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BACKGROUND: WHY IS PROGNOSTIC AWARENESS IMPORTANT?

Studies show that patients who discuss prognosis with their physicians

- have a **better understanding** of the disease trajectory
- are more likely to pursue **comfort-oriented care** over life-prolonging care
- are **better able to cope** with their illness and clarify priorities and goals

(Source: Epstein et al., 2016; Yun et al; 2010; Weeks JC et al, 1998)

However, the existing literature suggests that most advanced cancer patients

- state **unrealistic expectations** about the benefits of treatment
- believe that their cancer is **curable**
- **over-estimate** their predicted life expectancy

(Source: Chen et al, 2016)

Little is known about the level of prognostic awareness among patients in Singapore.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Research Questions

- Do patients with an advanced cancer in Singapore wish to know about their prognosis?
 - Do patients with advanced cancer in Singapore actually know that:
 - They have advanced cancer?
 - That their cancer is incurable?
 - What are patient's beliefs about their expected survival?
 - What are the factors that predict their prognostic beliefs?
- Hypothesis:** Patients will be less optimistic about their prognosis if they are experiencing pain and if they have experienced treatment failure in the past.

METHODS

Design

Baseline data of a cohort study of 600 patients with advanced cancer (COMPASS). Interim data of 484 patients was used for this analysis.

Participants

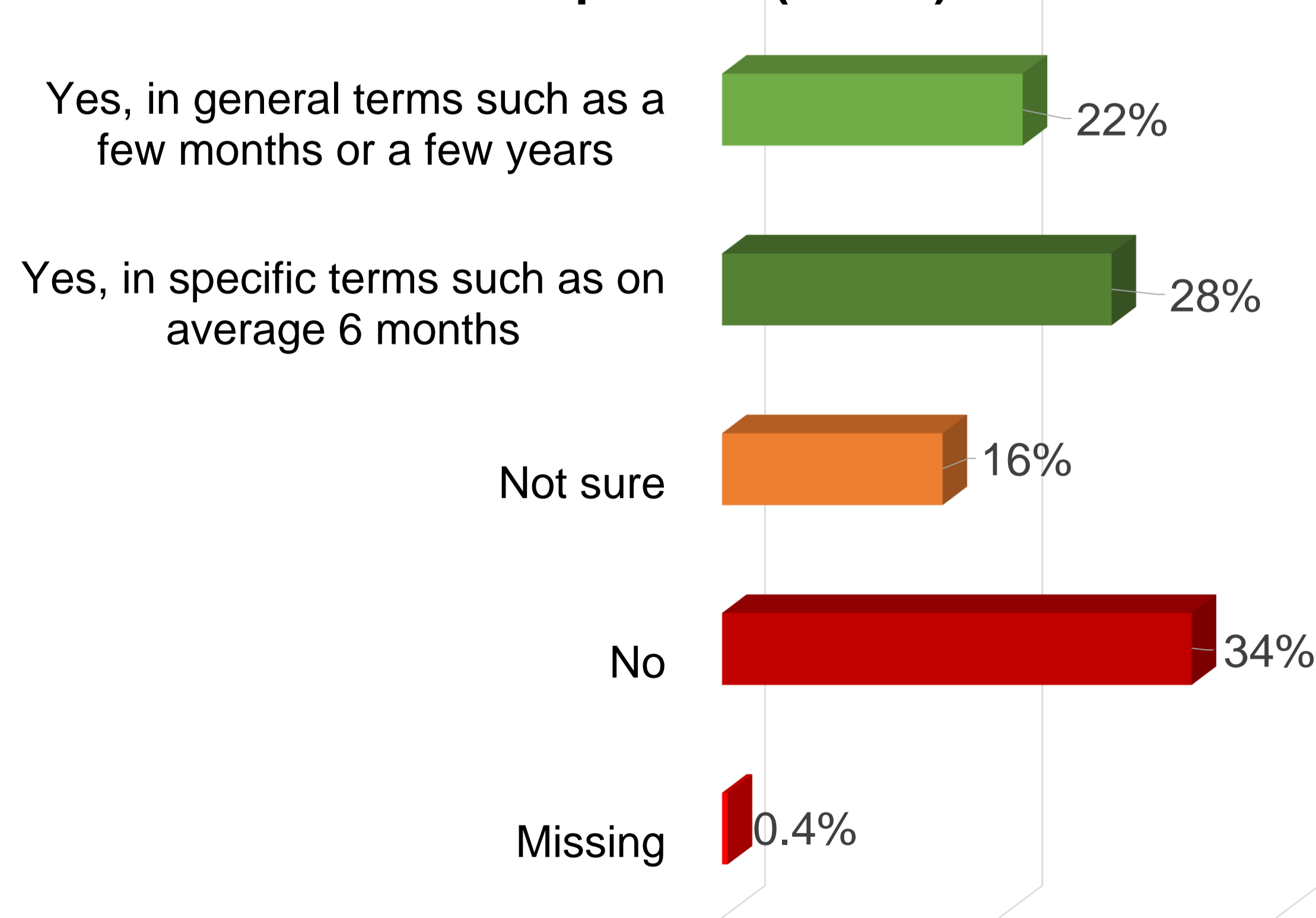
- Patients with stage IV solid cancer, age ≥ 21 years, ECOG ≤ 2
- Recruited from outpatient oncology clinics of two major public hospitals in Singapore

RESULTS

- Mean age for patients: 61 years
- 54% females
- 73% married
- Ethnic composition: Chinese (79%), Malay (14%), Indian (4%), Others (3%)

PATIENT'S DESIRE FOR PROGNOSTIC INFORMATION

Would you like to know how long you are likely to live under various treatment options? (n=484)

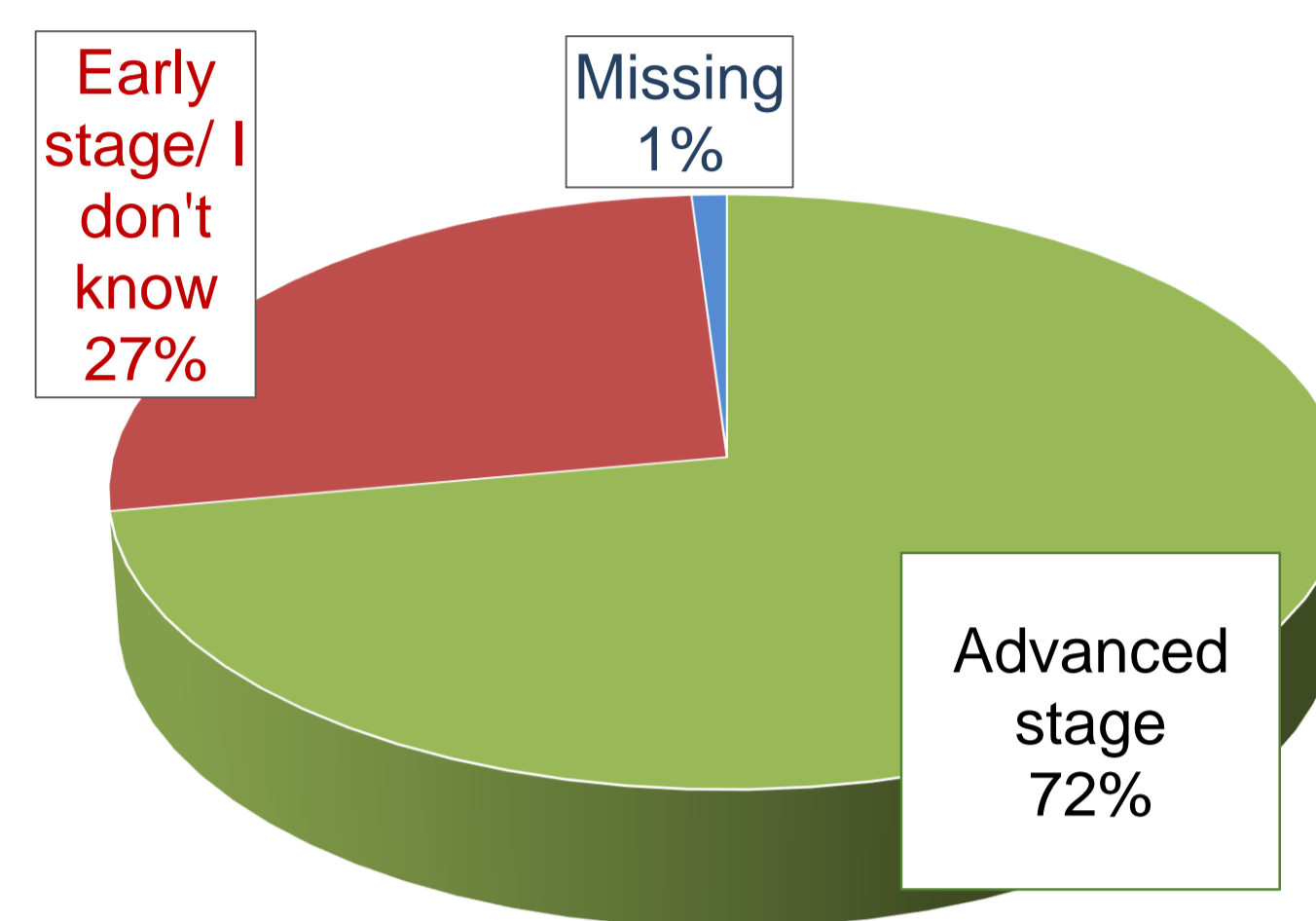


Half of patients would like to know how long they are likely to live under different treatment options

RESULTS (contd.)

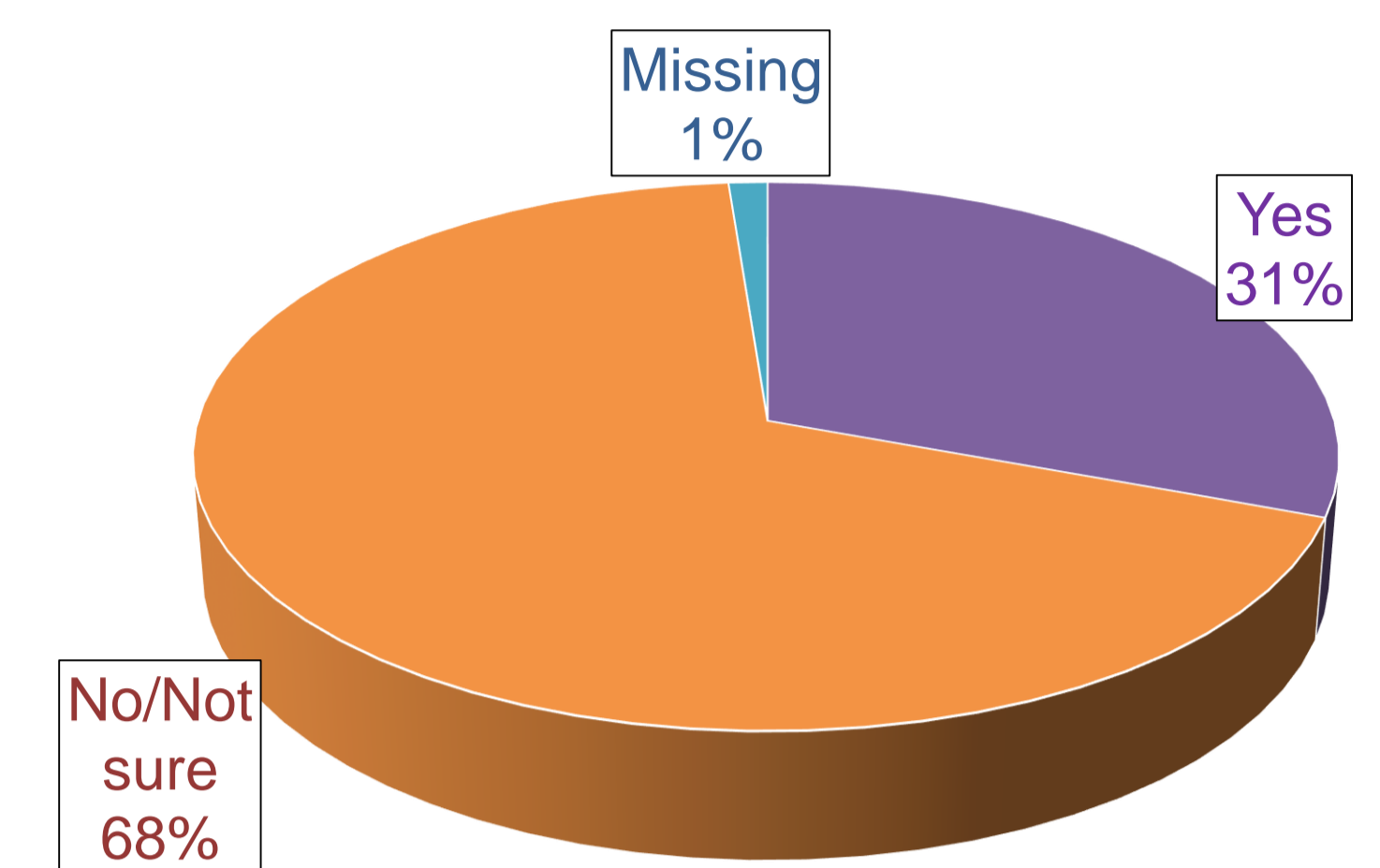
PATIENT'S PERCEPTION OF CANCER STAGE AND CURE

Do you know the current stage of your cancer? (n=482)



Among 99.6% (n=482) of patients who were aware that they had cancer, more than a quarter of patients were not aware they have **advanced cancer**

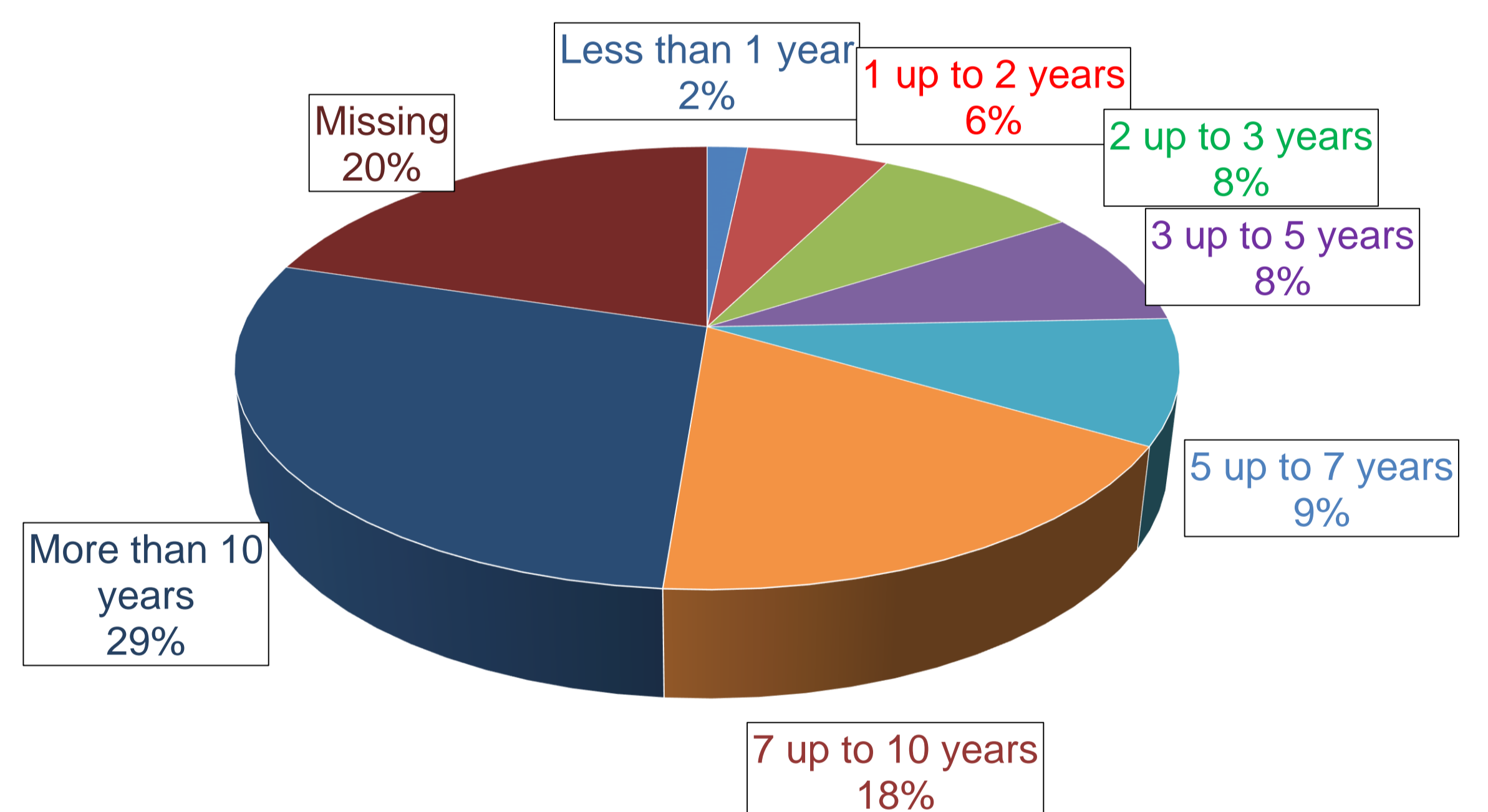
Do you think that your current treatment will cure you? (n=484)



Among patients who knew they had advanced cancer, almost one third thought that their cancer was **curable**

PATIENT'S EXPECTED SURVIVAL

How long do you think you are likely to live? (n=484)



More than a quarter of patients think that they will live more than 10 years

After controlling for patient demographics (age, gender and marital status), we also find that:

- Patients are **54% more likely** to believe that they will be cured if they were first diagnosed at an advanced stage (p<0.05).
- Suggests that patients who were first diagnosed at an early stage of cancer are **less optimistic**, perhaps as they are more likely to have experienced treatment failure.
- Patients are **52% less likely** to believe that they will be cured if they are experiencing pain at the time of the survey (p<0.05).
- Suggests patients (wrongly) associate current pain with their chance of being cured.

CONCLUSIONS

- Interim results suggest that many advanced cancer patients are **unrealistically optimistic** about their prognosis.
- These beliefs may lead to misinformed treatment decisions and/or overtreatment
- Patient's prognostic beliefs may be **incorrectly influenced by past experience**, hope and other biases. Future research should aim to tease out differences in what patients cognitively understand from what they hope will occur.
- Patient decision aids and better communication may solve some of these concerns.