



# Wisconsin's Annual Elder Abuse and Neglect Report: 2020

A statewide summary of reports submitted by Wisconsin counties

Division of Public Health  
P-00124-21 (05/2021)



# Introduction: The Annual Elder Abuse and Neglect Report

In Wisconsin, county agencies receive elder 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 elder adults at risk and help ensure their safety.

After responding to a referral, 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 reports from 2020 are the basis of this statewide report: *Wisconsin's Annual Elder Abuse and Neglect Report*.



# 2020 Annual Report

This report documents and summarizes reported incidents in Wisconsin, providing information about:

- The types of abuse and neglect reported.
- The characteristics of elder adults at risk and alleged abusers.
- The local responses that guide the state's efforts to stop elder abuse.

Allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of individuals living in licensed facilities are generally addressed by the Department of Health Services' Office of Caregiver Quality, which is located in the Division of Quality Assurance (DQA).



# Your Role in Reporting Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Older Adults

Wisconsin has made great strides in identifying and protecting elders. 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 elder adult at risk (ages 60 and older).

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



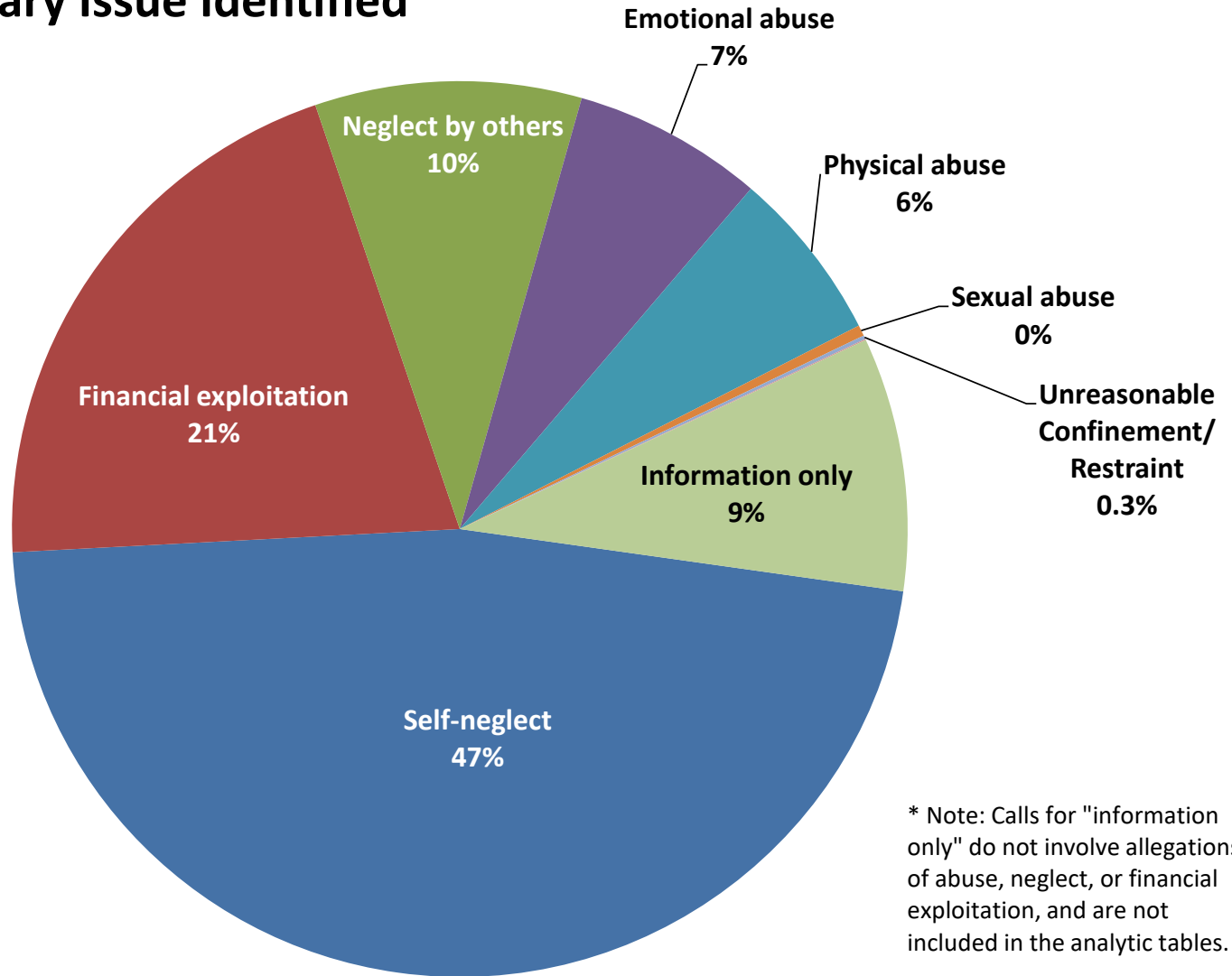
### Primary Reason for Call/Issue Identified

	Number	Percent
Self-neglect	4,896	47.0%
Financial exploitation	2,148	20.6%
Neglect by others	1,003	9.6%
Emotional abuse	717	6.9%
Physical abuse	650	6.2%
Sexual abuse	41	0.4%
Unreasonable confinement or restraint	14	0.1%
Treatment without consent	4	0.0%
<i>Information only</i>	955	9.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,428</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





<b>Previous Report on This Individual?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	5,754	60.7%
Yes	2,873	30.3%
Unknown	846	8.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



<b>Where Incident Occurred</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Place of residence	8,159	86.1%
Other place	1,206	12.7%
Place of employment or day services	71	0.7%
School	17	0.2%
Transportation	20	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

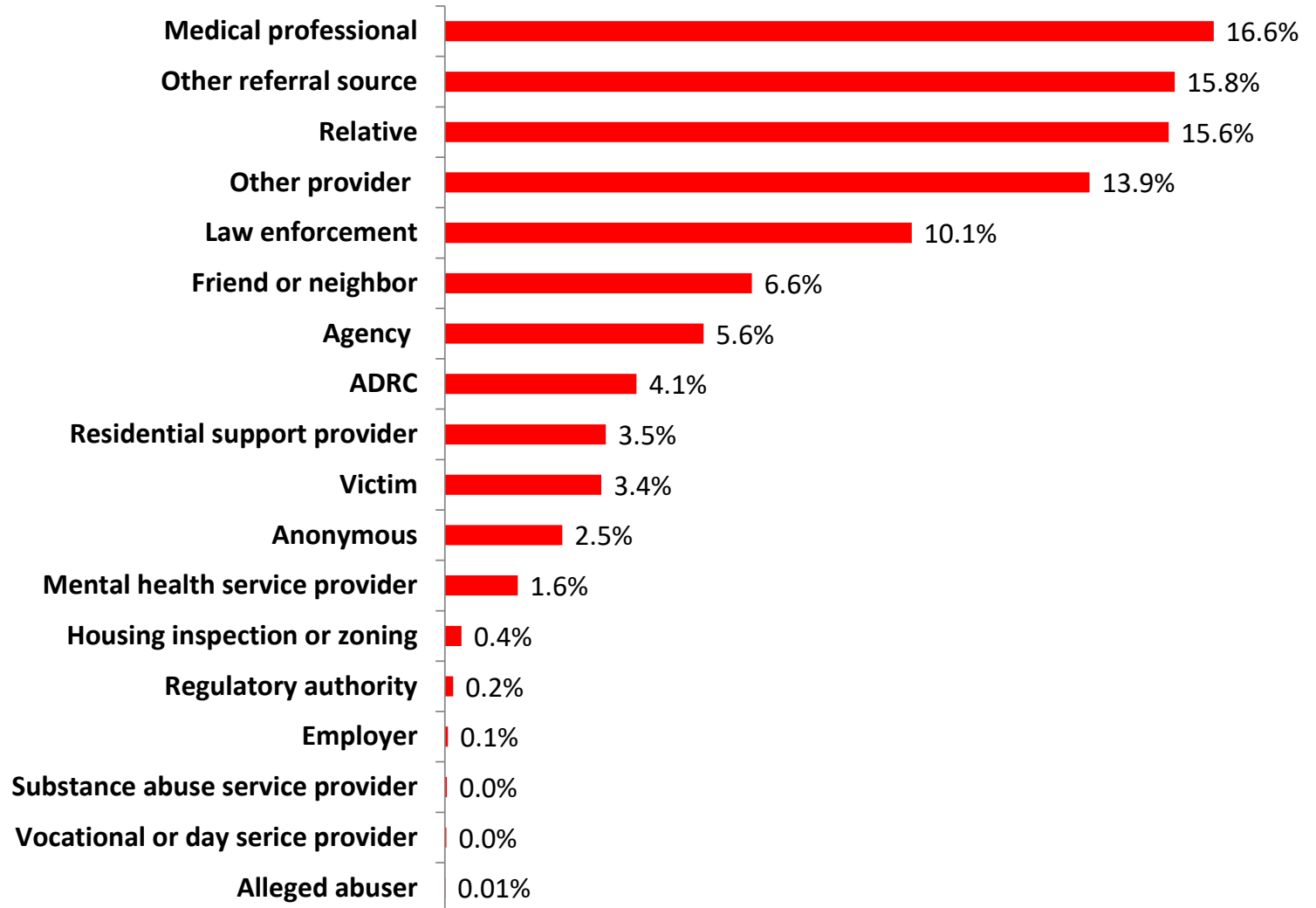




<b>Referral Source</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Medical professional	1,573	16.6%
Other referral source	1,493	15.8%
Relative	1,481	15.6%
Other provider	1,319	13.9%
Law enforcement	955	10.1%
Friend or neighbor	628	6.6%
Agency	529	5.6%
ADRC	392	4.1%
Residential support provider	329	3.5%
Victim	320	3.4%
Anonymous	240	2.5%
Mental health service provider	149	1.6%
Housing inspection or zoning	34	0.4%
Regulatory authority	17	0.2%
Employer	6	0.1%
Substance abuse service provider	4	0.0%
Vocational or day service provider	3	0.0%
Alleged abuser	1	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Referral Source

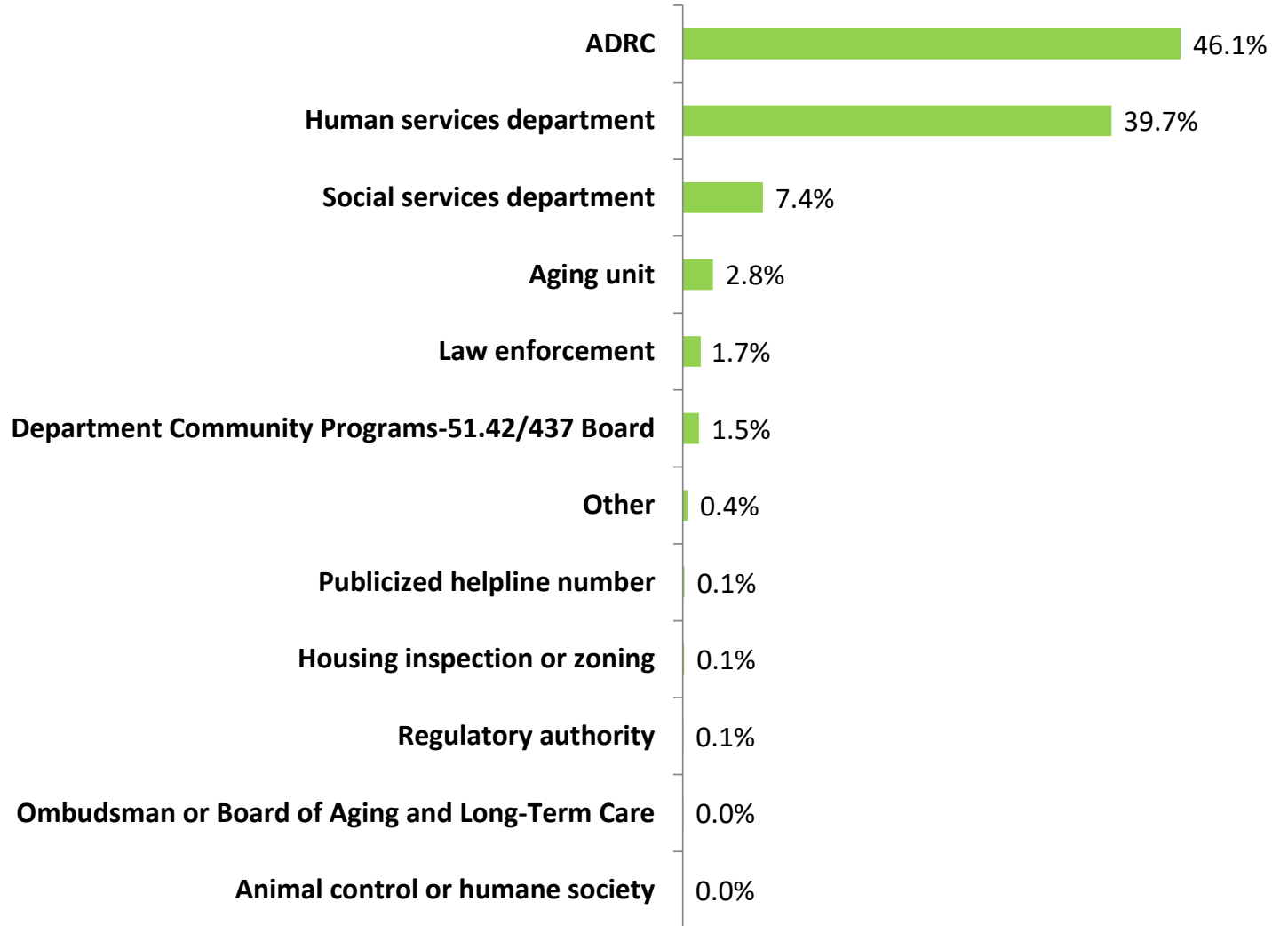




<b>Call Received By:</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
ADRC	4,368	46.1%
Human services department	3,761	39.7%
Social services department	702	7.4%
Aging unit	264	2.8%
Law enforcement	158	1.7%
Department Community Programs-51.42/437 Board	142	1.5%
Other	41	0.4%
Publicized helpline number	14	0.1%
Housing inspection or zoning	11	0.1%
Regulatory authority	5	0.1%
Ombudsman or Board of Aging and Long-Term Care	4	0.0%
Animal control or humane society	2	0.0%
Developmental disability board	1	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>0.0%</b>



### Call Received By:

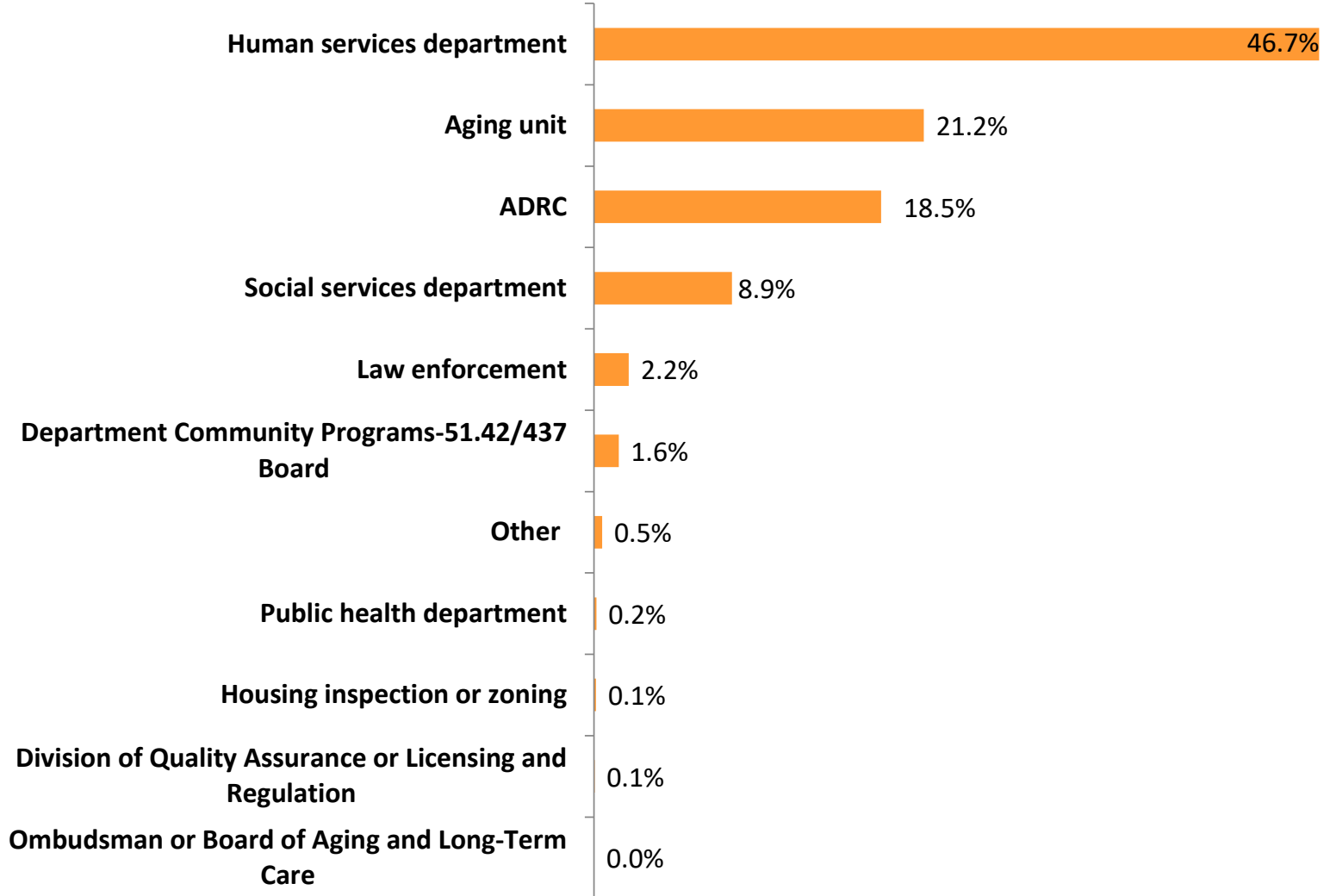




<b>Initial Investigating Agency</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Human services department	4,420	46.7%
Aging unit	2,011	21.2%
ADRC	1,750	18.5%
Social services department	842	8.9%
Law enforcement	212	2.2%
Department Community Programs-51.42/437 Board	152	1.6%
Other	50	0.5%
Public health department	15	0.2%
Housing inspection or zoning	13	0.1%
Division of Quality Assurance or Licensing and Regulation	5	0.1%
Ombudsman or Board of Aging and Long-Term Care	2	0.0%
Animal control or humane society	1	0.0%
Developmental Disability Board	0	0.0%
Wisconsin Department of Justice	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



### Initial Investigating Agency





<b>Was Incident Life Threatening?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	8,133	85.9%
Yes	605	6.4%
Unknown	735	7.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<b>Has Elder Adult at Risk Died?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	460	76.0%
Yes	139	23.0%
Unknown	6	1.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Note: Percents represent share of all life-threatening incidents.</i>		

<b>Was Death Related to the Incident?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	52	37.4%
Yes	57	41.0%
Unknown	30	21.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Note: Percents represent share of all incidents involving a death.</i>		

<b>Was Death Directly Caused by Incident?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	17	29.8%
Yes	29	50.9%
Unknown	11	19.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Note: Percents represent share of all incidents with death related to incident.</i>		



<b>Elder Adult at Risk's Age</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
60-69 years	3,071	32.4%
70-79 years	3,179	33.6%
80-89 years	2,440	25.8%
90 years or more	783	8.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<b>Elder Adult at Risk's Gender</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Female	5,254	55.5%
Male	4,206	44.4%
Unknown	13	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

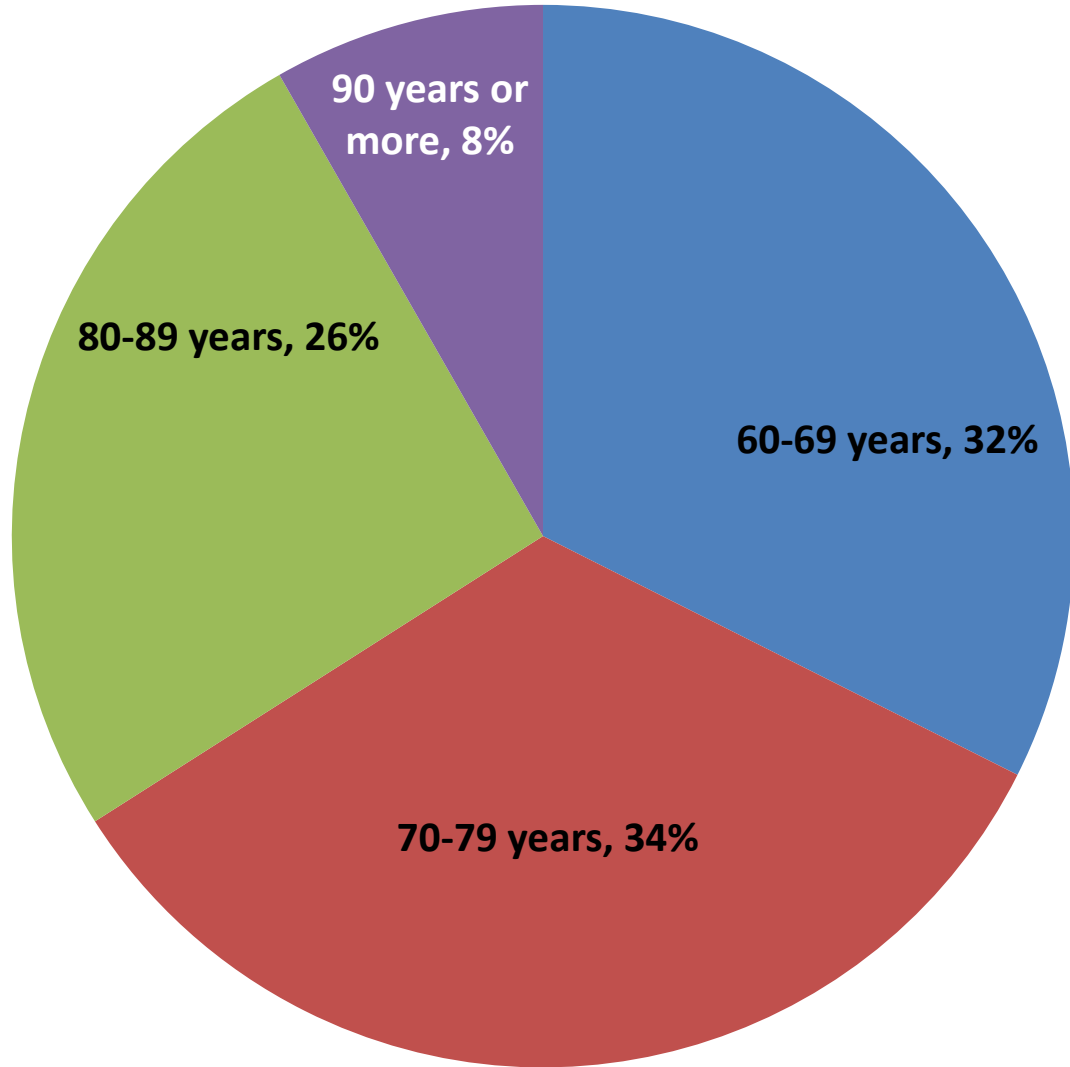
<b>Elder Adult at Risk's Race</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
White	5,467	57.7%
Black or African American	670	7.1%
Native American or Alaska Native	131	1.4%
Asian	26	0.3%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	6	0.1%
Other race	101	1.1%
Not reported or unknown	3,072	32.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*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.*





### Elder Adult at Risk's Age

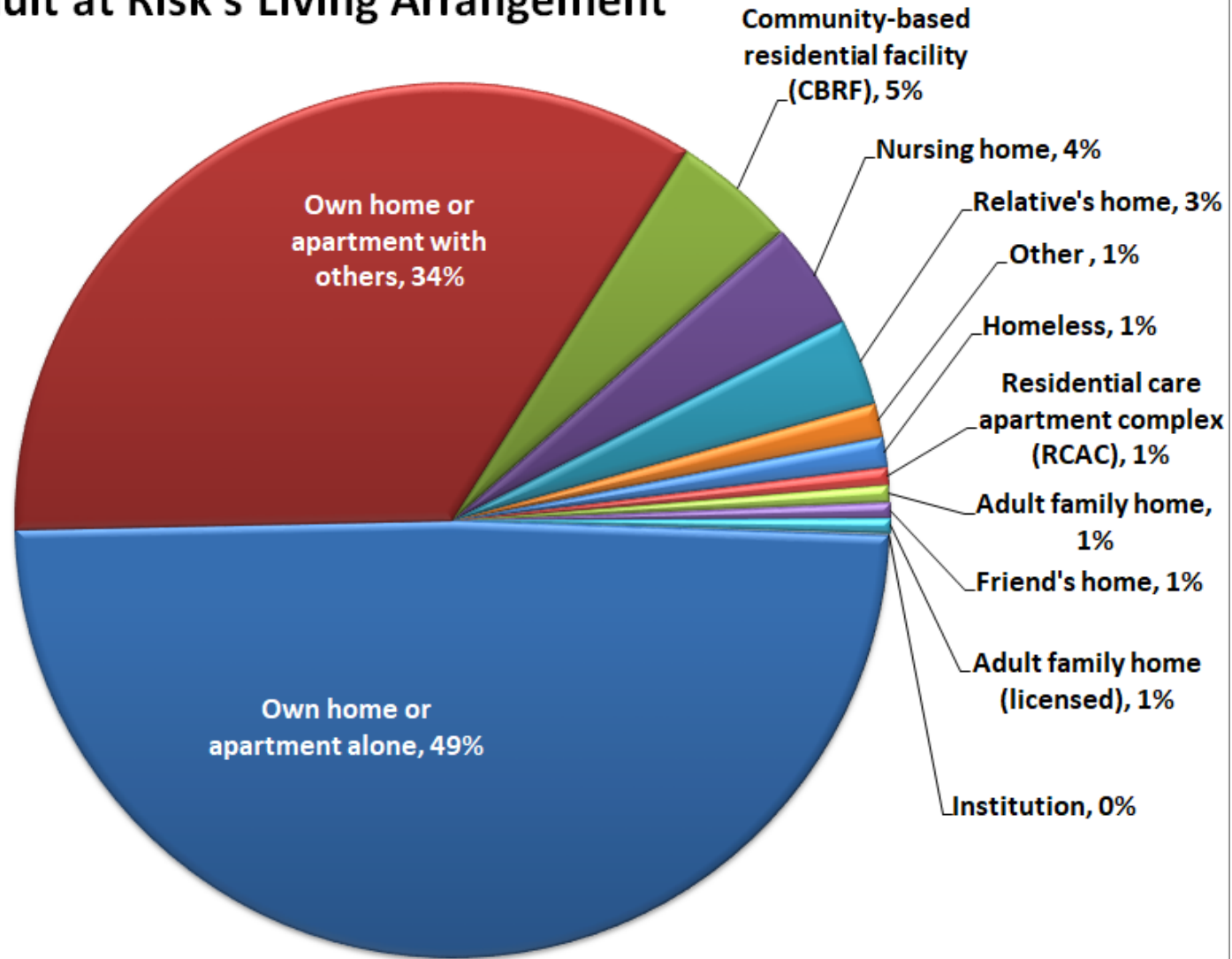




<b>Elder Adult at Risk's Living Arrangement</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Own home or apartment alone	4,652	49.1%
Own home or apartment with others	3,254	34.4%
Community-based residential facility (CBRF)	430	4.5%
Nursing home	374	3.9%
Relative's home	304	3.2%
Other	119	1.3%
Homeless	105	1.1%
Residential care apartment complex (RCAC)	64	0.7%
Adult family home	57	0.6%
Friend's home	54	0.6%
Adult family home (licensed)	51	0.5%
Institution	9	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Elder Adult at Risk's Living Arrangement





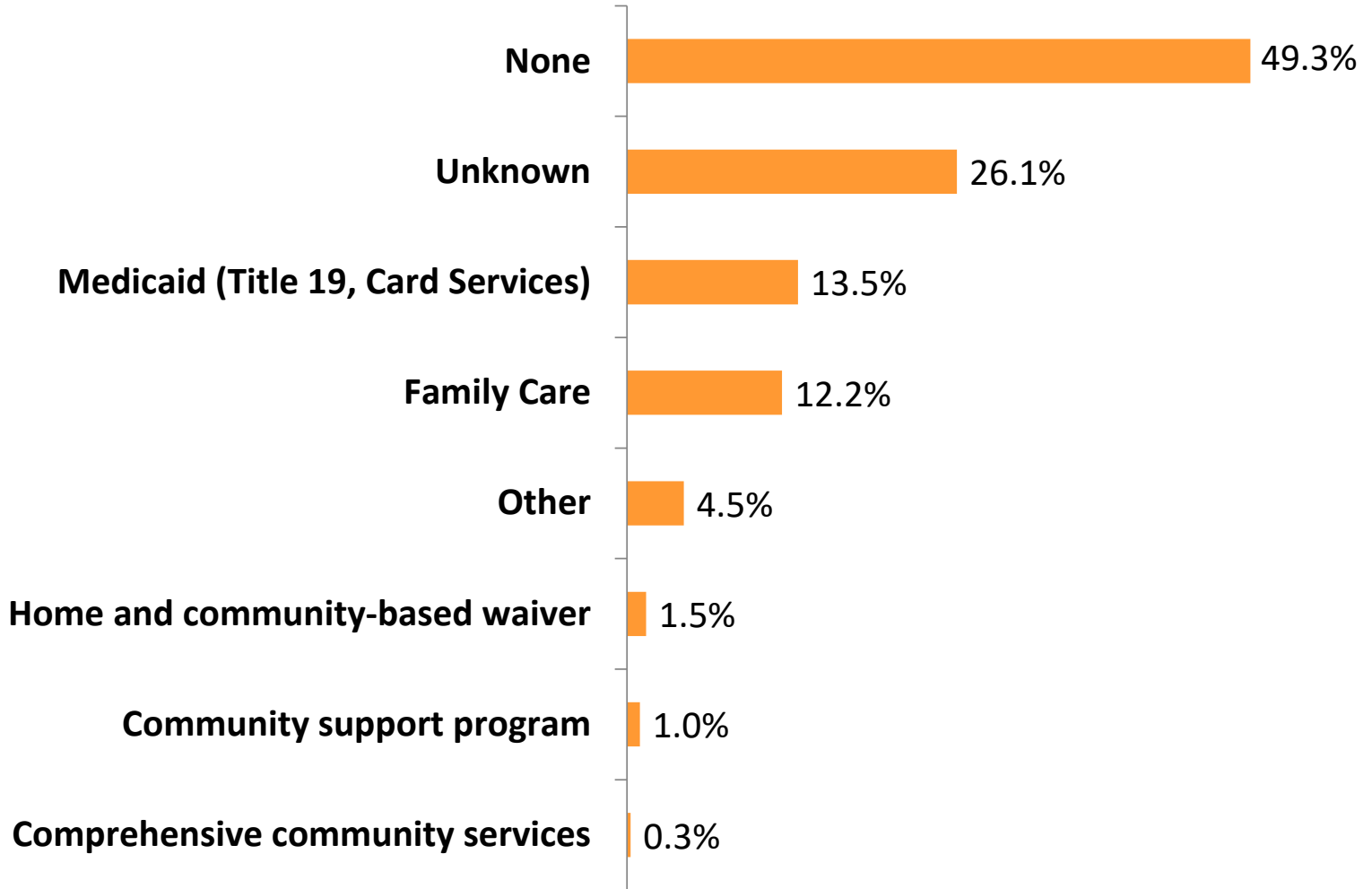
## County and State-funded Programs That Have Served Elder Adults at Risk

	Number	Percent
None	4,668	49.3%
Unknown	2,469	26.1%
Medicaid (Title 19, Card Services)	1,280	13.5%
Family Care	1,160	12.2%
Other	424	4.5%
Home and community-based waiver	143	1.5%
Community support program	95	1.0%
Comprehensive community services	27	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Note: Elder Adult at Risk may be served by more than one program, so sum does not equal 100%.*



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





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

	Number	Percent
No	4,057	42.8%
Yes	3,057	32.3%
Unknown	2,359	24.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

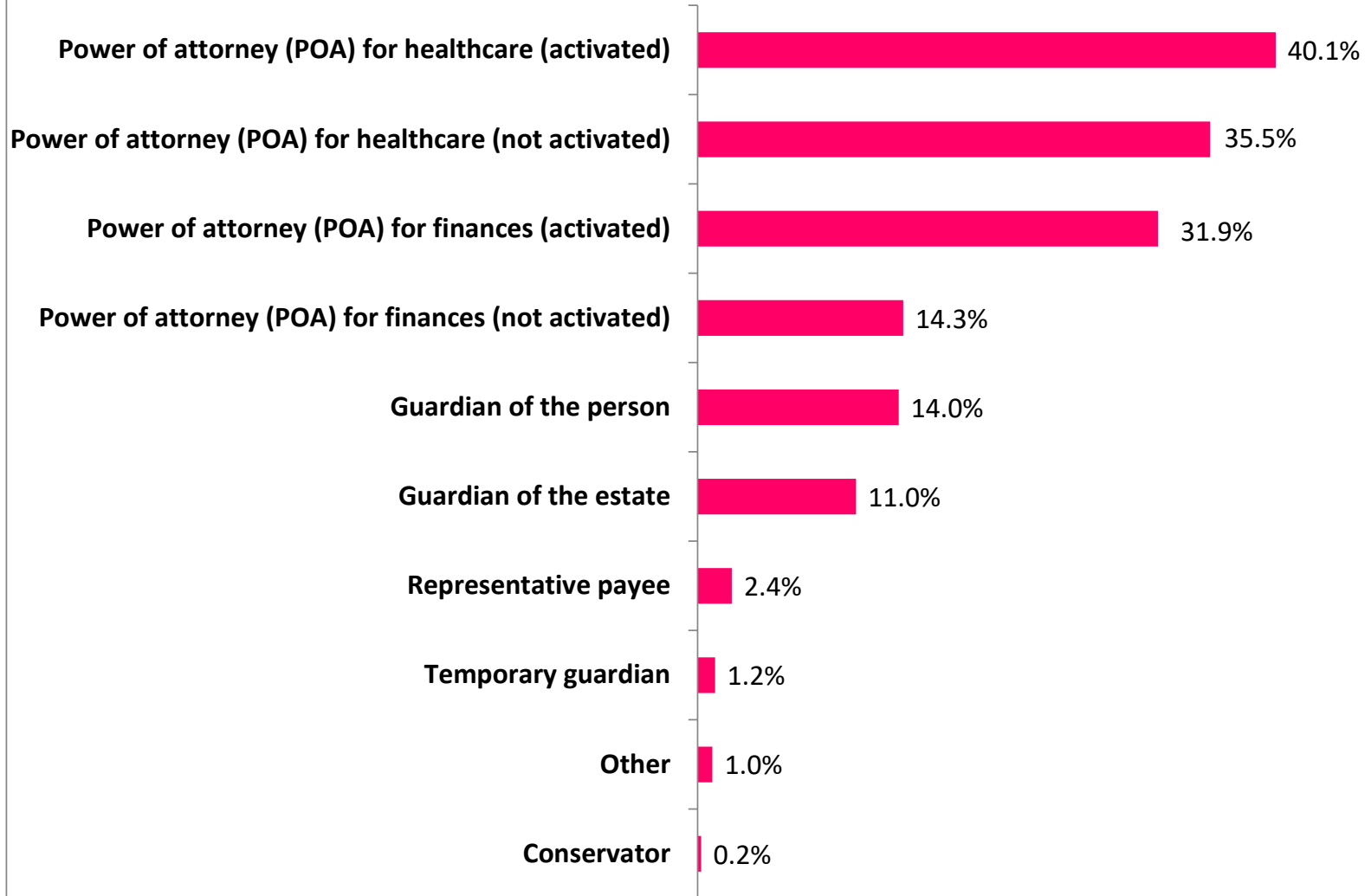
### Type(s) of Substitute Decision-Maker

	Number	Percent
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (activated)	1,287	40.1%
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (not activated)	1,141	35.5%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (activated)	1,025	31.9%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (not activated)	458	14.3%
Guardian of the person	448	14.0%
Guardian of the estate	353	11.0%
Representative payee	76	2.4%
Temporary guardian	39	1.2%
Other	33	1.0%
Conservator	8	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,057</b>	<b>95.2%</b>

*Percents represent share of all those with any kind of substitute decision-maker (n=3,057). Multiple responses are allowed, so percents do not total 100%.*



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





<b>Elder Adult at Risk's Characteristics</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Frail elderly	3,625	38.3%
Dementia	2,222	23.5%
None of the listed characteristics	1,587	16.8%
Mobility impaired	1,270	13.4%
Medically fragile	1,202	12.7%
Disoriented and confused	1,012	10.7%
Mental illness	1,010	10.7%
Other medical condition	715	7.5%
Physical disability	638	6.7%
Alcohol abuse	571	6.0%
Diabetes	568	6.0%
Homebound	536	5.7%
Challenging or dangerous behavior	509	5.4%
Incontinent	411	4.3%
Stroke-related condition	344	3.6%
Other characteristic	289	3.1%
Chronic mental illness	285	3.0%
Deaf or hard of hearing	230	2.4%
Chronic alcoholic	201	2.1%
Financial dependence: alleged abuser dependent on adult at risk	187	2.0%
Unemployed	176	1.9%
Blind or visually impaired	159	1.7%
Developmental disability	151	1.6%
Morbidly obese	150	1.6%
Brain injury	114	1.2%
Drug abuse	86	0.9%
Financially dependent on abuser	45	0.5%
Communication disorder	43	0.5%
Limited English proficiency	42	0.4%
Functionally illiterate	16	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Percents refer to share of all elder adults at risk having this characteristic. Multiple responses are allowed, so percents do not total 100%.</i>		





### Alleged Abusers' Gender

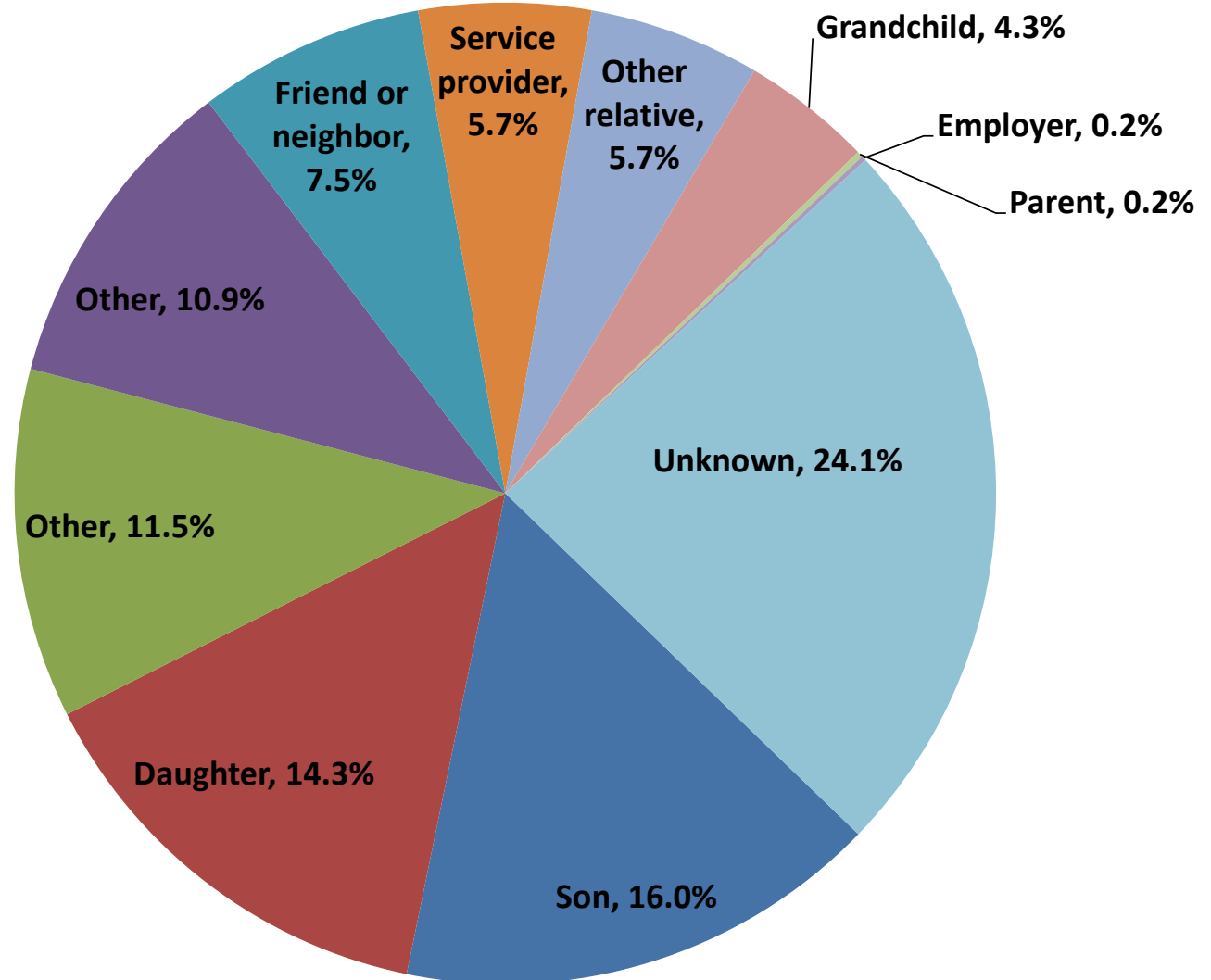
	Number	Percent
Female	1,957	38.1%
Male	2,304	44.9%
Unknown	870	17.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,131</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Alleged Abusers' Relationships to Elder Adult at Risk

	Number	Percent
Son	821	16.0%
Daughter	736	14.3%
Other	591	11.5%
Spouse	543	10.6%
Friend or neighbor	384	7.5%
Service provider	291	5.7%
Other relative	290	5.7%
Grandchild	220	4.3%
Parent	10	0.2%
Employer	8	0.2%
Unknown	1,237	24.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,131</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



### Alleged Abusers' Relationships to Elder Adult at Risk





<b>Do Alleged Abusers Live with Elder Adult at Risk?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	2,869	55.9%
Yes	1,858	36.2%
Unknown	404	7.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,131</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	4,124	80.4%
Yes	1,007	19.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,131</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Alleged Abusers' Legal Status

	Number	Percent
No legal status	2,578	50.2%
Unknown legal status	1,501	29.3%
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (activated)	456	8.9%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (activated)	424	8.3%
Power of attorney (POA) for healthcare (not activated)	259	5.0%
Guardian of the person	128	2.5%
Power of attorney (POA) for finances (not activated)	95	1.9%
Guardian of the estate	86	1.7%
Other legal status	39	0.8%
Representative payee	18	0.4%
Temporary guardian	2	0.0%
Conservator	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,131</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%.*



## Alleged Abusers' Characteristics

	Number	Percent
None of the listed characteristics	3,545	69.1%
Financial dependence: alleged abuser dependent on adult at risk	415	8.1%
Other characteristic	242	4.7%
Unemployed	230	4.5%
Drug abuse	226	4.4%
Mental Illness	223	4.3%
Alcohol abuse	215	4.2%
Frail Elderly	182	3.5%
Challenging or dangerous behavior	103	2.0%
Dementia	101	2.0%
Other medical condition	57	1.1%
Chronic alcoholic	50	1.0%
Medically fragile	47	0.9%
Physical disability	44	0.9%
Financial dependence: adult at risk on abuser	41	0.8%
Chronic mental illness	38	0.7%
Disoriented and confused	36	0.7%
Mobility impaired	36	0.7%
Diabetes	20	0.4%
Developmental disability	17	0.3%
Morbidly Obese	17	0.3%
Deaf or hard of hearing	16	0.3%
Homebound	15	0.3%
Stroke-related condition	10	0.2%
Brain injury	9	0.2%
Blind or visually impaired	6	0.1%
Incontinent	4	0.1%
Limited English proficiency	2	0.0%
Communication disorder	1	0.0%
Functionally illiterate	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,131</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*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?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No, one alleged abuser only	4,969	96.8%
Yes	162	3.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,131</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



<b>Was Hurt or Harm Substantiated?</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Substantiated	4,496	47.5%
Unsubstantiated	2,872	30.3%
Unable to substantiate	2,105	22.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Actions Taken to Assist Elder Adult at Risk

	Number	Percent
Services offered-some accepted	1,703	18.0%
Services offered-not accepted	1,633	17.2%
Services not needed	1,625	17.2%
Referral to law enforcement or Department of Justice	1,173	12.4%
Services offered-all accepted	1,094	11.5%
Investigation not accepted	902	9.5%
Guardian referral	642	6.8%
Outreach continues	607	6.4%
Referral made to other agency	599	6.3%
Protective services placement	447	4.7%
Other disposition	400	4.2%
Other legal action	217	2.3%
Referral to regulatory authority	82	0.9%
Response or investigation continues	70	0.7%
Mental health commitment	47	0.5%
Referral to protection or advocacy agencies	36	0.4%
Referral to caregiver misconduct registry	32	0.3%
Services needed are not available	32	0.3%
Referral to detoxification services	13	0.1%
Referral made to state agency	10	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</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%.*





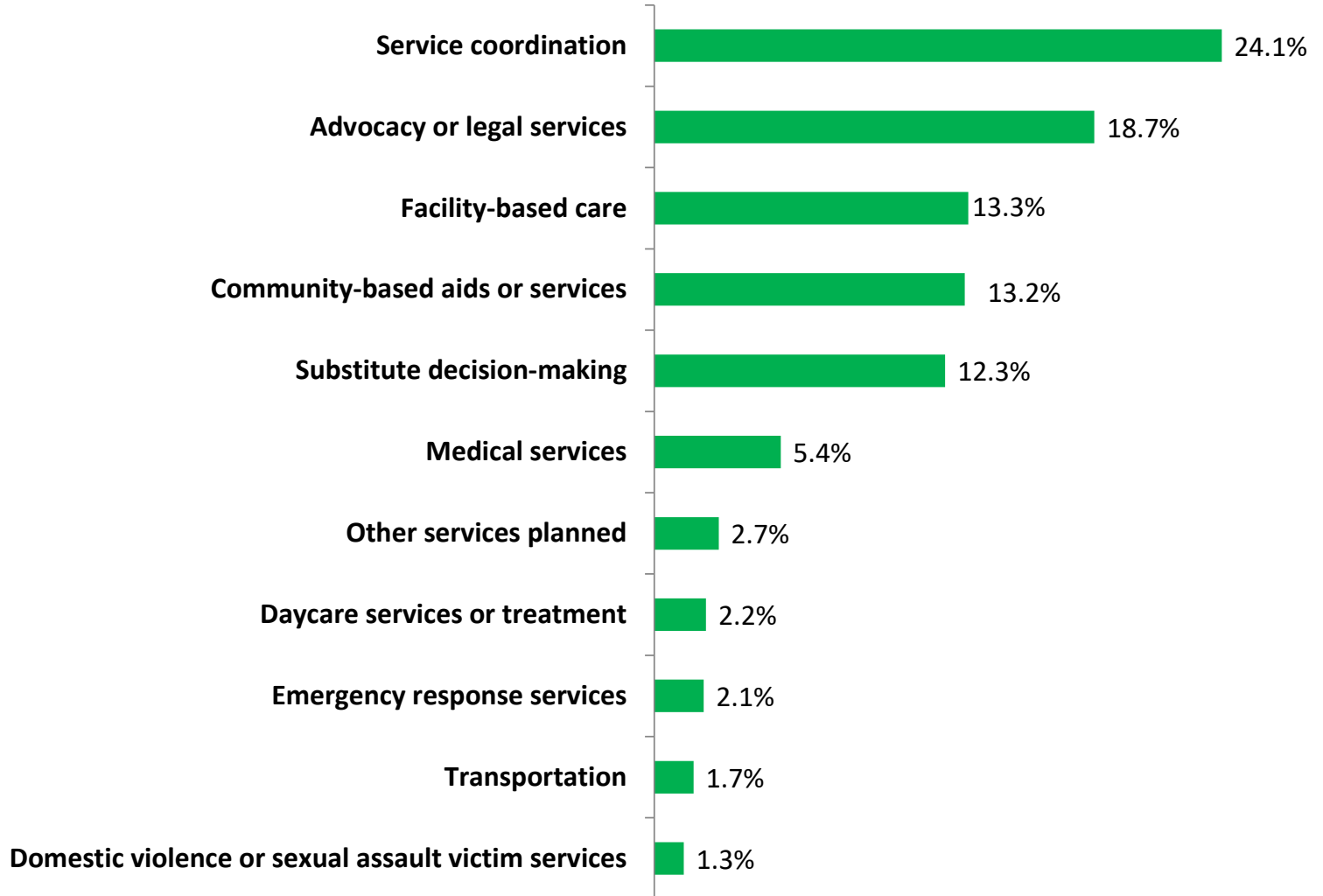
## Services Planned for Elder Adult at Risk

	Number	Percent
Service coordination	2,280	24.1%
Advocacy or legal services	1,768	18.7%
Facility-based care	1,261	13.3%
Community-based aids or services	1,247	13.2%
Substitute decision-making	1,168	12.3%
Medical services	508	5.4%
Other services planned	259	2.7%
Daycare services or treatment	208	2.2%
Emergency response services	199	2.1%
Transportation	158	1.7%
Domestic violence or sexual assault victim services	119	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,473</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 Elder Adult at Risk

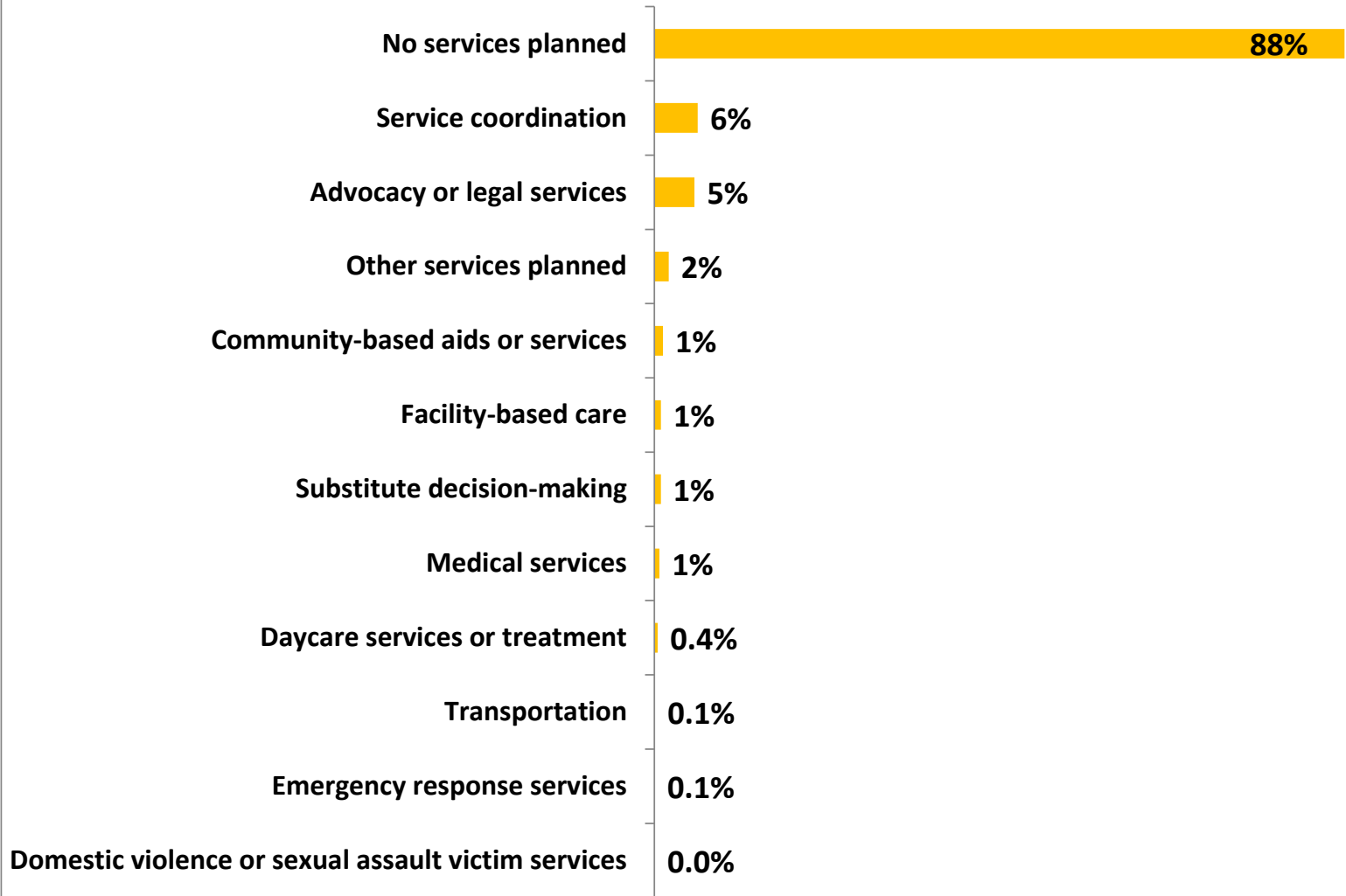




<b>Services Planned for Alleged Abuser(s)</b>		
<b>Service</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No services planned	4,036	88.2%
Service coordination	254	5.5%
Advocacy or legal services	235	5.1%
Other services planned	84	1.8%
Community-based aids or services	50	1.1%
Facility-based care	39	0.9%
Substitute decision-making	38	0.8%
Medical services	30	0.7%
Daycare services or treatment	20	0.4%
Transportation	4	0.1%
Emergency response services	3	0.1%
Domestic violence or sexual assault victim services	2	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,577</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Multiple responses were allowed so numbers do not add up to 100%.</i>		
<i>Percents refer to share of all incidents in which abuse or neglect was alleged (n=4,577).</i>		



## Services Plan for Alleged Abuser(s)





## Contact Information

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**Adult Protective Services Coordinator**

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Division of Public Health

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