

Perceptions, Attitudes, and Satisfaction with Private Pharmacies in Greece: Results from a Nationwide Survey

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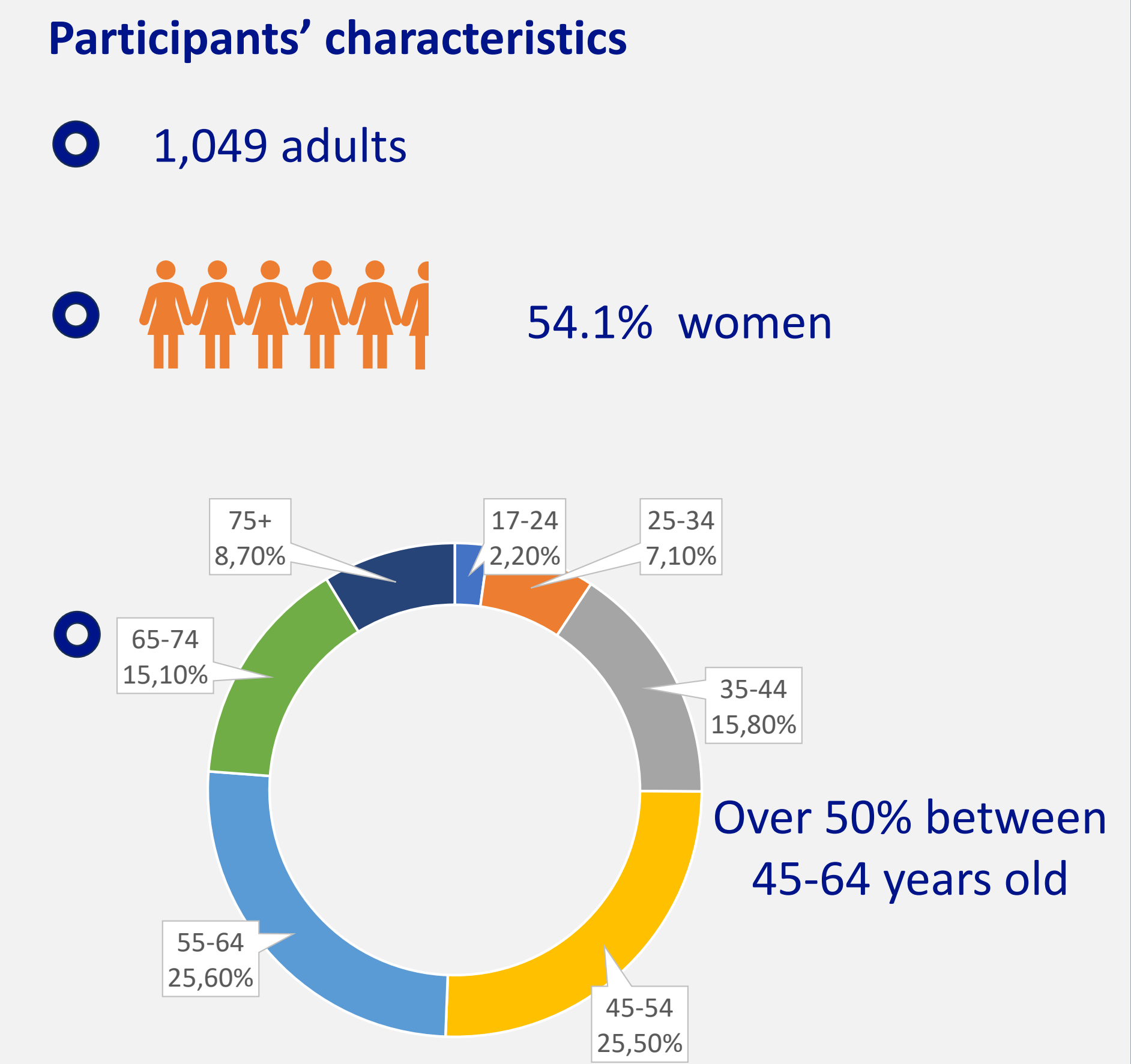


**Introduction**

Private pharmacies in Greece engage in de-facto, non-reimbursed, provision of primary care services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they shouldered additional critical responsibilities, such as booking vaccine appointments, distributing personal protective equipment (PPEs) and performing rapid testing. We surveyed how citizens in Greece perceive private pharmacies' contribution to public health, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Methods**

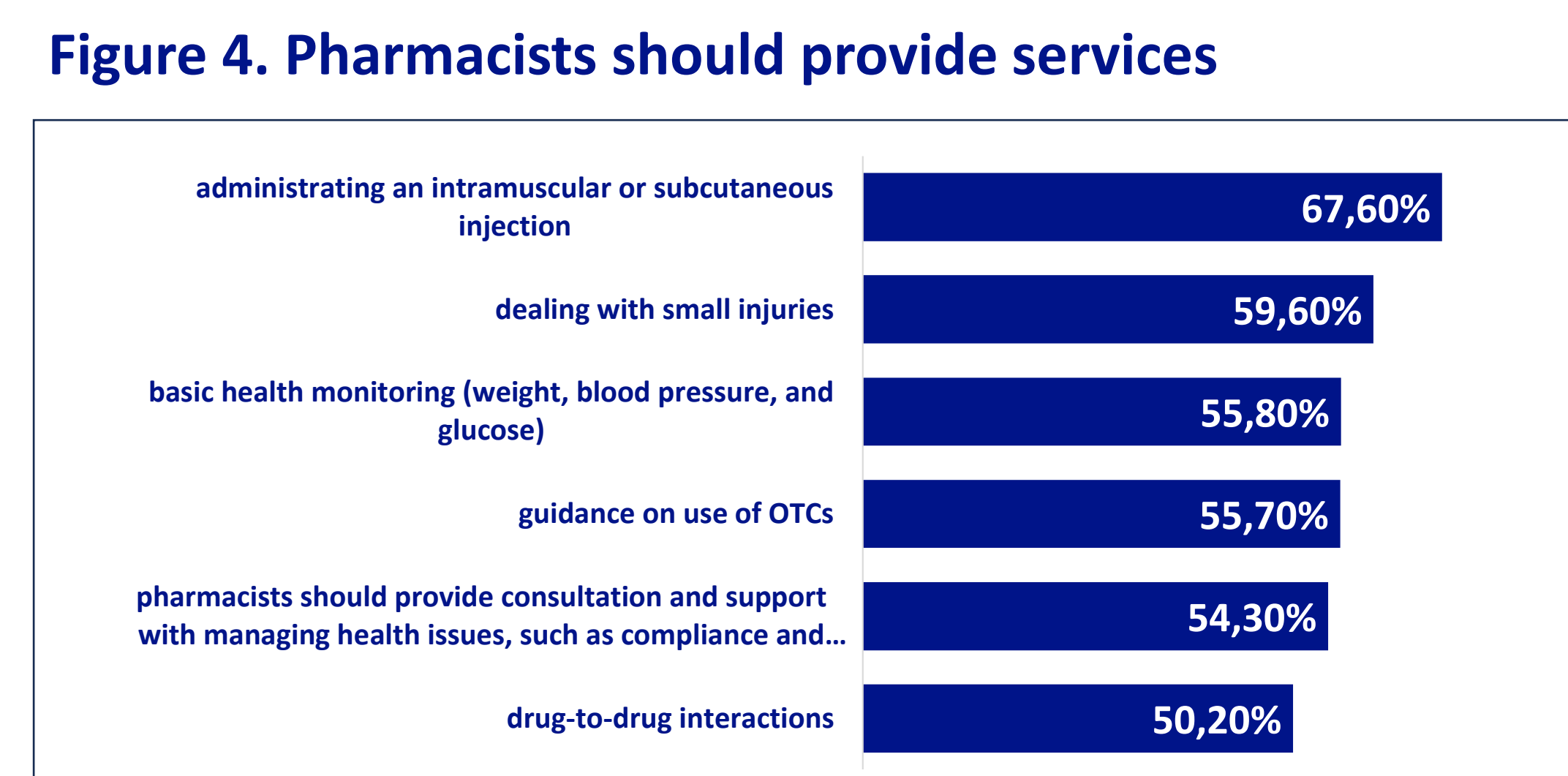
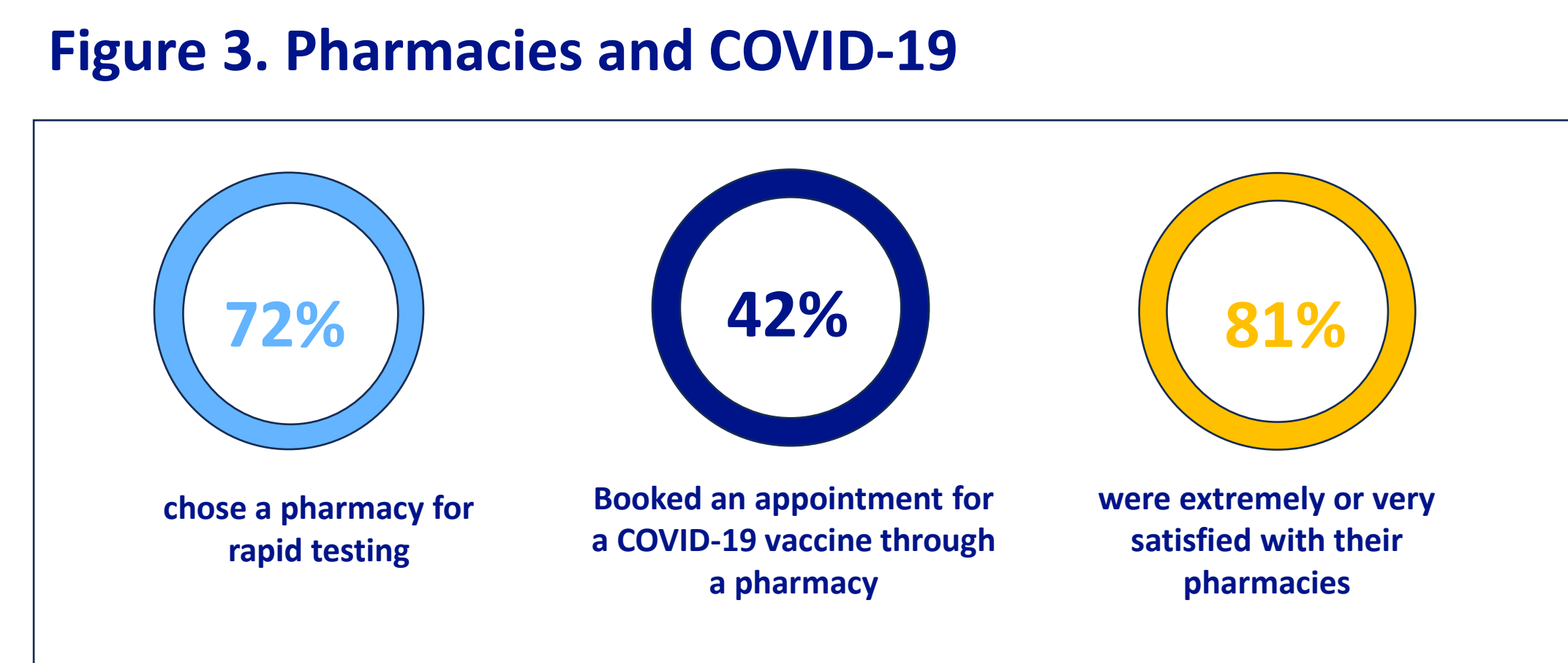
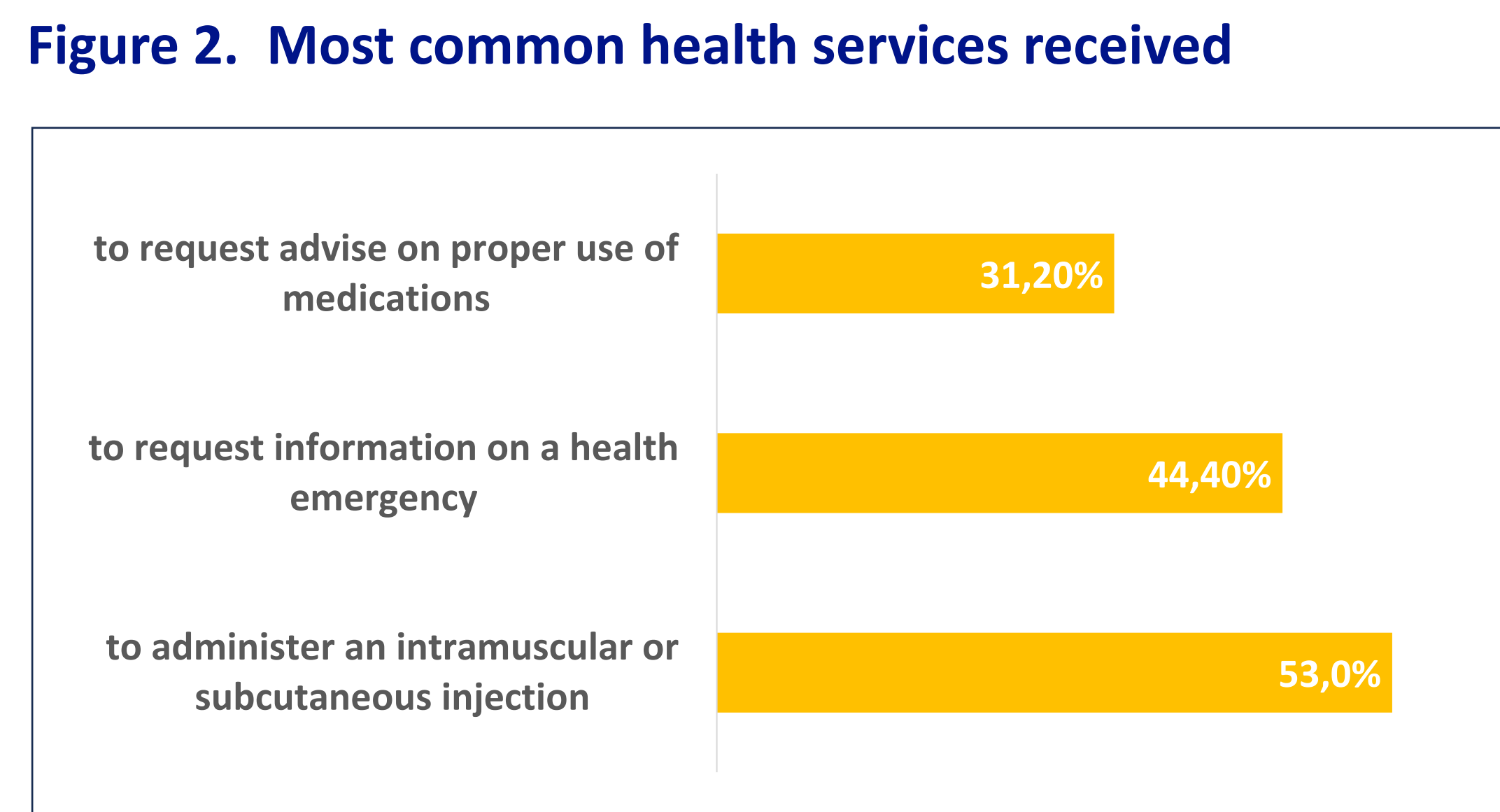
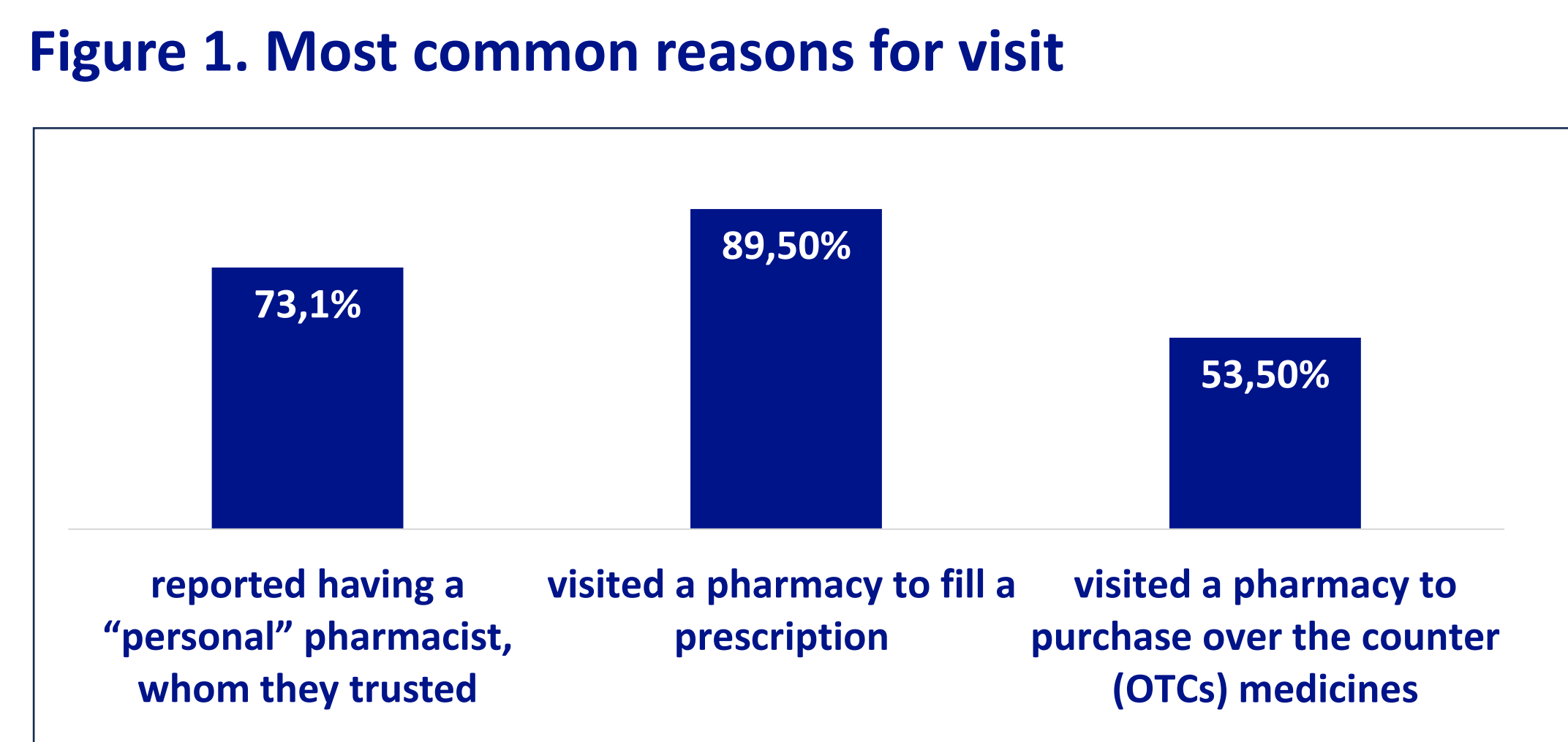
Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) - supported interviews were conducted with a sample selected randomly from the national telephone directory and distributed proportionately across the 13 administrative regions of the country. All adults who had visited a private pharmacy in the past 12 months were eligible to participate. The survey included 5 sections: a) who (sample demographics), b) what (main reason for choosing a pharmacy and any difficulties in accessing one), c) why (need to access a pharmacy), d) how (was the level of service) and e) did you get any help (during the COVID-19 pandemic).



**Summary**

Greece has the highest per capita number of private pharmacies amongst the OECD countries. These also provide de-facto, non-reimbursed primary care services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, private pharmacies also supported vaccination planning, rapid testing and PPEs distribution. Our general population survey revealed that citizens are very satisfied with the level of services received from their pharmacies, and tend to develop personal, trusting relationships with the pharmacists. They turn to private pharmacies for a series of primary care services and are willing to receive consultation and support services in the pharmacy, such as medication adherence monitoring, basic health monitoring etc.

- Results**
- 73.1% of respondents reported having a “personal” pharmacist, whom they trusted.
  - 89.5% visited a pharmacy to fill a prescription and 53.5% to purchase over the counter (OTCs) medicines (Figure 1).
  - 53% of respondents visited a pharmacy to get vaccinated or administered an intramuscular or subcutaneous injection.
  - 44.4% to request information on a health emergency.
  - 31.2% to request advise on proper use of medications (Figure 2).
  - During the pandemic, 72.2% of the respondents chose a pharmacy for rapid testing and 42.2% to book an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine.
  - Of the above, 80.8% were extremely or very satisfied with their pharmacies. (Figure 3).
  - Over half of survey sample believed that pharmacists should provide consultation and support with managing health issues, such as compliance and adherence to treatment, drug-to-drug interactions, guidance on use of OTCs and basic health monitoring (weight, blood pressure, and glucose) (Figure 4).



**Key take away**

Citizens in Greece are very satisfied with private pharmacies, and they trust them to provide some supplementary healthcare services, such as medication adherence consultation and basic health monitoring. They also recognize their significant contribution to managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Private pharmacies are a significant outpost for the provision health promotion, disease prevention and monitoring services and their wide-spread network should be optimized to address any geographical disparities in access to care.

