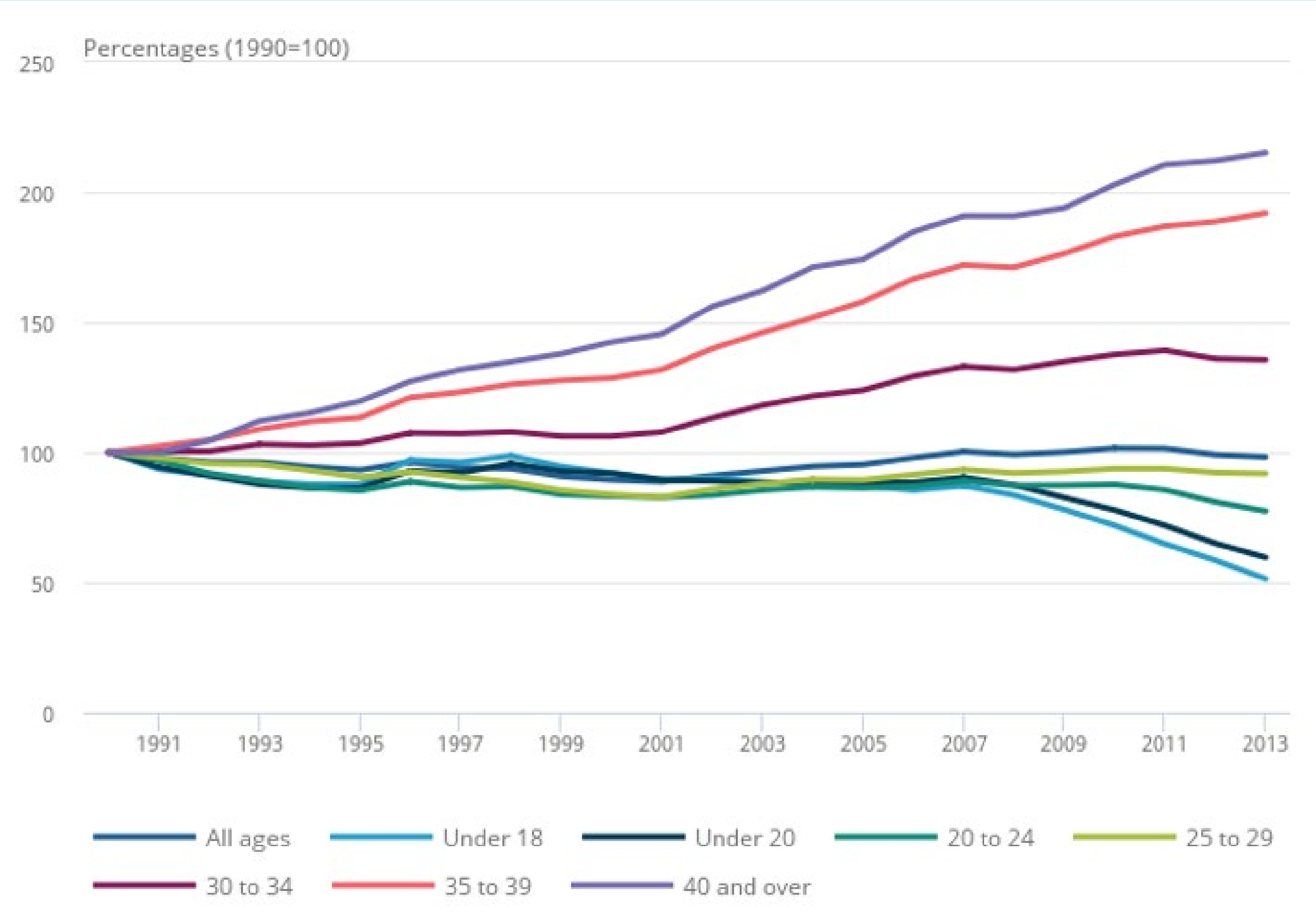


Introduction

- Increasing rates of delayed first-time motherhood in the UK (fig 1) have led to increased rates of involuntary childlessness
- Social egg freezing (SEF) offers a method for women to preserve their fertility for later years
- Demonstration of comparable pregnancy and live birth rates between vitrified and fresh oocytes, has led to increasing number of women freezing their oocytes
- Data is limited regarding women’s perceptions, having undergone SEF, and their long-term reflections, as well as the impact COVID-19 has had on their motivations and treatment experience

Figure 1: Changes in age-related conception
(Office of National Statistics, 2015)



Aims

- To investigate the motivations and treatment experiences of women undergoing SEF
- The impact of COVID-19

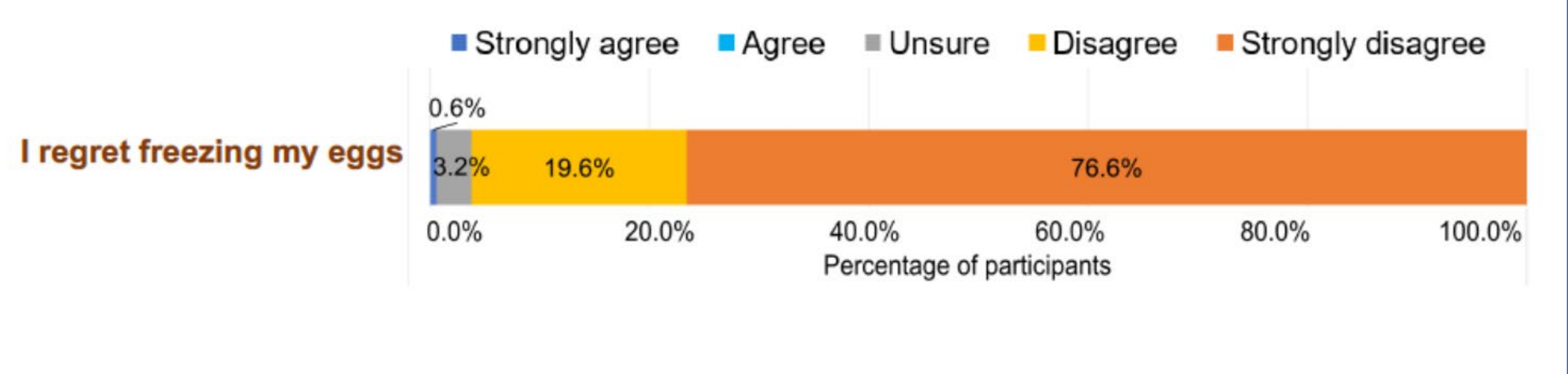
Method

- Data collected via a validated questionnaire investigating patients’ perceptions of SEF
- A link to an online questionnaire (using Qualtrics survey tool) was emailed to 410 women who underwent SEF at Lister Fertility Clinic, London (2011-2021)
- All women had consented to being contacted for research
- Response rate of 46.6% was achieved

Results

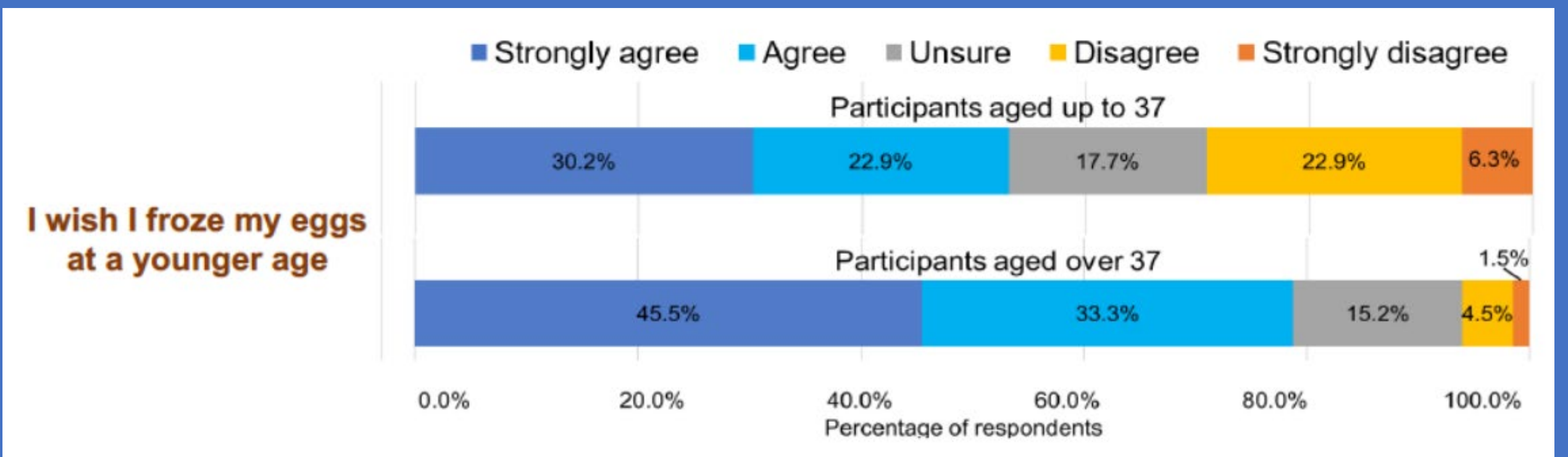
- Concern for age-related fertility decline was the main factor influencing decision to undergo SEF (93.9%)
- 89.5% of participants were not in a relationship at time of SEF
- Only 0.6% regretted participating in SEF (fig 2)

Figure 2: Response to women being asked if they regret participating in SEF



- 64.0% wished to have undergone SEF at a younger age, a view expressed significantly more in women aged > 37 years versus < 37 years at time of SEF (χ^2 , $p<0.001$) (fig 3)

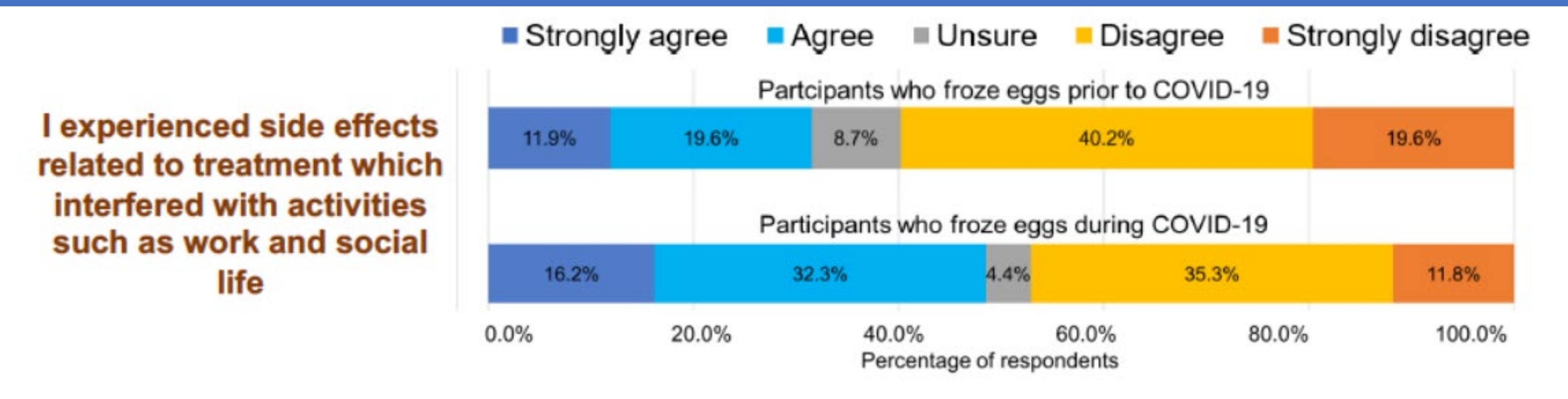
Figure 3: Responses when asked if they wished to have frozen their eggs at a younger age



Regarding the impact of COVID-19:

- Participants were more likely to report experiencing significant side effects if they cryopreserved during the pandemic (χ^2 , $p<0.05$) (fig 4)
- 82.3% did not consider their decision to undergo SEF was delayed by concern of being exposed to COVID19 by attending appointments at the clinic
- 44.1% felt the COVID-19 pandemic motivated them to undergo SEF, with this response significantly more common in women not in a relationship at the time of SEF (χ^2 , $p<0.001$)

Figure 4: The impact of COVID-19 on treatment side effects



Conclusion

- First study to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on SEF motivations and treatment experiences
- Women who undergo SEF do not regret their decision to have the treatment, regardless of age at which they did it
- Older women express a desire they had the treatment at a younger age
- This highlights the importance of the need for a continued drive to educate more women regarding age related female fertility decline and the option of SEF**