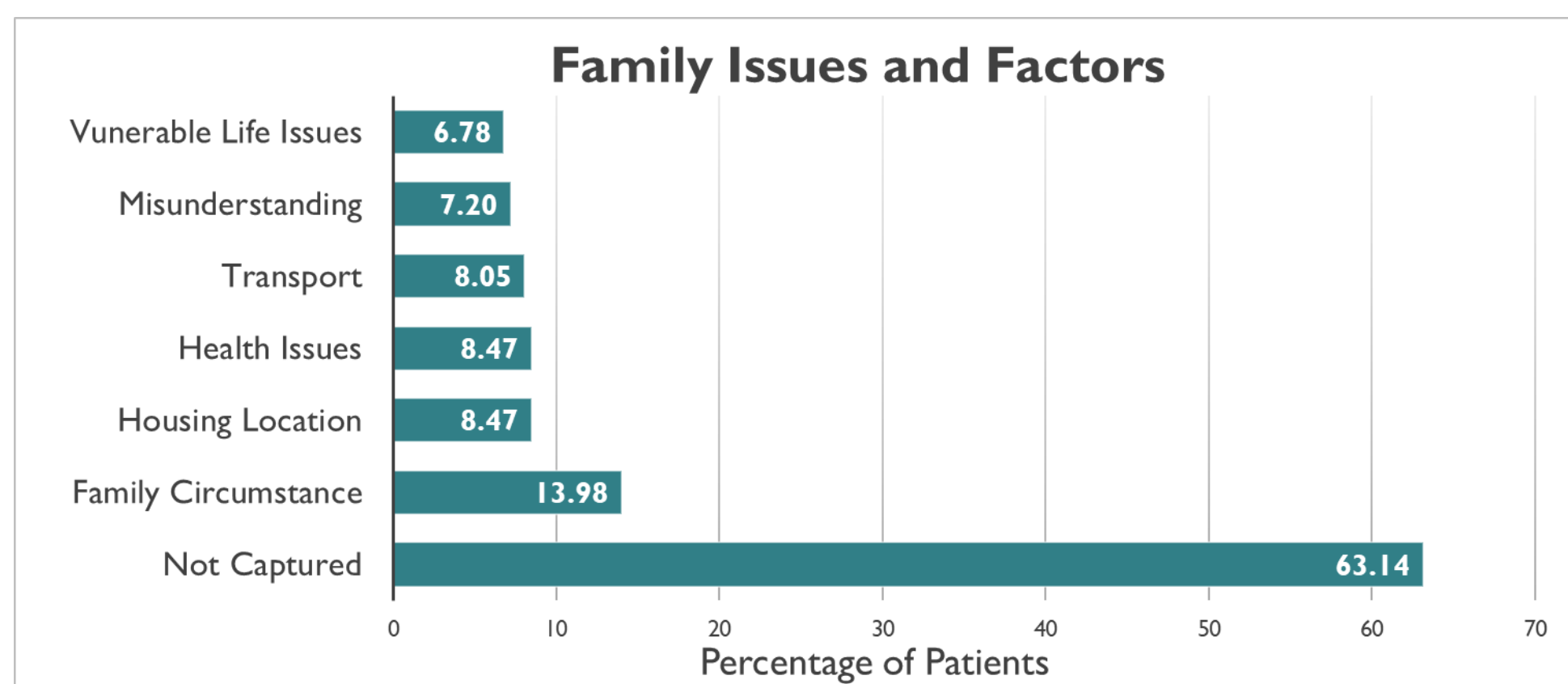


# Supporting Families through Newborn Hearing Screening to Diagnosis

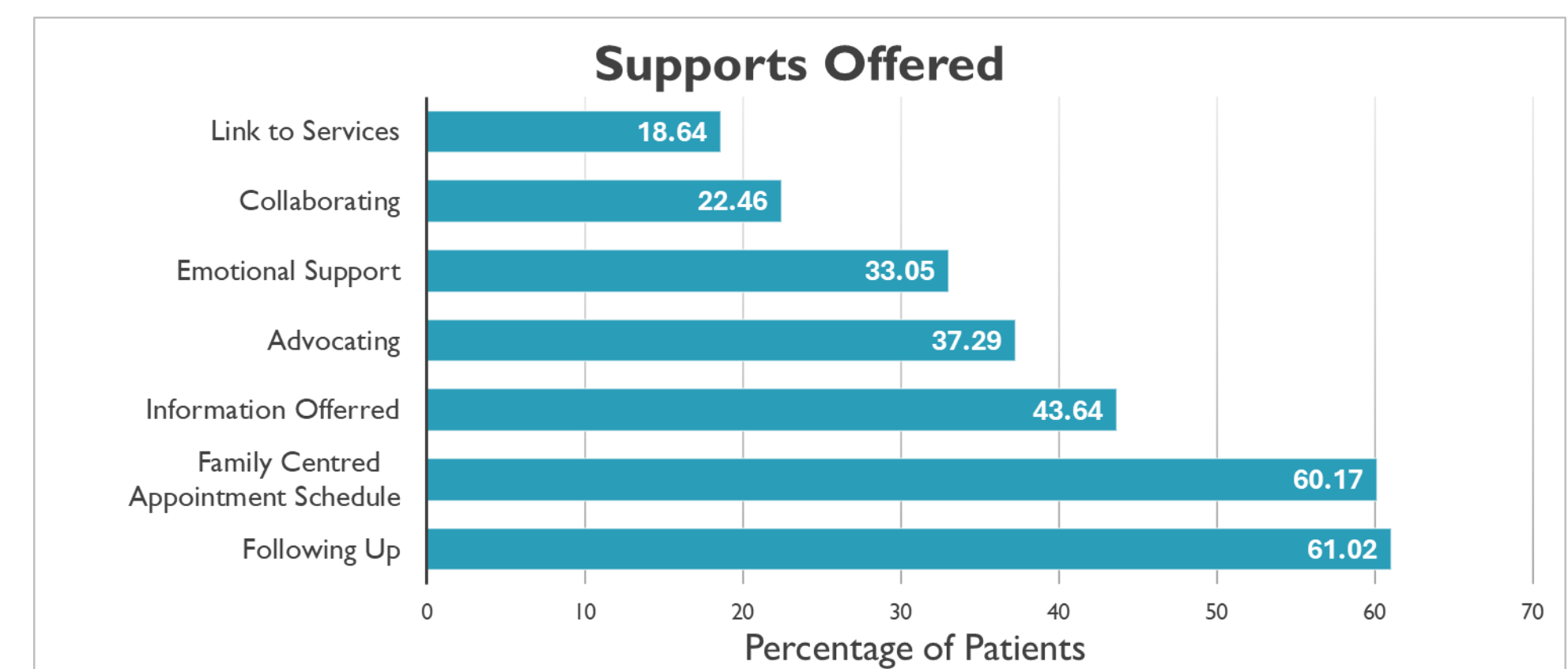
## Statewide Audiology Service - Royal Hobart Hospital

The Family Support Service (Audiology) supports Tasmanian families on their hearing journey by working with them to identify and address a range of issues they may be faced with. Incidental feedback suggests that with supports (both practical and emotional) barriers to engagement are often overcome, with families coping better through the Audiology process. In 2024 we undertook a retrospective file audit in order to further develop and adapt the focus of our Family Support Service, and other Audiology family centred clinic models, to the needs of our population. In Tasmania this includes a dispersed population and relatively high levels of disadvantage. This retrospective file audit considered the level of supports provided and range of issues and factors experienced by 236 paediatric patients and their families who were referred in 2021-2024 to the Tasmanian Health Service, Statewide Audiology Service, Family Support team.



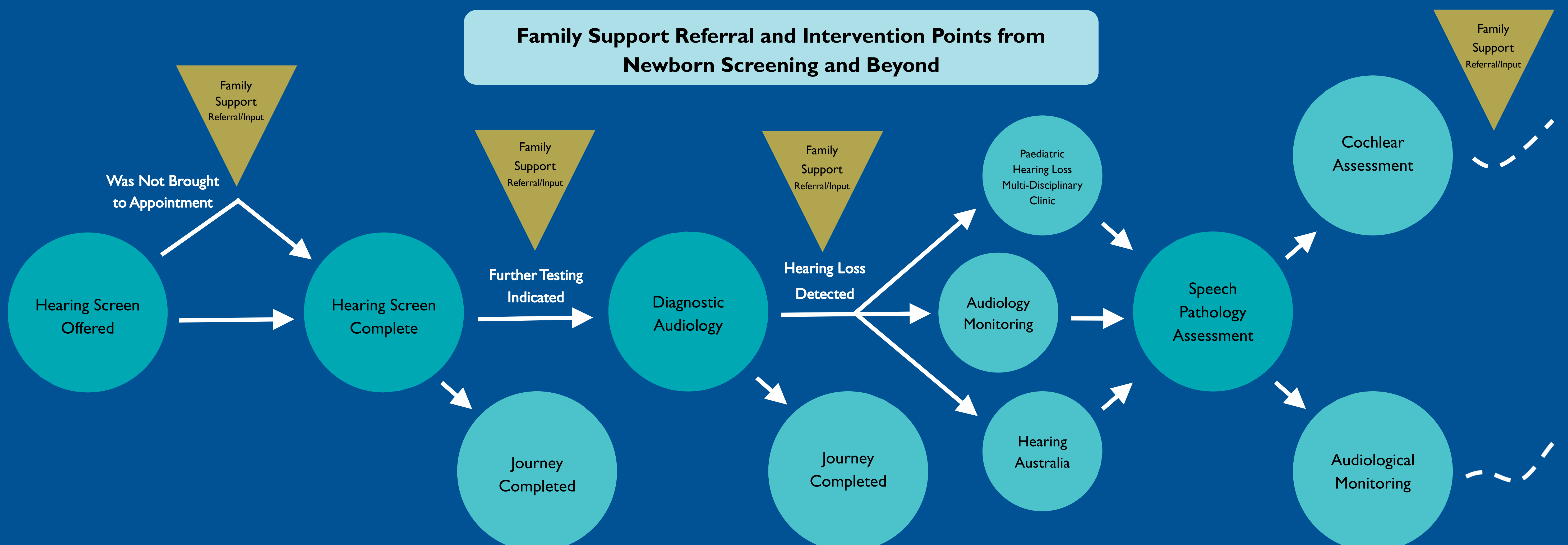
**Graph 1:** Percentage of patients who experienced each category of Family Issues and Factors affecting the degree of engagement with the Audiology process, as identified by Family Support. It is common for patients to be experiencing multiple of these factors at the time of support. Each category covers multiple factors. For example, the category Family Circumstances includes situations such as financial difficulty, multiple siblings (schedule clashes) and timing of appointment complexities.

Note: Not Captured includes issues uncategorised or not disclosed.



**Graph 2:** Percentage of patients who were offered each category of supports from the Family Support Service, as identified using a family centred approach by the Family Support Worker. Each category includes numerous supports customised to the needs of the individuals. It is common for patients to be offered multiple supports throughout their Audiology journey.

### Family Support Referral and Intervention Points from Newborn Screening and Beyond



#### Hearing assessment results

The pathway engagement and hearing assessment results were also reviewed for a limited sample of 50 patients in this retrospective file audit.

80% completed their newborn screening pathway, and although 20% did not these patients did subsequently re-engage and complete a diagnostic audiology pathway.

Of the limited sample of 50 patients, 66% were referred for diagnostic audiology and their hearing assessment results showed:

- 21% Normal hearing
- 79% Diagnosed with Hearing Loss (61% Permanent and 39% Transient)

#### Summary

Family Issues and Factors identified were fairly evenly reported, with Family Circumstance reported most frequently and ways to improve accessibility to and engagement with THS Statewide Audiology Service were considered. In view of the issues and factors identified, possible future directions could include:

- Increasing inpatient newborn hearing screening coverage to reduce outpatient appointments.
- Implementing a web based scheduling portal to allow families choice, to select for themselves a more family centred appointment date/time earlier in the hearing pathway.
- Explore partnership with Children and Family Learning Centres (who have clinical facility capacity) to offer local outpatient appointments in rural and remote communities.
- Increasing staff/patient awareness of and accessibility to consumer information regarding housing support assistance to assist families to access this as soon as possible.

#### Supports Offered

	Following Up	Family Centred Appointment Schedule	Information Offered	Advocating	Emotional Support	Collaborating	Link to services
Family Circumstance	58%	100%	36%	30%	18%	21%	18%
Housing/Location	85%	90%	65%	45%	65%	55%	60%
Health Issues	70%	75%	60%	25%	75%	30%	20%
Transport	74%	79%	63%	32%	32%	47%	53%
Misunderstanding	71%	53%	47%	35%	47%	24%	35%
Vulnerable Life Issues	63%	63%	50%	25%	38%	38%	13%

**Table 1:** Percentage of patients who received a particular category of support per each factor identified as affecting the degree of engagement with the Audiology process. For example, information was offered to 65% of patients identified as having housing/location issues. Supports needed were identified using a family centred approach by the Family Support Worker when engaging with the patient.

Note: At the time of contact with Family Support (Audiology) people disclosing vulnerable life issues had often already been provided with linkages to services and advocacy by other community service providers.