Foster Care Association Victoria

Carer Survey 2024 Report

25 June 2024

We pay respect to First Nations peoples past and present, their cultures and traditions and acknowledge their continuing connection to Land, Sea and Community.

Project overview

Background and Objective

Foster Care Association Victoria (FCAV) is the peak body for Victorian foster carers. This research, commissioned by FCAV, aims to **gather insights into the experiences of Victorian foster carers** to inform advocacy, engagement, policy and service development.

Methodology

The quantitative research consisted of a voluntary **online survey** of **current and former Victorian foster carers** drawn from an FCAV member database. Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, primary approach letters were sent to all FCAV members, providing background to the project, key dates, information about privacy and confidentiality, and an opt-out process for those who did not wish to be involved in the process. **Unique links** to the survey were distributed by ORIMA Research with **n=754** providing at least one response beyond screening questions. Fieldwork was conducted from **March 15th to April 28th**, 2024.

Overview of research phases:

Project establishment

Quantitative research

- Online survey of **n=754** respondents

Analysis and reporting

Respondent demographic profile

Gender

78% Female

20% Male

2% other/ prefer not to say

Age

18-35 yrs	8%
36-45 yrs	20%
46-55 yrs	34%
56-65 yrs	25%
65+	13%

Location

See appendix A

55% Metropolitan

36% Inner regional

8% Outer regional

<1% Remote

Employment status

Working full time	35%
Working part time	18%
Retired/ pensioner	14%
Unpaid work	11%
Self-employed	10%
Casual/ contract work	6%
Unemployed, not looking for work	3%
Student	1%
Unemployed, looking for work	1%

69% were **employed** (n=419)

Excludes 'prefer not to say' responses

Household Income

Under $60,000	30%
$60k-under 120,000	36%
$120,000 and over	35%

Excludes 'prefer not to say/ don't know' responses

Education

Certificate/ Diploma	33%
Bachelor's Degree	26%
Post Graduate Degree	24%
Secondary School	12%
Apprenticeship	2%
None of the above	3%

Excludes 'prefer not to say' responses

Culturally & Linguistically Diverse

9% **Culturally and/or linguistically diverse***

TOP LANGUAGES

Italian	17%
Hindi	12%
Auslan	12%
First Nations languages	10%
Cantonese	6%
Greek	6%
Spanish	6%

Excludes 'prefer not to say' responses

*Speak a language other than English at home.

Disability

5% Have a disability or impairment

Excludes 'prefer not to say' responses

First Nations

3% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

Excludes 'prefer not to say' responses

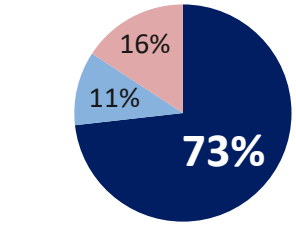
Wellbeing

79ip Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) score*

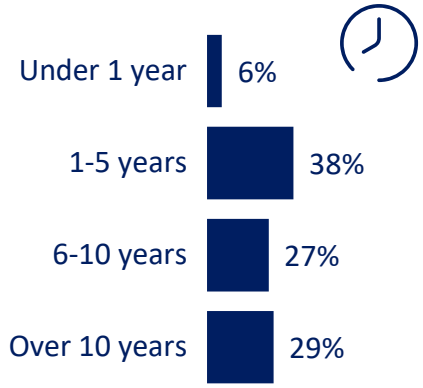
79ip Global Life Satisfaction Index (GLS) score**

Respondent carer profile

Carer Status



Duration of Caring



Co-carers

65% *of carers did so in partnership with a* ***co-carer****. Gender breakdown of the other person:*

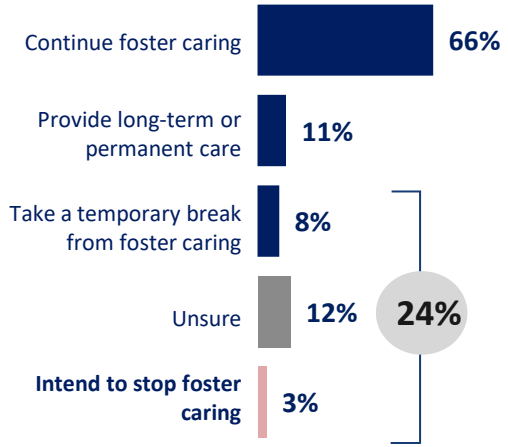
31% Female

67% Male

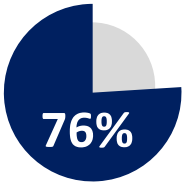
2% other/ prefer not to say

35% *Did* ***not*** *have a co-carer*

Future Intentions of current carers



Children in Foster Carer Households



of current carers presently have a child in ***foster care*** *living in their household*

594 total number of foster children living in foster carer households

(n=161) of current foster carer households include carer's **own children**

(n=82) of current foster carer households include children in **permanent care**

(n=38) of current foster carer households include **other types of children**

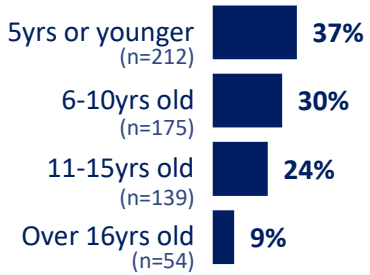
Note: Base size ranges from n=414-445.

Profile of Children in Foster Care

46% Female (n=269)

52% Male (n=304)

1% non-binary/ prefer not to say



20% Have a physical disability or impairment

Excludes 'prefer not to say' responses

42% Have an intellectual disability or impairment

Excludes 'prefer not to say' responses

Co-carer status profile

Co-carers status

65%

*of carers did so in partnership with a **co-carer***

35%

*Did **not** have a co-carer*

Respondent gender by co-carers status

*Of the respondents who **did not** care in partnership with someone else…*

90% *were **female***

8% *were **male***

2% other/ prefer not to say

*Of the respondents who did **care in partnership** with someone else…*

73% *were **female***

26% *were **male***

1% other/ prefer not to say

Gender of co-carers

Of the respondents who cared in partnership with someone else, the gender breakdown of the other person was:

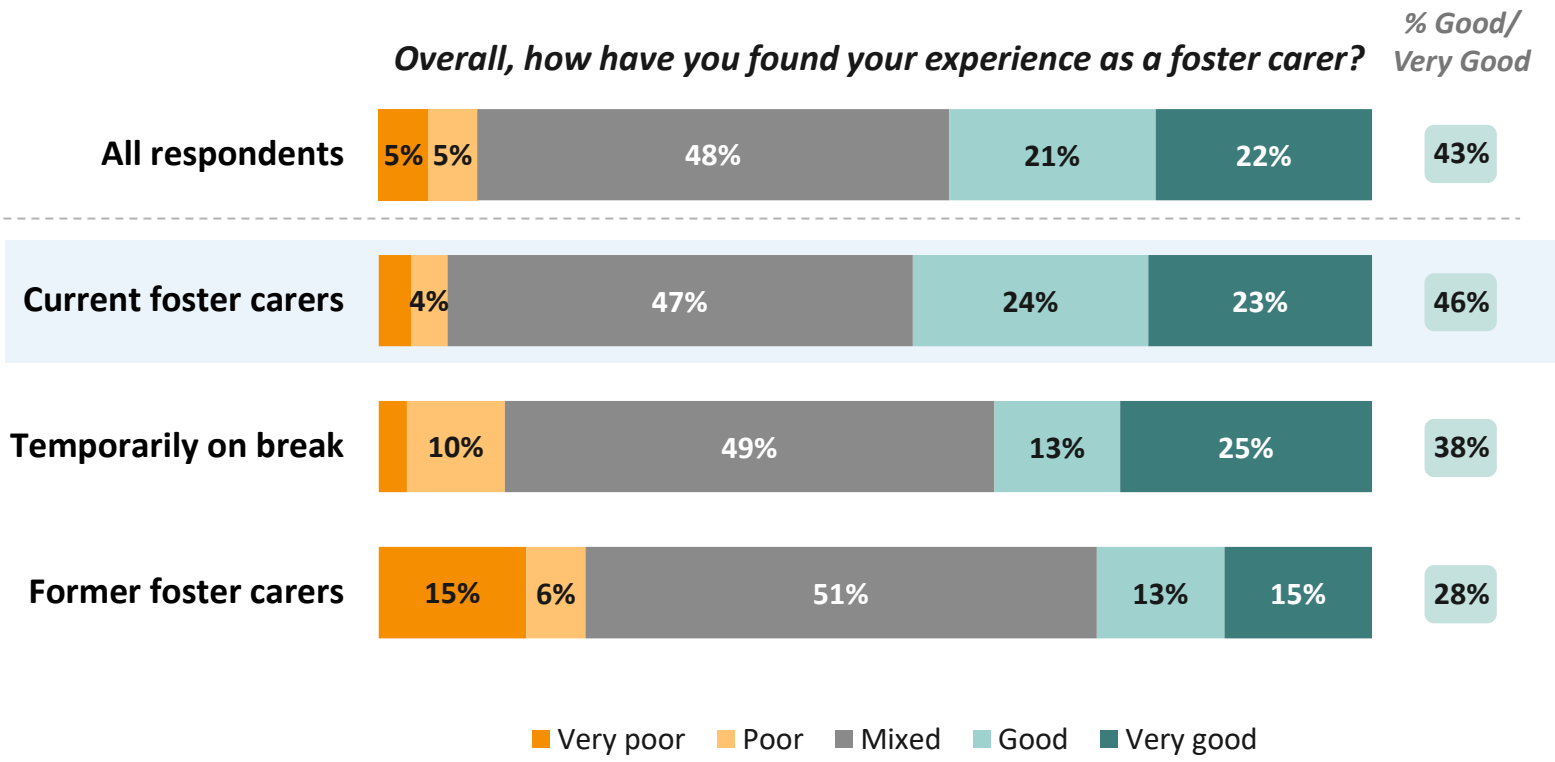
31% **Female**

67% **Male**

2% other/ prefer not to say

Understanding the carer experience

Foster carer experience

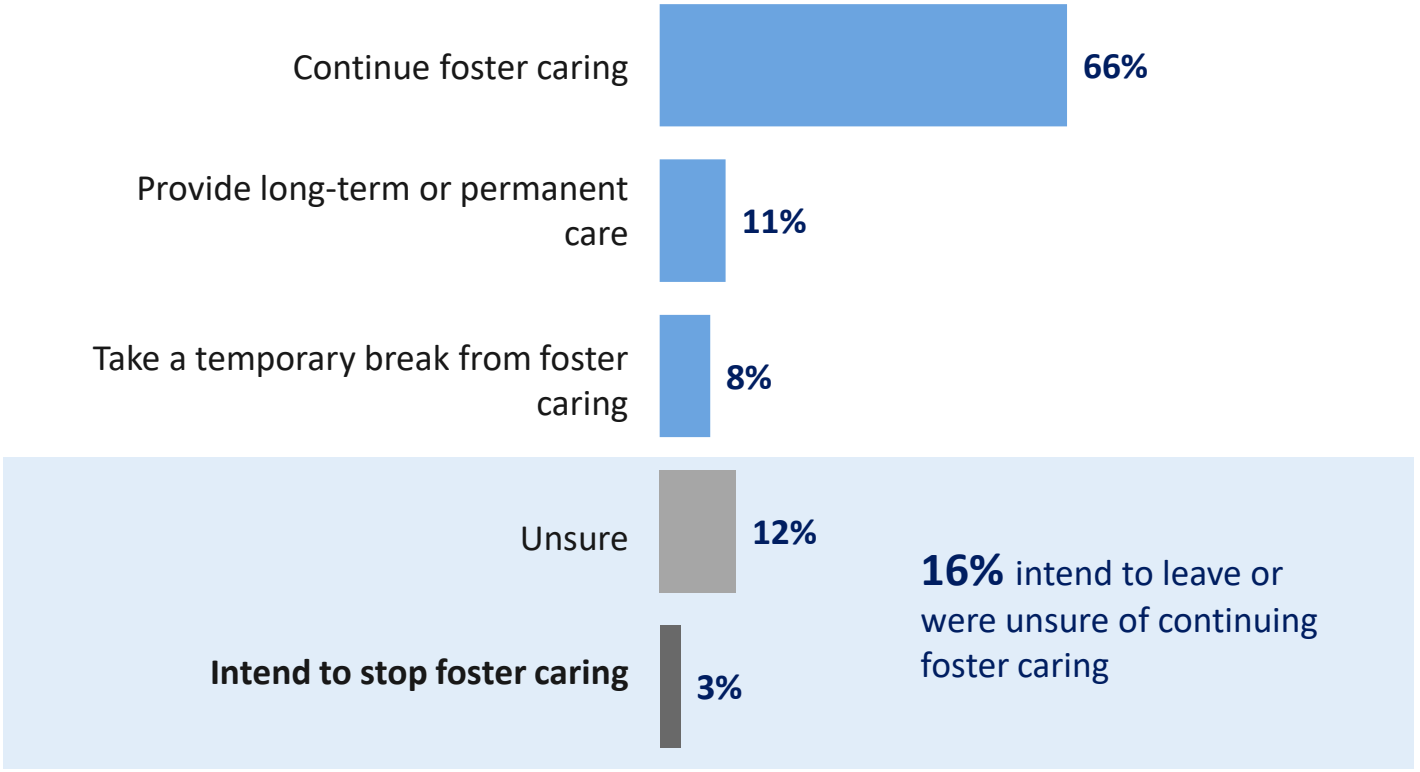


Among current carers who have had a good/very good experience as a foster carer:

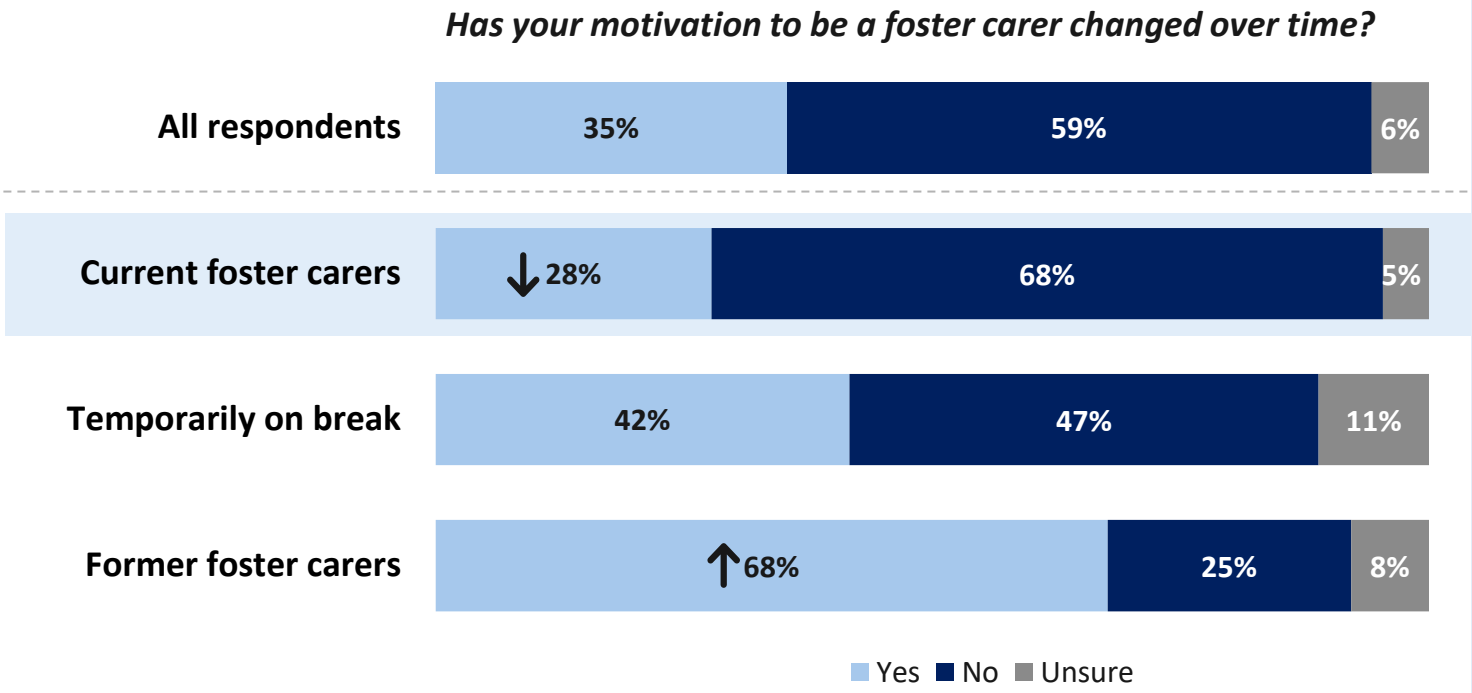
- **79%** plan to **continue** foster caring;
- **8%** plan to change to provide a **long-term or permanent care** arrangement;
- **5%** plan to take a **temporary break** from foster caring;
- **1% plan to stop foster caring**; and
- **7%** were **not sure** what they'll do in the next 12 months.

Future intention of current carers

Over the next 12 months, which of the following are you most likely to do?



Motivation to be a foster carer



45% of current carers planning to **stop or unsure of their future** foster caring reported that their **motivation had changed**.

In comparison:

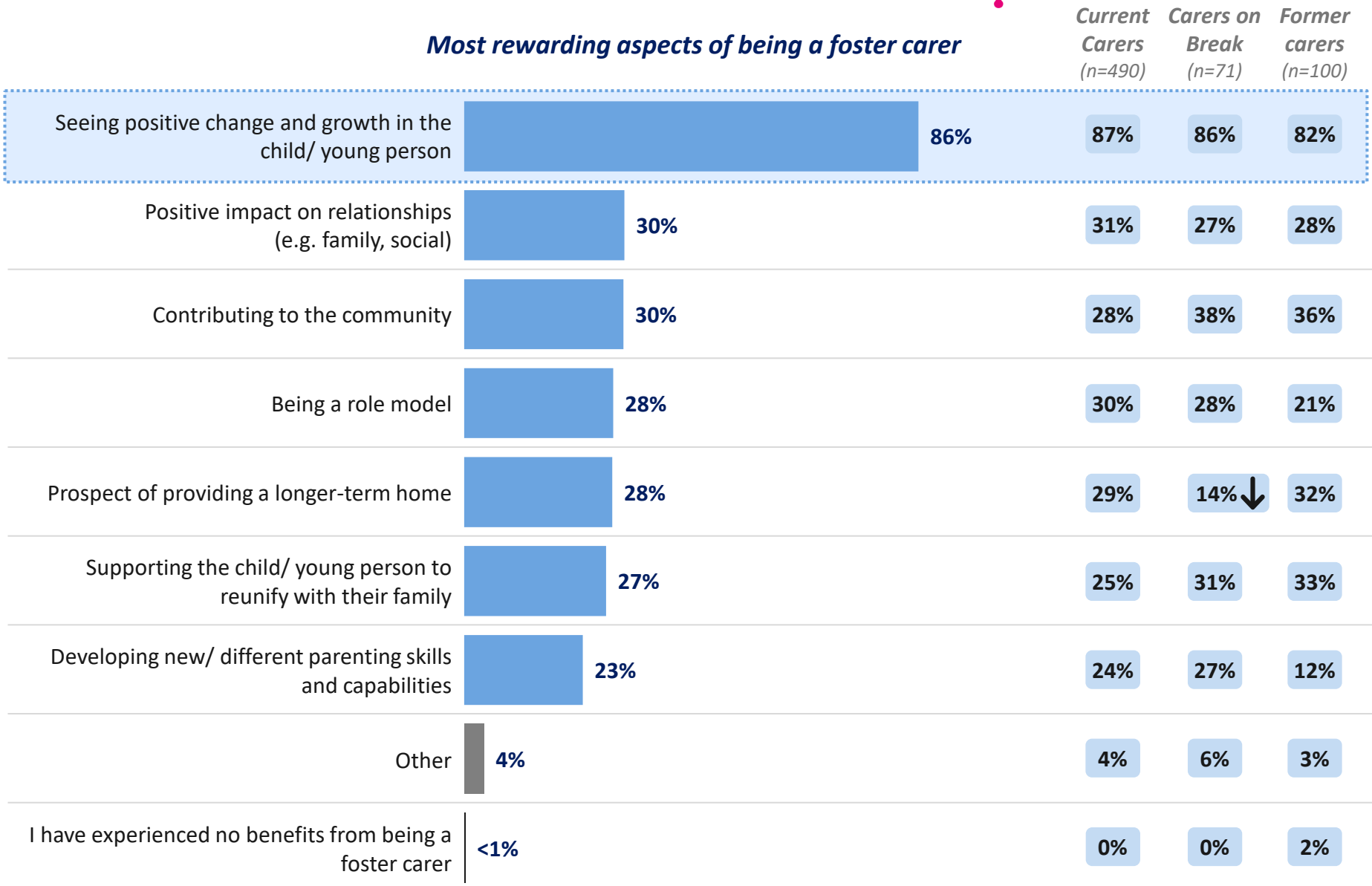
39% planning to change to provide a **long-term or permanent care** arrangement reported that their motivation had changed;

18% planning to take a **temporary break** from foster caring reported that their motivation had changed; and

23% of current carers planning to **continue** foster caring reported that their motivation had changed

Carers who had been caring for **a year or longer** reported having a **greater change in motivation** (37%), compared to those who have been caring for less than a year (18%).

Rewarding aspects of being a foster carer



Most rewarding aspects of being a foster carer – subgroup differences

Prospect of providing long term home

More likely to be reported as one of the most rewarding aspects:

- Among current carers who plan on changing to provide a **long-term or permanent care** arrangement in the next 12 months (63%, compared to 26% of those planning to continue caring and 10% of those planning to take a break);
- As **carer duration increases** (34% among those who have been a carer for 6 years or more, compared to 10% among those caring for less than a year, and 24% among those caring for 1 to 5 years); and
- Carers in the **outer regional area** (46%, compared to 29% in an inner regional area, and 26% in a metropolitan area).

Other subgroup differences:

By gender

- **Females** were more likely to find **supporting the child/young person to reunify with family** (30%) as one of the most rewarding aspects, compared to males (12%).

By educational attainment

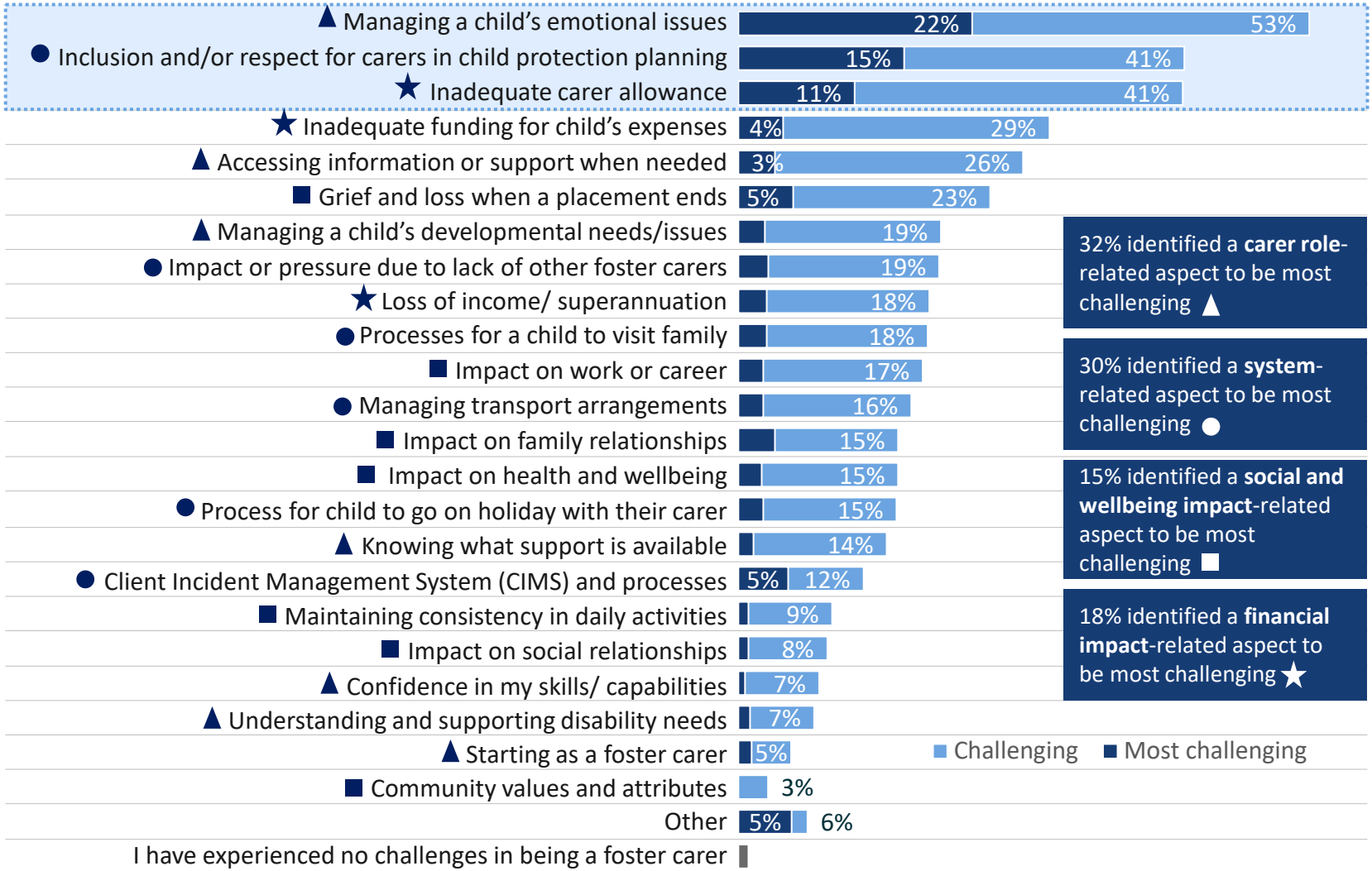
- **Post-graduates** were more likely to find **contributing to the community most rewarding** (42%), less likely to find the prospect of **providing a longer-term home** most rewarding (18%).

By location

- Carers residing in **metropolitan areas** (36%) were more likely to report that **contributing to the community** was one of the most rewarding aspects, particularly compared to those in outer regional areas (6%).

Challenges of being a foster carer – overall

Most challenging aspects of being a foster carer
(All respondents)



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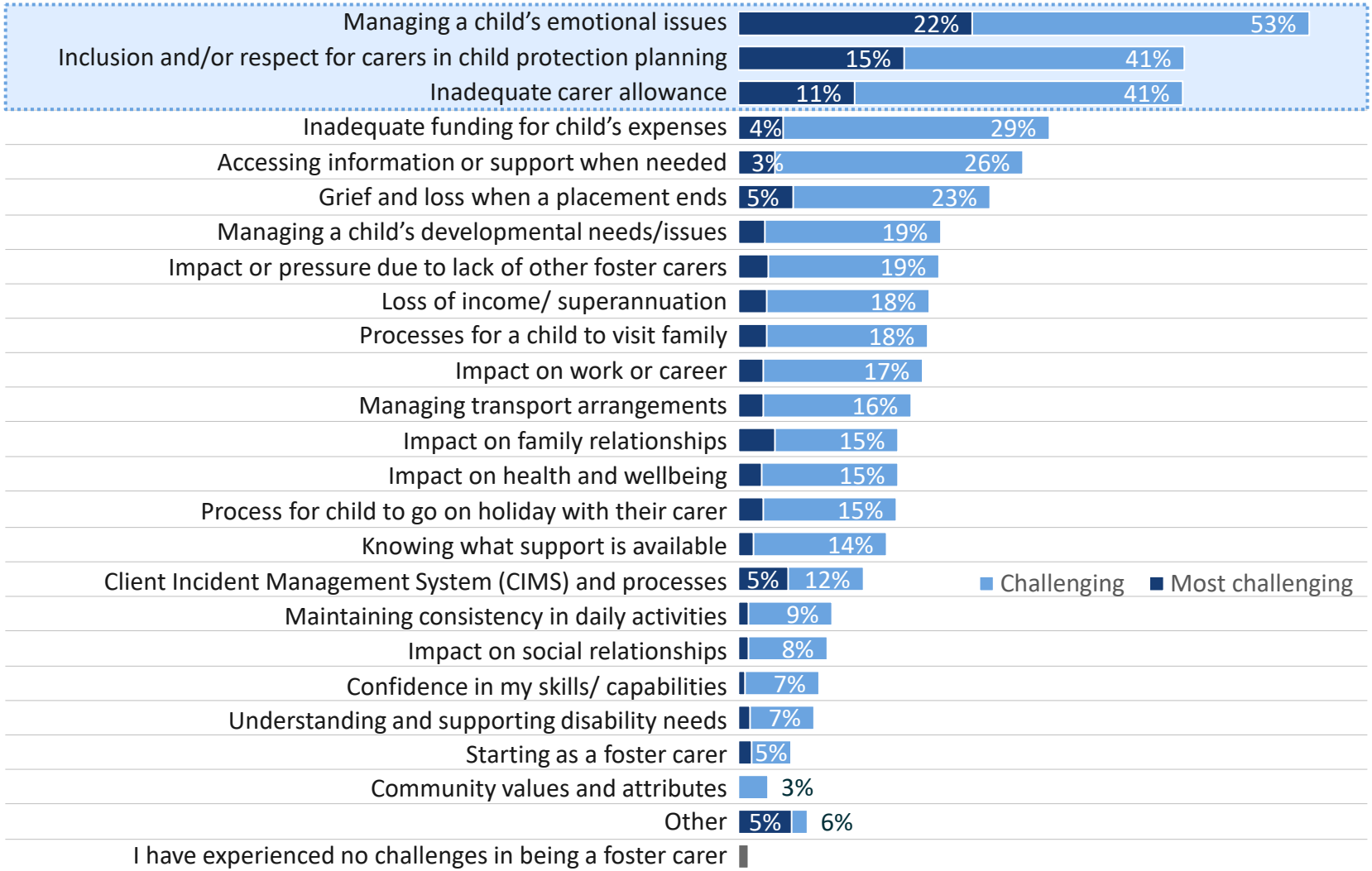
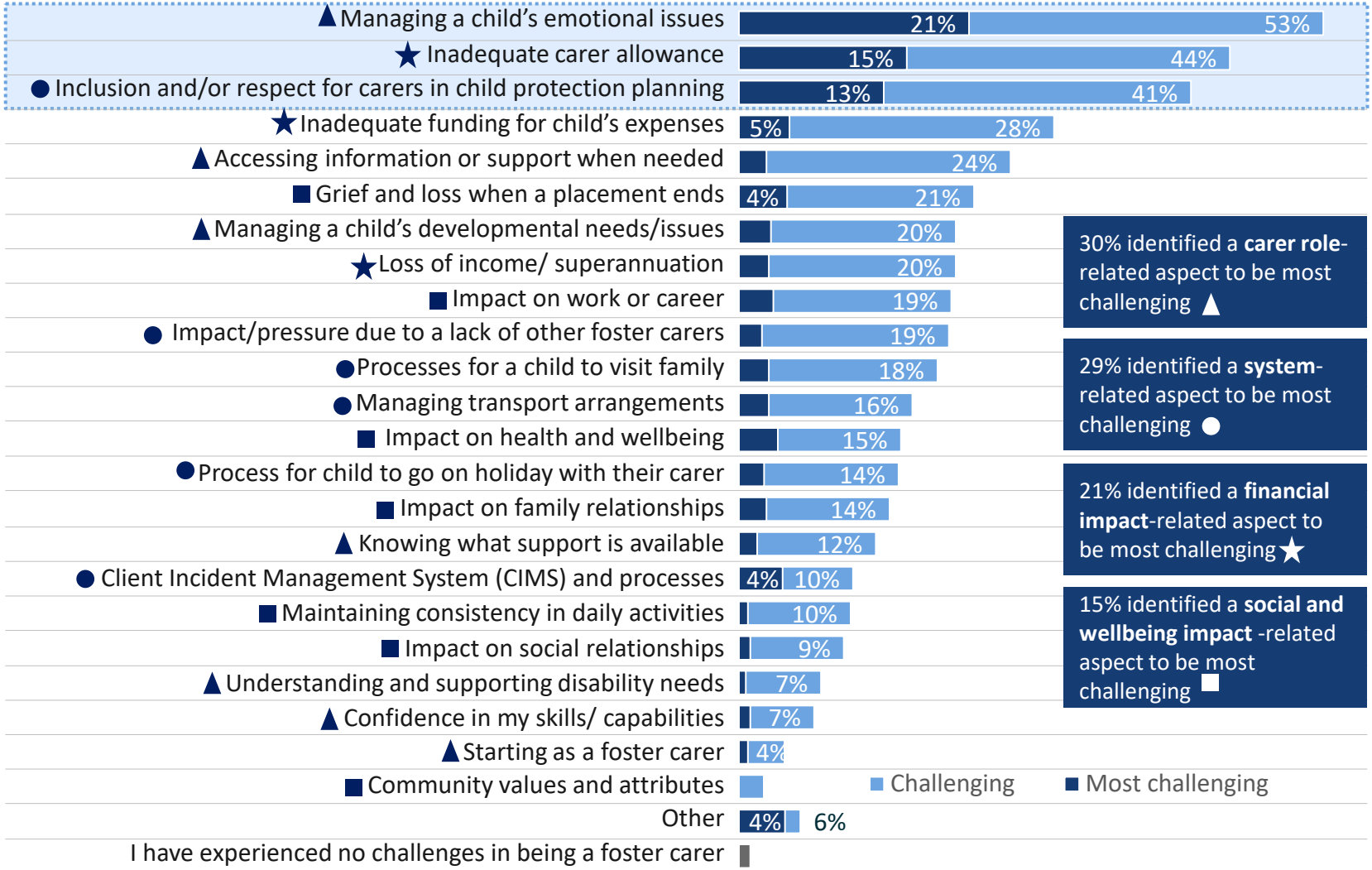


Challenges of being a foster carer – Current carers

Most challenging aspects of being a foster carer
(Current carers)

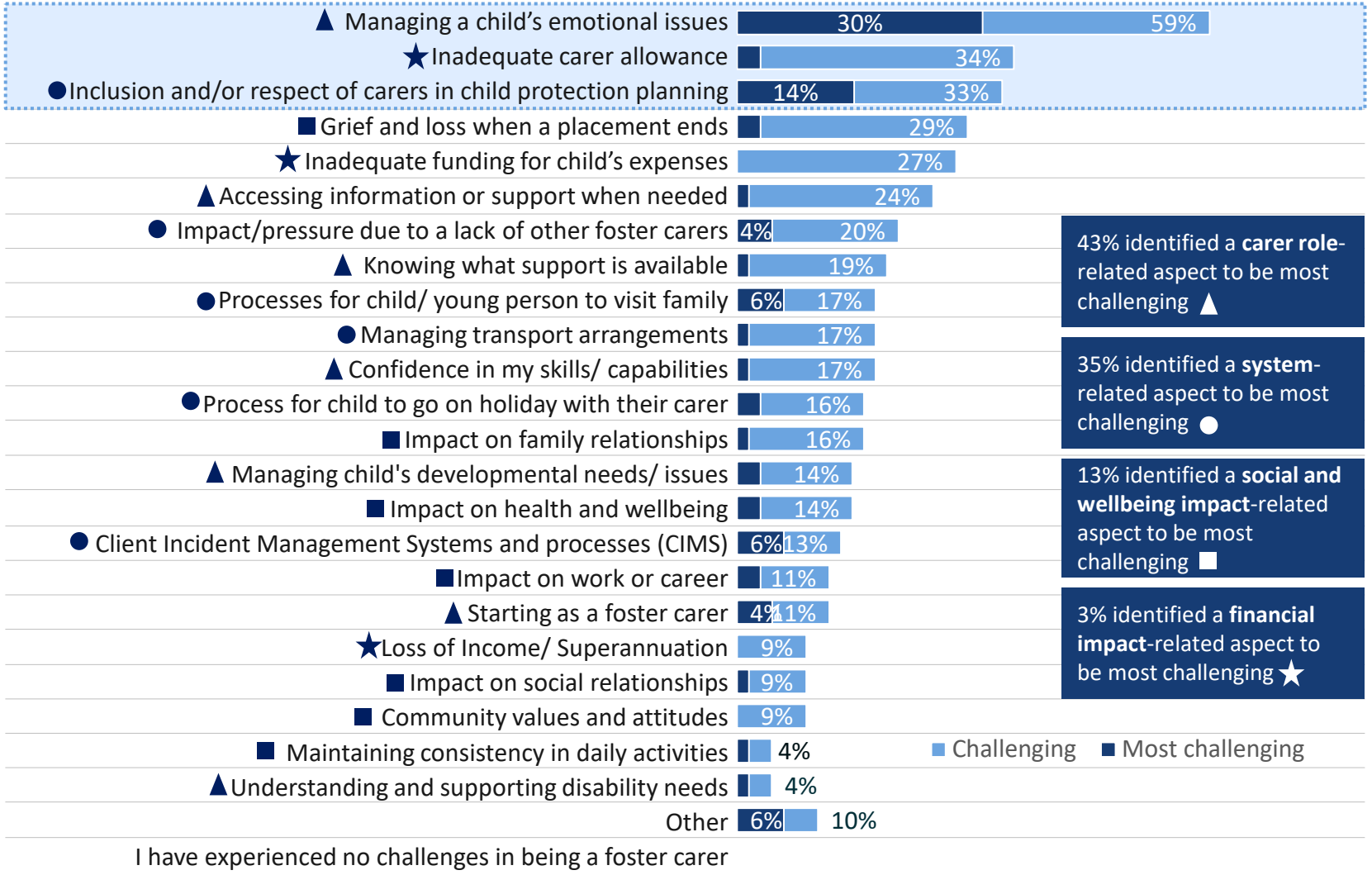


Challenges of being a foster carer – Current carers

Most challenging aspects of being a foster carer
(Current carers)

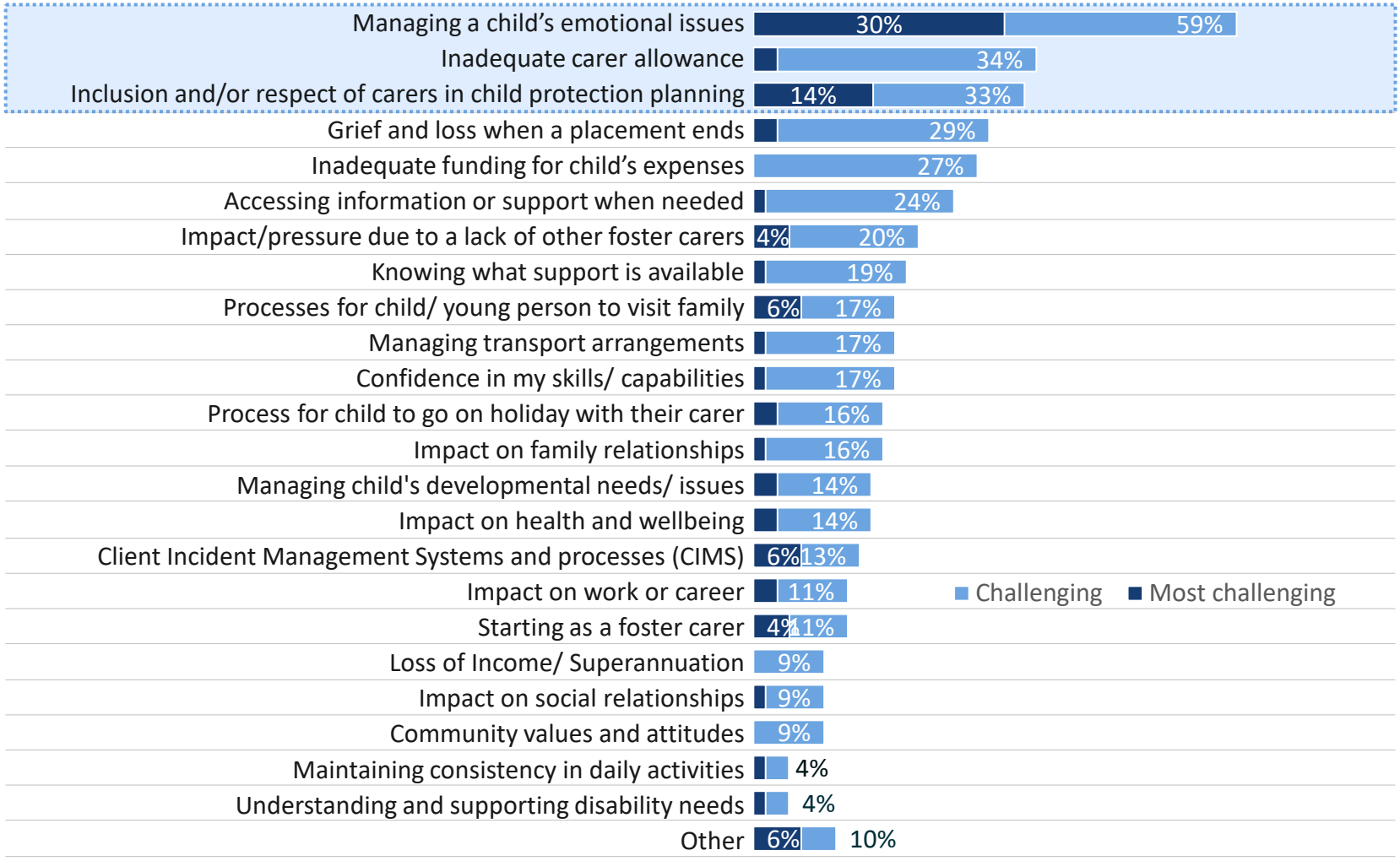
Challenges of being a foster carer – Carers on a temporary break

Most challenging aspects of being a foster carer
(Carers on a temporary break)



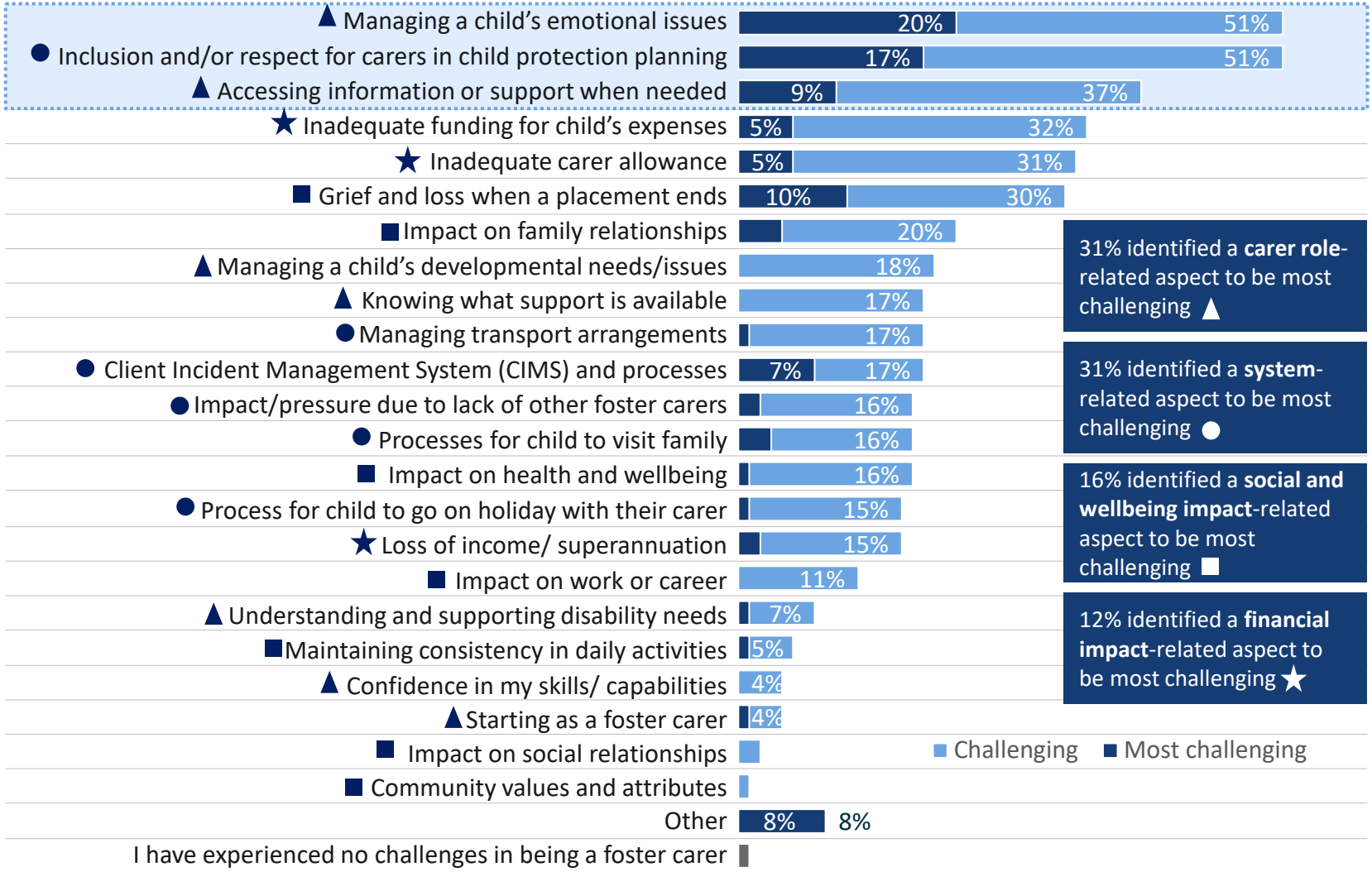
Challenges of being a foster carer – Carers on a temporary break

Most challenging aspects of being a foster carer
(Carers on a temporary break)



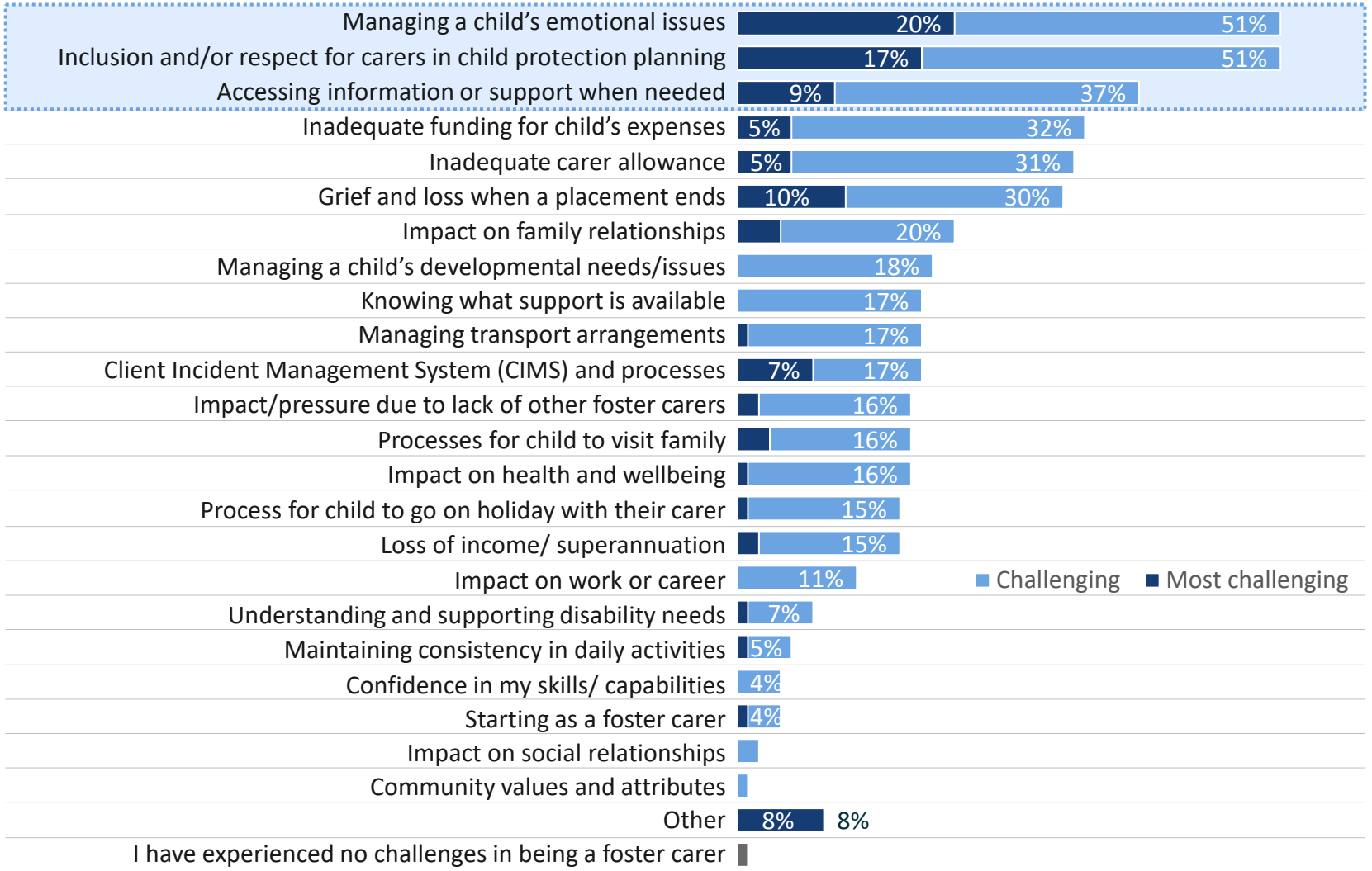
Challenges of being a foster carer – Former carers

Most challenging aspects of being a foster carer
(Former carers)



Challenges of being a foster carer – Former carers

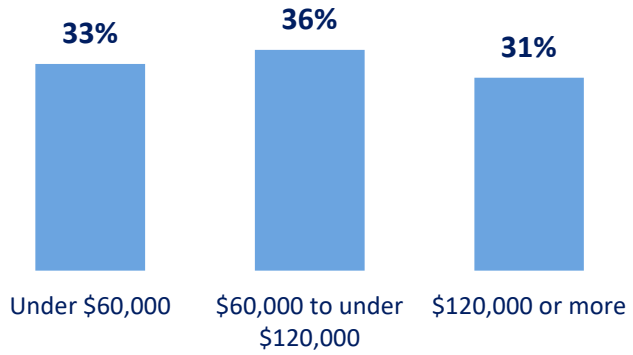
Most challenging aspects of being a foster carer
(Former carers)



Financial concerns as most challenging

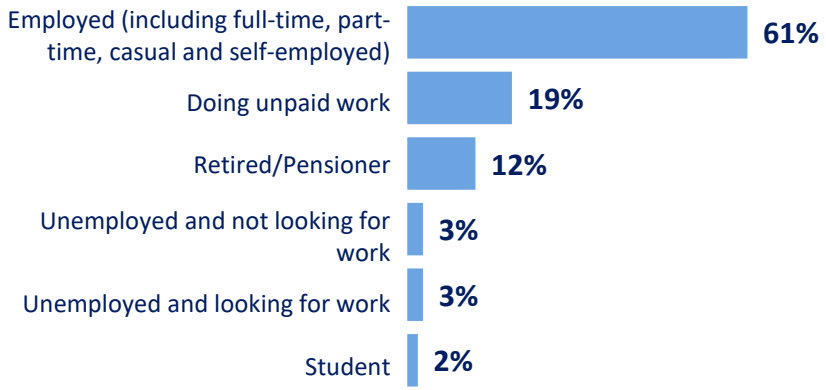
By gross annual household income

*Of the respondents who found **financial concerns** to be the most challenging, their **gross annual incomes** were the following:*



By employment status

*Of the respondents who found **financial concerns** to be the most challenging, their **employment situations** were the following…*



Most challenging aspects – subgroup differences

Overall

- ▲ Carers who had been caring for **1 year or less** (68%) and those who had **no children living in their home** for the week (40%) were more likely to identify a **carer role-related aspect** to be the most challenging, compared to those caring for more than a year (28%) and have one or more children in their household (24%).
- ■ Carers who had been **foster caring alone** were significantly more likely to identify **social and wellbeing-related impacts** as one of the most challenging aspects (20%), compared to those who had been caring with another person (12%).

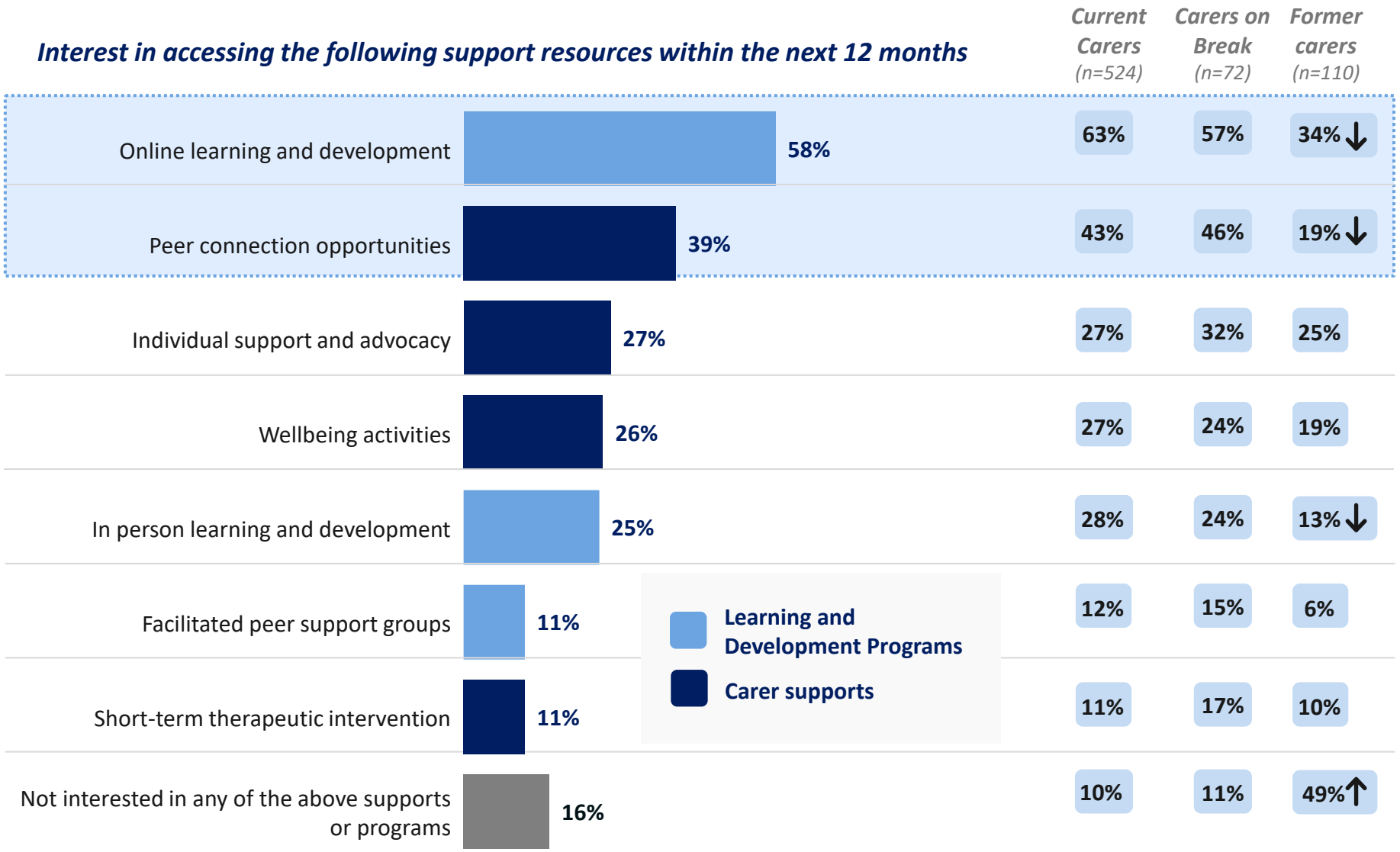
Current carers

- ★ **Current carers** were significantly more likely to identify **financial-related impacts** as the most challenging aspect (21%), compared to former foster carers (12%) and those taking a break (3%).
- ▲ Current carers who had **no children in foster care** living in their home for the week (40%) were significantly more likely to identify the **carer role** as the most challenging aspect.

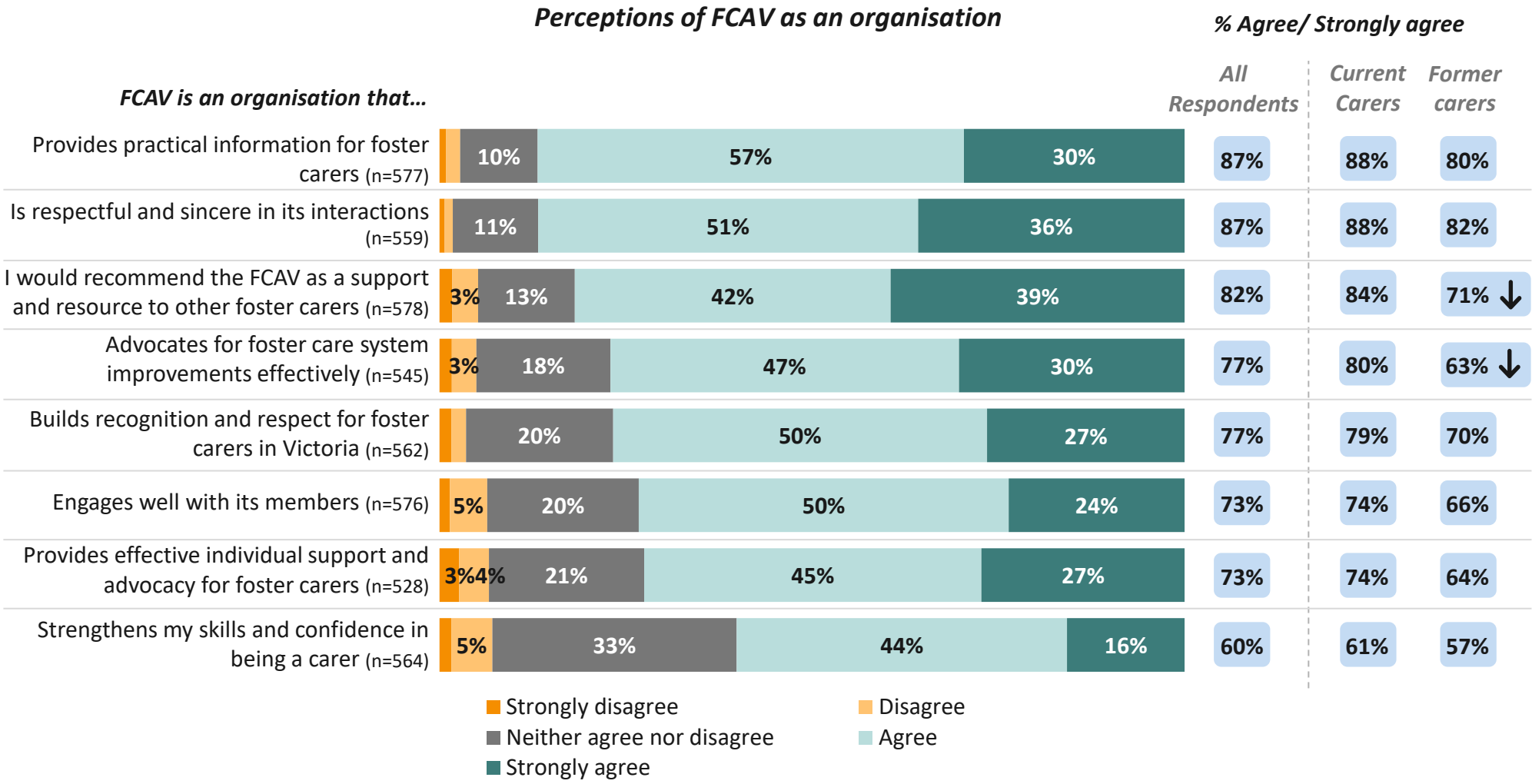
Feedback on FCAV services

Support resources

Interest in accessing the following support resources within the next 12 months

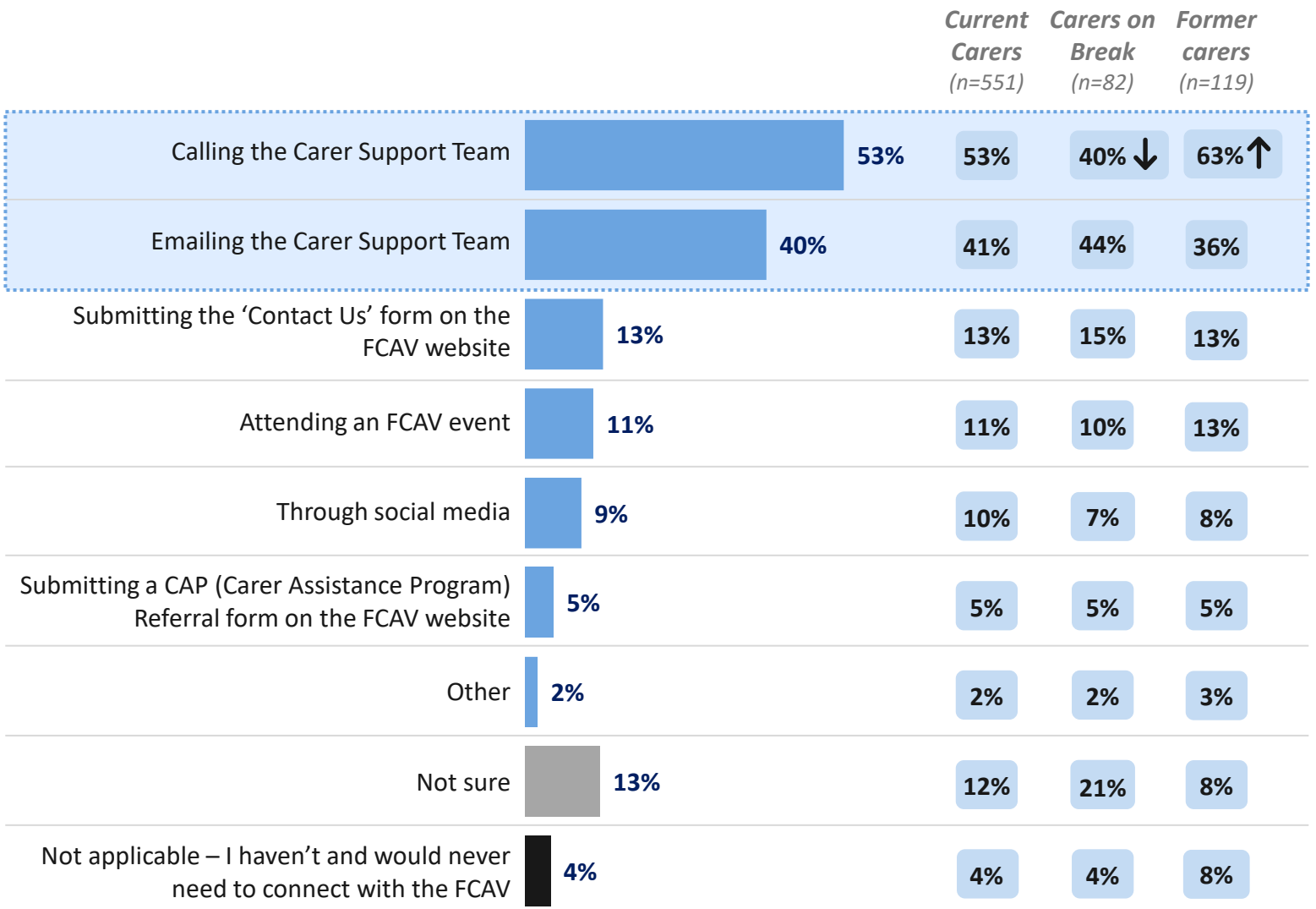


Perceptions of FCAV

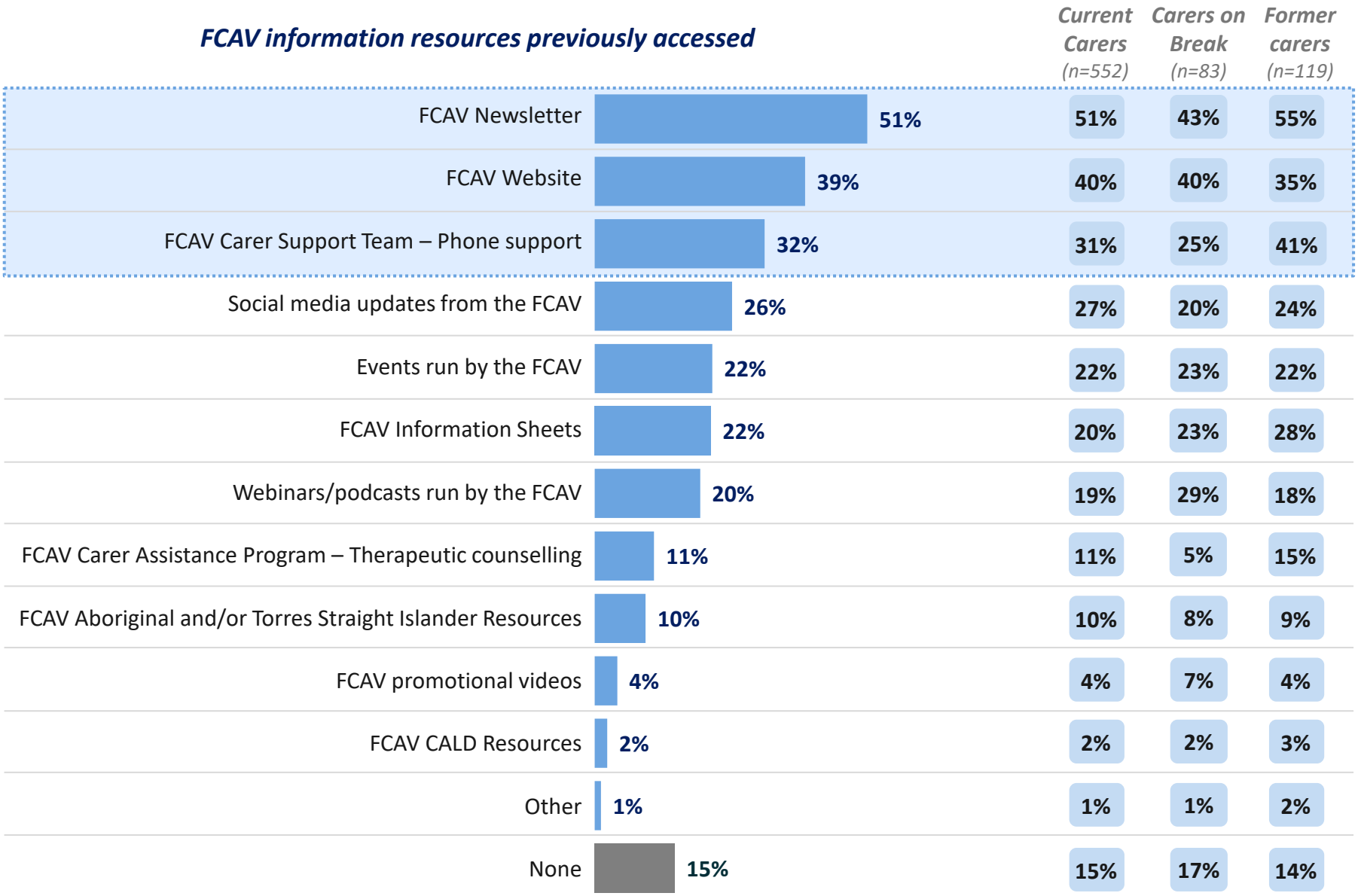


Preferred FCAV contact method

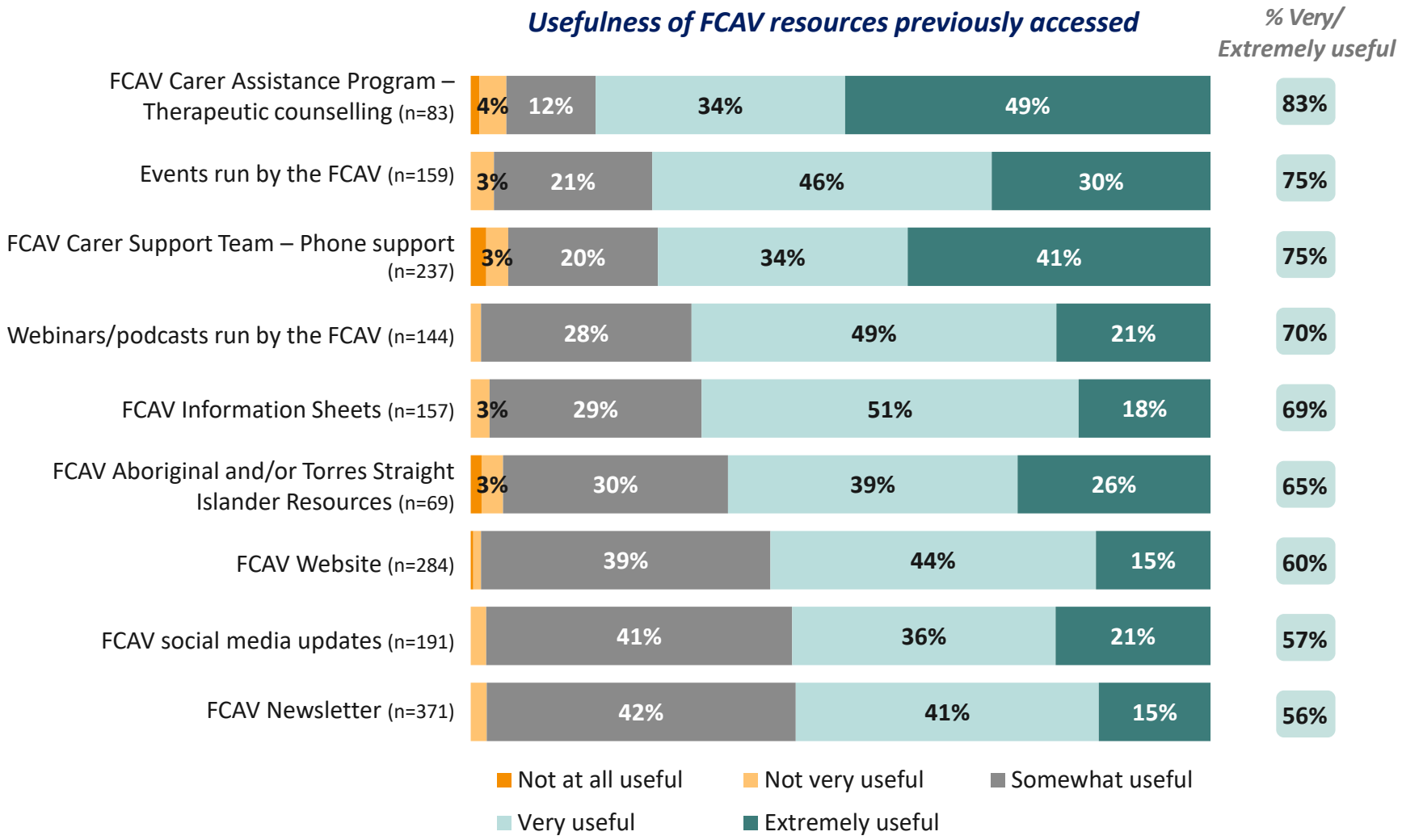
Preferred way to contact FCAV for information, advice or support



FCAV information resources previously accessed



Utility of previously accessed FCAV resources



Support resources

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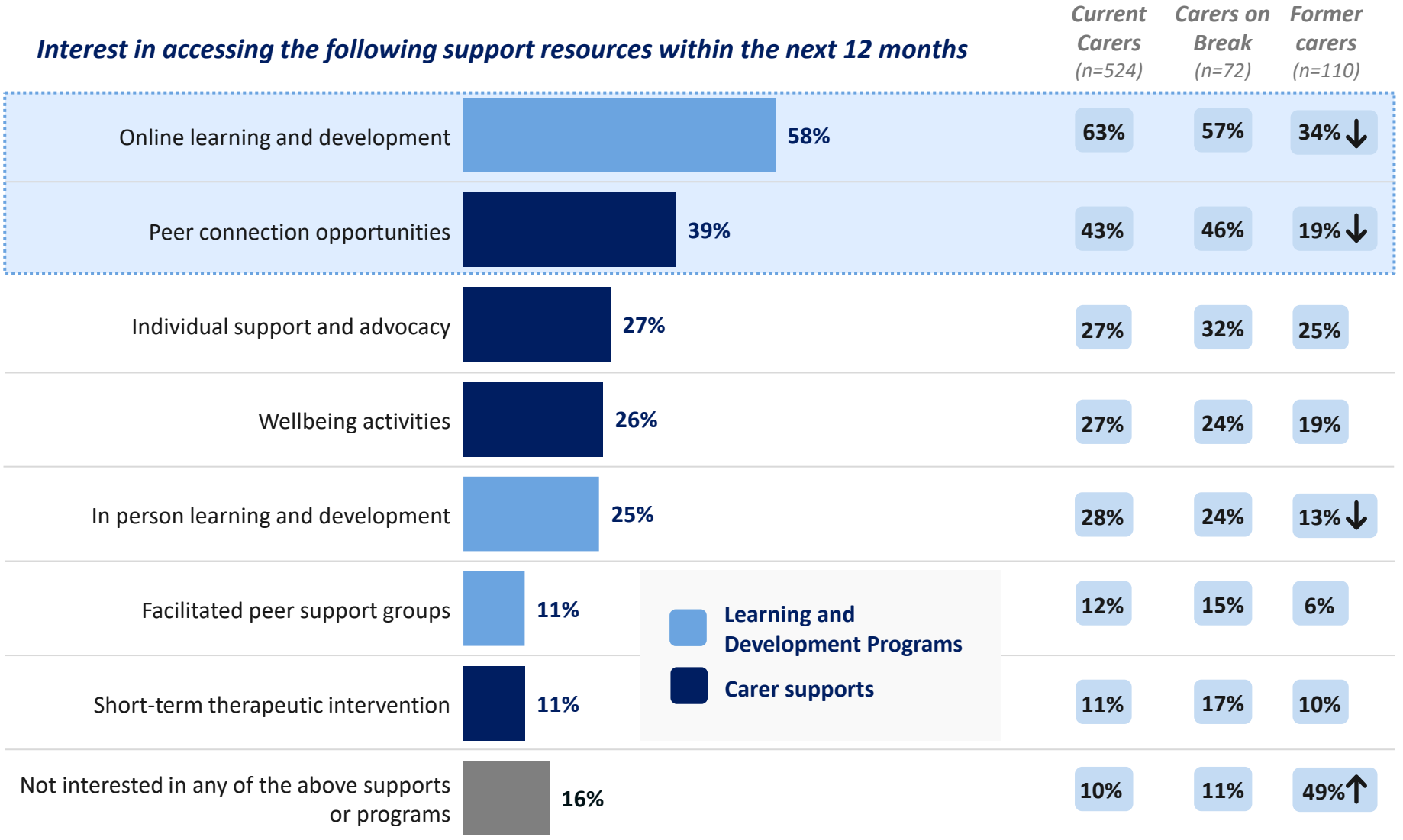
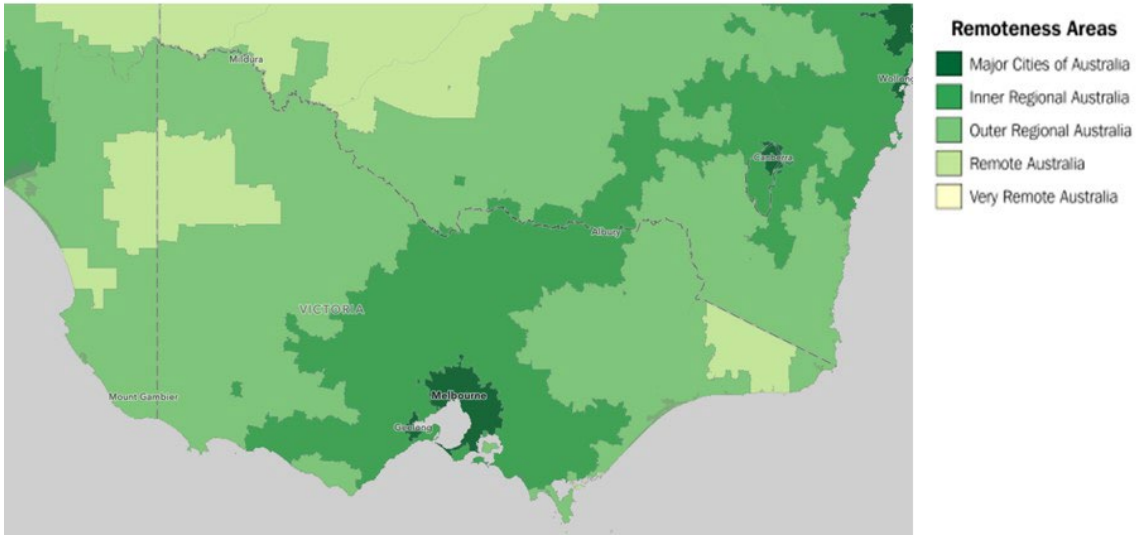


Appendix A: ABS Geographic Remoteness

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines remoteness according to the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure. The ASGS outlines 5 classes of relative geographic remoteness across Australia. These 5 classes are:

- Major Cities of Australia (Melbourne and Geelong)
- Inner Regional Australia (e.g. Bendigo, Shepparton, Ballarat)
- Outer Regional Australia (e.g. Horsham, Lismore, Mildura)
- Remote Australia (e.g. Kenmare, Cann River, Uderbool)
- Very Remote Australia (not applicable to Victoria)

Relative geographic remoteness is measured in an objective way using the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia Plus (ARIA+). ARIA+ is derived by measuring road distance from various populated locations to five categories of service centre, using population as a proxy measure for service availability.



Thank you

We would also like to acknowledge and thank all the participants who were involved in the research for their valuable contribution and input.

This project was conducted in accordance with the international quality standard ISO 20252, the international information security standard ISO 27001, as well as the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).