

Carer Priorities Survey Report 2022

The FCAV conducted a survey of members to ascertain priority issues for carers in FCAV's budget submission ahead of delivery this year.

Over 105 carer respondents assisted the FCAV to prioritise advocacy and identify vital reforms for carer support.

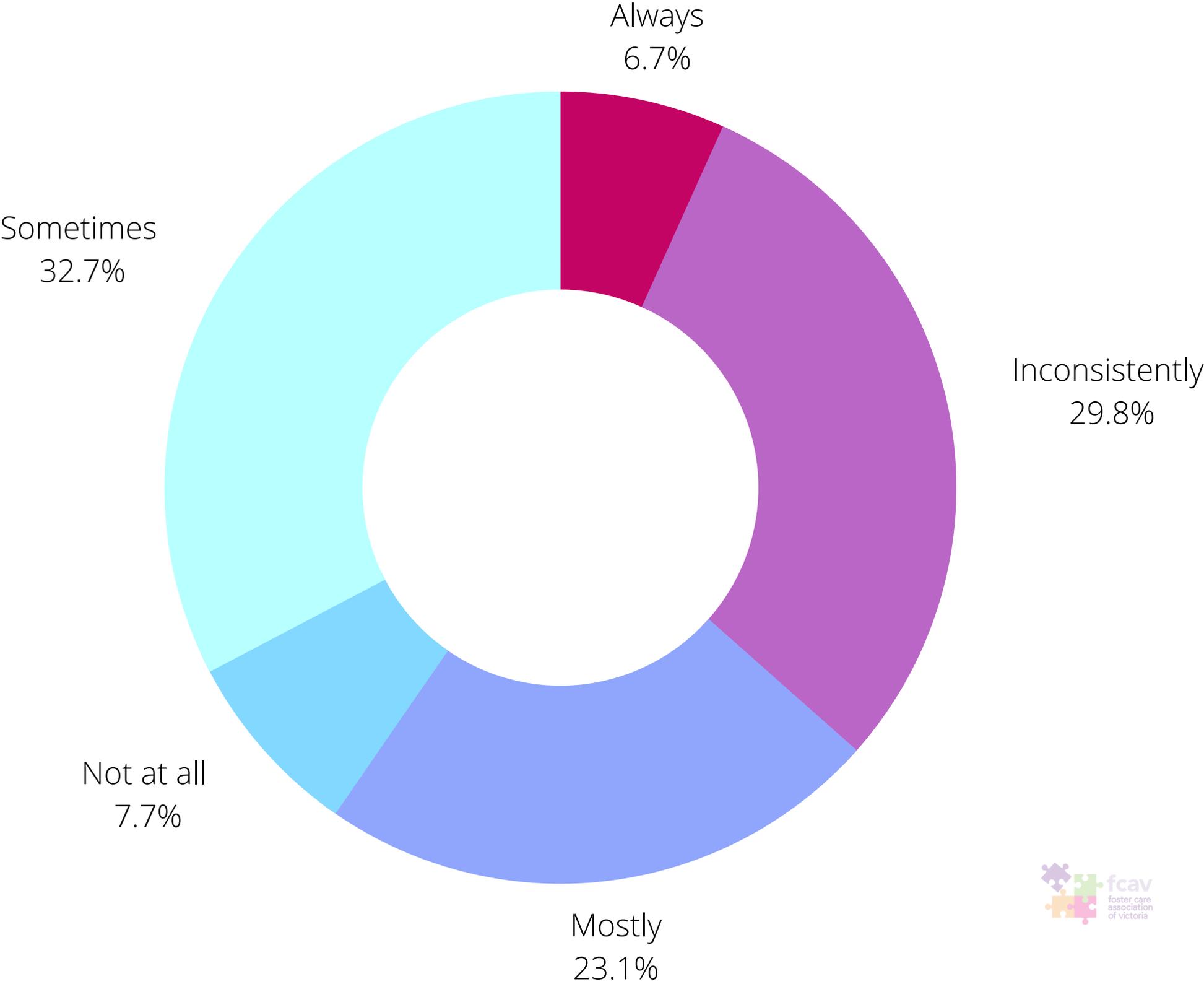
Whilst we welcome the announcement of the *Carer Help Desk* in the budget, it is disappointing that the following critical priorities were neglected; feeding carer attrition rates and instability for foster care households, including the children and young people in their care.

The FCAV now has a strong mandate ahead of the state election and the next budget round 2022-2023.

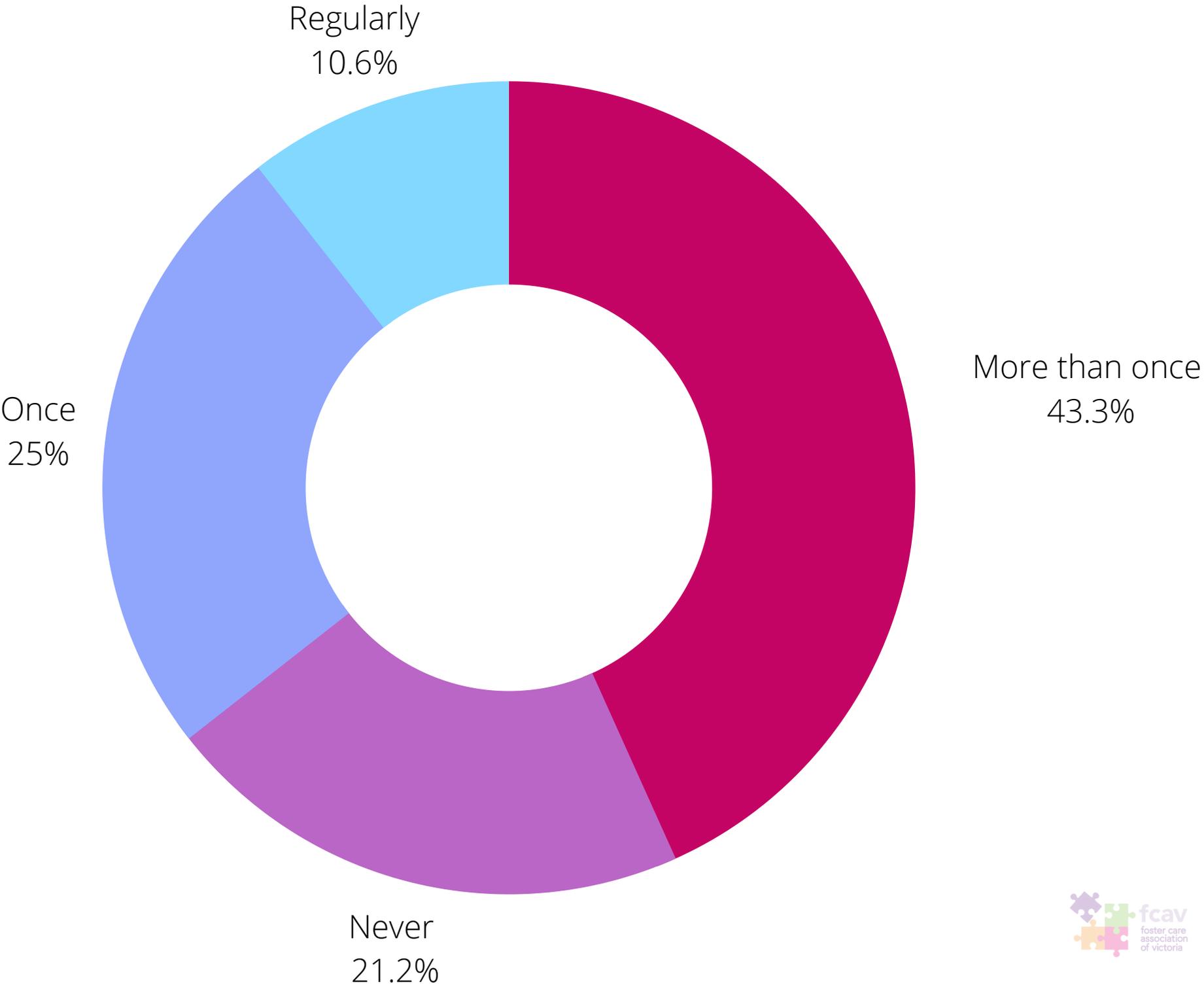
This report shows the highest priority issues for the volunteer carers of our state's children and young people in foster care.

As a Victorian Foster carer, I am satisfied with the support I receive in all aspects of my caring role.

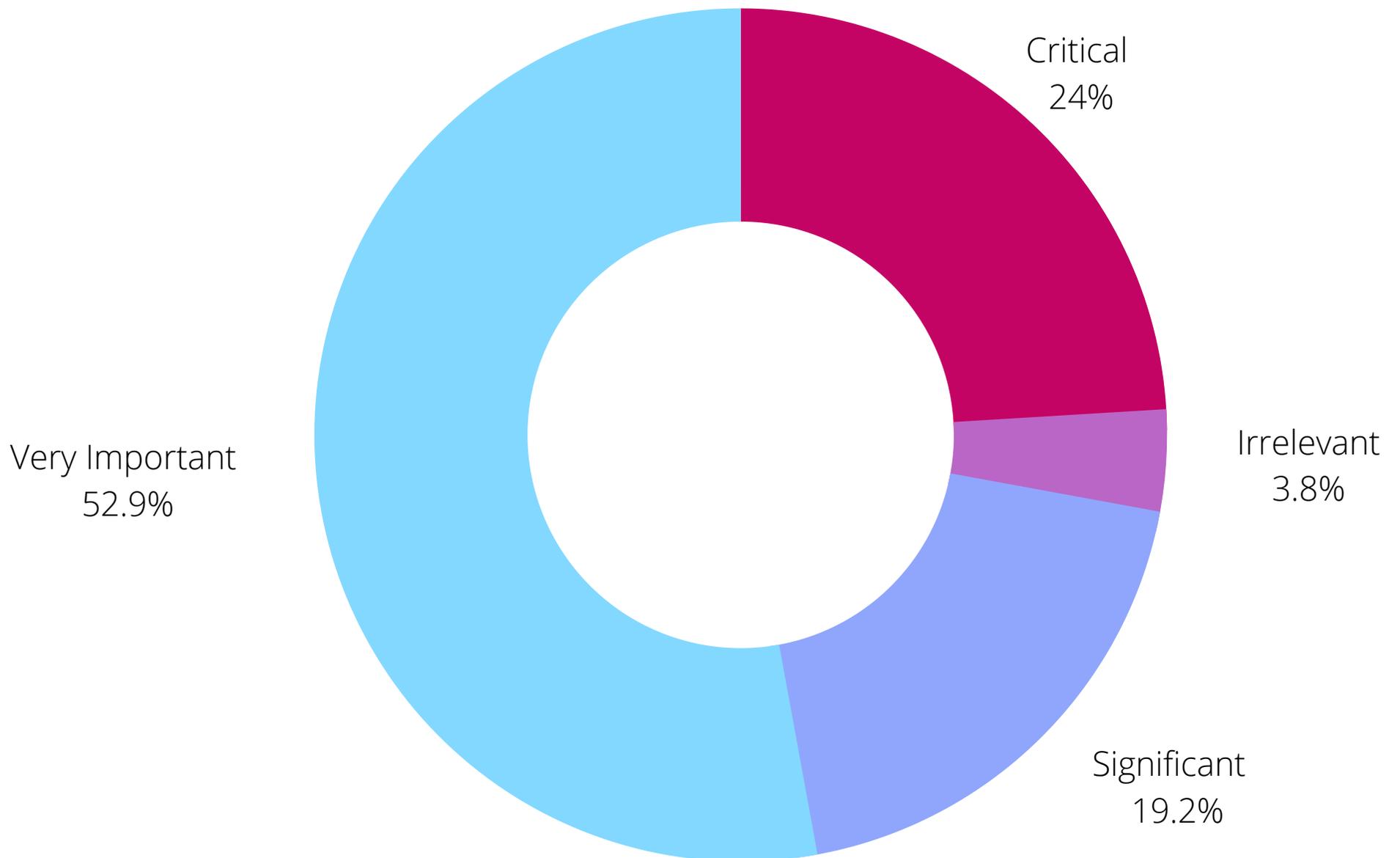
104 carer responses reflected below



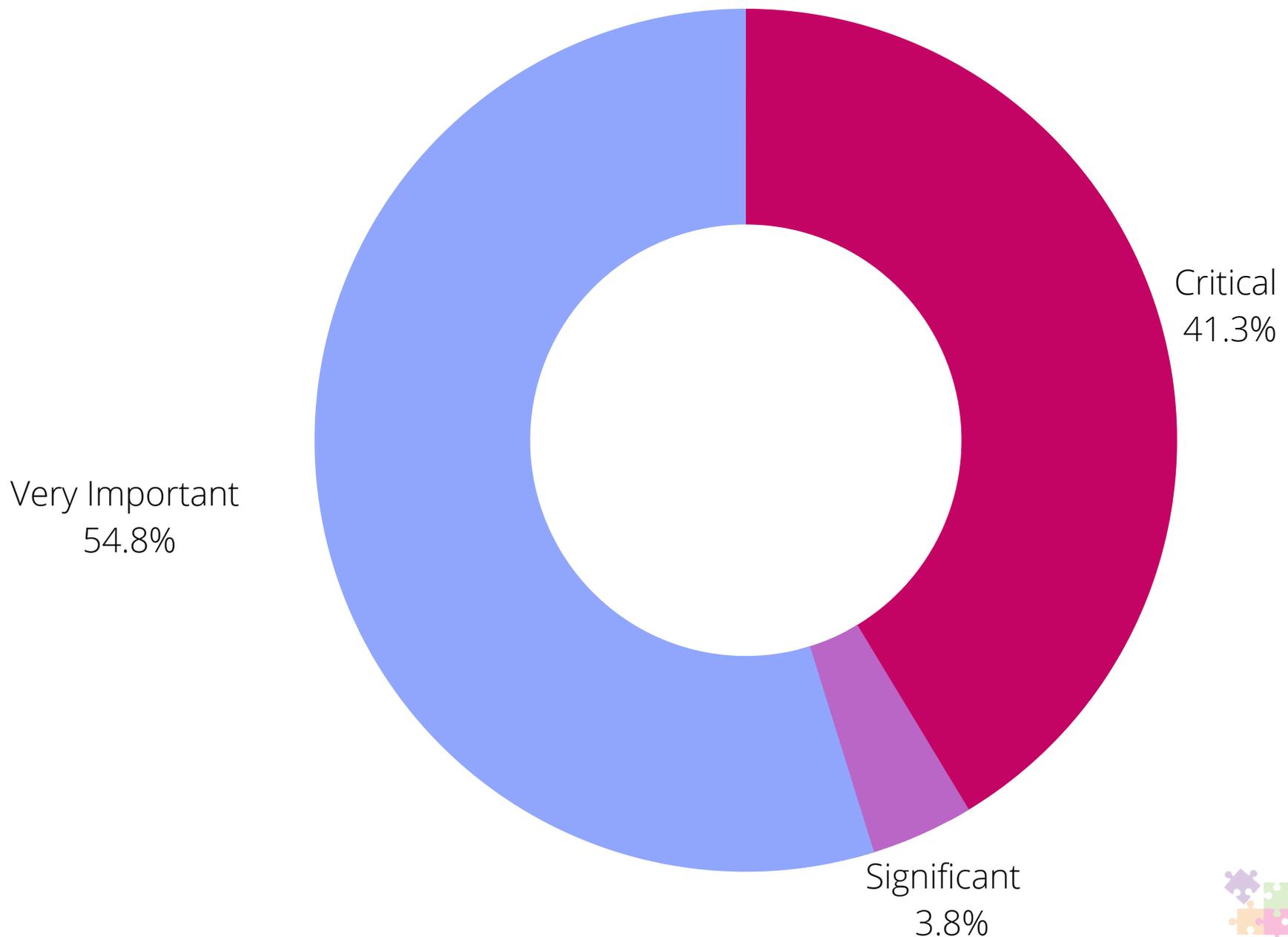
As a Victorian Foster carer, I have accessed one or more of the Foster Care Association of Victoria support services.



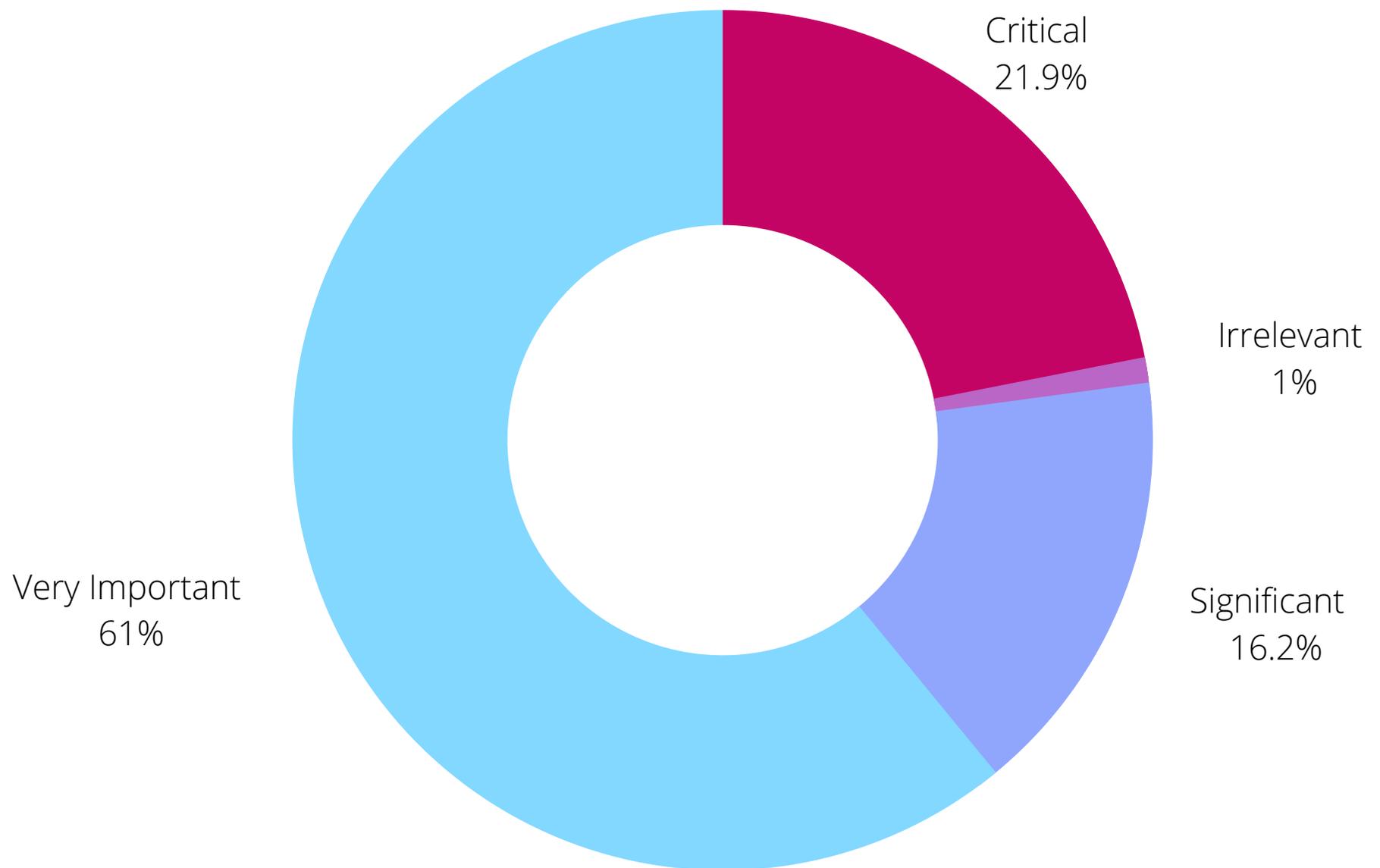
1. Increase and index the Carer Allowance to cover the true cost of care.



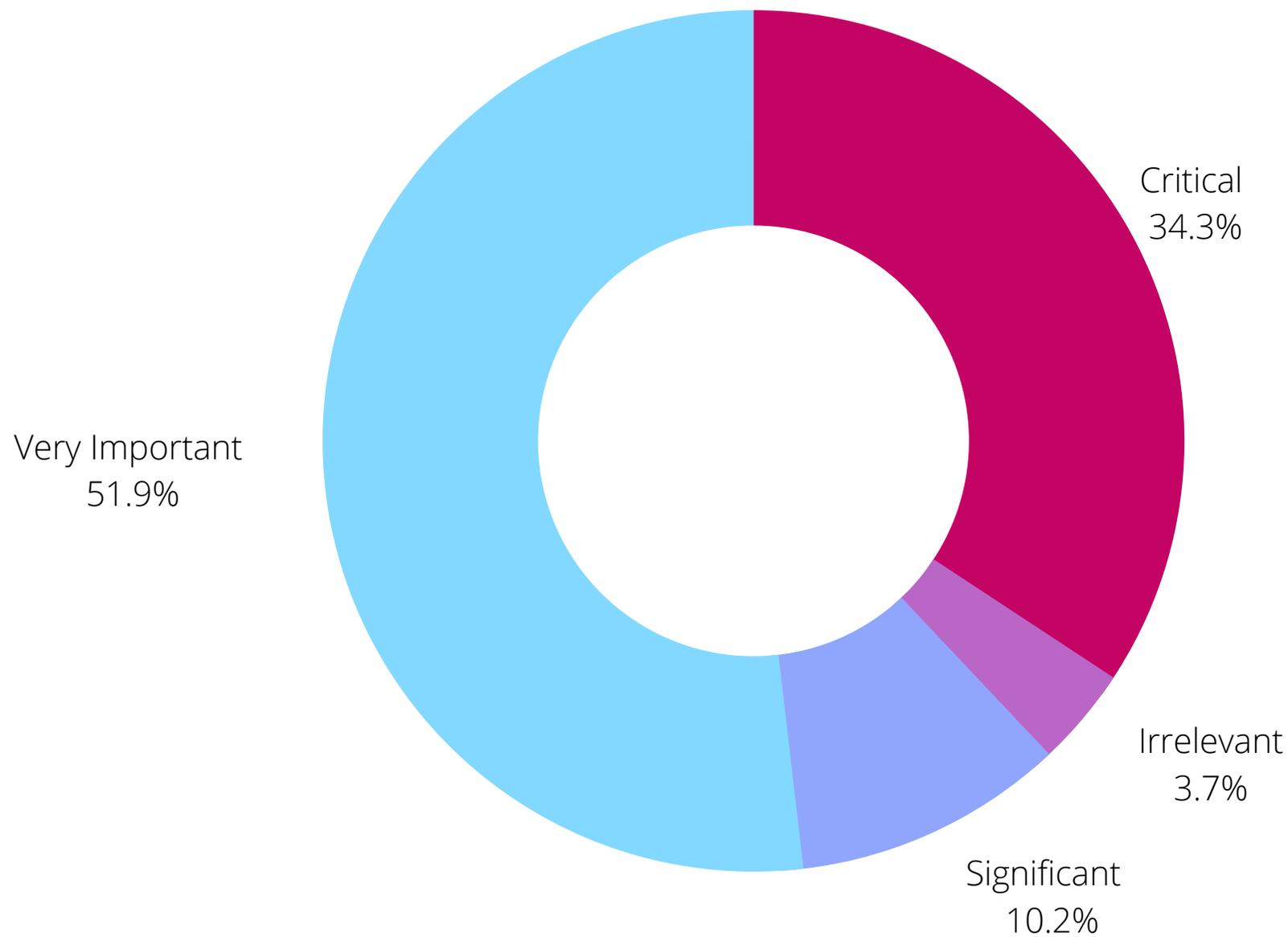
2. Fund administrative reform to ensure critical documents such as Medicare numbers/cards and birth certificates are provided at the commencement of a placement so that children can receive timely medical care.



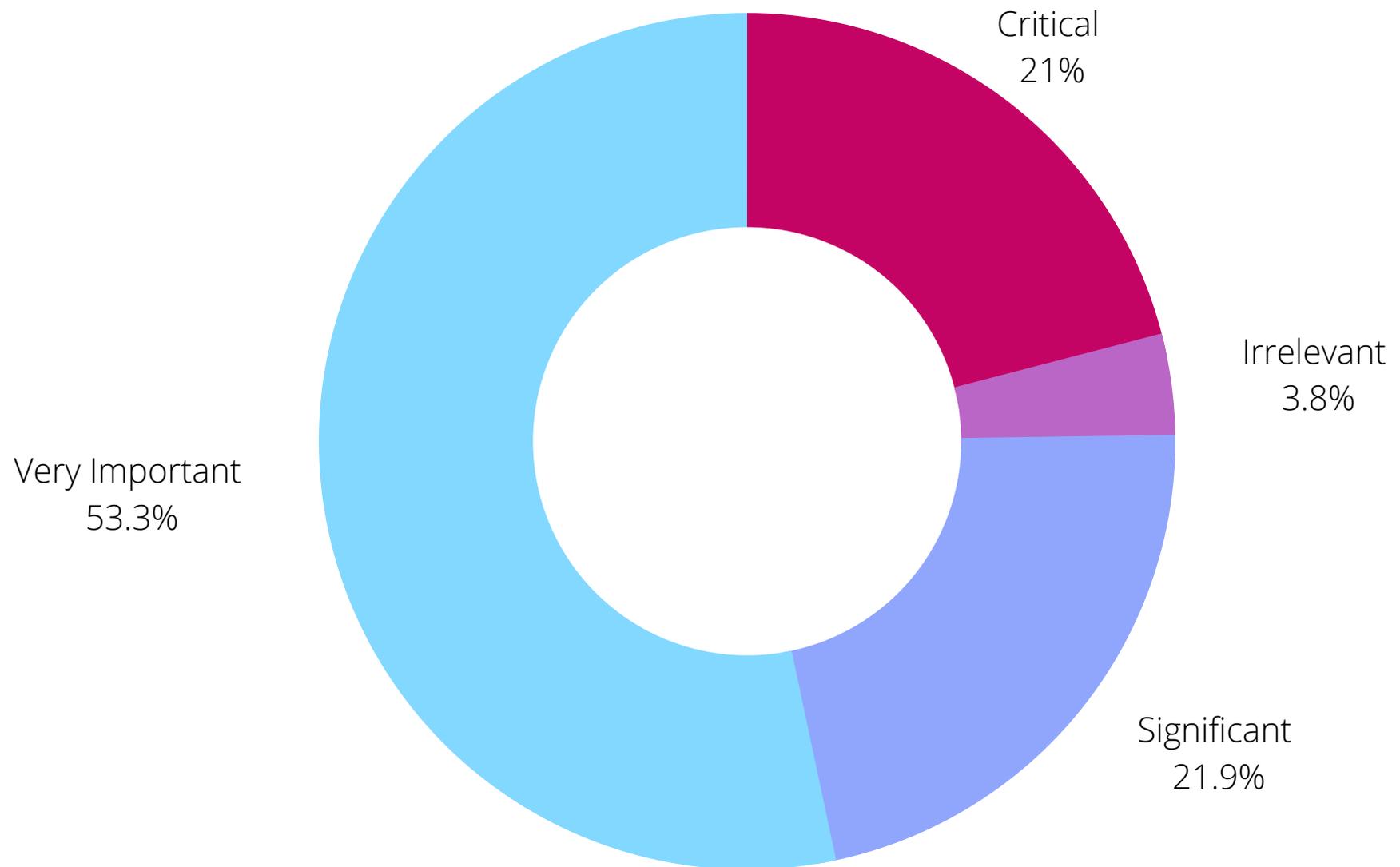
3. Provide funding and resources to implement the Carer Strategy.



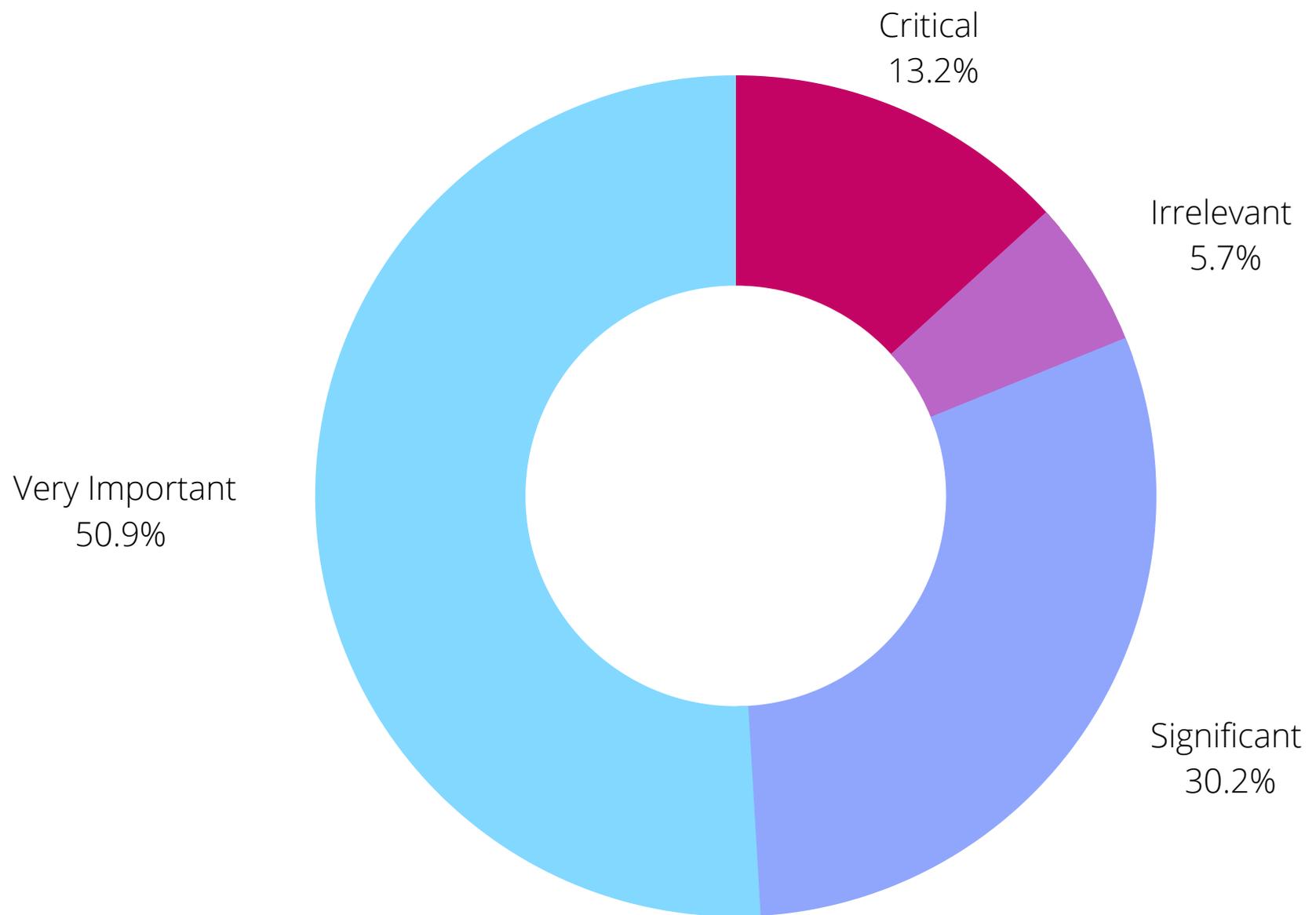
4. Fund carer reimbursements (Client Expenses) so that volunteer carers don't have to pay for access to essential education and health services for children in their care from their own savings.



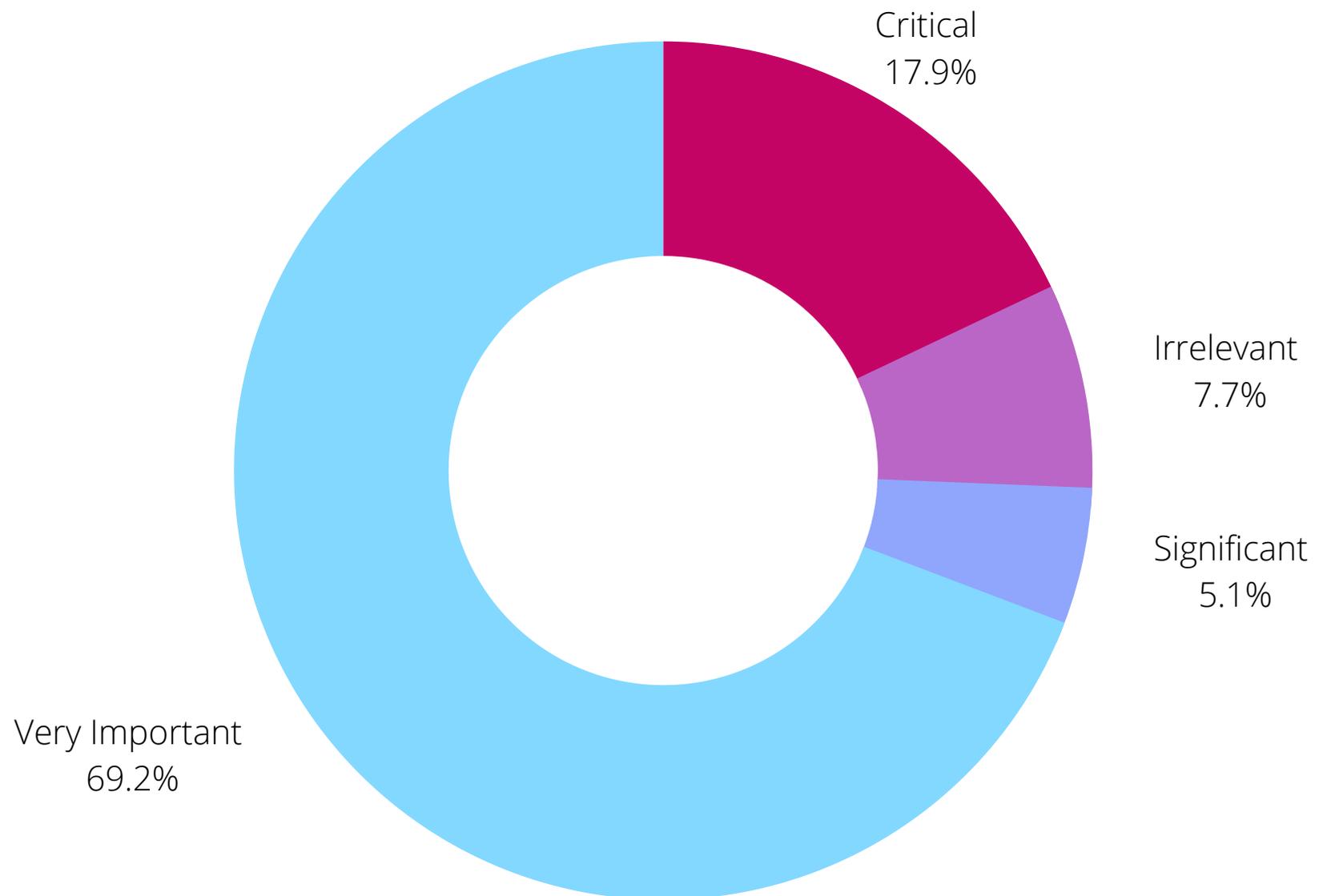
5. Provide ongoing funding for the Carer Assistance Program (CAP).



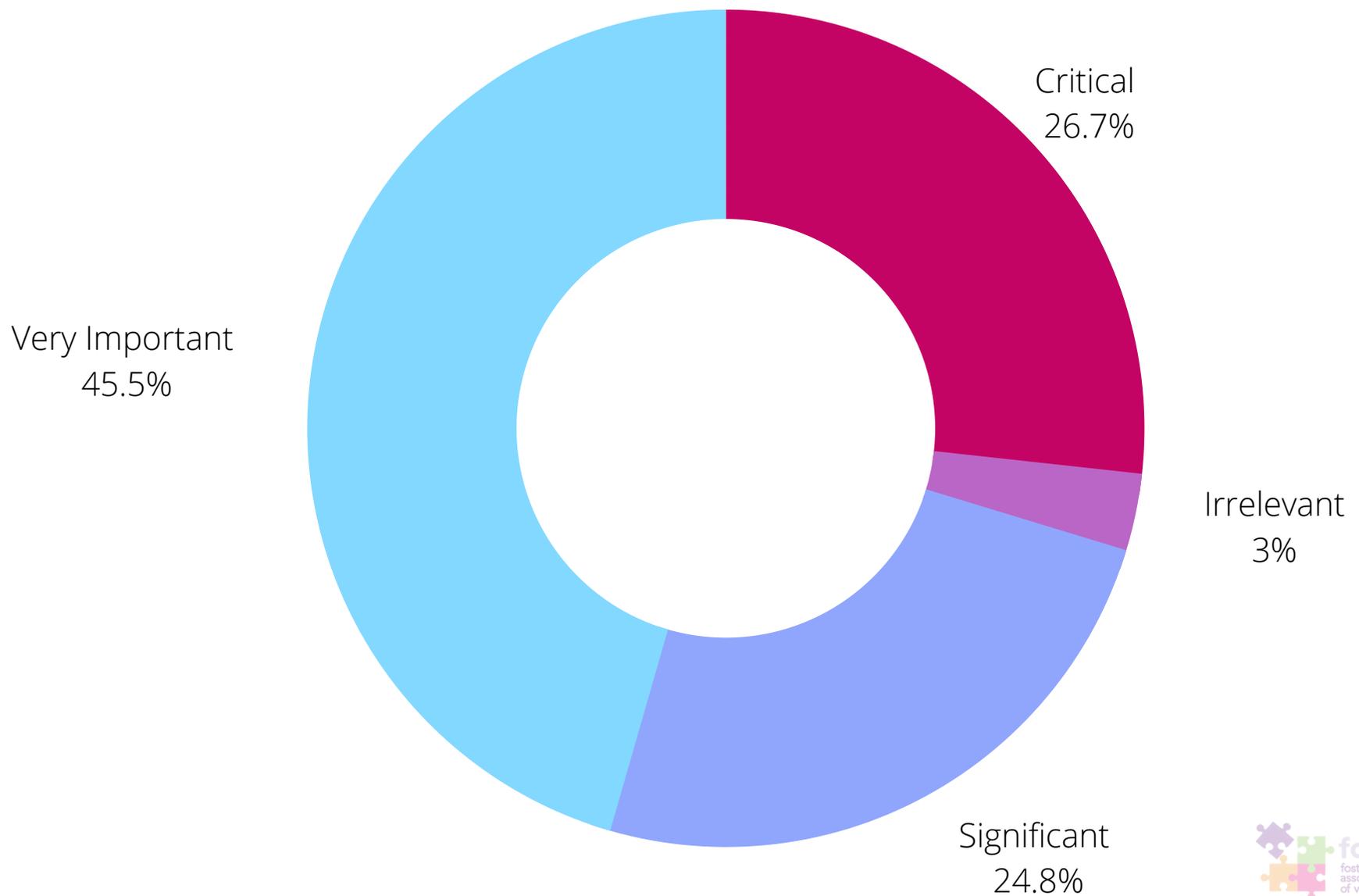
6. Fund a Carer Help Desk at the Department.



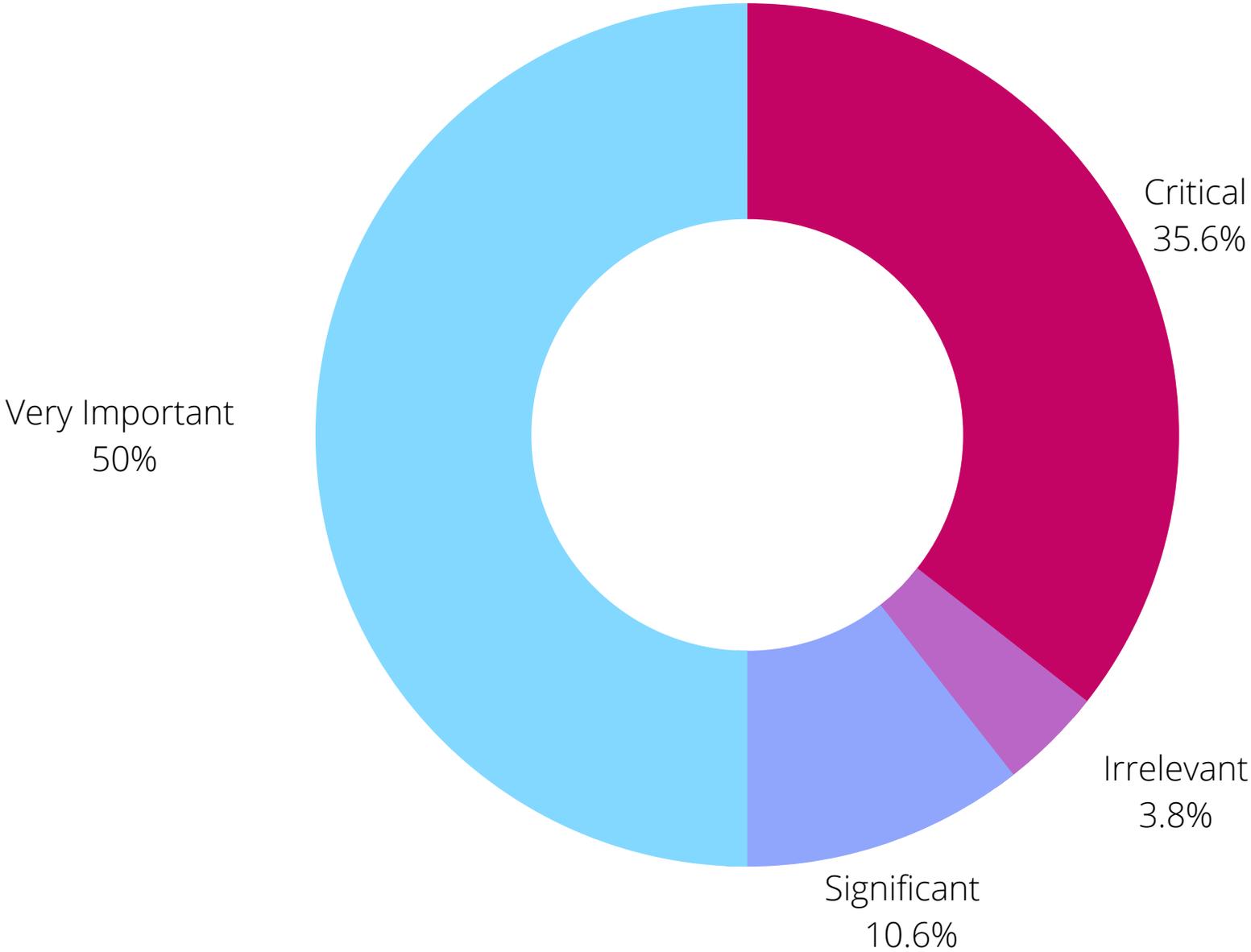
7. Resource facilitation of Carer Advisory Groups and updates to the Victorian Carer Handbook.



8. Review of the Client Incident Management process (CIMS investigations) including the establishment of an independent carer advice and support service to ensure timeliness and procedural fairness.



9. Improve the culture of respect for people who provide foster care and their role in care teams.



Carer identified issues in order of priority from the responses to the carer survey:

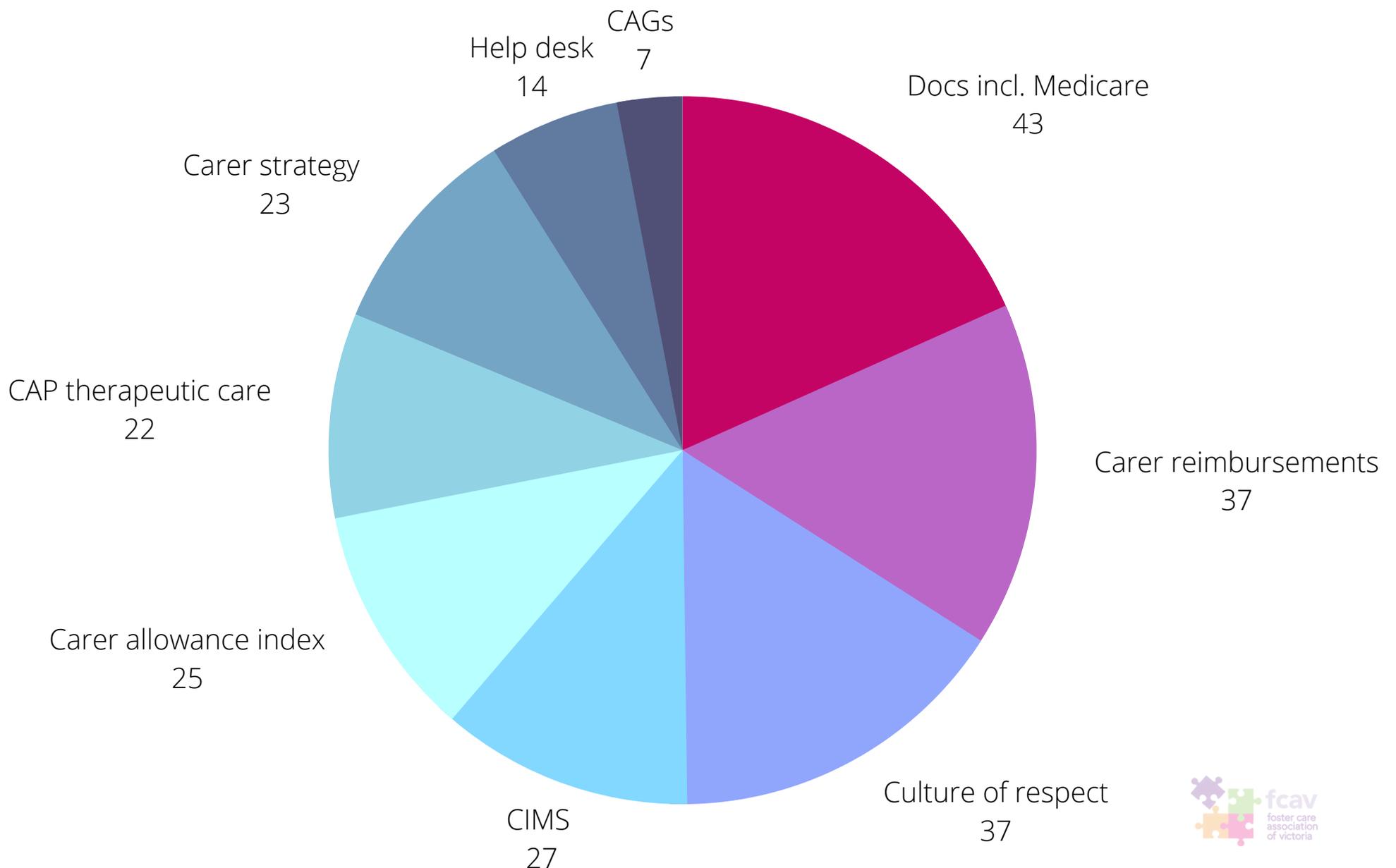
- ① Critical (I may cease foster care due to this issue) - Fund administrative reform to ensure critical documents such as Medicare numbers/cards and birth certificates are provided at the commencement of a placement so that children can receive timely medical care.
- ② Critical (I may cease foster care due to this issue) - Improve the culture of respect for people who provide foster care and their role in care teams.
- ③ Very Important - Fund carer reimbursements (Client Expenses) so that volunteer carers don't have to pay for access to essential education and health services for children in their care from their own savings.
- ④ Very Important - Review of the Client Incident Management process (CIMS investigations) including the establishment of an independent carer advice and support service to ensure timeliness and procedural fairness.
- ⑤ Very Important - Increase and index the Carer Allowance to cover the true cost of care.
- ⑥ Very Important - Provide funding and resources to implement the Carer Strategy.
- ⑦ Significant - Provide ongoing funding for the Carer Assistance Program (CAP).
- ⑧ Significant - Fund a Carer Help Desk at the Department.
- ⑨ Significant - Resource facilitation of Carer Advisory Groups and updates to the Victorian Carer Handbook.

ACHIEVED!

FCAV's advocacy priorities drawn out by critical importance responses

Carer's identified the below challenges as critical to the point that they may decide to cease providing foster care on its basis.

107 carer responses reflected below



"This is a great list to tackle that could really positively impact the lives of carers making their ability to care for children needing out of home care much easier. We can spend less energy battling with the system and more time caring for the children... we can sustain our caring energy for longer as the current system wears us out."

"As another carer highly likely to be a statistic in the Victorian carers leaving the system... it is time Dept and Agencies start treating carers with respect, communicate appropriately, listen to them, support them... (especially considering we've had 2 years of a pandemic)... maybe all the carers needed was a 3 day weekend break, or someone to do their gardening for them in the spring."

"Implement a tiered allowance for Therapeutic foster care."

Sample of long-response issues from carers

We asked carers to expand on the issues most impacting their carer role or identify other barriers within the care system. This is a de-identified sample of responses.

"Things like lack of birth certificate and Medicare are a barometer that many cases are managed ineffectively - lack of staff, lack of time, lack of expertise."

I think there is an important role to play for Carer Advisory Groups - but it needs to be a supported process... it would benefit from some outside support to make sure it is being run effectively.

"We actually stopped being carers. The support was too little, too late. They wait til we are at breaking point before anything is done."

"Carers who are strong advocates for the children in our care end up left out of vital meetings. We are presented in a biased light to stakeholders who then deal with us accordingly... makes it very difficult when you have to try to break down barriers & get the focus back onto the children's needs."

"When my child has contact with siblings it ends up costing me due to having to drive for hours and I have to pay for everything. Each contact is at least \$150 out of my pocket ... they don't help much at all."