



Survey of the workforce — 2021

Summary of findings



Purpose

We surveyed **763** government and non-government frontline workers in the child protection and family support sector in Queensland. We undertook similar surveys in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

This factsheet summarises the key findings from our 2021 workforce survey in terms of what's working well and what could be better. Where possible, we make comparisons with results from the previous (2019 and 2020) surveys. We also note any variations across sub-groups of respondents.

Our findings are described in the following sections:

- Role and organisation
- Working with clients
- Cultural capability
- Barriers to accessing services
- Working collaboratively
- Learning and development
- System performance
- Children's rights
- The biggest issues for vulnerable children and young people in Queensland.



Method

An online survey link was sent to government agencies, non-government organisations and peak bodies from the child protection and family support sector who forwarded it on to their frontline staff. We also sent the link to previous survey respondents who shared their email addresses with us. The survey was open between 5 and 24 May 2021. We asked 81 questions with a mixture of rating style and free text responses.

About the survey

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) collects data from a variety of sources to inform our programs of work.

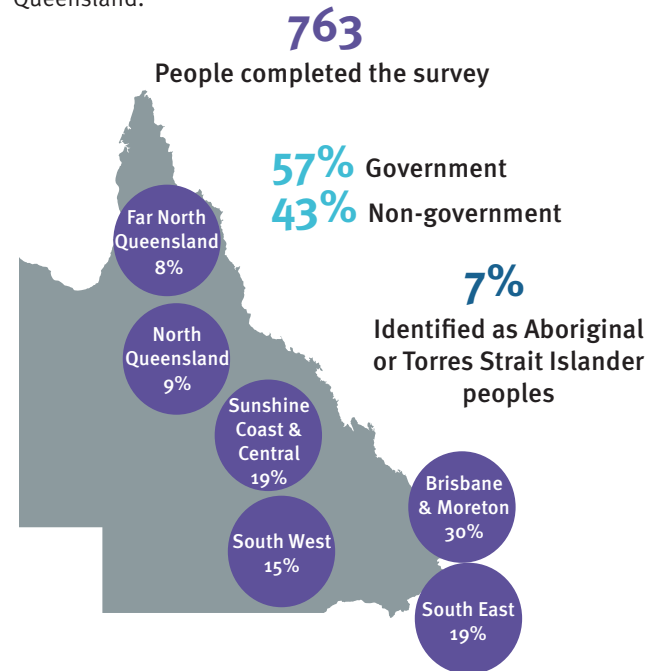
The QFCC intends to conduct a workforce survey annually to gather evidence to contribute to our evaluation and oversight activities.

Queensland
Family & Child
Commission



Sample

Responses were received from frontline workers throughout Queensland.



On average, respondents had worked in the child protection and family support sector for **10.93** years.

4 in 10 (43%) respondents agreed they would recommend working in the child protection and family support sector, which is a statistically significant decrease from the results in 2020 (55 per cent) and 2019 (54 per cent).

1 in 10 (10%) respondents agreed they intended to leave the child protection and family support sector within the next 12 months.



Overall findings

Survey respondents' perceptions were generally less positive in this survey than in previous years. Similar to our previous surveys:

- respondents were generally more positive about their role and organisations than the broader child protection and family support system.
- respondents working for non-government organisations were often more positive than those from government agencies.





Findings

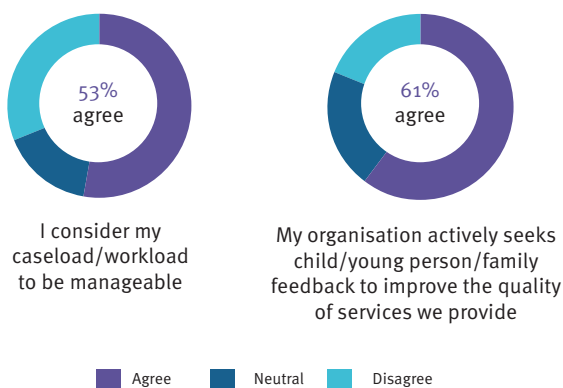
What's working well?

Statements with the highest proportion of agreement include:



What could be better?

Statements with the lowest proportion of agreement include:



Role and organisation

Trends

The level of agreement with the statements below changed across the last three surveys.

Question	2019	2020	2021
I consider my caseload/workload to be manageable	47%	65% ↑	53% ↓
I am confident that I know where to refer families for specialist services	73%	80% ↑	74% ↓
My organisation regularly assesses its own performance	70%	81% ↑	75% ↓
My organisation tailors services to meet the needs of children, young people and families	69%	78% ↑	69% ↓

↑↓ indicates a significant increase or decrease from the previous wave

Variation across sub-group responses

Respondents from non-government organisations were more likely than respondents from government agencies to agree with the following statements:

NGO	Govt
96%	90%
61%	47%

Factors influencing decision making

We asked a new question this year—'What factors influence your decisions about risk of harm to children and young people?' Respondents answered in their own words, and the most commonly cited factors included:

- 12% Family history/dynamics
- 10% Immediate/physical safety/health of the child
- 10% Capacity/willingness of parent/carer to provide care
- 8% Availability of community support
- 8% Presence of family and domestic violence
- 7% Drug and alcohol abuse issues



Findings

Working with clients

What's working well?

Statements with the highest proportion of agreement include:

I have a clear understanding of the information I can share with other organisations



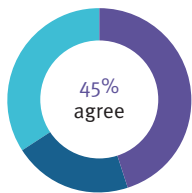
I am confident that I know where to refer families for specialist services



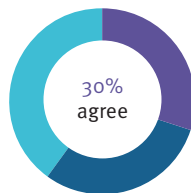
Agree Neutral Disagree

What could be better?

Statements with the lowest proportion of agreement include:



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

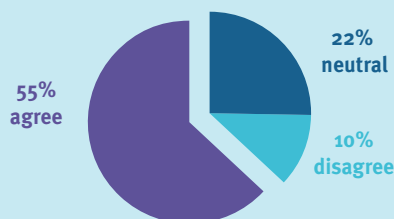


When I refer families to other services, I receive feedback about whether the service has engaged with the family

Agree Neutral Disagree

The impact of COVID-19

This year we asked about the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on system demand, with the majority of respondents agreeing that the pandemic had increased demand on the system.



Trends

The level of agreement with the statements below changed across the last three surveys.

Question	2019	2020	2021
I am able to spend enough time with children, young people and families to do my job well	36%	48% ↑	45% ↓
I have a clear understanding of the information I can share with other organisations	88%	86%	81% ↓
I am confident that I know where to refer families for specialist services	73%	80% ↑	74% ↓
I have sound knowledge of the services available in my area	75%	81% ↑	71% ↓
I am usually aware of other services working with my clients	76%	69% ↓	62% ↓

↑↓ indicates a significant increase or decrease from the previous wave

Variation across sub-group responses

Respondents from non-government organisations were more likely than respondents from government agencies to agree with the following statements:

NGO

89%

89%

88%

56%

76%

Govt

79%

78%

75%

36%

50%

I use evidence from literature, research and evaluation findings

I receive support from my colleagues/peers to do my job well

I have a clear understanding of the information I can share with other organisations/service providers

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

I am usually aware of the other services working with my clients



Findings

What's working well?

Statements with the highest proportion of agreement include:

I am confident in my ability to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families with the services my organisation delivers



My organisation partners with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to support the delivery of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities



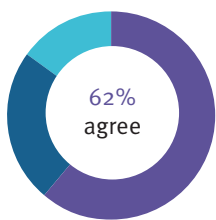
My organisation has provided cultural training for staff to support their work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families



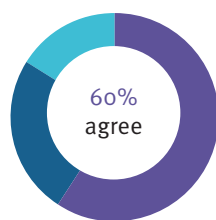
Agree Neutral Disagree

What could be better?

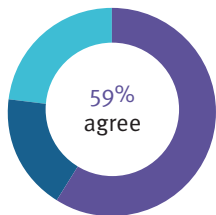
Statements with the lowest proportion of agreement include:



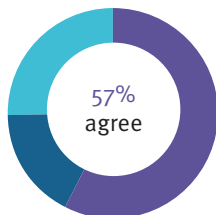
I feel competent to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities are empowered to participate in decision making that affects their children



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



I am aware of the changes to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

Agree Neutral Disagree

Cultural capability

Trends

The level of agreement with the statements below changed across the last three surveys.

Question	2019	2020	2021
I am confident in my ability to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families with the services my organisation delivers	79%	82%	75% ↓
I feel competent to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families	73%	71%	62% ↓
I understand how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle applies to my role	74%	69% ↑	59% ↓

↑↓ indicates a significant increase or decrease from the previous wave

Variation across sub-group responses

Respondents from non-government organisations were more likely than respondents from government agencies to agree with the following statements:

NGO

83%

I am confident in my ability to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families with the services my organisation delivers

77%

My organisation has provided cultural training for staff to support their work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families

69%

I feel competent to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families

73%

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

Govt

69%

66%

56%

48%



Findings

Barriers to accessing services

Barriers to accessing services

We asked—'Are there any barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and families to access family support services?'

Respondents answered in their own words, and the most commonly cited factors included:

- 13% Cultural capability of services and workers
- 6% Limited capacity of services
- 5% Barriers accessing services (including transport, eligibility criteria)
- 5% Limited confidence and trust in services
- 5% Personal barriers
- 4% Gaps in services
- 4% Historical factors

Six per cent of respondents provided a response of 'no barriers', while 60 per cent of respondents did not provide a response (either 'no response', 'don't know' or 'no opinion').

Trends

The barriers cited by respondents have been consistent across the last three surveys.

Barriers	2019	2020	2021
Cultural capability of services and workers	8%	11%	13%
Limited capacity of services	5%	6%	6%
Barriers accessing services (including transport, eligibility criteria)	4%	5%	5%
Personal barriers	3%	3%	5%
Gaps in services	2%	4%	4%
Historical factors	2%	3%	4%

A small numbers of barriers cited by respondents have changed across the last three surveys.

Barriers	2019	2020	2021
Limited confidence and trust in services	0%	5% ↑	5%
Poor service coordination and collaboration	3%	4%	2% ↓
Confidentiality concerns	1%	3%	1% ↓

↑↓ indicates a significant increase or decrease from the previous wave



Findings

What's working well?

Statements with the highest proportion of agreement include:
My workplace has a culture that supports collaboration with other organisations to achieve client outcomes



Information sharing between my organisation and other organisations supports better responses for children, young people and families



My workplace encourages multi-disciplinary responses to meet clients' needs (if needed)



Where appropriate, information sharing occurs regularly between my organisation and other organisations



I have a clear understanding of the information I can share with other organisations



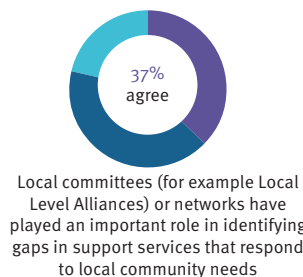
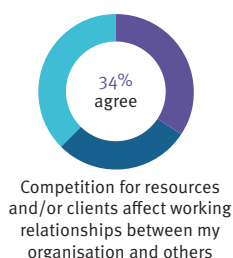
I have a sound knowledge of the services available in my area



Agree Neutral Disagree

What could be better?

Statements with the lowest proportion of agreement include:



Agree Neutral Disagree

Working collaboratively

Trends

The level of agreement with the statements below changed across the last three surveys.

Question	2019	2020	2021
Information sharing between my organisation and other organisations supports better responses for children, young people and families	91%	89%	84% ↓
Competition for resources and /or clients affects working relationships between my organisation and others	30%	28%	34% ↑

↑↓ indicates a significant increase or decrease from the previous wave

Variation across sub-group responses

Respondents from non-government organisations were more likely than respondents from government agencies to agree with the following statements:

NGO

94%

87%

76%

45%

45%

Govt

78%

77%

64%

31%

32%

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

My workplace encourages multi-disciplinary responses to meet clients' needs (if needed)

Where appropriate, information sharing occurs regularly between my organisation and other organisations

Local committees (for example Local Level Alliances) or networks have played an important role in identifying gaps in support services that respond to local community needs

Local committees (for example Local Level Alliances) or networks have played an important role in facilitating effective working relationships



Findings

Learning and development

What's working well?

Statements with the highest proportion of agreement include:

I use evidence from literature, research and evaluation findings to inform my professional practice



I receive support from my colleagues/peers to do my job well



My organisation actively supports training and other learning opportunities for staff



The training and other learning opportunities I have received have been of high quality



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



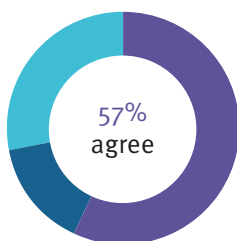
I receive the right amount of supervision to do my job well



Agree Neutral Disagree

What could be better?

Statements with the lowest proportion of agreement include:



I have received information and/or training regarding changes to child protection legislation in the past 12 months

Agree Neutral Disagree

Trends

The level of agreement with the statements below changed across the last three surveys.

Question	2019	2020	2021
My organisation actively supports training and other learning opportunities for staff	67%	77% ↑	75%
The training and other learning opportunities I have received have been of high quality	69%	76% ↑	75%
I have received information and/or training regarding changes to child protection legislation in the past 12 months	85%	65% ↓	57% ↓

↑↓ indicates a significant increase or decrease from the previous wave

Variation across sub-group responses

Respondents from non-government organisations were more likely than respondents from government agencies to agree with the following statements:

NGO

Govt

87%	My organisation actively supports training and other learning opportunities for staff	66%
87%	The training and other learning opportunities I have received have been of high quality	66%
81%	I have been provided with enough training and other learning opportunities to undertake my role well	63%

Learning and development priorities

We asked—'In your opinion, what are the highest learning and development priorities for the child protection and family support workforce?'. Respondents answered in their own words, and the most commonly cited factors included:

- 31% Specialist training (including domestic and family violence, trauma-informed practice, alcohol and drug use, mental health)
- 11% Identifying and assessing risk/structured decision making
- 11% Building workforce capacity and resources (including reduced caseloads, more staff)

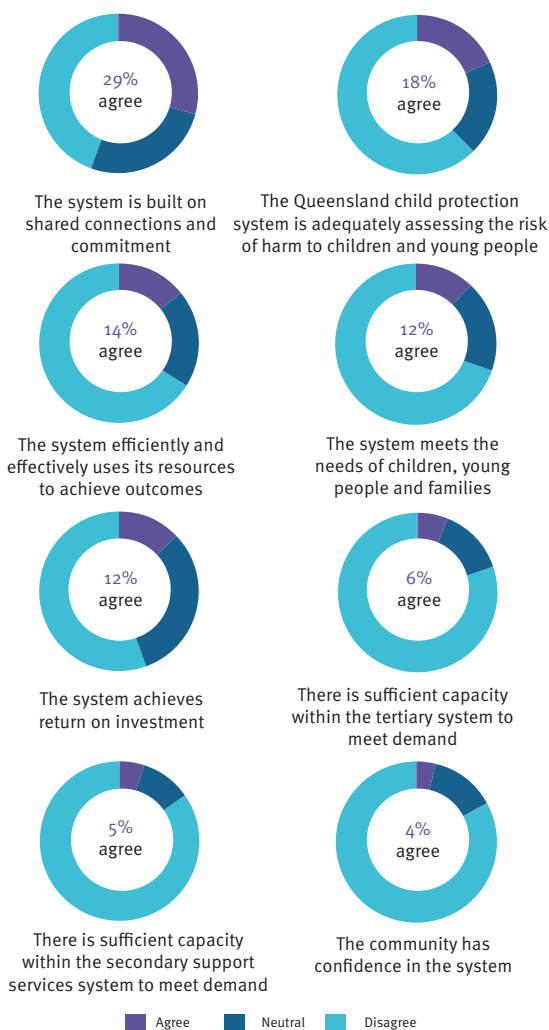


Findings

System performance

What could be better?

Statements with the lowest proportion of agreement include:



Trends

The level of agreement with the statements below changed across the last three surveys.

Question	2019	2020	2021
The system is built on shared connections and commitment	33%	42% ↑	29% ↓
The system efficiently and effectively uses its resources to achieve outcomes	23%	30% ↑	14% ↓
The system meets the needs of children, young people and families	19%	26% ↑	12% ↓
The system achieves return on investment	13%	21% ↑	12% ↓
The community has confidence in the system	8%	14% ↑	4% ↓

↑↓ indicates a significant increase or decrease from the previous wave

Variation across sub-group responses

Respondents who have worked in the sector for more than ten years were more likely than respondents with less than ten years of experience to **disagree** with the following statements:

10 years +	Disagree that:	< 10 years
70%	The system efficiently and effectively uses its resources to achieve outcomes	58%
82%	There is sufficient capacity within the tertiary system to meet demand	71%
68%	The Queensland child protection system is adequately assessing the risk of harm to children and young people	53%

Priorities to improve the system

The priorities cited by respondents changed across the last two surveys (we didn't ask this question in 2019).

2020		2021
44%	Greater support for the workforce (including capacity and capability)	51% ↑
14%	Additional support to meet service gaps	30% ↑
26%	Greater information sharing and collaboration	17% ↓
39%	Improve service responses	11% ↓
3%	More community and family education	9% ↑

Improving the system

We asked—'In your opinion, what could be done to improve the child protection and family support system?'. Respondents answered in their own words, and the most commonly cited factors included:

- 51% Greater support for the workforce (including capacity and capability)
- 30% Additional support to meet service gaps
- 17% Greater information sharing and collaboration
- 16% Increased early intervention and prevention
- 11% Improve service responses
- 9% More community and family education
- 5% Increased cultural capability



Findings

Children's rights

What's working well?

Our survey asked the workforce about child focused organisations and children's rights. The statement with the highest proportion of agreement is:

My organisation is a child safe organisation (including creates a culture, adopts strategies and takes action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people)

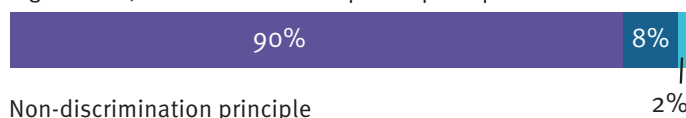


Through our Strategic Plan 2021–25 Bringing children's rights to life, the QFCC will lead the development of a comprehensive children's rights agenda to give practical effect to the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child for all children and young people growing up in Queensland.

For the first time in our workforce survey, we asked about child rights. Most respondents agreed their organisations were upholding children's rights' principles.

My organisation upholds the:

Right to life, survival and development principle



Non-discrimination principle



Best interests of the child principle



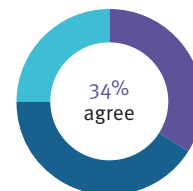
Respect for the views of the child principle



Legend: Agree (dark blue), Neutral (medium blue), Disagree (light blue)

What could be better?

Statements with the lowest proportion of agreement include:



Complaints processes in my organisation are child friendly

Legend: Agree (dark blue), Neutral (medium blue), Disagree (light blue)

Variation across sub-group responses

Respondents from non-government organisations were more likely than respondents from government agencies to agree with the following statements:

Statement	NGO	Govt
My organisation is a child safe organisation	87%	73%
Complaints processes in my organisation are child friendly	45%	26%
My organisation upholds the right to life, survival and development principle	93%	87%
My organisation upholds the non-discrimination principle	94%	85%
My organisation upholds the best interests of the child principle	92%	81%
My organisation upholds the respect for the views of the child principle	92%	77%



Findings

Issues for children/young people

We asked—'In your opinion, what are the biggest issues facing vulnerable children and young people in Queensland today? List up to three'. Respondents answered in their own words, and the most commonly cited factors included:

- Lack of intervention (including not removing children from danger soon enough)
- Domestic and family violence
- Support services workload
- Foster care/adoption waiting list
- Lack of educational opportunities
- Safety (including harm in care)
- Health/lack of healthcare
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Personal finances and poverty
- Government funding/resourcing/services
- Mental health
- Lack of trauma-informed decision making
- Homelessness/lack of housing
- Bureaucratic issues (including red tape)
- Ineffectiveness of Child Protective Services
- Family/parental issues