
THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF FULLY MEETING DEMAND FOR SPECIALIST FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES IN VICTORIA

A REPORT FOR SAFE AND EQUAL

BY EQUITY ECONOMICS

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About us

ABOUT SAFE AND EQUAL

Safe and Equal is the peak body for Victorian organisations that specialise in family and gender-based violence across the continuum, including primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.

We are an independent, non-government organisation. We work towards a world where everyone is safe, respected and thriving, living free from family and gender-based violence.

Our work prioritises the safety of all people experiencing, recovering from or at risk of family and gender-based violence. While we know that most family violence is perpetrated by men against women and children, we recognise that family violence impacts people across a diversity of gender identities, social and cultural contexts, and within various intimate, family and other relationships.

ABOUT EQUITY ECONOMICS

Equity Economics is a leading consulting firm, providing analysis, policy development, design and evaluation services to government, private sector and non-government clients.

We specialise in economic and social policy, and international development. We combine technical economic skills with policy and design expertise, helping our clients contribute to a more inclusive, equitable society. Our work addresses the persistent challenge of social and economic disadvantage, through new and practical solutions.

Acknowledgements

Safe and Equal and Equity Economics acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to both their land and seas.

We pay our respects to Elders – past and present– and generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples now and into the future.

We also acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector and its work in supporting the self-determination and better outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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Executive summary

Every day, specialist family violence services are helping victim-survivors across Victoria to escape violence, get their lives back on track, and recover. They play a critical role in reducing the costs that family violence imposes on individuals, communities and the economy.

However, many specialist family violence services are overwhelmed with demand and lack the capacity to help everyone who needs support. Equity Economics estimates that each year in Victoria:

- About 3,750 victim-survivors seeking help from specialist family violence services are unable to receive any support.
- A further 5,000 existing clients are unable to be provided with services they need (mainly accommodation services).
- About 85 per cent of clients seeking case management support wait to be assigned to a case manager, with an average waiting time of 8.5 days. Clients assessed as being at lower risk levels wait the longest.

When demand goes unmet, victim-survivors' lives are at stake. Services are forced to prioritise the clients with the most urgent needs—typically those who have reached crisis—which reduces their ability to support other clients and undertake early intervention.

In this report, Equity Economics has modelled the costs and benefits of fully meeting demand for specialist family violence services in Victoria. These estimates only consider the expansion in service delivery that is required to meet demand by people who are reaching out for support now (i.e. unmet demand). They do not factor in the even larger number of people who may be experiencing family violence but do not feel safe reporting the violence or seeking help, or who are unaware that help is available.

Equity Economics estimates that fully meeting demand would require government funding for the sector to increase to \$487 million in 2026-27, a 62 per cent increase from the \$300 million expected to be spent on the current funding trajectory.¹ This would allow services to support 15 per cent more clients and to deliver all supports existing clients are assessed as needing when they are needed. Services would also have greater capacity to provide early intervention to help victim-survivors before violence (and its associated costs) escalates further.

¹ This report was finalised in December 2025. It does not reflect funding announced in the 2026-27 Victorian Budget, which included an increase of about 3 per cent overall in family violence service delivery and prevention funding, including the extension of some lapsing funding programs for a further two years.

The benefits of fully meeting demand would exceed the costs. If demand were to be fully met in 2026-27, the sector would deliver \$2.8 billion in benefits for the Victorian community—equivalent to almost \$80,000 per client, on average (see Table 1). Most of these benefits would be realised within five years of services being accessed.

The largest area of benefit is a reduction in long-term health burdens of family violence through pain, suffering and premature mortality. There are also significant gains to be made through supporting clients' workforce participation and production, and by reducing the long-term impacts of family violence on children.

Table 1: Summary of benefits of fully meeting demand for specialist family violence services in Victoria (in 2025 dollars, present value)

Benefit type	\$ per client	Aggregate \$m
Adult clients		
Avoided pain, suffering and premature mortality	\$39,608	\$819
Savings to the health care system	\$2,720	\$56
Greater workforce participation and productivity	\$22,281	\$461
Avoided property damage	\$902	\$19
Child clients		
Savings to the child protection system	\$4,830	\$71
Avoided pain, suffering and premature mortality	\$66,839	\$976
Reduced use of other government services	\$17,126	\$250
Greater workforce participation and productivity	\$9,741	\$142
Total benefits	\$79,183	\$2,794

Source: Equity Economics modelling.

This report shows that the social and economic benefits of investing in the specialist family violence sector so that demand for services can be fully met could be worth almost six times the cost. By making this investment, the Victorian Government could significantly reduce the costs of family violence, realising significant improvements to individual health and wellbeing, workforce and social participation, and long-term reductions in the use of government health, justice and child protection services.

There are other things governments can do to further reduce the costs of family violence. These include:

- tackling barriers in police and the justice system to victim-survivors reporting violence and seeking help, for example, by embedding trauma-informed and culturally appropriate processes and supports;
- investing in social housing so that victim-survivors who cannot afford to own or rent their own home can secure safe long-term housing without having to return to the perpetrator; and
- investing in all forms of prevention and working towards eliminating family and gender-based violence in all its forms.

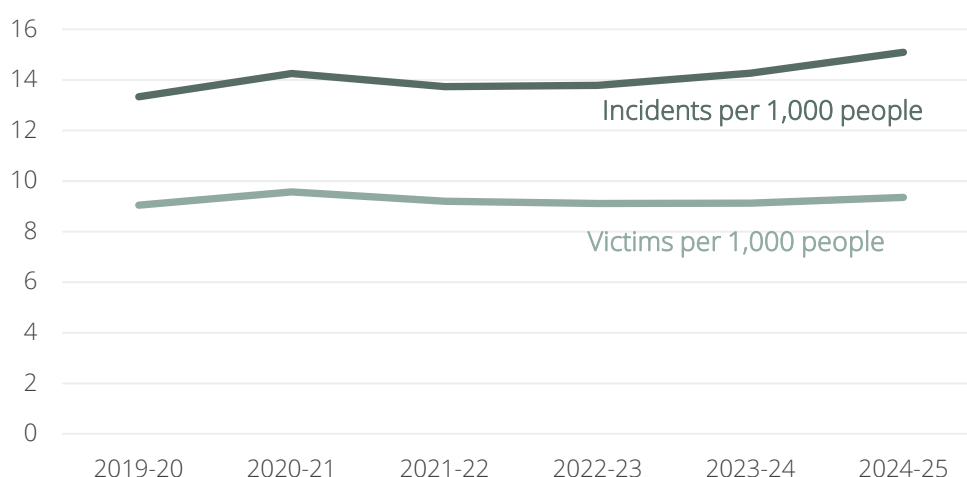
Introduction

Specialist family violence services play a central role in responding to family and gender-based violence. They work across all stages of prevention, early intervention, response and recovery to reduce rates of family violence and the substantial costs it imposes on individuals, communities and the economy.

This report focuses on response and crisis services delivered by specialist family violence services across Victoria. Every day, these services support victim-survivors to find safety, navigate systems and access resources for emotional and physical recovery. Many services provide refuges and other forms of accommodation for victim-survivors with nowhere else safe to go. The services have a deep understanding of family violence and what is needed to help victim-survivors in a culturally appropriate and trauma-informed way.

However, specialist family violence services lack adequate resources to help all victim-survivors reaching out for support. Reported rates of family violence in Victoria have remained at high levels following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2024-25, police recorded over 106,000 family violence incidents, a higher number than in any of the previous five years. Adjusted for population, the rate of reported incidents is now above pandemic levels, at 15.1 incidents per 1,000 people (see Figure 1). About 9 people in every 1,000 are victims of these family violence incidents.

Figure 1: Family violence incidents and victims recorded by police, number per 1,000 people, 2019-20 to 2024-25²



² Crime Statistics Victoria (2025), "Family Violence Data Tables: Justice System Data Tables", tables 3 and 8, Crime Statistics Victoria (2024), "Family Violence Data Tables: Justice System Data Tables", tables 3 and 7; ABS (2025), "National, state and territory population, March 2025".

With much family violence going unreported, true levels of violence are much higher than in the chart above. For example, in 2021-22, approximately 140,000 women aged 18 years and over reported experiencing family violence in Victoria in the previous year.³ This is nearly four times the 39,000 adult female victims reported by police in 2021-22.⁴

Other sources of data used in this report show that specialist family violence services are seeing ongoing high levels of demand, as well as high numbers of people reaching out for support that services lack the capacity to provide when it is needed, or at all.

With \$96 million in Victorian Government funding for family violence responses set to cease at the end of the current financial year, services will come under even more strain unless the funding is renewed in the 2026-27 State budget. Unless this funding is continued, there would be a significant reduction in the level of support that family violence services can provide, leaving many victim-survivors with longer wait times to receive support and others turned away. Safe and Equal estimates that if the funding is not renewed, 73 case managers could lose their jobs and 14,500 victim-survivors per year could lose access to services.⁵

³ ABS (2023), "Personal Safety, Australia, 2021-22". See Appendix for methodology.

⁴ Crime Statistics Victoria (2025), "Family Violence Data Tables: Justice System Data Tables", table 5.

⁵ Safe and Equal (2025), *Victorian State Budget 2026-27 Submission*, p. 6.

About the sector

In 2024-25, specialist family violence services across Victoria supported 29,729 clients through family violence case management, supported 7,352 clients through counselling and therapeutic services,⁶ and delivered 50,000 nights of refuge accommodation to victim-survivors.⁷ These services supported about 91 per cent of all clients recorded across the broader Victorian specialist homelessness sector as seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services primarily because of family violence.⁸

Specialist family violence services deliver a range of supports and programs, which include:

- Crisis accommodation and refuges for victim-survivors escaping violence who have nowhere safe to go
- Support for clients to access and transition to short or long-term housing
- Help for clients to stay safe at home and have the perpetrator removed (where appropriate)
- Case management to assess clients' risks, implement safety plans and navigate other services
- Counselling and therapeutic services to help clients cope with trauma and move forward
- Legal advice and assistance with engaging with police and courts to report violence, secure restraining orders and have perpetrators prosecuted
- Brokerage funding to cover expenses such as safety upgrades and transport costs required to keep clients safe
- Triage and intake services to help victim-survivors to access the right kinds of support.

In Victoria, victim-survivors are able to connect with specialist family violence services through a number of pathways, including by reaching out directly to a service or being referred by another service such as the statewide Orange Door network (see Box 1). This multi-channel system helps to direct people to the right services and to balance demand with the available capacity of specialist services.

⁶ Crime Statistics Victoria (2025), "Family Violence Data Tables: Service Sector Data Tables", tables 25b and 9.

⁷ Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (2025), *2024-25 Annual Report*, p. 62.

⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2025), Specialist Homelessness Services data cubes, Available: <https://dataexplorer.aihw.gov.au/webapi/jsf/dataCatalogueExplorer.xhtml>

Box 1: The Victorian specialist family violence sector

Victim-survivors can enter specialist family violence services through several channels:

- Referral from police and emergency services
- Referral from other services such as mental health, drug and alcohol, child protection or legal aid services
- Directly reaching out to a service (self-referrals).

Many referrals are channelled through The Orange Door, which is a statewide service that provides information, risk assessment and basic supports for people experiencing family violence, using violence, or seeking parenting or wellbeing support. In 2024-25, it received 302,234 referrals (including from police and self-referrals), relating to 219,510 victim-survivors.⁹ About half of victim-survivors referred to the Orange Door fully or partially engage with the service, and almost two in five decline service or are unable to be contacted.¹⁰

Other clients enter the sector through Safe Steps, which is a statewide crisis service offering supports such as emergency accommodation and safety planning to victim-survivors in circumstances that require urgent and immediate intervention.

Both the Orange Door and Safe Steps act as central intake points which undertake risk assessment and support clients with information and some immediate needs, before referring those in need of more specialist support to the specialist family violence sector. Specialist services also receive referrals from other specialist and general services (such as health and homelessness services) and often collaborate to connect clients with the specific services they need or to find providers who have available capacity to take on new clients.

However, limited data is publicly available on client flows through the Orange Door and Safe Steps, and on the extent to which they are helping to meet client needs.

Most specialist family violence services rely on Victorian Government funding. Although the Victorian Government does not publish figures for funding specifically provided to specialist services, budget papers show a material increase in funding over the past decade to the family violence output area, which also includes services such as The Orange Door, perpetrator interventions and programs, and reform implementation activities undertaken by government departments.¹¹ The increases in funding followed the 2016 report of the

⁹ Crime Statistics Victoria (2025), "Family Violence Data Tables: Service Sector Data Tables", tables 58 and 59.

¹⁰ Crime Statistics Victoria (2025), "Family Violence Data Tables: Service Sector Data Tables", table 60.

¹¹ For example, in 2024-25, \$231.7 million of the family violence output funding was allocated to The Orange Door Network. Parliament of Victoria (2024), Questions on Notice 21 May 2024, Inquiry into the 2024-25 Budget Estimates, Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, Available:

Royal Commission into Family Violence which revealed significant shortcomings in existing programs for reducing the frequency and impact of violence and for supporting victim-survivors.¹²

Equity Economics estimates that non-government organisations delivering specialist family violence services in Victoria will receive about \$286 million in government funding in 2025-26, of which about 60 per cent comes from baseline specialist homelessness services funding programs and the remainder from specific family violence initiatives. Under current policy settings, the figure would need to increase to \$300 million in 2026-27 (in nominal terms) to keep pace with inflation and population growth.

<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/495db5/contentassets/8aa89a5418e64910813623d1e6cf92d8/prevention-of-family-violence-qon.pdf>

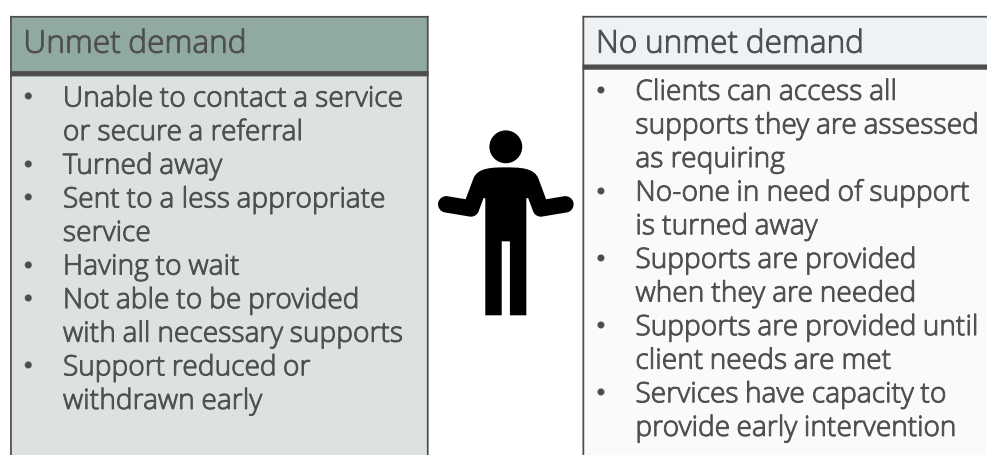
¹² Victorian Government (2023), "About the Royal Commission into Family Violence", Available: <https://www.vic.gov.au/about-royal-commission-family-violence>

Measuring unmet demand

Many specialist family violence services are overwhelmed and do not have enough capacity to provide immediate support to every victim-survivor who is reaching out for help. There are high levels of unmet demand across all types of services, including crisis accommodation and refuges, other specialist homelessness services, and case management.

Unmet demand exists when victim-survivors are unable to access high-quality support from specialist family violence services when they need it. Unmet demand can take several forms, such as when a victim-survivor is turned away because a service lacks capacity, the victim-survivor has to wait for capacity to become available, or they are unable to receive all the supports they are assessed as requiring (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Forms of unmet demand for specialist family violence services



Unmet demand is not the same as unmet need, which refers to a broader population of victim-survivors who are not accessing specialist family violence services. In addition to services not being available or having enough capacity, some victim-survivors may not reach out for help because they are unaware specialist services exist or because they fear that reporting violence or seeking help from services could make their situation worse.

In this report, Equity Economics has estimated levels of unmet demand for several key types of specialist family violence services in Victoria. This involved consideration of key conceptual and measurement issues, including that:

- Some people may contact or use more than one service—meaning that even if service A is unable to support them, they may have been able to secure support from service B.

- Some people may have their needs partially but not fully met, for example, when a woman escaping violence with nowhere safe to stay is offered case management but no crisis accommodation is available.
- Some people may withdraw entirely from the system if they have to wait for a service to have available capacity to support them.
- Some people who are unable to secure assistance from a specialist family violence service may end up being supported for some of their needs by a general health, homelessness or other service. For example, of the 48,566 people assisted by homelessness services in Victoria due to family violence in 2024-25, almost 40 per cent were assisted outside of specialist family violence services.¹³

Estimates of unmet demand

Equity Economics has estimated the extent of unmet demand for specialist family violence services in Victoria using official data on specialist homelessness services (of which specialist family violence services are a subset) and survey data on case management offered by specialist family violence services. Details of the method, data sources and assumptions are provided in the appendix.

People who cannot access any support

Equity Economics estimates that in 2024-25, approximately 3,750 people seeking support from specialist family violence services in Victoria were unable to receive any services. Collectively, they required 5,560 support periods which could not be provided, equivalent to 13 per cent of the total number of support periods that services delivered that year.

These estimates are based on data services are required to record on people they need to turn away (known as unassisted requests). In 2024-25, over 33,000 unassisted requests were recorded by specialist homelessness services in Victoria, with people most commonly turned away because accommodation or housing services were at full capacity and not available to new clients, or because services did not have enough staff.¹⁴

In addition, under-resourced services are often unable to record everyone who is reaching out for help, meaning the official data provides an incomplete picture of true levels of unmet demand. Recent research has shown that specialist homelessness services across Australia are overwhelmed, with a survey of 23 services in 2024 finding that:

- 39 per cent were forced to close their doors to people seeking help at least once over a two-week period;
- 83 per cent were unable to answer phone calls; and
- 74 per cent were unable to reply to emails for some period.¹⁵

¹³ Crime Statistics Victoria (2025), "Family Violence Data Tables: Service Sector Data Tables", table 25b.

¹⁴ AIHW (2025), Specialist homelessness services 2024-25 data tables, tables UNASSISTED.2 and UNASSISTED.6.

¹⁵ Impact Economics and Policy (2024), *Call Unanswered: Unmet demand for specialist homelessness services*.

Some people may also be deterred from seeking help if they know services are overwhelmed or they have been unable to get through previously.

The estimates of the number of people who were seeking support but unable to receive it take account of potential double counting (e.g. where someone is turned away from multiple services) as well as under-recording (e.g. where people cannot get through at all, or have some contact with a service but are not formally recorded as being unassisted).

Clients with unmet needs

Equity Economics estimates that in 2024-25 there were just under 5,000 existing clients of specialist family violence services (17 per cent of the total) where the service was unable to provide all the supports the client was assessed as needing. Half of these clients had unmet accommodation needs. This is a conservative estimate that does not include people who had some—but not all—accommodation needs met and does not include people who had accommodation—but not other—needs met.

About 29 per cent of clients using specialist family violence services in Victoria were assessed as requiring accommodation services.¹⁶ However, only 71 per cent of these clients were able to be provided with any accommodation service (see Table 2). Some of those who did not receive accommodation services were referred elsewhere, but most ended up not receiving it at all. Clients requiring medium and longer-term accommodation were much more likely to have unmet needs compared to those who only required short-term or emergency accommodation.

¹⁶ The percentage of clients in Victoria in 2024-25 with identified accommodation needs, as a proportion of clients who were mainly seeking assistance due to family violence and had an identified need for family violence assistance. Data sourced from AIHW (2025), Specialist Homelessness Services data cubes.

Table 2: Service need and provision of specialist homelessness services by clients who were mainly seeking assistance due to family violence and had an identified need for family violence assistance, Victoria, 2024-25¹⁷

Service type	Share of all clients with identified need	Share of clients with identified needs where:		
		<i>Service was provided</i>	<i>Client was referred elsewhere (no service provided)</i>	<i>Neither</i>
Accommodation – all forms	29%	71%	8%	21%
<i>Of which:</i>				
<i>Short-term or emergency accommodation</i>	22%	84%	2%	14%
<i>Medium-term/transitional housing</i>	12%	30%	17%	53%
<i>Long-term housing</i>	16%	4%	28%	68%
Family violence assistance	100%	99%	0.3%	1%
Disability assistance	1%	47%	13%	40%
Drug or alcohol counselling	1%	53%	14%	33%
Family assistance	7%	76%	11%	13%
General assistance	68%	99%	0%	0%
Immigration assistance	9%	91%	5%	5%
Legal or financial assistance	5%	53%	27%	20%
Mental health assistance	7%	59%	13%	27%
Specialist services	17%	78%	14%	8%
Tenure assistance	11%	80%	5%	15%

Delays in accessing case management

Equity Economics estimates that unmet demand for case management services provided by specialist family violence services in Victoria is equivalent to about 12 per cent of the current level of services provided. This unmet demand mainly takes the form of victim-survivors having to wait until they can be assigned to a case worker.

The estimate is derived from data which Safe and Equal has been collecting through a survey of its member services since 2021.¹⁸ These surveys have consistently shown that victim-survivors are often required to wait to access case management, while staff face high

¹⁷ Data sourced from AIHW (2025), Specialist Homelessness Services data cubes.

¹⁸ Safe and Equal (2022), *Measuring Family Violence Service Demand Project: Phase One Outcomes Report*; Safe and Equal (2025), *Measuring Specialist Family Violence Service Demand and Capacity*.

risks of burnout due to unsustainably high caseloads and vacancies which services struggle to fill. Services are also reporting growing numbers of clients are presenting with higher levels of risk and complexity, placing even further strain on the service system.

Survey data for the period October 2024 to March 2025 show that clients had to wait an average of 8.5 days to receive case management (see Table 3). About 85 per cent of clients had to wait at least one day, with clients assessed at lower levels of risk facing longer wait times. For example:

- wait times average 12.6 days among clients in the 'at risk' category, with almost half (44 per cent) of these clients having to wait more than 10 days to be assigned to a case manager
- wait times averaged just 0.7 days for clients at serious risk requiring immediate protection, yet a quarter of these clients still had to wait at least 1 day due to severe capacity constraints.

The survey data also show a significant increase in the number of victim-survivors in the lower two risk categories who have to wait to be assigned to a case manager, with 81 per cent of victim-survivors in these categories having to wait in the latest survey, compared to 50 per cent year one prior.¹⁹

Table 3: Waiting times for case management, October 2024 to March 2025 (across 36 services)

Risk category	Average waiting time (days) ²⁰	% of clients who have to wait at least 1 day	% of services with waiting times of at least 1 day	% of services with waiting times over 10 days
At risk	12.6	99%	81%	44%
Elevated risk	10.1	99%	81%	31%
Serious risk	5.3	81%	58%	6%
Serious risk requiring immediate protection	0.7	15%	25%	0%
Total	8.5	85%	-	-

¹⁹ Safe and Equal (2025), *Measuring Specialist Family Violence Service Demand and Capacity*, figure 8. Data are for the period February to April 2024.

²⁰ Weighed by the number of clients at intake (scaled down to the share of clients who require case management) in each of the risk categories.

These waiting times are likely to be broadly reflective of unmet demand pressures for case management across the sector, even though just under half of services maintain a formal 'waitlist' or 'active hold' function. Other services may manage demand in other ways, such as by prioritising victim-survivors assessed as facing the highest levels of risk, declining referrals, or referring incoming victim-survivors to other services with more capacity. In some cases, services may lack the capacity or resources to maintain a formal waitlist.

Even so, these estimates understate the extent of unmet demand within services with waitlists or active hold functions, because:

- some victim-survivors may withdraw from services before case management can be provided; and
- some services reached a point where they had to cap their waitlist or active hold (about a third of services with a waitlist or active hold).

Support for children and young people

Children and young people account for about 40 per cent of victim-survivors being supported by specialist family violence case management services in Victoria.²¹ However, services are not currently resourced to provide the dedicated, sustained and trauma-informed support that children and young people presenting to services require.

Safe and Equal estimates that at least \$32.6 million in additional funding is required each year for services to align the support they provide to children and young people to the support provided to adults. Delivering more intensive support in line with best practice would require in the order of \$43 million a year.²² Additional funding would also enable services to fully implement the Government's forthcoming Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) guidance for children and young people.

Implications of unmet demand

Due to capacity constraints, specialist family violence services across Victoria are having to prioritise higher-risk victim-survivors with more urgent needs. This means that those assessed as being at lower levels of risk may experience delays or be unable to receive support. Other services are having to turn victim-survivors away, or can only provide partial support. In some cases, victim-survivors in urgent need of emergency accommodation are being placed in motels, where it is harder for services to keep people safe and provide wrap-around supports.

These pressures make it difficult for services to assist victim-survivors to escape violence, with harm potentially escalating when timely access to appropriate specialist services cannot be secured. The capacity constraints also mean opportunities for early intervention are missed. As a result, they may end up relying more on crisis and response services in

²¹ Safe and Equal (2025), *Victorian State Budget 2026-27 Submission*, p. 12.

²² Safe and Equal (2025), *Victorian State Budget 2026-27 Submission*, p. 13.

future, as well as making greater use of other government services such as from the health and justice systems.

The challenges facing the sector are exacerbated when significant numbers of victim-survivors are unable to secure or remain in safe long-term housing. Low levels of rental affordability in the private market and a shortage of social housing across Victoria limit victim-survivors' ability to recover. These housing challenges can also mean people require assistance from specialist family violence services over a longer period, creating bottlenecks in the system which limit services' capacity to take on new clients. For example, over half (55 per cent) of clients in specialist family violence services in Victoria required support for 1 month or longer in 2024-25, compared to 35 per cent in 2019-20.²³

²³ Crime Statistics Victoria (2025), "Family Violence Data Tables: Service Sector Data Tables", table 28; Crime Statistics Victoria (2024), "Family Violence Data Tables: Service Sector Data Tables", table 28.

Costs of fully meeting demand

Equity Economics has quantified the costs and benefits of a scenario where specialist family violence services have the capacity to deliver the supports that all victim-survivors are assessed as requiring when they are needed. The detailed methodology and data sources are set out in the Appendix.

Realising this scenario would require increasing funding for the sector so that:

- service provision can be expanded to support victim-survivors who are currently unable to access specialist family violence services at all;
- existing clients can have all their support needs met;
- victim-survivors receive support when it is needed, including access to case management and early intervention to help them before violence escalates further; and
- services can align the support they provide to children and young people to that provided to adults.

Equity Economics estimates that fully meeting demand would require service delivery to expand by approximately 62 per cent (see Table 4). This uplift considers the number of people affected and the costs of service provision.

Table 4: Funding uplift required to fully meet demand for services

Category	Uplift required
Supporting people who cannot access any support	19%
Supporting clients with unmet needs	25%
Removing delays in accessing case management ²⁴	7%
Support for children and young people	11%
Total	62%

The uplift would allow services to be provided to an estimated 15 per cent more clients (who currently are not receiving any support), which would mean a total of about 35,000 unique clients in 2026-27 (about 20,700 adult clients and 14,600 aged under 18). The remainder of the uplift relates to the expansion of service provision to existing clients.

²⁴ Includes allowance for additional brokerage costs equivalent to 10 per cent of the increase in service provision.

The total cost of fully meeting demand in 2026-27 would be about \$487 million in nominal terms, including allowance for projected inflation and population growth between now and mid-2026.²⁵ This compares to an estimated \$300 million in funding in 2026-27 if policy settings did not change and funding only kept pace with inflation and population growth.

These estimates are conservative and only reflect aspects of unmet demand where there is sufficient data available (see Appendix). They also only capture service provision in relation to current clients and people who are reaching out to services. In other words, the estimates do not reflect underlying levels of unmet need in the community where victim-survivors are not reporting violence, seeking help or attempting to contact services. Addressing this broader level of unmet need would likely require a significantly greater expansion in service delivery than what has been possible to model for this report.

²⁵ The figure is \$472 million in current dollars (i.e. not adjusted for projected inflation).

Social and economic benefits of fully meeting demand

Family violence imposes a range of social and economic costs on the community. This includes direct impacts on victim-survivors such as health costs, property damage and lost workforce participation. It also includes the costs borne by friends and families, employers and other government services such as the justice, health and child protection systems. There are additional long-term costs associated with children affected by family violence, including to their health, education and lifetime earnings.

Previous research has sought to quantify the costs that family violence imposes on the community. In 2004, a landmark study by Access Economics found that family violence costs the Australian economy about \$8 billion every year.²⁶ Today, this would be equivalent to \$6.9 billion per year for Victoria alone, after adjusting for inflation, economic growth, population growth and Victoria's share of the population.²⁷

Other studies have since updated the Access Economics estimates. The most recent estimate for the cost of family violence in Victoria (published by KPMG almost 10 years ago) was \$5.3 billion in 2015-16,²⁸ equivalent to about \$8.9 billion today.

While these studies offer valuable insights on the costs of violence, they do not reflect current data, research and evidence on rates of family violence and its effects. Moreover, these previous studies quantified the total costs of violence across the population, including costs still being borne by victim-survivors who are experiencing the long-term and cumulative impacts of past violence.

In this report, Equity Economics has used previous research on the costs of family violence as a starting point to model the costs that might be *avoidable on a forward-looking basis*. Using the latest data and evidence, and assumptions informed by the literature, the benefits (i.e. avoided costs) generated by specialist family violence services were estimated. The Appendix sets out the methodology in detail.

Specifically, benefits were estimated for the scenario in which demand for specialist family violence services is fully met. In this scenario, more victim-survivors are able to avoid escalating or repeat violence, and are better supported to access justice, health and other

²⁶ Access Economics (2004), *The cost of domestic violence to the Australian Economy: Part I*.

²⁷ Calculated by multiplying the original estimate by Victoria's share of the population in 2002-03 (24 per cent) and then inflated to 2025 values using nominal GDP growth.

²⁸ KPMG (2017), *The cost of family violence in Victoria*.

services to reduce the long-term costs to themselves and to government. The estimates do not include costs associated with family violence which specialist family violence services are unlikely to be able to reduce or avoid, such as justice system costs related to perpetrators and some longer-term health impacts of past violence.

Summary of benefits

Equity Economics estimates that specialist family violence services can deliver benefits in the order of \$79,500 per client, on average, consisting of the avoided costs associated with poor health, lost workforce participation and productivity, property damage and impacts on children (see Table 5). This includes short-term savings as well as the long-term benefits associated with receiving support from a specialist family violence service, and which are realised in future years.

Across Victoria, the total benefits for clients who are supported in 2026-27 would be in the order of \$2.8 billion (in current dollars), based on the estimated number of clients that could be supported (from the previous section). These estimated benefits are about 5.9 times as large as the cost of fully meeting demand in that year, and demonstrate that investment in closing gaps in the sector's capacity offers significant social and economic benefit to the community and government.

About \$1.8 billion in benefits accrue to victim-survivors in the form of better health (avoided pain, suffering and premature mortality), with a further \$603 million gained through greater workforce participation and productivity, which benefits victim-survivors through higher earnings. An additional \$377 million accrues to the Victorian and Commonwealth governments through reduced use of health, child protection, justice and other services.

Table 5: Summary of benefits of fully meeting demand for specialist family violence services in Victoria in 2026-27 (in 2025 dollars, present value)

Benefit type	\$ per client	Aggregate \$m
Adult clients		
Avoided pain, suffering and premature mortality	\$39,608	\$819
Savings to the health care system	\$2,720	\$56
Greater workforce participation and productivity	\$22,281	\$461
Avoided property damage	\$902	\$19
Child clients		
Savings to the child protection system	\$4,830	\$71
Avoided pain, suffering and premature mortality	\$66,839	\$976
Reduced use of other government services	\$17,126	\$250
Greater workforce participation and productivity	\$9,741	\$142
Total benefits	\$79,183	\$2,794

Source: Equity Economics modelling.

Impacts relating to adults

Avoided pain, suffering and premature mortality

Family violence can have significant impacts on victim-survivors' health and quality of life, including long-term physical and mental health effects, as well as shortened life expectancy. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimates that intimate partner violence contributed to about 0.8 percent of deaths and 2.2 per cent of the burden of disease and injury for females aged 15 and older in 2024.²⁹ Intimate partner violence is in the top five leading factors contributing to ill-health among females aged 15 to 54.

Most of the burden of pain, suffering and premature mortality caused by intimate partner violence among females aged 15 or older is caused by mental ill-health, with depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, and suicide and self-inflicted injuries comprising 93 per cent of the total burden (see Figure 3). Expressed as a share of the total burden of each of these diseases, intimate partner violence contributes to about 20 percent of the total burden for depressive disorders and for suicide and self-inflicted injuries, and about half the total burden for homicide and violence.

These figures may not fully capture all the health impacts of family violence, as it can be difficult to distinguish the impacts of violence from other contributing factors. Recent evidence suggests that some health impacts may be more extensive than once thought, with a number of researchers linking intimate partner violence and acquired brain injuries (which can also exacerbate experiences of psychological distress and may be linked to some mental health conditions).³⁰

Using established methodologies to apply dollar values to the costs of pain, suffering and premature mortality, Equity Economics estimates that the health burdens associated with recent experiences of family violence are equivalent to about \$16,000 per adult victim-survivor per year.

Specialist family violence services can help victim-survivors to avoid future experiences of family violence and help them to access health services and other supports for recovery. This can reduce—but not completely avoid—all health costs associated with violence.

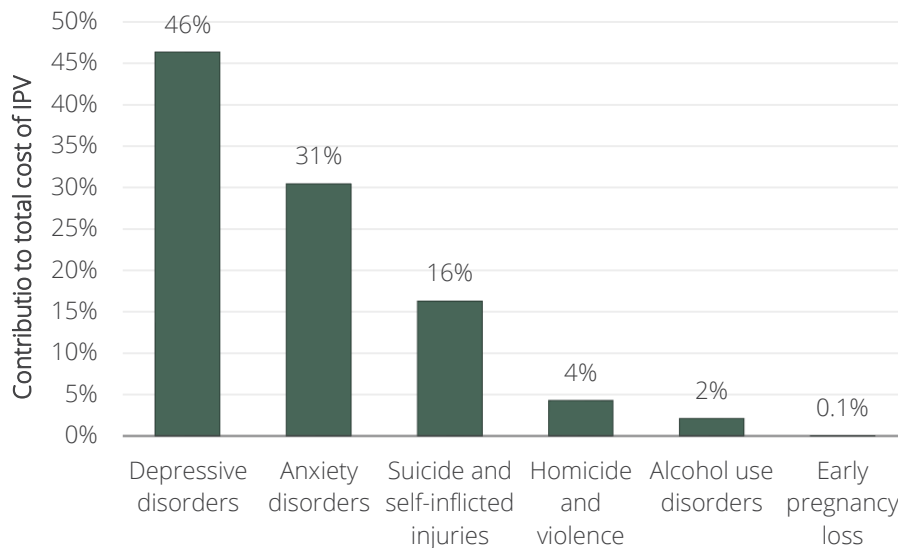
²⁹ AIHW (2024), Australian Burden of Disease Study 2024, data tables, Available:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-conditions-disability-deaths/burden-of-disease/data>

³⁰ For example, Adhikari, S. P., Daugherty, J. C., Molinares, N. Q. et al (2024), "A Four-Country Study of Strangulation-Related Alterations in Consciousness in Women Who Have Experienced Intimate Partner Violence: Co-Occurrence with Traumatic Brain Injuries and Measures of Psychological Distress", *Journal of Neurotrauma*, vol. 41, no. 13-14, pp. e1668-e1679; Valera, E., Daugherty, J. C., Scott, O. C. and Berenbaum, H. (2022), "Strangulation as an Acquired Brain Injury in Intimate-Partner Violence and Its Relationship to Cognitive and Psychological Functioning: A Preliminary Study", *Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation*, vol. 37(1), pp. 15-23.

Assuming services can reduce the health burdens by 50 per cent, they can avoid about \$8,600 in costs per victim-survivor per year.³¹

Figure 3: Health burden of intimate partner violence—contribution of each linked disease (females)



If demand for family violence services was fully met, and assuming that service use during a year can avoid health burdens associated with family violence over the next five years, the total benefits to the Victorian community would be about \$819 million. This estimate only covers adult victim-survivors, with health impacts on children discussed separately below.

Savings to the health care system

Family violence also imposes substantial burdens on the health care system. For example, in Victoria in 2024-25, family violence led to 1,600 people visiting emergency departments and almost 1,400 ambulance patients.³² In the previous year, family violence led to an estimated 2,300 hospital admissions across the state.³³

Intimate partner violence costs the health system in Victoria an estimated \$200 million each year, including the use of hospitals, general practitioners and specialists.³⁴ Some of

³¹ Estimate has been adjusted for the fact that some victim-survivors are already receiving support from specialist family violence services. See Appendix for details.

³² Crime Statistics Victoria (2025), "Family Violence Data Tables: Service Sector Data Tables", tables 1 and 36.

³³ National figure for family violence-related hospitalisations from AIHW (2025), "Health services", figure 1, Available: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/responses-and-outcomes/health-services>, scaled to Victoria using the state's share of female victims of family violence in the past two years (derived from ABS (2023), "Personal Safety, Australia, 2021-22").

³⁴ Based on Australia-wide costs of \$766 million, scaled to Victoria using the method described in the Appendix.

this cost is related to the long-term and cumulative impacts of past experiences of family violence.

Equity Economics estimates that the cost of providing health services used by adults who have experienced family violence in the past year is equivalent to about \$1,100 per victim-survivor per year. This is an average, noting that some victim-survivors will make much greater use of the health system than others, and not all victim-survivors will be able to access services they need (e.g. mental health services). It is also possible that the extent to which people use health care services as a result of family violence is understated in official estimates.

If demand for specialist family violence services was fully met and these services reduce health burdens in line with the estimates in the previous section, about \$587 a year in costs of health care services could be avoided, on average, per adult victim-survivor. Assuming the effect lasts for 5 years, the total savings to governments would be about \$56 million.

Greater workforce participation and productivity

Victim-survivors of family violence may find it harder to maintain workforce participation and to be productive at work. This includes unexpected absences from work, joss loss, and withdrawal from the workforce (and in extreme cases such as murder, never working again). This can have a significant impact on their income and financial security and can impose significant costs on the economy from lost production.

Recent research by Anne Summers has quantified the link between family violence and workforce impacts:³⁵

- In 2021-22, women who experienced partner violence or abuse in the previous five years were 5.3 percentage points less likely to be employed than women who never experienced this violence or abuse.
- The employment gap is even larger for women who experienced economic abuse, at 9.4 percentage points.
- More than a third of women (34.6 per cent) who were working and experienced violence took time off work as a result. The average time off was 31 days, with half of these women taking at least 7 days off work and more than a quarter taking at least three weeks off.
- Women who experience violence more frequently are much more likely to take time off work than those who experience it less frequently.

Drawing on this evidence, Equity Economics estimates that absences from work, reduced working hours, and victim-survivors exiting the workforce completely—combined with the costs associated with finding, hiring and training replacement workers—costs the Victorian economy about \$1.1 billion a year, or over \$7,300 per victim-survivor.

³⁵ Summers, A., Shortridge, T. and Sobeck, K. (2025), *The cost of domestic violence to women's employment and education*, University of Technology Sydney.

Specialist family violence services can reduce some of these economic losses by reducing experiences of escalated or repeat violence, supporting victim-survivors to recover, and helping victim-survivors to maintain their workforce participation. Assuming services can reduce the number of days taken off work by adult victim-survivors experiencing frequent violence to the level of those experiencing less frequent violence, and assuming they can reduce the chance of leaving full-time employment by half, they can avoid economic losses equivalent to over \$4,800 per victim-survivor per year (see Table 6). Assuming the effects last for 5 years, the total savings would add up to \$461 million.

Table 6: Avoided costs of reduced workforce participation and productivity

Type of cost	Actual costs of violence per victim-survivor (\$/year)	Average avoided costs per victim-survivor using services (\$/year)
Absenteeism from work	\$2,968	\$2,378
Leaving full-time employment to work part-time or not at all	\$3,503	\$1,870
Management costs of finding, hiring and training replacement workers	\$860	\$565
Total	\$7,332	\$4,812

These estimates are conservative because they do not take into account reduced hours for victim-survivors who already work part-time (as no data were available), or workforce absences due to the involvement of victim-survivors and perpetrators in the justice system (which it is assumed specialist family violence services cannot avoid).

Further, the estimates do not account for the potential longer-term loss in earnings that occur when family violence affects victim-survivors' education. Anne Summers found that a year after women first report experiencing family violence, their university degree attainment rates are 5.2 percentage points lower than for women did not experience violence. After three years, the gap grows to 9.7 percentage points.³⁶

Avoided property damage

Specialist family violence services can help reduce the economic costs of property damage (such as damage to houses, cars, and household items) caused by people who use violence against victim-survivors. Based on previous research,³⁷ Equity Economics estimates that about 25 per cent of victim-survivors experience damaged or destroyed property, and the cost of replacing this property averages about \$6,700 per affected victim-survivor. These

³⁶ Summers, A., Shortridge, T. and Sobek, K. (2025), *The cost of domestic violence to women's employment and education*, University of Technology Sydney.

³⁷ Access Economics (2004), *The cost of domestic violence to the Australian Economy: Part I*; costs inflated to 2025 dollars using growth in nominal GDP per capita.

estimates include costs across the economy, including those borne by landlords as well as by victim-survivors.

By providing brokerage to pay for safety upgrades, reducing clients' exposure to violence and helping them to access and seek legal advice against people using violence who have caused property damage, specialist family violence services can lower some of the economic costs of property damage. They can also support victim-survivors affected by property damage to reduce the burdens on them, including navigating liability issues when a person using violence damages a rental property.

If demand for specialist family violence services was fully met, and assuming services can reduce the costs of property damage by half, the aggregate savings would amount to about \$19 million a year for Victoria in avoided property-related damage.

This figure only includes the cost of replacing damaged or destroyed property, and does not include other costs that may be associated with eviction or homelessness resulting from property damage. The literature suggests that when a victim-survivor is evicted from a rental property, there can be relocation costs in the order of \$4,700 and re-leasing costs for landlords in the order of \$1,400,³⁸ as well as potentially large costs of homelessness and the use of crisis accommodation. Although property damage is the cause of eviction in only 1 per cent of at-fault rental eviction notices in Victoria,³⁹ earlier research has found that almost a fifth of evictions from social housing involved a woman who had experienced family violence and that family violence was present in half of cases involving misconduct by a male tenant.⁴⁰

Impacts relating to children

Savings to the child protection system

There is a strong intersection between family violence and child maltreatment, particularly when the abuse or neglect occurs within family relationships. When a child experiences family violence directly (by being the target of the violence) or indirectly (by seeing or hearing violence towards other family members), they are generally considered to have experienced child maltreatment.

³⁸ Impact Economics and Policy (2025), *The economic and social impact of financial counselling in Victoria*, Financial Counselling Victoria, p. 62, Available: https://fcvic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025_FCVic_Workforce-Development-Project_Volume_2.pdf

³⁹ Commissioner for Residential Tenancies (2025), *Renting in Victoria: 2024 Snapshot*, p. 21, available: https://files.rentingcommissioner.vic.gov.au/2025-10/Renting%20snapshot_FINAL.Website.pdf

⁴⁰ Misconduct includes excessive noise or swearing, abusive behaviour, alcohol and drug use, and criminal activity, as well as property damage. Martin, C., Habibis, D., Burns, L. and Pawson, H., *Social housing legal responses to crime and anti-social behaviour: Impacts on vulnerable families*, Australian Housing and Research Institute, p. 45.

A recent survey of child maltreatment found that about 62 per cent of Australians have experienced at least one form of child maltreatment.⁴¹ Many of these people had experienced physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect in a family relationship, with biological and non-biological parents being the perpetrators of an estimated 96 per cent of all instances of child maltreatment.⁴² In addition, almost two thirds of Australians who have experienced child maltreatment had seen or heard acts of violence towards other family members in the home (e.g. perpetrated by one parent against the other).⁴³ As such, a large proportion of children who experience maltreatment also experience family violence.

Many, but not all, children presenting to family violence services are likely to have experienced one or more forms of child maltreatment (with many of these children likely to present to services with a parent who experienced family violence from the same person using violence). This maltreatment leads to long-term costs for these children themselves, to the wider economy, and to the child protection system. For example, on average, child protection services cost about \$21,300 to provide (per child notified to authorities), with costs far higher for children who are placed in out-of-home care (exceeding \$100,000 a year).⁴⁴

Specialist family violence services can significantly reduce the risk of future child maltreatment by helping children and families to escape violence, thereby reducing costs borne by the child protection system. Assuming that services can halve the rate at which child clients enter the child protection system, Equity Economics estimates that services can save about \$15 million in costs to the child protection system each year, or \$71 million assuming the effects last five years per child.⁴⁵ This equates to an average saving of about \$4,800 per child client. Almost half the cost savings relate to the relatively small proportion of children who would have ended up in out-of-home care.

These estimates do not assume any change in the likelihood of victim-survivors reaching out for help, noting that some adult victim-survivors may be reluctant to do so if they fear that this could lead to their children being removed from them by child protection authorities. However, the barriers to seeking help would be lower if specialist family violence services were appropriately funded to provide culturally appropriate and trauma-informed supports to all victim-survivors reaching out for help, and if governments took

⁴¹ Haslam, D., Matthews, B., Pacella, R., et al (2023), *The prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia: Findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study: Brief Report*, Queensland University of Technology.

⁴² Hurren, E., Thompson, C., Jenkins, B., et al (2018), *Who are the perpetrators of child maltreatment?*, Report to the Criminology Research Advisory Council, p. 30.

⁴³ Haslam, D., Matthews, B., Pacella, R., et al (2023), *The prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia: Findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study: Brief Report*, Queensland University of Technology.

⁴⁴ See Appendix for details.

⁴⁵ This calculation assumes that 90 per cent of children presenting to services have experienced maltreatment, and about 10 per cent of children subject to maltreatment would ordinarily be notified authorities.

stronger action to embed trauma-informed and culturally appropriate processes and supports in the police and justice systems.

Other avoided costs for children

Child maltreatment has been linked to a range of adverse short- and long-term outcomes over the life course. People who experienced maltreatment as children are more likely to experience severe mental health and behavioural harms (such as depressive and anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder), including in their adult life. Child maltreatment has also been linked to risky health behaviours including binge drinking, smoking, drug use and self-harm.⁴⁶ Across the population, child abuse and neglect have been linked to 1.5 per cent of deaths and 3 per cent of the health burden of disease, and for women the impact is even larger than for intimate partner violence.⁴⁷

Researchers have also found that children who experience maltreatment are more likely to engage in criminal activity and be involved in the youth and adult justice systems, have lower workforce participation and productivity, and make greater use of government services such as health care and special education.⁴⁸ There is also evidence of strong links between experiences of child maltreatment, criminal activity (including involvement in the youth justice system) and homelessness.⁴⁹

The overall financial and non-financial costs associated with child maltreatment experienced in Australia in 2012-13 were estimated at \$17.4 billion, equivalent to over \$30 billion a year now.⁵⁰ More recent estimates put the costs of increased use of health services and reduced workforce productivity by all Australians aged 16 or older who had experienced child maltreatment at almost \$46 billion a year in 2021-22.⁵¹

Specialist family violence services can help to reduce some of these costs through early intervention to prevent maltreatment occurring or continuing, and by connecting children and families with supports that can help them to recover from the effects of trauma and previous maltreatment (for example, by helping with accessing school-related supports, mental health care or the National Disability Insurance Scheme).

⁴⁶ Haslam, D., Matthews, B., Pacella, R., et al (2023), *The prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia: Findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study: Brief Report*, Queensland University of Technology.

⁴⁷ AIHW (2024), Australian Burden of Disease Study 2024, data tables, Available:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-conditions-disability-deaths/burden-of-disease/data>

⁴⁸ McCarthy, M. M., Taylor, P., Norman, R. E., et al (2016), "The lifetime economic and social costs of child maltreatment in Australia", *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 71, pp. 217-226.

⁴⁹ AIHW (2012), *Children and young people at risk of social exclusion: Links between homelessness, child protection and juvenile justice*, Data Linkage Series no. 13.

⁵⁰ McCarthy et al (2016); inflated to 2025 dollars using growth in nominal GDP.

⁵¹ Le, D. Q., Le, L. K-D., Yap, M. B. H., et al (2026), "Impact of child maltreatment on the costs of health service use and productivity loss: Findings from the Australian child maltreatment study", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 171.

Equity Economics estimates that lifetime costs of child maltreatment are in the order of \$681,000 per child (see Table 7), based on estimates from a previous Australian study.⁵² Even if specialist family violence services are only able to avoid a small proportion of these costs (10 per cent of annualised costs over 30 years), the benefits would be in the order of \$1.4 billion for children supported by services in 2026-27 alone.

Table 7: Long-term costs of child maltreatment (2025 dollars)

Type of cost	Lifetime cost per affected child (\$ present value) ⁵³	Avoided costs due to specialist family violence services, 2026-27 (\$m present value)
Pain, suffering and premature mortality	\$485,775	\$976
Health care	\$92,379	\$186
Education	\$5,495	\$11
Criminal justice	\$25,303	\$51
Housing and homelessness	\$1,291	\$3
Workforce and productivity	\$70,797	\$142
Total	\$681,040	\$1,369

⁵² McCarthy, M. M., Taylor, P., Norman, R. E., et al (2016), "The lifetime economic and social costs of child maltreatment in Australia", *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 71, pp. 217-226.

⁵³ McCarthy et al 2016; inflated to 2025 dollars using growth in nominal GDP per capita.

Appendix: Methodology and data sources

Numbers of victim-survivors and clients

This report uses the following inputs for the prevalence and incidence of family violence in Victoria, sourced from the ABS Personal Safety Survey for 2021-22, which have been projected forward to 2025 values using growth in the Victorian female population:⁵⁴

- 621,700 women aged 18 or older in Victoria have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15.
- 1,038,000 women aged 18 or older in Victoria have experienced any form of family violence since the age of 15, defined as those experiencing intimate partner violence, plus those experiencing cohabiting partner emotional or economic abuse, plus those experiencing other family member violence.
- 31,400 women aged 18 or older in Victoria experienced intimate partner violence in the previous year (calculated by multiplying number who have experienced violence in the past two years by the ratio between one-year and two-year experiences of violence reported at the national level (as annual state-level estimates are not reported))
- 153,800 women aged 18 or older in Victoria experienced any form of family violence in the previous year (calculated using the same method as above).

Where necessary, estimates for other years have been constructed by scaling up these figures using population growth.

It is assumed there were 29,729 clients of specialist family violence services in 2024-25, based on Victorian Government data on the number of clients in specialist family violence services operating as specialist homelessness services. Of these clients, 17,421 were adults (aged 18 or older) and 12,308 were children (aged under 18).⁵⁵

Taking into account population growth as well as the estimated 15 per cent uplift in clients required to fully meet demand (explained below), the number of clients in 2026-27 is estimated to be 20,675 adult clients and 14,607 child clients (a total of 35,282).

⁵⁴ ABS (2023), "Personal Safety, Australia, 2021-22"; ABS (2025), "National, state and territory population, March 2025".

⁵⁵ Crime Statistics Victoria (2025), "Family Violence Data Tables: Service Sector Data Tables", table 30.

Unmet demand

Specialist homelessness services data

To estimate unmet demand and costs for specialist family violence services, 2024-25 data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare collection for specialist homelessness services were used. This was done on the understanding that all specialist family violence services in Victoria operate under specialist homelessness services funding and reporting arrangements.

As there is no flag in the AIHW data to indicate services which are specialist family violence services, the AIHW data was filtered to the subset of clients in Victoria who were recorded with family violence as the main reason they were assistance, and who were also identified as needing family violence assistance from services. There are 28,728 clients recorded with these characteristics, which is close (within 4 per cent) to the number of clients in specialist family violence services reported by the Victorian Government (29,729).⁵⁶ Estimates based on AIHW data are scaled accordingly so that total client numbers match those reported by the Victorian Government.

UNASSISTED REQUESTS

Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) shows that there were 33,125 unassisted requests recorded by specialist homelessness services across Victoria in 2024-25.⁵⁷ Apportioning this number to specialist family violence services using the method described above gives a figure of 6,861 unassisted requests.

To estimate the number of unassisted support periods in the year, it was assumed that:

- 5,277 unique people had unassisted requests, in line with AIHW estimates that the average person had 1.3 unassisted requests during the year.⁵⁸
- 64 per cent of these people received services at some point during the year (in line with AIHW estimates⁵⁹) and, for this group, 50 per cent of unassisted requests were for new support periods which were not provided (with the rest being met by services in a reasonable timeframe after the unassisted request).
- The remaining 36 per cent of people each required 1.5 support periods, in line with the average number of support periods per client for specialist family violence services.⁶⁰
- The true number of unmet support periods is 15 per cent higher than the total of the above calculations, to account for people who cannot get through to services

⁵⁶ Crime Statistics Victoria (2025), "Family Violence Data Tables: Service Sector Data Tables", tables 25b.

⁵⁷ AIHW (2025), Specialist homelessness services 2024-25 data tables, table UNASSISTED.2.

⁵⁸ AIHW (2025), Specialist homelessness services 2024-25 data tables, table HIST.UNASSISTED.

⁵⁹ AIHW (2025), Specialist homelessness services 2024-25 data tables, table HIST.UNASSISTED.

⁶⁰ Crime Statistics Victoria (2025), "Family Violence Data Tables: Service Sector Data Tables", tables 25a and 25b.

(10 percentage points) and those who are able to make some contact with services but are not formally recorded as unassisted (5 percentage points).

These adjustments give a figure of 5,560 unmet support periods.

To estimate the cost of meeting this unmet demand, the number of unmet support periods was first split into support periods where accommodation support was needed (3,071) and other support periods (2,488). The percentage who require accommodation support is based on 55 per cent of average daily unassisted requests relating to accommodation (across the entire specialist homelessness sector in Victoria).⁶¹

These figures were then multiplied by unit costs per support period, calculated as described in the costs section below. This yields an estimate of \$55 million in additional funding (a 19 per cent uplift) required to provide services for unassisted requests.

Sensitivity testing using the assumption that each of the 6,861 unassisted requests represents an unmet support period results in an estimate of \$67 in additional funding required (a 24 per cent uplift).

UNMET NEEDS OF EXISTING CLIENTS

The AIHW collects data on which specific services clients of homelessness services are identified as requiring, as well as which services they were provided with or referred elsewhere for (noting that there is no guarantee a client referred elsewhere will end up receiving that service).

This data indicates that among Victorian clients of specialist family violence services in 2024-25 (proxied using the method described earlier), 8,699 were assessed as requiring one or more kind of accommodation service. However, 2,258 (29 per cent) of these clients were not provided with any accommodation service, of which 703 (28 per cent) were referred elsewhere. For the remainder of the analysis, it is assumed that clients referred elsewhere do not end up receiving the service they need, noting capacity constraints across the family violence and other allied sectors.

The number of clients with unmet needs including accommodation was assumed to be 2,258 (i.e. the number of clients who needed accommodation who were not provided it). This may be an underestimate as it does not account for unmet non-accommodation

⁶¹ Calculated by taking the number of average daily unassisted requests across the two reported categories of accommodation services and dividing this by the sum of requests across all support categories (i.e. ignoring double counting), which gives a figure of 43.8. This was then scaled up to 47.5, using on the ratio of the equivalent figure from 2023-24 data to the number of average daily unassisted requests for accommodation services in 2023-24 published in the Report on Government Services. Finally, this figure was compared to the overall average daily unassisted requests (86), giving an estimate of 55 percent. Data sources: AIHW (2025), Specialist homelessness services 2024-25 data tables, table UNASSISTED.4; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2025), "Homelessness services data tables", Report on Government Services, table 19A.12.

service needs by clients who do receive accommodation services, and does not account for whether all types of accommodation need were met for each client.

The number of clients with unmet needs other than accommodation services was estimated using the weighted average share of clients (who did not require any accommodation services) with unmet need, across each non-accommodation service type (12 per cent). This gives an estimate of 2,428 clients. It may be an overestimate if some clients have unmet needs across more than one of the non-accommodation services.

Applying the estimates of average costs per client (discussed below) then yields an estimate that \$71 million in additional funding (a 25 per cent uplift) is required to address unmet needs of existing clients.

Sensitivity testing using the number of clients who did not require any accommodation services and who did not receive *any* of the non-accommodation services they needed (0.2 per cent in 2023-24, which is the latest available data⁶²) gives a figure of 42 clients with unmet needs other than accommodation services. This implies that \$56 million in additional funding is required (a 20 per cent uplift).

Case management waiting times

To estimate the extent of unmet demand, data from Safe and Equal's demand and capacity survey (covering the period 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025) were used to estimate the average number of days victim-survivors were required to wait before they were assigned to a case manager. The relevant survey questions cover general case management services and exclude case management delivered through refuge, counselling/therapeutic service programs, and case management provided to victim-survivors after they leave a refuge.

Thirty-six services who provide case management services responded to the survey questions in relation to wait times. As the data was recorded in discrete categories (same day, 1-5 days, 6-10 days, etc), the midpoint of each range was used to calculate the averages. The "same day (didn't wait)" category was assigned a value of 0 and the "31 days or more" category was assigned a value of 31 (which is conservative and likely understates the true waiting times for people in this category). Averages were calculated by weighting observations by the number of clients at intake, by risk category, recorded by each service.

The average waiting time (8.5 days on average across risk categories⁶³) was then divided by the average length of case management support periods (69 days, assuming 7 days in a week), resulting in an estimate of 12.2 per cent. The average length of case management

⁶² Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2025), "Homelessness services data tables", Report on Government Services, table 19A.11.

⁶³ See Table 3 in the main report.

support periods was calculated by weighting observations by the estimated number of clients at intake who required case management.⁶⁴

The funding uplift required to address case management waiting times was estimated by taking the estimated percentage increase in service delivery required (12.2 per cent), increasing this by a further 10 per cent to account for brokerage costs,⁶⁵ and applying it to the assumed portion of total service delivery costs that relate to case management (50 per cent). This results in an overall uplift of 7 per cent relative to total sector funding.

Costs

Total Victorian Government funding for specialist family violence services was estimated to be \$286 million in 2025-26. This figure was increased with consumer price inflation⁶⁶ and population growth⁶⁷ to estimate that funding would be \$300 million in 2026-27 on current policy settings.

The cost estimate of \$286 million in 2025-26 comprises two components.

- **Baseline funding through specialist homelessness services funding (\$168 million).**
This was estimated by apportioning total Victorian Government funding of \$519 million in 2023-24 (the latest year of data available)⁶⁸ to the specialist family violence sector, assuming that 50 per cent of service provision costs relate to accommodation provision,⁶⁹ 22 per cent of all clients using accommodation services are supported by specialist family violence services,⁷⁰ and the costs of providing accommodation services are 37 per cent higher in specialist family violence services compared to other providers.⁷¹ This estimate was then increased by inflation and population growth to give an estimate for 2025-26.

⁶⁴ As data on the number of clients at intake requiring case management specifically is not available, this was estimated by taking the total number of clients at intake and scaling it to the proportion of all referrals that are for case management.

⁶⁵ Data provided by a sample of Safe and Equal member organisations indicated that brokerage costs comprised about 10 per cent of case management costs.

⁶⁶ Consumer Price Index to June 2025, then projected rates of consumer price inflation from Commonwealth Government budget papers for subsequent years.

⁶⁷ Projections for Victoria (medium series) from ABS (2023), "Population Projections, Australia, 2022 (base) – 2071".

⁶⁸ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2025), "Homelessness services data tables", Report on Government Services, table 19A.20.

⁶⁹ Based on the weighted average proportion of accommodation costs in total costs, in data provided by a sample of Safe and Equal member organisations.

⁷⁰ Based on AIHW data for 2023-24, scaled to the Victorian specialist family violence services sector using the method described earlier.

⁷¹ Based on the difference in the median number of nights clients spend in accommodation (26 nights for clients who have experienced family violence, compared to 19 nights for all clients). AIHW (2024), Specialist homelessness services 2023-24 data tables, table CLIENTS.48.

- **Additional funding delivered through specific Victorian Government funding programs for specialist family violence services (\$118 million).** These programs are set out in Table A1, with only a percentage of funding counted for programs that also fund other things, such as government organisations and prevention programs.

Unit cost estimates were derived using the cost estimates above (in 2023-24 values) and data on client numbers (also for 2023-24). Assuming that 50 per cent of costs in the specialist family violence sector relate to accommodation provision (as described above), and that 6,433 clients used accommodation services in 2023-24, implies unit costs of \$21,378 per client or \$13,932 per support period. Assuming the remaining costs and client numbers relate to non-accommodation services implies unit costs of \$6,045 per client and \$3,939 per support period. These figures were inflated to 2025 dollars when used in the modelling.

To estimate the costs of fully meeting demand, it was assumed that all costs of service delivery are covered by government funding,⁷² notwithstanding that some services may receive philanthropic or other sources of funding.

⁷² Based on data provided by a sample of Safe and Equal member organisations.

Table A1: Victorian Government funding programs for family violence initiatives⁷³

Program	\$m 2025-26	Assumed percentage	Justification
New programs and initiatives in the 2025-26 Budget			
Supporting Victoria's response to family violence	\$27.3	50%	Also includes funding for Respect Victoria, prevention programs and perpetrator interventions
Supporting Victoria's response to sexual violence	\$13.1	100%	
Family violence risk assessment and information sharing schemes	\$8.5	50%	Also supports government organisations
Allocated funding from previous budgets			
Refuge and crisis accommodation	\$2.1	100%	
Ending family violence and sexual assault	\$15.7	50%	Includes perpetrator interventions
Addressing family violence for older Victorians	\$1.5	100%	
Family violence victim survivors supports	\$36.2	100%	
Driving down family and sexual violence	\$10.1	0%	Includes perpetrator interventions
Safer families: Central Information Point service	\$12.3	0%	Government-run service
Strengthening Women's Safety	\$14.9	50%	Also includes funding for prevention initiatives, perpetrator interventions and information services.
Lapsing programs extended in the 2025-26 Budget			
Sustaining family violence reforms	\$4.5	100%	
Responses for children and young people impacted by family violence and sexual assault	\$8.9	100%	
Support for victim survivors of family violence and sexual assault	\$2.2	100%	
Supporting victims of sexual violence and harm	\$10.5	100%	
Ending family violence and sexual assault	\$3.6	50%	Includes perpetrator interventions
Information sharing and family violence risk assessment and management reform	\$8.5	50%	Also supports government organisations
Total - all program funding	\$179.9		
Total - estimated funding for specialist family violence services	\$118.3		

⁷³ Sourced from Parliament of Victoria (2025), "2025-26 Budget Estimates Questionnaire: Department of Families, Fairness and Housing", Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, Available: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/4ab260/contentassets/3156f6124d4040008694cd9cd23cdbbb/df-fh-2025-26-budget-estimates-questionnaire.pdf>

Benefits

Types of benefits were identified based on previous studies of the costs of family violence, with some categories excluded from this analysis, mostly because they are unlikely to be influenced by specialist family violence services (see Table A2).

Table A2: Access Economics (2004) categories of costs of family violence and rational for treatment in this research⁷⁴

Type of cost	\$m in 2002-03	Treatment
Pain, suffering and premature mortality	\$3,521	Included
Health services	\$388	Included
Production	\$484	Included: Lost work participation by victims due to injury/distress, reduced work hours or death. Included: Management costs associated with lost participation. Excluded: Lost work participation by perpetrators and associated with victims attending court (services unable to influence). Excluded: Reduced unpaid and volunteer work (evidence unclear and does not appear to reflect substitution between paid and unpaid work).
Consumption	\$2,575	Included: Property damage. Excluded: Reduced economies of scale due to households breaking up (services unable to influence).
Second generational	\$220	Included
Administrative and other	\$480	Excluded: Legal system costs, carer costs associated with court attendance (services unable to influence). Excluded: Temporary accommodation and family violence services (captured in costs analysis) Excluded: Other costs such as funeral costs (immaterial).
Economic cost of transfers	\$410	Excluded: Not typically measured in benefit-cost analyses of specific policy measures.
Total	\$8,078	

⁷⁴ Access Economics (2004), *The cost of domestic violence to the Australian Economy: Part I*.

The estimates of benefits are based on assumptions about the impact specialist family violence services have, informed by a review of the literature. Benefits are reported as averages across all victim-survivors, even though in practice effect sizes are expected to differ significantly across victim-survivors with different backgrounds and circumstances.

The estimated benefits have also been adjusted to account for the fact that some victim-survivors already receive support from specialist family violence services. A figure of 13 per cent has been used for these calculations. This is based on the prevalence and victim-survivor data described above, with a 20 discount to reflect that, under current policy settings, not all victim-survivors are able to receive the supports they need and/or may face delays. This discount reduces the risk of over-stating the benefits currently delivered by the sector.

Benefits are estimated in present value terms, reflecting that the support a victim-survivor receives in a given year can have long-lasting impacts, compared to not receiving that support. Benefits are assumed to last 5 years, with the exception of property damage (1 year) and longer-term costs to children (30 years) (see Table A3).

Table A3: Summary of benefit calculations

Benefit type	\$/client first year	Assumed duration (years)	\$/client present value	Aggregate \$m
Adult clients				
Avoided pain, suffering and premature mortality	\$8,555	5	\$39,608	\$819
Savings to the health care system	\$587	5	\$2,720	\$56
Greater workforce participation and productivity	\$4,812	5	\$22,281	\$461
Avoided property damage	\$902	1	\$902	\$19
Child clients				
Savings to the child protection system	\$1,043	5	\$4,830	\$71
Other avoided costs for children	\$5,211	30	\$93,706	\$1,369
Total	\$11,288		\$79,183	\$2,794

A discount rate of 4 per cent was used to convert future benefits into a present value, consistent with Victorian Government guidance for assessing benefits in areas of traditional public service delivery.⁷⁵ Sensitivity testing using a 7 per cent discount rate reduces aggregate benefits to \$2.4 billion.

⁷⁵ Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (2024), *Guidance on discount rates*, Available: <https://djsir.vic.gov.au/about-us/overview/the-economic-assessment-information-portal/i-am-looking-for-guidance-on-particular-economic-assessment-processes-methods-and-variables>

For consistency, all inputs were converted to 2025 dollars (and, if applicable, increased in line with population or economic growth).

Pain, suffering and premature mortality

Each year, intimate partner violence results in a loss of about 11,900 disability-adjusted life years in Victoria. This is a measure captures the combined impact of premature mortality and reduced quality of life due to illness and injury. It reflects the gap between current levels of health across the population and an ideal level (e.g. where there is no intimate partner violence). The figure includes the health costs suffered by women who have experienced intimate partner violence at any point since the age of 15, including those who experienced violence in the past and are affected by its long-term and cumulative health impacts. Estimates are not available for other forms of family violence or for male victim-survivors.

These health impacts are converted into dollar values using estimates from the Australian Government of the value of one year of life spent in good health (\$245,000 per disability-adjusted life year).⁷⁶ This implies costs of about \$4,700 for each victim-survivor.

As only 5 per cent of victim-survivors report that they experienced violence in the previous year, the per-victim figure was adjusted to reflect this cohort, which is most relevant for assessing impacts of family violence services. To do this, the estimate was multiplied by 3.4, based on the ratio between the average cost for all victims reported by Access Economics and the average annual cost per recent victim (derived from the reported lifetime cost, using the 3.3 per cent discount rate in the original study and assuming average 52 year benefit period, consistent with a similar study⁷⁷). This gives a figure of \$16,025 per recent victim-survivor in the year they experience violence.

Assuming that specialist family violence service can reduce the annual health burdens by 50 per cent and adjusting for that fact that some victim-survivors already access specialist family violence services (as discussed above), the avoided costs from accessing services is estimated to be \$8,555 per client per year.

Key assumptions	Sensitivity testing
Services can reduce annual costs by 50 per cent	Using a figure of 20 per cent reduces aggregate benefits to \$341 million
Benefits last for 5 years	Using 10 years increases aggregate benefits to \$1.5 billion

⁷⁶ The Office of Impact Analysis (2024), “Value of statistical life”, Available: <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/resources/guidance-assessing-impacts/value-statistical-life>

⁷⁷ PwC (2015), *A high price to pay: The economic case for preventing violence against women*.

Health care services

The cost of health care service use was estimated in an analogous manner to the costs of pain, suffering and premature mortality. The starting point was an estimate from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare that intimate partner violence against females cost the Australian health system \$751 million in 2013-24,⁷⁸ which was increased in line with nominal GDP growth to give an estimate of \$781 million in 2025.

Expressed per recent victim-survivor, health care service costs are estimated to be \$1,100 a year. This figure also takes account of Victorian health services costing about 2 per cent more than the national average.⁷⁹ Assuming specialist family violence services can reduce costs by 50 per cent and adjusting for current service use results in an estimate of \$587 in avoided costs per victim-survivor per year, or \$2,720 as the present value over 5 years.

Key assumptions	Sensitivity testing
Average costs avoided per victim-survivor based on official AIHW estimates	Using a figure of \$7,853 per year (per the health service use estimates for children, discussed below) increases aggregate benefits to \$401 million
Services can reduce annual costs by 50 per cent	Using a figure of 20 per cent reduces aggregate benefits to \$23 million
Benefits last for 5 years	Using 10 years increases aggregate benefits to \$102 million

Workforce participation and productivity

To estimate avoided costs associated with absences from work, specialist family violence services are assumed to reduce the frequency and duration of absences among employed victim-survivors. Specifically, it was assumed that services can reduce the average (i.e. expected value) of days taken off work among women experiencing violence most or some of the time to the same level as those who experience violence once or a little of the time. To calculate this, it was assumed that women experiencing violence most of the time take 31 days off work on average each year (in line with the overall average reported by Anne Summers) and those in the other frequency categories take 7 days off a year (in line with the median) (Table A4). As a result, the weighted average time taken of work would fall from 8.8 days to 1.8 days across clients. This difference (7.1 days) was then multiplied by average daily female earnings plus employer on costs (\$442)⁸⁰ and the share of recent victim-

⁷⁸ AIHW (2025), "Data tables: Health system spending per case of disease and for certain risk factors", table 2.

⁷⁹ Based on the average cost per national weighted activity unit in 2021-22, Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority (2025), "National benchmarking portal", Available: <https://benchmarking.ihacpa.gov.au/extensions/ihpanbp/index.html#/>

⁸⁰ Female average weekly cash earnings, full time, Victoria (from ABS (2025), "Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, May 2025") divided by 5 days in a work week, plus 17 per cent for on costs (the

survivors who are employed (76 per cent) to arrive at an estimate of \$2,378 in avoided lost earnings per victim-survivor per year.

Table A4: Frequency of time off work by victim-survivors⁸¹

<i>Frequency of violence</i>	<i>% who took time off work</i>	<i>Assumed number of days off per year</i>	<i>% of victim-survivors</i>
All/most of time	66%	31	37%
Some of the time	35%	7	30%
A little of the time	27%	7	16%
Only once	16%	7	17%
Total / weighted average	35%	8.8	100%

To estimate avoided costs associated with leaving full-time work, it was assumed that 5.5 per cent of victim-survivors leave full-time employment due to family violence. This is based on evidence reported by Anne Summers, who explains that different data sources give different conclusions about whether these women stopped working completely or converted to part-time work.⁸² It was thus assumed that the women leaving full-time employment are evenly spread among leaving the workforce entirely and moving to part-time employment on a 0.5 full-time-equivalent basis.

Based on these figures, family violence was assumed to result in a loss of 4.1 full-time-equivalent workers per year for every 100 victim-survivors. Assuming that family violence services can avoid 50 per cent of these costs, adjusting for current service use and based on average earnings of \$84,925 per FTE,⁸³ the avoided costs are \$1,870 per client per year.

Avoided management costs were estimated using estimates from Access Economics which were equivalent to 13 per cent of reported victim absenteeism costs (assuming management costs are split between victim and perpetrator absences in proportion to the estimated absenteeism costs for each group).⁸⁴ Applying this percentage to the two cost categories above results in estimated avoided costs of \$565 per victim-survivor per year.

percentage of total employer costs relating to superannuation, payroll tax, workers' compensation and fringe benefits ta (from ABS (2017), "Labour Costs, Australia, 2015-16").

⁸¹ Summers, A., Shortridge, T. and Sobeck, K. (2025), *The cost of domestic violence to women's employment and education*, University of Technology Sydney.

⁸² Summers, A., Shortridge, T. and Sobeck, K. (2025), *The cost of domestic violence to women's employment and education*, University of Technology Sydney.

⁸³ Female average weekly wage earnings, all females, Victoria, multiplied by 52 weeks in a year, plus 17 per cent on costs (per the absenteeism analysis).

⁸⁴ Access Economics (2004), *The cost of domestic violence to the Australian Economy: Part I*.

Key assumptions	Sensitivity testing
Services can reduce the average number of days taken off work among women experiencing violence most or some of the time to the same level as those who experience violence once or a little of the time	Assuming the proportion of women experiencing violence 'all/most of the time' falls to the level of the 'some of the time' group reduces aggregate benefits to \$447 million
Services can reduce annual costs by 50 per cent for women leaving full-time work	Using a figure of 20 per cent reduces aggregate benefits to \$342 million
Management costs	Sensitivity testing using 7 per cent ⁸⁵ reduces aggregate benefits to \$437 million
Benefits last for 5 years	Using 10 years increases aggregate benefits to \$839 million

Property damage

As property damage is a short-term cost which mostly falls within the year in which it occurs, the benefits of avoiding damage are assumed to last for only 1 year.

Key assumptions	Sensitivity testing
25 per cent of victim-survivors experience property damage	Using a figure of 10 per cent reduces aggregate benefits to \$7 million
Services can reduce annual costs by 50 per cent	Using a figure of 20 per cent reduces aggregate benefits to \$8 million
Benefits last for 1 year	Using 5 years increases aggregate benefits to \$86 million

Child protection system

To estimate avoided costs to the child protection system, it was assumed that 90 per cent of children presenting to specialist family violence services have experienced child maltreatment (including, but not limited to, experiencing family violence when violence occurs between other family members). This seems a reasonable assumption to make in the absence of data on rates of child maltreatment among this cohort.

It was further assumed that 10 per cent of these children are notified to child protection authorities or would have been notified in future if they had not been supported by a specialist family violence service. There is little evidence available for what proportion of maltreated children are reported to authorities within a year, although other data suggest

⁸⁵ Based on the ratio of management costs to victim absenteeism costs reported by KPMG (2016), *The cost of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Final Detailed Report.

that family violence was reported to authorities for only 10 per cent of adult females who experienced family violence in 2021-22.⁸⁶

The above assumptions imply that child protection notifications for 1,263 children would be avoided in 2026-27 if specialist family violence services were able to fully meet demand. The figure is equivalent to 1 per cent of all children notified to child protection authorities. A third (33 per cent) of these children are assumed to be investigated by child protection authorities, in line with overall percentage of child protection notifications that end up being investigated in Victoria.⁸⁷ Maltreatment is assumed to be substantiated in 100 per cent of investigations, in line with the assumption that all these children have experienced maltreatment.

To estimate avoided costs, data on the average costs associated with children entering the child protection system were multiplied by the estimated number of children in the counterfactual scenario (see Table A5). The share of notifications subject to each service type were estimated using data on the total number of children entering the child protection system each year, assuming that in the counterfactual scenario 100 per cent of investigated cases are substantiated. As data on average costs and numbers of children are not reported for family support services, aggregate expenditure was apportioned using the ratio of expenditure on intensive versus non-intensive family support services.

These calculations result in estimated average annual costs of \$21,268 per notified child. It was assumed that specialist family violence services can reduce 50 per cent of these costs. Adjusting for existing service use and expressing the estimates as an average cost per all children (i.e. including those who are not subject to maltreatment or not notified) results in an estimate of \$1,043 in avoided costs per child per year.

⁸⁶ Comparison of data from ABS (2023), "Personal Safety, Australia, 2021-22"; ABS (2025), "National, state and territory population, March 2025" with Crime Statistics Victoria (2024), "Family Violence Data Tables: Justice System Data Tables", table 9.

⁸⁷ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2025), "Child protection services data tables", Report on Government Services, table 16A.1.

Table A5: Costs to the child protection system of child clients in specialist family violence services, 2026-27 (in 2025 dollars)⁸⁸

Child protection system costs	Unit cost (\$/child)	% of notifications	Average cost per notification (\$)	Total cost (\$m)
Notifications ⁸⁹	\$502	100%	\$502	\$0.7
Investigations	\$2,365	33%	\$777	\$1.0
Care and protection orders	\$3,060	9%	\$272	\$0.4
Intensive Family Support Services	\$18,446	19%	\$3,503	\$4.6
Family Support Services	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$8
Out of Home Care	\$123,347	8%	\$10,372	\$14
Total			\$21,268	\$28

Key assumptions	Sensitivity testing
90 per cent of children presenting to specialist family violence services have experienced child maltreatment	Using a figure of 75 per cent reduces aggregate benefits to \$59 million
10 per cent of children experiencing family violence are reported to child protection authorities	Using a figure of 25 per cent increase aggregate benefits to \$176 million
Services can reduce annual costs by 50 per cent	Using a figure of 20 per cent reduces aggregate benefits to \$29 million
Benefits last for 5 years	Using 10 years increases aggregate benefits to \$129 million

Other costs for children

Other costs for children were based on an existing study by McCarthy et al (2016).⁹⁰ This study estimated the present value of lifetime costs of child maltreatment in Australia in 2012-13 (in 2014-15 dollars). The estimates for each cost category were escalated to 2025 values using growth in nominal GDP per capita. Costs associated with the child protection system were excluded (as these are separately estimated, above), as were efficiency losses from taxation (consistent with the exclusion of this category in Table A2 above).

⁸⁸ Data on unit costs and percentage of notifications are derived from 2023-24 data from Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2025), "Child protection services data tables", Report on Government Services, tables 16A.1, 16A.4, 16A.6, 16A.8, 16A.26 and 16A.37.

⁸⁹ In Victoria, children subject to multiple reports to child protection authorities in a year are recorded only once in notifications data.

⁹⁰ McCarthy, M. M., Taylor, P., Norman, R. E., et al (2016), "The lifetime economic and social costs of child maltreatment in Australia", *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 71, pp. 217-226.

The estimates were converted to an annual amount based on the 7 per cent discount rate used in the study and assuming that the costs last for 30 years on average.⁹¹ This results in an estimated \$51,292 per child per year.

Consistent with the child protection analysis above, it was assumed that 90 per cent of children presenting to specialist family violence services have (or would have) experienced maltreatment. As the estimated costs associated with child maltreatment are large and long-term in nature, there is considerable uncertainty about the extent to which specialist family violence services can reduce these costs. Accordingly, a conservative assumption that these services can avoid 10 per cent of the long-term costs has been used. After adjusting for existing service use, this suggests annual avoided costs of \$5,211 on average for each child presenting to specialist family violence services, or \$93,706 in present value terms.

Key assumptions	Sensitivity testing
90 per cent of children presenting to specialist family violence services have experienced child maltreatment	Using a figure of 75 per cent reduces aggregate benefits to \$1.14 billion
Costs per child are as per McCarthy et al (2016)	Using estimates of \$1,854 per maltreated child for health service costs, and \$2,646 per maltreated child for workforce productivity losses (from Le et al (2026) ⁹²) reduces aggregate benefits to \$1.16 billion
Services can reduce annual costs by 10 per cent	Using a figure of 5 per cent increases aggregate benefits to \$689 million
Benefits last for 30 years	Using 5 years reduces aggregate benefits to \$352 million

⁹¹ As McCarthy et al (2016) used varying time periods depending on the benefit type, this is a rough approximation based on the typical period used in a more recent study for the UK (Herbert, K., Feder, G., Gilbert, R. et al (2025), "The economic burden of child maltreatment and co-occurring parental domestic violence and abuse in the UK", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 163).

⁹² The workforce productivity costs per person are multiplied by the reported labour force participation rate for people who experienced child maltreatment. Reported per-person estimates are assumed to apply to children as well as adults, and have been inflated from 2021-22 to 2025 values using nominal GDP per capita. Le, D. Q., Le, L. K-D., Yap, M. B. H., et al (2026), "Impact of child maltreatment on the costs of health service use and productivity loss: Findings from the Australian child maltreatment study", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 171.