

Population survey on antibiotic resistance

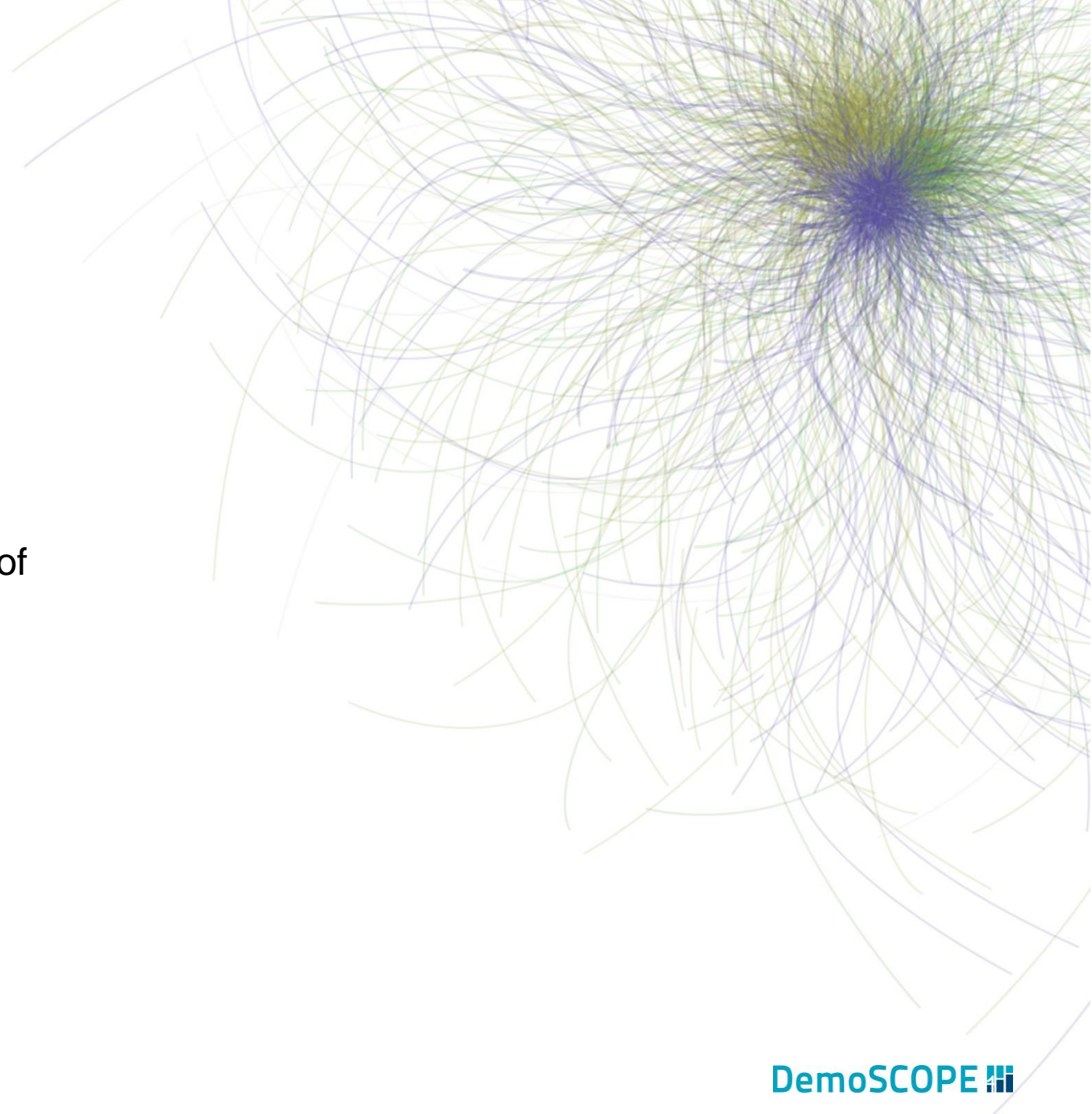
Study report on antibiotic use and the knowledge of
the Swiss population

November 2024



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Office of Public Health FOPH
Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office FSVO
Federal Office for Agriculture FOAG
Federal Office for the Environment FOEN



Introduction

Antibiotic resistance represents a global and growing challenge

The successful use of antibiotics against bacterial infections is considered one of the greatest achievements in the history of medicine. However, resistant bacteria can develop each time antibiotics are used, making the treatment of infections more difficult or even impossible. It is therefore vital that antibiotics are used as appropriately as possible in both humans and animals. It was against this backdrop that the Federal Council adopted the Swiss Strategy on Antibiotic Resistance (StAR) back in 2015. With the StAR 2024–2027 One Health Action Plan, which was launched this year, existing measures are strengthened, goals defined more precisely, and new priorities set for the years ahead.

To allow for the efficient and targeted implementation of the respective measures, the FOPH has been surveying the Swiss population with respect to antibiotic use and their knowledge in this area every two years since 2016. In summer 2024, the fifth survey was conducted with 3,485 people.

Study design



Universe / target group

Language-assimilated population in Switzerland aged 15 and above, selection procedure: SRPH sample

Sample size

3,485 interviews
Weighting according to the variables of language region, age and gender, measuring accuracy min. +/-1.7 percent with certainty of 95 percent



Survey period

6 June to 2 August 2024

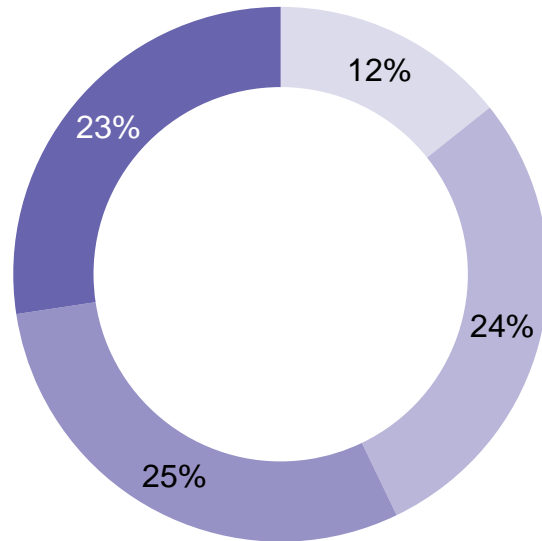
Survey method

Mixed mode (computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) / computer-assisted online interviews (CAWI))
Interview duration: 12 minutes



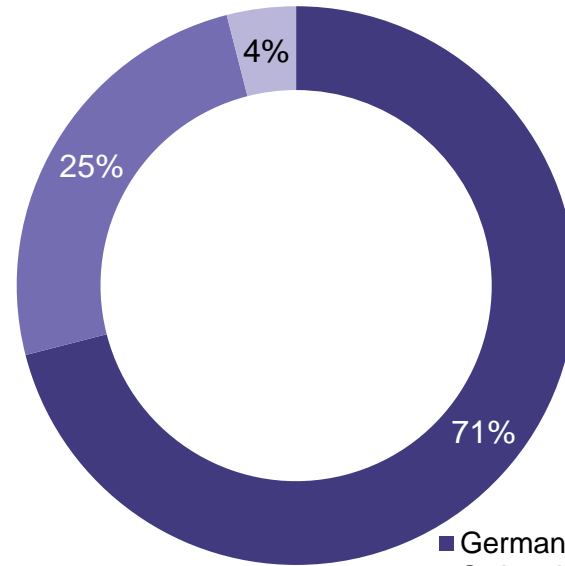
Sample

Age



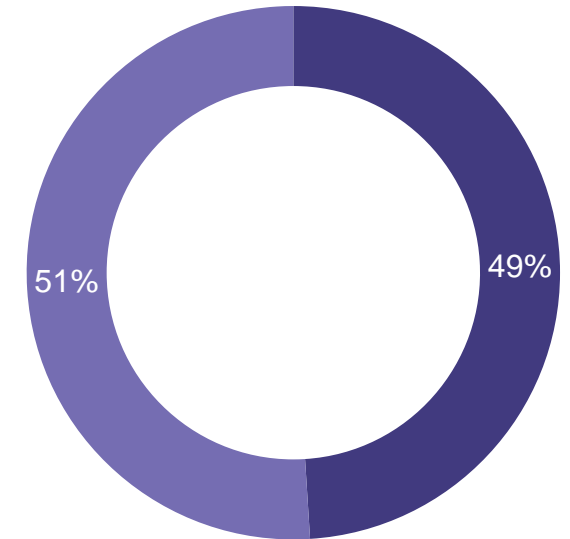
- 15–24 years old
- 25–44 years old
- 45–64 years old
- 65+ years old

Language region



- German-speaking Switzerland
- French-speaking Switzerland
- Ticino

Gender



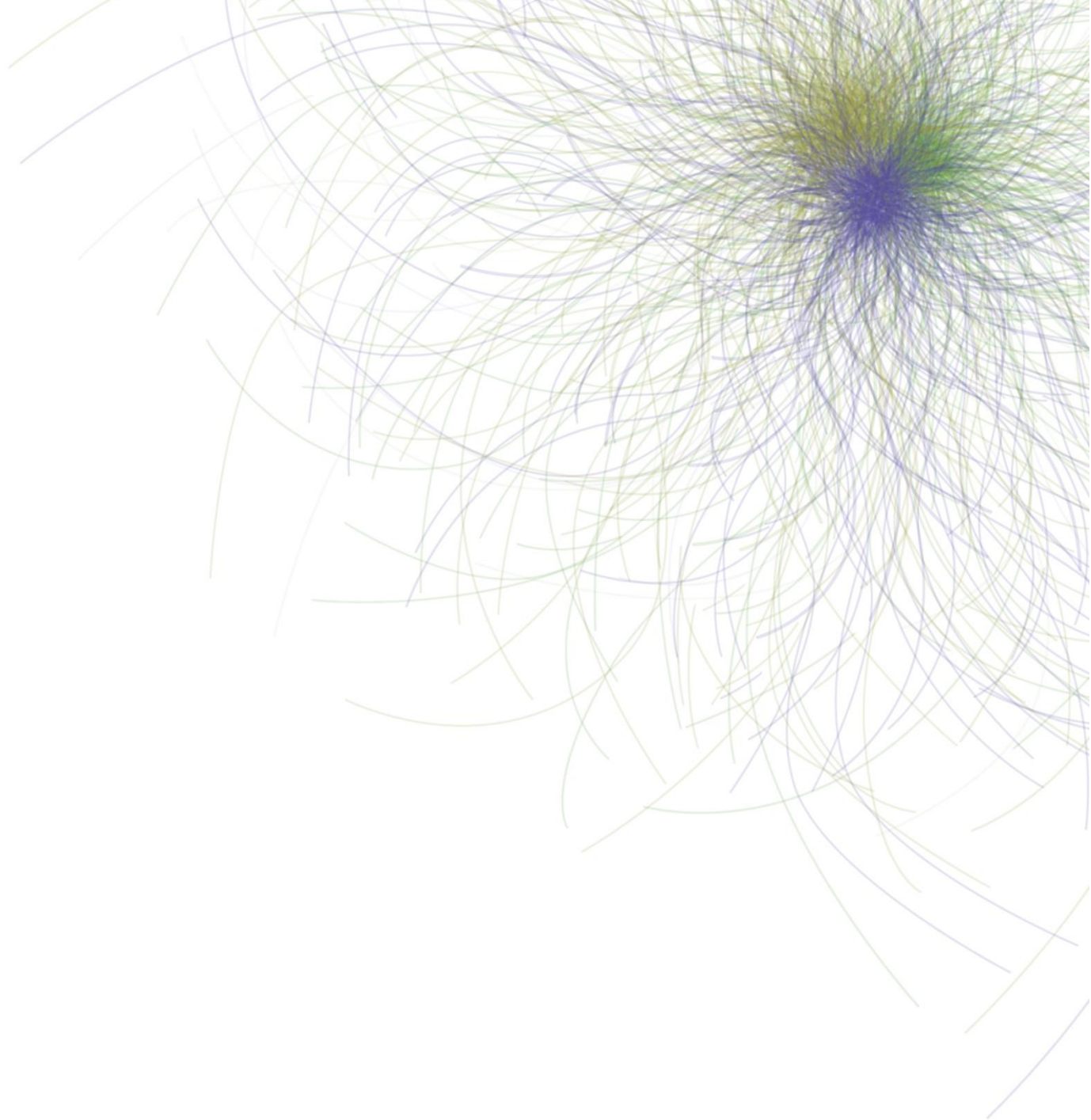
- Male
- Female

Basis: 3,485 respondents | Weighted percentages according to the total population of Switzerland; deviations from 100 percent due to rounding.

Strategy on Antibiotic Resistance



Antibiotic use



Summary

Antibiotic use

Over the past 12 months, 22 percent of the respondents had taken antibiotics. This figure has remained at a relatively constant level over time.

In the vast majority of cases, antibiotics were taken after being prescribed by a doctor. In 94 percent of cases, the antibiotics were dispensed either directly by the doctor or by a pharmacy following the issuance of a medical prescription. Instances of individuals taking antibiotics at their own discretion or obtaining them from other sources were the exception.

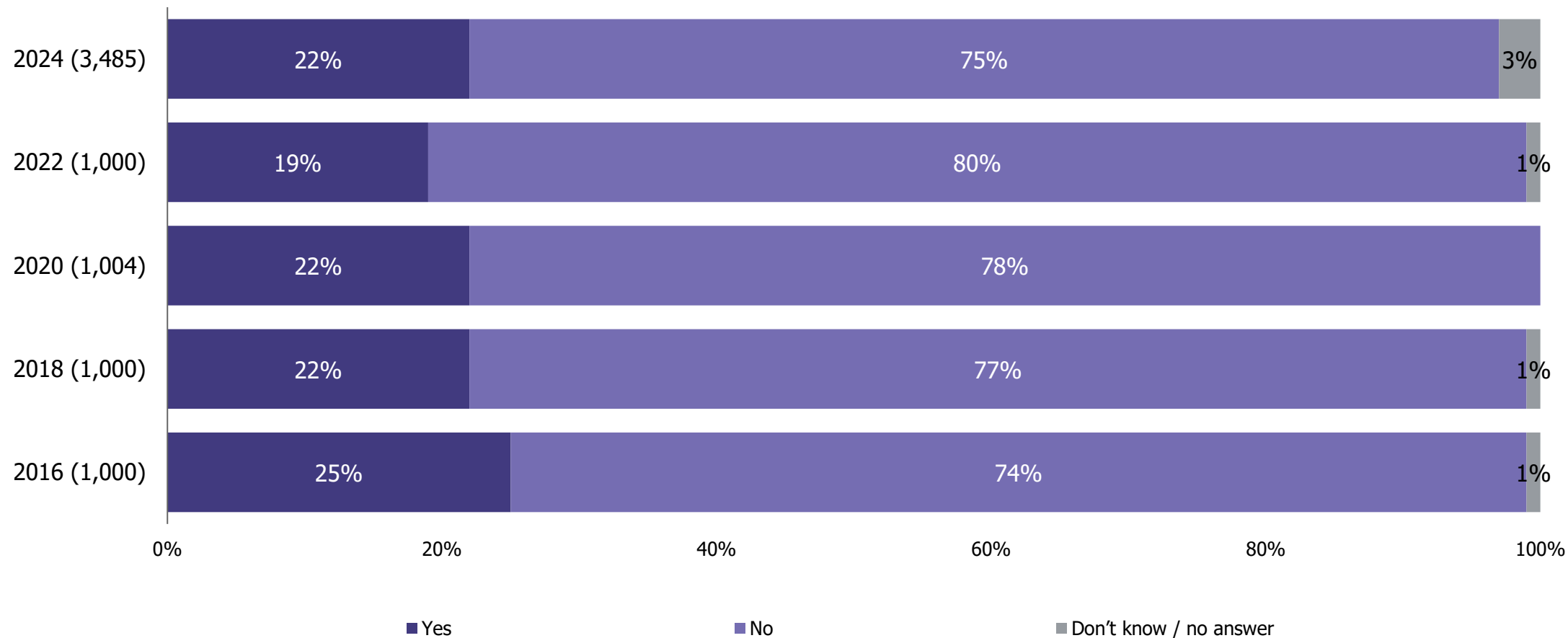
The main reasons for the use of antibiotics were urinary tract infections and surgical interventions. The use of antibiotics for viral illnesses, such as flu, or unclear indications, including headaches or fever, was comparatively rare.

For slightly over **half of the issued prescriptions, laboratory tests were carried out as part of the diagnosis process.**

Remaining stocks of antibiotics following the end of treatment were usually returned correctly to medical practices or pharmacies. Nevertheless, some of those questioned also stated that they kept their leftover antibiotics for self-medication or to pass on to third parties.

Antibiotic use over the past 12 months (time comparison)

Question: Have you taken antibiotics during the past 12 months, for example in the form of tablets, powder or syrup?

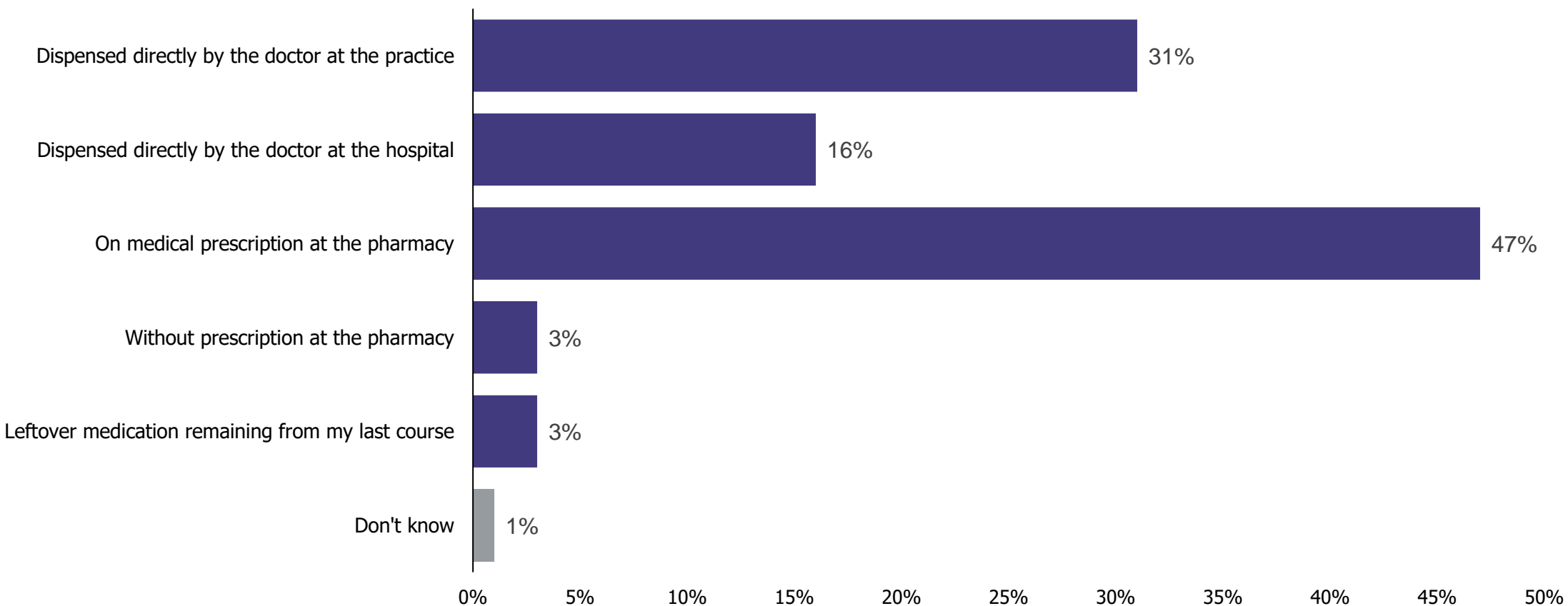


Basis: Number of respondents in brackets

Prescription for last course of antibiotics

Question: How did you receive the last course of antibiotics you took?

FILTER: Has taken antibiotics during the last 12 months

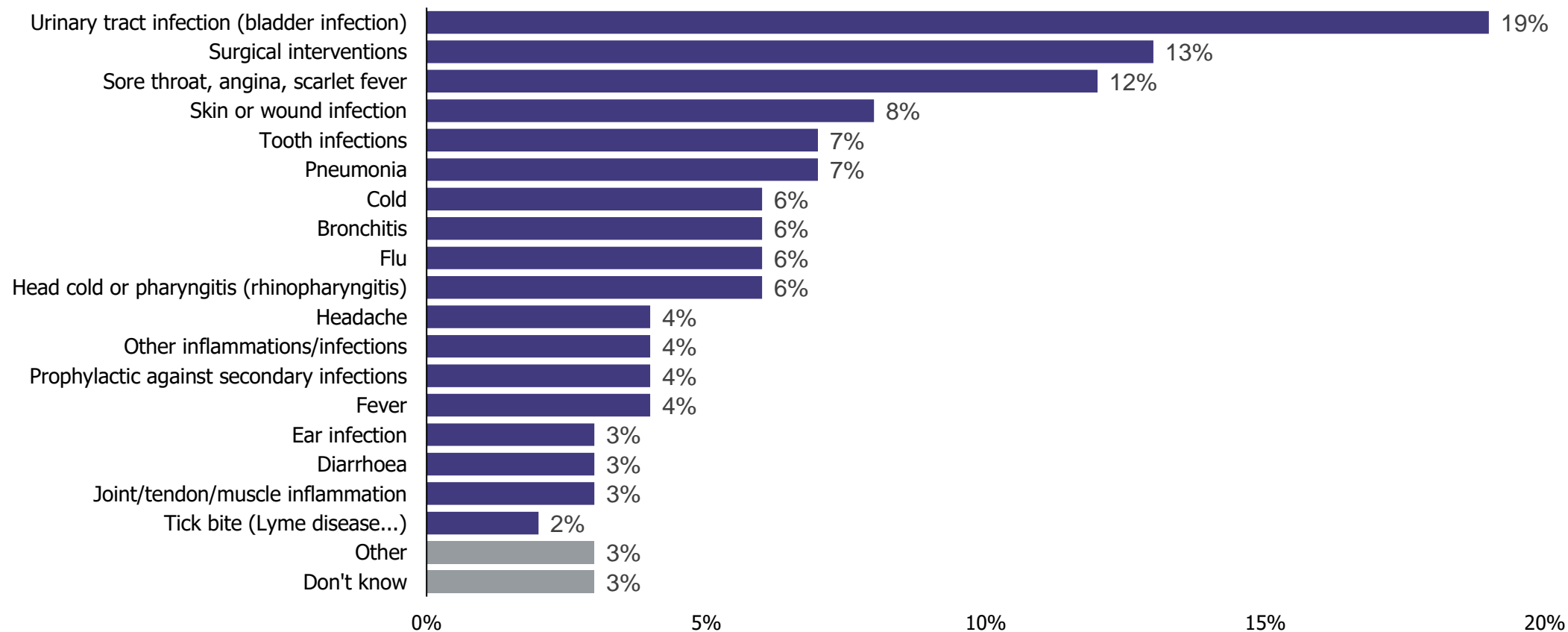


Basis: 773 respondents

Reasons for most recent antibiotic consumption

Question: Why did you last take antibiotics?

FILTER: Has taken antibiotics during the last 12 months

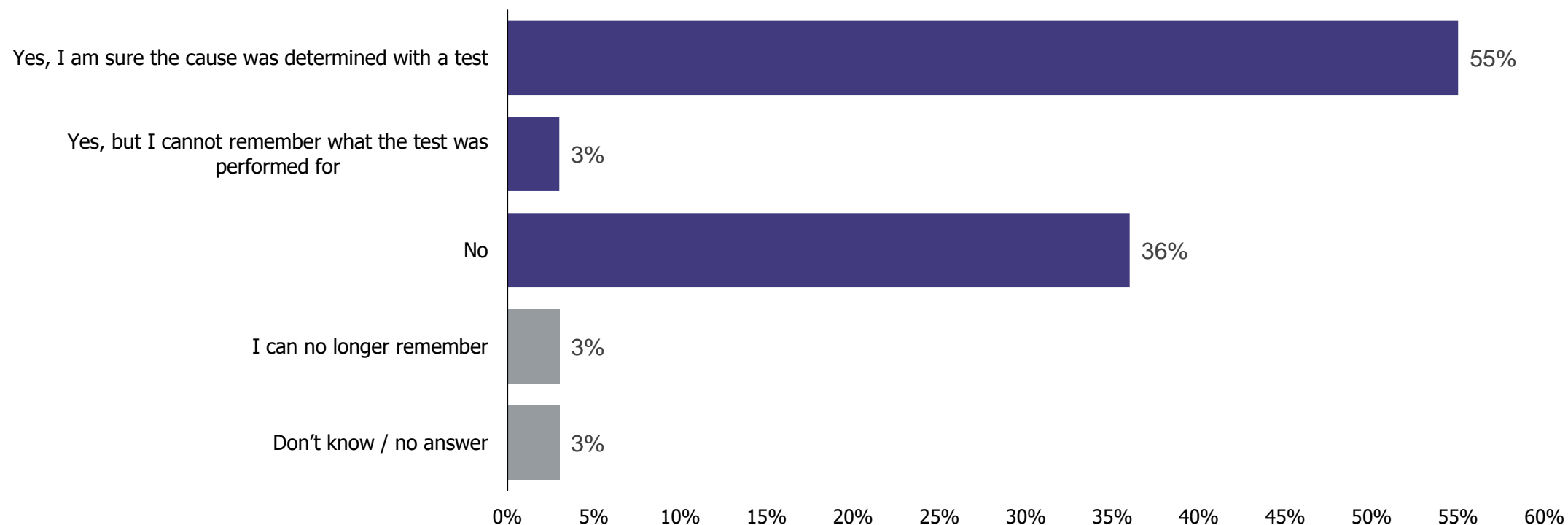


Basis: 773 respondents

Diagnosis using a test before taking antibiotics

Question: Was a laboratory test, for example a blood or urine test or a throat swab, conducted before or upon you starting to take the antibiotics to ascertain what had caused your illness?

FILTER: Has taken antibiotics during the last 12 months



Basis: 773 respondents

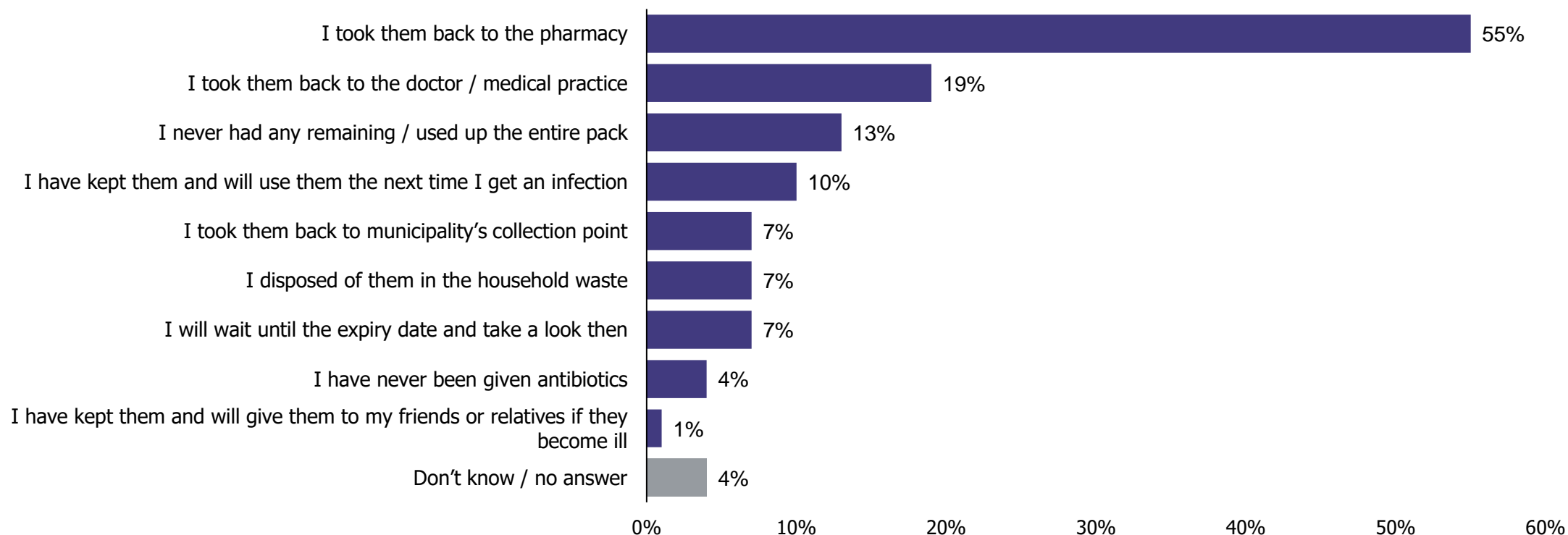
Disposal of antibiotics packaging

Questions: What would you do with leftover antibiotics that you no longer require?

FILTER: Has not taken antibiotics during the last 12 months

And what did you do with the remaining antibiotics that you no longer required?

FILTER: Has taken antibiotics during the last 12 months

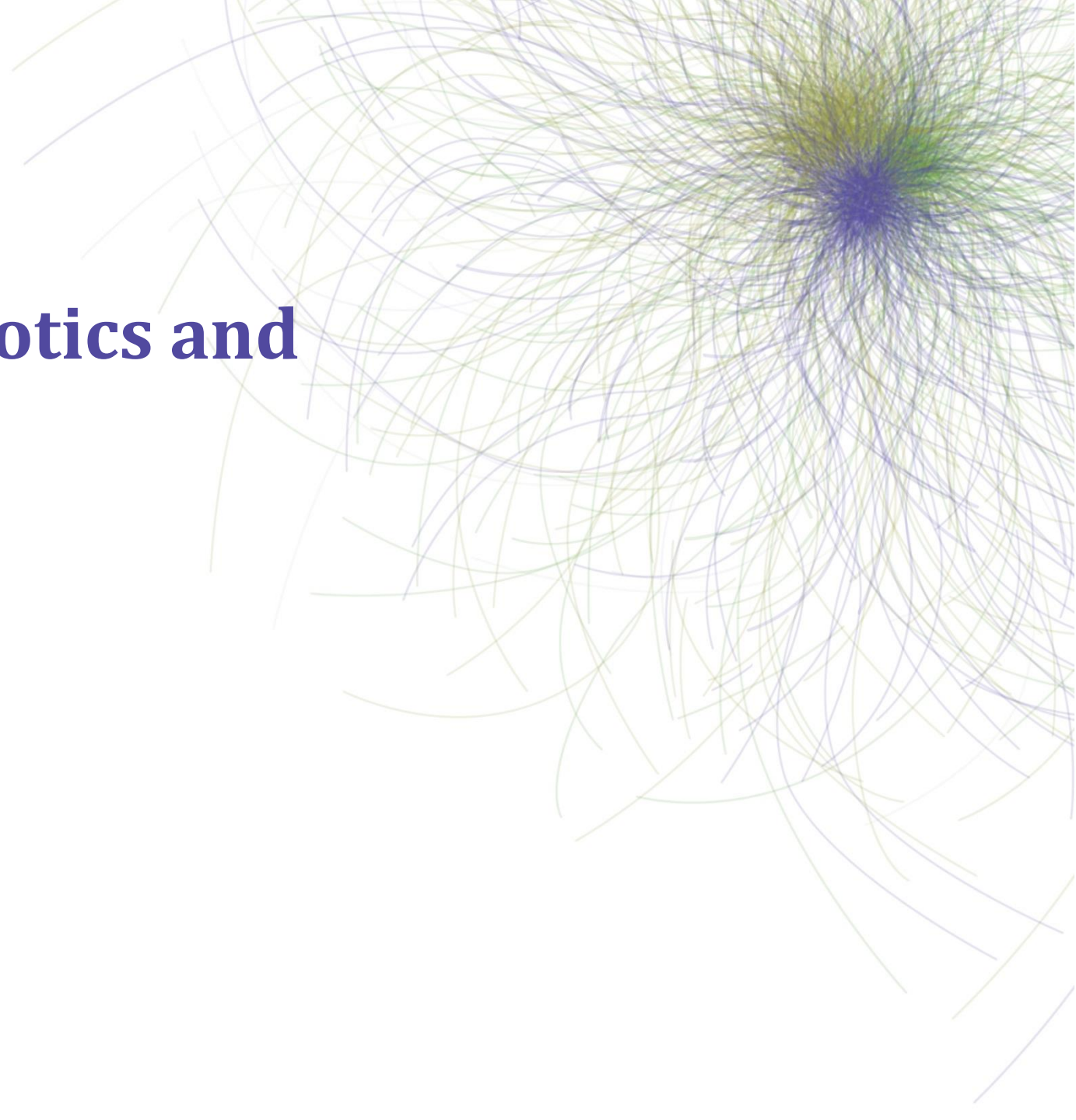


Basis: 3,485 respondents

Strategy on Antibiotic Resistance



Knowledge about antibiotics and antibiotic resistance



Summary

Knowledge about antibiotics and antibiotic resistance

Most of the Swiss population were aware of the problems surrounding antibiotics. Around **81 percent knew that taking antibiotics unnecessarily can reduce their effectiveness.**

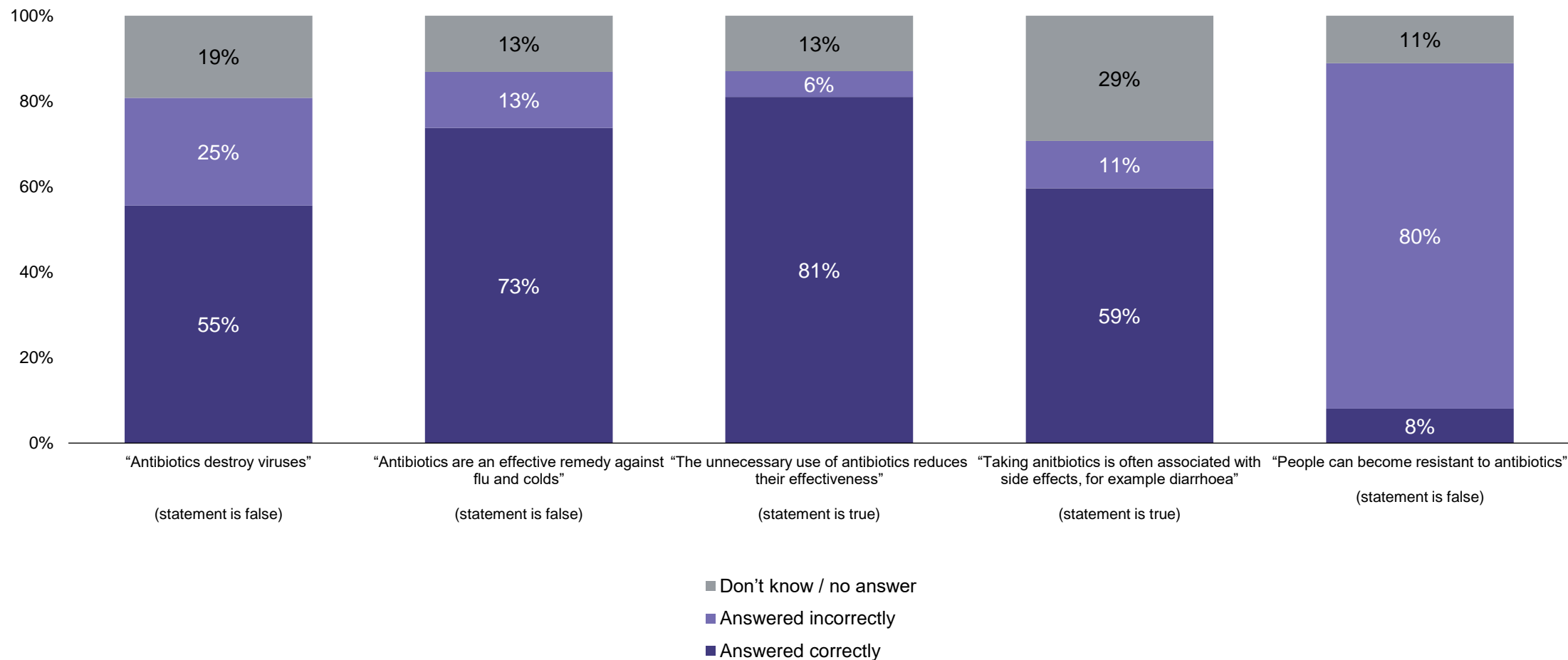
In addition, **the majority knew that antibiotics should be taken as prescribed and any remaining antibiotics should ideally be returned.**

It also became clear, however, that there are still gaps in the Swiss population's knowledge. While **73 percent of respondents knew that antibiotics will not help with the flu or a cold, only 55 percent of those questioned were aware that antibiotics are unable to destroy viruses.**

Furthermore, **approximately 80 percent of respondents incorrectly assumed that people can become resistant to antibiotics.**

Level of knowledge

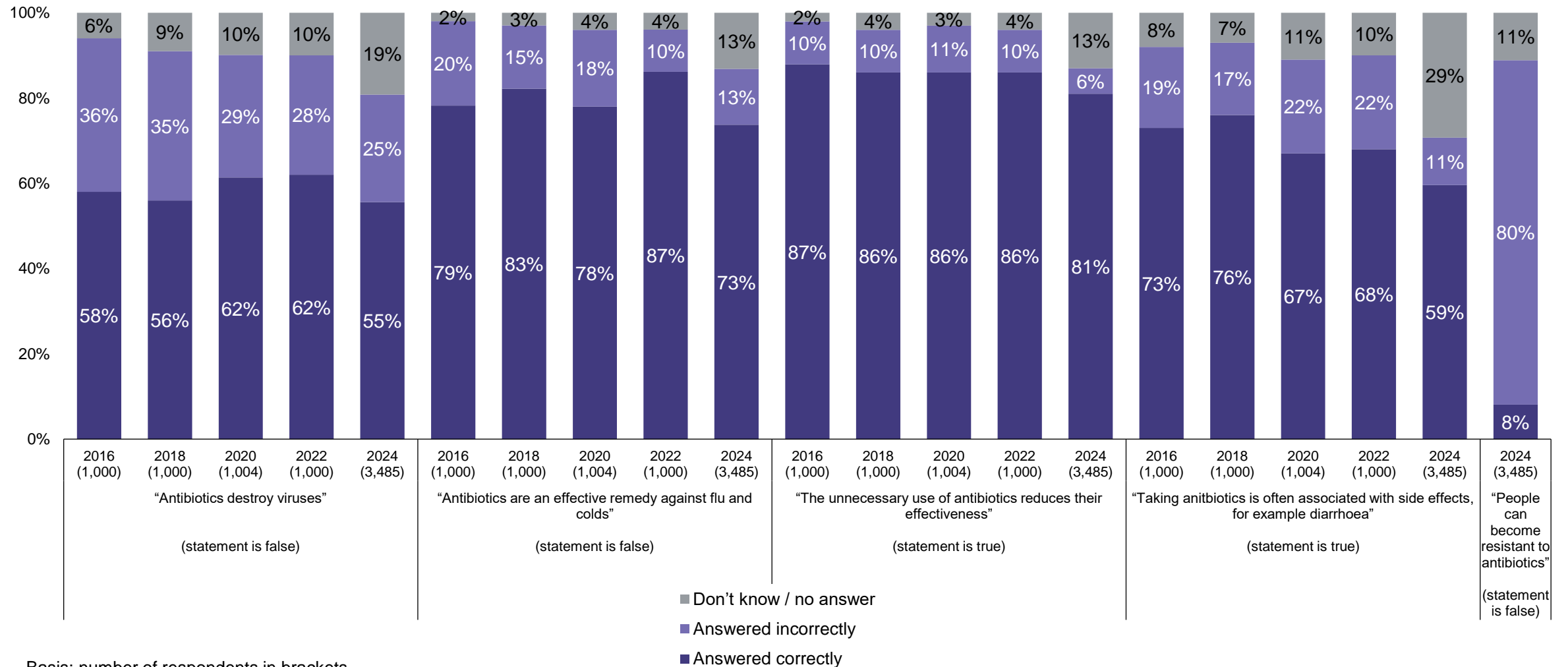
Question: Please indicate whether you believe the following statements to be true or false.



Basis: 3,485 respondents

Level of knowledge: 2016–2024

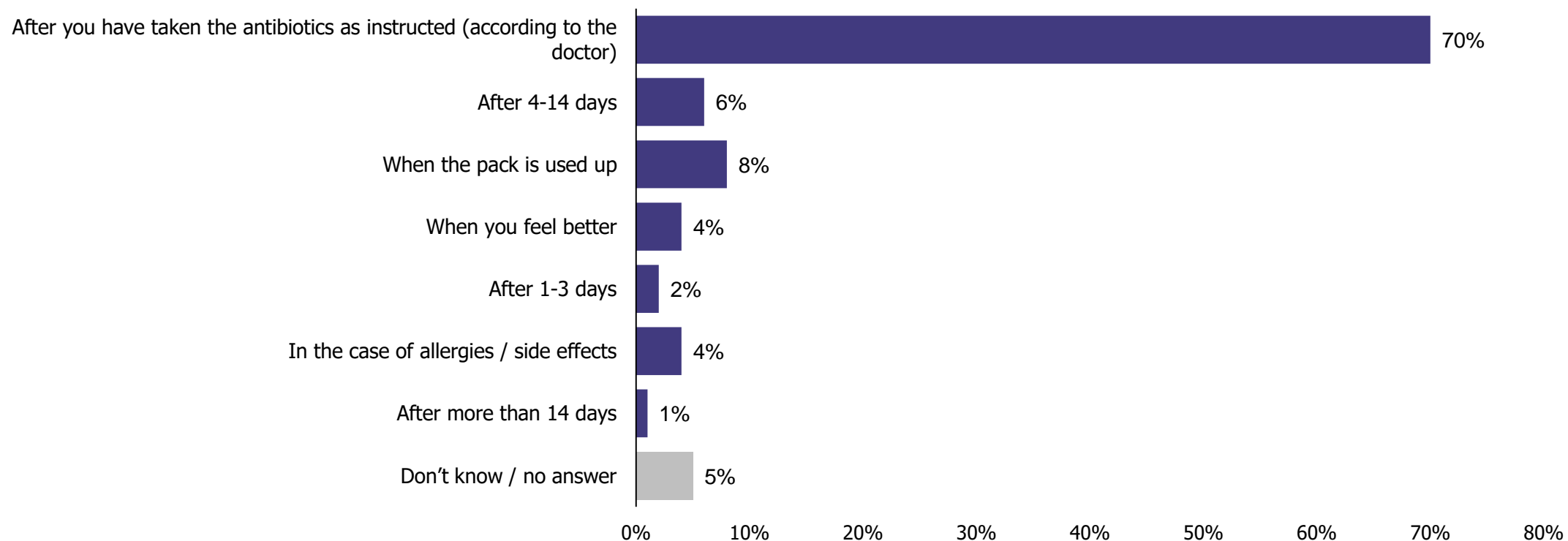
Question: Please indicate whether you believe the following statements to be true or false.



Basis: number of respondents in brackets

Ending a course of antibiotics

Question: When do you think you should stop taking antibiotics after commencing treatment?



Basis: 3,485 respondents

Strategy on Antibiotic Resistance



Information sources and information requirements



Summary

Information sources and information requirements

When looking for reliable information about antibiotics, **doctors are the preferred contacts, followed by pharmacies and official health websites.**

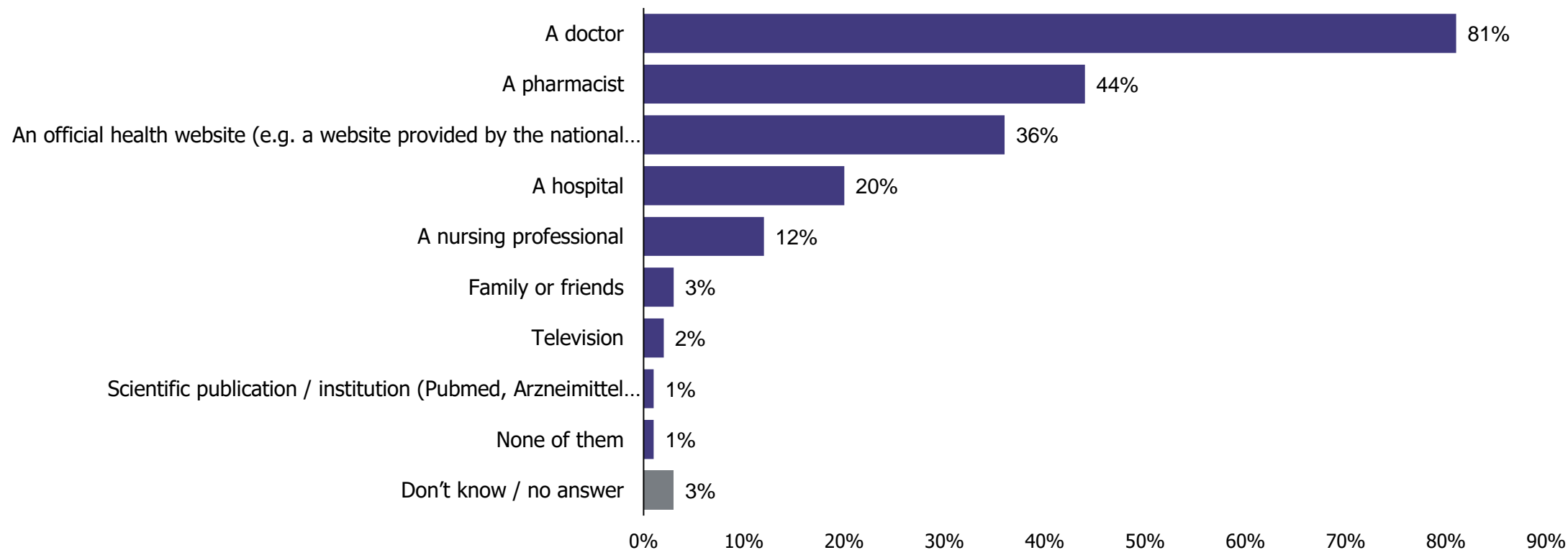
The most frequently selected topics for which respondents wanted more **information were alternatives to antibiotics and resistance.**

Only around **a third of those surveyed could recall having heard or read information during the past 12 months** advising against the unnecessary use of antibiotics.

Information sources

Question: Which of the following sources would you be most likely to consult to obtain reliable information about antibiotics.

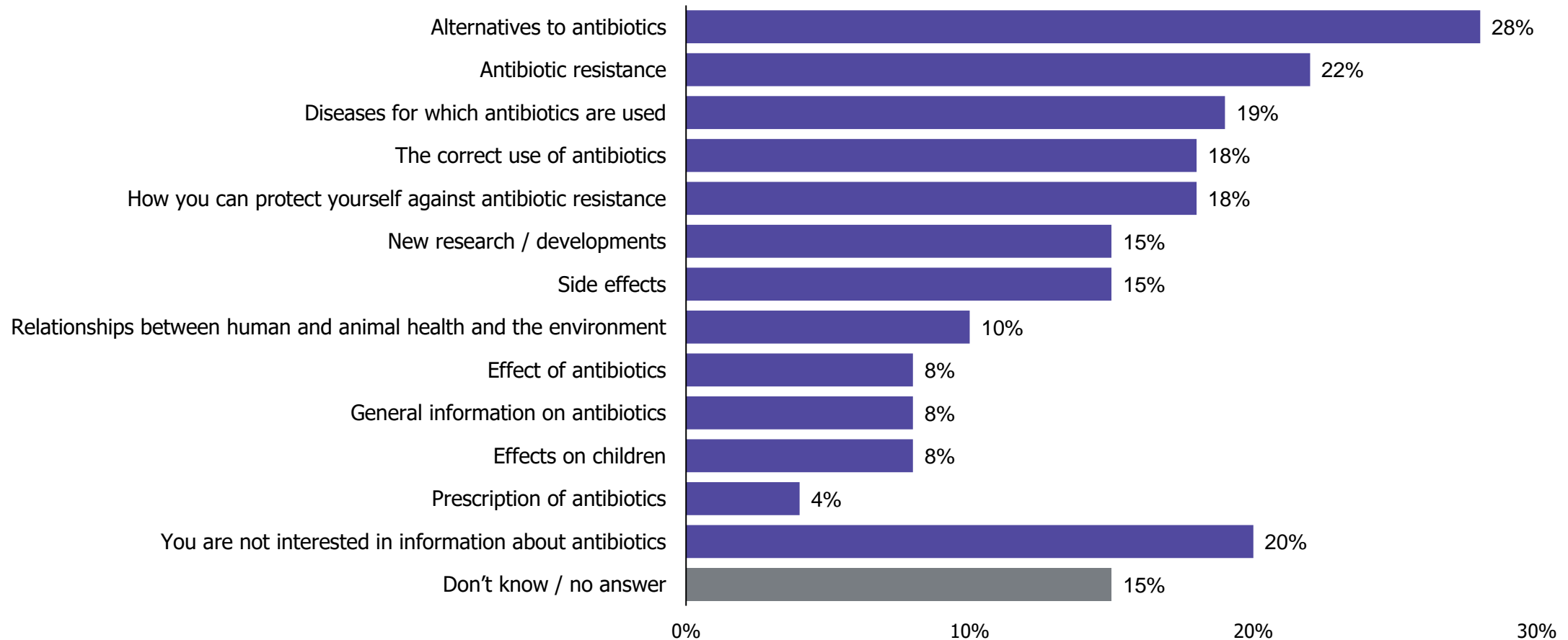
FILTER: Would like to receive more information about antibiotics



Basis: 2,801 respondents

Information required

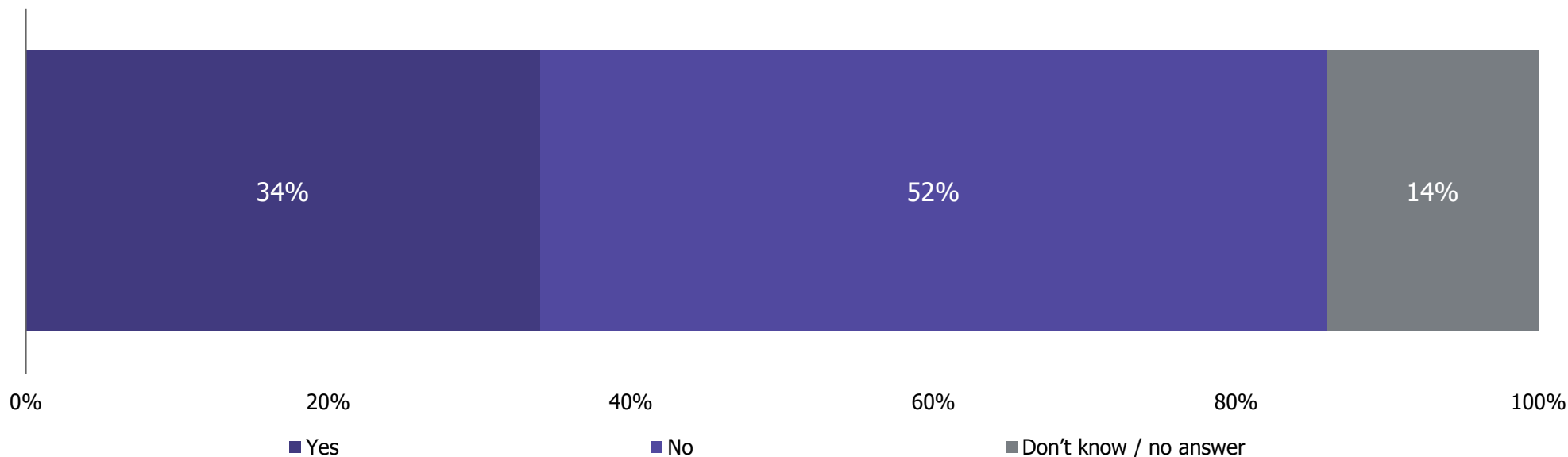
Question: On what topics related to antibiotics would you like to receive more information?



Basis: 3,485 respondents

Recollection of antibiotic information (time comparison)

Question: Can you remember reading or hearing information over the past 12 months that advised against the unnecessary use of antibiotics, for example for colds and flu-like infections?



Basis: 3,485

Strategy on Antibiotic Resistance



Knowledge about the use of antibiotics in animals



Summary

Knowledge about the use of antibiotics in animals

Generally speaking, the use of antibiotics in sick livestock was supported, **with around 58 percent of respondents either fully in favour or in favour to some extent.**

Here too, however, there are gaps in the Swiss population's knowledge. **Only 48 percent of those questioned knew that the use of antibiotics as growth promoters in livestock is banned in Switzerland.**

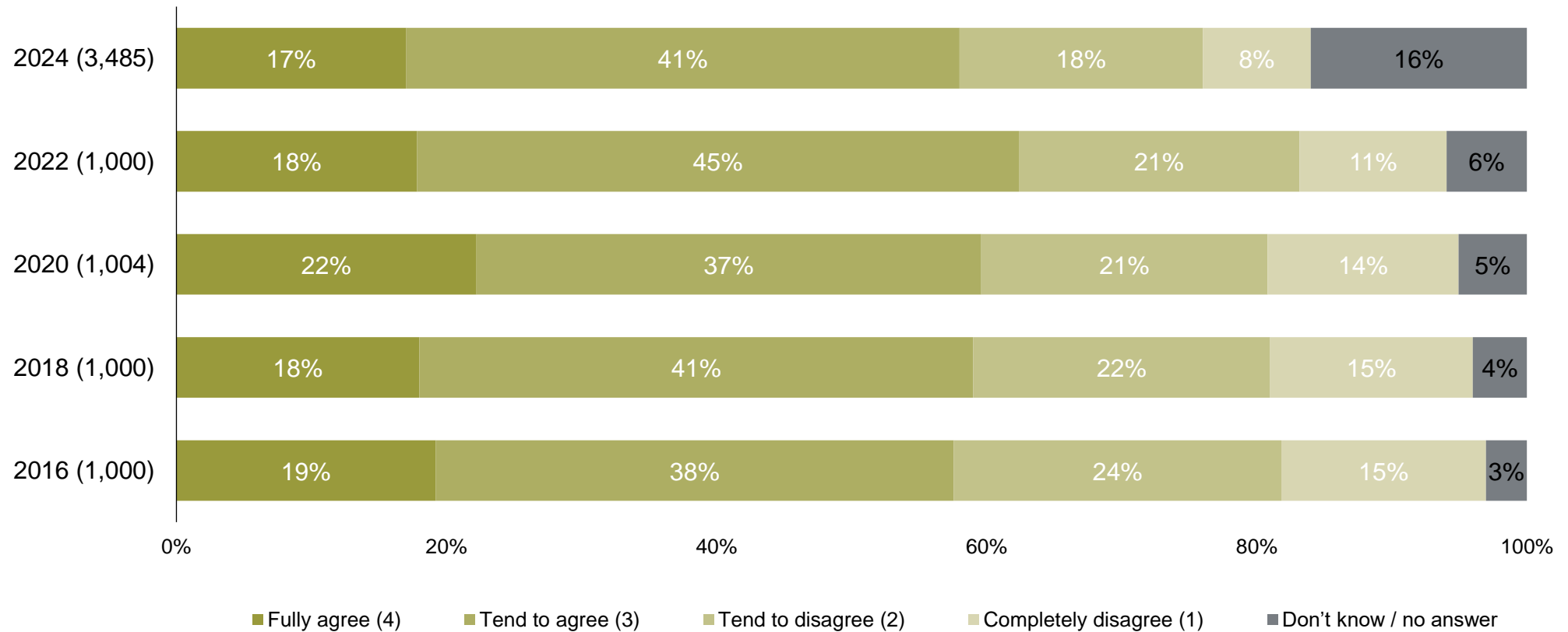
In turn, **only 27 percent were aware of the marked decline in the use of antibiotics in Switzerland.**

Around 26 percent of respondents overestimated the risk of an infection with resistant bacteria through the consumption of meat, while 40 percent were unable to assess the risk.

What is more, only 20 percent knew that animals cannot become resistant to antibiotics.

Antibiotic treatment in livestock (time comparison)

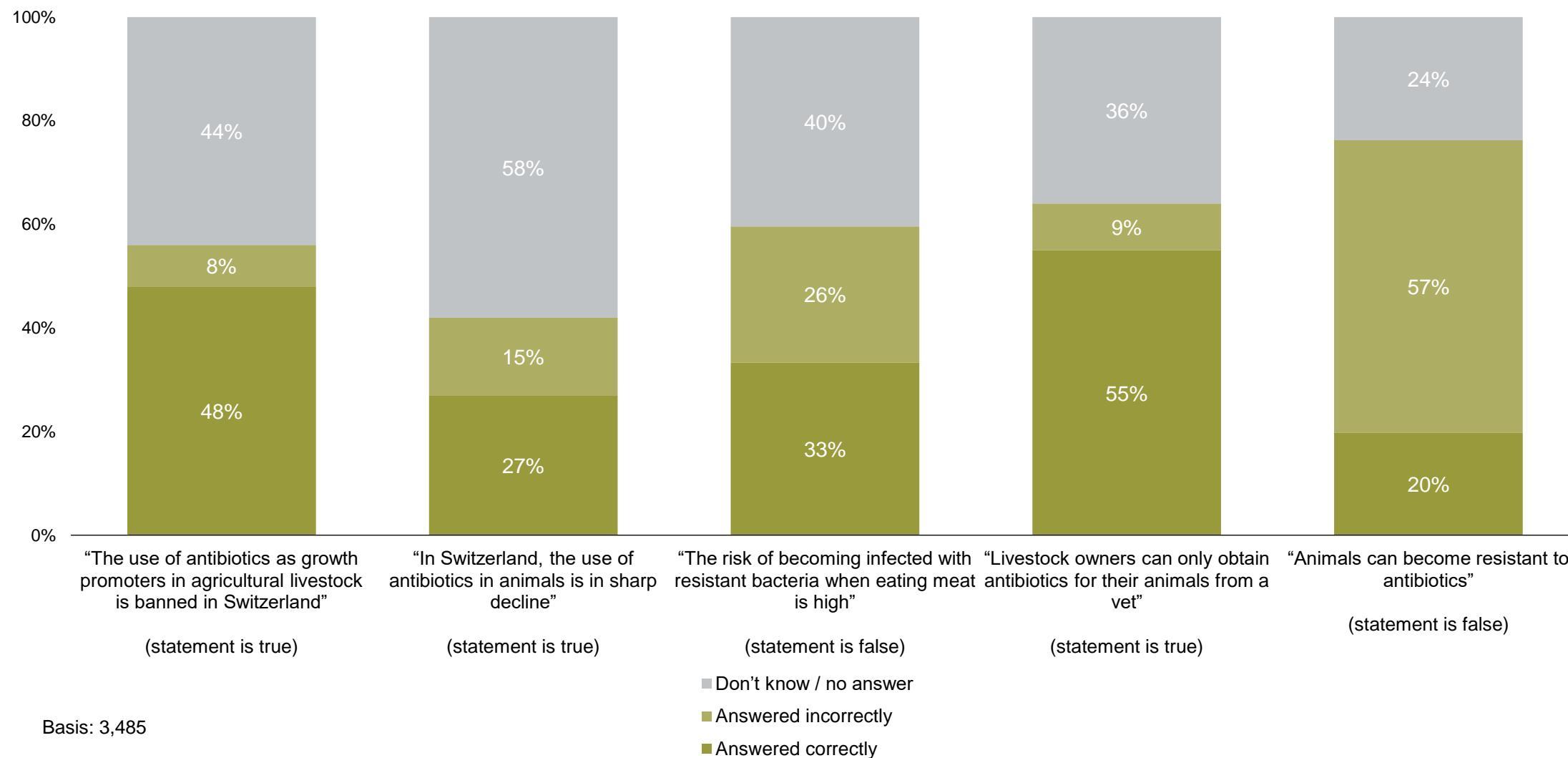
Question: Antibiotics are also used in livestock in the agricultural sector and can contribute to antibiotic resistance. To what extent do you agree or disagree that agricultural livestock should be treated with antibiotics in the case of illness if this is the most appropriate treatment method?



Basis: Number of respondents in brackets

Knowledge: use of antibiotics in animals

Question: Please indicate whether you believe the following statements to be true or false.



Basis: 3,485

Survey design and evaluation

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Strategy on Antibiotic Resistance



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