

Self-reported treatment expectations and motivations of a large cohort of patients with fibromyalgia (FM) and osteoarthritis (OA) 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 osteoarthritis, rheumatic diseases and chronic pain conditions seek treatment in this health facility. Our objectives were to assess and compare treatment expectations and motivations in a cohort of patients with FM and OA 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 368 respondents indicated a diagnosis of FM (39,1%) or OA (60,9%) at different locations. The mean age (SD) of the subset was 61 years (10,7) and 41,3% were male. The current pain level was 4,3 (2,3) on a NRS (range 0-10). The majority attended the gallery once every year (50,3%), not regularly (27,4%) or every 2 years (10,3%). Marked or moderate improvement of health condition until first gallery session was indicated by 23,4% and since by 71,2% of patients (figure 1). Concerning the 5 items measuring expectations a large proportion of patients agreed or mostly agreed (56,9% for `strengthen my muscles` - 86,6% for `improve health condition`) with no significant differences between the patient groups (figure 2). The same picture was found for the 6 motivation items (50,1% - 78,3%). Only in 2 items (`to perform moderate activities`/`to perform daily chores`) there was a significant difference between the patient groups (figure 3).

Conclusions: A high proportion of our cohort with FM or OA reported considerable improvements in their health conditions since they perform regular visits in the gallery. Over 50% 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 high proportion feel that the gallery help 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.

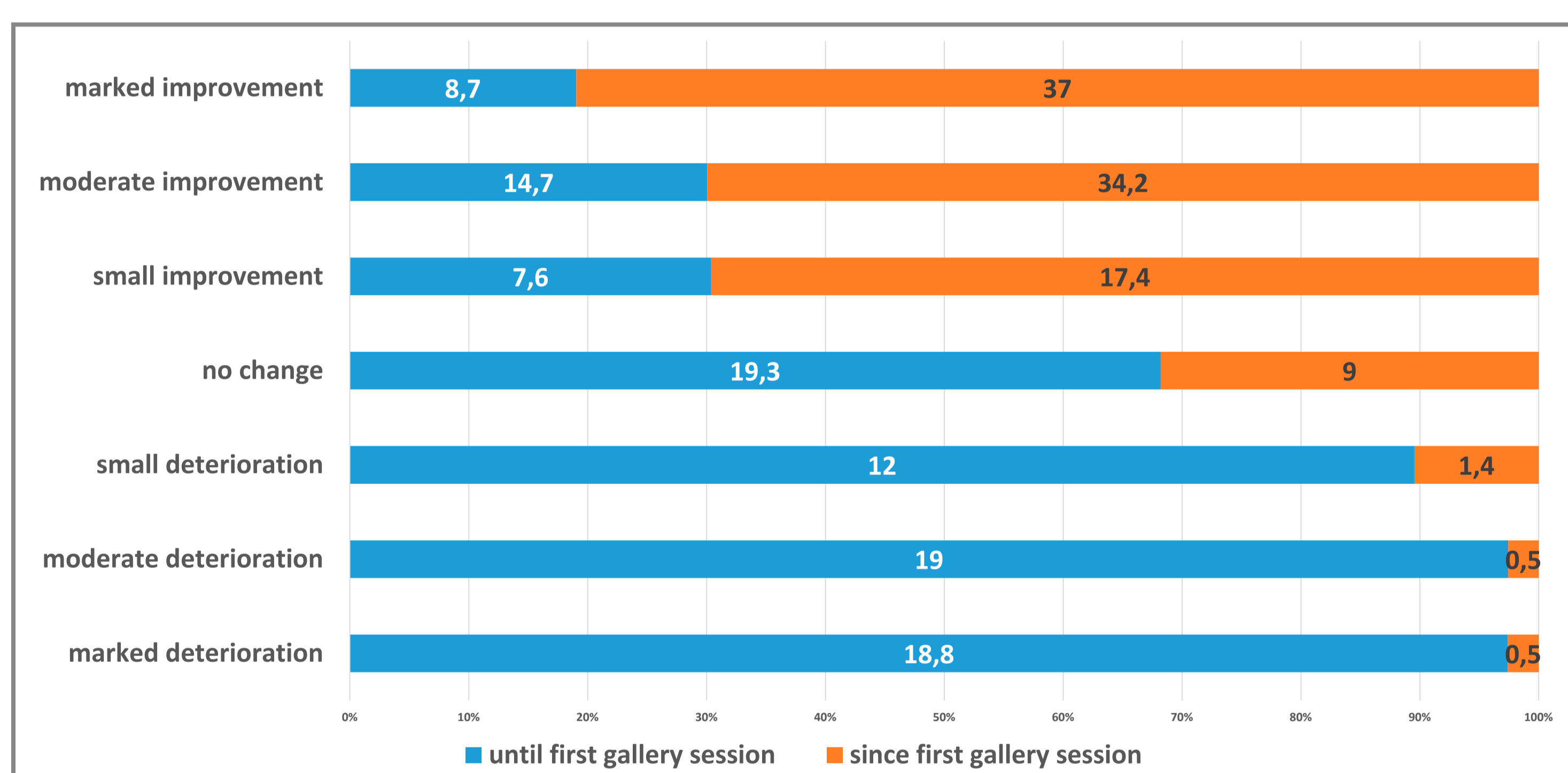


Fig. 1: Development of health condition until and since gallery sessions in %

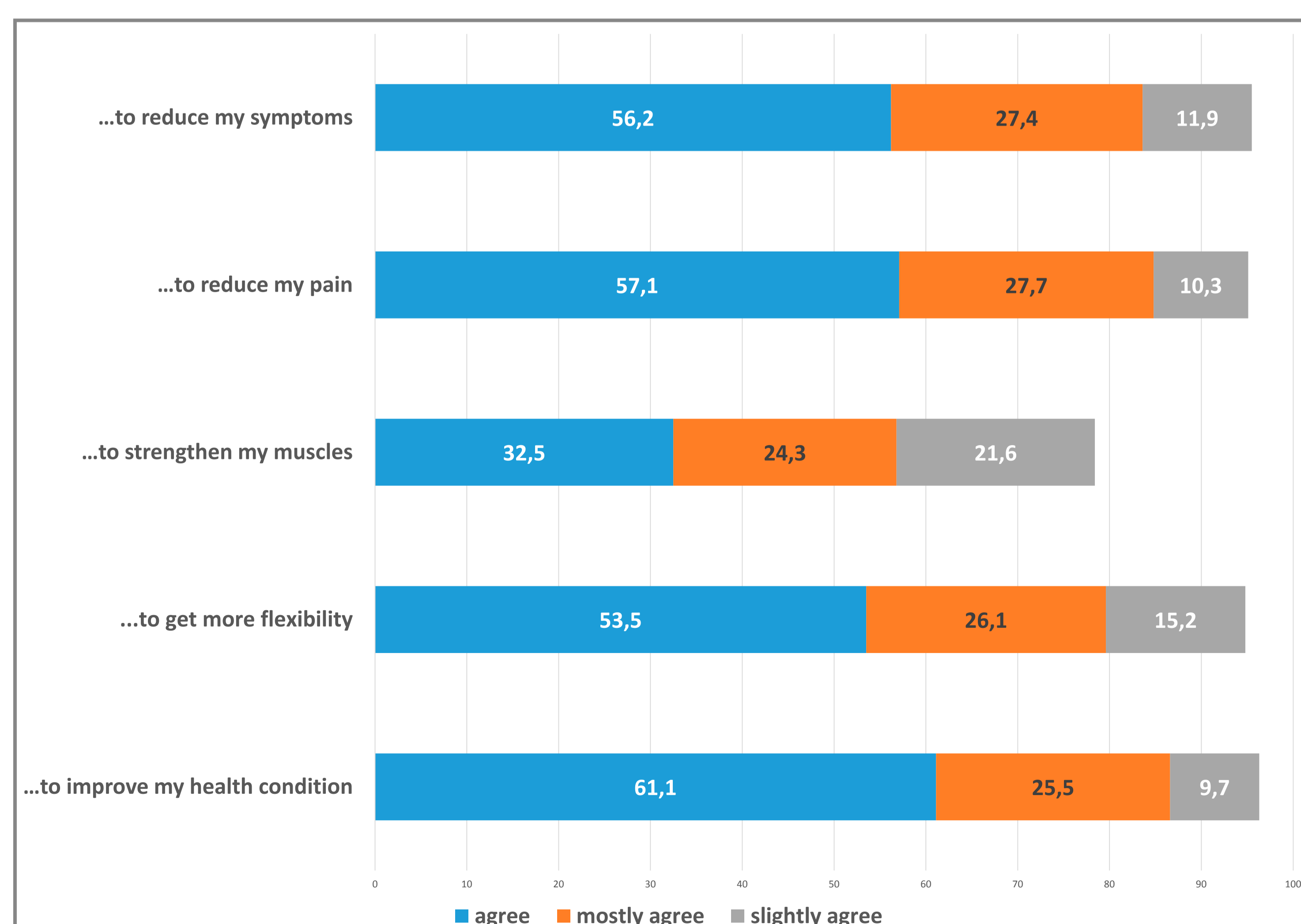


Fig. 2: I am convinced that the Gallery sessions help me... (%)

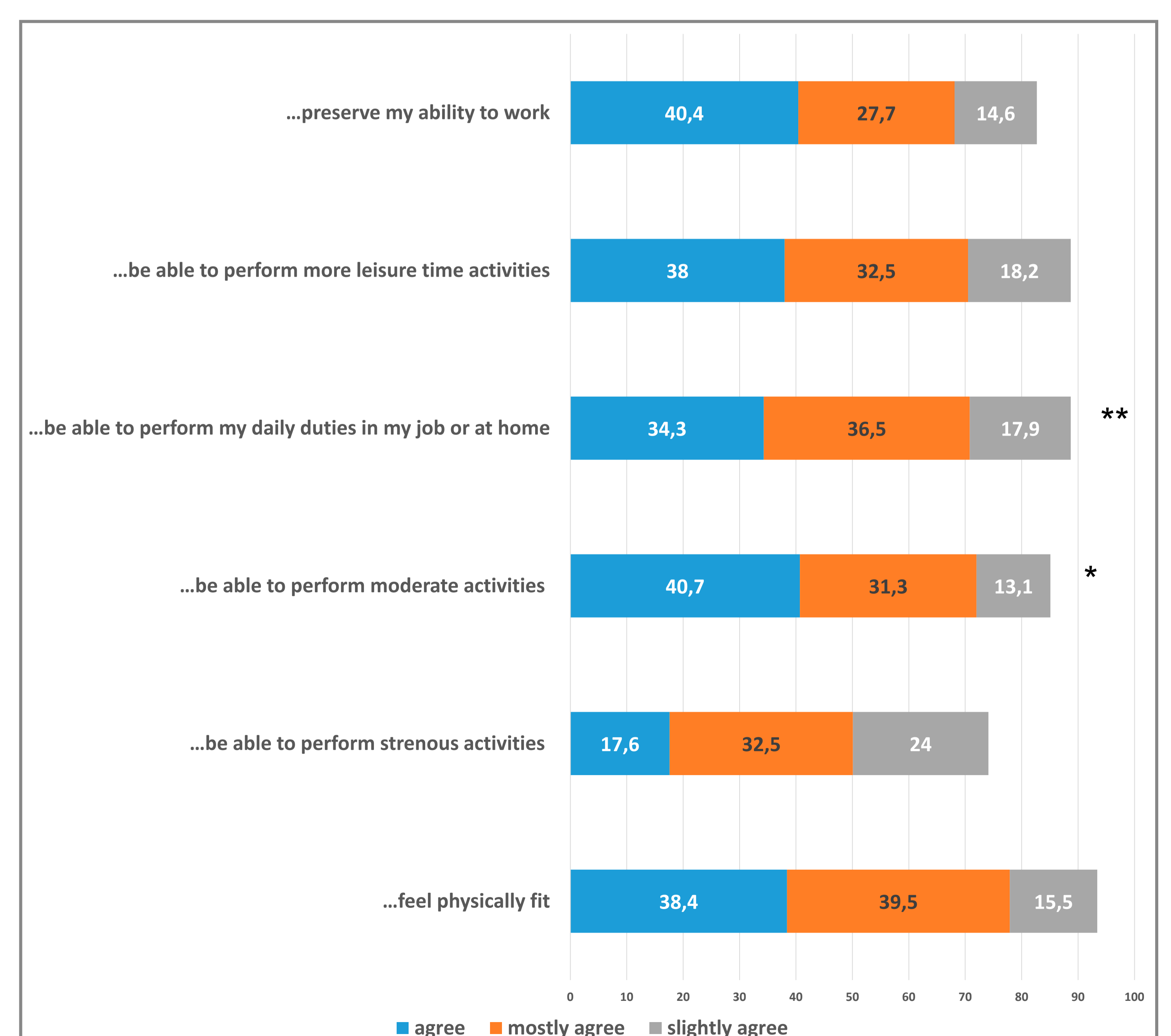


Fig. 3: If I perform Gallery sessions, then I will again... (%)