

# Adoption, a Social Contributor to Malnutrition in Kundiawa-SiPHA

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# Introduction

- In PNG, adoption is a complex social matter influenced by both customary practices and the legal system
- Formal, legal adoption process introduced to PNG in 1884, with adoption and welfare laws passed in 1968 and 2015, respectively: Adoption of Children Act 1968 and Lukautim Pikinini Act 2015. [Rooney, *“Principles of Family Law in Papua New Guinea: A Reflective Review.”*]
- Adequate nutrition in early childhood is important for optimal growth and development. [WHO: Nutrition]
- Studies on Adoption in PNG have indicated lack of proper feeding practices with risk of sub-optimal nutrition [Kali, 2017][Panauwe, 2013]

# Aims/Objectives

- To identify common adoption and feeding practices in Simbu
- To assess the nutritional status of adopted children admitted to Paediatric Ward-Kundiawa in 2022

# Research Question

- Is adoption a risk factor for Malnutrition in Children under 5y.o?

# Method

- Study design: Retrospective observational study
- Study site: Paediatric Ward, Kundiawa General Hospital
- Study duration: January-December 2022
- Study population: Adopted children age 0-5y.o
- Sample size: 46 participants

## Inclusion criteria:

- Age 0-5y
- 1<sup>st</sup> admissions

## Exclusion criteria

- Underlying congenital conditions/diseases
- Re-admissions

## **Variables measured:**

- **Patient data:** Gender, age, weight
- **Adoption details:** Type of adoption, age when child adopted, reason for adoption, status of biological parents, relationship between adopted and biological parents
- **Feeding practices:** Age when weaned off breast-milk, types of feed, frequency of meals
- **Nutritional status and anthropometry :** Weight-for-age, weight-for-height, MUAC, Oedema
- **Primary admission diagnosis**
- **Immunization status**
- **Outcome**

- Data collection and entry- MS Excel spreadsheet
- Data analysis using IBM SPSS
- Ethical approval obtained from Simbu PHA Ethics Committee



# Results

## **Demography**

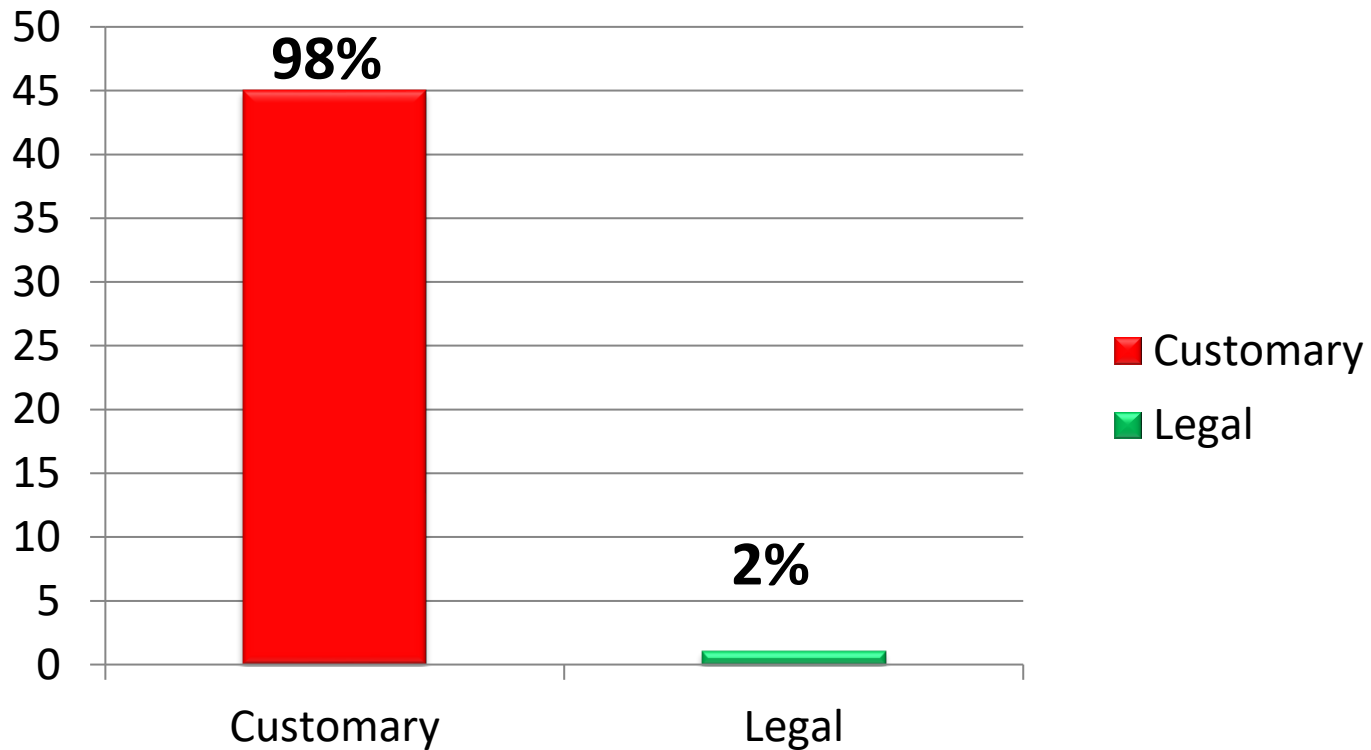
Total of 46 children were recruited

Equal percentage of male and female

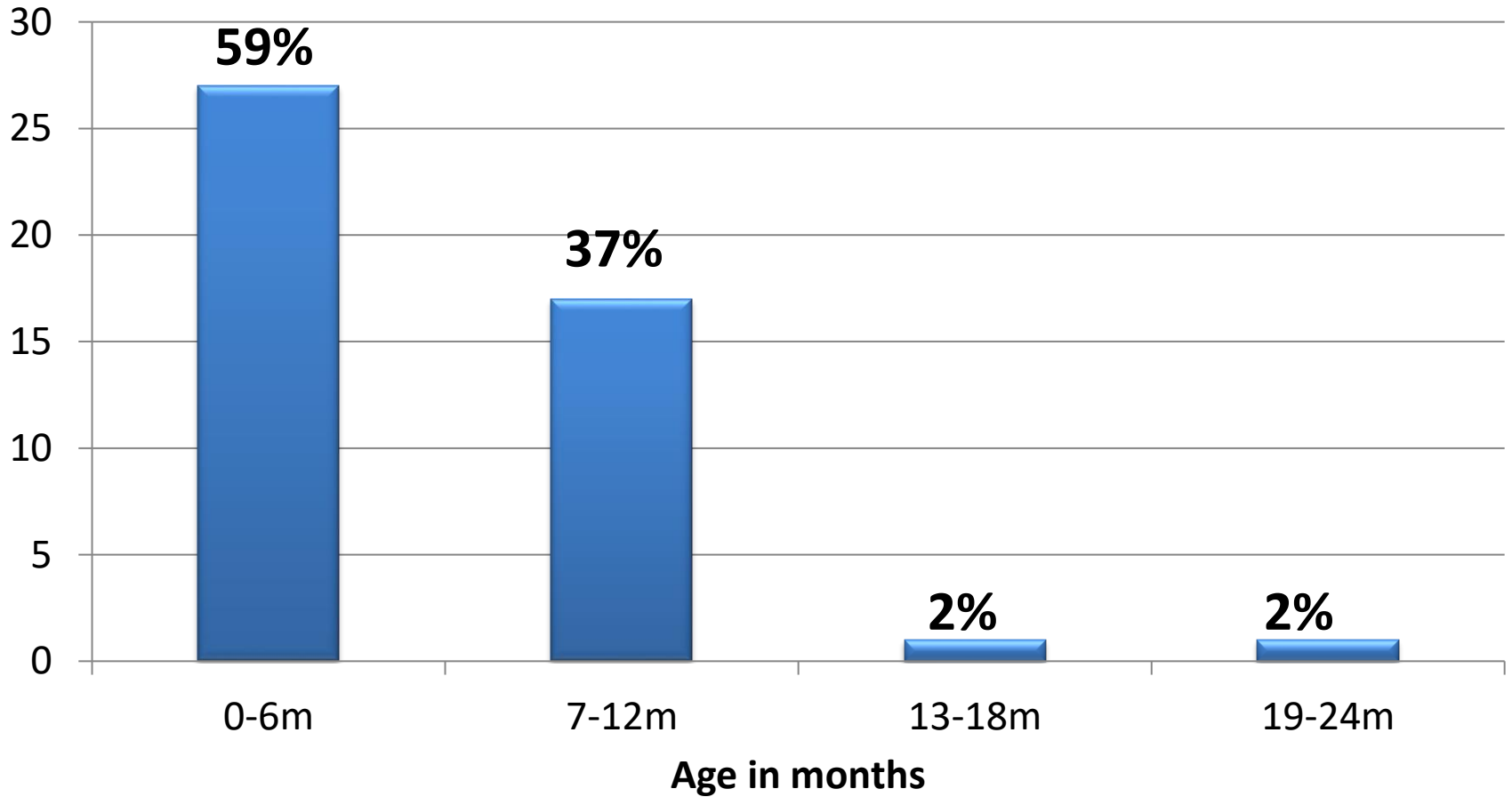
Median age in months is 13, IQR = 8-24

# Adoption details

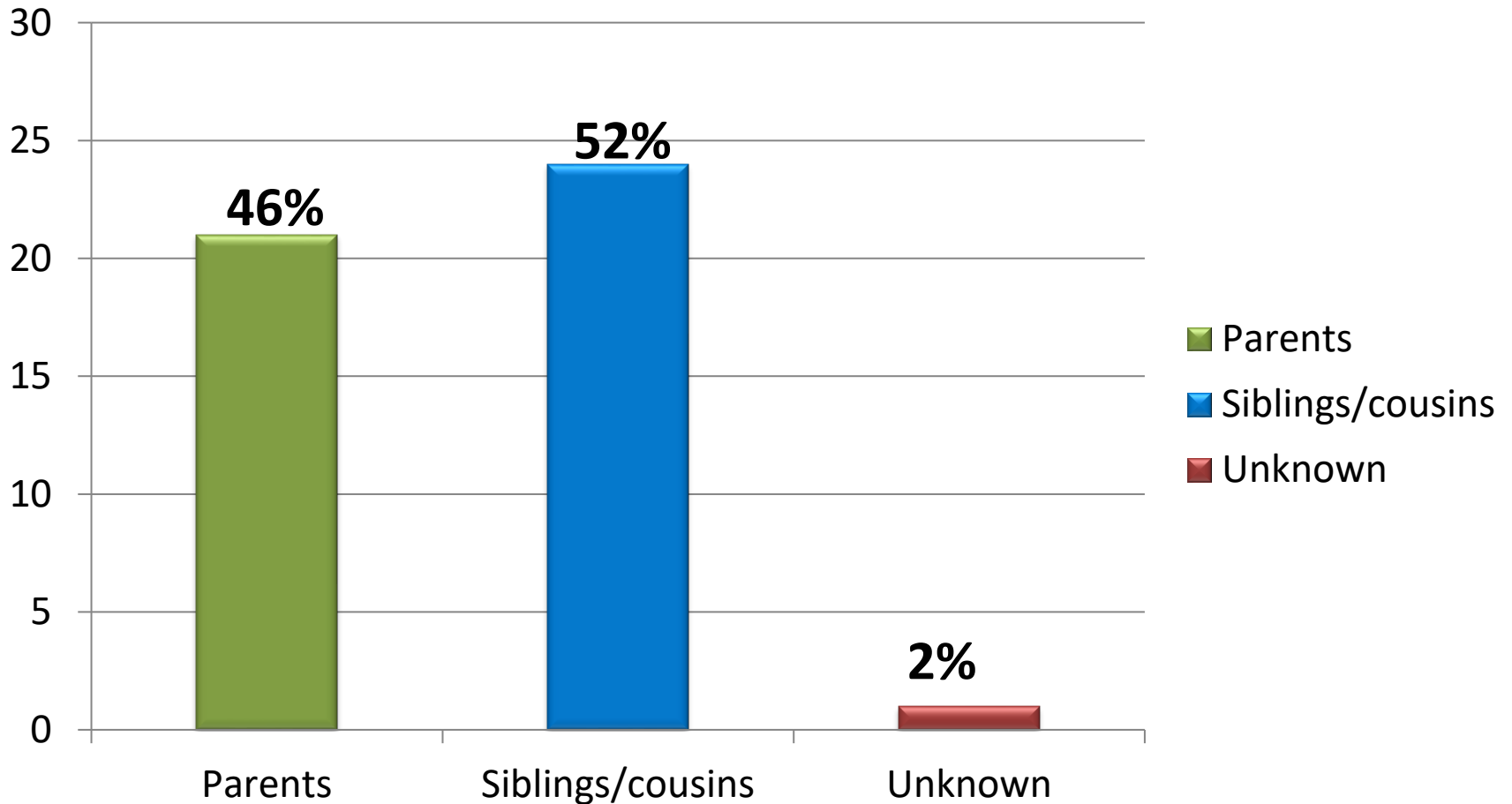
**Graph 1: Mode of Adoption**



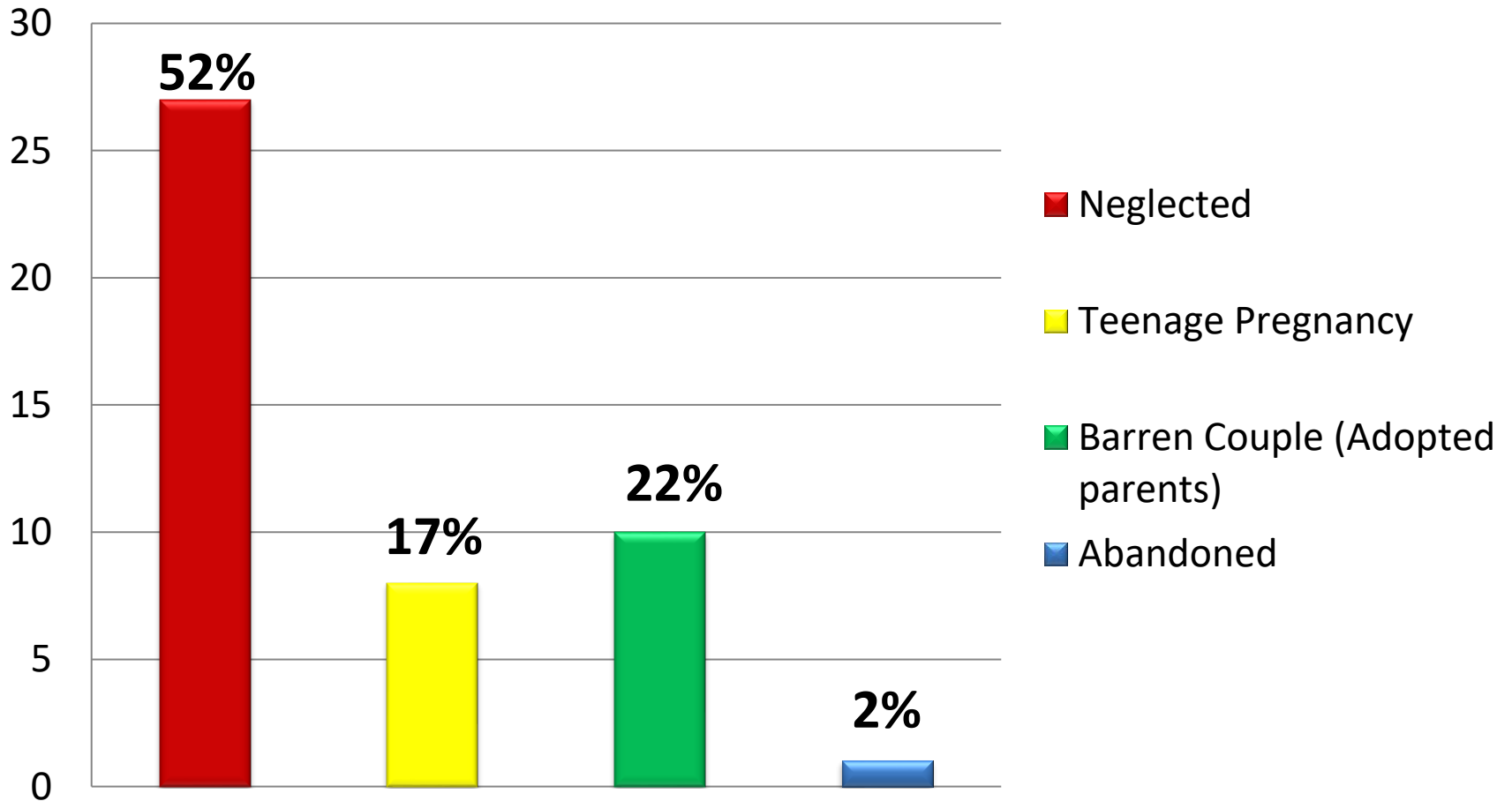
# Graph 2: Age of adoption in months



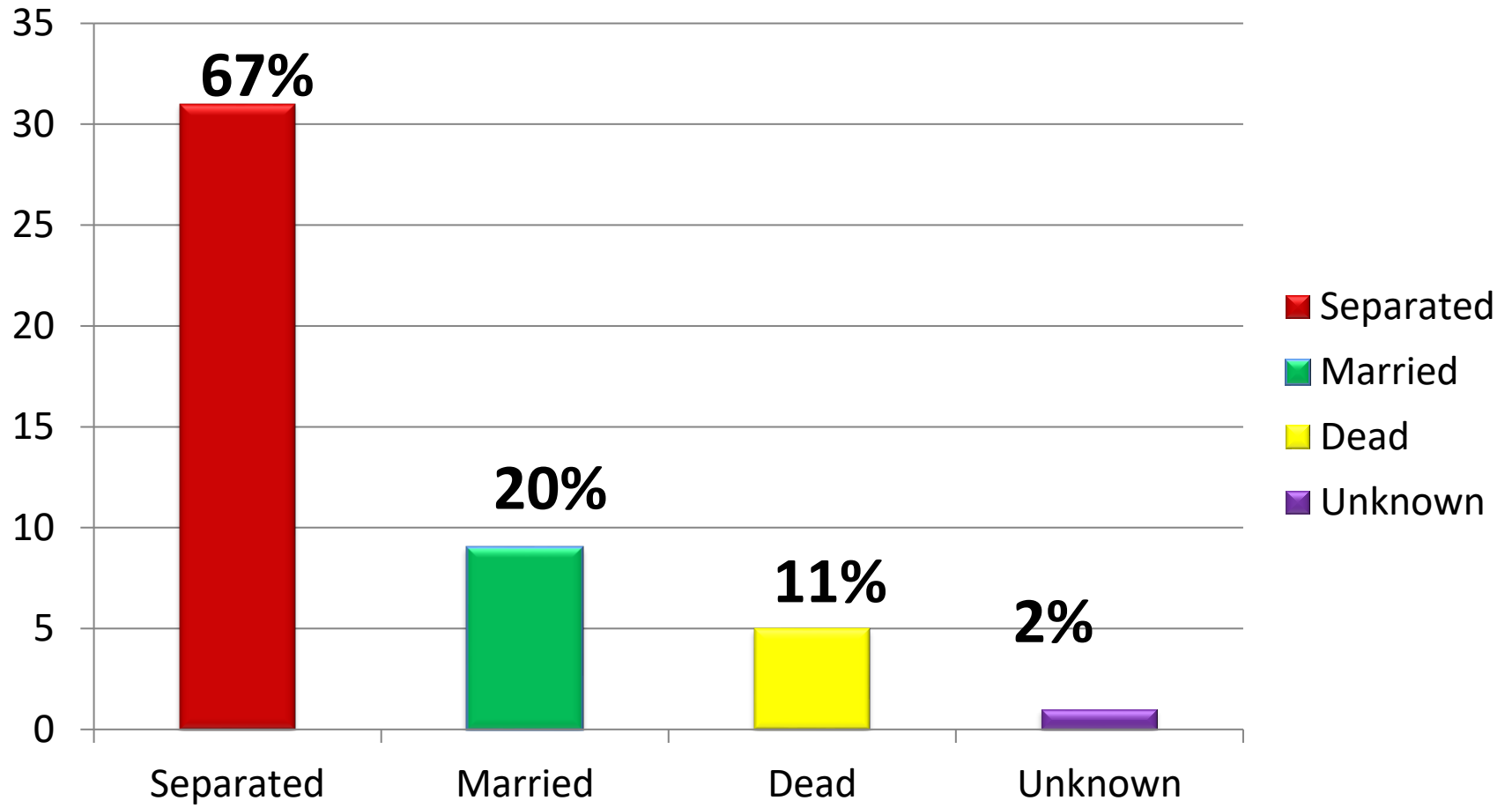
# Graph 3: Relationship between Biological and Adopted parents



# Graph 4: Reasons for adoption



# Graph 5: Status of biological parents



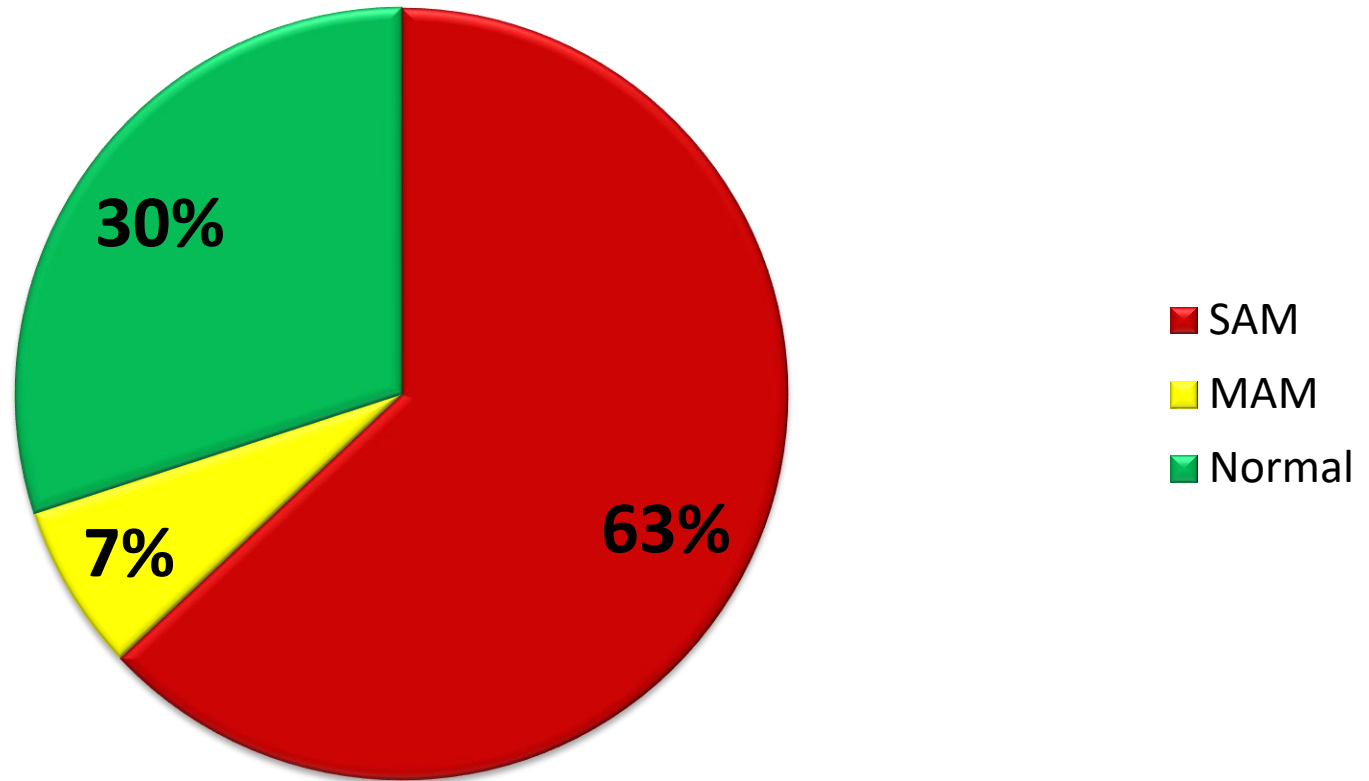
# Feeding Practices

- Age when weaned off breast-milk: Median- 5.43, IQR- 3-8
- No of meals per day: Median- 3.00, IQR- 3-4

Types of Feeds	Frequency (n=44)	Relative Frequency
Milk Formula (MF)	3	7%
MF and Complementary feeds	22	48%
Solids	21	46%

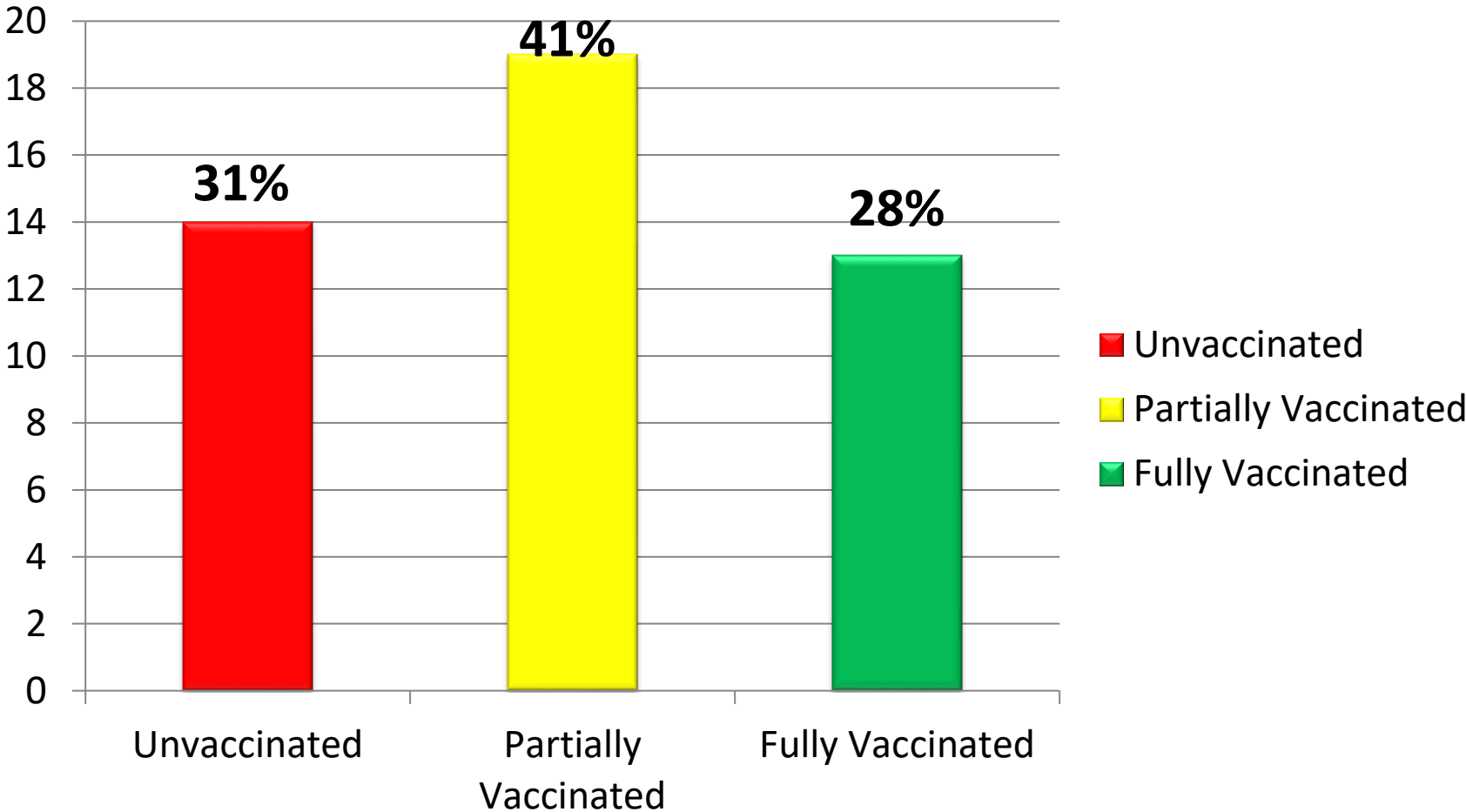
***Table 1: Types of feeds given to adopted children***

# Graph 6: Nutritional Status

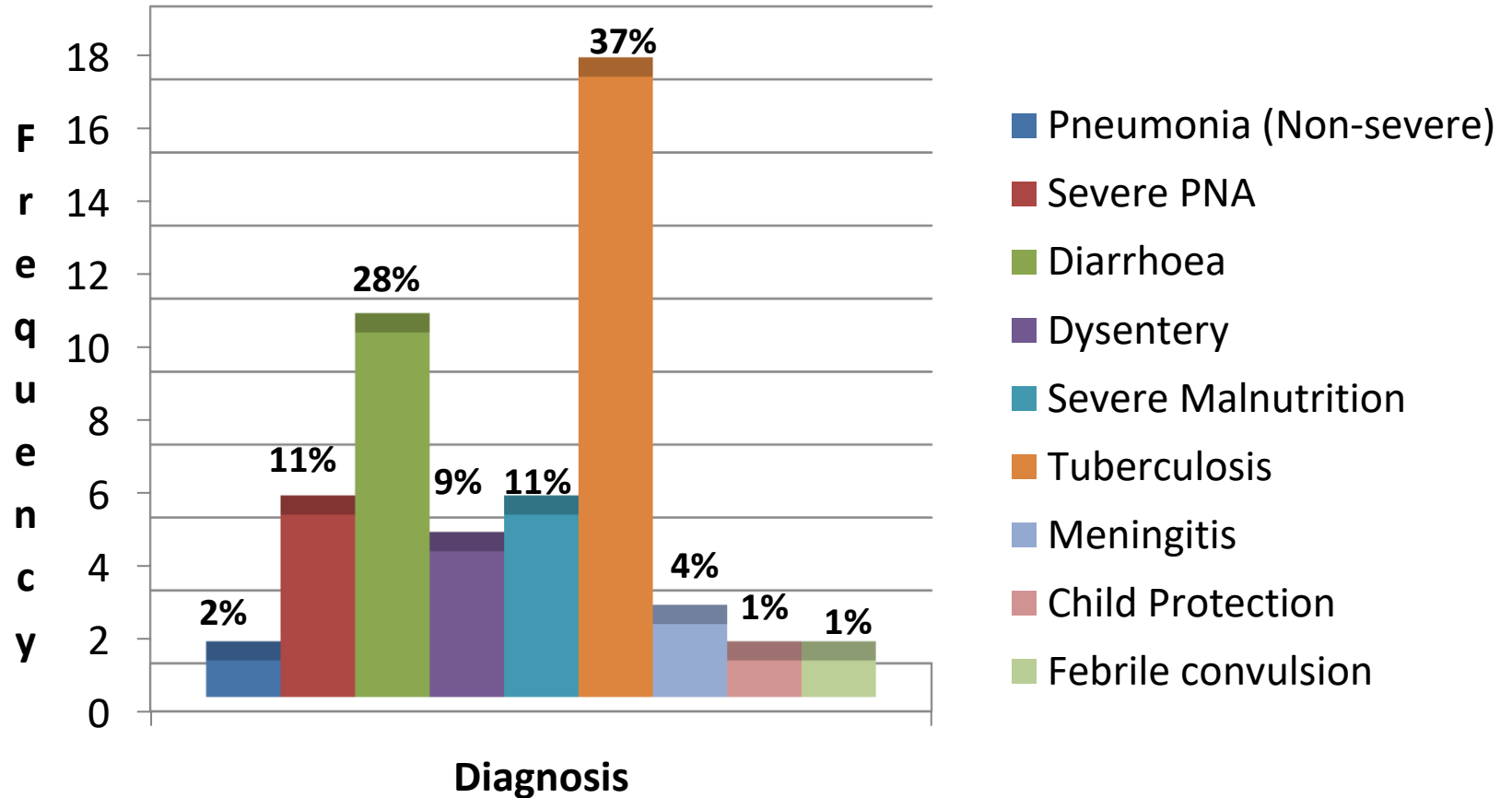




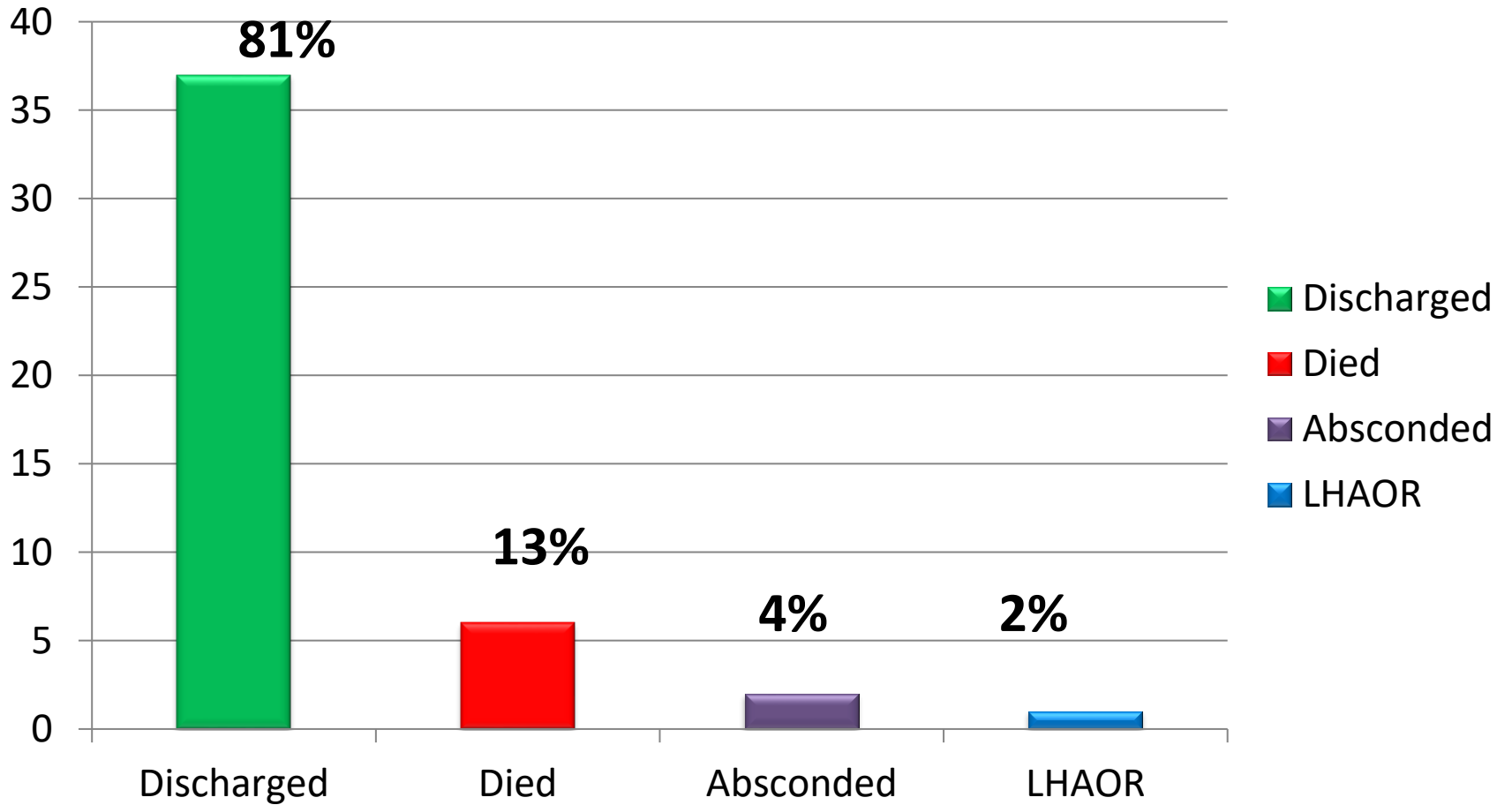
# Graph 7: Immunization status



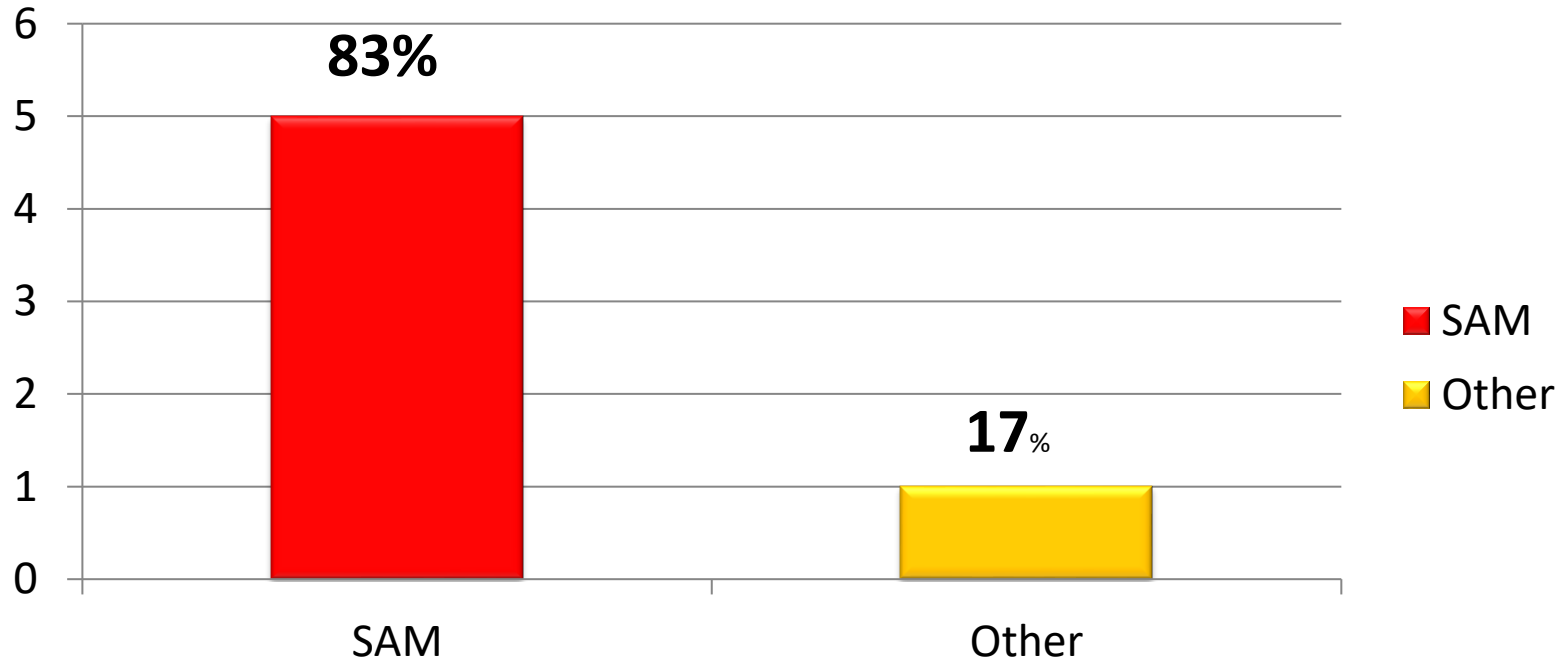
# Graph 8: Diagnosis by Admission



# Graph 9: Outcome



# Graph 10: Deaths in Adopted children



# Discussion

## *Adoption practices*

- Customary adoption is still highly practiced in Simbu:
  - Mostly practiced amongst close relatives
  - Common reasons for adoption were due to neglect by biological parents after separation, teenage pregnancy and wanted by barren couple
  - Most children were adopted at an early age (<6m), resulting in early weaning

# ***Feeding Practices***

- Feeding practices still not clearly understood as seen in early weaning and introduction of complementary feeds.
- Most patients have 3 daily meals on a diet of MF and complementary solids. WHO recommends 6 meals daily in this age group [WHO: Nutrition]

# ***Nutritional Assessment***

- High rate of Malnutrition in adopted children= 70% (63% had severe malnutrition and 7% had moderate malnutrition)
- Risk of adopted child dying from Severe Acute Malnutrition is very high = 83%
- Overall, the adopted children contribute significantly to the high mortality rates (63%) among children admitted for SAM [PHR 2022-Simbu PHA]

# Conclusion

- Adoption, in the context of customary adoption remains a risk factor for malnutrition in children under 5.y
- Customary adoption is still prevalent and common among close relatives
- Poor feeding practices among adopted children, including early weaning which could be a factor for the high rate of malnutrition seen in this population



# Limitations

- Inadequate data
  - Data collection based on charts and PHR with missing information
- Data collection by Paediatric Ward admissions, does not represent all adopted children in the community

# Recommendation

1. More awareness at community level regarding Adoption laws and children's rights (LPA). This can aid with:
  - More reporting/registration of adoptions
  - Reduced chances of neglect
2. Implement the Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) policies at community level:
  - Education and awareness
  - Support groups
  - More trained healthcare workers
3. Social worker/child welfare officer must be involved in in patient management at the ward and follow-up with home visits

# Acknowledgement

- Paediatricians- Simbu PHA:
- Dr D. Panauwe and Dr J Ande
- Professor T Duke
- Paediatric Ward Staff:
  - Sr A Danguma and Team
  - Dr Mukap
  - HEO Ben, HEO Kuria and HEO Kila and Residents

# Reference

1. Rooney MN. Principles of Family Law in Papua New Guinea: a reflective review.
2. Nutrition [Internet]. [cited 2024 Apr 30]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/nutrition>
3. Kali J. Adoption and Feeding Practices among children 0-3years presenting to health facilities in Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. 2017.
4. Panauwe D. Adopted Children admitted to Port Moresby General Hospital – A longitudinal follow up study. 2013