

# Obesity and its management in the Asia-Pacific region from the perspective of people with obesity and healthcare professionals: key findings from a large, multinational survey

Kwang Wei Tham<sup>1</sup>, Asma Ahmed<sup>2</sup>, Apussanee Boonyavarakul<sup>3</sup>, Mariana Mercado Garcia<sup>4</sup>, Blanca Miroslava Guajardo Guzman<sup>5</sup>, Tran Quang Nam<sup>6</sup>, Nemencio A. Nicodemus Jr.<sup>7</sup>, Zubaidah Nor Hanipah<sup>8</sup>, Faruque Pathan<sup>9</sup>, Jack Garcia Uranga Romano<sup>4</sup>, Sidartawan Soegondo<sup>10</sup>, Edgardo L. Tolentino, Jr.<sup>11</sup>, Ambika Gopalakrishnan Unnikrishnan<sup>12</sup>, Brian Oldfield<sup>13</sup>

<https://sciencehub.novonordisk.com/ico2022/Tham.html>



## Background and Aim

- Obesity is an escalating public health concern in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region.
- Despite this growing obesity epidemic in the APAC region, there is limited research available regarding the experiences, challenges, and needs of those living with obesity in the region and the healthcare professionals (HCPs) who treat them.
- The ACTION (Awareness, Care, and Treatment in Obesity maNagement) APAC study examined obesity-related perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours among people with obesity (PwO) and HCPs in the APAC region.

## Methods

- A cross-sectional online survey was conducted with 10,429 PwO and 1,901 HCPs in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- Survey participants were recruited from online panels to complete the survey between April 14, 2022, and May 23, 2022.
- Inclusion criteria:
  - PwO: Age  $\geq 18$ , current BMI of  $\geq 25$  kg/m<sup>2</sup> ( $\geq 27$  kg/m<sup>2</sup> in Singapore), not currently pregnant, does not participate in intense fitness or body building program.
  - HCPs: Physicians with primary specialty in general practice, family practice, internal medicine, or other relevant specialty (varied by country); spends at least 50% of time in patient medical management; in practice for at least 2 years; saw  $\geq 100$  patients in past month; saw  $\geq 10$  patients who have obesity (BMI  $\geq 25$  kg/m<sup>2</sup>; BMI  $\geq 27$  kg/m<sup>2</sup> for Singapore) in past month.
- Two surveys, one each for PwO and HCPs, were developed with a multidisciplinary panel of experts (Steering Committee).
- Survey content was similar across the two surveys to allow for comparisons and identification of gaps between PwO and HCPs.
- Both surveys were offered in both English and the native languages of each country.
- Descriptive statistical analyses (means, frequencies, percentages) were performed with the aggregated data for each respondent group using Q Research Software for Windows 23.\*

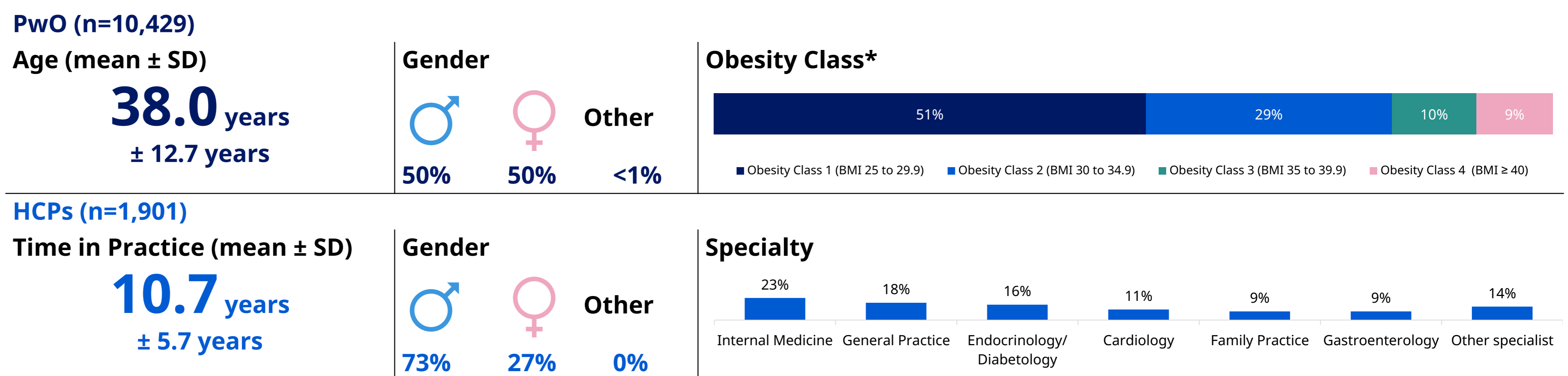
\*A Division of Displayr, Inc., New South Wales, Australia

## Results

- The characteristics of the study sample are described in **Figure 1**.
- The majority of PwO and HCPs recognized obesity as a chronic disease; however, many also believed that weight loss is solely the responsibility of the PwO (**Figure 2**).
- Less than half of PwO (43%) had discussions about their weight with an HCP in the past 5 years. Most HCPs (79%) indicated they were very or extremely comfortable talking to patients about their weight but reported discussing weight with only 56% of their patients who have obesity.
- PwO were more likely to get information on weight management from non-medical sources including the Internet, smartphone apps, and family/friends, than from an HCP (**Figure 3**).
- When asked about their weight loss goals, PwO reported setting a weight loss goal of 23% of their current body weight.
- Although HCPs reported recording the diagnosis of obesity in their patients' medical charts at least most of the time (**Figure 4**), they only informed 60% of their patients of their obesity diagnosis.
  - Some HCPs (5%) reported never mentioning obesity as a diagnosis to their patients.
- Weight management methods were infrequently discussed by HCPs with their patients. HCPs estimated recommending general improvements in eating habits and increased physical activity to 20% of their patients, prescription weight loss medications to 11%, and weight loss surgery to only 8% of their patients, on average (**Figure 5**).

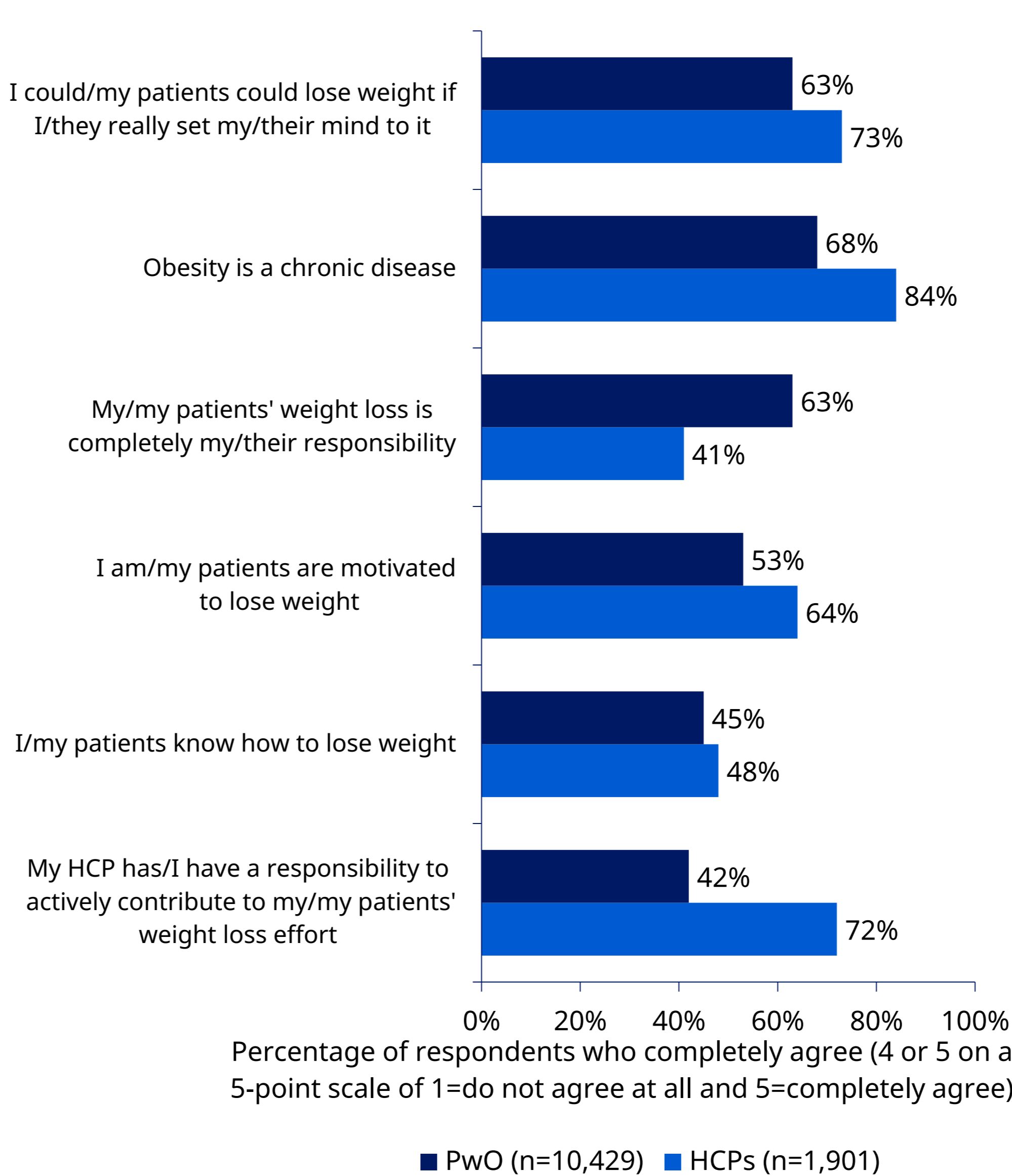
## Results, continued

**Figure 1. People with Obesity and Healthcare Professional Characteristics**

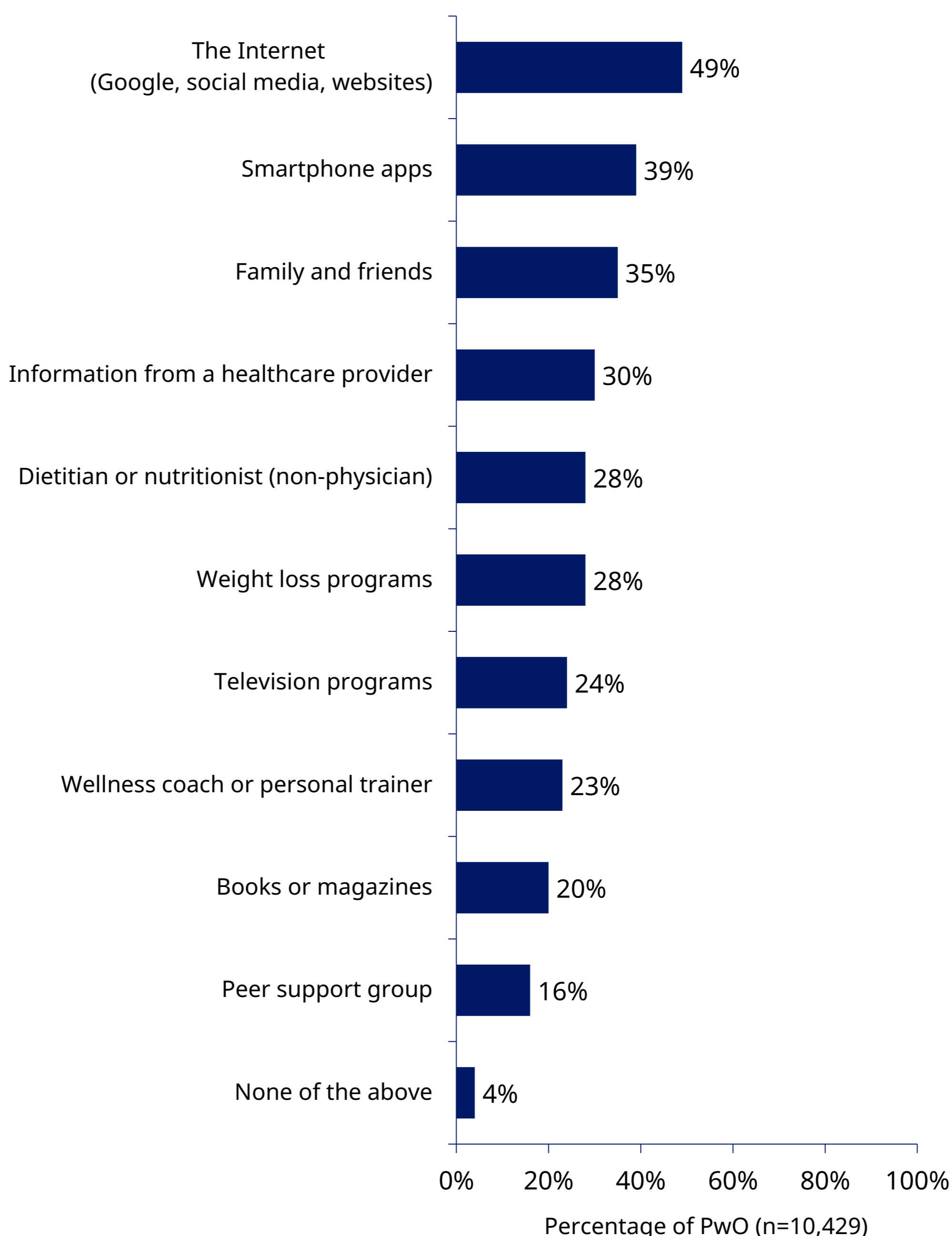


\*Obesity Classes for Singapore are defined as: Obesity Class 1 (27 to 31.9); Obesity Class 2 (32 to 36.9); Obesity Class 3 (37 to 41.9); Obesity Class 4 (42+). SD = standard deviation

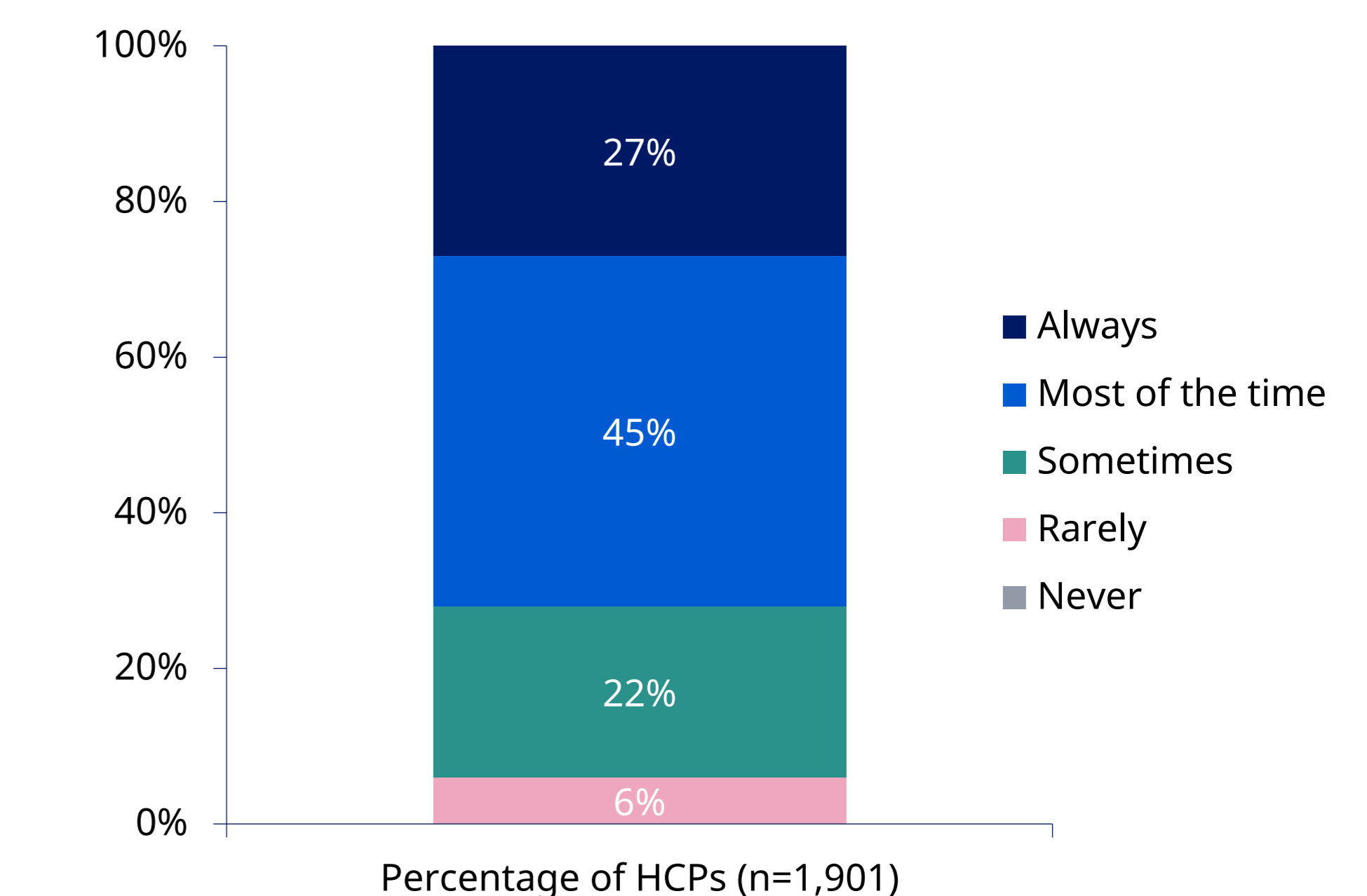
**Figure 2. Attitudes about Obesity and Weight Loss**



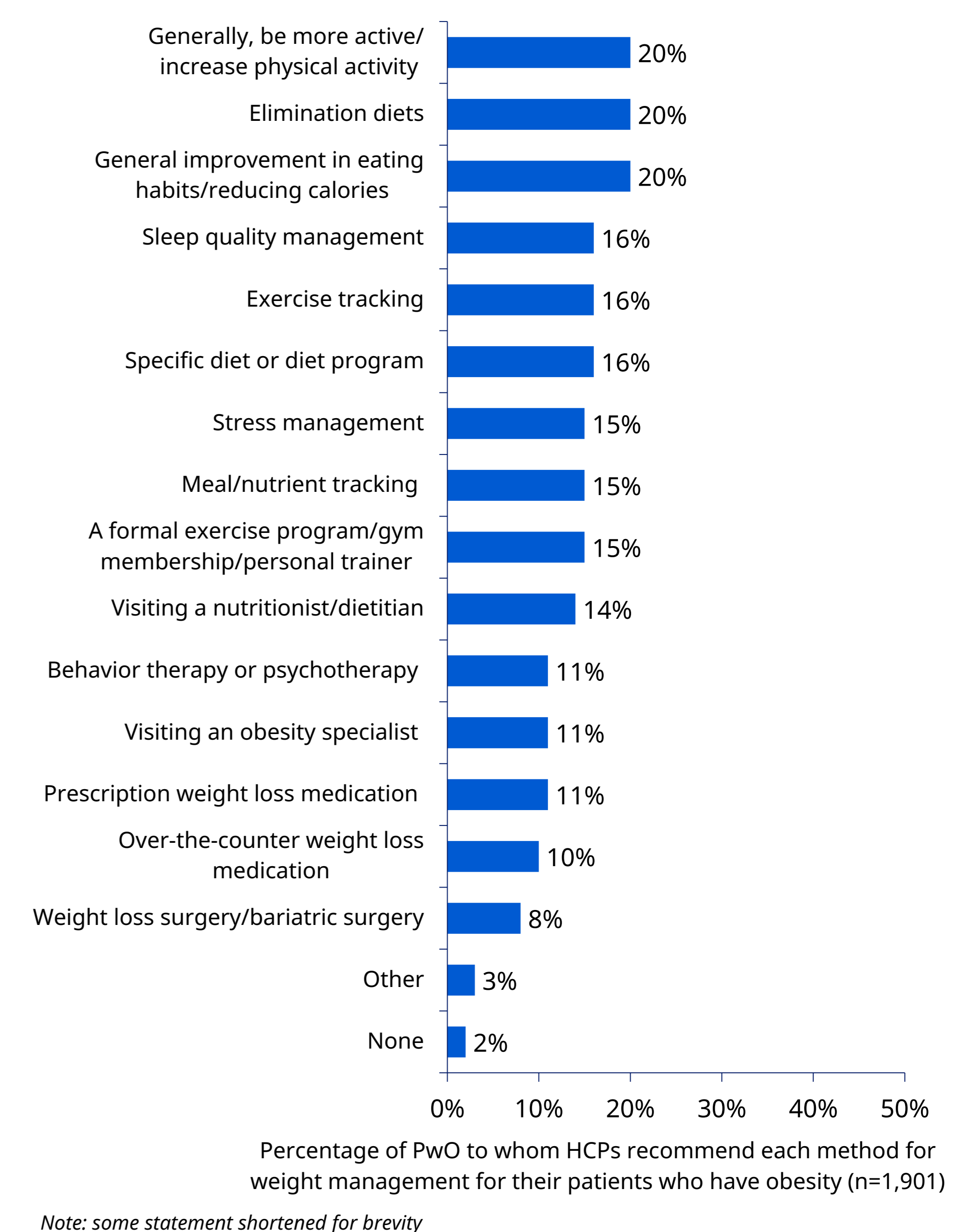
**Figure 3. Sources of Information Used by PwO for Managing Weight**



**Figure 4. Recording of Obesity Diagnosis in Patients' Charts**



**Figure 5. Percentage of PwO to whom HCPs Recommend Methods for Managing Weight**



## Summary and Conclusions

- Obesity is regarded as a chronic disease by most PwO and HCPs in the Asia-Pacific.
- Despite this, entrenched attitudes and biases about obesity and its management are prevalent among both PwO and HCPs, leading to inadequate medical guidance and the setting of unrealistic weight loss targets by PwO.
- Most HCPs are not regularly discussing the diagnosis of obesity and management options with their patients despite diagnosing them with obesity.
- This study has highlighted the clear gaps and divergence in the perception and attitudes to obesity and its management among both PwO and HCPs in the Asia-Pacific.

<sup>1</sup>National Healthcare Group; Singapore; <sup>2</sup>The Aga Khan University Hospital; Karachi, Pakistan; <sup>3</sup>Division of Endocrinology, Department of Internal Medicine, Phramongkutklao Hospital, Bangkok, Thailand; <sup>4</sup>Novo Nordisk, Dubai, United Arab Emirates; <sup>5</sup>Novo Nordisk, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; <sup>6</sup>University Medical Center at Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; <sup>7</sup>University of the Philippines-College of Medicine; Manila, Philippines; <sup>8</sup>Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia; <sup>9</sup>Department of Endocrinology Ibrahim Memorial Diabetes Center; Dhaka, Bangladesh; <sup>10</sup>Indonesia Diabetes Institute, Diabetes Connection & Care, Eka Hospitals; Jakarta, Indonesia; <sup>11</sup>Ateneo School of Medicine and Public Health; Pasig, Metro Manila, Philippines; <sup>12</sup>Chellaram Diabetes Institute; Bavdhan, Pune, India; <sup>13</sup>Monash University; Clayton, Australia

This study was funded by Novo Nordisk. The authors thank Rebecca Hahn, MPH of KJT Group, Inc., Rochester, NY for providing medical writing support, which was funded by Novo Nordisk, Dubai, UAE, in accordance with Good Publication Practice (GPP 2022) guidelines. Presented at the International Congress on Obesity (Melbourne, Australia), October 18-22, 2022.