

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

83% of survey participants were mothers & **8%** were grandparents of children with a parent in custody



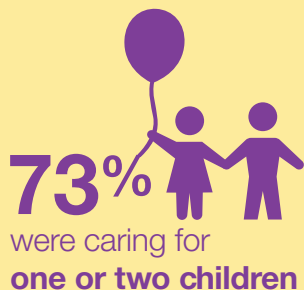
Children were as likely to have a **disability or chronic illness** compared to the general population

2x


30% of children were **Aboriginal**



73% were caring for **one or two children**



63% of children were under **10 years** of age & **31%** pre-school age




70% of carers reported travelling between **two and four hours** to visit the prison



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.”

“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.

74% of carers stated that the time available for contact between the child and the imprisoned family member is **less than before** the pandemic



95% of respondents reported **negative consequences** for children as a result of visits being restricted



40% of carers reported **negative emotional** and behavioral impact



24% of carers reported the change in visiting conditions as **not meeting** the **children's needs** notably younger children



40% of carers agreed that they were **not coping**



60% of carers strongly agreed that **children were not coping**



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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