

Clients Presenting to St. Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre with Learning Disabilities: Preliminary Findings



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BACKGROUND

The Mencap definition of learning disability (LD) is 'a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities. People with LD may need support to understand complicated information and interact with other people.'

The Learning Disability Screening Questionnaire (LDSQ) is a validated tool used to assess the likelihood of a person having intellectual disability. It was designed to be used by a wide range of professionals in a variety of settings, including healthcare, social care and the criminal justice system.

At St Mary's SARC, the LDSQ is used to help identify clients who may require additional measures in order to support them acutely or more long term, following their assault. The LDSQ is completed with all clients aged 8 and over, where a language interpreter is not required. The assessment consists of seven questions and can be quickly administered.

AIMS

To collect preliminary information on clients seen at St. Mary's SARC for forensic medical examination with LDSQ scores of less than or equal to 43%.

METHODS

- Clients seen by St. Mary's SARC for FME following alleged sexual assault during the calendar year 2017 with calculated LDSQ scores below 43% were identified from the St. Mary's E-dashboard.
- The notes of these clients were then reviewed and data collected around the client's demographics, the details of the assault, the alleged perpetrator, the findings of the FME and the follow-up care received by the client.

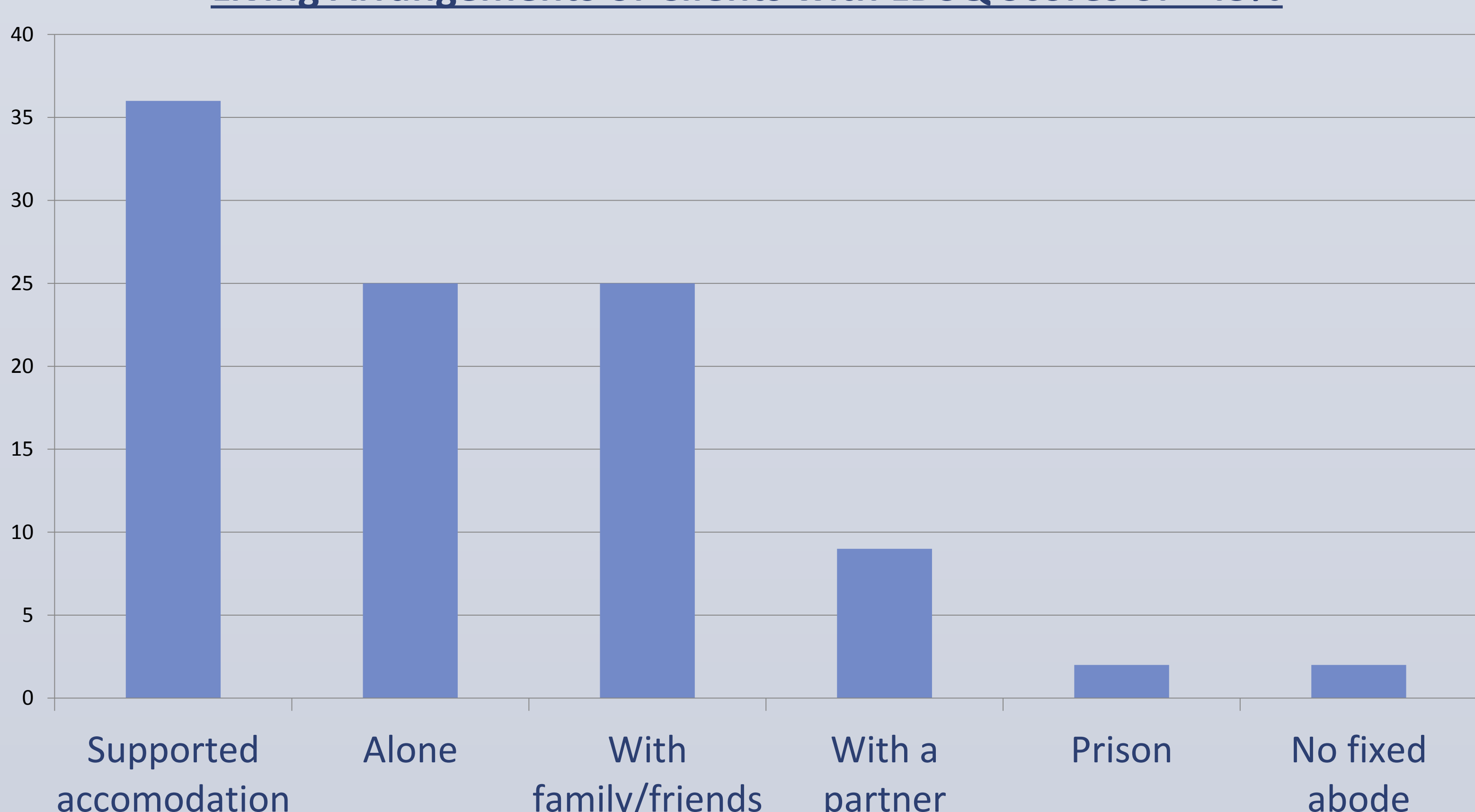
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Findings are based on 44 (of 55 total) clients seen for forensic medical examination at St Marys SARC with LDSQ scores of 43% or less in 2017.

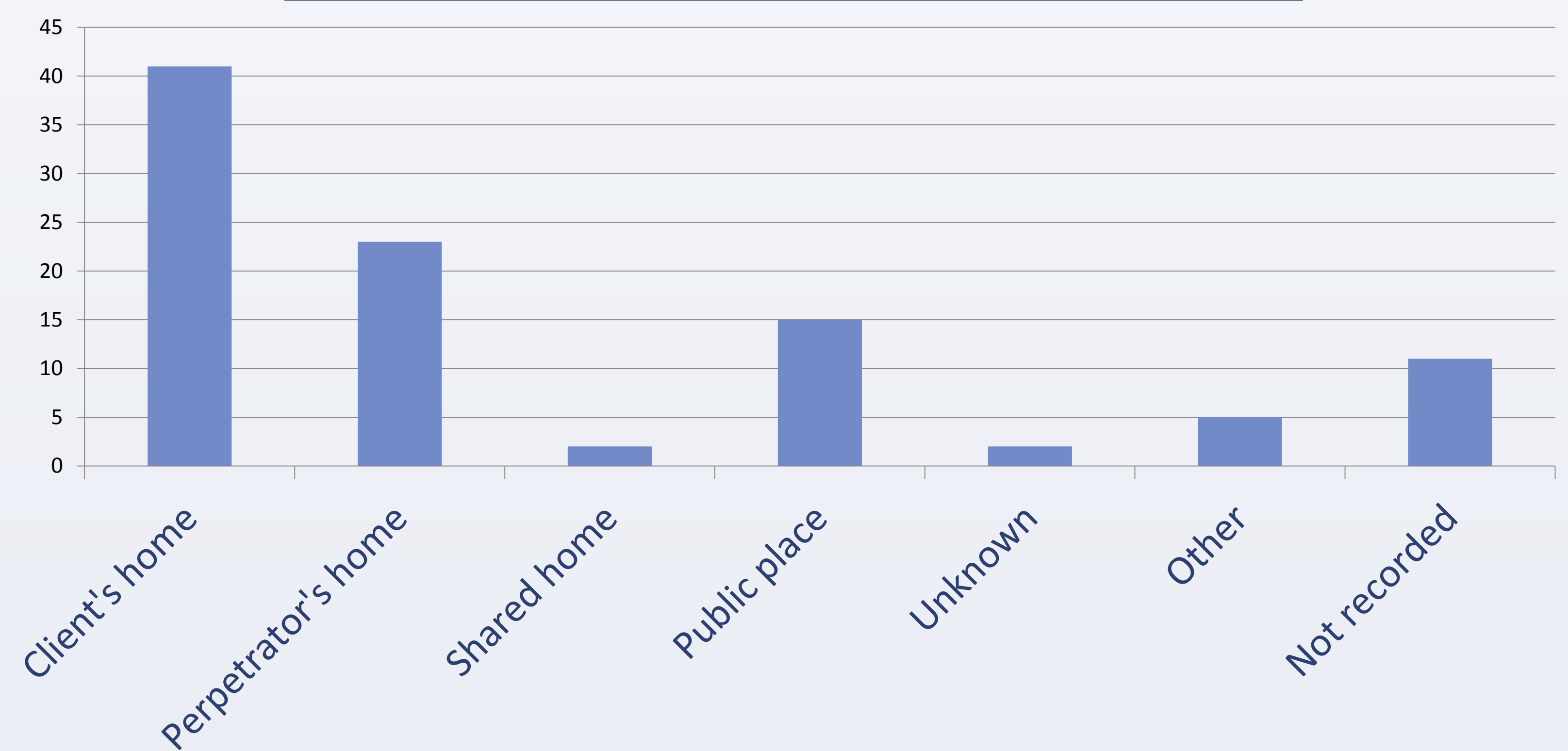
Table 1. Demographics table of clients presenting to St Mary's SARC with LDSQ scores <43%:

Demographic characteristic		N= 44	% of group
Age (group)	18 - 25	19	43%
	26 - 35	12	27%
	36 - 55	11	25%
	55+	2	5%
Gender	Female	41	93%
	Male	3	7%
Ethnicity	White British	40	91%
	Other	4	9%

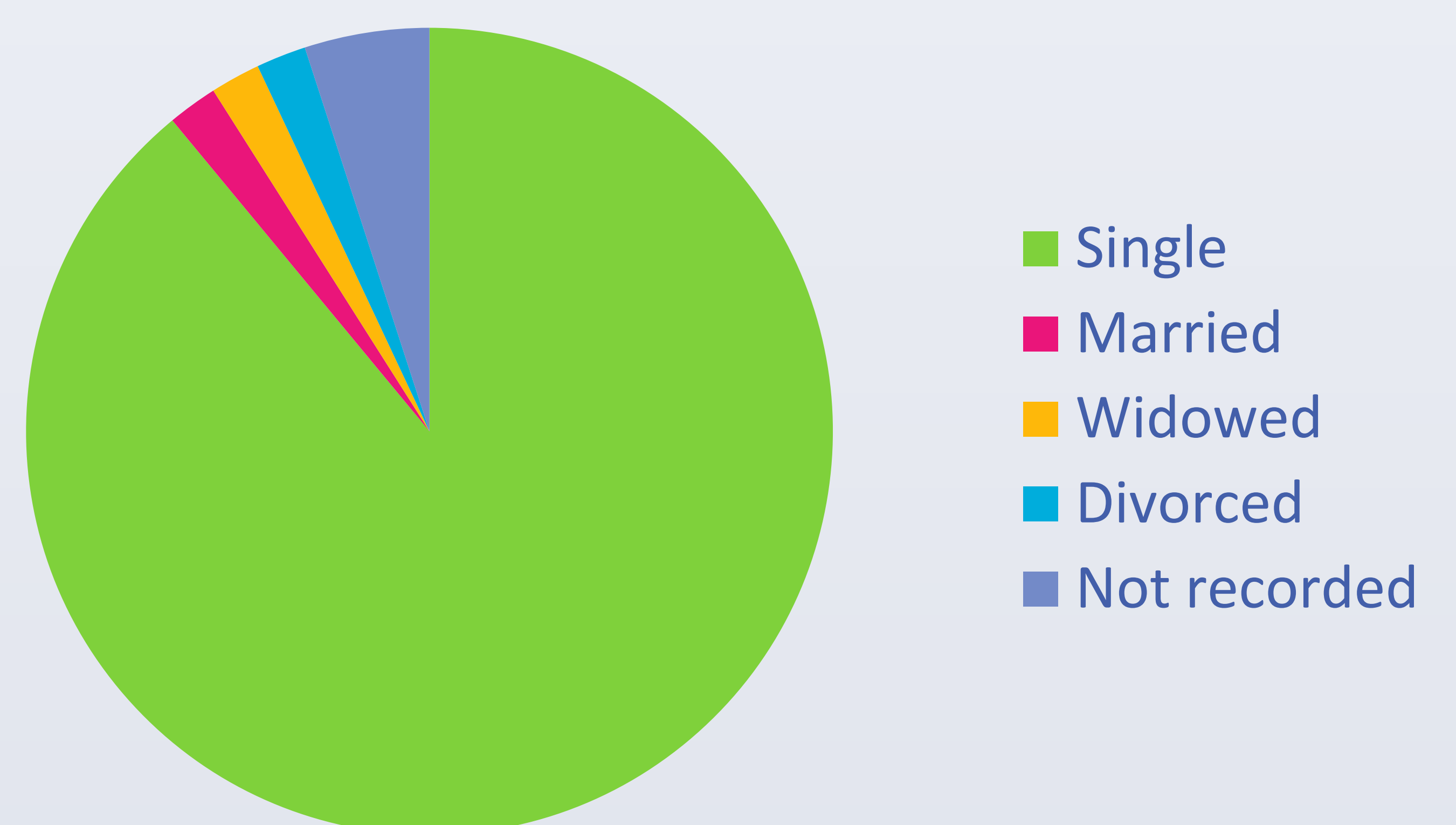
Living Arrangements of Clients with LDSQ Scores of <43%



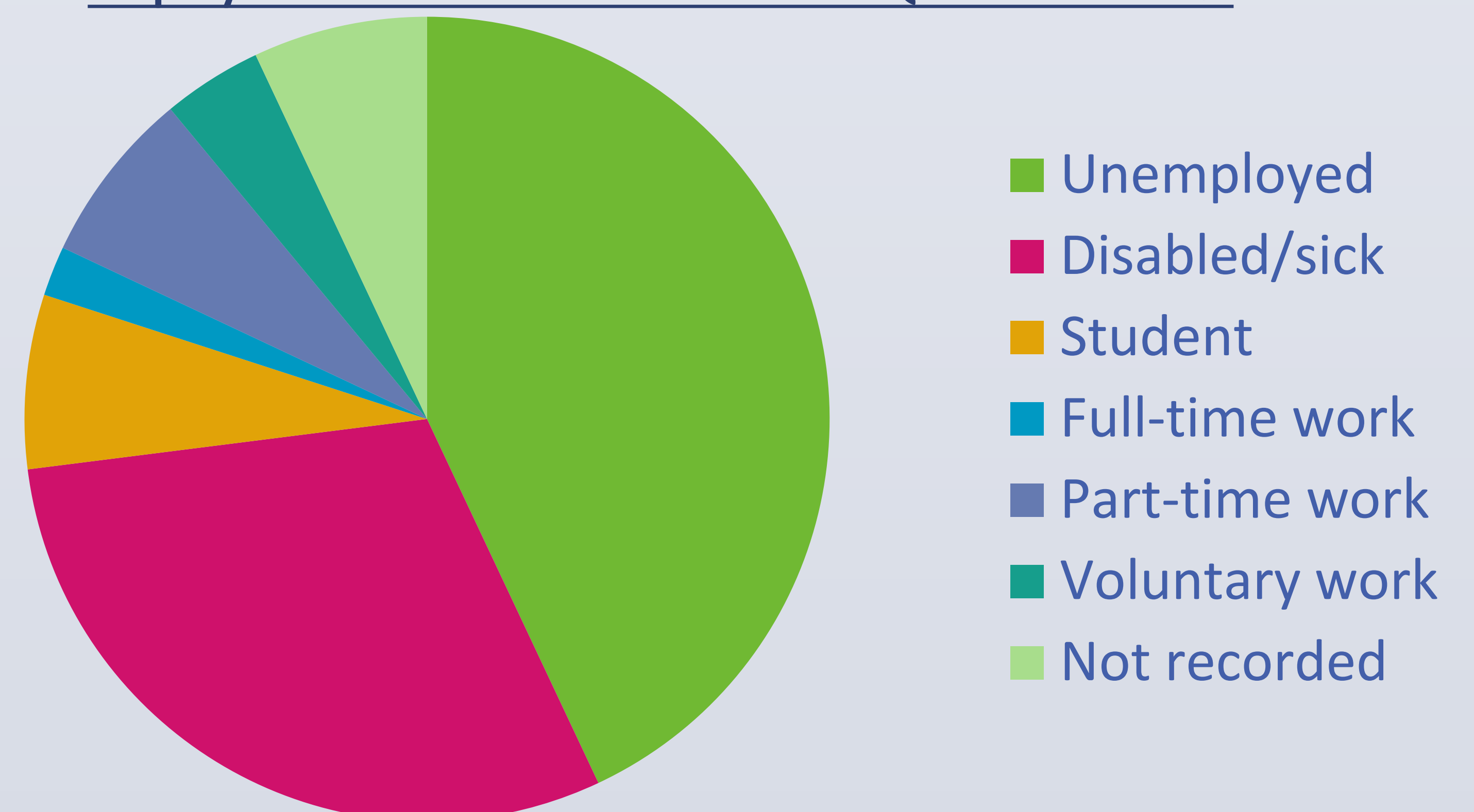
Location of Assault of Clients with LDSQ Scores <43%



Marital Status of Clients with LDSQ scores <43%



Employment Status of Clients with LDSQ Scores of <43%



19 clients were unemployed, 13 were out of work due to disability or sickness, meaning 32 out of 44 were not in current employment.

IMPLICATIONS

The information obtained from the identification of individuals with likely LD will be useful in legal and clinical settings. Sharing this information, with consent or in the clients' best interests will enable appropriate additional support to be put in place for these clients.

For example, the LDSQ result may help legal representatives to determine when an Intermediary may be used to assist a client during any criminal justice proceedings. It could also help GPs to identify more effective ways to communicate with patients than the standardised letter format.

Further work using a control group of clients without a probable learning disability will allow for comparison. Consideration will be given (but not limited) to:

- Time between alleged assault and FME at SARC
- Engagement with follow-up services at SARC (ISVA re-contacting and counselling services)
- Presence of learning disability in perpetrator of the assault