



NEBRASKA CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON
CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES & SCHOOLS

Identifying the Needs of Vulnerable Children and Families in Lancaster and Saunders Counties: A Community Assessment

Caitlin Eis, UCare Student, CYFS (Psychology)

Allison Morton, Undergraduate Research Assistant, CYFS (Psychology)

Miriam Kuhn, Graduate Research Assistant, CYFS (Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders)

Outline

- ⊙ Rationale for study
- ⊙ What is Early Head Start/Head Start?
- ⊙ Method of data collection
- ⊙ Analyses/Results
 - Presentation #1 – Child health
 - Presentation #2 – Parenting beliefs and practices
 - Presentation #3 – Voices from the outside
- ⊙ Implications
- ⊙ Questions

Rationale for study

- ⦿ Current project investigates educational, social, and health needs of low-income children age birth to five years, and their families in order to identify appropriate services in the community
- ⦿ Identify strengths and needs to improve Early Head Start/Head Start program outcomes

What is Early Head Start/Head Start?

- ◉ Who do programs serve?
- ◉ What does programming look like?
- ◉ What is their purpose?
- ◉ In Lancaster and Saunders Counties, Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties operates EHS and HS.



Method of Data Collection

Data Collection

- ◉ Data was collected as part of a community needs assessment project for a local Early Head Start/Head Start.
- ◉ Participants in the study included children and families who were enrolled in the early childhood program, as well as families who were eligible but not participating.
- ◉ Survey and interview were conducted with both groups. Both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed.



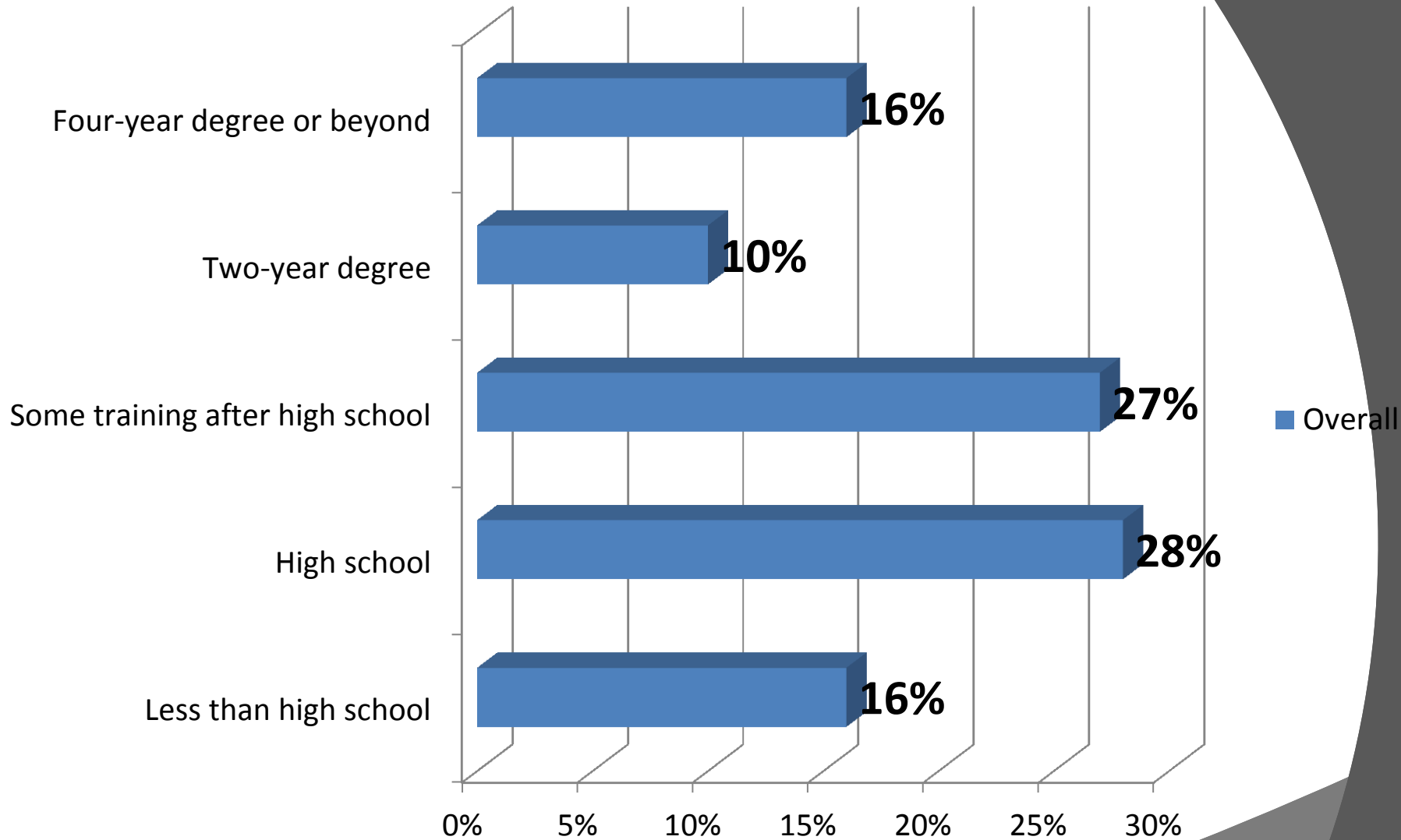
Results

Survey Sample

- ⊙ N = 206 needs assessment surveys
- ⊙ Data was analyzed by looking at two age groups: infants and toddlers and preschoolers
 - Infant/Toddler: n=74
 - Preschool: n=132
- ⊙ Data was also divided by language: English, Spanish, and Arabic
 - English: n=150
 - Spanish: n=30
 - Arabic: n=26

Parenting Sample Data

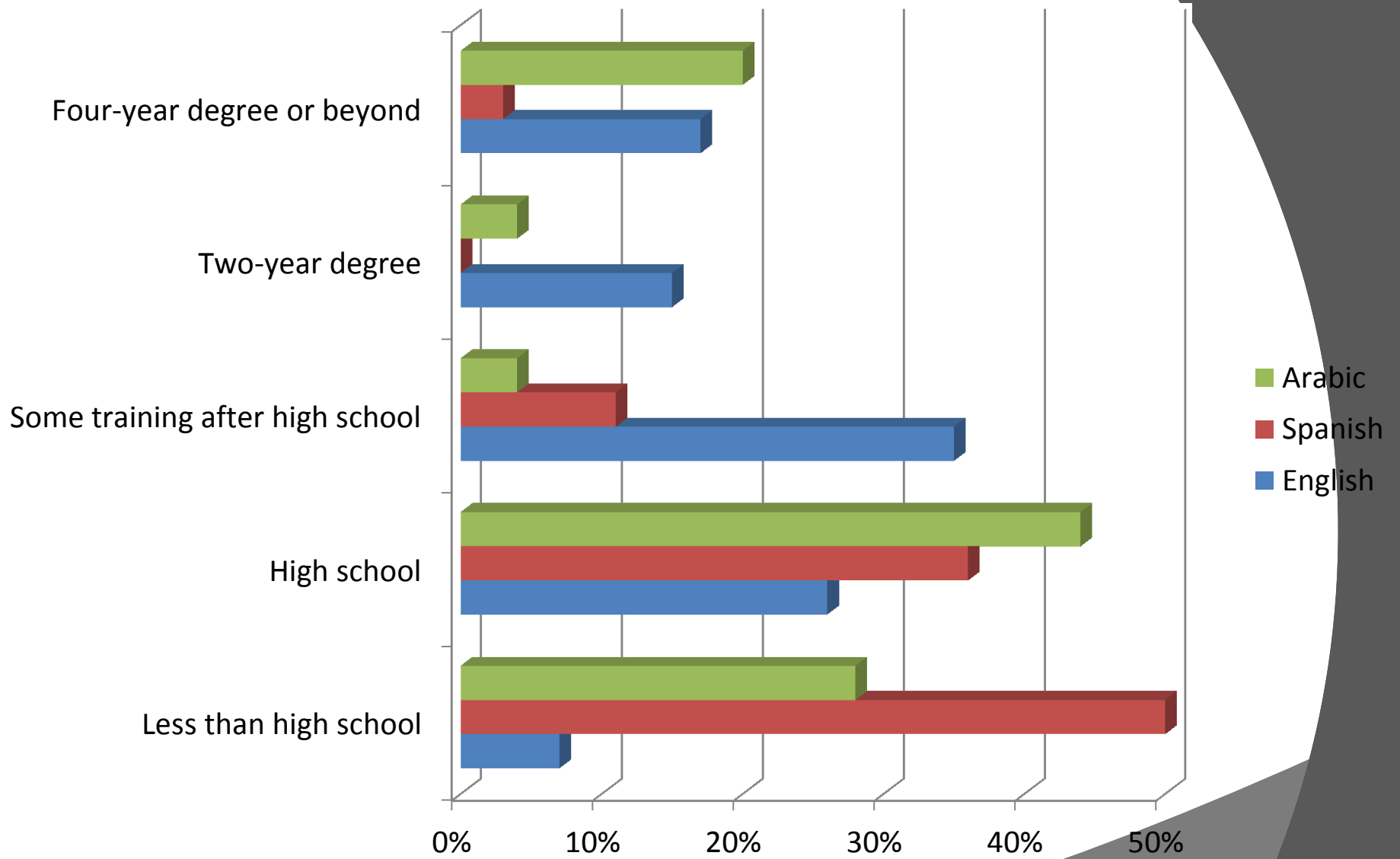
- Education was recoded into the following groups:
 - Less than high school
 - High school
 - Some training after high school
 - Two-year degree
 - Four-year degree or beyond

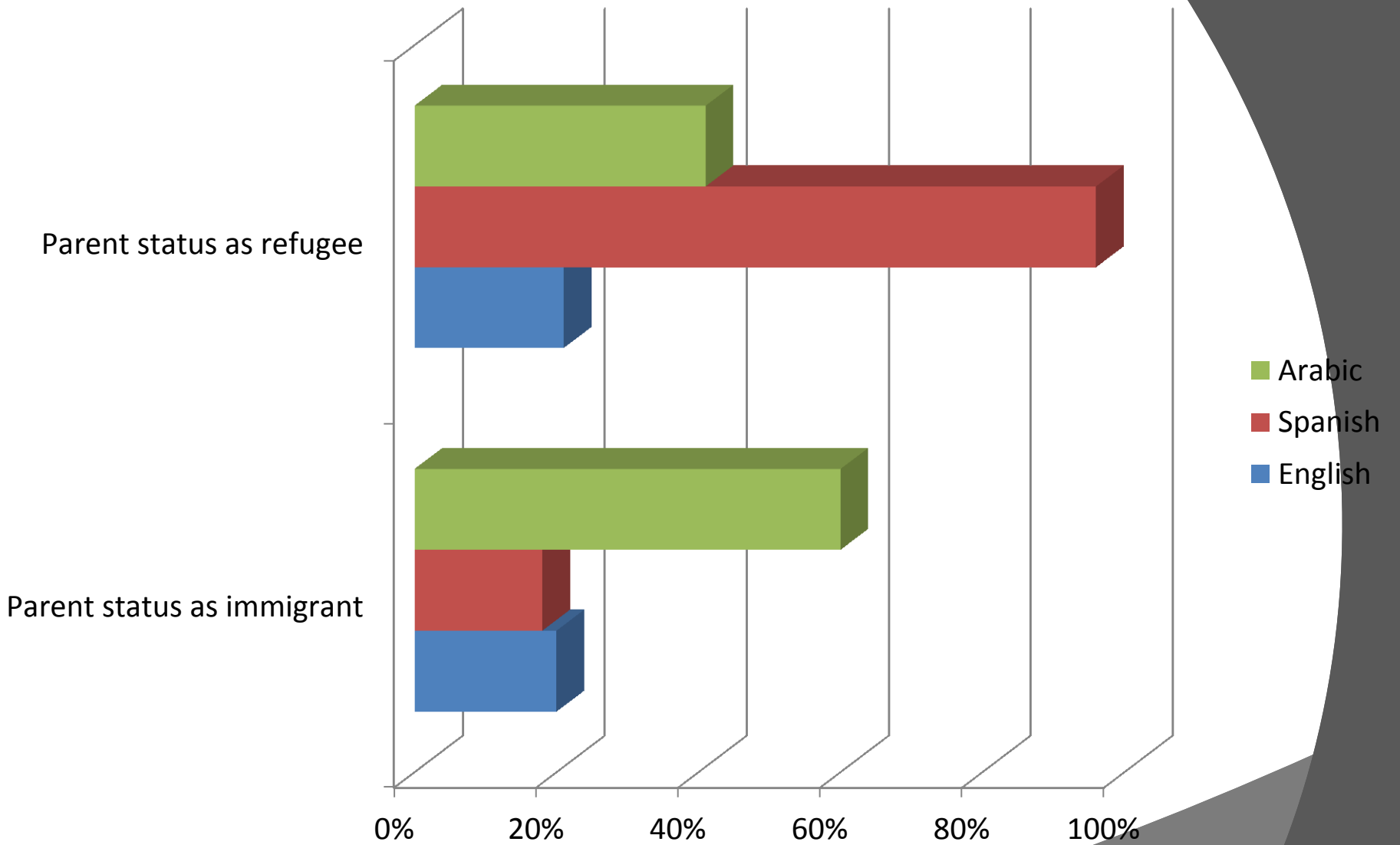


Parenting Sample Data

⊙ Language Group

- There was a significant relationship between parent education level and parent language group, $X^2(8)=51.40$, $p<0.001$
- There was a significant relationship between parent status as a refugee and parent language group, $X^2(2)=13.86$, $p=0.001$
- There was a significant relationship between parent status as an immigrant and parent language group, $X^2(2)=36.72$, $p<0.001$







Presentation #1 Child Health

Child Health

- ① What % of children had a low birth weight and length?
- ① What is parent perception of their child's health overall?
- ① What is the parent's assessment of child weight?
- ① Does the child have an identified disability?
- ① Does the parent have concern of their child's developmental delay?
- ① What are the sleep habits of children?

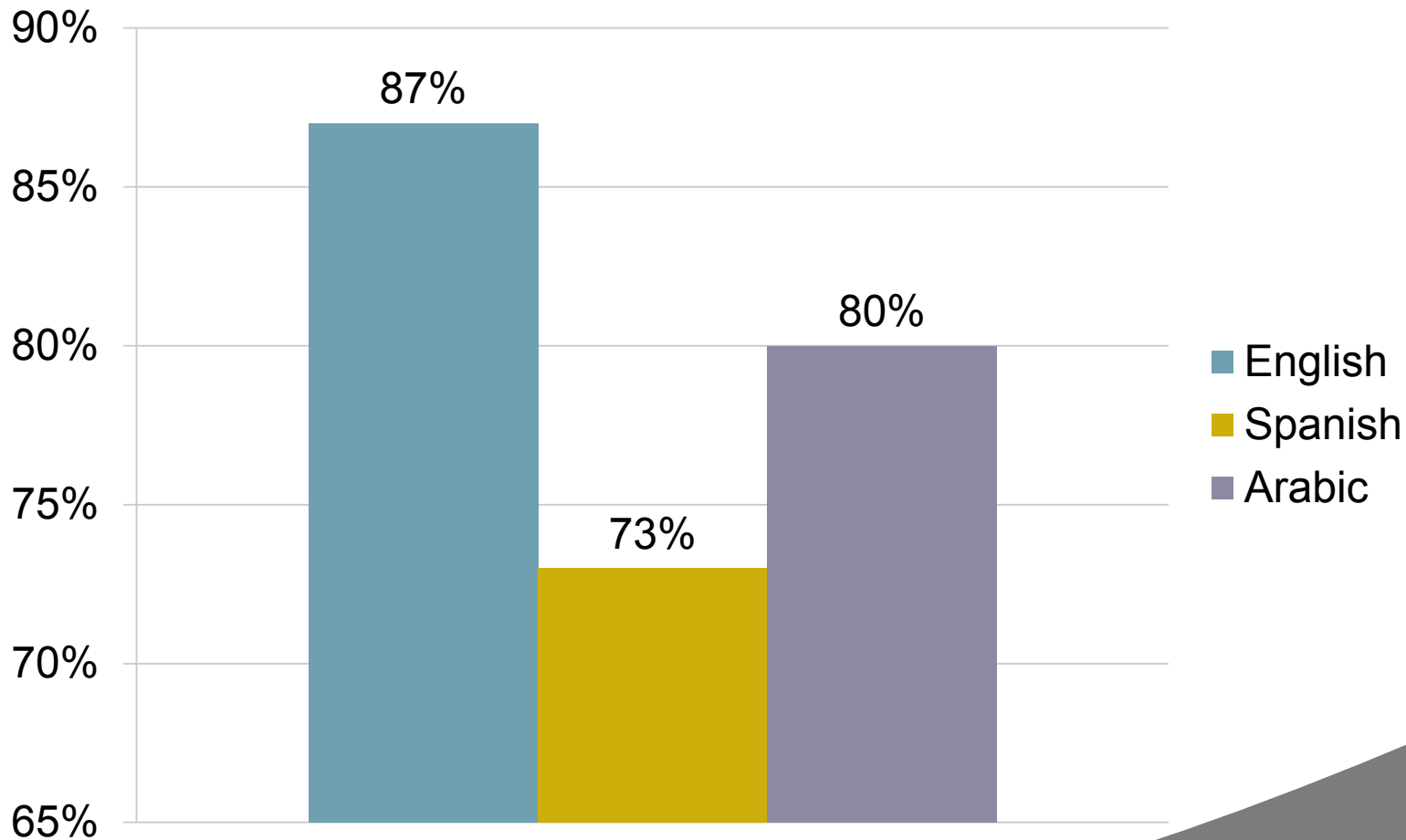
What % of children had a low birth weight and length?

- ◉ Overall, 11% of parents reported a low birth weight for their child. (≤ 5.5 lbs.)
- ◉ 16% of children measured in the 10th percentile and below. (≤ 18.5 in.)
- ◉ No language or age differences
- ◉ National data reports that 8% of children are born with low birthweight.¹

What is parent perception of their child's health overall?

- ⦿ Across both age groups, parents generally reported their children's health as very good or excellent (84%).
 - Nationally, Head Start reports about 82%²
- ⦿ No differences between age groups
- ⦿ There was variation in parent perception of child health across language groups.

What % of parents reported their children's health as very good or excellent?



What is the parent's assessment of child weight?

- ① The majority of parents rated their children's weight at "about right" (92%).
- ① Only 2% of parents reported that their children were overweight, and no parents reported that their children were obese.
- ① No language or age differences.

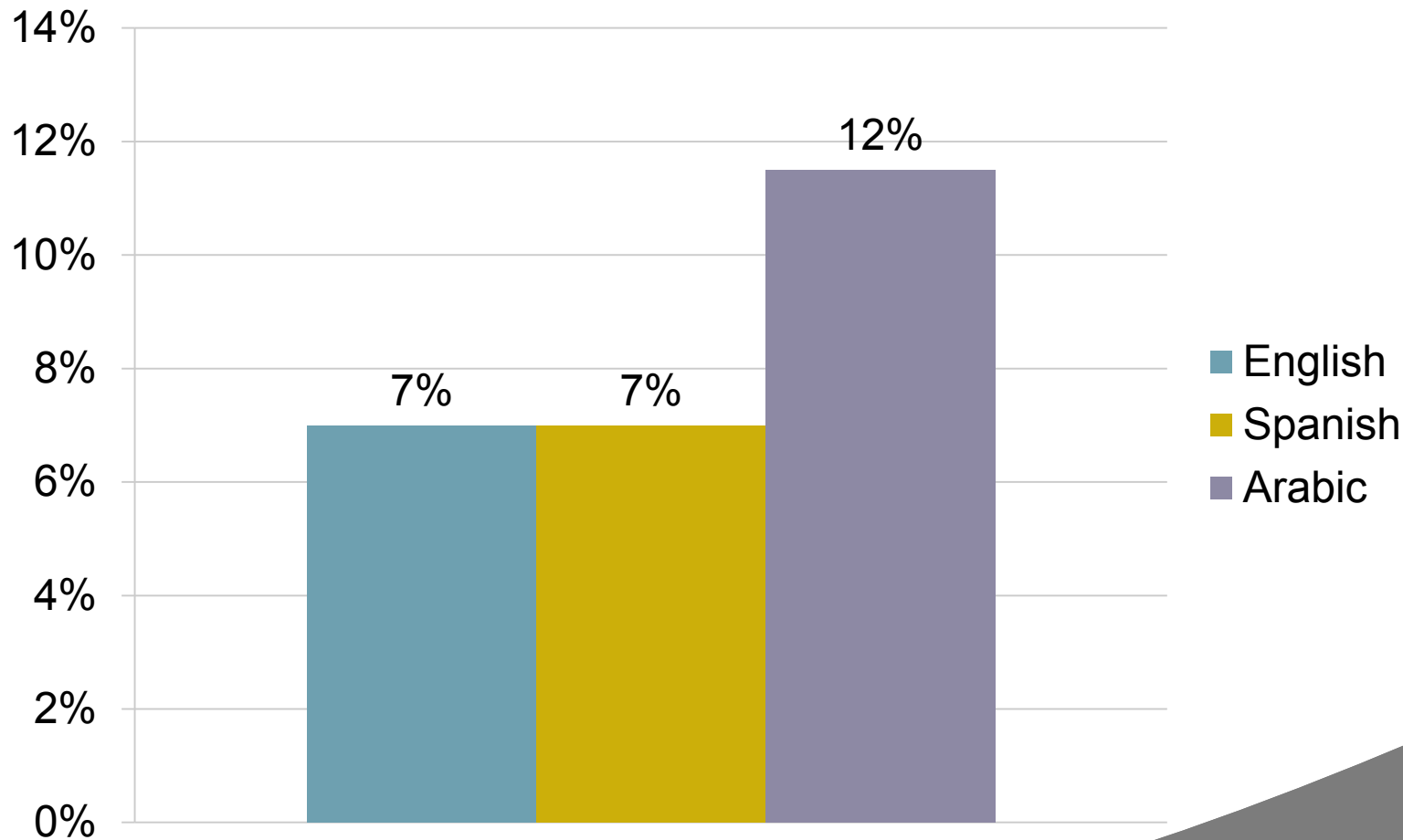
What is the parent's assessment of child weight?

- Nationally, about 13% of preschoolers are overweight or obese.
 - The prevalence of obesity among low-income children is about 14%.
- This average is true of Nebraska. In 2011, 14% of low-income children aged 2–4 years were obese.
 - This percentage has slightly increased between 2008-2011³.

What is the parent's assessment of child weight?

- Overall, 8% of parents reported that they were concerned about their children's weight.
- No age differences
- There was variation in parent concern about their child's weight across language groups.

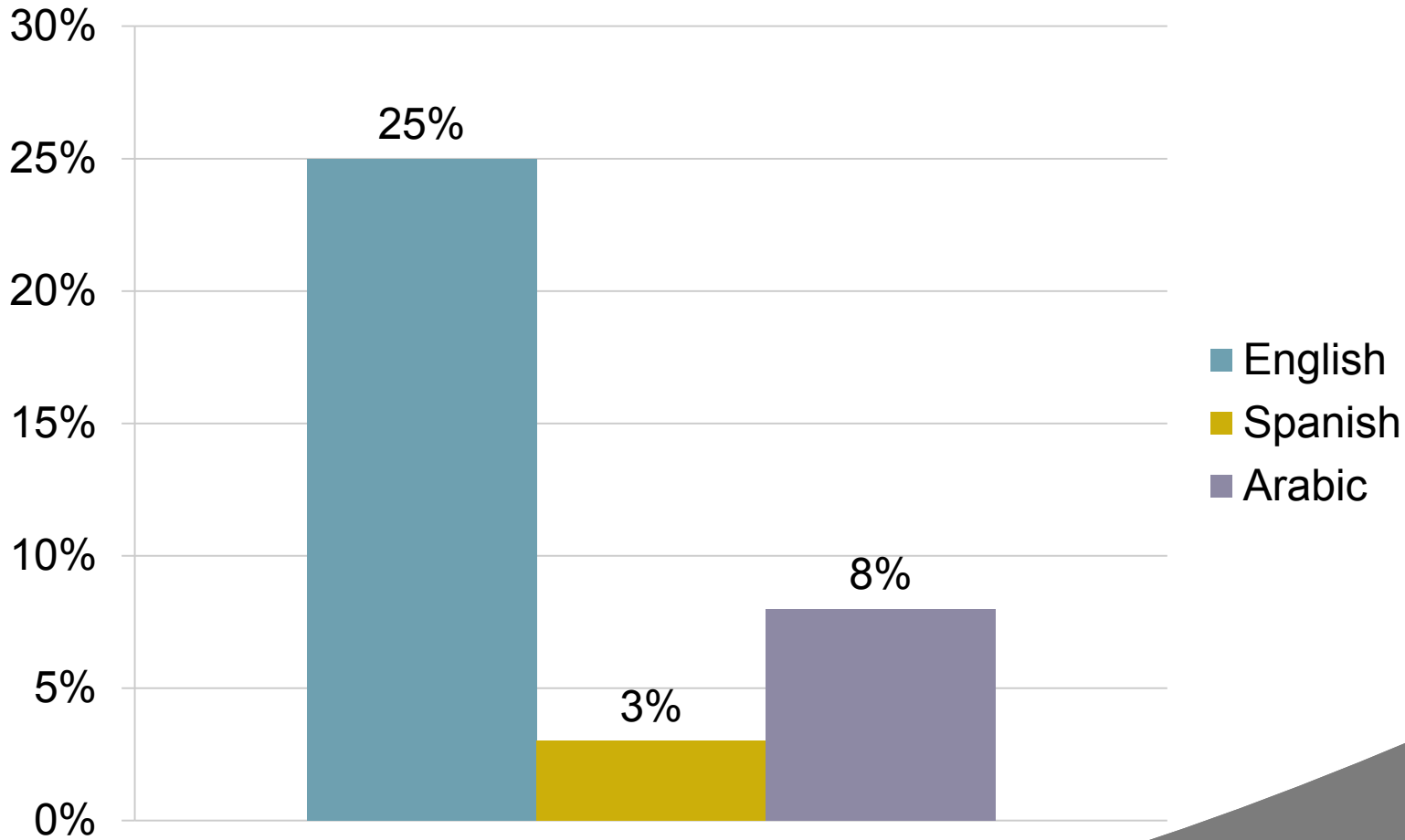
Are you concerned about your child's weight?



Does the child have an identified disability?

- Overall, 20% of parents indicated that their child has an identified disability.
 - Nationally, about 11% of children in Head Start have an identified disability².
- No differences were found between age groups.
- Significant results were found across languages.

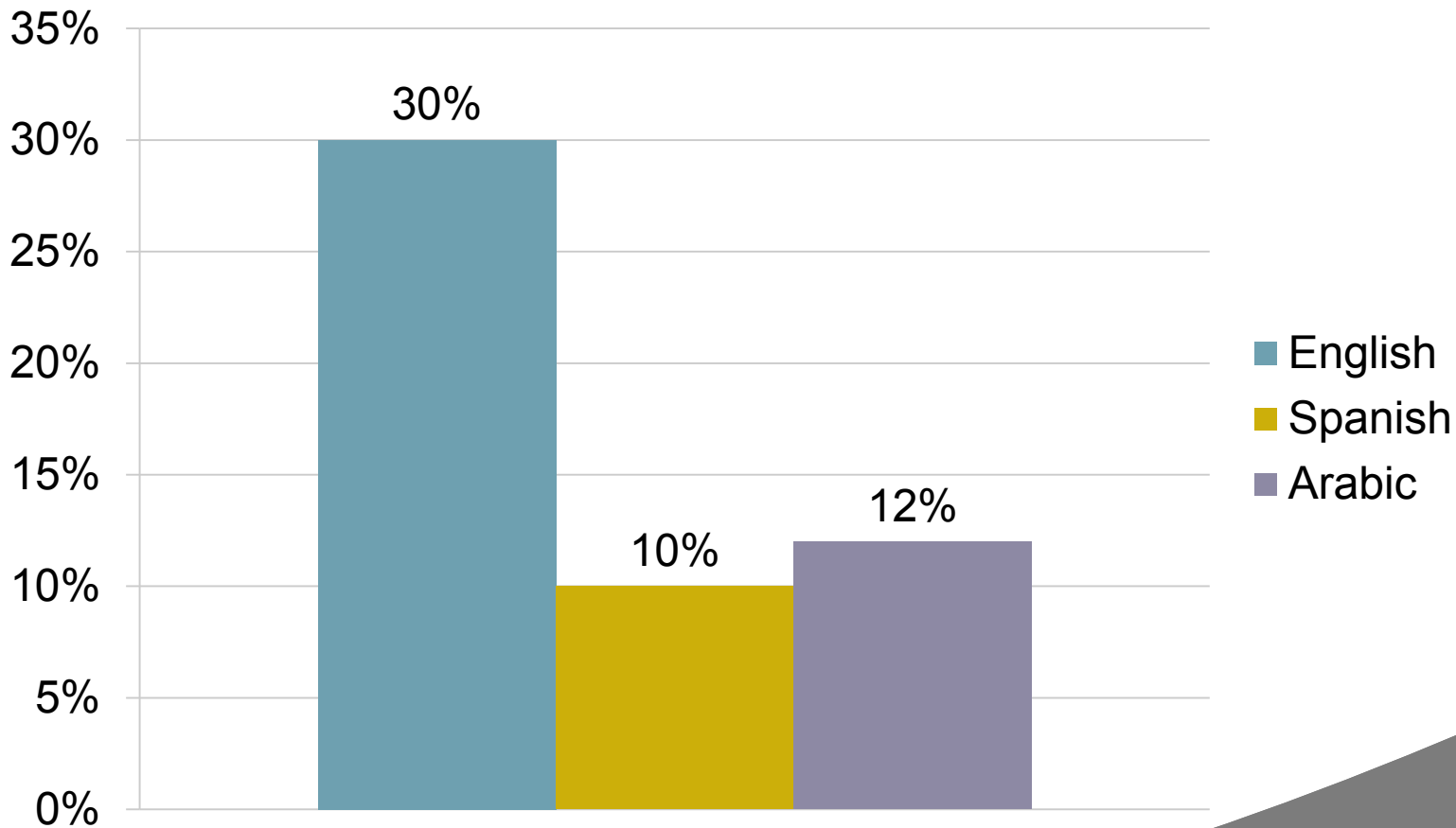
Does the child have an identified disability?



Does the parent have concern of developmental delay?

- ⦿ Overall, 25% of parents reported concern that their child may have a developmental delay.
- ⦿ No differences were found between age groups.
- ⦿ Significant results were found across languages.

Does the parent have concern of developmental delay?



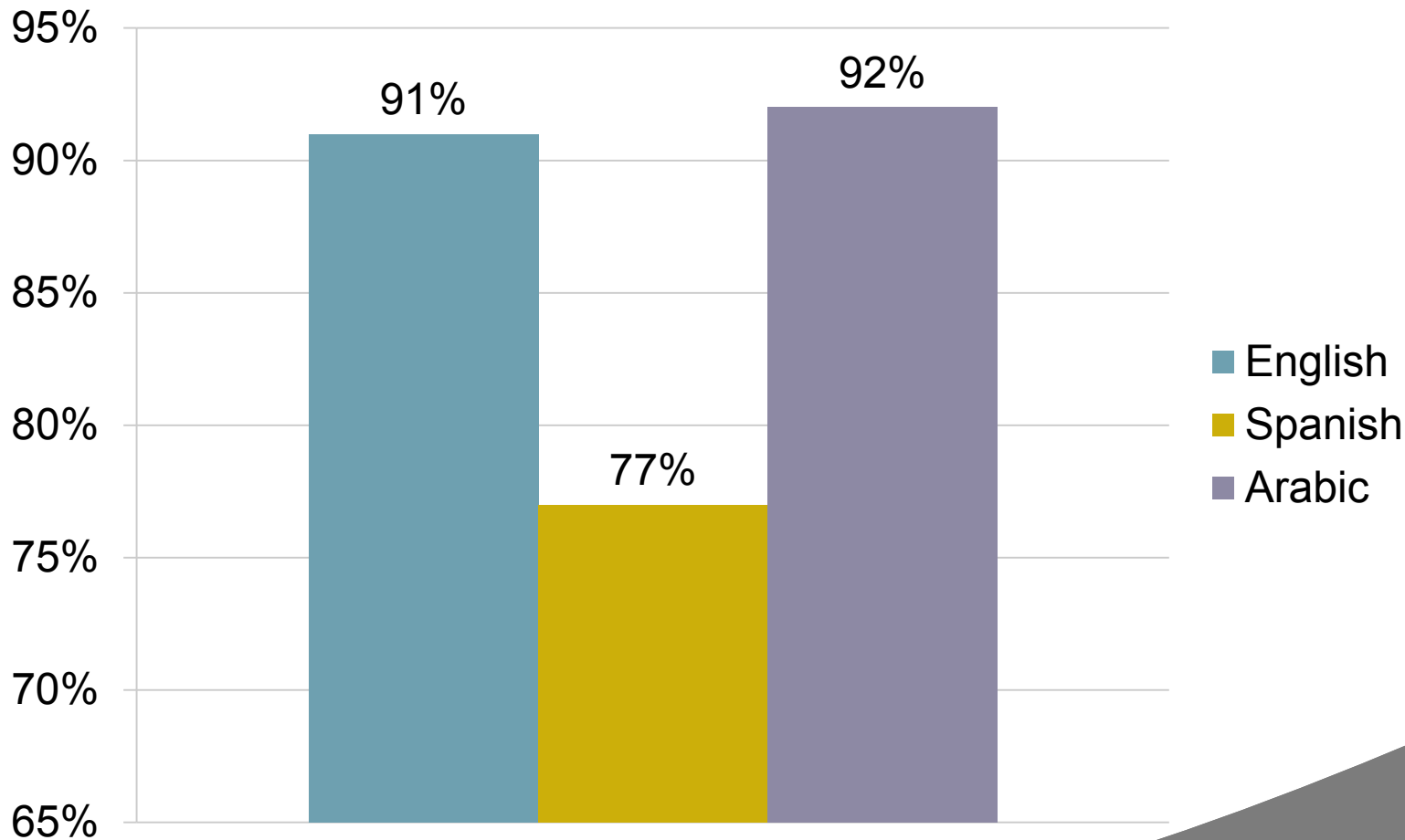
Identified Disability vs. Concern

- ◉ More parents have concerns about their children's development than there are children who have been identified.
- For English- and Arabic-speaking families, the % of children with identified disabilities and the % of parents who reported concerns were comparable.
- For Spanish-speaking families, only 3% of children had an identified disability, whereas 10% of parents reported a concern.

What are the sleep habits of children?

- ⊙ Generally, parents reported that their child has a regular bedtime during the week (89%).
- ⊙ No differences were found between age groups.
- ⊙ Language differences were found.

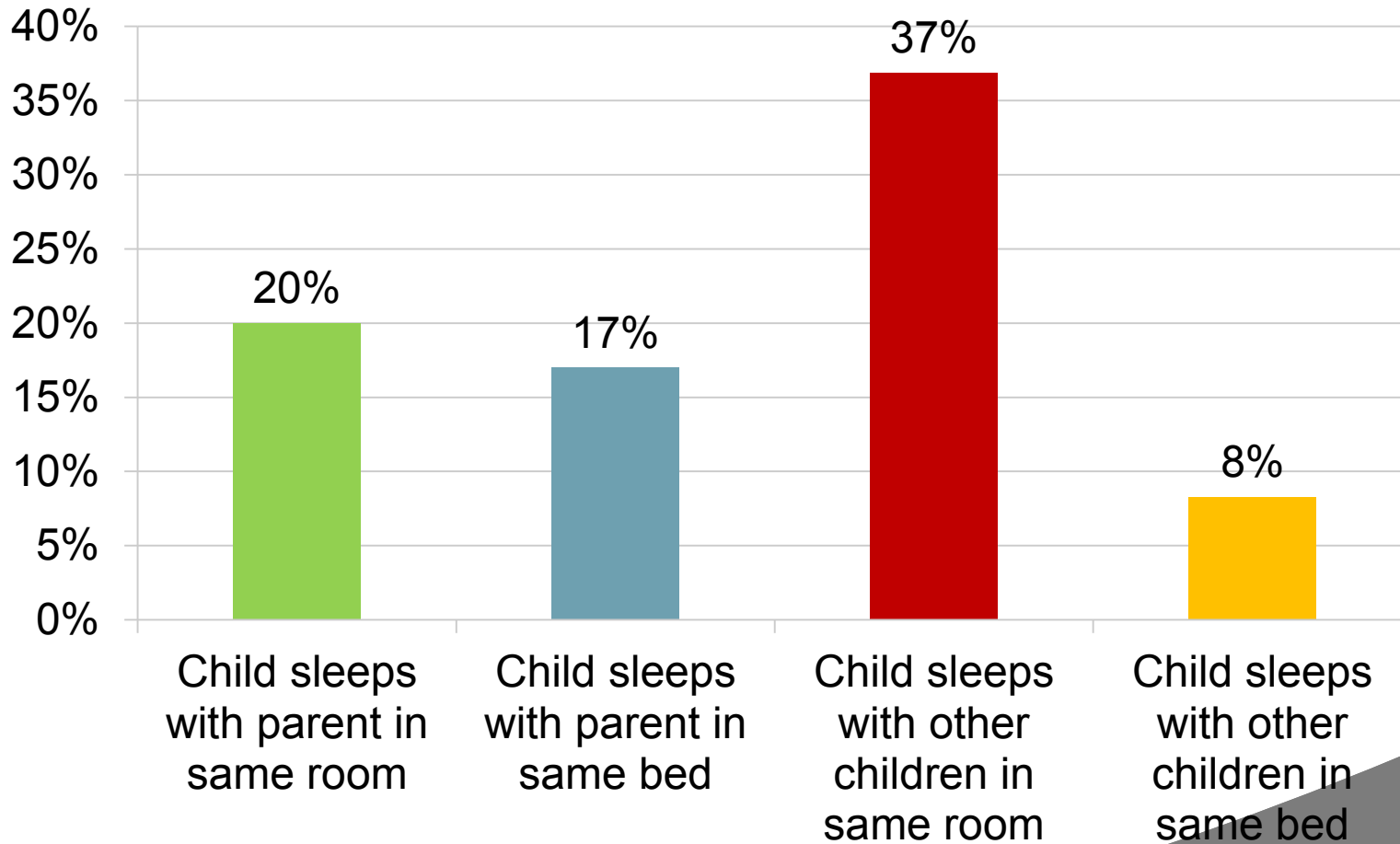
Does your child have a regular bedtime during the week?



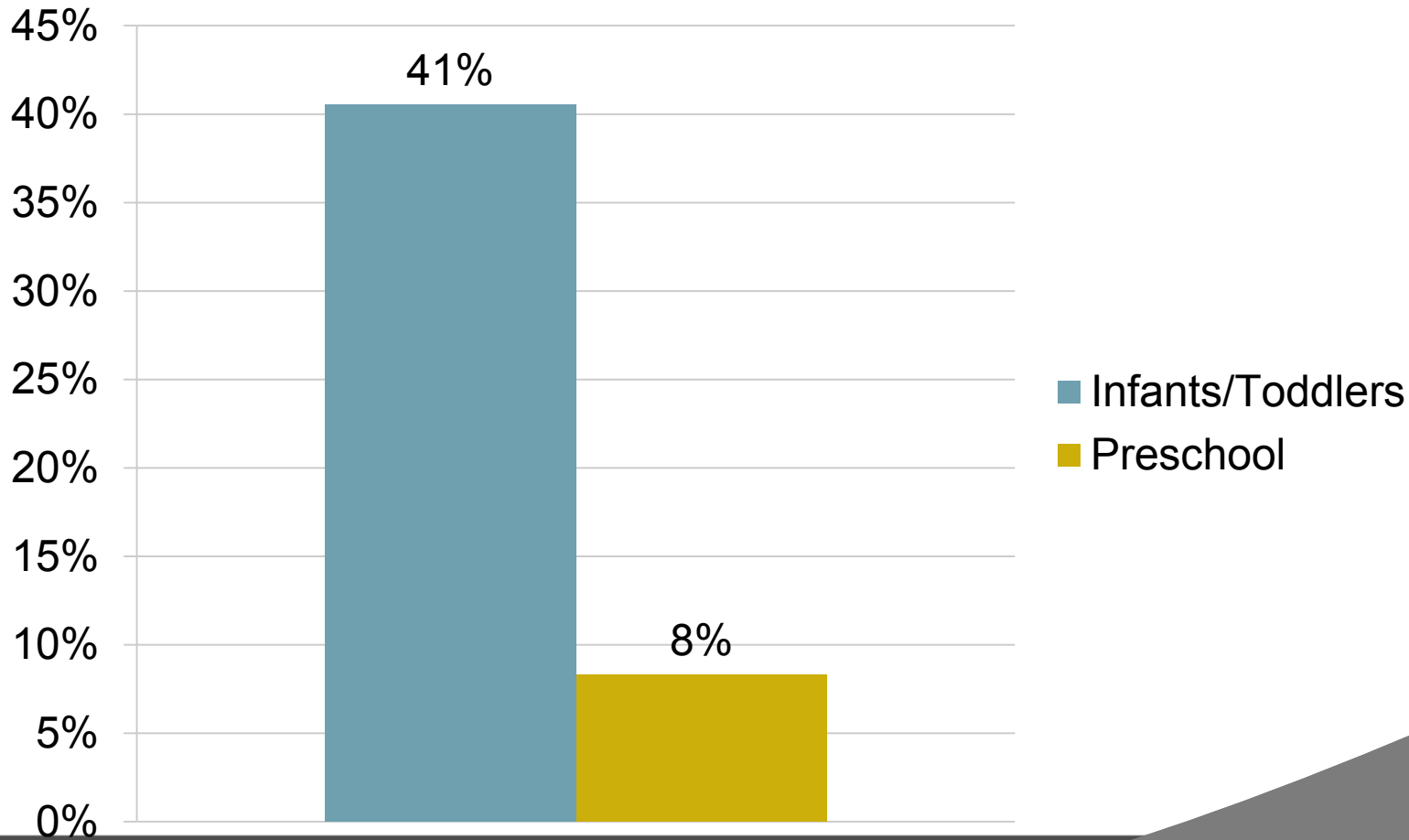
What are the sleep habits of children?

- Overall, 13% of children regularly have trouble sleeping.
- Children generally have a regular sleeping place (96%).
- Children are most likely to sleep in their own room (89%) and alone (47%).
- Other sleeping arrangements were also reported by families.

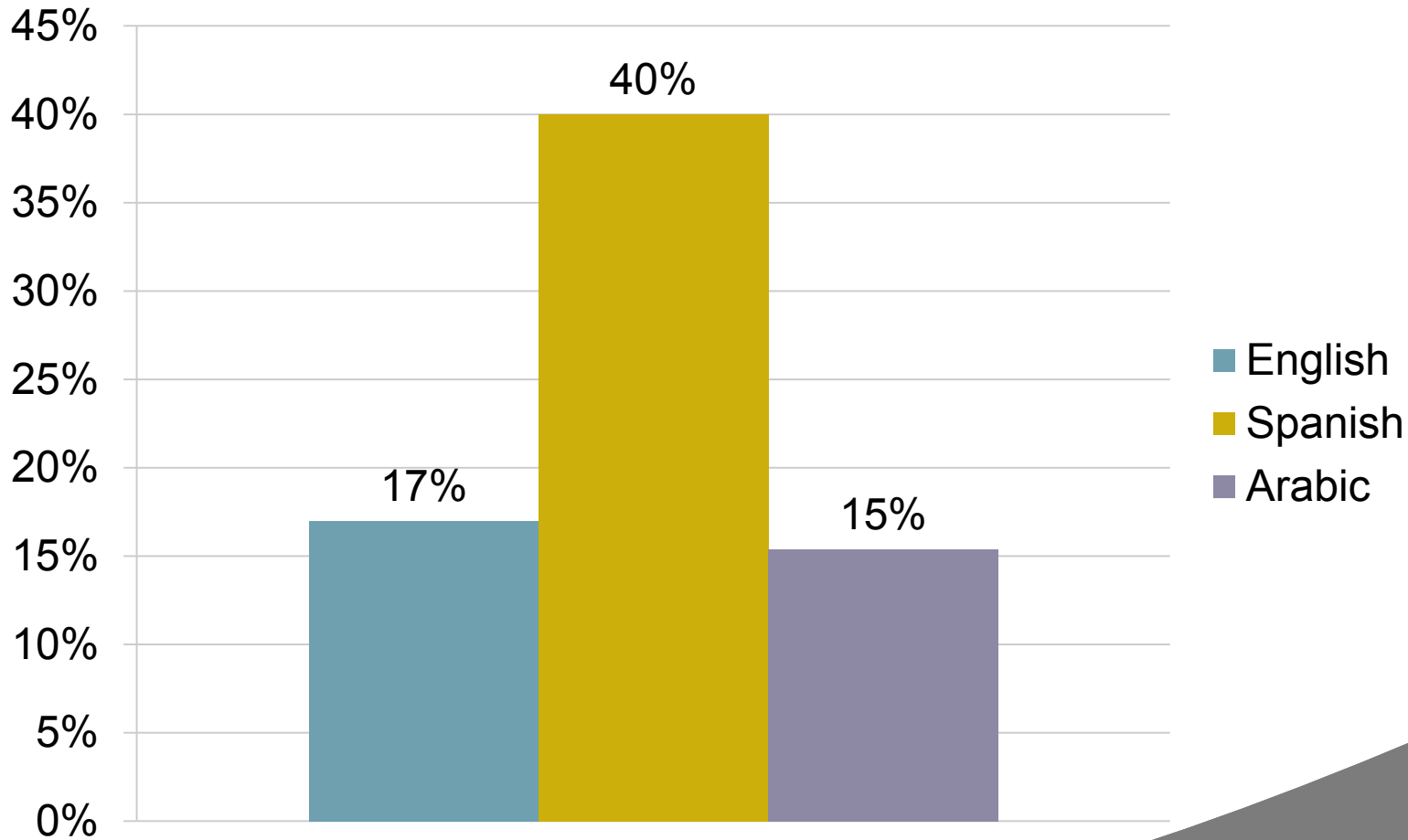
Where else do children sleep?



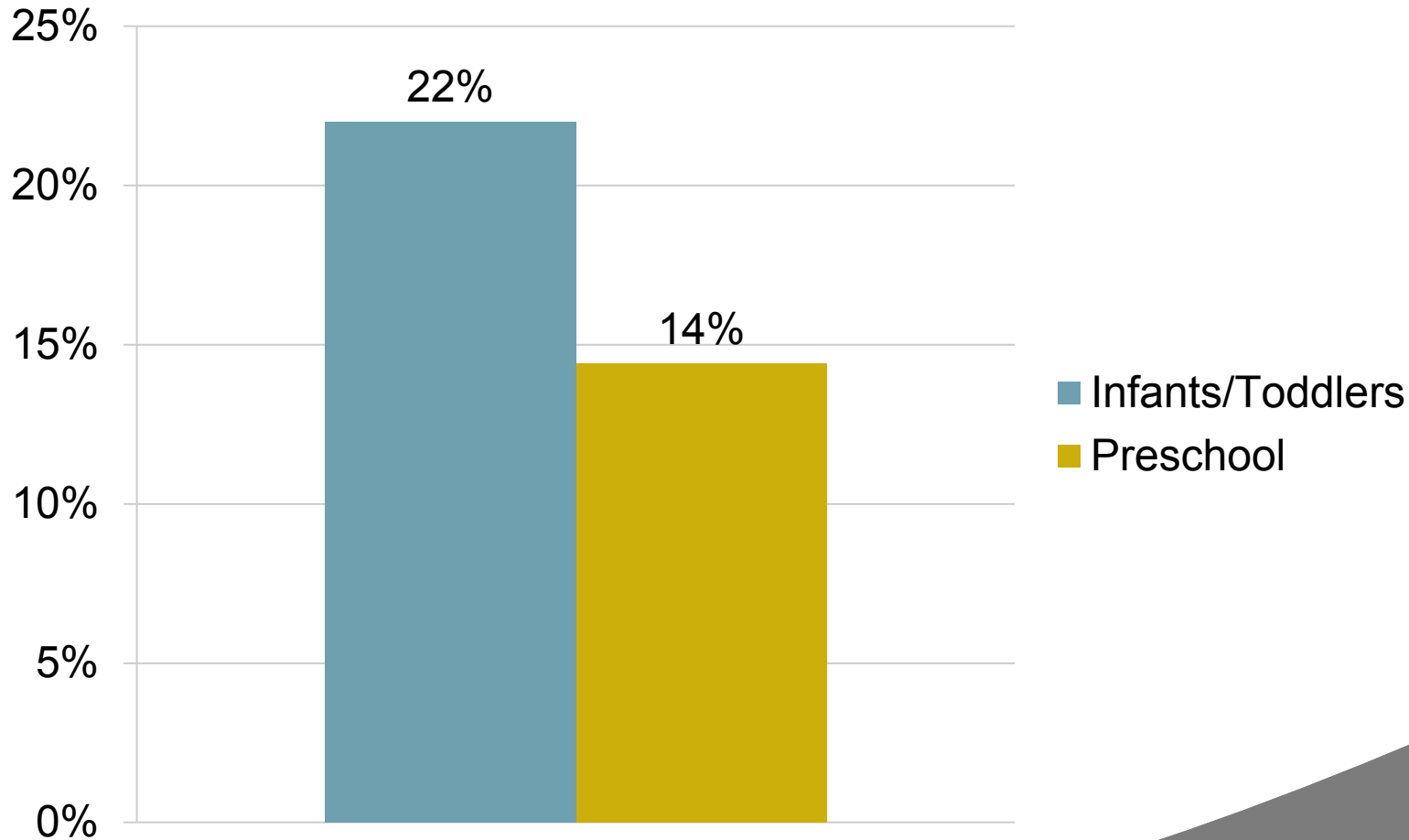
What % of children sleep with their parents in the same room?



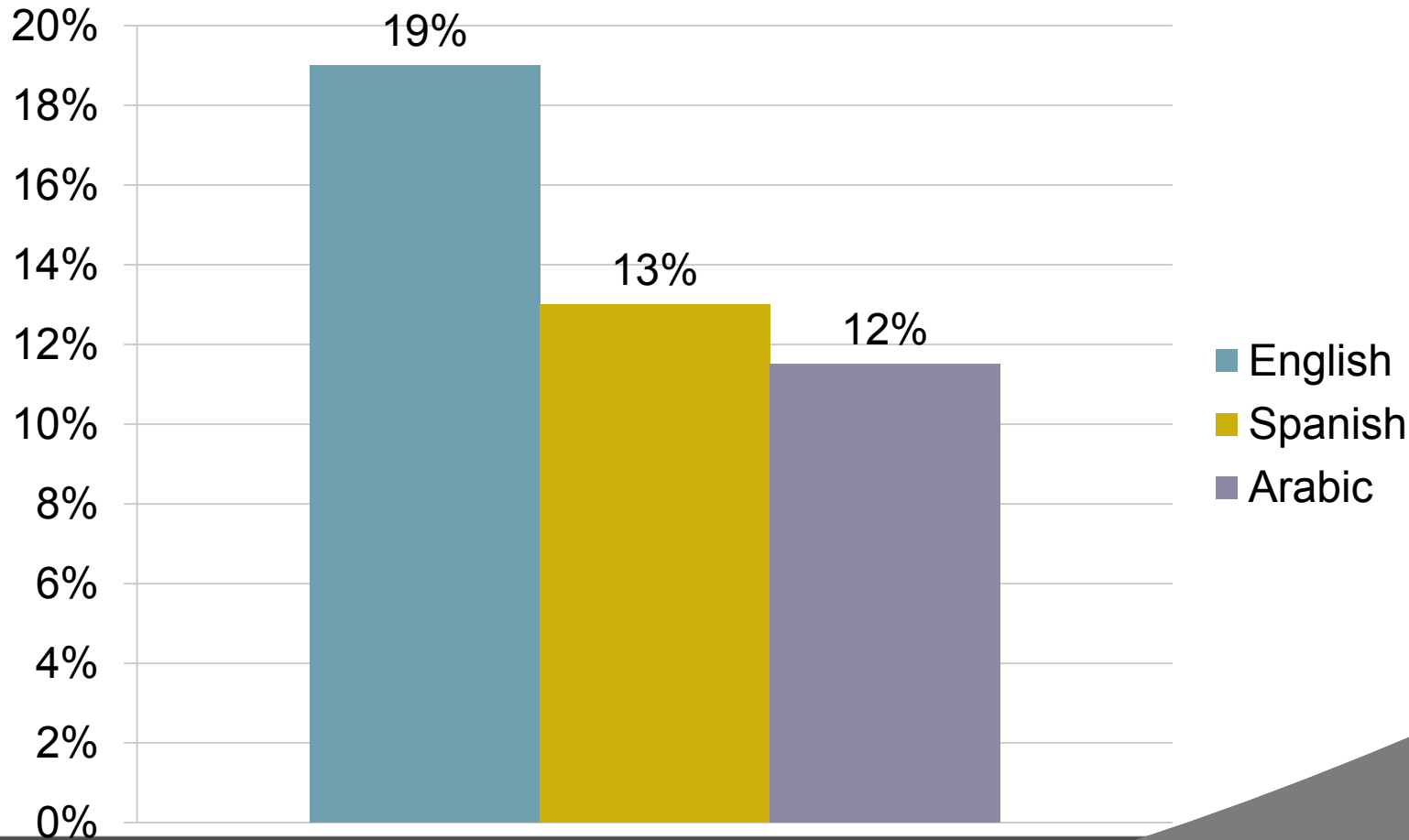
What % of children sleep with their parents in the same room?



What % of children sleep with their parents in the same bed?



What % of children sleep with their parents in the same bed?



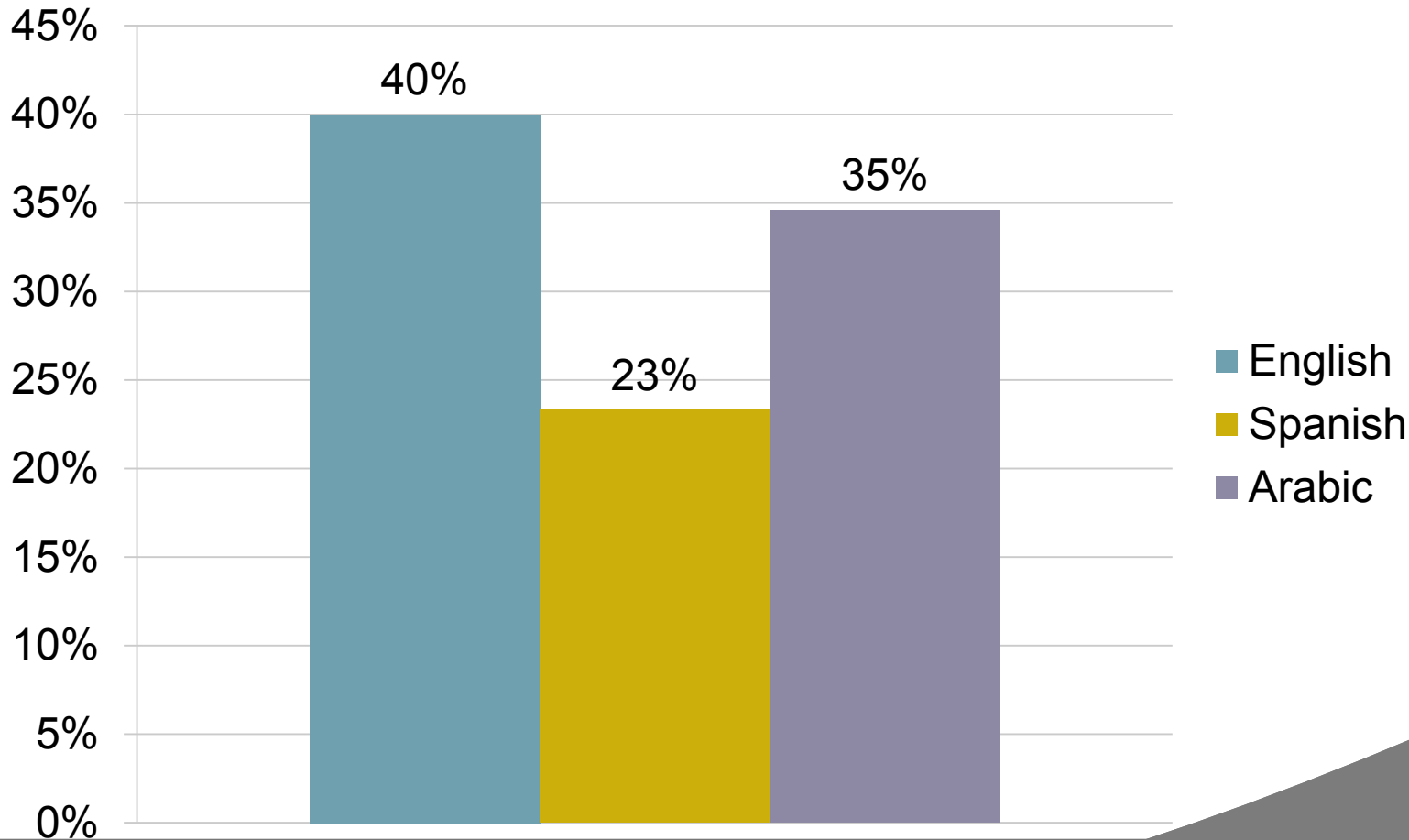
Co-sleeping and Cultural Differences

- ◉ Spanish-speaking families were more likely to sleep in the same bed than other languages.
- ◉ Compared with white American young children, research suggests that Hispanic-American children are **8 times** more likely to sleep in the same room and **3.5 times** as likely to sleep in the same bed⁴.

Do children share beds or rooms?

- ⦿ Generally, infants and toddlers are less likely to share a bed or even the same room with other children.
- ⦿ Differences were found between languages.

What % of children sleep with other children in the same room?



Summary

- ① What % of children had a low birth weight and length?
- ① What is parent perception of their child's health overall?
- ① What is the parent's assessment of child weight?
- ① Does the child have an identified disability?
- ① Does the parent have concern of their child's developmental delay?
- ① What are the sleep habits of children?

Take-Aways/Implications

- About 1 in 10 children in Early Head Start/Head Start in Lancaster and Saunders Counties had a low birth weight.
- In Nebraska, 14% of low-income children aged 2-4 are obese, however, no parents in our survey reported that their children were obese.
- More parents have concerns about their children's development than there are children who have been identified with a disability.
- In Spanish-speaking families, children are more likely to sleep in the same room as their parents.

References

- Hulseley, L. K., Aikens, N., Kopack, A., West, J., Moiduddin, E., and Tarullo, L. (2011). Head Start Children, Families, and Programs: Present and Past Data from FACES. OPRE Report 2011-33a. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Martin, J. A., Hamilton, B. E., Ventura, S. J., Osterman, M. J., & Mathews, T. (2013). Births: Final Data for 2011. National Vital Statistics Reports, 62(1), 1-70.
- May, A. L., Pan, L., Sherry, B., Blanck, H. M., Galuska, D., Dalenius, K., et al. (2013). Vital Signs: Obesity Among Low-Income, Preschool-Aged Children — United States, 2008–2011. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 62(31), 13-18.
- Schachter, F. F., Bijur, P. E., & Stone, R. K. (1989). Cosleeping and Sleep Problems in Hispanic-American Urban Young Children. Pediatrics, 84(3), 522-530.



Presentation #2

Parenting:

Practices/Beliefs,

Excursions, and Activities

Background Literature

- ◉ The level of parents' education is related to child academic achievement, efficacy, and endorsement of insecure attachment (Hortacsu, 1995)
- ◉ Parents' level of education and income are associated with children's reading and math outcomes (Epstein, 2008)
- ◉ Endorsement of disciplinarian beliefs by mothers results in decreased child efficacy and academic achievement (Hortacsu, 1995)
- ◉ High level of education for fathers influences endorsement of non-disciplinarian beliefs, increases child efficacy (Hortacsu, 1995)

Background Literature

- ◉ Parent involvement in school is positively associated with child's reading and math outcomes (Epstein, 2008)
- ◉ Parenting behaviors change in importance across child's lifespan (Shamah, 2011)
- ◉ Parent role in education is more important for younger child age groups (Shamah, 2011)
- ◉ Ethnic differences in parenting practices and child outcomes for families in Early Head Start (Iruka, 2009)
 - Cognitive development, problem behaviors

Study Questions

- What are the parenting practices and beliefs of Early Head Start and Head Start parents?
- What differences, if any, exist among Early Head Start and Head Start parents in terms of excursions with the child?
- What are the common parenting activities of Early Head Start and Head Start parents with their children?
- All questions were examined for sample overall, as well as age groups and language groups.

PARENTING PRACTICES

*WHAT ARE THE PARENTING PRACTICES
AND BELIEFS OF EARLY HEAD START
AND HEAD START PARENTS?*



Parenting Practices & Beliefs

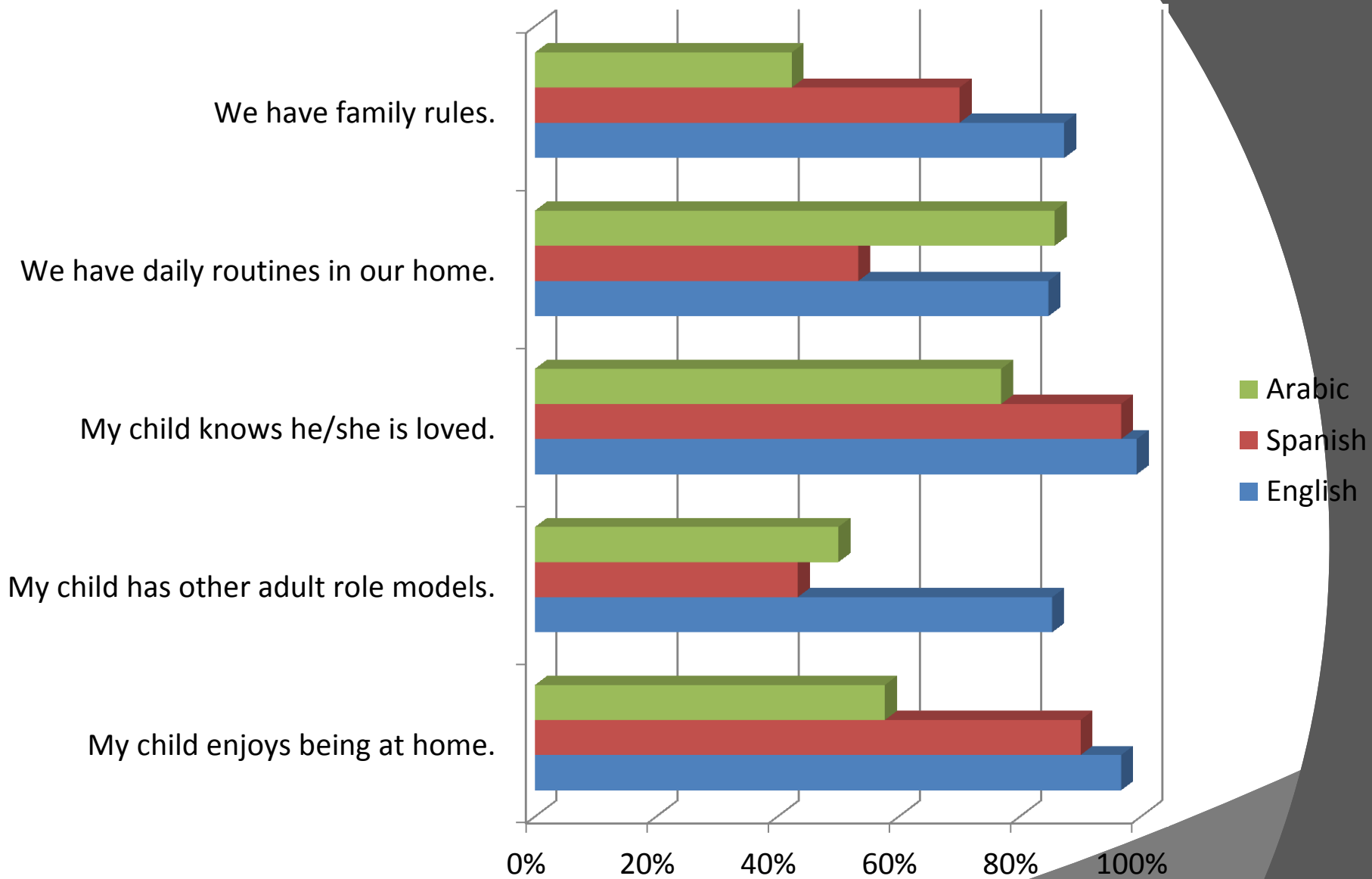
- ⦿ Parents were asked to identify whether or not certain parenting practices agree with their parenting.
- ⦿ Child Age Group
 - There was only a significant relationship between child age group and **whether parents feel they are a good parent**, $X^2(1)=3.88$, $p=0.049$.
 - Infant/Toddler = 90.5% answered yes
 - Preschool = 97% answered yes

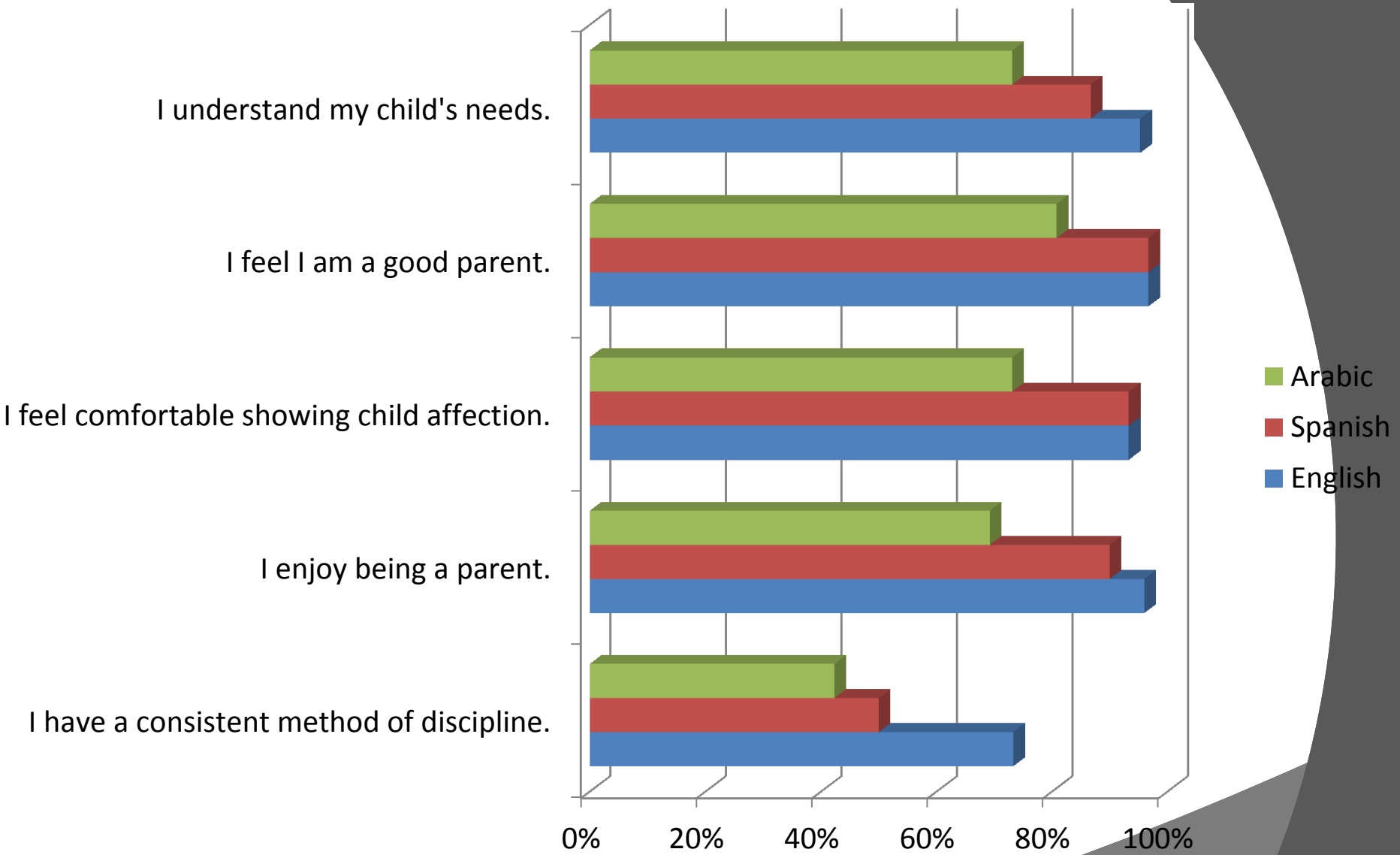
Parenting Practices & Beliefs

◉ Language Group

- There was a significant relationship between language and all of the parenting practices

Parenting Statement	χ^2	<i>P</i>
My child enjoys being at home	40.23	<0.001
My child has other adult role models	33.03	<0.001
My child knows he/she is loved	29.84	<0.001
We have family rules	28.97	<0.001
I enjoy being a parent	21.11	<0.001
We have daily routines in home	19.75	<0.001
I know and understand my child's needs	14.70	0.001
I have a consistent method of discipline	13.53	0.001
I feel I am a good parent	11.36	0.003
I feel comfortable showing affection to my child	11.13	0.004





Arabic
Spanish
English

PARENTING EXCURSIONS

WHAT DIFFERENCES, IF ANY, EXIST AMONG EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START PARENTS IN TERMS OF EXCURSIONS WITH THE CHILD?



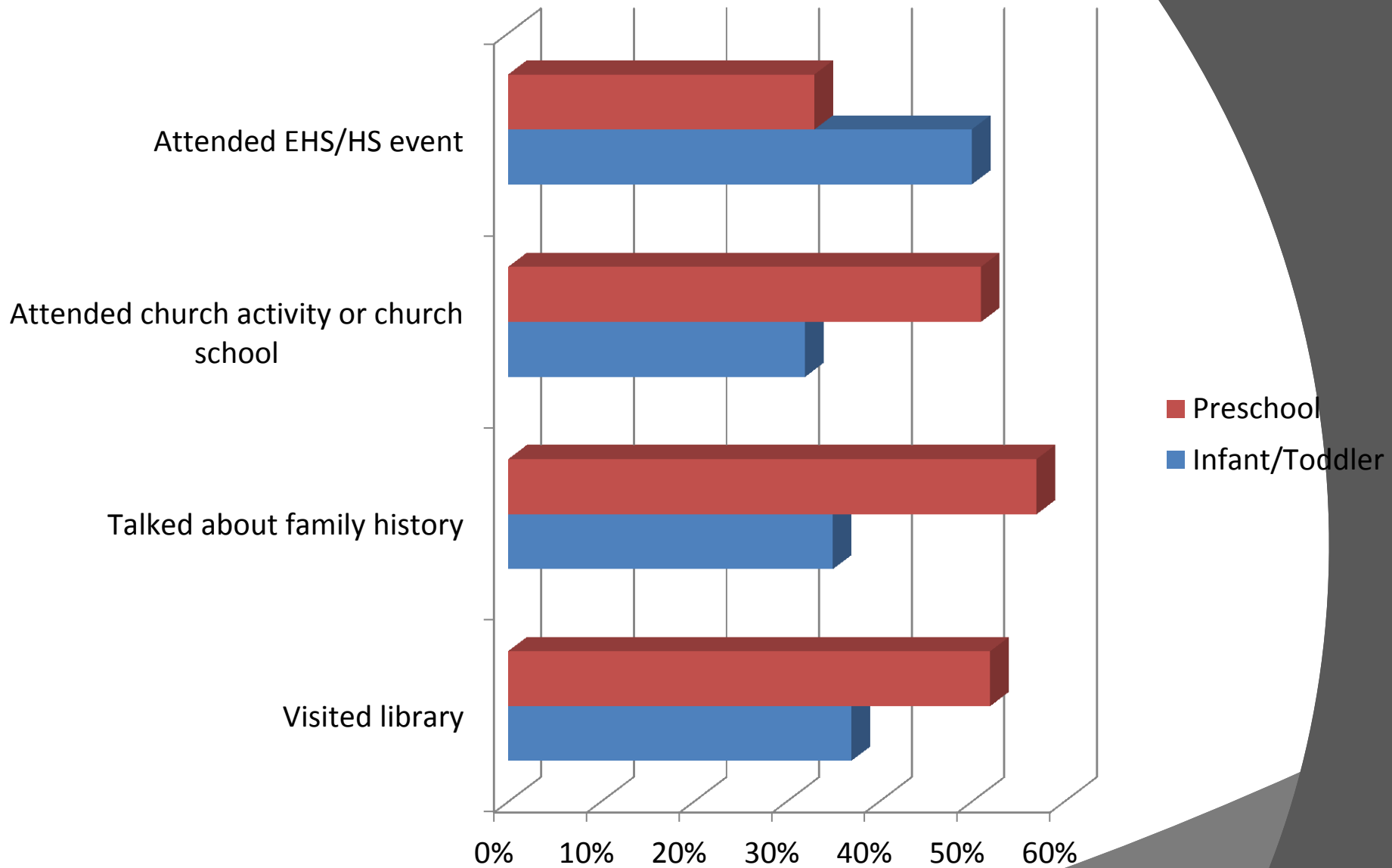
Parenting Excursions

- ◉ Parents were asked if anyone in their family had gone on certain excursions with the child in the past month.
- ◉ Excursions:
 - Visited a library
 - Gone to a movie
 - Gone to a mall
 - Visited a museum, historical site
 - Visited a playground, park, or gone on a picnic
 - Talked with your child about his/her family history or ethnic heritage
 - Attended an event sponsored by a community, ethnic, or religious group
 - Attended a church activity or church school
 - Attended an EHS/HS event

Parenting Excursions

⦿ Child Age Group

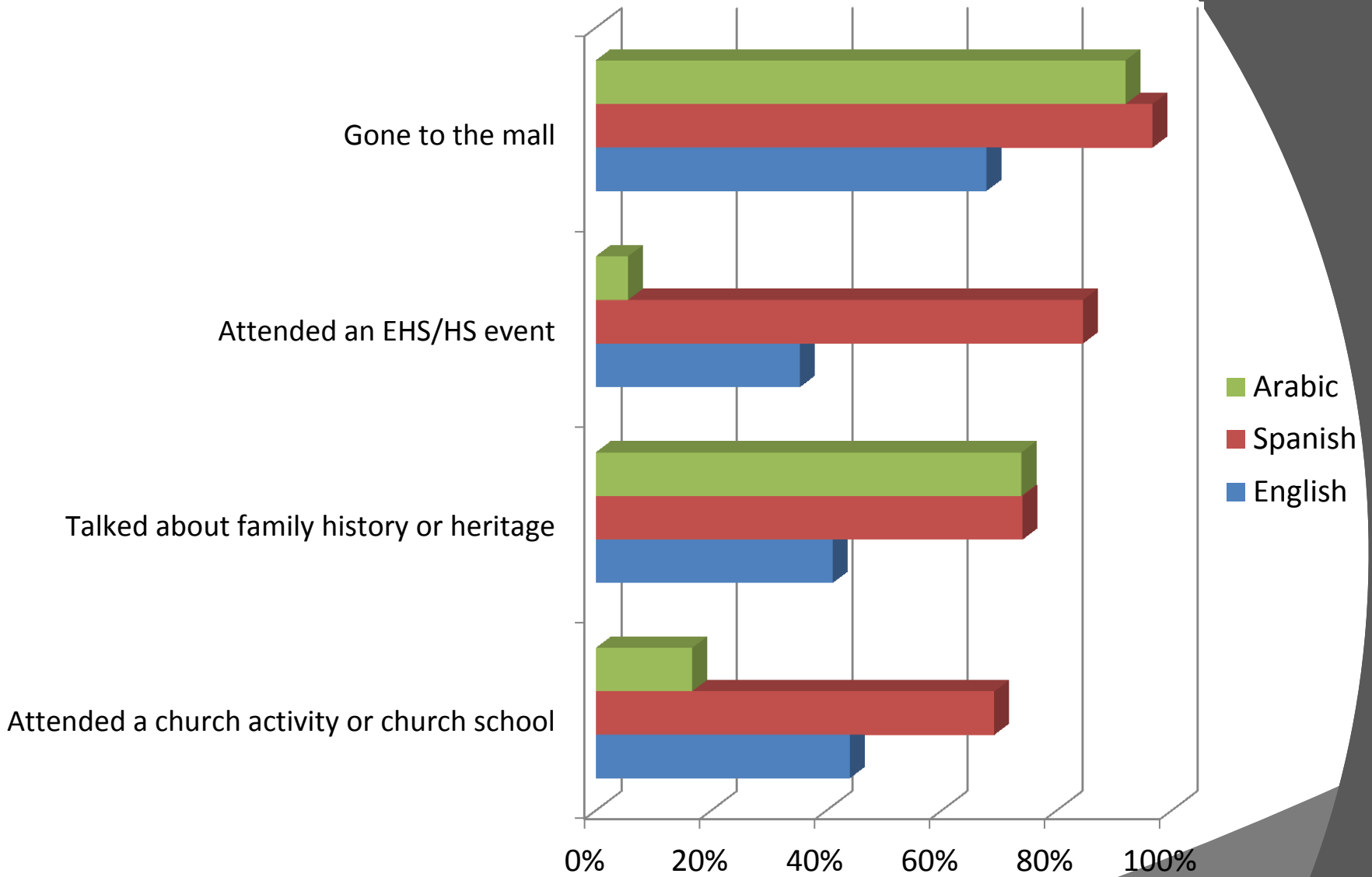
Parent Excursions	χ^2	<i>P</i>
Visited the library with child in the past month	3.99	0.046
Talked with child about family history in the past month	8.39	0.004
Attended a church activity with child in the past month	6.42	0.011
Attended an EHS/HS event with child in the past month	5.70	0.017



Parenting Excursions

⊙ Language Group

Parent Excursions	χ^2	<i>P</i>
Gone to the mall with child in the past month	15.44	<0.001
Talked with child about family history in the past month	16.13	<0.001
Attended a church activity with child in the past month	12.05	0.002
Attended an EHS/HS event with child in the past month	31.93	<0.001



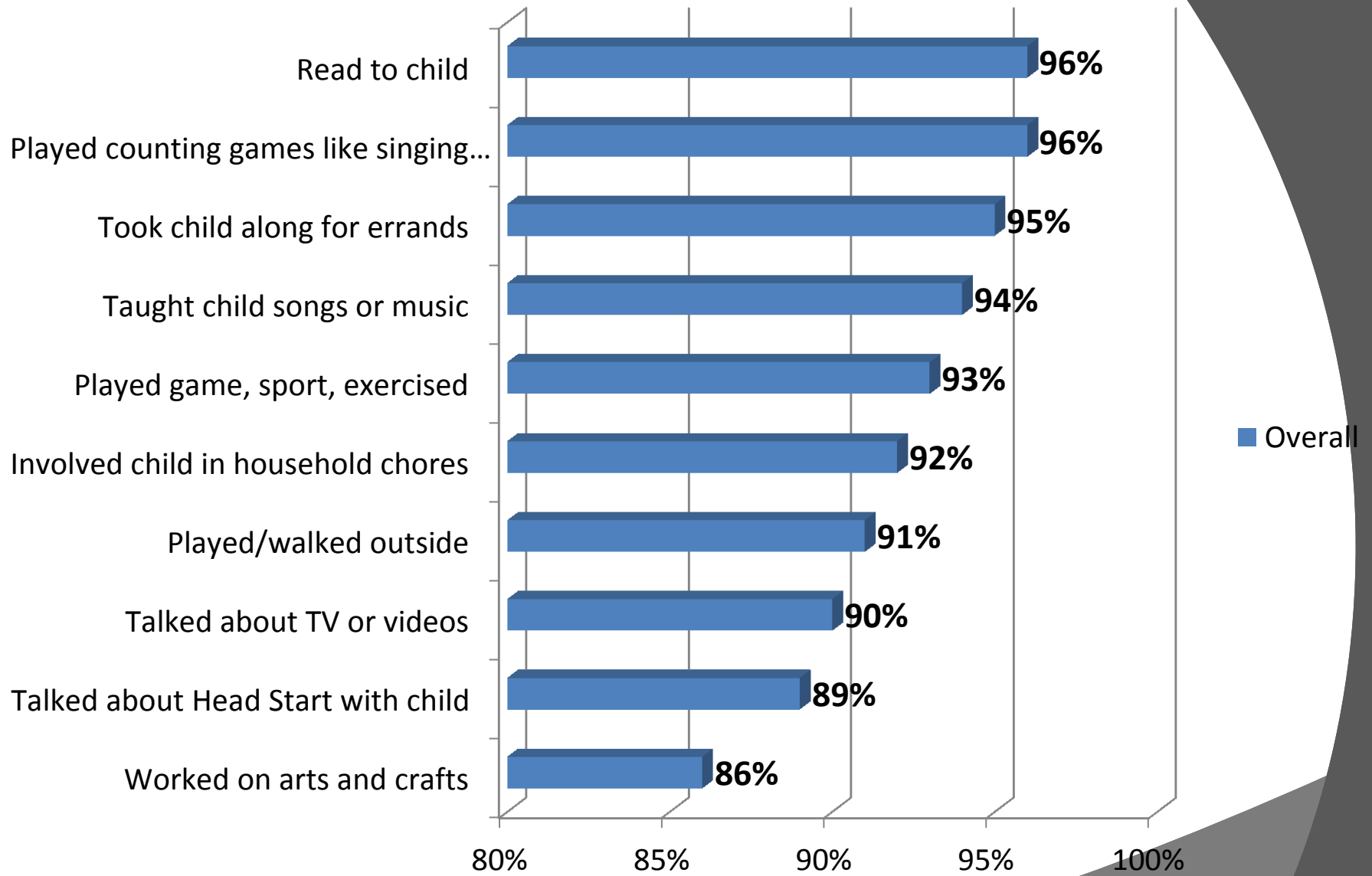
PARENTING ACTIVITIES

WHAT ARE THE COMMON PARENTING ACTIVITIES OF EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START PARENTS WITH THEIR CHILDREN?



Parenting Activities

- ◎ Parents were asked to how many times someone in their family had done certain activities with the child in the past week.
 - Parent answers of not at all, once or twice, several times, or everyday were recoded into not at all, or yes the activity occurred.



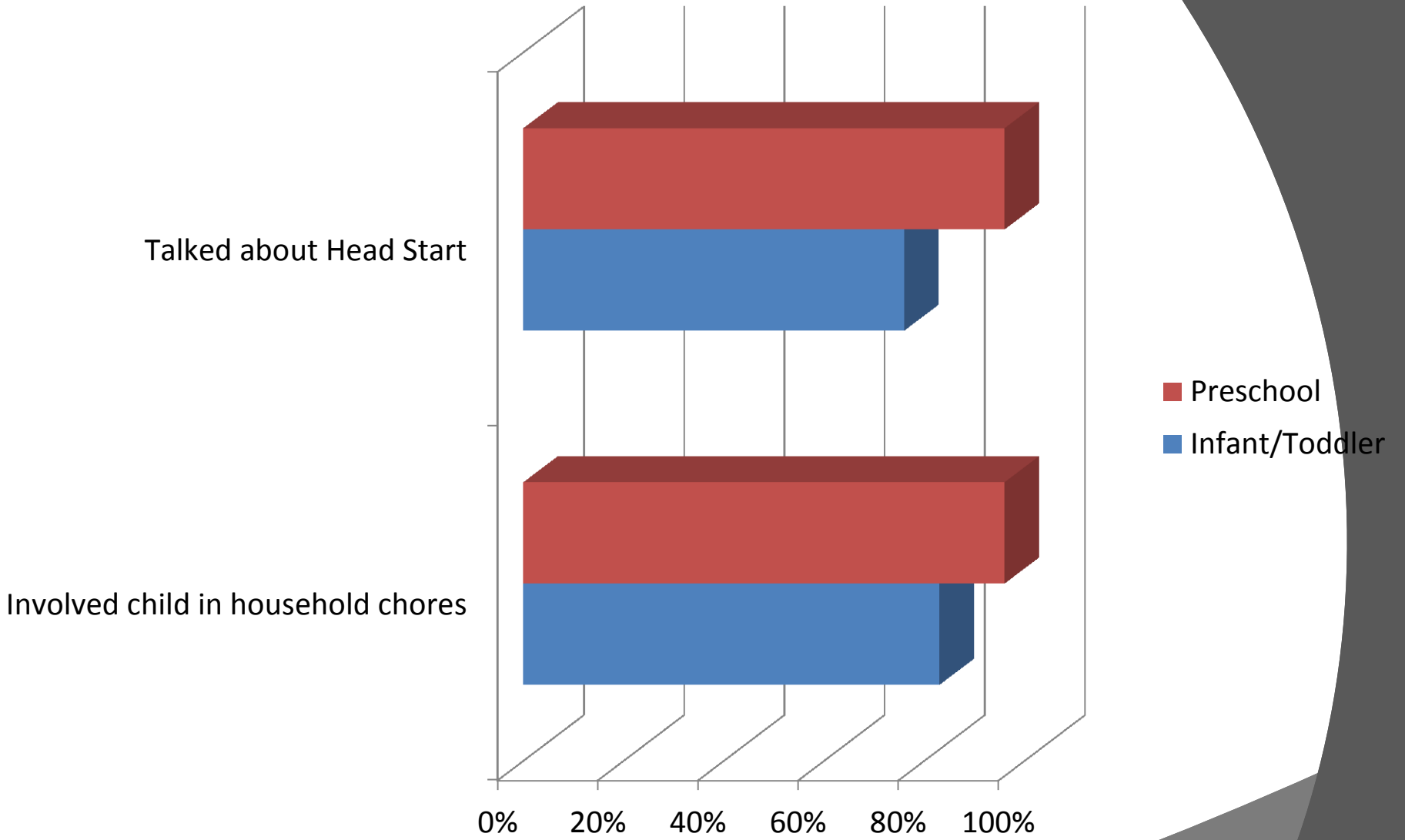
Parenting Activities

⊙ Child Age Group

Parent Activities	χ^2	<i>P</i>
Involved child in household chores like cooking, cleaning, setting the table, or caring for pets	11.39	0.001
Talked about what happened in Head Start	20.39	<0.001

⊙ Language Group

- There were no significant results for the chi-square test based on language group.



Conclusions

- ⊙ There are significant differences for child age group and parent language group for the statements:
 - “I feel that I am a good parent”
 - Age group and Language group
 - “My child knows he/she is loved”
 - Language group
 - “My child enjoys being at home”
 - Language group
 - Arabic speaking parents had the lowest % yes response to these statements

Conclusions

- ⊙ There are significant differences for child's age group and what parents do with their children.
 - Excursions and Activities
- ⊙ While there was a significant relationship between parent language group and all of the parenting practices, there was not a significant relationship between parent language group and any of the parenting activities.

Limitations and Future Research

- ⊙ There was a small sample size, N=206
- ⊙ Group membership was not equally distributed
 - Child Age Group
 - Infant/Toddler: n=74
 - Preschool: n=132
 - Language Group
 - English: n=150
 - Spanish: n=30
 - Arabic: n=26
- ⊙ Potential translation errors

References

- Hortacsu, N. (1995). Parents' education levels, parents' beliefs, and child outcomes. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 156(3), 373.
- Epstein, D. (2008). The impact of parents' demographic and psychological characteristics and parent involvement on young children's reading and math outcomes. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A*, 69, 497.
- Shamah, R. M. (2011). Parenting children of different ages: Adjusting child rearing practices. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 72, 3765.
- Iruka, I. U. (2009). Ethnic variation in the association between family structures and practices on child outcomes at 36 months: Results from Early Head Start. *Early Education and Development*, 20(1), 148-173.
doi:10.1080/10409280802206916

Presentation #3

Voices from the Outside



Voices from the Outside

- ⦿ A study of **potential** Early Head Start/ Head Start participants
- ⦿ Efforts made to collect data
 - Mailed surveys
 - Focus group
 - Phone interviews
- ⦿ A qualitative study

Voices from the Outside

⊙ Research Questions:

- What are the experiences of families who are **not** participating in EHS/ HS with regard to the rewards/ challenges of parenting, future expectations for their children, and community resources both used and still needed?
- In addition, what influences the decisions these families make regarding childcare arrangements and have they considered EHS/ HS?

Voices from the Outside

◎ Sample:

- 9 parents of young children eligible for Early Head Start/ Head Start but not currently enrolled
 - focus group with 4 parents
 - one-on-one telephone interviews with 5 parents

◎ Interview Protocol:

- Covered 5 topics--
 - the experience of parenting
 - expectations for parent and child futures
 - parent's goals, dreams, aspirations for child
 - resources accessed and needed
 - childcare arrangements

Voices from the Outside

⦿ Data Collection:

- All interviews audio-taped and transcribed
- Phone interviewer notes

Voices from the Outside

◎ Data Analysis:

- Basic qualitative approach
- Constant comparative method
- Meaningful segments of text identified and labeled to form initial codes
- Categories of codes aggregated to identify patterns and establish themes
- Relationships between themes identified
- A thick, rich description of the parents' experiences developed
- Identification of “what was learned” (Creswell, 2013, p. 191)

Voices from the Outside

◎ Three Themes

1. Busy, but worth it!
2. Bright futures
3. The Early Head Start/ Head Start enigma

Busy, but worth it!



“When they get old enough, I’ll be able to get my normal sleep again. So, I make it happen. I get through it.”

Bright futures



“I play a huge part in developing the desire for learning.”

The Early Head Start/ Head Start enigma



“The application process is confusing. When you think you’re applying for one program, you may very well be applying for a different program... So to be honest, being able to differentiate which program has gotten difficult for me at this time.”

Voices from the Outside

What was learned?

- ⦿ Caution regarding representativeness of the sample
- ⦿ Challenges of parenting young children are compounded by poverty
- ⦿ Optimism for the future
- ⦿ Emphasis on parent role in child education
- ⦿ Keys to promoting participation in Early Head Start/ Head Start

References

Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Thank you!

- ◉ We thank all the parents and guardians who participated in focus groups, phone interviews, and surveys to make this investigation possible.
- ◉ We also thank our funder, Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties.

Implications



Early Head Start/ Head Start program considerations:

● Strengths

- Programs provide individualized supports across age groups and family language groups
- Irrespective of family language/ SES, parents are engaged in excursions and learning activities with their children
- Families continue to be optimistic for brighter futures
- Goals of families match mission of the EHS/ HS program

Early Head Start/ Head Start program considerations:

⊙ Issues/ Concerns

- Parent perceptions of obesity
- Identifying children with disabilities in non-English speaking populations
- Promoting culturally-sensitive methods of consistent and positive discipline
- Impact of financial stress for families with young children
- Spreading the word- EHS/HS mission matches family mission

Questions?