

Wisconsin's Annual Report on Abuse, Neglect, and Financial Exploitation of Adults at Risk

2007

Introduction: The First Annual Adults-at-Risk Report

County agencies in Wisconsin receive abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation referrals and respond to them, determining whether a situation of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation exists and creating individualized service plans to assist adults at risk and help ensure their safety.

After responding to an incident, county agencies file an incident report with the Department of Health Services, using the web-based Wisconsin Incident Tracking System (WITS). A compilation of all county incident reports from 2007 are the basis of this statewide Annual Adults at Risk Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Report.

This report documents reported incidents involving adults at risk ages 18-59, providing information about the types of abuse reported, characteristics of the adults at risk and alleged abusers, and local responses which guide the State's efforts to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults at risk.

Introduction: The First Annual Adults-at-Risk Report

In 2007, 1,117 incidents of suspected abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation involving adults age 18-59 were reported. This first year of reporting reveals some differences from elder abuse reports, and also some parallels to them.

For instance, financial exploitation is the primary concern in one out of five reported elder abuse incidents, but in only one out of ten incidents involving younger adults. On the other hand, physical and sexual abuse are much more commonly reported for younger adults at risk.

For both age groups, relatives make up the largest share of alleged abusers.

Who is considered an Adult at Risk?

- For the **purposes of this annual report**, the definition of an “adult at risk” is:
 - an adult between the **ages of 18 to 59 years**;
 - who has any physical or mental impairment that substantially restricts his or her ability to care for his or her needs; and,
 - who has experienced or is at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- An adult at risk *does not* require membership in a categorical group (i.e., developmental disabilities, degenerative brain disorder, serious and persistent mental illness, or other like incapacities)
- An adult at risk *does not* require impairment in ability to provide for care or custody

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- New statutory requirements covering reports of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of elder adults/adults-at-risk became effective on December 1, 2006 with the enactment of Wisconsin Act 388.
- Prior to enactment of Wisconsin Act 388, counties responded to complaints about suspected abuse and neglect involving vulnerable adults ages 18-59 but they did so without any statutory direction or the necessary tools for response.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Changes to Chapter 55 provide the needed statutory authority and protection for counties to operate an **Adults-at-Risk Reporting and Response System**. The new legislation:
 - Allows explicit exchange of information and reports of findings among investigative agencies and service providers;
 - permits county workers access to needed medical and financial records when investigating allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation;
 - strengthens law enforcement's involvement in addressing victim safety and holding abusers accountable; and,
 - assures immunity to any individual who either reports suspected abuse or participates in the investigation of such a report.

How does the adults-at-risk reporting system differ from the elder abuse reporting system?

- The term adult at risk replaces the term vulnerable adult in the adult protective services laws, restraining order provisions and criminal abuse and neglect laws.
- The term elder adult at risk replaces the term elder person in the elder abuse reporting system (visit the Adults at Risk website to view the 2007 Elder Abuse Annual Report)
- Provisions relating to adults at risk and elder adults at risk are either identical or largely parallel under the new laws.
- The two populations differ in defining characteristics and in many cases are served by different agencies with different histories and approaches to handling these referrals.

The Growing Adults-at-Risk Program Statewide

- Wisconsin has made great strides in identifying and protecting adults at risk. No one should experience or endure abuse, neglect or exploitation. Let individuals you are concerned about know they are not alone, that there are others who understand, will not judge, are there to help them stay safe, and will support them emotionally. Provide reassurance that what they are experiencing is not their fault.
- Call your County Help Line if you need to talk to someone about suspected abuse of an adult at risk (age 18 to 59). See <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/aps/Contacts/aaragencies.htm>

A Note on the Data Sources

For this year (ONLY), data for the tables in this report come from two different web-based reporting systems. To meet reporting requirements in the new law, DHS developed an interim incident reporting system called the Adults at Risk Reporting System (AARS), making it available December 1, 2006.

In September, 2007, the Wisconsin Incident Tracking System (WITS) for elder abuse reporting was upgraded to allow counties to submit incident reports on adults at risk age 18-59. Starting in November, 2007, DHS discontinued operation of the AARS and began requiring all reporters to use WITS.

Differences between the 2007 data sources

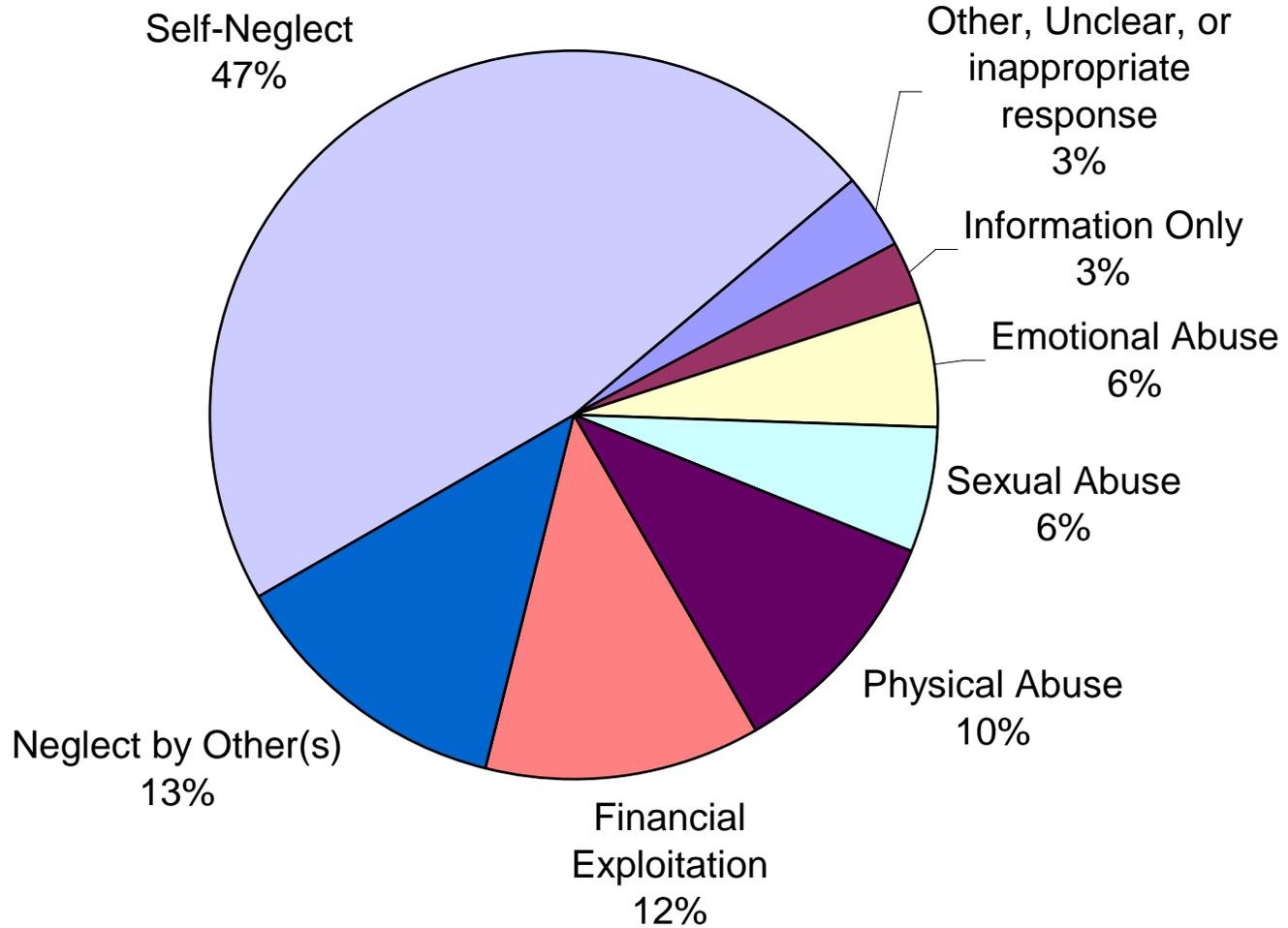
Some of the questions asked by the Adults at Risk Reporting System (AARS) were improved with clearer text or better response options when added to WITS. These changes make it difficult to combine early data from the AARS with later reports from WITS, and in some cases it cannot be combined. In this report, notes indicate when information in a table is from WITS only.

Also, the AARS had some technical limitations that make the information from certain data fields very difficult to use. Certain tables exclude AARS data for this reason. Notably, the tables with information about alleged abusers include WITS data only.

Primary Reason for Call	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
Self-Neglect	529	47.4%
Neglect by Other(s)	142	12.7%
Financial Exploitation	136	12.2%
Physical Abuse	117	10.5%
Emotional Abuse	62	5.6%
Sexual Abuse	62	5.6%
Unreasonable Confinement/Restraint	9	0.8%
Treatment without Consent	3	0.3%
<i>Information Only</i>	32	2.9%
<i>Other, Unclear, or inappropriate response</i>	25	2.2%
Total	1,117	100.0%

NOTE: Calls for "information only" do not involve allegations of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation, and those reported through WITS are not included in the analytic tables. However, the Adults at Risk Reporting System did not prevent this response from being combined with inconsistent information in other fields, so AAR Reporting System reports with this "reason for call" remain in the analytic tables.

Primary Reason for Call



Previous report?	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
No	647	59.9%
Yes	312	28.9%
Unknown	122	11.3%
Total	1,081	100.0%
<i>Note: Six WITS reports are missing this information.</i>		

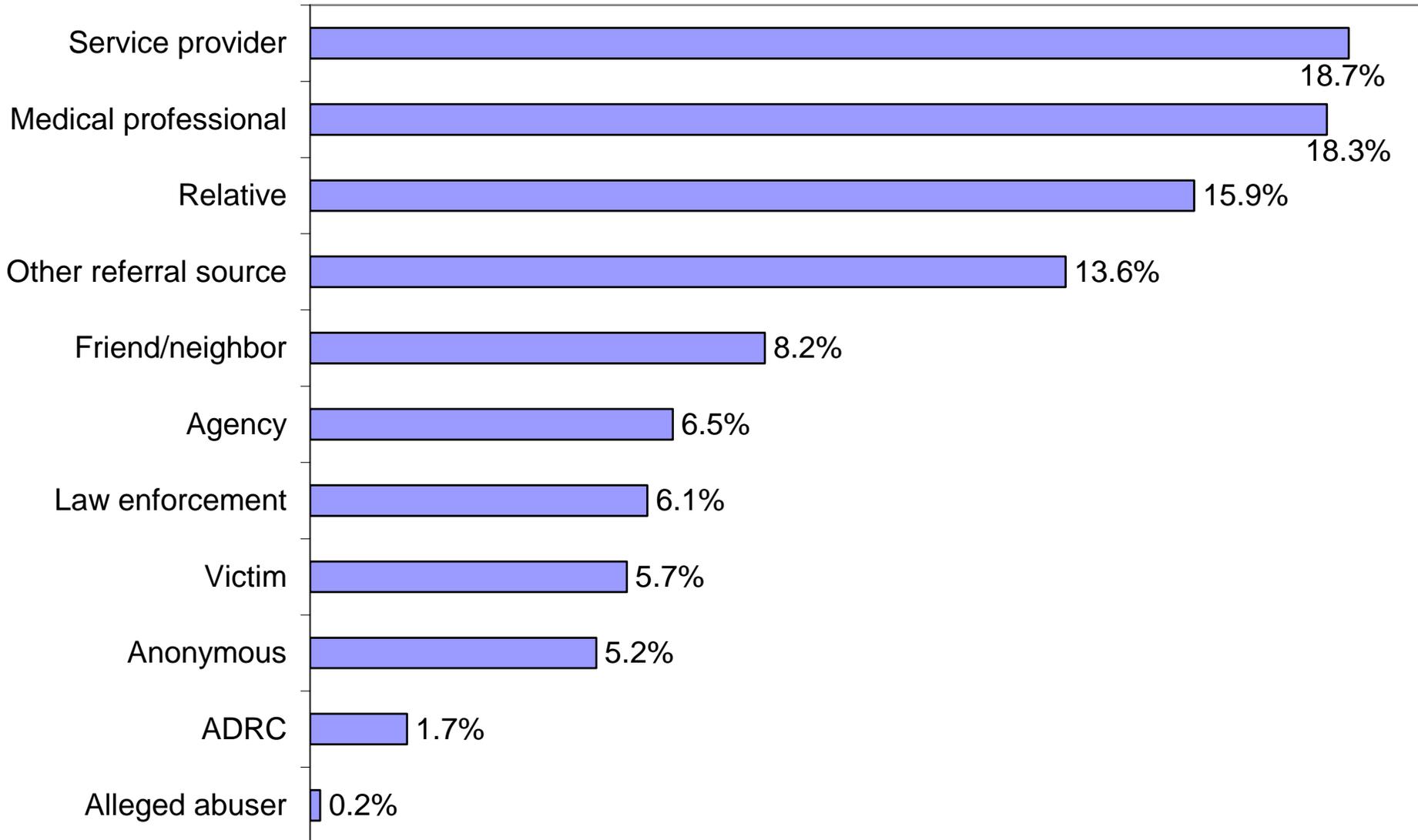
Where Incident Occurred	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
Place of residence	925	85.1%
Other setting	122	11.2%
Place of employment/day services	24	2.2%
School	5	0.5%
Transportation	11	1.0%
Total	1,087	100.0%

Life-Threatening and Fatal Incidents	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
Life-threatening incidents (percent of all reports)	79	7.3%
Reports involving persons who have died*	10	12.7%
Deaths that were related to life-threatening incidents*	4	5.0%

*Percents reflect this category's share of all life-threatening incidents. These questions were asked differently in the AAR Reporting System and WITS, so data are not precisely comparable.

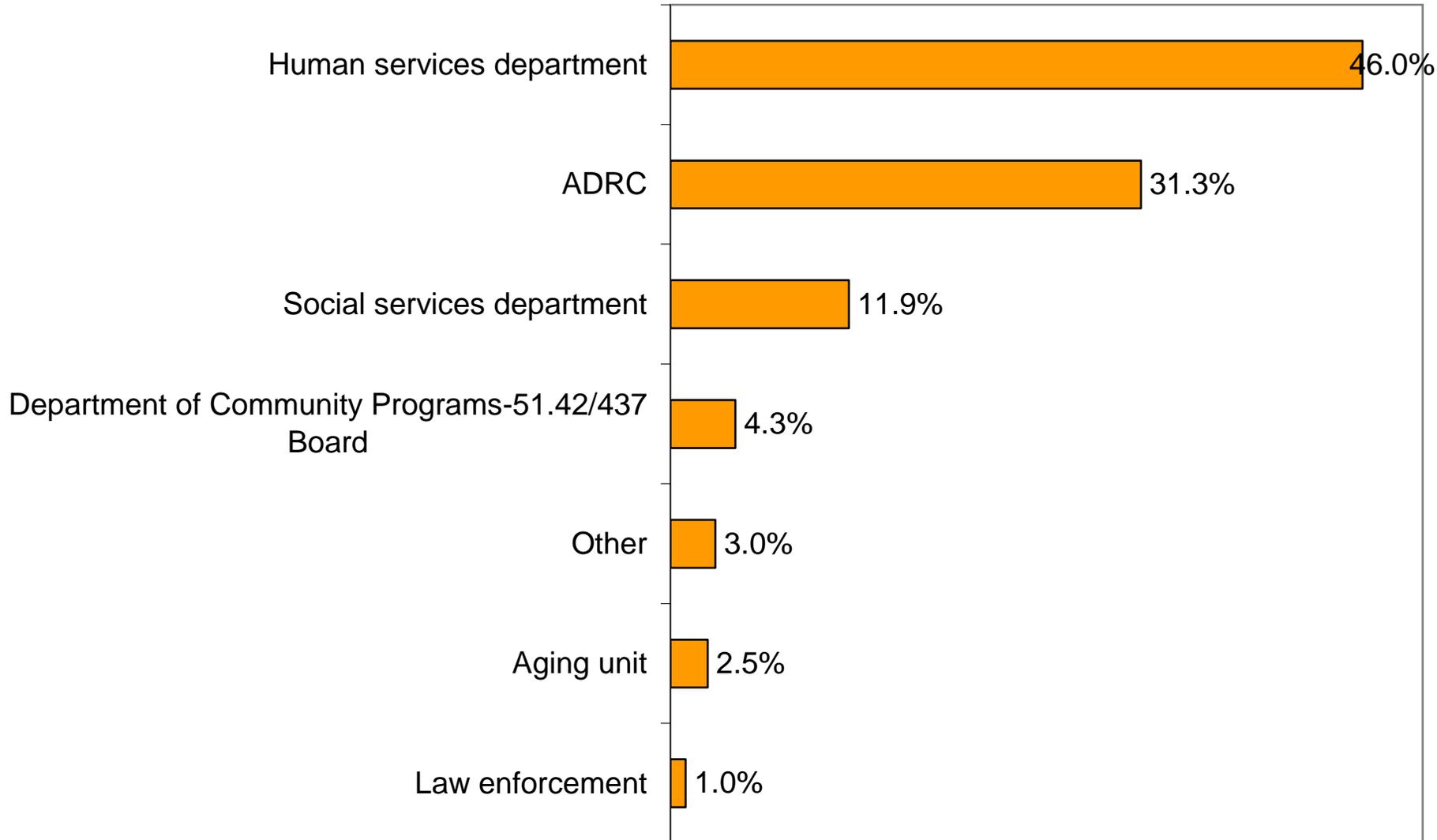
Referral Source	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
ADRC	19	1.7%
Agency	71	6.5%
Alleged abuser	2	0.2%
Anonymous	56	5.2%
Employer	4	0.4%
Friend/neighbor	89	8.2%
Housing inspection/zoning	10	0.9%
Law enforcement	66	6.1%
Medical professional	199	18.3%
Mental health service provider	28	2.6%
Other provider	96	8.8%
Other referral source	128	11.8%
Regulatory authority (DHS/DQA)	5	0.5%
Relative	173	15.9%
Residential support provider	52	4.8%
Substance abuse service provider	4	0.4%
Victim	62	5.7%
Vocational/day service provider	23	2.1%
Total	1,087	100.0%

Referral Source



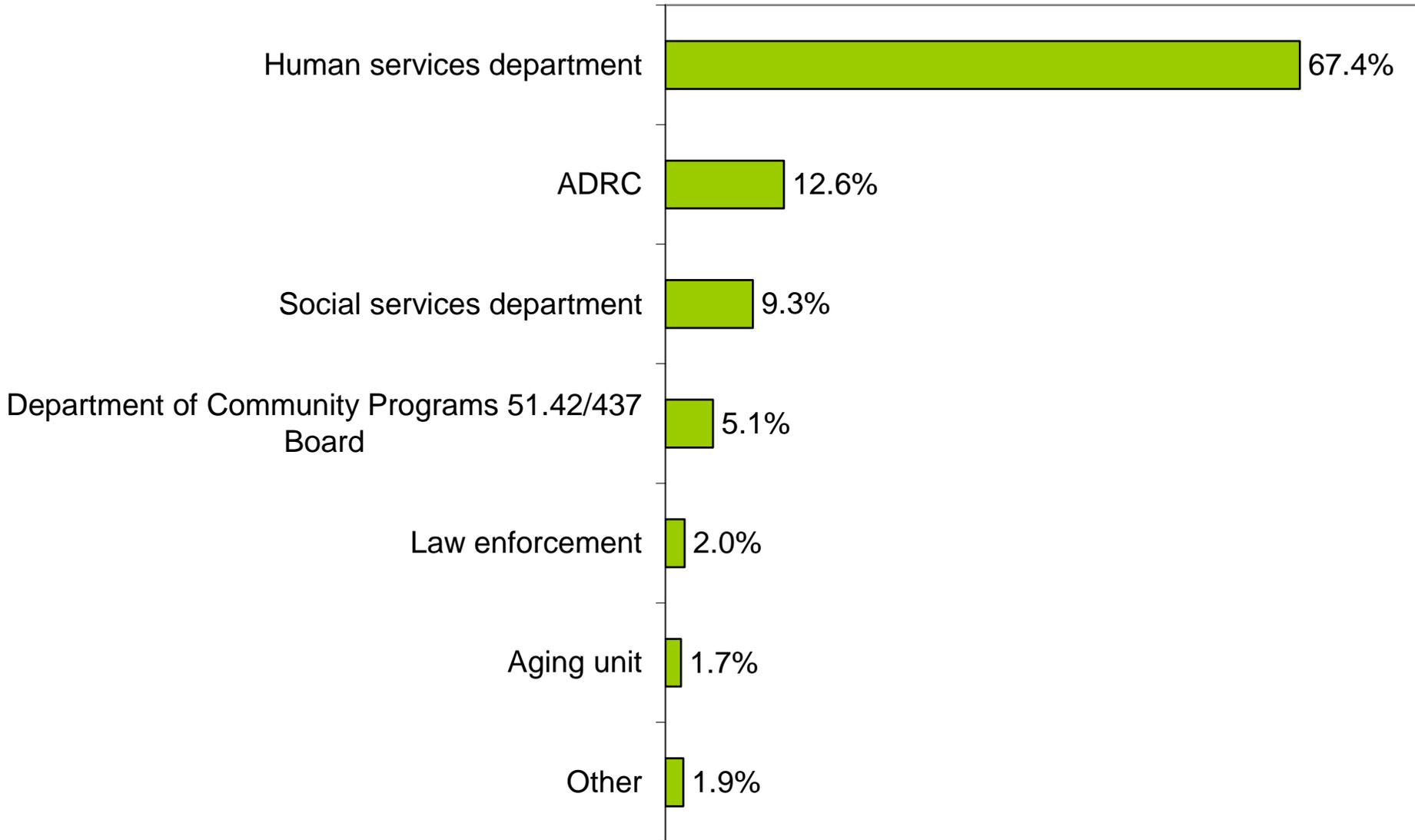
Call Received By	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
ADRC	340	31.3%
Aging unit	27	2.5%
Department of Community Programs-51.42/437 Board	47	4.3%
Developmental Disability Board	7	0.6%
Housing Inspection/Zoning	3	0.3%
Human services department	500	46.0%
Law enforcement	11	1.0%
Regulatory authority	1	0.1%
Social services department	129	11.9%
Other	22	2.0%
Total	1,087	100.0%

Call Received By...



Initial Investigating Agency	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
ADRC	137	12.6%
Aging unit	18	1.7%
BOALTC/Ombudsman	1	0.1%
Department of Community Programs 51.42/437 Board	55	5.1%
Developmental Disability Board	7	0.6%
Human services department	733	67.4%
Law enforcement	22	2.0%
Other	13	1.2%
Social services department	101	9.3%
Total	1,087	100.0%

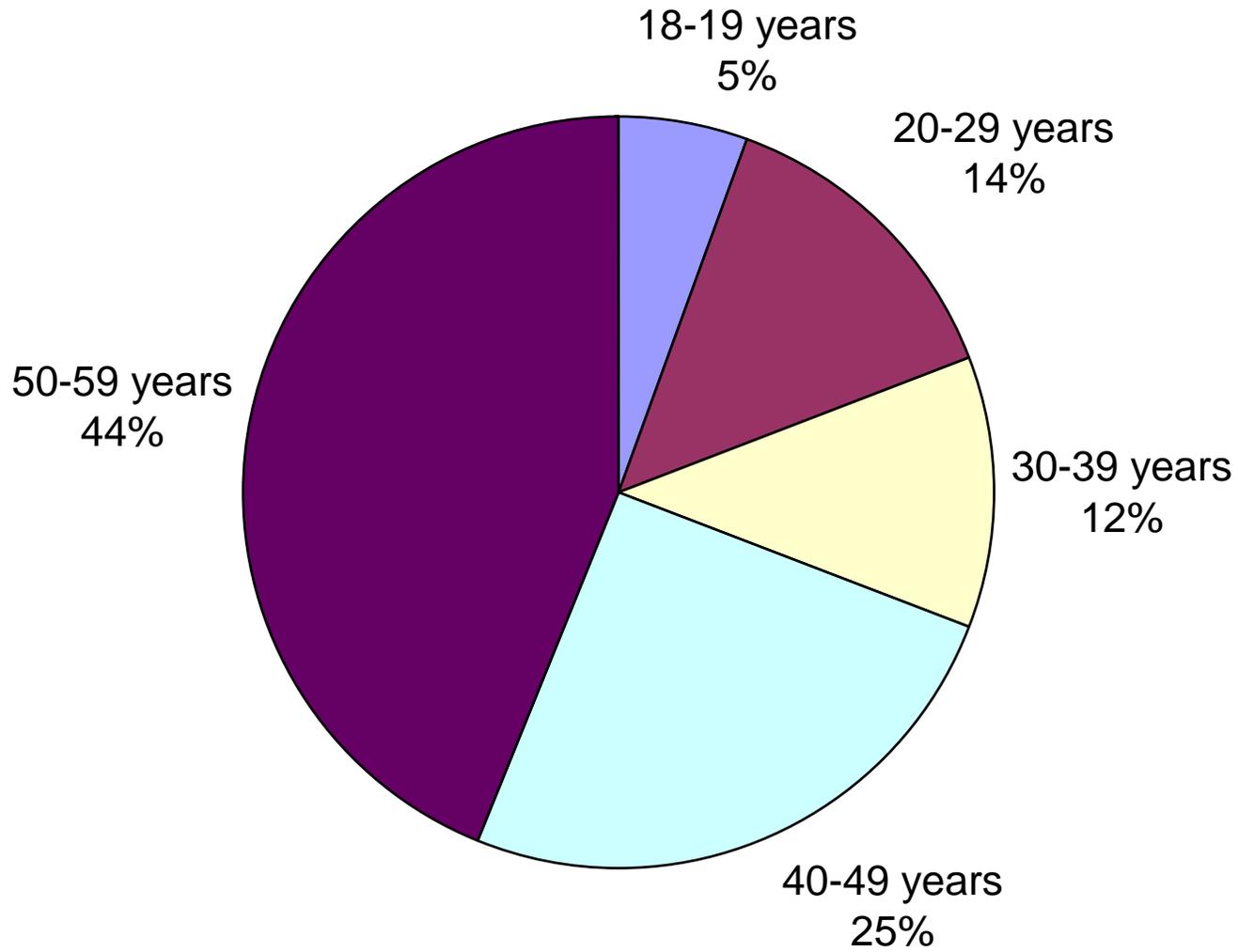
Initial Investigating Agency



Adult at Risk's Age	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
18-19 years	59	5.4%
20-29 years	150	13.8%
30-39 years	127	11.7%
40-49 years	274	25.2%
50-59 years	477	43.9%
Total	1,087	100.0%

Adult at Risk's Gender	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
Female	587	54.0%
Male	500	46.0%
Total	1,087	100.0%

Adult at Risk's Age



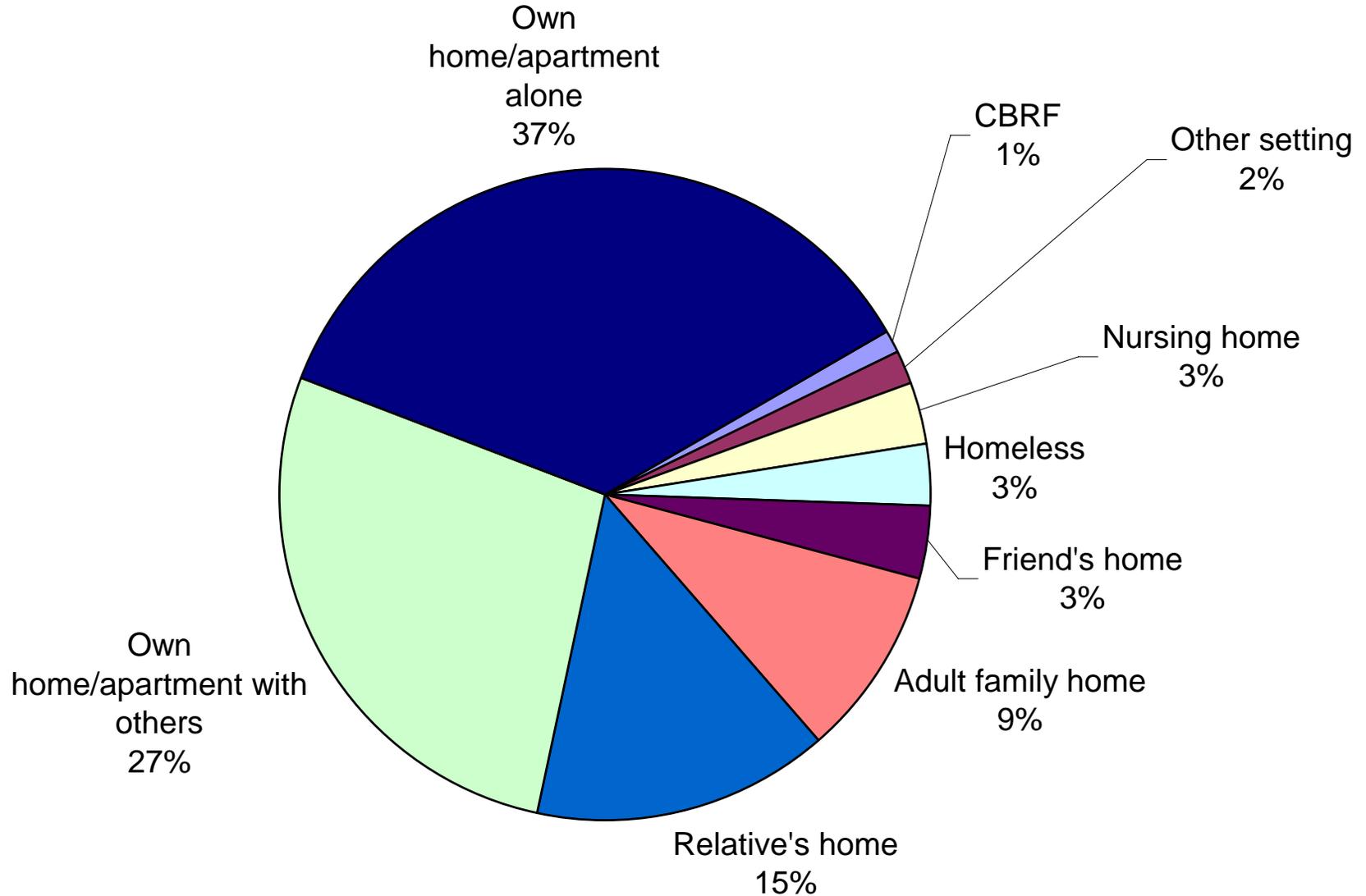
Adult at Risk's Race	Total, Both Systems	
Age	Number	Percent
White	895	82.3%
Black/African American	67	6.2%
Native American/Alaska Native	25	2.3%
Asian	10	0.9%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	0.3%
Other race	12	1.1%
Not reported or unknown	75	6.9%
Total	1,087	100.0%
<p><i>Race and Ethnicity are optional fields, so some reports are missing this information. Although data may be incomplete, percents represent the share of all complete reports that showed each race/ethnicity category.</i></p>		

Adult at Risk's Ethnicity	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
Hispanic or Latino	11	1.0%
Hmong	5	0.5%
Neither, unknown, or no response	1,071	98.5%
Total	1,087	100.0%
<p><i>Race and Ethnicity are optional fields, so some reports are missing this information. Although data may be incomplete, percents represent the share of all complete reports that showed each race/ethnicity category.</i></p>		

Adult at Risk's Living Arrangement	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
Own home/apartment alone	391	36.0%
Own home/apartment with others	299	27.5%
Relative's home	160	14.7%
Friend's home	38	3.5%
Adult family home	78	7.2%
Adult family home (licensed)*	24	2.2%
Nursing home	32	2.9%
CBRF*	12	1.1%
RCAC	1	0.1%
Homeless	34	3.1%
Other setting	17	1.6%
Institution	1	0.1%
Total	1,087	100.0%

**In the AAR Reporting System, Adult Family Home and CBRF were combined in a single category. These responses are reported here under "Adult Family Home." Also, in the AAR Reporting System, there was no distinction among Adult Family Homes based on licensing status.*

Adult at Risk's Living Arrangement



County/State funded programs that have served this AAR**Total, Both Systems**

	Number	Percent
Community Support Program	50	n/a
Comprehensive Community Services	6	n/a
Family Care	26	n/a
Home and Community Based Waiver	143	n/a
Medicaid (Title 19, Card Services)	187	n/a
Unknown	87	n/a
Other	86	n/a
None	197	n/a

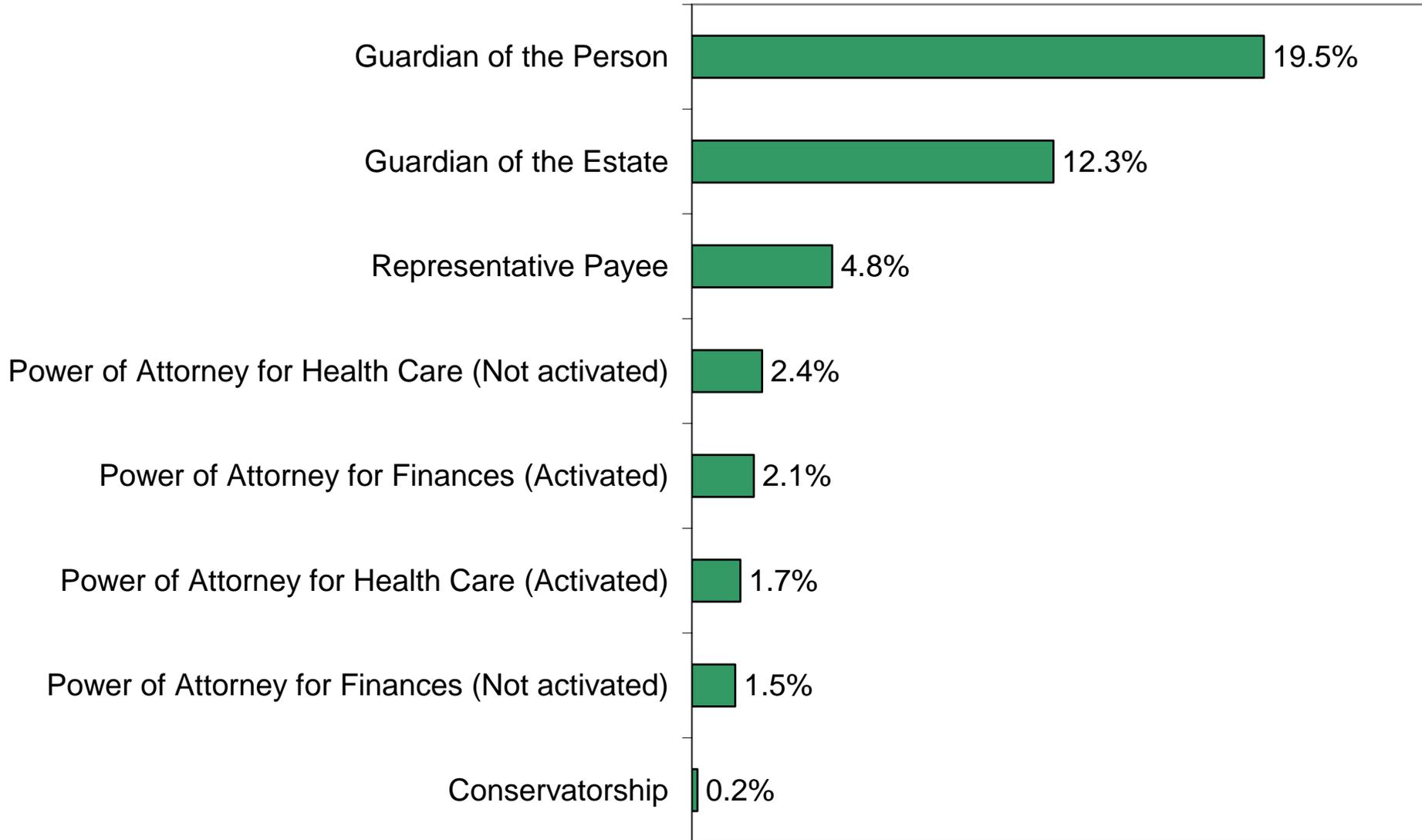
This new question was added to WITS partway through 2007. Thus, not all reports include this information for this year, so percents are not calculated. Multiple responses were allowed.

Does Adult at Risk have substitute decision maker?	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
No	724	66.6%
Yes	296	27.2%
Unknown	67	6.2%
Total	1,087	100.0%

Type(s) of Substitute Decision-Maker	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
Conservatorship	2	0.2%
Guardian of the Person	212	19.5%
Guardian of the Estate	134	12.3%
Representative Payee	52	4.8%
Power of Attorney for Finances (Activated)	23	2.1%
Power of Attorney for Finances (Not activated)	16	1.5%
Power of Attorney for Health Care (Activated)	18	1.7%
Power of Attorney for Health Care (Not activated)	26	2.4%

Percents represent share of all reports showing this kind of substitute decision maker. Note: Multiple responses are allowed, so percents do not total 100%

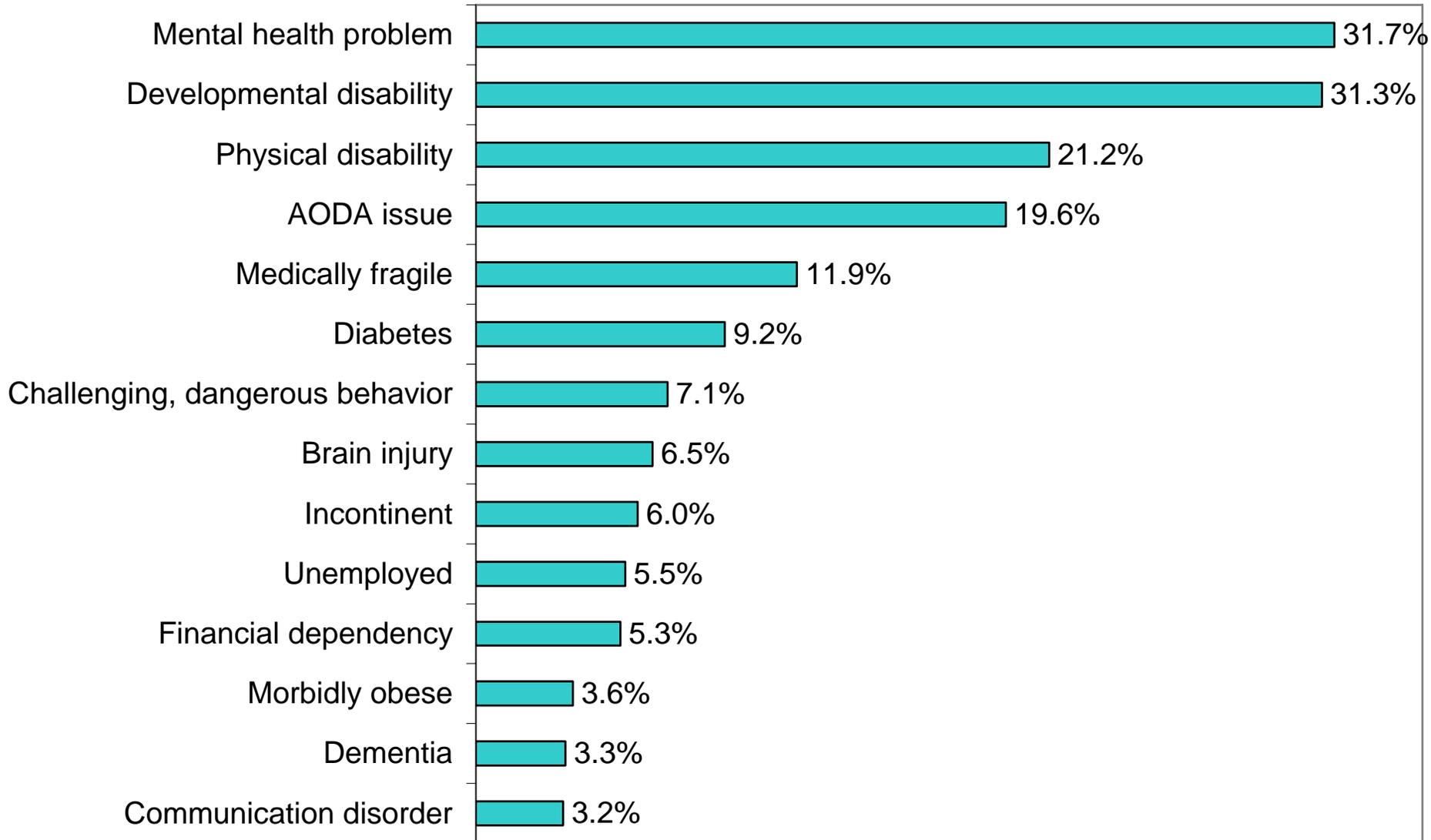
Type of Substitute Decision-Maker



Adult at Risk's Characteristics	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
AODA issue	213	19.6%
Brain injury	71	6.5%
Challenging, dangerous behavior	77	7.1%
Communication disorder	35	3.2%
Dementia	36	3.3%
Developmental disability	340	31.3%
Diabetes	100	9.2%
Financial dependency	58	5.3%
Incontinent	65	6.0%
Medically fragile	129	11.9%
Mental health problem	345	31.7%
Morbidly obese	39	3.6%
Other medical condition	94	8.6%
Physical disability	229	21.1%
Unemployed	60	5.5%

Response options varied between the Adults-at-Risk Reporting System and WITS, with more options available in WITS. To make categories comparable, WITS responses have been grouped together in this table when appropriate. A table showing detailed information from WITS only follows. Percents refer to share of all adults at risk having this characteristic. Multiple responses are allowed, so percents do not total 100%.

Adult at Risk's Characteristics



Note: Alleged abuser information in the following tables is based on reports filed through WITS ONLY.

Age of Alleged Abuser(s)	WITS 2007 ONLY	
Age	Number	Percent
Under 25 years	19	8.4%
25 to 44 years	76	33.5%
45 to 59 years	96	42.3%
60 to 79 years	33	14.5%
80 years or older	3	1.3%
Unknown*	111	n/a
<i>*Note: Abusers with unknown ages are excluded from these percents.</i>		
Total	227	100.0%

Alleged Abusers' Gender	WITS 2007 ONLY	
	Number	Percent
Male	172	51.3%
Female	143	42.7%
Unknown	20	6.0%
Total	335	100.0%

More than One Alleged Abuser?	WITS 2007 ONLY	
	Number	Percent
Yes	23	6.8%
No, one alleged abuser only	315	93.2%
Total	338	100.0%

Alleged Abusers' Relationships to Adult at Risk	WITS 2007 ONLY	
	Number	Percent
Friend/Neighbor	60	17.8%
Service provider	52	15.4%
Parent	52	15.4%
Other Relative	40	11.8%
Spouse	27	8.0%
Daughter	14	4.1%
Son	7	2.1%
Employer	2	0.6%
Other or unknown	84	24.9%
Total	338	100.0%

Are Alleged Abusers Caregivers?	WITS 2007 ONLY	
	Number	Percent
Yes	153	45.3%
No	173	51.2%
Unknown	12	3.6%
Total	338	100.0%

Do Alleged Abusers Live with Adult at Risk?	WITS 2007 ONLY	
	Number	Percent
Yes	183	54.1%
No	142	42.0%
Unknown	13	3.8%
Total	338	100.0%

Do Alleged Abusers Have Any Legal or Substitute Decision Maker Status?	WITS 2007 ONLY	
	Number	Percent
Any legal/substitute decision maker status listed	117	34.6%
No status listed	221	65.4%
Total	338	100.0%

Alleged Abusers' Legal Status	WITS 2007 ONLY	
	Number	Percent
Conservator	0	0.0%
Guardian of the Person	33	9.8%
Guardian of the Estate	25	7.4%
Temporary Guardian	0	0.0%
Representative Payee	23	6.8%
Power of Attorney for Finances (Activated)	9	2.7%
Power of Attorney for Finances (Not activated)	0	0.0%
Power of Attorney for Health Care (Activated)	7	2.1%
Power of Attorney for Health Care (Not activated)	4	1.2%
Other legal status	8	2.4%
Unknown legal status	44	13.0%
No legal status	221	65.4%

Percents represent share of all abusers who have this legal status. Multiple responses are allowed, so percents do not total 100%

Alleged Abusers' Characteristics	WITS 2007 ONLY	
Characteristic	Number	Percent
Alcohol or drug abuse	46	13.6%
Blind/visually impaired	2	0.6%
Developmental Disability	16	4.7%
Financially dependent on adult at risk	22	6.5%
Frail Elderly	8	2.4%
Mental Illness	25	7.4%
Physical Disability	10	3.0%
Unemployed	32	9.5%
Other medical condition	6	1.8%
Other condition	29	8.6%
None of the listed characteristics	187	55.3%

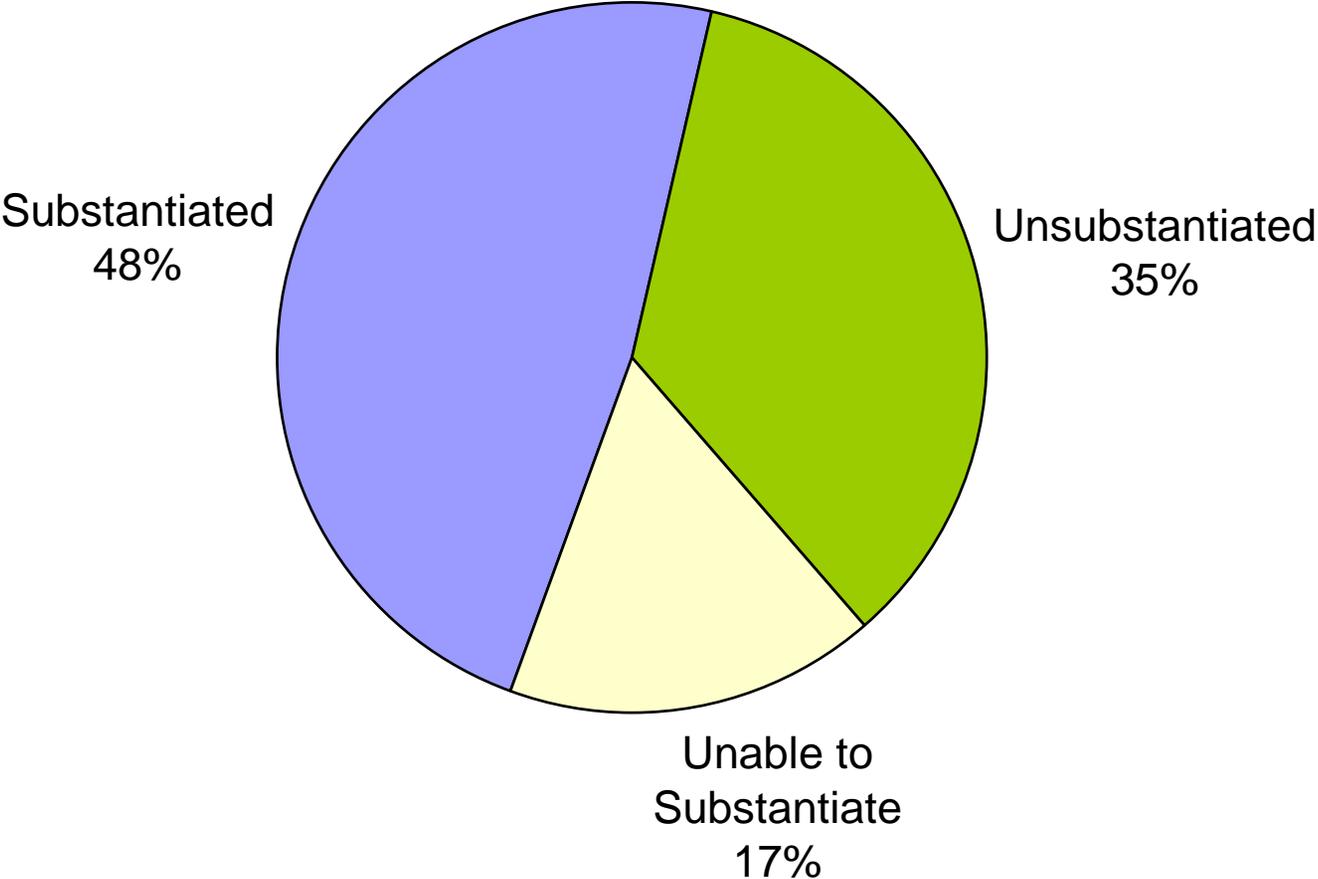
*Multiple responses were allowed so numbers do not add up to 100%.
Percents refer to share of all alleged abusers.*

Note: *Substantiation information comes from both the WITS and Adults-at-Risk Reporting System data combined*

Was hurt or harm substantiated?	Total, Both Systems	
	Number	Percent
Substantiated	519	48.0%
Unsubstantiated	378	35.0%
Unable to Substantiate	184	17.0%
Total	1,081	100.0%

Note: Information on substantiation was missing from 6 reports in the Adults-at-Risk Reporting System.

Was hurt or harm substantiated?

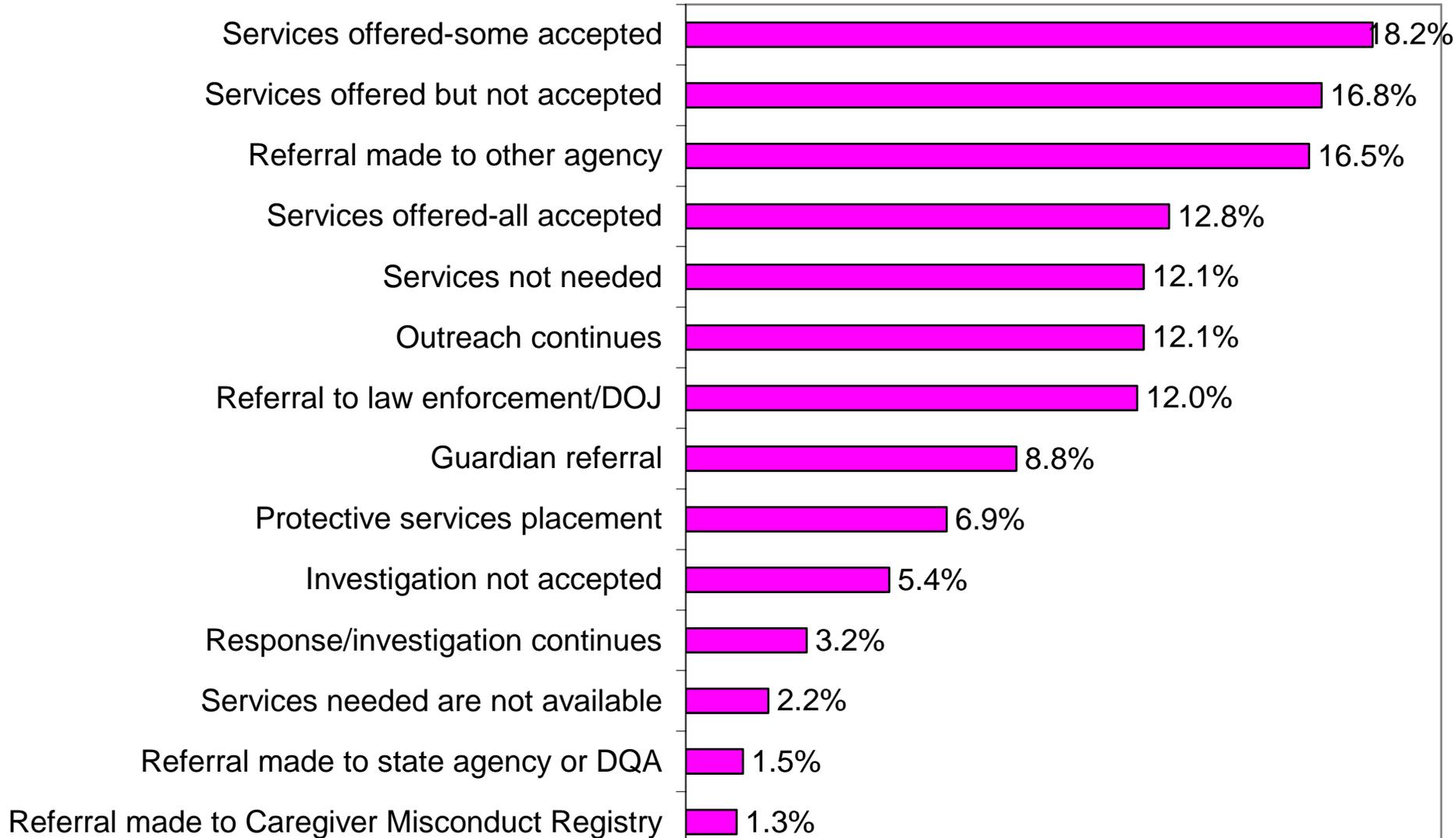


Note: Actions Taken information comes from WITS 2007 only

Actions Taken	WITS 2007 Only	
Action	Number	Percent
Guardian referral	52	8.8%
Investigation not accepted	32	5.4%
Outreach continues	72	12.1%
Protective services placement	41	6.9%
Referral made to Caregiver Misconduct Registry	8	1.3%
Referral made to law enforcement/Department of Justice	71	12.0%
Referral made to other agency	98	16.5%
Referral made to state agency or DQA	9	1.5%
Response/investigation continues	19	3.2%
Services needed are not available	13	2.2%
Services not needed	72	12.1%
Services offered but not accepted	100	16.8%
Services offered-all accepted	76	12.8%
Services offered-some accepted	108	18.2%

Percents refer to share of all reports showing this action. Multiple responses were allowed so numbers do not add up to 100%

Actions Taken

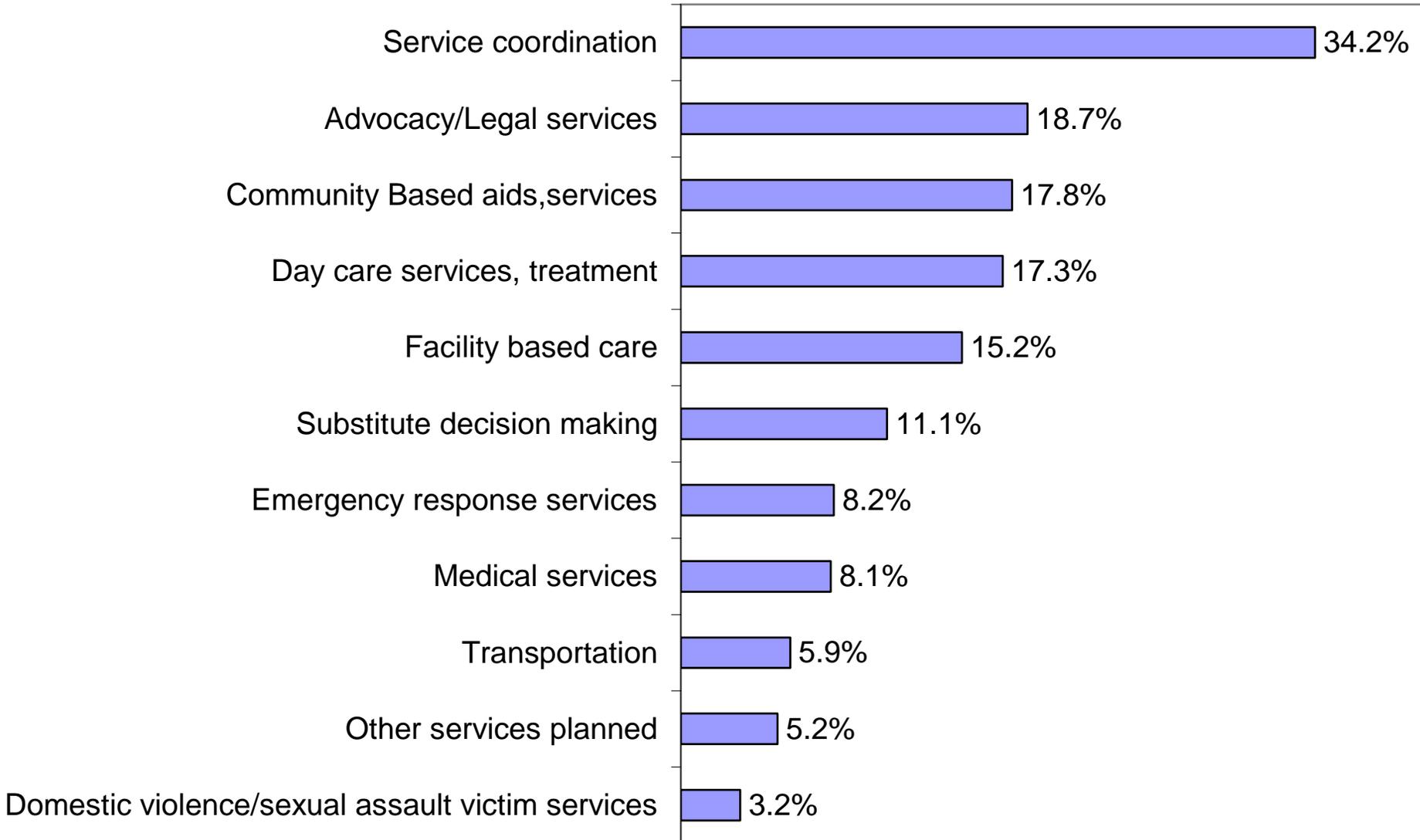


Note: *Services Planned information comes from WITS 2007 only*

Services Planned for Adult at Risk	WITS 2007 ONLY	
Service	Number	Percent
Advocacy/Legal services	111	18.7%
Community Based aids, services	106	17.8%
Day care services, treatment	103	17.3%
Domestic violence/sexual assault victim services	19	3.2%
Emergency response services	49	8.2%
Facility based care	90	15.2%
Medical services	48	8.1%
Service coordination	203	34.2%
Substitute decision making	66	11.1%
Transportation	35	5.9%
Other services planned	31	5.2%

Note: Percents refer to share of all WITS reports showing this service planned. Multiple responses were allowed so numbers do not add up to 100%

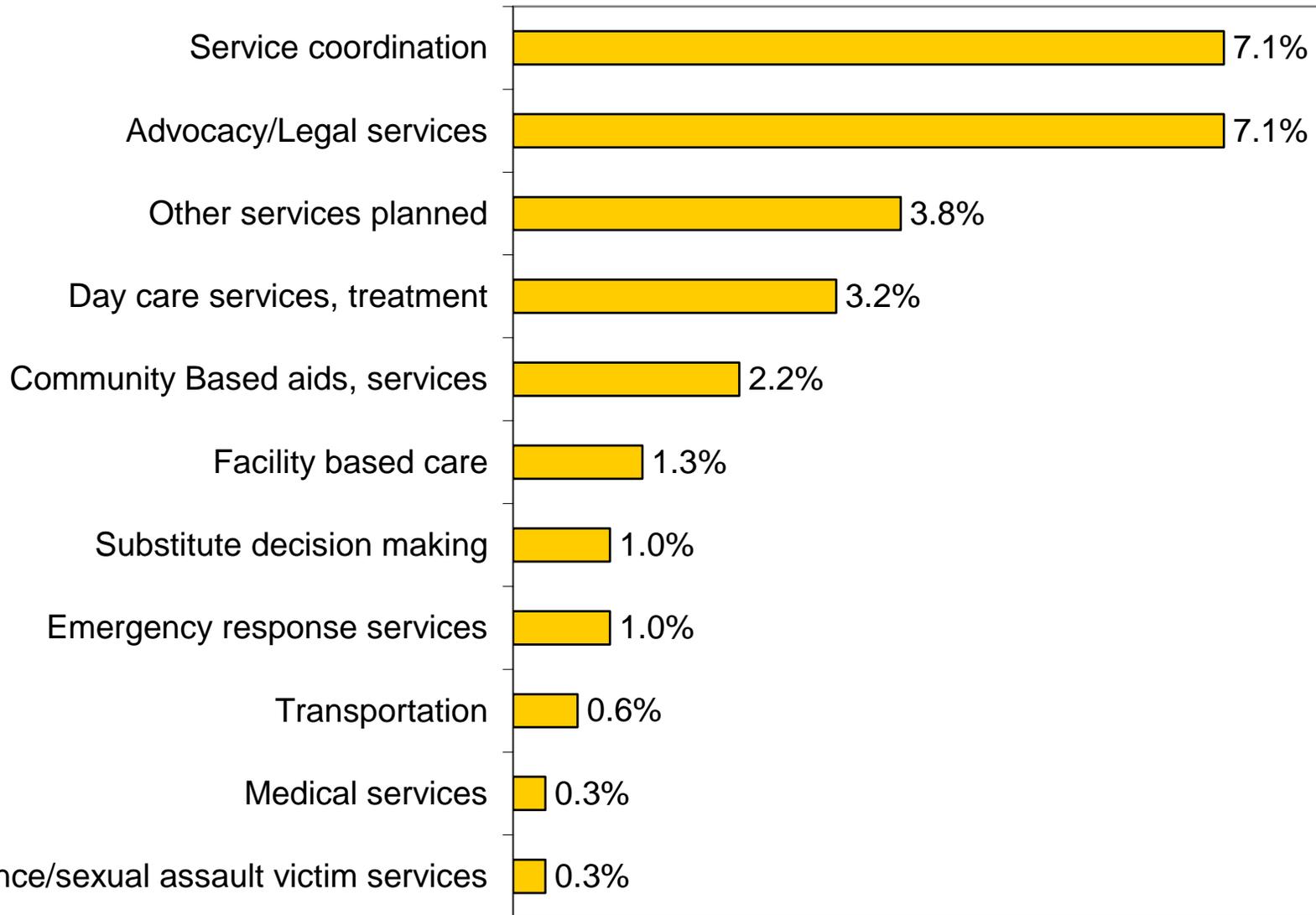
Services Planned for Adult at Risk



Services Planned for Alleged Abuser(s)		WITS 2007 ONLY	
Service	Number	Percent	
Advocacy/Legal services	22	7.1%	
Community Based aids, services	7	2.2%	
Day care services, treatment	10	3.2%	
Domestic violence/ sexual assault victim services	1	0.3%	
Emergency response services	3	1.0%	
Facility based care	4	1.3%	
Medical services	1	0.3%	
No services planned	237	76.0%	
Service coordination	22	7.1%	
Substitute decision making	3	1.0%	
Transportation	2	0.6%	
Other services planned	12	3.8%	

Note: Multiple responses were allowed so numbers do not add up to 100%. Percents refer to share of all WITS reports in which abuse was alleged (n=312).

Services Planned for Alleged Abusers



Contact Information

Kay Lund, Adults at Risk Program Coordinator

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Division of Long Term Care

Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources

P.O. Box 7851, Madison WI 53707-7851

Voicemail: 608-261-5990

FAX: 608-267-3203

Email: kay.lund@wisconsin.gov