

Foster Care in Portugal. Evidence of the present, challenges for the future

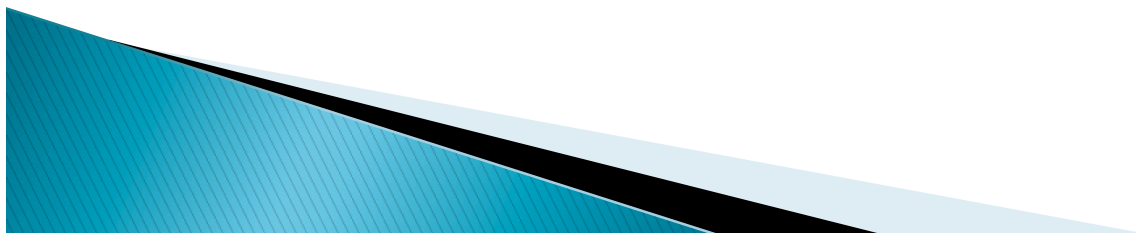


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Network Meeting
Padova, 9–11 September 2013

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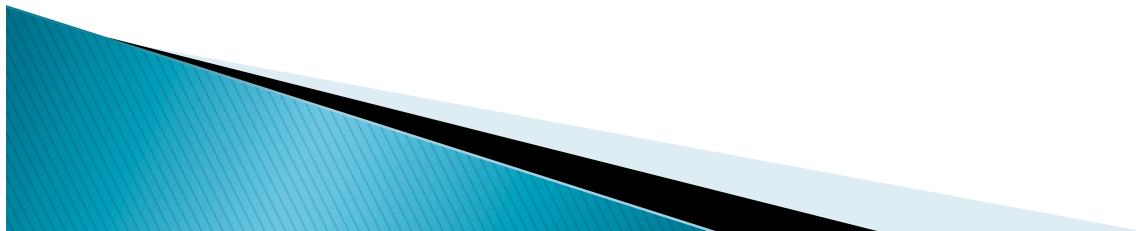
Portuguese child care system

- ▶ Large number of children in Care
- ▶ Long permanence
- ▶ Movement of deinstitutionalization: fewer children come to the system than those who leave (9,956 in 2008 compared to 8,557 in 2012, a decrease of 14%)
- ▶ Increase of children placed in residential care and decrease of Foster Care in the system



Children looked after and accommodated (in 2012)

- ▶ Residential care (long term): 5,513 children
- ▶ Residential care (short term): 2,092 children
- ▶ Foster care: 419 children



Statistics

- ▶ The available data are scarce and do not allow to determine, in depth, how the various stages of foster care process unfolds and materializes.



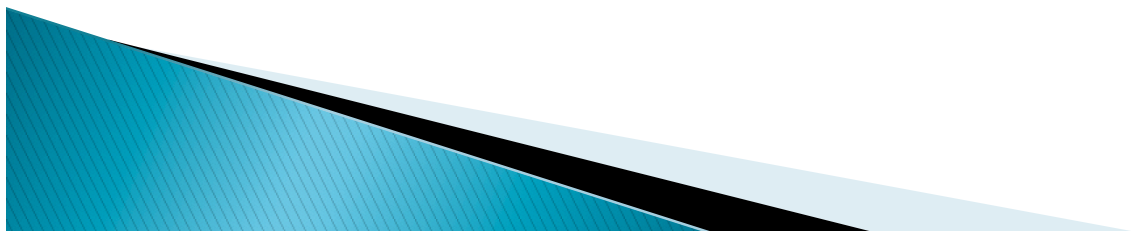
Study methodology

- ▶ Data were collected with the use of a questionnaire by Foster Care Teams based on the files of 289 children in May 2011;
- ▶ Personal interviews were also conducted in a sample of 52 Foster Parent Families in their homes;
- ▶ We also conducted two focus group sessions with the children.

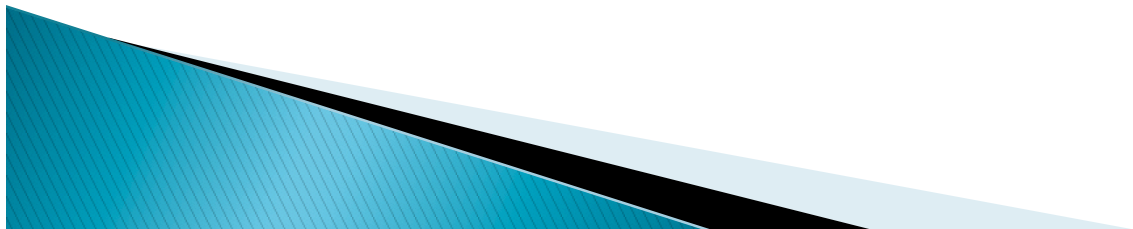
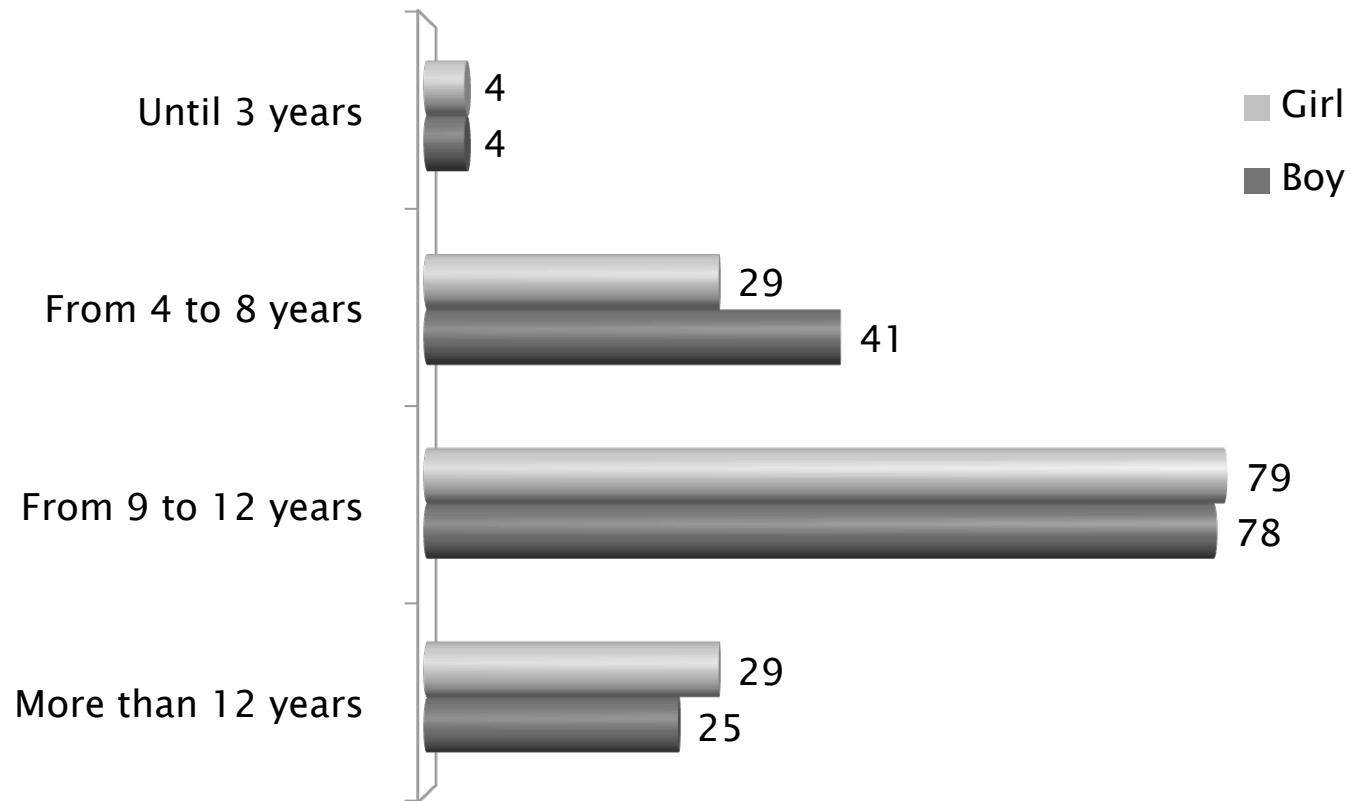


Results – children

- ▶ Lack of contacts or visits by the biological families;
- ▶ Many cases of children fostered for long periods of time;
- ▶ Schooling performance problems, as reflected in high rates of retention;
- ▶ A third of the children presents health and development problems.

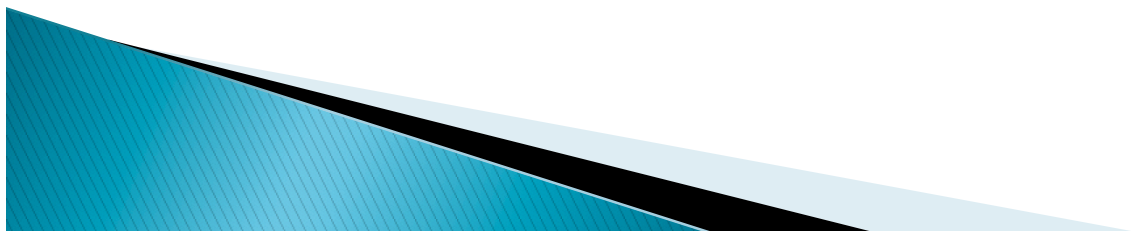


High average age of these children

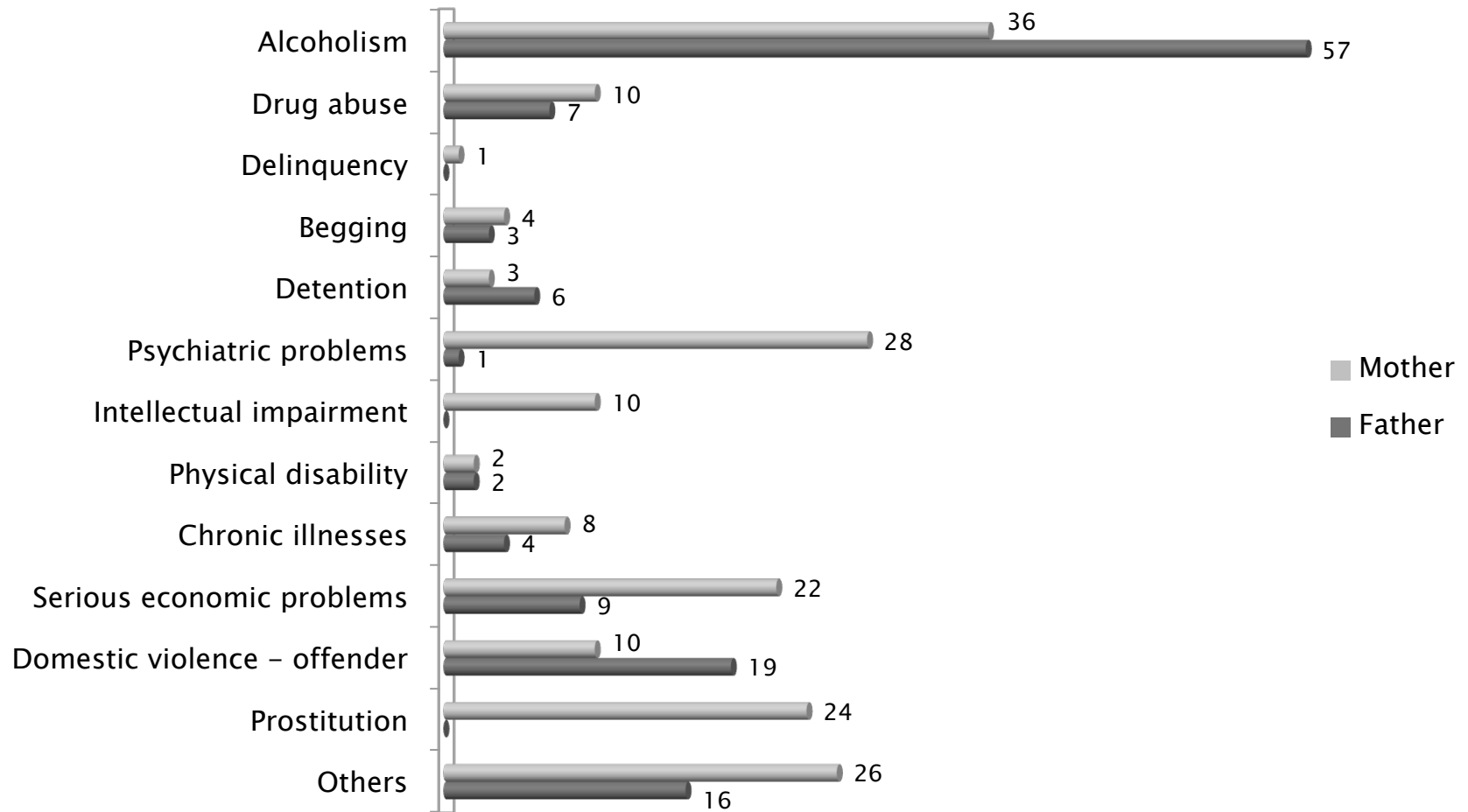


Results – Biological families

- ▶ Biological Families have multiple vulnerabilities, such as alcoholism, drug addiction, physical or mental illness, and domestic violence.
- ▶ Few parents remain as a couple, due to separation or death of one of its elements, which requires rethinking and redefining the design of family reunification.

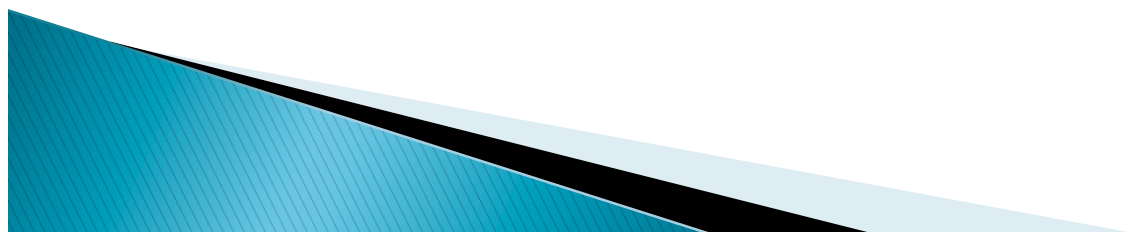


Parents' problems



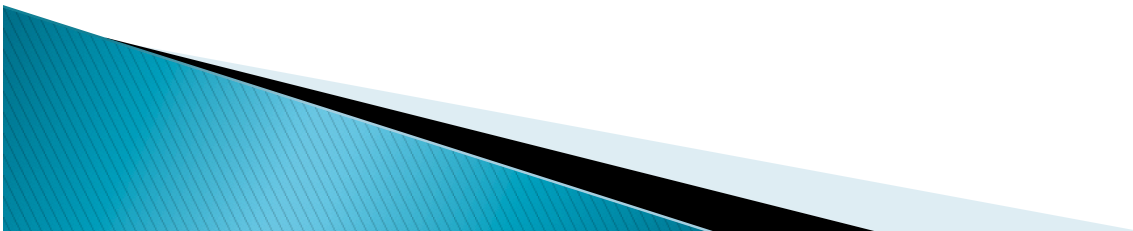
Results – Carers

Age(average)	Man	55,9
	Woman	53,7
Type of family	Couple	82,4%
	Single woman	17,3%
	Single man	0,3%
Level of education	Without studies	2,3%
	4th grade	91%
	High school	4,7%
	Higher Education	2%
With children		92,9%
With older children than the one in care		92,9%
Previous experience in care		44%
Experience of multiple children in care		79,8%

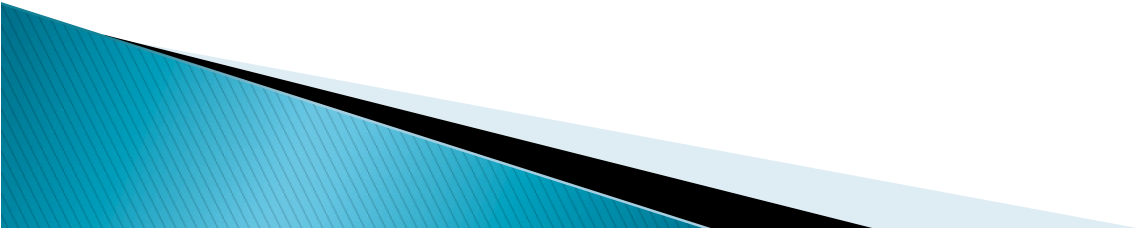
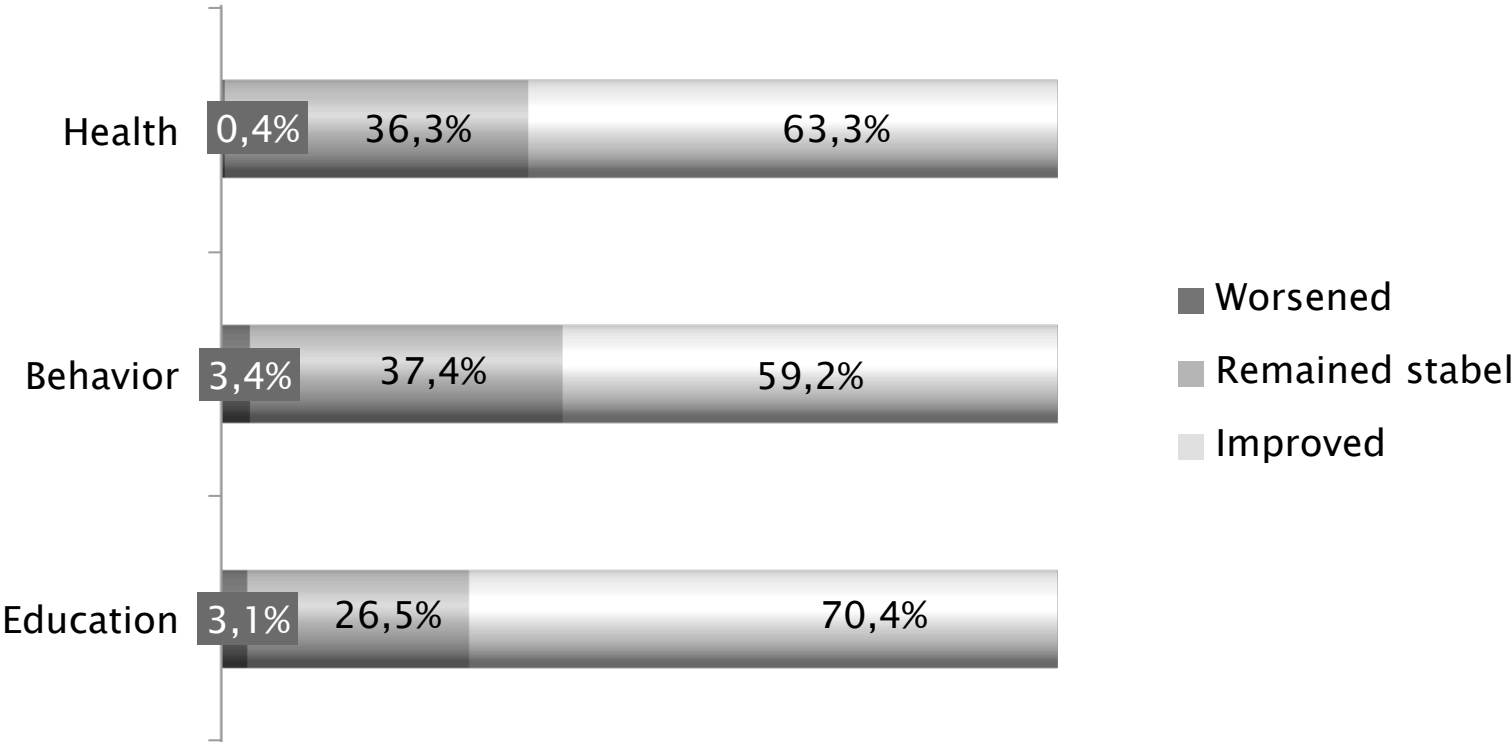


The results of foster care

- ▶ A very positive evolution of the foster children in education, health and behavioral level, comparing the moment of the integration in foster families with the moment of data collecting.

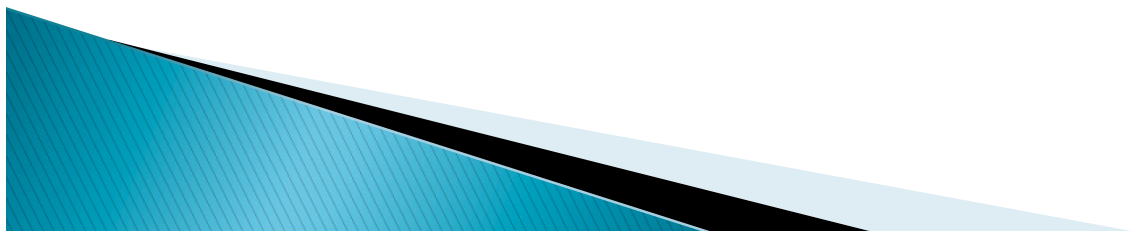


Results



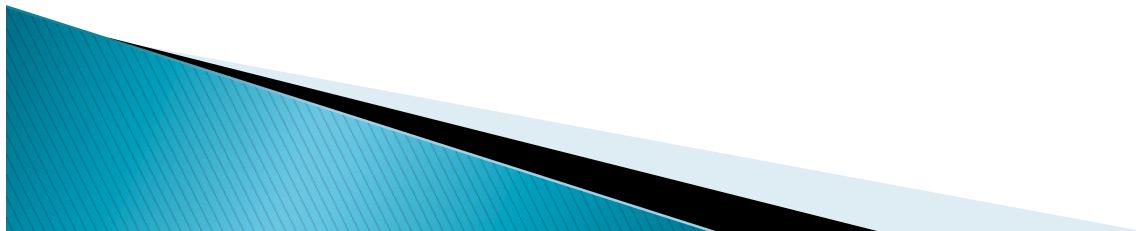
Results

Present education outcomes						
Education outcomes at the integration in care	<i>Didn't attend</i>	<i>Without problems</i>	<i>Some problems</i>	<i>Many problems</i>	<i>Special needs</i>	TOTAL
<i>Didn't attend</i>	33	43	27	6	21	130
<i>Without problems</i>	0	30	2	0	1	33
<i>Some problems</i>	0	15	18	1	0	34
<i>Many problems</i>	0	12	27	1	2	42
<i>Special needs</i>	0	0	4	0	8	12
<i>Without data</i>	2	10	19	2	4	37
TOTAL	35	110	97	10	36	288



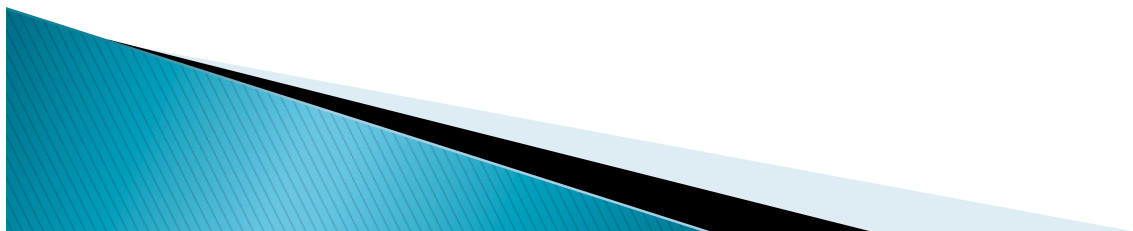
Results – carers (interviews)

- ▶ A set of less positive aspects were referred, such as lack of training to perform their role and gaps in the information received about the foster children.

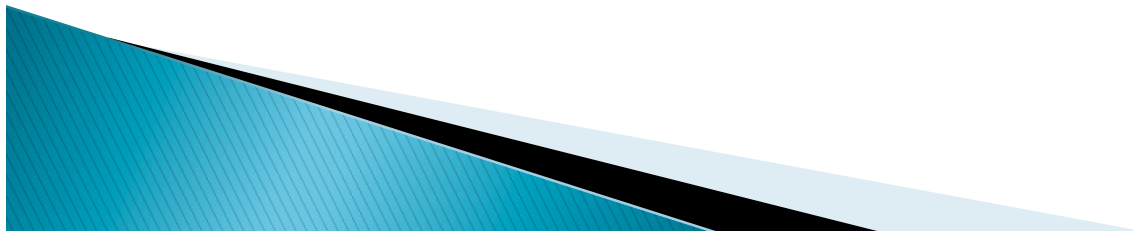
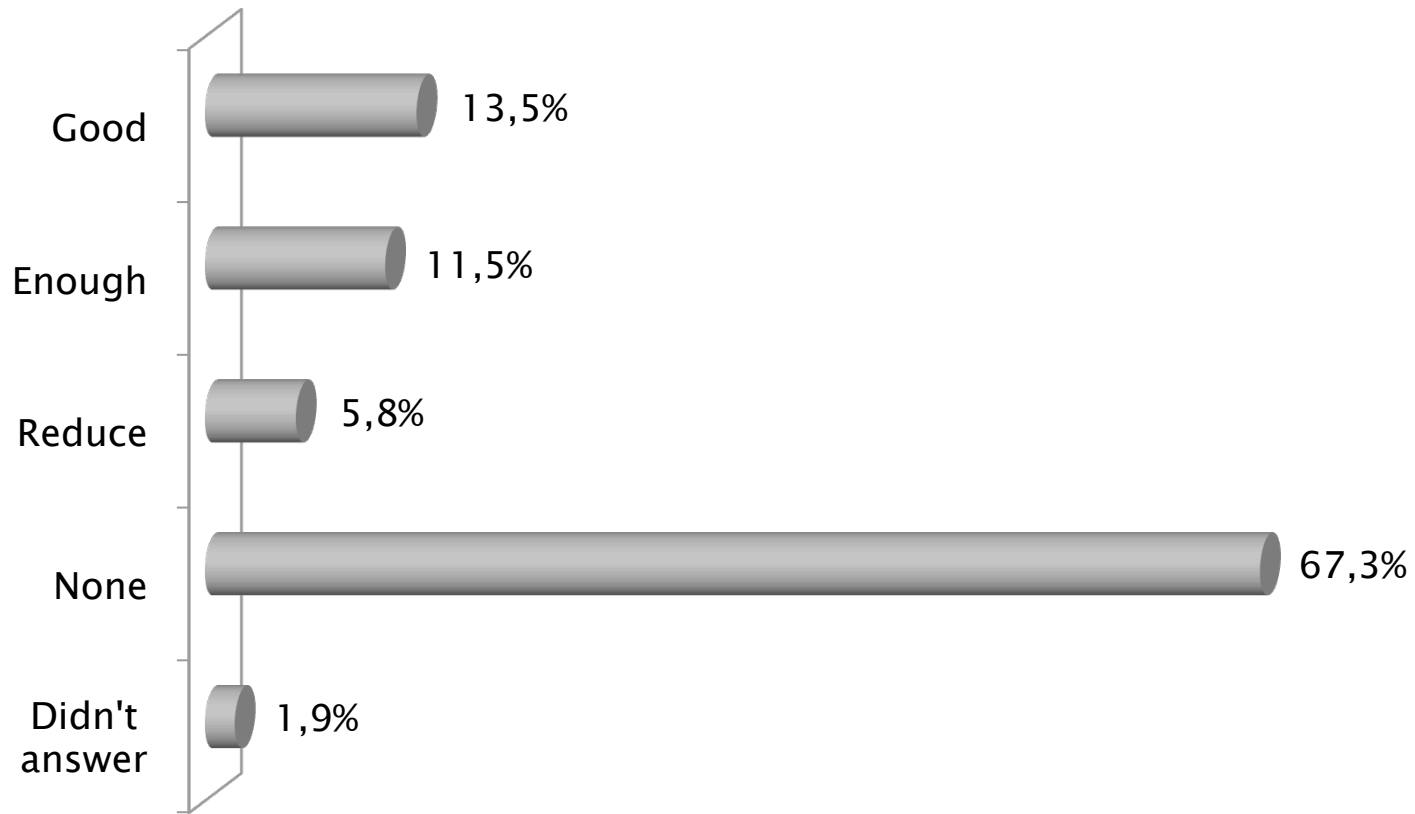


Previous information of the child


	Physical background - Health (%)	Family history (%)	Education - educational background (%)
<i>None</i>	26,9	26,9	38,5
<i>Reduce</i>	17,3	13,5	7,7
<i>Enough</i>	23,1	23,1	5,8
<i>Good</i>	30,8	34,6	9,6
<i>Didn't answer</i>	1,9	1,9	38,5
TOTAL	100	100	100



Training received to be a carer

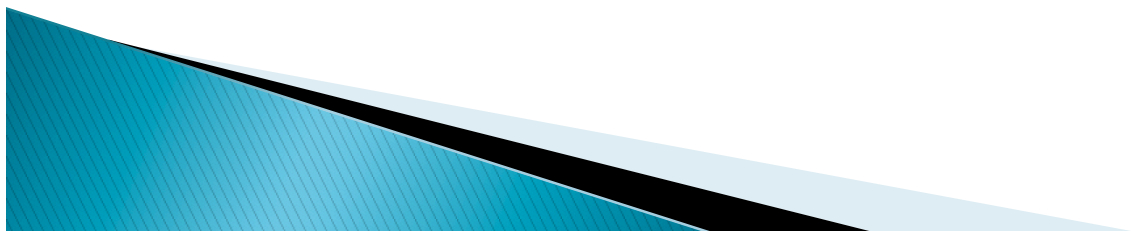


Results – carers

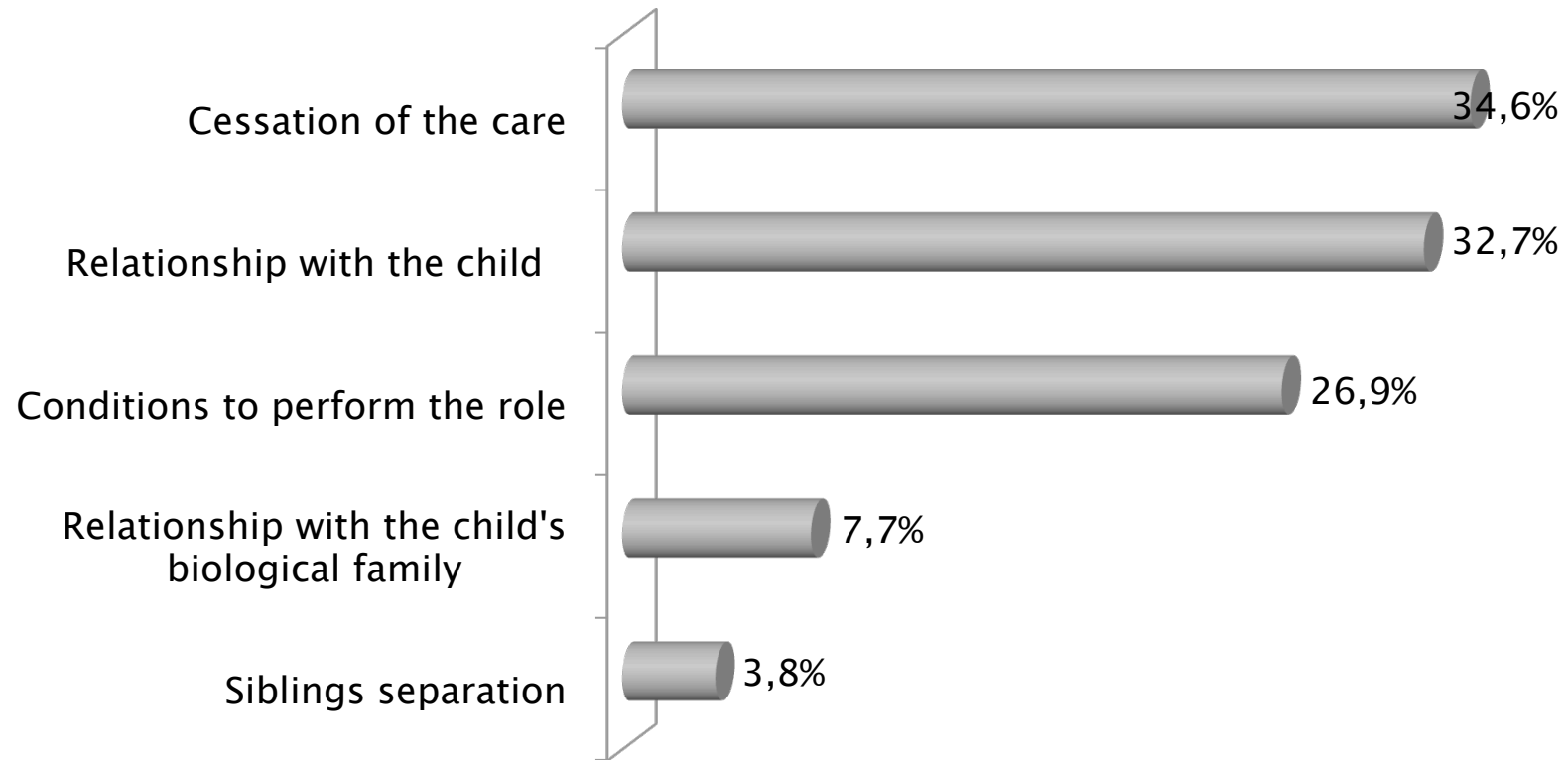
- ▶ Despite these negative aspects, most carers consider the experience positive as well as and considered a success the results achieved:
 - ▶ «(...) Came from a complicated situation ... we need this child to feel good, feel comfortable, may speak freely, we can give her all that we can, as we give our children (...)»;
 - ▶ «I have given him the same as my children and I have encouraged him as encouraged my children (...)»;
 - ▶ «My work and what I got was very good. It was another son that I won and another passion developed».
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Results – carers

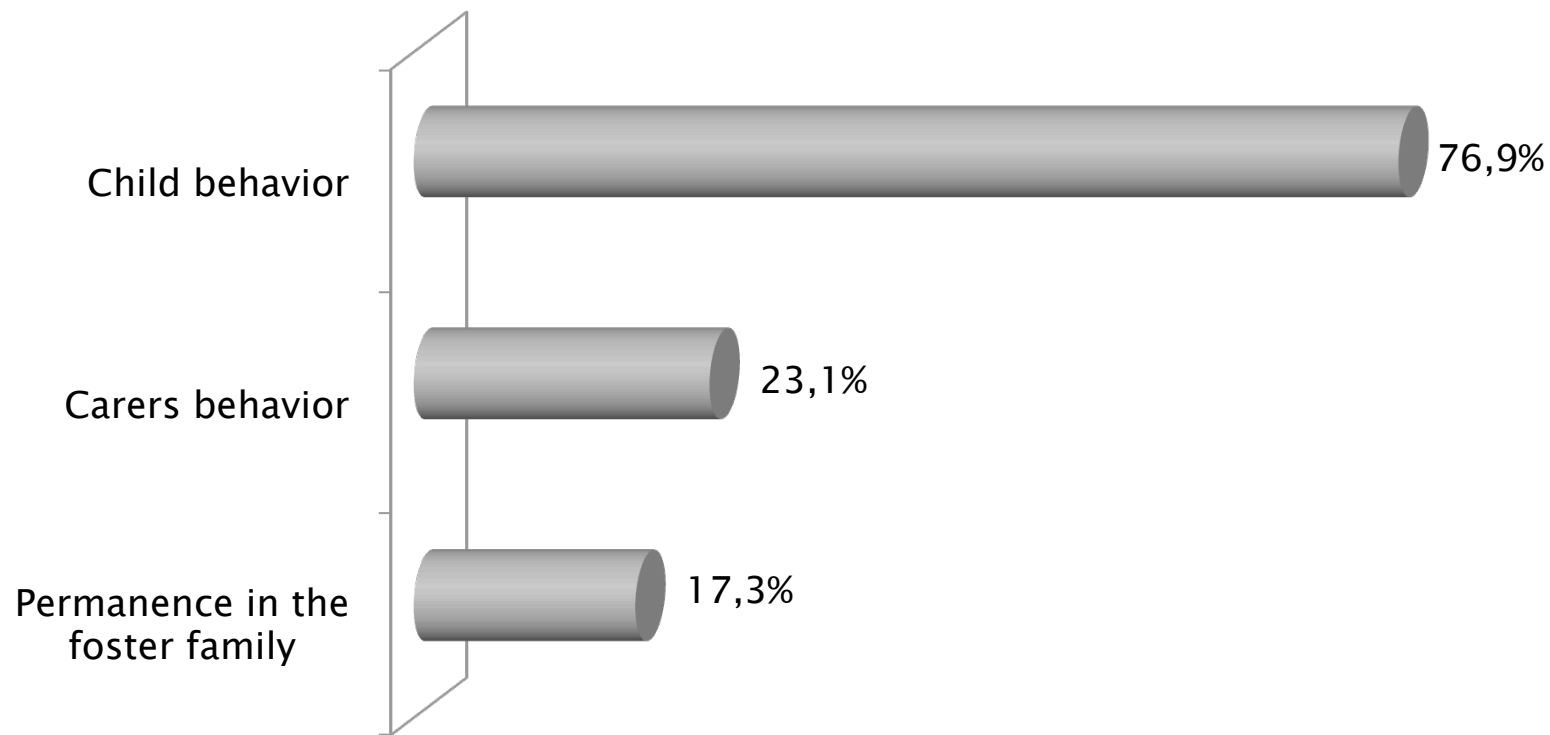
- ▶ «I have a successful young, almost finished a degree and all thanks to my efforts and to her efforts»; «has evolved in all aspects. Attend catechesis, music, choir (...) is a child model, fit well in the family»;
- ▶ «Behavior has improved (...); never thought he recovered that much. Doctors say it was a miracle!»; «Improved a lot concerning his health».



The hardest...



The most rewarding...



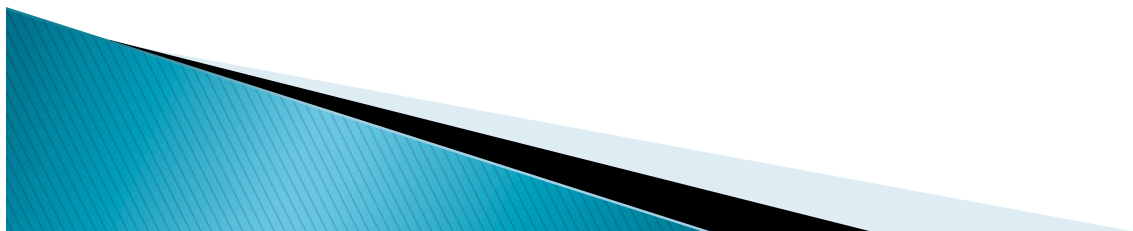
Implications for practice

- ▶ Establish links between research teams and social security teams;
- ▶ Develop regular and specialized campaigns to select new families;
- ▶ Effective work with the family of origin, following it in order support change and encourage reunification;
- ▶ Enhance communication passages inside child care system, particularly between residential and foster care, and from these two to adoption;
- ▶ Explore factors that are associated with decision making in child welfare.



Challenges for the future

To reduce the number of children in residential care and approximate the typologies of fostering to the standards that exists in Western countries.



Thank you for your attention!

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