

QFCC Statutory Systems Workforce Survey 2023

Summary of key findings

About the survey

This summary presents findings from the Queensland Family and Child Commission's (QFCC) 2023 survey of frontline workers in the child protection, family support and youth justice sectors in Queensland. We undertook similar surveys in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 & 2022.

Our findings are described in the following sections:

- Role and organisation
- Working with clients
- Cultural capability
- Working collaboratively
- Professional development
- Professional practice supervision
- Statutory systems
- Children's rights
- Policy issues
- Cost of living issues

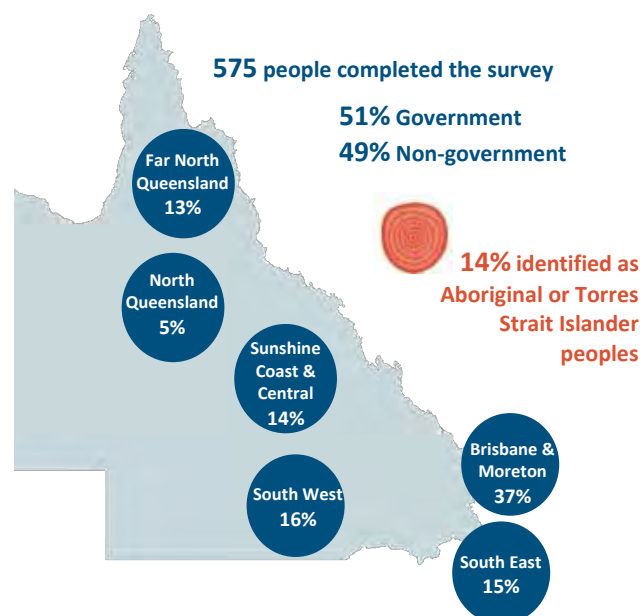
The full survey report can be found [here](#)

Method

An online survey link was sent to government agencies, non-government organisations and peak bodies from the Queensland child protection and family support sector and youth justice sectors 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 19 May to 12 July 2023. We asked 101 questions with a mixture of rating style and free text responses.

Respondents



More than half (65%) of respondents had less than 10 years' experience in statutory systems, including 22% who had 2 years or less experience in the sector. 35% of respondents had 10 or more years' experience.

Child protection was the main service offered by most respondents (61%), with 41% providing tertiary services and 20% providing secondary services.

5% of respondents provided educational, school or early education services, 4% provided counselling and other mental health services, while 4% of respondents provided health and hospital services. 452 respondents primarily worked in the child protection sector (79%) and 50 primarily worked in the youth justice sector (9%).

38% of respondents agreed they would recommend working in the child protection, family support and youth justice sector.



Key findings

Overall findings

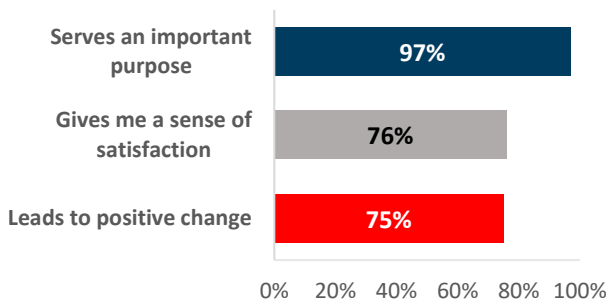
Consistent with trends observed in previous surveys, respondents were more positive when answering questions about their own roles and organisations than they were when answering questions about the child protection, family support and youth justice systems.

Overall, there were higher proportions of respondents working for government organisations and fewer non-government respondents.

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:



21% (1 in 5) of Child Protection frontline workers agree that they intend to leave the sector within the next 12 months, compared to the average of **19%** of respondents overall. This is an increase from **12%** in 2022 and **10%** in 2021.

38% of respondents agreed they would recommend to others to work in the sector, a significant decrease from **49%** in 2022.

43% of respondents agreed that their organisation supports staff to manage work stress, health and wellbeing. The remainder either disagreed (**34%**) or were neutral (**23%**). This is a reduction from **60%** in 2022.

Less than half (**47%**) 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.



78% 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 decrease from **87%** in the 2022 survey and is more in line with results recorded in 2021 (**79%** in 2021).

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



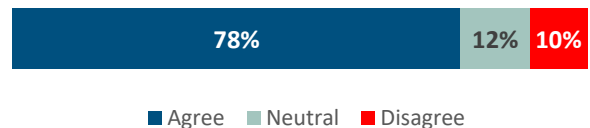
Almost half of respondents (**49%**) disagreed that risk assessment in holding higher than manageable caseload / workload is undertaken adequately.

2023 findings indicate that significantly more respondents would report a concern regarding a child's safety or wellbeing to a relevant government agency (e.g. Child Safety). Most promisingly, this increase has been observed year upon year since 2019.

Working with stakeholders, children and families

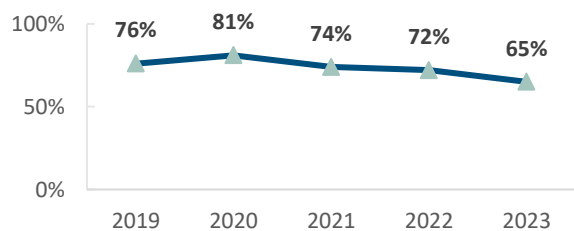
The majority of respondents (**78%**) agreed their workplace has a culture that supports collaboration.

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



65% of respondents agreed that children and families have the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Agreement with this statement has decreased year on year since our 2020 findings, where **81%** of respondents agreed.

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



Findings indicate that there has been a consistent decline in perceived role capacity for respondents since 2019. In 2023, less

than one third (30%) of respondents felt able to spend enough time with children, young people and their families to do their job well. Agreement was higher among non-government respondents (44%) than government respondents (16%).



■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree

Cultural capability

Over half of respondents (57%) agreed that **Delegated Authority** will result in better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

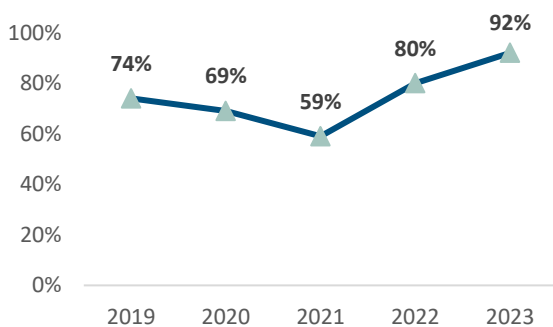
Delegated Authority, a service, whereby the statutory functions and or powers of the Chief Executive under the Child Protection Act 1999 for an Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander child, can be delegated to a Chief Executive Officer of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisation if the CEO is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

The Chief Executive Officer (or similar named role) of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation can now make some decisions about an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child currently in out-of-homecare.

The overwhelming majority (92%) of respondents agreed that they understood how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle applies to their role. Since 2021, findings indicate a year on year statistically significant increase in respondent understanding of the Principle.



Percentage of respondents who agreed that they understood how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle applied to their role, 2019 - 2023



Approximately 60% of respondents agreed that culturally and linguistically diverse children and young people are supported to:

- Preserve their cultural and linguistic identity (60%)
- Stay connected with their communities (58%)

Working collaboratively

Around 2 in 5 (41%) respondents agreed that the child protection, family support system and youth justice system is built on shared connections and commitments.

Around one third (35%) of respondents disagreed with this statement.

In 2023, 76% 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, their families and communities.

However, only 41% 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



■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree

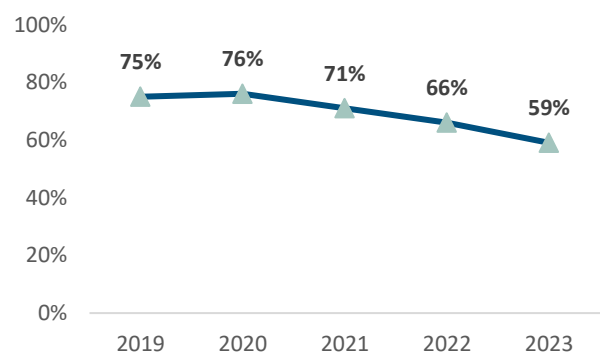
Professional development

Almost 3 in 5 respondents (59%) agreed they have been provided with enough training and other learning opportunities to undertake their role well.

20% disagreed, while 21% were neutral in their response.

Findings suggest that agreement with this statement has steadily decreased since 2020.

Percentage of respondents who agreed that they had been provided with enough training and other learning opportunities to undertake their role well



Professional practice supervision

The majority of respondents (75%) agreed that they receive support from their colleagues or peers to do their job well, down from 87% agreement in the 2022 survey. Less than half (49%) of respondents agreed they receive the right amount of professional practice supervision to do their job well.

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, nearly half of respondents (49%) would prefer to receive supervision from someone external to their organisation.

Professional practice supervision (Current and preferred channel)

Receive supervision from	Current	Preferred
My Team Leader/Manager	77%	58%
Another person in my organisation	19%	20%
An external person I pay for	11%	4%
An external person my organisation pays for	9%	49%
Other	5%	3%

Statutory systems (child protection and youth justice)

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.

8 in 10 respondents (82%) agreed that family support referrals and child protection reports are likely to increase in the next 12 months, which saw an increase in agreement compared to 2022 findings (76% in 2022).

In 2023, agreement that there is sufficient capacity within the secondary service system increased to 8% from 5% in the 2022 survey. Youth justice sector respondents were more likely to

agree there is sufficient capacity within the tertiary support system to meet demand (16% agreed or strongly agreed) than child protection respondents (6%).

Overall agreement that there is sufficient capacity within the system I work in to meet demand



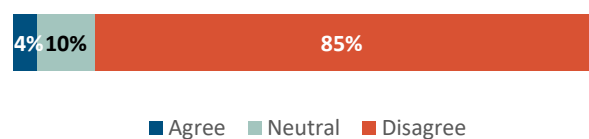
Less than 1 in 5 (14%) of respondents agreed that the child protection and family support system meets the needs of children, young people and families.

In 2023, respondents were asked whether the youth justice system meets the needs of children, young people and families. Less than 1 in 10 (7%) of respondents working in either the child protection or youth justice sectors agreed that the justice system meets the needs of children, young people and families.

Only 4% of respondents agreed that the community has confidence in the child protection and family support system. This differs from our Community Perceptions survey results, where 56% 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



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%
Employ more people / more trained staff	26%
Increased / additional funding	23%
Additional support to meet service gaps	20%
Better working environment to reduce burnout/high turnover	19%

Respondents who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander were significantly more likely to recommend that increased cultural capability (36%) would improve the child protection and family support system compared to other respondents (4%).

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 (41%) 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 slightly lower than the 2022 result of 42%.



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 outcomes for children, young people and families (47%)
- improved ability of families to care for their children (45%)
- a reduction in demand (that is, less children entering the child protection system) (21%).

QFCC asked respondents about the broader community and the extent to which children and young people had appropriate access to safety, support and wellbeing mechanisms.

Most respondents agreed that children and young people can access early childhood education and care (65%).

More than half (55%) agreed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are supported to connect with their culture.

Percentage of respondents who agreed with statements about supports, services and protections for children and young people, 2023

In my community, children, and young people...	2023 results
Can access early childhood education and care, such as kindergarten	65%
Are supported to connect with their culture (ATSI children and young people)	55%
Can access sporting, recreational or community activities	53%
Can access the services they need to stay healthy, such as GPs and hospitals	52%
Have support to stay engaged in learning at school or TAFE	51%
Can access the services they need for healthy teeth, such as dentists	50%
Are supported to live safely at home with their families	48%
Can access NDIS supports if needed	45%
Can access disability services if needed	45%
Are protected from abuse and neglect	43%
Can access mental health services if needed	35%

Children's rights

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



The majority of respondents agreed that within their organisations:

- children are supported to survive and develop in the best way possible (75%)
- decisions are made in children's and young people's best interests (74%)
- the views of children and young people are listened to and valued (70%).

Almost all respondents (75%) agreed that within their organisation, children and young people are not discriminated against.

In 2023, findings revealed that across all statements regarding children's rights being upheld with their organisations, non-government workers were significantly more likely than government-based respondents to agree.

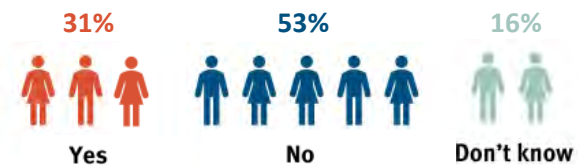
Policy issues

Minimum age of responsibility

We asked respondents whether children under the age of 14 should be incarcerated (that is, held in a police watchhouse or placed in youth detention) 5 in 10 respondents said no, 3 in 10 said yes, and around 2 in 10 didn't know.

2023 findings suggest that sentiment towards the minimum age of incarceration has changed considerably in 12 months, with the percentage of respondents who believe children under the age of 14 should be incarcerated almost doubling since 2022 (31% in 2023 compared to 16% recorded in 2022).

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 3 in 5 respondents (63%) said 14 years or older.

23% of respondents considered that the minimum incarceration age could be either 12 years (18%) or 13 years (5%). 1% of respondents supported incarceration for a child under the age of 10.

What is the minimum age a child should be incarcerated?



Cost of living

In 2023 respondents were asked their opinion about the increasing cost of living.

94% of respondents agreed that the increased cost of living is having a negative impact on children, young people and their families.

Respondents working in the Far North Queensland DCYJMA region were less likely than those from other regions to agree that the increasing cost of living is having a negative impact on children, young people and their families (83% Far North QLD, 94% average).