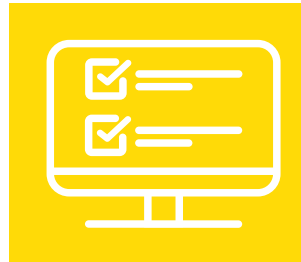


Assessing the Scope of International Placements with Kin across the U.S.





INTRODUCTION 3

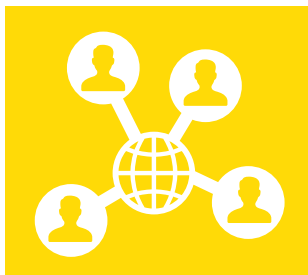


METHODOLOGY 6



SUMMARY FINDINGS 7

- Demographics
- Awareness and Existence of Policy and Practice
- *Process and Support*
- *Resource Needs*
- *Concerns and Questions about Cross Border Placement*

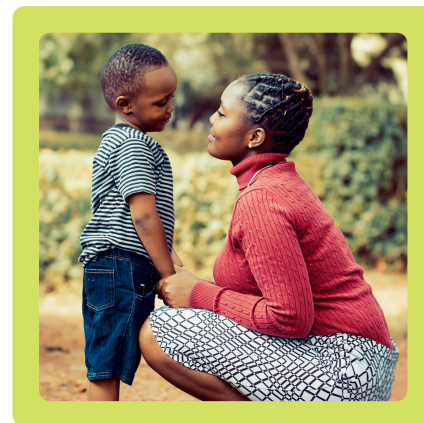


RECOMMENDATIONS 18

INTRODUCTION

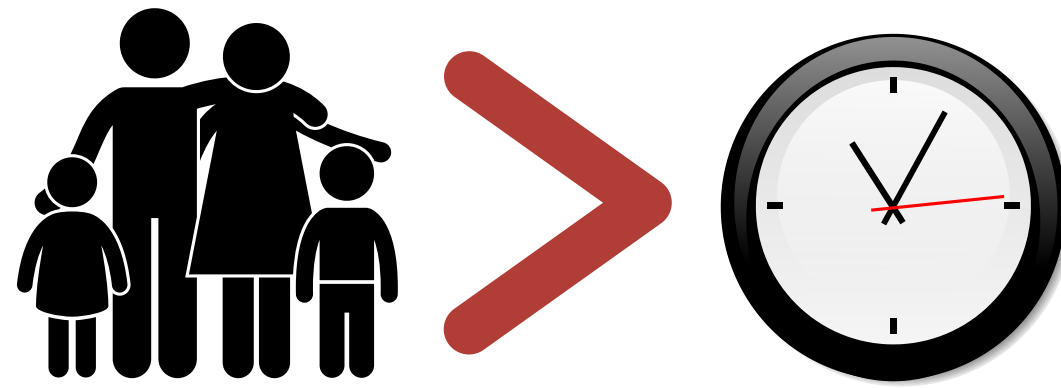
International Social Service (ISS-USA) is the U.S. member of International Social Service, a worldwide network reuniting vulnerable children, adults and families who are separated by borders.

With 18 million children in the United States having at least one immigrant parent it is reasonable to assume that a subset of 407,493 children[1] in the U.S foster care system have family connections overseas.



[1] Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), data received as of October 4, 2021, as of September 30, 2020
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcarsreport28.pdf>

INTRODUCTION



In January 2021, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF)[2] stated that child welfare systems have a “high duty and legal responsibility” to ensure family relationships and connections as the key to positive outcomes in child wellbeing, **thus reunification should be an urgent priority.**



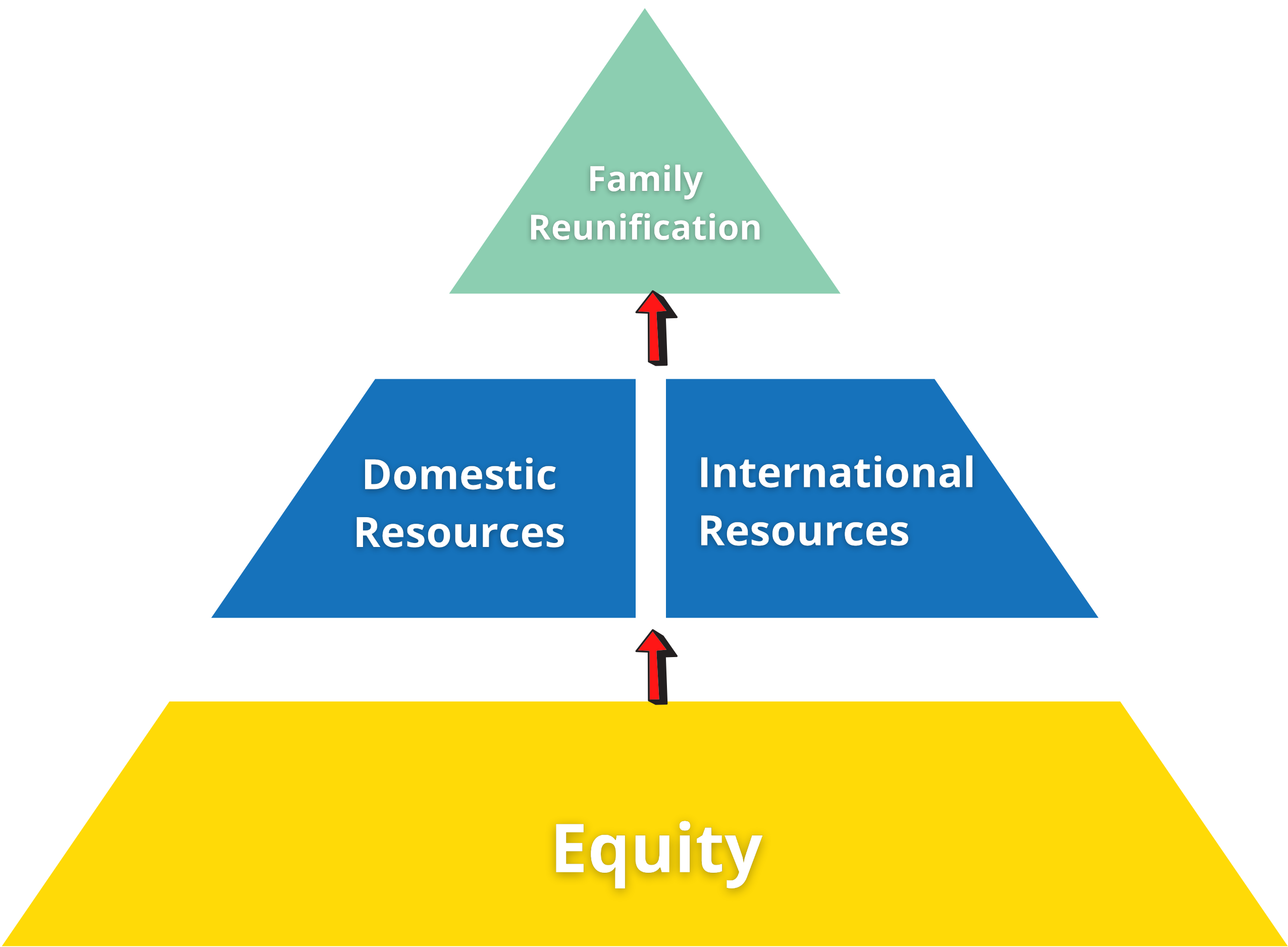
In 2021, the National Conference of State Legislatures produced a report [3] acknowledging families of color experience disproportionate and disparate permanency outcomes as compared to their White counterparts. To mitigate the disparity the report suggests the **child welfare systems develop culturally responsive practices and eliminate bias in placement processes.**

[2] Administration for Children and Families. Informational Memorandum. <https://www.cwla.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ACYF-CB-IM-20-09.pdf>

[3] Disproportionality and race Equity in Child Welfare. Jan 2021. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/disproportionality-and-race-equity-in-child-welfare.aspx>

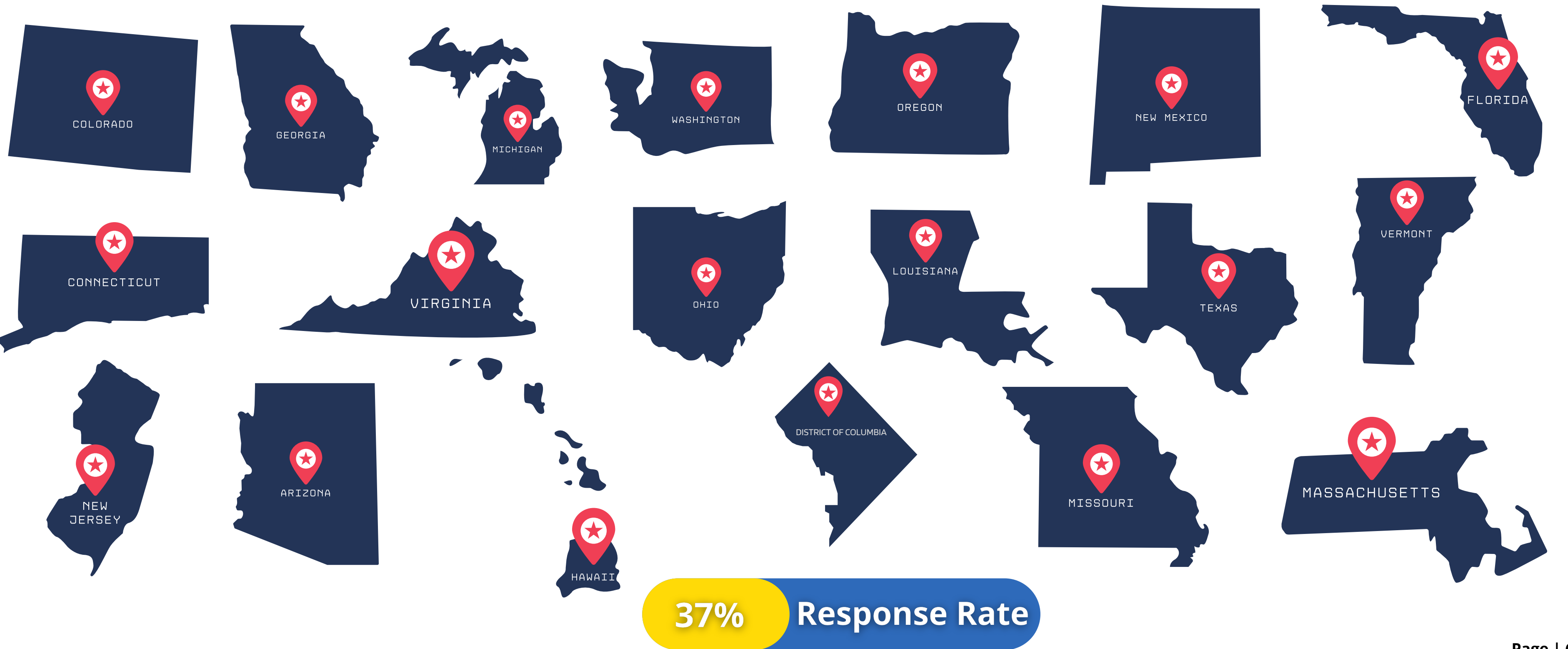
INTRODUCTION

Not all cross-border services will result in the movement of a child across a border, **equity looks at each child's best interest and ensures that systems have appropriate family finding tools to address** the best interests of each unique child. This includes the possibility of **an international placement with kin, regardless of how long the process may take. Including international placement options would reinforce a culturally responsive practice by identifying a safe placement with kin wherever they reside without "solely prioritizing timeframes."**



METHODOLOGY

During the window of August 2021 – November 2021, ISS-USA disseminated a nineteen question survey as part of an exploratory study on cross-border placements. A total of 32 surveys were received; **19 unique jurisdictions responded to the survey**



SUMMARY FINDINGS

Demographics

Respondents were asked questions about their job function, and role in relation to the state child welfare agency.

Majority of respondents (21 out of 33, 64 percent) worked in the State or Tribal Child Welfare Agency.

Majority of respondents (n=13, 41 percent) were in Administration.

Respondents represented the following job roles:

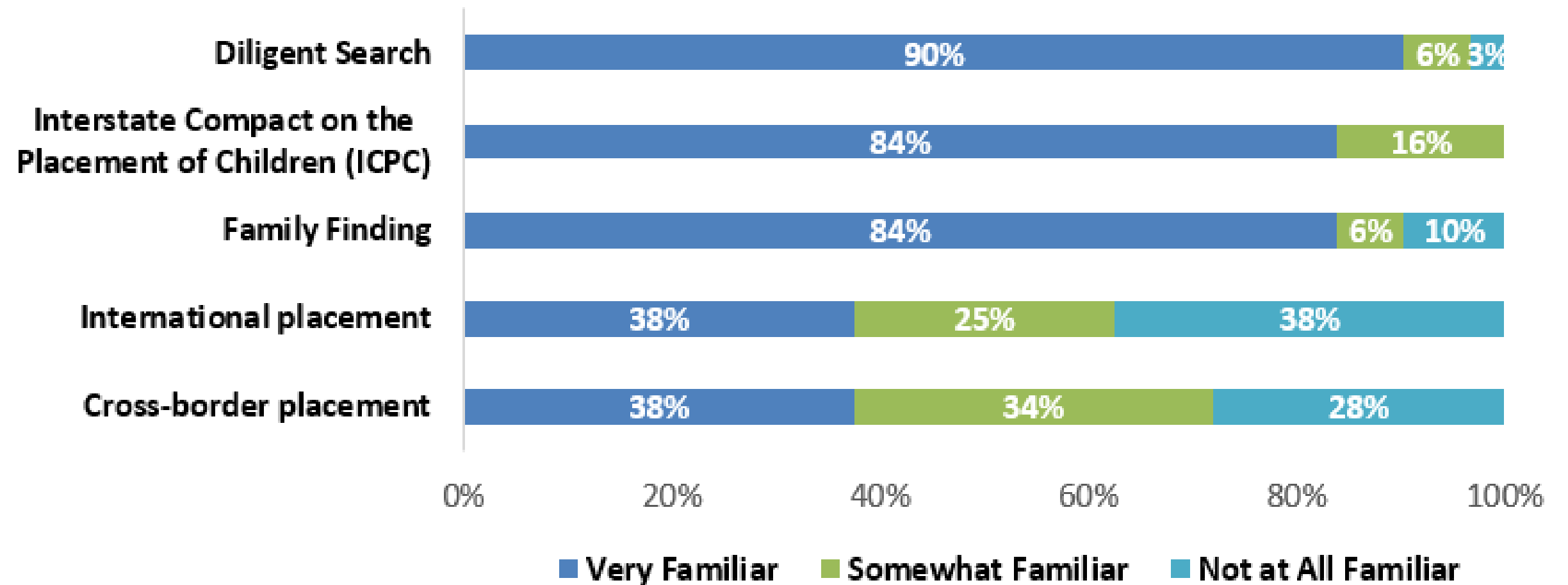


SUMMARY FINDINGS

Demographics

Between **84 – 90 percent** of respondents were very familiar with the following language: **Diligent Search, Family Finding, and Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC).** However, less familiarity of **cross-border placement or international placement** was demonstrated.

Respondent familiarity with the following terms:

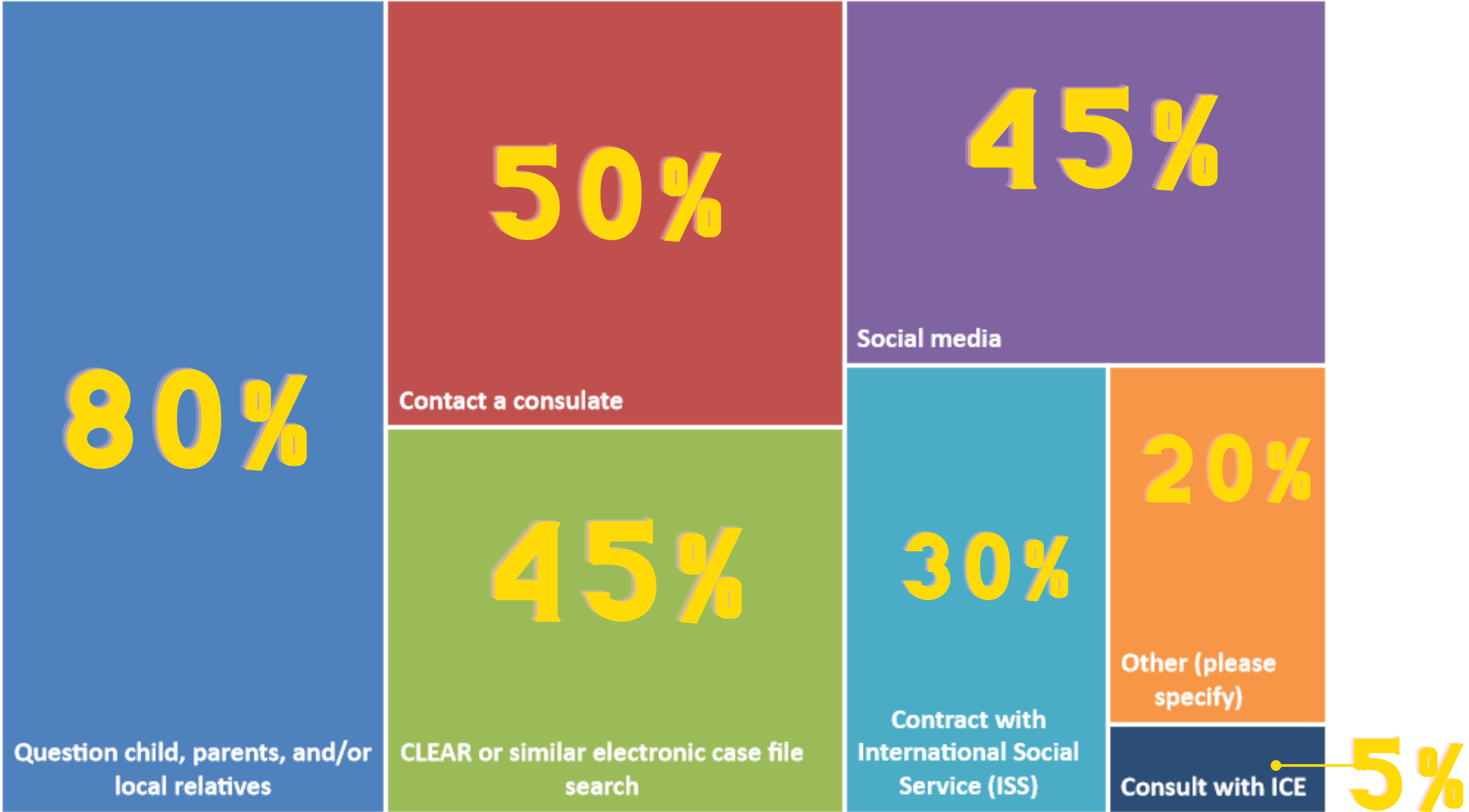


Considering the limited awareness surrounding cross-border placements among respondents, one can deduce this is a byproduct of **53 percent (n=17) of respondents being unfamiliar with the work of ISS-USA.**

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Awareness and Existence of Policy and Practice

Seventy-three percent (n=22) of respondents were able to confirm that the state or tribal child welfare agency they work or partner with **conducts diligent or family finding searches** for kin to serve as placement options. Of those 22 respondents, 50 percent (n=11) indicated the state or tribal child welfare agency conducts both domestic and cross-border/international family finding, 32 percent (n=7) said domestic only and 18 percent (n=4) were unsure. Only 20 of these respondents indicated each of the following resources (reflected in tree map form) are used to conduct diligent/family finding searches:

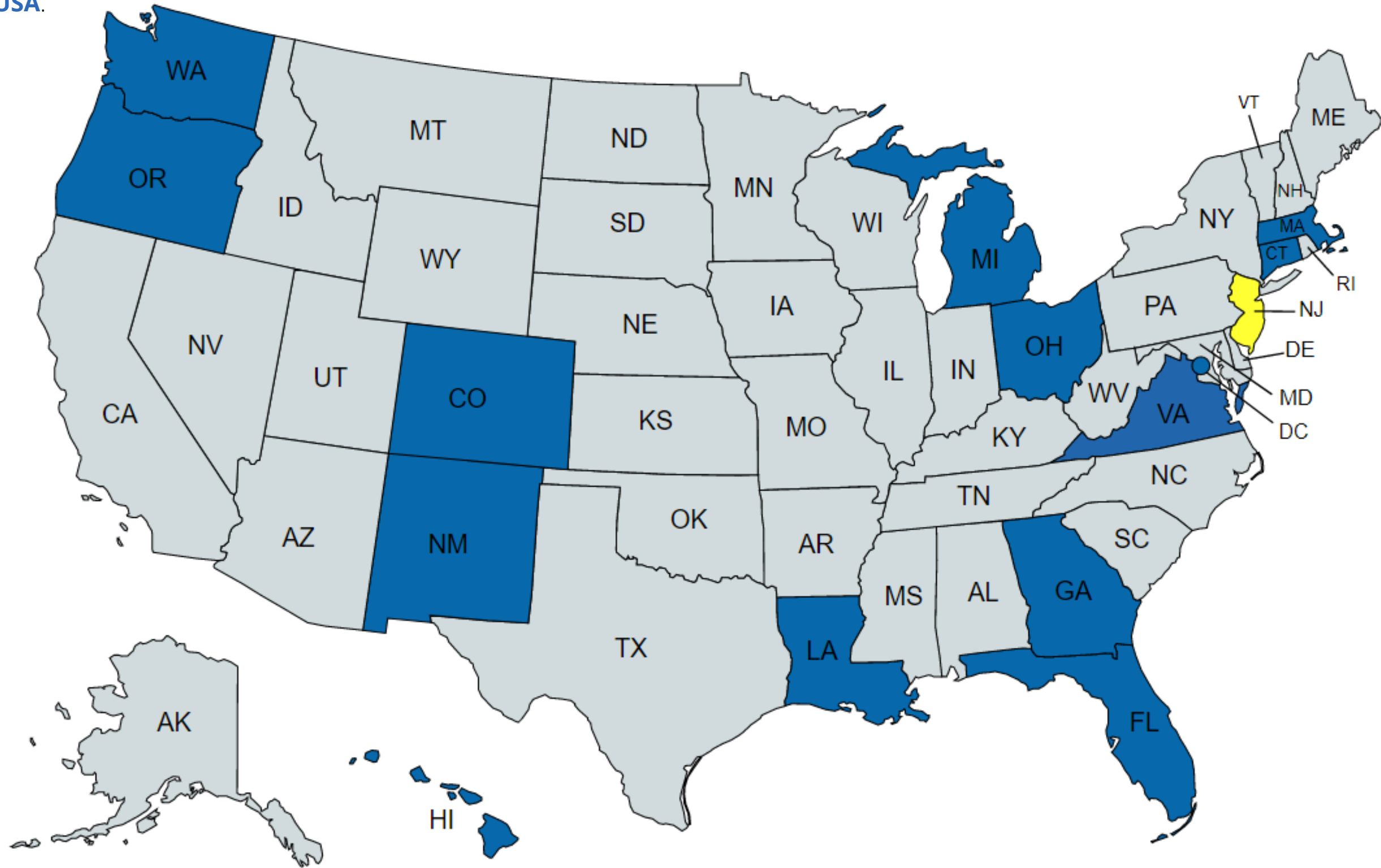


[4] Other includes research using Lexis Nexus or respondents were not fully knowledgeable of the resources used.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Awareness and Existence of Policy and Practice

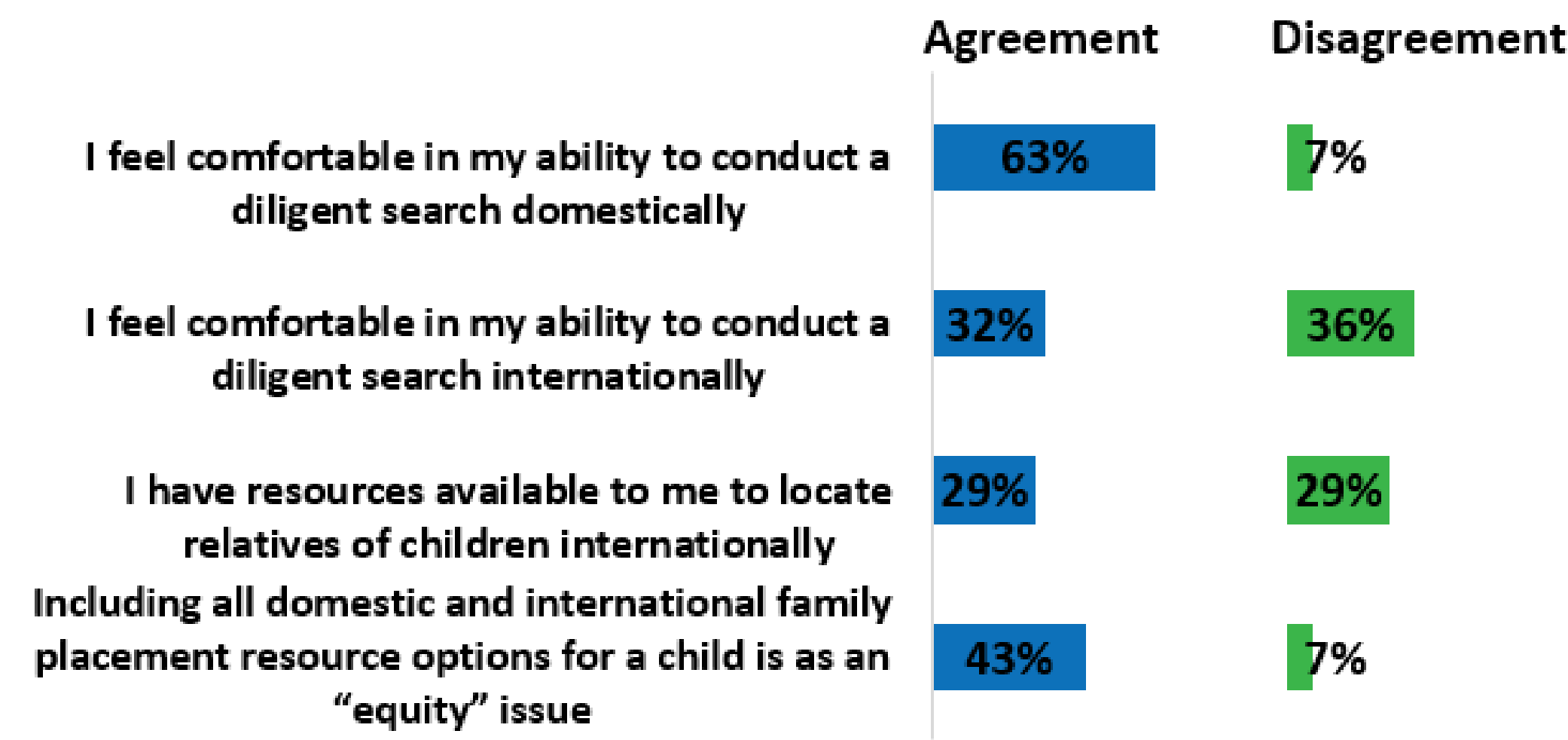
Respondents were from 15 unique jurisdictions: Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia. After a preliminary review of their diligent search/family finding policy and procedures **only one (New Jersey)**, out of the 15 jurisdictions, **clearly mentions cross-border/international placements and ISS-USA**.



SUMMARY FINDINGS

Awareness and Existence of Policy and Practice

Of the organizations who work primarily with placing children, the majority (over 40 percent) **indicated that international diligent search/family finding is not a regular part** of their work, **even when working with immigrant children**. The majority of respondents are comfortable with conducting diligent searches and locating relatives domestically, **but not internationally**.^[6]



Respondents indicated not only being uncomfortable with international placements but a lack of resources to locate relative placement options who may reside in another country.

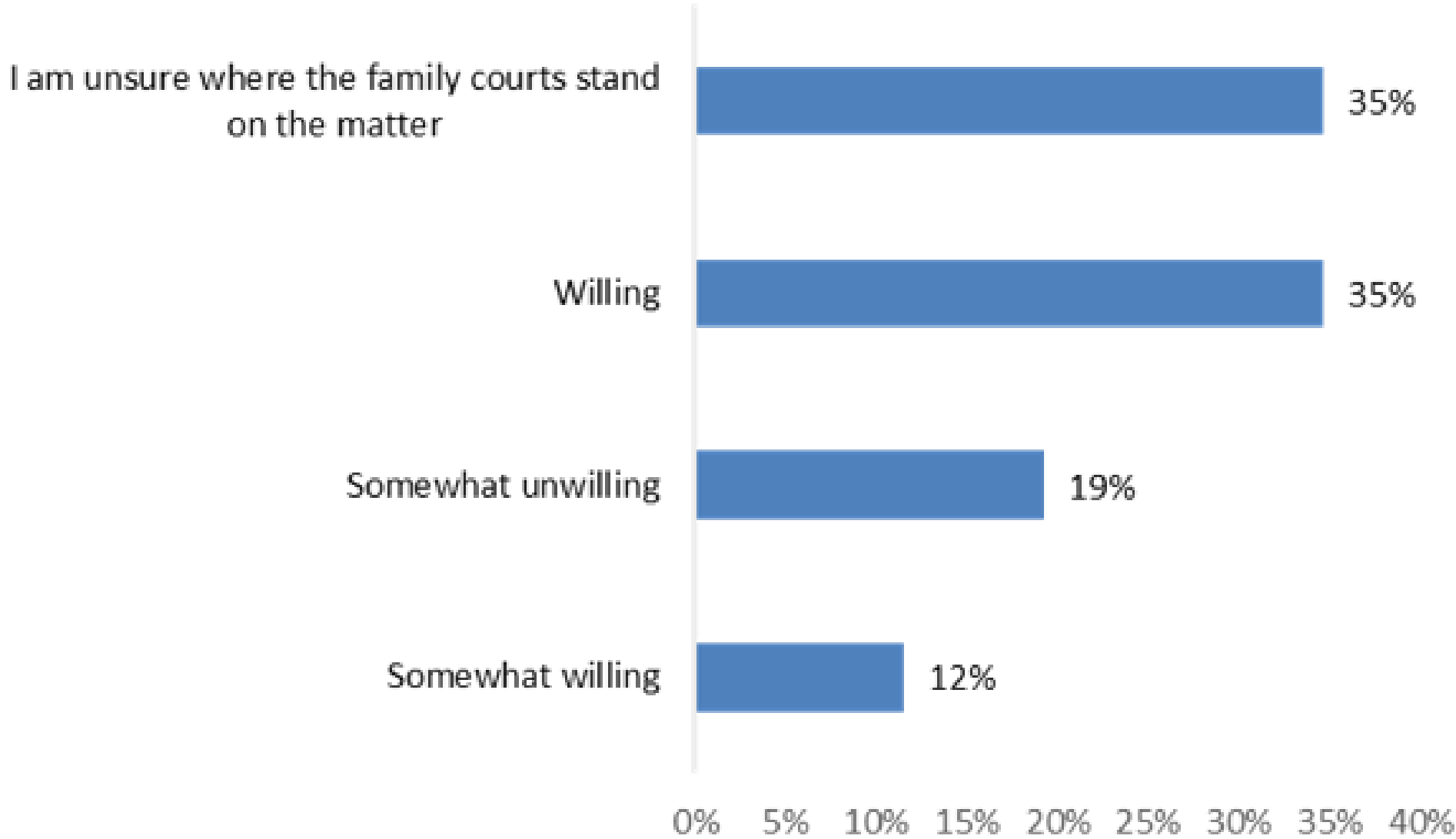
[6] Neutral or Unsure responses are not included.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Process and Support

Twenty-six respondents replied to questions of process and support. Only **35 percent felt their Family Court would be willing to consider placement with a parent or relative living abroad**. There is a demonstrated need to engage family courts around this topic to clearly understand their impressions and approach to the matter of cross-border placements.

Perception of Court Willingness:

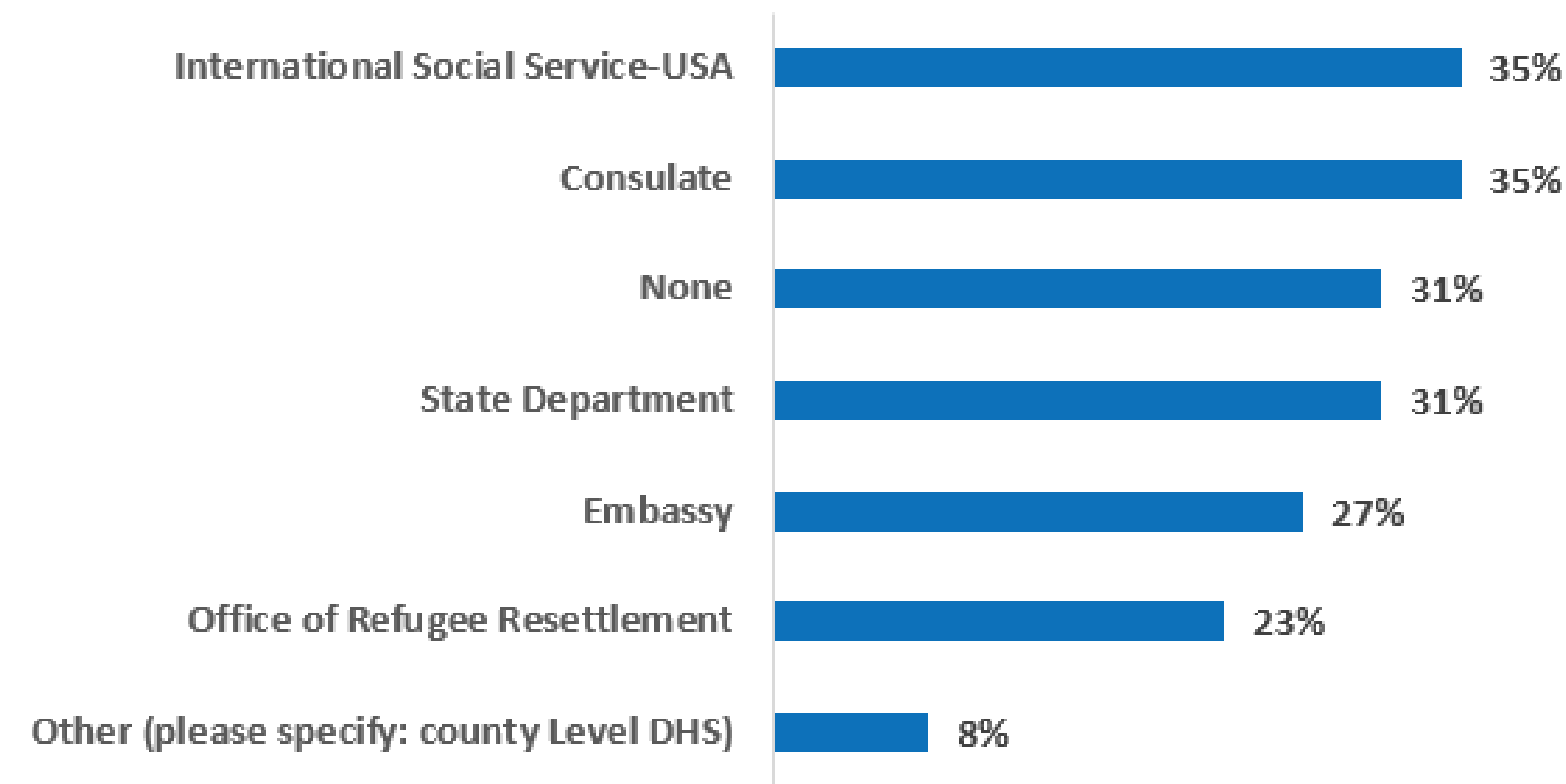


SUMMARY FINDINGS

Process and Support

The survey also gauged the types of entities respondents may have worked with to place a child and the type of placement data they collect. Of the entities used to place a child, **most respondents** (35 percent, n=9) **used a consulate and/or ISS**. Only 19 percent of respondents indicated they collect data on placing a child in a relative home internationally (e.g., 4 unique states: Colorado, New Mexico, Ohio and Virginia).

Entities Used to Place a Child:



SUMMARY FINDINGS

Process and Support

Data Collected	Percent	Count
Legal status/Citizenship of a child	73%	19
If a child was ever placed by child welfare authorities in another state	69%	18
Country of origin of a child	65%	17
Country of origin of a parent	62%	16
Legal status/Citizenship of a parent	60%	15
If a child experience a disrupted adoption in the USA after being adopted internationally	38%	10
If a child has relatives abroad	35%	9
If a child was ever placed by child welfare authorities in a relative home internationally	19%	5

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Resource Needs

The following identifies resources needs around cross border placements as provided by survey respondents:



Dissemination of information about ISS-USA, including how to obtain specific services.



Trainings for state, county and local agencies related to cross-border placements.



Guidance in working with cases involving immigration enforcement, especially related to deported parents.



Resources to connect with relatives and extended family in other jurisdictions.




Connection to international child welfare resources.


SUMMARY FINDINGS

Questions about Cross-Border Placements


Respondents had the following questions:




What is the cost for ISS-USA services?



What post-placement services and monitoring are available and how reliable is the report?



How fast can searches and home assessments be completed?




Can the international contact website URL with the APHSA/AAICPC be shared?

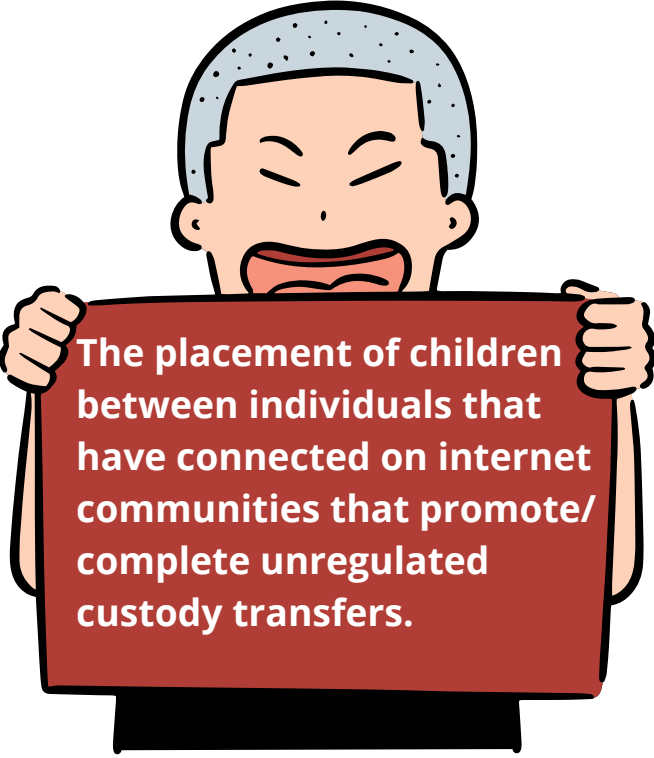
SUMMARY FINDINGS

Concerns about Cross-Border Placements


Respondents had the following concerns:




We cannot practice international placements because of legal jurisdiction.



The placement of children between individuals that have connected on internet communities that promote/complete unregulated custody transfers.



Sometimes it appears to be difficult to obtain placement for children in the smaller and less industrialized countries.



There is little information known to promote, facilitate or support our county partners in child welfare in pursuing cross-border/international placements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of these findings, ISS-USA recommends that the **topic of cross-border placement and its importance be at the forefront of discussion on kinship care amongst federal, state, and city/local-level child welfare agencies and providers.** This can be supported through the following:



The diagram consists of three large, overlapping circles arranged horizontally. The leftmost circle is yellow and contains the word 'Equity'. The middle circle is a teal-blue color and contains the word 'Engagement'. The rightmost circle is a light green color and contains the word 'Evaluation'. The circles overlap in the center, creating a shared space for all three concepts.

Equity

Engagement

Evaluation

RECOMMENDATIONS

Equity



Equity within the family finding process should be more widely explained in advocacy efforts, include cross-border inquiries and engage the courts. Equitable access to kin as placement options can only be achieved with increased awareness of resources around family finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Engagement

National platforms such as the Children's Bureau and the Court Improvement Programs can highlight cross-border permanency planning as part of states responsibility to prioritize child attachments and kinship connections.

- Conduct an awareness campaign aimed at Children's Bureau and Courts
- Encourage states to work with ISS as a consultant to develop protocols



RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation

Research & Tracking
Funding



ISS-USA has demonstrated a relationship with child welfare agencies within and outside of the United States in conducting cross-border assessments and facilitating placements, utilizing policies and practices that may serve as a source of guidance for child welfare agencies and service providers.

ISS-USA is prepared to serve as a consultant to states and federal entities to develop, implement and track policies and practices related to cross-border placements.

Additional funding is needed to further research barriers to cross-border permanency planning and to develop national and state-specific training and resources.