

Understanding perceptions of the cervical screening programme and HPV among 50-64 year olds

Women aged 50-64 are invited for cervical screening every five years however uptake among this age group is declining and among women aged 60-64 has reached an 18-year low. Worryingly the [NHSCSP Audit of invasive Cervical Cancer national report in 2007-10](#) found 56% of women aged 50-64 with fully invasive cancer hadn't been screened within seven years, compared to only 16% of women without cervical cancer.

In May 2015 we commissioned a study to explore knowledge of cervical cancer and barriers to screening for women aged 50 to 64. The findings were launched during Cervical Screening Awareness Week 2015 alongside calls for more investment in research to explore the feasibility of introducing HPV self-sampling as part of the NHS cervical screening programme.

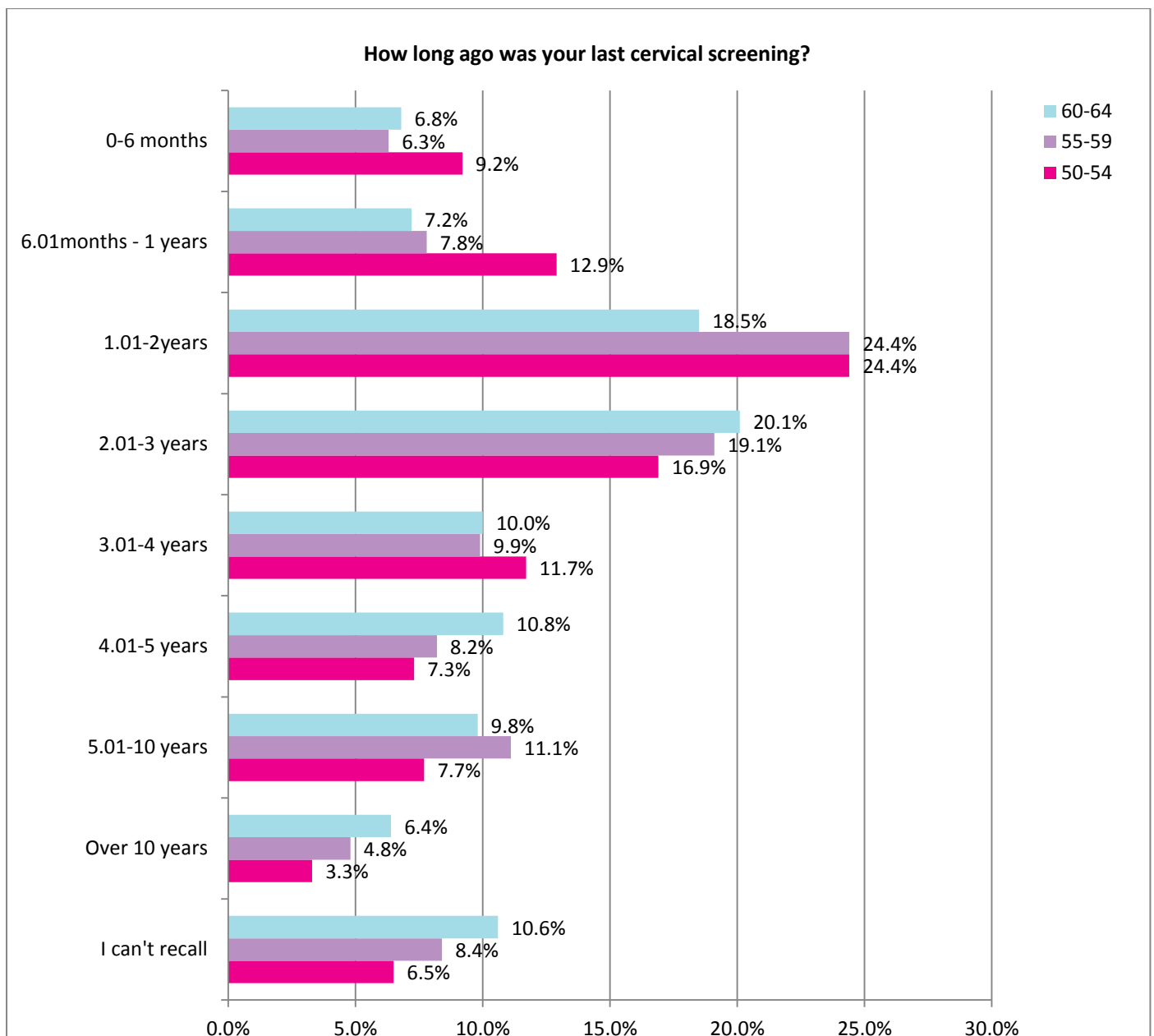
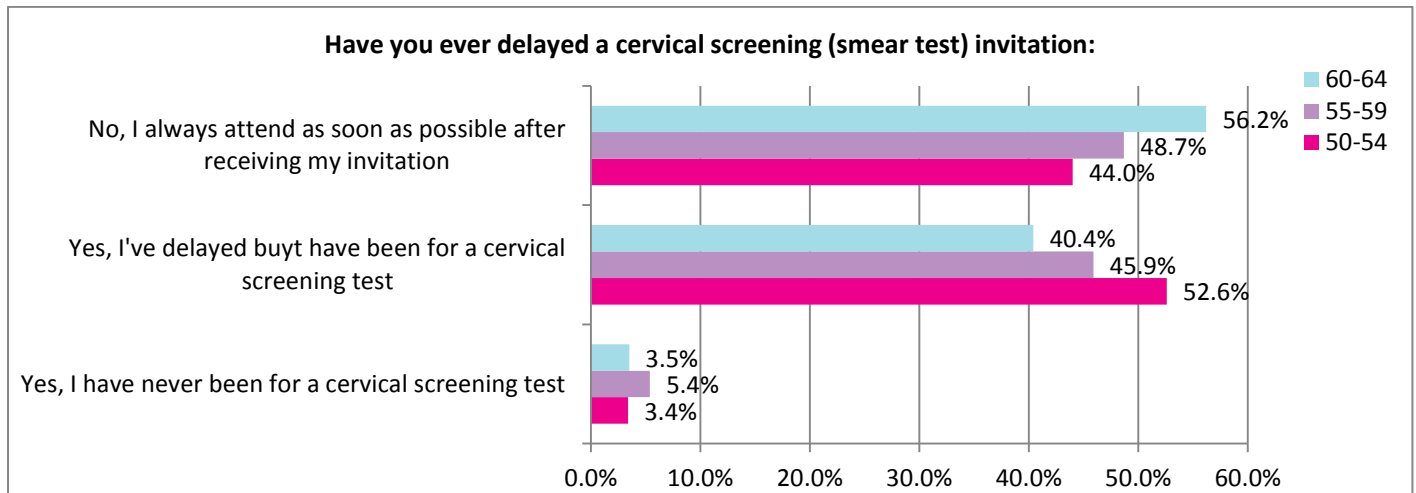
The survey, which was conducted by Censuswide, sampled 1,519 women aged 50 to 64. 764 had previously delayed cervical screening and 755 had never delayed.

The results found significant knowledge gaps amongst this group and a range of barriers to attending screening.

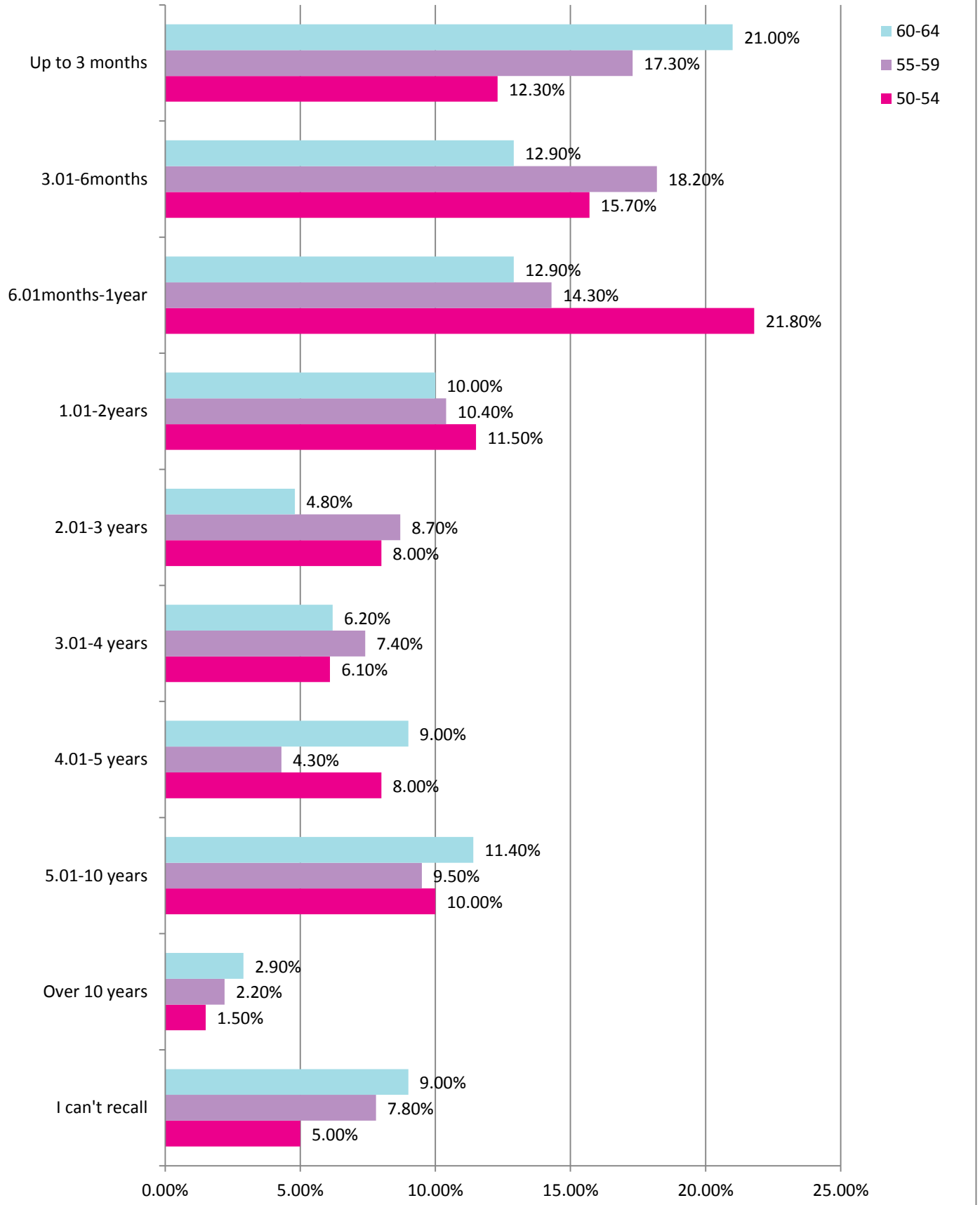
Key findings:

- Almost two thirds (60%) of women aged 50-64 did not know the Human papillomavirus (HPV) causes almost all cases of cervical cancer and many failed to link historic sexual activity as a threat to the virus laying dormant and potentially developing into cervical cancer later in life
- 29.1% found the test painful since growing older with 24.4% experiencing pain since going through the menopause
- 53.9% of those who had delayed cervical screening said they would prefer to self-sample at home, compared to only 20.5% of those that hadn't delayed screening
- 22.5% said cervical cancer was a disease most likely to affect women aged 25-34 which suggests many associated it as a predominately young person's cancer
- 40.1% didn't think smear tests are part of the healthy upkeep of a woman's body and 24.6% thought them an unnecessary health test for all women

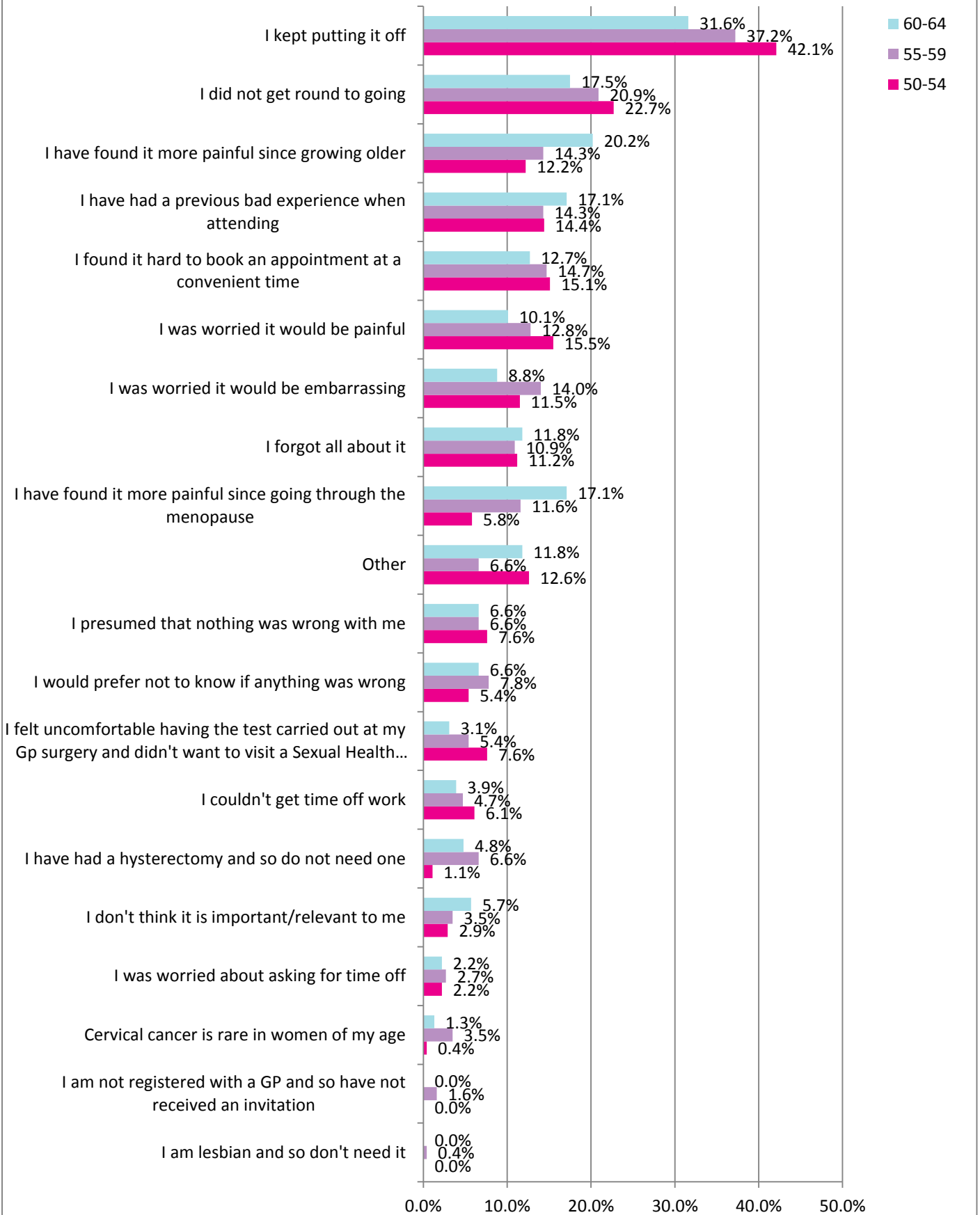
Full results (split by age group):



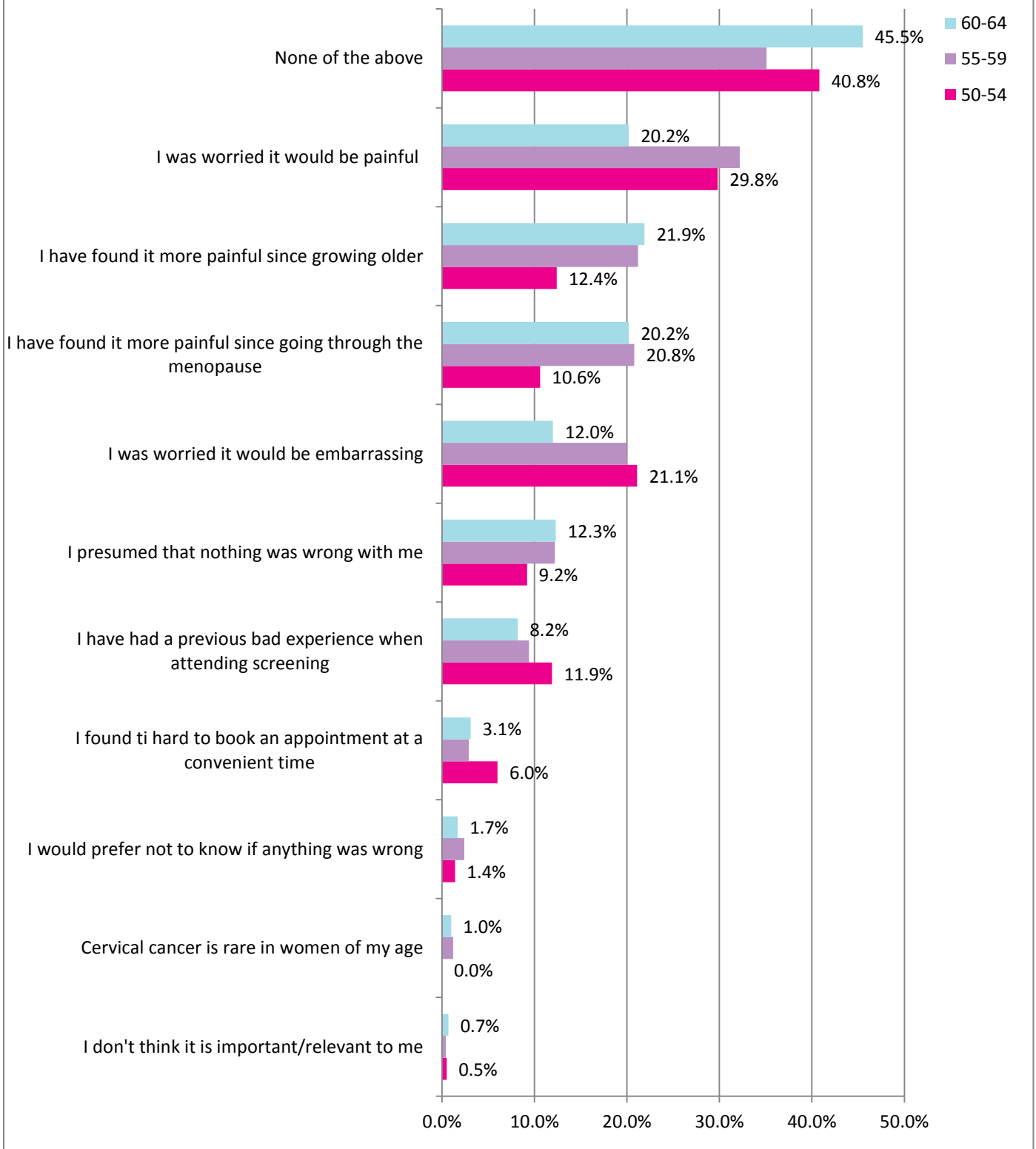
If you have delayed a cervical screening test/tests, in your estimation what is the longest time you've delayed for?



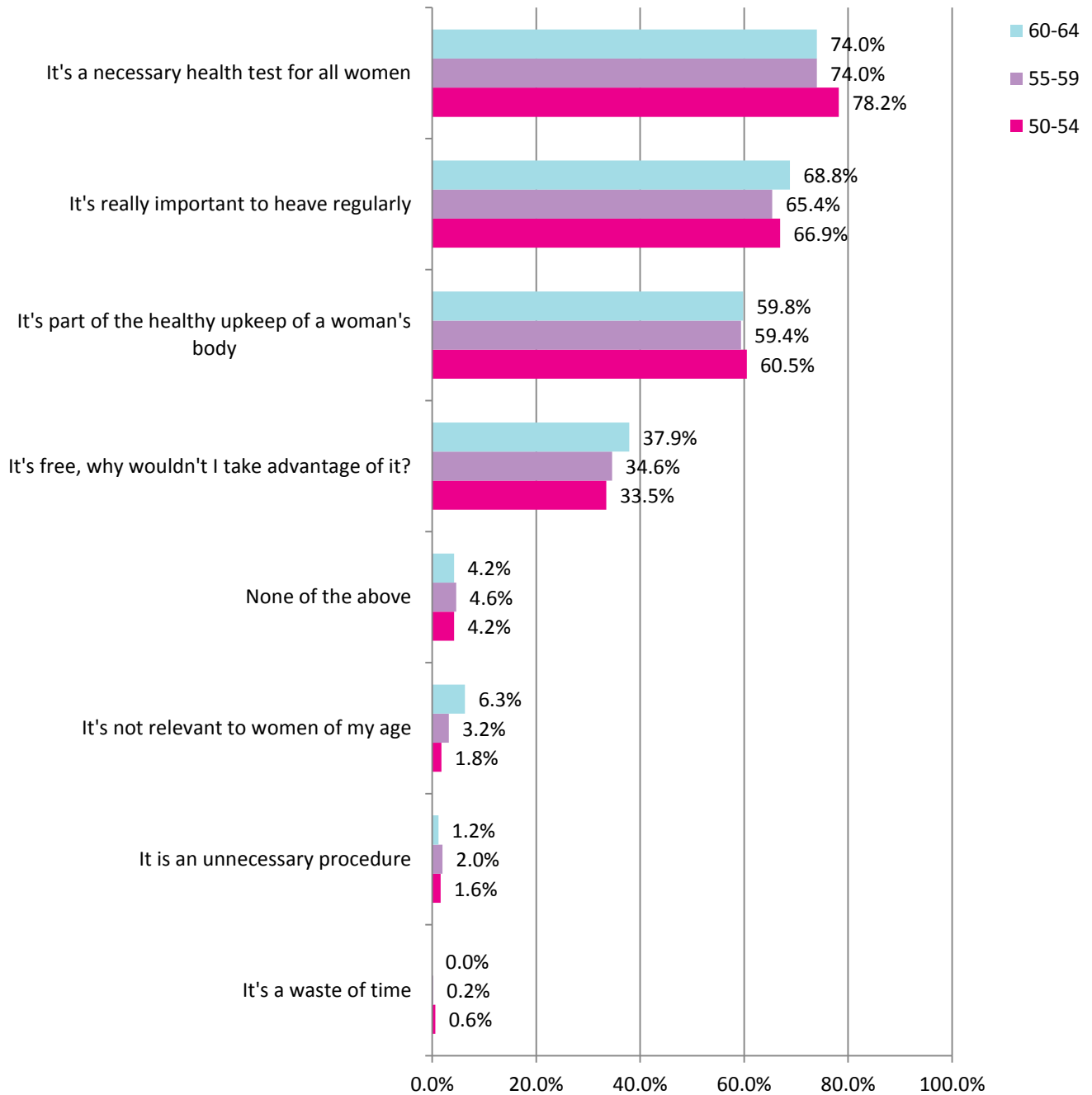
What has caused you to delay or not attend a cervical screening test?



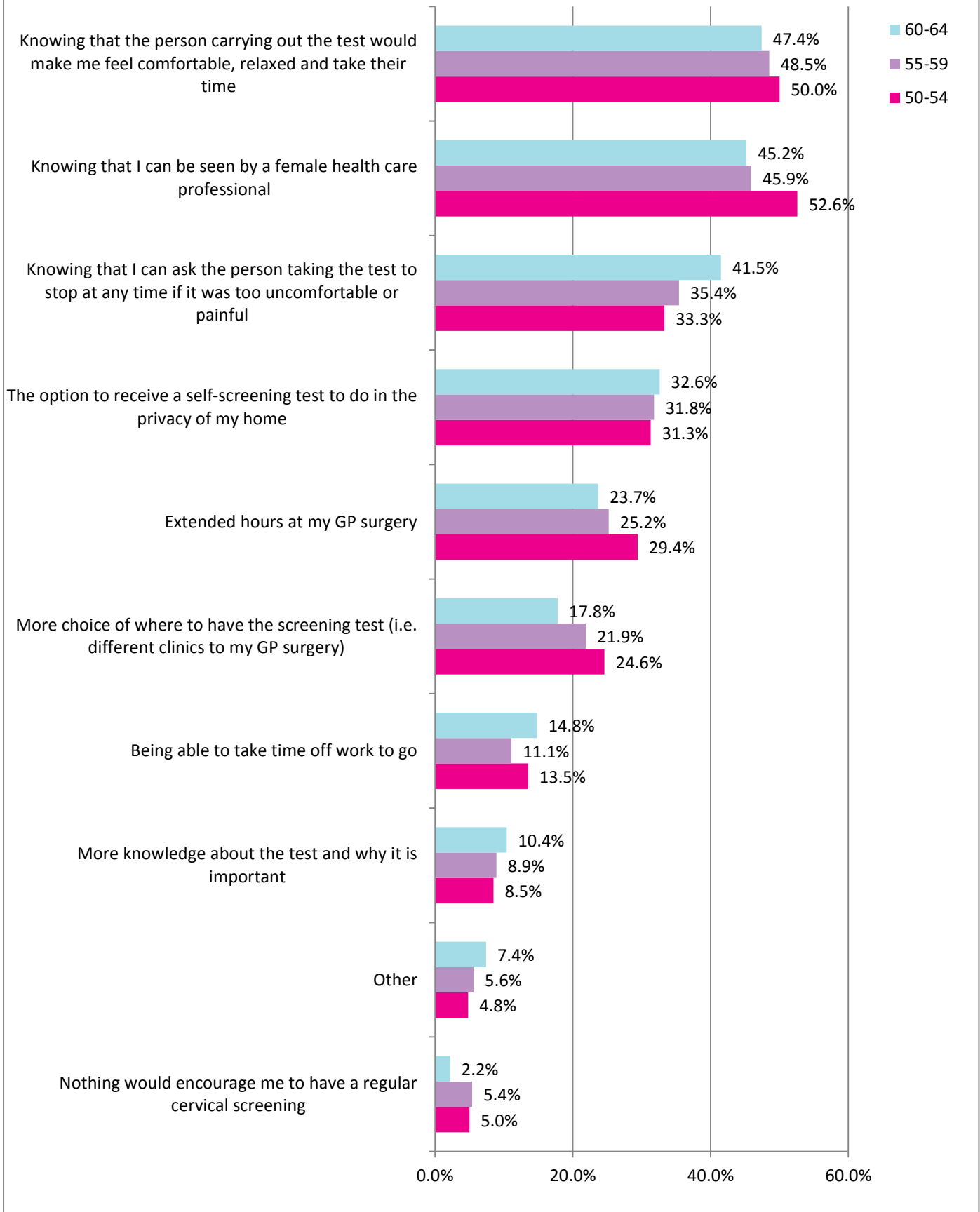
Have you experienced any of the below when attending cervical screening?



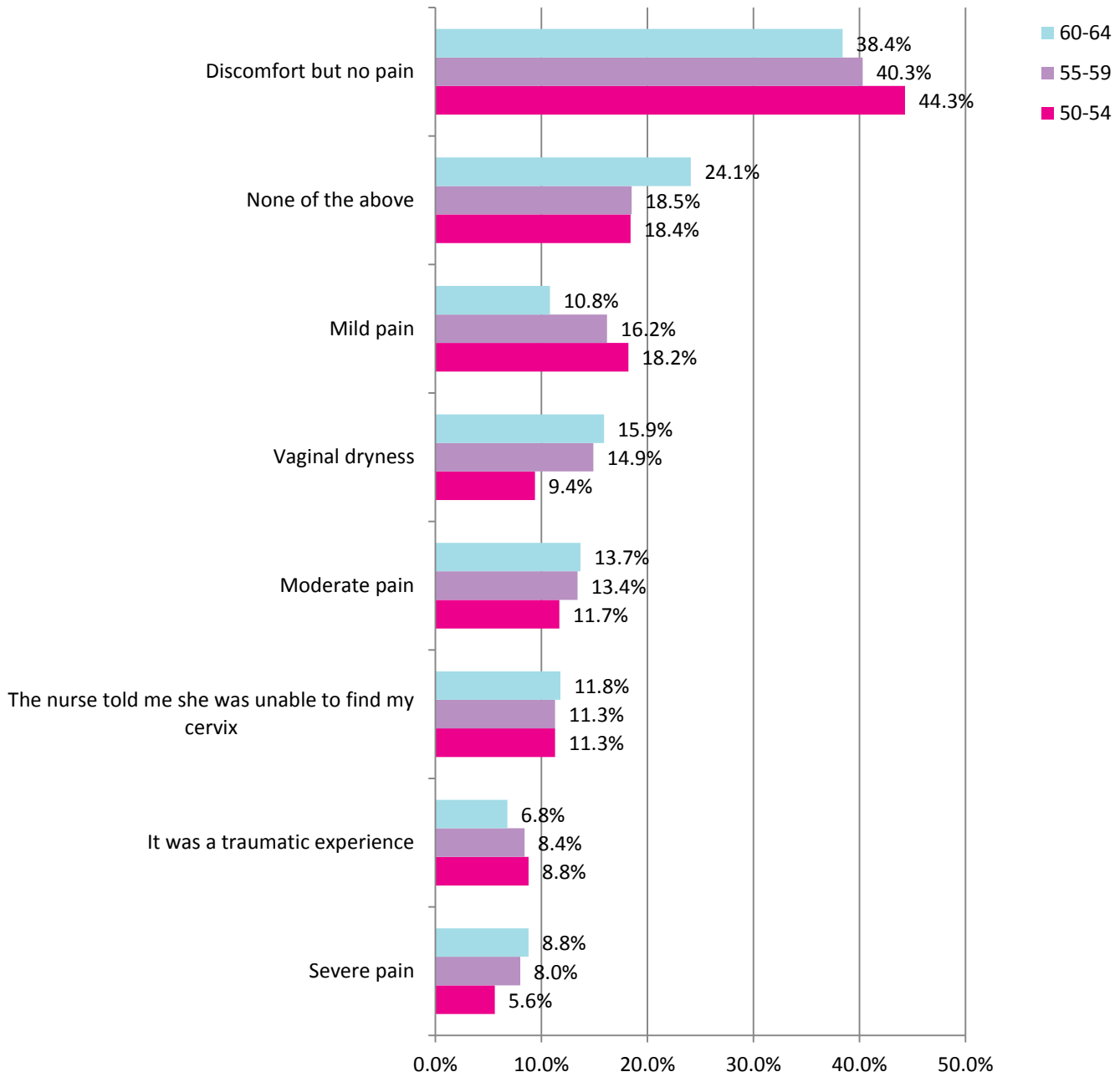
Which, if any, of the following statements about cervical screening do you agree with?

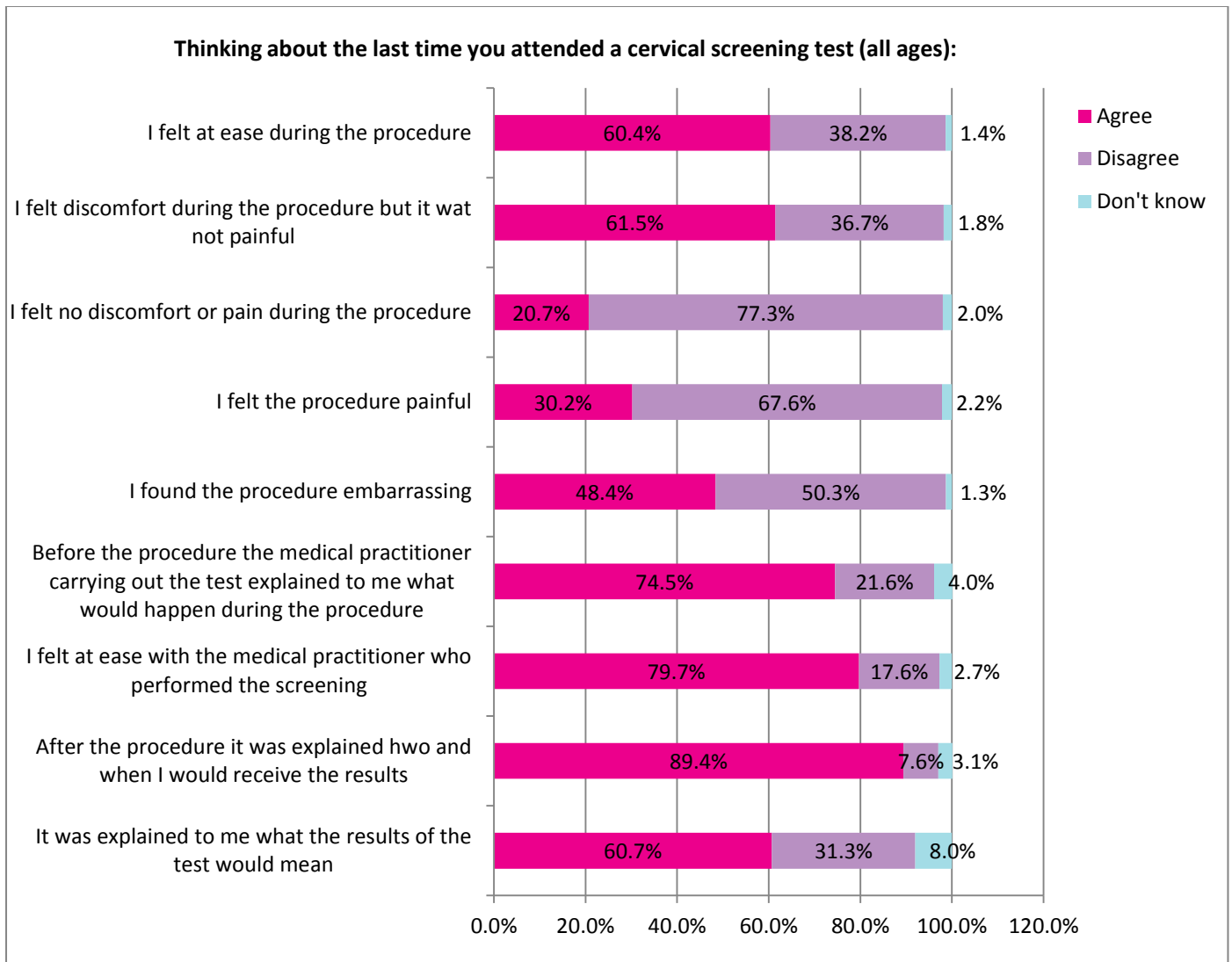


What would encourage you to have regular cervical screening (when invited)?



Have you experienced any of the following at a cervical screening test?



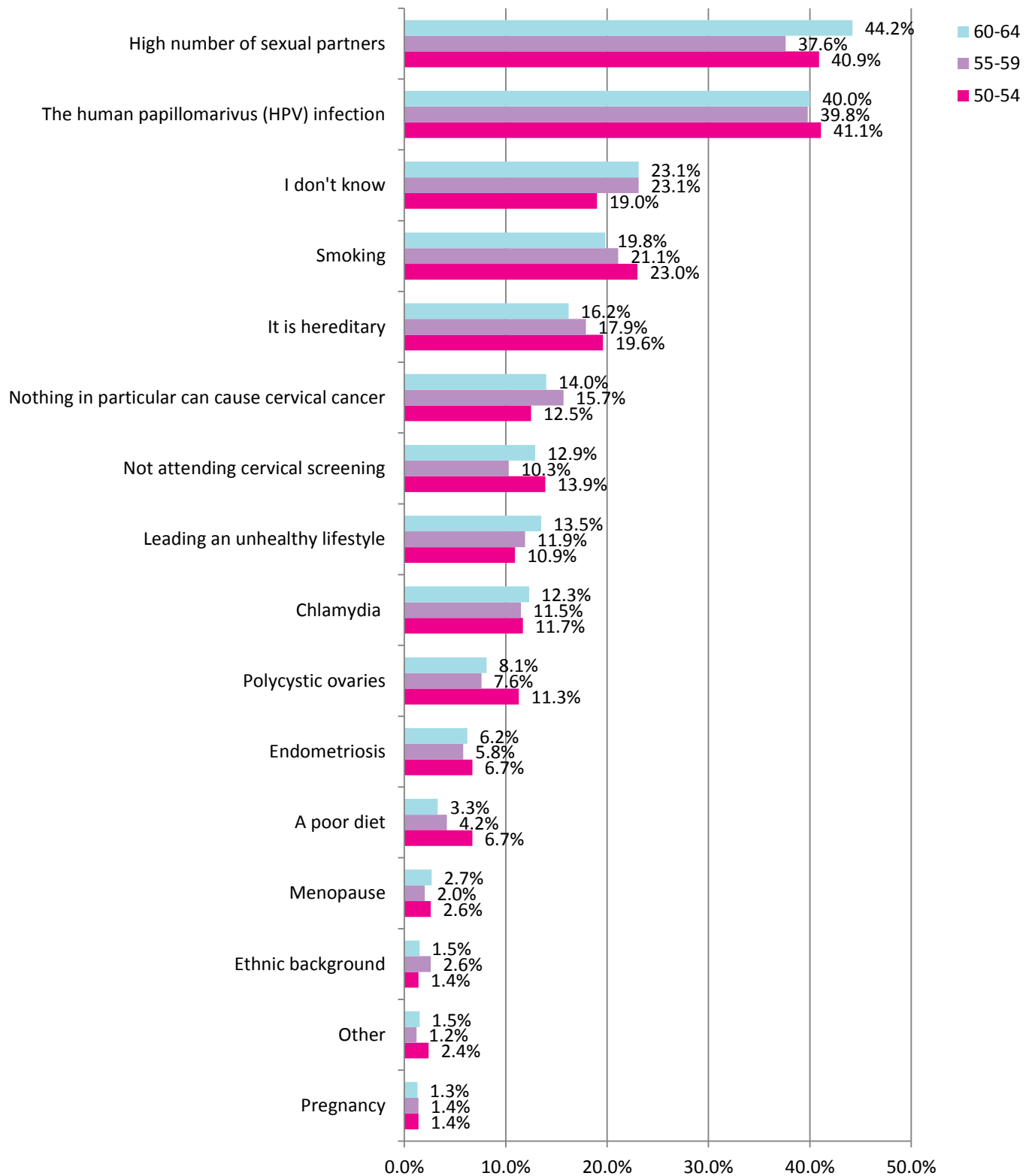


When comparing responses of who had previously delayed their screening to those that reported attending as soon as possible, differences in screening experience became apparent:

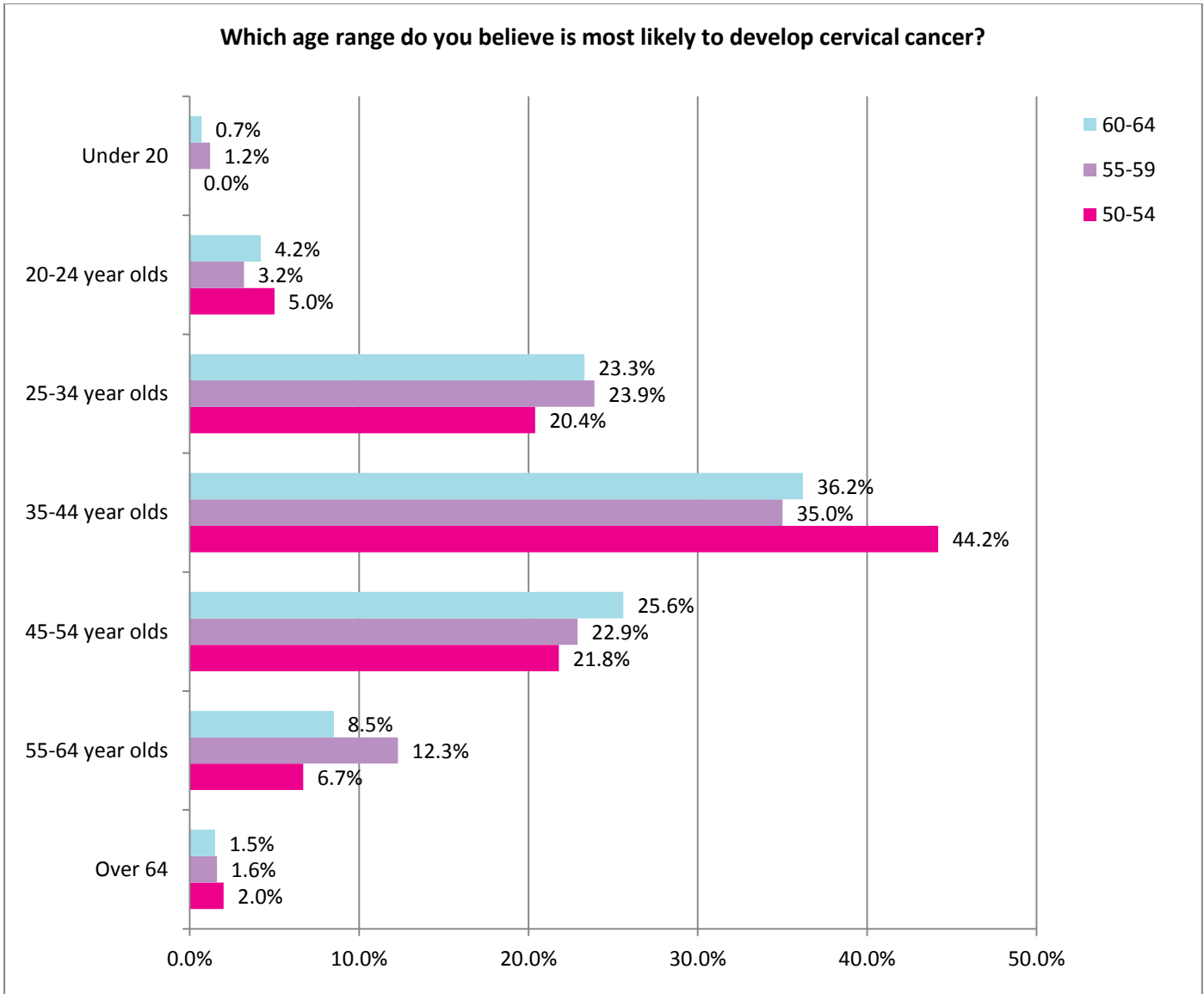
		No, I always attend as soon as possible after receiving my invitation	Yes, I've delayed but have been for a cervical screening test
I felt at ease during the procedure	Agree	75.20%	44.60%
	Disagree	23.10%	54.40%
	Don't know	1.70%	1.00%
I felt discomfort during the procedure but it was not painful	Agree	63.30%	59.70%
	Disagree	34.60%	38.90%
	Don't know	2.10%	1.40%
I felt no discomfort or pain during the procedure	Agree	72.10%	82.80%

	Disagree	25.50%	15.70%
	Don't know	2.40%	1.60%
I found the procedure painful	Disagree	75.30%	59.30%
	Agree	22.40%	38.60%
	Don't know	2.30%	2.10%
I found the procedure embarrassing	Disagree	64.10%	35.50%
	Agree	34.50%	63.40%
	Don't know	1.50%	1.10%
Before the procedure the medical practitioner carrying out the test explained to me what would happen during the procedure	Agree	79.80%	68.70%
	Disagree	16.30%	27.20%
	Don't know	3.80%	4.10%
I felt at ease with the medical practitioner who performed the screening	Agree	89.70%	68.90%
	Disagree	7.80%	28.10%
	Don't know	2.50%	3.00%
After the procedure it was explained how and when I would receive the results	Agree	94.70%	83.60%
	Disagree	2.90%	12.50%
	Don't know	2.40%	3.80%
It was explained to me what the results of the test would mean	Agree	69.80%	51.00%
	Disagree	23.10%	40.00%
	Don't know	7.20%	9.00%

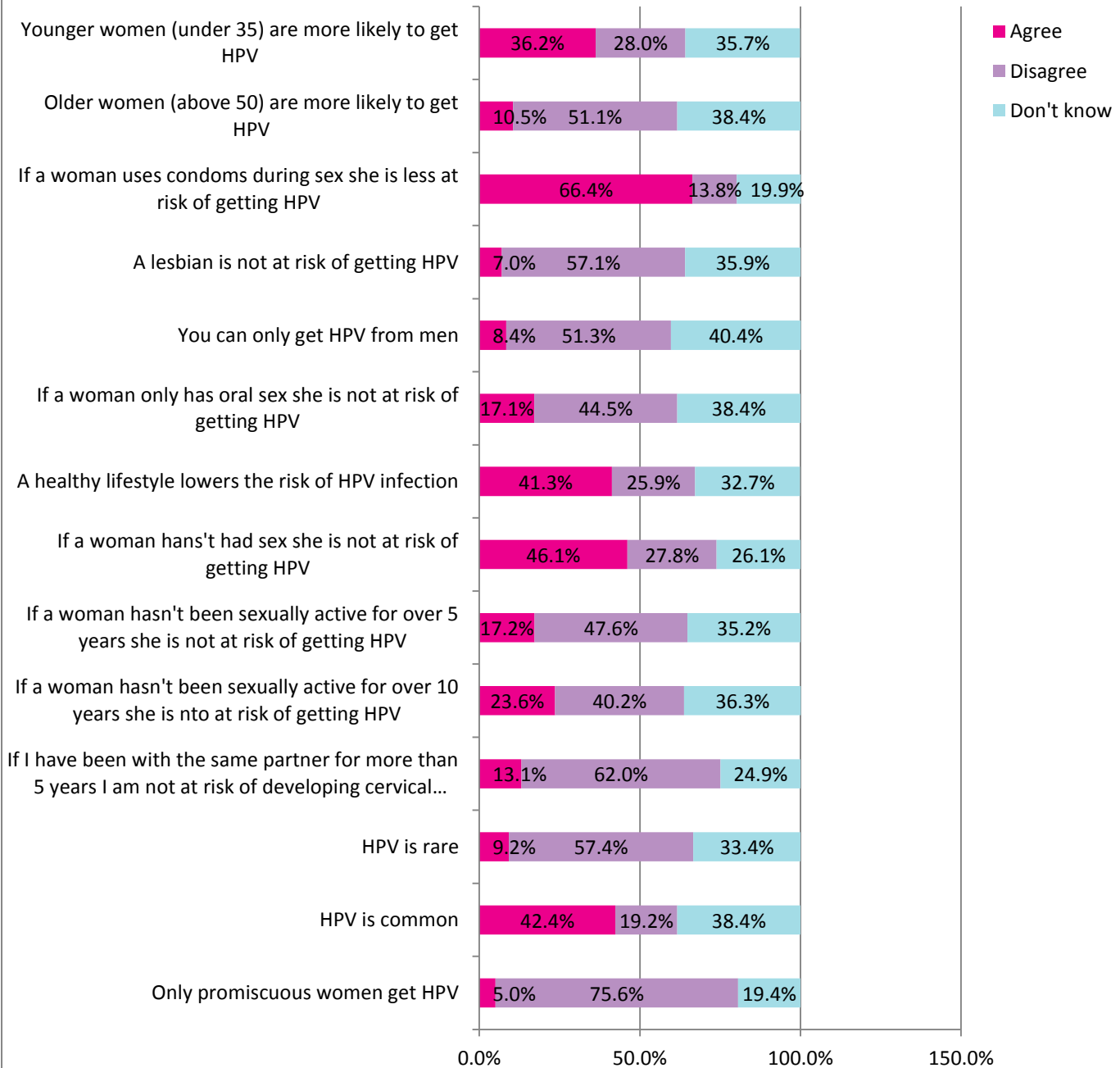
Thinking now more specifically about cervical cancer, what do you think can cause it?



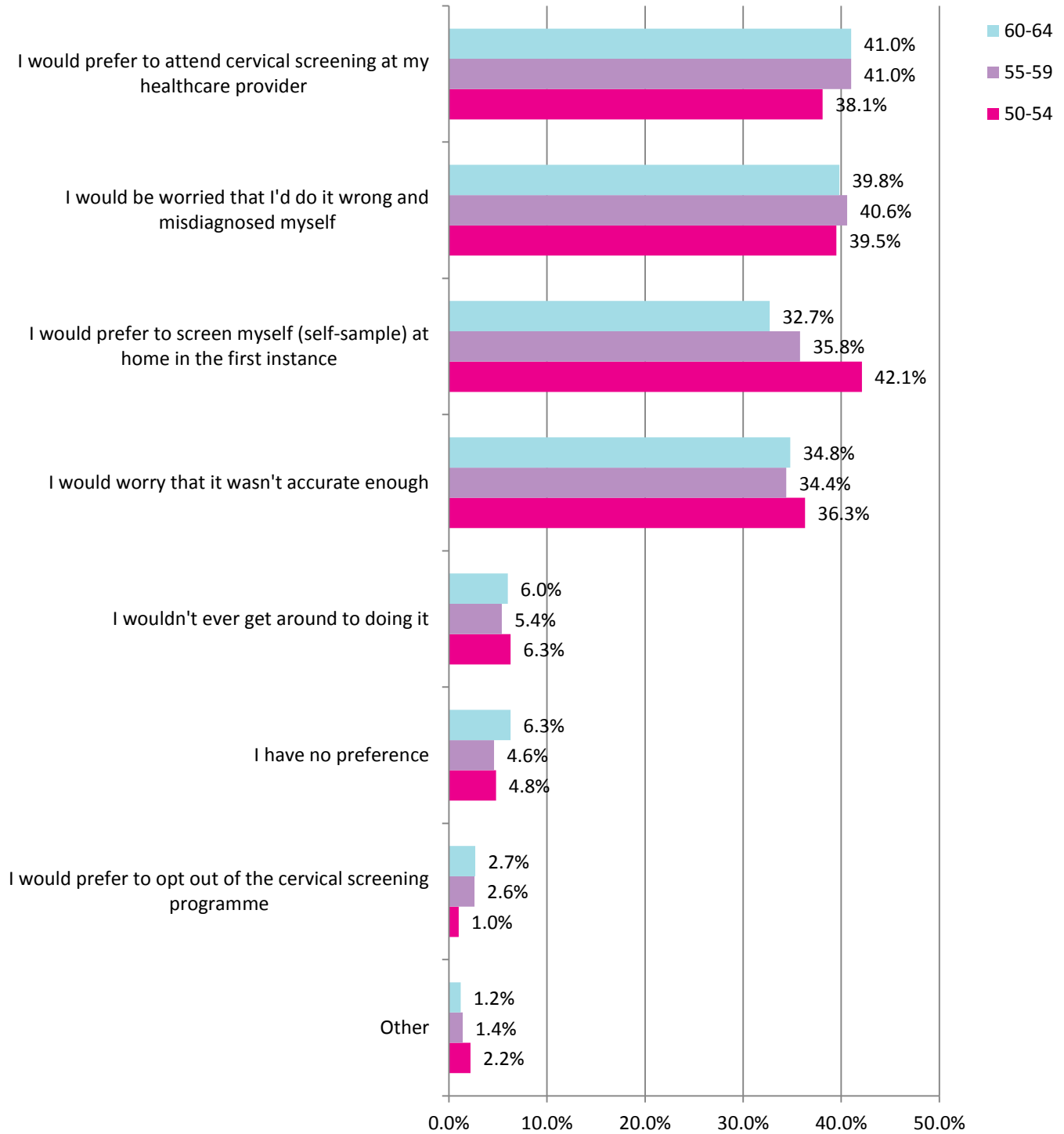
Which age range do you believe is most likely to develop cervical cancer?

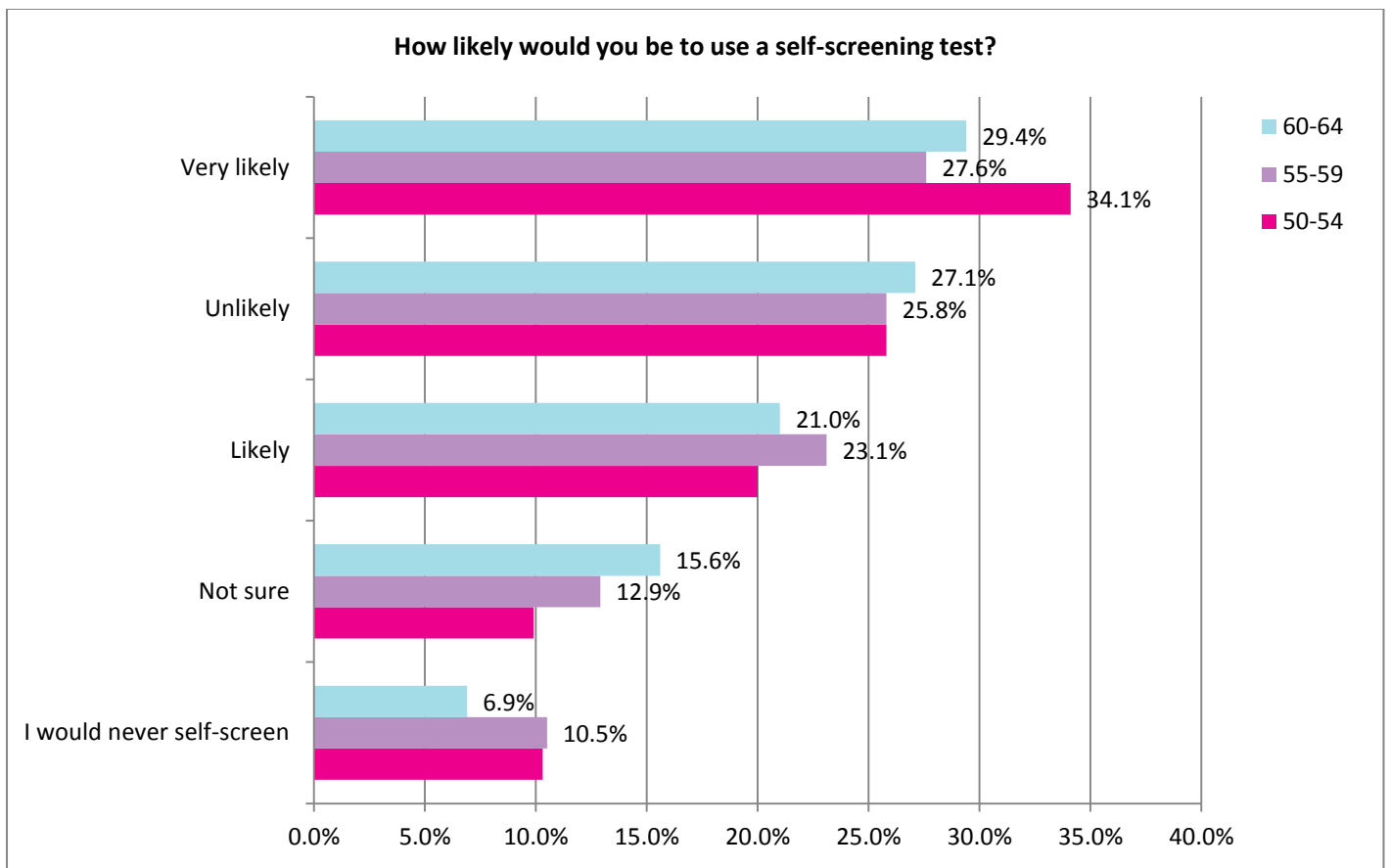


The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the cause of 99.7% of cervical cancers and is transmitted through sexual contact (genital to genital contact). To what extent do you agree with the following?



If you had an opportunity to use a self-screening test at home instead of attending your cervical screening at a GP surgery what would your thoughts be?





How long would you wait to make an appointment with a doctor, if you were suffering with each of the below ailments (in isolation)?

Unusual and/or unpleasant vaginal discharge			
	50-54	55-59	60-64
Within a couple of days or earlier	29.0%	37.0%	39.2%
Within 1-2 weeks	35.3%	36.6%	38.1%
Within a month	16.5%	15.5%	12.7%
Within 2-3 months	7.5%	3.8%	3.8%
Within 4-5 months	1.8%	0.8%	0.8%
6 months or more	1.0%	0.4%	0.8%
Don't know	5.4%	4.0%	3.8%
Not applicable I wouldn't see a doctor	3.4%	2.0%	0.8%

Discomfort or pain during urination			
	50-54	55-59	60-64
Within a couple of days or earlier	39.5%	42.5%	46.9%
Within 1-2 weeks	34.9%	38.4%	38.5%
Within a month	12.7%	11.9%	8.7%
Within 2-3 months	3.6%	1.6%	2.1%
Within 4-5 months	1.0%	0.4%	0.2%
6 months or more	0.6%	0.0%	0.4%
Don't know	4.2%	3.0%	2.3%
Not applicable I wouldn't see a doctor	3.4%	2.2%	1.0%

Needing to urinate more often than usual			
	50-54	55-59	60-64
Within a couple of days or earlier	15.9%	18.5%	17.7%
Within 1-2 weeks	35.7%	35.2%	44.0%
Within a month	21.4%	23.9%	19.2%
Within 2-3 months	8.5%	7.8%	6.3%
Within 4-5 months	2.6%	1.2%	1.2%
6 months or more	2.6%	1.0%	0.8%
Don't know	6.7%	7.2%	6.2%
Not applicable I wouldn't see a doctor	6.7%	5.4%	4.6%

Abnormal bleeding (i.e. after or during sexual intercourse, or between periods etc.)			
	50-54	55-59	60-64
Within a couple of days or earlier	34.3%	44.7%	50.8%
Within 1-2 weeks	30.8%	27.6%	30.2%
Within a month	14.3%	16.1%	7.1%
Within 2-3 months	8.1%	3.6%	3.7%
Within 4-5 months	2.6%	0.4%	0.6%
6 months or more	2.0%	0.2%	0.4%
Don't know	4.8%	3.2%	3.1%
Not applicable I wouldn't see a doctor	3.0%	4.2%	4.2%

Post-menopausal bleeding, if you are not on or have stopped taking HRT			
	50-54	55-59	60-64
Within a couple of days or earlier	28.8%	42.5%	51.0%
Within 1-2 weeks	27.6%	28.0%	29.4%
Within a month	13.7%	13.5%	8.5%
Within 2-3 months	9.3%	6.2%	3.1%
Within 4-5 months	1.6%	0.2%	0.2%
6 months or more	2.2%	0.2%	0.6%
Don't know	9.5%	4.6%	2.1%
Not applicable I wouldn't see a doctor	7.3%	4.8%	5.2%

Itching and soreness around the entrance to the vagina			
	50-54	55-59	60-64
Within a couple of days or earlier	21.4%	20.5%	22.3%
Within 1-2 weeks	34.3%	41.6%	45.0%
Within a month	18.1%	22.1%	16.2%
Within 2-3 months	9.1%	4.8%	6.7%
Within 4-5 months	2.0%	0.8%	0.4%
6 months or more	2.2%	0.8%	1.2%
Don't know	6.0%	4.8%	3.3%
Not applicable I wouldn't see a doctor	6.9%	4.8%	5.0%

Headaches			
	50-54	55-59	60-64
Within a couple of days or earlier	5.0%	5.6%	5.8%
Within 1-2 weeks	19.6%	17.3%	21.3%
Within a month	19.4%	25.6%	24.6%
Within 2-3 months	12.9%	12.7%	11.3%
Within 4-5 months	5.2%	2.6%	2.7%
6 months or more	4.2%	4.0%	2.5%
Don't know	7.1%	6.6%	7.5%
Not applicable I wouldn't see a doctor	26.6%	25.6%	24.2%

Lower back pain			
	50-54	55-59	60-64
Within a couple of days or earlier	5.0%	7.2%	6.0%
Within 1-2 weeks	22.4%	17.9%	24.2%
Within a month	19.8%	27.2%	24.4%
Within 2-3 months	15.5%	13.7%	15.2%
Within 4-5 months	5.0%	4.4%	4.2%
6 months or more	4.6%	4.2%	2.5%
Don't know	6.7%	7.6%	8.1%
Not applicable I wouldn't see a doctor	20.4%	17.9%	15.4%

Vomiting			
	50-54	55-59	60-64
Within a couple of days or earlier	23.2%	26.0%	27.5%
Within 1-2 weeks	36.5%	31.8%	35.8%
Within a month	10.1%	10.5%	7.3%
Within 2-3 months	3.8%	1.8%	2.5%
Within 4-5 months	1.2%	0.6%	1.2%
6 months or more	1.2%	0.8%	0.8%
Don't know	4.8%	6.4%	5.4%
Not applicable I wouldn't see a doctor	19.2%	22.1%	19.6%

Discomfort or pain during sex			
	50-54	55-59	60-64
Within a couple of days or earlier	10.5%	12.3%	12.5%
Within 1-2 weeks	28.2%	26.2%	32.3%
Within a month	18.1%	24.7%	18.8%
Within 2-3 months	12.5%	8.0%	9.2%
Within 4-5 months	4.0%	4.0%	2.3%
6 months or more	2.8%	1.6%	1.3%
Don't know	9.5%	7.8%	8.7%
Not applicable I wouldn't see a doctor	14.3%	15.5%	14.8%

Diarrhoea			
	50-54	55-59	60-64
Within a couple of days or earlier	15.3%	15.1%	14.0%
Within 1-2 weeks	32.1%	34.0%	38.7%
Within a month	13.7%	15.5%	10.6%
Within 2-3 months	6.3%	2.2%	5.2%
Within 4-5 months	1.6%	1.2%	1.5%
6 months or more	1.8%	0.8%	0.8%
Don't know	4.6%	6.2%	5.6%
Not applicable I wouldn't see a doctor	24.0%	25.0%	23.7%

What, if any, do you think are the symptoms of cervical cancer?

