



Care
Alliance
Ireland



The Online Family Carer Support Group Ireland

- 4 Years On.



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Care Alliance Ireland

22nd May 2024

Origin of the Project



- March 2020: COVID-19
- Services all ceased – many overnight
- Time of confusion and misinformation
- Care Alliance responded

The Online Family Carer Support Project

Initial Aims

- Reliable, trustworthy information
- Facilitate peer support between family carers
- Signpost to services & other organisations





Main Objectives

- Increase the overall well-being of family carers in Ireland
- Reduce the negative impacts often experienced, such as
loneliness and social isolation



Facebook



Family Carer Support Group (Republic of Ireland)

Private group · 8.1K members



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Why Facebook?

- Set up speed and cost
- Go where the carers already are

Not just a “Facebook group”

A professionally moderated, funded support group that happens to use the Facebook platform



Facebook users in Ireland

April 2024



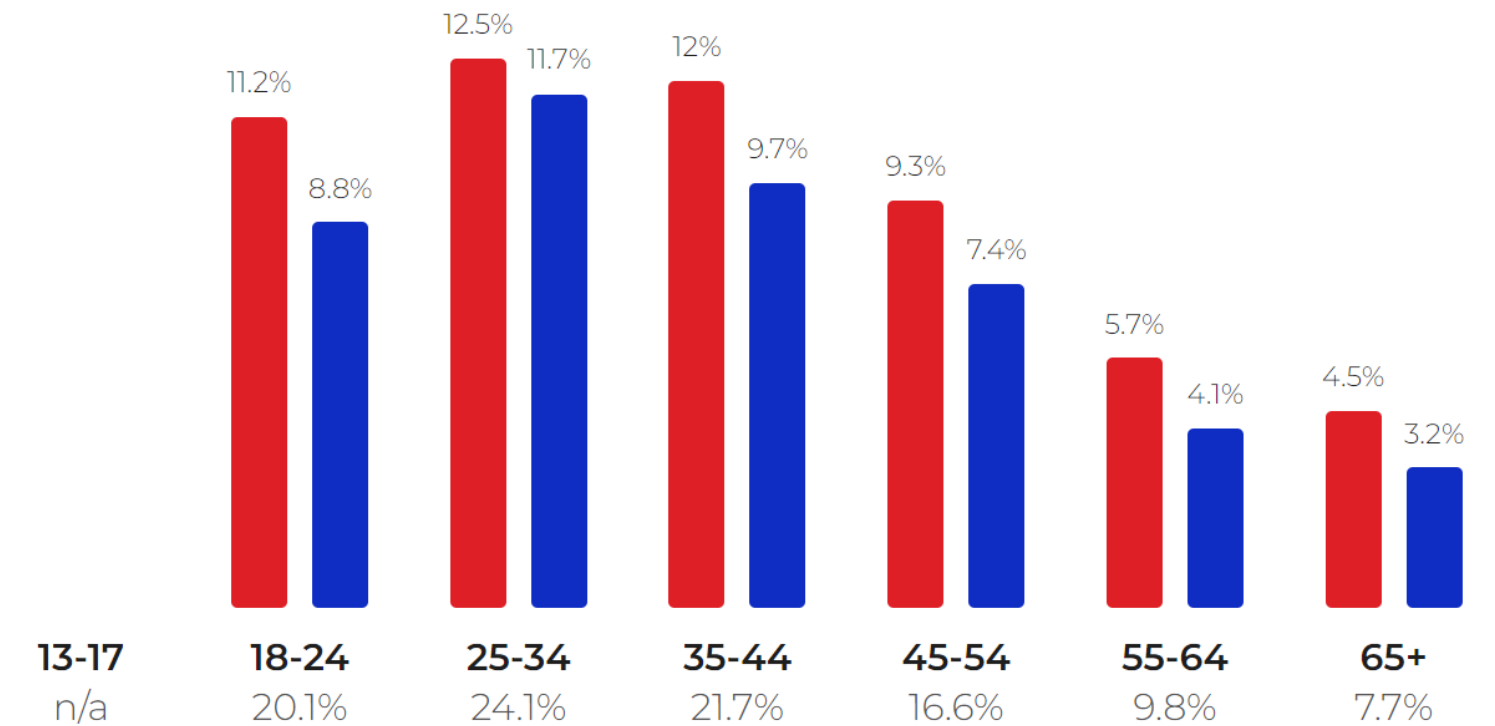
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55.2%
women



44.8%
men





Privacy & Oversight

- Private group – highest levels of privacy settings
- Strict membership criteria
- Anonymous posting
- Strict adherence to group rules
- High moderation:
 - Every post pre-moderated
 - Every comment read
- GDPR



Operations



Peer
Support &
Advice

- **Members**
- **Volunteers (former & current family carers)**

Professional
Guidance &
Referrals

- **Social Workers**
- **Policy & Research**
- **Psychologists**
- **Wellness**

Activities

- **Book Club**
- **Gardening Club**
- **Quiz Nights**
- **Coffee morning**
- **Educational Talks**
- **Competitions & Care Hampers**



“Mods & Vols” Group

- Discuss challenging issues
- Appropriate responses
- Resources
- Monthly Zoom meetings
- Volunteer Support

OFCSG Ireland

Mods & Vols

FC Support Group Moderators and volunteers

Private group · 19 members

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Quotes From Members


"The only place outside of my household where I feel that I really belong. The only place I go actually. I don't have to give any back story or talk about anything. I can just be, there is no demand at all on me and it is a safe haven. Invaluable. "

"I would just like to say Thank You 💜 as since I have found you, I have had a beautiful experience in speaking with the kindest and caring people, people who know and understand like myself the work anxiety stress and sometimes heartbreak that being a family carer can be. Thank you so much 💜"

Engagement



- Currently 8,047 members*
- Membership continues to increase at a rate of 7 new members per day
- Retention rate of 97% versus traditional face-to-face, where drop out rates can be as high as 50%
- Extremely high engagement levels – approx. 90% of members are “active”

8,047 total members 
▲ 4.92% vs. Mar 9, 2024
May 8, 2024

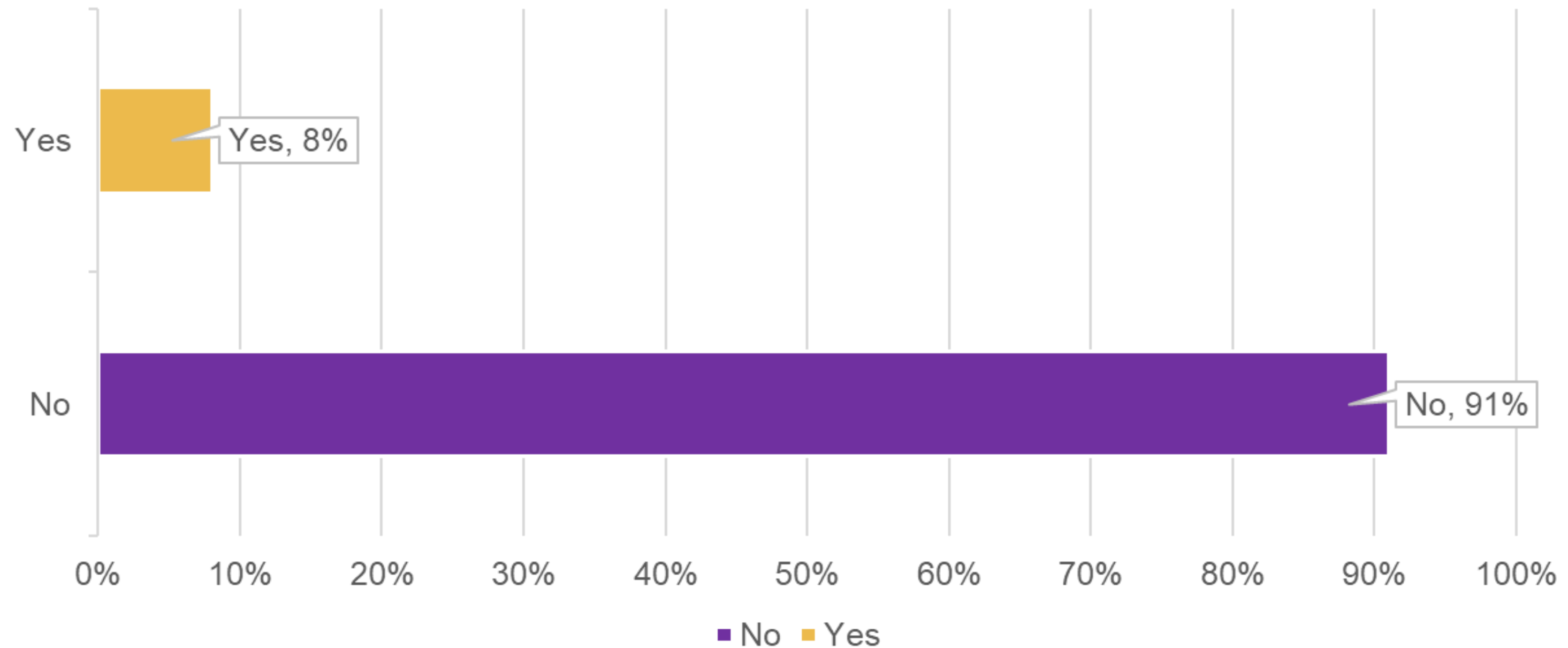


* As of 08/05/24



Member Poll

We asked: "Prior to Covid-19 were you involved in any face to face support groups?"

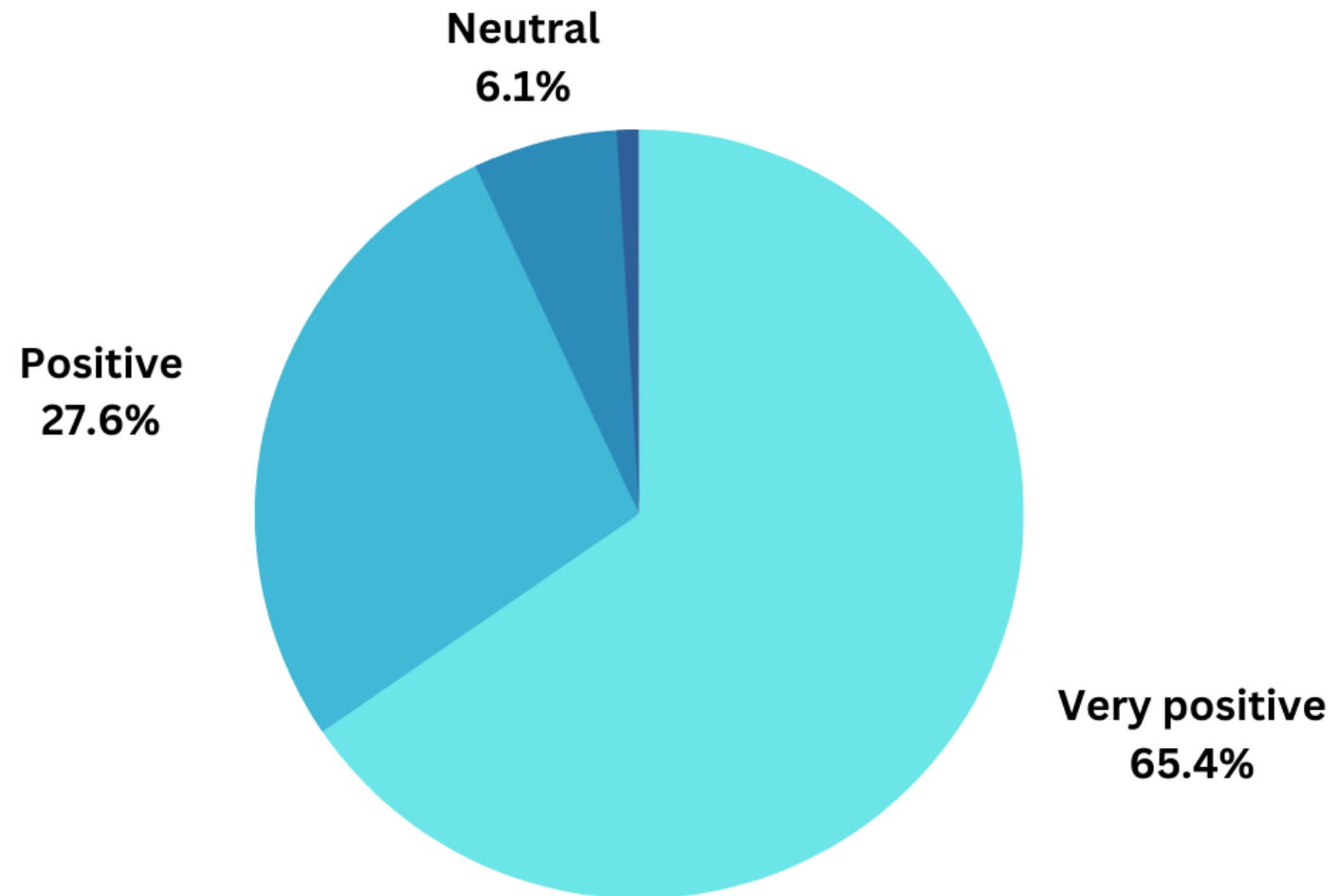


n=474



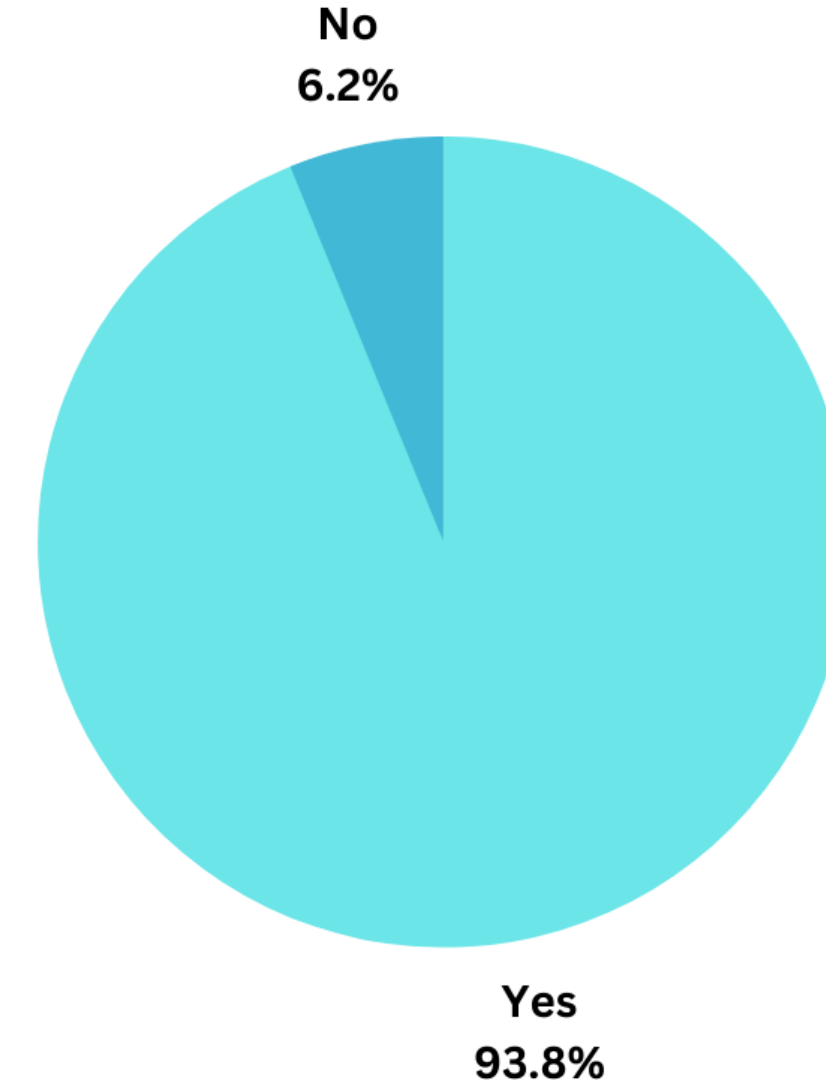
Online Survey Highlights

What has your experience been of the group?



n = 215

Have you personally found the group helpful to your own situation?



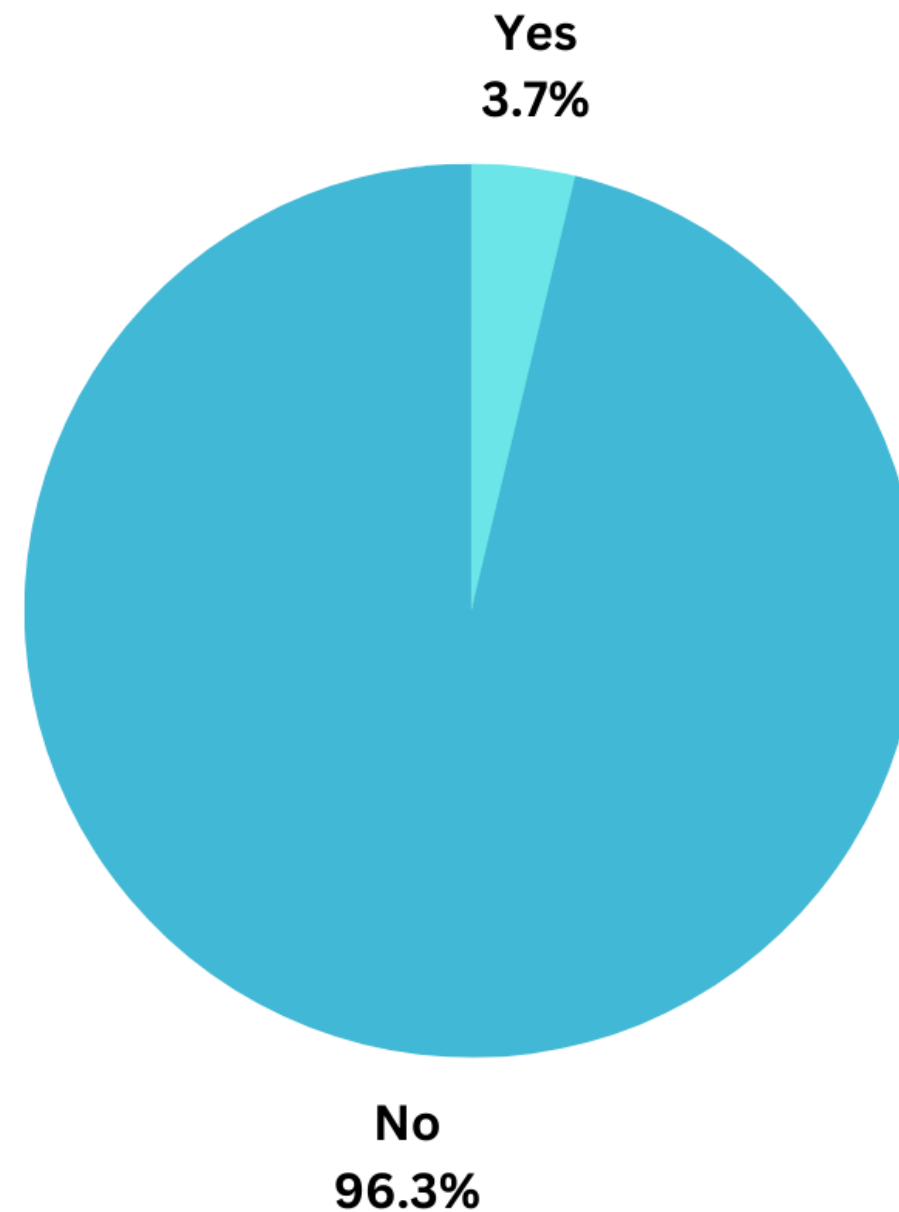
n = 215



Online Survey Highlights



Have you personally had (or witnessed) any negative experiences in the group?



n = 215



Collaboration

- Signpost and refer family carers to other organisations as appropriate
- Joint courses/activities
- Always open to collaborating with other organisations



Research

- PhD Research Project with The University of Limerick
- Rosemary Daynes-Kearney is investigating the impact of online support groups for family carers:
 - Why are they important?
 - What works well?
 - Who uses them?





Research Results

Social Identity and Online Support Groups: A Qualitative Study with Family Caregivers by Rosemary Daynes-Kearney and Stephen Gallagher published in July 2023

- Interviews were carried out with members of our support group
- Results were overwhelmingly positive
- Being a member of our online support group **does** have a positive impact on our members

Full paper is available at <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s12529-023-10203-z.pdf>





Funding

- Initial funding in 2020 by the Community Foundation of Ireland and The National Lottery
- HSE recurring funding granted in 2021
 - Recognition of the value the project provides
 - Project is sustainable for the future
 - Business case submitted to the HSE for enhanced 2025 and beyond



Problems & Solutions

Problem One: Accessibility

Group accessible online, 24/7, without the need to travel, find replacement care or interact directly if you don't want to

Problem Two: Waiting Lists

We don't have waiting lists

Problem Three: Cost

Our project costs approximately €20 per client per year

Technology

- Overall shift towards maximizing the use of technology in all sectors
 - European Digital Decade
 - Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework
 - Department of Health - Digital Health & Social Care Framework 2024-2030
 - Aligning with SlainteCare
- Utilising technology responsibly to reach and connect with family carers in Ireland
- Ongoing staff training; Micro-credential with Trinity College Dublin: *"Digital Technologies in Human Services"*



Questions?

Website: www.carealliance.ie

Find us on Twitter: [@CareAllianceIrl](https://twitter.com/CareAllianceIrl)

Contact: tara@carealliance.ie

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FamilyCarerOnlineSupportGroupIreland>



Thank you for your time and attention!