Ohio Alternative Response Project: Activities, Findings and Recommendations

Report of the AIM Team to the
Supreme Court of Ohio's Subcommittee on
Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect and
Dependency
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Our Labor…

The Fruit

Sharing the Fruits of Our Labor

- Introductions
- Report Overview
- Presentation Overview
- Invitation to Comment

Ohio Alternative Response:
A Bit of Project History

- January 26, 2006: Final report of Subcommittee on responding to Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency
- December 19, 2006: RFP issued by Supreme Court of Ohio
- March 2007: AIM team selected by Supreme Court
- June 1, 2007: Ohio AR project begins
- September 12, 2007: Ten counties selected to pilot AR
- September 17-18, 2007: First meeting of Design Workgroup

Principles	*Pathway Assignment*
Administration	*Assessment*
SACWIS	*Post-Assessment*
Training & Education	*Case Closure*

Ohio Alternative Response: A Bit of Project History

- Five more meetings of Design Workgroup convened prior to launch of AR [October 2007 – March 2008]
- July/August, 2008: Ten pilot counties launch Alternative Response Systems
- Four meetings of Leadership Council convened during random assignment. [September 2008 – September 2009]
- September 30, 2009: Random assignment of Alternative Response eligible families concluded.
- January 2010: Data collection for pilot study terminated

Evaluation Report

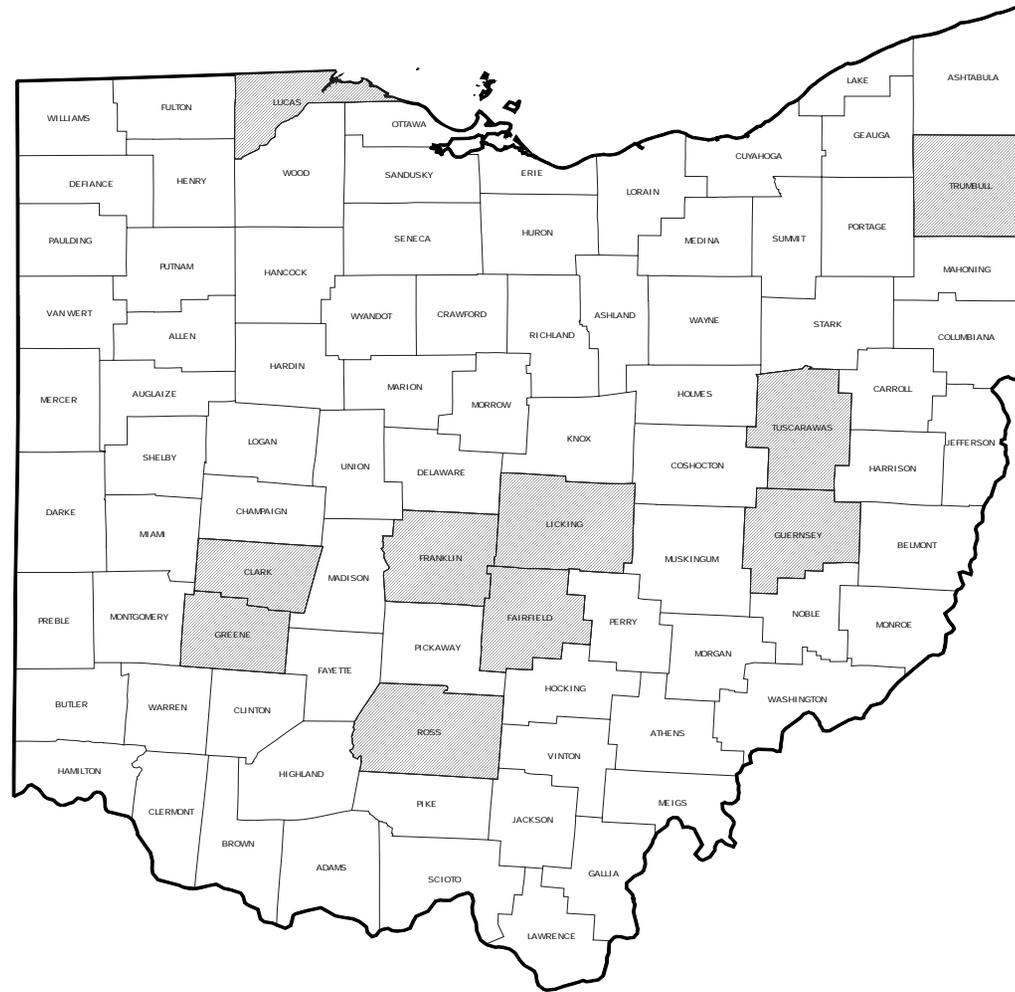Tony Loman
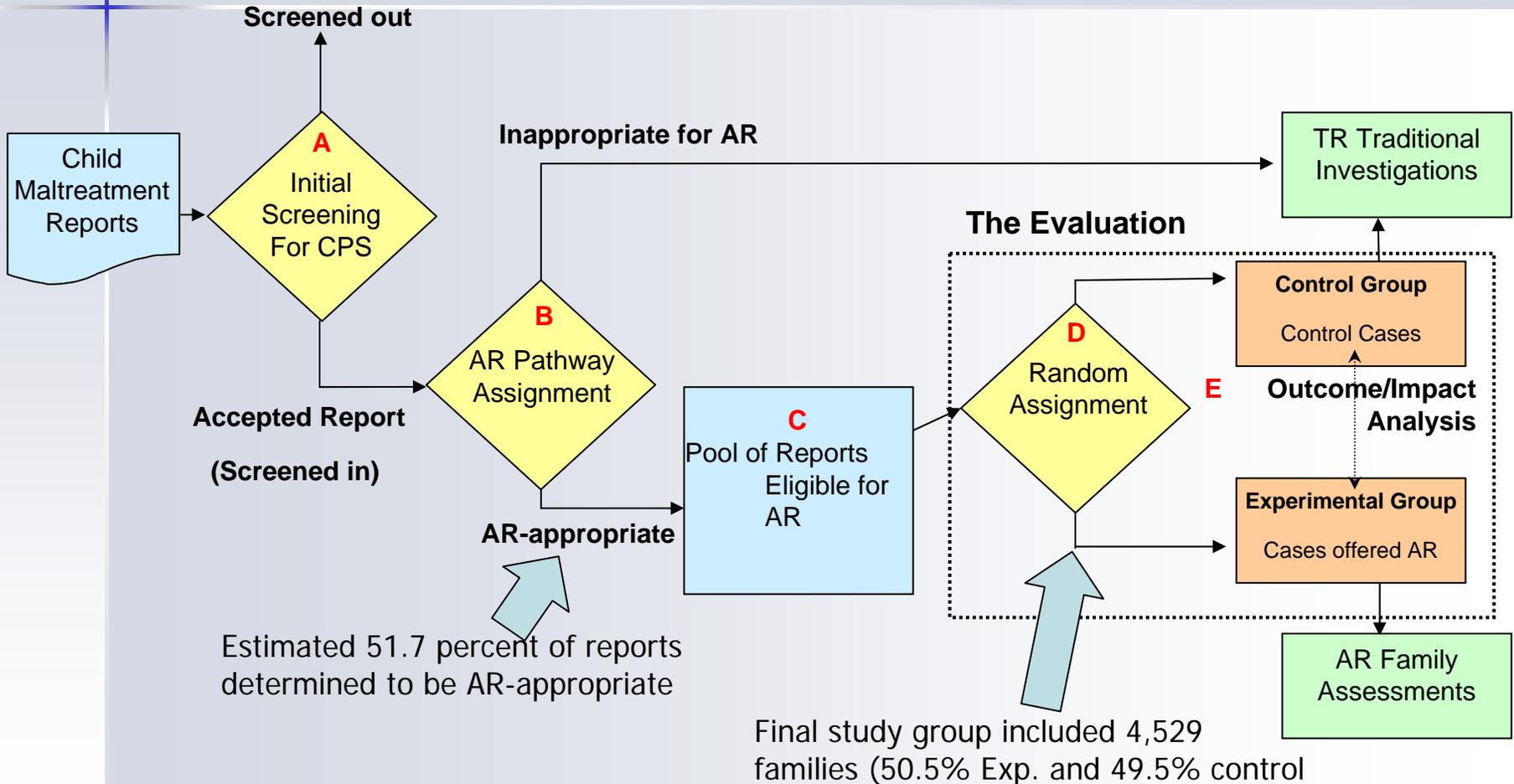AIM Team
Institute of Applied Research

Pilot Counties

Pathway Assignment and Random Assignment

Screened out

A — Initial Screening For CPS

Inappropriate for AR

Accepted Report (Screened in)

B — AR Pathway Assignment

AR-appropriate

Child Maltreatment Reports

C — Pool of Reports Eligible for AR

The Evaluation

D — Random Assignment

E

TR Traditional Investigations

Control Group — Control Cases

Experimental Group — Cases offered AR

Outcome/Impact Analysis

AR Family Assessments

Estimated 51.7 percent of reports determined to be AR-appropriate
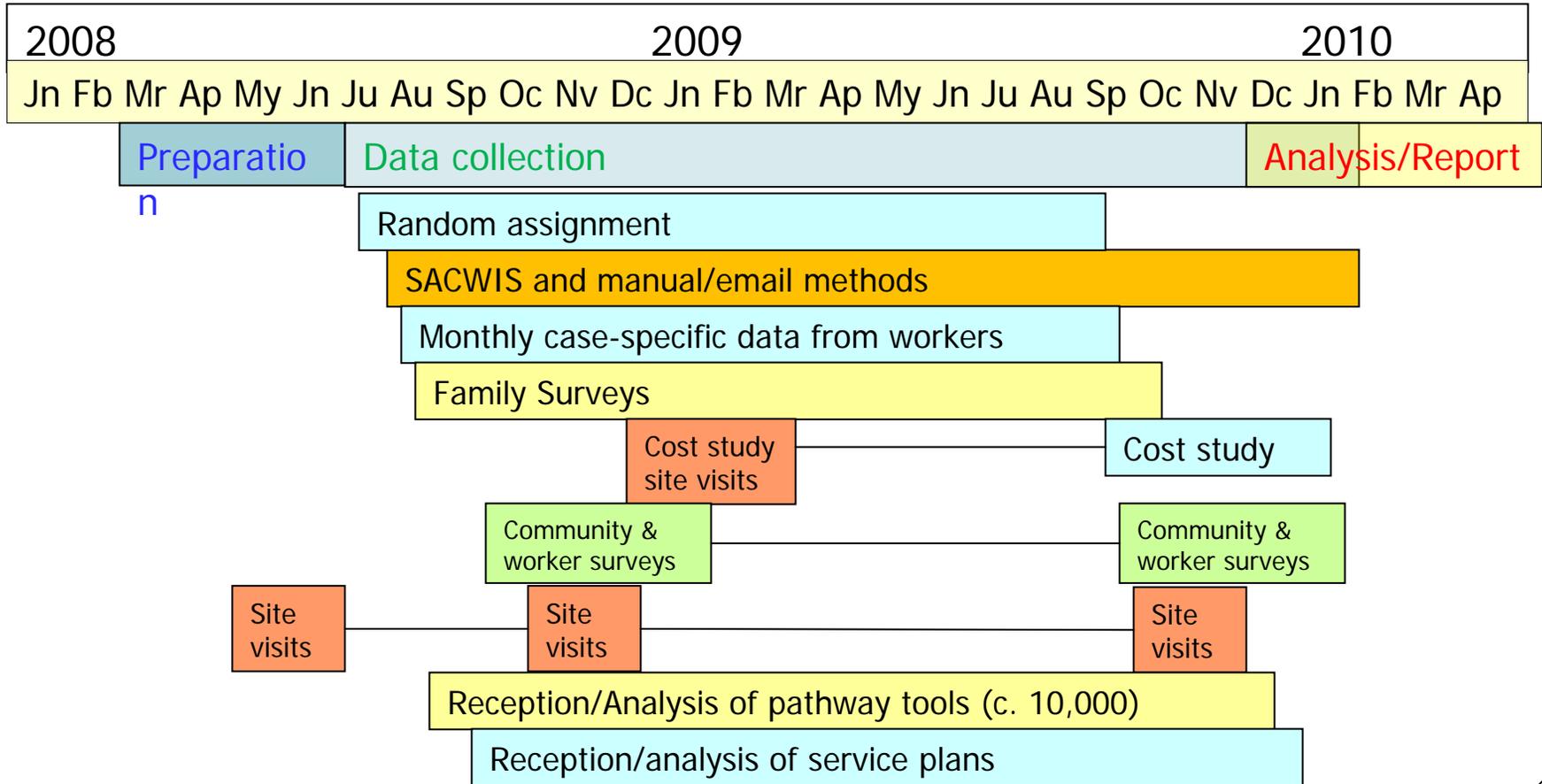
Final study group included 4,529 families (50.5% Exp. and 49.5% control

Data Collection Methods

- SACWIS data in monthly uploads from August 2008 through February 2010 supplemented with monthly manual/email data
- Follow-up with families (804 families) and telephone interviews of a small sample of families
- Follow-up with workers about specific cases (447 families)
- Early (12/08) and Late (12/09) general surveys of local workers and supervisors
- Early (11/08 and Late (11/09) community surveys
- Three sets of site visits to each of the 10 pilot counties to interview staff
- Documentary reviews (pathway tool, service plans, etc.)
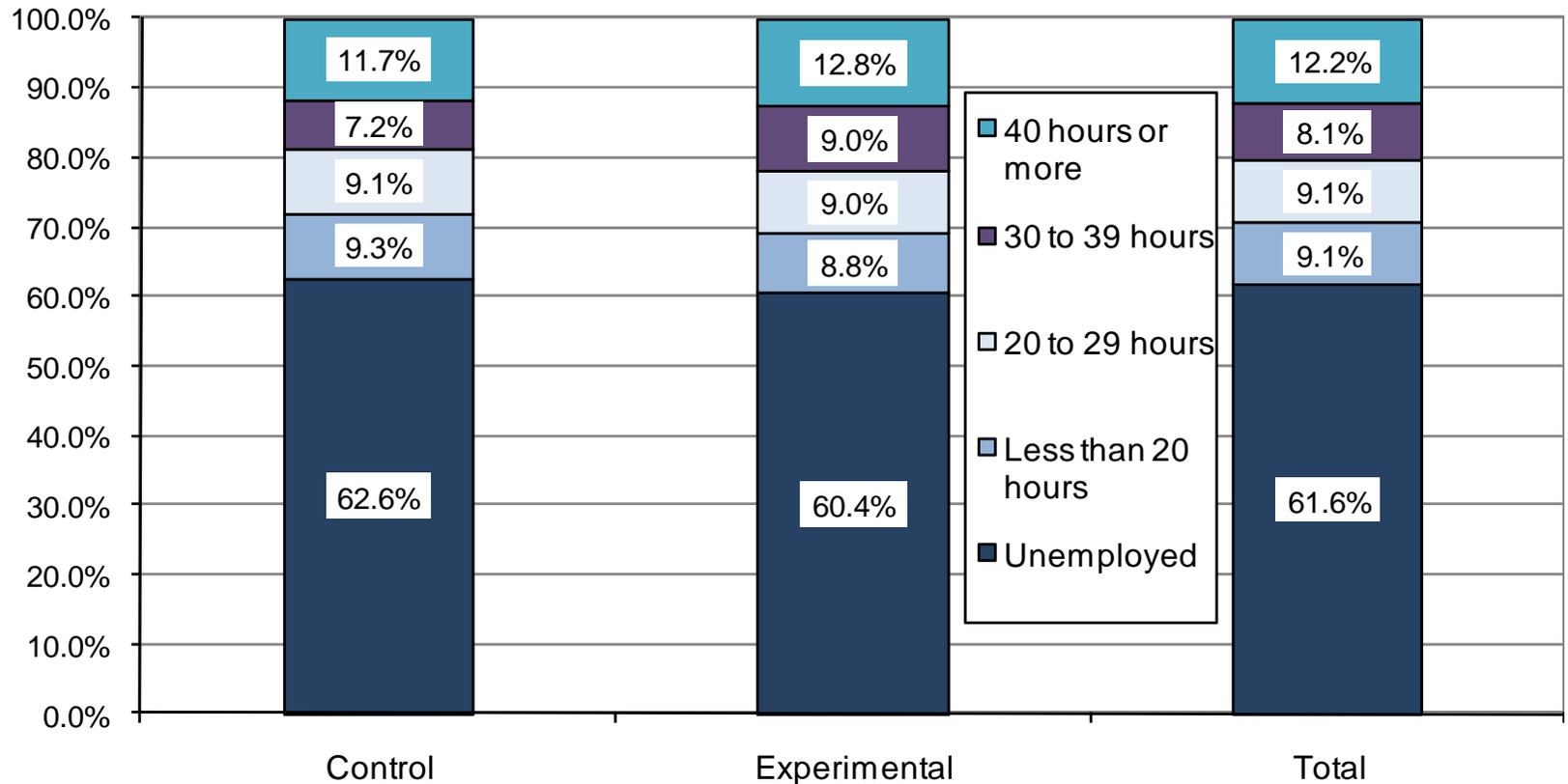- Collection of cost data on a sample of families

Time Line for Evaluation

2008	2009	2010
Jn Fb Mr Ap My Jn Ju Au Sp Oc Nv Dc	Jn Fb Mr Ap My Jn Ju Au Sp Oc Nv Dc	Jn Fb Mr Ap

| Preparation | Data collection | Analysis/Report |

- Random assignment
- SACWIS and manual/email methods
- Monthly case-specific data from workers
- Family Surveys
- Cost study site visits — Cost study
- Community & worker surveys — Community & worker surveys
- Site visits — Site visits — Site visits
- Reception/Analysis of pathway tools (c. 10,000)
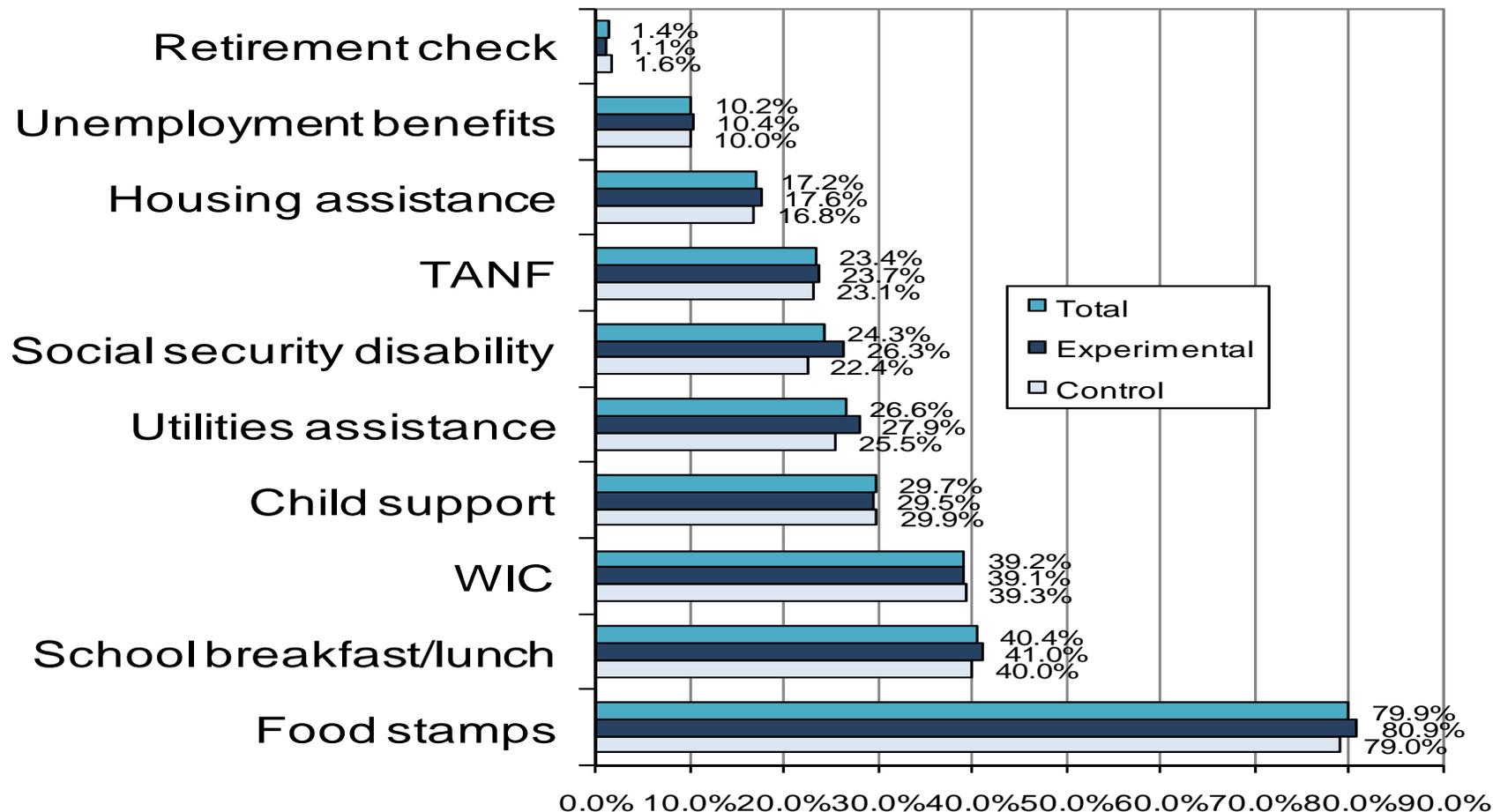- Reception/analysis of service plans

Family Characteristics

- A little over half of reports included only one caregiver and in the majority (75.8%) of these cases the caregiver was a woman. There were an average 1.8 adults and 2.1 children per household.
- Over two-thirds of sample families reported incomes of $15,000 or less compared to 8.0% for Ohio generally.
- Compared with statewide statistics, a higher proportion of family caregivers in the study had less than a high school diploma (31.2 percent) than in the general population of Ohio (13.0 percent).

Characteristics: Employment

	Control	Experimental	Total
40 hours or more	11.7%	12.8%	12.2%
30 to 39 hours	7.2%	9.0%	8.1%
20 to 29 hours	9.1%	9.0%	9.1%
Less than 20 hours	9.3%	8.8%	9.1%
Unemployed	62.6%	60.4%	61.6%

Characteristics:
Welfare and Other Support

Category	Total	Experimental	Control
Retirement check	1.4%	1.1%	1.6%
Unemployment benefits	10.2%	10.4%	10.0%
Housing assistance	17.2%	17.6%	16.8%
TANF	23.4%	23.7%	23.1%
Social security disability	24.3%	26.3%	22.4%
Utilities assistance	26.6%	27.9%	25.5%
Child support	29.7%	29.5%	29.9%
WIC	39.2%	39.1%	39.3%
School breakfast/lunch	40.4%	41.0%	40.0%
Food stamps	79.9%	80.9%	79.0%

0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0% 40.0% 50.0% 60.0% 70.0% 80.0% 90.0%

Poverty and Chronic Families

- High rates of unemployment, female-headed families, lower educational achievement were each associated with low income.
- Instability in housing was also found.
- Low-income families with these characteristics typically experience problems with:
  - unaffordable and unstable housing
  - utility payments, lack of furniture and appliances
  - unreliable transportation
  - occasionally lack of sufficient food and clothing
- About half of AR appropriate families had previous accepted reports of child maltreatment and one in every ten had a child placed in the past. A substantial portion were chronic CPS families.

Most Frequent Reports:
Child Neglect

- Allegations of child neglect (failure to provide basic needs, lack of supervision, etc.) were the most frequently received (54.5 percent) reports among current (target) reports.
- Reports of child neglect were associated with family income—more neglect reports among poorer families.
- Most past reports were for alleged child neglect (34.1 percent). Fewer were for physical abuse (26.0 percent) or sexual abuse (13.2 percent) or emotional maltreatment (4.1 percent).
- The more past reports found for a family, the more likely the reports were for child neglect.
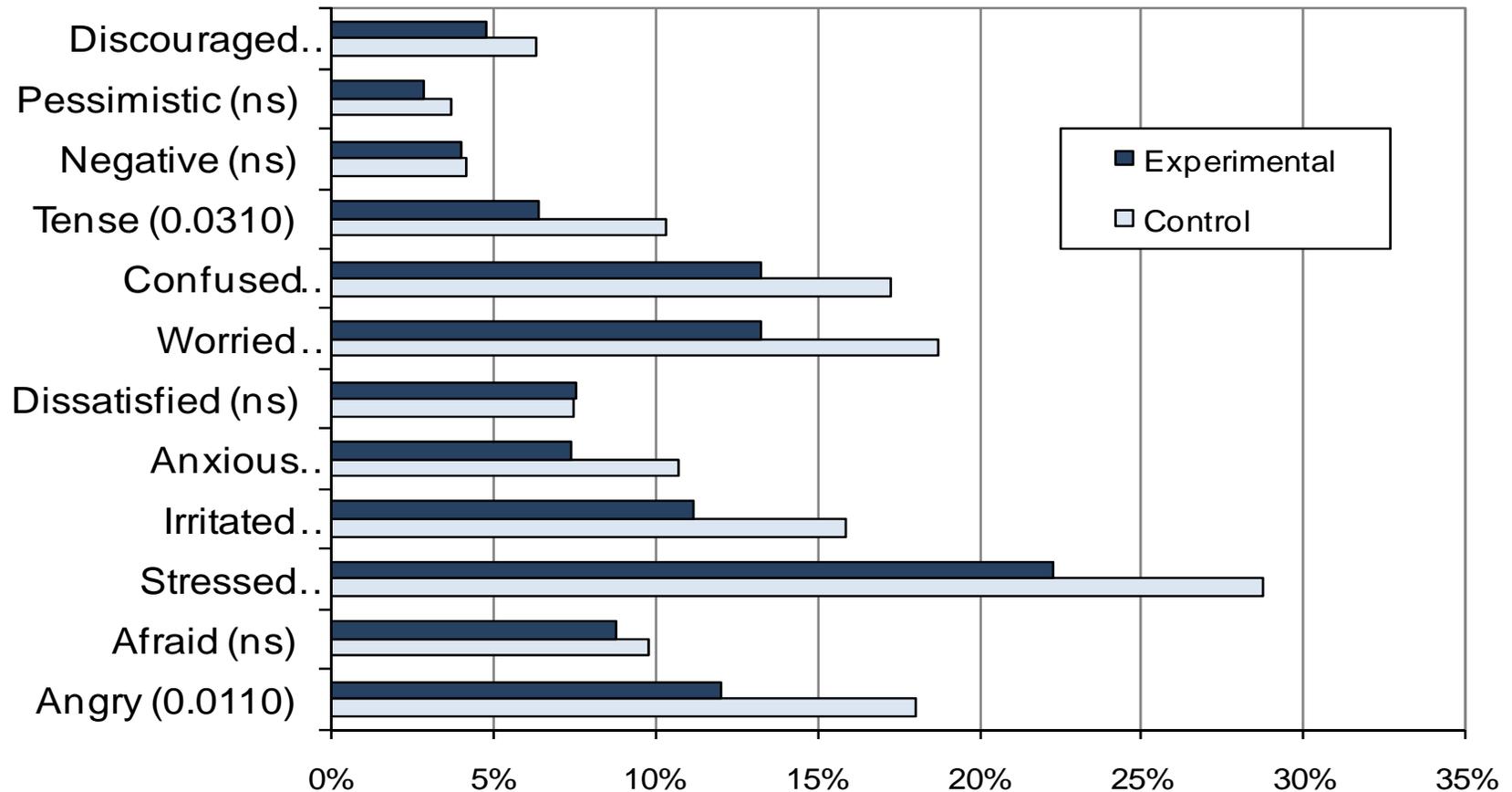
Workers Identified Needs

- Families tended to cite basic poverty-related needs.
- Workers indicated these needs among the families they encountered but also emphasized problems in family functioning, especially parent-child relationships and parenting skills. Perhaps, consonant with this:
  - Problems in behavior—especially uncontrollable and aggressive behavior—and childhood depression and anxiety were indicated by caregivers in nearly half of families survey.
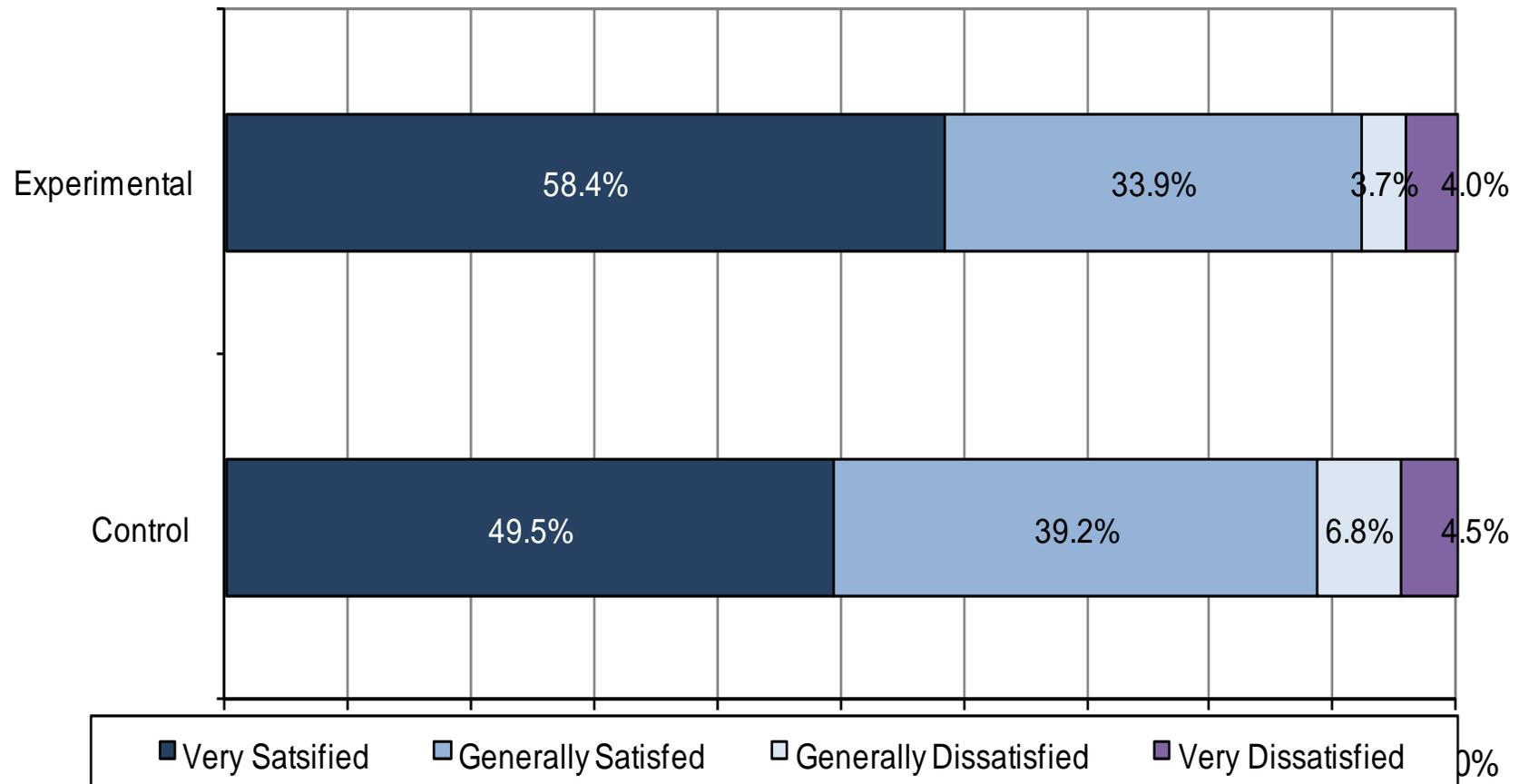 - School problems among children were indicated by about one-third of family caregivers

Changes under AR:
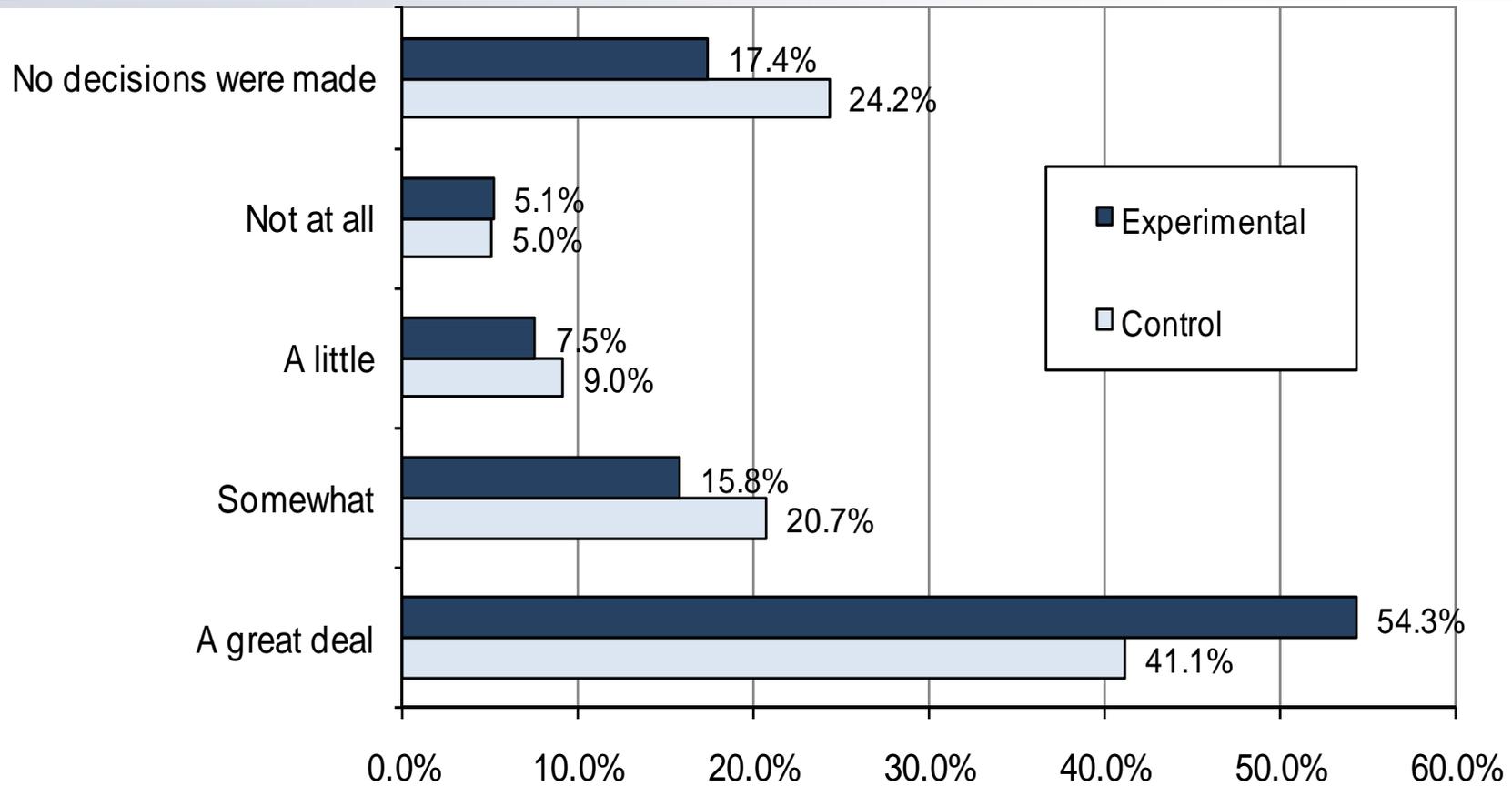# Positive Emotional Response of Families
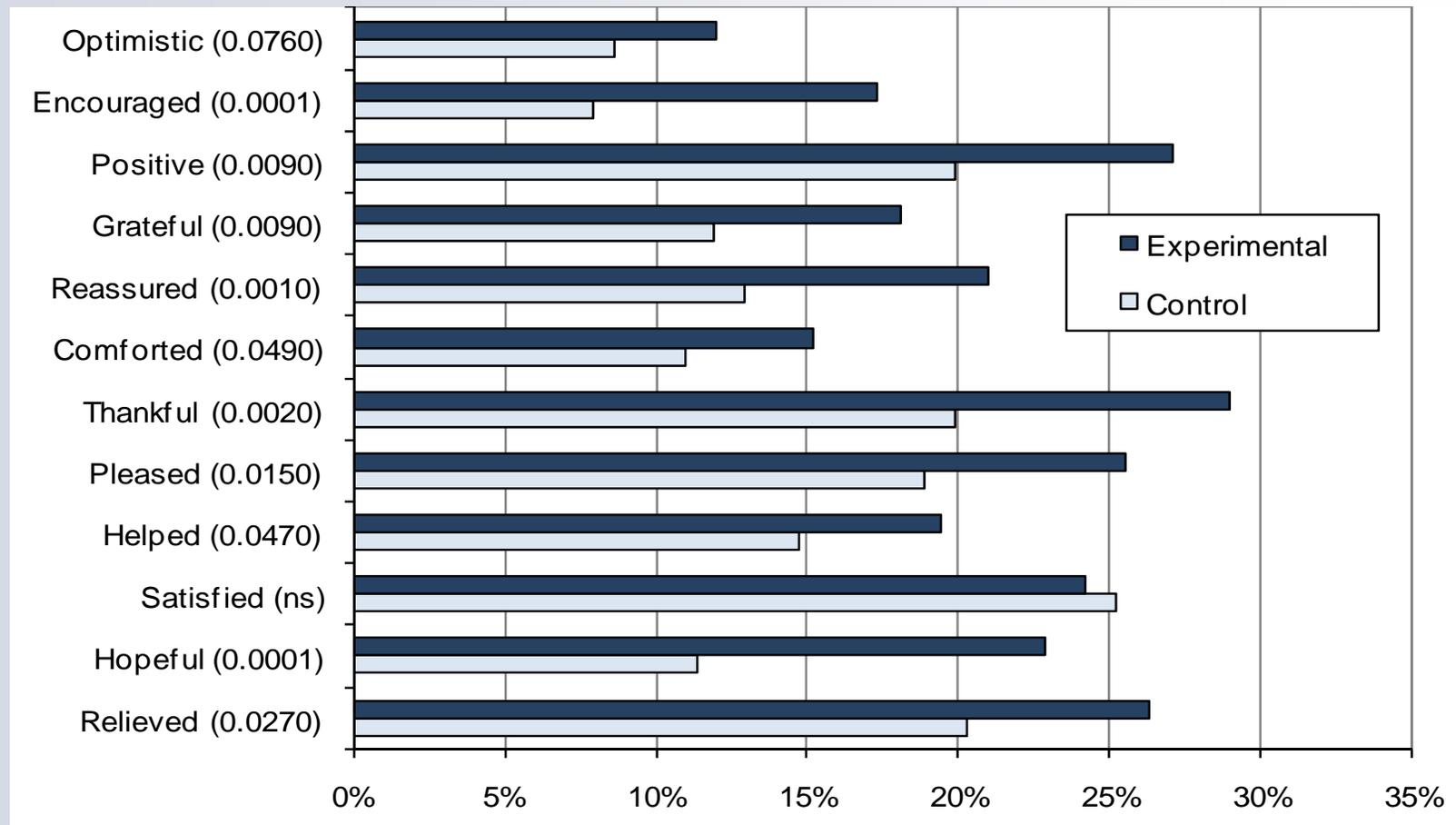
Changes under AR:
Negative Emotional Response of Families
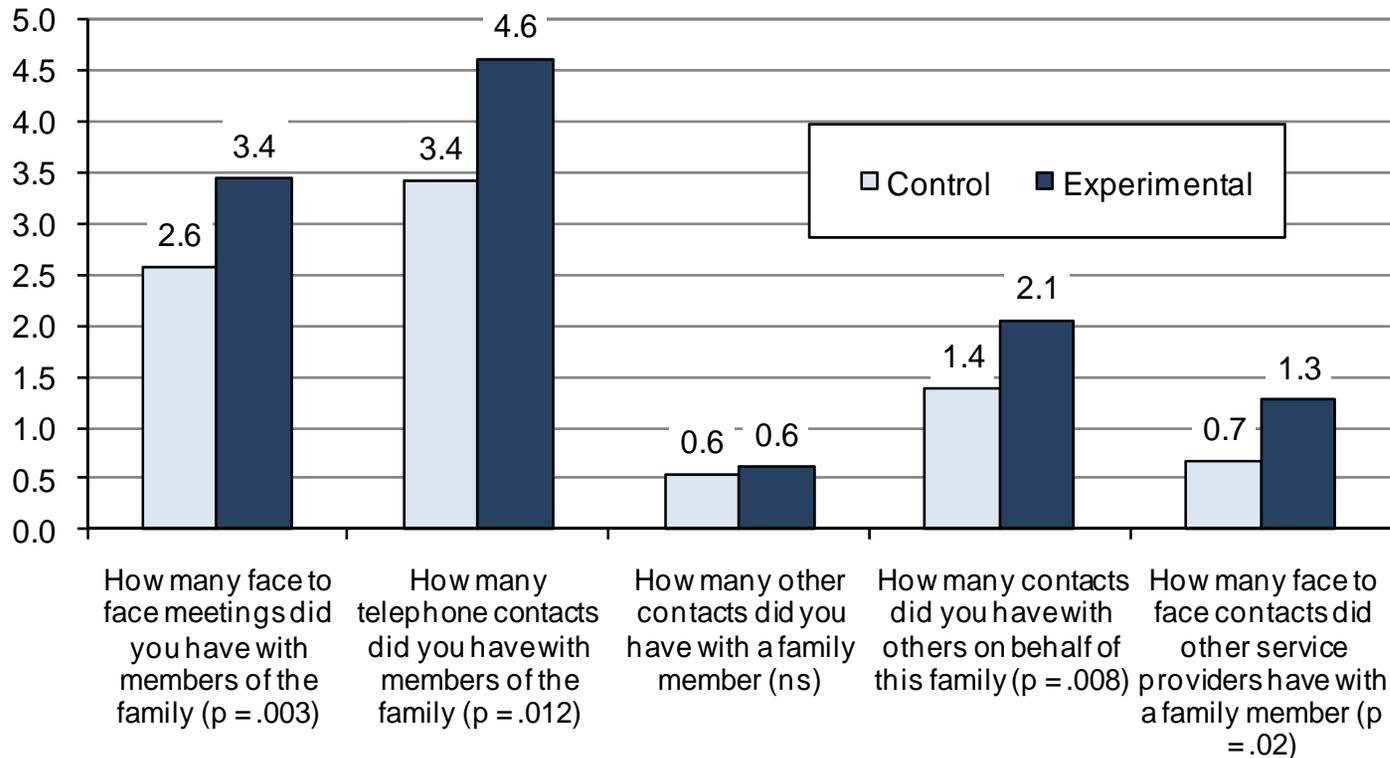
Changes under AR: Satisfaction with Worker

	Very Satsified	Generally Satisfed	Generally Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Experimental	58.4%	33.9%	3.7%	4.0%
Control	49.5%	39.2%	6.8%	4.5%

Changes under AR: Involvement in Decision Making

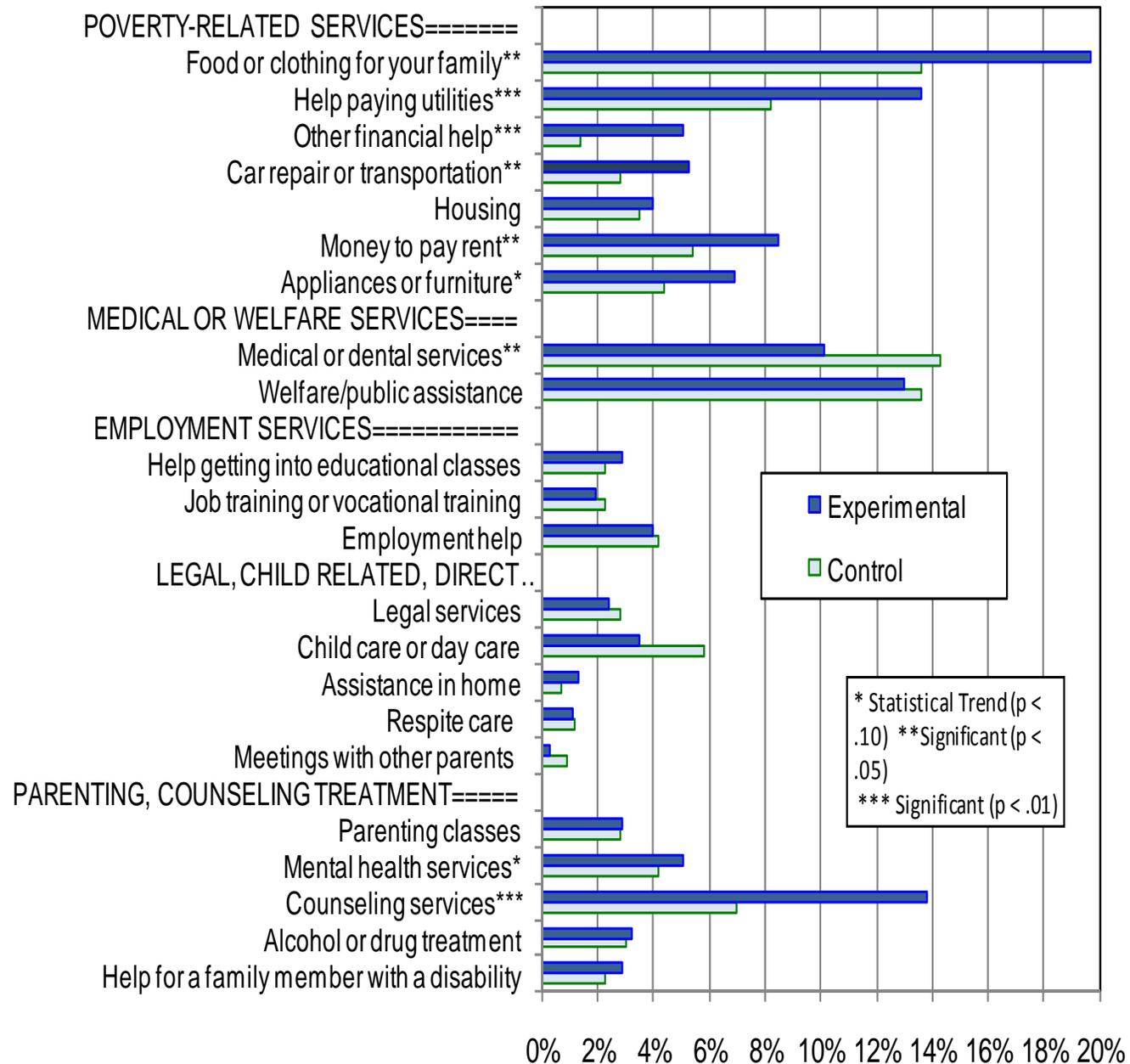| Category	Experimental	Control
No decisions were made	17.4%	24.2%
Not at all	5.1%	5.0%
A little	7.5%	9.0%
Somewhat	15.8%	20.7%
A great deal	54.3%	41.1%

Changes under AR:
Level of Contacts of Workers with Families

- The average number of days until case close was 53.6 for experimental families and 44.7 days for control families.
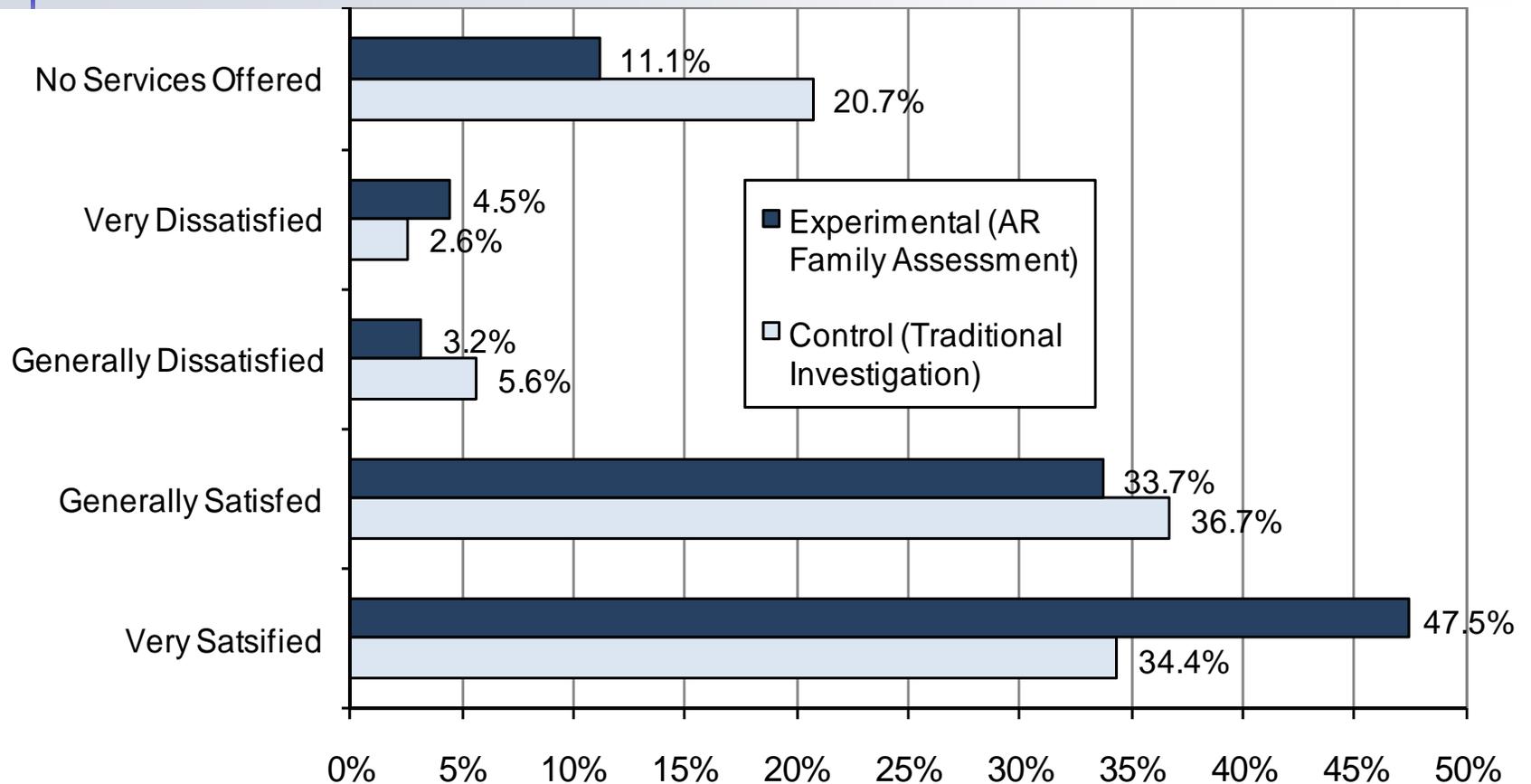
Family Reports: Level and Types of Services Received

POVERTY-RELATED SERVICES=======
Food or clothing for your family**
Help paying utilities***
Other financial help***
Car repair or transportation**
Housing
Money to pay rent**
Appliances or furniture*
MEDICAL OR WELFARE SERVICES====
Medical or dental services**
Welfare/public assistance
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES===========
Help getting into educational classes
Job training or vocational training
Employment help
LEGAL, CHILD RELATED, DIRECT…
Legal services
Child care or day care
Assistance in home
Respite care
Meetings with other parents
PARENTING, COUNSELING TREATMENT=====
Parenting classes
Mental health services*
Counseling services***
Alcohol or drug treatment
Help for a family member with a disability

■ Experimental
□ Control

* Statistical Trend (p < .10) **Significant (p < .05)
*** Significant (p < .01)

0% 2% 4% 6% 8% 10% 12% 14% 16% 18% 20%

Family Reports:
Level and Type of Services

- Poverty-related services increased:
- AR workers more often provided referrals for or helped families to receive food and clothing, help with utilities, other financial help, car repair and transportation, money to pay rent or help in obtaining appliances and furniture.
- Experimental families under AR also reported receiving more referrals to traditional counseling and mental health services.
- No difference was found in the number of services or the provision of direct services between Caucasian and African-American families under AR.

Family Reports:
Satisfaction with Help Offered or Received

Horizontal bar chart comparing Experimental (AR Family Assessment) and Control (Traditional Investigation) responses:

Category	Experimental (AR Family Assessment)	Control (Traditional Investigation)
No Services Offered	11.1%	20.7%
Very Dissatisfied	4.5%	2.6%
Generally Dissatisfied	3.2%	5.6%
Generally Satisfed	33.7%	36.7%
Very Satsified	47.5%	34.4%

X-axis: 0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45% 50%

Worker Reports of Services Provided

- Workers reported providing more services, support and assistance under AR and more information about where services could be found.
- Workers indicated that basic poverty-related services were provided significantly more often to experimental families, such as rent payments, housing services, help with basic household needs, emergency food, and transportation.
- Under AR, 46.7 percent of AR workers said they were responsible for directly providing or connecting families to resources and services, while only 26.3 percent of TR workers reported this. Correspondingly, AR workers indicated they provided only information and referral for 41.2 percent of the services compared to 59.2 percent for TR workers.

Family and Worker
Reports of Services Provided

- AR workers directly assisted with 83.3 percent of services in the category "help with rent or house payments" compared to 30.0 percent for TR workers.
- Experimental families were also somewhat more likely than control families to indicate that the services received were enough to really help.
- According to workers, AR families were also more likely to participate in services than control families.

Most Frequent Types of Services Listed in Service Plans

County (# plans reviewed)	1st Frequent Service		2nd Frequent Service		3rd Frequent Service	
Clark (72)	Mental health/ counseling	35%	Appliances, furniture, linens	26%	Housing assistance	22%
Fairfield (69)	Mental health/ counseling (in-house worker)	55%	Benefit assistance/ budgeting (in-house worker)	25%	Education/ employment services	22%
Franklin (214)	Beds, other household items	26%	Settlement house referral	10%	Utility assistance	7%
Greene (104)	Mental health/ counseling	30%	Utility assistance	10%	Housing assistance	9%
Guernsey (43)	Utility assistance	40%	Household items	21%	Housing and food assistance	19%
Licking (54)	Household items	35%	Housing assistance	30%	Utility assistance	28%
Lucas (107)	Clothing or food voucher	35%	Beds/furniture/ appliances	23%	Baby items/ household items	20%
Ross	Unable to review					
Trumbull (136)	Mental health/ counseling/ therapy	53%	Clothing or food voucher	32%	Utility assistance	26%
Tuscarawas (17)	Case-management by PCSA	47%	Housing assistance	29%	Mental health/ counseling	24%

Family Reports:
Types of Help Needed but Not Received

	Control	Experimental
Housing/rent or utilities	31.4%	34.5%
Clothing or food	20.6%	13.8%
Benefits, financial assistance	12.7%	11.5%
Furniture, beds, bedding	9.8%	11.5%
Employment assistance	9.8%	5.7%
Parenting	8.8%	5.7%
Transportation	8.8%	9.2%
Counseling or mental health	5.9%	6.9%
Other basic supplies, baby items	4.9%	3.4%
Help/medical treatment for disabled child	2.9%	0.0%
Other	8.8%	10.3%

* Because families listed multiple items totals are greater than 100%.

Worker and Supervisor Responses

- Workers and supervisors that performed work related to AR reported observable adjustments in their approach and practice, indicating that AR was implemented as intended and produced positive changes within the agency.
- Workers reported feeling more able to intervene effectively with AR families than with non-AR families.
- Knowledge of service resources in the community was ranked higher for workers involved with AR.
- Reactions of AR families to assistance were seen as more positive by workers than the reactions of other families.

Worker and Supervisor Responses (cont.)

- Workers believed that AR families were more likely to view the agency as a source of support and assistance and were more likely to feel better off because of their involvement with the agency than TR families.
- The majority of staff involved with AR stated that the pilot had affected their approach to families *a great deal* or *in a few important ways*.
- In addition to recognizing that AR does not require substantiation or formal finding, AR-involved staff saw AR as leading to a more friendly approach to families, more family participation in decisions and case planning, and more cooperation from families in the assessment process.

Worker and Supervisor Responses (cont.)

- Although almost all staff involved with the pilot felt their understanding of AR was at least adequate, the majority also indicated that they could benefit from more training in specific areas.
- A strong minority (38.9 percent) of county staff involved with the pilot reported that AR had increased the likelihood that they will remain in the field of child welfare.

Community Responses

- Familiarity with AR among stakeholders had increased by the end of the pilot, from 45.3 percent in 2008 to 68.3 percent in 2009.
- Attitudes toward AR were highly positive among those who were familiar, although a little less than half of all survey respondents were unsure of their opinion.
- Nine out of ten judges or magistrates in the pilot counties reported being at least somewhat familiar with the AR pilot.
- Those nine also perceived that AR had the potential to lower the number of cases coming to court to some degree.

Child Safety

- Short-term child safety from the time of the original report until final contact with families was examined. Child safety problems were identified by workers in a minority of families, 33.2 percent of control cases and 25.4 percent of experimental cases.
- When a child safety problem was identified, no statistically significant difference was found between experimental and control families in the extent of improvement or decline in safety.
- There was no evidence that replacement of traditional investigations by AR family assessments reduced the safety of the children.

New Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect

- Among families entering the study during the first 360 days, 13.3 percent of control families had a new report compared to 11.2 percent of experimental families. This difference was statistically significant.
- A proportional hazards analysis that controlled for levels of past reporting on families also confirmed that experimental *families that were served through the AR family assessment pathway had fewer new reports than control families that were approached through a TR investigative assessment*.

New Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect

Survival Function for patterns 1 - 2
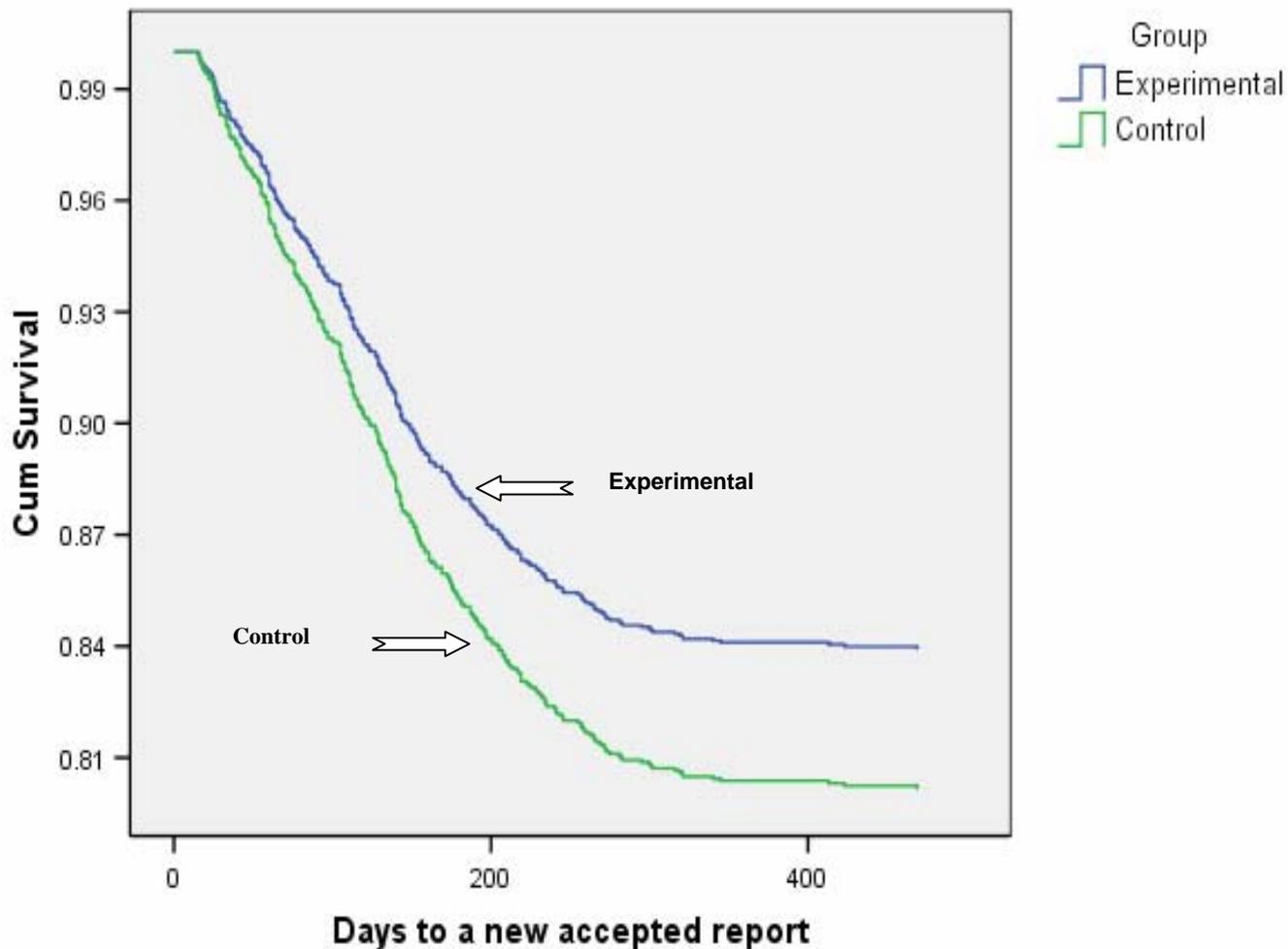
New Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect

- Racial differences in later accepted reports were also examined.
- Although study families as a whole were largely in poverty, African-American families were significantly and substantially more impoverished than Caucasian families. Race was taken as a proxy measure for poverty.
- *Analyses demonstrated that the major positive effects of AR on new reporting of child maltreatment at this point in tracking families appears to have occurred among African-American families.* This was interpreted to mean that AR has its greatest effects among the poorest families in the population.

Subsequent Removal and Placement of Children

- Differences in out-of-home placement were also examined in the evaluation.
- Within the control group 3.7 percent of children had been removed while 1.8 percent had been removed in the experimental group, a significant difference.
- This difference also remained significant in the stronger proportional hazards analysis. *AR appeared to reduce the number of child removals and out-of-home placements.*

Cost Analysis: Indirect Costs

- Indirect costs were calculated using cost allocation data and average time that workers spent with experimental and control families.

- AR family assessments averaged $940 per family compared to $732 per family for TR investigations. Reflecting increased worker time with families, AR was more expensive in the immediate term.

- For subsequent work, experimental families averaged $145 per family compared to $266 for control families. Total costs for control families averaged about $999 per family compared to $1,084 for experimental families. *At this point in the follow-up, experimental families were slightly more expensive ($85 per family) overall in indirect costs than control families.*

Cost Analysis:
Mean Indirect Cost per Family

Cost Analysis: Direct Costs

- Because control group data were missing or not comparable from two large pilot counties, the analysis of direct service costs was limited to the remaining eight pilot counties.
- Costs were determined from cost data provided by local bookkeepers on experimental and control families. The final analysis showed that control families were less expensive in the short-term ($104 per family) than experimental families ($192 per family) but were more expensive in the long-term.
- The total cost in the analysis for control families was $371 per family compared to $221 for experimental families. These differences were exaggerated by the loss of data from the two large counties.

What did we learn?
Selected Highlights

- **AR resulted in positive outcomes for families**
- Two-thirds of sample families report <$15,000 compared to 8% of families
- About half of AR eligible families had previous accepted reports of CA/N: 1 in 10 had child placed in past
- Allegation of current and past reports were most frequently for alleged child neglect.
- Families identified basic poverty related needs.

What did we learn?
Selected Highlights

- AR had greatest effects among poorest families
- ~40% AR county staff reported increased likelihood of remaining in child welfare field
- No evidence that AR family assessments reduced safety of children
- AR appeared to reduce # of child removals and placements
- Indirect costs of experimental families slightly more than control families

What went well?
Selected Highlights

- Provision of poverty-related services increased
- Knowledge of service resources in community ranked higher for AR workers than other staff
- Notable increases in families' (1) positive emotional response , (2) satisfaction with workers, (3) involvement in decision-making, (4) number of contacts with workers.
- Stakeholders' familiarity with AR increased from 45.3% in 2008 to 68.3% in 2009.

Many Thanks For Your Ongoing Support