

Insights Report

Exploring the impact of investment in Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland's domestic and family violence system

Acknowledgement

This report was written on the stolen and unceded lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. We pay respects to the Elders past, present and emerging.

Domestic Violence NSW acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign nations across the breadth and depth of Australia. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lived and cared for Country for over 60,000 years and continue to do so, honouring ancestors and knowledge holders within community, and observing ancient cultural practices.

We acknowledge the damaging impacts of colonisation and hold their stories with great care.

We acknowledge that domestic and family violence are not part of Aboriginal culture and assert that the responsibilities of Aboriginal families and kinship systems do not align nor are reflected in current government policies. Domestic Violence NSW work to position ourselves as allies and give voice and strength to the unique position that Aboriginal and Torres Strait people hold in their own family systems and communities.



About us

Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) is the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence (DFV) services in NSW. With approximately 200 member organisations across the state and diverse lived expertise advisory groups, we work to improve policy, legislative and program responses to domestic and family violence through advocacy and collaboration, while promoting good practice and primary prevention.

We exist to eliminate domestic and family violence from society.

DVNSW members represent the diversity of NSW specialist DFV services, working to support adults, children, families and communities impacted by domestic and family violence. Our member organisations consist of services such as crisis and refuge specialist homelessness services, domestic violence response enhancement, specialist DFV case management, Aboriginal controlled organisations, migrant and refugee specialist organisations, community housing, staying home leaving violence, women's legal and women's court advocacy services, men's behaviour change programs, and general community, women and children's support programs. It's our role to ensure our members are listened to, respected and heard by the change-makers in society.

We recognise that lived experience is central to change. We understand that DFV impacts some communities disproportionately – which is why we ensure the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQA+ people, migrant and refugee people and people with disability have a central voice in our advocacy. With guidance from lived experts, we elevate the experiences, voices and needs of victim-survivors through all work we undertake.

Together with victim-survivors, our members, our partners and our team – we will end gender-based violence in NSW.

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Executive summary

This report explores the impact of comparatively higher investment in domestic and family violence (DFV) systems across Victoria, Queensland (QLD) and Western Australia (WA), relative to New South Wales (NSW). Overall, this project makes two key findings:

1. Data limitations constrain the ability to demonstrate the impact of investment on DFV outcomes in Australia.
2. Long term structural investment and reform have strengthened the visibility of DFV systems.

Data limitations constrain the ability to demonstrate the impact of investment on DFV outcomes in Australia

High quality data is crucial to understanding the extent, nature and impact of DFV across our communities. However, at the time of this project, available data is insufficient to reliably measure how investment translates into improved outcomes for victim-survivors. Key challenges include:

- Attribution and causality – DFV outcomes are shaped by multiple, intersecting and interdependent systems (justice, health, housing, social services), making it difficult to isolate the impact of any single program or funding stream.
- Inconsistent definitions, fragmented and siloed systems – Although data is collected by states, territories, and various agencies, differences in definitions, coding systems, reporting cycles, and methodologies make comparisons difficult. This fragmentation limits the availability and comparability of data across jurisdictions and prevents effective integration between agencies and other actors.
- Output-focused reporting – Most datasets measure activity and outputs, rather than longer-term, client-centred outcomes such as safety, housing stability, economic security, recovery and risk reduction.
- Gaps and underreporting – Significant data gaps persist for priority populations, including First Nations peoples, migrant and refugee communities, people with disability, and LGBTIQA+ communities.
- Limited timeliness and accessibility – Data is not always published regularly or in a form accessible to services, researchers or policymakers, limiting its effectiveness for planning, evaluation and advocacy (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, Parliament Victoria 2025, QLD Audit Office 2022, Safe and Equal 2023).

Recommendation 1: Improve data integration and reporting

DVNSW welcomes the June 2025 announcement of \$3.1 million to begin delivery of a 10-year NSW cross-agency DFV Data Strategy. To ensure the DFV Data Strategy delivers real impact, the NSW Government must make a renewed commitment, backed by substantive and ongoing investment, in the forthcoming NSW DFV Plan, scheduled for 2027.

Priority should be the establishment of a state-wide, integrated DFV data system that:

- Is routinely available and accessible
- Uses standardised definitions, indicators and reporting standards aligned with state and national frameworks
- Enables secure data linkage across justice, health, housing and social services.

This system will allow NSW to track outcomes across populations and demonstrate the impact of reforms and investment over time.

Long term structural investment and reform have strengthened the visibility of DFV systems

Investment and reform, particularly in Victoria and QLD, have shifted DFV support systems toward greater visibility, strengthening system architecture and more accessible service entry points. While it is difficult to demonstrate a direct causal link between investment and outcomes, several trends can be highlighted:

- Prevalence and incidence of DFV: While DFV remains widespread across all states and territories, Victoria and QLD have reported declines in partner violence, while WA and NSW remain stable. Incident reporting (as seen from police, health, justice, and service data) has broadly increased across all jurisdictions (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023, Duncan et al 2025). While challenging to ascertain whether these trends result from greater community awareness, more reporting options, or enhanced system responsiveness, DFV remains a persistent presence in our communities.
- In particular, the immovability of DFV-related deaths highlights both the severity and limits of current system responses: while investment has expanded pathways into services and support, it has not yet translated into population-level reductions (Ombudsman WA 2024, Crime Statistics Agency 2025, Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2024, BOCSAR 2025).
- Victim-survivor outcomes: Data on outcomes for victim-survivors (particularly children and young people) remains limited, often missing individual experiences and long-term impacts (Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016). Some improvements have been observed in identification and referral pathways in Victoria and QLD. However, data on how this flows through to supports available and improved outcomes for victim-survivors across safety, housing stability, economic security, recovery and risk reduction is limited (QLD Audit Office 2022, Bortz & Cain 2022).
- Service delivery, system capability and innovation: While reforms and investment in Victoria and QLD have improved entry points and formal system architecture, without proportional growth in downstream capacity and appropriate data systems, the system risks amplifying unmet demand rather than resolving it (QLD Audit Office 2022, Victorian Government 2024, Safe and Equal 2023).
- Workforce stability, collaboration and long-term planning: There are currently limited mechanisms to capture and monitor workforce size, diversity, retention, or development at a systems level. This obscures systemic workforce pressures and is a key gap in available data (Cortis et al, 2018). Notably, this is an emerging area of political and strategic development, with Victoria having invested in the Family Violence Workforce Survey and QLD, WA and NSW are all investing in DFV workforce strategies (Family Violence Victoria 2021). Existing evidence highlights that system complexity, demand, and workforce pressures (burnout, retention, and cultural safety gaps) remain widespread (Cortis et al 2018).

Recommendation 2: Invest in connected data systems that can follow people's journeys through the system

Develop integrated, longitudinal, outcomes-focused data systems that follow victim-survivors' journeys through multiple services and entry points. Collect indicators on both met and unmet support needs to identify systemic barriers and enablers.

This will support the NSW Government and service providers to evaluate the impact of DFV funding and interventions, improve service coordination, and target resources where they are most needed.

Introduction and background

Purpose of this report

This is the final report from a project that sought to explore the impact of comparatively higher investment in Victoria, QLD and WA DFV systems, relative to NSW. Specifically reviewing trends and impact across the following areas:

- Prevalence and incidence of DFV
- Outcomes for victim-survivors
- Service delivery, system capability and innovation
- Impact on workforce stability, collaboration and long-term planning
- Barriers still faced despite investment.

The purpose of this report is to present the insights, methodology, and recommendations that arose from the project. These findings aim to support Domestic Violence New South Wales (DVNSW) policy and budget advocacy by highlighting evidence-based gains, persistent gaps and identifying priority areas.

Background

As part of their ongoing advocacy, DVNSW has been advocating for a 50% core funding increase for specialist DFV services - equating to an additional investment of \$177.4 million in 2026-2027.

A key pillar of this advocacy references the comparatively higher per capita investment in specialist DFV services across other jurisdictions in Australia, specifically Victoria and QLD. Indeed, research by Impact Economics and Policy (2024) shows that NSW spends significantly less per person than both Victoria and QLD. Victoria, for example, invests almost three times as much as NSW (180% more), while QLD spends approximately 50% more. While reported funding levels are not fully comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in how funding is allocated across program delivery areas, it is evident that NSW is significantly underspending compared to other states and territories across Australia (Impact Economics and Policy 2024).

In discussions with key decision makers in NSW Government, a recurring question is whether there is evidence that higher per capita funding leads to better outcomes. Specifically, whether increased investment strengthens service delivery, improves system capability and integration, and results in better outcomes for victim-survivors.

Methodology

This project drew on a mixed-methods approach combining policy analysis, data review, stakeholder insights, and synthesis into state-level snapshots. The methodology involved five key steps:



1. Policy and data – A rapid review of government policies, strategy documents, and service evaluations was undertaken to build a high-level understanding of the DFV service systems in Victoria, QLD, and WA, including their history, guiding frameworks, and reform priorities.

2. Data review and assessment – Relevant national and state-level datasets and indicators were examined for their comparability across jurisdictions, availability of time-series data across 2015–2025, level of state-based disaggregation, and adjustment for population change. Where system-level data was unavailable, gaps were identified and supplemented with alternative sources such as service-level evaluations and surveys.
3. State data snapshots – Using the reviewed indicators, tailored data snapshots were developed for Victoria, QLD, and WA (see Appendix 6.1 – 6.4). Note: A high-level snapshot was developed for NSW. These snapshots provide an overview of prevalence and incidence of DFV, client outcomes, service delivery, system capability, and workforce indicators.
4. Stakeholder interviews – Informal conversations were held with six key stakeholders across Victoria, QLD, WA and NSW; providing context and qualitative insights into the data and emerging trends.
5. Insights Report – The findings were synthesised into the relevant data snapshots and this Insights Report, which presents the data, methodology, and recommendations arising from the project.

Limitations

While this project provides valuable insights into trends in DFV across Victoria, QLD, WA and NSW, there are significant limitations that constrain comparability and interpretation of the data.

These challenges reflect long-standing national challenges, as outlined in the ABS (2013) *Defining the Data Challenge for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence*, which highlighted the limitations in building a reliable comparable evidence base for DFV across Australia, including: inconsistent definitions, fragmented systems reporting, under-reporting, methodological inconsistencies, and ethical and safety restrictions on data use.

At the state level, these challenges play out in four main ways:

1. The measurement of prevalence and incidence is a challenge as there is often no single, consolidated dataset capturing the full extent of DFV. Existing police, health, justice, and service data record only part of the picture and are shaped by community attitudes, reporting behaviour, policy shifts, and frequent misidentification of primary aggressors. Underreporting is especially acute among First Nation communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability, and LGBTIQA+ communities, meaning many experiences remain invisible (ABS 2013).
2. Evaluating outcomes for victim-survivors remains difficult. Current data systems in each state are fragmented and not configured to track victim-survivor outcomes over time. Current reporting often focuses on activity and throughput (e.g. the number of clients) rather than indicators of safety, housing stability, economic security, recovery and risk reduction (Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016, QLD Audit Office 2022, Bortz & Cain 2022). While new frameworks, such as Victoria's Family Violence Outcomes Framework, represent progress, the gap in longitudinal, trauma-informed, or client-centred data means we cannot reliably assess whether reforms and investment are delivering sustainable improvements for victim-survivors (Bortz & Cain 2022).
3. Service delivery, system capability and innovation – Across each state and territory there is limited visibility of statewide demand, capacity, and unmet need. Reporting remains siloed and primarily output focused. Without consistent measures of wait times, service availability, or demand-pressure, it is difficult to gauge whether reforms and investment are improving access, timeliness, or quality of responses (QLD Audit Office 2022, Victorian Government 2024, Safe and Equal 2023).
4. Workforce stability, collaboration and long-term planning – There are currently limited mechanisms to capture and monitor workforce size, diversity, retention, or development at a systems level. Where information exists, it is usually from one-off surveys or project evaluations. This obscures systemic

workforce pressures and is a key gap in available data (Cortis et al 2018). Notably, this is an emerging area of political and strategic development, with QLD, WA and NSW all investing in DFV workforce strategies to address this gap.

These limitations make it difficult to compare across jurisdictions and assess long-term shifts in outcomes and impact (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013). The data snapshots and following analysis should therefore be read as indicative rather than definitive. They provide valuable insights into trends and highlight emerging system pressures, but they cannot offer a full account of whether per capita investments are delivering lasting improvements.

Strengthening outcome-focused, integrated, and trauma-informed data collection is critical for future monitoring, evaluation, and advocacy.

Findings and insights

DFV investment

Research by Impact Economics and Policy (2024) shows that NSW spends significantly less per person on DFV services than both Victoria and QLD. Victoria, for example, invests almost three times as much as NSW (180% more), while QLD spends about 50% more.

State	Program Area	Funding 2024-25 (\$m)	Funding per capita (\$)
NSW	Prevent domestic and family violence, reduce reoffending and support victim safety	\$326.6	\$38.07
Victoria	Family violence service delivery	\$748.1	\$106.52
QLD	Women's safety and violence prevention	\$323.3	\$57.39

These per capita differences provide a useful benchmark and a critical foundation for advocacy and planning, particularly when considered alongside the political and community contexts shaping each jurisdiction.

In Victoria, DFV investment has been significantly driven by the [2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence](#) and its 227 recommendations. Funding has largely focused on building a more visible, coordinated, and accessible system, unpinned by initiatives such as The Orange Door network, specialist family violence courts, the MARAM (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management) Framework, and prevention and workforce development plans (Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016). These reforms, complemented by Victoria's Family Violence Outcomes Framework, provide long-term planning and measurable means of observing system improvements. While welcomed, organisations such as Safe and Equal (2023) have noted that this investment has not been experienced evenly across the service system, and downstream capacity has struggled to keep pace with demand, contributing to pressures on DFV specialist services.

QLD's comparative higher per capita investment similarly reflects sustained political commitment and community advocacy. Following the 2014 [Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in QLD](#) report, the 140 recommendations have been implemented over a decade-long reform program. Funding priorities have focused on statewide structural reform; particularly justice system responses, community sector capacity building, and enhancing place-based responses.

In contrast, NSW's investment in domestic and family violence has not been underpinned by a Royal Commission or taskforce process with binding recommendations, enduring bi-partisan support, or a long-term reform framework. As a result, funding has often evolved incrementally and in response to emerging pressures, rather than through a coordinated, system-wide strategy. This budget-responsive approach, coupled with the breadth of competing state priorities, may help explain the comparatively lower per capita investment in NSW.

Prevalence of DFV

Prevalence measures the proportion of a population that has experienced DFV over a specified period, such as lifetime or the past 12 months. The below data comes from the ABS Personal Safety Survey (PSS) (2023) which is the most comprehensive national dataset available for tracking DFV prevalence, disaggregated at a state level.

Summary:

- Across Victoria, QLD, WA and NSW, DFV remains widespread, with modest declines and/or stable prevalence rates since 2016.
- Victoria and QLD show modest declines in partner violence, suggesting some impact of targeted interventions or broader social changes.
- NSW maintains a relatively low prevalence level, but shows little change, highlighting potential areas for prevention focus.
- WA reports some of the highest prevalence rates with little change, signalling persistent risk.
- Emotional abuse remains the most common form of partner violence across all jurisdictions (ABS 2023).

Overall violence (physical and or sexual)

- National context: Approximately 8 million Australians (41%) have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15.
- State-level prevalence: There is moderate variation across states: QLD: 42%, WA: 42%, Victoria: 39%, NSW: 37%.
- Trends over time (2016 – 2021/22):
 - NSW, WA, and QLD: Two-year prevalence rates for both sexual and physical violence remained relatively stable.
 - Victoria: Experienced a modest decline in sexual violence (from 3.7% to 2.1%), while physical violence rates remained relatively stable (ABS 2023).

Cohabiting partner violence, emotional abuse, and economic abuse

- National context: Approximately 1 in 4 women (27%) in Australia have experienced violence from an intimate partner or family member since age 15, with emotional abuse presenting as the most common type of partner abuse.
- State-level prevalence: There is moderate variation across states: WA: 30%, QLD: 29%, Victoria: 26%, NSW: 25%.
- Trends (2016 - 2021/22)
 - NSW and WA: The two-year prevalence rate of both cohabiting partner violence (NSW 2.1% and WA at 2.7% in 2021-2022) and cohabiting partner emotional abuse (NSW 5.3% and WA 6.2% in 2021-2022) remained fairly stable.
 - Victoria: Declines were observed. Partner violence decreased from 2.4% to 1.4%, and emotional abuse declined from 6.8% to 4.9%.
 - QLD: Partner violence declined from 3.6% to 2.0%, while emotional abuse remained largely stable (ABS 2023).

Note: The above trends should be interpreted cautiously. The survey relies on self-reporting and excludes some high-risk populations, meaning actual prevalence is likely higher. Differences across states may reflect demographic and reporting variations as much as real changes and consequently reported declines (such as in Victoria and QLD) may not be statistically significant (ABS 2023).

Incidence of DFV

Incidence refers to the extent of offending behaviour within a community. Defined as the number of incidents of DFV that have occurred within a community, across a specified time (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013). Data collected by police, hospitals, justice services and specialist DFV services all offer insights into the incidence of DFV.

Summary:

- Broadly, recorded DFV incidents have risen in Victoria, QLD, WA and NSW. Police, health and justice datasets have reported higher DFV-related caseloads since 2015, likely reflecting a mix of ongoing violence, increased awareness, improved reporting options and better system responses.
- The PSS suggests that the prevalence of partner violence in Queensland and Victoria is modestly declining, while police, health and service data show rising incident reports. This suggests that, although fewer people may be experiencing partner DFV at a population level, more cases are being captured by the service system (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013).
- Notably, WA has the highest DFV-related police-report rate in Australia, up 30% since 2017. Such increases may signal both ongoing violence and greater willingness to report it (Duncan et al 2025).
- In QLD, certain regions (particularly northern and remote areas) emerge as hotspots of elevated DFV incidence (QLD Audit Office, 2022).
- Throughout all states, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience disproportionately high violence and fatalities, highlighting entrenched inequalities and barriers to safety.

DFV-related police reports

Trends:

- Across all jurisdictions (Victoria, QLD, WA and NSW) we are seeing an increase in recorded police reports of DFV-related assaults (Department of Families, Fairness and Housing 2022, Crime Statistics Agency 2024, BOCSAR 2025b, QLD Audit Office 2022, Duncan et al 2025).
- QLD saw a 218% increase from 2012-2023 in Domestic Violence Occurrences recorded by the QLD Police Service, Victoria saw a 12% increase in the number of DFV-related police reports since 2019, and WA recorded a 30% increase since 2017 (QCOSS 2025, Crime Statistics Agency 2025b, Duncan et al 2025).
- There are noticeable geographical hot spots, particularly in the Far North and Northern regions of QLD (QLD Audit Office 2022).

Data note: While the number and rate of DFV related police reports are more regularly accessible, they should not be read to fully represent DFV trends in the community. This is because changes in reporting practices, police processes and reporting, shifts in community attitudes and knowledge on DFV can influence these figures. Despite this, the figures underscore the growing demand on police and service resources, and the presence of DFV in communities across the country (Duncan et al 2025, Queensland Audit Office 2022, BOCSAR 2025c).

Court orders: Number and rate of court orders made under DFV legislation

NSW have seen an uptake in DFV-related court orders since 2017 (BOCSAR 2024). While WA doesn't routinely publish year-by-year data, evidence from the WA Police Union shows that WA courts are finalising the highest record of DFV-related cases since 2017 (WA Police Union 2025). This can be attributed to a mix of improvements in access, awareness and changes in police practices and recording.

Victoria and QLD have observed moderate declines in Family Violence Intervention Orders (Victoria) and Domestic Violence Orders (QLD) applications since 2021 (QLD Courts 2025, Crime Statistics Agency 2025c).

In Victoria there has been a significant increase in the number of cases heard in the specialist family violence court division of the Magistrates Court, suggesting that more DFV cases are receiving specialised treatment in court and improved capacity to apply specialised knowledge to DFV cases (Crime Statistics Agency 2023).

DFV-related hospitalisations

Across 2019-2020 the number of DFV hospitalisations increased in Victoria and WA. QLD recorded moderate decreases, and NSW has remained relatively stable since 2017 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022, BOCSAR 2025c).

Victoria reports steady rises in emergency admissions linked to assault by a partner, particularly for women aged 15 - 44 years (Crime Statistics Agency 2025d). QLD and WA continue to record some of the highest DFV-related hospitalisation numbers nationally, with Aboriginal women disproportionately represented, particularly in regional and remote communities (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022).

Note: These increases partly reflect sustained investment in health system identification and coding practices, which have improved detection and recording. However, anecdotal evidence from interviews express caution in interpreting hospital data citing inconsistencies and poor reliability of DFV screening practises within a hospital setting.

DFV-related housing presentations

DFV-related housing presentations for Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) remain persistently high across Victoria, QLD, WA and NSW highlighting the sustained high demand for SHS services (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2025, Crime Statistics Agency 2025e, Department of Communities 2022b).

While remaining at high levels, Victoria has seen a decline since 2019, with a modest rebound in 2023/24 (Crime Statistics Agency 2025e). However, anecdotal evidence expresses caution in drawing conclusions from this data due to the impact of COVID-19 during this time and changes that the Orange Door has made to intake/referral processes.

SHS data shows that DFV is the leading cause of homelessness presentations, with women and children the most affected.

DFV-related deaths

Trends:

- DFV-related deaths remain a persistent and sobering indicator across all jurisdictions, with little evidence of consistent decline despite increased investment. Underscoring the urgent need for earlier intervention, and culturally safe, targeted responses for high-risk groups.
- Victoria has seen fluctuations in intimate partner homicides, with recent years showing an uptick even as reporting and interventions expanded (Crime Statistics Agency 2025).
- QLD records some of the highest absolute numbers of DFV-related deaths nationally, prompting coronial inquests and the establishment of a dedicated DFV Death Review Board (Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2024).

- WA also continues to experience disproportionately high rates, particularly among Aboriginal women, reflecting entrenched inequalities and barriers to safety, highlighting the ongoing impacts of colonisation and systemic racism (Ombudsman WA 2024).
- In NSW, trend data shows that the number of women and children murdered in DFV circumstances has been relatively stable between 2018 and 2024 (BOCSAR 2025, 2025c). That being said, there has been an uptick in the absolute number of child victims from 5 in 2015/2016 to 11 in 2025/2025.
- These deaths highlight both the severity and the limits of current system responses: while investment has expanded pathways into services and courts, it has not yet translated into population-level reductions.

Data note: A key caution is that homicide data is relatively small in volume, making annual fluctuations appear more dramatic, and can mask longer-term trends.

Outcomes for victim-survivors

Summary

- Data on victim-survivor outcomes is very limited, with the absence of longitudinal, trauma-informed, or client-centred data (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013).
- Early indicators of success include better identification of victim-survivors by police and improvements in referrals into specialist supports. For example, Victoria's reforms have led to more victim-survivors entering the Orange Door system and receiving initial support. However, evidence of tangible, lasting improvements in housing stability, economic security, safety and quality of life for victim-survivors is still emerging (Victorian Government 2024).
- Victoria's DFV Outcomes Framework offers a more expanded and promising view of measuring outcomes over time (Victorian Government 2025).
- Childhood experiences of DFV remain especially underreported, with existing data suggesting substantial exposure across all jurisdictions.

Breach of protection orders

While the majority of people on active protection orders do not breach these orders across Victoria, QLD and NSW, emerging data shows a rising likelihood over time that a protection order will be breached (Victorian Government 2025b, QLD Treasury 2021, BOCSAR 2024).

Protection order breaches have risen across Victoria, QLD, WA since 2015 and remained stable in NSW (Victorian Government 2025b, QLD Treasury 2021, BOCSAR 2025, Department of Communities 2022c).

This makes them one of the most common DFV-related offences before the courts, reflecting both greater police attention and increasing offender non-compliance.

Number of children and young people who experience or witness DFV

In Victoria (and increasingly NSW) children are recorded as victims in their own right (i.e. noted as separate victims, rather than witnesses or bystanders), which means their experiences are recorded and acknowledged as constituting harm, and they are entitled to tailored, trauma-informed support (Victorian Government 2022, BOCSAR 2025d)

In Victoria, children represented just over 10% of affected family members in police reports and in QLD it is noted that between 2016-2022, 31.7% of all DFV occurrences involved children. This figure is likely higher (Victorian Government 2022, QLD Audit Office, 2022).

In NSW in 2023, 1 in 10 victims of DFV assault were young people. Specifically, there has been a 4.7% increase in children (0-17 years) being recorded as DFV assault victims (BOCSAR 2025d).

WA does not currently have time-series data on the number of children who experience or witness DFV.

Number/ proportion of victim survivors who experience an improvement in their housing situation after receiving a service

Victoria has recorded a modest improvement in the proportion of victim-survivors reporting an improvement in their housing situation after engaging with services since 2019. However, as of 2021/22, in only 16.4% of total cases is a victim-survivor no longer homeless at the end of their support period (Victorian Government 2022b).

NSW, QLD and WA remain relatively stable since 2022 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2025, 2025b).

This speaks to the broader socioeconomic factors that impact-victim survivors' ability to secure safe, long-term housing after leaving violence, such as the rising cost of living, housing affordability and availability (including temporary and transitional housing).

Referrals to DFV support services

Referrals to DFV support services (namely from police) have increased significantly across Victoria and QLD (Victorian Government 2024c, QLD Audit Office 2022). This data is either not captured, or publicly available at a systems level across WA and NSW.

QLD data shows that between 2015/16 to 2021/22 referral offers made from the QLD Police Service (QPS) increased by 2,500%. However, while the QPS is offering more referrals, only 20% of people have accepted the offer of support, and the percentage declining the offer has increased since 2015 (QLD Audit Office 2022).

This trend is similar in Victoria where, where the expansion of the Orange Door network has seen a growth in referral numbers since 2019, with police referrals making up 55.4% of all referrals in 2022/23. However, only approximately 40% of clients referred to the Orange Door, by police referral, engage with the Orange Door (Victorian Government 2022c).

While there is not a clear picture as to why this is the case, existing anecdotal commentary highlights the lengthy wait times, lack of services in regional areas, and service capacity/ availability across QLD and Victoria as the key reasons.

Specifically in QLD, anecdotally we heard only 2 services are funded to respond to the statewide QLD Police Referrals Program, meaning demand is outstripping service capacity and resourcing.

In Victoria, fears of child protection becoming involved due to the presence of Child FIRST (Victoria's Family Information, Referral and Support Team) being integrated within the Orange Door is a key factor (Safe and Equal 2023).

This trend is notably putting downstream pressure on DFV specialist services who are increasingly accepting direct referrals, experiencing surges in complex case demand and lengthy wait times.

Service delivery, system capability and innovation

Summary

- Investment in Victoria and QLD has improved the level of data available that can indicate improvements in system responsiveness, capability and capacity. This information either does not exist, or is not publicly available, at a systems level in WA or NSW.
- Victoria's Orange Door network is a complete alteration to the DFV system's architecture. This has increased visibility and responsiveness of receiving support after first disclosure, yet funding across the system has lagged. As a result, demand is outstripping capacity, with long waitlists and service bottlenecks common across specialist DFV services (Safe and Equal 2023).
- Similarly in WA and QLD, respondents report severe underfunding. WA services have chronically struggled to meet demand, with reported wait-times of up to five months (Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing, 2021).
- System complexity has increased such that practitioners now routinely work with clients who are navigating service responses to overlapping housing, legal, child protection and mental health issues (Safe and Equal 2023).
- Notably, investment across Victoria and Queensland has strengthened entry points and formal system architecture, however without proportional growth in downstream capacity and data integration, the system risks amplifying unmet demand rather than resolving it.

Demand and wait times

In Victoria, there is ongoing concern that despite investment, the demand for services continues to outpace capacity. However, without a consistent, system-wide measure of unmet need, this is difficult to assess. Safe and Equal's (2023) *Measuring Family Violence Service Demand Project* seeks to address this gap by developing statewide methodology to quantify both volume of demand and how effectively services are meeting need.

QLD has seen improvements in DFV service responsiveness, with median time to first contact after a referral from QPS decreasing from 2.25 days in 2015-2016 to 1 day in 2021-22. However, understanding this context is extremely limited with little to no data collected that maps regional demand, or high need areas, wait times, capacity or completion or visibility of the service system (QLD Audit Office 2022).

In QLD, the service of DVConnect, came under investigation where it was found that more than 2,500 calls were abandoned between July 2023 and March 2025 (and the number of abandoned calls increased by 388 per cent from July 2023 to March 2025). To adequately understand these challenges, this review has opened a complex debate regarding service capacity, staffing, governance and service oversight (Brewster, 2025).

System complexity and coordination

Reports of increased system complexity are being recorded across each jurisdiction, with clients increasingly presenting with multiple intersecting needs (social, legal, health and economic issues) and requiring more comprehensive responses (intensity and demand) (Safe and Equal 2023, Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing 2021, QLD Audit Office 2022).

Safe and Equal's (2023) *Measuring Family Violence Service Demand Project* further highlights how the nature of case management has shifted. System complexity has increased such that practitioners now routinely work with clients who are navigating service responses to overlapping housing, legal, child protection and mental health issues. This often also results in longer-term care.

QLD in particular notes fragmented case coordination between Government departments, with limited data and no single entity accountable for cross sector coordination. This lack of coordination often obscures the full severity of risk for individuals and families (QLD Audit Office 2022).

Workforce stability, collaboration and long-term planning

Summary

- Available data on DFV workforces across Australia is extremely sparse. The lack of comprehensive information persists due to limited data and analysis on the composition of the workforce, the diverse nature of roles, services, and the varied organisational contexts in which they operate (Coris et al 2018).
- Most insights come from national surveys (that aren't disaggregated) rather than state-level monitoring (Coris et al 2018).
- Victoria, through the Family Violence Workforce Census, offers one of the most comprehensive efforts to address this gap (Family Violence Victoria 2021).
- This is an emerging area of political and strategic development, with effort towards structured data collection and capacity building. Specifically:
 - QLD is developing the [Grow the Workforce Project: Attract, recruit and retain our people.](#)
 - WA is developing the [Strengthening Responses to Family and Domestic Violence System Reform Plan 2024-2029](#) and looking to establish a dedicated Family and Domestic Violence Workforce Entity.
 - NSW launched the [Strengthening the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Sector: Workforce Development Strategy 2025-2035.](#)

In Victoria, since the 2016 Royal Commission, a key reform was the introduction of the [Family Violence Workforce Census](#) (Workforce Census). The Workforce Census is conducted every two years and aims to provide greater visibility into workforce trends and challenges across the sector and is the most comprehensive dataset currently available (Family Violence Victoria, 2021).

Key findings from this survey, likely reflective of similar trends across other states and territories, include:

- While specialist practitioners were generally satisfied with their roles and support systems, there were growing concerns around workforce retention, stress, and preparedness.
- Retention remains a critical challenge. The 2019 Workforce Census found that 40% of practitioners planned to leave their role within 12 months, citing factors such as limited career progression, stress, job insecurity, and negative impacts on health and wellbeing (Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor 2022; Family Violence Victoria, 2021).

Moreso, data from the *Family Violence and Sexual Assault Workforce Pulse Survey Report* equally found that while steps have been taken toward inclusion, further efforts are needed to recruit and retain practitioners from diverse cultural, linguistic, and community backgrounds to better reflect the population's needs and improve culturally-responsive service delivery (Victorian Government 2023).

Conclusion

DFV remains far too prevalent across NSW and Australia, causing deep and long-lasting harm to individuals, children, families and communities.

At present, NSW's data system is fragmented, inconsistent and largely output focused, which obscures whether people are safer, more stable and better supported in their recovery following DFV. At the same time, NSW's DFV system faces growing demand and capacity pressure from generations of chronic underfunding.

Evidence from other jurisdictions (Victoria, QLD and WA) demonstrates that structural reform and long-term investment can improve service system visibility, coordination and entry-points for victim-survivors. But the gains are only meaningful when paired with robust, integrated data systems that centre victim-survivor outcomes, along with sufficient investment in frontline capacity and culturally-responsive support. Without both, reforms and investment risk amplifying gaps rather than closing them.

DVNSW welcomes the June 2025 announcement of \$3.1 million to begin delivery of a 10-year NSW cross-agency DFV Data Strategy as an important and timely commitment. However, to ensure the DFV Data Strategy delivers real impact, the NSW Government must make a renewed commitment, backed by substantive and ongoing investment, in the forthcoming NSW DFV Plan, scheduled for 2027.

For the DFV Data Strategy to be practical, action-orientated and effective, it must:

- Align with existing state and national frameworks, strategies and standards.
- Encourage better coordination across states and territories, and alignment with their data strategies and efforts.
- Enable secure integration across justice, health, housing and social services.
- Invest in longitudinal data systems that track victim-survivors' journeys through multiple services and entry points.
- Capture both met and unmet support needs to identify systemic barriers and enablers.
- Monitor and review workforce stability, capability and sustainability.
- Adopt trauma-informed consent, privacy and ethical safeguards.
- Respect and embed Indigenous data sovereignty principles, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have control over how their data is collected, used and shared.

The Strategy must also resource workforce capability (data analysts, sector training) and fund participation by those with lived and living experience, community members and specialist providers.

The message from this project is clear: a service system without investment cannot deliver long-term change, and investment without data cannot demonstrate it. NSW now has the opportunity and responsibility to do both.

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For full list of references and data analysis see relevant state data snapshots in Appendix 5.1 – 5.4.

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Appendix

- 1.1 Victoria Data Snapshot**
- 1.2 QLD Data Snapshot**
- 1.3 WA Data Snapshot**
- 1.4 NSW Data Snapshot**