



Moral Injuries Experienced by Vaccine Providers in Canada During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Eve Dubé, SHS Vaccination France, January 24 2025

Objectives

- Describe moral distress
- Present preliminary data from a study conducted among immunizers

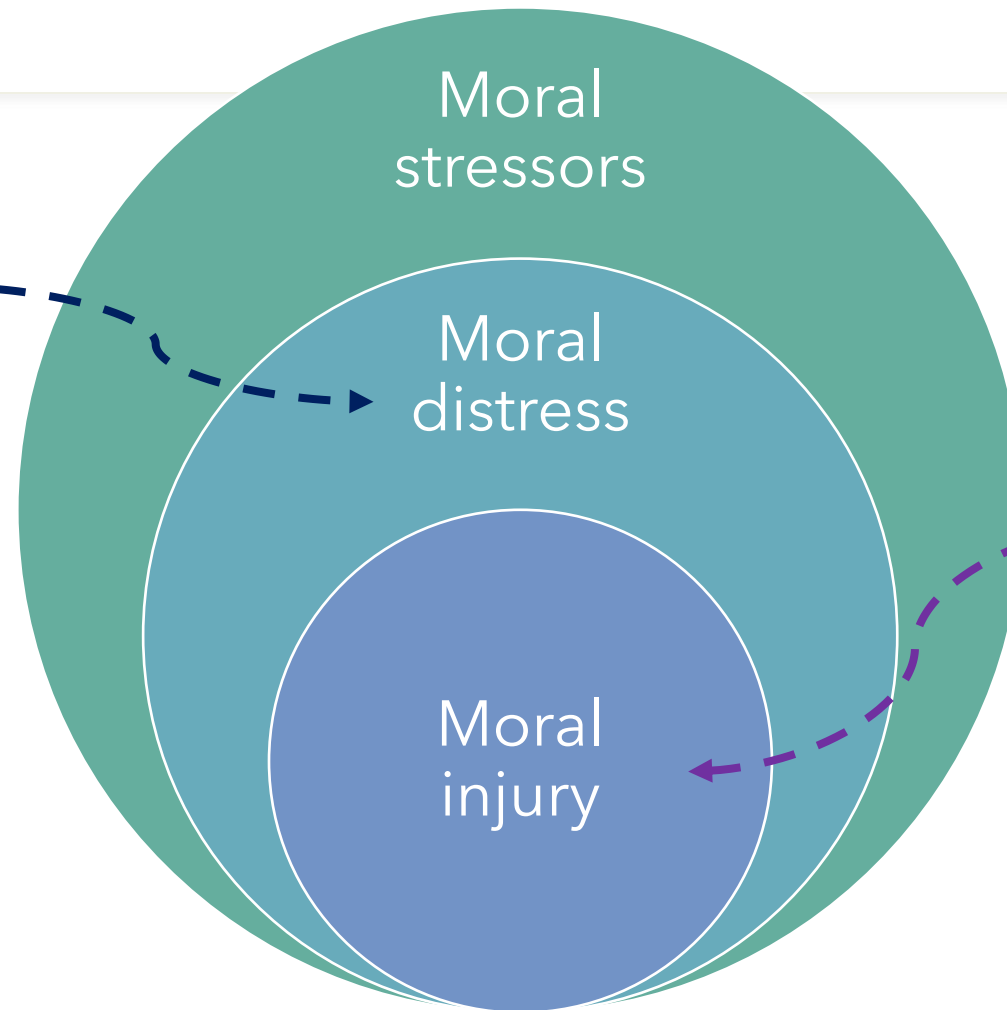


Moral stressors

MORAL CONSTRAINT	Being unable to perform the ethically appropriate action
MORAL UNCERTAINTY	Being unsure about whether we are doing the right thing
MORAL DILEMMA	Being unable to choose between 2 or more options
MORAL TENSION	Being unable to share our beliefs with others

Context and definitions

“Feeling of unease stemming from situations where institutionally required behaviour does not align with moral principles”



Longer-term harm that can arise in context of sustained moral distress

Context and definitions



Moral distress as a concept was developed in **nursing**, but was applied to understand the experiences of other HCPs and professions (e.g., police, military)



Moral distress & moral injuries were associated with sustained **mental health issues** (i.e., anxiety, depression), **burnout** and **turn-over**

WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE

- Gendered and racial/ethnic differences in moral distress
- No scientific consensus on how to define / operationalize
- Not included in DSM-5



Moral distress and the pandemic



Ottawa Public Health ✓
@OttawaHealth

...

Some of the more strongly worded replies to our tweets have encouraged us to go have intercourse with ourselves.

Well...don't mind if we do, because your safest sex partner during the COVID-19 pandemic is yourself.

[SexItSmart.ca](https://sexitsmart.ca) #SafeSex

8:20 AM · May 5, 2021 · Twitter Web App

From a presentation by
Kevin Parent, CIC 2024

Moral distress and the pandemic

RADIO-CANADA | MENU ▾

INFO

À la une | En bref | En continu | ICI RDI | Vidéos | Mon fil

International

Info | Politique | Politique fédérale | COVID-19: tout sur la pandémie

Le statut des « anges gardiens » de la santé sera régularisé

Téléjournal Montréal

D'anges gardiens à résidents permanents



TV NOUVELLES | ACTUALITÉS | MA RÉGION | ARGENT | SPORTS | GUIDE D'ACHAT | VIDEOS | ÉMISSIONS

Nos « anges gardiens » en détresse



- High workload
- Lack of PPE
- Changing guidelines / unclear directives
- Lock-out, schools and daycare closures
- Highest number of cases in LTCH where most staff are precarious migrant workers

Moral distress and the pandemic



Vaccine

Volume 40, Issue 49, 22 November 2022, Pages 7011-7013



Commentary

Moral injury in health care: A focus on immunization

Rosemary Ricciardelli^a, Noni E. MacDonald^b  

- +++ studies on moral distress
- Nothing specific to vaccine providers

Riedel, P. L., Kreh, A., Kulcar, V., Lieber, A., & Juen, B. (2022). A scoping review of moral stressors, moral distress and moral injury in healthcare workers during COVID-19. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(3), 1666.

Our project

- An online survey to measure moral distress experienced by HCPs involved in the COVID-19 vaccination campaign
 - Demographic & professional characteristics
 - Work Satisfaction
 - Attitudes toward vaccination
 - Moral distress
- Passive & active recruitment:
 - Ads in Immunize Canada and CANVax newsletters
 - Ads on social media
 - Email invitations via associations (e.g., OIIQ)

Measure of Moral Distress for Health Care Professionals (MMD-HP)

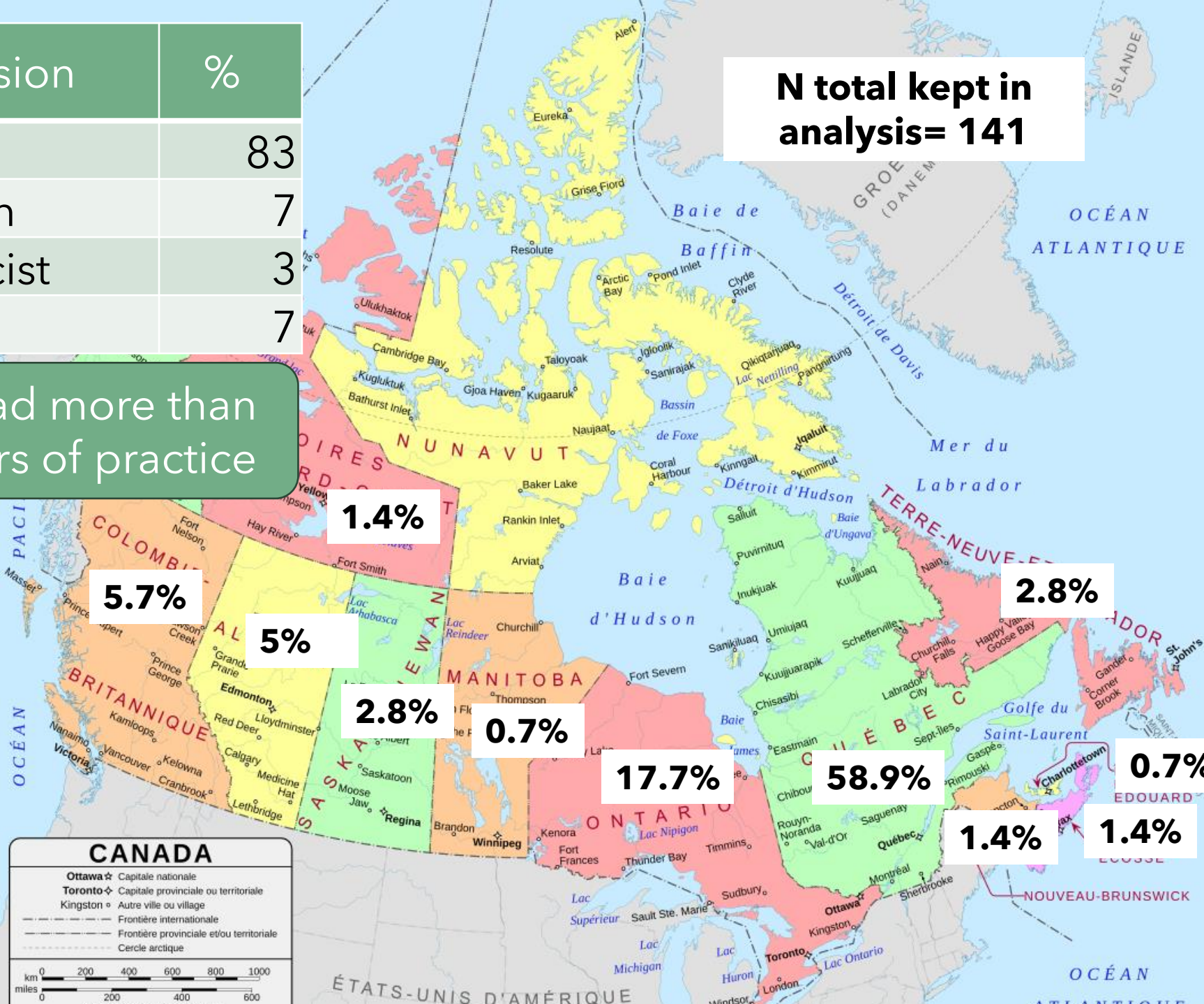
- 27 items validated scale to measure key features of moral distress at 3 level (patient-, unit- and system-level)
 - Pressure to act wrongly
 - Lack of voice
 - Violations of ethical professional practice
 - Repetitive situations
- All items have two dimensions: frequency and intensity ranging from 0 to 4
- Both components were multiplied to obtain a composite score (0-16) for each item
- Composite items scores are summed to create overall MMD-HP score (0-432)

Findings

Profession	%
Nurse	83
Physician	7
Pharmacist	3
Other	7

N total kept in analysis= 141

75% had more than 15 years of practice

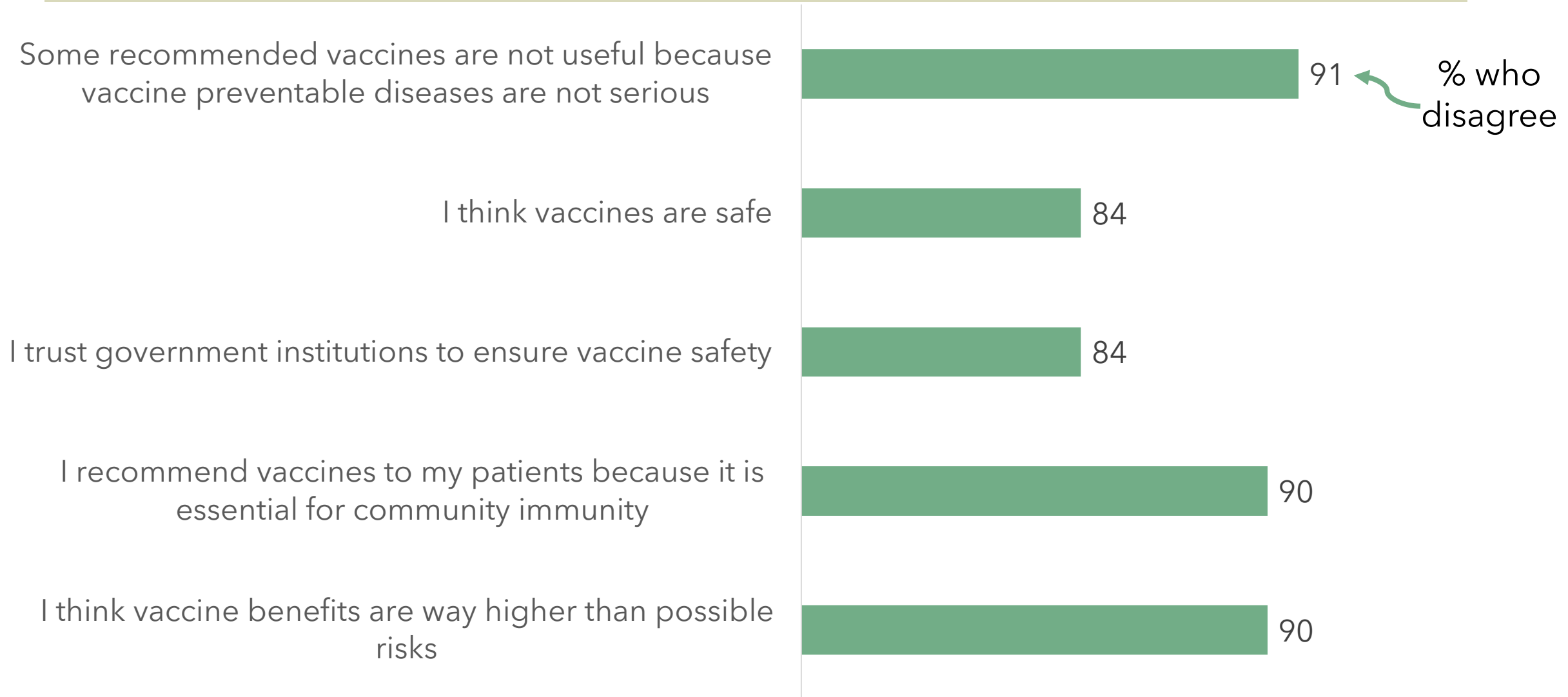


CANADA

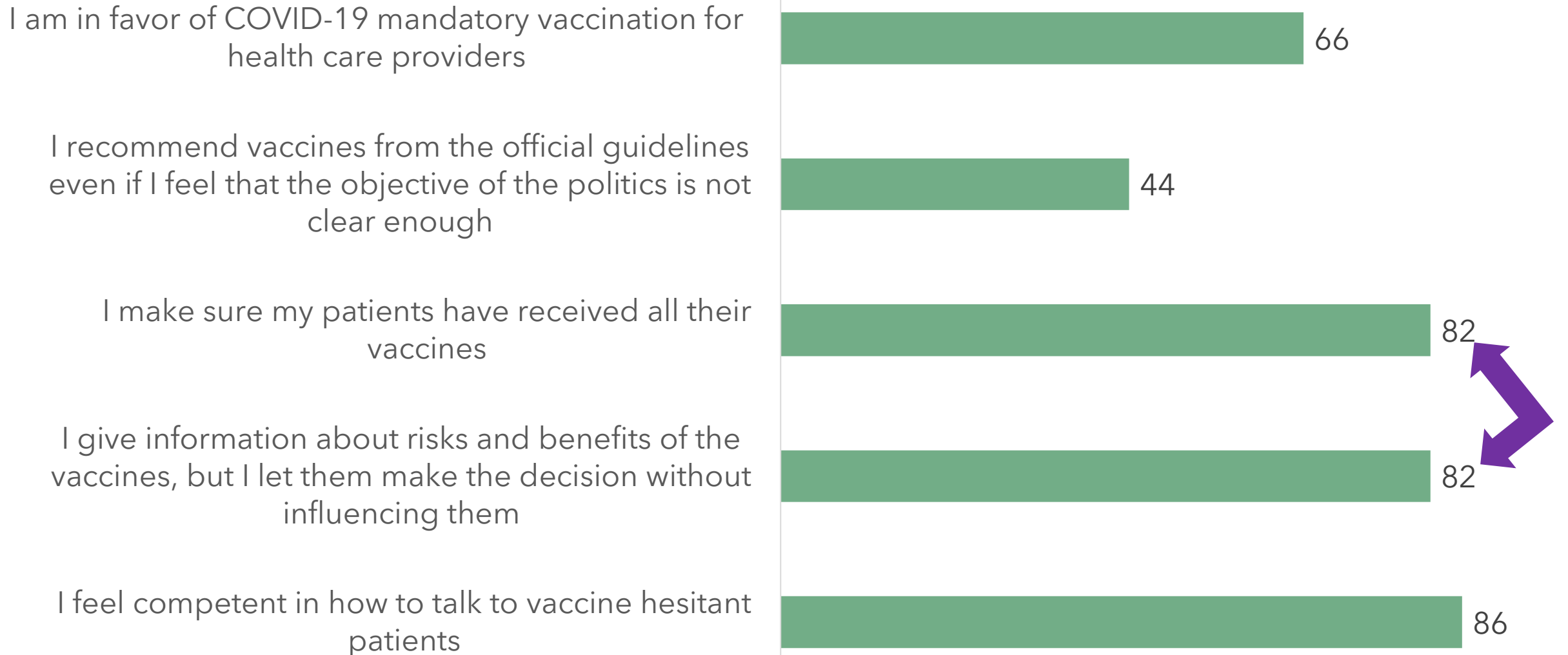
- Ottawa ☆ Capitale nationale
- Toronto ◇ Capitale provinciale ou territoriale
- Kingston ○ Autre ville ou village
- Frontière internationale
- - - Frontière provinciale et/ou territoriale
- ⋯ Cercle arctique

0 200 400 600 800 1000
km
0 200 400 600
miles

Attitudes toward vaccination (% in agreement)

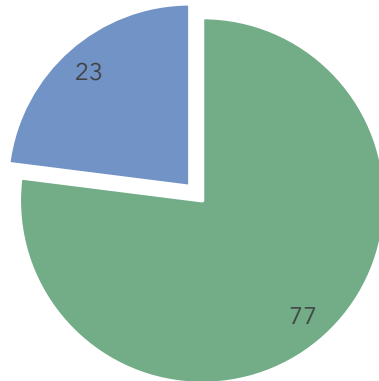


Attitudes toward vaccination (% in agreement)

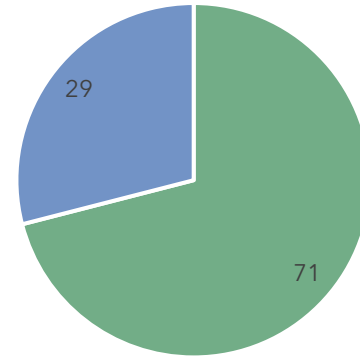


Work life satisfaction (%)

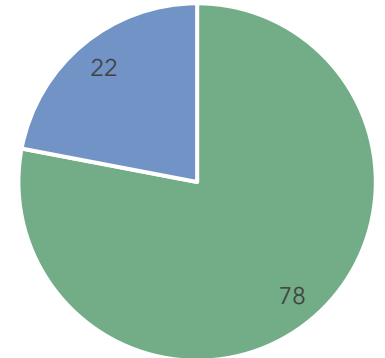
Life-work balance



Acknowledgement of skills

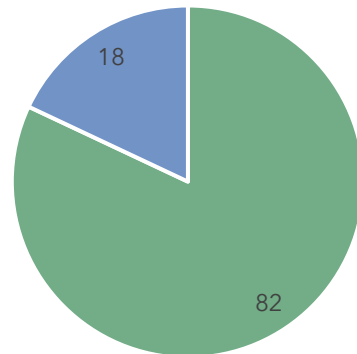


Time spent with patients

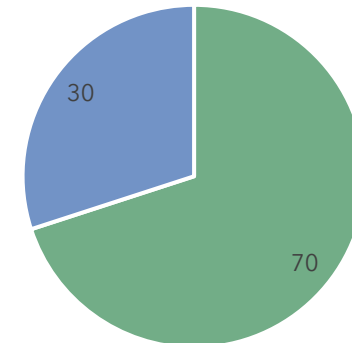


■ Satisfied
■ Unsatisfied

Work schedule



Salary



Moral distress

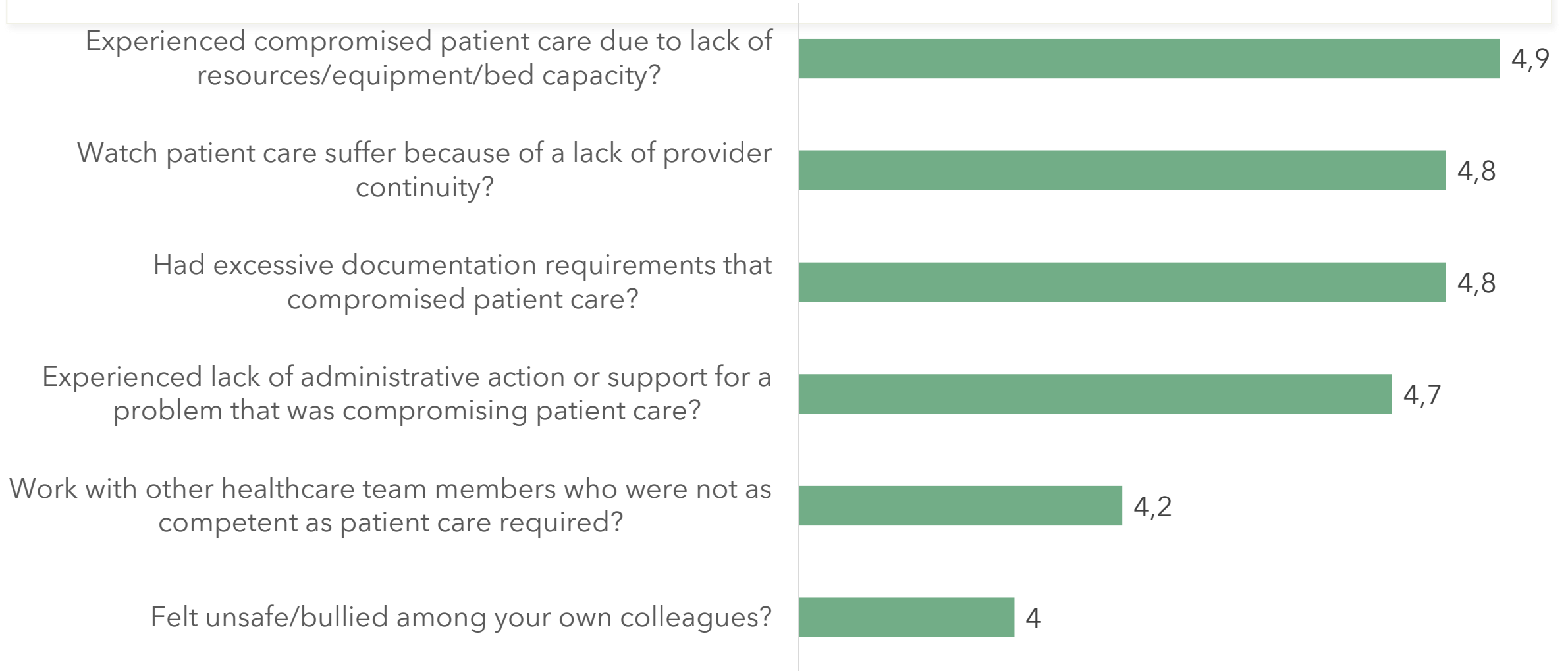
**Mean score = 76
(range 2-328)**



Moral distress



Moral distress



Moral distress

Experienced compromised patient care due to lack of resources/equipment/bed capacity?

High distress for items related to **availability of resources, support from management and administrative workload**

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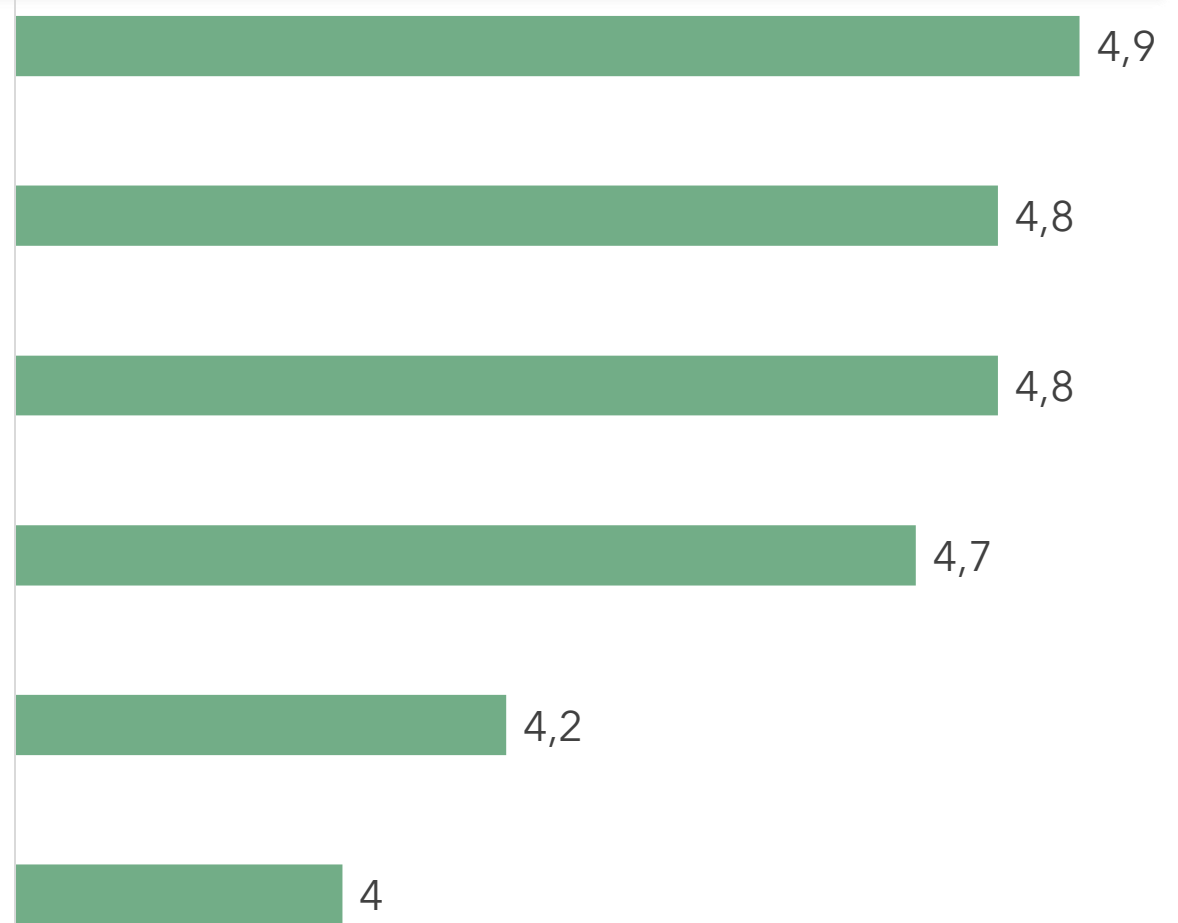
Felt unsafe/bullied among your own colleagues?

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Other sources of distress

Fear to be fired due to vaccine refusal

Patient's family insisting for more meds

To be fully in charge of the safety of people during lock down (having to do groceries, repair things, everything that is not linked to nursing when doing domicile care)

Fear of loss of child in care because of vaccine refusal

Racism

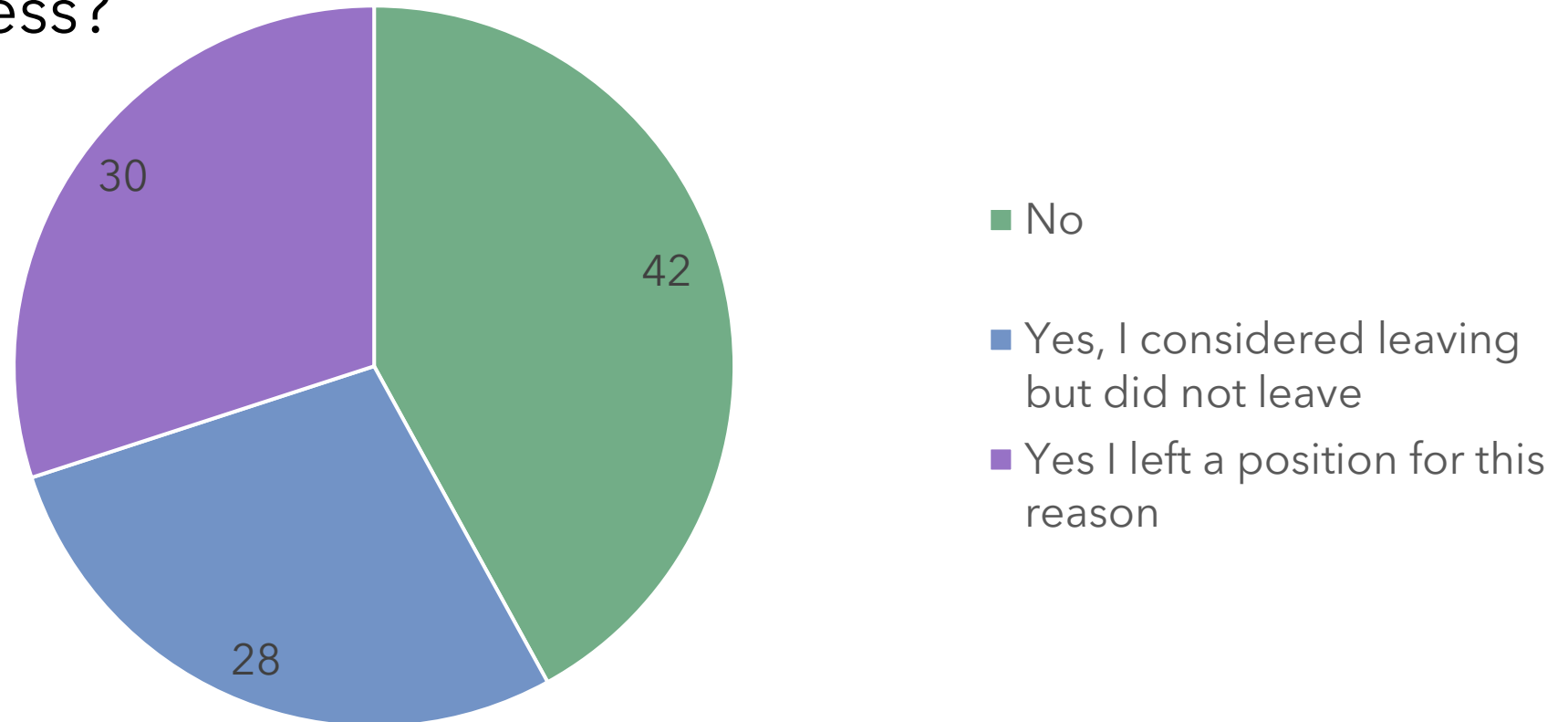
Anger from people getting the vaccine

Toxic environnement due to a superior

Death treats and manifestation against vaccines in front of the hospital

Impact of moral distress

Have you ever left or considered leaving a clinical position due to moral distress?

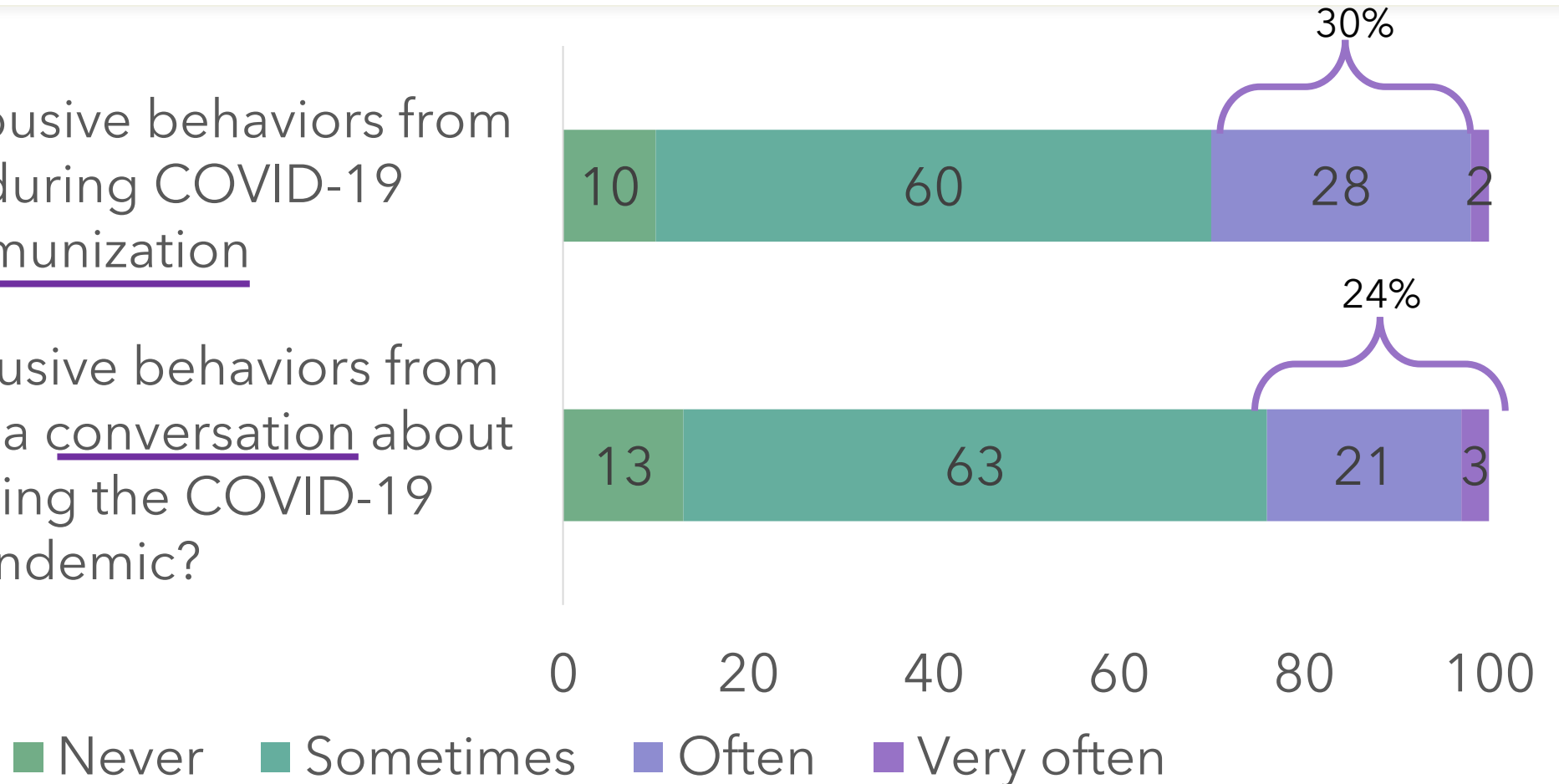


N=89

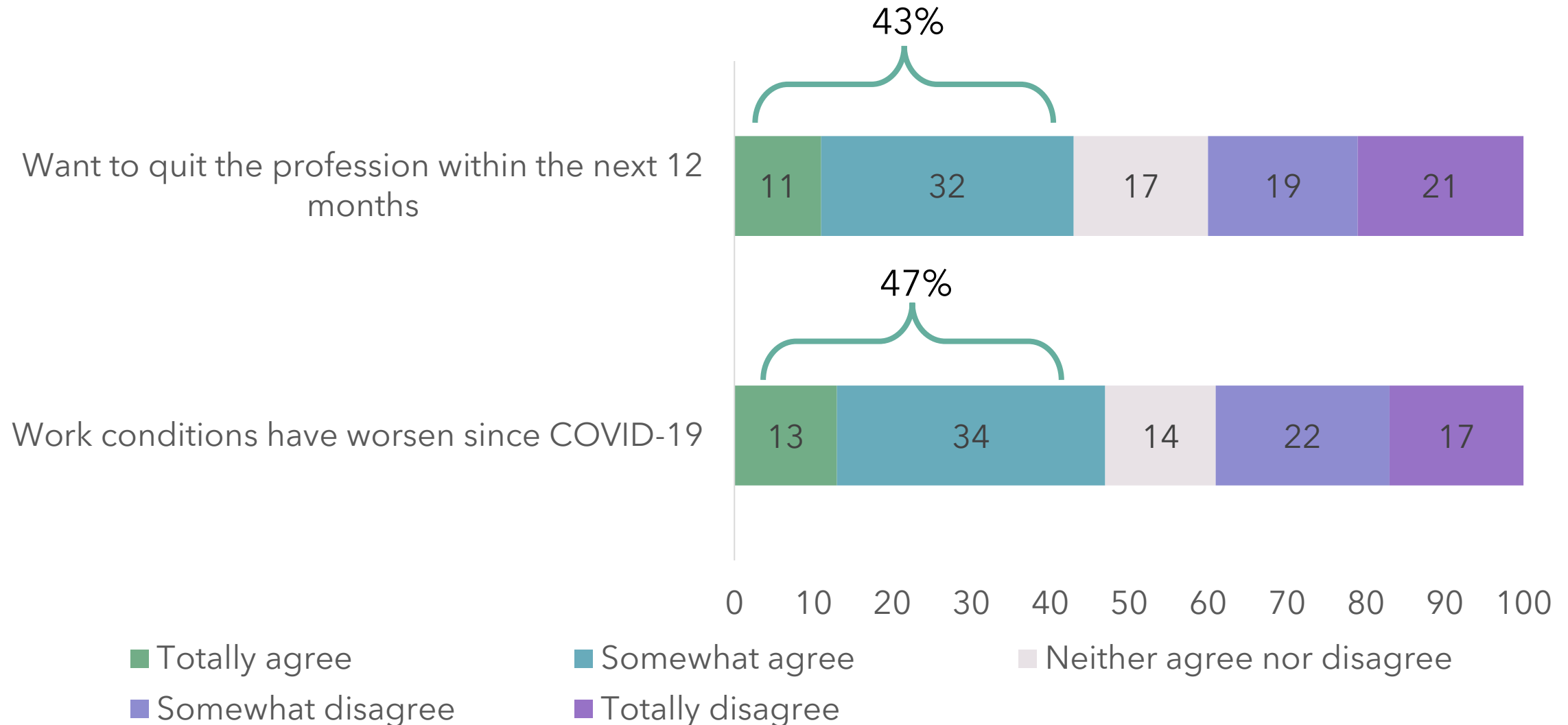
Impact of COVID-19 vaccination on moral distress

Experience abusive behaviors from patients during COVID-19 immunization

Experience abusive behaviors from patients during a conversation about vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic?

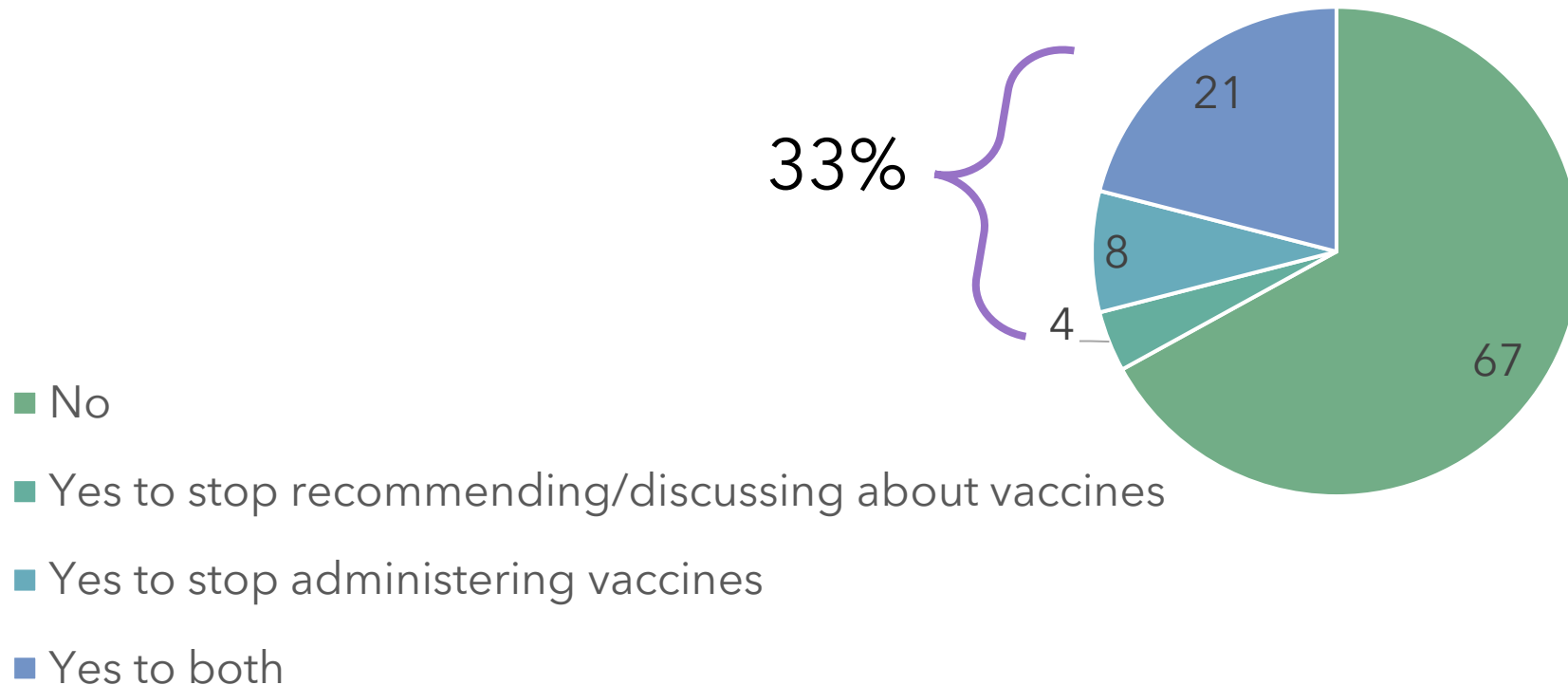


Impact of COVID-19 on moral distress



Impact of COVID-19 vaccination

Have you considered to stop being involved in immunization due to harassment / abusive behaviors?



Concluding remarks and next steps

- Moral distress associated with vaccination is an under researched topic
- To best prevent impacts of moral distress and protect immunization workforce, it is crucial to have a good understanding of experiences of vaccine providers
- We are launching a larger survey with moral distress items tailored to immunization

We are interested in moral distress as part of your role in immunization. Please indicated if you have experienced each item over the past year. Also, rank how distressing these situations are for you.

Been required to discuss vaccination with aggressive / abusive person

Observed patients suffer from vaccine-preventable diseases due to vaccine refusal

Be required to work with other healthcare team members who are not vaccinated

Lack the time to adequately discuss vaccination with patients



Thanks!



Please note the call for abstracts for a session that I am chairing at the next ESA RN16 **'Epidemics and Pandemics in the Digital Age: 'Contested knowledge', Health and Vaccine Acceptance'**

Further information on the conference at: <https://www.rn16midtermconf2025.uevora.pt/page/>

Deadline: January 31 2025