Parent Peers in Crisis Services: Results of a 2025 State Survey

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT of HEALTH SERVICES

(04/2026)

Summary

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services is transforming Wisconsin's system of services for people experiencing mental health and substance use emergencies to align with the national framework for these services known as Crisis Now.

The Crisis Now model features three components:

- Someone to contact
- Someone to respond
- A safe place to get help

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration recommends emergency services for mental health and substance use provide opportunities for families with children experiencing a crisis to have contact with parent peers who share the experience of supporting someone with mental health and substance use concerns. Given the feelings of isolation and fear that may accompany supporting someone during a mental health and substance use emergency, this parent peer-to-peer connection can provide the hope and support needed for healing and recovery.

The Division of Care and Treatment Services created a survey, open April 14, 2025, through June 9, 2025, to learn more about parent peer support in Wisconsin, specifically parent peer support in crisis services. Some questions were only asked based on answers from previous questions. This survey was intended for people at least 18 years of age who identify as a parent peer. It was not for people who identified solely as an individual peer specialist or peer recovery coach. People who identify as an individual peer specialist or peer recovery coach were invited to complete a similar survey in 2023. Parent peers were invited to complete this survey through emails from the Division of Care and Treatment Services and the Wisconsin Peer Specialist Employment Initiative managed by Access to Independence as well as posts on the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Facebook, X, and LinkedIn feeds. This survey also was promoted at the 2025 Wisconsin Peer Recovery Conference.

This is a report on the submitted responses. All questions were optional. A total of 154 people completed all or part of the survey. Duplicate responses with the same name and contact information were removed from the results. The first response submitted by these individuals was included in the results.

Highlights of the data

Parent peer identity

- Nearly half identified as a certified parent peer specialist.
- Almost 70% have experience supporting someone with mental health/substance use crisis services.
- More than two-thirds have more than 10 years of experience caring for an individual with mental health and substance use challenges.

Identity of the person the parent peer supports

- Of the individuals supported by parent peers, 60% have lived experience with substance use.
- Almost 70% of the individuals supported by parent peers are under the age of 35.
- Nearly 70% of the individuals supported by parent peers have experience with mental health and substance use crisis services.

Overall parent peer work experience

- Over half are employed in the parent peer field.
- The average hourly rate of pay for people working in parent peer services is $26.97.
- Of those currently employed part-time in the parent peer field, nearly two thirds of respondents are interested in working in the parent peer field full-time.
- The top reasons for leaving the parent peer field include employment opportunities, living wage, and training/employer support.

Parent peer crisis services experience

- A majority have experience working as a parent peer in mental health and substance use crisis services.
- The most desired setting for parent peers to work in is community intensive follow-up services.

Identity of parent peer

These questions were included in the survey to understand the characteristics of people who identify as parent peers.

Parent peer classification

Question: For work experience purposes, how do you identify? Select all that apply.
141 responses, 99% response rate

45%
Certified parent peer specialist

42%
Parent peer (uncertified)

18%
Other*

*Other included peer, job titles, and licensures.

Question: Do you have any other certifications or peer focused identities? Select all that apply.
104 responses, 73% response rate

Certified peer specialist	45%
Individual peer (uncertified)	44%
Recovery coach	28%

Barriers to becoming a certified parent peer specialist

This question was only asked to respondents that did not identify as a certified parent peer specialist.

Question: Select the option(s) that best describes why you are not a certified parent peer specialist.
75 responses, 97% response rate

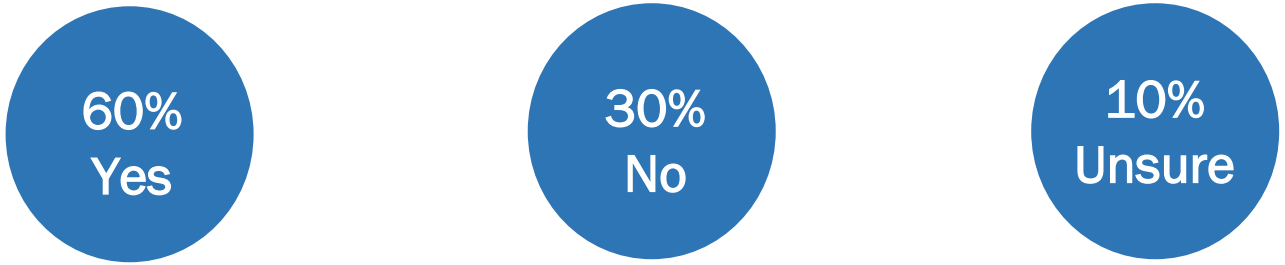
Training (dates, times, and needs)	32%
Other (write-in required)*	39%
Lack of funding	12%
Lack of employer support	8%
Readiness	8%
Stigma	7%
Not interested	7%
Certification lapsed	4%

*Other included not knowing a certification existed, not needing the certification for a job, not having access to training for the certification due to the dates it has been offered, etc., needing to complete the training and enrolled in a future training, waiting to take the certification exam, failing the certification exam, having other certifications, and not currently employed.

Parent peer lived experience

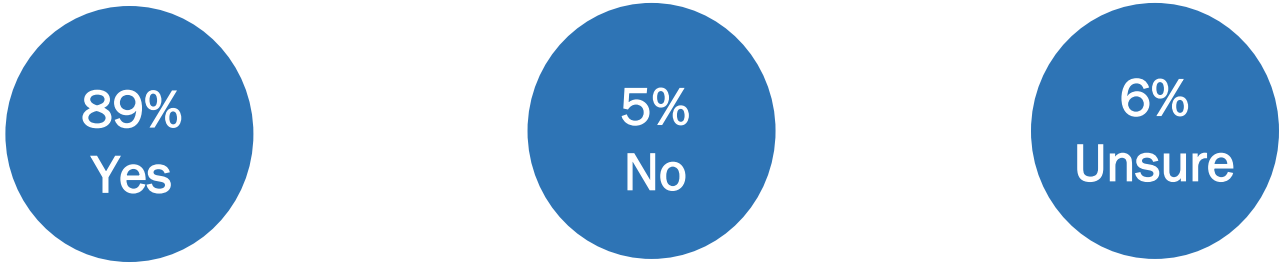
Caring for someone with lived experience with substance use

Question: Does the person you support in your caregiving role have lived experience with substance use?
142 responses, 99% response rate



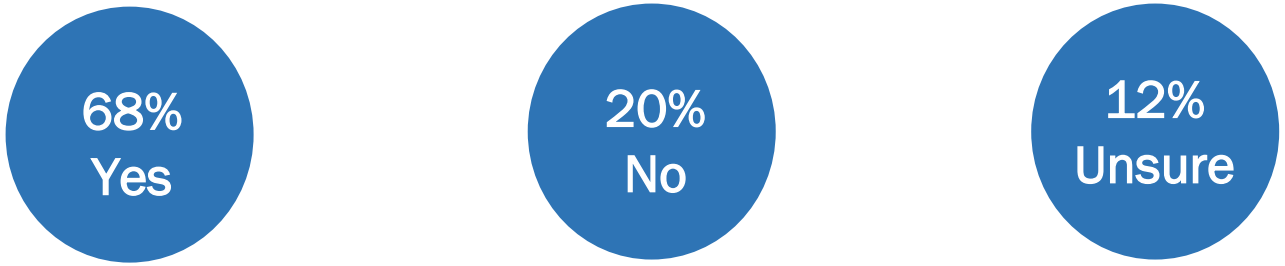
Caring for someone with lived experience with mental health

Question: Does the person you support in your caregiving role have lived experience with mental health?
140 responses, 98% response rate



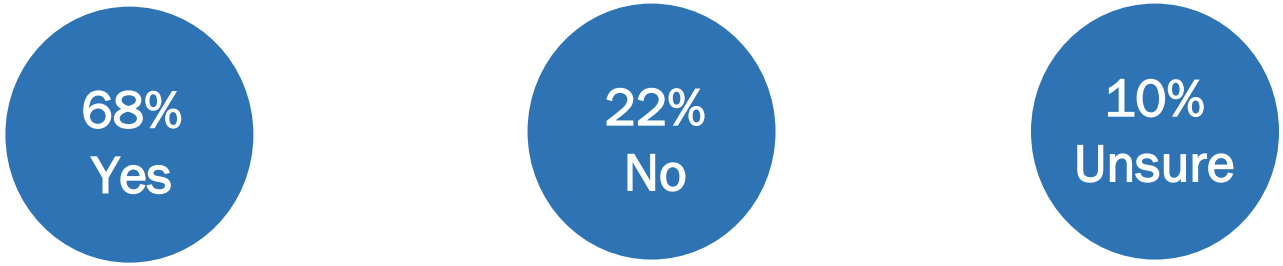
Caring for someone with lived experience with crisis services

Question: Does the person you support in your caregiving role have lived experience with mental health and/or substance use crisis services?
142 responses, 99% response rate



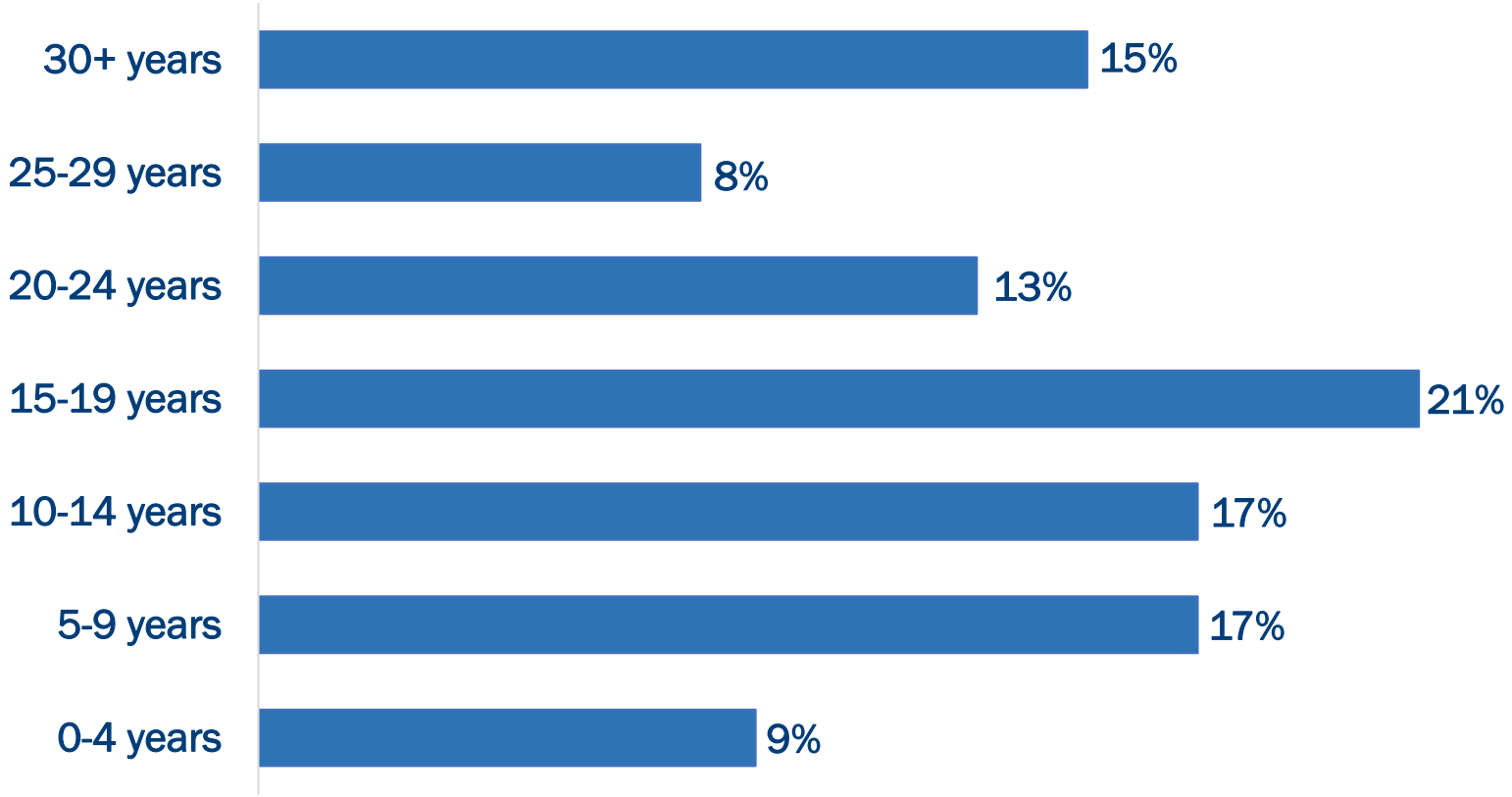
Caring for someone with lived experience with county crisis services

Question: Does the person you support in your caregiver role have lived experience with a county mental health and/or substance use crisis services system? Examples: crisis line, mobile crisis response, stabilization facilities, community intensive follow up, safety plan development, social worker team.
142 responses, 99% response rate



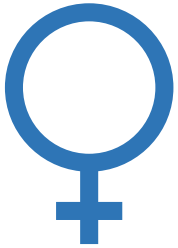
Years of lived experience as a caregiver

Question: How many years of lived experience do you have caring for an individual with behavioral health challenges?
142 responses, 99% response rate

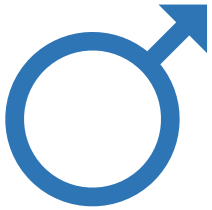


Parent peer gender

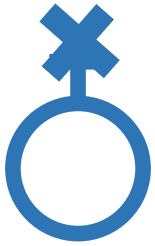
Question: Select the option(s) that best describes how you identify.
143 responses, 100% response rate



79%
Woman



16%
Man



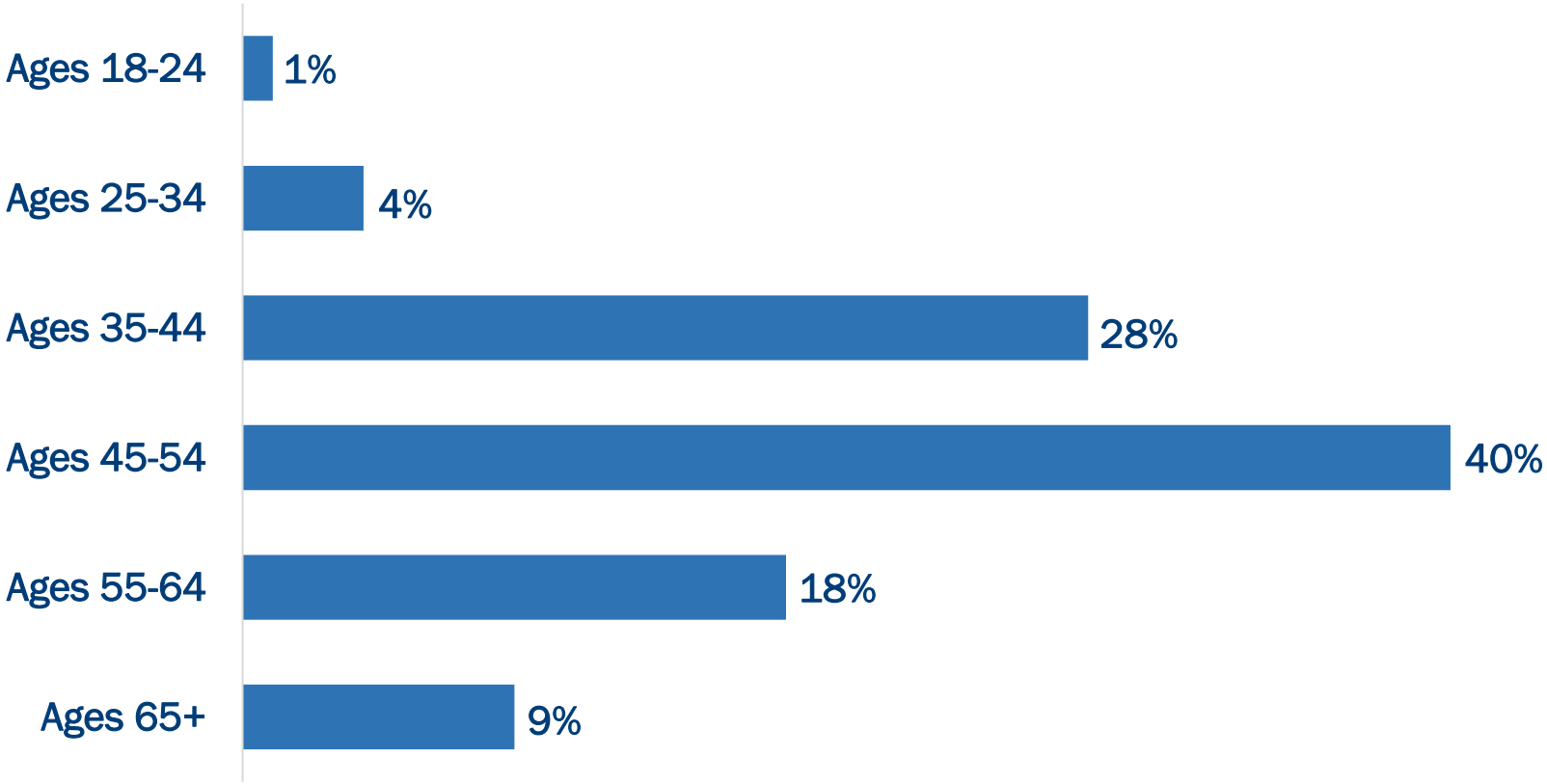
1%
Non-binary/
non-conforming

5%
Preferred not to answer

0%
Other

Parent peer age

Question: Select the option that best describes your age.
141 responses, 99% response rate



Parent peer race and ethnicity

Question: Select the option(s) that best describes you.
138 responses, 97% response rate

White	76%
Black or African American	14%
American Indian or Alaska Native	14%
Other (write-in required)*	1%
Asian	0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1%

*Other included multiracial and prefer not to answer.

All survey takers were asked if the person they support identifies as Hispanic or non-Hispanic. Five percent selected Hispanic.

Parent peer language

Question: Which language(s) do you currently speak?
137 responses, 96% response rate

English	72%
Ojibwe/Ojibwa/Okibwemowin	2%
Spanish	5%
American Sign Language	2%
Arabic	1%
Italian	1%
French	1%

Respondents were able to write in up to four languages.

Parent peer education

Question: Select the option that best describes the highest level of education you have completed.
142 responses, 99% response rate

30%
Bachelor's degree

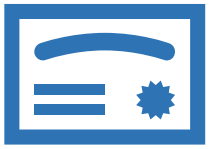
29%
Some college/ no degree

14%
Master's degree

11%
High school diploma or GED

9%
Associate degree

6%
Vocational degree



1%
Doctorate

0%
Less than a high school diploma

0%
Other

Parent peer clinical license

Question: Do you currently hold a clinical license?
141 responses, 99% response rate

Question: Select the option(s) that best describes the clinical license(s) you hold.
7 responses, 100% response rate

Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)	29%
Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC)	0%
Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC)	0%
Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)	14%
Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW)	0%
Clinical Substance Abuse Counselor (CSAC)	14%
Other (write-in required)*	57%

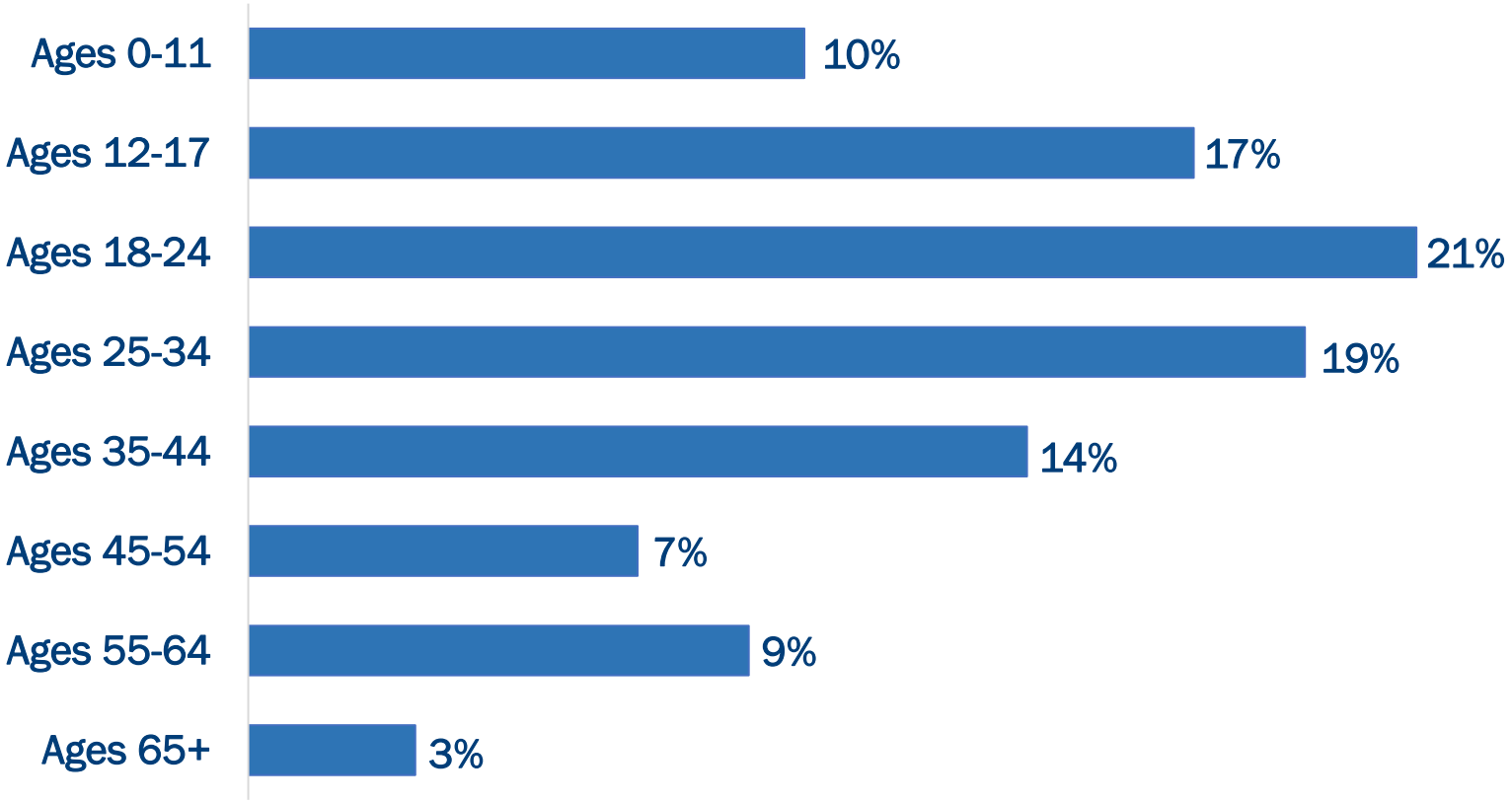
*Other included clinical social worker, private practice school psychologist, physician assistant certified, licensed practical nurse.

Identity of the person the parent peer supports

These questions were included in the survey to understand the characteristics of the person the parent peer supports.

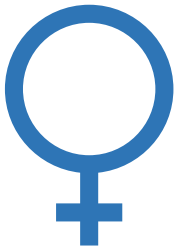
Age of person supported

Question: Select the option that best describes their age.
140 responses, 98% response rate

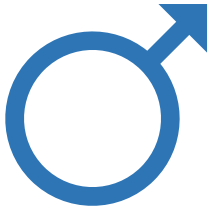


Gender of person supported

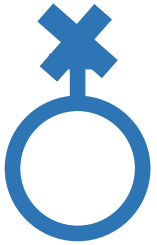
Question: Select the option(s) that best describes their identify.
142 responses, 99% response rate



41%
Woman



48%
Man



6%
Non-binary/non-conforming

14%
Preferred not to answer

3%
Other*
*Other included supporting multiple individuals.

Race and ethnicity of person supported

Question: Select the option(s) that best describes them.
138 responses, 97% response rate

White	70%
Black or African American	21%
American Indian or Alaska Native	17%
Other (write-in required)*	7%
Asian	3%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4%

*Other included multiracial, unsure, and prefer not to answer.

All survey takers were asked if the person they support identifies as Hispanic or non-Hispanic. Nine percent selected Hispanic.

Language of person supported

Question: Which language(s) do they currently speak?
131 responses, 92% response rate

English	68%
Ojibwe/Ojibwa/Okibwemowin	1%
Spanish	3%
American Sign Language	2%
German	1%
Mandarin	1%
Polish	2%
Japanese	1%

Respondents were able to write in up to four languages.

Education of person supported

Question: Select the option that best describes the highest level of education they have completed.
139 responses, 97% response rate

33%
High school diploma or GED

30%
Less than a high school diploma

16%
Some college/ no degree

4%
Associate degree

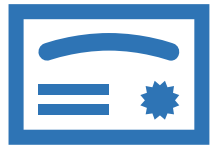
4%
Vocational degree

4%
Bachelor's degree

4%
Other*

*Other included supporting multiple individuals and unsure.

1%
Master's degree



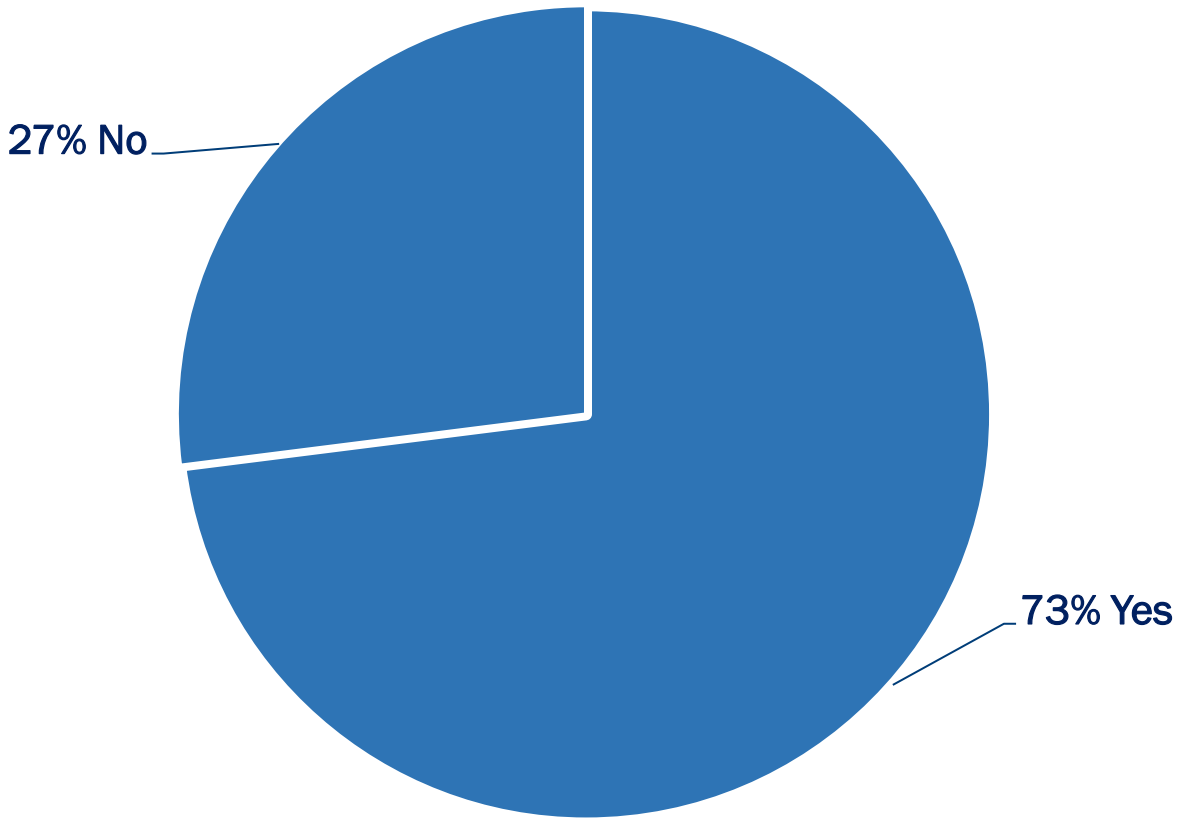
0%
Doctorate degree

Overall parent peer work experience

These questions were included in the survey to understand the current state of the parent peer workforce.

Employment

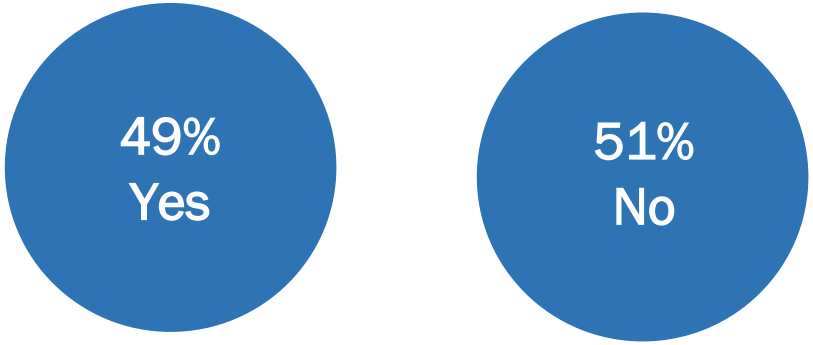
Question: Are you currently employed?
143 responses, 100% response rate



Employment in the parent peer field

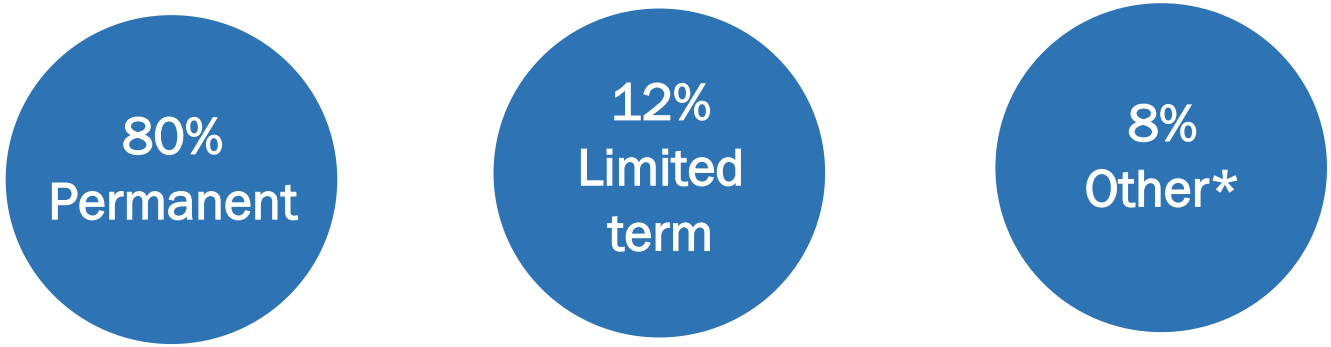
This questions was only asked to people who selected they were employed.

Question: Is your employment in the parent peer field?
102 responses, 97% response rate



This question was only asked to people who were employed in the parent peer field.

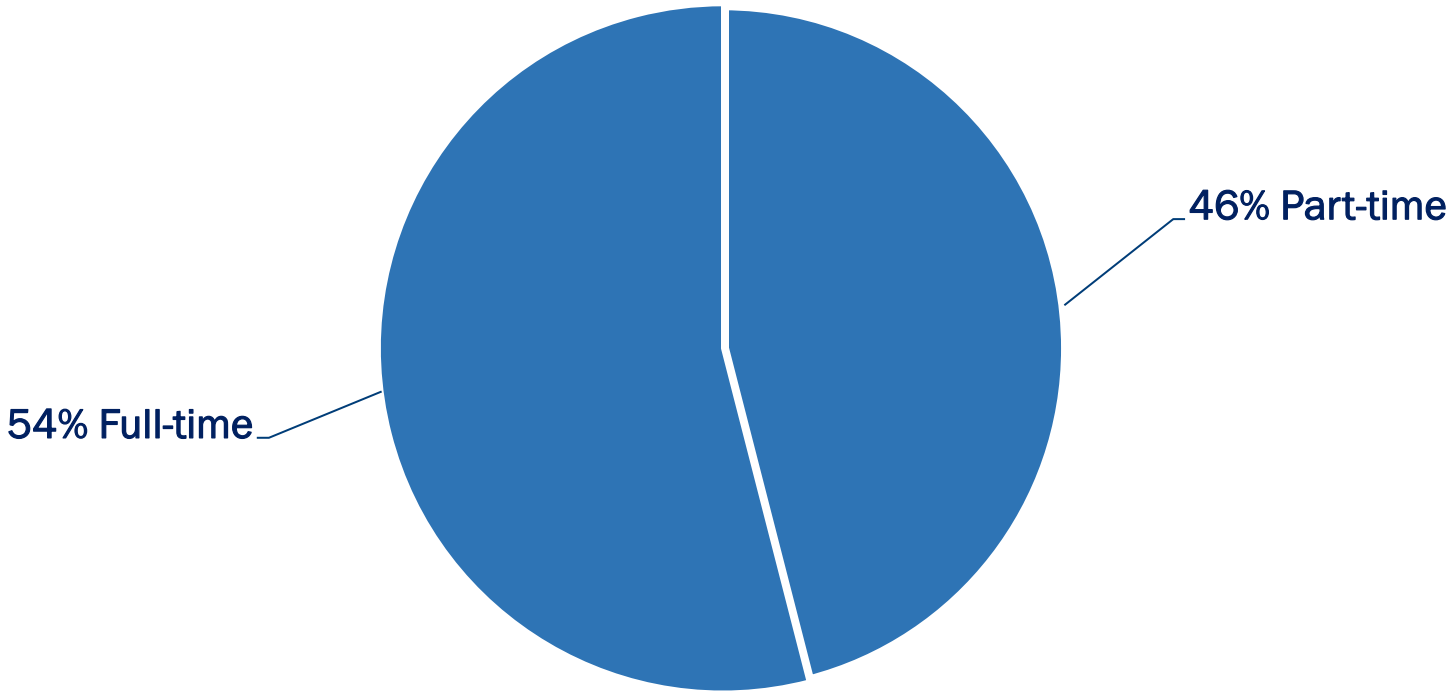
Question: Select the option(s) that best describes your employment status.
49 responses, 98% response rate



*Other included self-employed contract work and referral-based part-time work.

This question was only asked to people who were employed in the parent peer field.

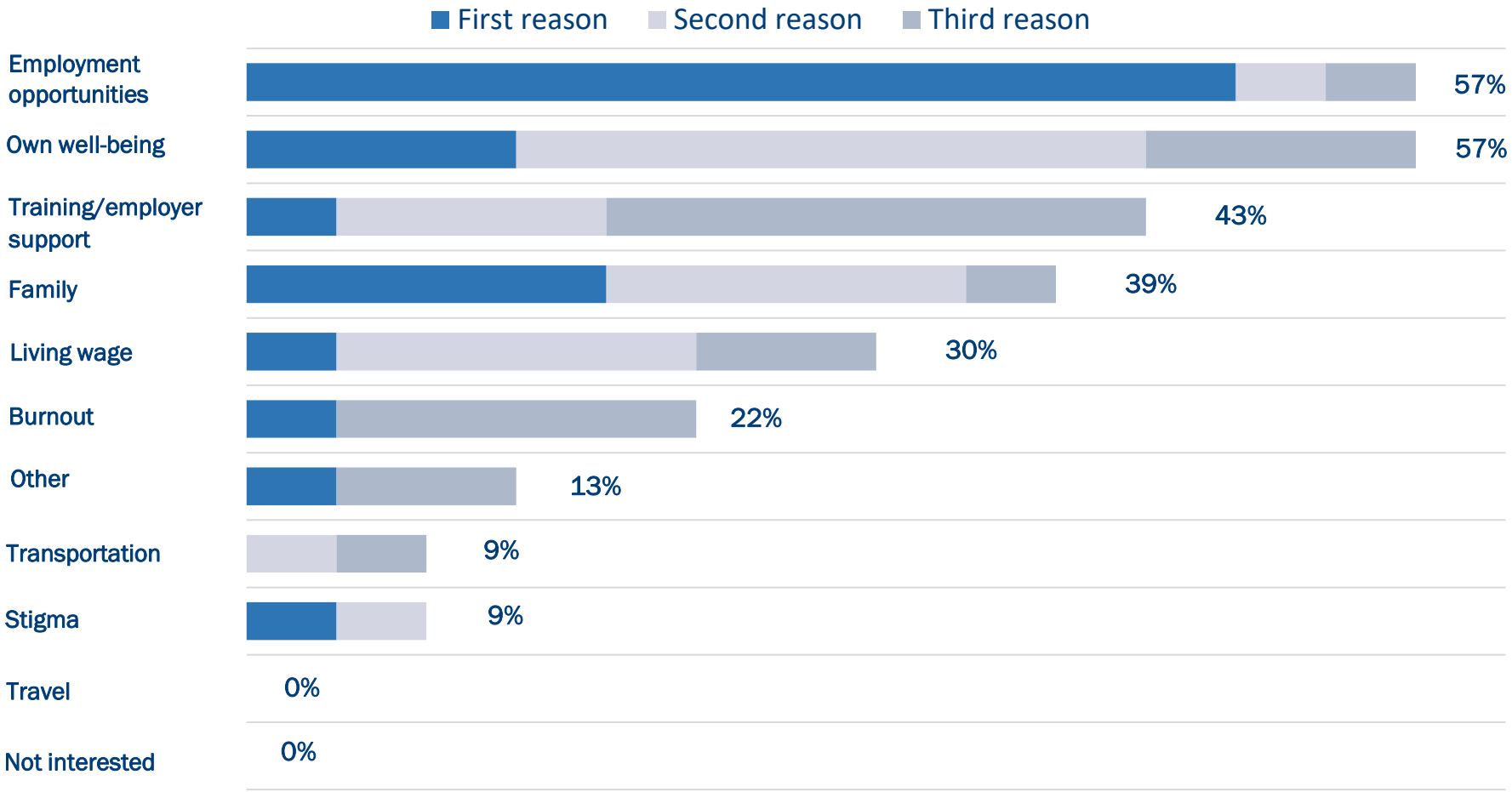
Question: Select the option that best describes your position.
50 responses, 100% response rate



Parent peers who selected they work in the field part-time were asked if they have another job. The majority (68%) said yes, they have secondary employment.

This question was only asked to people who were employed part time in the parent peer field.

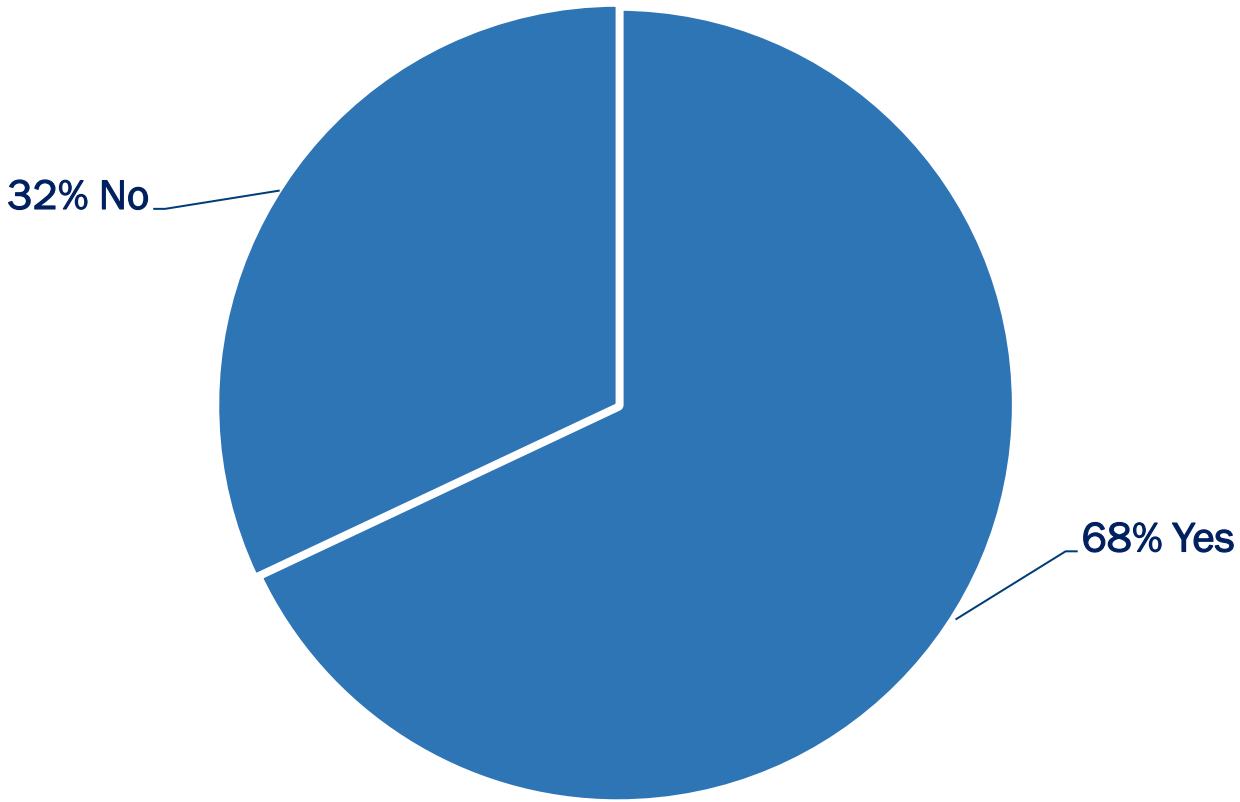
Question: What are the top three reasons you work in the parent peer field part time?
23 responses, 100 response rate



*Other included support and secondary employment.

This question was only asked to people who are employed part time in the parent peer field.

Question: Are you interested in working full time in the parent peer field?
22 responses, 96% response rate



Type of employer

This question was only asked to people who were employed in the parent peer field.

Question: Select the option(s) that best describes the type of your employer.
50 responses, 100% response rate

Nonprofit	42%
Contracted	38%
Government	18%
Self-employed	16%
Tribal nation	6%
Other*	4%
Justice-based	2%
School-based	0%

*Other included religious affiliate.

Area of focus providing parent peer support services

This question was only asked to people who were employed in the parent peer field.

Question: Select the option(s) that best describes your area(s) of focus when providing peer support services within the peer field.
50 responses, 100% response rate

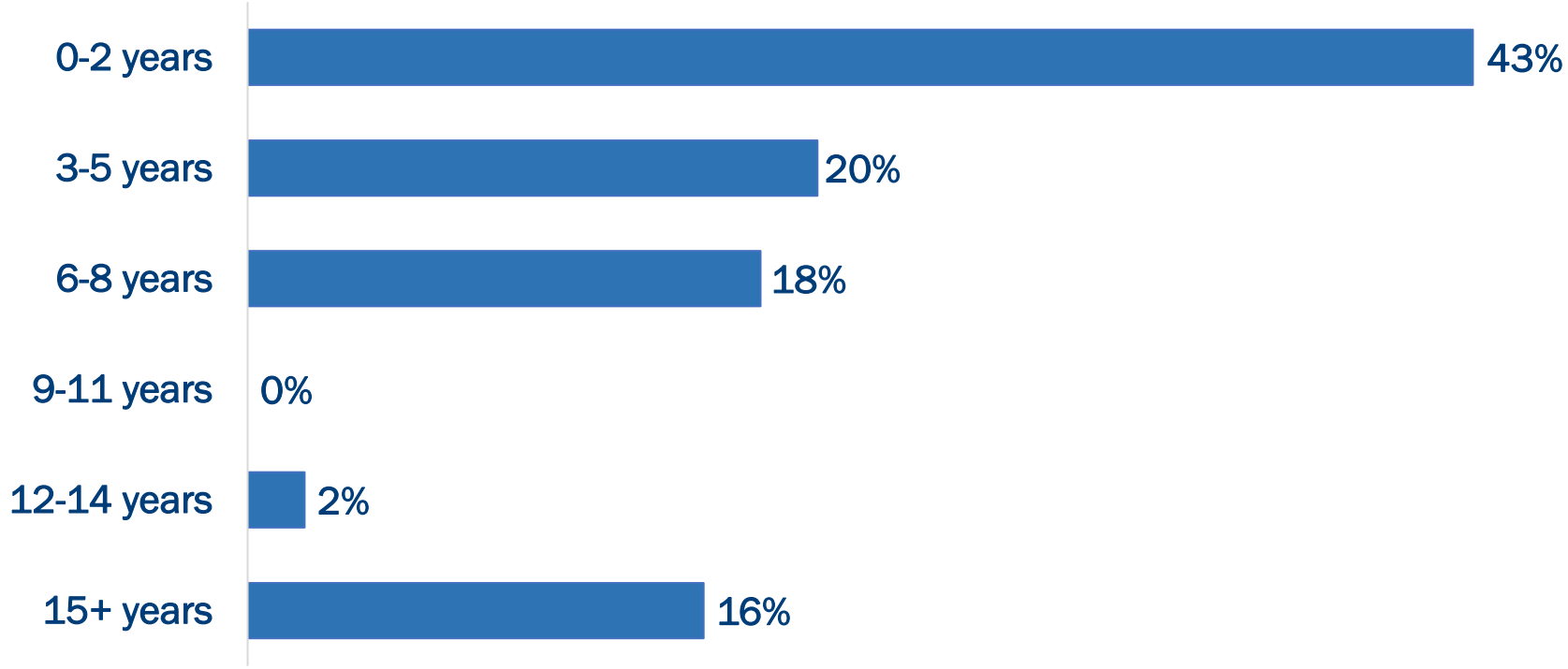
Community-based	84%
Crisis	54%
School-based	36%
Child welfare	34%
Substance use	24%
Justice-based	18%
Tribal nation	8%
Other*	8%

*Other included mental health, holistic, and Comprehensive Community Services.

Years of parent peer work experience

This question was only asked to people who were employed in the parent peer field.

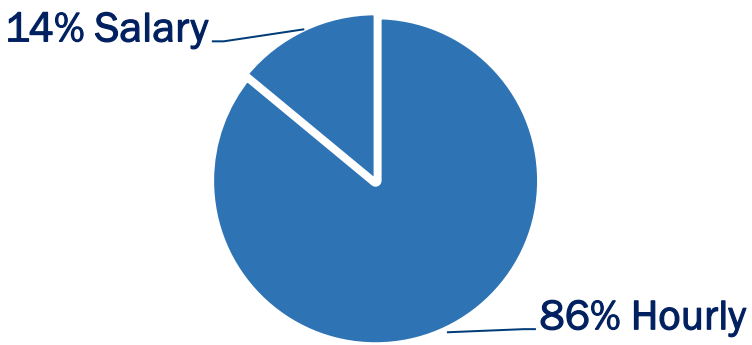
Question: How many years of work experience do you have working in a peer role?
49 responses, 98% response rate



Paid employment

This question was only asked to people who were employed in the parent peer field.

Question: Select the option that best describes how you are paid for your employer—salary or hourly.
49 responses, 98% response rate



Hourly employment

This question was only asked to people who were employed in the parent peer field.

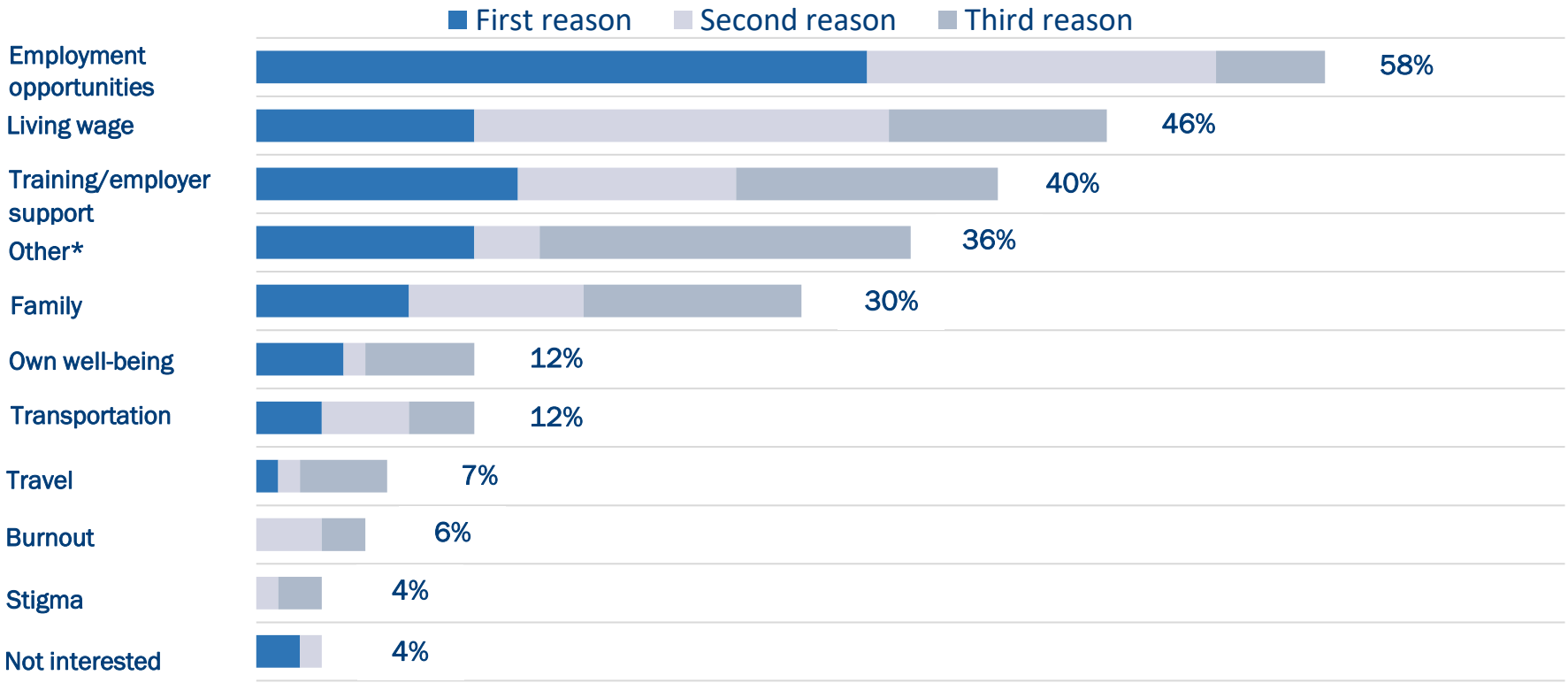
Question: What is your hourly rate of pay?
40 responses, 95% response rate

Minimum	Mean	Median	Maximum
$15.00	$26.97	$22.93	$72.00

Not employed in the parent peer field

This question was only asked to people who reported that they were currently not working in the parent peer field.

Question: What are the top three reasons you do not work in the parent peer field OR what are the top three reasons you left the parent peer field?
84 responses, 93% response rate *(Note some individuals didn't select three, making the max response for any section 77 but an overall response of 84.)*



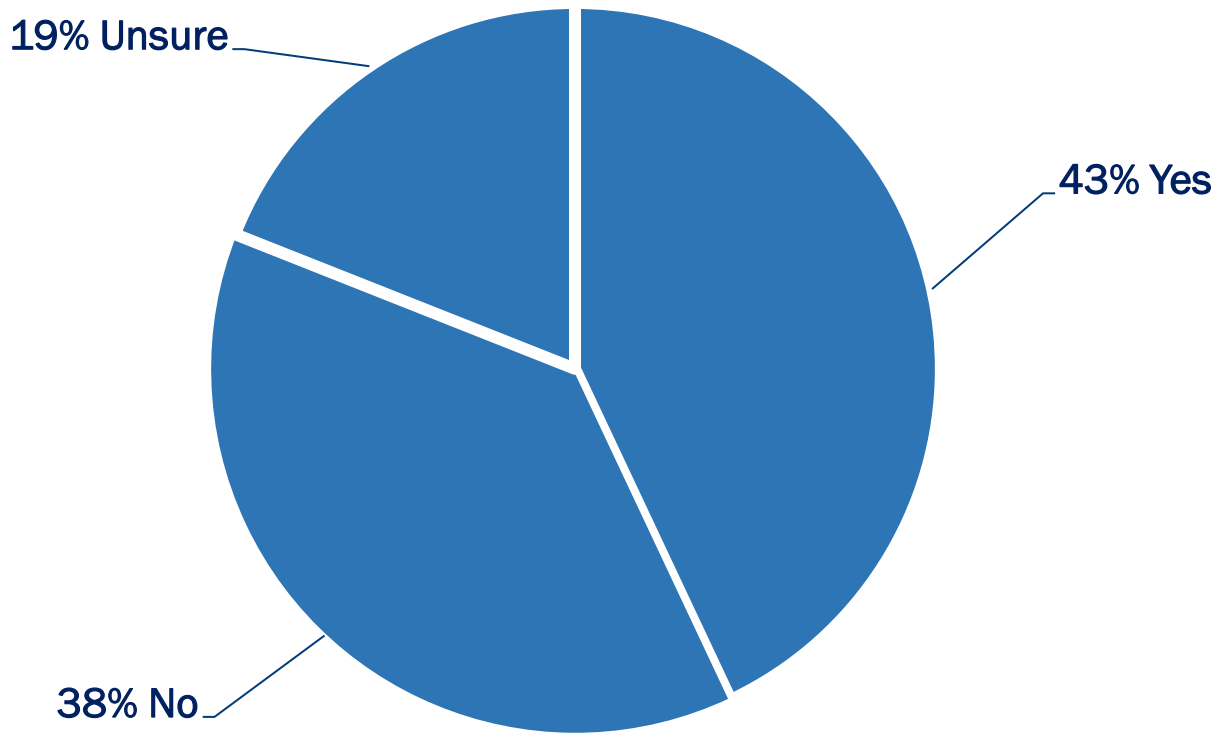
*Other included not applicable, can't find employment, employed elsewhere, benefits, unsure of certification process/field, training schedule, not approved for training, retired, lack of funding for employment sustainability, waiting on certification, and not certified.

Parent peer crisis services experience

These questions were included in the survey to understand parent peer perspectives on working in crisis services.

Crisis work experience

Question: Do you have professional work experience working as a parent peer in mental health and substance use crisis services and/or providing crisis services?
143 responses, 100% response rate



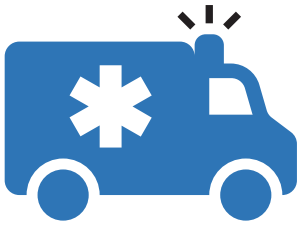
Crisis model employment as certified parent peer specialist

Question: Would you consider working as a trained certified parent peer specialist in any of the following models? Select all that apply.

- Crisis line: Answer phone calls to help those in crisis.
- Mobile crisis team: Respond as a team, in person, to someone who is in crisis.
- Stabilization facility: Provide peer support at a safe space where those in crisis are voluntarily receiving help on a short-term timeline.
- Community intensive follow up: Provide peer support in a community setting to those who recently had a crisis to help prevent reoccurring crises.

139 responses, 97% response rate

78%
Crisis lines



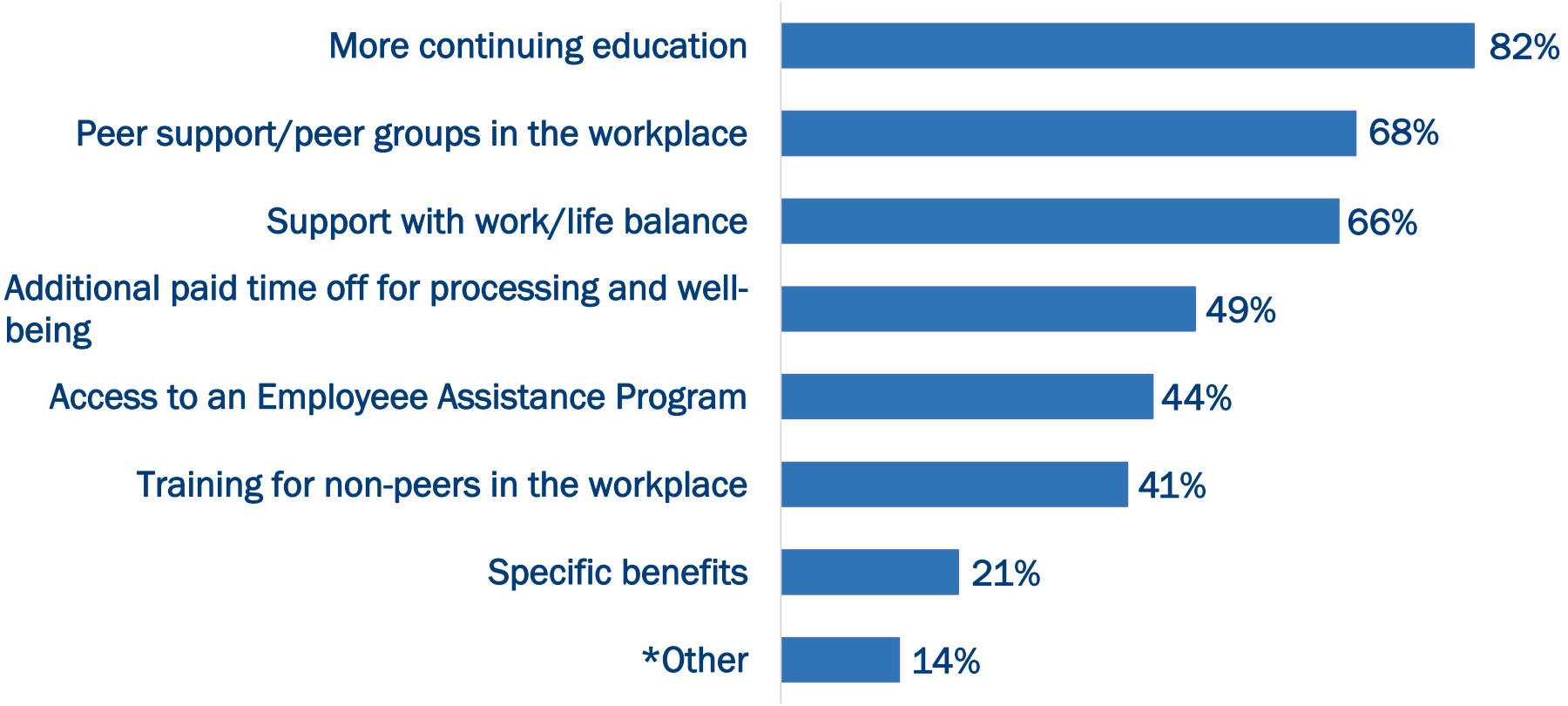
62%
Mobile crisis teams

58%
Stabilization facilities

83%
Community intensive follow-up

Employer supports needed

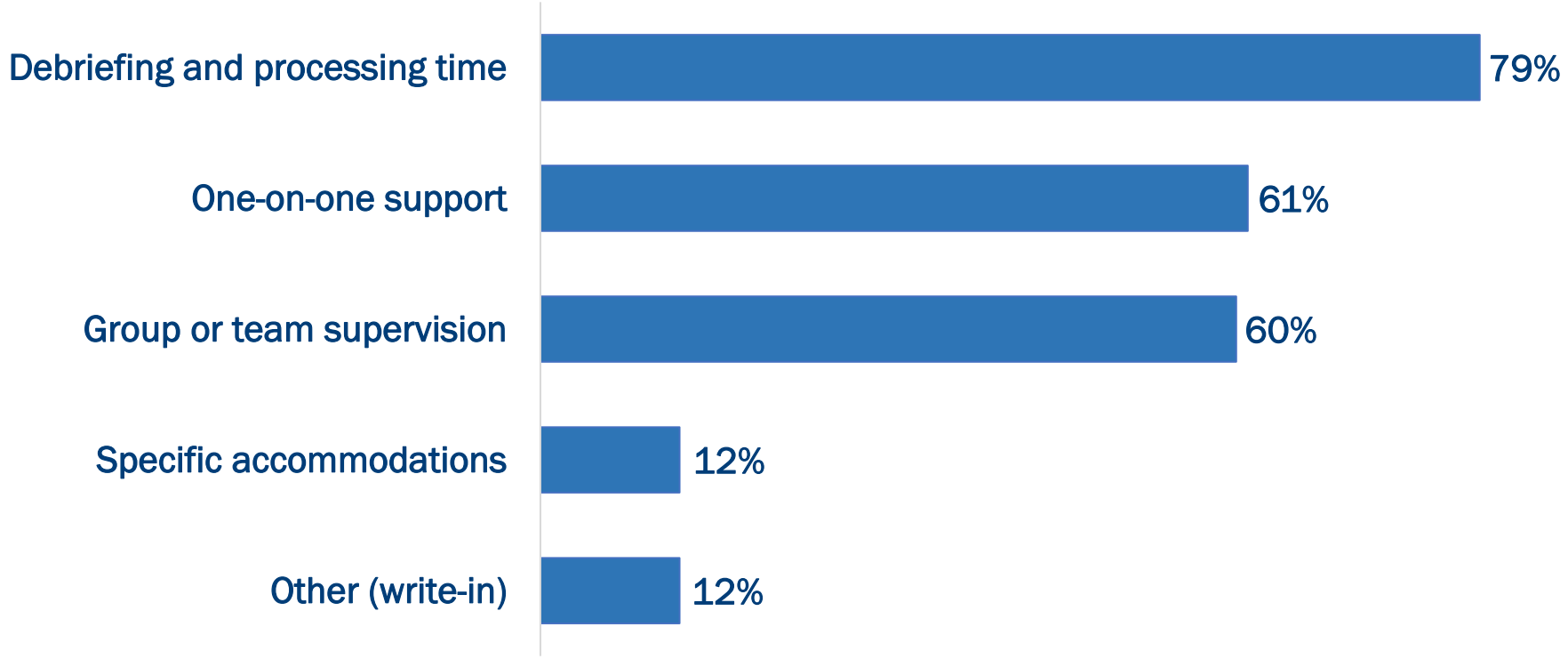
Question: What would you need from your employer as a parent peer working in crisis services?
140 responses, 98% response rate



*Other included better pay, supportive supervisor/more communication, access to continued education or training, and less stigma for the profession/trauma-informed workplace.

Supervision supports needed

Question: What types of support would you need from a supervisor as a parent peer working in crisis services?
140 responses, 98% response rate

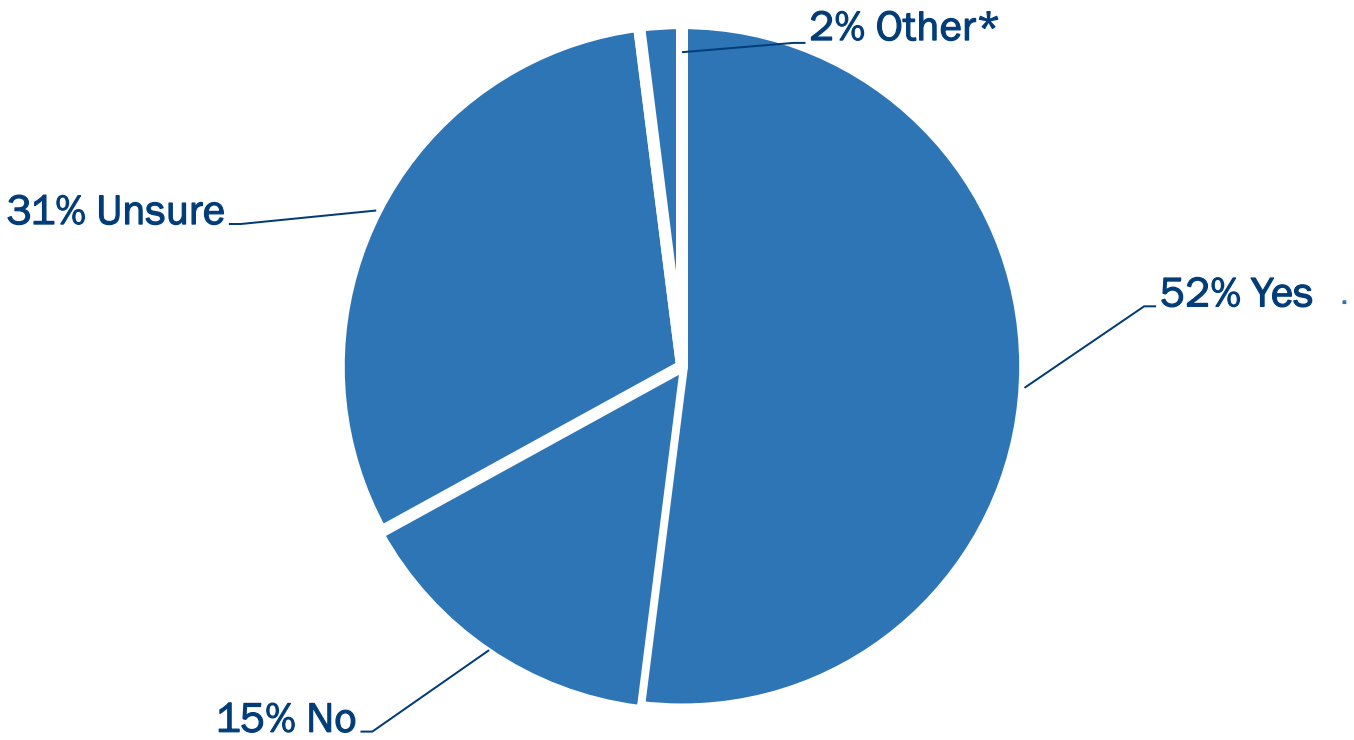


*Other included clear procedures/policies, communication, vacation/benefits, job shadowing, funding for training/ongoing training, virtual support, connection with peers on work time, and unsure.

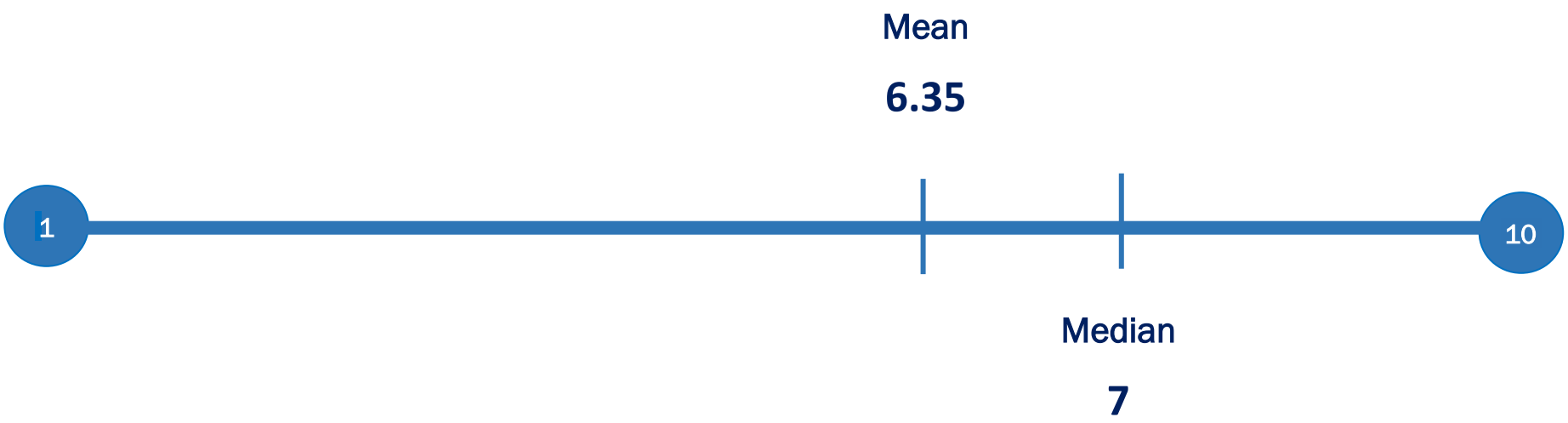
Involuntary hospitalizations

Workplace referrals

Question: Would you ever consider working as a certified parent peer specialist at an agency where involuntary hospitalization for a mental health or substance use concern could happen if you were not directly involved in the decision?
142 responses, 99% response rate



*Other included need clear procedures and policies and dedication to least intensive interventions first.

Comfortability of working where involuntary hospitalization could happen

Question: Rate your comfortability on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the most comfortable), with working at an agency where involuntary hospitalization could happen for a mental health or substance use concern, even if you were not directly involved.
121 responses, 85% response rate