



**ORANGA
TAMARIKI**
Ministry for Children

Social Impact and Research

New Zealand Government

Annual Caregiver Satisfaction Survey

Topline Report One

February 2025

The Oranga Tamariki Social Impact and Research team works to build the evidence base that helps us better understand wellbeing and what works to improve outcomes for New Zealand's children, young people and their whānau.

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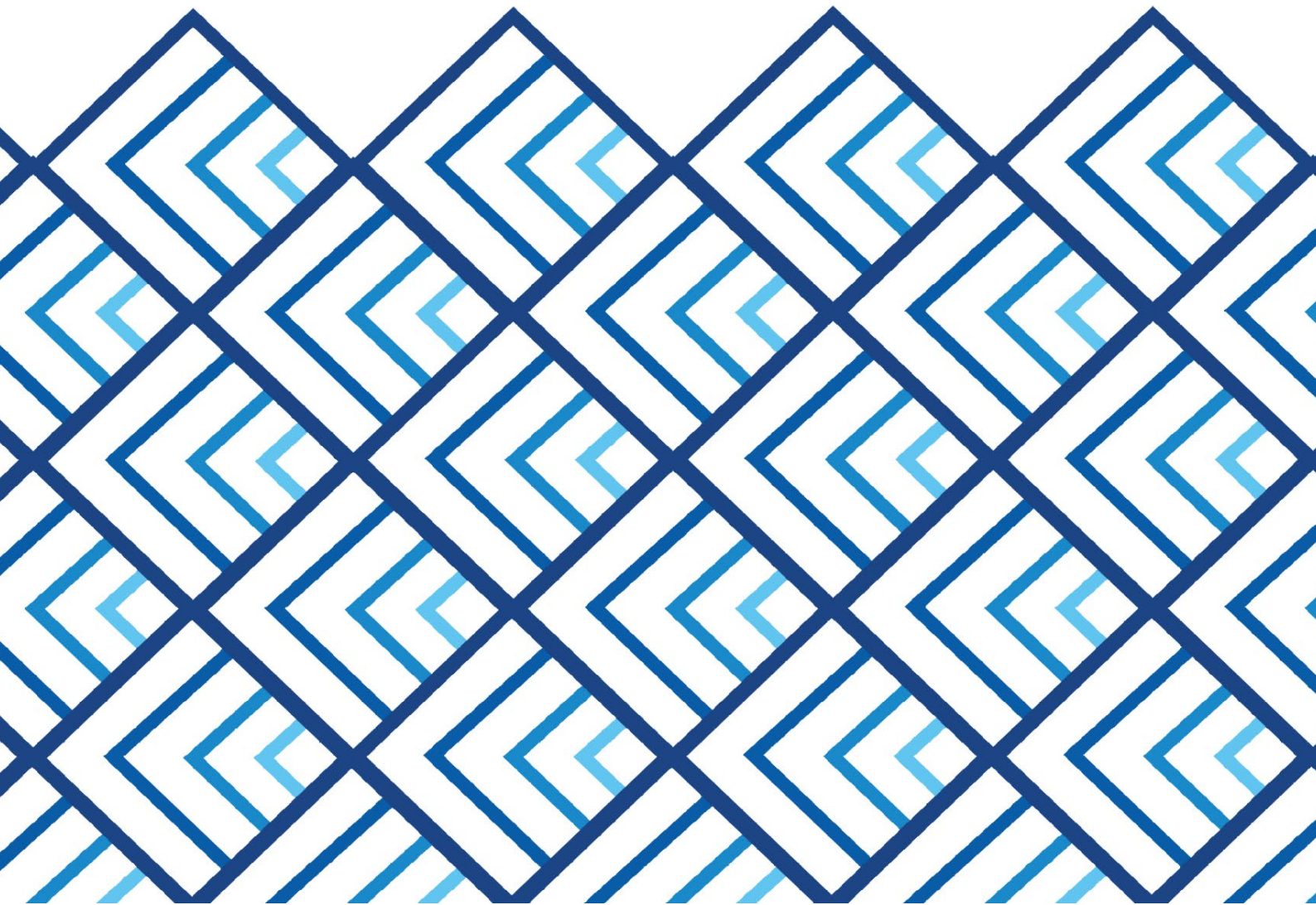
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Context

Our annual Caregiver Satisfaction Survey was run from **October 7th to 28th, 2024**, to better understand caregivers' experiences and needs. Both **whānau** (family/kin) and **non-whānau** (non-kin) caregivers participated, sharing insights on their overall satisfaction, reasons for recommending (or not recommending) becoming a caregiver, and satisfaction with the support they receive from Oranga Tamariki.

This report summarises several key quantitative results of interest, highlights open-text comments from caregivers, and provides initial recommendations and answers to two focal questions on placements destabilising and differences in whānau versus non-whānau caregiver feedback.

Key insights of interest are included in this first report with a second deep dive coming in April 2025 focusing on the specific needs of caregivers and the children and young people they care for.



Methodology

We reached out to a list of currently active Oranga Tamariki caregivers (n = 1,868) approved as of September 2024.¹ A direct survey link was emailed to the list of caregivers inviting them to take part in the survey online.

A second survey link was posted on the Oranga Tamariki website available to anyone with experience being a caregiver in the last 12 months. All recipients were advised to contact their caregiver social worker to receive other options to participate.

All survey data is securely held within the Oranga Tamariki survey team platform and is kept confidential. The Caregiver Survey team aggregated any responses used for this report.

Demographic Overview

A total of 665 Oranga Tamariki active caregivers participated in the survey (Table 1) giving an estimated total active caregiver population participation rate of 36%. While this report focuses on descriptive analysis, the response rate is sufficient for statistical inferences given the sample size and data quality.² For the full demographic table and other significant characteristics refer to Table 2.

Table 1. Survey participants: Caregiver type breakdown (n = 665)

Demographic Characteristics	Count	%
Caregiver type		
Whānau or kin caregiver	354	53
Non-whānau or non-kin caregiver	302	45
Other caregiver; Prefer not to say or left blank	9	<2

¹ An active caregiver is an Oranga Tamariki-approved caregiver with a child placement in the past 12 months. A limitation of this survey is the underrepresentation of caregivers from Oranga Tamariki affiliated partners.

² Holtom, B., Baruch, Y., Aguinis, H. & Ballinger, G. A. (2022). Survey response rates: Trends and a validity assessment framework. *Human Relations*. 75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267211070769>; Wu, M. J., Zhao, K. & Fils-Aime, F. (2022). Response rates of online surveys in published research: A meta-analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*. 7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2022.100206>

Key Survey Findings

1. Overall Caregiver Satisfaction

Figure 1 shows that 43–48% of whānau and non-whānau caregivers are satisfied or very satisfied (light and dark blue) with the overall support Oranga Tamariki provides. A fifth of caregivers – both whānau and non-whānau – are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, as shown in orange and red on the left side.

Figure 1. How satisfied are you with the support Oranga Tamariki provides you overall?

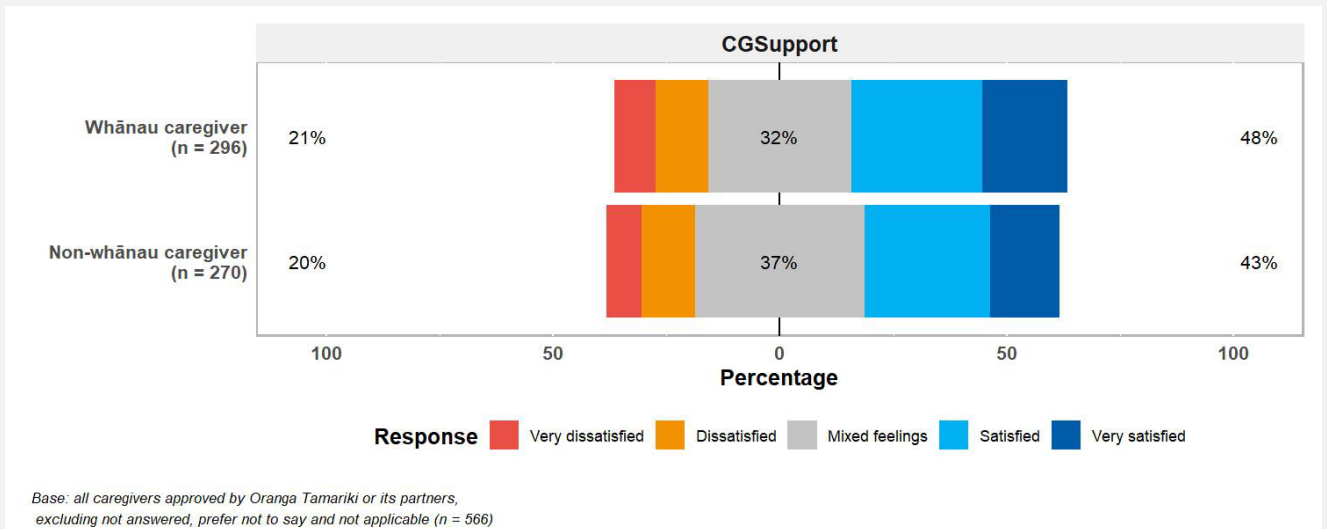
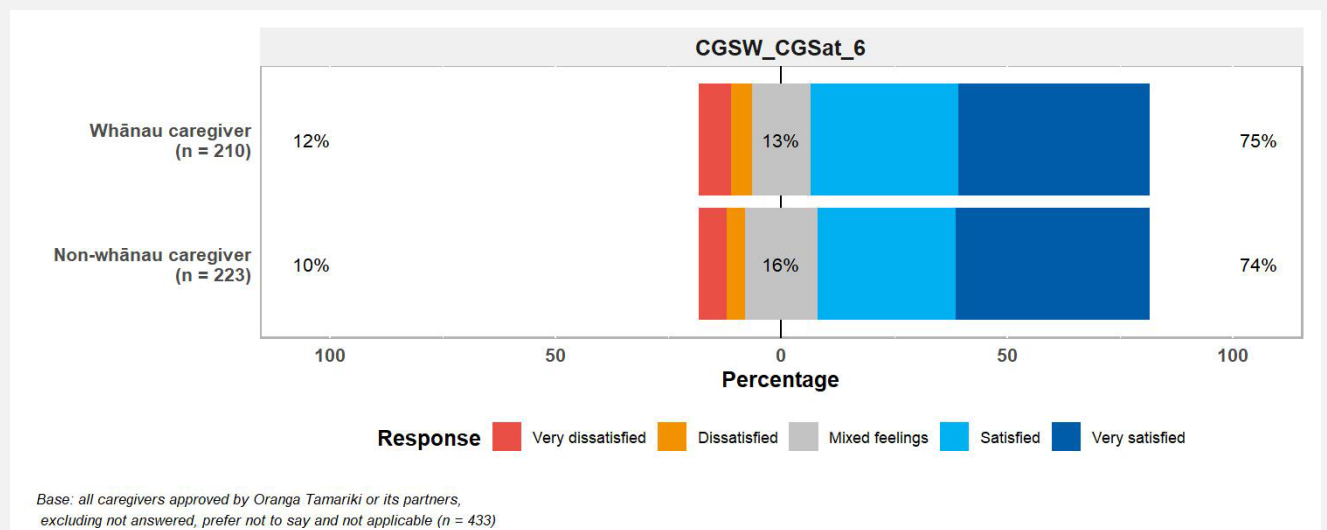


Figure 2 shows a higher proportion of positive satisfaction (74–75%) with caregiver social workers, indicating many caregivers feel supported in their role.

Figure 2. How satisfied are you with the following: My social worker supporting me in my role as caregiver overall?



Notable Trend: While satisfaction levels are generally high, a significant subset of caregivers (roughly one-quarter to slightly over one half) express varying degrees of dissatisfaction or mixed feelings, pointing to unmet needs or inconsistent experiences.

2. Recommending Caregiving

Figure 3 indicates that **47%** of non-whānau caregivers would recommend becoming a caregiver for Oranga Tamariki. Among whānau caregivers, **36%** said “Yes” to recommend.

Figure 3. Would you recommend becoming a caregiver for Oranga Tamariki?

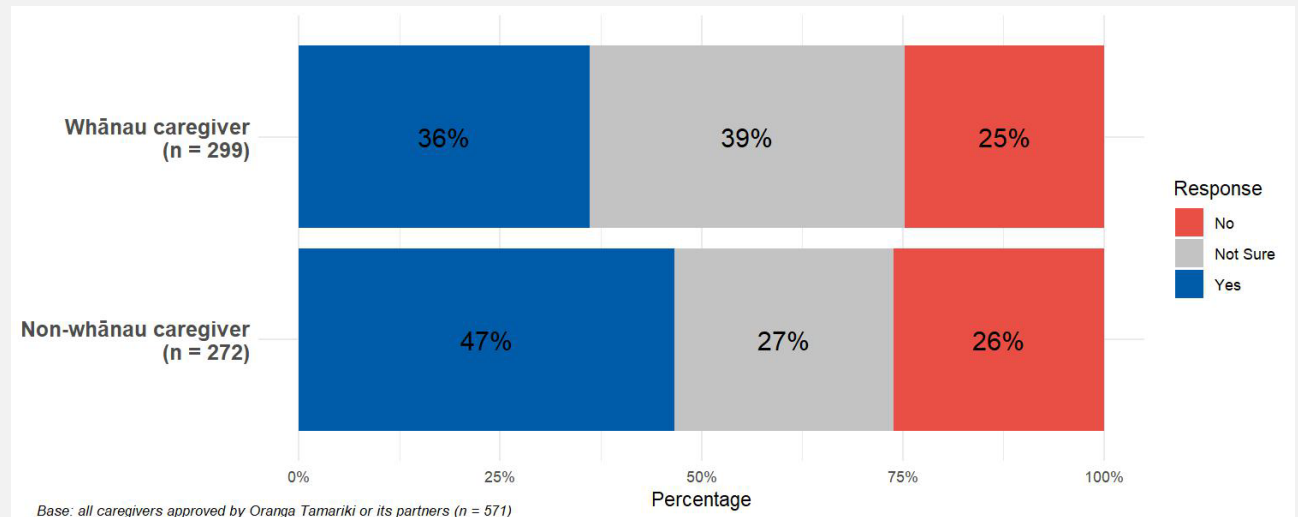


Figure 4 shows that **71%** of whānau and **62%** of non-whānau caregivers are not thinking about stopping caregiving.

Figure 4. Are you thinking of stopping being a caregiver?

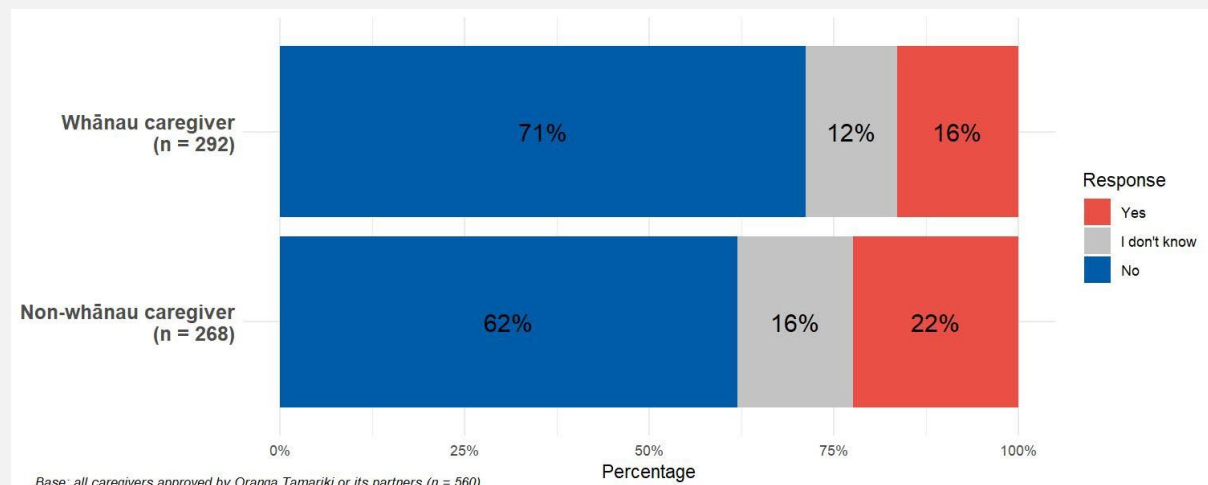
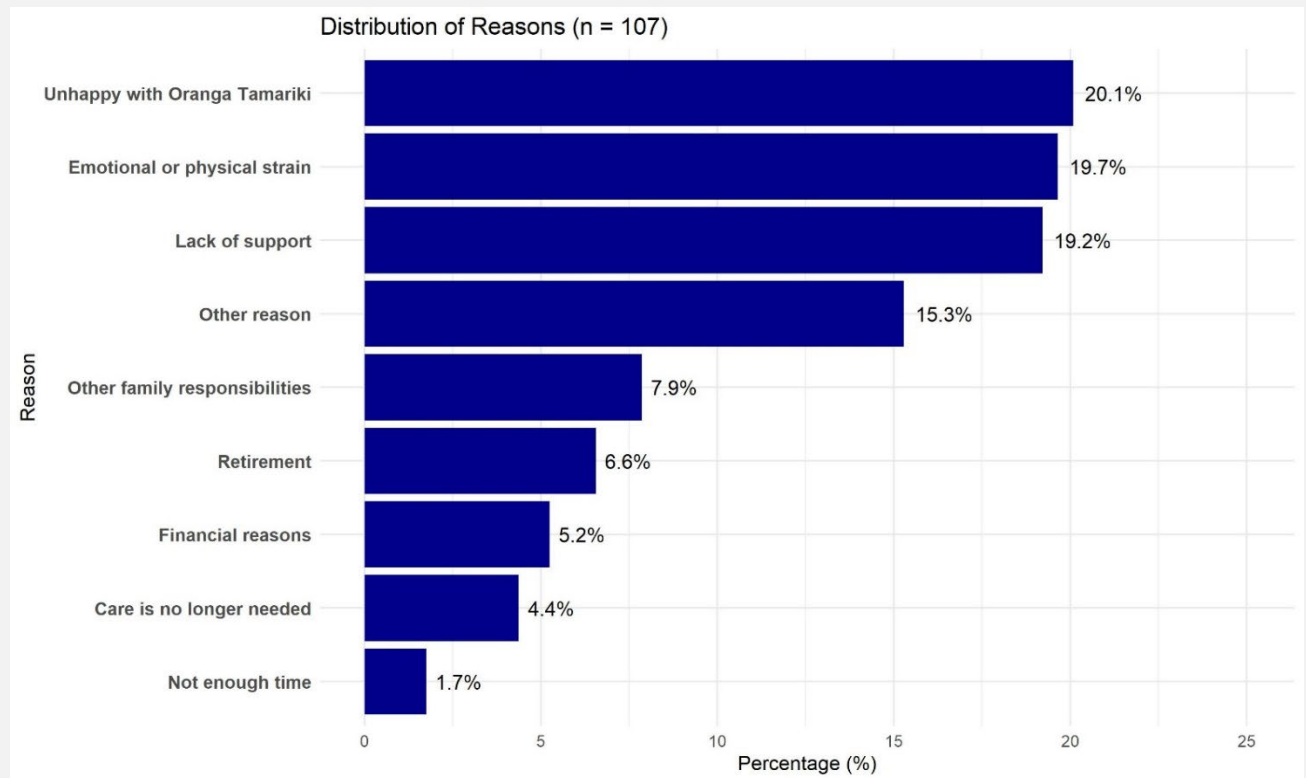


Figure 5 highlights the top reasons **why** some caregivers think about stopping:

1. Unhappiness with Oranga Tamariki (20.1%)
2. Emotional or physical strain (19.7%)
3. Lack of support (19.2%)

Figure 5. Why are you thinking of stopping being a caregiver?



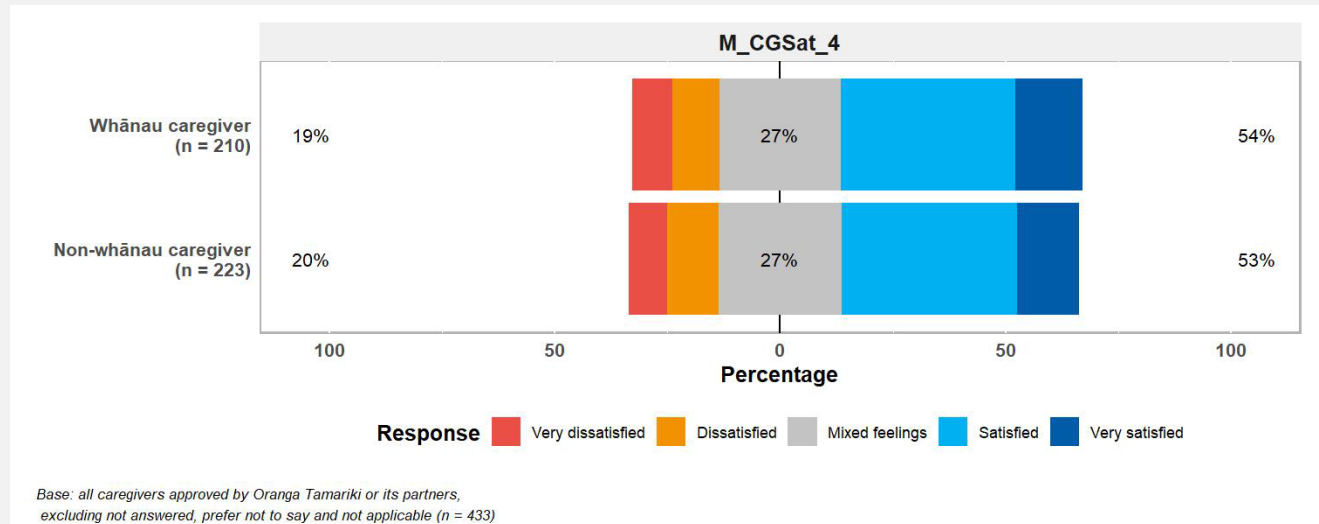
For category **‘Other reason’ (15.3%)** listed in **Figure 5**, caregivers frequently said a lack of consistent support and follow-through – particularly around respite care, formal complaints, and social worker involvement – as a key reason for stopping. Several respondents are seeking or have obtained permanent custody³ and therefore no longer wish to remain as caregivers. Others also mention the emotional and financial toll of caring for children who may or may not stay with them long-term, others cite that older age (mid-to-late 60s or 70s) leaves them less able to meet the demands of caregiving.

Interpretation: Although many caregivers find the role rewarding, nearly half either do not recommend caregiving or are unsure due primarily to perceived inadequate support from Oranga Tamariki, emotional/physical stress, and other challenges (i.e. communication and transparency of entitlements).

³ Types of permanent custody: Special Guardianship Orders under the Care of Children Act Section 27; Home for life permanent care arrangements secured by legal orders; other permanent care arrangements with entitlements to Permanent Caregiver Support Service (PCSS)

Figure 6 shows that **54%** of whānau and **53%** of non-whānau caregivers are satisfied with the amount of financial allowance received for the child in their care.

Figure 6. Satisfaction with allowances you receive to meet the needs of the child?



3. Why Caregivers Would Recommend

Survey participants reported:

Rewarding experience: Supporting children and young people to make a positive difference in their lives is highly meaningful.

“Being a caregiver has been one of the most fulfilling and amazing things I have ever done...It also brings a sense of satisfaction in knowing that you have provided support to a child who needed somewhere to belong.”

“Firstly, being able to give a child or children a home, safe environment is most important to me. I feel very heard and Oranga Tamariki supported a lot which is a huge help and [I] think being a caregiver for Oranga Tamariki is a privilege.”

Need for more caregivers: Many caregivers said that children in crisis need stable, caring homes and that people who want to and can should do it.

“We need more caregivers.”

“We need more people to look out for and care for our tamariki.”

“Children in crisis need someone to care for them, and this is a way to do so.”

Positive Oranga Tamariki support: Some caregivers described Oranga Tamariki as providing responsive support, including adequate financial support and training.

“The social workers work hard for the children and drive a lot of [kilometres] for them. Costs are covered for the foster-child.”

“Great support, opportunity for training.”

“Your social worker gives you lots of support and you build some really strong connections.”

Stepping up for whānau: Whānau caregivers emphasised that they did not want tamariki from their whānau to enter a stranger’s care.

“Wouldn’t want [the] child going [to] someone they didn’t know.”

4. Why Caregivers Would Not Recommend

The open-text responses pointed to several critical challenges:

Inadequate support: Financial or logistical gaps, some caregivers felt the costs of caregiving outstripped support for children with diverse needs.

“They cannot financially sustain the care of children who have special needs.”

“Caregivers are not taken care of properly. Unless you have a good social worker for your child, you will spend a lot of time waiting for financial support for everything. There is a lack of communication and transparency. Taking care of the child is easy but trying to follow up the child’s needs and receiving adequate support is nearly impossible.”

“Based on the support I get vs the amount of effort and money I put I don’t even break even I have had to get a side hustle to feed myself while looking after the kids.”

Poor communication: Delays, fragmented information, or a lack of clarity on entitlements.

“Every time I have received a payment it's been a different amount, this causes confusion. Communication is poor and often contradictory. It seems like there are many staff with minimal experience, I've often experienced staff who haven't even read FGC notes, plans or past notes.”

Inconsistent practice: Varied experiences with social workers' competence, availability, and follow-through. Some caregivers described professional, reliable social workers, while others cited inconsistencies in social worker practices.

“Depending on the social worker depends on the support. The social workers aren't equipped to support the way the caregivers and children need.”

“Trauma informed practice seems to be a skill most social workers lack. We feel we are constantly battling for things we shouldn't have to.”

Systemic barriers: Bureaucracy and cumbersome processes were mentioned as burdensome.

“It's not for the fainthearted. And really the organisation's procedures are cumbersome.”

“Because its hard work and Oranga Tamariki have their 'hands tied' a lot of the time. Their workload is ridiculous, and funding is hard to obtain due to red tape.”

“It is harder dealing with the agency than raising the child.”

Emotional and physical strain: High demands without enough respite or training.

“[I'm] Getting too old.”

“It is a lot to take on emotionally and physically. Nothing can prepare you for it but if you can get through the first [three] months then it should be a lot easier. Also, having a social worker who isn't constantly questioning every move you make and very argumentative would help as well.”

Critical Follow-up Questions

Although the following questions were not explicitly asked to the caregivers taking this survey, these are important questions for our organisation, our stakeholders and supporting partners. We have analysed the data to form some initial insights.

Question 1: Why do placements destabilise, and what immediate actions can be taken?

Key reasons for placement destabilisation from survey results:

- **Inadequate support for children with diverse needs:** High-stress situations with children who have diverse needs can lead to caregiver burnout.
- **Poor communication and unmet expectations:** Frequent miscommunication or lack of follow-through from social workers.
- **Lack of resources:** Financial constraints, insufficient training, limited respite care.
- **Burnout:** Emotional and physical fatigue from intensive caregiving demands.

Immediate actions to consider are listed in the **Recommendations**.

Question 2: Did whānau and non-whānau caregivers raise the same concerns?

Distinct concerns were reported with some similarities:

- **Whānau Caregivers:** Often voiced frustrations about **inconsistent updates** and fragmented communication regarding system processes and children's progress.
- **Non-Whānau Caregivers:** Stressed **lack of guidance** or clarity around their specific roles and expectations.
- **Shared Themes** (both whānau and non-whānau caregivers):
 - Insufficient information on children's medical or behavioural background.
 - Delays and gaps in communication.
 - The desire for more robust financial and logistical support.

Summative Interpretation

The qualitative data aligns with the quantitative findings that while a majority of Oranga Tamariki caregivers are satisfied overall, a notable portion experience **insufficient support** or **systemic issues** that negatively impact their caregiving journey and livelihood.

- **Positive motivations** revolve around the joy and fulfilment of helping tamariki, feeling listened to by competent social workers, and ensuring family members remain within whānau care.
- **Negative motivations** often tie to systemic barriers (bureaucracy, inadequate financial resources) and inconsistent communication.

Recommendations

The following are some actionable strategies to consider in addressing the gaps in support for caregivers:

1. Improve inclusive communication pathways

- Develop more explicit guidelines and protocols for timely updates on children's circumstances with caregivers.
- All About Me Plans⁴ are a priority for the care of tamariki and rangatahi and be informed by all those who have knowledge of them.

2. Bolster caregiver financial and resource support

- Reevaluate financial support levels, particularly for children with diverse needs (also called complex or high needs).
- Streamline and make transparent the pathway for entitled payments.
 - Ensure adequate compensation is given to caregivers.
- Strengthen and support the network for caregivers inclusive of whānau which includes fluid access to respite to prevent burnout.
 - Accessibility of respite care: Ensuring caregivers are provided information and aware of respite.

3. Enhance training and professional development

- Ensure access to trauma-informed programs for all caregivers.
 - Targeted support for whānau caregivers: Offer family counseling or mediation to handle intra-family challenges.
 - Enhance training: Offer programs focusing on behavioural and trauma-informed care.
- Provide ongoing professional development for social workers to ensure collaborative and consistent practice with caregivers.
- Knowledge and utilisation of community resourcing to scaffold support for caregivers.

4. Streamline bureaucratic processes and shift organisational culture

- Examine current procedures to reduce paperwork and delays.
- Address feedback about frequent social worker turnover through an organisational cultural shift.
 - Lift the voice of caregivers – because poor social worker practice has an impact on caregivers and the tamariki.
 - Engage collaboratively, meaning caregiver social worker and child social workers are working collaboratively alongside the caregiver and the child to build and maintain relationships.
 - Shift the organisational culture towards caregivers as they are our greatest asset to the recruitment of caregivers.

⁴ A template that helps guide discussions with children and youth about how caregivers and support people will help meet their needs and goals. [All About Me plan](#) | [Practice Centre](#) | [Oranga Tamariki](#)

5. Additional Resources

Additional organisational resource may need to be considered to make these actions tangible, such as:

- **Budget** for expanded caregiver training, financial support, and respite care.
- **Frontline staff** dedicated to consistent communication.
- **Development of technology** platforms to give caregivers real-time updates and resources.

Conclusion

In summary, caregivers find their roles rewarding yet highlight gaps in financial support, communication, and consistent social work practice. Strengthening support mechanisms—especially for complex cases—and refining communication processes can significantly improve caregiver satisfaction, retention and recruitment success.

By addressing these insights promptly, Oranga Tamariki can build stronger, more sustainable caregiving environments where tamariki thrive, and caregivers feel valued and supported.

Table 2. Oranga Tamariki Caregiver Satisfaction Survey Participants (n = 665)

Demographic Characteristics	Count	%
Caregiver type		
Whānau or kin caregiver	354	53
Non-kin caregiver	302	45
Family Home caregiver	3	<1
Prefer not to say or left blank	6	<1
Relationship to Oranga Tamariki		
I am a caregiver for Oranga Tamariki	576	87
I am a caregiver through a care provider for Oranga Tamariki	8	1
I am a caregiver for an iwi or hapu care provider on behalf of Oranga Tamariki	5	<1
Other	5	<1
Prefer not to say or left blank	72	11
Relationship to the child		
Grandparent or great-grand parent	131	20
Aunt, uncle, grand or great-grand aunt or uncle	115	17
Other relative (i.e. sibling, cousin, niece or nephew)	59	9
Whāngai, hāpu or iwi connection	28	4
Other connection (i.e. non-kin)	226	34
Prefer not to say or left blank	106	16
Ethnicity of Caregivers*		
New Zealand European*	414*	59*
Māori*	218*	31*
Pacific Peoples*	37*	5*
Asian*	6*	<1*
Other*	31*	4*
Prefer not to say or left blank	83	12
Ethnicity of the child**		
New Zealand European*	363*	41*
Māori*	388*	44*
Pacific Peoples*	74*	8*
Asian*	23*	3*
Other*	40*	5*
Prefer not to say or left blank	90	14
Representative Region		
Te Tai Tokerau	44	7
North and West Auckland	81	12
South Auckland	43	6
Bay of Plenty	52	8
Waikato	62	9
Taranaki-Manawatū	84	13
East Coast	56	8
Wellington	49	7
Canterbury	116	17
Lower South	60	9
Upper South	18	3

*Calculated taking 'total response' approach to ethnicity which may add up to more than 100 percent due to respondents identifying with more than one ethnicity.⁵ **Ethnicity of the child as reported by the caregivers participating in the survey.

⁵ Allan, J. (2001). *Review of the measurement ethnicity: Classifications and issues*. www.stats.govt.nz