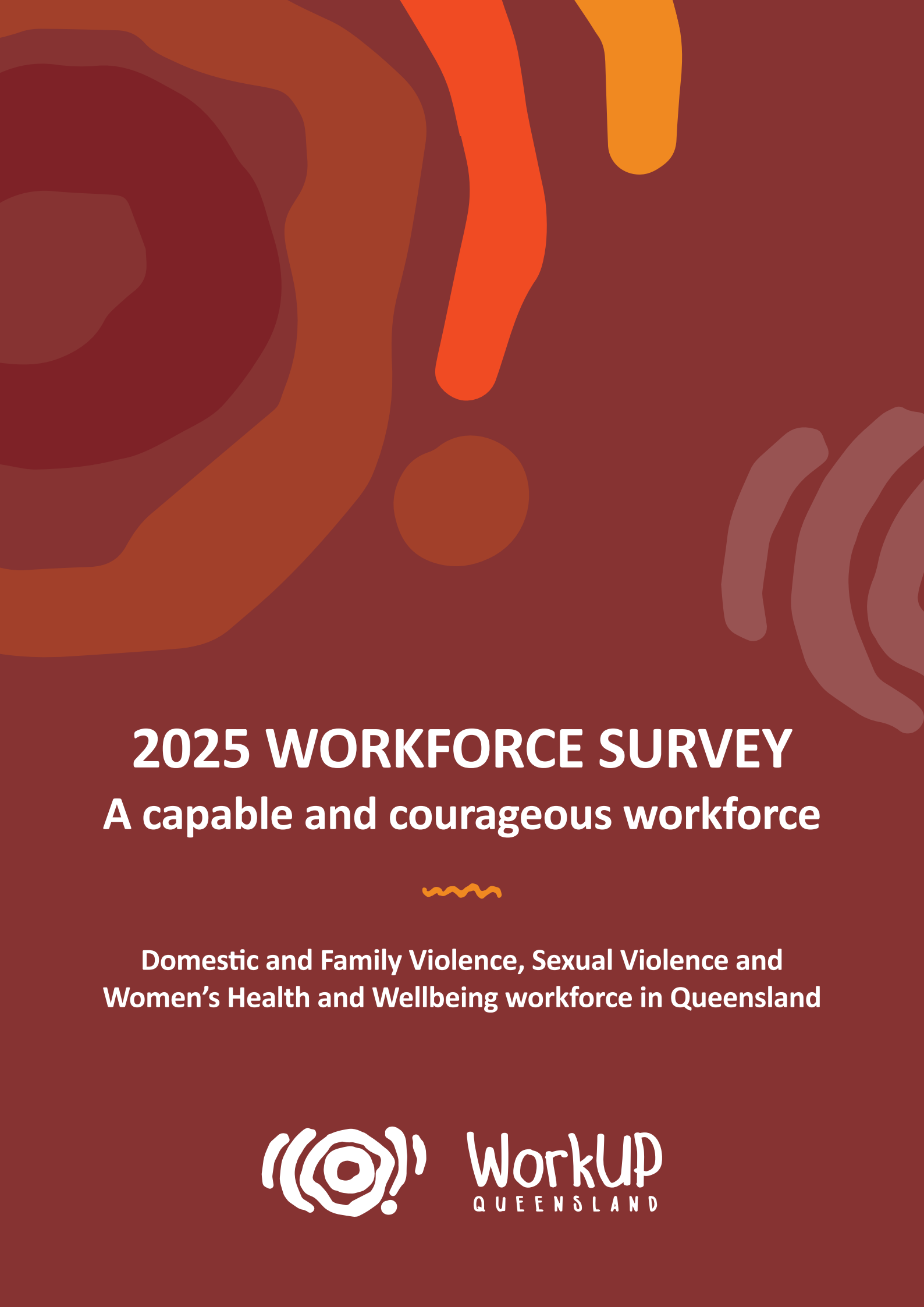




2025 WORKFORCE SURVEY

A capable and courageous workforce



Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and
Women's Health and Wellbeing workforce in Queensland



WorkUP
QUEENSLAND



Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work and pay our respects to Elders. We recognise the Intergenerational Trauma that remains and our commitment to build an Australia that can heal.

We thank the Queensland Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Health and Wellbeing specialist workforce for participating in this survey and sharing their thoughtful and detailed perspectives and pay thanks to the WorkUP reference group for their generous support and insights.

We acknowledge the expertise and partnership of Ronan Analytics and Infinite Potential in developing and administering this survey.



Strengthening practice: Creating healing

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Overview	5
WorkUP Queensland	6
Workforce Survey	6
Findings	7
Our People	7
Demographics	7
Education and Experience	8
Retention	8
Our Insights	10
Our Organisations	12
Size and Growth	12
Responding to Demands	12
Organisational Support for Professional Development	13
Our Insights	14
Workplace Culture, Performance and Support	16
Workplace Culture and Employee Engagement	16
Workforce Performance	17
Organisational Support	17
Our Insights	18
Worker Health and Wellbeing	20
Wellbeing	20
Burnout	21
Workplace Loneliness	21
Our Insights	22
Workplace Sustainability	24
Workforce Safety / Protection from Harm	24
Human Leadership	24
People-Centred Structures	25
Team Connection	25
Personal Growth	25
Bringing it together	26
References	28

Executive Summary

WorkUP Queensland (WorkUP) is the lead workforce capacity and capability service for the Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Health and Wellbeing workforce (the workforce) in Queensland.

.....

In February – May 2025 WorkUP undertook its fourth workforce survey to provide a continued evidence-based understanding of the characteristics, challenges and needs of the workforce in Queensland.

The Workforce Survey consisted of two separate surveys, one for individual workers and one for leaders to complete on behalf of their organisation. The response rate for the Individual Survey was 176 and 32 for the Organisation Survey.

These online self-reported surveys were sent to workers and organisations across Queensland using WorkUP's extensive contacts, networks and communication channels. The two surveys provide rich insights into the strengths and pain points of the workforce.

Key findings include:

- > The workforce is predominantly female, aged between 35-54 years, qualified and employed in a full-time ongoing basis.
- > The values alignment and purpose driven nature of the work is a strength of the workforce and the work it does.
- > The workforce is growing, and while this growth is necessary, it impacts workplaces and other employees in terms of onboarding time, workload, response times, waitlists, and overall workplace stability and relationships.
- > The continued growth of the workforce will require ongoing support to strengthen pathways into the sector.
- > The sector is experiencing increasing complexity and demand which organisations are not confident in meeting despite the growth of the workforce.
- > The overall engagement of the workforce is strong, with high levels of organisational support and trust in leadership.
- > The workforce is experiencing exhaustion and reports workload and time pressure, understaffing and a high administrative burden.
- > Leaders are doing an excellent job creating and sustaining worker wellbeing, supporting and protecting their teams in challenging conditions and stretched resources.

The survey highlights systems level challenges as well as opportunities for further discussion, planning and action at the workplace level.

WorkUP looks forward to exploring some of these challenges and building on strengths at its upcoming workforce planning engagement with the sector. We will continue to work alongside the sector, government and key partners and agencies to respond to insights garnered through this survey.

Overview



WorkUP
QUEENSLAND

WorkUP Queensland

WorkUP Queensland (WorkUP) is the lead workforce capacity and capability service for the Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Health and Wellbeing workforce (the workforce) in Queensland.

.....

Established in 2019 and funded by the Queensland Government, WorkUP has a singular focus to grow, retain, develop, connect and support the workforce and sustain services.

Underpinned by a strategic workforce planning approach and theory of change, our work is informed by research, evidence and continuous and deep engagement and collaboration with the Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Health and Wellbeing sector (the sector).

With a comprehensive program of work informed by the needs of the workforce we focus on actions and outcomes at three levels - individual, organisation and sector wide.

The workforce survey is a key sector wide activity that precedes WorkUP's bi-annual workforce planning engagement with the sector to commence in October 2025. This ongoing evidence gathering and planning cycle positions WorkUP as a partner to the sector in building a strong and sustainable workforce in a responsive and dynamic way.

Overview

Workforce Survey

WorkUP conducted its 4th workforce survey to provide a continued evidence-based understanding of the characteristics, challenges and needs of the workforce in Queensland. The WorkUP workforce survey was a first in quantifying the characteristics of this workforce in Queensland.

This survey serves three critical purposes:

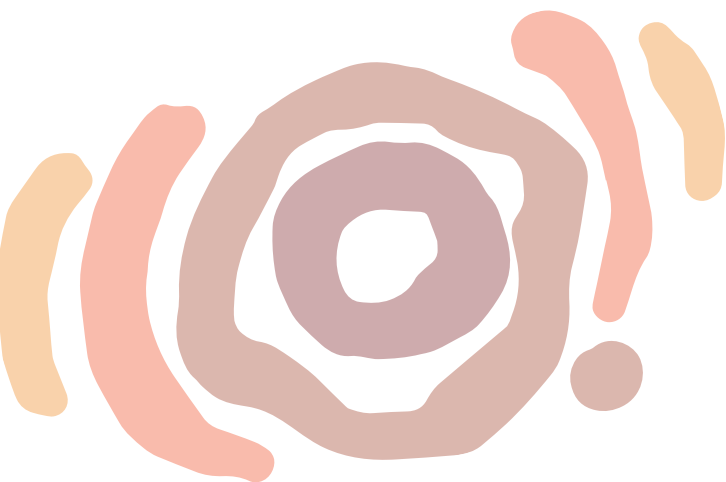
- 1** Provides insight into the characteristics of the workforce and highlights the strengths and unique ways of working.
- 2** Identifies the challenges that impact attraction and retention and signposts where greater care, investment, or structural change is needed.
- 3** Provides continued direction to WorkUP to inform and shape activities and strategies to strengthen and grow the workforce.

The survey was open between February and May 2025, was anonymous and voluntary and consisted of two separate survey instruments, one for individual workers and one for leaders to complete on behalf of their organisation. It was sent to workers and organisations across Queensland using WorkUP's extensive contacts, networks and communication channels. The sample had a focus on State funded Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Health and Wellbeing workers and services.

A quantitative survey design was used which included the Infinite Potential Burnout Scale (IPBS), Workplace Sustainability Index (WSI) and UCLA 3-Item Loneliness Scale. The survey was concise and accessible, requiring approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The response rate for the Individual Survey was 176 and 32 for the Organisation Survey. This represented a 35% increase for the Individual Survey and the Organisation Survey was consistent with previous response rates. Completed surveys were received from across the State.

The report is split into five sections followed by a Bringing it Together section. Throughout the report a range of WorkUP initiatives to grow, strengthen and sustain the workforce are showcased aligning with emerging survey themes.



FINDINGS

Our People

Demographics

The 2025 workforce survey revealed a predominantly female workforce (92%) with the largest cohort between the ages of 25-34 (27%), followed closely by 35-44 years (26%), 45-54 years (25%) and 55 years and over (19%).

The profile of the workforce consisted of 14% of workers from non-English speaking backgrounds, 6% from First Nation's backgrounds, 15% identified as LGBTIQ+ and 10% as persons with a disability.

36% of the workforce were fulfilling caring responsibilities at home including caring for young children or adults with disabilities and or mental health conditions.

A significant majority of workers were employed in full-time ongoing roles (84%) with 11% in part time roles. Those who completed the survey were from a broad range of roles including Domestic and Family Violence Specialists and Workers, Men's Behaviour Change Facilitators, Women's Advocates, Sexual Assault Counsellors and Team Leader and Managers.

Less than half respondents indicated their role involved managing/supervising people in an official capacity. The sample represented all five Queensland regions, and the majority worked from the office/worksite.

84%

of the workforce are in
full time ongoing roles.



Our People

Education and Experience

Most commonly respondents held bachelors (38%) or master's degrees (23%) often in Social Work (25%) with Counselling, Psychology and Criminology as other common fields of study.

Respondents were asked questions about their level of experience and any study or training they were undertaking.

22% had under one year, 42% between 1-5 years and 37% had over 5 years' experience with the sector. In terms of tenure with their current organisation, 34% reported having less than 1 year, 49% between 1-5 years, 11% between 6-10 years and 6% had over 10 years with their current employer. Nearly one in five respondents had transitioned from another sector and 7% were new or recent graduates.

Of the 28% of respondents who indicated that they were currently engaging in study or training the most common fields of study were Counselling, Social Work, Human Services and Graduate Diplomas/Certificates in Domestic and Family Violence.

Retention

Questions were asked to understand available opportunities for professional development and what contributes to workers staying with their current workplace:

- > 76% said there were opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge through professional development
- > 78% said they were encouraged to learn from their mistakes
- > 73% said their manager supported and encouraged their development

When asked if there were adequate opportunities for promotion and career advancement within their organisation over half of the respondents were neutral or disagreed with this statement.

The strongest factors that contribute to workers staying with their current organisation included alignment with personal value, the fulfilling nature of the work, pay and benefits and supportive colleagues and team.



Which of the following factors most contributes to why I am staying with my current organisation



Pay (17%), flexibility (14%), culture (11%) and career growth (10%) were identified as key factors that would attract workers to join a different organisation.

Respondents were able to provide in their own words what was most important or worthwhile in the work they do with support for clients the highest response (52%) followed by workplace support and client safety.

"We walk alongside people in the darkest times of their lives and believe them."

"Working with amazing colleagues to provide needed services is so rewarding."

"My lived experience can assist and encourage others."

Our People

Our Insights

The workforce profile is predominantly female, aged between 35-54 years, qualified and employed in a full-time ongoing basis. This mirrors the national picture as reported in the *National Survey of Workers in the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Sectors* (Cortis et al, 2018).

Of significance in our data is the higher rate of full-time workers at 84% compared to 61% nationally. The narrative of a high number of casual and part time workers (Putt, Holder and O’Leary, 2017, p.31) is not reflected in this data.

The survey data shows men make up only 5% of the total workforce, less than the previous survey of 12%. Whilst this may be related to the survey sample itself given the breadth of respondents, it is worth noting that despite efforts to attract men to the workforce these results continue to highlight the challenges that exist in this space.

The workforce has a higher representation, when compared to the Queensland population (2021 census), of people from Non-English-Speaking Backgrounds (14% compared to 13.2%), First Nations Communities (6% compared to 4.6%) people with a disability (10% compared to 6%) and those with caring responsibilities (36% compared to 23%). This profile is like the national data and mirrors closely the Victorian workforce as noted in the *Family Violence and Sexual Assault Workforce Pulse Survey Report 2022* (Family Safety Victoria, 2023). This diversity is a strength of the workforce profile and should be nurtured and grown however it also requires thoughtful consideration and tailored planning to support and develop workers with different characteristics and needs.

Of this sample a little under one fifth of the workforce is approaching retirement age, however, the overall age profile is represented relatively evenly across 25-34 years, 35-44 years and, 45-54 years. This may reflect the efforts of the sector to recruit workers across the age and experience spectrum. Given this age distribution of the workforce, it is critical the sector is supported to develop effective career and leadership pathways to retain the workforce as they age.

The values alignment and fulfilling nature of the work is a clear strength of the workforce and the work it does. Workers report organisations are providing opportunities for them to learn and develop in their roles, however systemic issues including pay and benefits and opportunities for career growth may be impacting the ability of the sector and individual workplaces to retain staff over the long term. Limited opportunities for career growth may be attributable to many factors including the different sizes of organisations and the related challenge to offer opportunities for advancement as well as the lack of clear pathways to transition from practitioner to advanced practitioner to leader.



Walking Together, Learning Together



The Walking Together, Learning Together mentoring program contributes to strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce in the sector.

Now in its fourth year, the program is open to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and is designed to respond to the underrepresentation of First Nations workers in the sector.

With a unique blend of professional development, cultural support, and healing-informed practice, the structure includes face-to-face workshops, narrative coaching, weaving as cultural practice, and peer mentoring.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentees are matched to experienced mentoring partners to build strong and supportive professional relationships which builds on their resilience, strength and skills as culturally grounded workers in the sector.



Impact:

To date 33 participants have gone through the program with an additional 8 to complete by the end of 2025. There is continued demand and interest for the program year on year.

Participants consistently report feeling “safe,” “seen,” and “empowered”, helping them to build confidence, deepen cultural identity, and progress their careers in a culturally safe and responsive environment.

The mentoring relationships have led to tangible outcomes in career progression for mentees ranging from increased public speaking, clearer leadership pathways, and strengthened strategic thinking. Additionally, mentees have progressed to take on a mentor role over time as part of their own career pathway.

We have also seen the continuation of professional relationships and support networks established throughout the program.

*“This was a space
where my spirit
felt safe.”*

Participant

*“This program changed
my life in ways I did not
predict or expect.”*

Participant

Our Organisations

Size and Growth

Respondents to the Organisation Survey indicated a 90% service focus of Domestic and Family Violence, 33% Sexual Violence and 20% Women's Health and Wellbeing.

Of the 32 organisations who responded this represented a workforce of 831 in the Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Health and Wellbeing sector. Small and large services and organisations were represented in all five regions across Queensland.

The sector estimated that it had recruited 302 people over the last 12 months (36% employment) and anticipated that it would add another 117 positions in the coming 12 months equating to a projected 14% growth.

All organisations indicated their funding was either very stable (60%) or somewhat stable (40%). Over half organisations (57%) had supported student placements and there was a total of 93 employees that had graduated from university/specialised training in the last two years. And 53% of leaders indicated that their organisations sought to employ people with lived experience.

Findings outlined
in this section are drawn
from the Organisational
Survey.

Responding to Demands

The majority of organisations (84%) indicated there had been an increase in the complexity and demand over the last 12 months and only 20% of respondents indicated their organisation was very likely to meet this demand. When asked about the drivers the housing crisis or housing demand (87%), increasing complexity of clients (83%) and increasing mental health or counselling support needs (77%) were the highest identified demand drivers.

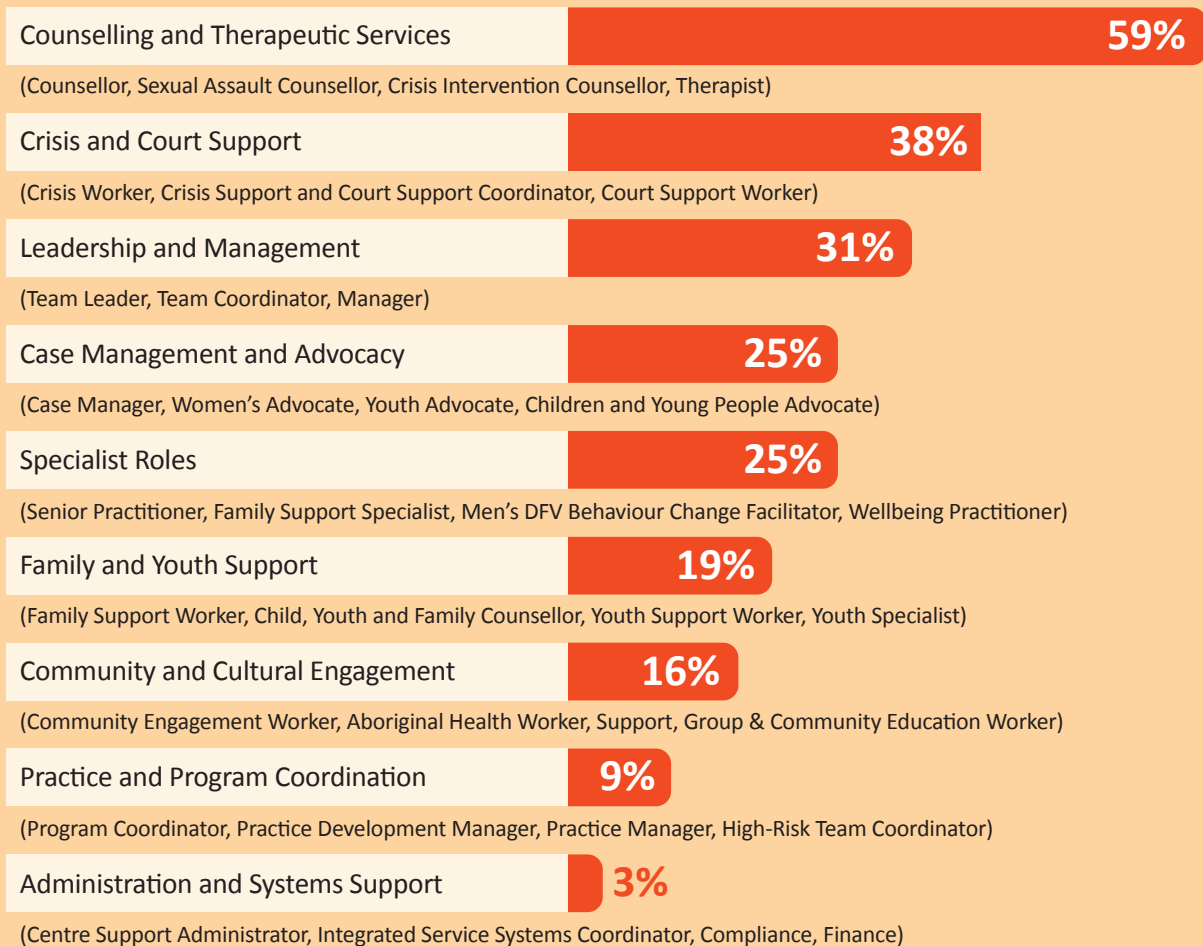
10 drop down options were provided to understand Occupations in Demand and the challenges surrounding recruitment of these roles. Of these, Counselling and Therapeutic roles was the most difficult to fill occupation followed by Crisis and Court support workers and Leadership and Management.

Alongside occupations in demand, a question was asked to understand the skills or experience difficult to attract and retain.

- > Domestic and Family Violence experience and Counselling skills were identified as the top two skills or experience difficult to attract and retain.
- > For occupations of demand the sector had to wait as long as 78 days to fill key roles.
- > Central Queensland on average had the longest vacancy rates while South-East Queensland had the least days vacant for roles.

Difficult to Fill Occupations

Top Three Difficult to Fill Occupations



Organisational support for Professional Development

Almost all (97%) respondents indicated that training opportunities and professional development was provided by their organisation. This was followed by support structures and supervision (84%), a tailored and or individualised approach to professional development (67%) and online resources at 63%.

Backfilling, time pressures, lack of funding, staff shortages and limited training budgets were key challenges that organisations and leaders experienced in prioritising the professional and career growth of its employees and volunteers.

Our Organisations

Our Insights

It is difficult to accurately state the size of the workforce and quantify shortages and vacancy rates given the sample size, lack of national and state data at the sector workforce level along with other variables such as how organisations are funded, the way they provide services and their workforce profile. However, survey results suggest a relatively high vacancy rate and a growing workforce.

.....

Organisations reported 36% new employment in the last 12 months. It is unclear if these are newly funded roles or the replacement of existing roles. It is important to recognise the support new workers require as they enter the sector and the significant impact on workplaces in relation to the time to onboard new workers, the impact on the workload of other workers, response times and waitlists and workplace stability and relationships.

Unsurprisingly, respondents noted an increasing complexity of demand being felt by the sector and importantly organisations are not confident they will meet the future projected demand despite the growth of the workforce.

Challenges in relation to the attraction of different roles, skills and experience highlight Counselling and Therapeutic Roles and Crisis and Court Support workers in demand with difficulty attracting those with experience in the domestic and family violence sector.

The data points to regional variability and increased challenges to attract and recruit roles which is a long-standing issue for the sector that requires continued focus, investment and innovative solutions in how we attract and employ workers particularly in regional areas.

Responding to demand, staffing levels and the level and parameters of funding impede the efforts of leaders to prioritise time and resources to support and develop their staff. Leaders are doing an excellent job at creating opportunities for professional development within these constraints however the data highlights systems level stressors.

There is a growing narrative in the sector of the role and importance of lived experience within the workforce and data supports that over half organisations are seeking to employ people with lived experience. There are lessons from other sectors such as Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol on how to plan for and support a dedicated lived experience workforce as well as workers with a lived experience not in dedicated lived experience roles.



Emerging Practitioner Program



The Emerging Practitioner Program contributes to supporting the transition of new workers into the sector with sector context and real work knowledge.

The inaugural pilot program commenced March 2025 and runs until November 2025. The program aims to alleviate pressures of organisations hiring and developing new practitioners, through a streamlined structure, while providing opportunities for feedback. It is designed to support the transition from qualification or other human services pathways to our specialist workforce. It offers a tailored approach to sustain new workers informed by gaps in industry knowledge and experience.

As the project evolved, to ensure maximum impact particularly for rural and remote areas, the scope was expanded to be inclusive of emerging practitioners early in their career journey.

The model features a flexible blend of practice workshops with sector expert presenters;

facilitated communities of practice and 1-on-1 wrap around support. Sector foundations training and working with trauma professional development offered by WorkUP was incorporated into the program.

Impact:

An external review has been built into the approach, and this review will inform a potential wider and upscaled application of the initiatives across the sector.

15 participants are enrolled in the program from across five different organisations with a unique mix of practitioners from sexual violence, men's behaviour change and domestic and family violence.

Feedback received from participants confirm they have experienced 'rich learning and gained a unique understanding of the work' which will not only strengthen their transition into the sector but also support their retention, wellbeing and connection.

Workplace Culture, Performance and Support

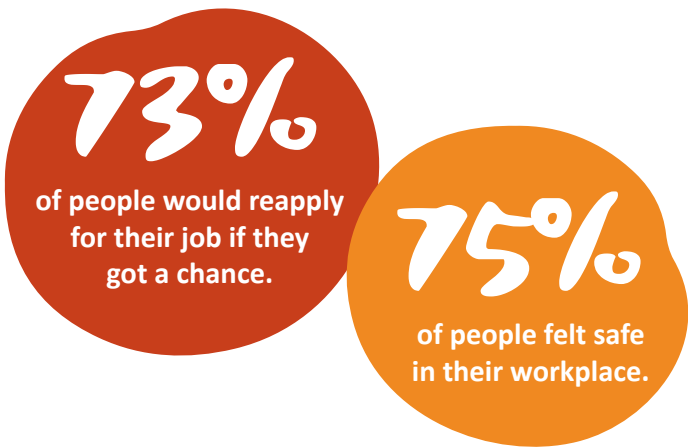
Workplace Culture and Employee Engagement

Respondents were asked questions to measure how workers felt about the culture of their workplace and their engagement to their work, colleagues and organisations.

Results indicate a high level of respect between workers, workplaces that celebrate success and achievements and organisations where people feel safe, are valued for their contribution and enjoy their workplace culture.

With strong responses across all six employee engagement items, the overall engagement of the workforce is strong, with 75% of respondents reporting being engaged, significantly surpassing the Australian norm of 35% (*The State of Workplace Burnout, 2025*).

As the data indicates, the workforce is excited to be a part of their organisation, feel that they belong, and would recommend their organisation as a great place to work. Nearly one in five respondents indicated they were actively seeking to leave their organisations whilst the majority (68%) were not seeking to do so.



I am excited about my part in my organisation's future



I would recommend my organisation as a great place to work



I feel a strong connection with my immediate team



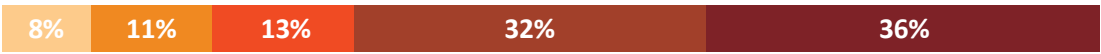
I have grown professionally in the past 12 months



I feel like I belong at my organisation



I am not actively seeking to leave my current organisation



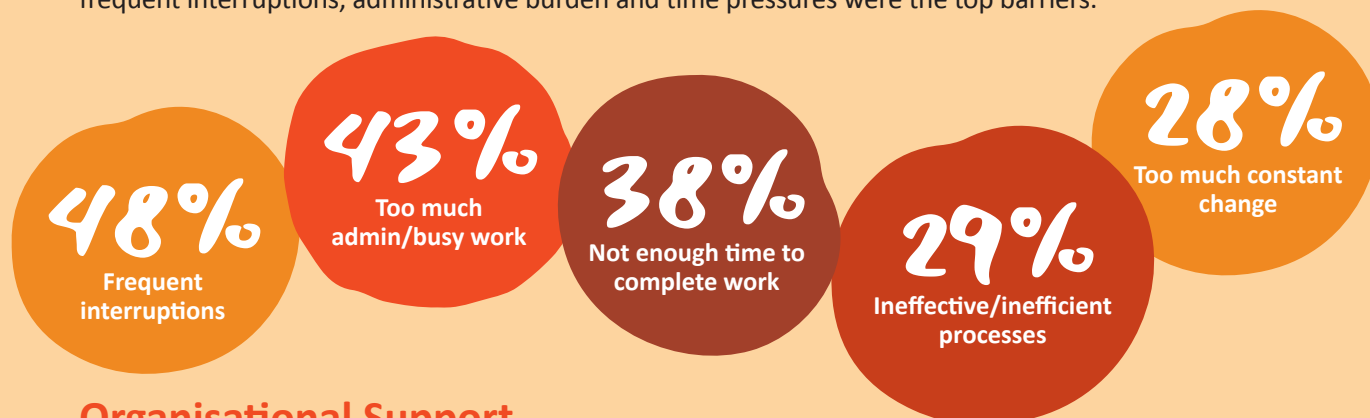
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

Employee engagement across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Disability, Non-English background, LGBTIQ+, and Carer groups showed no significant difference.

Workforce Performance

Findings reveal 52% of respondents indicated they are more productive and 58% were producing higher quality of work compared to 6 months ago.

Respondents identified **five barriers** that undermine productivity in the workforce - frequent interruptions, administrative burden and time pressures were the top barriers.



Organisational Support

When asked *'How well supported have you felt in the last 6 months by your organisation?'* results show a resounding affirmation of support from their organisation rated at 7.10 / 10, especially when compared with the Australian norm (4.9 / 10) (Infinite Potential, 2025).

Regardless of tenure in the organisation people felt well supported in the last 6 months by their organisation with the highest rating of 8/10 for those 6-10 years and the lowest of 6.7/10 for those who had been in the workforce over 15 years. This goes against common trends across other sectors that workers feel less supported as their tenure within an organisation grows (Mercer, 2005).

Workers felt supported by Tenure (out of 10)



In relation to demographic groups, the data shows differences in experience. Those who identify as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander, have a disability, or belong to the LGBTIQ+ community indicated lower levels of support by their organisation in the last 6 months with 6.60/10, 6.72/10 and 6.44/10 respectively. There was no significant difference between those from a non-English background and those with Caring responsibility.

When asked the types of support and development organisations provide their workers, internal professional or clinical supervision was the highest response (79%) followed by access to employee assistance programs (78%) and trauma informed training (57%). Over a third of the workforce indicated their organisation did not provide external professional or clinical supervision.

Workplace Culture, Performance and Support

Our Insights

Respondents were asked questions to measure how workers felt about the culture of their workplace and their engagement to their work, colleagues and organisations.

.....

Organisational support is a powerful predictor of staff wellbeing, employee engagement, and performance. These results demonstrate the hard work that the sector and its leaders have been undertaking to create exceptional workplaces with highly engaged workforces and strong workplace cultures.

Despite an era of constant change, increasing complexity and escalating demands, findings highlight the sector is unlocking conditions for sustained performance with exceptionally high productivity and quality outcomes.

Whilst the majority indicated they were not actively seeking to leave their current organisation, nearly one in five workers were seeking to do so. This is similar to the Victorian workforce as found in the *Family Violence and Sexual Assault Workforce Pulse Survey Report 2022* where 22% of respondents indicated that they intended to leave their current role.

Reported barriers to productivity provide insight to some of the pain points for workers and organisations. Frequent interruptions, high administrative burden, constant change and time pressure combined with increasing demand, staffing levels and the level and parameters of funding underscore the workforce is being stretched.

These barriers appear not to reflect issues of individual capability or motivation, but of systemic conditions that require coordinated, organisation-wide and sector-wide responses. This mirrors recent findings from Seymour, Wendt and Goudie (2025, p. 33) that bureaucracy and systems significantly impacted on the nature of work and added to challenges addressing client needs.

Organisations recognise the importance of and prioritise supervision for their staff as a key support mechanism within the context of the work they do. Ensuring this is resourced is critical to support the wellbeing of workers, manage risks and retain workers for the longer term.



The Daring, Inclusive, Feminist Leadership Series

The Daring, Inclusive Feminist Leadership Series contributes to developing and strengthening leaders in the sector.

The series drew on the work of Brené Brown to build leadership capacity grounded in feminist values. The series welcomed people from across the sector in different roles, defining leadership as *“anyone taking responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes, and having the courage to develop that potential.”*

A flexible, one-year experiential program tailored to participants featured a series of inspiring and thought-provoking symposiums with expert speakers, complemented by optional facilitated peer learning groups to unpack insights from the symposiums.

Participants had access to bespoke learning resources developed after each symposium to support ongoing reflection and practice between symposiums. A combination of online and face to face, this blended learning approach facilitated participants to explore what inspired them, what challenged them, and how they could turn their insights into positive impact.

Impact:

60 people from a diverse range of roles across domestic and family violence, sexual violence and women’s health and wellbeing sector participated in the program from all regions across Queensland.

With participants rating the facilitation, delivery, content and learning materials as good or excellent (95%), and the learning as relevant and important to their role with intention to apply new knowledge (95%), the program was seen as highly beneficial by participants.

The program provided space to come together in solidarity—to strengthen leadership, be inspired, and celebrate the values and strengths that drive meaningful action to end violence against women. Connections made through peer learning groups have endured.

As a result of conversations held during the series a key resource was developed – the *Feminist Governance Toolkit* - highlighting the program’s role in identifying and responding to sector needs in a sustained way.



“reassuring. this work is hard... necessary...and worth it.”

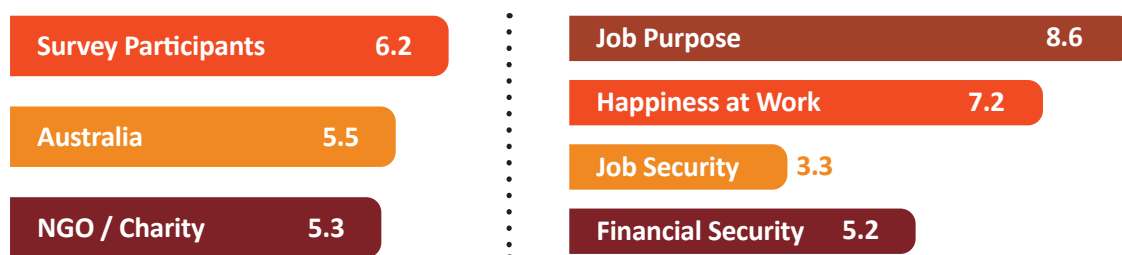
“this was extremely well done & energising for our entire team.”

Worker Health and Wellbeing

Wellbeing

Respondents were asked to rate their overall wellbeing between 1 (Chronic burnout) to 10 (Fully engaged and energised) with a further four items used to measure the different aspects of a person's wellbeing.

The average overall wellbeing was **6.2 / 10**, significantly above the Australian norm of 5.5 (Infinite Potential, 2025). The workforce finds the job highly purposeful and are generally happy when they're at work, however, results suggest challenges within two aspects that make up an individual's wellbeing at work, job security and financial security.



Survey results also demonstrate the active role of the leader in the wellbeing of the workforce:

> **52% of respondents agreed**

"Decisions at all levels of the organisation are made with staff wellbeing as a key consideration"

> **68% of respondents agree**

"I feel comfortable discussing concerns about my wellbeing with my manager"

Looking ahead, when respondents were asked to reflect on how they think their wellbeing will be in 12 months' time, only 14% of respondents think their wellbeing will be better off and 47% indicated they feel they will be worse off.

Differences in Wellbeing

In response to the question, where you see your overall wellbeing right now, data showed differences among demographic groups. Those respondents who identify as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander or have a non-English background indicated higher levels of overall wellbeing. On the other hand, those in the workforce who identify as having a disability, belong in the LGBTIQ+ community, or have caring responsibilities, indicate lower levels of wellbeing.

Those working in the Very Remote regions (e.g., Gulf of Carpentaria, Cape York, Outback Queensland) showed higher overall wellbeing scores compared with those working in Major City or Inner Regional areas.

Wellbeing for those whose tenure is less than one year and those who have been in the sector for over 11+ years is significantly higher than those whose tenure is between 1 and 10 years.

Barriers to Wellbeing

The three highest responses when asked about the challenges and barriers to prioritising wellbeing were external blockers (51%), unmanageable workloads/demands (49%) and too many ongoing changes (48%). These barriers appear to point to issues beyond the work itself to more systems level issues.

Burnout is defined as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress, characterised by feelings of physical, mental, and emotional depletion (exhaustion), mental distance or negativity towards one's work (cynicism), and a reduction in productivity and focus (reduced efficacy) (WHO, 2019). The combination of all three classifies a person as experiencing burnout.

Burnout

To gauge the level of burnout within the workforce, the survey included a validated burnout scale (Infinite Potential Burnout Scale) to measure the three dimensions of burnout.

When it comes to **exhaustion**, there is broad consensus of the experience in the sector:

- > **55% agreed with the statement**
"At the end of my day, I feel mentally and emotionally exhausted."
- > **33% agreed with the statement**
"I struggle with the pace and volume of work expected of me."
- > **33% agree that**
"After a working day, I still have enough energy for my leisure activities"

Exhaustion: 3.2 out of 5.0
(compared to Australian norm of 3.66/5.0)

When it comes to **cynicism** the results show the dedication and engagement of the workforce in their work which mitigates the effects of cynicism:

- > **85% agreed with the statement**
"My day-to-day activities gives me a sense of satisfaction."
- > **90% agreed with the statement**
"I enjoy working with my co-workers."
- > **30% agreed that**
"I feel that a lot of the work that I'm doing is just 'busy work'."

Cynicism: 2.27 out of 5.0
(compared to Australian norm of 3.15/5.0)

When it comes to **reduced professional efficacy**, when a person experiences burnout, their ability and confidence to perform at their normal level gradually decreases.

The results from the survey show:

- > **90% agreed with the statement**
"I feel confident in my ability to do my job."
- > **28% agreed with the statement**
"When I'm working, I often have trouble concentrating."
- > **15% agreed with the statement**
"I lack motivation to do my best at work."

Reduced Professional Efficacy: 2.35 out of 5.0
(compared to Australian norm of 3.18/5.0)

Workplace Loneliness

The survey used the UCLA-3 Loneliness Scale, a short, widely used, validated measure to assess feelings of loneliness and social isolation at work.

The results demonstrated relative low levels of isolation and loneliness within the workplace.

Lonely

30%

Not Lonely

70%

The data also shows differences in levels of loneliness among different demographic groups. Those who identify as having a disability, belong in the LGBTIQ+ community, or have caring responsibilities, indicate higher levels of loneliness. Meanwhile, those with non-English backgrounds report lower levels of loneliness.

Worker Health and Wellbeing

Our Insights

Results show a workforce that is exhausted, however, the protective effects of high employee engagement, organisational support and trust in leadership result in low levels of cynicism and reduced professional efficacy which shows a mitigating effect on burnout.

.....

While the burnout rates are significantly lower for the sector than the national average, feedback from the sector cautions that this may reflect a culture of endurance to keep going, and that it is vulnerable to burnout without continued, intentional and direct support for the workforce. Whilst burnout was measured according to a specific definition as recognised by the World Health Organisation it is useful to note in terms of these findings that the term burnout is often viewed differently by individuals with people experiencing it in various ways which can change based on different circumstances.

A common perception is that the difficult work and subject matter of the sector are a key driver of low wellbeing within the workforce. These results demonstrate that with and perhaps despite the difficult nature of the work and growing complexity and demand, the workforce shows strong resilience and emphasises the importance of active leadership in worker wellbeing.

Whilst it is important to acknowledge the strengths of the sector and its workforce evidenced through these results, findings also underscore an exhausted workforce who signals their wellbeing will likely be worse off in 12 months' time. External blockers, workloads and ongoing changes are creating pressure and impacting workers wellbeing. These findings mirror feedback from the sector to WorkUP that challenges such as short term and unplanned funding and lack of funding for essential functions such as human resources, supervision and staff development, present barriers for organisations in supporting the wellbeing of their people.

This coupled with insights from the Organisational Survey of difficulty in meeting the increasing complexity of demand highlight the importance of attention and care to the expectations, support and resourcing of a workforce that is already stretched.

Whilst differences were noted in wellbeing for specific groups given the size of the sample and the limited narrative due to the nature of the survey it is important to further explore and understand this context to ensure appropriate strategies and support at the workplace level.

Interestingly whilst most respondents were employed on an ongoing full-time basis the data shows a concern regarding job security suggesting that feelings of instability and insecurity go beyond employment status and may include variables such as pilot and short-term funding.



Annual Professional Development Program

The annual professional development program contributes to supporting organisations in the development of their people.

A comprehensive program of professional development across a broad range of learning areas and delivery modalities is offered to the sector. Activities are designed to respond to the changing environment and ensure the workforce has access to experiential, culturally safe and evidenced based learning.

Leveraging practice wisdom, delivery is driven by sector needs and focused on reflective practice and application of learning within the current and future operating context including responding to changes such as the recently introduced coercive control legislation.

By continual and deep engagement with the sector, professional development needs are identified, and a panel of expert providers is drawn from to ensure delivery is current, meaningful, transformative and responsive. Activities are provided for different audiences across the workforce continuum from new workers entering the sector, practitioners and advanced practitioners and program and organisational leaders.

Impact:

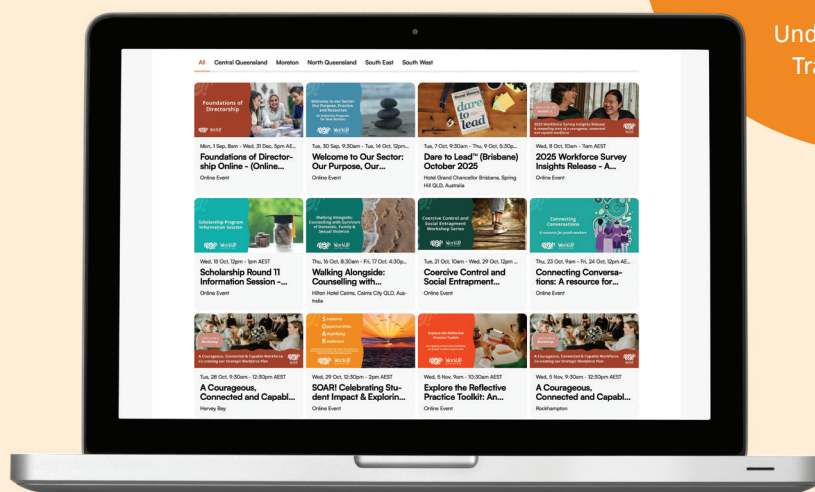
In the 2024/2025-year 1517 people participated in the professional development program from all five regions across Queensland. Participants overwhelmingly rate the quality of the learning (facilitation, delivery, content and learning materials) as good or excellent (93%) with an average of 30% increase in knowledge after the learning experience.

"This is the best training I have ever attended, and I have attended ALOT of training. I hope that there is opportunity to do a next level training."

Advanced Facilitator Training
Participant Participant

"I really value how the training provided practical tools and strategies that can be applied directly to my work."

Understanding Trauma
Training Participant



Workplace Sustainability

The research-based Workplace Sustainability Framework developed by Infinite Potential was used to assess how people are feeling at work, but also how the system itself is functioning by assessing organisational design, leadership, and structures impact engagement, wellbeing, and burnout risk.

For each of the five elements, several survey items are asked and respondents rated each item on a five-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree).



The State of Burnout, 2024, Infinite Potential

Workforce Safety / Protection from Harm

Score = 3.54 / 5

Protection from Harm referred to as Workforce Safety in the survey is the foundation of a safe and sustainable workplace.

Results show that many organisations in the sector have strong procedural safeguards in place: Staff report that physical safety is generally well managed, and most organisations have accessible complaints procedures.

Respondents also agree that it's safe to discuss mental health issues in the workplace and that they have access to mental health resources and support at their workplace.

Notably in the past 6 months, 59% of respondents have witnessed or experienced harassment or bullying in the workplace. Whilst nearly two thirds of workers were confident that their organisations would respond to this behaviour when it occurs it would be useful to understand this further including where the behaviour is occurring, the nature of it and how organisations are and should be responding.



Human Leadership

Score = 3.73 / 5

The sector's greatest strength lies in its people—and especially in its leaders. Workers report high levels of trust in direct managers, and many describe their leaders as caring, values-driven, and genuinely committed to staff wellbeing. This relational trust between leaders and their people represents a critical asset to protect.

The lowest score in this element was in response to the question **'my manager regularly coaches me on my job performance'** with half respondents agreeing to this.

To continue to support and grow this trust, leadership in the sector needs the resources, systems and support to develop and nurture strong capacity within the sector.



People-Centred Structures

Score = 3.55 / 5

This is one of the lowest rated elements and highlights some issues that may impact on the ability of the workforce to remain productive and healthy.

Whilst an overwhelming majority of workers feel they have the skills, knowledge and ability to do their job, workloads and demands often exceed individual and team capacity.

Only 37% of respondents indicated their team was adequately staffed for the work they are expected to do and just over half (52%) agreed that their workload is manageable within work hours.

A high proportion of people had access to the resources needed to do their job well and had a clear understanding of the expectations associated with their role. Whilst a small majority indicated the rewards they receive at work are in line with their expectations (52%) and received appropriate recognition when they complete work efficiently and effectively (55%).

91%

have the skills, knowledge and ability to do their job.

Team Connection

Score = 3.85 / 5

A healthy workplace is not just about individual performance—it's about the quality of team relationships, collaboration, and the ability to support one another through complex, emotionally demanding work.

This year's data shows that team connections is an area of strength in the sector as the highest scoring element.

While some workers report tension among colleagues, they strongly believe that they can rely on their co-workers for support and could openly express ideas and opinions. A high proportion believed their contributions were valued and appreciated by team members.

85%

can rely on my co-workers to help me with problems.

Personal Growth

Score = 3.78 / 5

Personal growth is essential to retention, motivation, and long-term career sustainability—but for many workers, it's the first thing to fall away in high-pressure environments.

As the second highest rated dimension results support that organisations are prioritising the growth of their people. Survey data revealed that most respondents have opportunities and are allocated time to participate in professional development and develop their skills and knowledge.

Just over half respondents have had a meaningful career conversation in the past six months.

82%

my organisation allocates time to participate in professional development.

Bringing it together

The survey data tells a compelling story: the workforce is values and purpose driven and the sector has the elements required to sustain its workforce.

.....

The workforce is educated, qualified and employed on a full-time ongoing basis. The results highlight the hard work the sector has done to create exceptional workplaces that are deeply engaged, where teams work well together and workers are resilient.

Leaders emerge as a clear strength, who play a vital role in creating and sustaining wellbeing and employee engagement and supporting and protecting their teams in challenging conditions. This underscores the skill of leaders in understanding the risks of vicarious trauma and being proactive to mitigate the risks to their workers. Their efforts should be recognised, resourced and celebrated.

There is however caution - the workforce is experiencing exhaustion and reports workload and time pressure, understaffing and a high administrative burden. This is compounded by increasing complexity and demand, ongoing challenges related to recruiting key roles and ensuring the right experience and skills.

Workers are telling us they feel their wellbeing would likely be worse off in 12 months' time. We must listen when stress is signalled, without the right type of support a stretched workforce is vulnerable to further exhaustion, cynicism and reduced confidence and motivation ultimately leading to higher levels of turnover.

The survey highlights systems level challenges as well as opportunities for further discussion, planning and action at the sector and workplace level, including:

- > Opportunities for career advancement and promotion appear limited which risks stalling the progression of future leaders, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. How do we facilitate a planned approach to creating supportive and structured pathways and succession planning for the sector?
- > The workforce profile is diverse, however, to retain and continue to grow this diversity and ensure a sustainable and healthy workforce, we must ensure that all workers—regardless of role, background, or identity—can thrive. How do we plan for and support a diverse workforce at the workplace level?
- > The workforce is growing which has an impact on workplaces and other workers. How do we support workplaces and bring in new workers?
- > Supervision is critical for practitioners and leaders in the work they do and is highly valued by workers. What support do organisations need to embed effective supervision frameworks and strategies at the workplace level?
- > Leaders are critical to the wellbeing and performance of workers – how do we continue to nurture sector leaders within the challenging context they operate?
- > Data indicates that workers are witnessing or experiencing harassment or bullying in the workplace - where is the behaviour occurring, what is the nature of it and how can we support organisations in responding?

The Workforce Capability Framework

The Workforce Capability Framework articulates the capabilities needed across the employee continuum from student, new worker, advanced practitioner and leader.

It outlines the capabilities required by the specialist Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Health and Wellbeing workforces to deliver safe, effective and respectful responses for those impacted by violence.

The framework was developed through intensive engagement with the sector over an 18-month period and guided by the Wise Hive, a small group of experienced sector leaders. The approach was driven by and anchored in the sector's language and aspirations about how to best support people, families and communities now and into the future.

Aligned to relevant legislation, reform, standards and policy the framework is a versatile and practical tool that can be used across all levels of the organisation from recruitment, induction, career development, succession planning and organisation and strategic planning.

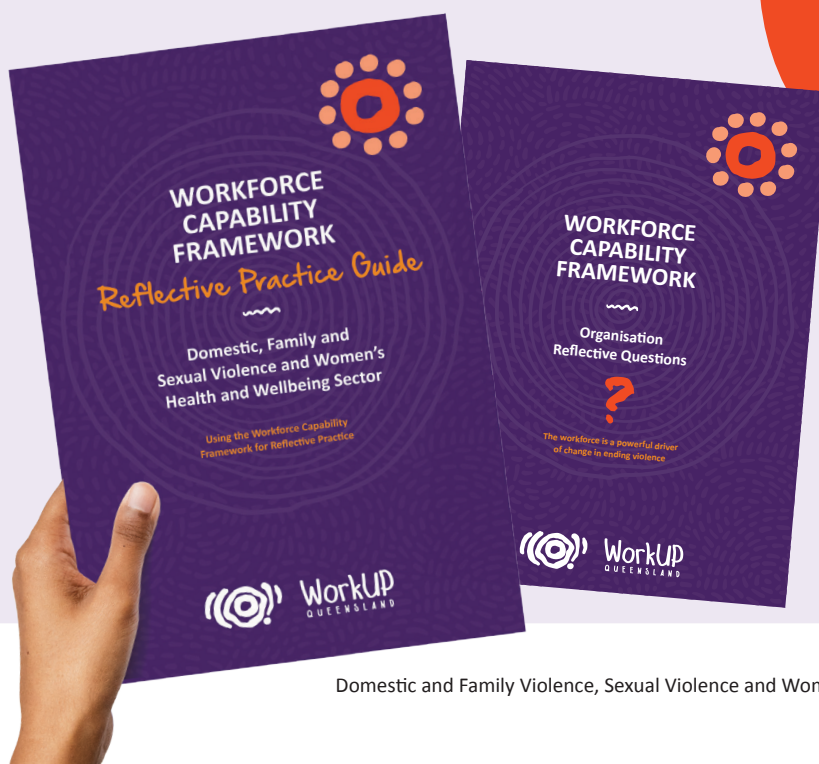
Impact:

The framework was launched in 2023, and WorkUP has been supporting organisations to apply the framework to their organisational context by sector wide workshops and one-to-one support.

Feedback from the sector has informed a suite of resources to assist in the implementation of the framework. These include reflective practice toolkit and templates, interview scoring templates, job interview question bank and self-assessment tool.

WorkUP continues to build on and evolve the framework with the sector, so it remains practical, meaningful and supportive for organisations in growing and developing their workforce.

"The unique skill set and values that you need to work effectively in this sector haven't been well captured in any document or framework. The Workforce Capability Framework pivots on this and draws the core capabilities needed to the front."



References

Chan, F. M., & Clarke, S (2024, 2025). The State of Workplace Burnout. Infinite Potential.

The State of Burnout 2024 | Infinite Potential

Cortis, N., Blaxland, M., Brekenridge, J., valentine, k., Mahoney, N., Chung, D., . . . Green, D. (2018). National survey of workers in domestic, family and sexual violence sectors. Social Policy Research Centre and Gendered Violence Research Network, UNSW.

National_Survey_of_Workers_in_the_Domestic_Family_and_Sexual_Violence_Sectors.pdf

Family Safety Victoria. (2023). Family Violence and Sexual Assault Workforce Pulse Survey Report 2022.

Family Violence and Sexual Assault Workforce Pulse Survey Report | vic.gov.au

Hughes, M. E., Waite, L. J., Hawkley, L. C., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2004). A short scale for measuring loneliness in large surveys: Results from two population-based studies. *Research on Aging*, 26(6), 655–672.

A Short Scale for Measuring Loneliness in Large Surveys - Mary Elizabeth Hughes, Linda J. Waite, Louise C. Hawkley, John T. Cacioppo, 2004

Mercer Human Resource Consulting. (2005, November 28). *Longest-tenured workers feel slighted by their bosses, organizations*. HR.com. *Longest-tenured workers feel slighted by their bosses, organizations*

Seymour, K., Wendt, S. & Goudie, S. (2025). Theorising family and domestic violence work: What is the work and who does it? Flinders University. <https://doi.org/10.25957/5ksp-xs48>

World Health Organization. (2019, May 28). Burn-out an “*occupational phenomenon*”: International Classification of Diseases. <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>



WorkUP looks forward to exploring some of the above challenges at its upcoming workforce planning engagement with the sector and continuing to work alongside the sector, Government and key partners and agencies to respond to insights garnered through this survey.



WorkUP Queensland
310 Edward Street
Brisbane, QLD 4000

www.workupqld.org.au
workforce@healingfoundation.org.au



Strengthening practice: Creating healing