



Estimating Early Childhood Mental Health Service Needs in Nebraska



CENTER ON CHILDREN,
FAMILIES, AND THE LAW

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ABSTRACT

In response to the growing recognition of mental health needs in young children, this study aims to address the challenge of estimating infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) needs in Nebraska, a metric crucial for service capacity planning. Because there is currently no universal screening tool to identify IECMH needs, we utilize Kidsights data to explore various estimation methods. This work aims to enhance the identification and provision of IECMH services across the state.

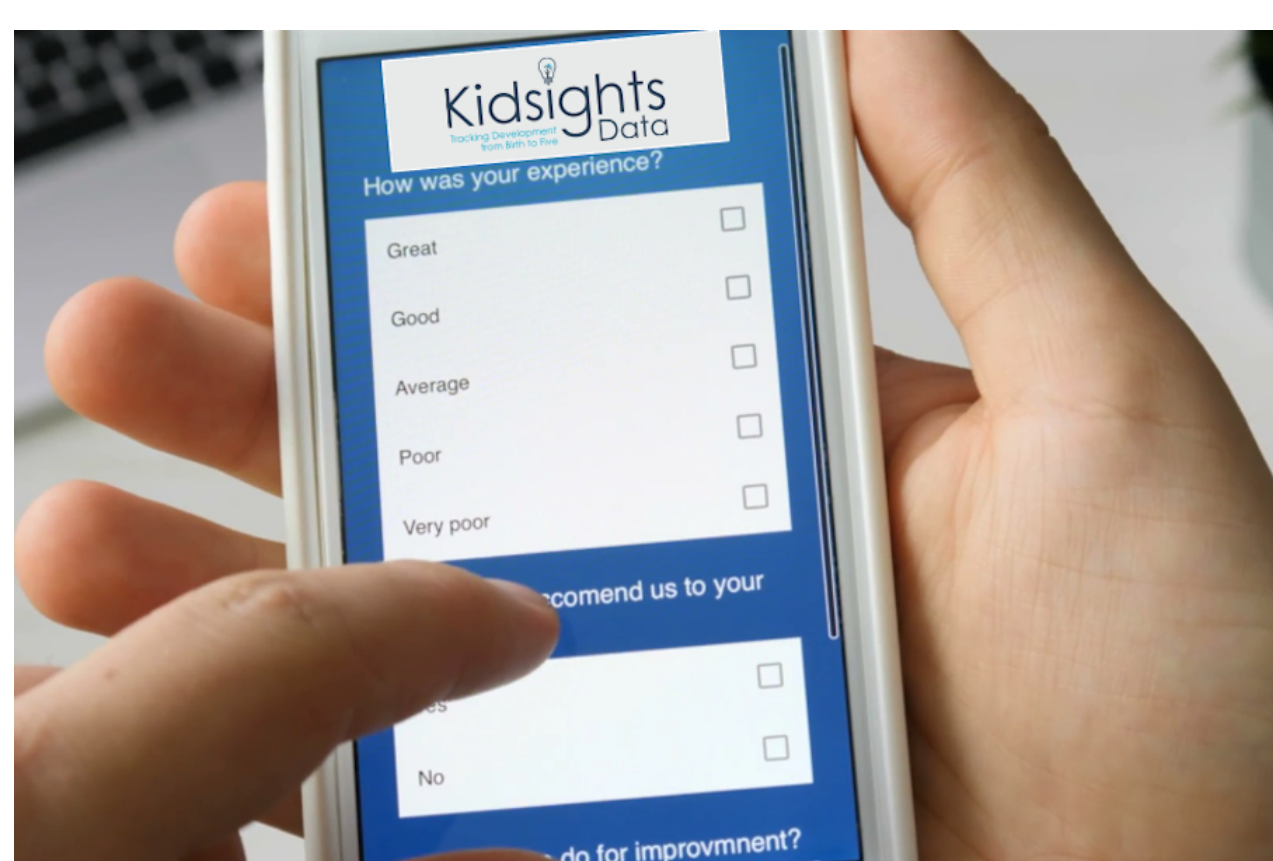
Research Questions

- 1) How can we accurately identify and measure the need for IECMH services across the state?
- 2) What indicators should parents and providers be looking for to determine if a child could benefit from IECMH services?

What is Kidsights Data?

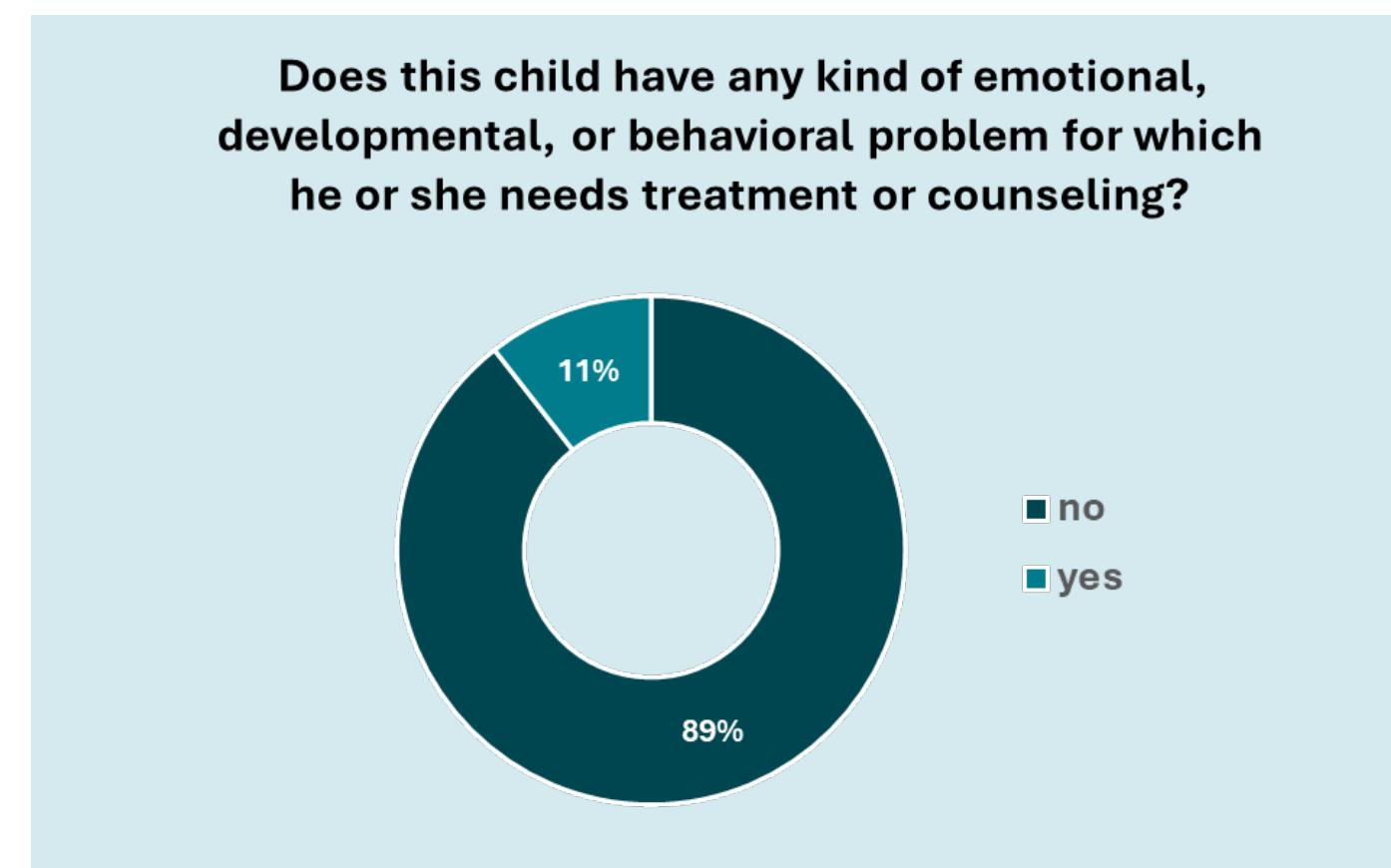
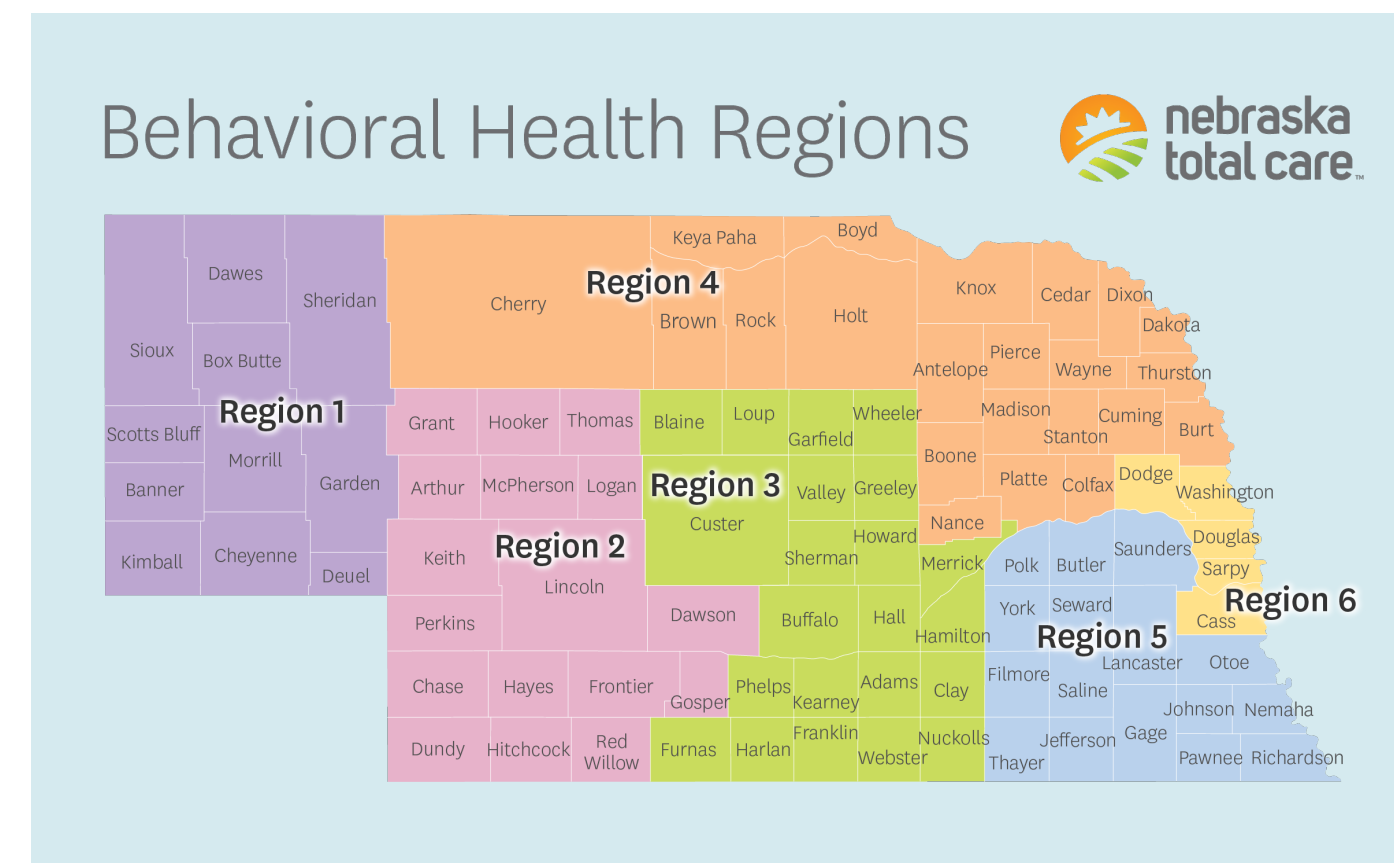


Kidsights Data is an initiative to build demand for the adoption and use of a population-based early childhood measurement tool for children from birth to age 5.

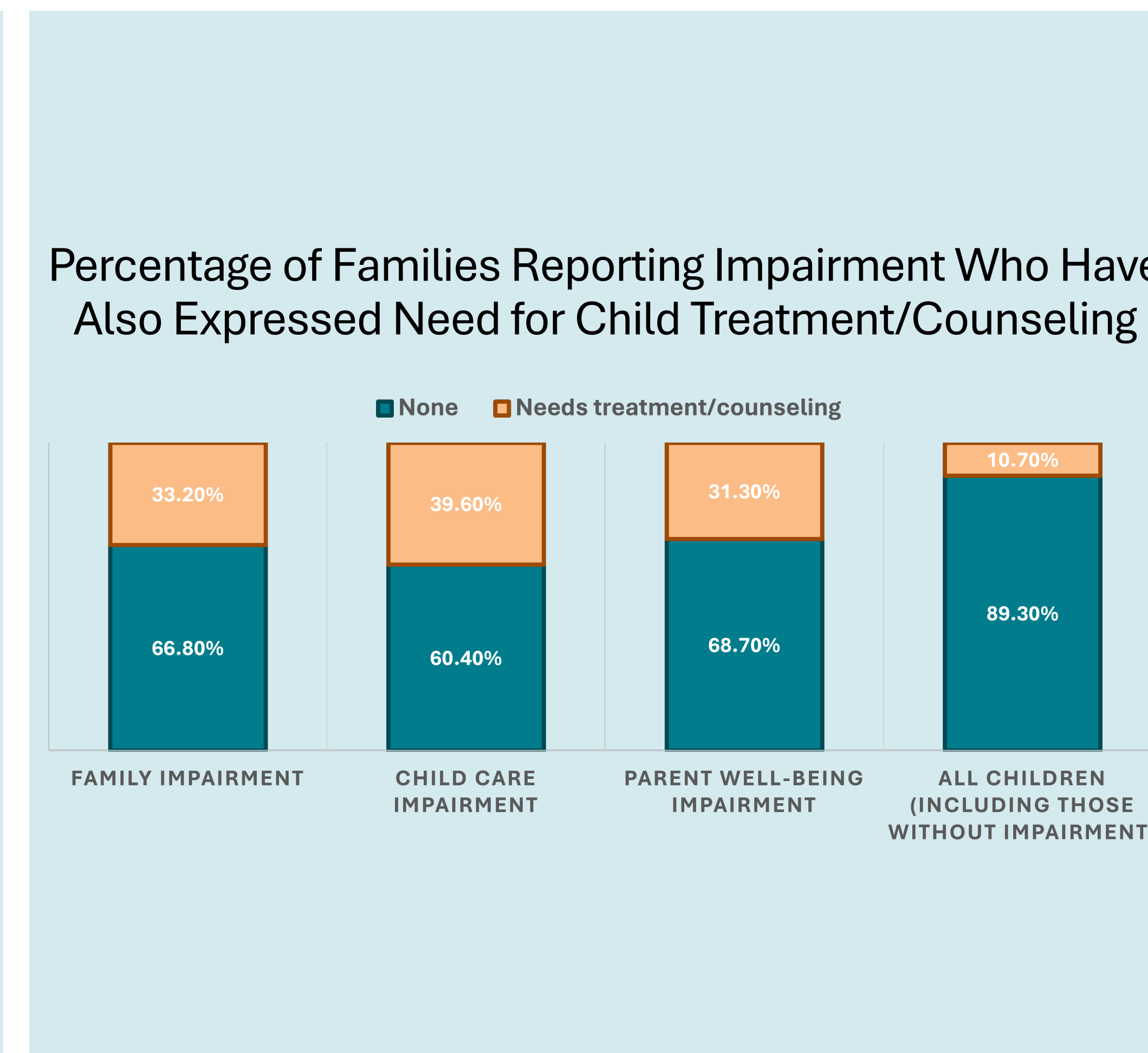
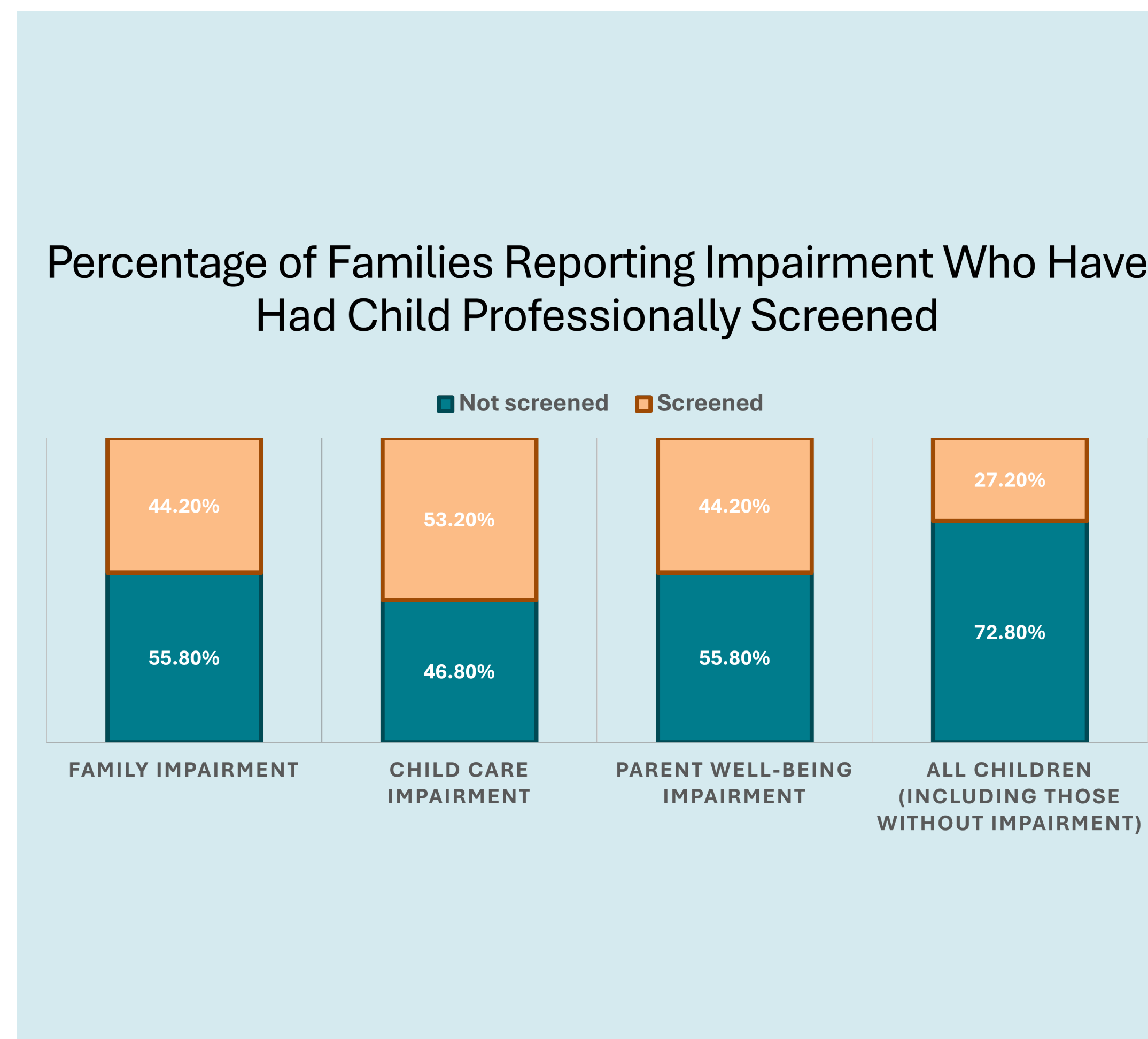
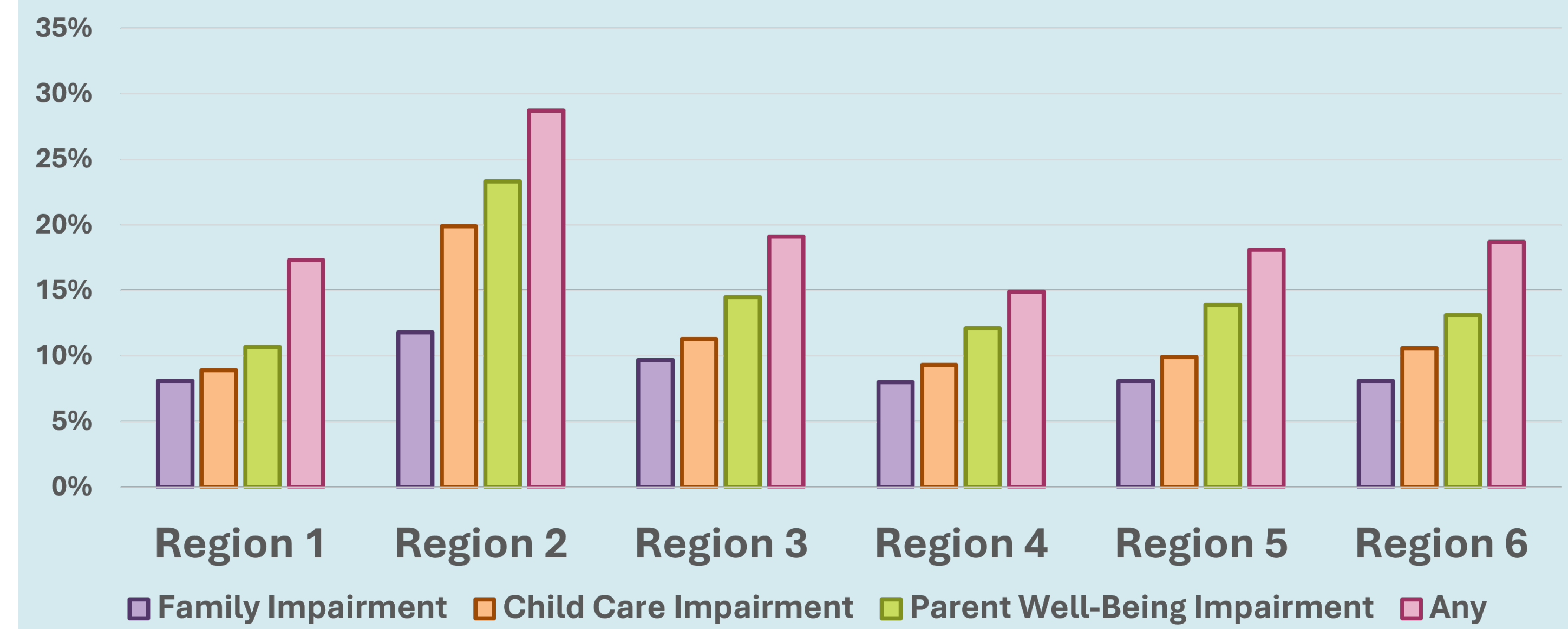


Kidsights Data uses the **Kidsights Measurement Tool**, a parent-report measure, usually completed in an online survey, to measure typical early development at the population level within the United States. The data from the Kidsights Measurement Tool is a new and valuable resource for understanding how infants and children are developing in a defined geographic area.

RESULTS



Frequency of Impairment Type by Behavioral Health Region



Who Is Being Missed?



Family Life Impairment Scale

Mian et al. (2018), creators of the Family Life Impairment Scale, advocate for using a family lens in IECMH screening. This 19-item scale evaluates the impact of a child's behavior on family functioning, childcare, parental growth, and well-being, using a three-point scale (0 = not true, 1 = somewhat true, 2 = very true). Aligning with the DC:0-5 diagnostic criteria updates (Zero to Three, 2016), incorporating family impairment (rather than just individual impairment) into diagnostic assessments may help better identify children who may benefit from IECMH services.



DISCUSSION

The use of family impairment measures, such as the FLIS, may be helpful in identifying young children at risk for severe psychopathology and families that might benefit from interventions like CPP or PCIT. Given that many children are never professionally screened, and parents often do not recognize the need for treatment, tools like the FLIS are invaluable. They not only aid in screening but may also serve as a useful treatment target, providing measurable outcomes for assessing the efficacy of IECMH services.

Raising awareness among parents and providers about the significance of family impairment as an indicator of IECMH can enhance early identification and intervention. Further research is needed to refine these measures and validate the reliability of specific indicators. Such efforts are critical for improving service delivery across the state, ensuring interventions are targeted and effective.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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