

Understanding how to create earlier pathways to AOD help and support

The right information, in the right format, at the right time

Access to high quality information helps reduce the risk of alcohol and other drug (AOD) harms by encouraging early pathways for behaviour change.

The Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) provides a range of resources to prevent and reduce AOD harm, but for this information to be effective it must meet the needs of those seeking it.

To this end, we set out to better understand the needs of people seeking AOD information and their experience of seeking support and treatment.

METHOD

An online, Australia-wide survey was in field between June 28 and Aug 2, 2021.

The survey was completed by 1,947 members of the general public who use AOD or are concerned about another person's AOD use (Figure 1).

Respondents were broadly representative of the Australian population for gender and age:

- 51% were female
- 12% were 18-25, 46% were 26-54 and 42% were 55 years or older.

The survey captured AOD knowledge, AOD information and help seeking behaviour, the availability and helpfulness of information, and explored experiences of support or treatment, including the common barriers.

KEY FINDINGS

Rates of accessing AOD information were 'moderate': 30% have accessed information about drugs and 32% have accessed information about alcohol. Of those who have accessed AOD information, most report obtaining it for themselves (Figure 2).

Google was the most frequently accessed source of AOD information; however, out of 13 sources, it was ranked as the 9th most helpful (Table 1). AOD-focussed websites and doctors were reported as the most helpful sources of AOD information.

Respondents who drank alcohol at least monthly (n=1,781) were asked if they wanted support or treatment for their alcohol use.

Of the small proportion who did, almost two thirds obtained support and half obtained treatment (Figure 3).

Commonly reported factors that prevented respondents from gaining support were concerns around privacy, and judgement from others, including family and friends (Figure 4).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- Australians access online sources of AOD information, like that provided by the ADF, typically for themselves, but also for family members and friends.
- The majority access information through a Google search despite it being ranked low for helpfulness.
- AOD-focussed websites were ranked most helpful - but less than half use them as a source.
- Among those who wanted support, a third did not access it, with concerns about privacy and judgement being the most common barriers.

IMPLICATIONS

This comprehensive survey helped the ADF maximise the reach and impact of AOD information by identifying current needs and gaps in resources. These findings also informed the creation of new AOD resources and tools.

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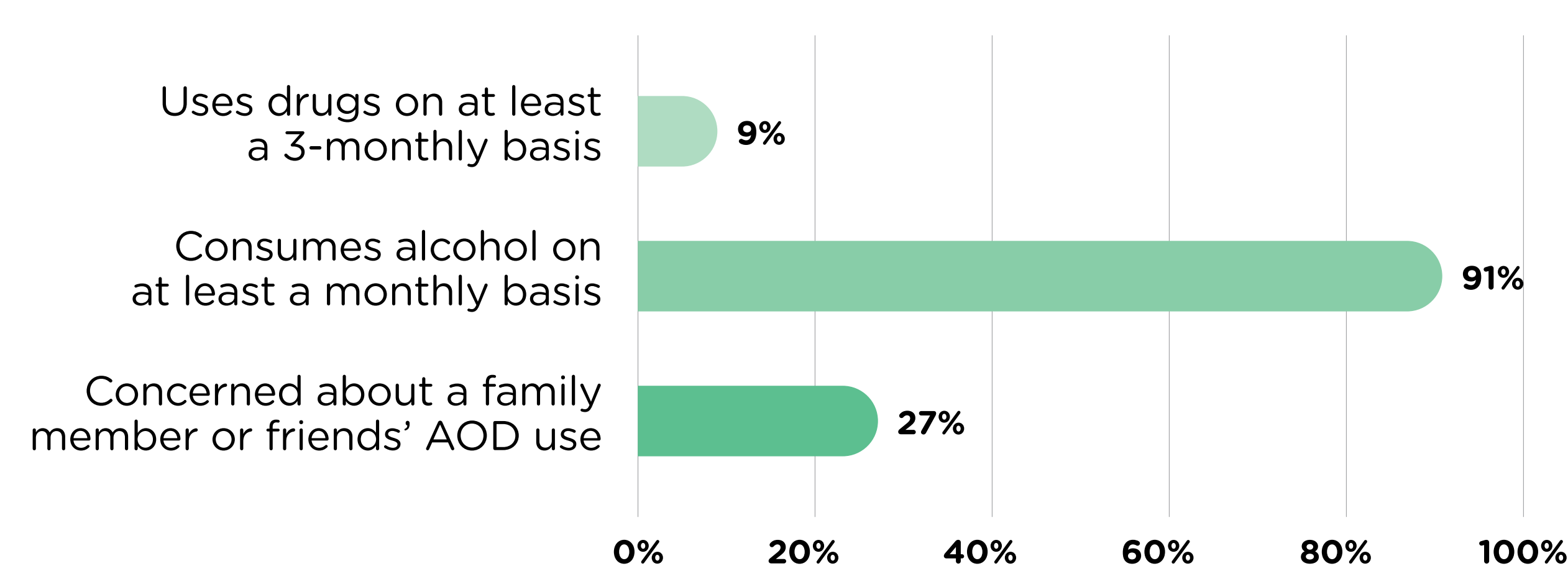


Figure 1. Respondent relationship with AOD (n=1,947)

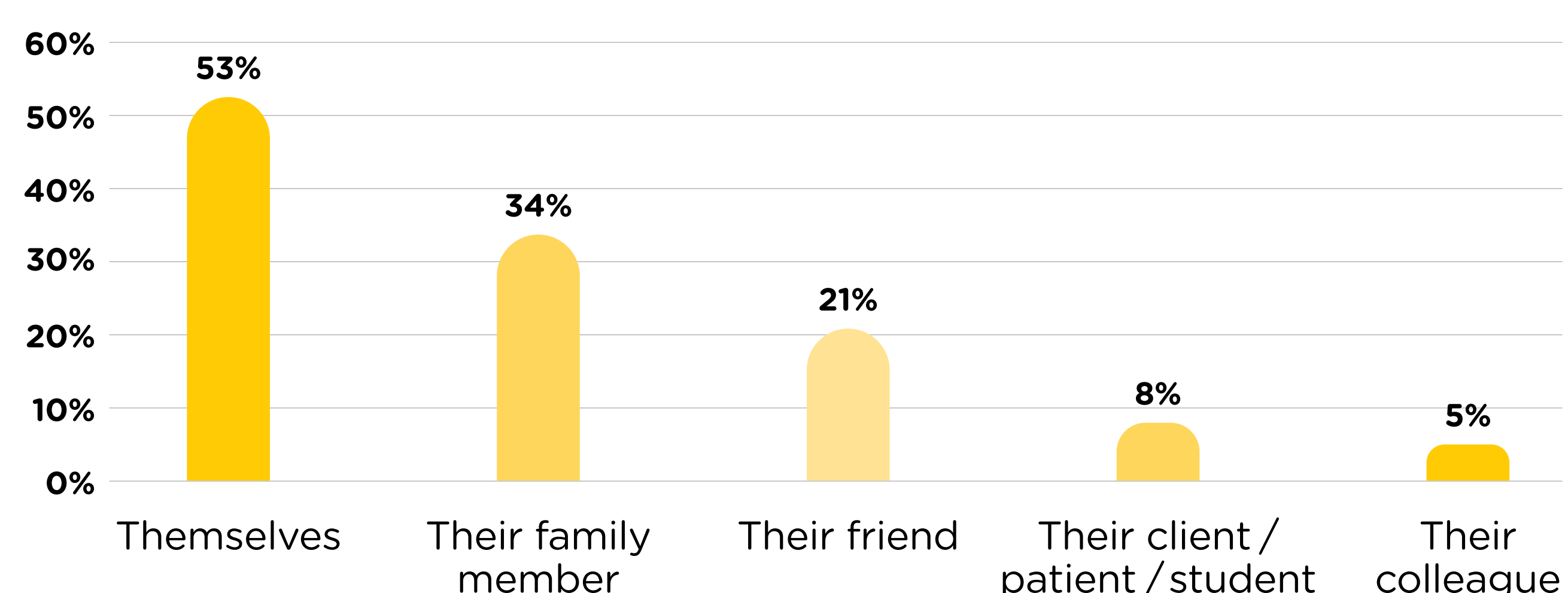


Figure 2. Who respondents obtained AOD information for (n=898)

Most used sources of information (rate of access)	Helpfulness ranking
Google search (63%)	9th
AOD-focussed website (43%)	1st
Doctor/GP (22%)	2nd
Mental health org website (15%)	4th
Friends (14%)	12th

Table 1. Most used sources for obtaining AOD information and their helpfulness ranking

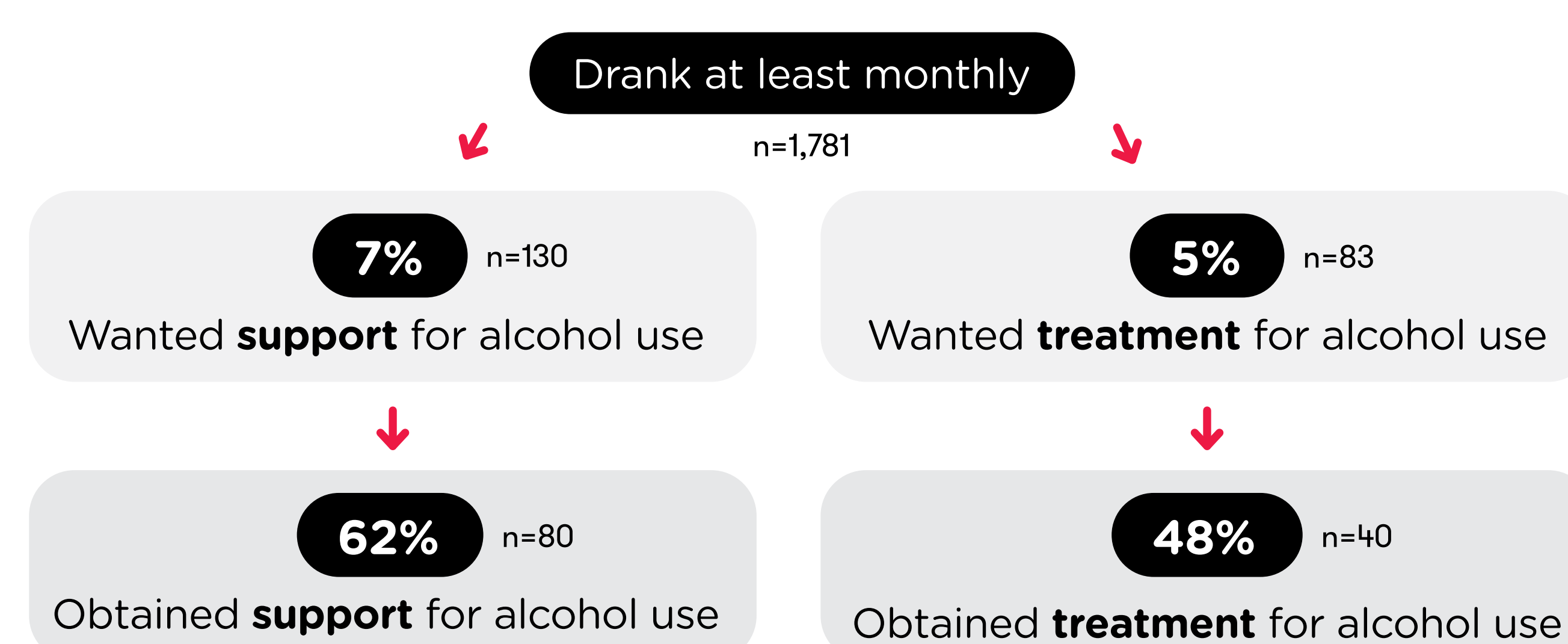


Figure 3. Respondents want for, and access to, support and treatment for their alcohol use

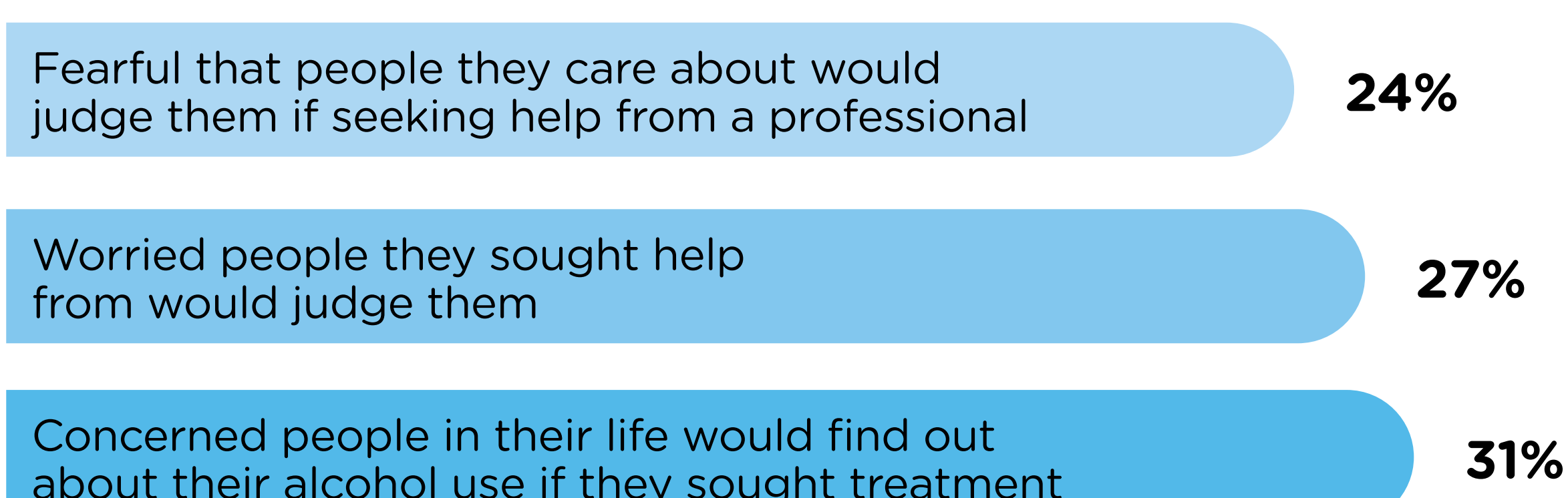


Figure 4. Factors that prevented respondents from gaining support for alcohol use (n= 49)