

# Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) Client Experience Research 2024

## Summary report

June 2024

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# **1. Summary of key results.**

# Key measures

## ACCESS\*



**80%** agreed it was **easy to contact VLA when they first needed help**

## WELLBEING



**63%** agreed they were **less stressed after talking to the lawyer**<sup>\*^</sup>



**Overall wellbeing improved**

**67%** of those with a **fully resolved problem**<sup>\*\*^</sup>  
**32%** of those with an **unresolved problem**<sup>\*\*\*^</sup>

## EXPERIENCE\*



**85%** agreed that the lawyer **treated them with respect**<sup>^</sup> (↑)



**77%** agreed that the lawyer **listened to their legal problem**



**72%** agreed that the lawyer **took their circumstances into account**<sup>^</sup>

## LEGAL CAPABILITY\*



**77%** agreed they **know where to get help for future legal problems**



**75%** agreed they **feel more confident to get legal help in the future**



**74%** agreed that the lawyer **helped them understand how to deal with their legal problem**

## RESOLUTION



**48%** had their legal problem **fully resolved**<sup>\*</sup>

**17%** had their legal problem **partially resolved**<sup>\*</sup>

**30%** had an **unresolved legal problem**<sup>\*</sup>



**84%** agreed that VLA's help had a **positive impact on their legal outcome**<sup>^\*\*</sup> (↑)



**80%** agreed that VLA **helped fix their legal problem**<sup>^\*\*</sup>

## SATISFACTION\*



**65%** satisfied with the **help they got from VLA**



**76%** agreed they would **recommend VLA to others**

\*Base: All respondents (n=680-802). \*\*Base: All respondents with a fully resolved problem (n=342-353). \*\*\*Base: All respondents with a partly or unresolved problem, excluding those who did not know if their legal problem was resolved (n=367) ^Excludes 'not sure' / 'I can't remember' / 'not applicable' responses. Note: ↑↓ indicates the result is a statistically significant increase or decrease compared to 2023, at 95% confidence level.

# Key measures 2022-2024

Question/ indicator	2022	2023	2024
<b>ACCESS:</b> It was easy to contact VLA when you first needed help. (NLAP)	77%	81%	80%
<b>EXPERIENCE:</b> The legal aid lawyer understood my legal problem.	77%	73%	77%
<b>EXPERIENCE:</b> The lawyer treated me with respect.	81%	80%	85%
<b>EXPERIENCE:</b> The lawyer listened to my legal problem. (NLAP)	83%	76%	77%
<b>RESOLUTION:</b> The help I got from VLA had a positive impact on the outcome of my legal problem. (EIIIF)	85%	76%	84%
<b>RESOLUTION:</b> Legal Aid helped me fix my legal problem.	84%	75%	80%
<b>RESOLUTION:</b> Proportion of clients who had their legal problem resolved. (EIIIF)	42%	50%	48%
<b>LEGAL CAPABILITY:</b> You know where to get help if you have another legal problem in the future.	78%	80%	77%
<b>LEGAL CAPABILITY:</b> You feel more confident to get legal help in the future if you need it. (NLAP + EIIIF)	75%	76%	75%
<b>LEGAL CAPABILITY:</b> The lawyer helped you understand how to deal with your legal problem. (NLAP + EIIIF)	77%	70%	74%
<b>WELLBEING:</b> I was less stressed after talking to the lawyer.	65%	59%	63%
<b>SATISFACTION:</b> Overall client satisfaction. (BP3)	67%	62%	65%
<b>SATISFACTION:</b> I would recommend VLA to other people. (NLAP + BP3)	78%	76%	76%

# Main themes from survey and interviews

1

## ● VLA is performing well at an overall level

Overall, VLA recorded a solid performance in its delivery of legal services to clients in the 2024 survey. Clients found it easy to contact VLA when they first needed help, expressed positive feedback on the person-centred approach of lawyers, and noted that VLA built their confidence to deal with legal problems in the future. Historically, between 2015 and 2023, overall client satisfaction has been following a trajectory of decline (from a high of 76% in 2015 to a low of 62% in 2023). However, in 2024 the trend stabilised, with around two in three (65%) feeling satisfied with the help they received from VLA.

2

## ● Clients with a disability have poorer experiences with VLA: additional support may be needed

Clients who have a disability recorded poorer ratings across many client experience metrics. This client cohort were less likely to feel confident that their lawyer's advice would help them with their legal problem, less likely to express that their capability to deal with legal problems improved as a result of VLA's service, less likely to feel less stressed after receiving the service and had lower service satisfaction overall. Additional, tailored supports for these clients may be required.

Interviews highlighted the importance of VLA being more proactive in asking about a person's disability or mental health needs and how this might impact on how they understand information, how a client may present in a court environment and also provide pertinent context needed to represent the legal problem. Disability awareness training (including Brain Injury, Autism, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders, etc.) should be considered, alongside ways these conditions can be supported in different VLA services.

3

## ● Clients are less satisfied with their service from legal advice than other service options

Clients who have received legal advice services had poorer ratings across most metrics. This may in part be due the level of service intensity and the type of interaction being different between duty lawyer or casework support. Clients who have received legal advice rated lawyers as being less person-centred (i.e. listening, consideration of circumstances, and respect), with poorer communication and engagement experiences (e.g. asking questions). They were also less likely to have a resolved problem (compared to case work or duty lawyer services), and resolved problems were less likely to be 'favourable'. Interviews identified that clients largely define 'resolution' as the end of a court matter.

Clients contacting Legal Advice had little expectation of what VLA could provide, nor that initial advice would resolve the problem. Despite this, VLA could look at ways to strengthen person-centred legal advice service models, within the time constraints of these briefer interactions.

# Main themes from surveys and interviews

4

## Clients with unresolved legal problems and unfavourable outcomes feel isolated

The resolution status and outcome of respondents' legal problems had a large influence on their overall satisfaction, with clients who have unresolved problems and clients who have unfavourable outcomes reporting poorer service satisfaction and poorer experiences across most metrics. Many clients who had unresolved problems felt that they were left alone to deal with their legal problem, particularly where there was minimal contact, waitlists or long gaps between contacts from VLA staff. Communication and engagement appear to be critical factors of perceiving VLA support more favourably, even when legal problems are not resolved. Qualitative insights suggest that a consistent and responsive person-centred approach will involve:

- good quality interactions based on skilled listening;
- being available to answer questions as required; and
- clear and confident communication of information drawing upon a combination of understanding the legal process, trends in legal problems (likelihoods / scenarios) and regard for the individual's situation.

5

## Clients receiving family law support have poorer experiences with VLA: additional support may be needed

Clients who have received support for family law problems recorded poorer ratings across most client experience metrics. This client cohort is more likely to have an unresolved problem (compared to criminal law), and less likely to feel that the lawyer took their circumstances into account (compared to criminal law), and that they know where to get support in the future (compared to criminal law).

6

## Clients experiencing violence require additional support

Out of all the types of support needs, clients experiencing violence were the least likely to feel that VLA met their support needs related to this experience. Free-text comments highlighted that clients seeking support for a domestic or family violence problem felt that VLA staff lacked understanding of these types of problems.

Additional support for clients of all services areas with lived or living experience of violence may be required, with a focus on ensuring trauma-informed services are delivered. Interviews highlighted gaps in VLA services for individuals experiencing violence who were ineligible for assistance despite lacking financial resources. These participants were reliant on ad-hoc time-limited support or services or faced with services (including legal partners) suggested by VLA not taking clients. This issue could also be combined with the lack of consistency in the quality provision of Legal Advice and may also be related to the poorer ratings for family law problems.

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## 2. Project overview

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# Project overview

## Background

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) is an independent statutory authority established under the *Legal Aid Act 1978* (Vic). VLA provides legal information, advice and representation to members of the Victorian community who are most disadvantaged and in need of support. Services provided by VLA and private practitioners are intended to be accessible, tailored to clients' needs and capabilities, and help people to address legal problems.

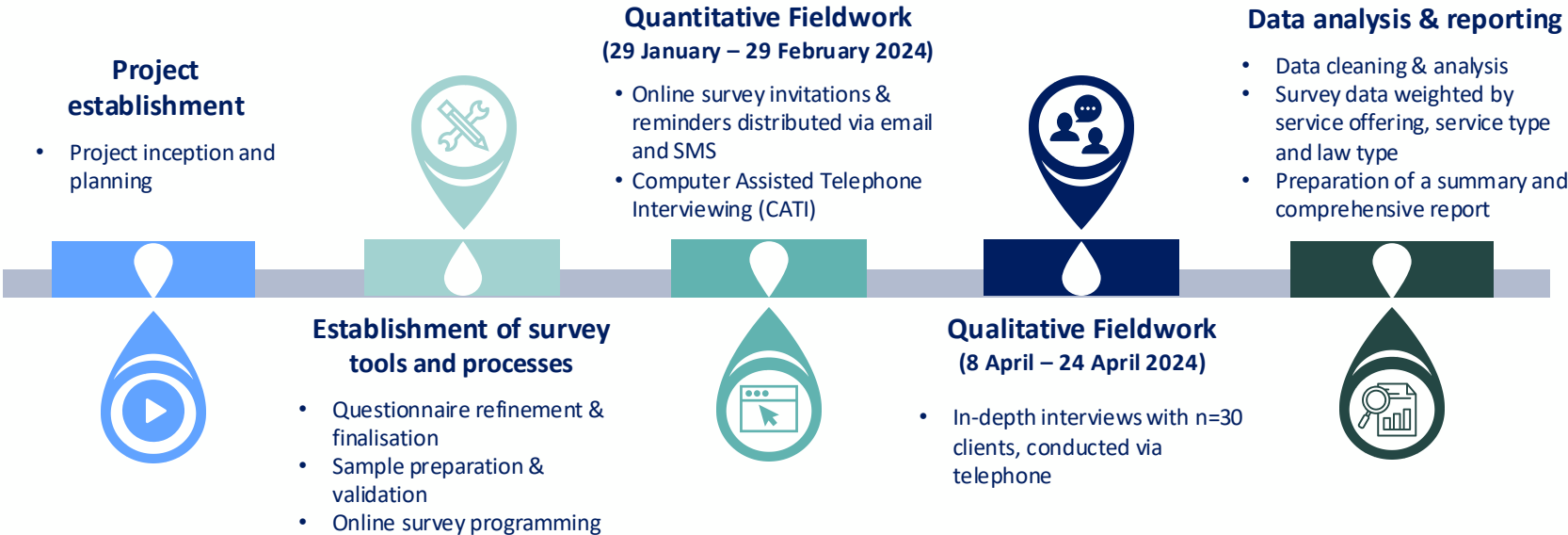
VLA has sought feedback through client surveys since 2011, to assess the extent to which it meets clients' needs. In 2022, VLA adopted an outcomes approach with the development of VLA's Outcomes Framework 2022-30 and the Outcomes and Evidence Agenda 2022-26. The first outcome, 'clients have increased access to justice' is directly related to the client journey with VLA. This outcome has been further broken down to better understand the client journey along with the impact of VLA's services.

These client outcome areas are:

- Access to VLA services;
- Experience of VLA services;
- Impact on client legal capability,
- Resolution of clients' legal problems; and
- Impact on client wellbeing.

In 2023, VLA first commissioned ORIMA Research to conduct the Client Experience Survey. In 2024, VLA commissioned ORIMA Research to conduct the survey again, in addition to the conduct of follow-up qualitative interviews with select clients. This report presents a summary of the findings from the research.

## Research approach



# Profile of survey respondents

## Sampling approach

The survey was sent to a stratified random sample of n=20,935 VLA clients who received services between 1 June – 30 November 2023. The sampling strata were based on service offering, service type and law type (see table below). Certain groups were oversampled to allow for more robust analysis and reporting. Survey data was then weighted by known population proportions. The population sample did not include clients aged under 18 or any client who had received a family law service where the risk level of seeking their feedback was deemed to be too high.

## Response rate



**4%\***

n=802 out of 20,935 clients responded in 2024.

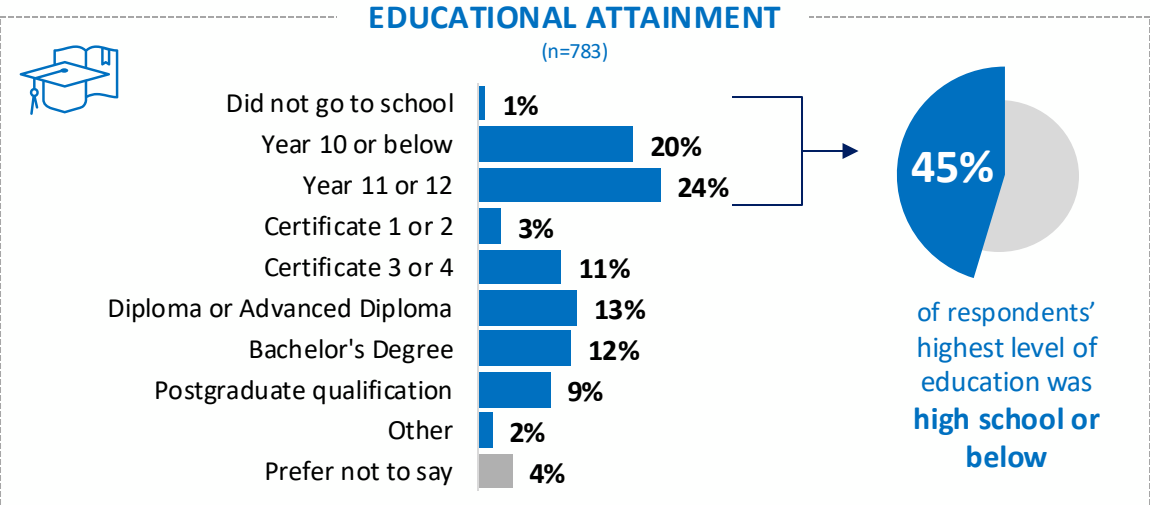
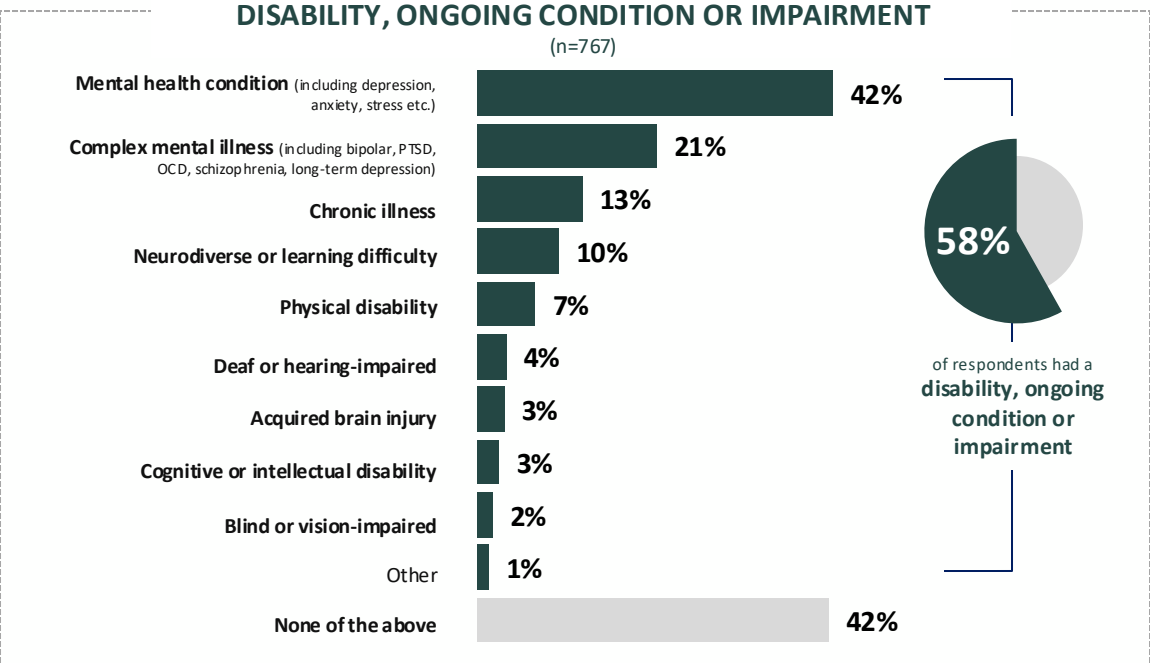
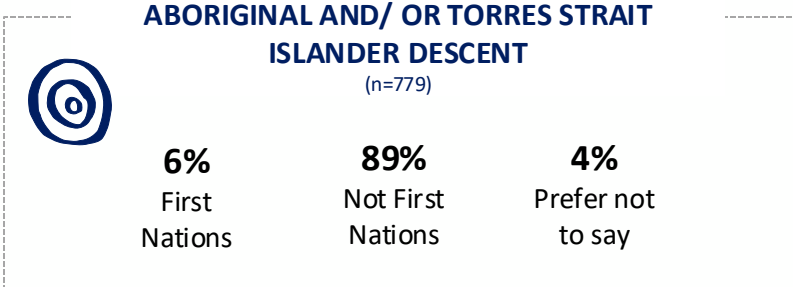
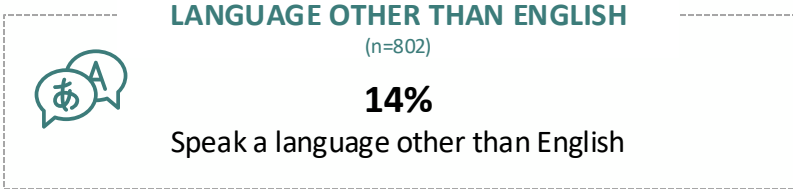
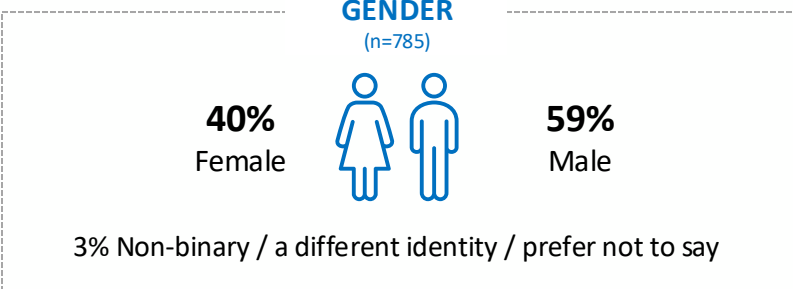
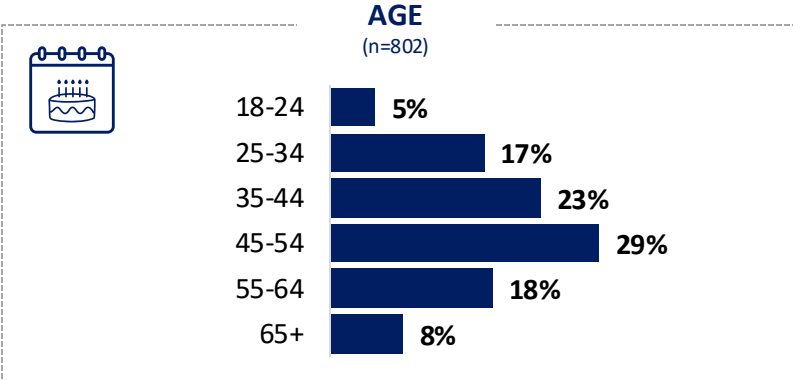
In all surveys, there is no clear ‘sufficiency standard’ for response rates. The sample achieved is representative of the actual population of VLA clients in terms of service offering, service type and key law type. The sample size of n=802 ensures adequate statistical precision and that the results are reliable. More broadly, people are less inclined to click on links and answer calls from unknown numbers due to data security, privacy, and online safety concerns.

*\* Down from a response rate of 6% in the 2023 survey and 8% in the 2022 survey*

## Profile of responding sample compared to the in-scope population

	Target number of responses (#)	Count of survey responses (#)	Proportion within survey responses (% unweighted)	Population (count of clients who had received VLA services between 1 June – 30 November 2023) (#)	Proportion within population (%)
<b>Service offering</b>					
In-house practitioner	300	702	88%	22,741	91%
Private practitioner	100	100	12%	2,188	9%
<b>Service type</b>					
Duty Lawyer	300	384	48%	14,373	57%
Legal advice	200	308	38%	8,237	33%
Casework	80	113	14%	2,455	10%
<b>Key Law type</b>					
Criminal law	200	385	48%	14,821	59%
Family law	200	221	27%	6,062	24%
Civil law	200	199	25%	4,115	16%
<b>Total number of unique client records</b>	800	802	100%	<b>24,908</b>	100%

# Demographic profile of survey respondents



Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Profile presented is the weighted data. Base: All respondents (base sizes noted above)

# Qualitative fieldwork

## Engagement approach

Qualitative research was conducted between 8 April – 24 April 2024 with a total of 30 participants, who participated in individual in-depth interviews following opting in through completion of the online survey.

A light touch Human Research Ethics review of all draft materials was conducted to ensure the research was robust, respectful and sensitive in its conduct. This included a Participant Information Sheet, Discussion Guide and Duty of Care Escalation protocols.

## Target audience

The target audiences included:

- People with disability support needs;
- People with support needs related to the experience of violence;
- A mix of people who had fully, partially or unresolved legal issues;
- A mix of people across VLA service types and legal issues; and
- A mix of people who had positive, neutral or negative experiences with VLA.

The focus on these clients was informed by the recommendations from the 2023 Client Experience Survey.

## Profile of responding sample compared to the in-scope population

### Interview respondents by support needs

Additional support needs	Number of respondents (#)
Yes, a disability, mental health issue, or other health concern	17
Yes, I had experienced violence at home, school, or work	6
Yes, other support needs	4
No, I did not have any specific support needs	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

### Interview respondents by service type and practice area

	Legal advice (#)	Duty lawyer (#)	Case work (#)	Total (#)
Civil	8	0	0	8
Criminal	3	7	1	11
Family	7	2	2	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>30</b>

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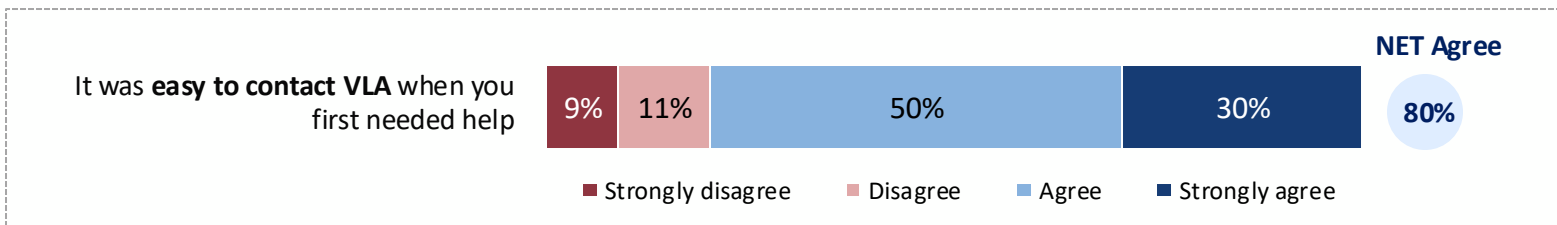
## 3. Access

*This section of the report focuses on clients' initial contact with VLA and any difficulties they had when contacting VLA when they first needed help.*

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# Most respondents found accessing VLA's service straightforward

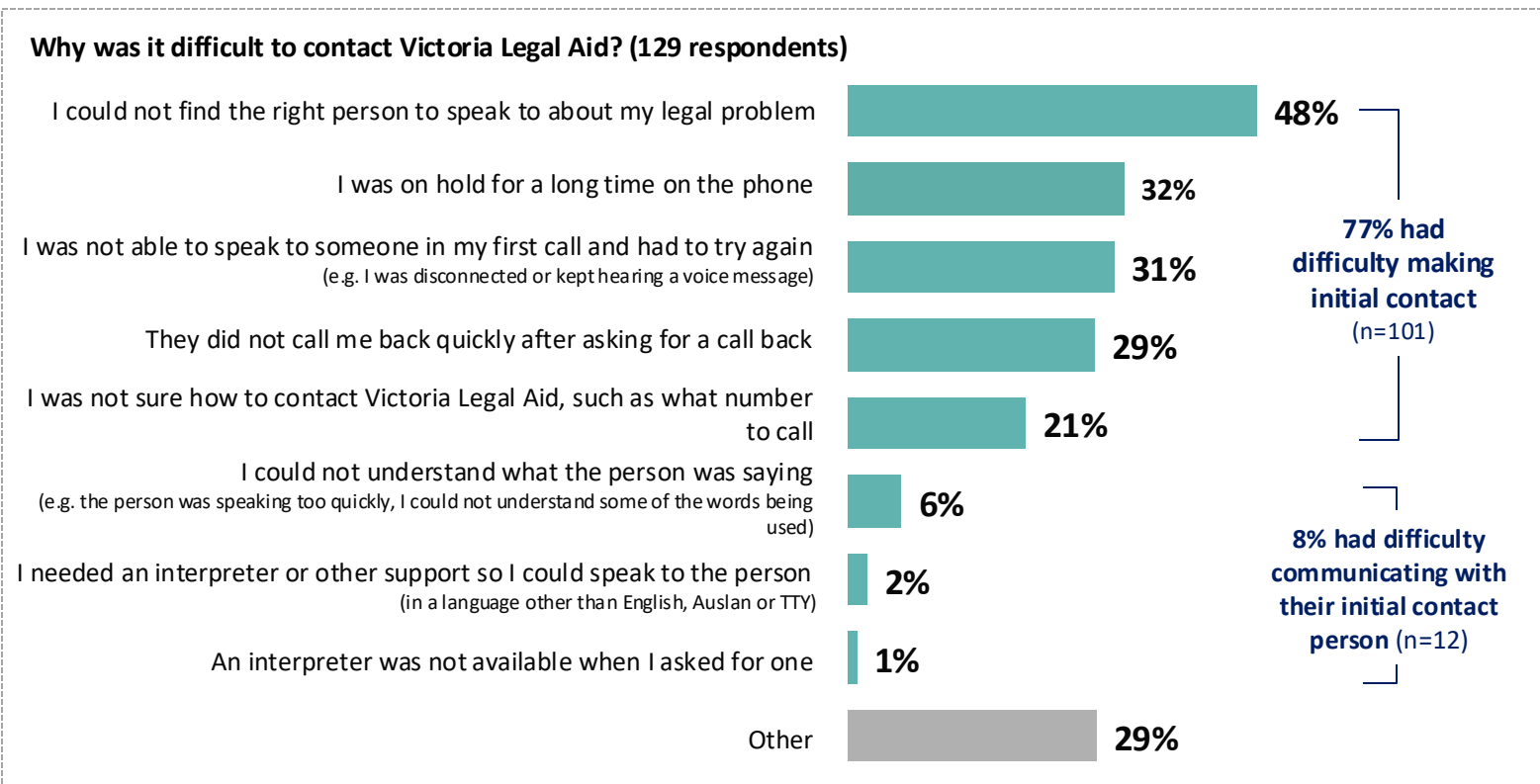
Eight in ten (80%) respondents agreed it was easy to contact VLA when they first needed help.



Q3. How much do you agree or disagree that it was easy to contact Victoria Legal Aid when you first needed help? Base: All respondents (n=680).

20% felt that it was not easy to contact VLA when they first needed help.

Of these, **77% reported difficulty in making initial contact** with VLA, and a much smaller proportion (**8%**) had difficulties communicating with the VLA staff member when they were able to make contact.



Q4. Why was it difficult to contact Victoria Legal Aid? Base: All those who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "It was easy to contact Victoria Legal Aid when you first needed help" (n=129)

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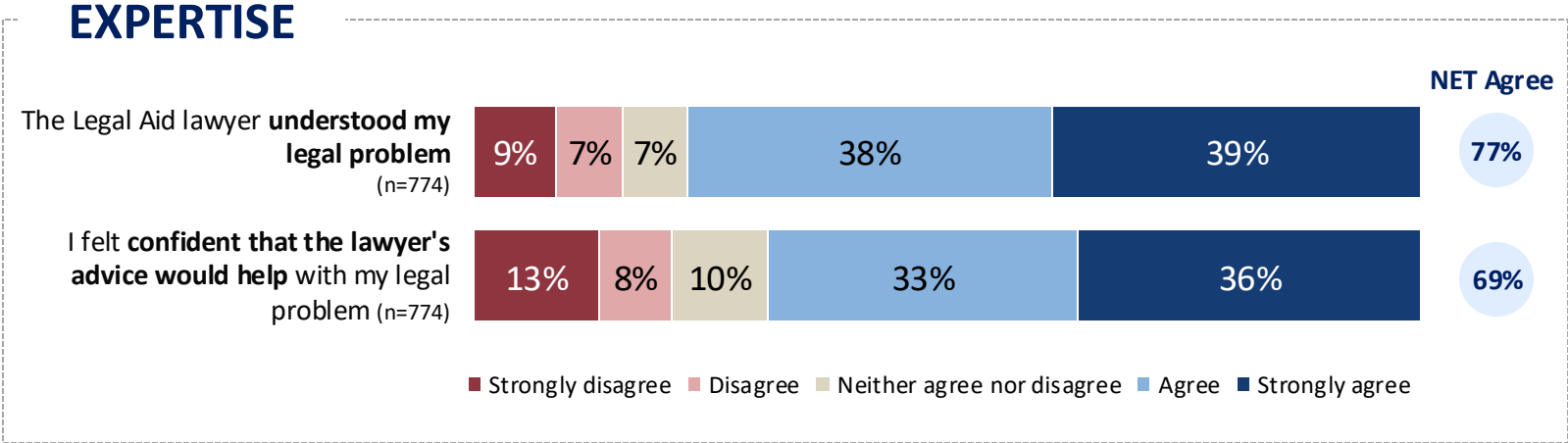
## 4. Experience

This section of the report focuses on the various factors influencing the quality of the experience clients have while interacting with VLA. These can be summarised as:

- perceived expertise of the legal advisors;
  - quality of communication between clients and legal advisors;
  - the extent to which services are person-centred and tailored to individual circumstances; and
  - support needs and considerations of clients, and whether these were adequately met.
-

# Respondents generally felt positive about the expertise of the lawyer

Around three-quarters (77%) of respondents agreed that the lawyer understood their problem and around seven in ten (69%) had been confident that the advice provided would help them. One in six (16%) did not think that their lawyer understood their problem and one in five (21%) had not been confident that the lawyer’s advice would help them, disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement.



Q7a. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Legal Aid lawyer? – the Legal Aid lawyer understood my legal problem. Q8c. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how you felt? – I felt confident that the lawyer’s advice would help with my legal problem. Base: All respondents (base size as shown). Excludes ‘not sure / I can’t remember’ responses.

Some respondents praised the knowledge of their lawyer and the suitability of their advice. Some highlighted that a positive outcome came from their lawyer’s legal expertise.

*“The lawyer handling my problems was very well versed in case law, in situations similar to mine. He treated me very professionally and was patient in dealing with my emails, some sent late at night. The service that I received was gold standard.”*

*“The lawyer assigned to us was fantastic. Achieved a better result than we could have hoped for. Extremely grateful for his understanding of the situation and the solution he sought from the prosecution and the outcome he achieved.”*

Some respondents felt that their lawyer did not provide advice or information that was helpful or was inexperienced.

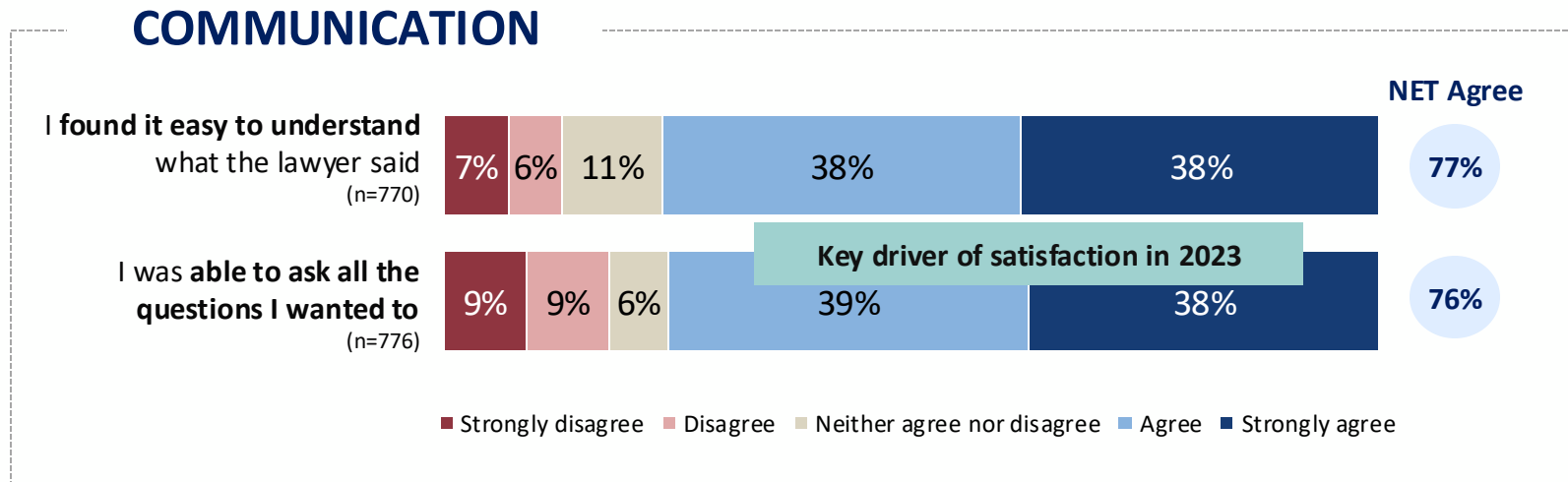
*“Because no solution or instructions on what to do with my problem was provided.”*

*“Get experienced family lawyers that genuinely want to help victims of family violence. The Junior family lawyers are useless and don't understand family violence.”*



# Communication between lawyers and clients was viewed positively

More than three-quarters (77%) agreed it was easy to understand the lawyer and 76% said they were able to ask all the questions they wanted.



Q8d. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how you felt?– The last time I got help from the Legal Aid lawyer... I found it easy to understand what the lawyer said. Q8b. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how you felt?– The last time I got help from the Legal Aid lawyer... I was able to ask all the questions I wanted to. Base: All respondents (base size as shown). Excludes ‘not sure / I can’t remember’ responses.

Some respondents praised the positive impact of VLA’s good communication skills:

*“Good communication, friendly & helped us understand more clearly to get a positive outcome.”*

*“Both my legal aid lawyers explained everything to me and answered any questions that I had and showed me respect and were very supportive and understanding about my circumstances.”*

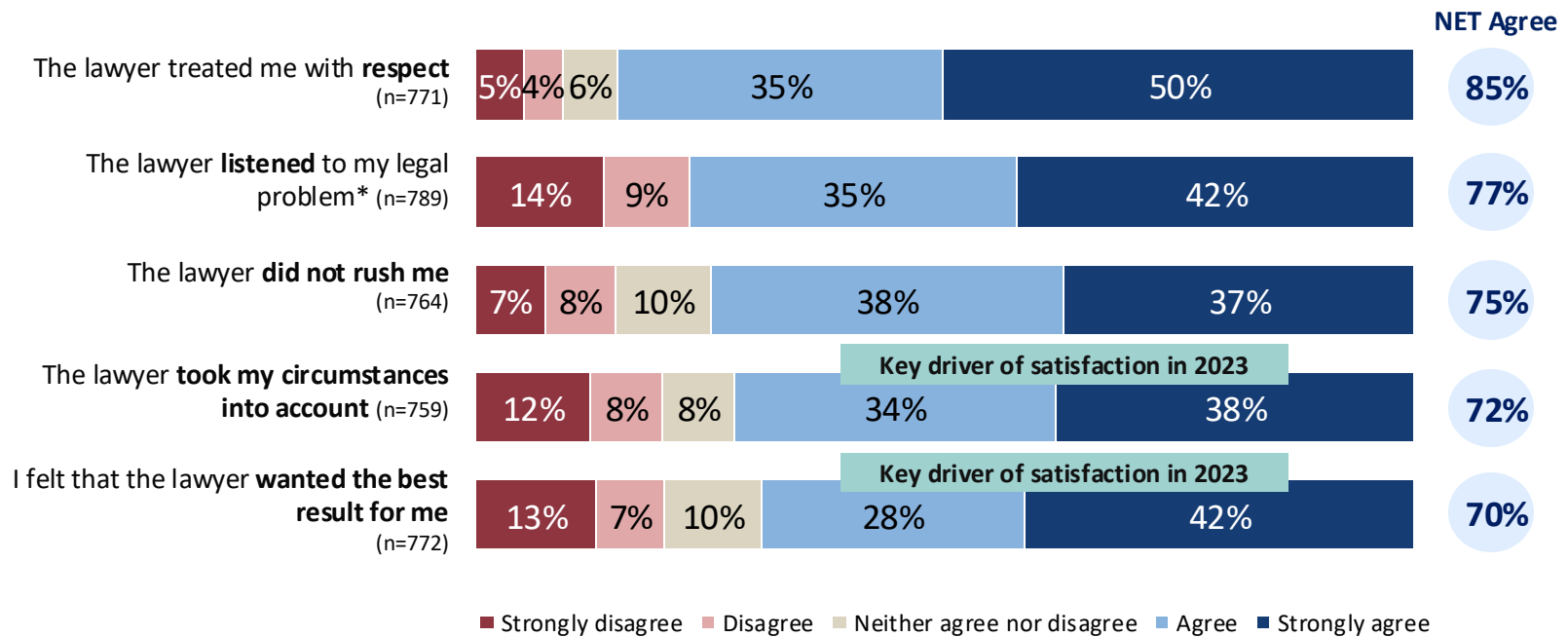
A few respondents provided negative assessments on the communication measures. These respondents mentioned a lack of communication and language that wasn’t accessible.

*“I was referred and case was accepted, but no human contact there after multiple calls.”*

*“Wanted to speak to someone, happy when I received a phone consultation, but she must have been reading off a sheet of all legal jargon that went way over my head, didn’t really answer any questions that I managed to ask, offered nothing.”*

# Respondents generally perceived the service to be person-centred

## PERSON-CENTRED



Q7c/ Q7b/Q7e/Q8e. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Legal Aid lawyer? Q9. How much do you agree or disagree that the lawyer listened to your legal problem? Base: All respondents (base size noted above). Excludes 'not sure / I can't remember' responses. \*This question was asked on a 4-point agreement scale without a mid-point (e.g. 'neither agree nor disagree').

Many respondents felt they were respected, listened to, that their personal circumstances were taken into account.

*"[name] was so respectful towards my problems and knew I didn't have the mental health to deal with some of my problems/ So thank you again."*

*"I was treated with dignity and respect and my medical defense was taken seriously."*

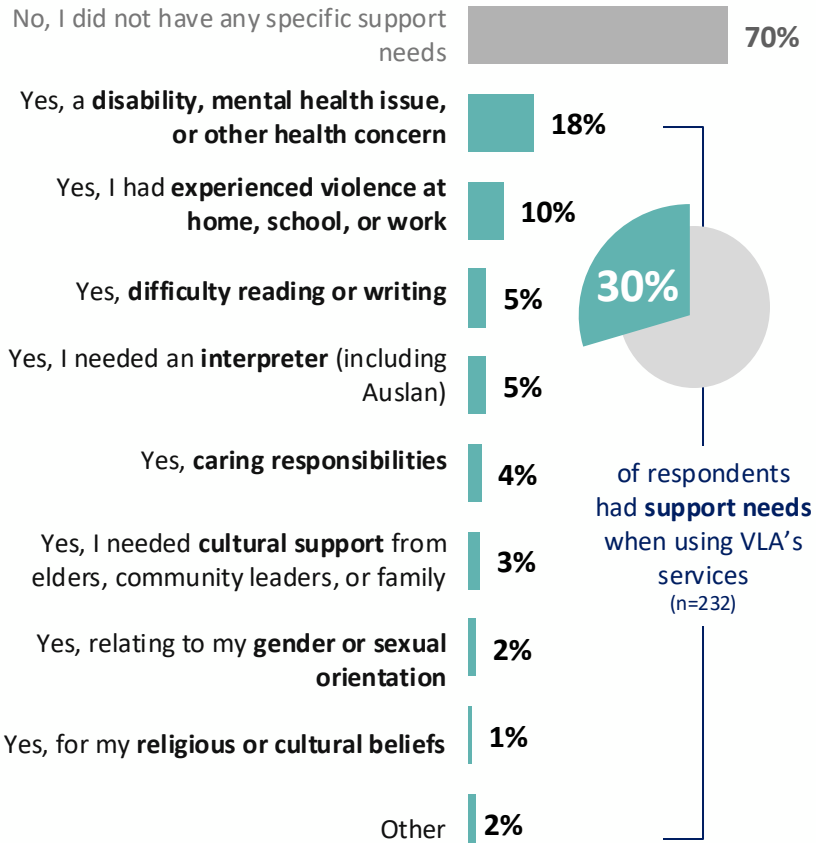
A minority indicated that their lawyer seemed rushed and that they did not attend to the respondent's individual circumstances or specifics about the problem.

*"The staff member was quick and didn't want to listen he treated me like a number he didn't want to spend time explaining it was absolutely horrendous knowing these staffers don't have our best interests at heart."*

*"The lawyer didn't listen to me, and had everything muddled when she spoke to the judge."*

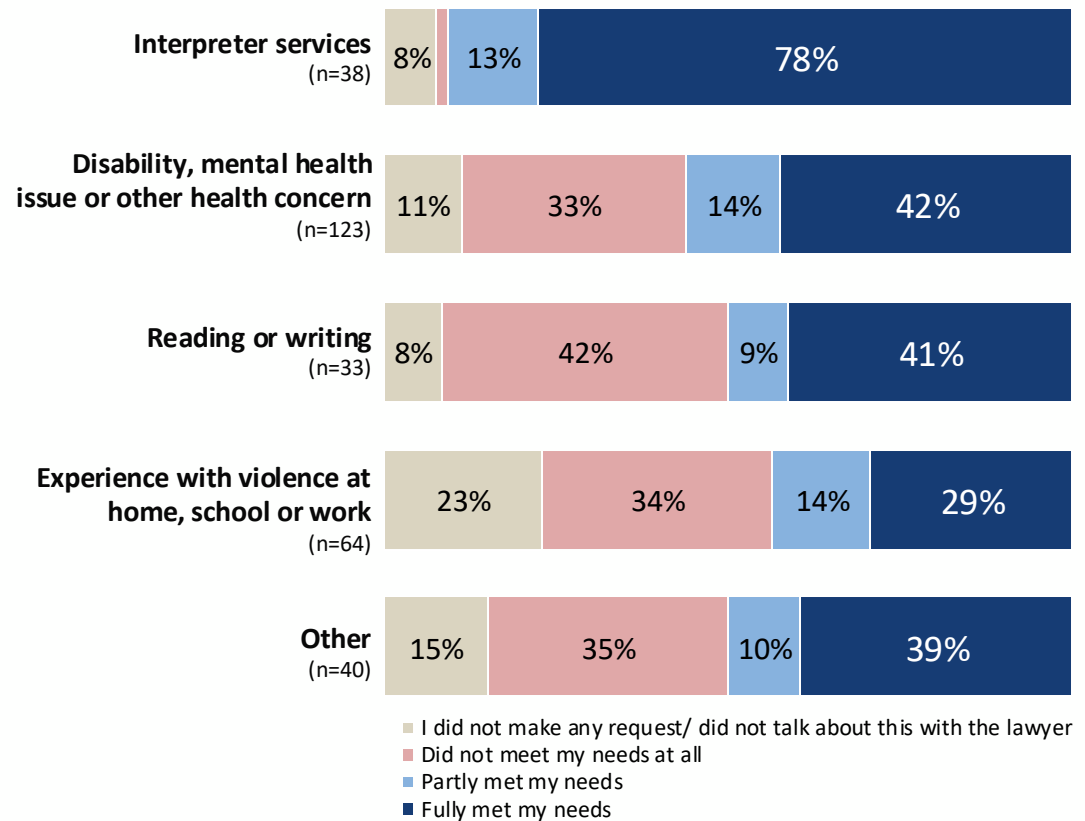
# Three in ten (30%) respondents had support needs when using VLA's services and feedback on whether these needs were met was mixed

## SUPPORT NEEDS & CONSIDERATIONS



Q11. Regardless of whether you asked for any additional help, did you have any support needs when you used Victoria Legal Aid's services? If so, what were they? Base: All respondents (n=778).

## EXTENT TO WHICH SUPPORT NEEDS AND CONSIDERATIONS WERE MET



\*Results relating to cultural support from Elders, community leaders or family, gender or sexual orientation, caring responsibilities, and religious or cultural beliefs are not shown due to small response numbers (n=8-27)

Q12. How well did Victoria Legal Aid support these needs? Base: All respondents (base size noted above). Excludes 'not sure' responses.

# Comments and suggestions for assisting clients with support needs



**When respondents were asked why their support needs were not fully or only partially met, many explained that it was because they felt VLA did not consider how their particular circumstances would impact the way they received or engaged with services:**

*“ADHD and anxiety means the limited options available for explaining my issues made the process overly stressful and meant it was hard to get my meaning across.”*

*“I been waiting all day, while I have had back injury and been on medication.”*

*“I sustained 2 forms of an acquired brain injury a number of years ago. The frontal lobe damage makes dealing with my daily life rather difficult. During the coma that caused my brain injuries, I also sustained bilateral ulnar nerve palsy. So, I am unable to write. That obviously isn't a concern for anyone from Victorian Legal Aid.”*



**When respondents whose support needs were not fully met, they were asked how VLA could better meet their needs. Many suggested that VLA could improve their communication, take the time to listen to and understand clients' circumstances, receive education around domestic violence and trauma-informed service and ensure that the staff understands the needs of people with mental health conditions.**

*“Time management and following up with clients and update them.”*

*“Understand the individual's situation first before the operators make any recommendations.”*

*“I guess just understanding that family violence survivors can be further traumatised by the court system. When I broke down crying at one stage I got told that I had better not do that in court. Maybe being trauma informed in order to work with your clients with compassion.”*

*“Not just legal aid but everyone needs to understand that violence doesn't just stop when you leave the person and that you will possibly still need that help ongoing.”*

*“Provide a more personalised service where neurodivergence and hidden disabilities are a factor.”*



**A small proportion of respondents indicated that although they had support needs, they did not make any requests. A few explained that they were too overwhelmed to think of it at the time, that their family member supported them so they didn't need additional support, and that they didn't feel they would get the support if they asked.**

*“Was too overwhelmed at the time to think of them.”*

*“I felt like they were hardly listening to my problem or circumstances anyways so why add something extra in.”*

*“I did not need. My family member came along with me and was with me when speaking to my lawyer.”*

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## 5. Legal capability

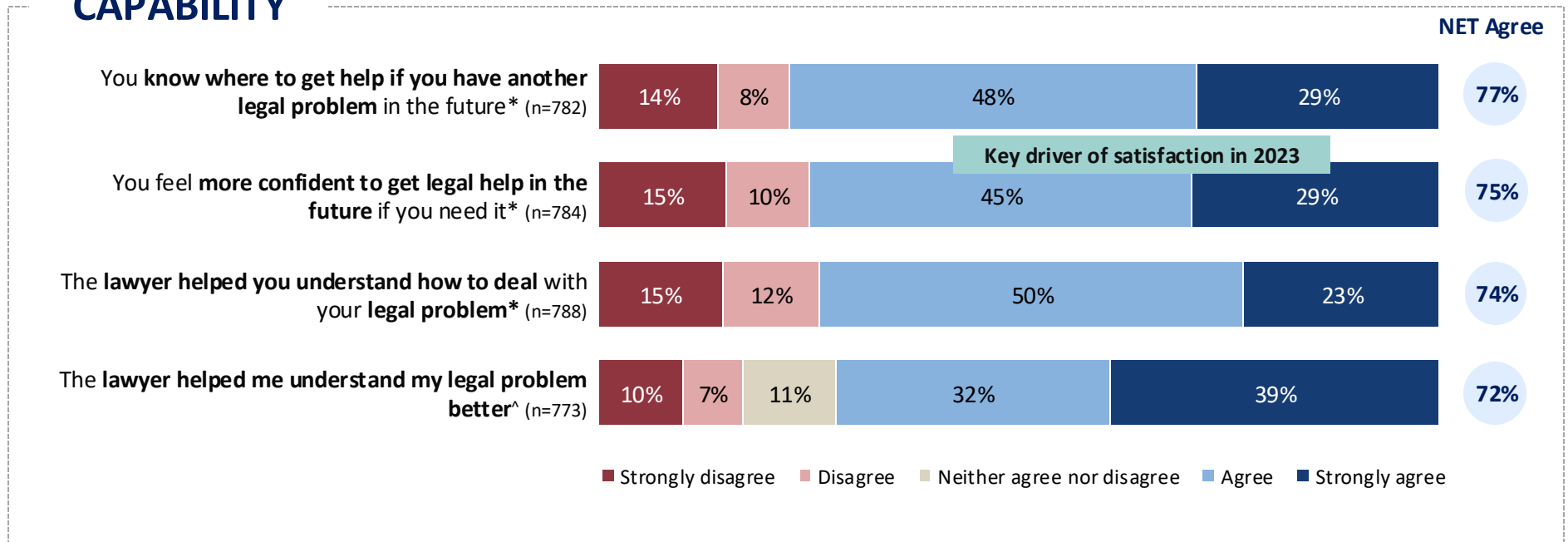
*This section describes the impact of VLA's assistance on clients' ability to understand their most recent legal problem, how to deal with it, as well as their impact on building client capability in dealing with future legal problems.*

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# The experience of interacting with VLA left most respondents feeling more capable of dealing with legal problems in the future

Slightly more than three-quarters (77%) of respondents agreed they would know where to get help with future legal problems, and 75% felt more confident in getting legal help should they need to do so in the future. Respondents also agreed that the lawyer was instrumental in helping them to understand (72%) and deal (74%) with their legal problems.

## CAPABILITY



\*These questions were asked on a 4-point agreement scale without a neutral mid-point (e.g., 'neither agree nor disagree'). ^Excludes 'not sure / I can't remember' responses.

Q25a. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – You know where to get help if you have another legal problem in the future. Q25b. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – You feel more confident to get legal help in the future if you need it. Q10. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – The lawyer helped you understand how to deal with your legal problem. Q7d. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Legal Aid lawyer? The last time I got help, the Legal Aid lawyer... helped me understand my legal problem better. Base: All respondents (base sizes noted above).

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## 6. Resolution

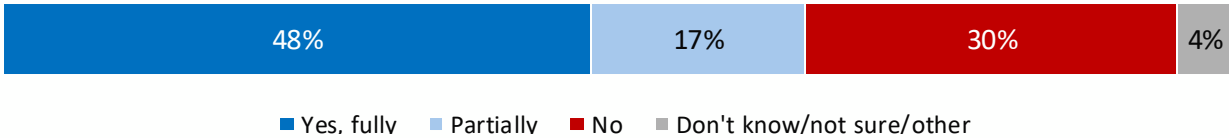
*This section focuses on client perceptions of VLA's impact on their legal problems. In the survey, there was a separate set of questions for those who had a fully resolved legal problem to those whose legal problem was yet to be resolved. The former focused on the perceived impact of VLA assistance on the outcome, and the latter focused on the perceived impact of VLA assistance on the progress of their case or anticipated outcome.*

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**One in two respondents' legal problem had been fully resolved at the time of surveying. Of those, three in five indicated the problem was resolved fully in their favour.**

## RESOLUTION STATUS

Has the legal problem you went to VLA for help with ended or been resolved? (n=794)



Was your most recent legal problem resolved...? (n=362)



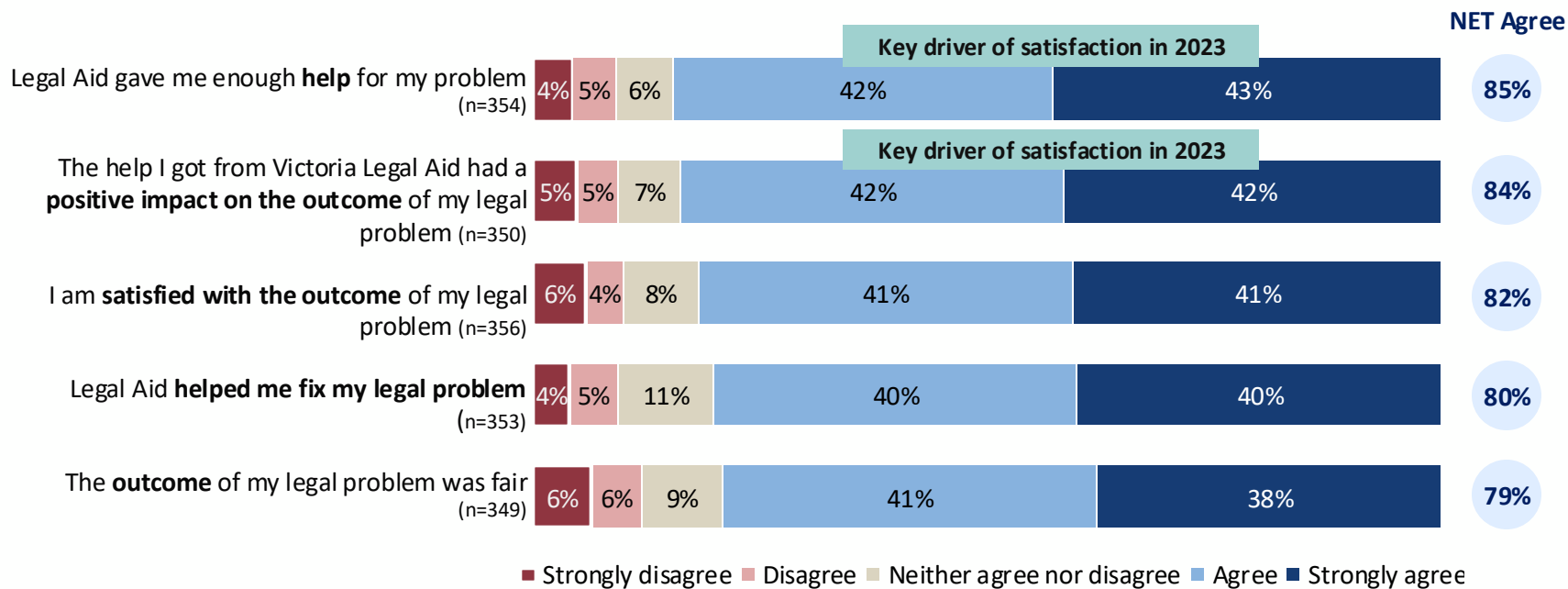
Q16. Has the legal problem you went to VLA for help with ended or been resolved? Base: All respondents (base size noted above).

Q17. Was your most recent legal problem resolved...? Base: All respondents with a fully resolved legal problem (base size noted above).



# VLA's involvement was perceived to have had a positive impact on the outcomes of respondents' legal problems where the legal problem had been resolved

## RESOLUTION – FULLY RESOLVED LEGAL PROBLEM



Q20. Thinking about the resolution of your legal problem, how much do you agree or disagree with the following? Q18a. Thinking about the resolution of your legal problem, how much do you agree or disagree with the following? – The help I got from Legal Aid had a positive impact on my legal problem. Base: All respondents with a fully resolved legal problem (base size noted above). Excludes 'not sure / I can't remember' responses.

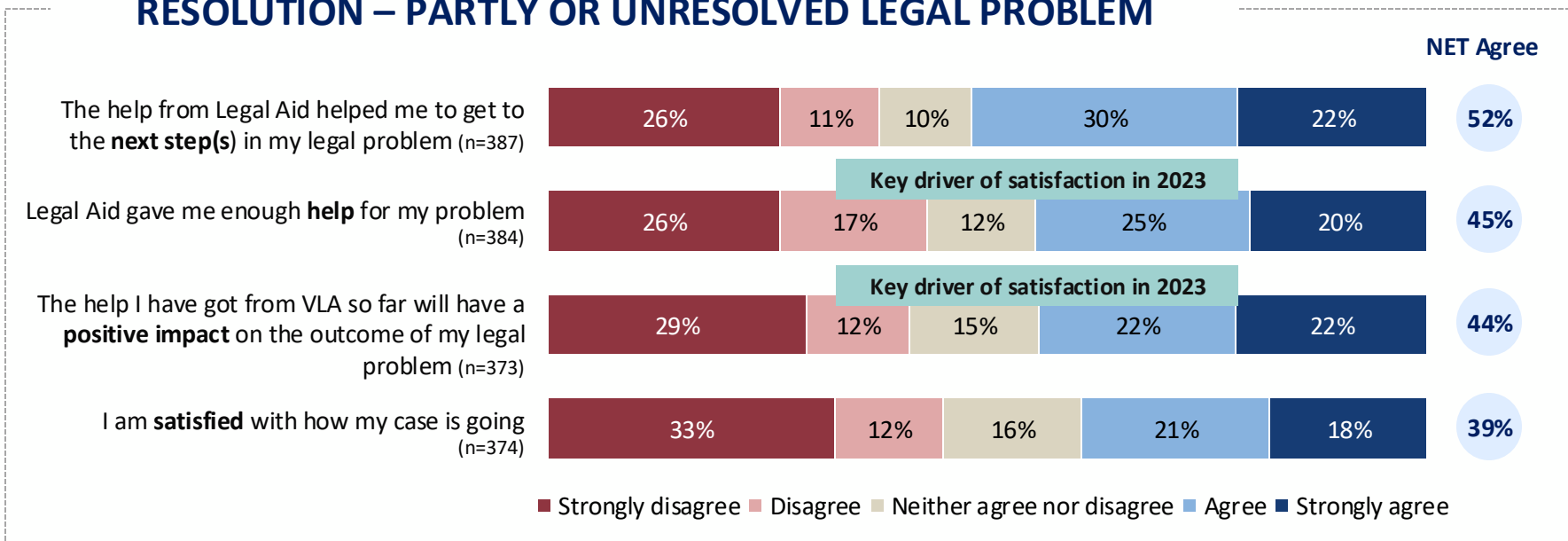
Respondents who perceived VLA to have a positive impact on their legal problem praised VLA's support which helped them to achieve their outcome:

*"My lawyer did a good job. I was very pleased with the outcome."*

*"My solicitor did everything in her power to represent my case and succeed to a very positive outcome i.e. - winning the case for me."*

# Clients tended to be less positive if their legal problem had not been fully resolved

## RESOLUTION – PARTLY OR UNRESOLVED LEGAL PROBLEM



Q21. How much do you agree or disagree with the following? Q19a. How much do you agree or disagree with the following? – The help I got from Victoria Legal Aid so far will have a positive impact on the outcome of my legal problem. Base: All respondents with a partly resolved or unresolved legal problem, excluding those who did not know if their legal problem was resolved (base size noted above). Excludes 'not sure / I can't remember' responses.

Respondents who were not satisfied with their overall experience and whose legal problem had not been resolved described concerns about the level of communication and support from VLA:

*“They were not interested in my problem, were not interested in assisting and provided no direction to where I might be able to go to get my problem resolved.”*

However, some clients expressed satisfaction with VLA despite their case not being resolved. In many cases this was due to the person-centred engagement of legal staff:

*“Because the lawyer always took my calls and if he wasn't available at the time, he got back to me straight away. And that is a big thing. And it was very efficient and I knew the lawyer was there for me and not for anyone else.”*

The quality of the advice or service was also mentioned as a reason for satisfaction, despite the lack of resolution.

*“I'm very satisfied with the help of legal aid. They are following my case up today and gave me valuable information and advice.”*

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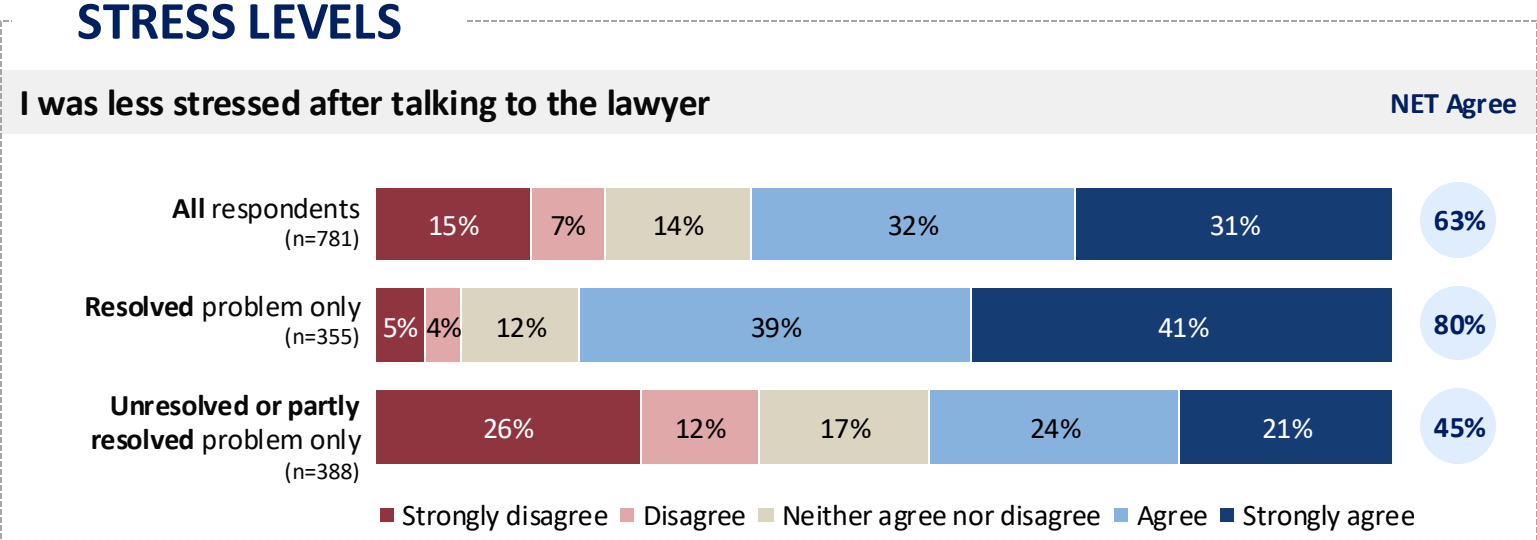
## 7. Wellbeing

*This section discusses VLA's impact on the wellbeing of clients, including stress levels, overall wellbeing and mental health.*

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# Respondents whose legal problem was resolved generally indicated that VLA’s services had a positive impact on their stress levels

In contrast, a minority of respondents whose problems were partially or entirely unresolved agreed that VLA’s services had a positive impact on stress levels.



Q8a. Thinking back to the last time you got help from the Legal Aid lawyer, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how you feel? – I was less stressed after talking to the lawyer. Base: All respondents, respondents with a fully resolved legal problem, and respondents with a partly resolved or unresolved legal problem excluding those who did not know if their legal problem was resolved (base size noted above). Excludes ‘not sure / I can’t remember’ responses.

Those with unresolved problems indicated that their involvement with VLA may have been detrimental to their wellbeing, with many citing stress as a cause.

*“All I can say is that when people need legal assistance, they need it fairly immediately. Having waiting lists causes more stress and anxiety to already stressful situations. A phone consult is ok for some basic advice but to actually have some representation at a case conference would have been more beneficial and may have resolved my case already.”*

*“Legal aid only gave me half hour consultation and advised me to lodge my own documents. The legal terms are mindboggling and so difficult to understand but I was advised to lodge them all myself. I felt so stressed.”*

*“They were not interested, they rushed me. They were vague. My mental health got much worse.”*

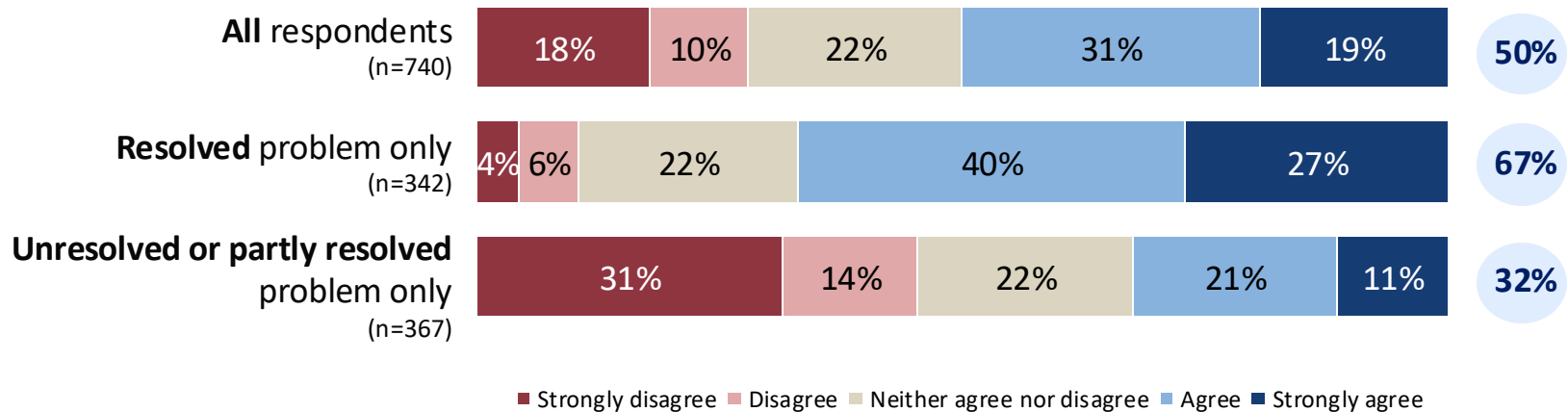
# Similarly, respondents whose legal problem was resolved generally indicated that VLA's services had a positive impact on their wellbeing

In contrast, a minority of respondents whose problems were partially or entirely unresolved agreed VLA's services had a positive impact on their wellbeing.

## WELLBEING

The help I got from Victoria Legal Aid improved my overall wellbeing

NET Agree

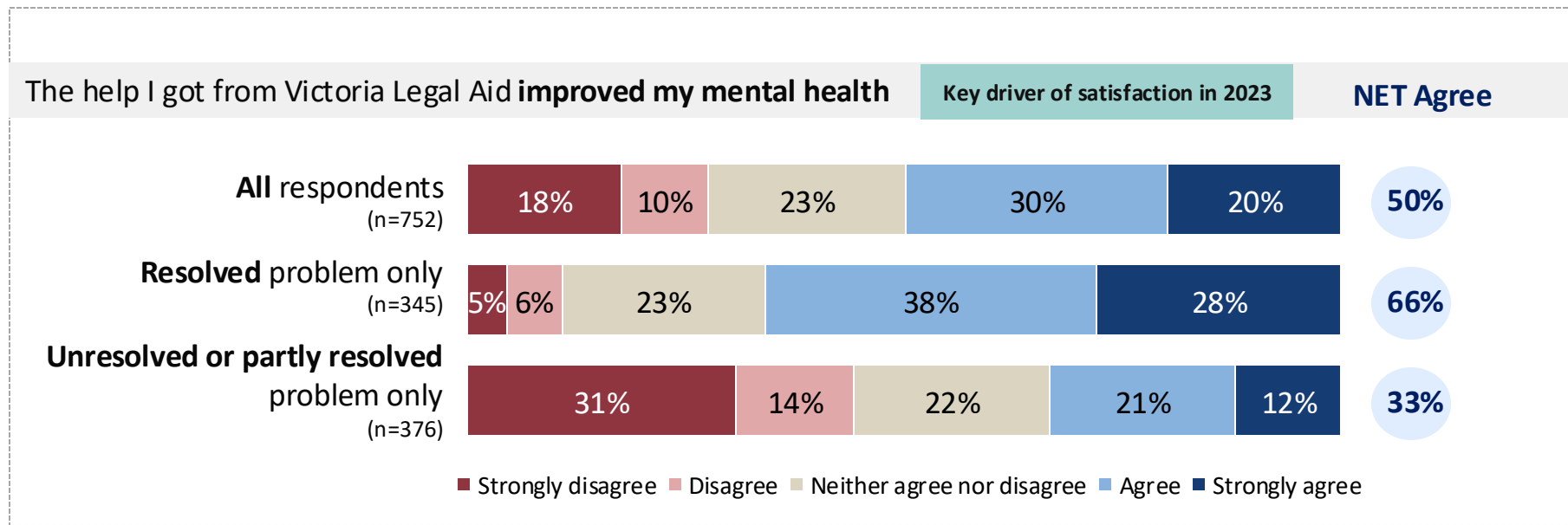


Q18. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Q19. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: All respondents, respondents with a fully resolved legal problem, and respondents with a partly resolved or unresolved legal problem excluding those who did not know if their legal problem was resolved (base sizes noted above). Excludes 'not sure / not applicable' responses.

## Similarly, respondents whose legal problem was resolved generally indicated that VLA's services had a positive impact on their mental health

In contrast, a minority of respondents whose problems were partially or entirely unresolved agreed VLA's services had a positive impact on their mental health.



Q18. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Excludes 'not sure / not applicable' responses. Q19. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Excludes 'not sure / not applicable' responses. Base: All respondents, respondents with a fully resolved legal problem, and respondents with a partly resolved or unresolved legal problem excluding those who did not know if their legal problem was resolved (base sizes noted above).

Respondents who felt that they had good mental health outcomes, praised VLA's assistance:

*"It was daunting in the extreme and very stressful when trying to handle my legal problems, so having Vic Legal Aid represent me has saved my wellbeing and allowed me look to the future...without that help my life would have been very bleak indeed."*

*"The legal problem was quite distressing and the lawyer who provided my advice was able to reduce my distress and give me clear guidance."*

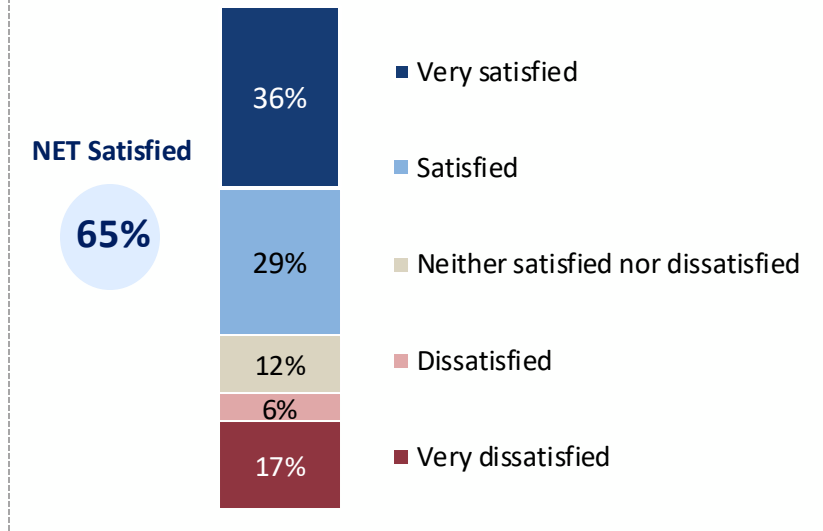
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## 8. Overall client satisfaction

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Historically, client satisfaction has been following a trajectory of slight decline. In 2024 this trend stabilised, with two in three (65%) feeling satisfied; 76% said they would be likely to recommend VLA to other people which is consistent with the previous two years.

## OVERALL SATISFACTION



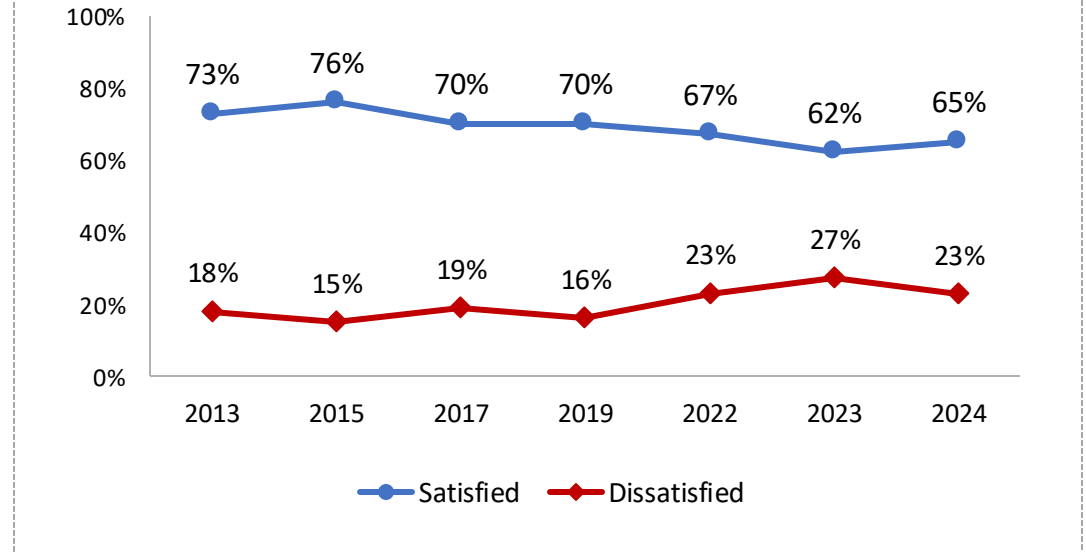
Q23. Overall, how do you feel about the help you got from Victoria Legal Aid?  
Base: All respondents (n=802).

Respondents were asked the reason for their level of satisfaction. The top reason among those satisfied overall with the help they received from VLA was that their request for services was fulfilled (i.e. they felt VLA helped) and/or were satisfied due to the outcome of their legal problem:

*“Problem was resolved and they were great.”*

*“The outcome was in our favour and the lawyer was great.”*

## TIME-SERIES COMPARISON<sup>^</sup>



<sup>^</sup> Base sizes are not available for 2013-2022 results. Base size for 2023 is n=783 and base size for 2024 is n=802. Both 2023 and 2024 results are weighted. Base sizes for 2013 - 2022 figures were not available. Significance testing between these years have not been conducted. Any trends described are indicative only.

Satisfaction was also attributed to the Legal Aid lawyer, with commentary highlighting their empathy, kindness, respectfulness, professionalism, expertise, understanding and work ethic.

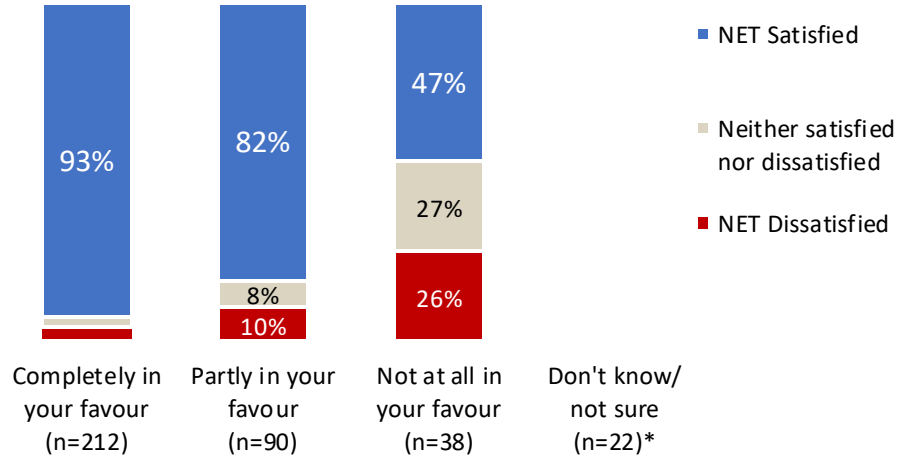
*“The lawyer I spoke to before and during the legal process was not only knowledgeable and competent, but extremely understanding of my personal situation. She treated me with respect and compassion. I was not just a number.”*

*“We’re very satisfied with the lawyer, she was very professional, caring and into the case straight away.”*

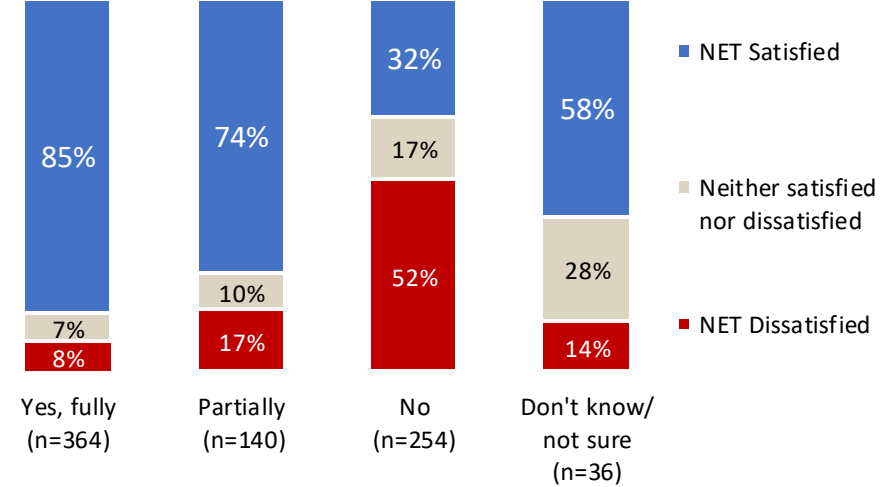


# Overall satisfaction comparisons by cohorts

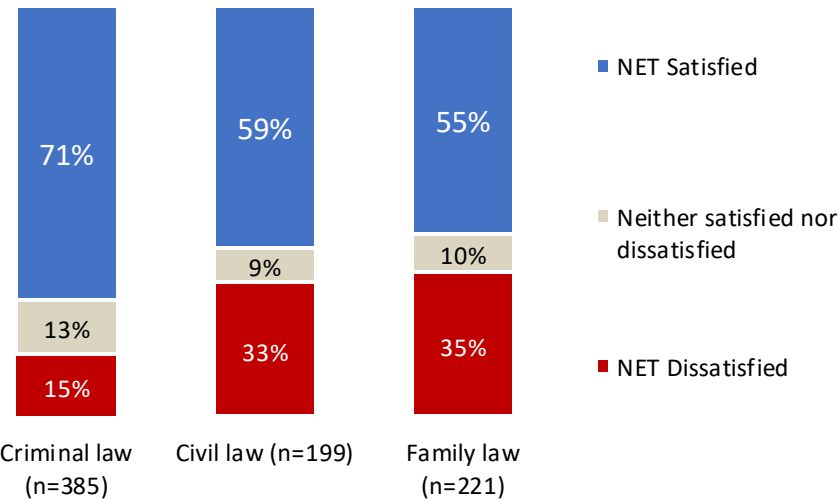
## Overall satisfaction by outcome of legal problem



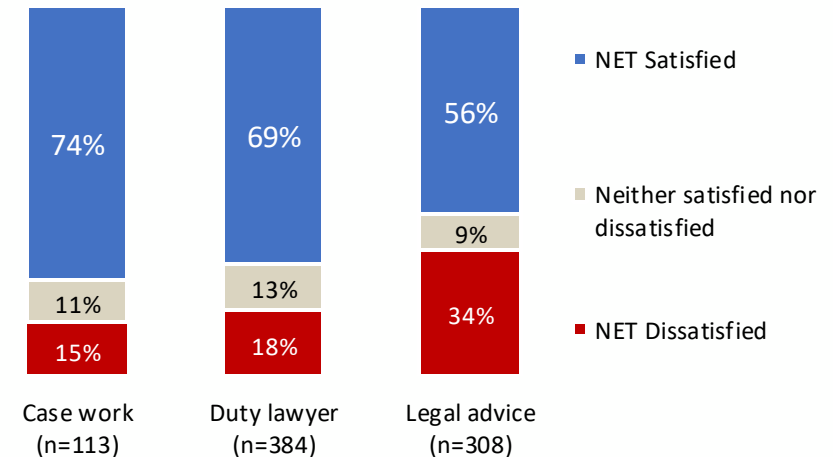
## Overall satisfaction by resolution status of legal problem



## Overall satisfaction by problem type



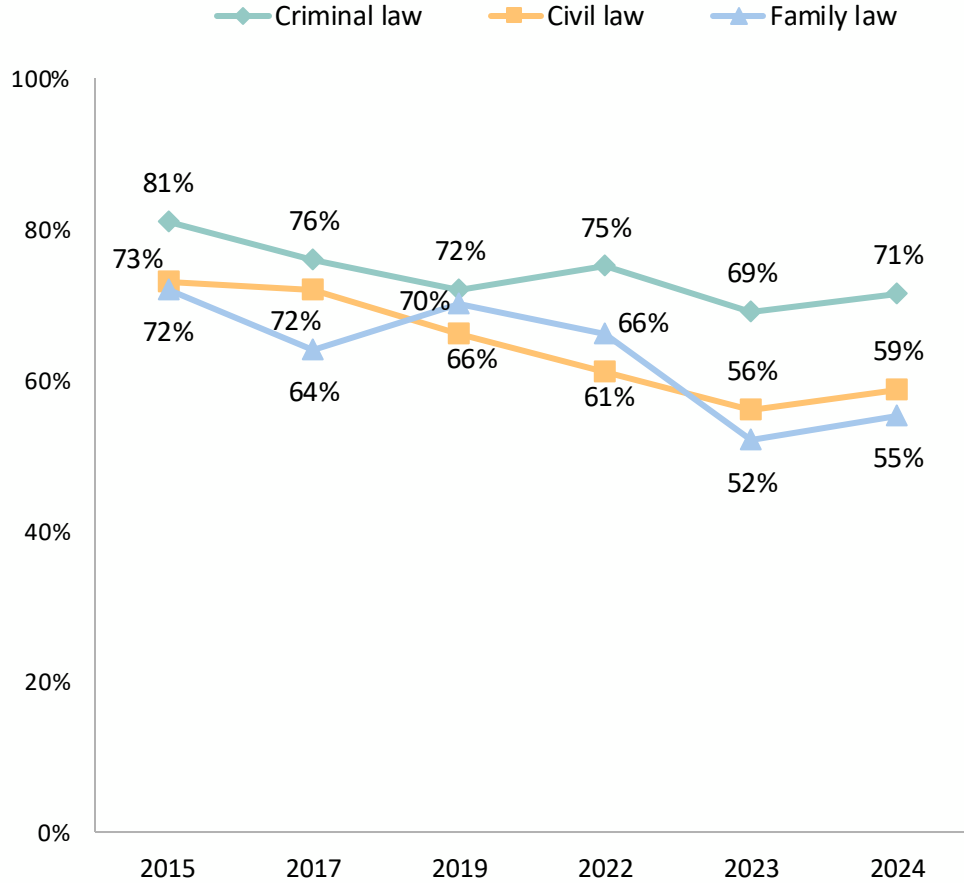
## Overall satisfaction by service type



Base: All respondents (base sizes noted above). \*Results are not shown due to small response numbers (n<30).

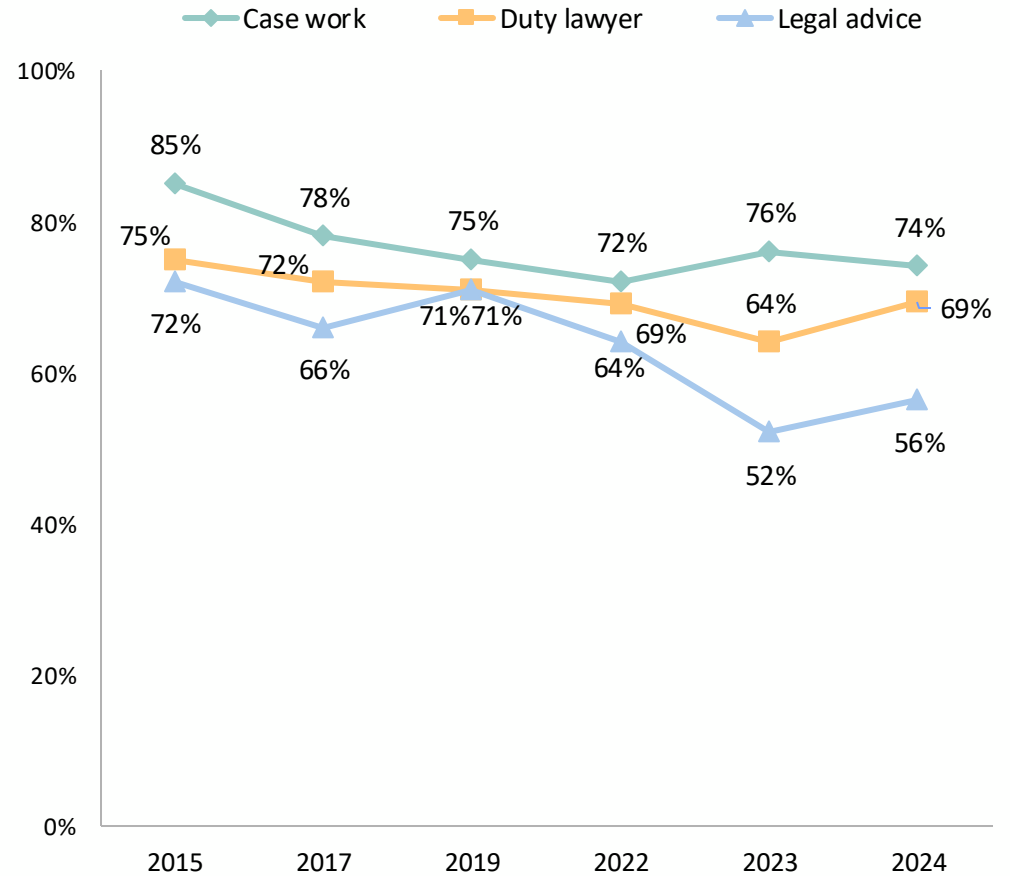
# Overall satisfaction trend

Overall satisfaction by program area and time-series comparison



Base: All respondents by program area (2023 and 2024 results are weighted). 2023 (weighted): Criminal Law (n=269), Civil Law (n=189), Family Law (n=326). 2024 (weighted): Criminal Law (n=385), Civil Law (n=199), Family Law (n=221).

Overall satisfaction by service area and time-series comparison



Base: All respondents by service area. 2023 (weighted): Case work (n=127), Duty Lawyer (n=334), Legal advice (n=329). 2024 (weighted): Case work (n=113), Duty Lawyer (n=384), Legal advice (n=308).

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## 9. Insights from client interviews

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# Key themes from client interviews

Client interviews facilitated greater insight into the topic areas of resolution and support needs of people with disability, a mental health condition or experiencing violence. A summary of the primary themes and considerations for VLA service delivery are outlined below and overleaf.



*“(Expected) they would give me some advice, but not expected all to be resolved.”*

*“Fair resolution and being treated with equality. I want to be heard through the judge.”*

*“They helped me. It took a long time and interactions) varied a lot but they did their job”*

*“...phone consult was all that I really needed. If the process to get that could have been easier... Not knowing the process or anything legal, being able to talk to someone was important.”*

*“...because of the care of the VLA lawyer to get full background, (VLA provided) advocacy around the background, my character.”*

*“Symbiotic relationship – both have to do the work, not just rely on (VLA).”*



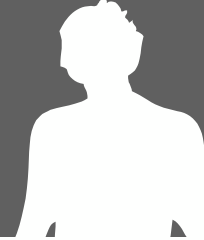
## Defining Resolution



There is commonality in how ‘resolution’ of a problem is defined – as the ending of a court issue.

Additionally, the outcome of the problem being a perceived a fair process, and the level of impact the outcome had on the person’s life are also features of a positive resolution.

## Service level expectations for resolution



There is variance in how VLA can contribute to the expected ending of a legal problem due to the nature of the VLA service provided, and the stage that these services are delivered.

The expectation of the VLA Legal Advice service is not always related to obtaining legal resolution, but to build their knowledge on the next steps.

## Working together



When features of a person-centred approach are working well together, this creates a sense of genuine mutual respect and engagement.

The most powerful expression of this experience was when participants felt that VLA was in ‘their corner’ and prepared to ‘advocate’ or fight for their best possible legal outcome.

# Key themes from client interviews

## Use of support need information



While clients were generally comfortable in disclosure of disability or support needs, this information was either not discussed with lawyers due to it being assumed 'unimportant' in the context of the service, unlikely to be 'utilised' by the lawyer or not seen as being possible to be accommodated.

## The complete personal context



Lack of a proactive approach to discussing support needs may miss opportunities to obtain the client's perspective around accommodations that could be needed, and for the lawyer to obtain greater context into the person's situation as part of considering their legal issue.

## Information for agency



Information about the role of VLA and the justice system is highly sought after as clients, who are often overwhelmed and highly stressed, try to gain some semblance of control and understanding of a system that is considered complex and intimidating.

*“I was comfortable – but it is expensive time that you can't go into (support needs) ... Be grateful for what you get. The focus was 'how do I get across what I need in the limited time I have'.”*

*“When I try to explain anything to my solicitor, I feel guilty. I get confused and explain things backwards. It can come across as excuses. I feel self-conscious. Every part of your life you question what anyone thinks of you.”*

*“(PTSD triggers) might not make sense to VLA but it doesn't make the disability any less valid.”*

*“...did her own research ...to get a good understanding of how to relate to me and work with me better.”*

*“...need to have a good breadth of experience, complexity, and understanding of people's backgrounds...They need to be bridge from legal to public, if that bridge is broken, confidence in VLA goes down.”*

*“Struck me how much the system relies on VLA. Demand is high. It is people's only chance to have a voice.”*

# Thank you

*We would also like to acknowledge and thank all the participants who were involved in the research for their valuable contribution and input.*

This project was conducted in accordance with the international quality standard ISO 20252, the international information security standard ISO 27001, as well as the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).

-  Communications and marketing research
-  Client and stakeholder research
-  Employee research
-  Community sentiment research
-  Policy development and program management research
-  Program evaluations and reviews
-  Data analytics
-  Data portals and ballots
-  PGPA Compliance services
-  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research
-  Public health research
-  Disability services research
-  Education research
-  Consulting and advisory services
-  User-centred design