

From insights to action: How evidence is informing family services reforms

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Together with Families Family Services Symposium 2024

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands across Victoria and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge Aboriginal self-determination is a human right and recognise the hard work of many generations of First Peoples who have fought for this right to be upheld.

We value the rich and diverse voices of First Peoples in our work.

We collect data and information that can help us strengthen family services

Data and information is drawn from many sources

Demographic, needs and service usage data through parenting, family services and child protection data systems

Linked data, using VICSIM to understand families' touchpoints with the system

Quantitative data via surveys and outcome assessment tools

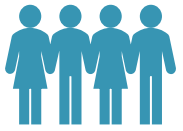
Qualitative data via case studies, focus groups and targeted consultations

Thematic insights and learnings from family services evaluations

Findings and recommendations from multiple system enquiries and commissions

Family Services data

A snapshot of family services in Victoria



Family services is able to support around **40,000** families across the platform, including **4,270** Aboriginal families (based on 2023 –24 investment)



Families supported through the **strengthening** and **restoring** streams receive around **100** hours of service on average, up from **70** hours in 2015-16



Services are delivered by **157** agencies, including **18** Aboriginal community-controlled organisations



Family services employ a workforce of approximately **2,000** practitioners and team leaders

A snapshot of how investment is distributed across the platform

We have seen a **doubling** in family services capacity over the last **10 years**. In 2024-25, the Victorian government is investing **\$368 million** in the provision of family services via the sector



Connecting Families

\$30 million



Strengthening Families

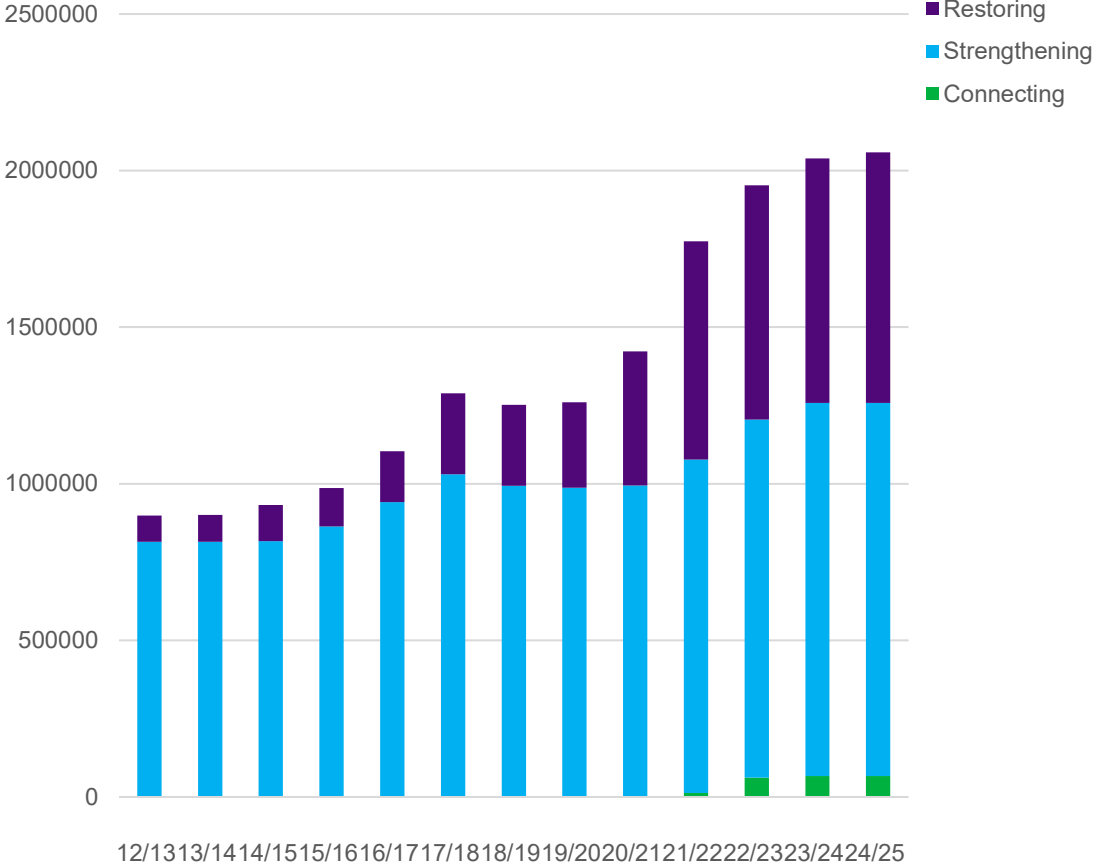
\$190 million



Restoring Families

\$149 million

Funded service hours over time 2012-13 to 2024-25*



Family services support children with different needs, experiences and backgrounds



16 per cent of children are Aboriginal



41 per cent of children are from regional or rural areas



One in three children are four years of age or younger



16 per cent have a parent or carer born overseas – representing **142** countries.



12 per cent of children are enrolled in the NDIS and another **20 per cent** are likely eligible for NDIS

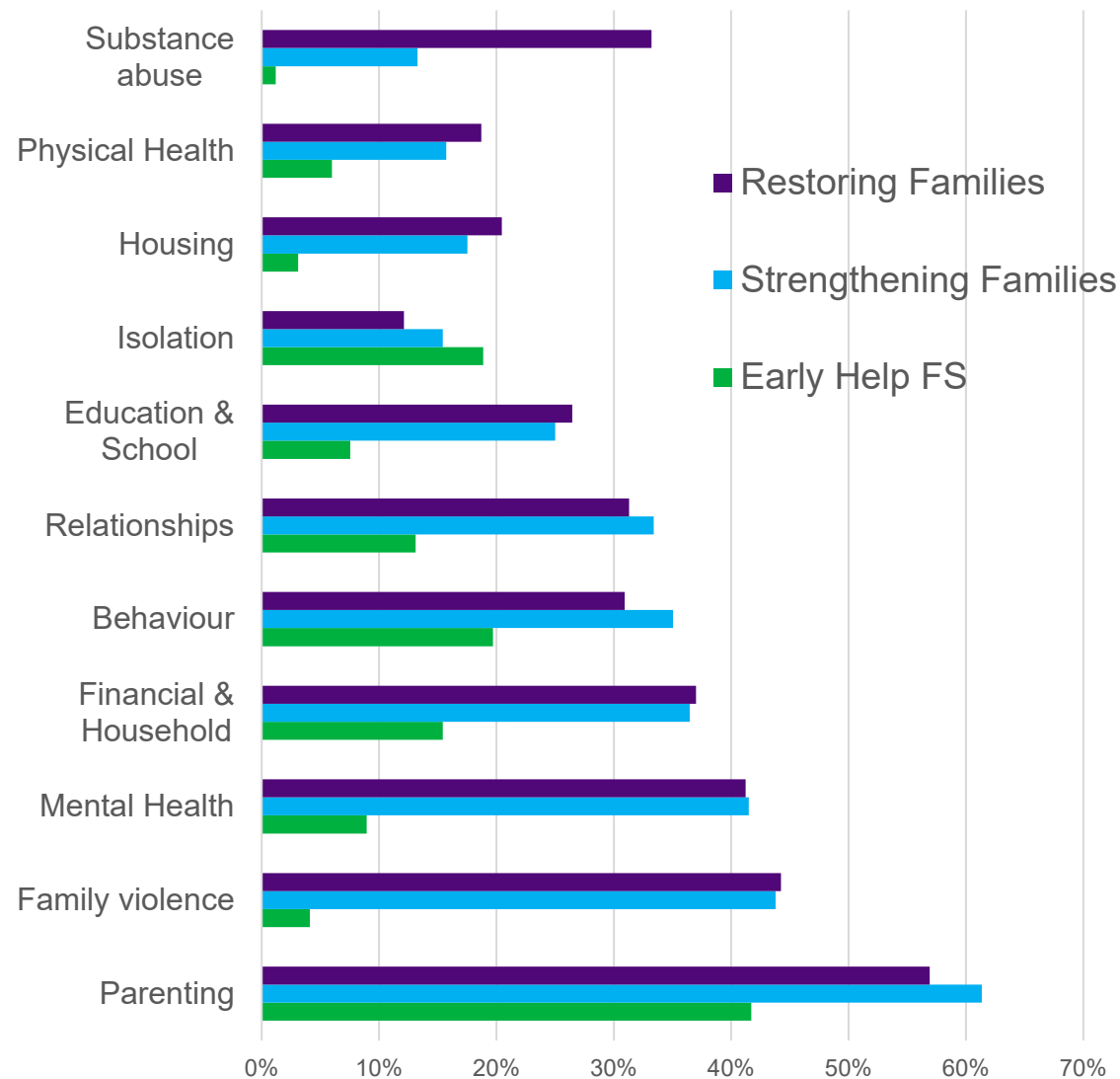
	0-4 years	5-10 years	11-17 years
Connecting Families	37%	41%	22%
Strengthening Families	28%	36%	36%
Restoring Families	32%	33%	35%
Total	30%	36%	34%

Age of children in IRIS

Families experience multiple and complex issues

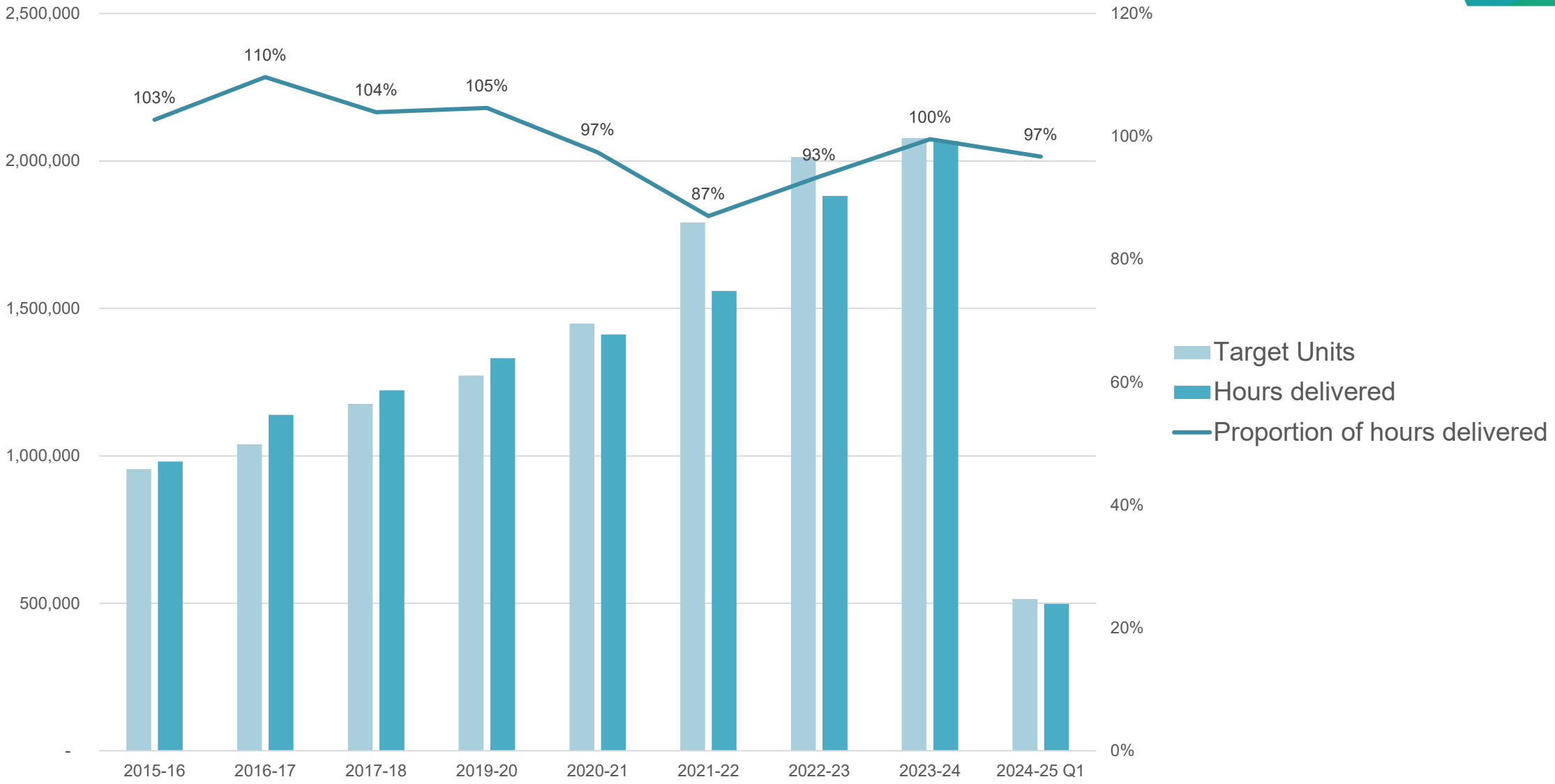
- **21 per cent** of families in the **strengthening stream** and **80 per cent** in the **restoring stream** are referred from child protection. Many referrals from child protection originate from education reporters.
- Families in the **connecting stream** are mainly self-referrals or referred from maternal and child health and education.
- **55 per cent** of families have more than two complex needs.
- Parenting is the most prevalent issue for families, followed by family violence and mental health.

Issue prevalence across the platform



Performance against funded hours has improved following the pandemic

Family Services performance (against total service hours) from SDT



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Family services continue to meet most of the government targets, but data quality continues to impact results

We report on several family service performance measures to government. Data collection and categorisation issues are impacting on several measures.

Over recent years, there is a stronger focus on outcome and impact measures such as:

- family functioning and parenting efficacy
- goal achievement
- substantiation rates and rates of children in care

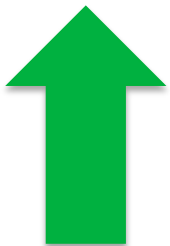
Performance against Budget Paper 3 Output measures

Outcome measure	Outcome	Target	Actual
Number of family services cases provided to Aboriginal families	Exceeded target	1,983	2,716
Total number of family service cases provided	Target not met	22,692	19,811
Number of intensive family service cases commencing	95% of target met	3,107	2,951
Number of intensive support service cases commencing for Aboriginal families	Target not met	925	709
Number of parents/carers enrolled in supported playgroups	Exceeded target	12,280	14,670
Proportion of family services cases closing who met an identified goal in their child and family action plan	Exceeded target	70%	74%

Connecting Families is supporting families earlier leading to improved child outcomes

- **14,690** parents/carers participated in supported playgroups in 2023-24
- **Over 3,500** families supported through early help family services, with only **7 per cent** being referred to more intensive family services
- **54 per cent** of families in early help family services were supported to connect to community

Parental efficacy, measured via Me as a Parent Survey



65 per cent
improvement for
those in supported
playgroups



68 per cent
improvement for
those in early help
family services

'I was in a dark place when he was born and coming here has helped...I'm learning so much about myself – how to parent – and I actually now feel like I am a good Mum'

EHFS participant

We know that families who engage in Strengthening Families have improved outcomes

- **12,000** families supported with **13,500** episodes of support in 2023-24
- **21 per cent** of families are referred from Child Protection
- By linking data we can see CP involvement is higher. **40 per cent** of whom have previously been subject to a CP investigation while **30 per cent** have had a previous substantiation
- **53 per cent** of families fully meet at least one goal on their child and family action plan, 73% fully or partially meet a goal

Families who engage in family services have improved outcomes



19 per cent
reduction in CP investigations



29 per cent
reduction in CP substantiations



15 per cent
reduction in school absences

'I didn't think I could learn to do anything differently as a parent. Now I've been practicing new skills for so long they've become second nature and I have to pinch myself to remember what it was like before'

Disability family services participant

We are seeing improved outcomes through new evidence-based approaches in Restoring Families

- **4,452** families supported through Restoring Families.
- **72 per cent** of families are achieving goals, either fully or substantially. This has continued to improve over the recent years.
- **56 per cent** of families had improved family functioning scores while **44 per cent** had better parenting efficacy scores following FPR participation.
- **294** fewer children in care, **17.3%** less than expected.

'I've been in the [correction and jail] system for a long time, so I was skeptical at first ... but it was totally different from the start. My worker made me feel comfortable and it was about me and not the system ... you're just feeling like you're a real person again, you're not a case study'

PFF participant

'I had missed my child so much, the program improved our family's functioning and wellbeing, and it was amazing to be reunited with my child'

FPR participant

Data directions – improving IRIS data processes and access

We are improving the technology that processes IRIS data files. These are now processed automatically and daily into a modern database.

The FSI Qlik application, which shares IRIS data with family services agencies and alliances, is also being replaced by a Microsoft Power BI solution that will update overnight when new data is received.

Power BI – quick peek at referral information...

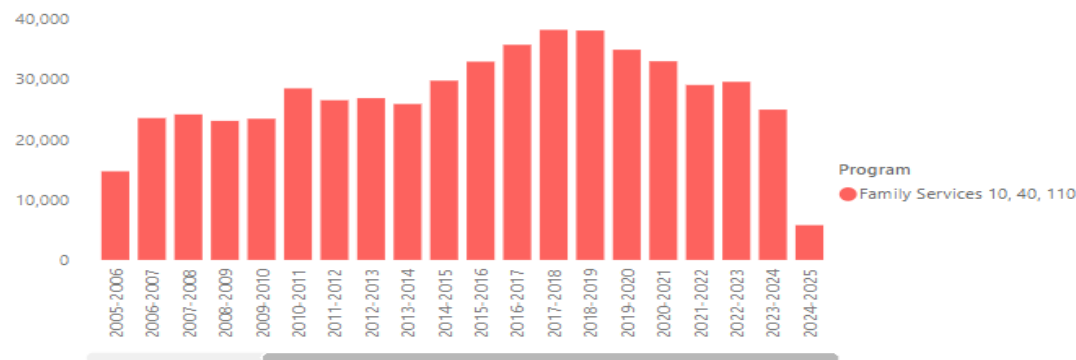
FAMILY SERVICES INFORMATION



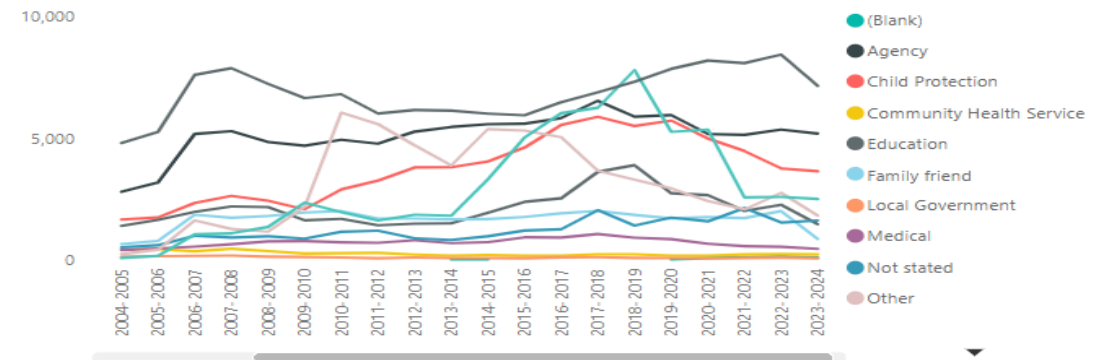
Referrals

Child First	Program Category	Referral Source Category, Referral Source	Agency Name	Client Aboriginal	
All	All	All	All	All	
Referral Date	Funding Source	Specialist Case Type	Case Objective	Agency Division, Area	Client Division, Area
All	dhhs	All	All	All	All

Referrals by Program category - Yearly view



Referrals by Referral source category - Yearly view



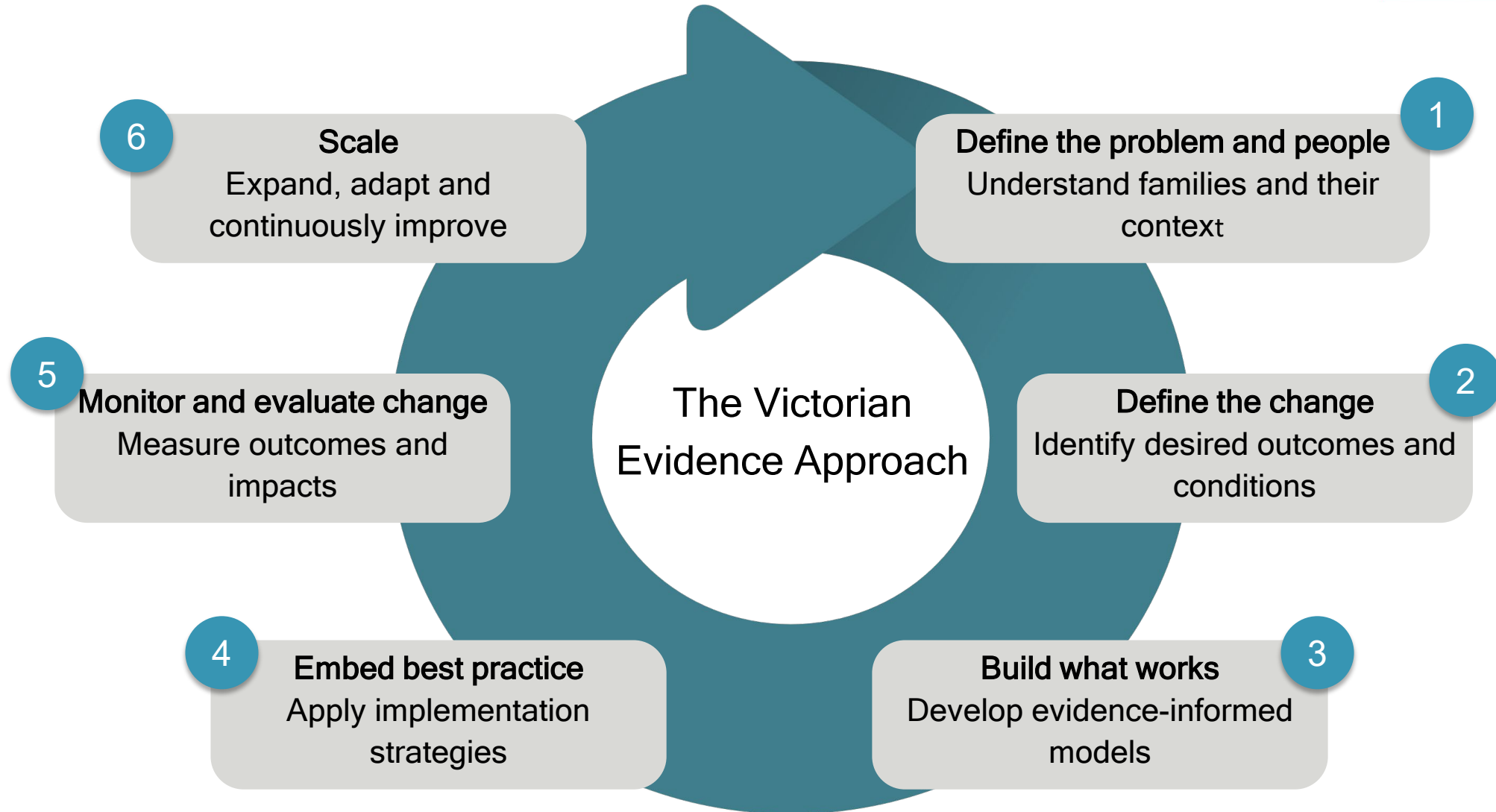
Your thoughts and reflections

In a few words, what are your initial reactions to the family services system data?



Family Services Evidence Approach

Our Evidence Approach to building and scaling services that improve outcomes (as demonstrated in FPR)



How we are using data to monitor implementation and impact in FPR

Systematic collection of agency data and feedback to address implementation challenges

DFFH roles working closely with agencies to drive implementation

Monitoring participation in self-guided learning, training and coaching

Collecting data on key implementation strategies to build workforce skills

Collection of family outcomes data to demonstrate change

Supporting agencies to collect family outcomes data before and after the service

Evaluation of implementation strategies and impact

Robust evaluation of the service model

Linked data to determine impact

DFFH analytics team identifying characteristics of families in need and monitoring long term impact

With sustained effort, we are reaching an advanced stage of implementation

Selected implementation strategies



Local implementation teams

Regular meetings to support implementation, guided by an action plan and supported by implementation science leads.

**% of agencies with established local implementation teams*

Mid-2022
n=34 agencies, 378 practitioners



Mid- 2024
n=32 agencies, 508 practitioners



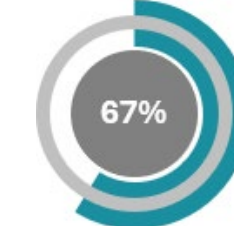
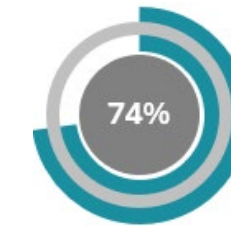
Target mid-2025
n=32 agencies (up to 400 practitioners)



Training suite

Facilitated training in each practice module is delivered in person or online to build practitioner capacity and confidence in their application.

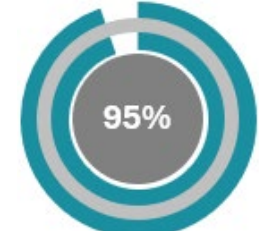
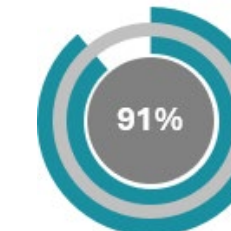
**% of practitioners who have completed Foundations modules.*



Coaching

Practitioners and team leaders receive in-person or online coaching from the Centre and/or VACCA to build skills and confidence in using practice elements.

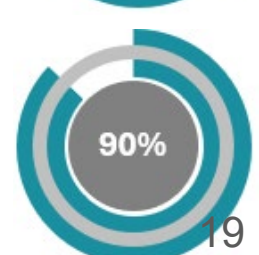
**% of agencies participating in coaching*



Family outcomes data

The implementation team support agencies to collect family outcomes data for those participating in the service.

**% of agencies submitting outcomes data under EIIF framework*



Foundation modules

Foundational modules

These modules contain practices that are foundational to working with families and are used to build and maintain engagement and support collaborative partnerships between families and practitioners. They are used continuously throughout a practitioner's work with families.

Building and maintaining engagement

- OARS
 - Strengths-based practice
 - Checking for understanding
 - Seeking feedback
- ≈ Deep listening
 - ≈ Empowering narratives
 - ≈ Connecting to Community and culture

Preparing for change

- Collaborative partnership
 - Identifying priorities
 - Building motivation for change
 - Goal setting
- ≈ Connecting to mentors

Aboriginal healing

- ≈ Responding to racism
- ≈ Self-advocacy
- ≈ Understanding the impact of intergenerational trauma
- ≈ Lateral violence
- ≈ Grief, loss and sorry business

Legend

- ≈ Cultural practice element

Practice confidence and consistency is improving

Confidence and adherence for building and maintaining engagement, family functioning, and cultural practice elements is high

✓ **73-91%**

Strong likelihood of **future use of practice modules**

✓ **90 – 97%**

High levels of **confidence to coach teams** in the practice elements

✓ **58 - 72%**

Evaluation data shows we're on the right track

Families experienced **better family functioning outcomes** when practitioners participated in **more than 50% of the training and participated in regular coaching** (CERE, 2023)

'All aspects of the training are beneficial, the yarning components that welcomed input from all attendees and facilitators was excellent!'

'I am enjoying the FPPR training and how it has helped me as a practitioner'

'Everything, best 'training' I have participated in, in such a long time and so valuable and important'

'Coaching is supporting team to imbed practice elements'

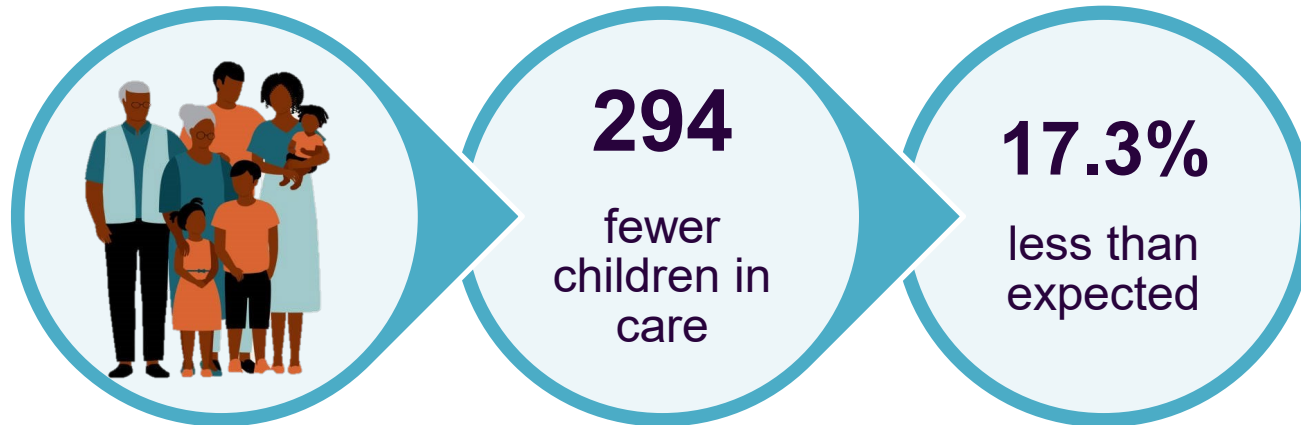
Practice module and coaching survey, Dec 2022, n=164

Impact and sustainment



1,409 children in care instead of **1,703** children out of a total of **6,842** children

As at June 2023, for all children connected from September 2020 to March 2023



After 4 years, we are moving into sustainment – the operating model, practice modules and implementation processes are being embedded as ‘business as usual’

‘Without sustainment, the public health benefits of the implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs) will be limited and the accumulated costs from EBP development, evaluation, and implementation are futile’

Moullin et al 2021

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8404332/>

Family Services Workforce Survey

About the family services workforce survey respondents

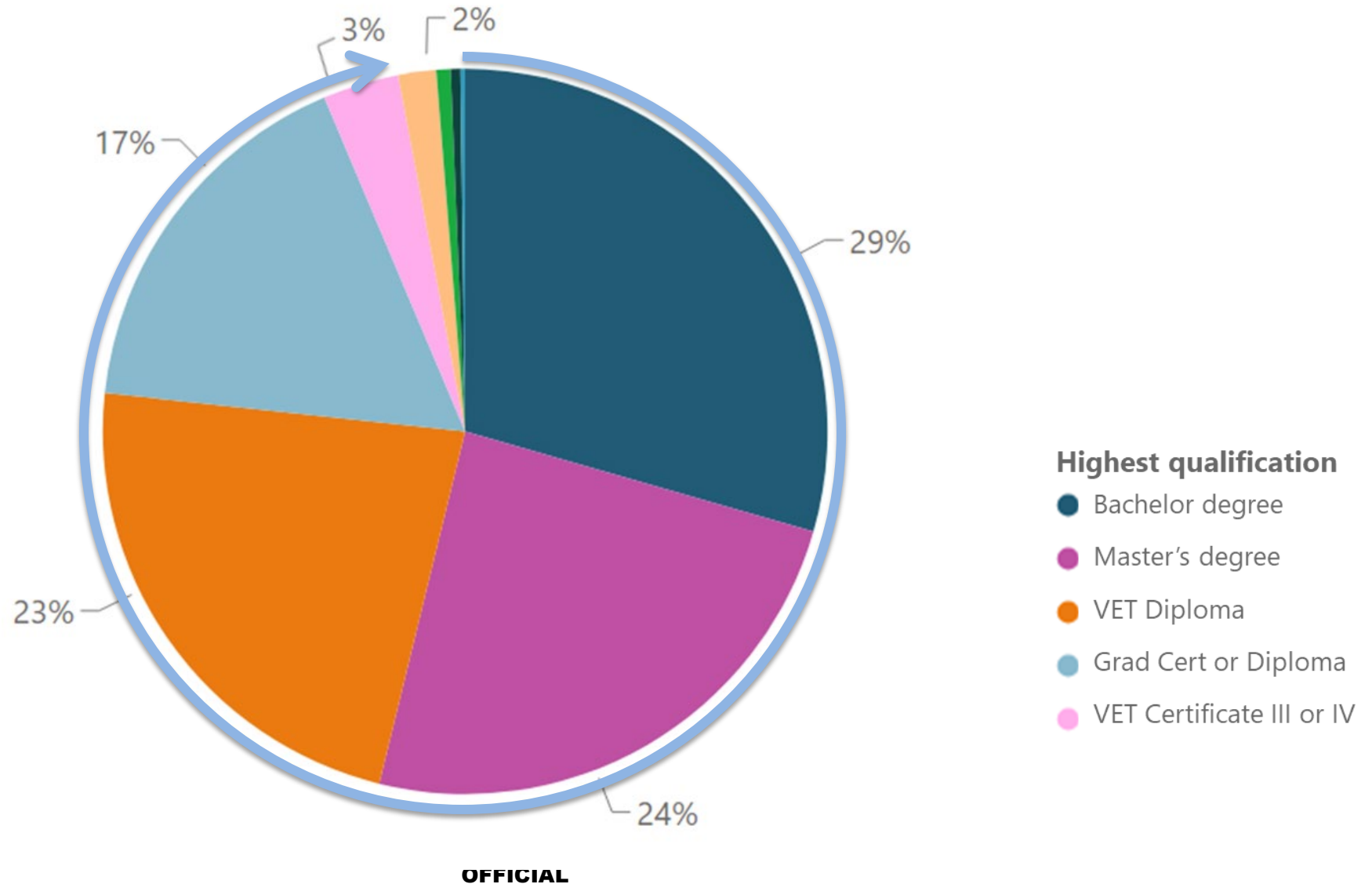
Almost **500** individual responses

- Average age **35-44** years
- **92%** identify as women
- **2.2%** identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- **82%** born in Australia or NZ
- **9.8%** identify as LGBTIQ+
- **8.4%** live with a disability



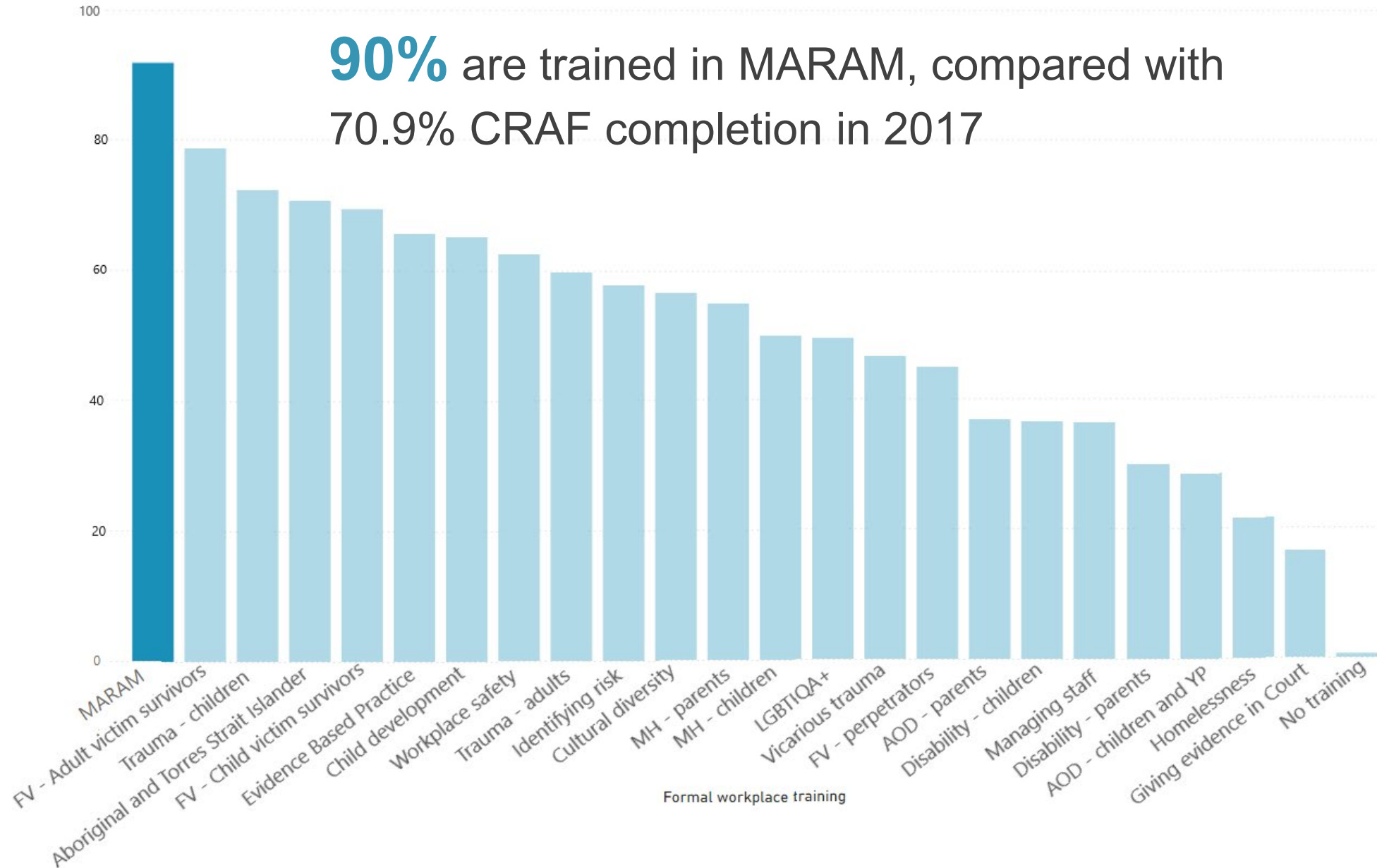
We have a highly qualified workforce

96%
of respondents
have some form
of tertiary
qualification

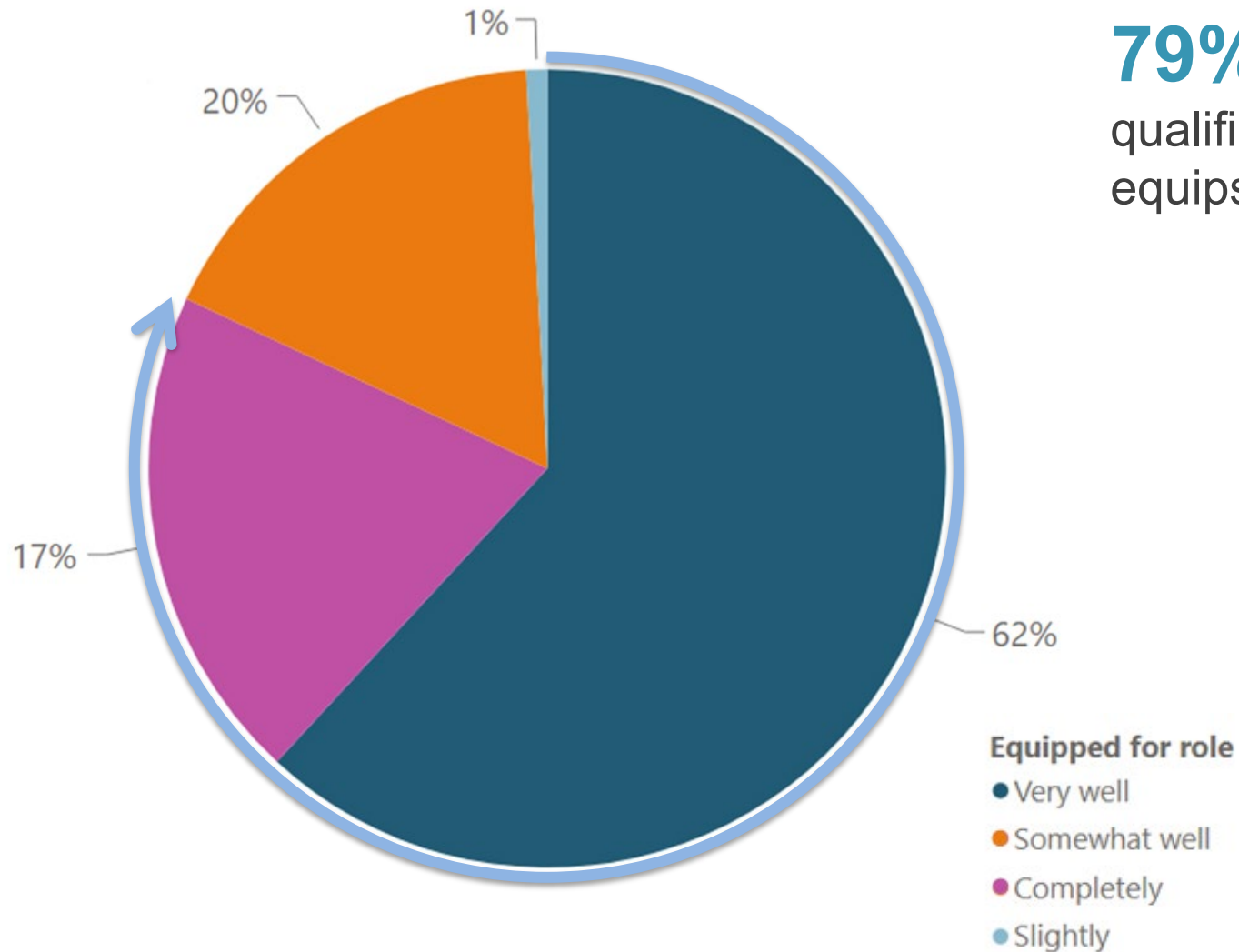


Most are trained in multiple areas

90% are trained in MARAM, compared with 70.9% CRAF completion in 2017



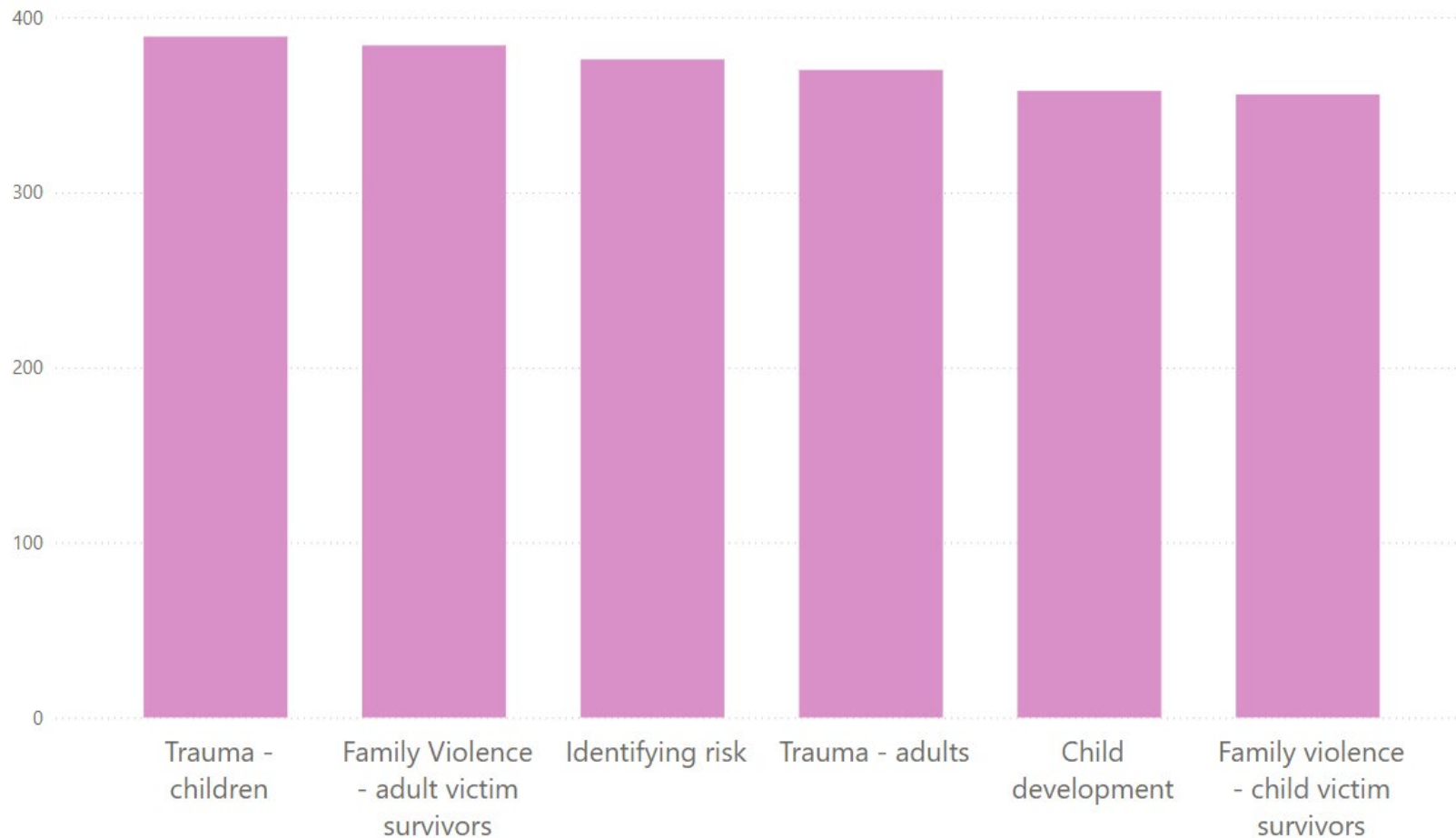
Training equips people for their roles



79% feel their training and qualifications very well or completely equips them for the role

‘This work always requires upskilling, capacity building and professional development as a requirement of the ever-expanding challenges across the community sector’

Practitioner Confidence



Most were confident in working in trauma-informed ways, along with working with victim survivors of family violence, identifying risk and child development

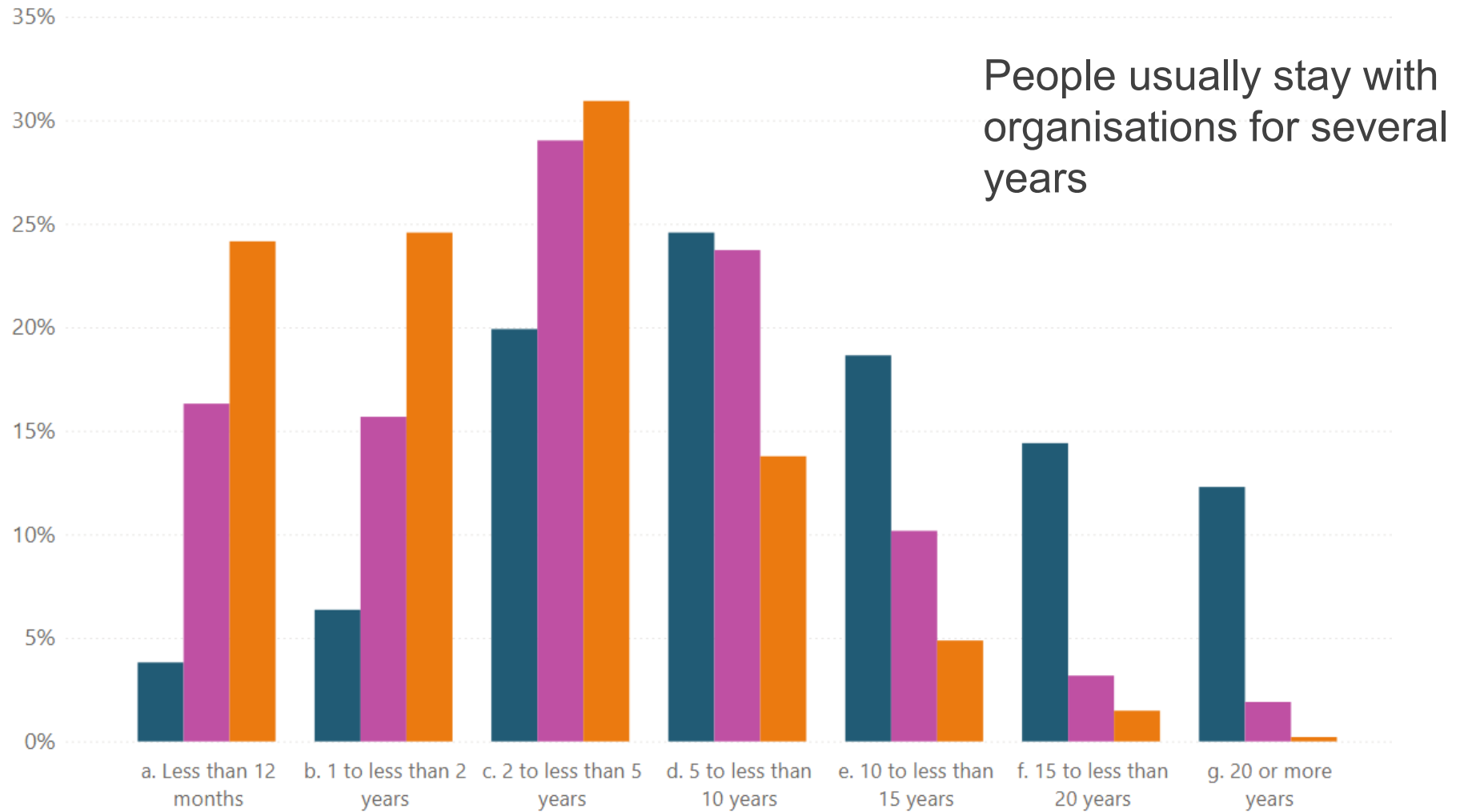
Practitioner Confidence

... and fewer were confident in working with parents with disabilities, people who perpetrate family violence, and giving evidence in court

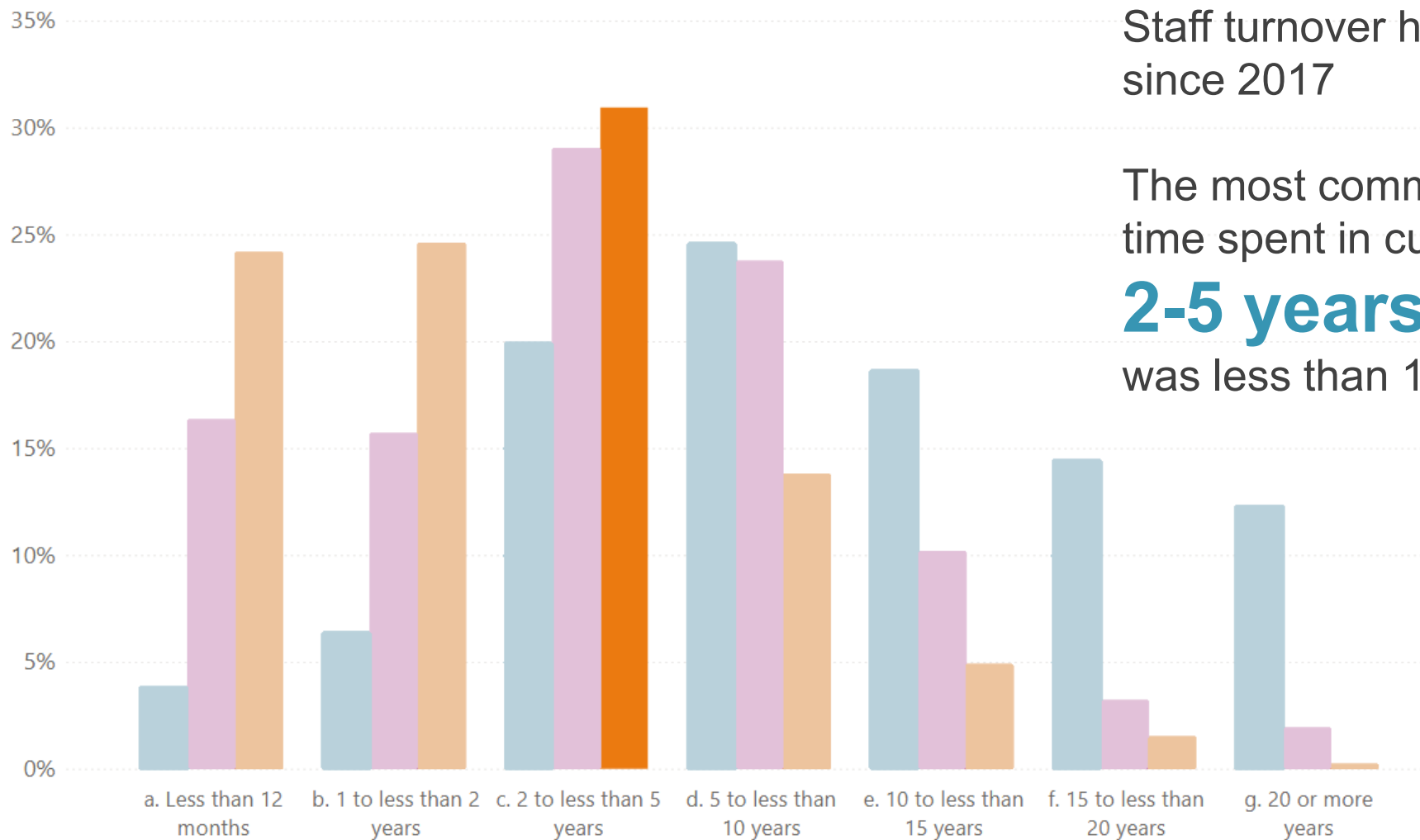
Many highlighted the need for quality training in disability, in line with the lower confidence we see here



Job stability and turnover



Job stability and turnover



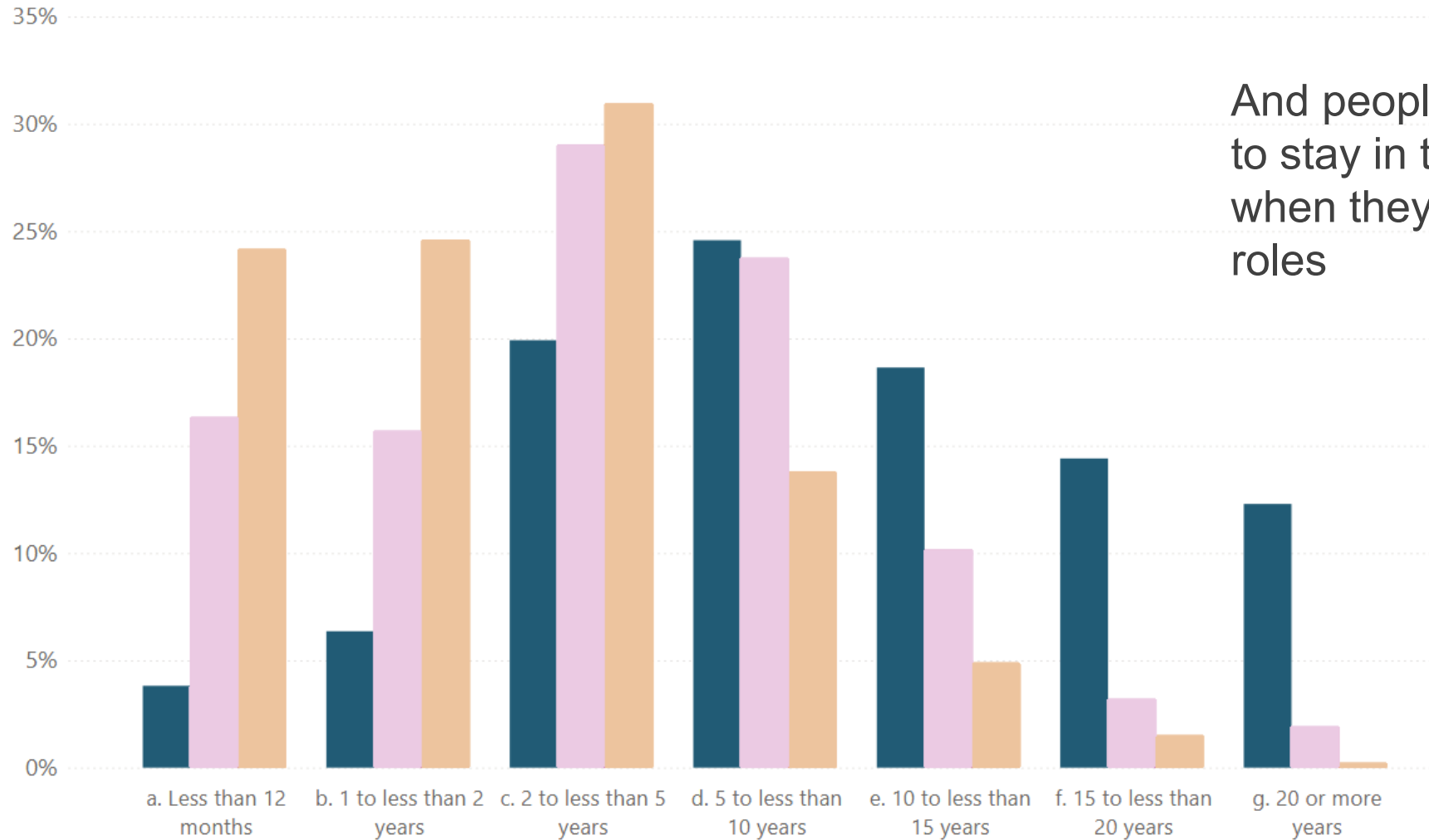
Staff turnover has decreased since 2017

The most common length of time spent in current role is **2-5 years**. In 2017, it was less than 12 months.

Time in:

- Current role
- Current organisation
- Community services

Job stability and turnover



And people are likely to stay in the sector when they move roles

Time in:

- Current role
- Current organisation
- Community services

Support and job satisfaction

These figures are supported by survey data that suggest people generally feel supported in the workplace, and have good job satisfaction:

67% have high or very high job satisfaction

90% feel supported to work safely

78% feel supported to maintain a professional development plan

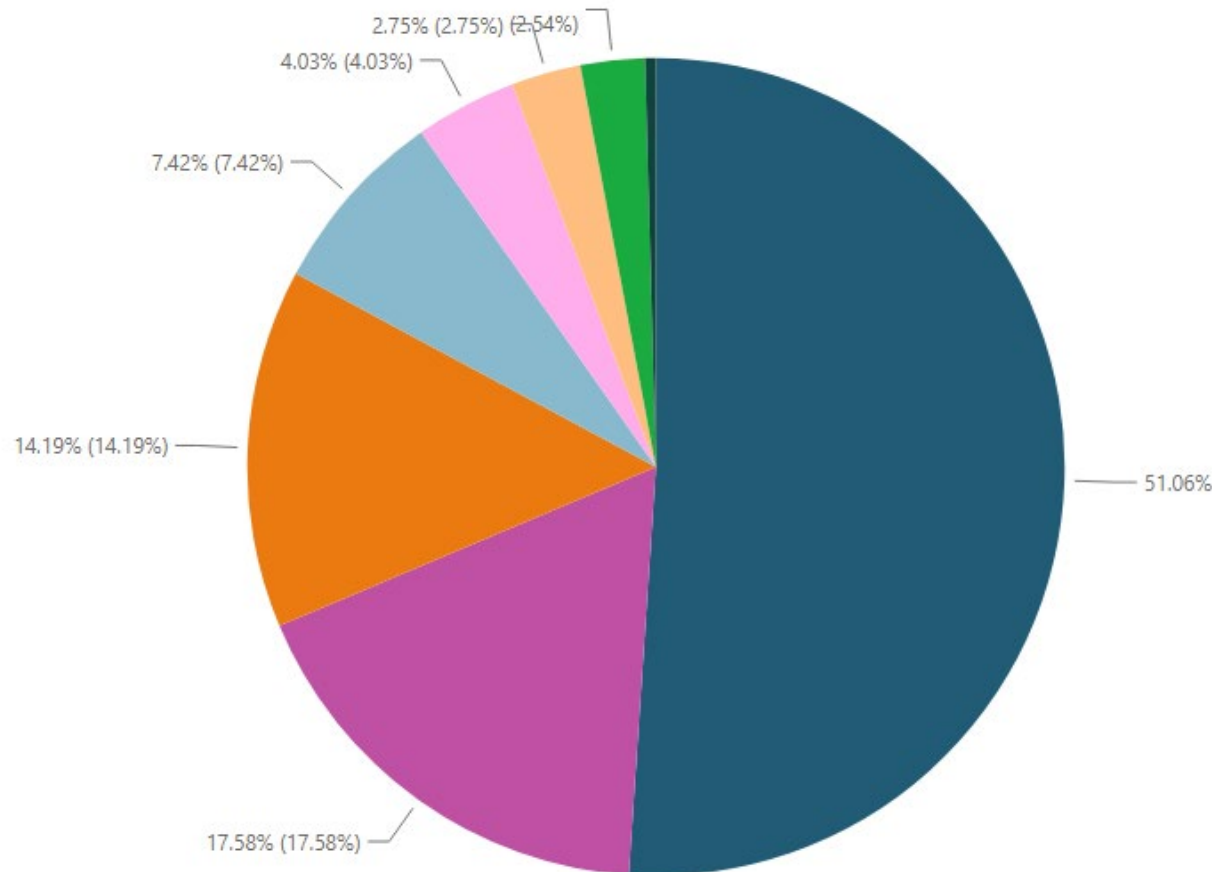
86% feel at least somewhat supported to maintain life/work balance



Qualitative insights suggest manager support and flexible working arrangements make the biggest difference to people achieving balance

Motivations to stay in sector

88% plan or hope to stay in the sector in the next year (down 2% since 2017). Like in 2017, the most common primary motivation to stay is 'making a difference to children and families' (51%)



'Employees have the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of children, young people, and families, supporting those experiencing challenges like family violence, trauma, or homelessness'

Your thoughts and reflections

In a few words, what are your initial reactions to the workforce survey data?



Family Services Strategic Framework

Moving to a more integrated, person centred family services platform



For families with	Emerging or situational needs	Cumulative and escalating needs	Significant and enduring needs
Intensity	● ○ ○	● ● ○	● ● ●
Primary entry point	Universal services	The Orange Door	Child Protection
Primary intent	Building resources and networks	Building capacity and family functioning	Restoring safety and enabling healing
Primary opportunity to act	To prevent problems from getting worse	To prevent problems from becoming entrenched	To prevent lifelong harm & disrupt cycles of disadvantage

Many voices are informing the re-design of the strategic framework...



22 engagement sessions held, including **2** information sessions and **20** targeted consultations and briefings



Involving more than **560** participants



Representing parenting and family services community service organisations and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, child and family alliances, The Orange Door, child protection, agency performance and system support, peak, oversight and representative bodies, and departments of health, education and justice and community services



Reflecting voices of families, practitioners, operational managers, executives, policy advisors and researchers



69 feedback forms completed

....and helping us focus on the things that matter



Framework must reflect the ambition of **Aboriginal-led reforms**, supporting a need for an **Aboriginal family services framework**



Entry points should enable **seamless and timely** access to the right level of support



Support needs are not always linear - some families need **support for longer periods or supports that can be re-activated** when needed



Child voice needs to be embedded in the design and delivery of family services



Parenting supports need to be prominent across all service streams and for all age groups



Families can benefit from continuity – this can be a **diverse mix of staff** with differing skills, roles and functions, but it **needs to be coordinated**



Integrated models are needed across sectors and across the continuum

Which we can draw on to strengthen family services

Document type	Component	Primary purpose	Applicability
Strategic framework and implementation plan	Strategy and reform	Set direction and enable implementation in line with reform agenda	Family Services and broader system partners
Cross agency/sector protocols and agreements	System interface and integration	Facilitate ways of working between family services and key system partners	Family services and broader system partners
Monitoring and reporting frameworks, policies and regulations	System oversight and performance	Monitor system performance and ensure accountability	Applicable to family services and across the platform
Operational requirements	Service delivery	Enable effective service delivery	Service model and/or cohort specific <i>Designed for operational managers and practitioners</i>
Practice frameworks and resources	Practice	Support best practice	Service model and/or program specific <i>Designed for practitioners</i>

Your questions

