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# Welcoming Streets Initiative Evaluation

## WSI Services and Training



Toward Common Ground

# Welcoming Streets Initiative: Intended Outcomes

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The purpose of the Welcoming Streets Initiative (WSI) is to support local businesses and street-involved individuals in the Guelph Downtown Area. The WSI works toward achieving the following outcomes:

1. Downtown businesses are supported and receive education related to managing challenging situations;
2. Vulnerable individuals in the downtown core receive support and are connected to the services they need; and
3. The Guelph Downtown Core feels safe and welcoming.



# Evaluation Questions

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The Welcoming Streets Initiative Evaluation was guided by the following questions:

1. To what degree do local business representatives feel:
  - a) supported by the WSI?
  - b) they have received education related to managing challenging situations (with a focus on information about de-escalation and anti-stigma)?
2. What suggestions do local business representatives have to strengthen the WSI program?
3. What is the reach and impact of the WSI?
4. To what degree does the Guelph Downtown Core feel safe and welcoming?



# Methods and Information Sources

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Phase 1 of the evaluation began in November 2019. Information was collected through the following methods:

1. Key highlights were drawn from WSI Program Data to present a Program Data Snapshot (April to October 2019)
2. An online survey was disseminated and analyzed (October and November 2019)
  - ❖ Requests to complete survey were sent to all Downtown Guelph Business Association (DGBA) members through multiples emails from DGBA staff
  - ❖ To increase survey participation, WSI workers dropped off reminders to complete survey at downtown Guelph business locations
3. Key findings were drawn from surveys administered to participants directly following participation in WSI training
4. Two questions about ‘sense of safety’ and ‘feeling welcome’ were added to a DGBA community-wide survey. The results from that survey are not yet available



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# Welcoming Streets Initiative: Program Data Snapshot



# WSI Program Snapshot: By the Numbers

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<b>182</b>	Number of calls from businesses received by WSI
<b>80</b>	Number of individual businesses that accessed WSI services
<b>783</b>	Number of interactions with clients
<b>119</b>	Number of individual clients served

April 2019 - October 2019



# WSI Program Snapshot

## Top 5 Issues Addressed

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The following were the top 5 issues addressed by WSI workers during client interactions:

1. Visit for therapeutic counselling/listening
2. Visit for advice on community resources
3. Request for advocacy
4. Issues related to homelessness
5. Feeling overwhelmed



# WSI Program Snapshot

## Top 5 Services Provided

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The following are the top 5 services provided by WSI workers during their client interactions:

1. Basic support (active listening, general check-in)
2. Advocacy
3. Accompaniment (medical appointments, housing meeting)
4. Information about community resources
5. Assistance with completing forms





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# Welcoming Streets Initiative Survey:

## Overview of Respondents



# Where Survey Respondents Worked

## % of Respondents by Places of Employment

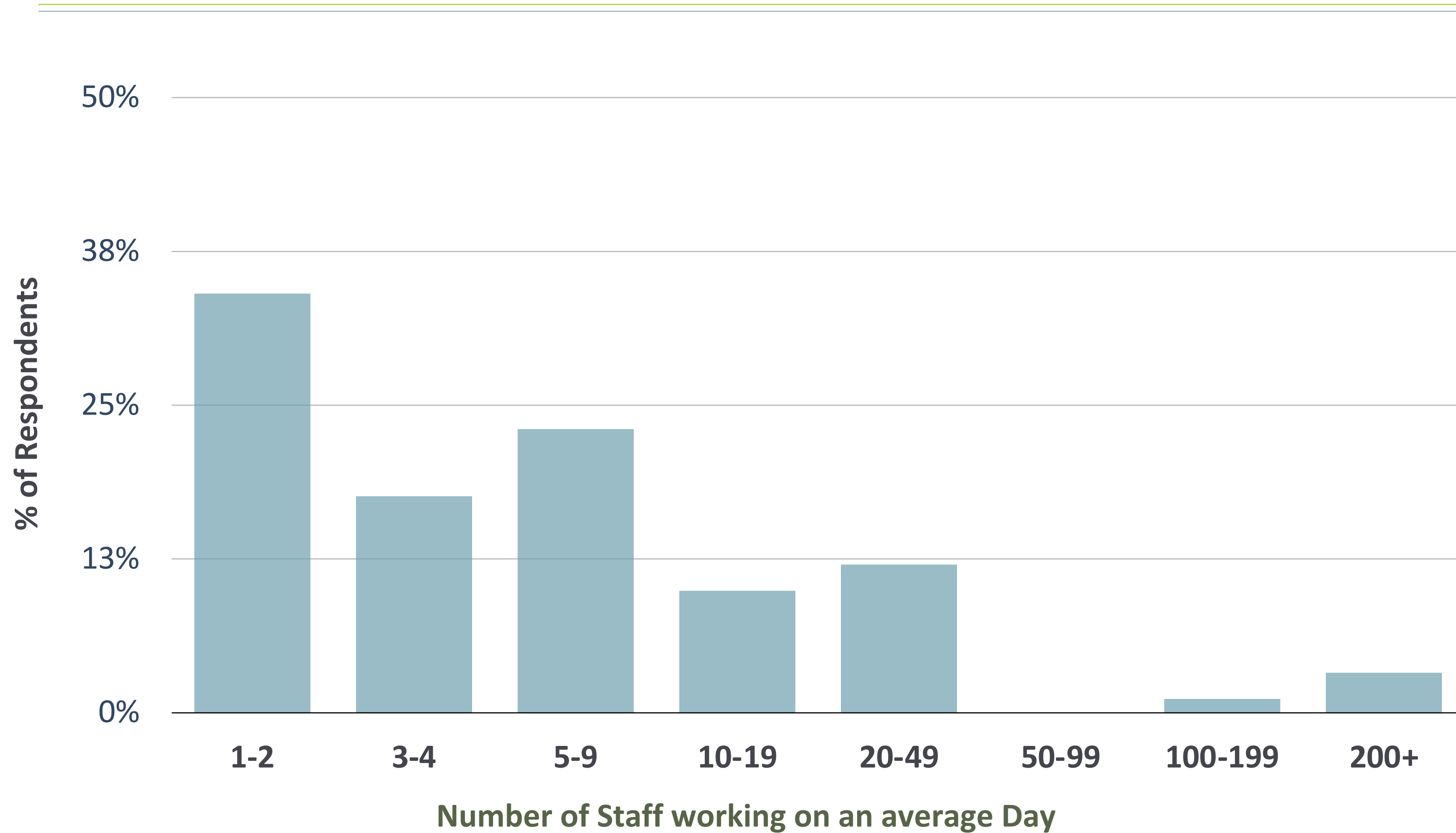
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- ❖ **36.5%** worked in retail
- ❖ **16.6%** worked in healthcare and/or social services
- ❖ **15.6%** worked in food services
- ❖ **7.3%** worked in commercial or services
- ❖ **3.1%** worked in non-profit, legal, entertainment and leisure, or municipal government
- ❖ **2.1%** worked in bar and/or club or mixed-use facility



# Number of Staff at Downtown Business Location on Average Day

## % of Respondents by # of Staff Working



✦ **73.6%** of respondent had 9 or fewer staff working on an average day at their downtown location



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# Welcoming Streets Initiative Survey: Perceptions of WSI Services



# Types of WSI Services Accessed

## % of Respondents by Type of Service Accessed



Top 3 services accessed by respondents:

- ❖ **61%** used de-escalation services
- ❖ **58%** connected street involved individuals with WSI workers
- ❖ **58%** debriefed with WSI workers

■ De-escalation of an individual on business premise  
■ Debriefed with a WSI worker  
■ Connected street involved individual to community services

■ Connected street involved individual with WSI workers  
■ Removal of drug paraphernalia  
■ I was or someone where I work was connected to community services



# Perception of WSI Services

Respondents were asked about their experiences accessing WSI services:

- ❖ for de-escalation services
- ❖ to debrief with a worker
- ❖ to connect a street-involved individual to community services
- ❖ to connect a street-involved individual with a WSI worker
- ❖ For removal of drug paraphernalia
- ❖ to connect with community services

Most respondents (**80-100%**) indicated that they were mostly or completely:

- ❖ **Satisfied** with WSI service(s) they received
- ❖ Able to access WSI easily and in a **timely manner**
- ❖ Satisfied with the degree to which WSI **addressed their concerns**



# Perceptions of Overall Experience with WSI Services

## % of Respondents by Perception of Services



❖ **87.9%** of respondents reported that the WSI service(s) they used were either **very good or excellent**



# Overall Perceptions of WSI Services

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**Overall perceptions of Welcoming Streets Initiative Services were positive:**

*“I think that the WSI Initiative is making our downtown safer for everyone and I'm so appreciative of all the work that has gone into it.”*

*“It makes me feel more secure in dealing with future situations knowing that there are people I can call to help resolve an issue without involving the police. Thank you Welcoming Streets!!”*

**A small group of respondents gave negative feedback, for example:**

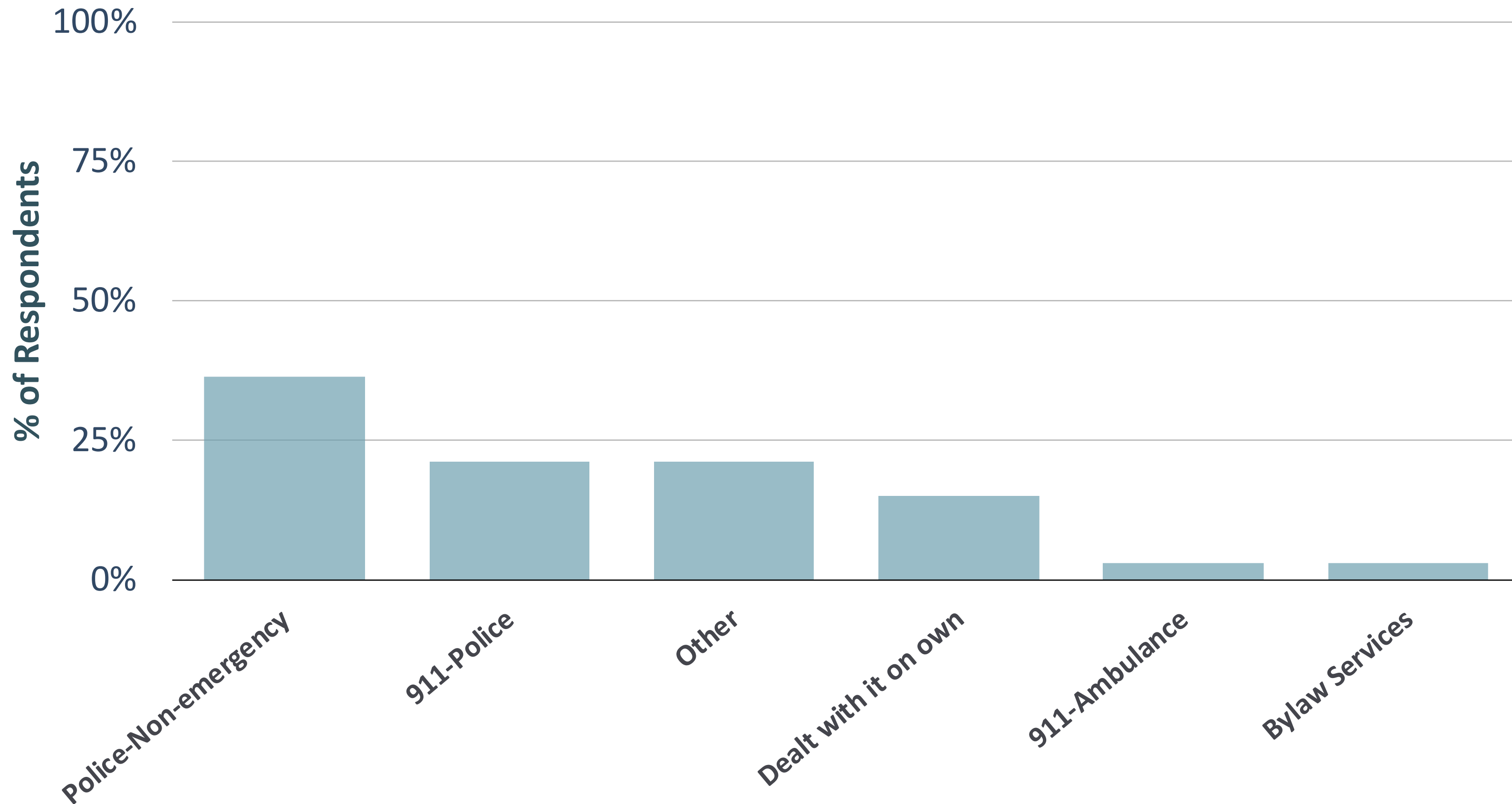
*“We can't afford this and it is too late”*





# The Services Respondents would have Accessed if WSI did not Exist

% of Respondents by Services they would have Accessed



## Other services included:

- ❖ calling police and/or dealing with it themselves
- ❖ There are no other similar services to which individuals can be referred
- ❖ “All of the above depending on the emergency.”

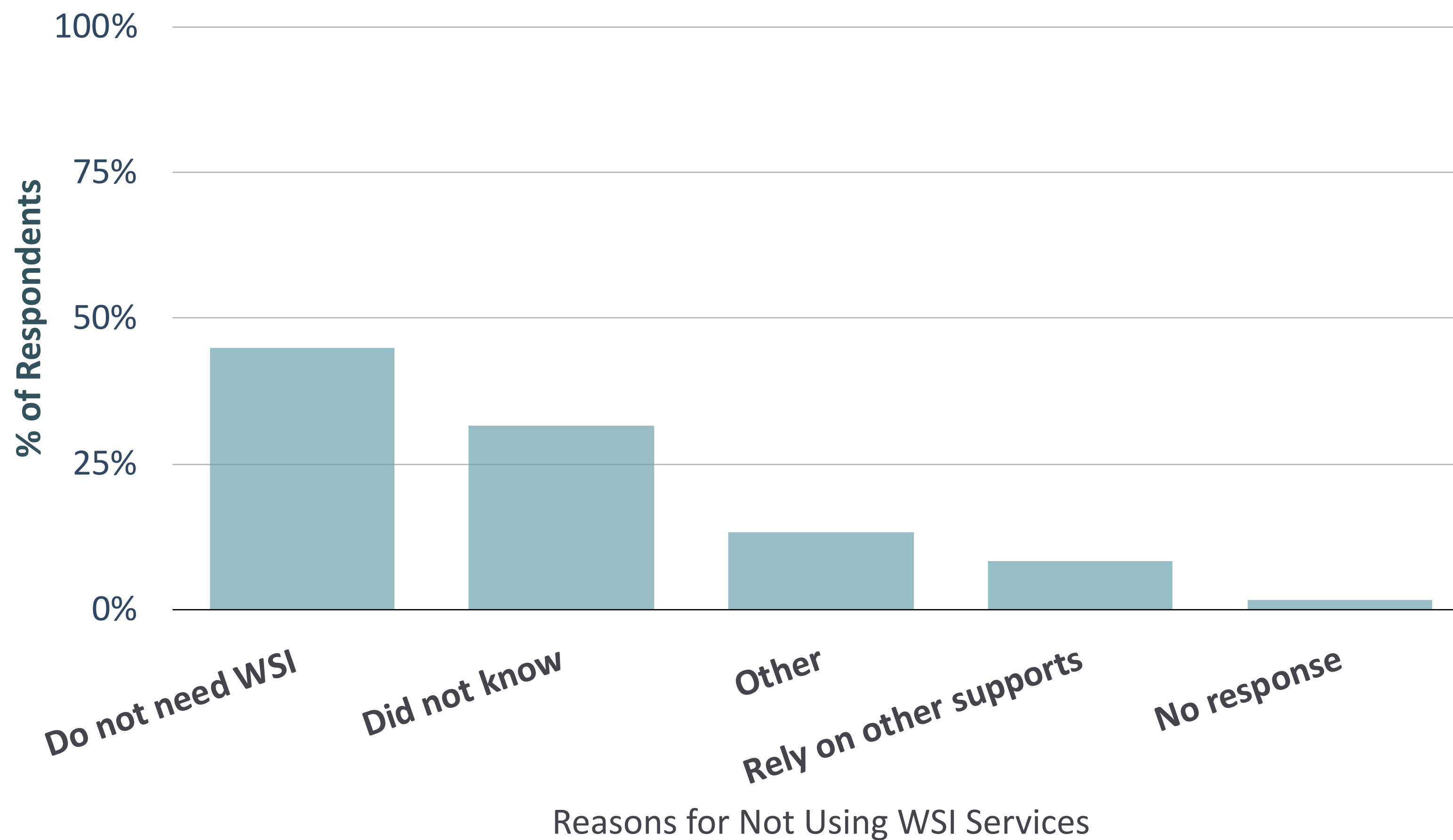
Services that would Have been Accessed if WSI did not Exist

33 respondents answered this question



# Reasons for not using WSI Services

## % of Respondents by Reasons for not using Services



Of the respondents who did not use WSI services:

- ✦ **45%** did not need the services
- ✦ **31.7%** did not know about the services

The response “other” included: do not know how to connect, unable to connect with service, and not interested



# Reasons for Not Using WSI Services

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*“Fortunately we have not needed the help of WSI staff. We feel secure that if a problem does arise there is a strategy in place for emergencies”*

*“I know of them but am not aware of when they operate, how to contact them, who to contact, etc.”*

*“We tend to need help right on the spot and 3 times we have called for help people are unavailable. From our experience we have found that it takes about a week before someone gets back to us or follows up and at that point we've already moved on and dealt with the situation ourselves”*



# WSI Services - Key Strengths

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- 1 Valued service
  - ❖ **Key points:** integral, indispensable, crucial, needed, important, worthwhile, valued, great
- 2 Supportive service
  - ❖ **Key points:** supports, helpful, bridges a gap, good solutions
- 3 Effective service
  - ❖ **Key points:** positive impact, positive experience, very well run, effective, helps
- 4 Appreciated service
  - ❖ **Key points:** appreciate the work, one of the best programs, very grateful



## WSI Services - Key Strengths *(continued)*

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5 Quick service

❖ **Key points:** efficient, very quick to respond

6 Wish for service to  
continue/expand

❖ **Key points:** really hope this initiative continues, spread to many more towns

7 Friendly service

❖ **Key points:** good caring people in this role, very friendly

8 Sense of safety

❖ **Key points:** feel more secure in dealing with future situations, makes our downtown safer

9 Addressed needs and struggles

❖ **Key points:** need for this program, see the struggle



## WSI Services - Key Strengths *(continued)*

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*“We are retail, street level business, we see the struggles of people who are living (spending their whole day) on the downtown streets. We know the need for a program such as Welcoming Streets Initiative. I know we will be using this program a lot and am very grateful they are here.”*

*“I think it is an important service that bridges a gap between policing and people getting access to services. You need to have good caring people in this role to make it work which you seem to have had”*



# Suggestions for WSI Services

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1 Make it easier to access information about service

❖ **Specific suggestions:** need education for local businesses, have speakers series on benefits of program, flyers/posters

2 Expand service delivery

❖ **Specific suggestions:** extend the delivery area, need in late evening hours



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# Welcoming Streets Initiative Survey:

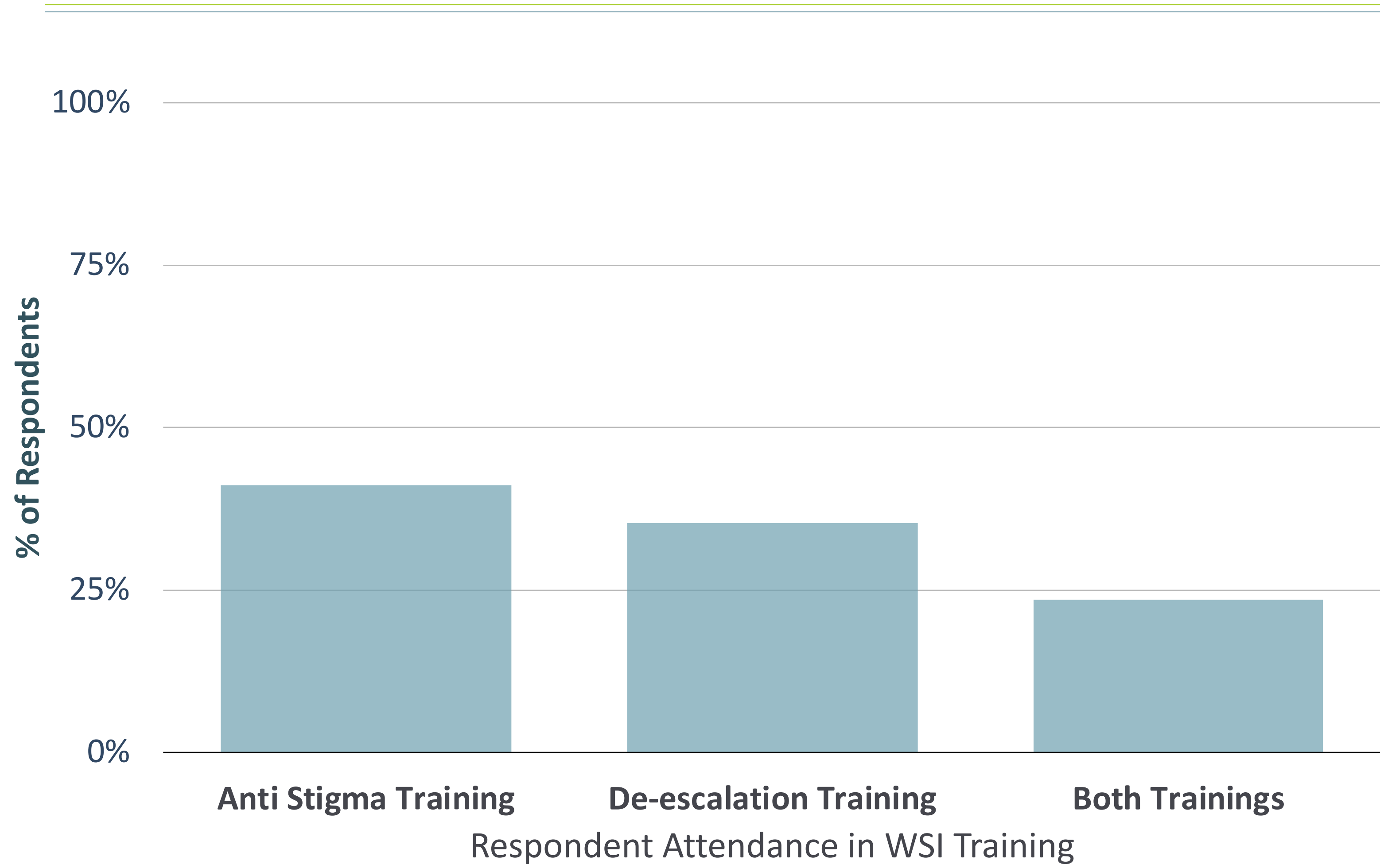
## Perceptions of WSI Training





# Participation in WSI Training

## % of Respondents by Type of Training



Of those who participated in WSI training:

- ❖ **41.2%** participated in Anti-Stigma
- ❖ **35.3%** participated in De-escalation
- ❖ **23.5%** participated in both trainings

# Perceptions of WSI Training

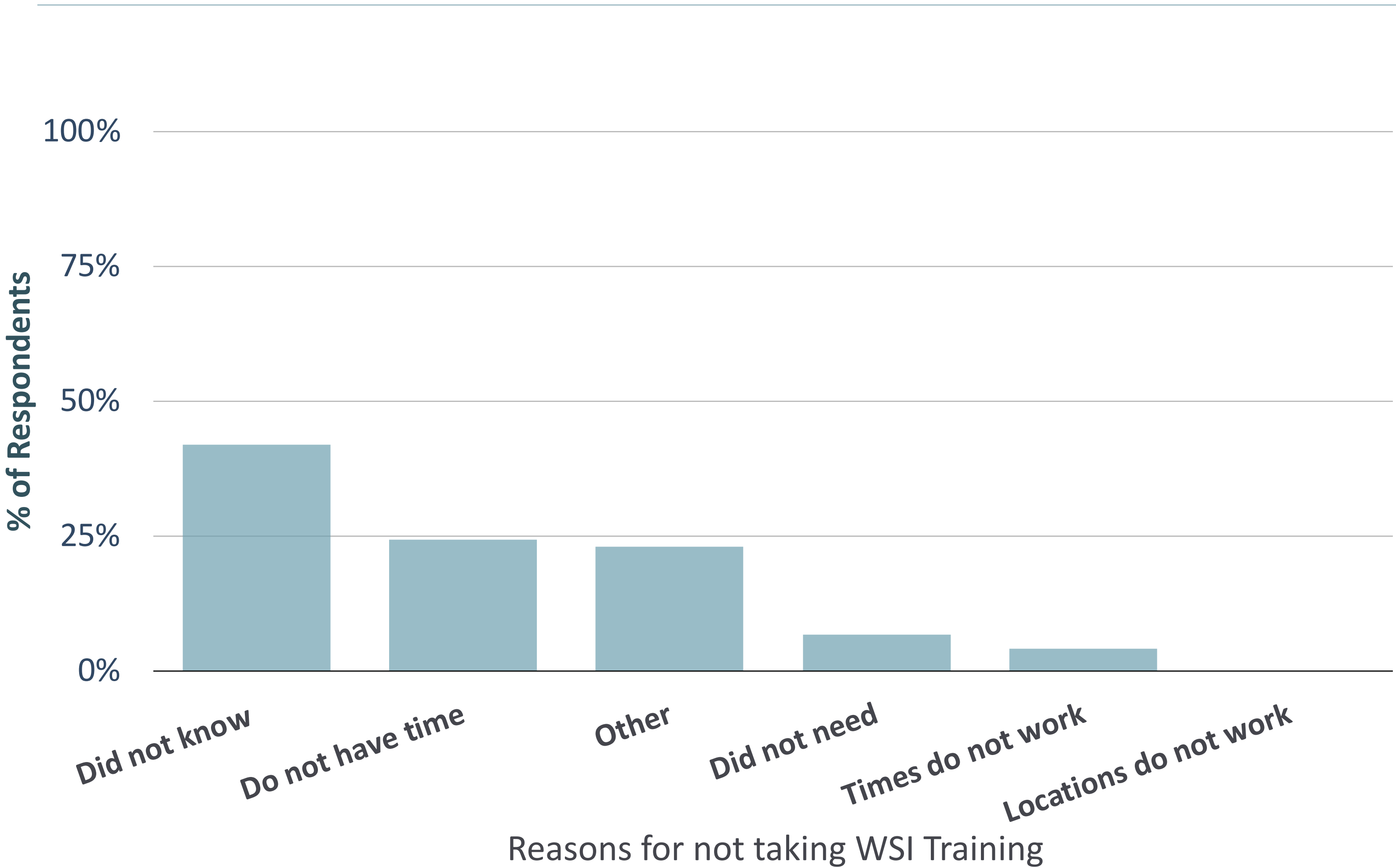
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- ❖ **90%** of respondents that attended training, felt mostly or completely satisfied, that:
  - ❖ they would apply the knowledge they learned
  - ❖ the training was relevant, useful and engaging
- ❖ The majority of respondents felt the training mostly or completely:
  - ❖ gave them **new information** (60% of respondents)
  - ❖ **built their skills** (80% to 90% of respondents)
  - ❖ Increased their **confidence** (70% to 90% of respondents)



# Reasons for not taking WSI Training

% of Respondents by Reasons for not taking training



Of those who did not participate in WSI training:

- ❖ **41.9%** did not know about the trainings
- ❖ **24.3%** did not have time to attend the trainings

The response “other” included planning to attend in future, not interested, no reason



# Reasons for Not Using WSI Services

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*“We'd be happy to take training and fully support this initiative”*

*“We have not been able to organize staff to attend training together”*

*“It was offered off hand but I never initiated scheduling a time for it”*



# WSI Training Strengths

## Results from Surveys Completed by Training Participants Directly Following Training

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Respondents who completed a survey directly following a training identified the following strengths:

- |                                                            |                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Relevant and Open Conversation                           | ❖ <b>Key points:</b> open, honest and real discussions, relevancy to everyday life, informal Q & A |
| 2 Learned about De-escalation                              | ❖ <b>Key points:</b> how to de-escalate a person, learning to stay calm, it`s not about me         |
| 3 Received Information about Resources available in Guelph | ❖ <b>Key points:</b> list of available resources around the city for people in need                |
| 4 Effective Facilitation Skills                            | ❖ <b>Key points:</b> excellent facilitation, clear and specific direction and assistance           |



# Overall Perceptions of WSI Training

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**Overall perceptions of Welcoming Streets Initiative Training were positive:**

*“Training has definitely been helpful though and it has given us confidence to deal with issues ourselves in an appropriate manner.”*

*“We sent a lot of our staff to the training and we found that all staff thought it was worthwhile.”*

*“Clear and specific direction and assistance”*

**A small group of respondents gave negative feedback, for example:**

*“No interest in more government [programs]”*



# WSI Training Suggestions

## Results from Surveys Completed by Training Participants Directly Following Training and from WSI Evaluation Survey

1 Expand Presentation Content

❖ **Specific suggestions included:** include real life examples; how to deal with needles and fentanyl problems

2 Diversify Types of Media used in Presentation

❖ **Specific suggestions included:** use video; use stories to illustrate the points

3 Improve Presentation Handouts

❖ **Specific suggestions included:** include what each resource can help with; provide a copy of the presentation

4 Consider offering training in different formats

❖ **Specific suggestions included:** offer online training

5 Provide more information about trainings

❖ **Specific suggestions included:** Flyers/posters, offer a speaker's series about the benefits of WSI



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# Conclusion:

**Overall Program Strengths & Suggestions; Evaluation  
Limitations; and Recommendation**





# WSI Services: Summary of Key Findings

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- ❖ The **top 3 services** accessed by respondents were de-escalation services; connecting street-involved individuals with WSI workers; and debriefing with WSI workers
- ❖ Most respondents indicated that they were **mostly or completely satisfied** with the WSI services they received
- ❖ Overall, most respondents felt that the WSI services they used were either **very good or excellent**
- ❖ Over half of respondents would have accessed emergency and non-emergency **police services** if WSI services did not exist
- ❖ Reasons respondents did not use WSI services were they did not need the service; they did not know about the service; they rely on other supports; they have not received a response from WSI workers



# WSI Training: Summary of Key Findings

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- ❖ **90%** of respondents that attended training felt mostly or completely satisfied that they would **apply the knowledge** they learned and that the training was **relevant, useful and engaging**
- ❖ Of the respondents who participated in the training
  - ❖ 60% felt it mostly or completely gave them **new information**
  - ❖ 80% to 90% felt it mostly or completely **built their skills**
  - ❖ 70% to 90% felt it mostly or completely **increased their confidence**
- ❖ Reasons respondents did not participate in training included, that they: did not know; did not have time/logistics; did not need/not interested; would like to attend in future; no reason



# Key Strengths Overall: WSI Services and Training

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1. Valued service
2. Supportive service
3. Useful training
4. Effective service
5. Appreciated service
6. Quick service
7. Wish for service to continue/expand
8. Friendly service
9. Provides sense of safety
10. Addressed needs and struggles



# Summary of Suggestions: WSI Services and Training

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- 1 Expand service delivery
- 2 Expand presentation content in training
- 3 Diversify types of media used in training
- 4 Improve presentation handouts in training
- 5 Consider offering training in different formats
- 6 Make it easier to get information about WSI services and training



# Limitations

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- ❖ Data collection methods were limited by resources
- ❖ Survey was only available online
- ❖ Survey was only available in English
- ❖ Although the overall number of respondents (92) nearly achieved the target number for responses set for the survey (100), for some questions the actual number of respondents was low
  - ❖ *On each slide the number of respondents is identified and should be taken into account when interpreting the results*



# Recommendations

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The findings from the WSI evaluation have led to the following recommendations:

1. Expand WSI services
  - Increase service delivery area (expand service delivery area, extend hours of operation, increase number of staff)
  - Increase service hours (for example: include evening hours)
2. Expand and improve WSI training
  - Explore the development of an online training option
  - Implement changes to current training in response to survey respondent suggestions (for example: tailor information to what audience wants to learn)
3. Increase promotion of WSI services and training
  - Use flyers/posters to further promote services and engage businesses
  - Increase exposure of services to downtown business staff (speakers series, more frequent training)

