



# **Wisconsin's Annual Report on Abuse, Neglect, and Financial Exploitation of Adults at Risk: 2020**

A statewide summary of reports  
submitted by Wisconsin counties

Division of Public Health  
P-00123-20 (05/2021)



# Introduction: The Annual Adults at Risk Report

County agencies in Wisconsin receive abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation referrals and determine whether a situation of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation exists. They create 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 2020 are the basis of this statewide report: *Wisconsin's Annual Report on Abuse, Neglect, and Financial Exploitation of Adults at Risk*.



# Introduction: The Annual Adults at Risk 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 stop abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults at risk.

The majority of the adults at risk included in this report are community-dwelling. Allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of individuals living in licensed facilities are generally addressed through the Department of Health Services (DHS), Division of Quality Assurance (DQA), Office of Caregiver Quality.



# 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 and 59 years.
  - who has any physical or mental impairment that substantially restricts his or her ability to care for his or her needs.
  - who has experienced or is at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- An adult at risk *does not* require membership in a categorical group such as those with developmental disabilities, a degenerative brain disorder, a serious and persistent mental illness, or other like incapacities.



# 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 know that you are concerned about them and that they are not alone; there are others who do understand and are there to help them stay safe.

Call your County Help Line if you need to talk to someone about suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an adult at risk (ages 18-59).

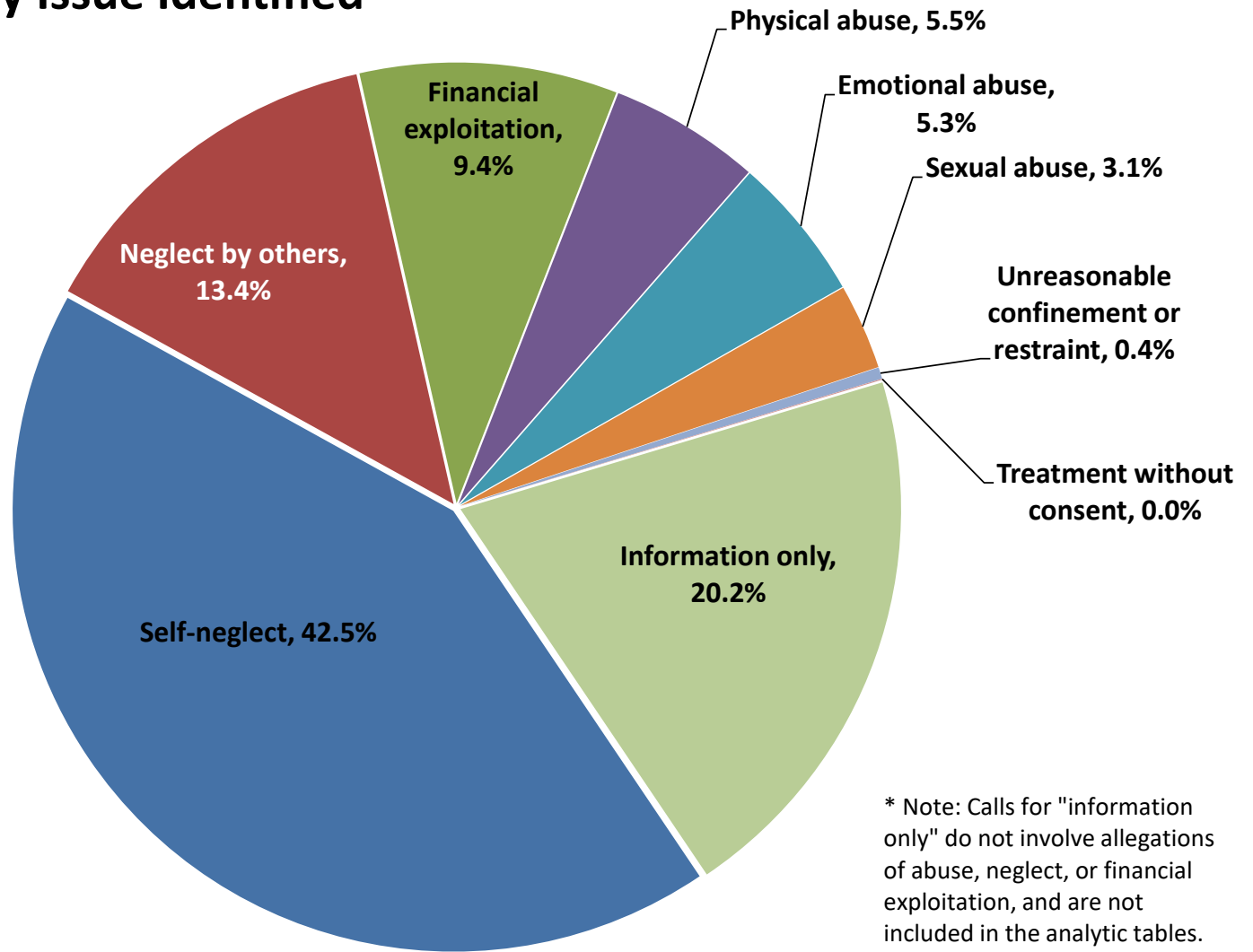
See <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/aps/Contacts/aaragencies.htm> for these help line phone numbers.



<b>Primary Reason for Call/Issue Identified</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Self-neglect	1,205	42.5%
Neglect by others	381	13.4%
Financial exploitation	268	9.4%
Physical abuse	157	5.5%
Emotional abuse	151	5.3%
Sexual abuse	89	3.1%
Unreasonable confinement or restraint	12	0.4%
Treatment without consent	1	0.0%
Information only	573	20.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,837</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
* Note: Calls for "information only" do not involve allegations of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation, and are not included in the analytic tables.		



## Primary Issue Identified





### Previous Report on This Individual?

	Number	Percent
No	1,245	55.0%
Yes	698	30.8%
Unknown	321	14.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Where Incident Occurred

	Number	Percent
Place of residence	1,905	84.1%
Other place	317	14.0%
Place of employment or day services	26	1.1%
School	8	0.4%
Transportation	8	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

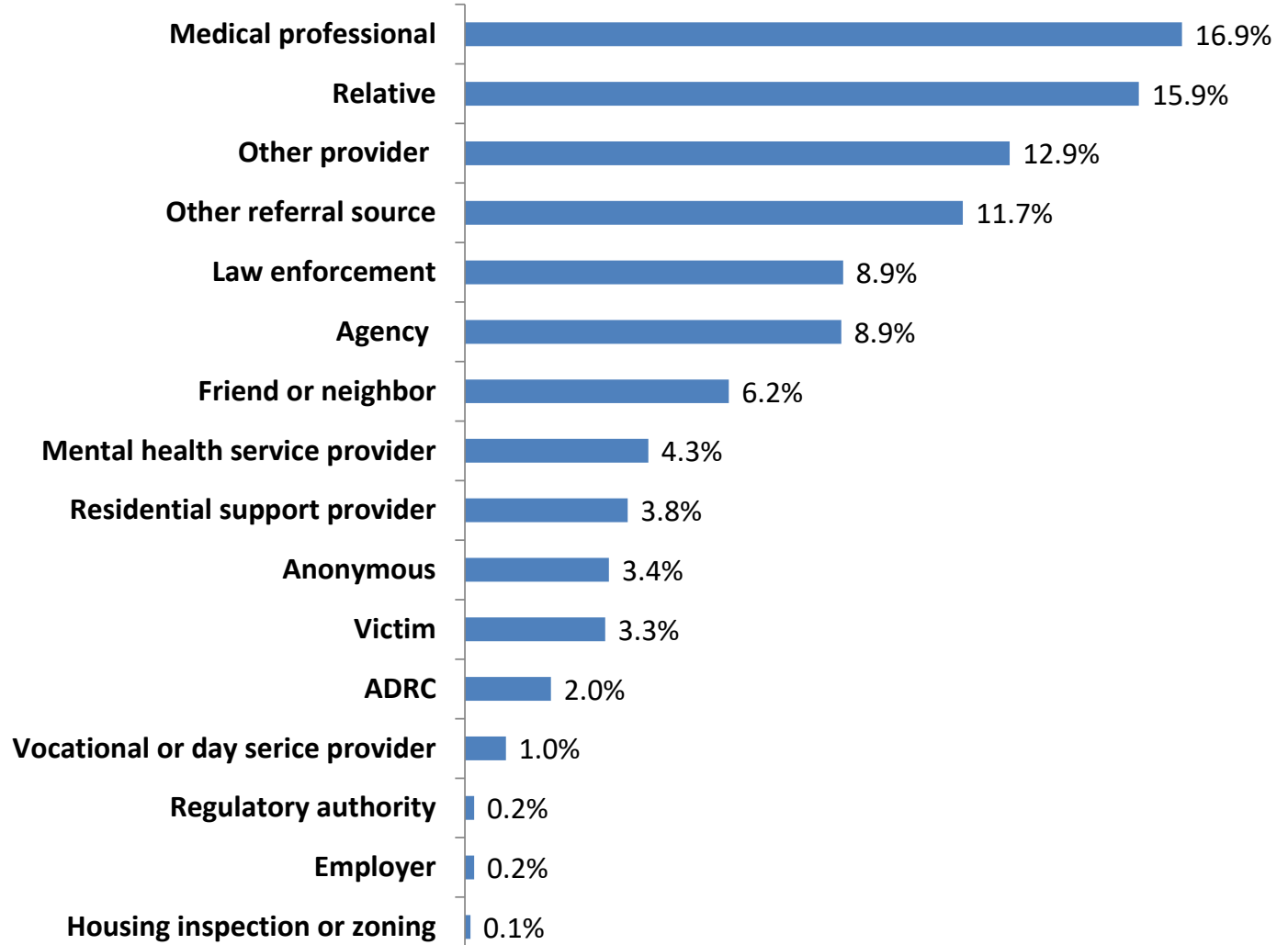




<b>Referral Source</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Medical professional	383	16.9%
Relative	360	15.9%
Other provider	291	12.9%
Other referral source	266	11.7%
Law enforcement	202	8.9%
Agency	201	8.9%
Friend or neighbor	141	6.2%
Mental health service provider	98	4.3%
Residential support provider	87	3.8%
Anonymous	77	3.4%
Victim	75	3.3%
ADRC	46	2.0%
Vocational or day service provider	22	1.0%
Employer	5	0.2%
Regulatory authority	5	0.2%
Housing inspection or zoning	3	0.1%
Alleged abuser	1	0.0%
Substance abuse service provider	1	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Referral Source





### Call Received By:

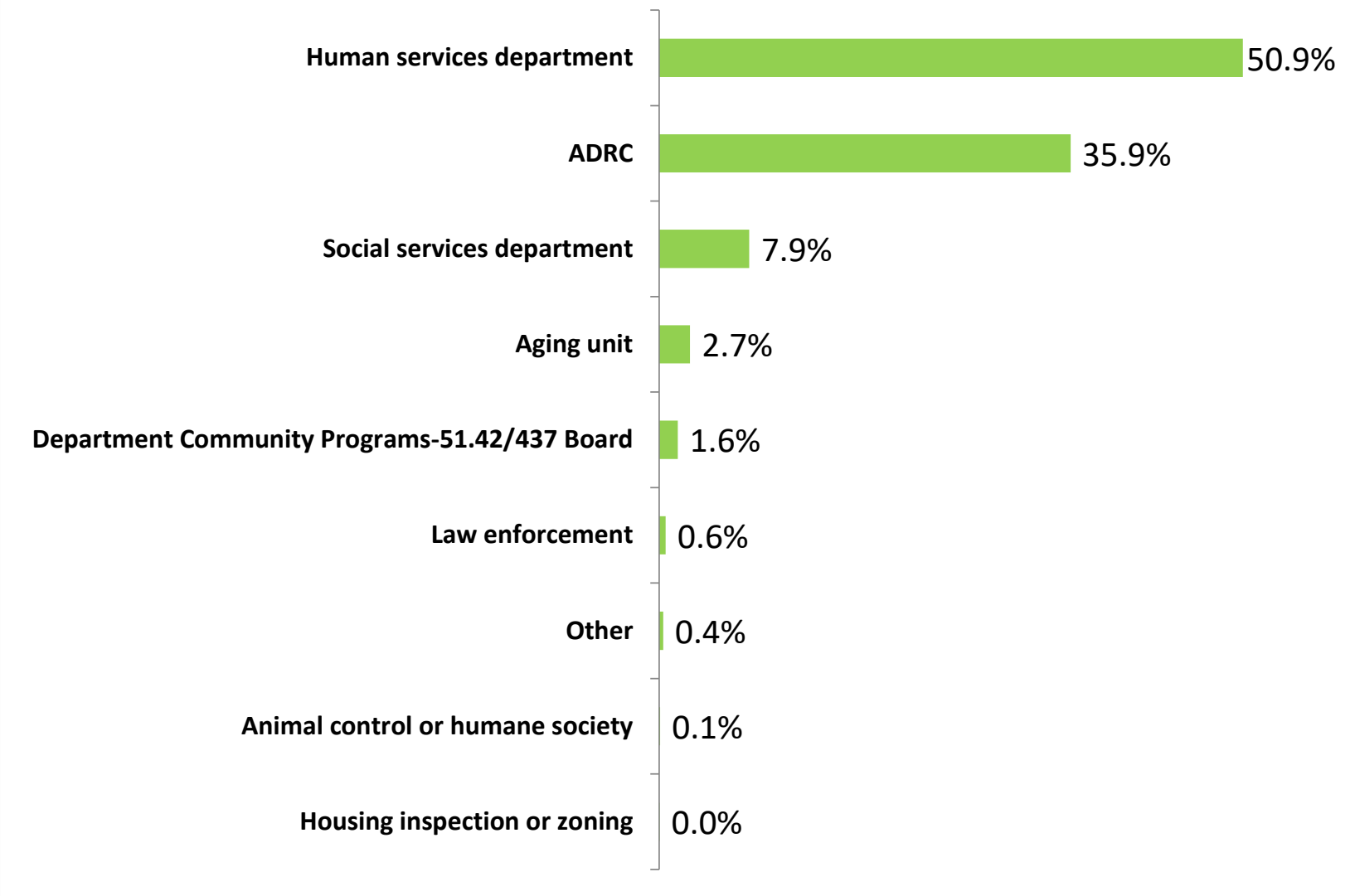
	Number	Percent
Human services department	1,152	50.9%
ADRC	812	35.9%
Social services department	178	7.9%
Aging unit	61	2.7%
Department Community Programs-51.42/437 Board	37	1.6%
Law enforcement	13	0.6%
Other	8	0.4%
Animal control or humane society	2	0.1%
Housing inspection or zoning	1	0.0%
Developmental Disability Board	0	0.0%
Ombudsman or Board of Aging and Long-Term Care	0	0.0%
Publicized helpline number	0	0.0%
Regulatory authority	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Initial Investigating Agency

	Number	Percent
Human services department	1,351	59.7%
ADRC	336	14.8%
Aging unit	235	10.4%
Social services department	166	7.3%
Other	88	3.9%
Department Community Programs-51.42/437 Board	56	2.5%
Law enforcement	25	1.1%
Public health department	4	0.2%
Housing inspection or zoning	2	0.1%
Division of Quality Assurance or Licensing and Regulation	1	0.0%
Animal control or humane society	0	0.0%
Ombudsman or Board of Aging and Long-Term Care	0	0.0%
Developmental Disability Board	0	0.0%
Wisconsin Department of Justice	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

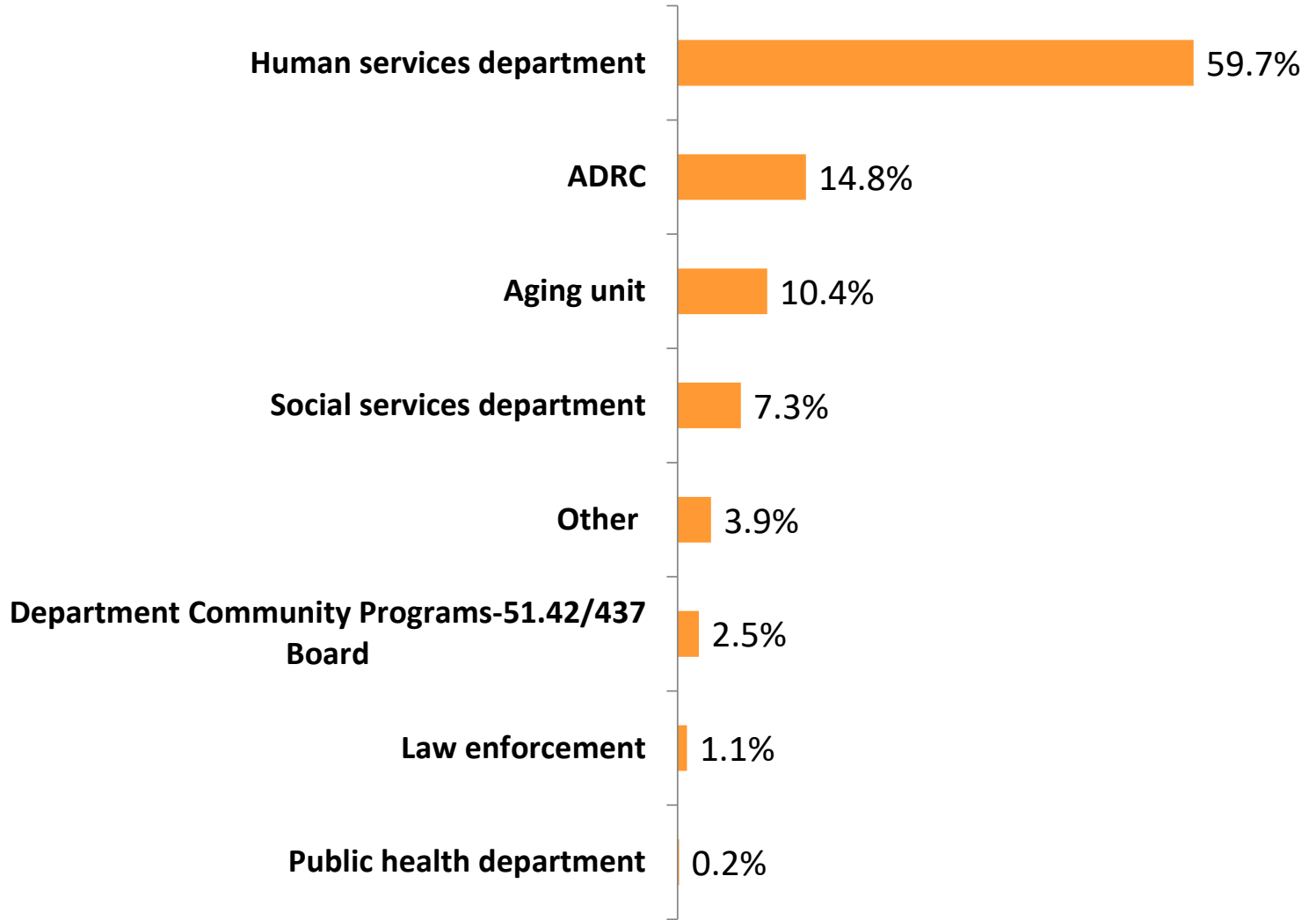


### Call Received By:





### Initial Investigating Agency





<b>Was Incident Life Threatening?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	1,986	87.7%
Yes	144	6.4%
Unknown	134	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<b>Has Adult at Risk Died?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	129	89.6%
Yes	13	9.0%
Unknown	2	1.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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

<b>Was Death Related to the Incident?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	7	53.8%
Yes	5	38.5%
Unknown	1	7.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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

<b>Was Death Directly Caused by Incident?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	1	20.0%
Yes	3	60.0%
Unknown	1	20.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

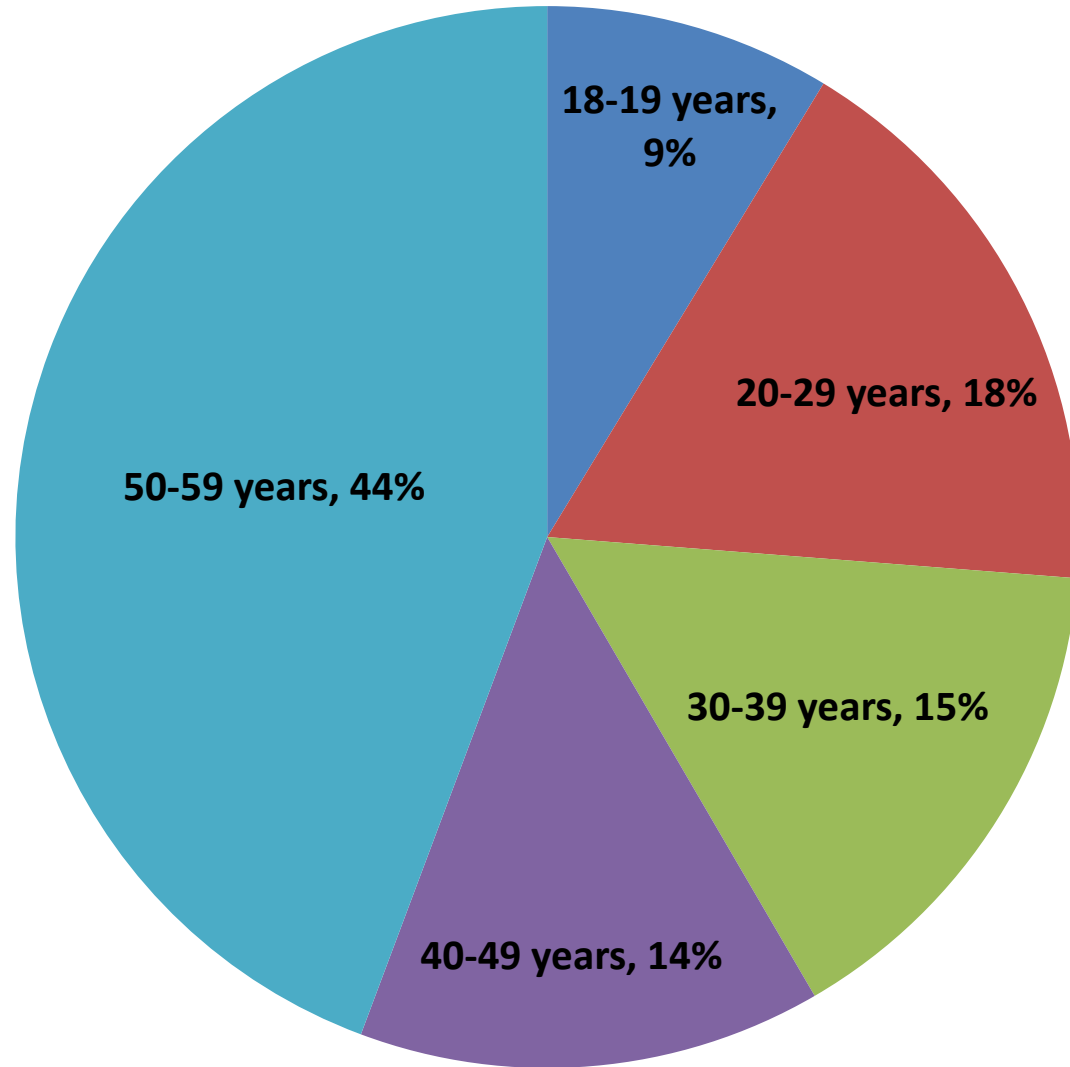
*Note: Percents represent share of all incidents involving a death related to the incident.*



<b>Adult at Risk's Age</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
18-19 years	197	8.7%
20-29 years	397	17.5%
30-39 years	348	15.4%
40-49 years	319	14.1%
50-59 years	1,003	44.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Adult at Risk's Gender</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	1,146	50.6%
Female	1,115	49.2%
Unknown	3	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Adult at Risk's Race</b>		
<b>Age</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
White	1,173	51.8%
Black or African American	141	6.2%
Native American or Alaska Native	60	2.7%
Other race	35	1.5%
Asian	20	0.9%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	0.1%
Not reported or unknown	833	36.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>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.</i>		



## Adult at Risk's Age





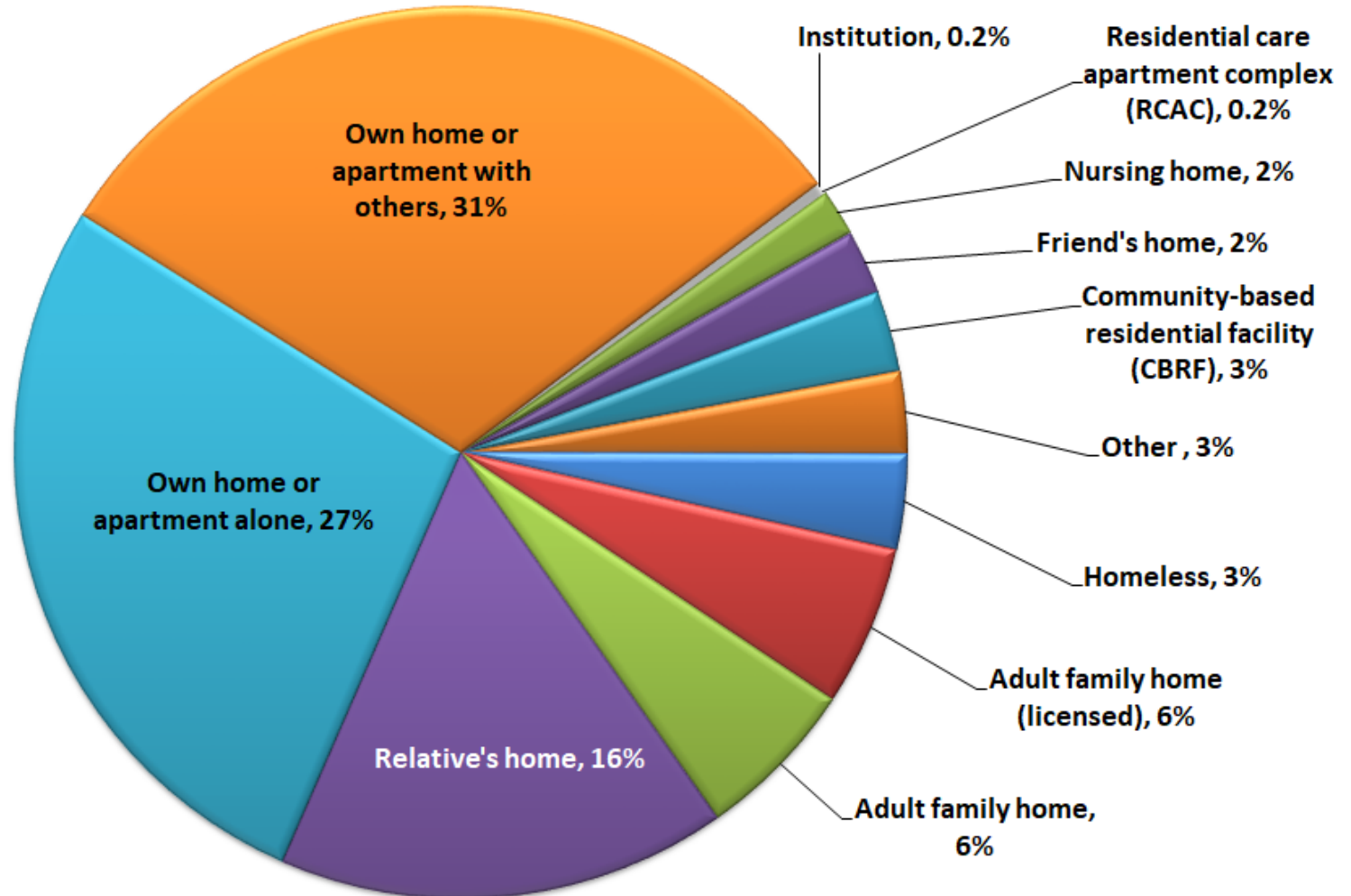


## Adult at Risk's Living Arrangement

	Number	Percent
Own home or apartment with others	697	30.8%
Own home or apartment alone	620	27.4%
Relative's home	369	16.3%
Adult family home	134	5.9%
Adult family home (licensed)	132	5.8%
Homeless	78	3.4%
Other	67	3.0%
Community-based residential facility (CBRF)	66	2.9%
Friend's home	53	2.3%
Nursing home	38	1.7%
Institution	5	0.2%
Residential care apartment complex (RCAC)	5	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Adult at Risk's Living Arrangement





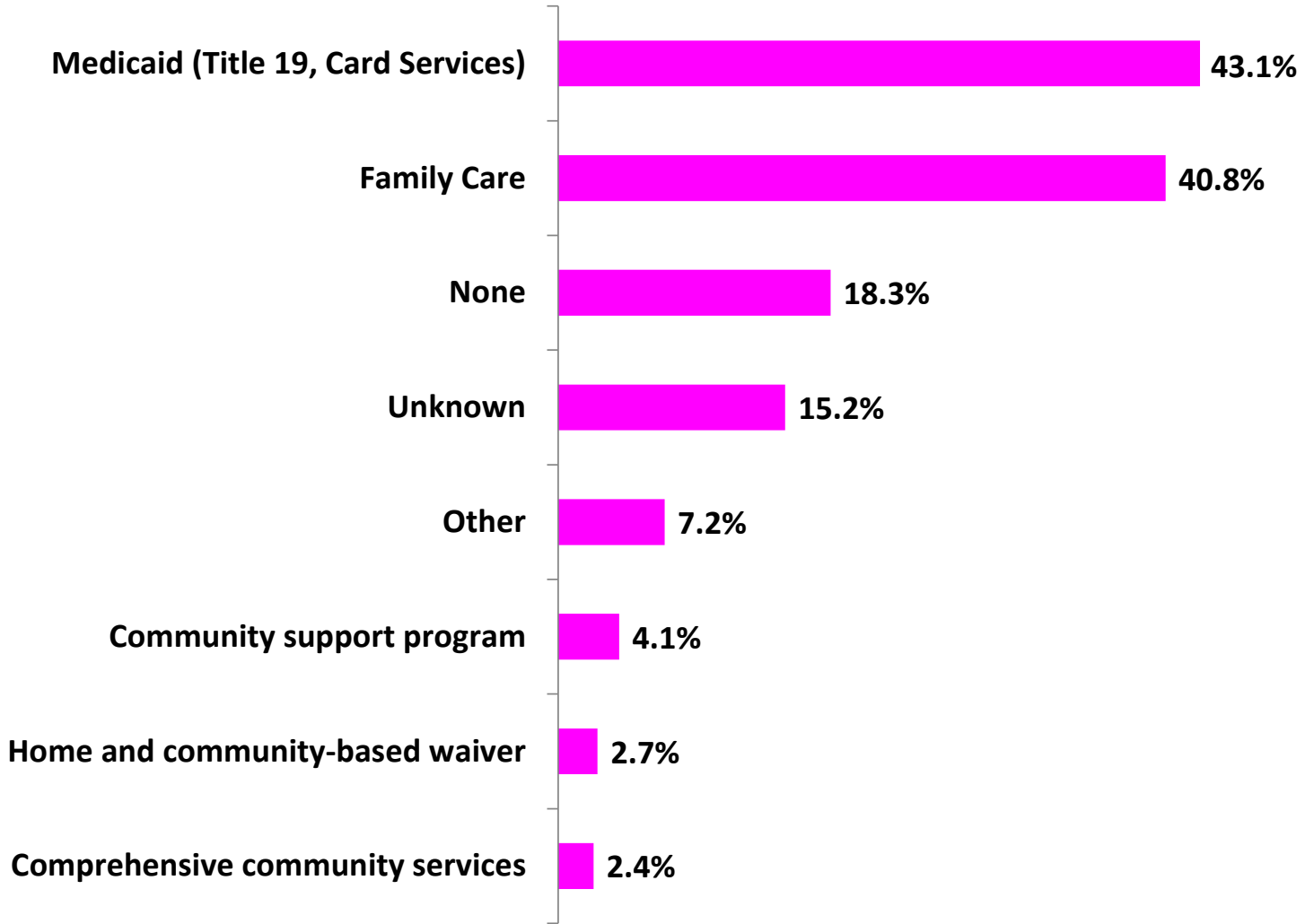
## County and State Funded Programs That Have Served Adult at Risk Adults

	Number	Percent
Medicaid (Title 19, Card Services)	975	43.1%
Family Care	923	40.8%
None	414	18.3%
Unknown	345	15.2%
Other	162	7.2%
Community support program	93	4.1%
Home and community-based waiver	60	2.7%
Comprehensive community services	54	2.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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



### County and State-funded Programs That Have Served Adults at Risk





### Does Adult at Risk Have a Substitute Decision-Maker?

	Number	Percent
No	1,092	48.2%
Yes	901	39.8%
Unknown	271	12.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

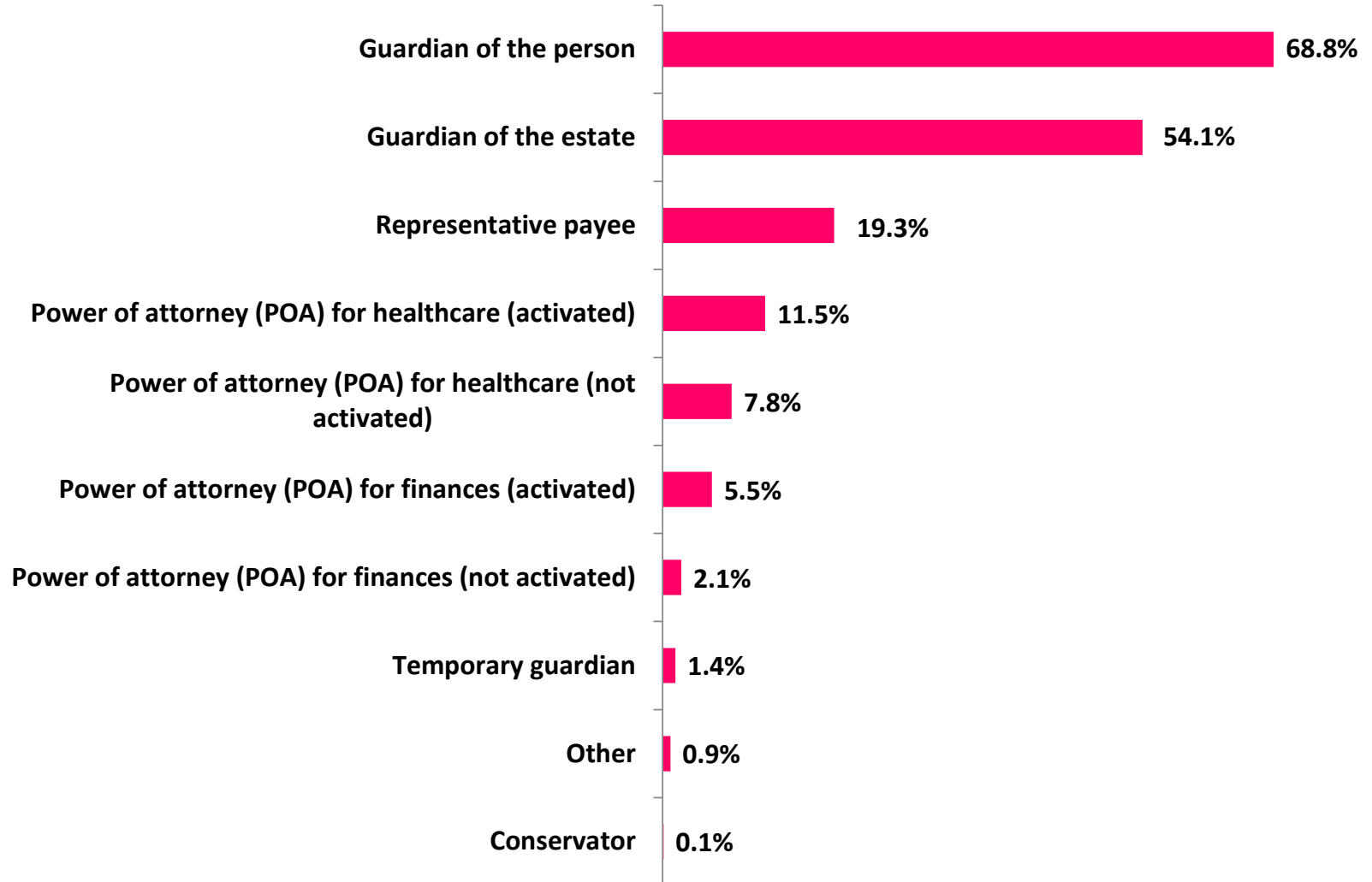
### Type(s) of Substitute Decision-Maker

	Number	Percent
Guardian of the person	620	68.8%
Guardian of the estate	487	54.1%
Representative payee	174	19.3%
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (activated)	104	11.5%
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (not activated)	70	7.8%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (activated)	50	5.5%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (not activated)	19	2.1%
Temporary guardian	13	1.4%
Other	8	0.9%
Conservator	1	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Percents represent share of all those with any kind of substitute decision-maker (n=901). Multiple responses are allowed, so percents do not total 100%.*



## Type(s) of Substitute Decision-Maker





## Adult at Risk's Characteristics

	Number	Percent
Developmental disability	864	38.2%
Mental illness	602	26.6%
Physical disability	333	14.7%
Medically fragile	265	11.7%
Other medical condition	261	11.5%
Chronic mental illness	241	10.6%
Mobility impaired	226	10.0%
Alcohol abuse	217	9.6%
Challenging or dangerous behavior	217	9.6%
Diabetes	146	6.4%
Unemployed	132	5.8%
Drug abuse	127	5.6%
Brain injury	119	5.3%
Other characteristic	107	4.7%
Disoriented and confused	91	4.0%
Chronic alcoholic	78	3.4%
Dementia	74	3.3%
Stroke-related condition	71	3.1%
Homebound	67	3.0%
Morbidly obese	66	2.9%
Incontinent	65	2.9%
Communication disorder	52	2.3%
None of the listed characteristics	52	2.3%
Blind or visually impaired	39	1.7%
Deaf or hard of hearing	25	1.1%
Financial dependence: alleged abuser dependent on adult at risk	19	0.8%
Frail elderly	19	0.8%
Functionally illiterate	16	0.7%
Financially dependent on abuser	15	0.7%
Limited English proficiency	6	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*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	57	4.3%
25 to 44 years	189	14.1%
45 to 59 years	256	19.2%
60 to 79 years	121	9.1%
80 years or older	18	1.3%
No abuser or age unknown	695	52.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,336</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Total includes all alleged abusers; some incidents involve more than one.</i>		

### Alleged Abusers' Gender

	Number	Percent
Female	646	48.4%
Male	534	40.0%
Unknown	156	11.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,336</b>	<b>100.0%</b>





### Alleged Abusers' Relationship to Adult at Risk

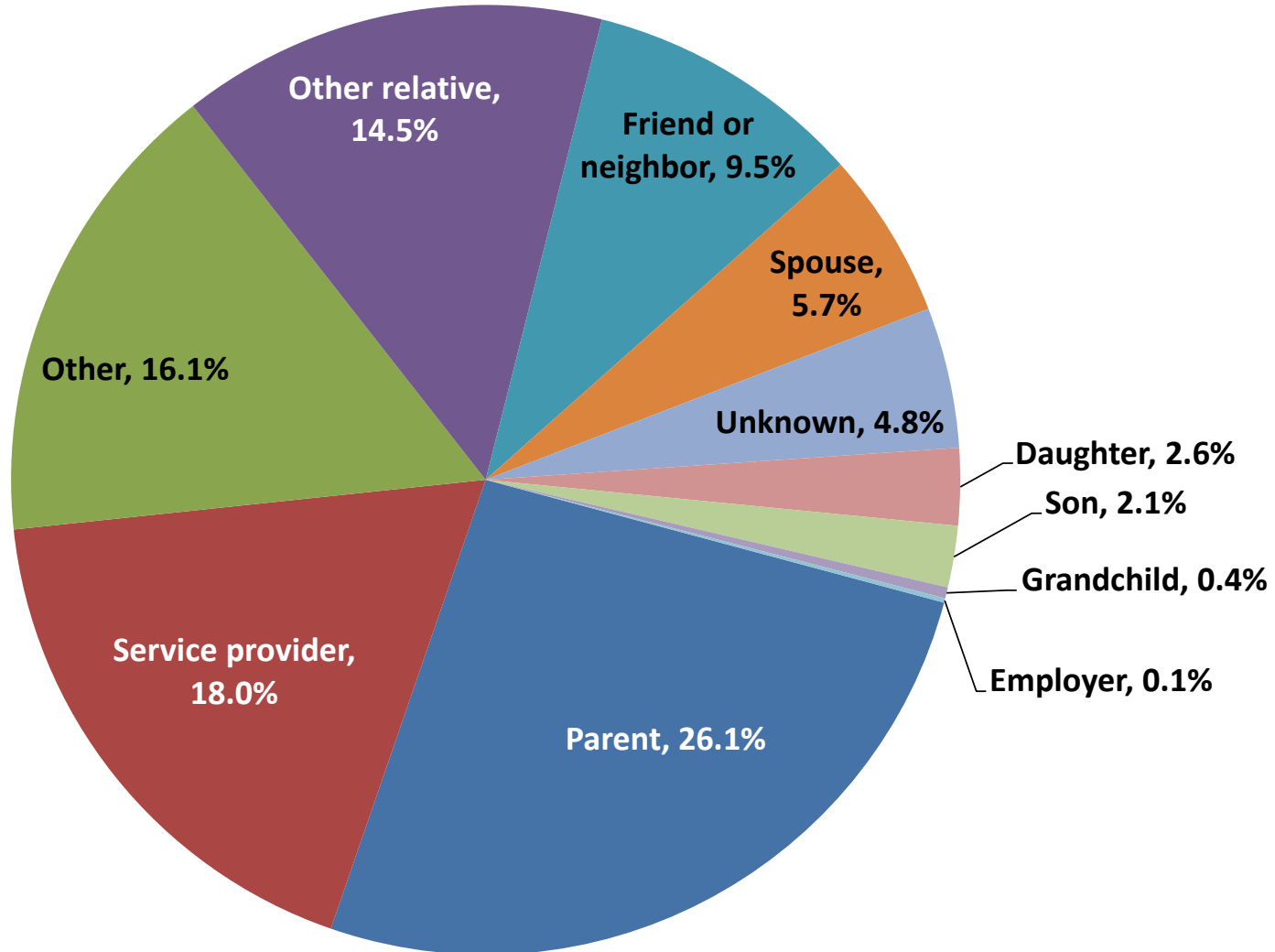
	Number	Percent
Parent	349	26.1%
Service provider	241	18.0%
Other	215	16.1%
Other relative	194	14.5%
Friend or neighbor	127	9.5%
Spouse	76	5.7%
Unknown	64	4.8%
Daughter	35	2.6%
Son	28	2.1%
Grandchild	5	0.4%
Employer	2	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,336</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Are Alleged Abusers Caregivers?

	Number	Percent
No	545	40.8%
Yes	712	53.3%
Unknown	79	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,336</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Alleged Abusers' Relationships to Adult at Risk





<b>Do Alleged Abusers Live with Adult at Risk?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	660	49.4%
Yes	629	47.1%
Unknown	47	3.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,336</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Do Alleged Abusers Have Any Legal or Substitute Decision-Maker Status?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	964	72.2%
Yes	372	27.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,336</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Abusers' Legal Status

	Number	Percent
No legal status	727	54.4%
Guardian of the person	235	17.6%
Unknown legal status	215	16.1%
Guardian of the estate	174	13.0%
Representative payee	85	6.4%
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (activated)	42	3.1%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (activated)	25	1.9%
Other legal status	15	1.1%
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (not activated)	14	1.0%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (not activated)	5	0.4%
Temporary guardian	4	0.3%
Conservator	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,336</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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



<b>Alleged Abusers' Characteristics</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
None of the listed characteristics	862	64.5%
Other characteristic	73	5.5%
Unemployed	72	5.4%
Mental illness	69	5.2%
Developmental disability	59	4.4%
Drug abuse	54	4.0%
Alcohol abuse	43	3.2%
Financial dependence: alleged abuser dependent on adult at risk	36	2.7%
Challenging or dangerous behavior	32	2.4%
Physical disability	30	2.2%
Frail Elderly	29	2.2%
Financial dependence: adult at risk on abuser	20	1.5%
Mobility impaired	20	1.5%
Other medical condition	20	1.5%
Medically fragile	13	1.0%
Chronic alcoholic	11	0.8%
Disoriented and confused	11	0.8%
Chronic mental illness	10	0.7%
Morbidly Obese	8	0.6%
Dementia	7	0.5%
Diabetes	6	0.4%
<i>Deaf or hard of hearing</i>	5	0.4%
Homebound	4	0.3%
Brain injury	3	0.2%
Functionally illiterate	3	0.2%
Stroke-related condition	3	0.2%
Blind or visually impaired	2	0.1%
Communication disorder	2	0.1%
Incontinent	1	0.1%
Limited English proficiency	1	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,336</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Multiple responses are allowed so numbers do not add up to 100%.*

**More than One Alleged Abuser?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No, one alleged abuser only	1,265	94.7%
Yes	71	5.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,336</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



<b>Was Hurt or Harm Substantiated?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Substantiated	947	41.8%
Unsubstantiated	755	33.3%
Unable to substantiate	562	24.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



### Actions Taken to Assist Adult at Risk

	Number	Percent
Services not needed	408	18.0%
Investigation not accepted	316	14.0%
Services offered-some accepted	302	13.3%
Services offered-all accepted	299	13.2%
Services offered-not accepted	289	12.8%
Guardian referral	254	11.2%
Referral made to other agency	227	10.0%
Outreach continues	195	8.6%
Other disposition	120	5.3%
Referral to law enforcement or Department of Justice	112	4.9%
Protective services placement	110	4.9%
Referral to protection or advocacy agencies	105	4.6%
Other legal action	54	2.4%
Referral to regulatory authority	47	2.1%
Referral to caregiver misconduct registry	37	1.6%
Mental health commitment	22	1.0%
Response or investigation continues	16	0.7%
Services needed are not available	13	0.6%
Referral made to state agency	6	0.3%
Referral to detoxification services	3	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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





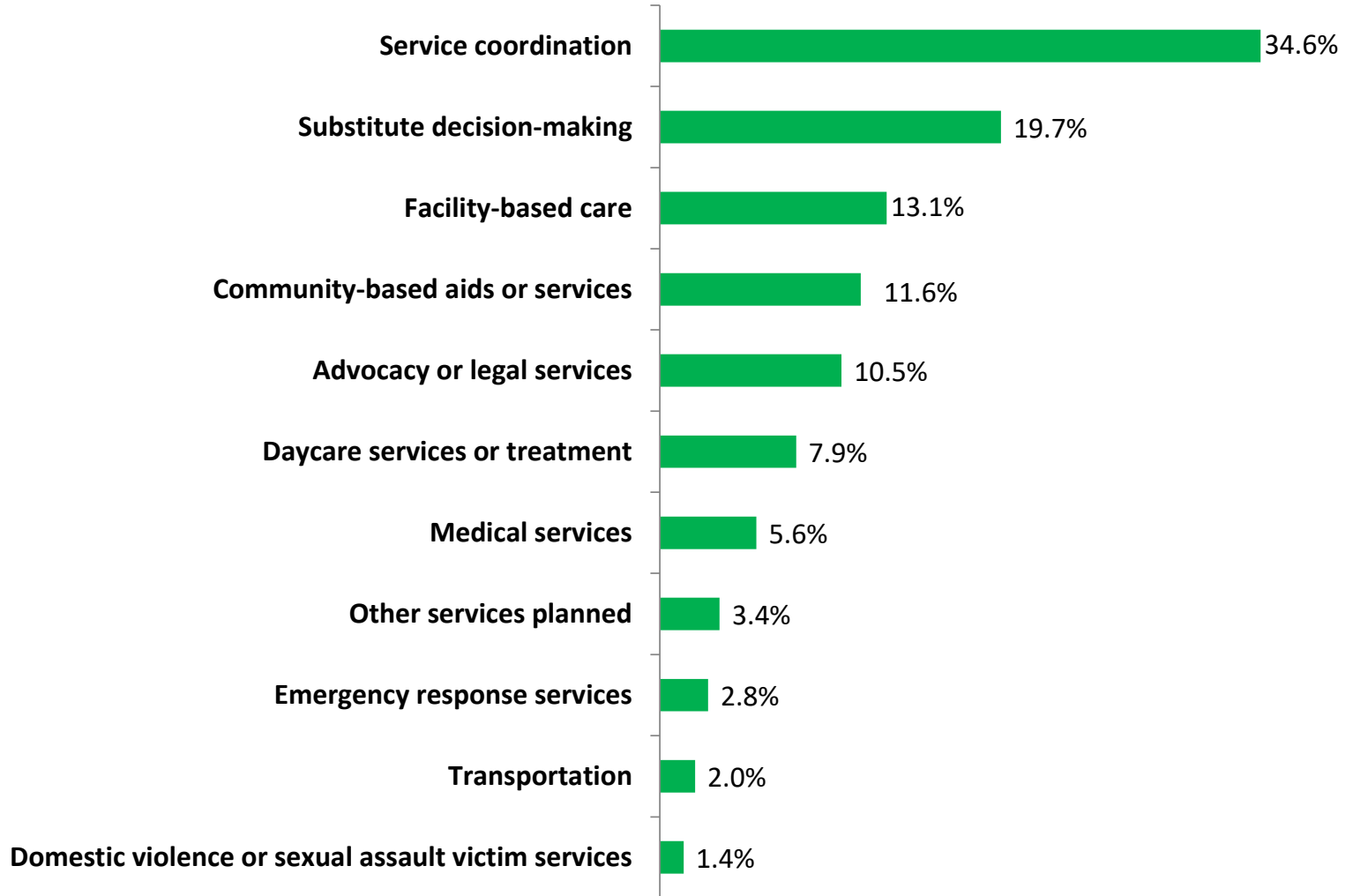
## Services Planned for Adult at Risk

	Number	Percent
Service coordination	784	34.6%
Substitute decision-making	445	19.7%
Facility-based care	296	13.1%
Community-based aids or services	262	11.6%
Advocacy or legal services	237	10.5%
Daycare services or treatment	178	7.9%
Medical services	126	5.6%
Other services planned	78	3.4%
Emergency response services	63	2.8%
Transportation	46	2.0%
Domestic violence or sexual assault victim services	31	1.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*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)

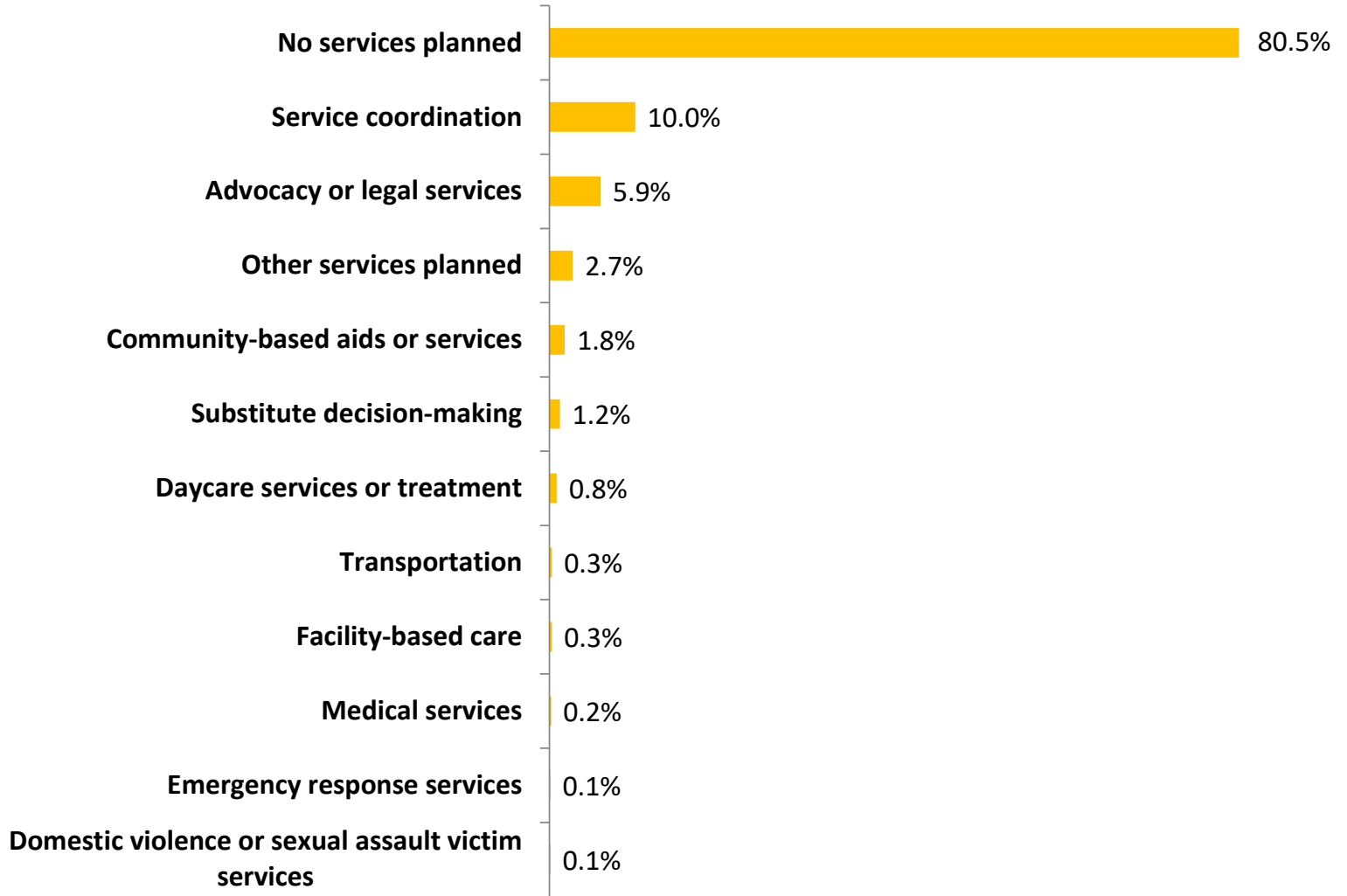
	Number	Percent
No services planned	853	80.5%
Service coordination	106	10.0%
Advocacy or legal services	63	5.9%
Other services planned	29	2.7%
Community-based aids or services	19	1.8%
Substitute decision-making	13	1.2%
Daycare services or treatment	9	0.8%
Facility-based care	3	0.3%
Transportation	3	0.3%
Medical services	2	0.2%
Domestic violence or sexual assault victim services	1	0.1%
Emergency response services	1	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,059</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Multiple responses are allowed so numbers do not add up to 100%.*

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



## Services Plan for Alleged Abuser(s)





## Contact Information

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Division of Public Health

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