

2013 National Survey Results: SMSmame Program

The Health and Development Foundation recently carried out a national survey among participants of its maternal and child mHealth program, SMSmame. This program (“SMS to Mom” in Russian, also known as Text4baby Russia) provides new and expectant mothers with free text messages to their mobile phones with information on caring for their own health and the health of their children.

This program is based on the successful U.S. maternal and child health initiative, Text4baby, and was developed under the auspices of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission in 2010-2011 and launched nationwide in Russia by the Health and Development Foundation in February 2012.

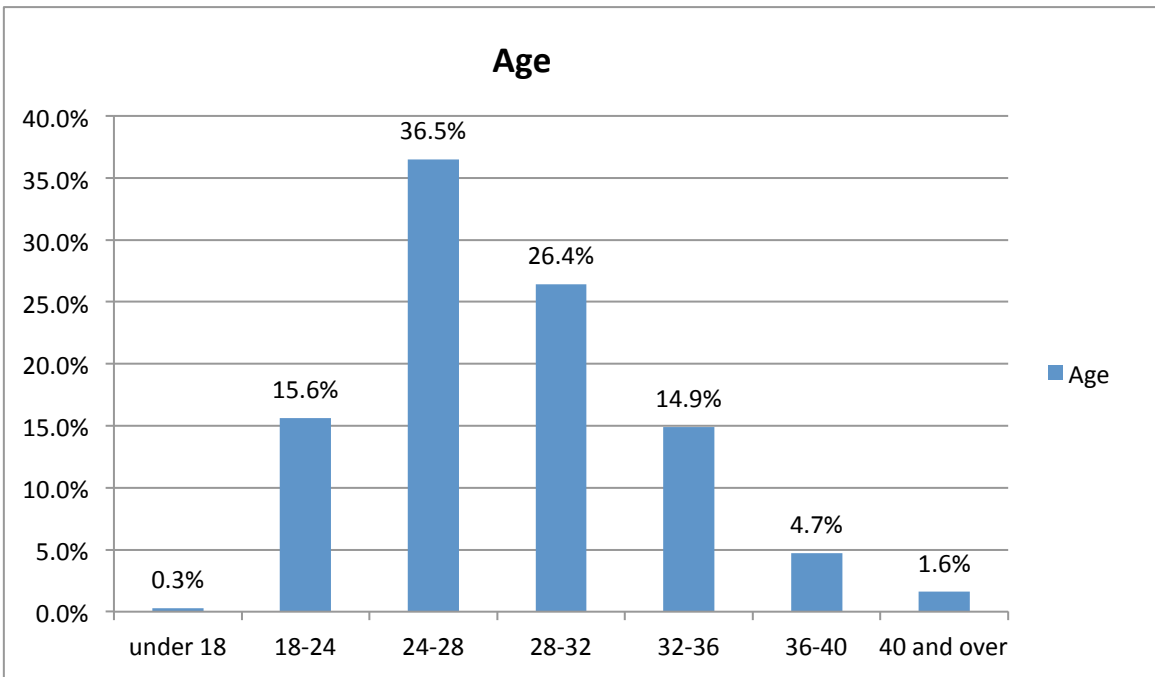
Text4baby Russia is intended as a general health guideline and system of reminders that will encourage women to engage in healthy behaviors and visit their doctors in accordance with a generally accepted timeline. These reminders are also intended to jumpstart conversations between mothers and doctors, and motivate subscribers to seek out additional information from other reliable sources, by notifying women of early warning signs of health problems or introducing new information.

Text messages are sent to subscribers (pregnant women and mothers with children up until their first birthday, and family members). Message topics include nutrition, safety, substance abuse prevention, legal rights, mental health, exercise, developmental milestones, breastfeeding and more. Subscribers receive personalized information, as messages are organized and sent in accordance with their children's due date or birth date. Messages contain no advertisements, spam, or product promotions.

This survey was conducted during April-October 2013 among 751 respondents from 64 Russian regions. Of these, 49 respondents were interviewed at the Federal Kulakov Center for Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Perinatology on April 2, 2013. These respondents (pregnant women) were attending two classes led by medical specialists at the center on the first anniversary of the SMSmame program launch. The other respondents were reached through an Internet survey in September-October 2013. Of these, 50 were pregnant, and 652 were mothers whose children were under one year of age.

Target Audience

The total number of respondents was 751. Women from various age groups took part in the survey, but the majority were 24-28 (36.5%) and 28-32 (26.4%) (fig. 1)
Fig.1.



Further analysis of personal information about respondents revealed that a majority of respondents, 84%, were married (fig. 2) and had a university degree or higher, 66.9% (fig. 3).

Fig. 2

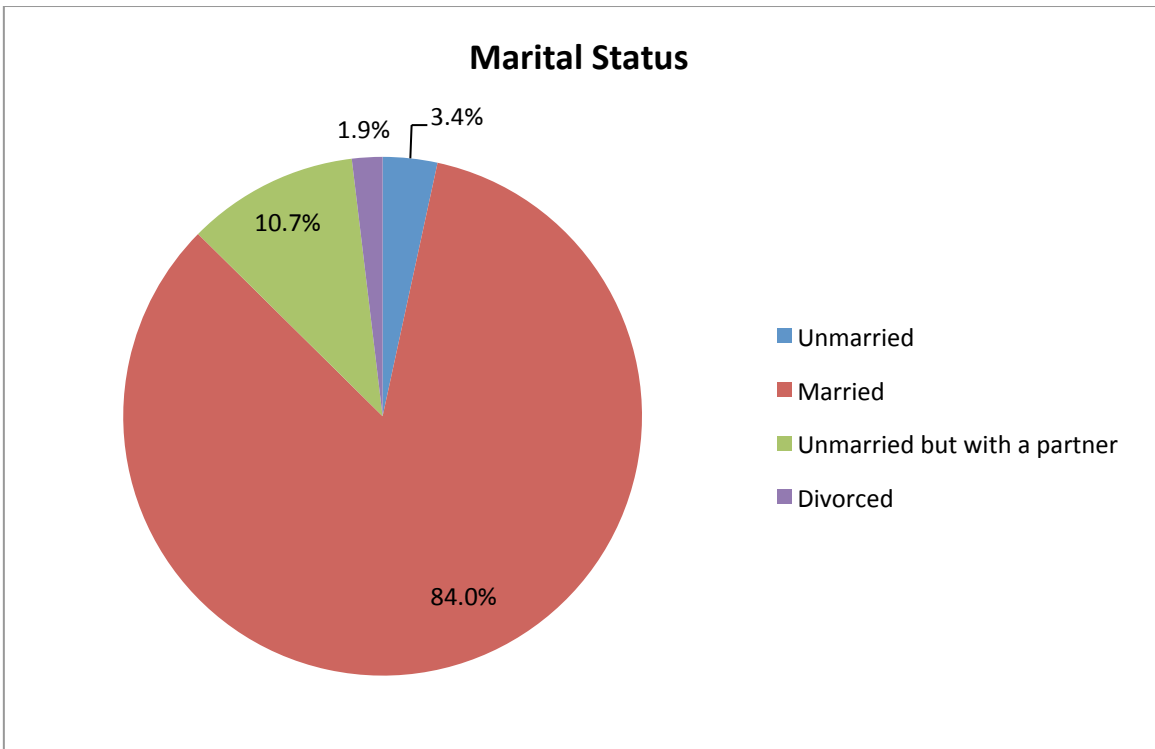
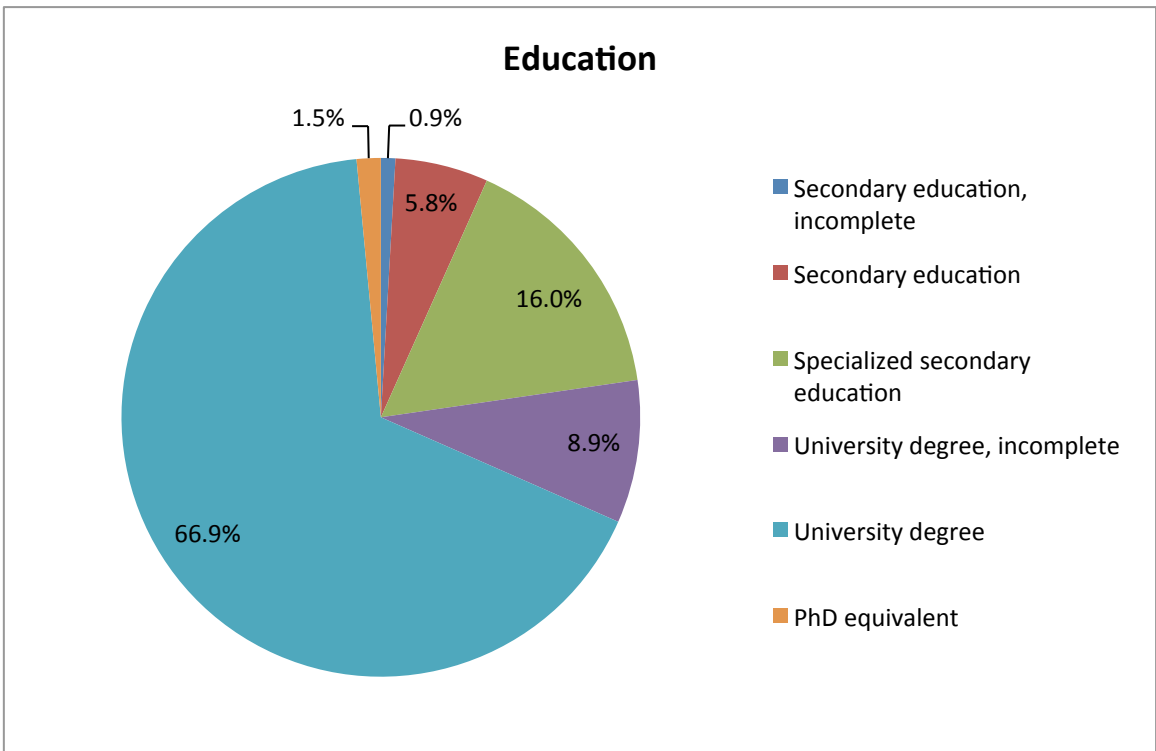
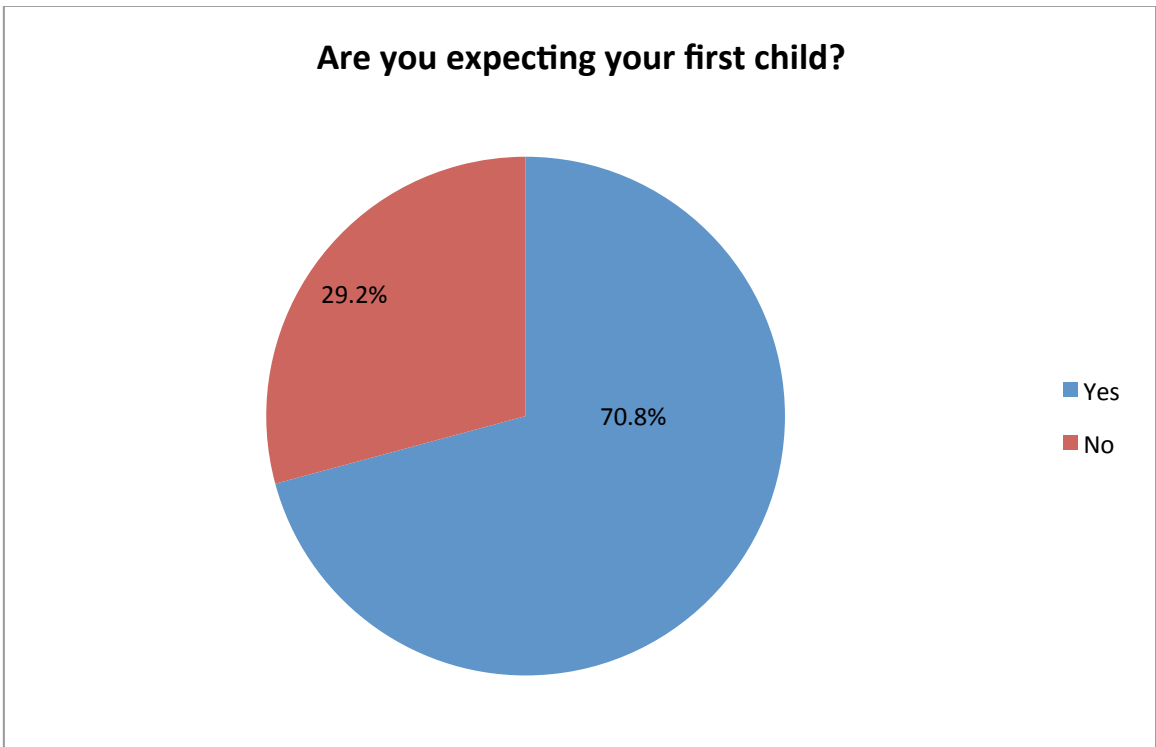


Fig. 3



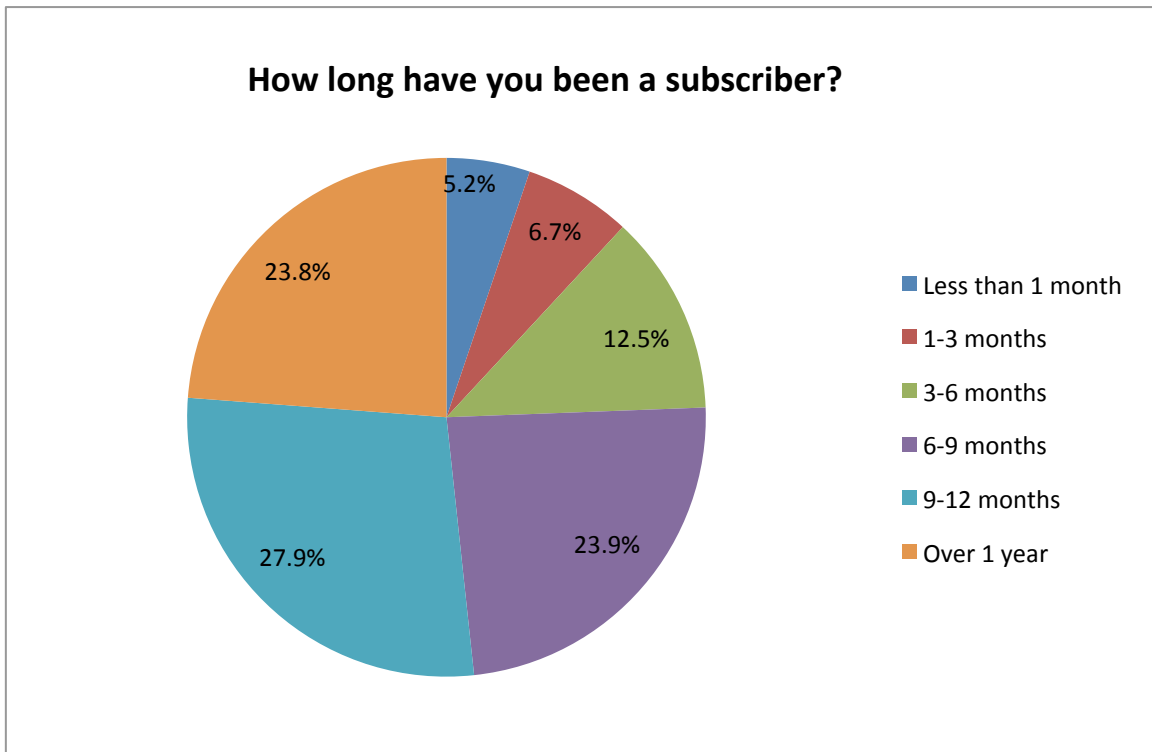
A majority of the pregnant participants surveyed (70.8%) were expecting their first child. However, the fact that nearly a third of respondents (29.2%) were expecting their second child demonstrates that the program is also popular among women who have already experienced pregnancy and motherhood, not only those approaching both for the first time. (fig. 4)

Fig.4



Survey respondents had been subscribers to the SMS service for different time periods; clients had been receiving program text messages for 6-9 months (23.9%), 9-12 months (27.9%), and over a year (23.8%) (fig.5).

Fig.5



The survey was conducted nationally and is comprised of respondents from 64 Russian regions (fig.6-7). The most common regions were Moscow (22.6%) and the Moscow Region (6.8%), St. Petersburg (5.7%), Tatarstan (4.5%), and the Chelyabinsk Region (4.5%). (fig.8)

Fig.6.

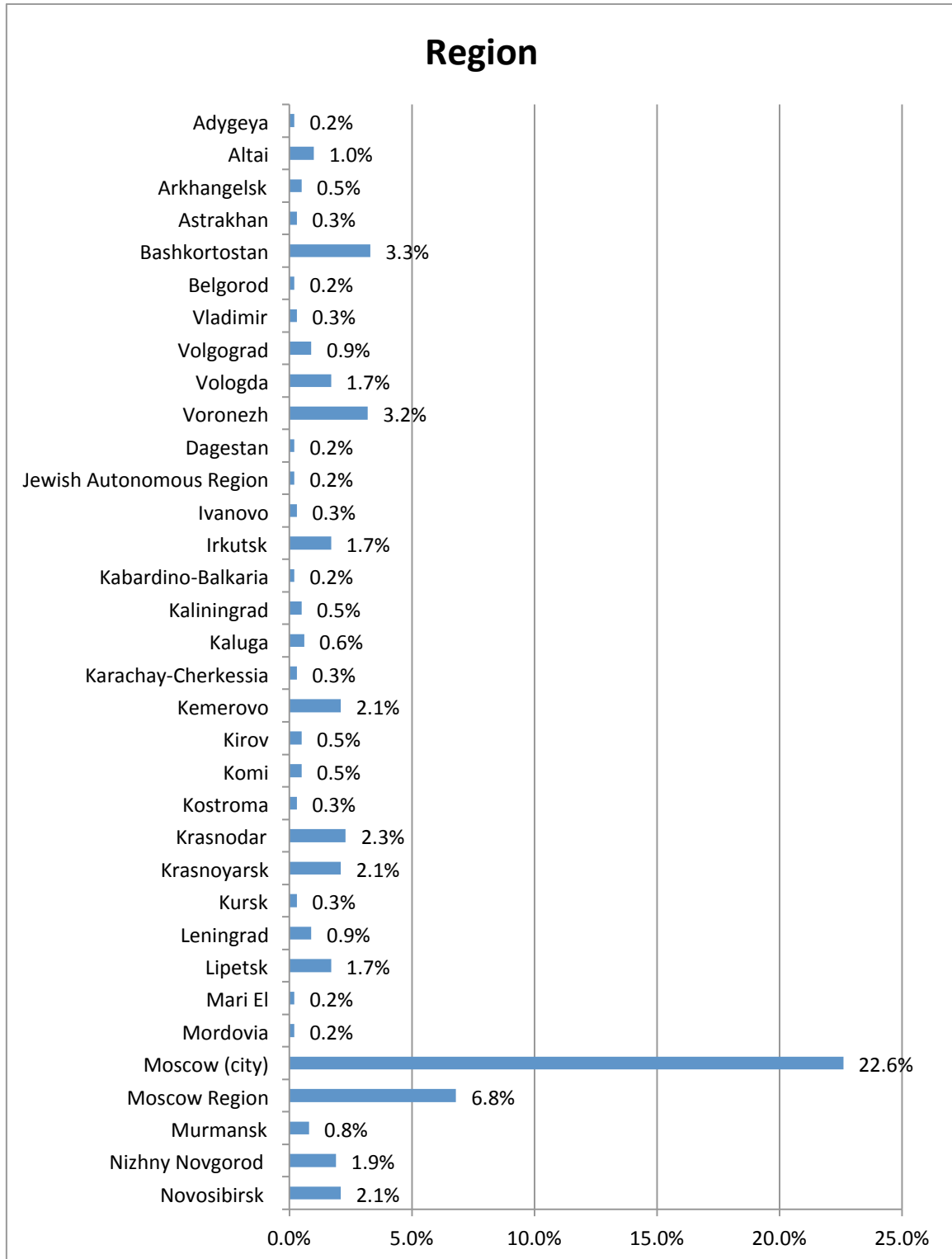


Fig.7

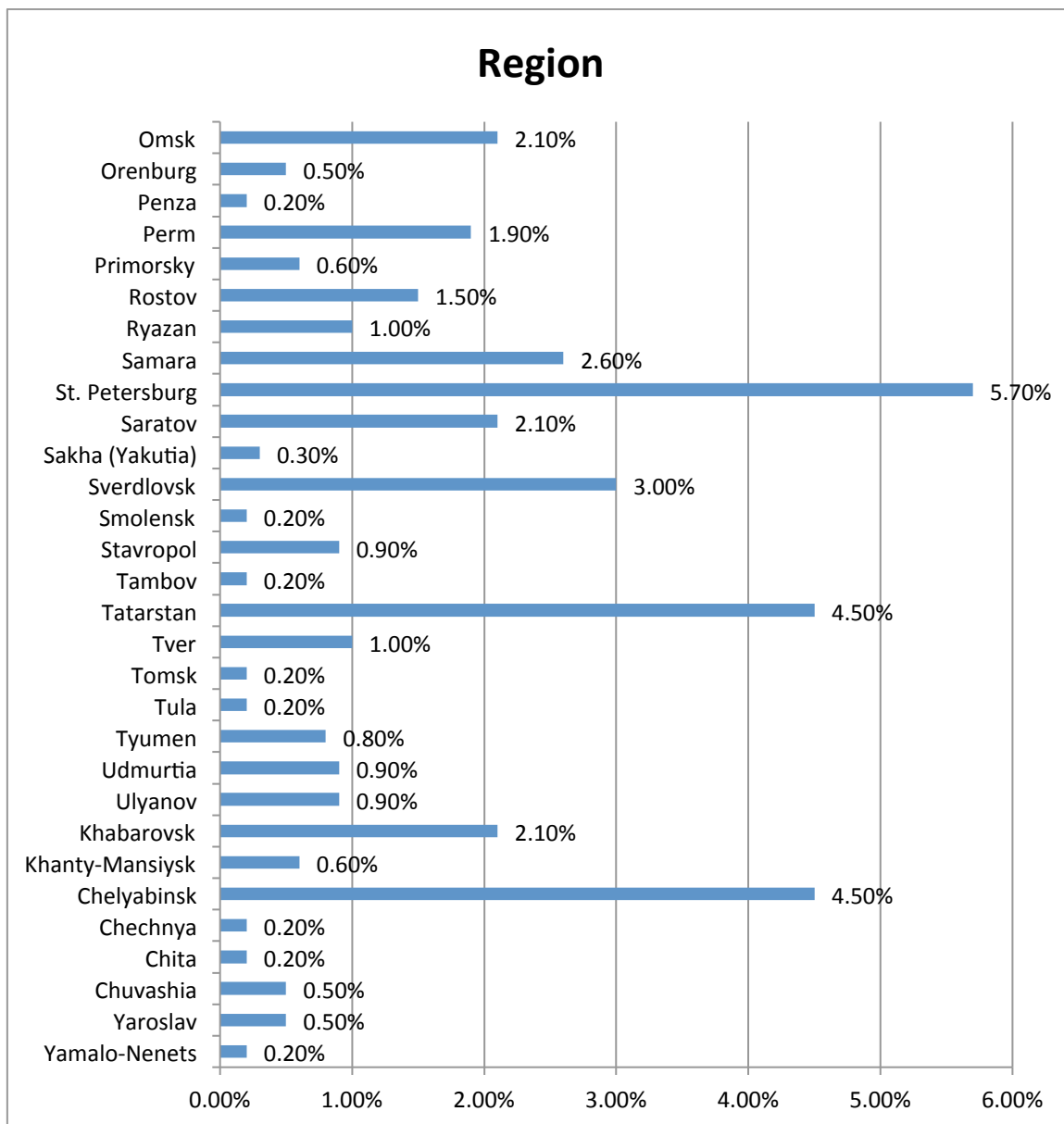
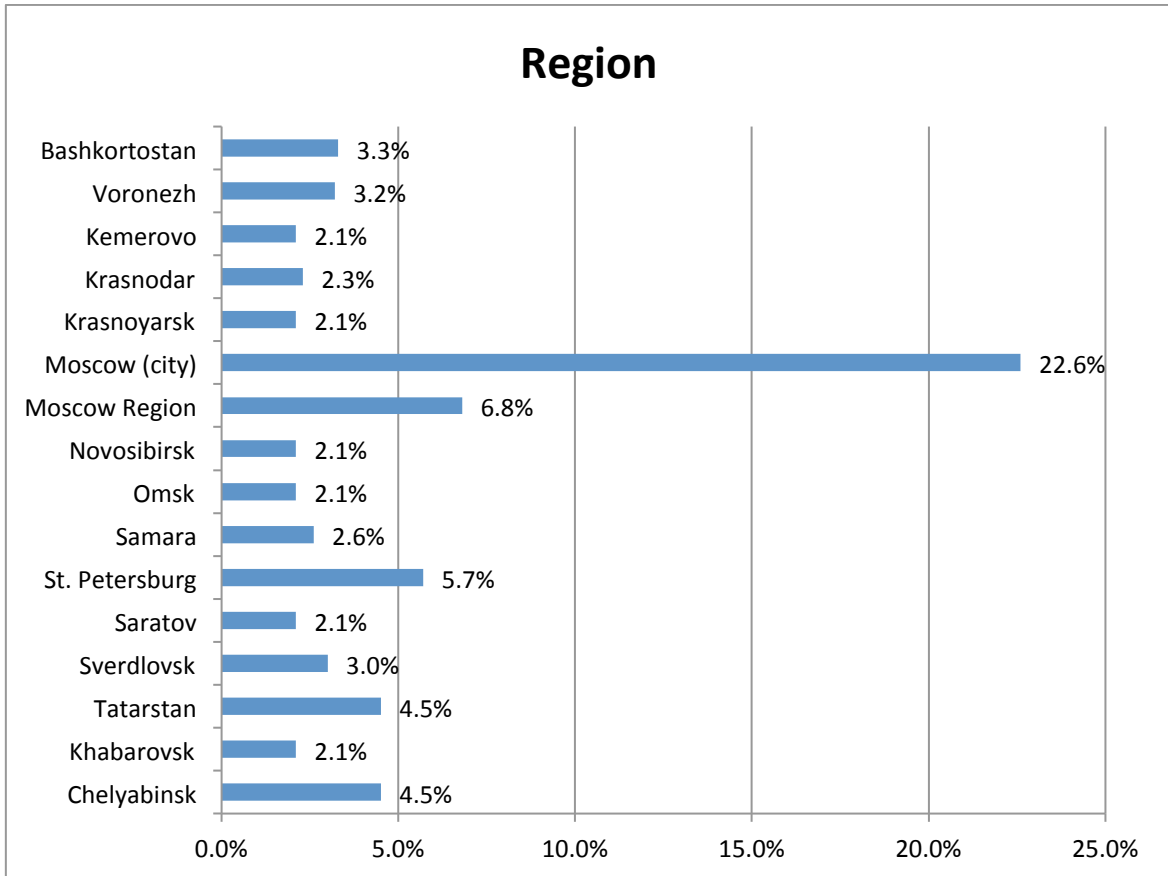
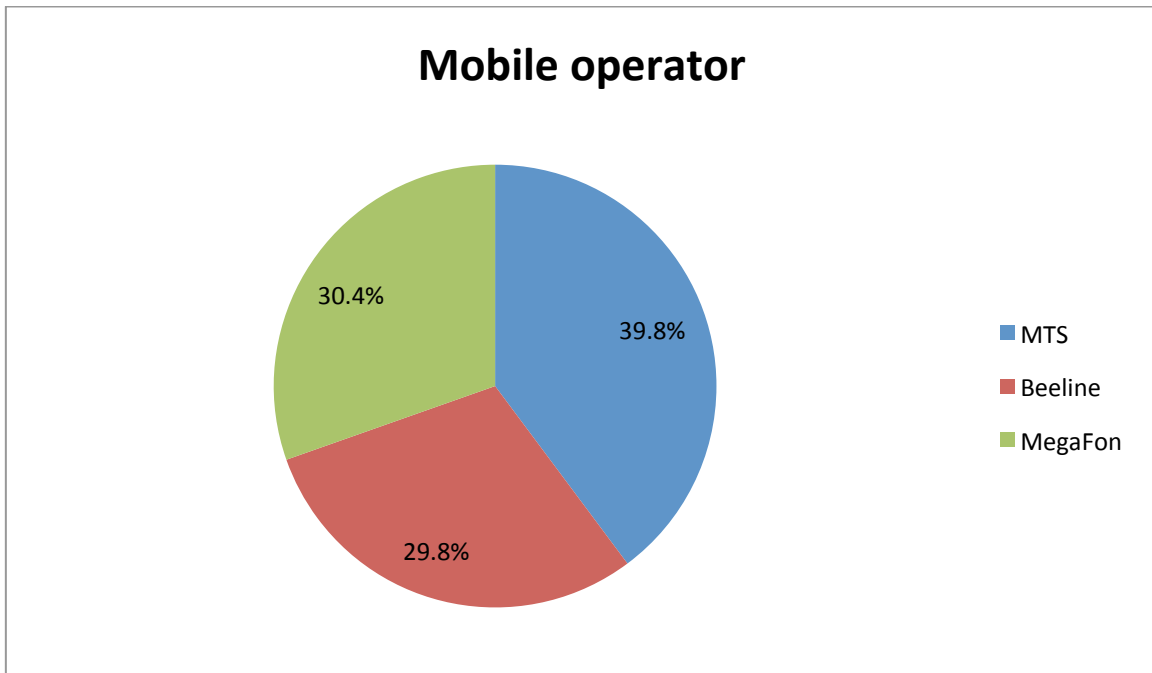


Fig.8



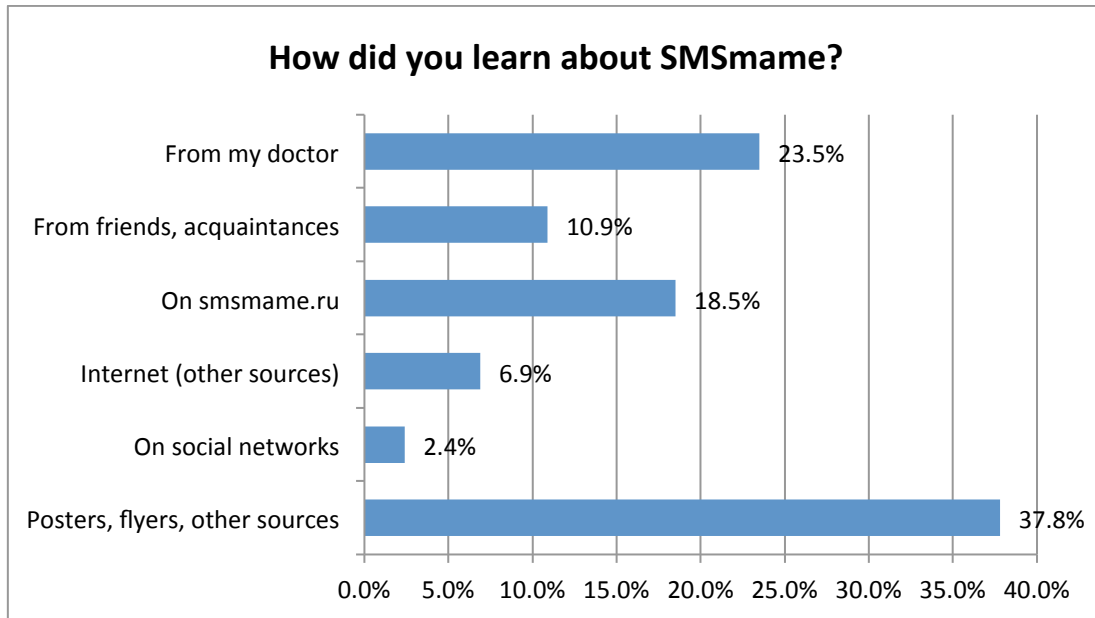
Survey respondents used three main mobile operators; the largest percent used MTC (39.8%).



The main channels through which participants learned about the program were: posters advertizing SMSmame, flyers, and other sources (37.8%); physician recommendations

(23.5%), the Internet (18.5%) (including the www.smsmame.ru site). The fact that nearly a quarter of respondents received recommendations from their doctors speaks to the high opinion the professional medical community has of the initiative.

Fig. 9



Program effectiveness

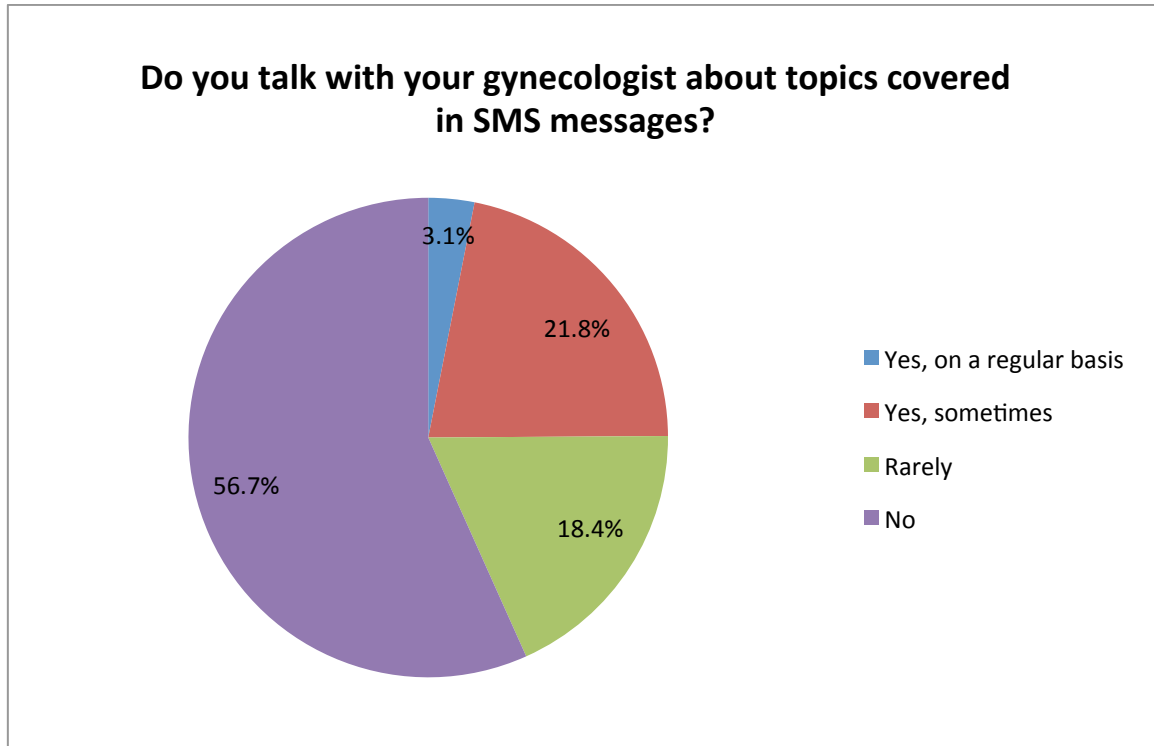
Behavior change in program participants: SMSmame messages as motivation to seek out more information from reliable sources

One of the main goals of this initiative is to increase the interest and attention of expectant and new mothers regarding their health, and to motivate them to seek out additional information about pregnancy and child care from reliable sources.

The following questions were asked in order to determine whether the program was meeting this goal.

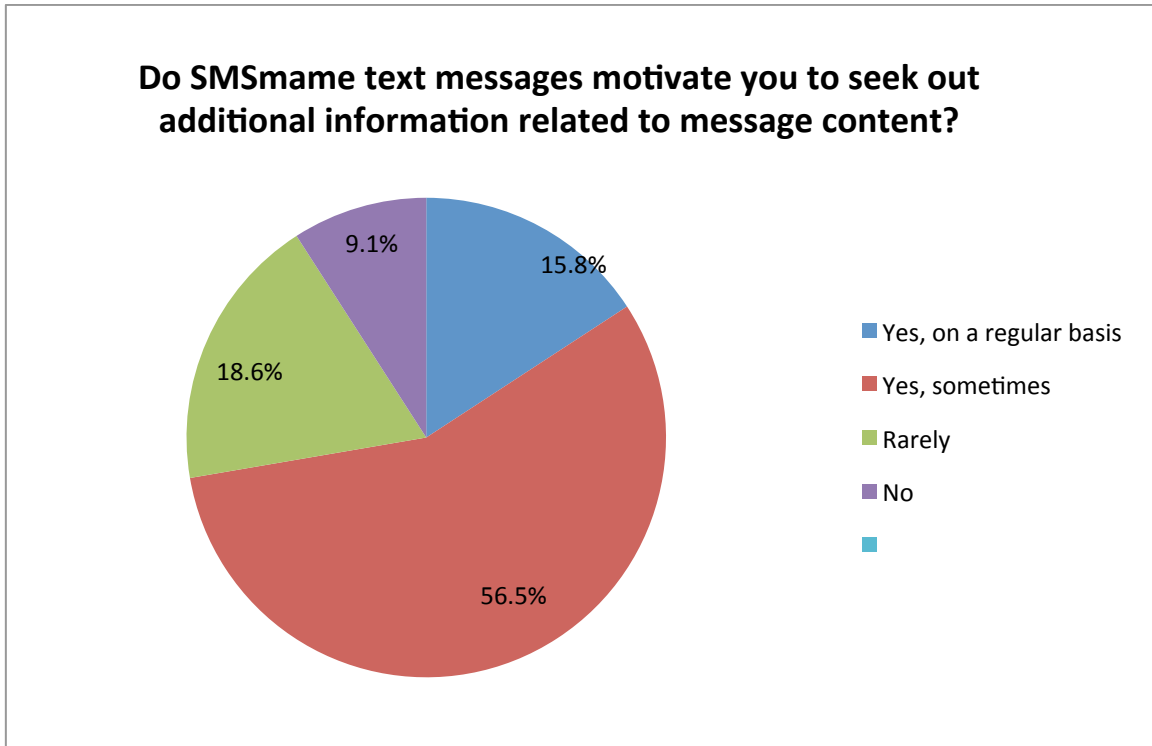
To the question “Do you talk with your gynecologist about topics covered in SMS messages?”, 24.9% gave positive answers (“sometimes” - 21.8%, “on a regular basis” - 3.1%). The remaining respondents did so “rarely” (18.4%) or never did so (56.7%). These data show that at the moment, only a quarter of respondents approach their physicians for further information related to program messages. (fig.10)

Fig.10



Respondents were more positive about whether program text messages motivated them to seek out additional information related to message content: 56.5% replied “sometimes,” 15.8% “on a regular basis”, and 18.6% “rarely.” The high percentage (90.9%) of respondents who replied in the affirmative indicate that the program is meeting its goal to motivate a majority of subscribers to seek out additional, reliable information.

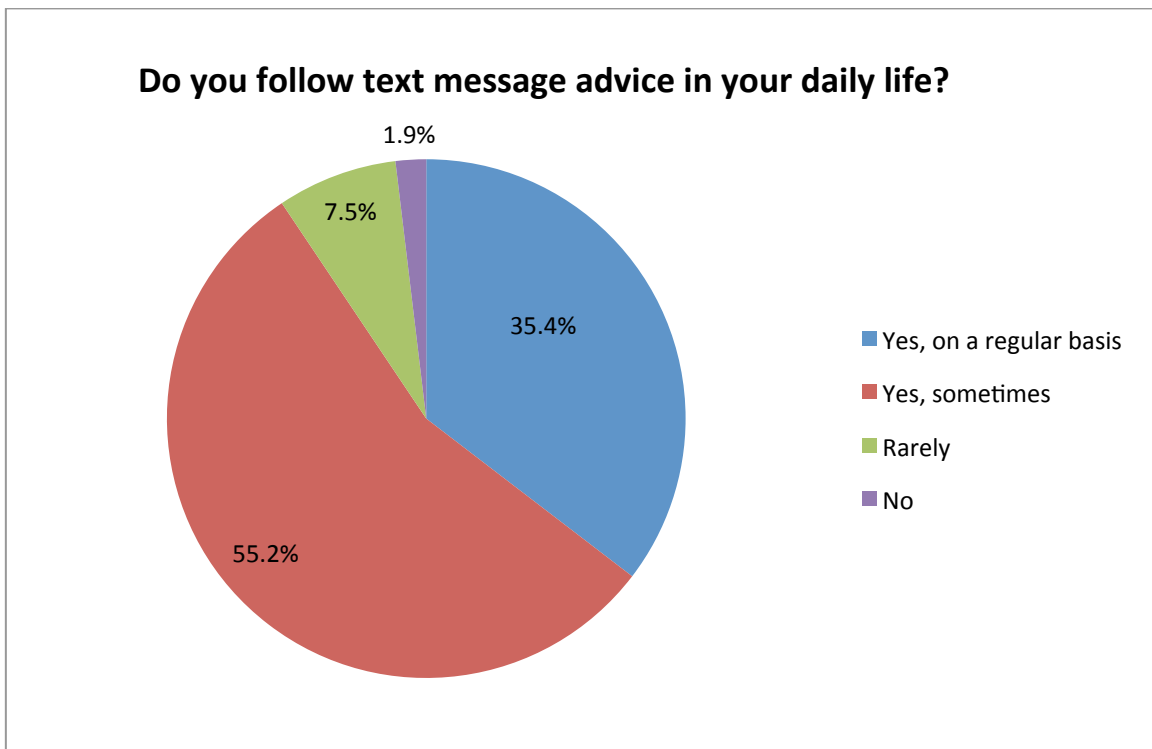
Fig.11



Behavior change in program participants: carrying out program recommendations in daily life

In order to determine the effect program messages had on subscriber behavior, respondents were asked: “Do you follow text message advice in your daily life?” A clear majority responded affirmatively (90.6%): of these, 35.4% did so “on a regular basis,” 55.2% “sometimes.” This attests to the high degree of trust program participants had in message content. (fig.12)

Fig.12



The next set of questions addressed the actual behavior of participants. These questions were developed in relation to text message content so that we could verify whether participants were, in fact, following program advice in their lives. It is necessary to note, of course, that many factors influence the behavior of program participants, but the text message service is one of those factors.

Pregnant respondents were asked two questions specific to them. To the first, "How often did you take vitamins/folic acid in the last month?" 71.1% replied "every day." Only 9.3% responded that they were not taking any vitamins (fig.13).

SMS messages recommend women to be physically active (in accordance with recommendations from their doctors, if there are no contraindications to exercise). The survey data indicates that all of the women were physically active to some extent (81.8%) with the exception of those for whom exercise was not recommended (18.2%) (fig.14). Among pregnant respondents, none reported that they did no exercise. These data point to the positive influence of program messages on subscribers.

Fig.13

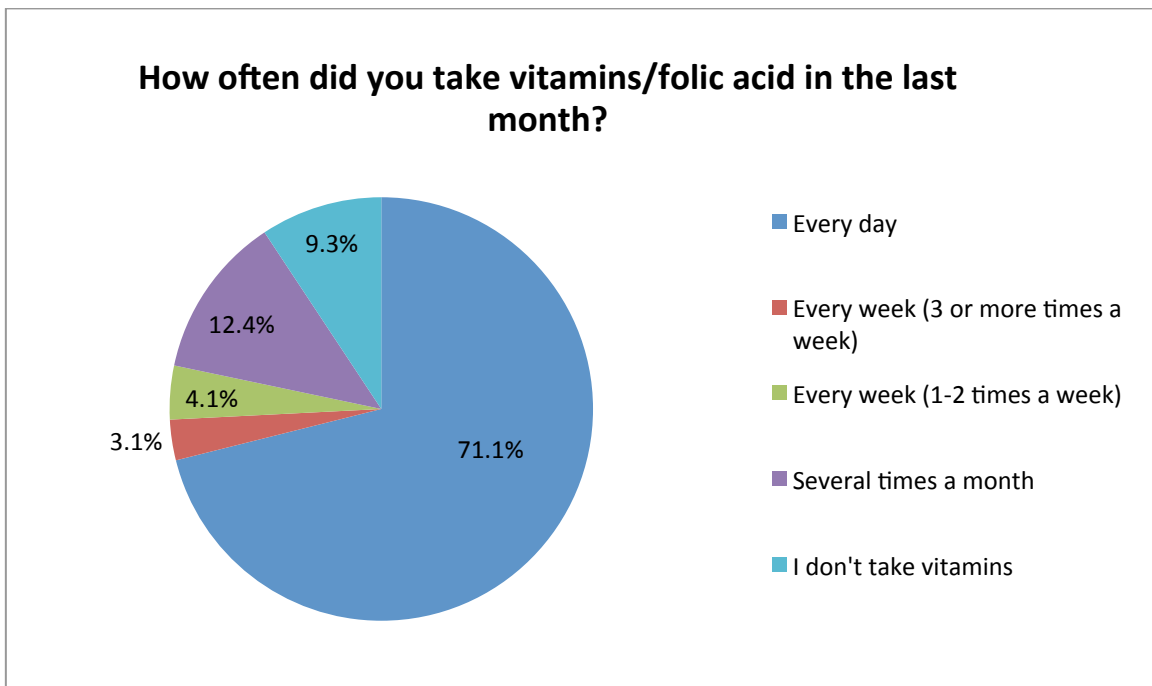
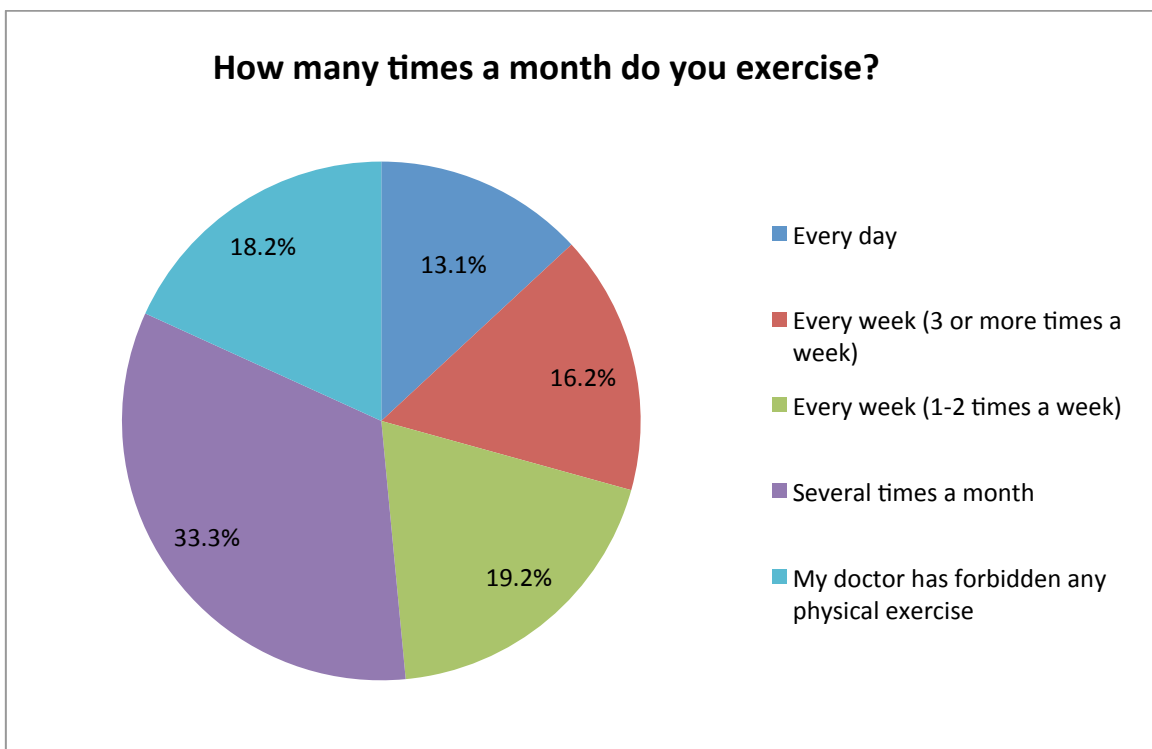


Fig.14



The other group of participants, mothers with children under one year, were asked about breastfeeding. At the time of the survey, a little over half of respondents were breastfeeding (57.6%), however, among the remaining women, 87.8% breastfed after the birth of their children for varying periods of time (fig. 15-16). Only 4.5% of respondents had never breastfed their children.

Fig.15

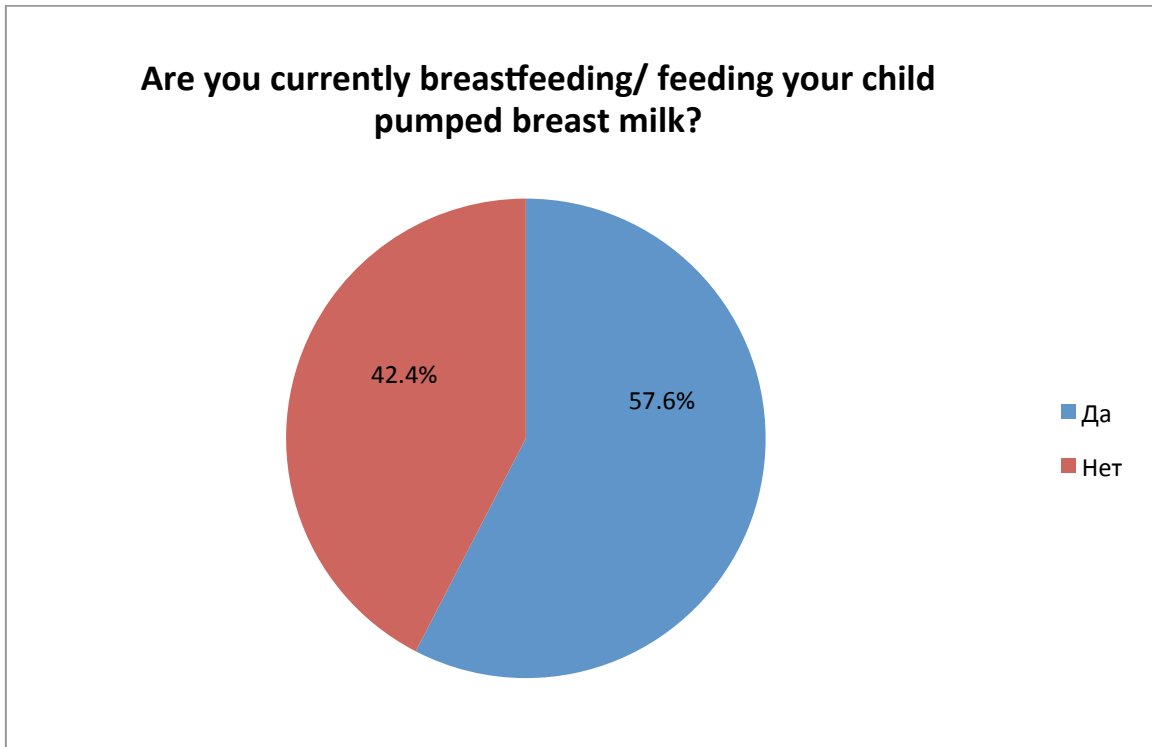
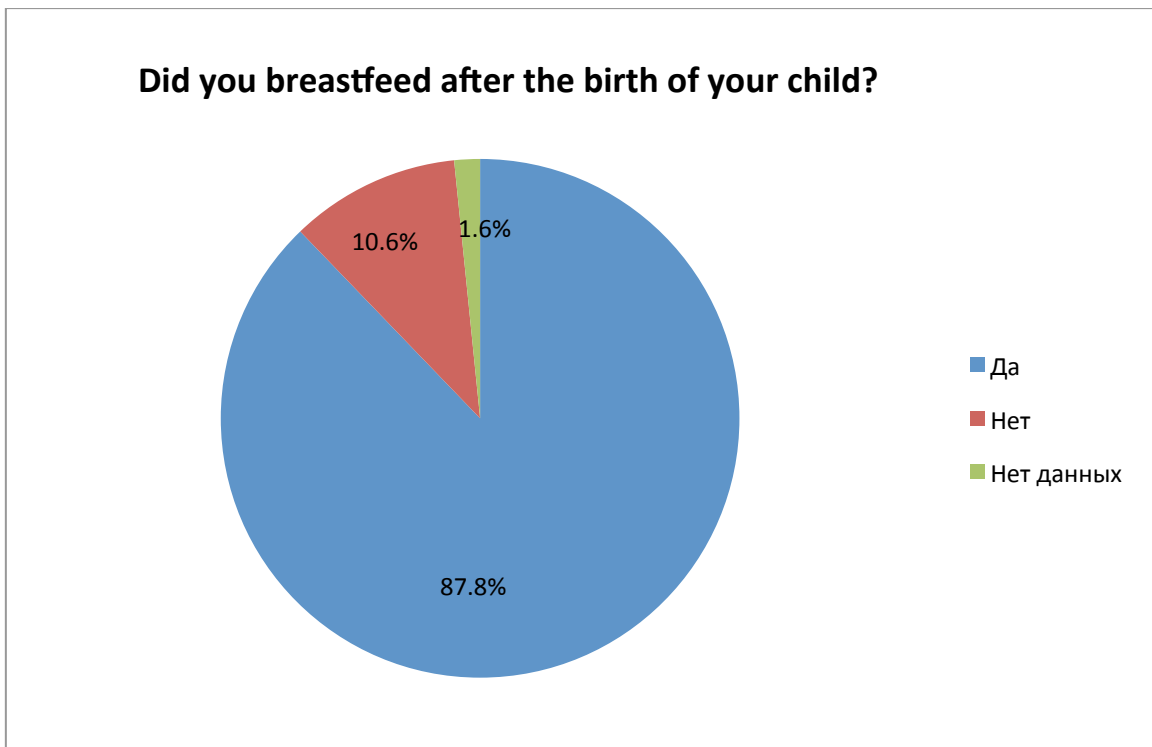


Fig.16



The next two questions addressed alcohol and tobacco use, and were answered both by pregnant respondents and new mothers. The data show that a majority of respondents do

not smoke (80.6%) (fig.17). Significantly, almost a quarter of respondents quit smoking while pregnant or after the birth of their children (22.6%).

It is also important to note that those women who do smoke mainly belong to the group of non-breastfeeding mothers. If we compare those who reported smoking with pregnant women and new mothers (fig.18), we can see that the number of pregnant women who reported smoking is 7.1%, breastfeeding women 5.2%, and women who are not breastfeeding, 23.2%, demonstrating that on the whole, those women who are smoking are those whose risky behavior is less likely to effect the health of their children.

Fig. 17

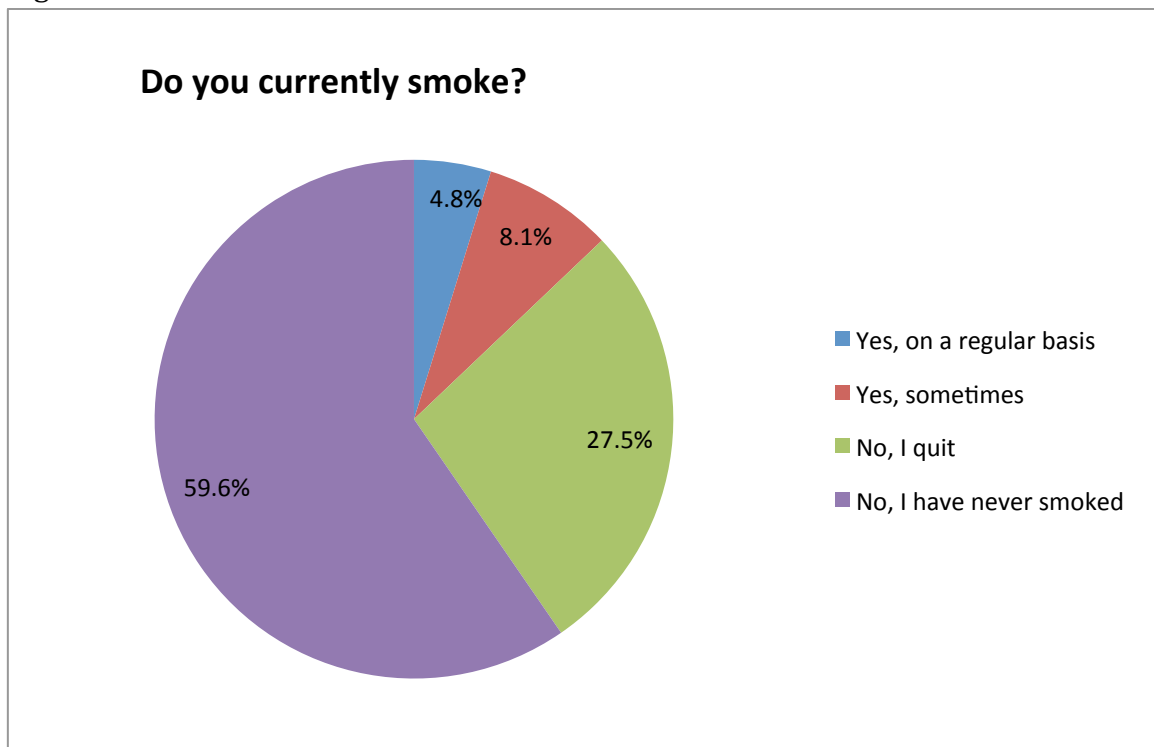
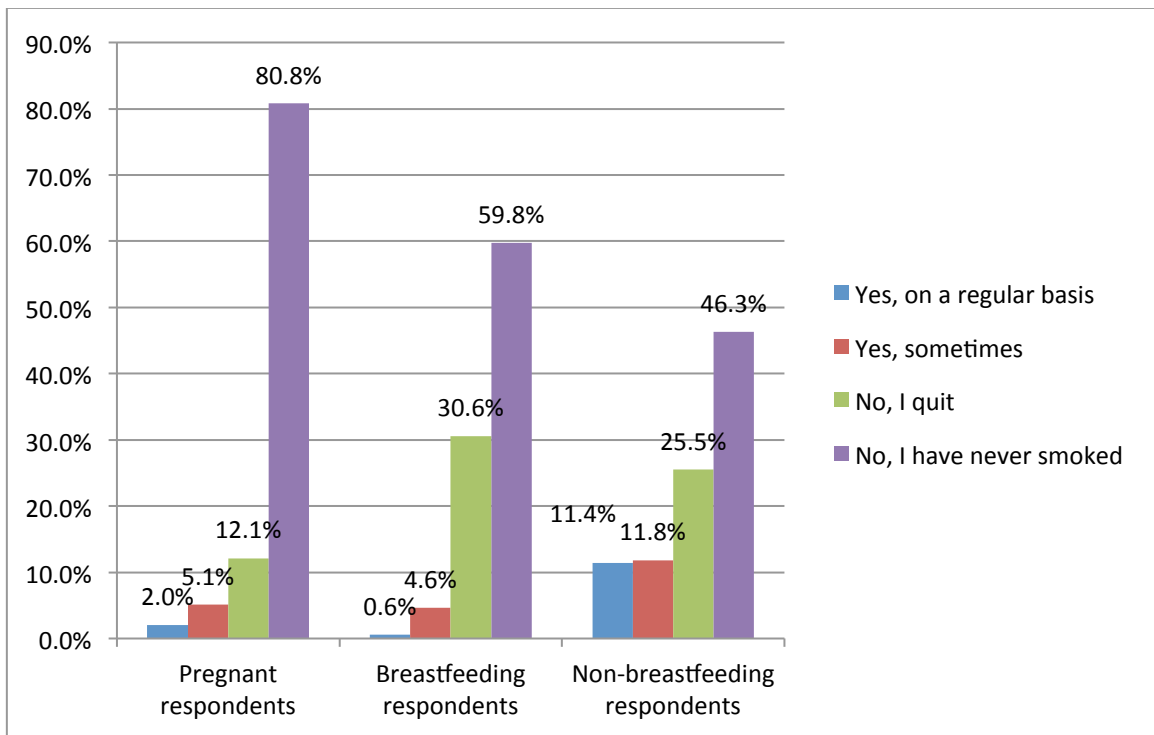


Fig.18

Do you currently smoke?



The situation is similar with alcohol use. Almost half of respondents reported alcohol use at least once in the last month (44.9%), however, as with tobacco use, most of those who answered affirmatively belonged to the group of women who were not breastfeeding (61.6%). Among pregnant women, the percentage with recent alcohol use was 16.2%, and 36.1% among breastfeeding women (fig.19-20).

Fig.19

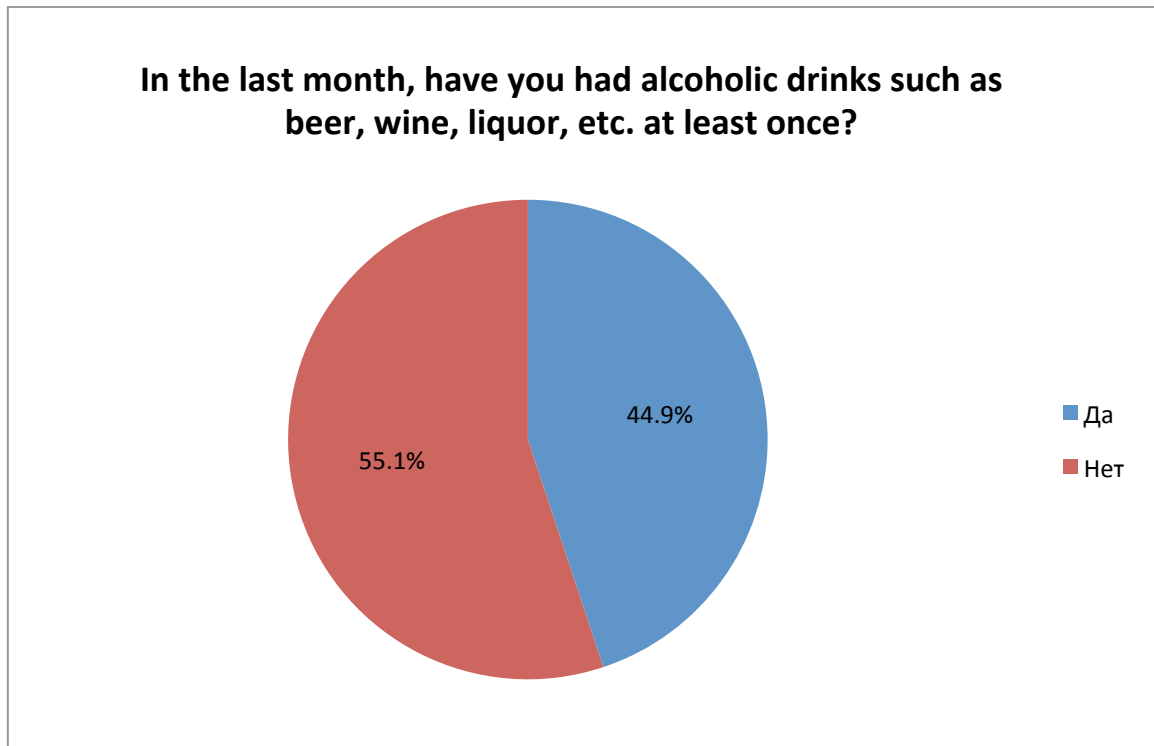
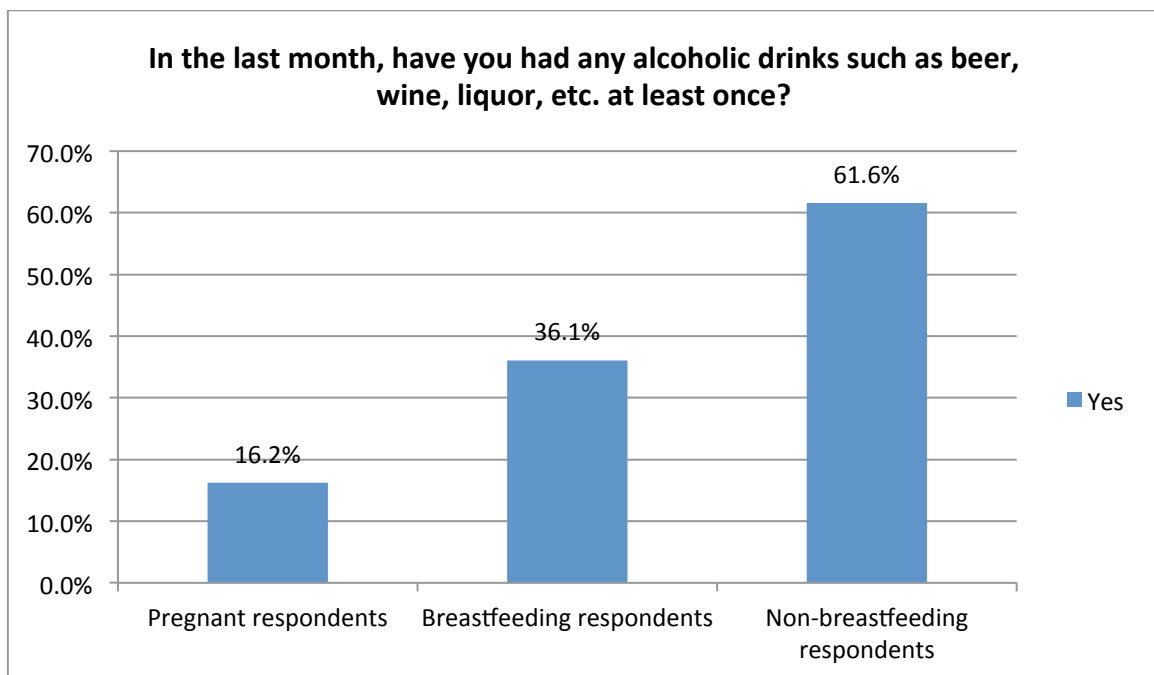


Fig.20

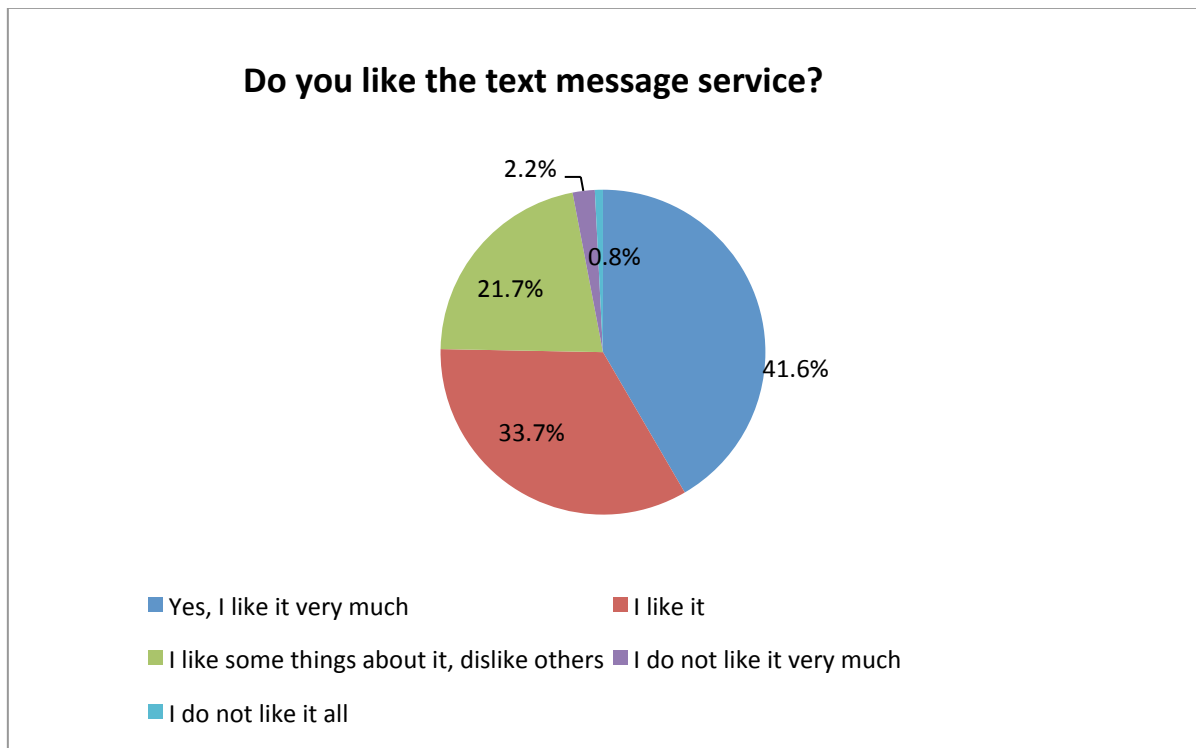


Participant evaluation of the program

The next topic in the survey was a general evaluation of the program by respondents. Figure 21 clearly demonstrates the overall positive nature of participant opinion: 41.6% of

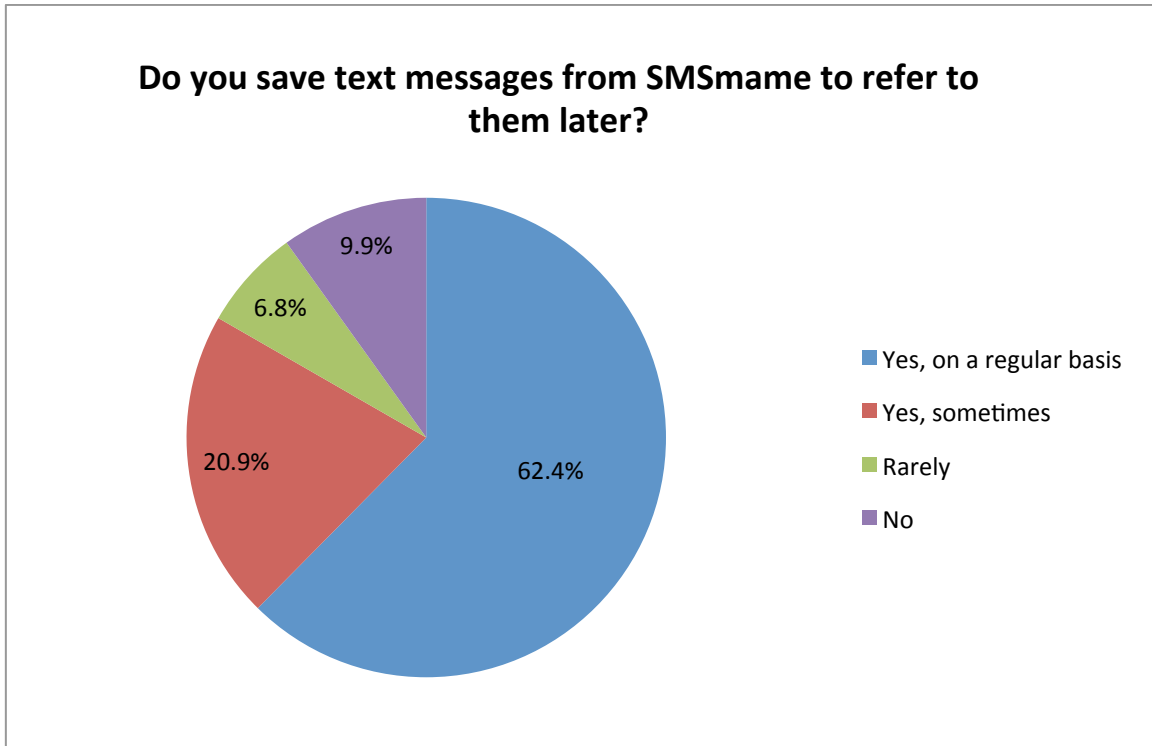
respondents say they like the service very much, and 33.7% like it. Only a very small number of respondents did not like the service at all – 3%.

Fig. 21



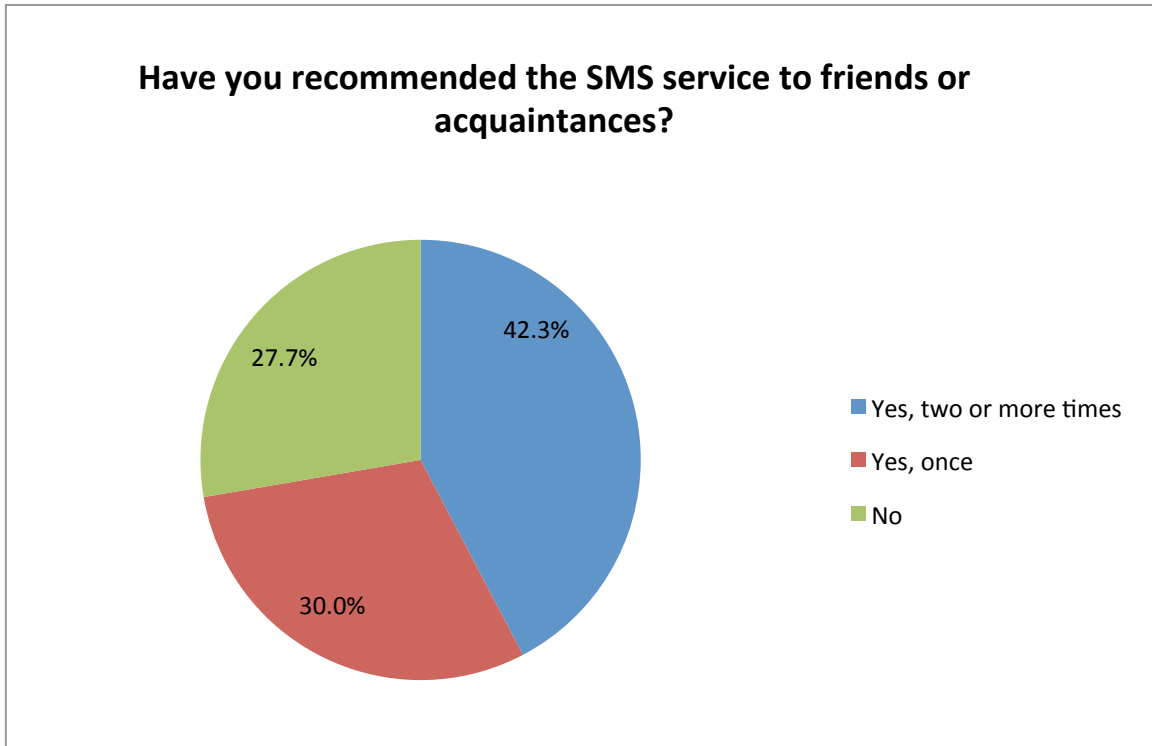
A key goal of this program is to provide subscribers with important, timely information. How they use the text messages is a strong indicator of whether subscribers feel that the program is meeting this goal. The data show that 62.4% regularly save text messages to refer to them later, and 20.9% sometimes do so (fig.22). A much smaller number never did so (9.9%) or did so rarely (6.8%).

Fig.22



Another criteria demonstrating participant opinion of the program is whether or not they recommend it to others. Of all the respondents surveyed, 30% had recommended the service to at least one friend or acquaintance, and 42% had done so two or more times (fig.20). This high percentage of personal recommendations (72.3%) show that the majority of respondents have an overall positive view of the usefulness and effectiveness of SMSmame.

Fig.23



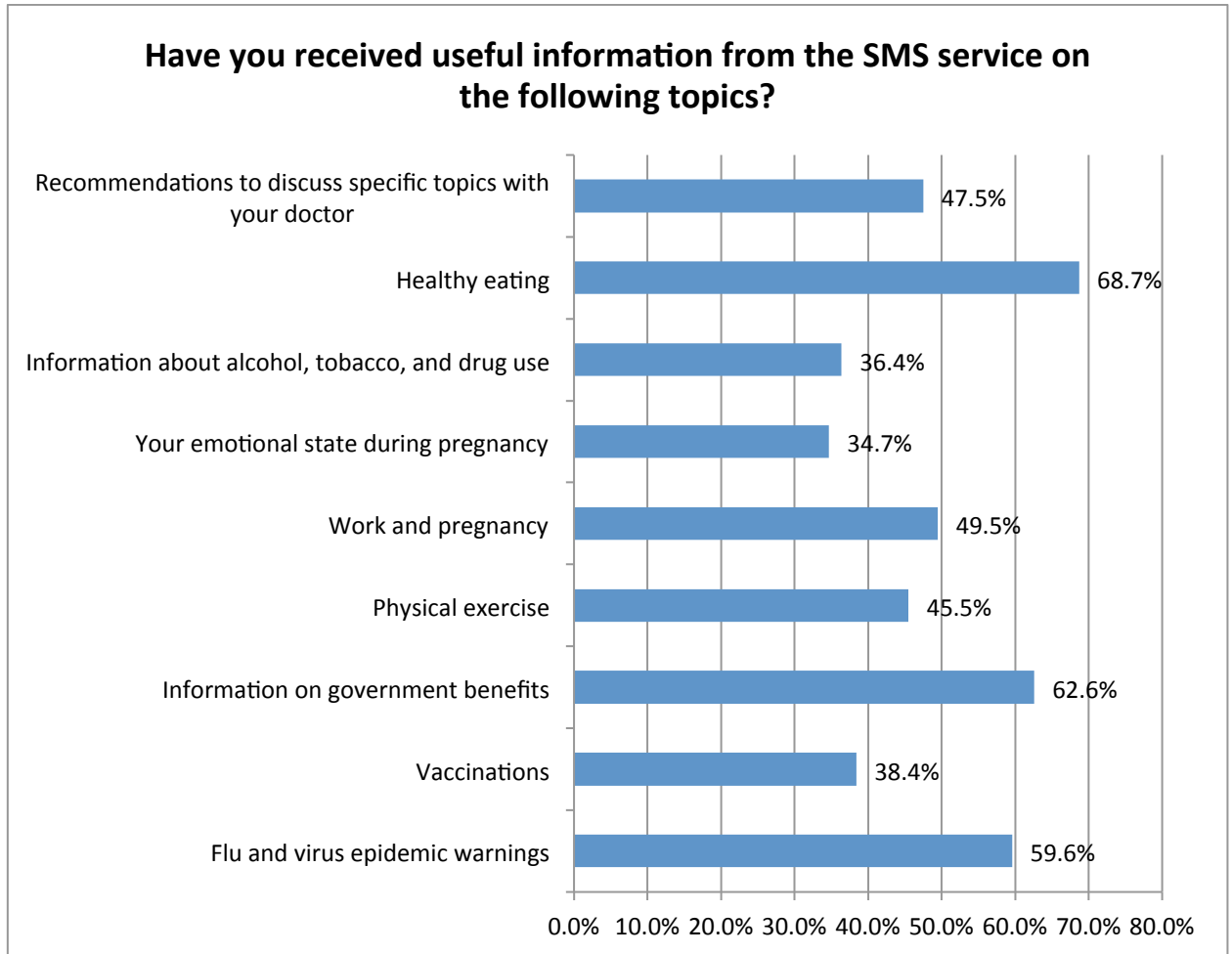
In conclusion, we can say that participant opinion of SMSmame is, overall, positive, as shown by the number of respondents who found message content useful enough to save it for further reference, and the number who recommended the service to others.

Satisfaction with message content and feedback

In order to determine the level of subscriber satisfaction with message content, a key element of program effectiveness, respondents were asked more specific questions about message topics. Pregnant women and new mothers were asked different sets of questions.

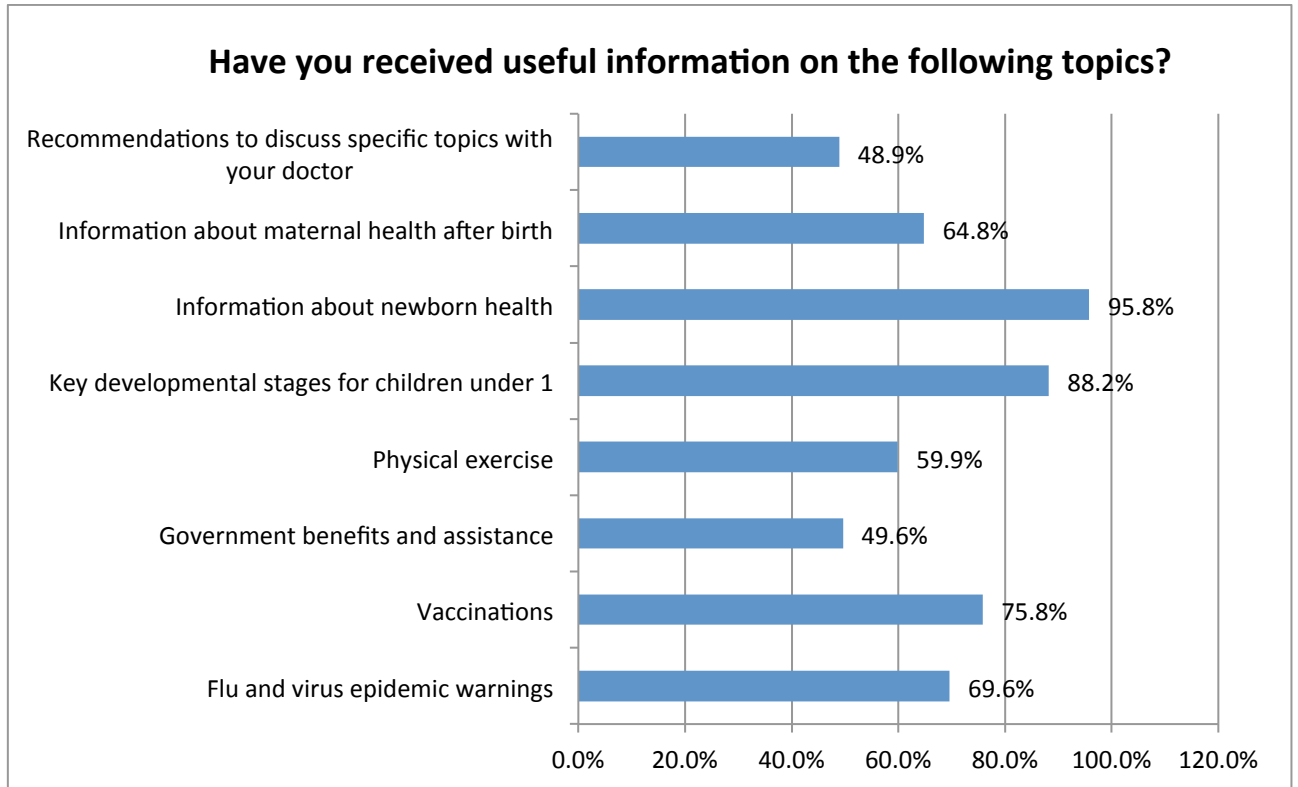
Figure 24 shows that pregnant respondents received the largest amount of useful and relevant information on the following topics: 1) healthy eating (68.7%) 2) information about government benefits (62.6%) 3) warnings about flu and viral respiratory infection epidemics (59.6%). On the whole, information on each topic was useful to nearly half the respondents.

Fig.24



The new mothers surveyed indicated that they found information on the following topics most useful: 1) information about newborn health (95.8%), 2) key developmental stages for children in their first year of life (88.2%), 3) vaccination (75.8%) (fig.25). The data make it clear that almost all topics were of interest to subscribers.

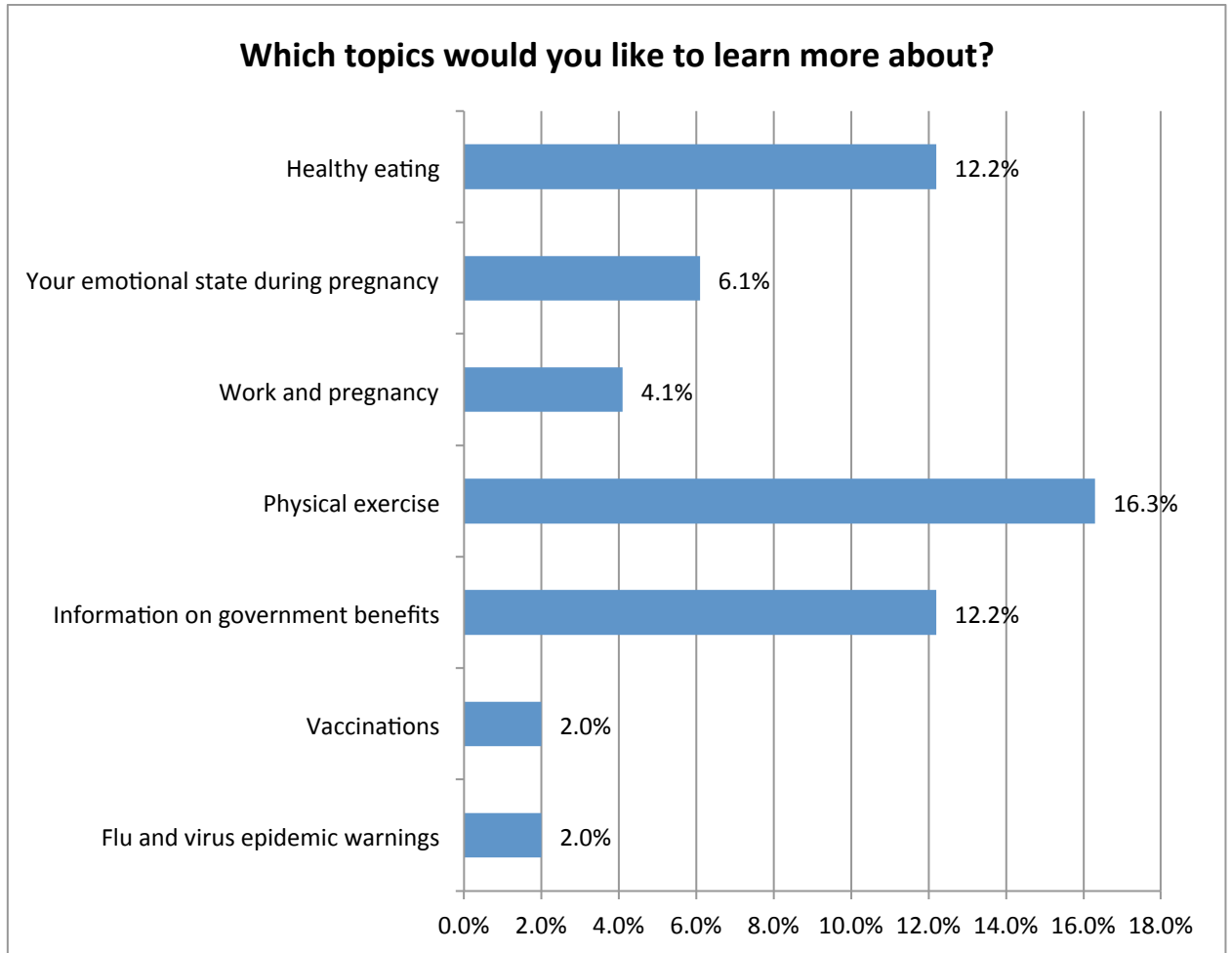
Fig.25

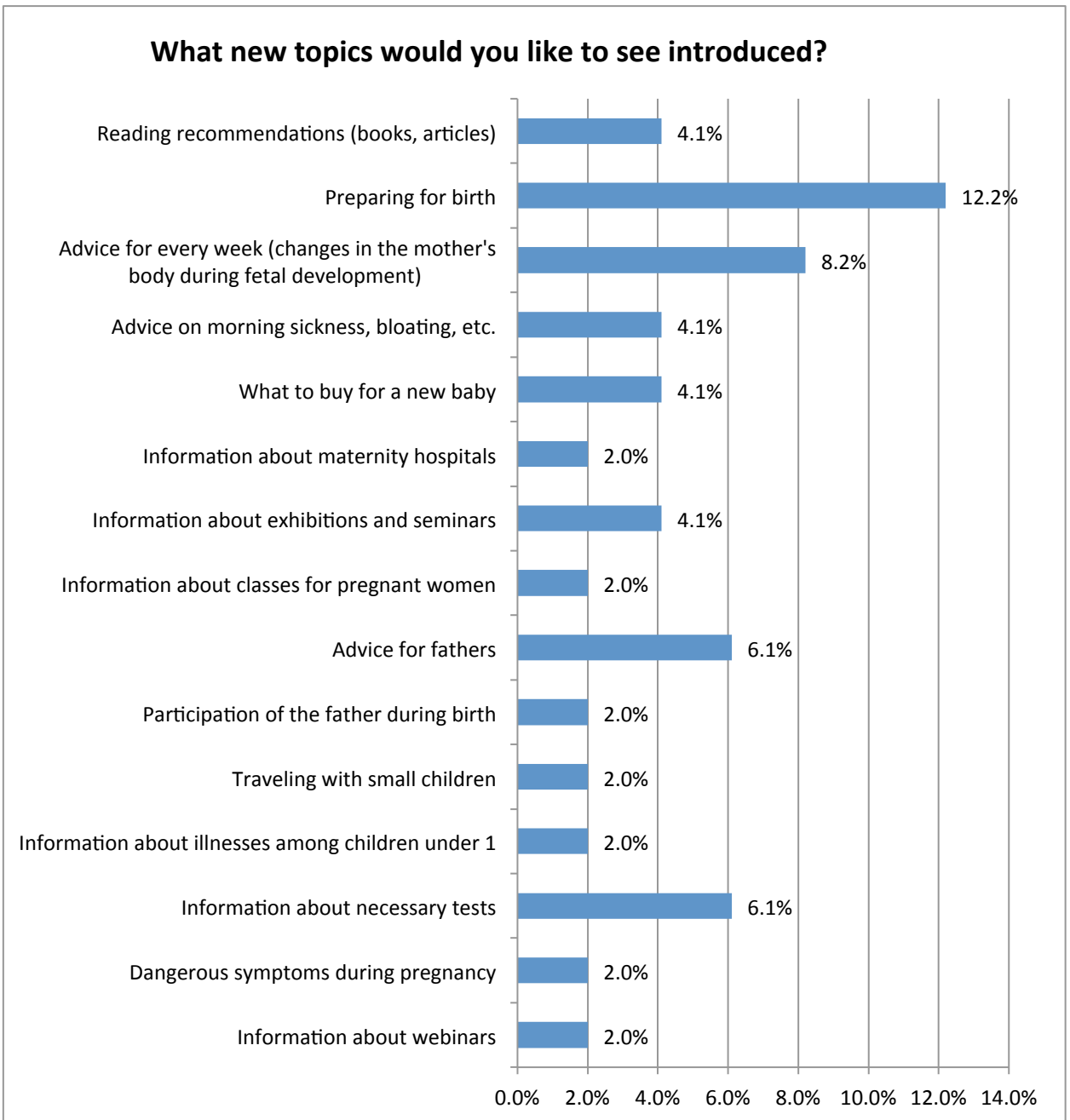


Two more questions about message content quality were given to only the group of respondents who took the survey in person at the Kulakov Center.

Figure 26 displays information about which topics respondents would like to receive more information on: 1) physical exercise (16.3%), 2) healthy eating (12.2%), 3) information on government benefits (12.2%). Respondents were also asked which new topics they would like to see added to the text message service, and the most common replies were: 1) getting ready for the birth (12.2%), 2) advice for each week (8.2%), 3) advice for fathers (6.1%), 4) information about necessary tests (6.1%).

Fig.26

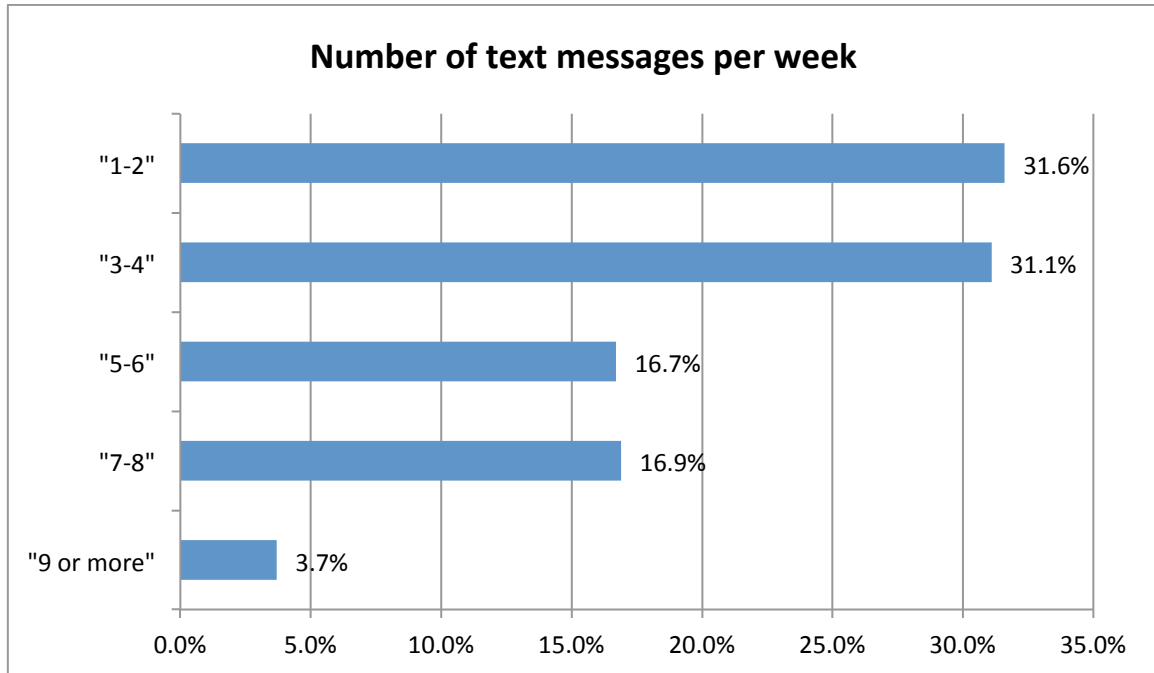




These data show that respondents are interested in expanding the range of topics that SMS messages address, which will influence future text message content development.

The last question related to program improvement addressed the frequency of text messages (fig.27). A third (31.6%) of respondents are satisfied with the current rate of 1-2 messages per week. However, a majority would prefer to receive more messages; among that group, 31.1% would like to receive 3-4 messages weekly. The remaining third would like to receive 5 or more messages per week. It is clear from this response that the majority of respondents would prefer greater frequency of messages, indicating the usefulness and importance of the service in keeping them informed.

Fig.27



In addition to directing the attention of program developers to areas for improvement, (expansion and refinement of text message content, message frequency, etc.), survey data also shows the overall positive attitude to the service among respondents. The fact that a large group of respondents save text messages for future reference, recommend the program to others, and would like to receive more text messages weekly all demonstrate that SMSmame is meeting the key program goals of providing reliable, useful information to pregnant women and new mothers throughout Russia.