



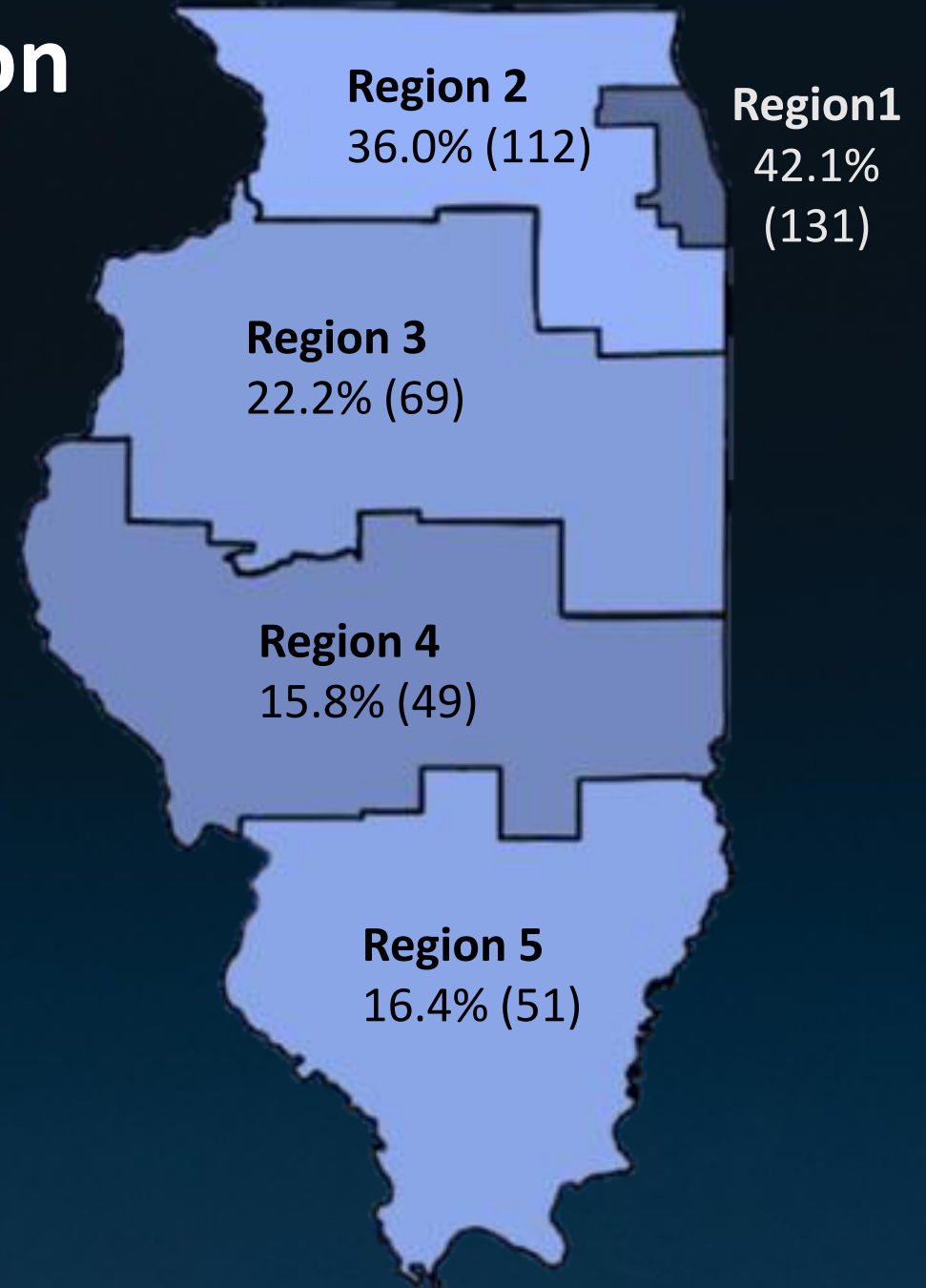
Preparation of Early-Career Behavioral Health Providers in Illinois: Findings from a Statewide Survey

Sonya Leathers, PhD, Amy Starin, PhD, and Sam Carpenter, MS

Primary question: How well do our bachelor's and master's level educational programs prepare people for behavioral health practice?

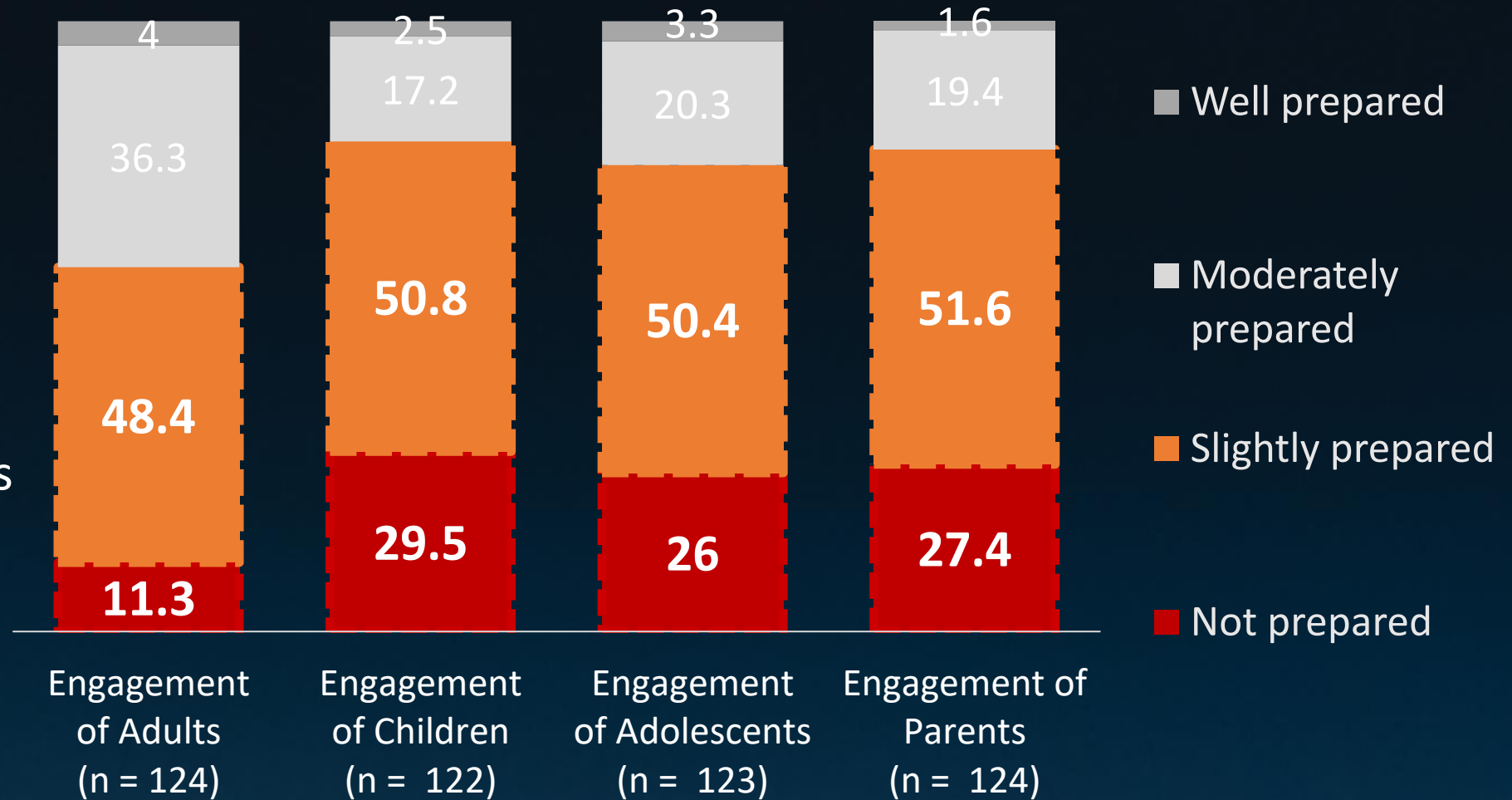
Survey Methods and Participation

- Surveys focused on how prepared early career BA and MA level staff (**less than one year in practice**) are in a range of areas.
- Distributed through multiple listservs and DMH emails **to supervisors and program directors** in community mental health settings
- A total of **311 responses** received from 129 agencies
- Of those that participated in the survey:
 - 45.3% supervised bachelor's level staff
 - 63.3% supervised master's level staff

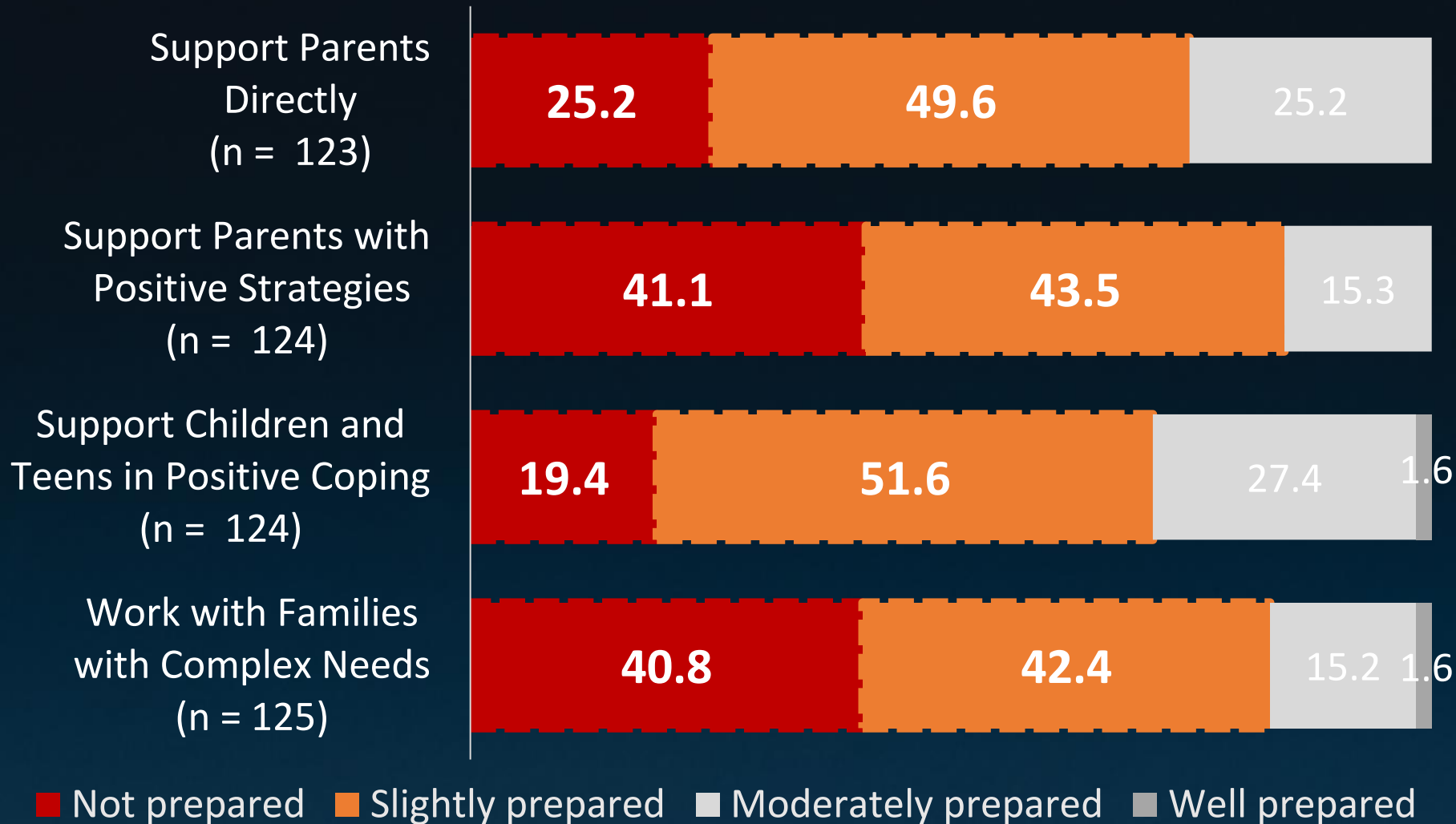


Bachelor's (BA/BS) Preparedness: Engagement Skills

Most BA/BS Staff were reported to by supervisors to be not adequately prepared to engage children, adolescents, and parents (less than a quarter moderately or well prepared).



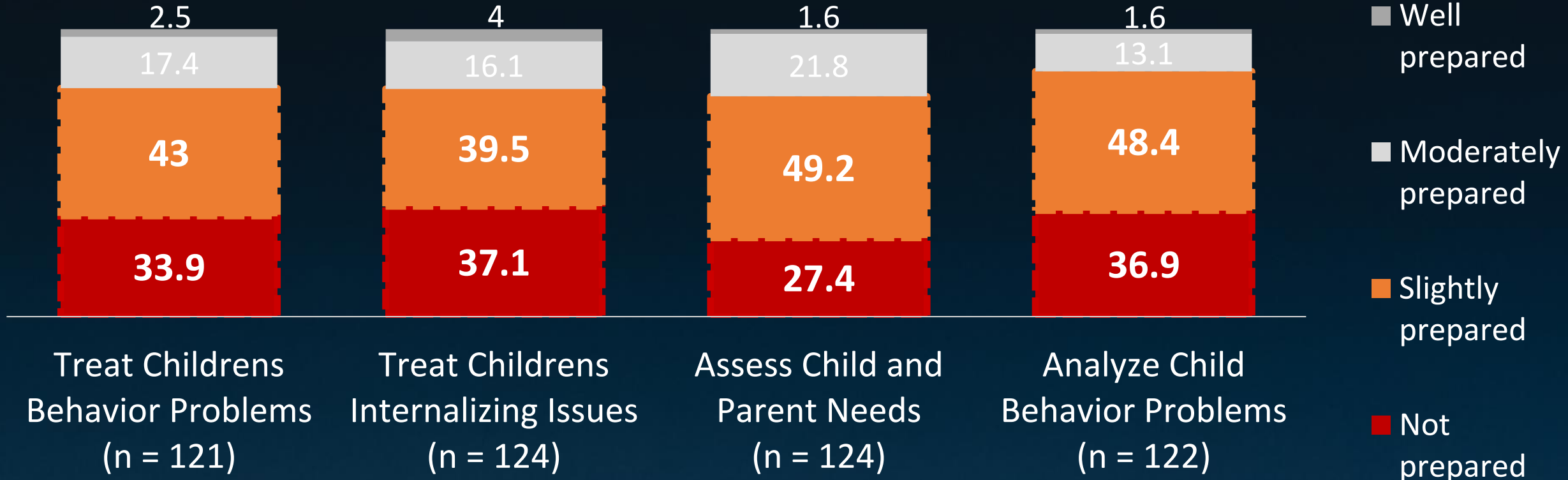
Bachelor's (BA/BS) Level Staff Preparation to Work with Parents and Children



BA/BS staff needed more preparation to support parents directly and provide support for parents' and young clients' use of positive coping strategies.

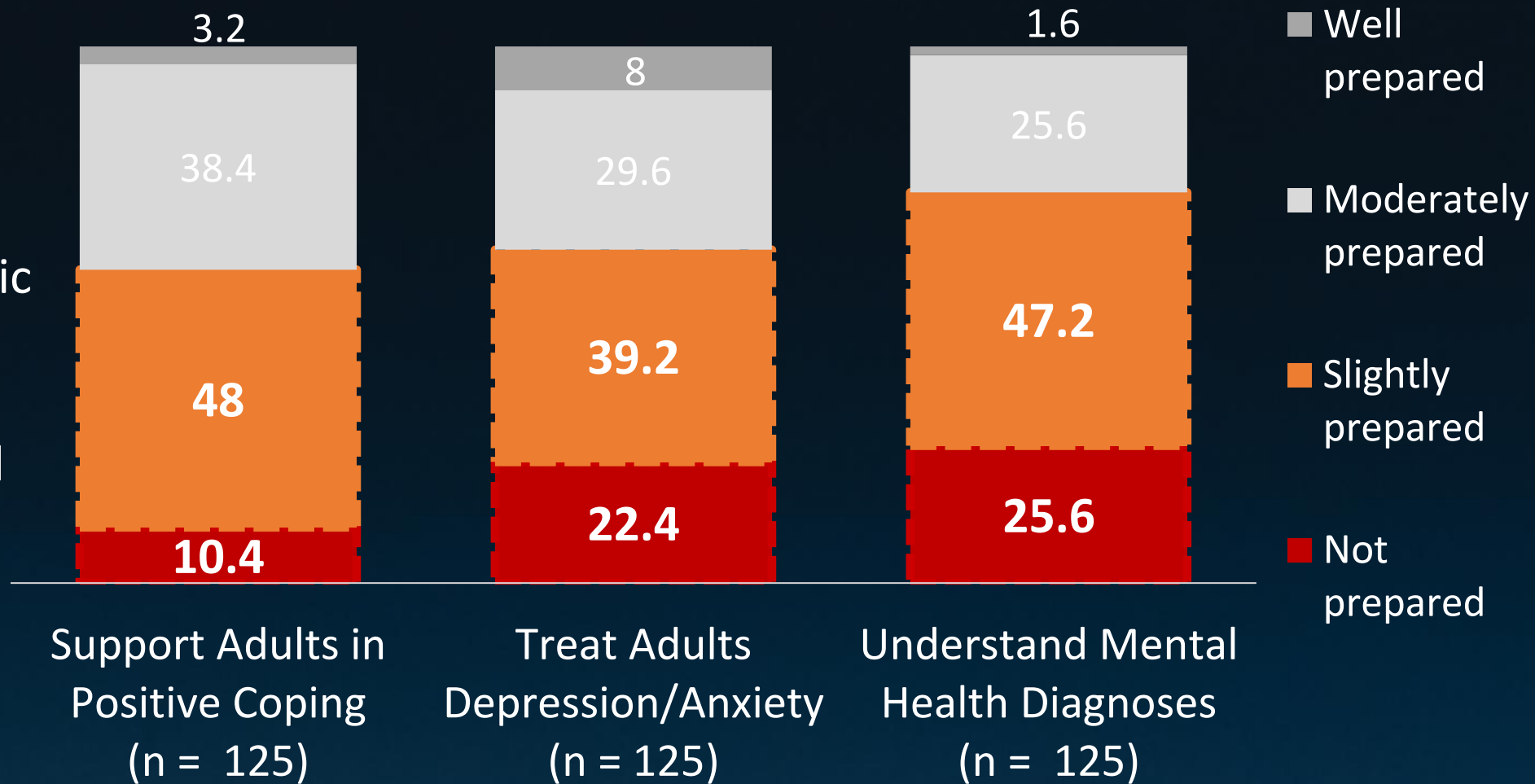
Bachelor's (BA/BS) Preparation to Treat Children

As expected, given their level of training, most BA/BS level staff were not prepared to assess needs or provide treatment to children.



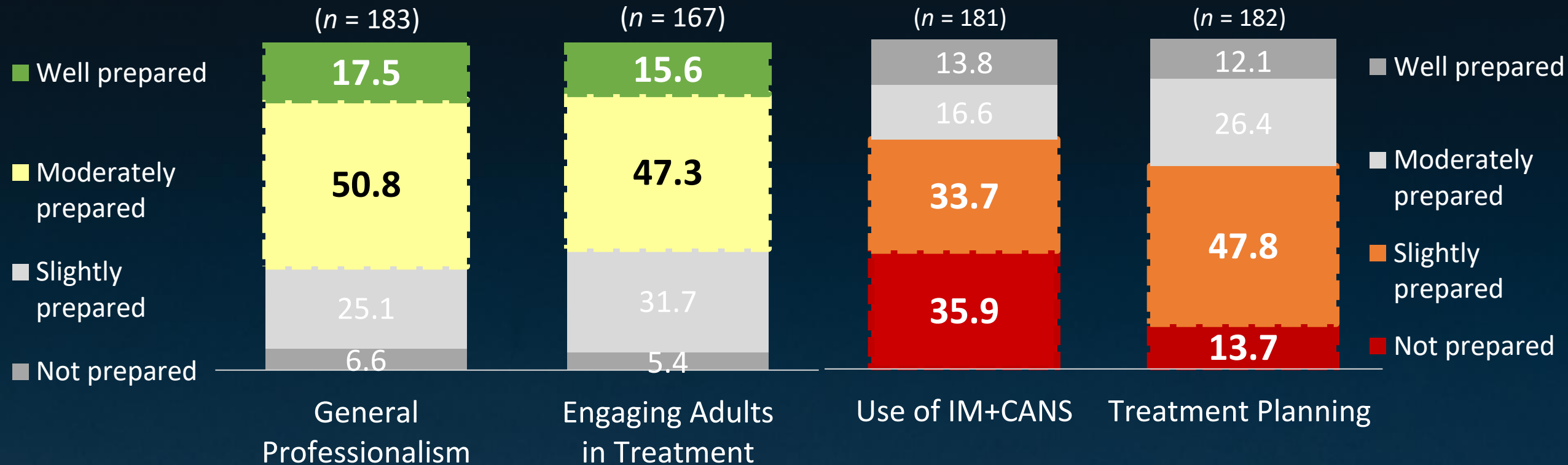
Bachelor's (BA/BS) Preparation to Work with Adults

While the majority of BA/BS level providers need additional preparation to work with adults with specific mental health conditions, over a quarter were prepared to work with adults with depression/anxiety and to understand mental health diagnoses.



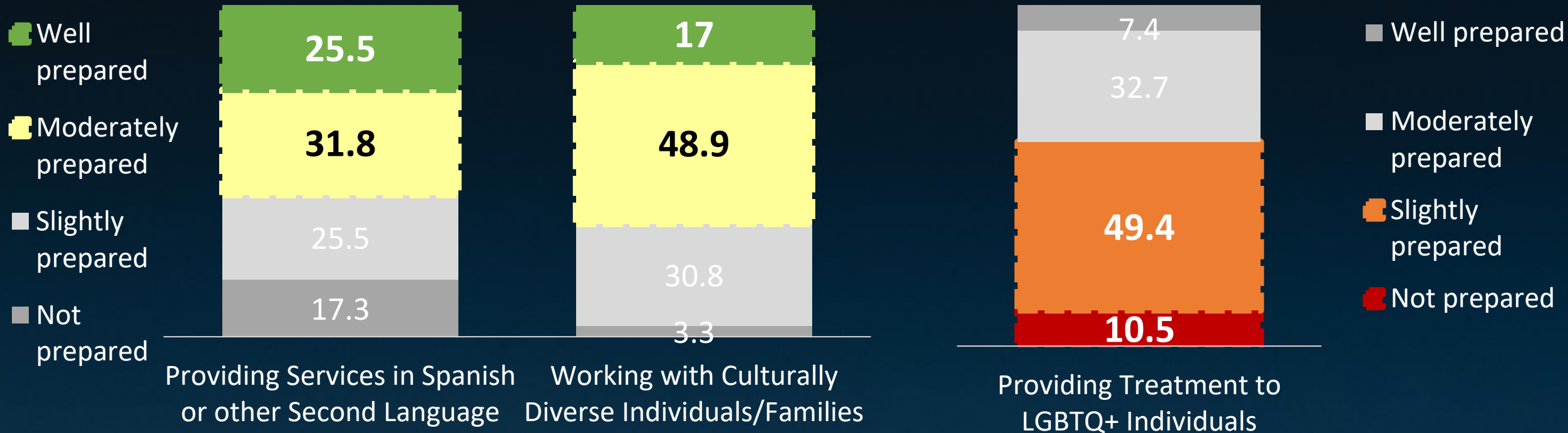
Master's Degree (MA) Staff Preparedness

Supervisors reported that MA-level staff higher levels of preparation than BA/BS staff, as expected. However, most were not well prepared to use IM+CANS. Engagement of adults and general professionalism were viewed as relative strengths.

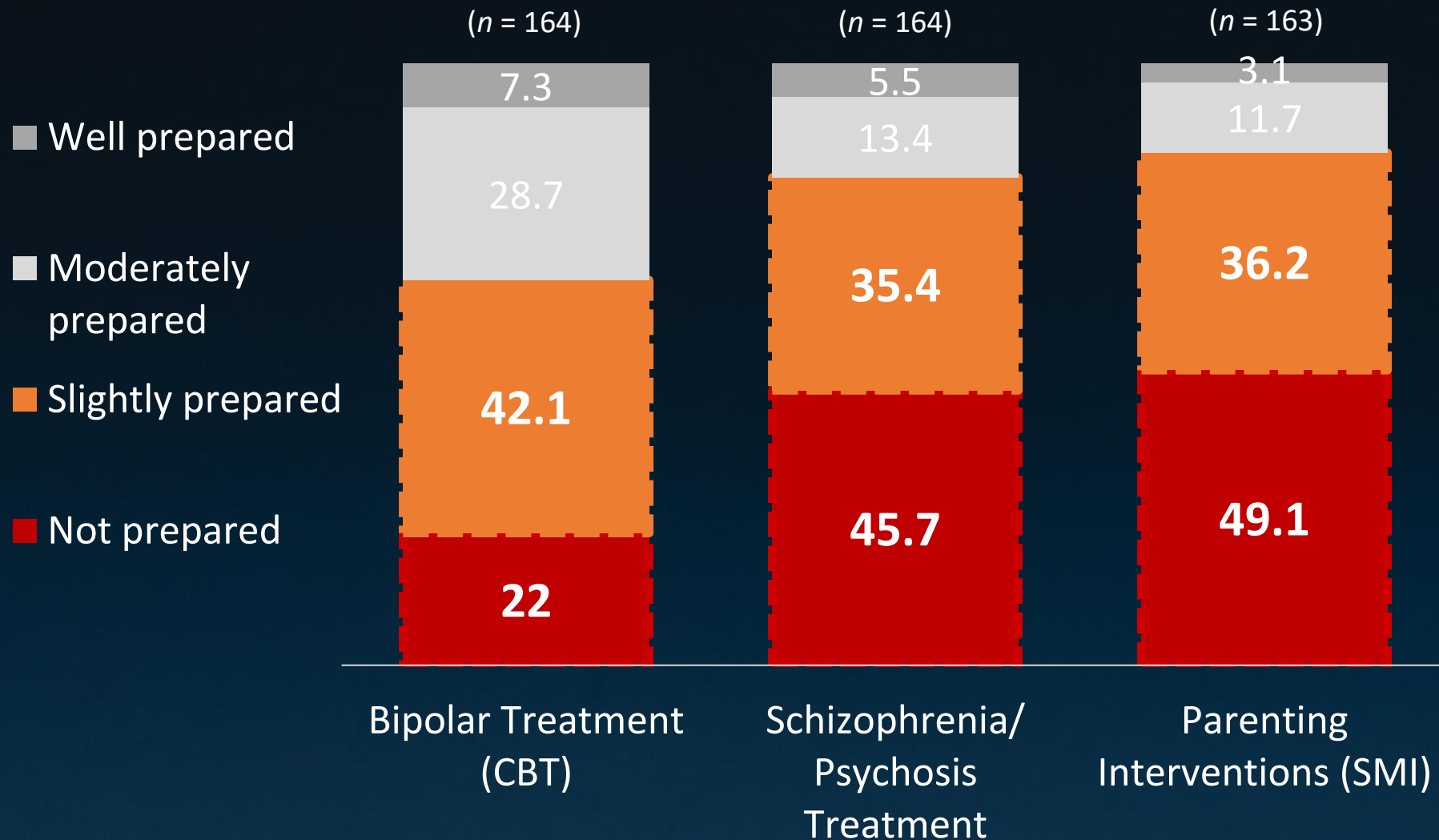


Master's Degree (MA) Staff Preparedness

Providing services to diverse adult populations were also relative strengths; relatively lower preparation was reported in working with LGBTQ+ individuals.

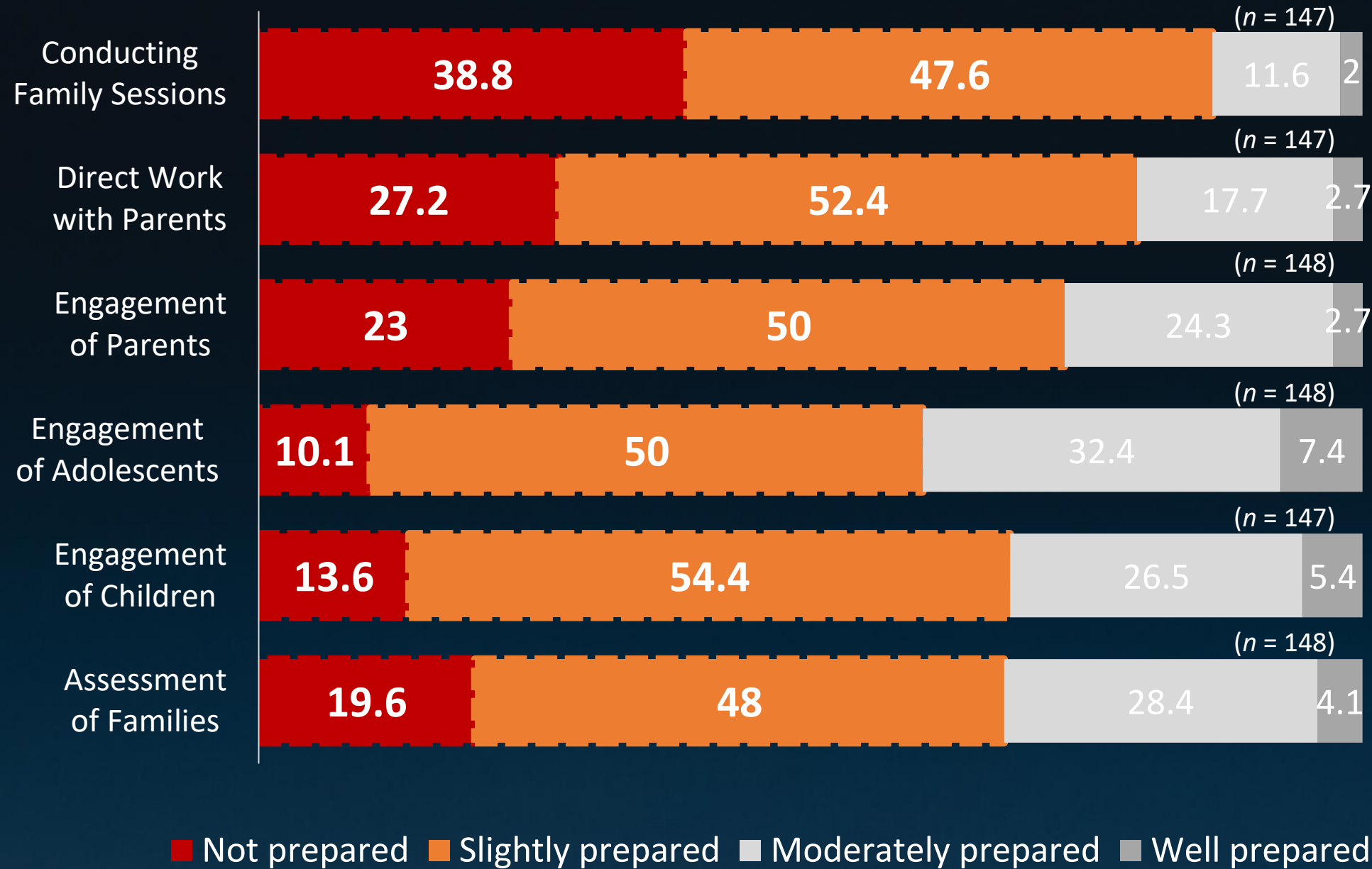


Master's Level Staff Preparation to Work with Adults



Most MA level staff were also unprepared to work with people with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, or to provide parenting interventions.

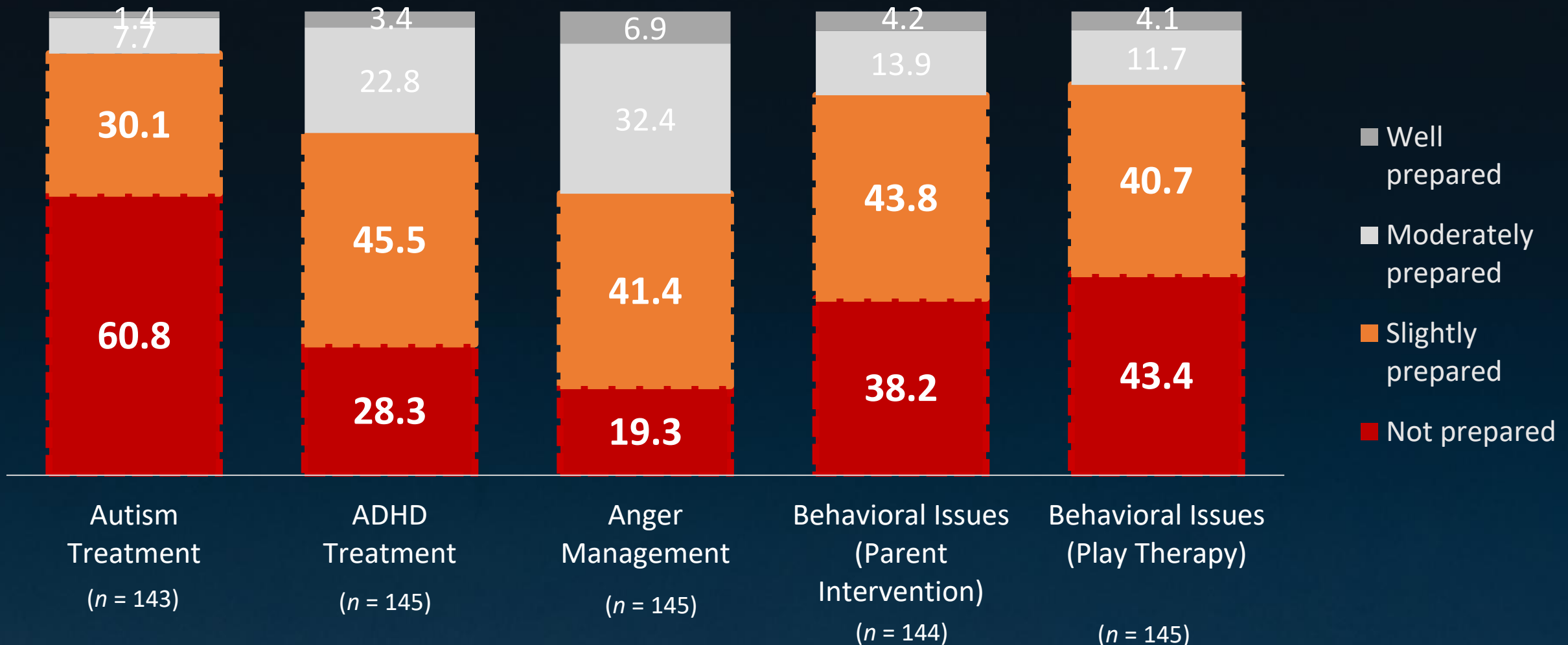
Masters Level Staff: Work with Parents and Children



Most MA-level staff need more preparation to work with parents and children. Direct work with parents and ability to conduct family sessions are significant educational needs.

Master's Level Staff Preparation to Treat Children

Supervisors report that most early career MA-level staff are not prepared to treat children with autism, ADHD, and externalizing behaviors.



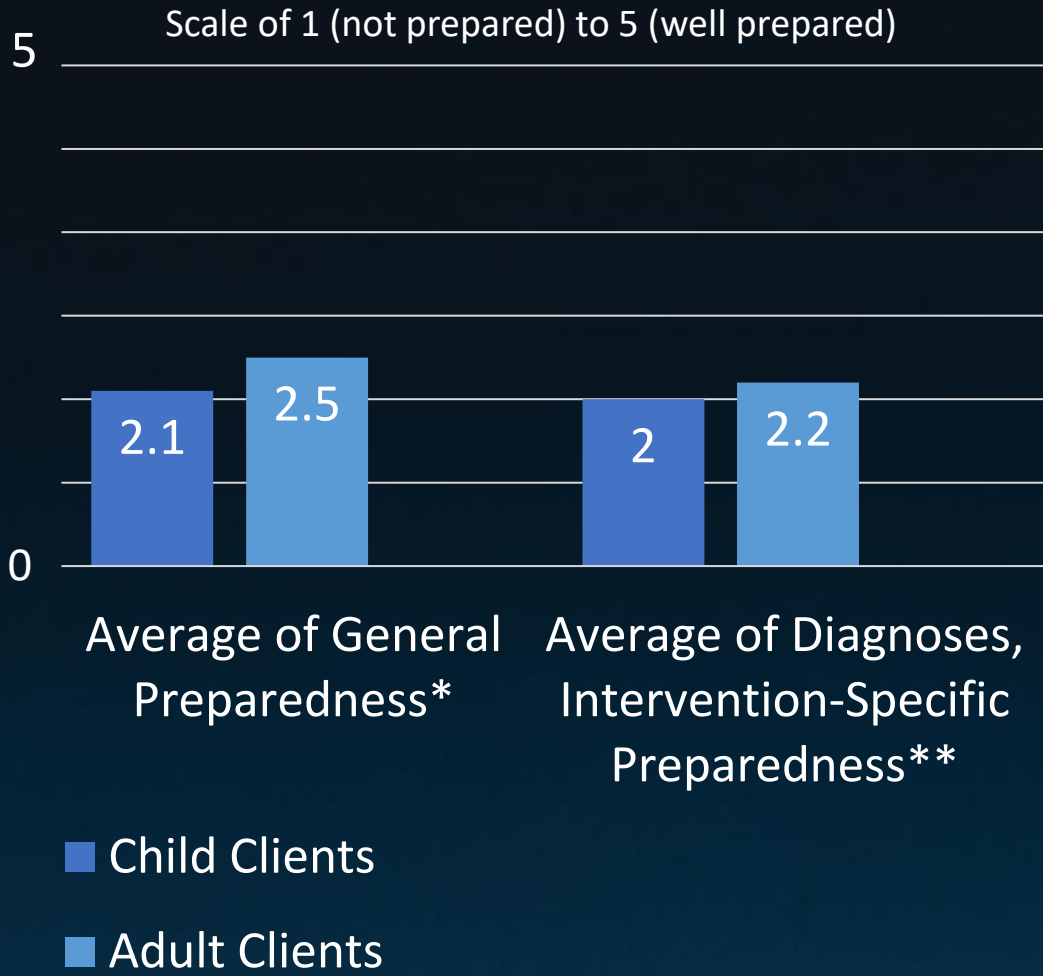
Comparison of Master's Level Preparation to Treat Children and Adults

- These analyses included responses only from supervisors who reported overseeing work of both MA clinicians who see children and those who see adults, or clinicians in lifespan clinics
- Parallel questions about BA/ BS and MA level staff were compared using paired t tests
- Findings support the same pattern seen in the descriptive data:

Lower preparation was reported for clinical work with children and parents, although fewer differences were found when comparing treatment of specific mental health needs.

Master's Level: Age of Client Comparisons

Average Preparedness Based on Client Age



* $t(133) = -9.60, p < .001$ ** $t(130) = -8.75, p < .001$

Preparation for Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis

with Children
($n = 139$)



with Adults
($n = 133$)



Preparation for working with people with multiple or complex needs

with Children
($n = 139$)

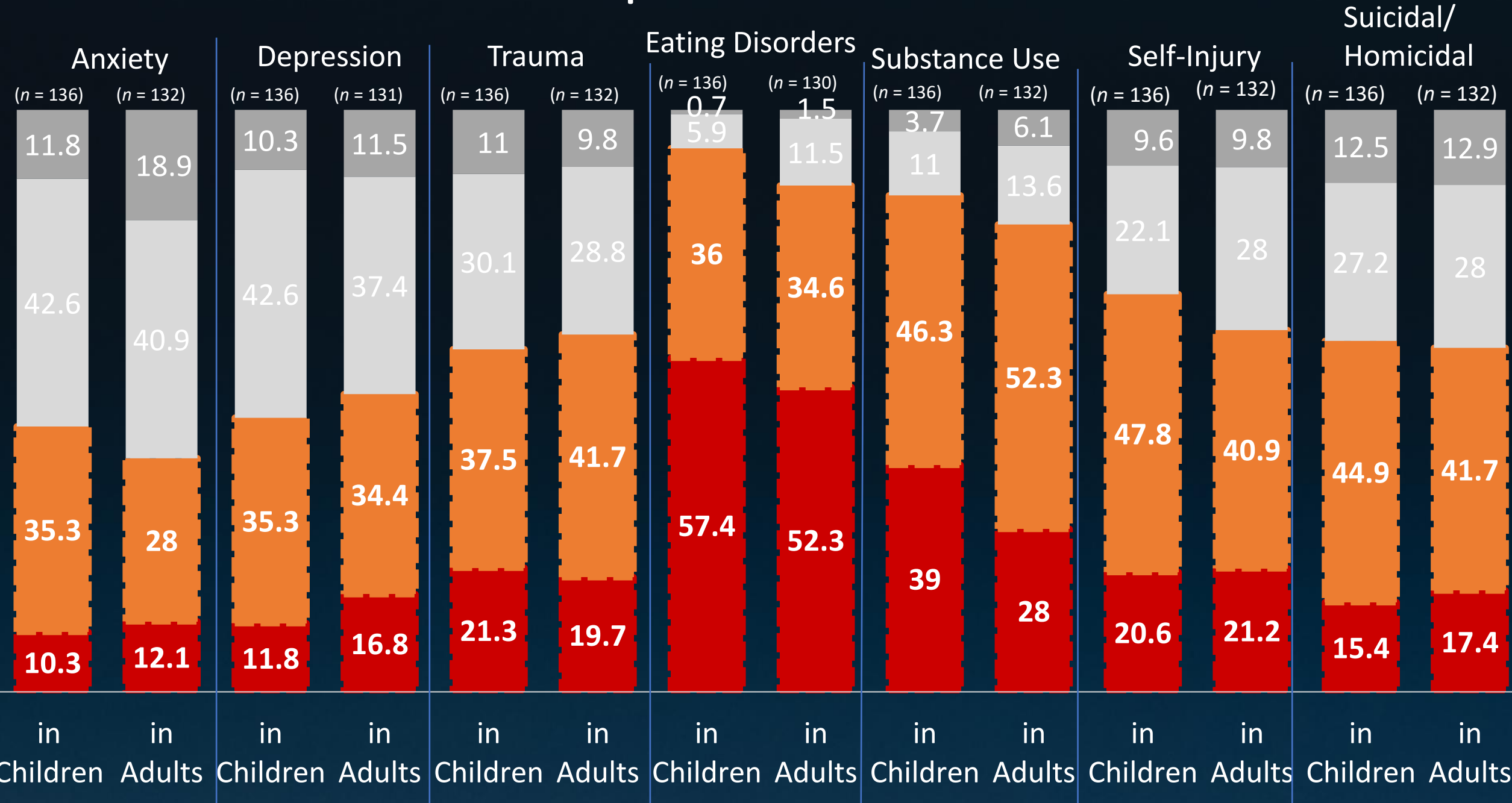


with Adults
($n = 134$)



■ Not Prepared ■ Slightly Prepared
■ Moderately Prepared ■ Well Prepared

Master's Level: Percent Prepared to Treat...

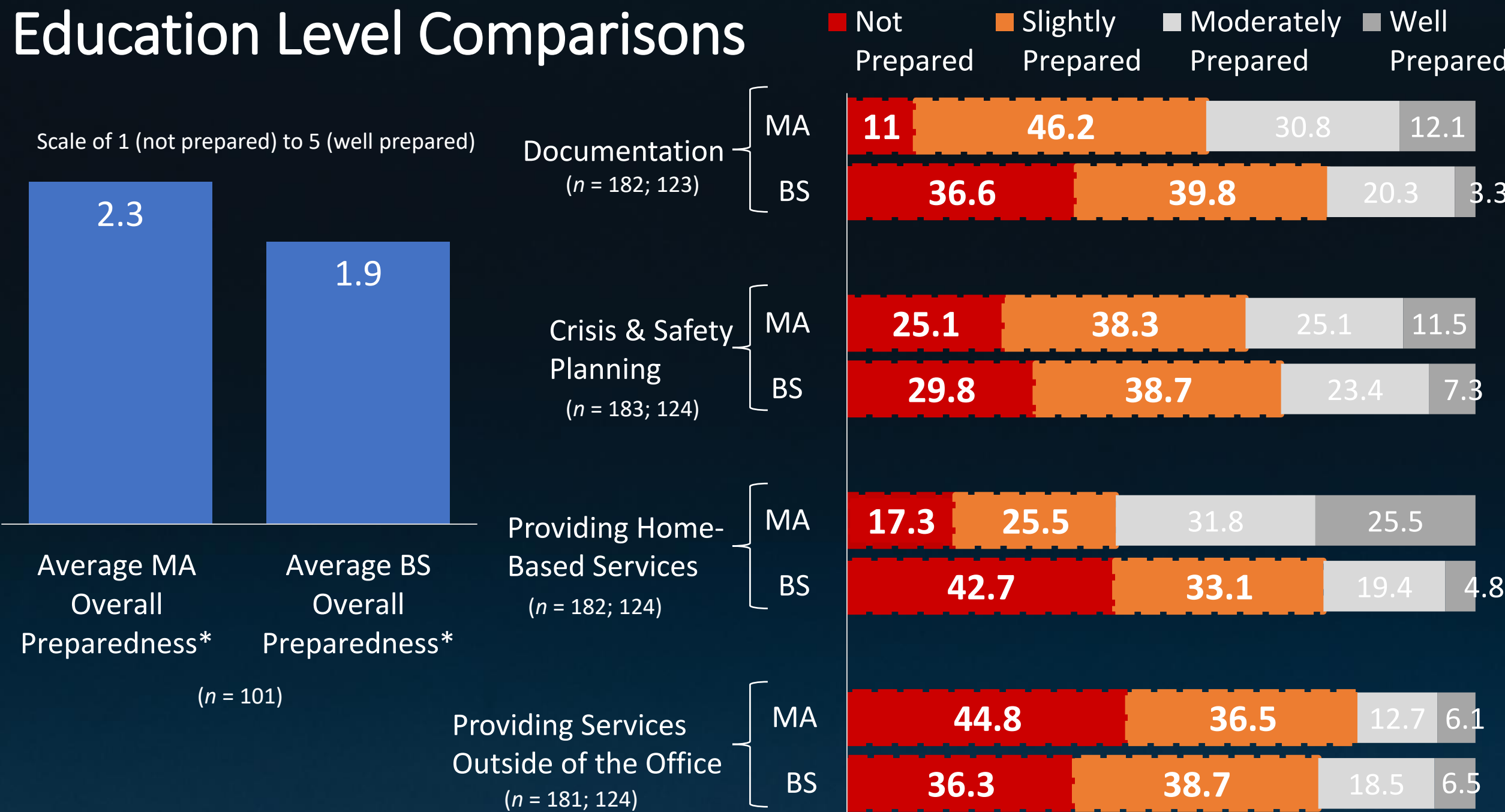


Comparison of MA-level and BA/BS Level Staff

- ***Do supervisors report stronger preparation among early career MA level staff than early career BA/ BS staff?***
- Same method used to compare responses within the subgroup supervisors that reported on preparation of both degree levels.
- Questions for BA/BS and MA level staff varied based on expected skill set, but questions related to treatment also included for BA/ BS level staff, as some are in clinical roles.

Findings similar to descriptive findings; stronger preparation reported for master's level staff, as expected.

Education Level Comparisons



* $t(100) = 6.29, p < .001$

Next Steps to Address Early Career Training Needs

- *Form an educational curriculum work group*
 - Develop targeted solutions to address gaps in skills training for behavioral health (BH) professionals.
- *Outreach to schools*
 - Advocate for curriculum updates to enhance BH skills training, including evidence-based practices skill development, interventions for parents and children, family interventions, in home interventions, and crisis planning, etc.
- *Strengthen field placements*
 - Partner with employers and schools to provide hands-on experience addressing identified skill gaps.
- *Expand continuing education*
 - Create certifications or training modules focused on high need areas with a focus on practice skills development.



Ways to Engage with the BHWC



Join an SIU Project Group:

The new SIU Project Groups will begin meeting this fall.



Research Findings:

Access reports on demographics and retention needs in CMH. Final reports will be posted on the BHWC website shortly.



Collaboration:

BHWC collaborates with various agencies, programs, and providers across Illinois. Each Initiative has an Advisory Group that provides technical expertise and recommendations. Contact Carrie Welter at cwelter@uic.edu to get involved.

Join us with Cook County Behavioral Health to learn and share insights on burnout prevention and retention strategies that work - currently in development!



Illinois BHWC Website

Resources

- Behavioral & Mental Health Jobs in IL
- Interactive Workforce Dashboard
- Data and Reports on the BH Workforce in IL
- Funding Opportunities
- Community Health Worker Certification Information & Tools
- Provider Support Tools and Resources

Training Opportunities

- Supervision Training Series & Learning Collaborative
- PracticeWise MATCH Training & Learning Collaborative
- Motivational Interviewing Courses
- Integrated Care ECHO Training Series
- Telehealth ECHO Training Series
- Access QR codes for trainings on next page



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