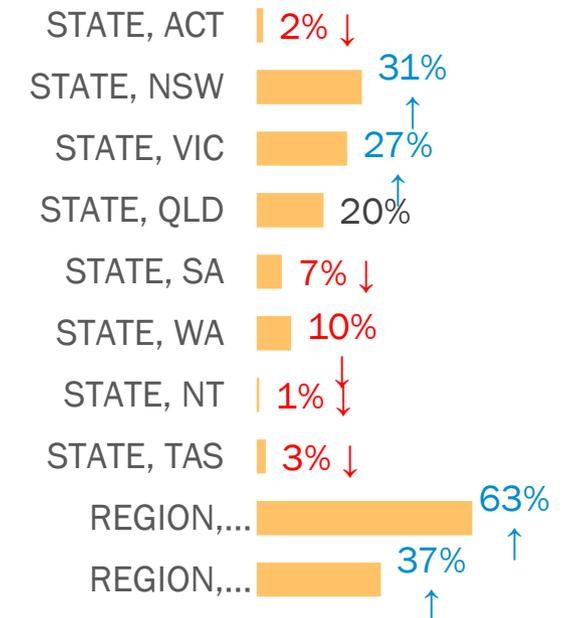
sample size = 1020;  
total sample size = 1040

## Generation



sample size = 1020;  
total sample size = 1040

## Location

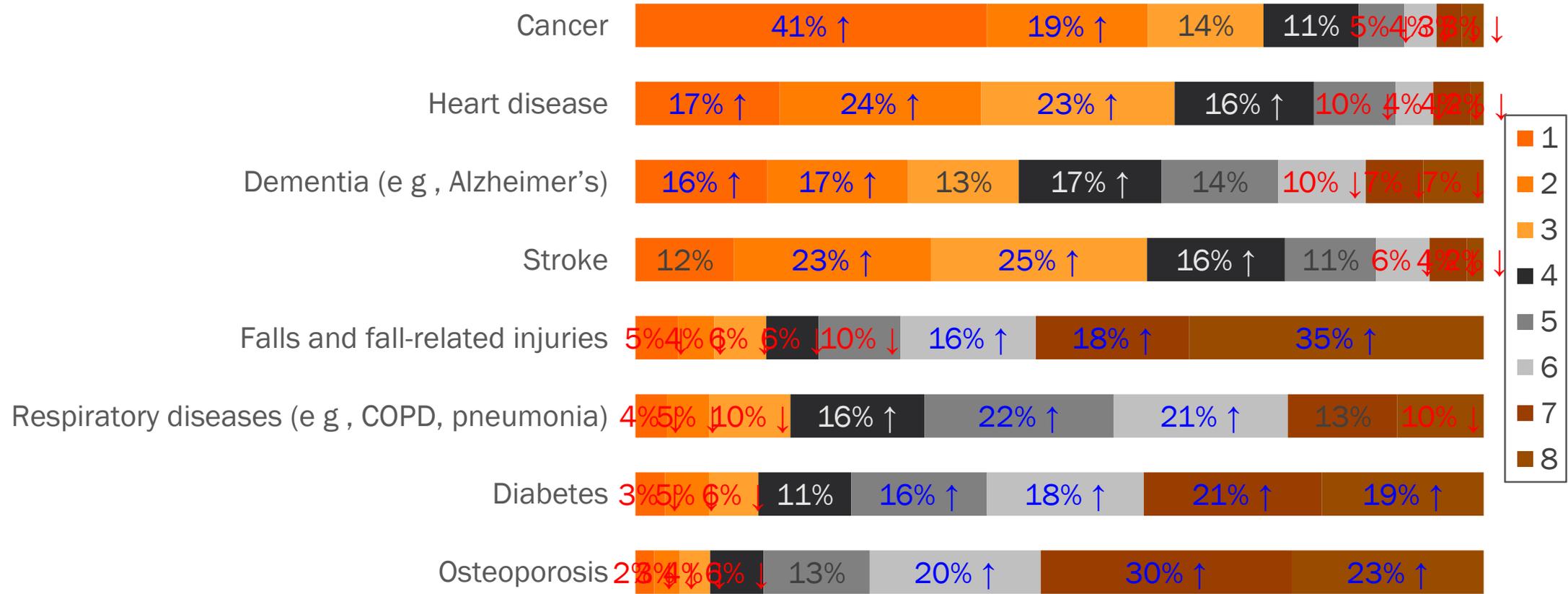


sample size = 1018;  
total sample size = 1040

# In comparison to other age-related health risks, falls are not a huge concern for Australians over 45



Q1. Please rank the following health risks from most concerning (1) to least concerning (8)

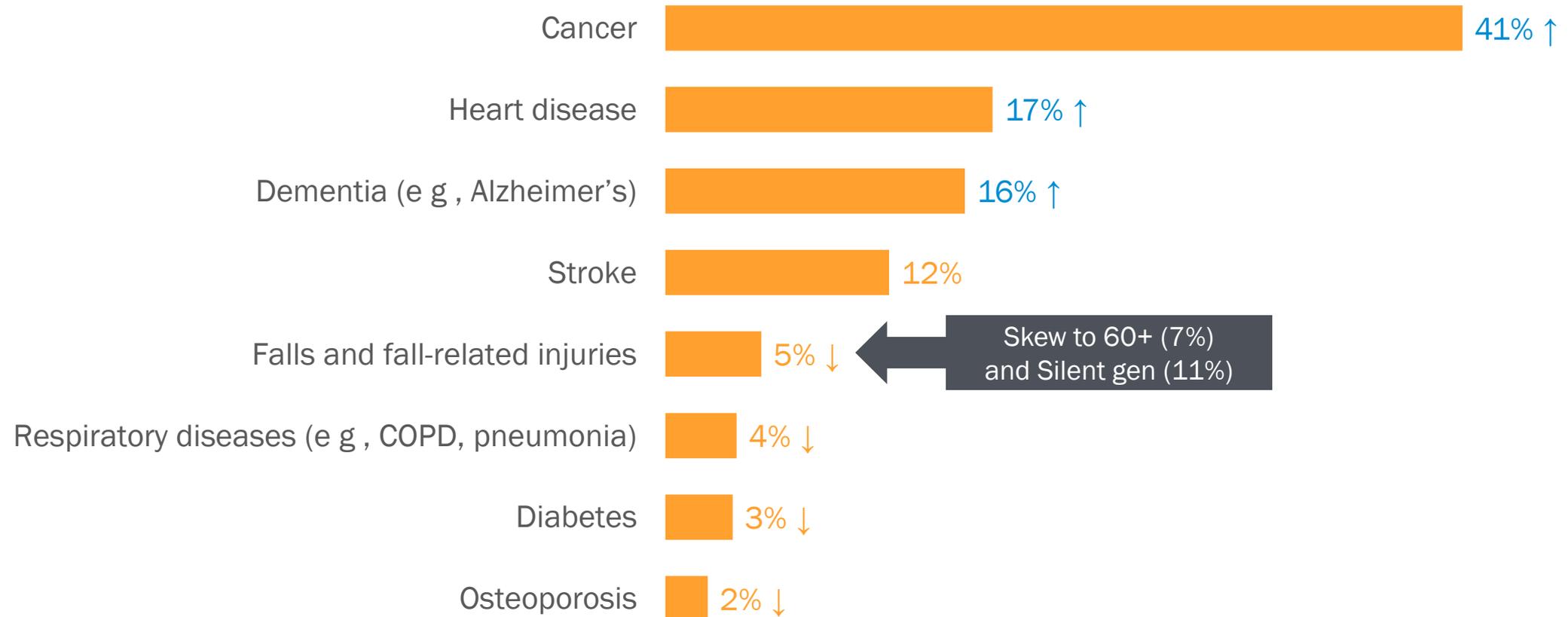


sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

More than one in three ranked falls as the least concerning health risk

# More than a third ranked cancer as the most concerning health risk

Q1. Please rank the following health risks from most concerning (1) to least concerning (8) - Top ranked

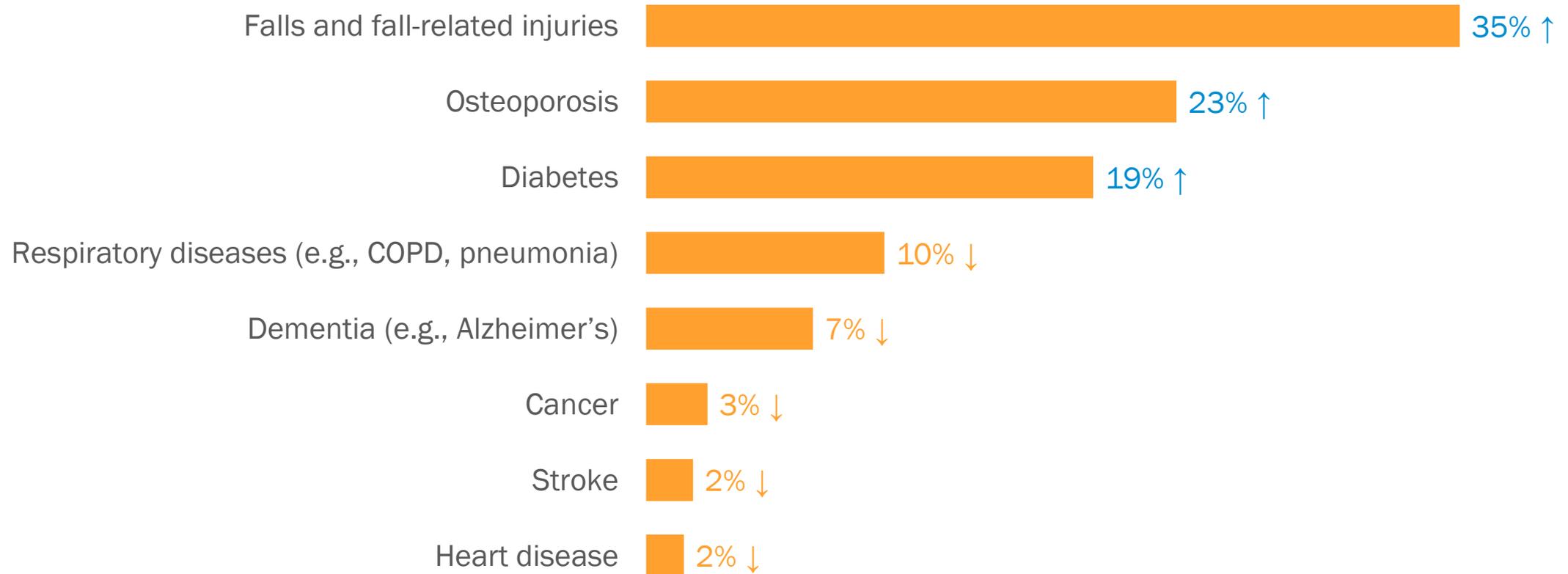


sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

Less than 5 per cent ranked falls and fall-related injuries as the top concern, this was slightly higher for older respondents

# More than a third ranked falls and fall-related injuries as the least concerning health risk

Q1. Please rank the following health risks from most concerning (1) to least concerning (8) - Bottom ranked

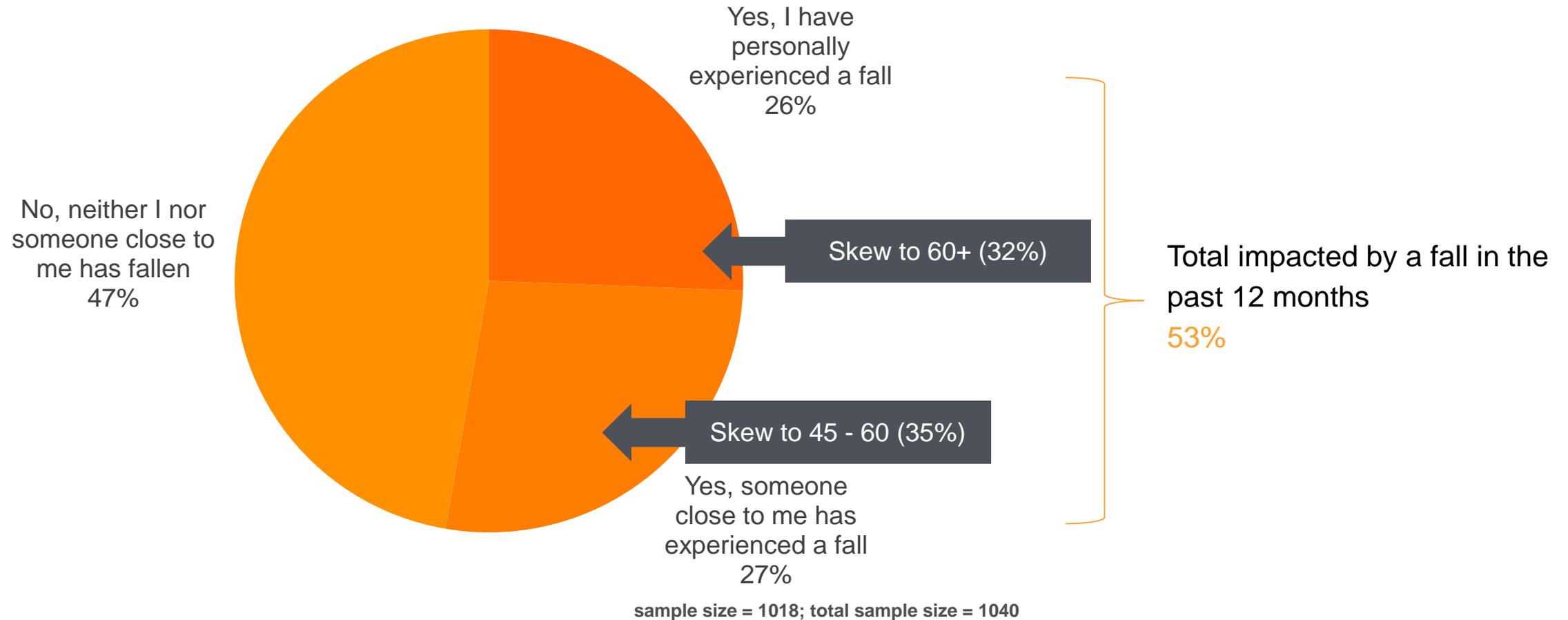


sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

Falls are the leading cause of injury related hospitalization and death - there is a clear disconnect between the size of the issue and how concerned Australians over 45 are.

# More than half of Australians over 45 have personally experienced a fall or had someone close to them fall in the past year

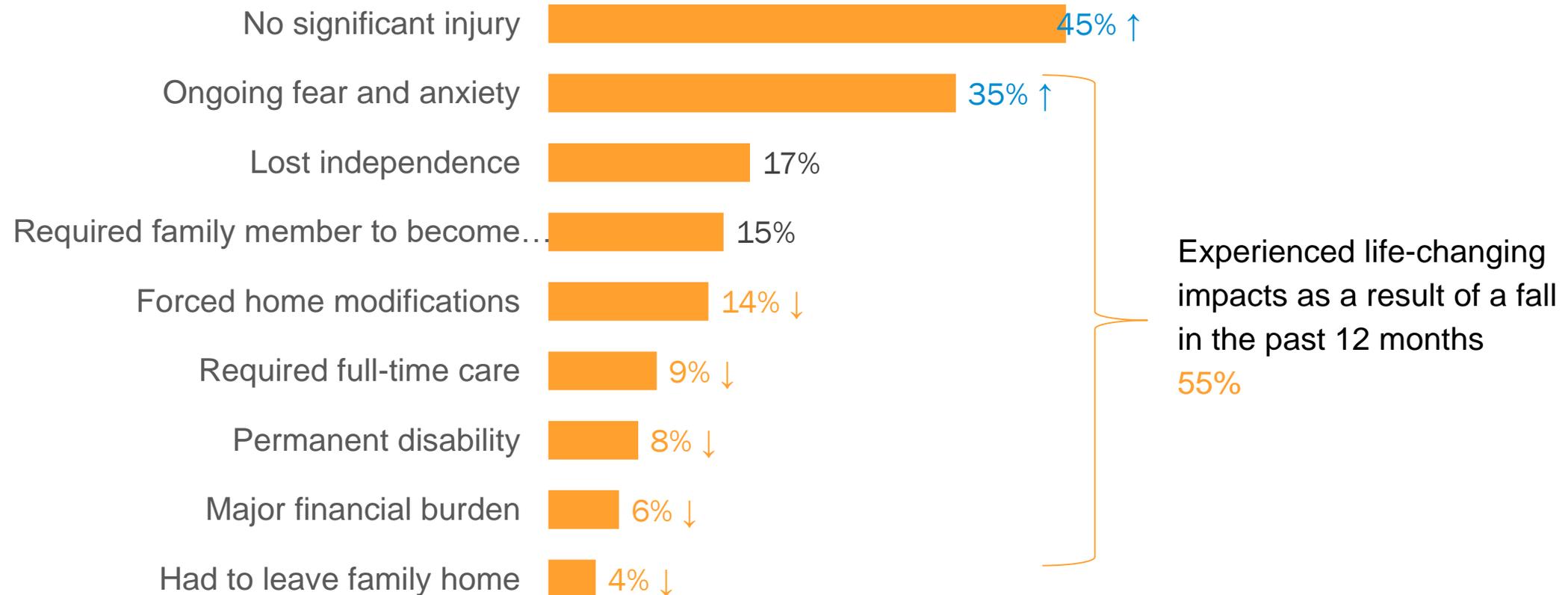
Q3. In the past year, have you or someone close to you experienced a fall? by BANNER



Almost one in three Australians over 60 have experienced a fall in the last 12 months

# After a fall more than a third experience life-changing fear and anxiety

Q4. What life-changing impacts resulted from the fall?

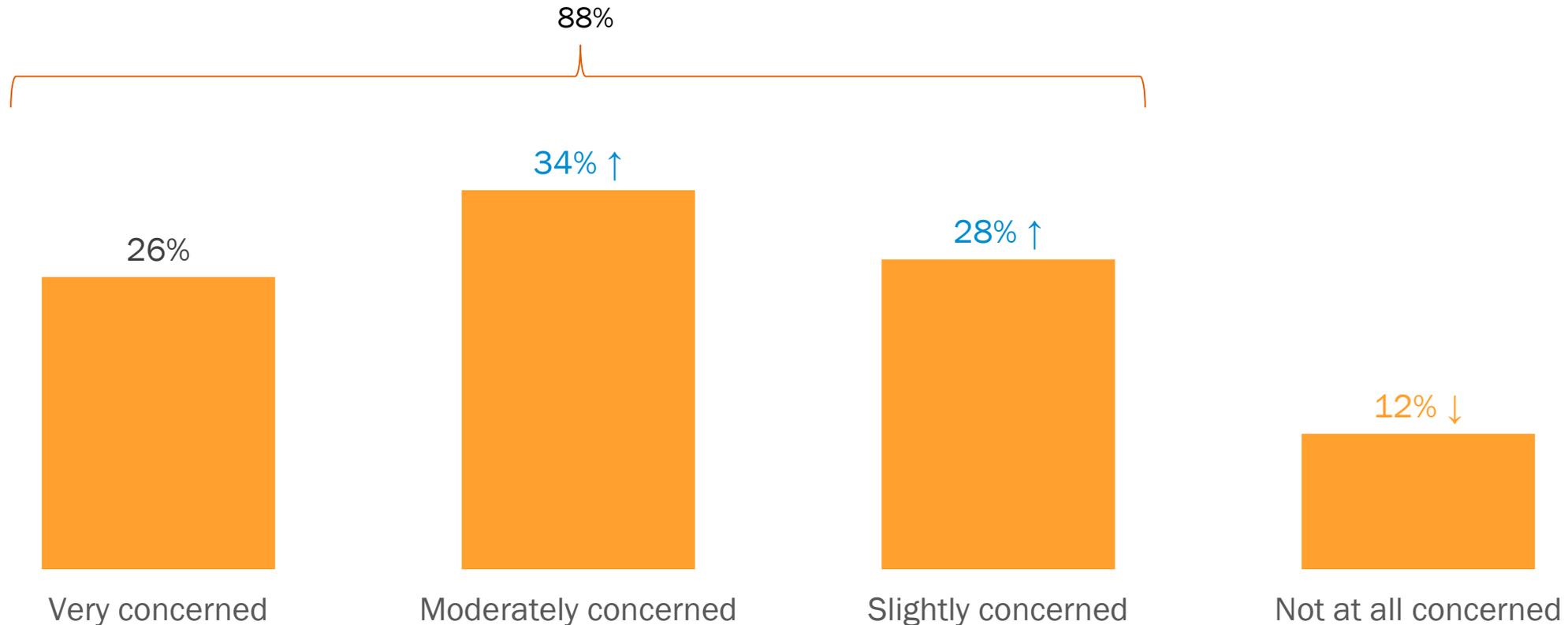


sample size = 537; total sample size = 1040

More than half of those impacted by a fall in the last 12 months (55 per cent) also experienced life-changing impacts as a result of that fall. Ranging from fear and anxiety to loss of independence and permanent disability

# Majority of Australians over 45, almost nine in ten are concerned about the risk of falling

Q5. How concerned are you about the risk of falling for yourself or a loved one?



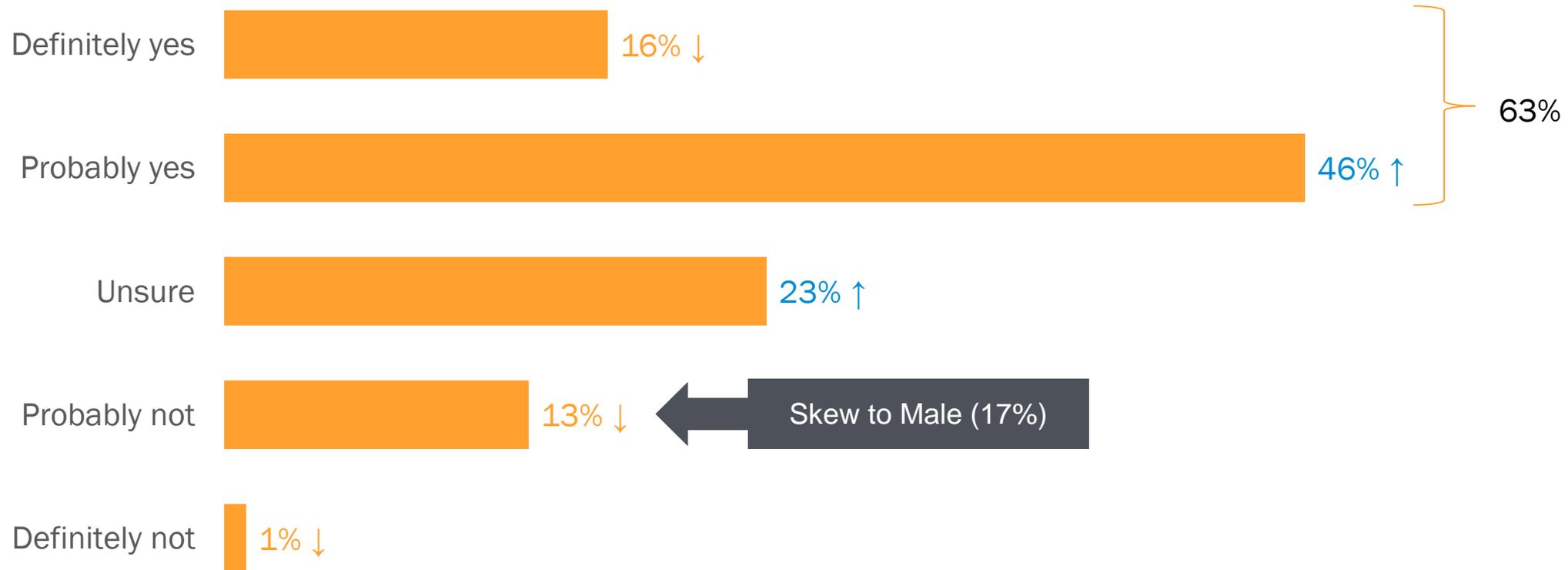
sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

28 per cent are only slightly concerned more than half (60 per cent) are moderately to very concerned about the risk to themselves or a loved one

# Nearly two thirds believe that falls can be prevented



Q6. Do you believe falls can be prevented?

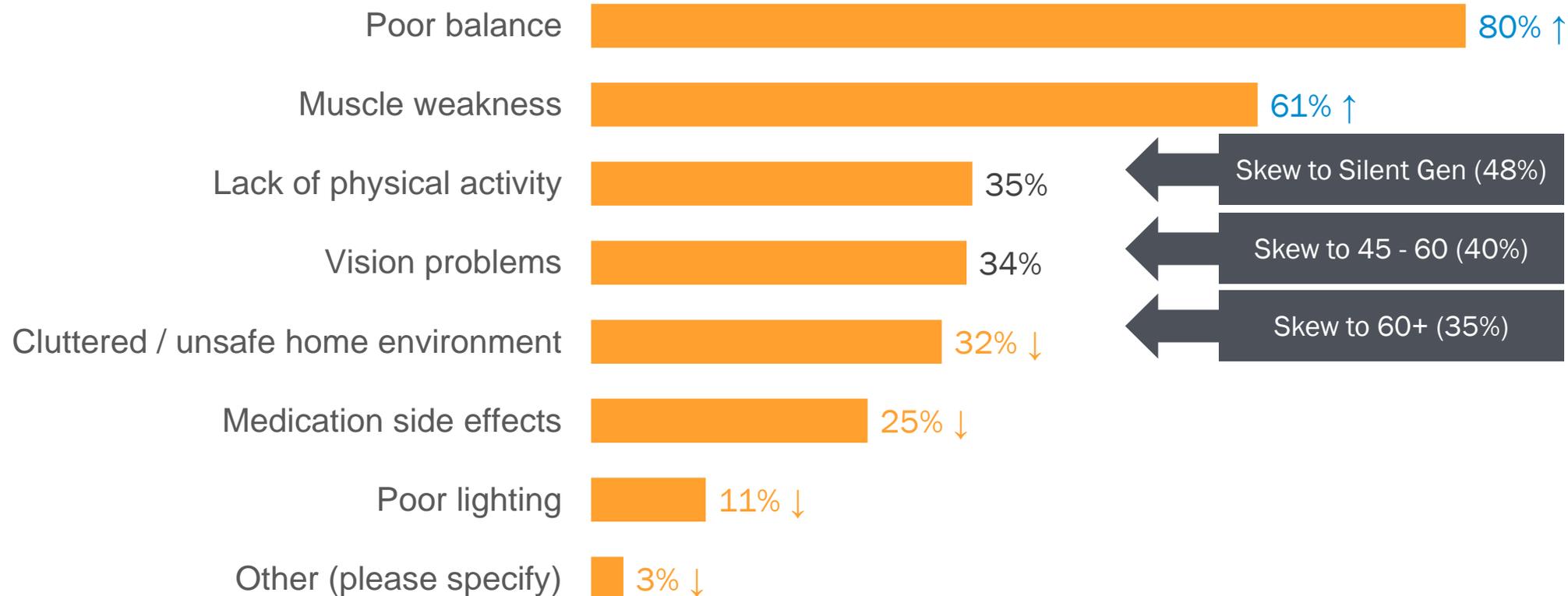


sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

Males were slightly more skeptical with 17 per cent thinking prevention is probably not possible

# The majority felt that poor balance was the most common cause of falls, and more than half felt muscle weakness was a factor

Q7. Which factors do you think most commonly cause falls?



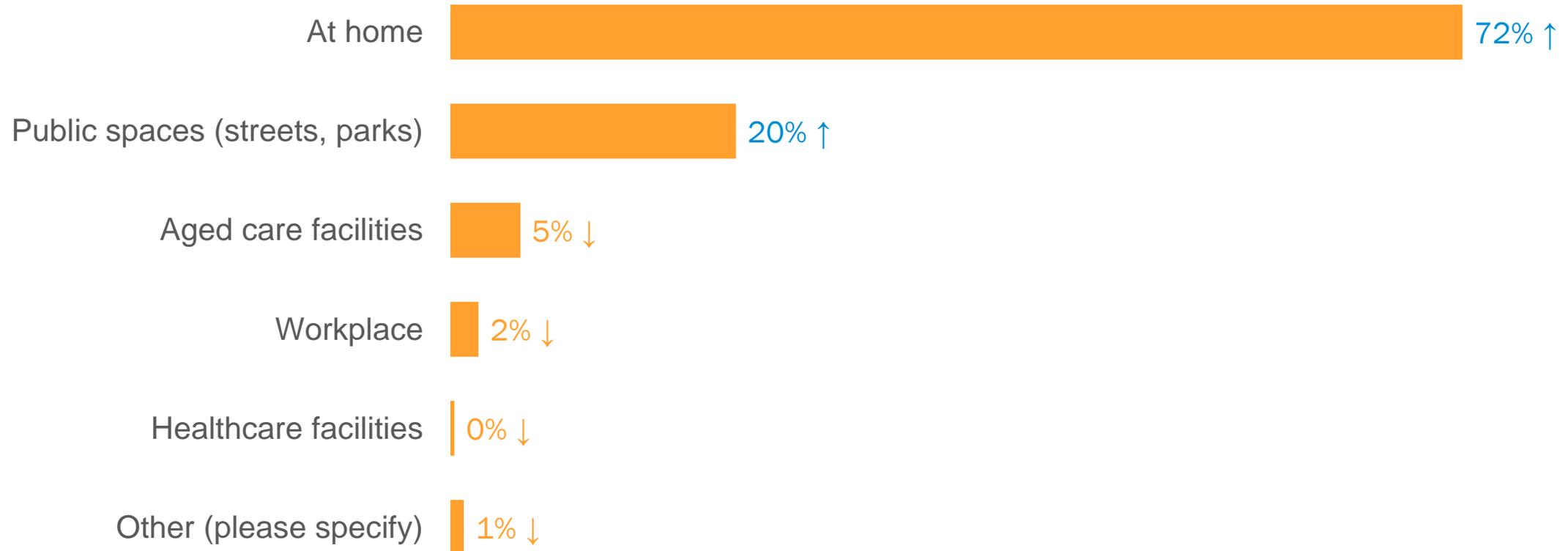
sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

Over a third thought a lack of physical activity was a common cause, which was significantly higher for Silent Gen (48 per cent)

# Nearly three quarters think people are most at risk of falling at home



Q8. Where do you think people are most at risk of falling?

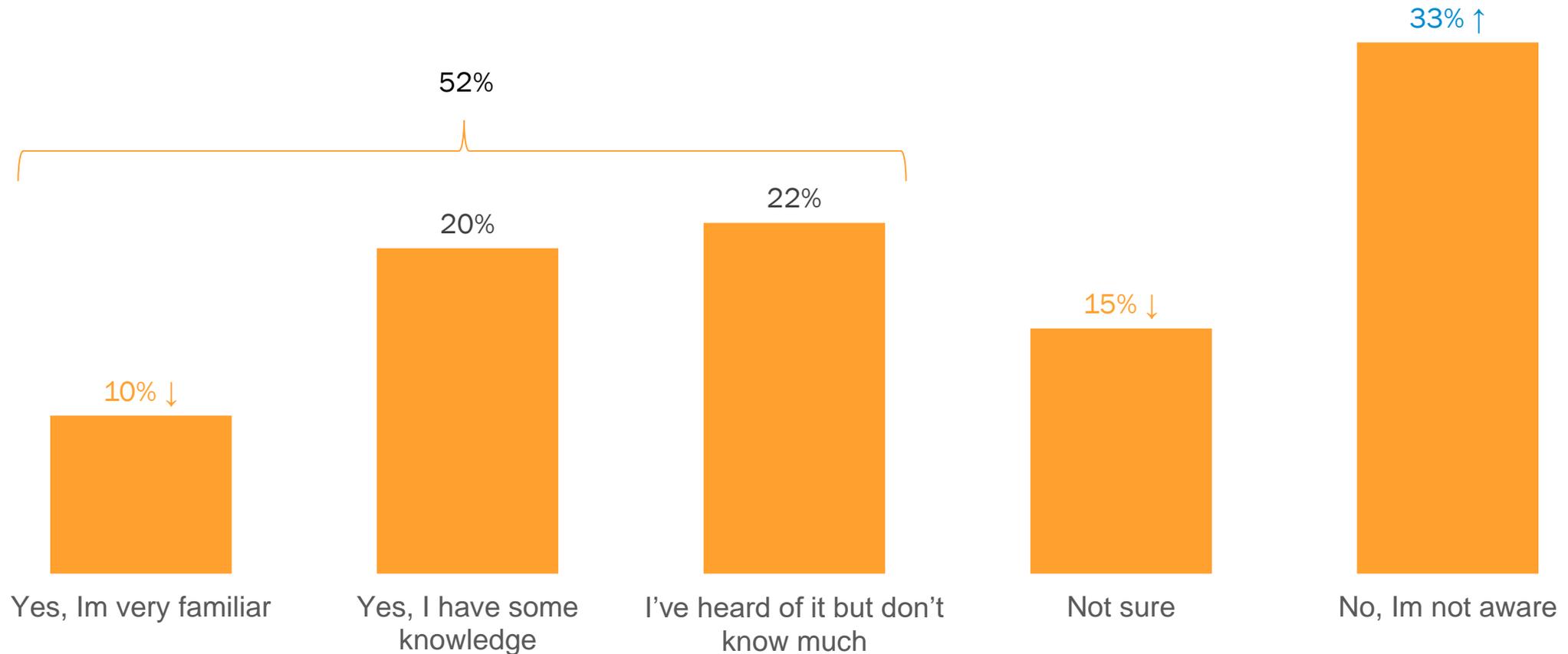


sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

One in five thought that public spaces were where people are most at risk of falling

# Only one in ten are very familiar with physiotherapy's role in fall prevention

Q9. Are you aware of physiotherapy's role in fall prevention?



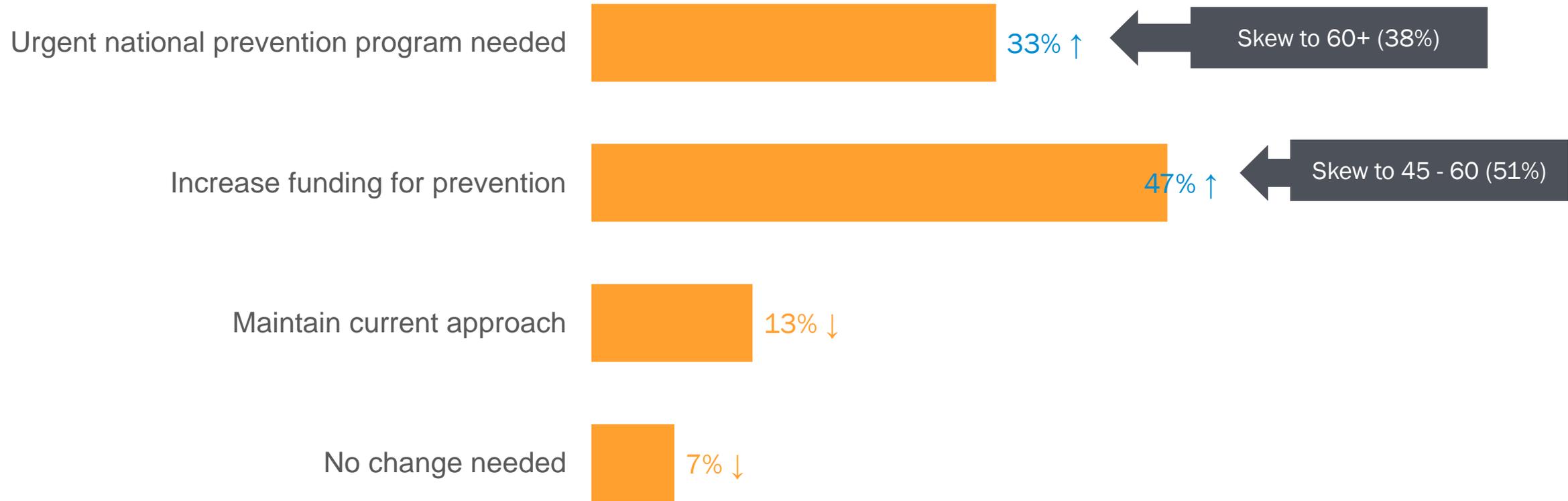
sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

In total, just over half (52 per cent) were aware of physiotherapy's role in fall prevention, but there are varying degrees of understanding

# Almost half feel the government should address the \$5b cost to the healthcare system by increasing the funding for prevention



Q10. Falls cost the Australian healthcare system \$5 billion a year. How should the government address this?

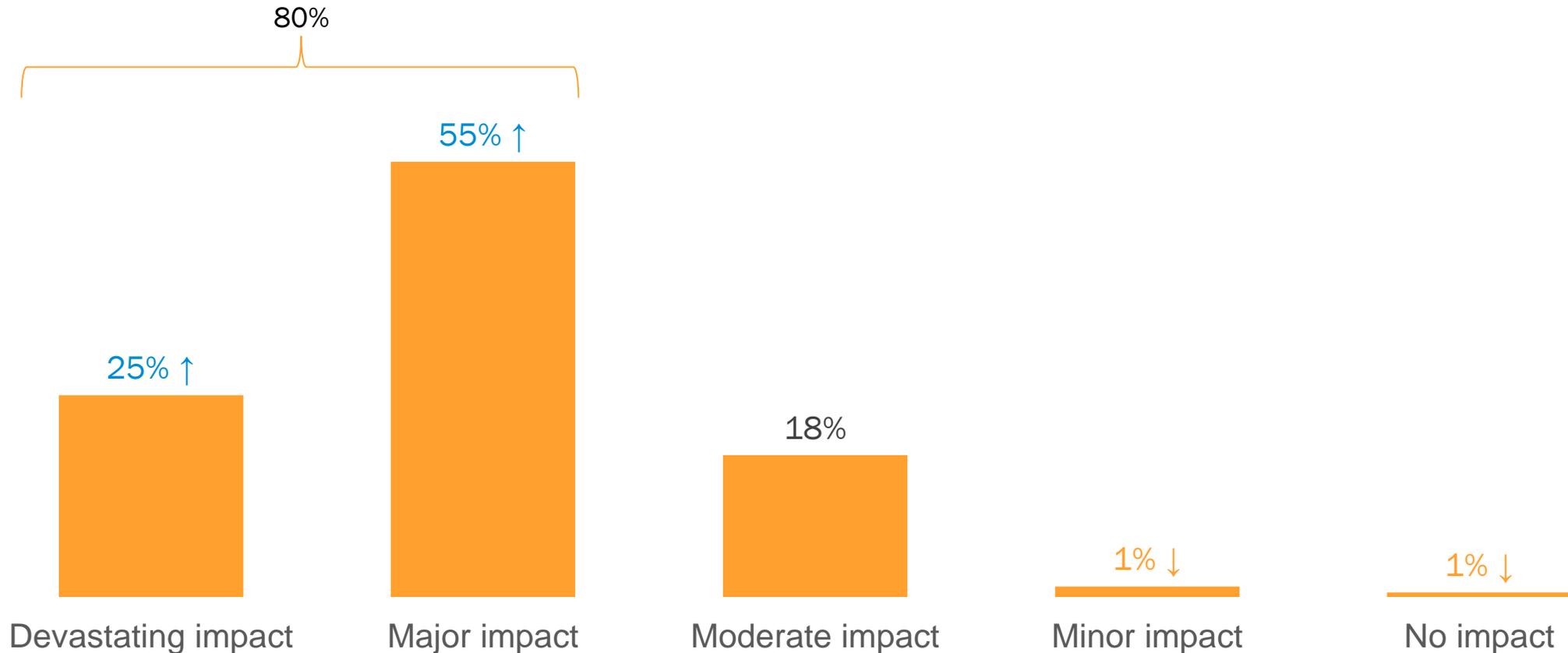


sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

A third feel that an urgent national prevention program is the right response from government

# Four in five say that quality of life for older Australians majorly impacted after falling

Q11. How significantly do you think the quality of life is impacted for older Australians after falling?

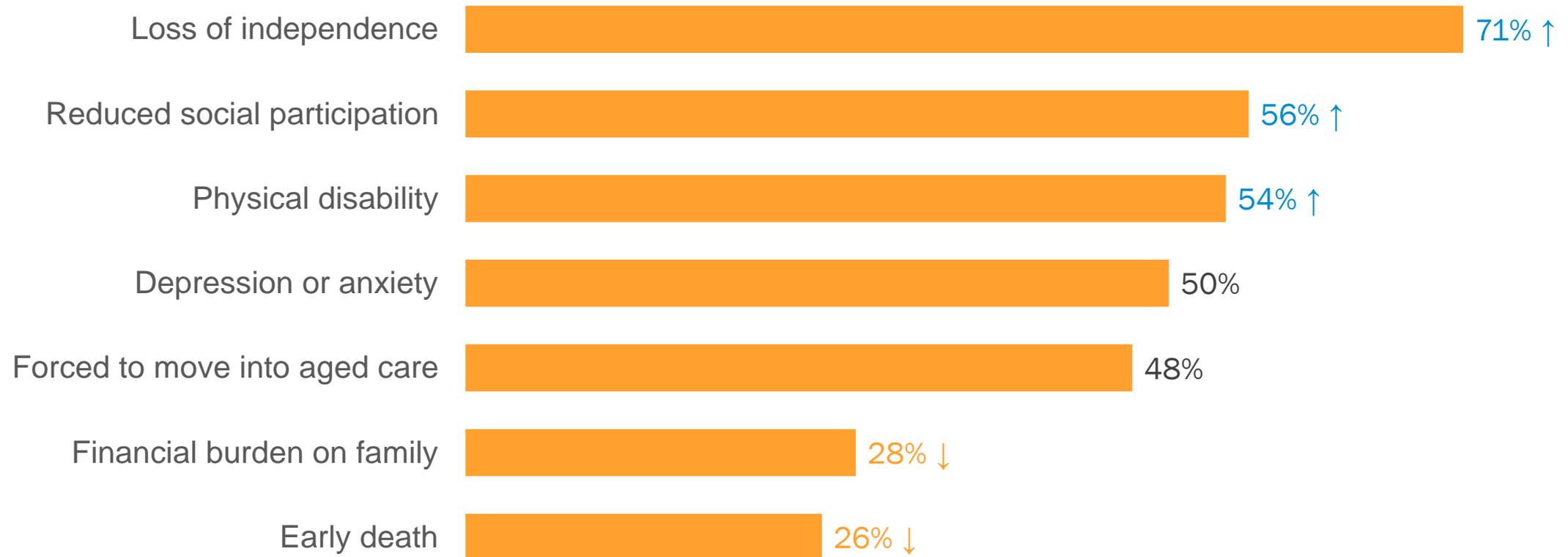


sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

One in four (25 per cent) say the impact is devastating

# Seven in ten have witnessed a loss of independence due to falls affecting older Australians

Q12. Which of the following have you witnessed due to falls affecting older Australians?

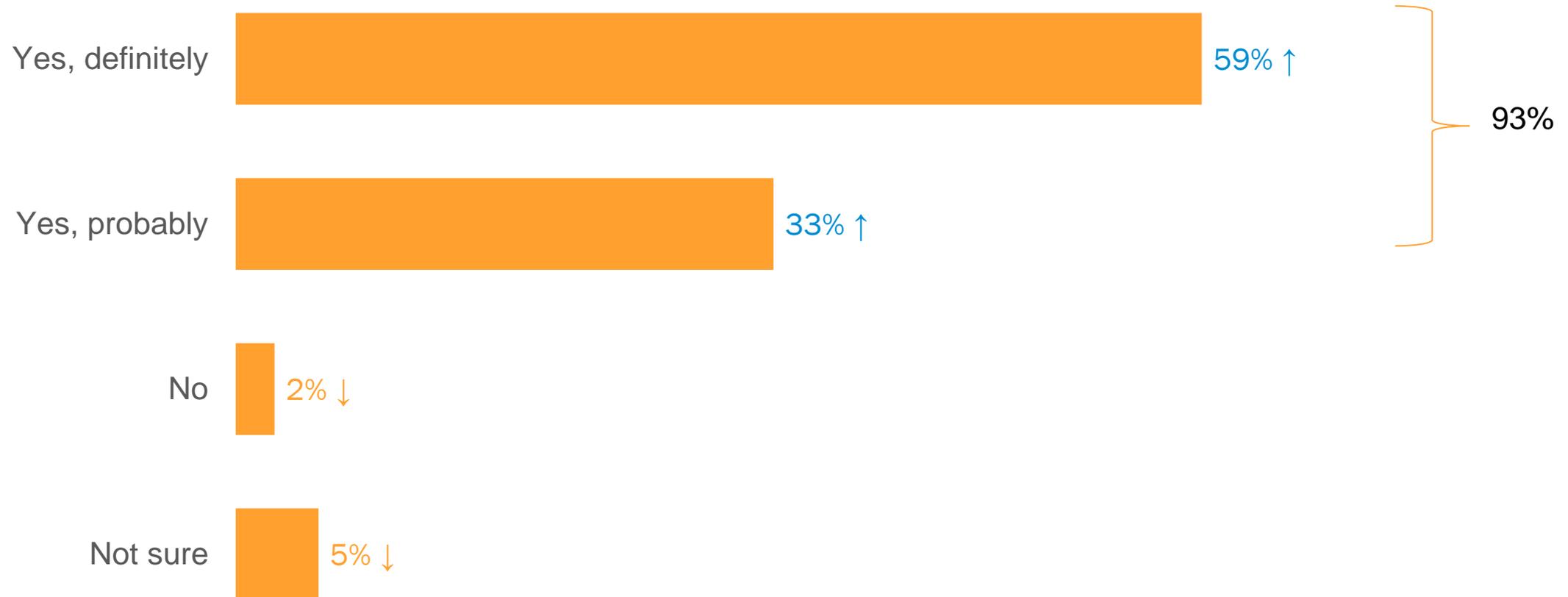


sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

More than half witnessed reduced social participation, physical disability and depression or anxiety.  
A quarter have witnessed early death due to falls affecting older Aussies

# Nine in ten feel that physiotherapy led falls prevention programs should be made freely available to Australians over 65

Q13. Physiotherapy-led falls prevention programs can reduce the number of falls and falls-related injuries by 55 per cent. Should physiotherapy-led falls prevention programs be made freely available to all Australians over 65?

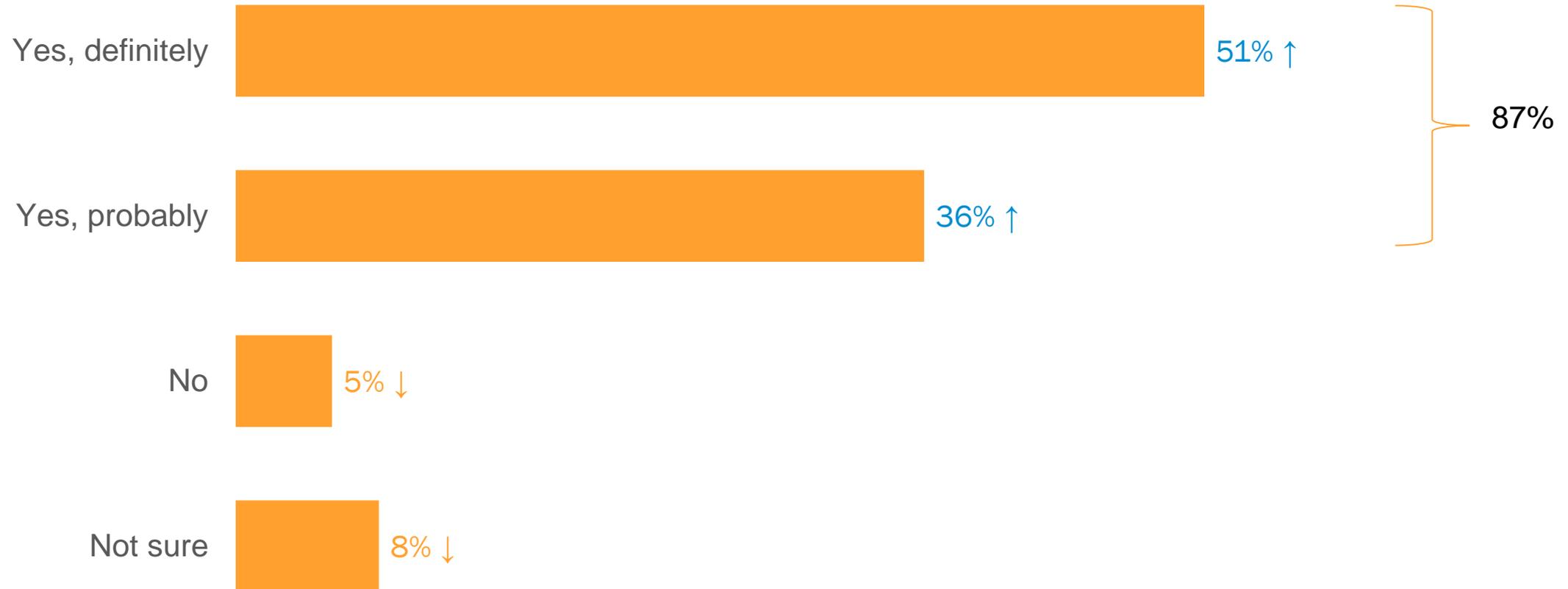


sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

# The majority feel that free physiotherapy led fall prevention programs should be a Medicare priority



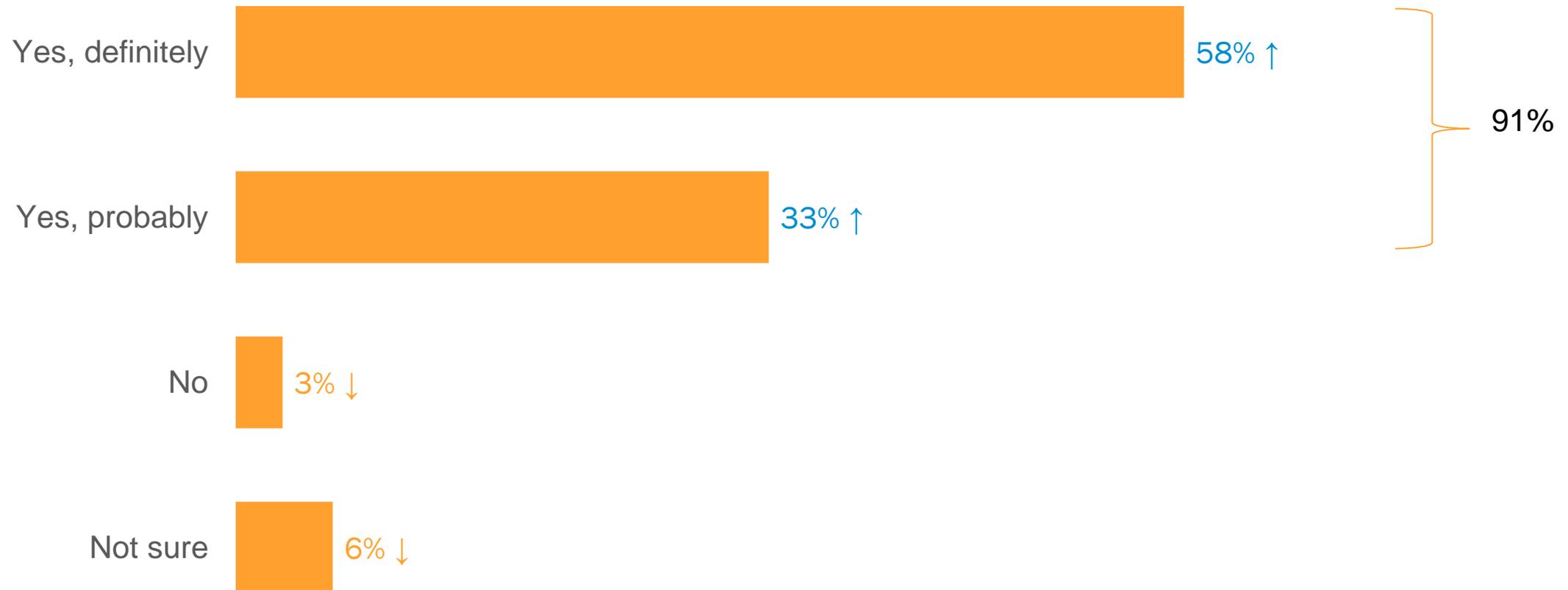
Q13. Physiotherapy-led falls prevention programs can reduce the number of falls and falls-related injuries by 55 per cent . Should free physiotherapy-led fall prevention programs be a Medicare priority?



sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

# More than nine in 10 said if they knew that falls could be prevented with simple exercises, they would take action now

Q13. Physiotherapy-led falls prevention programs can reduce the number of falls and falls-related injuries by 55 per cent . If you knew that falls could be prevented with simple exercises, would you take action now?

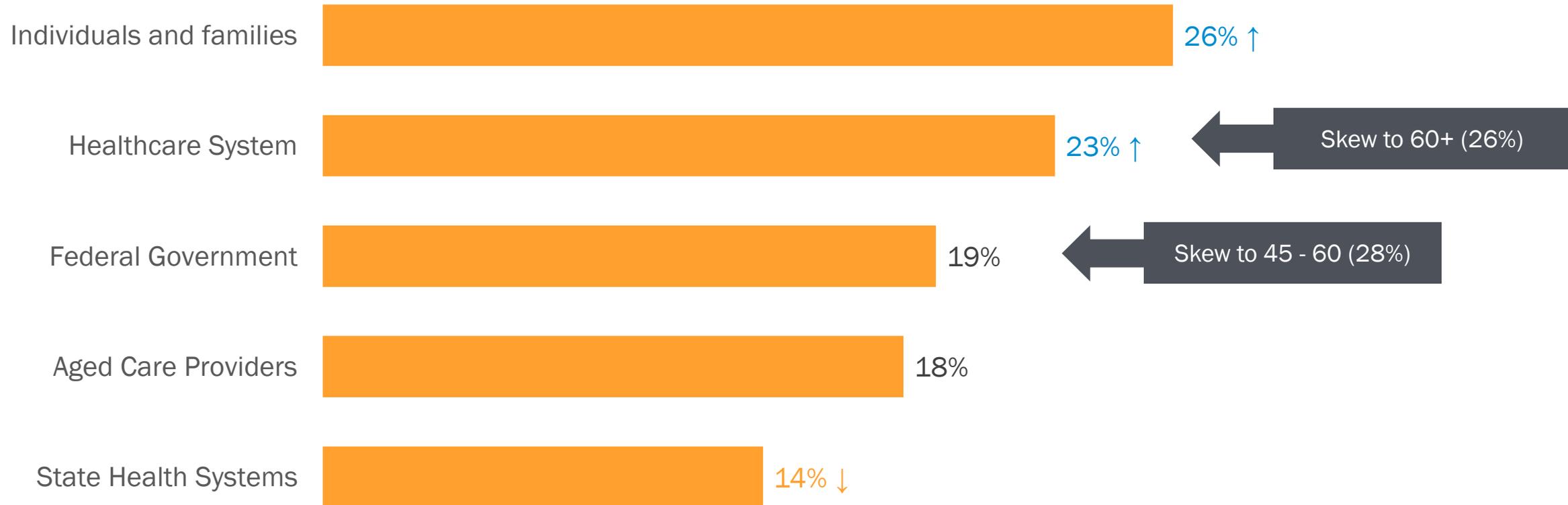


sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

# More than a quarter think that individuals and families should be held accountable for Australia's rising falls crisis



Q14. Every year, one in three Australians over 65 experience a fall, the numbers get much higher in residential care, and these numbers are growing. Who should be held accountable for Australia's rising falls crisis?

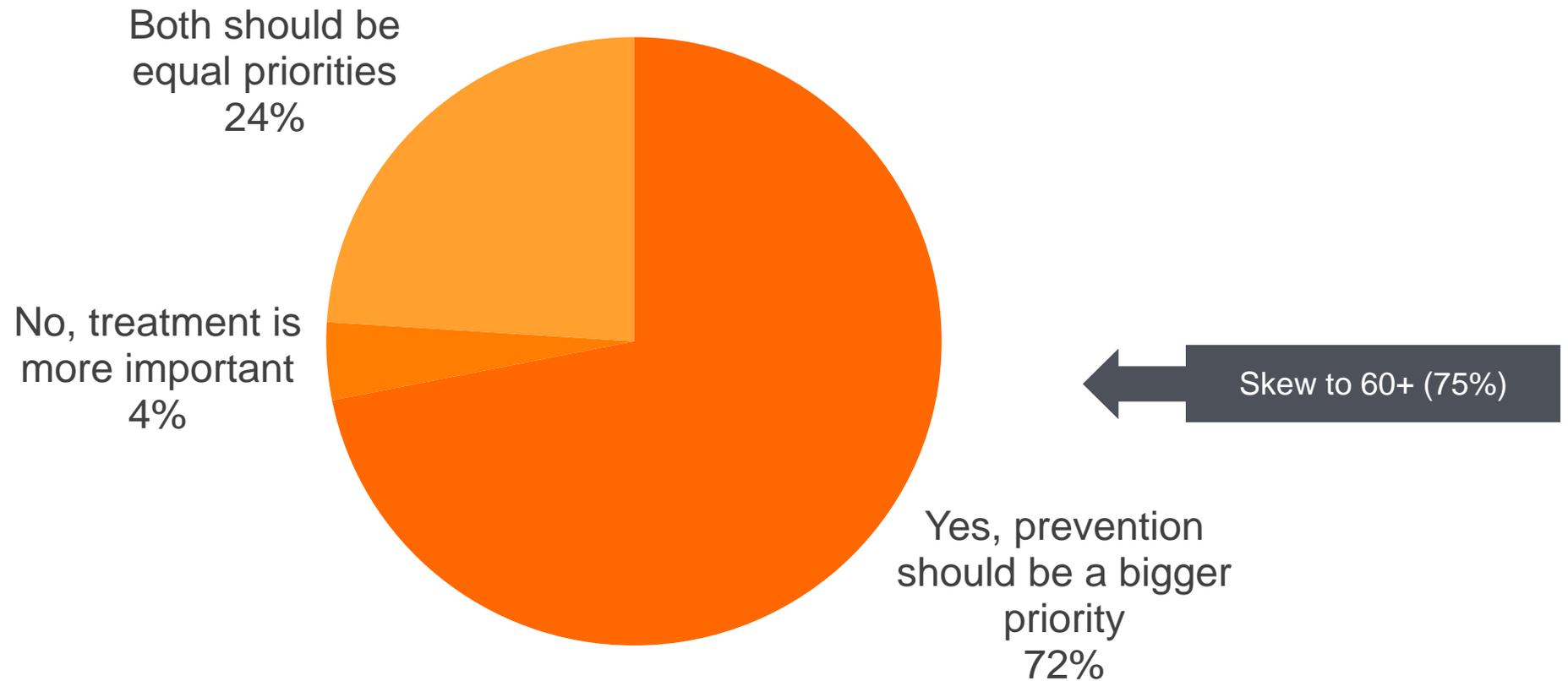


sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

For the 45-60 age group more than a quarter (28 per cent) felt that federal government should be held accountable

# Nearly three quarters feel that prevention should be the priority

Q15. Finally, do you think more focus should be placed on preventing falls rather than treating injuries after a fall?



sample size = 1018; total sample size = 1040

This was higher for 60+ where 75 per cent said prevention should be the priority compared to 45 - 60 (69 per cent)

## Methodology reference



*Antenna, an independent consumer research agency on behalf of APA, conducted an online AntennaPoll survey of n=1,040 Australians.*

*The survey was conducted between 14th & 17th of Feb 2025*

*The survey data collection was national, and respondents were sourced using an accredited online research access panel. Data was weighted for representation against the 2021 ABS Census.*



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