



Texas Secondary Analysis Report of the Kidsave-Gallup National Study “Americans’ Views of U.S. Foster Care”

In collaboration with Gallup, Kidsave’s EMBRACE Project conducted a national study on American’s perspectives of foster care to better understand and find solutions for the overrepresentation of Black children in the foster care system. In 2020, Black children made up 23% of all kids in foster care in the U.S., even though they only represent 14% of the total child population, according to the 2021 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). This secondary analysis report of the national study focuses on Texan Americans’ perspectives of foster care.

Methodology

Data for this study were first collected by Gallup as part of the Kidsave-Gallup Study, “Americans’ Views of U.S. Foster Care: Elevating Black Americans’ Perspectives and Experiences” (Gallup). The full methodology for the study can be found in the report on the Kidsave EMBRACE website. This state-level report is a secondary analysis of that data, conducted by Kidsave, analyzing the responses of 449 Texans.

Why Focus on Texas?

As one of the largest states in the nation, it is understandable that Texas would have a large child welfare system. However, the size of the system is not the major area of concern. For years, the state of Texas has struggled to house the more than 25,000 youth in care ([Flahive, 2024](#)).

Black youth are disproportionately represented in foster care both nationally and in Texas. Despite making up only 12.2% of the child population in Texas in 2021, Black youth made up 21.4% of the youth in foster care. Additionally, of the total 11,600+ kids in foster care in Texas waiting to be adopted, 21% of them are Black ([AFCARS Report: Texas, 2022](#)).

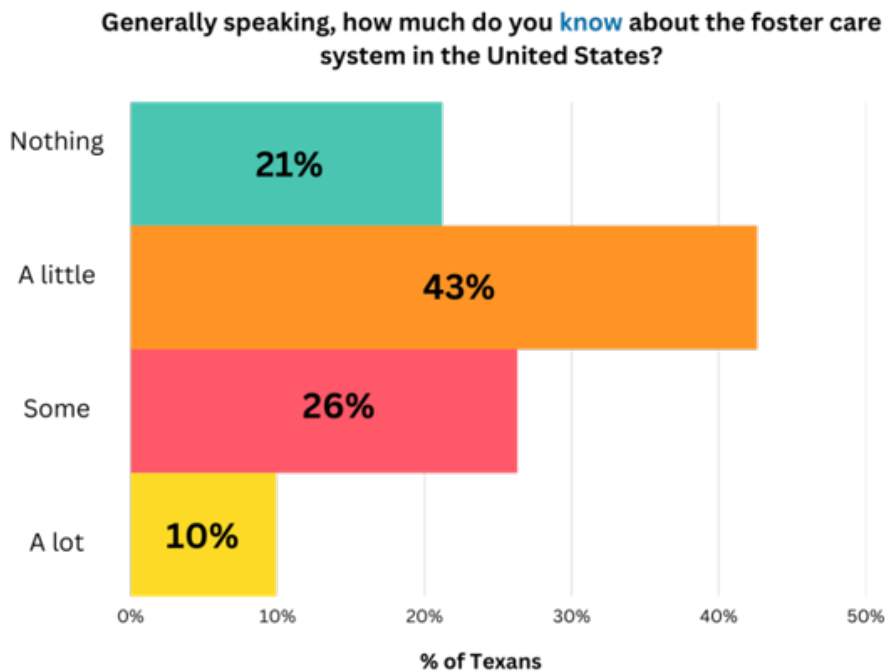
Our goal with this state-level sub-report is to learn more about Texans’ confidence in and perceptions of the foster care system, adoption from foster care, and barriers preventing Texans from positively engaging in mentoring, fostering, and adopting youth in foster care. With these learnings in mind, recommendations for actionable steps can be made for community leaders, child welfare practitioners, and policymakers to help improve outcomes for the 25,000+ kids—many of whom are children of color—languishing in foster care.

Key Findings

- 64% of Texans reported that they know little to nothing about the U.S. foster care system; over half (51%) reported that they are not at all or not very confident that the U.S. foster care system does the right thing for children in need of care.
- 44% of Texans said that not having enough access to mental health resources is a major barrier to providing foster care.
- 42% of Texans indicated that the possibility the biological parents would be able to reclaim the child after the child was living with them was a major barrier to adopting. It was also a *top* barrier for 11% of Texans.
- 1 out of 10 Texan respondents have participated in a program to work with children in foster care. 45% of Texans have thought about participating in a program to work with children in foster care, but almost half (47%) did not know such programs existed.
- 71% said having training and support to ensure they could adequately support the child would make them more likely to participate in a program to work with children in foster care.

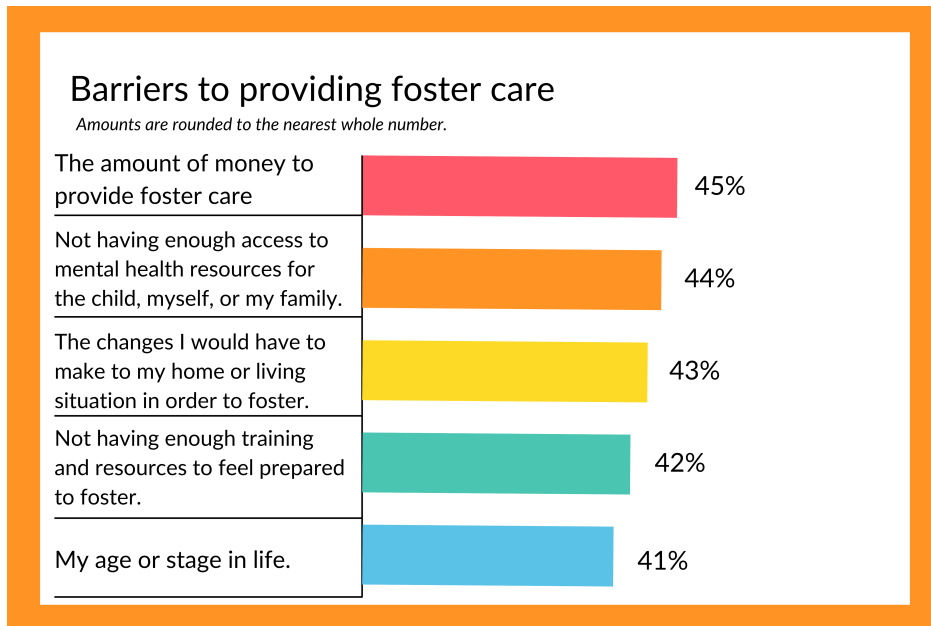
The following are key findings from the sub analysis conducted on Texans' responses when asked questions regarding their personal perceptions of, confidence levels in, and barriers to engaging with the U.S. foster care and adoption systems.

Figure 1: Texans' knowledge level of the U.S. foster care system



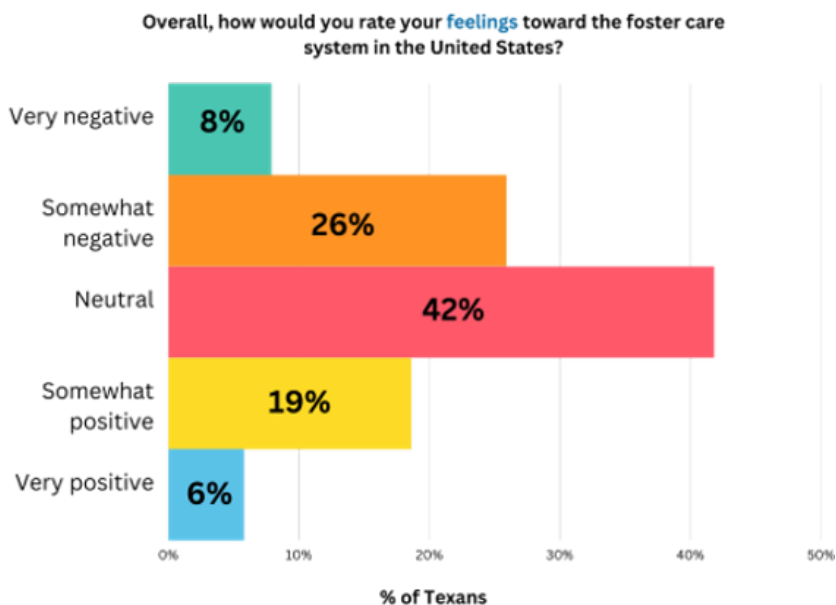
When asked about their knowledge of the foster care system in the United States, the majority of Texans (64%) reported knowing either “a little” or “nothing” whereas the minority (36%) reported knowing “some” or “a lot.”

Figure 2: Texans’ top barriers to providing foster care



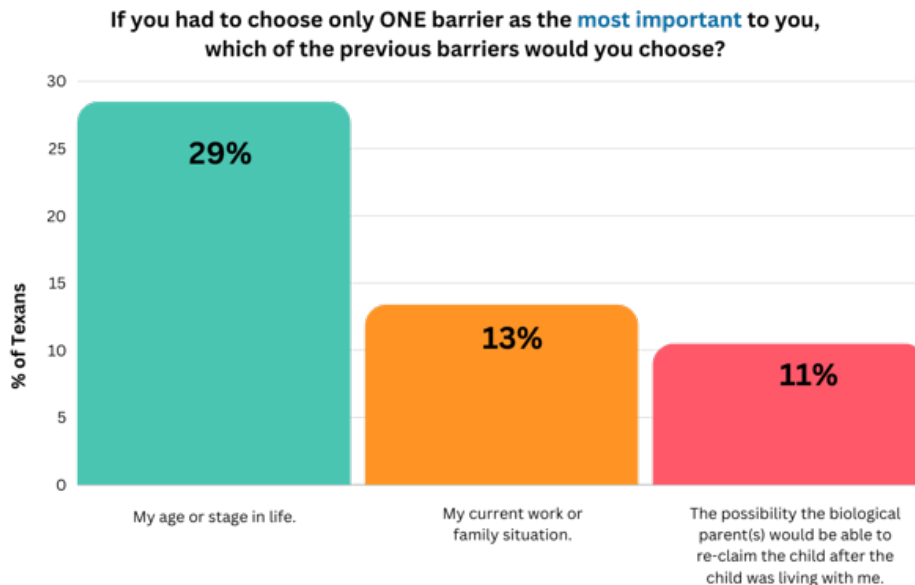
When asked to rank the top barriers preventing them providing foster care, 44% of Texans said, “Not having enough access to mental health resources for the child, myself, or my family” was the second most significant barrier. Similarly, 42% of Texans said, “Not having enough training and resources to feel prepared to foster,” was the fourth biggest barrier.

Figure 3: Texans’ feelings toward the U.S. foster care system



Texan respondents reported a lack of knowledge about the foster care system in the United States, but when asked to rate their feelings toward the system, only 25% of them reported feeling “somewhat” or “very” positive about it. 34% reported feeling “somewhat” or “very” negative, but the majority were neutral at 42%.

Figure 4: Texans’ major barriers to providing foster care



Texan respondents (42%) listed the fear that the biological parents might be able to reclaim the child after the child was living with them as a major barrier to adopting from foster care. When asked to choose one barrier as the most important, 11% said it was their top barrier.

Conclusion

While Texans report high interest in providing foster care and participating in programs to work with children in foster care, they have low knowledge of the foster care system and low confidence in whether it does the right thing for children in need. This shows a need for more education and awareness about foster care and trust building between the foster care system and Texas communities.

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

Additionally, Texans report a fear that biological parents may reclaim a child after living with them. Over 40% indicated that this would be a major barrier to adopting a child, and over a tenth chose it as their top barrier when asked to choose one. More education about adoption from foster care, termination of parental rights, and assistance throughout the fostering processes could help Texans feel more at ease about their futures with their new families. Most

Texans (over 70%) also do not know whether they are eligible to provide foster care, so more education regarding eligibility criteria could lead to more families providing foster care in Texas. Texan respondents expressed an interest in participating in programs to work with children in foster care—according to the Kidsave-Gallup Study, “Americans’ Views of U.S. Foster Care,” participation in such programs increases the likelihood of fostering and adopting from foster care.

Sources

Administration For Children and Families. (2022, June 28). *The AFCARS Report: Texas*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcars-tar-tx-2021.pdf>

Flahive, P. (2024, February 15). *Texas foster care system placement crisis indicative of deeper reform issues*. Texas Public Radio. <https://www.tpr.org/news/2024-01-26/texas-foster-care-system-placement-crisis-indicative-of-deeper-reform-issues>

Gallup, Inc., & Kidsave, (2024, July 8). *Americans' Views of U.S. Foster Care: Elevating Black Americans' Perspectives and Experiences*. <https://s43633.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Americans-Views-of-U.S.-Foster-Care-Kidsave-Gallup-Report-Web-v2.pdf>



Kidsave-Gallup Study Texas Secondary Analysis Report

January 2024

METHODOLOGY

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- Data for this study were first collected by Gallup as part of the Kidsave-Gallup Study, “Americans’ Views of U.S. Foster Care.” The full methodology for the study can be found in the report on the Kidsave website.
 - This state-level report is a secondary analysis of that data, conducted by Kidsave, using new weighting procedures for state-level estimates.
 - In the original study, data were collected using both mail and web in March through April 2023. Respondents were primarily identified through the Gallup Panel, a probability-based panel. About one-quarter of respondents were identified through a third-party opt-in sample. Gallup conducted weighting to ensure that the national sample matched national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity and education, with cross-classified targets within race.

METHODOLOGY

- As part of the current study, Kidsave conducted post-stratification weighting to adjust the national-level weights to state-level demographic targets.
- Demographic weighting targets were based on the most recent Current Population Survey estimates for the age 18+ population.
- For the **449** Texas respondents, the adjusted margin of error was ± 7.6 percentage points.

Why the Focus on Texas

Why Texas?

As one of the largest states in the nation, it is understandable that Texas would have a large child welfare system. However, the size of the system is not the major area of concern. For years, the state of Texas has struggled to house the over 25,000 youth in care.

Black youth continue to be disproportionately represented in foster care both nationally and in the state of Texas.

Despite making up only 12.2% of the child population in Texas in 2021, Black youth made up 21.4% of youth in foster care ([AFCARS, Texas](#)).

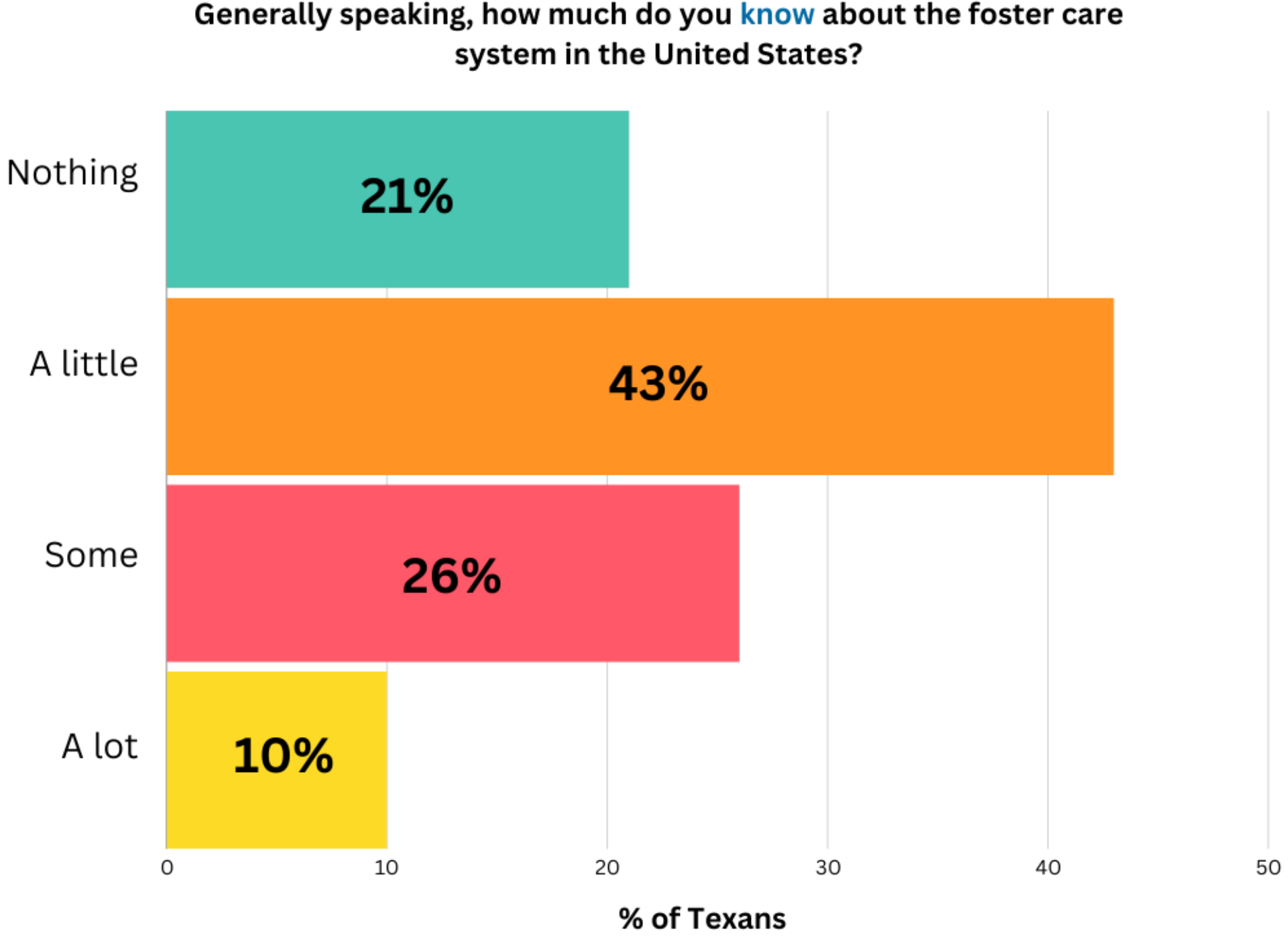
Additionally, of the 11,600+ kids in foster care in Texas waiting to be adopted, 19% of them are Black ([AFCARS, Texas](#)).

We believe that by learning more about Texans' perceptions of the foster care system and adoption from foster care, we can hopefully help bridge the gap between the community and the 15,000+ kids—who are mostly children of color—languishing in foster care.

The foster care system:

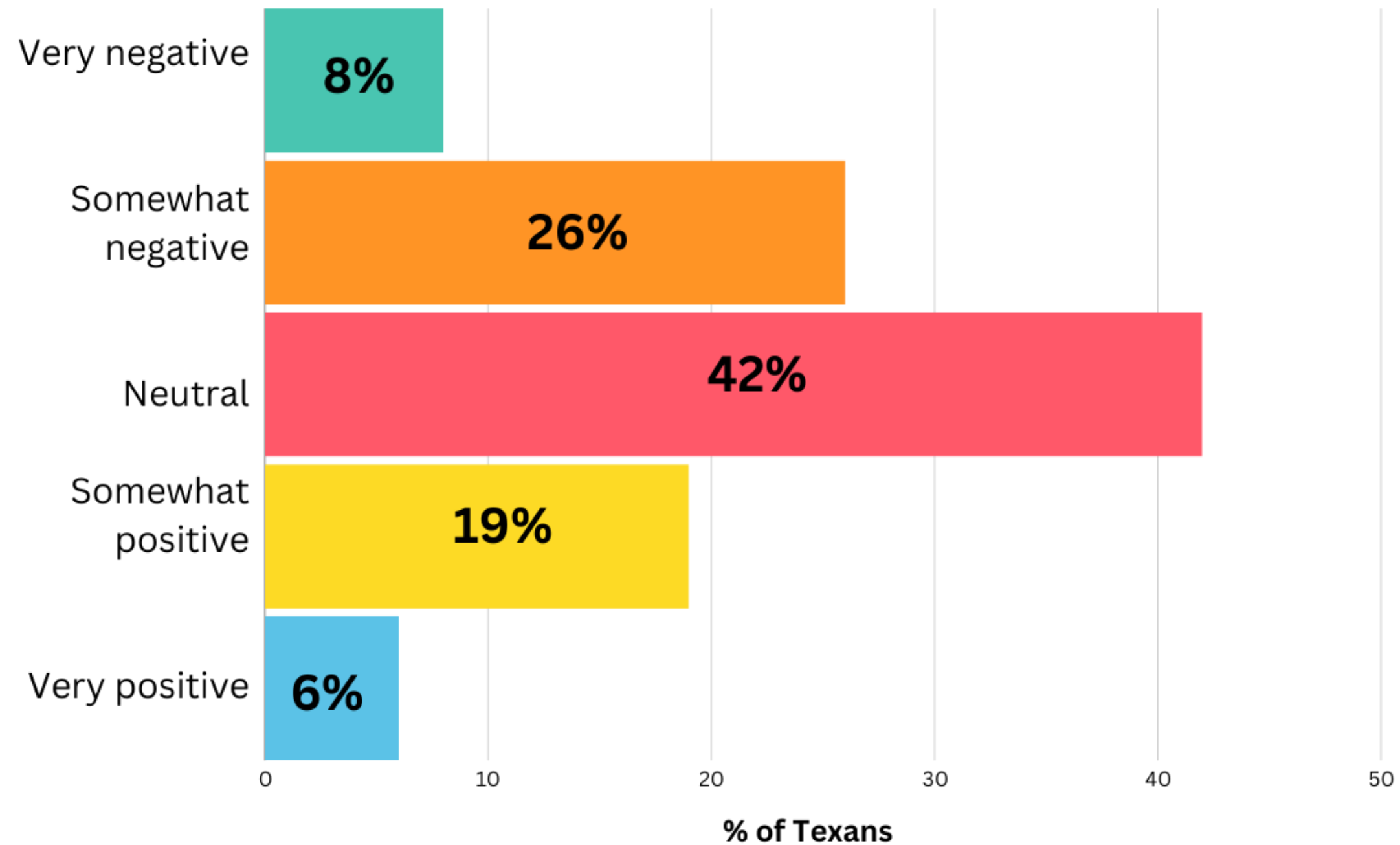
Perceptions, barriers, and interest

Texans know little about the foster care system



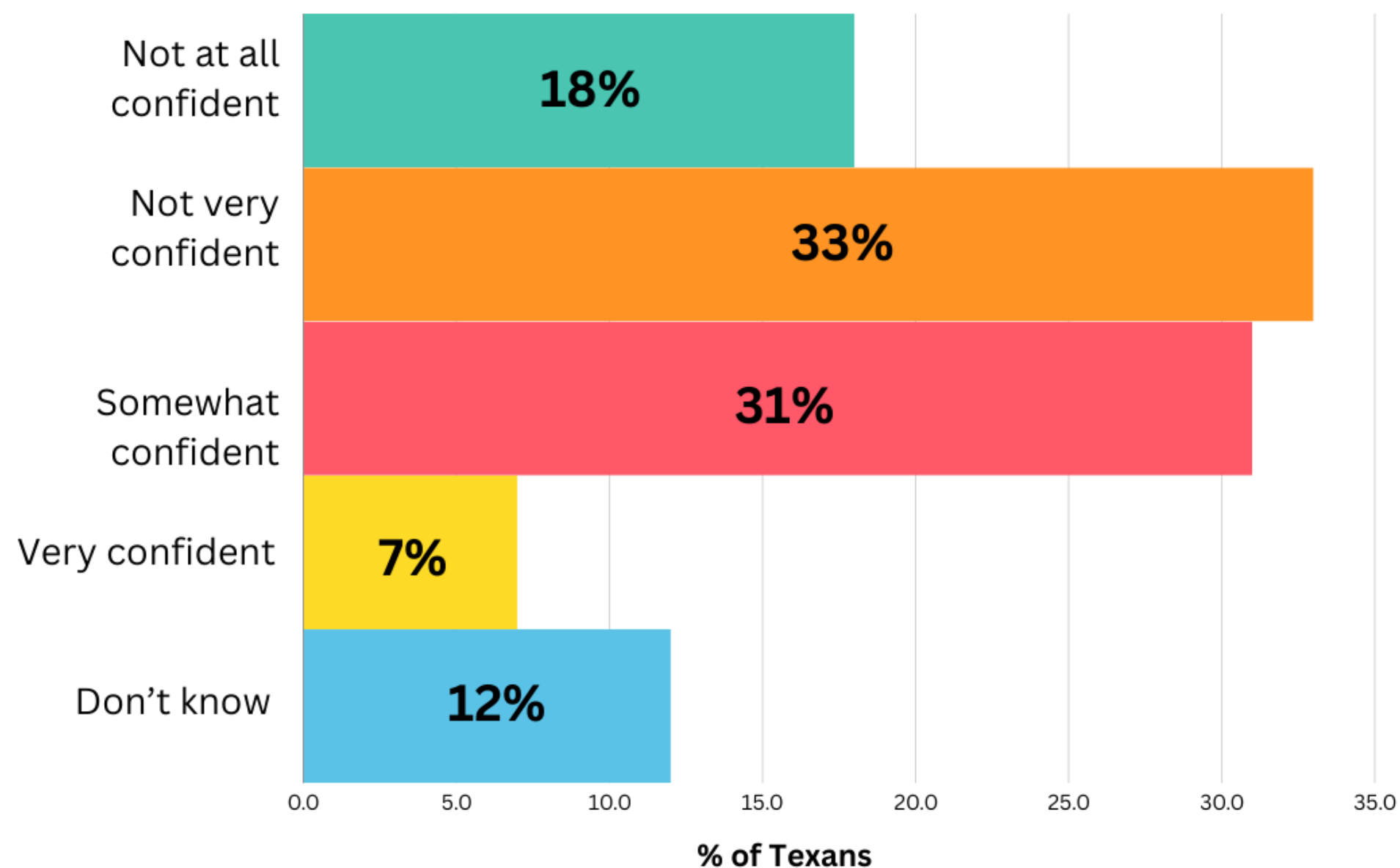
Just one in four Texans have a positive view of the foster care system

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

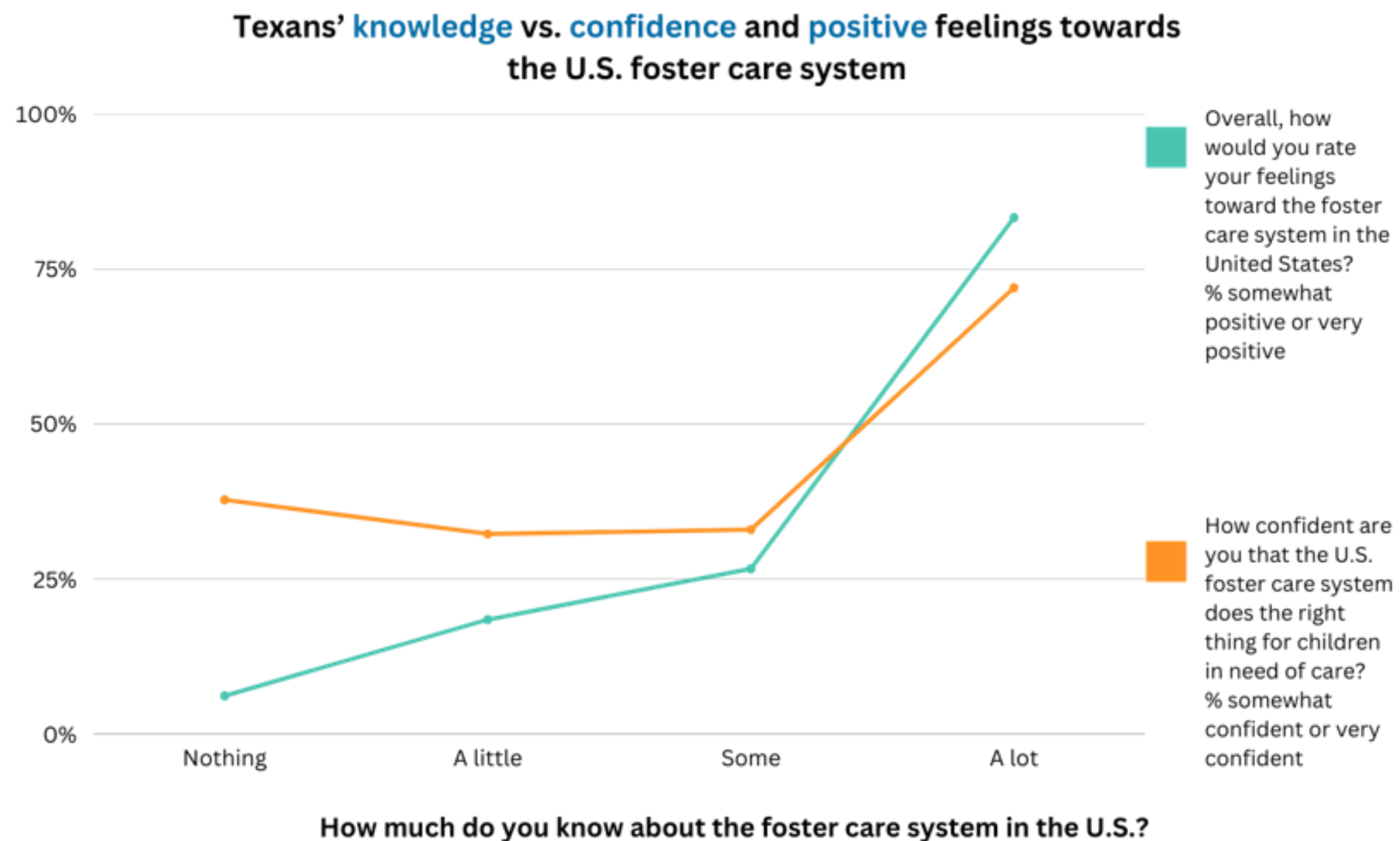


And over half are not at all confident or not very confident in the system

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

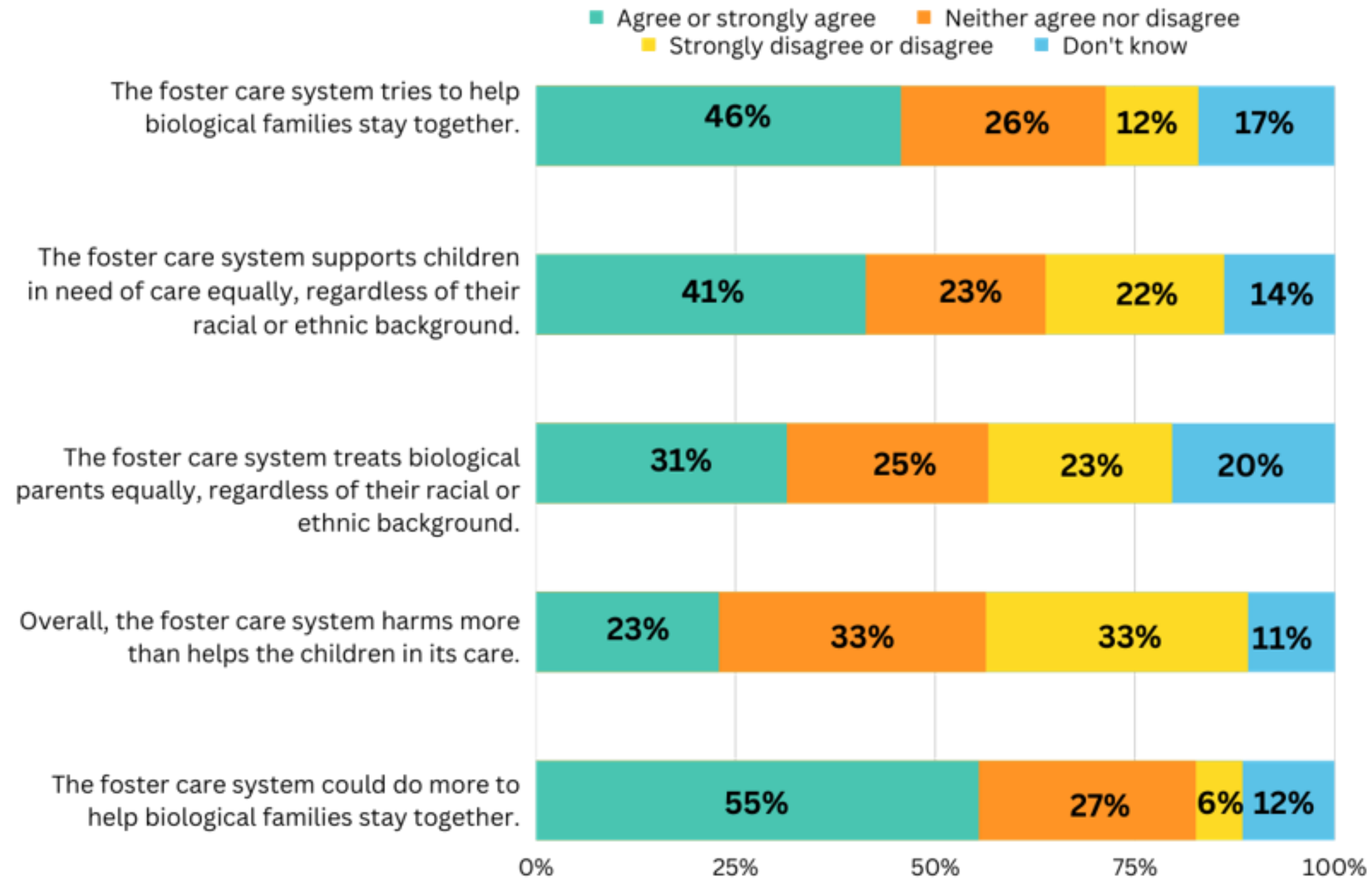


Generally, more knowledge about the system relates to more positive feelings and confidence in it



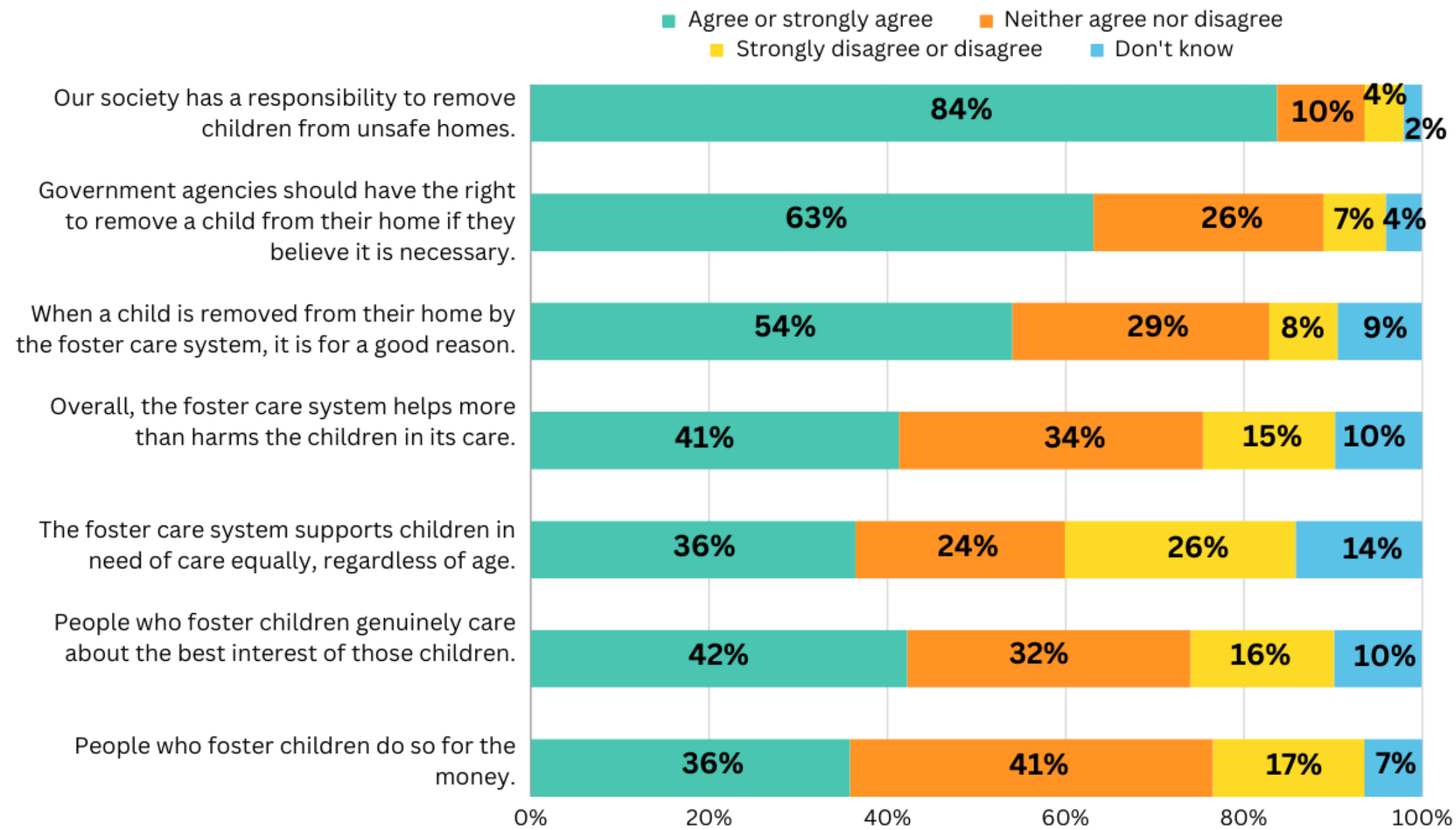
Most Texans believe the foster care system could do more

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



Most Texans believe the foster care system has certain responsibilities

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Barriers to providing foster care

Top 5 Most Common Barriers to Providing Foster Care Among Texans

% Major barrier

1. The amount of money required to provide foster care. **44.7%**
2. Not having enough access to mental health resources for the child, myself, or my family. **43.7%**
3. The changes I would have to make to my home or living situation in order to foster. **42.5%**
4. Not having enough training and resources to feel prepared to foster. **42.3%**
5. My age or stage in life. **41.4%**

Training and resources are significant barriers to providing foster care

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.

Not having enough access to mental health resources for the child, myself, or my family.



The possibility the child will have behavioral or emotional challenges.



Not having enough training and resources to feel prepared to foster.

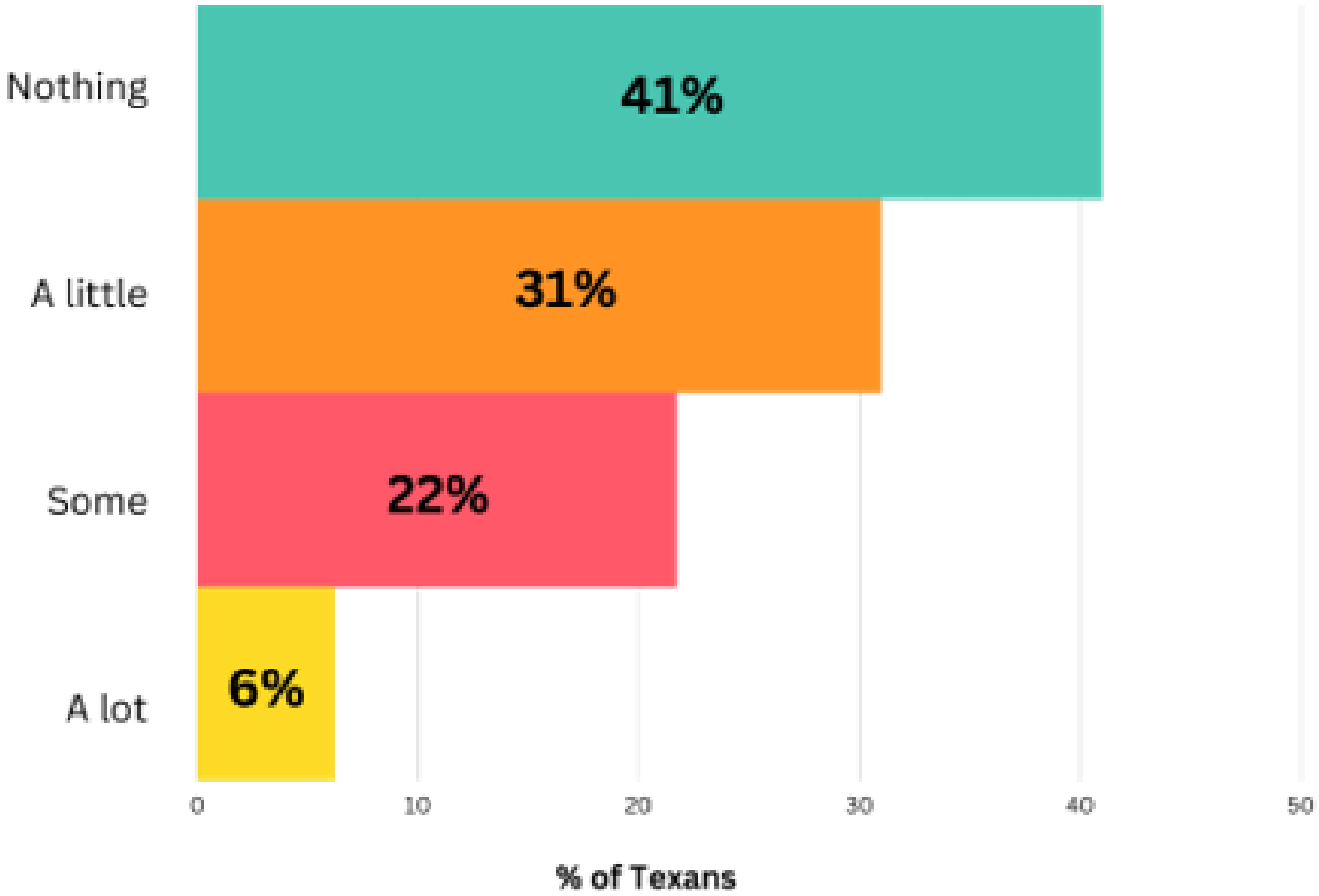


Adoption from foster care:

Perceptions, barriers, and interest

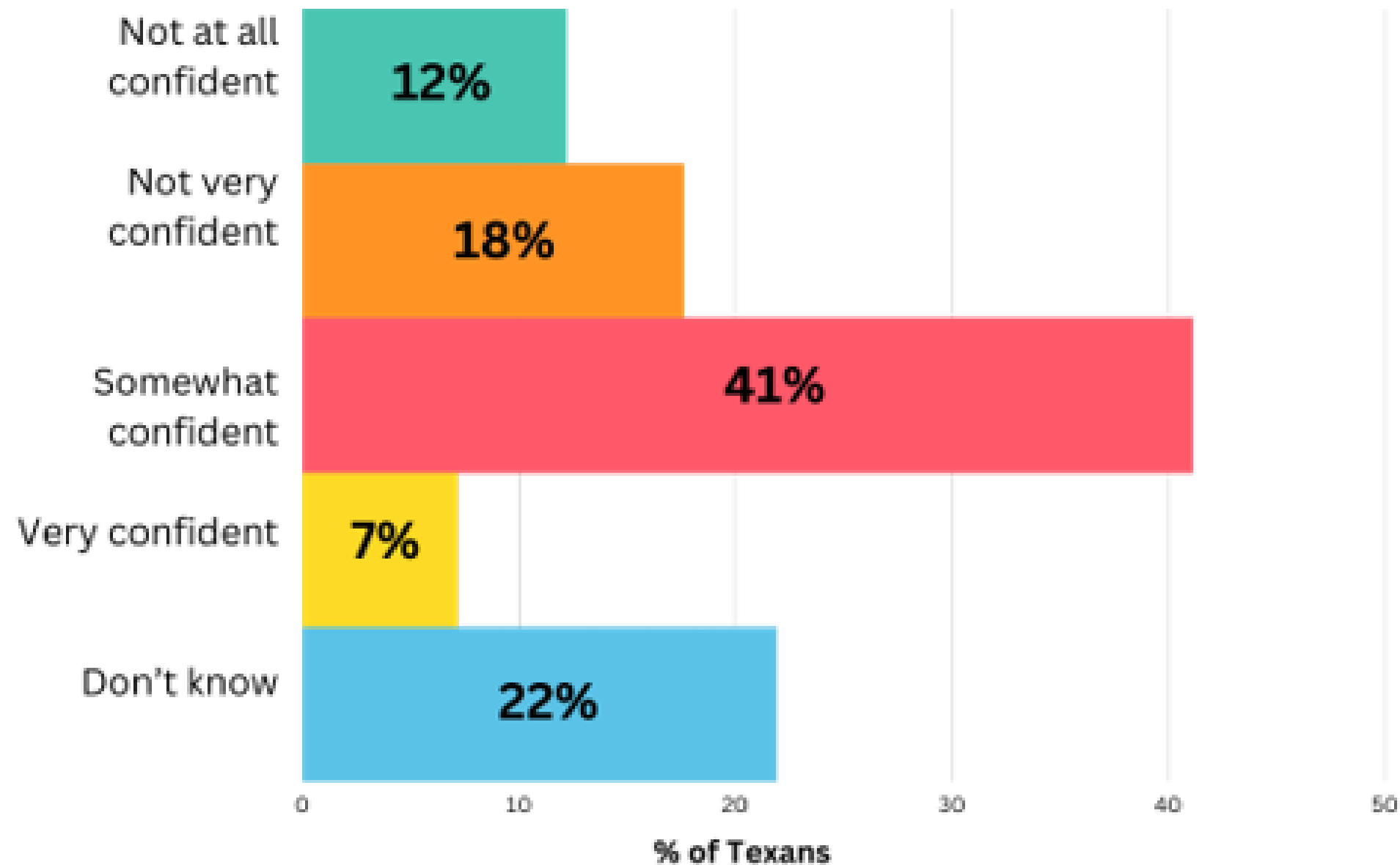
Texans also know little to nothing about adoption from the foster care system...

Generally speaking, how much do you know about adoption from the foster care system?



..but are **somewhat confident** in organizations that facilitate adoption

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



Barriers to adopting from foster care

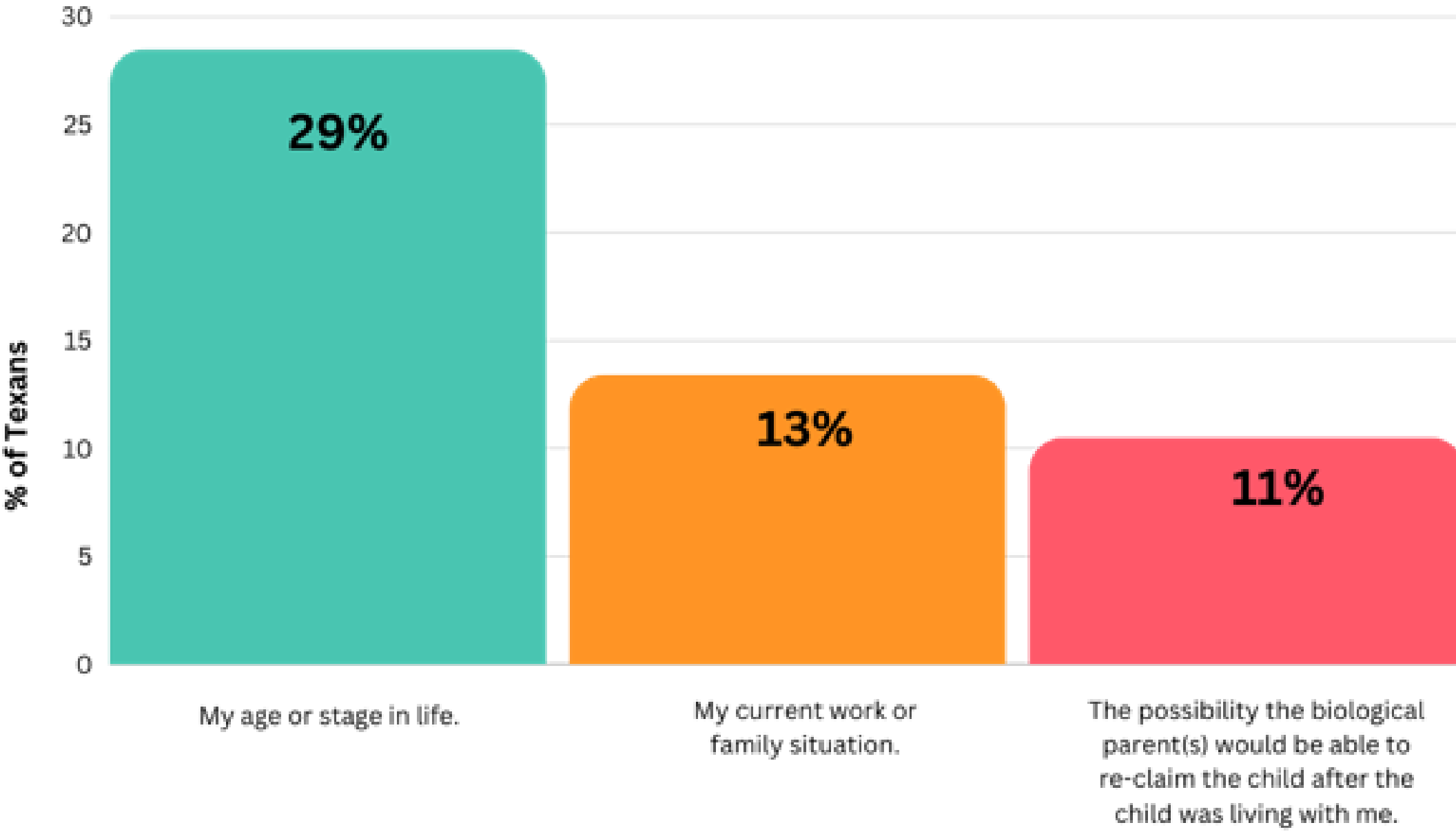
Top 5 Most Common Barriers to Adopting from Foster Care Among Texans

% Major barrier

1. My age or stage in life. **56.2%**
2. My current work or family situation. **44.8%**
3. The possibility the biological parent(s) would be able to re-claim the child after the child was living with me. **41.8%**
4. The possibility the child was removed from their home for the wrong reasons. **39.7%**
5. The changes I would have to make to my home or living situation in order to foster. **38.3%**

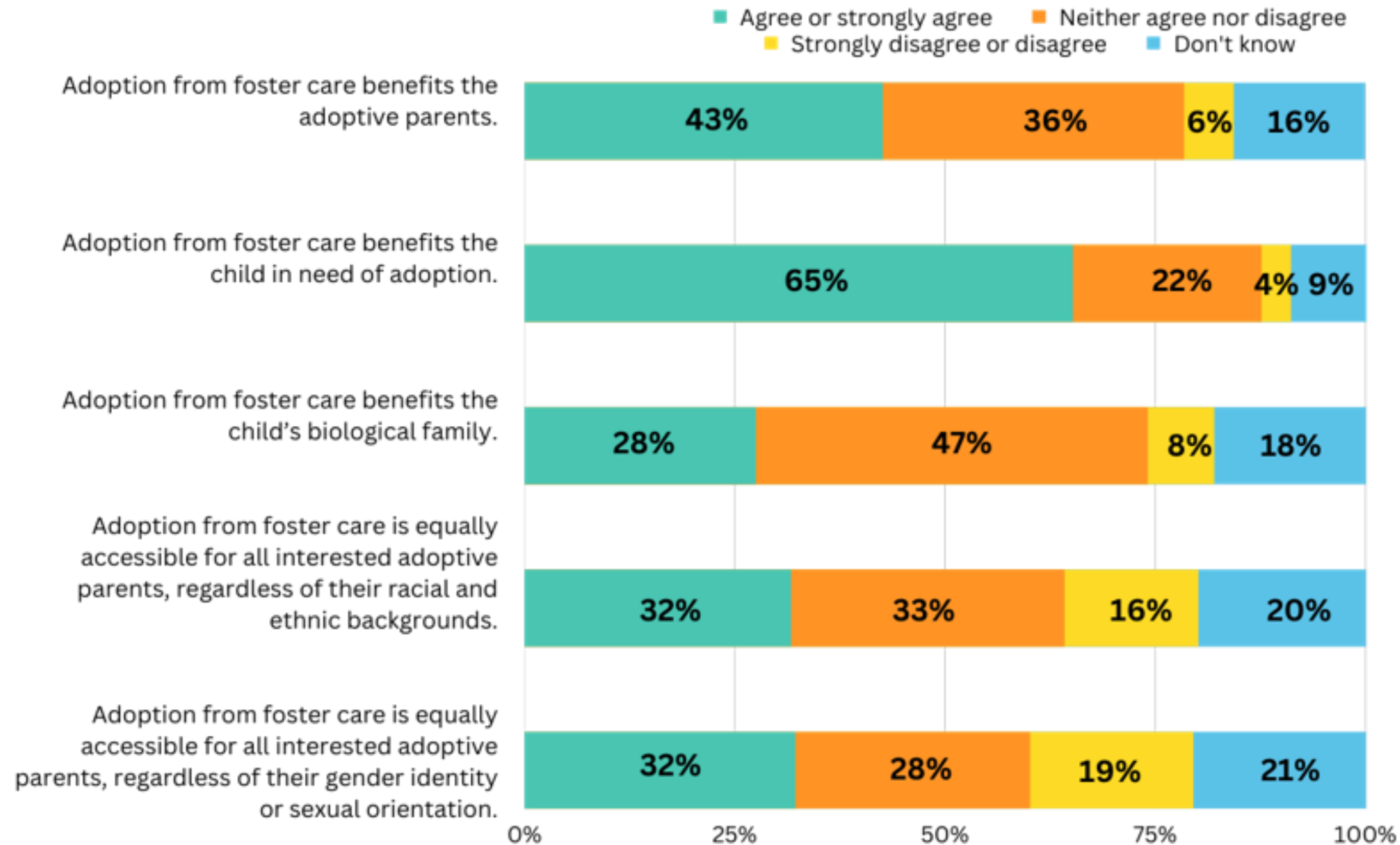
Texans also cite "age or stage in life" and "work/family situation" as their top barriers to adopting

If you had to choose only ONE barrier as the most important to you, which of the previous barriers would you choose?



Not many Texans believe adoption is an equally accessible or equally beneficial process

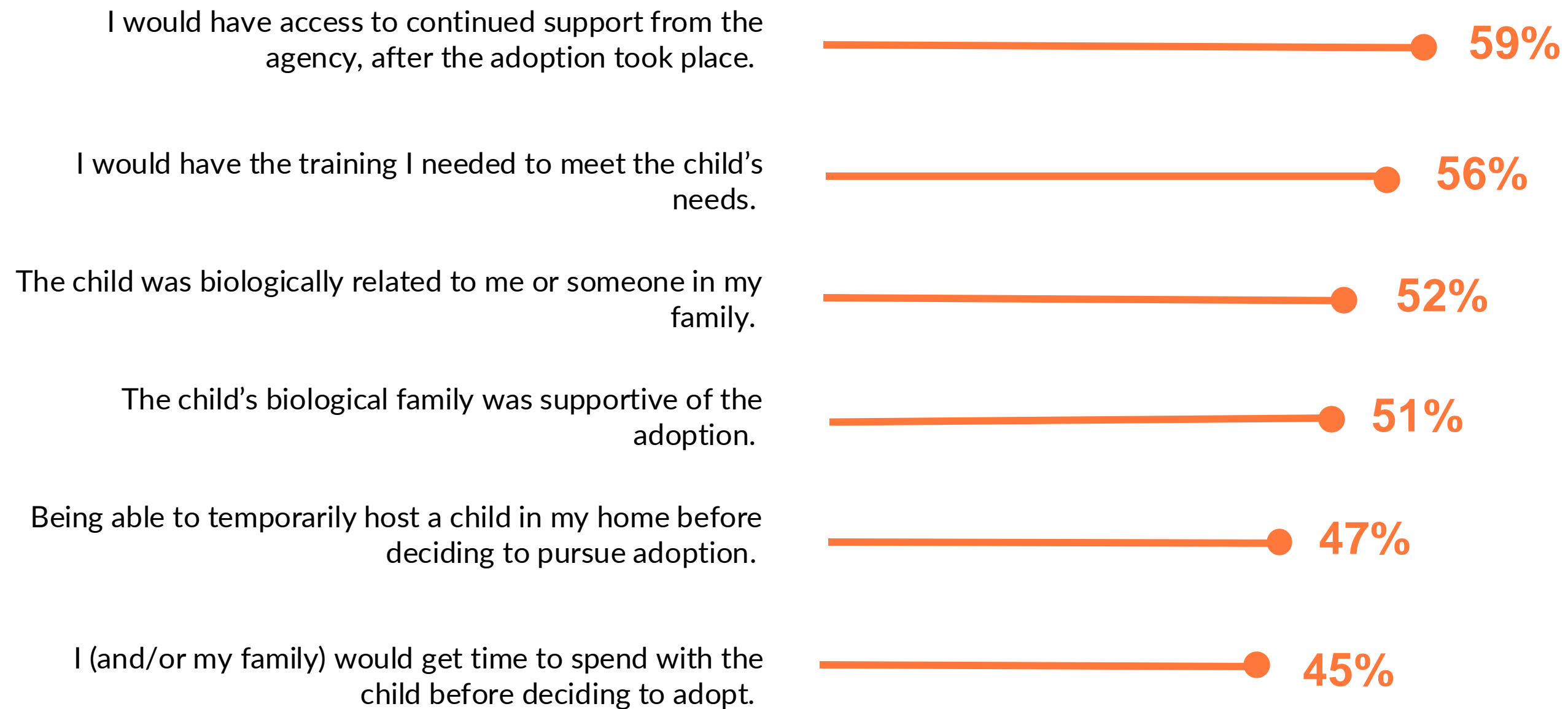
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Interest in adoption from foster care

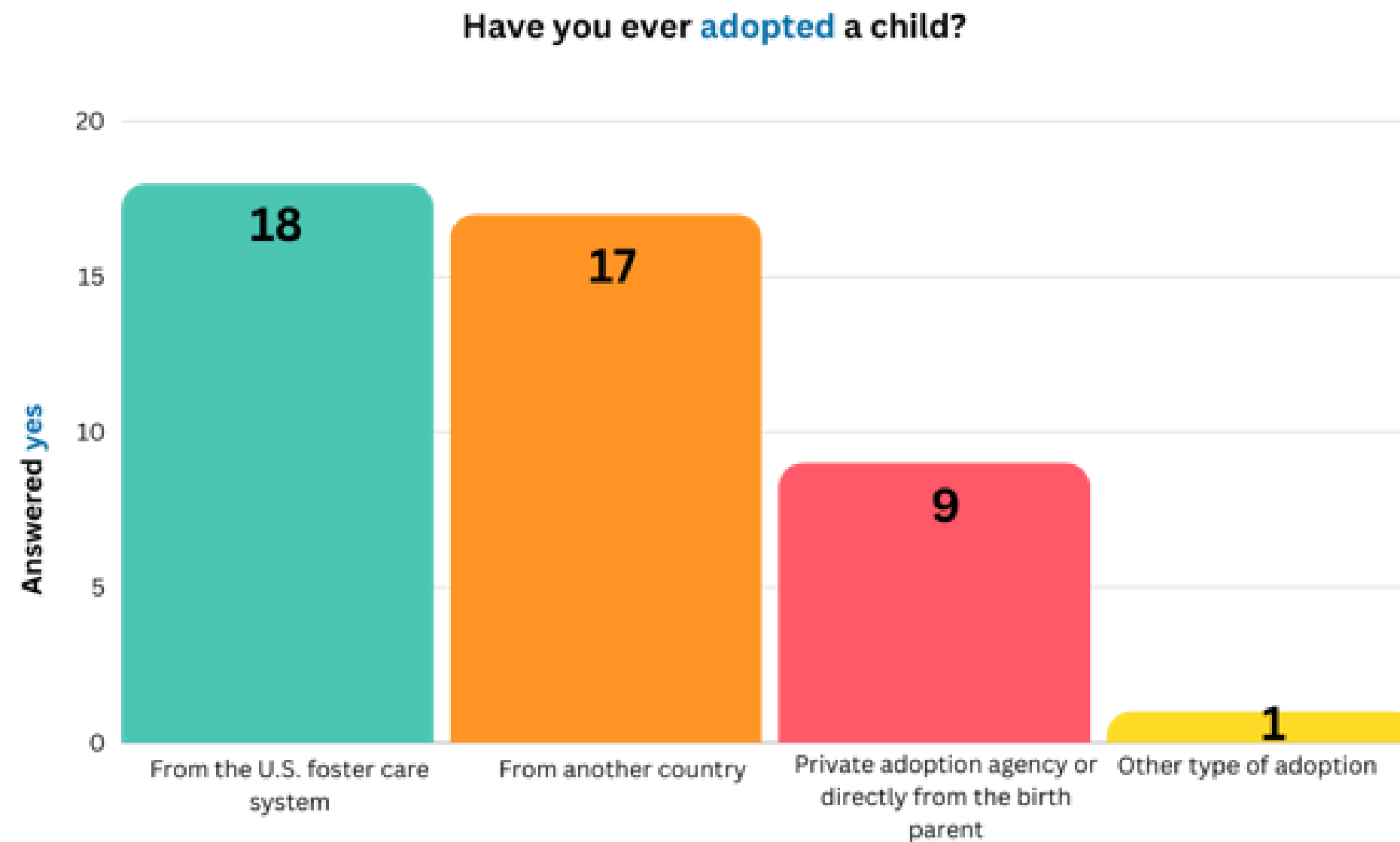
"If the following were true, would it make you more or less likely to consider adoption through foster care in the U.S.? If I knew...."

% somewhat more or a lot more likely



The plurality of Texan adoptions are from U.S. foster care

Out of 45 total adoptions



Mentorship program experience

1 OUT OF 10 Texans



have participated in a program to work with children in foster care.



45% of Texans have ever considered or thought a lot about participating in a program to work with children in foster care.



47% were not aware that these types of volunteer programs (outside of foster parenting) existed.

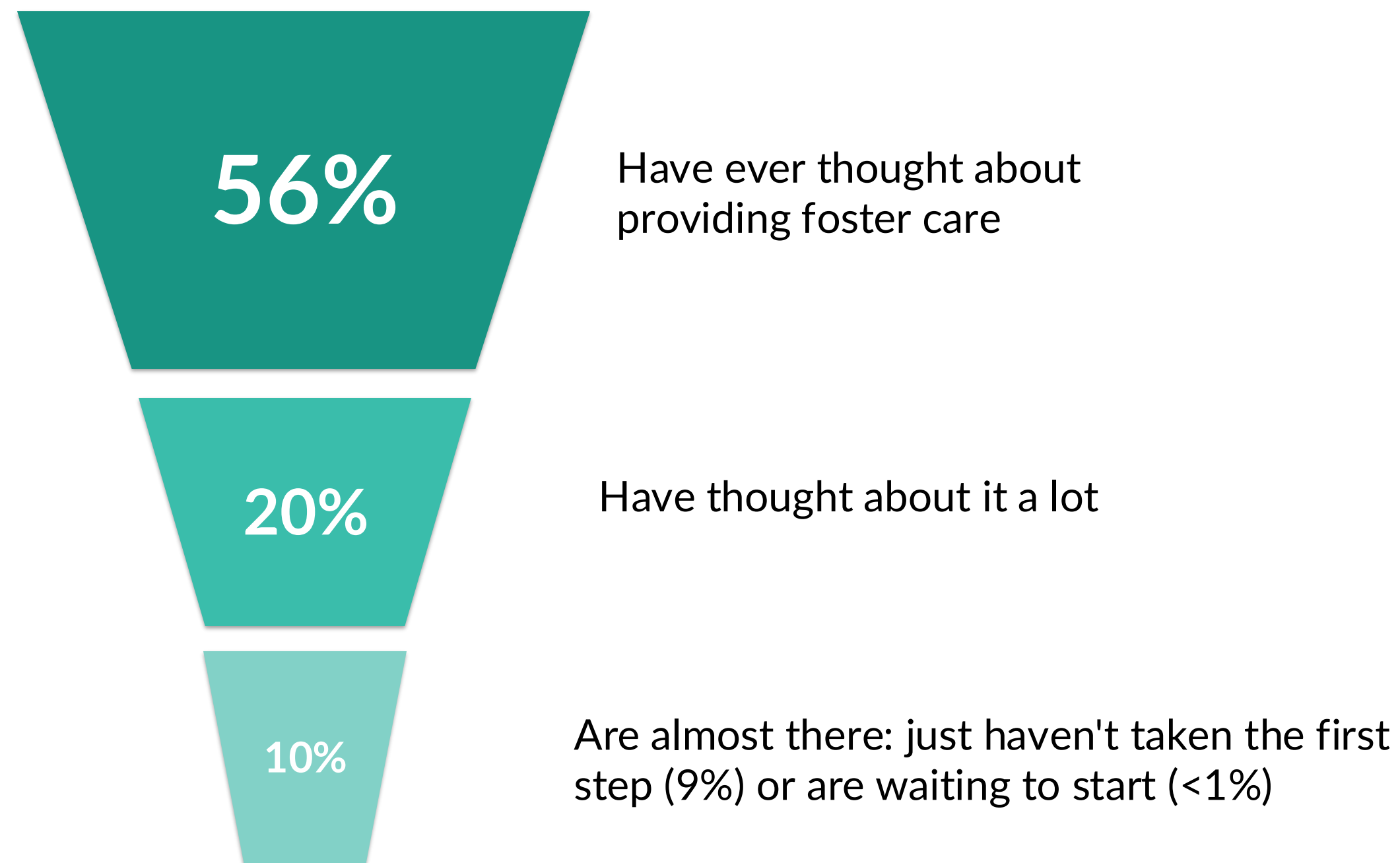
Mentorship program experience

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

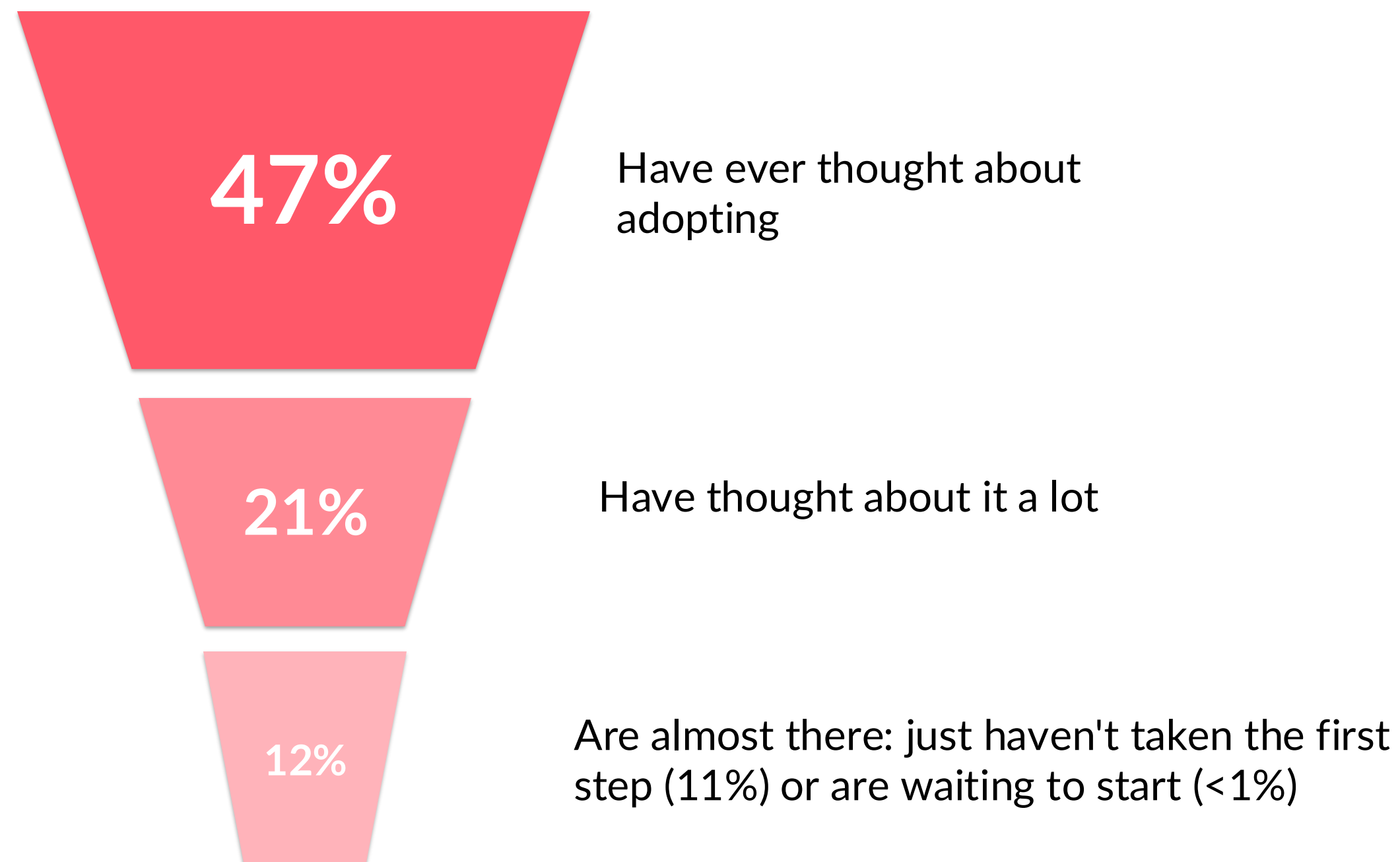
% who say the following would make them more or much more likely to consider participating:

- **71%** Having training and support to ensure I know how to help the child I support.
- **62%** Knowing the child has a say in whether they spend time with me.
- **59%** Having training and support to ensure I felt safe at all times.
- **59%** Having regular interaction with other adults in the program.
- **59%** Getting to meet and spend time with the child before making a commitment.

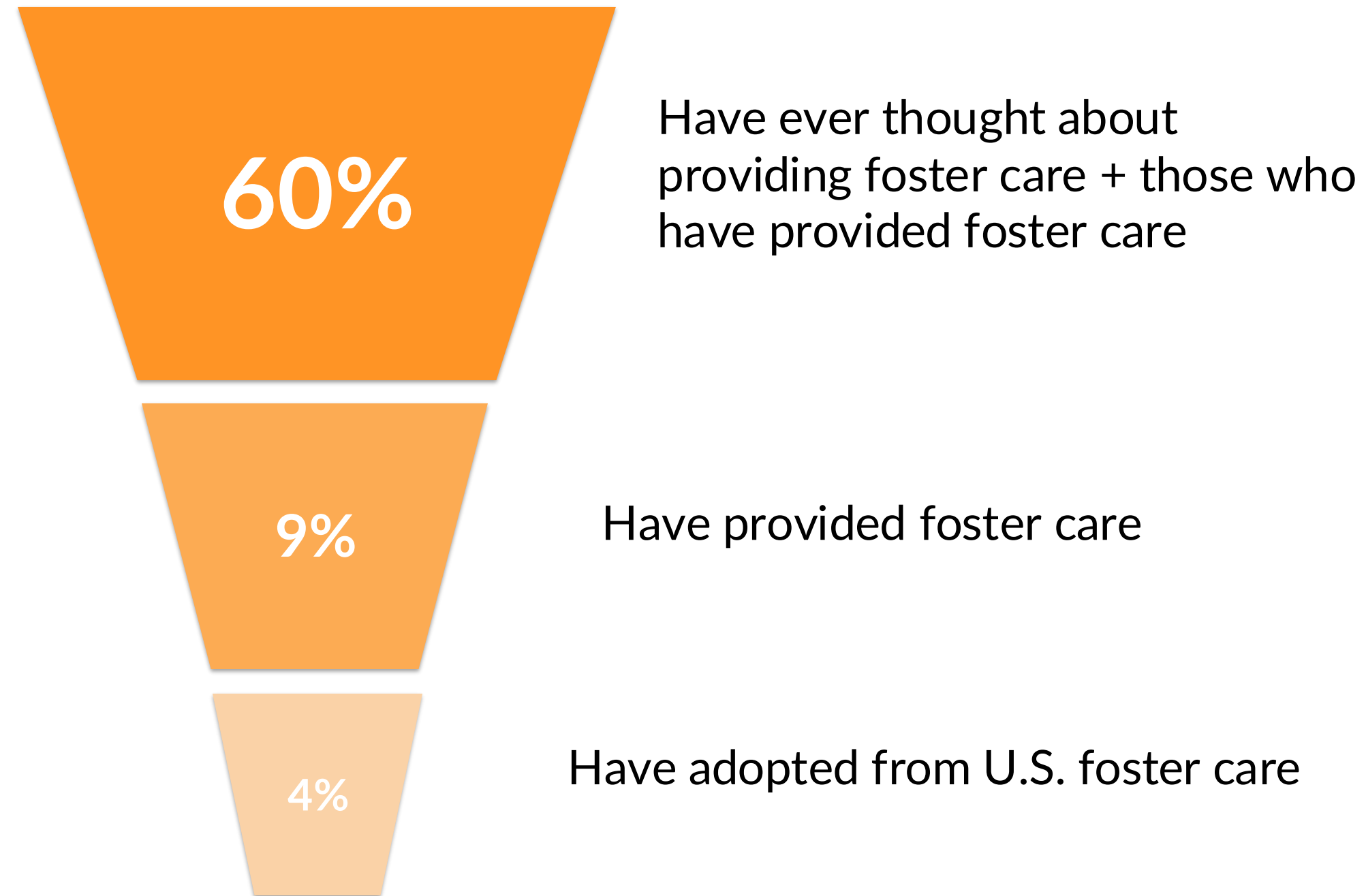
Most Texans have thought about providing foster care



Most Texans have thought about adopting from foster care

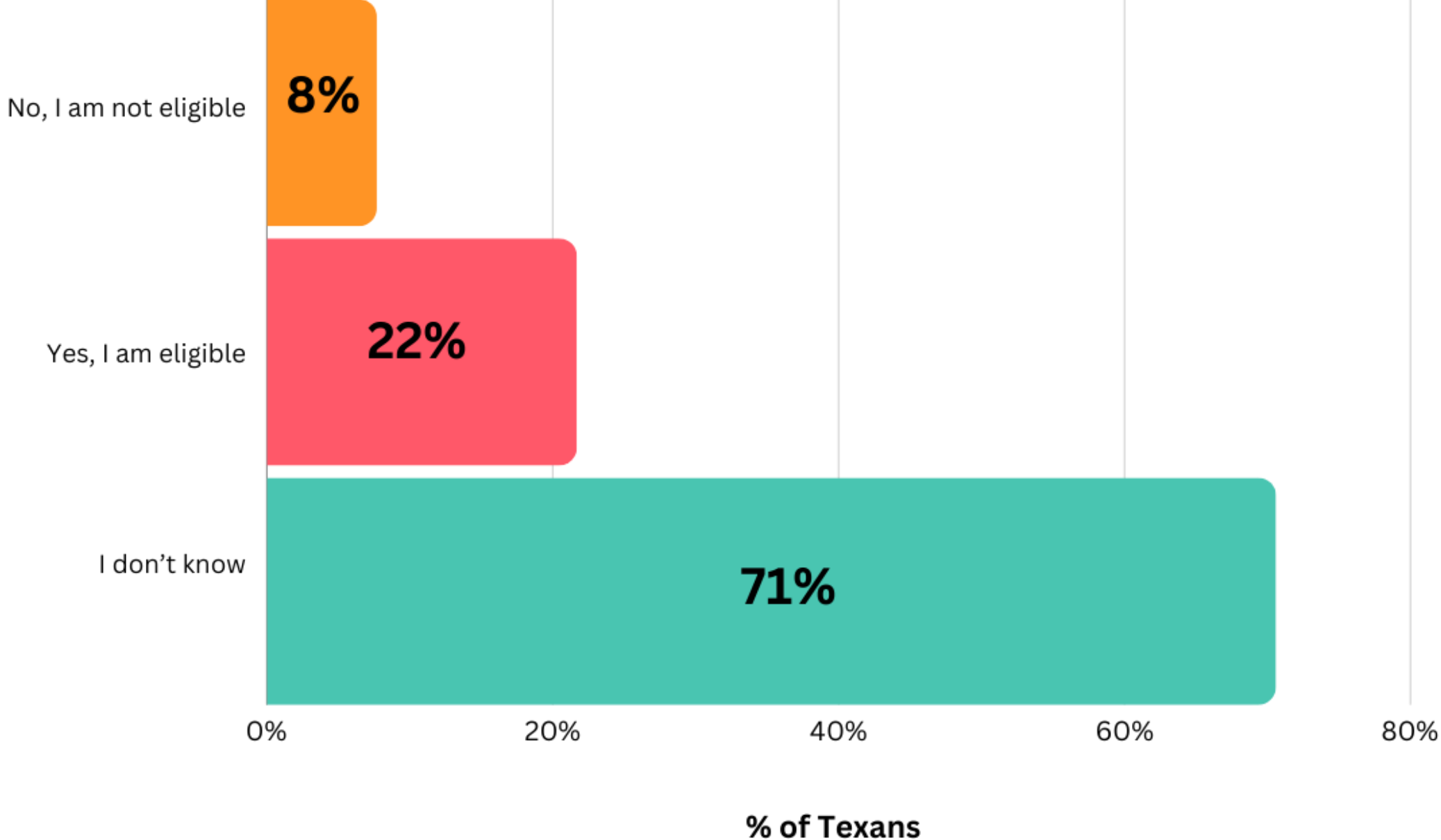


Fostering to adoption gateway



However, most Texans don't know if they're eligible to provide foster care

Do you know if you are legally eligible to provide foster care?



Key Findings from the Data

- The majority of Texans (**42%**) felt neutral about the foster care system with **34%** feeling either somewhat or very negative.
- When asked how confident they are that foster care does the right thing for children, **51%** of Texans said they were not very or not at all confident.
- When asked about barriers to providing foster care, lack of resources were a major concern, be it financial resources (**45%**), mental health resources (**44%**), or training resources (**43%**).
- When asked about barriers to adoption, the third top barrier cited was the possibility that the child could be reclaimed by the biological family (**42%**)
- While interest in providing foster care is high among Texans (**60%**), **71%** don't even know if they are eligible.
- Only **1 in 8** Texans have participated in a mentorship program to work with youth in foster care, but **45%** of Texans have ever considered or thought a lot about participating in such a program. **59%** of Texans say having the opportunity to meet and get to know the child before making a commitment would make them more likely to participate and **62%** said knowing the child also has a say in whether they engage and spend time with the adult would make them more likely to participate.

Recommendations from the Data

- Interest in foster care and adoption is high in Texas, but education around eligibility and how to get started could be helpful in reducing barriers.
- Concerns about a lack of resources could be preventing families from participating. Awareness campaigns about the resources that are available to foster and adoptive parents could help encourage more potential parents to take the first step. Additional resources such as mental health resources could also be developed to ensure potential adoptive families are adequately prepared and supported throughout the adoptive process and beyond.
- Texans responded that the fear of their adopted child being reclaimed by their biological parents was a barrier for adoption. Education around the adoption process and when reunification can and cannot happen could help alleviate some of these fears for potential adoptive parents.
- Mentorship programs and programs that introduce youth in foster care who need adoptive families to the community could help improve rates of adoption as Texan respondents expressed they were interested in participating in mentorship programs and getting to know the kids first before making a commitment.

Thank You!

To learn more about our ongoing research and how we are using the knowledge we've gained to reduce barriers preventing families from mentoring, fostering, and adopting, visit embrace.kidsave.org.

Interested in partnering with us? Contact Shantay Armstrong at shantay@kidsave.org.

Thank you to our amazing partners!



**Leslie Alexander
Foundation**