LEADERSHIP JOURNEYS

An exploration of retention and career progression among graduates of the Leadership Intensive Program (2018–2020)

WIDI

**WORKFORCE
INNOVATION AND
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE**

About the Project Team

The Workforce Innovation and Development Institute (WIDI) was established to drive innovation in education, training, and applied research to enable the growth and transformation of the social service industry. The Institute provides opportunities for students to develop the knowledge, skills and experience required to work in the social service sector. As part of this, the Institute partners with RMIT Schools to provide learning opportunities for students including accredited training, placements and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) projects.

Since 2020, the Institute has been hosting placement students from the social work programs in the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies. The Institute works with the Social Work Program Team to identify research projects that the students will contribute to as part of their placement. The placement is part of the Social Work curriculum and the Institute provides task supervision.

In 2021 placement students Melissa Bosma, Kallum Dennis and Thomas Speer formed part of the project team for the Leadership Journeys Project and played a key role in the design and delivery of the project.

A message to project participants

Leaders in the family violence sector play a critical role in keeping people safe and helping to create a society that is free from violence. The project team would like to acknowledge and thank the leaders who participated in the Leadership Journeys Project who generously gave their time to share their experience and their insights on retention and career progression in the family violence sector.

Project Team

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Executive Summary

Background

Family violence and violence against women and children is a 'global pandemic'.[1] Family violence affects thousands of Victorians – disproportionately women and children – and its impacts are devastating and wide-ranging. Leaders in the family violence sector play a crucial role in both ensuring victim survivors receive the services and support that they need and leading the social and cultural change required to break the cycle of family violence.

The participants in the Leadership Journeys Project have a deep knowledge and understanding of the family violence sector. This project reinforced the importance of engaging with sector leaders to better understand the issues facing individuals, teams and organisations to inform the development of new initiatives, policy and programs to support and strengthen the family violence workforce.

The Leadership Journeys Project provides some insights into drivers of workforce retention in the family violence sector. Data collected through this Project confirms the need to promote greater consistency in the design of management and leadership roles through the Family Violence Workforce Project and in the remuneration levels for these roles. Participants in the Leadership Journeys Project also highlighted the importance of feminist perspectives and approaches to leaders in the family violence sector. The need for ongoing training and networking opportunities for leaders across Victoria were also apparent.

In recognition of the important role that leaders play, the Victorian Government has invested in programs and initiatives to strengthen leadership capability and promote workforce retention in the family violence sector. The Leadership Journeys Project is part of this suite of initiatives to better understand and support this critical workforce. The Project aimed to explore the following questions:

1. Are graduates of the Leadership Intensive Program still engaged in the specialist family violence response workforce?
   a. If so, what contributed to them staying?
   b. If not, what might have encouraged them to stay, why did they leave and where are they working now?
2. Have graduates of the Leadership Intensive Program who are still engaged in the specialist family violence response workforce experienced career progression since they completed the Program?
3. How have graduates' circumstances and roles changed since the COVID-19 pandemic?

Methodology

The project team developed a mixed-methods approach, which included collection of quantitative data through a specially designed survey, as well as gathering of qualitative data through a series of interviews. Data collected through surveys and interviews was analysed and compared with the existing literature on retention and career progression in the social service sector more broadly.

The project sought to engage with all past participants of the Leadership Intensive Program in 2018, 2019 and 2020 (N: 345). In recruiting participants, the project team sought to include a cross-section of leaders working in the family violence sector in Victoria, in terms of their cohort, gender, age, and metro or regional status. Initial attempts to contact participants reduced that the target population to 268 due to email bounce backs (N: 53), email addresses no longer in operation (N: 16), and out-of-office responses that spanned the data collection phase (N: 8).

The project included participants who undertook the Leadership Intensive Program in 2018, 2019 and 2020. Throughout this report, quantitative data collected through the survey is presented in charts and tables and qualitative data collected as part of free-text responses in the survey and through interviews are included in the discussion. The report also includes three case studies based on interview data.

OF THE 268 POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS, A TOTAL OF 65 ENGAGED IN THE PROJECT INCLUDING:

54 participants who submitted a response to the survey

8 participants who completed the survey and took part in an interview

3 participants who just took part in an interview

OF THE 62 SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

58 were female and four were male

33 were aged 50 years or above

3 identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin

28 work in regional Victoria

Key Findings

Retention

Of the 65 people who participated in the Leadership Journeys Project, all but three are still working in the family violence sector, two survey respondents and one interviewee. Those who remain in the sector identified several positive aspects of their role that contribute to and support retention including 'supportive colleagues' and 'positive work culture'. 'Helping others', 'feeling challenged' and 'career progression opportunities' were also identified as positive aspects of their role.

However, most participants agreed that there are barriers to retaining leaders in the family violence sector citing factors such as 'burnout' and 'high-pressure work environment'. 'Lack of advancement opportunities', 'lack of organisational resources to adequately undertake their role', and 'being undervalued' were also identified as barriers.

It is worth noting that 77 potential participants were not able to be reached due to email bounce backs (N: 53), email addresses no longer in operation (N: 16), and out-of-office responses that spanned the data collection phase (N: 8). It is possible that some of these 77 potential participants are no longer working in the family violence sector.

Career Progression

Of the 60 survey respondents still working in the family violence sector, 23 indicated that they had experienced career progression since completing the Leadership Intensive Program. Several participants noted that career progression was not

presently a priority for them, with some reporting that they are happy to remain at their current level. Barriers to career progression include 'lack of options for advancement', 'personal commitments', 'burnout' and the 'need for further specialised education and training'.

Participants noted that opportunities varied according to geography. The same number of regional and metro participants cited 'lack of career progression options' as a barrier to career progression (nine regional, nine metro) however the proportion of participants from regional areas who cited this as a barrier was slightly higher (33% compared to 27%).

Some participants reported a need to develop greater knowledge and confidence in business-management skills. Poor remuneration and issues in the design of job roles – specifically inconsistencies in breadth of responsibilities and the number of direct reports – were also identified as issues.

Education and Training

Most participants agreed that their current level of education is sufficient to excel in their current role in the family violence sector. Knowledge gained through the Leadership Intensive Program has had a positive impact for many participants and prompted or inspired several participants to undertake further study, training or professional development.

Around half of the participants have undertaken further study, training or professional development since completing the Leadership Intensive Program, ranging from workshops, short courses, and self-paced online learning through to formal qualifications. Access to professional development was not an issue for most participants however there were barriers to engaging in further training with the two greatest barriers being 'cost of study' and 'lack of time'.

Impacts of COVID-19

Most participants agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on their working life and participants reported a mix of negative and positive impacts. Participants described the variety of ways in which COVID-19 has impacted on their working life including:

- **Demand** – increased demand for services and workforce shortages were reported by several participants;

- **New forms of work** – including transitioning to telehealth-type models and research inspired by COVID-19;

- **Changes to workload** – increases in workload were reported by many participants, the ability to work more efficiently was reported by some;

- **Work/life balance** – greater work/life balance was reported by some participants, increased pressures as well as challenges to maintaining boundaries were reported by others; and

- **Wellbeing and connection** – challenges maintaining connections with colleagues, as well as exhaustion, fatigue, stress, and anxiety were reported by several participants.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Leadership Journeys Project confirms the need for existing initiatives to promote greater consistency in the design of job roles and to recognise the importance of feminist leadership practice in the family violence sector. However, more research is needed to develop a deeper understanding of the barriers to retention and career progression to inform the development of strategies addressing these challenges. Based on the findings of the Leadership Journeys Project, the Institute makes the following recommendations:

DOMAIN	RECOMMENDATION	
Retention & Supply	**RECOMMENDATION 1** Growing the workforce through supported pathways for workers from other industry sectors	Partner with peak bodies and Government to co-design initiatives to support leaders and practitioners to effectively transition from other sectors.
Career Progression & Pathways	**RECOMMENDATION 2** Developing and sustaining leadership pathways for a growing sector	Undertake further research aligned to the Family Violence Workforce Project to map pathways to leadership in the family violence sector for aspiring leaders, emerging leaders, established leaders and transitioning leaders.
Education and Training	**RECOMMENDATION 3** Embed targeted leadership content in relevant learning and development offerings	Augment existing and new training programs for the family violence workforce with supplementary content on leadership drawn from the Institute's Leadership Intensive Program.
	RECOMMENDATION 4 Pilot scholarship for family violence leaders	Create scholarship for family violence leaders to undertake a Masters by Research program including an original research project on a topic relevant to the sector.
	RECOMMENDATION 5 Enabling leadership development to strengthen the leadership of the Family Violence sector	Invest in a formal Coaching and Mentoring Program to support leaders in the family violence sector to continue to develop their skills and expand their professional networks.
	RECOMMENDATION 6 Aligning leadership education and training offerings with sector needs	Commission further research on the learning and development needs of leaders at various stages and support the development and delivery of high-quality, funded, flexible training opportunities to address those needs.
COVID-19	**RECOMMENDATION 7** Inform effective ways of working in the COVID environment	Undertake research on best practice hybrid models of working in the family violence sector and related sectors.

Introduction

Family violence and violence against women and children is a 'global pandemic'.[2] Family violence affects thousands of Victorians – disproportionately women and children – and its impacts are devastating and wide-ranging. The Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria) was established in 2015 and tasked with identifying the most effective and practical ways to:

- prevent family violence;
- improve early intervention so as to identify and protect those at risk;
- support victims – particularly women and children – and address the impacts of violence on them;
- make perpetrators accountable;
- develop and refine systemic responses to family violence – including in the legal system and by police, corrections, child protection, legal and family violence support services;
- better coordinate community and government responses to family violence; and
- evaluate and measure the success of strategies, frameworks, policies, programs, and services introduced to put a stop family violence.[3]

Since the Royal Commission handed down its recommendations in March 2016,[4] the family violence sector in Victoria has been undergoing a series of critical and comprehensive reforms, many of which are focused on strengthening the workforce. The Victorian Government's commitment to implementing all 227 recommendations, supported by 'unprecedented investment',[5] has helped to transform the ways in which services are designed and delivered and has sought to build and strengthen the capability of specialist and mainstream workforces to prevent and respond to family violence.

The Victorian Government's vision and priorities for the family violence sector are set out in a series of key statements, strategies, and plans, including:

- Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change;[6]
- Building from strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response;[7] and
- Strengthening the Foundations: First Rolling Action Plan 2019–22.[8]

Each of these statements, strategies and plans highlight the need for a high-quality workforce with skilful leadership.

The workforce is properly recognised and effectively responds, understands risk and need and is skilled to prevent family violence – **the workforce is supported through new career pathways, fair conditions and a commitment to enhanced wellbeing and safety, and is skilled to meet people's diverse needs.**

'Family Violence Outcomes Framework' from *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*

The workforce of the future is equipped to prevent and respond to all forms of family violence and the individuals that experience or use it. **At the core is a valued, skilled, diverse, safe, empowered and supported specialist family violence and primary prevention workforce.**

From *Building from strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response*

Capable, purposeful and connected leadership underpins a system that works together to prevent and respond to family violence.

From *Strengthening the Foundations: First Rolling Action Plan 2019–22*

This emphasis on growing a sustainable, skilled workforce with highly capable leadership is echoed in the *10-Year Community Services Industry Plan* (CSIP). As noted in the CSIP, '[t]o continue to meet community expectations and people's needs, the community services industry will need to undergo significant change, placing responsibility and pressure on boards and organisational and industry leaders to be adaptive and to manage ongoing change in the social, economic and policy environment'.[9]

With thousands of additional workers required to meet increasing demand for services, promoting retention and career progression is a priority and a challenge for the social service sector, including the family violence sector. In Victoria, government, service providers and higher education providers are partnering to develop and implement a range of initiatives to train and upskill workers and to support greater retention and career pathways. Through the Leadership Journeys Project, the Institute seeks to contribute to the evidence base on the experience of leaders which is critical to informing the design and implementation of future initiatives to support and strengthen the workforce.

The Leadership Intensive Program

The Leadership Intensive Program was part of a suite of initiatives designed to strengthen the workforce by enabling leaders in the family violence sector to build their knowledge and capabilities to contribute to and navigate an 'ambitious, complex and unprecedented' reform agenda.

ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP INTENSIVE PROGRAM

The Leadership Intensive Program is a non-accredited program for leaders working in the family violence sector. The Program – which is Action 4.1 of Strengthening the Foundations: First Rolling Action Plan 2019 – 2022 – aims to strengthen leadership capabilities within the family violence sector and uses a co-design approach that enables participants to provide input to the program content.

The Program is designed to support leaders in the family violence sector to:

1. **demonstrate** a strengthening of their leadership skills and change management capabilities in a range of leadership domains

2. **apply** new concepts, theories, frameworks, and approaches in leadership to inform leadership practice; and

3. **participate** and engage in collaborative community-of-practice led approach for continuous real-time improvement.

The current iteration of the Program – which is being delivered online – includes the following key components:

Orientation Session → Pre-reading / resources → Seminars featuring expert speakers → Facilitated Workshops → Evaluation

The Leadership Intensive Program has been delivered to over 450 leaders from across Victoria between 2018 and 2021. Between 2018 and 2019 the Program was delivered to 12 cohorts in 6 locations: Melbourne, Ararat, Benalla, Bendigo, Mildura and Shepparton, Traralgon. In 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Program shifted to online delivery in line with public health measures. The Program was delivered to 3 cohorts in 2020 and 6 cohorts in 2021.

The Leadership Intensive Program has inspired other projects and initiatives, including:

• The establishment of the Leadership Network to 'enable participants to continue to build on their learnings in relation to contemporary practice'; and

• An applied research project to explore feminist leadership in the family violence sector.[10]

The idea for the Leadership Journeys Project also arose from WIDI and FSV's shared interest in finding out more about the experience of leaders in the family violence sector during this period of unparalleled growth and change.

Project Aims

The Leadership Journeys Project was developed in response to the need for a greater evidence base on leadership capacity within the family violence sector in Victoria. The project sought to contribute to a deeper understanding of the experience of leaders within the family violence sector, particularly retention and career progression among past participants of the Leadership Intensive Program. The project supports the following outcome of the Victorian Government's Strengthening the Foundations: First Rolling Action Plan 2019–22, under 'Focus Area 3: Recruiting and retaining specialist workforces':

Outcome 3.1: Detailed workforce data, analytics and best practice research are available to support more strategic decisions and approaches relating to workforce planning, attraction and recruitment, career pathways, working conditions and employment arrangements (including remuneration) to improve attraction and retention.[11]

The objectives of the Leadership Journeys Project were to:

• Research the experiences of past participants of the Leadership Intensive Program with a particular focus on retention and career progression;

• Develop case studies that illustrate career trajectories and pathways in the family violence sector; and

• Provide recommendations to inform workforce planning, training and development initiatives to further strengthen retention and career pathways for senior leaders in the family violence sector.

The research questions explored in this project were:

1. Are graduates of the Leadership Intensive Program still engaged in the specialist family violence response workforce?

    a. If so, what contributed to them staying?

    b. If not, what might have been the difference in them staying, why did they leave and where are they working now?

2. Have graduates of the Leadership Intensive Program who are still engaged in the specialist family violence response workforce experienced career progression since they completed the Program?

3. How have graduates' circumstances and roles changed since the COVID-19 pandemic?

This project was funded by Family Safety Victoria.

Project Methodology

The project team considered the following factors when designing the research methodology:

- The value of both quantitative and qualitative data;
- Engaging participants who completed the Leadership Intensive Program in 2018, 2019 and 2020; and
- The time pressures facing potential participants.

The project team developed a mixed-methods approach for the Leadership Journeys Project. As part of the project, existing literature on retention and career progression in the social service sector more broadly was reviewed, quantitative data was collected through a specially designed survey and qualitative data was gathered through a series of interviews. Surveys provided an opportunity for participants to give clear, direct answers and interviews enabled more exploratory conversations delving deeper into participants' experience.
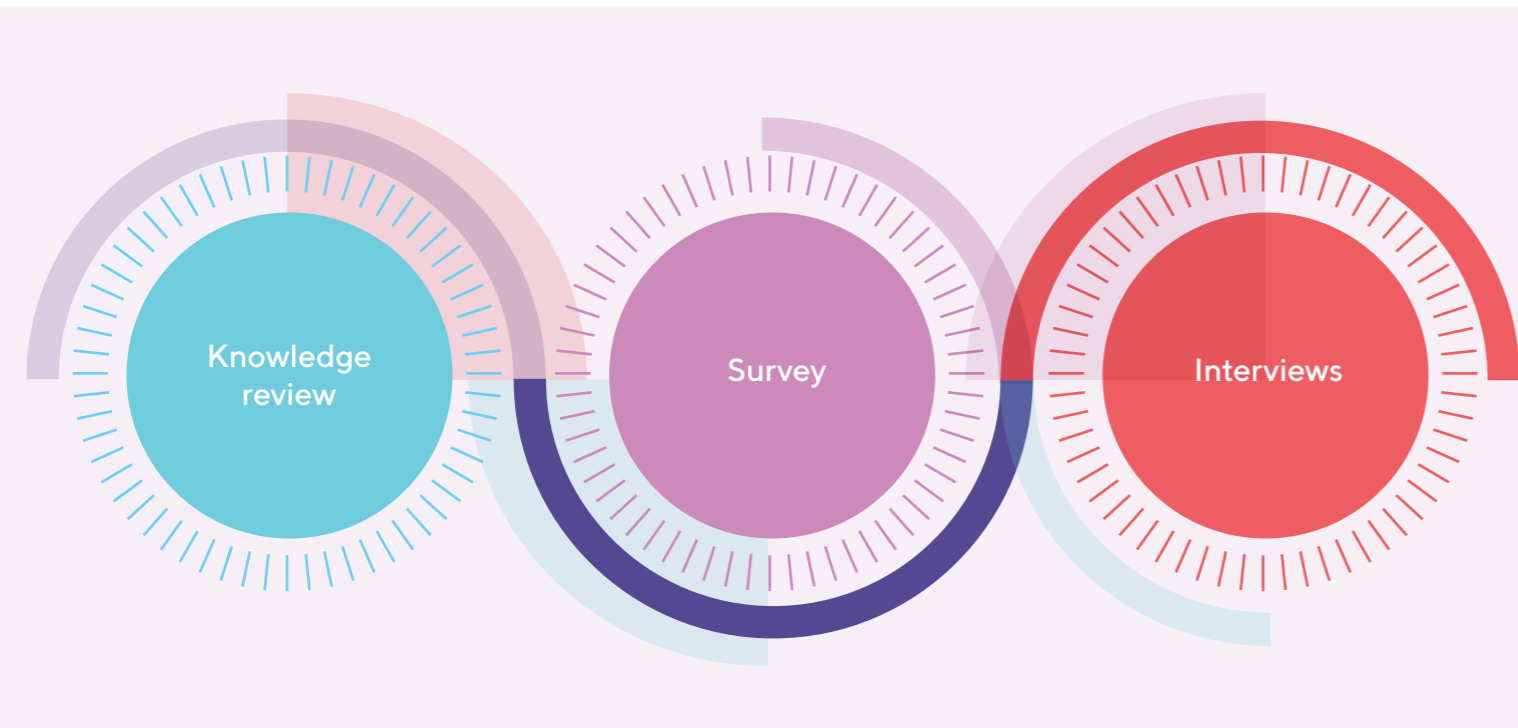
Target Population

The target population for the research project was all past participants from the Leadership Intensive Program in 2018, 2019 and 2020 (N: 345). Initial attempts to contact participants reduced that the target population to 268 due to email bounce backs (N: 53), email addresses no longer in operation (N: 16), and out-of-office responses that spanned the data collection phase (N: 8). Of the target population of 268, a total of 65 participants (24%) took part in the project and of these:

- 54 participants submitted a response to the survey;
- 8 participants completed the survey and took part in an interview; and
- 3 participants just took part in an interview.

Ethics Approval

An ethics application for the Leadership Journeys Project was prepared by the project team and submitted on 25 March 2021. The application was assessed as 'Low Risk' and was subsequently reviewed and approved by the RMIT Design and Social Context College Human Research Ethics Advisory Network (DSC CHEAN) on 22 April 2021.

Survey

The Leadership Journeys Project survey – which was developed in consultation with FSV – included both open and closed questions to give respondents a chance to have their voice heard, while also ensuring that survey could be completed in a reasonable amount of time. The survey was comprised of a series of questions including demographic questions, questions about their current role, level of education, barriers to retention and career progression, intentions around career development and further study, and the impact of COVID-19 on their working life.

The survey was open for a four-week period over which time the project team contacted potential participants four times, initially inviting them, and then reminding them to complete the survey. As shown in the table below, the emails were received by a total of 268 possible participants, due to three key reasons:

- many of the emails bounced back, stating that the email account no longer being active;
- responses advising that the email recipient was no longer working at the organisation; and
- responses advising that the recipient would be on leave for the duration of the survey data collection period.

Over the four-week period, the survey was fully completed by 61 respondents, with one further respondent, who completed most of the survey questions, also included in the statistics. These 62 responses included 17 respondents from the 2018 Leadership Intensive Program cohort, 22 from the 2019 Program cohort, and 23 from the 2020 Program cohort.

Interviews

Interviews allowed exploratory conversations that produced rich data regarding the careers of leaders, including insights into challenges and barriers facing leaders in the family violence sector. The interviews were designed to include only open-ended questions and the interviewers investigated topics that the participant mentioned and followed the thread of their conversation. Each interview was limited to 20 minutes to ensure that it did not demand too much of the participant's time.

Interview participants were recruited in several ways. Participants who had completed the survey were contacted directly and asked if they would like to participate in an interview. The project team also contacted a selection of participants from each cohort (e.g., 2018, 2019 and 2020). The interviews were conducted on Microsoft Teams by two members of the project team.

A total of 11 participants took part in in an interview (2018 – N:3; 2019 – N: 4, 2020 – N: 4).[13] A further six expressed interest but did not take part in an interview. Conversations with prospective interviewees highlighted that lack of time was one of the main barriers to participating in the project.

Data Analysis

Grounded Theory was used to systematically examine the different interviews to clarify what is meant by specific concepts and themes and to synthesise different versions of events to put together an understanding of the overall narrative.[14] Data coding involved systematically labelling concepts, themes, events, and topical markers to allow for readily retrieving and examining all the data units that refer to the same subject across all interviews/surveys.[15]

Summary of Survey Communications

	2018	2019	2020	Total
Total Initial Sample	126	149	70	345
Email Bounced Back	25	25	3	53
Left Workplace[12]	10	5	1	16
On Leave Throughout Survey	2	3	3	8
Total Sample Contacted	**89**	**116**	**63**	**268**

Participant Profile

Sample Size

All past participants from the Leadership Intensive Program in 2018, 2019 and 2020 were invited to take part in the Leadership Journeys Project. Based on the target population (N: 268), the project team calculated that an ideal number of survey responses was 158 with 20–25 interviews. In recruiting participants, the project team sought to include a cross-section of leaders working in the family violence sector in Victoria, in terms of their cohort, gender, age, and metro or regional status.

The project team used various methods to recruit participants, including:

- Emails;
- Items/announcements in the dedicated enewsletter for the Leadership Network, *Leadership Matters*;
- Posts on the Leadership Network LinkedIn Group;[16] and
- Phone calls.

A total of 65 participants took part in this project, including:

- 54 who submitted a response to the survey;
- 8 who completed the survey and took part in an interview; and
- 3 who just took part in an interview.

While the number of participants was significantly lower than the project team had hoped and falls short of the target of 158 responses and 20 – 25 interviewees which would enable for generalisability across the entire participant population, this result was expected. WIDI is acutely aware that lack of time is a barrier encountered by many participants having observed this through its work to support the training and development of leaders in the family violence sector over the past four years. Some participants in the 2020 Leadership Intensive Program reported 'having limited time in their working day to get everything done'.[17] This has also been identified as an issue for the broader family violence workforce, with lack of time being cited as the most common barrier to training across all four workforce Tiers.[18]

Participant Characteristics – Survey Respondents

This section summarises the characteristics of the participants who completed the survey. Participants were drawn from across the first three years that the program was delivered. The response rate was highest for those who completed the program in 2020 and lowest for those who completed the program in 2018. It is worth noting that participants who completed the program in 2018 were harder to reach as the bounce–back rate was higher than for the 2019 and 2020 cohorts.
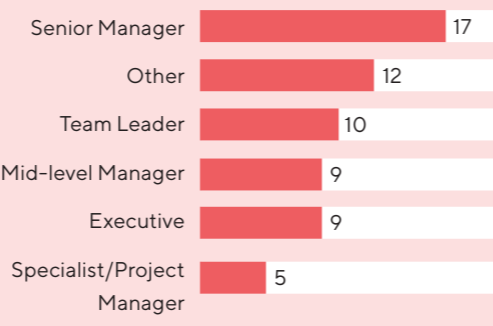
SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY YEAR

17 22 23

2018   2019   2020

TIME WORKING IN FAMILY VIOLENCE SECTOR

3 12 19 13 15

LESS THAN 2 YEARS | 2-5 YEARS | 5-10 YEARS | 10-15 YEARS | MORE THAN 15 YEARS

STILL ENGAGED IN THE FAMILY VIOLENCE SECTOR

YES 60 PEOPLE NO 2 PEOPLE

JOB TITLE

|	
Senior Manager	17
Other	12
Team Leader	10
Mid-level Manager	9
Executive	9
Specialist/Project Manager	5

12 participants did not select from the list of job descriptions provided instead providing their own job title. The job titles provided were:

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Chairperson
Principal Strategic Advisor (2)
Senior Case Manager
Senior Practitioner
Senior Aboriginal Hub Practitioner
Practice Leader (3)
Family Violence Practitioner
Specialist Family Violence and Alcohol and Other Drugs

WORKFORCE TIER LEVEL

Tier 1	39
Tier 2	6
Tier 3	8
Tier 4	4
Unsure	5
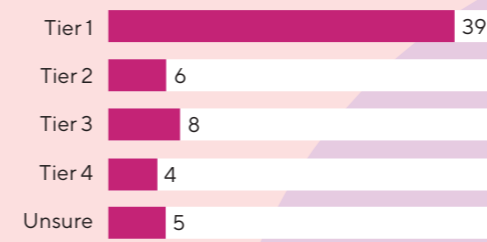
All four male survey respondents identified as Tier 1 workers.
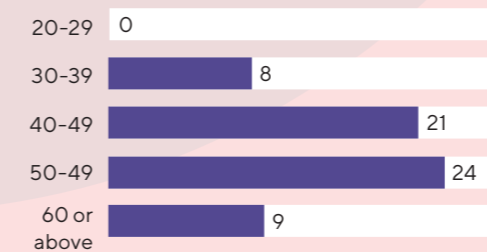
GENDER IDENTITY

4   58
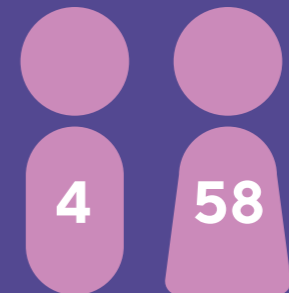
N.B. None of the survey respondents selected 'non-binary', 'gender diverse' or 'prefer not to say'

ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORIGIN

YES 3 PEOPLE NO 59 PEOPLE

All three of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants were women. Two of these participants work in regional Victoria.
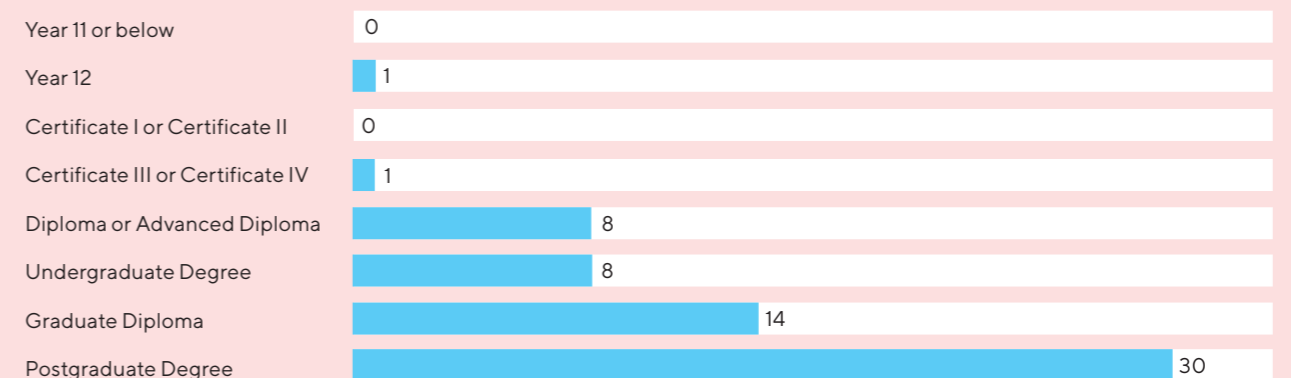
AGE GROUP

20-29	0
30-39	8
40-49	21
50-49	24
60 or above	9

PLACE OF WORK

34 METRO MELBOURNE

28 RURAL AND REGIONAL VICTORIA

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

33 METRO MELBOURNE

29 RURAL AND REGIONAL VICTORIA

Of the 28 respondents who work in regional Victoria, 14 were aged 50 or more and one was male.

HIGHEST QUALIFICATION

Year 11 or below	0
Year 12	1
Certificate I or Certificate II	0
Certificate III or Certificate IV	1
Diploma or Advanced Diploma	8
Undergraduate Degree	8
Graduate Diploma	14
Postgraduate Degree	30

19 of the 34 survey respondents (56%) who work in Melbourne have undertaken Postgraduate study, compared with 11 survey respondents (40%) who work in regional Victoria.

Limitations

Several limitations were encountered during the Leadership Journeys Project that it is important to acknowledge. Participation in this project was voluntary and was limited to past participants of the Leadership Intensive Program. There are many leaders who chose not to participate in the project who could have provided valuable insights and the project does not include perspectives of other staff working in the family violence sector. Many of these limitations were anticipated (e.g. lack of time to complete the survey or to be interviewed) and the project team sought to put in place mitigation strategies to minimise the impact of these limitations.

Contact Information

The project team contacted participants using the email address that they provided to the Institute upon enrolment in the Leadership Intensive Program. Since most of the email addresses for potential participants were work email addresses, many emails bounced back or advised that the recipient was no longer working at the organisation. This was especially apparent in the 2018 cohort, where 37 out of 126 potential participants were unable to be contacted to complete the research. This is likely to have contributed to the lack of survey responses from participants who are no longer working in the family violence sector.

Response Rate

As noted previously, it was difficult to achieve high rates of participation for both the survey and interview. Data sourced through the initial literature review,[19] from previous reports[20] and anecdotal evidence from the team who deliver the Leadership Intensive Program, confirmed that leaders in the family violence sector are quite time poor and have heavy workloads, which is likely to have contributed to lower-than-desired response rates. There is also the issue of 'survey fatigue' which was noted by the researchers from the QUT Centre for Justice in their report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic and family violence services.[21] To combat this, the project team followed up the emails with phone calls to around 50 potential participants to invite them to participate in the research.

Diversity Data

The survey only collected selected demographic data - gender, age, place of residence, place of work and whether or not the participant identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The survey did not include questions about carer status, cultural diversity (including religion), disability, sexual orientation and intersex variations. The survey did not collect data on which part of the family violence sector that participants work in (e.g. support and recovery programs, prevention programs, men's behaviour change programs).

The report highlights differences in responses where possible – for example disparities between responses from participants who work in Melbourne and participants who work in regional areas. It is important to note that the sample size is smaller than hoped and so generalisability across the entire participant population is not possible.

Distribution of Participants

23 participants who responded to the survey completed the Leadership Intensive Program in 2020, despite this being the year with the fewest participants in the Program. Respondents from the 2020 cohort have also had the least amount of time elapse between completing the Program and participating in the Leadership Journeys Project. As a result, they have had less time to pursue career progression opportunities than those who completed the Program in 2018 and 2019.

Interview Location

Many participants appeared to be in their office or workplace when the online interview was conducted. If this was the case, then this may have impacted on participants' ability to be fully transparent and honest about any issues associated with their role or workplace. For example, it would have been difficult for participants to disclose that organisational culture or remuneration was an issue for them if they were sitting near a colleague or manager.

Interview Duration

The interviews were scheduled for 15–20 minutes to ensure that they could be more easily managed with the participants' busy schedules. However, this meant that the conversation could not go into significant detail about the participant's career. More data could have been collected if interviews had been of longer duration.

Key Findings

Of the 65 people who participated in this project – participants who submitted a response to the survey (N: 54), participants who completed the survey and took part in an interview (N: 8) and participants who just took part in an interview (N: 3) – all but three were still working in the family violence sector. This section sets out the key findings of the project. These findings are grouped and discussed under the following headings:

- Retention;
- Career progression;
- Education and training; and
- Impacts of COVID-19.

Each section includes a summary of the relevant literature followed by presentation and discussion of the data collected through the Leadership Journeys Project. Throughout this report, quantitative data collected through the survey is presented in charts and tables and qualitative data collected as part of free-text responses in the survey and through interviews are included in the discussion.

Retention

The social service sector is Australia's largest and fastest growing sector.[22] Retention of appropriately skilled staff is an ongoing challenge for the sector,[23] including in the family violence sector. There is always a level of natural attrition in any industry (i.e. retirement of older employees) and the social service sector is faced with the challenge of renewing the workforce as more workers reach retirement age[24] and growing the workforce to meet increasing demand for services. In addition, 'voluntary turnover' (i.e. when an employee chooses to leave) has been recognised as an issue that needs to be addressed.[25]

As Cho and Song point out, the need to retain capable employees is 'especially important' for non-for-profit organisations 'because they mainly determine the quality of the social services'.[26] Employee turnover represents not just a loss of human capital but also a loss of institutional knowledge[27] and high turnover among leaders can have a profound impact on the effective functioning of an organisation, particularly if there is not a succession plan in place. High turnover among practitioners is also problematic and costly and it can result in leaders being required to step into service delivery in addition to, and sometimes at the expense of, their leadership and management responsibilities.

There are many factors that contribute to the retention of staff – including leaders – in the social service sector and related industries. Cho and Song identified three categories of factors affecting turnover: environmental, organisational and individual.[28] Examples of these factors cited by Cho and Song[29] include:

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

unemployment rates – which have been found to negatively correlate with turnover intention

ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

perceived autonomy – which has been found to reduce the likelihood of turnover

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

level of education – which has been found to be positively related to turnover

In terms of environmental factors, location of the work can be an issue with organisations that are based in and/or provide services to rural, regional and remote communities often reporting difficulties recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified and skilled staff.[30] Policy and funding are also significant. As noted by Cunningham et al, the Productivity Commission found that inadequate funding diminished the quality of services and restricted the ability of providers to react to the changing needs of clients, as well as reducing their capacity to recruit and retain staff.[31] Reflecting on the impact of restructuring in the social service sector, the Productivity Commission identified an unintended outcome that 'rather than enabling staff to provide dependable, accountable, community-responsive services, an unanticipated impact of these policy initiatives [is that] many non-profit social service agencies scrambled to hire and retain a consistent, high[ly] skill[ed] workforce'.[32]

High levels of employee turnover have an impact on individuals, teams, organisations and clients. In contrast a 'stable workforce', Radford and Chapman point out, 'leads to improved quality of work, improved organisational memory, competitive advantage through retaining a more experienced workforce, and reductions in training, advertising, and recruitment costs'.[33] Researchers have also argued that, when adequately funded, there is an increased likelihood for workforce capability and skills to keep up with the increasing complexity and challenge of the jobs within the domestic and family violence sector.[34] An

organisations' ability to attract and retain high calibre staff is impacted by many factors including job security, pay and conditions. Inconsistencies in salaries of specialist family violence workers and workers in comparable roles in family services was highlighted as an issue by the Royal Commission.[35]

Given that 80.5% of the family violence workforce in Victoria is female,[36] it is also important to consider additional forces – or gender-based structures and norms – that shape women's economic participation and their experience of work. These include 'the gender division of care work; options to mediate work-life balance; and the availability, quality, and comprehensiveness of social supports and entitlements'.[37] For example, as noted by Baines, 'unpaid care work remains largely the responsibility of women rather than of men, the market or the state'.[38] The Workforce Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) has documented how the Australian labour market is highly gender segregated and 'gender pay gaps in favour of men exist in female-dominated, male-dominated and mixed organisations'.[39] The Victorian Government's census of workforces that intersect with Family Violence highlighted the gender pay gap among Tier 1 workers 'with male respondents receiving a higher salary than female respondents, on average'.[40] These forces – which combine and intersect with environmental, organisational and individual factors – can have a significant impact on retention in the sector.
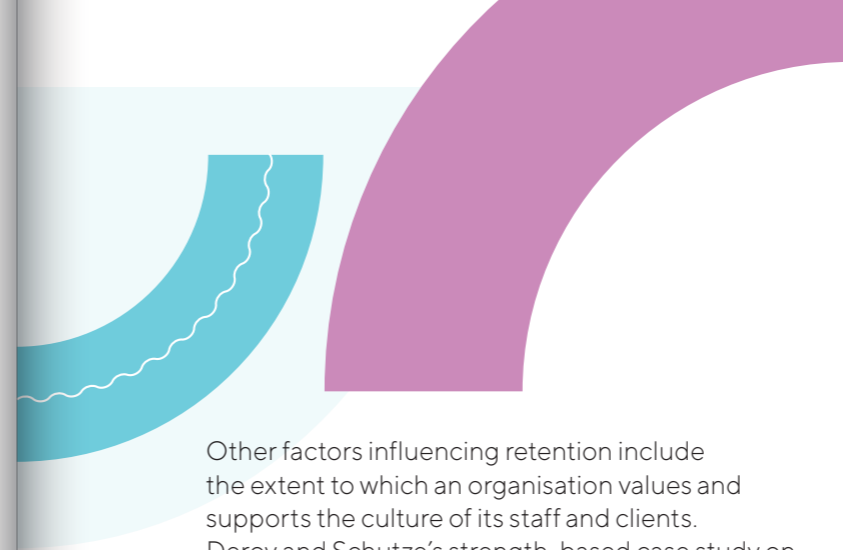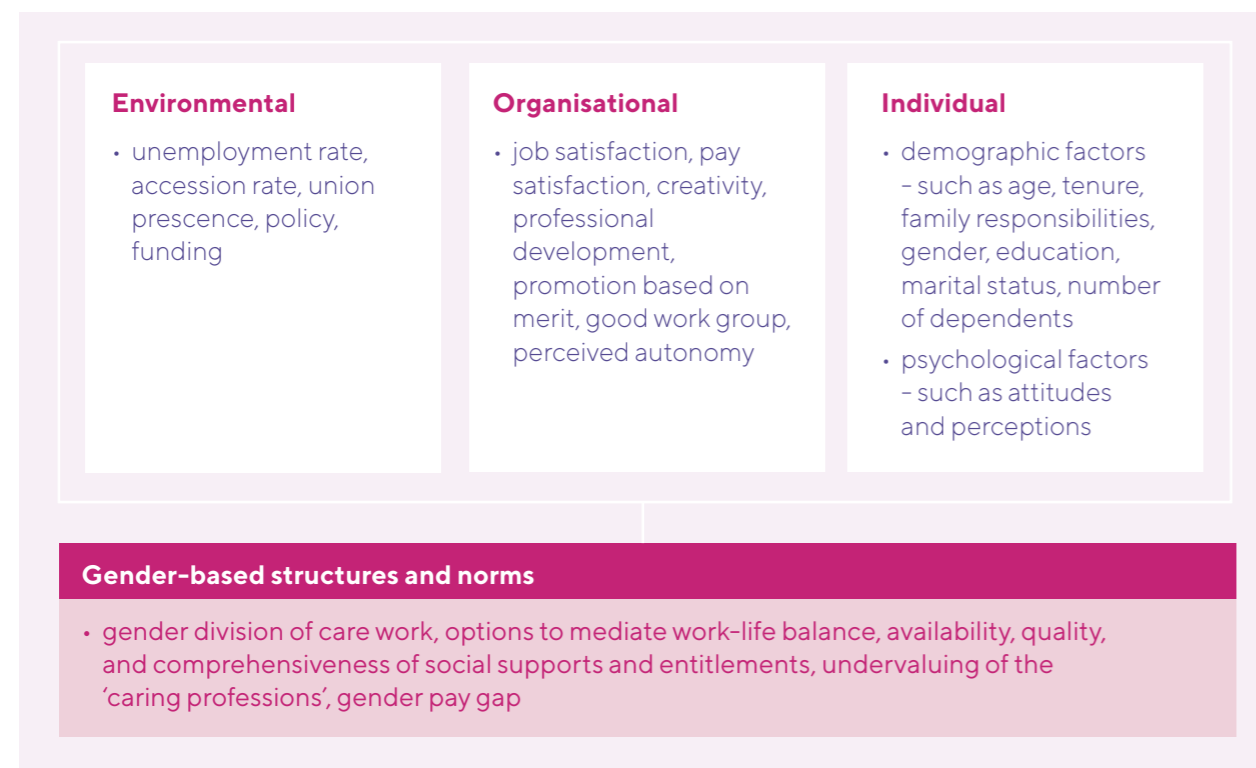
Other factors influencing retention include the extent to which an organisation values and supports the culture of its staff and clients. Deroy and Schutze's strength-based case study on retention of health and wellbeing at an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (Waminda in NSW), highlighted cultural safety as an enabler of retention. Deroy and Schutze found that '[s]taff at Waminda valued working in an atmosphere which resembled a family unit, that promoted mutual respect and trust, important in Aboriginal culture'.[41] The importance of 'culturally respectful leadership' and 'culturally competent leadership' has also been recognised in the context of child and family practice.[42]

At the level of individual motivations, research has shown that people frequently choose to work in the family violence sector due to a desire to 'contribut[e] to the community or provid[e] help to people in need' and a commitment to social justice and feminism.[43] However, it is recognised that service provision can expose workers to high levels of stress and vicarious trauma which can lead to burnout.[44] One of the commonly cited mitigations against burnout – frequent, high-quality supervision – can be difficult for organisations to provide in an environment where organisational resources are limited and urgent client-related tasks often take priority.[45]

Studies by Colbran et al on rural health professionals and Radford and Chapman on aged care workers point to the need for retention strategies that are evidence based and consider the circumstances of individual workers. Colbran et al identified a need for 'retention strategies that are multi-faceted and "bundled" to ensure they closely target the combination of factors important for the retention of specific groups', i.e. reflecting difference is career stage, age, gender, professional needs, social contact and cultural background.[46] Radford and Chapman also argue that retention strategies cannot be based on a 'one-size-fits-all' model and should be tailored to cater to diversity.[47] Of the 65 people who participated in the Leadership Journeys Project, all but three are still working in the family violence sector. Two survey

respondents and one interviewee are no longer working in the sector. The participants who are no longer working in the sector were all female. All three Aboriginal leaders and all four of the male respondents are still working in the family violence sector. As noted previously, the project team was unable to reach 77 past participants and it is possible that some of these leaders are no longer working in the family violence sector.

Of the three leaders who participated in the project who have left the sector, two are working in a related field (family dispute resolution and child contact service, community and wellbeing services in the Mallee region) and the other did not specify the field that they are currently working in. The participant who is working in an unknown field cited several factors that contributed to their decision to leave the sector explaining that they left their role in an Aboriginal co-operative managing a family services program due to a combination of individual factors (burnout) and organisational factors (inadequate resources, support, and supervision which caused the burnout). The interviewee who is no longer working in the field noted that family violence work takes a toll on people and that the COVID-19 has brought challenges, for example approaches to group work. While gender-based structures and norms were not mentioned by the participants who have left the sector, challenges around balancing work and caring responsibilities were identified by other participants in relation to the Impacts of COVID-19.

When asked about their intention to return, both survey respondents indicated they would consider moving back to the family violence sector in the future – one citing their passion for working in the family violence sector and the other noting that they did not intend to go back to direct service delivery but would consider work in policy and research, for example, understanding family violence in different cultural contexts. The survey respondent and interviewee working in a related field reported that they had undertaken further study since completing the Leadership Intensive Program and listed a range of training programs including MARAM training. Of the participants who are no longer working in the sector, one worked from home due to the pandemic and the other remained in the office. The participant who worked from home reported being 'more productive', however, they had to adapt their way of working to enable social interaction and connection and to support their staff. The survey respondent who kept working in the office reported added pressures due to the pandemic, including providing additional support and reassurance to staff.

Environmental

- unemployment rate, accession rate, union prescence, policy, funding

Organisational

- job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, creativity, professional development, promotion based on merit, good work group, perceived autonomy

Individual

- demographic factors – such as age, tenure, family responsibilities, gender, education, marital status, number of dependents
- psychological factors – such as attitudes and perceptions

Gender-based structures and norms

- gender division of care work, options to mediate work-life balance, availability, quality, and comprehensiveness of social supports and entitlements, undervaluing of the 'caring professions', gender pay gap

As noted under the Project Methodology section, there were several email addresses that were no longer active. The project team identified 16 people who had left their workplace since completing the Leadership Intensive Program. There were a further 53 email addresses that were invalid (i.e., bounced back). As no forwarding email addresses were provided, the project team was unable to determine whether these 69 people are still working in the family violence sector. A further 8 leaders were on leave for the duration of the data collection phase and so were unable to participate in the project.

The remainder of this report describes the responses of participants who have remained in the family violence sector. Quantitative data collected through the survey is presented in charts and tables and qualitative data collected as part of free-text responses in the survey and through interviews are included in the discussion.
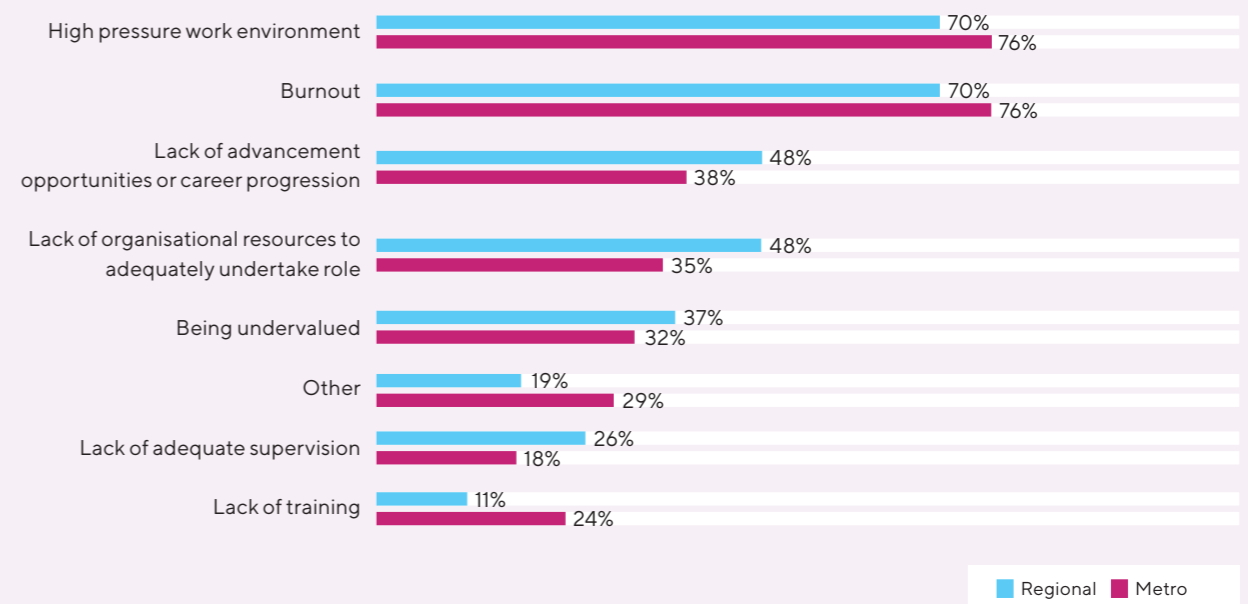
45 survey respondents agreed that there are barriers to retaining leaders in the family violence sector with similar proportions of respondents from Melbourne (76%) and regional Victoria (74%). Participants were asked to select from 8 barriers to retaining leaders including 'other'. Consistent with the findings in the literature,[48] 45 respondents identified 'burnout' and 'high pressure work environment' as key challenges and barriers to retaining leaders in the family violence sector. Over one-third of respondents also identified 'lack of advancement opportunities', 'lack of organisational resources to undertake their role', and 'being undervalued' as challenges.

'High pressure work environment' and 'burnout' were the two most commonly cited barriers to retaining leaders among survey respondents who work in Melbourne and regional Victoria. While a similar number of respondents cited 'lack of advancement opportunities' (13 respondents from Melbourne and 13 from regional Victoria) and 'lack of organisational resources to undertake the role' (12 respondents from Melbourne and 13 from regional Victoria), the proportion of regional respondents to identify these barriers was higher. Interestingly, 'lack of training' was a more commonly cited barrier by respondents who work in Melbourne.

'Lack of career progression options' were cited as a barrier to retaining leaders by metro respondents (N: 9, 27%) and regional respondents (N: 9, 33%). 20 survey respondents – 18 female and two male, also cited 'personal commitments' as a barrier.

BARRIERS TO RETAINING LEADERS

- 15 Strongly agree
- 30 Somewhat agree
- 14 Neither agree nor disagree
- 1 Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

TYPES OF CHALLENGES/BARRIERS TO RETAINING LEADERS

Challenge/Barrier	Number of Respondents
High pressure work environment	45
Burnout	45
Lack of advancement opportunities or career progression	26
Lack of organisational resources to adequately undertake role	25
Being undervalued	21
Other	15
Lack of adequate supervision	13
Lack of training	11

CHALLENGES/BARRIERS TO RETAINING LEADERS

Challenge/Barrier	Regional	Metro
High pressure work environment	70%	76%
Burnout	70%	76%
Lack of advancement opportunities or career progression	48%	38%
Lack of organisational resources to adequately undertake role	48%	35%
Being undervalued	37%	32%
Other	19%	29%
Lack of adequate supervision	26%	18%
Lack of training	11%	24%

In free-text responses, several participants called out environmental and organizational factors such as pay, conditions – including lack of flexibility and work/life balance – and lack of job security (i.e., fixed-term contracts) as barriers to retention in the sector. Workforce shortages, issues with the structure of job roles (e.g., increased responsibility for Team Leaders, lack of consistency in leadership roles in terms of responsibilities and direct reports), lack of education and recruitment of people without experience were also mentioned. One respondent noted the limited opportunities for staff working in prevention. Another respondent noted that the barriers listed apply to all staff who work in the family violence sector, not just leaders.

Participants elaborated on these challenges during the interviews.

'The impact of funding and not knowing of funding, the Royal Commission, family violence, aged care, all of that stuff impacts on us all and the workforce in particular and keeping people in jobs. So, for instance, some of our mental health programs we don't know if we're funded from the first of July onwards still.'
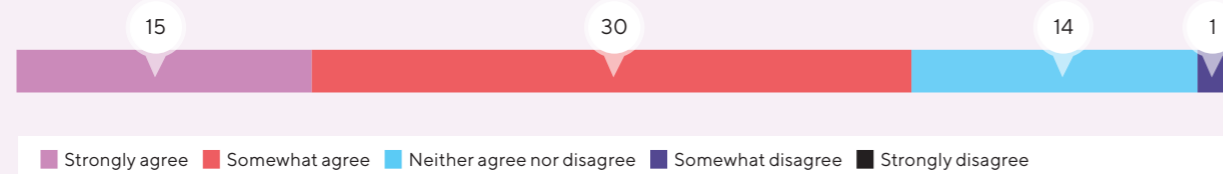
'This is rewarding work, but it is relentless. There doesn't seem to be a respite, and the demand exceeds capacity.'

Many of these issues pre-date the Royal Commission and have been observed in other parts of the social service sector. For example, Catherine McDonald explored changes in non-profit community social services sectors and found that an increased pace and volume of work, coupled with increases in both the absolute number of clients and the level of care required, meant that workers must constantly struggle to remain on top of their workloads, adding to the challenges of work-family balance.[49] The Report on the Family Violence Workforce Census also noted that '[low job security, due to high numbers of fixed term contracts and their dependence on funding and grant replenishment, was said to be another factor in the sector's minimal career pathways and security'.[50]
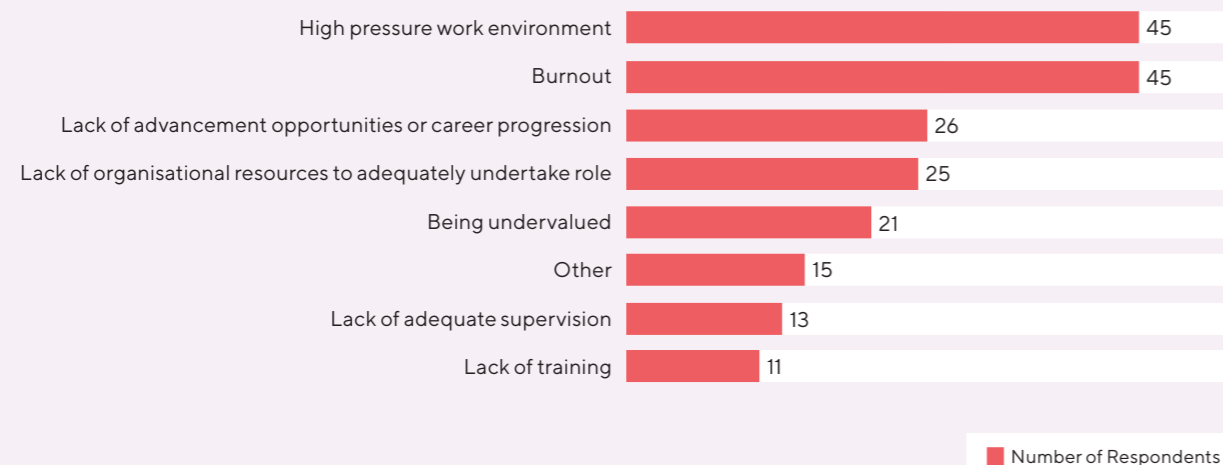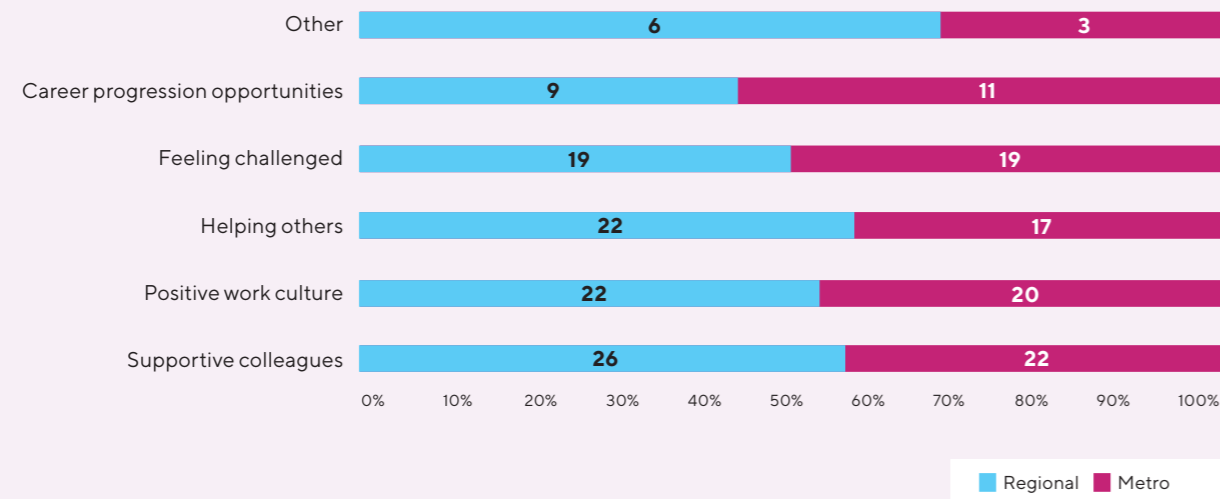
In terms of positive aspects of their role that contribute to and support retention in the family violence sector, 48 participants cited 'supportive colleagues' and 42 participants cited 'positive work culture'. Participants also highlighted 'helping others' and 'feeling challenged' as key. Although many participants identified 'positive work culture' as a factor contributing to retention, it is not clear to what extent this denotes or relates to teams or organisations that act in ways that are culturally safe.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF ROLE

Category	Regional	Metro
Other	6	3
Career progression opportunities	9	11
Feeling challenged	19	19
Helping others	22	17
Positive work culture	22	20
Supportive colleagues	26	22

Legend: ■ Regional ■ Metro

INTENTION TO STAY: TIME

	Less than 1 Year	1–3 Years	3–5 Years	Over 5 Years	Unsure
Total	1	8	8	21	22
Metro	0	4	6	11	12
Regional	1	4	2	10	10
Over 50	1	5	5	10	11
Female	1	8	7	18	22
Male	0		1	3	0
ATSI	0			1	2

Legend: ■ Less than 1 Year ■ 1–3 Years ■ 3–5 Years ■ Over 5 Years ■ Unsure

CHANGED ROLES SINCE THE LEADERSHIP INTENSIVE PROGRAM

■ Yes (14)
■ No (46)

Aboriginal leaders identified positive aspects of their role including 'helping others' (N: 3), 'positive work culture' (N: 3), 'supportive colleagues' (N: 3), 'career progression opportunities' (N: 2) and 'feeling challenged' (N: 1). One Aboriginal leader also highlighted their role as an agent of change and supporting the next generation of leaders reach their potential as positive aspects of their role.

Interestingly, given the focus of this research project, 20 participants cited 'career progression opportunities' as a positive aspect of their role. 11 survey respondents who work in regional Victoria cited career progression opportunities as a positive aspect of the role, compared with nine participants who work in Melbourne. 38 participants – 19 who work in Melbourne and 19 who work in regional Victoria – cited 'feeling challenged' as a positive aspect of their role that contributes to the retention of leaders in the family violence sector.

Participants provided further insights on the positive and challenging aspects of their role in free-text responses and through interviews. A few participants cited autonomy and variability as positive attributes of their role. Others pointed to their role as a leader helping to drive change and support the next generation of leaders. A commitment to social justice, values alignment and supportive leadership were also mentioned.

'[T]he work is very values driven for me. It is very much about that strong sense of duty, that sense of social justice, and addressing inequality and inequities and prejudice and discrimination. I suppose ultimately, too, it is about power and speaking truth to power'

As noted previously, 28 participants have worked in the sector for 10 years or more. 21 survey respondents stated that they planned to remain working in the family violence sector for more than five years including 11 respondents aged over 50, 11 respondents who work in Melbourne and 10 respondents who work in regional Victoria. Eight survey respondents stated that they planned to remain for 3–5 years, 22 were unsure, nine stated that they planned to remain in the sector for less than three years with one participant planning on staying in the sector for less than a year. Of the 22 respondents who were unsure about the amount of time that they planned to work in the family violence sector, all were women, 11 were aged 50 or older and two were Aboriginal leaders. This data points to a risk that the sector will lose significant capability at senior levels in the coming years. As noted previously, this turnover would likely result in a loss of human capital and a loss of institutional knowledge which would be costly to
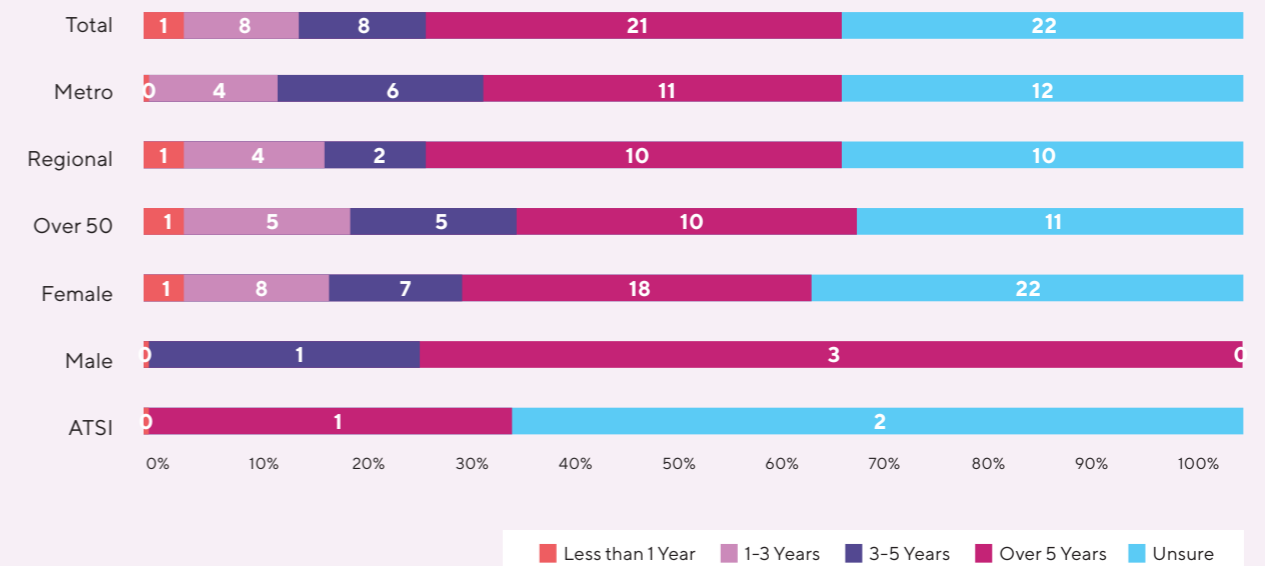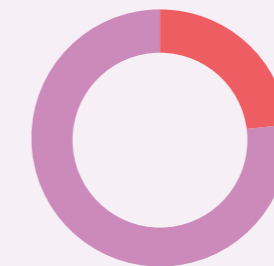
organisations and potentially impact on service delivery.

In terms of future plans, 18 participants indicated that they plan to change roles in the foreseeable future. This group of 18 participants included 15 female participants, three male participants, nine participants who are aged 50 or more, 10 participants who work in Melbourne and eight who work in regional Victoria. Of the 18 participants who plan to change roles, nine intend to stay in the family violence sector (including one Aboriginal participant and three male participants who plan to change roles but remain in the family violence sector), four intend to move into another part of the social service sector (e.g., homelessness, mental health, etc.) and five intend to move into another area altogether.
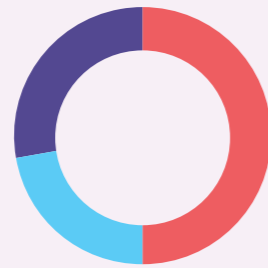
One participant reflected that the sector would benefit from recruiting people from more diverse work backgrounds, for example, people from corporations with management skills. This participant noted that with the current levels of funding it is not possible to offer competitive salaries to attract people from other sectors.

'I think that there is a real gap in the family violence sector in that, I think that the CEO level is fine, I think the practice levels are fine, I think there is a real dearth in the middle. And I don't think they are/can come from the family violence sector. I think they are going to have to come from outside the family violence sector. It's about trying to attract the right people over to the family violence services but we are going to have to start paying more because to get people to move over from good government jobs or even high level executive jobs ...you're unlikely to get women in their 40s and 50s and at the height of their career prepared to drop 50+ thousand dollars in income a year so, I think they are going to have to start paying properly if they want the right people involved/in roles.'

INTENTION TO CHANGE ROLES

	Yes	No
Total	18	41
Metro	10	22
Regional	8	19
Over 50	9	23
Female	15	40
Male	3	1
ATSI	1	2

■ Yes ■ No
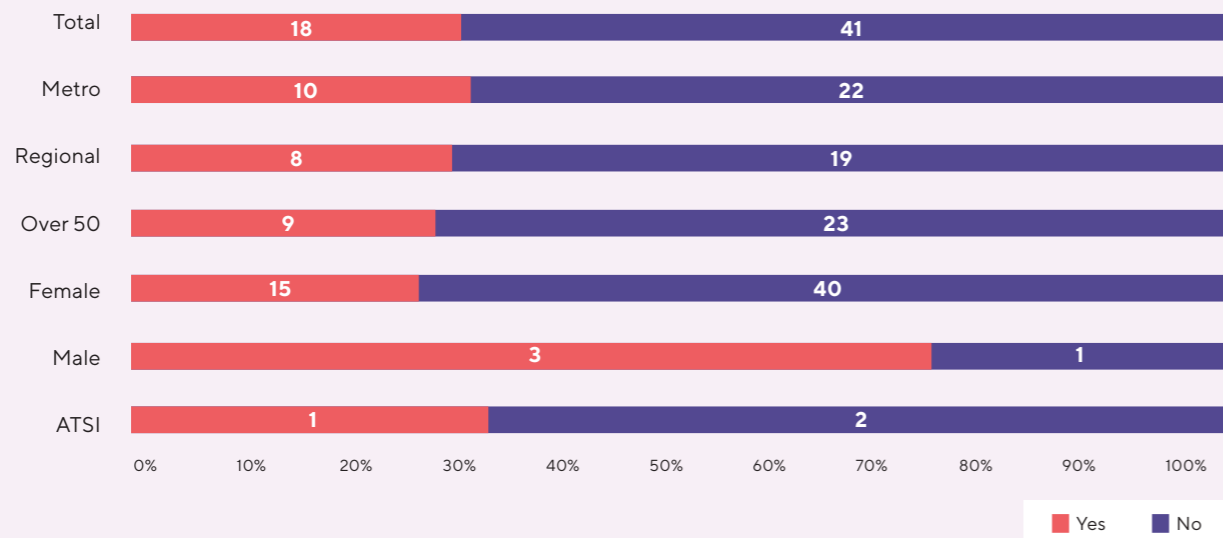
AREAS THAT PARTICIPANTS FORESEE THEMSELVES MOVING INTO

■ Staying in family violence sector **(9)**
■ Different social services sector (E.g. homelessness, mental health) **(4)**
■ Other **(5)**

RECOMMENDATION 1

Growing the workforce through supported pathways for workers from other industry sectors

Partner with peak bodies and Government to co-design initiatives to support leaders and practitioners to effectively transition from other sectors.

Career Progression

'Career progression' can mean different things to different people. As Moran et al point out '[s]ociety frequently judges career success using objective criteria (salary, role responsibilities, position etc) but success can also be measured from a subjective perspective'.[51] Much of the literature on career progression for women focuses on the experience of female leaders within male dominated industries, disciplines and fields for example STEM, construction and financial services. This literature highlights the benefits of diverse workforces which include improved performance (financial and non-financial).[52] This literature also describes the barriers to career progression that are faced by women which include entrenched stereotypes and biases about the capabilities and commitment of women (and men).[53]

Women's participation in the workforce has been increasing in Australia for decades and more women have taken up managerial roles over this time.[54] However, as noted by Jogulu and Wood, 'women managers face significant challenges and barriers in their middle management careers that hinder their further progression into senior roles', including gender stereotypes.[55] Reflecting on the gender-specific barriers to career progression Crosby noted that 'women who become mothers often encounter an array of prejudice against career advancement'.[56] Women are much more likely than men to take time away from work for caring responsibilities and a larger proportion of women work part-time[57] and both factors can create barriers to career progression. In a recent study Tabassum and Nayak point out that '[t]he

challenges women face due to gender stereotypes can be devastating'.[58] Stereotypes around gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, class and age combine to compound the barriers to career progression faced by women. A study by Carangio et al on the experiences of highly skilled immigrant women found that 'career trajectories in Australian working spaces were…determined by women's multiple identities' and 'shaped by the interaction between skilled immigrant women's intersectional identities and the informal White-dominant practices embedded in an already gendered and raced working space'.[59]

There is less research on career progression in female dominated industries. While there is an acknowledgement that women are often underrepresented at the highest levels in industries with a predominately female workforce like education, health and community services, scholars note that further research is required to better understand the multiple factors that influence this trend.[60] A study of career progression among nurse executives identified a range of issues including 'organisational flattening', career dissatisfaction and turnover.[61]

The Report on the Family Violence Workforce Census noted that there are limited advancement opportunities which often result in workers needing to change employers to progress their careers, which produces high levels of mobility and has a 'self-cannibalism' effect within the sector,

particularly for smaller non-government organisations.[62] Opportunities for career progression are even more limited in organisations that are based in and/or provide services to rural, regional and remote communities.

Many leaders in the family violence sector are former practitioners who have been promoted to leadership roles within their organisations. Knowledge and experience in direct practice is seen by many as essential for leaders working in the family violence sector. The Leadership Intensive Program was developed – in part – in recognition that this is a common career pathway and that leaders with significant practice experience need further training and support to develop knowledge and skills in key areas of leadership such as trauma informed leadership, collaboration and partnerships and workforce development and planning. At the same time, The Report on the Family Violence Workforce Census noted concerns that 'the only way up' in pay scale is through managerial roles and suggested that technical specialists should also be recognised with equivalent managerial-level salaries.[63] Given that family violence services are predominately small organisations, there are often limited opportunities to learn through observing a range of leadership styles, and informal mentoring.

Participants in the Leadership Journeys Project were asked whether they had experienced career progression since they completed the Leadership

Intensive Program. Because the definition of 'career progression' varies between individuals, the project team included the following explanatory note in the survey: 'career progression refers to the process of moving forward in your career, whatever that might mean to you'. This meant that participants were able to answer based on their subjective view – which may include development and application of new skills, achievement of work life balance, satisfaction derived from work[64] – rather than on a presumed set of indicators that are commonly used in relation to career progression (e.g. moving up in their organisational hierarchy).

16 survey respondents reported that they had changed roles since completing the Leadership Intensive Program, including the two survey respondents who had left the family violence sector. Of the 14 survey respondents who are still working in the family violence sector but have changed roles, nine work in Melbourne and five work in regional Victoria. The types of roles that participants reported moving into included Senior

Manager, Program Manager, Business Partner, Practice Lead, Coordinator and Practitioner roles.[65] Some participants noted that their roles were impacted by organisational restructures.

Of the 60 survey respondents still working in the family violence sector, 23 agreed or strongly agreed that they had experienced career progression since completing the Leadership Intensive Program. Nine of the 23 completed the Program in 2018, seven completed the Program in 2019 and seven completed the Program in 2020. Among the participants who reported having experienced career progression, 11 work in Melbourne, 12 work in regional areas, 11 were aged over 50, two were Aboriginal leaders and one was male. 12 participants indicated that they have not experienced career progression (2018, N: 1, 2019, N: 6, 2020, N: 5). The remaining 25 participants gave a neutral response to this question. It is worth noting that 23 participants completed the Program in October 2020, just over six months prior to undertaking the survey.
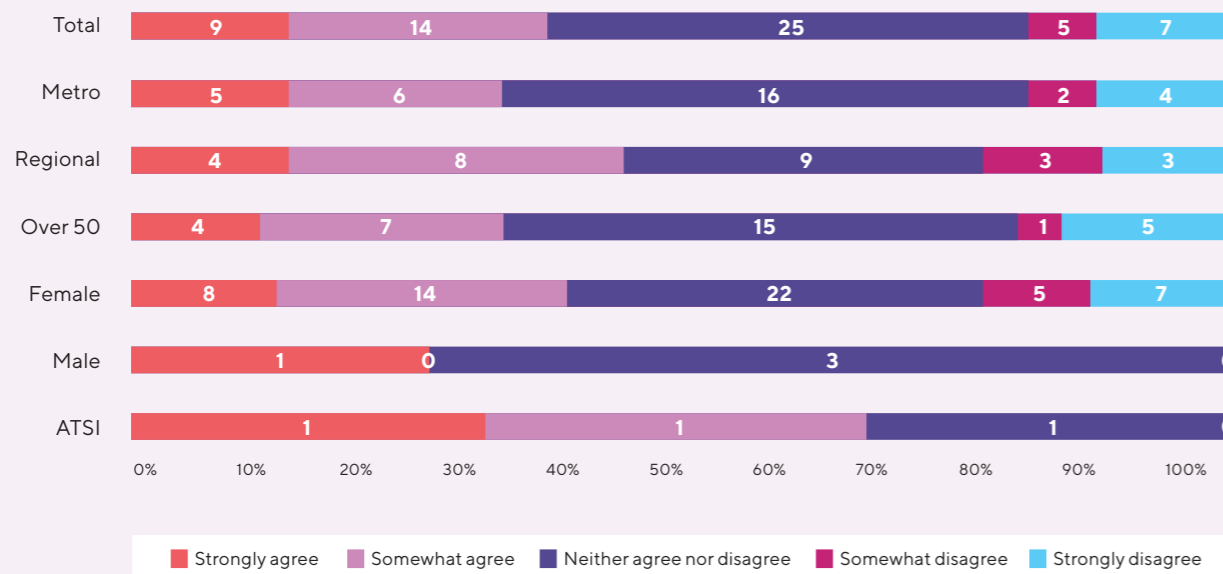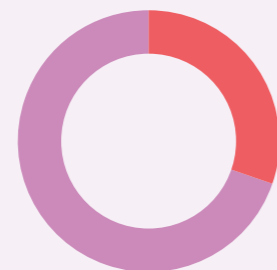
Several participants noted that career progression was not presently a priority for them, with some reporting that they are happy to remain at their current level. Three respondents stated that they did not see any barriers to career progression at all and reported being satisfied in their current role. For example, one respondent said
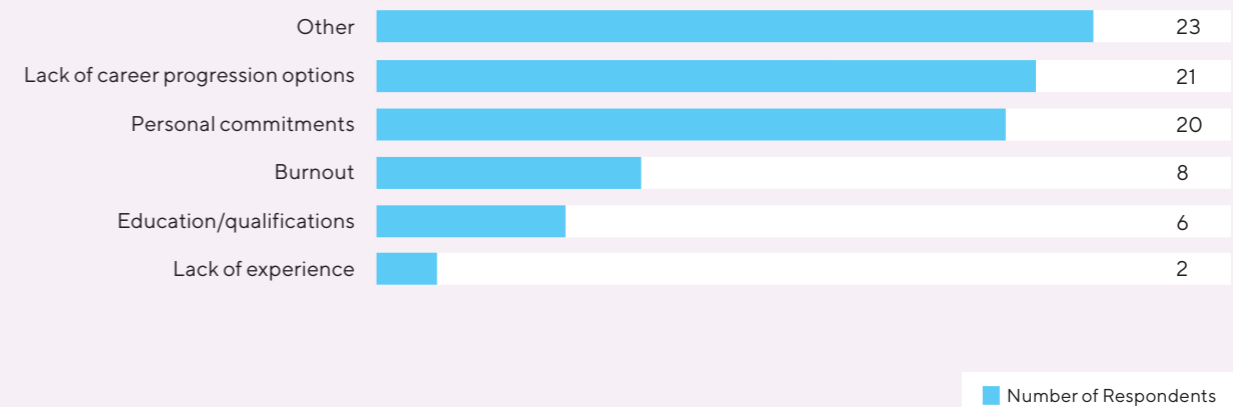
'No barriers – love my work. I am inspired by the reform. Feel like I am part of a team and making a difference.'

45 survey respondents in the Leadership Journeys Project considered that there were barriers to career progression and called out 'lack of options for advancement', 'personal commitments', 'burnout' and the 'need for further specialised education and training'. Participants noted that opportunities varied according to geography, for example, there are fewer project and leadership roles available in regional locations. The same number of regional and metro participants cited 'lack of career progression options' as a barrier to career progression (nine regional, nine metro) however the proportion of participants from regional areas was slightly higher (33% compared to 27%). One participant cited a need for greater knowledge and confidence in business management skills, specifically governance.

One Aboriginal leader noted that while they were satisfied with their current role which sits at the interface between management and practice, they were concerned about poor remuneration and lack of consistency across levels and job roles– specifically inconsistencies in breadth of responsibilities and the number of direct reports.

EXPERIENCED CAREER PROGRESSION

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Total	9	14	25	5	7
Metro	5	6	16	2	4
Regional	4	8	9	3	3
Over 50	4	7	15	1	5
Female	8	14	22	5	7
Male	1	0	3		0
ATSI	1	1	1		0

PLANS TO CHANGE ROLES

- Yes (18)
- No (41)

BARRIERS FOR PROGRESSION IN CAREER

	Number of Respondents
Other	23
Lack of career progression options	21
Personal commitments	20
Burnout	8
Education/qualifications	6
Lack of experience	2

RECOMMENDATION 2

Developing and sustaining leadership pathways for a growing sector

Undertake further research aligned to the Family Violence Workforce Project to map pathways to leadership in the family violence sector for aspiring leaders, emerging leaders, established leaders and transitioning leaders.

Case Studies

Christine
Metro-based Leader, participated in the 2019 Leadership Intensive Program

Christine is a Family Violence Practitioner based at an integrated practice service in Melbourne. Family violence work is something that Christine always wanted to do, and she is passionate about driving change at a structural level including law reform for sexual violence.

Christine was in her first senior leadership role when she took part in the Leadership Intensive Program in 2019. This role focused on capacity building within the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) sector, upskilling practitioners to enable them to identify and respond to family violence. This role was established in response to recommendations by the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

After completing the Program, Christine moved from a role focused on systems change to a role providing individual support to clients.

Christine is now wanting to step back into a leadership role and has been undertaking further study completing her social work degree (with honours). For Christine, supportive leadership and self-care are essential for working in a sector that is fast paced with heavy caseloads and complex systems.

Matt
Regional-based Leader, participated in the 2019 Leadership Intensive Program

Matt is a Family Violence Practice Leader in regional Victoria who reports to the Principal Practitioner who heads up Victoria's Child Protection Program. Matt has a background in adult education having worked in universities and private colleges and nearly 20 years of experience working in family violence counselling. Matt spent 15 years working in not-for-profit organisations where it was difficult to get full-time work to work with perpetrators of family violence and so their work involved two to three days working in family violence and one to two days on men's behaviour change programs.

Matt's current role was created in response to Recommendation 29 of the Royal Commission relating to family violence training for child protection practitioners. Matt has been in this role for two and a half years and is very satisfied in their current role as it enables all their skillsets to be utilised. The combination of expertise in family violence and adult education has enabled Matt to reach a greater audience.

The combination of expertise in family violence and adult education has enabled Matt to reach a greater audience.

Amy
Regional-based Leader, participated in the 2020 Leadership Intensive Program

Amy started working in community services in 2012 as a Case Manager in alcohol and other drugs (AOD). Amy worked in a multi-disciplinary organisation based in regional Victoria and had 'no idea at all' about family violence when they started working in the sector. Amy built up their knowledge of family violence through engaging with family violence specialists within their organisation and identifying how to respond to disclosures of family violence. Amy worked briefly as a family safety contract worker attached to a men's behaviour program and through that developed an interest in working with perpetrators. At that time, Amy considered their 'ideal role' would combine AOD and family violence work.

After the Royal Commission handed down its recommendations including measures aimed to increase identification and responses to family violence in the AOD and mental health sector, Amy moved into a newly created 'Specialist Advisor' role. In this role, Amy was able to support AOD Case Managers working with people impacted by family violence and was part of a wider network of Advisors across Victoria.

Instability in Amy's team – linked to an organisational restructure – resulted in low team morale and the organisation had been unable to recruit a long-term Program Leader. Amy approached other team members asking if they had their support to take on the Program Leader role and then subsequently was appointed to that role.

As Program Leader, Amy started working more closely with men's behaviour change programs and family violence counselling and worked to provide a solid foundation for the team so that they could focus on key activities like group facilitation. In this leadership role, Amy also contributed to consultations on perpetrator tools and assessments.

One of the things that Amy has most enjoyed in their role is advocating more effectively for rural and remote communities and helping to ensure that rural and remote communities have access to services.

Education and Training

Continuing training and development are essential for a highly skilled workforce, including leaders. Cathy Humphreys has described how 'the context for [domestic and family violence] is constantly changing' and 'the dynamic nature of the knowledge base requires leaders in the field to be aware of and responsive to the changing nature of the field'.[66]

As noted by the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) – of which a sizeable proportion of the Leadership Intensive Program participants are members – continuing professional development is necessary for leaders and practitioners to 'maintain, improve and broaden their skills, knowledge and expertise, and develop the qualities required for professional practice'.[67] Nickson et al describe how professional development provides a range of benefits including:

- General education regarding the impact of change;
- Opportunities to develop and nurture knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies to manage change;
- Development or strengthening of existing theoretical understandings;
- Development and sustaining of relationships;
- Reduction of stress and enhancement of mental wellness; and
- Fostering a positive workplace culture.[68]

Several studies have found a positive link between education and training and retention and career progression. As noted by Foreman et al, there is evidence that '[a]ccess to ongoing education has been linked to increased employment satisfaction' and some have argued that such access is 'a determinant of career retention'.[69] In their study of nurse executives, Moran et al found that opportunities to pursue further education and training were vital to enabling career progression.[70]

Data from the Family Violence Workforce Census and from the applications to the Leadership Intensive Program from 2018 to 2021 show that there is a strong interest in further education and training among leaders and practitioners in Victoria's family violence sector.[71] While there is demand for further training, several studies have described significant barriers to ongoing development for workers in the social service sector. Both the Family Violence Workforce Census and The National Survey of Workers in the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Sectors identified barriers to staff training and development, particularly the cost and time constraints including back-filling for staff who are engaged in training.[72]

It is possible to address some of these barriers through sponsored training programs like the Leadership Intensive Program and Domestic Violence Victoria / Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria's FastTrack Program. However, the benefits of training cannot be fully realised without organisational support to a) undertake training and b) implement changes based on the new knowledge and skills acquired through training. As noted in the Impact Evaluation of the 2020 Leadership Intensive Program, '[l]ack of time, [o]rganisational priorities, and [c]ultural and [i]Ideological differences act as barriers to the successful implementation of the content at organisational and sector level'.[73]
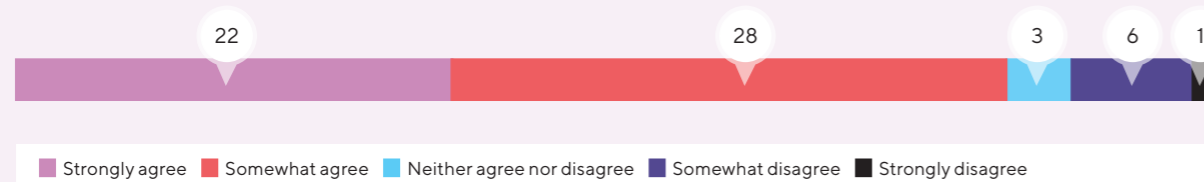
50 participants in the Leadership Journeys Project agreed that their current level of education is sufficient to excel in their current role in the family violence sector with seven participants disagreeing. One Aboriginal participant based in Melbourne had not undertaken further study and strongly disagreed that their level of education was sufficient and disagreed that they have adequate access to training and development within their current role. This participant highlighted 'lack of suitable options', 'lack of time', and 'inability for organisation to provide back-fill for my role when I am on training' as barriers to engaging in further study.

One participant commented on their lack of understanding about the family violence sector when they started their role. This combined with earlier findings about attracting more people from other sectors suggest that it would be beneficial for government, peak bodies, and organisations to collaborate on models to support leaders and practitioners who are new to the family sector.
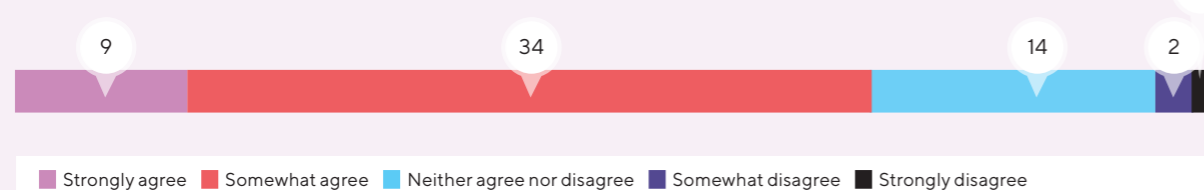
43 participants agreed that the knowledge gained through the Leadership Intensive Program has had a positive impact on their career.

The content delivered as part of the Leadership Intensive Program has evolved over time and since 2019 has featured 'Trauma informed leadership' as a core topic alongside other highly rated topics like 'Strategic and influential leadership' and 'Leadership in a time of crisis'. Participants from 2018 would benefit from accessing the learning material (seminar recordings, resources) that have been developed for the online iterations of the program. The Institute is currently exploring options for packaging content from the online program (2020 and 2021) so that it can be made available to members of the Leadership Network. The Institute is also considering how the content developed through the Leadership Intensive Program could be adapted and used for other parts of the social service sector alongside formal training programs such as the Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management.

SUFFICENT EDUCATION FOR CURRENT ROLE

22 | 28 | 3 | 6 | 1

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP INTENSIVE PROGRAM ON CAREER

9 | 34 | 14 | 2 | 1

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree
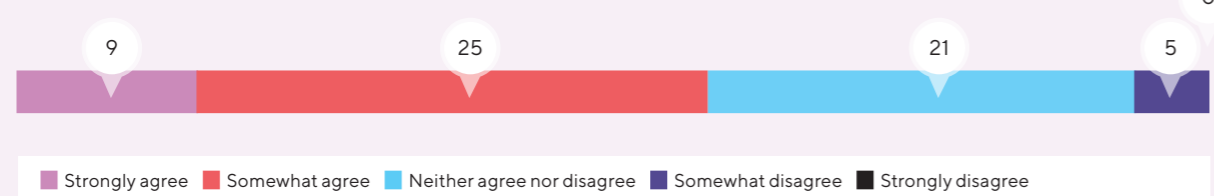
34 participants agreed that the Leadership Intensive Program prompted or inspired them to undertake further study, training or professional development.

31 participants reported that they have undertaken further study, training or professional development since completed the Program including 18 participants from Melbourne and 13 participants from regional Victoria. Of the participants who have undertaken further study 30 were female, one was male and two were Aboriginal leaders.
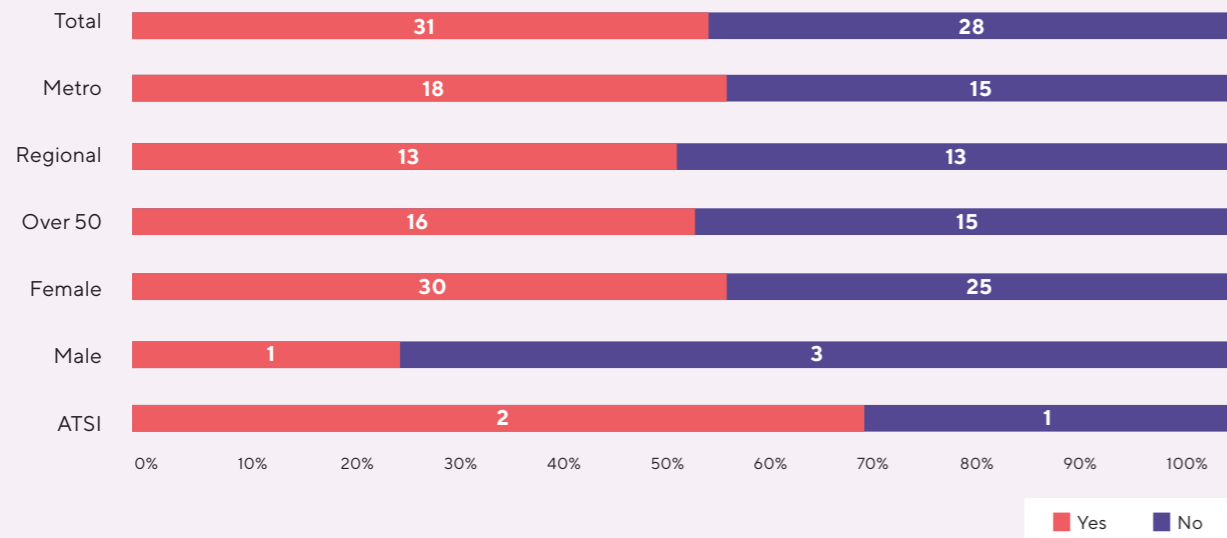
The type of further study undertaken was varied and included workshops, short courses, and self-paced online learning as well as formal qualifications. The topics spanned the domains of Specialist Knowledge, Leadership and Technical Skills with most activities focusing on developing and strengthening specialist knowledge. More participants from regional Victoria reported that they are undertaking formal qualifications including Vocational Education and Higher Education Programs. Several participants expressed an interest in more formal accredited training options, including the Graduate Certificate in Family Violence being developed by Family Safety Victoria in partnership with the Department of Education and Training. One participant noted that they would welcome opportunities for research and master's degree scholarships that involve work/study undertaken on the job.

LEADERSHIP INTENSIVE PROGRAM INSPIRED FURTHER STUDY

| 9 | 25 | 21 | 5 | 0 |

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

UNDERTAKEN FURTHER TRAINING

	Yes	No
Total	31	28
Metro	18	15
Regional	13	13
Over 50	16	15
Female	30	25
Male	1	3
ATSI	2	1

RECOMMENDATION 4
Pilot scholarship for family violence leaders
Create scholarship for family violence leaders to undertake a Masters by Research program including an original research project on a topic relevant to the sector.

	SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE	LEADERSHIP	TECHNICAL SKILLS
METRO PARTICIPANTS	• <u>Bachelor of Social Science</u> • County Count Engagement • Information Sharing • MARAM / Embedding MARAM –FVISS–CISS • Suicide Risk Assessment • Trauma Focused Cognitive Therapy • <u>PhD</u> • Suicide risk	• Community strategy immersion and planning • Facilitation / Facilitation Group Work • Supervision • Tactful negotiations and diplomacy • Trauma informed leadership • Women's Leadership Diploma	• Excel • Knowledge translation • Measurement and evaluation • Outcome measurement
REGIONAL PARTICIPANTS	• <u>Diploma of Community Services</u> • <u>Diploma – Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD)</u> • Gender equality • <u>Graduate Certificate in Childhood Developmental Trauma / Yoga for Trauma</u> • <u>Graduate Certificate in Domestic and Family Violence</u> • MARAM • Safe and Together Training • ShantiWorks workshop series	• Evidence Based Decision Making in Human Services • Facilitation / Facilitation Group Work • <u>Master's in leadership</u> • Supervision	

Accredited programs underlined.

It is worth noting that the participants from 2020 only completed the Program in October 2020 and so they may not have had the opportunity to engage in further study at the time they contributed to this project.

51 participants reported that they have adequate access to professional development in their current role with one in five reporting 'I have good access to training'. Interestingly, six survey respondents who work in Melbourne indicated that they do not have adequate access to professional development in their role compared with one respondent from regional Victoria. All of the survey respondents that reported that they do not have access to adequate training were female.

Participants noted barriers to engaging in further training. The findings of this project are consistent with those in Family Violence Workforce Census in that 'cost of study' (N: 31) and 'lack of time' (N: 27) were identified as the two greatest barriers to undertaking further training in the family violence sector.[74] Other barriers identified by participants in the Leadership Journeys Project related to:

- **organisational factors** – e.g., the inability of the organisation to provide back-fill, lack of employer support;
- **personal factors** – e.g., caring responsibilities; and
- **market factors** – e.g., lack of suitable training and development opportunities, lack of awareness of suitable programs.
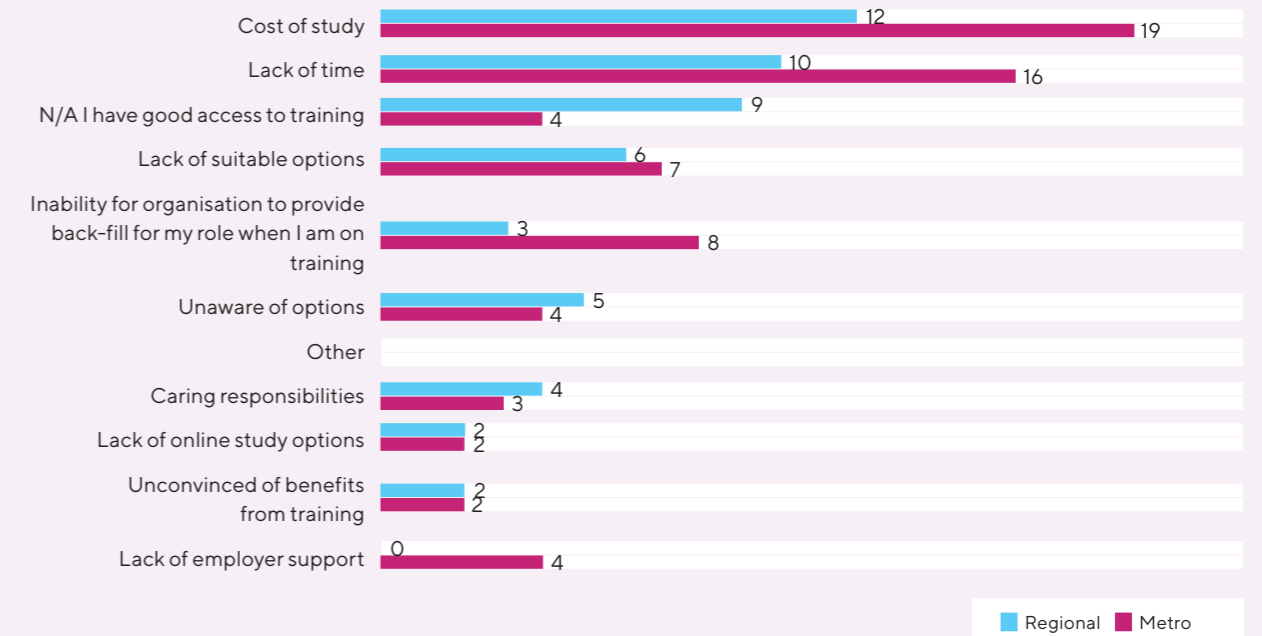
Cost and time were the most commonly cited barriers regardless of the location of the work. Nine participants who work in regional Victoria reported that they have access to adequate training, compared with four participants who work in Melbourne. Four participants who work in Melbourne (three female and one male) cited 'lack of employer support' as a barrier however no participants who work in regional Victoria reported this as a barrier. 'Inability of organisations to provide back-fill' was also cited by more Melbourne participants (N: 8) than regional participants (N: 3). 'Lack of suitable options' was highlighted by 13 participants, seven who work in Melbourne and six who work in regional Victoria.

In interviews, participants reflected on the availability and quality of training.

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'One of the things I love the most... [is] I'm actually able to advocate more effectively for the rural and remote communities, as well as the rural and remote workers and getting them the services, better access to services, and access to virtual training, as attending training opportunities in Metropolitan Melbourne [are] just not viable for us to attend.'

ADEQUATE ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

23 | 28 | 2 | 6 | 1

- ■ Strongly agree
- ■ Somewhat agree
- ■ Neither agree nor disagree
- ■ Somewhat disagree
- ■ Strongly disagree

MAIN BARRIERS TO FURTHER TRAINING IN FV SECTOR

Barrier	Number of Respondents
Cost of study	31
Lack of time	27
N/A I have good access to training	13
Lack of suitable options	13
Inability for organisation to provide back-fill for my role when I am on training	11
Unaware of options	9
Other	7
Caring responsibilities	7
Lack of online study options	4
Unconvinced of benefits from training	4
Lack of employer support	4

■ Number of Respondents

MAIN BARRIERS TO TRAINING

Barrier	Regional	Metro
Cost of study	12	19
Lack of time	10	16
N/A I have good access to training	9	4
Lack of suitable options	6	7
Inability for organisation to provide back-fill for my role when I am on training	3	8
Unaware of options	5	4
Other		
Caring responsibilities	4	3
Lack of online study options	2	2
Unconvinced of benefits from training	2	2
Lack of employer support	0	4

■ Regional ■ Metro

In terms of delivery mode, participants noted in interviews that during 2020 staff were able to access more free online training. However, a few participants expressed a preference for in-person training. Reflections upon online learning ranged from pragmatic – one participant noted that people who are not as confident may struggle with online learning – through to passionate, with another participant reporting feeling short-changed by having to undertake study online. The latter noted that they would have preferred the networking to be face-to-face. This speaks to the benefits of education and training that were described above and include networking and development of professional relationships.

Concerns about online learning were less apparent in the evaluation of the 2020 Leadership Intensive Program. As noted in the evaluation report, '[t]here were strong levels of engagement and high levels of satisfaction with the online facilitation, content and speakers, and program design features'.[75] However, WIDI recognises the value of in-person learning and networking experiences and is considering how to offer opportunities for in-person networking in the in the future.[76]

In relation to future training offerings, only a few participants suggested specific models and topics. For example, one participant suggested a mentoring program, another advocated for increasing resources and training on elder abuse and one participant called for more training focused on strategic thinking and project management with a feminist leadership lens.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Enabling leadership development to strengthen the leadership of the Family Violence sector
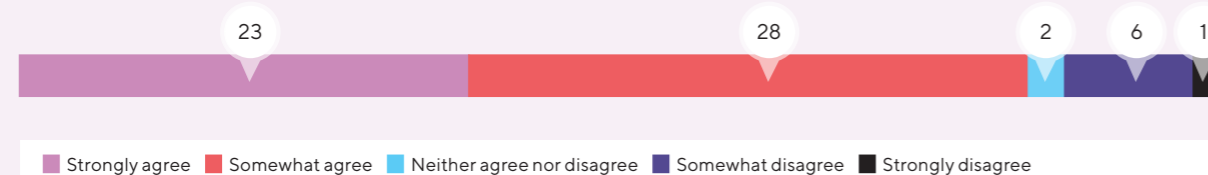
Invest in a formal Coaching and Mentoring Program to support leaders in the family violence sector to continue to develop their skills and expand their professional networks.
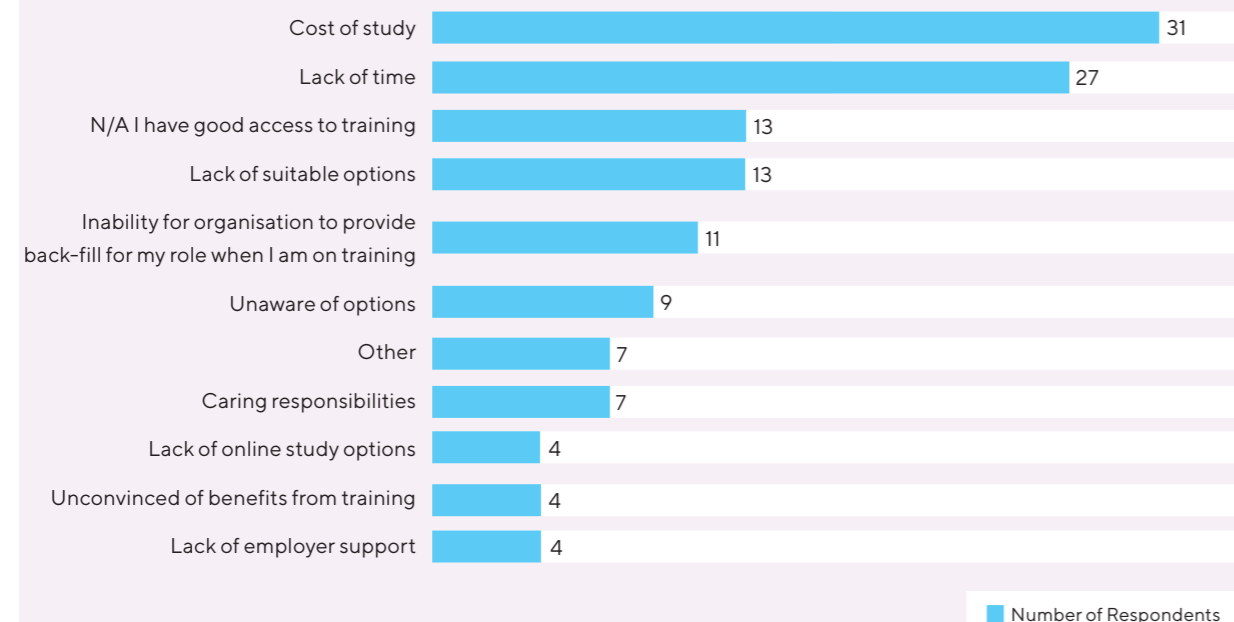
RECOMMENDATION 6

Aligning leadership education and training offerings with sector needs

Commission further research on the learning and development needs of leaders at various stages and support the development and delivery of high-quality, funded, flexible training opportunities to address those needs.

Impacts of COVID-19

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 has had far ranging, and still unfolding impacts, creating additional challenges for leaders within the family violence sector. From the beginning of the pandemic, experts from around the world warned of a sharp rise in the risk and incidence of family violence. As noted by Domestic Violence Victoria/Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, 'disasters result in an increase in the severity and frequency of family violence and can trigger a change in the nature and tactics of family violence already being used or even the onset of family violence'.[77]

These forecasts have proven well founded with data showing that the pandemic and the public health measures introduced to tackle the spread of COVID-19 – which in Victoria included a 112-day lockdown in 2020 – have exacerbated the risks and incidence of family violence.[78] Research by Monash University on the experiences of practitioners responding to women experiencing violence during the COVID-19 shutdown in Victoria found:
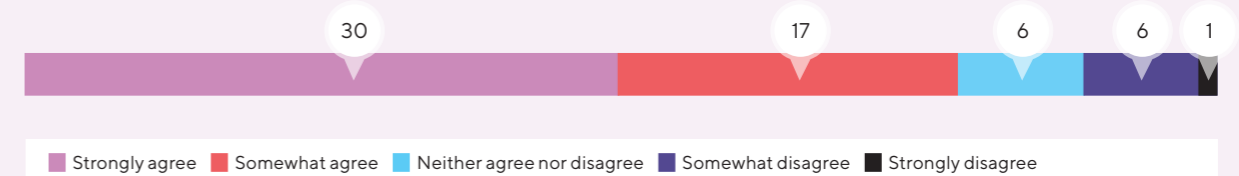
- An increase in the frequency and severity of violence against women (VAW);
- 59% of respondents reported that COVID-19 has increased the frequency of VAW and 50% reported it has increased the severity of VAW;
- An increase in the complexity of women's needs noted by 86% of respondents;
- An increase in first-time family violence reporting by women noted by 42% of respondents;
- New forms of intimate partner [violence against] women, including enhanced tactics to achieve social isolation and forms of violence specifically relating to the threat and risk of COVID-19 infection;
- For many women experiencing violence during the lockdown period, there was less ability to seek help;

- Service innovations have occurred across Victoria to enhance accessibility and effectiveness of service delivery during the COVID-19 easing of restrictions and recovery phase; [and]
- Numerous challenges to providing support, undertaking effective risk assessment, and carrying out safety planning during the COVID-19 shutdown phase.[79]

Another study by the QUT Centre for Justice on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic and family violence services found that '[a] huge population, 86% of respondents to our survey reported an increase in the complexity of their client needs, 62% reported increases in the number of clients accessing their services during the COVID-19 pandemic, while 67% of DFV workers reported new clients seeking their help for the first time during the COVID-19 crisis'.[80] The researchers described how 'perpetrators are weaponizing COVID-19 lock-down conditions to enhance to enhance their coercive and controlling behaviours'.[81] The study found that the domestic and family workforce requires additional resources to better cope with crises in the future. Participants in this study highlighted the need for:

- More staff, better technology, technology support and training for workers and clients;
- More thorough and better technology safety checks for clients;

- More Safe Connection mobile phones for clients and better internet connectivity;
- More government funding for crisis and emergency supplies;
- More government funding for emergency and long-term accommodation and housing;
- Transport for home delivery of services;
- The continuation of tele-health provisions;
- The continuation of on-line access to courts and justice services; and
- More resources for male perpetrator programs (especially for Indigenous men).[82]

Community service organisations (CSOs) consulted as part of the Stories Into Evidence Project – led by WIDI and VCOSS – found that 'CSOs also report that there has been an increase in women experiencing family violence, with an increase in the severity and complexity of incidents being reported. This increase in new complex clients has required immediate safety planning and risk assessment, placing pressure on organisations and workers'.[83]

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic has had heterogeneous effects on the participants of the Leadership Journeys Project. Participants reported a mix of challenges and positive changes with some referencing the types of factors outlined above as contributing to their experience of leading during the pandemic. 47 survey respondents agreed that

the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on their working life and only seven disagreed, with one participant strongly disagreeing. 29 out of 34 (85%) respondents who work in Melbourne agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on their working lives, compared with 18 out of 27 respondents (66%) who work in regional Victoria. More survey respondents from regional areas disagreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on their working lives. Four respondents (14% of all regional respondents) disagreed that COVID-19 has had a significant impact. These respondents were from Ballarat, Mildura and Warrnambool. This is likely related to the level of restrictions, for example metro areas were subject to lockdowns for longer periods of time in 2020 and early 2021.

Two Aboriginal leaders reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on their working life citing new working arrangements (working from home), longer working hours, loss of face to face contact with clients and staff, balancing work within the home and family responsibilities and blurring of boundaries between home and work.

The types of impacts reported have been grouped under the following themes:

- Workload
- Work/Life Balance; and
- Wellbeing and Connection.

COVID-19 HAD SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON WORK

| 30 | 17 | 6 | 6 | 1 |

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Workload

Participants described a variety of ways in which COVID-19 impacted on their working life. A few participants observed that the pandemic exacerbated existing challenges, including workforce recruitment and retention. 29 participants reported that their workload had increased due to COVID-19 – with one participant reporting that their workload had tripled – placing pressure on the entire service system. Participants noted that the workload increases were due to several factors – many of which are consistent with the findings of the Monash University study – including:

- Increased demand for services;
- A rise in the number of complex cases;
- Workload associated with transitioning to online forms of service delivery (e.g., introduction of telehealth delivery models, increased administrative requirements);
- Increased support needs of staff and teams;
- Issues obtaining advice on state-funded programs;
- Increased availability and uptake of training and development; and
- Real-time research on the impact of COVID-19 on clients and organisations.

For some organisations, complexity was more of a factor than case numbers.

'I don't think it's numbers that are going up its complexity of cases. So we are, we actually did an analysis of some of our data for 2019 compared to 2020. And yeah, numbers definitely did not go up, although there were peaks in calls after the lockdowns finished each time. But some of the types of abuse change. So, we generally used to see financial abuse as the highest. But in fact, we got a lot more physical abuse that we had been getting in the past'.

One participant spoke at length about COVID-induced workforce shortages in rural areas.

'We did lose workforce as we were in a situation where we had to sacrifice some of the available workforce because of crossover of employments. A lot of people in rural areas work across more than one service. So, they work for two or three different health providers in a week, and in COVID when you're creating 'work bubbles', we had to make choices relating to staff employments. So, that was hard for a lot of rural areas...for example, a person who works in an acute ICU, do you let them come to work in your community clinic the next day? There's lots of those sorts of decisions and challenges as a manager. And right now, we've lost nearly all our childhood nurse immunisers because they're all COVID vaccinating.'

The same participant also noted that their team was undertaking demanding work in challenging circumstances.

'Since COVID, clinical staff were sitting in an office by themselves working all day, unable to connect will colleagues in usual ways to support themselves, but all day long listening to very stressed, highly emotional, and really difficult family calls, for example, parents isolated at home, really not able to connect with their usual social networks and available to talk for longer periods. There were many long emotional telephone call[s] about family problems, mostly relating to mental health and difficult relationships. So, that was really hard for our staff, they became very burnt out and they became very isolated.'

Work/Life Balance

Most participants reported that they transitioned to working from home with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some participants found it difficult to maintain a healthy work/life balance – for example, easy access to work leading to working more, fatigue caused by online meetings – and described challenges including blurring of work/home life and managing work alongside caring responsibilities, including remote learning. One participant described the experience as exhausting as it involved 'holding' their team together without an opportunity to take a proper break to rest and recover.

Other participants reported that they had been able to achieve greater work/life balance – for example, several participants reported enjoying not having to travel and having more time for exercise – and some reported that working from home enabled them to work more efficiently.

'Greater work/life balance, more flexibility, physically better being able to attend gym in the morning, better use of time so workload is much more manageable. Working from home has changed my life and going forward is going to be very appealing when I look at my employment options.'

Wellbeing and Connection

Some participants reported that they felt more productive and connected. Others found the loss of connection – to their clients, team, and community – challenging and were concerned about people who were stranded in their homes during lockdown without the safety net provided by community organisations (e.g., schools, places of worship).

Several participants reported feeling isolated, including people who lived alone. Some participants described feeling disconnected from their colleagues noting that they missed face-to-face meetings and incidental discussions with people from within and outside of their organisations. Some participants reported high levels of anxiety and stress – in themselves and in the staff that they managed – which impacted on their ability to function effectively at work and more generally. One participant reported that stress impacted on their executive functioning and critical thinking abilities.

A few participants called out the challenges of providing services and supports from within a worker's personal space. One interviewee noted that during the second lockdown, there were

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'emerging concerns around the impact of family violence practitioners working at home, alone with very high-risk phone calls and finding it very difficult to maintain boundaries between personal and professional, you know, that they were working in their bedrooms, and often, you know, engaging with trauma content in their personal spaces.'

One participant noted that during the second lockdown in 2020, they had concerns for family violence practitioners engaging with trauma content in their own homes.

As noted previously, participants' experience of working and leading during the COVID-19 pandemic has been mixed. Participants reported similar challenges to those identified in the studies by Monash University and QUT. Several participants expressed a preference for working from home suggesting that further work is needed to understand how to design safe and effective hybrid working arrangements for the family violence sector.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Inform effective ways of working in the COVID environment

Undertake research on best practice hybrid models of working in the family violence sector and related sectors.

Conclusion

The social service workforce needs highly skilled leaders who can continue to guide the sector through a period of unprecedented growth and change. The participants in the Leadership Journeys Project have a deep knowledge and understanding of the family violence sector and an important role to play in driving ongoing reforms and nurturing the next generation of leaders. The Leadership Journeys Project reinforced the importance of engaging with sector leaders to better understand the issues facing organisations and inform in the development of new initiatives, policy and programs. Although small in scale, the project provides some insights into drivers of retention and career progression in the family violence workforce.

Data collected through this project confirms the need to promote greater consistency in the design of management and leadership roles – which is being pursued through the Family Violence Workforce Project – and the remuneration levels for these roles. Participants in the Leadership Journeys Project also highlighted the importance of feminist perspectives and approaches to leaders in the family violence sector. The need for ongoing investment in training and networking opportunities for leaders across Victoria was also apparent.

However, more research is needed to deepen our understanding of the family violence workforce including why leaders (and practitioners) leave the sector and the types of interventions that support leaders to progress further in their careers. Evidence gathered through further research will help to inform the development of strategies to promote greater retention among the workforce by addressing systemic issues that contribute to staff turnover. Moving forward, it is vital to address the barriers to retention and career progression experienced leaders in the family violence sector.

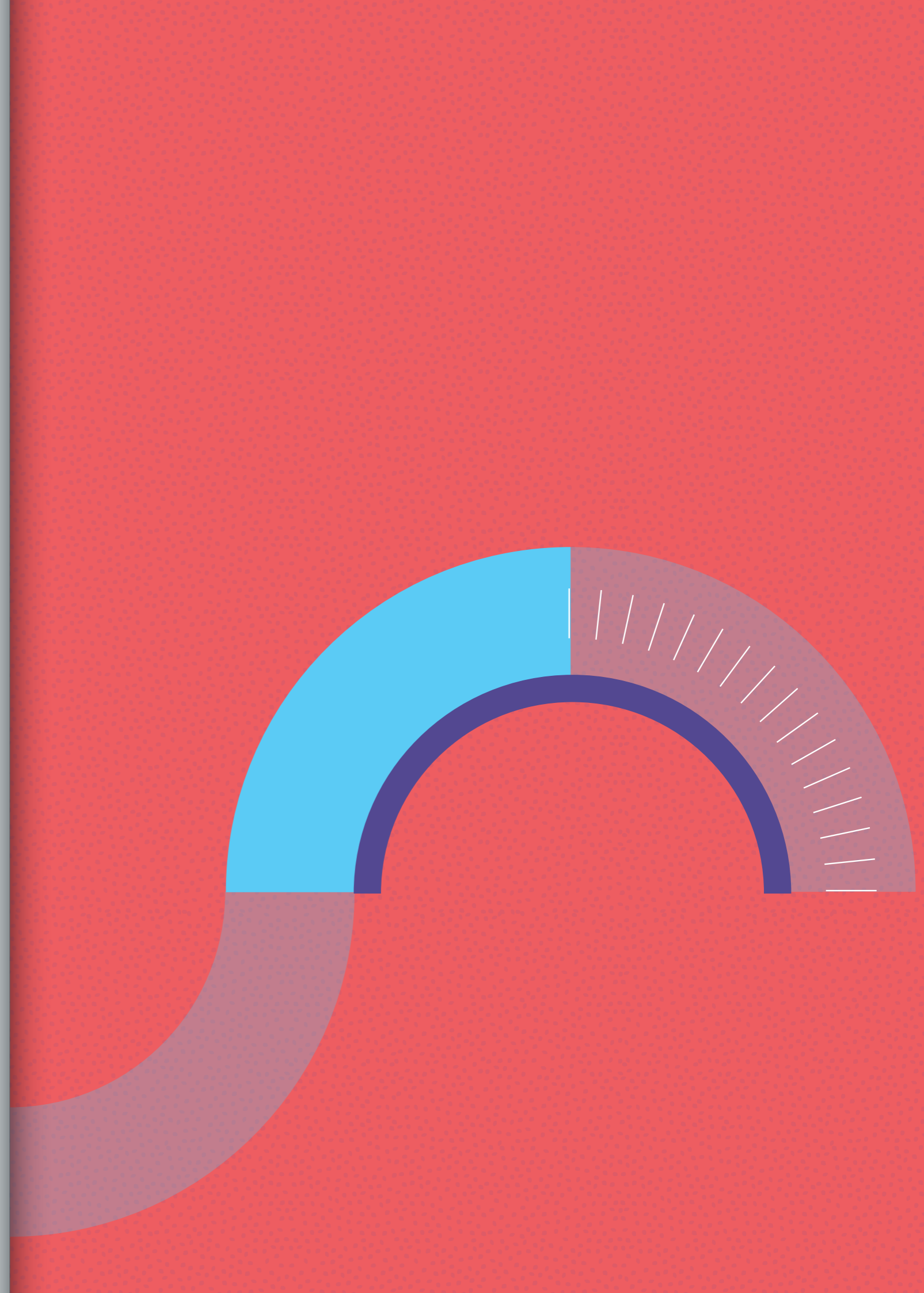## BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF THE LEADERSHIP JOURNEYS PROJECT, WIDI MAKES THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

DOMAIN	RECOMMENDATION	
Retention and Supply	**RECOMMENDATION 1** Growing the workforce through supported pathways for workers from other industry sectors	Partner with peak bodies and Government to co-design initiatives to support leaders and practitioners to effectively transition from other sectors.
Career Progression and Pathways	**RECOMMENDATION 2** Developing and sustaining leadership pathways for a growing sector	Undertake further research aligned to the Family Violence Workforce Project to map pathways to leadership in the family violence sector for aspiring leaders, emerging leaders, established leaders and transitioning leaders.
Education and Training	**RECOMMENDATION 3** Embed targeted leadership content in relevant learning and development offerings	Augment existing and new training programs for the family violence workforce with supplementary content on leadership drawn from the Institute's Leadership Intensive Program.
	RECOMMENDATION 4 Pilot scholarship for family violence leaders	Create scholarship for family violence leaders to undertake a Masters by Research program including an original research project on a topic relevant to the sector.
	RECOMMENDATION 5 Enabling leadership development to strengthen the leadership of the Family Violence sector	Invest in a formal Coaching and Mentoring Program to support leaders in the family violence sector to continue to develop their skills and expand their professional networks.
	RECOMMENDATION 6 Aligning leadership education and training offerings with sector needs	Commission further research on the learning and development needs of leaders at various stages and support the development and delivery of high-quality, funded, flexible training opportunities to address those needs.
COVID-19	**RECOMMENDATION 7** Inform effective ways of working in the COVID environment	Undertake research on best practice hybrid models of working in the family violence sector and related sectors.

Endnotes

1   As noted by Eleri Butler, CEO of Family Safety Victoria, in FSSI's vlog series in November 2020. See 'Violence Against Women and Children is also a Global Pandemic' with Eleri Butler" https://www.futuresocial.org/vlog-series-eleri-butler/

2   Ibid.

3   State of Victoria, Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and recommendations, Parliamentary Paper No 132 (2014–16).

4   Royal Commission into Family Violence – Report and Recommendations - http://rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Report-Recommendations.html

5   'Unprecedented' investment in family violence prevention in Victoria, Australia, on New Zealand Family Violence Clearing House, 1 June 2017. See https://nzfvc.org.nz/news/unprecedented-investment-family-violence-prevention-victoria-australia accessed June 2021.

6   Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change, see https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/Ending-Family-Violence-10-Year-Plan.pdf

7   Building from strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response, see https://www.vic.gov.au/building-strength-10-year-industry-plan

8   Strengthening the Foundations: First Rolling Action Plan 2019–2022, see https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/Digital_FSV_StrengtheningFoundations.pdf

9   10-Year Community Services Industry Plan, see https://vcoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/CSIP-Sept-2018-FINAL-single-page-web-version.pdf, page 28.

10 Lyons, K. Maguire, E. (2021) Dangerous Hope: Feminist leadership in the Victorian family violence and prevention of violence against women sectors, Workforce Innovation and Development Institute. See WIDI+Feminist+Leadership+Research +Report+Sept+2021.pdf (squarespace.com)

11 Strengthening the Foundations: First Rolling Action Plan 2019–2022, see https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/Digital_FSV_StrengtheningFoundations.pdf

12 Automatic responses included statements such as 'I am no longer working at …' (N: 11), 'has left the employment of…' (N: 2) and 'this address is no longer monitored' (N: 1).

13 One interview was not able to be used in the final report because the consent form was not returned.

14 Rubin, H.J. and Rubin, I.S., (2005). Qualitative Interviewing: the art of hearing data. Sage. p. 207.

15 Ibid. p. 207.

16 The Leadership Network is Action 4.2 of Strengthening the Foundations: First Rolling Action Plan 2019–2022. Action 4.2: Establish a Leadership Intensive Alumni network to enable participants to continue to build on their learnings in relation to contemporary practice. See https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/Digital_FSV_StrengtheningFoundations.pdf

17 WIDI Impact Evaluation of 2020 Leadership Intensive Program, page 17.

18 Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence Companion report to Building from Strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response, December 2017, p. 12.

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71 50% of respondents to the Family Violence Workforce Census indicated an interest in additional training. Victorian State Government 2017, *Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence Companion Report to Building from Strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response*, viewed 28 April 2021, https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-workforce-census. Page 11. In 2020 WIDI received a total of 177 applications for the 2020 Leadership Intensive Program that met the program eligibility criteria, 122 from Melbourne and 55 from regional areas.

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75 WIDI Impact Evaluation of the 2020 Leadership Intensive Program, page 3.

76 The delivery on an on-campus event will be dependent on public health advice and RMIT requirements.

77 COVID-19 and Family Violence – see https://dvvic.org.au/covid-19-and-family-violence/

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82 Ibid. Page 49.

83 Stories into Evidence: Covid-19 adaptations in the Victorian community services sector, page 11 – see https://www.futuresocial.org/completed-projects/stories-into-evidence-project/

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