

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

2008

***Introduction:* The 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 a referral, county agencies file a report with the Department of Health Services, using the web-based Wisconsin Incident Tracking System (WITS). A compilation of all county reports from 2008 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 Annual Adults-at-Risk Report

In 2008, 1,344 incidents of suspected abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation involving adults age 18-59 were reported. Analysis of the reports 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 seven incidents involving younger adults. However, 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 (about 52% for younger adults at risk, and 73% for older adults at risk).

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 of himself or herself.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 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

- Chapter 55 provides the needed statutory authority and protection for counties to operate an **Adults-at-Risk Reporting and Response System**. The law:
 - 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;
 - requires 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?

- Provisions relating to adults at risk and elder adults at risk are either identical or largely parallel under Wisconsin law.
- 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.

Your Role in Reporting Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Adults-at-Risk

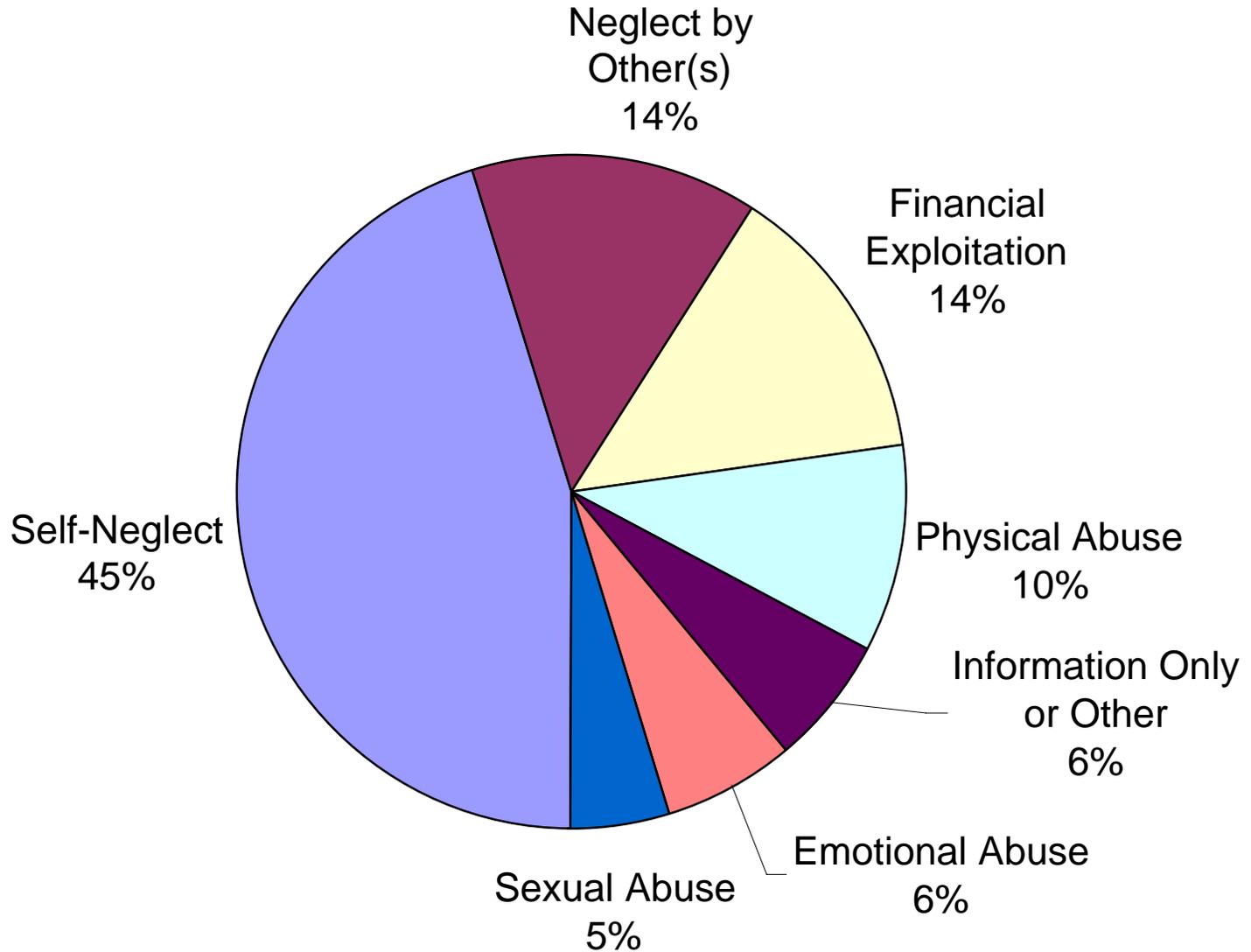
- Wisconsin has made great strides in identifying and protecting adults at risk. No one should experience or endure abuse, neglect or exploitation. Let individuals you are concerned about know they are not alone, and that there are others who understand, will not judge, are there to help them stay safe, 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>

Primary Reason for Call/Issue Identified

	Number	Percent
Self-Neglect	648	45.3%
Financial Exploitation	195	13.6%
Neglect by Other(s)	197	13.8%
Emotional Abuse	89	6.2%
Physical Abuse	142	9.9%
Sexual Abuse	68	4.8%
Treatment without Consent	0	0.0%
Unreasonable Confinement/Restraint	5	0.3%
<i>Information Only*</i>	86	6.0%
Total	1,430	100.0%

** Note: Calls for "information only" do not involve allegations of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation, and are not included in the analytic tables. Wording of this question changed near the end of 2008. Table combines responses to the question titled "Primary Reason for Call" with responses to "Primary Issue Identified."*

Primary Reason for Call/Issue Identified



Previous Report on This Individual?

	Number	Percent
No	893	68.2%
Yes	174	13.3%
Unknown	242	18.5%
Total	1,309	100.0%

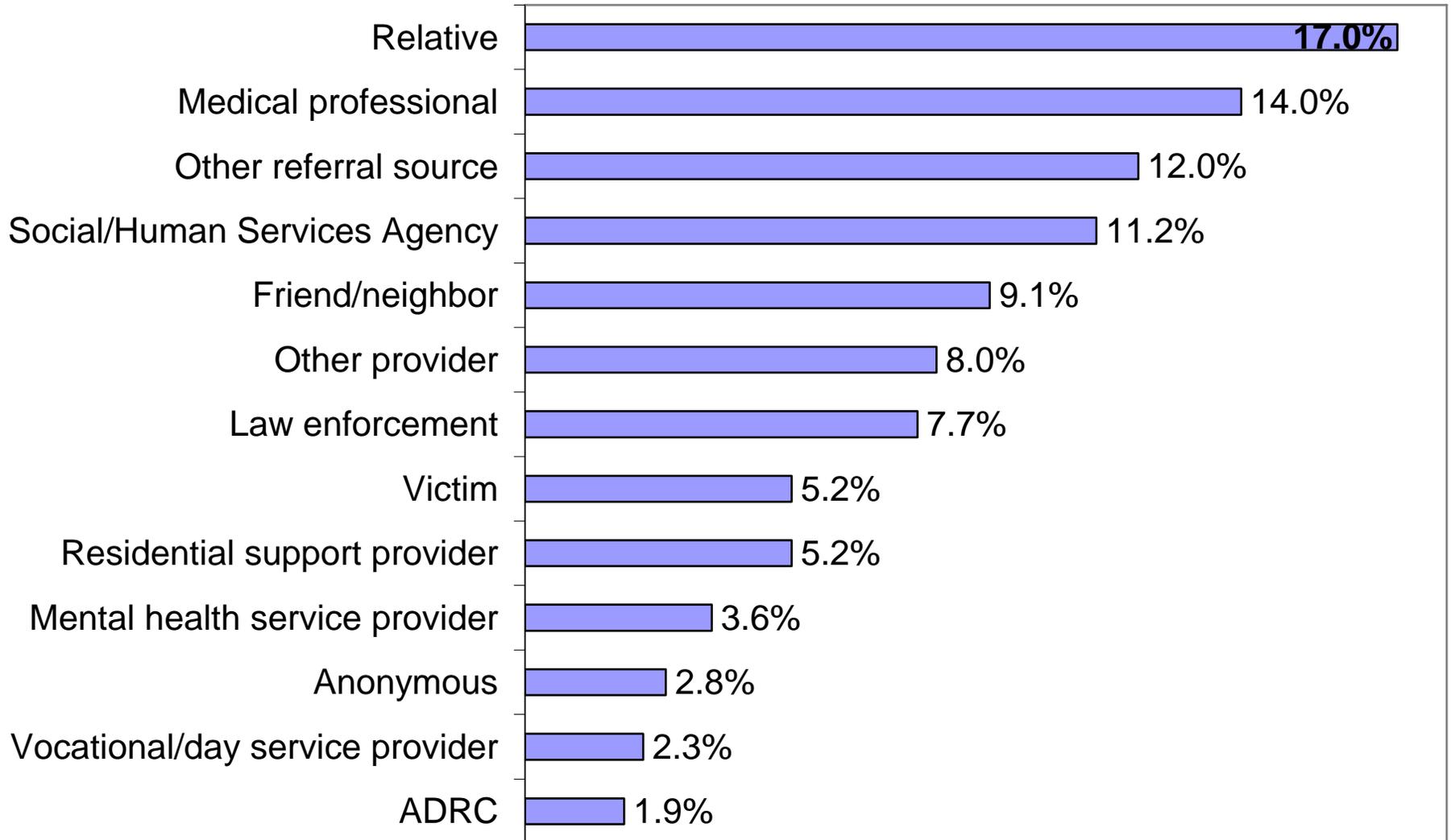
Where Incident Occurred

	Number	Percent
Place of residence	1,141	84.9%
Other place	162	12.1%
Place of employment/day services	24	1.8%
School	7	0.5%
Transportation	10	0.7%
Total	1,344	100.0%

Referral Source

	Number	Percent
Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)	26	1.9%
Social/Human Services Agency	150	11.2%
Alleged abuser	1	0.1%
Anonymous	37	2.8%
Employer	7	0.5%
Friend/neighbor	122	9.1%
Housing inspection/zoning	13	1.0%
Law enforcement	103	7.7%
Medical professional	188	14.0%
Mental health service provider	49	3.6%
Other provider	108	8.0%
Other referral source	138	10.3%
Regulatory authority (DHS/DQA)	2	0.1%
Relative	229	17.0%
Residential support provider	70	5.2%
Victim	70	5.2%
Vocational/day service provider	31	2.3%
Total	1,344	100.0%

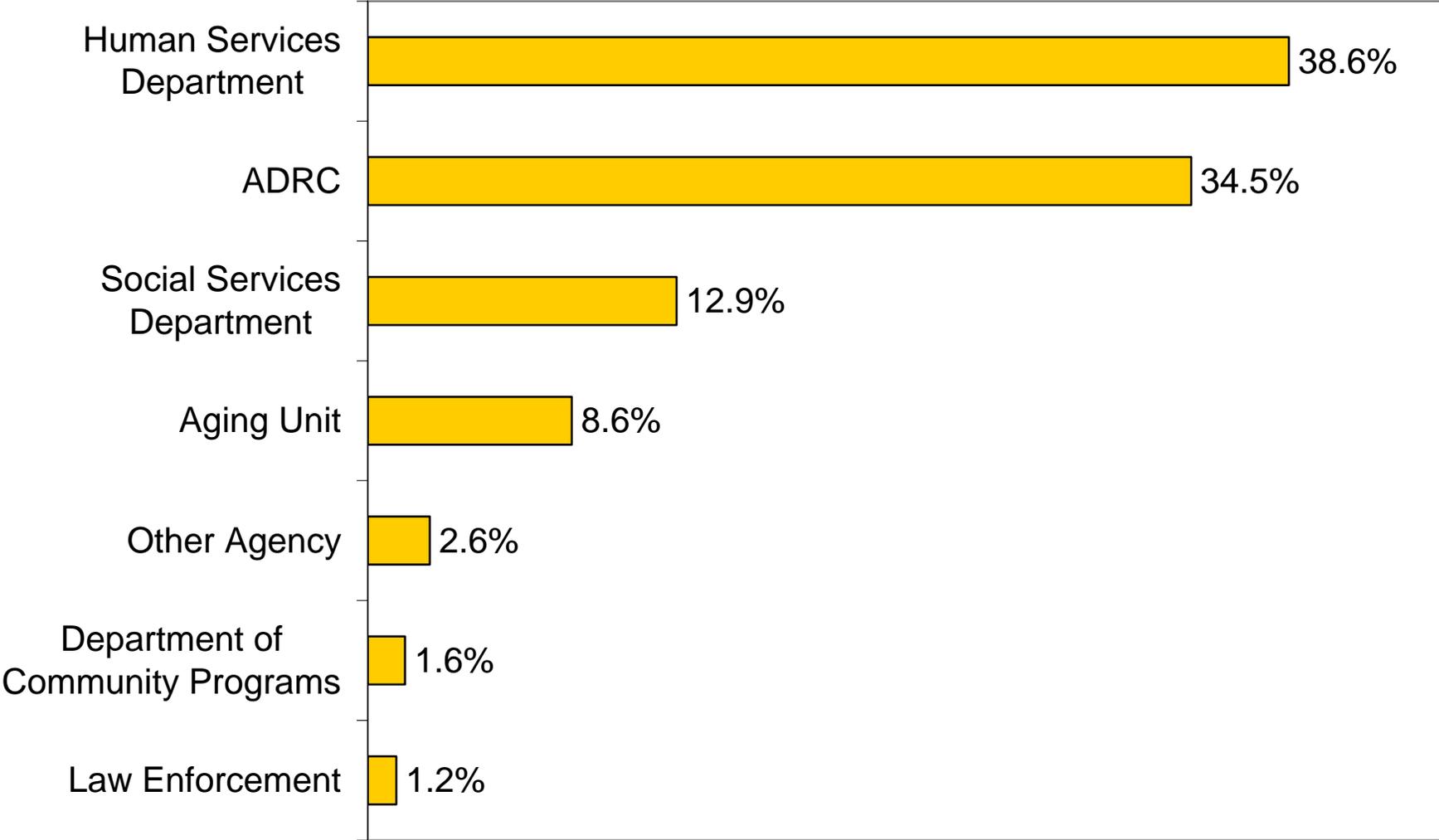
Referral Source



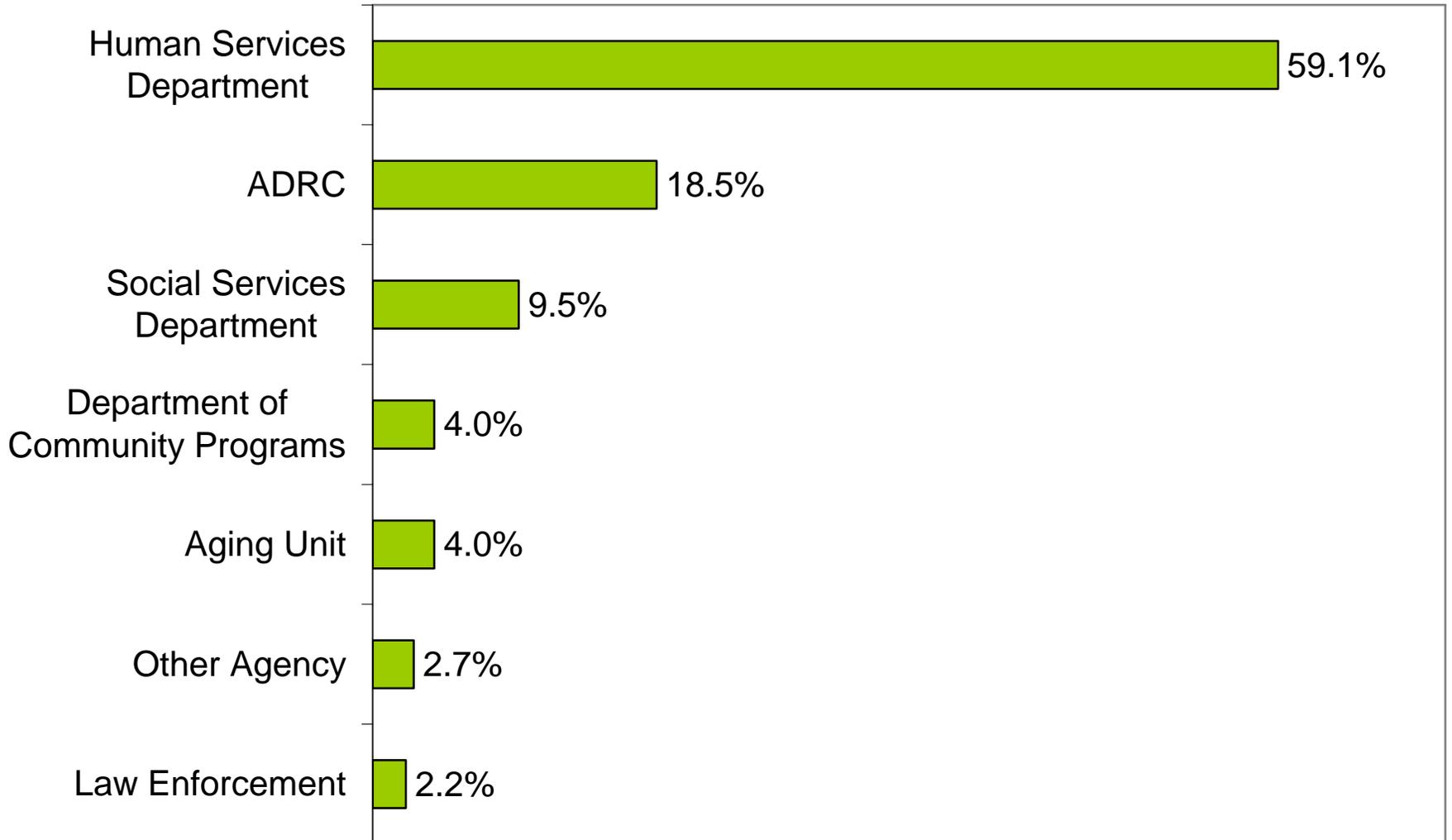
Call Received By		
	Number	Percent
Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)	464	34.5%
Aging Unit	115	8.6%
Department of Community Programs-51.42/437 Board	21	1.6%
Developmental Disability Board	6	0.4%
Human Services Department	519	38.6%
Law Enforcement	16	1.2%
Other Agency	29	2.2%
Social Services Department	174	12.9%
Total	1,344	100.0%

Initial Investigating Agency		
	Number	Percent
Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)	249	18.5%
Aging Unit	54	4.0%
Department of Community Programs-51.42/437 Board	54	4.0%
Developmental Disability Board	5	0.4%
Housing Inspection/Zoning	6	0.4%
Human Services Department	794	59.1%
Law Enforcement	29	2.2%
Other Agency	22	1.6%
Public Health Department	3	0.2%
Social Services Department	128	9.5%
Total	1,344	100.0%

Call Received By



Initial Investigating Agency



Was Incident Life Threatening?

	Number	Percent
No	1,182	87.9%
Yes	111	8.3%
Unknown	51	3.8%
Total	1,344	100.0%

Has Adult at Risk Died?

	Number	Percent
No	101	91.0%
Yes	10	9.0%
Unknown	0	0.0%
Total	111	100.0%

Note: Percents represent share of all life-threatening incidents.

Was Death Related to the Incident?

	Number	Percent
No	2	20.0%
Yes	5	50.0%
Unknown	3	30.0%
Total	10	100.0%

Note: Percents represent share of all incidents involving a death.

Was Death Directly Caused by Incident?

	Number	Percent
No	4	80.0%
Yes	1	20.0%
Unknown	0	0.0%
Total	5	100.0%

Note: Percents represent share of all incidents involving a death.

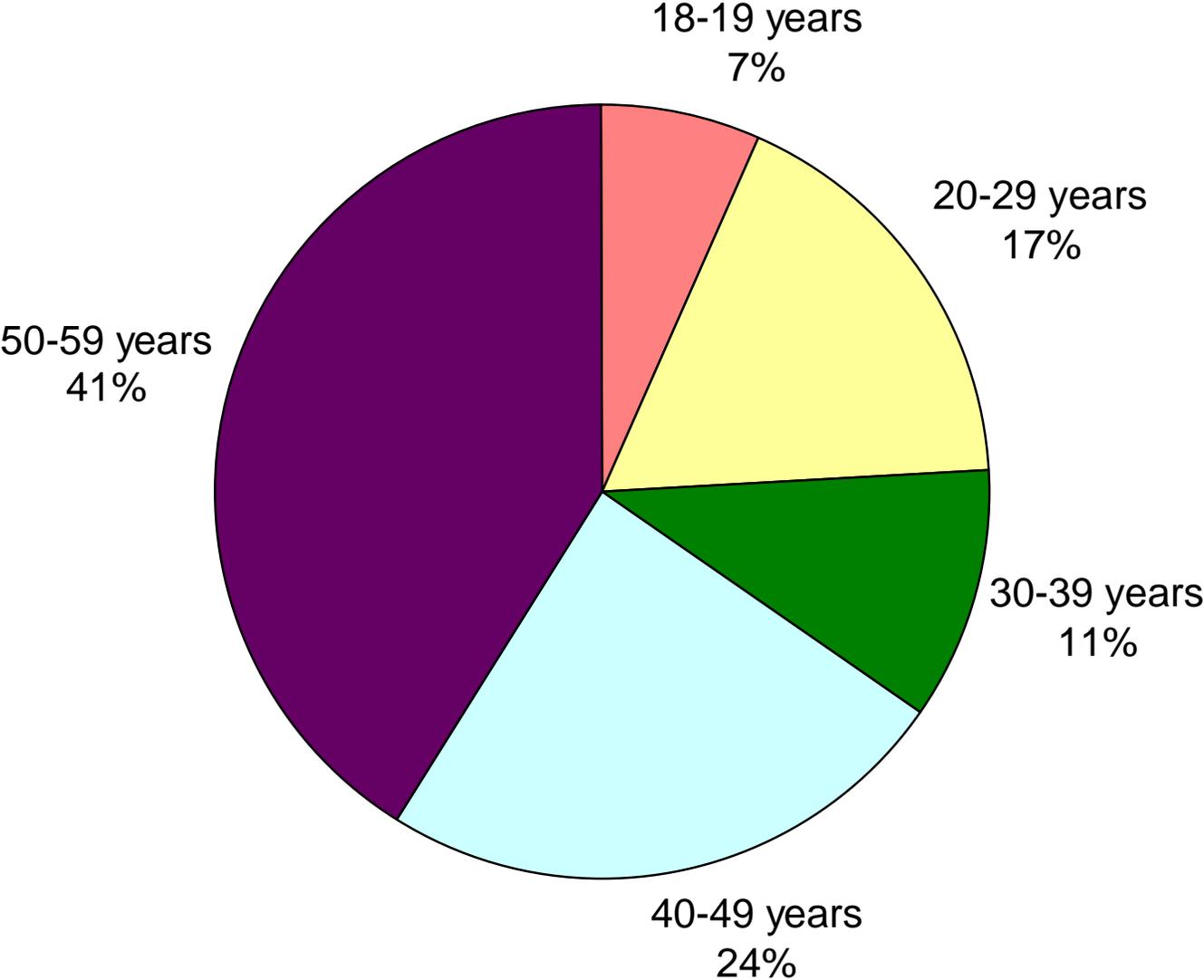
Adult at Risk's Age		
	Number	Percent
18-19 years	90	6.7%
20-29 years	234	17.4%
30-39 years	144	10.7%
40-49 years	322	24.0%
50-59 years	554	41.2%
Total	1,344	100.0%

Adult at Risk's Gender		
	Number	Percent
Female	700	52.1%
Male	642	47.8%
Unknown	2	0.1%
Total	1,344	100.0%

Adult at Risk's Race		
Age	Number	Percent
White	996	74.1%
Black/African American	139	10.3%
Native American/Alaska Native	37	2.8%
Asian	9	0.7%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2	0.1%
Other race	20	1.5%
Not reported or unknown	141	10.5%
Total	1,344	100.0%

Notes: 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.

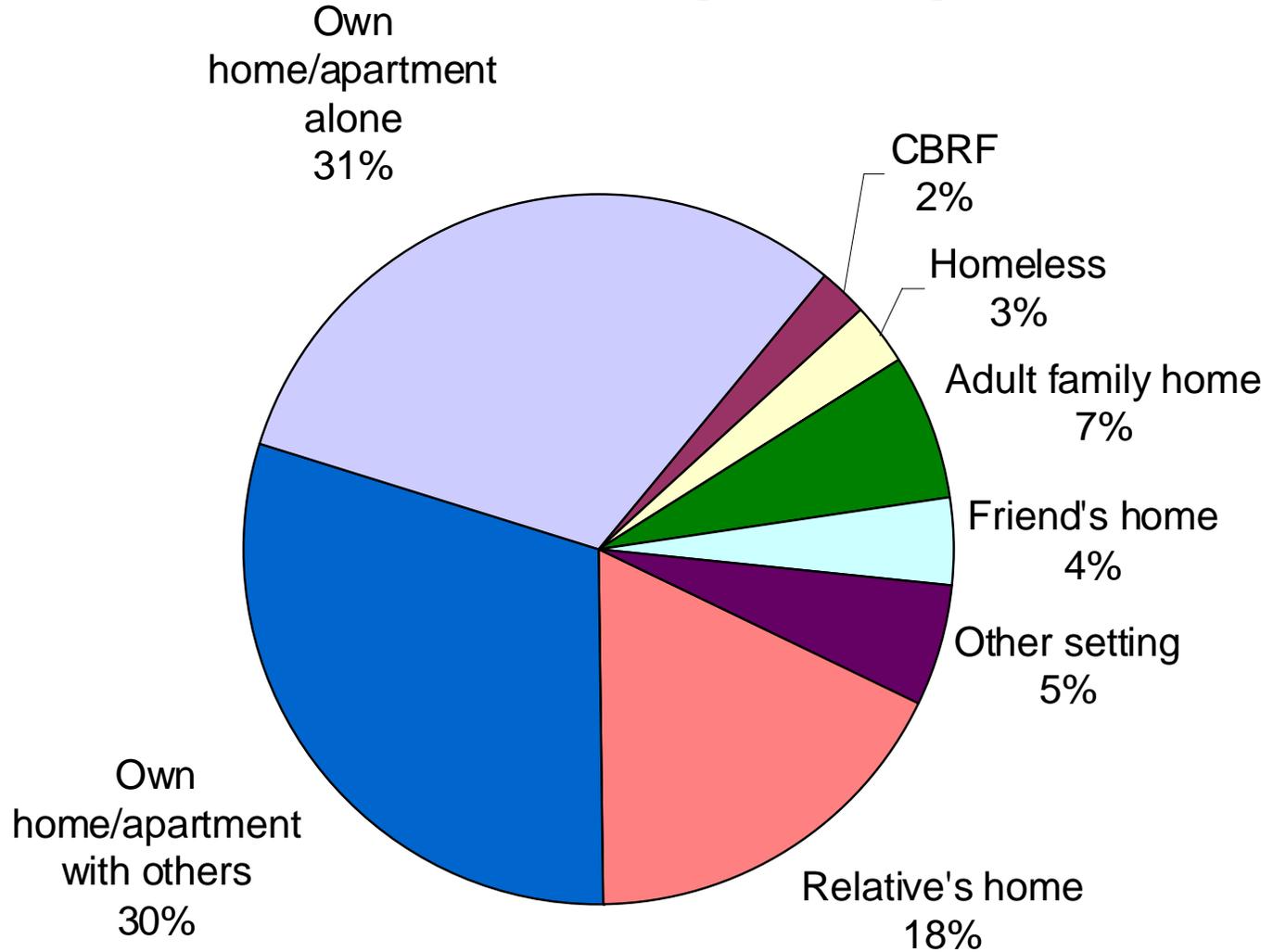
Adult at Risk's Age



Adult at Risk's Living Arrangement

	Number	Percent
Own home/apartment alone	421	31.3%
Own home/apartment with others	404	30.1%
Relative's home	236	17.6%
Friend's home	52	3.9%
Adult family home	49	3.6%
Adult family home (licensed)	43	3.2%
Nursing home	16	1.2%
Community Based Residential Facility (CBRF)	30	2.2%
Homeless	37	2.8%
Other setting	53	3.9%
Institution	3	0.2%
Total	1,344	100.0%

Adult at Risk's Living Arrangement

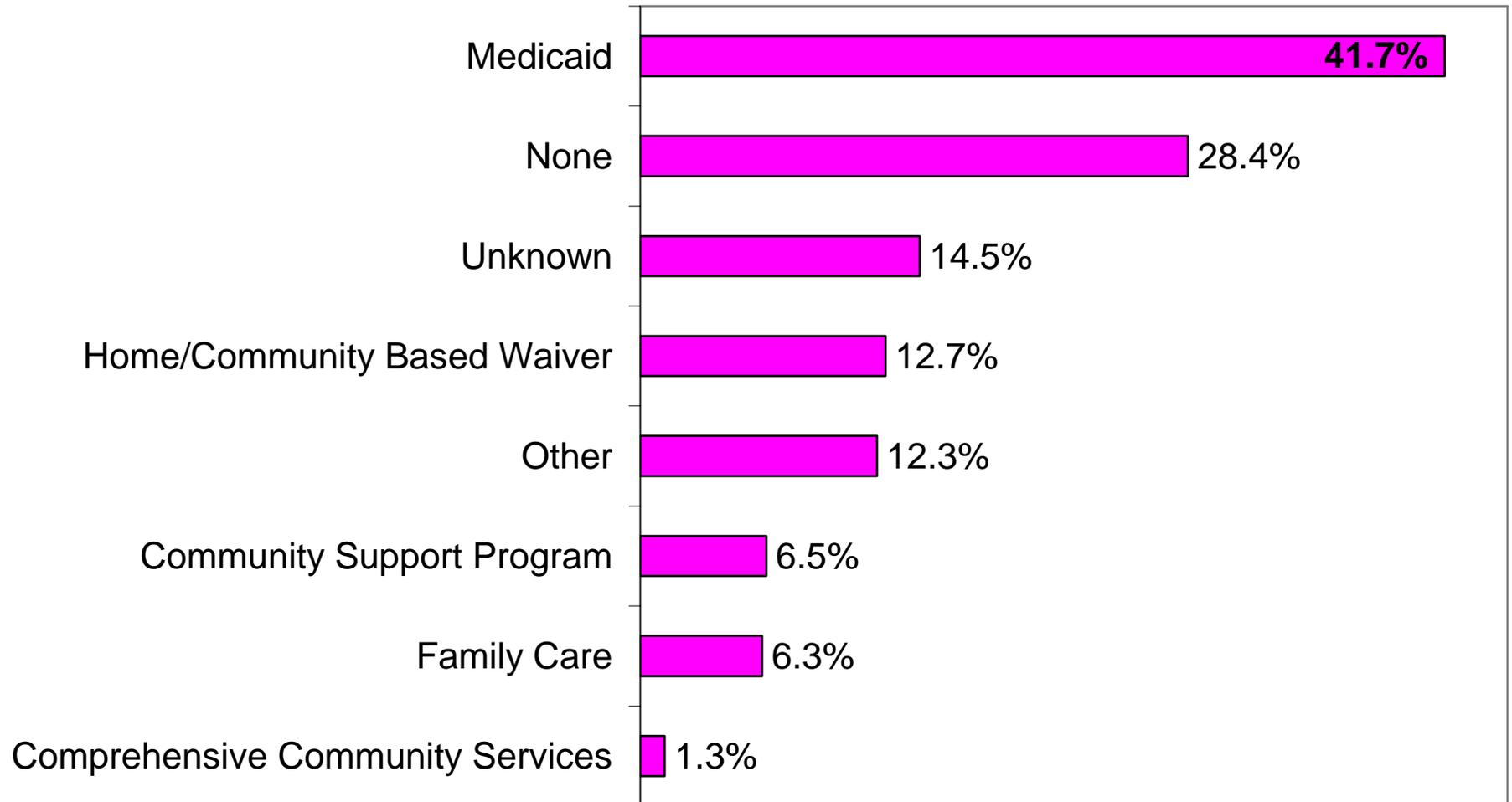


County/State Funded Programs That Have Served This Adult at Risk

	Number	Percent
Community Support Program	88	6.5%
Comprehensive Community Services	17	1.3%
Family Care	85	6.3%
Home and Community Based Waiver	171	12.7%
Medicaid (Title 19, Card Services)	561	41.7%
Unknown	195	14.5%
Other	165	12.3%
None	382	28.4%

Multiple responses were allowed, so percents do not total 100%.

Public Programs That Have Served This Adult at Risk



Does Adult at Risk Have a Substitute Decision-Maker?

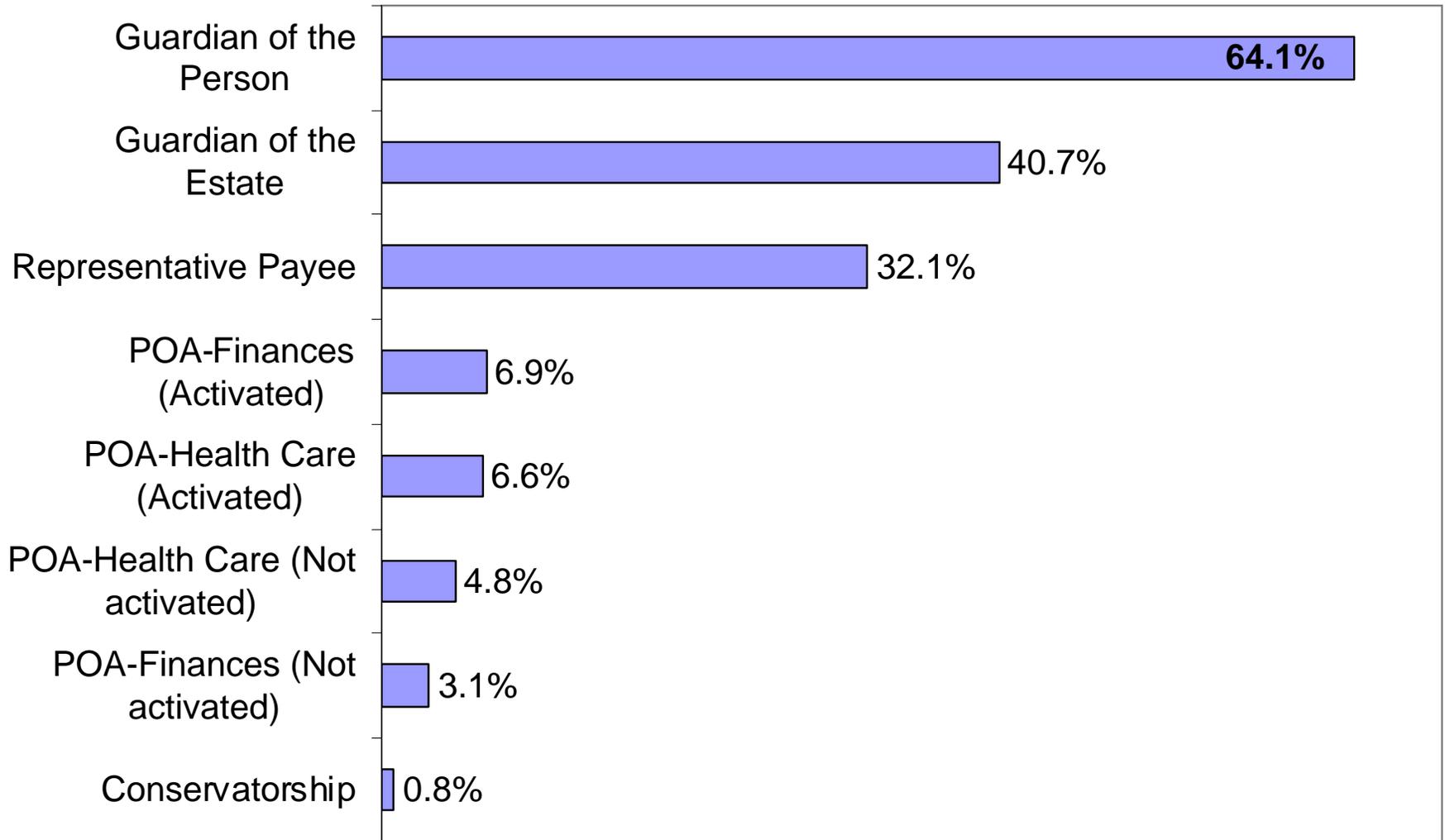
	Number	Percent
No	820	61.0%
Yes	393	29.2%
Unknown	131	9.7%
Total	1,344	100.0%

Type(s) of Substitute Decision-Maker

	Number	Percent
Conservatorship	3	0.8%
Guardian of the Person	252	64.1%
Guardian of the Estate	160	40.7%
Representative Payee	126	32.1%
Power of Attorney (POA) for Finances (Activated)	27	6.9%
Power of Attorney (POA) for Finances (Not activated)	12	3.1%
Power of Attorney (POA) for Health Care (Activated)	26	6.6%
Power of Attorney (POA) for Health Care (Not activated)	19	4.8%

Percents represent share of all those with any kind of substitute decision-maker. Multiple responses are allowed, so percents do not total 100%

Type of Substitute Decision-Maker



Adult at Risk's Characteristics

	Number	Percent
Adult at Risk financially dependent on alleged abuser	32	2.4%
Alcohol or drug abuse	201	15.0%
Alleged abuser financially dependent on Adult at Risk	38	2.8%
Alzheimer's or related dementia	32	2.4%
Blind/visually impaired	38	2.8%
Brain injury	65	4.8%
Challenging or dangerous behavior	95	7.1%
Developmental disability	481	35.8%
Diabetic	102	7.6%
Disoriented/confused	54	4.0%
Functionally illiterate	29	2.2%
Homebound	51	3.8%
Incontinent	53	3.9%
Medically fragile	143	10.6%
Mental illness/Chronic mental illness	404	30.1%
Mobility impaired	156	11.6%
Physically disabled	280	20.8%
Unemployed	118	8.8%
Other medical condition	199	14.8%
Other characteristic	195	14.5%

*Percents refer to share of all adults at risk having this characteristic.
Multiple responses are allowed, so percents do not total 100%.*

Age of Alleged Abuser(s)

	Number	Percent
Under 25 years	48	6.1%
25 to 44 years	164	20.8%
45 to 59 years	217	27.6%
60 to 79 years	77	9.8%
80 years or older	9	1.1%
Unknown	272	34.6%
Total	787	100.0%

Percents refer to share of all incidents in which abuse or neglect was alleged.

Alleged Abusers' Gender

	Number	Percent
Male	327	41.7%
Female	370	47.1%
Unknown	88	11.2%
Total	785	100.0%

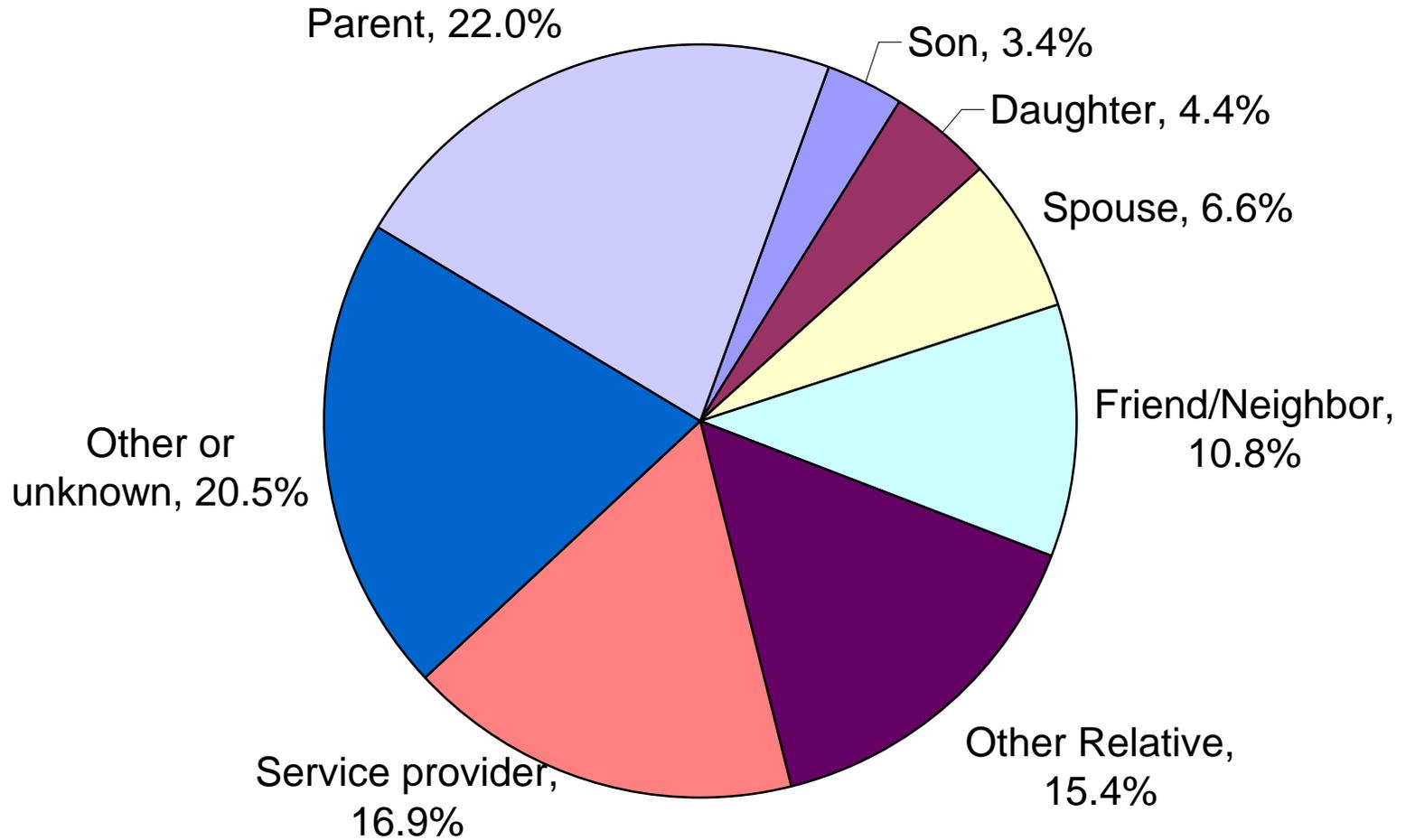
Alleged Abusers' Relationship to Adult at Risk

	Number	Percent
Parent	173	22.0%
Son	27	3.4%
Daughter	35	4.4%
Spouse	52	6.6%
Other or unknown	156	19.8%
Friend/Neighbor	85	10.8%
Other Relative	121	15.4%
Grandchild	5	0.6%
Service provider	133	16.9%
Total	787	78.0%

Are Alleged Abusers Caregivers?

	Number	Percent
Yes	383	48.7%
No	333	42.4%
Unknown	70	8.9%
Total	786	100.0%

Alleged Abusers' Relationship to Adult at Risk



Do Alleged Abusers Live with the Adult at Risk?		
	Number	Percent
Yes	407	51.8%
No	314	40.0%
Unknown	64	8.2%
Total	785	100.0%

Do Alleged Abusers Have Any Legal or Substitute Decision-Maker Status?		
	Number	Percent
Any legal/substitute decision-maker status listed	213	27.1%
No status listed	574	72.9%
Total	787	100.0%

Abusers' Legal Status

	Number	Percent
Guardian of the Person	90	11.4%
Guardian of the Estate	64	8.1%
Temporary Guardian	2	0.3%
Representative Payee	89	11.3%
Power of Attorney (POA) for Finances (Activated)	11	1.4%
Power of Attorney (POA) for Finances (Not activated)	6	0.8%
Power of Attorney (POA) for Health Care (Activated)	12	1.5%
Power of Attorney (POA) for Health Care (Not activated)	10	1.3%
Other legal status	25	3.2%
Unknown legal status	117	14.9%
No legal status	454	57.7%

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

Alleged Abusers' Characteristics

	Number	Percent
Alcohol abuse	57	7.2%
Chronic alcoholic	15	1.9%
Challenging/dangerous behavior	24	3.0%
Developmental disability	24	3.0%
Drug abuse	33	4.2%
Financial dependence: adult at risk on abuser	28	3.6%
Financial dependence: abuser on adult at risk	55	7.0%
Mental illness	49	6.2%
Morbidly obese	6	0.8%
Physical disability	34	4.3%
Unemployed	64	8.1%
Other characteristic	176	22.4%
None of the listed characteristics	431	54.8%

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

More than One Alleged Abuser?

	Number	Percent
Yes	37	4.7%
No, one alleged abuser only	750	95.3%
Total	787	100.0%

Was Hurt or Harm Substantiated?

	Number	Percent
Substantiated	698	51.9%
Unsubstantiated	466	34.7%
Unable to Substantiate	180	13.4%
Total	1,344	100.0%

Actions Taken to Assist Adult at Risk

	Number	Percent
Guardian referral	90	6.7%
Investigation not accepted	54	4.0%
Mental health commitment	32	2.4%
Outreach continues	186	13.8%
Protective services placement	65	4.8%
Referral made to other agency	242	18.0%
Referral made to state agency	7	0.5%
Referral to Caregiver Misconduct Registry (DHS/DQA)	23	1.7%
Referral to law enforcement/Department of Justice	129	9.6%
Referral to detoxification services	21	1.6%
Referral to protection/advocacy agencies	71	5.3%
Referral to regulatory authority (DHS/DQA)	24	1.8%
Services needed are not available	52	3.9%
Services not needed	175	13.0%
Services offered but not accepted	210	15.6%
Services offered-all accepted	177	13.2%
Services offered-some accepted	282	21.0%
Response/investigation continues	41	3.1%
Other legal action	53	3.9%
Other disposition	115	8.6%

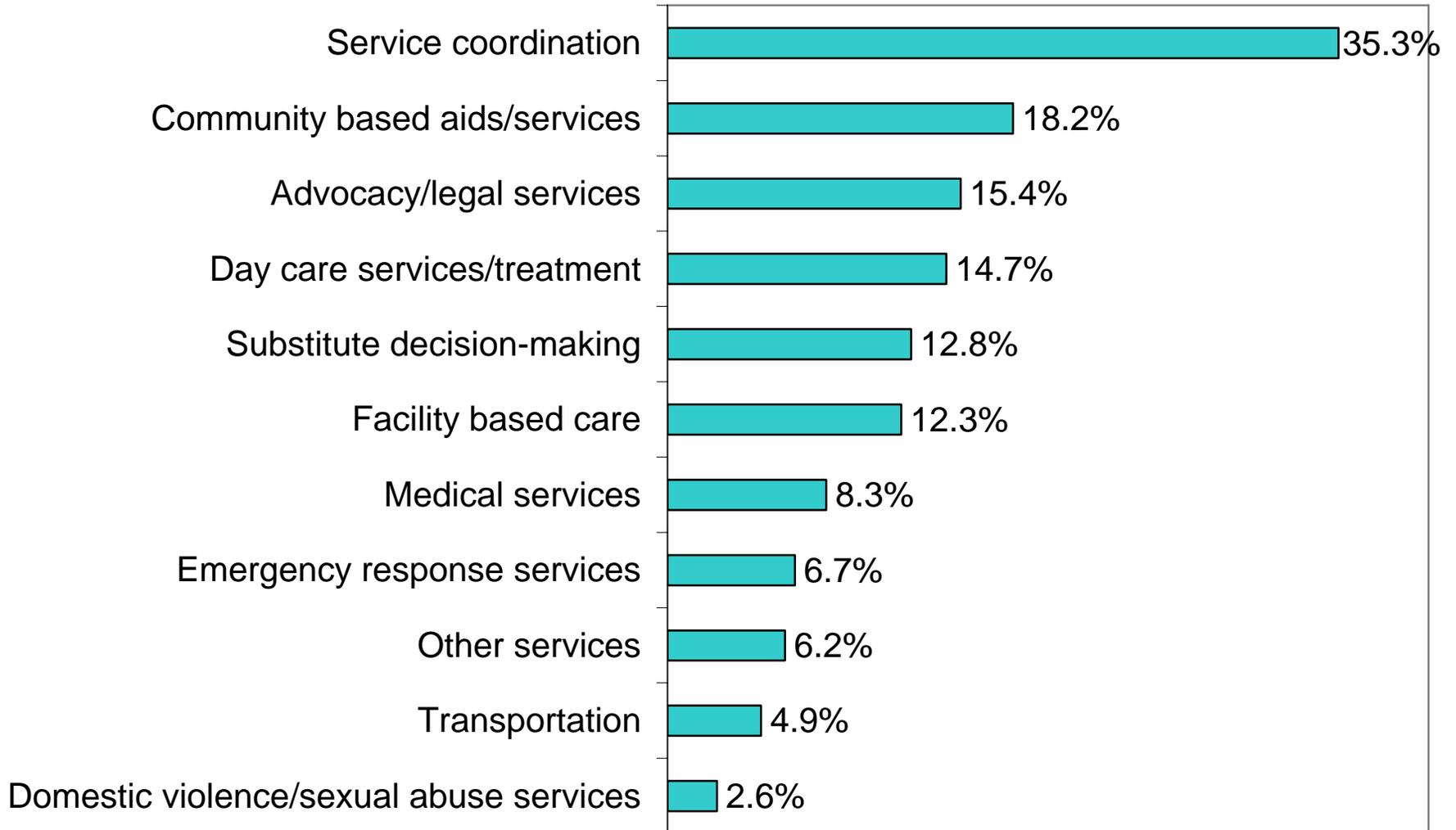
Percents refer to share of all reports showing this action. Multiple responses were allowed so numbers do not add up to 100%

Services Planned for Adult at Risk

	Number	Percent
Advocacy/legal services	207	15.4%
Community based aids/services	244	18.2%
Day care services/treatment	197	14.7%
Domestic violence/sexual assault services	35	2.6%
Emergency response services	90	6.7%
Facility based care	165	12.3%
Medical services	112	8.3%
Service coordination	474	35.3%
Substitute decision-making	172	12.8%
Transportation	66	4.9%
Other services planned	83	6.2%

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

Services Planned for Adult at Risk

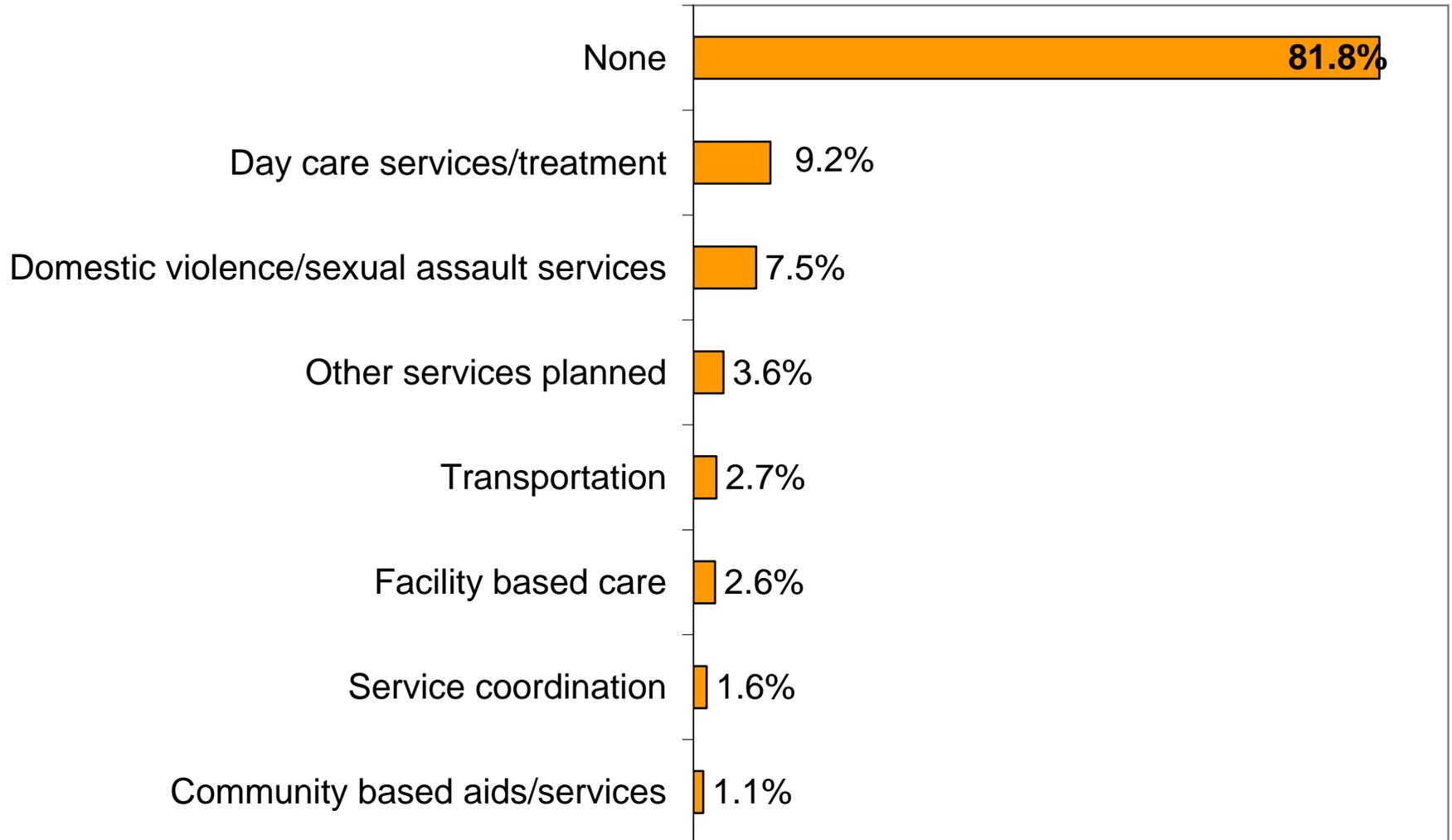


Services Planned for Alleged Abuser(s)

	Number	Percent
Advocacy/legal services	52	7.5%
Community based aids/services	19	2.7%
Day care services/treatment	18	2.6%
Domestic violence/sexual assault victim services	2	0.3%
Emergency response services	7	1.0%
Facility based care	6	0.9%
Medical services	6	0.9%
Service coordination	64	9.2%
Substitute decision making	8	1.1%
Transportation	4	0.6%
Other services planned	11	1.6%
None	569	81.8%

Multiple responses were allowed so numbers do not add up to 100%. Percents refer to share of all incidents in which abuse, neglect or financial exploitation was alleged.

Services Planned for Alleged Abuser(s)



Contact Information

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