

# Characteristics of California Women With a History of Removal from Birth Family

Presented To:  
Executive Staff,  
California Department of Social Services (CDSS),  
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# Purpose

- **To examine long term outcomes for women removed from their homes during childhood.**

# Note

- The results of this analysis do not suggest that being removed from the birth family, in itself, causes poor long-term outcomes. It seems likely that the factors which lead the child to be removed from his/her birth family may also lead to poor long-term outcomes.

# Related Research

- In their study relating to internal medicine, Felitti et al examined the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) and physical health outcomes.
- Felitti defined the following 8 experiences as ACE's:
  - emotional abuse
  - sexual abuse
  - parental separation
  - substance abuser living in the household
  - member of the household is incarcerated
  - physical abuse
  - having a battered mother
  - mental illness in household
- Felitti et al concluded that the more ACE's a child had, the worse their outcomes.
- The findings of our analysis are consistent with Felitti's.

# Introduction

- Little research has been done on the long-term outcomes for adults with a history of being removed from their birth family.
- Understanding how youth fare long after leaving their birth family will help us understand how to best serve these clients should they enter service provided by CDSS.

Descriptive and Outcome  
Data from the California  
Women's Health Survey  
(CWHS)

# Data Source

- We took advantage of an existing survey of health status to assess characteristics of women with a history of removal from their birth family.
- The California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) is an ongoing annual survey of 4,000 adult women in California.
- The CWHS includes questions about employment, health, social wellbeing, service utilization and "removal".

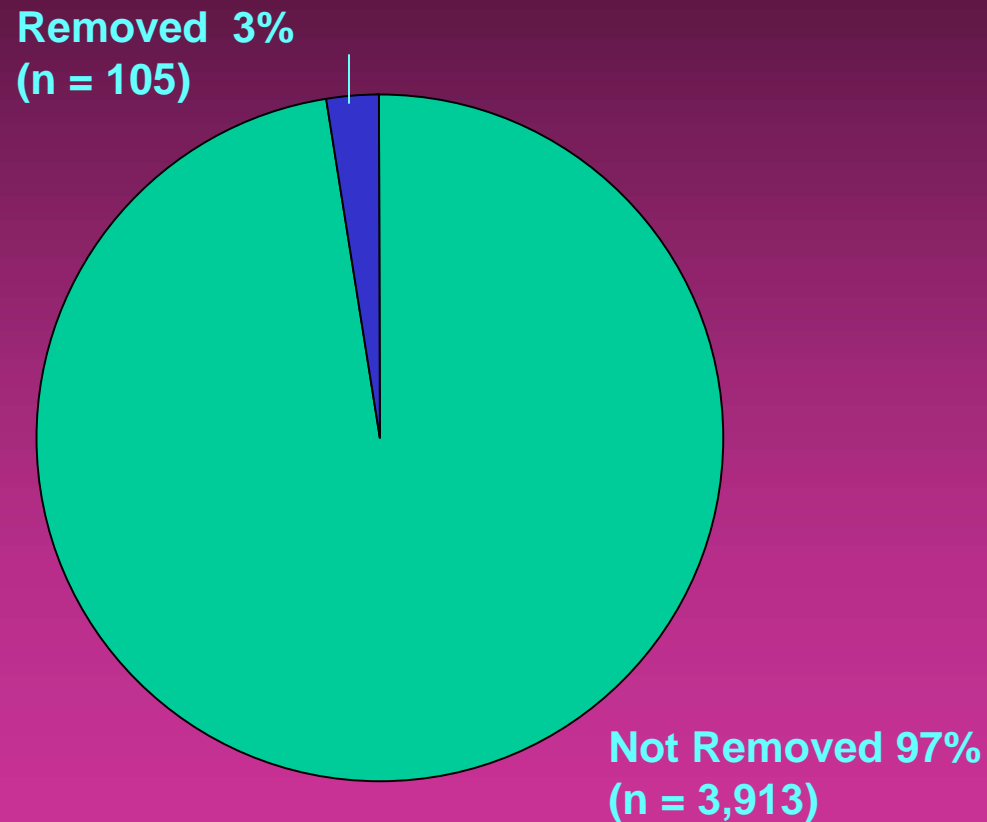
## CWHS Removal Question

- Thinking back to your childhood, that is, before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, was there ever a time when you were removed from your home by the state, county, or court, and went to live with people other than your mother or father?



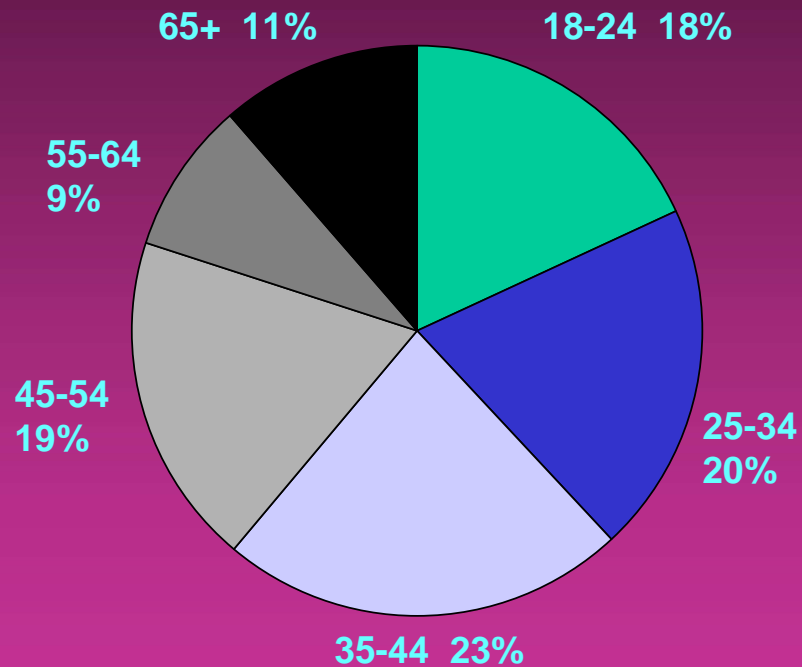
# Descriptive Data

A history of being removed from birth family was reported by 3% of respondents.

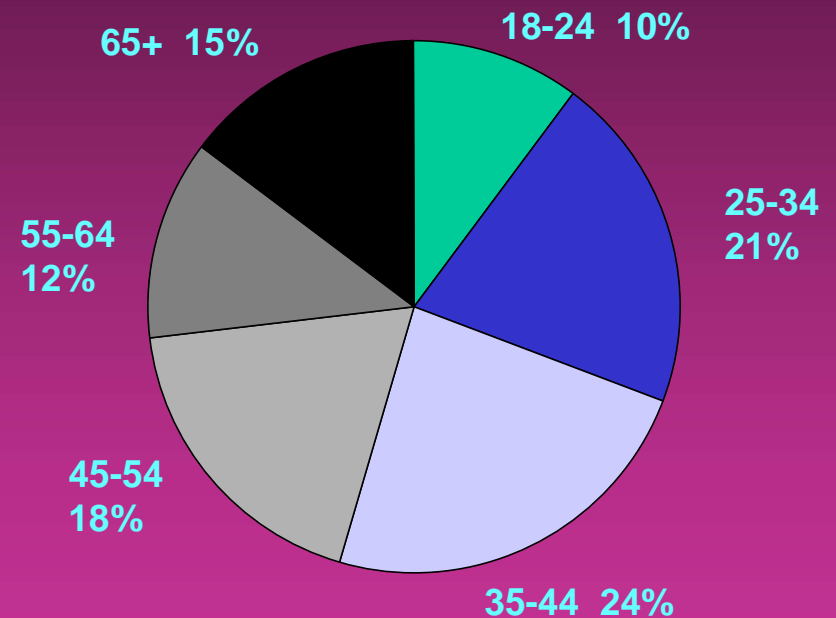


# Women with a history of being removed from their birth family tend to be younger.

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(n= 105)**



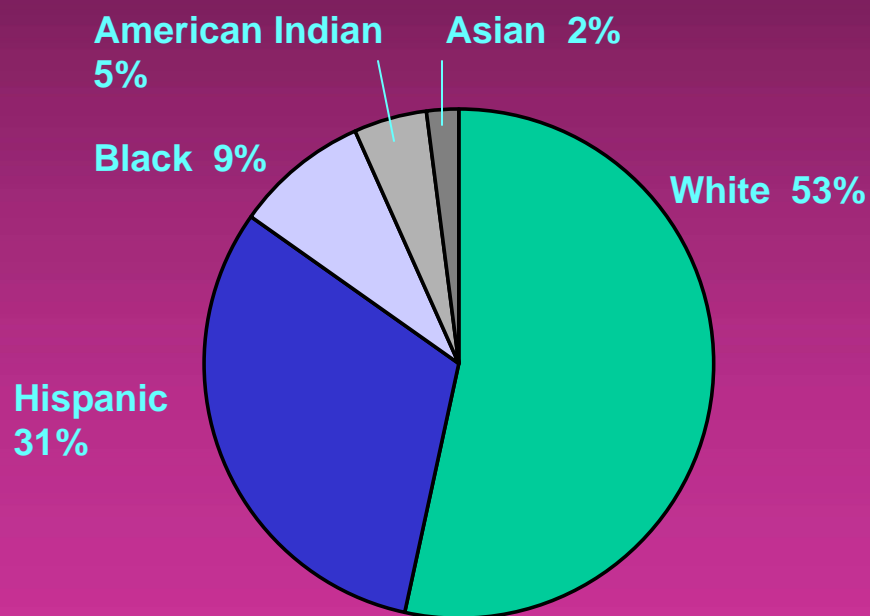
**Not Removed  
(n= 3,913)**



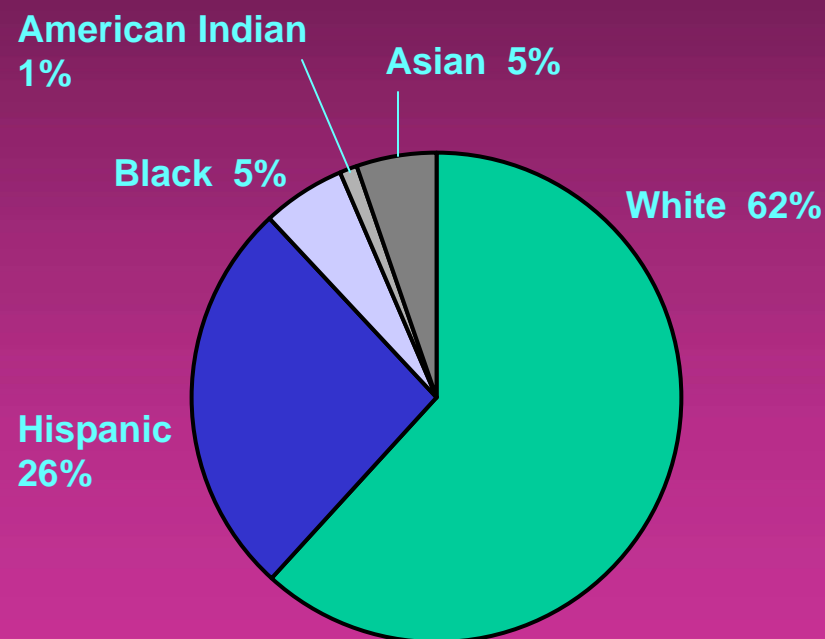
- 18% of women with a history of removal are 18 to 24 years of age.
- 10% of women with no history of removal are in the same age group.

# Women with a history of being removed from their birth family are more likely to be Latina, African-American, or American Indian.

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(n= 105)**



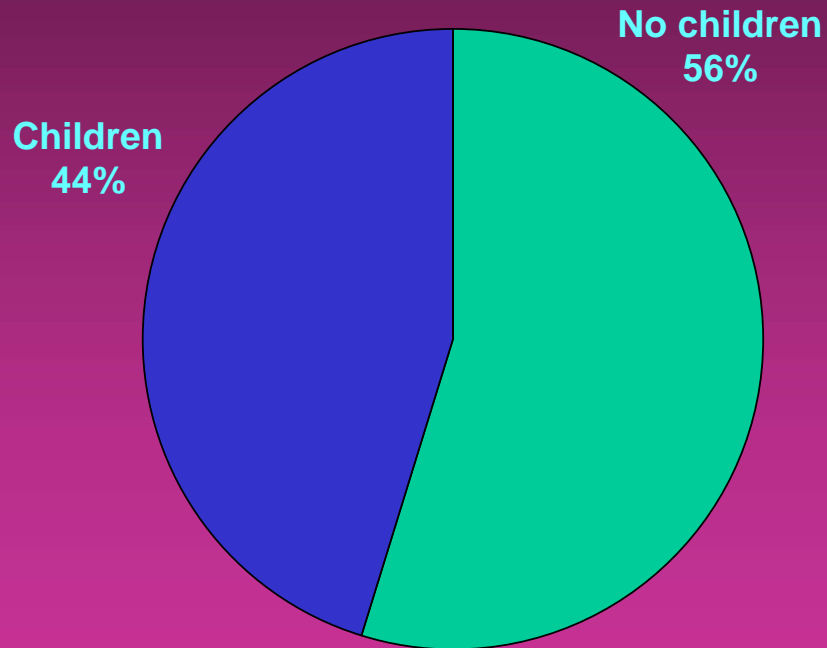
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(n= 3,885)**



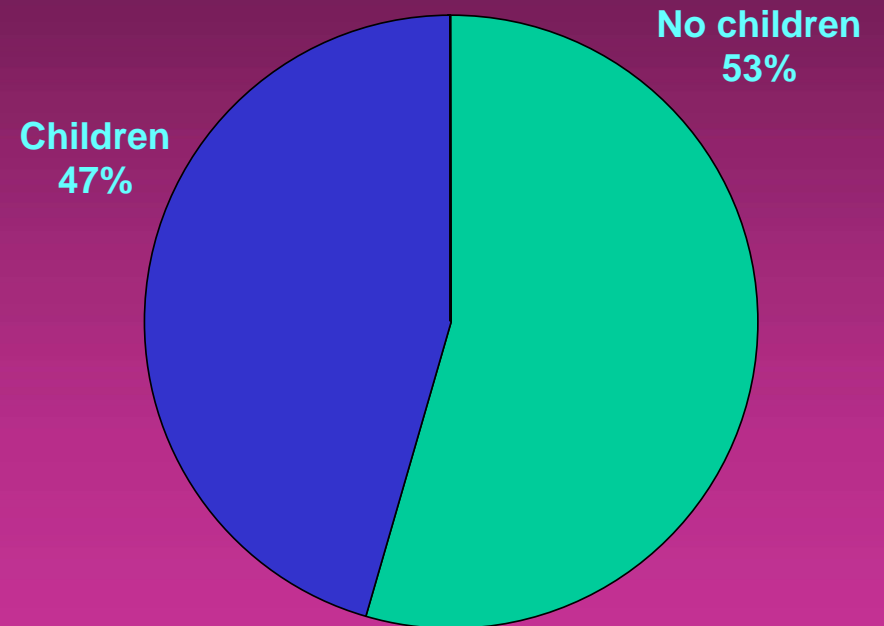
- 47% of women who were removed are non-white/Asian.
- 38% of women who were not moved are non-white/Asian.

The number of children under 18 years living in the household is about the same for the two groups.

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(n=105)**



**Not Removed  
(n=3,911)**



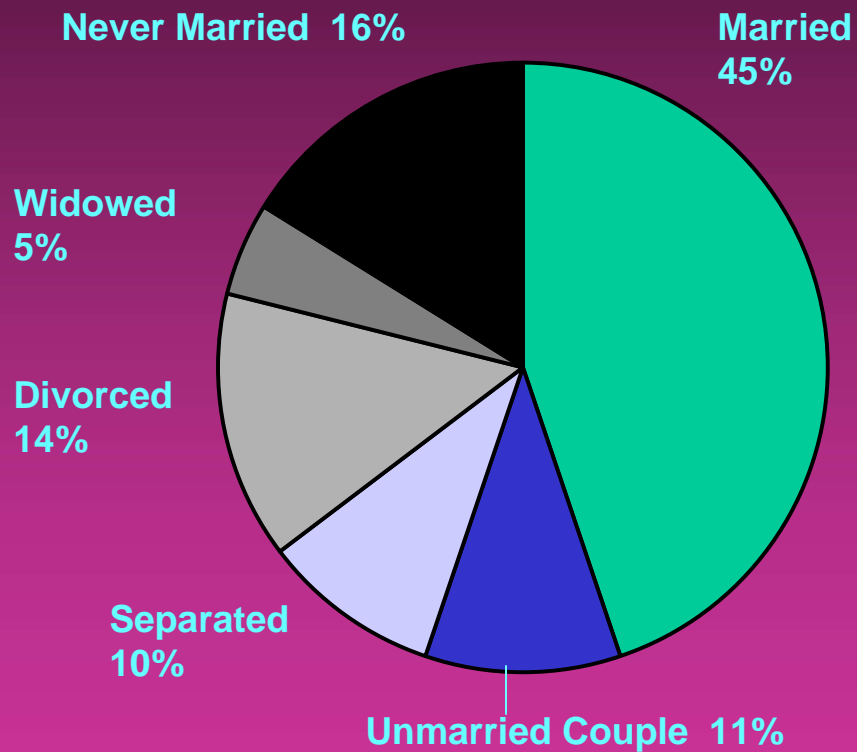
44% of those removed had a child in the household.  
47% of those not removed had a child in the household.

## Outcomes:

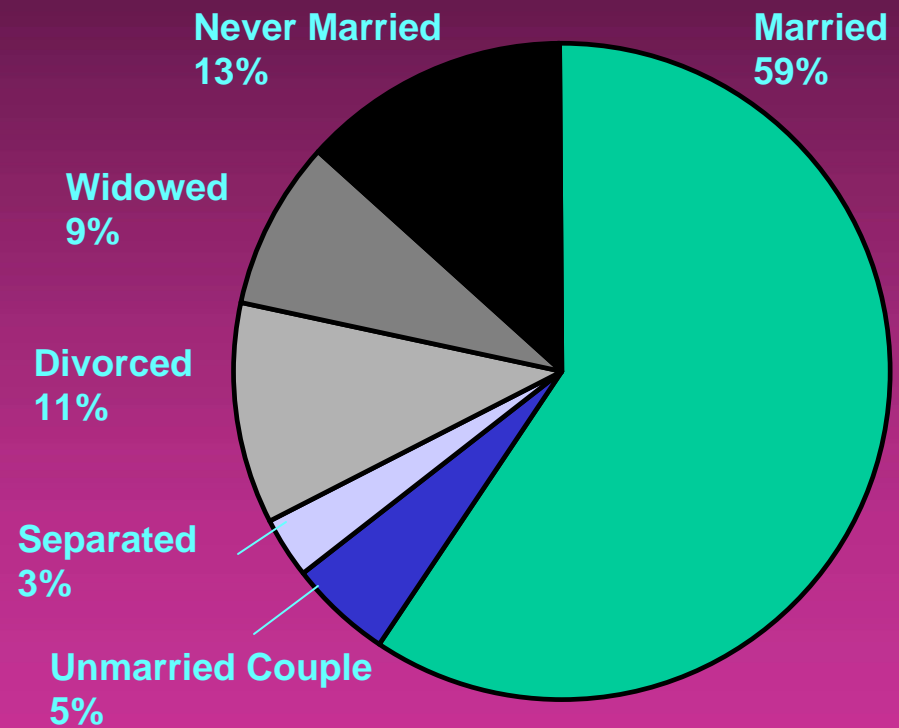
Compared to women who remained with their birth family, women with a history of being removed from their birth family had the following characteristics:

# A larger percent are not married.

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(n= 105)**



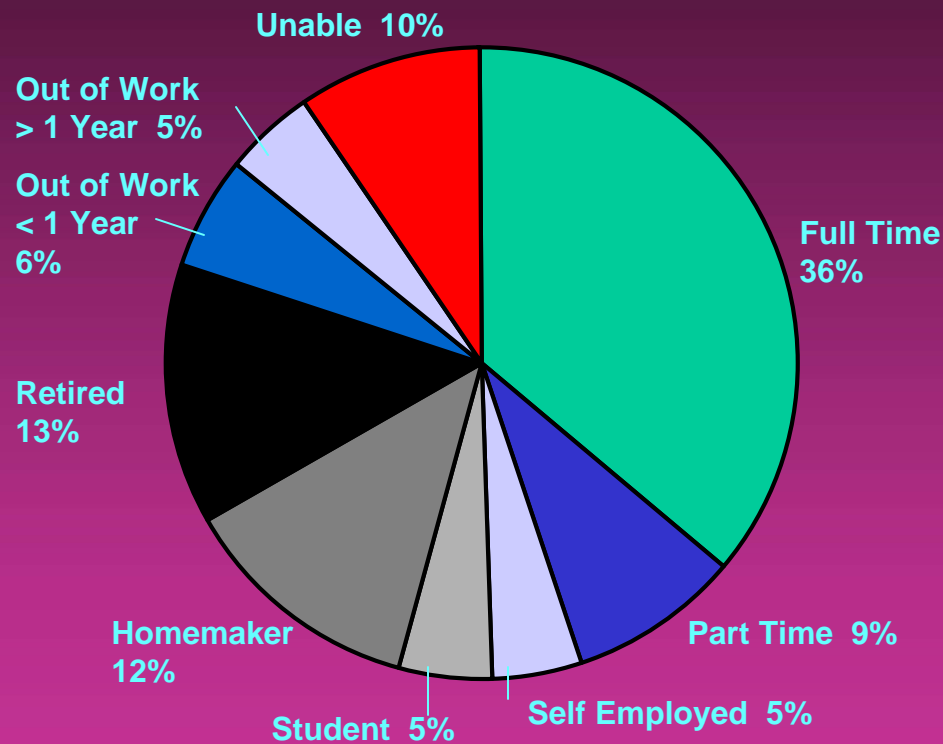
**Not Removed  
(n= 3,885)**



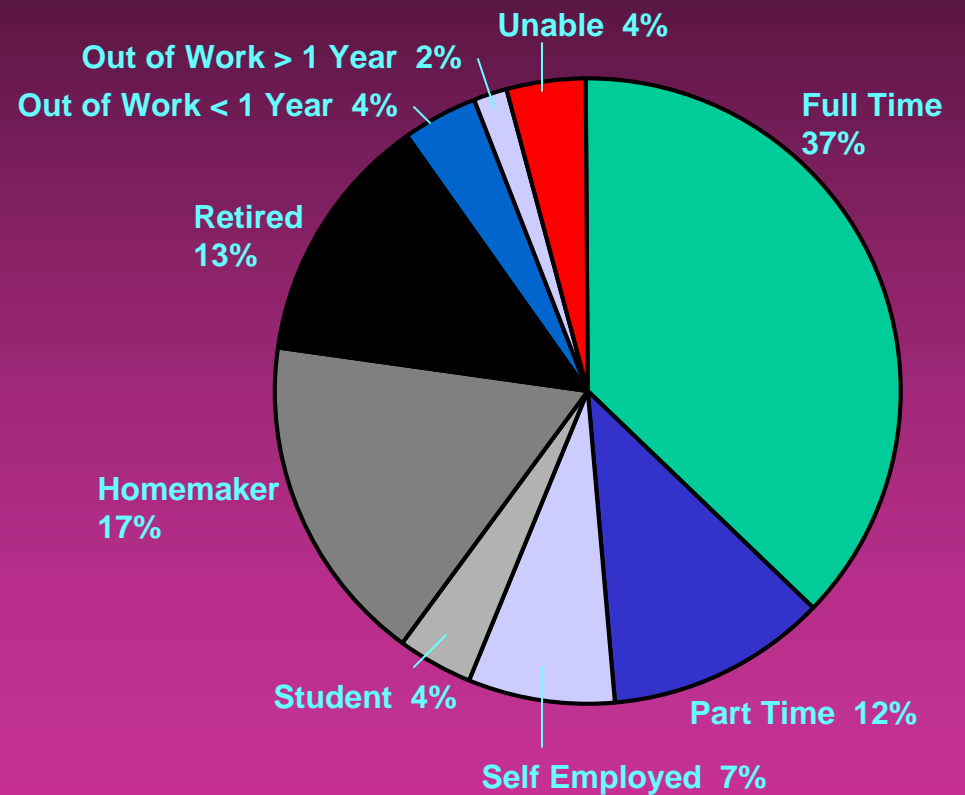
- 55% of women who were removed are not married.
- 41% of women who were not removed are not married.

# Twice as many report being out of work or unable to work.

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(n= 105)**



**Not Removed  
(n= 3,885)**

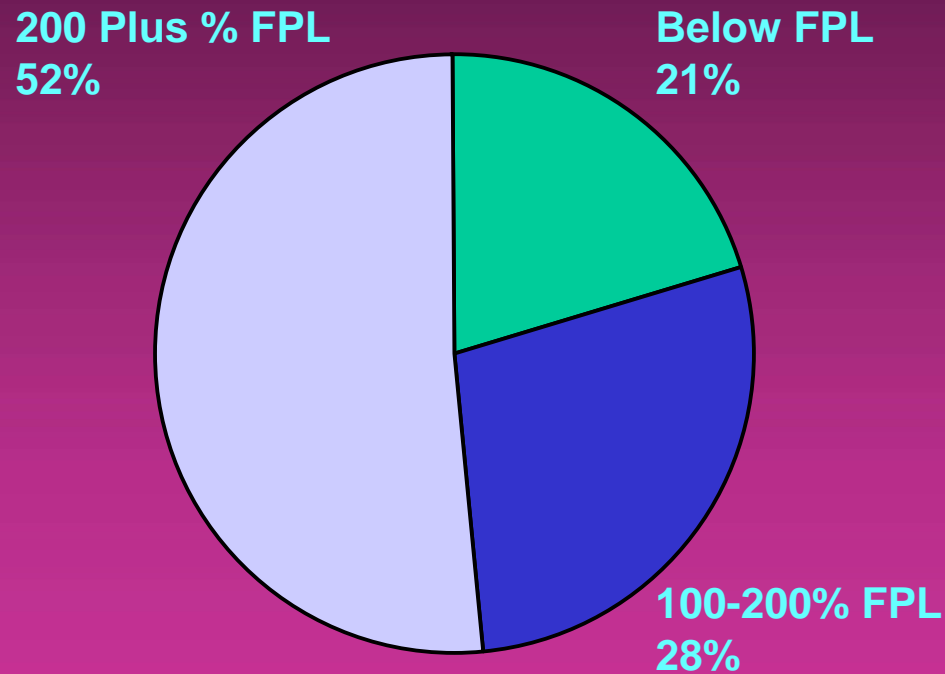


- 20% of women who were removed are out of work or unable to work.
- 10% of women not removed are out of work or unable to work.

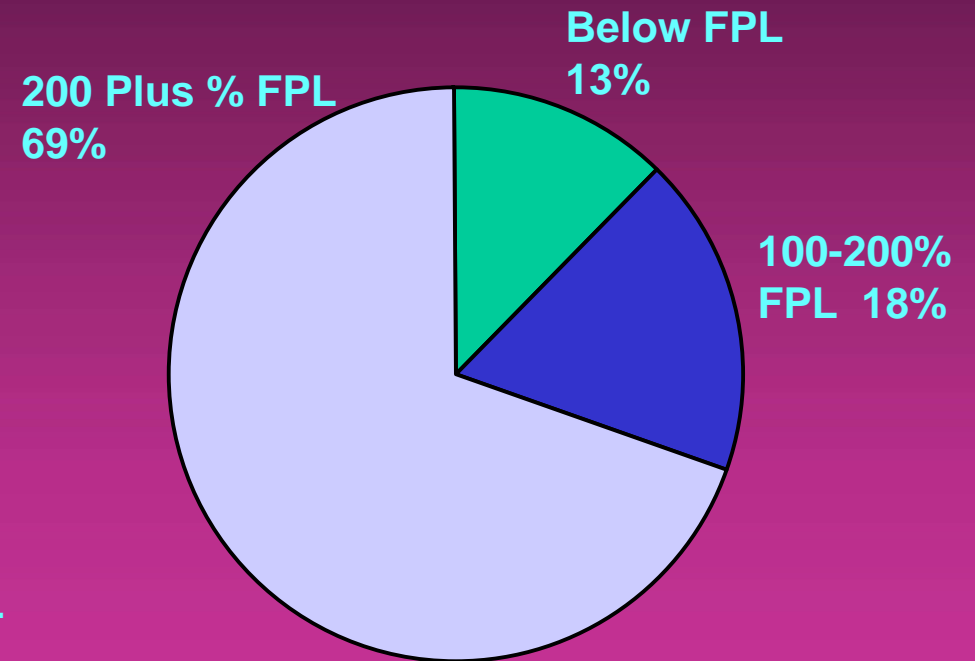


A higher percent are living in poverty.

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(n= 97)**

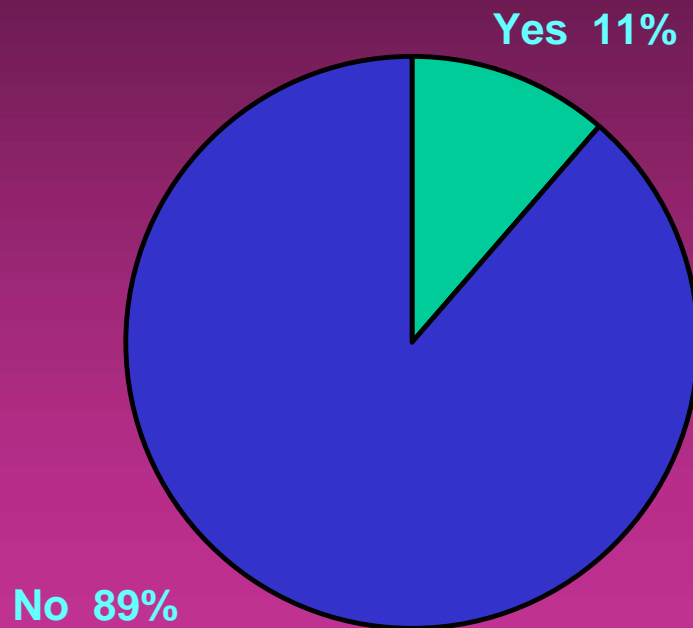


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(n= 3,665)**



Twice as many received welfare during the last 2 years.

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(n= 105)

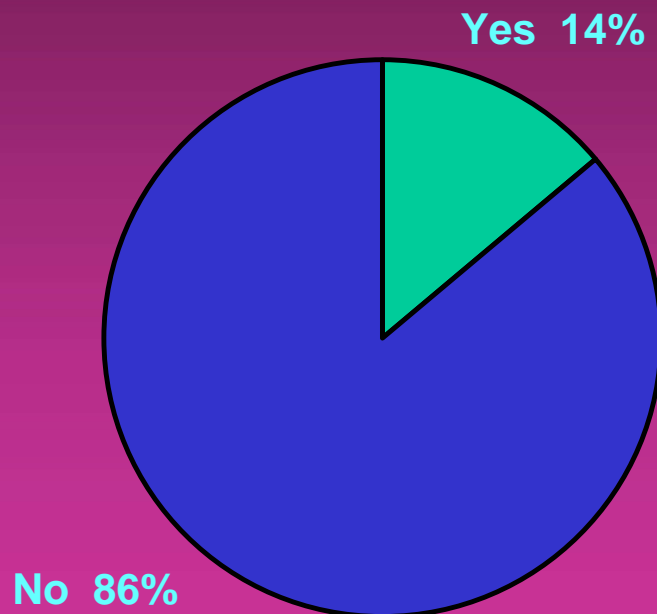


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(n= 3,911)

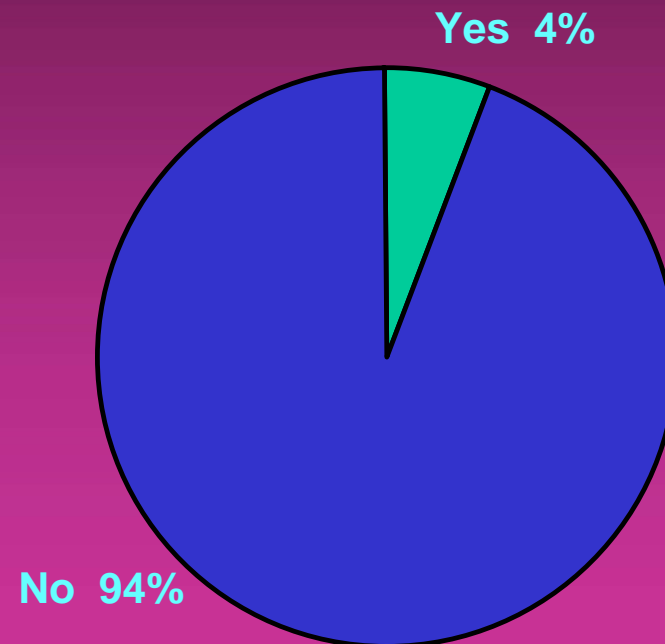


Of those 50 or younger,  
more than three times as many received welfare  
during the last two years.

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(n= 74)

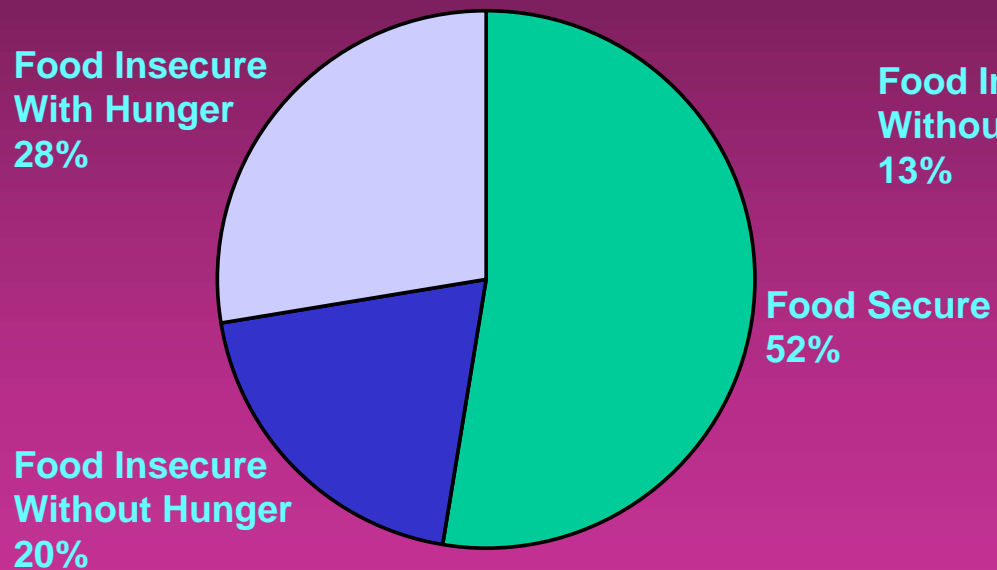


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(n= 2,564)

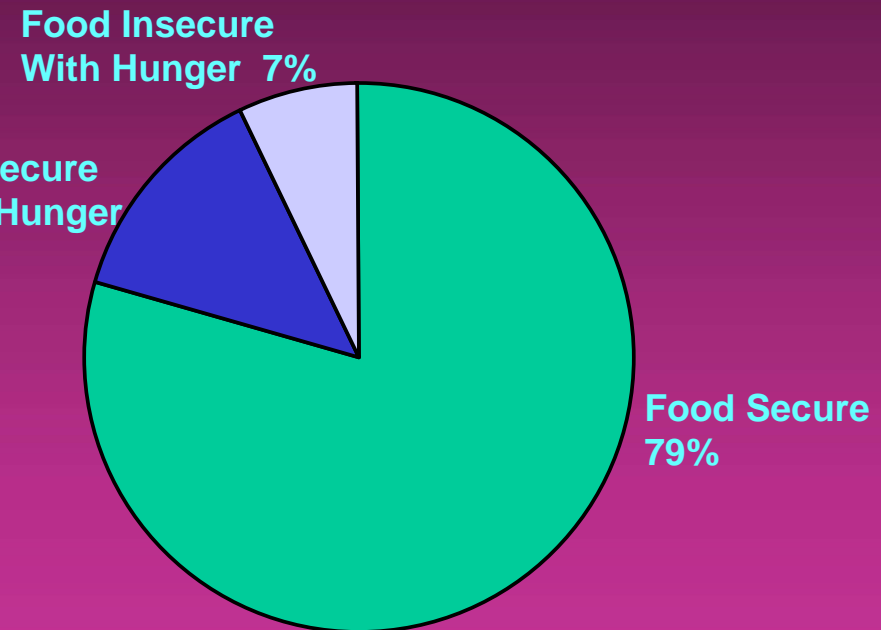


Twice as many are food insecure.  
Four times as many are food insecure  
*with hunger.*

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(n= 105)



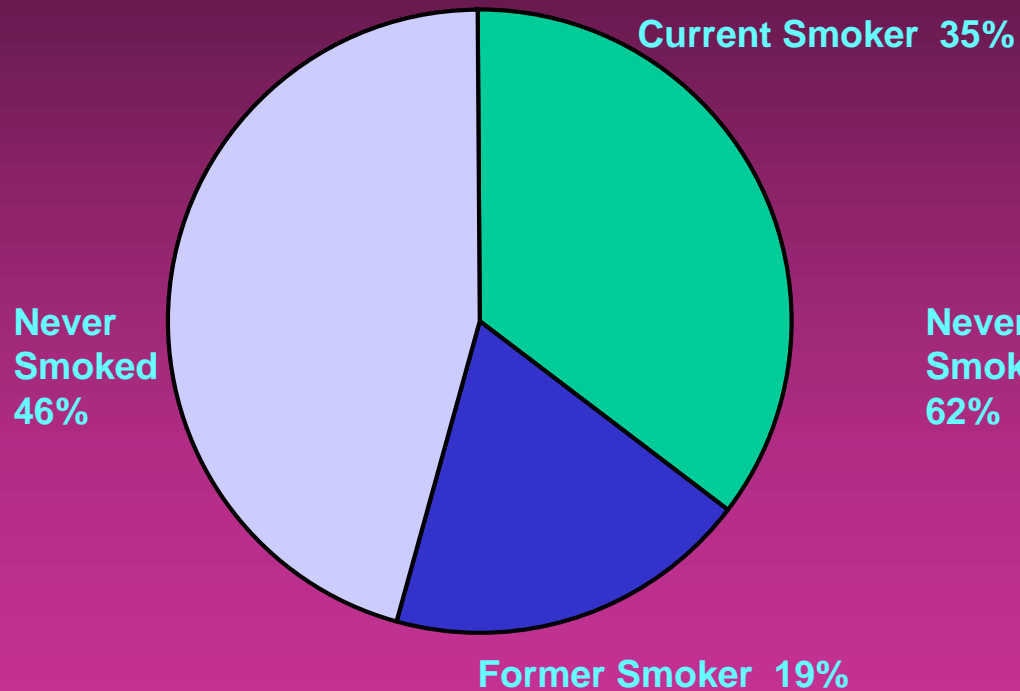
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(n= 3,913)



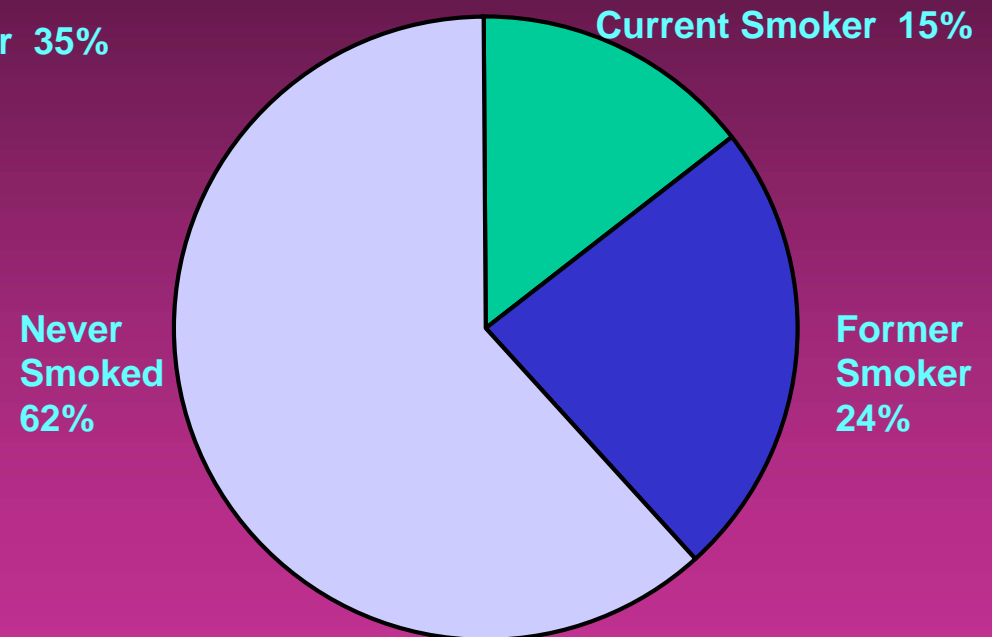
- Food insecure *without hunger*: 20% vs. 13%.
- Food insecure *with hunger*: 28% vs. 7%.

More than twice as many are current smokers.

**Removed  
(n= 105)**



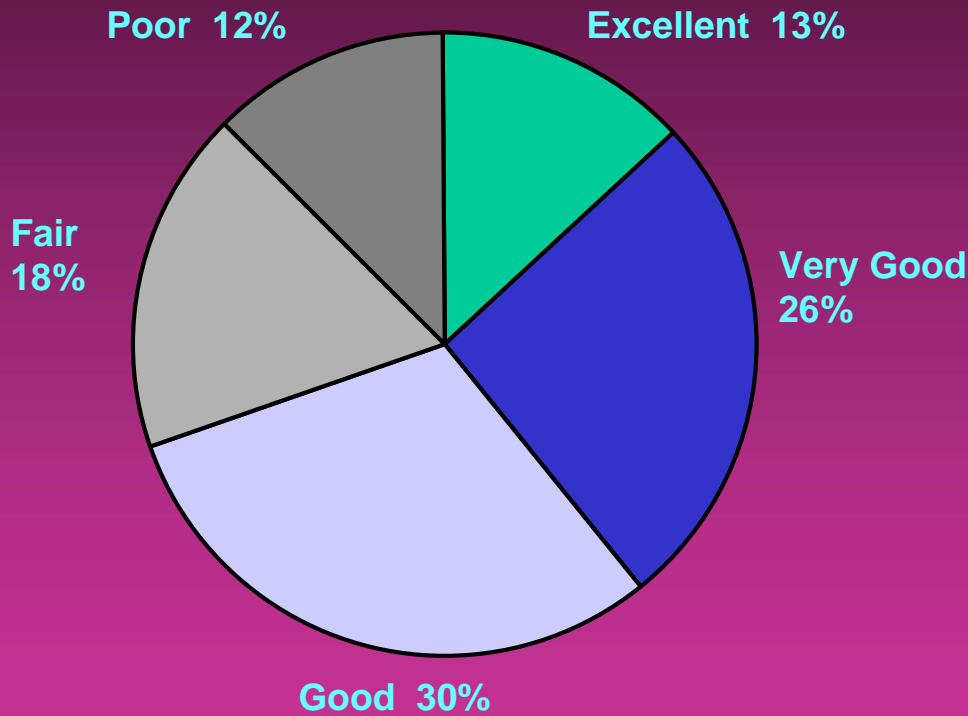
**Not Removed  
(n= 3,913)**



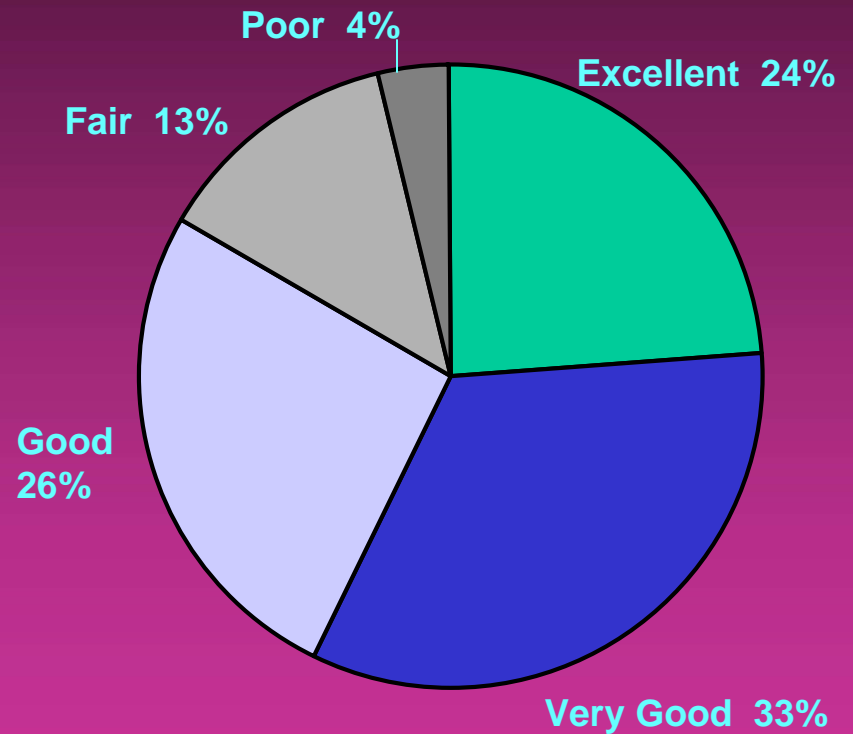
- 35% of women who were removed are current smokers.
- 15% of women who were not removed are current smokers.

# They report poorer general health status.

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(n= 105)**



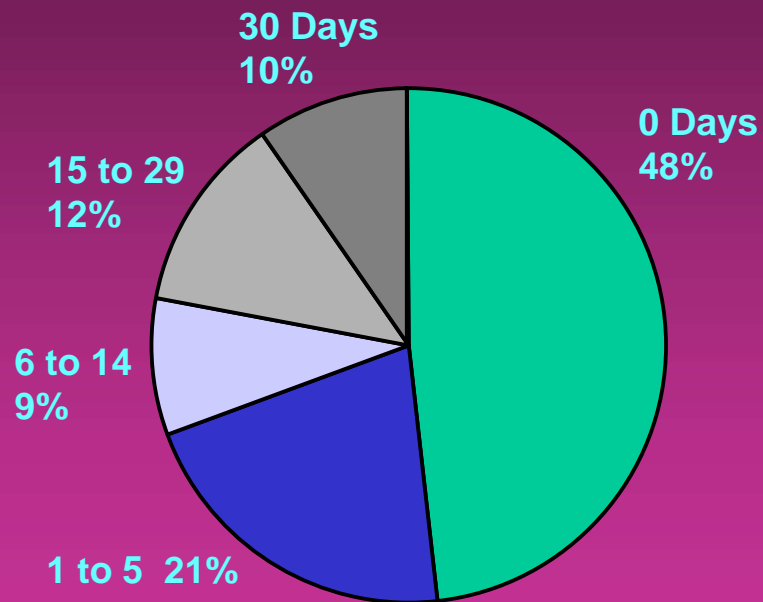
**Not Removed  
(n= 3,909)**



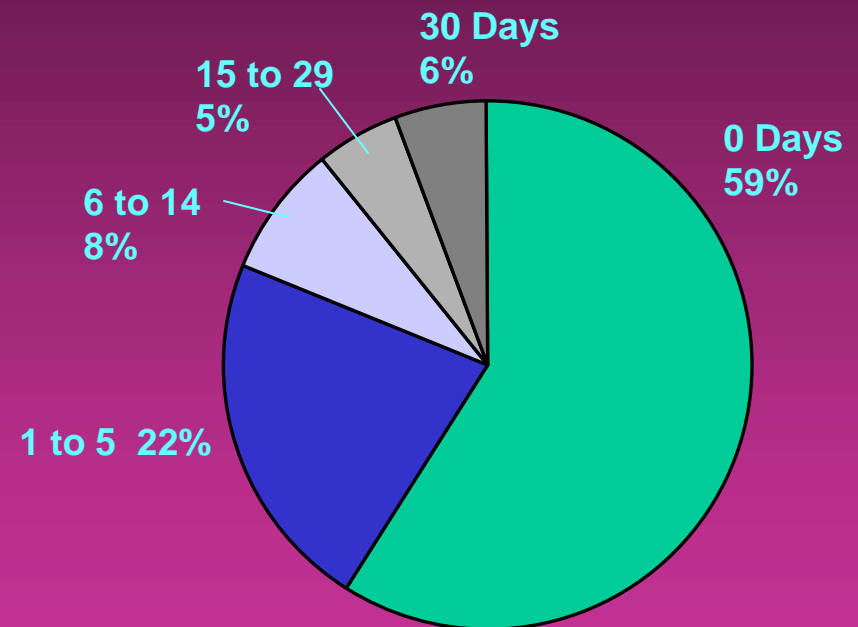
- Fewer report excellent or very good general health.
- Almost twice as many (30% vs. 17%) report fair or poor general health.

# Report poorer *physical health*.

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(n= 104)**



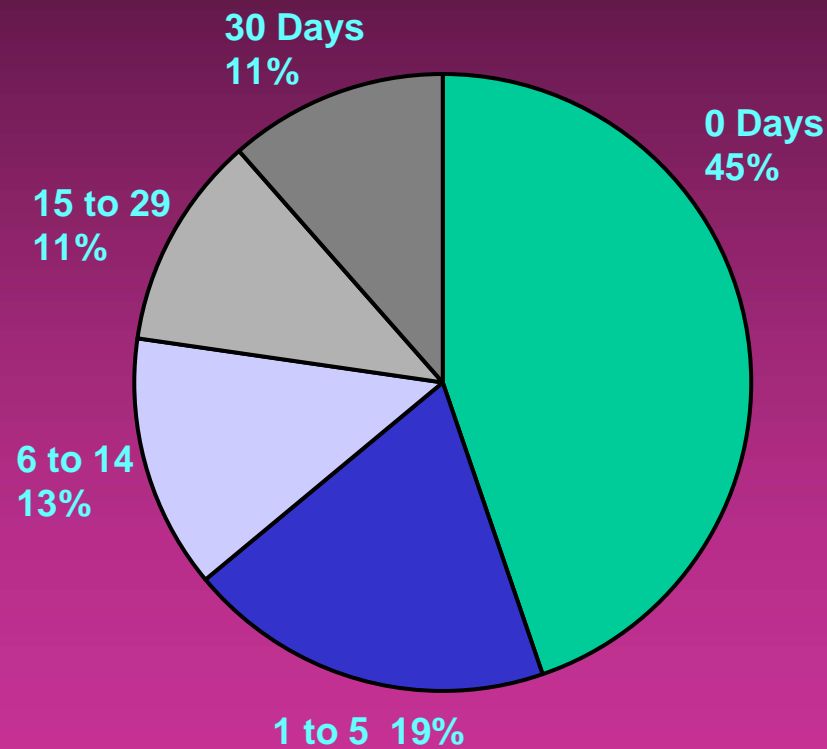
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(n= 3,899)**



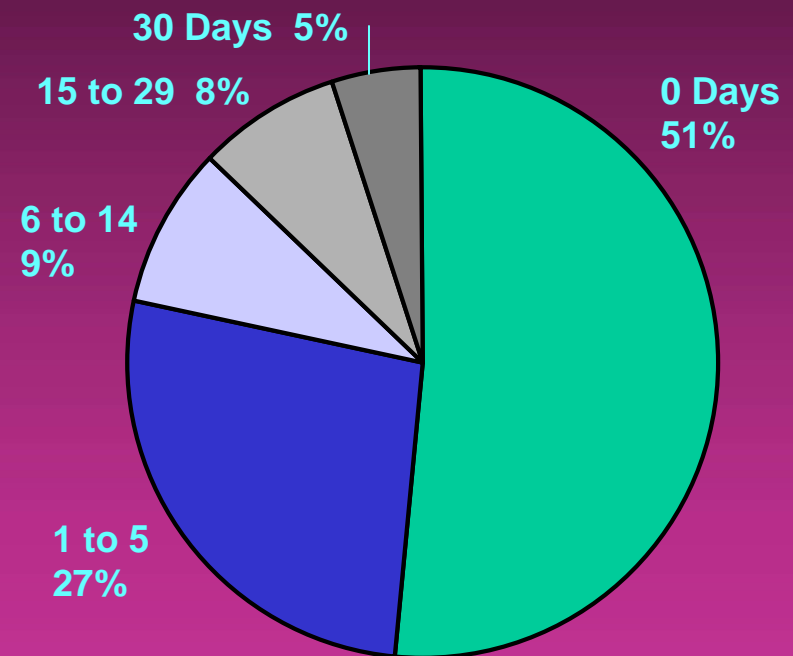
- Twice as likely (22% vs. 11%) to report their physical health is not good for 15 or more days in the last 30.

# Report poorer *mental health*.

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(n= 105)**



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(n= 3,905)**

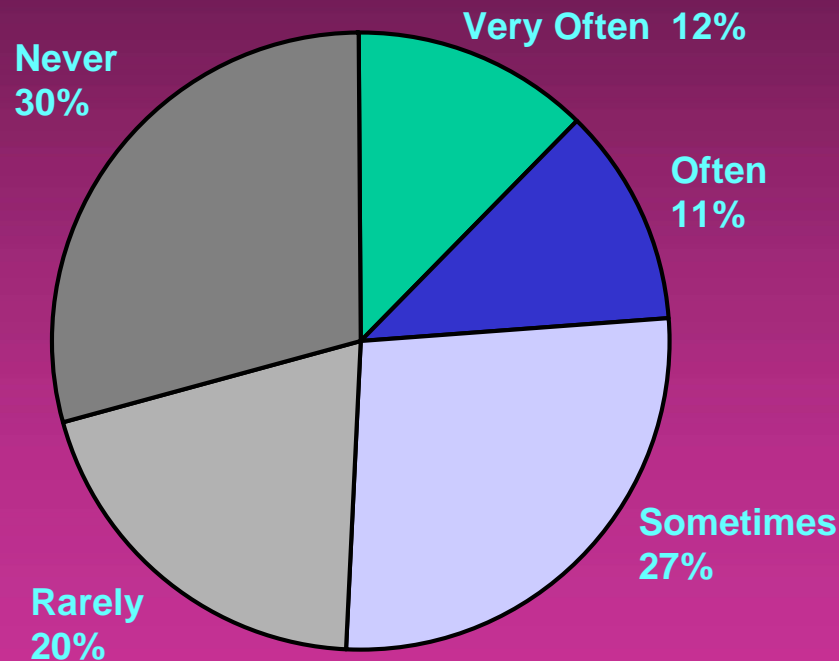


- A higher percentage (22% vs. 13%) report their mental health is not good for 15 or more days in the last 30.

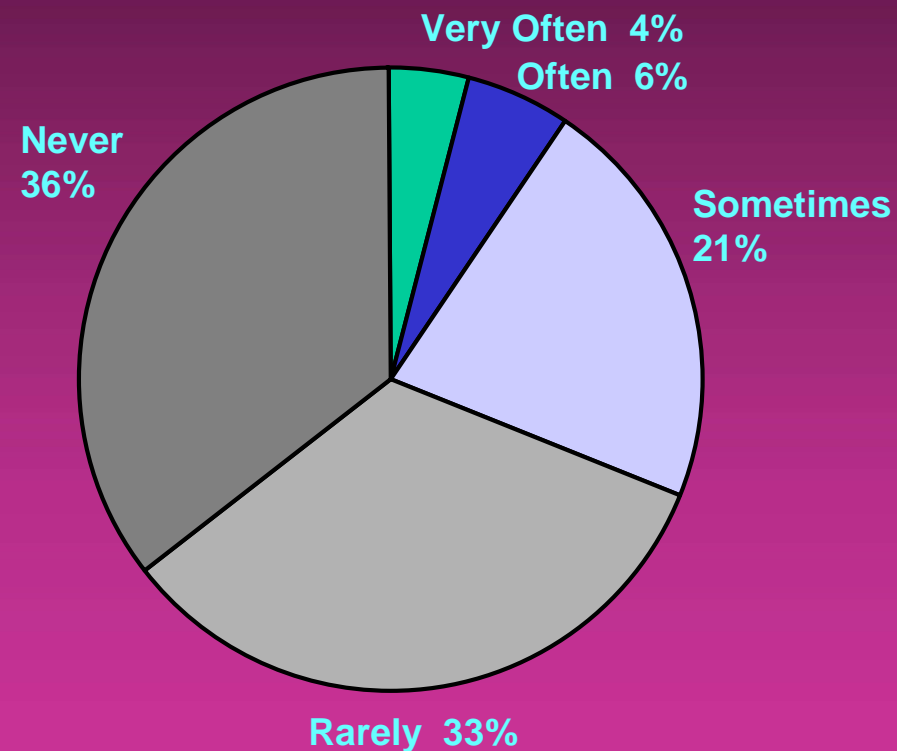


Twice as many felt they could not control the important things in life during the past 30 days.

**Removed  
(n= 105)**



**Not Removed  
(n= 3, 909)**



- Felt not in control of important things very often or often in last 30 days.  
Removed from birth family: 23%  
Not removed from birth family: 10%

# Summary

- **Women with a history of removal are more likely than others to:**
  - **Be unmarried**
  - **Be living in poverty**
  - **Receive welfare**
  - **Smoke**
  - **Be out of work or unable to work**
  - **Be food insecure**
  - **Be in poor physical and mental health**

# Interpretation and Related Issues

- **History of being removed from birth family was associated with poor health outcomes in our sample.**
- **The well-being of children who are removed from their birth family not only becomes a responsibility of social services agencies, it is a public health issue.**
- **Collaboration with public health policy makers may be beneficial in order to better serve children who have been removed from their birth families.**