
Portland Children's Levy Community Engagement 2024 Key Findings Report

The Portland Children's Levy

Project Overview

In March 2023, the Community Council set goals for the community engagement process, recommended topics for community input, and identified priority communities to engage. The PCL Allocation Committee adopted the recommendations in June 2023, which informed our community engagement process.

Since the fall of 2023, our team has designed and implemented a mixed-methods community engagement research process that has enabled us to listen deeply to priority populations across Portland and amplify their voices.

The findings from our research endeavors will assist the Community Council in creating funding priorities recommendations for the Allocation Committee to consider in the next funding round.

The Portland Children's Levy

Project Goals

- **Learn** from diverse stakeholders about the most effective and needed services for children, especially children most affected by historical inequities and disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.
- **Identify** community solutions to improve outcomes for children and families, including culturally informed emerging grassroots strategies and pandemic recovery practices in PCL's program areas.
- **Build** positive relationships with historically marginalized communities by incorporating the city's core values.
- **Promote** community understanding and awareness of Portland Children's Levy's work, including the funding processes, services funded, and demographics of children and families served.
- **Improve** transparency in the community engagement process and ensure that community members who engage in the process receive ongoing communication about PCL and how it uses community feedback.

About Camille E. Trummer Consulting

Founded in 2020, Camille E. Trummer Consulting (CETC) is a boutique social impact consultancy specializing in social impact strategy, strategic communications, and community engagement.

CETC has partnered with local and national organizations to design inclusive, culturally resonant, and community-driven social impact projects focused on community economic development, environmental sustainability, and public health. Learn more at camilletrummer.com

Project Team:

- Camille E. Trummer, Account Director + Engagement Lead
- Melissa Burgess, Project Manager
- Tanisha Tate Woodson, Research Lead
- Annie Ozols, Research Analyst

Demographic Characteristics

We engaged more than 750 community members and providers across Portland

759

Individuals participated in the process

509

Community members completed the survey

153

Service providers complete the survey

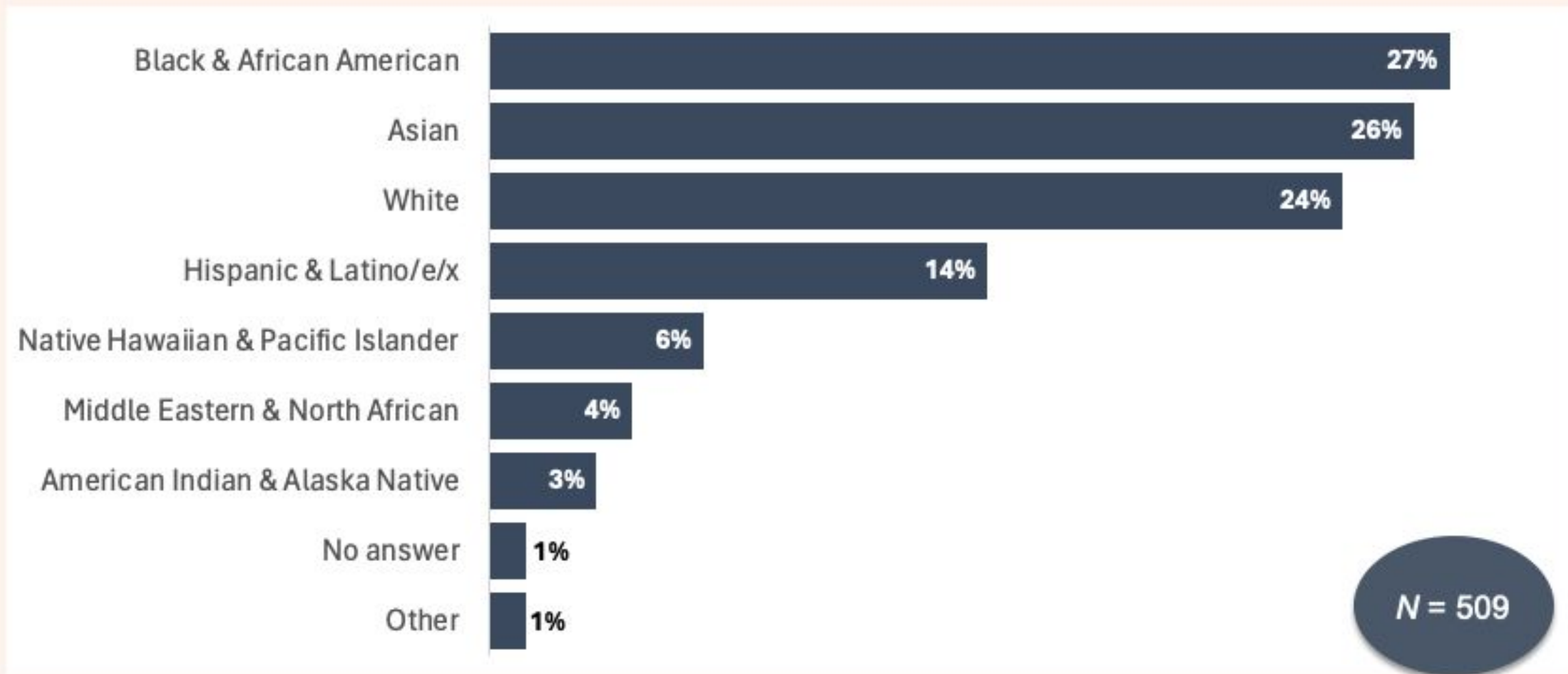
87

Children, parents, and caregivers participated in focus groups

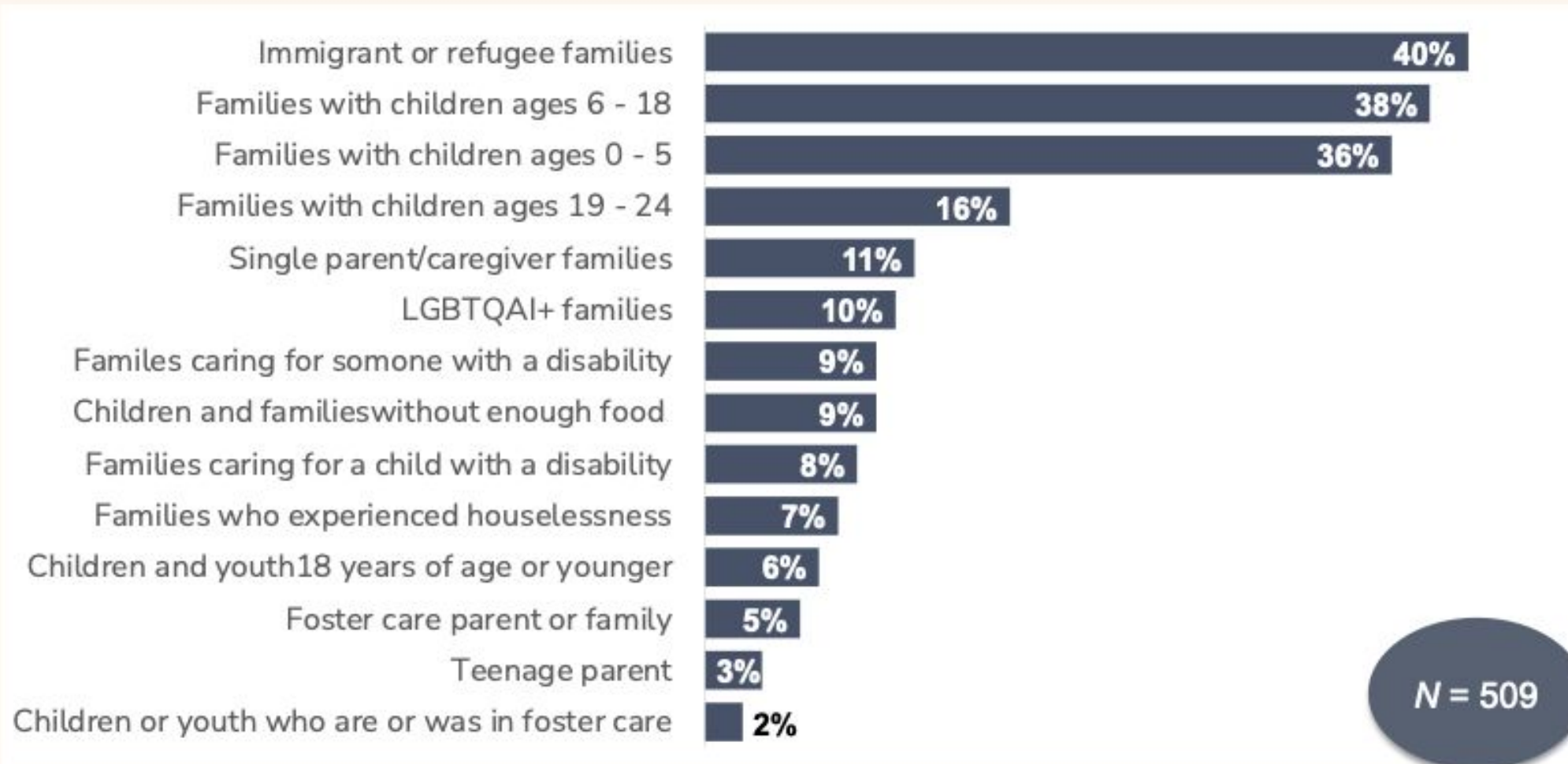
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Service providers participated in in-depth interviews

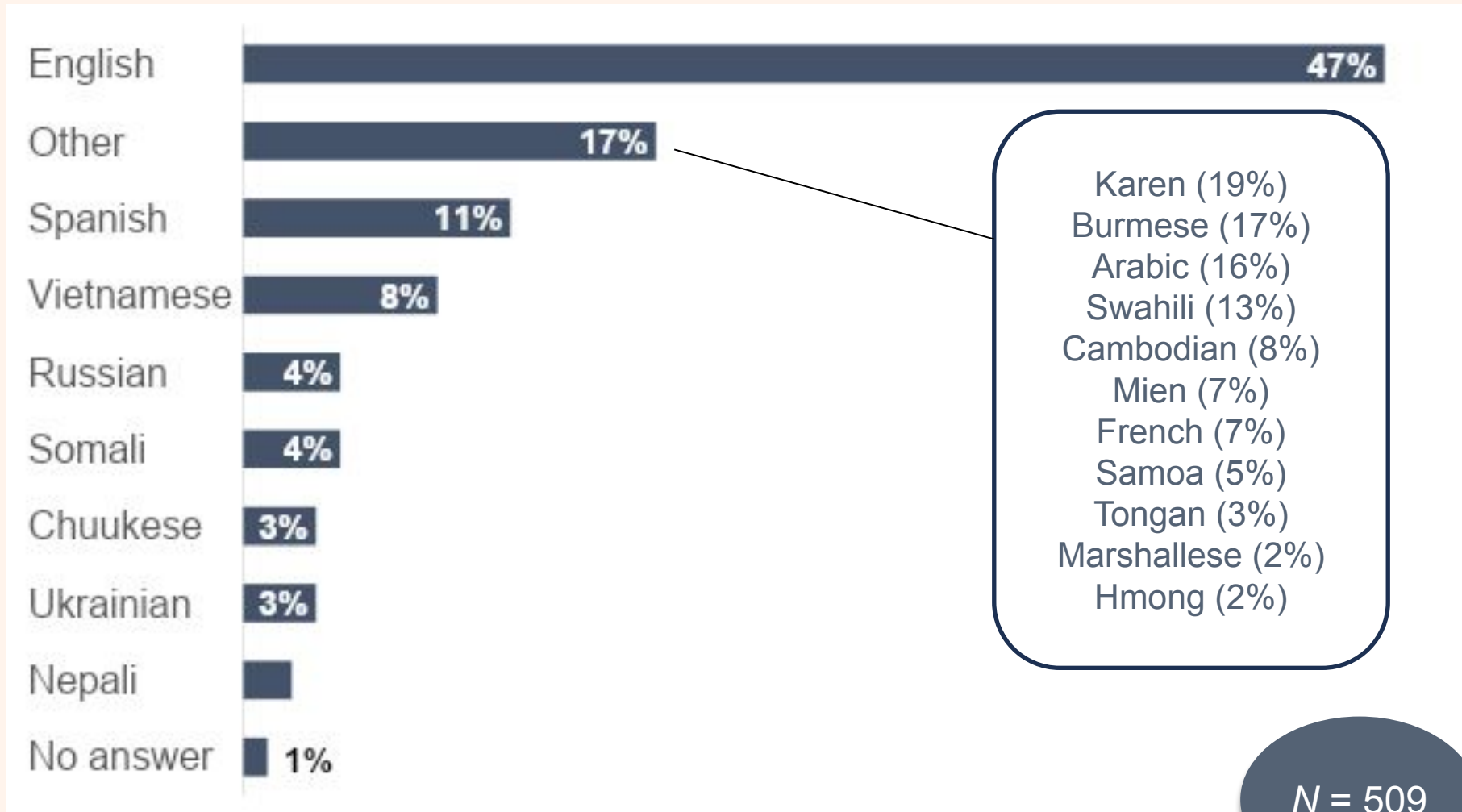
Community survey respondents: Race and Ethnicity



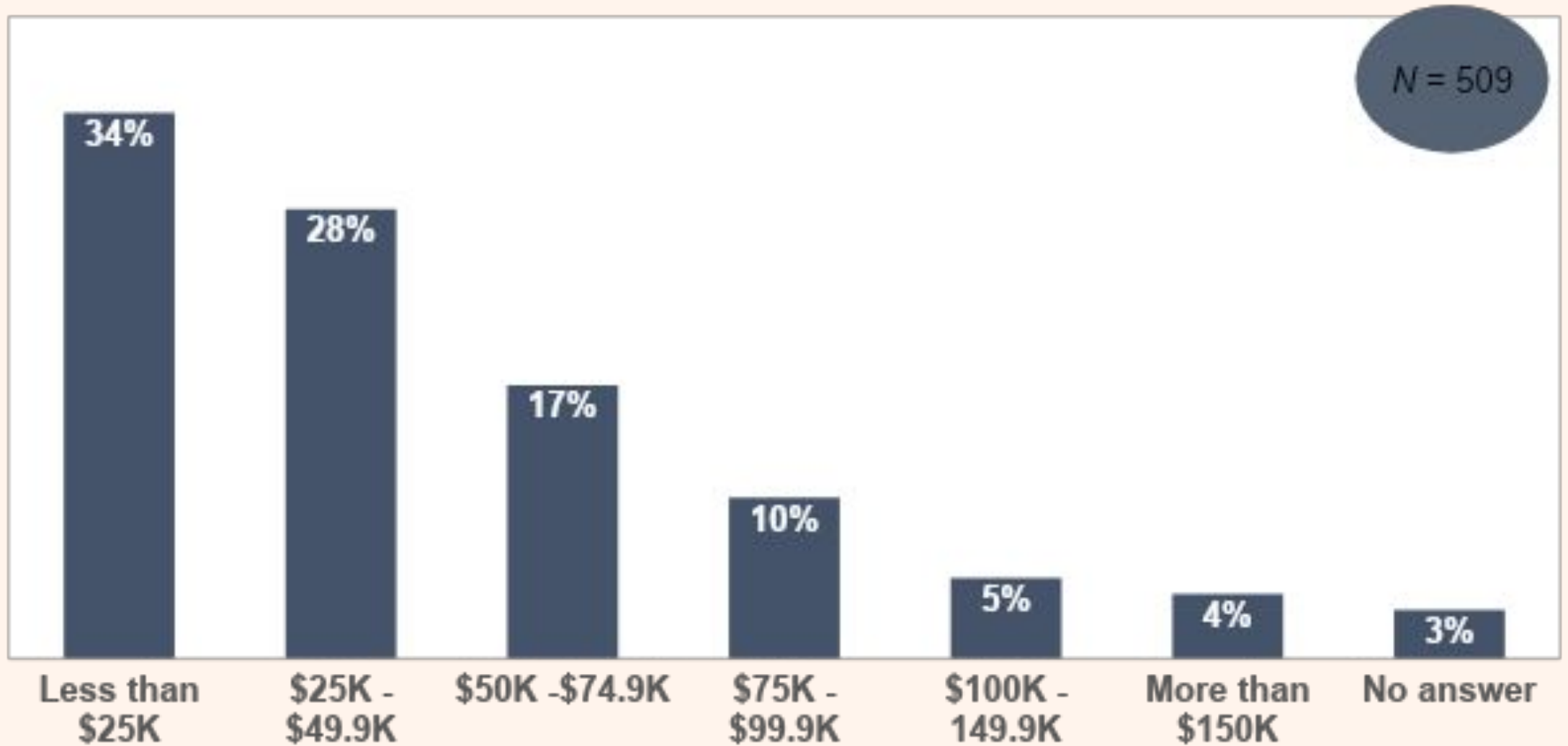
Community survey respondents: Representation of priority populations



Community survey respondents: Preferred Language

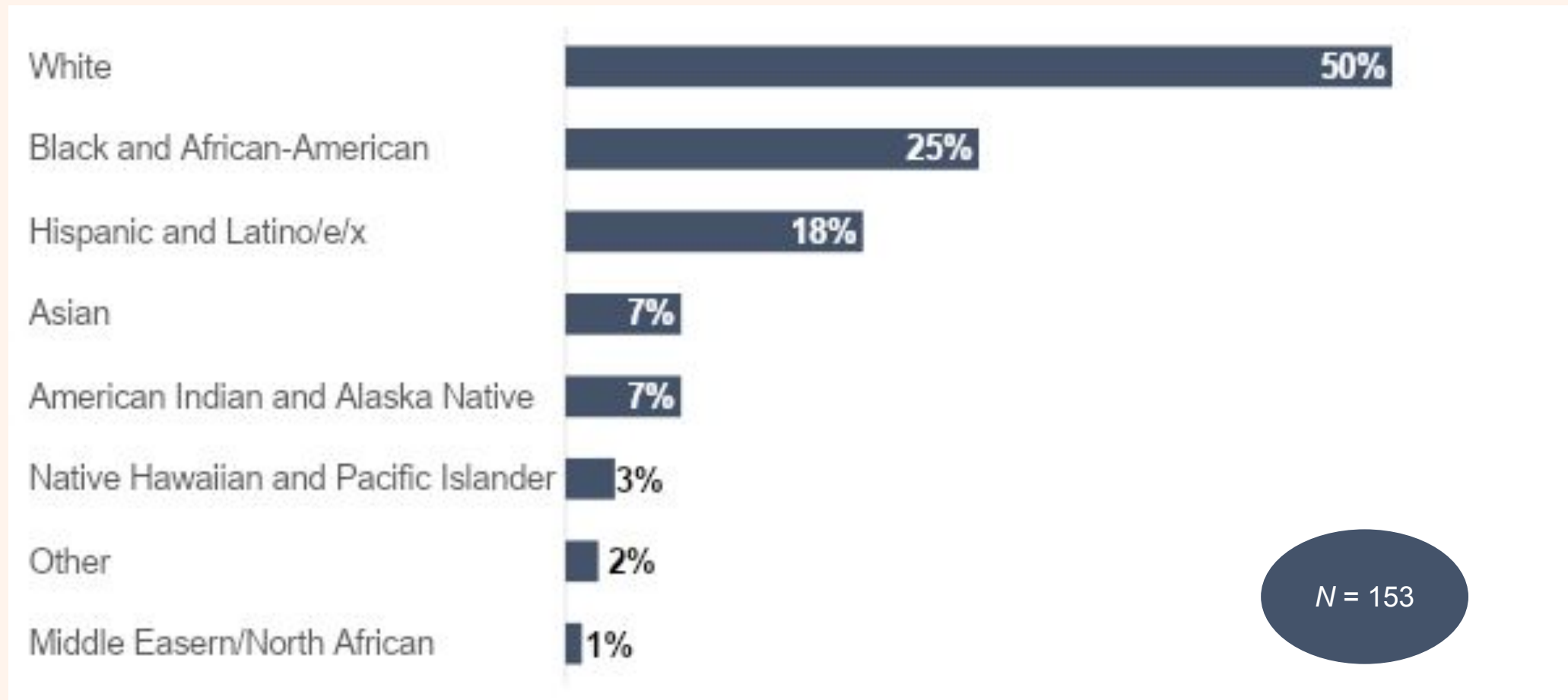


Community survey respondents: Household income



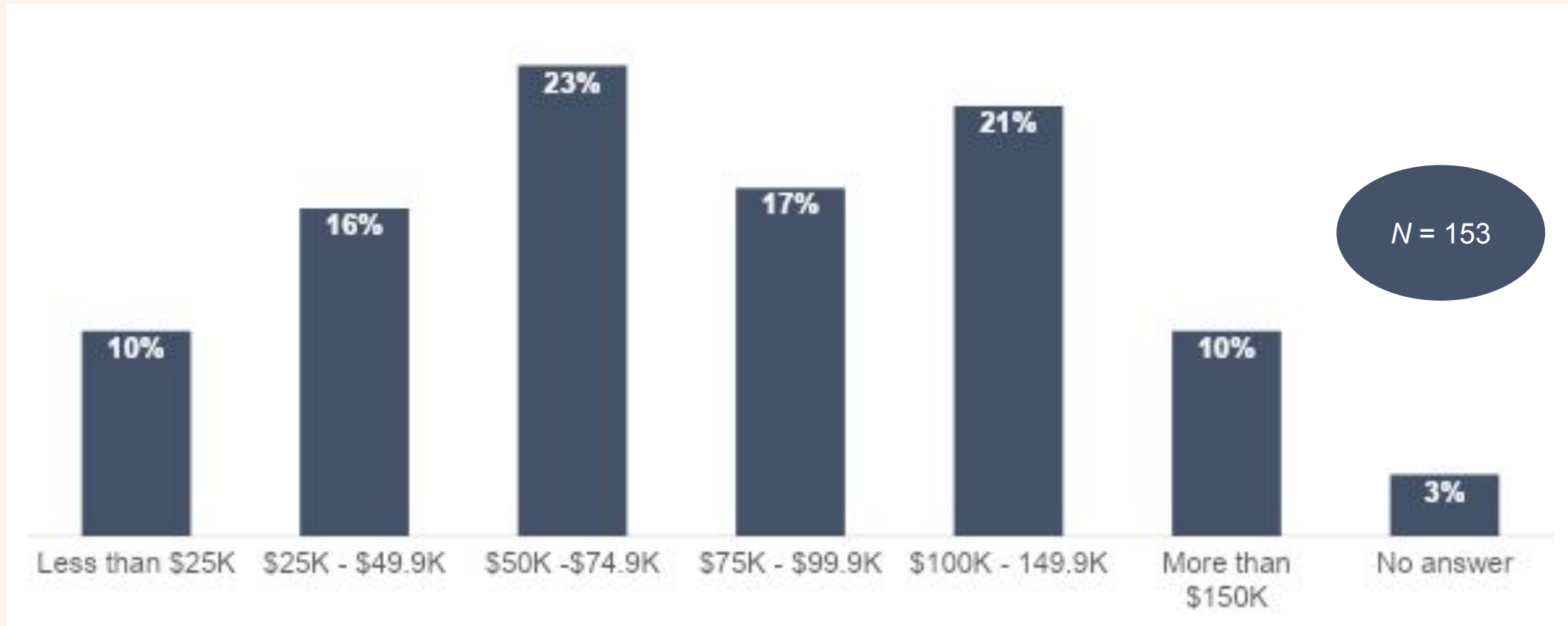
Provider Survey Respondents: Race and Ethnicity

Half of the respondents identified as White (50%) and a quarter identified as Black and African American (25%).



Provider Survey Respondents: Household Income

Close to half of the provider respondents resided in households with an annual income of \$75K or more.



87 residents participated in 10 focus groups

Focus group priority population	# Participants*
Spanish-speaking parents and children	15
Black, Indigenous, People of Color, Slavic and Middle Eastern youth and parents/caregivers	13
Portland students in grades 6 through 12	12
Houseless parents, caregivers, and youth	12
Low-income children and families	8
Youth with a disability and parents/caregivers of youth with a disability	7
Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) youth and parents/caregivers	6
Foster care youth and parents/caregivers	5
Teen and single teen parents	5
LGBTQAI+ youth	4

*Participants had intersecting identities.

10 interviews were conducted with members of the following organizations

- Higher Elevations Learning Place
- KAIROS
- New Avenues for Youth – SMYRC Program
- Oregon Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Needs (OCCYSHN) at OHSU
- Our Children Oregon
- Samoa Pacific Development Corporation
- Seeding Justice
- S.E.E.D. Portland
- Transgender Health Program at OHSU
- Unicorn Solutions
- Youth Unlimited

Early Childhood

Understanding the needs of families with children ages 5 and younger

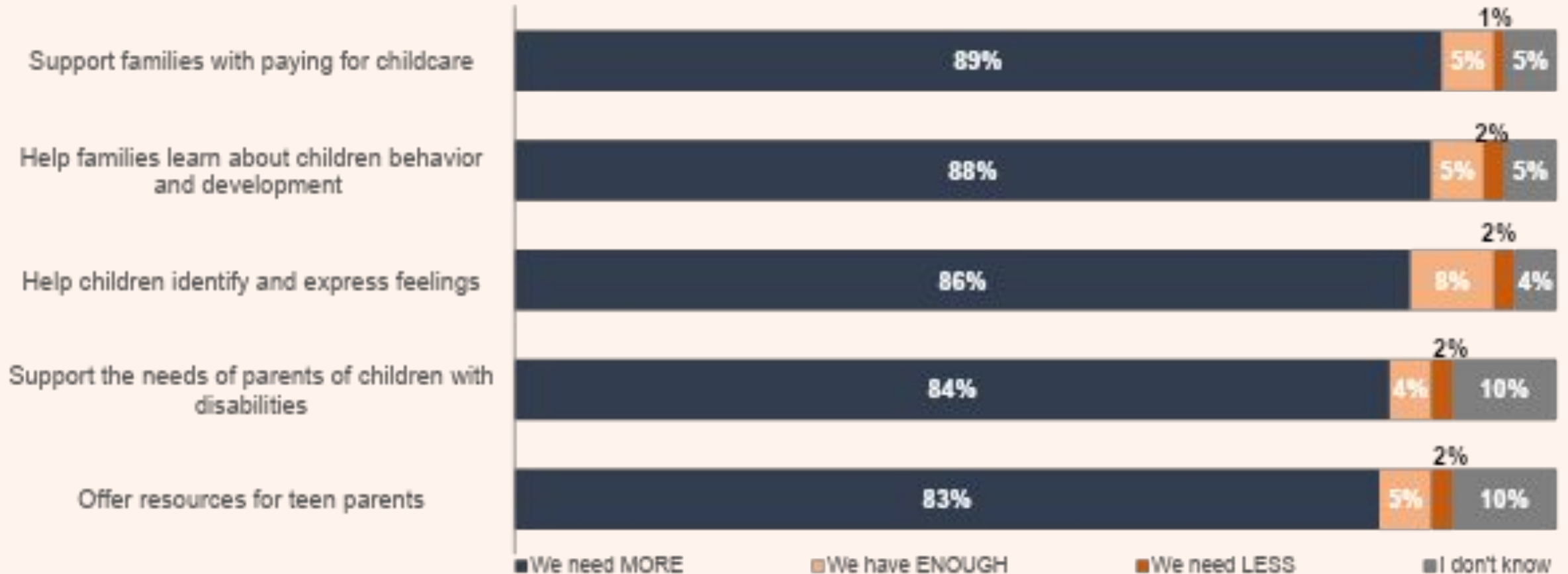
Programs for families with children ages 5 and younger

Community members and providers were surveyed and asked how much their community needs the following programs to support families with children ages five and younger.

Question: In my community, families with children ages 5 and younger need...

1. Programs that help parents and caregivers learn about children's behavior and development (e.g., managing difficult behavior)
2. Programs that help children learn how to identify and express their feelings
3. Programs that help parents and caregivers of children with disabilities with their parenting needs
4. Programs that support families with paying for childcare
5. Programs that offer teen parents resources like childcare and parenting support

In my community, families with children ages 5 and young need programs that...



N* = 662

*Includes community members and providers

Comparing perspectives among community members

Programs to help families learn about children's behavior and development, including how to manage difficult behavior:

- Only 44% of Hispanic/Latinx respondents indicated they needed a lot more, whereas more than 60% of other race and ethnicities subgroups indicated they needed a lot more.
- 100% of teenage parents indicated that they needed a lot more programs to learn about their child's behavior and development.

Programs to help children learn how to identify and express their feelings:

- Interestingly, there was a significant difference in the perceived need for more programs among different racial and ethnic groups. Hispanic/Latinx (89%), American Indian (100%), Black (92%), and Asian (90%) respondents were notably more likely to express the need for a lot more programs compared to White respondents.
- Teenage-parent families (92%), single-parent families (69%), families caring for someone with a disability (73%), and families caring for foster care youth (90%) were all significantly more likely than LGBTQAI+ families (51%) to indicate they needed a lot more programs to support their children with identifying and expressing their feelings.

Comparing perspectives among community members

Programs to help parents and caregivers of children with disabilities with their parenting needs:

- 93% of families caring for someone with a disability and 95% of families caring for a child with a disability indicated they need either a lot more or a little more programs to support their families.

Programs that support families with paying for childcare

- Black (73%) and Asian (76%) families were significantly more likely than White (60%) and Hispanic/Latinx (59%) to indicate their communities need a lot more programs to support families with paying for childcare.
- 92% of families with children younger than 5 indicated they need more programs to support families with paying for childcare.

Programs that offer teen parents resources like childcare and parenting support

- Black families (87%) were significantly more likely than White families (77%) to indicate that there is a need for more programs that offer teen parents resources like childcare and parenting support
- Families with income less than \$50K were significantly more likely than families making \$75to \$100K to indicate that they need a lot more programs to support teen parents

Access to culturally responsive care is important for health care and for education. Getting connected to culturally responsive, high-quality, trustworthy childcare is important for many families.

Spanish-speaking communities face linguistic barriers to being engaged and advocating for their children in the education system.

In addition to language barriers, Spanish-speaking parents unfamiliar with the American education system feel powerless and often viewed as outsiders.

While affordability remains a barrier for many, most parents/caregivers are more concerned about the safety of their children while in childcare.

“As a parent, I feel like the least supported person in the education system. Our kids receive instruction, teachers receive information and training, but parents are alone and unsupported.” – Parent

“The childcare system is scary to me because you see so many reports of kiddos who get hurt in those environments. At the root of it, it’s not about being affordable, it’s a matter of being trustworthy.” - Parent

Recommendations: Early childhood

- **Financial assistance:** Families and providers alike expressed the need for assistance with paying for childcare.
- **Culturally responsive, flexible care:** Families want to receive childcare services from providers who reflect their same cultural identity and can support families who do not work a typical 9AM-5PM work shift.
- **Support education and awareness of neurodiversity among children five and younger:** Support and train childcare providers and educate caregivers on best practices for the healthy development of neurodiverse youth. Also support families with learning about child behavior and development.
- **Fund early intervention and treatment programs:** Support families in accessing physical, occupational, and speech therapy.
- **Support families with children with disabilities:** Support programs that support kids with disabilities and co-create learning environments where all children thrive - programs that cater to children with various levels of ability.
- **Support children with expressing their feelings:** Support programs that create learning environment for children to identify and express their feelings

Mentoring & Adult Role Models

Understanding the important role of adult role models in supporting the growth and development of youth and young adults in the community

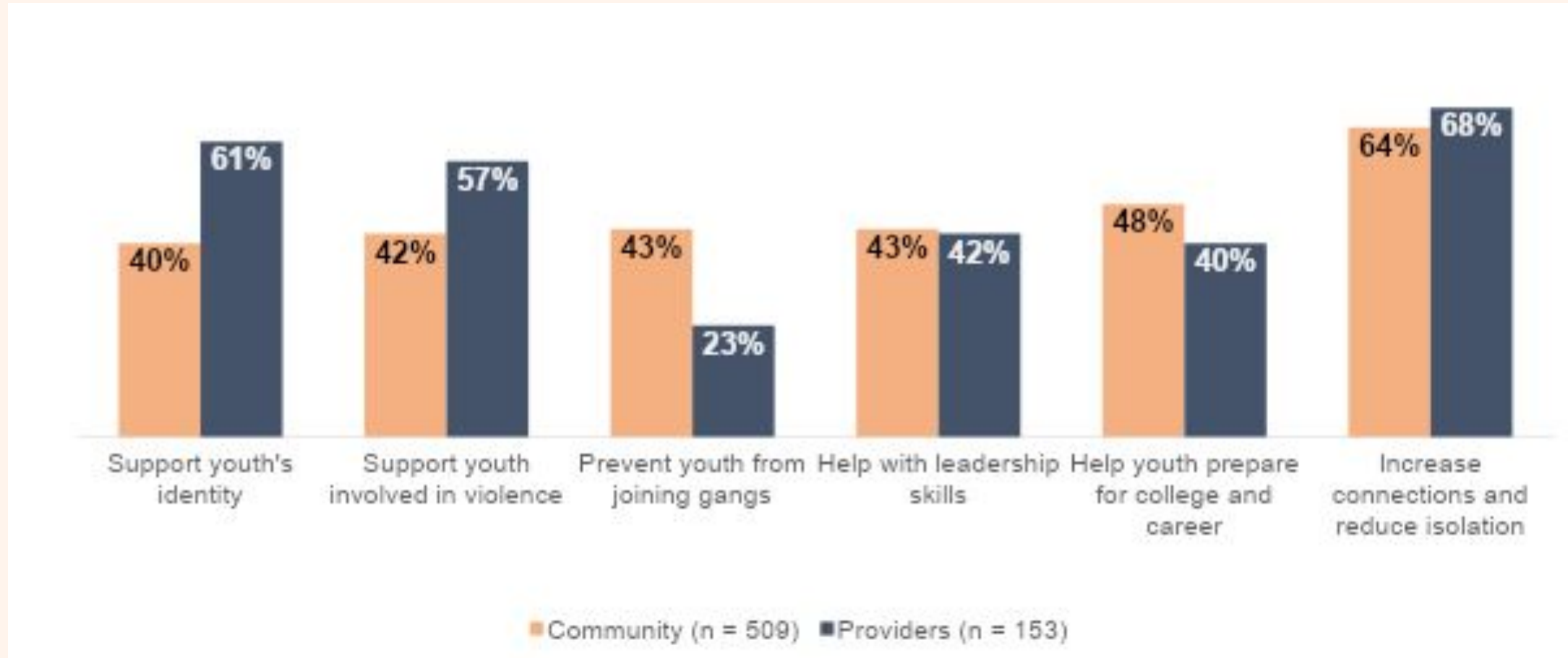
What are the best ways adult role models (outside of the family) can meet the needs of children/youth in your community?

Survey respondents were asked about the most important ways adult role models can support the needs of children in the community.

Question: What are the best ways adult role models (outside of the family) can meet the needs of children/youth in your community? *Select only three (3) answers.*

1. Connect youth to each other for positive development and reduce feelings of isolation.
2. Support youth's cultural, racial, gender, and sexual identity
- 3. Prevent youth from joining gangs**
4. Support the healing of children and youth involved with violence or harmed by violence
5. Help youth develop leadership skills
6. Help youth ages 14-24 prepare and plan for college and careers

What are the best ways adult role models (outside of the family) can meet the needs of children/youth in your community?



Comparing community perspectives

Connect youth to each other for positive development and reduce feelings of isolation:

- Immigrant and refugee respondents (67%), parents caring for children under the age of five (69%), and parents caring for a child with a disability (75%) were significantly more likely than other groups to identify this as a priority.

Support youth's cultural, racial, gender, and sexual identity:

- LGBTQAI+ respondents (63%) and youth ages 18 and younger (57%) are significantly more likely than other groups to identify this as a priority area.
- Middle Eastern/North African (83%), Asian (50%), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders (53%) are significantly more likely to indicate this is a priority for their community.

Help youth ages 14-24 prepare and plan for college and career:

- Respondents earning an annual income of \$75K to \$100K were significantly more likely than others earning less to find this as a priority.
- 67% of youth indicated preparing and planning for college and careers were their top priority.

Focus group discussions with Spanish-speaking families highlight the need for support with cultural and linguistic preservation.

Spanish-speaking parents highlighted the tension of preserving their culture and language while supporting their kids with adjusting to the American education system.

“We have to teach our children about our values, culture, and language. They don’t speak Spanish at school and then stop speaking at home. It becomes a fight for preservation.”- Parent

We need everything to be culturally-specific from after-school programs to mentors—otherwise our kids are confused about their identity.” - Parent

Comparing community perspectives

Prevent youth from joining gangs:

- Households with annual earnings less than \$75K were significantly more likely than other income-earning households to identify this as a priority.
- Youth were significantly less likely than other groups to indicate this as a priority area (17%).

Support the healing of children and youth involved with violence or harmed by violence:

- 52% of North Portland residents indicated this to be a priority area, which was significantly more than East Portland residents, where only 36% indicated this as a priority.
- Immigrant respondents were significantly less likely to indicate this as a priority area compared to others.

Help youth develop leadership skills:

- Youth were significantly less likely to indicate this as a priority.
- Respondents with a college degree (51%) were significantly more likely to indicate this as a priority than respondents with a highschool degree.

Youth need peer and adult role models to support them in navigating life and various transitions

Survey respondents and focus group participants mentioned the need for the following types of mentorship programs:

- Programs offering long-term, reliable, and culturally diverse mentor services
- Programs offering adult mentors who can provide personal and professional support, especially for single and teen parents
- Providing social connection activities for youth to feel connected
- Flexibility of mentors to be available on evenings and weekends
- Addressing turnover of professional mentors to ensure stability for youth
- Offering mentors that share the identity and experiences of the youth they serve
- Building skills of older youth to become mentors themselves
- Building basic life skills (budgeting)

“Mentors shouldn’t give up or stop services too soon. Or start when a kid is in their senior year. They should start from the beginning and stay right until the end, following up with students every week and/or every month. That way, students can see: OK, this person really cares about me and my progress. Back where I’m from [New Zealand] we made it a goal to have every student with a mentor and their goal was to make sure that kid graduated.” – Parent

Youth and parents/caregivers seek mentors that have similar lived experience, enabling them to mentor from a place of experience versus sympathy

A key theme of relatability and lived experience surfaced across all conversations with youth and parents about their ideal mentor, especially those with a family member who has a disability.

“We need mentors who we can relate to. Sure, you can relate to me because we are both women, but do you have kids? If not, you can’t relate or help me, you can only sympathize with my situation.” - Parent

“If I have a mentor, I’d want them to have the same cultural background as me, so that it’s easier to share things that they immediately understand.” - Youth

“My daughter identifies as lesbian, so it was helpful that her skills builder was also a lesbian. She felt more comfortable sharing things and going through being a teenager and coming out...it’s someone that’s on their level.” -Parent

“Mentoring programs should prioritize culturally responsive, empowering, and strengths-based approaches.” - Provider

Youth from immigrant, refugee, and ESL families experience added pressure to make hard decisions on behalf of their families

Youth from immigrant, refugee, and ESL families often feel the impacts of adultification—forcing them to act as the “head of household” and make decisions for their entire family

“There needs to be more translation services for ESL families. I’ve had to leave school and call off work to translate for my parents and grandparents so they can make decisions during their medical visits.”- Youth

“I think about emergency preparedness because I volunteer at my school to make kits for families. So many ESL families have no idea about how to prepare for a disaster—I would have to make decisions on behalf of my family.” - Youth

“My dad needed to be in recovery for alcoholism but it was hard for my mom to find services in our language, so I had to do research and make calls.” – Youth

“There are a lot of [immigrant/refugee/ESL] students that go to school late or couldn’t be at school. They had to take care of their little siblings or take them to school first. Many teachers saw them as kids who didn’t want to be at school, but really they just had to take care of their family and work and provide for them.” – Youth

Recommendations: Mentoring

- **Support the sustainability of programs:** Youth and families are seeking sustainable mentorship programs to help their youth build strong, nurturing relationships with a role model.
- **Strengthen the field of professionals that provide mentoring programs:** Support programs that hire culturally responsive and professionally paid mentors that are committed to establishing long-term mentoring relationships.
- **Support programs that provide mentorship for youth and their parents/caregivers.** Parents and their youth are seeking peer mentors, particularly mentors with similar lived experiences and cultural identities. Parents are seeking mentors who can provide support in financial literacy and developing other life skills.
- **Increase accessibility and awareness:** Families and youth desire mentorship programs and mentoring small groups that are available in centralized hubs where parents and students naturally gather (e.g., schools, community centers, etc.).
- **Support youth who experience violence, grief, and loss.** Families and youth seek culturally-responsive support to help youth and young adults learn coping skills.
- **Support families with increasing connections and reducing feelings of isolation:** Families and youth are looking for opportunities to gather and be in community with each other. Provide opportunities for individuals with shared experiences to gather and learn from each other.
- **Increase access to mental health support:** Youth are seeking programs that enable them to express their feelings and support their mental health and well-being. Getting connected to culturally responsive providers with shared lived experiences is important.

After-School Programs

Understanding the type of programs and resources needed to support youth when they are out of school (e.g., after school, summer time, etc.)

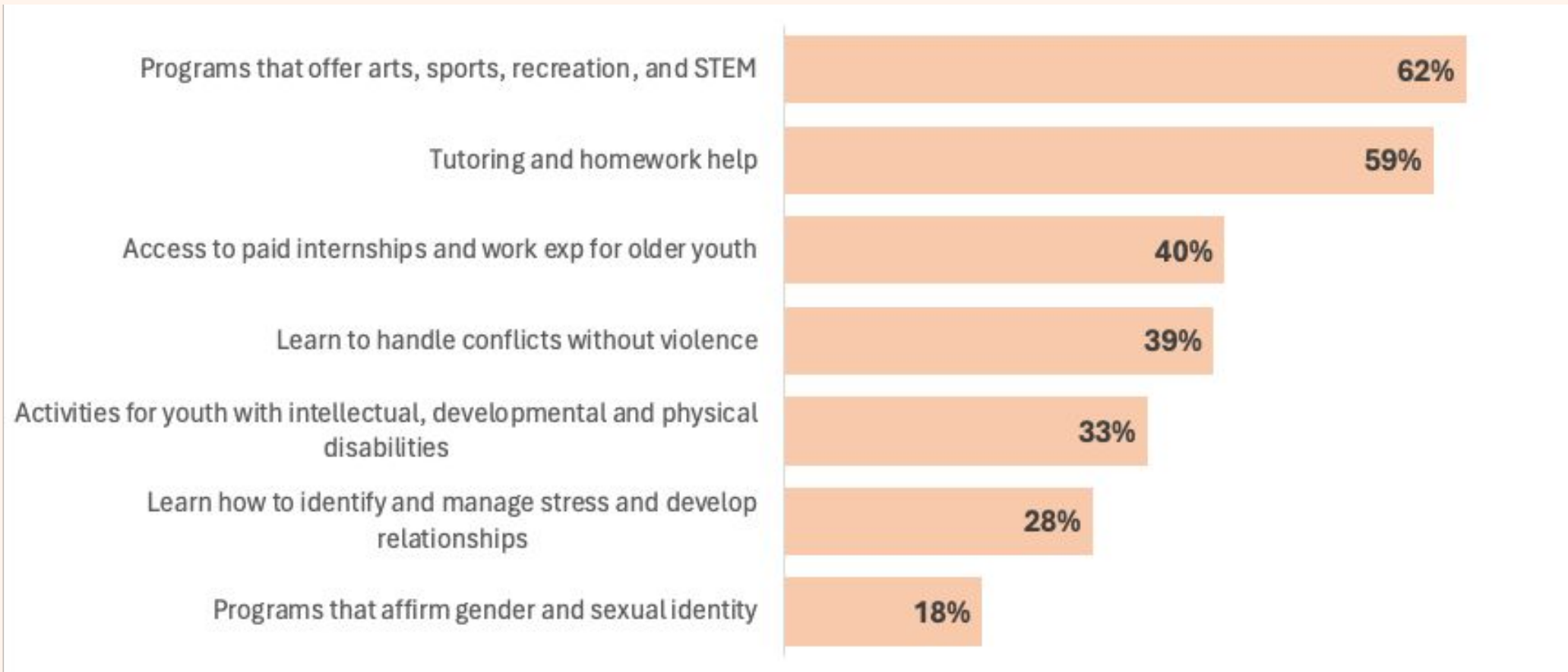
What are the three most important things children and teenagers need when they are not in school?

Survey respondents were asked about the most important needs of children and teenagers when they are out of school.

Question: What are the most important things children and teenagers need when they are not in school. *Select only three (3) answers.*

1. Help with tutoring and homework
2. Access to programs that affirm gender identity and sexual orientation
3. Learn how to handle conflicts without violence
4. Access to programs that offer arts, sports, recreation, and/or science and technology activities
5. Access to paid internships and work experiences for older youth
6. Access to programs to learn how to identify and manage stress and develop relationships
7. Access to activities for children/youth with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities

Community members were asked “What are the three most important things children and teenagers need when they are not in school?”



N = 509

Comparing community perspectives

Help with tutoring and homework:

- Black (63%) and Asian (73%) respondents were significantly more likely than white respondents to express wanting more programs focused on tutoring and homework support.

Access to programs that affirm gender identity and sexual orientation:

- LGBTQAI+ respondents (37%) were significantly more likely than other groups to indicate having access to gender-affirming programs was important.

Learn how to handle conflict without violence:

- Respondents with children ages 5 and younger (42%) and respondents who experienced homelessness (51%) and without enough food (49%) were significantly more likely than individuals with children between the ages of 6 and 18 to prioritize this as a programmatic area.

Comparing community perspectives

Access to programs that offer arts, sports, recreation, and/or science and technology activities:

- Survey respondents earning more than \$100K annually (88%) and respondents with a college degree (74%) are significantly more likely than less-earning respondents and people with less than a college degree to indicate a need for programs that focus on arts, sport, recreation, and STEM.

Access to paid internships and work experiences for older youth:

- 67% of youth who completed the survey and 60% of caregivers with children connected to foster care are more likely to indicate a strong need for these programs.

Access to programs to learn how to identify and manage stress and develop relationships:

- Respondents experiencing houselessness (49%), not having enough food (45%), or caring for someone with a disability (45%) were significantly more likely than other groups to indicate access to these programs was a priority.

Comparing community perspectives

Access to activities for children/youth with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities:

- Survey respondents with children with a disability (50%) and parents with foster care children (50%) were more likely than others to indicate access to activities for children/youth with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities was important for them.
- In addition to wanting to see more programs that provide tutoring and homework support, programs that focused on meeting the needs of children experiencing disabilities were the top priority area for families with children with disabilities.

Children and youth with disabilities and special health needs are not effectively being served in school and afterschool settings

Children and youth with disabilities and special health needs are experiencing barriers to participation in programs:

- Some families opt for homeschooling which can be further isolating
- Not enough training for programs and organizations to learn how to adapt
- Need for more awareness about targeted universalist strategies that support youth with disabilities and those who are neurotypical (e.g. structured literacy)
- Transition from youth to adult disability support services is confusing and cumbersome

“Very few afterschool programs seem to have the ability to offer adaptive services in a meaningful way for folks who have sensory issues or language communication difficulties all the way up through more visible physical disabilities.”

Families want affordable opportunities for their youth to engage in meaningful experiences when they are not in school

Open-ended survey responses and interviews with community leaders suggested that youth need more of the following programs when they are out of school:

- More resources for working caregivers to provide affordable care during after-school and summer hours
- Creating a sense of belonging for LGBTQ2SIA+ youth by supporting Gay Student Associations (GSAs) and Queer Student Associations (QSAs) in school —especially for 9-13 year-olds
- Providing tutoring and academic support to help kids catch up

“We need more counselors-in-training programs for older children to learn leadership skills and mentor younger peers.” – Community Member

“More programs around sports, arts, etc., to support youth in having more opportunities to engage in their sparks, learn new things, be engaged in positive and community building activities.” – Provider

“We need more resources and programs that are age-appropriate. This will help us keep our kids off screens at home and help children process emotions and communicate their feelings. – Community Member

“Afterschool programming is vital, and having funding to support consistent staffing in these programs is pivotal to its success.” - Provider

Recommendations: After-school programs

- **Consistent, affordable, and sustainable:** Families expressed the desire to have access to after-school programs that were offered year-round and for youth as young as preschoolers. Families also want to see the programs exist in the community for long periods of time.
- **Support a variety of programs:** Families would like to see options for after-school programs that are inclusive of sports and recreation but also include creative arts, STEM and tutoring and homework support
- **Programs that support skill development :**
 - Career and skills building to prepare for the workforce
 - Tutoring and academic support to help kids catch up
- **Cultural preservation programs:** Programs offered in various languages (e.g., Spanish, Russian, etc.) should be created and implemented by culturally specific community based-organizations. This would create spaces for youth to express their cultural and linguistic identities.
- **Support cultural identity:** Programs that help preserve cultural identity and help youth identity and express their cultural and racial background are important.
- **Support QSAs (queer student associations) and GSAs (gay student associations).** These programs are at low capacity and need additional support to continue providing youth safe spaces.

Q&A

Foster Care

Understanding the needs of families with foster care youth and youth who are currently or were formerly in foster care

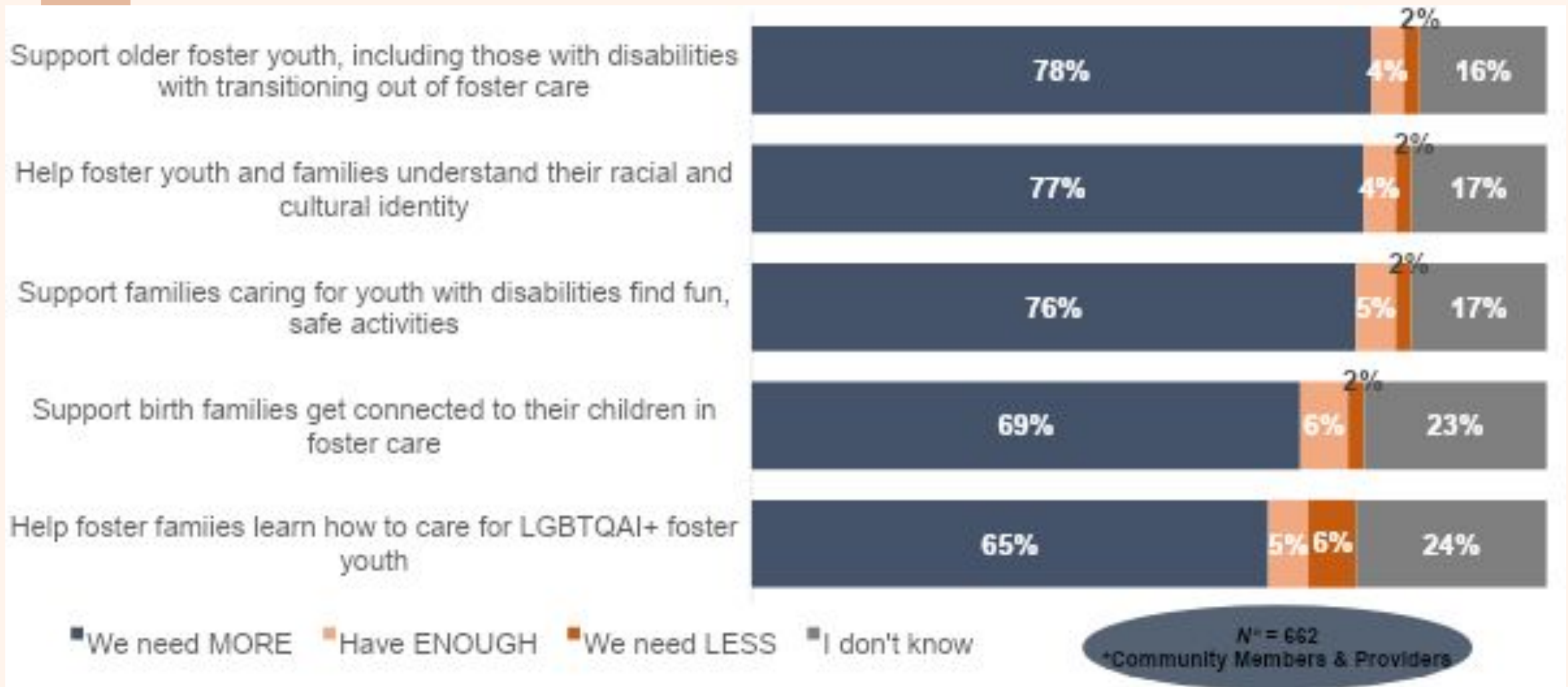
Programs for children and youth who are or were in foster care systems

Survey respondents were asked how much their community needs the following programs to support foster care youth and families.

Question: My community needs programs for children and youth who are or were in foster care systems that...

1. Help foster youth and families understand their racial and cultural identity, especially when foster parents and youth are from different races and cultures
2. Support birth families with getting connected to their children in foster care
3. Support older foster youth, including youth with disabilities, to find housing and employment, enter college, and live on their own
4. Support foster families caring for children/youth with disabilities and find fun, safe activities to do with their children/youth
5. Help foster families learn how to care for, support and create a comfortable home for LGBTQAI+ foster youth

My community needs programs for children and youth who are or were in foster care systems that...



Comparing community perspectives

Help foster youth and families understand their racial and cultural identity, especially when foster parents and youth are from different races and cultures

- 92% of foster care parents/caregivers and 80% of foster care youth indicated that their communities need A LOT MORE programs in this area to help support foster youth.
- 86% of LGTBQAI+ youth indicated their community needs more programs in this area as well.
- Black (87%), Middle Eastern/North African (100%) and Hispanic/Latinx (82%) respondents were significantly more likely than White (69%) and Asian (68%) respondents to indicate their communities need more programs to support foster youth with understanding their racial and cultural identity.

Comparing community perspectives

Support birth families with getting connected to their children in foster care:

- 83% of foster care parents and 90% of foster care youth indicated this as a programmatic area where their community needs more support
- Black (79%) and Hispanic/Latinx (77%) respondents were significantly more likely than White respondents to emphasize the need for more programs in this area.

Support older foster youth, including youth with disabilities, to find housing and employment, enter college, and live on their own:

- Asian respondents (61%) and respondents whose preferred language is Russian (59%) were significantly less likely than other families to indicate these programs as an important area for their communities.
- 88% of foster care parents, 91% of families caring for someone with disabilities, and 100% of foster care youth emphasize this as an area where their communities need more support.

Comparing community perspectives

Support foster families caring for children/youth with disabilities and find fun, safe activities to do with their children/youth:

- 92% of foster care parents and caregivers, 93% of families caring for someone with a disability, and 100% of foster care youth indicate that their communities need more programs.

Help foster families learn how to care for, support and create a comfortable home for LGBTQAI+ foster youth:

- 63% of community members indicated their communities need more programs to support foster care families in creating a comfortable home for LGBTQAI+ families.
- 84% of LGBTQAI+ families, 80% of families caring for someone with a disability, 75% of foster care parents and 90% of foster care youth indicate this as an area where they need more programs.

Children and youth in foster care experience a regulated environment with limited resources, and a challenging transition to adulthood.

Children and youth in foster care are often facing more challenges than their peers, including:

- higher regulation of normal activities like playdates and driving
- urgent mental health needs and long waits to access therapists
- not enough academic support and tutoring to be successful in school
- diminished services after the age of 18
- Foster parents who are not adequately supported (and case managers who are overloaded, delaying services)

“We had a really good therapist that left—a replacement therapist didn't happen for another three to four months. When you're seeing that inconsistency, that's when you really start to see issues in kids' as well as parents' mental health.”

– Parent

Recommendations: Foster Care

- **Support when transitioning of the system:**
 - **Transition out of foster care:** Need more support when transitioning out of foster care and preparing for college and careers.
- **Support while in the system:**
 - **Advocating and seeking resources for biological parents:** Foster care youth expressed the desire to receive services (e.g., financial, basic needs, mental health, healthcare, etc.), harm reduction resources and support for themselves and their biological parents.
 - **System navigators:** Families advocated for an assigned social worker to provide resource navigation (e.g., drug treatment, college readiness, mental health). They are looking for support when navigating systems and using their insurance.
 - **Peer mentorship:** Youth want mentors that share their lived experiences. Families also expressed the need for peer mentors for parents and caregivers. Need more programs that offer 1:1 or group mentorship.
 - **Support reunification:** Families have expressed a priority of reuniting foster care youth with their biological parents. Relatives taking care of young family members have expressed the need for reunification programs
 - **Understand racial and cultural identity:** Families need supportive programs to help foster youth understand their racial and cultural identity, especially when the caregiver and youth do not share the same cultural identity.
 - **Support foster care children with disabilities:** Families are looking for support and resources to support the development of youth with intellectual, physical and developmental disabilities.

Hunger Relief

Understanding the needs of families who do not have enough food

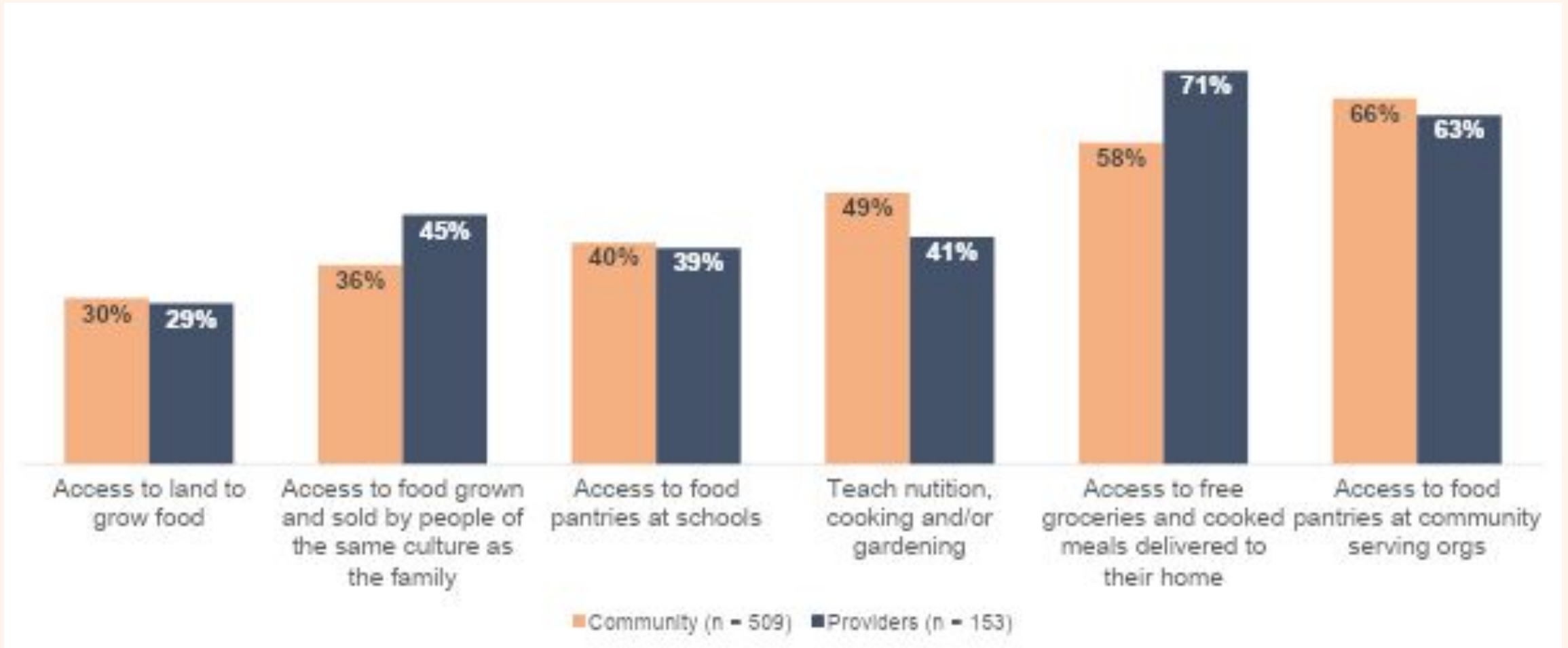
What are the three biggest needs of families and children who do not have enough food?

Survey respondents were asked to identify the three most important needs of families and children who do not have enough food.

Questions: What are the biggest needs of families and children who don't have enough food in your community? *Select only three (3) answers.*

1. Access to free groceries and cooked meals delivered to their home
2. Access to food pantries at school
3. Access to food pantries at organizations that serve your community (e.g., community centers, churches, recreation centers)
4. Teach children and families about nutrition, cooking and/or gardening
- 5.** Access to land to grow food
6. Access to food grown and sold by people of the same culture as the family

What are the three biggest needs of families and children who do not have enough food?



Comparing community perspectives

Access to free groceries and cooked meals delivered to their home:

- Black (74%) and American Indian/Alaskan Native (93%) respondents were significantly more likely than any other racial/ethnic group to indicate having access to free groceries and cooked meals delivered to their homes as a priority.
- Immigrant and refugee respondents (47%) indicate this as a priority area significantly less often than other respondents.

Access to food pantries at school:

- Respondents whose preferred language is Vietnamese (68%) were significantly more likely than other respondents to indicate that they would like food pantries in the school.
- Black (28%) and American Indian (13%) respondents were less likely than other respondents to indicate their families need food pantries in their schools.

Comparing community perspectives

Access to food pantries at organizations that serve your community (e.g., community centers, churches, recreation centers):

- Low-income respondents (76%), respondents with children between the ages of 19 and 24 (81%), and single-parent/caregiver respondents (78%) mentioned this as a priority area more than other types of respondents.

Teach children and families about nutrition, cooking, and/or gardening:

- Respondents whose preferred language is Vietnamese (29%) and Middle Eastern/Northern African respondents (6%) are significantly less likely than other respondents to indicate this as a priority for their community.

Comparing community perspectives

Access to land to grow food:

- Respondents with an annual household income of less than \$75K were significantly more likely than respondents from higher-earning households to indicate this as a priority need for families in their community.

Access to food grown and sold by people of the same culture as the family:

- While 36% of community members identified this as an important issue, having access to food grown and sold by people of the same culture was one of the lowest priority areas.
- Foster care respondents (54%), immigrant and refugee respondents (44%) and LGBTQAI+ respondents (49%) listed this as a priority significantly more often than other respondents.

**For most
parents/caregivers,
basic needs seem out
of reach now more
than ever.**

From nutritious food to menstrual care products—every day items are harder to access and more expensive in post-COVID times.

“We need better housing support. Even the affordable housing isn’t an option for some of us. We need truly low-income housing for our families.” – Community Member

“Food pantries are a big help—I go to a small one, but we need more so that all low income families can get food.” – Community Member

“I just wish there was more connections for affordable transportation. Even with a bus pass, I can’t easily access the things or places I need, like making it to my doctor appointments.” – Community Member

“System navigators” are needed to help families find resources that meet their needs—especially those with a disabled family member.

Caregivers named “system navigators” — someone who works within or adjacent to health and social systems — as a reliable and accessible tool that could connect families to resources.

“We need someone who can connect families with resources. Especially when you have a family member with developmental needs—we have been waitlisted for an autism screening. We need someone who can get us help now.”

“Yes, we need navigators, but we also need folks who have experience working with families with disabilities and parents/caregivers that are neurodivergent.”

Recommendations: Hunger relief

- **Increase access to food relief programs:** Community members expressed the need for food pantries to be supported by their schools and local community-based organizations. Food pantries should provide culturally specific foods and options for residents to select their own items as opposed to receiving a set box of random items.
- **Increase access and awareness of financial assistance programs:** Communities recognize the increased cost of food and need access to cash assistance programs to help cover their food and other basic needs.
- **Nutrition education and training:** Community members would like to see more opportunities to learn how to prepare and make healthier food options for their families.

Child abuse prevention and intervention

Understanding the needs of families who experience stress, trauma, and abuse

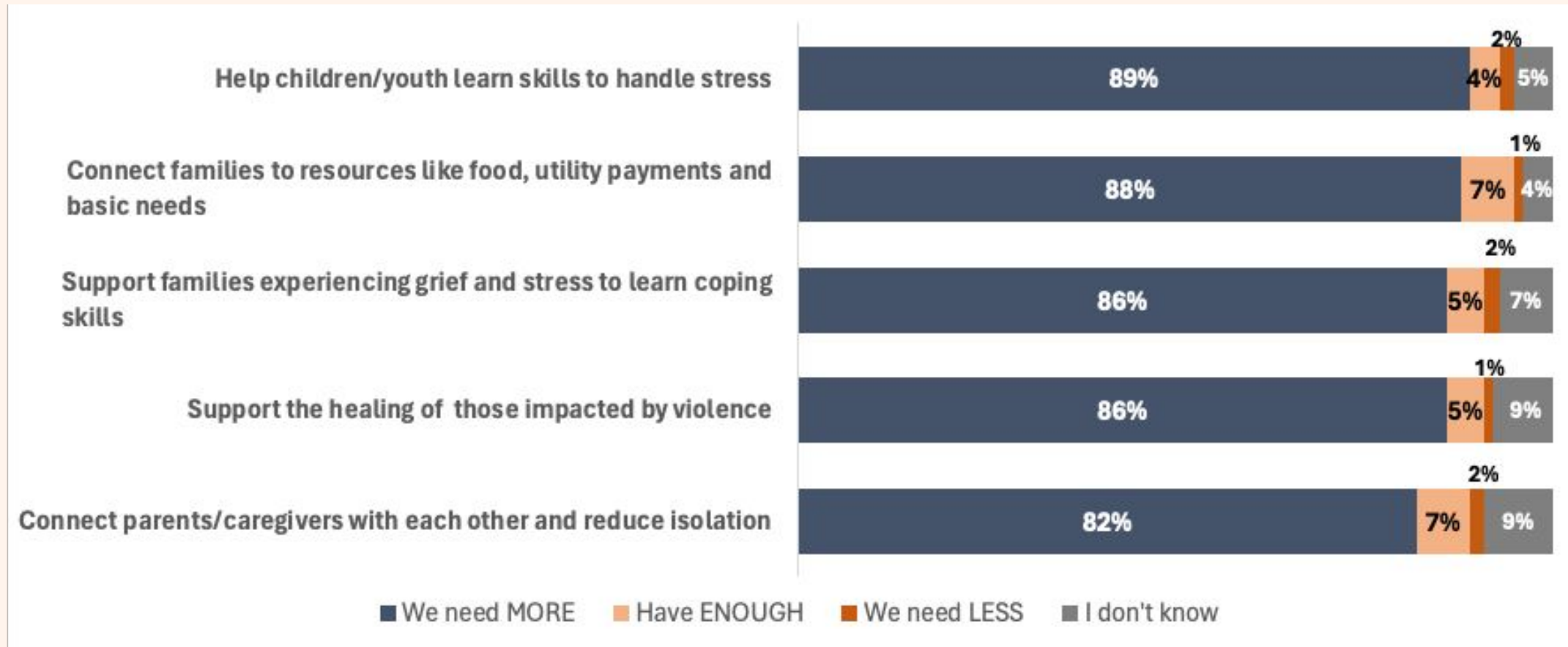
Programs for families experiencing high levels of stress and/or trauma in my community

Community members and providers were surveyed on how much their community needs the following programs for families who experience trauma and high stress.

Question: Families experiencing high levels of stress and/or trauma in my community need...

1. Programs that help children/youth learn skills to handle stress
2. Programs that connect families to resources like food, utility payments, housing assistance, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits
3. Programs that support the healing of children and youth who have been affected by violence in their homes, such as domestic violence or gang violence
4. Programs that connect parents/caregivers and families with each other and reduce isolation
5. Programs that support children, youth, and families experiencing grief and stress to learn skills to cope

Families experiencing high levels of stress and/or trauma in my community need programs that...



N* = 662
*Community members & providers

Community Perspectives

Programs that help children and youth learn skills to handle stress:

- Black (90%), Middle Eastern/Northern African (100%), Asian (92%), and Hispanic/Latinx (92%) respondents were significantly more likely than White (80%) and Native Hawaiian (72%) respondents to indicate this as a program area where their communities need more support.
- Among the families indicating the need for more programs, families caring for someone with a disability (84%) and families with teenage parents (100%) were significantly more likely than other families to indicate their communities need a LOT MORE programs in this area.

Programs that connect families to resources like food, utility payments, housing assistance, WIC and SNAP benefits:

- Having more supportive programs that provide assistance for basic needs were very important and considered a major need for single parent families (97%), families without enough food (98%), families experiencing houselessness (97%), families caring for someone with a disability (98%) and immigrant families (90%).

Community Perspectives

Programs that support the healing of children and youth who have been affected by violence in their homes, such as domestic violence or gang violence:

- Middle Eastern (89%), American Indian (80%), Black (74%), and Asian (66%) respondents are significantly more likely than White families (51%) to indicate their communities need a LOT MORE supportive programs to assist their children who have been affected by violence.
- This was an important program area for respondents with children between the ages of 19 and 24 (93%), families with foster care youth (100%), families without enough food (98%), families experiencing houselessness (97%), and single-parent households (91%).

Programs that connect parents and caregivers and families with each other and reduce isolation:

- Black (88%), Hispanic/ Latinx (86%) and Asian (85%) respondents were significantly more likely than White families (72%) to indicate programs that reduce isolation as an important need for their communities.
- Respondents caring for foster care youth (96%), respondents experiencing houselessness (97%) and respondents without enough food (96%) are significantly more likely than other families to indicate their families need more program support in this area.

Focus groups with parents/caregivers reported an increased sense of loneliness and named community-building as a potential remedy.

For many youth and parents, loneliness stemming from the pandemic continues to impact their mental health.

“I feel alone and want to be a part of a community where I can connect with people, especially women, to strengthen my mental health. Sometimes it is hard to go about life alone.” - Parent

“It would be nice to have a network that can help support single parents.” - Parent

“I wish there were more community-building spaces that also connect people with resources. It is hard to find resources on your own.” - Youth

Comparing perspectives

Programs that support children, youth, and families experiencing grief and stress to learn skills to cope:

- Black (93%), Asian (89%), and Middle Eastern/Northern African (100%) respondents are significantly more likely than White (77%) and Native Hawaiian (72%) respondents to indicate that their community needs more programs in this area.
- Teenage parent respondents (92%), respondents caring for foster care youth (83%), respondents caring for someone with a disability (82%), and respondents experiencing houselessness (77%) are significantly more likely than other respondents to indicate their community needs a LOT MORE programs in this area.

BIPOC youth have few therapists that look like them and that they feel they can trust.

Youth experience challenges finding mental health care services committed to maintaining their privacy.

“Mental health is one that I feel like my community shy away from. Also the lack of therapists that look like them now...or just a lack of therapists in general, but also people of color.”

– Youth

“I’ve done mental health counseling through my school, because they offered it to students, the only issue is that it wasn’t completely confidential. I’d set up an appointment myself and then they’d call my dad about it.”

“We have a school social worker—she’s amazing and confidential, but she’s responsible for over 300 kids, so I can barely get into to see her when I need it the most.”

– Youth

The term and concept of “mental health” doesn’t translate well within immigrant and refugee families and communities who speak languages other than English.

For many families, “mental health” is a foreign [and westernized] concept that lacks credibility—making access to education and support challenging.

“The only time I’ve heard or learned about mental health was in school, and it was only one unit that lasted 1-2 days.” – Youth

“[What’s mental health?] In the Asian community, if you go to therapy, then there’s some inherently wrong with you. They just don’t believe the concept of mental health exists.” – Youth

“[My parents] often say, oh you haven’t gone through life. You don’t know what it is to struggle and be dirt poor. You have nothing to be sad about. That kind of mentality.” – Youth



“Mental health is still a taboo subject. During freshman year when COVID hit, I talked to my mom about getting a therapist, just to help me out during a difficult time. Every time, she’d say, why do you need a therapist? You’re a teenager - you’re just sad. Why do I need to pay for a therapist? I also told my dad about my mental health and he said: that’s not real.”

- Youth

Recommendations: Child abuse prevention and intervention

- **Confidential advocates for youth:** Youth want a confidant who is able to advocate for them. They would like to have an ally they could turn to for support and advice.
- **More support from legal aid to navigate government benefits and mitigate the negative impacts of government assistance.**
- **Mental and behavioral health support for the whole family:** Families expressed the need for mental health support for the whole family, especially for families with relatives in foster care who desire to heal and unite as a family.
- **Support programs that provide access to services for families, especially after 5 pm during the week and during the weekend:** Lack of access to basic needs and social services (e.g., counseling, shelter) during the weekends and outside regular business hours is a challenge for families experiencing trauma and housing instability.
- **Families desire programs that provide culturally responsive mental health services:** Youth acknowledged the generational disconnect they experience when discussing mood disorders and mental health with their parents. To mitigate the effects of mental health silencing, families seek a holistic approach to family therapy that includes providing education to parents about trauma and mental health, especially for families that speak languages other than English.

Q&A

Community Vision for Portland Children's Levy and their community

Perception of PCL

What do people know about PCL?

- Those primarily doing direct service or community-based work knew less about PCL than those who were doing at least some systems-level work.
- The Community Council stood out as an essential part the PCL process and ensuring community has a voice.

Additional Advice

What additional advice do interview participants have for PCL?

- Build relationships with people doing the work.
- Consider climate resilience as a key priority.
- Act both upstream and downstream.
- Consider creative ways to show kids we care about them.
- Ensure that Community Council reflects the community. And pay them.
- Be part of the collaborative conversation happening at a system level.
- Show how the community can get involved.
- Consider more collaborative efforts that benefit multiple organizations.

“Does the Children’s Levy fund new organizations and programs or the usual suspects? Some of them aren’t making an impact in the community like they should be.”

– Community Member

“How does the Portland Children’s Levy grant program work? How does one apply? I know so many micro organizations that would be perfect for funding, but I’m not sure how to encourage them to apply.”

– Community Member

“I’ve never heard of the Portland Children’s Levy. I want to learn more about what they do with our tax dollars and how families can get connected to resources.”

– Community Member

Five Year Vision

What change would you like to see in the community after the next five years of the Levy?

- A declining poverty rate for families with children.
- A next generation of Portlanders with more skills and tools to thrive—academically, behaviorally and emotionally.
- More spaces where children and youth feel a sense of belonging.
- More awareness and training for adults in children's lives.
- More engagement of communities to solve the problem collectively.
- More funding flexibility and imagination.
- Sustainability beyond just the next five years.

Interviewer: What does it look like for the next generation of Portlanders to have more skills and tools to thrive?

“Being able to stabilize the home and help families with their traumas and structures, bills and food. Being able to give these youth tools to survive and know that it's okay to seek mental health... I think it would change things tremendously.”

- Community Member

Final Reflections & Thank You

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