



TOWARDS A HEALTHIER AUSTRALIA

Health benefits and reduced use
of public health services

reported by

Taoist Tai Chi[™] arts practitioners



Introduction

As governments struggle with mounting health costs, an ancient art is showing a way to improve health and cut bills.

Based on the results of the survey presented here, practitioners of *Taoist Tai Chi*[™] arts report reductions in their use of public health services and improvements in their health in key areas.

Our organisation wanted to capture some of the specific ways in which our practice impacts the use of public health services. We conducted our survey with 1,334 of our 2,600 participants across Australia responding. The questionnaire was completed anonymously and voluntarily by participants regardless of their duration of practice. This document contains the preliminary findings from the results of the questionnaire and some comments from participants.

Findings include:

- 93% reported improvements in balance, 49% reported better coordination, and 80% reported improved mobility;
- Of those suffering from a painful health condition (eg back pain), 30% experienced reduced frequency of pain and 26% experienced reduced intensity;
- Of those normally requiring medication for their health condition, 29% reported reduced levels of medication required.
- Of those suffering from a health condition requiring therapeutic services such as physiotherapy, 44% reported using *Taoist Tai Chi*[™] arts for ongoing support after completion of the prescribed treatment, 22% reported faster recovery than expected and 19% required fewer visits than recommended;
- 13% of the total sample (1334 respondents) reported that *Taoist Tai Chi*[™] arts had assisted them to avoid or postpone surgery;
- 61% of the total sample reported that practice of *Taoist Tai Chi*[™] arts had affected their mental health, and of these, 54% reported improved mood, 44% reported increased emotional strength, 43% reported improved concentration, 40% reported increased energy and 38% reported decreased anxiety (N = 770).

The data provides a compelling snapshot of ways in which practice of *Taoist Tai Chi*[™] arts can improve individual health (including mental health) and, as a result, collectively reduce impact on public health services. The individual stories are powerful, but, pulled together they provide a more complete picture of how *Taoist Tai Chi*[™] arts contribute to our communities.

These survey results of our members in Australia are reinforced by similar surveys undertaken with thousands of other participants in the USA, Canada, Great Britain and elsewhere. Moreover, these results are consistent with a growing body of peer reviewed research which shows the benefits of tai chi for health and well-being. (For a recent survey, see: “Health benefits of tai chi: What is the evidence?” by Patricia Huston and Bruce McFarlane, *Canadian Family Physician* November 2016, 62 (11) 881-890. <http://www.cfp.ca/content/62/11/881>)

“We knew anecdotally from classes that such benefits exist, but this unprecedented survey drew many responses and is very heartening and important for policy makers to contemplate,” says Elisabeth Clevers-Schatten, President of Taoist Tai Chi Society of Australia.

“While the survey results emphasise the usual health benefits of fitness, these are significant because *Taoist Tai Chi*[™] arts are a gentle form of training that can be done by anyone. While very helpful to young people, it also has a significant appeal to elderly people who might not otherwise be exercising or moving much.”

Taoist Tai Chi[™] arts were brought to Australia in 1980, thanks to Master Moy Lin Shin, a Taoist monk who had begun teaching in Toronto, Canada, 47 years ago to promote the health and spiritual benefits of *Taoist Tai Chi*[™] arts. Now more than 40,000 participants in 25 countries feel the benefits of these internal arts of health that are taught by accredited volunteer instructors.

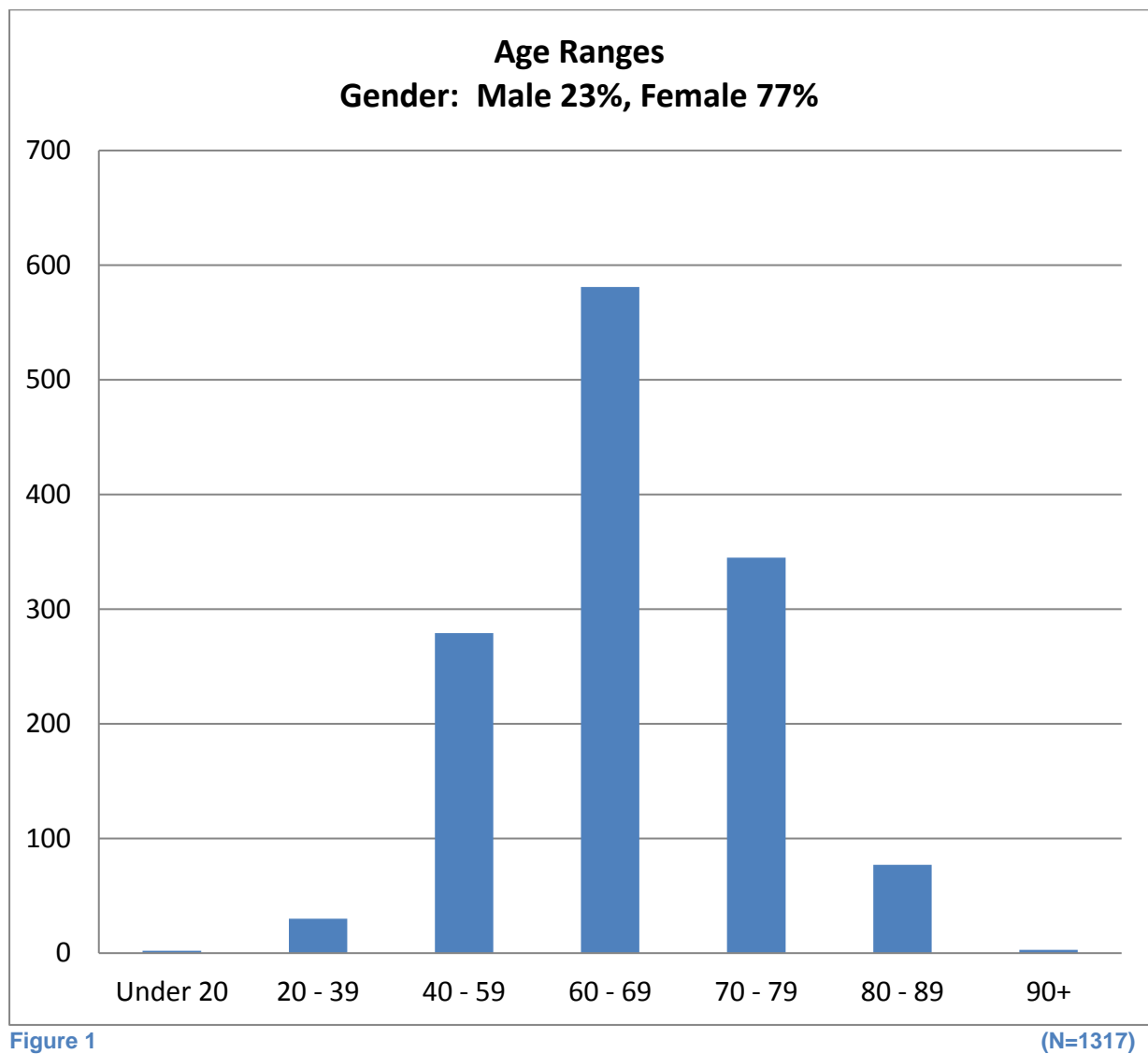
The Taoist Tai Chi Society of Australia is a not- for-profit, charitable, volunteer organisation.

**For more information, visit taoist.org.au,
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email australia@taoist.org**

Australia 2017 — Preliminary Findings

The questionnaire was designed to allow respondents to share as much of their experience of the practice of *Taoist Tai Chi*™ arts as possible. Not all respondents answered all questions and many questions were designed to allow for multiple responses.

The bar charts and pie charts that follow show the percentages of respondents who answered particular questions. The total number (N) of respondents relevant to each chart is shown adjacent to each chart – for example N = 1000.



How long have you been practicing?

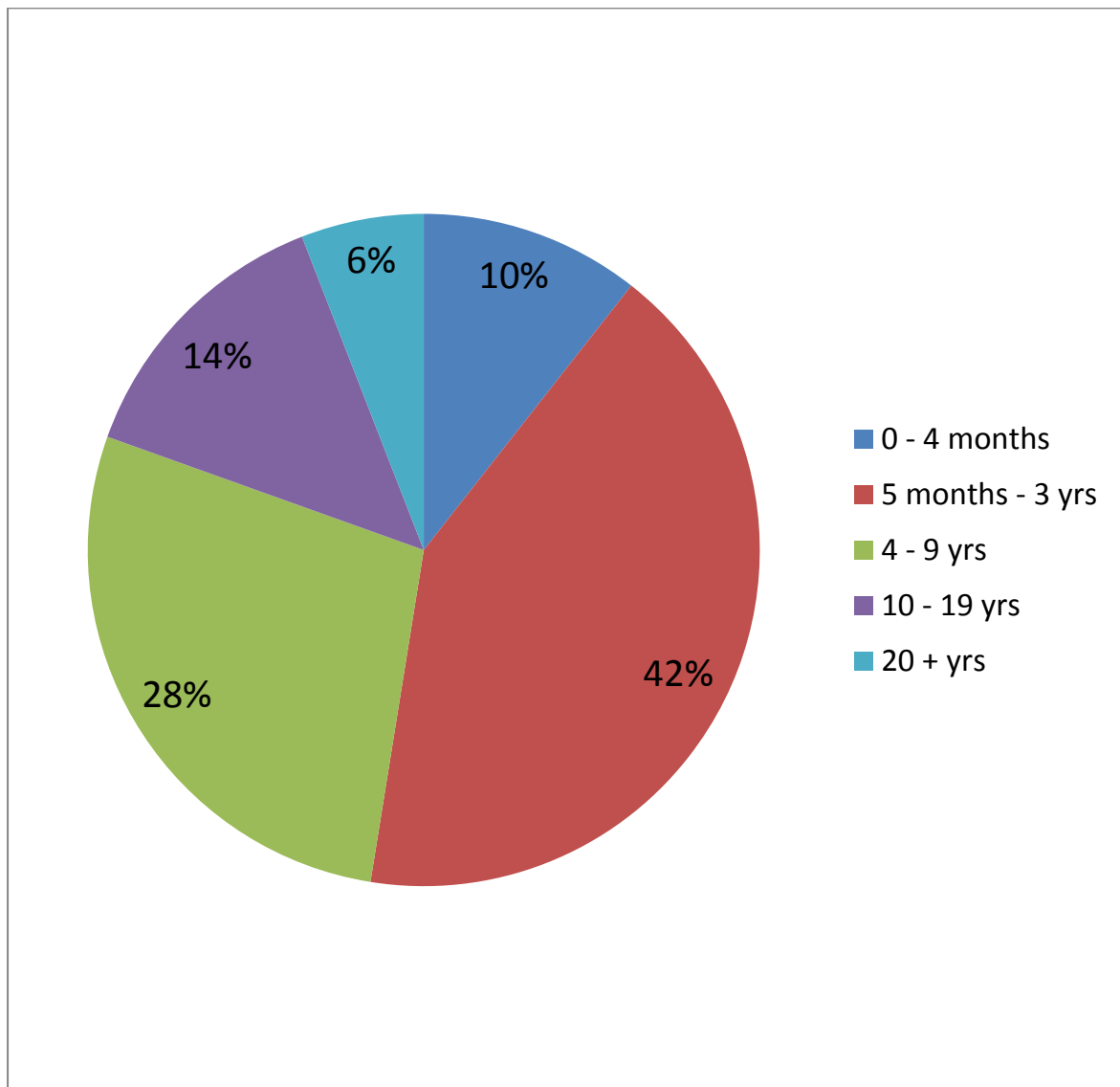


Figure 2

(N=1321)

(Beginners classes typically run for 4 months, then participants join ongoing “continuing classes”)

Would you say that your practice has had a positive impact on any of the following?

Includes responses greater than 10%

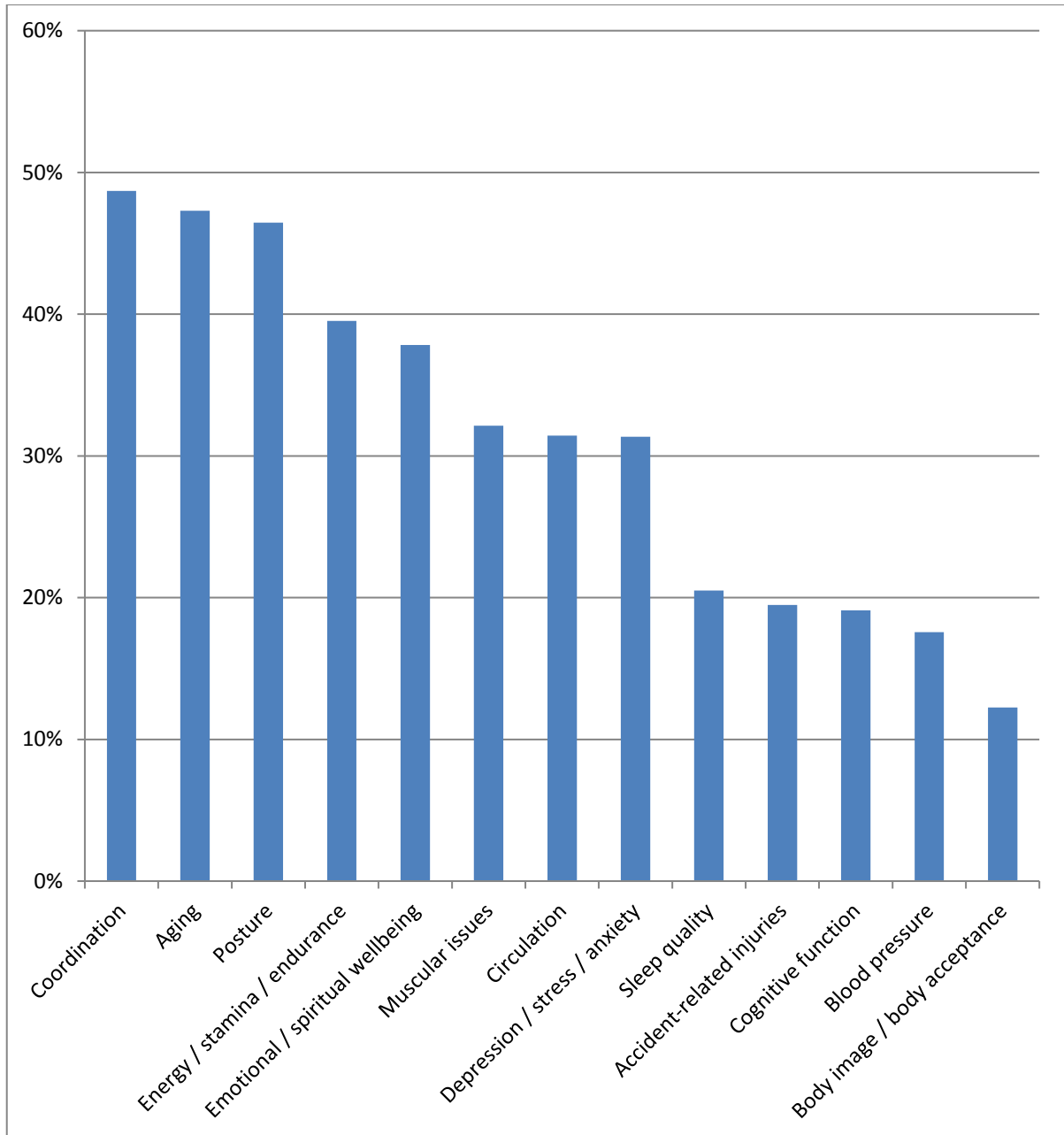


Figure 3

(N = 1298)

Has your health been impacted by any of the following conditions?

Accident related injuries	251	20%
Arthritis	476	37%
Asthma / lung disorder	131	10%
Back / spine issues	540	42%
Balance issues	395	31%
Brain injury / concussion	20	2%
Cancer	100	8%
Chronic pain	151	12%
Depression / stress / anxiety	321	25%
Diabetes	62	5%
Epilepsy	7	1%
Fibromyalgia / chronic fatigue	62	5%
Foot issues / plantar fasciitis	197	15%
Gastrointestinal disorders	123	10%
Headaches / migraines	134	11%
Heart problems	104	8%
High blood pressure	283	22%
Joint problems / TMJ	297	23%
Mobility issues	110	9%
Multiple Sclerosis	9	1%
Osteoporosis	149	12%
Parkinson's disease	11	1%
Prefer not to say	7	1%
Sleep disorders	109	9%
Stroke / blood clots	21	2%
Varicose veins	77	6%
Other	85	7%
None of the above	98	8%

Has your condition required that you access therapeutic services such as physiotherapy and rehabilitation?

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	668	56%

If yes, how did your practice (of tai chi) impact your use of those services?

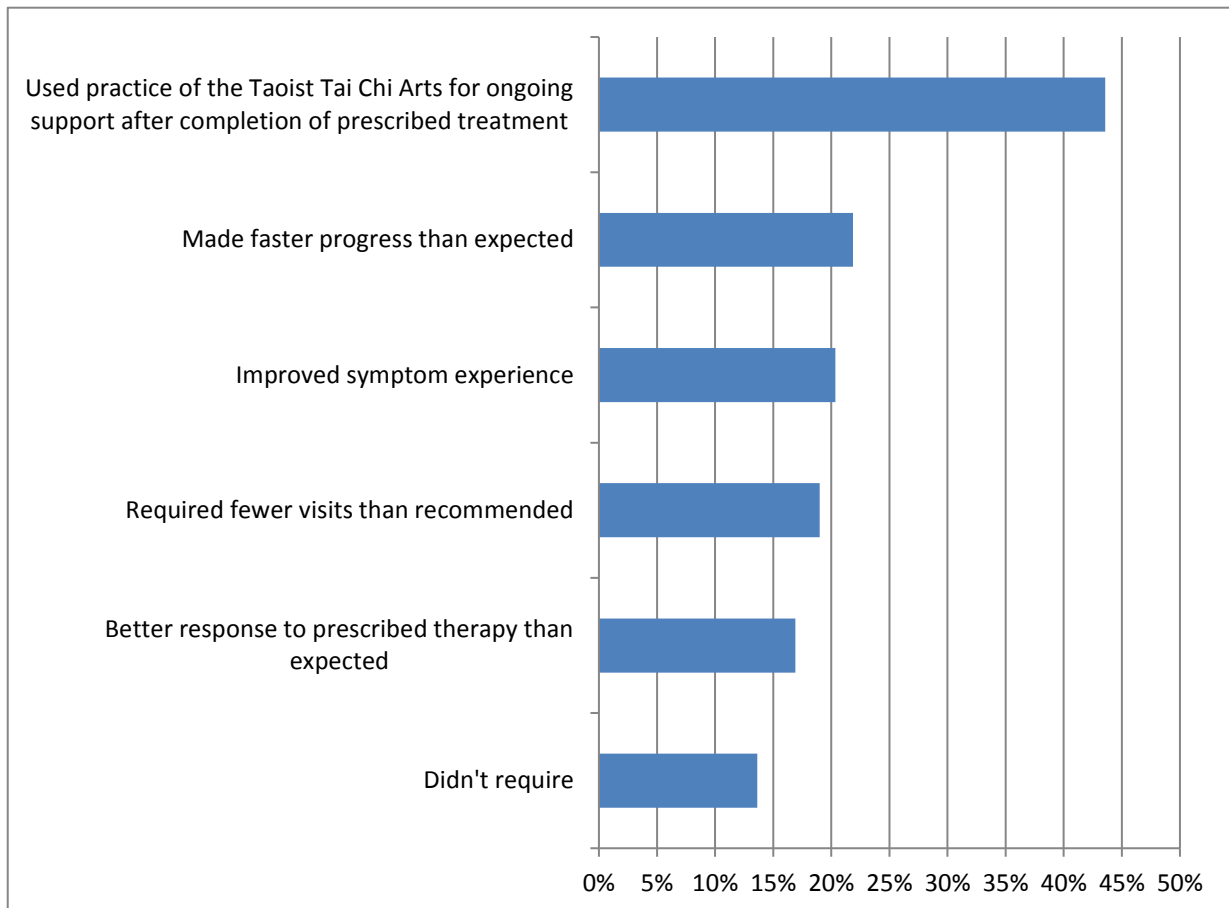


Figure 4

(N=668)

“I have had a very significant improvement in blood test results – improved blood sugar levels, liver function etc. I feel much healthier and require fewer visits to the GP.”
(female, age range 40-59)

“This year I have undergone surgery 3 times. All the surgeons, anesthetists and my GP have been impressed with my physical condition and have had confidence in my ability to recover quickly, which I have.”
(female, age range 60 – 69)

“Tai chi practice has reduced the amount of physiotherapy sessions required to address neck issues. It used to require 10 sessions. My last visit to the physiotherapist was years ago, and it only required 5 sessions.”
(female, age range 40-59)

Do you experience pain as part of your health condition(s)?

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	720	60%

If yes, as a result of your practice, how has the pain changed?

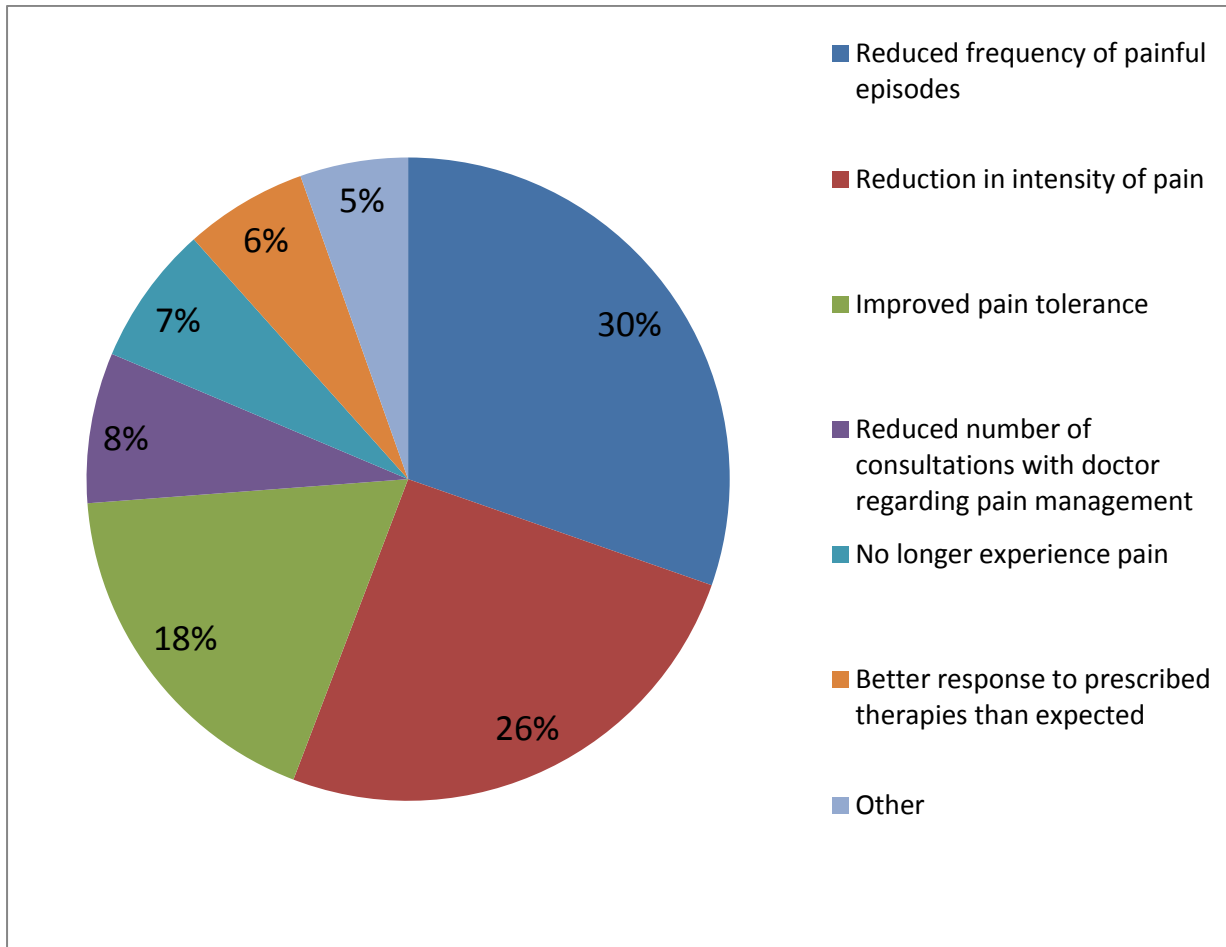


Figure 5

(N=610)

“My practice has definitely had a positive effect on the pain and fatigue I experience from chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia. It has also assisted with my emotional wellbeing.”

(gender unspecified, age range 60 – 69)

“Left knee medial meniscus has arthritis wear but pain decreased such that proposed surgery put off. Now 4 years & still surgery not needed.”

(male, age range 70 – 79)

“Spinal surgery too high risk with multiple disk prolapse. Muscular strength + balance enables pain free lifestyle and high activity level”

(female, age range 60 – 69)

Is medication normally required for your health condition(s)?

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	667	56%

If yes, as a result of your practice, how has your use of medication changed?

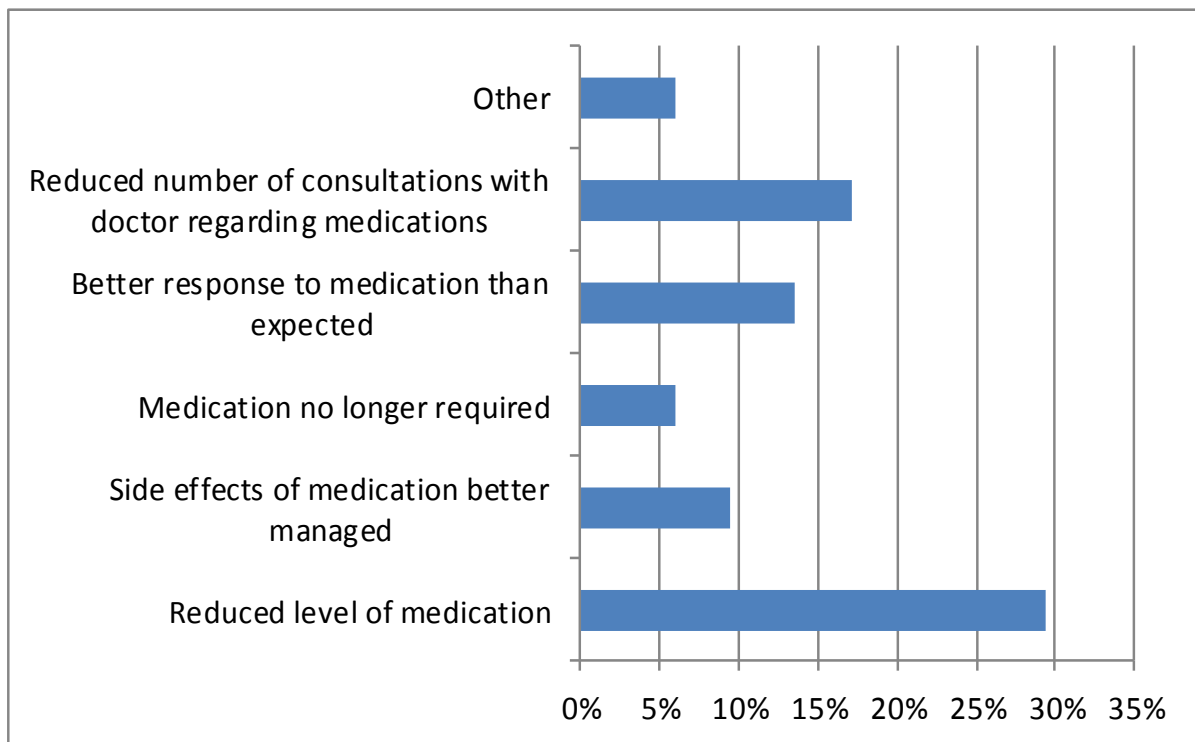


Figure 6

(N=490)

“I am reasonably certain that I have less pain as a result of tai chi practice, therefore I do not need to visit my doctor very often and do not need to take frequent or constant analgesics.”
(gender unspecified, age range 70 – 79)

“Taoist Tai Chi has meant that I am on no prescribed medications. My GP is amazed.”
(male, age range 60 – 69)

“Tai chi has helped my asthma and I have not needed to use my Ventolin as much as I had before I started Tai Chi”
(female, age range under 20)

As a result of your practice, have you avoided surgery (hips, knees, carpal tunnel...)?

Number responding 548

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	174	32%

Therefore, 13% of the total sample (1334 respondents) reported that *Taoist Tai Chi*™ arts had assisted them to avoid or postpone surgery.

“Have avoided having spinal surgery due to increased mobility of lower back / spine.”
(Male, age range 70 -79)

“My condition is inoperable however I now have fewer falls and an improved quality of life.”
(Female, age range 60 -69)

“Surgery was recommended for instability in lumbar spine, a multi-level fusion being an option. Improved function and less severe episodes of spasm and pain allows me to live with the condition”
(Female, age range 70 -79)

“My orthopedic surgeon is amazed that i am still moving comfortably given the arthritic state of my knees. He says he won't operate (and I don't want him to) until I am feeling pain.”
(Female, age range 60 -69)

“Diagnosed with carpal tunnel - but condition improved back to normal - so no longer need surgery”
(Male, age range 70 -79)

Has your practice improved your balance?

Number responding

1101

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	1020	93%

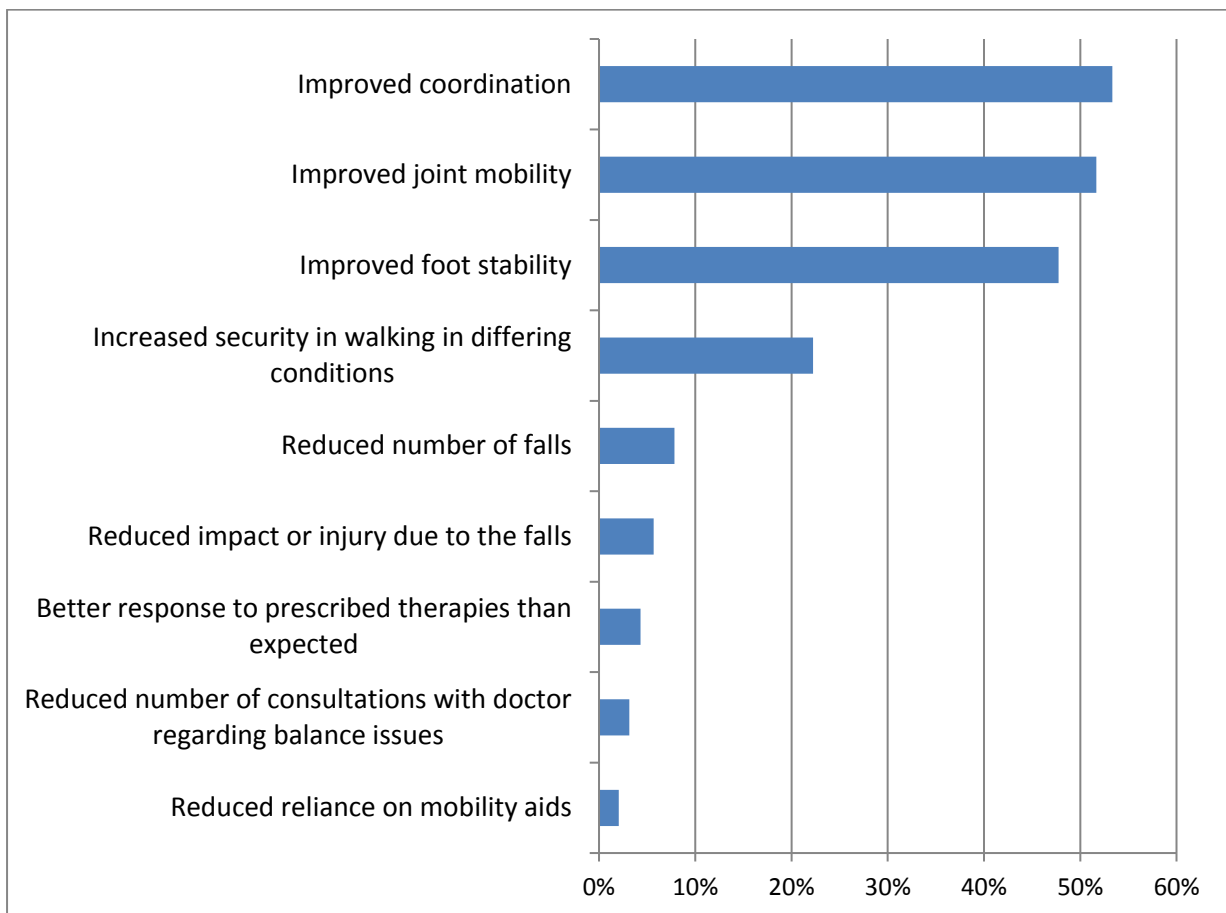


Figure 7

(N=1020)

“I have peripheral neuropathy in my feet which resulted in poor balance. My balance has improved considerably - now unless people are told, nobody would realise I have the condition.”

(Female, age range 70 -79)

“I’m on continuous chemotherapy medication and found that balance, coordination, concentration and stress levels have improved.”

(Female, age range 60 -69)

“Prevention is far better than cure! Increased flexibility and balance has provided more active lifestyle”

(Female, age range 60 -69)

Has your practice improved your mobility?

Number responding 856

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	689	80%

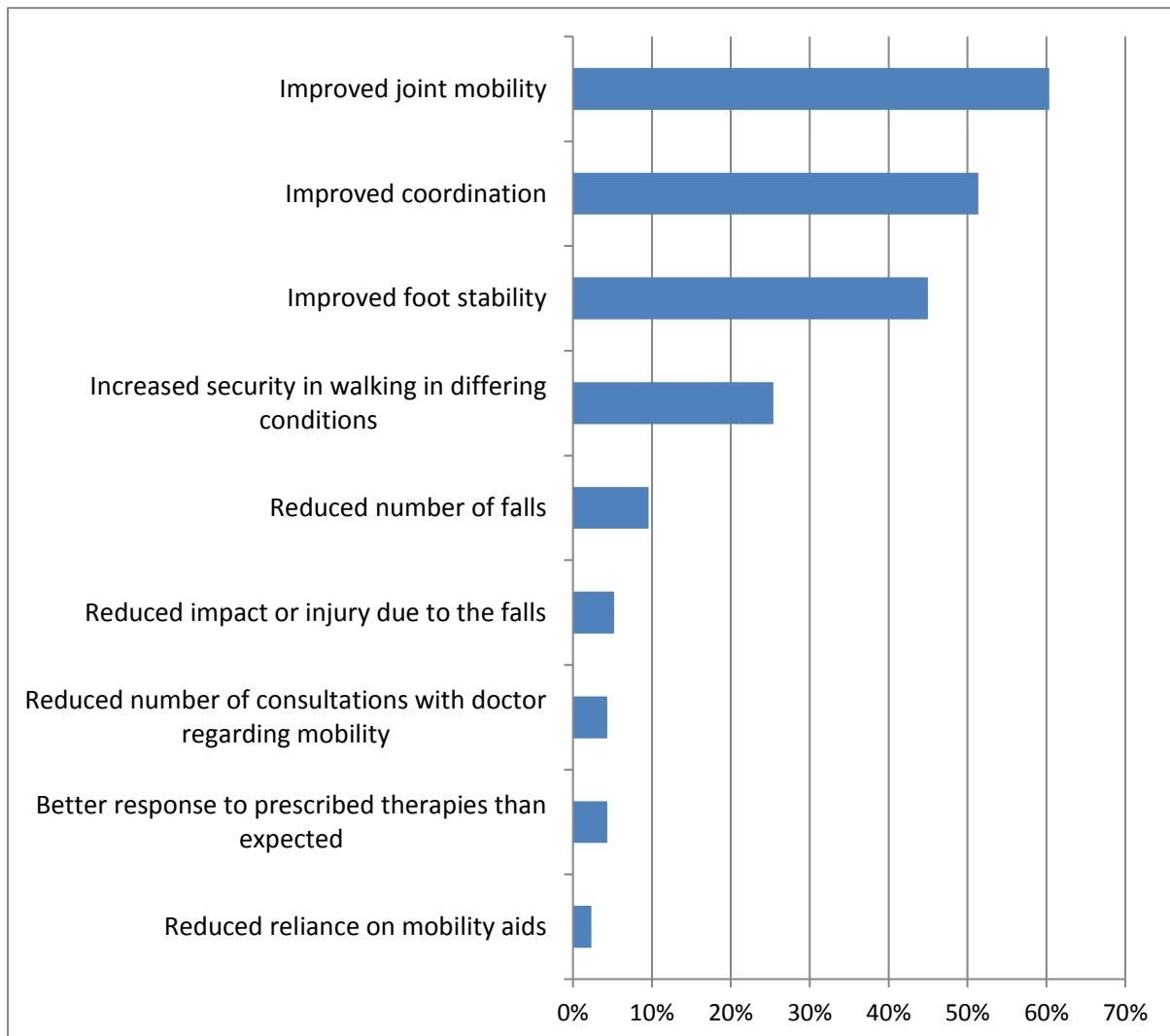


Figure 8

(N=689)

“Due to an accident, I was left with pain throughout my back and spasms in my lower legs. After 8 months of tai chi the pain and spasms lessened. Today I am pain free. Now and again I get a little bit of lower leg spasm. When I joined tai chi I also could not move my foot beyond say 22 degrees but now I can turn it to 90 degrees”

(Female, age range 60 -69)

“Two years prior to commencing tai chi I suffered a prolapsed disc in the lower back causing impaired mobility and low level intermittent pain. Practicing tai chi on a regular basis has eliminated these problems and I no longer need physiotherapy or chiropractic treatment.”

(Male, age range 60 -69)

Has your practice affected your bone density?

Number responding 241

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	105	44%

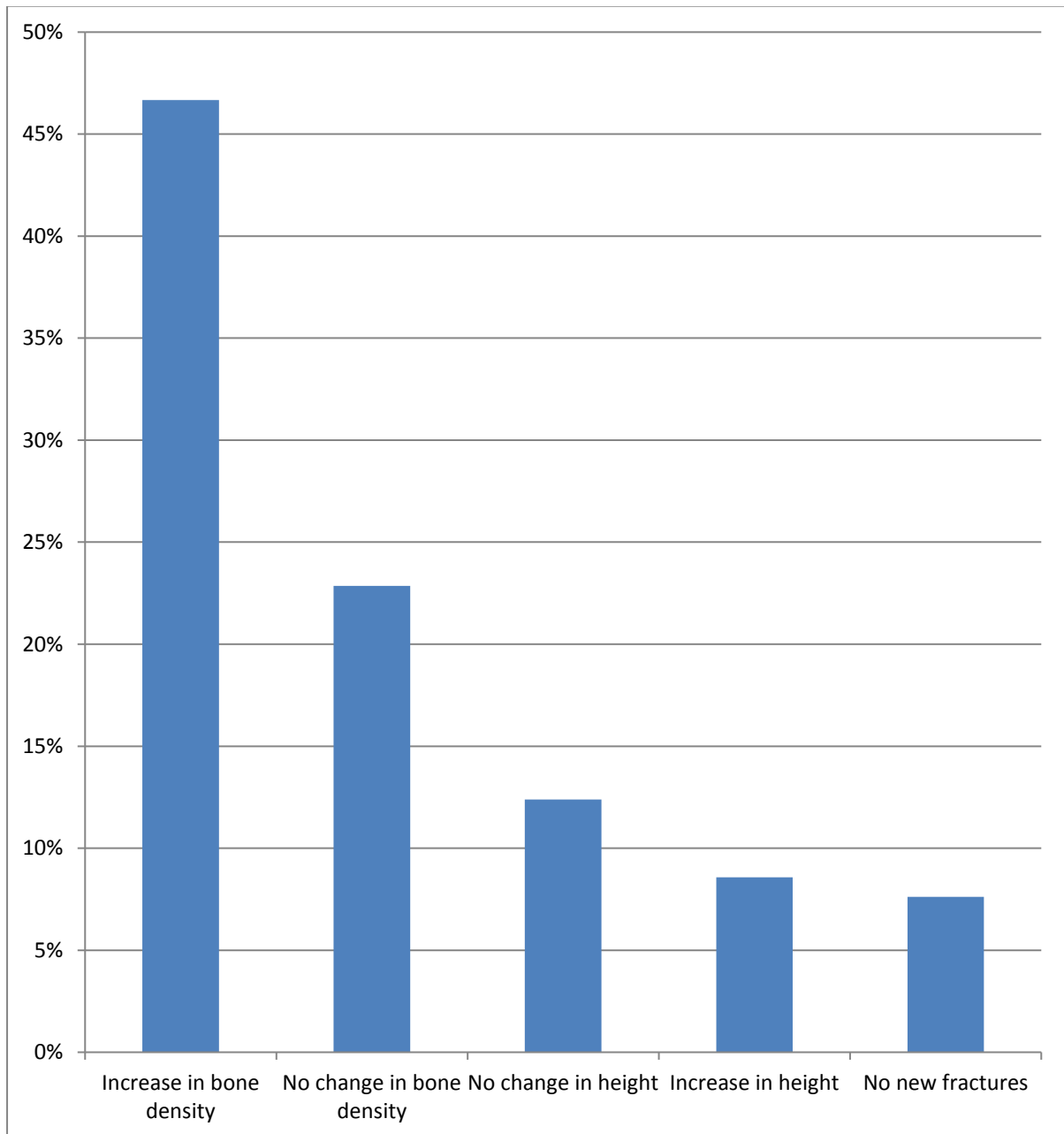


Figure 9

(N=105)

Has your practice affected your mental health?

Number responding 982

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	815	83%

Therefore, 61% of the total sample (1334) reported that practice of Taoist Tai Chi(tm) arts had affected their mental health.

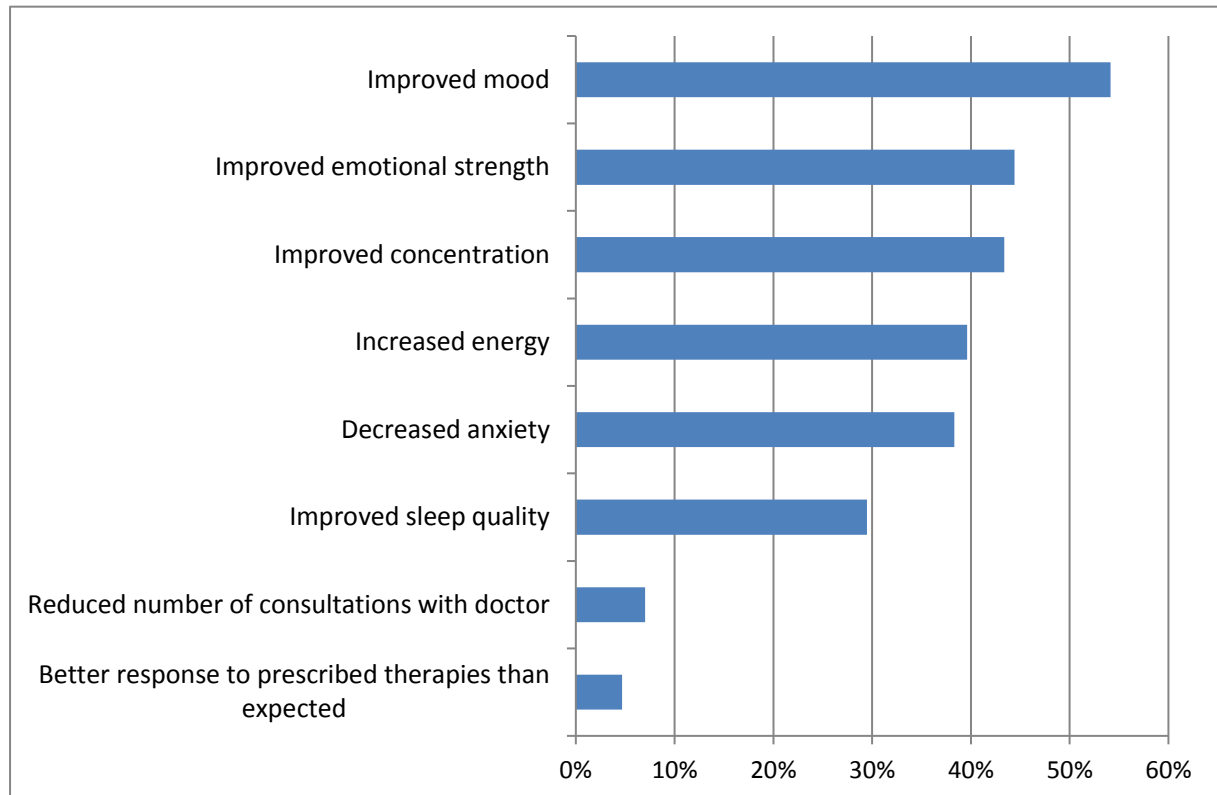


Figure 10

(N=770)

“Taoist Tai Chi is a wonderful art of health. It has helped me through the most stressful times of my life, and in recovering from injury and illness. Practicing every day has definitely enhanced my sense of wellbeing.”

(Male, age range 60 -69)

“A ready way to de-stress, correct posture at work, calm down, relate better to family, focus.”

(Female, age range 40 -59)

“Great for my bipolar disorder. Controlled calm environment with focused physical practices has helped me very much.”

(Male, age range 20 -39)

“It has helped me so much with my depression. I use to be a negative thinker and am very much a positive thinker now.”

(Female, age range 40 -59)

“The fog in my brain has lifted. I can think a lot more clearly. I feel optimistic and strong”

(Female, age range 40 -59)

Has your practice impacted your social situation?

Number responding 1088

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	880	81%

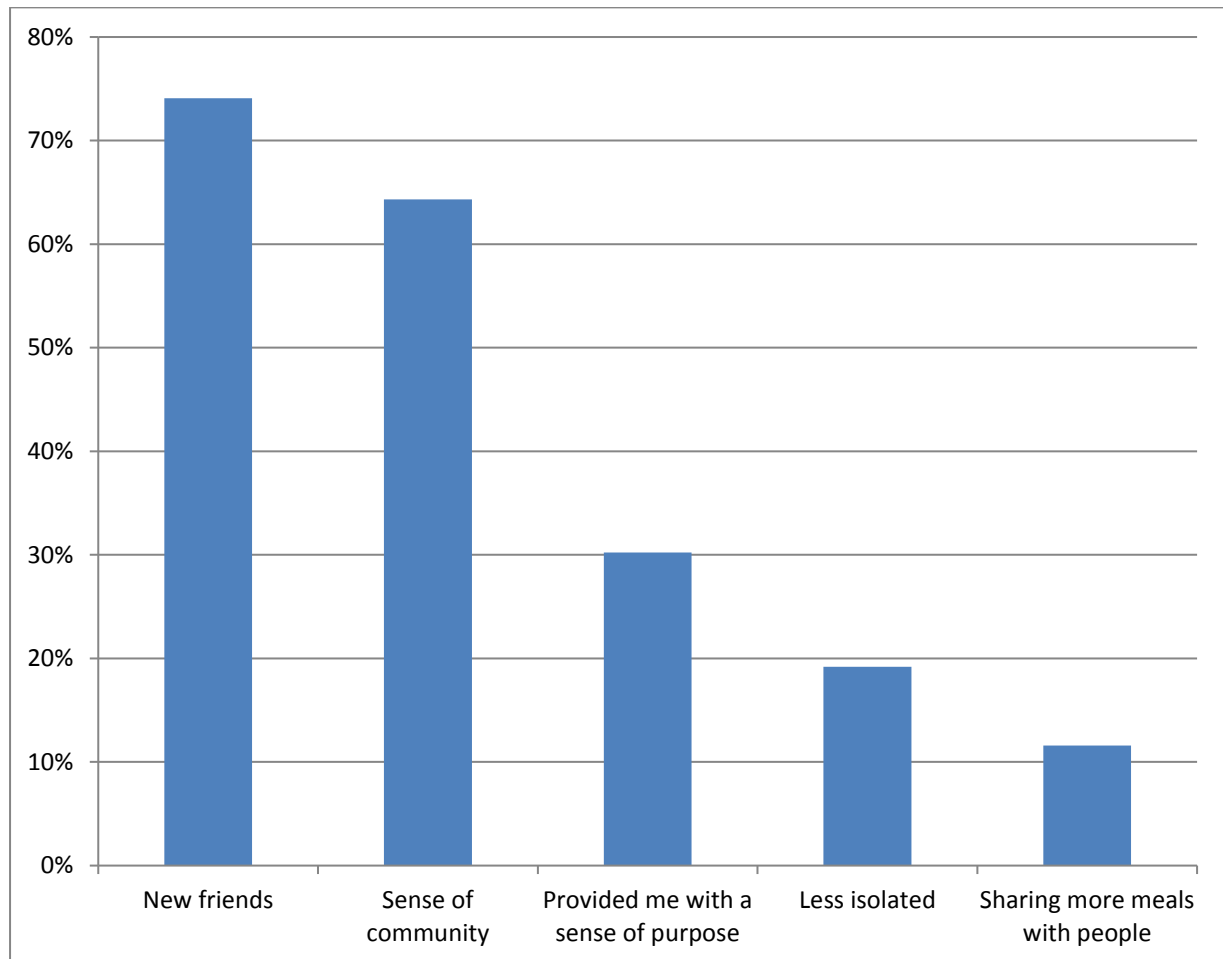


Figure 11

(N=880)

“The social aspect is a tremendous benefit. I have made real friends that I meet out of class times.”

(Gender unspecified, age range 70 -79)

“Tai Chi helps me in physical, mental, emotional and spiritual ways. The social contact is very important to me as I live on my own and can become isolated.”

(Female, age range 60 -69)

“Tai Chi has widened my circle of friends and provided me with an invaluable feeling of belonging.”

(Male, age range 60 -69)

How soon after you started your practice did you experience any improvement in your health?

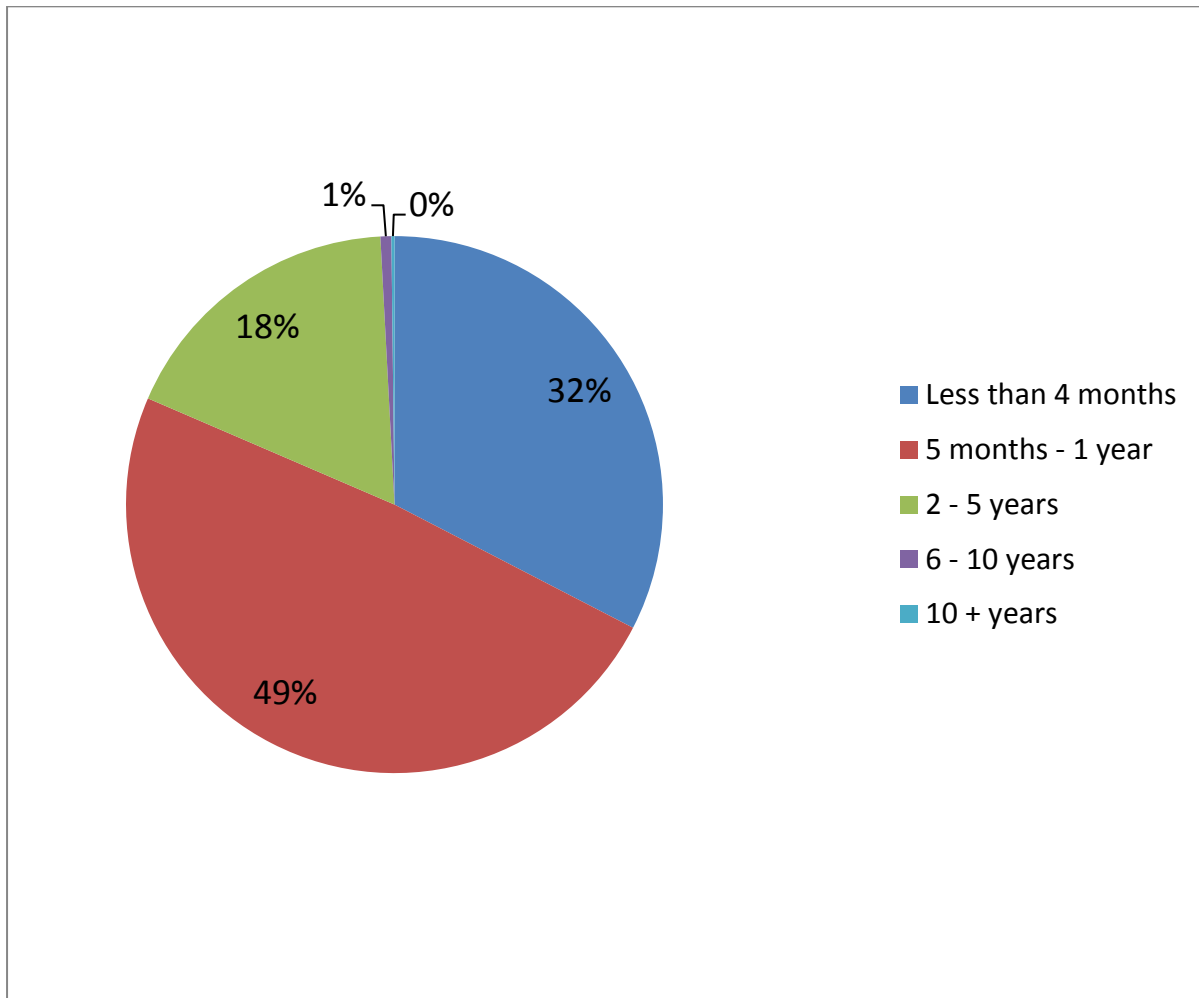


Figure 12

(N=1074)

“Though too early in practice to say (attended 5 classes) I feel energy levels improved. Feel more motivated + manage joint mobility better.”

“In Feb 16, I crushed vertebrae in my back, skiing in Japan. I stayed in hospital for a month. I came back to Aust with a back brace & medical assistance. I started tai chi 2 weeks later. After 4 months, I tried to get off pain relief but after 2 days I could barely walk or sit. I went to my tai chi class thinking I would just watch, but started to participate and after 2 hours, could walk normally. None of the other physio etc could do this! After 6 months, I went to a spinal neurosurgeon who referred me to specific fitness classes which I attended for 8 weeks. These confirmed for me that everything we do in Tai Chi was very similar. After 9 months, I am off pain killers & of all the treatments, Tai Chi I credit the most for my recuperation.” (Male, age range 40 -59)

Questions related to Home Care:

	Yes Responses
Do you require professional home care?	27
Do you require a family member/friend to provide you with care?	27
As a result of your practice, have you experienced any changes in your home care needs?	7

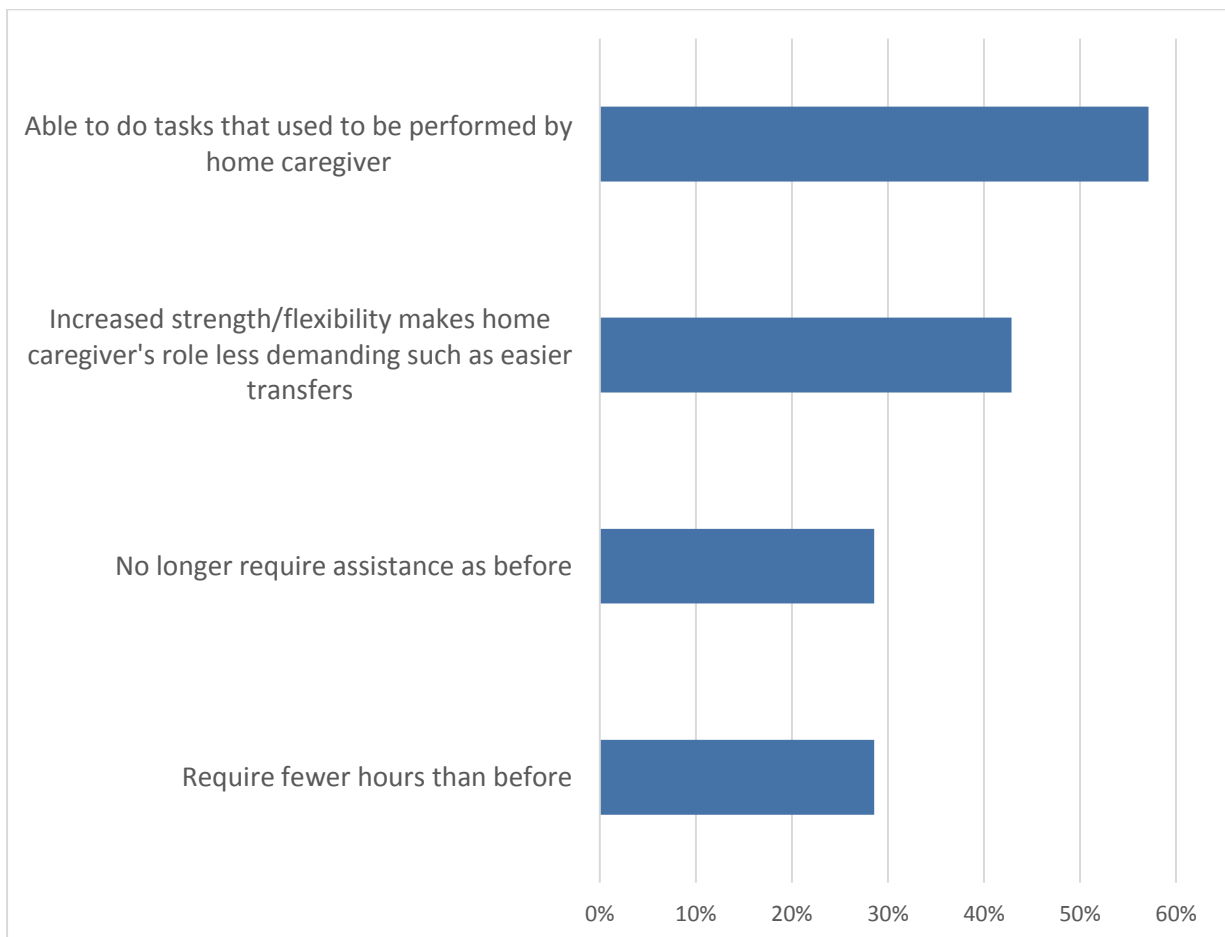


Figure 13

(N=7)

Are you a caregiver for a loved one?

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	120	9

If yes, how has your practice impacted the care situation in your home?

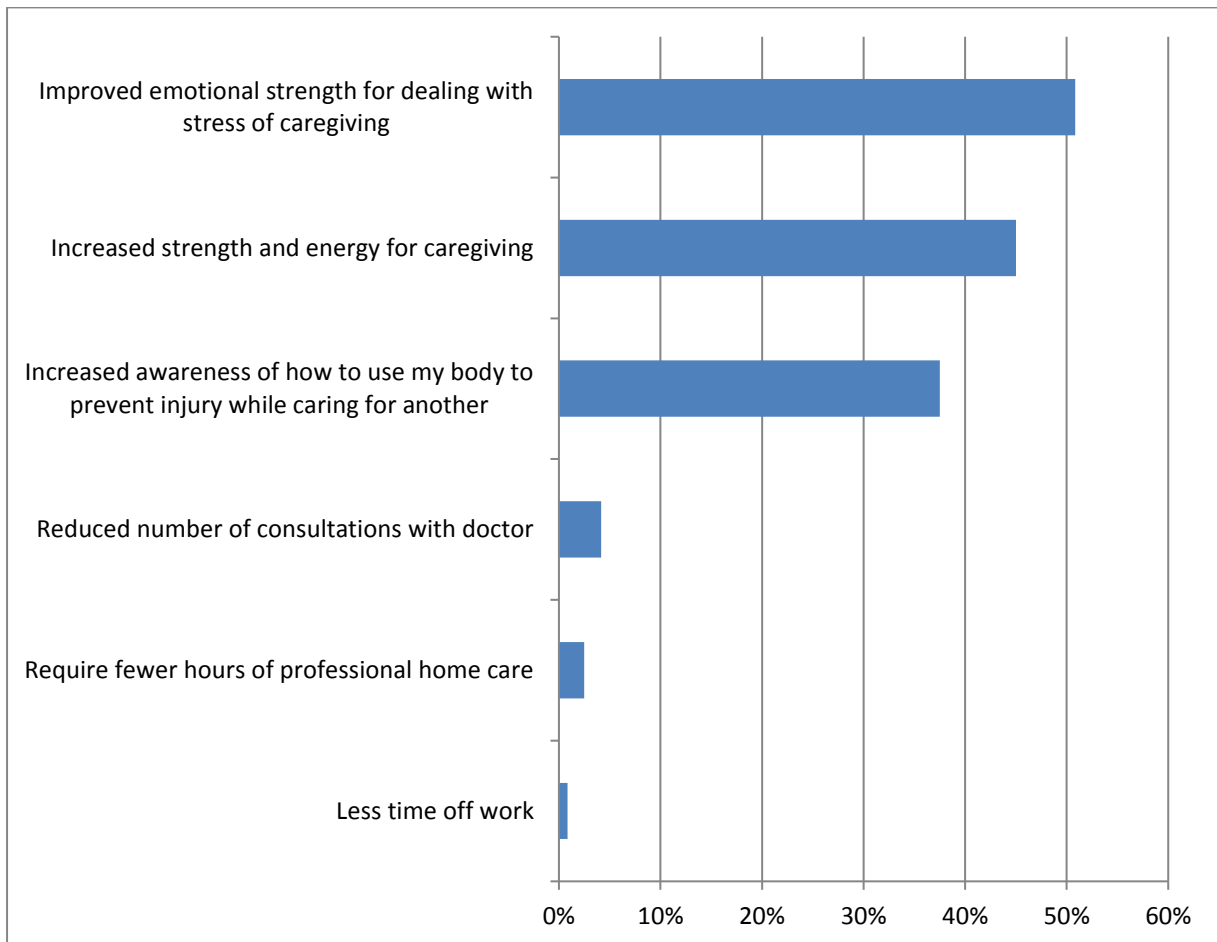


Figure 14

(N=120)

“Tai chi is a great safety valve in giving respite to me as a full time carer of a frail husband and daughter with multiple health issues.”

(Female, age range 70 -79)

“My life has been devoted to the care of others and family in need which has stretched over 30 years. For the first time in my life since childhood, I am doing something for me and I enjoy it.”

(Female, age range 70 -79)

“After a period of absence of 2 years from tai chi, my balance has deteriorated (also because of failing eyesight). I am returning to tai chi to the Health Recovery class. I am using tai chi to help me remain at home and also keep my husband home. I am his main caregiver.”

(Female, age range 80 -89)

AND SOME OTHER COMMENTS

“I’ve no health problems Just love tai chi”

(Female, age range 70 -79)

“Can now climb steps to clean windows & wash curtains
Sense of being more independent”

(Female, age range 80 -89)

“By maintaining my well-being & overall motivation I am more independent & less reliant on health services & more proactive with tools to use on my own”

(Female, age range 60 -69)

“At the age of 76 years I have only required health support for a couple of minor health issues. I practice tai chi twice weekly in a group and most days some form at home. In the company of my own age group I realize how much flexibility my body still has. I am able to put in a full day of physical work e.g. garden, farm general light duties”

(Female, age range 70 -79)

“Overall my well-being has improved; become more relaxed, much calmer in dealing with stressful situations in daily work / home / social life. Migraines have recurred less.”

(Female, age range 40 -59)

“Improves my general well-being. A special space to go to - friendly, welcoming, quiet, reflective. I always feel better when I leave - even when I feel my tai chi was not too good!”

(Female, age range 60 -69)

“I am a far better person - as an individual and a member of society - physically, mentally and spiritually.”

(Male, age range 60 -69)

“My doctor keeps telling me NEVER to give up tai chi.”

(Female, age range 70 -79)

“Tai chi gives me a good work out without the pain associated with other exercises. I LOVE IT!!”

(Female, age range 40 -59)

“I have found a path to immediate relaxation.”

(Female, age range 40 -59)



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