

# Self-reported treatment expectations and motivations of a large cohort of patients with ankylosing spondylitis (AS), rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and psoriatic arthritis (PA) attending the Gastein Healing Gallery regularly

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**Background:** The Gastein Healing gallery combines several treatment factors such as low level radon exposure, high humidity and mild hyperthermia in a moderate altitude above sea level. Every year several thousands patients with a variety of diseases including rheumatic diseases seek treatment in this health facility. Our objectives were to assess and compare treatment expectations and motivations in a cohort of patients with AS, RA and PA attending the Gastein Healing gallery regularly.

**Methods:** We conducted an anonymous online survey with patients regularly attending the Gastein Healing Gallery in Bad Gastein. In this health facility approximately 12,000 patients with a variety of disease are being treated annually. Of those, 6,465 patients were invited by email to fill out the survey. Socio-demographics and disease related variables (e.g. development of health condition until and since gallery sessions, pain, etc.) were assessed, including 2 blocks of questions (answer format: agree/mostly agree/slightly agree/disagree) such as “I am convinced that the Gallery sessions help me to...” (expectations) following 5 statements, e.g. “reduce my pain” and „If I perform Gallery sessions, then I will again...” (motivations) following 6 statements, e.g. „be able to maintain my ability to work“.

**Results:** In total 2,017 patients responded (=31%) of which a subset of 503 respondents indicated a diagnosis of AS (73,8%), RA (17,5%), or PA (8,7%). The mean age (SD) of the subset was 55,2 years (10,7) and 61,4% were male. The current pain level was 4,1 (2,2) on a NRS. The majority attended the gallery once every year (61%), every 2 years (13,7%) or not regularly (10,5%). Marked or moderate improvement of health condition until first gallery session was indicated by 16,9% and since by 79,1% of patients (Fig. 1). Concerning the 5 items measuring expectations a large proportion of patients agreed or mostly agreed (62,3% for ‘strengthen my muscles’ - 92,5% for ‘improve health condition’) (Fig. 2). The same picture was found for the 6 motivation items (58,6% - 85,8%) (Fig. 3). Only in 3 of 11 items (expectation and motivation) there was a significant difference between the groups, i.e. patients with PA scored lower.

**Conclusions:** A high proportion of our cohort with AS, RA and PA reported considerable improvement in their health conditions since they perform regular visits to the gallery. Over 2/3 of all patients agreed or mostly agreed that their symptoms and pain and thus their health condition improve with gallery sessions. Patients are also highly motivated to take sessions because a large proportion feel that the gallery helps them to improve physical functioning, participation and preserve their ability to work. To conclude, from our patients’ point of view regular gallery sessions have important positive effects on a variety of domains including symptoms, health status, functioning and participation and help them to improve their health condition in the future.

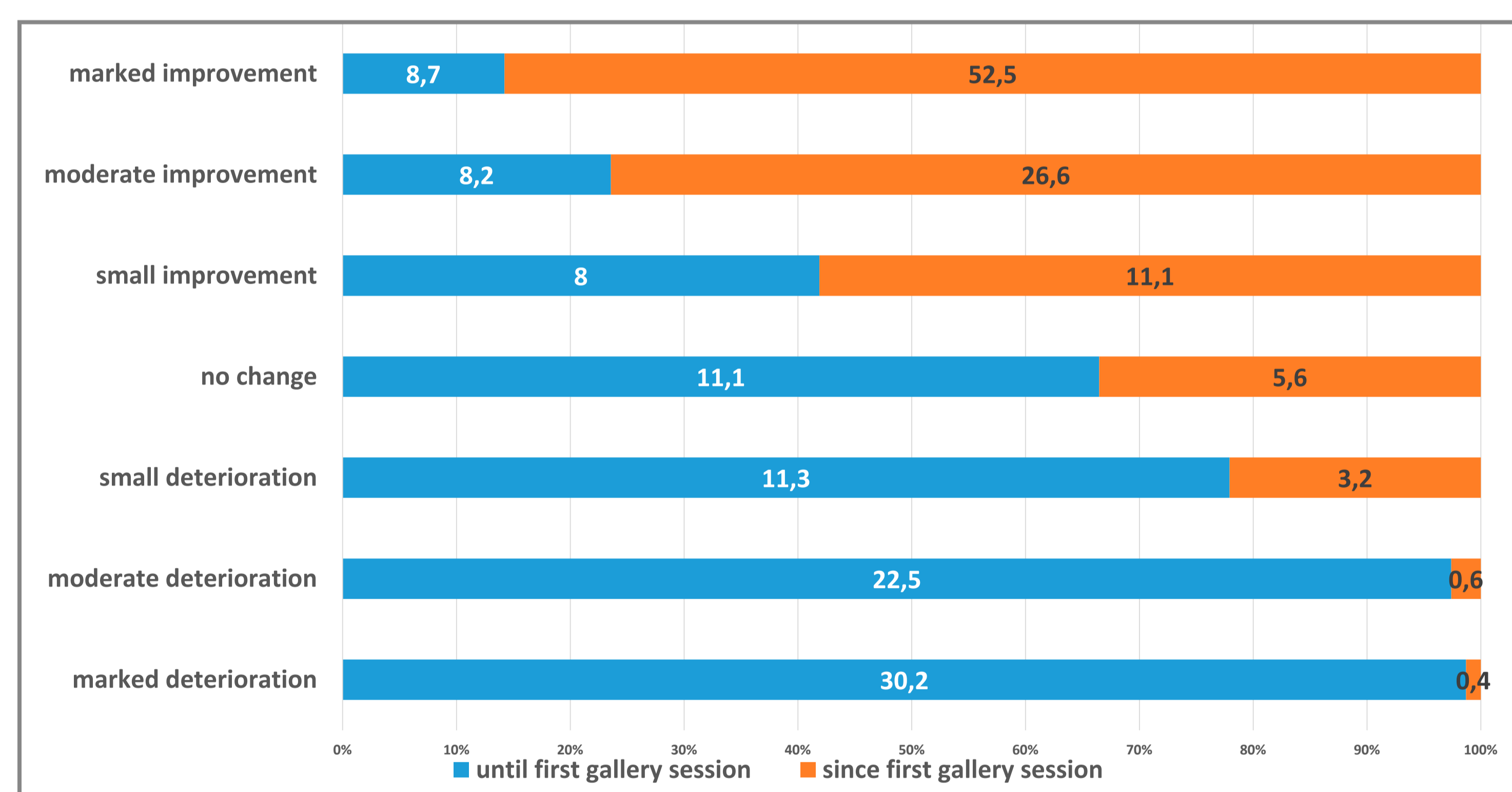


Fig. 1: Development of health condition until and since gallery sessions in %

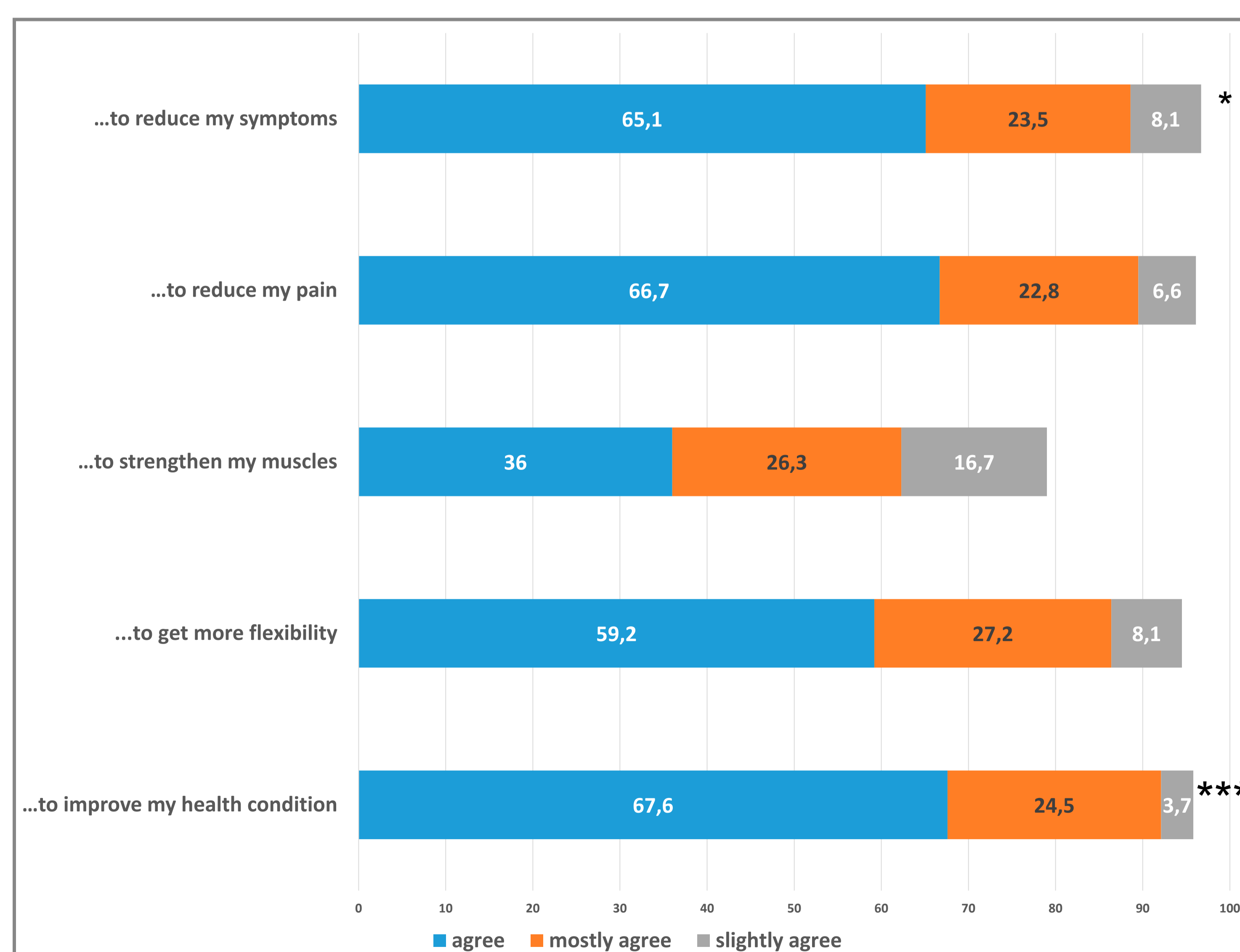


Fig. 2: I am convinced that the Gallery sessions help me... (%)

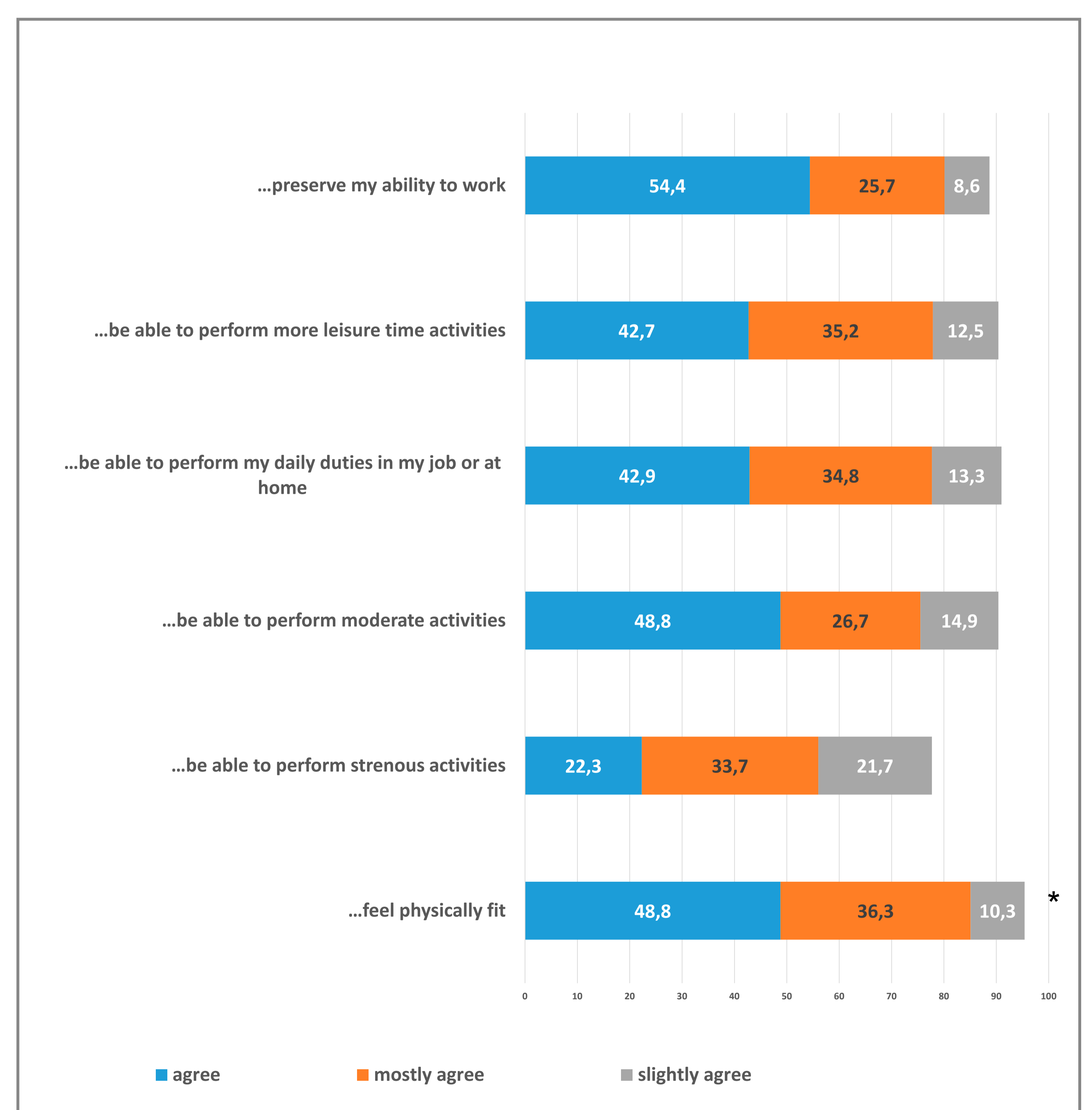


Fig. 3: If I perform Gallery sessions, then I will again... (%)