



EARLY CHILDHOOD ALLIANCE

**Uniting for young children.....the heart of our community
Framingham, MA**

Preliminary Findings from Our Needs Assessment

March 18, 2010



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MISSION:

The Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham (ECAAF) is dedicated to promoting and supporting the healthy growth and development of young children from birth to age 5 by strengthening families and advocating for high quality learning experiences.



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What We Do:

- **Resources and Services**
- **Professional Development for Early Childhood Educators**
- **Family Support and Education**
- **Kindergarten and Special Education Transition Activities**
- **Resource Center with Internet Access**
- **Community Advocacy Efforts**
- **Early Childhood Enrichment Activities**
- **Cross Community Partnerships**

Needs Assessment

Our Process

- **Parent Survey in English, Spanish and Portuguese**
- **Community Provider Survey**



Needs Assessment

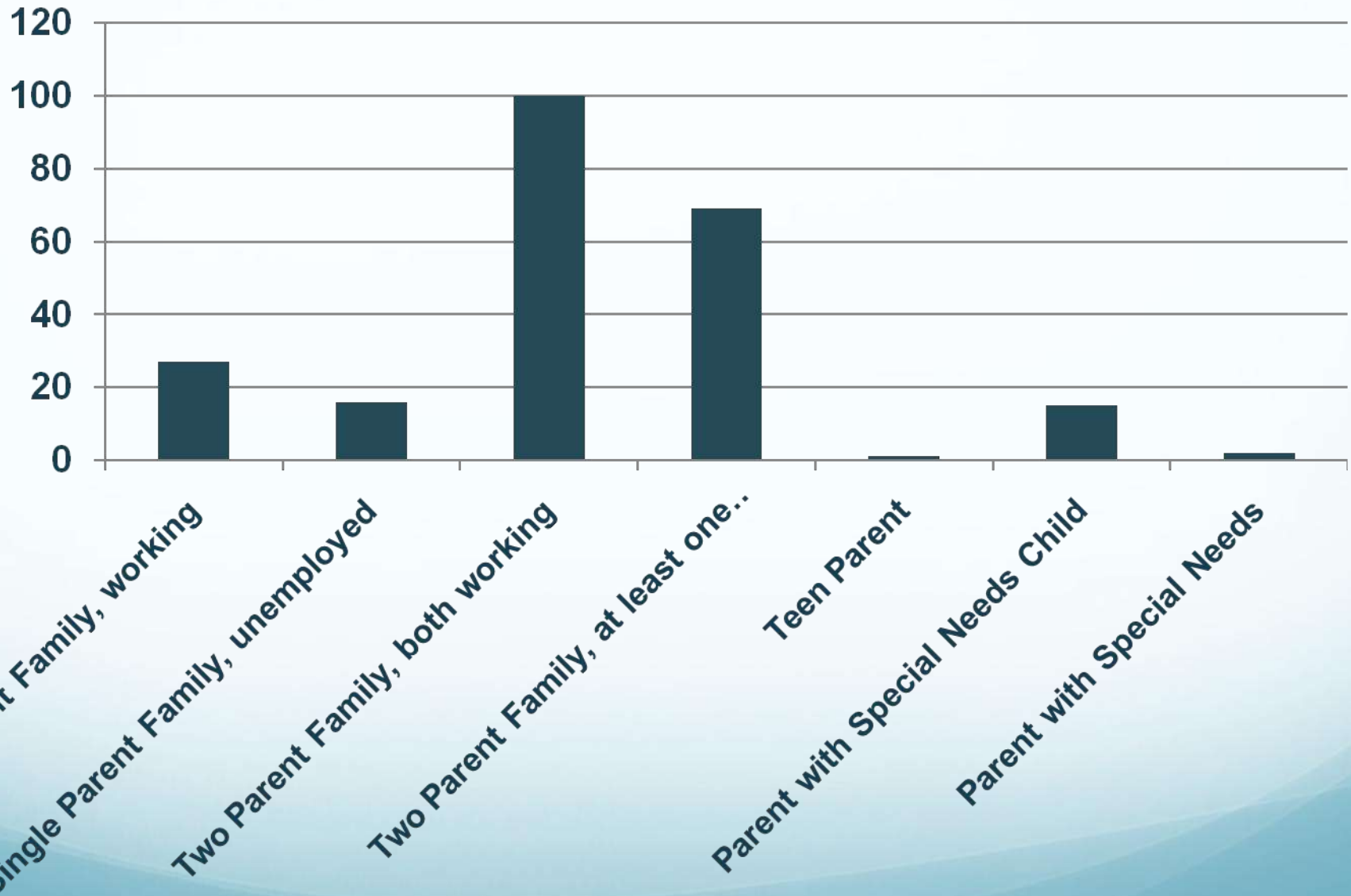
Our Process

Community Leader Interviews

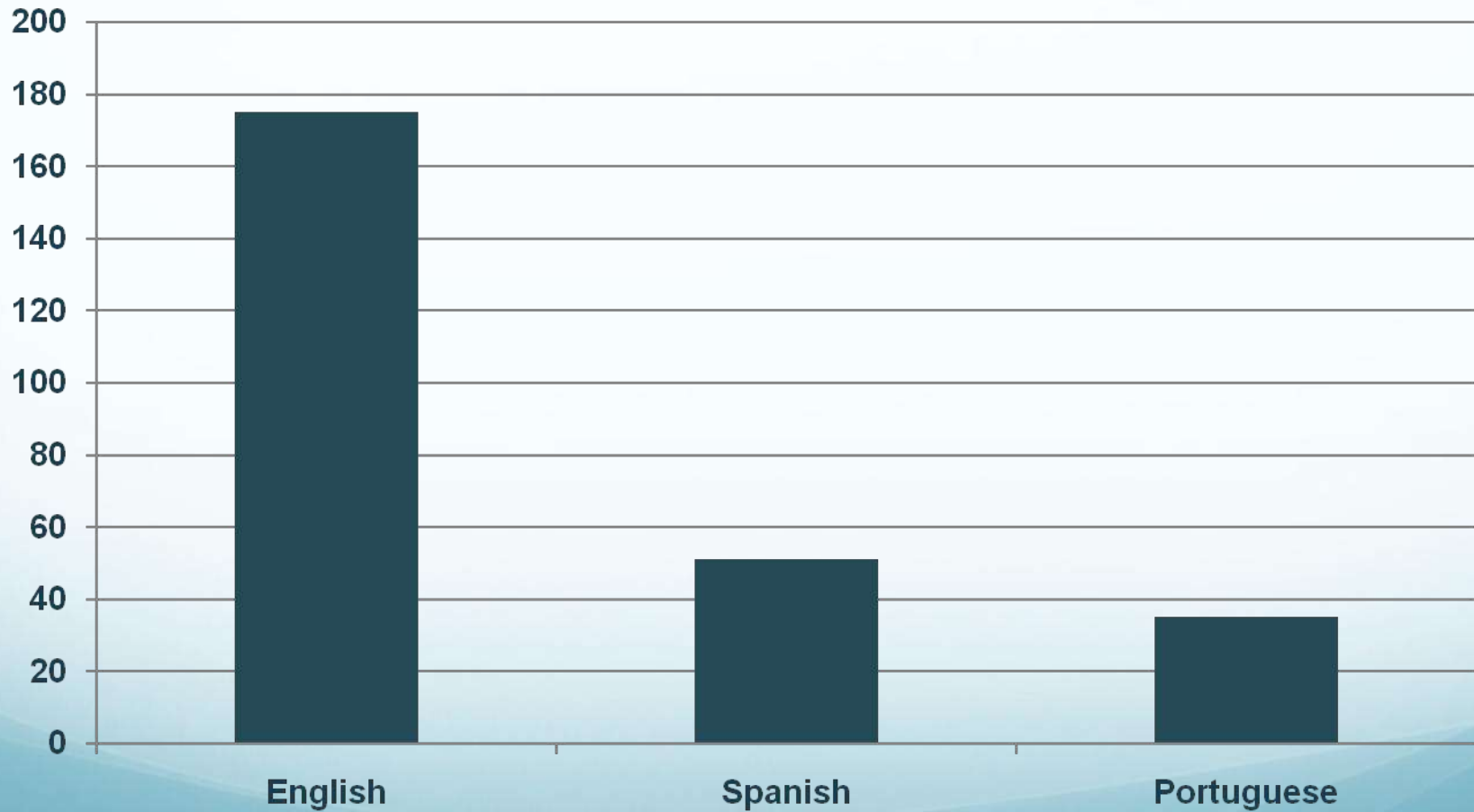


A comprehensive set of interviews with representatives from Early Education , Faith Communities, Health Care and Referral Resources all across Framingham.

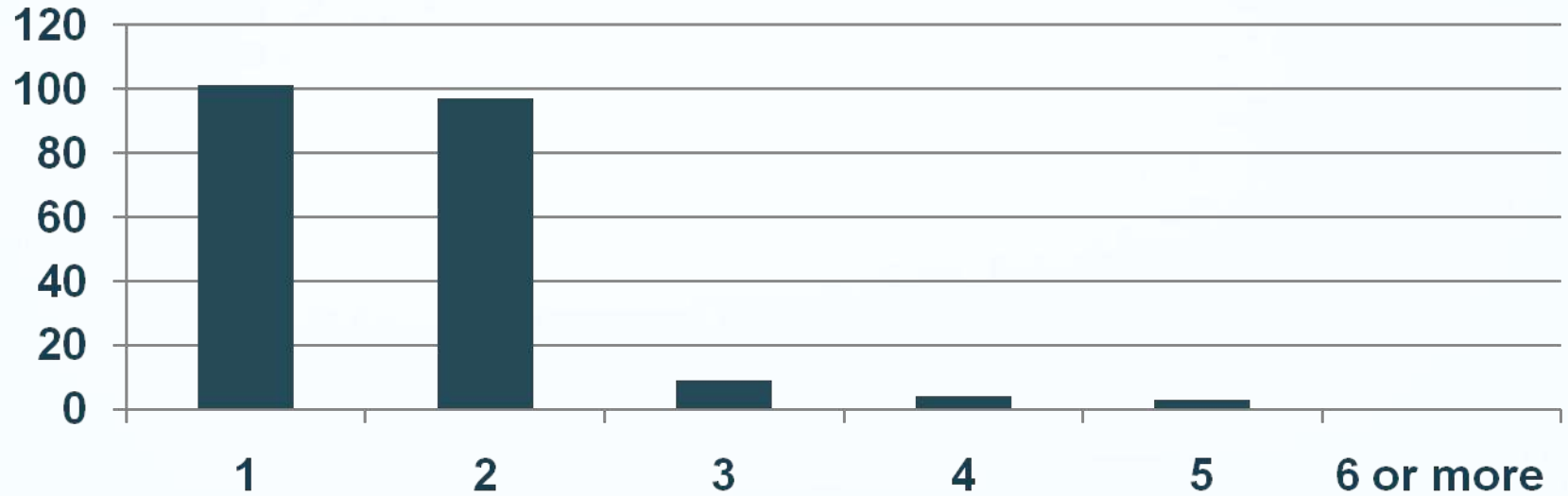
Kinds of Families Responding



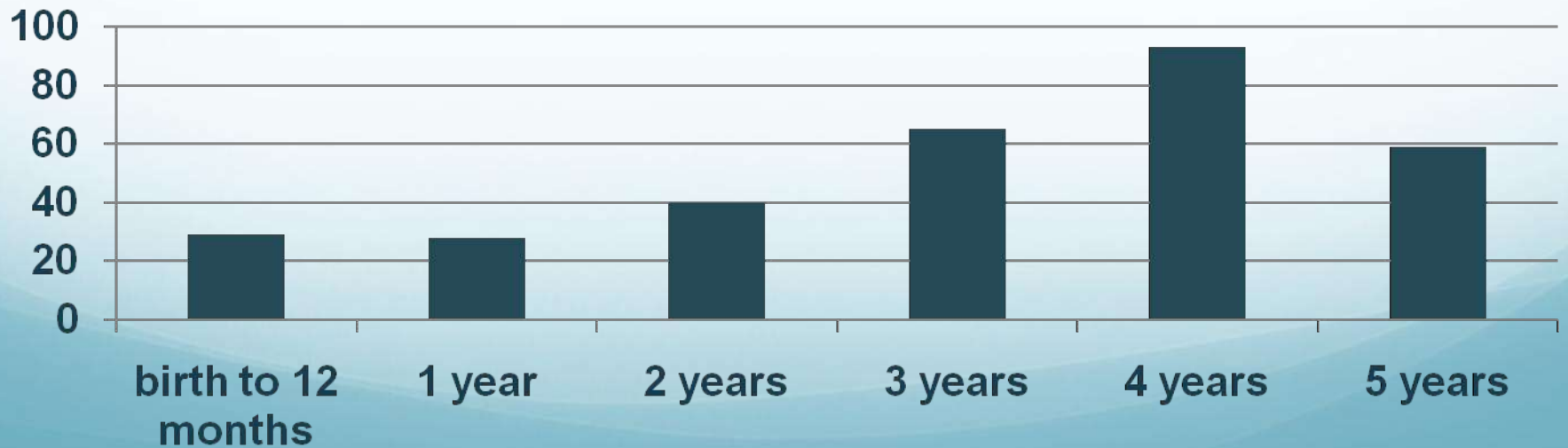
Primary Language in the Home



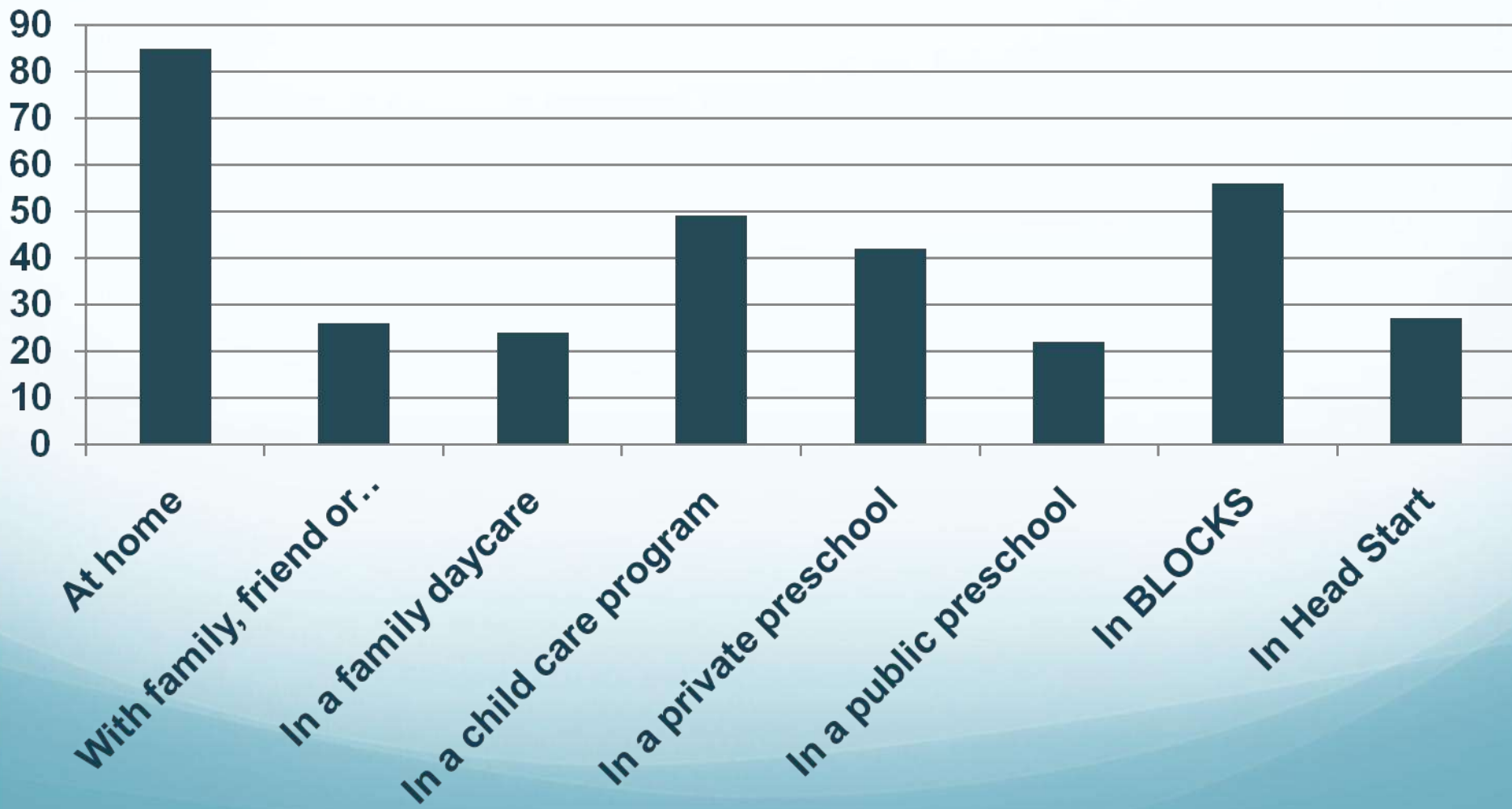
Family Size



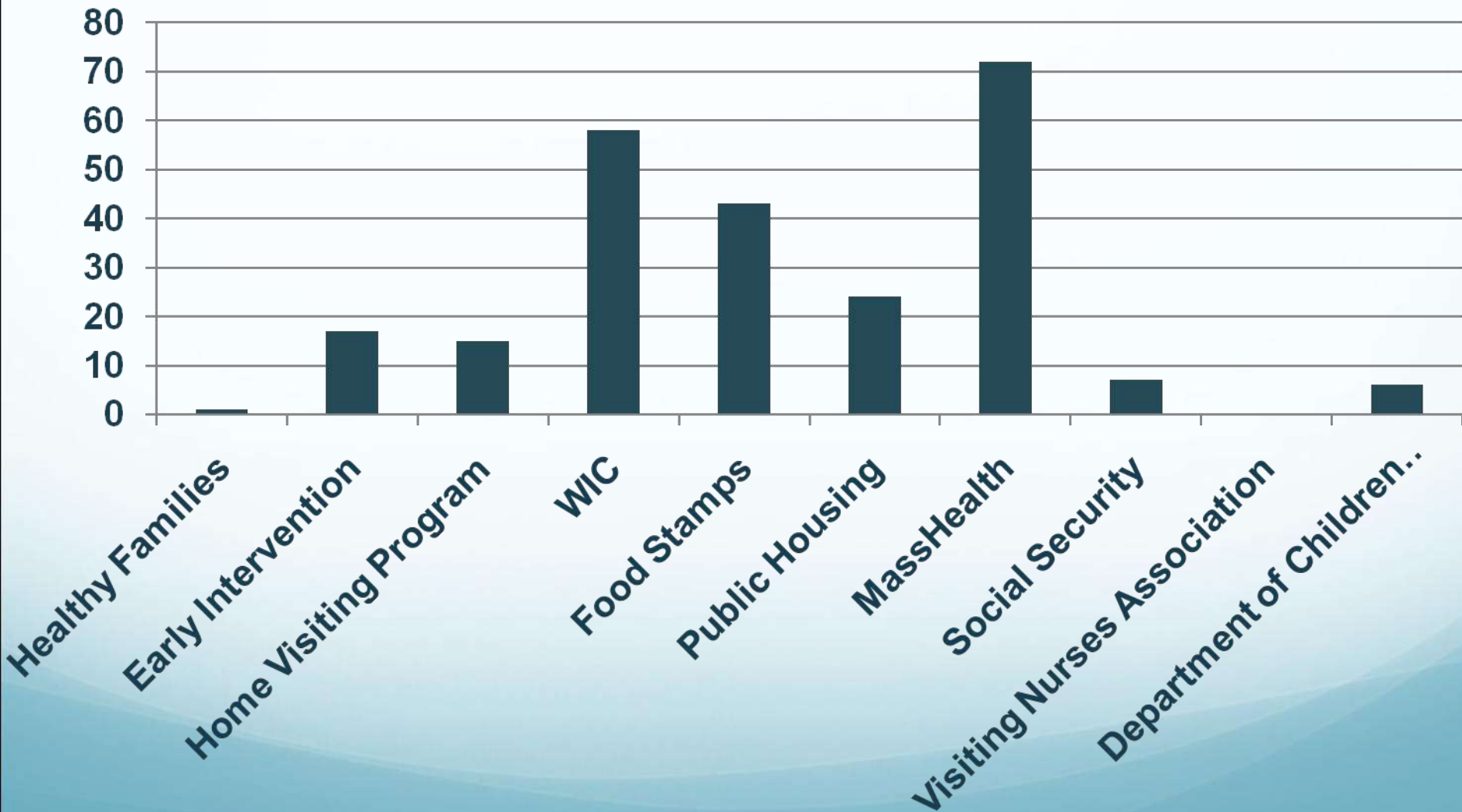
Ages of your children



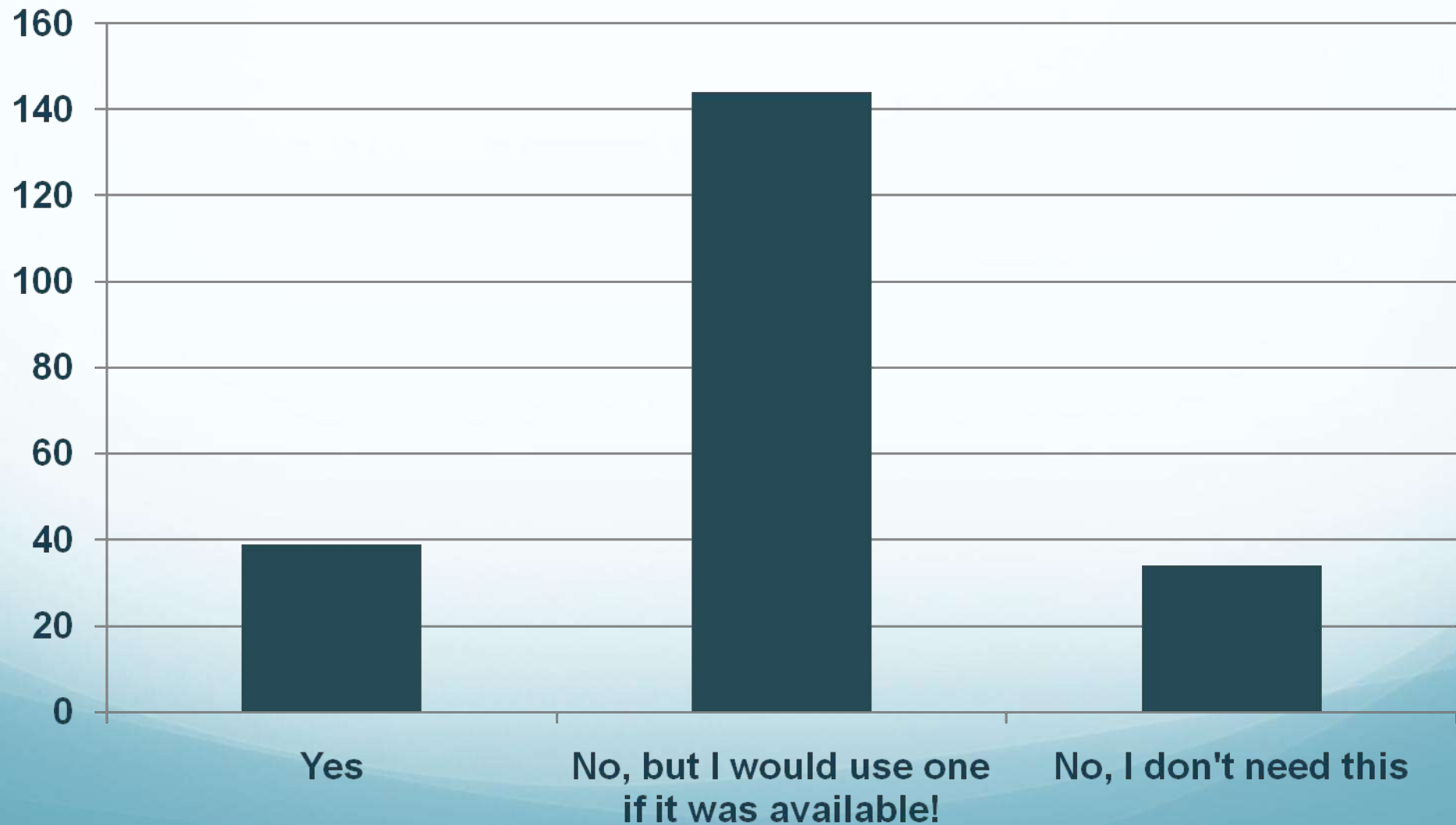
Where are your children under six during the day?



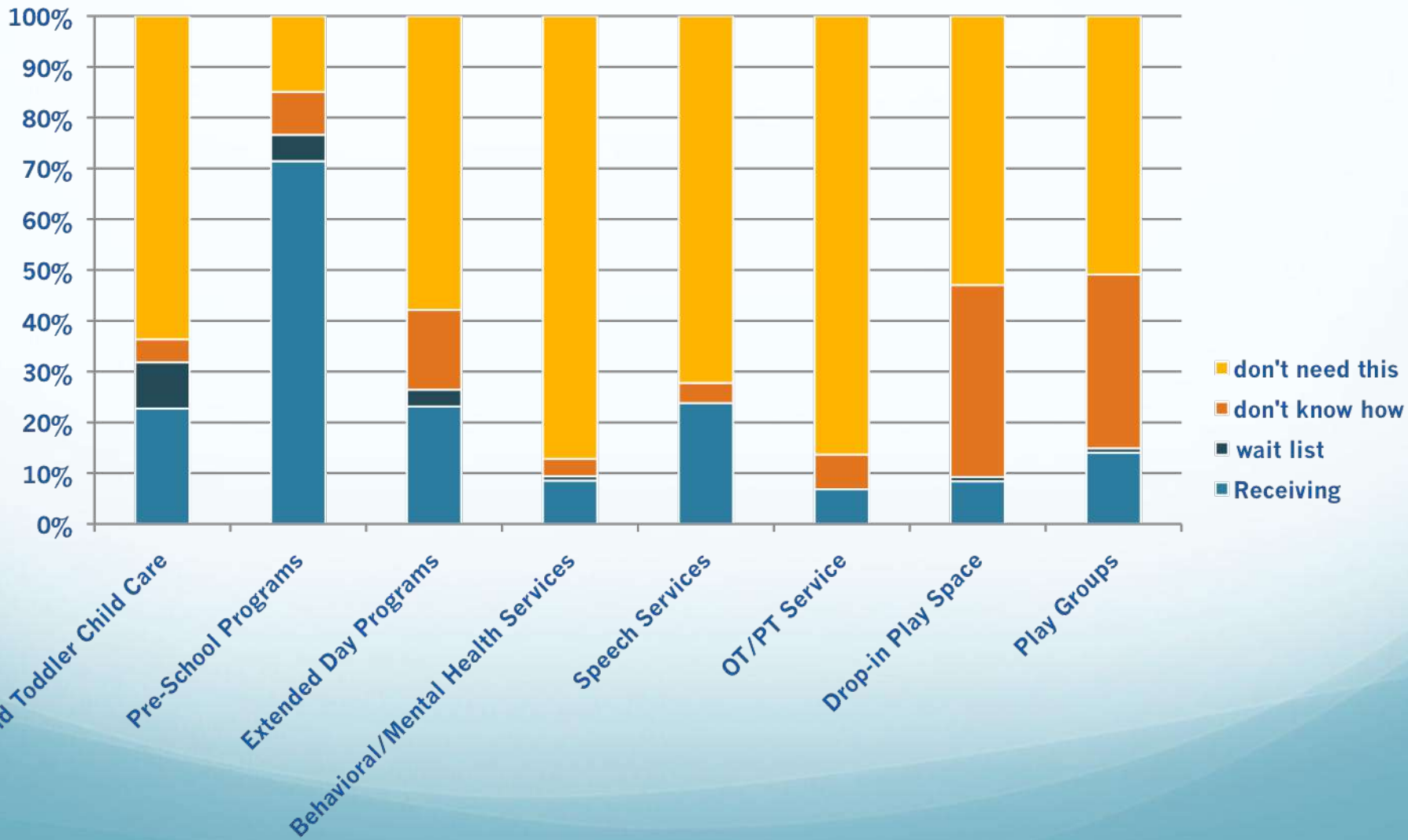
What services are you receiving?



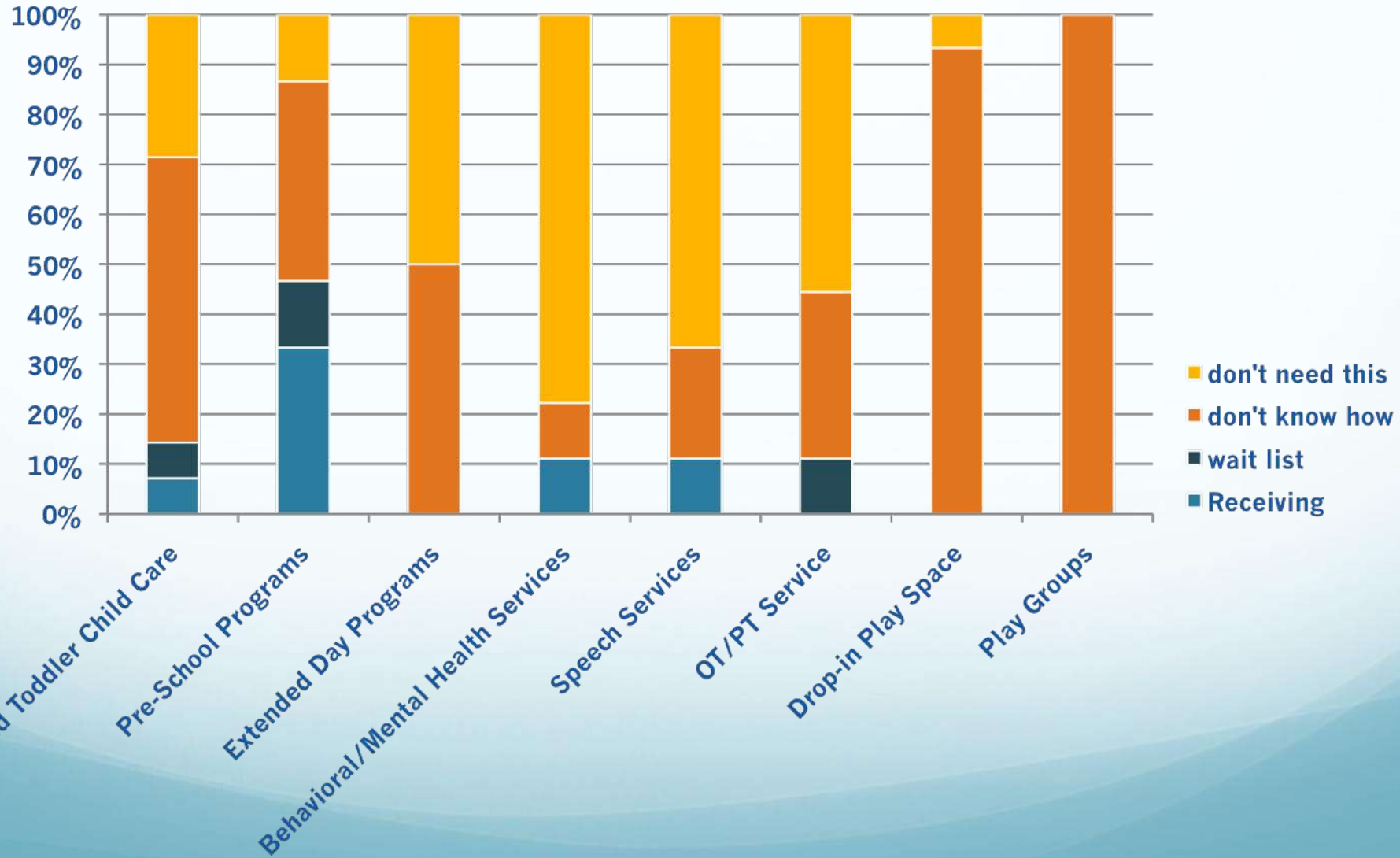
FREE indoor play spaces or drop-in playgroups



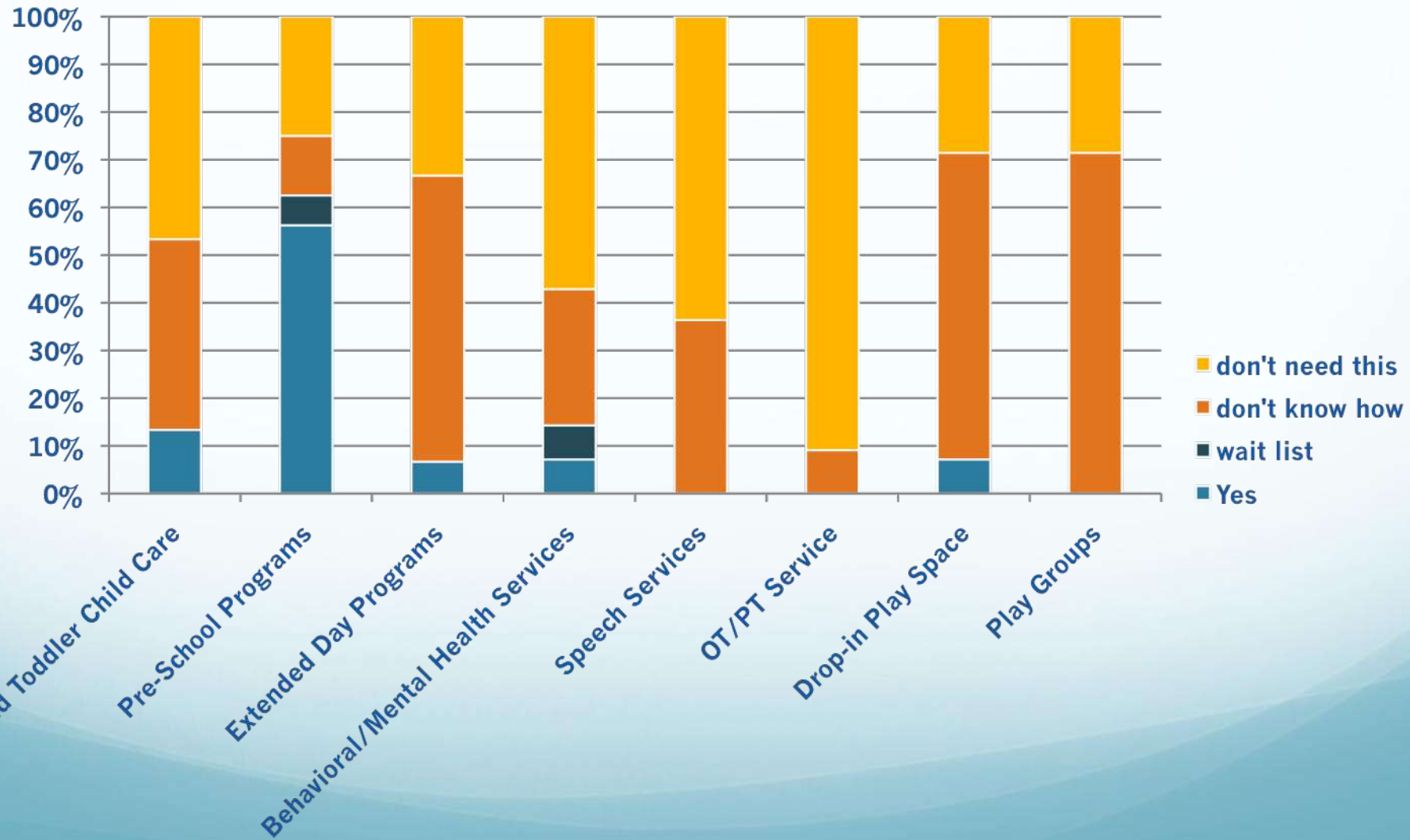
Early Childhood Services English Survey



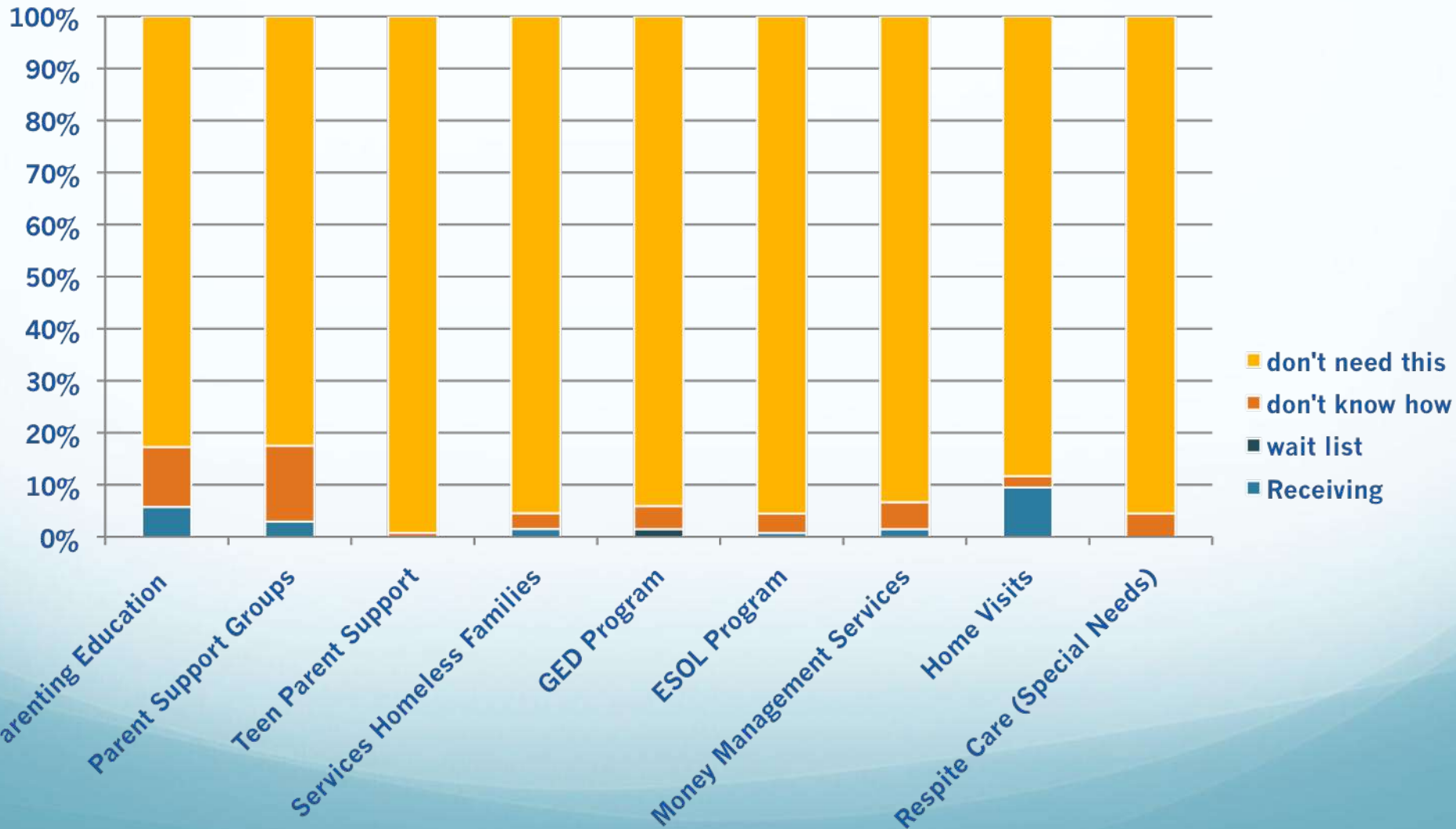
Early Childhood Services Portuguese Survey



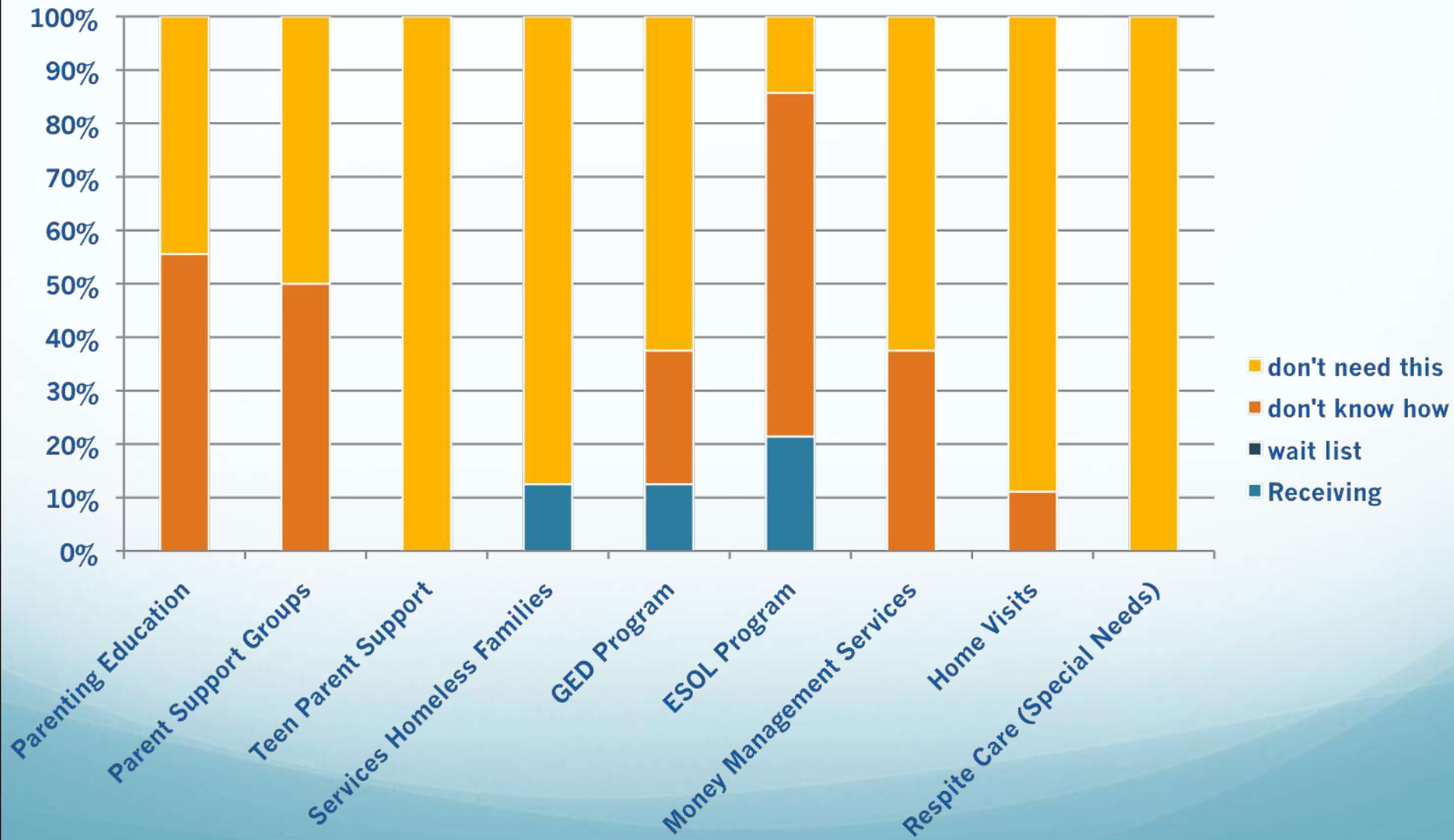
Early Childhood Services Spanish Survey



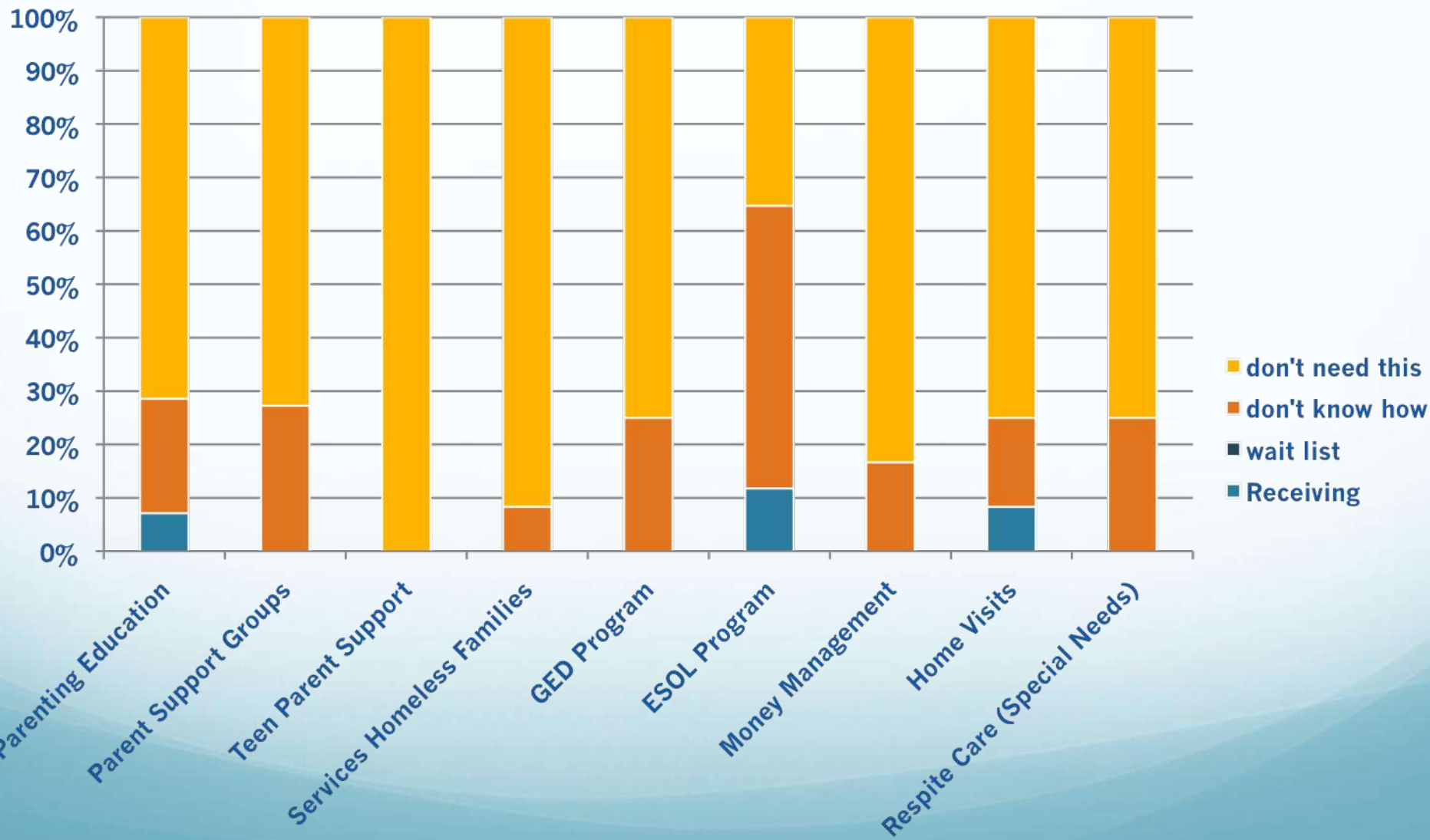
Family Support Services: English Survey



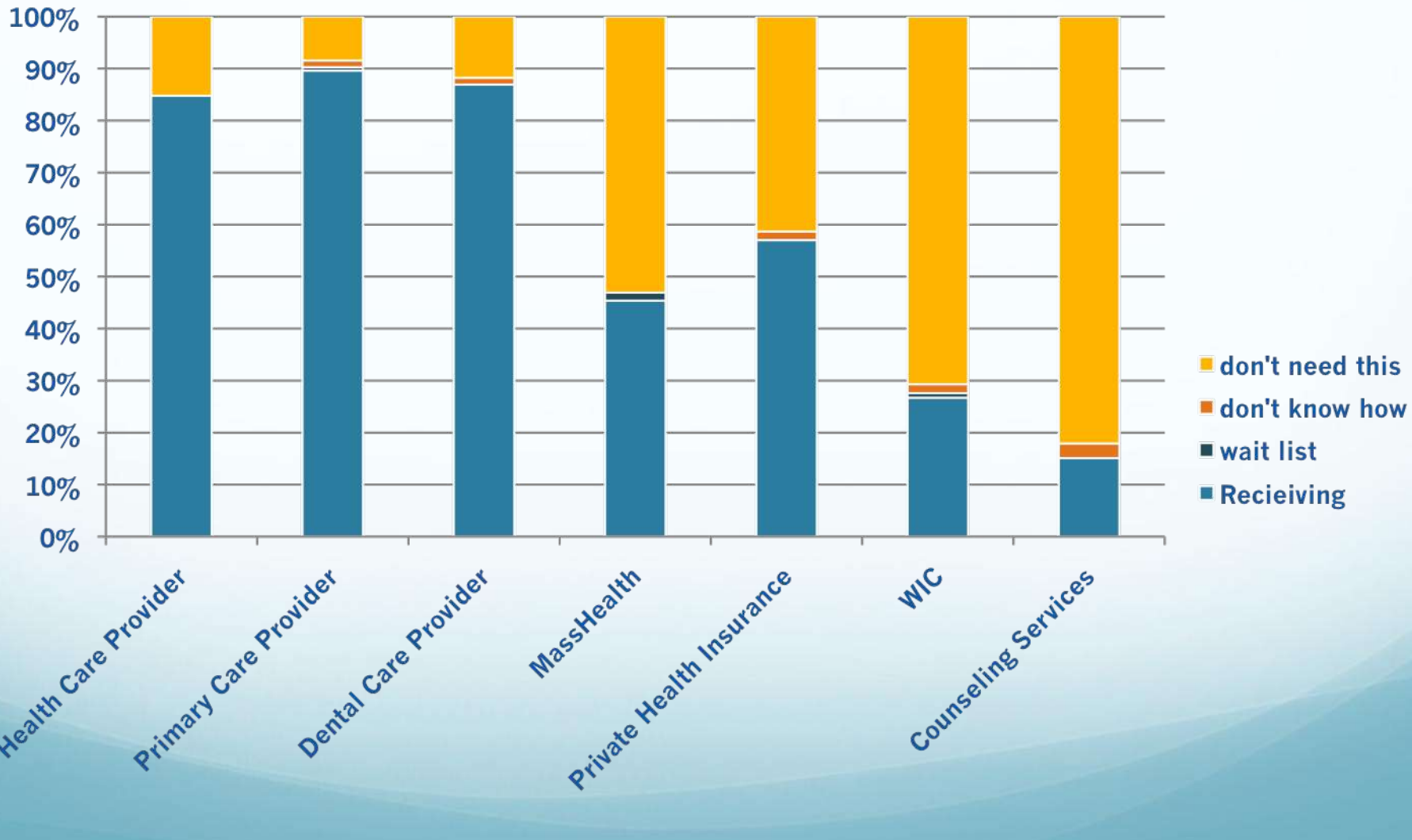
Family Support Services: Portuguese Survey



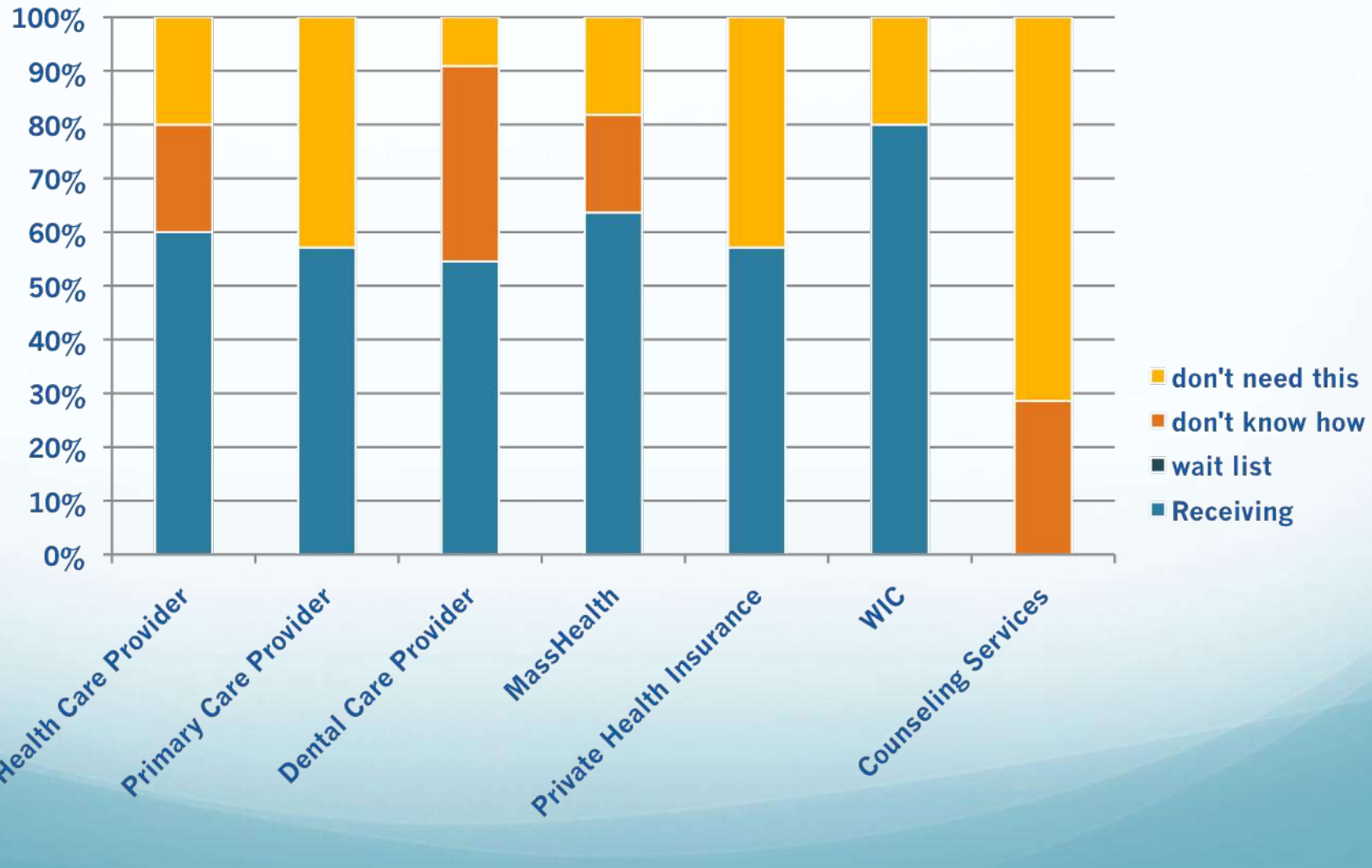
Family Support Services: Spanish Survey



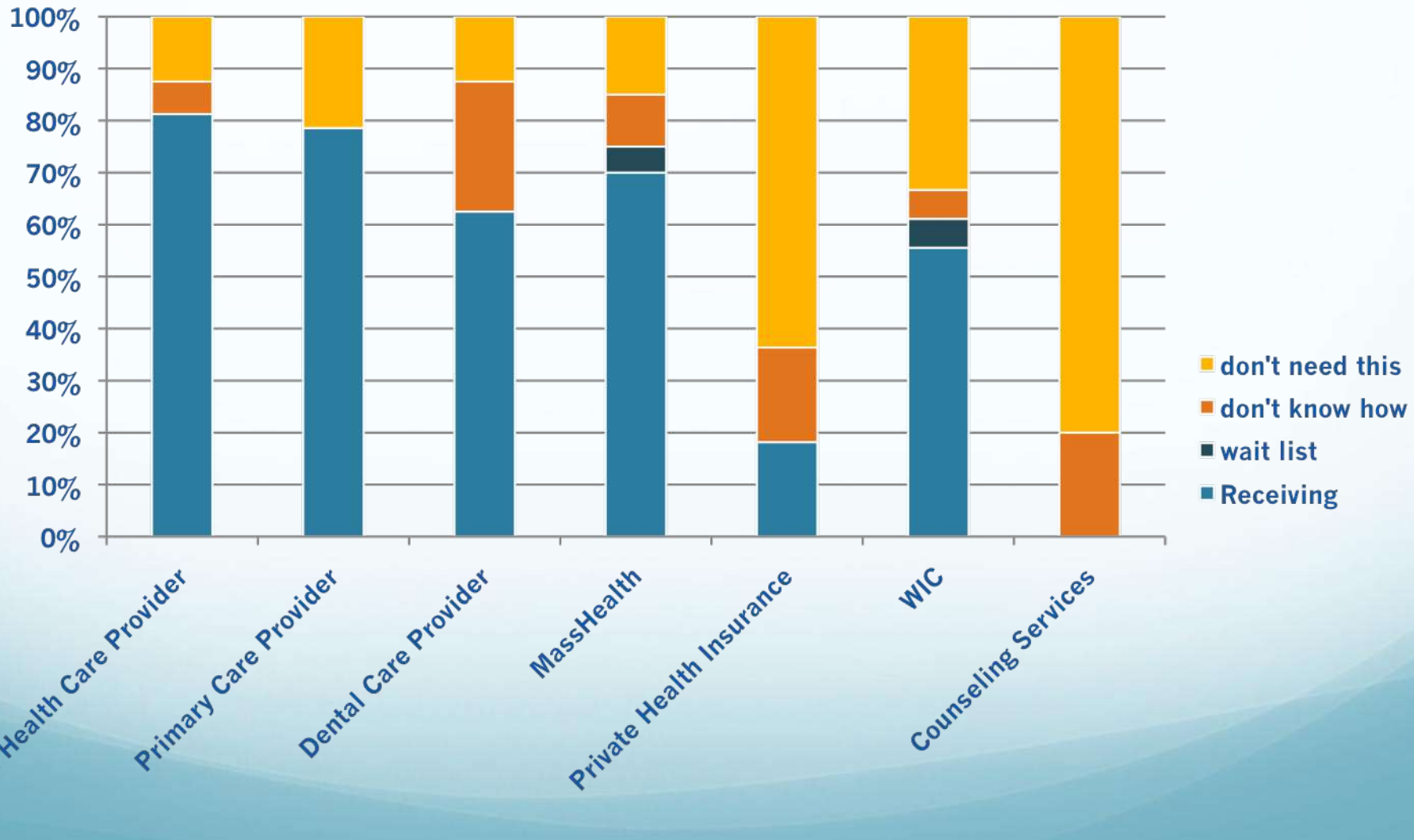
Health Services English Survey



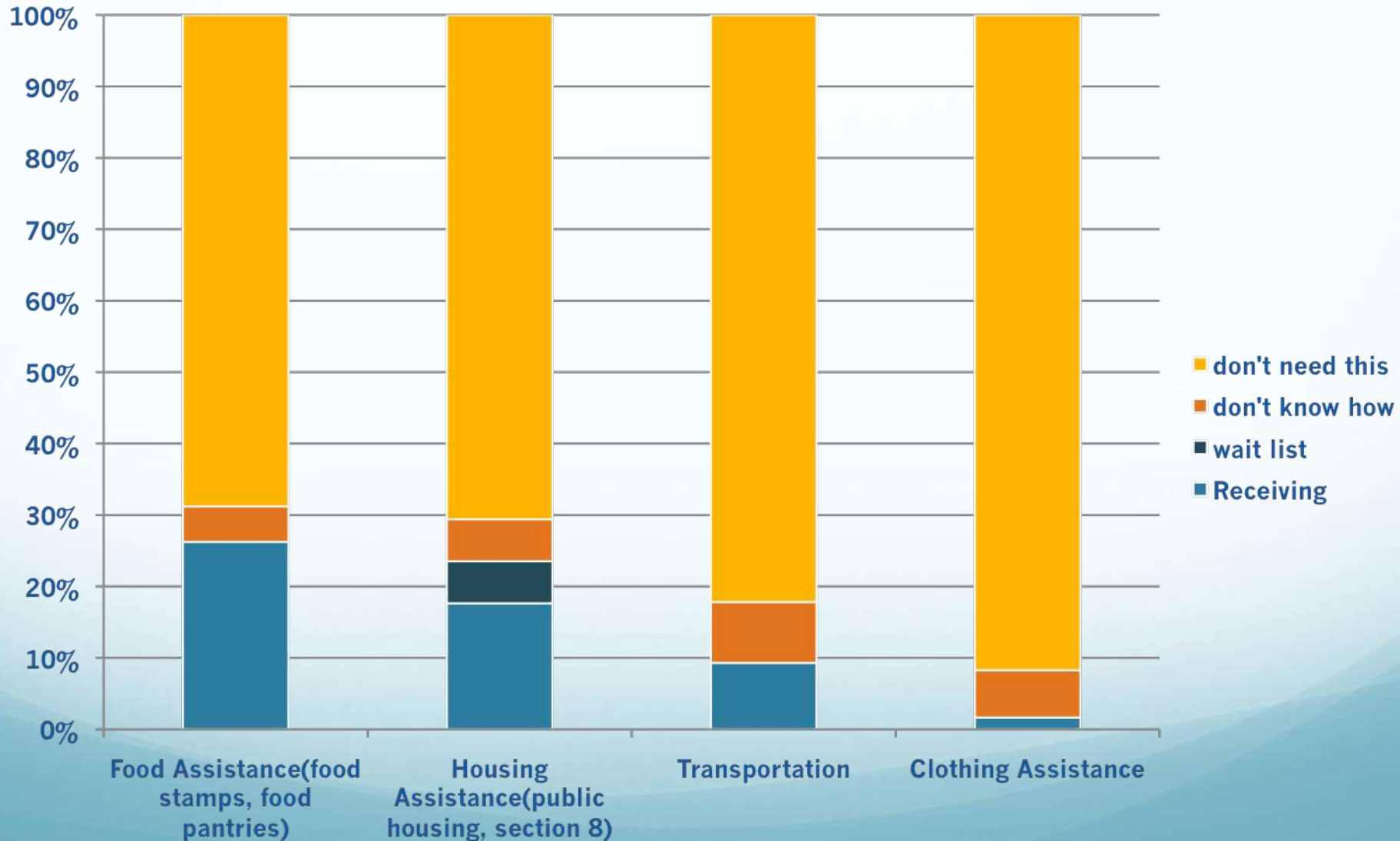
Health Services Portuguese Survey



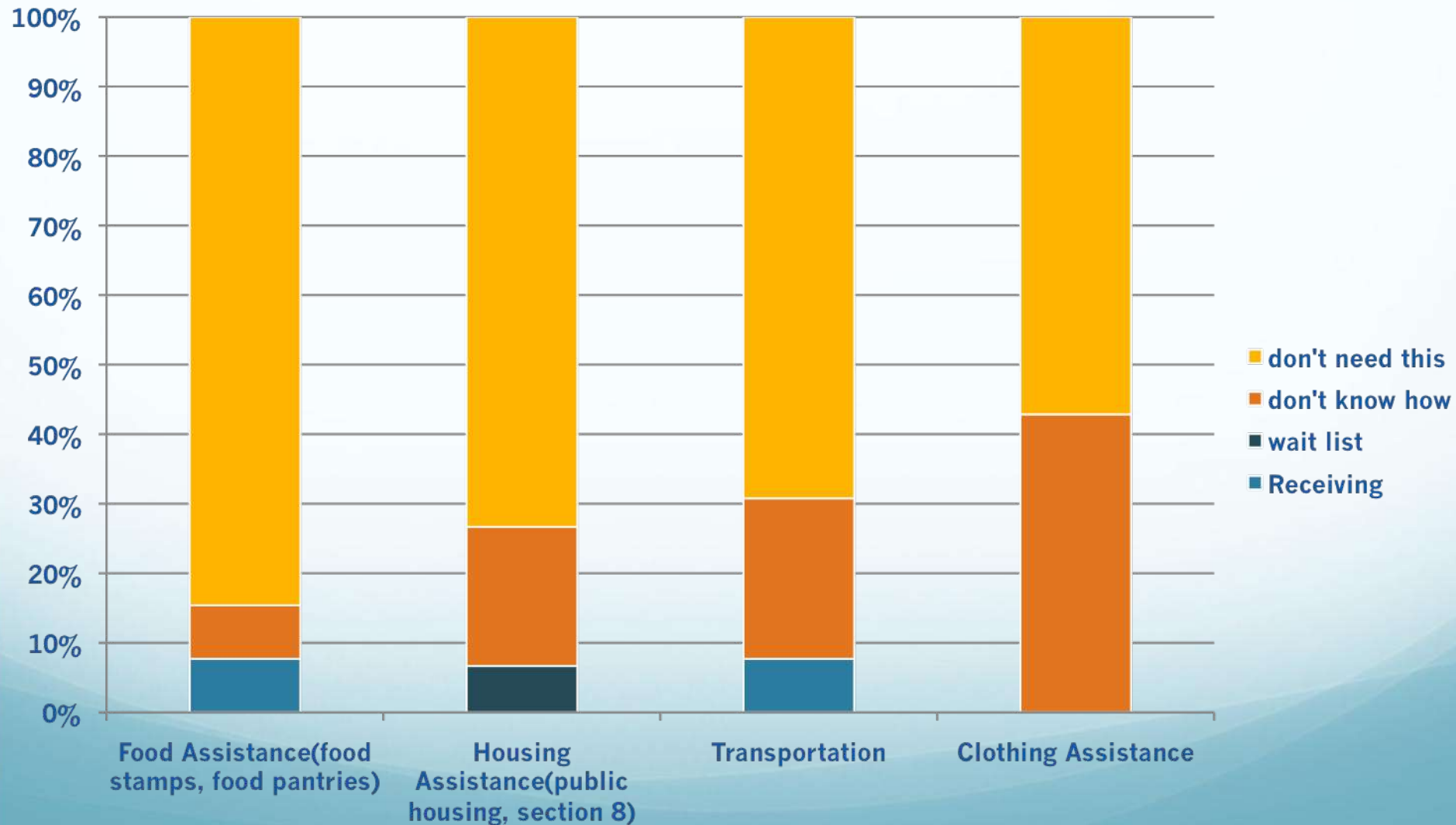
Health Services Spanish Survey



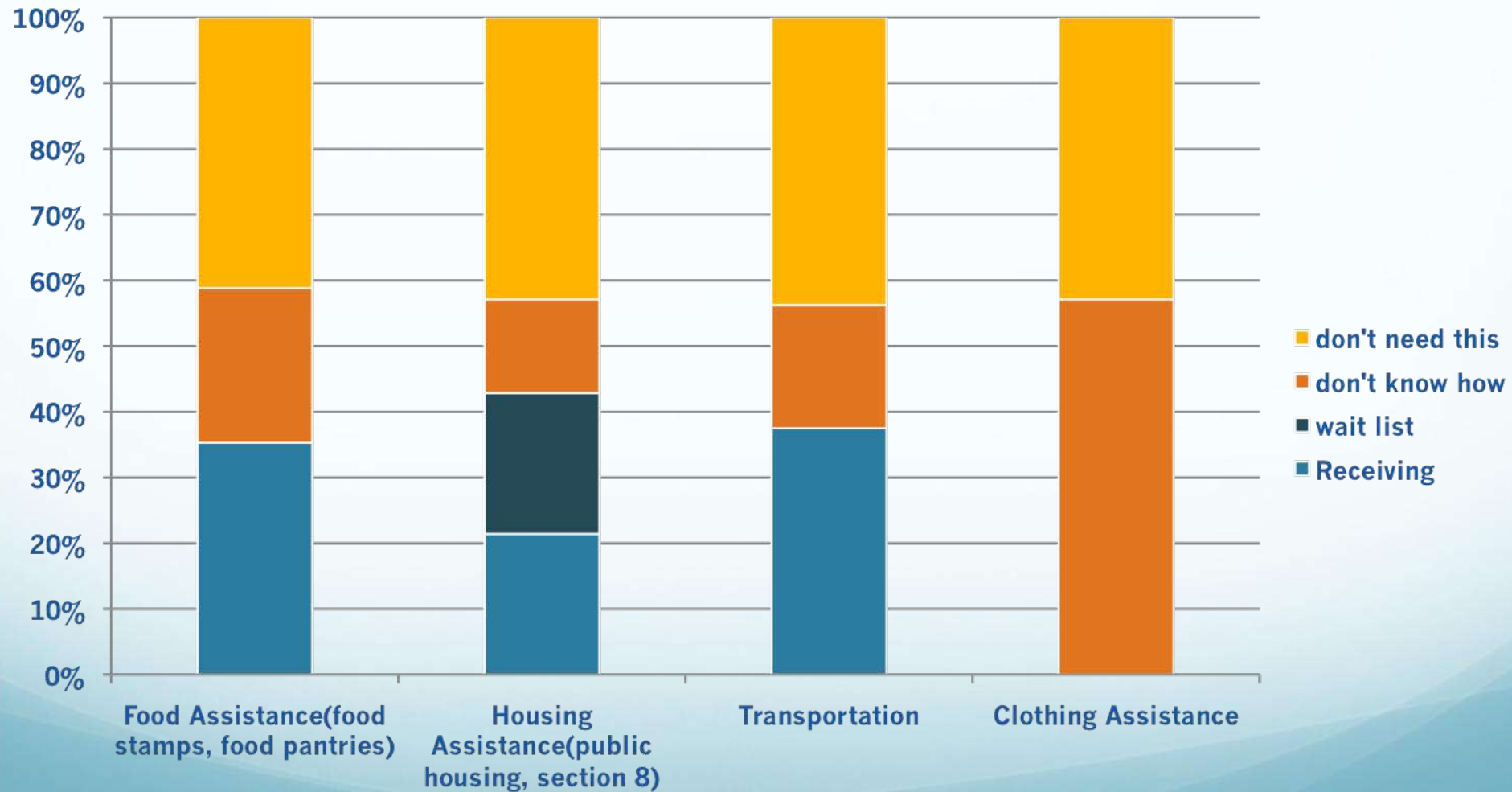
Basic Needs English Survey



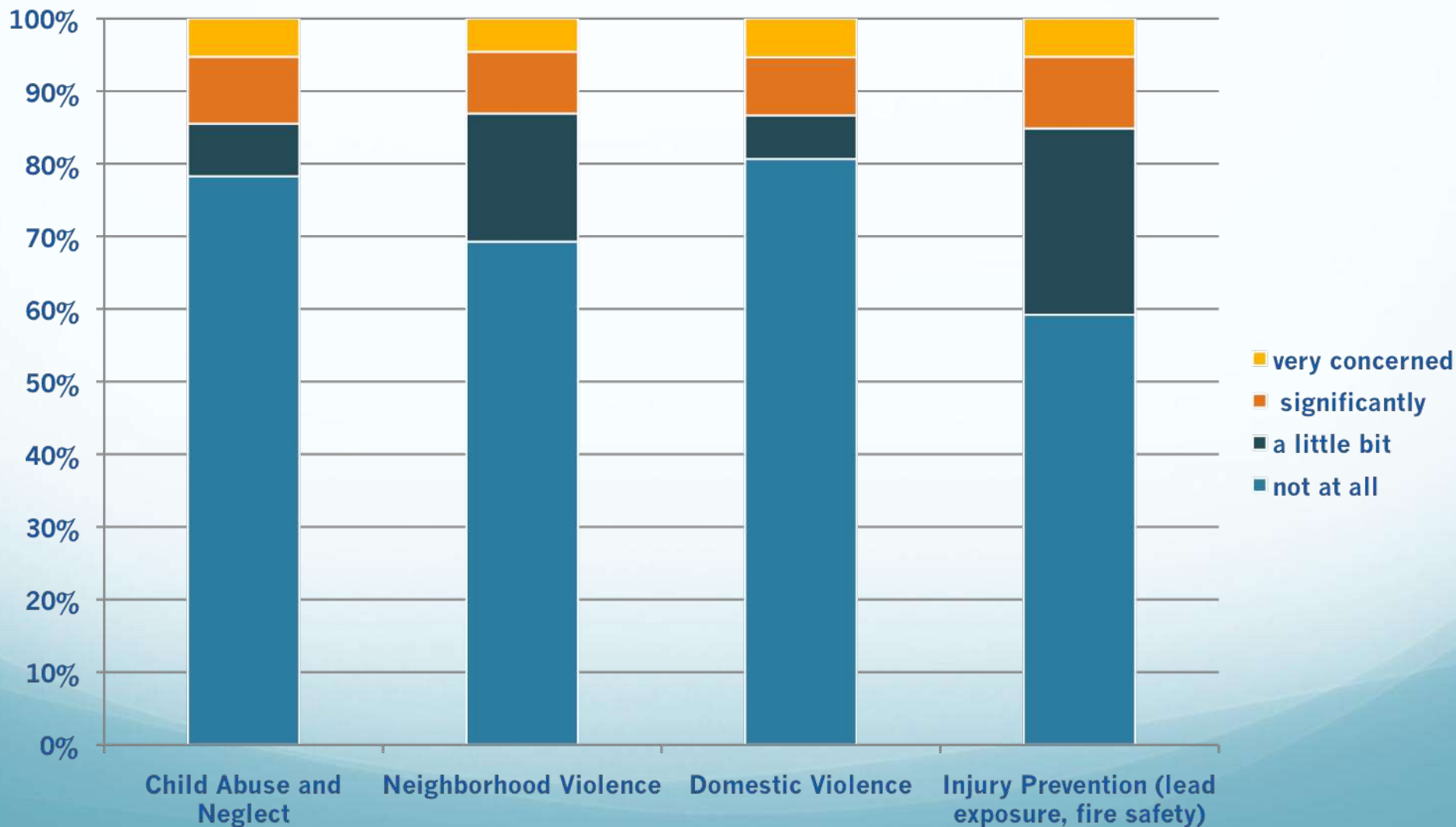
Basic Needs Portuguese Survey



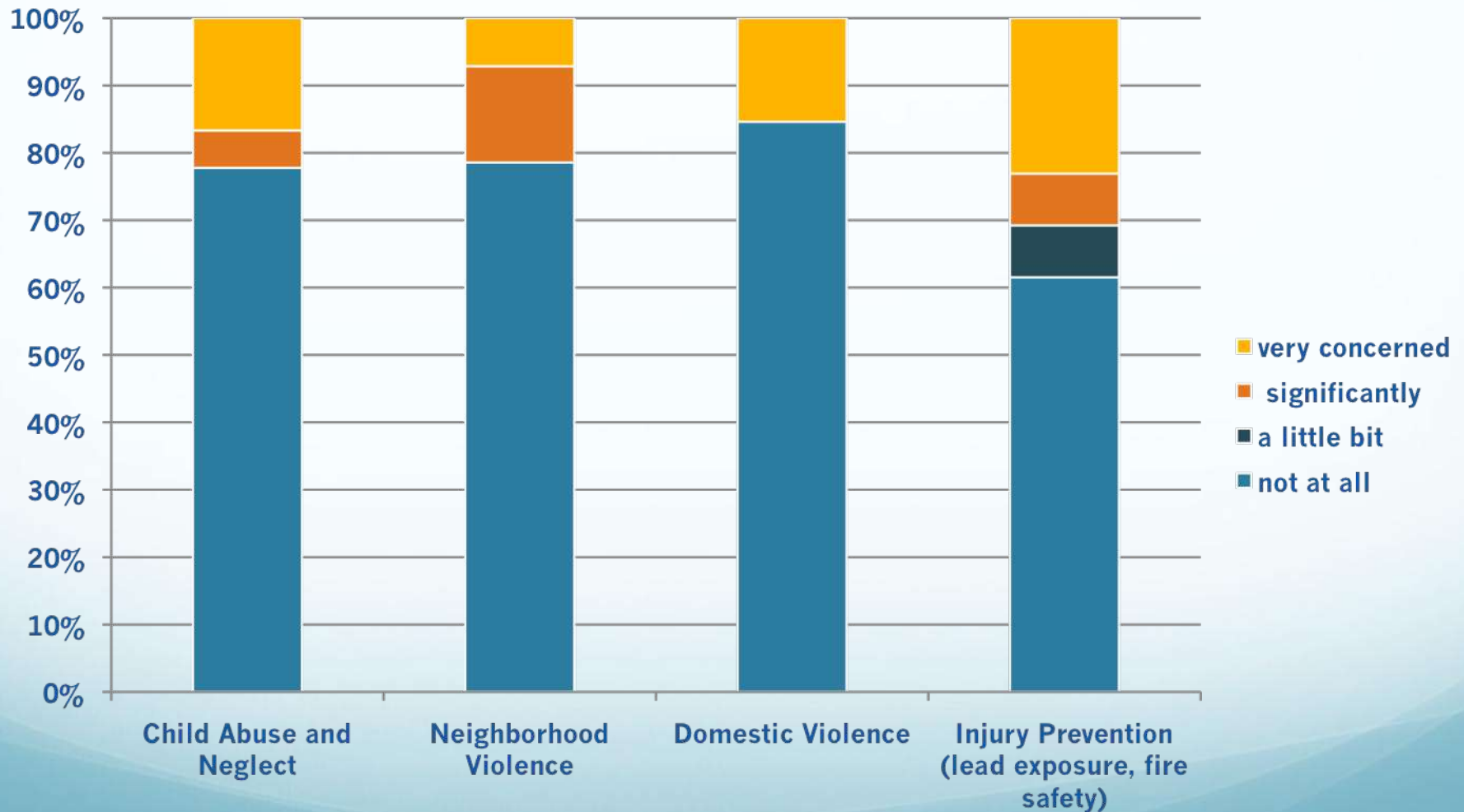
Basic Needs Spanish Survey



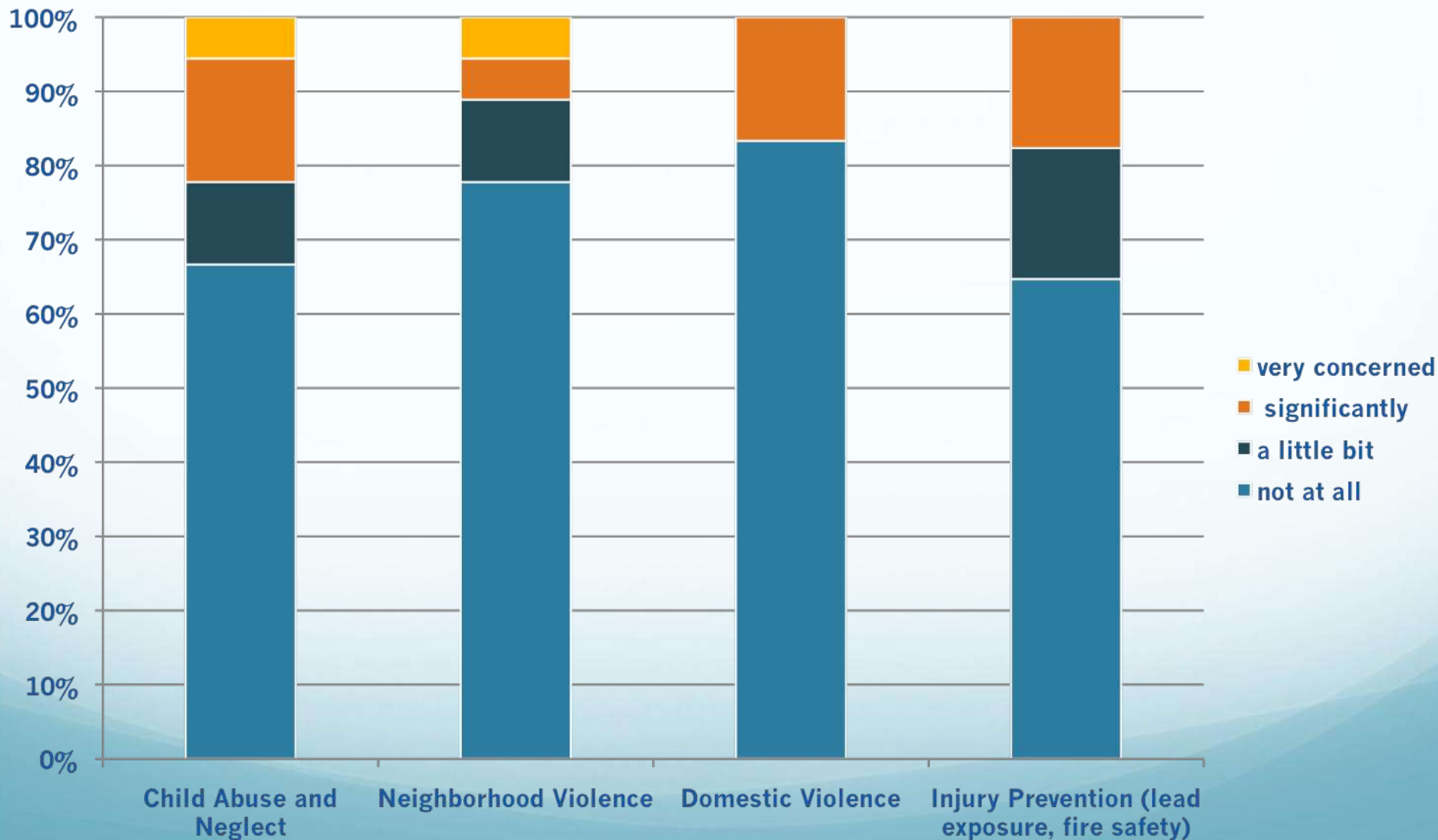
How much do the following concern you? English



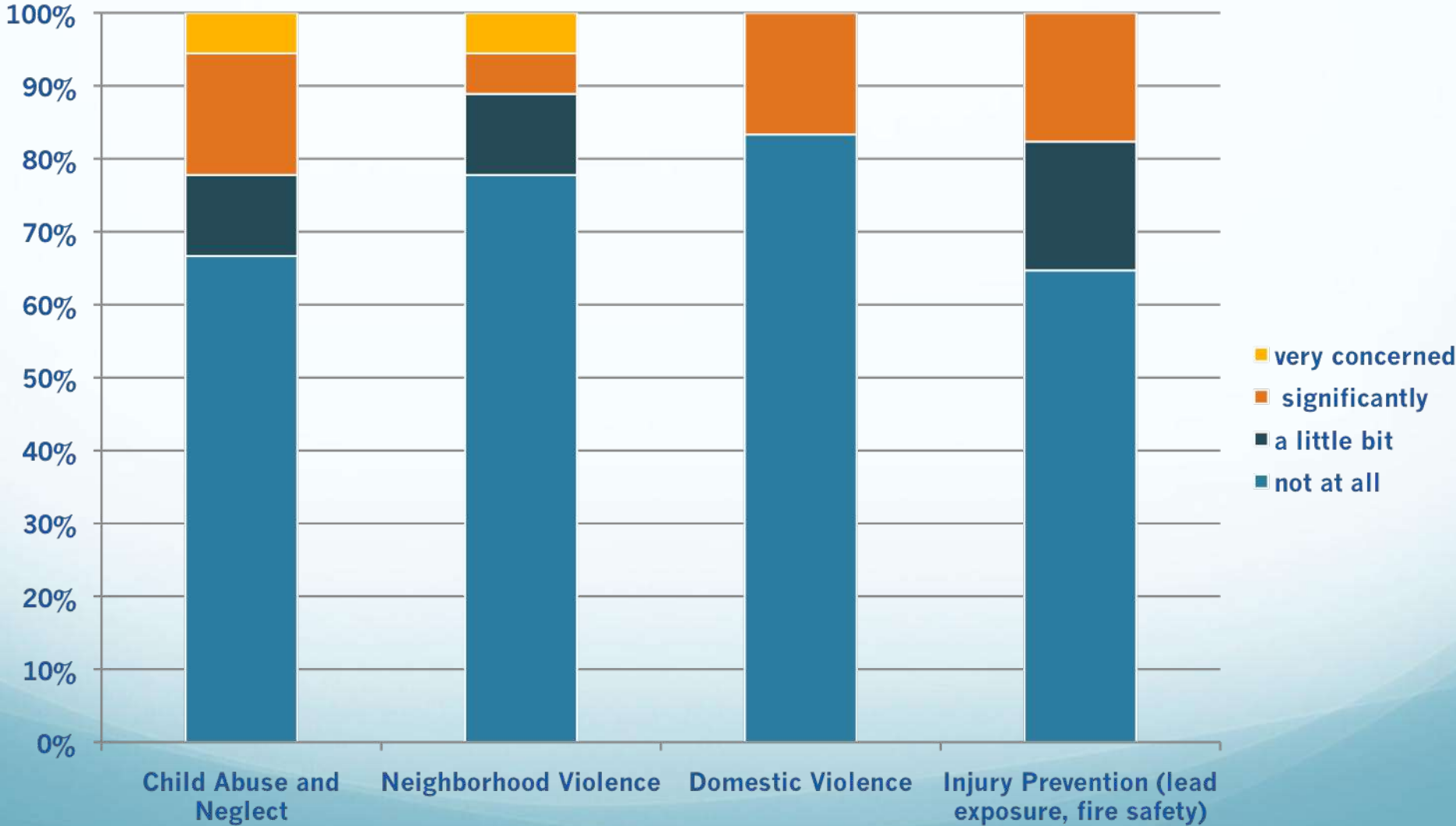
How much do the following concern you? Portuguese



How much do the following concern you? Spanish



Combined Parent Survey Responses



Parent Survey Comments

What would improve your quality of life?

Topping the list with 53 responses; increased available free or affordable informal places to take children under six for social, educational and recreational activities.

Followed closely by 33 responses for access to quality affordable child care; including pre-school education, extended day care and after school programs.

Time and money also figured prominently in comments, more time to spend as a family, more financial resources to support family life.

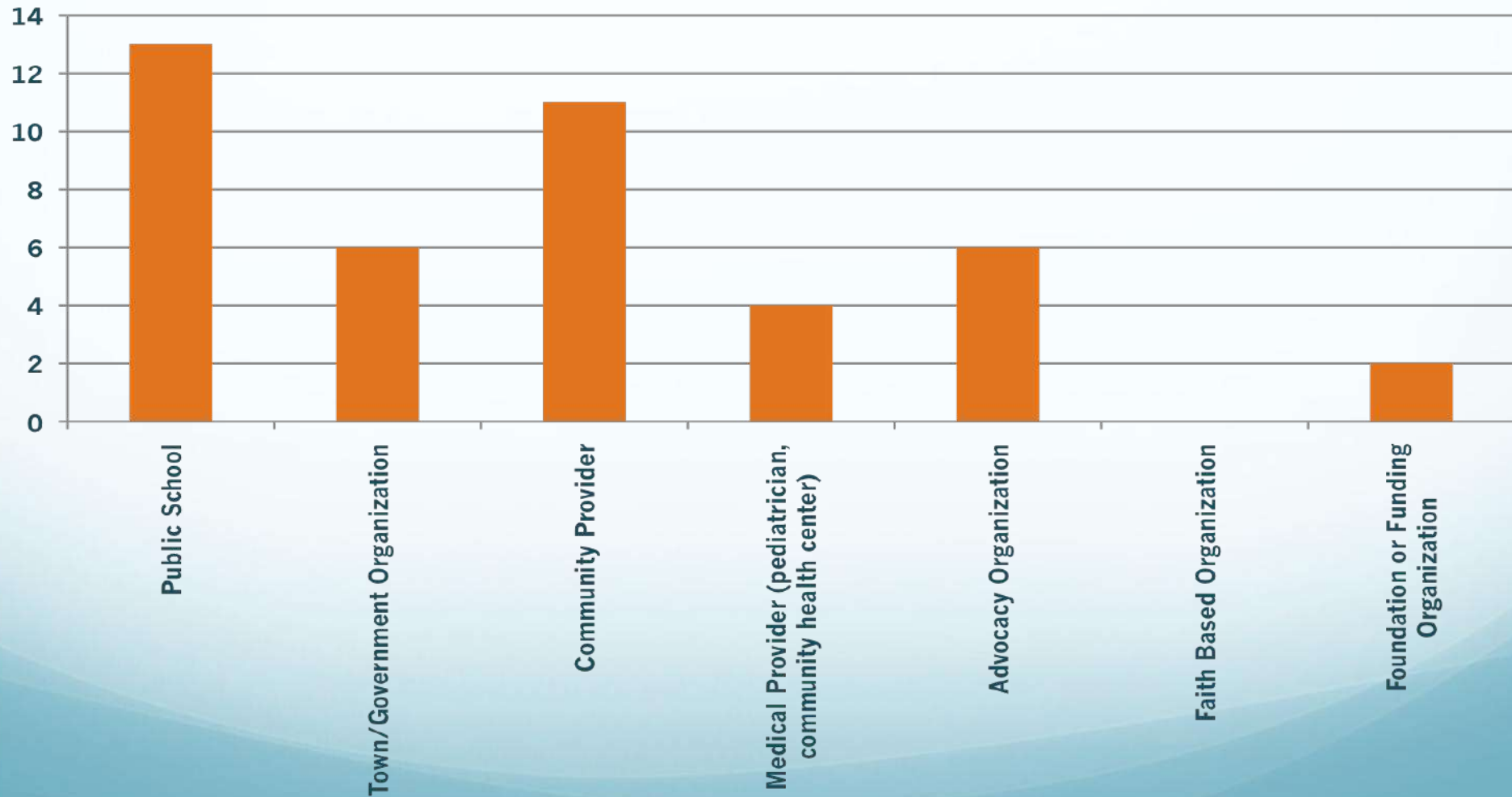
Parent Survey Priorities

What should we focus on?

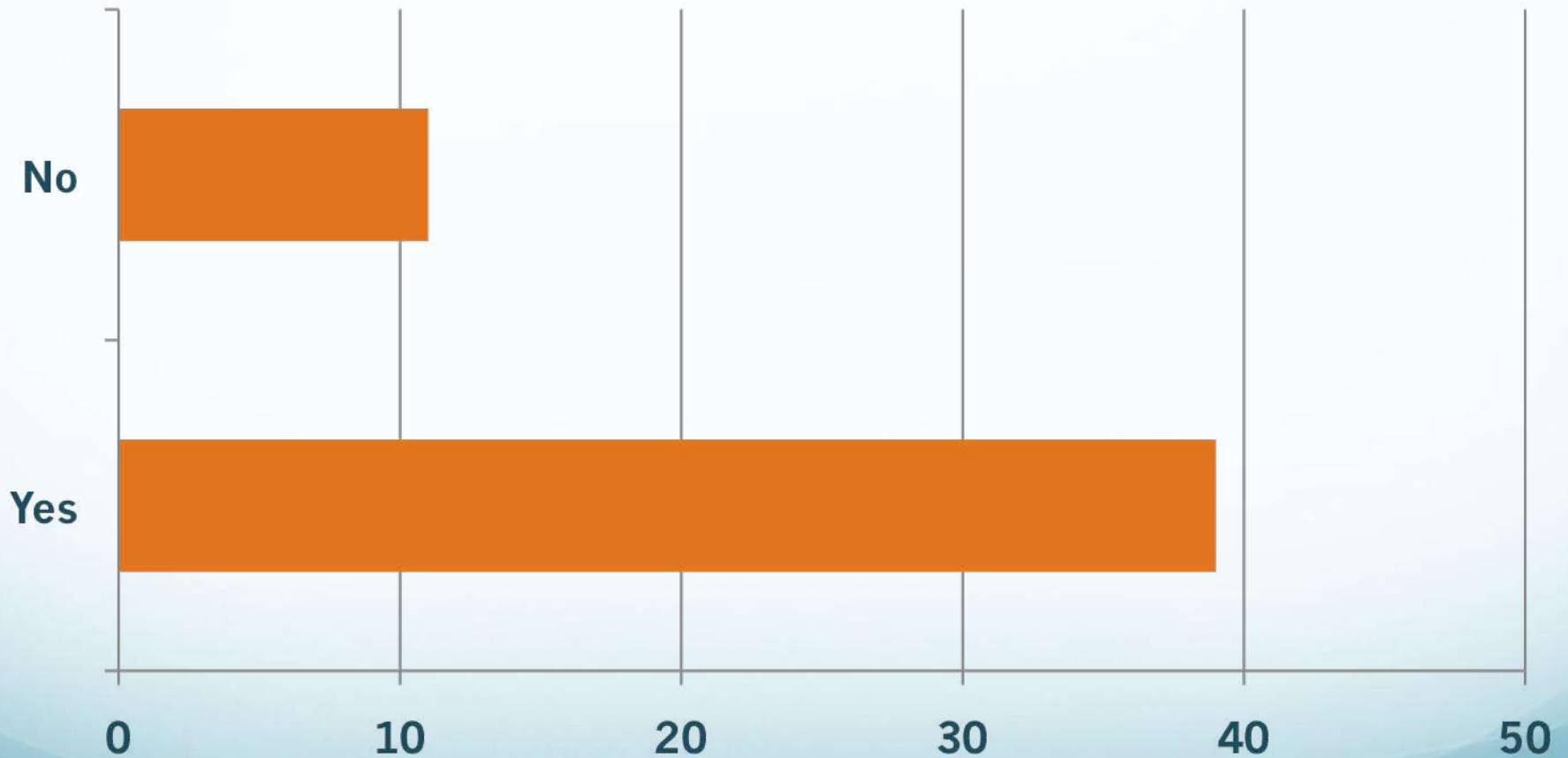
- Again topping the results was parent's wish for more free informal and affordable community recreation for their families with young children (29), followed by need for quality affordable child care and early childhood education (17).
- Community safety, especially shared community spaces such as parks was identified by 15 respondents.
- Combined responses in regard to basic needs such as housing, transportation, employment and food and nutrition support were included in 14 responses.
- Concerns about the quality of education (8), parent education (7) and knowledge of and coordination of services (7) followed in the number of times mentioned.

Community Provider Survey

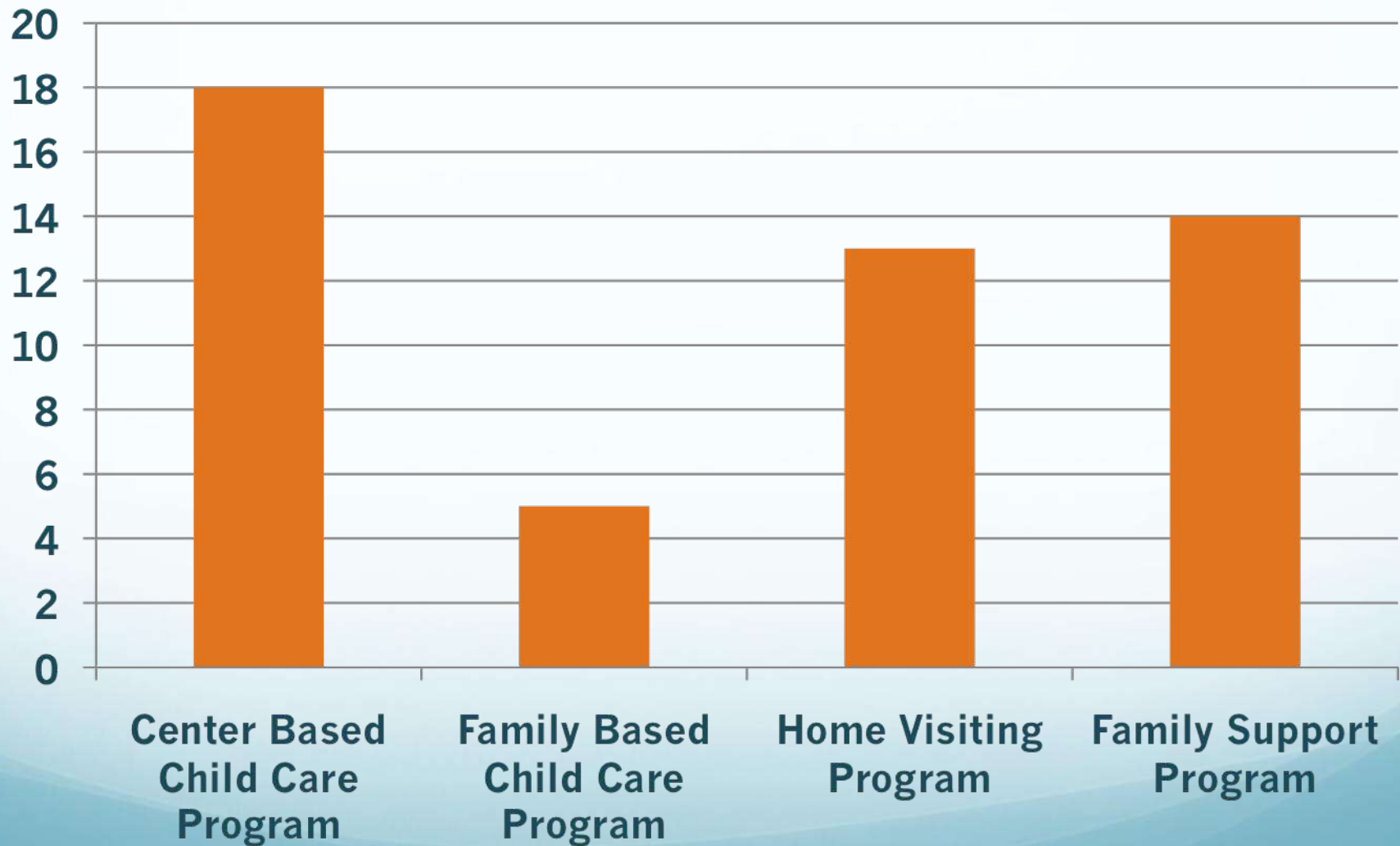
Who we engaged



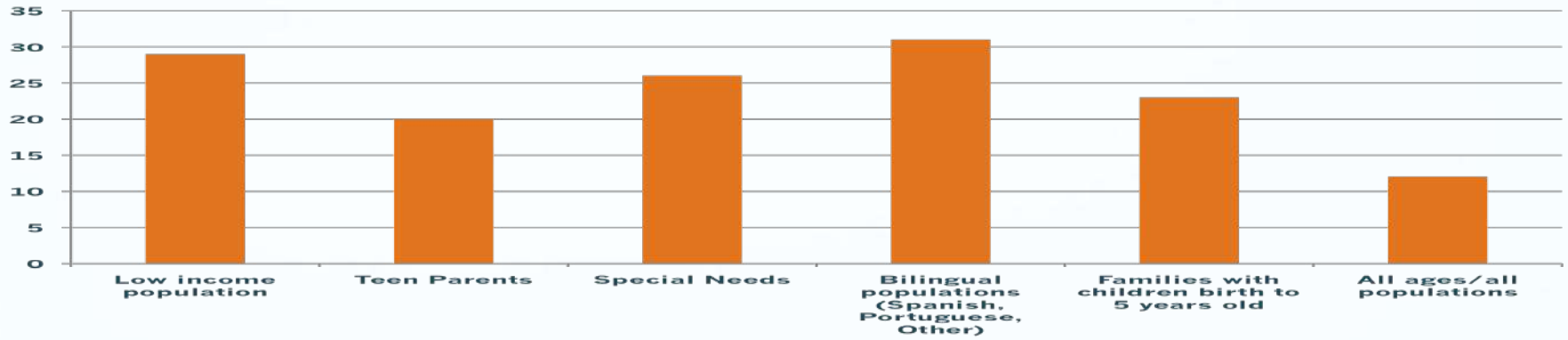
Do You Provide Early Childhood Services?



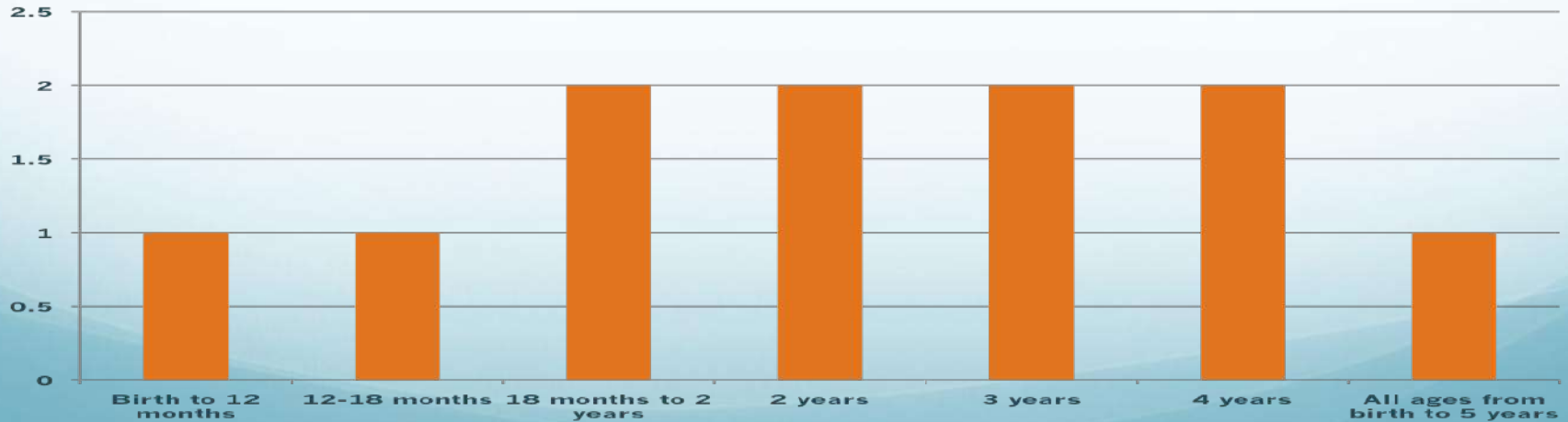
Kinds of Early Childhood Services Provided



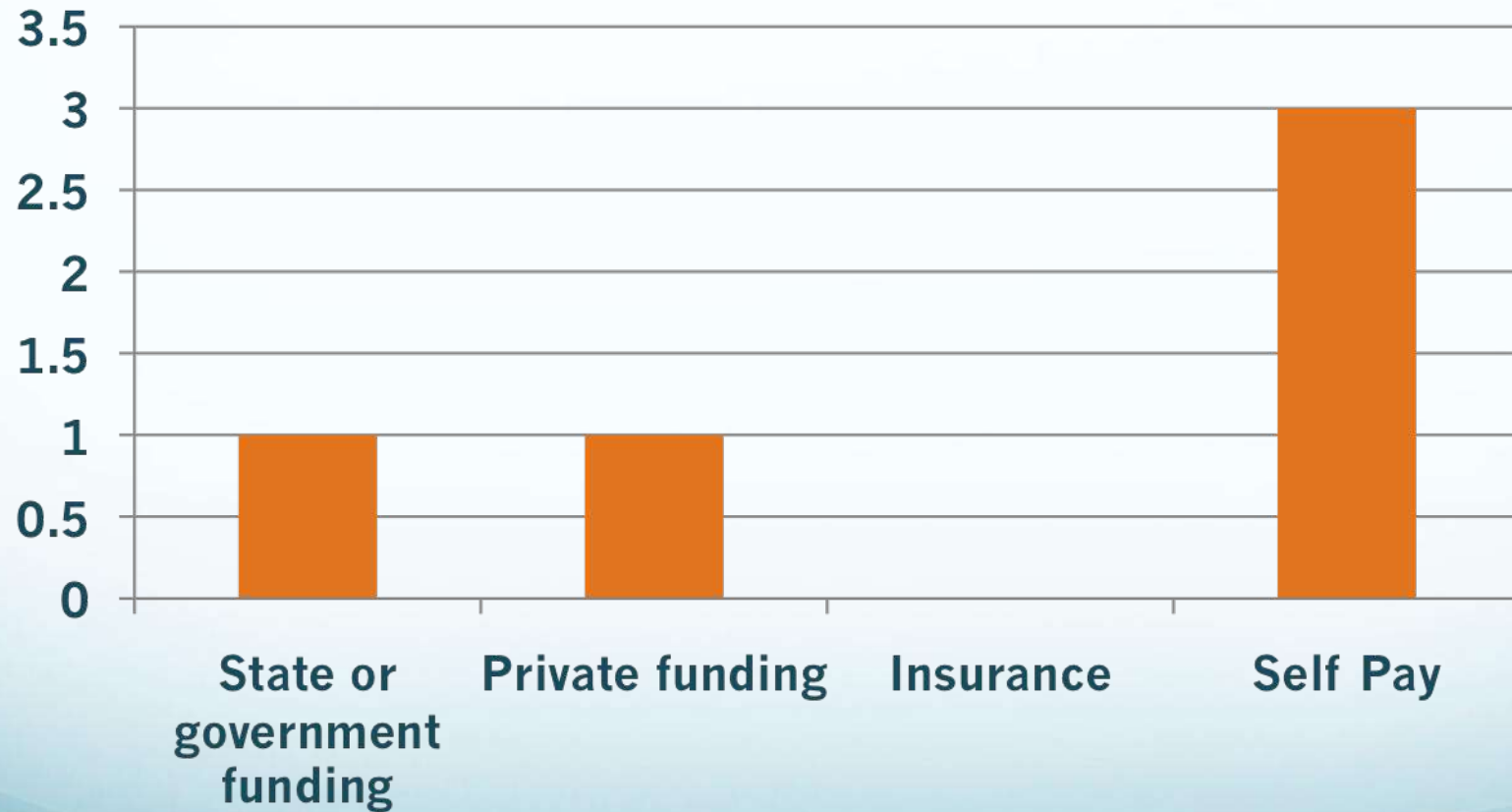
Who's Served



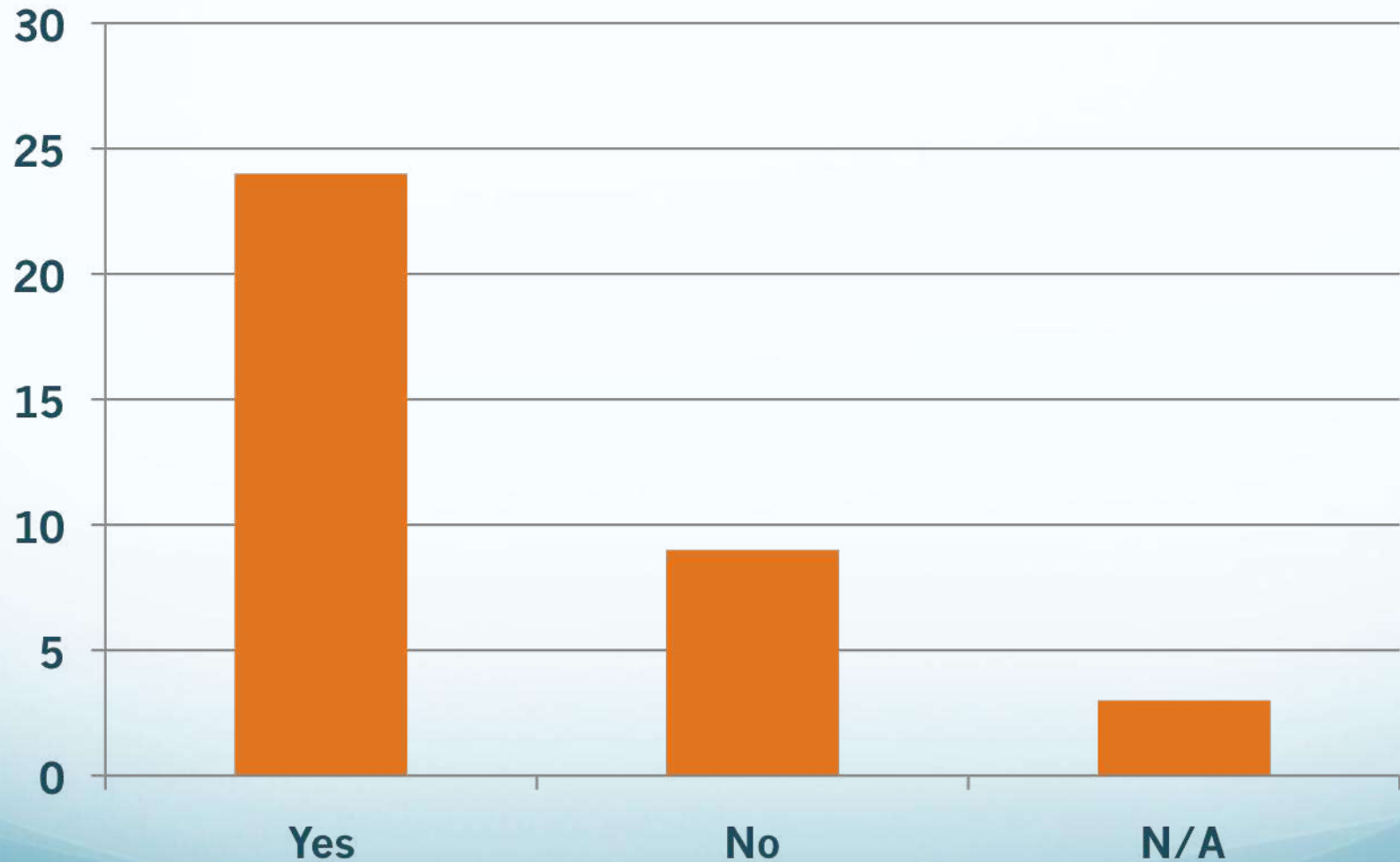
Ages Served



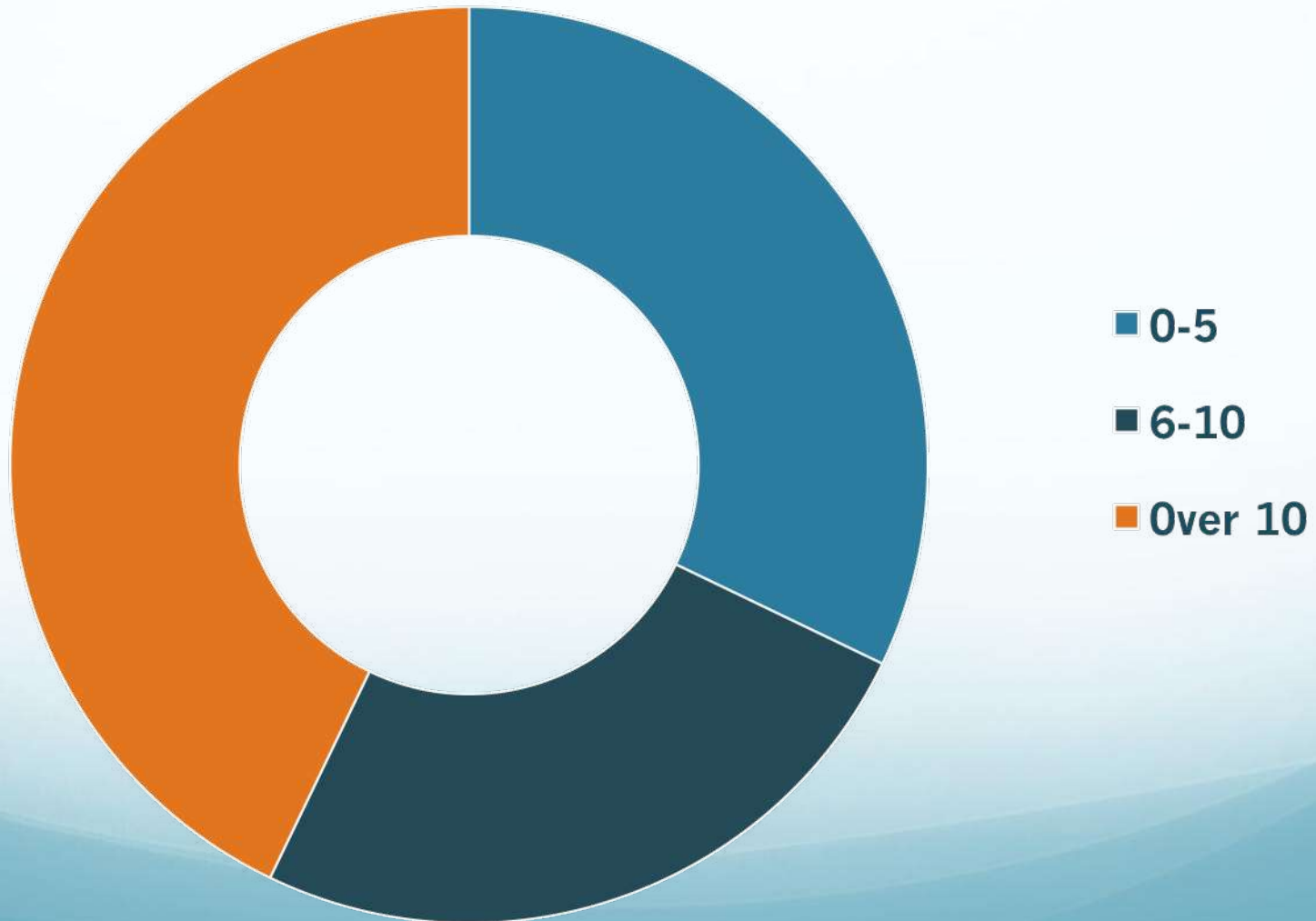
Program Funding Sources



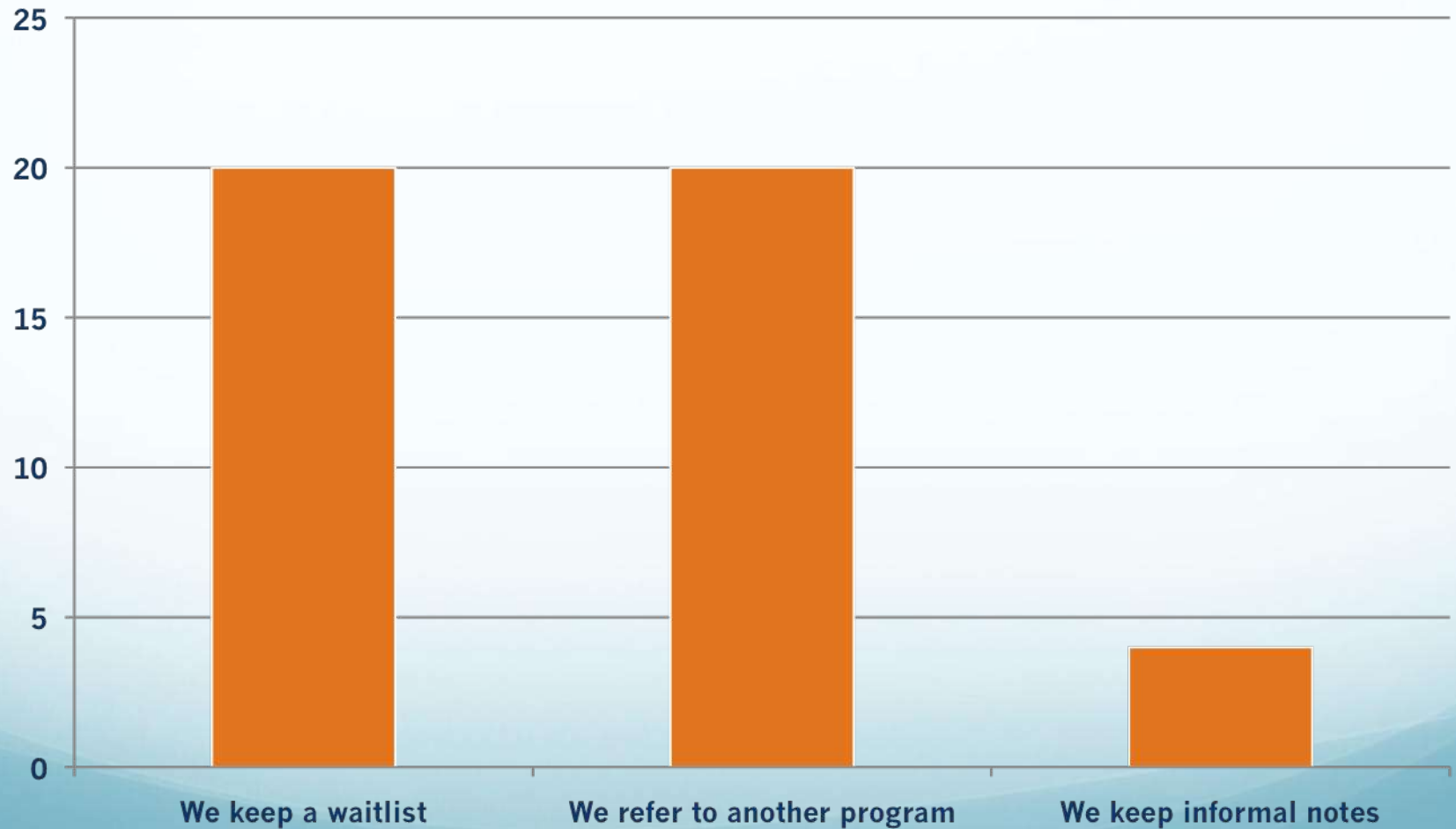
Are you able to serve all those eligible for your services?



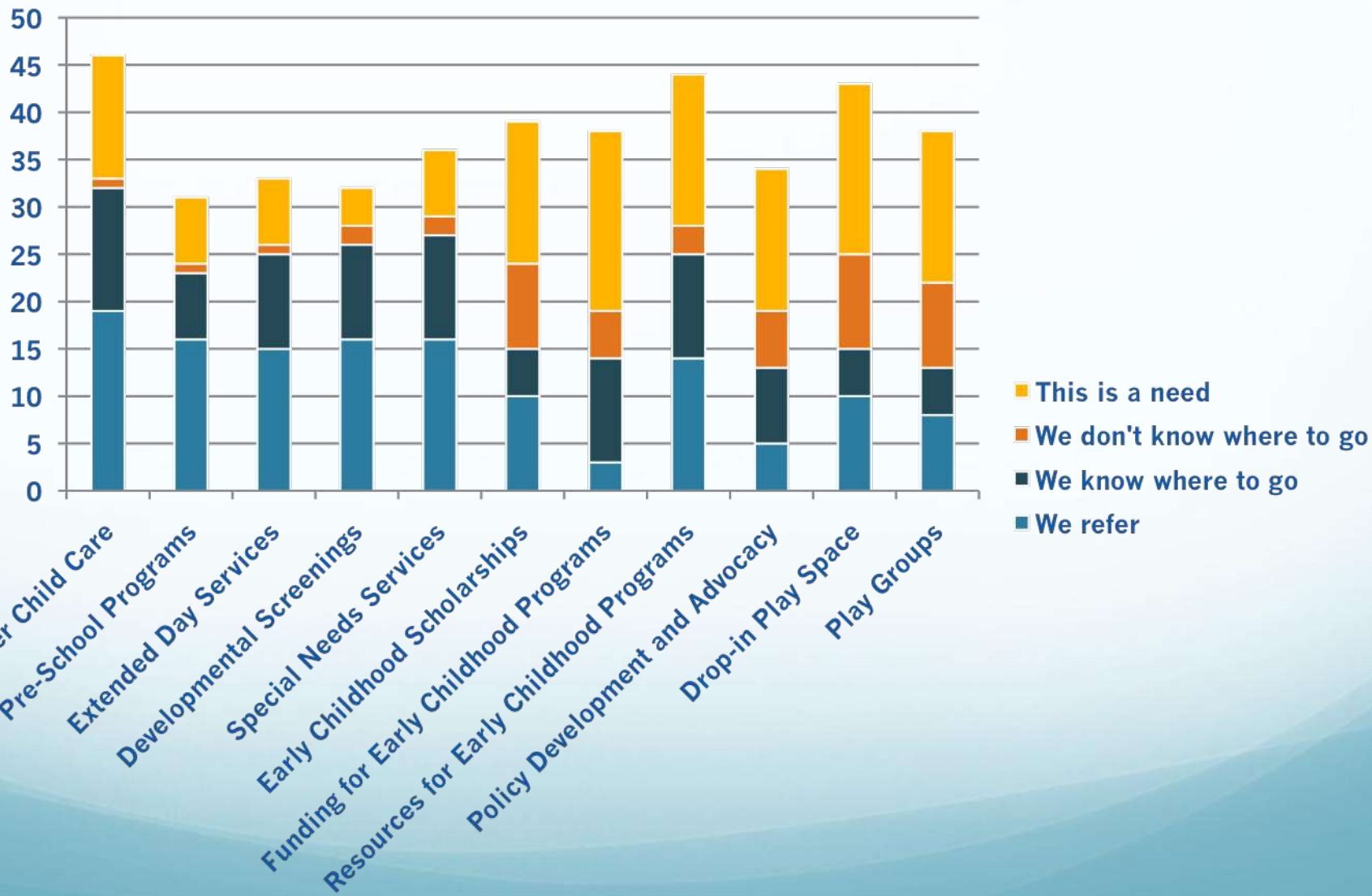
Number of Requests per Week for Services



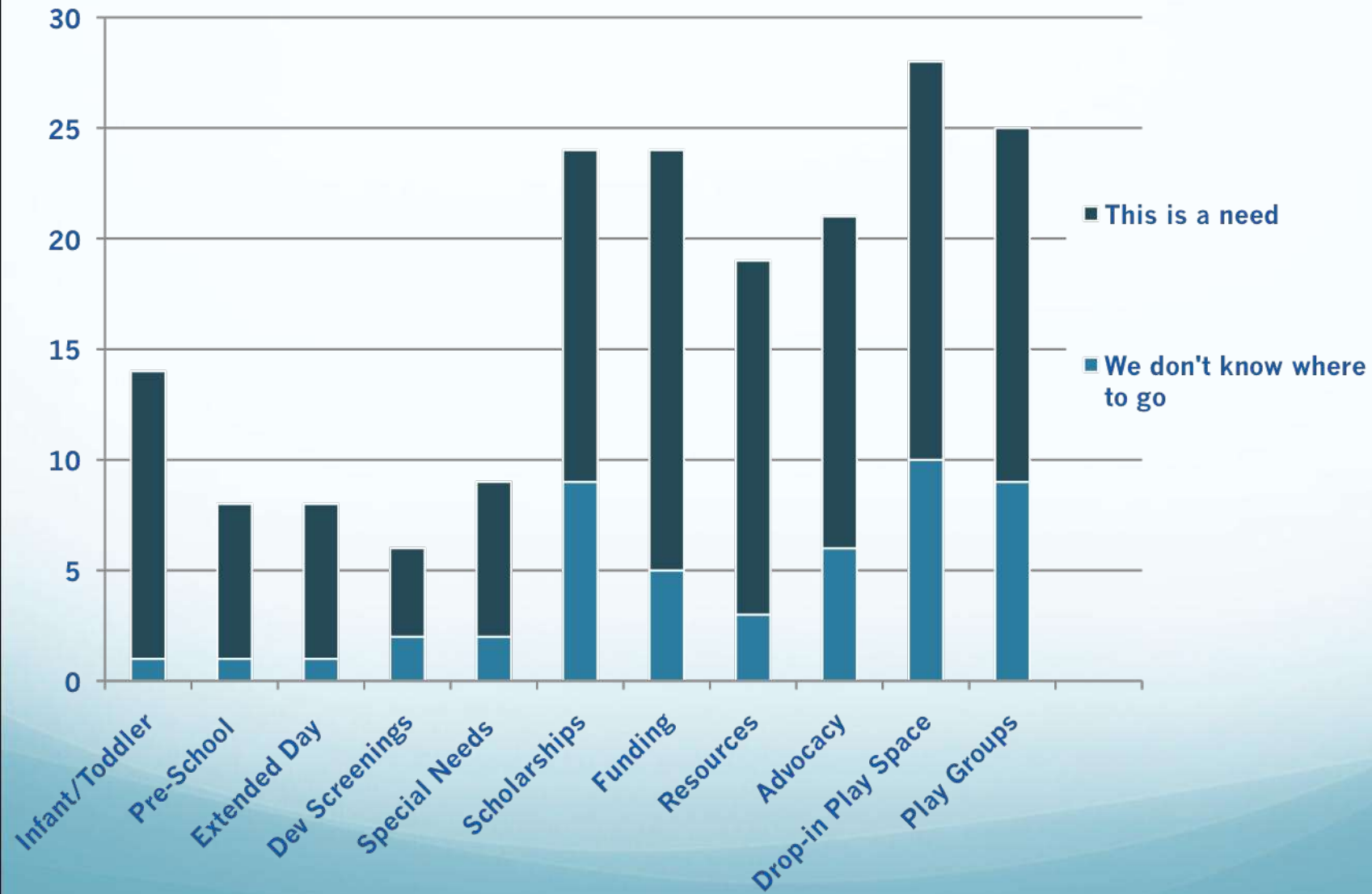
How do you manage those you are unable to serve?



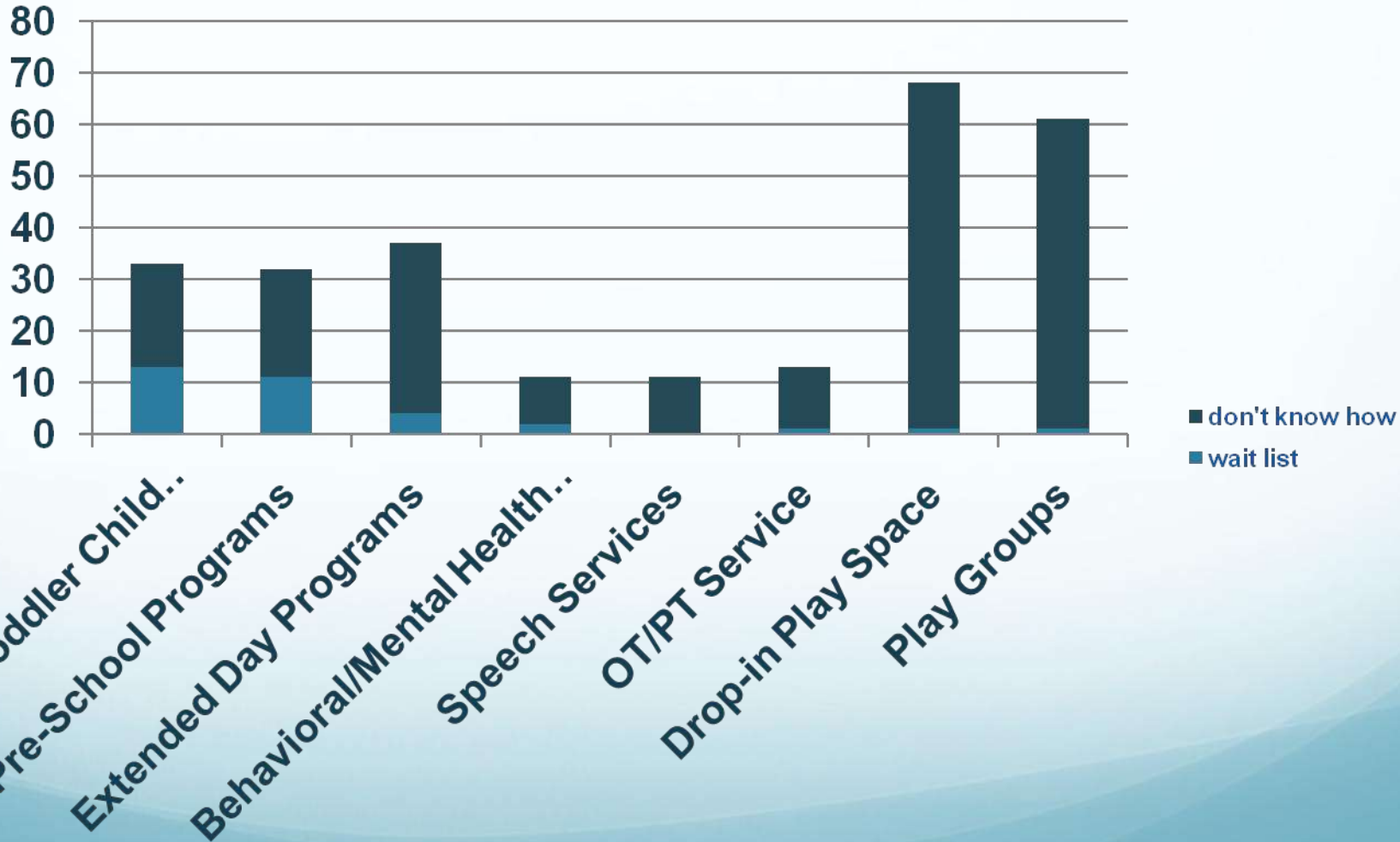
Early Childhood Services



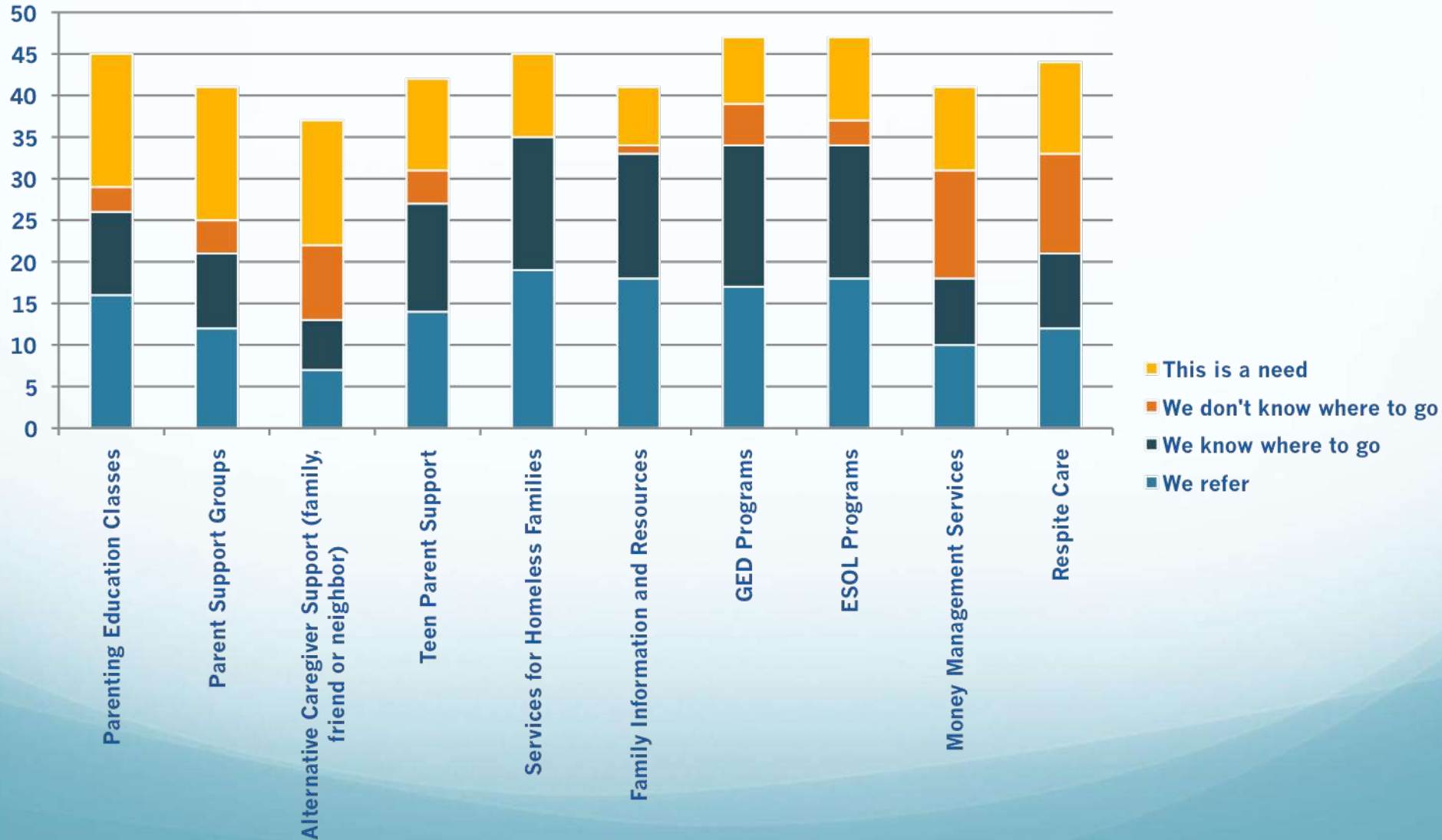
Early Childhood Services



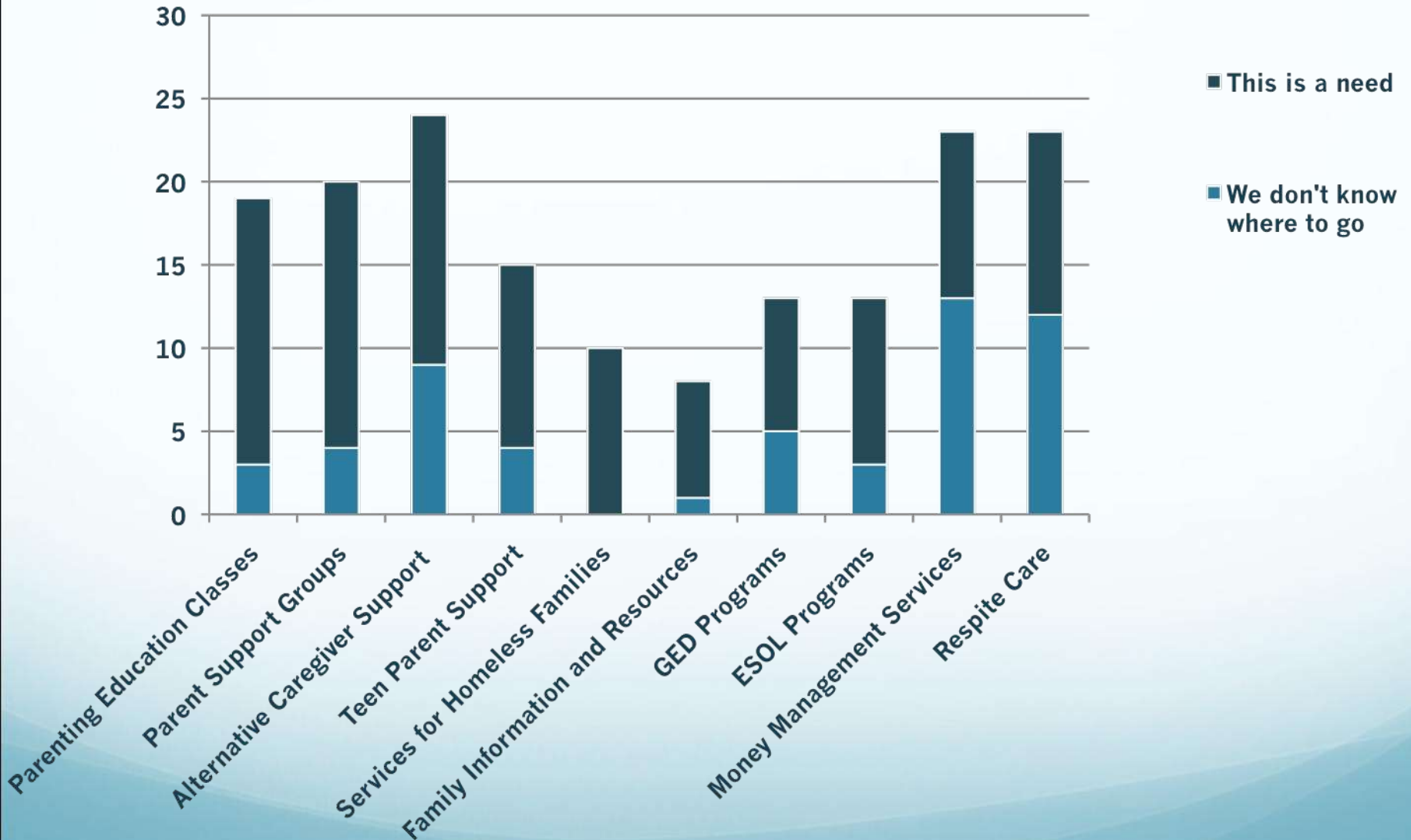
Early Childhood Services Parent Survey



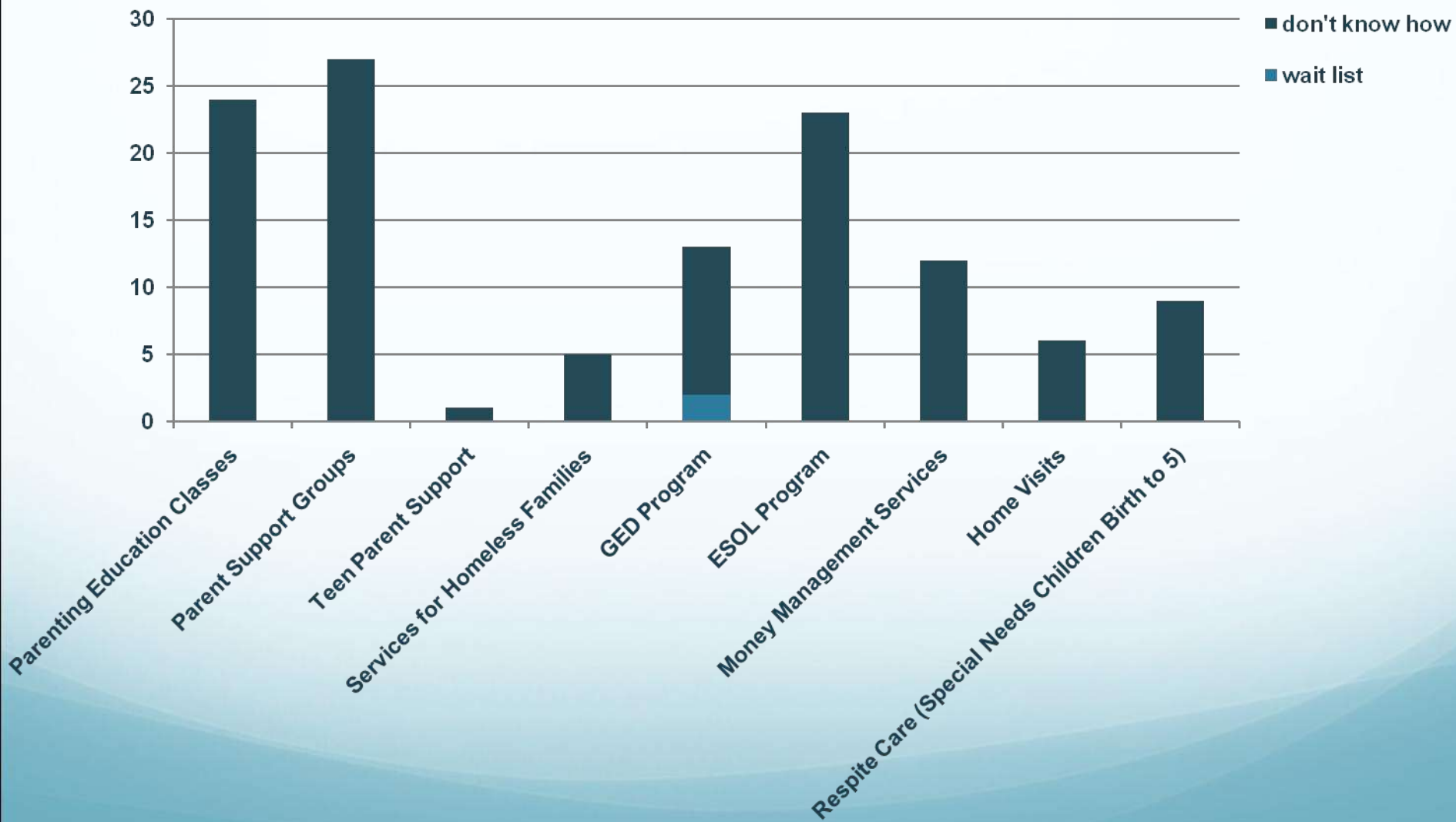
Family Support



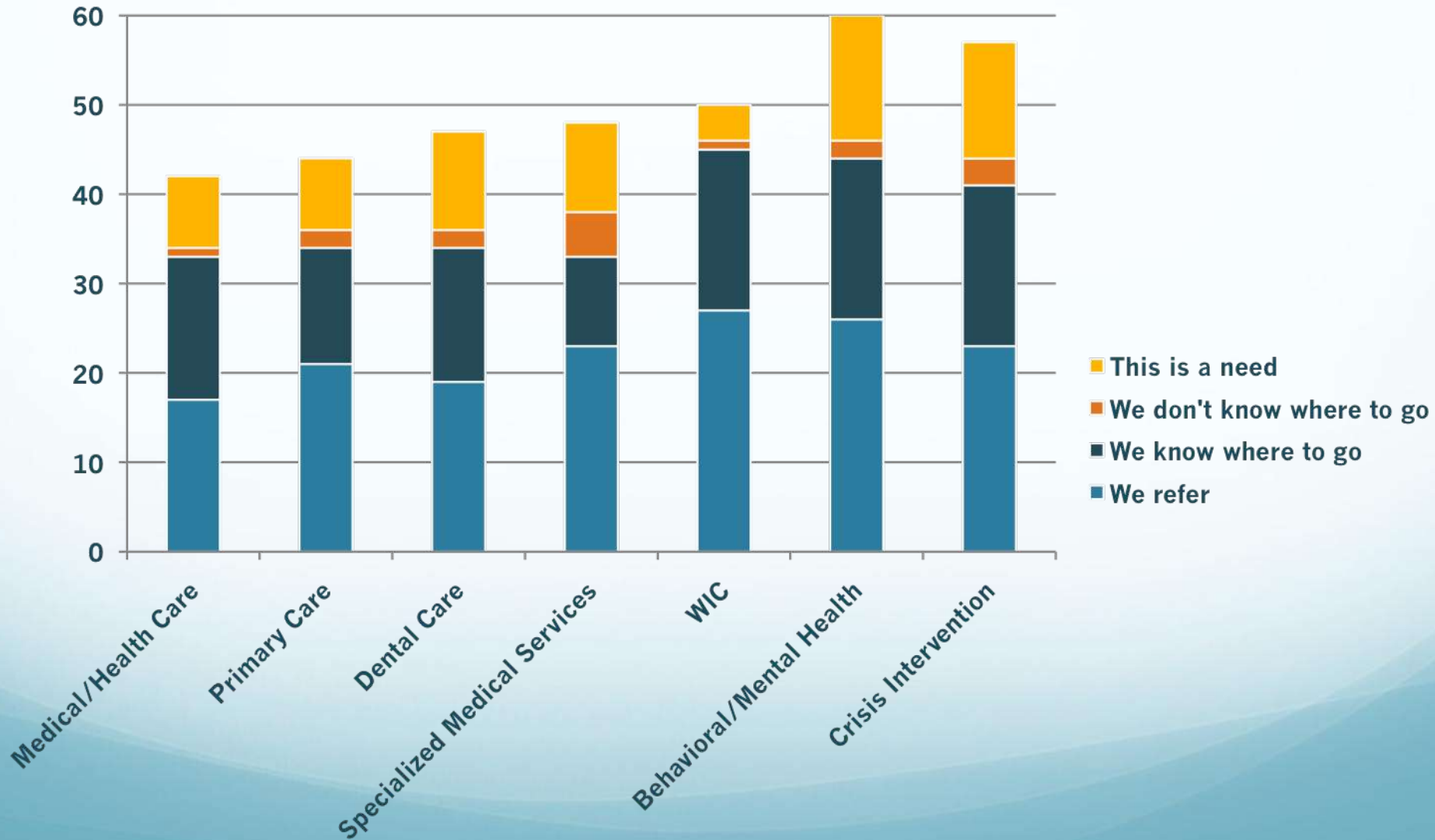
Family Support



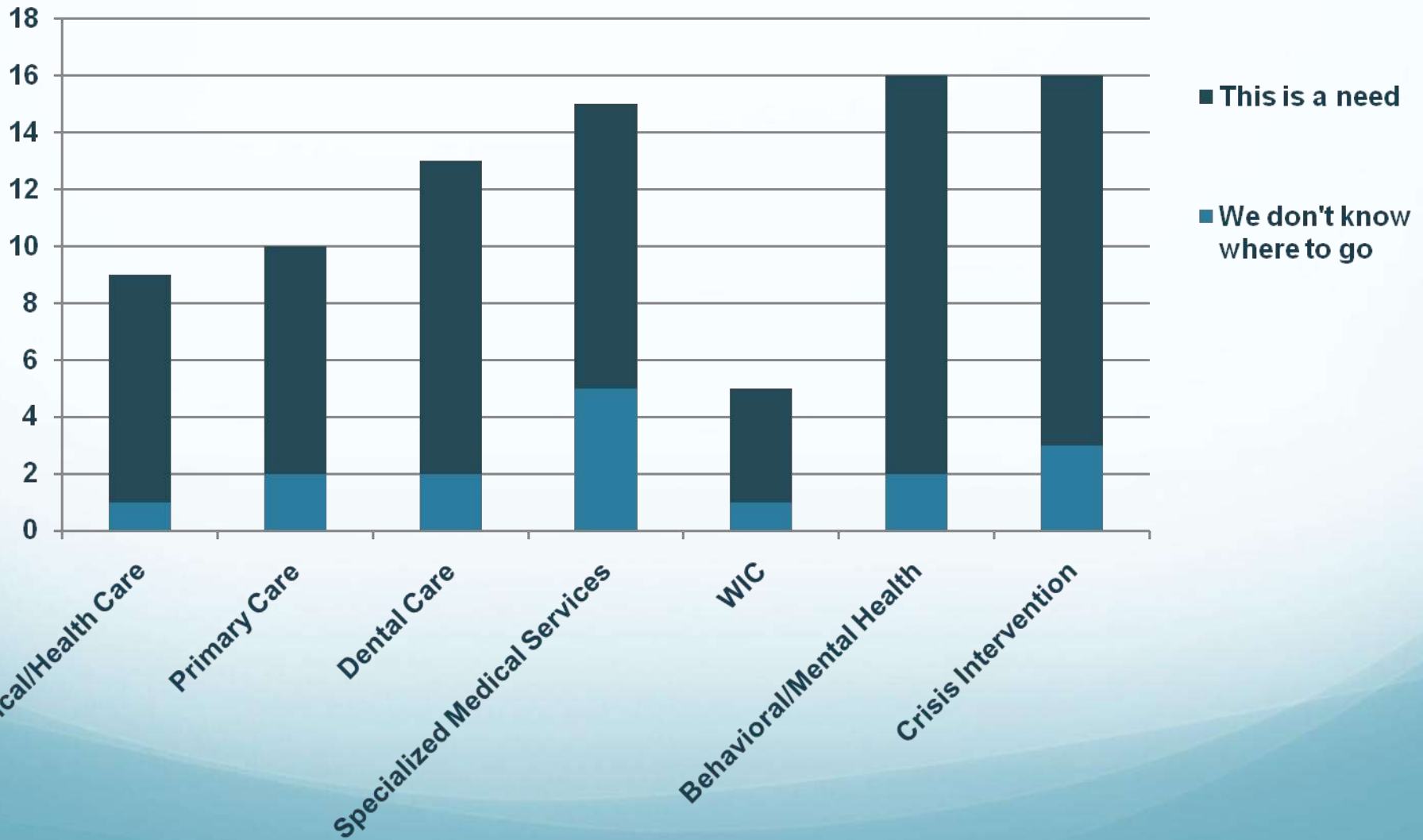
Family Support- Parent



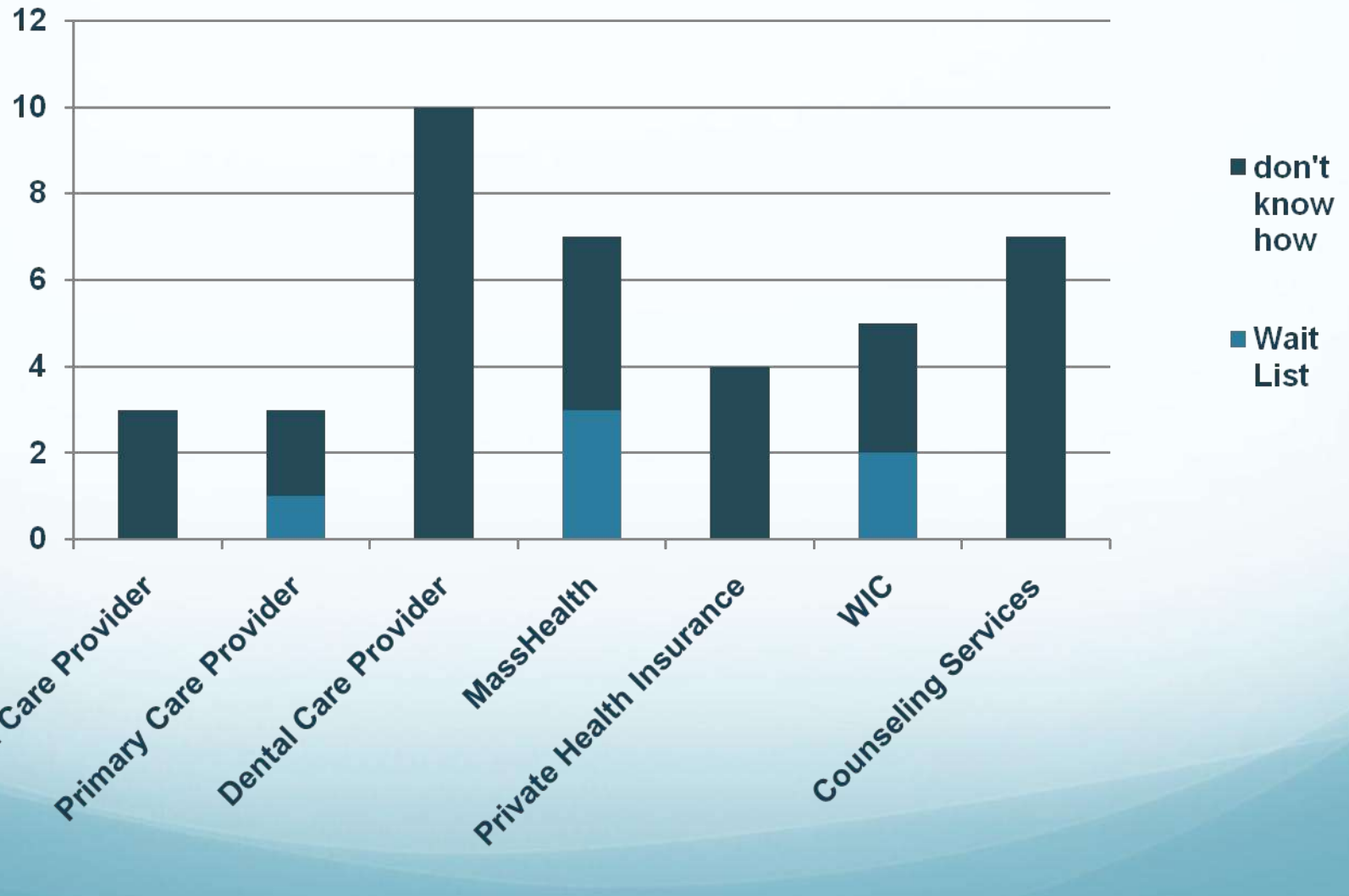
Health



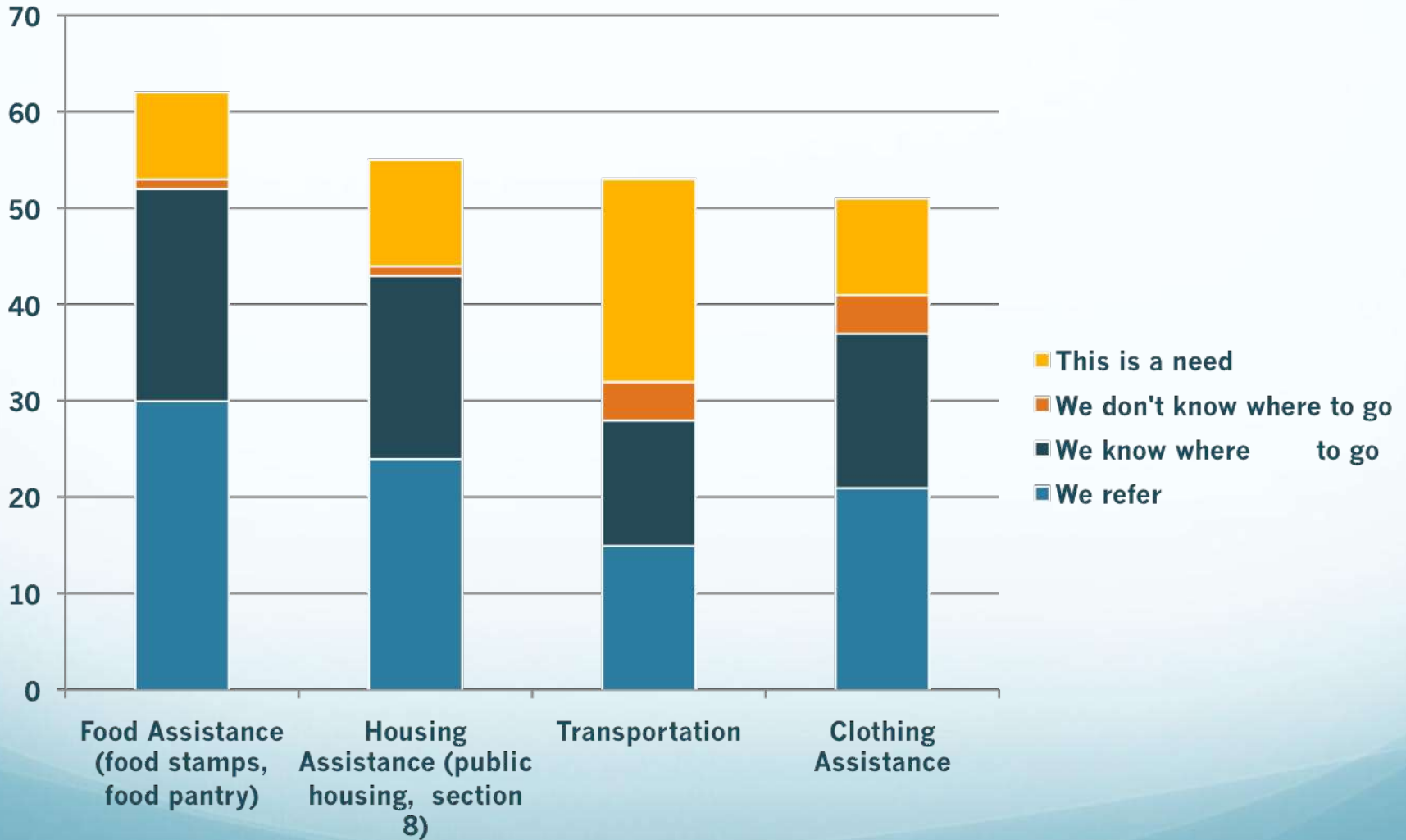
Health



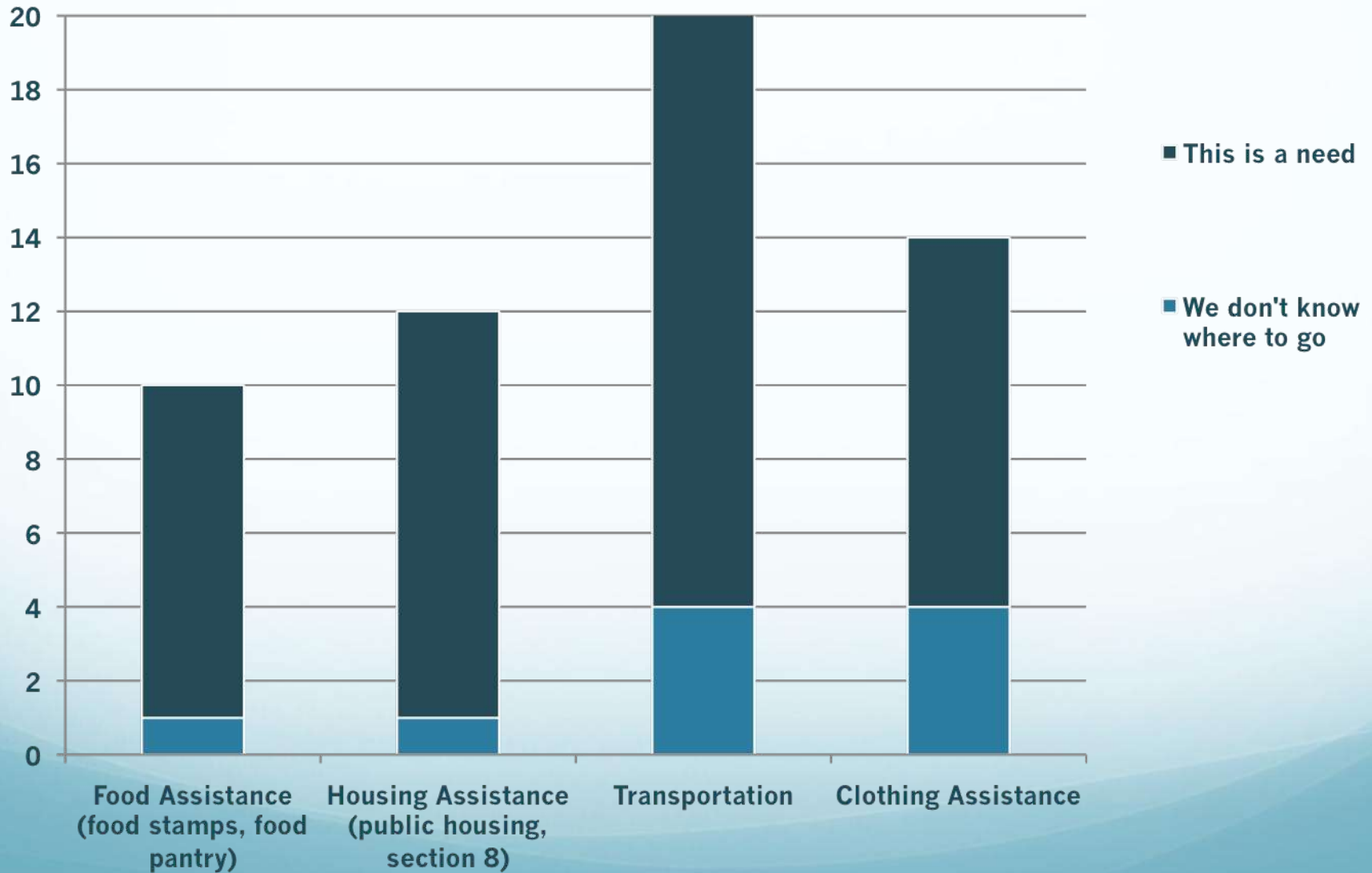
Health- Parents



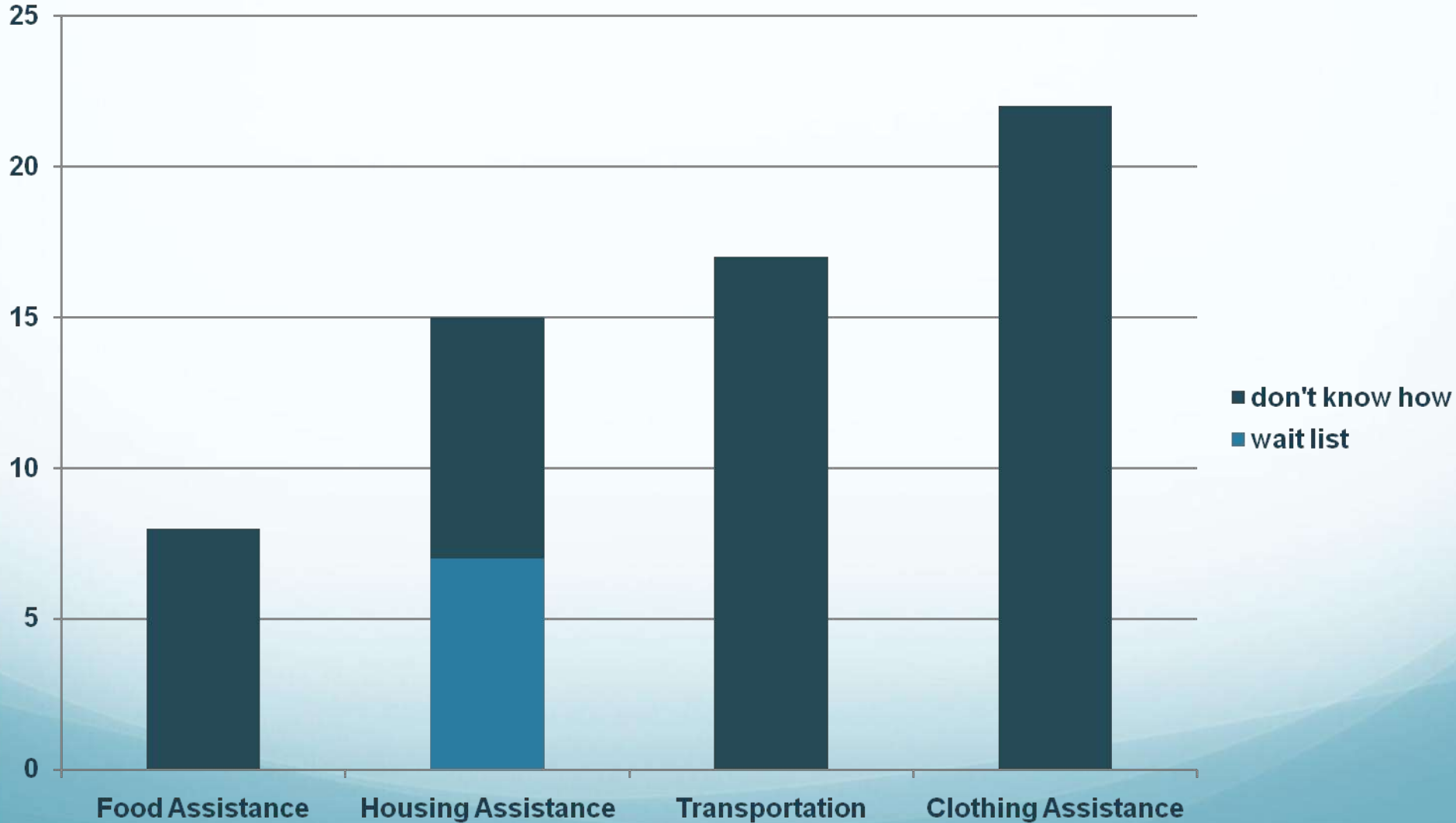
Basic Needs



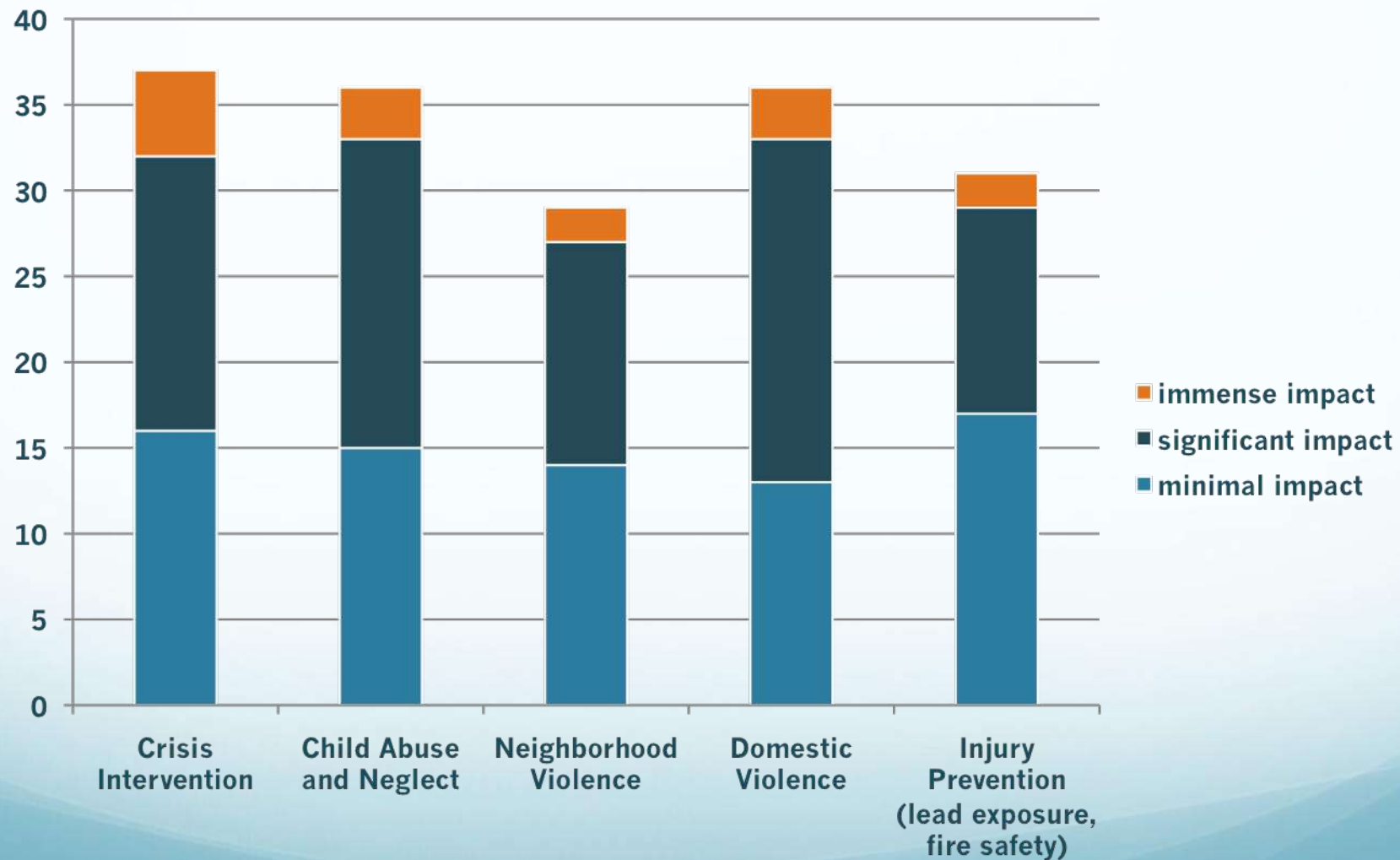
Basic Needs



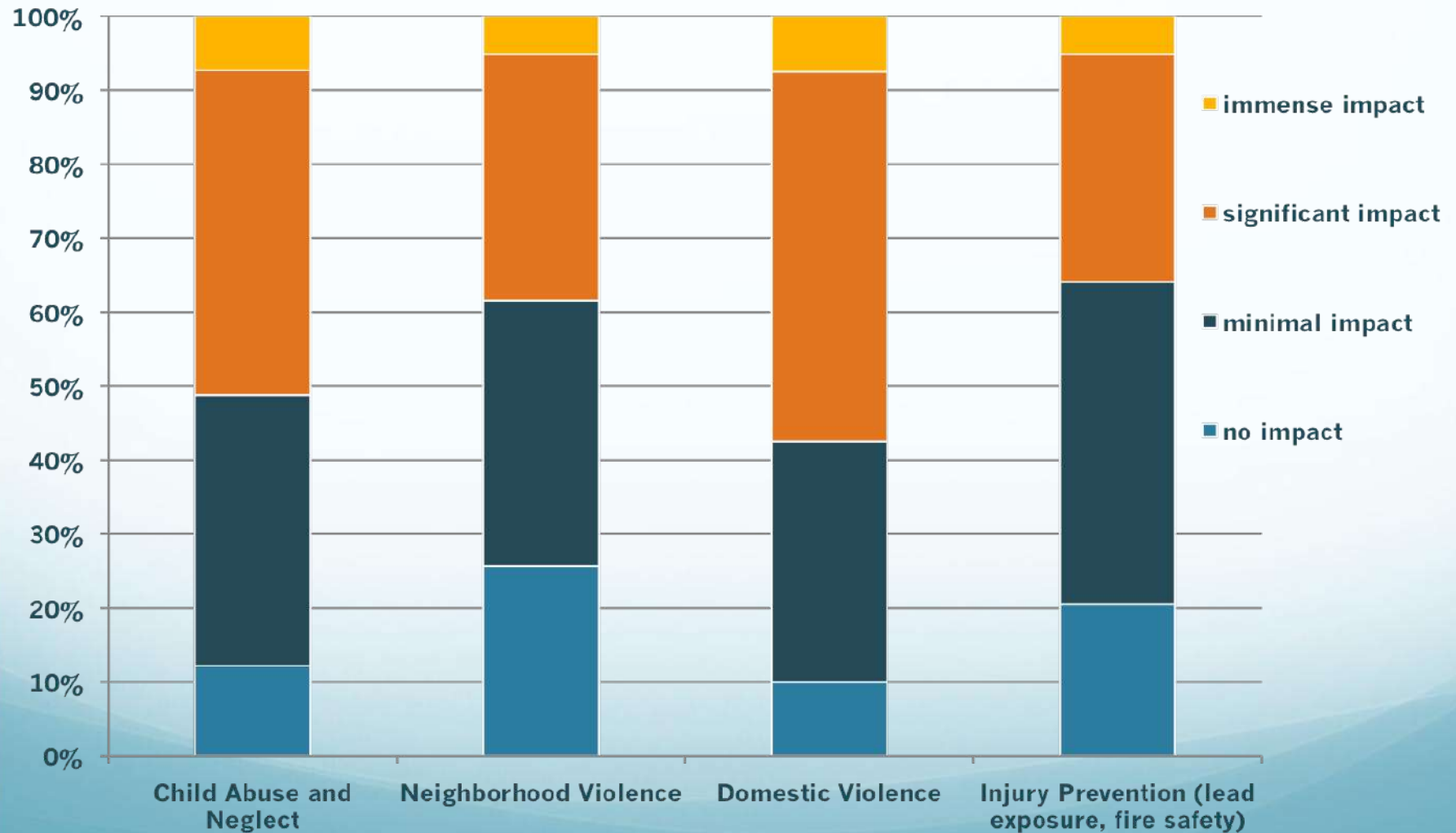
Basic Needs Parent



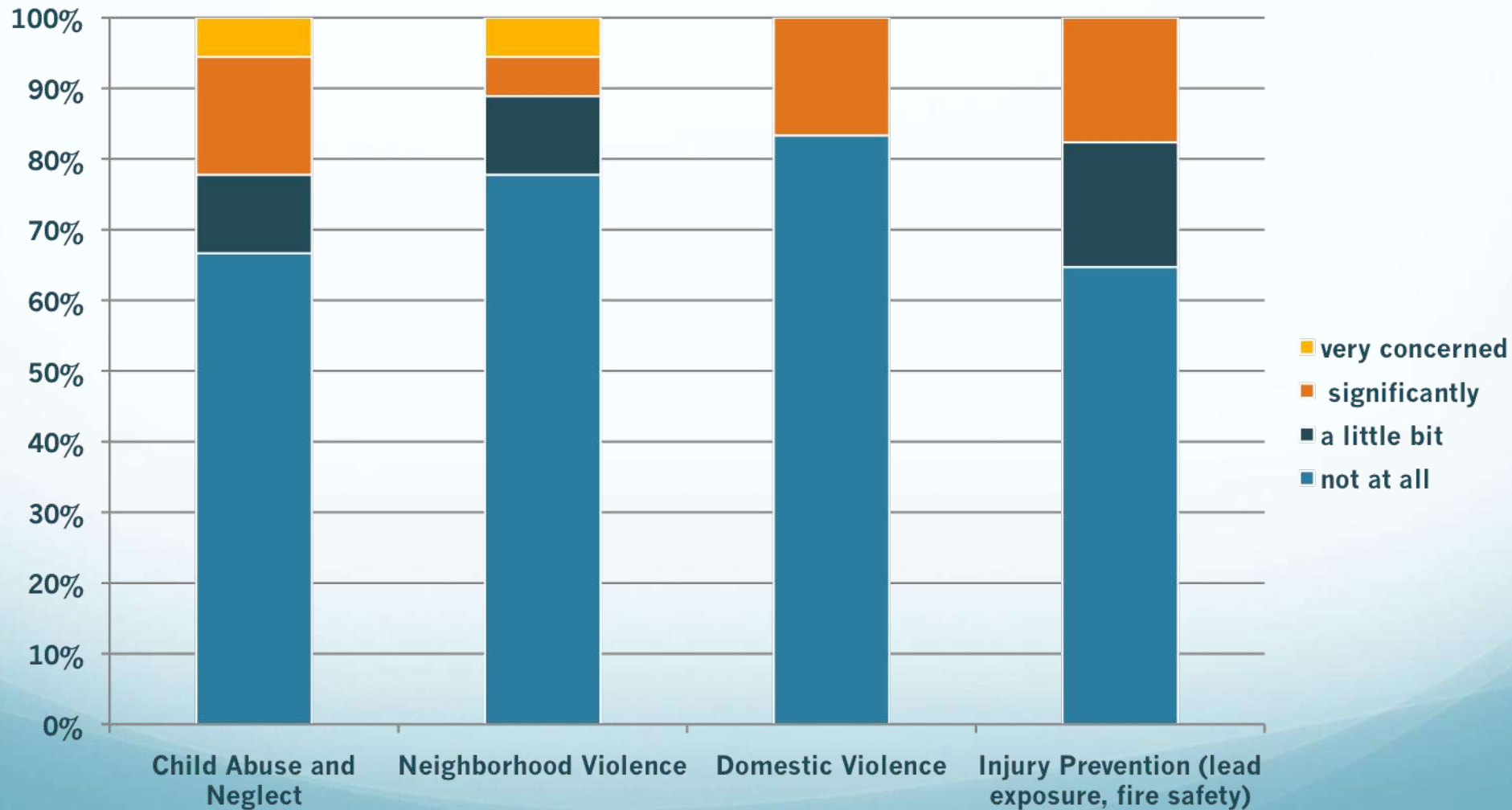
Safety Issues in families with children under six



Provider Perceptions of Safety



Combined Parent Perceptions of Safety



Community Provider Comments

What are the top three things the Alliance should focus on?

- **Increasing availability of affordable quality child care was mentioned 17 times, with two saying bilingual services are important**
- **Resource Coordination; one place to go to network for all services families need was mentioned 10 times**
- **Financial assistance for families, parent education and community playgroups and informal play spaces followed**

Community Interviews

Who we interviewed:

- **Early Childhood Education and Care Providers**
- **Social Workers working with families with young children**
- **Health Care providers; Pedi Clinic and Framingham Community Health Center**
- **Targeted Services; Early Intervention, Bethany Hill School**
- **Faith Community Leaders**
- **Resource and Referral Providers; Kids Care, Human Services Coordinator, Library, United Way of Tri County**

What's Working

- **Strong collaboration between providers, built on long term relationships, EC professionals have a real commitment to working together**
 - **Parent to Parent support; helping each other connect to the right resource**
 - **Health Care in MA is improving, MassHealth and Child Safety Net, more primary care, better communication between Pedi's and providers**
 - **BU Dental Program, Child Mental Health Access Program- MCHCF funding**
 - **Kids Care Connection, links to health resources, very valuable**
 - **EI Transitional Planning Conference model, new but having a good impact**
- “When families are able to make a good connection, it works”*

Challenges in your role as a service provider

- Availability of affordable quality child care and early childhood education
 - Families are increasingly stressed, no time, limited resources, many aren't eligible, but right on the edge
 - Parent's understanding of Early Childhood Development, unrealistic expectations
 - Transportation, basic needs issues, food and nutrition
 - Access to MH services for small children
 - Connecting the pieces of the system together, transitions and referrals, one central place
 - Isolated families, due to work schedules, culture and language, how do we make the system work for all our families?
 - Lack of free or low cost community based playgroups and play spaces
- "We're all building our own paths"*

Barriers to Engagement for Families

- **Affordability of Early Childhood Services, \$ for tuition support/vouchers**
- **Still don't know how to access needed services, too many doors to navigate**
- **Trust in the system, stigma in accessing services, for some undocumented status, feeling judged, stereotypes**
- **More and more families are on the edge, due to the economic downturn**
- **More mobility in housing, families moving a lot**
- **Priorities on meeting basic needs, food, shelter**

"Well, you can't blame the parents, they need food, and a home and safety before they can think about other things, like getting their young child ready for school in the next two years."
- **Cultural responsiveness, understanding of minority cultures**

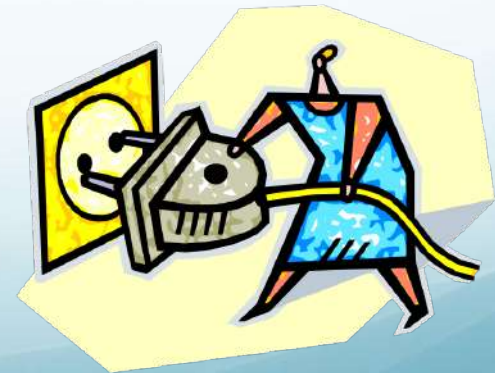
"I want to send my child to a school where the other students and staff look like me, and where our family values are understood"

Assets and Resources

- Tend to be spread out, here and there, hard to keep up to date
- Boys and Girls Club, for 6 and above is terrific and affordable
- BU Dental Program, Child Mental Health Access Program, Shaken Baby Syndrome outreach works
- CHIP, MassHEALTH, WIC, Headstart, safety net programs
- A few pockets of playgroups*
- Latino Health Outreach
- Legal Assistance, Kids Care Connection
- Voices against Violence
- Free Medical Clinics
- Framingham Health Center great resource, understand MH and behavioral issues

Where else do you connect?

- Teen Pregnancy Coalition
- Stand for Children
- MWMC Children's Health Fair
- Advisory Councils for Head Start
- Families First-Bethany Hill
- Child Access Project
- FPS Meetings with Psychologists, Guidance and Nurses
- Mental Health Substance Abuse Disparities Project (MCHCF)
- Faith Community Leaders Summit at Mass Bay



If you could change one thing?

“It shouldn’t be so hard”

- Fix the broken voucher system!
- Better coordination, one central place to connect people to services
- Pool resources to ensure the highest priority families get what they need
- Pool Local Professional Development
- Integrate MH services into natural environments
- Strengthen legislative advocacy efforts
- What **can** we do at the community level?

“It ought to be easier”

Practical Solutions

Build on informal supports:

- **Babysitter Co-op**
- **Pool Child Care Scholarships**
- **Map the available community play spaces to increase options and build on existing resources**

Help Families Navigate:

- **Engage elderly volunteers to help research resources**
- **Pool resource guides, have one family friendly, updated, easily accessible on-line guide**

Assist in managing transitions:

- **Build bridges of support across transitions, from home to program, Pediatrician to provider, EI to preschool, from preschool to Kindergarten**
- **Use informal support networks, build parent to parent empowerment network**
- **Work through culturally responsive brokers to build connections with and outreach to isolated, underserved families**

Share Professional Development Resources:

- **Coordinate calendar**
- **Reach out to informal providers**



Questions?

Facilitated Discussion

“Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win”

- **Take a few minutes to jot down your responses to the following question:**
- *What are some practical, short term solutions, activities or initiatives the Early Childhood Alliance could engage in to address the issues raised in the Needs Assessment?*
- **Find the group you’ve been assigned to and develop a priority list of 5 to 7 consensus answers. Write them on the provided large sticky notes**

Next Steps

- **The development of an active engaged Leadership Council**
- **Re-application to EEC for CFCE Funding**
- **Work towards a centrally located site to coordinate resources and referrals for the Framingham community**
- **Continue advocacy efforts to increase affordable quality child care/early childhood education**
- **Your thoughts?**



EARLY CHILDHOOD ALLIANCE

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Framingham, MA

Thank You!

How to contact us:

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