

# Foster Care

Perhaps you've heard about foster care in the news. Maybe your family is thinking about participating in foster care, or perhaps you've thought about becoming a foster parent in the future. Check out this infographic for some quick facts about the life-affirming process of participating in foster care:

## What is foster care anyway?

- ☀ **Foster care** is designed to provide a safe, temporary living situation for a child. Children in foster care may live with relatives or unrelated foster parents.
- ☀ The goal of the foster system is to **reunite children with their biological families** or find permanent placements for children whenever reunification isn't possible.

Here's the good news! Roughly 50% of foster children will be reunited with their biological parents.

# How is foster care different from adoption?

- ☀️ The goal of foster care is to reunite children with their biological parent or parents.
- ☀️ Sometimes foster care does lead to adoption, especially in cases when a child's biological family can't care for him or her.
- ☀️ In fact, there are currently over 100,000 children in the foster system waiting for adoption. Unfortunately, 32% of foster children eligible to be adopted must wait over three years before they are officially adopted.
- ☀️ Here's a quick definition for adoption: "Adoption is the social, emotional, and legal process in which children who will not be raised by their birth parents become full and permanent legal members of another family while maintaining genetic and psychological connections to their birth family."
- ☀️ Both foster care and adoption are gifts from God. Though broken by sin, God still cares and provides for children through foster and adoptive families.



**You could be involved in a child's life in a variety of ways. Here are just a few types of foster placements:**



**Traditional Foster Homes:**

Foster parents work with state child welfare agencies, biological parents, and court systems to ensure that the child is in the best living situation.



**Kinship Care:**

Children are placed in the legal custody of the state, which places the children with relatives. The state welfare agency works in partnership with the family to provide care for the children in the best way possible.



**Respite Care:**

Respite caregivers provide short-term care, typically evening or weekend care, for a child currently living with another foster family.



**Group Homes:**

Group foster homes provide 24-hour non-medical care and supervision. In these homes, a single foster child will live alongside 4-12 other children with a caretaker in the home.

## Foster Care by the Numbers

**223,770**

**Children entered foster care in 2021.**

**391,641**

**Total children living in foster care in 2021.**

**214,421**

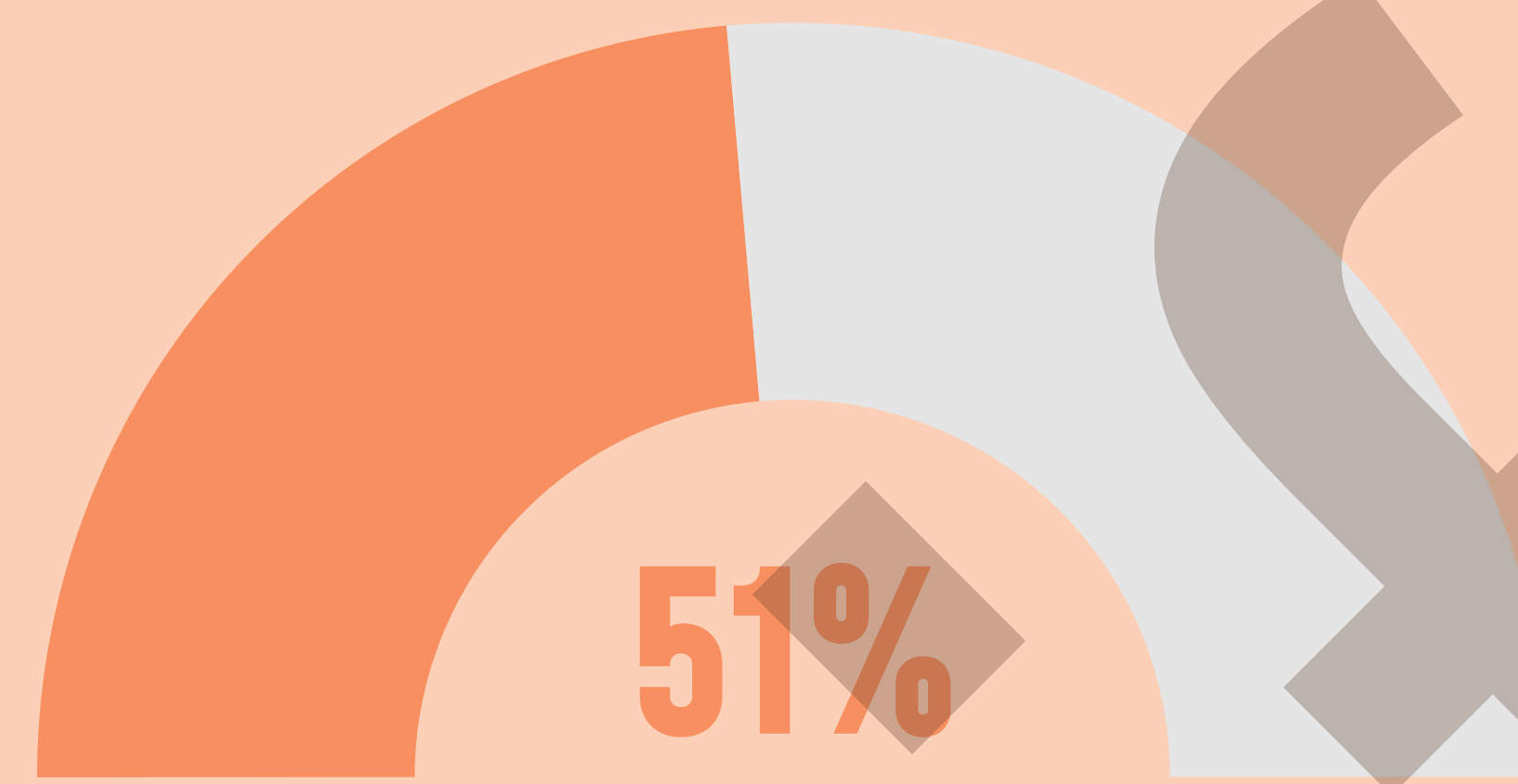
**Foster parents in the United States.**

Fun fact! If fewer than 1% of able-bodied households in the United States were licensed foster parents, there would be a surplus of foster homes.

# Education

Unfortunately, because of multiple transitions in a foster child's life, foster children often struggle to complete their education.

**Just over half**  
**of all foster**



**youth graduate**  
**high school.**

**Fewer than**

**1 in 4**

**foster youth enroll in college.**

**Just**

**4%**

**of former foster youth**  
**have successfully obtained a bachelor's degree.**

**How Can Foster**  
**Families Uphold**  
**the Lives of**  
**Foster Children?**

- ☀ **Affirm their identity in Christ.**
- ☀ **Support their education.**
- ☀ **Provide the basic necessities of life.**  
**When a foster child comes to a new**  
**foster home, they're going to need food**  
**and care.**
- ☀ **Help them process their emotions and**  
**affirm they are loved.**



# Mental Health of Children in Foster Care

Our experiences impact our mental health. Being separated from one's family can be very difficult for a child to bear.

Unfortunately, before a child is placed into foster care, they've probably already experienced trauma. The good news is, studies show that a stable foster home can decrease the risk of a child developing behavioral problems by up to 63%. Here are some of the other risks foster youth experience:

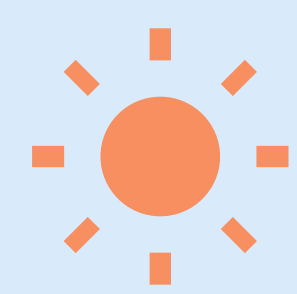
Foster youth are **seven times** more likely than non-foster youth to have depression, and five times more likely to have anxiety.

Studies show that youth in foster care are **two-and-a-half times** more likely to contemplate suicide than youth not in foster care and **four times** more likely to attempt suicide.

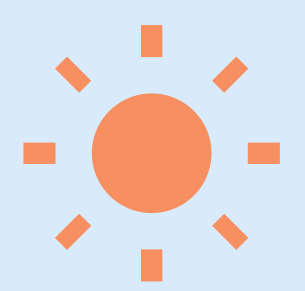
**Eight out of every ten** foster youth enter the system with notable mental health needs.

In comparison to veterans, former foster youth are **twice** as likely to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

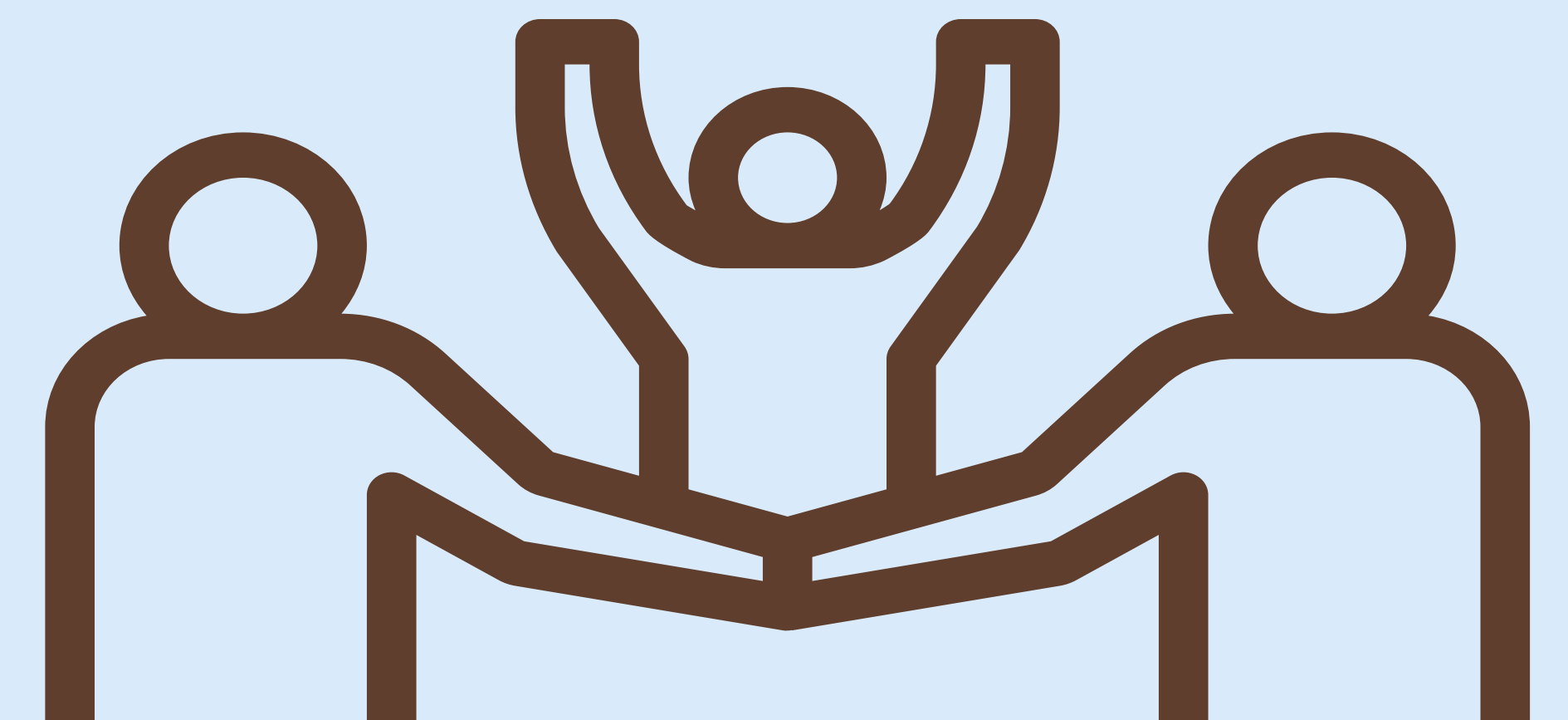
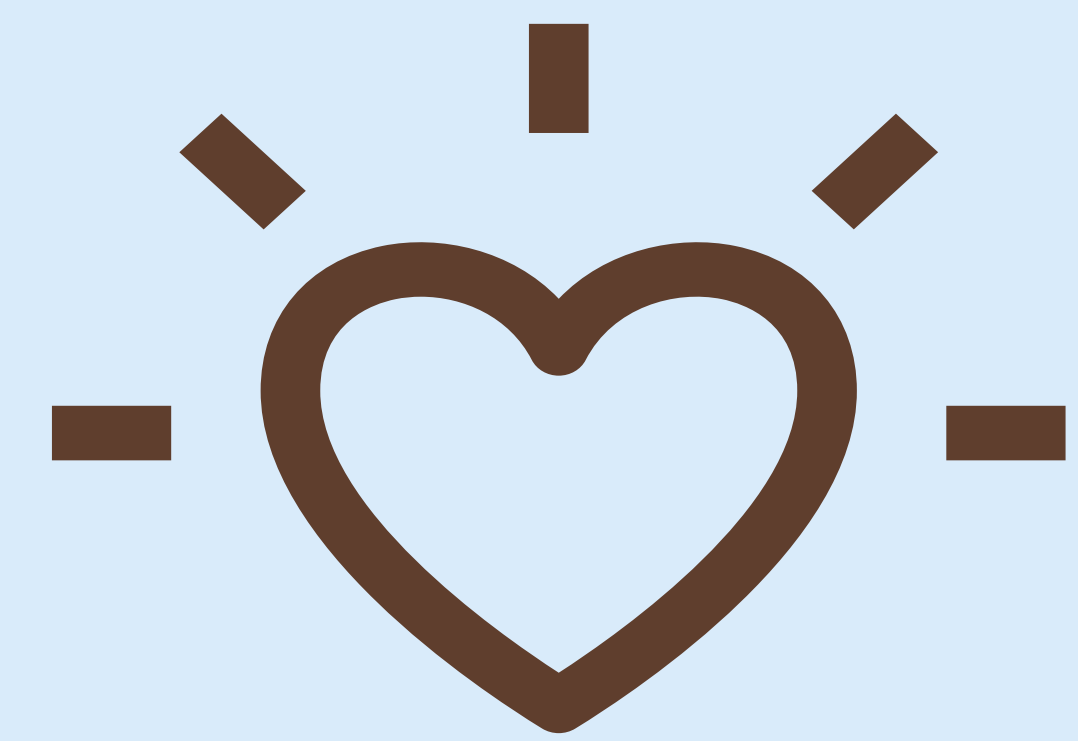
# Why is there an increase in mental health concerns for foster children?



**Foster children often experience a history of complex trauma, frequently changing situations and transitions, broken family relationships, inconsistent and inadequate access to mental health services, and the over-prescription of psychotropic medications.**



**However, there is hope! When foster children experience few placement changes, no reunification failures, and have no runaway incidents, they experience a 22% decrease in negative mental health outcomes.**



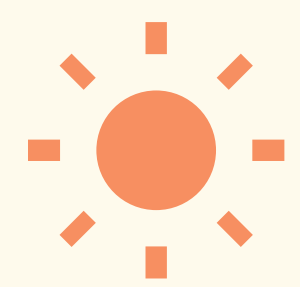
*"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Psalm 46:1*



# Rebuttals

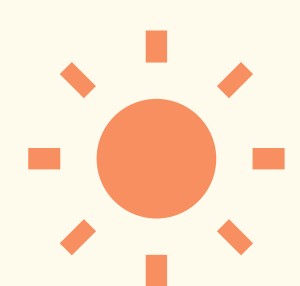
**We've all heard reasons why the foster care system doesn't work. It's important to be ready to respond with the facts. Here are four of the most common arguments against the foster care system and ways that we can respond to them with a Gospel-motivated voice.**

## **"The foster system is broken"**



This statement is made frequently, both by people involved in the system and those who are outside observers. Of course the foster care system is broken! God designed families to be made up of a biological mother, a biological father, and a child. So when that design is disrupted, it is only natural that there are consequences to that disruption. There is no way to make a perfect system that replaces the biological family unit that children need. But living in a broken world with a broken system does not mean that there are not ways to make changes that provide hope and healing to children within the foster care system.

## **"Just in it for the money"**



Monthly stipends given to foster parents are meant to help offset the costs of the basics: food, clothing, transportation, school supplies, daycare, and daily needs. Each state has its own way of determining what the stipend will be, based on the cost of living and other factors. The average amount estimated that a foster parent receives is approximately \$20–25 per day. With a day being 24 hours long, this is about \$1 per hour. Remember, food and clothing are also coming out of this \$1 per hour. So, your "take home" pay would be far less. Foster parents are not making money; rather, the funds they receive are used to help offset the costs of adding a child to the household.



# Rebuttals

## "I would get too attached"

☀️ This is exactly why you should foster! The fear that these children who need a home may never have the opportunity to experience someone showing them attachment and love should provide the encouragement to foster. Stable relationships and home life are critical for healthy child development. The time a foster child spends in your home may be the only time that child gets to hear messages of hope and forgiveness that are found in Christ alone.

☀️ Attachment is what these children need. When the foster system completes its goal of reuniting children with their biological families, we rejoice that the child is back where he or she belongs. We turn to our faith in Christ which brings us the peace that the world cannot give. God comforts us when we experience the pain and heartache that come with fostering.

**It's true, foster care is hard, especially when a child leaves. But C.S. Lewis says it best:**

“We shall draw nearer to God, not by trying to avoid the sufferings inherent in all loves, but by accepting them and offering them to Him; throwing away all defensive armor. If our hearts need to be broken, and if He chooses this as the way in which they should break, so be it.”



# Rebuttals

## “The foster system is an example of why we need abortion”

- ☀ Foster care is not a justification for abortion. Just because someone \*may\* end up in foster care and \*may\* end up experiencing the suffering that comes with being separated from one's biological parents does not mean that a child is better off without the opportunity to have life. Suffering does not determine one's value as a person, and it is not a reason for abortion. EVERY life includes suffering; it is unavoidable because of our sinful world. If we argue that we should allow abortion because of the potential for suffering, then no life is safe.
- ☀ Suffering is temporary. We shouldn't make permanent decisions to rectify a temporary situation, and death is a permanent decision. Even in the midst of suffering, there are still many joys to experience. Foster families can provide some of those joys.
- ☀ Instead of blaming innocent children for the problems with the foster system, we can all work together to help solve the problems facing parents and children who are at risk for foster care. Solutions for a better foster care system are tied to options that affirm life rather than abortion.
- ☀ The goal of foster care is first and foremost to ensure that a child is in a safe home, and secondly to work toward that child's reunification with his or her birth parents. Stating that foster children are better off aborted or dead is hurtful and further reiterates to foster children the lie that they are unloved and unwanted.
- ☀ As 4 Life voices, we can change the narrative! We can share that **EVERY** child is a wanted and loved child, a child who was created with purpose by the Almighty God, who has perfect intentions beyond our understanding.

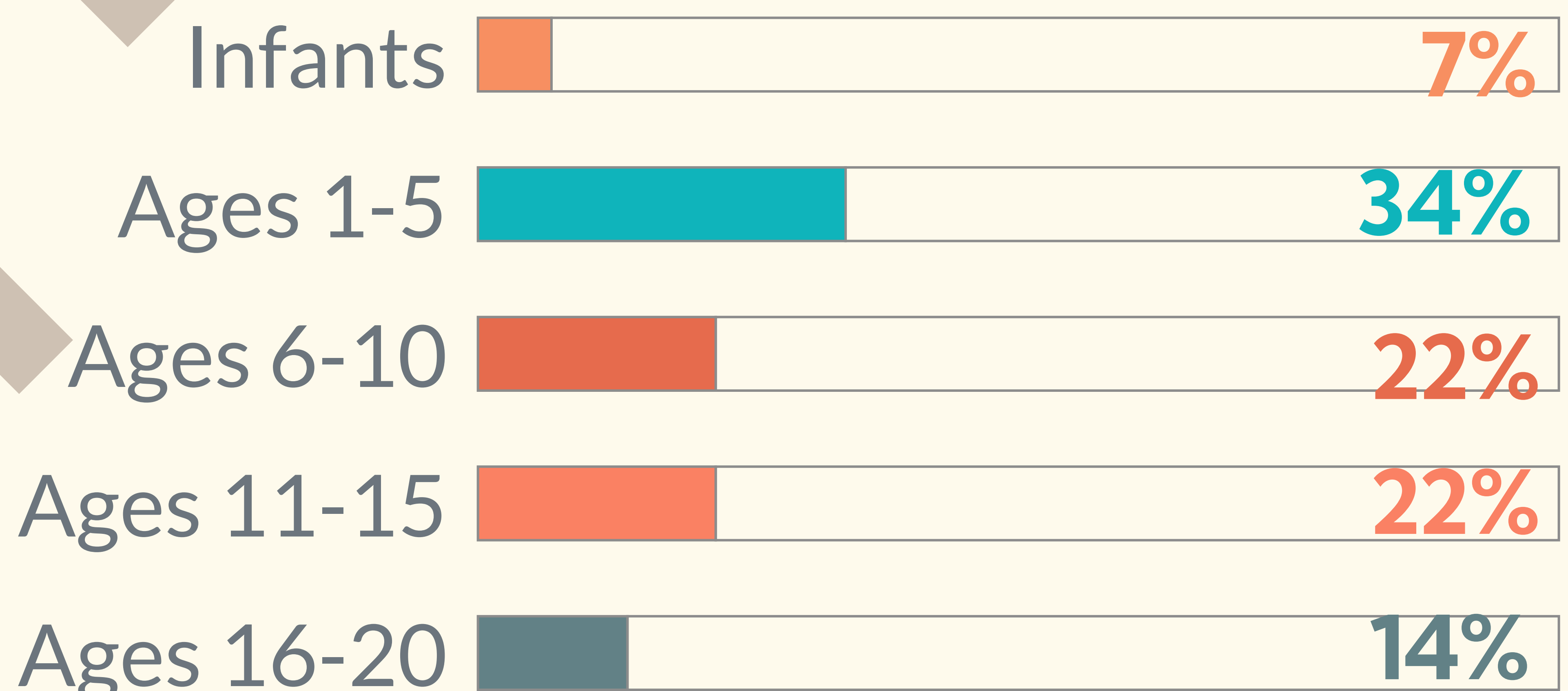


# Why Do We Care as Gospel-Motivated Voices for Life?

- ☀️ As Gospel-motivated voices for life, we acknowledge that we live in a broken world, and thus a broken foster system exists. Even more importantly, we know and confess that there is hope in Christ. As Christians, God calls us to "care for the orphans and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27).
- ☀️ Christian foster families help a child of God navigate a new reality, a reality they didn't ask for and probably don't want. They may be able to bring a child to the holy waters of Baptism and teach them the faith. Christian foster families also uphold their child in prayer.
- ☀️ Adoption is life-giving! It reminds us of our adoption as sons and daughters of God through our Baptisms that we too may walk in the newness of life (Romans 6:4). Adoption is God's redemptive response to something that is broken.

## Children in Foster Care by Age Group

God's  
children  
need  
YOU!



On average, \$30 billion is spent on foster care each year in the United States.

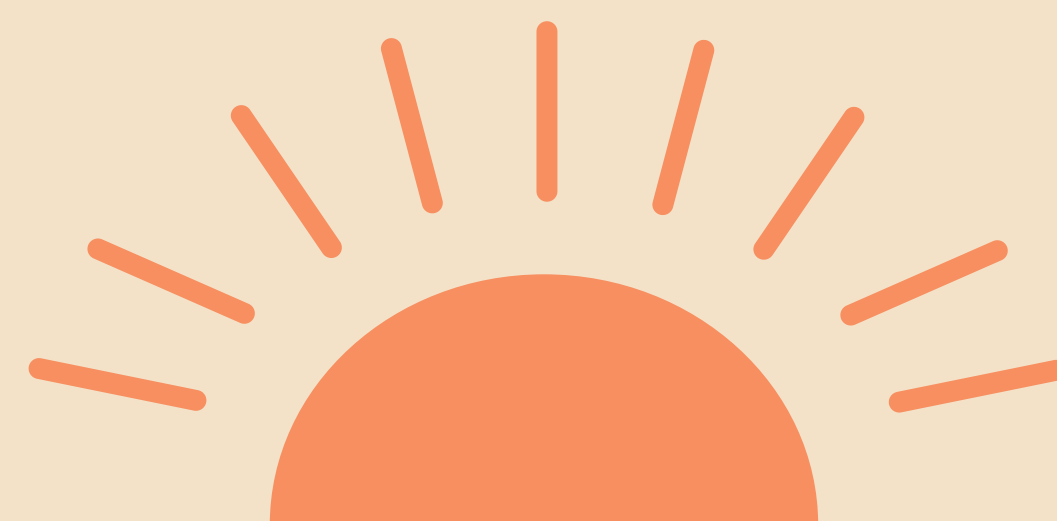


# What If We Can't Be Foster Parents?

- ☀️ Pray for foster children, their biological parents, caseworkers who work countless hours, and lawyers who advocate for foster children and families. Also pray that God would mitigate the impact of foster care on siblings, for more foster and adoptive families that they may have wisdom and strength, and for organizations and churches to rally around biological parents, foster children, and foster families.

## How Do We Uphold and Affirm the Lives of Those in Foster Care?

- ☀️ We can support and uplift foster/adoptive children and their foster/adoptive families. "Foster child" does not define or assign value to a human being. Reminding children in care that they are loved and that their circumstances do not define their worth is vital.
- ☀️ Supporting foster families spiritually, emotionally, physically, and financially is also important. A network of people supporting and cheering them on makes a foster family's calling much easier.
- ☀️ There is no better community than a church community to wrap around biological families, foster families, and foster children.





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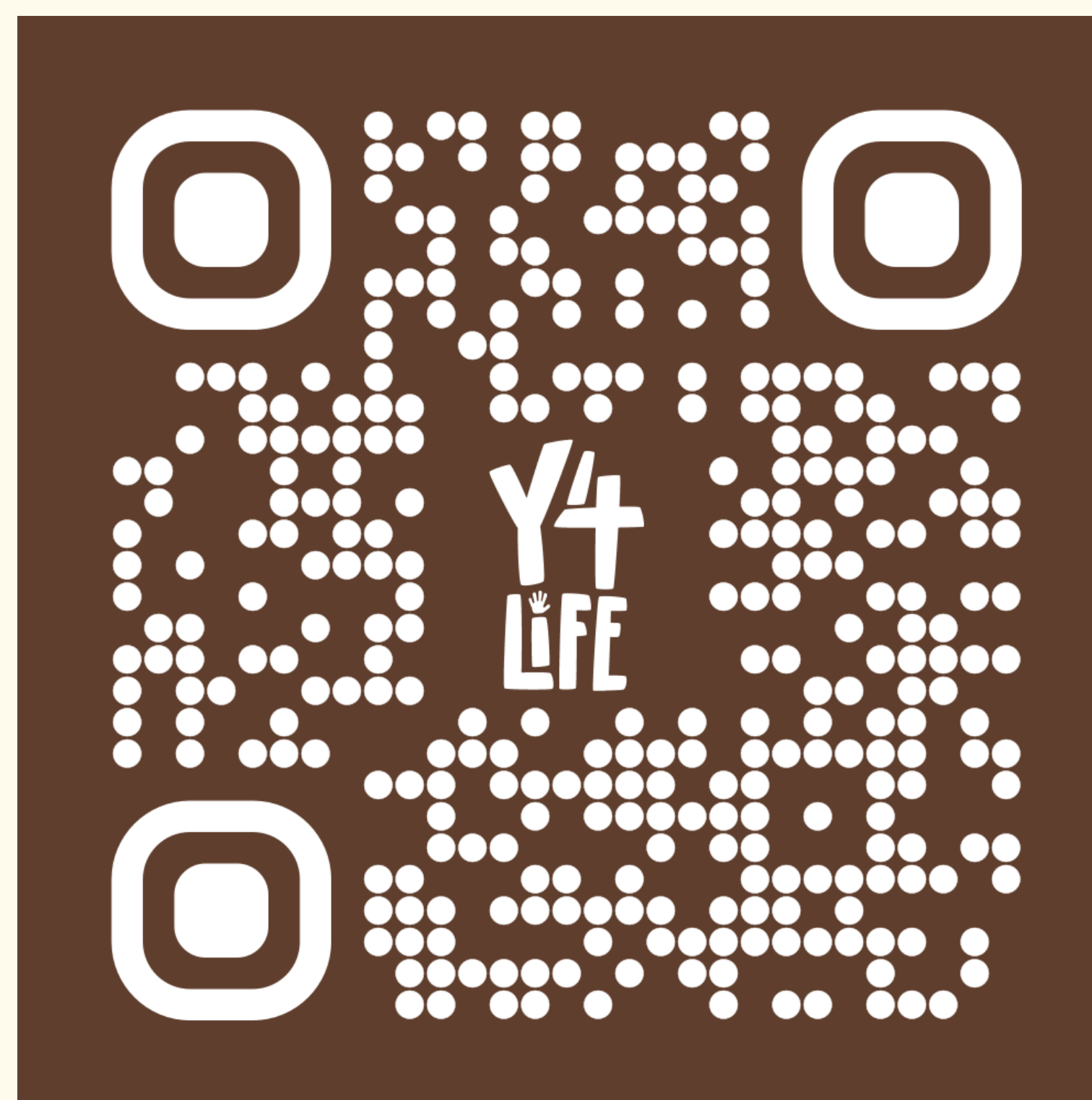
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