



A Call to Action: Peers That Count

A Peer-Led Peer Recovery Census to Determine Where We Are, What We Contribute, and What We Need

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"I would generally define Peer Recovery Support as the first line of defense towards support"

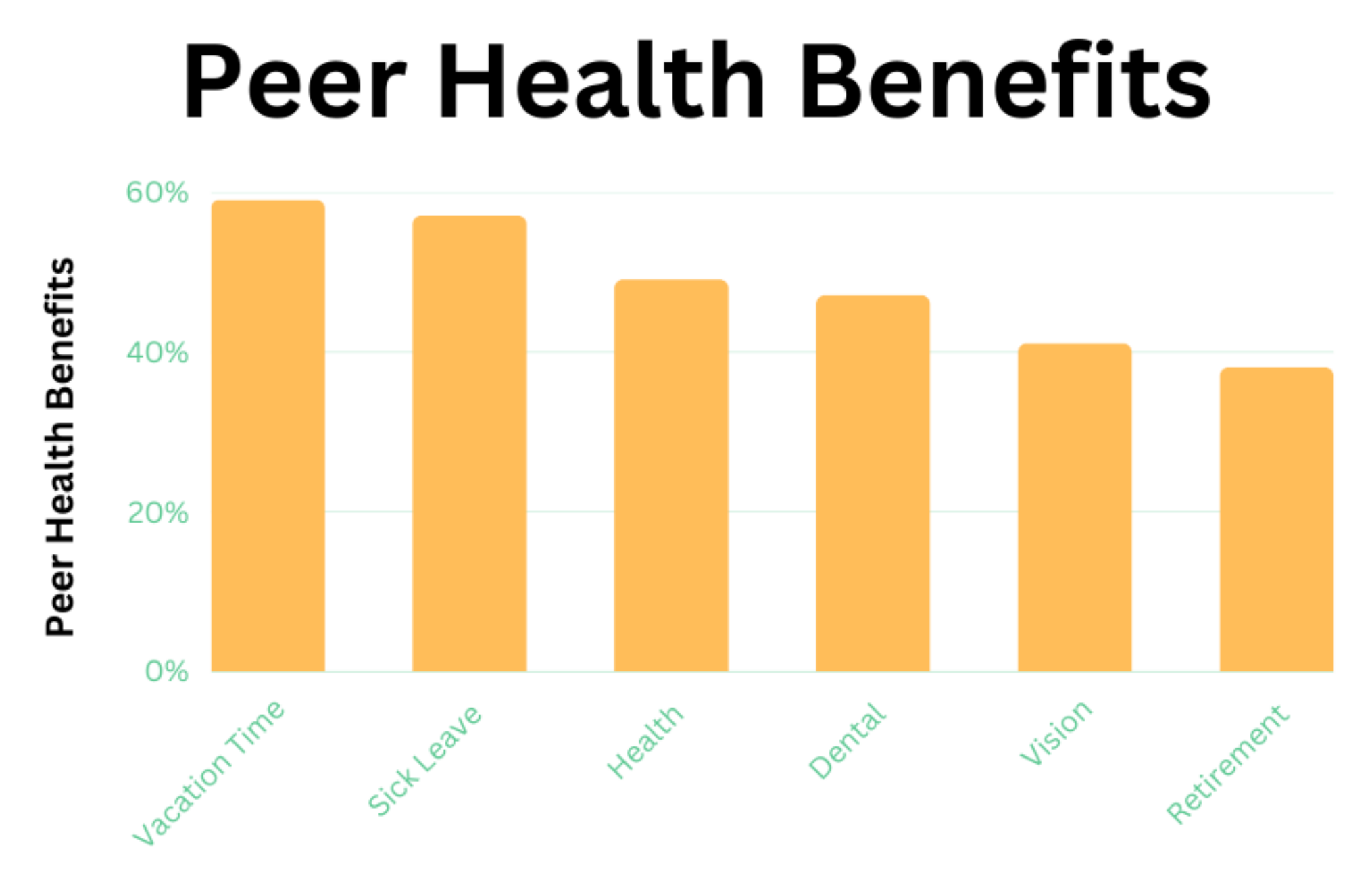
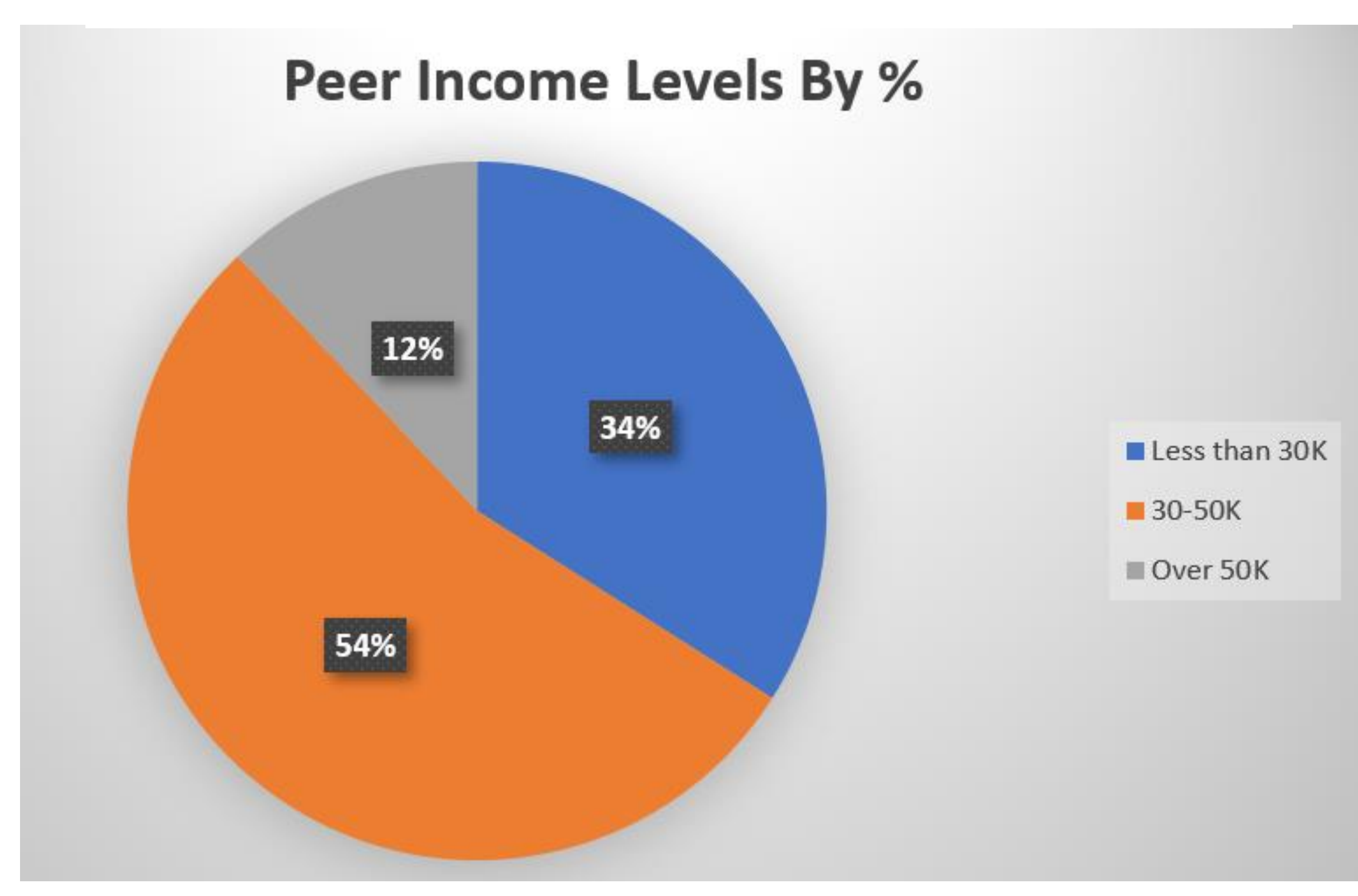
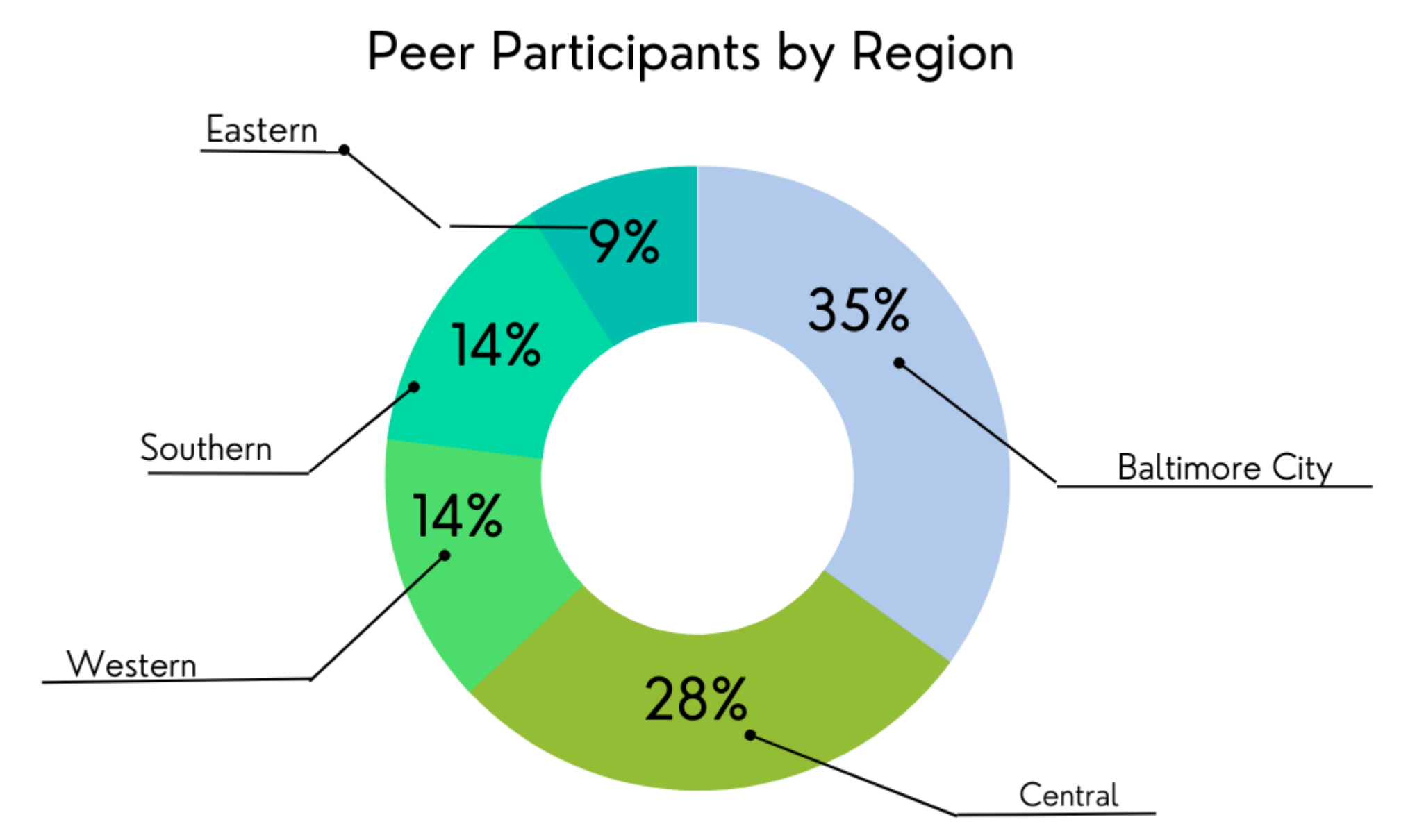
Introduction:

- The role of peers is well recognized, however there is still much to learn about peer recovery services.
- The Peers that Count (PTC) research project was created by peers for peers and involved a partnership between MPAC and the UMB IRIS initiative.
- PTC aimed to count Maryland peers through a census; examining service provision, workforce integration, professional development, financial resourcing, social action, and inclusivity
- Through this research covering five Maryland regions, we will determine barriers, benefits, challenges, needs, and strengths of peers.

Methods:

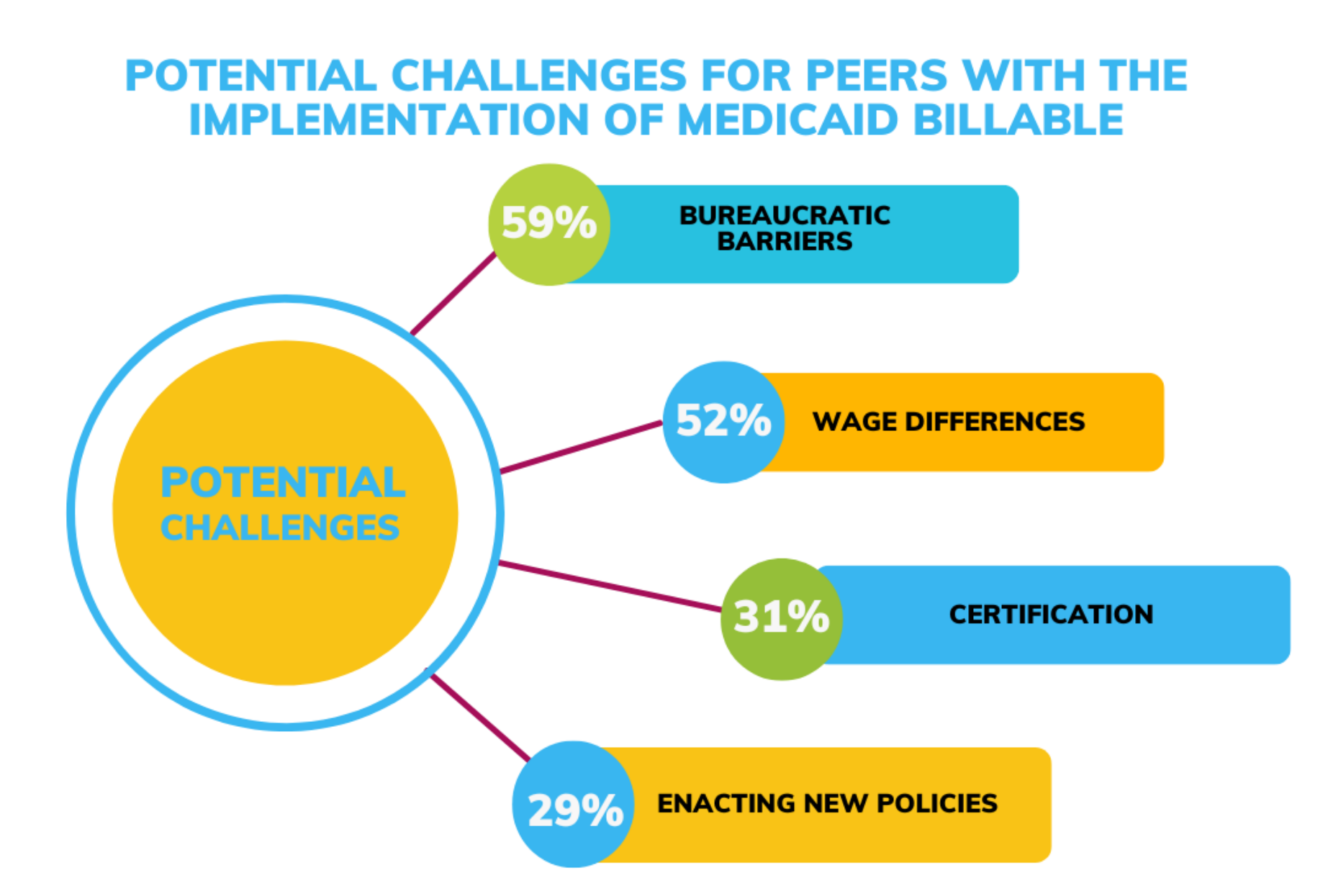
- This is a mixed-method, quantitative and qualitative study using an online survey and four regional focus groups.
- Survey questions were developed by the research team and further improved by MPAC regional leaders and members
- Survey was shared through listservs, social media, email, text, QR code, and in person at peer-related events.
- Quantitative data collected included race, gender, education, income and benefits, geographic area, work placement, professional development, strengths and challenges within the workforce, and opinions on Medicaid reimbursable services. Data was analyzed by determining frequency and percentages of responses.
- Focus group members offered important qualitative statements that gave greater depth to survey responses. Data was analyzed to identify major themes across participant responses.

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"I don't feel verbally and financially compensated"

Potential Benefits of Medicaid Billable for Peer Services	
Better salaries	70%
More recognition	69%
More jobs	65%
Training	60%



Results:

- 465 peers completed the survey, 21 also participated in focus groups.
- 46% were White, 35% Black or African American, 11% mixed racial ancestries (11%), 5% Hispanic or Latino/a/x, 8% did not give information.
- 56% were women, 33% were men, 2% were transgender or non-binary, and 9% did not provide information.
- 81% felt well integrated as peers into the workforce, 19% did not.
- 51% had two or more jobs as peers.
- Qualitative themes: peers work in diverse settings with a wide range of roles; peer work is a "lived experience to a lived experience" that goes "deeper than empathy"; more support and resources for peers are needed; there is a growing respect for peers, but significant stigma and misunderstanding remain; more preparation is needed for peers to navigate Medicaid billable services.

Discussion:

- To develop and sustain the peer workforce, ongoing efforts are needed to reduce stigma, improve pay and benefits, and facilitate upward mobility.
- Future research can examine why some peers get certified and some stay uncertified, differences across regions, and how Medicaid billable plays out.
- Peers that Count has been an important peer-led study conducted with a very productive academic partnership. Study strengths include a large and diverse sample, a mixed method design, and exploration of a broad array of topics.
- Results indicate that though peers are vital to the Maryland recovery support service continuum of care, more resources are needed to support them.