

# INTERNATIONAL MAINTENANCE CASES – PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

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# Overview

- Background
- Objectives of Research
- Our Findings
  - Cases and Clients
  - Payments and Enforcement
  - Caseworker Survey
- Conclusions
- Recommendations for future researchers

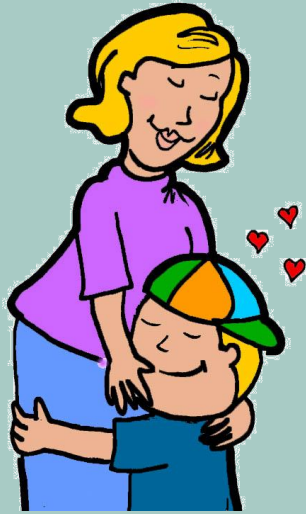
# Background

- Implementation of Hague Maintenance Convention may increase the number of international cases
- Discussion point – What is the size of the current international maintenance caseload and what do the cases look like?
- No published statistics
- Led to the design of a research project for this Conference
- Three questions ....

# Collect Data To Answer Three Questions

1. What data about international cases is available?
2. Can that data be compared to provide insight into international maintenance cases?
3. What does the data tell us about the families and children on the international caseload?

# DEFINITIONS



## MAINTENANCE CREDITOR

The person entitled to receive maintenance for their own support or for the support of their children

Also known as maintenance recipient, custodial parent, or resident parent



## MAINTENANCE DEBTOR

The person responsible for paying support or maintenance to another person for the support of that person or a child

Also known as maintenance payor, non-custodial parent, or non-resident parent

# Participating Jurisdictions

Recovery of Maintenance in the  
European Union and Worldwide  
Heidelberg Conference 5 – 8 March 2013

State of New Jersey



State of Washington

Orange County – California



Los Angeles County – California

Province of British Columbia



Province of Ontario

Australia



New Zealand



Germany



# Methodology

- Two parts to the research
  1. Collection of data
    - International Caseload Profile
    - Client Profile
    - Maintenance Payment Information
    - Enforcement Information
  2. Caseworker Survey
- Developed questions and measures for data collection
  - Discussion with data partners
- Developed “Survey Monkey” to collect caseworker responses
- Analysis and drafts were shared for comment



# Data and Research Limitations

- Key Research objective - what data is available and can it be compared ?
- Invited large and small jurisdictions and one with and without information technology capability
- Wanted to see – in the real world – what barriers exist to the collection of the type of data we were interested in
- Result – some jurisdictions were able to provide a lot of data, some jurisdictions were not able to provide very much
- Results reflect those differences in the information available



# A. INTERNATIONAL CASELOAD CHARACTERISTICS

# What is an International Case?

An international case is one where:

One of the parents lives in a different country

OR

The case is being managed by a maintenance program in a country that has a reciprocal arrangement with the sending country

# What is a Maintenance Case?

- A case where an applicant wishes to establish a maintenance decision in another jurisdiction
- A case that has been sent to another jurisdiction for enforcement of a maintenance decision
- A case that has been sent to another jurisdiction for modification or variation of a maintenance decision

# What we learned- International Caseloads

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## Definition of International Case

- Programs have different ways of defining what makes an international cases
- There are some good policy reasons for these distinctions!
- It is a good conversation as to what we should include in our case counts.

## Maintenance Cases

- Structure or delivery of program makes a big difference
- All programs do enforcement of maintenance but some are more limited in terms of the types of cases they enforce
- Not all programs include cases involving establishment and modification of maintenance

# HOW BIG IS THE INTERNATIONAL CASELOAD?

# Case Counts

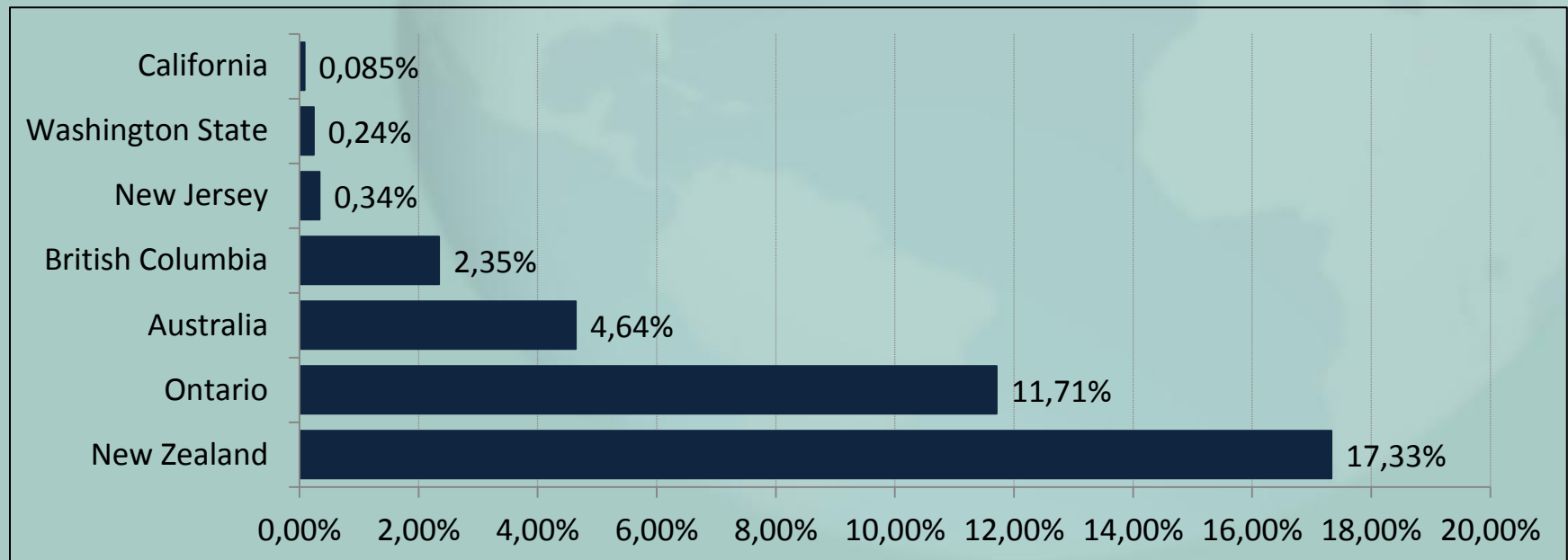
- Total number of cases in our research study was;  
35,151<sub>(2009)</sub> 56,943<sub>(2010)</sub> 59,743<sub>(2011)</sub>
- Caseloads do fluctuate year over year

Jurisdiction	Number of cases (In and Out)		
	2009	2010	2011
British Columbia	948	972	991
Washington State	732	722	745
California	772	1202	1143
New Jersey	479	897	1471
New Zealand	23573	27241	29989
Australia	19103	37682	38839

# International Cases as a Percentage of Caseload (2011 Data)

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- International cases make up a small percentage of overall caseload
- The unique relationship of Australia and New Zealand is evident
- Ontario has over 30% of the entire Canadian population and is a primary destination for immigration to Canada.



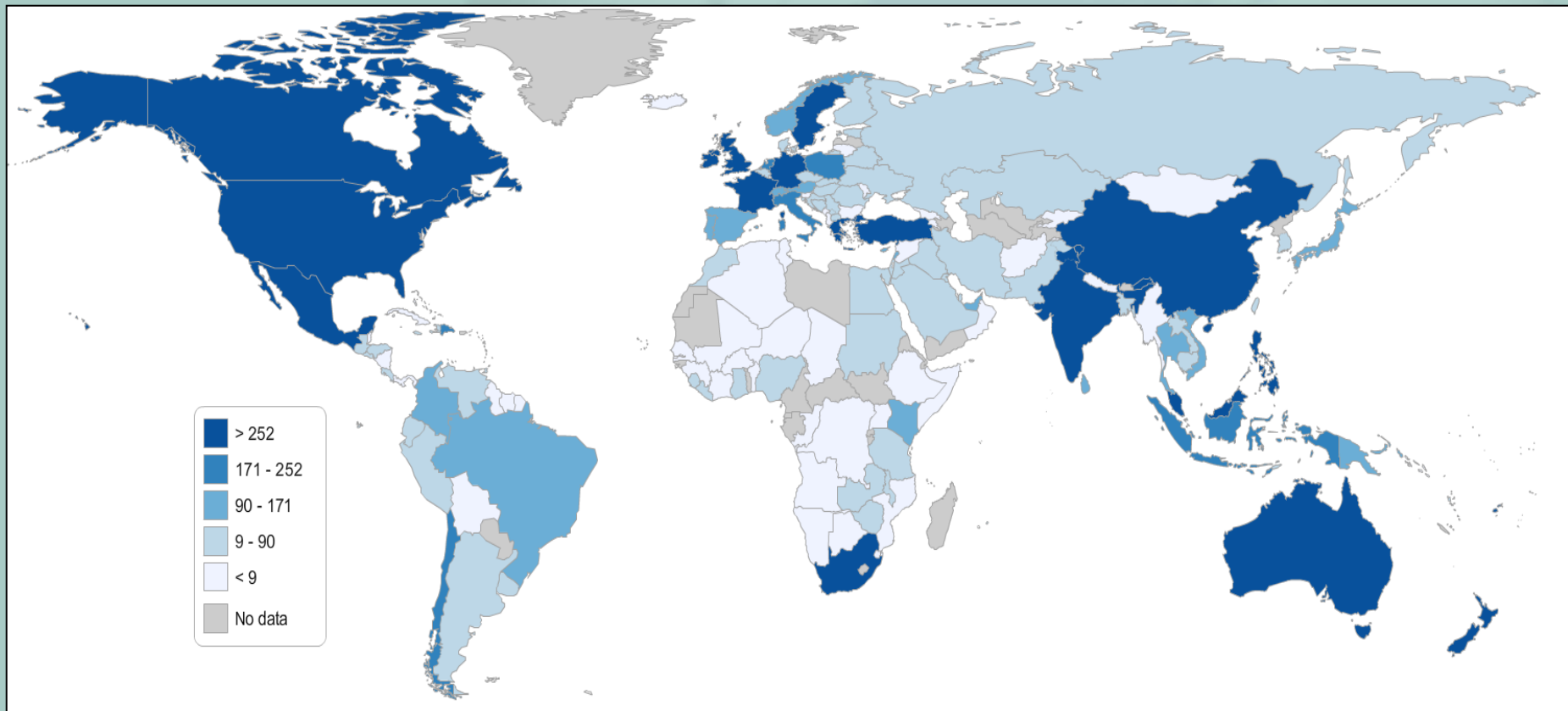


# WHERE DO THE PARENTS LIVE?

# International Cases (2011 Data)

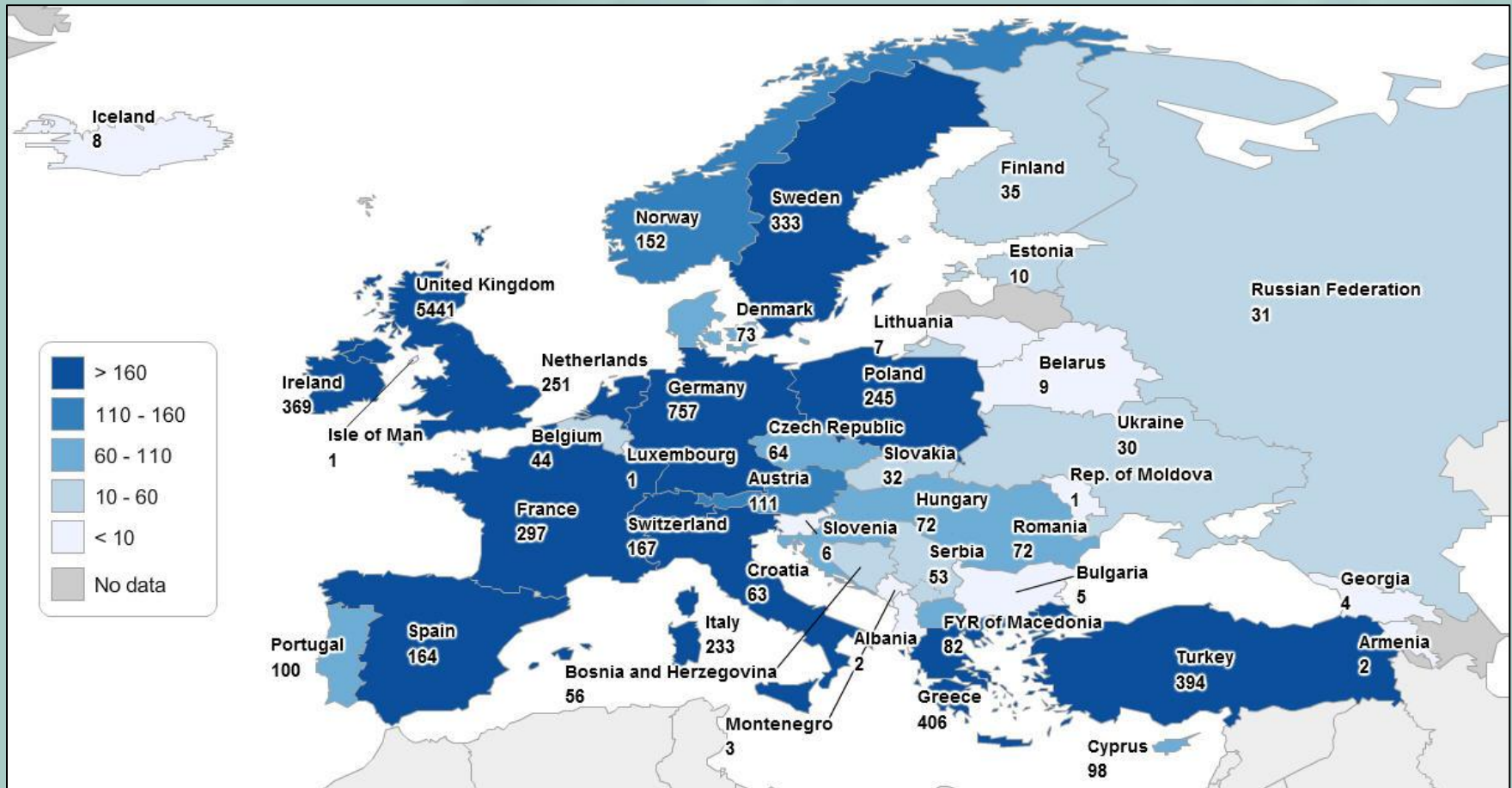
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- Data from all reporting jurisdictions places cases in 172 nations.
- Caseload reach was to 90% of nations in world



# European Cases (2011 Data)

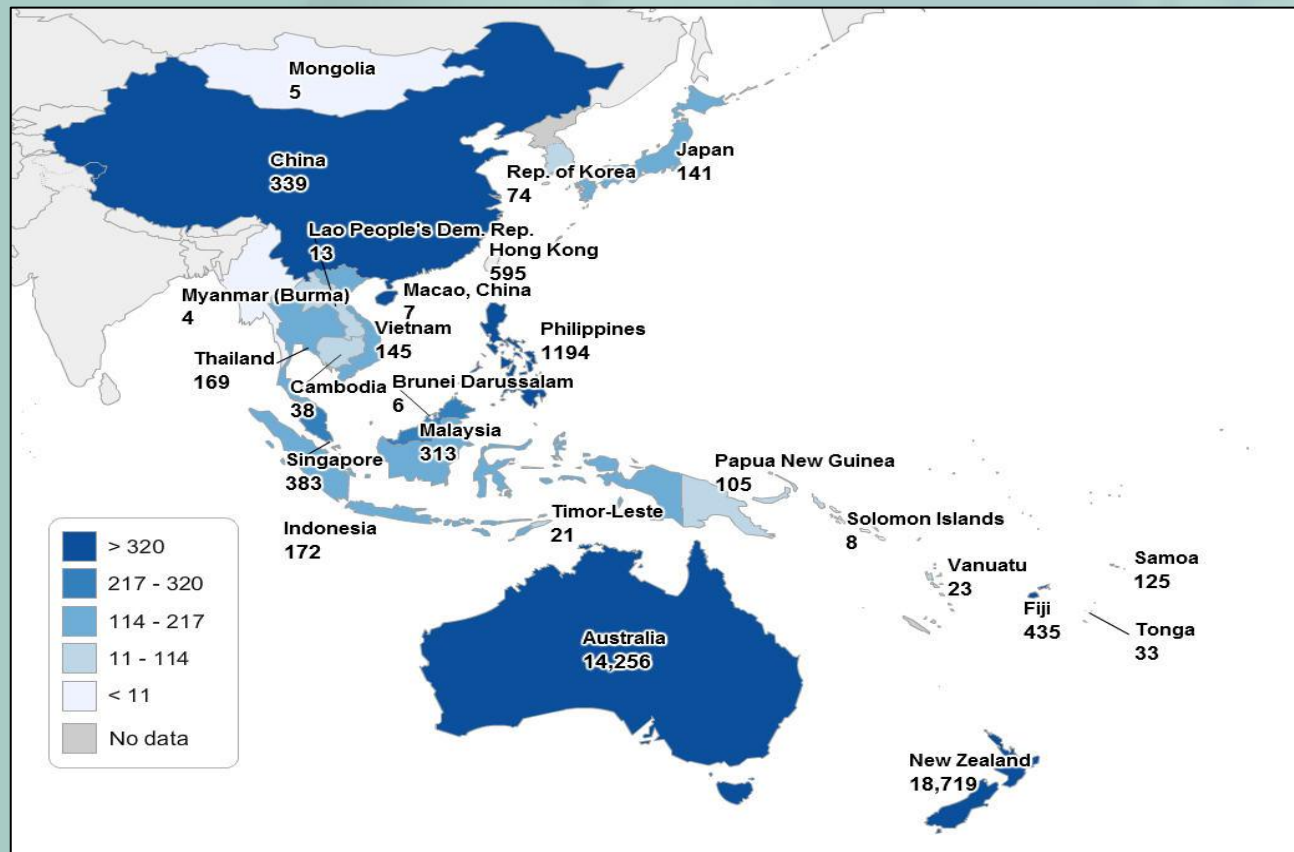
- Every nation in Europe has cases represented in the data sample (except Latvia)



# East Asia & Pacific (2011 Data)

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- Large number of cases as a result of the reciprocal agreement between New Zealand and Australia
- Australia and New Zealand have reciprocal agreements with many of the Pacific islands



# BORDER CASES



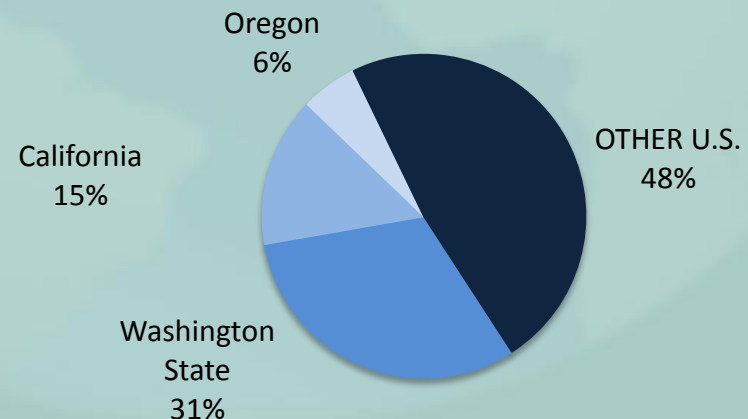
# Shared Borders A British Columbia Example

- Geographic proximity leads to larger caseloads
- Over 80% of British Columbia cases are with states in the United States.
- Over ½ of those cases are within the Pacific Region - California, Oregon and Washington State.

British Columbia Reciprocal Cases 2011/2012



BC Reciprocal Cases with US Partners 2011/2012

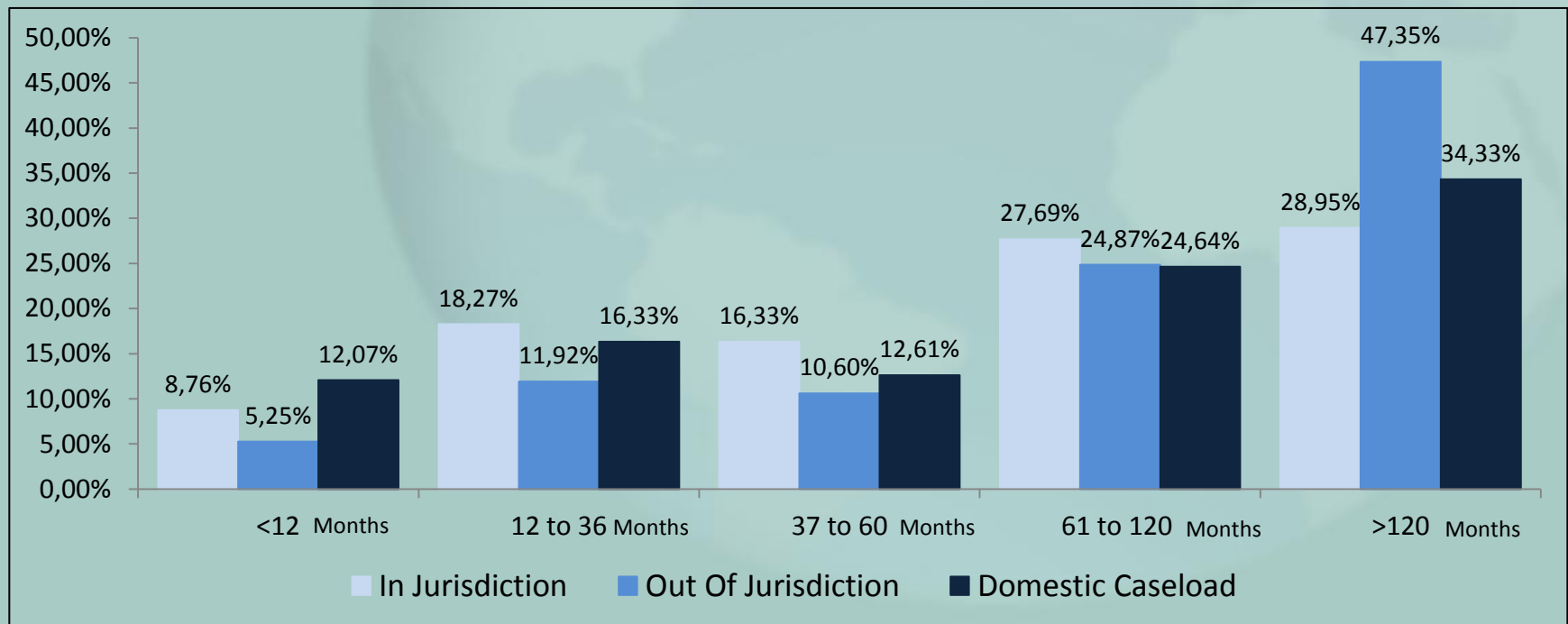


# HOW LONG DO CASES REMAIN OPEN ?



# Length of Enrolment (2011 Data)

- Almost 50% of cases where the Debtor is out of the jurisdiction have been enrolled longer than 120 months – this exceeds both the Debtor in and Domestic caseload by a significant margin
- Where the Debtor resided in the jurisdiction there was a slight skew towards the file being enrolled less than 120 months



# What we Learned – International Caseload

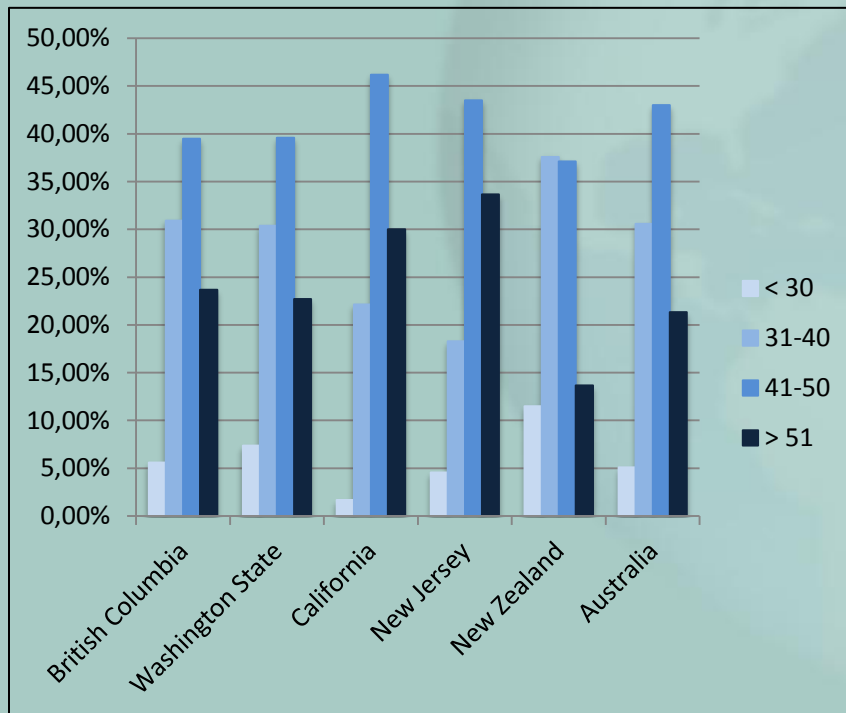
- Maintenance cases can be found everywhere!
- Geographic “reach” of caseload depends upon definition of “international” and how many reciprocal arrangements each jurisdiction has
- Our largest partners are also our closest geographic partners
- We speculate that this may have to do with proximity for purpose of access or contact – but that is an area for further research
- Cases remain open for a very long time (10 years) or more

## B. CLIENTS AND CHILDREN

# Age of Debtor

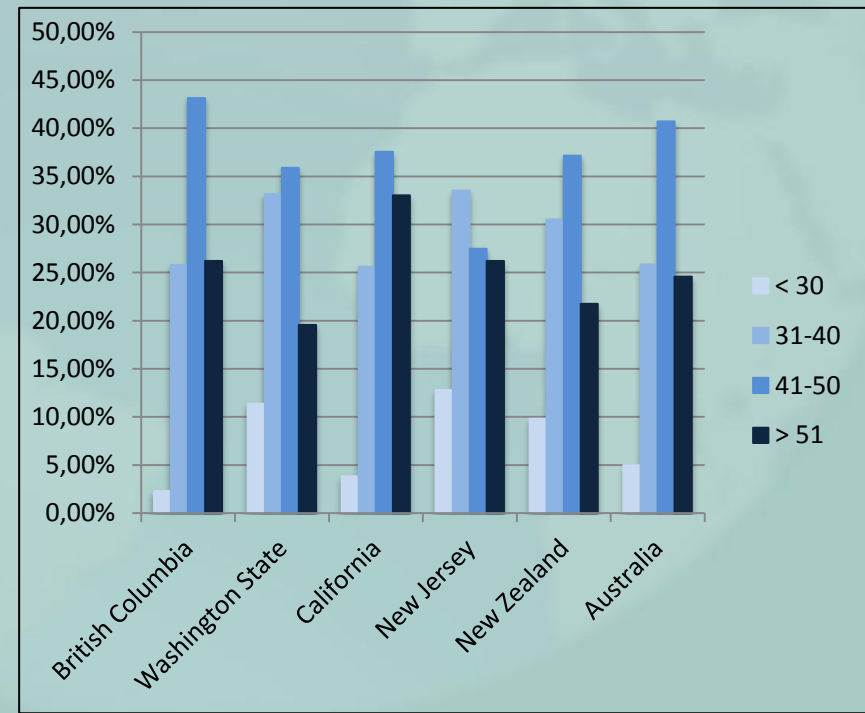
## Debtor In Reporting Jurisdiction (2011) Data

- Most Debtors are between 31 and 50 years of age



## Debtor Out of Reporting Jurisdiction (2011) Data

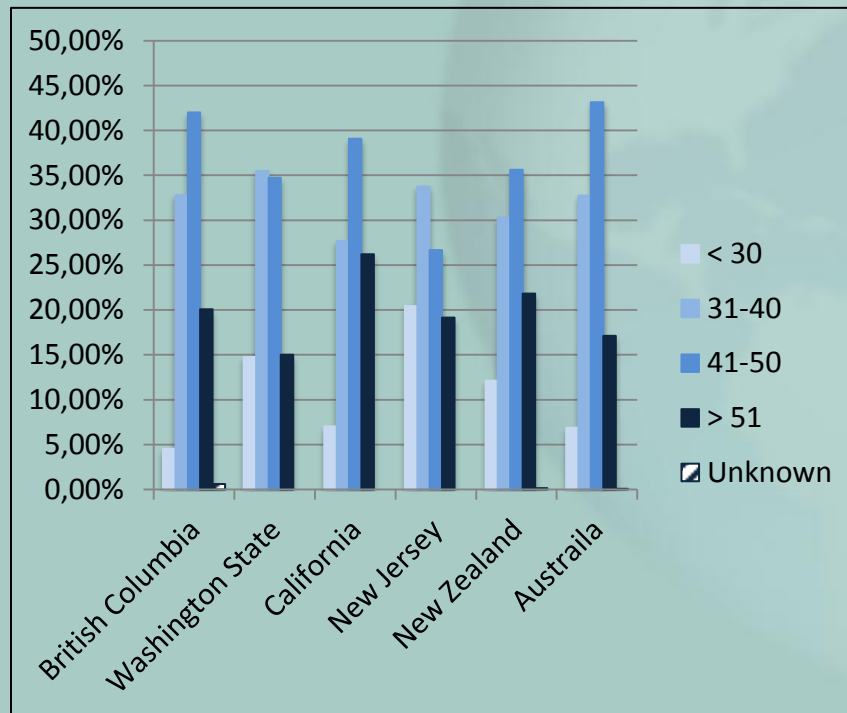
- Most Debtors are between 31 and 50 years of age



# Age of Creditor

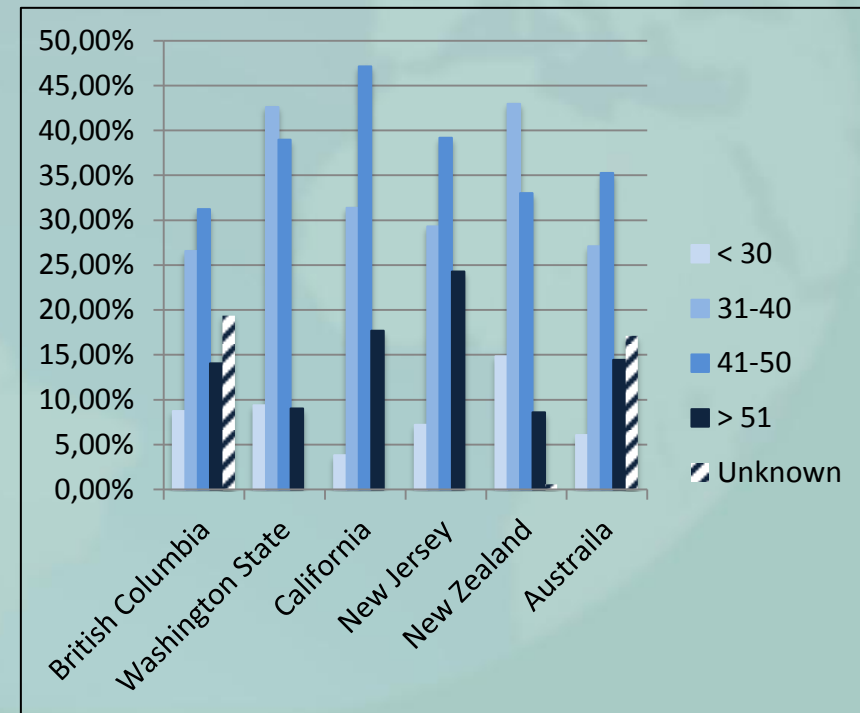
## Creditor In Reporting Jurisdiction (2011 Data)

- Most Creditors are between 31 and 50 years of age
- Largest single group is 41-50 years of age



## Creditor Out of Reporting Jurisdiction (2011 Data)

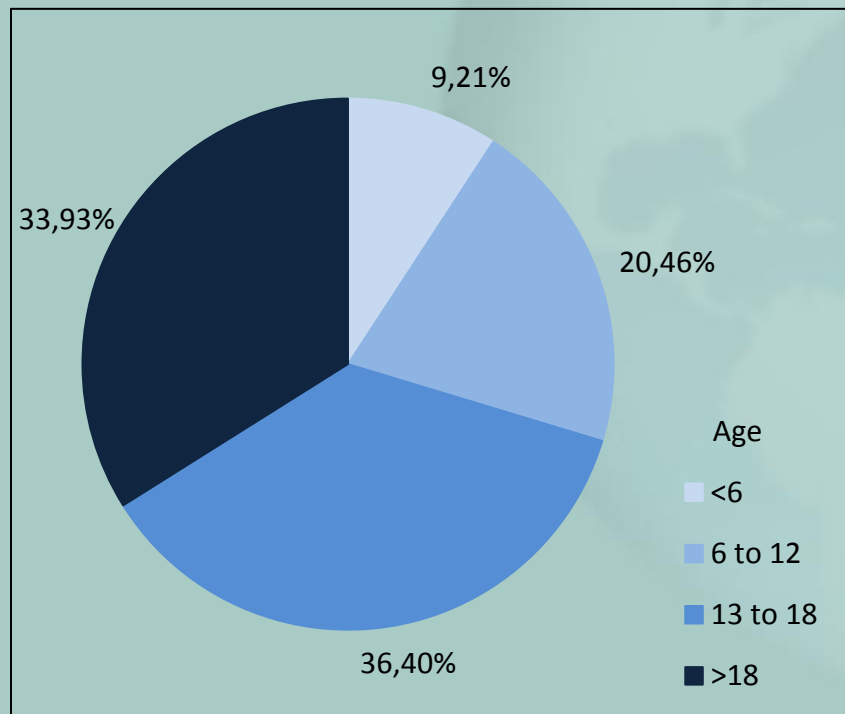
- Most Creditors are between 31 and 50 years of age
- Note the larger population of unknown ages – age of creditor is not a requirement



# Age of Children

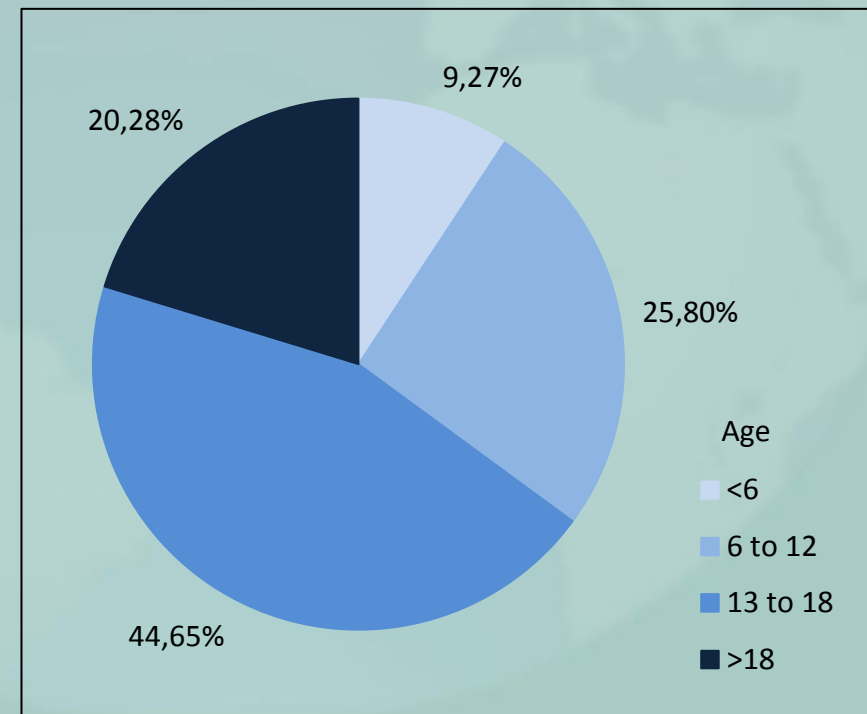
## Children In Jurisdiction (2011 Data)

- 56% of Children are between 6 and 18 years old
- Much larger group of children over 18 years old



## Children Out of Jurisdiction (2011 Data)

- 70% of Children are between 6 and 18 years old
- Much smaller number of children > 18 years old

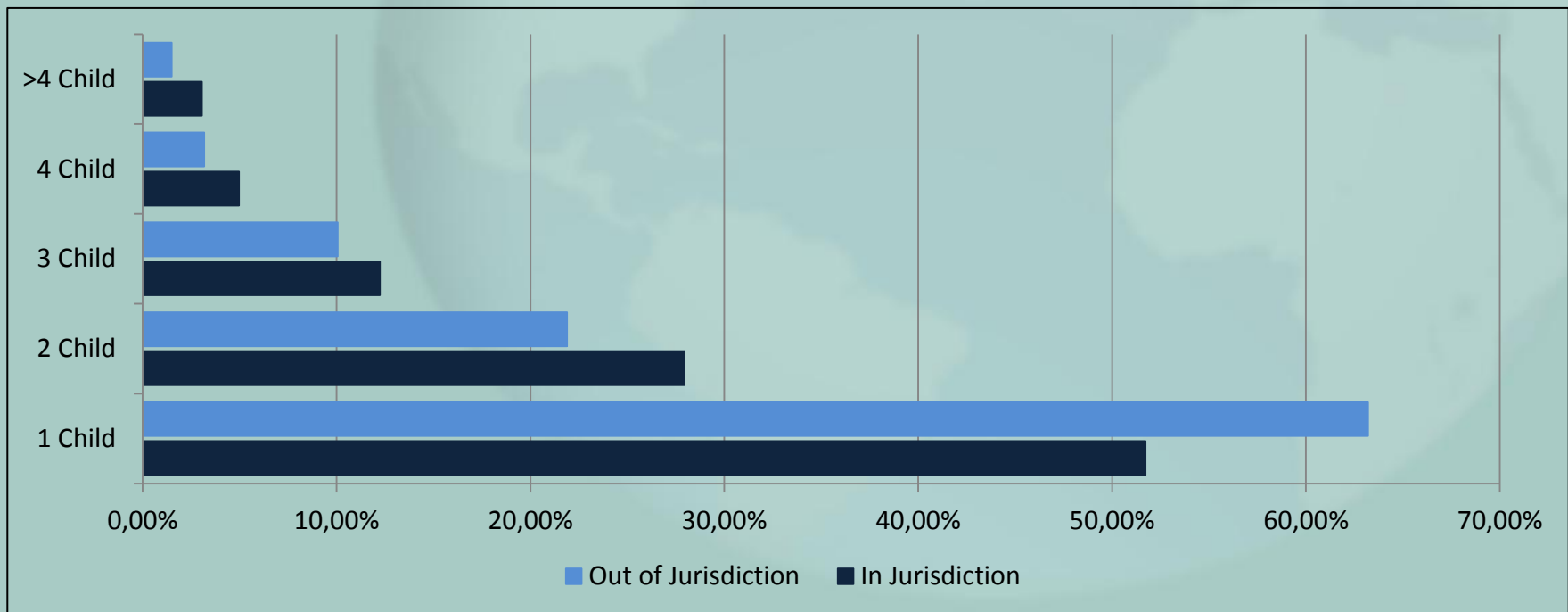


# Number of Children per case

## All Jurisdictions (2011 Data)

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- Fewer one child families in jurisdiction (just over 50 %) than out of jurisdiction (just over 60%)
- Average Family sizes
  - 1.5 children (out of jurisdiction)
  - 1.8 children (in jurisdiction)

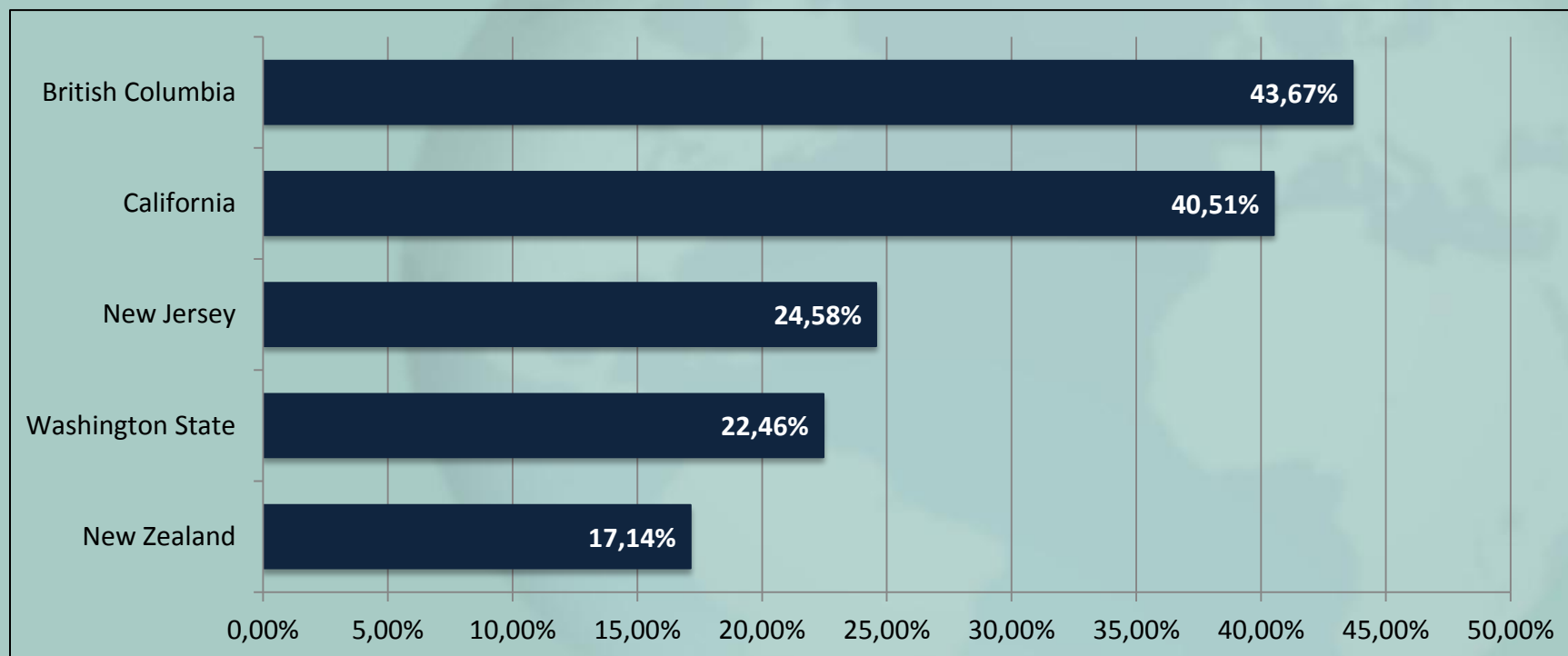




# “ADULT” CHILDREN

# Percentage of Children in Reporting Jurisdiction over 18 (2011 Data)

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\*Age of majority varies by jurisdiction – graph uses age 18 for comparative purposes

# What we Learned – Clients and Children

- Both creditors and debtors are most likely to be in the 40 – 50 age group
- We don't know much about creditors outside the jurisdiction
- Children are older than on domestic cases- not very many babies or under 10 year olds
- Some jurisdictions have lots of adult children on their caseloads

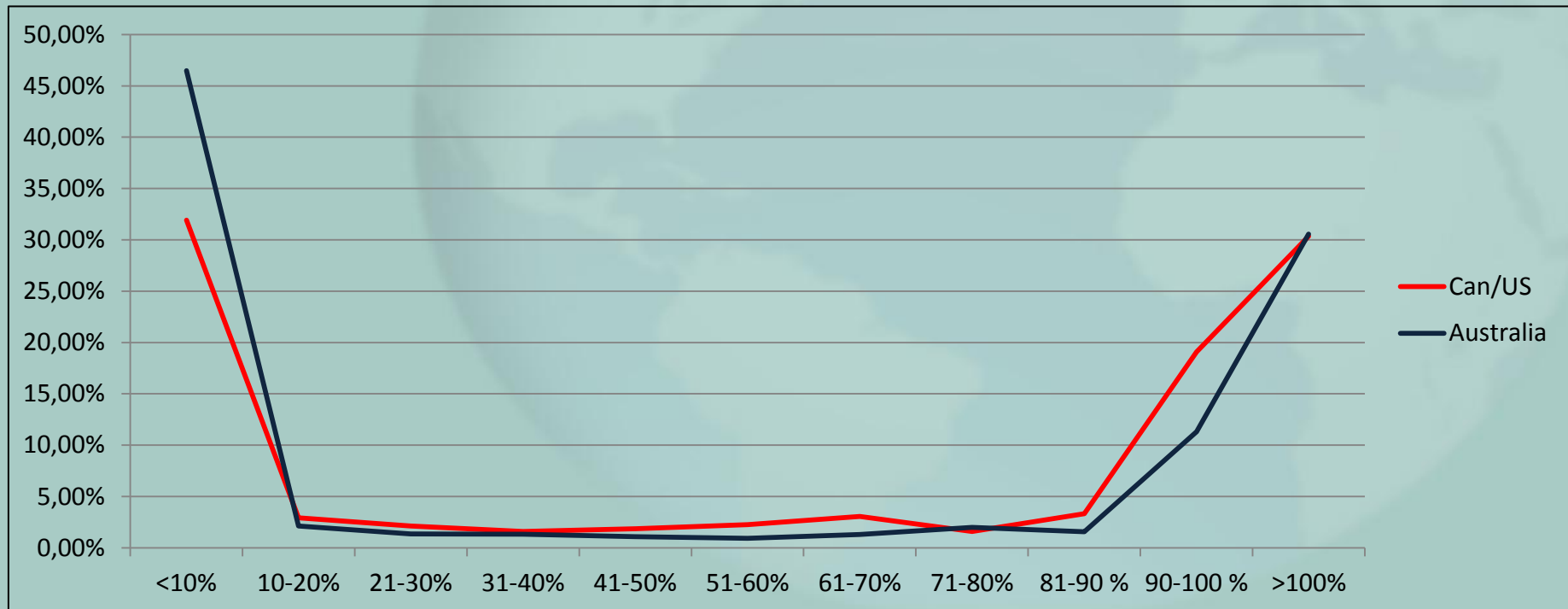
# C. MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS

# HOW MUCH IS PAID ?

# Payment of Due Amount Debtor in Reporting Jurisdiction (2011 Data)

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- Cases are either almost fully paid – or very little is paid on the case
- Similar across all reporting jurisdictions
- Some jurisdictions (not all) report same pattern on domestic cases

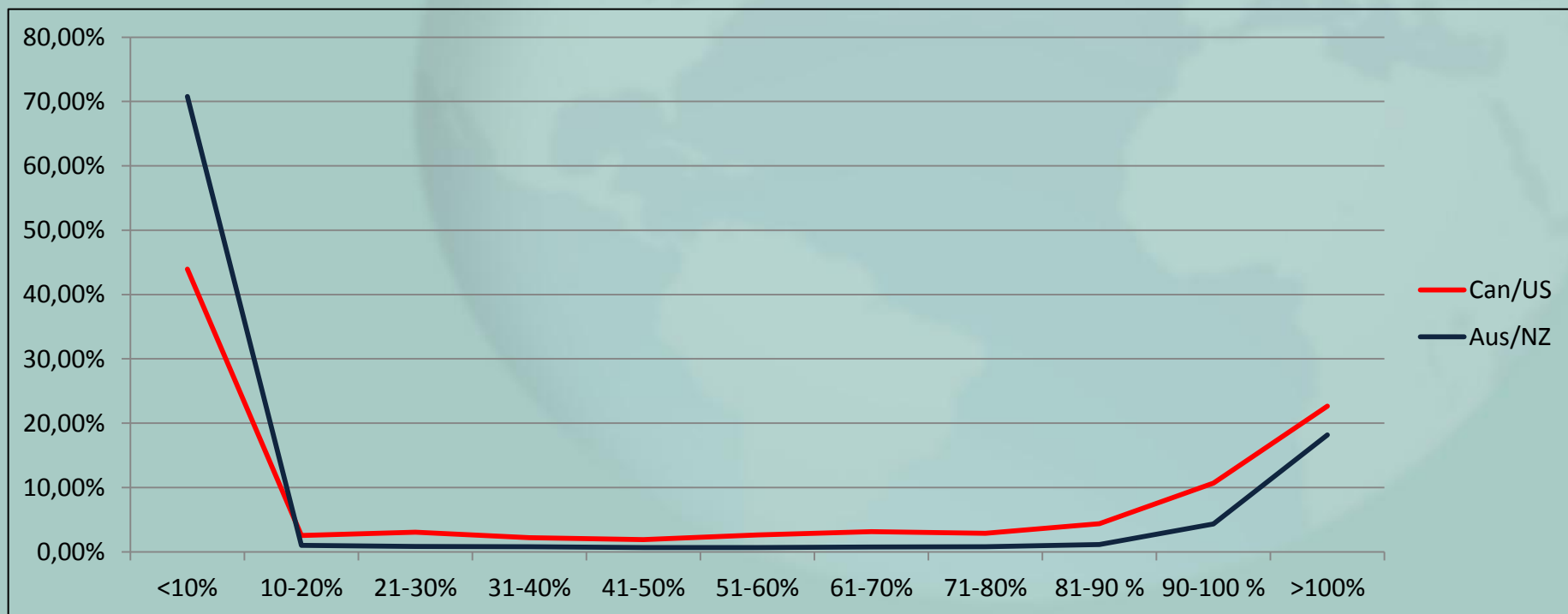


# Payment of Due Amount

## Debtor out of Reporting Jurisdiction (2011 Data)

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- Similar pattern as cases where Debtor In Jurisdiction - cases are either paid or unpaid
- The main difference is the much higher number of unpaid cases when the Debtor is outside of the reporting jurisdiction
- All jurisdictions retain cases that are fully paid so overall collection rates are lower on debtor-out cases





# What we Learned - Payments

- Cases tend to be either fully or almost fully paid – or have received no payments at all
- Where the paying parent (debtor) is out of the jurisdiction , there is a higher percentage of cases that are never-paid
- The debtor-out numbers reflect the practice of all jurisdictions to retain cases where the debtor is fully complying with the maintenance order
  - Cases are only sent for enforcement where there are problems with payment!
- It is difficult to compare jurisdictions because they differ so much in terms of structure
  - Whether establishment cases are included; whether they send cases only once a debtor has been located etc.

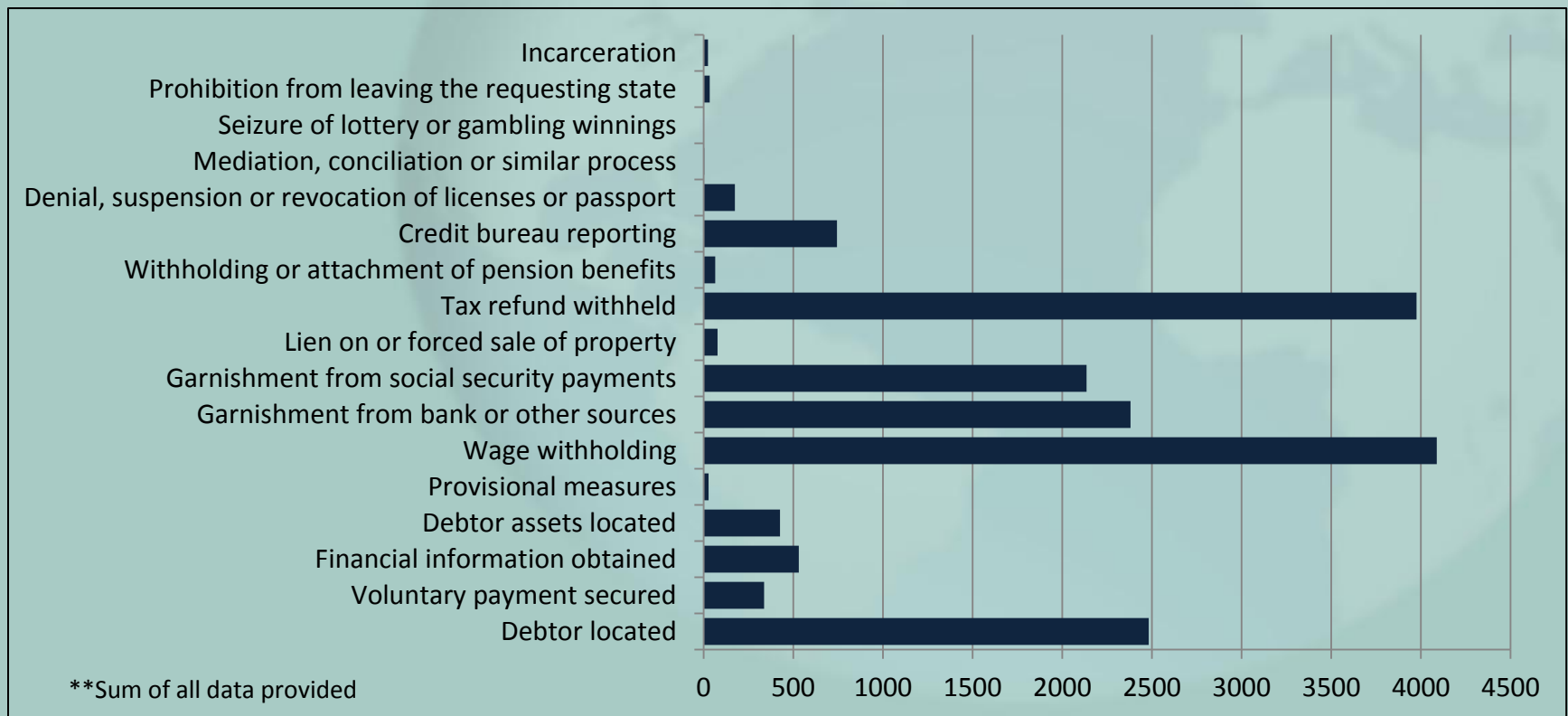
# D. ENFORCING MAINTENANCE DECISIONS

# Enforcement Actions Taken

## All Jurisdictions Combined (2011 Data)

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- Most jurisdictions reported that they were able to
  - Secure funds from the state – tax refunds or pension diversion
  - Initiate wage withholding (garnishments)
  - Trace / Locate a debtor



# What we Learned - Enforcement

- Almost all jurisdictions use the same basic enforcement measures
- Trace/locate, wage, tax and bank account withholding are the most usual enforcements initiated
- Looks like voluntary measures are rarely used – but many jurisdictions do not record these.
- Using measures listed in the Convention revealed a few surprises – some measures were not used at all
- This likely has more to do with an understanding (or lack of) concerning the description of the measure in the Convention

# E. CASEWORKER SURVEY

# Online Survey

- All caseworkers were able to participate (116 responses)
- Were able to include some of the jurisdictions that did not have enough data to provide on cases
- Participants included:
  - Caseworkers
  - Lawyers
  - Call centre staff
  - Establishment/modification workers
  - Registration or enrollment officers

# Caseworker Experience

- Caseworkers have significant amount of experience
- Average longevity/seniority exceeds 7 years
- More than half have mixed caseloads (i.e. work regular cases in addition to international cases)
- This has interesting implications for Convention training – the information needs to be available on an “as needed/when needed” basis

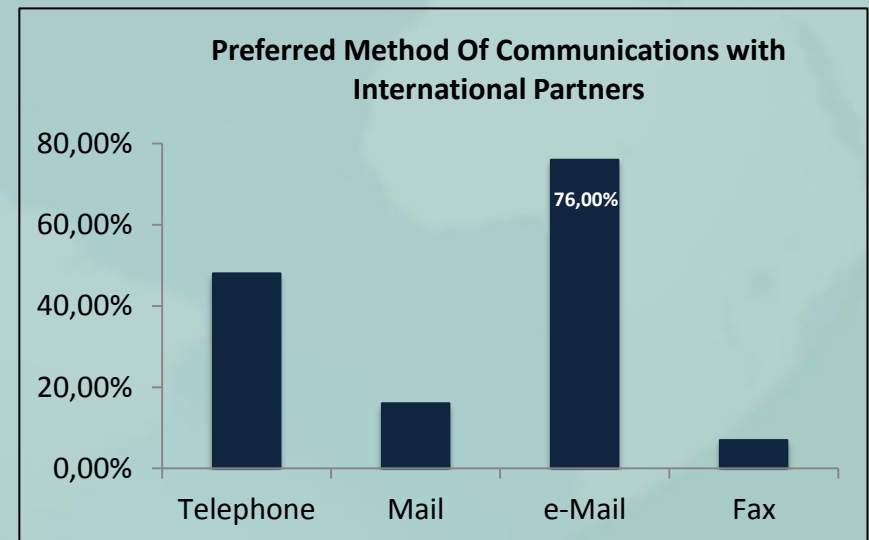
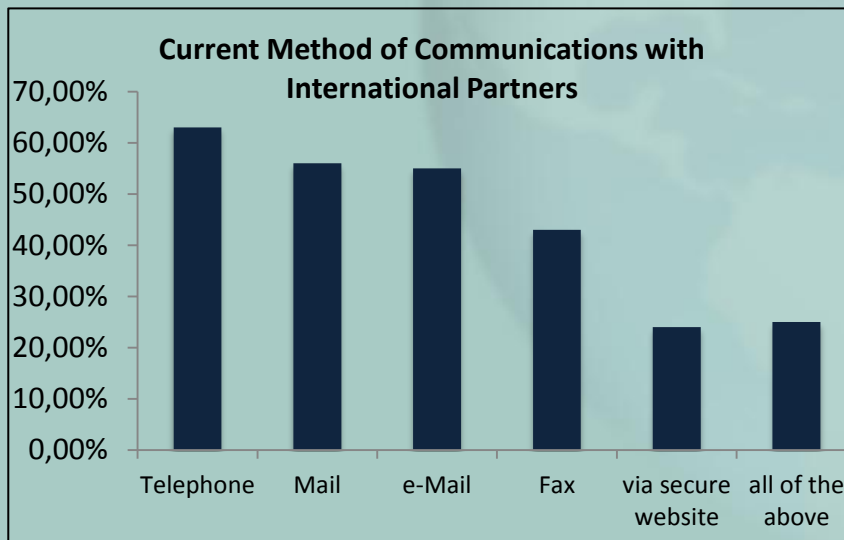


# Barriers or Challenges

- Most frequently cited barrier was communication between jurisdictions
- Recognize that success in international cases is dependent upon having a good working relationship with another jurisdiction
- Caseworkers also stated need for more information as to what different jurisdictions can or cannot do, and what is required
  - Important for Convention cases to make sure country profiles can be understood by caseworkers
- Caseworkers are frustrated with technology

# Communicating with Partners

- Most jurisdictions use a variety of methods to interact with international partners.
- International calling was one of the main methods with just over 60% of respondents using it.



# E-Mail Please!!!

- Strong message from caseworkers that they would like to communicate by email
- More than half reported restrictions on either international phone calls or email
- International calling only works if you are in a similar time zone.
- Secure messages through website not seen as effective replacement for email
- Important message – we need to work this out!

# What Caseworkers like about the work

- We asked caseworkers what they liked best about working international cases.
  - “The variety of work and of people we come across coupled with regularly learning things about other countries which keeps me interested”
  - “the variety and being able to make a positive difference in people's lives”
  - “The mix of people that make up our international cases. No case is the same.”
  - “Keeps my mind sharp and I learn something new every day”
  - “The complexities of the work we do”
  - “Helping collect child support for parents living in other countries to support their children”
  - “Finding someone that has dodged their child support and getting payments to the custodial parent”

# Caseworker Comments to each other

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- We asked caseworkers whether they had any comments they would like to share with the other caseworkers completing the survey.
  - “I appreciate their level of commitment given the often difficult situations (underfunding in many instances). I also appreciate the friendly manner I usually find with speaking to other jurisdictions and their usual prompt reply to my questions and requests for additional information.
  - “Thanks for the good work you do! Especially to those who take the time to go over and above to help their clients and colleagues. We do important work so remember that 😊 ”
  - “It has always been a pleasure working with caseworkers around the world!”
  - “Your work is SO important to the children of the world. Keep up the EXCELLENT work!!!”

# What we Learned - Caseworker Survey

- Most caseworkers have significant experience working international cases
- Caseworkers enjoy the challenges and the variety of their cases
- Better tools and more information would be appreciated by all of them
- We should try to solve the email “problem”

# F. RESEARCH PROCESS CONCLUSIONS



# Research Findings

- Yes - the data can be compared and it does tell us some interesting things about international families
- The more we work with international cases data, the more we learn about the right questions to ask to collect meaningful information
- Limitations on Data
  - Differences in structure of Child Support Programs
    - What services do they provide to families?
    - Are they national or regional?
  - Data Systems/technology capability
    - Small caseloads do not justify significant IT investments
    - Difficult to extract data specifically on international caseloads

# Recommendations

- Future research recommendations
  - Use consistent definition of international cases
    - Policy question – how are we defining international cases and why?
  - Program delivery and structure need to be well understood in order to properly structure data questions
  - Size is important – it is challenging to compare very large programs to very small ones
  - Small caseloads sometimes produce data anomalies as there are so few cases included
  - Understanding the barriers to better casework should inform the development of training and processes for the Convention. Learning more about best practices would be useful
  - The level of cooperation is wonderful – let's do more of this!

# Thank You!!

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## New Jersey

- Alisha

## Washington State

- Wally
- David

## LA County

- Steven
- Lori

## British Columbia

- Cathi
- ISO Team

## Ontario

- Bohodar
- Scot
- Olay



## New Zealand

- Paula
- Margie
- Donna

## Germany

- Natalie
- Thomas

## Orange County

- Mark
- Ruth
- Steven
- Winnie

## Australia

- Martin
- Natalie

AND to Chris Beresford for supporting and encouraging us  
in this research project!

# Questions?

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