

# Girls in the Juvenile Justice System:

The need for gender-specific interventions targeting substance abuse, sexual risk-taking, and mental health issues

Lindsey Gray, MPH  
Aliya Buttar, BS  
Sandi Noffsinger, MPH  
Sarah Hernandez  
Teri-Lee Hedman, BS  
Rachael McGarrah, BS  
Kristen Clements-Nolle, PhD, MPH



# Background

- There are an increasing number of females involved with the juvenile justice system; however, most public health research focuses on males.
- Gender-specific assessment of substance abuse, sexual risk-taking, and mental health issues is essential for developing culturally appropriate interventions.

# Methods

## ▣ Eligibility

- 13-17 years
- On probation (with or without detainment)
- Able to conduct the assent and interview in English

## ▣ Parental notification / assent process

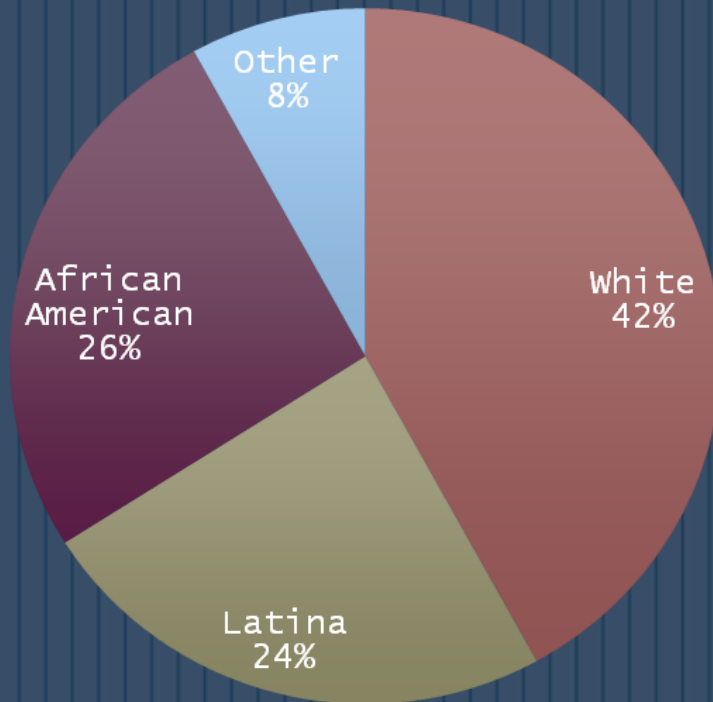
- Letters mailed to parents / guardians
- Two week time allotment to return “Decline to Participate” form
- Girls provided personal assent to the study

## ▣ Interviews

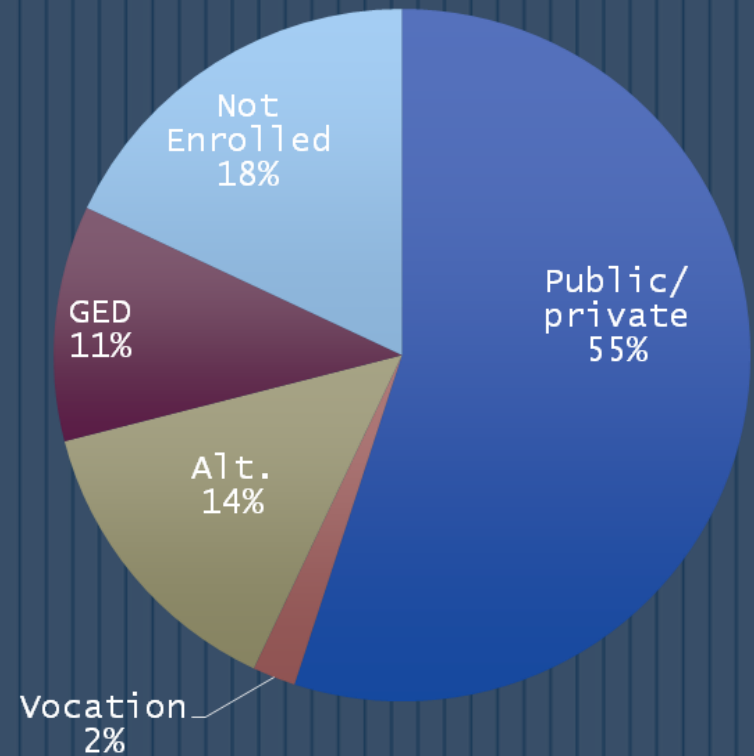
- N = 259 (136 Northern Nevada; 123 Southern Nevada)
- Audio Computer Assisted Self Interview (ACASI) ~ 30 minutes
- Validated measures were used (e.g., YRBS, CRAAFT, BSI-18)
- Confidential interview was followed by counseling & referrals

# Sample Characteristics

Race



School



□ N=259

# Juvenile Delinquency History

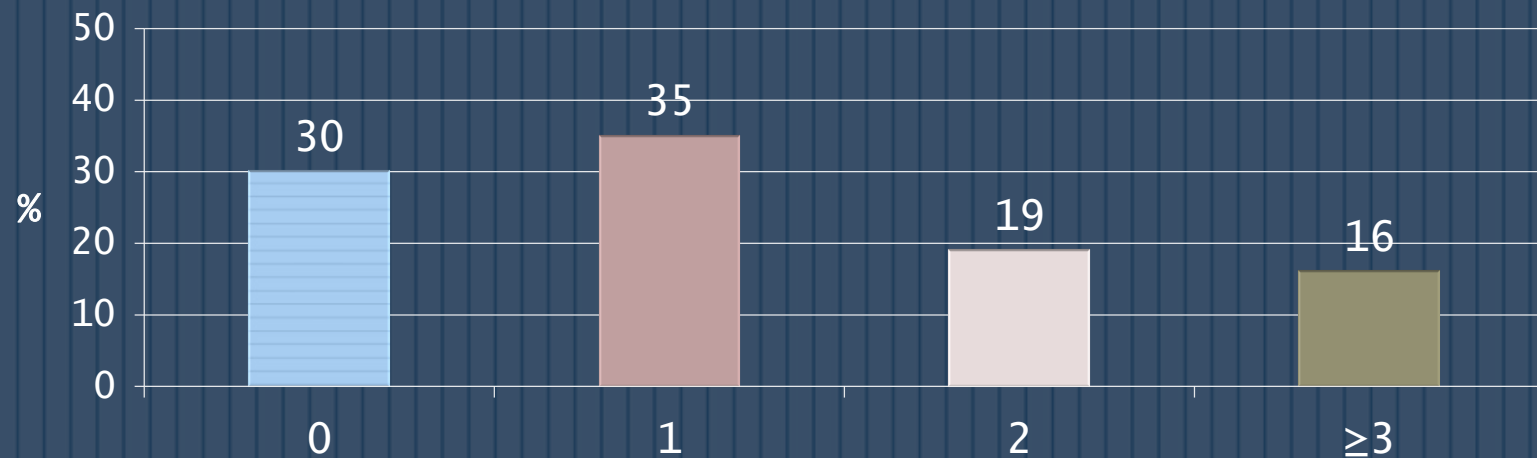
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# Juvenile Delinquency History

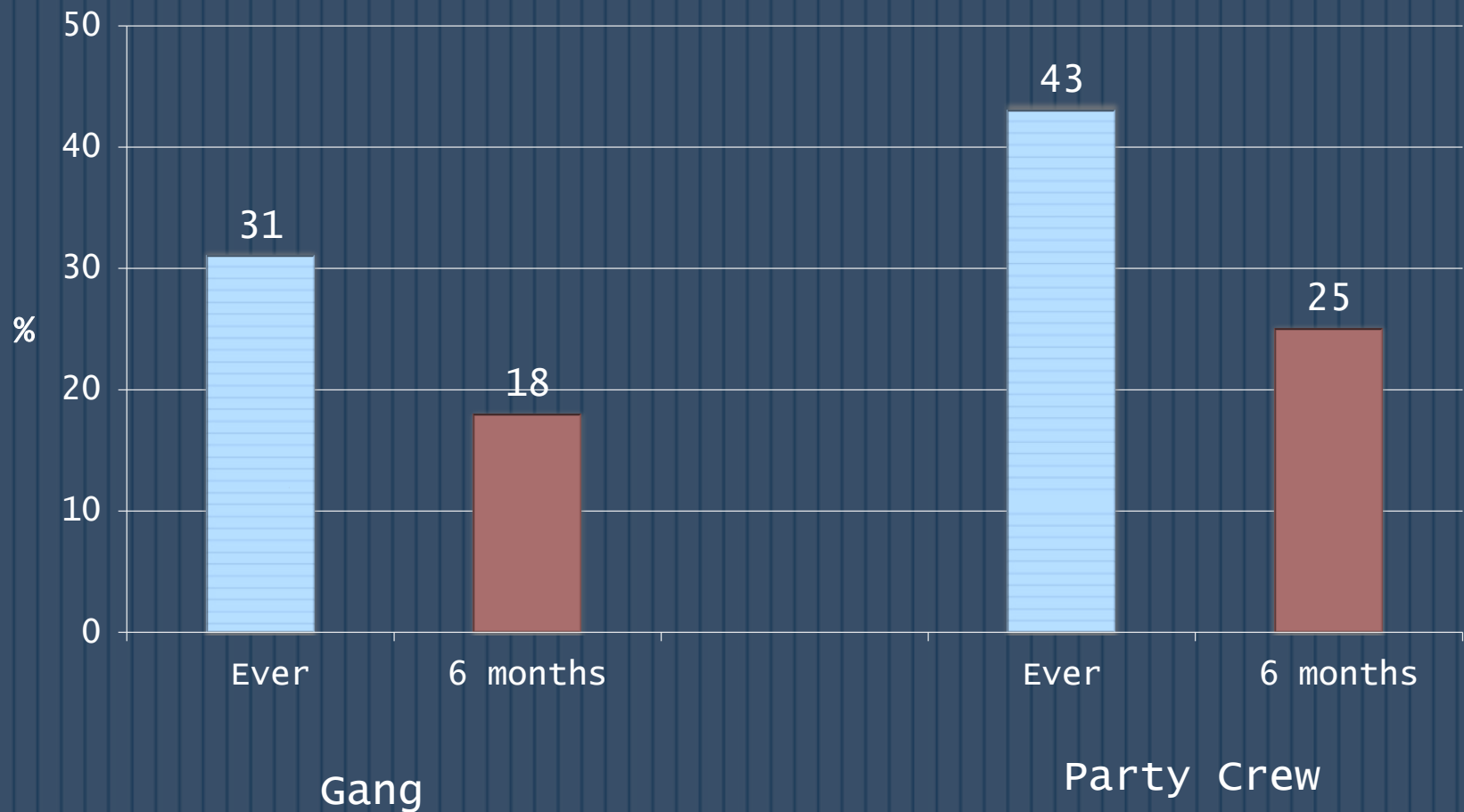
- **14** = Mean Age first brought to Juvenile Hall
- **4.3** = Mean # times brought to Juvenile Hall

Number of Times Detained



# Juvenile Delinquency History

## Gang and Party Crew Involvement



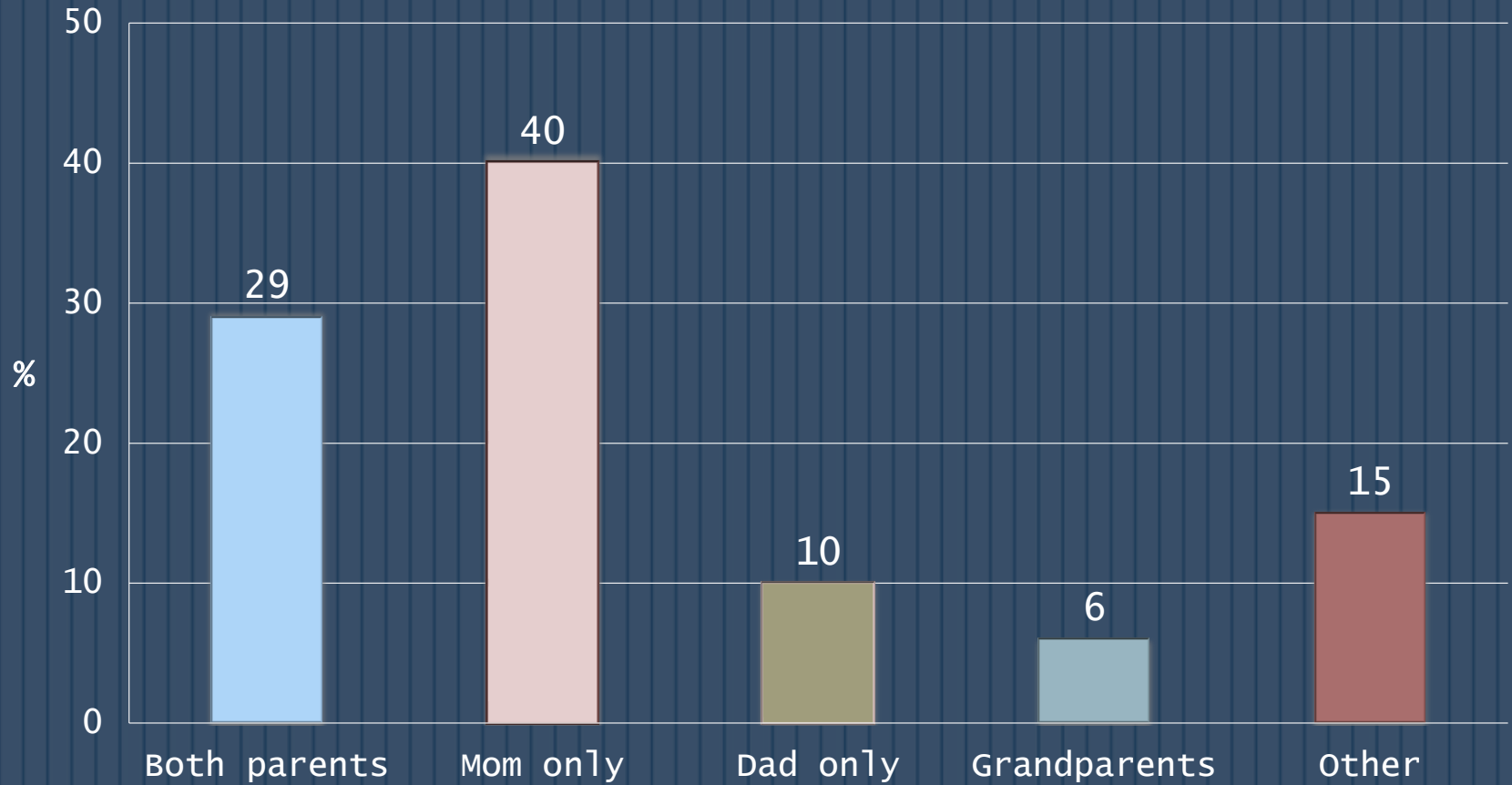


# Family Environment

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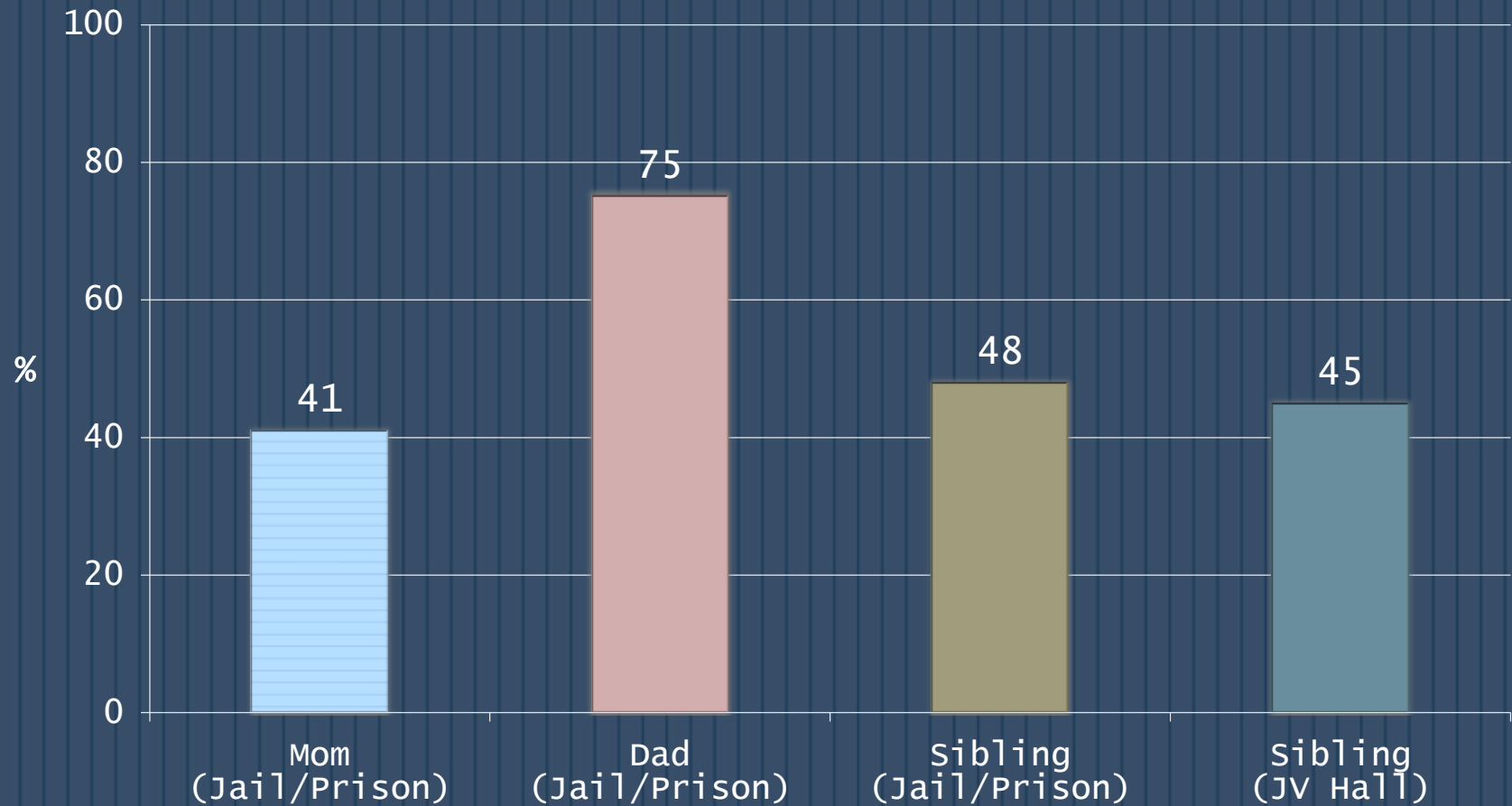
# Family Environment

## Girl's Caretaker



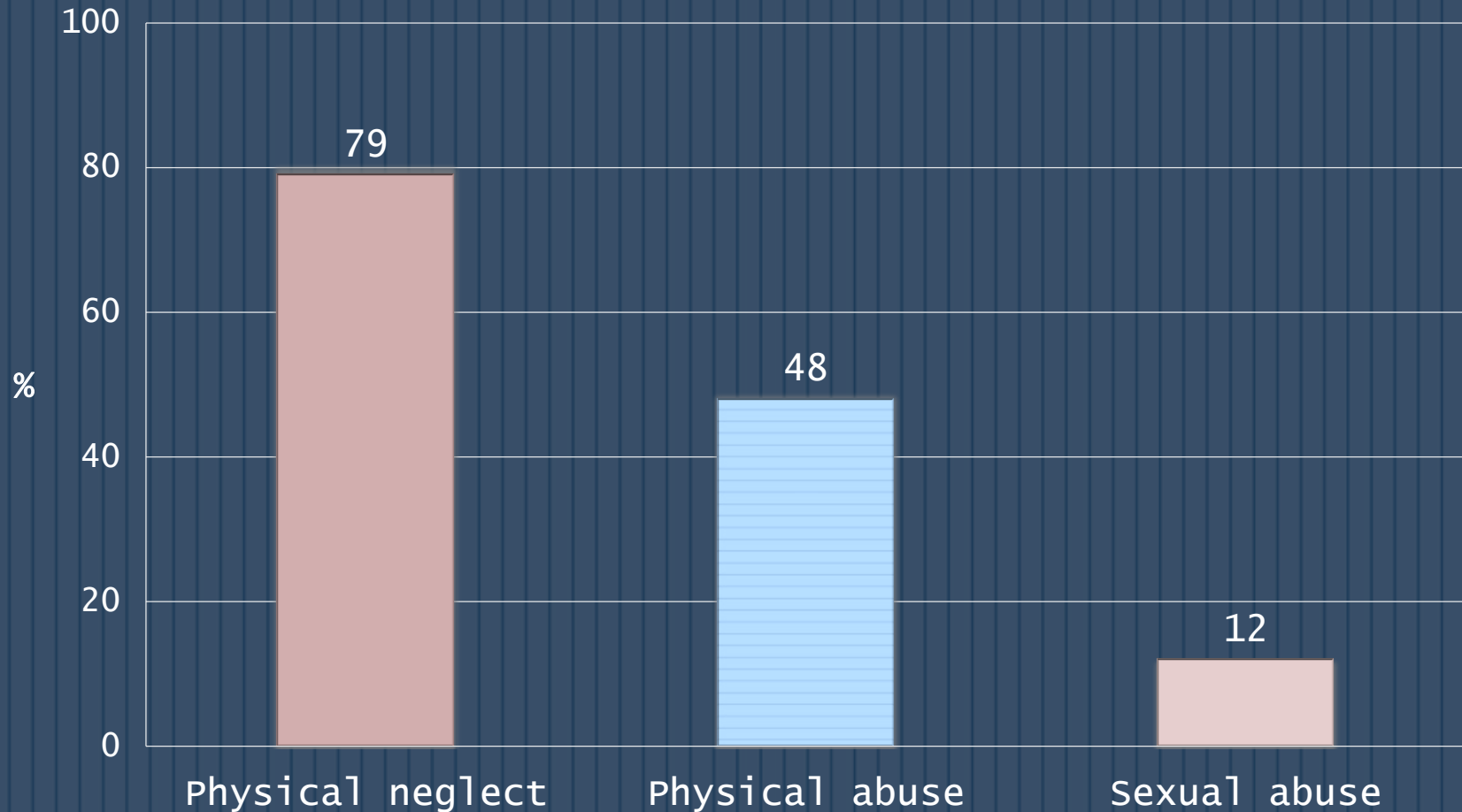
# Family Environment

## Family Incarceration History



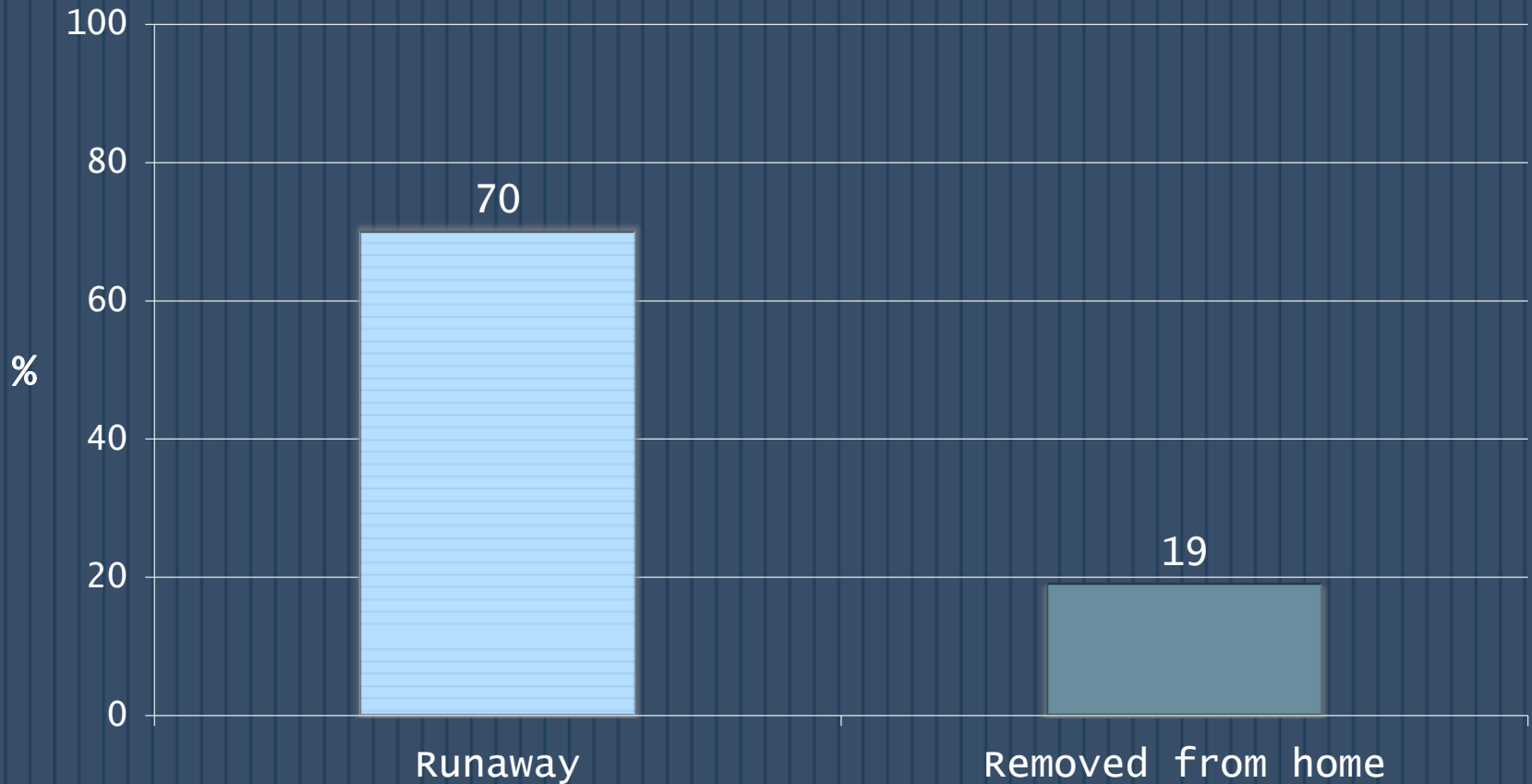
# Family Environment

## Parent/Caregiver Abuse and Neglect



# Family Environment

## Runaway or Removed From Home

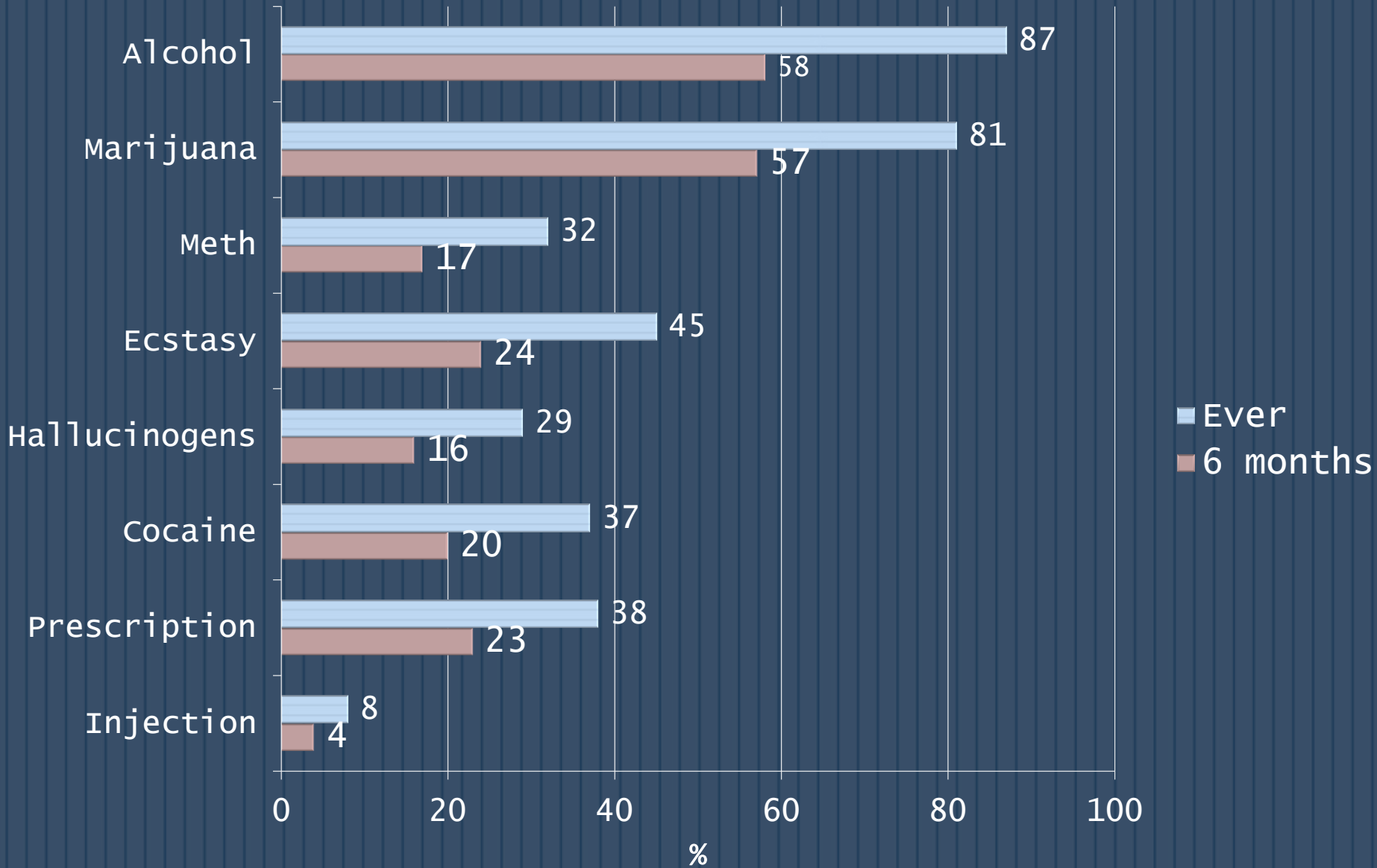


# Substance Use

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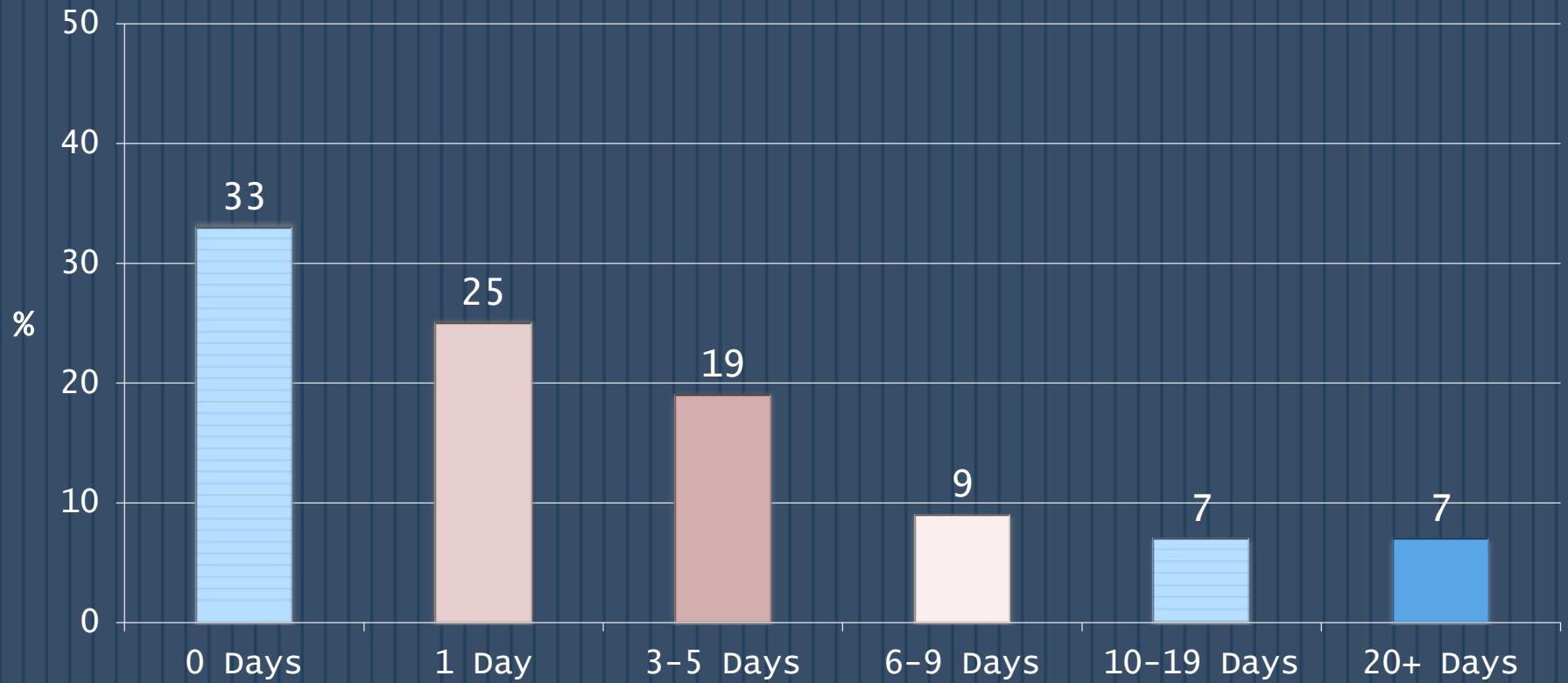


# Substance Use (Lifetime and 6 months)



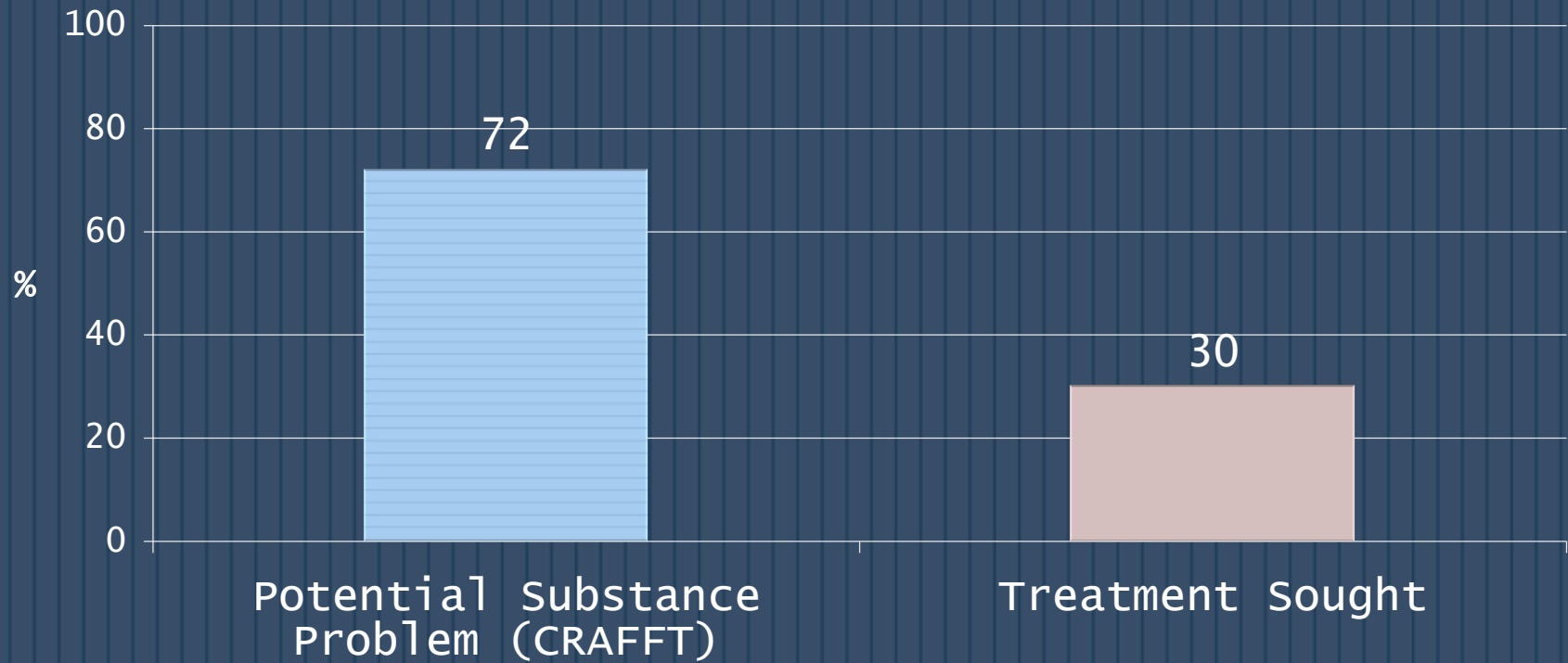
# Substance Use

## Binge Drinking (Past month)



# Substance Use

## Potential Substance Abuse and Treatment History



A score of 2 or more (out of 6) on CRAFFT signifies a potential or serious problem with drug and/or alcohol abuse.

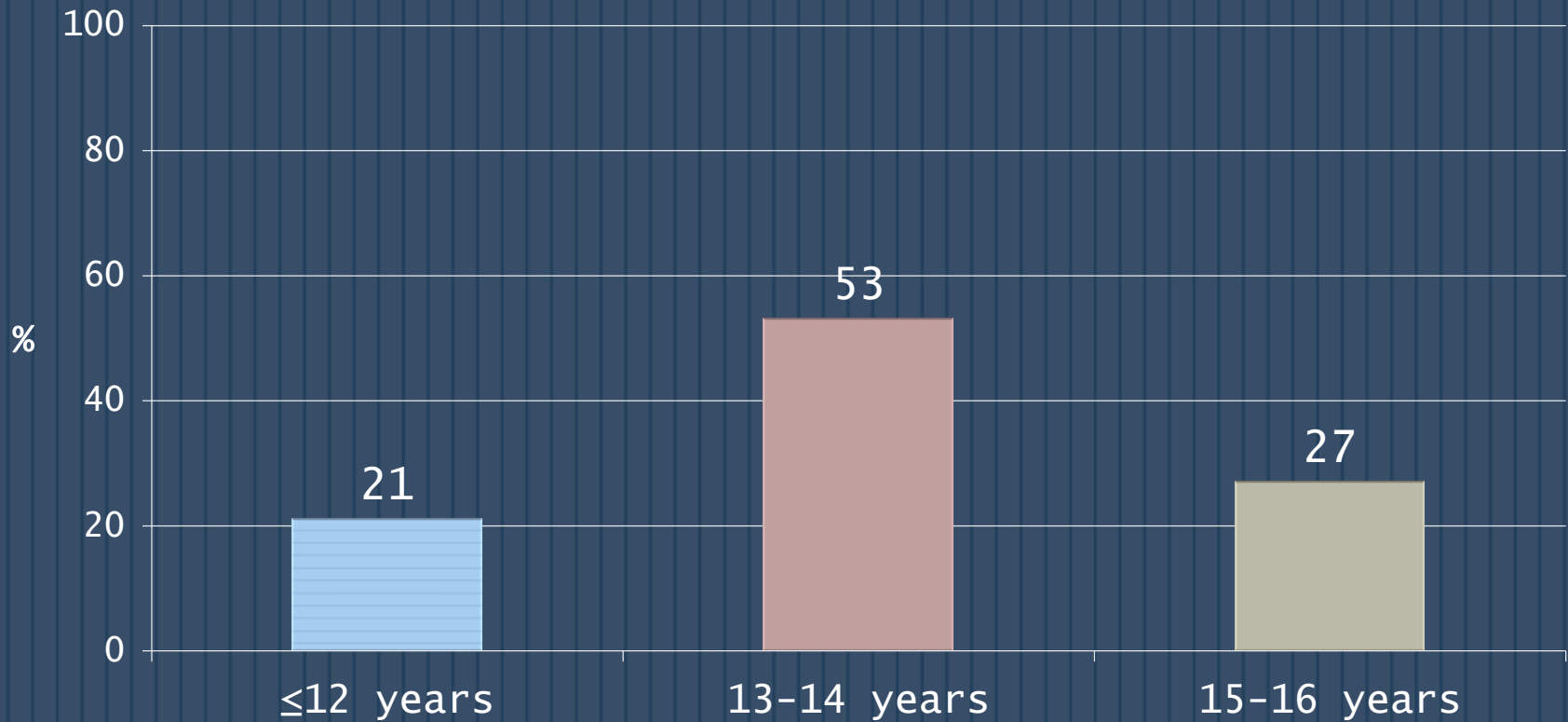
# Sexual Behaviors

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# Sexual Behaviors

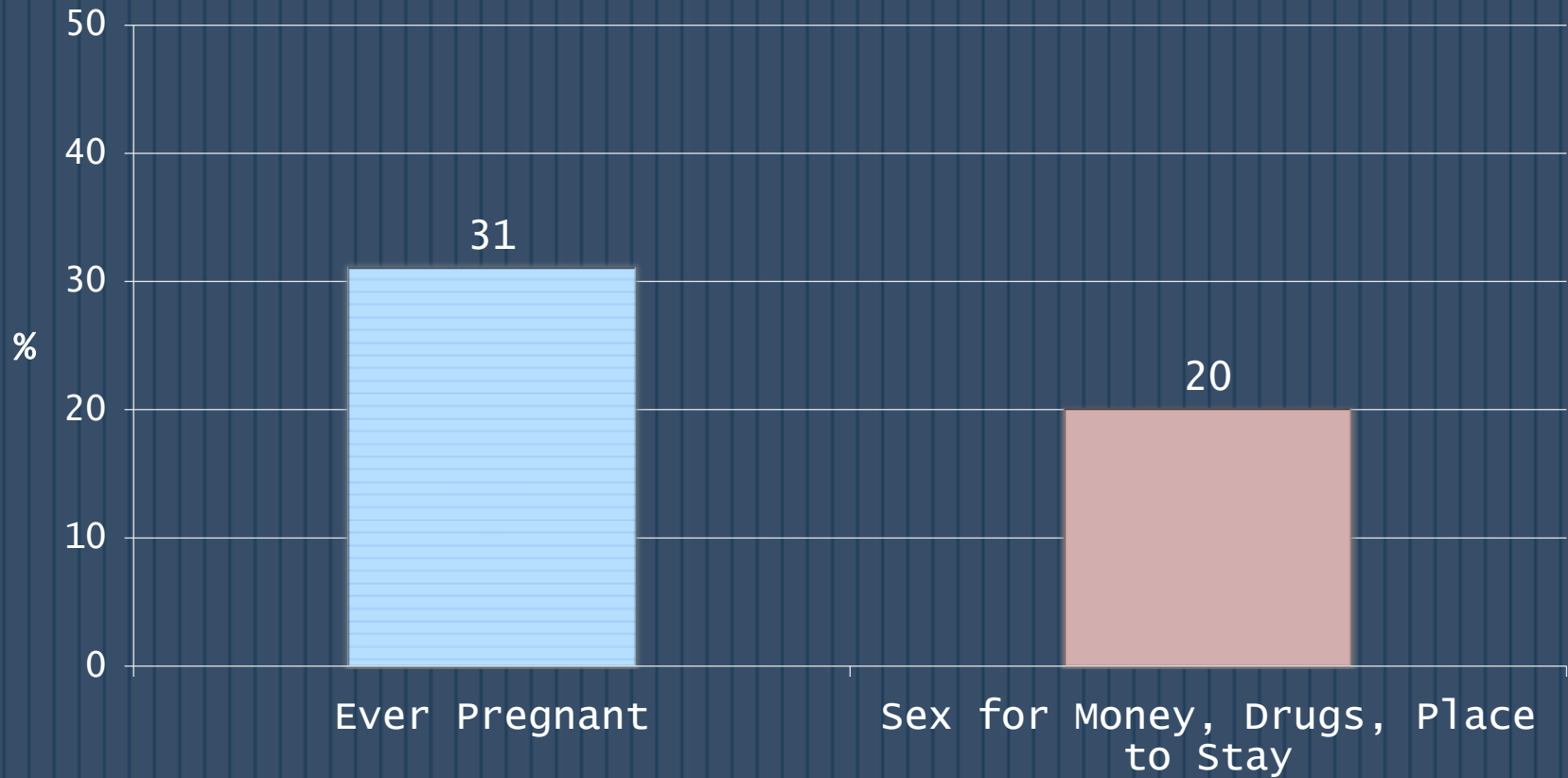
## Age of Sexual Debut



Note: 88% of sample had sex (n=224)

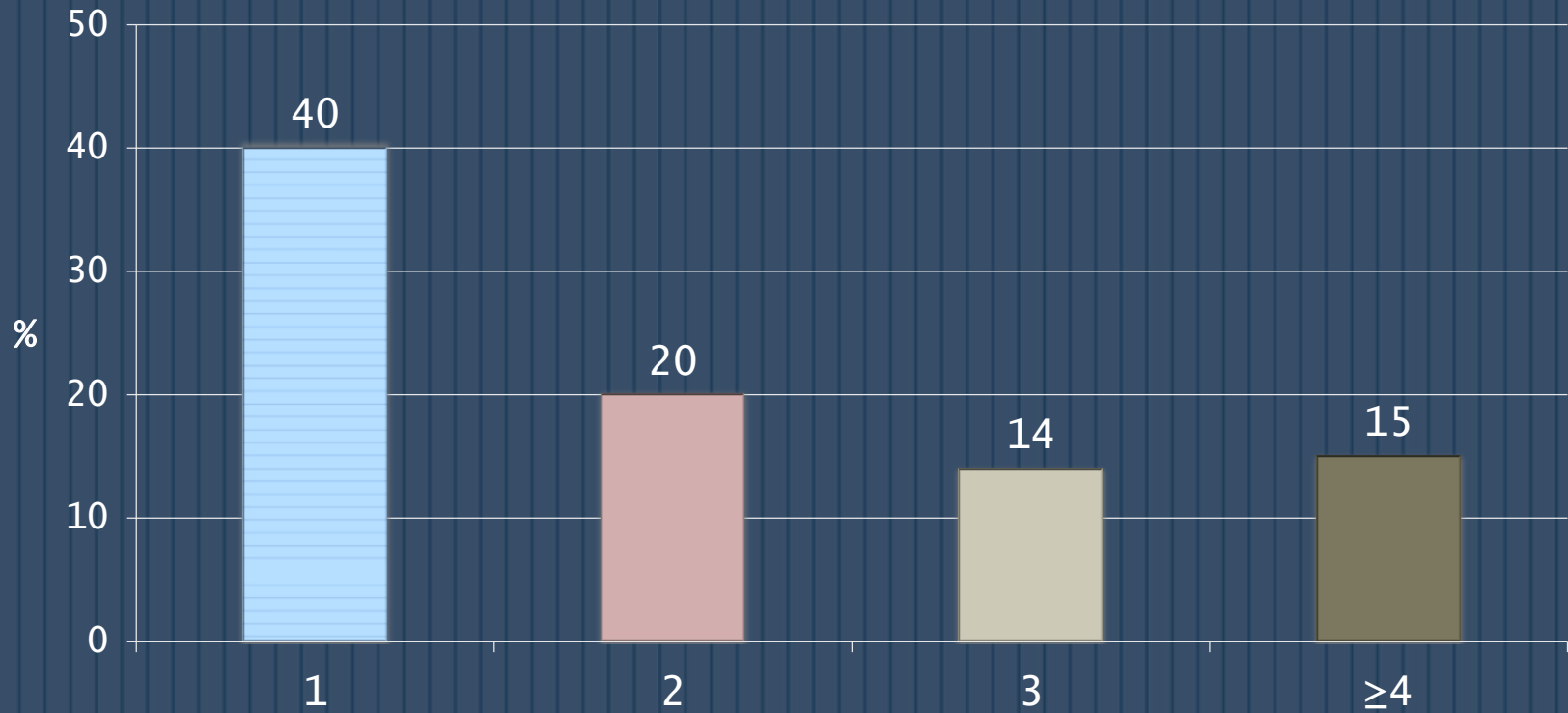
# Sexual Behaviors

## Pregnancy and Sex Trade



# Sexual Behaviors

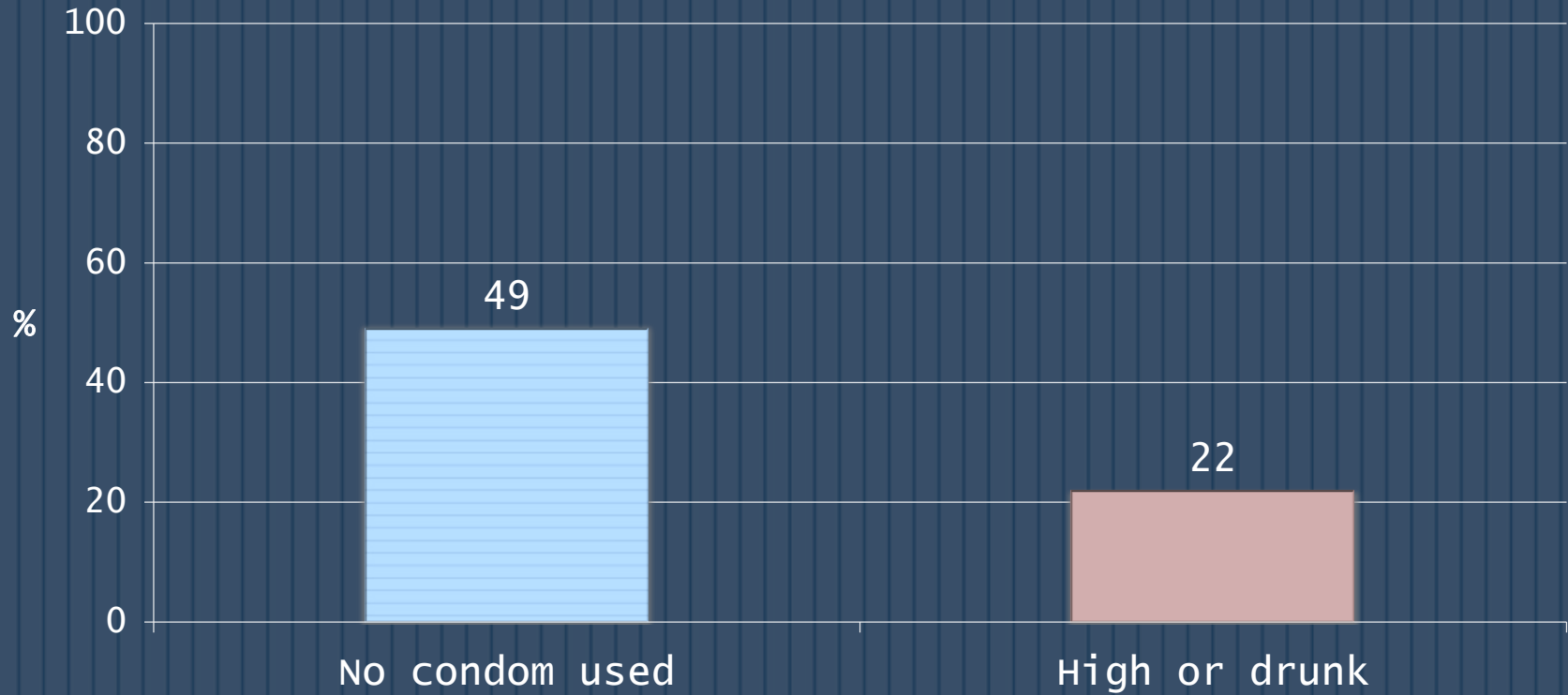
Number of Sexual Partners  
(Past 6 months)



Note: 88% of sexually active girls had vaginal sex in past 6 months (n=196)

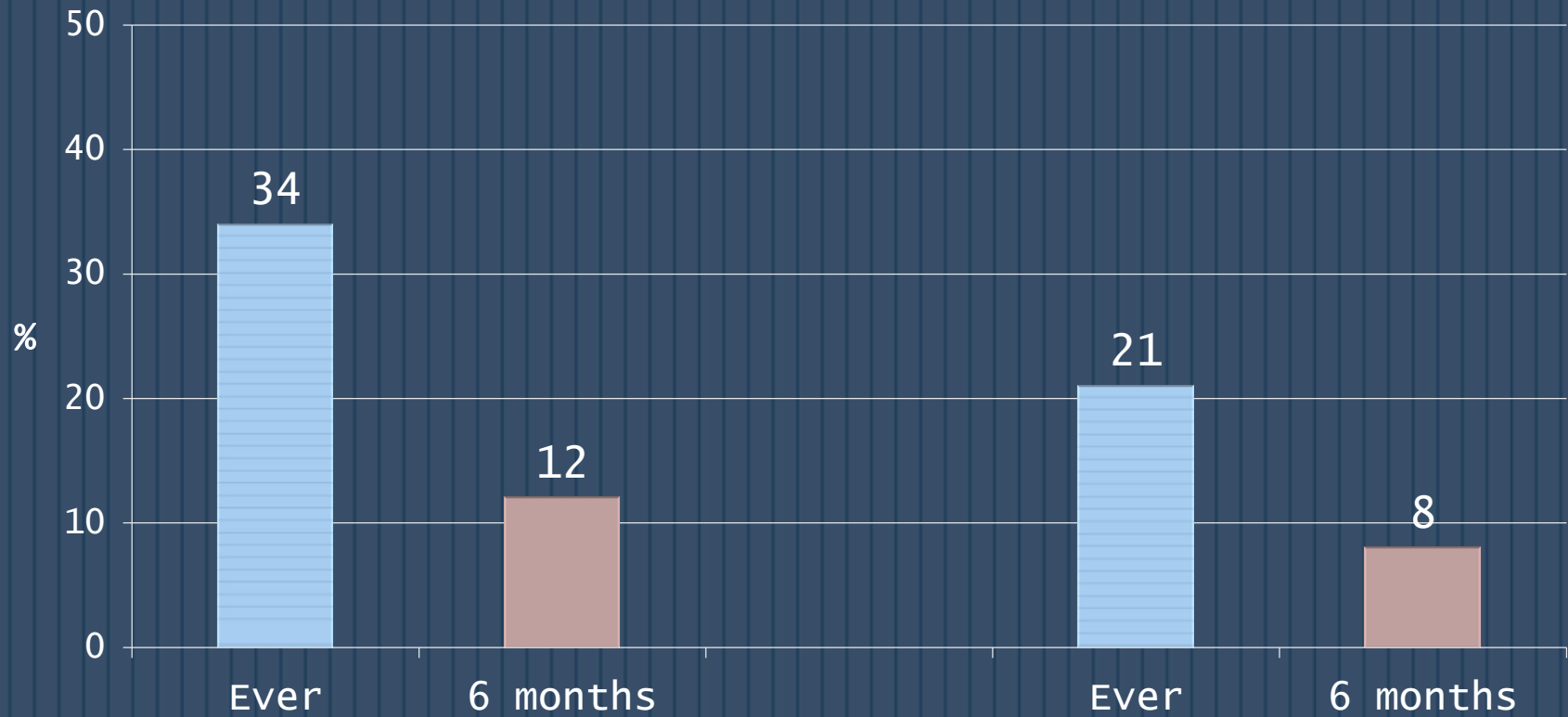
# Sexual Behaviors

Unprotected Sex and Sex while High  
(Last vaginal sex)



# Sexual Behaviors

## Intimate Partner Violence



Physical Violence

Forced Sex

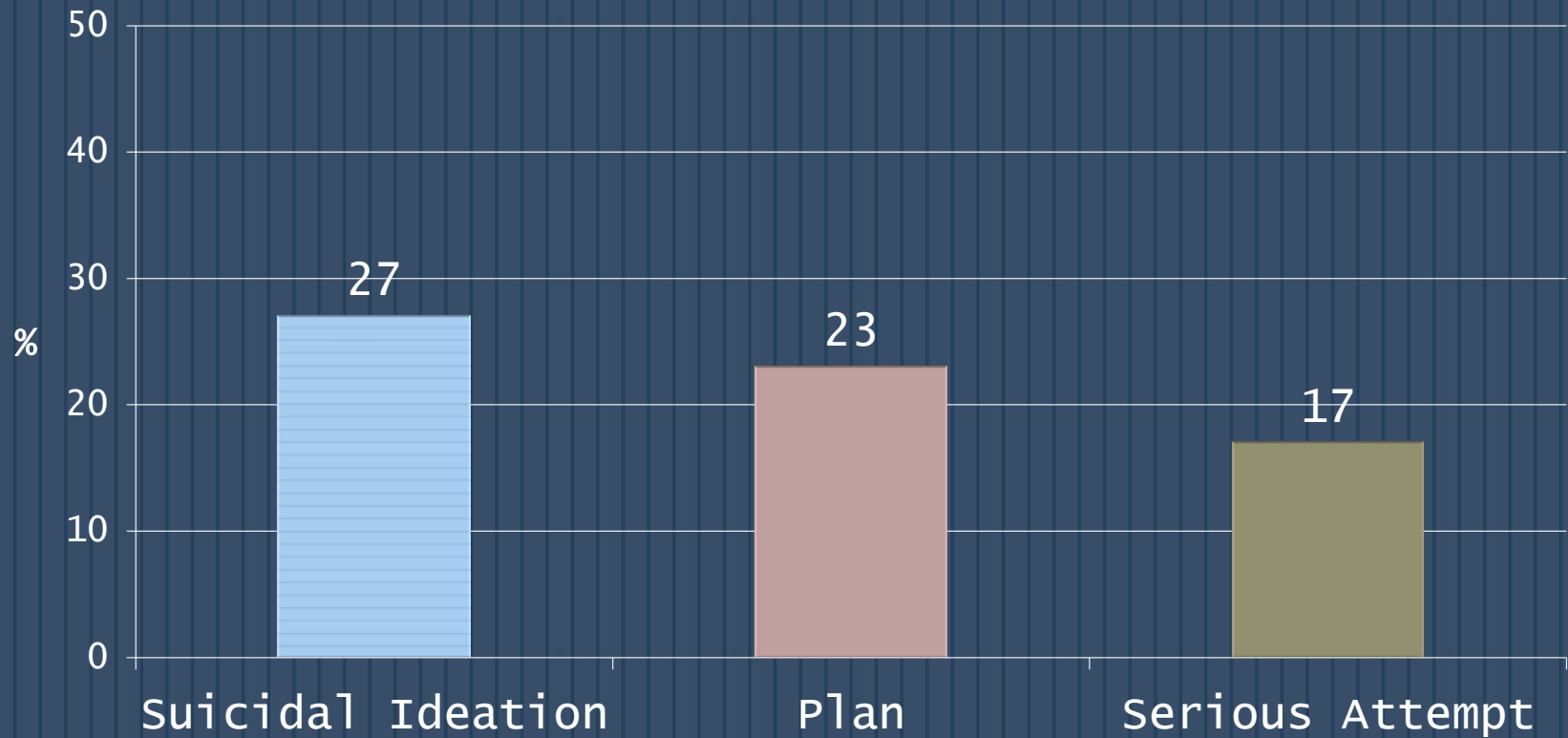
# Mental Health

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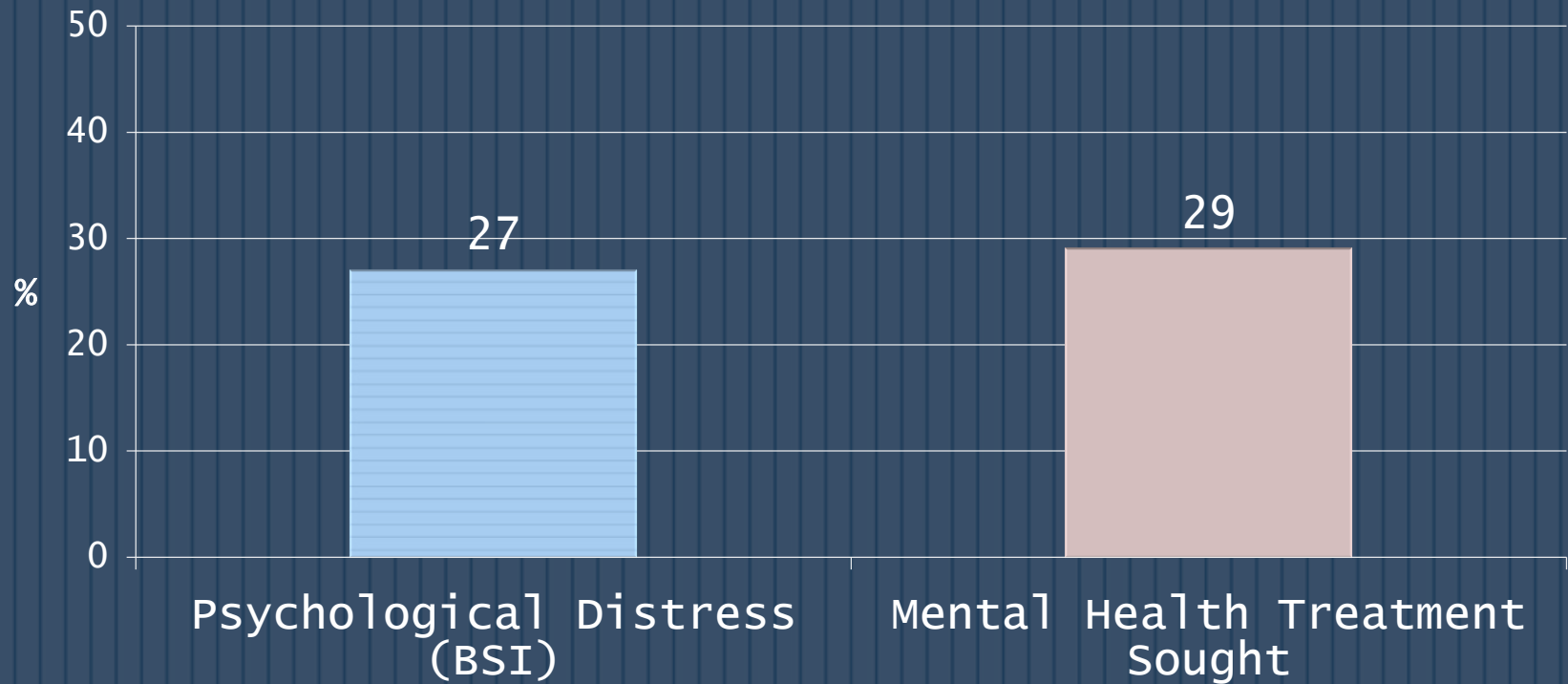
# Mental Health

## Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors



# Mental Health

## Potential Mental Health Problem and Treatment Sought



# Summary

- Substance use, sexual risk taking, and mental health problems are extremely high among girls involved with the juvenile justice system in Nevada
- Probation and detainment represents a unique opportunity to reach a vulnerable group of girls with public health interventions
- The juvenile services departments in Washoe County and Clark County will use the results of this study to develop gender-responsive programming in Nevada