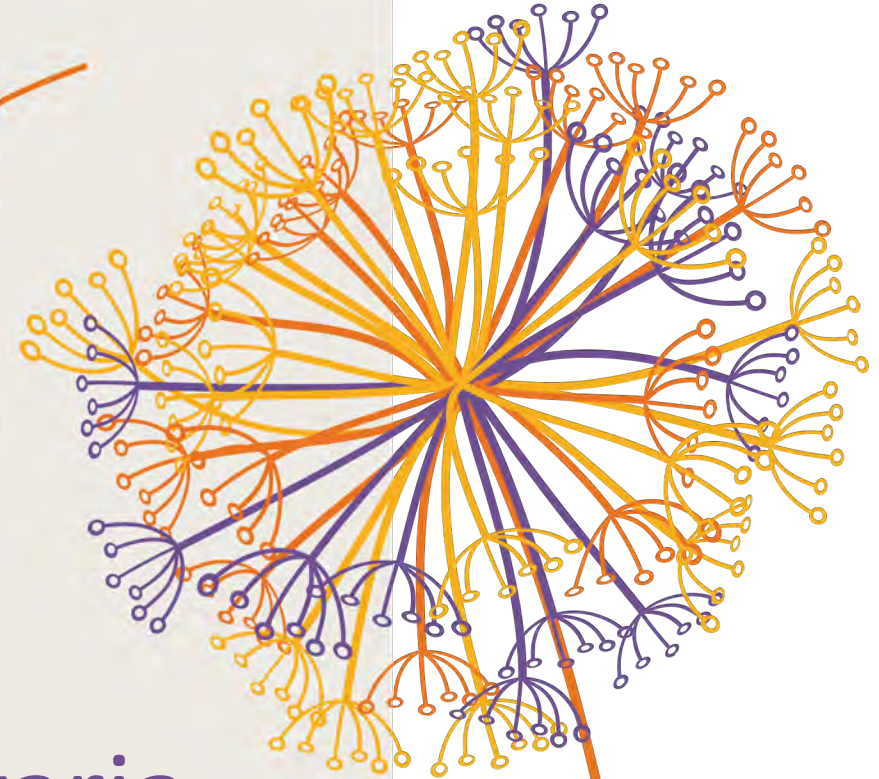


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**25+** years for  
Early Childhood  
Development

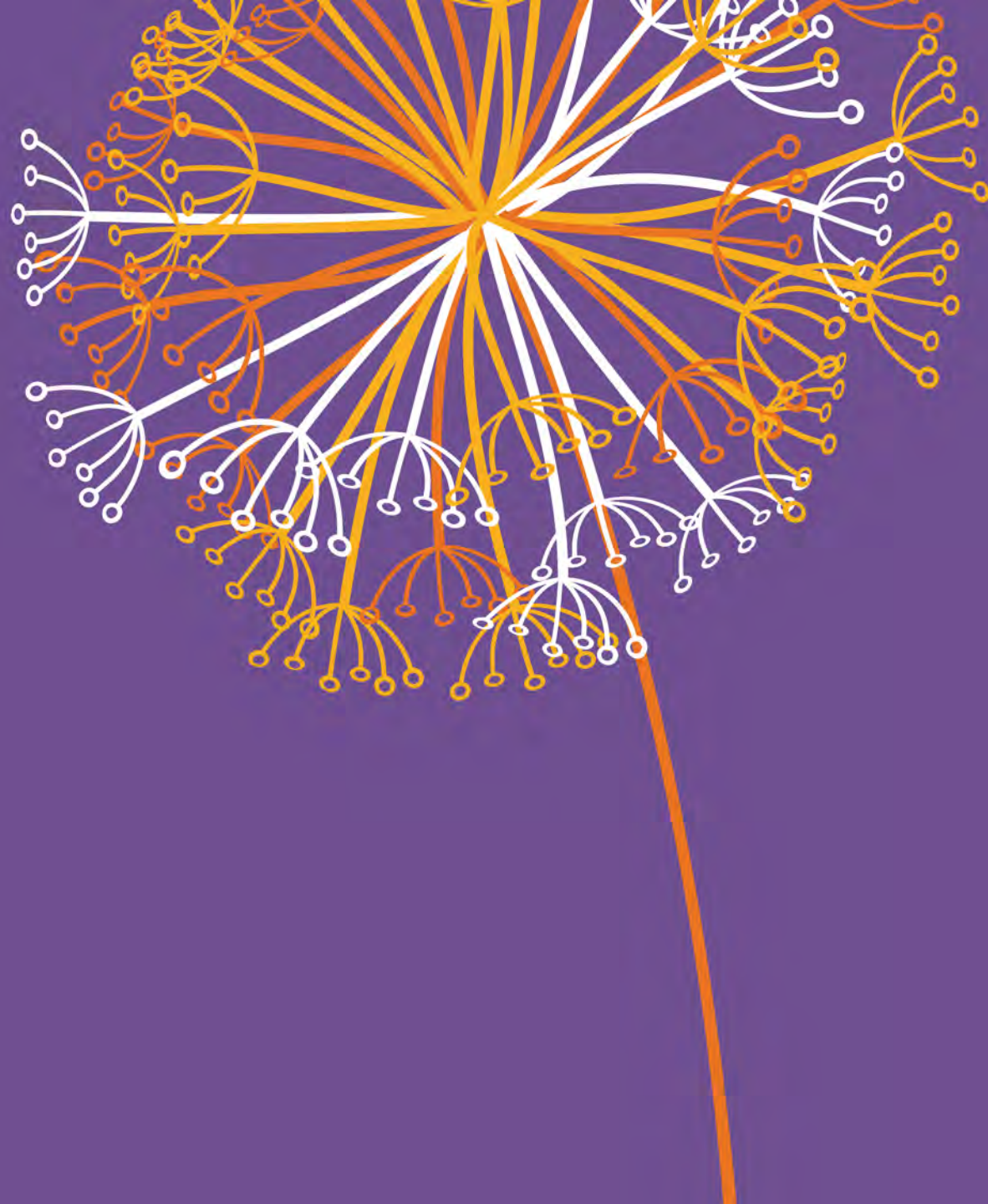


# Child-family separation in Bulgaria

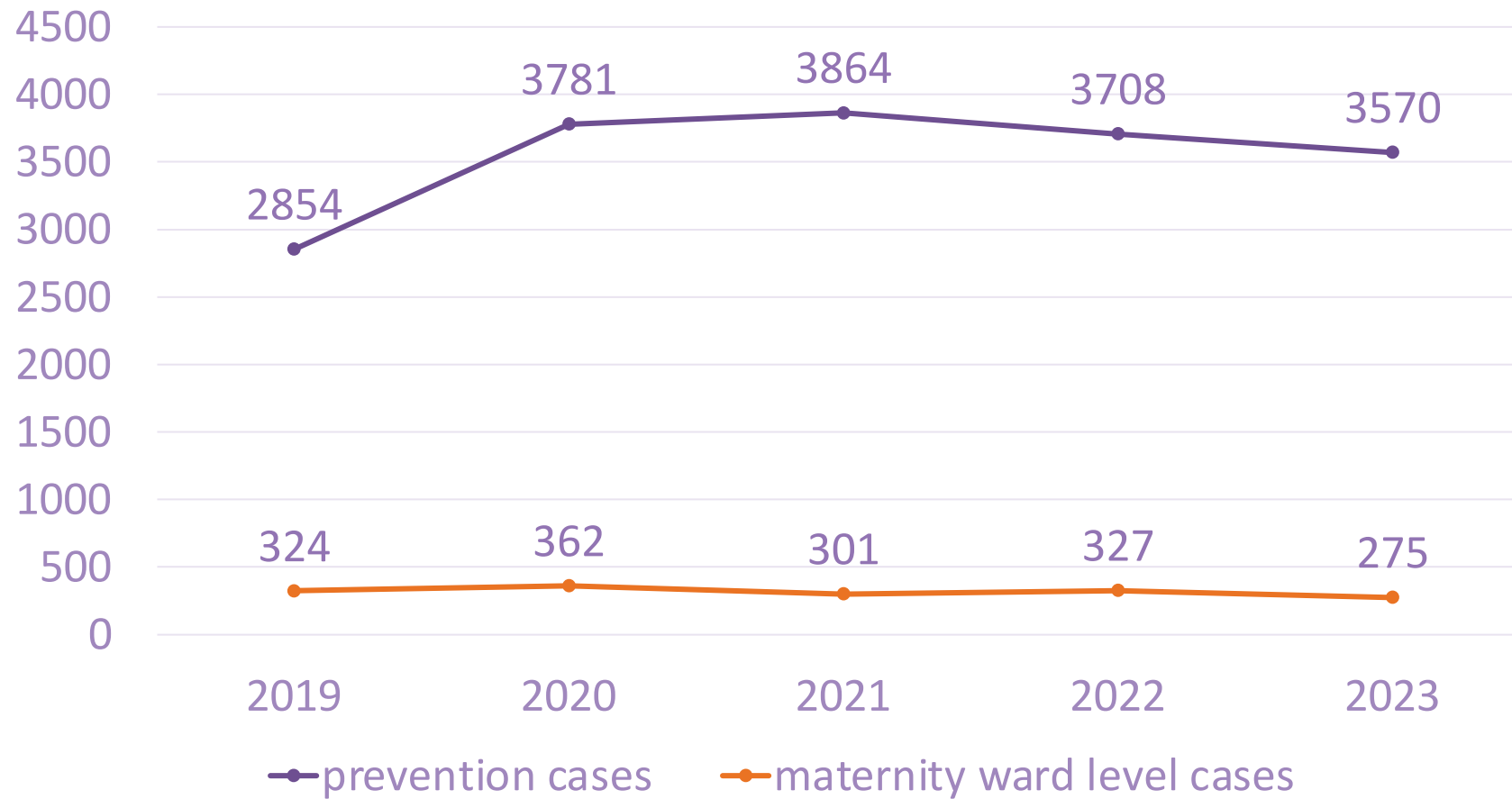
*Evgeniya Toneva,  
Know-how Centre for Alternative Care for  
Children, New Bulgarian University*

# Public data

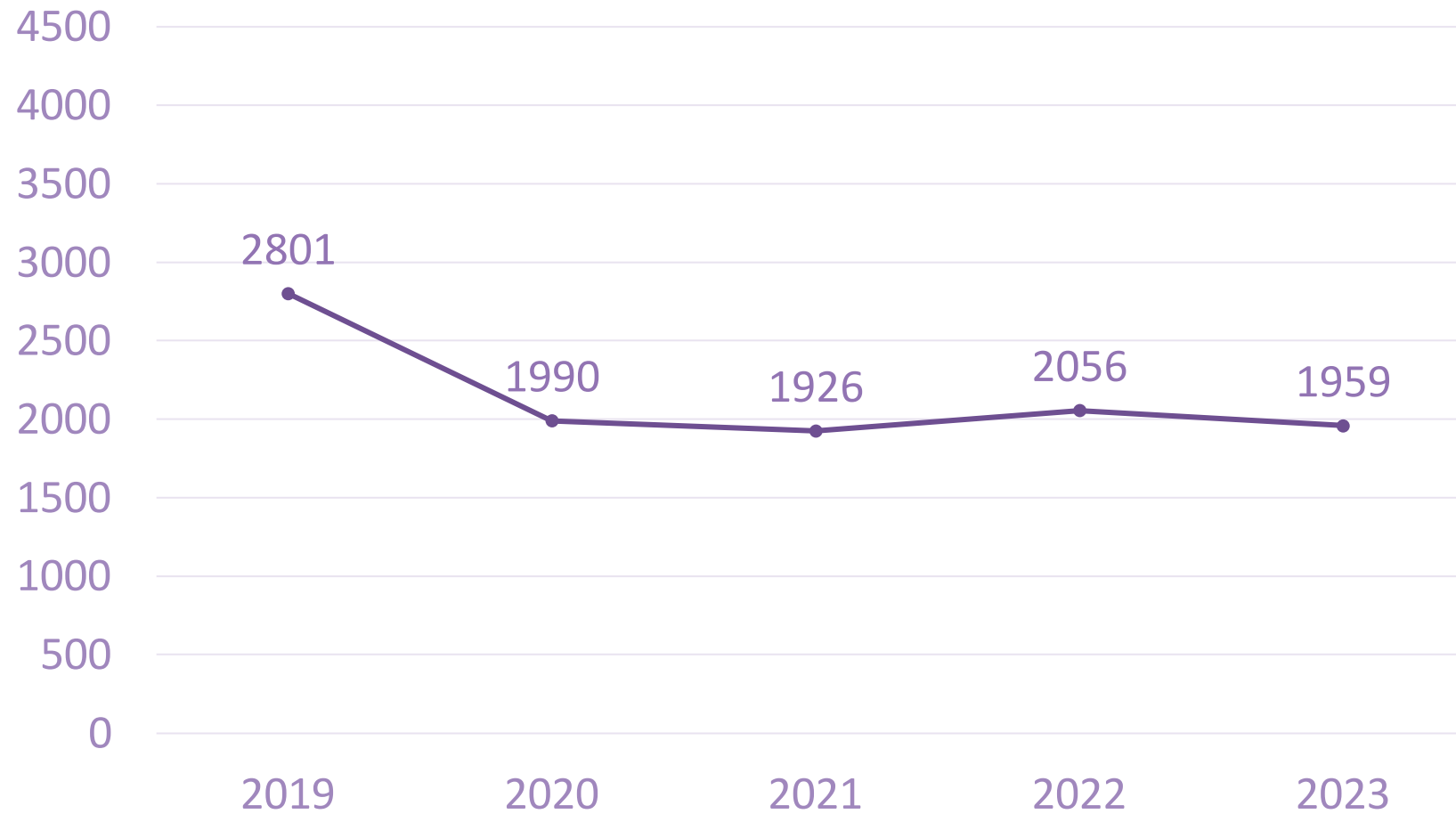
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## New prevention cases open by the child protection departments



## Number of children placed in alternative care

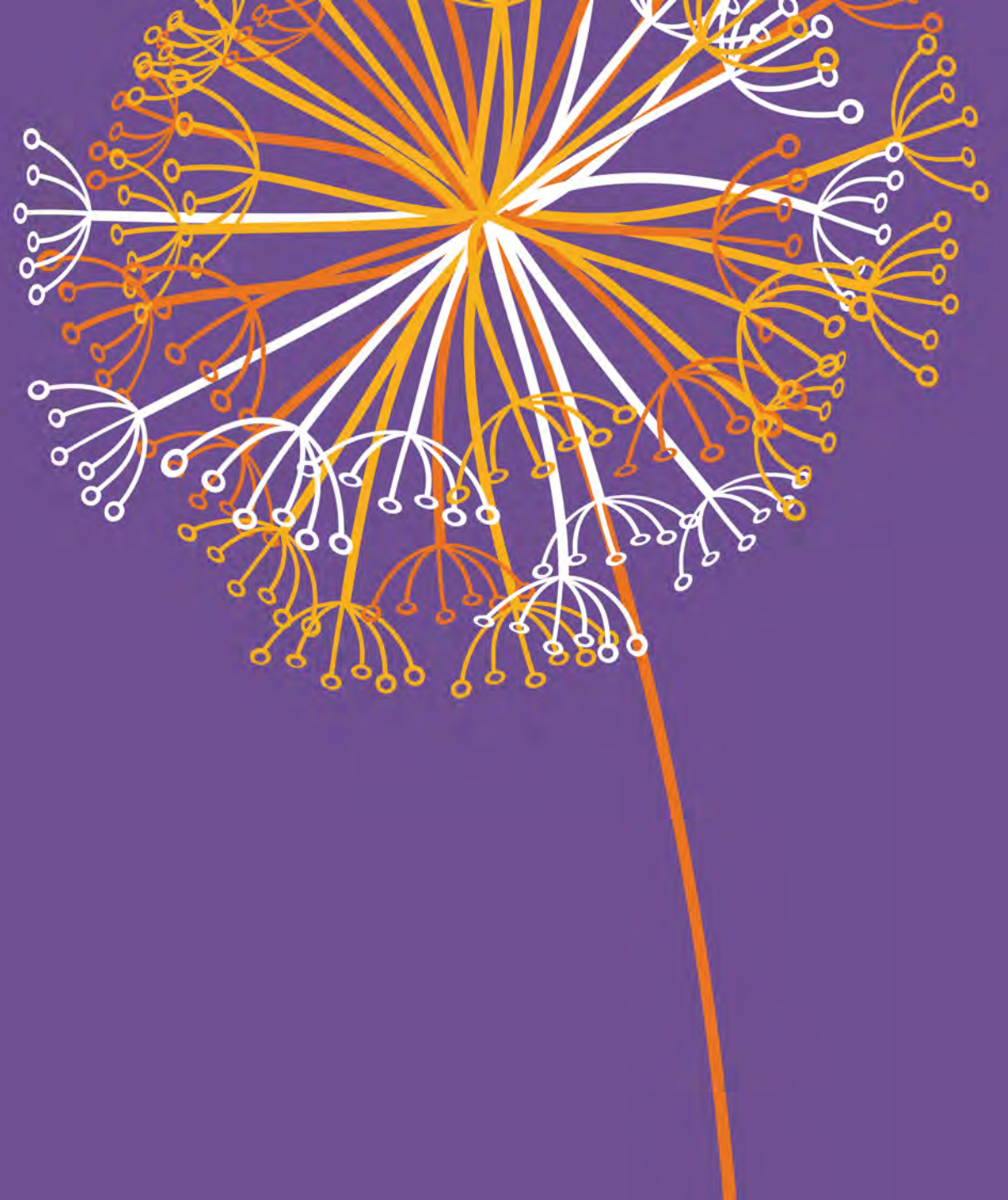




# What is the official statistics not telling us?

- how many children enter the alternative care system **for the first time** each year
- how many children are placed in alternative care as a matter of **emergency**
- what are **the reasons** for child protection measures to be taken (incl. alternative care placements)





# The study

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# Overview:

Current aspects of the child-family separation phenomenon

**1300+** prevention and reintegration cases analyzed (2019-23)

**Collaborative research** incl. co-authorship (NGOs & academia)

**Field-level experiences & insights**

**50+** surveys filled-in by social workers

November 2023 - December 2024



## Research team:

Antoaneta Mateeva and Evgeniya Toneva, **Know-how Centre, NBU**  
& members of the **Childhood 2025 Coalition:**

Boryana Klimentova, **Hope and Homes for Children – Bulgaria**

Elena Petkova, **Equilibrium Association**

Sabina Sabeva, **International Social Service – Bulgaria**

Maria Petkova, **Tulip Foundation**

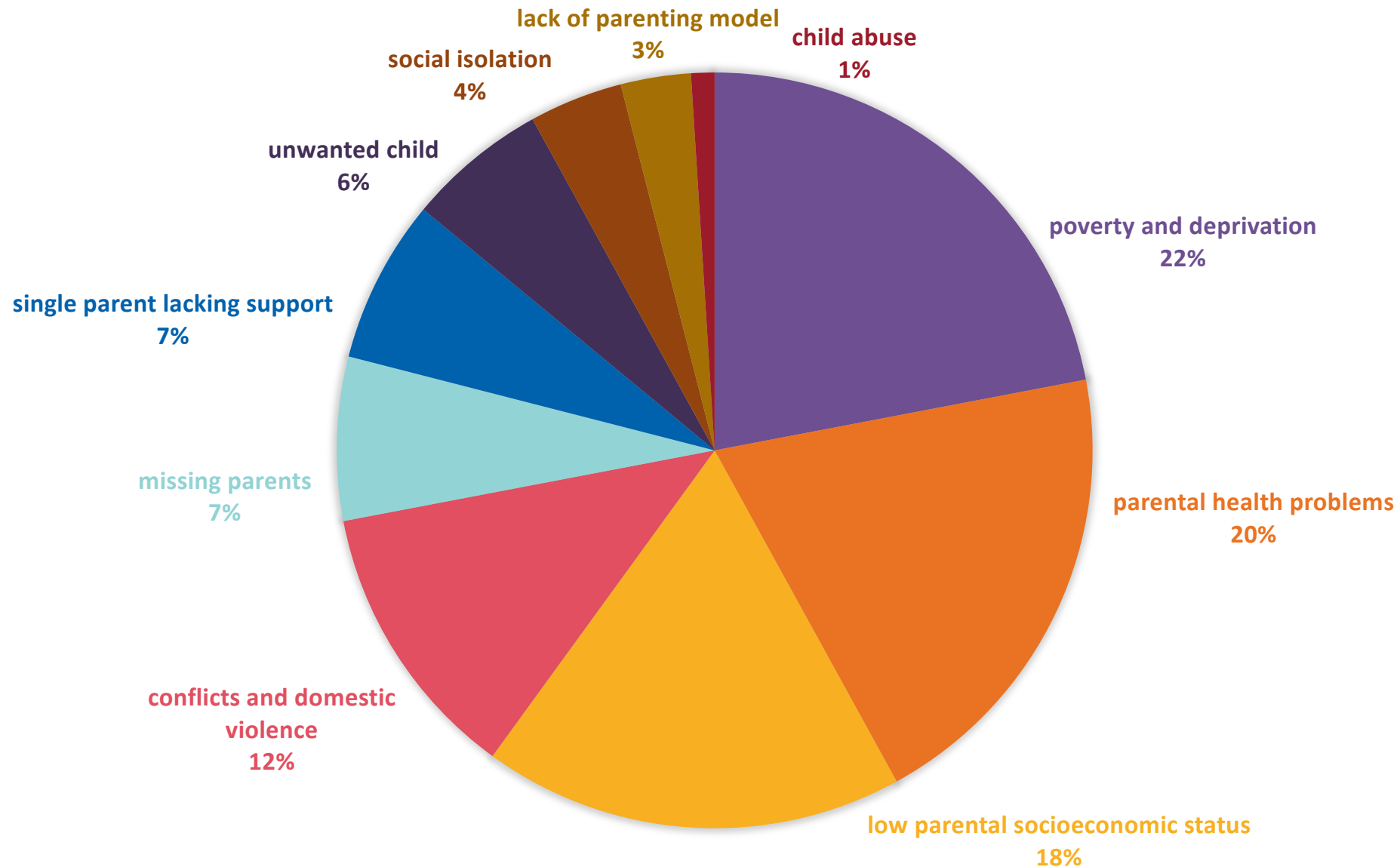
Nina Todorova, **SOS Children's Villages – Bulgaria**

Mariana Taseva, **For Our Children Foundation**

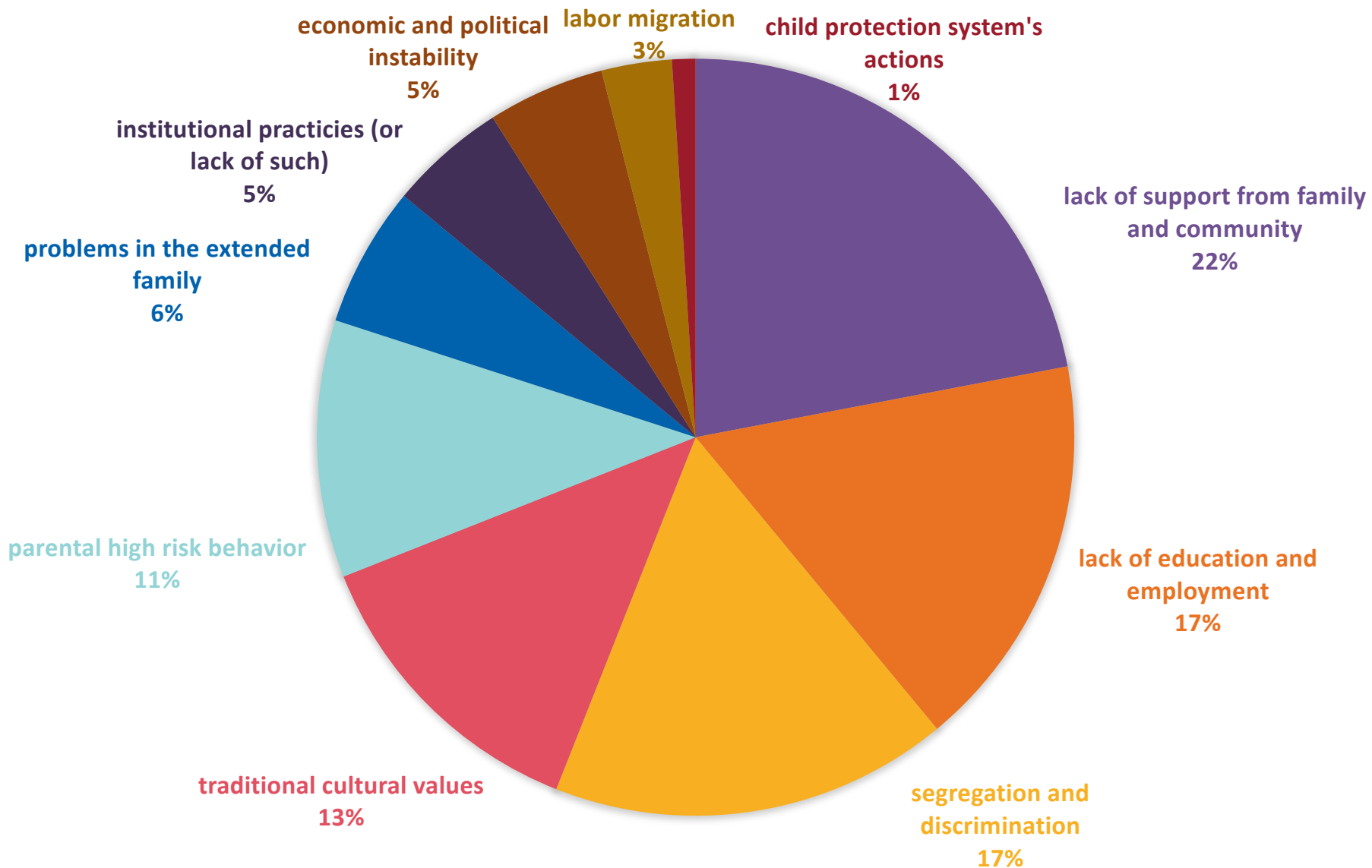




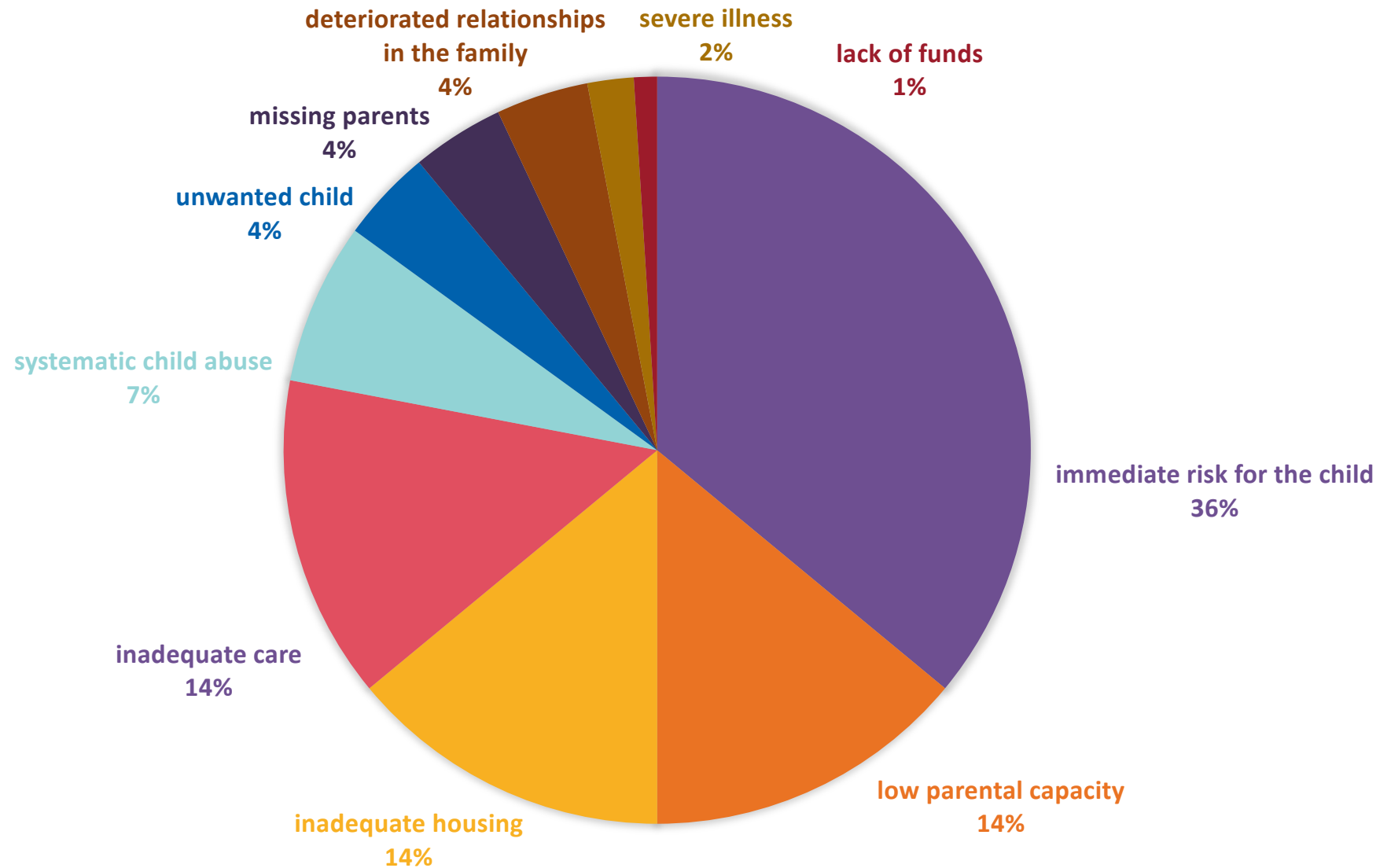
# FAMILY ENVIRONMENT FACTORS, LEADING TO CHILD-FAMILY SEPARATION



# WIDER SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT FACTORS THAT DESTABILIZE FAMILIES



## FORMULATIONS OF CHILD PROTECTION CASES WHEN CHILDREN ARE PLACED IN ALTERNATIVE CARE





living in poverty and deprivation



crisis in the family (of any nature)



lack of supportive environment (incl. social infrastructure)

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child-family separation



# WHAT DOES THIS TELL US ABOUT THE CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICES IN PLACE?

- The system works with poverty and marginalization with **“eyes wide shut”** to these problems (lack of data) and without admitting the associated (discriminatory and often exclusionary) attitudes.
- The system responds to crises **in emergency mode** without assessing and dealing with the persistent, systemic problems that are the main factor for separation currently.
- When parents lack or lose natural support, institutions and society fail to compensate for this lack (**the system is not there to "catch" people when they are falling down**).



# TOPICS FOR REFLECTION:

- What **data** (statistical and qualitative) do we need to define problems and solutions?
- What is the child protection system's **mission**? Is it shared between the different stakeholders in the field of child protection? *What are we actually saving children from and how?*
- How do we invest in **communities**?
- How effective our work is in building **support networks** around families who are struggling?



# THANK YOU

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