

# Maintaining family contact during COVID-19

Describing the **experiences** and needs of **children** with a **family member** in prison



SHINE for Kids®

**Summary of research study conducted by Dr Catherine Flynn with Dr Susy Harrigan, Professor Lorana Bartels and Professor Susan Dennison**

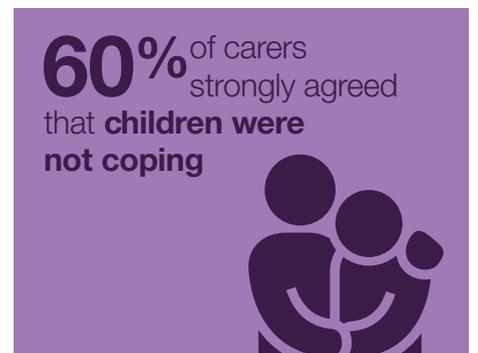
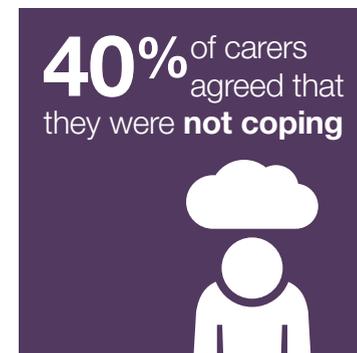
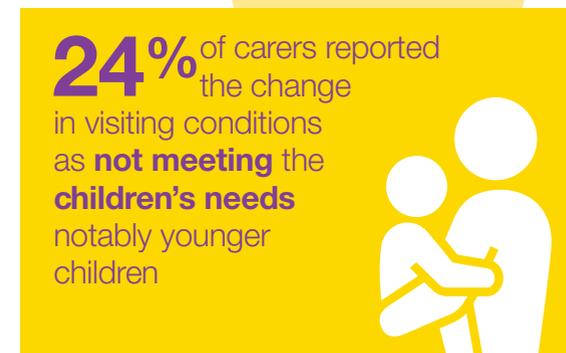
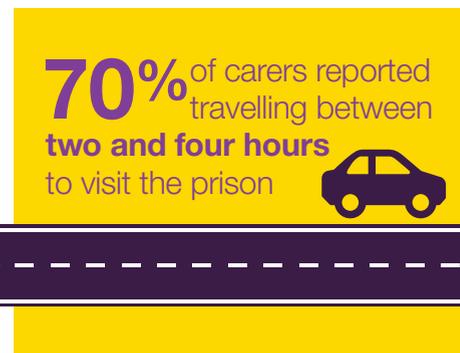
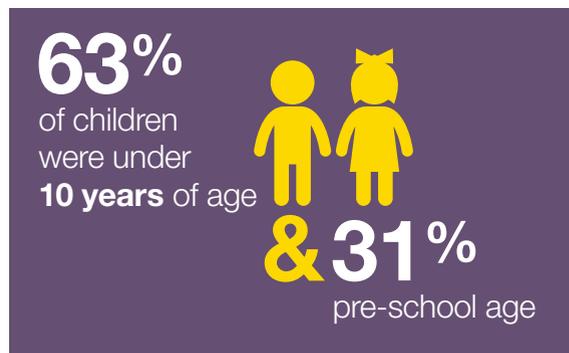
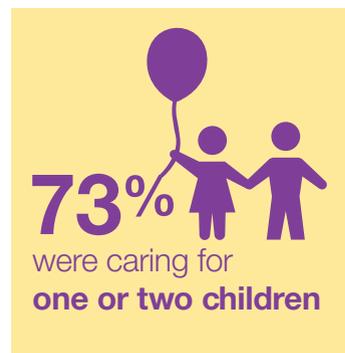
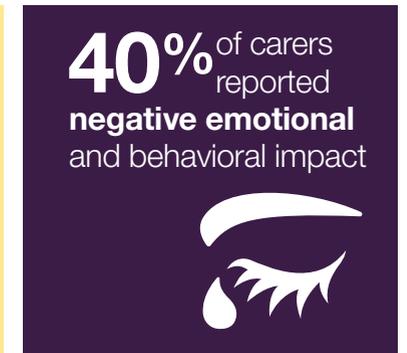
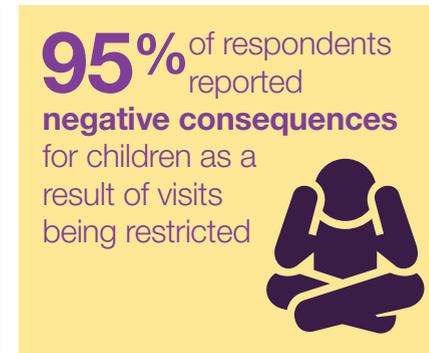
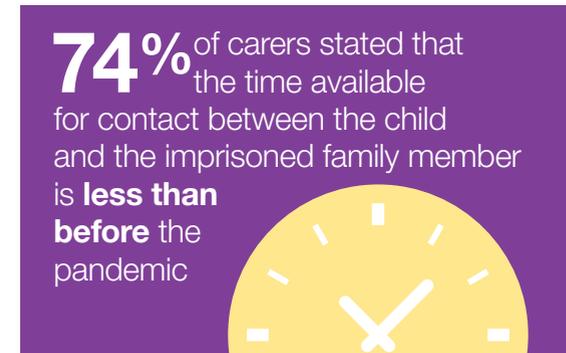
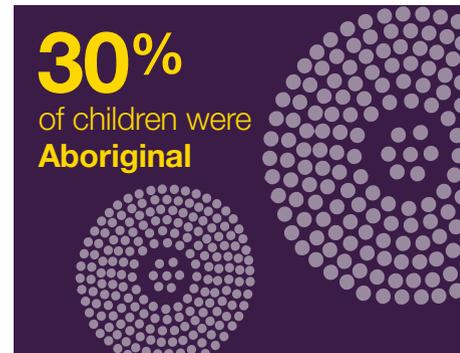
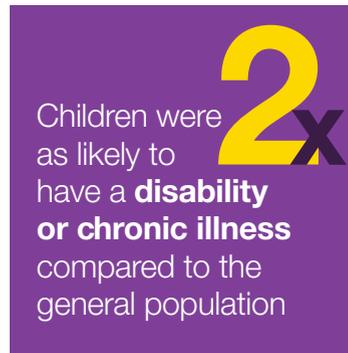
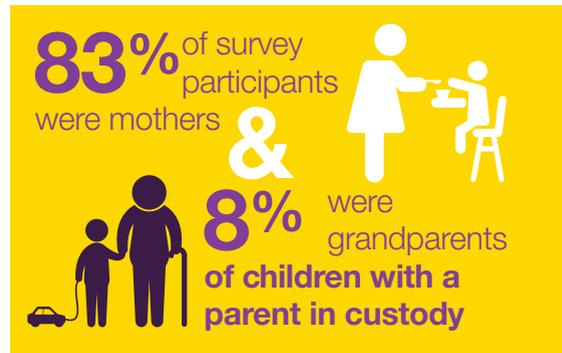
Prison visiting across the globe has been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. By March 2020, all Australian prisons were suspended. SHINE for Kids commissioned this study to improve the understanding of the needs and experiences of children with a family member in prison, with regard to visiting during COVID-19.



# Summary of findings

*“While it is true that the virus does not discriminate, it is accentuating and exacerbating longstanding inequalities in society, leaving particular groups exposed to heightened vulnerability. Among these groups requiring targeted support are children separated from their parents by incarceration. Children of prisoners experience a deep sense of abandonment when a parent is incarcerated. That sense of abandonment has been amplified by COVID-19 and has lifelong impact.”*

April Long, National Operations Manager, SHINE for Kids.



**73%** reported no positive element to contact after visits were suspended. Others reported the main positives as **reduced time and cost**, showing the parent in custody around the house, and **participation in the child's bedtime routine**



“My child is very distressed, it's affecting his learning, behavior and emotional wellbeing.”

“Children are resilient but they miss holding and talking to their father. The youngest one cries after a talk on Zoom – she wants to hold him. The older one wants to hug him and play games with him – affection is very important and has been hard for them not to have it.”

“My son will lose the bond with his father and won't know who he is.”



**For more  
information**

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