



# Facial Palsy Awareness Survey

## Results published 1 March 2016

Produced in collaboration  
with: Research Now

UK Demographic

509 participants

Facial Palsy UK is a charity registered in England & Wales, no. 1148115 and Scotland, no. SC045086.

# About the survey

We wanted to understand what the general public know about facial paralysis.

We wanted to understand their perceptions of the problems associated with facial paralysis.

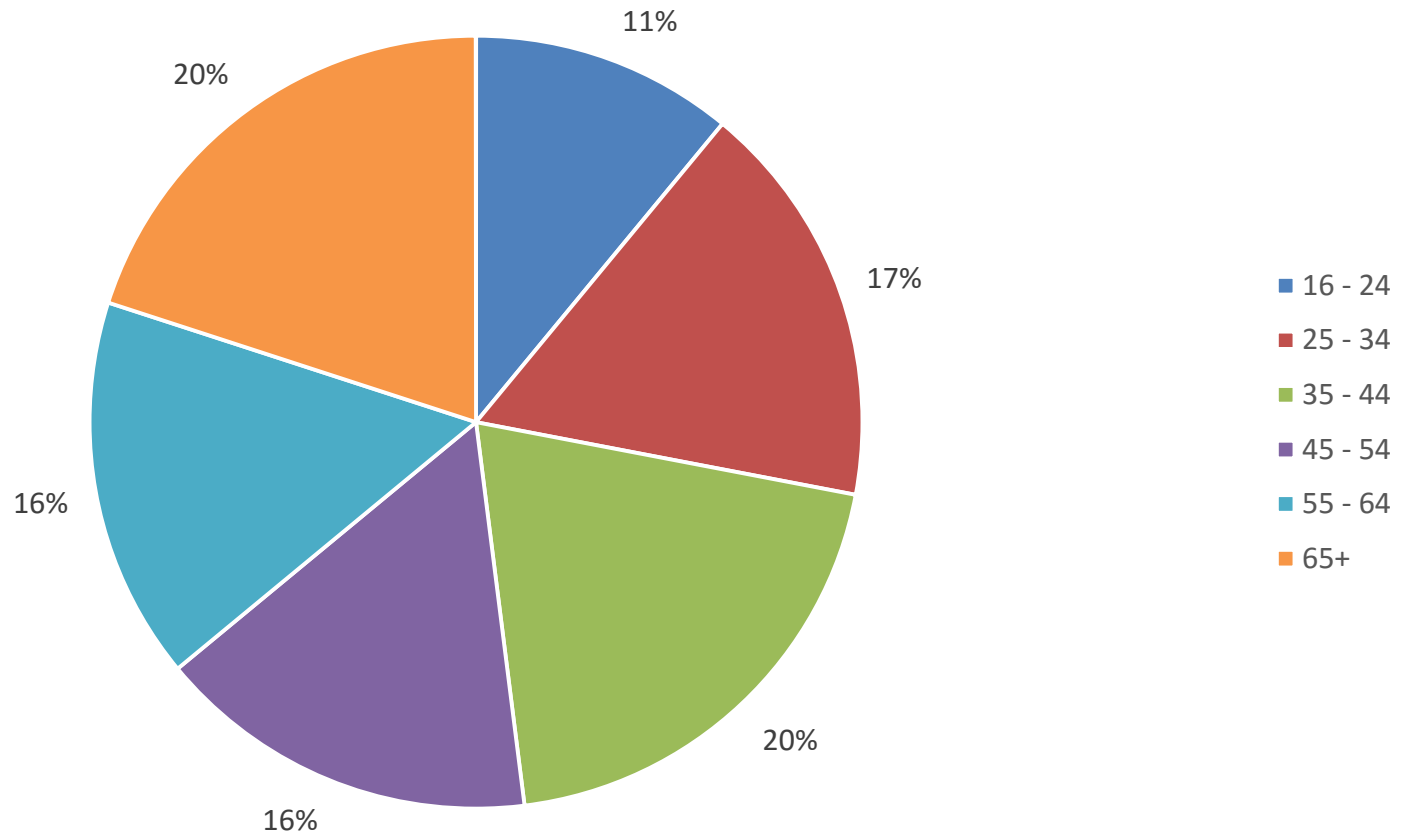
We wanted to understand people's expectations in relation to treatments for facial paralysis.

# Responses

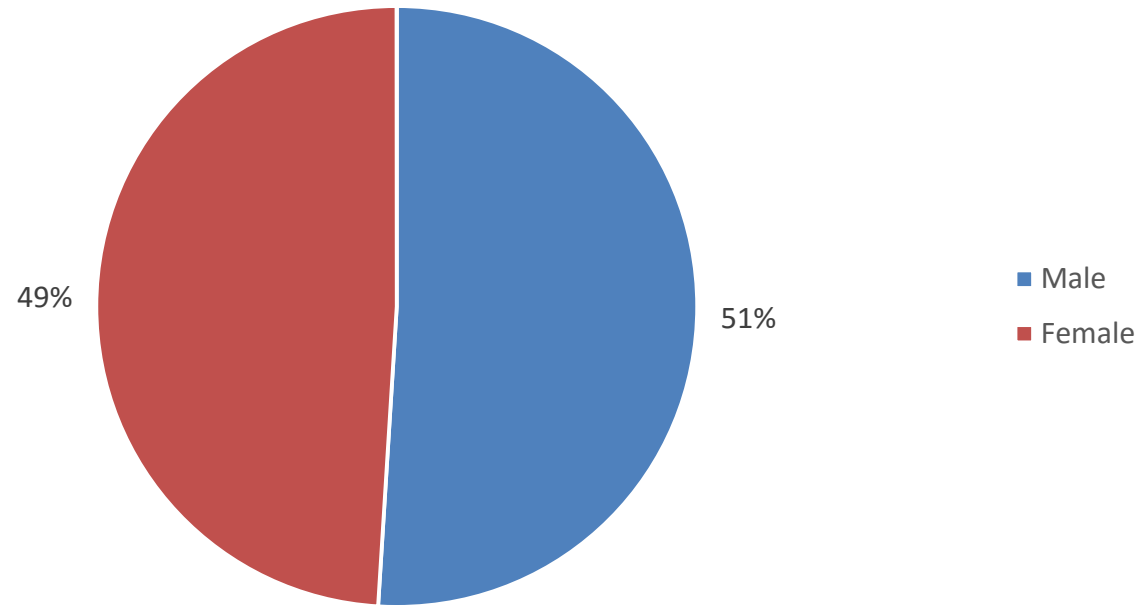
Survey responses were collected during the month of February 2016 from a total of 509 participants.

The age of people surveyed ranged from as young as 16 to those 65 plus. There was a reasonable distribution across each age group.

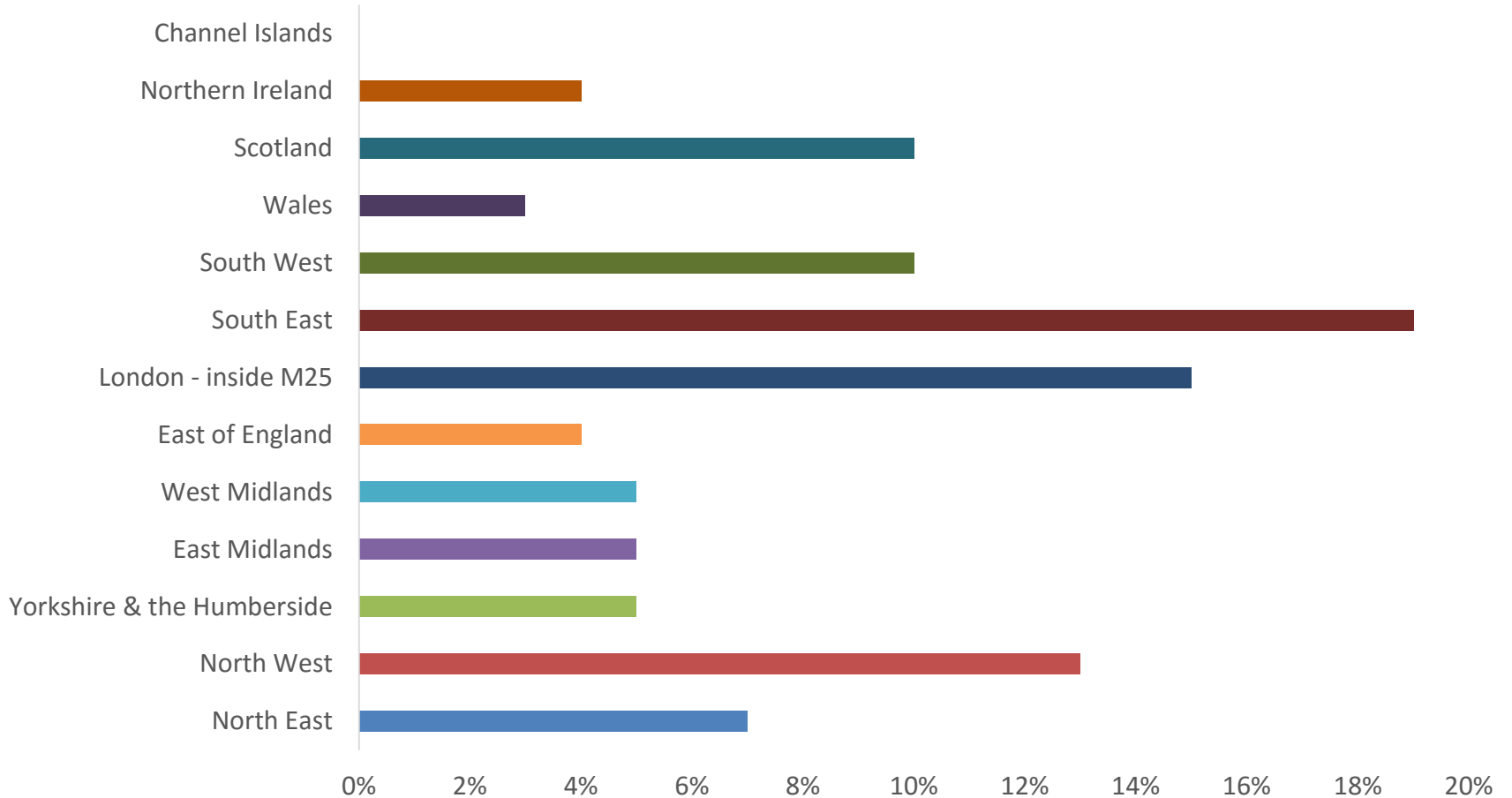
# Age of survey respondents



# Gender respondents identified as



# Location of respondents

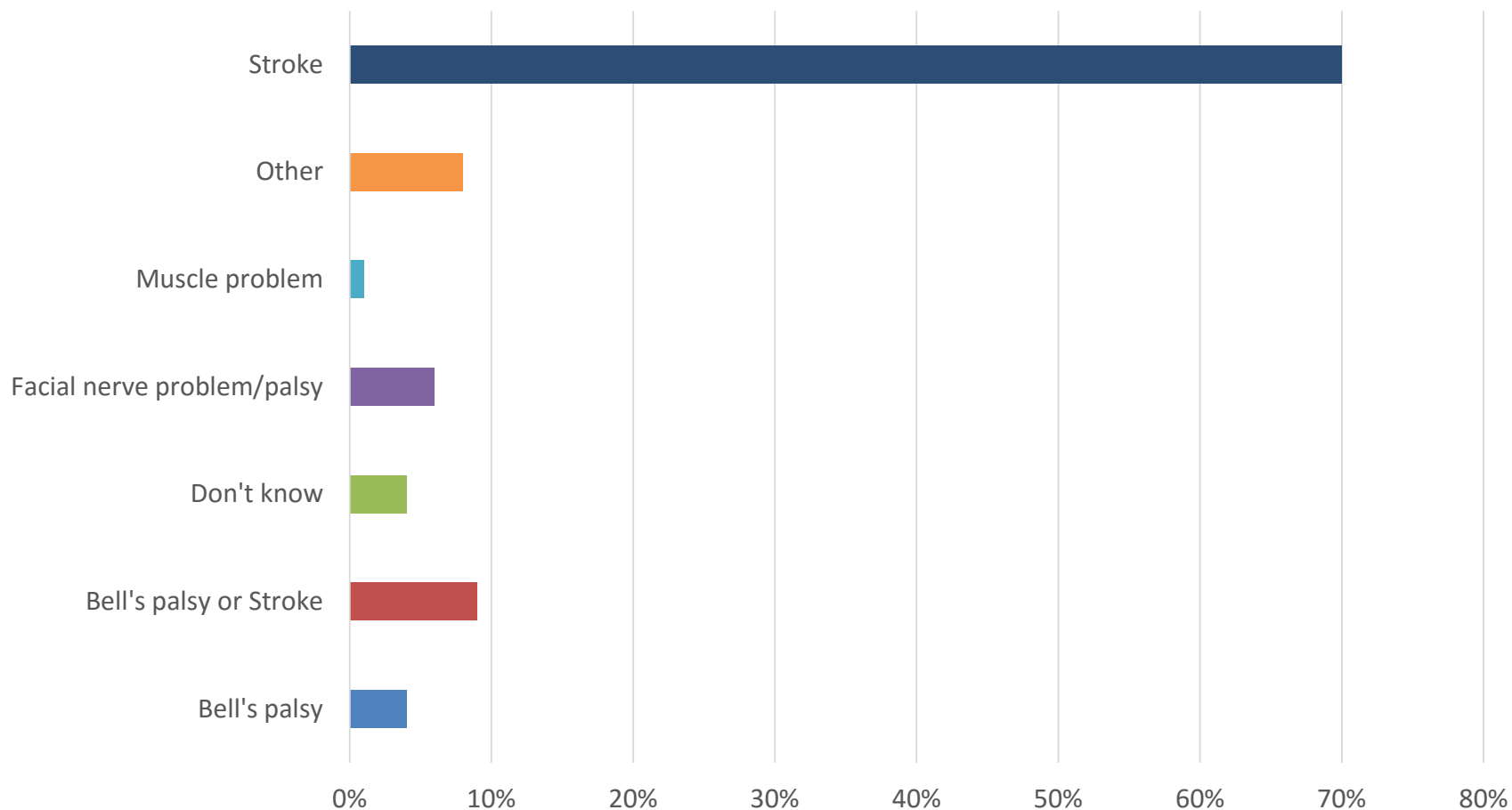


Question: Mrs Smith was suddenly aware that her face looked/felt odd. This is a picture of her smiling, what do you think has happened to her?

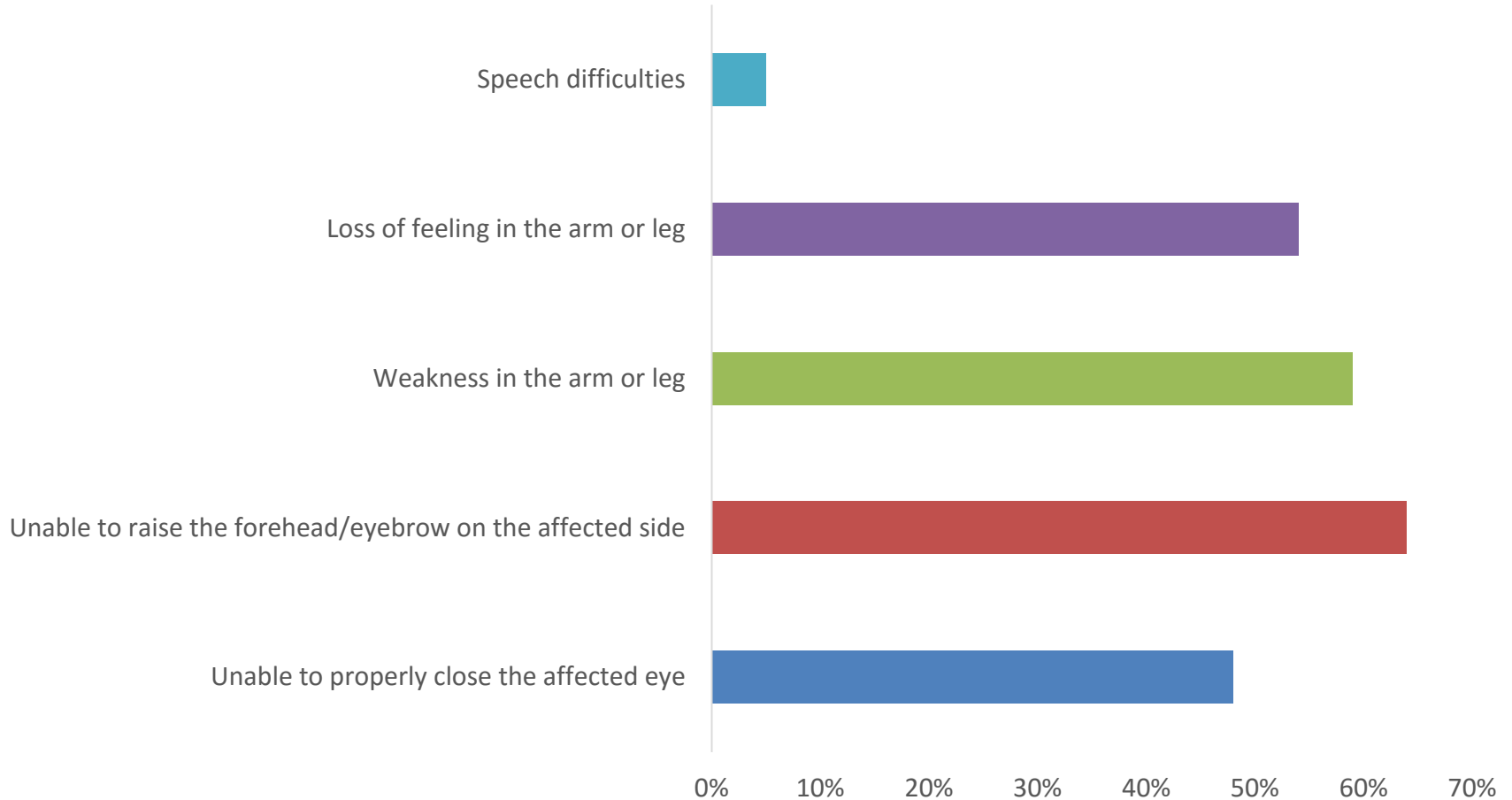


Survey respondents were unaware that the picture is of someone with Bell's palsy.

# From a free text response, causes identified were..

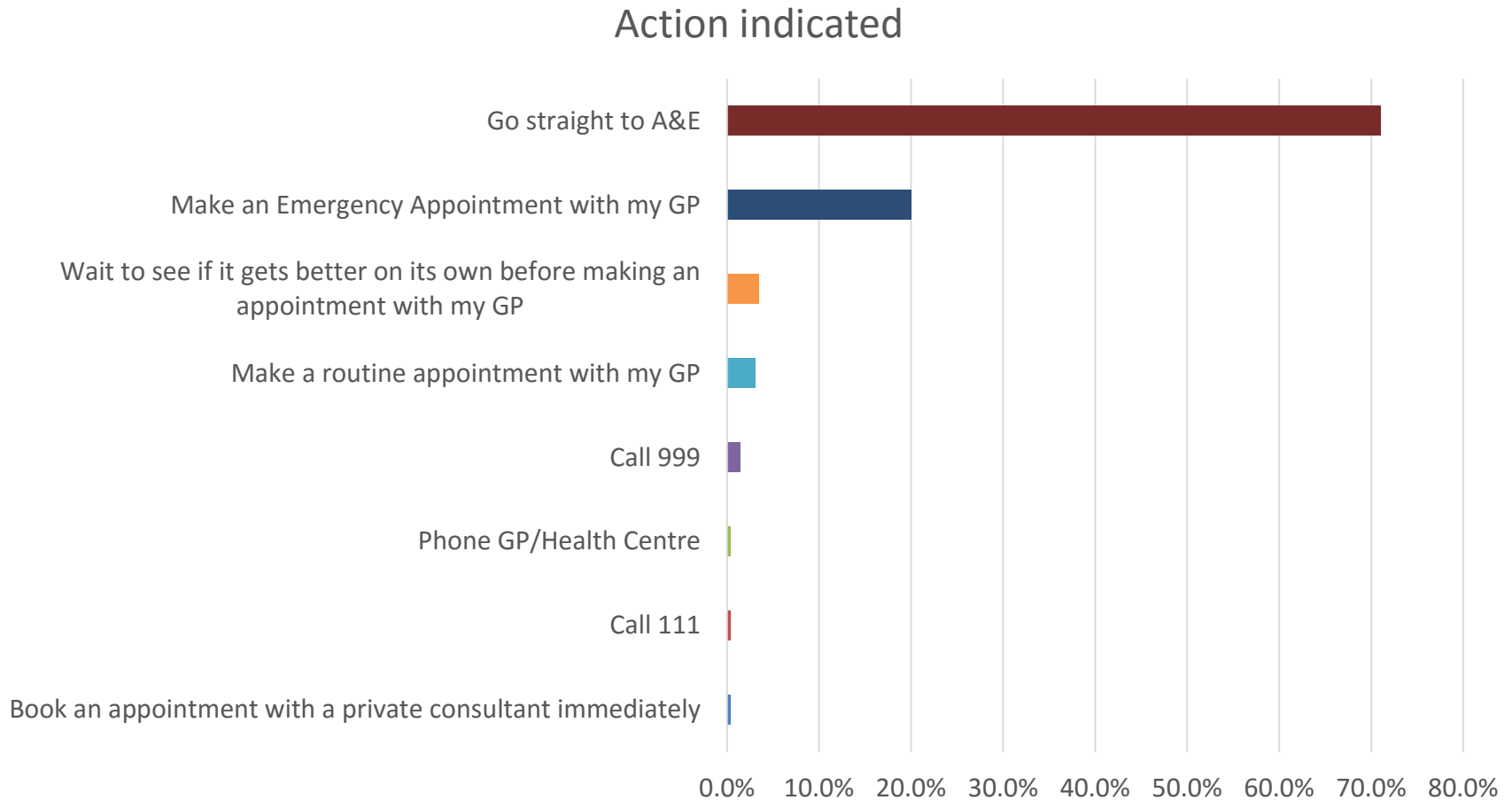


# Q: What other symptoms might Mrs Smith have?

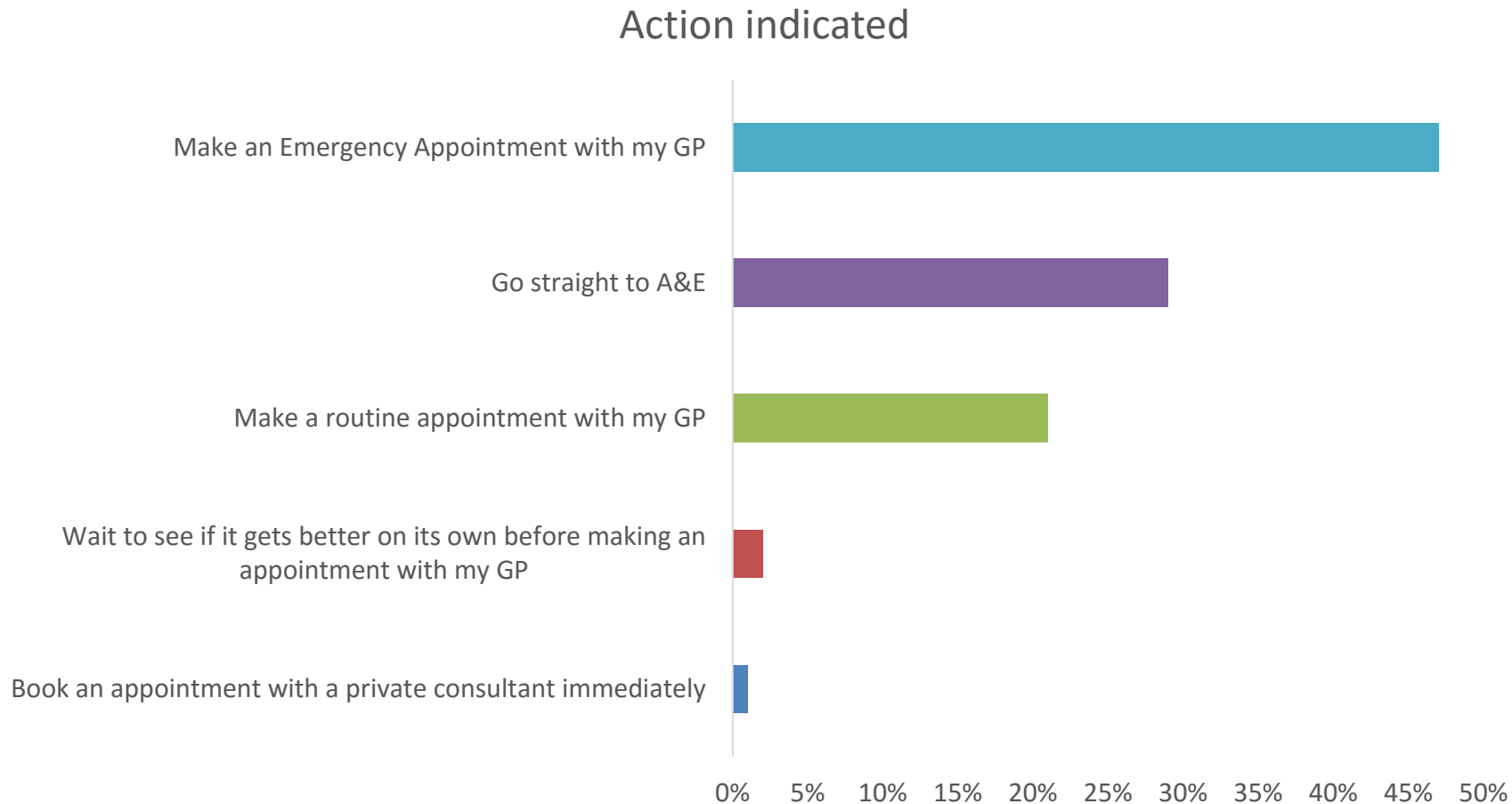


We explained that this person has facial paralysis, the muscles in her face are not receiving the necessary signals to function as they should.

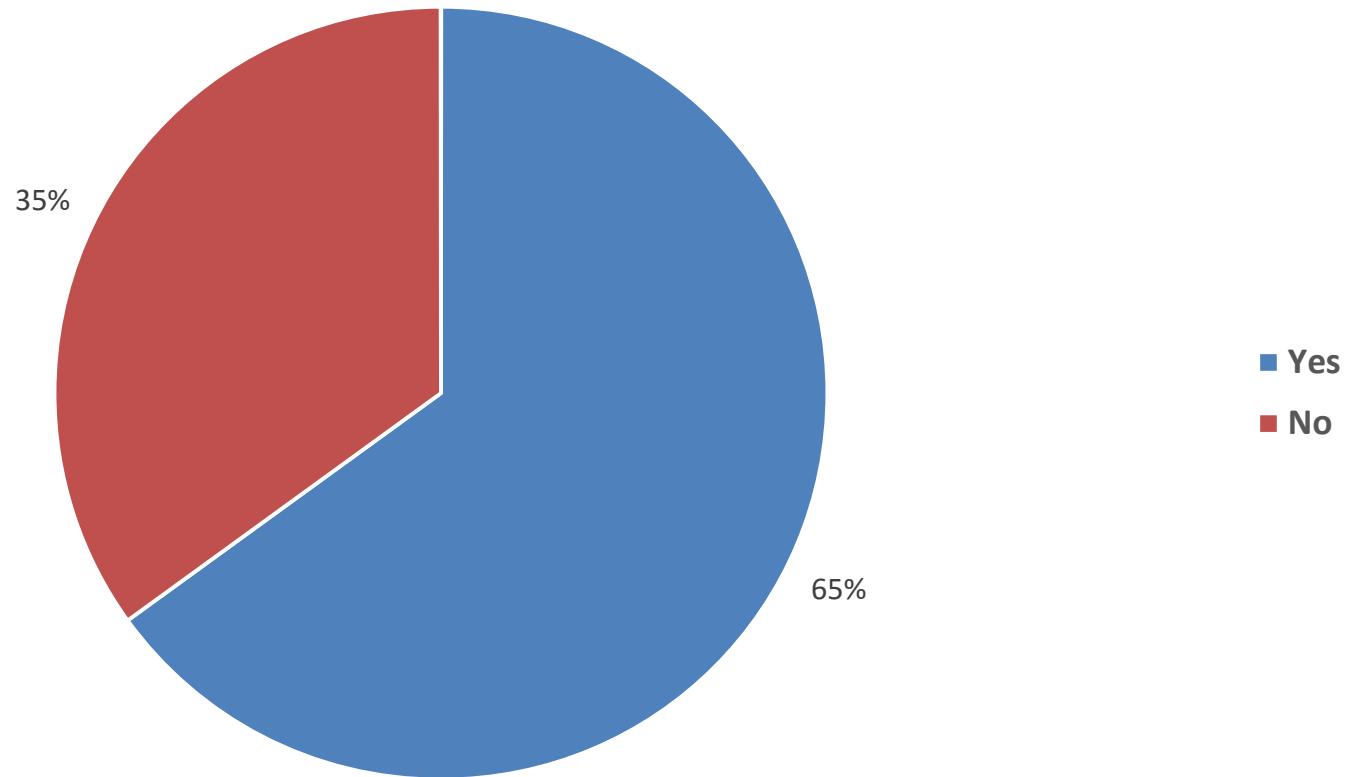
# Q: If you suddenly experienced facial weakness during the daytime, what would you do?



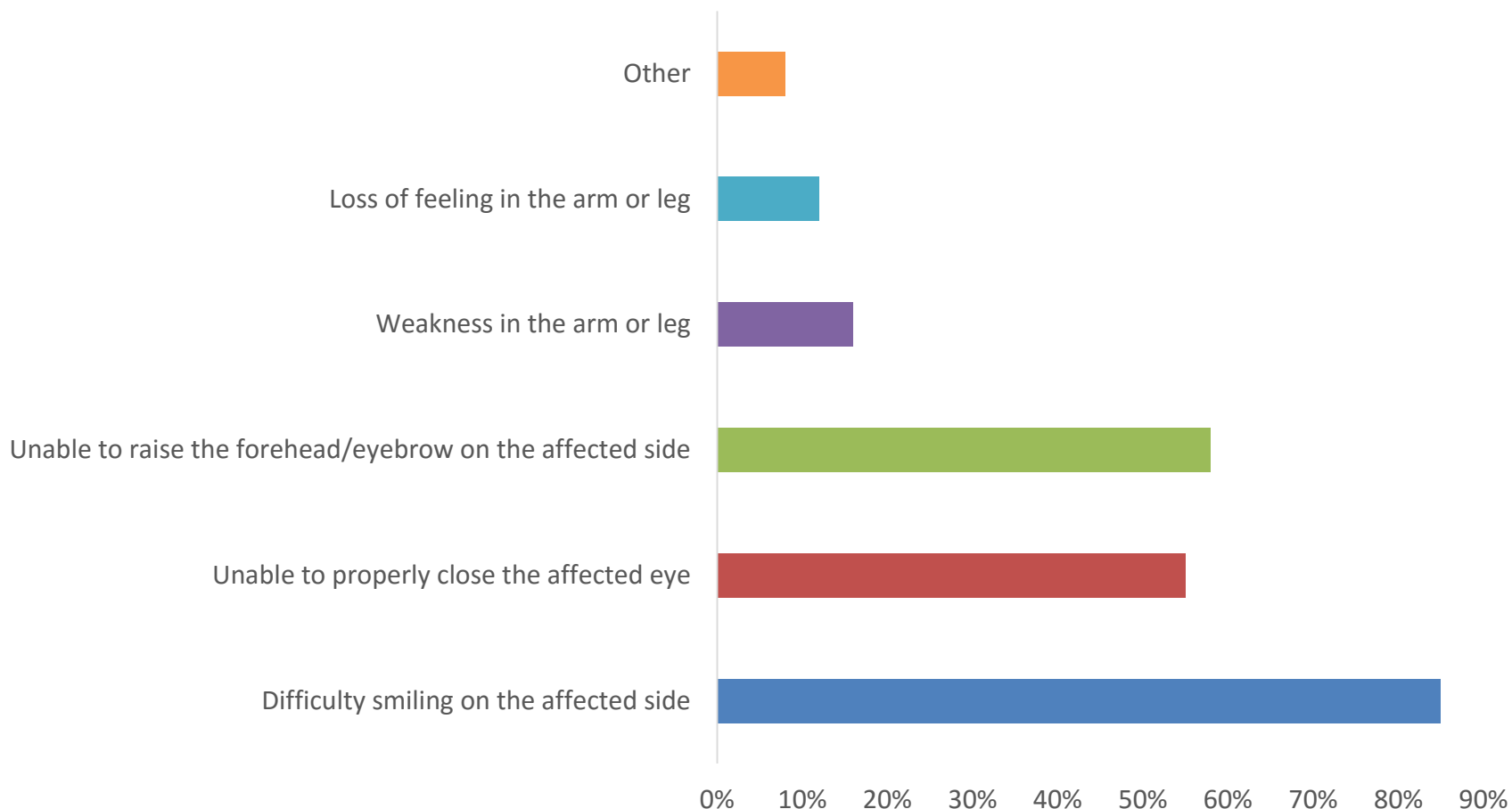
Q: If you noticed a change in your face that developed over several weeks, what would you do?



Q: Have you heard of Bell's palsy?

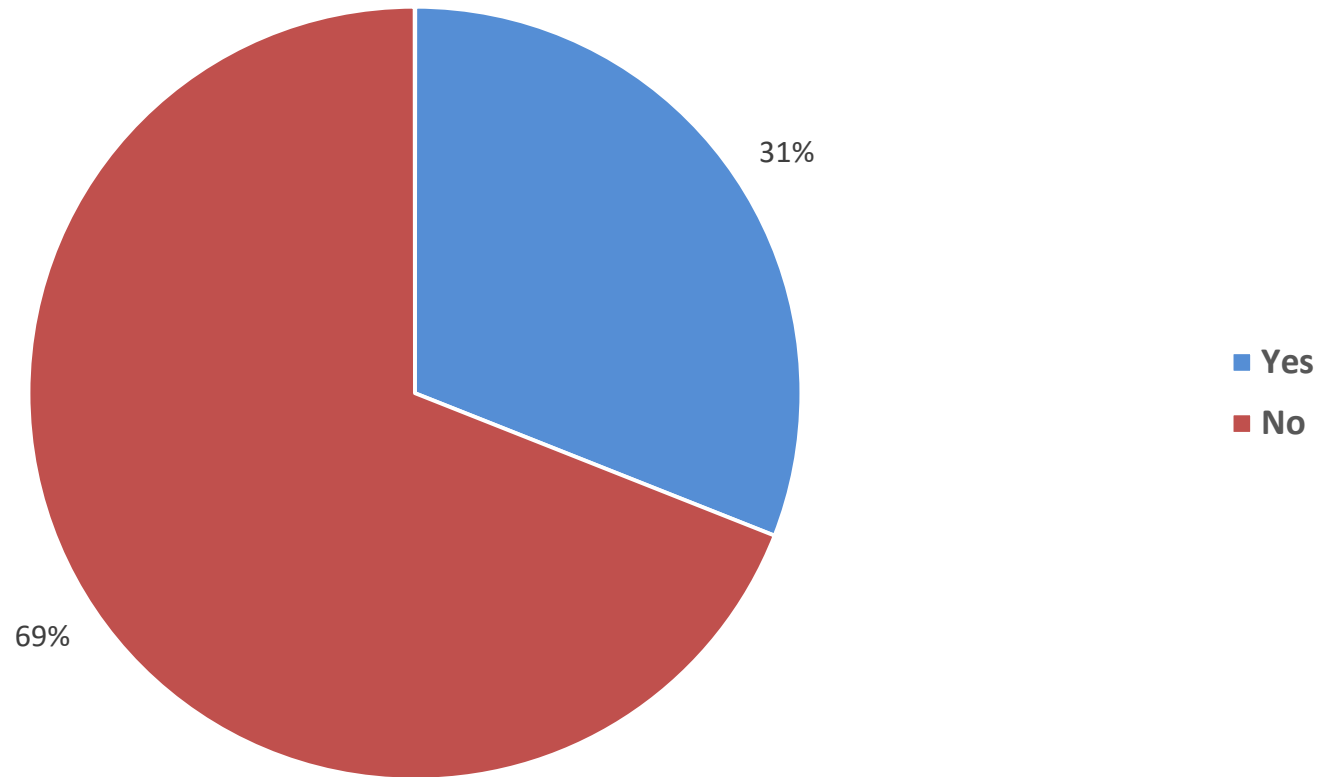


# Q: Please select the features of Bell's palsy you are aware of

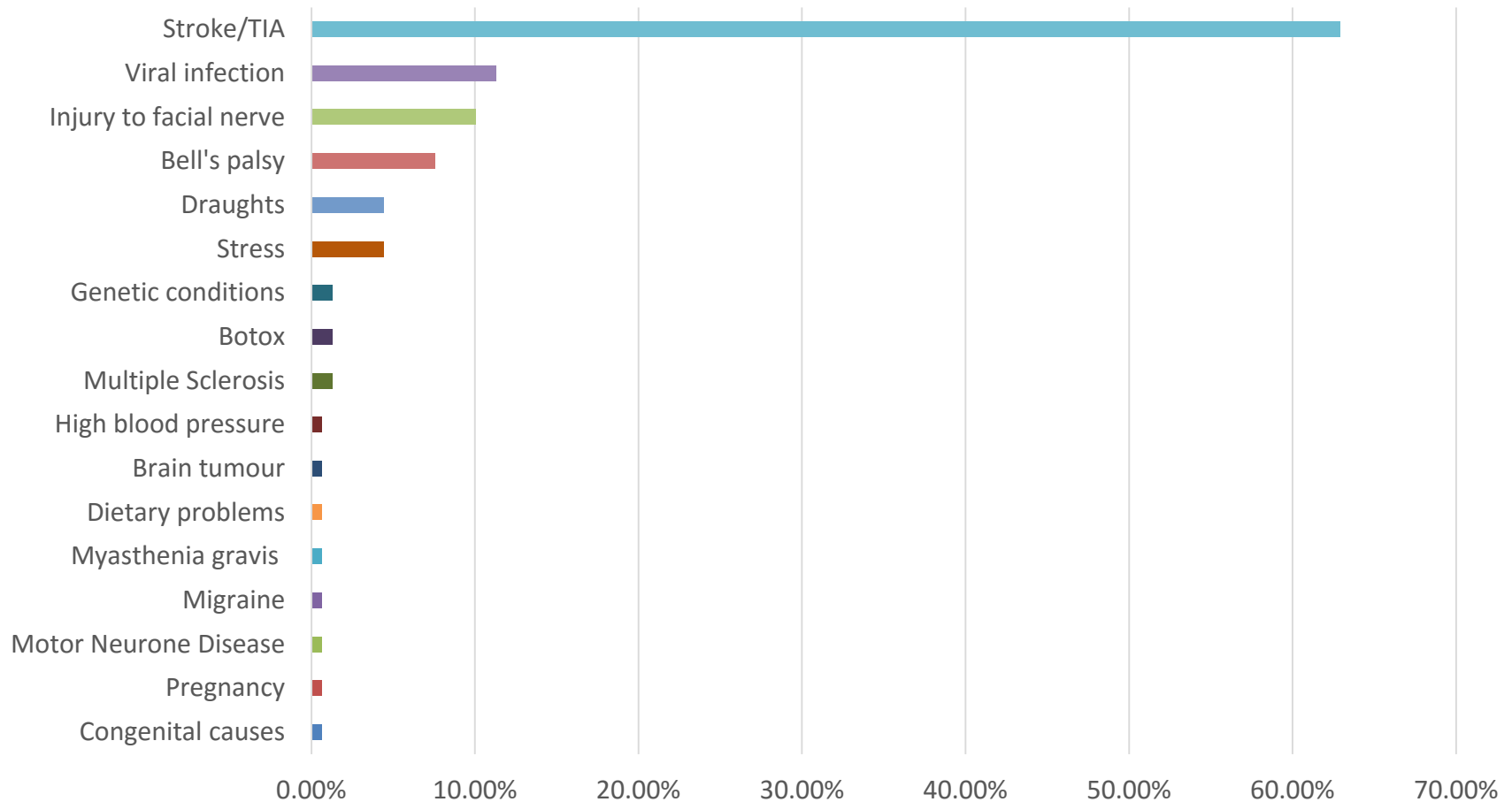


176 respondents excluded for this question only - those who said they hadn't heard of Bell's palsy

Q: Do you know any other causes of facial paralysis?

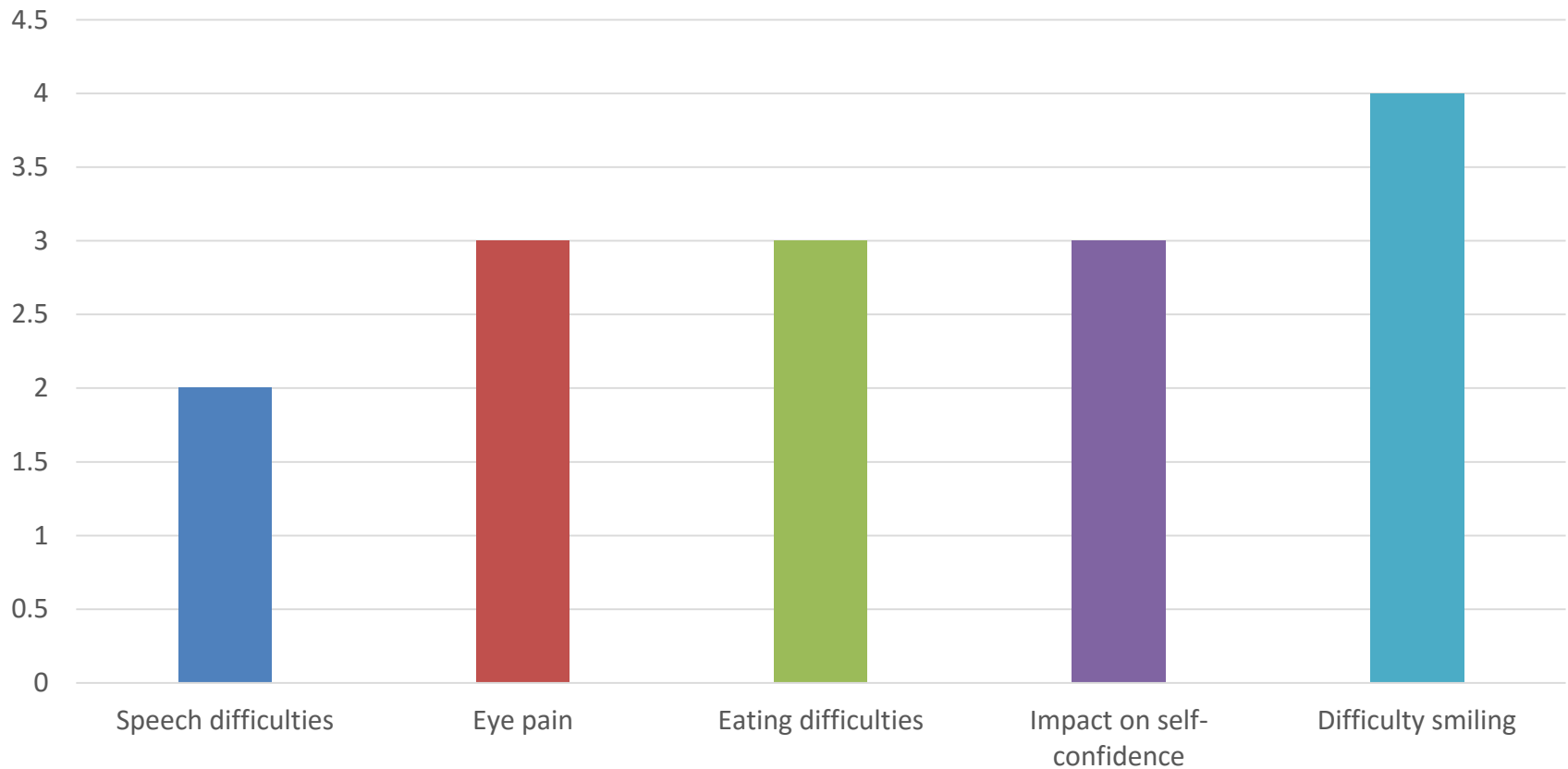


# Other causes of facial paralysis named by 159 respondents



Q. If you had a facial paralysis, what would you find least upsetting?

Results based on median value



## Further notes to last question


Respondents were asked to consider what would upset them most if they had a facial paralysis. They were asked to rank the effects from 1 to 5 with 1 being the most upsetting and 5 the least upsetting.

	Difficulty smiling	Eye pain	Difficulty speaking	Difficulty eating	Effect on self-confidence
Mean =	3.8	2.9	2.1	3	3.2
Standard Deviation =	1.3	1.3	1	1.2	1.6
Median =	4	3	2	3	3
Mode =	5	3	1	3	5
IQR =	2	2	2	2	4

# How do the figures for smiling break down?

When asked to rank difficulty smiling, 1 being the most upsetting and 5 being the least upsetting, the results were as follows:

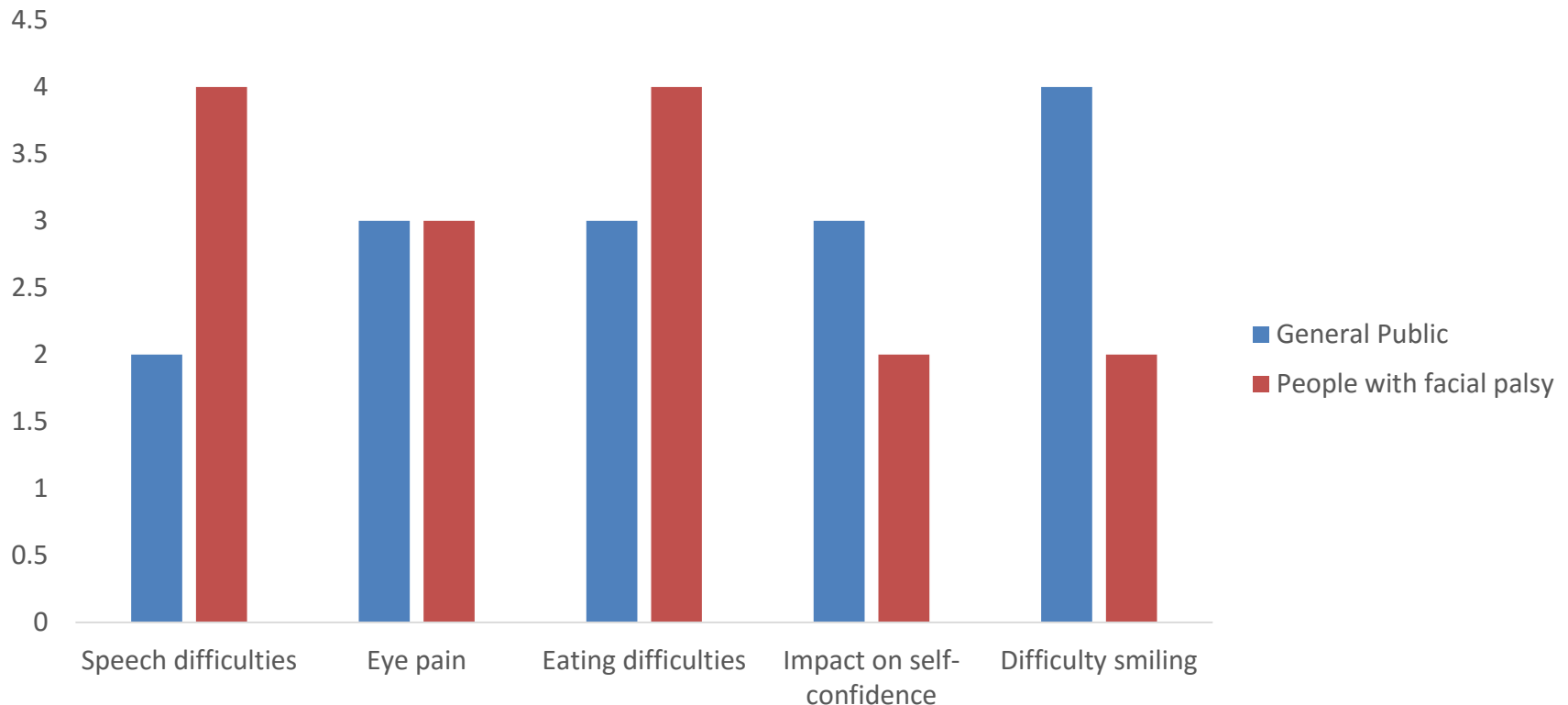
Difficulty Smiling	% of people (number)
1 – most upsetting	10.41% (53 people)
2	8.25% (42 people)
3	12.38% (63 people)
4	28.29% (144 people)
5 – least upsetting	40.67% (207 people)



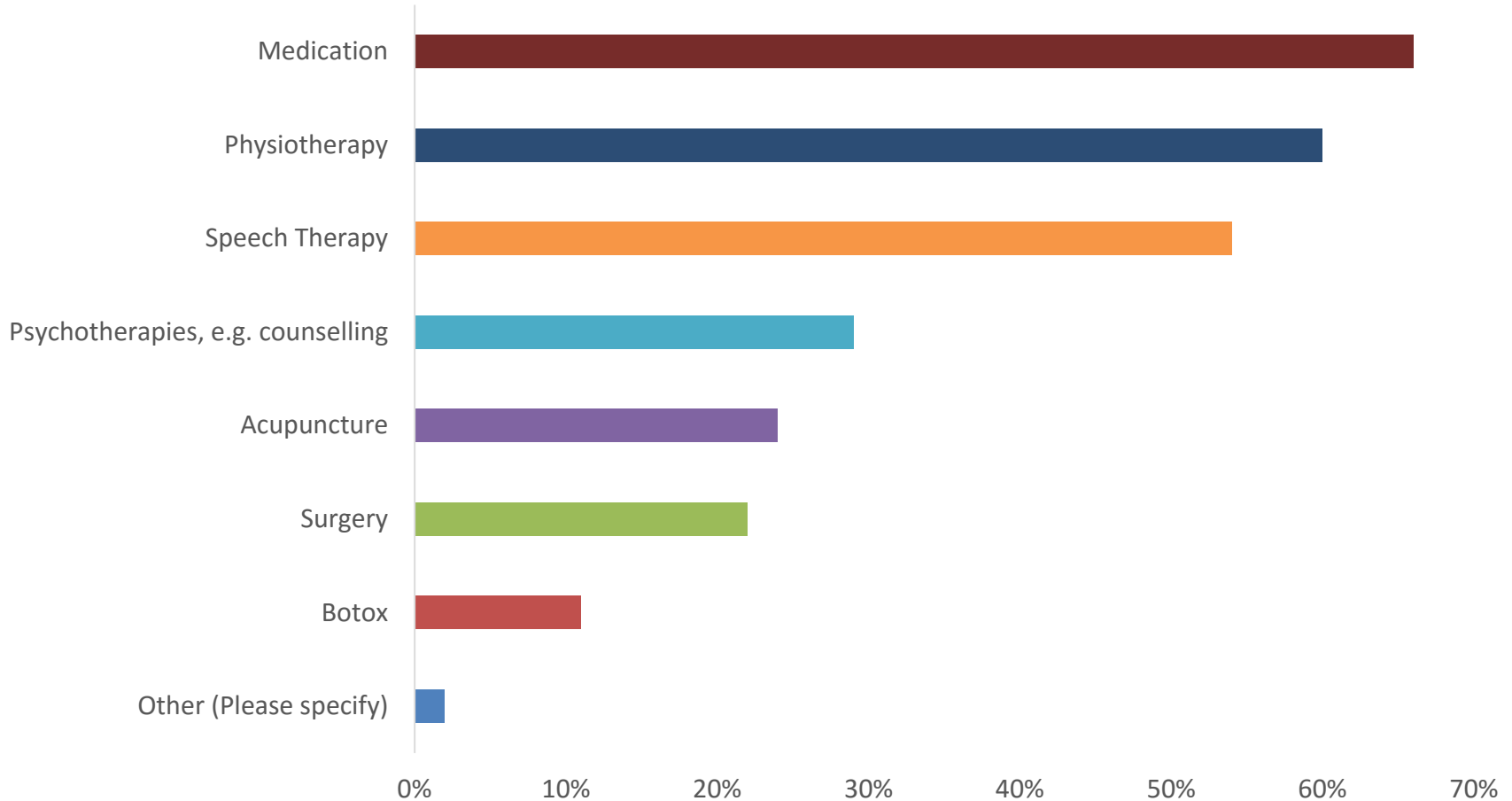
# We asked the same question in a separate survey of people with facial palsy and compared the results

Q. If you had a facial paralysis, what would you find least upsetting?

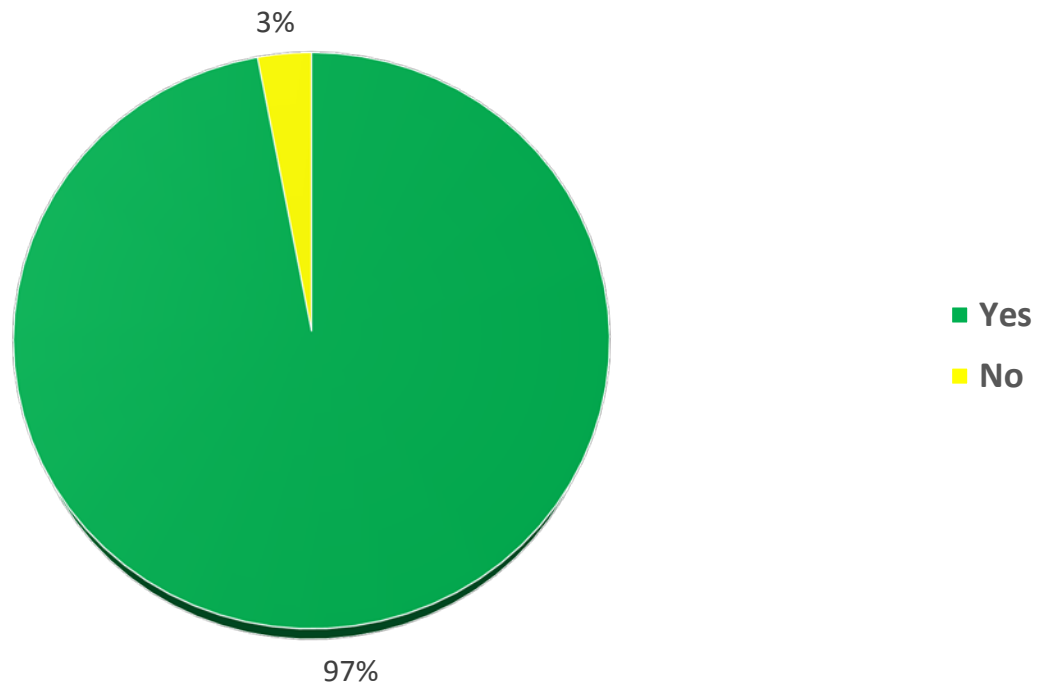
Results based on median value, 509 answers from general public compared to 154 answers from people with facial palsy



# Q: What treatments do you think would help people with facial paralysis?



Q. Do you think treatments for facial paralysis should be routinely available on the NHS?



# Survey limitations

- It is unlikely to be a representative sample of the population in view of a) the numbers of respondents, b) there is bias towards people who use the internet and c) towards people who like completing questionnaires.

# Conclusions

What does the general public know about facial paralysis?

On shown a picture of someone with Bell's palsy:

- 70% believed it could be a Stroke
- 13% mentioned it could be Bell's palsy
- 6% identified it as a problem with the facial nerve
- 90% of respondents identified a sudden facial weakness as a medical emergency.
- 76% of respondents identified a slow change in facial weakness over a matter of weeks as a medical emergency.
- Responses indicate that most people automatically associate a facial weakness with Stroke. It's a sensible approach to treat it as a medical emergency. All causes of facial palsy should be diagnosed promptly.

## What is the general public's perception of the problems associated with facial paralysis?

- The general public consider difficulty smiling to have the least impact and speech difficulties to have the most impact.
- We compared to a recent separate survey of facial palsy patients who said difficulty smiling and the effect on self-confidence have the most impact. Speech and eating difficulties have the least impact.
- The public seem aware of the consequences of a facial nerve palsy for eating and speech, but seem less aware of those for self-confidence associated with loss of the face as the area for emotional expression and indeed self-expression.

## What is the general public's expectations in relation to treatments for facial paralysis?

- 66% felt it could be treated with medication and 24% with acupuncture
- 60% felt it could be treated with physiotherapy and 54% with speech therapy.
- Just 11% say botox could help, the low figure suggesting an association between the aesthetic use of botox.
- Only 22% considered surgery a suitable treatment.
- 29% felt that psychotherapies could help indicating a lack of understanding about the psychological impact of the condition.
- 97% people believe that treatments for facial paralysis should be routinely available on the NHS.

# Take home messages from this survey

- Observers look at practical uses of the face; eating and speech, whereas patients find the aesthetic/expressive use of the face most difficult.
- 60% of the general public believe physiotherapy can help people with facial palsy yet there is insufficient research in this area and it is not routinely offered.
- It is important to remember that physiotherapy is often about more than facial therapy; it allows time with a professional to explain and support. Physiotherapists play an important role in boosting self-esteem and providing education about the condition.
- The value of a smile is underestimated, perhaps because it is mostly a sub-conscious act. Most people are unaware that the majority of our communication happens in non-verbal channels.