

INTRODUCTION

Oral health literacy (OHL) refers to an individual's capacity to understand and act upon oral health information effectively. OHL is vital for expectant mothers and their children's well-beings. Maternal OHL directly influences the oral health behaviors and dental care decisions. This research aims to explore the varying levels of maternal OHL and its impact on oral health behaviors, understanding these factors is vital in optimizing oral health outcomes for both mothers and children

Goal of the study:

1. Evaluate knowledge and beliefs regarding oral health of pregnant women
2. Evaluate oral health literacy of pregnant women



MATERIALS & METHODS

- One-on-one interview among low-risk pregnant individuals (still ongoing).
- Questions included demographics, dental healthcare, maternal oral health knowledge and beliefs, dental insurance, perceived oral health, previous dental visits, and their interactions with past healthcare providers. .
- Health Literacy in Dentistry (HeLD) is questionnaire composed of questions surrounding oral health literacy based off the participants abilities or challenges. Responses were recorded on a Likert-scale from 'Without any difficulty' = (5) to 'Unable to do'= (0), 65 is the highest attainable score.
- Study location: East Carolina University's Women's Physician Clinic and ECU Health Brody outpatient center.
- All participants were given an oral health hygiene kit for the completion of the survey.

Take a look at the survey!



RESULTS

Table 1.1: Patient Demographics

Total Participants:	23
Average Age (Years):	26
Race and Ethnicity	
Black	15 (65%)
White	7 (30%)
Hispanic	1 (4%)
Educational Level	
2-year or 4-year degree	14 (61%)
High School	8 (35%)
Some level of High School	1 (4%)

Fig 1.1: Age distribution

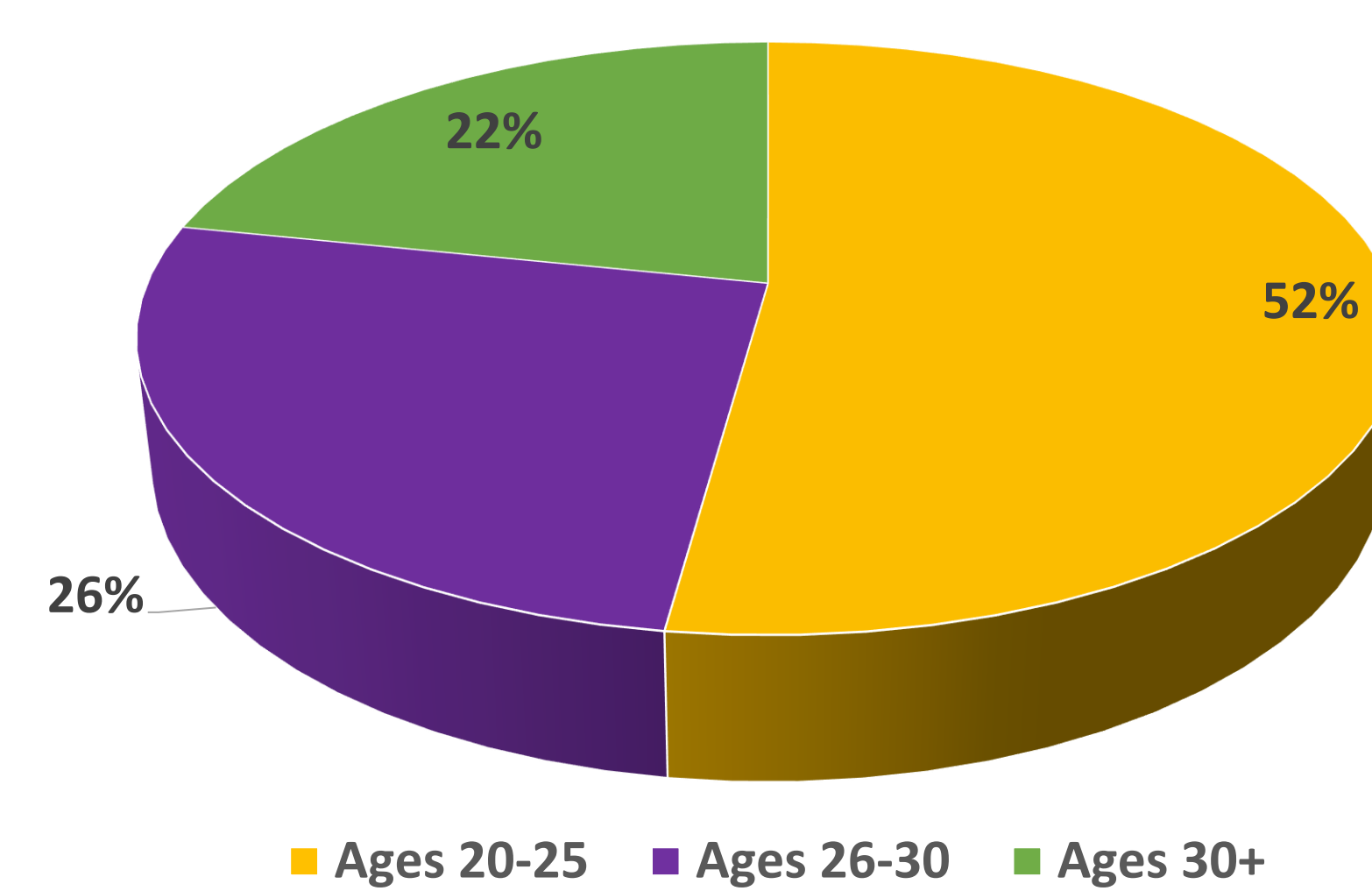


Fig 1.2: Household Income Distribution

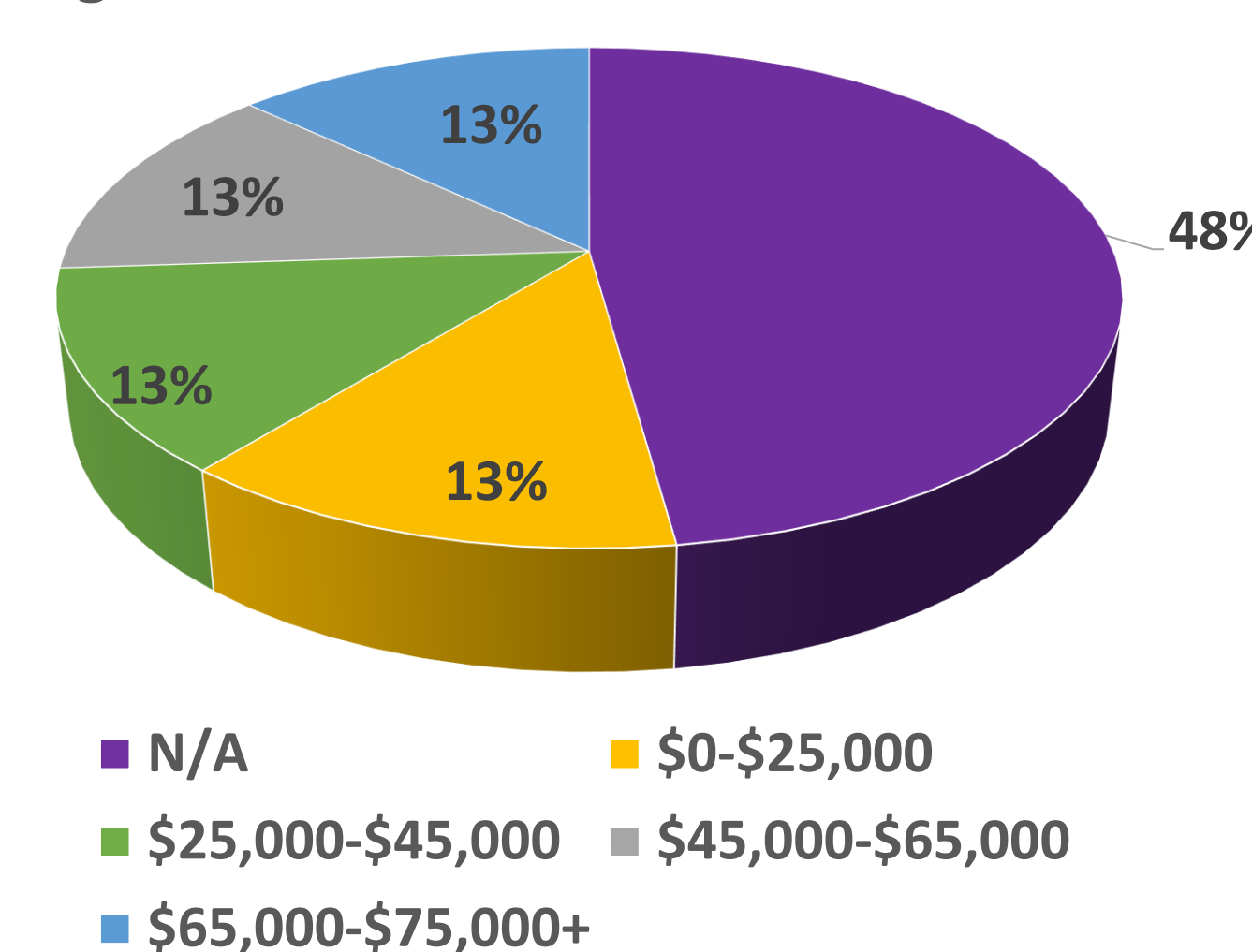


Figure 1.3: Dental Insurance Providers

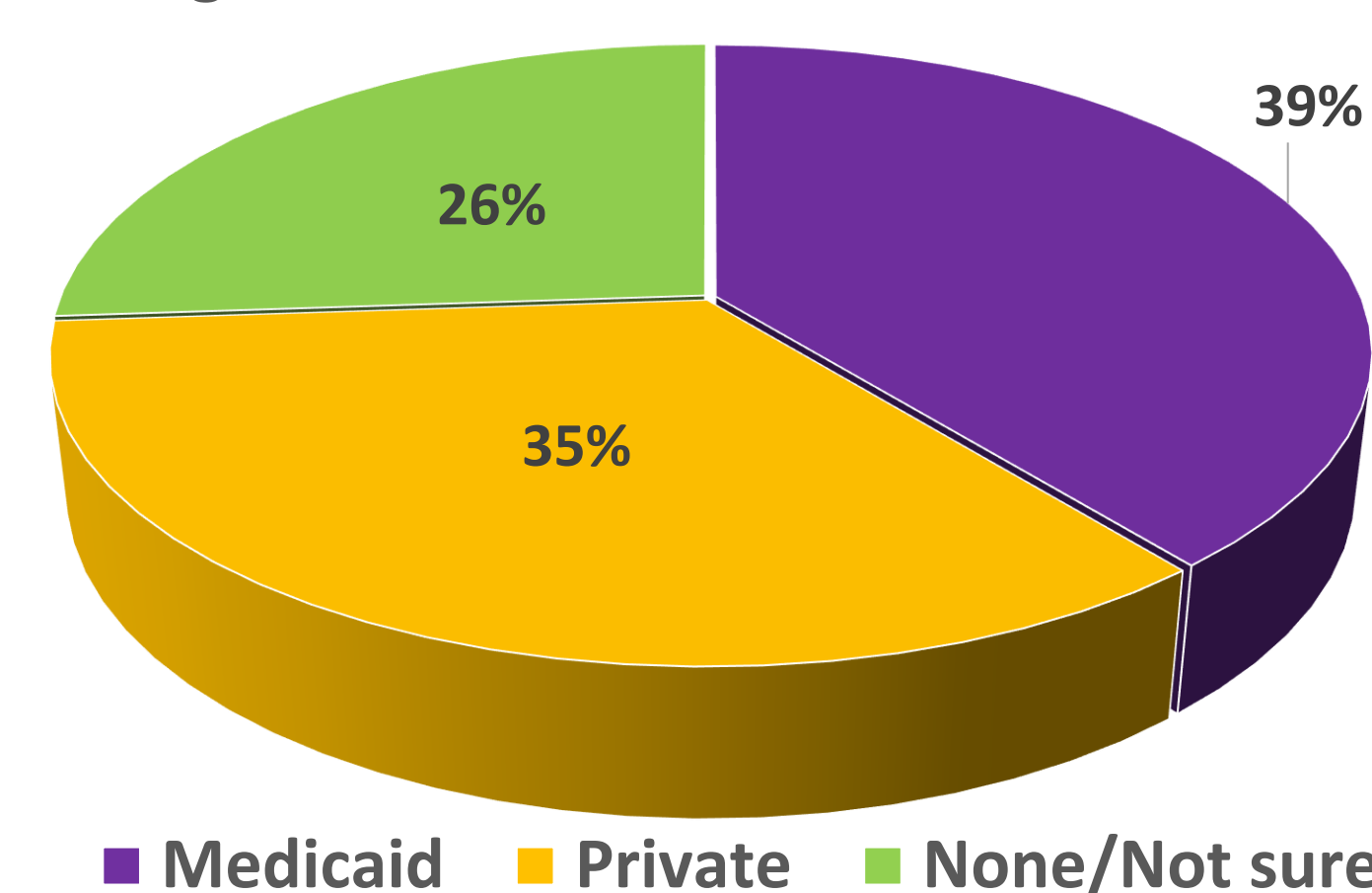


Fig 1.4: Last Visit to Dentist

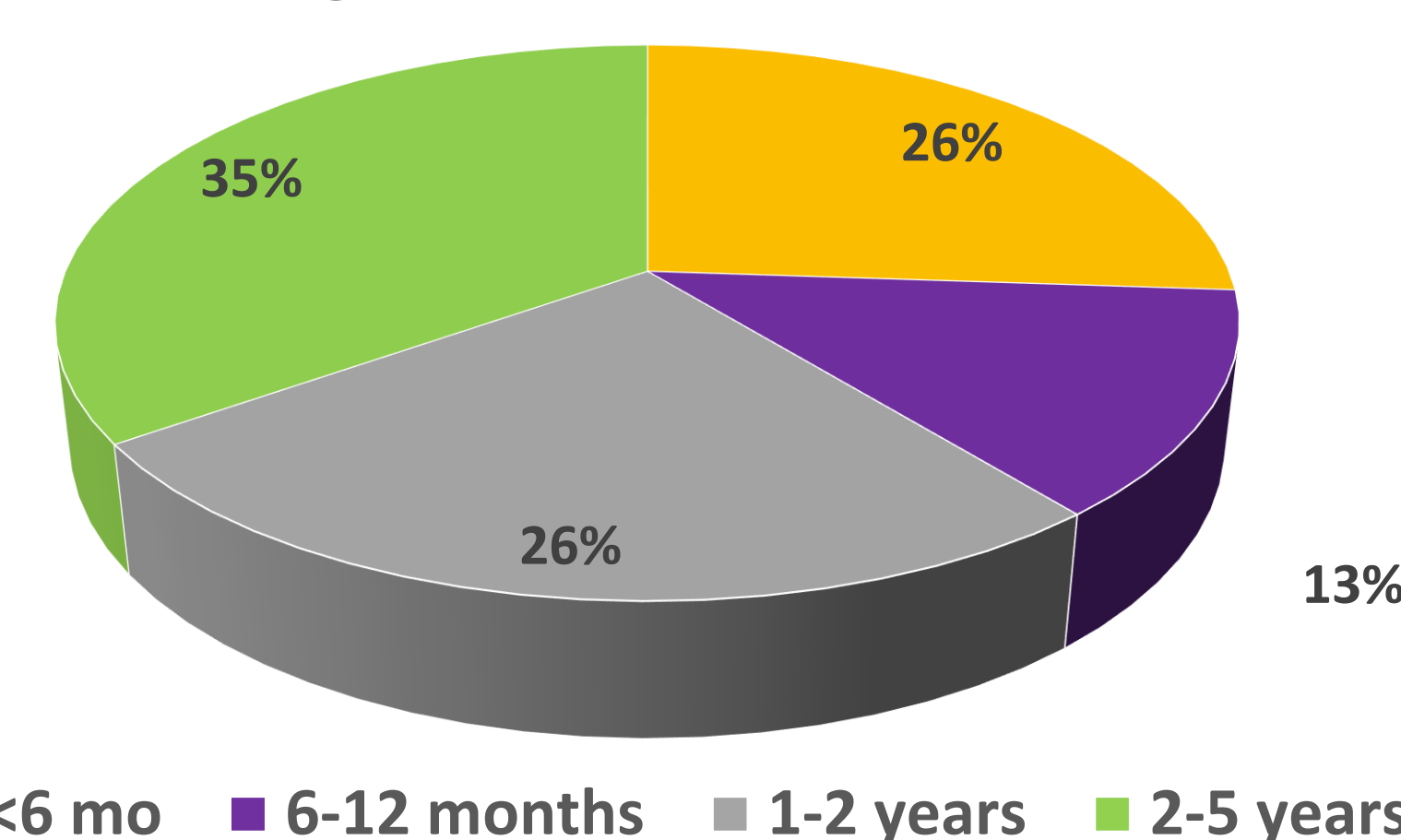
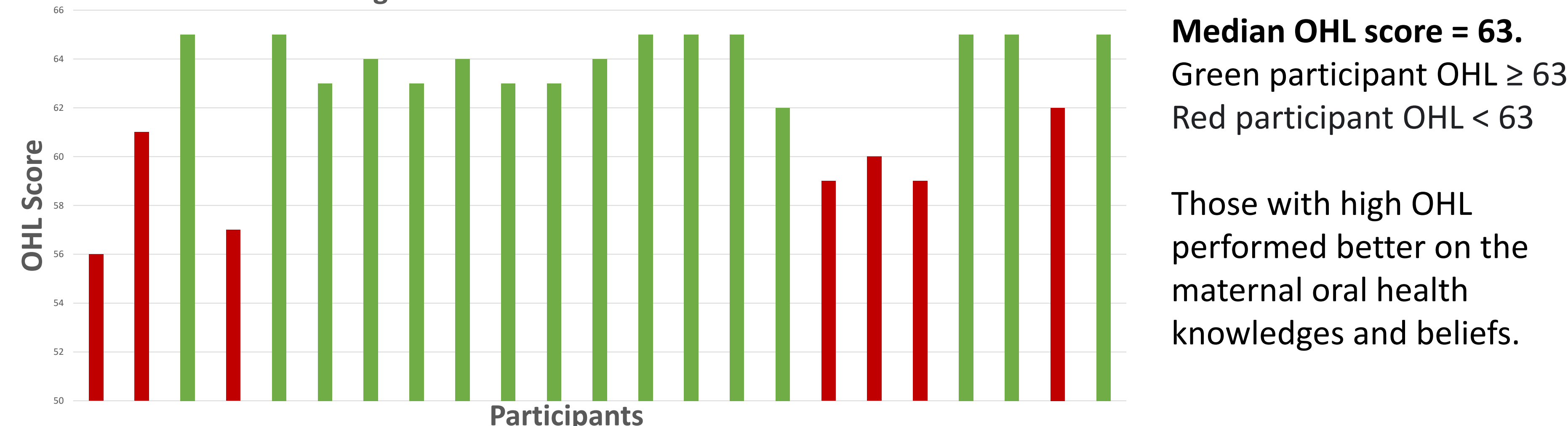


Fig 1.5: OHL Score's Breakdown



- Regarding communication from OB/GYN providers, 11 participants (48%) reported not receiving any information about oral health care checkups, while the remaining participants did.
- When asked about cavity filling for babies, 13 participants (57%) were aware that it should be done even if it doesn't cause pain, whereas 10 (43%) did not know this information.
- Out of the 23 participants, 5 (21%) people have heard of the Head Start program, and 3 of them have had a child be a part of it. (Head start is a United States Department of Health and Human Services program that provides childhood education and supports growth for low-income families.)

DISCUSSION

The study's results show a **promising level of oral health literacy** and **strong inclination toward good oral health behaviors** for their children.

A substantial proportion of the participants demonstrated a **good understanding of oral health and were proactive** about their child's oral health care.

Frequent dental visits emerged as a critical factor influencing oral health knowledge and behaviors. Participants **without recent dental visits were more likely to have misconceptions and poorer oral health**, highlighting the role of regular dental check-ups in reinforcing correct information and practices.

Implications and future studies:

Addressing knowledge gaps and access to barriers can empower expectant mothers to make informed decisions for better oral health outcomes. These findings can inform targeted interventions to improve maternal and child oral health care and reduce oral health disparities.

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