

A Fairer Future for Grandchildren: A research project informing change and understanding

Insights to Action

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Introduction

- History of the project
- A project in three parts – survey, camps, policy and service analysis
- *"A Fairer Future for Grandchildren"*

Service and Policy Analysis

Dr Mark Liddiard, Dr Barbara Blundell, Dr Tina Fernandes, Curtin University

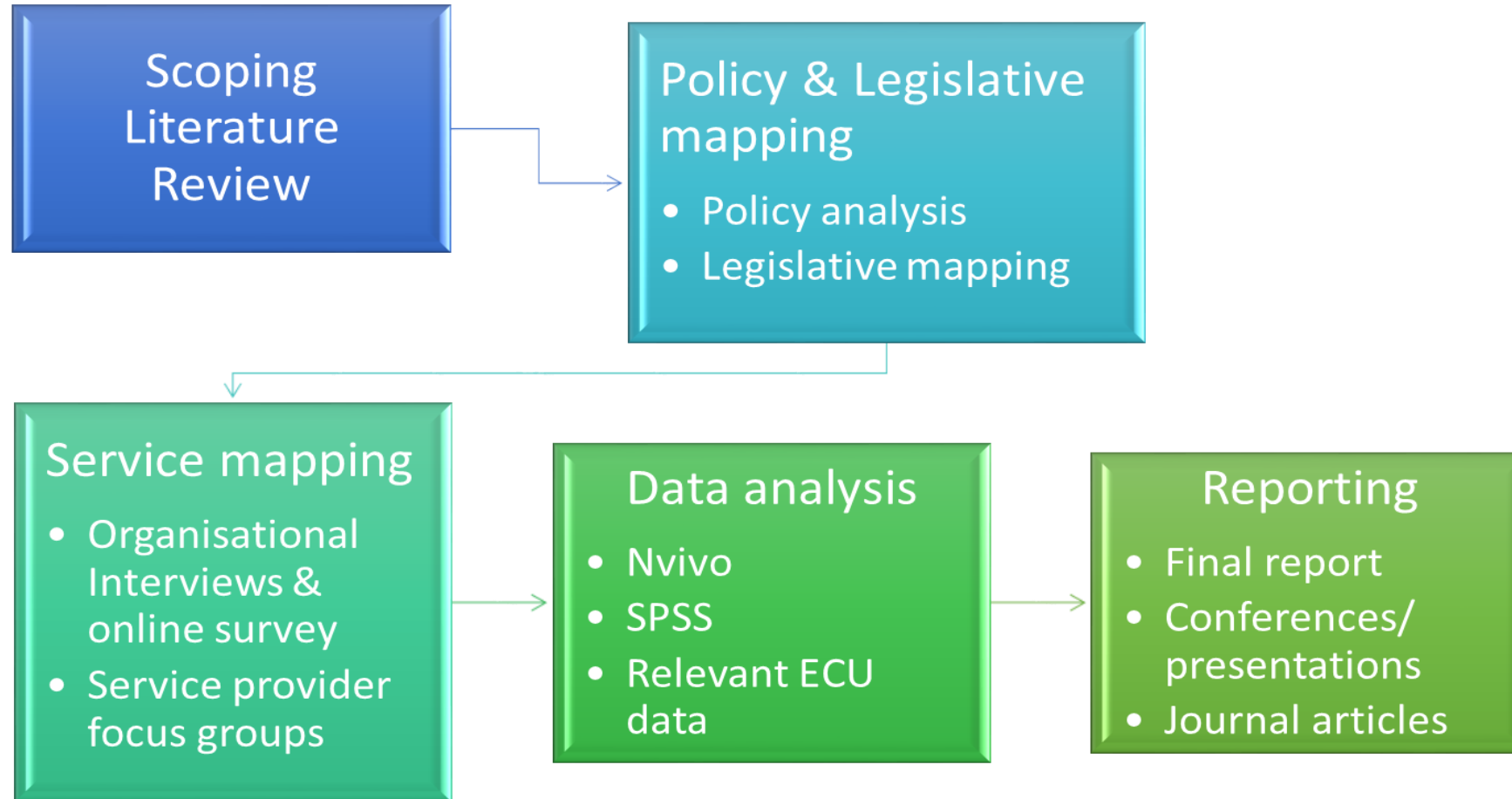


Social policy and service provision - gaps, barriers and enablers

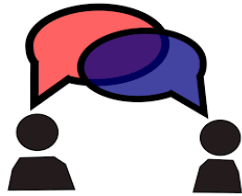
Objectives:

- To examine the policy context and specific service delivery framework for Grandcarers in WA and nationally.
- To map current government, non-government and private services and supports for grandparent carers in WA in order to identify accessibility, gaps and duplications in this area.
- To provide recommendations about improvements to service availability, accessibility and delivery, to facilitate improvements to relevant policy frameworks.

Methodology



Data Collection



24 interviews with 29 representatives from identified key stakeholder organisations

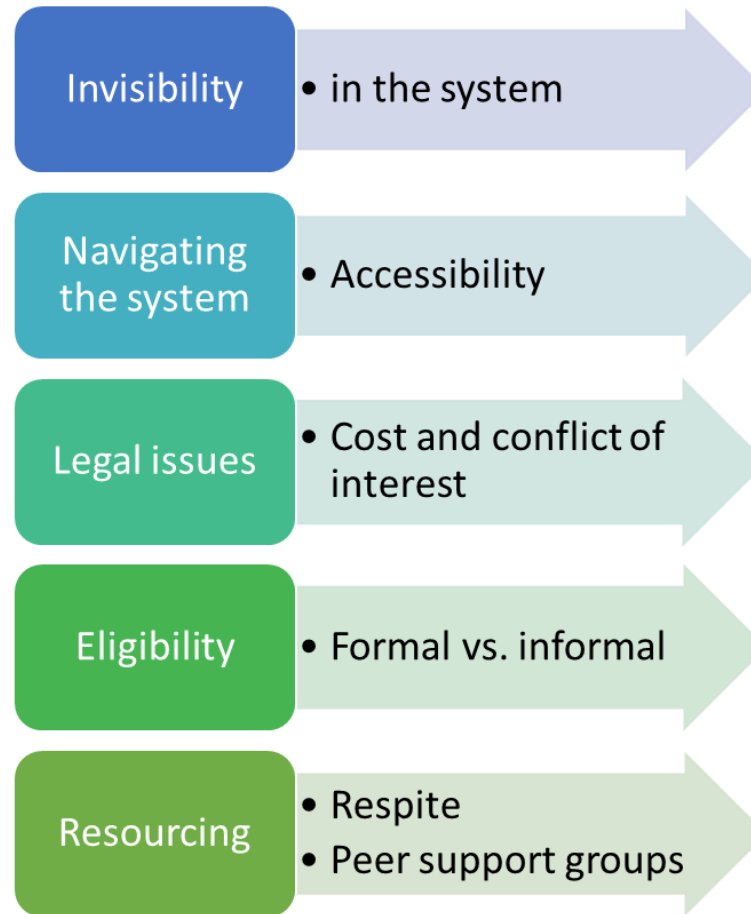


9 focus groups with 40 frontline staff working with Grandcarers; 4 in Perth metro and 5 in regional Western Australia, including Bunbury, Broome, Kalgoorlie, Albany and Geraldton.



37 organisations from 9 different service categories participated, including: health and wellbeing (28%), family support and information (32%), Aboriginal support-focussed (12%), disability support-focussed (8%), legal matters (7%), financial support and information (5%), social services and support (3%), housing and accommodation (3%), crisis support (2%).

Gaps and issues for grandparent carers



Implications for service provision

Hidden nature of
Grandcaring

Diverse nature of
Grandcarer population

Inequities between 'formal'
and 'informal' status

Inequities with foster carers

Complex service system
hindering support and
responses

Importance of informal
supports

Grandparent Carers

Dr David Coall, Professor Ruth Marquis, Dr
Francesca Robertson, Liz Wenden, Dr Shantha
Karthigesu & Dr Julie Dare - Edith Cowan University

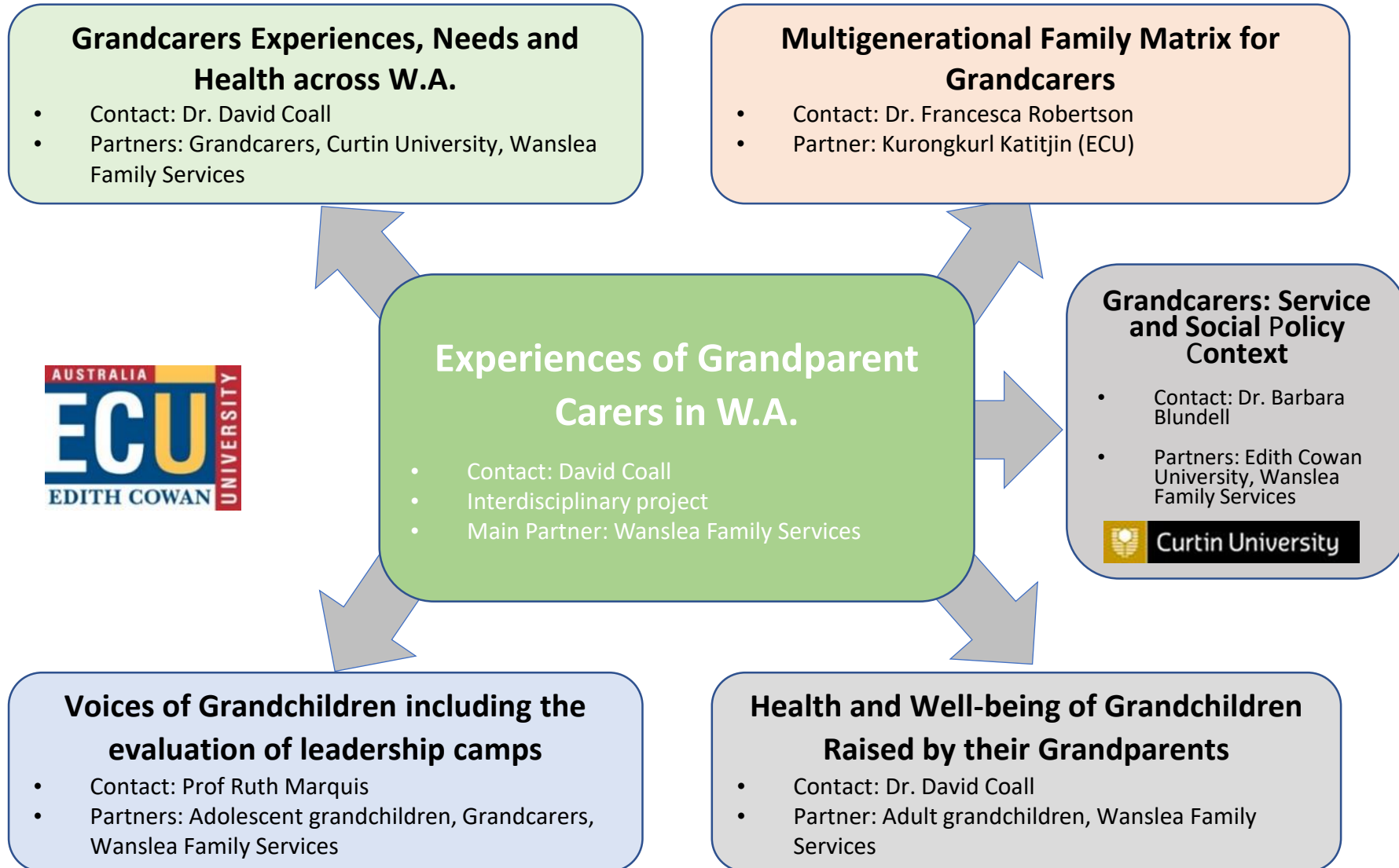


Industry driven research

- Research aim:
 - To gather the largest body of data on the needs of grandparents who are raising their own grandchildren in WA
- Industry driven research:
 - Stakeholders at all levels (Grandcarers to Government) have overseen and guided this research
 - Creating the capacity to generate the evidence that will help grandparent carers now and into the future by informing social policy, and enhancing services and resource availability



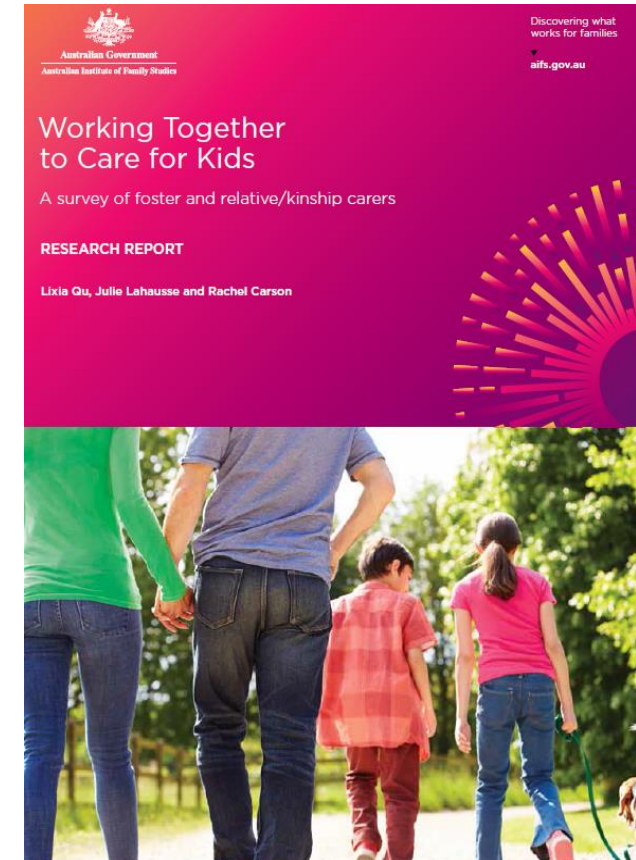
Overview



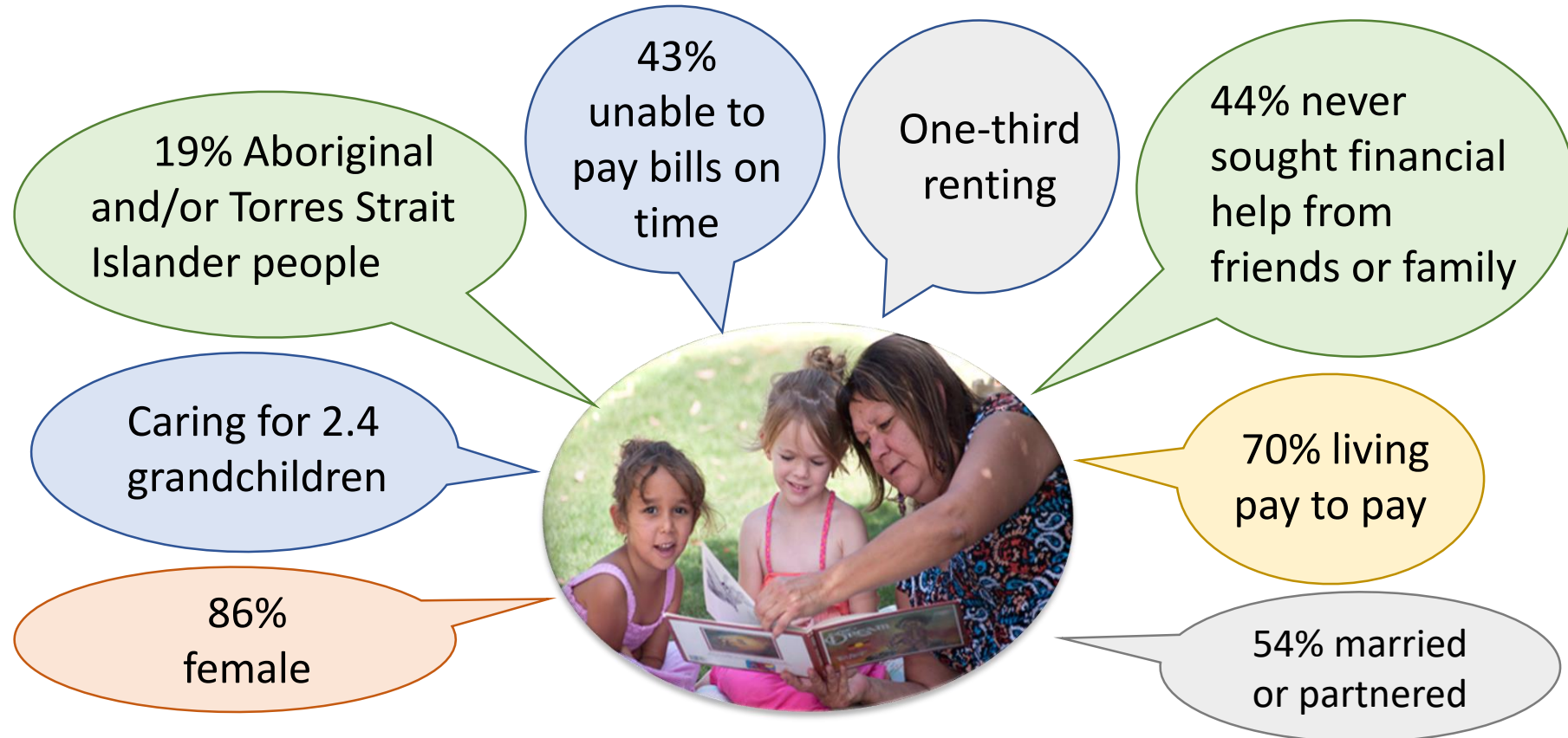
Why Western Australia?

Table 2.1: Summary of sample used for the main study

Strata	Final achieved interviews <i>n</i> (%)
NSW NGO*	411 (18.7)
NSW Kinship	384 (17.4)
NSW Foster	236 (10.7)
NSW total	1,031 (46.8)
Vic. Kinship	266 (12.1)
Vic. Foster	154 (7.0)
Vic. total	420 (19.1)
Qld Kinship	128 (5.8)
Qld Foster	235 (10.7)
Qld total	363 (16.5)
SA Kinship	76 (3.4)
SA Foster	65 (3.0)
SA total	141 (6.4)
WA Kinship	102 (4.6)
WA Foster	73 (3.3)
WA total	175 (7.9)
Tas. Kinship	20 (0.9)
Tas. Foster	20 (0.9)

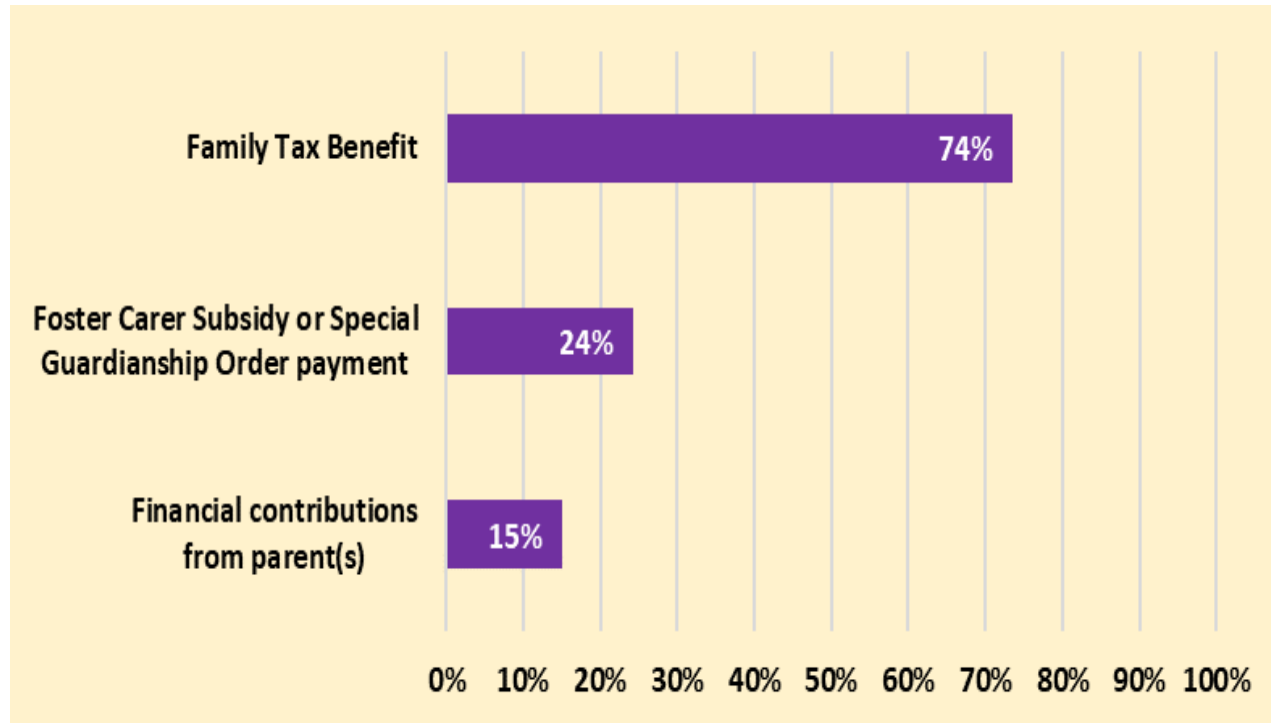


Our Grandcarers (n = 584)



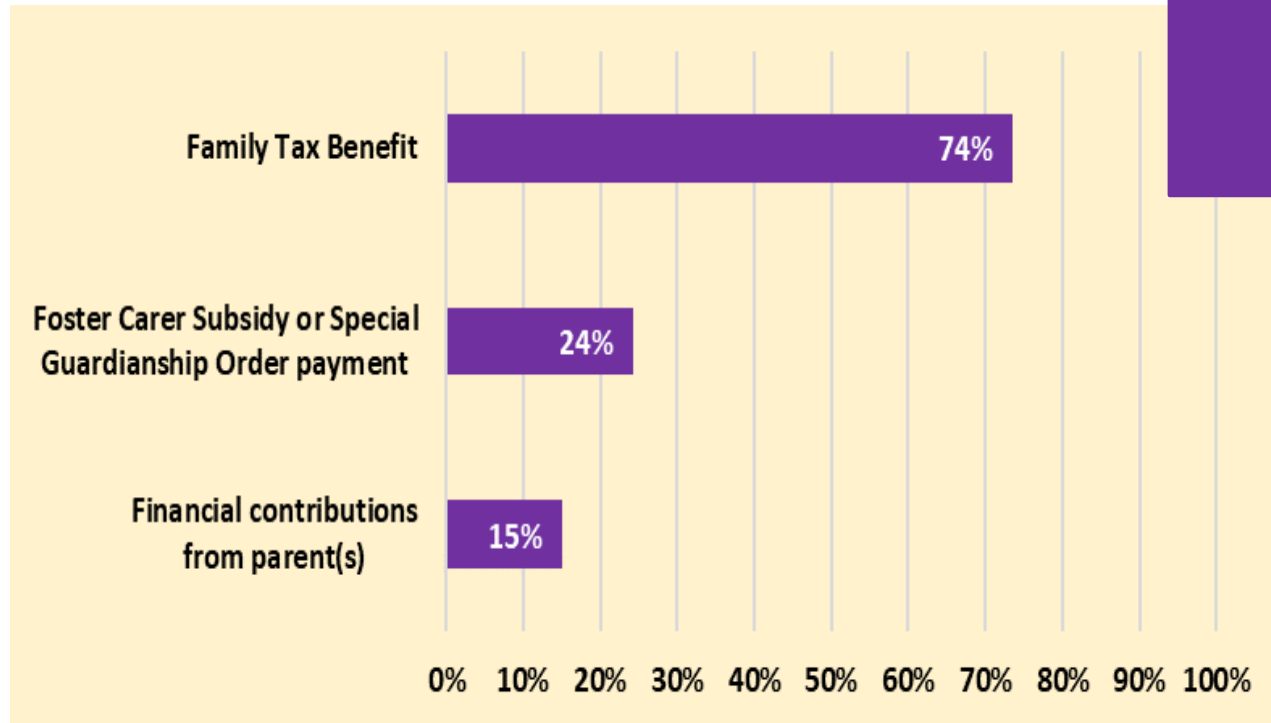
Who are we talking about?

- Financial assistance



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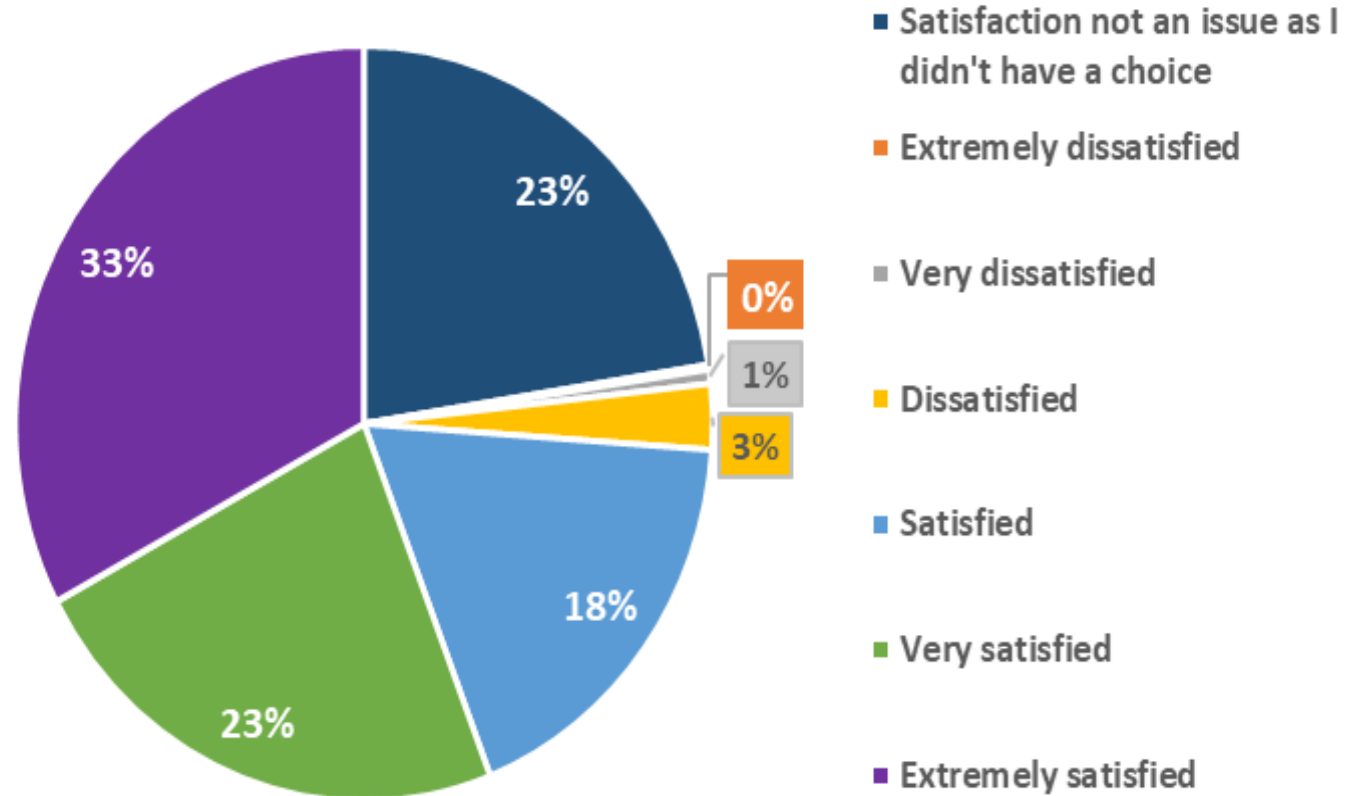
- Financial assistance



Grandcarers who receive **No money:**
98 out of 510
= 19%

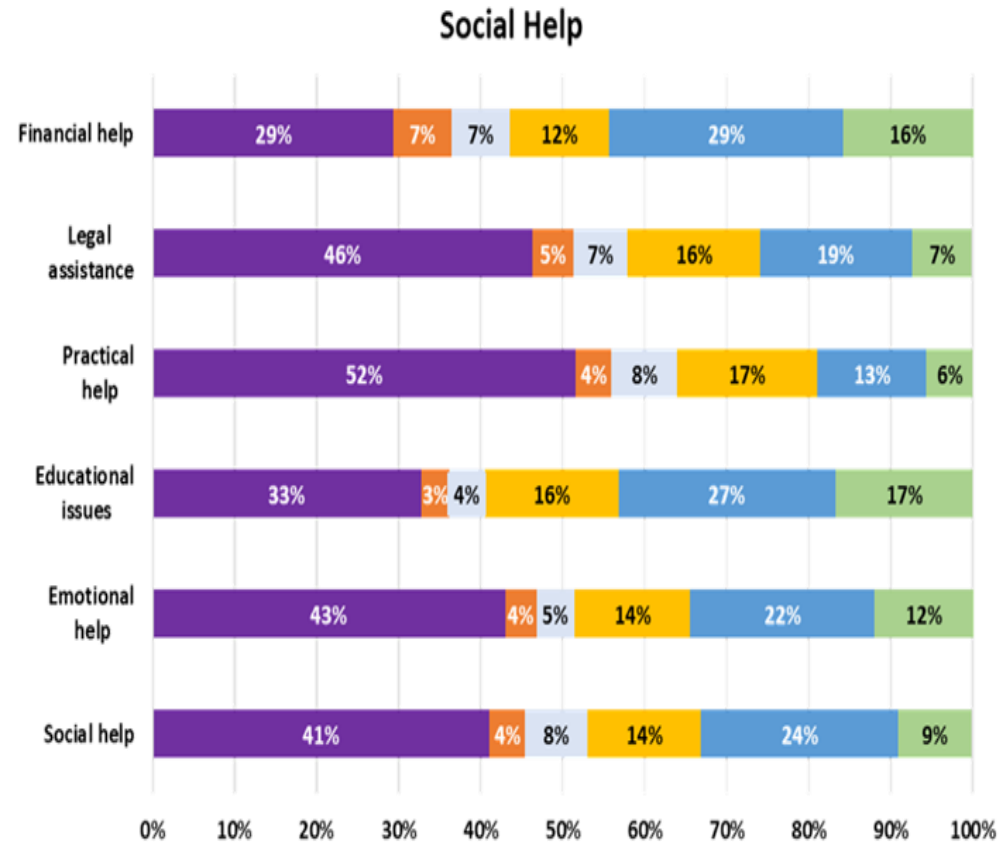
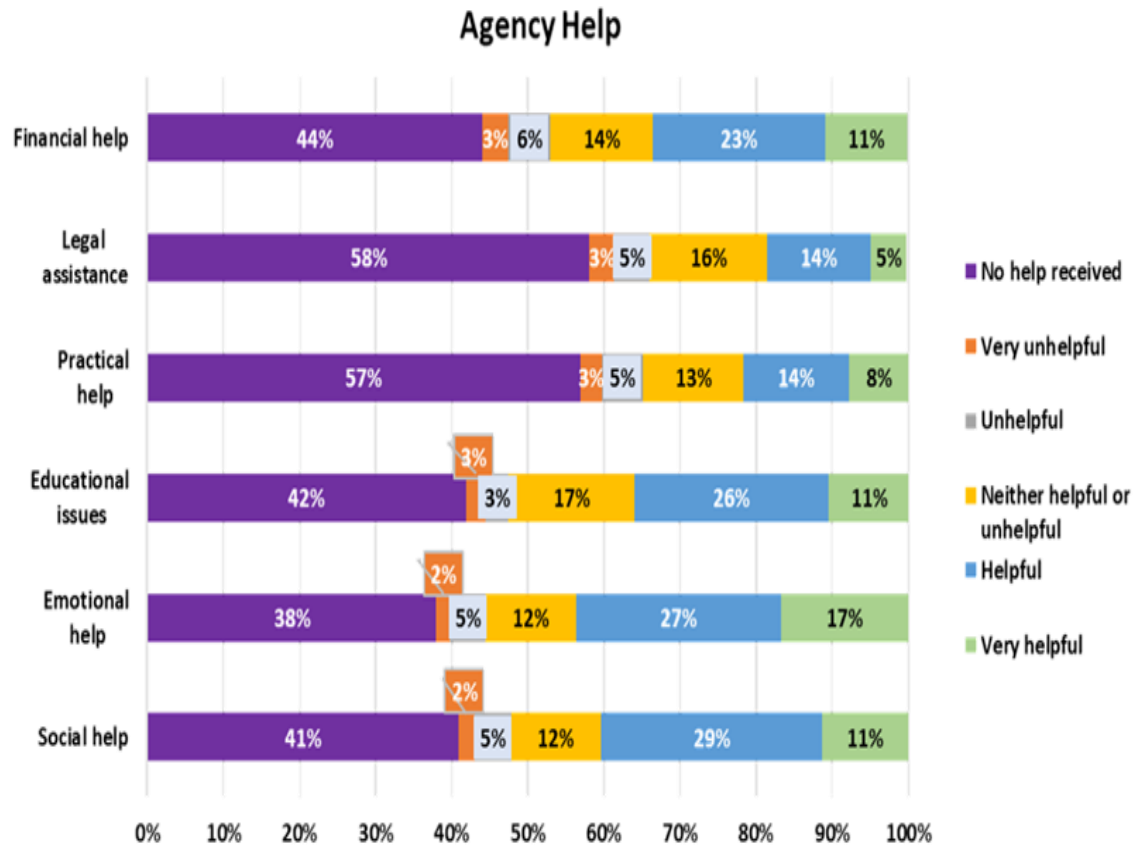
Insights

- Overall satisfaction with grandcaring role



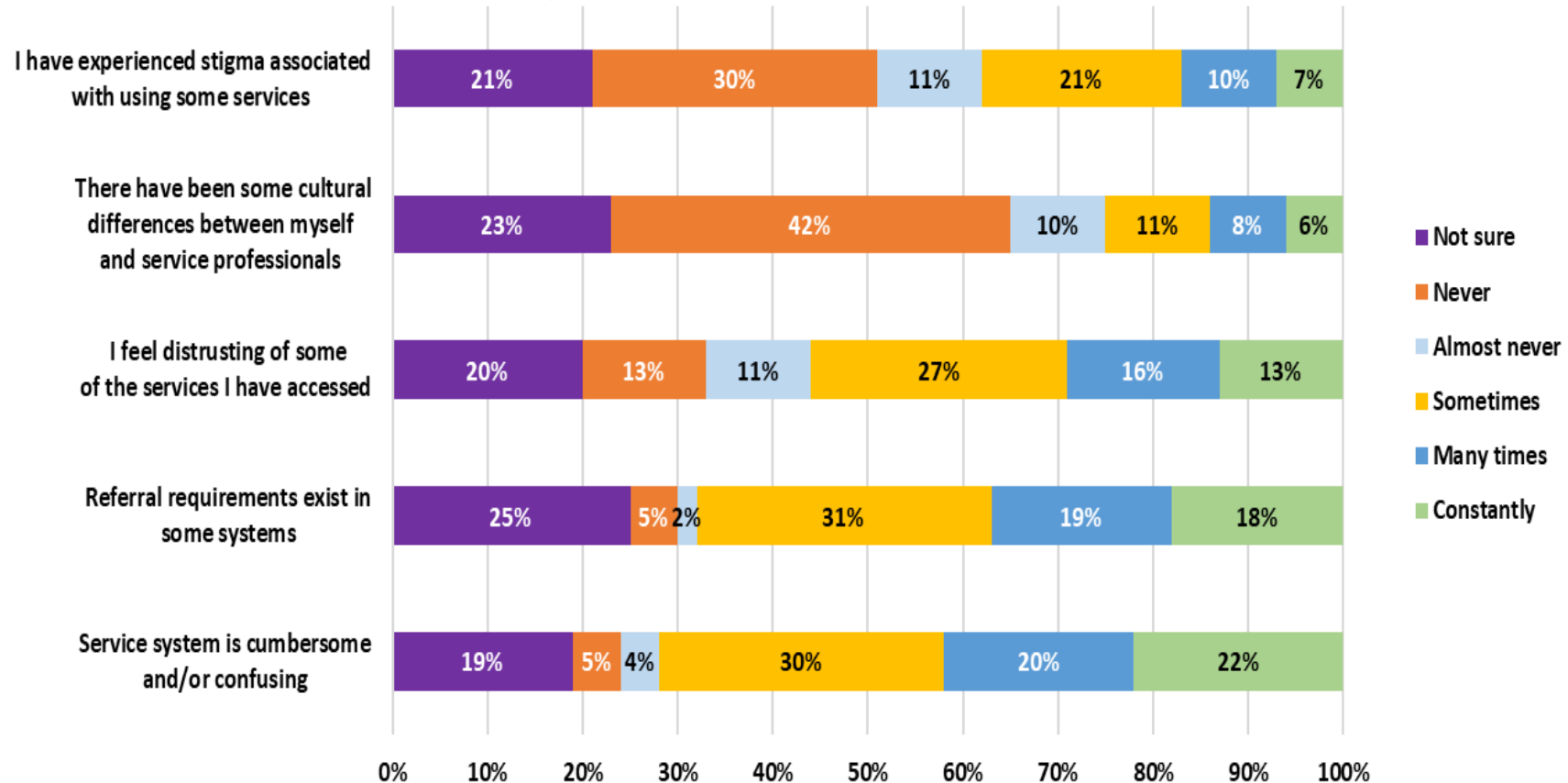
Insights

- Help for Grandcarers and is it helpful?



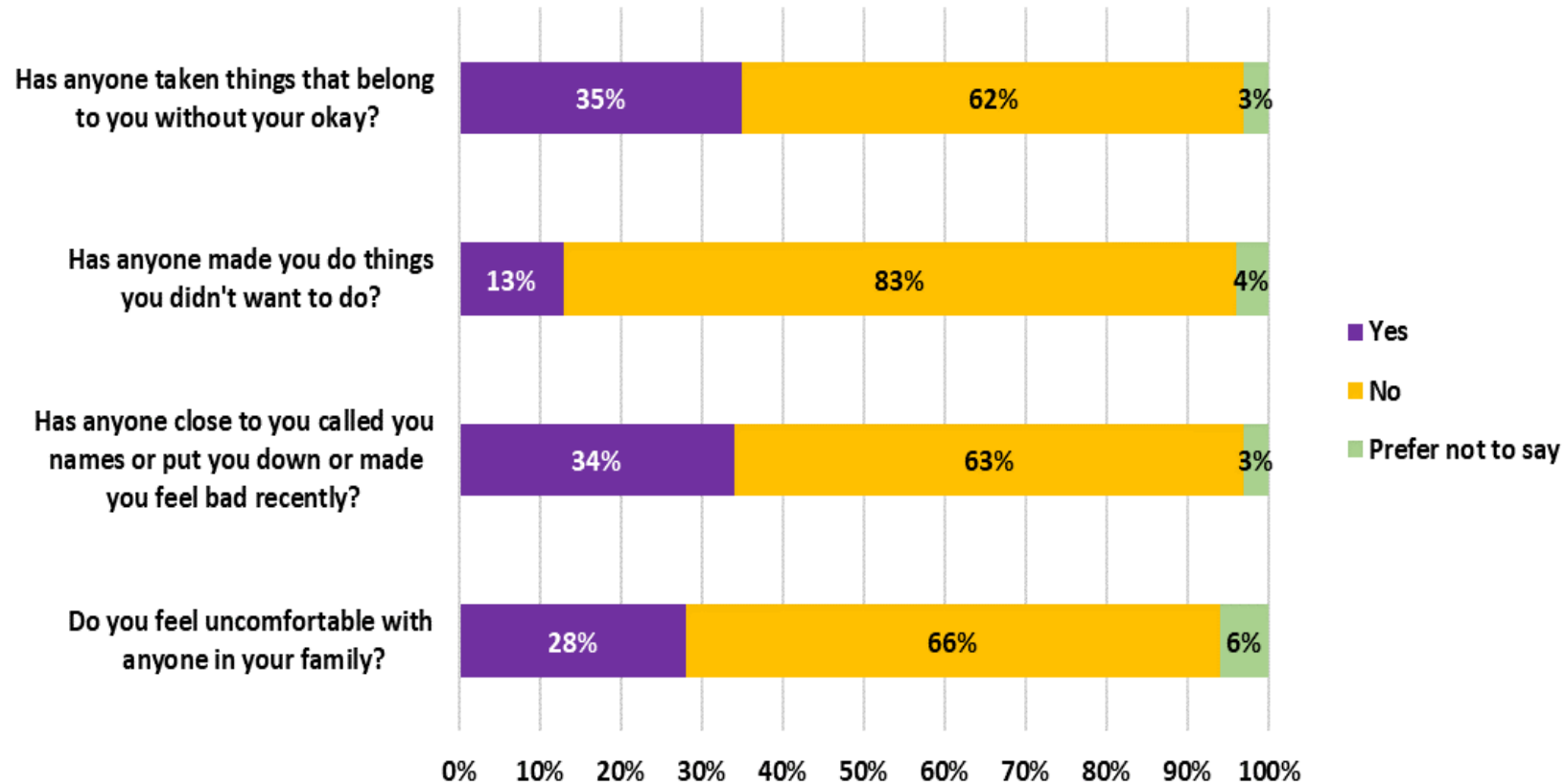
Insights

- Cultural and Service Barriers

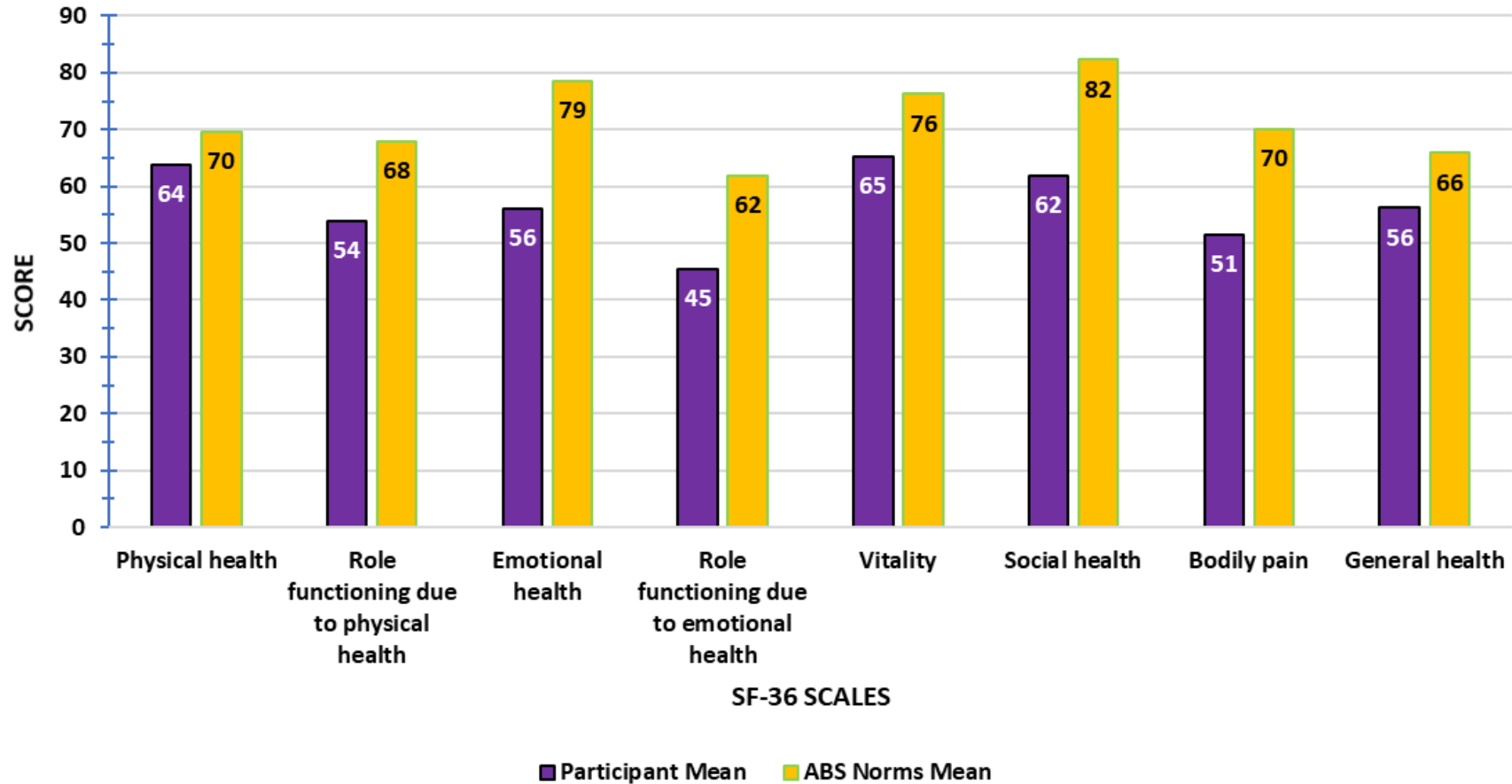


Insights

- Grandcarers' reported mistreatment by family members



Insights: Grandcarers' Health Status



Actions



- The data are strong and represent Grandcarers
- Grandcarers face a litany of challenges in their day-to-days lives and accessing support, which may ultimately have health consequences
- The detail and diversity of voices we have captured must be used to improve the service and policy environment Grandcarers grapple with

A Fairer Future for Grandchildren

Dr Katrina Stratton, Denise Gray, Katie Bennell

Wanslea



Background

Grandparent care is the fastest growing form of out-of-home care for vulnerable children in Australia. Grandchildren typically come into the care of their grandparents due to a number of factors including parental drug/alcohol abuse, mental illness, family violence and incarceration. Often it is the intersection of a range of these issues or due to a parent's death.

Given this, these children often have experienced trauma. Usually grandparent-headed families are formed in a time of crisis, adding to their trauma. As a result, children arrive with complex care needs, creating an additional challenge for grandparent carers.

Many grandparent carers confront a lack of legal security. While some are involved with statutory child protection or have Family Court Orders, the greater majority are 'informal' family arrangements with no legal security. This status also creates issues accessing essential health and education services.

Many grandparent carers already have their own health or other life stage issues, including financial pressures and these are exacerbated by taking on the full time care of their grandchildren. Recent Western Australian research shows grandparent carers are predominantly single older women, living on low incomes, raising an average of three grandchildren (compared to the Australian average of 1.9 children). Aboriginal families are over represented in the grandparent carer population and are less likely to seek services.

A fairer future for grandchildren



Improving outcomes for children in the full time care of their grandparents

Key issues

Grandparent carers step up to provide love and security for their grandchildren but are a hidden population, invisible in the social services, legislative and policy context. Since 2014 a multi-disciplinary, cross-institutional study has been underway with grandparent carers in WA. Research partners Wanslea, Edith Cowan University and Curtin University have a comprehensive body of evidence showing:

- Grandparents care for grandchildren at significant cost to their own physical and mental health and relationships, with lower levels of health and wellbeing compared to their peers
- Service providers don't acknowledge them as a unique group requiring a specialist response
- Grandparent carers need more support to sustain a role that brings significant social and economic benefit to the community, and helps to keep children safe and out of foster care
- One third of grandparent carers have experienced having their possessions taken without permission, being verbally abused or feeling uncomfortable with a family member
- Grandparents are socially isolated, with many not finding their social network or support agencies helpful. Grandparents find service systems cumbersome and/or confusing
- Poverty and financial stress is a common experience, with 62% living on less than \$50,000 per year, and a portion of those on less than \$19,000. Half have trouble paying household bills
- Grandchildren experience a range of issues including abandonment, schooling delays, anger management, grief and lack of access to age-appropriate recreation
- Emerging research shows outcomes for children in kinship care are better than those in foster care; already known and loved, they experience greater placement stability. Grandparents also experience a high degree of personal satisfaction in their caring role.

Grandcarers: Our Top 5 Concerns

What will happen when I die?

Financial Distress

Legal Security and Recognition

Physical and Mental Health Needs

Centrelink Assistance

Service Providers: Our Top 5 Concerns

Invisibility • In the system

Navigating the system • Accessibility

Legal issues • Cost and conflict of interest

Eligibility • Formal vs. informal

Resourcing • Respite
• Peer support groups

Call to Action

We are calling on the Australian Federal Parliament to provide support and recognition to grandparent carers. While grandparents are motivated to provide safety and love for their grandchildren, they are also saving the community the direct and long-term costs of foster care. Changes you can implement include:

- Paying grandparents carers an ongoing allowance similar to foster care subsidy payments which are administered by State governments
- Making all grandparent carers exempt from participating in activity requirements for Newstart, not just those with court orders
- Having Family Tax Benefit – which currently follows the carer – follow the child's residence. This will increase income while removing a source of family conflict
- Keeping the Foster Child Health Care Card income-test exempt
- Changing the income threshold for Child Care Subsidy to allow working grandparents greater access to early education for their grandchildren, particularly important in the context of early childhood trauma
- Providing 'Evidence of Care' – creating an easy system of identification, recognising that the grandparent has responsibility for the child(ren), facilitating access to Medicare, Centrelink, education and other specialist services
- Identifying grandparent-headed families through the census to allow better data and identification of patterns to, in turn, shape service delivery and resourcing.

A Fairer Future for Grandchildren

- Partnership with Grandparents Rearing Grandchildren WA Inc and Carers WA
- Federal Election Campaign
- Media interest
- Parliamentary Friends of Grandparents Rearing Grandchildren
- National Alliance for Grandparent Carers
- Honours research regarding a 'foster care' subsidy
- Parliamentary Committee Inquiry
- Community Forum and report launch (2020)
- State election campaign



THANK YOU

