

Austrian Early Childhood Intervention Programme

...She always listened well and was like a strong shoulder for me without judging me as person...

FrüheHILFEN

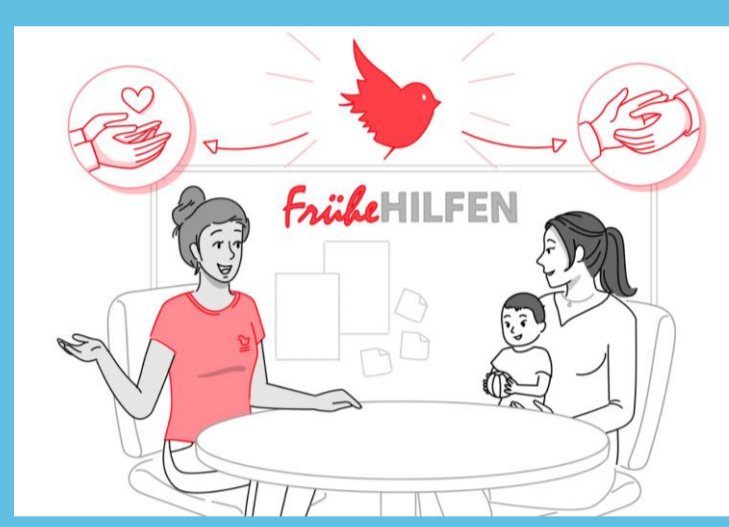
Austrian National Center for Early Childhood Interventions (NZFH.at)

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Objectives and design



Evidence from various research areas (epigenetic research, neuroscience, research on public health and inequality, ...) shows the relevance of the **early childhood** as a **key phase** for **long-term health** as well as for quality of life. While ACEs, toxic stress and the socio-economic status of the family can have a negative impact, PCEs have a positive impact and can compensate resp. counteract potentially negative impact.

The indicated **prevention programme** aims to **improve the life circumstances** of families and **competences** of those parents who are experiencing **several burdens while missing compensating resources**. who are confronted with **various burdens during pregnancy or in the early childhood** of the children (aged 0 to 3 years) and who **lack compensatory resources**.

It is designed as **2-Generation Programme** that addresses families in need. The **low threshold approach** (outreach, free of costs, voluntary) ensures that socially disadvantaged families are reached. Professionals from different sectors identify families in need, explain and motivate families to participate in the programme. **Family supporters** from a **multiprofessional team** get in contact (home visits), build up trust, assess the situation together with the family and help to **reduce burdens** and to **strengthen resources** by listening, giving advice, providing a model for bonding and referring to specific services step by step. Intensity and duration of this support depend on the **individual needs** of the family. **Raising awareness** of and ensuring **cooperation with network partners** offering specific support or therapy (like e.g. parent-child-groups or psychotherapy) is an additional core element.

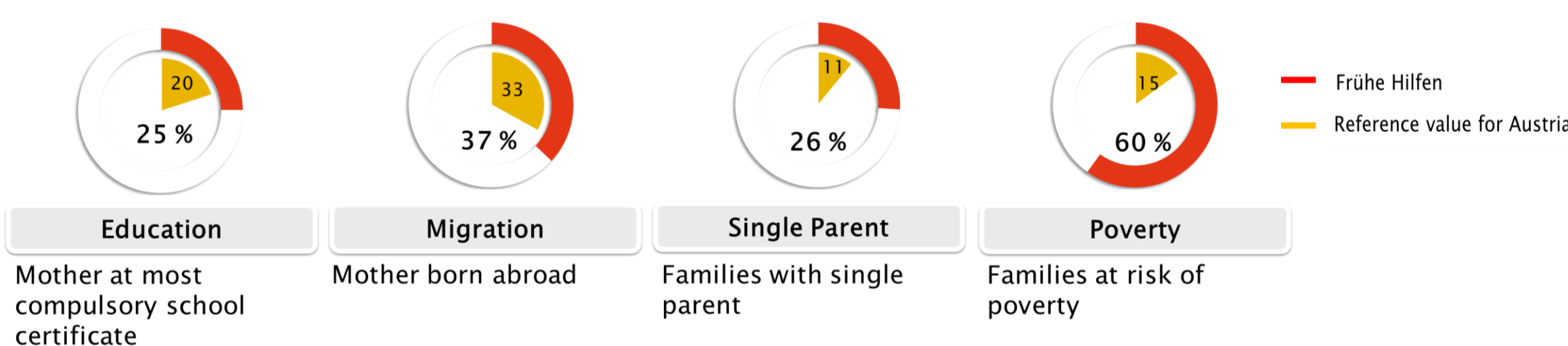
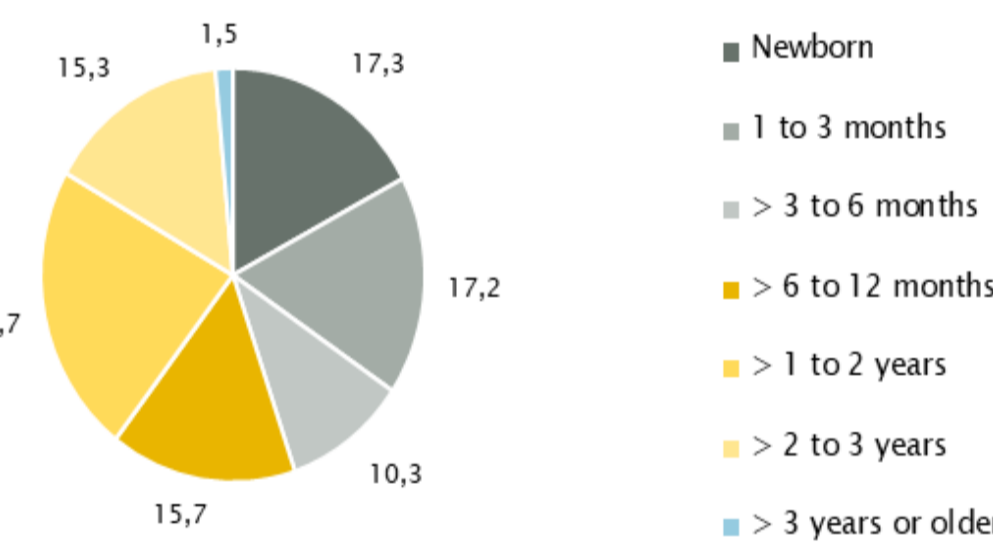
Data and evaluation results

...My fears and worries were taken seriously, we got help quickly and without complications...

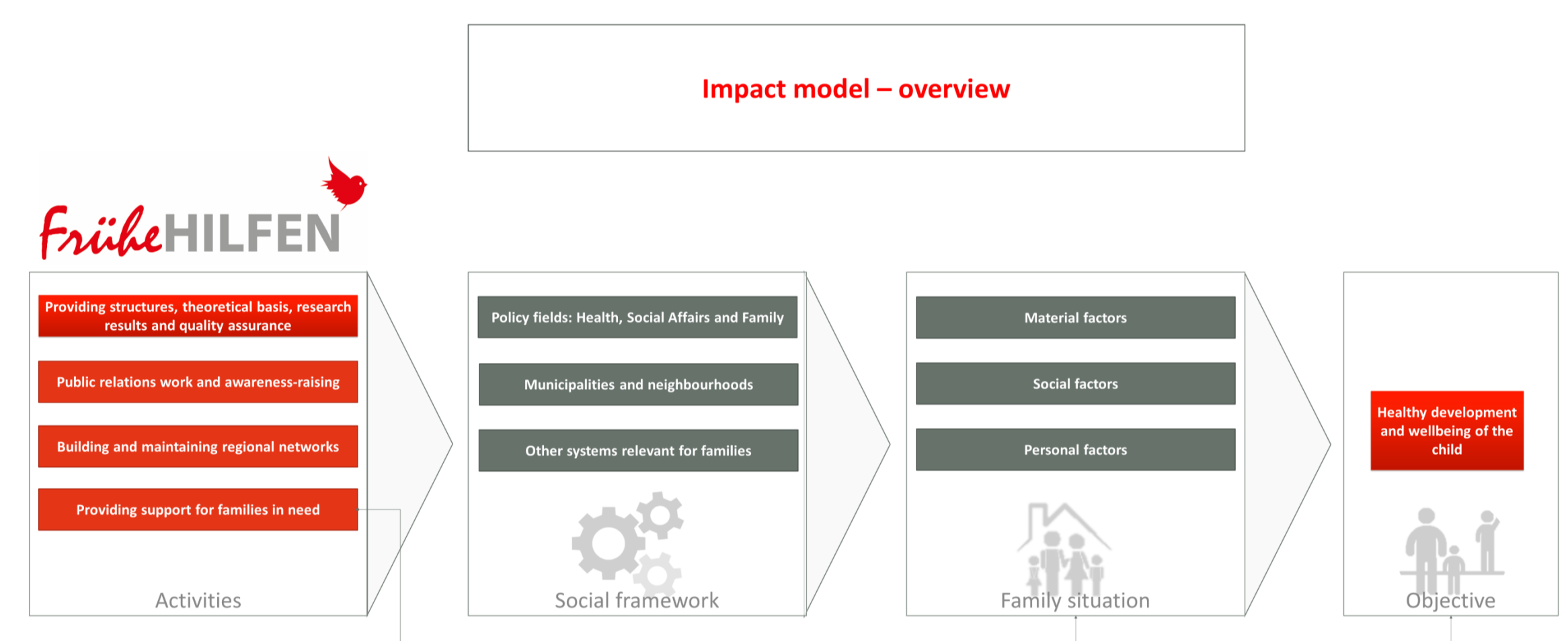
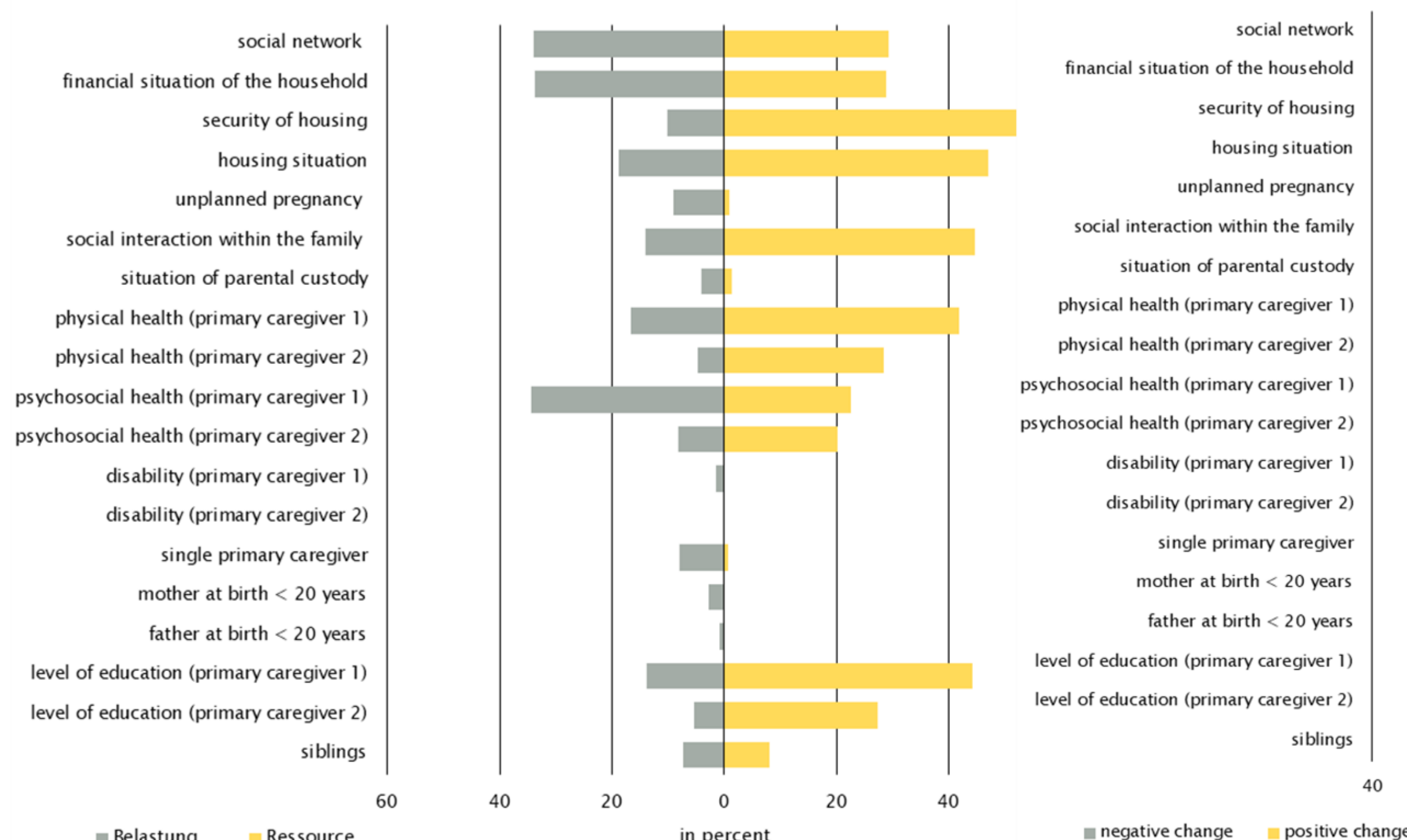
Success factors (according to evaluation):
 Intersectoral cooperation, proactive and outreach approach, combination of core elements, multiprofessional teams, Austrianwide coordination and support for regional implementors

Data from the unique Austrian-wide documentation system (FRÜDOK, 2021):

- 11.400 contacts -> 7.200 families supported -> 6.200 completed (2015-2021)
- 28 % of the families already supported during pregnancy, >50 % of the children <1 year
- Socially disadvantaged families are reached very well



- About 50 % of families refer themselves to the programme
- Main reasons for contact: excessive demand and fears, medical/social burdens, administrative/legal/organisational support needed
- 84 % of the families are referred to additional specific services
- Assessments at the beginning and the end of the family support show various burdens and resources and the improvements achieved by the programme:



Evaluation results:

- ✓ Regional networks have been well established
- ✓ Programm is unique for Austria: outreach and demand-oriented support with focus on prevention, relationship and empowerment as well as assistance in finding additional services needed
- ✓ Clear benefit for families:
 - Increased resources (e.g. social inclusion, self-esteem, positive family climate, parental skills, health literacy, social network)
 - Reduced burdens (e.g. stress, anxiety, economic hardship, mental strain, social isolation)
 - Improved family situation
 - Positive impact on parent-child-bonding, interaction and relationship, child development
 - Improved future perspectives for the parents

Feedback from families:

- ✓ 93 % would participate again
- ✓ 98 % would recommend programme to other families
- ✓ Almost all felt well looked after, had enough confidence in family supporter
- Families mentioned the following aspects as particularly helpful:
 - ✓ Talks with family supporter
 - ✓ Tips and advice
 - ✓ Information about additional specific services
 - ✓ To know that there is help and they are not alone with their worries and problems