

High Turnover in Caseworkers: Describing Characteristics of Past Child Welfare Workers

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BACKGROUND

- High turnover impacts workplace factors such as limited effectiveness, decreased productivity, and lower morale (Aarons et al., 2012)
- It takes caseworkers roughly two years to obtain enough skill and experience to effectively work independently, but most turnover takes place prior to that point (Ellett et al., 2017)
- Families can be hesitant to work with new caseworkers due the disruption and potential differences in approach, leading to worse outcomes (Bowman, 2019)
- The probability of placement permanency drops significantly when more than one caseworker is assigned to the case over time (Bowman, 2019)

PURPOSE

- The purpose of this research is to describe factors that are common in past child welfare caseworkers
- This study examines the educational background and work-related characteristics of previous child welfare workers from Hamilton County Job & Family Services (HCJFS)

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were de-identified and only their pre-existing data was used for the purposes of this study
- N = 198
- Gender:
 - Females: 160
 - Males: 38
- Age:
 - 20-29 years old: 130
 - 30-39 years old: 41
 - 40-49 years old: 22
 - 50-59 years old: 5
- Race:
 - American Indian or Alaskan Native: 1
 - Asian: 3
 - Black or African American: 81
 - Hispanic or Latino: 3
 - White: 105
 - Two or more races: 5
- Individuals left their position at the agency between January of 2017 and May of 2021

METHODS

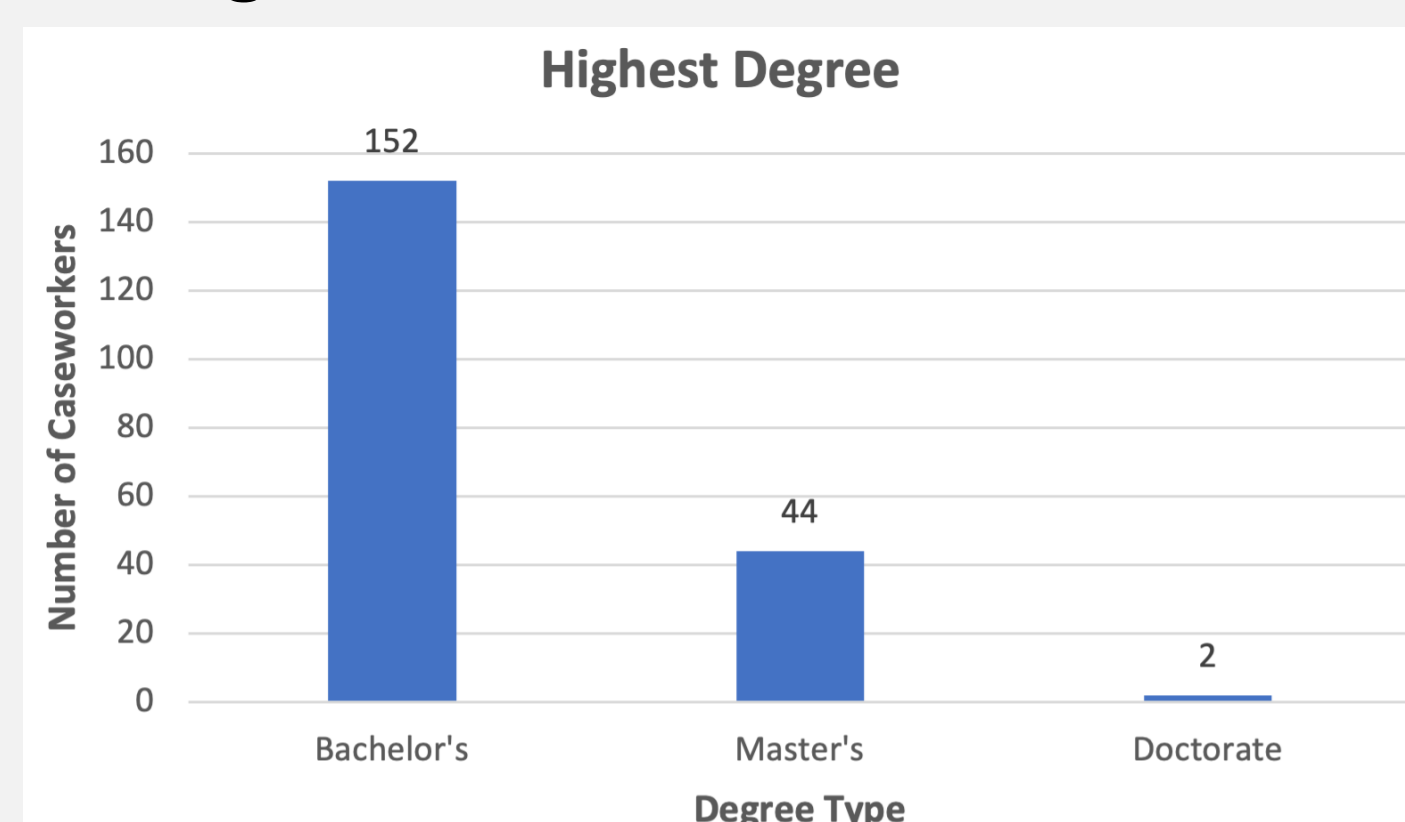
- This was a qualitative study that utilized a convenience sampling method to obtain participant data
- Individuals contributed data if they left the agency between January of 2017 and May of 2021
- Participant data was excluded if all data points were not available for that individual in order to maintain a homogenous sample
- Data on educational background and demographic information was distributed in Microsoft Excel sheets by managers in the Strategic Initiatives and Safety Culture departments
- Job-related data was retrieved from SACWIS, the agency database where information is stored on cases and employee statistics

DATA ANALYSIS

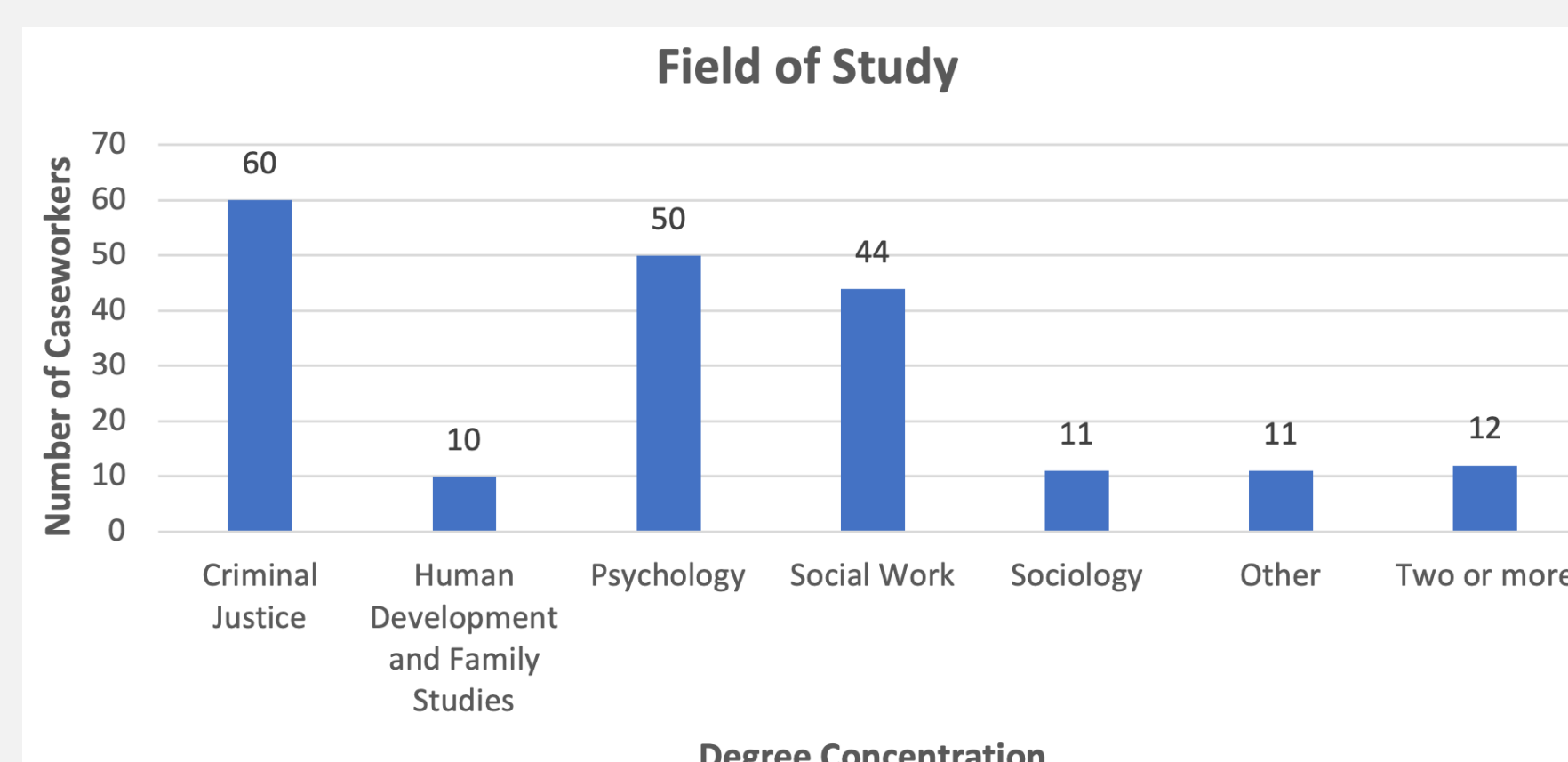
- The analysis conducted was descriptive in nature, using the secondary data that was collected from the agency
- All retrieved data points were consolidated into a single Excel document
- Information was analyzed in Microsoft Excel by utilizing frequency charts and bar graphs

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND RESULTS

- Highest Degree Earned



- Field of Study



- Additional Licensure

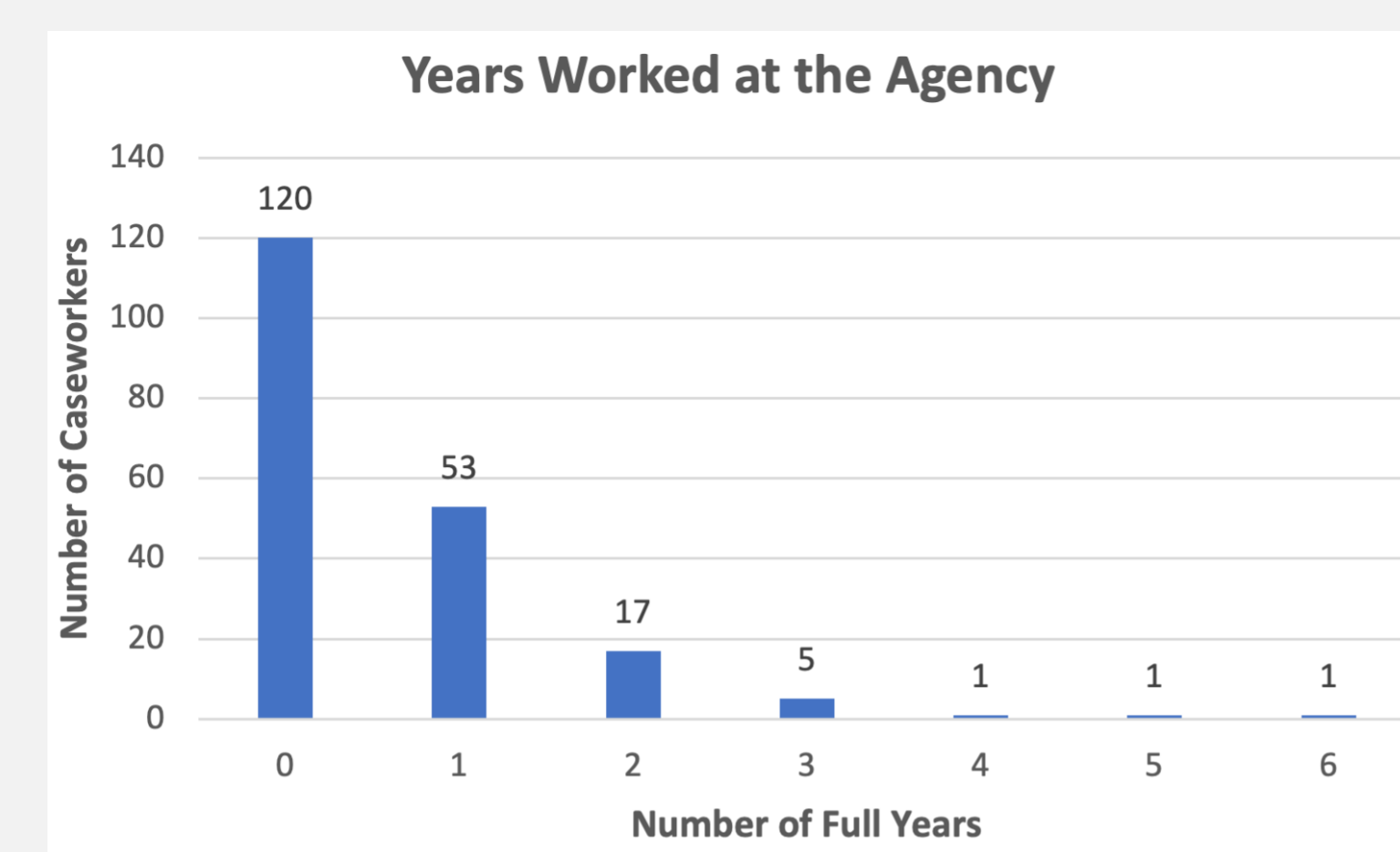


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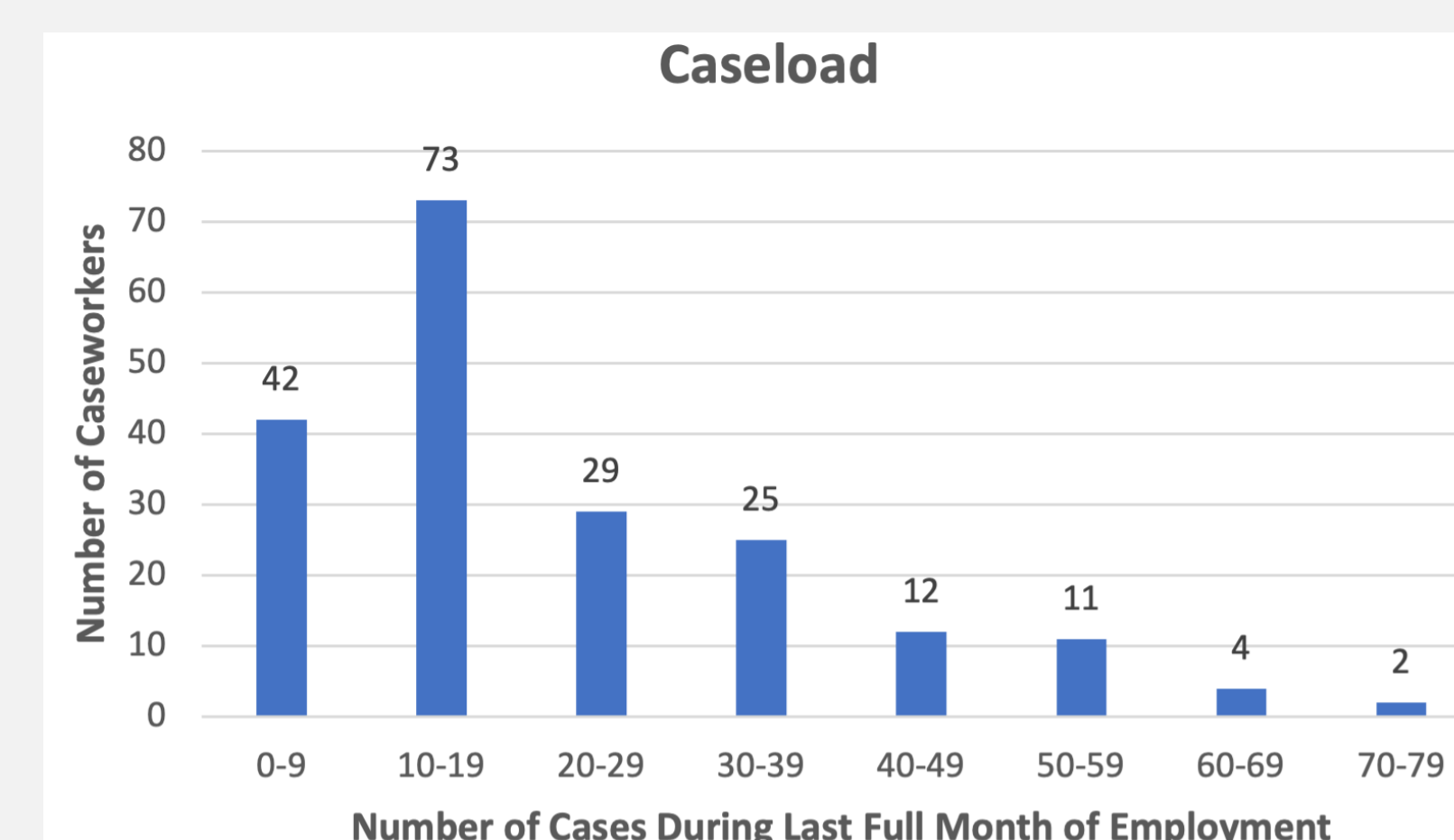
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- Ellett, A. J., Ellis, J. I., Westbrook, T. M., & Dews, D. (2007). A qualitative study of 369 child welfare professionals' perspectives about factors contributing to employee retention and turnover. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29(2), 264-281. 10.1016/j.childyouth.2006.07.005

WORK-RELATED RESULTS

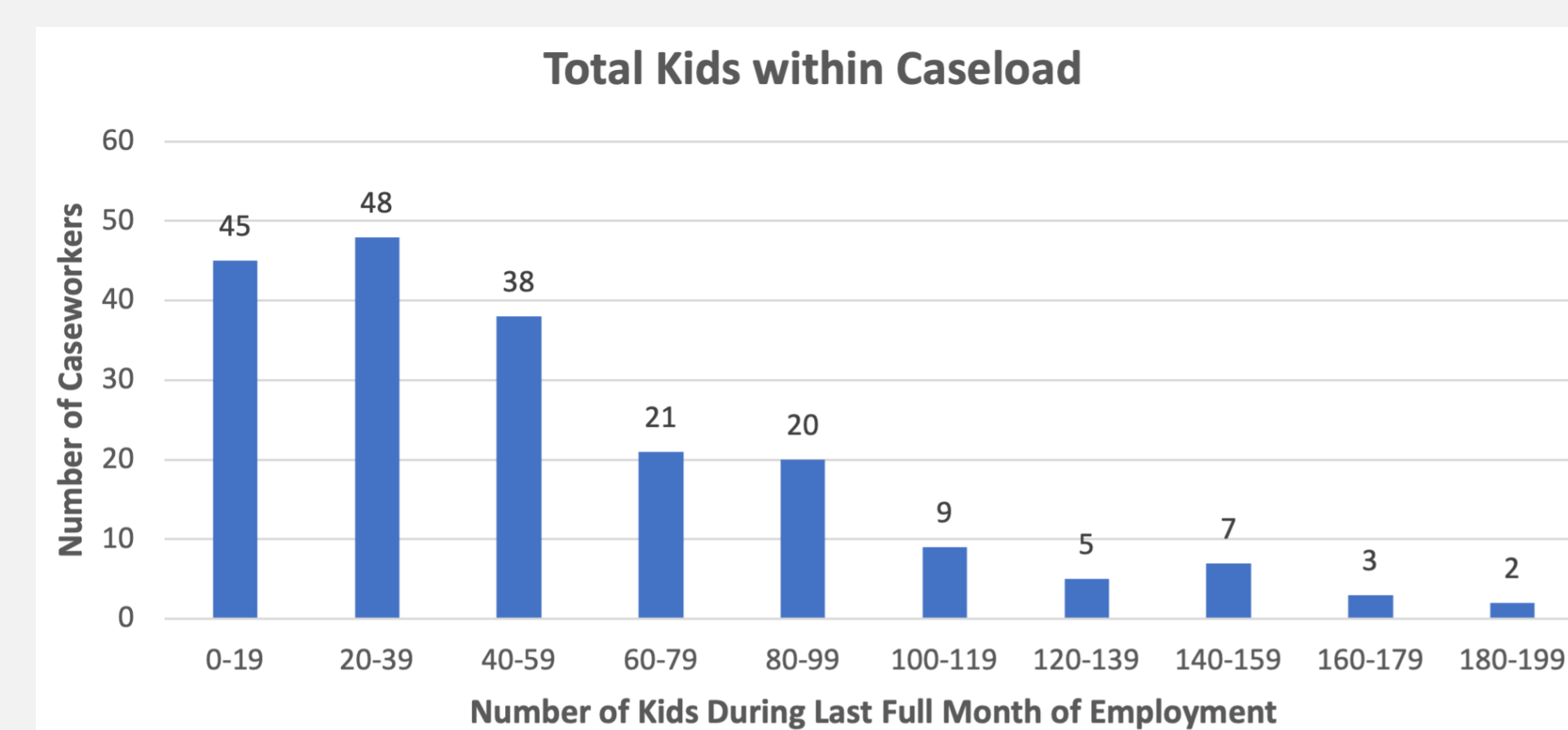
- Years Worked at the Agency



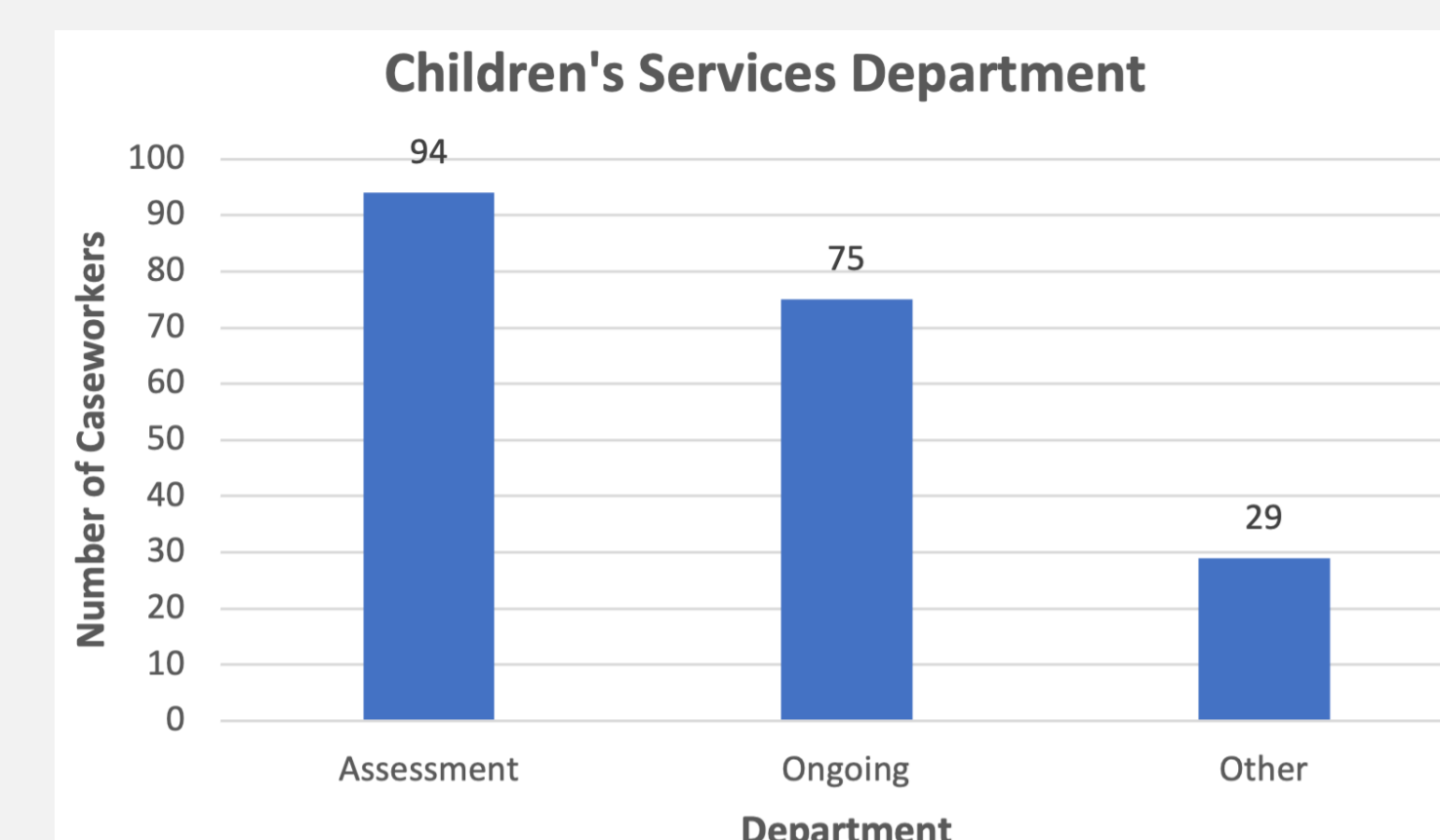
- Caseload



- Total Kids Within Caseload



- Children's Services Department



DISCUSSION

- Most fields of study were related to human services
- Although most caseloads and total kids were lower within the range of values, many individuals had to manage over 50 cases and more than 100 children
- There may be more turnover in Assessment because of higher caseloads, increased direct contact, and a more fast-paced environment
- The primary limitation was a lack of access to exit interview narratives due to that information being sealed and not stored in a central location

CONCLUSIONS

- Families need consistent sources of reliable support and intervention, neither of which will occur with so many caseworkers leaving that role within one year
- It would be beneficial for exit interviews at HCJFS to be stored in an online database
- More research should be conducted on causative factors related to child welfare caseworker turnover