



# Deep in the HEART

**Workshop: Post Adoption Support for Birth Mothers**  
**Presenters: Terri Marcroft & Heather Featherston**

*48<sup>th</sup> Annual Pregnancy Help Conference*  
APRIL 24-26, 2019 | DALLAS, TEXAS



**Terri Marcroft**  
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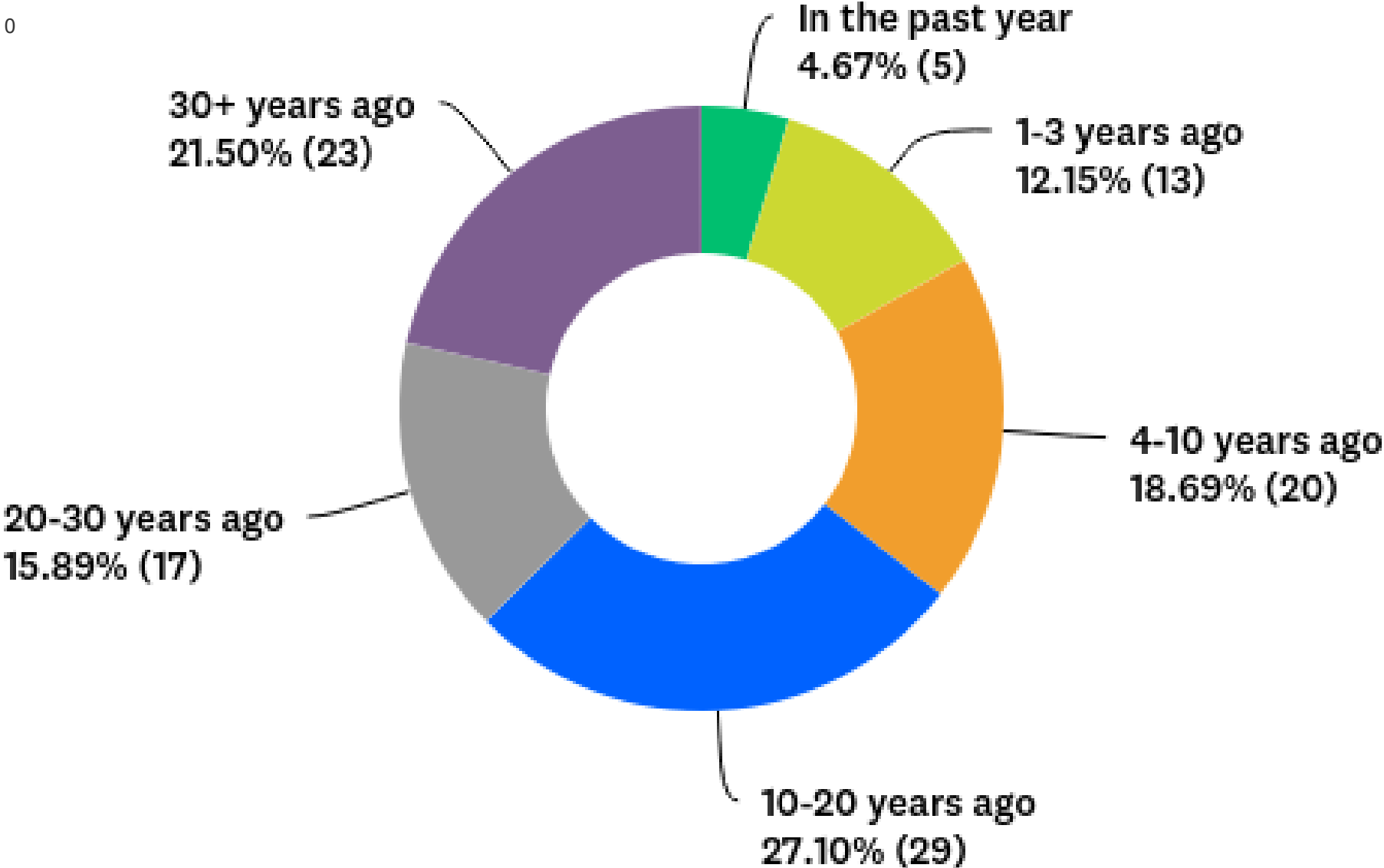
## Survey Details



- Survey conducted as primary research for this workshop
- Timeframe: March/April 2019
- 107 Birthmothers filled out survey completely
- Many contributors; not just one source.

# When was your baby born?

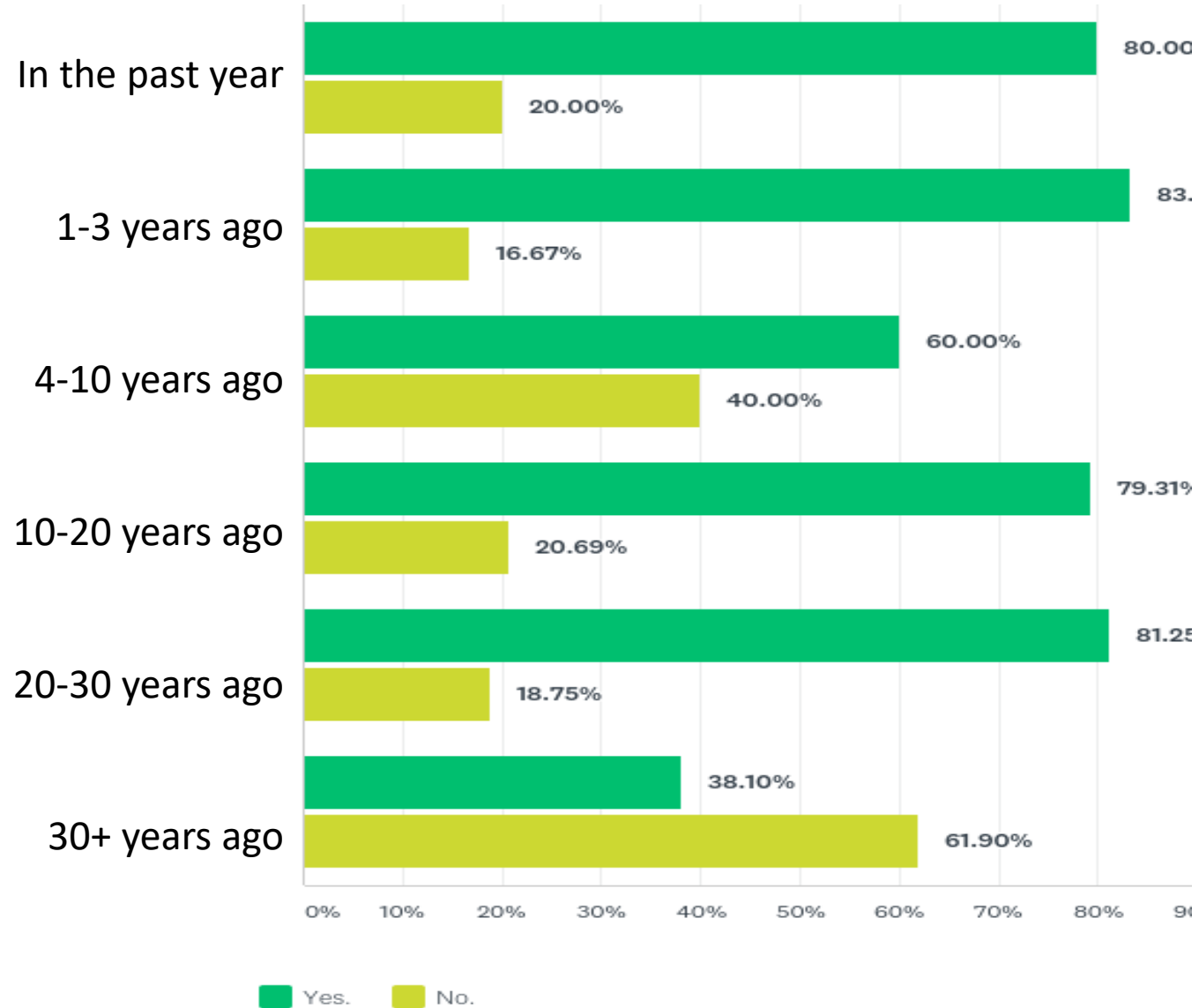
Answered: 107 Skipped: 0



# Was the adoption YOUR decision?

(breakdown over time)

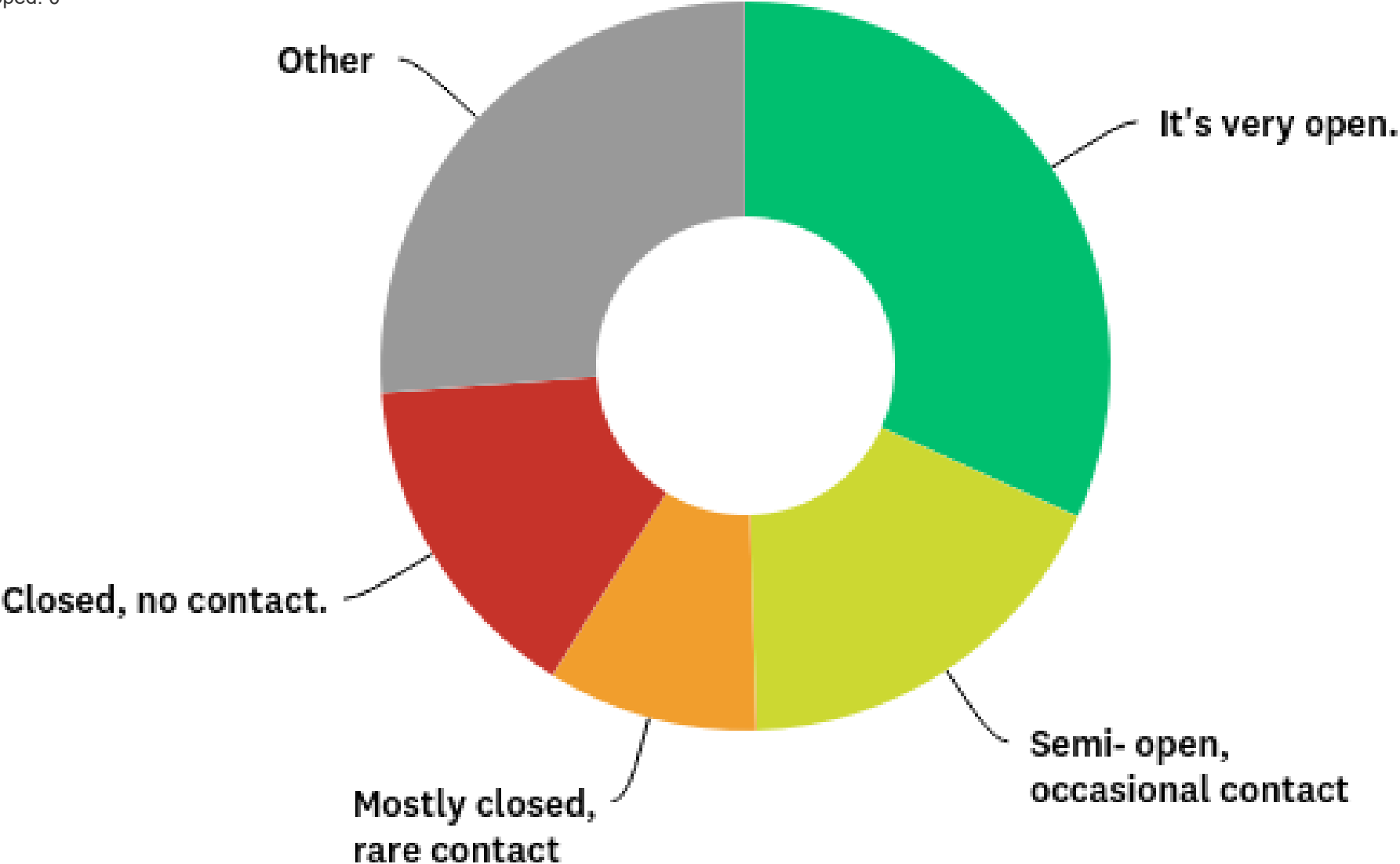
Answered: 104 Skipped: 3



***Pre-1990 was the time when women really felt that the adoption was NOT their decision.***

# Is/was the adoption open or closed?

Answered: 107 Skipped: 0



# Is/was the adoption open or closed?

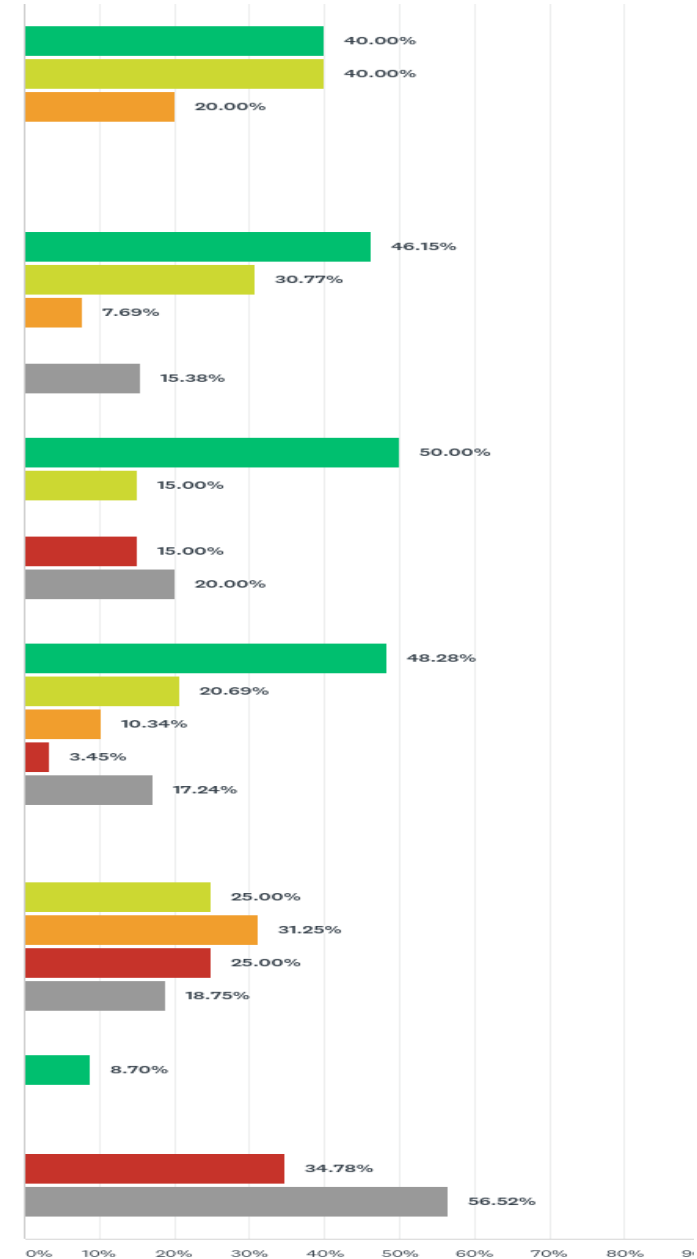
(by placement year)

Answered: 107 Skipped: 0

*As we know, adoptions have become more open over time. Today, most have some degree of openness.*

- Very open.
- Semi open, occasional contact.
- Mostly closed, rare contact.
- Closed. No contact.
- Other.

In the past year.



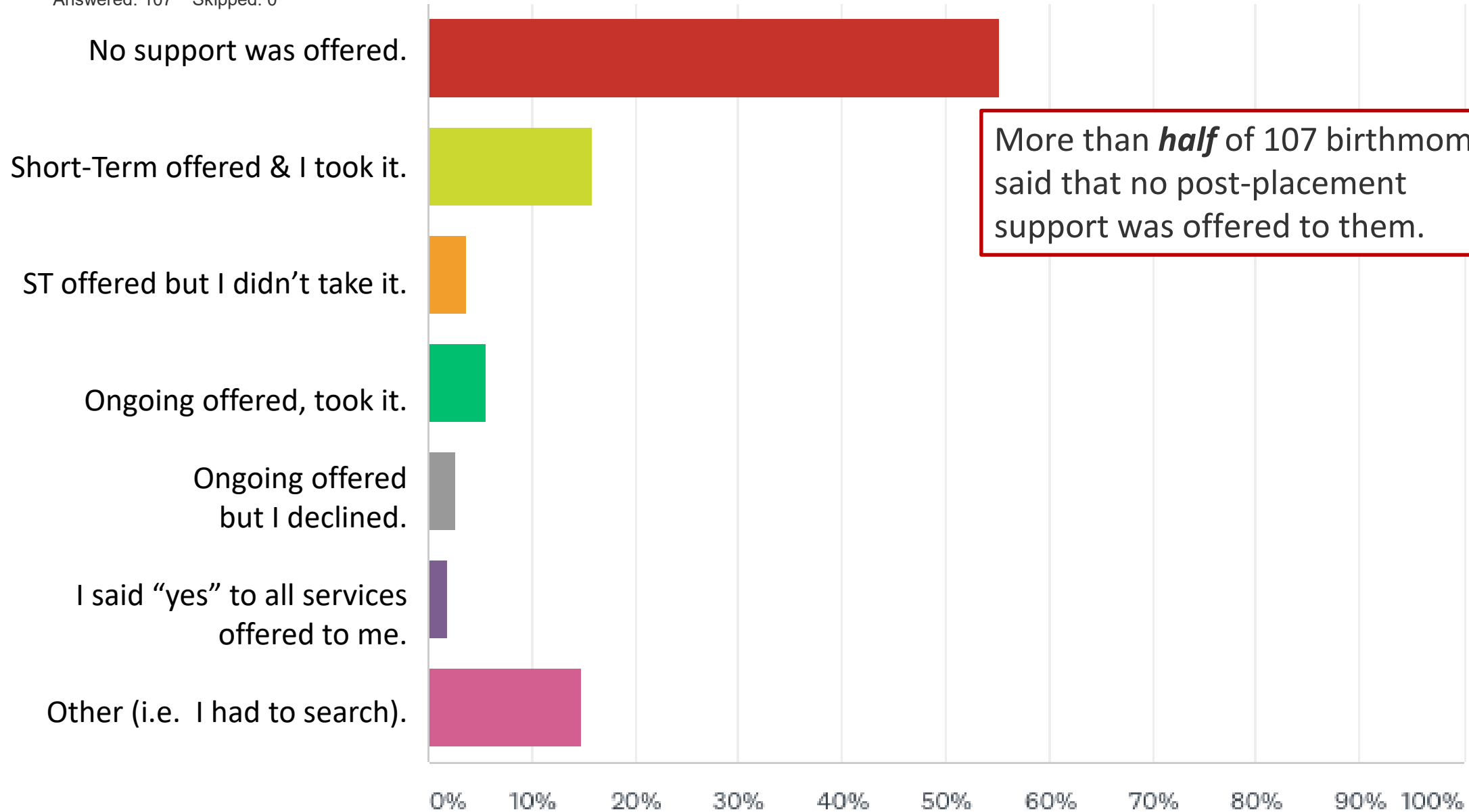
10 - 20 years ago.

20 - 30 years ago.

30+ years ago.

# What kind of support did you receive after placement of your child with the adoptive parents?

Answered: 107 Skipped: 0

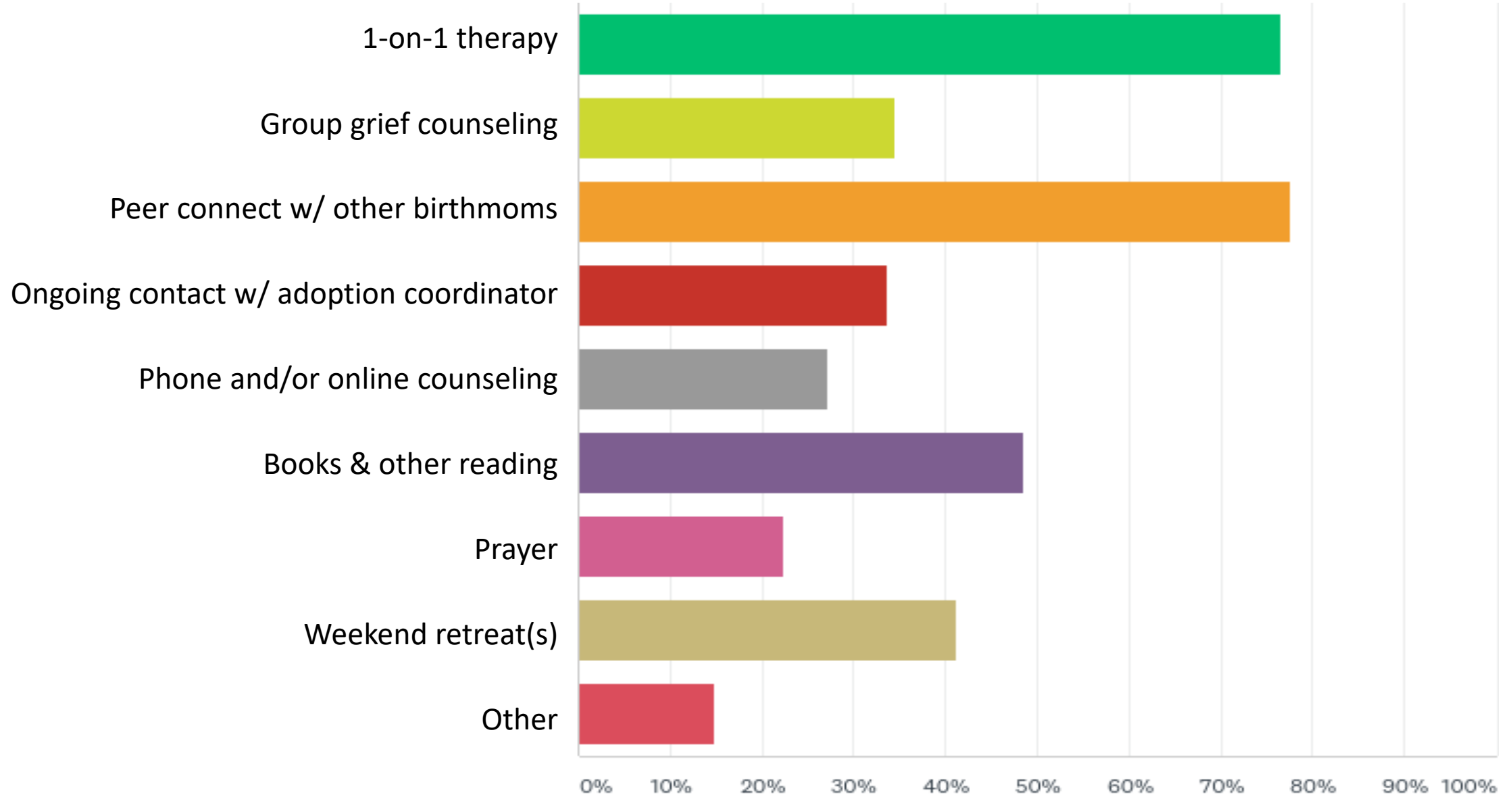


More than *half* of 107 birthmoms said that no post-placement support was offered to them.



# What kind of post-placement support would you have liked, preferred, or needed?

Answered: 107 Skipped: 0



## What would your advice be today for a woman considering adoption for her baby?

- Answered: 93 Skipped: 14

*“It is the toughest choice you could ever have to make. Its a struggle between your heart and your head. But **ultimately it’s not about you, it’s about that precious baby and what is best for them.** It’s hard to put your own dreams and hopes aside and give up your opportunity to parent your child, but it’s the most unselfish thing you could do in your life.”*

**Please share any other comments you have ... about post-placement support or any other related topic.**

- Answered: 51 Skipped: 56

*“It is critical for birthmoms to get post-placement care.”*

*“Every major city needs support groups for birthmoms.”*

## The Progression of Modern Adoption



- 1950's – Closed Adoption, no choices
- 1980's – Semi-open Adoption, few choices
- 2000's – Open Adoption, more choices
- 2010 and beyond – Modern Adoption, complete choices, birth parent driven, social media generation

## Closed Adoption Era

*“Guilt and shame. It spills over always,”* said Gardner, 63, of Maple Grove, who was 18 when she got pregnant in 1971...

Gardner reunited with her daughter in 1996. *“My life is greatly healed and greatly enriched,”* Gardner said.



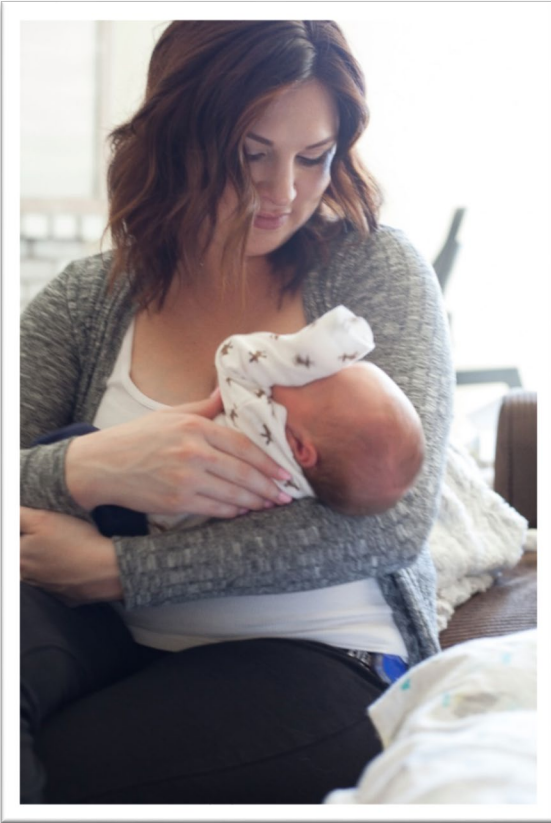
## Modern Adoption Era

T. Feeling loved. Just now · Safety Harbor, Florida · 🌐

Cassie, Matt, and Tiffany. Three of the most amazing people I have ever had the pleasure of saying that I know. And all three now have a very special place in my heart forever more !! I could not feel more blessed to have found all three !! Everyone should be so lucky !!! — feeling loved.

A collage of three photographs. The largest photo on the left shows a woman in a wheelchair holding a baby, with two other people standing behind her. The top-right photo shows a man and a woman with a baby. The bottom-right photo shows a man and a woman with a baby.

## A Mother's Post-Placement Mindset



- Even with a positive adoption outlook, she may still experience symptoms of grief and loss.
- She will have common post-partum feelings.
- Some may experience feeling of “aloneness” that comes with not having baby with them.
- This time may be emotionally mixed or bittersweet.
- She looks forward to continued contact with the adoptive family and her child.

## Your Role at the Pregnancy Center: *What can I do for my client who has chosen adoption?*



- Start her off with the right adoption referrals.
- Help her focus on her goal or the future.
- Ask her to TALK about her story or feelings.
- Revisit why she chose adoption.
- Offer additional support.

## *How does the right adoption referral set the tone for her whole adoption?*



- When given opportunity to make the choices in her adoption plan, women report a greater satisfaction with her decision.
- **All** adoption professionals should provide post-adoption support that is:
  - Free of Charge
  - Offered to every mother, before and after birth
  - Tailored to a client's needs
  - Open ended
  - Readily accessible via different methods
  - Focused on the adoption
  - Variety of options



## Help Your Client Make the Most of Resources Available to Her



- She may give you permission to call her adoption professional on her behalf, if needed.
- The professional knows all sides of her adoption.
- She may not have friends or family who understand what she's going through.
- Any adoption professional with integrity, and a true heart for birth mothers will WANT to help her, and hear from her, after the adoption.

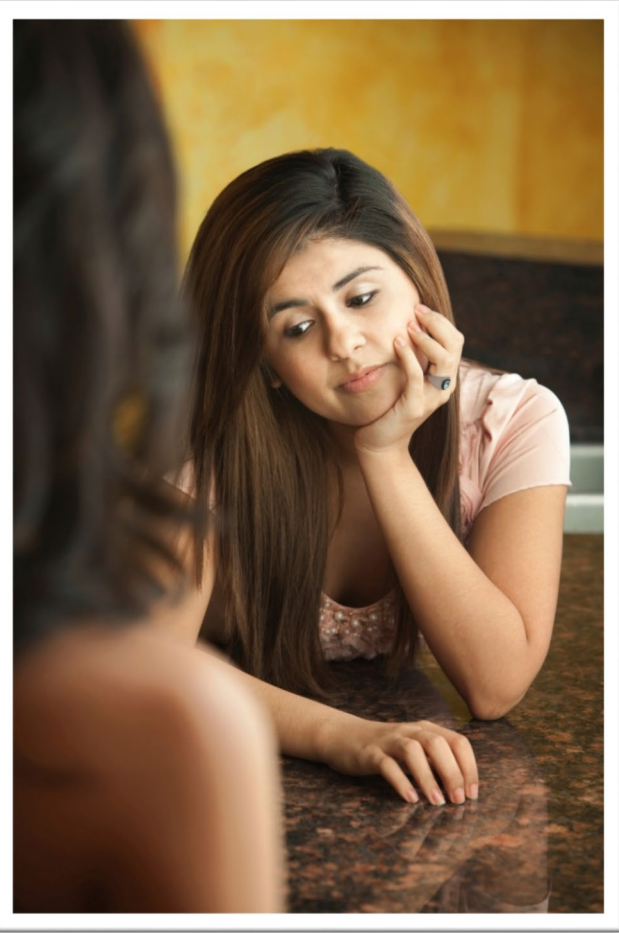
## ***How do I know what support my adoption referrals are providing my clients?***



- **Call and ask them!**

- *What do you provide after the adoption in regards to counseling and support?*
- *Can she still reach you after-hours, even if her adoption is completed?*
- *Do you tell all clients about your post-adoption support, or wait for her to ask?*
- *Is there a time limit on the support offered?*
- *Can someone call years later and expect help?*
- *Do you have a peer network for her?*
- *Do you have adoptive families who are truly vested in having an open adoption?*
- *Who pays for the post adoption counseling or support?*
- *Do you have third-party, licensed counseling?*

## Help Her Focus on the Future



*Adoption is as much about giving her baby a future, as it is about creating a future for herself.*

- What are **her** goals or dreams?
- Does she want to continue her education?
- What does ongoing contact with the adoptive family look like for her?
- Does she need help creating short or long term plans?
- How will she make healthy choices moving forward?

## Give Her an Opportunity to Talk About The Adoption



- Don't assume you know how she feels: Ask her.
  - She may actually express optimism, relief, peace, gratitude, or pride about her choice.
- Her feelings may not be completely adoption-related.
- Let her share her feelings and know grief is normal:
  - Feeling sad does not mean the wrong decision was made.
  - Grief is a normal part of adoption.
  - Revisit why she chose adoption.
  - Remember, adoption grief is different than abortion regret.
- Validate her adoption story by engaging her about it.

## ***What about if my client needs support beyond her adoption professional's resources?***



- Referrals for additional post-adoption support:
  - Peer support
  - Licensed counseling
  - Groups, online or in-person
    - Birth Mom Buds
  - Birth Mother Retreats
  - Birth Mother Scholarship
  - Book: *So I Was Thinking About Adoption...*
  - Brave Love, online stories and regional dinners
- Community programs that address her needs, beyond the adoption.

***Let us answer your questions about Post-Adoption Support!***



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