



# **Wisconsin's Annual Report on Abuse, Neglect, and Financial Exploitation of Adults at Risk: 2021**

A statewide summary of reports  
submitted by Wisconsin counties

Division of Public Health  
P-00123-21 (06/2022)



# 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.



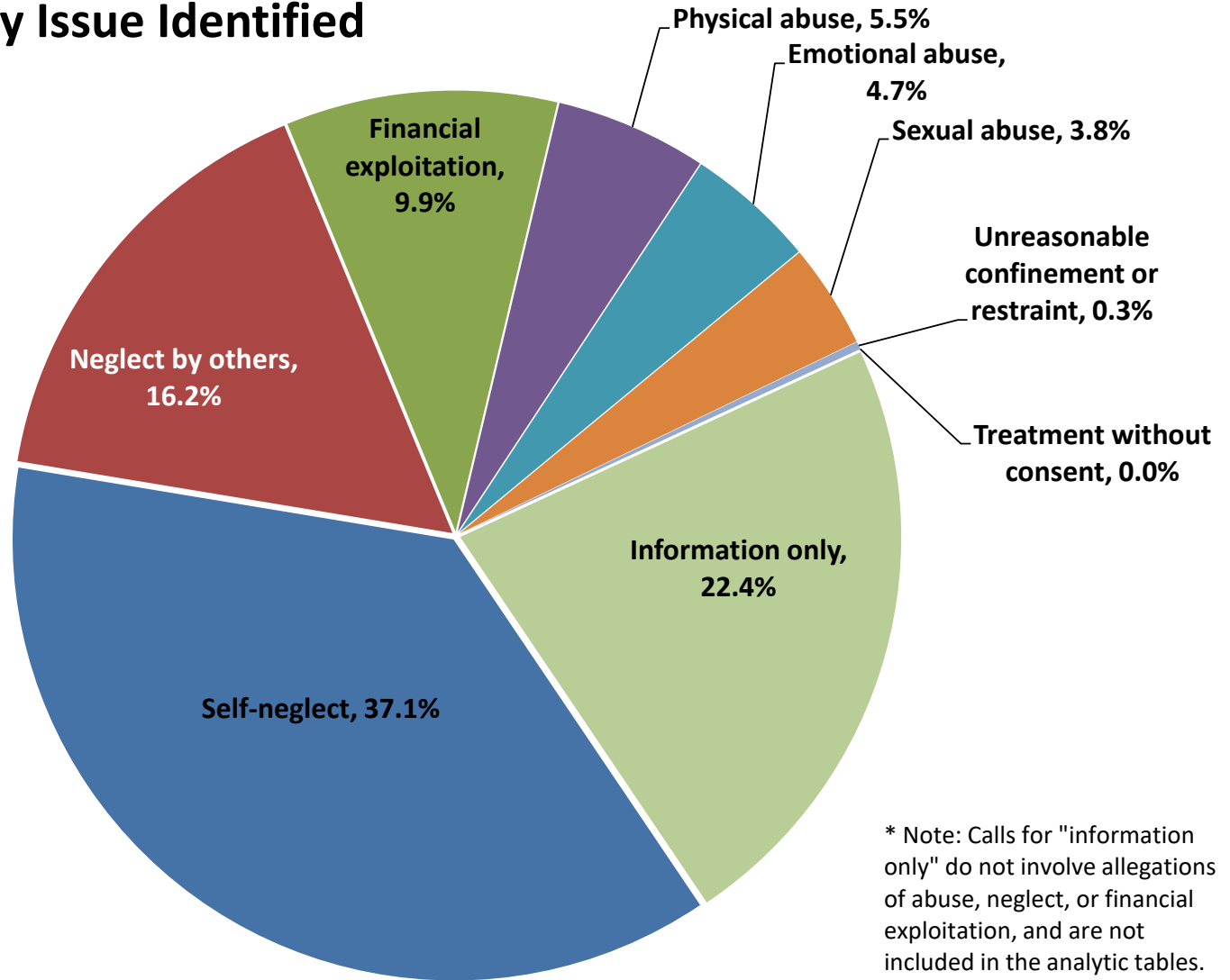
### Primary Reason for Call/Issue Identified

	Number	Percent
Self-neglect	1,055	37.1%
Neglect by others	460	16.2%
Financial exploitation	283	9.9%
Physical abuse	158	5.5%
Emotional abuse	135	4.7%
Sexual abuse	109	3.8%
Unreasonable confinement or restraint	8	0.3%
Treatment without consent	0	0.0%
Information only	639	22.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,847</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	1,297	58.7%
Yes	726	32.9%
Unknown	185	8.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Where Incident Occurred

	Number	Percent
Place of residence	1,879	85.1%
Other place	273	12.4%
Place of employment or day services	39	1.8%
School	7	0.3%
Transportation	10	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

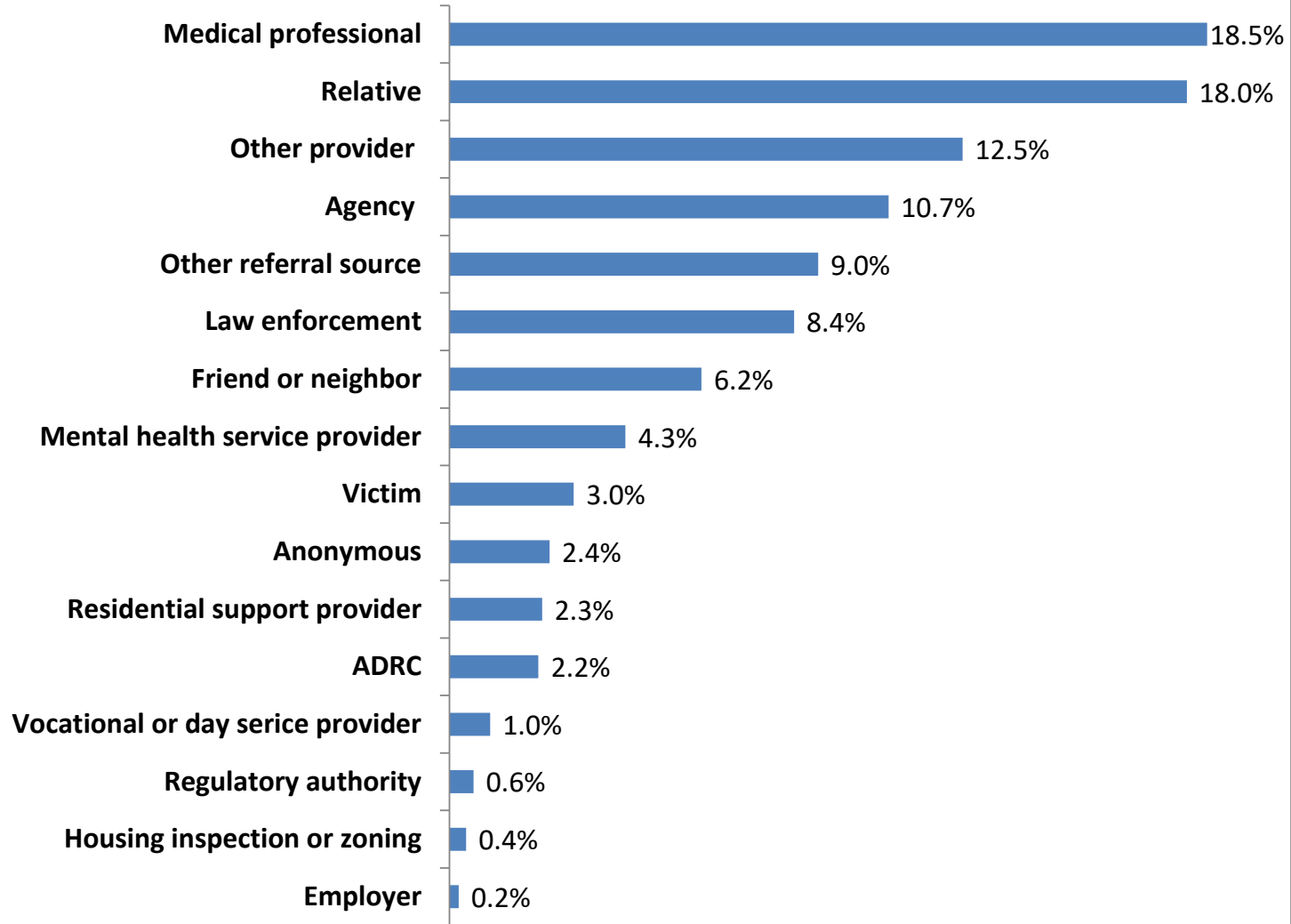




<b>Referral Source</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Medical professional	409	18.5%
Relative	398	18.0%
Other provider	277	12.5%
Agency	237	10.7%
Other referral source	199	9.0%
Law enforcement	186	8.4%
Friend or neighbor	136	6.2%
Mental health service provider	95	4.3%
Victim	67	3.0%
Anonymous	54	2.4%
Residential support provider	50	2.3%
ADRC	48	2.2%
Vocational or day service provider	22	1.0%
Regulatory authority	13	0.6%
Housing inspection or zoning	9	0.4%
Employer	5	0.2%
Substance abuse service provider	2	0.1%
Alleged abuser	1	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Referral Source

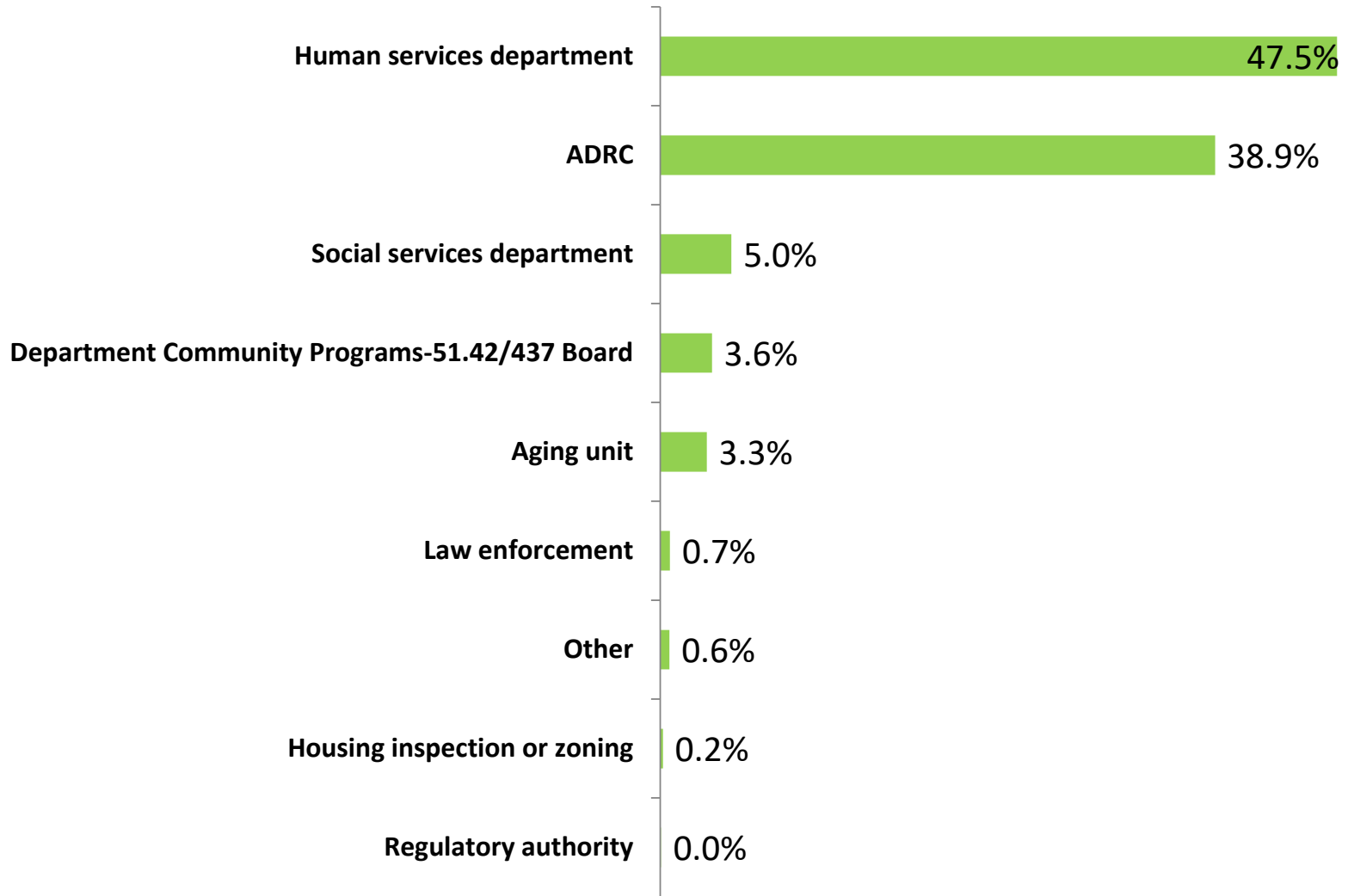




<b>Call Received By:</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Human services department	1,049	47.5%
ADRC	860	38.9%
Social services department	110	5.0%
Department Community Programs-51.42/437 Board	80	3.6%
Aging unit	72	3.3%
Law enforcement	15	0.7%
Other	14	0.6%
Housing inspection or zoning	4	0.2%
Animal control or humane society	1	0.0%
Developmental Disability Board	1	0.0%
Publicized helpline number	1	0.0%
Regulatory authority	1	0.0%
Ombudsman or Board of Aging and Long-Term Care	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Initial Investigating Agency</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Human services department	1,226	55.5%
ADRC	379	17.2%
Aging unit	295	13.4%
Social services department	117	5.3%
Department Community Programs-51.42/437 Board	90	4.1%
Other	65	2.9%
Law enforcement	26	1.2%
Housing inspection or zoning	5	0.2%
Public health department	5	0.2%
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%
Division of Quality Assurance or Licensing and Regulation	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

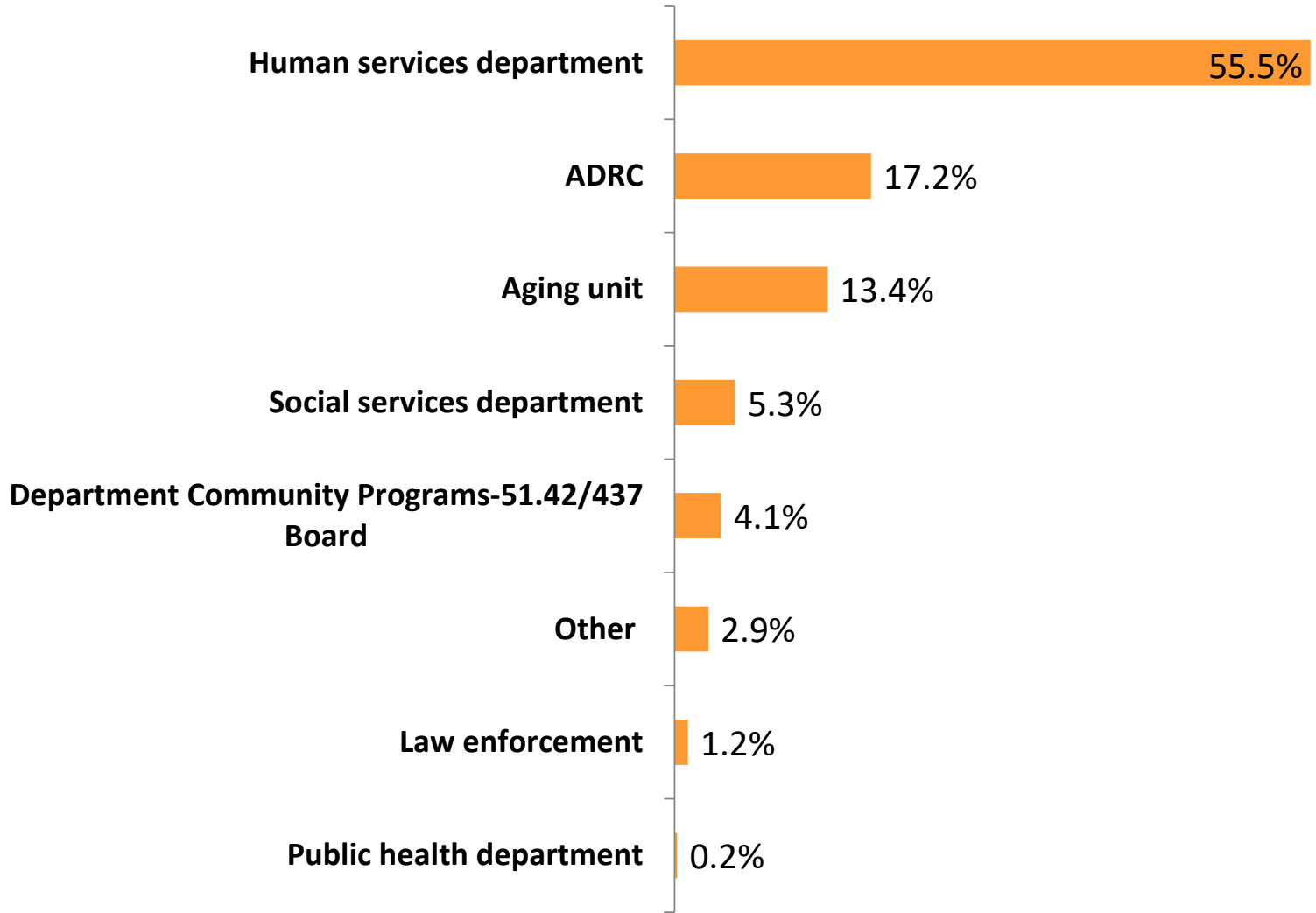


### Call Received By:





### Initial Investigating Agency





### Was Incident Life Threatening?

	Number	Percent
No	2,010	91.0%
Yes	125	5.7%
Unknown	73	3.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Has Adult at Risk Died?

	Number	Percent
No	105	84.0%
Yes	20	16.0%
Unknown	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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

### Was Death Related to the Incident?

	Number	Percent
No	10	50.0%
Yes	7	35.0%
Unknown	3	15.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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

### Was Death Directly Caused by Incident?

	Number	Percent
No	1	14.3%
Yes	5	71.4%
Unknown	1	14.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

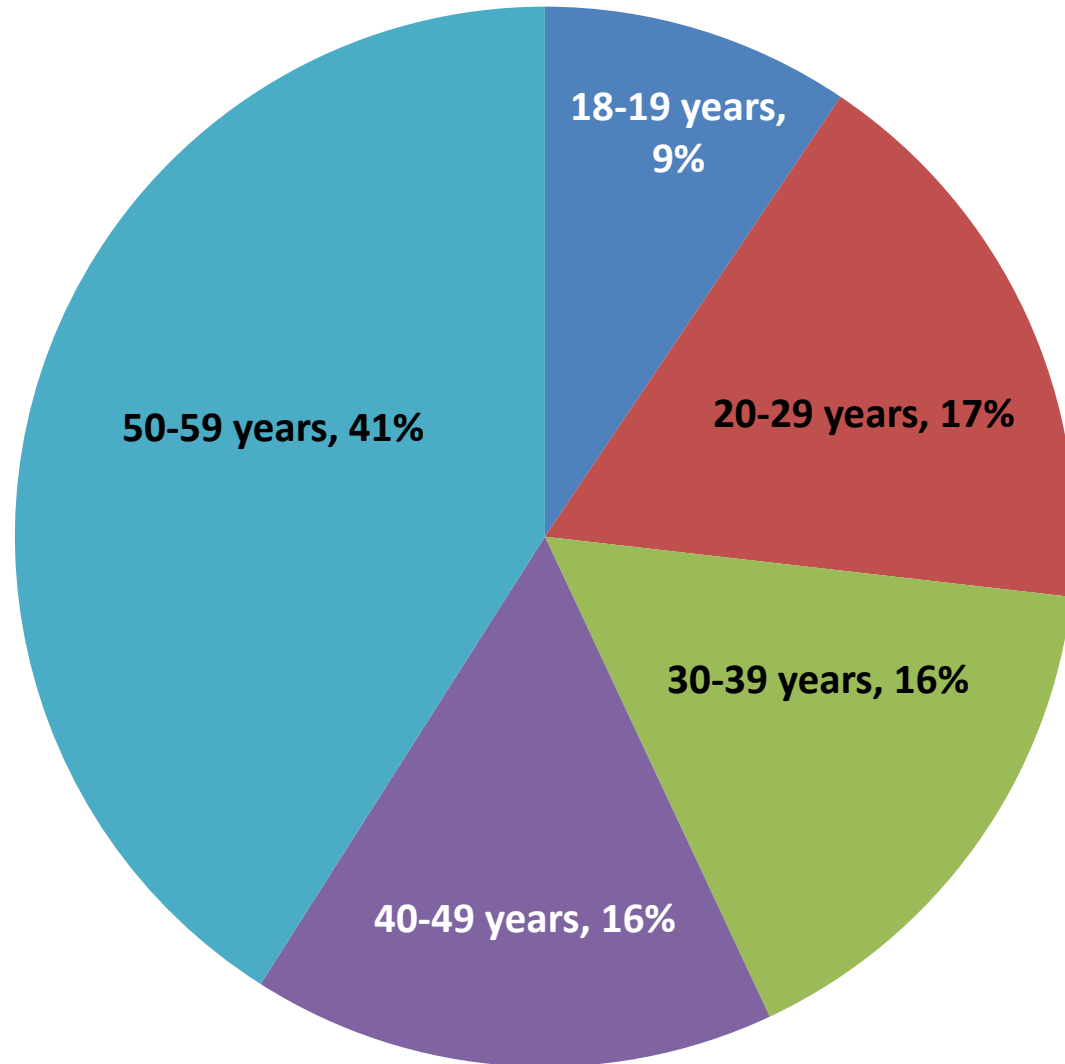
*Note: Percents represent share of all incidents involving a death related to the incident.*



<b>Adult at Risk's Age</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
18-19 years	208	9.4%
20-29 years	384	17.4%
30-39 years	358	16.2%
40-49 years	353	16.0%
50-59 years	905	41.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Adult at Risk's Gender</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Female	1,089	49.3%
Male	1,115	50.5%
Unknown	4	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Adult at Risk's Race</b>		
<b>Age</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
White	1,153	52.2%
Black or African American	161	7.3%
Native American or Alaska Native	57	2.6%
Other race	31	1.4%
Asian	22	1.0%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.0%
Not reported or unknown	783	35.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<p><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></p>		



### Adult at Risk's Age





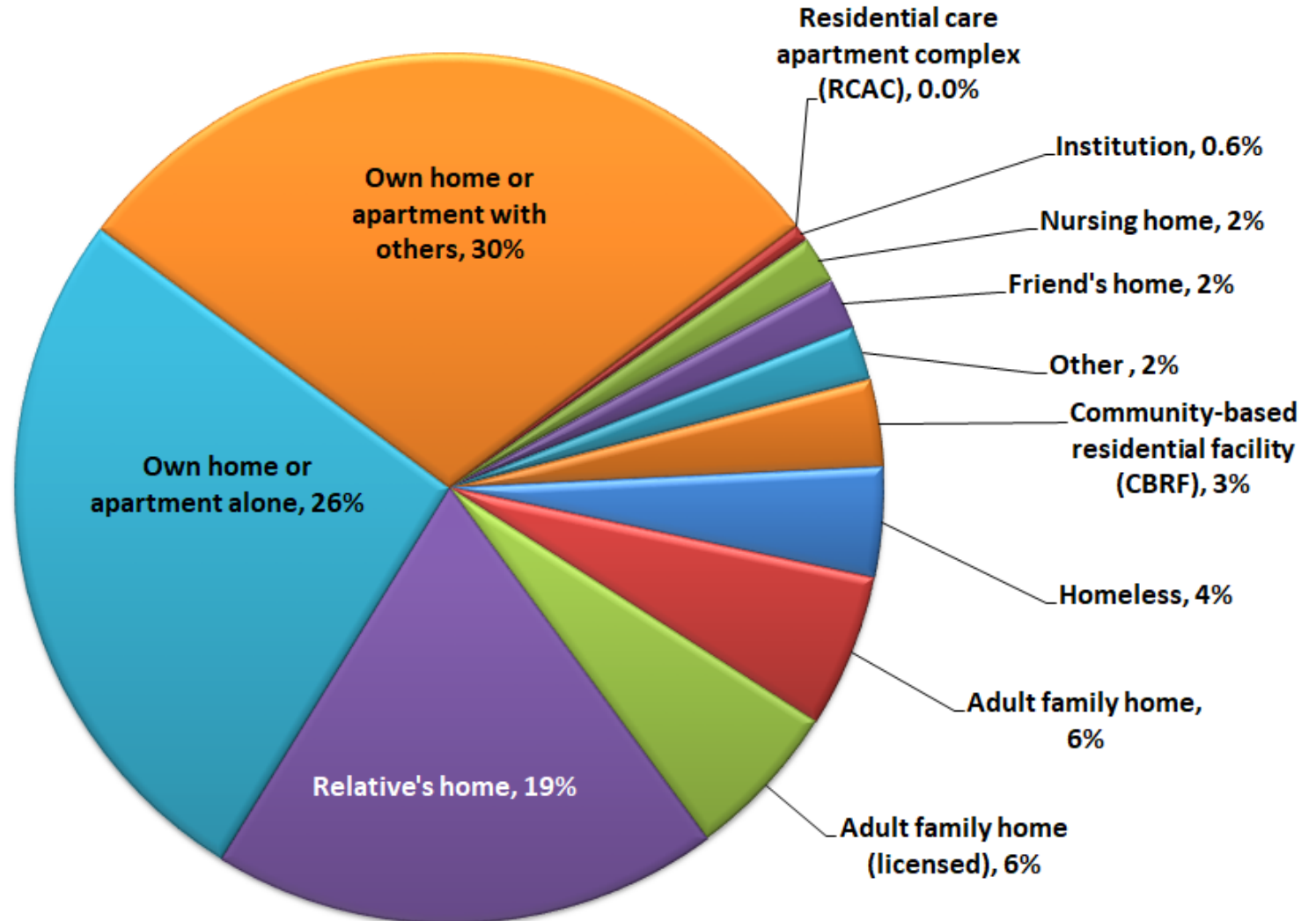


## Adult at Risk's Living Arrangement

	Number	Percent
Own home or apartment with others	653	29.6%
Own home or apartment alone	582	26.4%
Relative's home	417	18.9%
Adult family home (licensed)	130	5.9%
Adult family home	126	5.7%
Homeless	90	4.1%
Community-based residential facility (CBRF)	72	3.3%
Other	44	2.0%
Friend's home	42	1.9%
Nursing home	38	1.7%
Institution	14	0.6%
Residential care apartment complex (RCAC)	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Adult at Risk's Living Arrangement





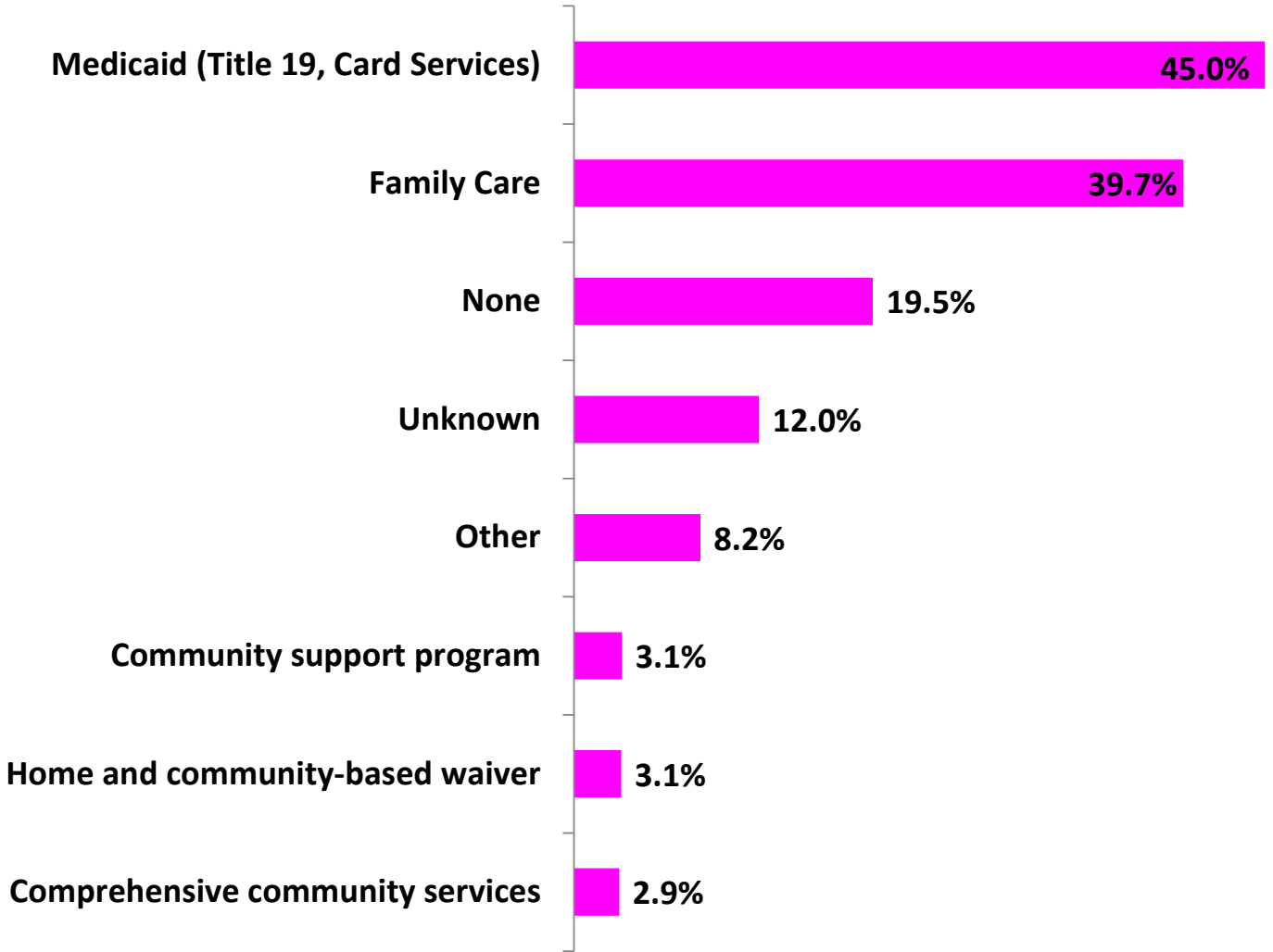
## County and State Funded Programs That Have Served Adult at Risk Adults

	Number	Percent
Medicaid (Title 19, Card Services)	994	45.0%
Family Care	877	39.7%
None	430	19.5%
Unknown	266	12.0%
Other	182	8.2%
Community support program	69	3.1%
Home and community-based waiver	68	3.1%
Comprehensive community services	65	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</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	1,061	48.1%
Yes	889	40.3%
Unknown	258	11.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

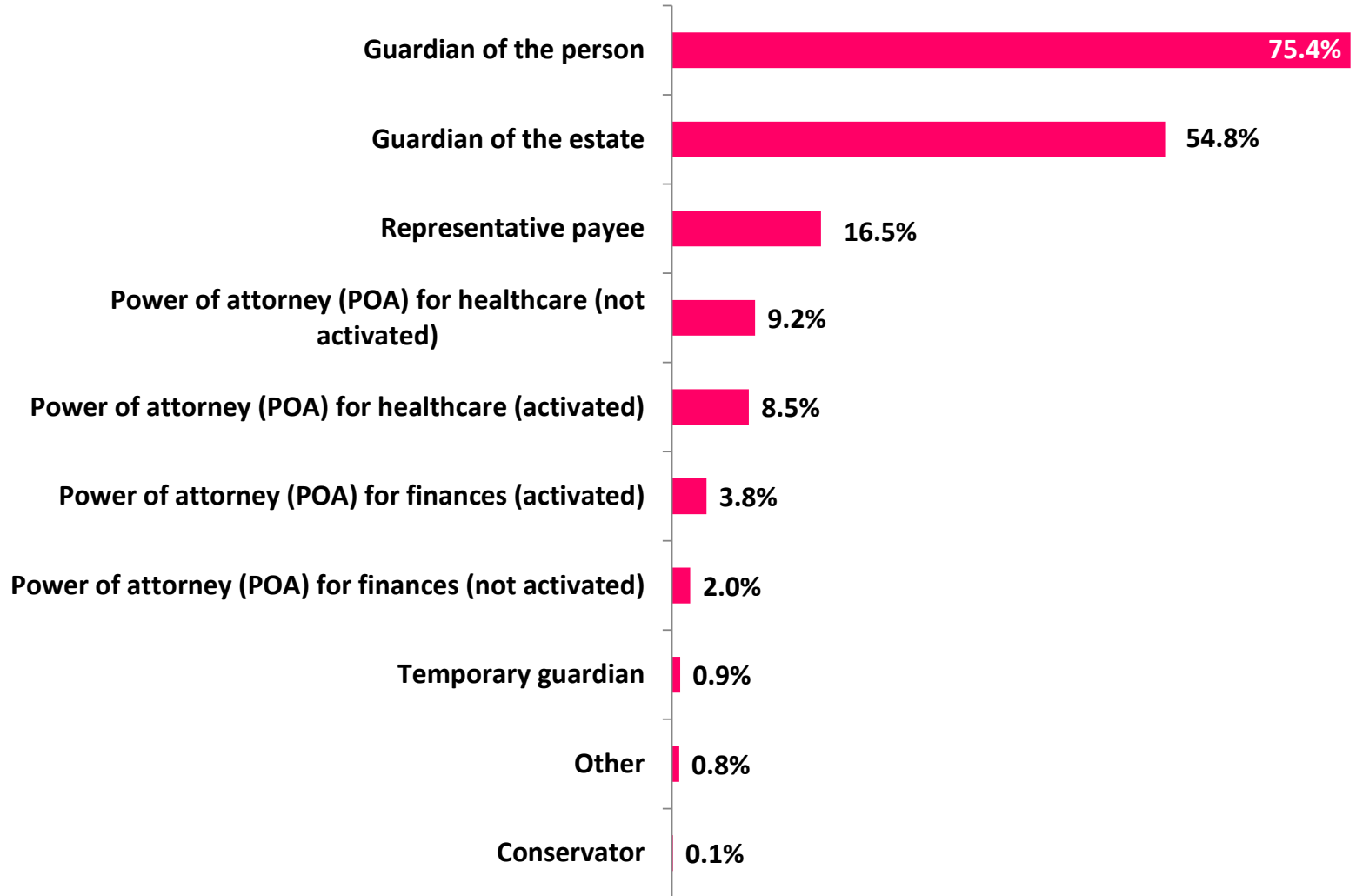
### Type(s) of Substitute Decision-Maker

	Number	Percent
Guardian of the person	670	75.4%
Guardian of the estate	487	54.8%
Representative payee	147	16.5%
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (not activated)	82	9.2%
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (activated)	76	8.5%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (activated)	34	3.8%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (not activated)	18	2.0%
Temporary guardian	8	0.9%
Other	7	0.8%
Conservator	1	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>889</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Percents represent share of all those with any kind of substitute decision-maker (n=889). Multiple responses are allowed, so percents do not total 100%.*



## Type(s) of Substitute Decision-Maker





<b>Adult at Risk's Characteristics</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Developmental disability	874	39.6%
Mental illness	587	26.6%
Physical disability	296	13.4%
Other medical condition	263	11.9%
Medically fragile	242	11.0%
Mobility impaired	227	10.3%
Alcohol abuse	174	7.9%
Chronic mental illness	172	7.8%
Challenging or dangerous behavior	164	7.4%
Diabetes	150	6.8%
Unemployed	132	6.0%
Brain injury	113	5.1%
Drug abuse	94	4.3%
Other characteristic	90	4.1%
Disoriented and confused	85	3.8%
Incontinent	81	3.7%
Stroke-related condition	78	3.5%
Chronic alcoholic	76	3.4%
None of the listed characteristics	75	3.4%
Morbidly obese	71	3.2%
Homebound	61	2.8%
Dementia	60	2.7%
Communication disorder	55	2.5%
Blind or visually impaired	48	2.2%
Deaf or hard of hearing	27	1.2%
Financial dependence: alleged abuser dependent on adult at risk	23	1.0%
Functionally illiterate	17	0.8%
Financially dependent on abuser	16	0.7%
Frail elderly	15	0.7%
Limited English proficiency	3	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Percents refer to share of all adults at risk having this characteristic. Multiple responses are allowed, so percents do not total 100%.</i>		



### Age of Alleged Abuser(s)

	Number	Percent
Under 25 years	44	2.9%
25 to 44 years	193	12.6%
45 to 59 years	252	16.4%
60 to 79 years	131	8.6%
80 years or older	12	0.8%
No abuser or age unknown	900	58.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Total includes all alleged abusers; some incidents involve more than one.*

### Alleged Abusers' Gender

	Number	Percent
Female	740	48.3%
Male	540	35.2%
Unknown	252	16.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>100.0%</b>





### Alleged Abusers' Relationship to Adult at Risk

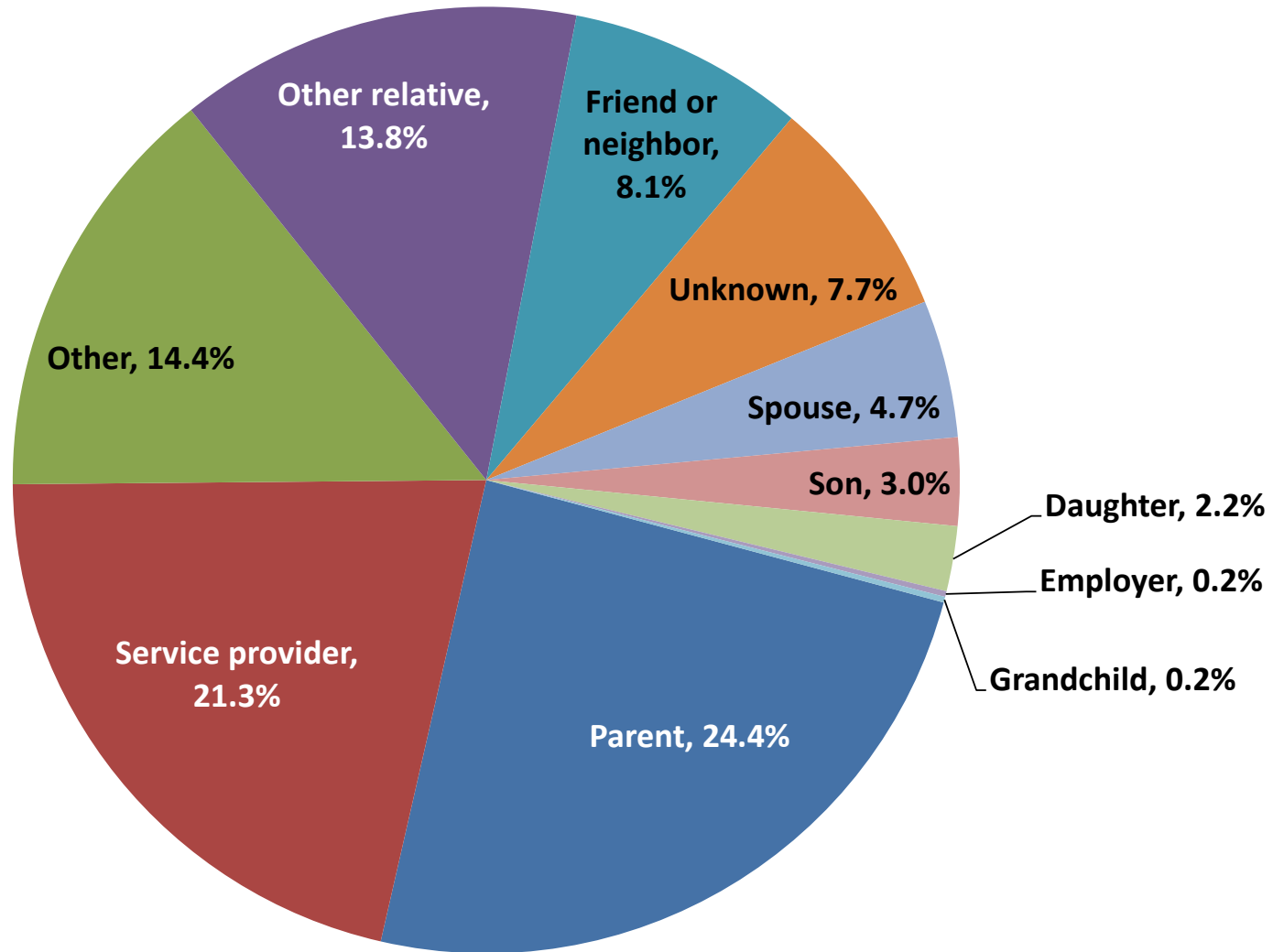
	Number	Percent
Parent	374	24.4%
Service provider	326	21.3%
Other	221	14.4%
Other relative	211	13.8%
Friend or neighbor	124	8.1%
Unknown	118	7.7%
Spouse	72	4.7%
Son	46	3.0%
Daughter	34	2.2%
Employer	3	0.2%
Grandchild	3	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Are Alleged Abusers Caregivers?

	Number	Percent
No	569	37.1%
Yes	835	54.5%
Unknown	128	8.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Alleged Abusers' Relationships to Adult at Risk





### Do Alleged Abusers Live with Adult at Risk?

	Number	Percent
No	743	48.5%
Yes	674	44.0%
Unknown	115	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Do Alleged Abusers Have Any Legal or Substitute Decision-Maker Status?

	Number	Percent
No	1,150	75.1%
Yes	382	24.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Abusers' Legal Status

	Number	Percent
No legal status	794	51.8%
Unknown legal status	243	15.9%
Guardian of the estate	186	12.1%
Representative payee	78	5.1%
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (activated)	35	2.3%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (not activated)	24	1.6%
Other legal status	20	1.3%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (activated)	12	0.8%
Conservator	0	0.0%
Guardian of the person	0	0.0%
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (not activated)	0	0.0%
Temporary guardian	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,532</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	1,052	68.7%
Other characteristic	93	6.1%
Unemployed	77	5.0%
Mental illness	58	3.8%
Financial dependence: alleged abuser dependent on adult at risk	53	3.5%
Drug abuse	49	3.2%
Alcohol abuse	47	3.1%
Developmental disability	36	2.3%
Challenging or dangerous behavior	29	1.9%
Mobility impaired	22	1.4%
Physical disability	22	1.4%
Other medical condition	19	1.2%
Frail Elderly	18	1.2%
Financial dependence: adult at risk on abuser	15	1.0%
Diabetes	12	0.8%
Medically fragile	12	0.8%
Morbidly Obese	11	0.7%
Chronic mental illness	10	0.7%
Dementia	9	0.6%
Disoriented and confused	9	0.6%
Chronic alcoholic	6	0.4%
Stroke-related condition	6	0.4%
Deaf or hard of hearing	4	0.3%
Homebound	4	0.3%
Incontinent	2	0.1%
Limited English proficiency	2	0.1%
Blind or visually impaired	1	0.1%
Brain injury	1	0.1%
Communication disorder	0	0.0%
Functionally illiterate	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Multiple responses are allowed so numbers do not add up to 100%.</i>		
<i>Percents refer to share of all alleged abusers.</i>		

**More than One Alleged Abuser?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No, one alleged abuser only	1,425	93.0%
Yes	107	7.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Was Hurt or Harm Substantiated?

	Number	Percent
Substantiated	957	43.3%
Unsubstantiated	814	36.9%
Unable to substantiate	437	19.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Actions Taken to Assist Adult at Risk

	Number	Percent
Services not needed	433	19.6%
Services offered-not accepted	364	16.5%
Services offered-some accepted	306	13.9%
Services offered-all accepted	298	13.5%
Guardian referral	230	10.4%
Outreach continues	220	10.0%
Referral made to other agency	163	7.4%
Investigation not accepted	145	6.6%
Referral to law enforcement or Department of Justice	122	5.5%
Protective services placement	101	4.6%
Other disposition	96	4.3%
Referral to protection or advocacy agencies	96	4.3%
Referral to regulatory authority	73	3.3%
Other legal action	61	2.8%
Referral to caregiver misconduct registry	51	2.3%
Mental health commitment	19	0.9%
Response or investigation continues	19	0.9%
Referral made to state agency	10	0.5%
Services needed are not available	10	0.5%
Referral to detoxification services	9	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</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%.*





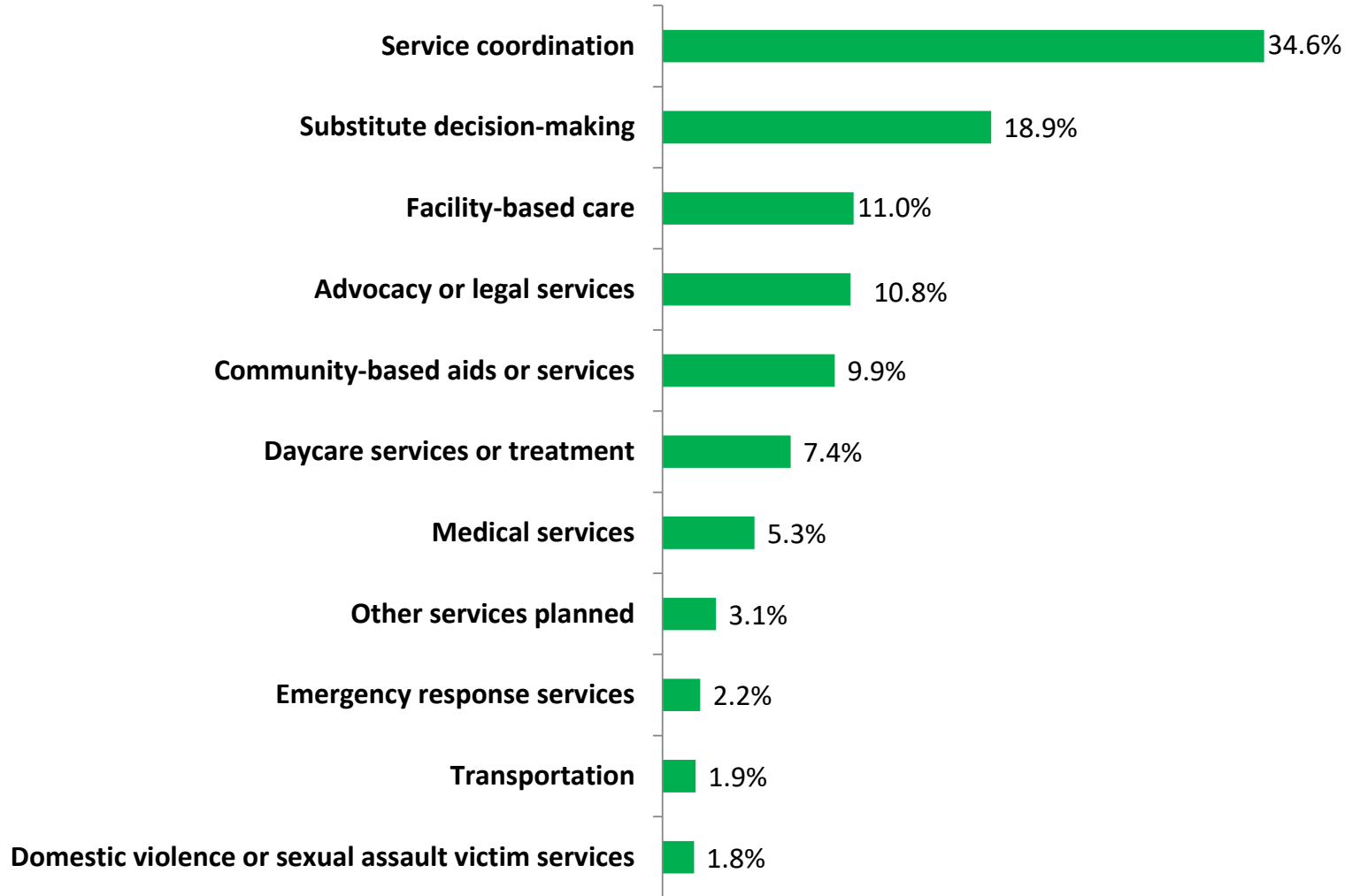
## Services Planned for Adult at Risk

	Number	Percent
Service coordination	765	34.6%
Substitute decision-making	418	18.9%
Facility-based care	243	11.0%
Advocacy or legal services	239	10.8%
Community-based aids or services	219	9.9%
Daycare services or treatment	163	7.4%
Medical services	117	5.3%
Other services planned	68	3.1%
Emergency response services	48	2.2%
Transportation	42	1.9%
Domestic violence or sexual assault victim services	40	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,208</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)

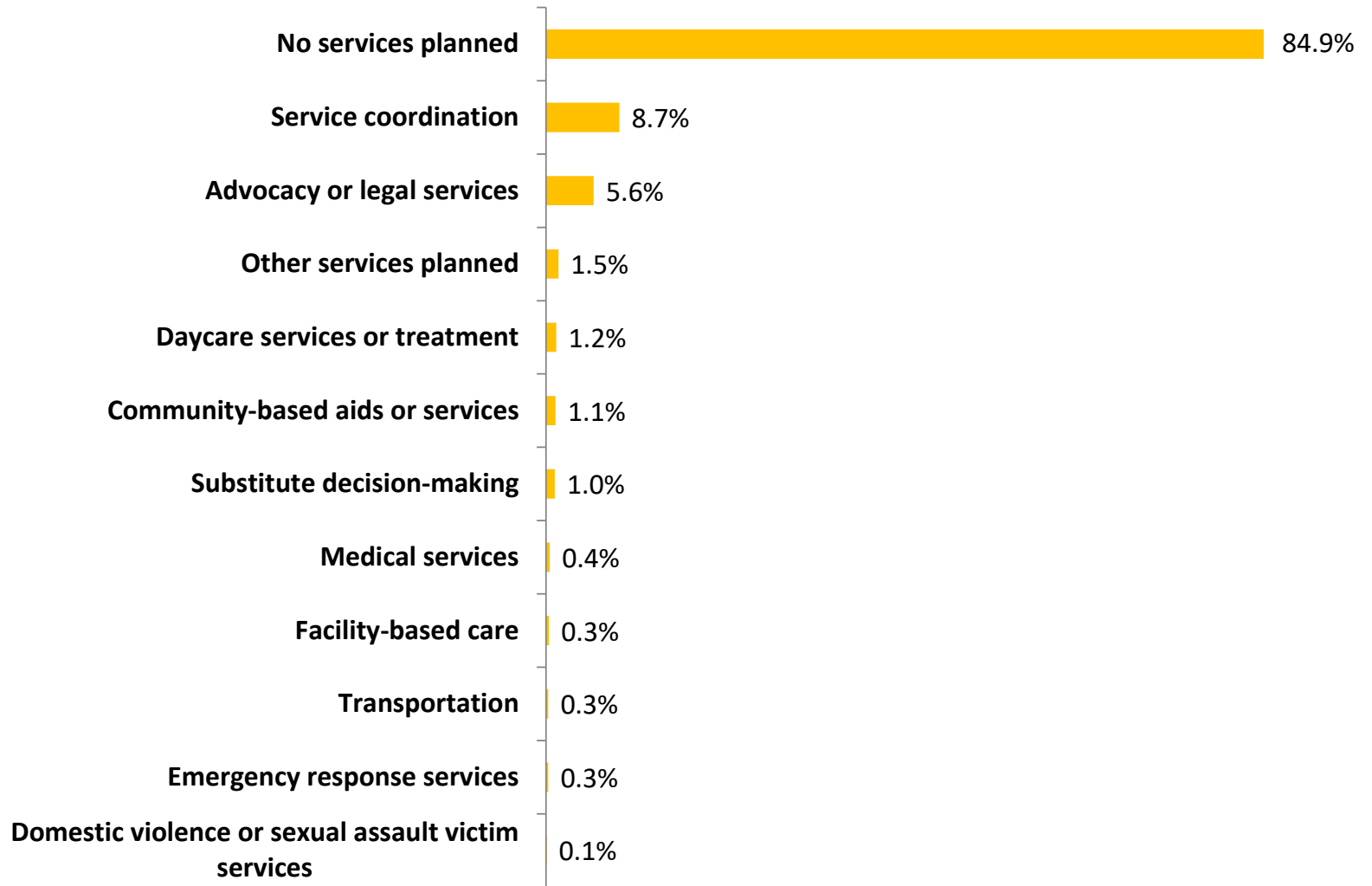
	Number	Percent
No services planned	979	84.9%
Service coordination	100	8.7%
Advocacy or legal services	65	5.6%
Other services planned	17	1.5%
Daycare services or treatment	14	1.2%
Community-based aids or services	13	1.1%
Substitute decision-making	12	1.0%
Medical services	5	0.4%
Facility-based care	4	0.3%
Emergency response services	3	0.3%
Transportation	3	0.3%
Domestic violence or sexual assault victim services	1	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,153</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

**Gena Schupp**

APS Coordinator

Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources

Division of Public Health

Department of Health Services

920-572-9610

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