

Victorian Foster Carer Census



November, 2016

The inaugural 2016 Foster Carer Census undertook a survey of a sample of Victorian foster care households during the week of 7th -13th November, 2016. The aim of the census was to obtain a snapshot picture of foster carers in Victoria, profiling who they are and who they care for.

The 2016 Foster Carer Census was an initiative of the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) supported by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Profiling Victoria's foster carers

Characteristics of the respondent carers

Most foster carers fall in to one of these three profiles:

Sharing care

66%

FAMILIES/COUPLES

66%

Age

36-65

Most are between 36 and 65 yrs old

Location



Live in both metro and rural areas

Employment



Most are employed

Household income



High

Family



1 in 2 (51%) with other children living at home



1 in 2 (49%) without other children living at home

Foster caring alone

35%

PREVIOUSLY MARRIED/PARTNERED

15%

Age

>50

Most are over 50 yrs old

Location



Live in both metro and rural areas

Employment



Most are unemployed

Household income



Medium to low

Family



Rarely with other children living at home (14%)

SINGLE

20%

Age

<45

Most are under 45 yrs old

Location



Live in both metro and rural areas

Employment



Most are employed

Household income



Medium to high

Family

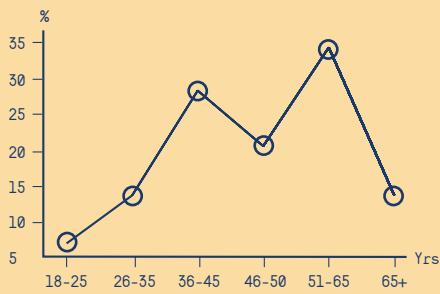


Rarely with other children living at home (16%)

Who are Victoria's foster carers?

Characteristics of the respondent carers

Age



53% of foster carers are between

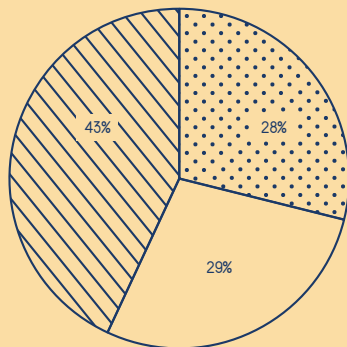
46–65 YRS

Almost no foster carers (1%) are

<25 YRS

Education


Highest level of education





- Bachelor degree / Postgraduate quals
- Technical qualification e.g. VET/TAFE
- High School

Employment

In addition to their caring role:

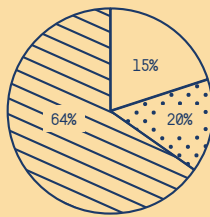
 Almost 2 in 5 (38%) carers are employed fulltime

 At least 1 in 5 (24%) are employed part-time


 Almost 2 in 5 (38%) are not in employment or are retired


Family situation


RELATIONSHIP STATUS



- Married/de Facto
- Divorced/Widowed
- Single

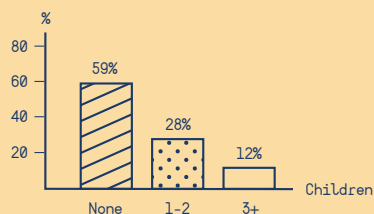
 3 in 5 foster carers share caring with a partner (66%). Most of these are in a married or de facto relationship


 Just over 1 in 3 foster carers care alone (35%). These are equally likely to be divorced/separated/widowed or single (20%)

 7% of foster carers identify as LGBTIQ

HOUSEHOLD STATUS

Own children in home



 2 in 5 foster care families have biological children also living in the care home (41%) - usually up to 2 children (28%)

Others in care

25%

also care for children on a permanent or long term care order

10%

also care for 'another' child such as a child who has exited foster care

10%

also have other care responsibilities such as caring for an elderly relative

Cultural diversity



36% 

are from a heritage other than Australian

2.5% 

identify as having an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage

7% 

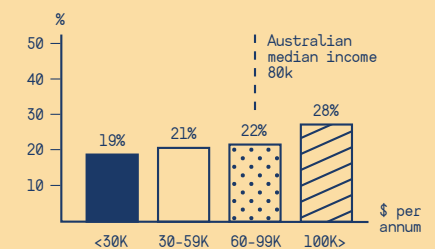
are from a Non-English speaking heritage

6% 

also speak a language other than English at home

Household income

Household income is widely varied



Technology

Foster carers use technology



99%
have a mobile phone



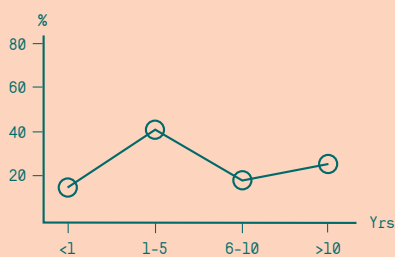
93%
have internet enabled computers in their home

What type of foster care is provided?

Characteristics of the respondent carers

Foster caring experience

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE



56% 

of foster carers have under 5 years' experience

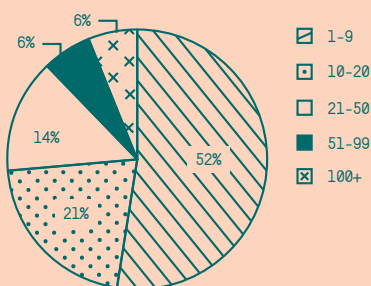
15% 

have up to 1 year's experience

26% 

have been accredited carers for over 10 years

TOTAL NO. OF CHILDREN CARED FOR



<9

Most foster carers have provided care for up to 9 foster children (52%)

10-20

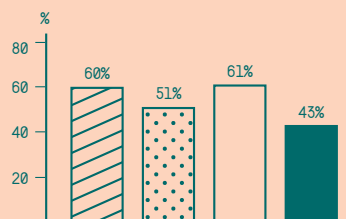
1 in 5 foster carers have provided care for 10-20 foster children (21%)





21-50

1 in 8 (14%) have cared for between 21-50 foster care children

Type of foster care provided

TYPES OF CARE

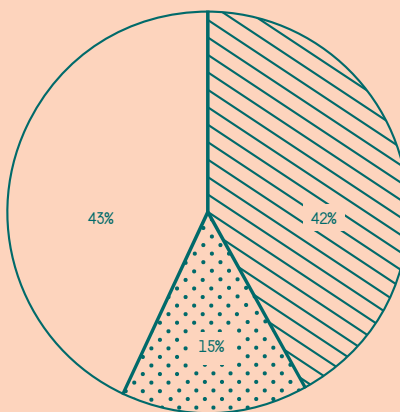





-  Long term foster care
-  Short term foster care
-  Respite Care
-  Emergency Care

78% 

Most foster carers provide all types of foster care

DURATION OF CARE



-  <1 year
-  1-2 years
-  >2 years

For most foster carers (57%), the longest period of care provided for any single foster placement was between 1 week and 2 years

43% 


of foster carers have provided continuous care of over two years for at least one of their placements


Children being cared for in Census Week

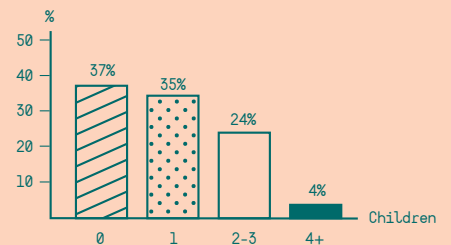
NUMBER OF CHILDREN

24% 

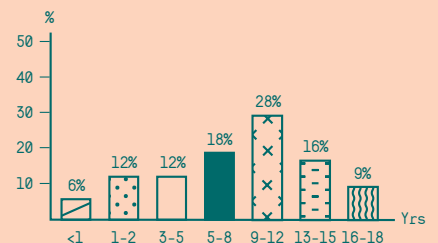
of families were caring for two or three children in foster care

 Over a third of foster families were caring for one child in foster care (35%)

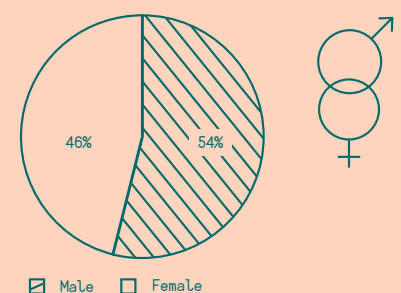
 36% of the foster care pool were not caring for a child in census week



CHARACTERISTICS



3 in 4 children in foster care in census week were under 13 years of age



25% 

of children in foster care have special needs*

* Special needs as defined for funding purposes by DHHS, this may not indicate the extent of emotional or physical needs of the children in care

What types of training support do they need?

Interest in training courses

Managing challenging behaviours	85%
The impact of trauma and therapeutic approaches to caring	80%
The child protection system	74%
Managing young people with sexually abusive behaviours	67%
Working with birth families	59%
Self-care and wellbeing	58%
Practical day to day caring for children/young people in foster care	57%
Cultural awareness training	56%
Caring for LGBTIQ young people	43%

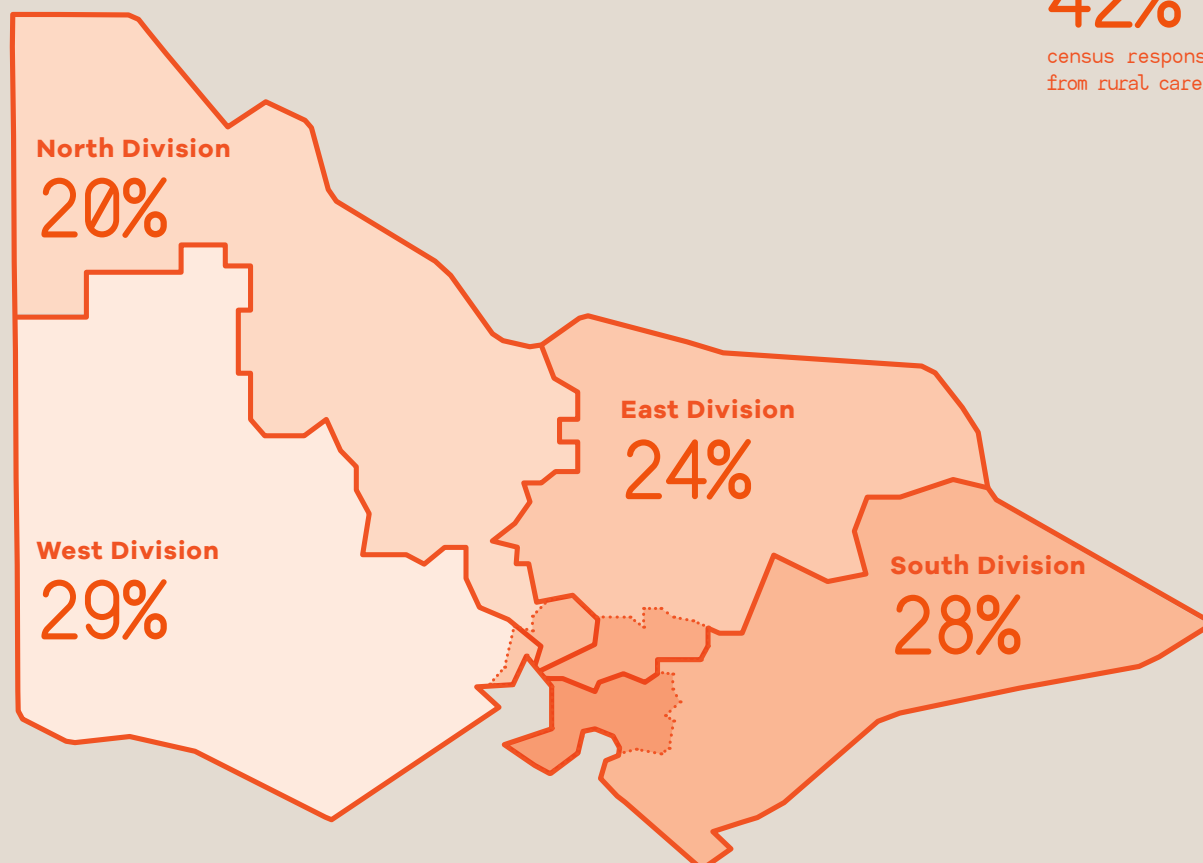
Preferences for receiving training

Face to face	86%
Fact Sheets	85%
Short videos online	83%
Online individual e-learning based courses	81%
Webinars - online group training courses	72%
Podcasts	71%
Peer Support / Mentoring	57%

Where are the respondents located?

Below are the proportions of carers who responded to the census from all four DHHS divisions.

When reviewing these and the FCAV Carer Snapshot 2016 figures, we note that this is a good representation across the state.



Rural



42%*

census responses from rural carers

Metro



58%*

census responses from metro carers

* These proportions are consistent with where FCAV information shows carers live

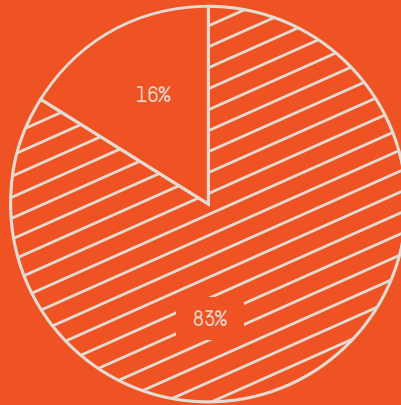
Who responded?

1346

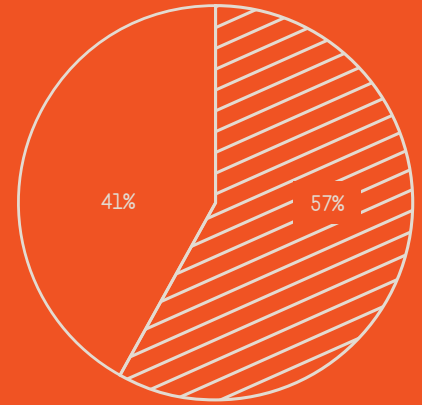
respondents of 2337 foster care households (58%)

Number of children in foster care in Census Week

1373



□ Male
▣ Female



□ Rural/Regional areas
▣ Metropolitan areas

As per FCAV annual Carer snapshot 2016 (March) fcav.org.au/images/documents/CSS2016.pdf

Who is FCAV?

The Foster Care Association of Victoria is the non-profit peak body offering information, support and advocacy to Victorian foster families. This support enables carers to better provide a positive and healing environment for children and young people in their care, and to help them reach their full potential. As the peak body, we are an independent and confidential resource for foster carers, and represent their voice through our work with government, agencies and the media.

Our work directly impacts the care provided to the thousands of Victorian children and young people in foster care, enabling carers to better provide a positive and healing environment and to help the children in their care to flourish.

Foster care has been the backbone of the Victorian response to protective intervention on behalf of children and young people at risk. Foster carers are volunteers who provide homes, care and support to children and young people who are unable to live with their birth families for a variety of reasons. All of these children have suffered traumatic events, and need a safe and nurturing place to recover and thrive.

The FCAV is recognised as:

- A source of authority within the sector driving public debate, government policy, and working with community service organisations to improve the foster care system.
- A safe zone where foster carers are listened to, and can access advocacy, support and information.
- A place where foster carers receive an independent perspective regarding the issues that affect them.

