



# Impacts of COVID-19 on Rural Mental Health



AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION®

December 2020

 MORNING CONSULT

## MENTAL HEALTH AMONG RURAL ADULTS AND FARMERS/FARMWORKERS

## Key Findings

- 1. The percentage of rural adults who say mental health is important to them and/or their family increased from April 2019.** Three in four rural adults (75%) say mental health is *very important*, a 6% increase from April 2019. (4) *\*denotes corresponding slide numbers*
- 2. An overwhelming majority (87%) of farmers/farmworkers say it is important to reduce stigma about mental health in the agriculture community, including 59% who say it is very important.** Three in four rural adults (78%) say reducing stigma about mental health in the agriculture community is important. (8,9)
- 3. The main obstacles to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition remain cost, availability, accessibility, stigma and embarrassment.** Among farmers/farmworkers, the percent agreeing cost (-11%) and embarrassment (-10%) are barriers decreased. However, agreement that stigma (+13%), availability (+12%) and accessibility (+9%) are barriers increased since April 2019. (13,14,15)
- 4. Two in three farmers/farmworkers (66%) say the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their mental health,** while rural adults are split on COVID-19's impact. Half of rural adults (53%) say the pandemic has impacted their mental health at least some, while 44% say it has not been impacted much or at all. Younger rural adults are more likely than older rural adults to say the pandemic has impacted their mental health a lot. (26,27,28)
- 5. Three in five rural adults (61%) say the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted mental health in rural communities a lot or some.** Farmers/farmworkers are more likely than rural adults to say COVID-19 has impacted mental health in rural communities *a lot* (37% vs. 22%). (29,30,31)
- 6. Farmers/farmworkers are 10% more likely than rural adults to have experienced feeling nervous, anxious or on edge during the pandemic (65% vs 55%).** (32)
- 7. Half of rural adults (52%) aged 18-34 say they have thought more about their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, more than other age groups.** (34)
- 8. The percentage of farmers/farmworkers who think social isolation impacts farmers' mental health increased 22% since April 2019.** (40)
- 9. Farmers/farmworkers are 7% more likely than rural adults (52% vs. 45%) to say stress and mental health have become more of a problem in their community in the past year.** Younger rural adults also are more likely than older rural adults to say stress and mental health have become more of a problem in their community and personally in the past year. (42,43,44)
- 10. Two-thirds of rural adults ages 18-44 say they are personally experiencing more mental health challenges than they were a year ago.** More than half of rural adults (56%) and farmers/farmworkers (58%) say they are personally experiencing more mental health challenges than they were a year ago. (45,46,47)

**Methodology:** Morning Consult conducted this poll on behalf of the American Farm Bureau Federation between December 4-13, 2020 among a national sample of 2,000 rural adults. The interviews were conducted online. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points. Results are tracked from an AFBF/Morning Consult survey conducted between April 4-10, 2019 among a national sample of 2,004 rural adults.

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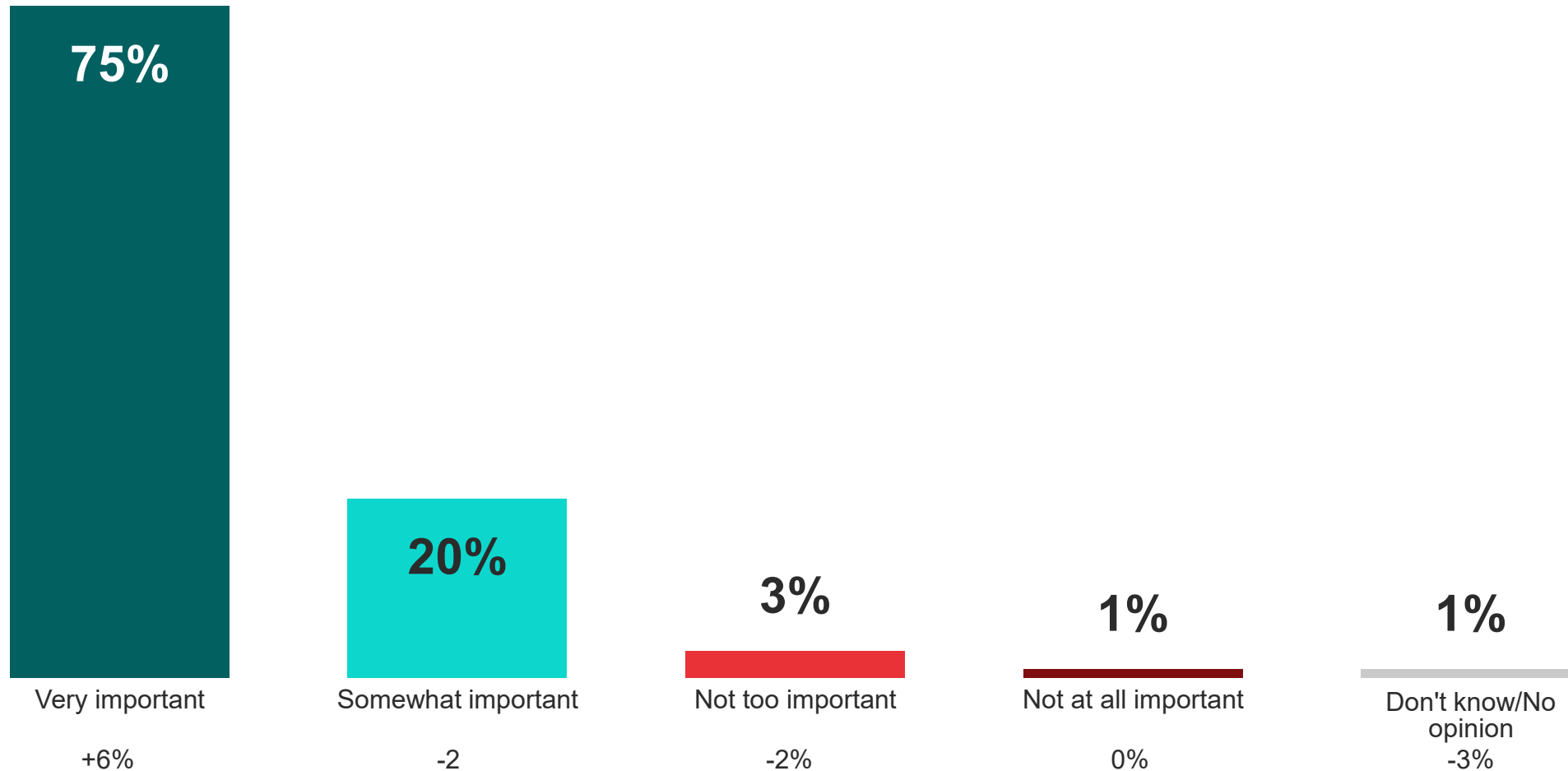
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GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Three in four rural adults say mental health is *very important* to them and/or their family, a 6% increase from April 2019.

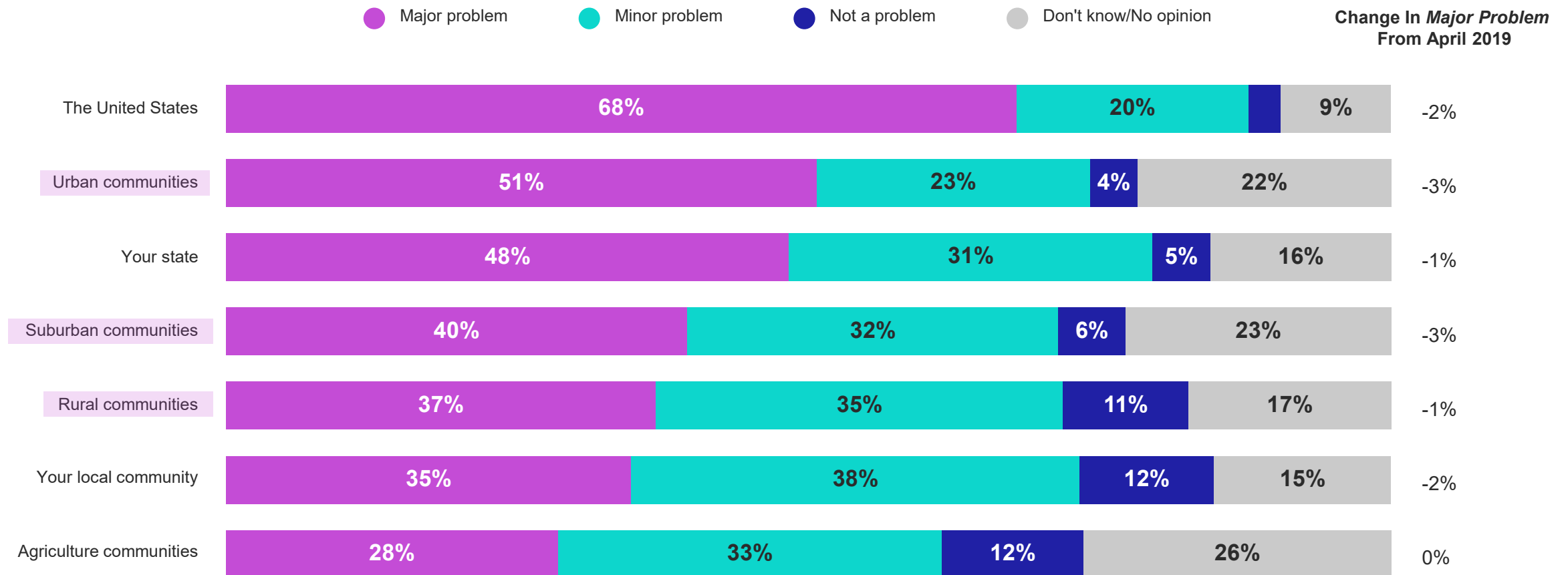
How important is mental health to you and your family?



GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Consistent with polling from April 2019, rural adults are more likely to say mental health is a *major problem* in urban (51%) communities rather than suburban (40%) and rural (37%) communities.

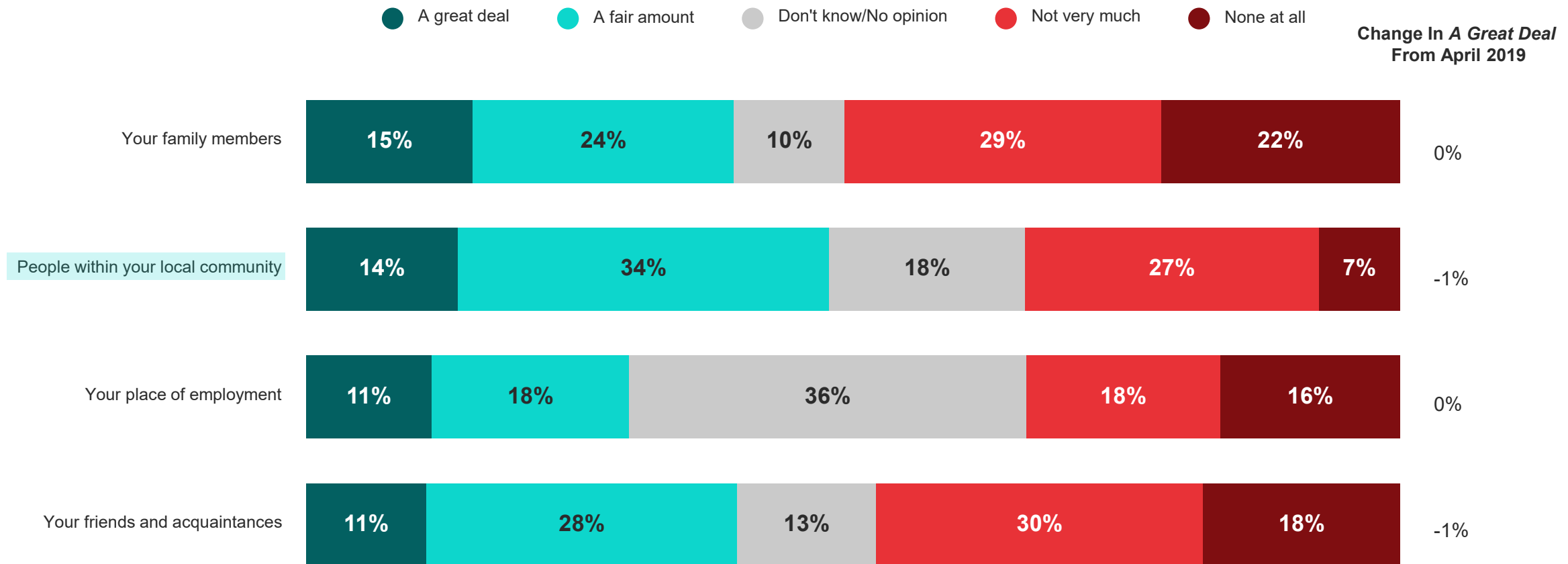
In your opinion, how big of a problem is mental health in each of the following?



GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Half of rural adults (48%) think people in their local community attach at least a fair amount of stigma to mental health.

In your opinion, how much stigma do the following groups **attach to mental health**?

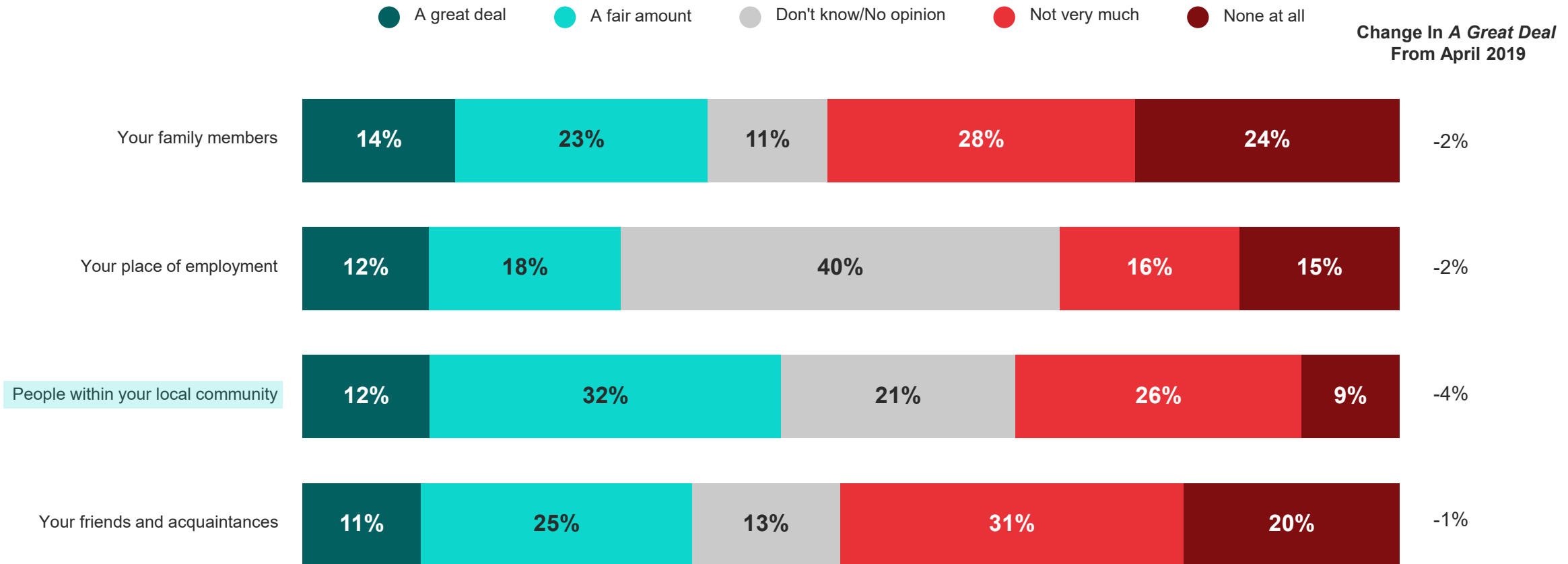


Split A- split sampled 'attach to mental health' and 'attach to seeking treatment or help for mental health'

**GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH**

Similarly, 44% of rural adults think people in their local community attach at least a fair amount of stigma to seeking treatment or help for mental health.

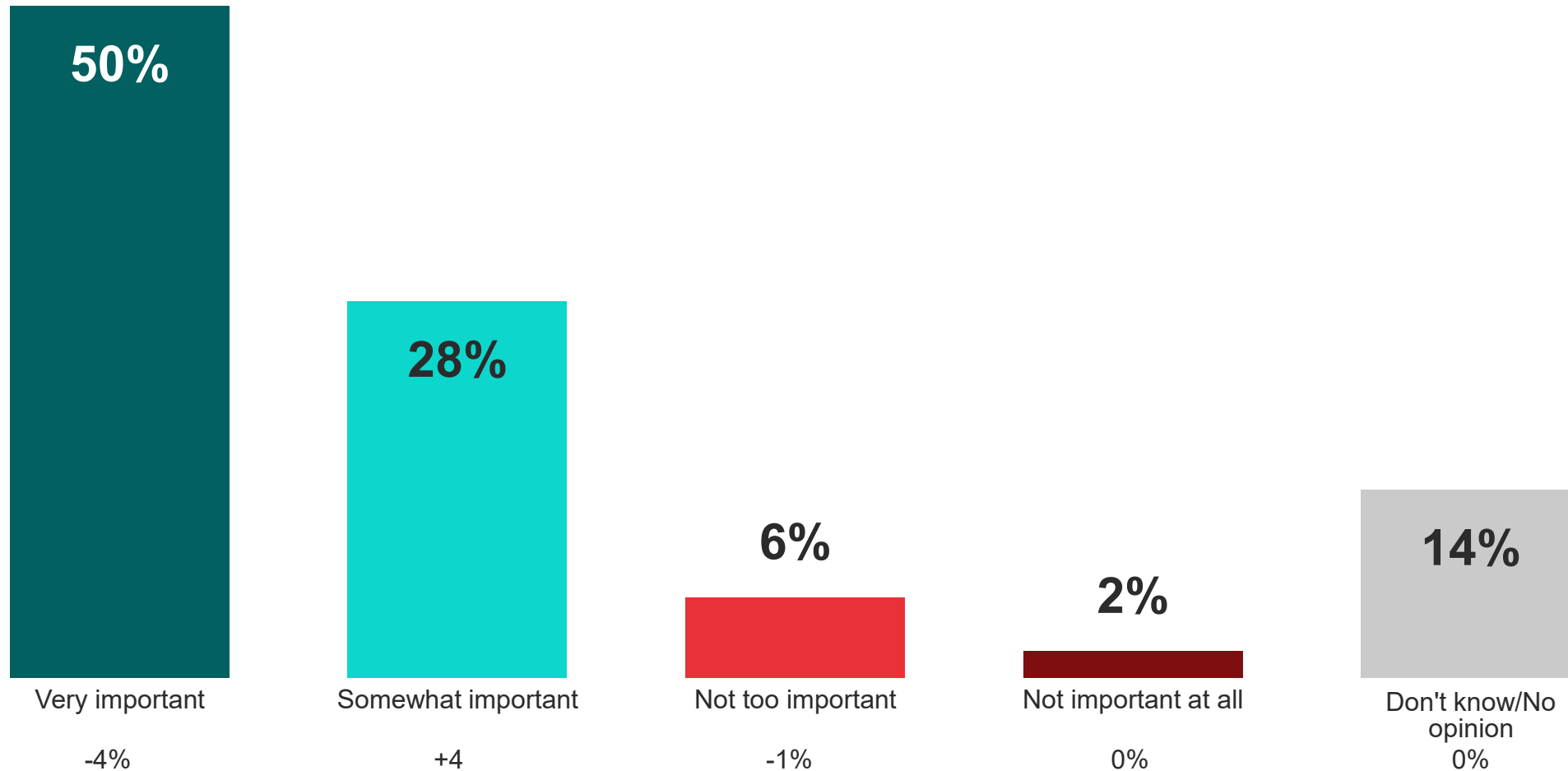
In your opinion, how much stigma do the following groups **attach to seeking treatment or help for mental health?**



GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Three in four rural adults (78%) say it is important to reduce stigma about mental health in the agriculture community.

How important is it to reduce stigma about mental health in the agriculture community?



Change From April 2019

-4%

+4

-1%

0%

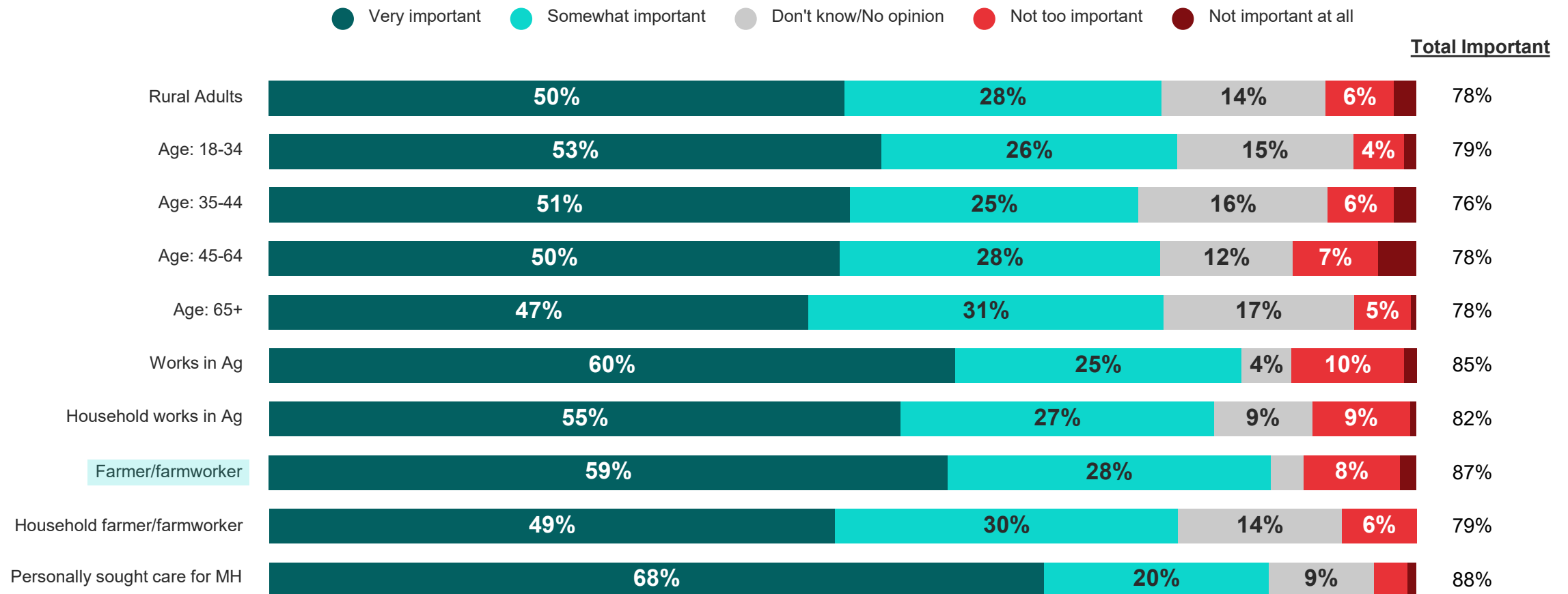
0%



GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH

And 87% of farmers/farmworkers say it is important to reduce stigma about mental health in the agriculture community, including 59% who say it is *very important*.

How important is it to reduce stigma about mental health in the agriculture community?



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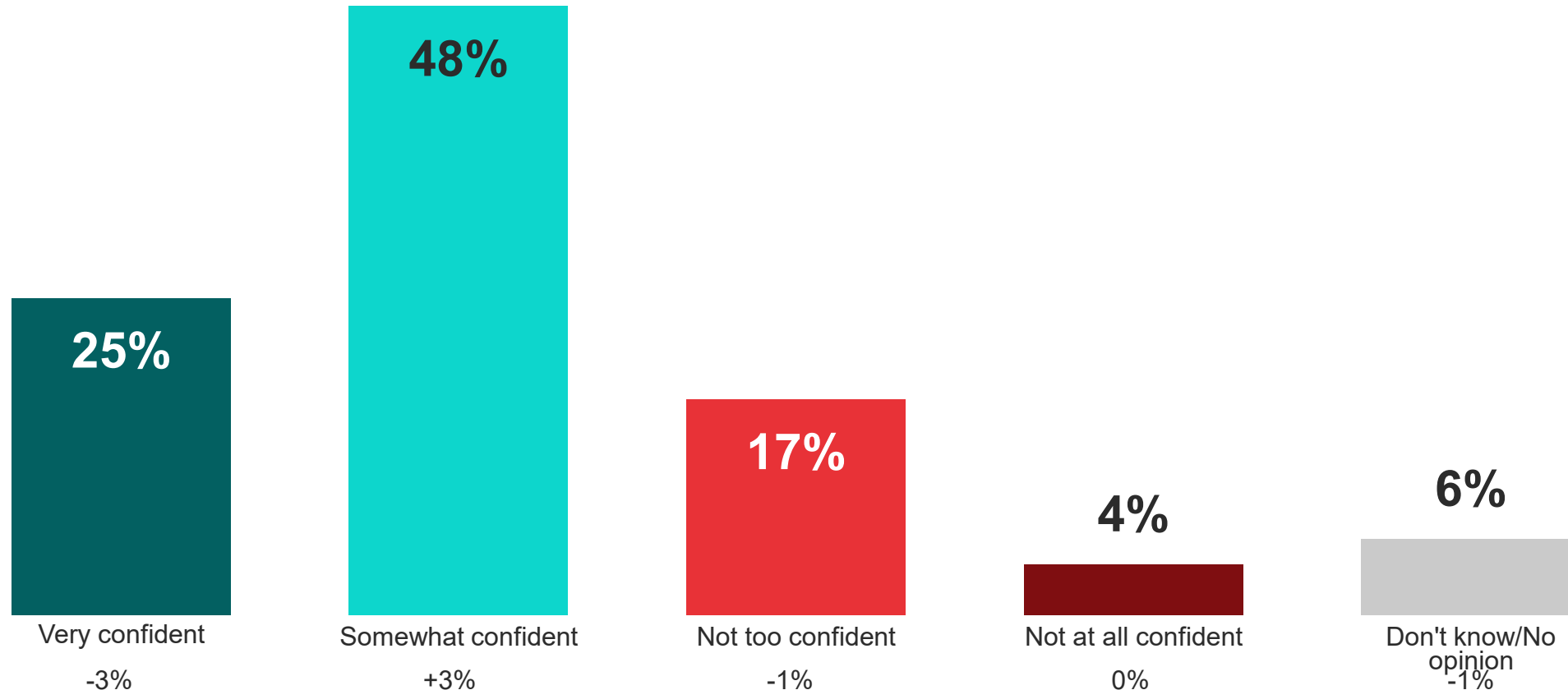
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ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Consistent with results from April 2019, 73% of rural adults are confident they would be able to spot the warning signs of a mental health condition in an immediate family member or close friend.

How confident are you that you would be able to spot the warning signs of a mental health condition in an immediate family member or close friend?

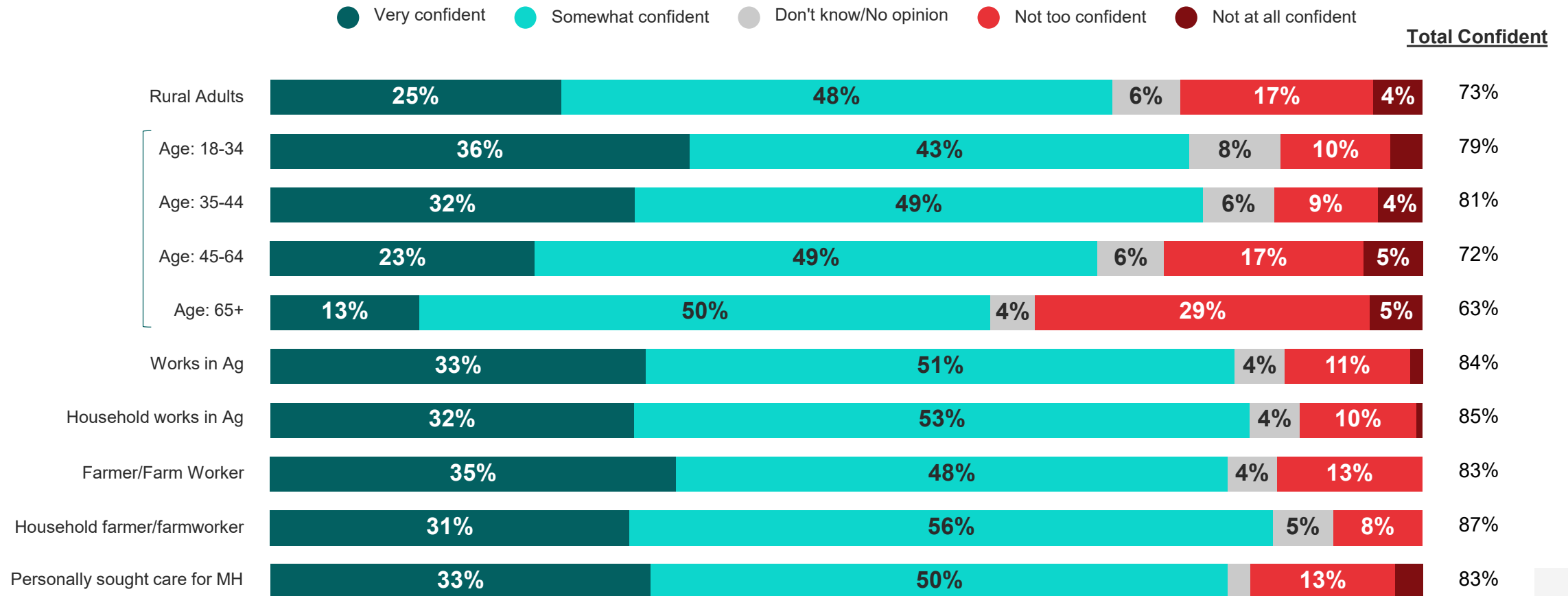


Change From April 2019

ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Younger rural adults are more likely than older rural adults to be *very confident* they would be able to spot the warning signs of a mental health condition in an immediate family member or close friend.

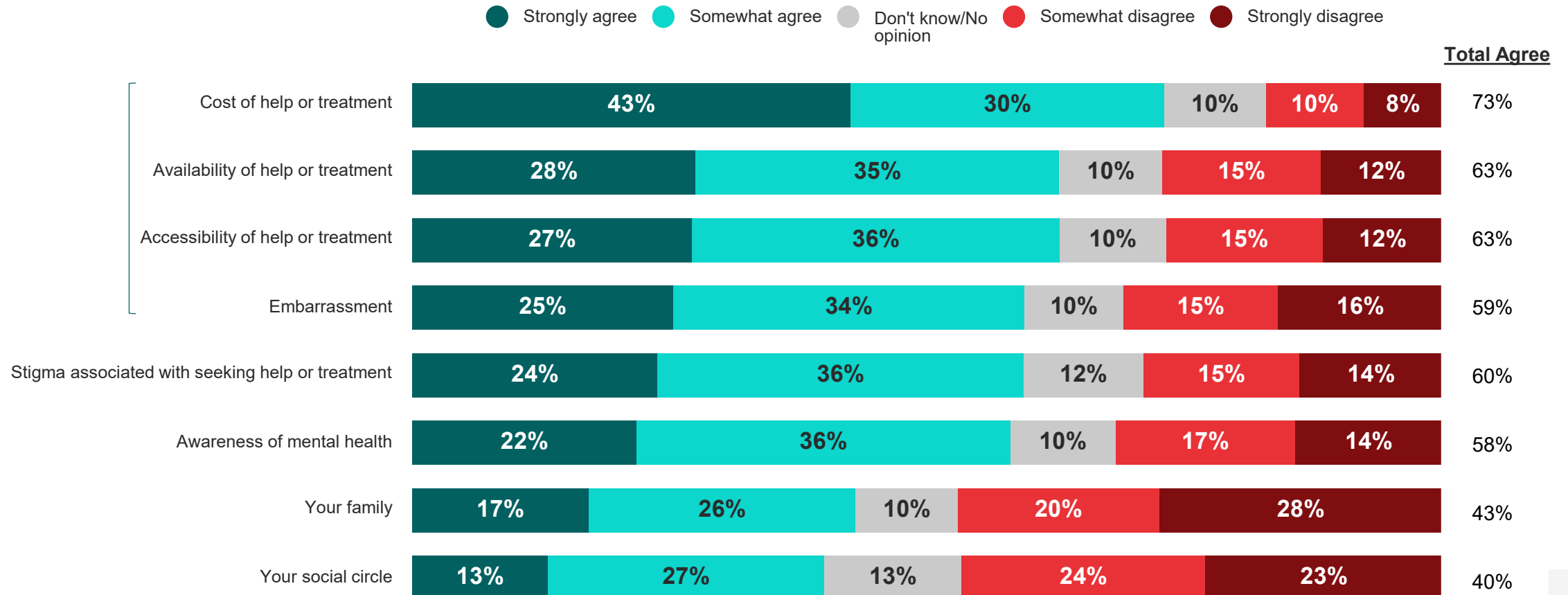
How confident are you that you would be able to spot the warning signs of a mental health condition in an immediate family member or close friend?



## ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

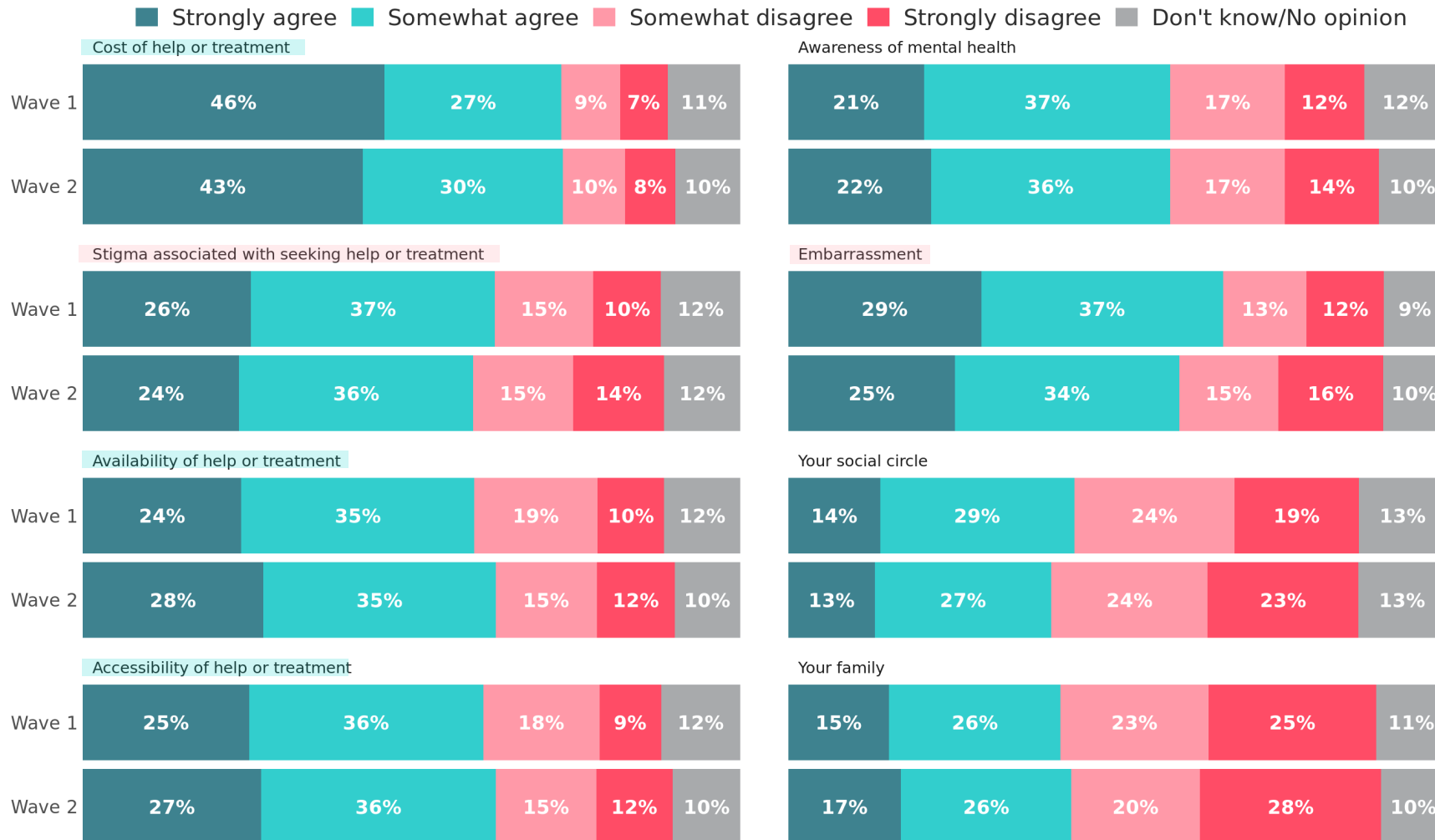
A majority of rural adults agree that cost (73%), availability (63%), accessibility (63%), stigma (60%) and embarrassment (59%) would be barriers if they were seeking help for a mental health condition.

Some say the following are obstacles to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition. Do you agree or disagree that the following would be an obstacle if you if you were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition?



**ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES**

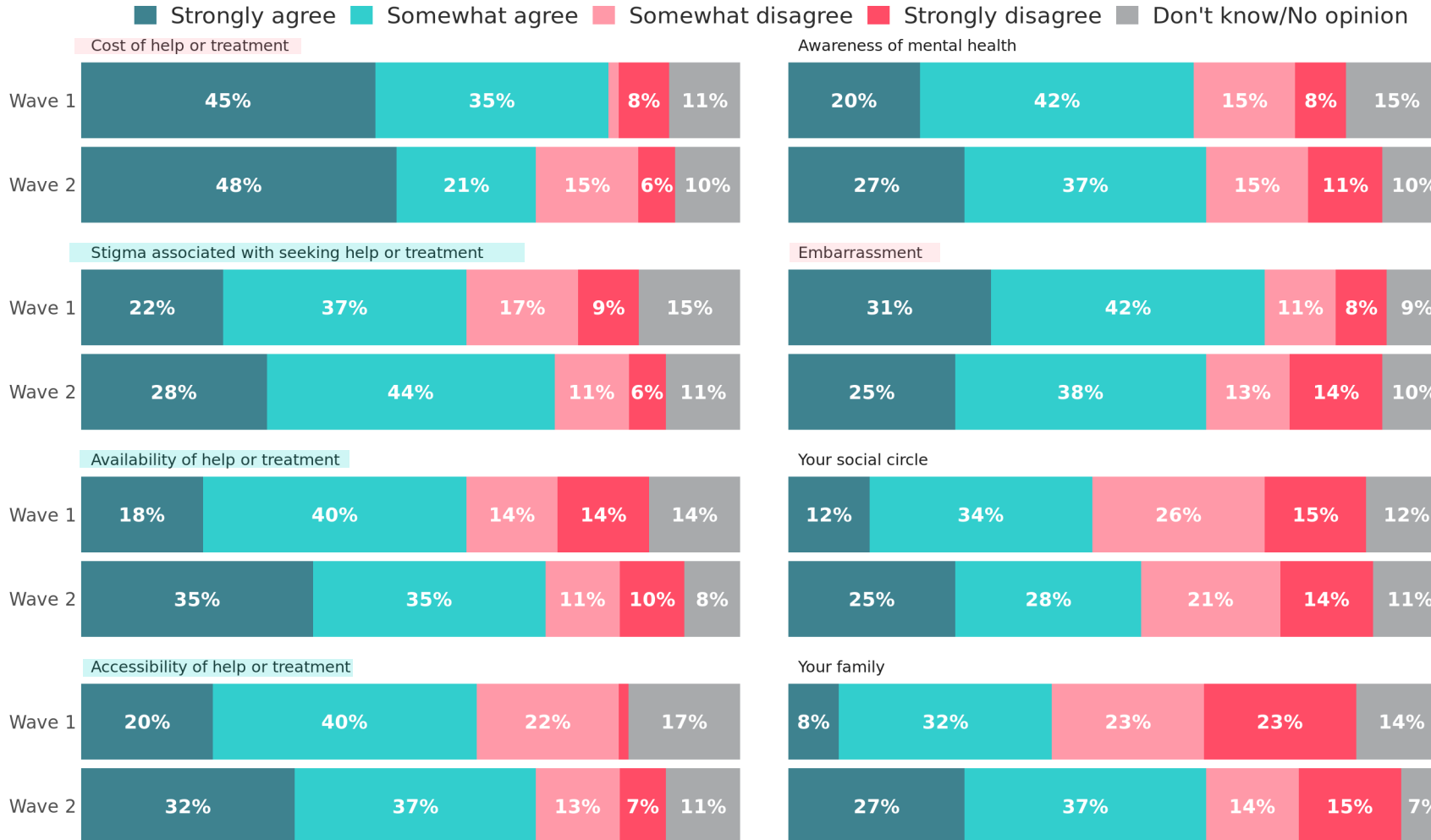
Some say the following are obstacles to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition. Do you agree or disagree that the following would be an obstacle if you if you were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition?



Consistent with April 2019 results, cost, availability, and accessibility of help or treatment remain the main barriers to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition. On the other hand, the percent of rural adults agreeing embarrassment (-7) or stigma (-3%) is a barrier decreased.

**ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES**

Some say the following are obstacles to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition. Do you agree or disagree that the following would be an obstacle if you if you were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition?



Among farmers/farm workers, the percent agreeing cost (-11%) and embarrassment (-10%) are barriers to seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition decreased. On the other hand, agreement that stigma (+13%), availability (+12%), and accessibility (+9%) are barriers increased since April 2019.

\*Wave 1, n=65  
Wave 2, n=71, margin of error 12%

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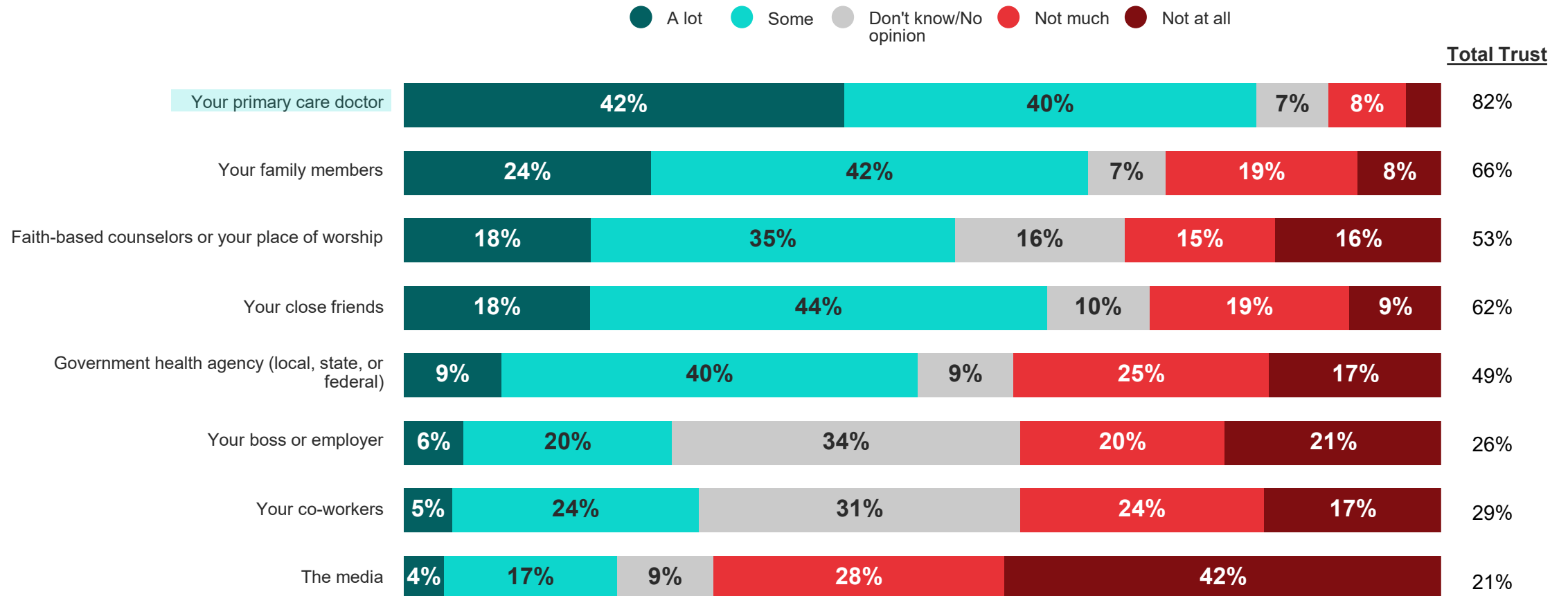




**TRUSTED RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION**

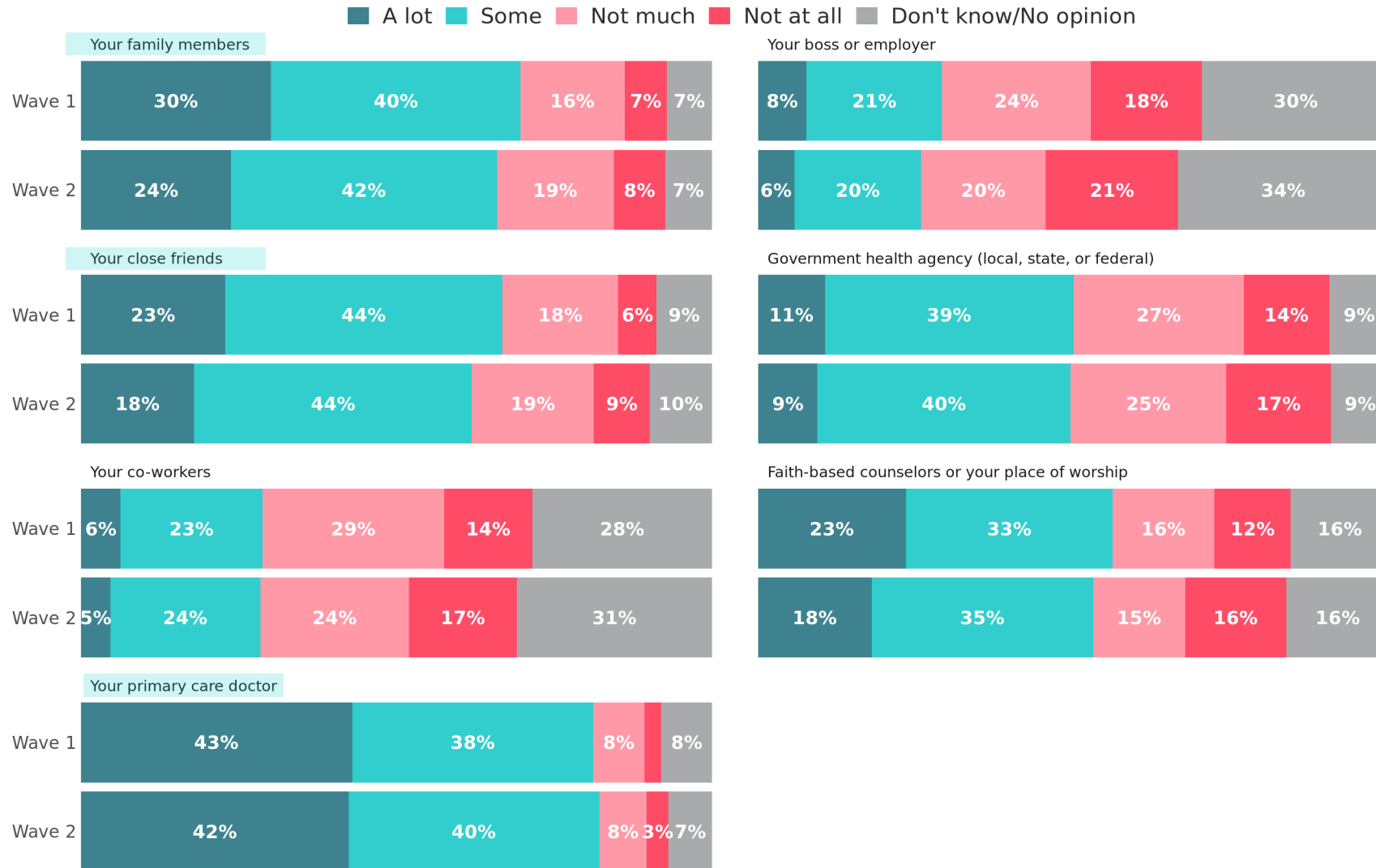
Rural adults are most likely to trust their primary care doctor (82%) for information on mental health.

How much do you trust the following sources for information on mental health?



TRUSTED RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION

How much do you trust the following sources for information on mental health?

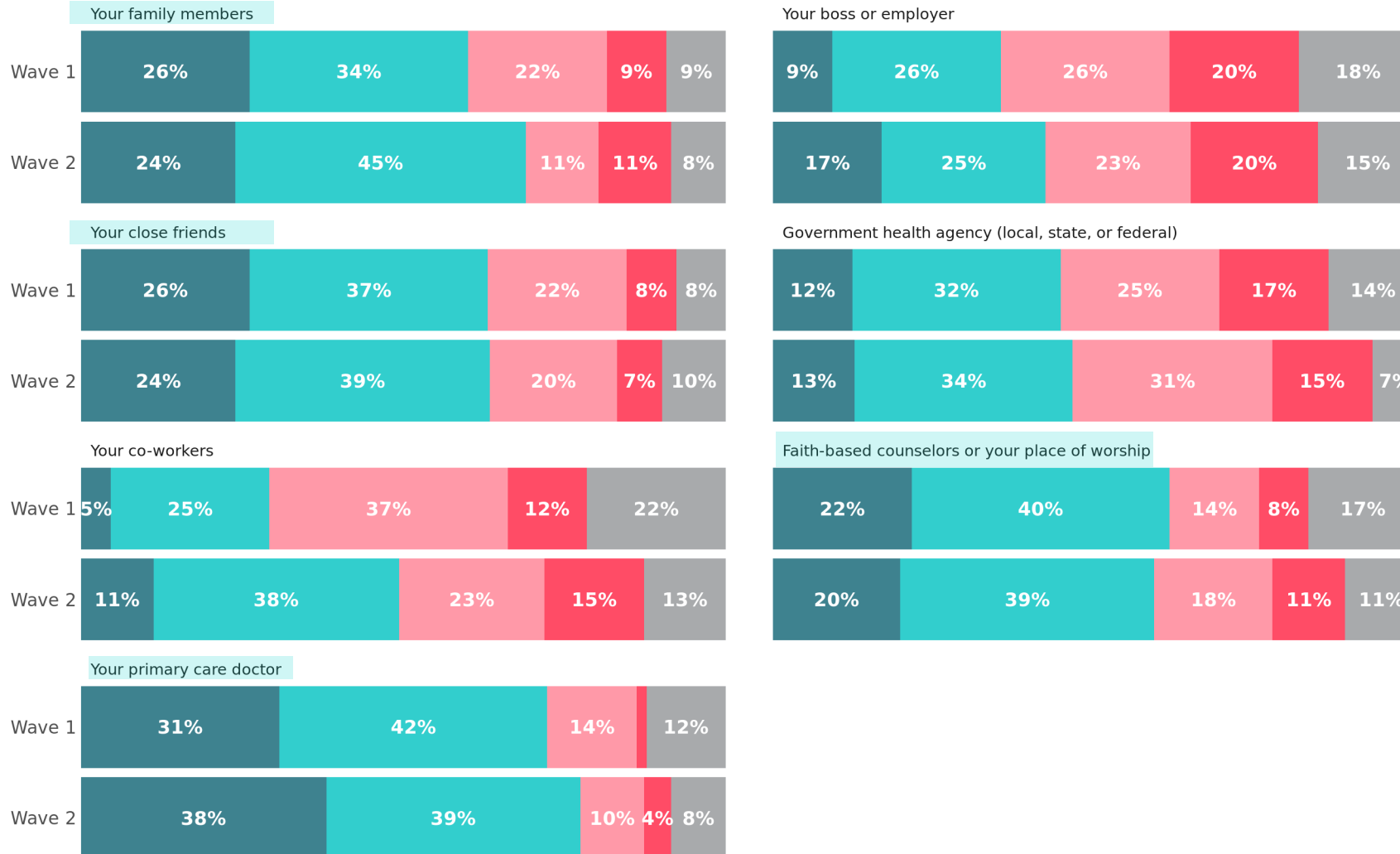


Consistent with results from April 2019, personal primary care doctors, family members, and close friends remain the most trusted sources for information on mental health.

**TRUSTED RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION**

How much do you trust the following sources for information on mental health?

■ A lot ■ Some ■ Not much ■ Not at all ■ Don't know/No opinion



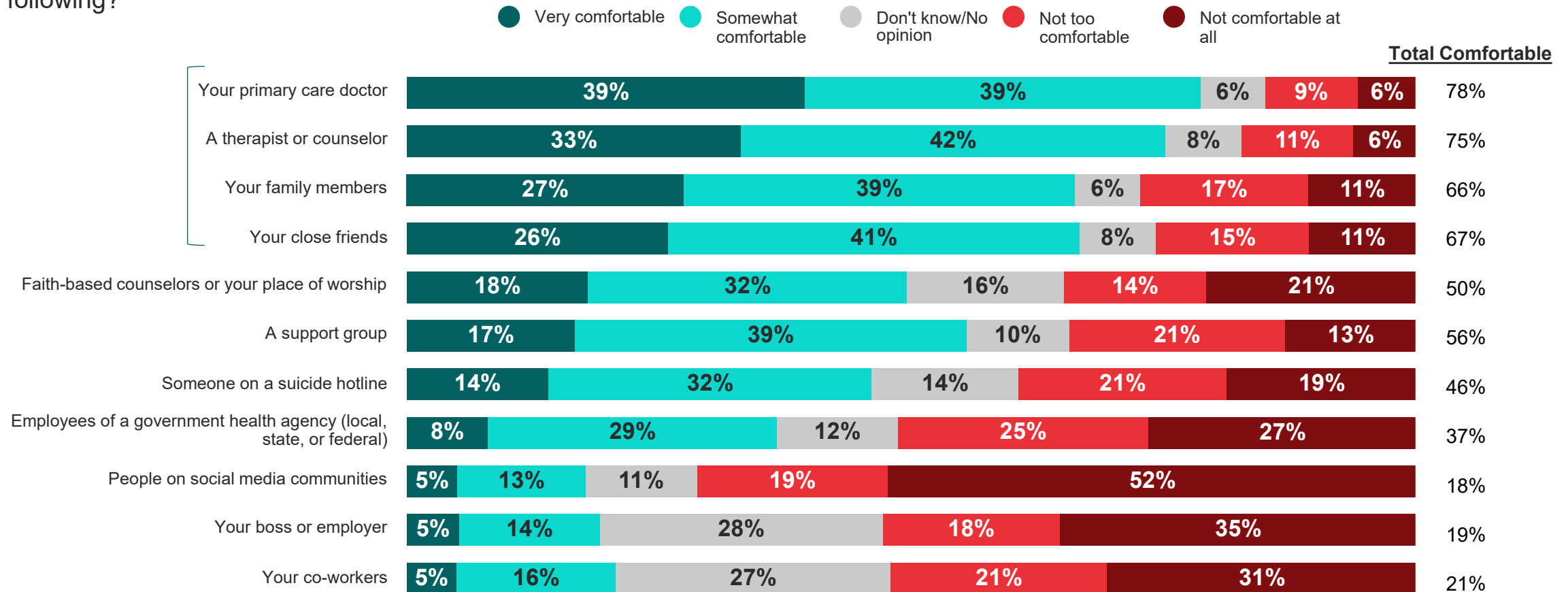
Along with their primary care doctor (77%), family members (69%), and close friends (69%), a majority of farmers/farm workers trust faith-based counselors or their place of worship (59%) for information on mental health.

\*Wave 1, n=65  
Wave 2, n=71, margin of error 12%

**TRUSTED RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION**

More than two-thirds of rural adults say they would be comfortable talking to their primary care doctor (78%), therapist or counselor (75%), family members (66%), or close friends (67%) if they were dealing with a high level of stress or a mental health condition.

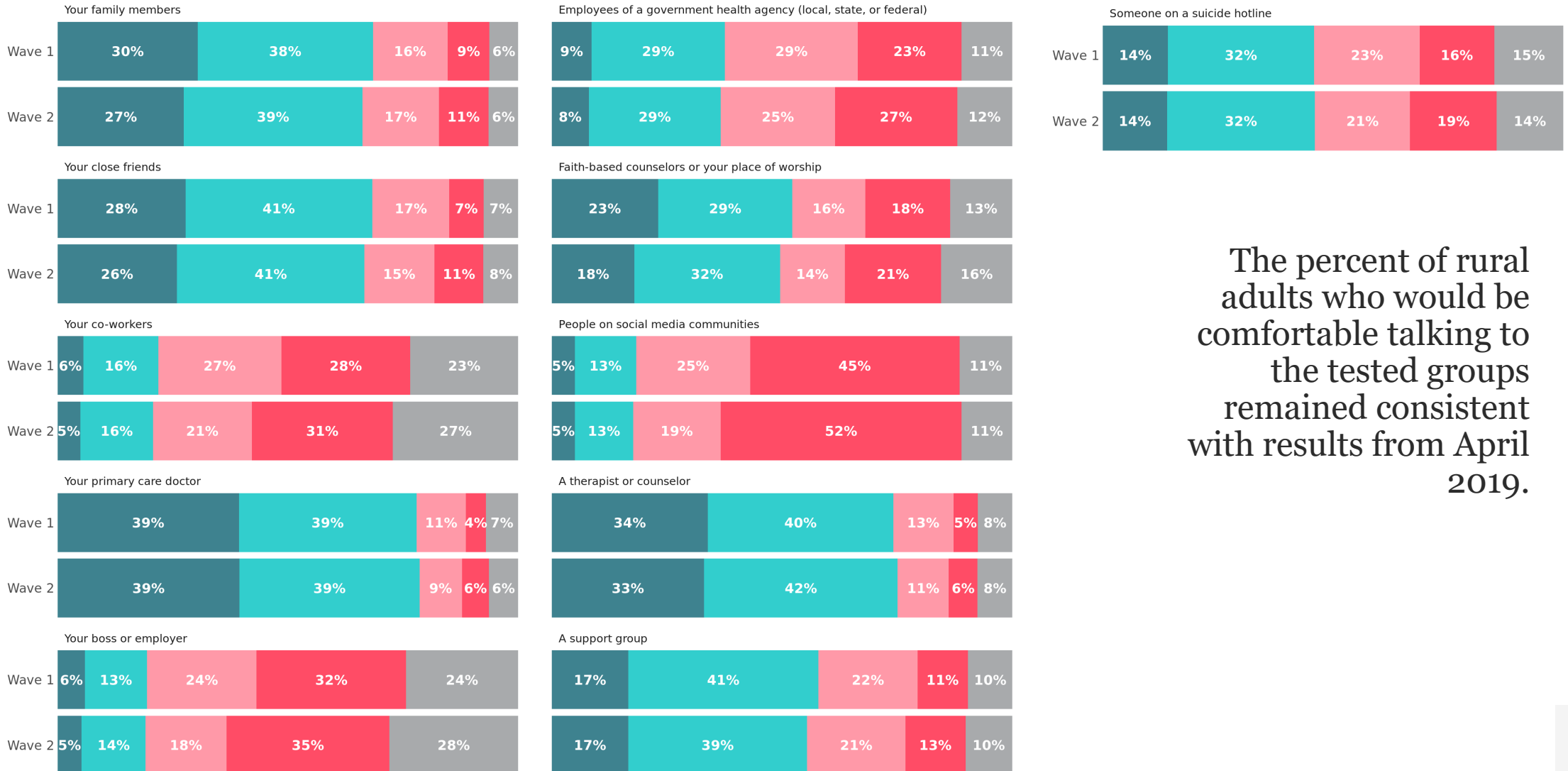
If you were dealing with a high level of stress or a mental health condition, how comfortable would you be talking with each of the following?



**TRUSTED RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION**

If you were dealing with a high level of stress or a mental health condition, how comfortable would you be talking with each of the following?

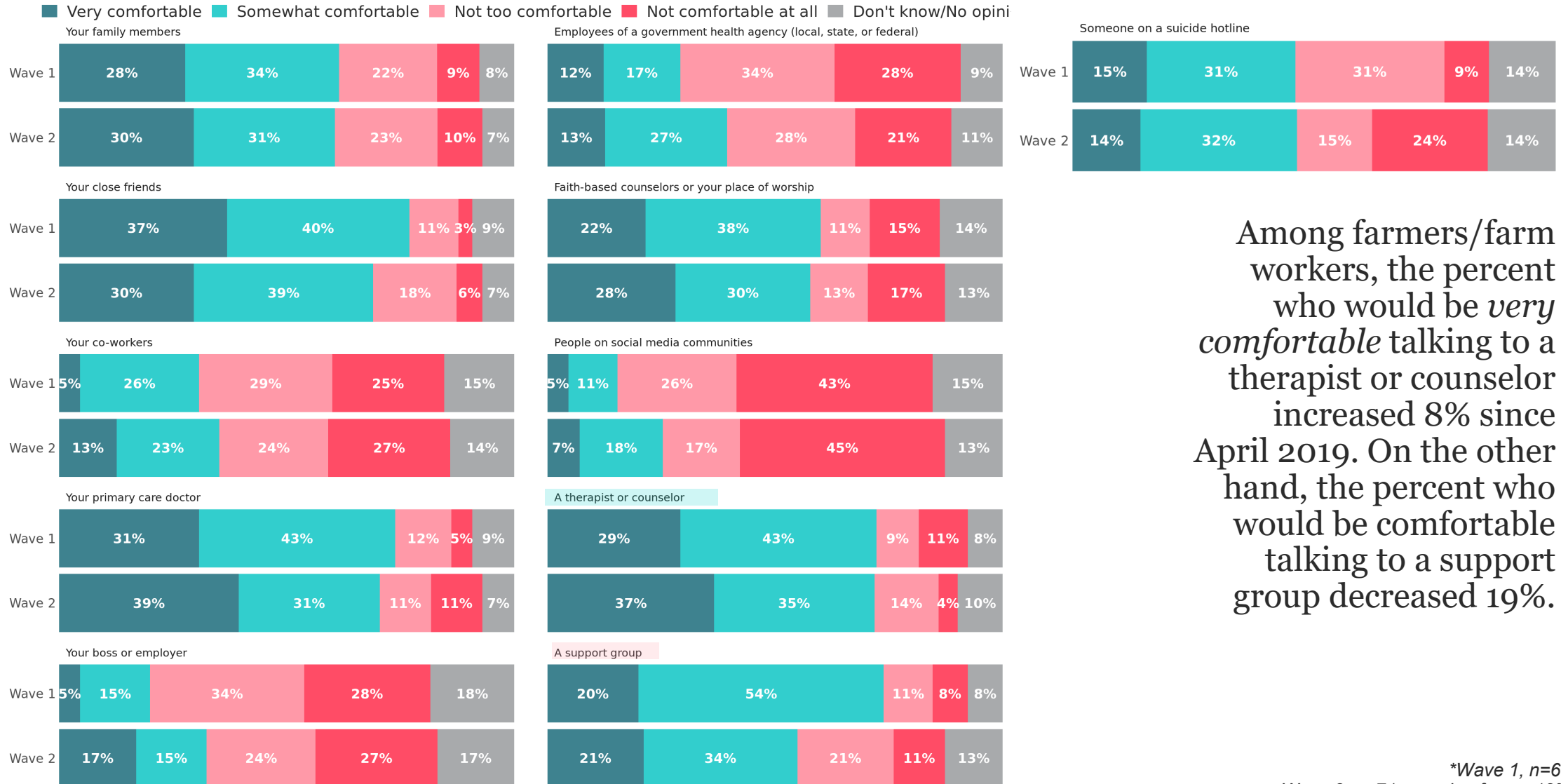
Very comfortable    Somewhat comfortable    Not too comfortable    Not comfortable at all    Don't know/No opinion



The percent of rural adults who would be comfortable talking to the tested groups remained consistent with results from April 2019.

**TRUSTED RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION**

If you were dealing with a high level of stress or a mental health condition, how comfortable would you be talking with each of the following?



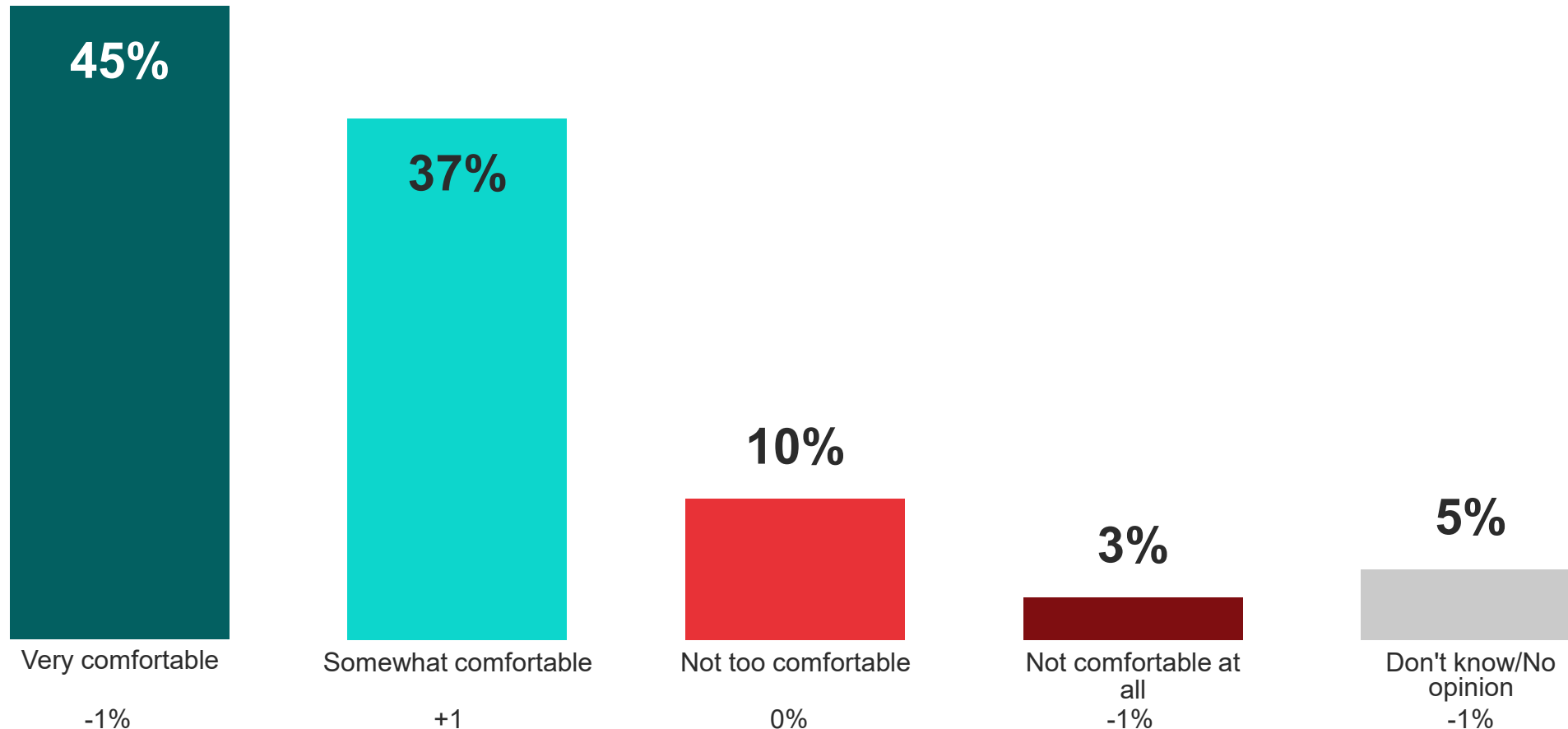
Among farmers/farm workers, the percent who would be *very comfortable* talking to a therapist or counselor increased 8% since April 2019. On the other hand, the percent who would be comfortable talking to a support group decreased 19%.

\*Wave 1, n=65  
Wave 2, n=71, margin of error 12%

TRUSTED RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION

Four in five rural adults (82%) say they would be comfortable talking with a friend or family member who is dealing with stress or mental health condition.

If you have a friend or family member dealing with stress or a mental health condition, how comfortable would you be talking with them about solutions?



Change From April 2019

-1%

+1

0%

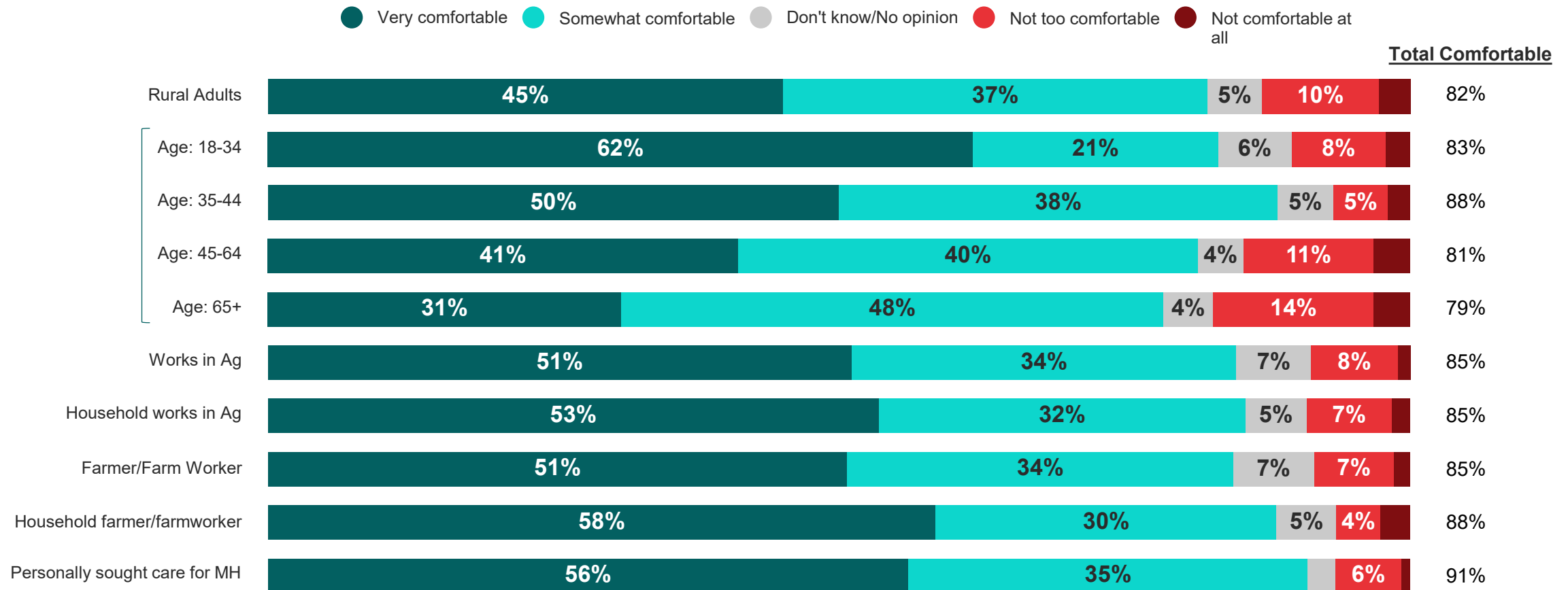
-1%

-1%

**TRUSTED RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION**

Younger rural adults are more likely than older rural adults to be *very comfortable* talking to a family or friend dealing with stress or a mental health condition.

If you have a friend or family member dealing with stress or a mental health condition, how comfortable would you be talking with them about solutions?





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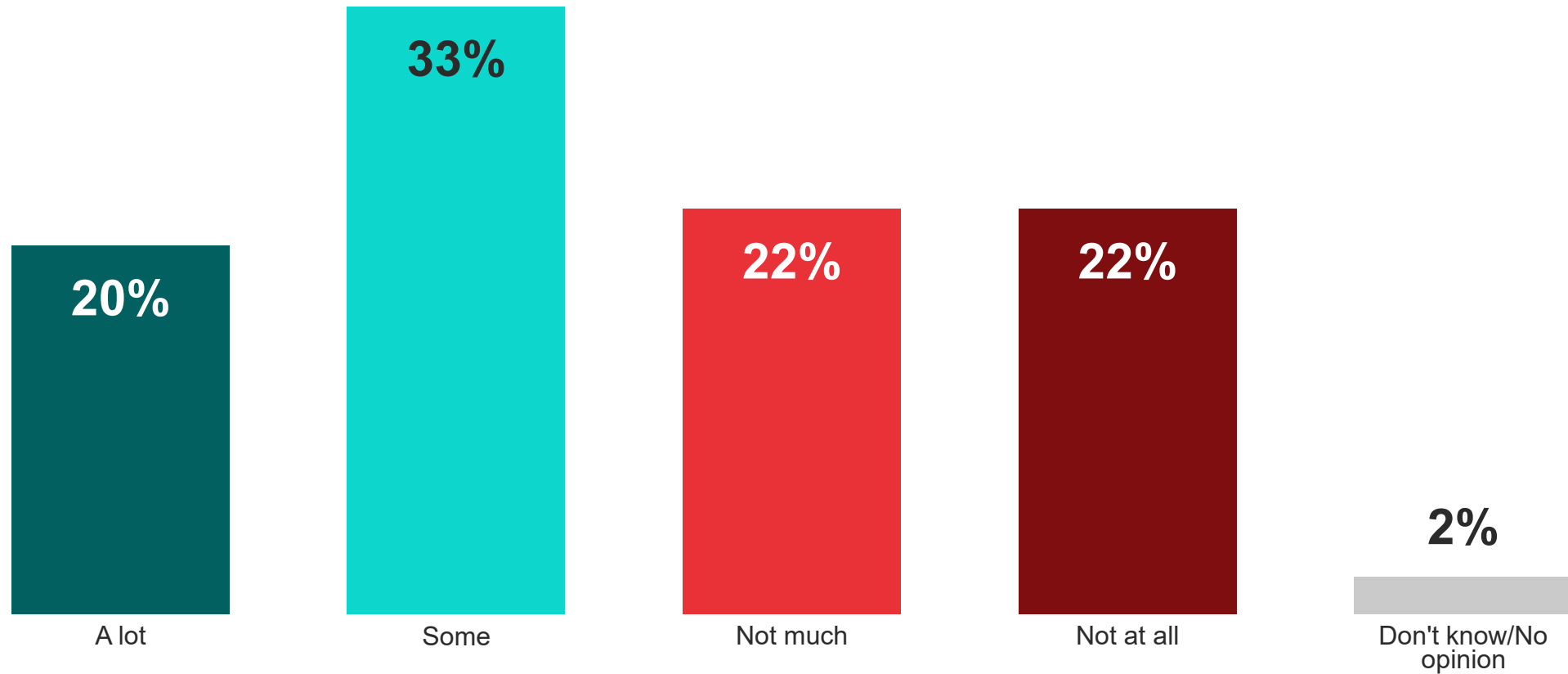
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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

Rural adults are split on how COVID-19 has impacted their mental health; 53% say the pandemic has impacted their mental health at least some, while 44% say their mental health has not been impacted much or at all.

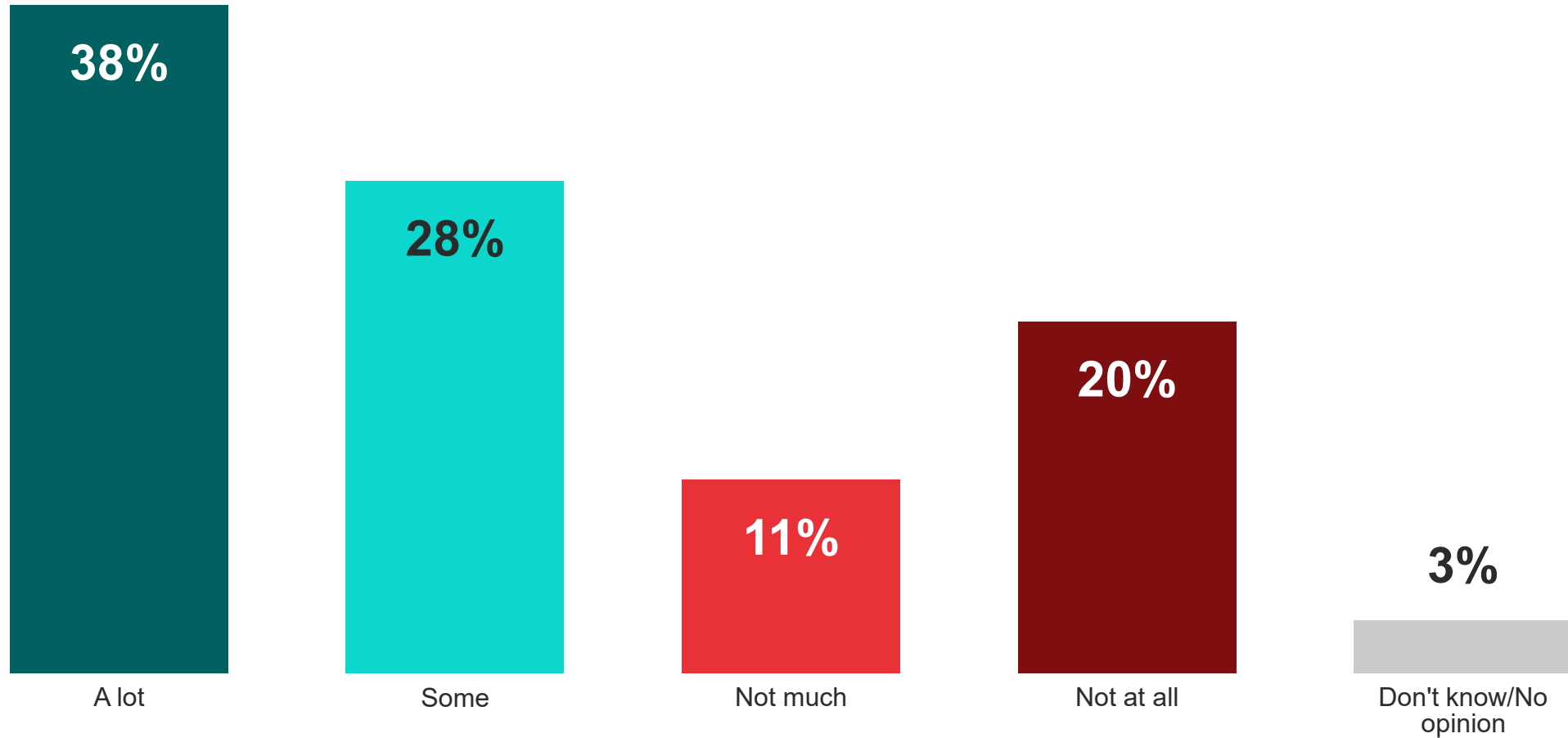
How much has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your mental health, if at all?



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

Farmers/farmworkers are more likely than rural adults to say COVID-19 has impacted their mental health (66% vs 53%).

How much has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your mental health, if at all?

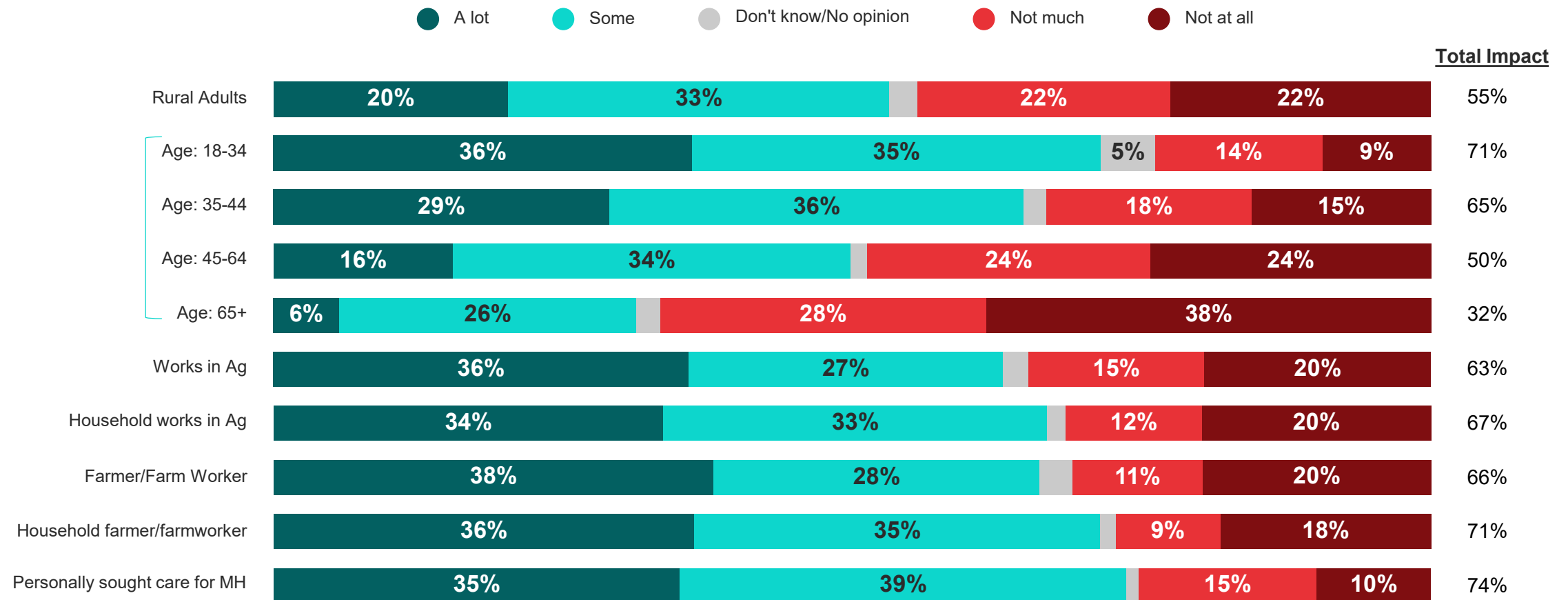


\*n=71

**IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH**

Younger rural adults are more likely than older rural adults to say COVID-19 has impacted their mental health *a lot*.

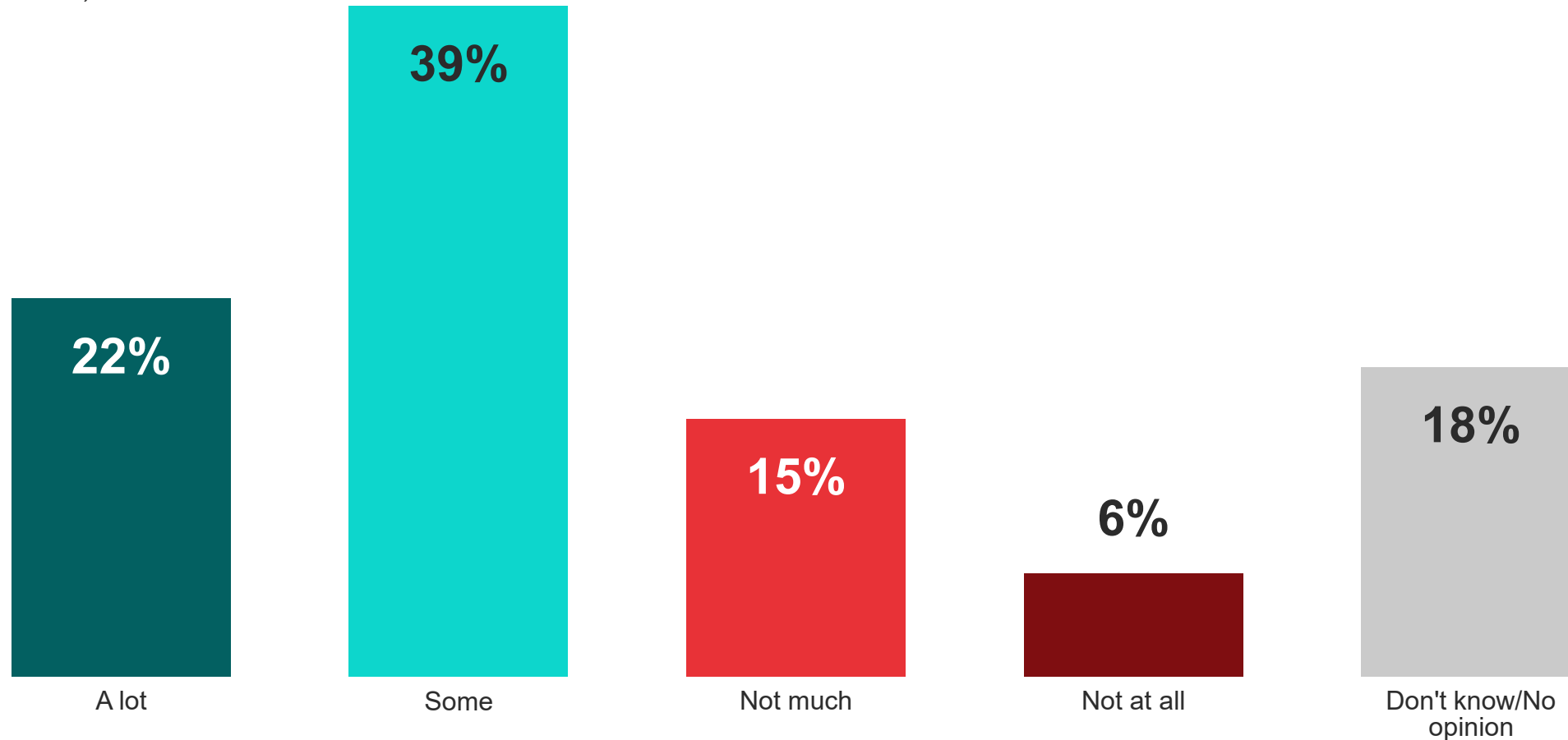
How much has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your mental health, if at all?



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

Three in five rural adults (61%) say the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the mental health in rural communities *a lot or some*.

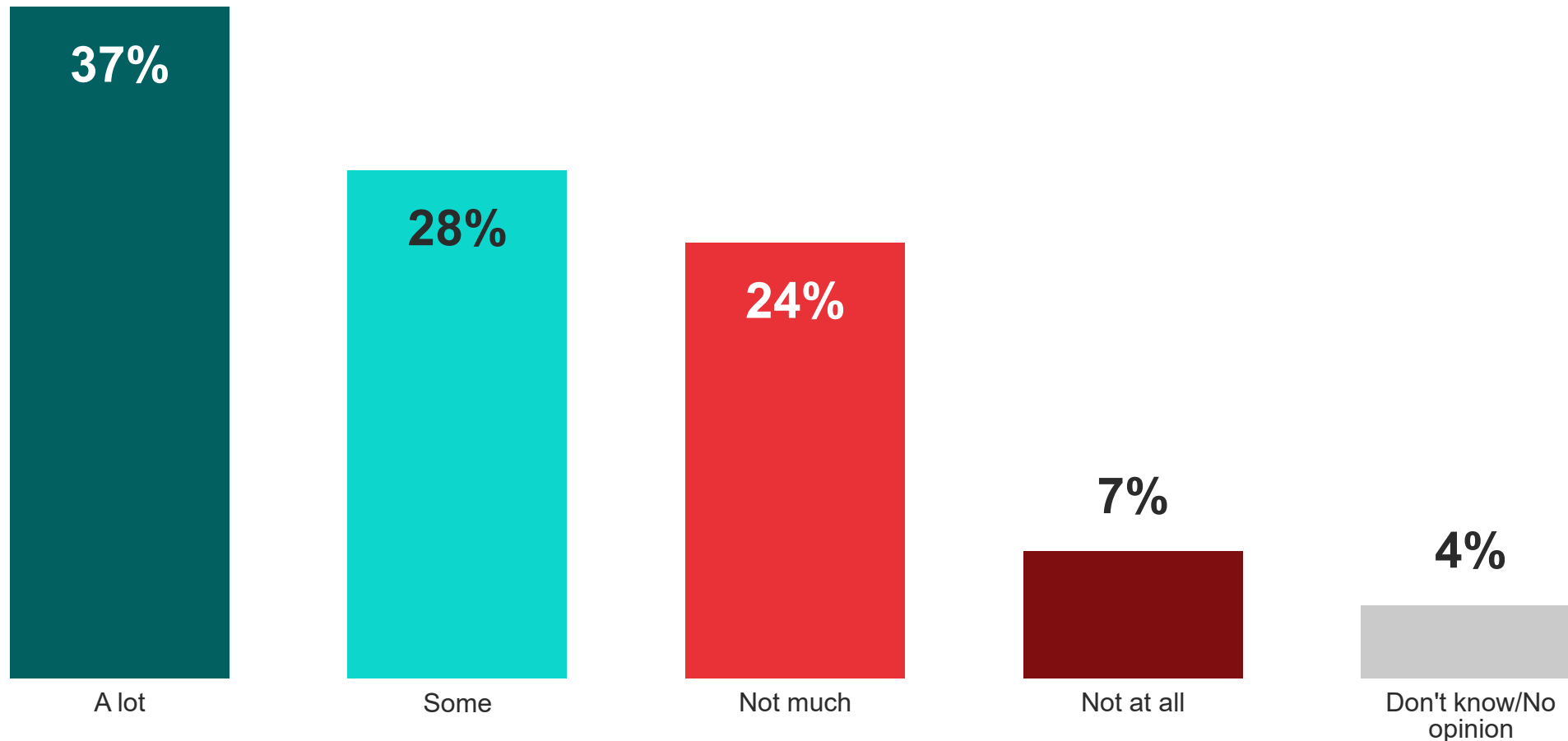
Thinking about rural communities, based on what you know, how much has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted mental health in rural communities, if at all?



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

And 65% of farmers/farmworkers say the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted mental health in rural communities *a lot or some*.

Thinking about rural communities, based on what you know, how much has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted mental health in rural communities, if at all?

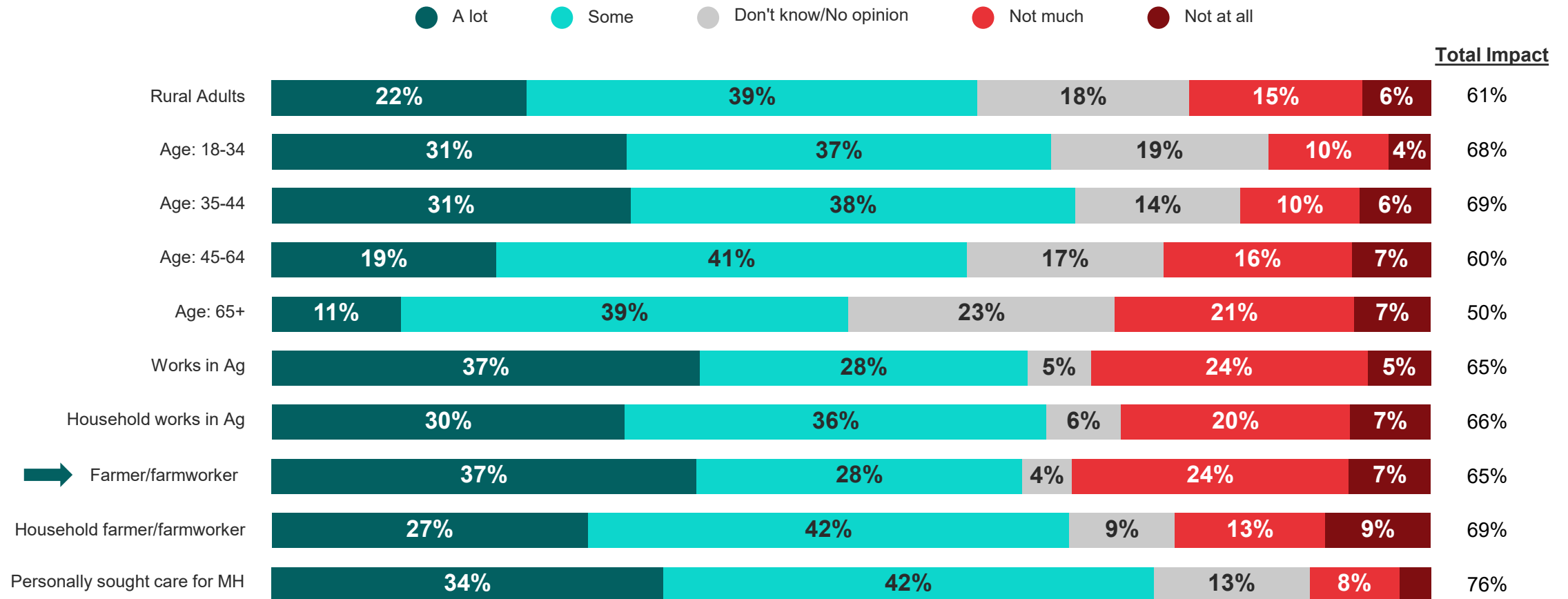


\*n=71

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

Farmers/farmworkers are more likely than rural adults to say COVID-19 has impacted mental health in rural communities *a lot* (37% vs. 22%).

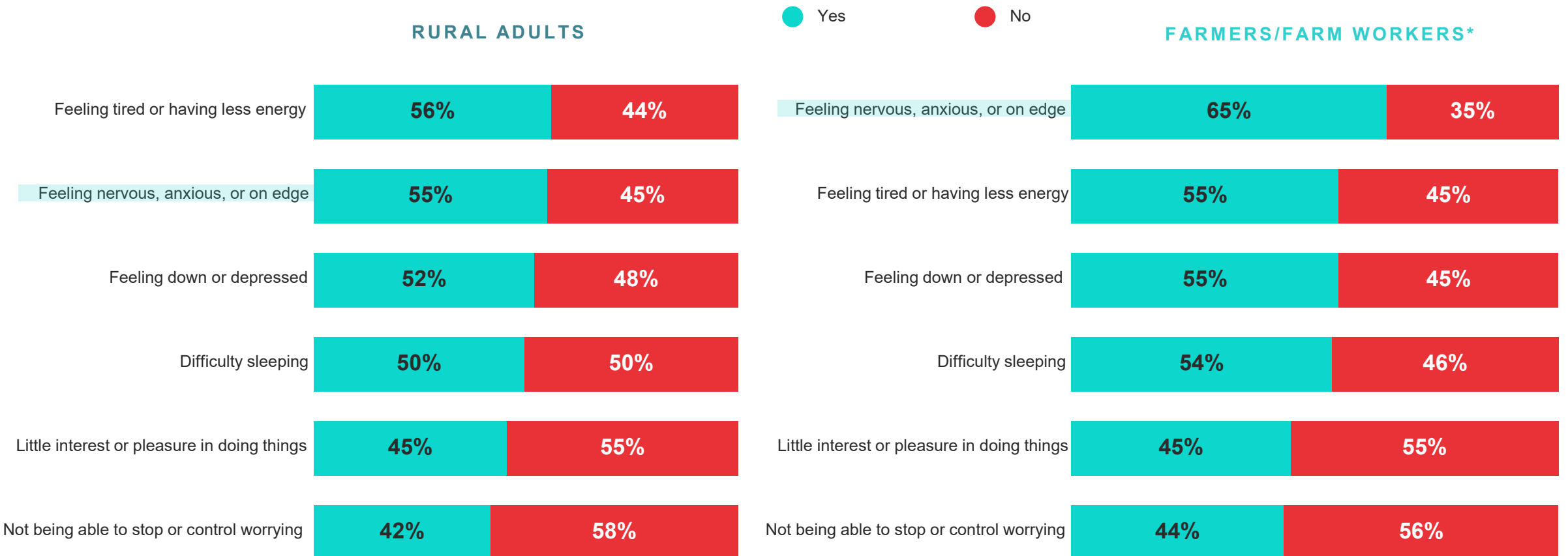
Thinking about rural communities, based on what you know, how much has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted mental health in rural communities, if at all?



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

Farmers/farmworkers are 10% more likely than rural adults to have experienced feeling nervous, anxious or on edge during COVID-19 (65% vs 55%).

Have you experienced any of the following during the COVID-19 pandemic?



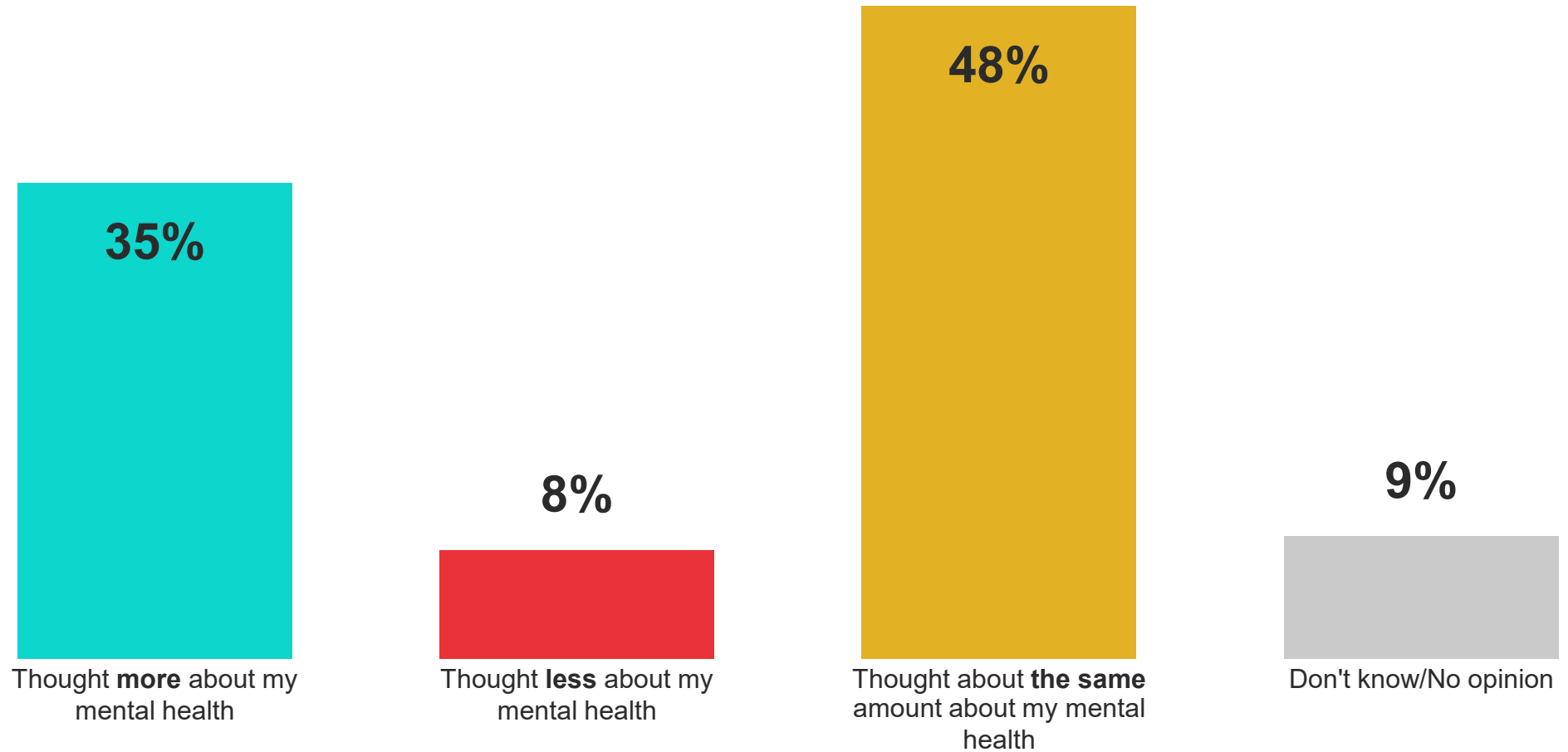
\*n=71



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

A third of rural adults (35%) say they have thought about their mental health *more* during the COVID-19 pandemic.

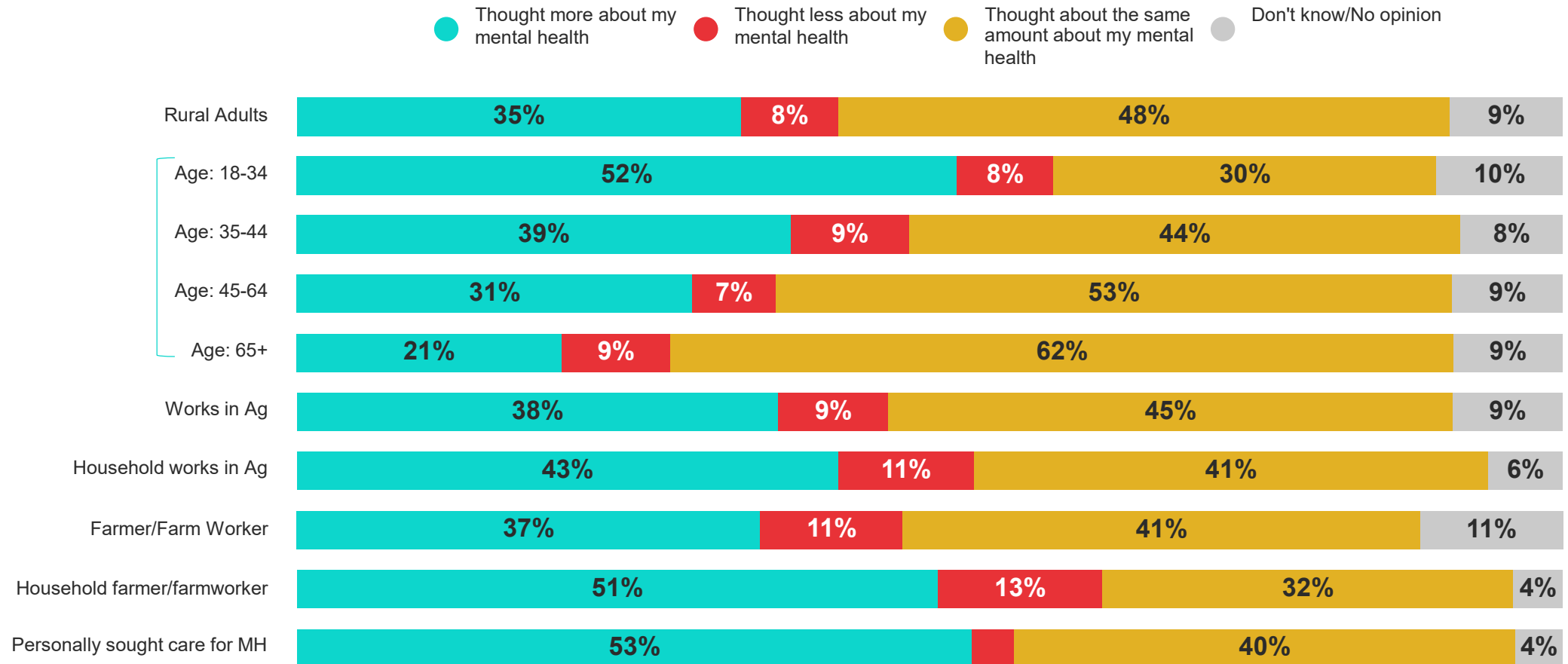
Have you thought about your mental health more, less, or about the same amount during the COVID-19 pandemic?



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

Half of 18-34-year-old rural adults (52%) say they have thought more about their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, more than other age groups.

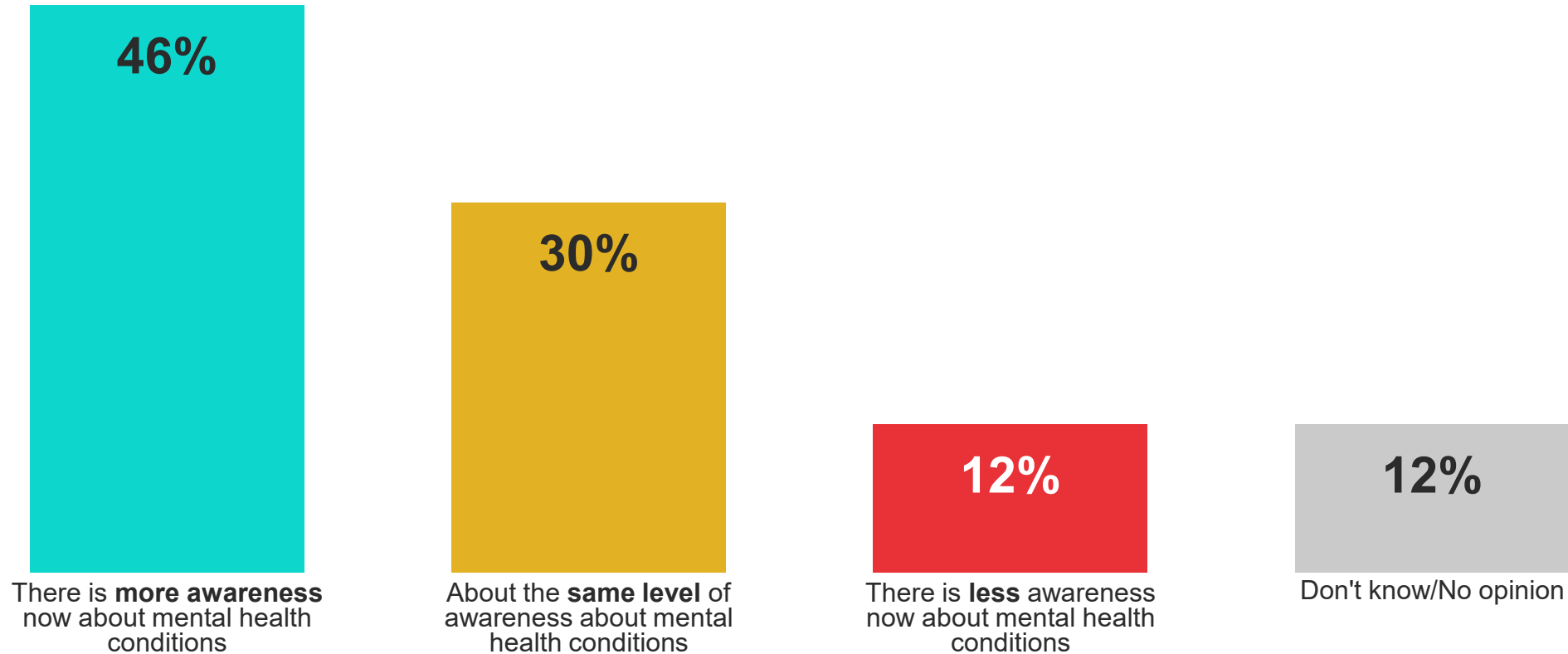
Have you thought about your mental health more, less, or about the same amount during the COVID-19 pandemic?



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

Forty-six percent of rural adults think there is more awareness of mental health conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic, while 30% think there is the same amount of awareness.

Do you think there is more awareness or less awareness of mental health conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic, or is awareness about the same?



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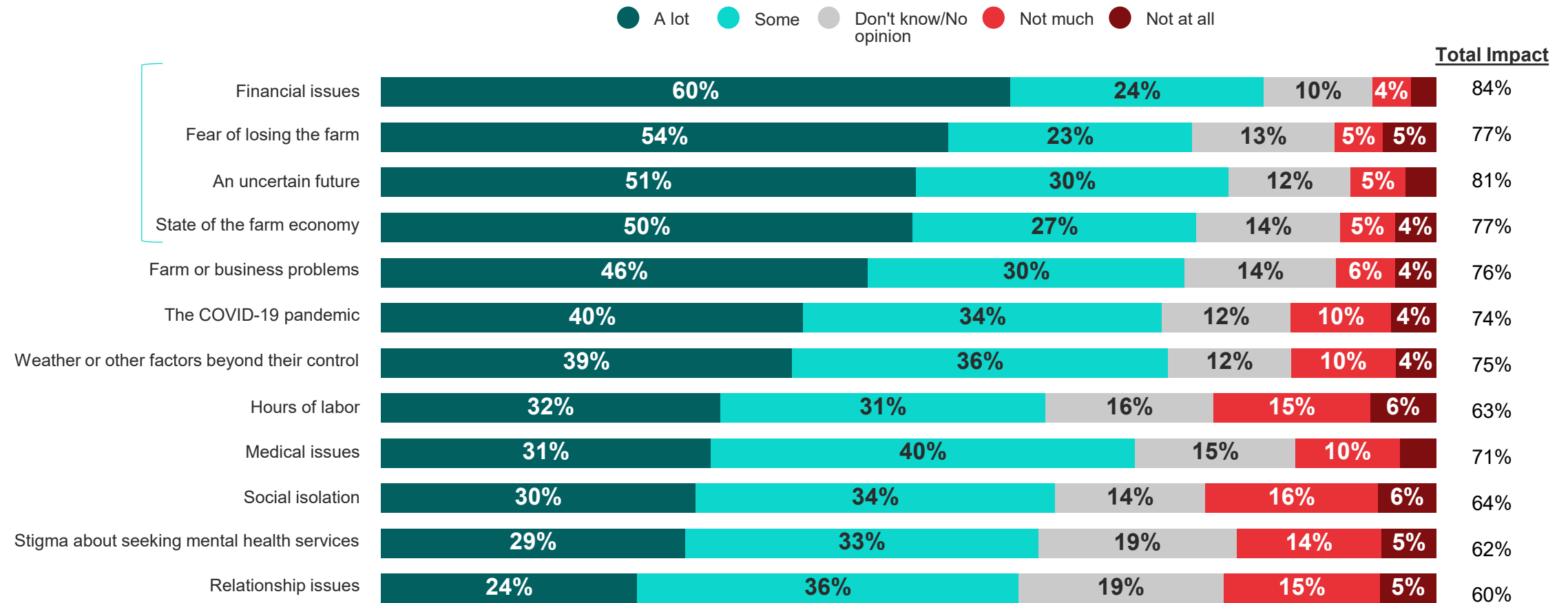
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## CONTRIBUTORS TO MENTAL HEALTH OF FARMERS

More than half of rural adults think financial issues (60%), fear of losing the farm (54%), an uncertain future (51%) and the state of the farm economy (50%) impact the mental health of farmers *a lot*.

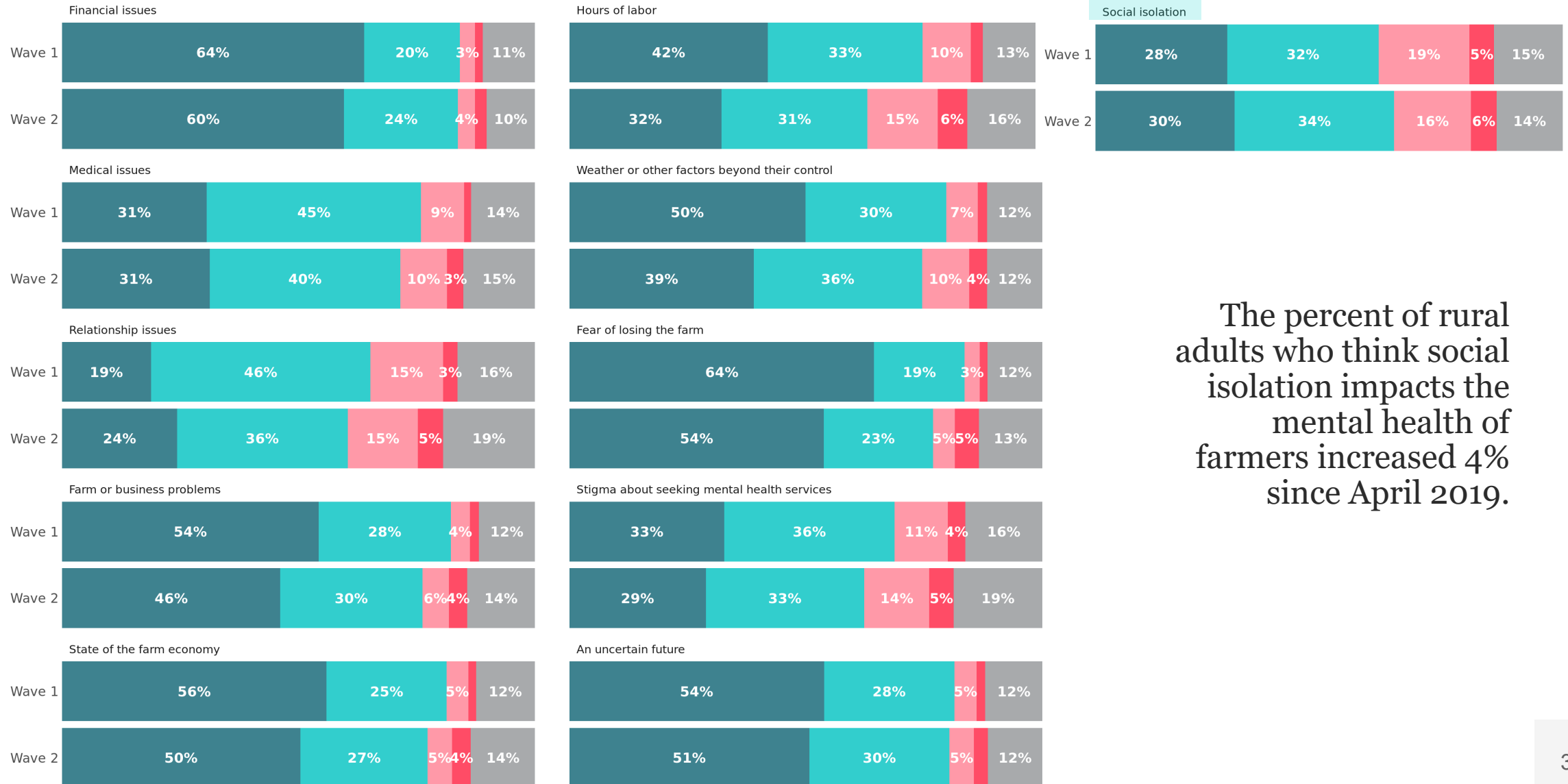
Based on what you know, how much do you think each of the following impacts the mental health of farmers?



**CONTRIBUTORS TO MENTAL HEALTH OF FARMERS**

Based on what you know, how much do you think each of the following impacts the mental health of farmers?

■ A lot ■ Some ■ Not much ■ Not at all ■ Don't know/No opinion

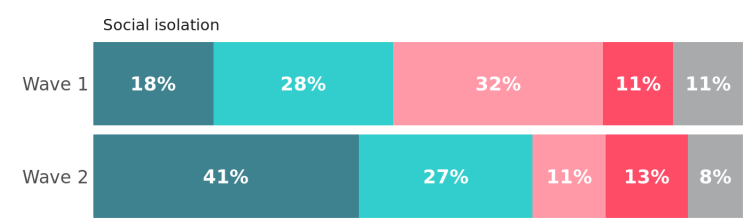
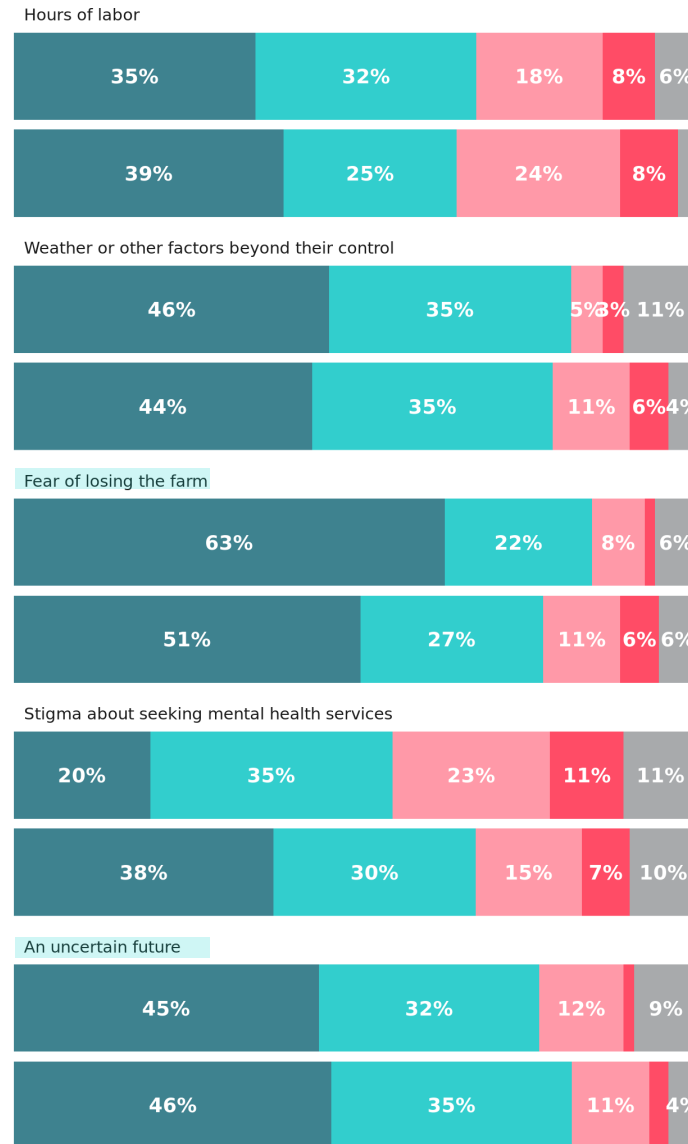
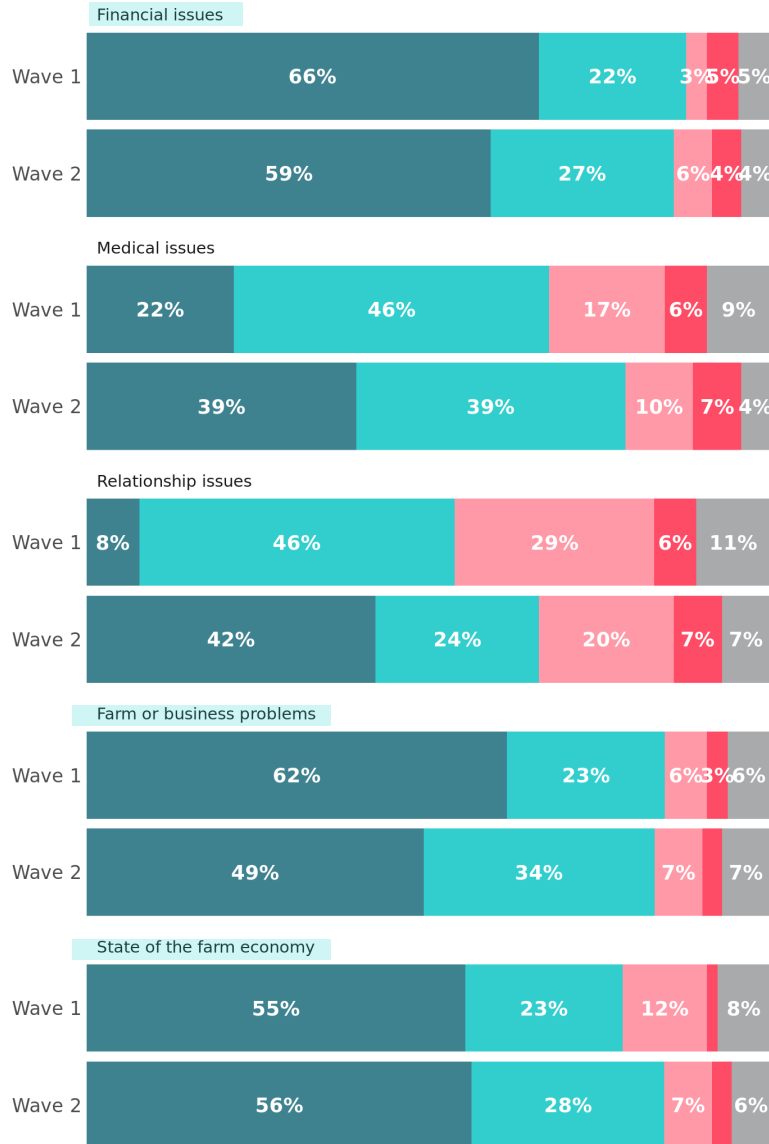


The percent of rural adults who think social isolation impacts the mental health of farmers increased 4% since April 2019.

**CONTRIBUTORS TO MENTAL HEALTH OF FARMERS**

Based on what you know, how much do you think each of the following impacts the mental health of farmers?

■ A lot ■ Some ■ Not much ■ Not at all ■ Don't know/No opinion



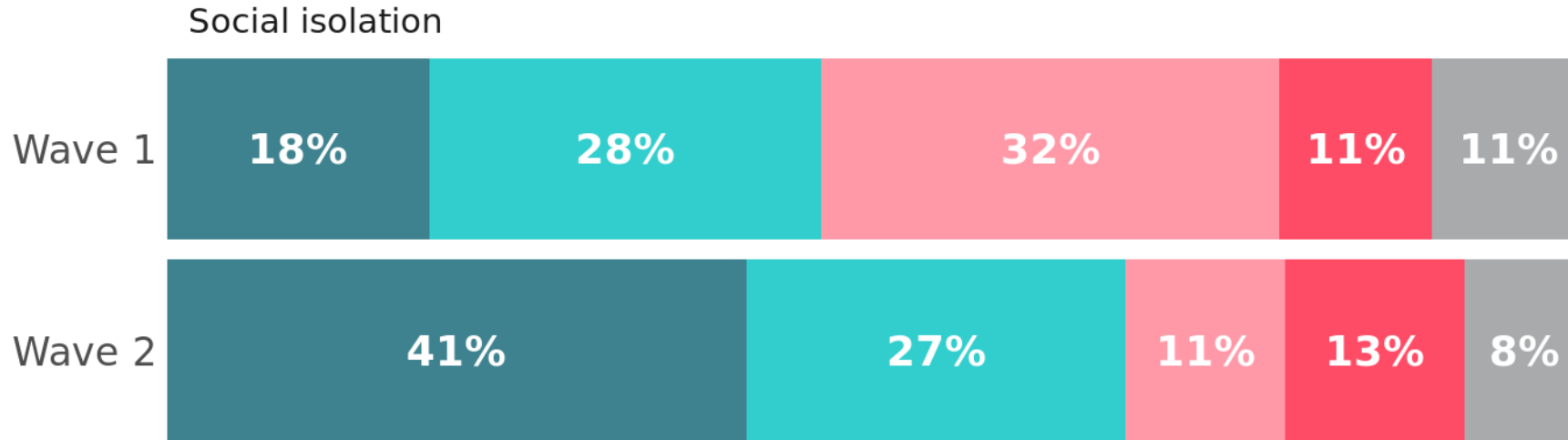
And among farmers/farm workers, financial issues (86%), state of the farm economy (84%), farm or business problems (83%), an uncertain future (81%), and fear of losing the farm (78%) remain the top factors impacting the mental health of farmers.

\*Wave 1, n=65  
Wave 2, n=71, margin of error 12%

CONTRIBUTORS TO MENTAL HEALTH OF FARMERS

The percentage of farmers/farmworkers who say social isolation impacts the mental health of farmers increased 22% since April 2019.

Based on what you know, how much do you think each of the following impacts the mental health of farmers?



\*Wave 1, n=65  
Wave 2, n=71, margin of error 12%



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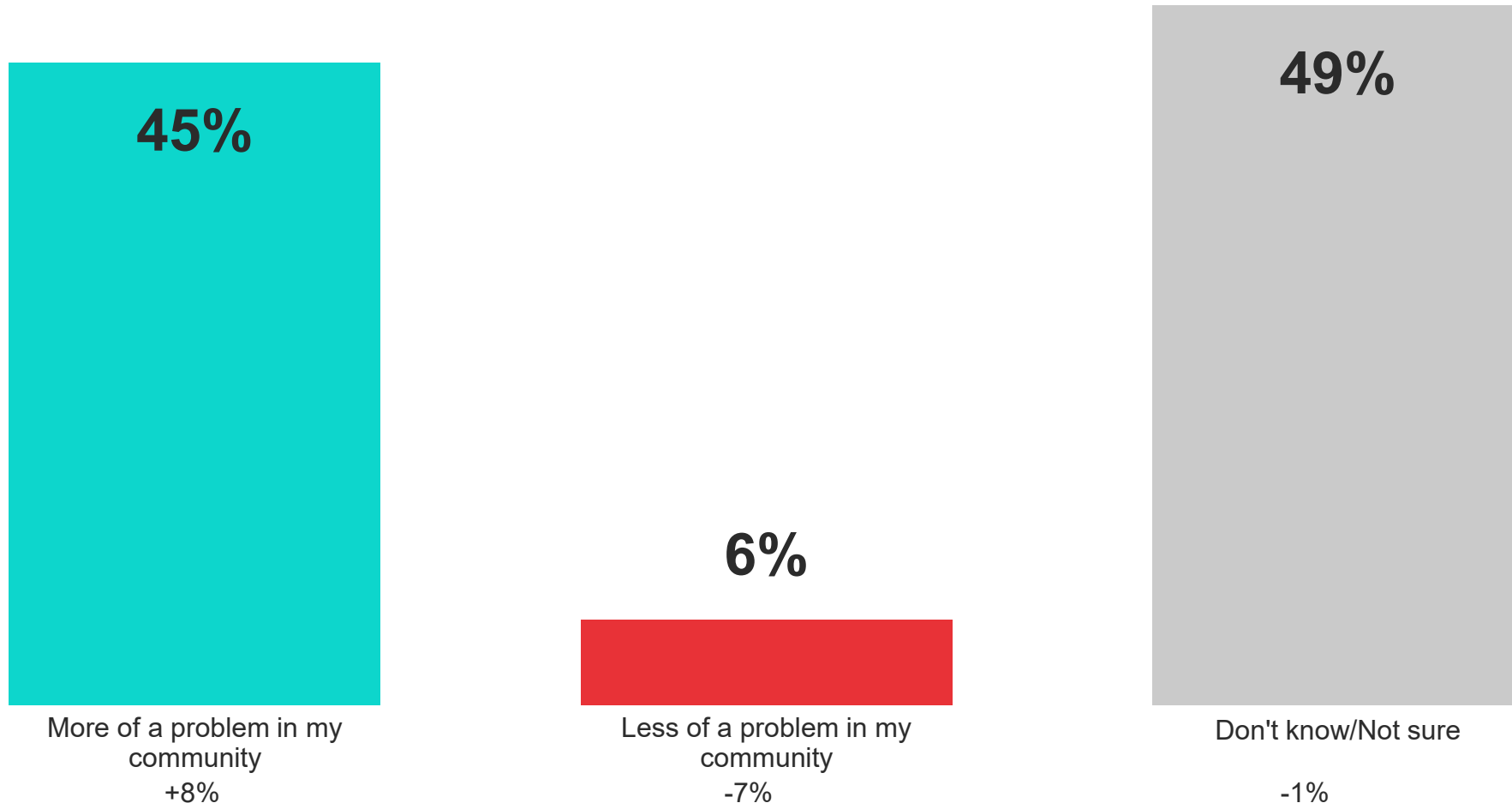
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH  
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PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH MENTAL HEALTH

Forty-five percent of rural adults say stress and mental health have become more of a problem in their community in the past year, an 8% increase from April 2019.

Compared to a year ago, have stress and mental health become more or less of a problem in your community?

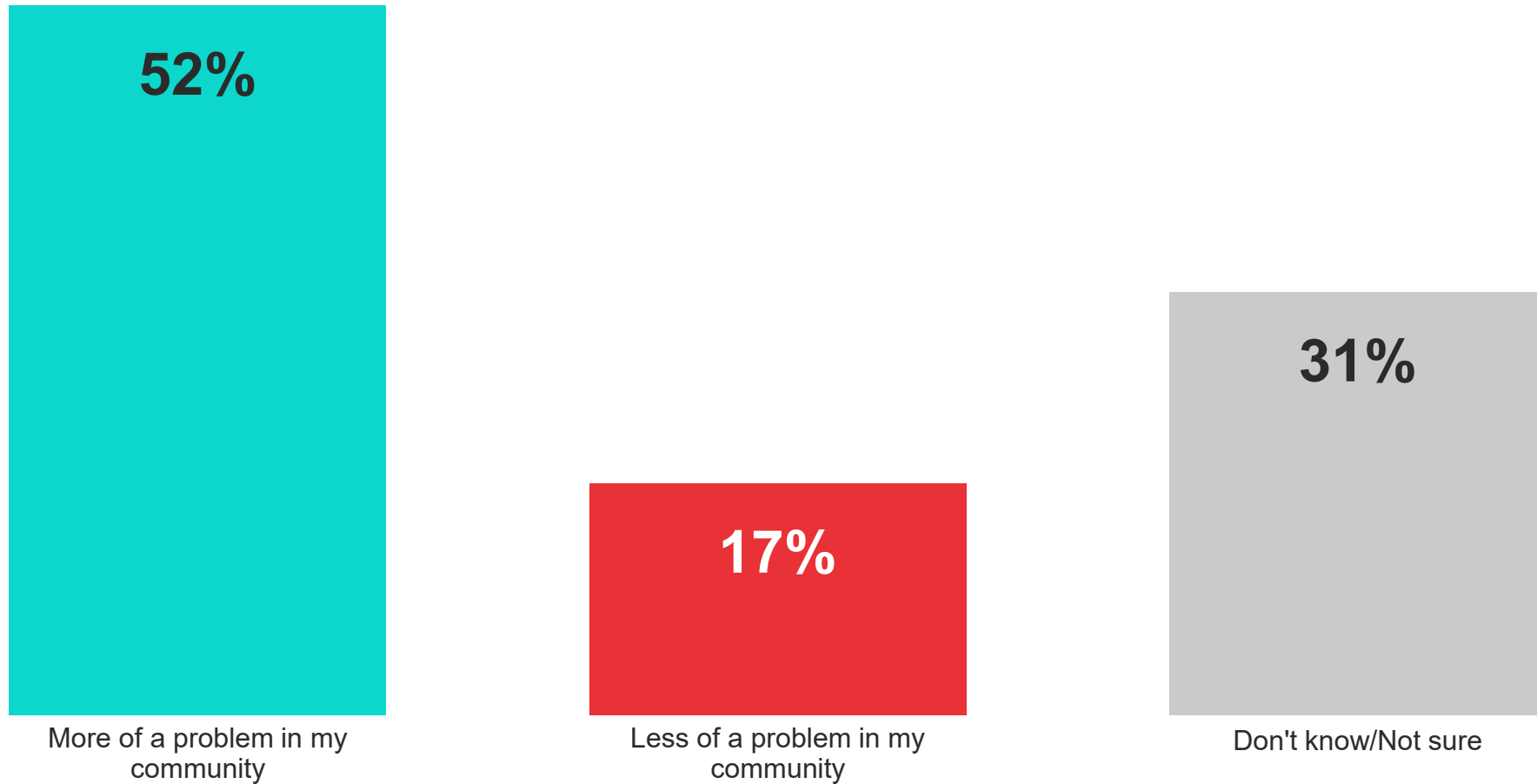


Change From April 2019

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH MENTAL HEALTH

Farmers/farmworkers are 7% more likely than rural adults (52% vs. 45%) to say stress and mental health have become more of a problem in their community in the past year.

Compared to a year ago, have stress and mental health become more or less of a problem in your community?

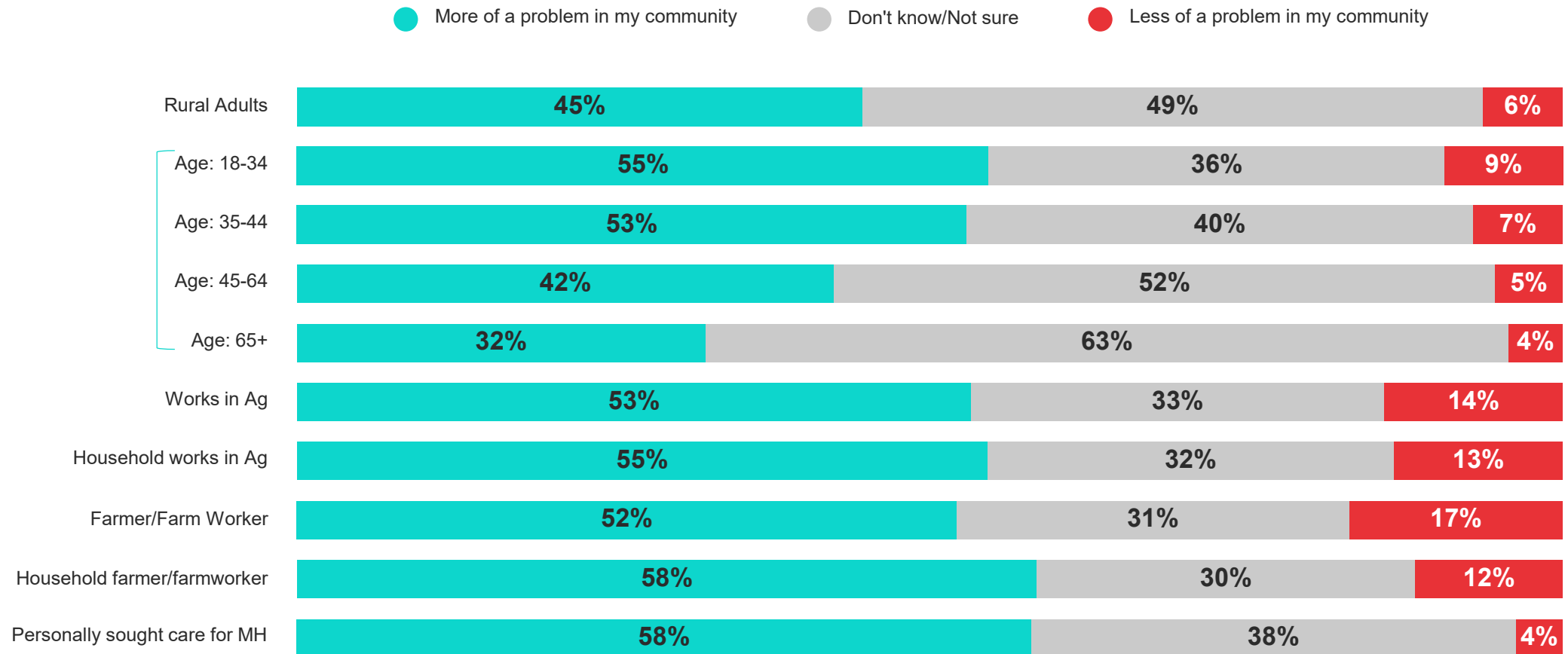


\*n=71

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH MENTAL HEALTH

Younger rural adults are more likely than older rural adults to say stress and mental health have become more of a problem in their community in the past year.

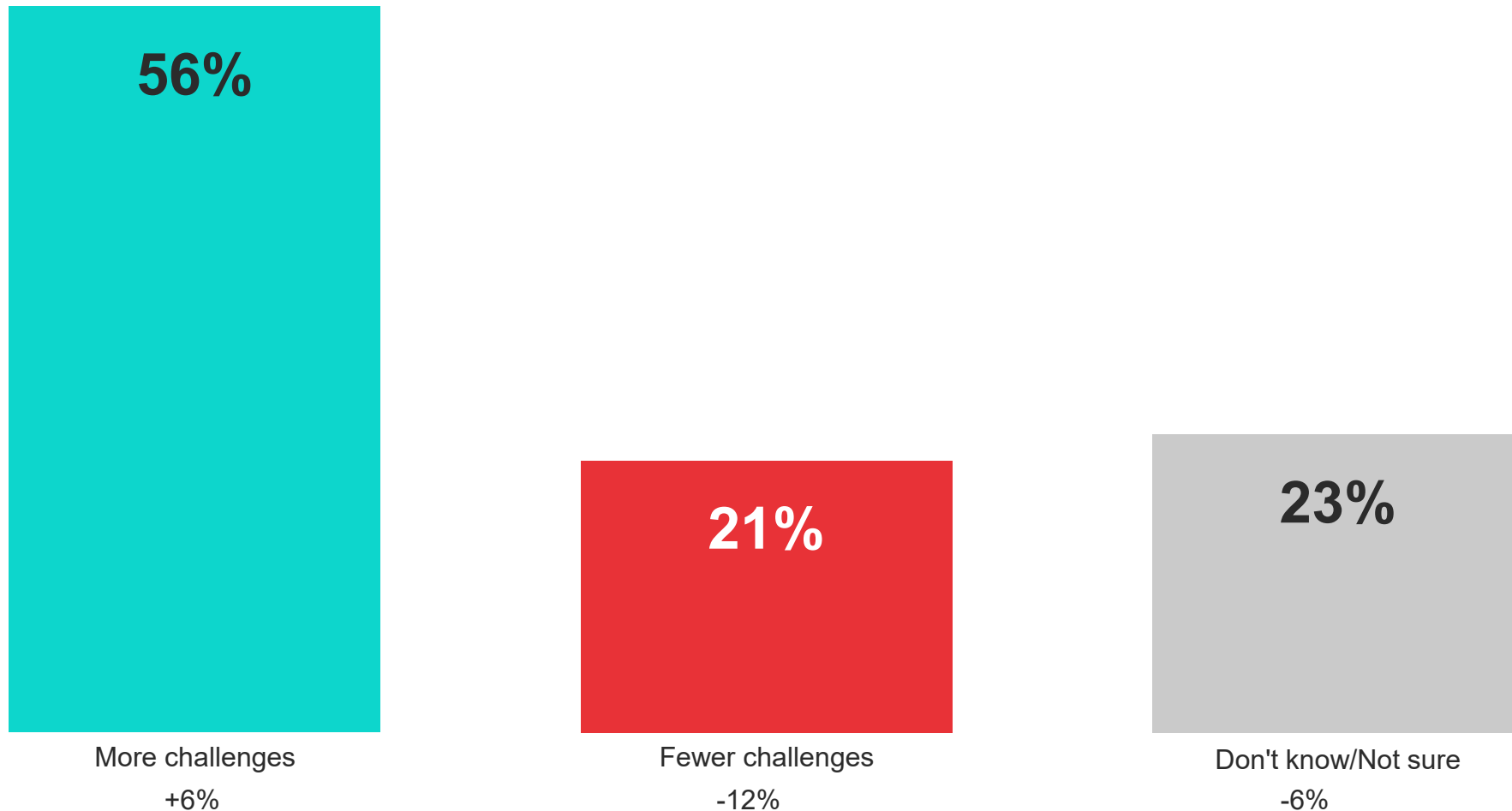
Compared to a year ago, have stress and mental health become more or less of a problem in your community?



PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH MENTAL HEALTH

More than half of rural adults (56%) say they are personally experiencing more mental health challenges than they were a year ago, a 6% increase from April 2019.

Compared to a year ago, are you personally experiencing more or fewer stress and mental health challenges?

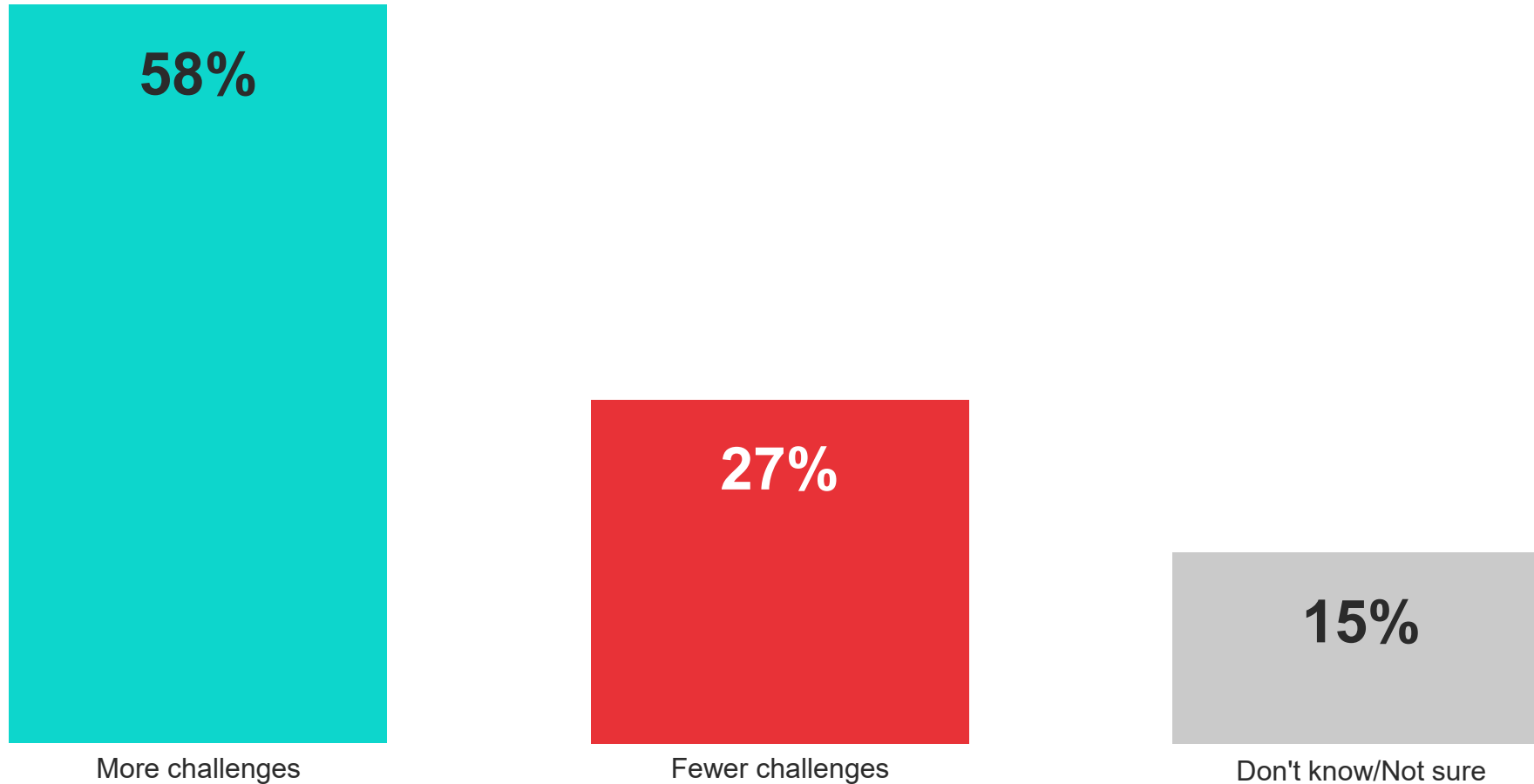


Change From April 2019

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH MENTAL HEALTH

Similarly, more than half of farmers/farmworkers (58%) say they are personally experiencing more mental health challenges than they were a year ago.

Compared to a year ago, are you personally experiencing more or fewer stress and mental health challenges?

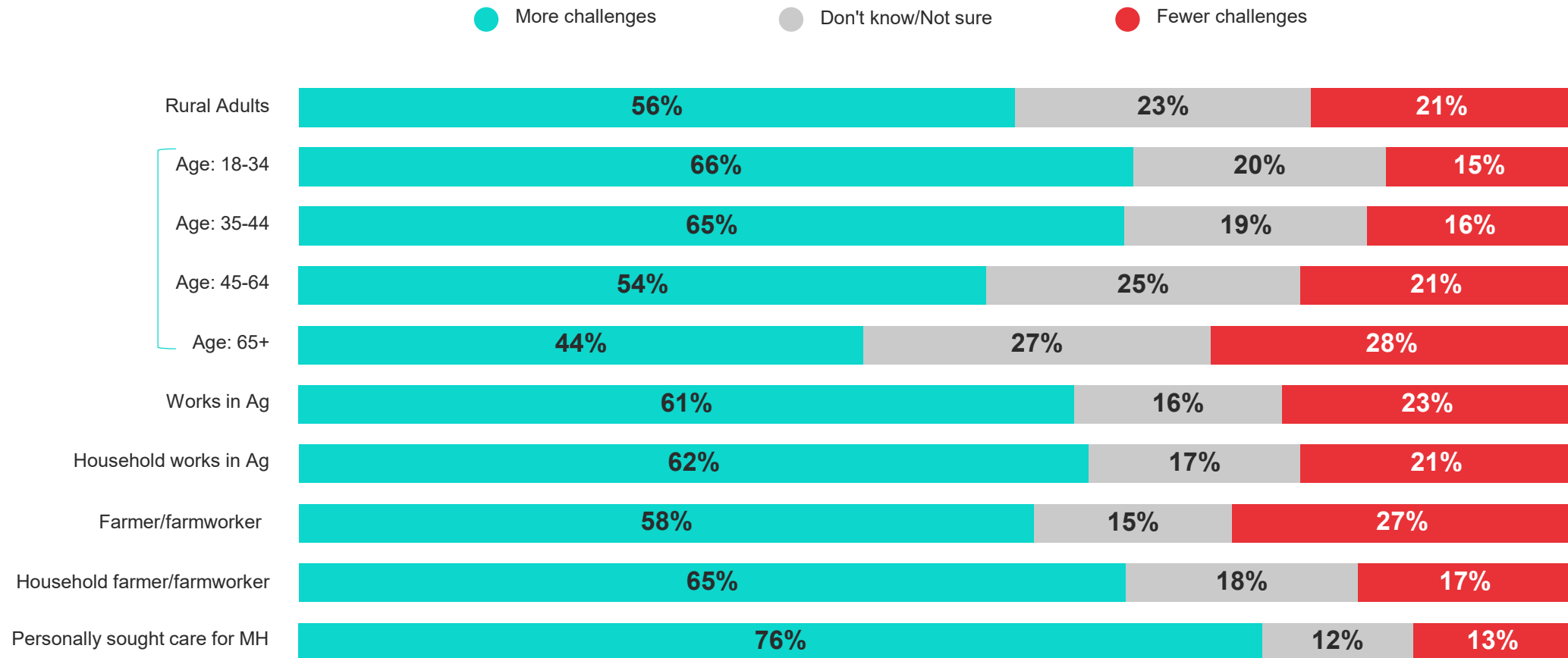


\*n=71

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH MENTAL HEALTH

Two-thirds of rural adults ages 18-44 say they are personally experiencing more mental health challenges than they were a year ago.

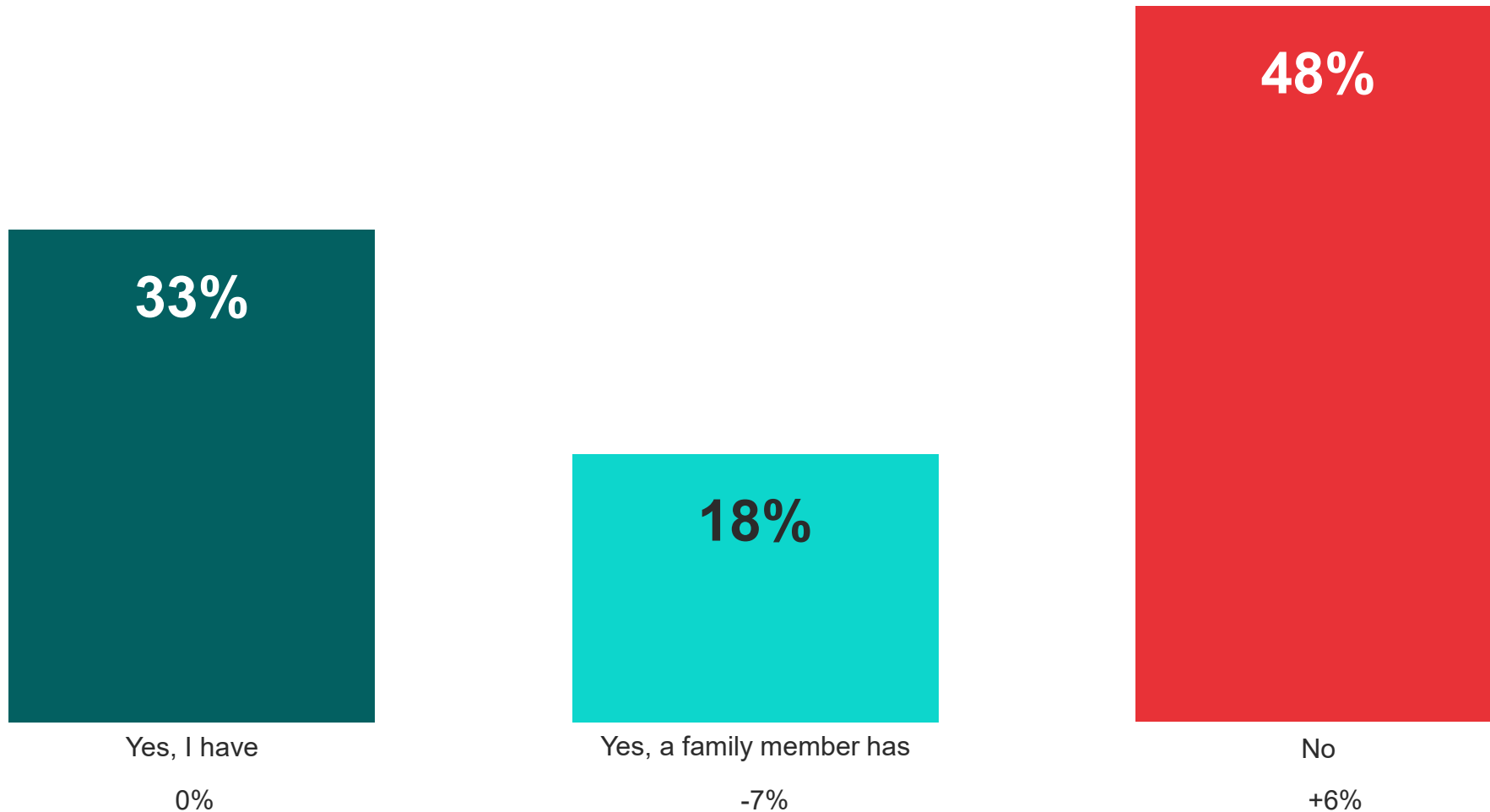
Compared to a year ago, are you personally experiencing more or fewer stress and mental health challenges?



PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH MENTAL HEALTH

One-third of rural adults have personally sought care for a mental health condition.

Have you or a family member ever sought care for a mental health condition of any kind?



Change From April 2019





**AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION®**

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