

# Testimonials of victims of child sexual abuse

Disclosure and help-seeking

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# Background | German reappraisal process

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*'Thinking from the victims' point of view was a central principle of the reappraisal process.'*

(Final report of the German Independent Commissioner, 2011)

# Background | Helpline 'Sexual abuse'

- Offered by the German Independent Commissioner
- National, free and anonymous contact line in Germany
- Focus: Counselling and information transfer
- Accompanying research process since January 2016



# Methods | Accompanying research process



- Data collection during the telephone calls
- Informed consent
- Web-based documentation pattern
- Quantitative and qualitative analyses
- Almost 10,000 data records since 2016

Gibt es bezogen auf das (möglicherweise) betroffene Kind bereits andere Interventionen/Unterstützungen durch Behörden oder andere Einrichtungen des Hilfesystems?

☐ Ja  
☐ Nein  
☐ Weiß ich nicht

Wenn ja, welche?

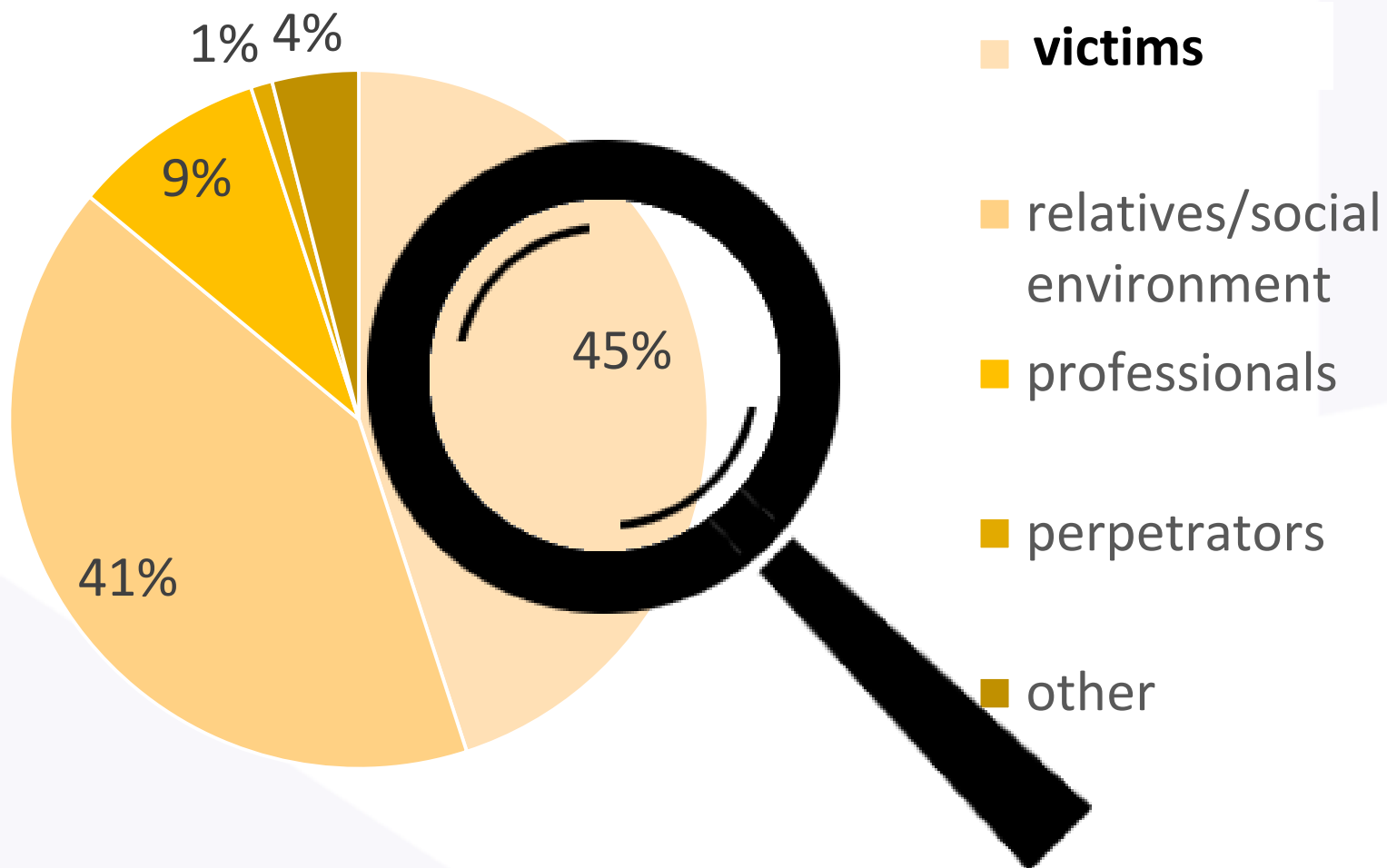
☐ Beratung bei einer allgemeinen Beratungsstelle  
☐ Beratung bei einer spezialisierten Beratungsstelle  
☐ Somatisch-medizinische Behandlung  
☐ Psychiatrische Behandlung  
☐ Kinder- und jugendpsychiatrische Behandlung  
☐ Psychosomatische Behandlung  
☐ Kassenpsychotherapie (Richtlinienverfahren)  
☐ Andere Formen der Psychotherapie  
☐ Telefonische Beratung (außer Hilfetelefon)  
☐ Polizei  
☐ Gericht  
☐ Jugendamt  
☐ Sonstiges:

Was, soweit Sie das beurteilen können, sind Ergebnisse dieser Interventionen?

Dokumentation

Bitte wählen

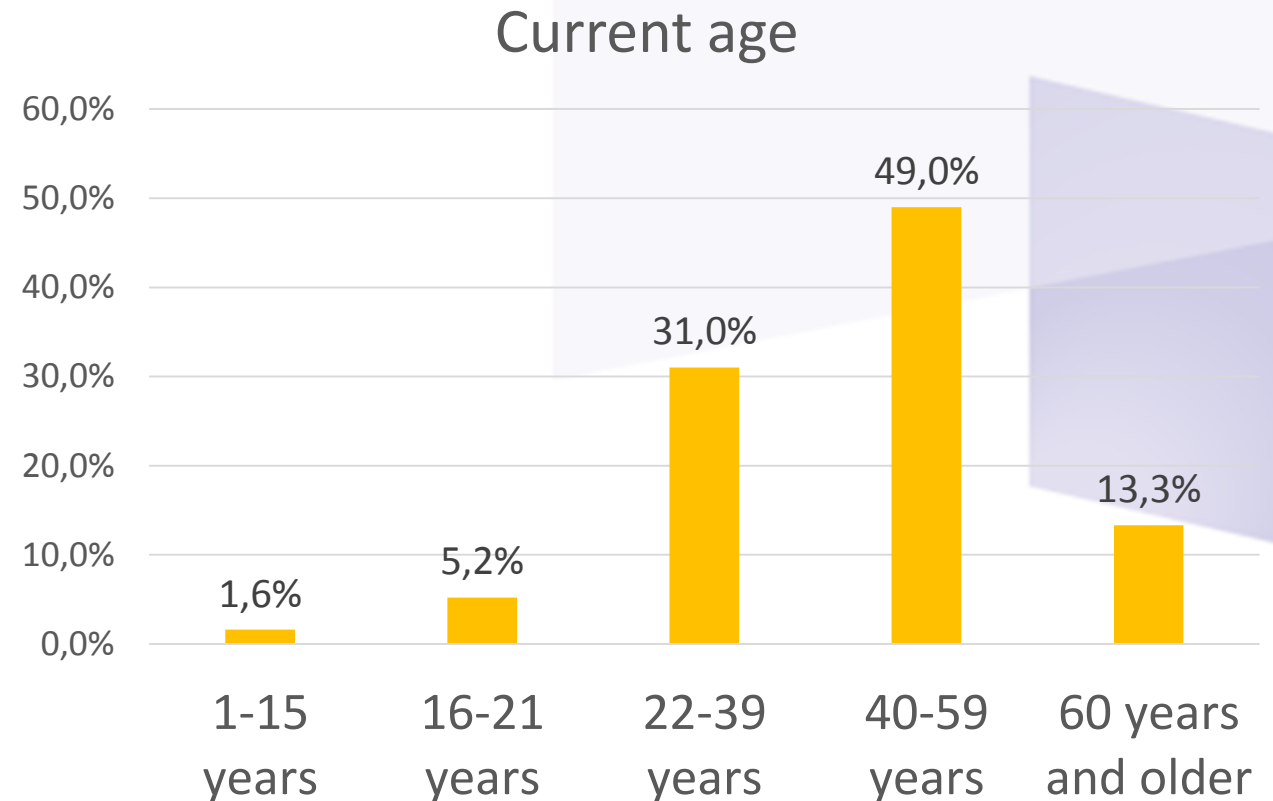
# Sample | Who is calling the helpline?





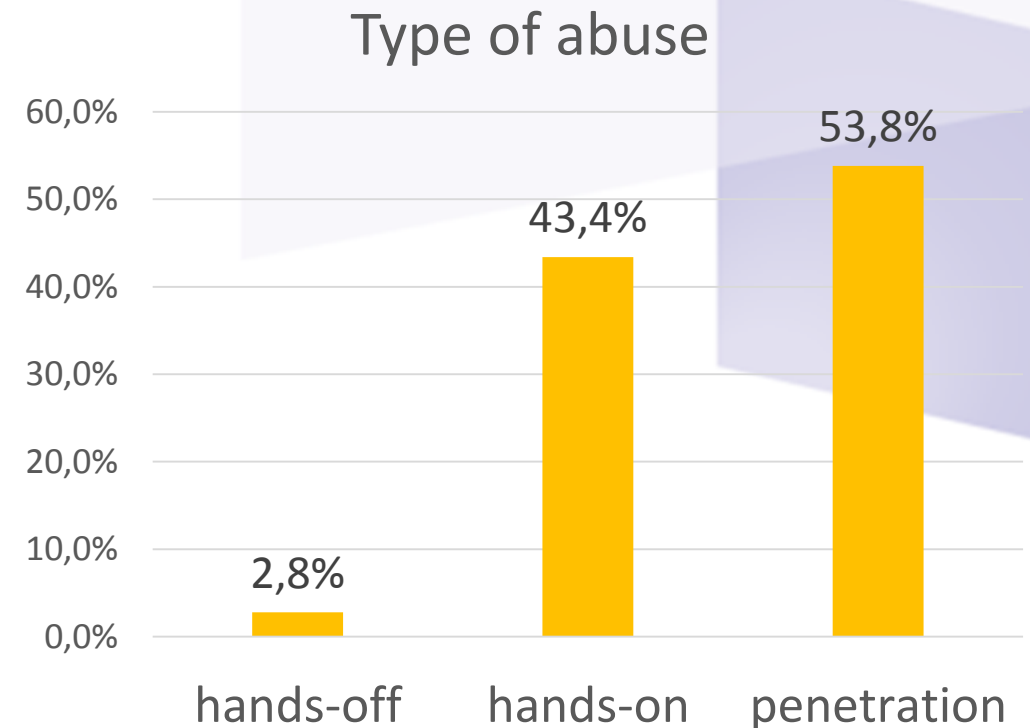
# Sample | Who are the victims?

- Gender
  - 76.6% female
- Current age
  - M=44.41 years (SD=15.03)
- Age at time of abuse
  - M = 7.81 years (SD=4.09)



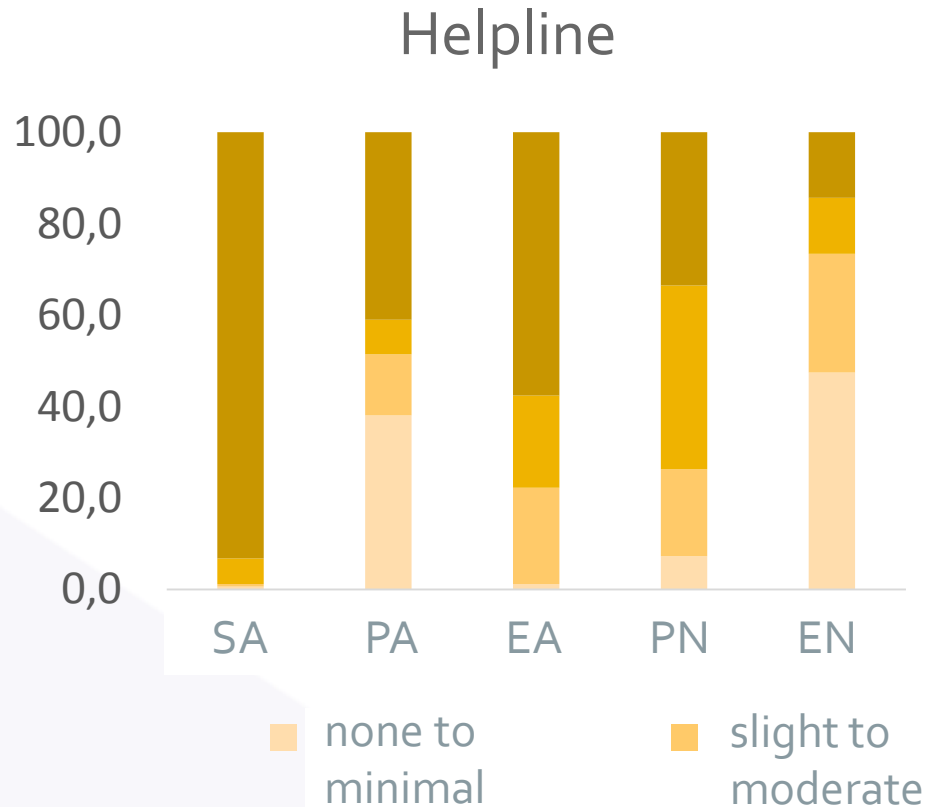
# Results | Description of abuse acts

- **Date**
  - predominantly (96%) cases of the past
- **Frequency**
  - less than 10% one-time acts
- **Type of abuse**
  - tendency towards severe types of abuse
  - predominantly hands-on, high percentage with penetration

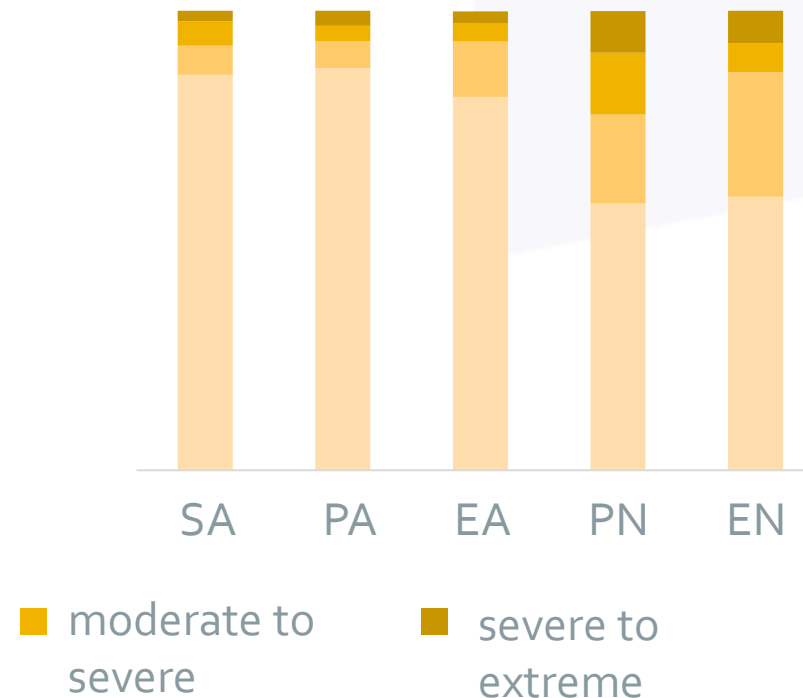


# Results | Childhood trauma questionnaire

## Types and severity of maltreatment:



## Sample of the general population (Witt et al., 2017)<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Witt, A., Brown, R. C., Plener, P. L., Brähler, E., & Fegert, J. M. (2017). Child maltreatment in Germany: prevalence rates in the general population. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 11(1), 47.

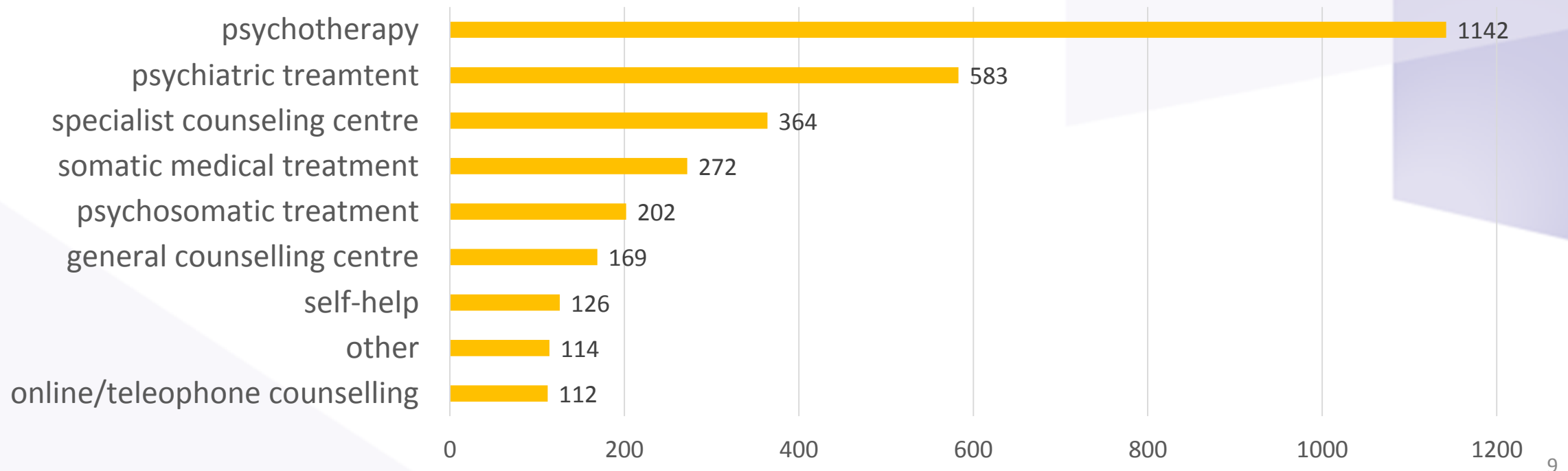


# Results | Help-seeking

## Professional help

N = 1231 (75,2%) have gotten some kind of professional help

### Kind of professional help (multiple answers possible)



# Results | Help-seeking

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Reasons for not getting help - frequently mentioned:

- Shame
- Not knowing who to contact
- Help line is the first attempt of seeking help
- Currently looking for help; waiting for an appointment
- Not necessary before

# Results | Help-seeking

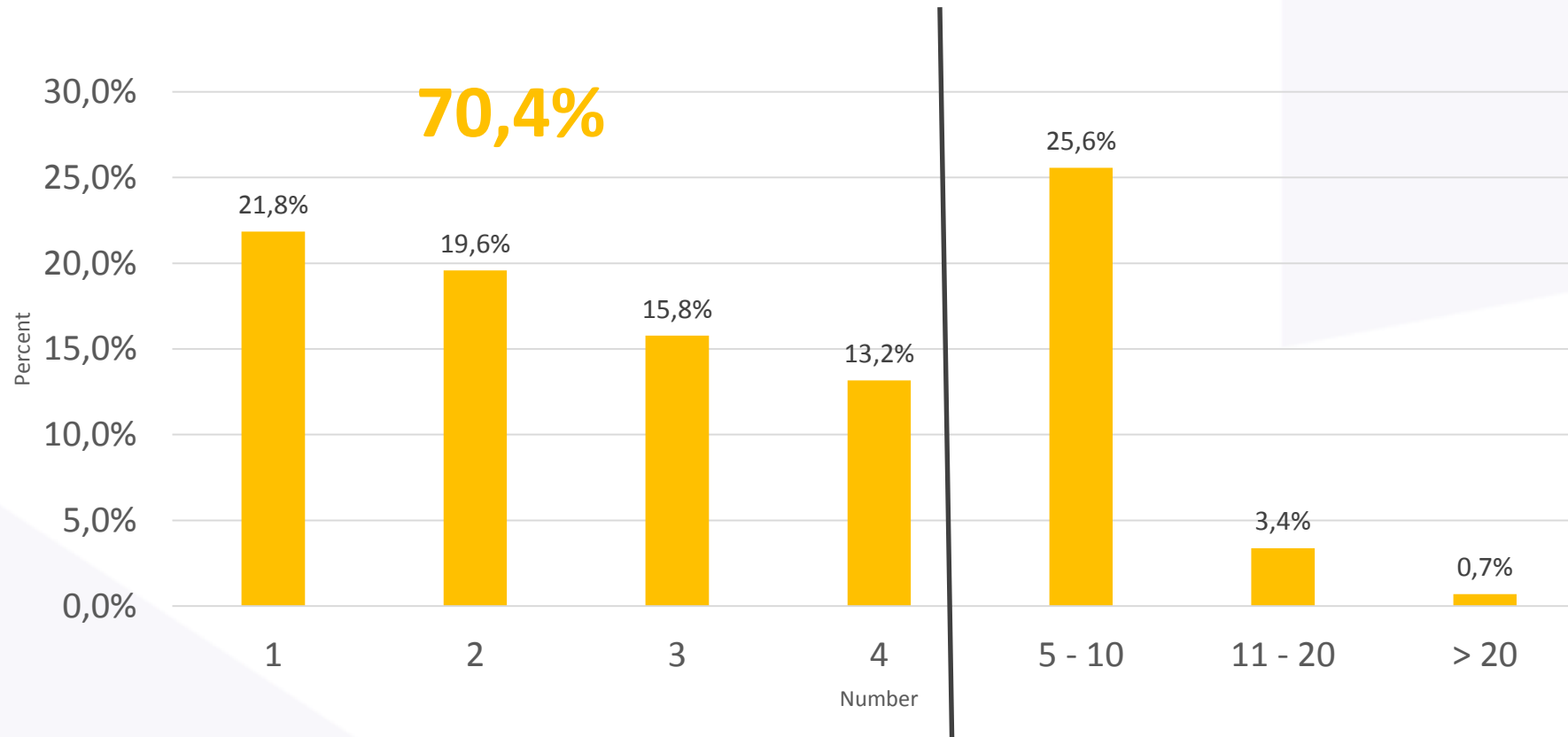
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Reasons for not getting help – slightly less frequently mentioned:

- Previous bad experiences with getting help
- Scared of not being believed/reactions
- Intimidated by the perpetrators
- Thought, they'd have to deal with it by themselves
- Desire for anonymity
- Counselling points not nearby (rural area)

# Results | Help-seeking

## Number of contact points

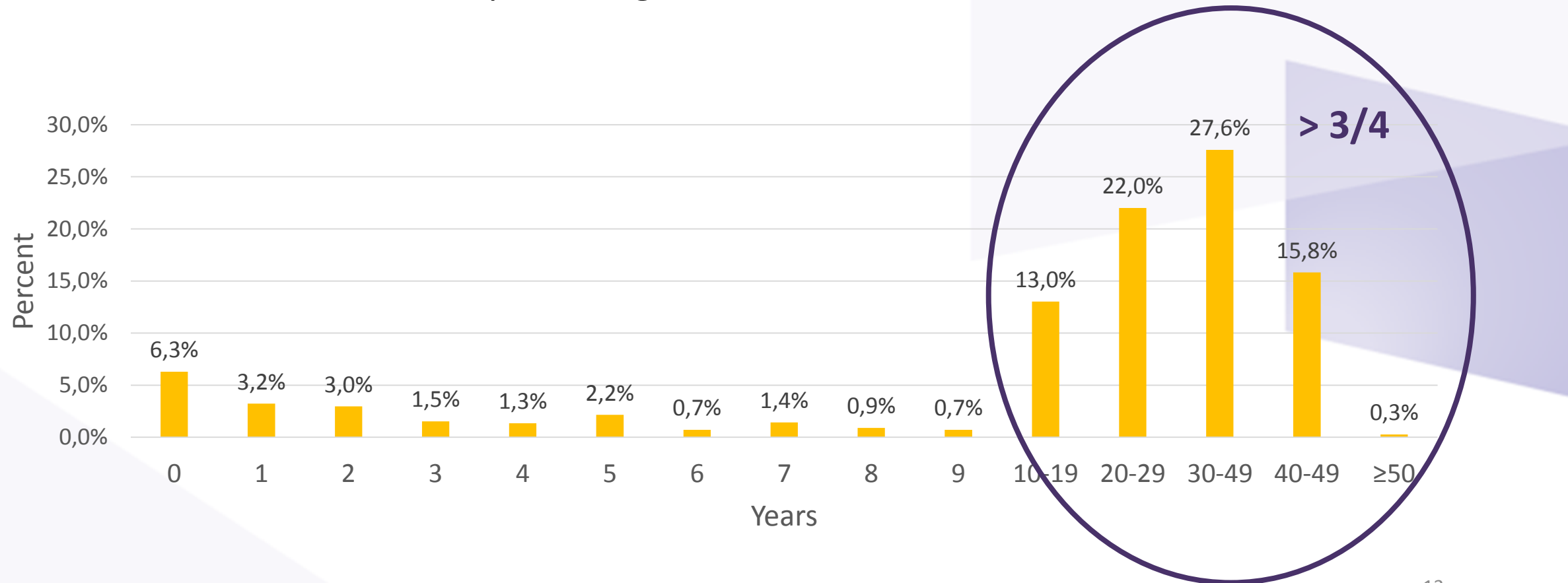


$M=4,1$  ( $SD=4,4$ )

Median= 3

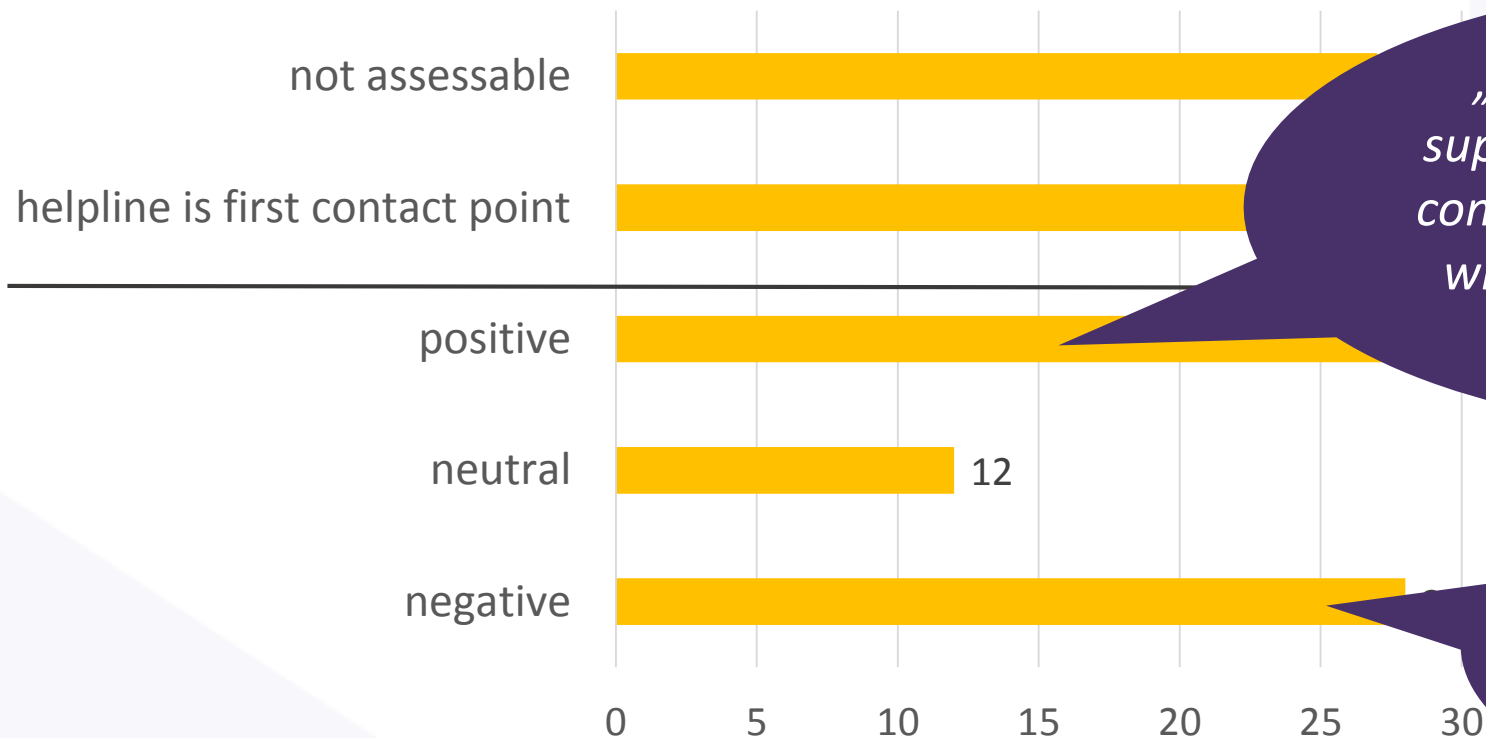
# Results | Help-seeking

## Time between abuse and help-seeking



# Results | Disclosure

Victims' personal experiences with disclosure:



*„Fortunately, I got a lot of support. They believed me and convinced me that it wasn't me who was wrong, neither was responsible or guilty.“*

*„My family said: 'You are depressed and ill. That's why you imagined this...'“*

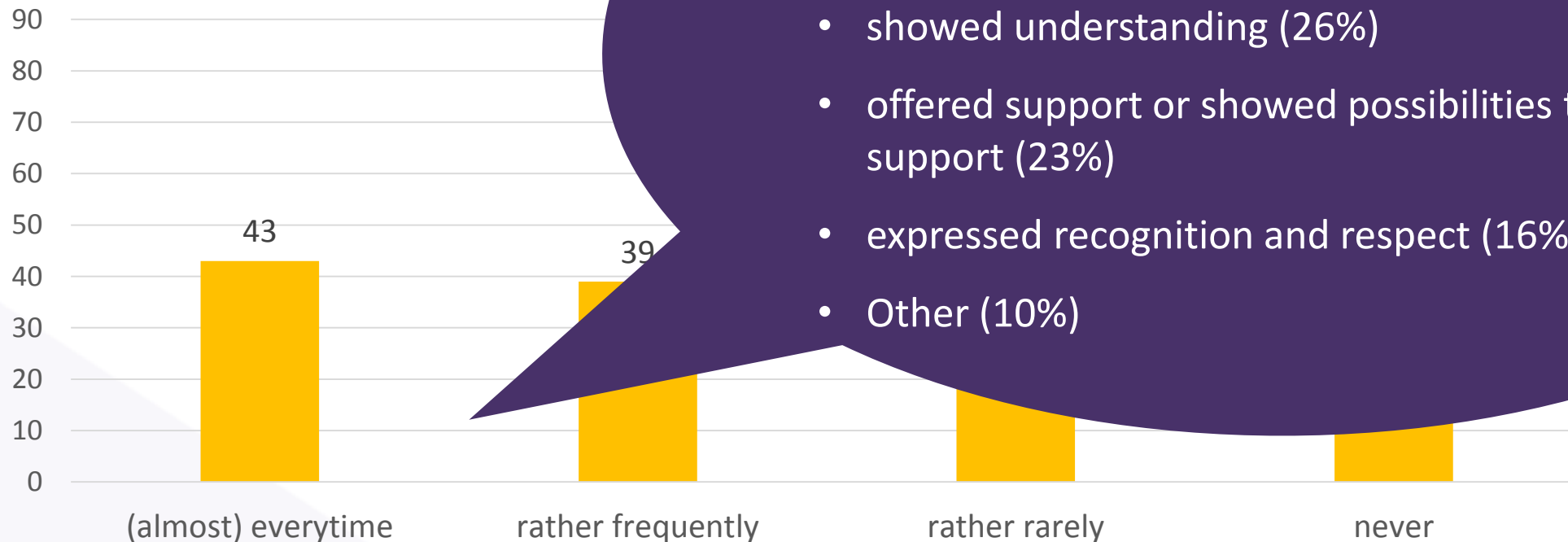


# Results | Disclosure

In N=402 additional answers, victims reported that people...

- believed them (33%)
- showed understanding (26%)
- offered support or showed possibilities to get support (23%)
- expressed recognition and respect (16%)
- Other (10%)

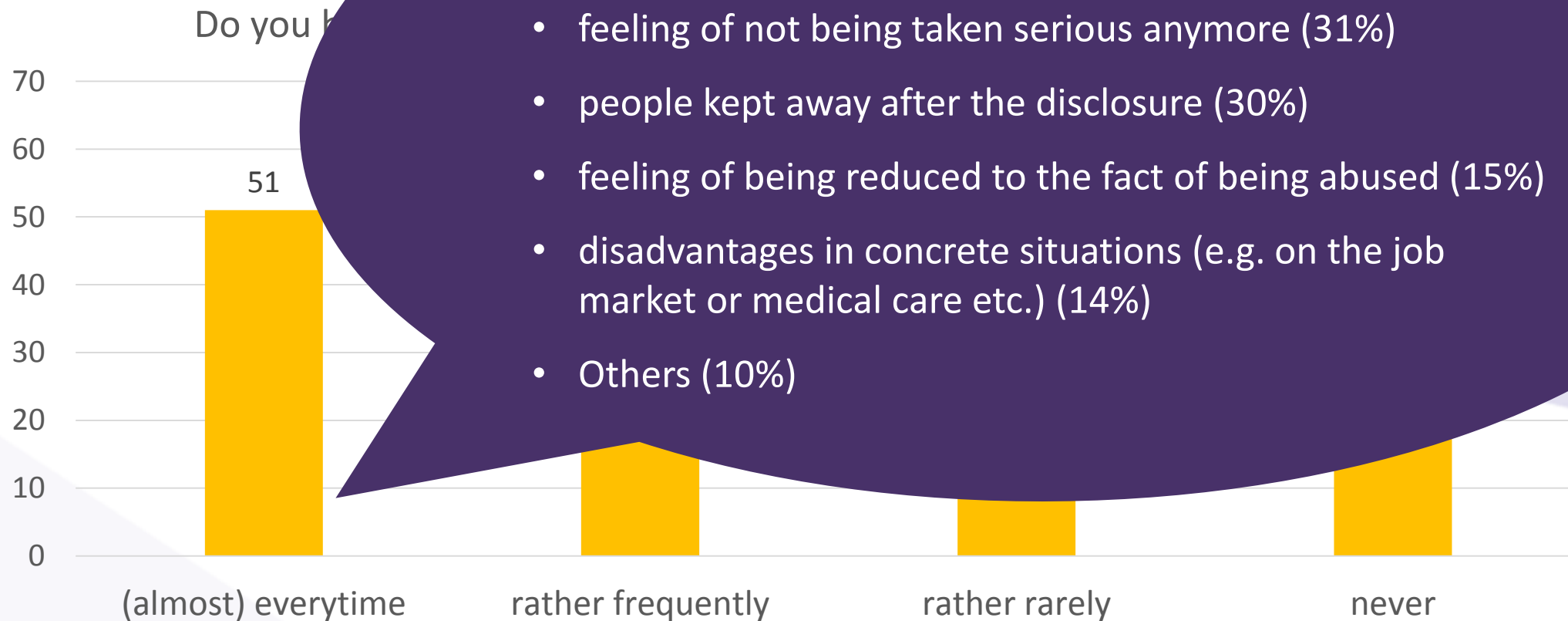
Did people show...



# Results | Disclosure

In N=332 additional answers, victims reported **disadvantages** after disclosure:

- feeling of not being taken serious anymore (31%)
- people kept away after the disclosure (30%)
- feeling of being reduced to the fact of being abused (15%)
- disadvantages in concrete situations (e.g. on the job market or medical care etc.) (14%)
- Others (10%)



# Summary and conclusion

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- Heavily loaded sample with severe cases of abuse
  - Cases in the past
  - Help-system:
    - Barriers for finding professional help
    - Victims need to address themselves to several contact points
    - Large latency for help-seeking behaviour
  - Disclosure:
    - Positive as well as negative experiences
- Need for more sensibility and knowledge in society as well as more appropriate offers for professional help/support

# Thank you for your attention!

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