

# Emotional and mental health support needs of young onset (YO) colorectal cancer patients

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## BACKGROUND

- The incidence of young onset (YO; diagnosed before the age of 45) colorectal cancer (CRC) is rising.
- Compared to CRC patients diagnosed at an older age, YO CRC patients tend to present with advanced tumors, are more likely to receive more aggressive treatments, live with disease and treatment-associated symptoms for longer periods of time, and face the stress of experiencing a life-threatening illness and the financial burden of treatment at a young age.
- YO patients may have unique emotional and mental health support needs compared to older CRC patients (OP; diagnosed at age 45 years or above).

## AIMS

- To assess and describe the emotional and mental health support needs of YO CRC patients to inform efforts to improve quality of life.

## METHODS

- Cancer Support Community (CSC) and the Colorectal Cancer Alliance launched a joint initiative to understand the unique needs of CRC patients by enrolling participants with a CRC diagnosis into Cancer Support Community's Cancer Experience Registry® (CER).
- In August 2022, 103 CER participants with CRC who reported post-diagnosis emotional or mental health concerns completed an online survey to assess emotional and mental health needs, access, and barriers.
- Of those participants, 31% were YO (<45 years old at time of diagnosis) and 69% OP (≥45 at time of diagnosis).
- Chi-square tests were used to assess group differences.

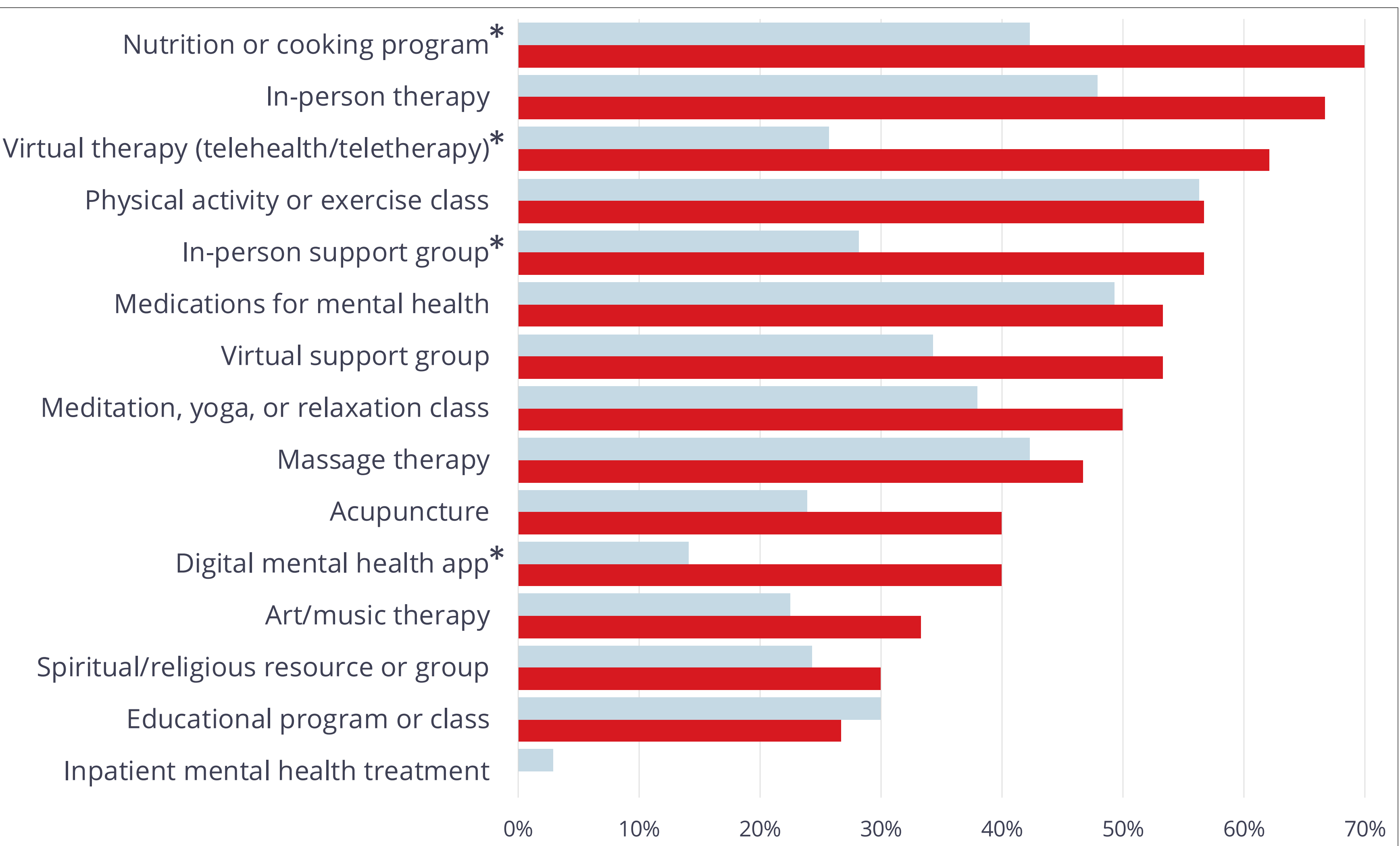
## PARTICIPANTS

	Total sample (n=103)	YO sample (n=32)	OP sample (n=71)
<b>Age (years)* range (24-82)</b>	M=55 (SD=12)	M=42.9 (SD=7.3)	M=60.5 (SD=8.4)
<b>Race &amp; Ethnicity</b>			
Non-Hispanic White	87%	94%	85%
Non-Hispanic Black	5%	3%	6%
Non-Hispanic other/Multiracial	4%	3%	4%
Hispanic	3%	0%	4%
<b>Gender Identity</b>			
Man	33%	31%	34%
Woman	67%	69%	66%
<b>Household Income*</b>			
<\$40K	16%	6%	20%
≥\$40K	67%	75%	63%
Not reported	18%	19%	17%
<b>Education*</b>			
Some or no college	24%	13%	30%
Associate/Bachelor degree	53%	75%	44%
Graduate degree	22%	13%	27%
<b>Time since diagnosis (years)</b>	M=3.9 (SD=4.6) Median=2.0 IQR=4.0	M=4.6 (SD=6.1) Median=2.0 IQR=5.8	M=3.6 (SD=3.7) Median=2.0 IQR=4.0

\*indicates group difference  $p<.05$  using Chi-Square test for categorical variables and T-tests for continuous variables

## RESULTS

### Types of Emotional and Mental Health Support Participants Wanted



■ OP CRC Sample (diagnosed ≥ age 45) ■ YO CRC Sample (diagnosed < age 45)

#### Group Differences

**YO patients were significantly more likely\* than OP to want emotional and mental health support in the form of:**

Nutrition or cooking programs (**70% vs. 42%**)

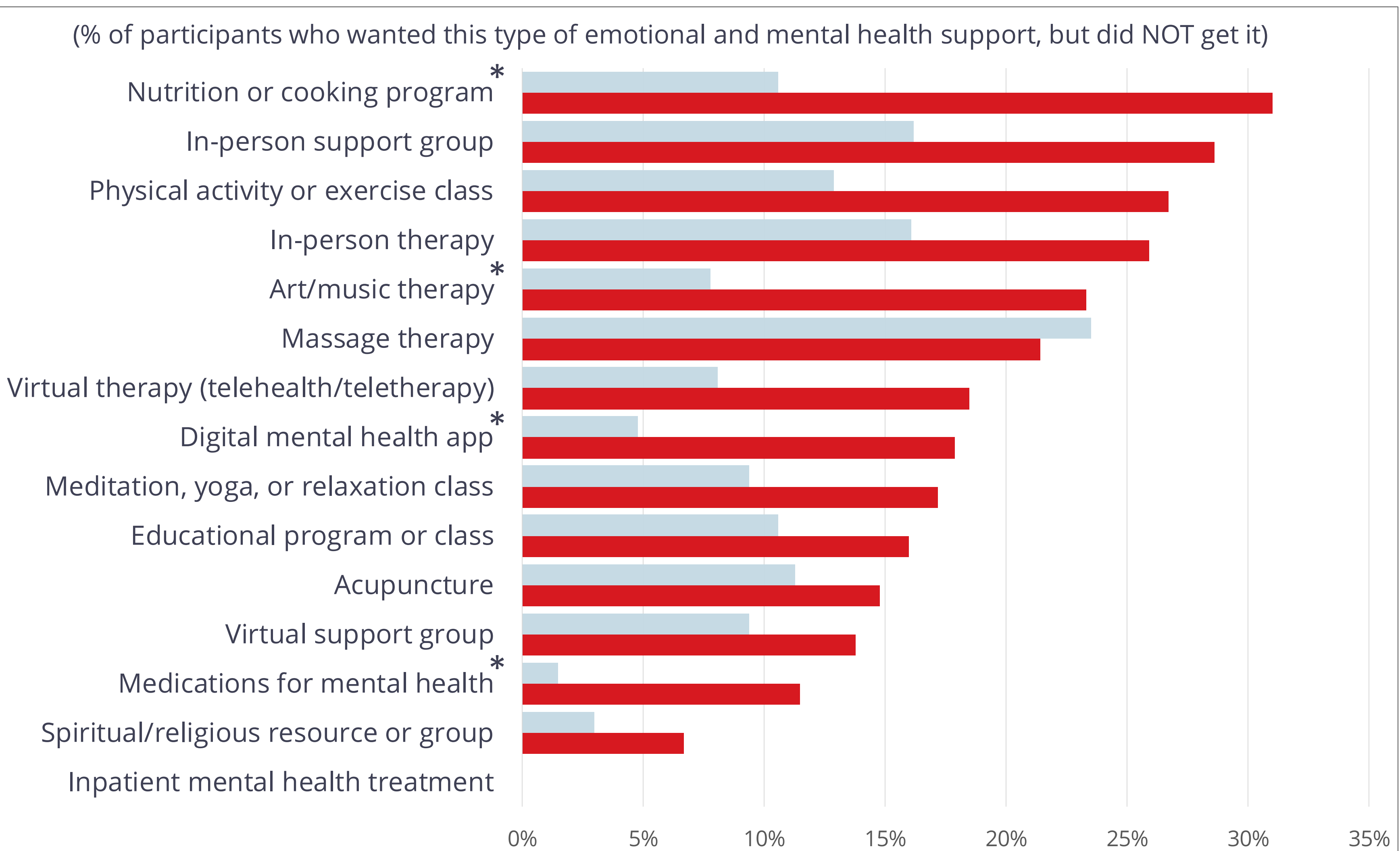
Virtual therapy (telehealth) (**62% vs. 26%**)

In-person support groups (**57% vs. 28%**)

Digital mental health apps (**40% vs. 14%**)

\*indicates group difference  $p<.05$  using Chi-Square test

### Unmet Emotional and Mental Health Support Needs Among Participants



■ OP CRC Sample (diagnosed ≥ age 45) ■ YO CRC Sample (diagnosed < age 45)

#### Group Differences

**YO patients were significantly more likely\* than OP to have unmet needs in the form of:**

Nutrition or cooking programs (**31% vs. 11%**)

Art/music therapy (**23% vs. 8%**)

Digital mental health apps (**18% vs. 5%**)

Medications for mental health (**12% vs. 2%**)

\*indicates group difference  $p<.05$  using Chi-Square test

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

- Regardless of age at diagnosis, CRC patients who report post-diagnosis emotional or mental health concerns desire various types of treatment and support for mental health care.
- YO patients diagnosed with CRC at or before the age of 45 exhibit different mental and emotional health support needs compared to those diagnosed later in life.
- Gaps remain in providing emotional and mental health support, and programs tailored to YO patients' specific wants and needs are warranted.

