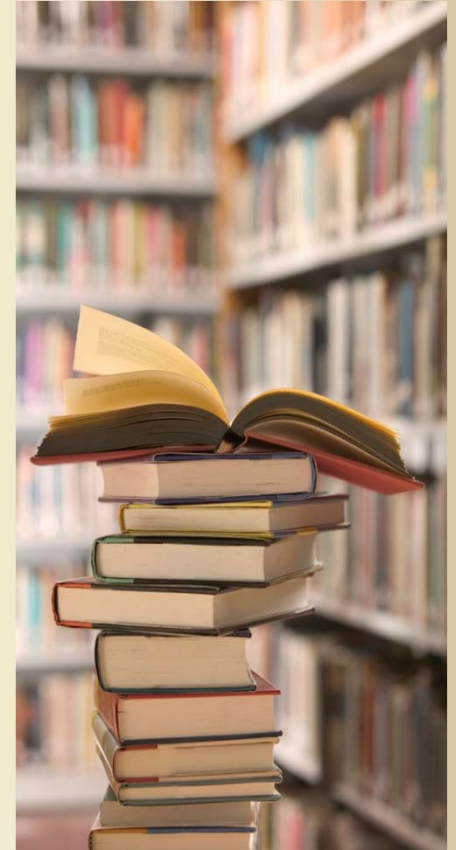


An Examination of Decision-Making  
Processes and Pathway of Outcomes  
for Child Maltreatment Referrals in  
Madera County

Jerica Ramos, MSW

Child Welfare Decision-Making  
Processes:  
Understanding Screening Processes  
in Calaveras and Kings Counties

Maria Bravo, MSW



# Purpose

## Jerica

- To seek out trends in decision-making processes for Madera County Child Welfare Services.
- To identify decision-making indicators that may be present.

## Maria

- To examine decision-making processes that occur when a child welfare agency receives a child maltreatment referral.
- To increase understanding of screening practices to better inform child welfare practitioners, administrators, community members, and policymakers about complex nature of child welfare decision-making.

# Problem Statements

## Jerica

- Little understanding of the factors that may be associated with the decision-making processes in child welfare.
- Explore decision-making pathways for child maltreatment referrals that are evaluated out in Madera County.

## Maria

- Decision-making related to child maltreatment referrals can be risky business even with advancements, such as safety assessment tools and training meant to improve the accuracy of detecting risk factors associated with maltreatment.
- Errors in decision-making or screening are sometimes manifested in evaluated out reports of child maltreatment.
- Screening errors can have unintended consequences such as public turmoil, private distress, and a loss in public confidence in CPS.

# Conceptual Frameworks

## Jerica

- Decision complexity and organizational factors
- Decision-making barriers
- Decision-making models

## Maria

- Structured Decision-Making (SDM)
  - Incorporates research-based risk assessment tools to guide decision-making in child welfare and to allow agencies to target cases that are most at risk (CDSS, 2007).
- Decision-Making Ecology (DME)
  - Mutual connections between case, organizational, community, and individual factors influencing case decisions and client outcomes (Wells et al., 2007).
- Organizational Operations Theory
  - Organizational culture is shaped by several factors: management style, social function, autonomy level and expectations of workers (Rzepnicki & Johnson, 2005).

# Research Questions

## Jerica

- What are the characteristics of child maltreatment referral for Madera County?
- What are the decision-making pathways for child maltreatment referral in Madera County?

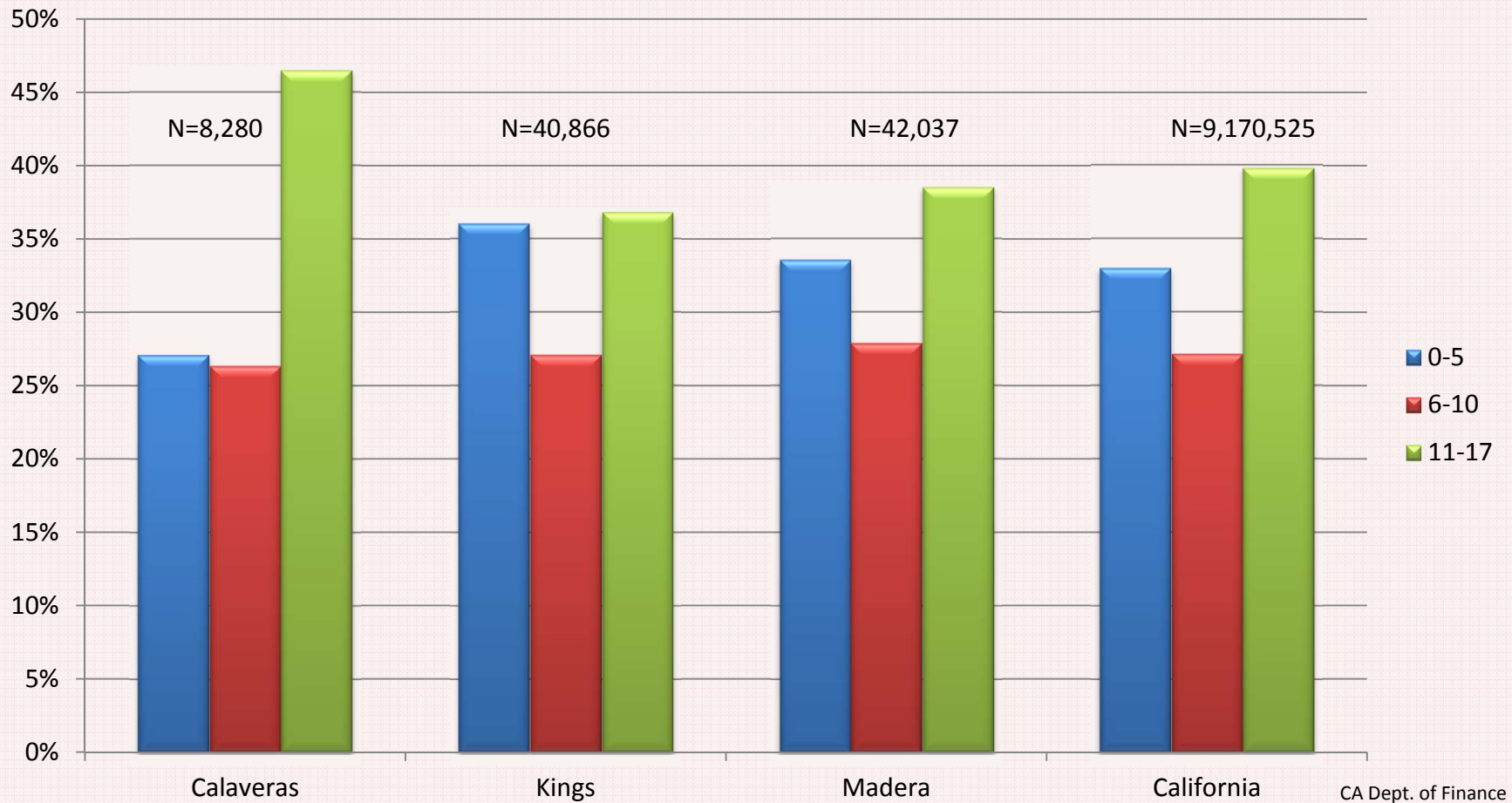
## Maria

- Does Calaveras County have higher incidences of evaluate-out child maltreatment referrals in comparison to California?
- Does Kings County have higher incidences of evaluate-out child maltreatment referrals in comparison to California?

# Methodology

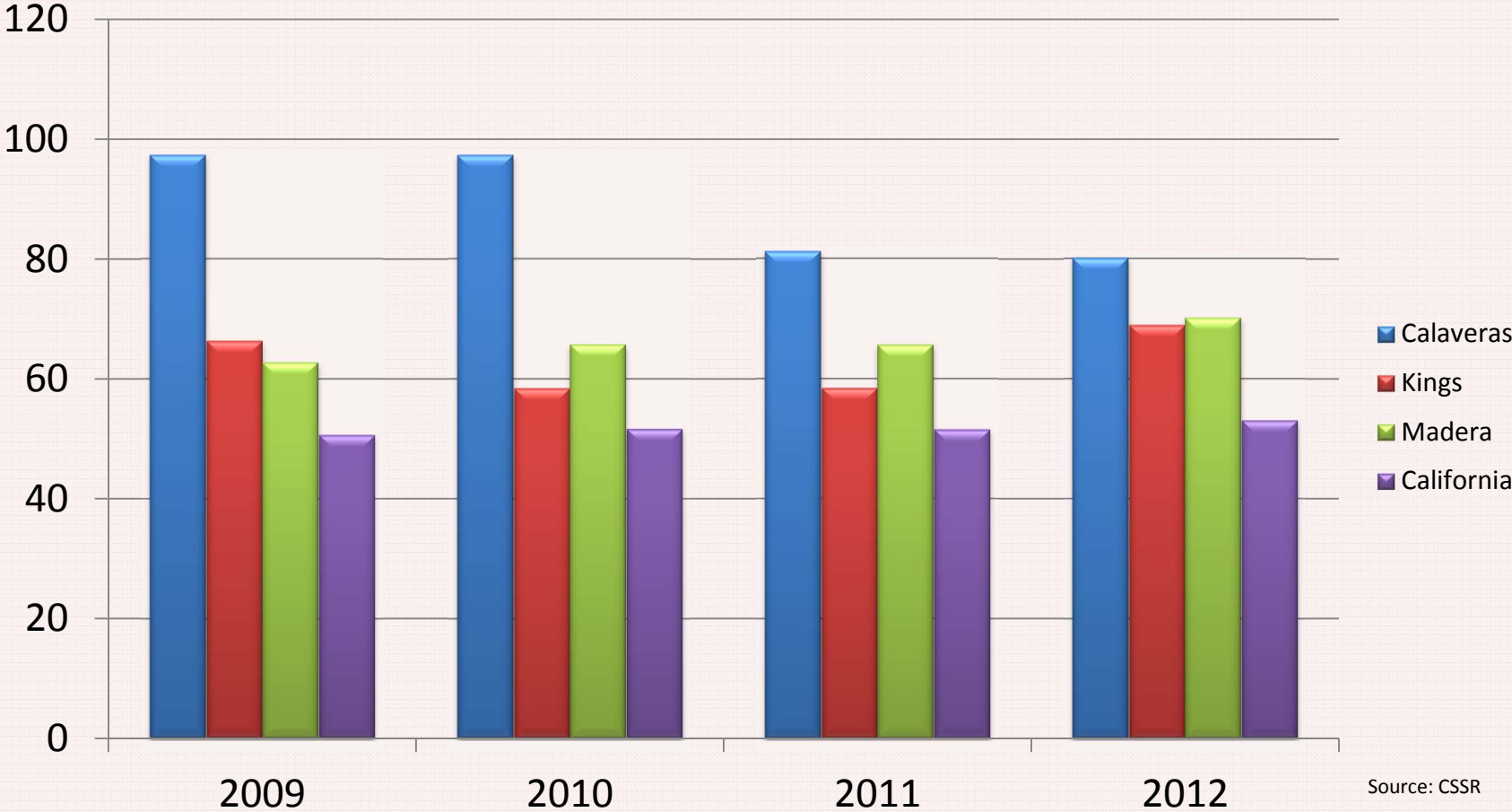
- Secondary Data Analysis: Data from Center for Social Services Research (CSSR) and the National Council on Crime and Delinquency's (NCCD) Children's Research Center (CRC).
- Subjects: Children in California between the ages of 0 to 17, who are involved with Calaveras, Kings & Madera CWS due to alleged child maltreatment.
- Data Analysis: Descriptive analysis and discussion of findings.

# Child Population by Age Group 2012





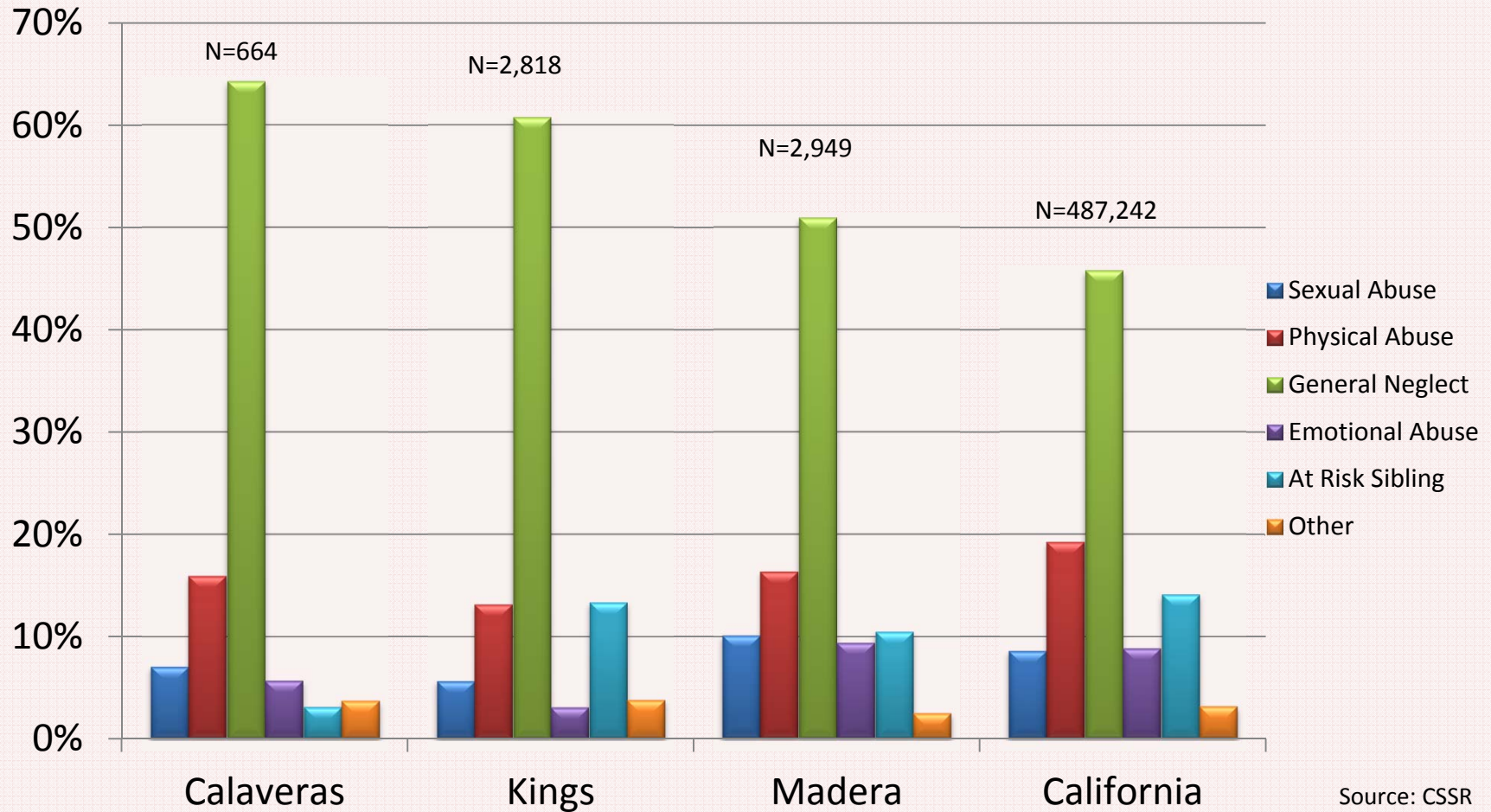
# Child Maltreatment Allegations: Incidences per 1000



Source: CSSR

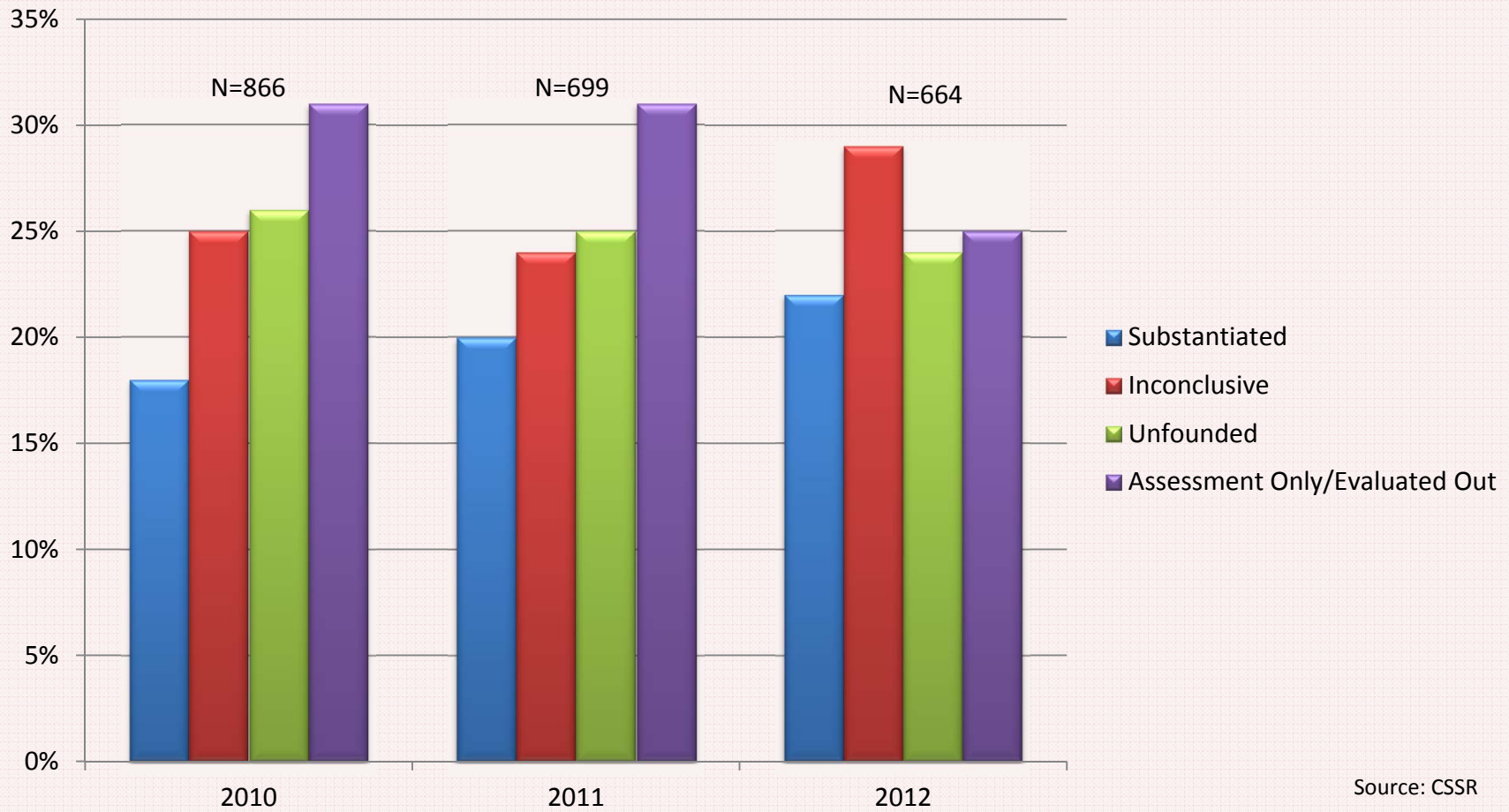


# Child Maltreatment Allegation Type - 2012



Source: CSSR

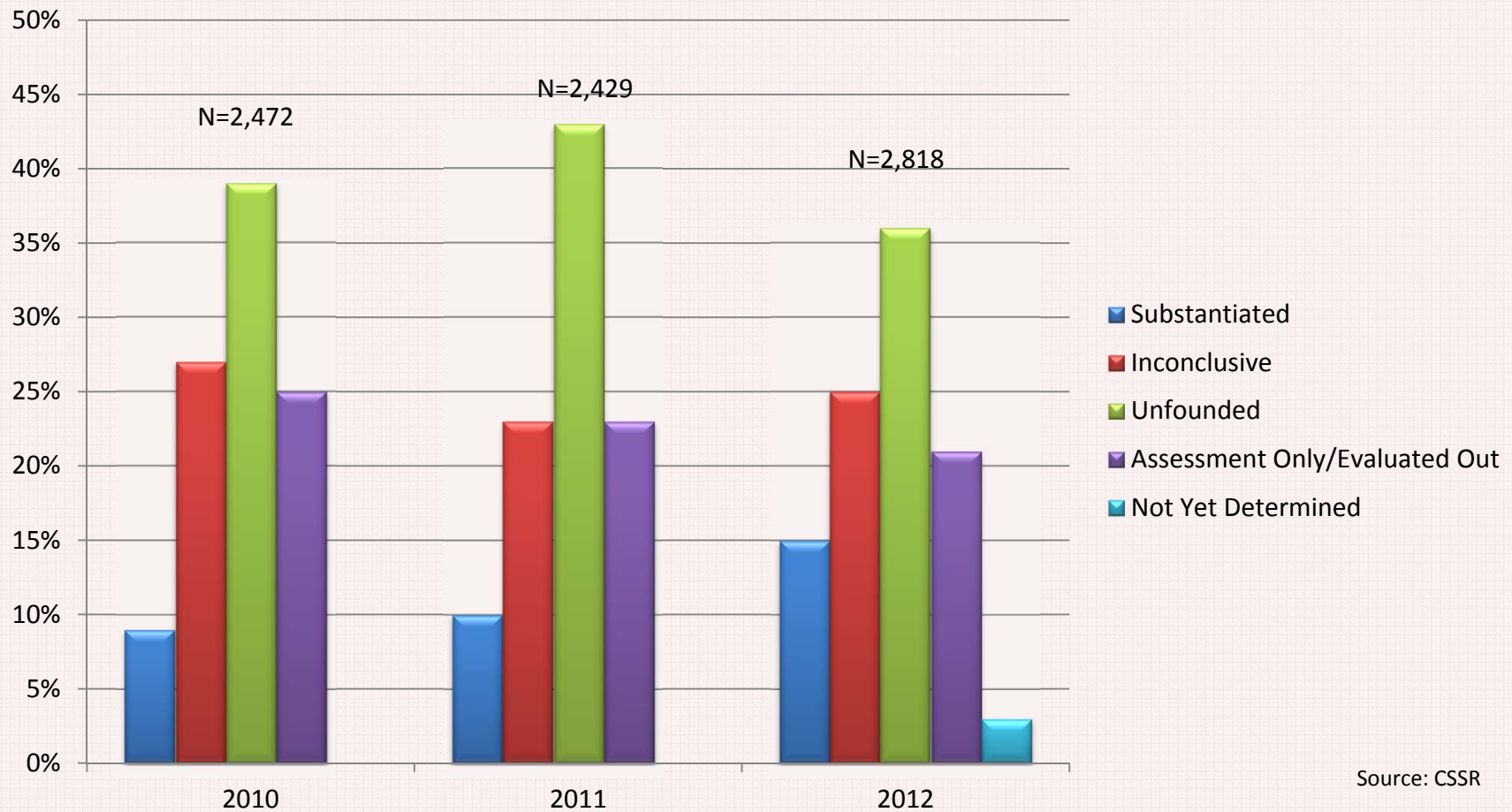
# Calaveras County: Disposition Type



Source: CSSR

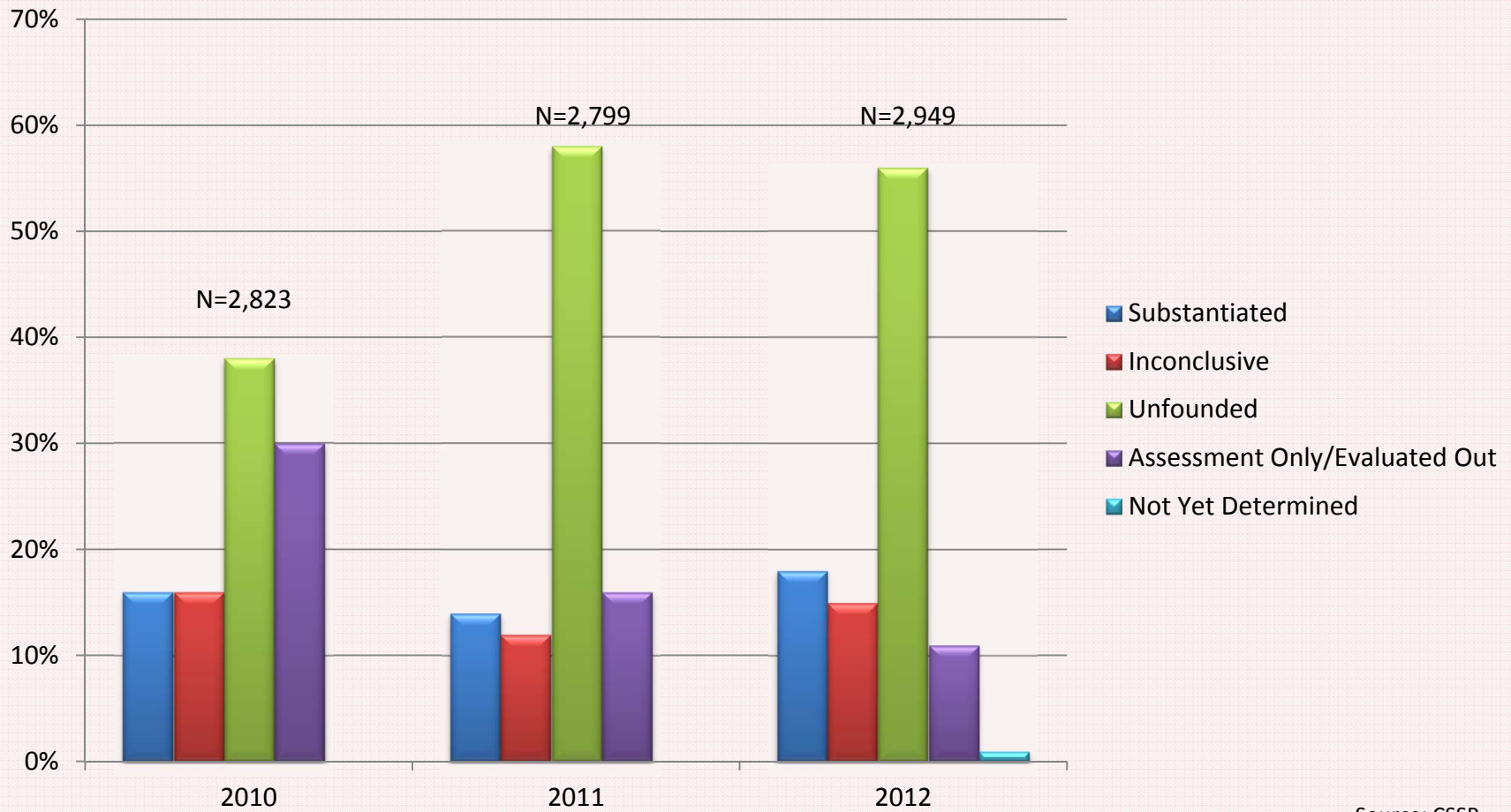


# Kings County: Dispositions Type



Source: CSSR

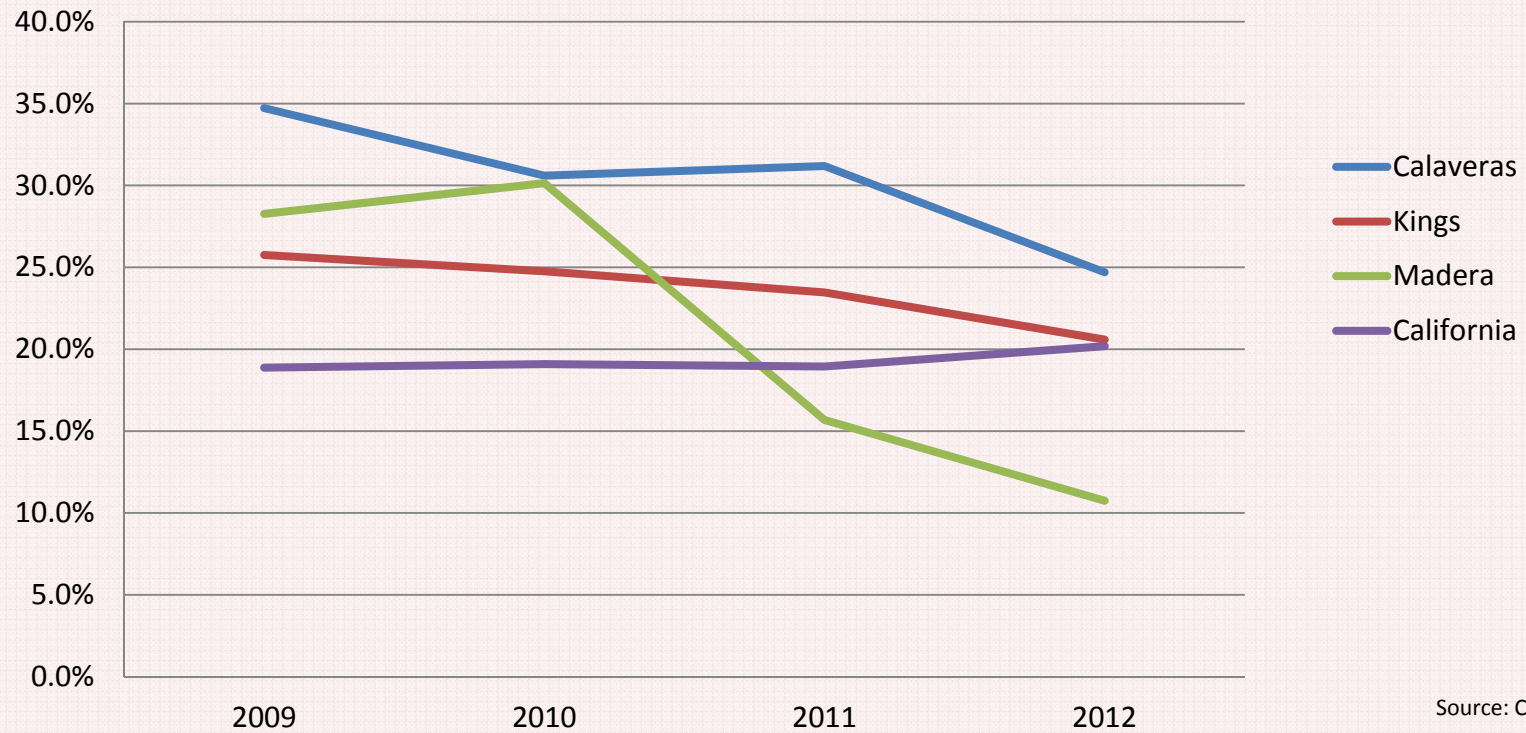
# Madera County: Disposition Type



Source: CSSR

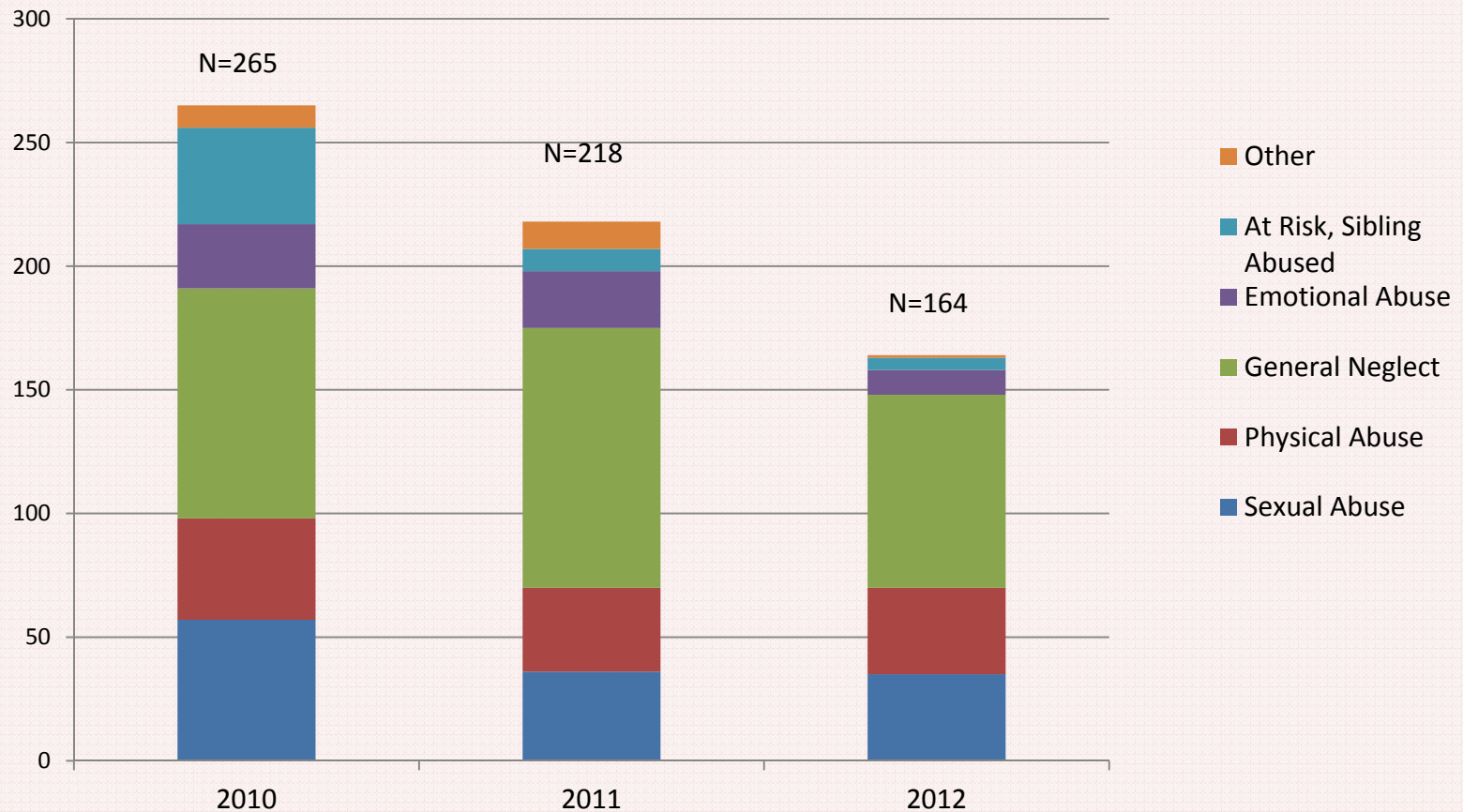


# Evaluated Out: County/California Comparison



Source: CSSR

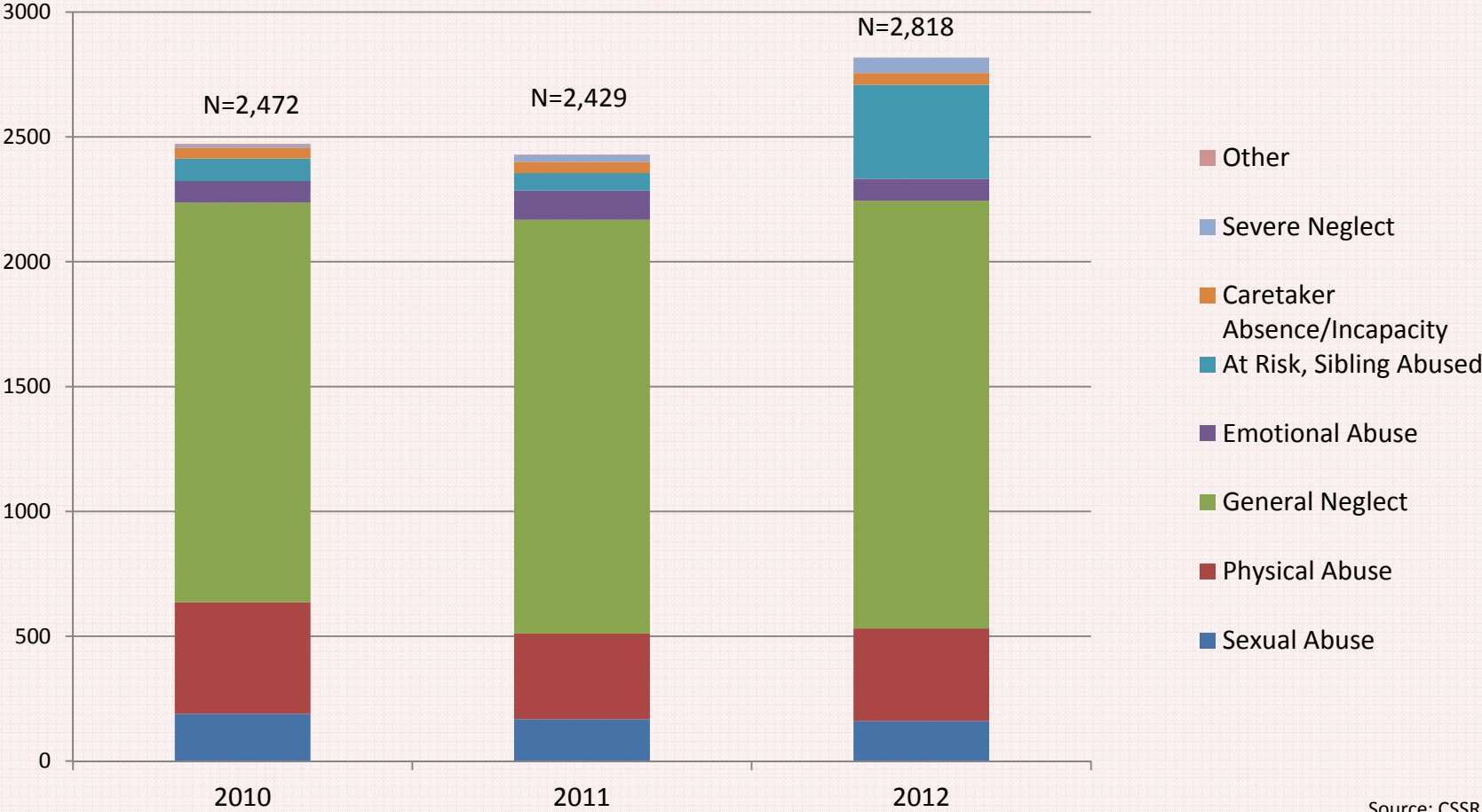
# Calaveras County: Allegation Type/Evaluated Out



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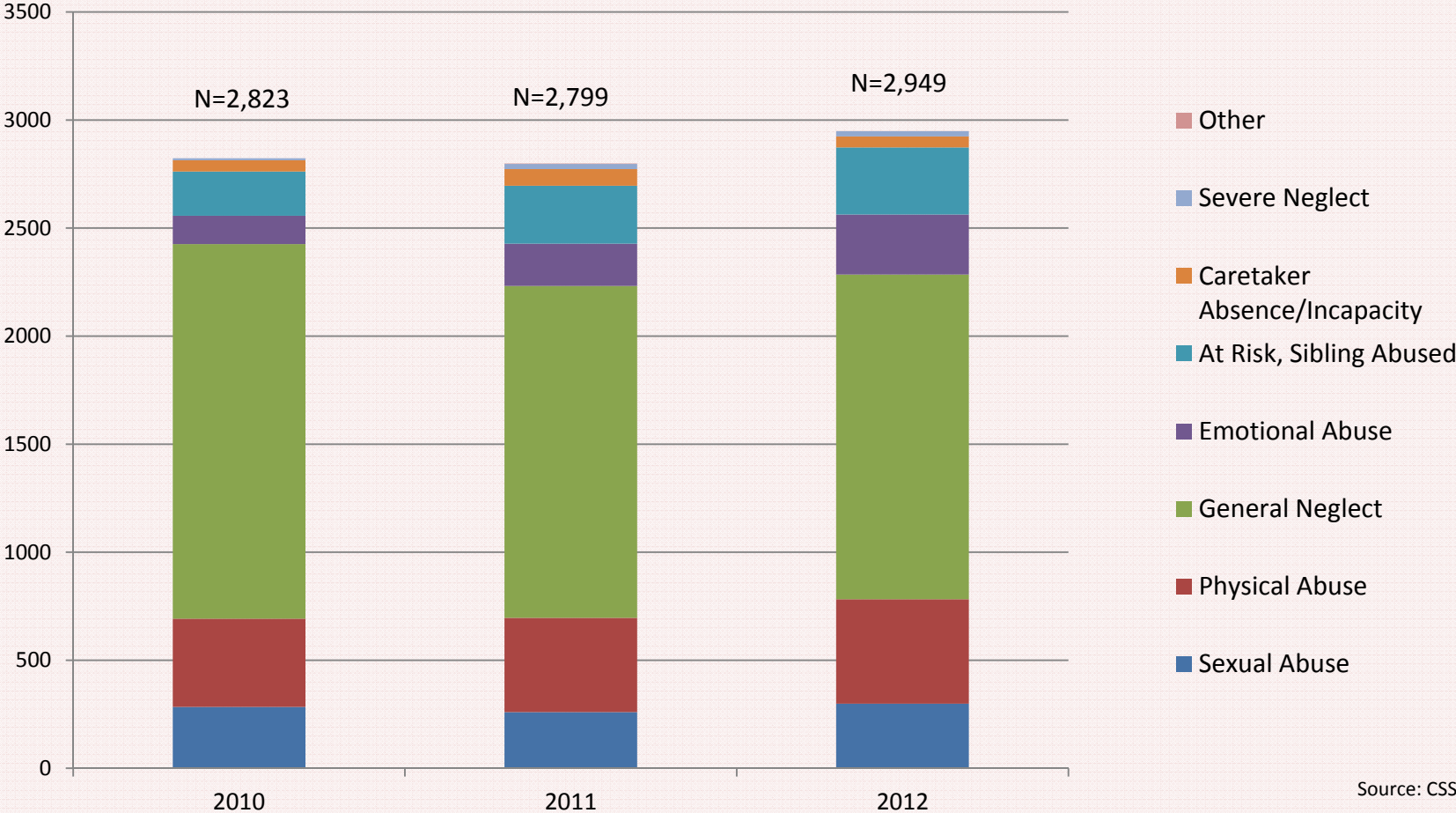


# Kings County: Allegation Type/Evaluated Out



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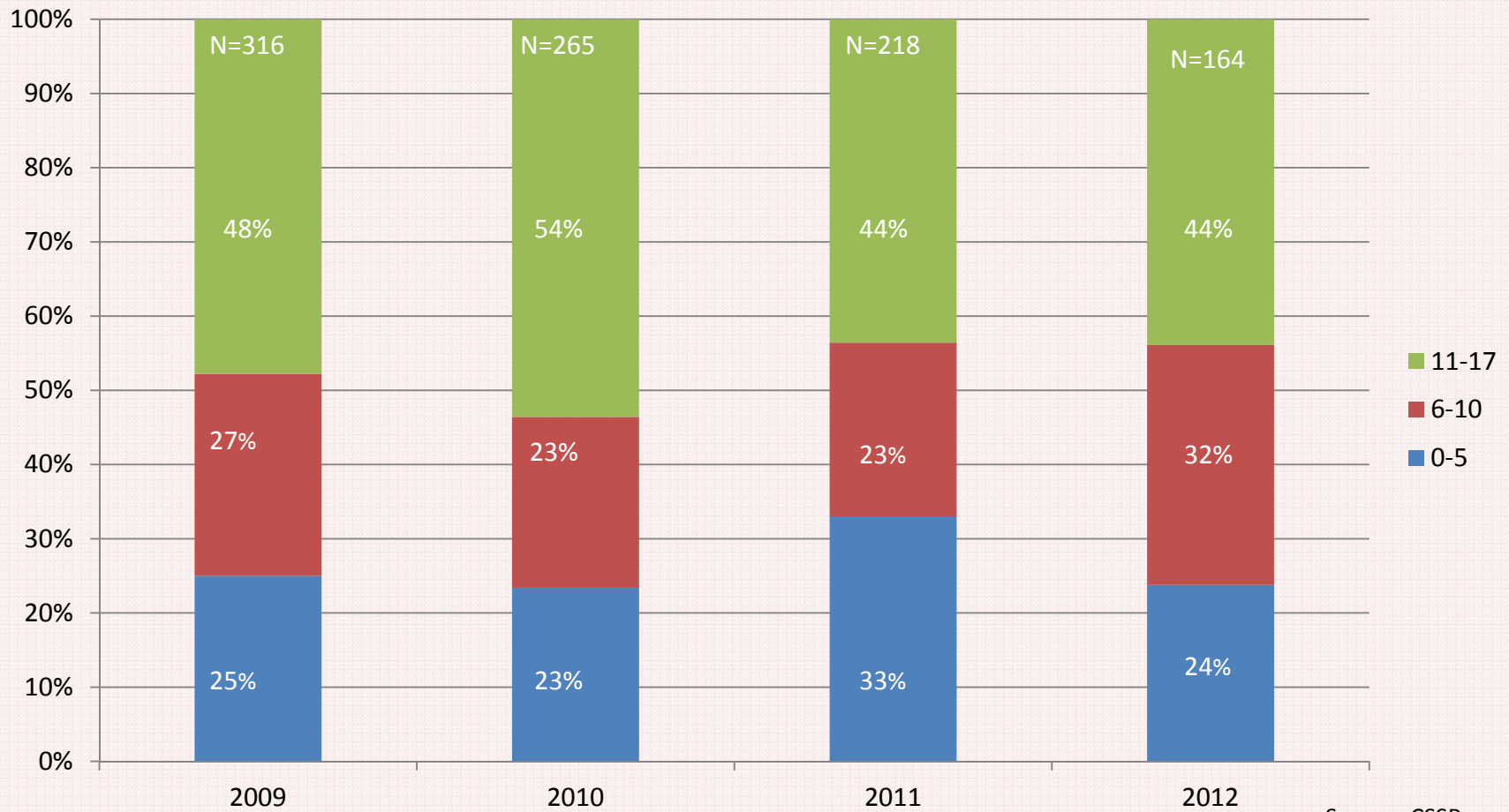
# Madera County Allegation Type/Evaluated Out



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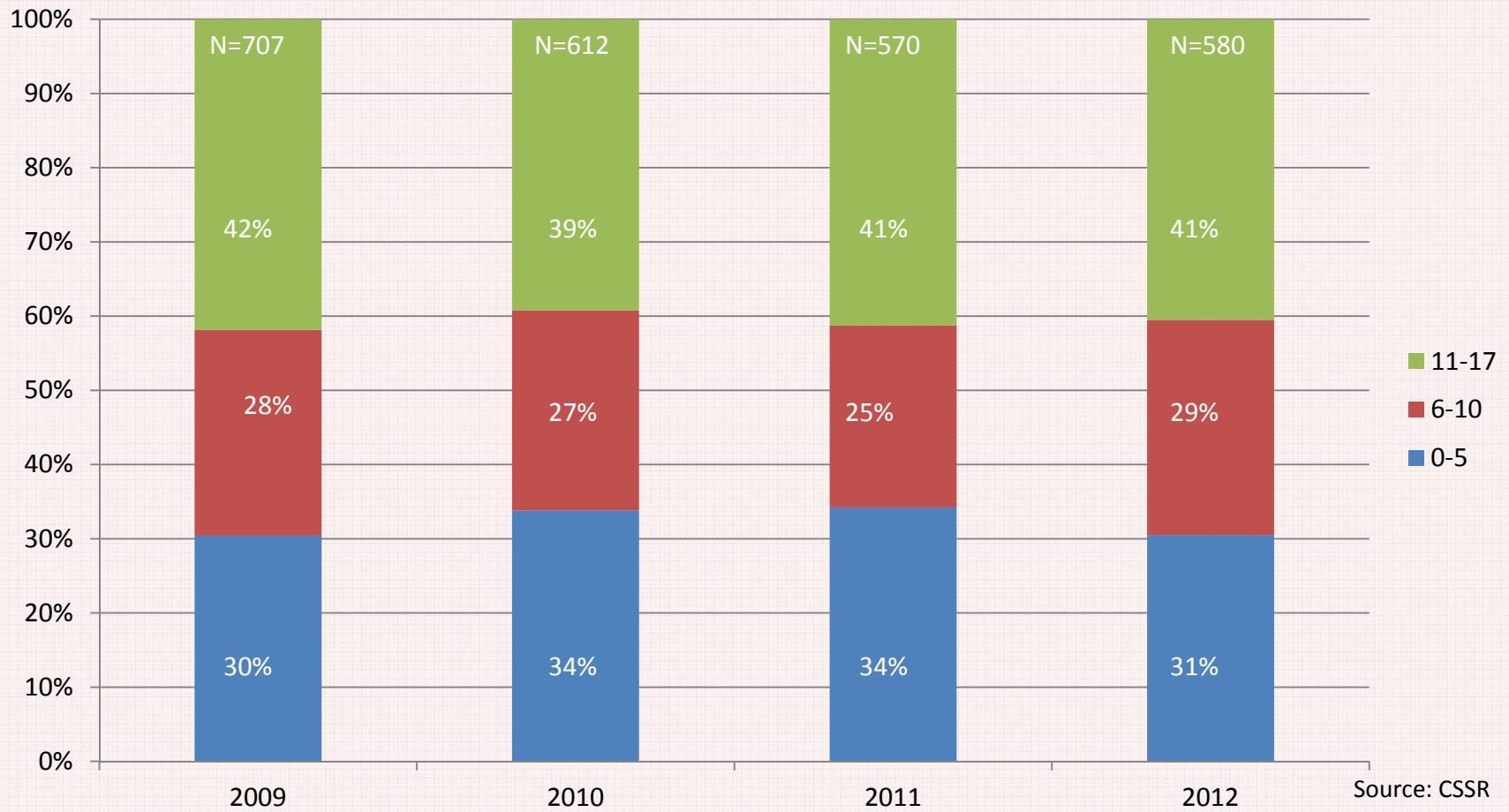


# Calaveras County: Evaluated Out by Age Group



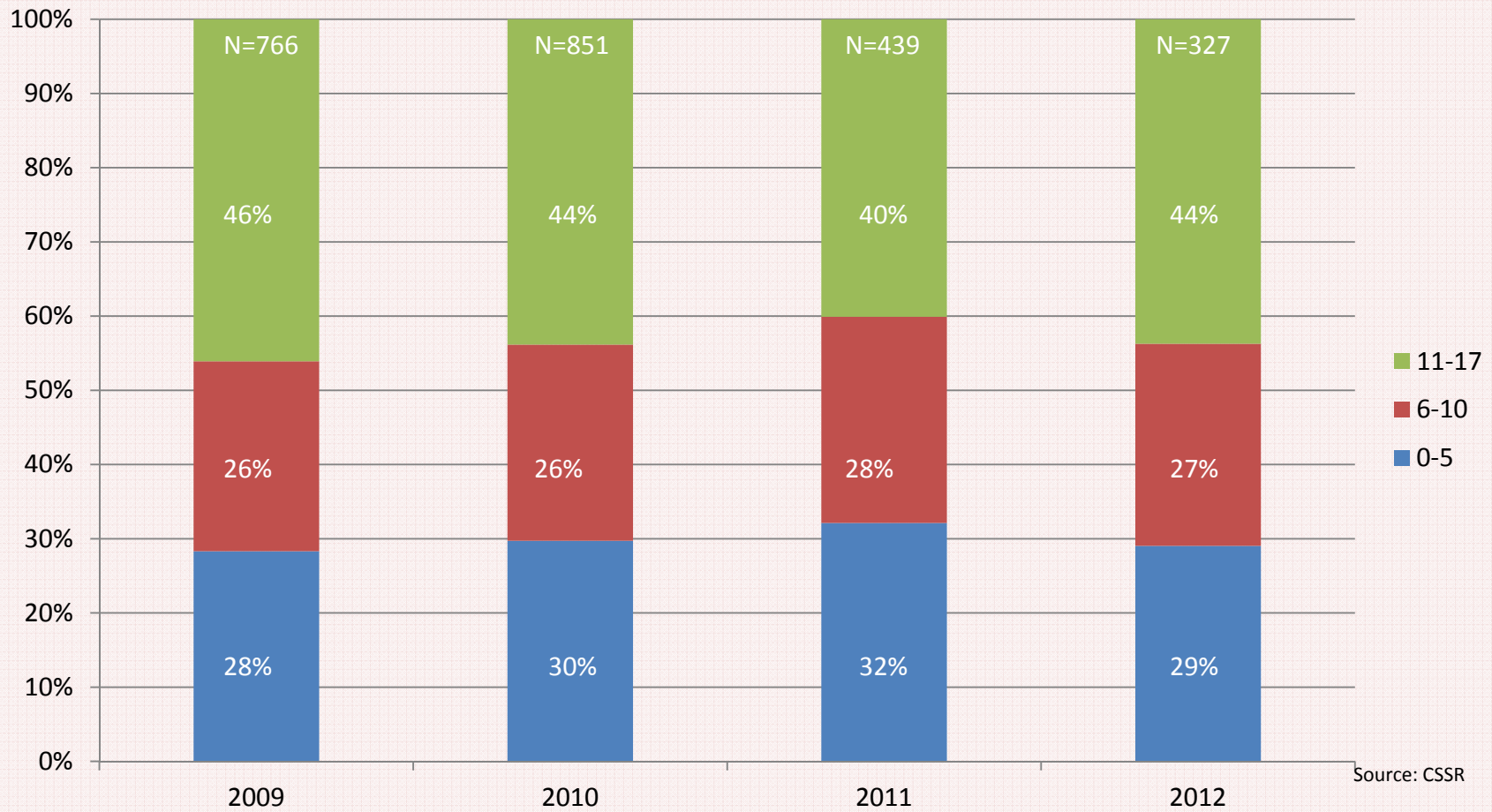
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# Kings County: Evaluated Out by Age Group

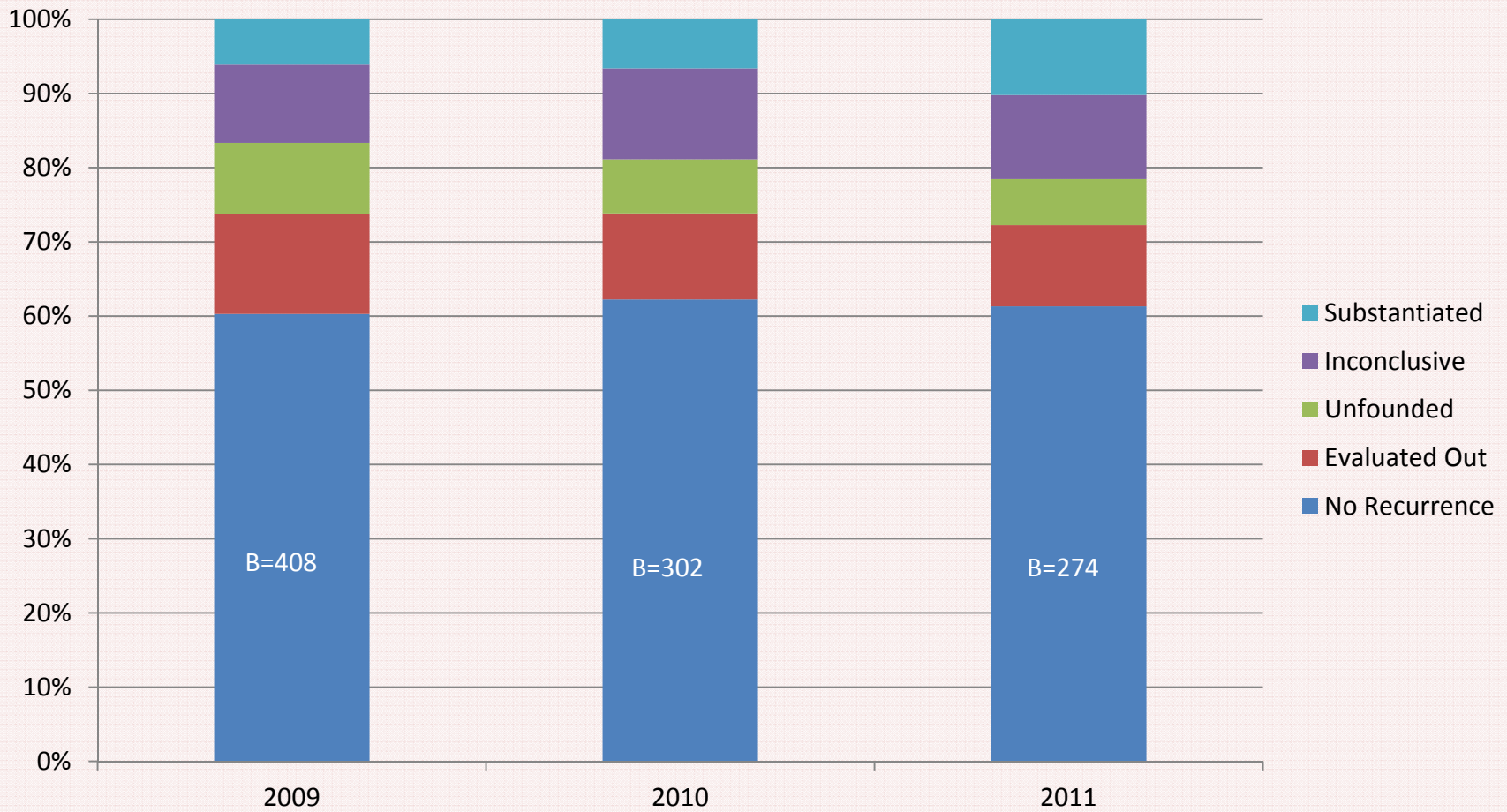




# Madera County: Evaluated Out by Age Group



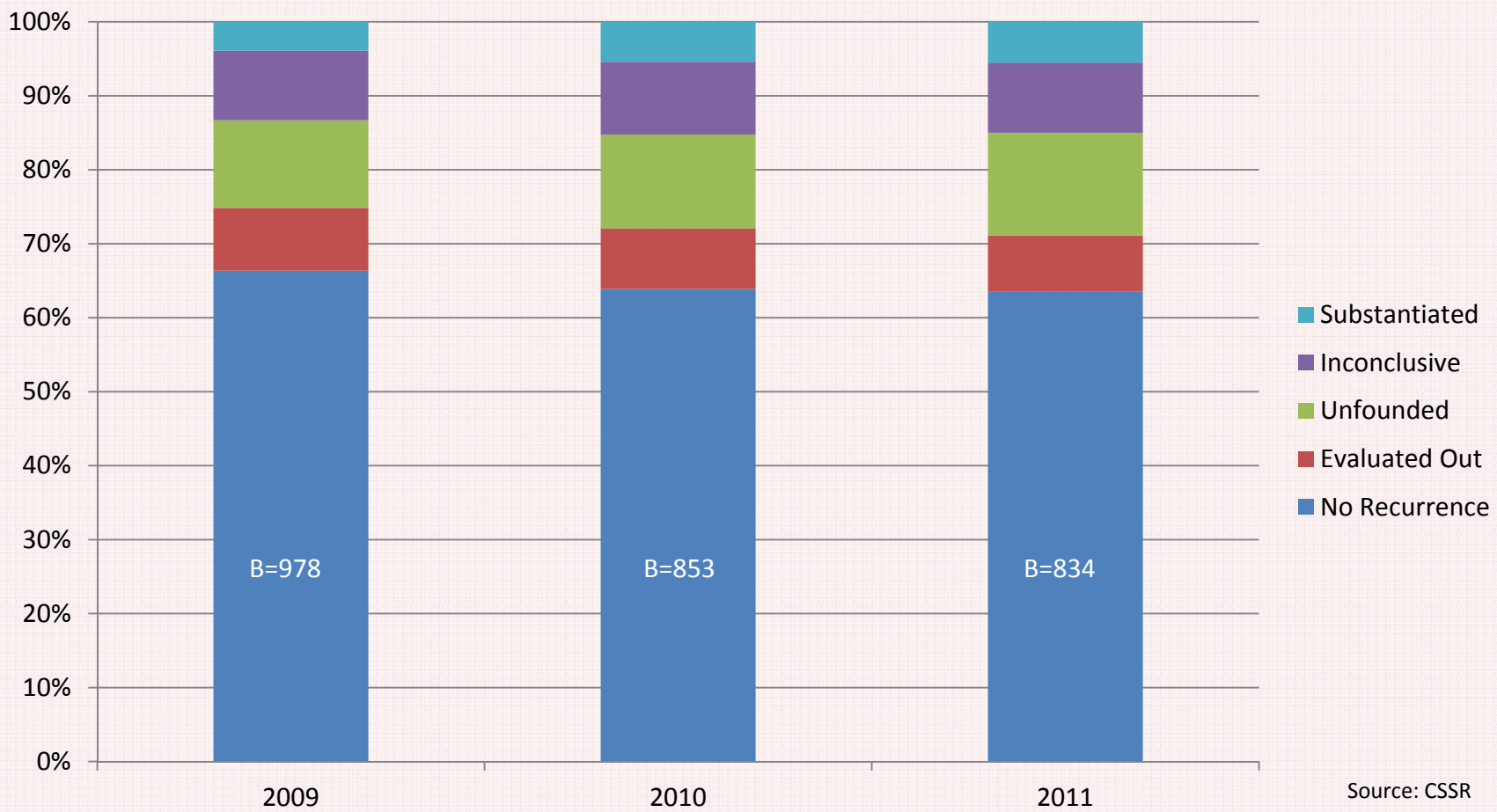
# Calaveras County: Recurrence of Allegation—Assessment Only



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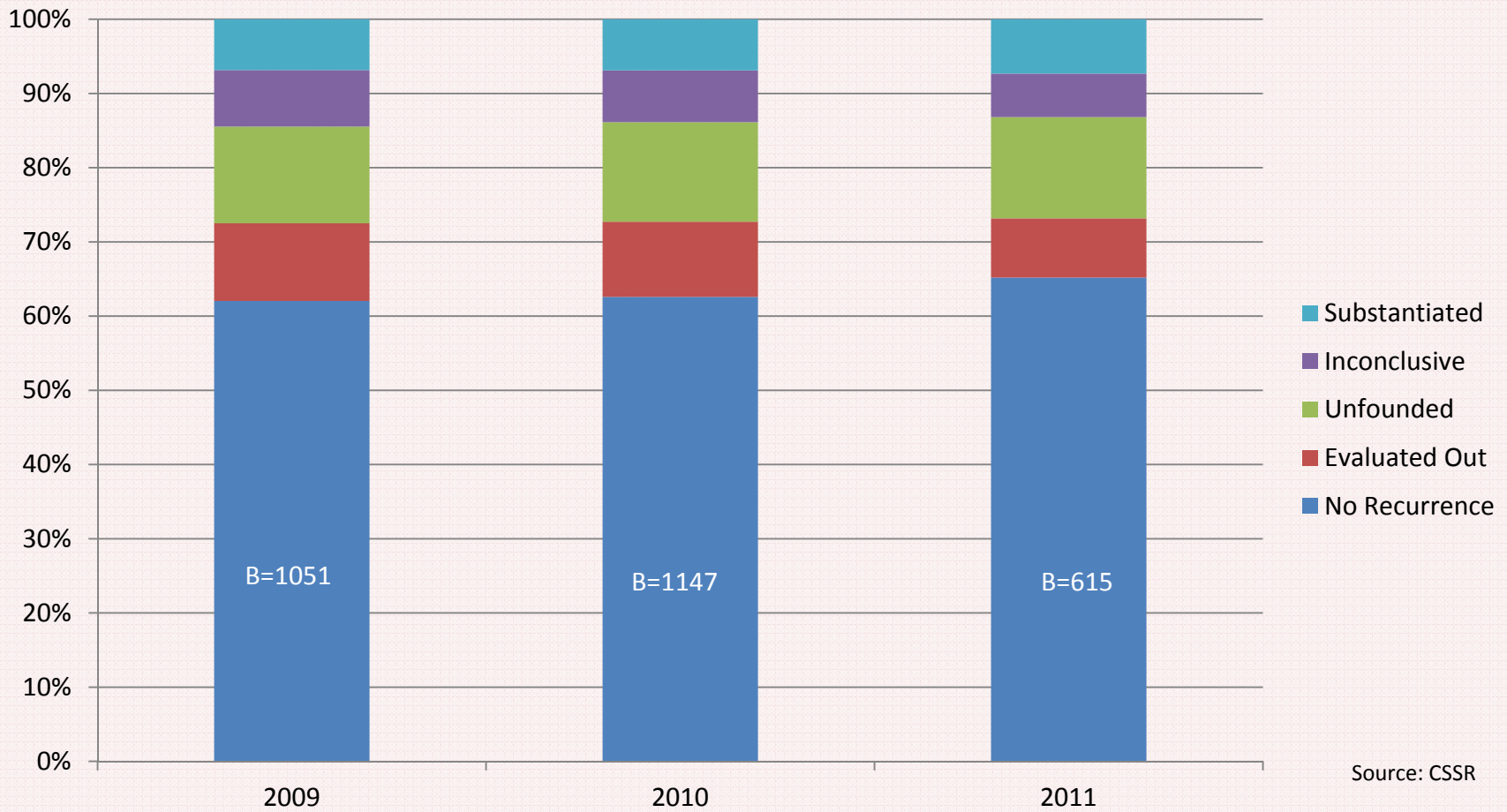


# Kings County: Recurrence of Allegation-Assessment Only



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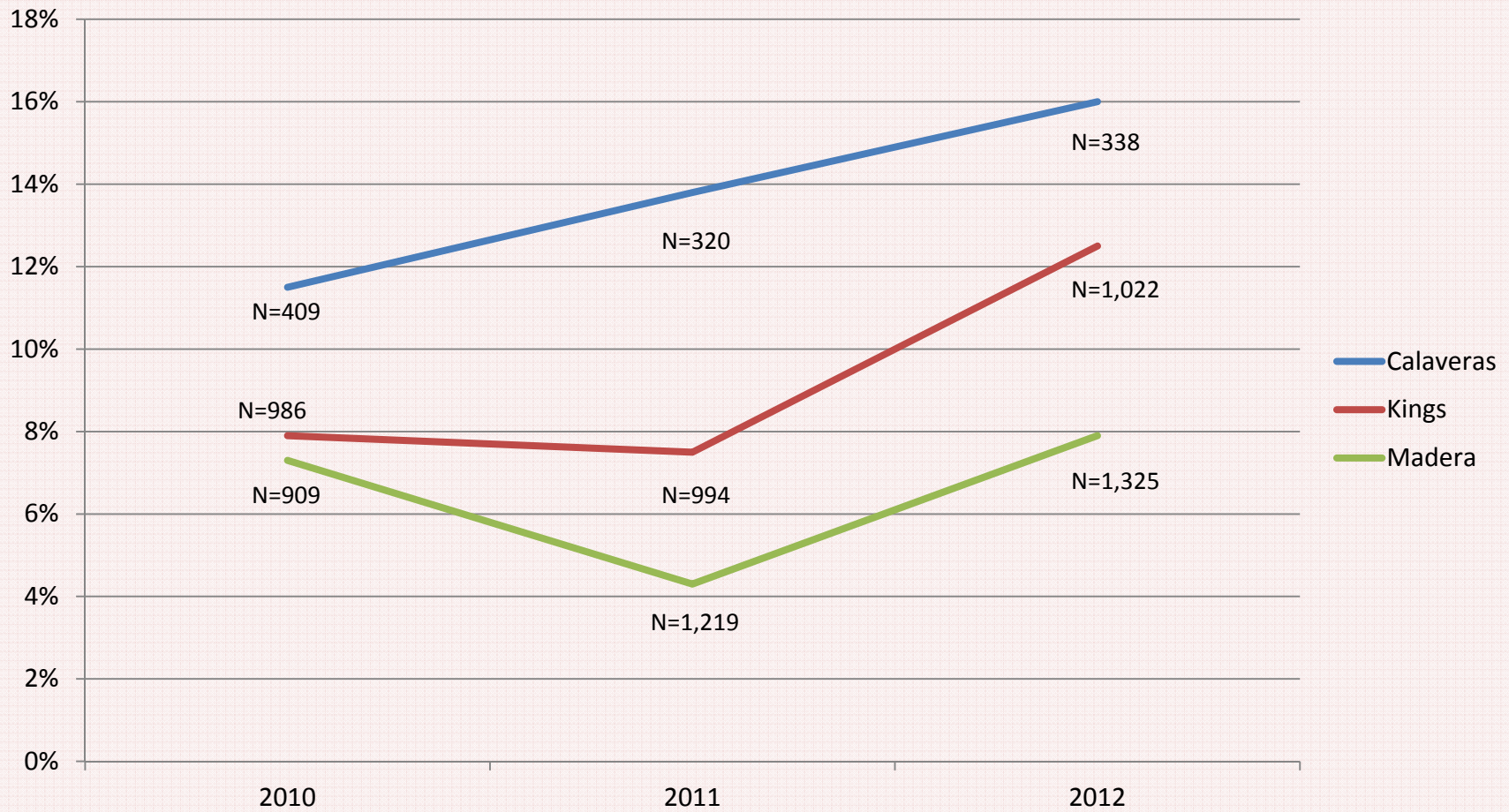
# Madera County: Recurrence of Allegation-Assessment Only



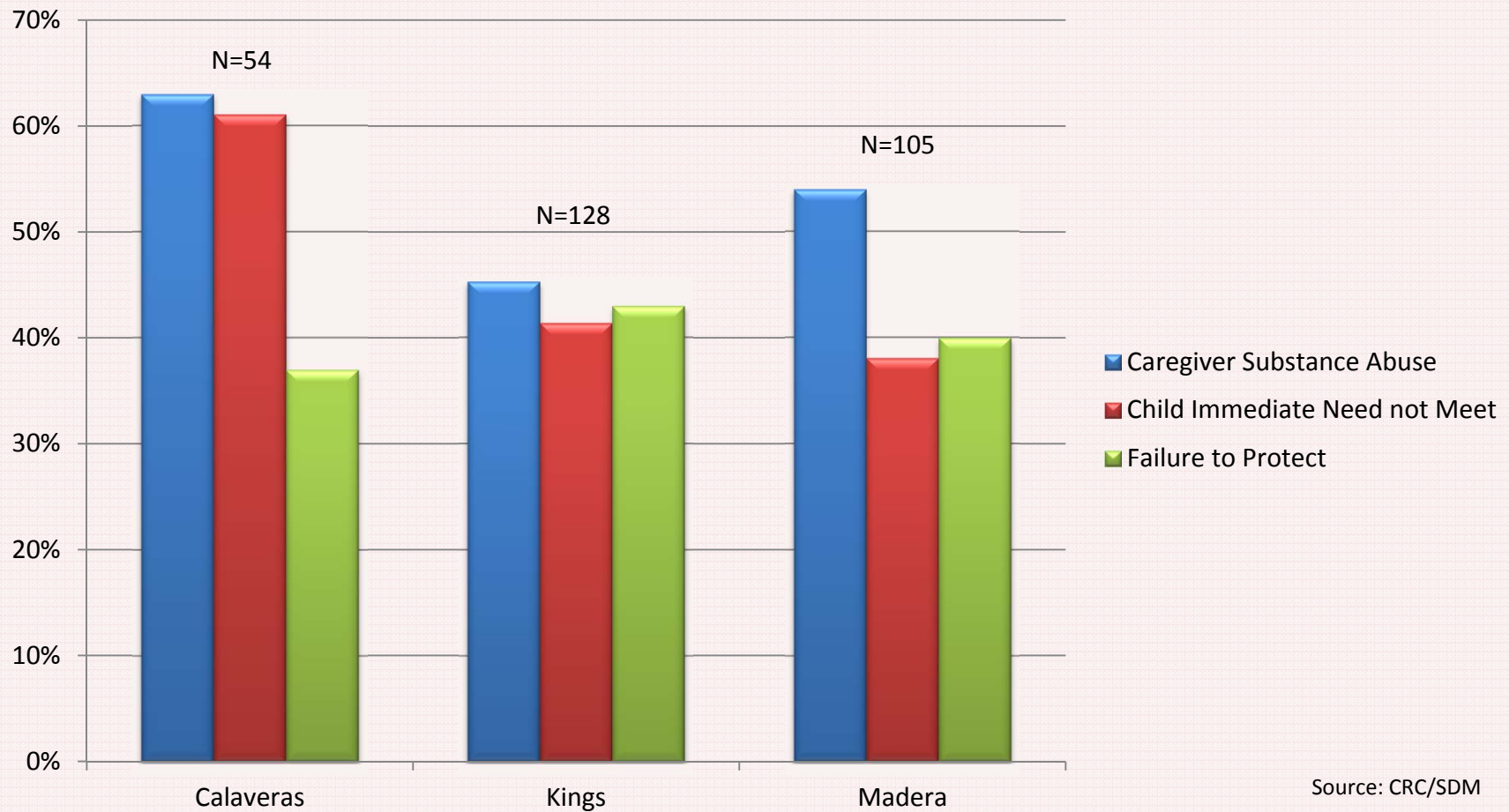
Source: CSSR



# CRC/SDM Safety Assessment Results Removal/Placement



# CRC/SDM 2012: Most Prevalent Safety Threats in Removal Households

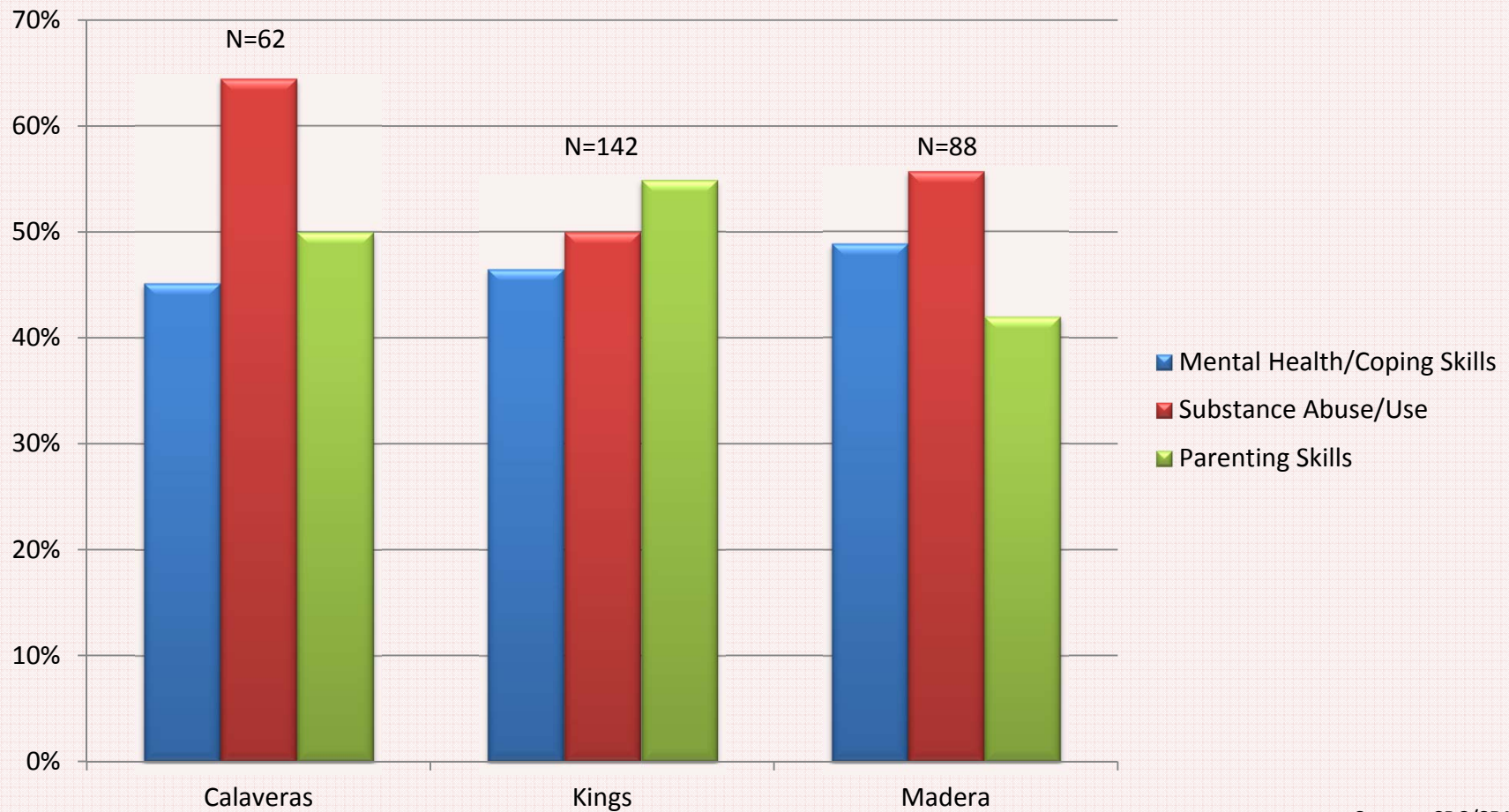


Source: CRC/SDM



# CRC/SDM 2012

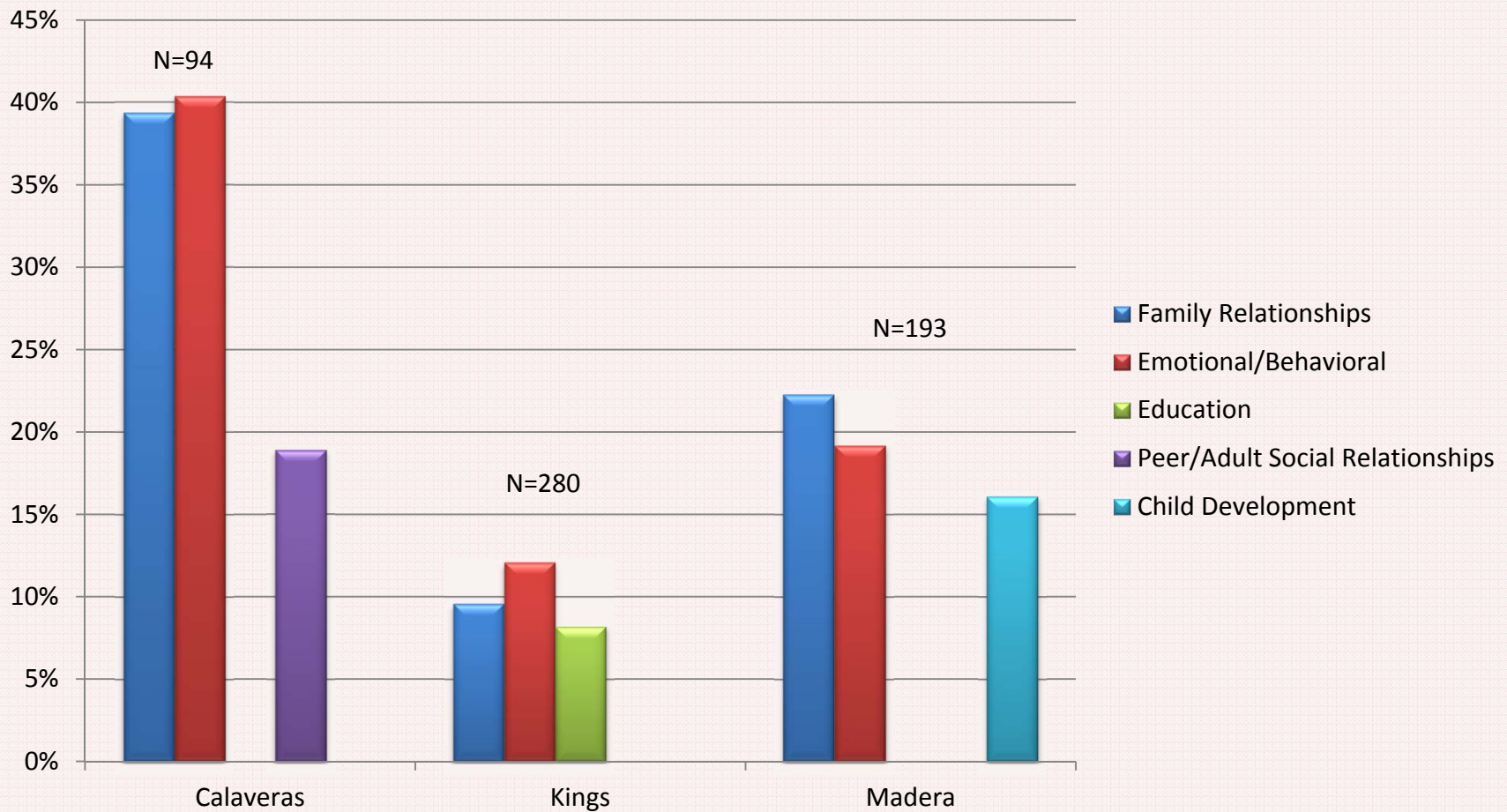
## Most Frequent Priority Family Need



Source: CRC/SDM

# CRC/SDM 2012

## Most Frequent Child Need



Source CRC/SDM



# Implications of Findings for Social Work Practice

## Jerica

- Increased knowledge of decision-making pathways in Madera CWS.
- Service provision and need
- Benefits to San Joaquin Valley and surrounding counties
- Influence Madera CWS' System Improvement Plan (SIP)

## Maria

- As outcomes of child maltreatment reports depend largely on decisions of child welfare officials, it is important to consider factors that drive, influence, and affect these decisions to improve child welfare screening practices.
- It is important to understand how features of human experience can influence family involvement with CPS to strengthen child maltreatment prevention and intervention efforts.

# Future Areas of Study

## Jerica

- Further study of increased removal of children by Madera County CWS since 2011.
- The extent to which substance abuse plays a role in child welfare involvement with families.
- This basis of information can segue into a more descriptive review of decision making.

## Maria

- Further exploration of the possible factors influencing child welfare decisions.
- Further analysis state, and county policies and protocols used in the review of child maltreatment allegations.
- Further qualitative analysis of child maltreatment referrals received directly by Calaveras and Kings Counties.