Evolving Views of Vaccination: COVID-19, Flu, and RSV

A Communications Survey Supporting Technical Assistance for State, Local, Territorial, and Federal Communications

Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Strategic Data for Communications

Collaboration

- Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health
- ASTHO
- NPHIC
- CDC

Goals

- To provide robust evidence that can help guide communications strategy in the evolving COVID-19 context
    - Beyond publicly available polls
    - More than data to understand implications
    - Timely results for evolving issues
        - COVID-19, Flu, and RSV Vaccines

Strategic Considerations

Questions	Implications
• What are the public's intentions around COVID and seasonal flu vaccines?	→ Framing of seasonal vaccine messaging
• What does the public think of RSV vaccine?	→ Messaging for educating and motivating uptake where appropriate
• Where are public attitudes with respect to new vaccines in the future?	→ Developing broader communication frames around vaccination

Methods Summary

2023	Timing	Sample Size
Wave II	July 7 – 16, 2023	n=1430 (1328 online, 102 phone)
Wave I	February 15 – March 6, 2023	n=1936 (1786 online; 150 phone)

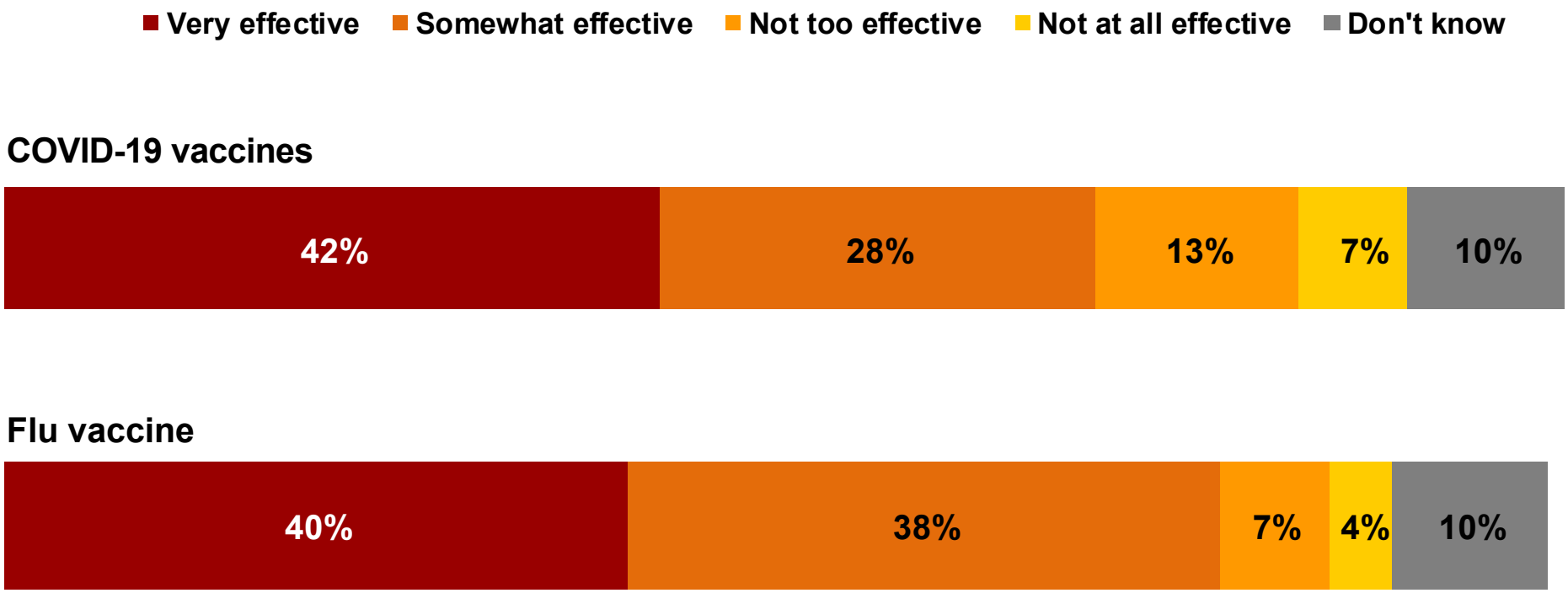
- *Design*: Nationally representative in each wave
- *Sampling*: Representative online and phone panel
- *Languages*: English and Spanish
- *Weighting*: Standard (Age, Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Education, Urban status) and Panel-specific (Internet access; Civic engagement)

NOTES:
For presentation purposes, Don't Know and Refused responses not always shown unless >5%
±3.3 percentage points for total respondents at the 95% confidence level

Views of COVID-19 Vaccine and Flu Vaccine

Moderate Perceptions of Effectiveness for Both COVID and Flu Vaccines

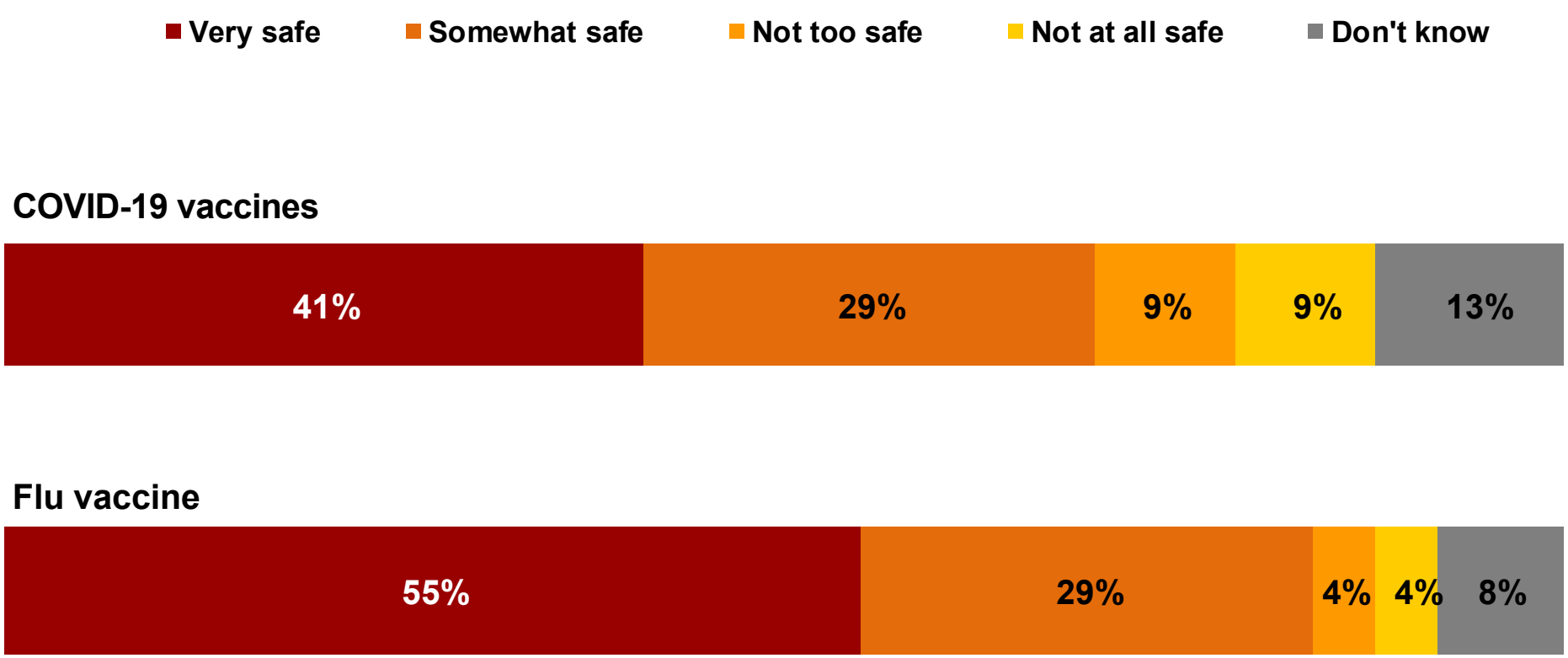
% saying each is effective or not effective for most adults in protecting the person getting vaccinated from getting seriously ill or having to be hospitalized with each illness



n=1430

Flu Vaccine Perceived as Substantially Safer than COVID Vaccine

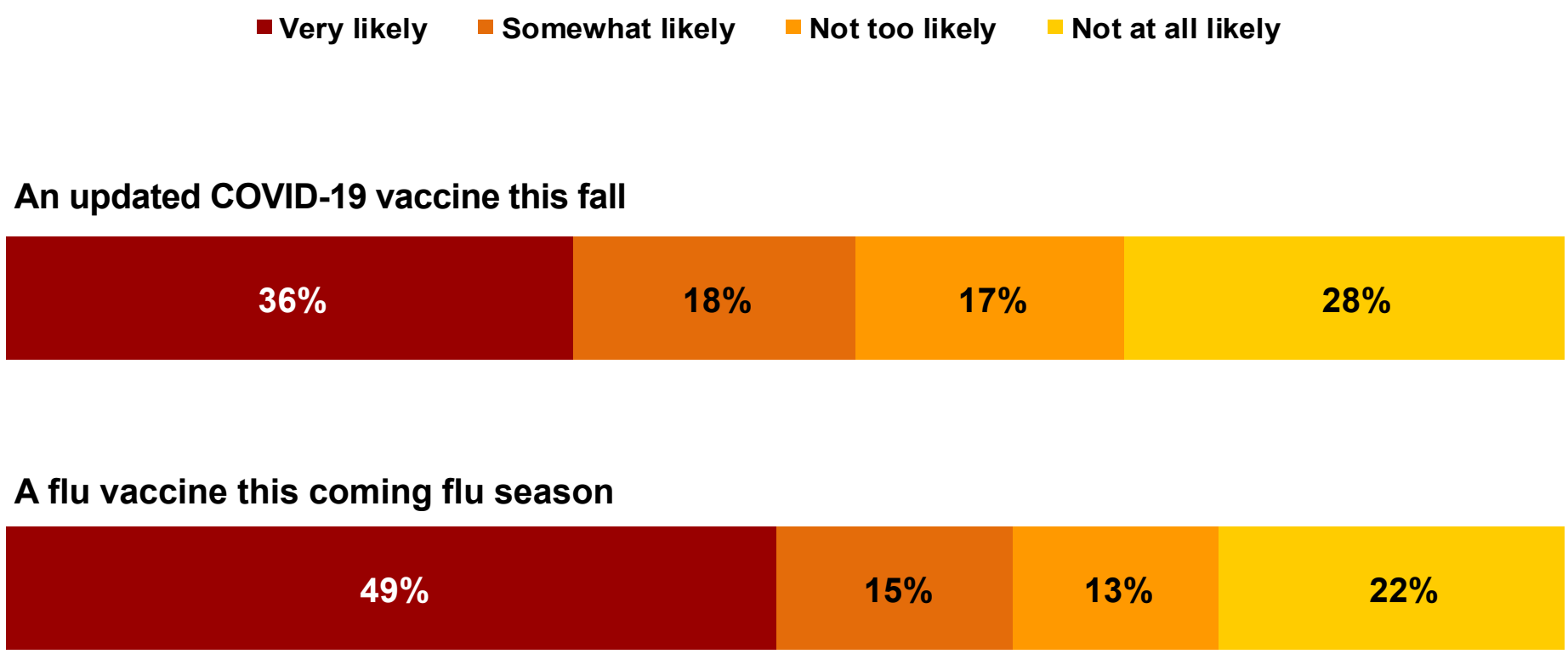
% saying, for most adults, each is…



n=1430

Adults More Likely to Get Flu Vaccine than COVID Vaccine This Year

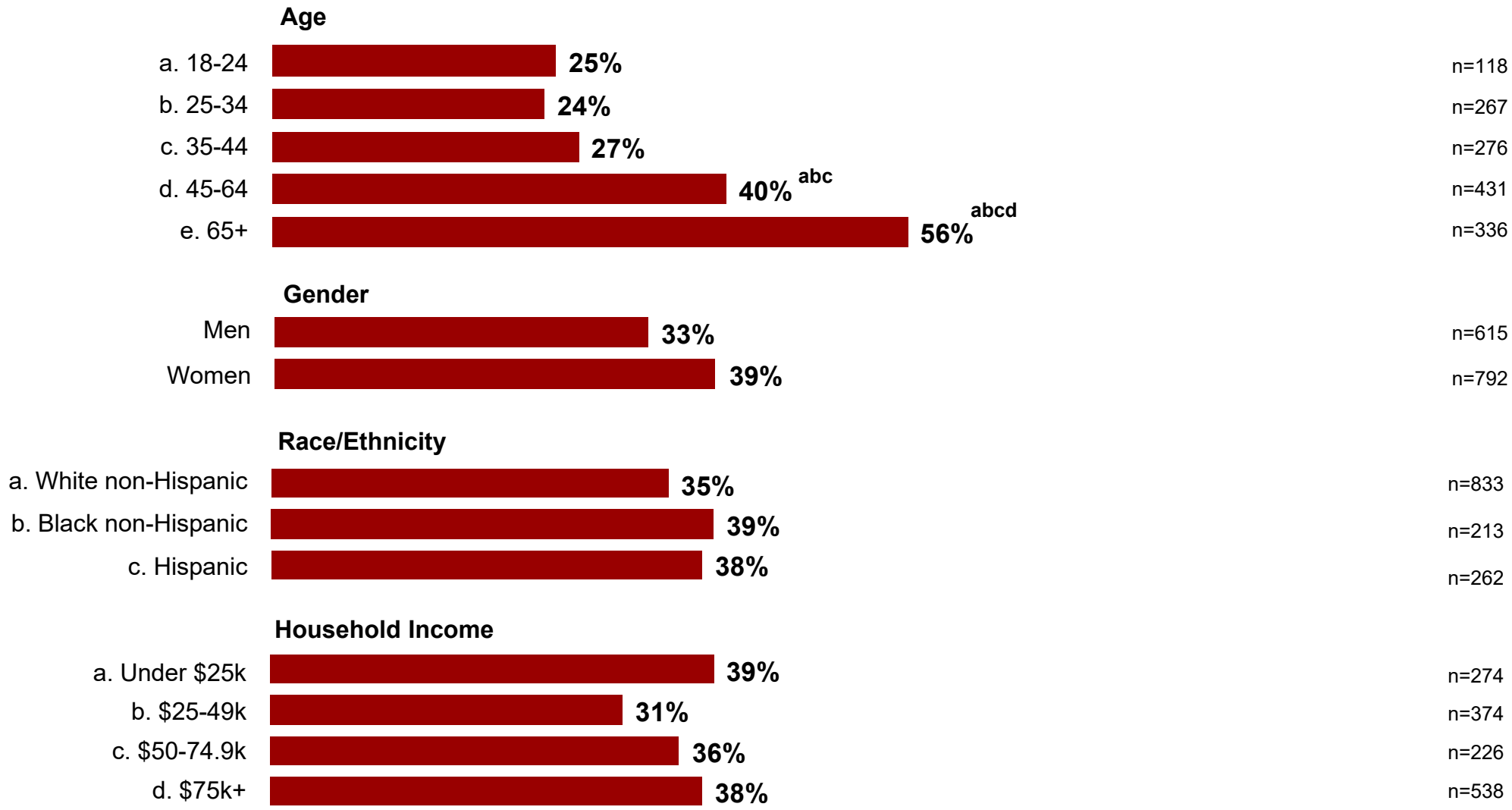
% saying they would be likely or not likely to get…



n=1430

COVID-19 Vaccination Likelihood Differs by Age but Not Other Core Demographics

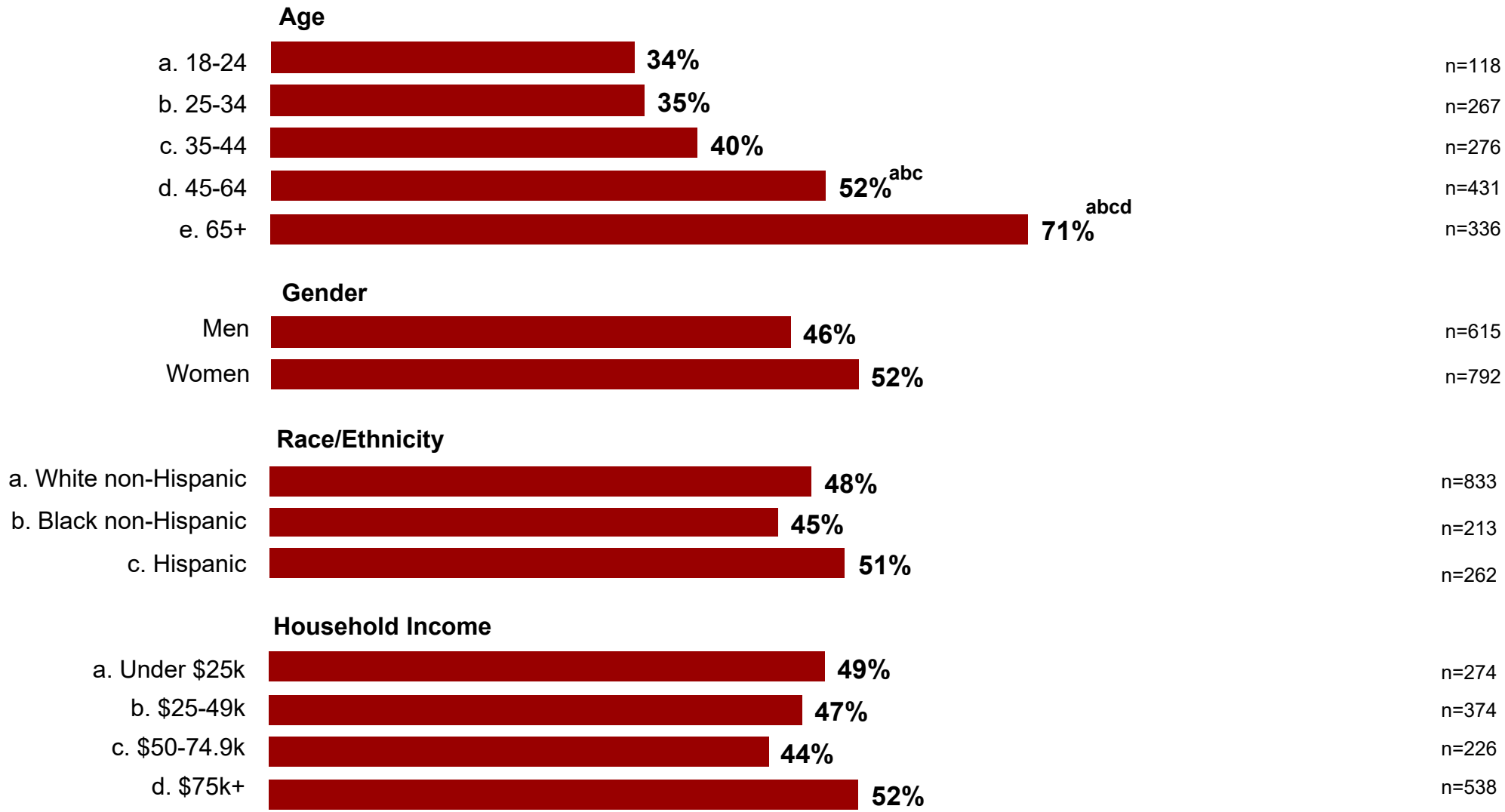
% saying they would be "very likely" to get <u>an updated COVID-19 vaccine this fall</u>



abcde Percentage is statistically significantly greater than the percentage among the corresponding group

Flu Vaccination Likelihood also Differs Only by Age

% saying they would be "very likely" to get a flu vaccine this coming flu season



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Hesitations Around Each Vaccine Fairly Different

% saying each is a major reason they are not likely to get each (among those who say they are not "very" likely to do so)

An updated COVID-19 vaccine this fall	
Want more research	60%
Worried about safety	51%
Distrust government	45%
Not effective	40%
Distrust manufacturers	38%
Prefer natural immunity	38%
Too many vaccines	35%

A flu vaccine this flu season	
Prefer natural immunity	37%
Too many vaccines	30%
Distrust government	27%
Not likely to get sick	27%
Not effective	27%
Distrust manufacturers	25%
Worried about safety	25%

Respondents asked about random 10 reasons for each; Not very likely to get an updated COVID-19 vaccine n=744-777; Not very likely to get a flu vaccine n=535-579

Differences Even Among those "Somewhat" Likely to Get COVID and Flu Vaccines

% saying each is a major reason they are not likely to get each (among those who say they are "somewhat" likely to do so)

An updated COVID-19 vaccine this fall	
Want more research	45%
Worried about safety	29%
Too much for immune system	22%
Too many vaccines	21%
Previous vaccine is enough	21%
Distrust government	20%
Wouldn't have time	20%

A flu vaccine this flu season	
Wouldn't have time	23%
Want more research	21%
Prefer natural immunity	21%
Not likely to get sick	20%
Worried about safety	19%
Previous vaccine is enough	19%
Too many vaccines	18%

Respondents asked about random 10 reasons for each; "Somewhat likely" to get an updated COVID-19 vaccine n=179-222; "Somewhat likely" to get a flu vaccine n=154-175

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Too much for immune system	22%
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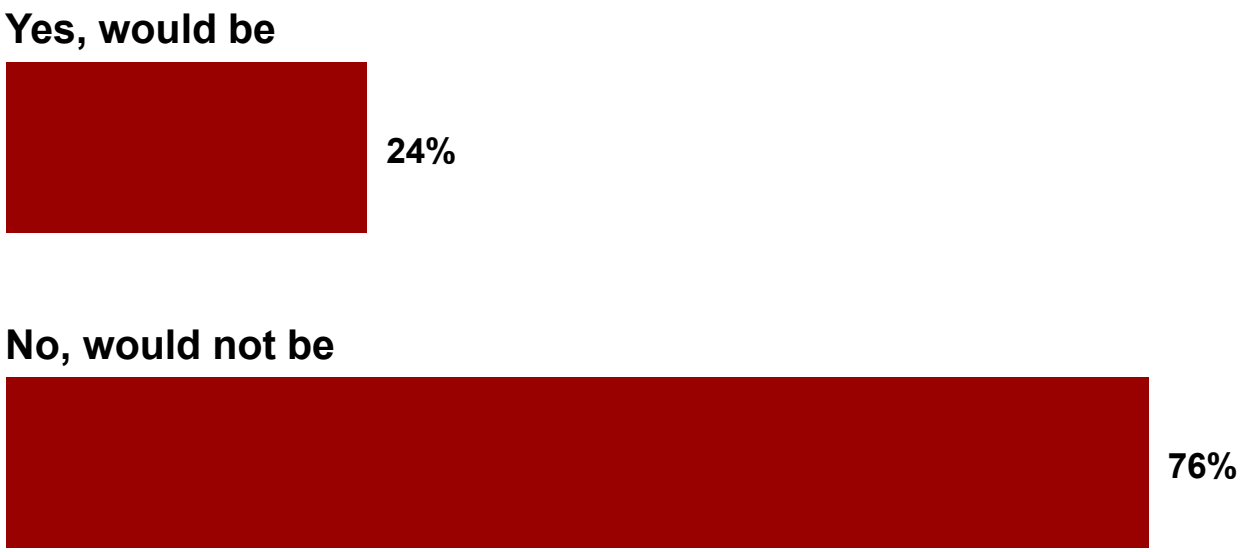
Perceived Personal COVID Risk Status

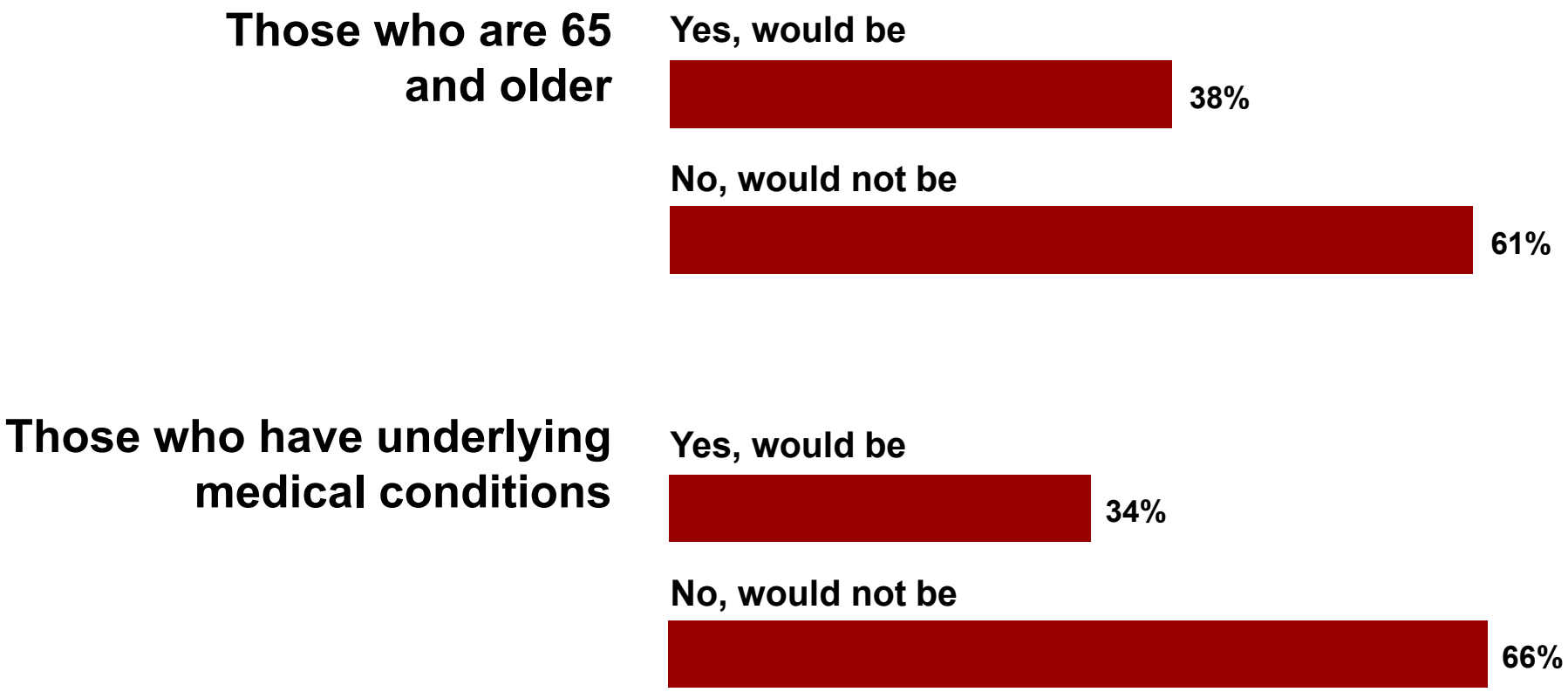
% saying, if they got COVID-19, they would be at high risk of getting very sick



n=1430

Majority in High Risk Groups Don't Identify as High Risk

% saying, if they got COVID-19, they would be at high risk of getting very sick



Medical conditions question wording: "Have you been told by a doctor or health professional that you have any of the following medical conditions: A serious heart, lung, kidney, or brain condition; a mental health condition; substance use disorder; cancer; diabetes; obesity or overweight; sickle-cell disease; tuberculosis; or decreased immunity?"

Age 65 and older n=336;
Have underlying medical condition(s) n=595

Implications for Communication

COVID-19 and Flu Vaccines

- Expect limited interest in updated COVID-19 vaccines and moderate interest in flu vaccine
    - Targeted outreach to younger people may be especially important

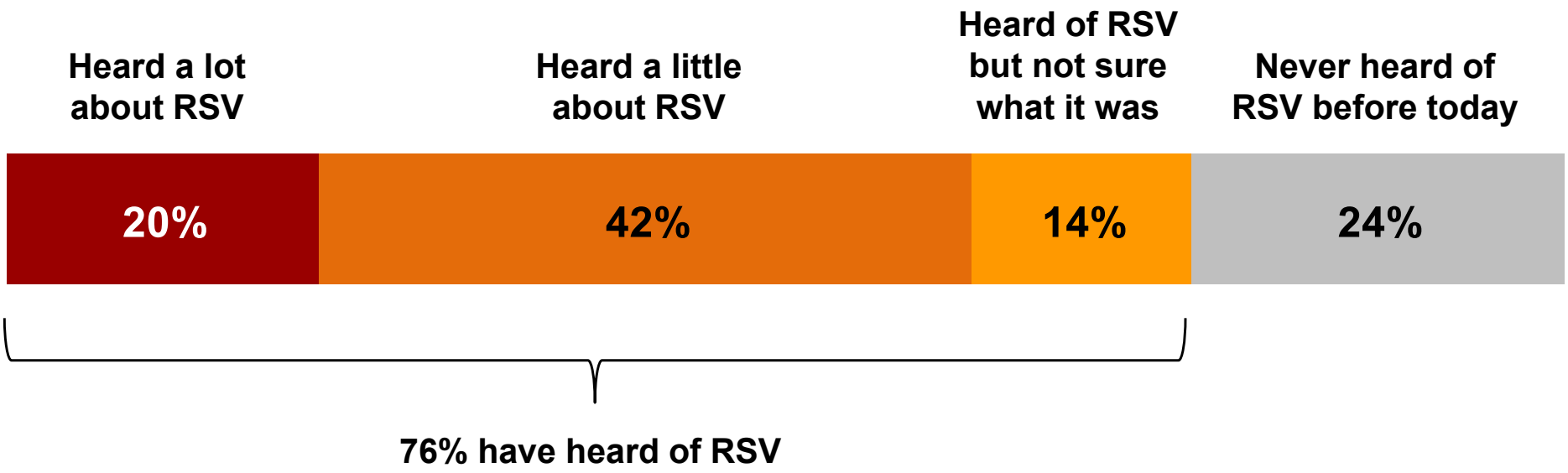
- Considerations for co-messaging and coadministration
    - Offer coadministration when possible, but lead with flu vaccine
        - Communication is not necessarily better when both COVID and flu are mentioned
        - Reminder: Be wary of linking childhood vaccines and COVID vaccines

- Maximize messaging opportunities for both:
    - Provide consistent messages about safety and effectiveness
    - Build trust with community engagement beyond vaccines
    - Consider how to clarify the notion of “high risk”

RSV Vaccine

Most Have Heard of RSV, but Few Have Heard A Lot

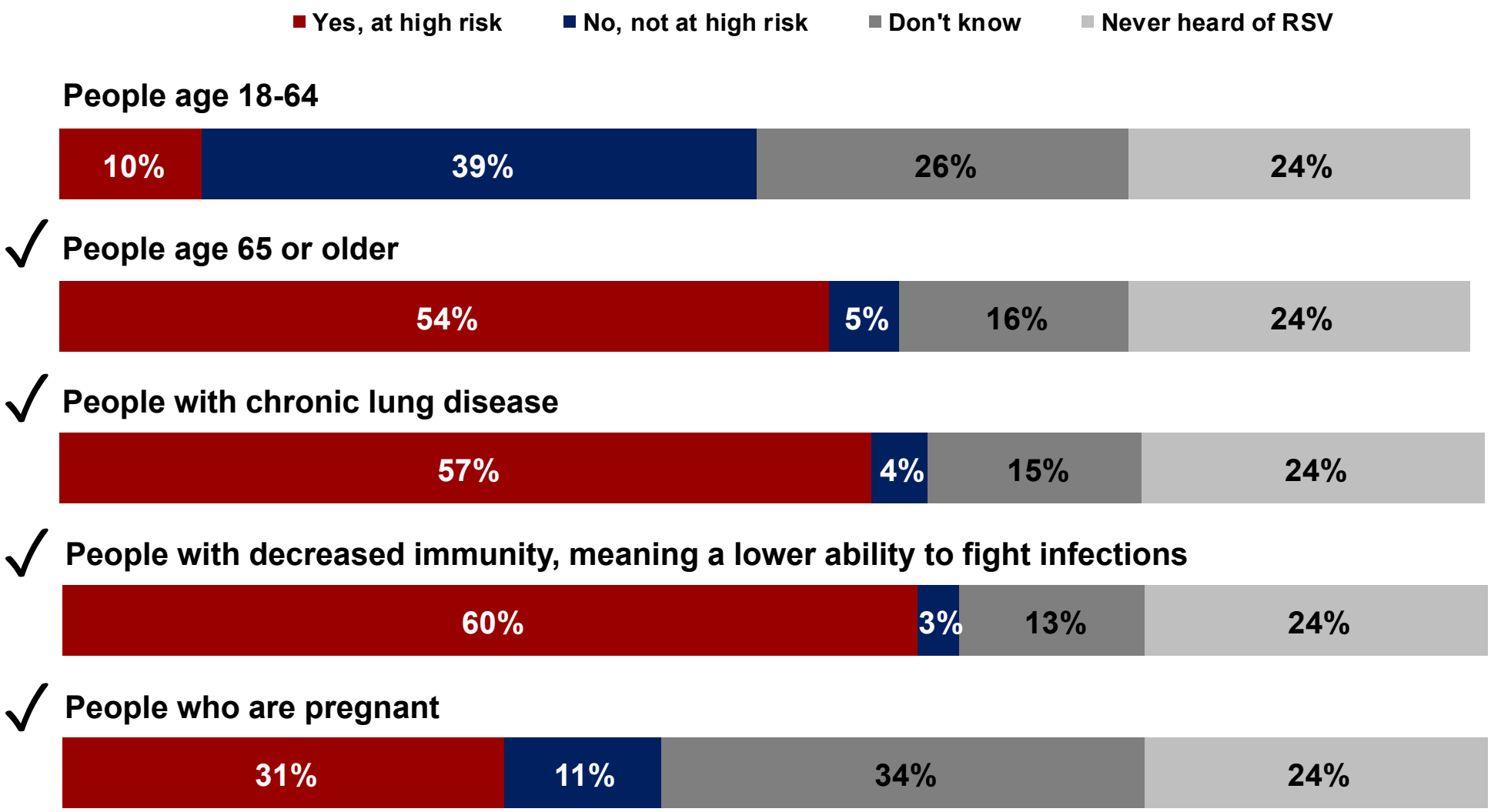
% saying they have…



n=1430

Mixed Awareness of Who is at High Risk

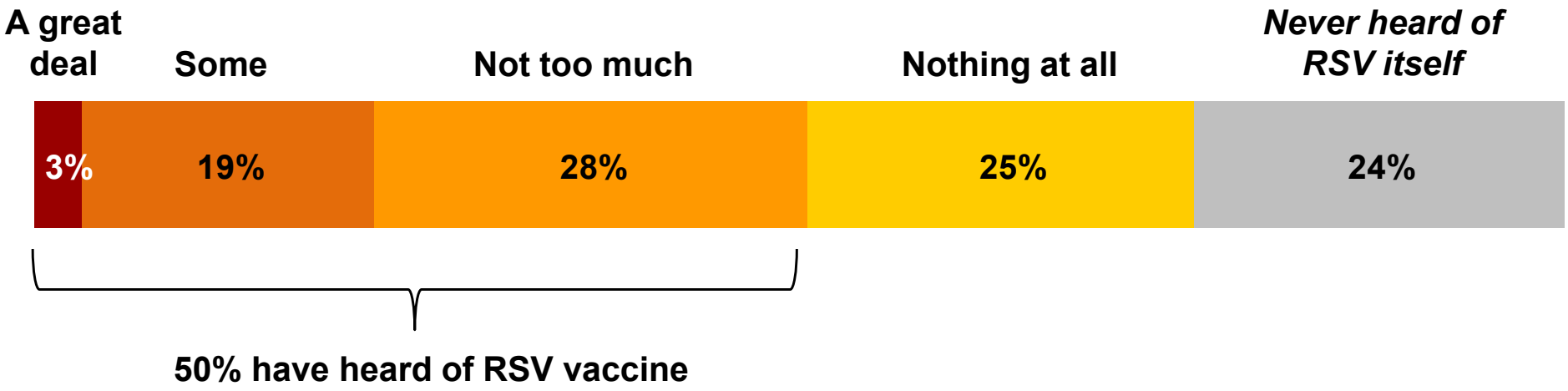
% saying adults in each of the following groups are at high risk of getting very sick from RSV



n=1430

Only Half of Adults Have Heard of RSV Vaccine

% saying they have heard, read, or seen anything about a vaccine to protect against RSV

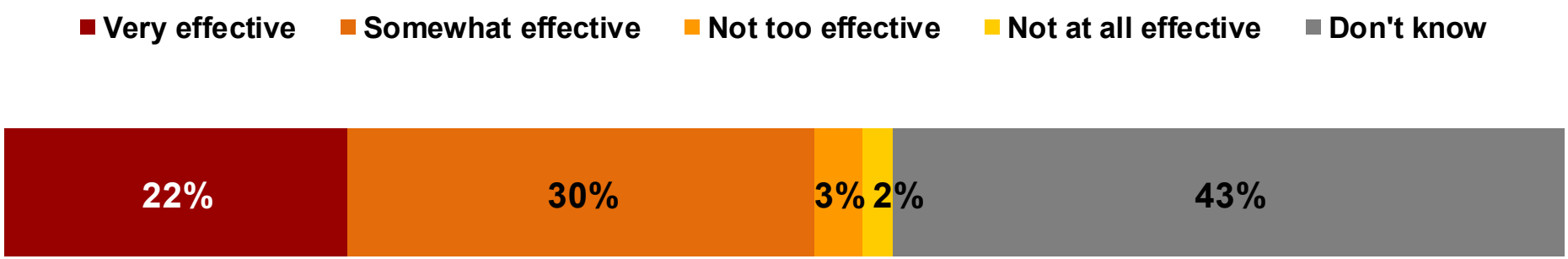


n=1430

For Those Who Have Head of RSV Vaccine, Many Believe It is Effective, but Many Don't Know

% saying the RSV vaccine is effective or not effective for most adults 60 and older in protecting the person getting vaccinated from getting seriously ill or having to be hospitalized with RSV

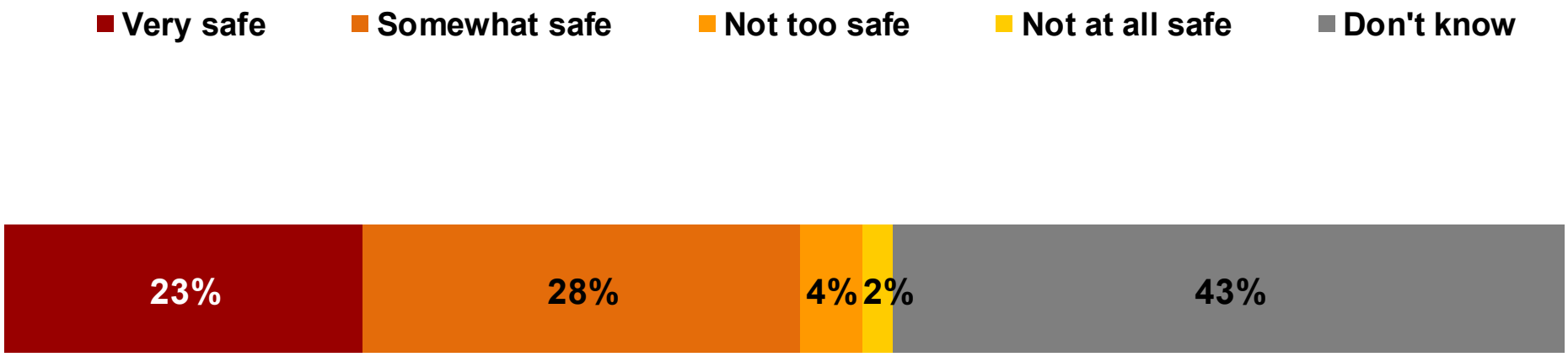
(among those who have heard of the RSV vaccine)



n=733

For Those Who Have Heard of RSV Vaccine, Many Believe It is Safe, but Many Don't Know

% saying the RSV vaccine is safe or not safe for most adults 60 and older (among those who have heard of the RSV vaccine)

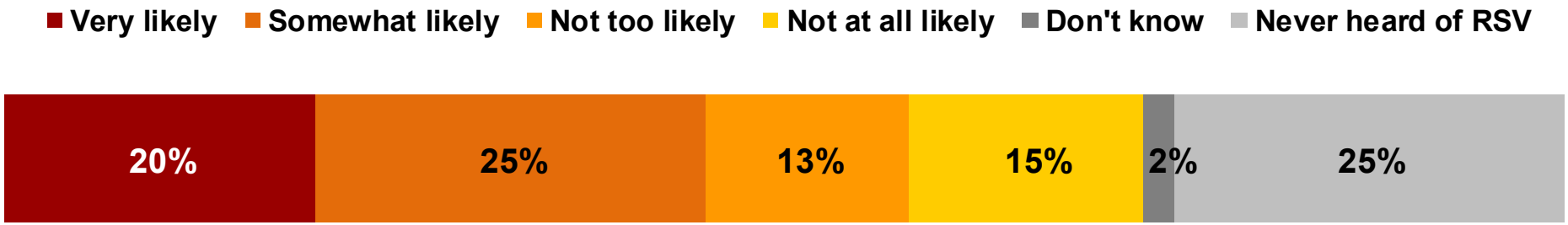


n=733

Among Eligible, Moderate Interest in Getting RSV Vaccine

"A vaccine to protect against RSV has been approved by the FDA for adults age 60 and older, and it is expected to be available before this winter."

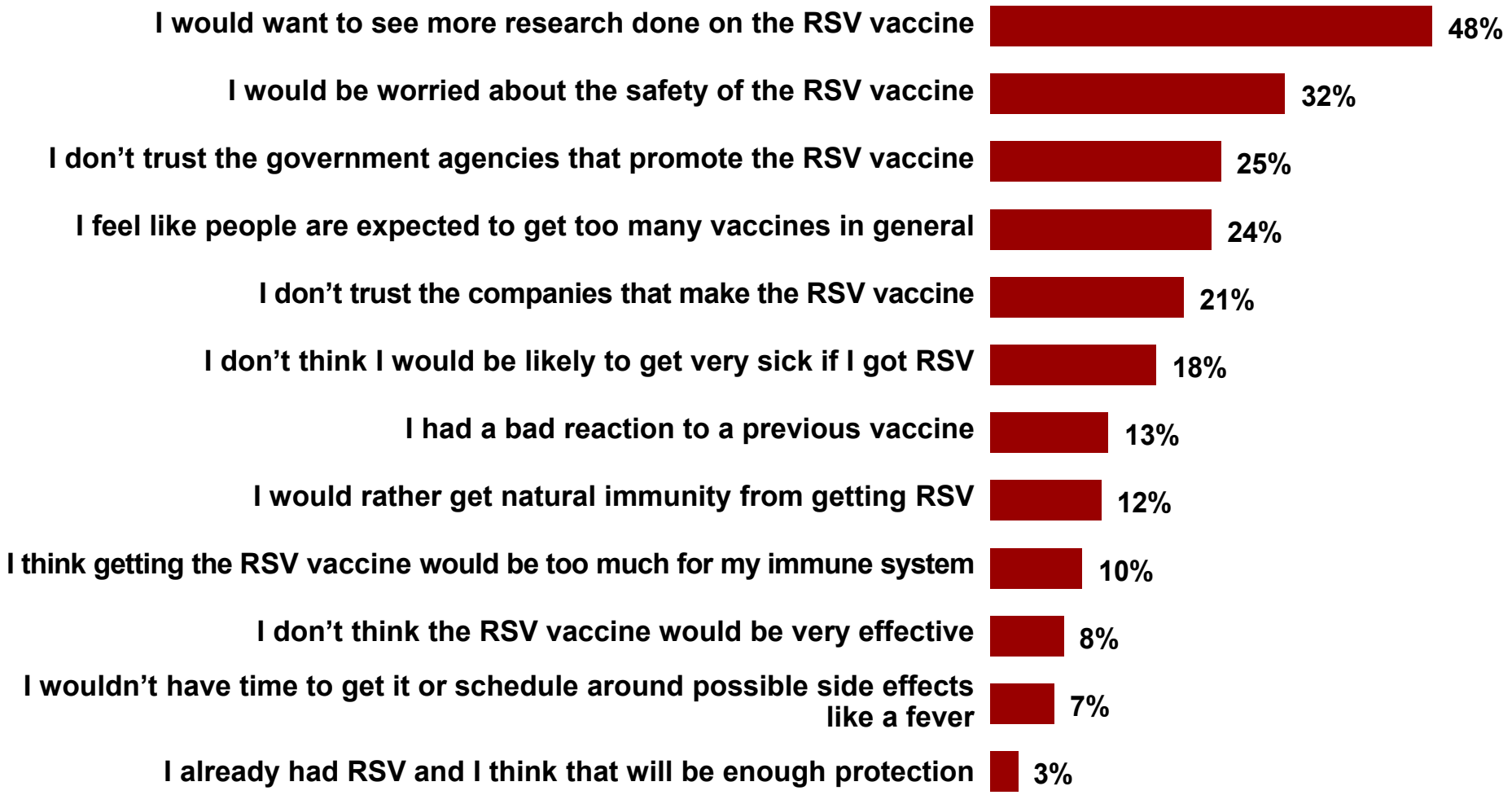
% saying they would be likely or not likely to get the RSV vaccine before this winter (among those who are age 60 or older)



n=448

Needing More Research & Reassurance on Safety are Top Reasons for Hesitation in Getting RSV Vaccine

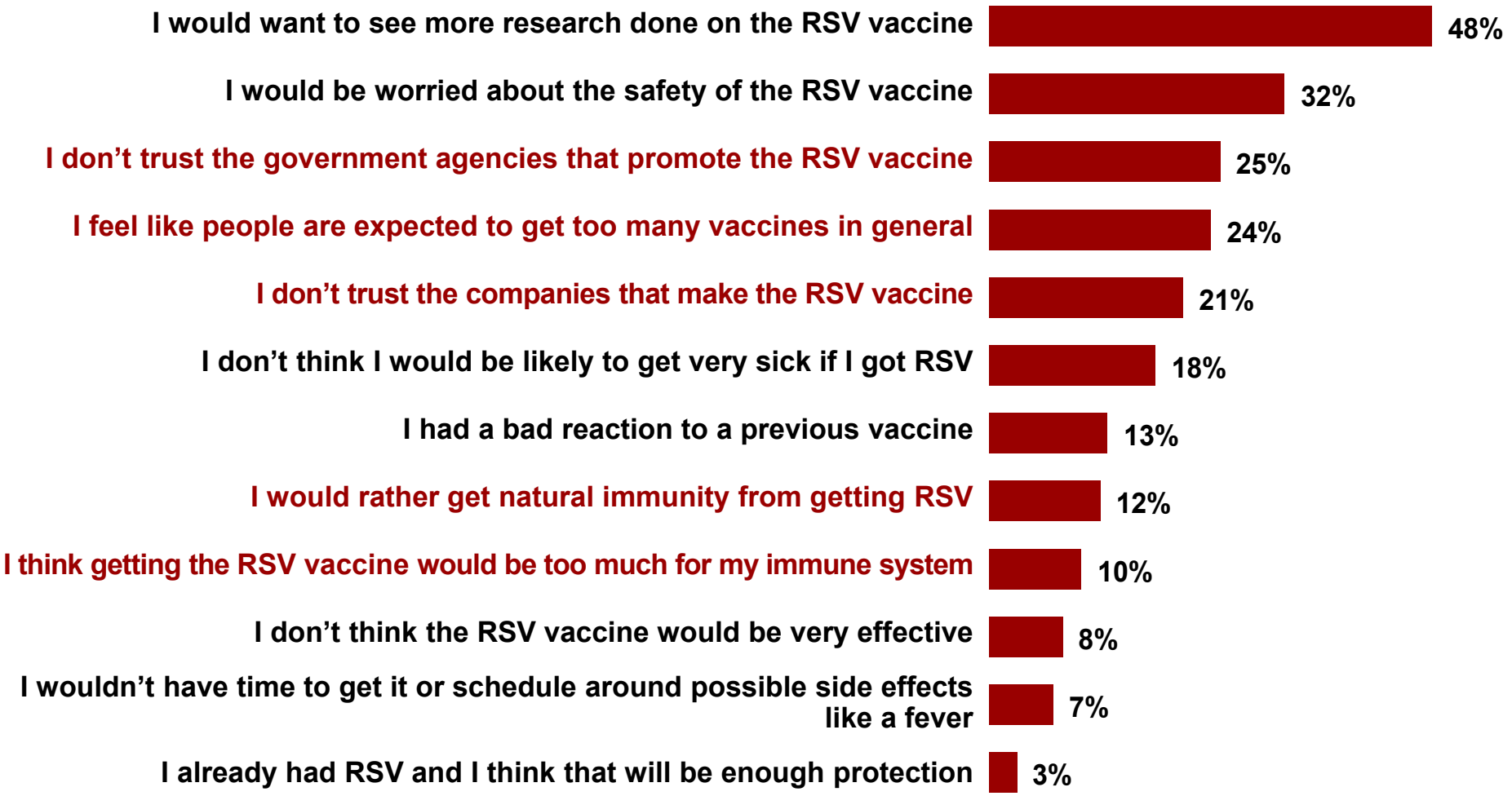
% saying each is a major reason they are not likely to get the RSV vaccine before this winter (among those who say they are not "very" likely to do so)



Respondents asked about random 10 reasons, n=187-212

Broader Vaccination Hesitations are Also Part of the Picture for RSV Vaccine Hesitancy

% saying each is a major reason they are not likely to get the RSV vaccine before this winter (among those who say they are not "very" likely to do so)



Respondents asked about random 10 reasons, n=187-212

Implications for Communication

RSV Vaccine

- Expect moderate interest in RSV vaccine
- Increasing awareness may need to be the central focus of communication
- Provide consistent messaging about effectiveness and safety – and degree of testing where possible
    - For people who are appropriately interested in getting vaccine, may support actions of talking to doctor or getting vaccine
    - For those who are hesitant, reinforcing messaging may be compelling in longer-term
- Broader approaches to vaccination messaging and framing may be needed for RSV, for seasonal vaccines, and beyond

Broader Vaccine Development

Limited Sense of New Vaccines Being Developed

% saying they have heard a lot, a little, or nothing at all about other new vaccines being developed for adults and children that will be available in the next couple of years

n=1430

Most Feel Development of New Vaccines is Good

% saying, in general, they think the development of new vaccines is…

n=1430

Conceptual Reasoning for Positive Views Includes Traditional and Newer Ideas

% saying the main reasons they think the development of new vaccines is mostly good are… (among those who say this is mostly good)

Mostly good because…	
Prevention/protection from disease	34%
Avoid severe outcomes, including death	19%
Protect the community/the vulnerable	14%
Scientific progress	14%
Keeps diseases under control	13%
Get ahead of disease changes	8%
Good for health	7%

n=1177

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"To protect as many people as possible from the effects of illness."

"Any time that we can prevent illness has to be a good thing to me."

n=1177

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"I think new vaccines will prevent children and adults from being hospitalized."

"May not prevent from getting sick but can significantly reduce how serious illness can become."

n=1177

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"Those with compromised immunities should have options available to keep them safe and healthy."

"More options are good and can be a great benefit to society, especially older or immune compromised people."

n=1177

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"To prevent disease from spreading or creating another pandemic."

"Keep the spread of new viruses to a minimum and help the at-risk population."

n=1177

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"As new viruses come up we have to create new vaccines to fight them."

"Getting ahead of potential pandemic situations, herd immunity, and learning from past mistakes."

n=1177

Negative Themes are Familiar but Still Some Nuance to Listen For

% saying the main reasons they think the development of new vaccines is mostly bad are… (among those who say this is mostly bad)

Mostly bad because…	
Don’t trust the safety	41%
Potential side effects	20%
Don’t trust pharmaceutical companies	18%
Don’t trust the government	13%
Not necessary	12%
Causes harm	11%
Too many vaccines	8%
Not effective	7%

n=249

Negative Themes are Familiar but Still Some Nuance to Listen For

% saying the main reasons they think the development of new vaccines is mostly bad are… (among those who say this is mostly bad)

"They come to market way too quickly without enough testing."

"Not enough long-term research being done for the long-term effects."

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% saying the main reasons they think the development of new vaccines is mostly bad are… (among those who say this is mostly bad)

"Vaccines make some people die or get even sicker."

"Vaccines are weakening our bodies natural defenses and immunities."

Mostly bad because…	
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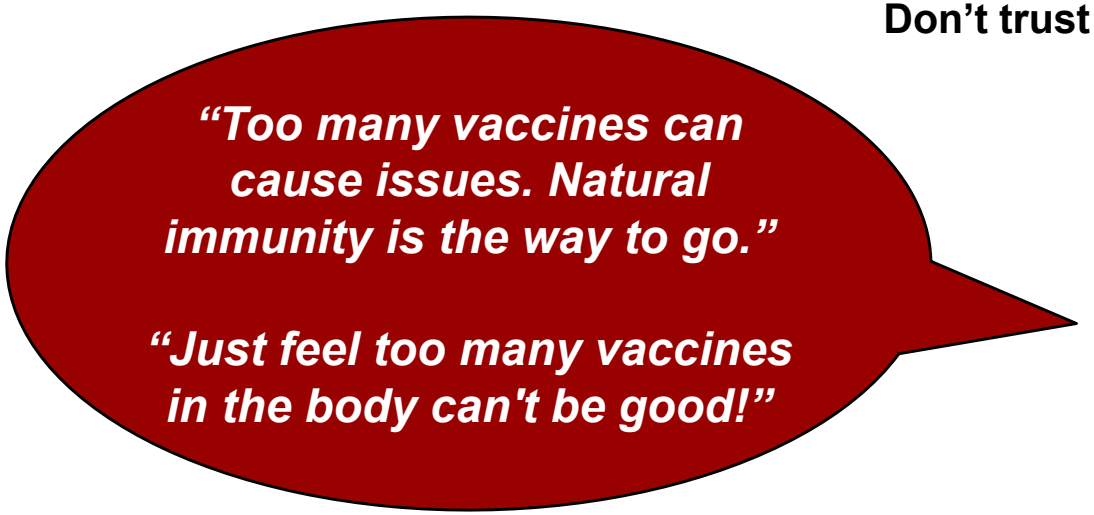

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"I don't think it fully protects us. There were people who still caught Covid or the flu after getting shots."

"People are gonna get sick regardless."

n=249

Implications for Communication

For New Vaccines Broadly

- Messages about safety and effectiveness may always be needed
- Amplify messages about reducing risk rather than disease avoidance or elimination
- Address concerns about “too many vaccines” – why the immune system can handle it
- Address confusion about superior “natural immunity”
- Explaining how new vaccines use well-known technologies may be better than sharing information as if they are totally novel vaccines

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- Ofsj%Jx| twym~
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- Meredith Allen
- ASTHO membership

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- Tom Schafer
- NPHIC membership

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- JIC Lead
- JIC Research and Evaluation Team