



2022 Family Needs Assessment Briefing

Presented by Building Bright Futures'
Families & Communities Committee
and
Vermont's Early Childhood Data & Policy Center
([Vermontkidsdata.org](https://vermontkidsdata.org))

Wednesday, May 17th, 2023



Briefing Agenda

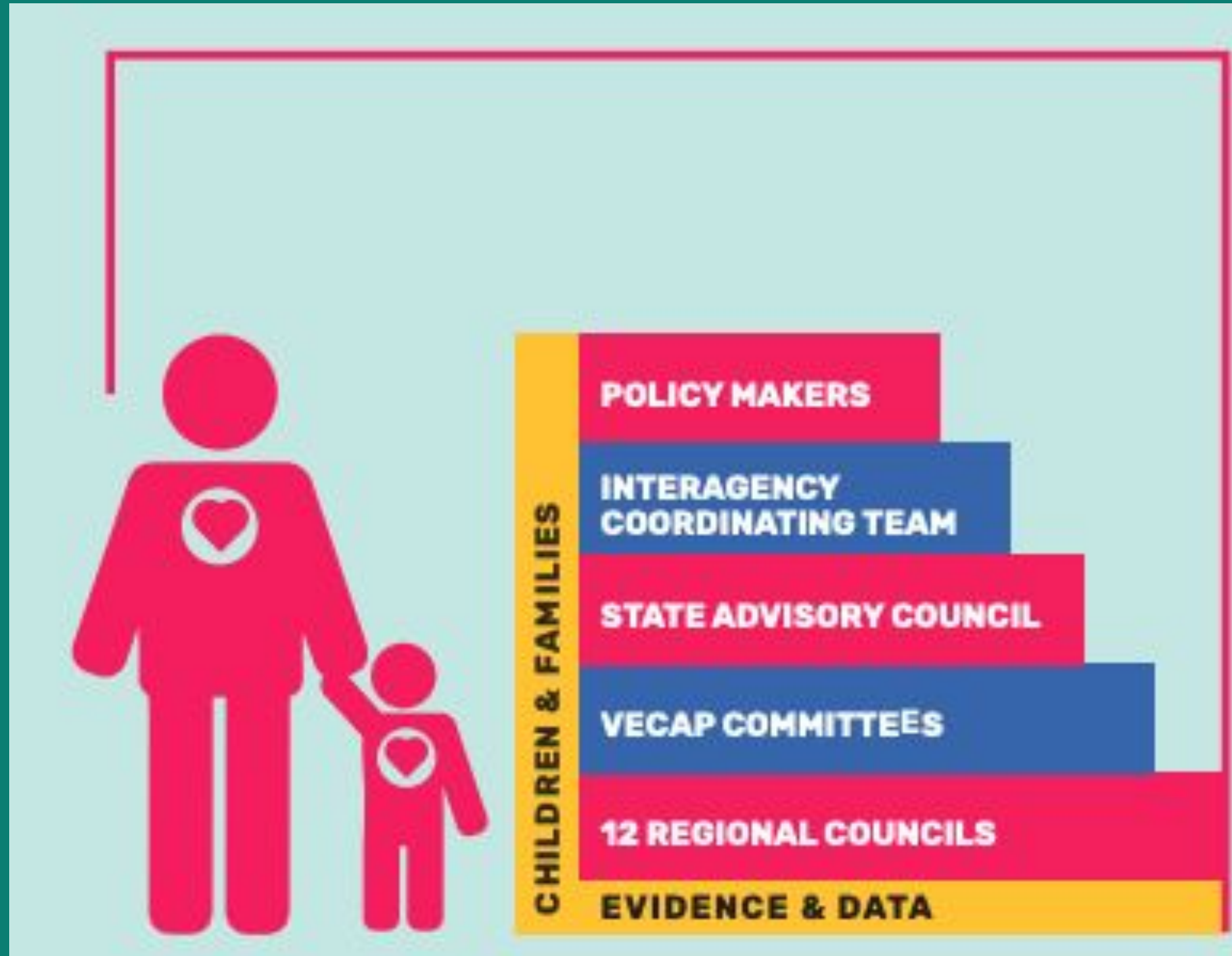
- Welcome
- About the Families & Communities Committee
- BBF Structure
- Overview of Family Needs Assessment
 - Methodology
 - Limitations and Demographics
 - Related Findings
 - Policy Considerations
- Policy Consideration Panel
- Q & A

The Families and Communities Committee



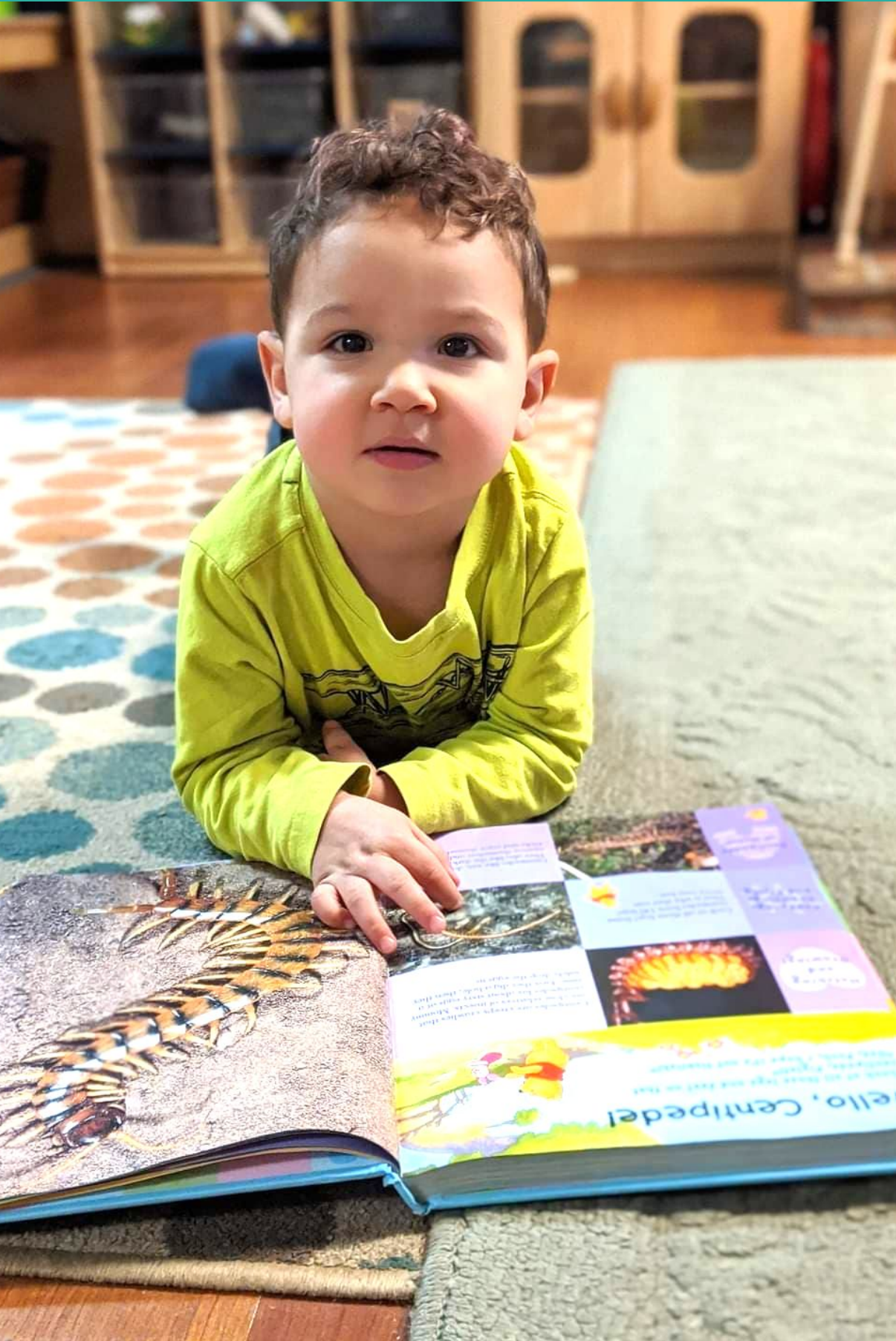
- Vermont's Early Childhood Action Plan (VECAP) is a vision for 2026 to support a comprehensive and integrated early childhood system
- Committee is made up of majority parents and caregivers
- Parents are paid for their time working or attending meetings
- Helps create an early childhood system that mirrors the diverse needs of families
- Partner in big picture conversations about improving the early childhood system and decision making processes
- Develop and train family leaders

Building Bright Futures Early Childhood Infrastructure and 450+ Person Network



The Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council and network infrastructure is charged by Act 104/Title 33, Chapter 46 to use evidence and data to monitor the system of services and provide the mechanism to support accountability.

Creation of the Family Needs Assessment



- Led by the Families & Communities Committee and supported by BBF's State Advisory Council Network
- Funded by the Vermont Integration Prenatal to 3 (VIP-3) grant
 - Lead by Vermont Department of Health, Family and Child Health division partnering with BBF
 - 5 year grant ending July 2026

Survey Design

- Collaborative process to design the survey in spring/summer 2022
- Survey will be conducted regularly going forward



Family Needs Assessment Methodology



Parent Ambassadors

- Recruited and trained 14 Parent Ambassadors from around the state of VT

Survey Distribution

- Family Leaders supported the Parent Ambassadors as they conducted the survey from August 15 - October 15 2022

Results Analysis

- Over the next 6 months, the BBF Data Team analyzed the results, pulling out reoccurring themes from individual responses resulting in 4 Policy Considerations



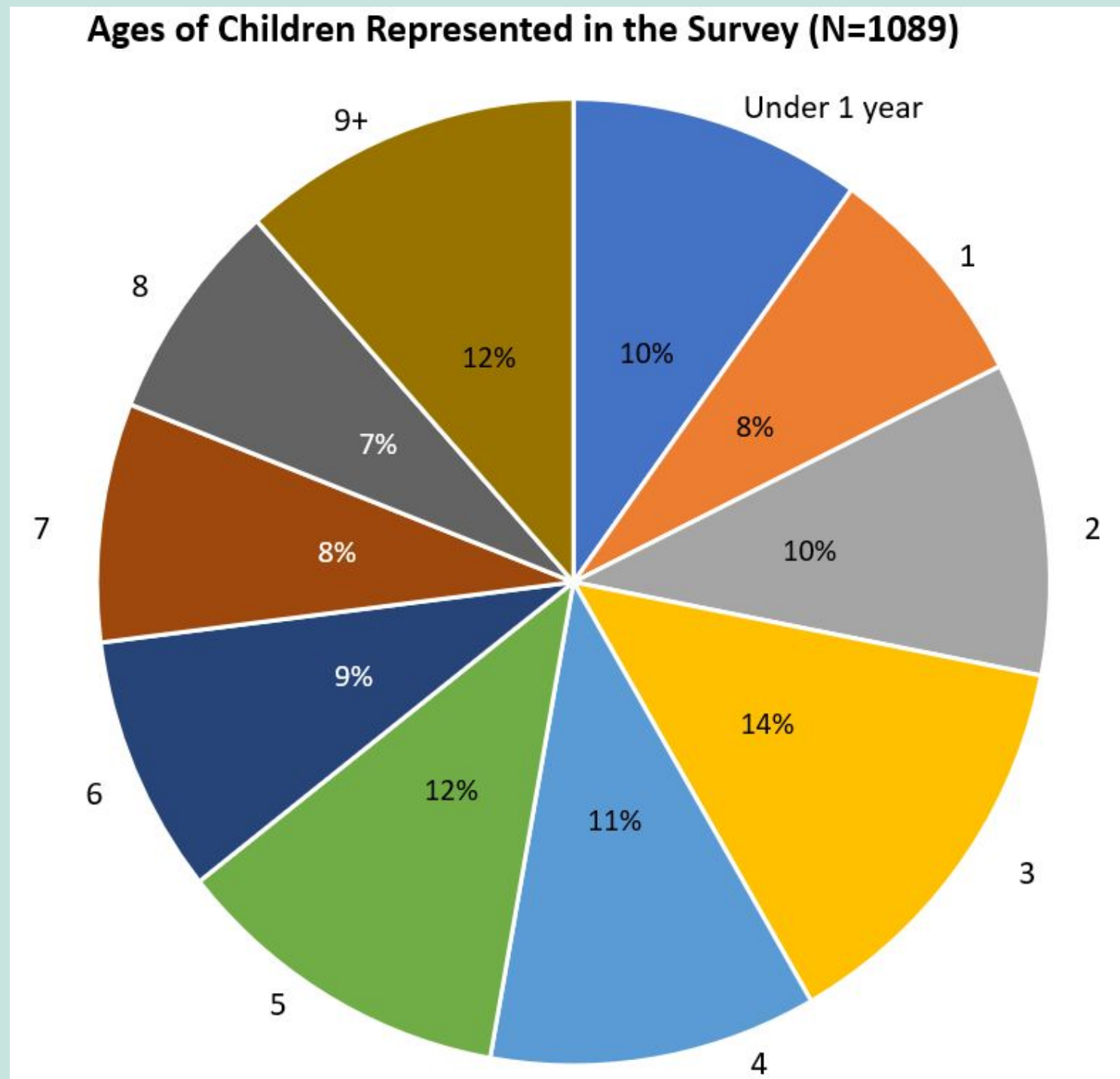
Family Needs Assessment Limitations

Limitations

- **Self-selection bias**
 - Respondents were more likely to already be connected to resources in the early childhood system given that the survey was administered by Parent Ambassadors, their networks, and social media
 - The vast majority of respondents participated in the survey via SurveyMonkey online
- **Accessibility limitations**
 - Long survey in English
 - Some services were not specifically asked about, such as mental health services or home visiting services
- **Limited ability to fully analyze a large volume of data**
 - Limited sample size in some counties
- **Continued limitations related to the COVID-19** pandemic that may limit the generalizability of the findings



Family Needs Assessment Respondents

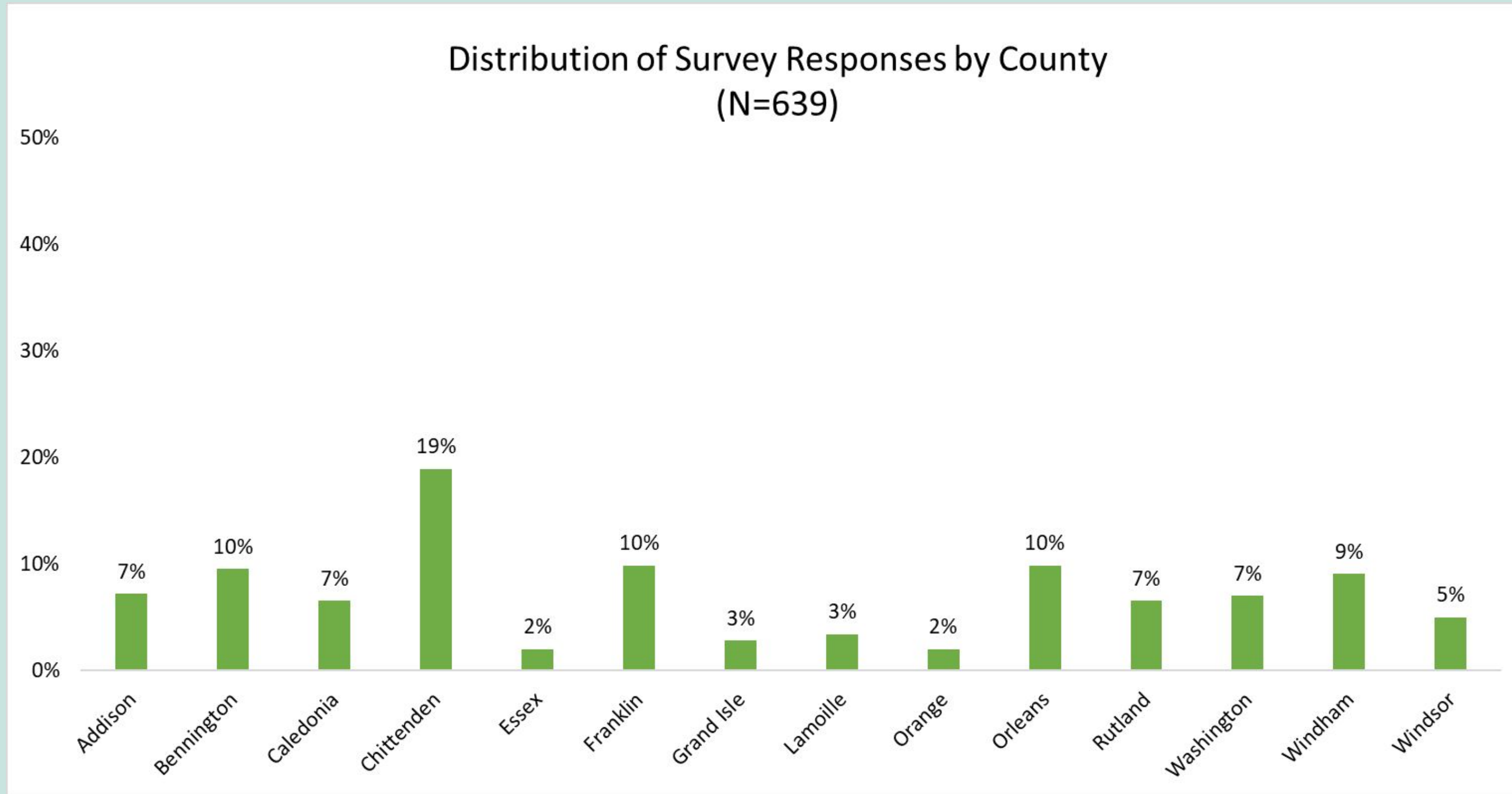


- **A total of 639 responses were received, representing 1089 children**
 - This is representative of about 2% of Vermont's total child population under age 9



DEMOGRAPHICS

Response by County



DEMOGRAPHICS

Race, Ethnicity & Gender

Female Respondents
536 (83%)



Other and Prefer Not to Answer
19 (3%)

Male Respondents
91 (14%)

Race	# Respondents	%
White	562	87.9%
Two or More Races	21	3.3%
Asian	14	2.2%
Black or African American	13	2.0%
Prefer Not to Answer	13	2.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	**	**
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	**	**

Ethnicity	# Respondents	%
Not Hispanic or Latino/a/x	539	84.4%
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	48	7.5%

Basic Needs

The vast majority of respondents agreed that they had access to basic physiological needs

- 92% of respondents agreed that they had access to safe, secure, affordable housing
- 94% agreed they had access to reliable transportation
- 91% of respondents agreed they had access to affordable food that met their needs and preferences
- 92% of respondents agreed with they had access to and can afford the necessities they need

My family has access to affordable food that meets our needs and preferences.	Agree %
Non-white or multiracial respondents	82%
White respondents	90%

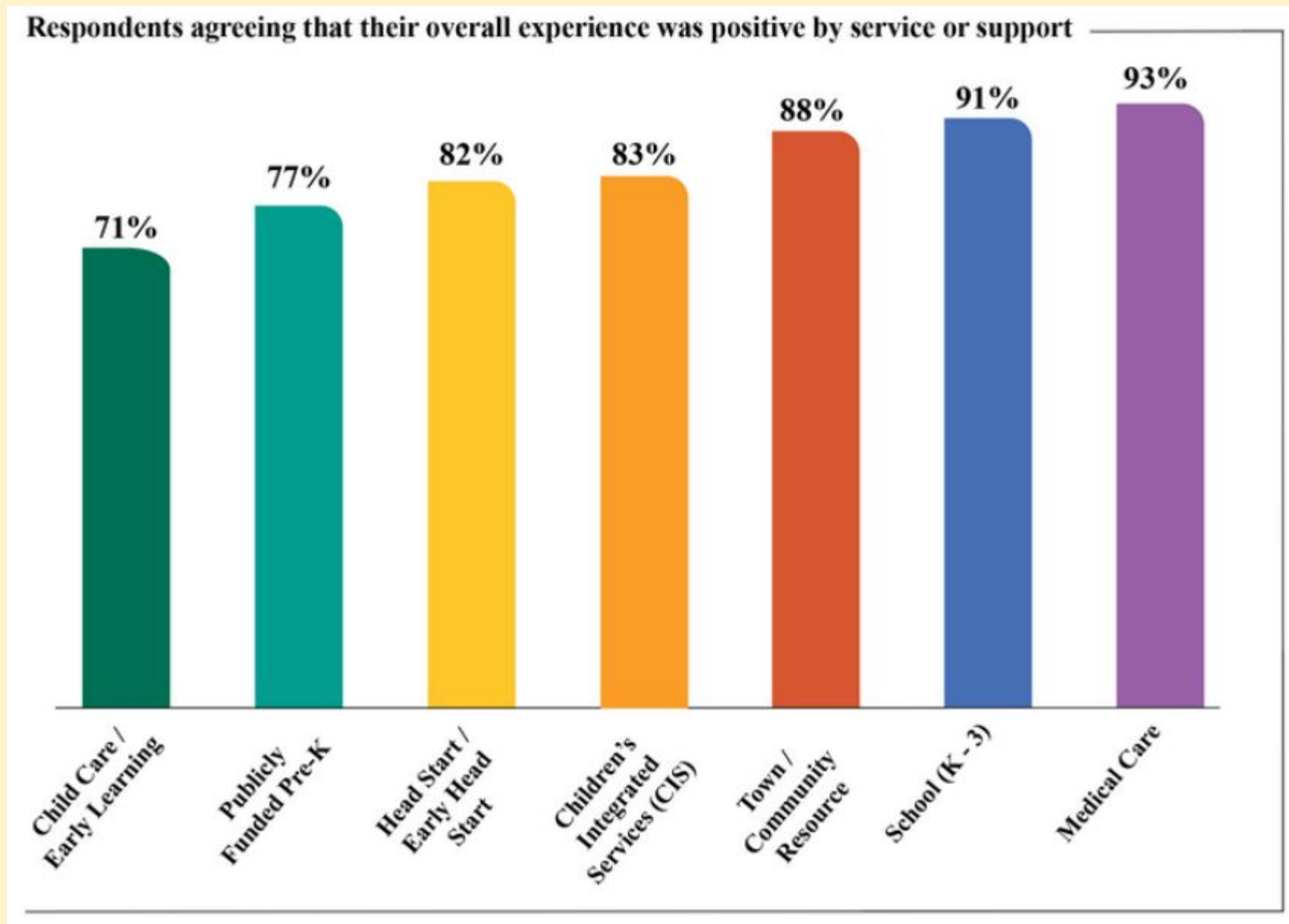
My family has access to and can afford the necessities we need	Agree %
Non-white or multiracial respondents	78%
White respondents	94%

My family has access to affordable food	Agree %
Does not participate in 3squares	92%
Participates in 3squares	87%



Overall Experience with Services & Supports

Respondents were given the opportunity to rate their overall experience with seven services & supports



Respondents were asked:
My experience with each of the following services/supports was overall positive (for example: met the needs of my family, and was easy to access):

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Experiences with Services & Supports



- Opportunities were given to provide in-depth feedback about 3 specific services or supports
- The number of responses for each setting or support ranged based on respondents' use of that service or support

Positive Key Themes

Seven key themes emerged across the services and supports from both qualitative and quantitative responses

Themes Related to Positive Experiences:

Respondents highlighted three key interrelated themes:

- Relationships with staff and providers
- Communication
- Ease of access
- **Relationships:** Interactions with providers and staff are a large part of receiving any service or support.
- **Communication:** Coordination and communication between providers (eg. OB/GYN & pediatric offices) were highlighted as an important part of a positive experience.
- **Ease of Access:** Two key factors impacted abilities to access resources: availability of timely services, and geographical proximity.

“The library offers so many great resources for families with young children. They bring their programs throughout Burlington, explain things clearly on the web, and the staff are so helpful and knowledgeable. They really make you feel like part of a community.” - Caregiver in Chittenden County

Challenging Key Themes

Seven key themes emerged across the services and supports from both qualitative and quantitative responses

Themes Related to Challenging Experiences:

Across services and supports, four common themes emerged:

- **Difficulty navigating the complex early childhood system**
- **Difficulty accessing a service or support due to cost or inequity**
- **Kindergarten transitions**
- **Difficulty accessing a service or support due to availability**
- **Navigating System:** The early childhood is complex, difficult to navigate, and respondents don't know what services exist or where to go to find them.
- **Cost or inequity:** The cost of child care in particular was highlighted as a key barrier to access and financial comfort.
- **Kindergarten:** Respondents shared mixed experiences with their transitions to Kindergarten.
- **Availability:** Limited availability is a key barrier to access across services & supports.

Difficulty Navigating the Complex Early Childhood System

“There are so many different ways that services are offered and it is not always clear how they are related. Word of mouth is a primary way that I learn about services and supports, but that is limited by my circles. Various directories are confusing and can provide conflicting information. A bunch of the resources are also far away.”

- Caregiver in Windham County

“I feel like information on various services is so scattered that it’s hard to find and access everything that’s available.”

- Caregiver in Orleans County

1. Evaluate and align Vermont’s strategies to inform and connect families to resources

Resource Statements	% Agree
I know where to look or who to ask when I am looking to access a new resource	86%
I was able to access needed services, resources, or support for my child(ren) and/or family.	87%

Difficulty Accessing Services Due to Inequity

“Not being from here originally I had no idea what systems were in place. Each system (WIC, food stamps, Medicaid etc.) has different financial eligibility requirements and it's incredibly confusing. For a long time I didn't even know I was eligible for some financial assistance for our healthcare because I assumed it was the same as food stamps.”

- Caregiver in Caledonia County

2. Review national best practices to reduce administrative burden and promote equity of access to necessities (food, diapers, formula, etc.)

My family has access to and can afford the necessities we need	Agree %
Non-white or multiracial respondents	78%
White respondents	94%



Kindergarten Transitions

“My child will start kindergarten next week. The meet and greet with her teacher was incredibly brief and really lacked in terms of introducing us to the school system. I am not at all comfortable with sending my child to the school and am not confident that she will be kept safe. I do believe that in the end, she will be safe and school will be great, but I wish that the teachers and staff made this clear to help with the anxiety of sending your child off to school.”

-Caregiver in Franklin County

3. Support the implementation of clear guidance on the full scope of kindergarten transitions

Transitioning Pre-K to Kindergarten	% Agree
The transition went smoothly and my family and child's needs were met	80%
During the time of the transition, my family felt supported and knew where to go for information or questions	77%

Difficulty Accessing Services Due to Availability

“Wait lists for mental health professionals in our area are outrageous!”
- Caregiver in Windsor County

“Impossible to get this service. Been waiting for a very long time for referral to [the organization] and have only received a letter saying we received it and will be in touch when we can. Unacceptable for children that need mental health services.”
- Caregiver in Franklin County

“It has not been easy for my child & I to get mental health counseling. Both my child & I were waitlisted at at least 15 plus different counseling centers or private counselors & we remained without therapy for over 2 years until we both finally got in at separate places.”
- Caregiver in Chittenden County

4. Pursue integration of mental health services throughout Vermont’s early childhood system that encourages ease of access for families with young children.

Policy Considerations

1. Evaluate and align Vermont's strategies to inform and connect families to resources
2. Review national best practices to reduce administrative burden and promote equity of access to necessities (food, diapers, formula, etc.)
3. Support the implementation of clear guidance on the full scope of kindergarten transitions
4. Pursue integration of mental health services throughout Vermont's early childhood system that encourages ease of access for families with young children.



Policy Considerations: Public and Private Partners Weigh in



Keely Agan

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2022 Vermont Early Childhood Family Needs Assessment

Read the report:

<https://vermontkidsdata.org/2022-family-needs-assessment/>



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