A photograph of three young children smiling and looking towards the camera. The child on the left is a young boy with light hair, wearing a white shirt. The child in the middle is a girl with blonde hair, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and denim overalls with white polka dots. The child on the right is a girl with dark hair, wearing a pink and white striped shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with greenery.

Informing Policy: Examining Enrollment Trends in Universal Prekindergarten in Vermont



Vermont Universal PreK Research Partnership

January 22, 2020

3–4:30 p.m. ET

Agenda

Welcome and introductions

Overview of Vermont's universal prekindergarten (preK) law

Overview of findings

Q&A with Vermont Deputy Secretary of Education, Dr. Heather Bouchey

Wrap-up

Presentation goals

- Share findings from the partnership's first study:
Enrollment rates of children in universal prekindergarten programs in Vermont in 2016/17
- Facilitate a discussion with the Vermont Agency of Education regarding the policy implications of the study and how the research has informed the work of the agency



Meet today's presenters



Dr. Clare Irwin

Vermont Universal PreK Research
Partnership Lead

REL Northeast & Islands at EDC



Dr. Heather Bouchey

Deputy Secretary of Education
Vermont Agency of Education



Kate Rogers

Early Learning Programs
Manager

Vermont Agency of Education



Vermont Universal PreK Research Partnership

- **Goal:** Address research needs and inform policy and practice decisions during the implementation of Vermont's universal prekindergarten model, Act 166
- **Members:**
 - Agency of Education: Deputy Secretary, Early Learning Programs Manager, Director of Analysis and Data Management, Universal PreK Program Manager
 - Agency of Human Services/Child Development Division: Deputy Commissioner, Policy Director

Regional Priority Area: Early Childhood Education & School Readiness

OVERVIEW OF VERMONT'S UNIVERSAL PREKINDERGARTEN LAW

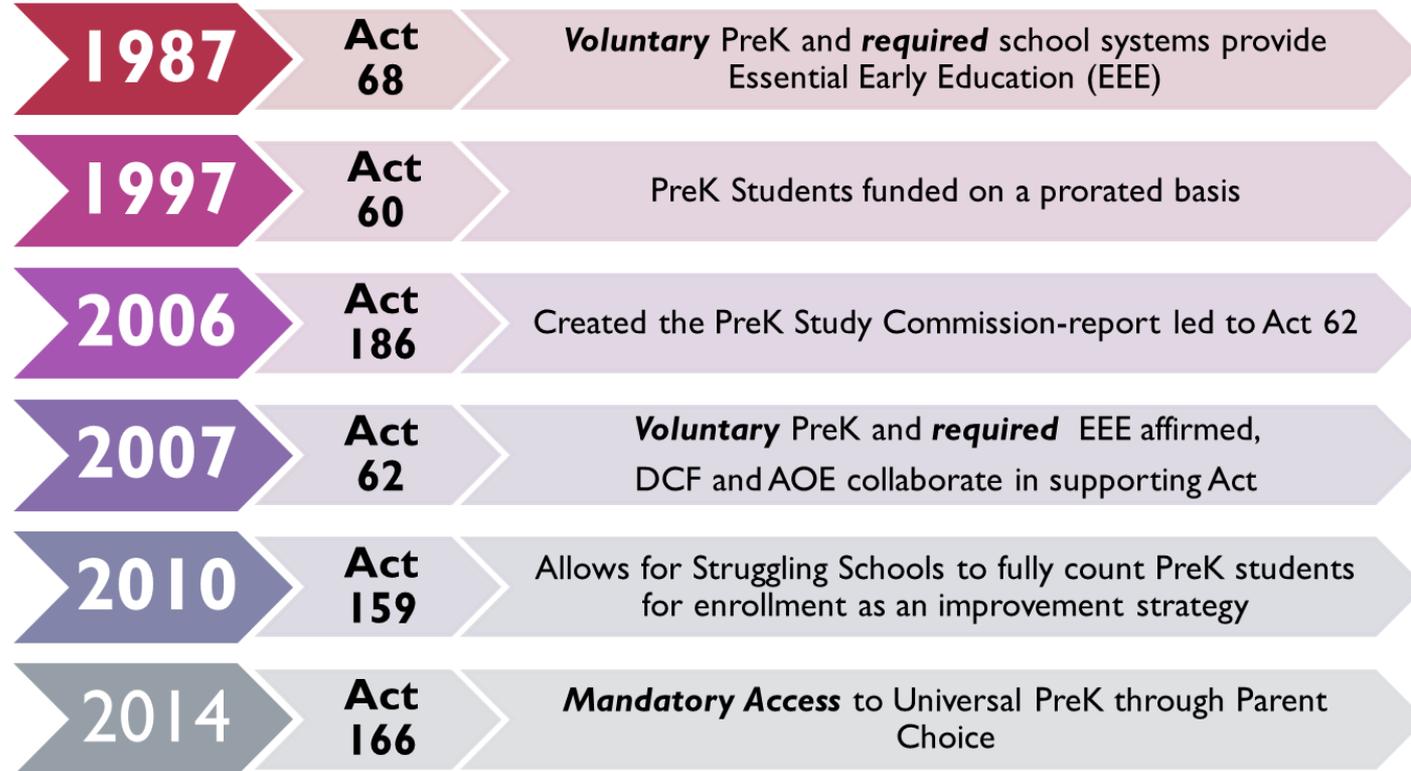


Vermont prekindergarten legislation

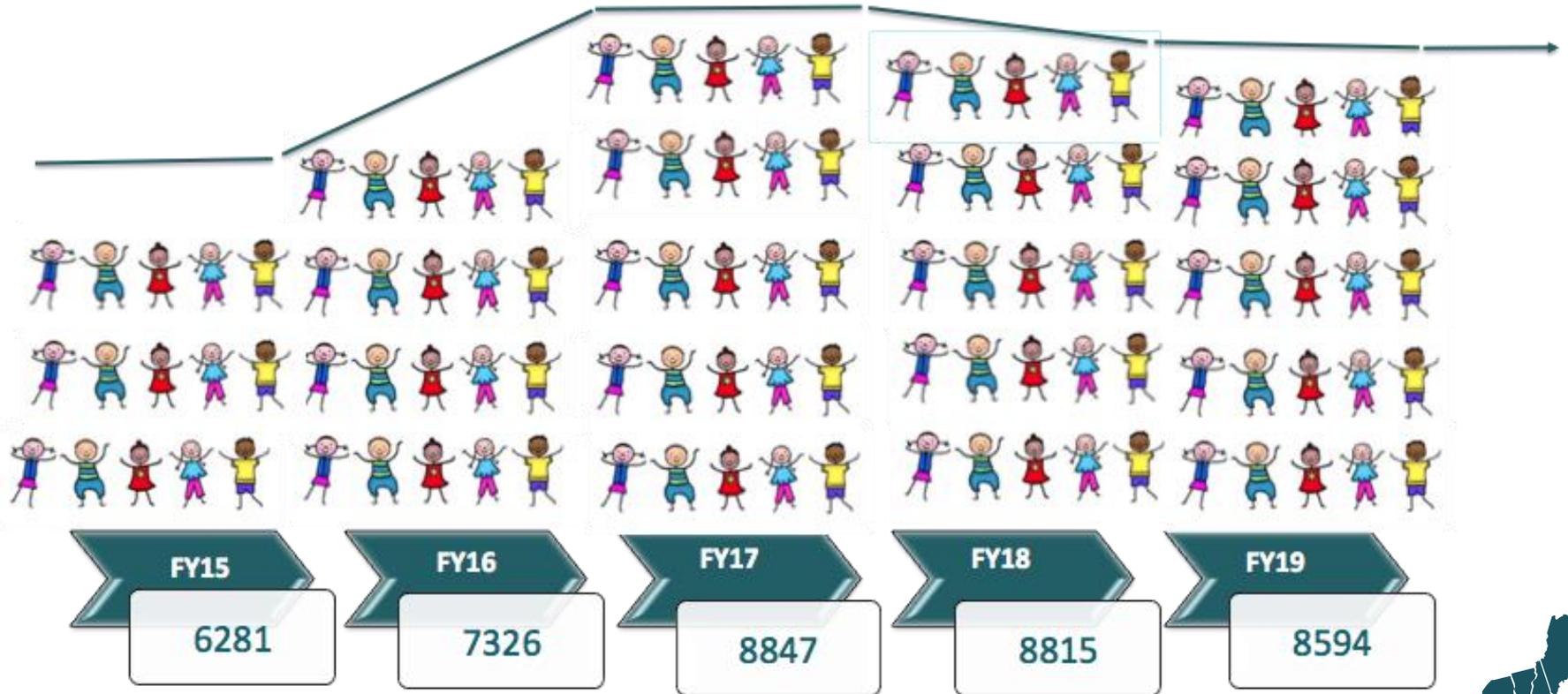
- [Act 166 of 2014](#) provides access to [publicly funded](#) prekindergarten (preK) education for every Vermont three-, four-, and five-year-olds no yet enrolled in kindergarten.
- All preK education programs, including private childcare, Head Start, and public school-operated programs, must meet specific requirements to be recognized and approved by the state.
- Agency of Education (AOE) and Agency of Human Services (AHS) co-administrate.



Brief timeline of Vermont's universal preK



PreK enrollment



Questions



OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS



Research questions

1. To what extent are children with different characteristics enrolled in public school preK programs, private preK programs, and programs at each STARS quality rating?
2. To what extent are preK children enrolled in a program within the boundaries of their local education agency?



Research questions

3. After other characteristics are controlled for, which characteristics of preK children are associated with the likelihood of being enrolled in:
 - a public school rather than a private preK program,
 - a five-star program rather than a three- or four-star program, and
 - a program within rather than outside the boundaries of a child's local education agency (LEA)?



Sample

- All children enrolled in publicly funded preK in 2016/17 who could be matched to their program of attendance
- 5,622 children
- 282 prequalified preK programs

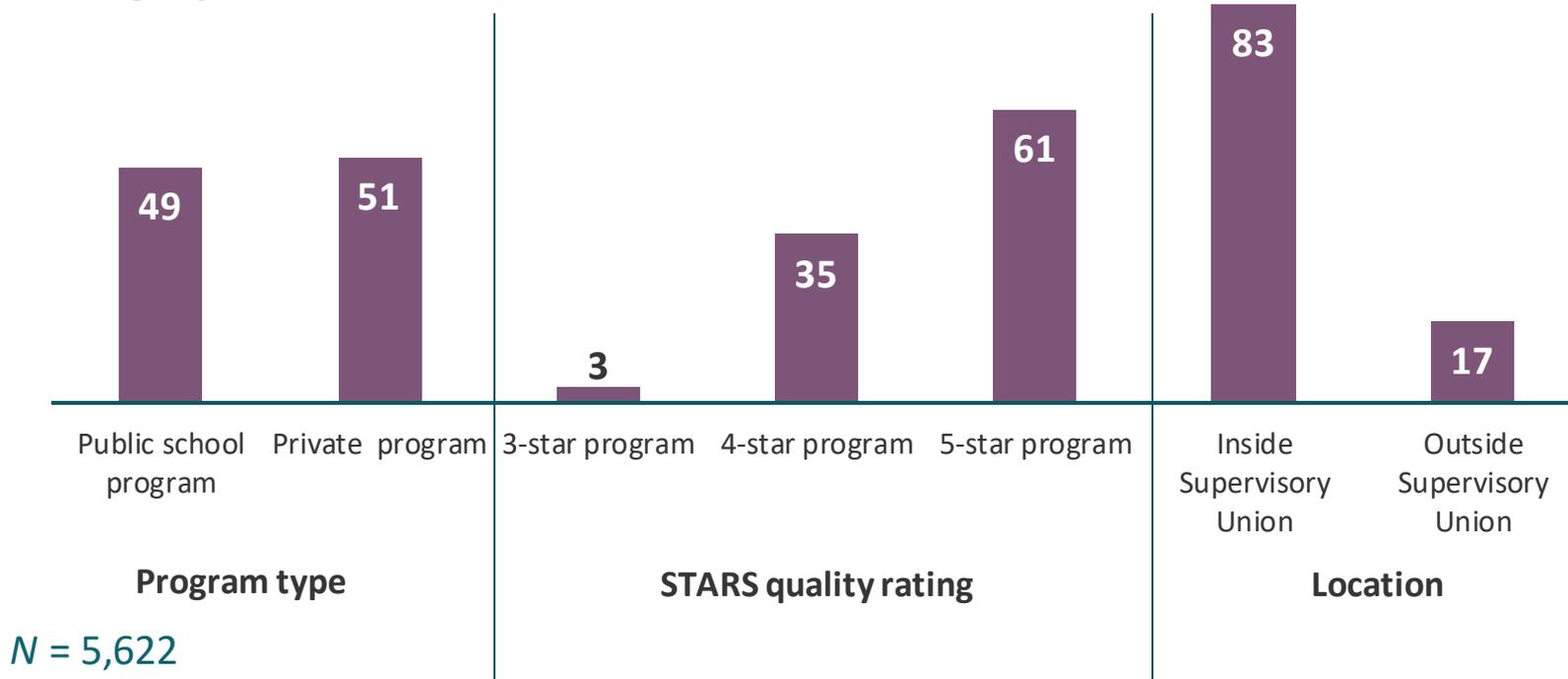


WHERE did children
in publicly funded
preK enroll?



The majority of children enrolled in preK programs enrolled in five-star programs and programs **inside their supervisory union**, 2016/17

Percentage of children enrolled



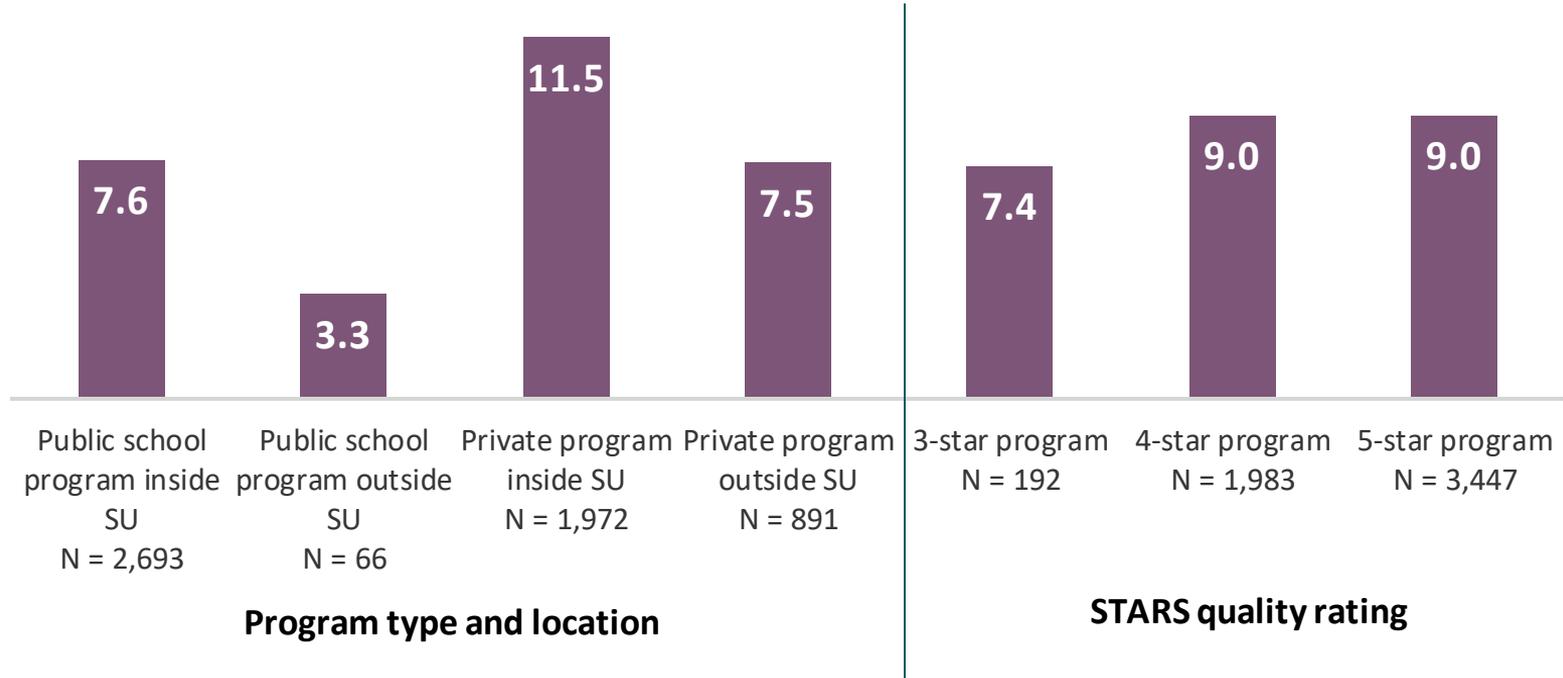
Note: Supervisory unions are a type of LEA in Vermont.

How many
PREQUALIFIED PROGRAMS
were available to children in preK
within their supervisory union?



Average number of preK programs available within the boundaries of a child's supervisory union (SU) varied by program type and STARS level, 2016/17

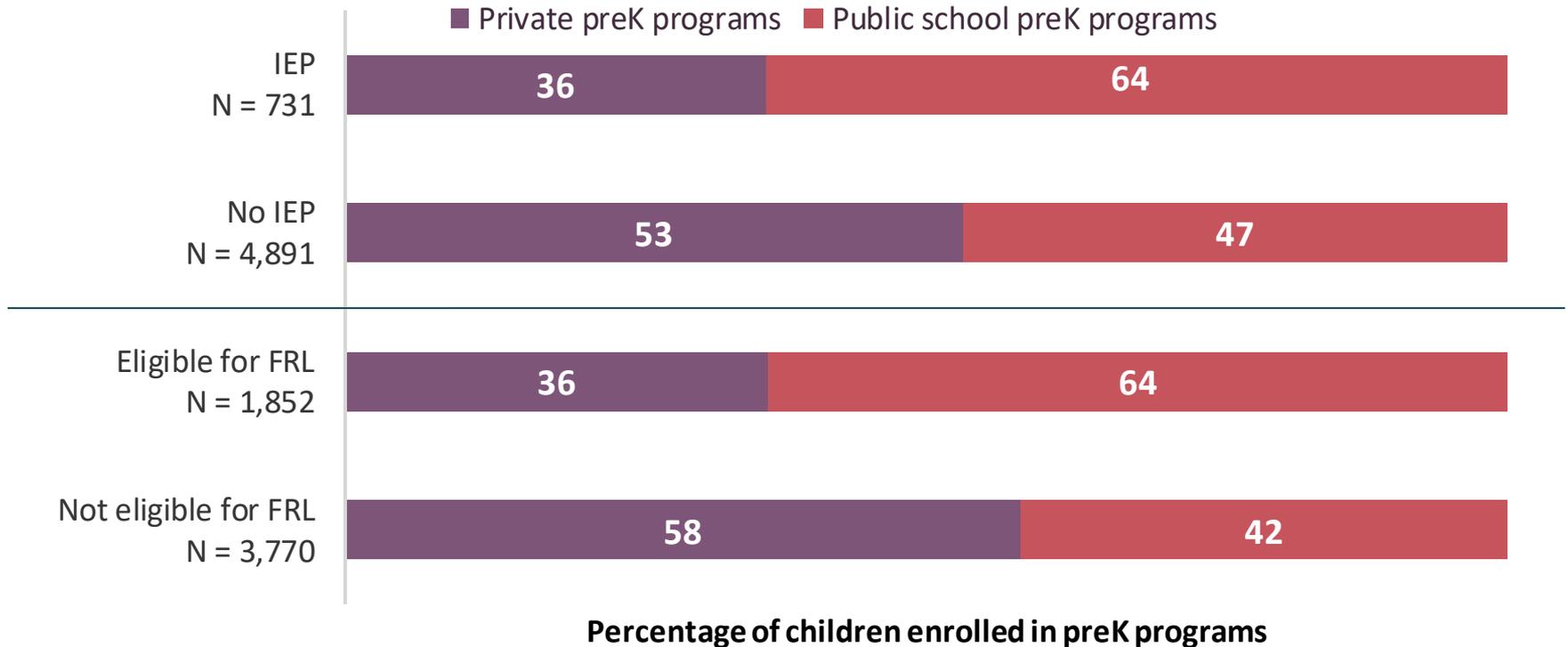
Average number of programs within SU boundaries = 9 programs



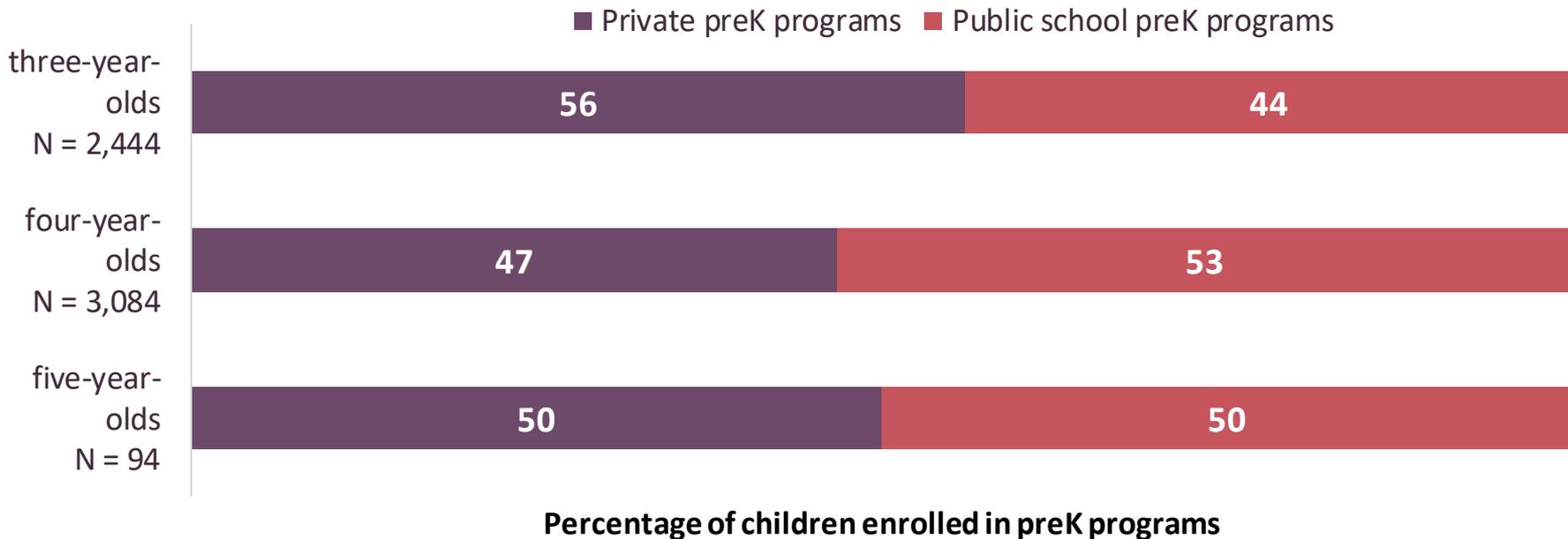
Were children's characteristics associated with the likelihood of being enrolled in a **PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE PROGRAM?**



A higher percentage of children with individualized education programs (IEPs) and those who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) were enrolled in **public school preK programs**, 2016/17



Fifty-three percent of four-year-olds in preK were enrolled in public programs compared to 47 percent enrolled in private preK programs, 2016/17



High-needs children in preK were more likely to be enrolled in a public than a private program

Children with the following characteristics were more likely to be enrolled in a public school program versus a private program:

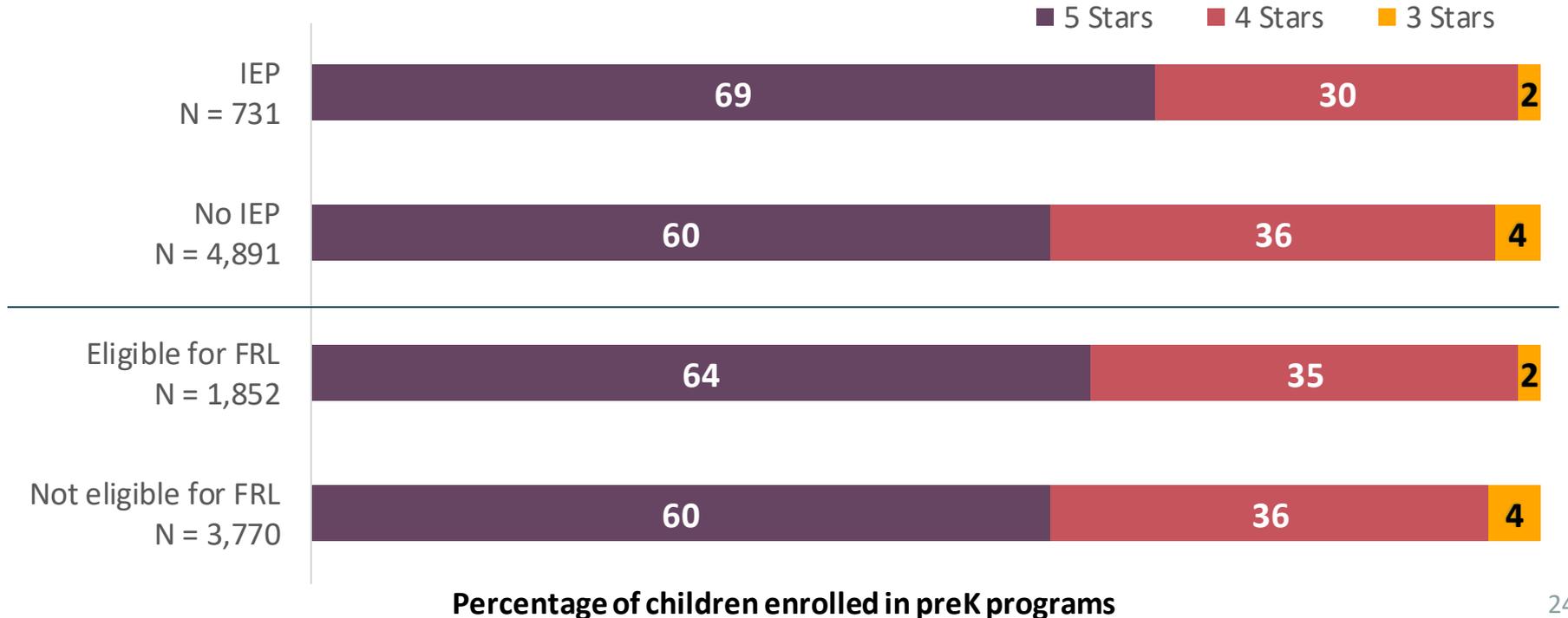
- On an individualized education program
- Free or reduced-priced lunch eligible
- Four or five years old (compared to three years old)
- Supervisory union of residence has fewer prequalified preK programs



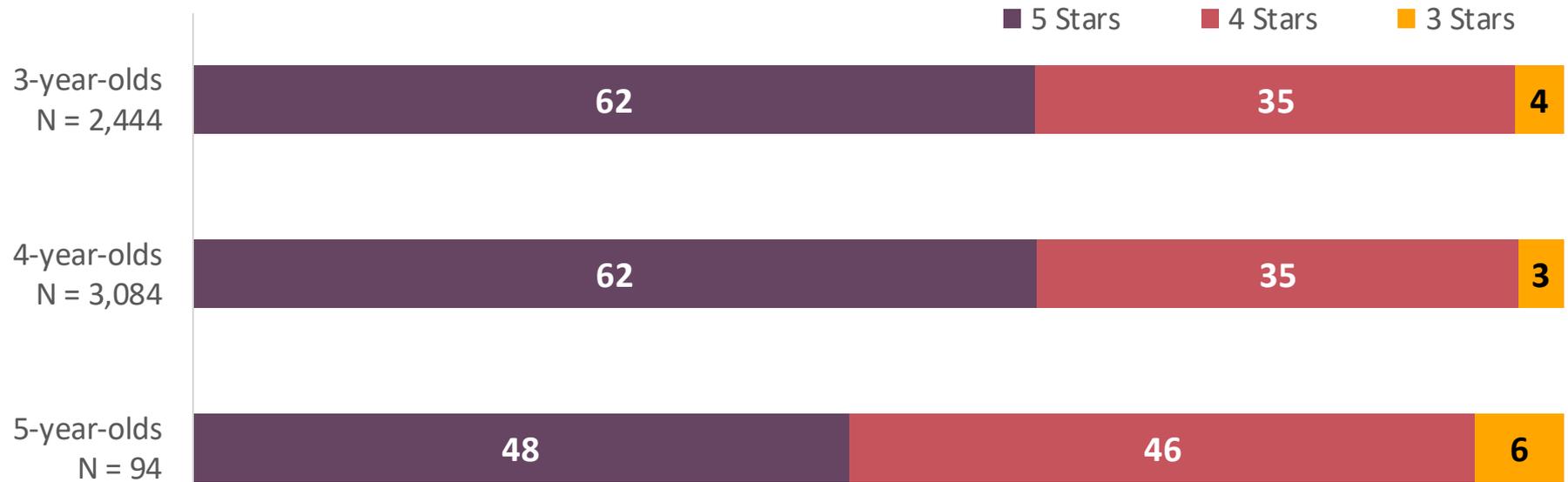
Were children's characteristics associated with the likelihood of being enrolled in **5-STAR vs. 3- or 4-STAR PROGRAMS?**



The majority of children in preK, regardless of demographic characteristics, were enrolled in **five-star programs**, 2016/17



Three- and four-year-old children were primarily in five-star programs and enrollment of five-year-old children was evenly split between five- and four-star programs, 2016/17



Percentage of children enrolled in preK programs

Among children in publicly funded preK, those with individualized education programs were more likely to be in five-star programs

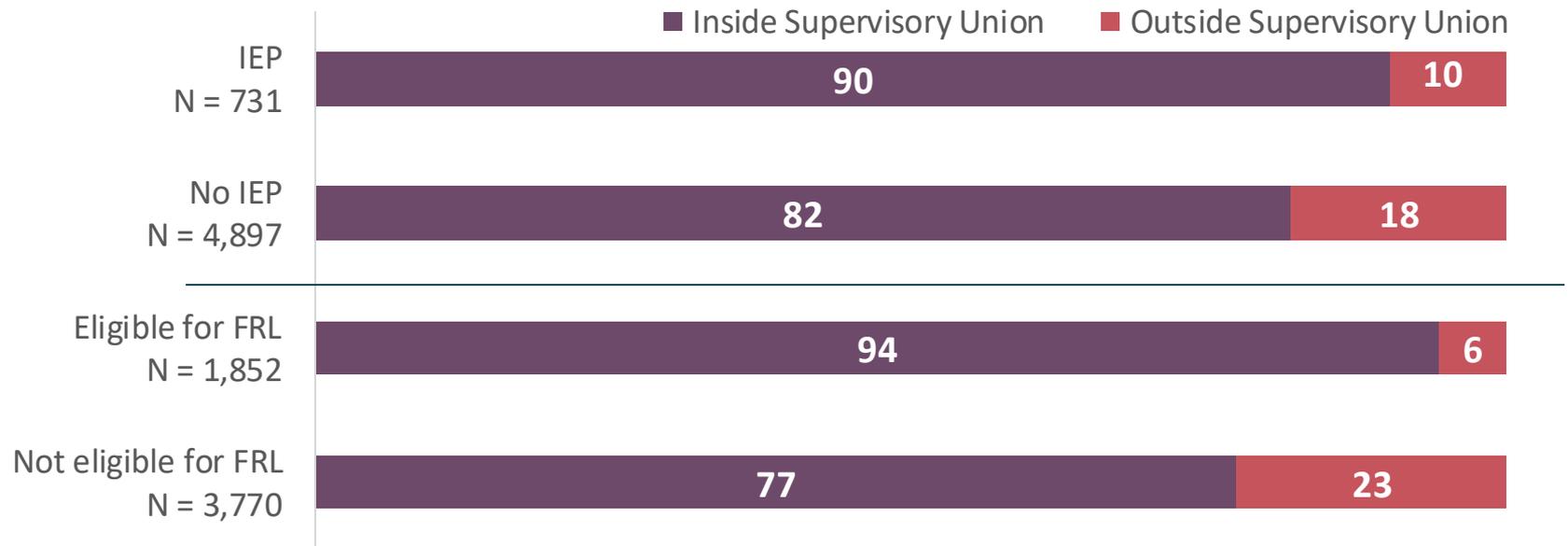
Individualized education program was the only child characteristic significantly associated with an increased likelihood of enrollment in a five-star program.



Were children's characteristics associated with the likelihood of being enrolled in a program **INSIDE vs. OUTSIDE THEIR SUPERVISORY UNION?**

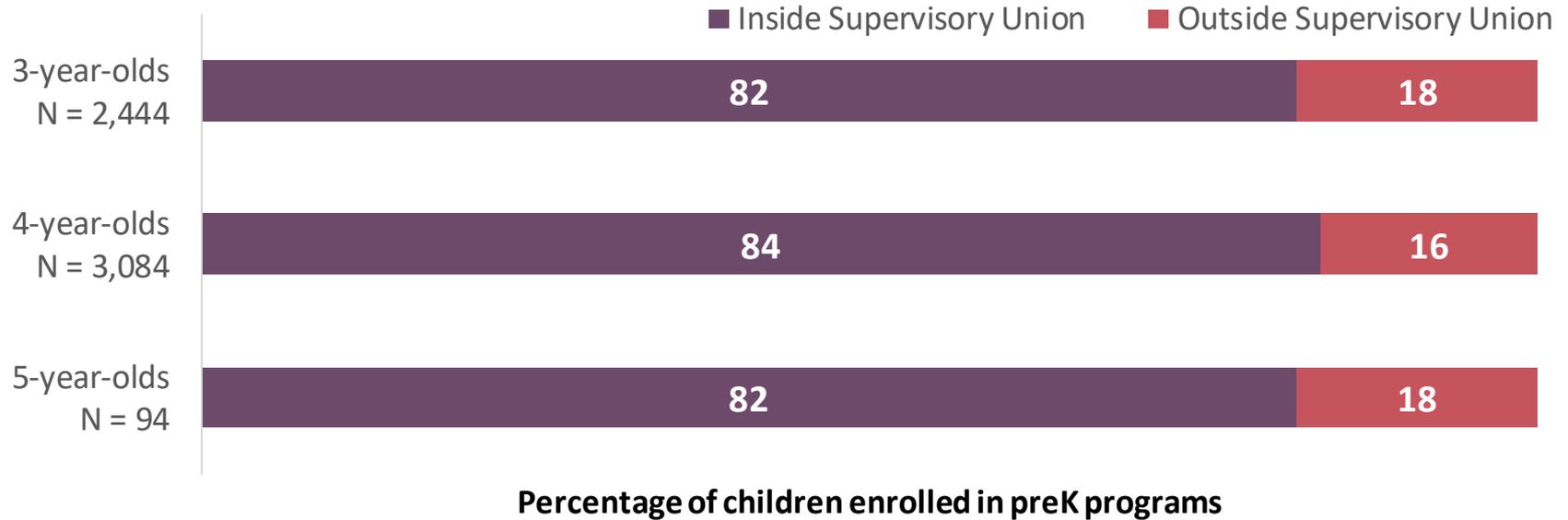


A higher percentage of children with individualized education programs and those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch were enrolled in preK programs **inside their supervisory union, 2016/17**



Percentage of children enrolled in preK programs

Children of all ages enrolled in preK were enrolled in programs **inside their supervisory union** at similar rates, 2016/17



Specific child characteristics were related to an increased likelihood of enrollment inside their supervisory union

Children with the following characteristics were more likely to enroll in a program inside of their supervisory union:

- On an individualized education program
- Free or reduced-price lunch eligible
- Supervisory union of residence has more prequalified preK programs



Key Takeaways

1

Families who enroll their children in preK enroll them in different types of preK programs, which aligns with the mixed-delivery design in the legislation.



Key Takeaways continued



High-needs children enrolled in preK were more likely to be in public programs and higher-rated programs.



Key Takeaways continued

3

Children enrolled in preK who had fewer prequalified programs located within the boundaries of their supervisory union (SU) were more likely to be enrolled in public programs and programs outside of their SU. They were also more likely to enroll in lower-quality programs.



Limitations

- The association between child characteristics and enrollment in preK programs is correlational, not causal.
- The sample used in this study does not comprise all three- to five-year-olds in Vermont, nor does it comprise all children attending public preK in 2016/17.
- There may be some variables relevant to enrollment that are not collected or included in the study, for example, reasons families make choices to enroll children in different types of programs.



Questions

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Q&A WITH VERMONT DEPUTY SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, HEATHER BOUCHEY





Submit your questions in the chat.

We listen to you!



Your feedback is essential to our work. Please [take our survey](#) to help us improve.



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