

# Being a mother on the Opioid Treatment Program. First results from a NSW study

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# Background to study



- Three year study of *Child protection and women in substance abuse treatment*
- Funded by NSW Community Services, NDARC & UNSW
- Concerns about when & how to intervene where parental substance use a child protection concern
- Lack of research in area, particularly large scale & with women themselves
- Grella, Hser & Huang (2006) study

# Why women on the OTP?



- Heroin as a child protection concern; large numbers on OTP (approx 18,000)
- Around half AOD treatment entries have children: most women entering treatment are mothers of dependent children
- OTP allows parents to continue caring for their children
- Attention re take-aways & children

- Recruited through 9 OTP clinics
- Sydney metropolitan area
- Interviewed: May 2009 to May 2010
- Ethics approvals and permissions
- Interviews were 1 hour in duration and had qualitative and quantitative components
- Consent to access OTP and Community Services records at conclusion of interview (up to 12 months after interview)

# Estimated response rate



	Private OTPs	Public OTPs
Number women with any children < 16 years (est.)	184	109
Number study participants	111	64
Response rate	60%	59%

# Data collected



**Data collected from women (interview),  
OTP & child protection records**

**Maternal:** age; age first child born; number children; single parent; mental health issues; substance misuse; DV; no social supports; own abuse history; low income; low educational attainment

**Child:** premature birth; disability or chronic illness; behaviour or learning difficulties

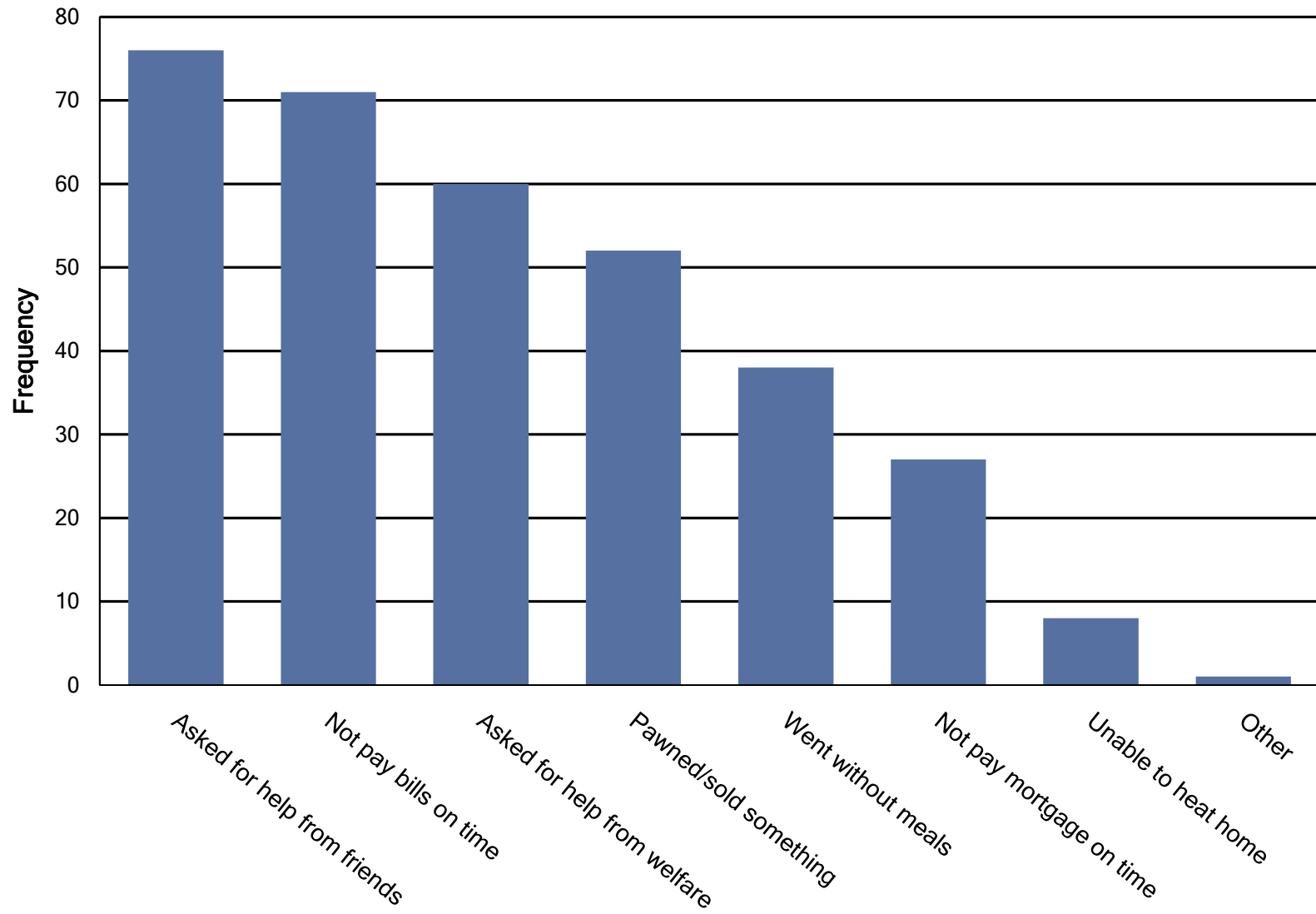
**Services & interventions; child protection**

# Demographics



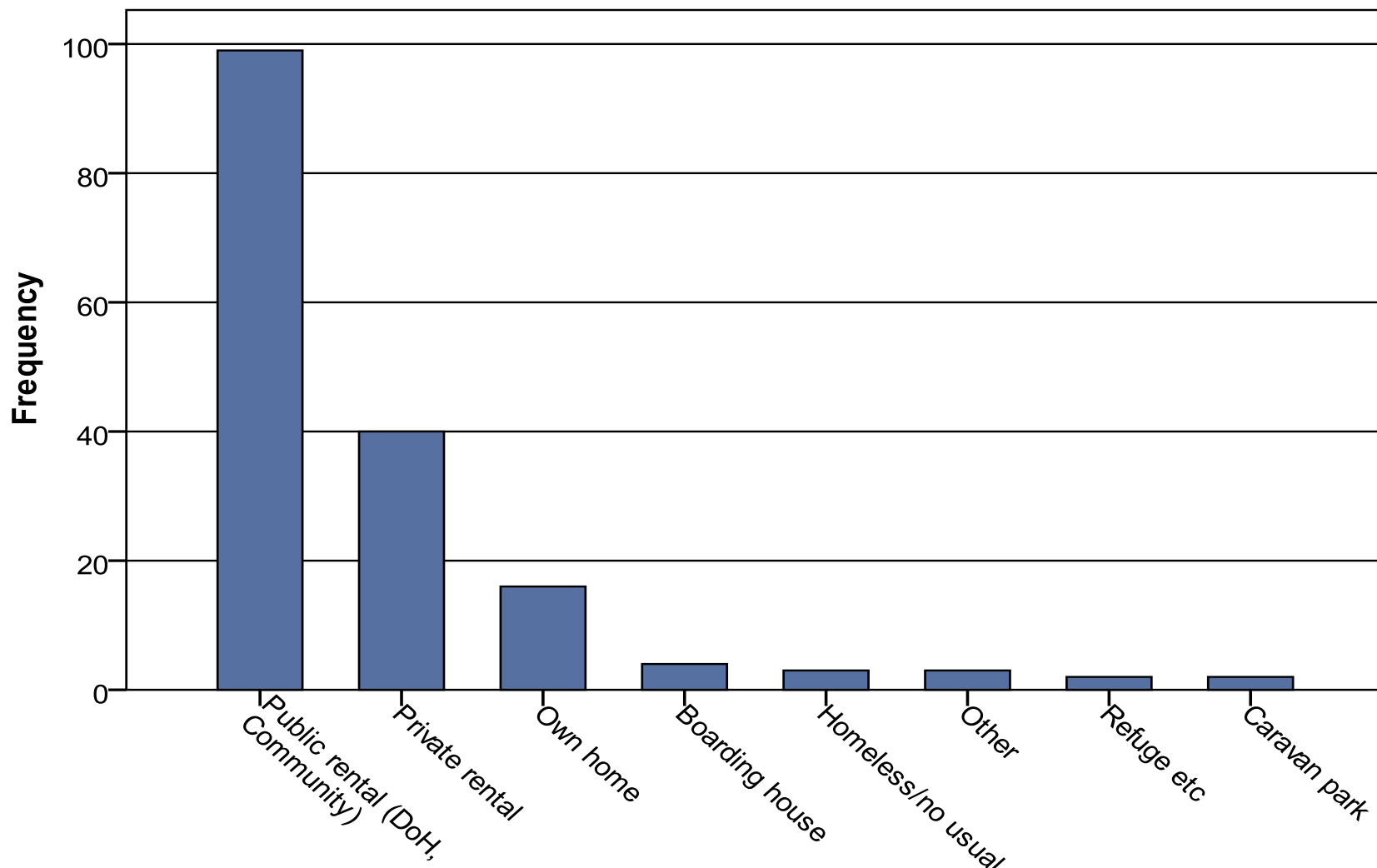
- Mean age at interview: 35.8 years (min: 21; max: 52 years)
- 85% born in Australia
- 38 (22.2%) of participants were Aboriginal
- Mean number of school years completed was 10 years
- 12% were employed, and 84% not in the workforce
- 149 (87%) on government benefits

# Recent financial difficulties



**N = 171. NB: Preliminary data only**

# Current type of residence



**N = 171. NB: Preliminary data only**

# Relationship status



Not in a relationship	72 (42%)	
Married/de facto	54	] 99 (58%)
In a relationship (not living together)	45	

**N = 171. NB: Preliminary data only**

# Women's childhood



- Majority (83%) were brought up by own mother; around half by father
- 88 reported ever living away from home < 16 years (mostly in teens)
- 102 reported avoiding home because of problems there
- Q: Were you well cared for as a child?  
A: Yes: 107; No: 43; Unsure: 7

# Respondents' abuse history



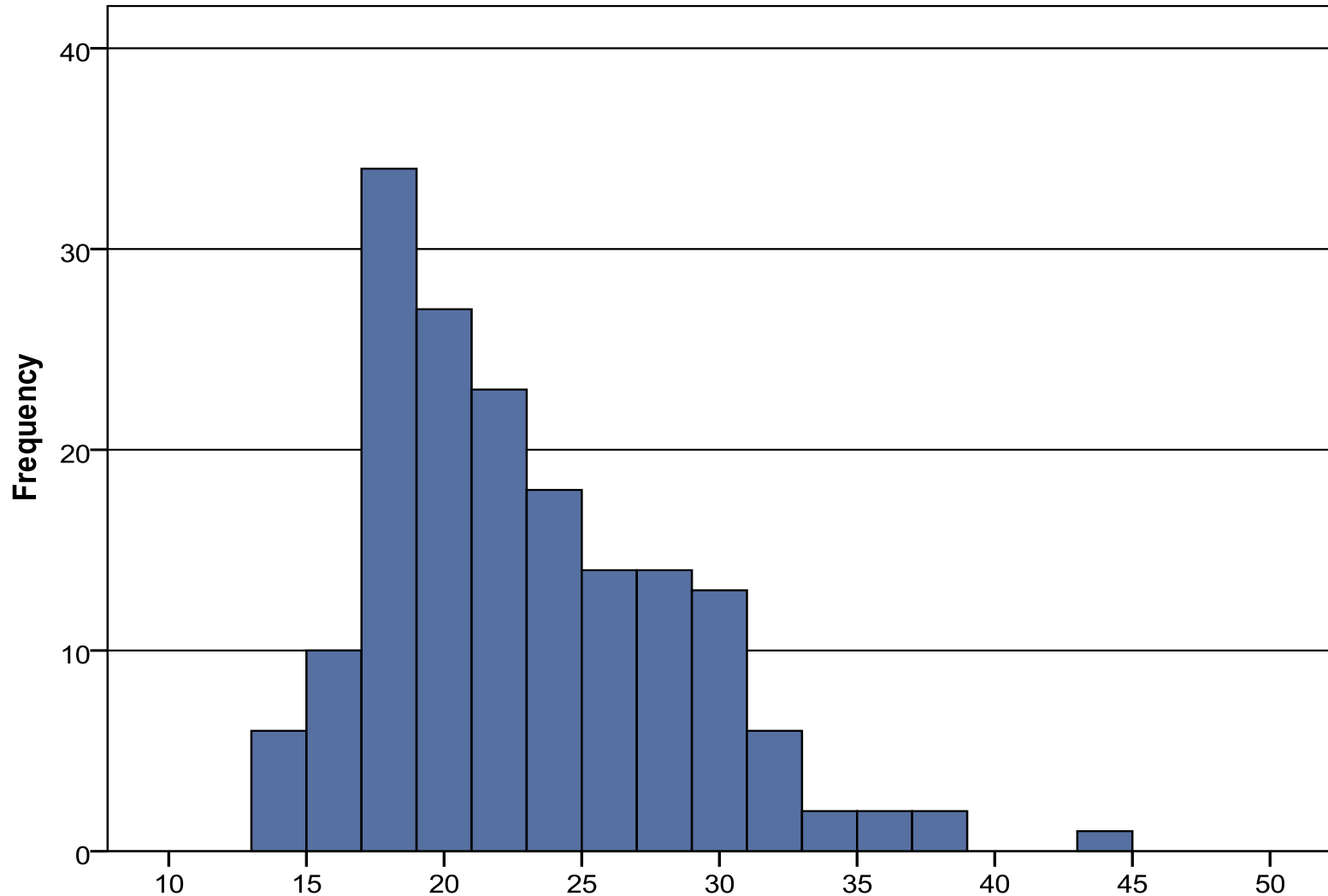
When you were a child or teenager... (CATS study questions)	Yes
Hit or physically abused?	69
Have any unwanted sexual experiences?	93
Forced or persuaded to have sexual intercourse against wishes?	74
Any upsetting sexual experience with a relative or authority?	61
<b>None of the above</b>	<b>51 (30.0%)</b>

# AOD treatment



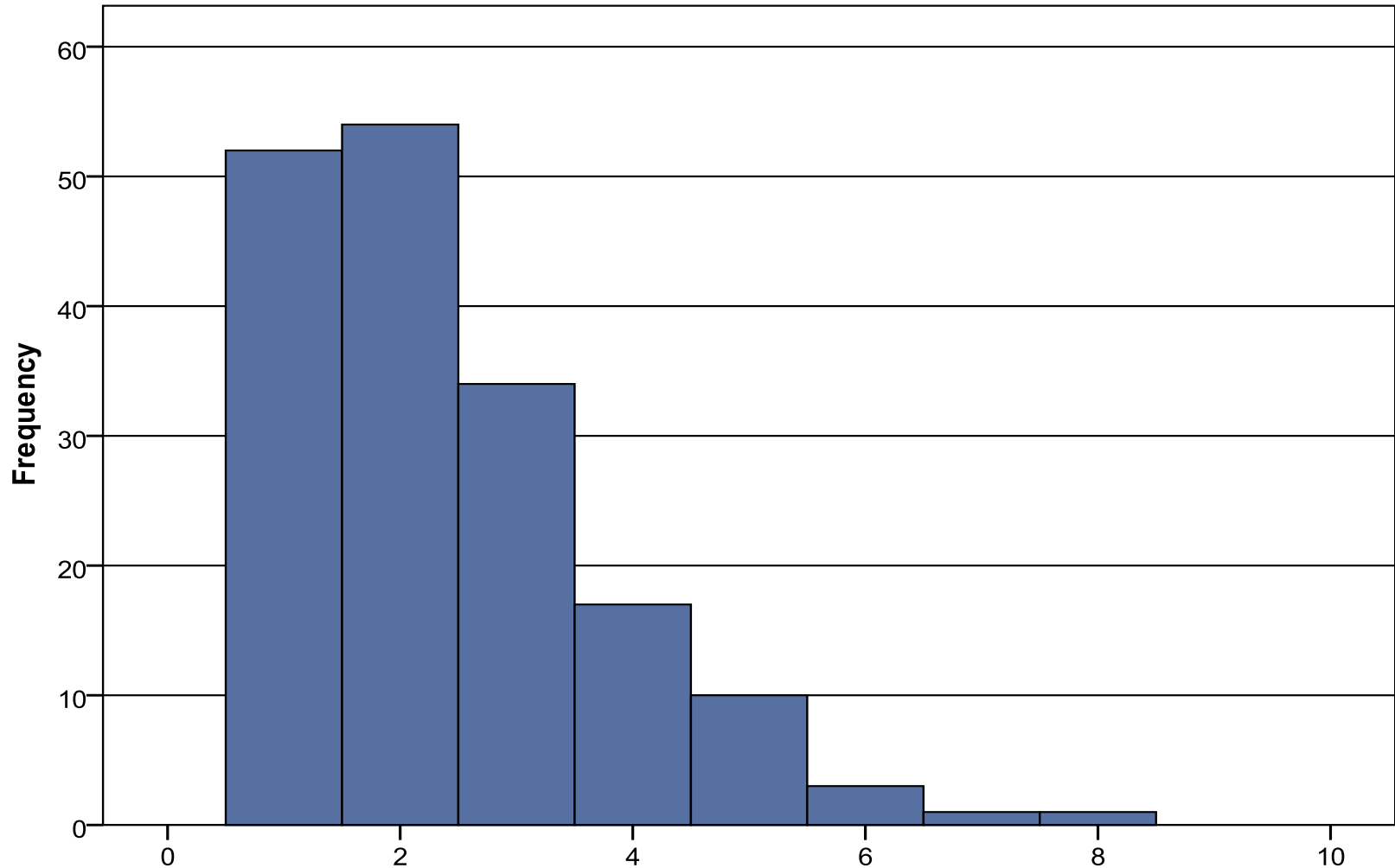
- 78% were on methadone; the rest on Subutex or Suboxone
- 82% had been in AOD treatment before, an average of 4.1 times
- Time on OTP (this episode): median: 48 mths.
- Majority were self-referred
- 32.7% cited pregnancy or being able to care for their kids as main reason for OTP

# Age when first child born



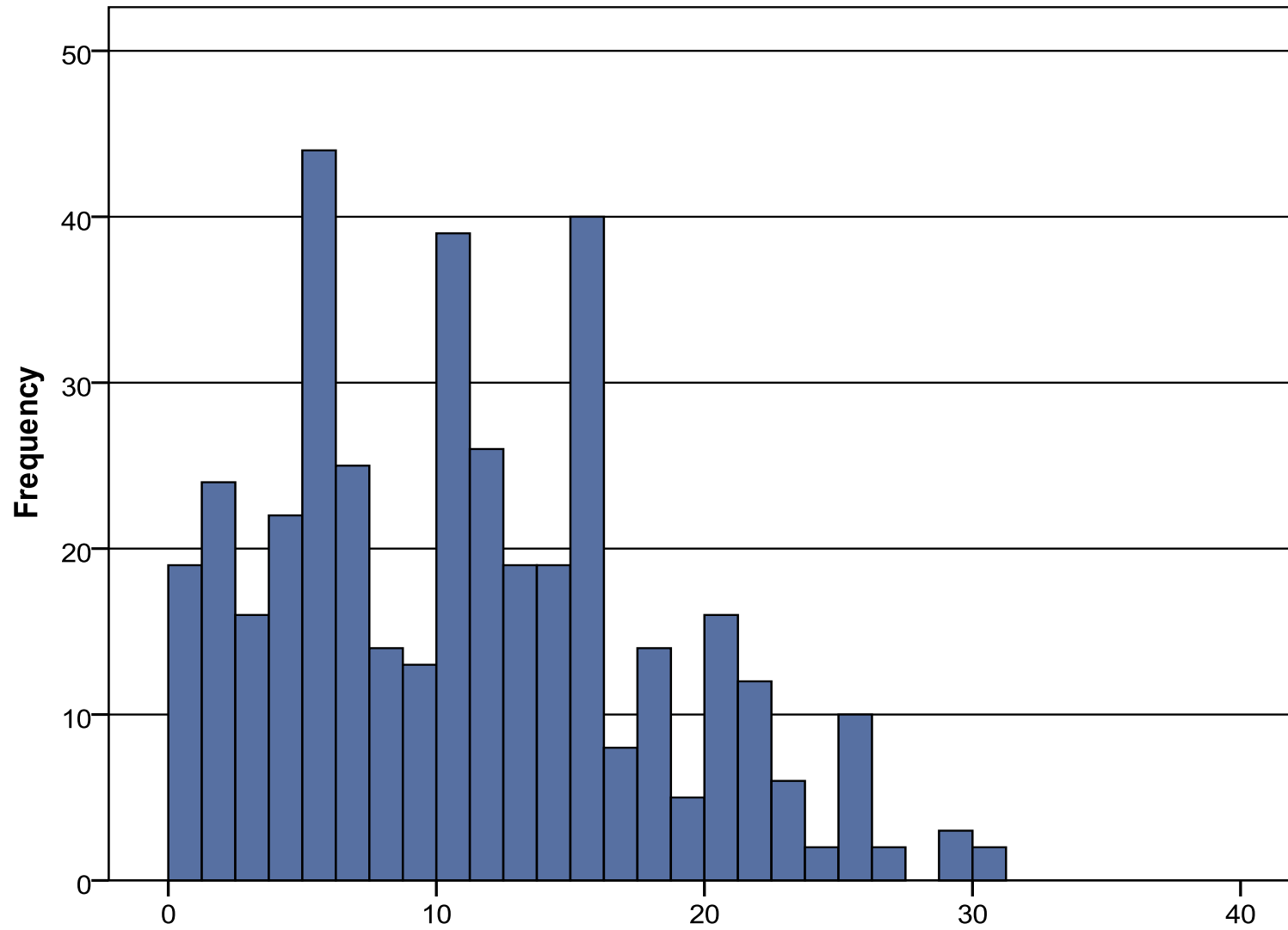
**N = 172. NB: Preliminary data only**

# Number of children



**N = 172. NB: Preliminary data only**

# Ages of children



**N = 172. NB: Preliminary data only**

# Child protection involvement



Child protection system involvement of respondents	Number	Percentage (%)
Current child protection involvement i.e. at least one child in OOHC &/or recent investigation or service	66	38.6
Past involvement with child protection i.e. previous report, investigation or OOHC	43	25.1
No child protection contact last 16 years	62	36.3

**N = 171**

# Children in care



Age of respondents' children in care	Number
< 1 year	3
1-2 years	13
3-4 years	17
5-11 years	50
12-15 years	17
16-17 years	1
Total in care	101

# Children's living arrangements



- Respondents had 319 children <17 years
- 163 (51%) lived with their mother
- Of the 101 children in care, 33 are in foster care and 68 in kinship care
- Some (n=40) are not 'in care' but live with other family in an informal arrangement
- 53 are living with grandparents only; 34 with extended family (aunts, sisters etc)

# Next steps



- Data on services received
- Comparisons between child protection-involved versus not
- Regression analyses
- Comparisons between self report and admin data
- Completion of 12 month follow-up (via DoCS records)

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