

GALLUP®



**Despite making up 14% of the U.S. child population, Black children make up 22% of all kids in foster care.<sup>1</sup>**

- Black youth are disproportionately overrepresented in foster care and underrepresented in rates of adoption.
- Compared to other kids in care, Black children are more likely to experience multiple placements<sup>2</sup> and may be less likely to be reunited with their birth families.<sup>3</sup>

The **EMBRACE Project** is a research initiative with the Gallup Center on Black Voices. Through the EMBRACE Project, Kidsave and its partners aim to:

- 1 Reduce the gap between the number of older Black youth in foster care and the number of Black families mentoring, fostering and adopting, these children.
- 2 Increase services to Black children in foster care to find adoptive families when reunification is not an option and support lifelong support systems.
- 3 Improve outcomes for Black youth and families interacting with the child welfare system and affect policy and practice implications in 2025 and beyond.

1. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcars-report-29.pdf>

2. <https://www.casey.org/placement-stability-impacts/>

3. <https://www.casey.org/permanency-reunification/>

# Methods: Capturing Americans' Perspectives on Foster Care and Adoption

In spring of 2023, Kidsave partnered with Gallup to embark on the EMBRACE project and better understand Americans' perceptions of foster care and adoption from foster care in the United States.

Responses were collected from **5,469 Americans residing in the United States** and representing diverse backgrounds. To ensure comprehensive and accurate representation of the perspectives of **Black Americans, an oversample of 1,563 responses** from this group was included. Most respondents were invited to participate in a web survey, with a smaller portion who were invited to participate via mail. **Seventy-three percent of respondents** were members of the **Gallup Panel**, a probability-based panel that recruits members using random sampling methods. These members then chose to opt in and complete the survey either online or through mail after receiving the invitation. The remaining participants were invited through email by an opt-in sample provider.

After data collection, weighting was conducted to ensure that results would be **representative of the national population**. As an additional step, **cross-classified targets** were used within race to ensure the results within Black Americans (as well as other racial backgrounds) would be representative at the within-race group level.





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# Key Findings



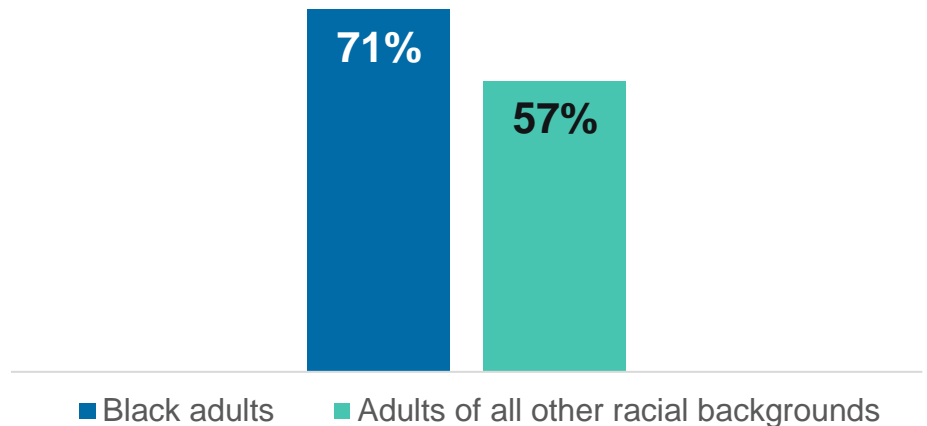
# Americans have low confidence in the racial equality of the foster care system.

- While close to half (48%) of Americans agree that the foster care system tries to help biological families stay together, Americans are less confident that treatment is equal for children and families of all races.
  - 35% of Americans strongly agree or agree with “The foster care system supports children in need of care equally, regardless of their racial or ethnic background.”
  - 27% of Americans strongly agree or agree with “The foster care system treats biological parents equally, regardless of their racial or ethnic background.”

## Black Americans’ confidence is even lower.

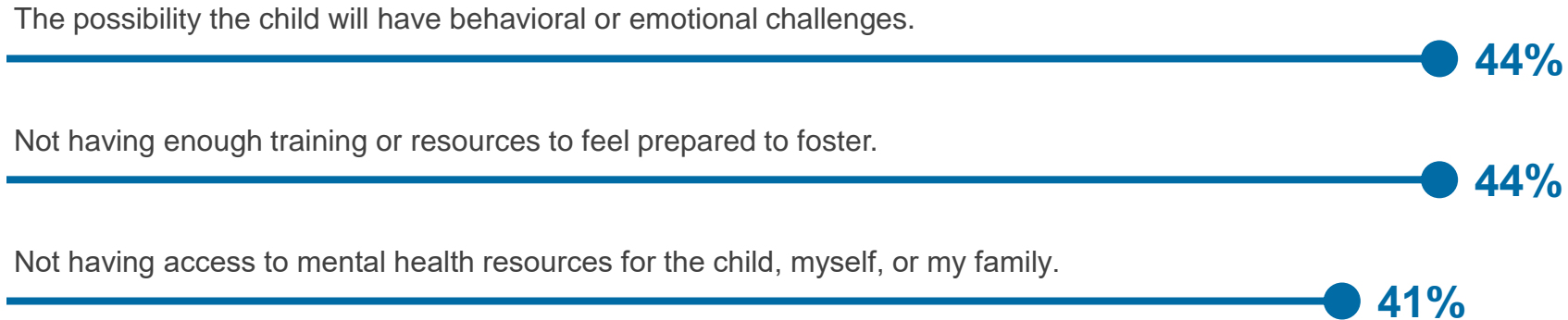
- Generally, Black Americans are more skeptical of the benefits of the foster care system. Black adults are more likely than adults of other racial backgrounds to agree that the foster care system harms more than helps the children in its care (28% vs. 18%).
- Black adults are also more likely than others to agree that the system could do more to help families stay together (71% vs. 57%) and *less* likely to agree that foster care organizations equally support children in need, regardless of racial background (29% vs. 36%).

The foster care system could do more to help biological families stay together.  
*% Strongly agree or agree*



Three of the top five barriers to fostering a child could be improved with **training and supportive resources**, especially those related to child and family **mental health**.

**While “My age or stage in life” is the top barrier to providing foster care among all Americans, the following issues are also among the top 5 major barriers:**



**When it comes to *adopting* from foster care, personal and physical adjustments are most important. The top four barriers to adopting are stage in life (57% say it poses a major barrier), work or family situation (46%), lack of desire to add or have children (42%), and the changes that would need to be made to the home (41%).**

- Notably, 40% of all Americans cite “The possibility the child was removed from their home for the wrong reasons” as a major barrier to adopting from foster care, tied with the 40% who cite “the possibility the biological parent(s) would be able to re-claim the child after the child was living with me” as a major barrier.

Mentoring is a gateway to adoption: Even among those who have never fostered, participating in a mentoring program increases the odds of adopting from foster care by roughly **seven times**.

7x



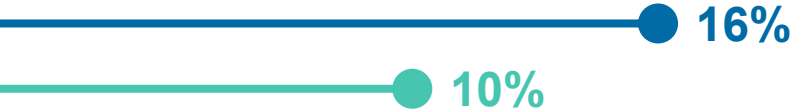
Most Americans say **training** and **the opportunity for a meaningful relationship** could make them more likely to participate in a program working with a child in foster care.

- % who say the following would make them more or much more likely to consider participating:
  - 73% Having training and support to ensure I know how to help the child I support.
  - 69% Having training and support to ensure I felt safe at all times.
  - 64% Knowing the child has a say in whether they spend time with me.
  - 64% Getting to meet and spend time with the child before making a commitment.



# Despite less favorable views of foster care overall, Black adults are more likely than others to mentor and to consider fostering and adopting.

Have you ever participated in a program to work with children in foster care? % Yes



Have you ever considered providing foster care for a child? % Thought about it a lot



Have you ever considered adopting a child from the U.S. foster care system? % Thought a lot about it



■ Black adults ■ Adults of all other racial backgrounds

When it comes to participating in a program to work with a child in foster care, Black Americans are twice as likely as other Americans to say that knowing they could volunteer with a child of the same racial or ethnic background would make them more likely to consider participating (40% vs. 20%).

While motivators to both fostering and adopting from foster care are similar among U.S. adults, **addressing the unique barriers cited by Black adults could address the gap between interest and participation.**



**One-quarter of Black adults say the amount of racial and ethnic discrimination they may face is a major barrier to providing foster care (and 24% say the same about *adopting* from foster care).**



### Unique Barriers to Providing Foster Care

- Over one-third of Black adults (37%) say the possibility the child was removed from their home for the wrong reasons is a major barrier to providing foster care (compared with 32% of adults of other racial backgrounds).
- The amount of money required to foster is also a uniquely significant factor among Black adults: 42% say it's a major barrier, which ranks among the top five barriers for Black adults.

### Unique Barriers to Adopting From Foster Care

- Forty-four percent of Black adults say the possibility the child was removed from their home for the wrong reasons is a major barrier to adopting from foster care (compared with 39% of adults of other racial backgrounds).

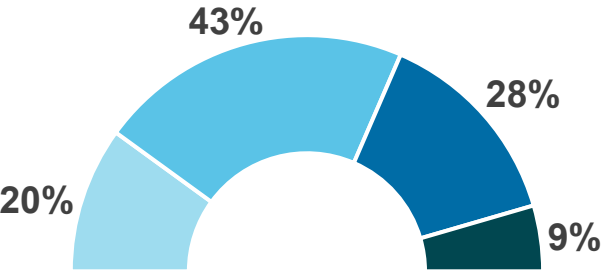
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# Perceptions and Interest in U.S. Foster Care



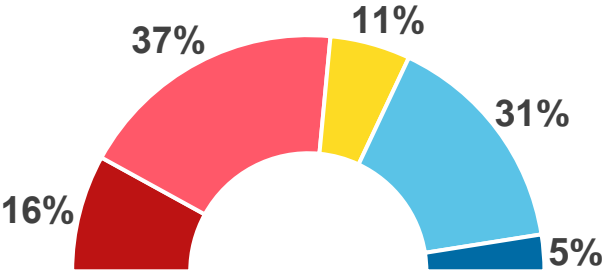
# Two-thirds of Americans know little or nothing about foster care in the U.S., and just one in four have a positive view of the system.

Generally speaking, how much do you know about the foster care system in the United States?



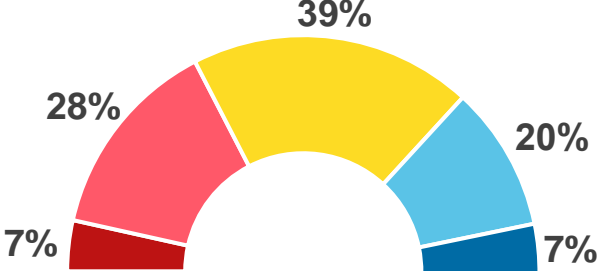
■ Nothing ■ A little ■ Some ■ A lot

How confident are you that the U.S. foster care system does the right thing for children in need of care?



■ Not at all confident ■ Not very confident  
 ■ Don't know ■ Somewhat confident  
 ■ Very confident

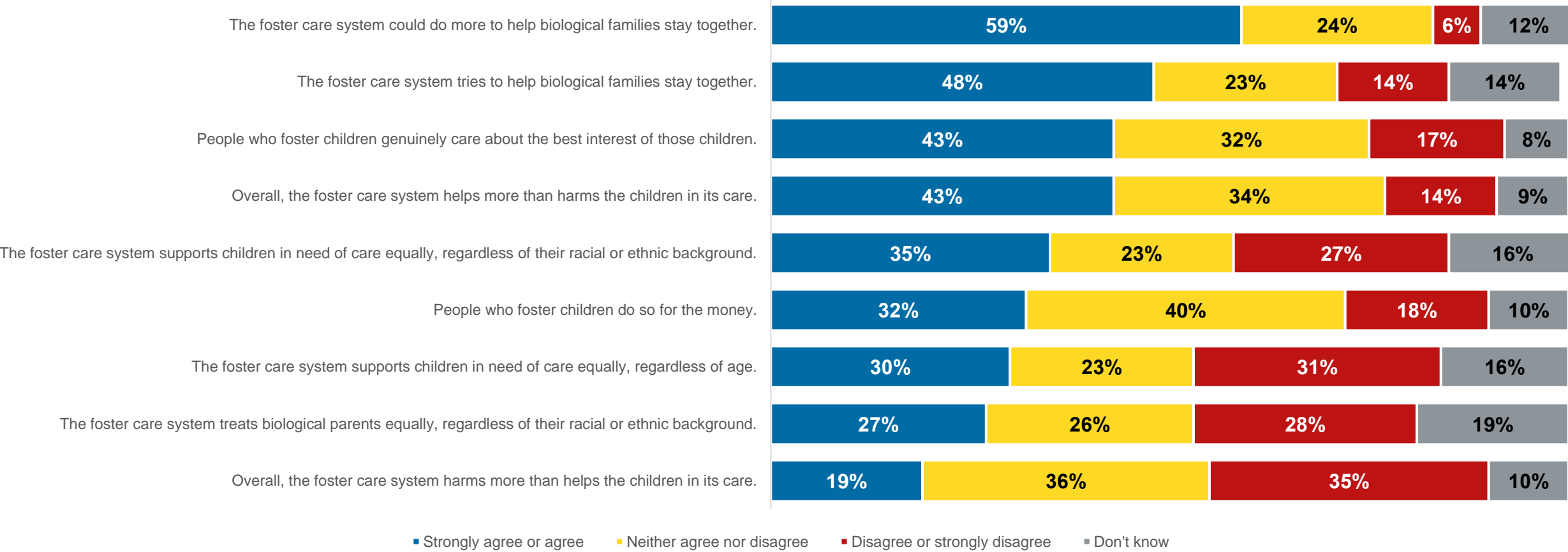
Overall, how would you rate your feelings toward the foster care system in the United States?



■ Very negative ■ Somewhat negative  
 ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat positive  
 ■ Very positive

# About half of Americans agree the foster care system tries to help biological families stay together, but six in 10 say it could still do more.

With your current understanding of the U.S. foster care system, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Note. Categories may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



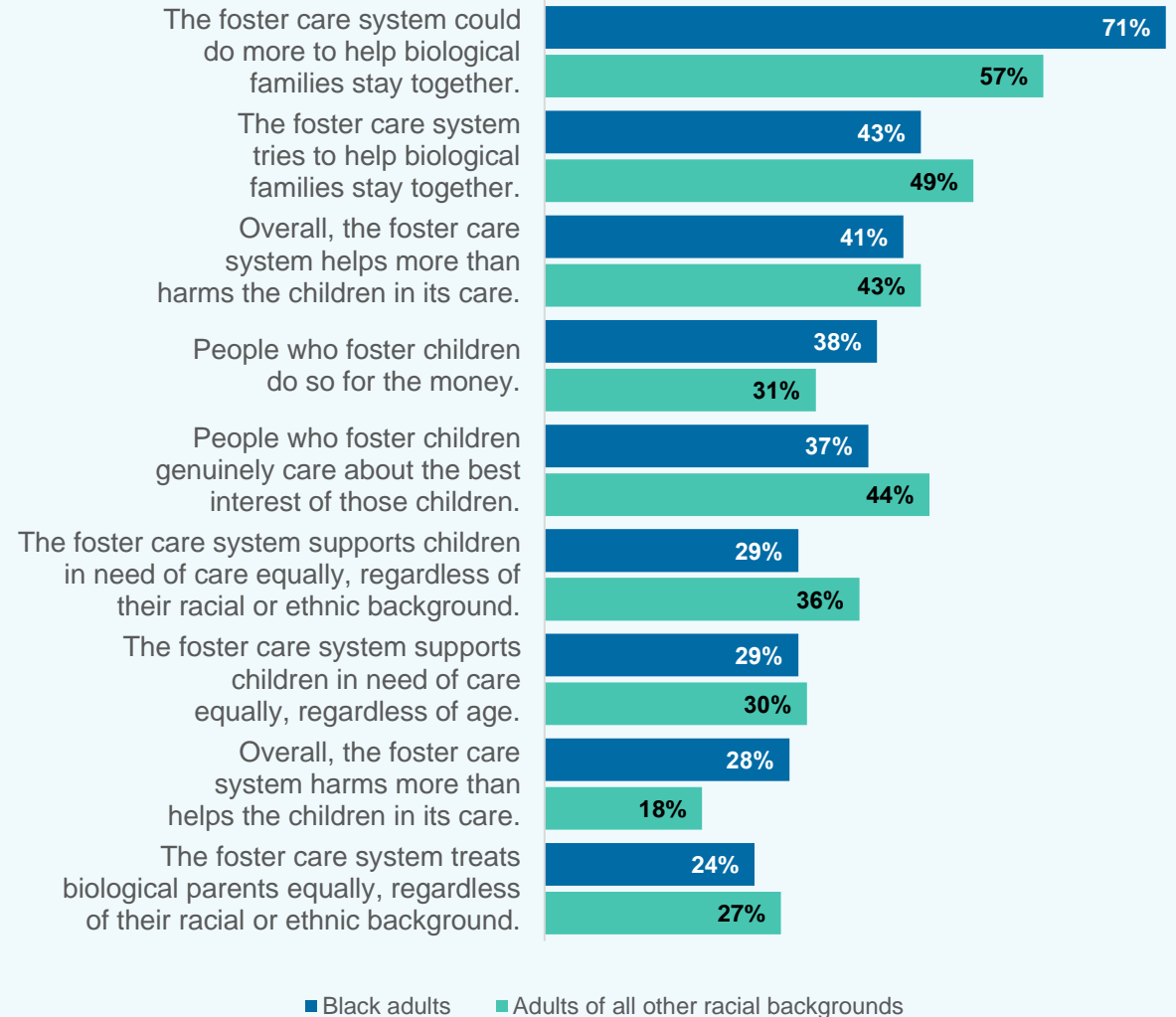
# Dissatisfaction and distrust with the foster care system is higher among Black Americans.

**Over one in four Black Adults say the foster care system harms more than helps the children in its care.**

Black adults are more likely than others to say the system could do more to help biological families stay together.

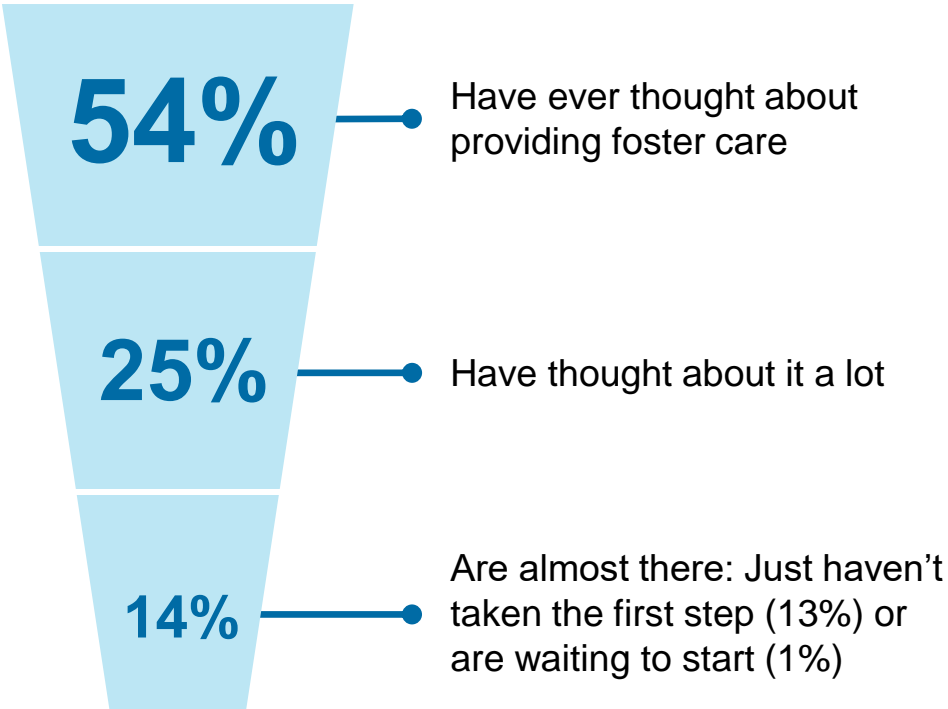
**With your current understanding of the U.S. foster care system, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

*% Strongly agree or agree*



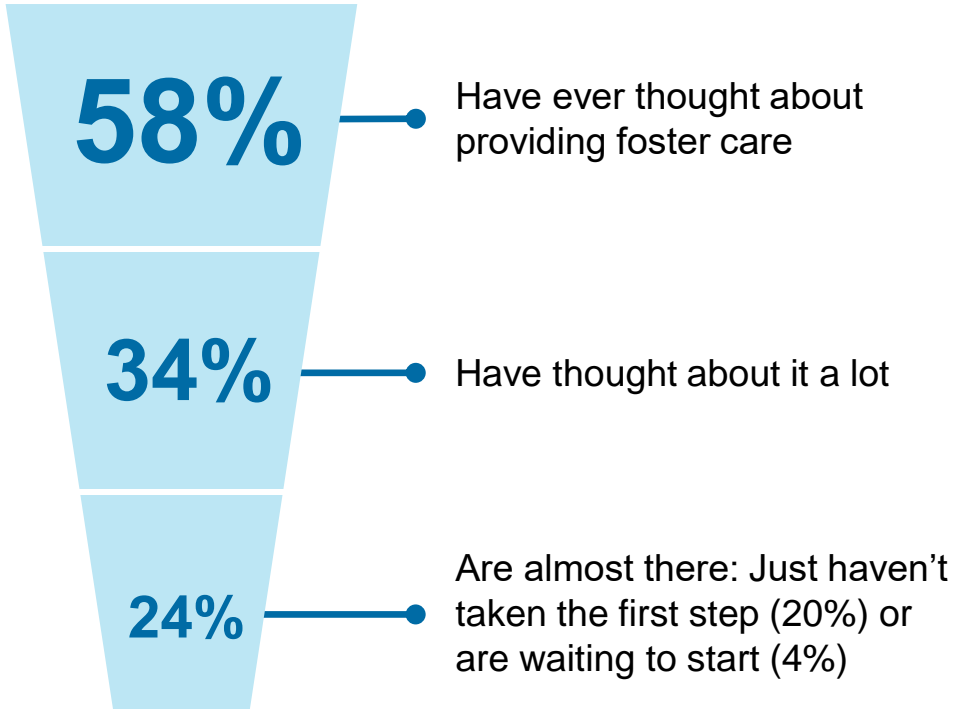
# One-quarter of Americans have thought a lot about providing foster care, but 44% of those who thought a lot about it ultimately decided not to.

## Among all Americans



**68%**  
of Americans  
don't know if  
they're eligible.

## Among Black Americans



## Top 5 Most Common Barriers to Providing Foster Care\* Among All Americans

*% Major barrier*

1. My age or stage in life. **45%**
2. Not having enough training or resources. **44%**
3. The possibility the child will have behavioral or emotional challenges. **44%**
4. The changes I would have to make to my home or living situation in order to foster. **42%**
5. Not having access to mental health resources for the child, myself, or my family. **41%**

## Top 5 Most Common Barriers to Providing Foster Care\* Among Black Americans

*% Major barrier*

1. The possibility the child will have behavioral or emotional challenges. **43%**
2. The changes I would have to make to my home or living situation in order to foster. **42%**
3. The amount of money required to provide foster care. **42%**
4. Not having enough training and resources to feel prepared to foster. **41%**
5. Not having enough access to mental health resources for the child, myself, or my family. **40%**

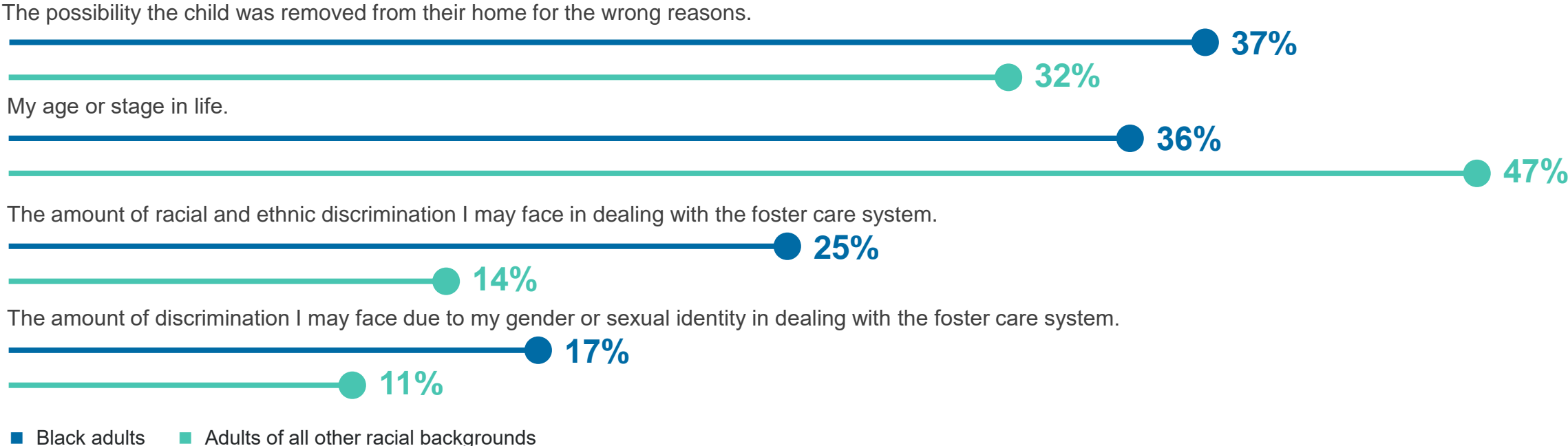
*\*Selected based on the barriers which most often received a rating of “major barrier” in response to “To what extent are the following a barrier to getting involved with (or continuing with) providing foster care?”*

# Black Americans are more likely than other Americans to think a lot about providing foster care (34% vs. 23%) but perceive unique barriers:

One-quarter of Black adults say that the amount of racial and ethnic discrimination they may face poses a major barrier to providing foster care.

Over one-third of Black Americans cite “the possibility the child was removed from their home for the wrong reasons” as a major barrier to providing foster care.

To what extent are the following a barrier to getting involved with (or continuing with) providing foster care?  
% Major barrier





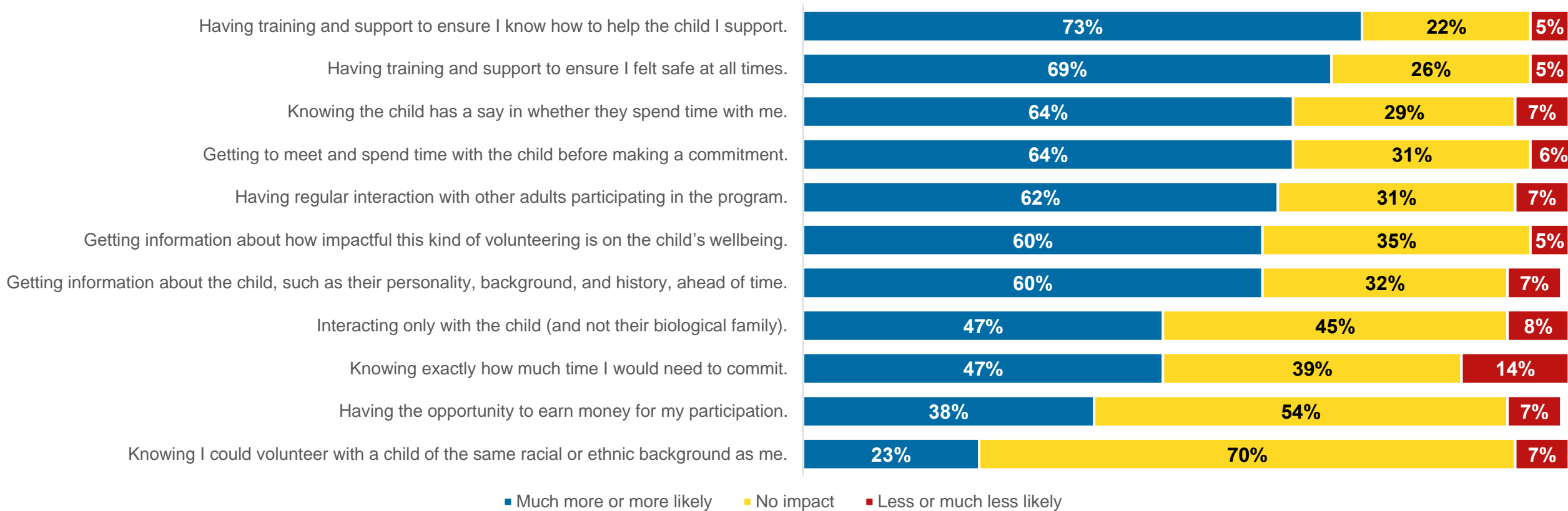
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# Interest in Programs to Work With Youth in Foster Care



# Sixteen percent of Americans have thought a lot about participating in a program to work with children in foster care, outside of formal foster care. About half of all adults (51%) were never aware that this type of opportunity existed.

Would any of the following factors make you more or less likely to consider (or continue) participating in a program working with a child in foster care?



Note. Categories may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Black adults are more likely than adults of other racial backgrounds to say they've participated in a program to work with children in foster care (16% vs. 10%).

Two in five Black adults say that knowing they could volunteer with a child of the same racial or ethnic background would make them more likely to consider participating.

Would any of the following factors make you more or less likely to consider (or continue) participating in a program working with a child in foster care?

*% Much more or more likely*

Knowing I could volunteer with a child of the same racial or ethnic background as me.



Having the opportunity to earn money for my participation.



Interacting only with the child (and not their biological family).



■ Black adults ■ Adults of all other racial backgrounds

DIFFERENCE

20%

8%

-6%



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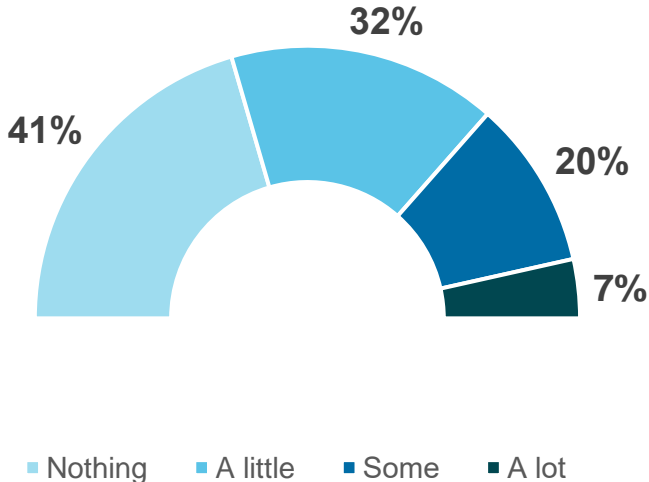
# Perceptions and Interest in **Adoption** From U.S. Foster Care



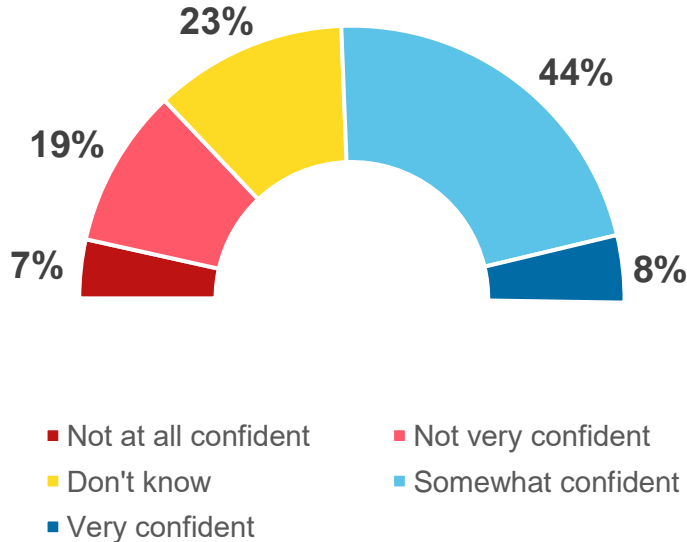


# Most Americans (73%) know little or nothing about adoption from foster care. About half are somewhat or very confident that adoption organizations are doing the right thing for children.

Generally speaking, how much do you know about the foster care system in the United States?

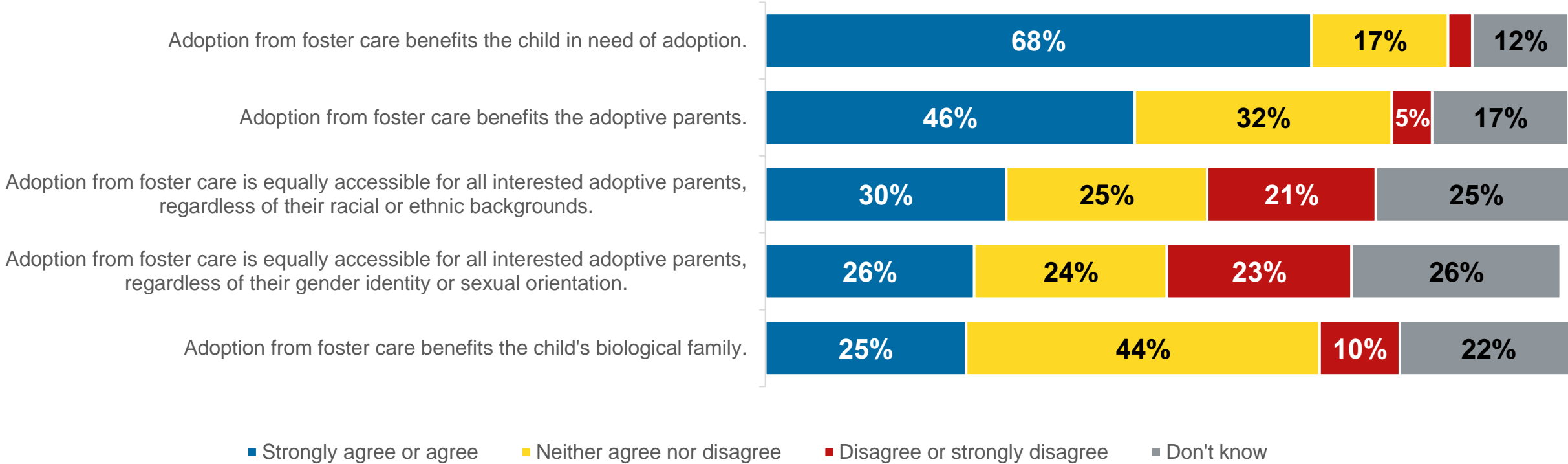


Overall, how would you rate your feelings toward the foster care system in the United States?



# About two-thirds of Americans agree that adoption from foster care benefits the child in need of adoption.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about adoption from the U.S. foster care system?

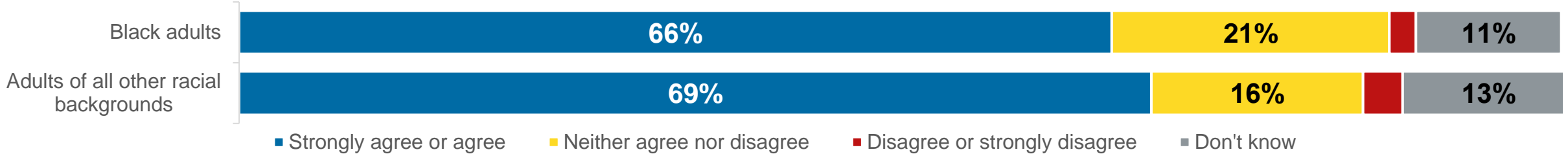


Note. Categories may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Numerical values shown when 5% or higher.

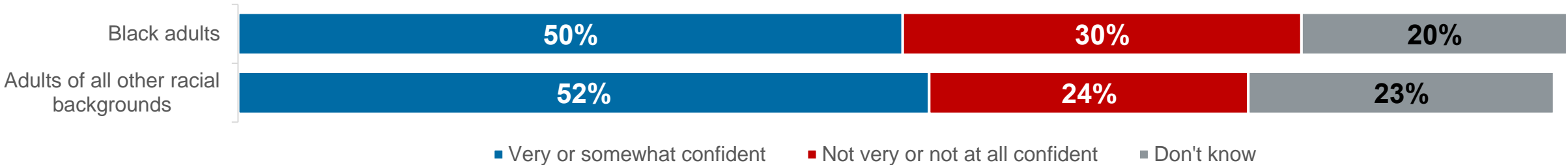
# Black Americans show more uncertainty about the benefits of adoption to children than Americans of other racial backgrounds.

Twenty-one percent of Black Americans say they neither agree nor disagree that adoption benefits the child, compared with 16% of Americans of other racial backgrounds. Similarly, 30% of Black Americans are not very or not at all confident that organizations that facilitate adoptions do the right thing for children, compared with 24% of those of others racial backgrounds.

Adoption from foster care benefits the child in need of adoption.



How confident are you that organizations that facilitate adoption from foster care do the right thing for children in need of adoption?

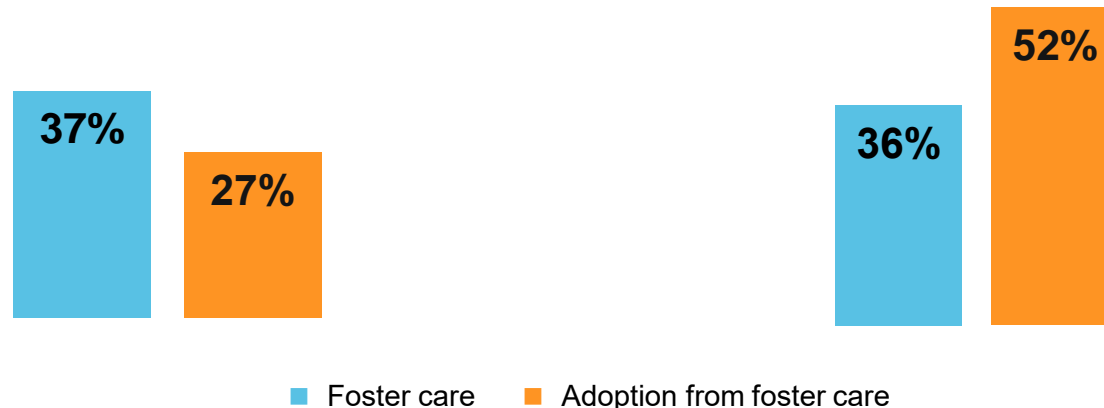


Note. Categories may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Numerical values shown when 5% or higher.

# Adoption is less understood than foster care but has a more positive reputation.

Americans know less about adoption from foster care but feel more positive about it compared with the foster care system itself. Half (52%) of adults are somewhat or very confident that organizations that facilitate adoption do the right thing for children, compared with 36% who say the same about the U.S. foster care system. Americans also know less about adoption from foster care than they do about the foster care system.

Generally speaking, how much do you know about adoption from the foster care system/the foster care system in the United States?  
*% A lot or some*



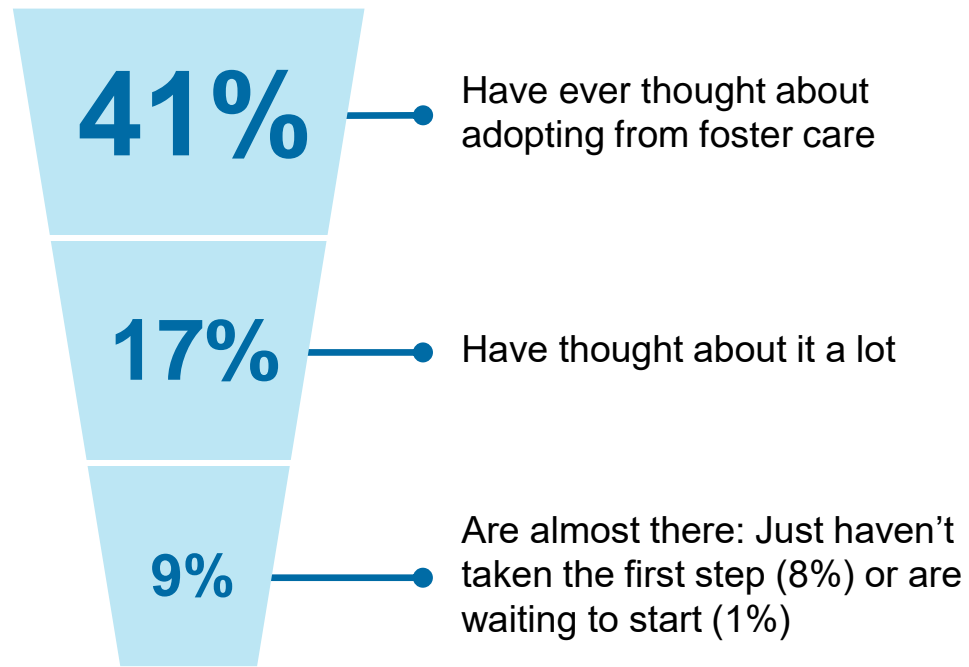
How confident are you that the organizations that facilitate adoption/the U.S. foster care system do/does the right thing for children in need of adoption/care?  
*% Very or somewhat confident*

Similarly, while 68% of adults agree adoption from foster care benefits the child in need of adoption, just 43% of adults agree that the foster care system helps more than harms children in its care.

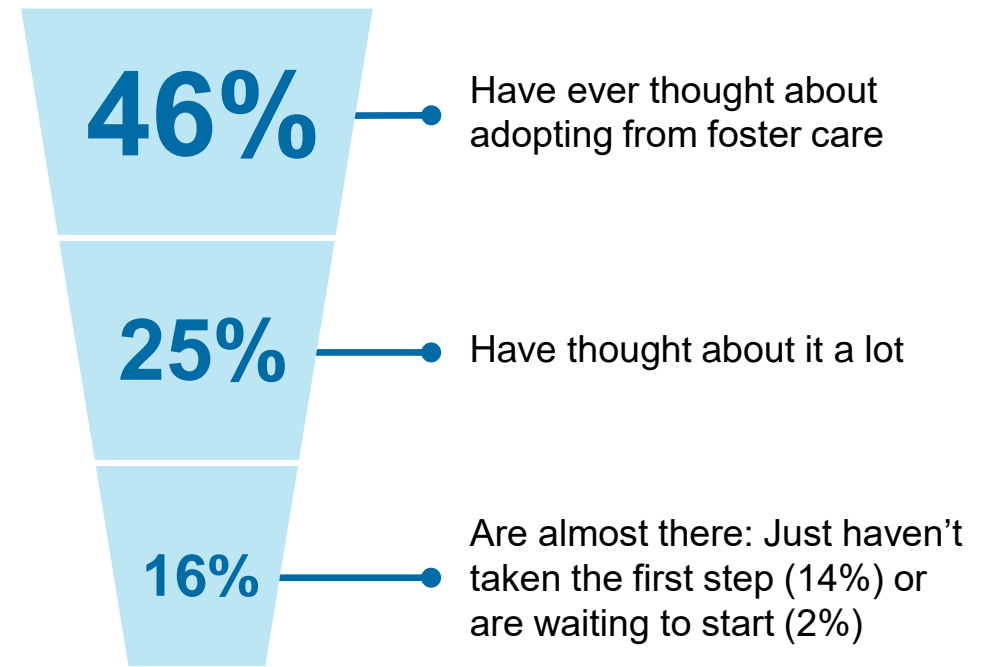
# 17% of all Americans say they've thought a lot about adopting a child from U.S. foster care, but roughly half decided not to.

Within the 8% who thought a lot about adopting from foster care but decided not to, about **one-quarter decided to adopt outside the U.S. foster care system** (the rest decided not to adopt at all).

## Among all Americans



## Among Black Americans





## Top 5 Most Common Barriers to Adopting from Foster Care\* Among All Americans

*% Major barrier*

1. My age or stage in life. **57%**
2. My current work or family situation. **46%**
3. My desire to add a child or have children (i.e., I do not want a child or more children). **42%**
4. The changes I would have to make to my home or living situation to adopt from foster care. **41%**
5. The possibility the biological parent(s) would be able to re-claim the child after the child was living with me. (Tied with “The possibility the child was removed from their home for the wrong reasons.”) **40%**

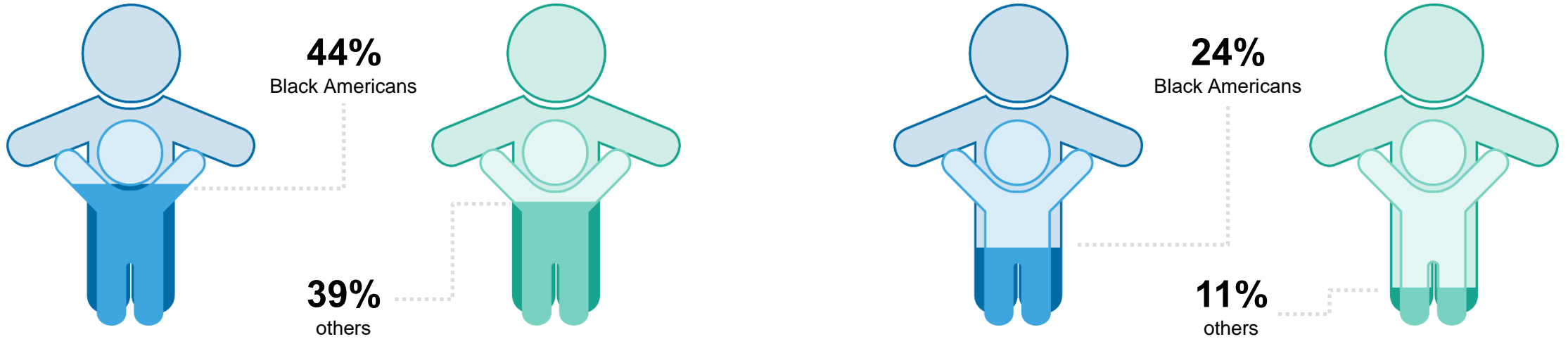
## Top 5 Most Common Barriers to Adopting from Foster Care\* Among Black Americans

*% Major barrier*

1. My age or stage in life. **44%**
2. The possibility the child was removed from their home for the wrong reasons. **44%**
3. The difficulty of parenting a child who has experienced trauma, grief, or loss. **42%**
4. My current work or family situation. **41%**
5. The changes I would have to make to my home or living situation to adopt from foster care. **39%**

*\*Selected based on the barriers which most often received a rating of “major barrier” in response to “To what extent are the following a barrier to potentially adopting a child from foster care in the U.S.?”*

# Racial bias in the foster care system is a barrier to adoption.



Forty-four percent of Black Americans say the possibility the child was **removed from their home for the wrong reasons** is a major barrier to adopting from foster care (compared with 39% of others).

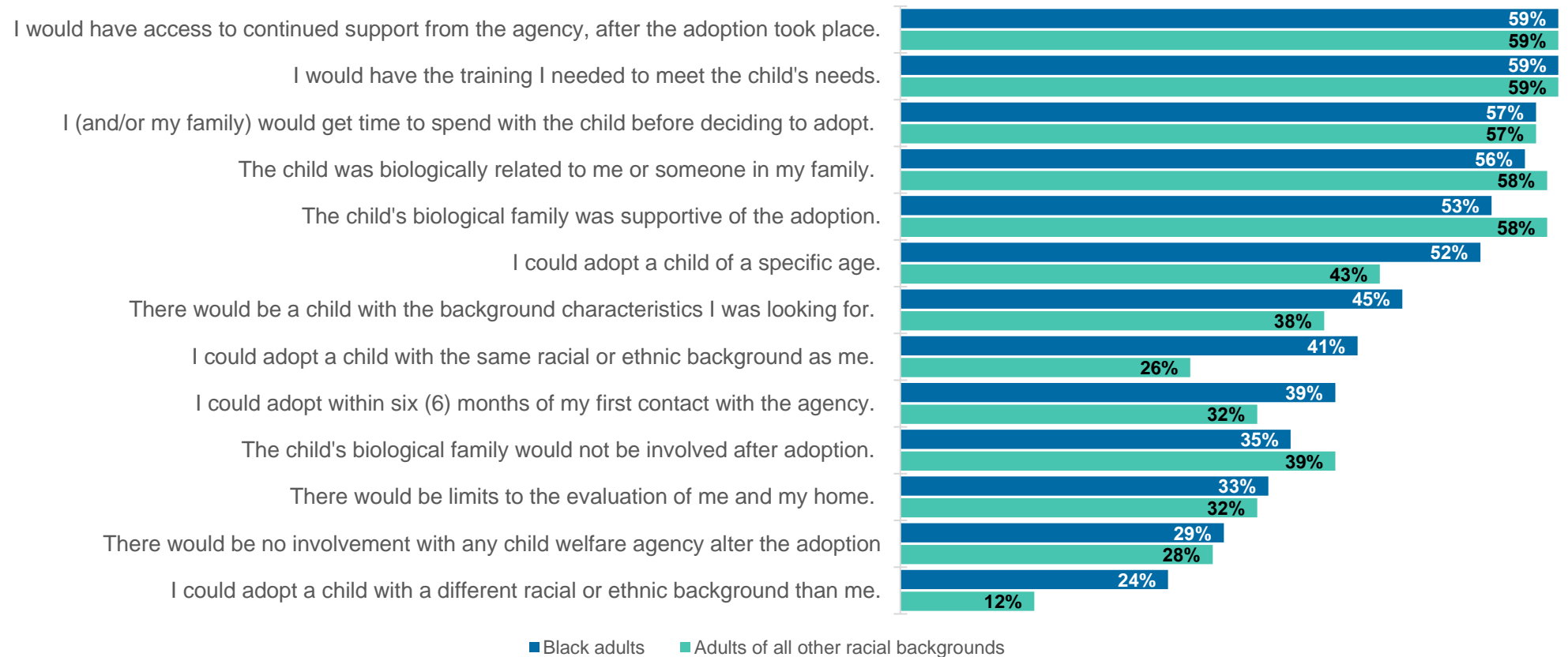
Twenty-four percent of Black Americans say the **racial and ethnic discrimination** they might face in the adoption process is a major barrier to adopting from foster care (compared with 11% of others).

**Like the barriers to providing foster care, Black Americans are less likely than Americans of other racial backgrounds to say their age or stage in life is a major barrier to adoption from foster care (44% vs. 59%).**

# Support and training top the list of factors that make Americans more likely to consider adoption through foster care, which is true for Americans of all racial backgrounds.

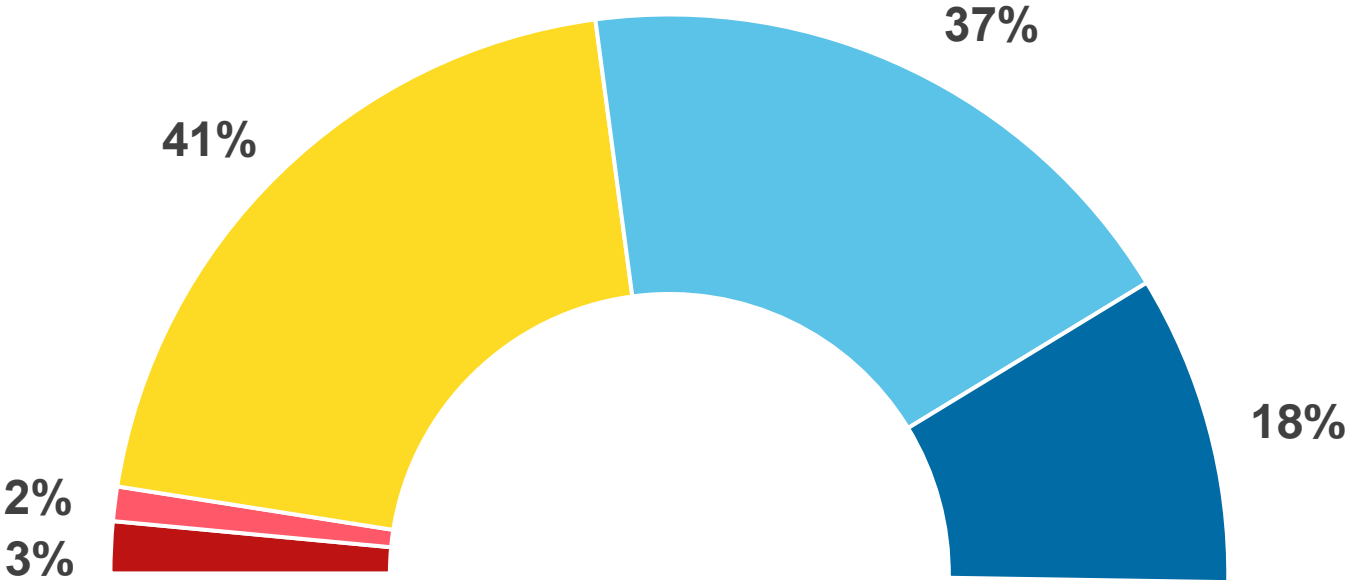
If the following were true, would it make you more or less likely to consider adoption through foster care in the U.S.? If I knew ...

*% More likely or much more likely*



# About one in six Americans say hosting a child temporarily would make them a lot more likely to consider adoption through foster care.

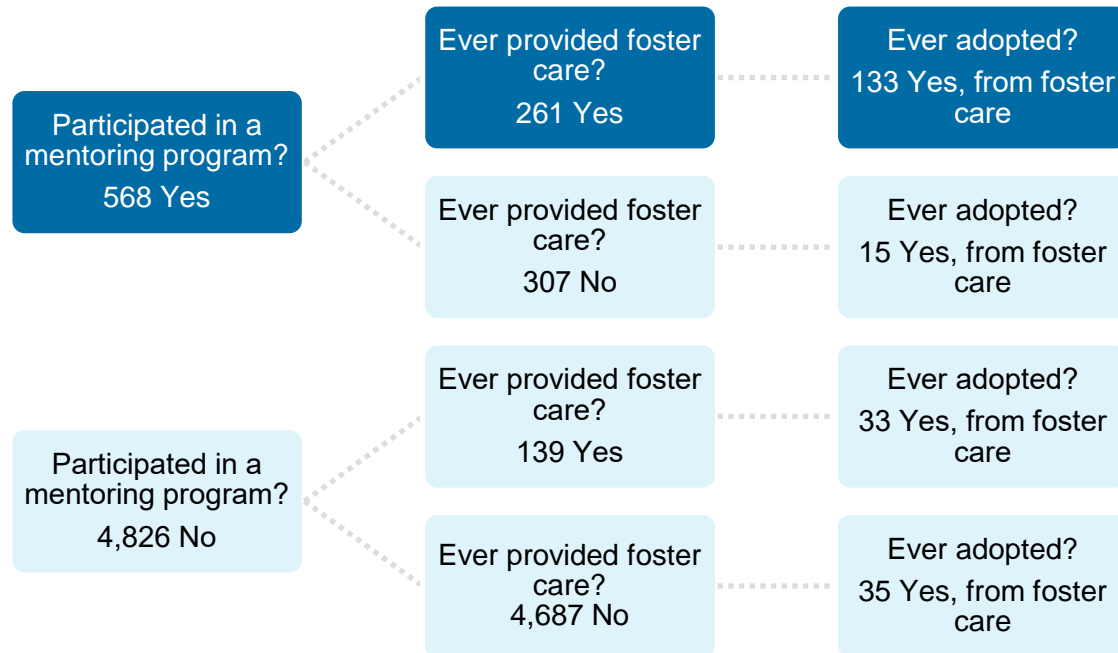
If you were able to temporarily host a child in your home before deciding to pursue adoption (not foster care), would it make you more or less likely to consider adoption through foster care?



■ A lot less likely to adopt   ■ Somewhat less likely to adopt   ■ No change   ■ Somewhat more likely to adopt   ■ A lot more likely to adopt

# Mentorship programs may lead to adoption: about one-quarter (26%) of those who have participated in a mentoring program have also adopted a child from foster care.

Almost half (46%) of those who participated in a mentor program have also provided foster care, and 41% of foster parents say they've also adopted from foster care.



Providing foster care is the strongest predictor of adopting from foster care. **But among those who have never provided foster care, participating in a mentorship program still increases the odds of adopting from foster care by 7 times.**

*Note.* Weighted counts in the three-way chart do not match the overall portion who have mentored, provided foster care, or adopted from foster care due to differences in the number of respondents who answered each item. Accordingly, percentages presented here may not exactly match division of n sizes also presented.



# Methodology

Data for this study were collected using both mail and web surveys in March through April 2023. A total of 5,469 surveys were collected. 3,967 responses were collected using the Gallup Panel, a probability-based panel that selects respondents using random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover both mobile and landline phones (as well as some address-based sampling recruitment). In order to obtain sufficient responses from Black Americans and others, an additional 1,502 responses were collected through a third-party opt-in sample provider. All web responses were collected using the same platform.

The Gallup Panel and opt-in samples were weighted independently and then combined using composite weighting procedures. Base weights for the Panel data were generated to correct for unequal selection probabilities. Post-stratification weights were then used to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity and education, with cross-classified targets within race. Demographic weighting targets were based on the most recent Current Population Survey estimates for the age 18+ population.

The adjusted margin of error (adjusted for design effect) for the 5,469 overall respondents was  $\pm 2.0$  percentage points. For the 1,563 Black or African American respondents the adjusted margin of error was  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points, and for adults of all other racial backgrounds (those who selected White, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or other as their race) it was  $\pm 2.2$  percentage points. Black or African American respondents were defined as anyone who selected “Black or African American” as their race.

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