

UNC-Chapel Hill Student Caregiver Needs Assessment Report

Prepared by Shelley Gist Kennedy

Overview

This survey was conducted by the [Carolina Women’s Center](#) to better understand the experiences, needs, and challenges of student caregivers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The goal was to identify barriers to academic success, assess current resource utilization, and gather feedback to inform future programming and support services.

Methodology

Survey Design

An online survey with 15 multiple choice and short answer questions gathered demographic data, current caregiving responsibilities, stressors, resource use, and of-interest supports.

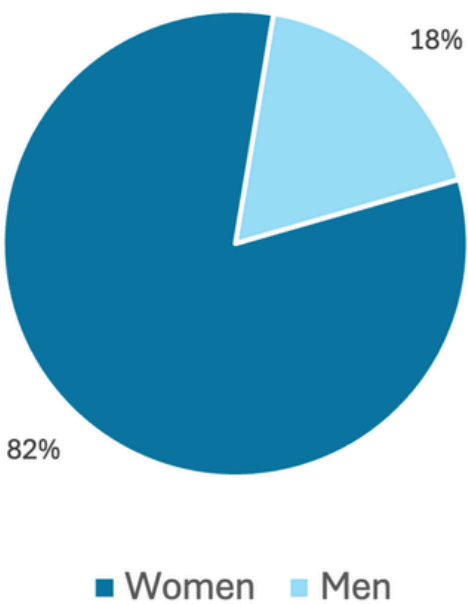
Survey Distribution

The survey was administered in the Fall 2025 semester. The survey was open to all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students at UNC-Chapel Hill who self-identified as having caregiving responsibilities. An invitation to complete the survey was distributed physically across campus bulletin boards and digitally via departmental and student organization newsletters and social media.

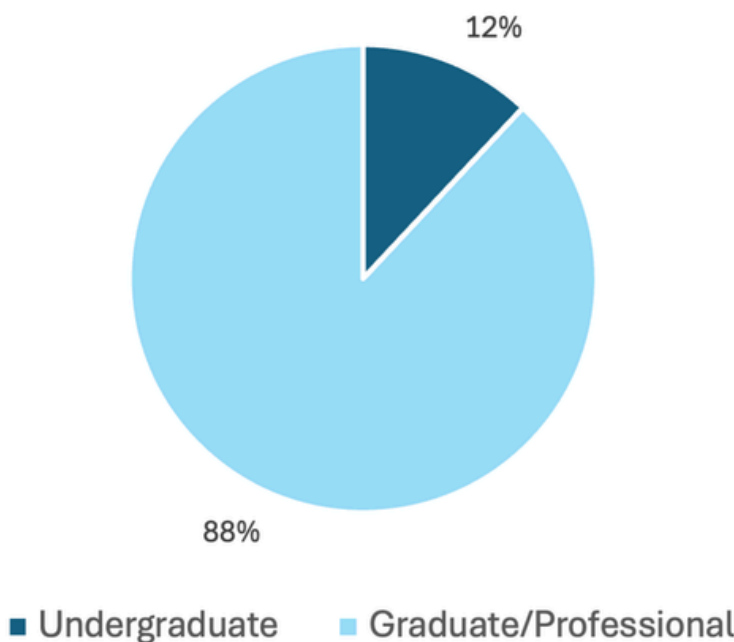
Participants

The survey received 17 complete responses. Incomplete responses were discarded. The majority of respondents were graduate or professional students (15), with 2 undergraduate students. Respondents represented a wide range of academic units, including the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Social Work, School of Education, School of Information and Library Science, Gillings School of Global Public Health, School of Medicine, and Kenan-Flagler Business School. Participants were between 18 and 50 years of age and included 14 women and 3 men.

Respondent Gender



University Affiliation

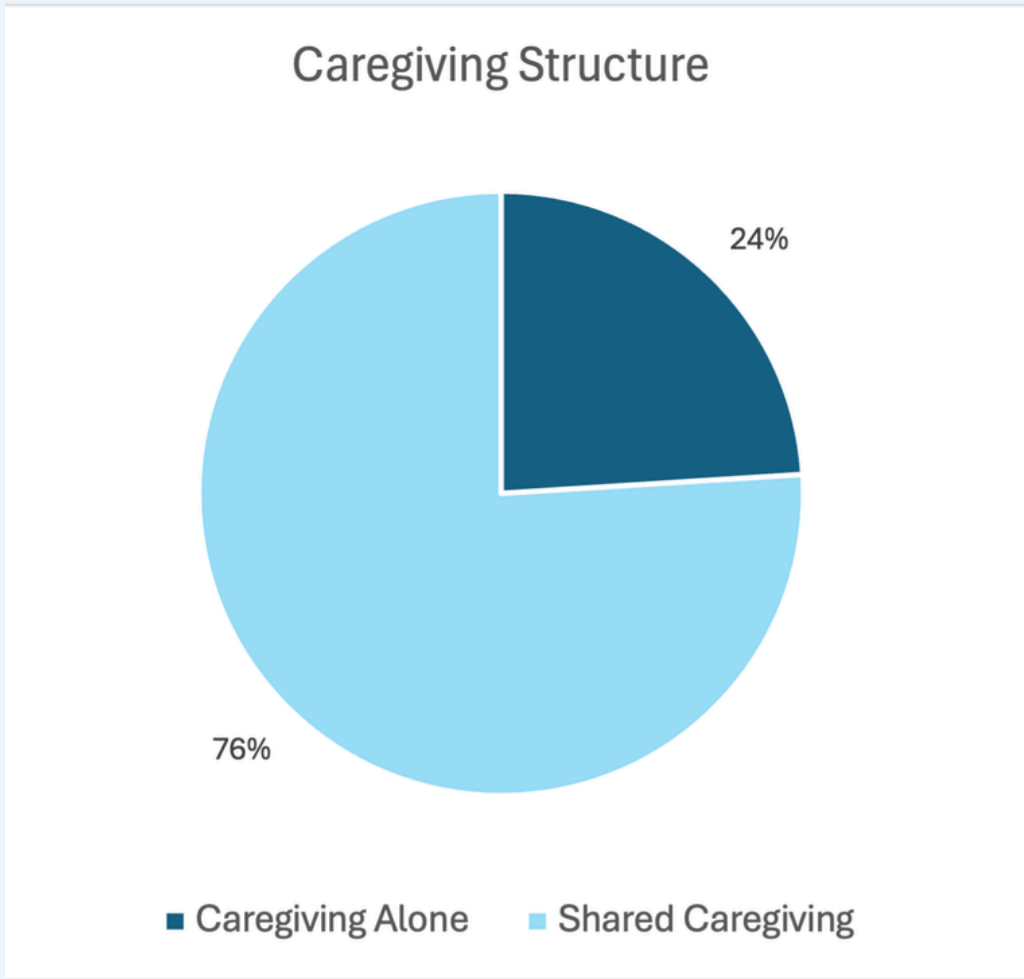
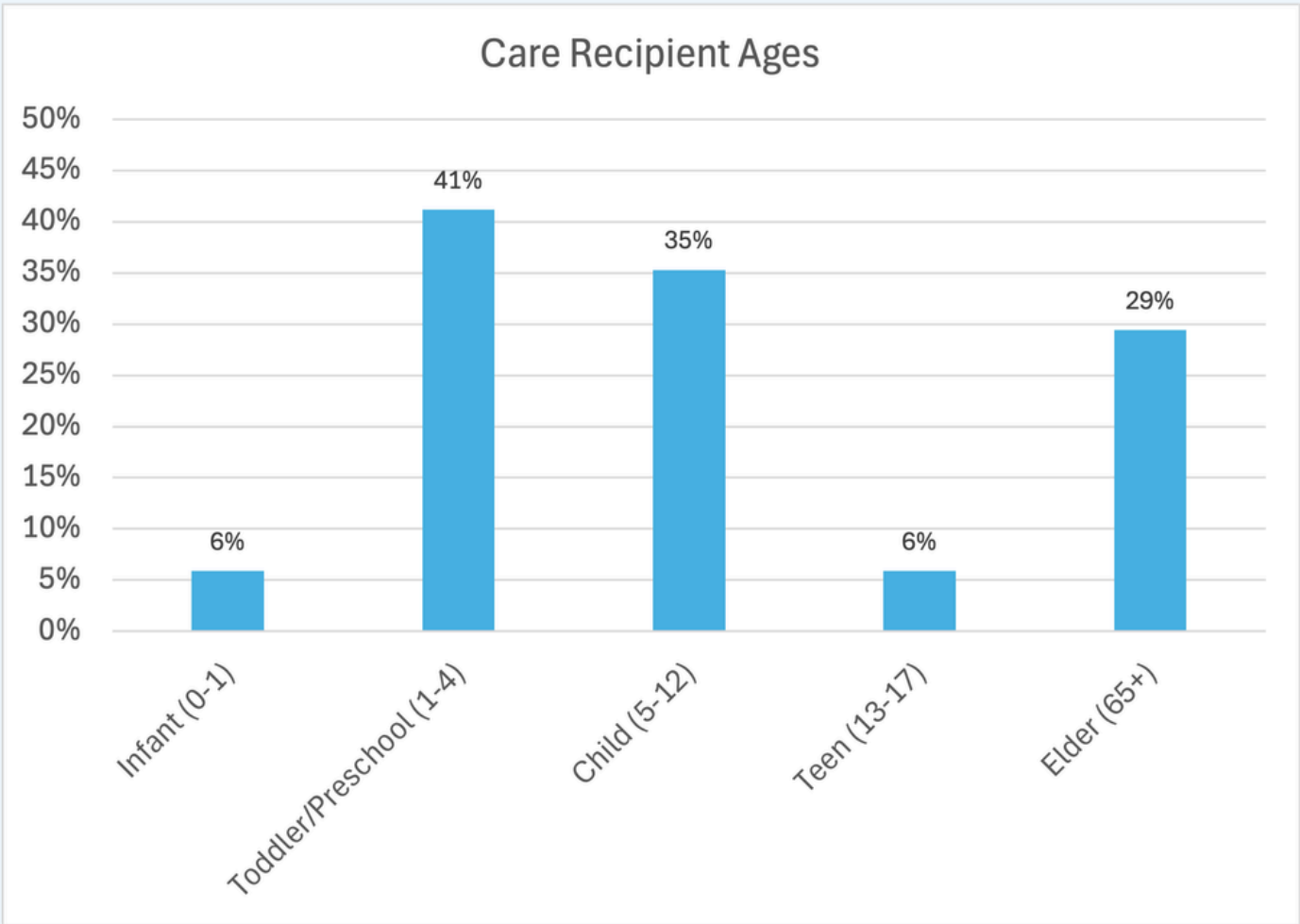


Key Findings

Theme 1: Diverse Caregiving Responsibilities

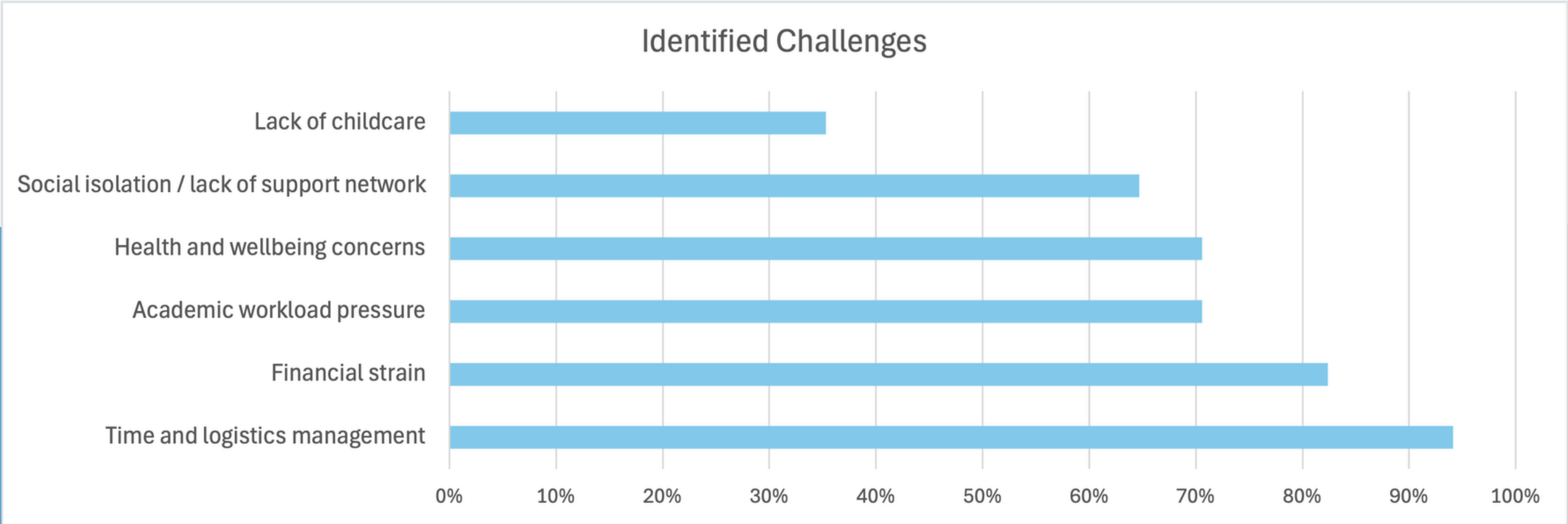
Even within a small sample, respondents reported diverse caregiving roles, including biological parents, adoptive parents, caring for elderly parents or relatives, kinship/relative caregivers, and legally appointed guardians.

Most participants (70%) cared only for children, while 24% cared for only elders and 6% cared for both. Caregiving structures varied: 76% shared caregiving responsibilities and 24% were the sole caregivers.



Theme 2: Significant and Overlapping Challenges

Respondents indicated high levels of financial, academic, and relational challenges. All participants had multiple, overlapping stressors, with comments such as “Everything [is a challenge]” highlighting feelings of overwhelm.



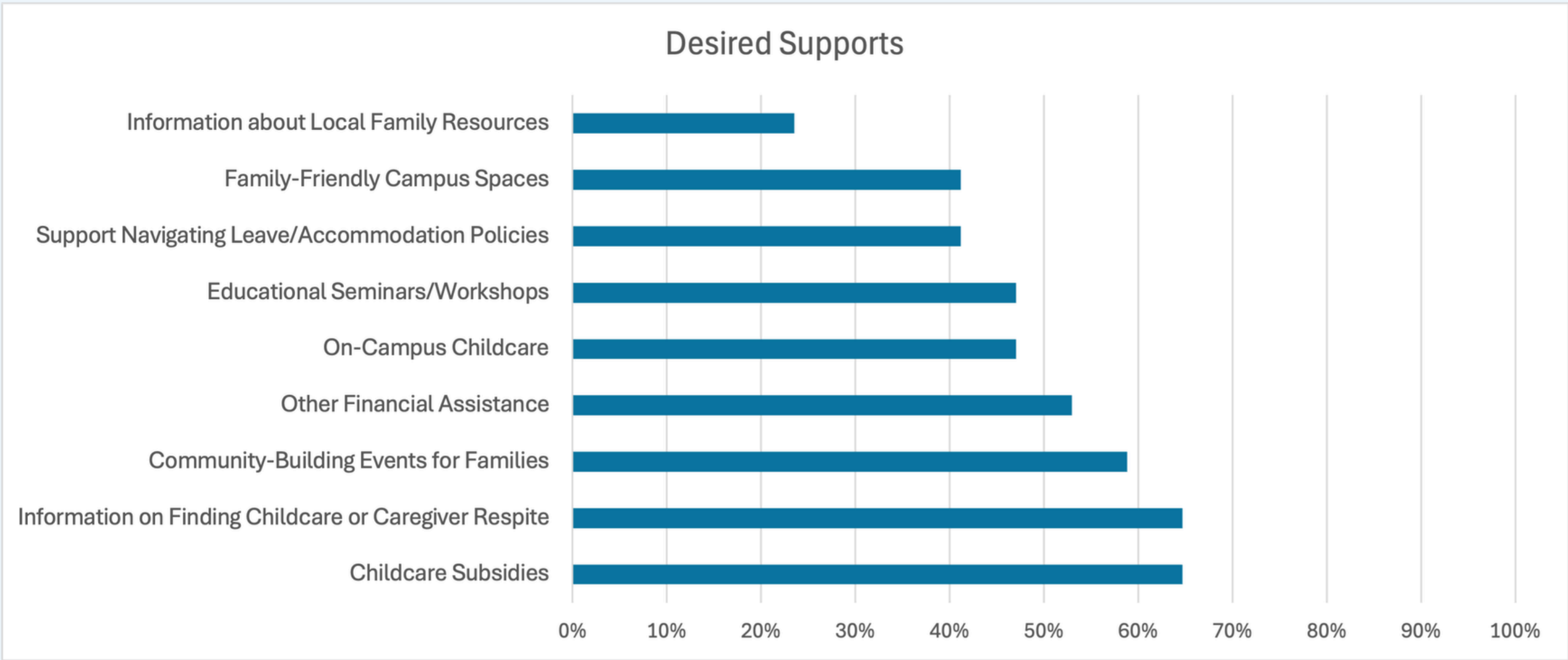
Theme 3: Low Resource Utilization

Most respondents (53%) reported not using any campus resources related to caregiving. Among those who did access resources, the most commonly used were:

- Parental leave (18%)
- University childcare (12%)
- Adding a dependent to university insurance (12%)
- Counseling and Psychological Services (6%)
- Childcare scholarship/subsidy (6%)
- On-campus cupboard (6%)

Theme 4: Additional Supports Desired

Respondents identified several resources that they believed would be most helpful. Some of these resources already exist but are underutilized, and others would be new or renewed campus offerings. The desired supports align with identified challenges (e.g., social isolation could be alleviated by community-building events, or financial strain could be alleviated by childcare subsidies and other financial assistance).



Implications

Survey results indicate that student caregivers face substantial barriers to academic success, particularly around time management, financial strain, and wellbeing. Many are unaware of or unable to access existing resources, and a majority report feeling isolated or unsupported. The data suggests a strong need for expanded financial assistance, clearer policy navigation support, improved childcare access, and intentional community-building opportunities.

Recommendations

1. Expand financial support options, including childcare subsidies and emergency assistance.
2. Develop centralized, accessible information on caregiving-related resources.
3. Increase community-building programs for student caregivers to reduce isolation.
4. Advocate for expanded on-campus childcare and family-friendly spaces.
5. Offer workshops on caregiving-related topics (lactation, child development, estate planning, memory care).
6. Strengthen communication around leave policies, accommodations, and available supports.
7. Conduct additional quantitative and qualitative research to deepen understanding of student caregiver needs.

Conclusion

The survey highlights the significant pressures student caregivers face and underscores the need for expanded, coordinated support. These findings will guide future programming, advocacy, and resource development to ensure that student caregivers can thrive academically, personally, and professionally.