

QFCC Child Protection and Family Support Workforce Survey 2022

Summary of key findings

About the survey

This summary presents findings from the Queensland Family and Child Commission's (QFCC) 2022 survey of frontline workers in the child protection and family support sector in Queensland. We undertook similar surveys in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Our findings are described in the following sections:

- Role and organisation
- Working with clients
- Cultural capability
- Working collaboratively
- Learning and development
- Professional practice supervision
- System demand
- System performance
- Children's rights
- Minimum age of incarceration.

The full survey report can be found [here](#)



Method

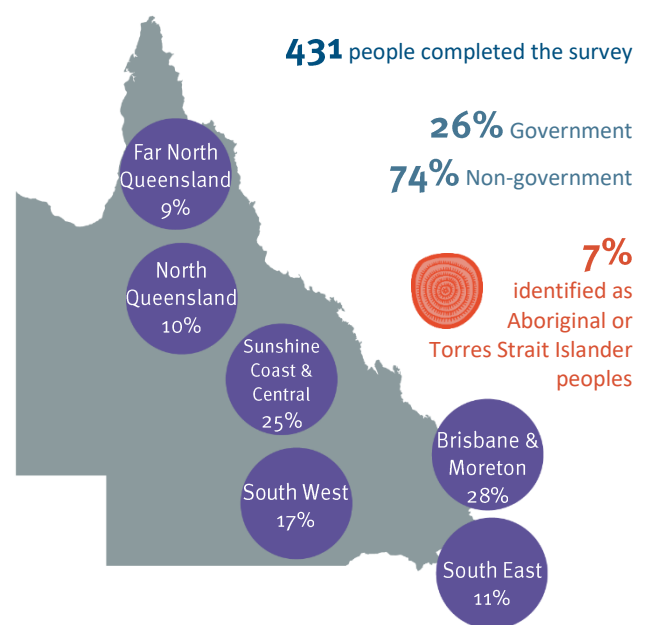
The survey was open between 27 May and 21 June 2022. We asked 116 questions with a mixture of rating style and free text responses.

An online survey link was sent to government agencies, non-government organisations and peak bodies from the Queensland child protection and family support sector. We also sent the link to previous survey respondents.

431 responses were received from frontline child protection and family support workers throughout Queensland.



Respondents



More than half (**58%**) of respondents had less than 10 years' experience in the child protection and family support sector, including **19%** who had 2 years or less years' experience in the sector. **4 in 10** (42%) respondents had 10 or more years' experience.

Child protection was the main service offered by most respondents (**66%**), with **35%** providing tertiary services and **31%** providing secondary services.

A further **10%** provided counselling and other mental health services, while **9%** of respondents provided health and hospital services.

48% of respondents agreed they would recommend working in the child protection and family support sector.



Key findings

Overall findings

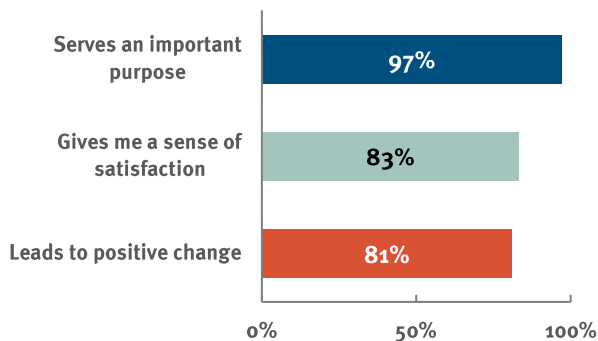
Overall, there were higher proportions of positive responses on this year's survey compared with previous years.

Consistent with trends observed in previous surveys, respondents were more positive when answering questions about their own roles and organisations than they were when answering questions about the child protection and family support system.

Respondents from non-government organisations were also generally more positive than respondents from government agencies.

Role and organisation

The majority of respondents agreed the work they do:



More than half (57%) of respondents agreed they considered their caseload or workload to be manageable. Non-government respondents were more likely to agree their caseload or workload was manageable.



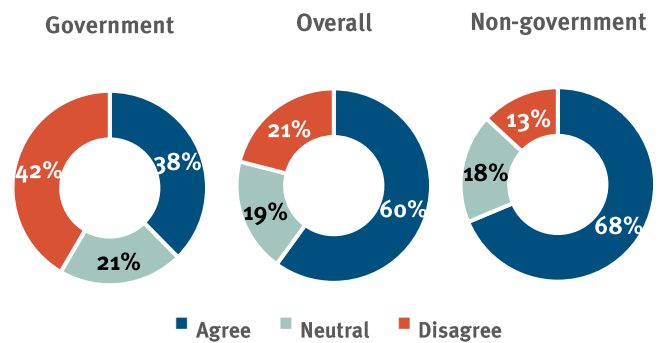
87% of respondents agreed their organisation is Child Safe (that is, creates a culture, adopts strategies and takes action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people). This is a statistically significant increase from 79% in the 2021 survey.

Interestingly, non-government respondents were more likely to agree to this statement than government respondents.



60% of respondents agreed their organisation supports staff to manage stress and maximise health and wellbeing, with a higher proportion of non-government respondents agreeing than government respondents. The proportion of disagreement among government respondents was more than 3 times that for non-government respondents.

My organisation supports staff to manage work stress and maximise health and wellbeing



Working with clients

Respondents were asked to describe their work with clients on a 5-point scale from 'My work is guided by what the client wants' to 'Clients do not have a say in decisions or what happens' (the middle 3 points were not labelled).

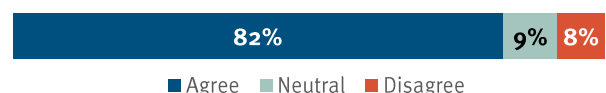
Around half (54%) of respondents perceived their work is guided by what their clients want, while 6% of respondents indicated that their clients largely did not have a say.

Non-government respondents were more likely to indicate that their work is guided by what their clients want.

	Gov't	Overall	NGO
1 – My work is guided by what the client wants	33%	54%	62%
2	21%	21%	20%
3	21%	15%	13%
4	12%	4%	1%
5 – Clients do not have a say in decisions or what happens	13%	6%	4%

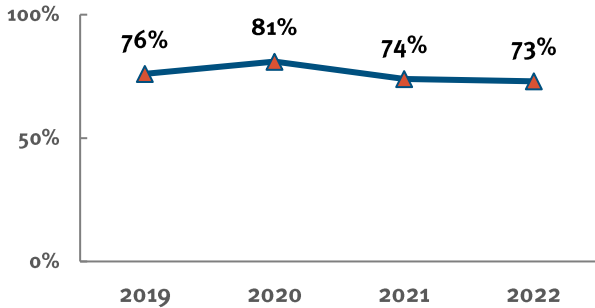
The majority of respondents (82%) agreed their workplace has a culture that supports collaboration.

My workplace has a culture that support collaboration with other organisations to achieve client outcomes



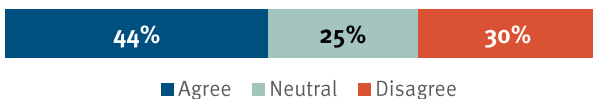
Nearly three quarters (**73%**) of respondents agreed that clients have the opportunity to participate in decisions. Agreement with this statement has decreased since our 2020 survey, where **81%** of respondents agreed.

Agreement that children, young people and families have the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their lives



Consistent with previous surveys (from 2019 onwards), less than half (**44%**) of respondents felt able to spend enough time with children, young people and families. Agreement was higher among non-government respondents (**50%**) than government respondents (**26%**).

I am able to spend enough time with children, young people and their families to do my job well



Just over half (**52%**) of respondents agreed that young people attending their organisation who are making the transition from out-of-home care to independent living can access appropriate transition services when they need them.

Respondents who worked in non-government organisations were more likely to agree than respondents working for government agencies.



Cultural capability

75% of respondents agreed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people attending their organisation are supported to:

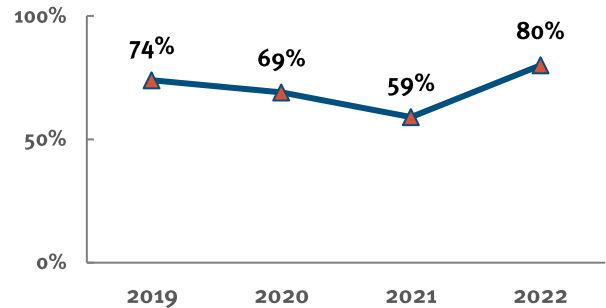
- preserve their culture and linguistic identity
- stay connected with their communities.

80% of respondents agreed that they understand how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle applies to their role.



This is a statistically significant increase from the 2021 result.

I understand how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle applies to my role



Two thirds of respondents agreed that culturally and linguistically diverse children and young people attending their organisations are supported to:

- preserve their cultural and linguistic identity (**69%** agree)
- stay connected with their communities (**67%** agree).

Working collaboratively

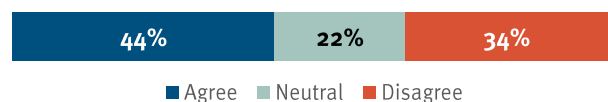
Around **2 in 5 (44%)** respondents agreed that the child protection and family support system is built on shared connections and commitment, up from **29%** in 2021.

Around a quarter (**28%**) of respondents disagreed with this statement.

Consistent with previous surveys, **71%** of respondents agreed that their organisation partners with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to support the delivery of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

However, only **44%** of respondents agreed that they have the time to build relationships with other organisations and service providers.

I have enough time in my role to build relationships with other organisations/service providers



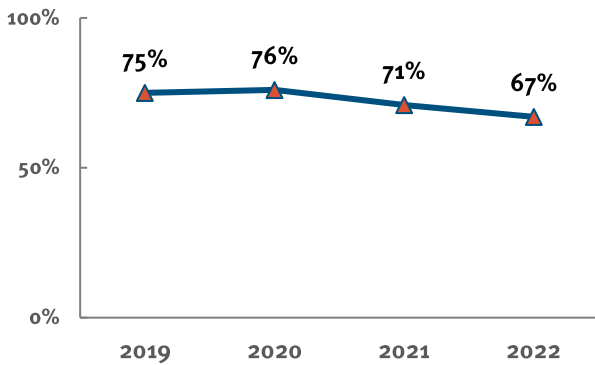
Learning and development

Two thirds (**67%**) of respondents agreed they have been provided with enough training and other learning opportunities to undertake their role well.

13% disagreed, while **20%** were neutral in their response.

Agreement with this statement has decreased compared to previous surveys.

I have been provided with enough training and other learning opportunities to undertake my role well



Professional practice supervision

63% of respondents agreed that they receive the right amount of professional practice supervision to do their job well, down from **71%** agreement in the 2020 survey.

Participants were asked where they receive their professional practice supervision, and how they would prefer to receive professional practice supervision.

Most respondents said they receive supervision through someone in their organisation.

However, approximately **half** would prefer to receive supervision from someone external to their organisation.

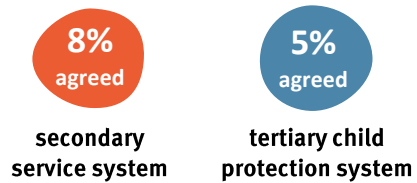
Receive supervision from	Current	Preferred
My Team Leader/Manager	74%	54%
Another person in my organisation	23%	18%
An external person my organisation pays for	12%	48%
An external person I pay for	10%	3%
Other	6%	5%

System demand

Survey responses show that the workforce is concerned about capacity to meet the demand on the child protection and family support system.

Less than **1 in 10** respondents agreed that there is sufficient capacity within the secondary service system and tertiary child protection system to meet demand, and three quarters (**76%**) of respondents agreed that family support referrals and child protection reports are likely to increase in the next 12 months.

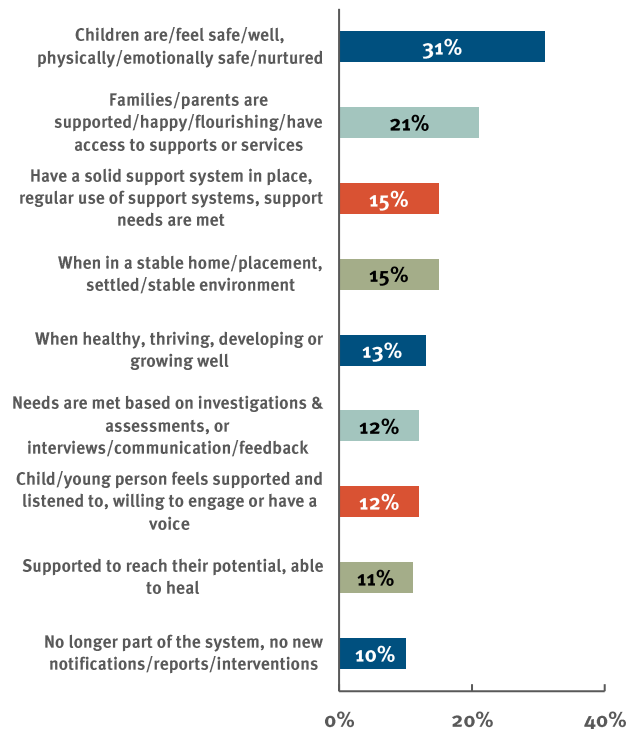
There is sufficient capacity within the system to meet demand



Agreement that there is sufficient capacity within the secondary service system significantly increased from **5%** in the 2021 survey.

System performance

Less than **1 in 5 (16%)** respondents agreed that the child protection and family support system meets the needs of children, young people and families. When asked how they know when needs are met, respondents said:



Only **7%** of respondents agreed that the community has confidence in the child protection and family support system. This differs from our community survey results, where **60%** of respondents agreed that they had confidence and trust in the Queensland child protection system.

The community has confidence in the child protection and family support system



When asked why they thought this, respondents said:

Why do you think this?	Percentage of responses
Family's advice/views, lack of family support	26%
The public generally doesn't have a positive view/have negative views of the child protection system, level of dissatisfaction in the community	20%
Not enough staff, staff underpaid/overworked, staff lack experience	19%
Feeling let down by the system/processes/ agencies	17%
Media misrepresentation, bad publicity, negative media coverage	15%
Underfunded system, too many cuts to services, limited resources	13%
Public lacks an understanding of what we do	12%
Response times (the time between referral and intervention) lagging	10%
The failed responses for children by the State, government improvement needed	10%

Respondents were asked what could be done to improve the child protection and family support system. They said:

Suggested improvement	Percentage of responses
Greater support for the workforce (capacity and capability)	35%
Greater information sharing and collaboration	33%
Increased early intervention and prevention	27%
Improved service responses	15%
Increased cultural capability	7%
More community and family education	4%
Better balancing risk and statutory intervention	2%

Family and Child Connect is a community-based referral service which helps vulnerable families access the information and support they need. Helping families manage issues which do not require a statutory response is intended to reduce demand on the tertiary child protection system.

2 in 5 (42%) of respondents agreed that the introduction of Family and Child Connect has resulted in families being more appropriately referred to the secondary or tertiary system. This is lower than the 2020 result of **49%**.



Intensive Family Support services respond to vulnerable families who are at risk of becoming involved with the statutory child protection system. Families must consent to engage with these services.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services are provided by Indigenous community-controlled organisations. These services intend to help families reduce or avoid involvement with the statutory child protection system.

We asked survey respondents about their views on these services. Respondents agreed that the introduction of Intensive Family Support and Family Wellbeing Services has resulted in:

- improved access to early intervention services for children, young people and families (**57%**)
- improved ability of families to care for their children (**46%**)
- improved outcomes for children, young people and families (**46%**)
- a reduction in demand (that is, less children entering the child protection system) (**23%**).

Children's rights

82% of respondents agreed they have a good working understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.



8 in 10 respondents agreed that within their organisations:

- decisions are made in children's and young people's best interests (**84%**)
- the views of children and young people are listened to and valued (**80%**).

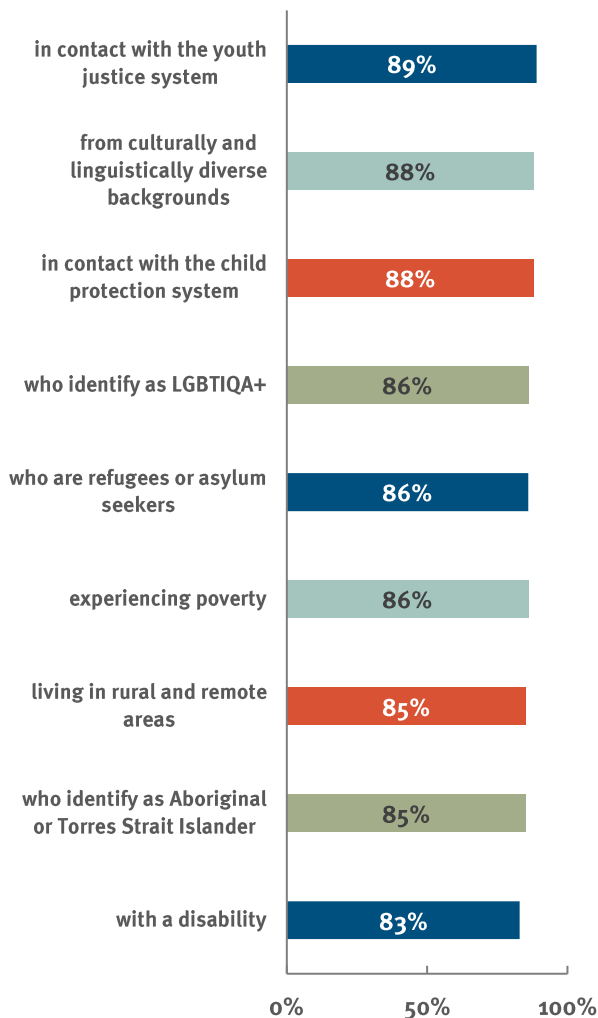
Almost all respondents (**87%**) agreed that within their organisation, children and young people are not discriminated against.

However, there was broad agreement that cohorts of children and young people are likely to experience discrimination, in terms of not having their rights upheld.

For all cohorts of children and young people identified in this question, more than **8 in 10** respondents believed they experienced discrimination at least sometimes (that is, sometimes, often, or always).

Do you feel that children and young people from any of the following groups experience discrimination in terms of having their rights upheld?

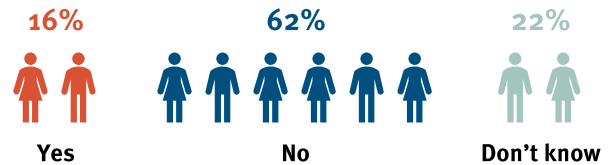
(Percentage of respondents who said sometimes, often, or always)



Minimum age of incarceration

We asked respondents whether children under the age of 14 should be incarcerated (that is, held in a policy watchhouse or placed in youth detention). **6 in 10** respondents said no, less than **2 in 10** said yes, and around **2 in 10** didn't know.

Do you believe that children under the age of 14 should be incarcerated?



When asked to nominate the minimum age a child should be able to be incarcerated, almost all respondents said 12 years or older, and three quarters said 14 years or older.

Only **6%** of respondents said the current minimum age of incarceration (10 years). Fewer than **1%** of respondents provided a response that was less than the current minimum age of criminal responsibility in Queensland.

In your opinion, what is the minimum age a child should be incarcerated?



Youth mental health

We asked respondents about the accessibility, affordability, and timeliness of youth mental health services in their area. We also asked whether services were culturally appropriate.

Around one quarter (**26%**) of respondents agreed that youth mental health services in their area were accessible (that is, available in the area).

Around **1 in 5** respondents agreed that youth mental health services in their area were affordable (**20%**) and culturally appropriate (**16%**). Only **3%** of respondents agreed that services were timely (that is, services can meet demand without waitlists).

The QFCC values your feedback

Please scan the QR code to complete a brief survey and tell us what you think of this document

