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Introduction

- Health authorities have recommended **rapid antigen testing** to help identify positive cases of COVID-19 in the community and help people make informed decisions about engaging in various virus transmission prevention measures (e.g., isolation, masking).
- If positive, Canadians can take preventative measures to protect loved ones and others. They can also avoid unnecessary self-isolation and anxiety if they test negative.
- However, these benefits are dependent on people actually using rapid antigen testing.

Objectives

This study examined **Canadians' attitudes, behaviours, and intentions** surrounding **rapid antigen testing**.

Methods

Participants and procedure



We examined **four rounds of Canadian representative sample** survey data from the iCARE study (www.icarestudy.com), which was collected via an online polling firm (Leger©) between **September 10, 2021** and **June 3, 2022** (N=12,111)

Measures

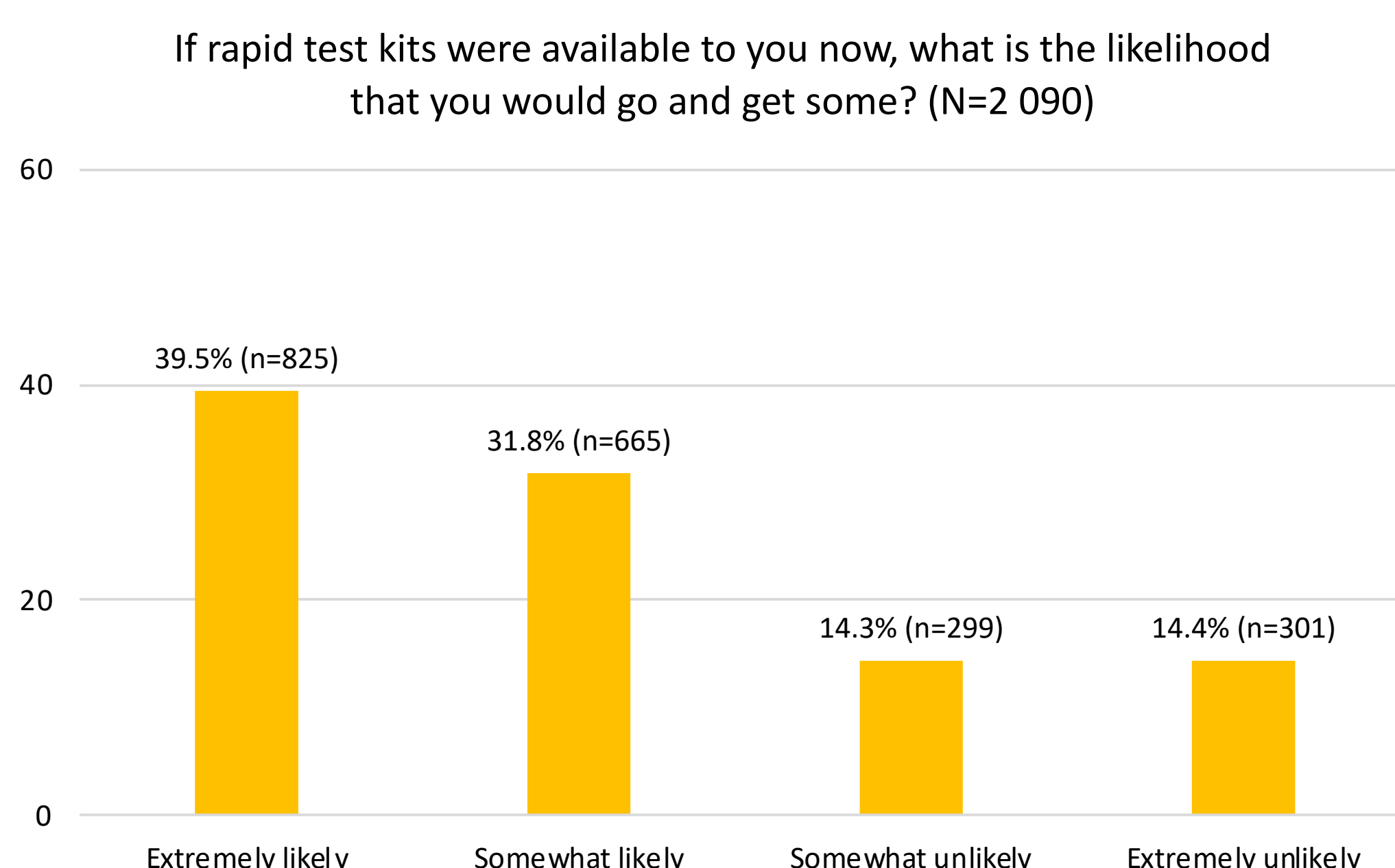
- iCARE survey: 57 questions, 20 minutes
- Participants self-reported their attitudes, behaviours, and intentions towards rapid antigen testing, and their intentions to report positive results.

Analyses

- Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to describe attitudes and behaviours of Canadians around rapid antigen testing.

Results

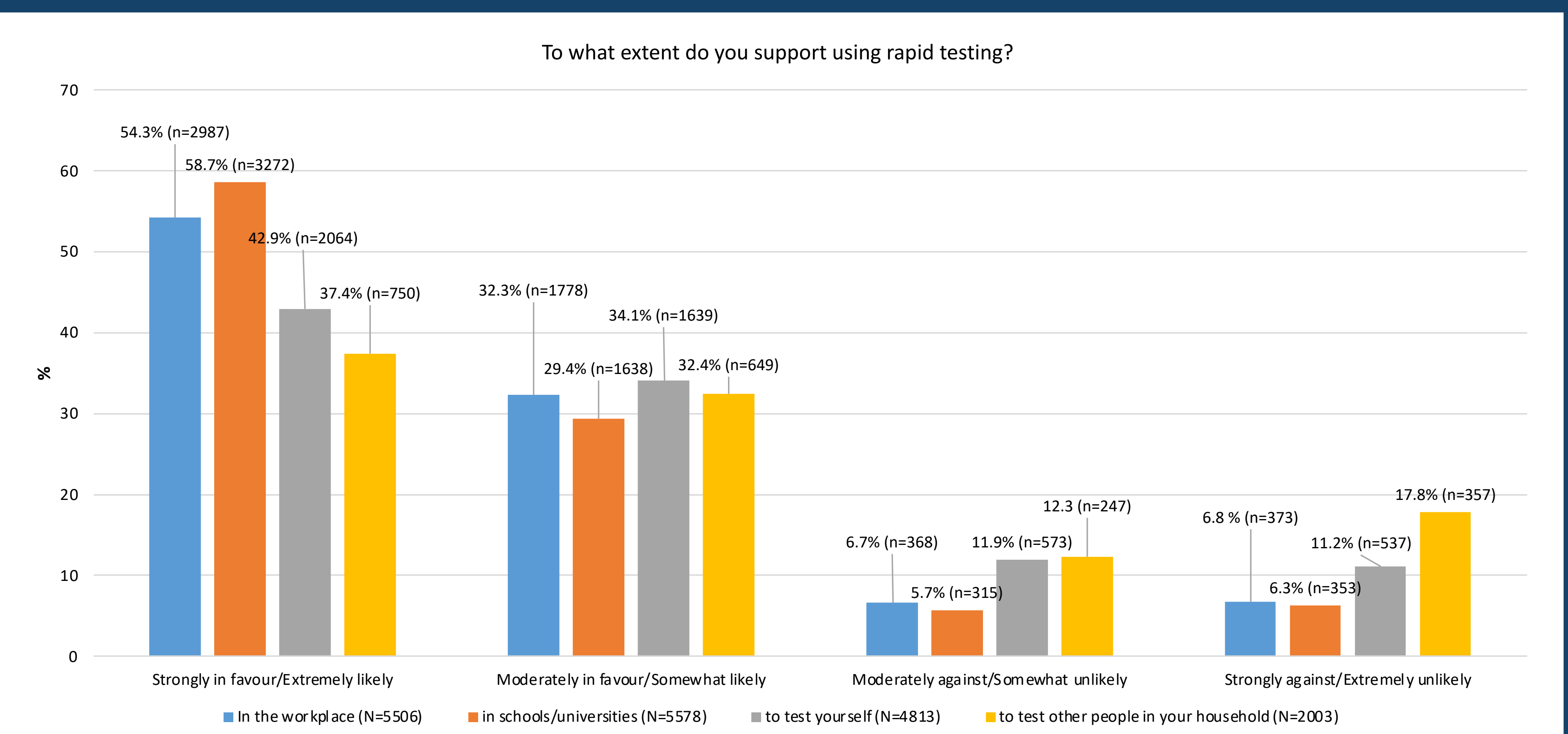
Likelihood of getting rapid antigen testing



- Canadians were most likely to report being extremely likely (39.5%) and somewhat likely (31.8%) to get rapid tests kits when available.

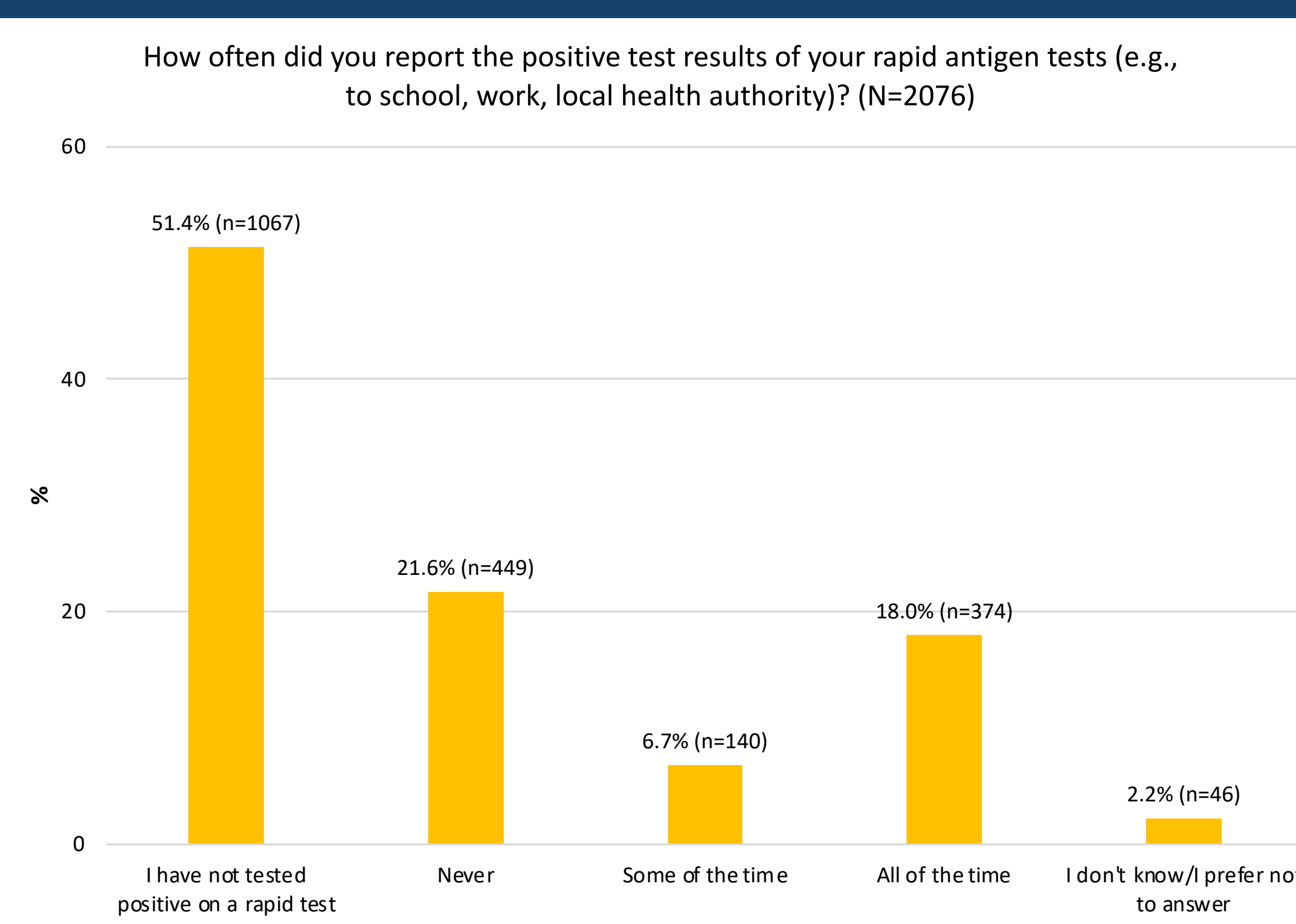
Results

Likelihood of using rapid antigen testing



- Overall, nearly 45% of Canadians had taken at least one RAT in the last month.
- However, during survey 9 (January 21 to February 4th, 2022 – which corresponded to the 5th wave of COVID-19 pandemic), nearly three quarters of Canadians (73.6%) reported using at least one RAT in the last 6 weeks.
- During survey 10 (when case rates were low), most Canadians (60.4%) reported not using a RAT in the last month.

Likelihood to report positive rapid antigen testing



Nearly 45% of participants had engaged in rapid antigen testing at least once, with 37% always reporting their positive results (although a majority [44%] did not).

Discussion / Conclusion

- Results suggest that Canadians are in favor of rapid antigen testing and use it more frequently when population COVID-19 infection rates are higher.
- Messaging on the potential benefits of self-testing for reducing transmission during outbreaks as well as in between outbreaks could be strengthened.
- Subsequent research could investigate the potential shifts in attitudes and behaviors in response to the removal of free tests.

References

- Bacon SL, Lavoie KL, Boyle J, Stojanovic J, Joyal-Desmarais K, for the iCARE study team. International assessment of the link between COVID-19 related attitudes, concerns and behaviours in relation to public health policies: optimising policy strategies to improve health, economic and quality of life outcomes (the iCARE Study). *BMJ Open*. 2021 Mar;11(3):e046127.
- Health Canada, (2022). Testing for COVID-19: Importance of testing and contact tracing [Education and awareness]. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms/testing.html>

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