

Preliminary Findings from the Welcome Group Program Evaluation

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Network for Economic
and Social Trends (NEST)

Overview

- Evaluation Components
- Demographic Profiles of Newcomers
- Preliminary Findings
- Summary

Evaluation Components

Focus of this Presentation:

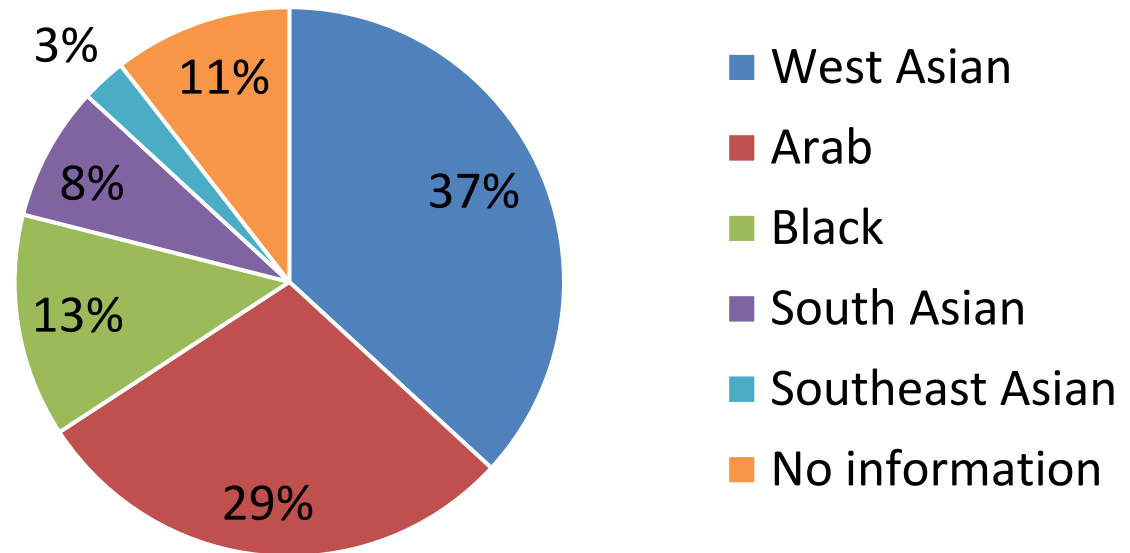
- Newcomer surveys at 3 points in time (at baseline, at the middle and at the end of the match)

Other Components:

- Volunteer surveys at 2 points in time (at baseline and at the end of the match)
- 10-15 interviews with randomly selected newcomers (3 months after their match end)
- 9 interviews with settlement staff near the end of the project (January-March, 2024)

Demographics of Newcomers

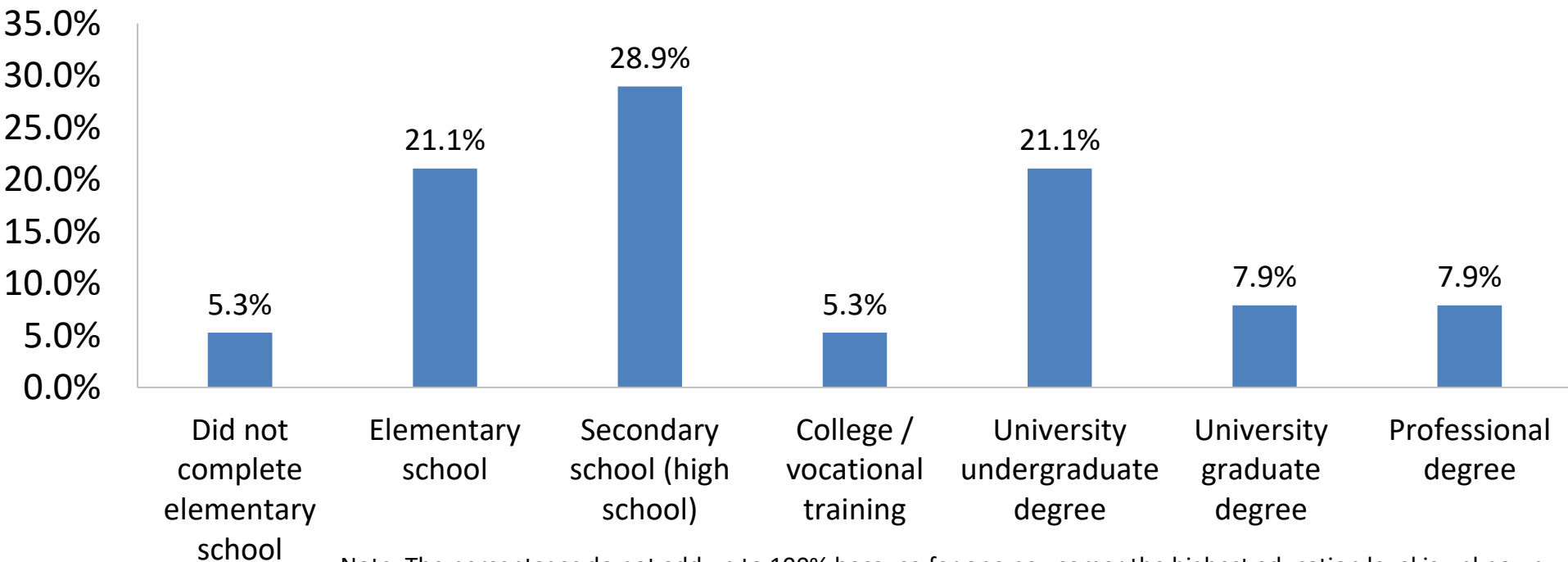
- To date, 38 newcomers (19 men and 19 women) completed both the baseline and interim surveys.
- Average age of 37.7 years ($SD = 10.1$ years)
- Ethnicity:



- The most commonly reported countries of birth were Afghanistan (36.8%, $n = 14$) and Syria (23.7%, $n = 9$)

Demographics of Newcomers

- 94.7% of newcomers entered Canada as government assisted refugees, 5.3% were protected persons
- As of November 2023, newcomers' length of time in Canada ranged between 12 month and 62 months ($M = 26.2$ months)
- Newcomers' education levels varied:



Preliminary Findings: Type of Matches

- Type of matches based on interim survey data of newcomers ($n = 38$):
 - 18 ‘entirely, or almost entirely, remote’ matches
 - 14 ‘mostly remote, some in-person’ matches
 - 3 ‘equally in-person and remote’ matches
 - 2 ‘mostly in-person, some remotely’
 - 1 ‘entirely, or almost entirely, in-person’
- } Remote
- } Hybrid

Preliminary Findings: Type of Matches

- **Reasons for meeting remotely:**

COVID, convenience and preference for remote interactions, busy schedules among newcomers and/or volunteers, geographic distance between newcomers and volunteers is too large, most challenges could be resolved remotely, volunteers did not request in-person meetings, newcomers' lack of confidence to ask the volunteers for an in-person meeting, or no specific reason

- **Reasons for meeting in-person:**

Volunteers asked for an in-person meeting, it was easier to practice English in an in-person setting; it was easier to communicate and discuss the challenges faced by the newcomer; a newcomer reported feeling depressed and preferred meeting in-person

Preliminary Findings: Platforms Used to Meet Remotely

	Remote Matches		Hybrid Matches	
Platform	Percentage	Mean Effectiveness	Percentage	Mean Effectiveness
Messaging platforms (e.g., WhatsApp)	83%	5.33	85%	5.88
Phone calls	56%	5.20	85%	5.65
Video calls	61%	5.55	40%	6.00
Text messages	39%	5.29	15%	4.33
Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Email• Social Media	17%	5.33	10%	4.50

Note. Effectiveness ratings were provided on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely). Multiple responses were possible.

Preliminary Findings: Challenges

Challenges Reported at Baseline by Newcomers	Percentage (<i>n</i> = 38)
Practicing English or French	87%
Finding employment	68%
Pursuing education	58%
Accessing government services	55%
Expanding social network	45%
Socializing/friendships with volunteers	39%
Helping children with schoolwork/extracurriculars	34%
Seeing doctors/navigating healthcare system	26%
Accessing settlement services	18%
Using public transit/getting around	11%
Other:	13%
• Housing (4x)	
• Youth Mentorship / Support	

Preliminary Findings

Immediate Outcome 1: Increased Understanding of Client Settlement Needs and Appropriate Linkages to Other Services

Indicators:

1. Clients' perception that they have someone to talk to about their problems
2. Clients' level of understanding and access to available services and resources
3. Percentage of clients who report that their settlement needs are being met



Preliminary Findings

Immediate Outcome 1: Increased Understanding of Client Settlement Needs and Appropriate Linkages to Other Services

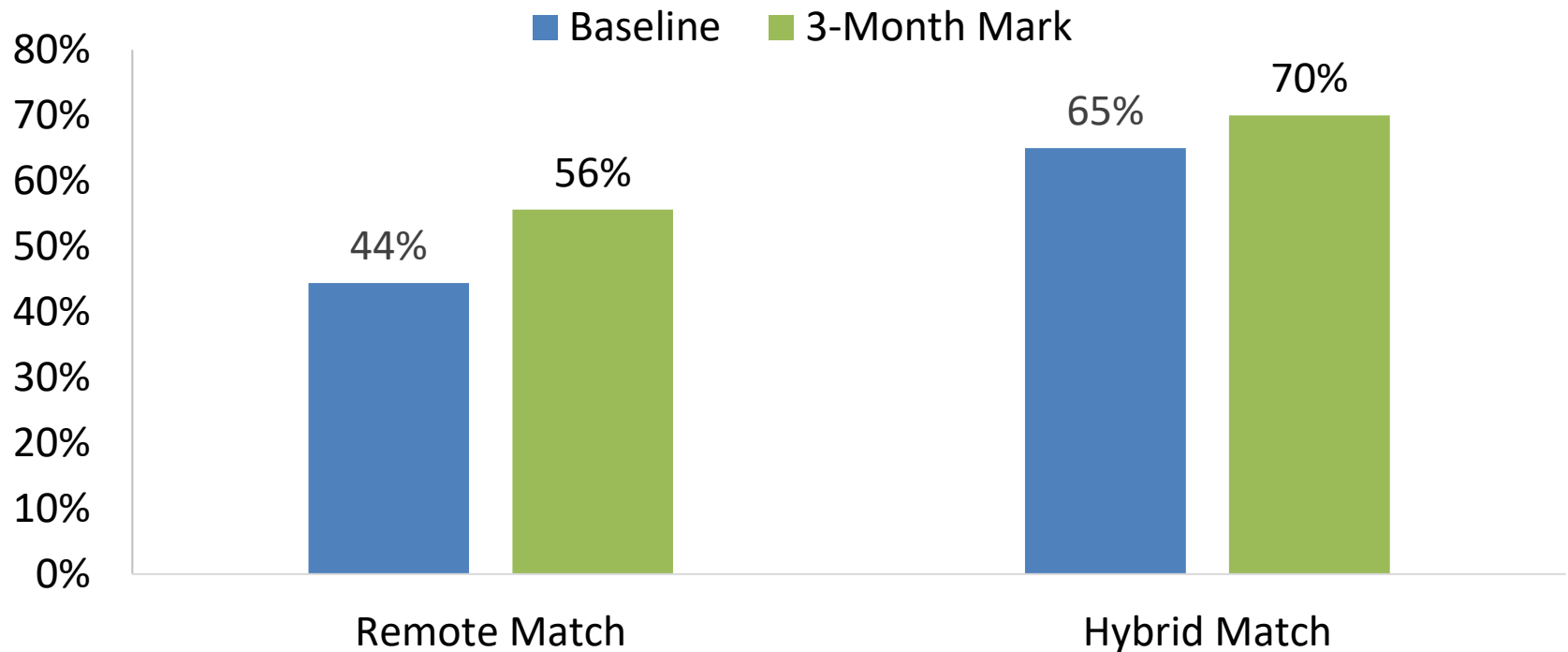
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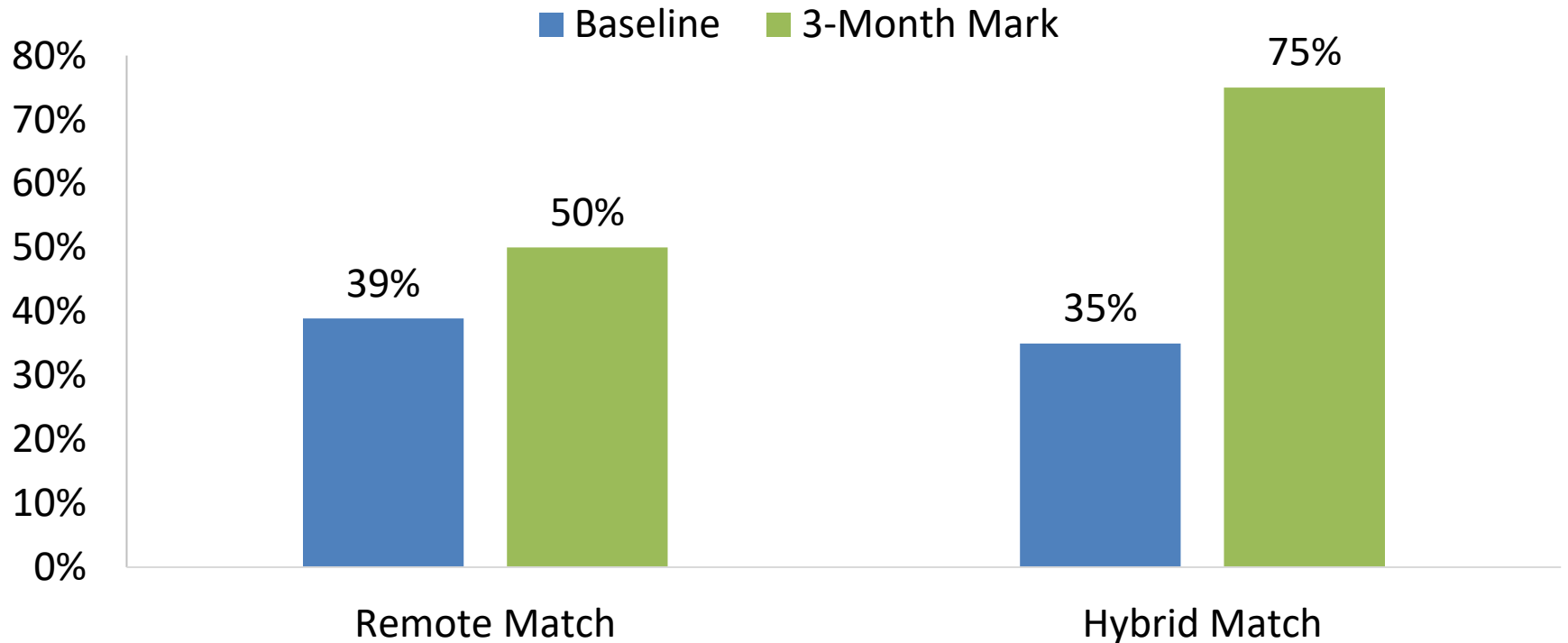
Preliminary Findings

Percentage of Newcomers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That They Have Someone to Talk to About Problems They Are Facing



Preliminary Findings

Percentage of Newcomers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That They Have People Who Support Them in Their Community



Preliminary Findings

Immediate Outcome 1: Increased Understanding of Client Settlement Needs and Appropriate Linkages to Other Services

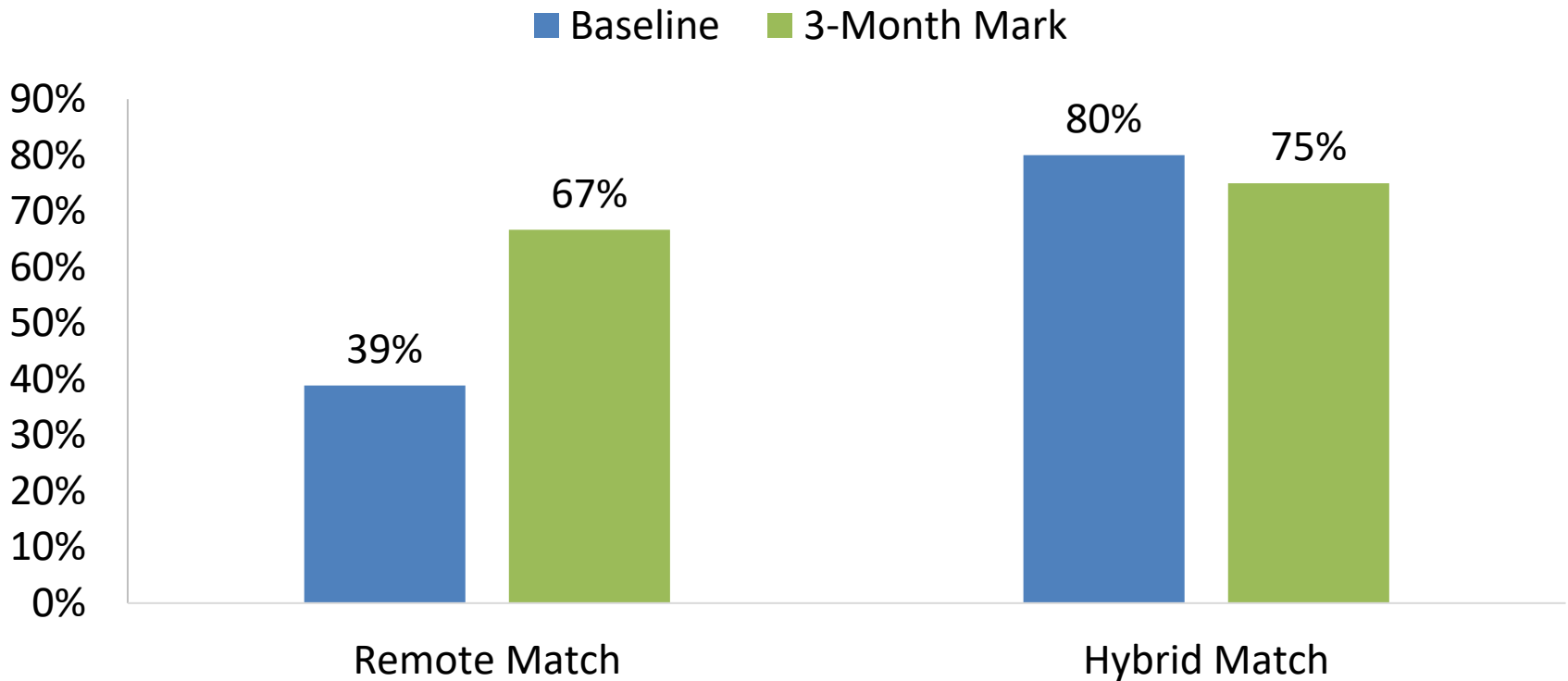
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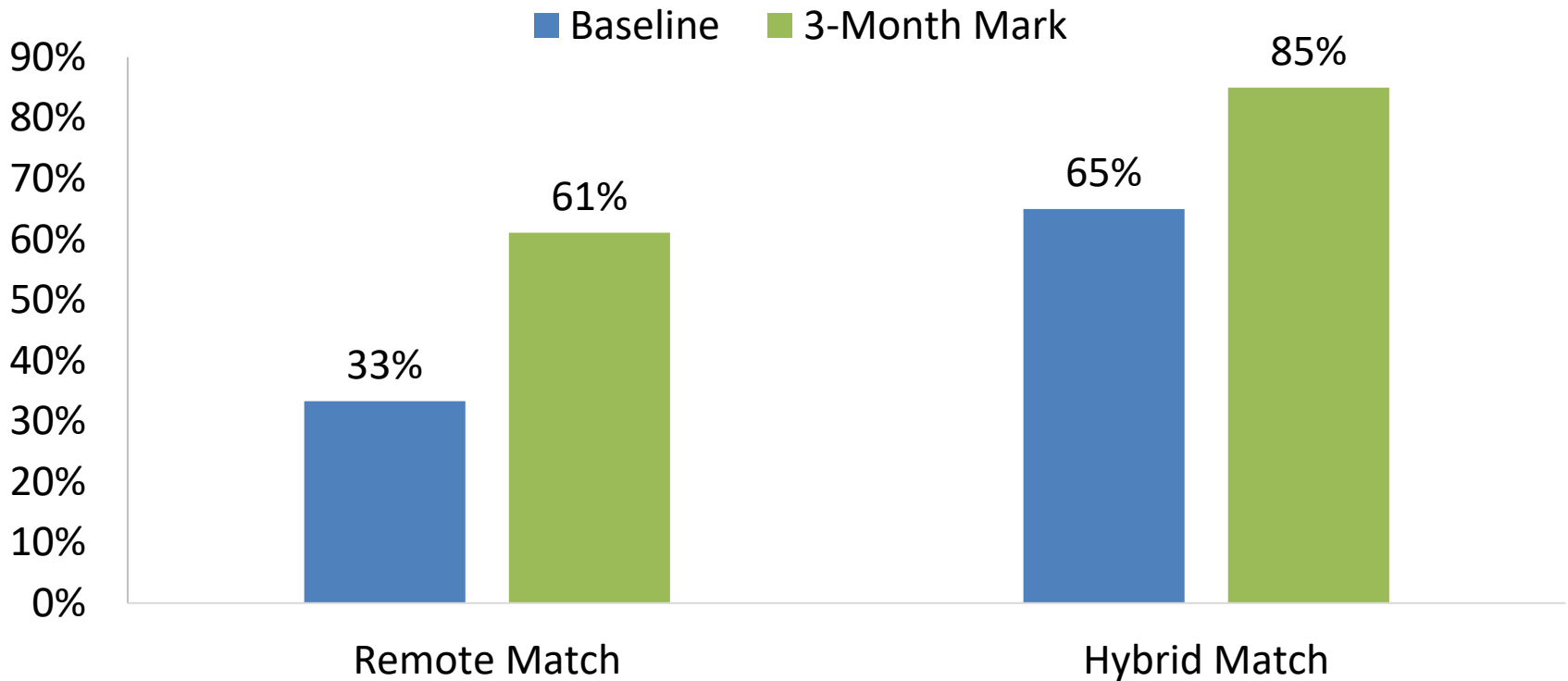
Preliminary Findings

Percentage of Newcomers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That They Can Access the Services They Need in Canada



Preliminary Findings

Percentage of Newcomers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That They Can Access and Understand the Information They Need in Canada



Preliminary Findings

Immediate Outcome 1: Increased Understanding of Client Settlement Needs and Appropriate Linkages to Other Services

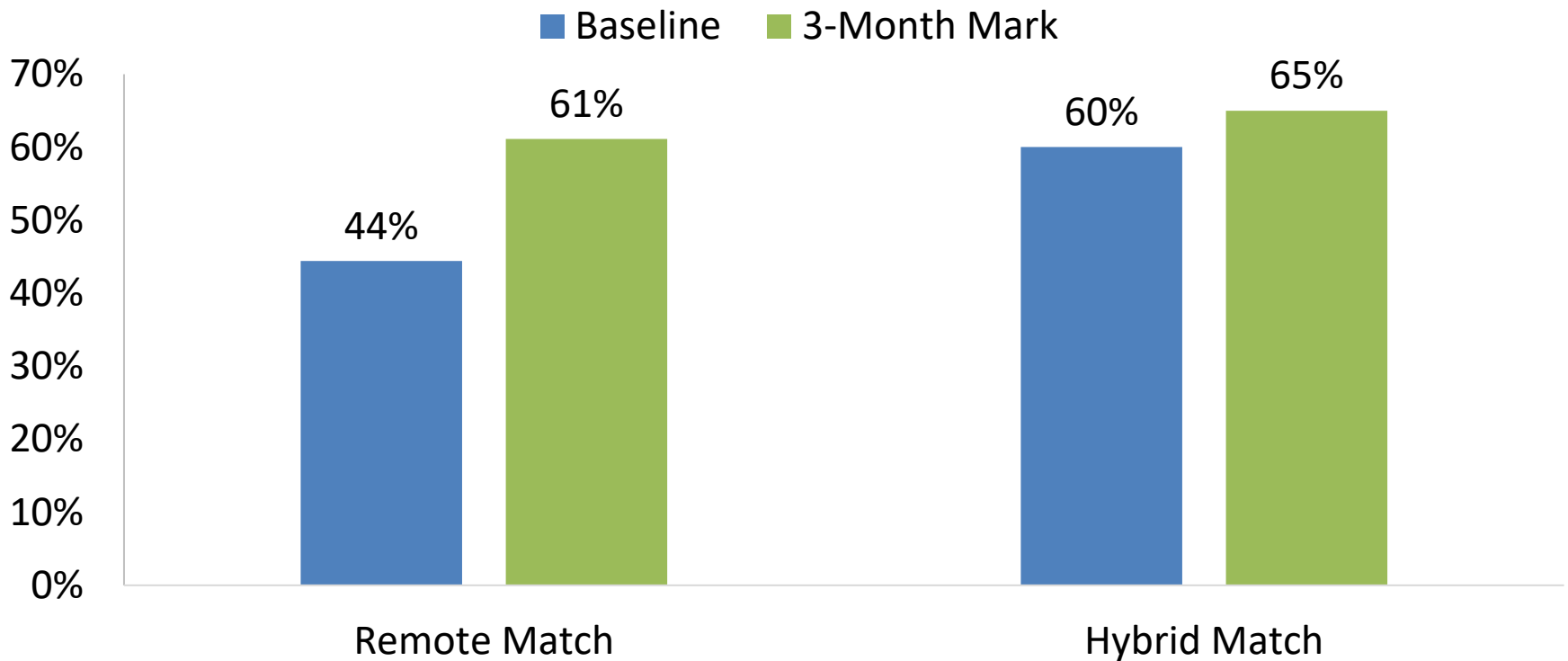
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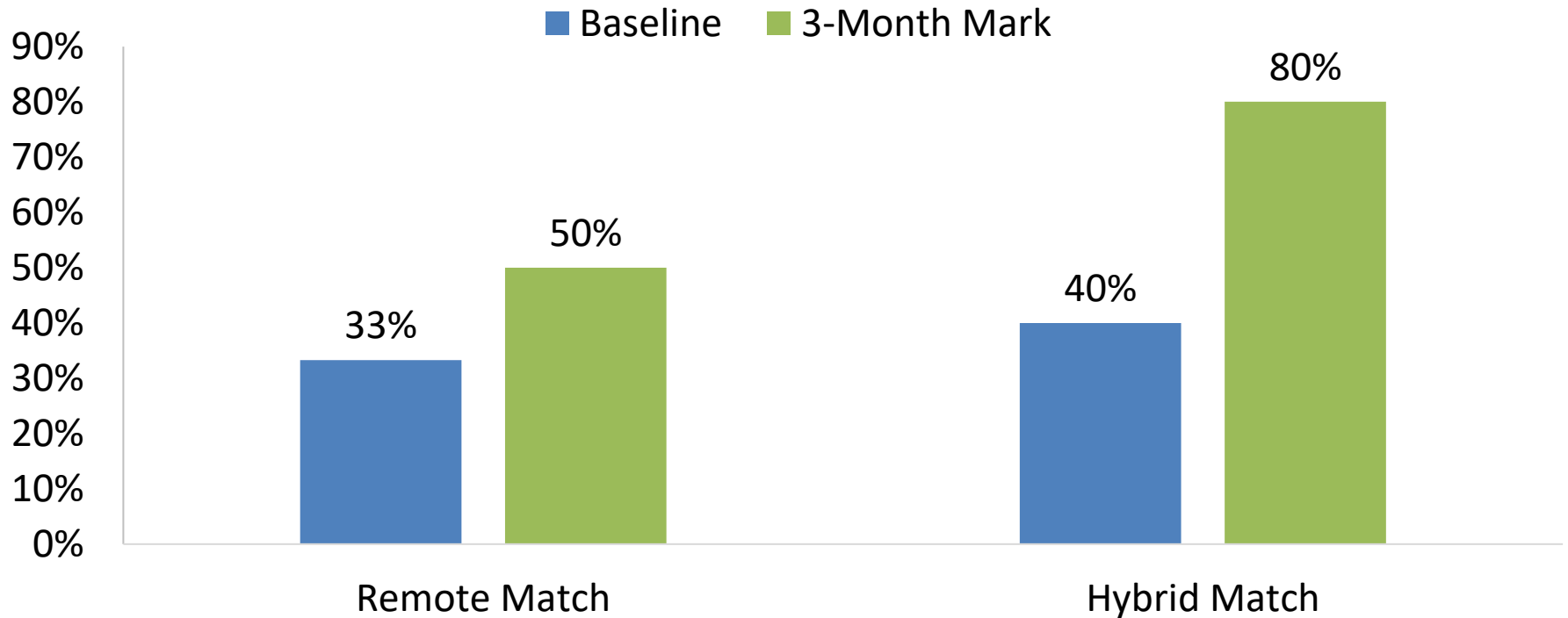
Preliminary Findings

Percentage of Newcomers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That Their Settlement Needs are Being Met



Preliminary Findings

Percentage of Newcomers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That Their Household Has Made Progress Toward Their Integration Priorities



Preliminary Findings

Immediate Outcome 2: Clients Increase Participation in Communities and Social Networks

Indicators:

1. Clients' level of attachment to their community
2. Clients' participation and social integration in their community



Preliminary Findings

Immediate Outcome 2: Clients Increase Participation in Communities and Social Networks

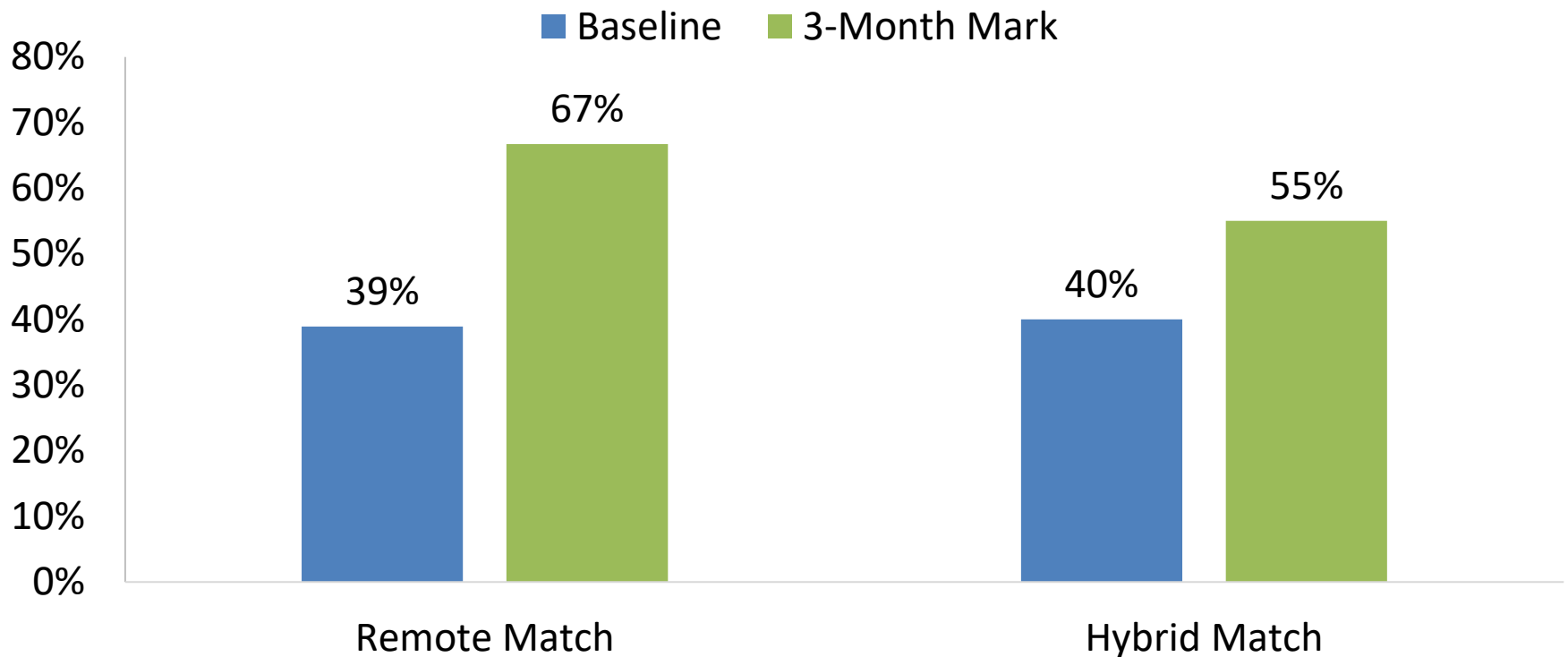
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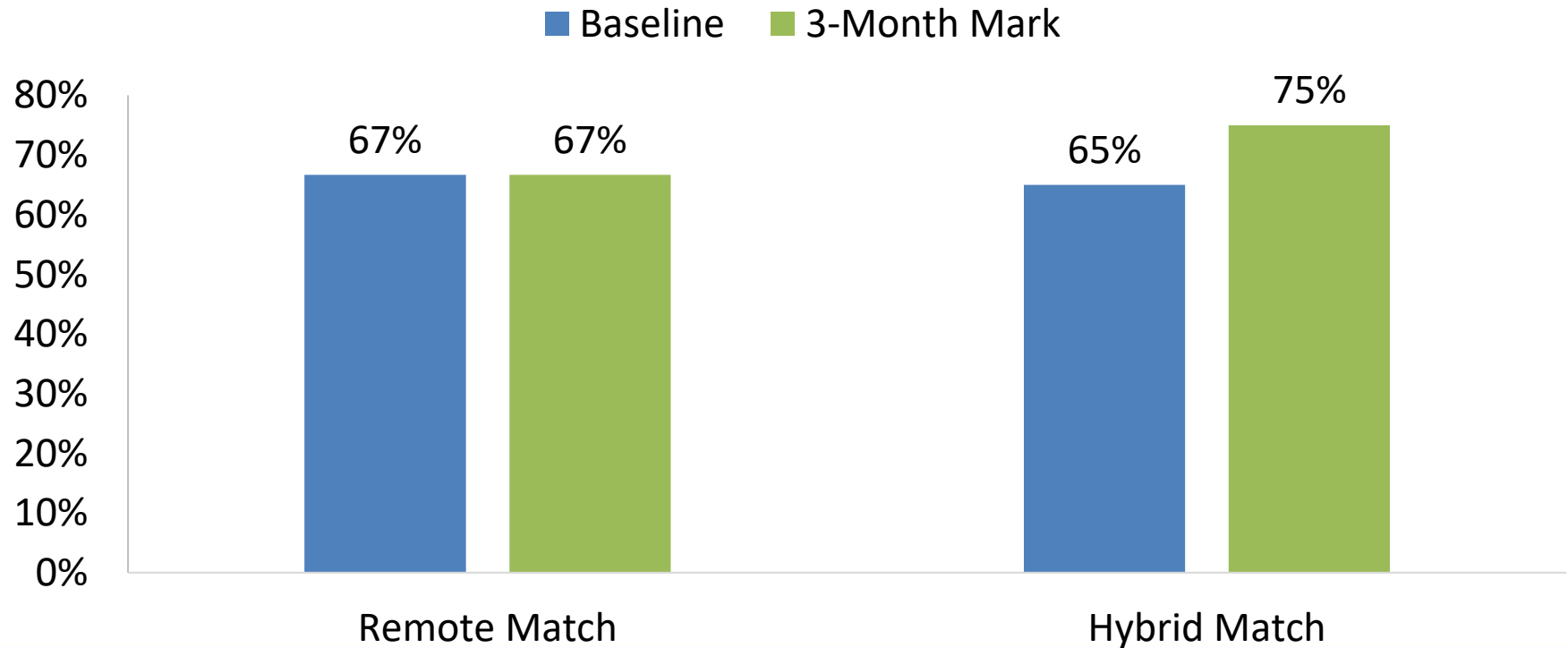
Preliminary Findings

Percentage of Newcomers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That They Feel Connected to Their Community



Preliminary Findings

Percentage of Newcomers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That They Feel Welcome in Their Community



Preliminary Findings

Immediate Outcome 2: Clients Increase Participation in Communities and Social Networks

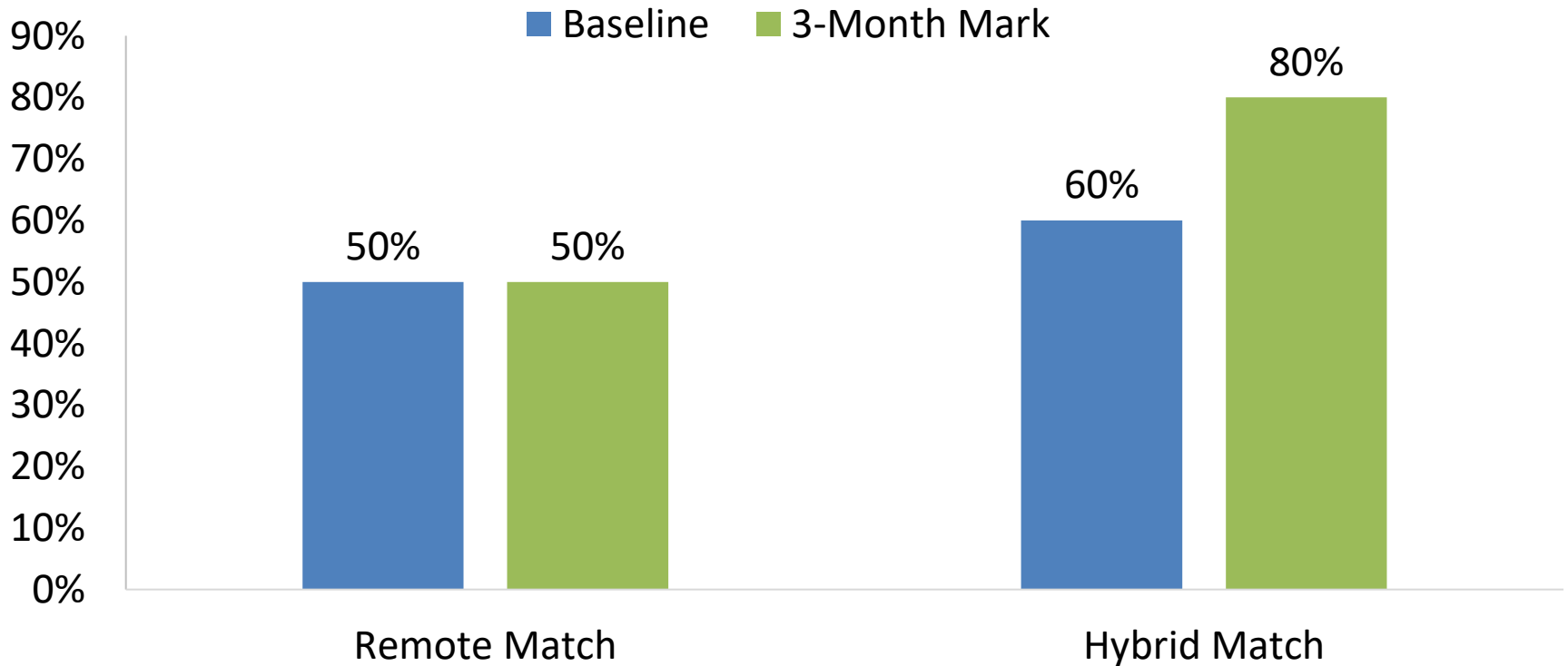
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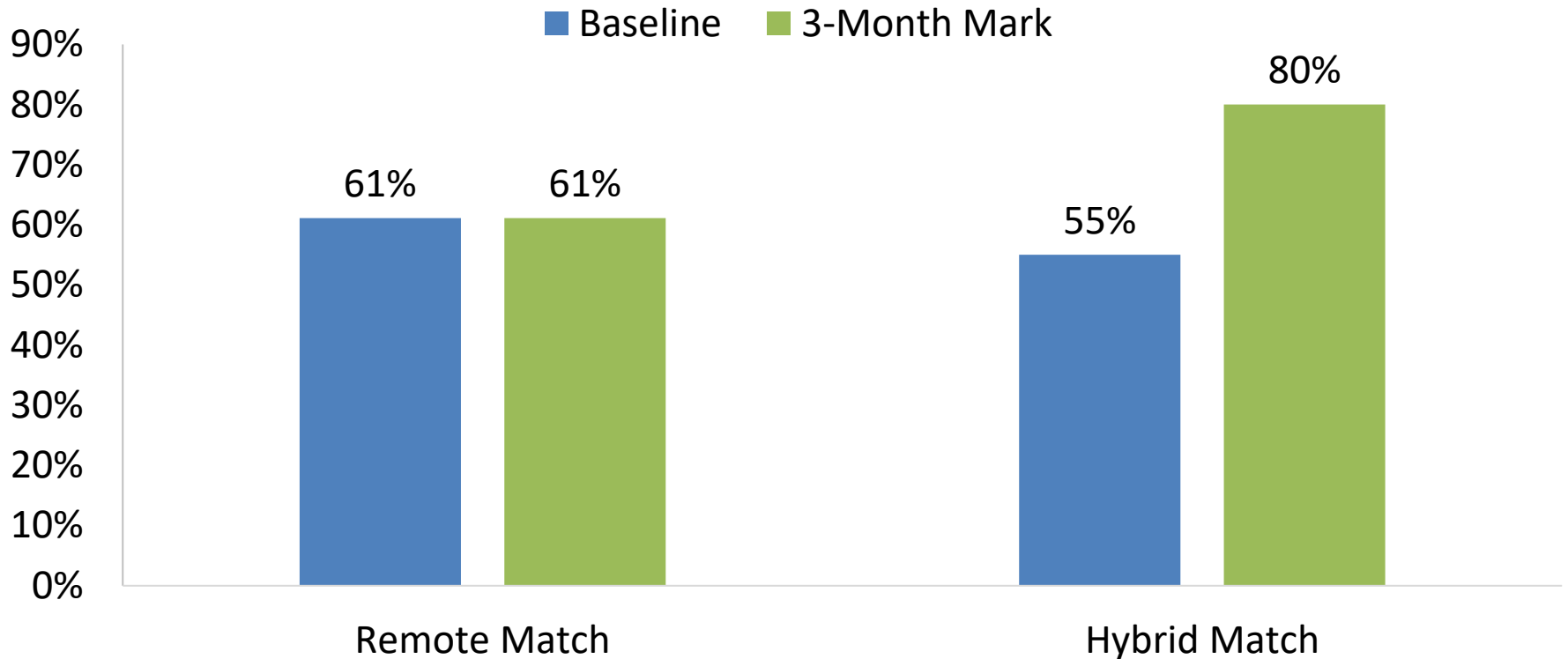
Preliminary Findings

Percentage of Newcomers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That They Can Participate in Their Communities



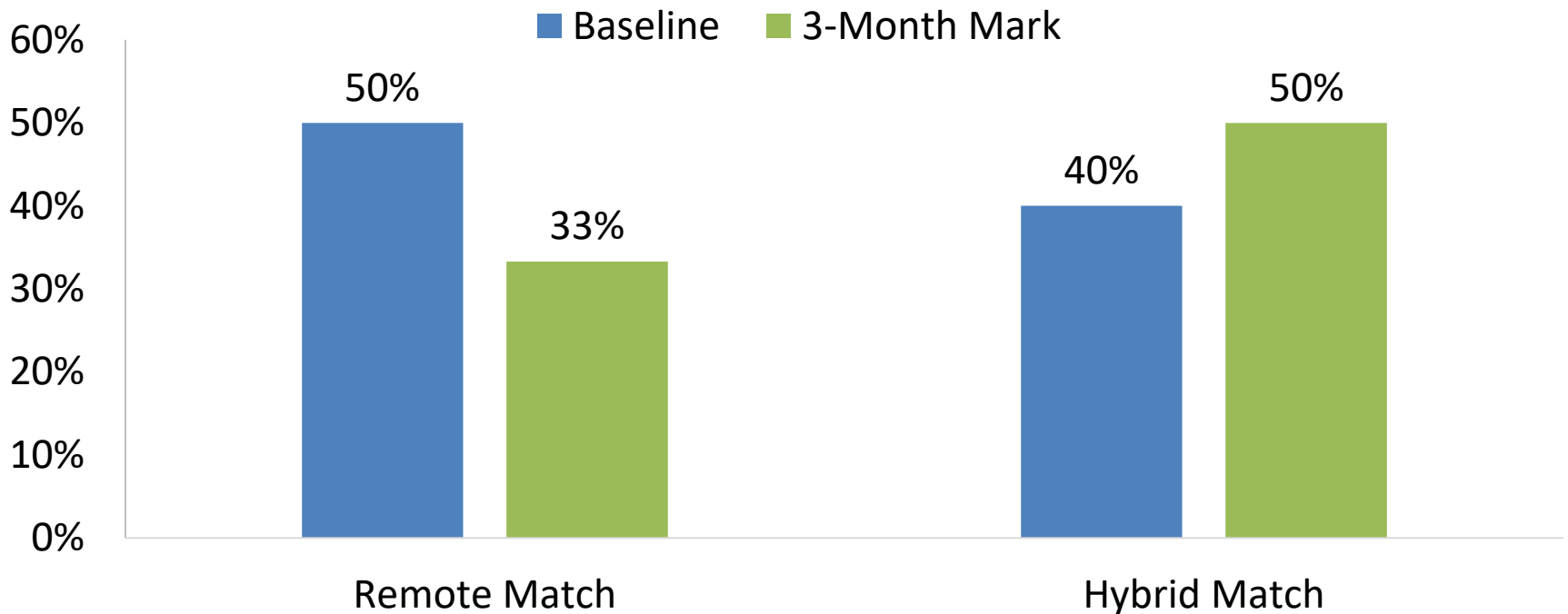
Preliminary Findings

Percentage of Newcomers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That They Have Social Connections in Their Community



Preliminary Findings

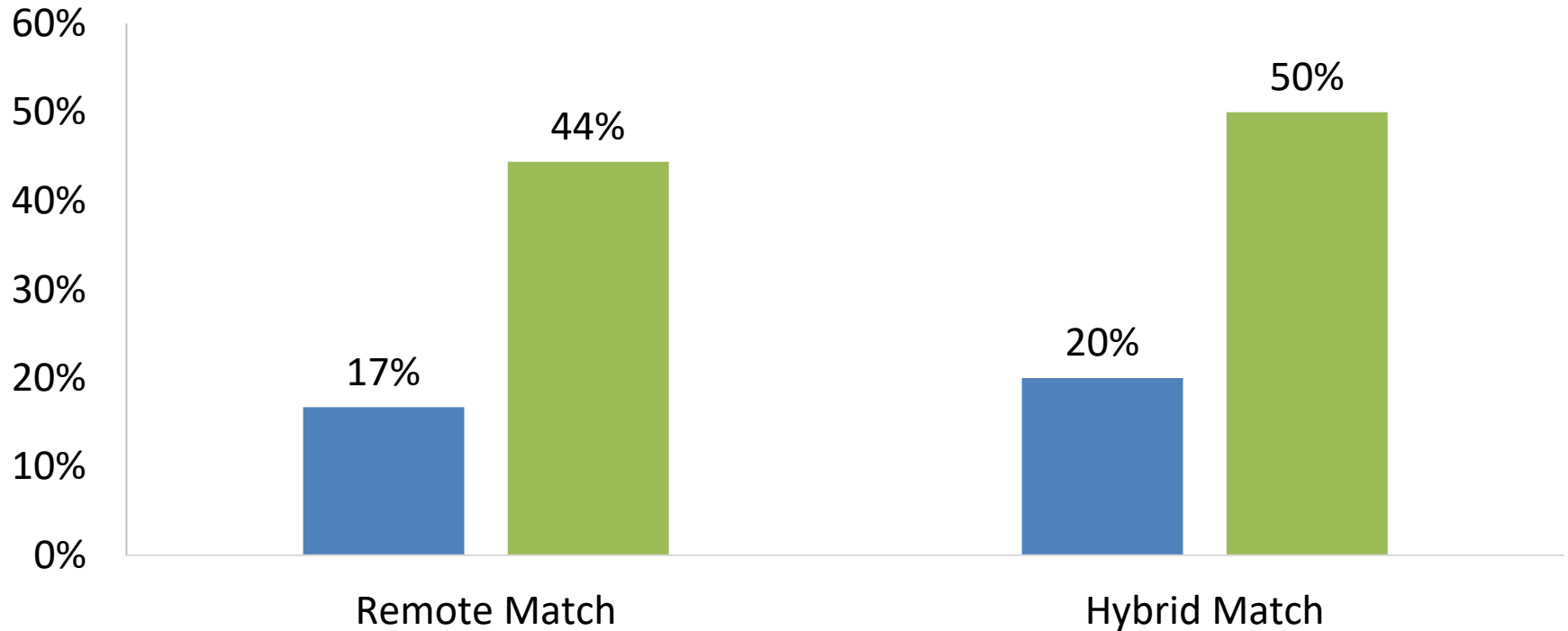
Percentage of Newcomers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That They Have Met People in Their Community Who Share Their Interests and Enjoy the Same Social Activities as Them



Preliminary Findings

Percentage of Newcomers who Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed That They Feel Socially Isolated

■ Baseline ■ 3-Month Mark



Summary

- At the beginning of the program, newcomers faced a variety of challenges. Top challenges include: English/French language proficiency, employment and education.
- Within 3 months of the Welcome Group Program, clients reported ...
 - increased support in the form of having someone to talk to about their problems, particularly in remote matches (hybrid matches already had higher levels of support to begin with)
 - increased social support in their community (with a larger increase in hybrid matches)
 - increased access to available services, only in remote matches (hybrid matches already had higher levels to begin with)

Summary

- Within 3 months of the Welcome Group Program, clients reported ...
 - increased access and understanding of the information they need in Canada (both match types)
 - making progress toward their integration priorities (with a larger increase in hybrid matches)
 - feeling more connected to their community (with a larger increase in remote matches)
 - increased participation in their community, having social connections in their community, and having met people in their community with shared interests (only hybrid matches)
 - reduced social isolation (both match types)

Conclusion

- While the evaluation is still ongoing, preliminary findings show that, overall, 3 months into the Welcome Group Program newcomers in both remote and hybrid matches reported improvements in their journey to settle and integrate in Canada.
- However, for a few indicators – participation, having social connections and meeting people with shared interests in the community – only newcomers in hybrid matches showed improvements.
- For other indicators – social support in the community and progress toward integration priorities – newcomers in hybrid matches tended to show larger improvements than newcomers in remote matches.
- The only indicator that showed a larger improvement for remote matches than hybrid matches is feelings of connections to the community.

Acknowledgements & Contact Information

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 - Victoria Esses: vesses@uwo.ca