

FCAV Note:

This report was prepared by ORIMA Research for the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV). It is being published by FCAV to make the findings of the 2026 FCAV Carer Census publicly available.

Some pages and information contained in the original report have been redacted from this published version. These redactions have been made where information was considered sensitive, could potentially enable the identification of individuals or small groups, or was not considered appropriate for public release in accordance with privacy and confidentiality considerations.

The remaining content has not been altered.

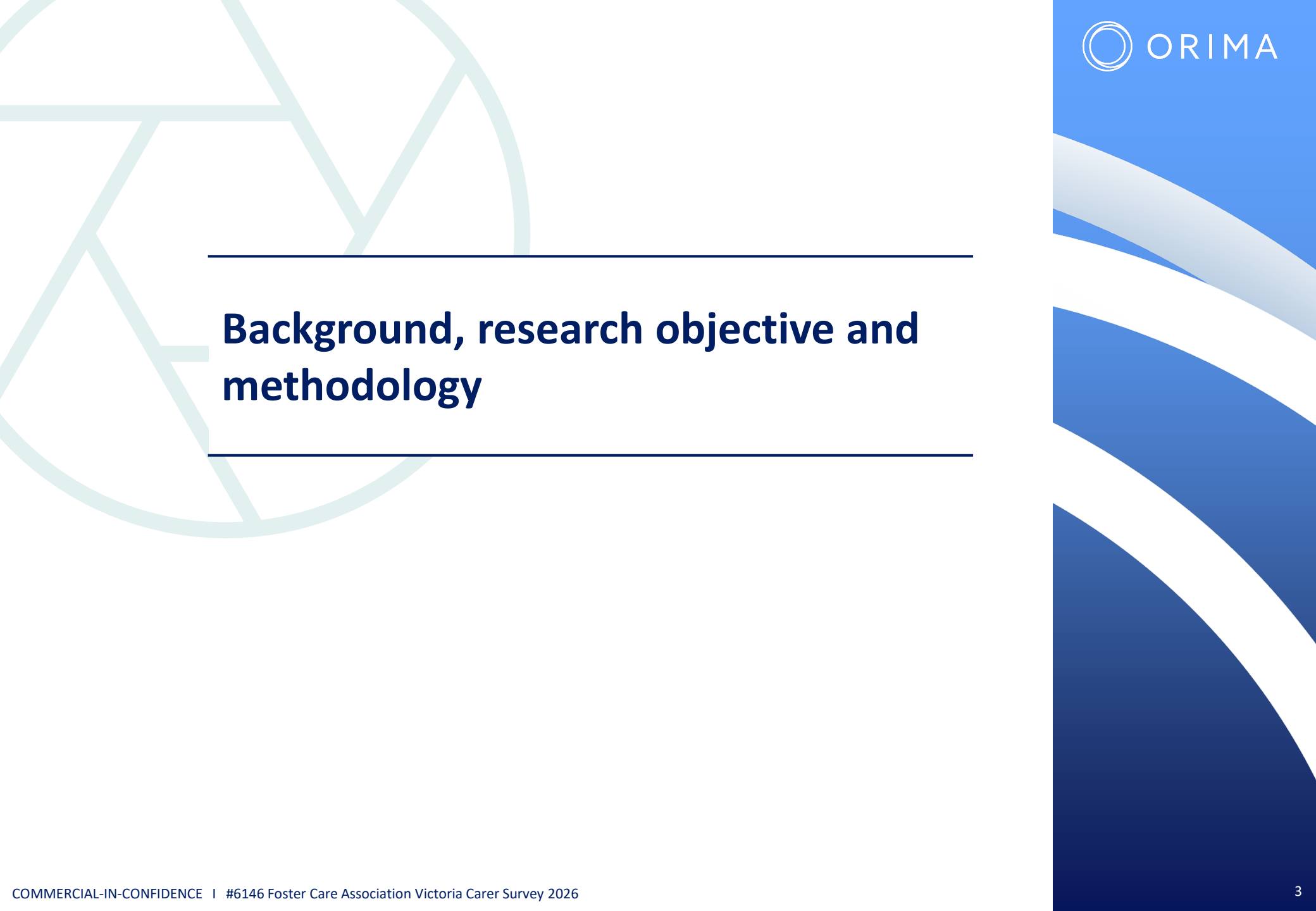
Foster Care Association Victoria

Carer Survey 2026 Chart Pack

25 June 2026

ORIMA pays respect to First Nations peoples past and present, their cultures and traditions and acknowledges their continuing connection to Land, Sea and Community.



The slide features several geometric patterns. On the left, there is a large, light green circular pattern with internal lines. On the right, there are several curved, overlapping shapes in shades of blue and white. The main content area is a white rectangle with a dark blue border.

Background, research objective and methodology

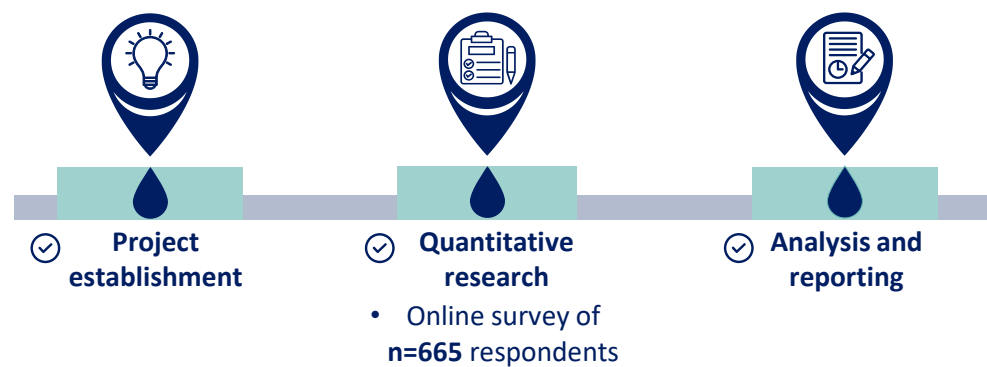
Background and Objective

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 and policy or service development and **compare findings with previous research** to identify trends, changes, and emerging issues over time.

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. **n=3,137 unique links** to the survey were distributed by ORIMA Research to carers, with **n=665** providing at least one response beyond screening questions. Fieldwork was conducted from **April 10th to May 19th, 2026**.

Overview of research phases:



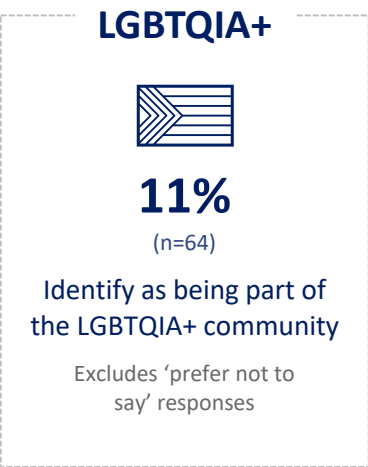
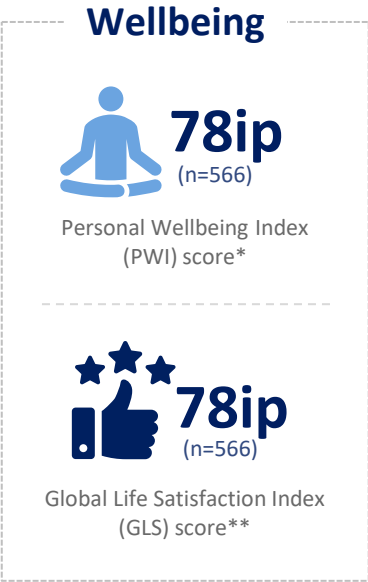
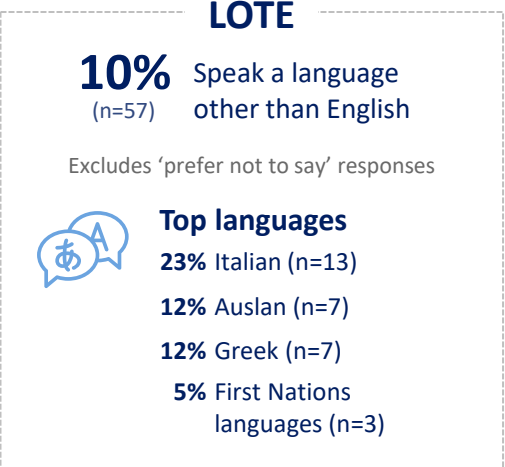
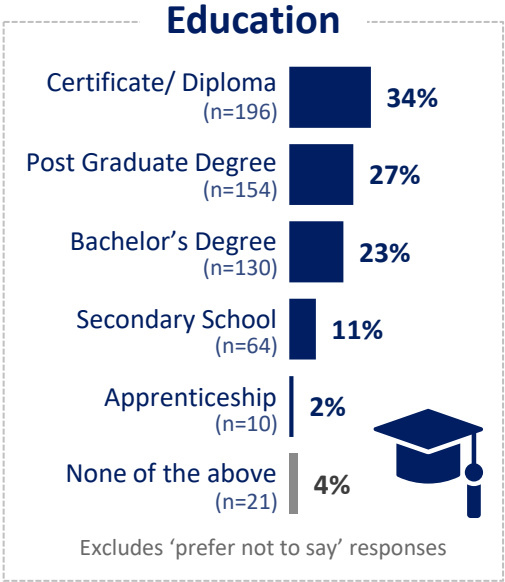
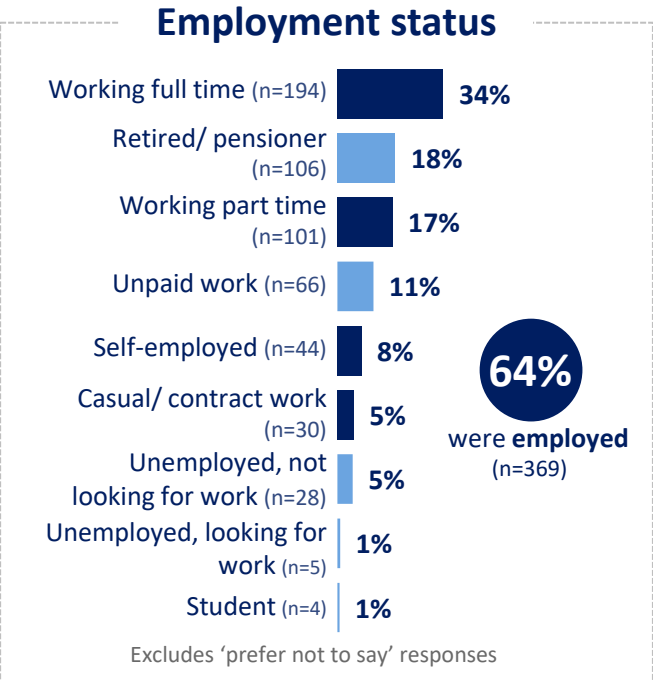
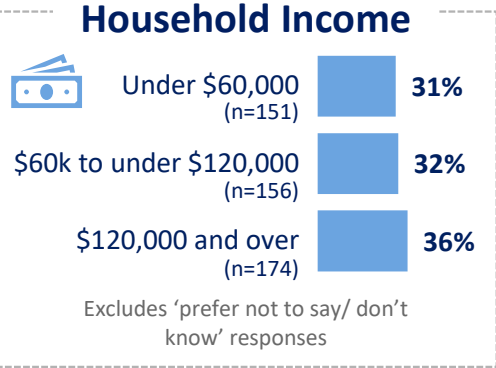
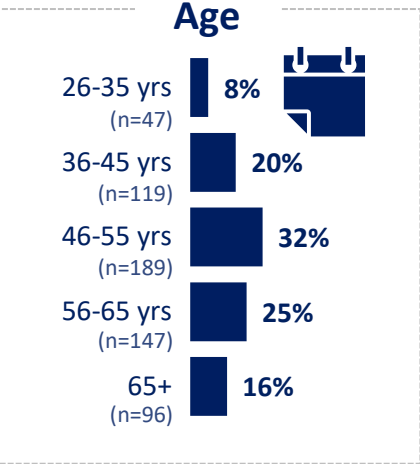
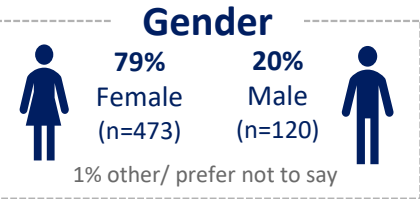
When interpreting the data:

 Arrows are used to indicate if a cohort's result is substantially higher or lower compared to the 2024 results by at least 10 percentage points as a minimum threshold (unless otherwise specified).

Note on sampling and non-sampling error: The survey was not subject to sampling error, as it was an attempted census. All surveys are potentially subject to non-sampling measurement error. Unlike sampling error, non-sampling error is generally not mathematically measurable. The main non-sampling error risk with this survey is the potential for non-response bias to affect results. Non-response bias arises if the people who respond to the survey differ systematically to non-respondents in terms of characteristics relevant to the survey, such as satisfaction with outcomes or processes.

Given their unique experiences and the possibility of differing responses, more than one foster carer from the same household could complete the survey, provided they were also FCAV members.

2026 Respondent demographic profile



Base: Base sizes vary, ranging from speak a language other than English (n=57) to all respondents (n=599) in 2026. Some questions have a smaller base as questions were optional.

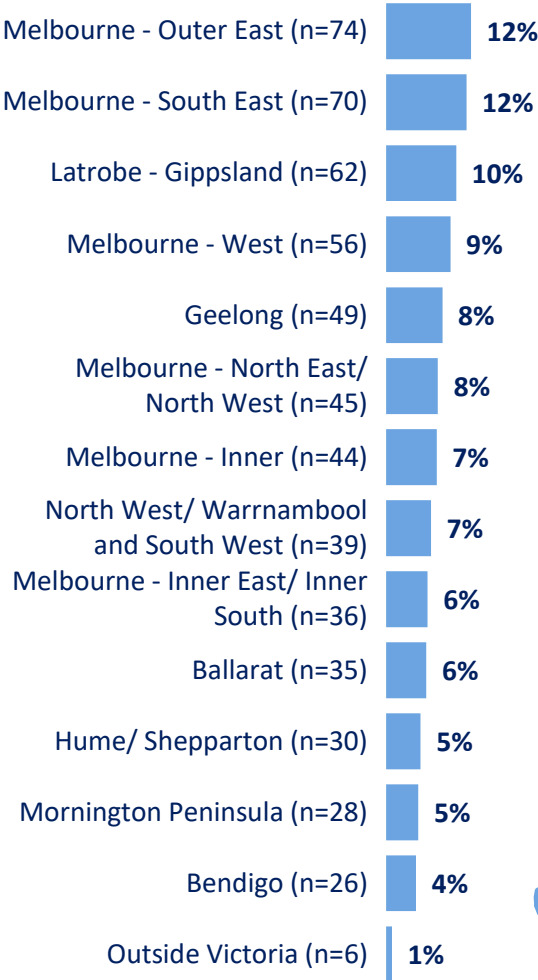
Note: Numbers within brackets refer to the number of respondents who fall within each demographic group.

*The Personal Wellbeing Index score is the calculated average of responses to questions covering the seven components related to wellbeing: health, relationships, standard of living, community connectedness, personal safety, achieving in life, and future security. The resulting score ranges from 0 to 100 index points. **The Global Life Satisfaction Index score is the calculated average of respondents' ratings on their life as a whole. The resulting score ranges from 0 to 100 index points.

2026 Respondent demographic profile (cont'd.)

Location

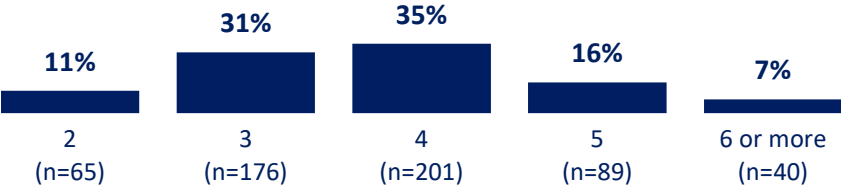
(Based on ABS SA4 regions*, amongst those who provided a postcode)



Living Situation



Number of bedrooms



Excludes 'prefer not to say' responses

Renters were slightly more likely to be younger (12% aged 26-35 and 28% aged 36-45, compared to 7% of those who owned their homes outright/ with a mortgage aged 18-35, and 19% aged 36-45).

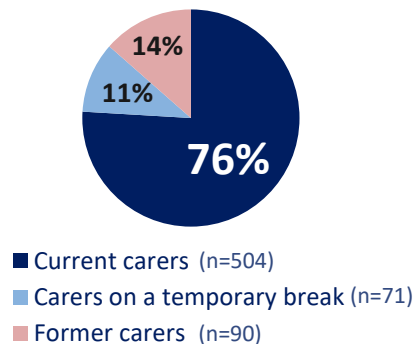
Base: All respondents in 2026 (n=571-600). Some questions have a smaller base as questions were optional.

Note: Numbers within brackets refer to the number of respondents who fall within each demographic group.

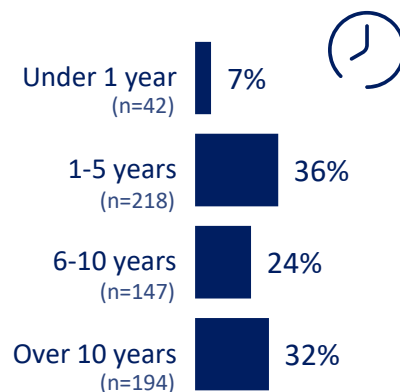
*SA4 regions are geographical classifications of people and communities, and generally have a population of over 100,000. More information on these is provided in Appendix A.

Respondent carer profile

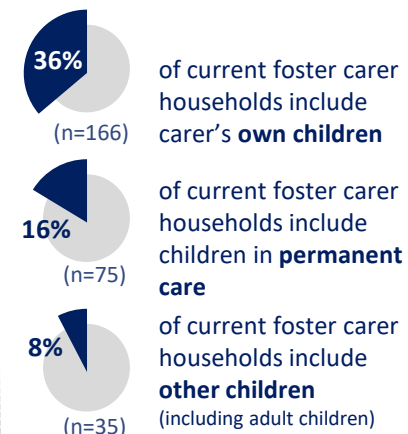
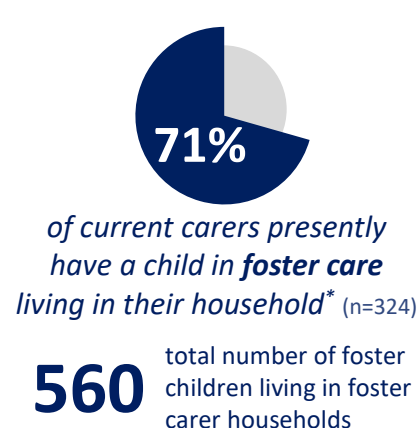
Carer Status



Duration of Caring



Children in Foster Carer Households

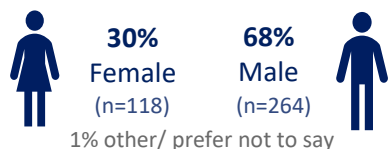


Base: Current carers (2026: n=459)

Co-carers

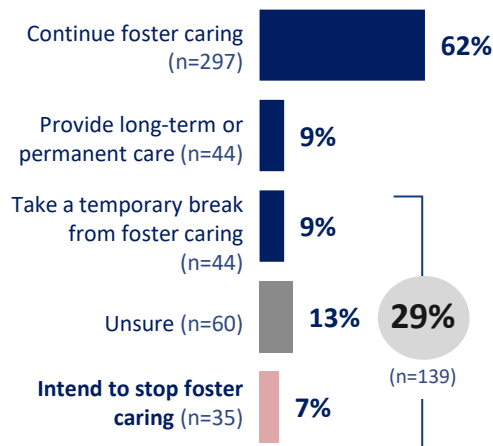
More detail is provided on the next slide

65% of carers (n=387) did so in partnership with a **co-carer**. Gender breakdown of the other person:

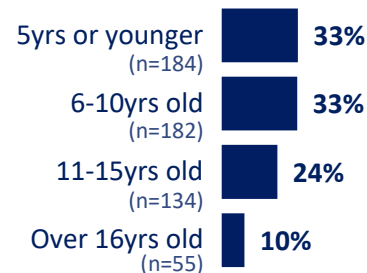
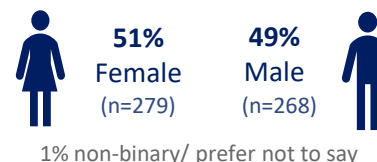


36% Did not have a co-carer (n=213)

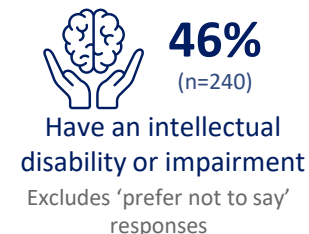
Future Intentions of current carers



Profile of Children in Foster Care



Excludes 'prefer not to say' responses



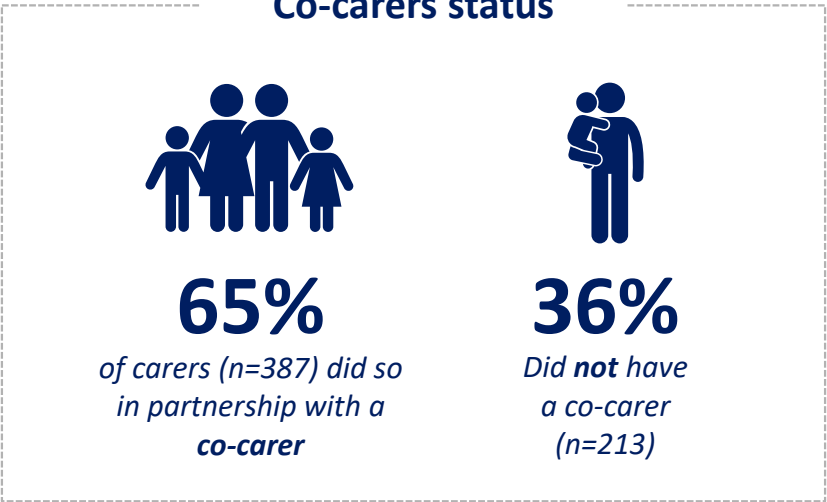
Base: Base sizes vary, ranging from future intentions of current carers (n=480) to all respondents (n=665) in 2026. Some questions have a smaller base as questions were optional.

Note: Numbers within brackets refer to the number of respondents who fall within each demographic group.

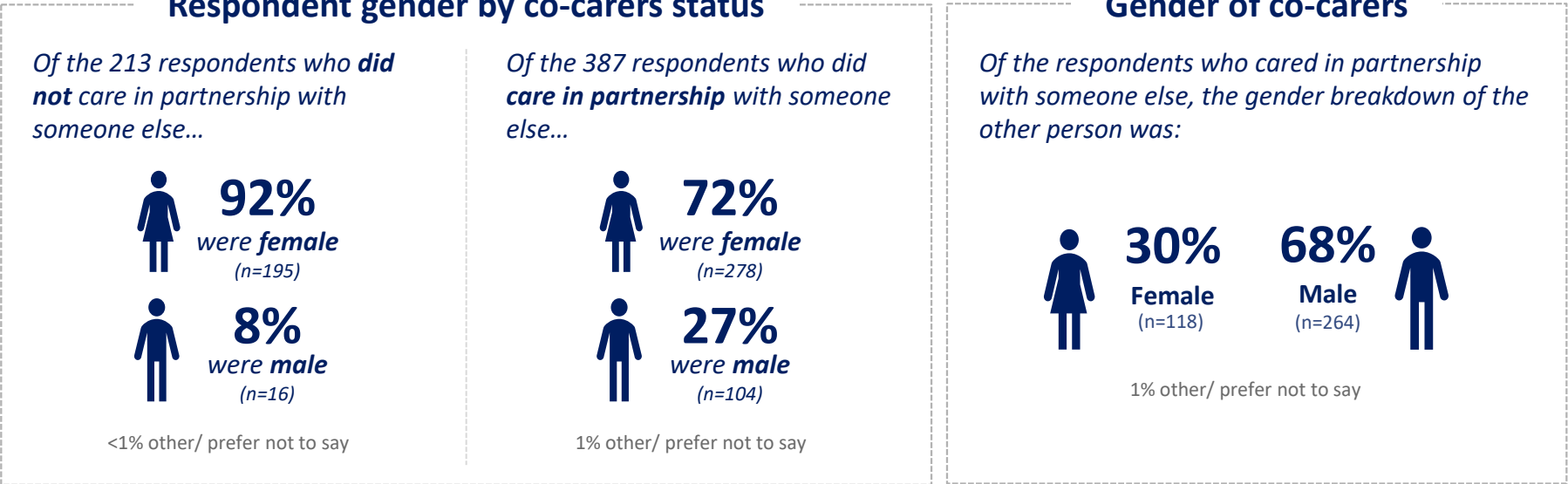
*Asked about the number of children living with the respondent at home the week they did the survey. Note that respondents who saw this question were given a default value of 0, and could edit this as needed.

Co-carer status profile

Co-carers status



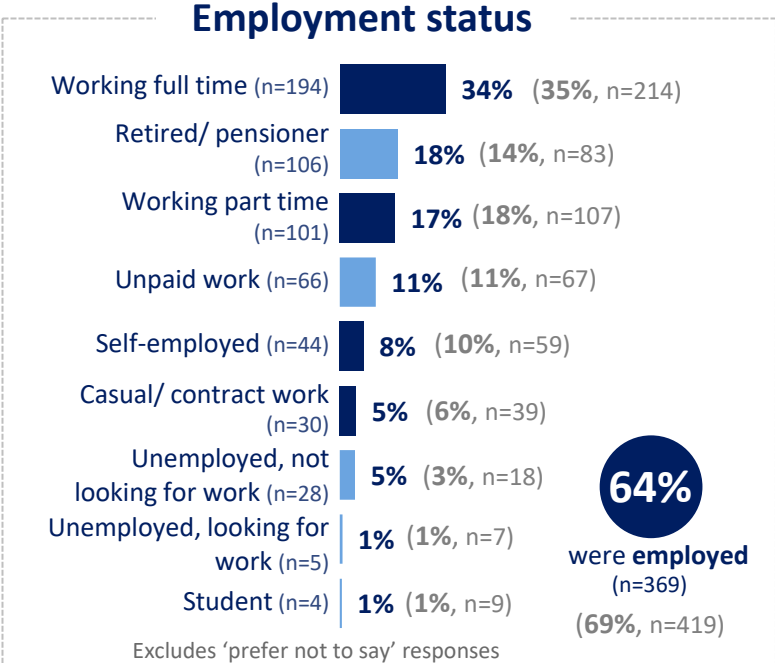
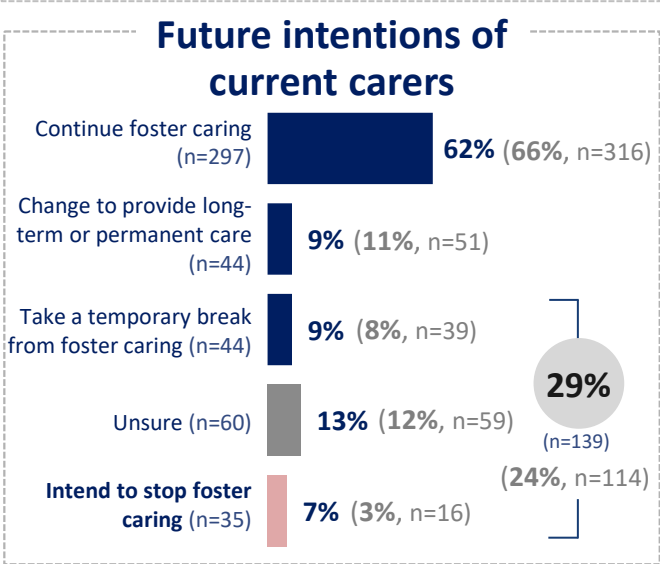
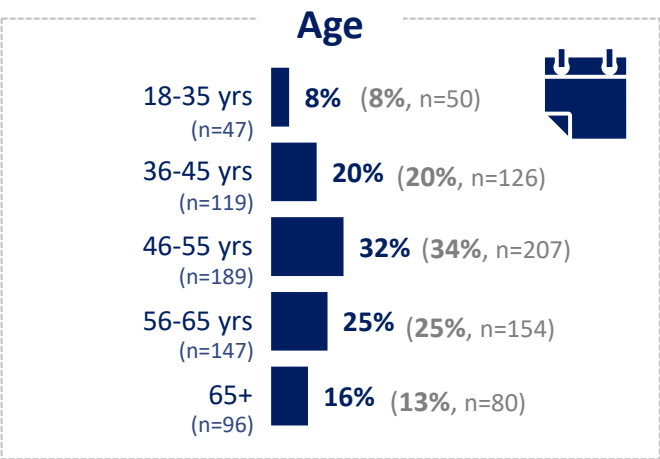
Respondent gender by co-carers status



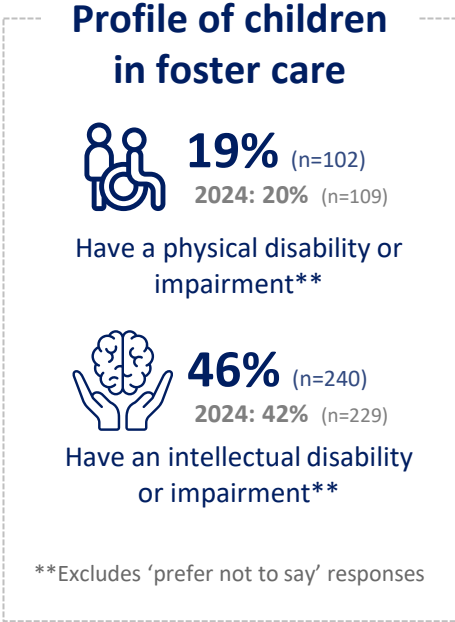
Base: Base sizes vary, ranging from carers who did not care in partnership with someone else (n=213) to all respondents (n=600) in 2026. Some questions have a smaller base as questions were optional.
Note: Numbers within brackets refer to the number of respondents who fall within each demographic group.

Respondent demographic profile – yearly comparisons and cohort differences

Note: Changes from 2024 (figures in grey) are only indicative. They are **largely small in magnitude and should be interpreted with caution**.



Employment is higher amongst male carers (72%, compared to 62% of female carers) and those caring in partnership with someone else (69%, compared to 54% of those caring alone).

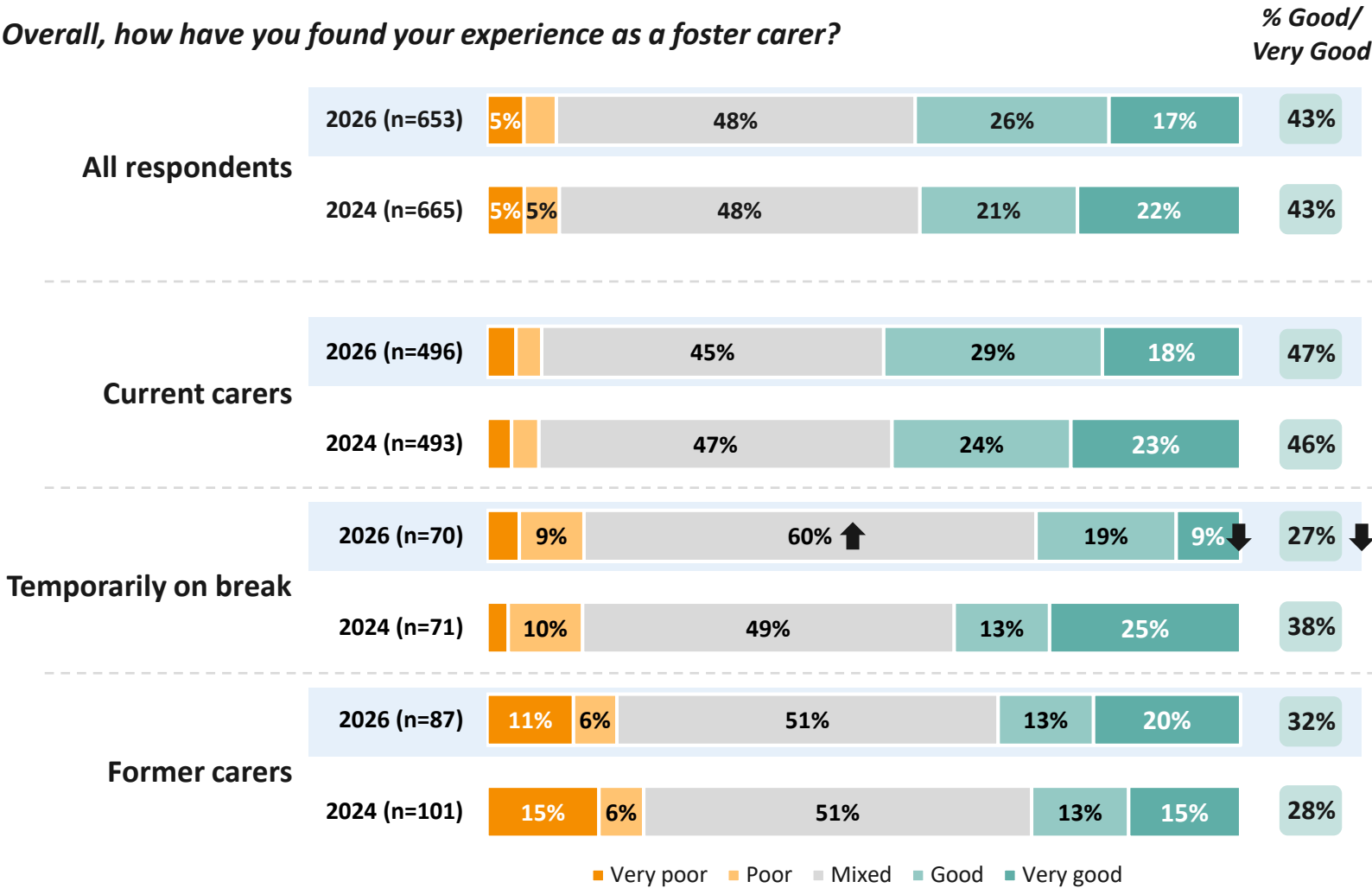


Base: Base sizes vary, ranging from future intentions of current carers (n=480) to all respondents (n=598) in 2026.
Note: Numbers within brackets refer to the number of respondents who fall within each demographic group. Figures in grey indicate results from the 2024 Census.

A decorative geometric pattern is located on the left side of the slide. It features a large, light green circle with several lines radiating from its center, creating a stylized, abstract design.

Understanding the carer experience

Foster carer experience



Q11. Overall, how have you found your experience as a foster carer? If you are not currently a foster carer, please think about your previous experiences.
Base: All respondents, current foster carers, carers on a temporary break and former foster carers in 2026 and 2024 (base sizes shown above).
Note: Arrows indicate a higher or lower result compared to 2024 of at least 10pp.

Foster carer experience (cohort differences)

Among current carers...



The following cohorts were **more likely** to have a good/ very good experience as a foster carer compared to **47%** of current carers overall:



74% of those who had been a carer for **under a year**



62% of carers **aged 65 and over**



59% of **male carers**



58% of carers whose highest level of education was **Year 12 or below**



58% of carers from **Melbourne – Inner East/ Inner South**



The following cohorts were **less likely** to have a good/ very good experience as a foster carer compared to **47%** of current carers overall:



37% of those who had been a carer for **6-10 years**



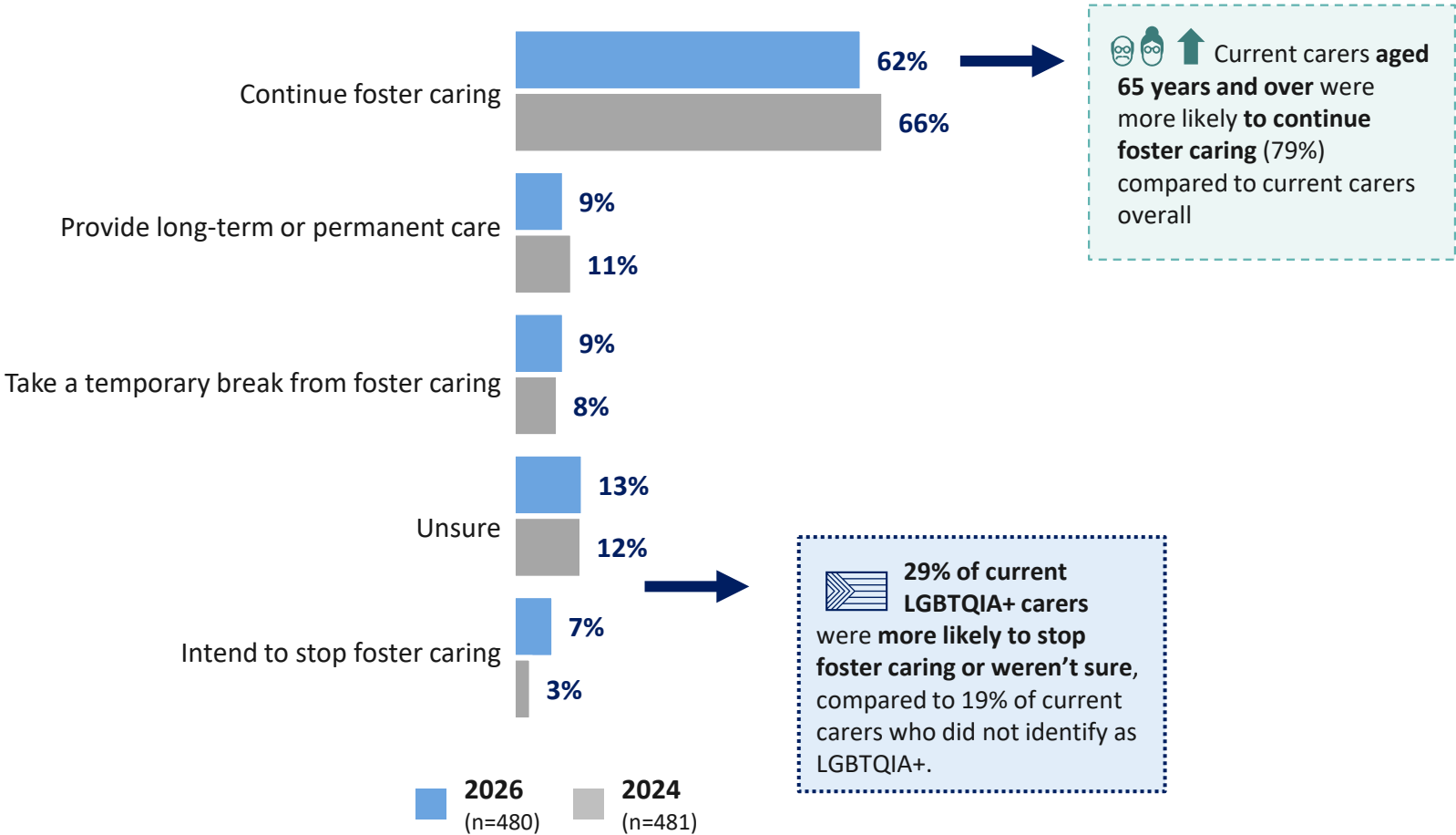
29% of carers **who identified as LGBTQIA+**

Q11. Overall, how have you found your experience as a foster carer? If you are not currently a foster carer, please think about your previous experiences.

Base: Current carers aged 65 and above, current male carers, current carers whose highest level of education was Year 12 or below, current carers who had been a carer for under a year, current carers who had been a carer for 6-10 years, current carers from Melbourne – Inner East/ Inner South, and current carers who identify as LGBTQIA+ (base sizes shown above).

Future intention of current carers

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

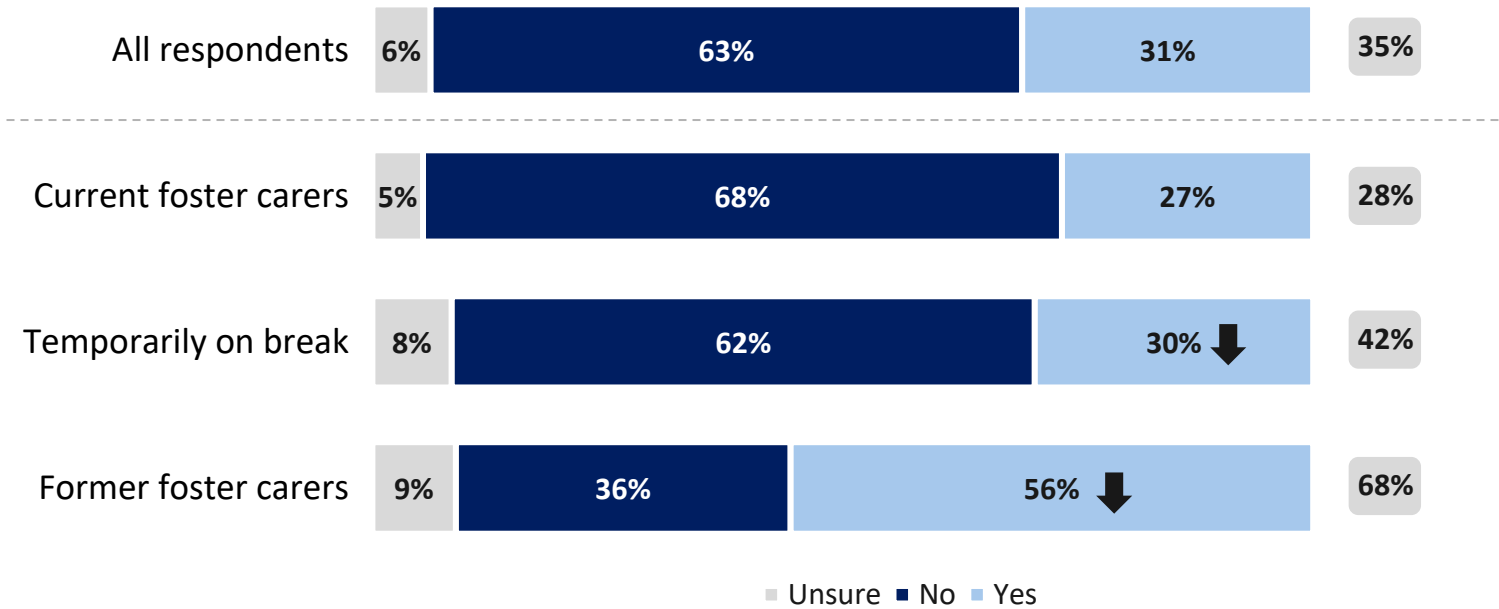


Q17. Over the next 12 months, which of the following are you most likely to do? Base: All current foster carers (base sizes shown above), current carers aged 65 years and over (n=66), current LGBTQIA+ carers (n=45) and current carers who did not identify as LGBTQIA+ (n=399).

Motivation to be a foster carer

Has your motivation to be a foster carer changed over time?

% Yes
(2024)



When asked why carers' motivations for being a foster carer have changed, most have mentioned their experience with **issues in the foster care system**.

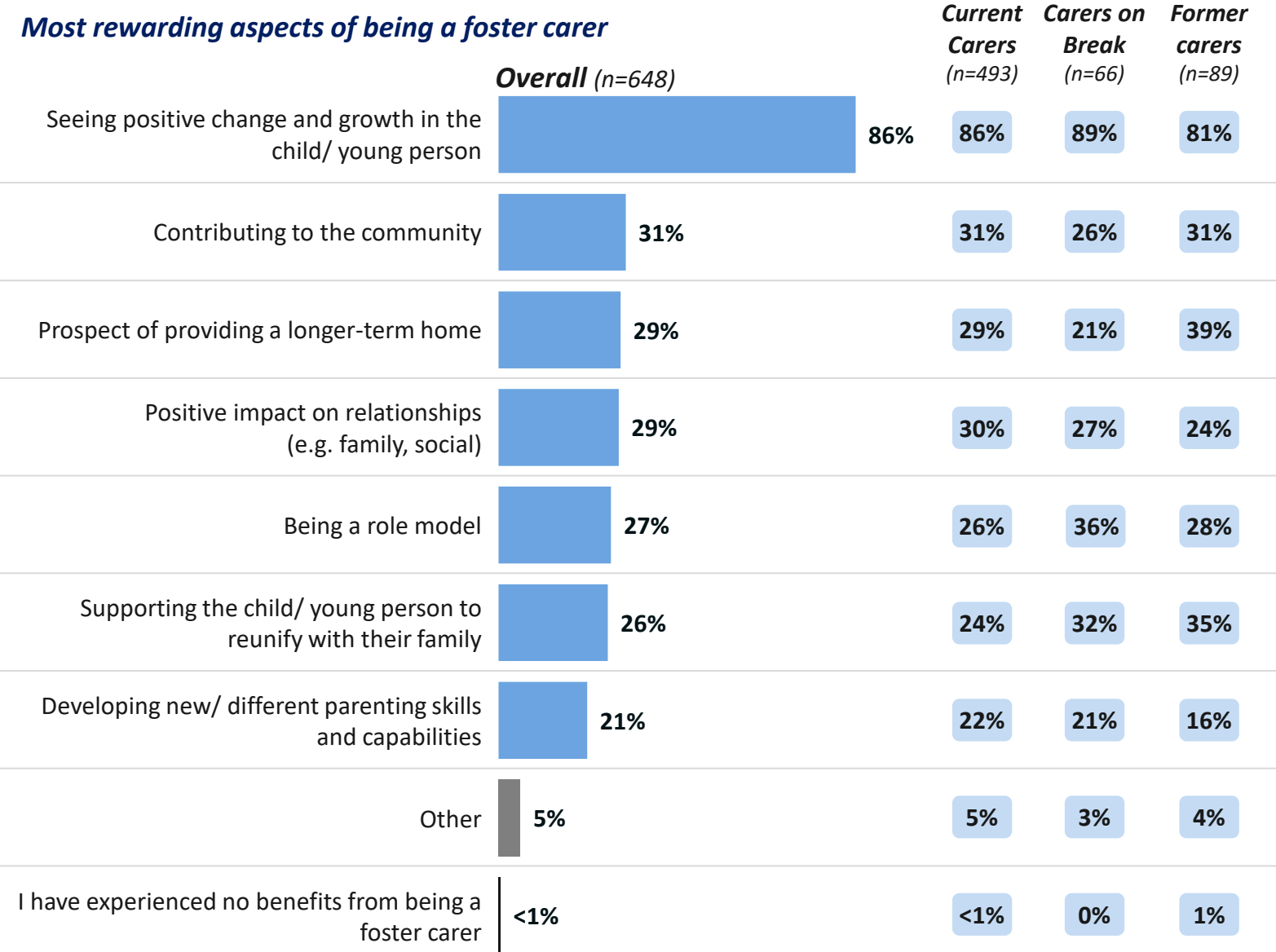
"It's like banging your head against a brick wall sometimes. Who knew the system would be so difficult. In the end I decided I had to stick it out to spread the word about how bad it is and help other carers through." – Current carer

"We work with these kids and when good results are evident our views and thoughts are listened to but ignored. Two organisations managing 1 child, then the carers are just viewed as the babysitter or after thought." – Carer on a temporary break

"Child protection system. Lacks ability to put the child's needs first. Carers are seen as a very temporary need (in) the child's life rather than (an) integral part of their development, growth and lives." – Former foster carer

Q9. Has your motivation to be a foster carer changed over time? Base: All respondents (2026: n=663, 2024: n=671), Current foster carers (2026: n=502, 2024: n=497), Temporarily on break (2026: n=71, 2024: n=72), Former foster carers (2026: n=90, 2024: n=102), current carers who plan to stop foster caring or aren't sure (n=95), current carers from North West/ Warrnambool and South West (n=28) and current carers from Melbourne – West (n=47).
Q10. Can you describe why? (your motivation to be a foster carer has changed). Base: Carers whose motivations for foster caring have changed in 2026 (n=202). Note: Arrows indicate a higher or lower result compared to 2024 of at least 10pp.

Rewarding aspects of being a foster carer



 Carers on a temporary break were less likely to identify ‘contributing to the community’ as the most rewarding aspect of being a foster carer (26%) compared to carers on a break in 2024 (38%).

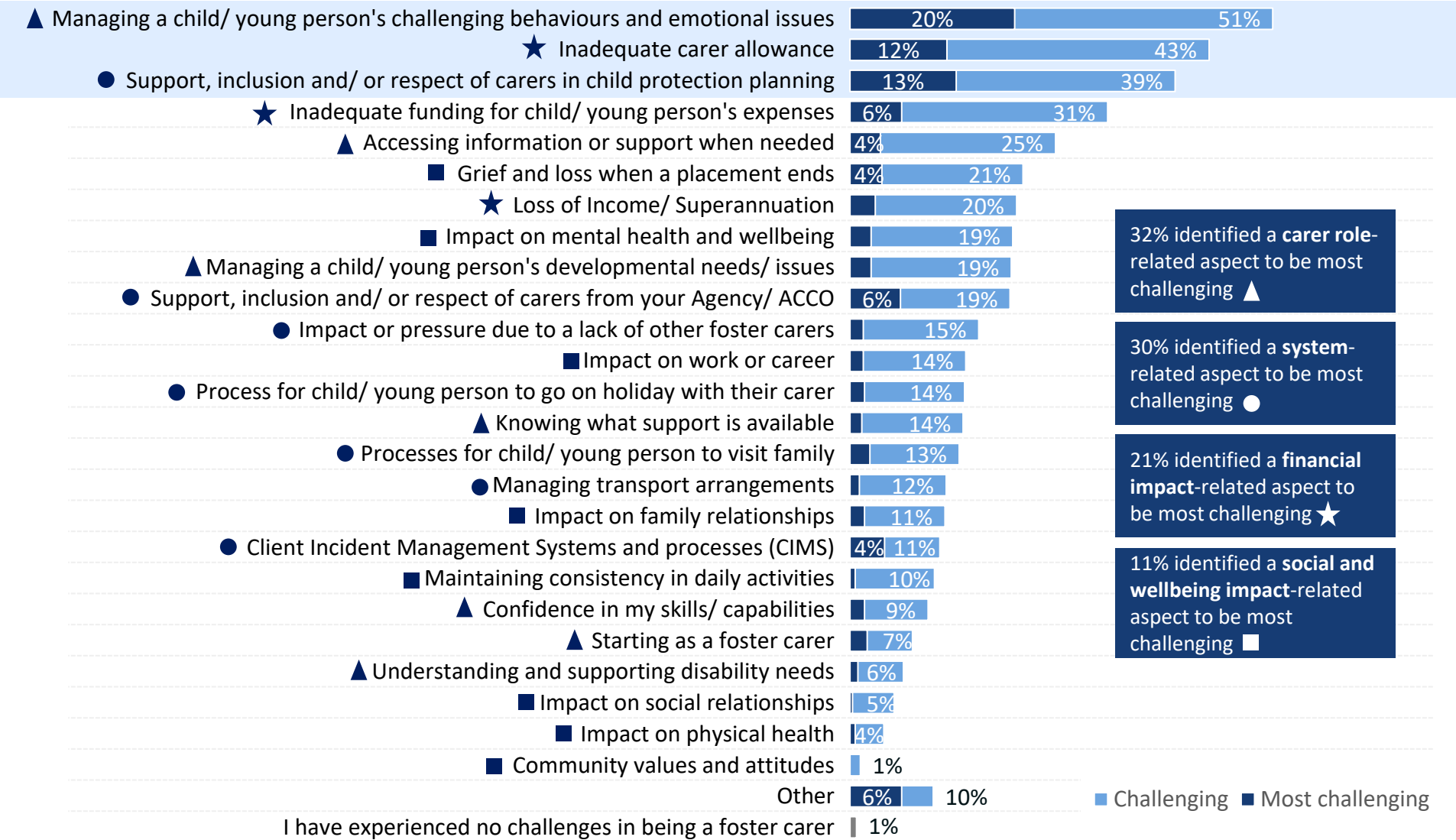
 LGBTQIA+ carers were more likely to find the ‘prospect of providing a longer-term home’ (38%) as the most rewarding aspect of foster caring, compared to 28% of carers who did not identify as LGBTQIA+

 Carers of at least one foster child with physical or intellectual disability were more likely to find ‘providing a longer-term home’ (38%) rewarding, compared to 28% of carers who did not have a child with physical or intellectual disabilities.

Q13. Overall, what have you found to be most rewarding about being a foster carer? If you are not currently a foster carer, please think about your previous experiences. Base: All respondents, current carers, former carers (base sizes shown above), carers on a temporary break (2026: n=66, 2024: n=71), LGBTQIA+ carers (n=64), carers who did not identify as LGBTQIA+ (n=518), current carers with at least one child with a disability (n=182) and current carers whose foster child/ children did not have a disability (n=130).

Challenges of being a foster carer – Overall

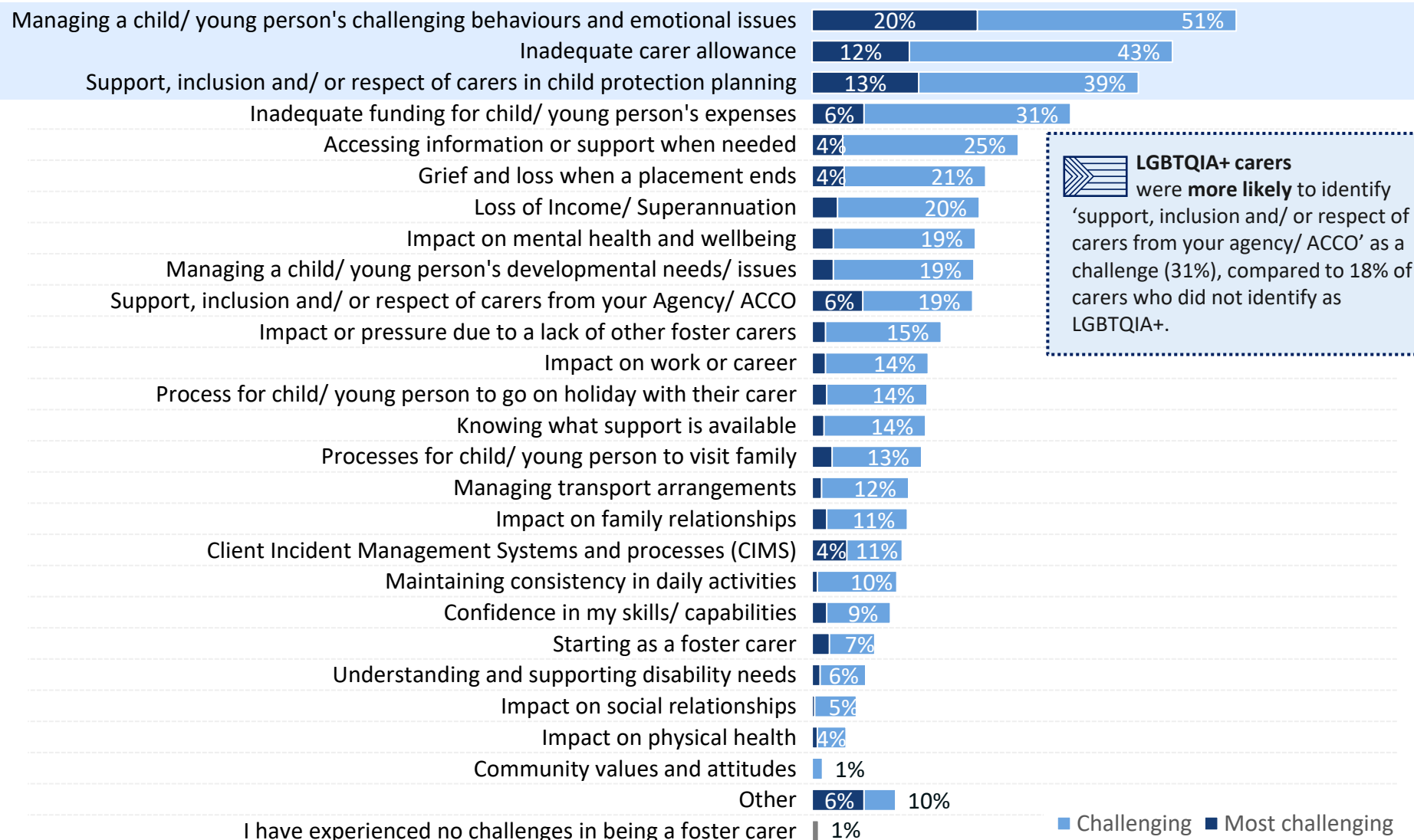
Challenging aspects of being a foster carer (All respondents)



Q14. Overall, what have you found to be most challenging about being a foster carer? If you are not currently a foster carer, please think about your previous experiences. Select up to 5 responses. Base: All respondents in 2026 (n=643).
Q15. Of these, which is the most challenging? Base: All respondents who answered Q14 and Q15 in 2026 (n=630).

Challenges of being a foster carer – Overall

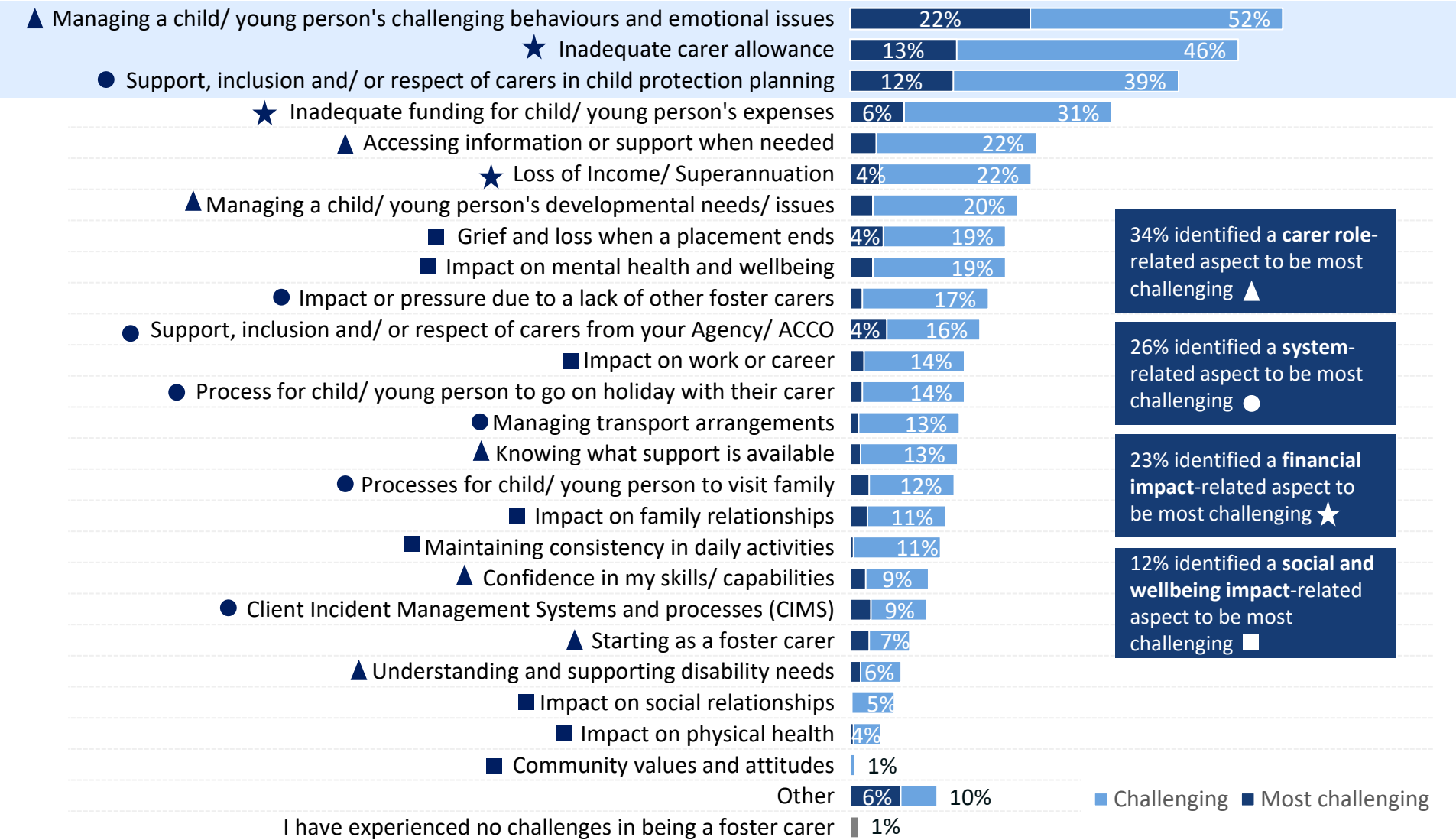
Challenging aspects of being a foster carer (All respondents)



Q14. Overall, what have you found to be most challenging about being a foster carer? If you are not currently a foster carer, please think about your previous experiences. Select up to 5 responses. Base: All respondents in 2026 (n=643), LGBTQIA+ carers (n=64), and carers who did not identify as LGBTQIA+ (n=518). Q15. Of these, which is the most challenging? Base: All respondents who answered Q14 and Q15 in 2026 (n=630).

Challenges of being a foster carer – Current carers

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

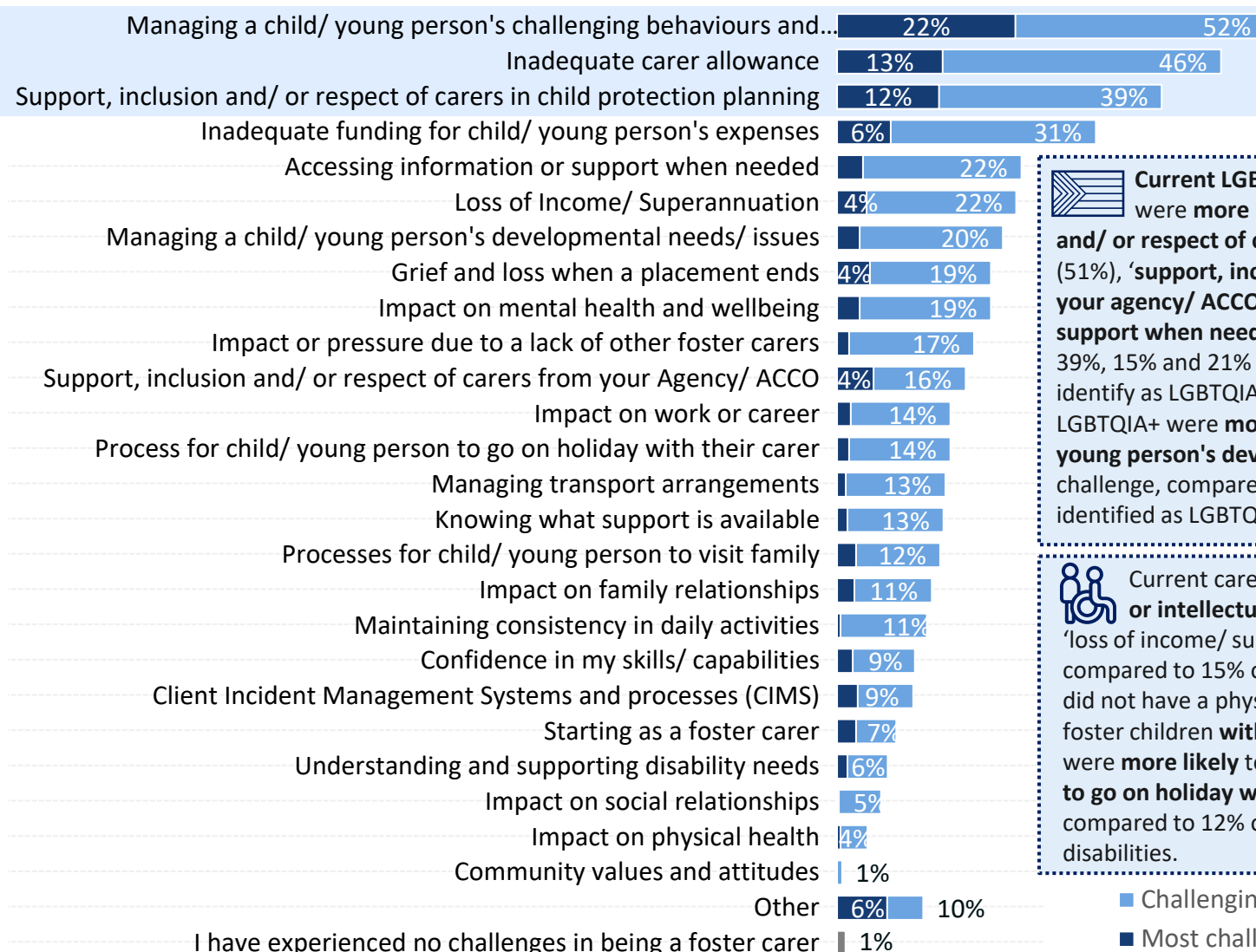


Q14. Overall, what have you found to be most challenging about being a foster carer? If you are not currently a foster carer, please think about your previous experiences. Select up to 5 responses. Base: All current carers in 2026 (n=489). Q15. Of these, which is the most challenging? Base: All current carers who answered Q14 in 2026 (n=478).

Challenges of being a foster carer – Current carers

Most challenging aspects of being a foster carer

(Current carers)



Current LGBTQIA+ carers

were **more likely** to identify 'support, inclusion and/ or respect of carers in child protection planning' (51%), 'support, inclusion and/ or respect of carers from your agency/ ACCO' (33%), and 'accessing information or support when needed' (31%) as challenges, compared to 39%, 15% and 21% respectively among carers who did not identify as LGBTQIA+. Those who **did not** identify as LGBTQIA+ were **more likely** to identify 'Managing a child/ young person's developmental needs/ issues' as a challenge, compared to 11% of current carers who identified as LGBTQIA+.



Current carers **least one foster child with physical or intellectual disability** were **more likely** to cite 'loss of income/ superannuation' as a challenge (31%), compared to 15% of current carers whose foster child/ren did not have a physical/ intellectual disability. Carers of foster children **without** physical or intellectual disabilities were **more likely** to cite 'process for child/young person to go on holiday with their carer' as a challenge (22%), compared to 12% of carers of children with such disabilities.

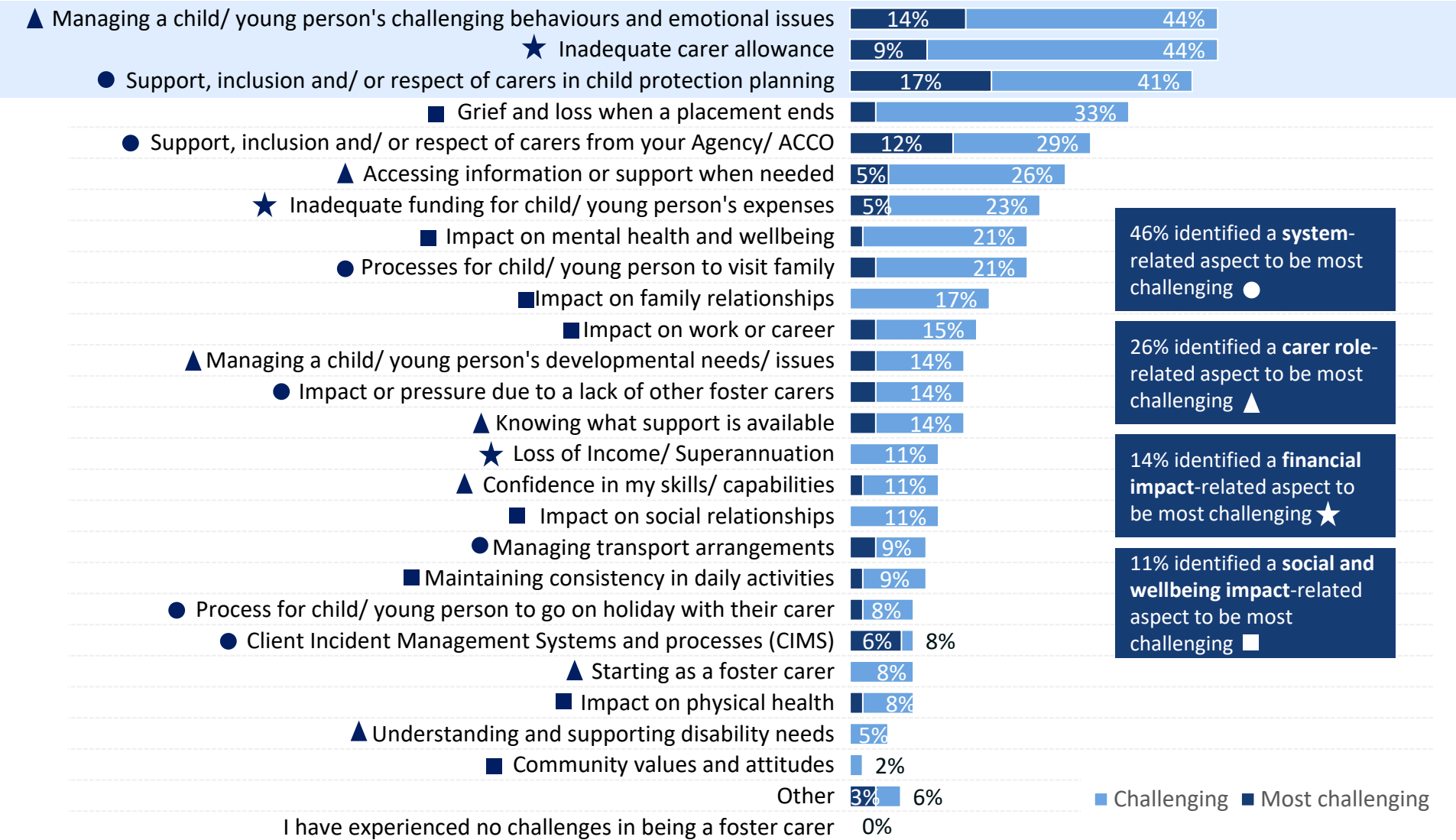
■ Challenging

■ Most challenging

Q14. Overall, what have you found to be most challenging about being a foster carer? If you are not currently a foster carer, please think about your previous experiences. Select up to 5 responses. Base: All current carers in 2026 (n=489), current carers who identify as LGBTQIA+ (n=45) and current carers who do not identify as LGBTQIA+ (n=399), current carers with at least one child with physical/ intellectual disability (n=182) and foster carers of children without a disability (n=130). Q15. Of these, which is the most challenging? Base: All current carers who answered Q14 in 2026 (n=478).

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

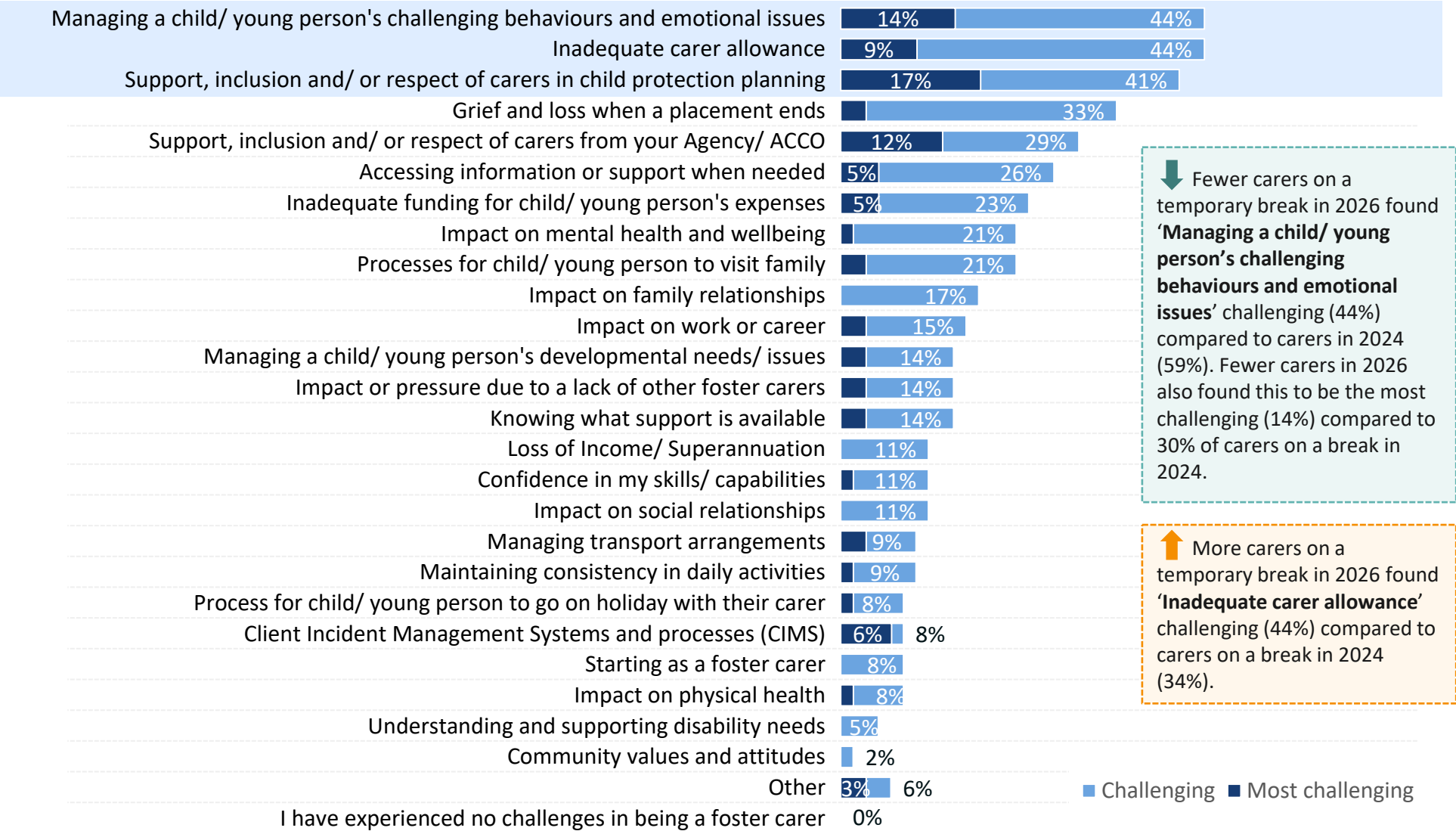
Most challenging aspects of being a foster carer (Carers on a temporary break)



Q14. Overall, what have you found to be most challenging about being a foster carer? If you are not currently a foster carer, please think about your previous experiences. Select up to 5 responses. Base: All carers on a temporary break in 2026 (n=66). Q15. Of these, which is the most challenging? Base: All carers on a temporary break who answered Q14 and Q15 in 2026 (n=65).

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

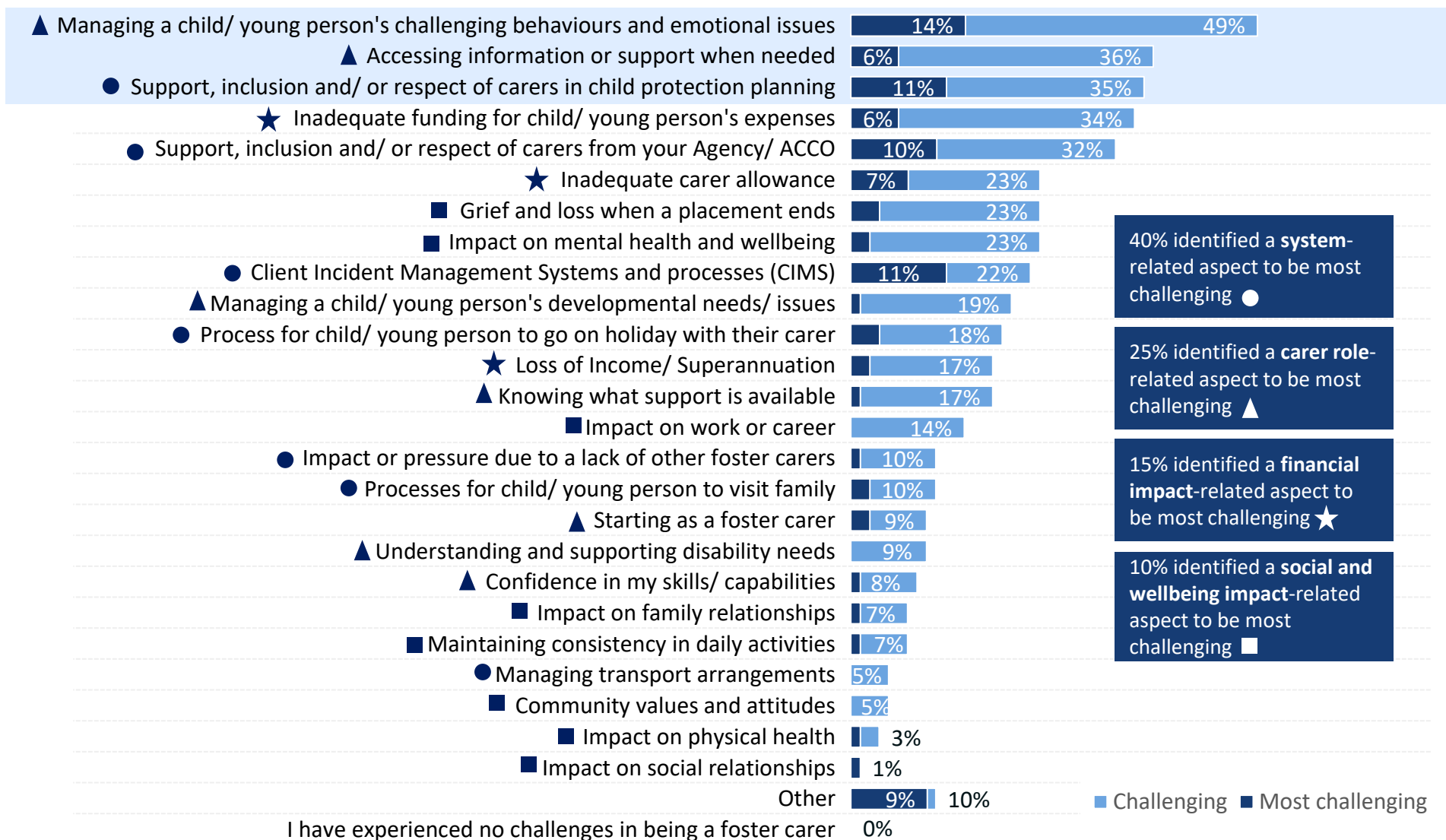
Most challenging aspects of being a foster carer (Carers on a temporary break)



Q14. Overall, what have you found to be most challenging about being a foster carer? If you are not currently a foster carer, please think about your previous experiences. Select up to 5 responses. Base: All carers on a temporary break (2026: n=66, 2024: n=70). Q15. Of these, which is the most challenging? Base: All carers on a temporary break who answered Q14 and Q15 (2026: n=65, 2024: n=69).

Challenges of being a foster carer – Former carers

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



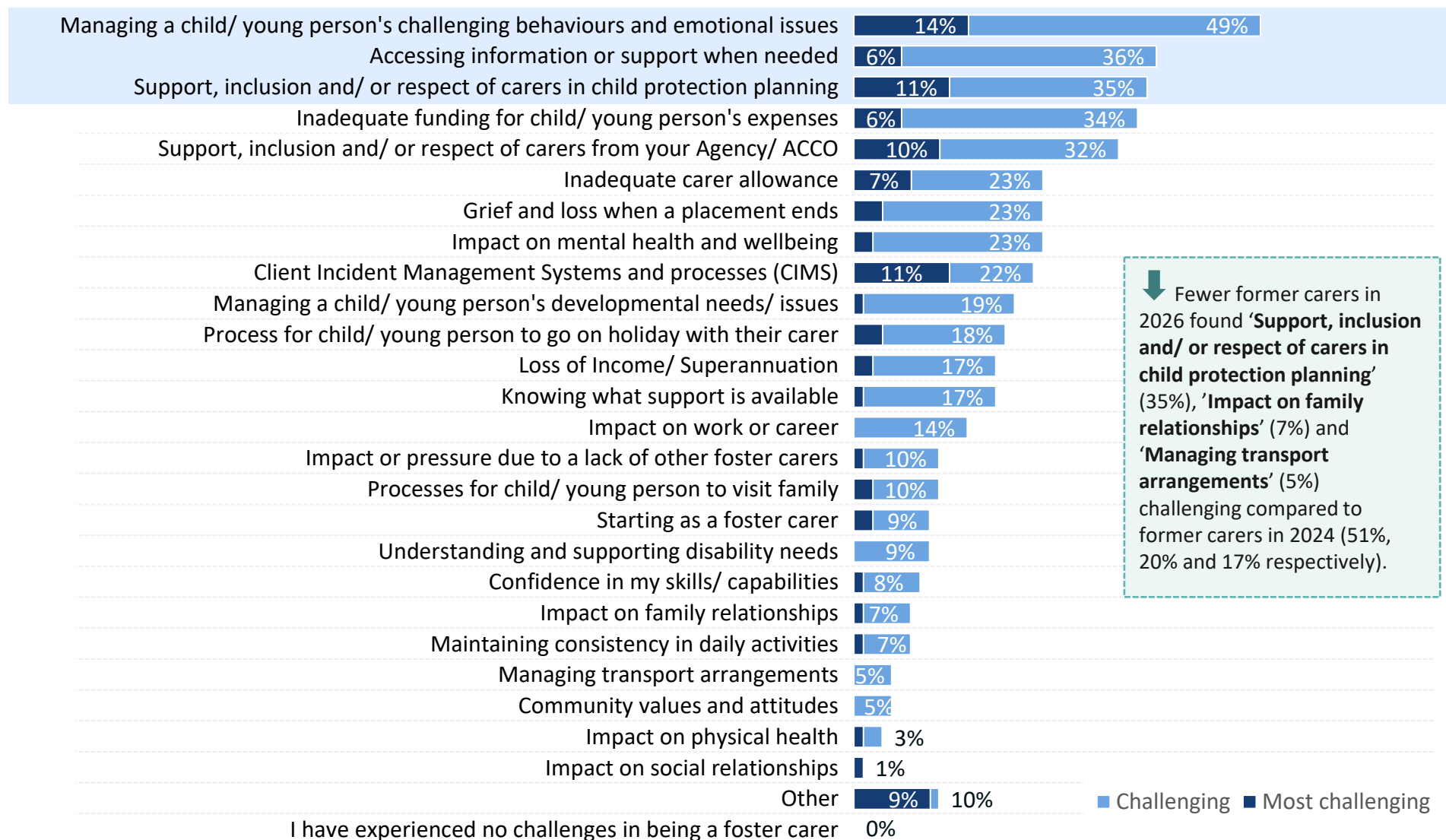
Q14. Overall, what have you found to be most challenging about being a foster carer? If you are not currently a foster carer, please think about your previous experiences. Select up to 5 responses. Base: Former carers in 2026 (n=88).

Q15. Of these, which is the most challenging? Base: Former carers who answered Q14 and Q15 in 2026 (n=87).

COMMERCIAL-IN-CONFIDENCE | #6146 Foster Care Association Victoria Carer Survey 2026

Challenges of being a foster carer – Former carers

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



↓ Fewer former carers in 2026 found 'Support, inclusion and/ or respect of carers in child protection planning' (35%), 'Impact on family relationships' (7%) and 'Managing transport arrangements' (5%) challenging compared to former carers in 2024 (51%, 20% and 17% respectively).

Q14. Overall, what have you found to be most challenging about being a foster carer? If you are not currently a foster carer, please think about your previous experiences. Select up to 5 responses. Base: Former carers (2026: n=88, 2024: n=99). Q15. Of these, which is the most challenging? Base: Former carers who answered Q14 and Q15 in 2026 (n=87).

Wellbeing indicators

Note: Cohort comparisons shown are only indicative. They are **largely small in magnitude** and **should be interpreted with caution**.



78ip
(n=566)

personal wellbeing index score of foster carers, based on **Australian Unity Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI)*** metrics, compared to the 2025 national personal wellbeing index score of **68ip** 🦅



Slightly lower PWI scores were observed among carers who:



74ip

Rented the house they live in (n=113)



75ip

Had at least one **foster child with a physical/ intellectual disability** (n=171)



75ip

Had a household income **below \$60,000 per year** (n=144)



Slightly higher PWI scores were observed among carers who:



83ip

Were aged **65 and over** (n=89)



78ip
(n=566)

global life satisfaction index score of foster carers, based on **Australian Unity Global Life Satisfaction Index (GLS)*** metrics, compared to the 2025 national global life satisfaction index score of **69ip** 🦅



Slightly lower GLS scores were observed among carers who:



75ip

Had at least one **foster child with a physical/ intellectual disability** (n=171)



75ip

Rented the house they live in (n=113)

Carers with a household income **below \$60,000 per year** had a similar GLS score to carers overall (77ip) (n=144)



Slightly higher GLS scores were observed among carers who:



85ip

Were aged **65 and over** (n=89)

*The Personal Wellbeing Index score is the calculated average of responses to questions covering the seven components of the Australian Unity Personal Wellbeing Index: health, relationships, standard of living, community connectedness, personal safety, achieving in life, and future security. The resulting score ranges from 0 to 100 index points.

**The Global Life Satisfaction Index score is the calculated average of respondents' ratings on their life as a whole. The resulting score ranges from 0 to 100 index points.

Base: All respondents, current carers with at least one child with physical/ intellectual disability and carers aged 65 and over in 2026 (base sizes shown above).

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).



Communications and marketing research



Client and stakeholder research



Employee research



Community sentiment research



Policy development and program management research



Program evaluations and reviews



Data analytics



Data portals and ballots



PGPA Compliance services



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research



Public health research



Disability services research



Education research



Consulting and advisory services



User-centred design

Appendix A: ABS SA4 areas

The Australian Bureau of Statistics provides several geographical classifications, including SA4, part of a hierarchy of statistical areas developed to reflect the location of people and communities. SA4 areas are designed for the output of a variety of regional data, and represent labour markets and the functional area of Australian capital cities. Most SA4s have a population of over 100,000 people.

Interactive maps that can display boundaries and other geographical overlays are available from the ABS here:

<https://maps.abs.gov.au/index.html>



SA4 areas (red boundaries) in Victoria (blue boundary)