



Quantifying the legal and broader life impacts of domestic and family violence

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Abstract: *The last decade has seen increased policy reform in Australia to reduce domestic and family violence (DFV) and provide appropriate services for victims, who are predominantly women and their children. This paper provides the first quantitative assessment based on representative Australian population data of the legal and related problems that often coincide with DFV. Regression and bivariate analyses of the Legal Australia-Wide (LAW) Survey underlined the serious nature of DFV victimisation and revealed the gamut of severe legal problems and adverse life impacts that often result from, or accompany, DFV.*

Survey respondents who had experienced DFV in the previous 12 months ('DFV respondents') were 10 times more likely than others to experience other legal problems, including a wide range of family, civil and criminal law issues. Their odds of experiencing family law problems were especially elevated – a massive 16 times higher than for other respondents. They were also at least three times more likely to experience 10 of the other 11 legal problem types examined, including criminal law problems and civil law problems related to employment, financial, government payment, health, housing, personal injury and rights issues.

Not only was DFV linked to a myriad of legal problems, but these legal problems were also more severe with greater adverse impacts on broad life circumstances. Four in five DFV respondents rated at least one of their legal problems as having a 'severe' impact on their everyday life, compared to fewer than one-quarter of others. Their legal problems were more likely to lead to stress-related illness, physical ill health, relationship breakdown, loss of income or financial strain, and moving home. They were more likely to require assistance from professionals, particularly lawyers and health and welfare professionals, and to require recourse to formal legal processes to achieve resolution.

These findings demonstrating the 'compounding effect' of DFV victimisation on legal and human service needs, together with the relatively disadvantaged profile of people experiencing DFV, reinforce the importance of accessible public legal assistance services for DFV remaining a government policy priority. Holistic, joined-up legal and broader human services are often necessary to address the complex legal and related needs of people experiencing DFV.

The results highlight the importance of ongoing funding to support initiatives that provide wrap-around assistance for DFV such as Domestic Violence Units (DVUs) and the Family Advocacy Support Services (FASS) scheme in the Local and Family Courts, as well as initiatives that link victims to legal and human services outside the court system. In addition, they indicate the potential utility of further expanding joined-up DFV services to better address the wide range of criminal and civil law problems, as well as family law problems, that are often tied up with DFV, which often span across Commonwealth and state/territory jurisdictions.

Introduction

Definition

Domestic and family violence (DFV) refers to violence or abuse within intimate relationships or between family members in domestic settings.¹ The violence or abuse can take many forms, including not only physical violence and sexual assault, but also other types of abuse that can cause emotional harm such as psychological abuse (e.g. verbal abuse, insults, intimidation and threats to harm children, family or pets), social abuse (e.g. isolation from friends and family), economic abuse (e.g. financial control and deprivation) and spiritual abuse (e.g. using religious beliefs or practices to justify abuse). DFV can take place in a range of relationships including spousal, de facto, intimate, family, biological and non-biological (e.g. foster, guardianship and informal care) relationships; can involve abuse of children and elder abuse; and can involve current or former relationships.²

Although DFV can be experienced by both males and females, research highlights that DFV is predominantly committed by men against women.³ A central element of DFV is that the pattern of violence or abuse involves gaining power or coercing control over the victim.⁴

Policy and service context

Although policy reform aimed at addressing and reducing DFV in Australia has been on the political agenda for some time,⁵ the naming of Rosemary Anne ‘Rosie’ Batty as Australian of the Year in 2015, along with the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victorian Royal Commission),⁶ marked an increased impetus in such reform. The Victorian Royal Commission was established in the wake of a series of DFV-related deaths in Victoria,

including the death of the 11-year-old son of Rosie Batty. It advocated a major overhaul of the DFV system in Victoria, providing 227 recommendations, which included initiatives to change laws, improve DFV response services, reduce DFV reoffending and increase primary prevention.

The commitment of Australian governments to tackling the complex problem of DFV is enshrined in the 12-year *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (National Plan).⁷ The National Plan provides the framework for action by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to reduce violence against women and their children within Australia. It aims to achieve ‘a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children’. It focuses on two main types of violent crimes: DFV and sexual assault. The key actions of Australian governments articulated in the National Plan largely align with international goals and targets.⁸ The National Plan involves over \$300 million in funding to implement a variety of initiatives in stages via four action plans.

The National Plan includes an Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) to address and respond to the elevated incidence of DFV in Indigenous communities. As part of the IAS, the Australian Government has committed \$121.2 million to continue funding 14 Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLSs) across Australia over the five years to 30 June 2020.⁹ FVPLSs were established in recognition of the gap in access to legal services for Indigenous people experiencing DFV – predominantly women and children. The FVPLSs are Indigenous organisations that provide culturally appropriate legal and human services to Indigenous people experiencing DFV, including legal assistance, casework, counselling and court support, as well as community legal education, early intervention and prevention services.¹⁰

Supporting the work being undertaken under the National Plan, on 24 September 2015, the Australian Government announced a \$100 million *Women’s Safety Package* to take action against DFV. This package included several initiatives to improve frontline support and services, leverage innovative technologies to keep women safe and change community attitudes to violence and abuse. It included \$15 million to help women at risk of DFV access legal assistance, establishing a three-year pilot program of 12 new specialist Domestic Violence

1 Most typically, ‘domestic violence’ is used to refer to violence within intimate relationships, whereas ‘family violence’ is used more broadly to refer to violence between family members. ‘Family violence’ is often the preferred term in Indigenous communities as it encapsulates the broader issue of violence within extended families. However, these terms are not always used consistently by different jurisdictions and organisations, and are sometimes used interchangeably (Angus 2015; Morgan & Chadwick 2009). Acknowledging these different definitions, for convenience, the present paper uses the umbrella term of ‘domestic and family violence’ or ‘DFV’.

2 Australian Law Reform Commission and NSW Law Reform Commission (ALRC & NSWLRC, 2010); Chung & Wendt (2015); Cox (2015); Morgan & Chadwick (2009); Queensland Government (2008); Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland (Special Taskforce, 2015); State of Victoria (2016b); Wendt, Chung, Elder, Hendrick & Hartwig (2017).

3 Angus (2015); Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017); Cox (2015).

4 Chung & Wendt (2015); Council of Australian Governments (COAG, 2011); Morgan & Chadwick (2009); Special Taskforce (2015); Stark (2013).

5 See, for example, Murray & Powell (2011).

6 State of Victoria (2016b).

7 COAG (2011).

8 Dicker (2017).

9 See, for example, <https://www.pmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/indigenous-advancement-strategy>; <https://www.pmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/grant/family-violence-prevention-legal-services-fvpls>; Attorney-General’s Department (2018); Cox Inall Ridgeway (2019).

10 See <http://www.nationalfvpls.org>; Attorney-General’s Department (2018); Cox Inall Ridgeway (2019).

Units (DVUs) in Local Courts and 4 new Health Justice Partnerships (HJPs). An additional \$5 million announced in October 2016 extended the funding of this pilot program for a fourth year.¹¹

The specialist DVUs provide intensive, coordinated, frontline legal and social work services tailored to each client's circumstances. In terms of legal services, DVUs provide duty lawyer services in Local Courts, assisting clients to apply for DFV protection orders (DFVPOs),¹² as well as assisting with a range of other family, civil and criminal law issues that can be tied up with DFV.¹³ The social work services provided include case management so clients can access other support services such as financial counselling, tenancy assistance, trauma counselling, emergency accommodation, family law services and employment services.¹⁴

The HJPs deliver legal assistance services to women experiencing DFV at local hospitals or health centres.¹⁵

In 2018, the Australian Government announced an additional \$31.8 million for DVUs and HJPs, provided as part of the Women's Economic Security Package, which aims to improve economic security for women, including economic recovery following DFV. The funding extends the DVUs and HJPs until 2022, expanding these services to provide better access to financial support services such as financial advice, counselling and literacy.¹⁶ Eighteen DVUs and 5 HJPs have been funded to date.¹⁷

Other initiatives under the 2015 Women's Safety Package aim to increase early access to services. These initiatives include expanding 1800RESPECT, the national telephone and online counselling, information and referral service for sexual violence and DFV, and expanding DV-Alert,

a national training program to assist community frontline workers such as teachers, volunteers and medical practitioners to recognise and refer clients experiencing or at risk of DFV.¹⁸ Funding to maintain these two initiatives is provided through to 2022.¹⁹

Another key legal services initiative under the National Plan, announced in 2016, is the Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS) scheme, a national scheme for integrated duty lawyer and social support services in Family Courts across Australia. The FASS scheme was originally funded \$18.5 million over three years until 2019. It extends existing duty lawyer services in Family Courts to enable legal aid commissions to collaborate with specialist DFV services to help families affected by DFV work across state and federal court systems.²⁰ The FASS scheme provides legal advice, risk screening and assessments, safety planning, social support services and referrals for families affected by DFV. In 2018, the Australian Government committed an additional \$22.6 million to fund the FASS scheme for another three years until 2022.²¹ The scheme is currently operating in 23 service locations across Australia, including Family Court registries and circuit locations.²²

The National Plan and the Women's Safety Package support broad government policies and initiatives at both the national and state level to prevent and reduce DFV. As signatories of the National Plan, the state and territory governments have introduced their own policy plans, with extensive initiatives at the state level to reduce DFV. Victoria has been at the forefront of policy development and reform in Australia and has been influential in propelling DFV reforms in other Australian and international jurisdictions. Deciding to implement all 227 of the Victorian Royal Commission's recommendations, the Victorian Government developed a 10-year plan to reduce DFV entitled *Ending family violence: Victoria's plan for change*. To support this plan, the Victorian Government committed unprecedented funding of \$1.9 billion in 2016–17 and a further \$42.5 million in 2018–19 to address DFV, more than any other

11 See <https://www.dss.gov.au/women-programs-services-reducing-violence/womens-safety-package>; <https://www.malcolmturnbull.com.au/media/release-womens-safety-package-to-stoptheviolence>.

12 Australian states and territories use different terms to refer to these protective orders, including domestic violence orders, apprehended violence orders, family violence intervention orders, violence restraining orders, family violence orders, and domestic violence restraining orders (see, for example, Taylor, Ibrahim, Wakefield & Finn 2015). In the present paper, for convenience, the term 'DFVPOs' is used as a collective term to refer to these protection orders across states and territories.

13 Coumarelos, Forell, Wilson & Karras (2018).

14 See <https://www.ag.gov.au/LegalSystem/Legalaidprogrammes/Pages/Specialist-domestic-violence-assistance.aspx>; <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/family-law/domestic-violence-unit>; Coumarelos et al. (2018).

15 See <https://www.ag.gov.au/LegalSystem/Legalaidprogrammes/Pages/Specialist-domestic-violence-assistance.aspx>.

16 <https://www.ag.gov.au/FamiliesAndMarriage/Families/FamilyViolence/Pages/default.aspx>.

17 https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/statements/2018_2019/ministerial-statement/attorney-generals.aspx

18 See <https://www.dss.gov.au/women-programs-services-reducing-violence/womens-safety-package>.

19 Commonwealth of Australia (2019); <https://ministers.dss.gov.au/media-releases/4626>.

20 See, for example, <https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/about-us/news/new-approach-to-help-keep-children-and-families-safe-from-family-violence>; <https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/get-legal-services-and-advice/free-legal-advice/get-help-court/family-advocacy-and-support-services>; <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/domestic-violence/family-advocacy-and-support-service-fass>; <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/womens-safety-welfare.pdf>.

21 <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/Media/Pages/Additional-funding-for-Family-Violence-support-services-18-december-2018.aspx>

22 ALRC (2019a).

state or federal government.²³ The Victorian Government plan includes initiatives to:

- change Victorian law to make intervention orders for DFV (i.e. DFVPOs) more victim-friendly, tighten the bail process and create an information sharing regime to ensure perpetrators' right to privacy doesn't compromise victims' safety
- increase access to services via a network of support and safety hubs, a new coordination agency to manage services across government, and specialist navigators to assist victims to navigate the complex legal and community services system
- increase victim safety through better access to safe housing, earlier intervention to prevent harm to children and a risk assessment and management framework
- expand Specialist Family Violence Courts to provide a safer and more coordinated, wrap-around response to DFV
- strengthen perpetrator programs
- improve police capability to respond to DFV through training and mobile technology
- improve DFV training for key workforces, including hospitals and schools
- increase primary prevention through a gender equality strategy and education about respectful relationships.²⁴

The NSW Government's *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016–2021* focuses on improving:

- prevention to support strategies that can change attitudes, social norms and structures underpinning DFV
- early intervention with vulnerable communities
- victim support via Safer Pathway reforms which involve multi-agency Safety Action Meetings and coordinated referrals to support services through Local Coordination Points, and via improved homelessness services and safe housing
- perpetrator accountability
- quality of services via considering minimum standards and best-practice strategies, and supporting skill development and training of service providers and capacity building
- the system's governance, planning, accountability and performance measurement.²⁵

In 2016, the NSW Government announced a \$20 million Innovation Fund to support the Blueprint for Reform and has set a target to reduce DFV reoffending by 25 per cent by 2021.²⁶

23 State of Victoria (2016a, 2017); <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/extra-investment-to-end-family-violence>.

24 State of Victoria (2016a, 2017).

25 NSW Government (2014a, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

26 See <https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/premiers-priorities/reducing-domestic-violence-reoffending>; <https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/commissioning/domestic-and-family-violence-innovation-fund>.

The other state and territory governments similarly have their own plans and strategies to tackle DFV in line with the National Plan.²⁷

Within the justice and legal services sector more specifically, services also support the National Plan with organisational policies, guidelines and initiatives to reduce DFV. Most notably, the *National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services 2015–2020* (NPA),²⁸ is consistent with the National Plan and the Women's Safety Package. The NPA seeks to target legal assistance services to people facing disadvantage who have the greatest legal need, and it identifies 'people experiencing or at risk of DFV' as a key priority group. It provides Australian Government funding to state and territory governments to distribute to legal aid commissions and community legal centres so that the neediest groups can access relevant legal assistance services.

Importantly, the NPA draws on the empirical evidence, particularly the reports *Legal Australia-Wide Survey: legal need in Australia*²⁹ and *Reshaping legal assistance services: building on the evidence base: a discussion paper*.³⁰ The research evidence shows that legal needs are often intertwined with other human service needs. Thus, legal problems are often part of 'life problems' rather than stand-alone problems.³¹ Consequently, the NPA endorses a holistic approach to addressing legal need, espousing the value of collaboration between legal and non-legal services to more comprehensively address legal and related needs, including services that are timely and appropriate to the client's capability. The NPA also aims to empower and build resilience within the community to resolve legal problems.

Various legal assistance service agencies also have their own plans, guidelines or initiatives to address DFV, in keeping with the NPA and the National Plan.³²

27 See, for example:

- Australian Capital Territory (ACT) – The Legislative Assembly for the ACT (2016);
- Northern Territory – Northern Territory Government (2018a, 2018b);
- Queensland – Bond, Holder, Jeffries & Fleming (2017); Special Taskforce (2015); <https://www.justice.qld.gov.au/corporate/initiatives/dfv-reform>;
- South Australia – Government of South Australia (2011, 2016); <https://premier.sa.gov.au/news/domestic-violence-disclosure-scheme-launched>;
- Tasmania – Tasmanian Government (2015, 2017);
- Western Australia – Department of Child Protection and Family Support (2015); <https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/CrisisAndEmergency/FDV/Pages/StrategicPlanning.aspx>.

28 COAG (2015).

29 Coumarelos, Macourt, People, McDonald, Wei, Iriana & Ramsey (2012).

30 Pleasence, Coumarelos, McDonald & Forell (2014).

31 Coumarelos et al. (2012); Pleasence et al. (2014).

32 See, for example, Community Legal Centres Queensland – <http://communitylegalqld.org.au/policy/domestic-and-family->

Prevalence and reporting

Recorded crime statistics do not provide reliable measures of the extent of DFV in the population because many instances of DFV are not reported to police. Estimates have suggested that as few as 14–52 per cent of people experiencing DFV report this crime to police.³³ Underreporting to police is clearly concerning, firstly because DFV may be more likely to recur as offenders go undetected and unpunished. In addition, underreporting may also mean that victims do not always receive the assistance they require, as underestimating the true extent of DFV may result in insufficient funding of DFV services.³⁴

Representative crime victim surveys potentially provide more accurate estimates of DFV as they are unaffected by victims' willingness to report the incident to police. Thus, victim surveys can capture DFV that is not reported to police as well as DFV that is. However, given the sensitive nature of DFV, such surveys may still underestimate its prevalence to some extent.³⁵

In Australia, the most recent large-scale representative victim survey that explicitly measures DFV is the *Personal Safety Survey* conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). It examined physical violence, sexual violence and emotional abuse from both current and previous partners. Partner violence was estimated to be experienced by 17.0 per cent of women and 6.1 per cent of men in their lifetime (since the age of 15 years), with 1.7 per cent of women and 0.8 per cent of men experiencing such violence in a 12-month period.³⁶

The annual ABS *Crime Victimization Survey* measures physical, sexual and threatened assault, but only captures the relationship between the victim and the offender for the most recent incident of each type. It also does not measure other types of abuse that may cause emotional harm. Although it uses a less comprehensive measure of DFV victimisation than the Personal Safety Survey, the Crime Victimization Survey provides data that are generally in keeping with the Personal Safety Survey.³⁷

violence; Legal Aid NSW – <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/domestic-violence>; Queensland Law Society (2016); Women's Legal Service NSW (2018).

33 Angus (2015); Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2018); Birdsey & Snowball (2013); Cox (2015); Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn (2016).

34 Birdsey & Snowball (2013).

35 The sensitive nature of DFV may mean that some victims do not disclose their victimisation even in an anonymous survey, or are unwilling to do so, such as when the perpetrator is present or in close proximity at the time of interview (Freeman 2018b; Morgan & Chadwick 2009).

36 ABS (2017).

37 For example, it reports that 2.3 per cent of women and 2.4 per cent of men (aged 15 years or more) experienced physical assault in a 12-month period. It also reports that the perpetrator was an intimate partner or family member in 53.0 per cent of the most recent incidents of physical

Some legal needs surveys, which broadly measure the types of legal problems experienced by respondents, have included DFV as one of the legal problems they measure.³⁸ The most recent, representative population legal needs survey in Australia is the *Legal Australia-Wide (LAW) Survey*, which interviewed over 20,000 residents.³⁹ The LAW Survey focused on (threatened and actual) physical and sexual assault in a domestic context, but did not capture emotional abuse. In keeping with its narrower definition of DFV, it provided similar but slightly lower estimates of the prevalence of DFV than the Personal Safety Survey, finding that 1.3 per cent of female respondents and 0.3 per cent of male respondents reported experiencing DFV in the previous 12 months.⁴⁰

DFV is not necessarily a single, isolated incident, but often an ongoing pattern of behaviour. For example, according to the Personal Safety Survey, repeated incidents of violence from the same partner were reported by approximately half of the women who reported violence by their current partner and approximately two-thirds of the women who reported violence from a previous partner.⁴¹

Correlates and risk factors

The literature suggests that the risk factors for DFV involve a complex mix of personal, situational, and community or societal factors.⁴²

First, although DFV occurs in all walks of life, it is correlated with the demographic characteristics of both victims and offenders. Thus, certain demographic groups are more likely to experience DFV, and similarly, certain demographic groups are overrepresented as perpetrators. However, it is important to note that the underlying causes of heightened DFV experience or DFV offending among some groups are not well established and may reflect situational, community or societal factors, including factors associated with socioeconomic disadvantage.

As already noted, victims of DFV are predominantly female. There are some indications that the experience of DFV may be increased for younger women, separated women, pregnant women, women who had witnessed or been exposed to DFV as a child and women lacking social support. Further, the literature has suggested that the experience of DFV is more common among women who are more likely to experience disadvantage, including women

assaults experienced by women and 15.1 per cent of such incidents experienced by men (ABS 2018).

38 See, for example, Coumarelos et al. (2012); Pleasence, Balmer & Sandefur (2013).

39 Coumarelos et al. (2012).

40 Coumarelos et al. (2012); Coumarelos, McDonald, Forell & Wei (2015).

41 ABS (2017).

42 Angus (2015); Bryant & Willis (2008); Cox (2015); Douglas (2008); Fitzgerald & Graham (2016); Morgan & Chadwick (2009); Phillips & Vandenbroek (2014); Weatherburn (2011).

who have been victims of child abuse, Indigenous women, women living in remote or geographically isolated areas, women with a long-term illness or disability, and women from non-English speaking backgrounds.⁴³

DFV perpetrators are more likely to be male, be young, be Indigenous, have mental health problems, live in a disadvantaged area, and have previously committed violent or other types of criminal offending.⁴⁴ DFV offending is also more likely if men hold negative attitudes towards women or gender role attitudes that legitimise violence.⁴⁵

Second, situational factors also appear to contribute to or exacerbate the risk of DFV. These include drug and alcohol abuse; stressful life events or circumstances, such as divorce, separation and family or relationship problems, death of someone close, serious illness, accident or disability; as well as financial stressors, such as unemployment and gambling problems.⁴⁶ For example, alcohol was found to be involved in approximately 1 in 3 incidents of DFV.⁴⁷

Third, research has suggested that societal and community factors can also influence risk of DFV, including gender inequality, violent masculinities, weak sanctions, dysfunctional communities, and lack of community supports and resources for women.⁴⁸

Consequences and impact

The consequences for people experiencing DFV can be extreme and can include not only physical injuries, but also sexual, emotional, psychological, social, financial, cultural and legal harms, and homicide.⁴⁹

The most extreme consequence of DFV is homicide, with approximately two-fifths of all homicides in NSW and Australia being classified as domestic according to recorded crime statistics.⁵⁰

A number of studies have found that women who have experienced DFV have relatively poorer physical and mental health and use more health services, and this can extend well beyond the period of abuse.⁵¹ It was estimated that 1.4 per cent of the total disease burden experienced by women was due to DFV victimisation perpetrated by an intimate partner.⁵²

Experiencing DFV has also been found to be a common factor contributing to homelessness among women and children, with 2 in 5 clients of specialist homelessness services having experienced DFV.⁵³

Further, the experience of DFV has been linked to time off work and financial stress.⁵⁴

Significant emotional, social and economic costs have been reported not only for those who have experienced DFV, but also for their families and the broader community.⁵⁵ For example, it has been estimated that more than one million Australian children are affected directly or indirectly by the experience of DFV, with consequences that can include child abuse and neglect, as well as negative impacts on physical health, emotional wellbeing, cognitive functioning and learning, and ability to develop positive relationships.⁵⁶

The cost of DFV to the Australian economy in 2015–16 was estimated to be \$22–26 billion.⁵⁷ This estimate includes costs related to pain, suffering and premature mortality; consumption-related activities (e.g. replacing damaged property, defaulting on debts, the cost of moving); production and employment; health services; justice and other services; transfer payments (e.g. tax and social welfare costs); and impacts on children witnessing or experiencing DFV.⁵⁸

Aims

Although clinical practice and research reveal that the crime of DFV can have severe consequences for victims, there is little quantitative research on the nature, extent and impacts of the broader legal problems that often go hand in hand with DFV, including family law and civil law problems. The present study provides the first quantitative assessment of the legal problems of people

43 AIHW (2018); Angus (2015); Bryant & Willis (2008); Cox (2015); Morgan & Chadwick (2009); Stavrou et al. (2016); Wendt et al. (2017). Note, however, that the evidence for some of these factors has not always been consistent, including the evidence for non-English speaking background and for rural and remote areas.

44 Angus (2015); Boxall, Payne & Rosevear (2015); Dowling, Morgan, Hulme, Manning & Wong (2018); Fitzgerald & Graham (2016); Freeman (2018a); Morgan, Boxall & Brown (2018); Napier, Poynton & Fitzgerald (2015); Poynton, Stavrou, Marott & Fitzgerald (2016); Ramsey (2015); Trimboli (2015); Weatherburn & Rahman (2018).

45 Morgan & Chadwick (2009).

46 AIHW (2017a, 2018); Bryant & Willis (2008); Cox (2015); Morgan & Chadwick (2009); Stavrou et al. (2016); Weatherburn (2011).

47 AIHW (2017a).

48 Bryant & Willis (2008); Douglas (2008); Morgan & Chadwick (2009); Wendt et al. (2017).

49 AIHW (2018); Angus (2015); KPMG (2009); Morgan & Chadwick (2009); Queensland Government (2008); Ramsey (2015); Smallwood (2015); Special Taskforce (2015).

50 Bryant & Bricknell (2017); Ramsey (2015); Special Taskforce (2015).

51 AIHW (2018); Morgan & Chadwick (2009).

52 AIHW (2018); Angus (2015).

53 AIHW (2017b).

54 AIHW (2018); Smallwood (2015).

55 KPMG (2016); Morgan & Chadwick (2009).

56 AIHW (2018); Angus (2015); Morgan & Chadwick (2009); Special Taskforce (2015).

57 KPMG (2016). An extra \$4 billion was added to the estimate of \$22 billion to account for the underrepresentation of various vulnerable groups in the data (e.g. women who are Indigenous, pregnant or homeless or who have a disability).

58 KPMG (2016).

experiencing DFV that is based on representative population data.⁵⁹

The present paper uses LAW Survey data to compare respondents who had experienced DFV in the previous 12 months (henceforth 'DFV respondents')⁶⁰ with other respondents in terms of:

- their vulnerability to legal problems of different types
- the severity and consequences of their legal problems on broader life circumstances
- their actions in response to their legal problems
- the finalisation and outcomes of their legal problems.

Method

LAW Survey method

The LAW Survey was a representative population-level survey covering a broad range of civil, criminal and family law problems. It provided detailed information about the nature, handling and outcome of legal problems. A total of 20,716 landline telephone interviews were conducted with household residents aged 15 years or over across Australia.⁶¹

The survey measured the extent to which respondents had experienced 129 specific types of legal problems in the 12 months prior to interview. These legal problems were categorised into 12 problem groups for analyses – accidents, consumer, credit/debt, crime, employment, family, government, health, housing, money, personal injury and rights.

The LAW Survey adopted the justiciable problem approach introduced by Genn's (1999) landmark *Paths to justice* survey and therefore did not restrict the scope of legal problems to those resolved within the formal justice system. Thus, it also included legal problems that were resolved by non-legal means, remained unresolved or failed to be recognised by respondents as legal problems.

Consequently, like Genn's (1999) survey, the LAW Survey was carefully limited to include only problems that are likely to be justiciable in that, by definition, they have potential legal consequences and remedies, without explicitly labelling the problems as 'legal'.⁶² Each problem was described in sufficient detail to allow respondents to say whether they had experienced it, without requiring them to know that the problem was likely to have legal implications.

The assessment of whether respondents had experienced DFV was conducted as part of a series of questions measuring crime victimisation:

'Next are questions about being a victim of crime in the last 12 months. Also include any earlier crimes for which insurance, compensation or legal proceedings were still an issue in the last 12 months. Again, I assure you that your answers are strictly confidential. Were you a victim of ... threatened or actual assault or sexual assault by a family or household member?'

Thus, the LAW Survey question on DFV victimisation focused on physical and sexual assault in a domestic context rather than on the broader spectrum of DFV behaviours which can result in emotional harm.

For each type of legal problem reported, the survey measured the number of such problems experienced in the 12-month reference period.⁶³ It also measured the severity of each problem type in terms of its impact on everyday life, asking respondents whether it had no impact or a slight, moderate or severe impact.⁶⁴ In addition, the survey asked in-depth follow-up questions about the 'three most serious' types of legal problems experienced, including questions about the adverse consequences resulting from these problems on broad life circumstances, the responses to these problems and the outcomes.⁶⁵ If DFV victimisation was rated by the respondents as one of their three most serious types of legal

59 To date, the LAW Survey is the most recent representative population survey in Australia measuring a comprehensive range of legal problems. It is also the only such Australian survey conducted on a large enough scale to allow investigation of the legal needs of various minority population groups such as people experiencing DFV.

60 For the sake of brevity, 'DFV respondent' is used throughout the paper to refer to a LAW Survey respondent who experienced DFV in the 12 months prior to interview.

61 Just over 2,000 interviews were conducted in each state/territory, apart from NSW and Victoria, in which more than 4,000 interviews were conducted. Random digit dialling was used to yield a quota sample that matched the general population in terms of age, gender, geographical area and cultural and linguistic diversity according to the 2006 Census of Population and Housing (ABS 2007). Additional quotas (oversamples) were also set for people living in the six local government areas that formed the basis of the 2003 NSW Legal Needs Survey (Coumarelos, Wei & Zhou 2006), those in remote and outer regional areas of Victoria and Indigenous people in Victoria. The average length of interviews was 26 minutes, and the response rate was 60 per cent. See Coumarelos et al. (2012).

62 The term 'legal problem' is used throughout this paper for easy reference to a problem that is 'justiciable' in that it raises legal issues with the potential for legal resolution, regardless of whether the respondent recognised this or took any action involving the justice system (cf. Genn 1999).

63 Respondents who had experienced DFV in the previous 12 months were asked: 'How many separate incidents of this type did you have in the last 12 months?' See Coumarelos et al. (2012).

64 For each specific problem type experienced, the respondent was asked: 'What impact has this problem/dispute/accident/incident had on your everyday life.? (1) None, (2) Slight, (3) Moderate, (4) Severe'. Note that if the respondent had experienced multiple instances of a specific problem type, they were asked to answer this question for 'the worst of these' instances. See Coumarelos et al. (2012), pp. 269–271, for further details.

65 Respondents were asked in-depth follow-up questions about their 'three most serious' types of legal problems, based on the 129 specific types of legal problems that the survey examined. Respondents with three or fewer specific types of legal problems were asked these follow-up questions about each legal problem type they experienced. Those with more than three legal problem types were asked about their three most serious types only. See Coumarelos et al. (2012) for further details.

problems, then these follow-up questions were asked about their worst incident of DFV victimisation in the previous 12 months.

The survey also collected extensive demographic information at the outset and conclusion of interviews.⁶⁶

Thus, the LAW Survey allows examination of the nature of the legal problems that are experienced in temporal proximity to DFV victimisation – that is, within the same 12-month period. The LAW Survey does not allow accurate determination of whether these other legal problems preceded, coincided with or followed each DFV incident experienced.⁶⁷ However, as DFV is often a pattern of behaviour rather than an isolated incident, it is informative to examine the legal problems that are faced by people who are either at risk of DFV, are experiencing DFV or have recently experienced DFV. That is, people accessing DFV services may have other unresolved legal problems that contributed to, coincided with or resulted from their experience of DFV.

Present analyses

Descriptive, bivariate and multivariate statistical analyses were conducted to examine the following specific questions about DFV respondents, compared to other LAW Survey respondents:⁶⁸

1. Is their demographic profile more disadvantaged?
2. Do they experience a greater number of legal problems (other than DFV victimisation)?
3. Do they have elevated prevalence of a broad range of legal problems?
4. Are any differences in their experience of legal problems (other than DFV victimisation) explainable by their demographic profile and level of disadvantage?
5. Are their legal problems (including DFV victimisation) more severe, and more likely to result in adverse consequences?
6. Are their responses to their legal problems (including DFV victimisation) different?
7. Are the finalisation and outcomes of their legal problems (including DFV victimisation) different?

66 Full details of the methodology for the LAW Survey are provided in Coumarelos et al. (2012).

67 The LAW Survey captured only limited information about the timing of legal problems within the 12-month reference period. Timing was captured for only the ‘three most serious’ types of legal problems experienced by each respondent rather than for all their legal problems in the 12-month period. Further, only the month of occurrence was captured for these three most serious problems rather than the exact date.

68 All analyses were conducted on weighted data to adjust for oversampling of respondents from some jurisdictions and some NSW regions and oversampling of Indigenous Victorians, and to make minor corrections where quotas for age, gender, Indigenous status, and non-English-speaking main language were not met precisely by the sampling process. See Coumarelos et al. (2012) for full details of the sampling process. All analyses based on problems (rather than respondents) as the unit of analysis were also adjusted for the clustering of legal problems within respondents.

The specific statistical tests used to answer each of the above questions are further detailed in the next section, and in the notes to the tables and figures.

Results

Demographic profile of DFV respondents

Table 1 (p. 9), compares the demographic characteristics of respondents based on whether they had experienced DFV in the previous 12 months.⁶⁹ Compared to other respondents, DFV respondents were significantly more likely to be female and younger. Four-fifths of DFV respondents were female compared to half of other respondents, and 45.8 per cent of DFV respondents were under 35 years compared to 34.0 per cent of other respondents. DFV respondents were also overrepresented among several demographic groups who are more likely to experience disadvantage. Specifically, DFV respondents were significantly more likely than other respondents to:

- be Indigenous (5.5% of DFV respondents versus 1.7% of other respondents)
- have a disability (39.8% versus 19.6%)
- have been unemployed in the previous 12 months (25.8% versus 10.4%)
- be a single parent (36.6% versus 6.9%)
- have lived in disadvantaged housing (20.6% versus 5.8%), including having been homeless (13.8% versus 1.2%), in the previous 12 months
- be on government payments as their main source of income (38.6% versus 26.4%).

There were no significant differences between DFV respondents and other respondents in terms of their education level, whether English was their main language or the remoteness of their area of residence (see Table 1).

DFV respondents and other respondents were compared on their ‘level of disadvantage’. Level of disadvantage was measured by the extent to which respondents fell into demographic groups that have been empirically linked to increased disadvantage.⁷⁰ DFV respondents had an average

69 The demographic variables examined were identical to those used by Coumarelos et al. (2012).

70 ‘Level of disadvantage’ for each respondent was a count of how many of the following demographic characteristics were relevant to the respondent: Indigenous background, disability, lower than Year 12 education, unemployment sometime during the previous 12 months, single parenthood, disadvantaged housing sometime during the previous 12 months, government payments being the main income source, non-English main language, and living in an outer regional or remote area (see Coumarelos et al. (2012) for further details). Level of disadvantage was then categorised into three categories – no disadvantage (i.e. none of the nine types examined), 1 or 2 types of disadvantage, and 3 or more types of disadvantage. A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test was conducted between level of disadvantage (in three categories) and DFV victimisation.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable	Category	DFV respondent	
		Yes (N=169) %	No (N=20,550) %
Gender*	Female	80.4	50.4
	Male	19.6	49.6
Age*	15–17	8.6	5.0
	18–24	13.0	12.1
	25–34	24.2	16.9
	35–44	20.0	17.9
	45–54	22.5	17.1
	55–64	8.7	14.2
	65 and over	2.9	16.9
Indigenous status*	Indigenous	5.5	1.7
	Non-Indigenous	94.5	98.3
Disability*	Disability	39.8	19.6
	No disability	60.2	80.4
Education	<Year 12	32.3	31.5
	Year 12	18.8	20.2
	Post-school qualification	48.9	48.3
Employment status*	Unemployed	25.8	10.4
	Other	74.2	89.6
Family status*	Single parent	36.6	6.9
	Other	63.4	93.1
Housing type*	Disadvantaged	20.6	5.8
	Other	79.4	94.2
Homelessness*	Homeless	13.8	1.2
	Other	86.2	98.8
Main income*	Government payment	38.6	26.4
	Other	61.4	73.6
Main language	Non-English	5.8	6.8
	English	94.2	93.2
Remoteness	Remote	2.4	2.4
	Regional	30.9	30.9
	Regional	66.8	66.8

*Significant difference on this demographic variable between DFV and other respondents.⁷¹

Notes: N=20,716 LAW Survey respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

of 2.2 types of disadvantage compared to 1.2 types for other respondents. As Table 2 (p. 10) shows, DFV respondents were significantly more likely to have a greater level of disadvantage than other respondents – they were less likely to have no type of disadvantage (12.7% versus 34.0%) and more likely

to have at least three types of disadvantage (37.2% versus 14.7%).

Prevalence of different types of legal problems

Table 3 (p. 10) shows that DFV respondents experienced a greater number of legal problems compared to other LAW Survey respondents, both in terms of mean and median numbers.⁷² The mean number of legal problems of all types, including DFV victimisation, was 20.0 for DFV respondents compared

71 A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test (Rao & Scott 1984) was conducted on each demographic variable, comparing DFV and other respondents. Gender: $\chi^2=60.74$, $F_{1,20715}=41.27$, $p=0.000$; Age: $\chi^2=36.03$, $F_{6,123857}=3.88$, $p=0.001$; Indigenous status: $\chi^2=14.80$, $F_{1,20715}=11.16$, $p=0.001$; Disability status: $\chi^2=43.24$, $F_{1,20715}=28.40$, $p=0.000$; Education: $\chi^2=0.19$, $F_{2,41429}=0.06$, $p=0.941$; Employment status: $\chi^2=42.66$, $F_{1,20715}=27.61$, $p=0.000$; Family status: $\chi^2=222.28$, $F_{1,20715}=150.60$, $p=0.000$; Housing type: $\chi^2=65.41$, $F_{1,20715}=45.34$, $p=0.000$; Homelessness: $\chi^2=207.62$, $F_{1,20715}=144.55$, $p=0.000$; Main income: $\chi^2=12.87$, $F_{1,20715}=8.65$, $p=0.003$; Main language: $\chi^2=0.25$, $F_{1,20715}=0.15$, $p=0.698$; Remoteness: $\chi^2=0.00$, $F_{2,41426}=0.00$, $p=1.000$.

72 The mean is the average. The median is the ‘midpoint’ value, with half the values falling above the midpoint and half falling below. The median is a useful measure of central tendency when the data is skewed because, unlike the mean, it isn’t affected by any extreme values.

TABLE 2: LEVEL OF DISADVANTAGE, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Level of disadvantage	DFV respondent	
	Yes	No
	%	%
No types	12.7	34.0
1–2 types	50.1	51.4
3+ types	37.2	14.7
Total	100.0	100.0

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents. Significant difference between DFV respondents and other respondents.⁷³

TABLE 3: MEAN AND MEDIAN NUMBER OF LEGAL PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Level of disadvantage	DFV respondent			
	Yes		No	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
DFV victimisation	4.5	2.0	na	na
Other legal problems	15.6	8.0	2.4	0.0
All legal problems	20.0	11.0	2.4	0.0

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents. The median is a relevant measure of central tendency given that the data is skewed. 'na' indicates 'not applicable'.

The mean number of legal problems of all types, including DFV victimisation, was 20.0 for DFV respondents compared to only 2.4 for others.

to only 2.4 for others. Notably, this figure of 20.0 legal problems on average comprised not only multiple instances of DFV (4.5 on average), but also a very high number of other legal problems (15.6 on average). The median number of legal problems experienced by DFV respondents was also

high at 11.0 overall, including a median of 8.0 for legal problems other than DFV victimisation.

Excluding DFV victimisation problems, Figure 1 (p. 11) compares DFV respondents and other respondents on their prevalence of 14 different types of legal problems:

- any type of legal problem
- any type of 'substantial' legal problem (i.e. any type of legal problem with a moderate or severe impact on everyday life)
- each of 12 problem groups, namely, accidents, credit/debt, crime, consumer, education, employment, family, health, housing, money, personal injury and rights problems.⁷⁴

73 A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test was conducted on level of disadvantage, comparing DFV and other respondents. $\chi^2=79.83$, $F_{2,41424}=26.34$, $p=0.000$

74 These are identical to the legal problem categories used by Coumarelos et al. (2012), except that, in the present analysis,

DFV respondents were more likely to experience a broad range of legal problem types, based on bivariate chi-squared analyses (see Figure 1). These analyses examined the straightforward relationship between DFV victimisation and each legal problem type, without considering the influence of any other factors that may be relevant to the experience of legal problems. According to these chi-squared analyses, DFV respondents were significantly more likely to experience all the legal problem types examined, apart from accidents.⁷⁵ Thus, people experiencing DFV victimisation are also more likely to experience numerous other types of legal problems within the same 12-month period. Figure 1 shows, for example, that at least half of the DFV respondents experienced:

- a family problem (e.g. regarding child custody, contact, or care and protection; child support payments; fostering, adoption, guardianship or parentage; relationship break-up, no change division of assets)
- a consumer problem (e.g. regarding phone, internet, TV or utilities services; professional or tradesperson services; faulty goods)
- a crime problem other than DFV victimisation (e.g. regarding non-domestic assault, robbery, theft, property damage).

In addition, at least three-tenths of DFV respondents experienced:

- a government problem (e.g. government payments, fines)
- a housing problem (e.g. neighbours; rented housing; owned housing)
- a rights problem (child bullying/harassment, unfair treatment by police, discrimination)
- a credit/debt problem (e.g. credit rating/refusal, actual/possible bankruptcy, creditor's threats/actions; see Figure 1).

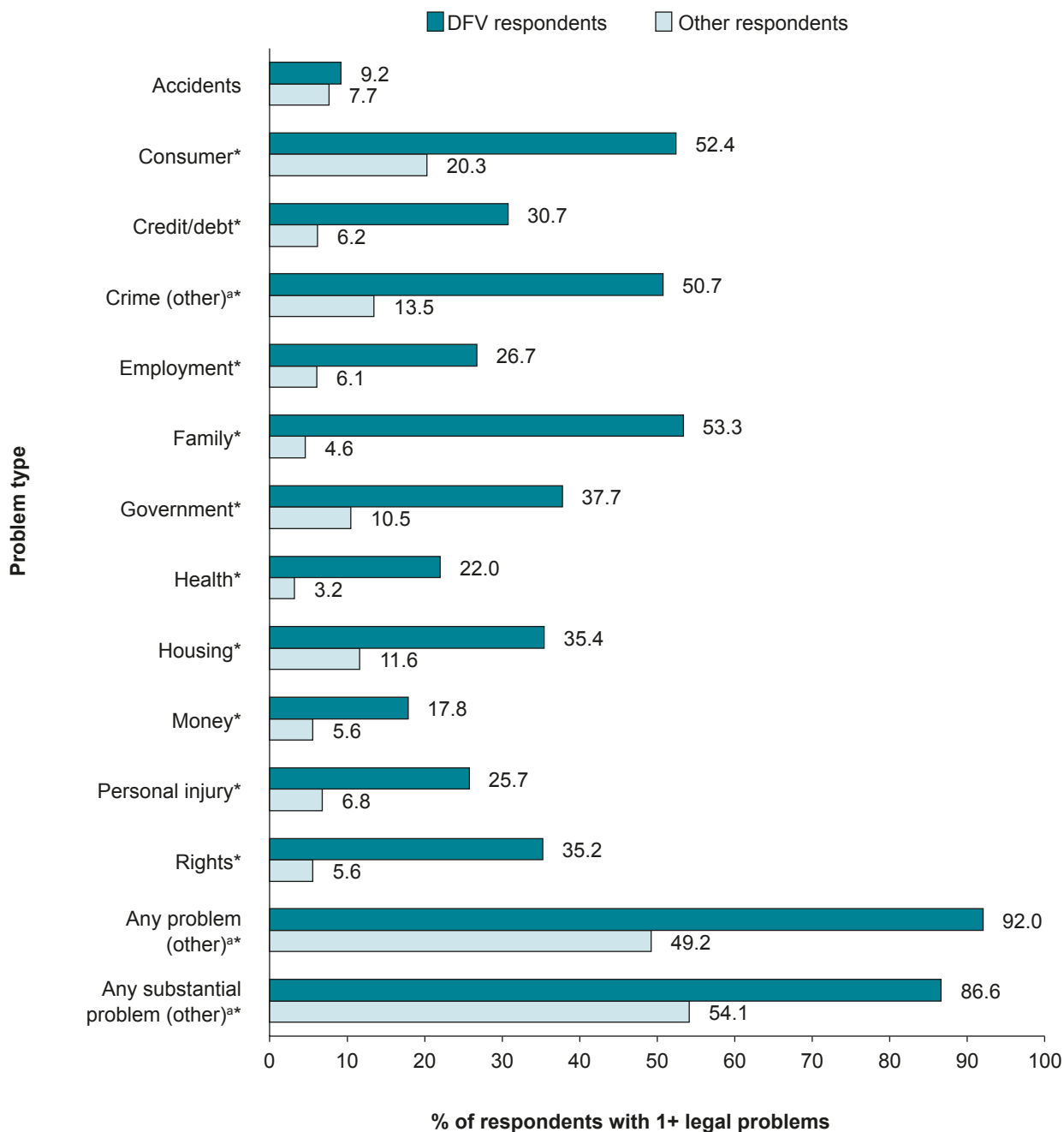
Notably, 92.0 per cent of DFV respondents reported experiencing a legal problem other than DFV victimisation, compared to only 49.2 per cent of other respondents (see Figure 1). Thus, DFV victimisation is linked to elevated experience of a broad range of legal problems, including substantial and multiple legal problems. Further, these legal problems span criminal, family and civil areas of legal expertise, as well as straddling both the Commonwealth and state and territory jurisdictions.

As discussed above, DFV respondents had a different demographic profile to other respondents, more often being female, younger and disadvantaged. Research demonstrates that disadvantaged people have

DFV victimisation was removed from the categories of 'crime', 'any type of legal problem' and 'any substantial type of legal problem'.

75 The accidents problem group, by definition, consisted of relatively minor issues as it included only injury-free motor vehicle accidents. Accidents involving injury were categorised within the personal injury problem group.

FIGURE 1: PREVALENCE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEGAL PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA



* Significantly higher prevalence of this legal problem type for DFV respondents compared to other respondents.⁷⁶

a The 'crime (other)', 'any problem (other)' and 'any substantial problem (other)' categories exclude DFV victimisation problems. Thus, for example, 50.7% of the respondents who experienced DFV victimisation also experienced another type of crime problem, whereas 13.5% of other respondents experienced a crime problem other than DFV victimisation.

Notes: N=20,716 LAW Survey respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

⁷⁶ A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test was conducted on each problem type, comparing DFV and other respondents. Accidents: $\chi^2=0.48$, $F_{1,20715}=0.32$, $p=0.574$; Consumer: $\chi^2=105.86$, $F_{1,20715}=70.14$, $p=0.000$; Credit/debt: $\chi^2=168.83$, $F_{1,20715}=111.57$, $p=0.000$; Crime (other – excluding DFV victimisation): $\chi^2=194.50$, $F_{1,20715}=128.97$, $p=0.000$; Employment: $\chi^2=122.15$, $F_{1,20715}=76.93$, $p=0.000$; Family: $\chi^2=839.43$, $F_{1,20715}=557.94$, $p=0.000$; Government: $\chi^2=129.43$, $F_{1,20715}=83.90$, $p=0.000$; Health: $\chi^2=185.53$, $F_{1,20715}=117.18$, $p=0.000$; Housing: $\chi^2=91.86$, $F_{1,20715}=60.37$, $p=0.000$; Money: $\chi^2=46.28$, $F_{1,20715}=30.75$, $p=0.000$; Personal injury: $\chi^2=92.19$, $F_{1,20715}=58.65$, $p=0.000$; Rights: $\chi^2=270.06$, $F_{1,20715}=173.29$, $p=0.000$; Any problem (other – excluding DFV victimisation): $\chi^2=122.84$, $F_{1,20715}=73.54$, $p=0.000$; Any substantial problem (other – excluding DFV victimisation): $\chi^2=71.28$, $F_{1,20715}=47.24$, $p=0.000$.

significantly higher vulnerability to experiencing many types of legal problems.⁷⁷ It is also well established that different types of legal problems tend to peak at different ages, reflecting changing life circumstances as people progress through the stages of life.⁷⁸ It was therefore of interest to examine whether DFV respondents' elevated prevalence of most types of legal problems solely reflects their greater disadvantage and demographic profile. Consequently, a series of logistic regression models were conducted to examine this question, comparing DFV respondents to other respondents on their experience of a broad range of legal problems other than DFV victimisation problems. These models investigated whether DFV victimisation was related to elevated prevalence of each problem type, *independently* of any influence of gender, age and level of disadvantage.⁷⁹

As summarised in Table 4 (p. 13) the regression results revealed that DFV victimisation was still associated with significantly elevated prevalence of all types of legal problems other than accidents, even after the gender, age and greater disadvantage of DFV respondents were taken into account. The regression results similarly showed that higher levels of disadvantage were significantly associated with elevated experience of all legal problems types other than accidents. In addition, the experience of different legal problems also varied significantly by gender and age. Thus, DFV victimisation, gender, age and greater level of disadvantage were *independent* predictors of elevated legal problem prevalence.

This finding indicates that DFV respondents' heightened prevalence of a broad range of legal problems is only partly explained by their greater level of disadvantage and demographic profile, and that other factors or circumstances linked to DFV victimisation also play a role. The odds of experiencing *any* type of legal problem (other than DFV victimisation) was much higher for DFV respondents – 10 times higher (see Table 4). Further, the odds of experiencing each of the legal problem types examined, apart from accidents, were at least 3.5 times higher for DFV respondents compared to other respondents (see Table 4). Most notably, the odds of DFV respondents experiencing a family

problem were especially high – 16 times higher than those for other respondents (see Table 4).⁸⁰

Severity of legal problems

LAW Survey respondents were asked to rate the severity of each specific type of legal problem they experienced in terms of its impact on their everyday life, choosing between no impact, a slight impact, a moderate impact or a severe impact.⁸¹ As reported above, DFV respondents were significantly more likely to experience a legal problem other than DFV victimisation that had a 'substantial' impact – that is, a moderate or severe impact – on their everyday life.

Figure 2 (p. 14) is based only on those respondents who experienced legal problems. It compares the severity of the legal problems experienced by DFV respondents and other respondents. Based on all legal problems experienced, including DFV victimisation, DFV respondents were significantly more likely than other respondents to rate at least one of their legal problems as having a severe impact on their everyday life. This significant finding still held when the analysis was repeated excluding DFV victimisation problems. Only 23.1 per cent of respondents who had not experienced DFV victimisation in the previous 12 months rated at least one of their legal problems as having a severe impact on their everyday life. By comparison, 80.5 per cent of DFV respondents rated at least one of their legal problems as severe when DFV victimisation problems were included in the analysis, and 67.0 per cent of DFV respondents rated at least one of their other types of legal problems as severe (see Figure 2). It is worth noting that fewer than 5 per cent of DFV respondents rated all their legal problems as having no impact or only a slight impact, compared to 45.8 per cent of other respondents (see Figure 2). Thus, both the DFV victimisation problems experienced by DFV respondents and their other types of legal problems were more likely to be severe than other respondents' legal problems.

These findings therefore suggest that, in addition to being linked to increased prevalence of a broad range of legal problems, experiencing DFV appears to have a 'compounding effect' that increases the severity of these other legal problems.

... experiencing DFV appears to have a 'compounding effect' that increases the severity of these other legal problems.

77 See, for example, Coumarelos et al. (2012); Coumarelos, Pleasence & Wei (2013); McDonald & Wei (2013); Pleasence et al. (2014).

78 Coumarelos et al. (2012); Pleasence (2006).

79 A (weighted) binary logistic regression was conducted comparing DFV respondents with other respondents on their experience of legal problems from each of the same 14 categories that were used for the Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared analysis. All 14 regressions examined the relationship of DFV victimisation to the prevalence of legal problems of that type (excluding DFV victimisation problems), and independently of the effects of gender, age, and level of disadvantage (in three categories, as described above).

80 Note that the particularly increased odds of legal problems related to employment for the younger and middle age groups compared to those aged 65 years or over reflect the much higher rates of retirement for the latter age group.

81 The survey measured 129 specific types of legal problems (which were grouped into 12 broader categories). Respondents were asked to rate the severity of each specific type of legal problem they experienced. If respondents had experienced multiple instances of a specific type of legal problem, they were asked to rate the severity of the worst instance.

TABLE 4: REGRESSION SUMMARIES — PREVALENCE OF EACH LEGAL PROBLEM TYPE, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable		Significant odds ratios in regression model for each legal problem type. ^a													
		Any problem (other) ^b	Any substantial problem (other) ^c	Accidents	Consumer	Credit/debt	Crime (other) ^d	Employment	Family	Government	Health	Housing	Money	Personal injury	Rights
Gender	Categories compared	0.9	1.2	-	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.4	0.8	1.3	-	0.7	0.7	0.9
Age (years)	Female male	1.6	0.7	1.4	0.8	-	3.2	16.2	-	0.6	0.3	1.4	0.4	8.6	12.2
	15–17 65+	2.9	-	3.3	1.7	5.5	4.2	36.0	2.3	2.2	-	2.2	0.7	10.4	9.0
	18–24 65+	3.1	1.5	2.1	2.2	7.7	3.3	26.3	7.2	2.1	1.9	2.7	1.3	6.2	8.5
	25–34 65+	3.4	1.7	1.8	2.5	5.8	3.2	24.9	9.8	2.3	1.9	2.5	2.2	6.9	10.9
	35–44 65+	2.7	1.5	1.5	2.1	4.6	2.6	30.0	4.9	1.9	1.4	1.9	2.4	6.5	5.7
45–54 65+	2.1	1.4	-	1.7	3.8	2.2	13.6	2.9	1.9	1.5	1.6	2.4	4.2	3.2	
55–64 65+	10.0	4.4	-	4.2	5.1	5.7	4.3	16.2	4.6	5.4	3.5	4.5	4.0	6.1	
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.1	1.5	-	-	1.5	-	1.3	3.0	1.3	2.5	1.1	0.8	1.6	2.0
	1–2 types none	1.6	3.0	0.7	1.2	3.3	1.6	2.0	8.1	1.9	7.1	1.7	0.7	1.9	4.6
	3+ types none														

a A significant odds ratio (OR)>1.0 indicates that the first category in the comparison had significantly higher odds of experiencing legal problems of the type in question than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A significant OR<1.0 indicates that the first category in the comparison had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the significant OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category. OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category, or, in other words, that the odds for the second category were twice those (i.e. 1/0.5=2.0) for the first category. '-' indicates that the OR was not significant. See Appendix Tables A1 to A14 for the full results, including beta values.

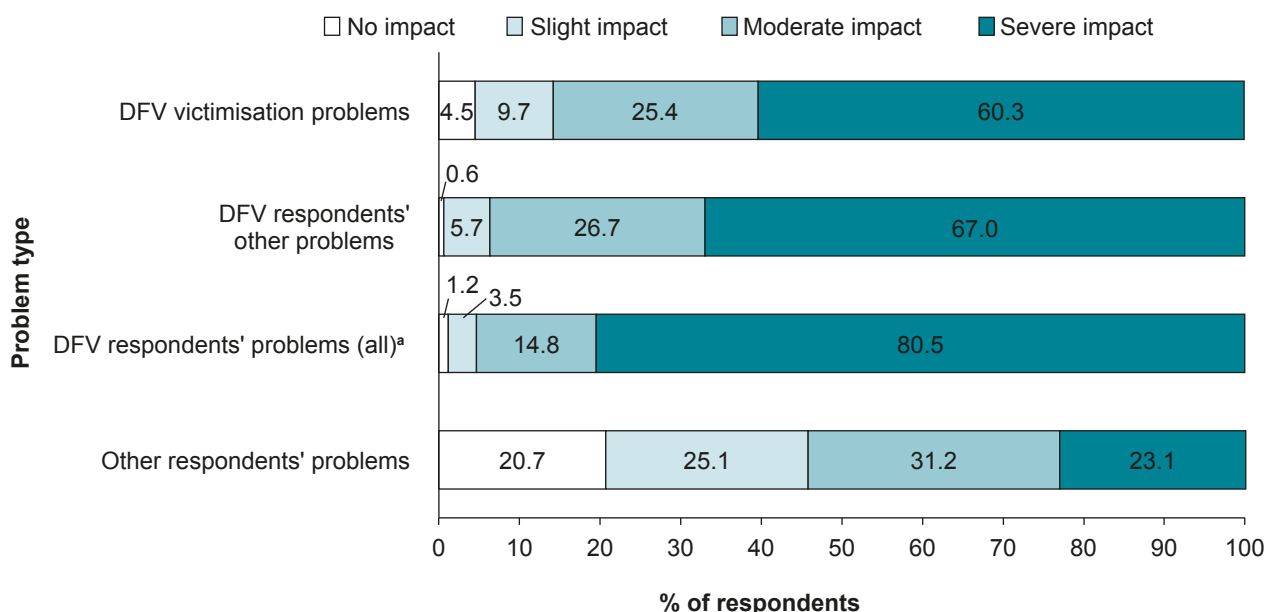
b Any type of legal problem other than a DFV victimisation problem.

c Any type of 'substantial' legal problem, rated as having a moderate or severe impact, other than a DFV victimisation problem.

d Any type of crime problem other than a DFV victimisation problem.

Notes: A separate weighted binary logistic regression model was conducted for each of the 14 categories of legal problems. For the regression model on any substantial legal problem, N=10,289 respondents who experienced at least one legal problem, including 169 DFV respondents. For each other regression model, N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

FIGURE 2: SEVERITY OF LEGAL PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA



^a Includes both DFV victimisation problems and other legal problems experienced by DFV respondents.

Notes: N=10,289 respondents with a legal problem, including 169 DFV respondents. Problem severity was missing for 29 of these non-DFV respondents. The severity rating for each problem type reflects the most severe legal problem of that type experienced. Significant difference between DFV respondents' legal problems (including DFV victimisation and other problems) and other respondents' legal problems.⁸² In addition, significant difference between DFV respondents' other legal problems (excluding DFV victimisation problems) and other respondents' legal problems.⁸³

Figure 3 (p. 15) shows the type of legal problem rated by each respondent as their single most serious problem.⁸⁴ DFV victimisation was rated as the most serious legal problem experienced by 50.8 per cent of DFV respondents, followed by family problems (16.1%) and other crime problems (12.1%).

These family problems rated as their most serious legal problem by DFV respondents were predominantly child-related issues (66.5%), but also included relationship break-up issues concerning divorce, separation and division of assets (33.5%). The child-related issues included custody or contact issues (44.0% of family problems), fostering, adoption, guardianship or parentage issues (13.2%), and care and protection issues (9.3%).

The other crime problems rated by DFV respondents as their most serious problem included both crime victim problems other than DFV victimisation (58.5%), which were predominantly non-domestic assault victim problems, as well as crime offender problems (41.5%). Some of the crime offender problems involved DFV allegations against the respondent or DFVPOs made against the respondent.⁸⁵ Such crime offender problems are

consistent with prior research and clinical experience indicating that victims of DFV are sometimes unfairly charged as the primary perpetrator of the violence, for example in some cases where there are competing allegations by both parties involved in the incident.⁸⁶

The most severe legal problems for other respondents were consumer problems (18.4%), other crime problems (15.8%) and housing problems (10.5%), which were largely problems with neighbours.

Adverse consequences of legal problems

As noted in the Method section, the survey asked in-depth follow-up questions about the 'three most serious' types of legal problems that respondents experienced, including questions about the adverse consequences of these problems, respondents' responses to them and their outcomes.⁸⁷ These follow-up questions were asked about 467 legal problems experienced by DFV respondents and 18,921 legal problems experienced by other respondents. The 467 legal problems experienced by DFV respondents that were followed up in depth included 130 DFV victimisation problems and 337 other types of legal problems.⁸⁸

⁸² $\chi^2=306.53$, $F_{3,60660}=64.05$, $p=0.000$.

⁸³ $\chi^2=179.68$, $F_{3,60438}=47.66$, $p=0.000$.

⁸⁴ Note that for respondents who only reported one legal problem, this problem was classified as their most serious.

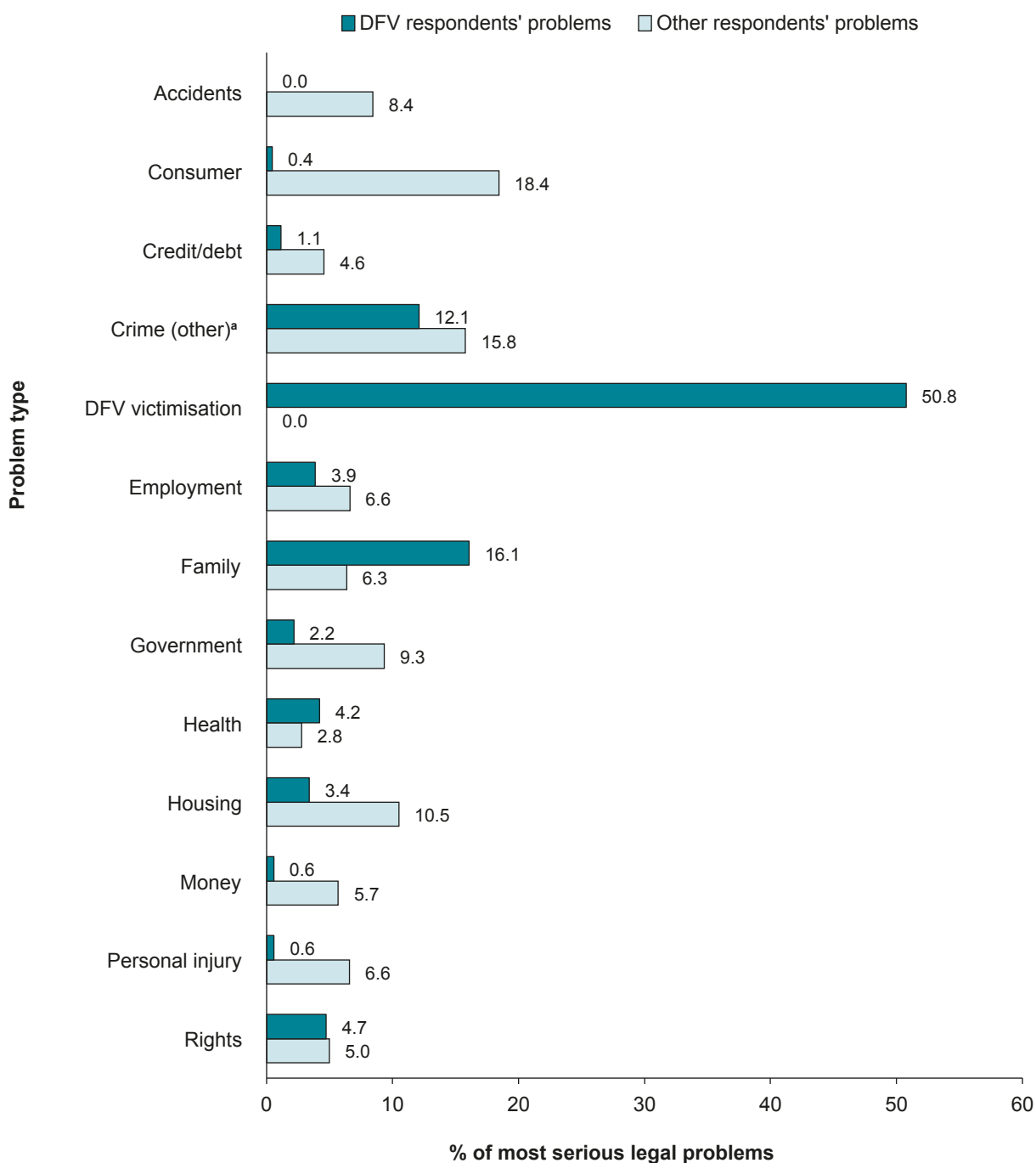
⁸⁵ This 41.5 per cent included DFV allegations against the respondent (9.3%) and criminal charge/arrest/questioning by police (32.2%) without explicit information about the nature of the matter.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Dichter (2013); Mansour (2014); Ulbrick & Jago (2018).

⁸⁷ Respondents were asked in-depth follow-up questions about their 'three most serious' types of legal problems, based on the 129 specific types examined by the survey. See Coumarelos et al. (2012) for further details.

⁸⁸ Of the 169 DFV respondents, 130 rated their DFV victimisation problems among their three most serious problem types

FIGURE 3: MOST SERIOUS LEGAL PROBLEM, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA



^a Excludes DFV victimisation problems.

Notes: N=169 legal problems for DFV respondents and 10,117 legal problems for other respondents, representing each respondent's single most serious legal problem.

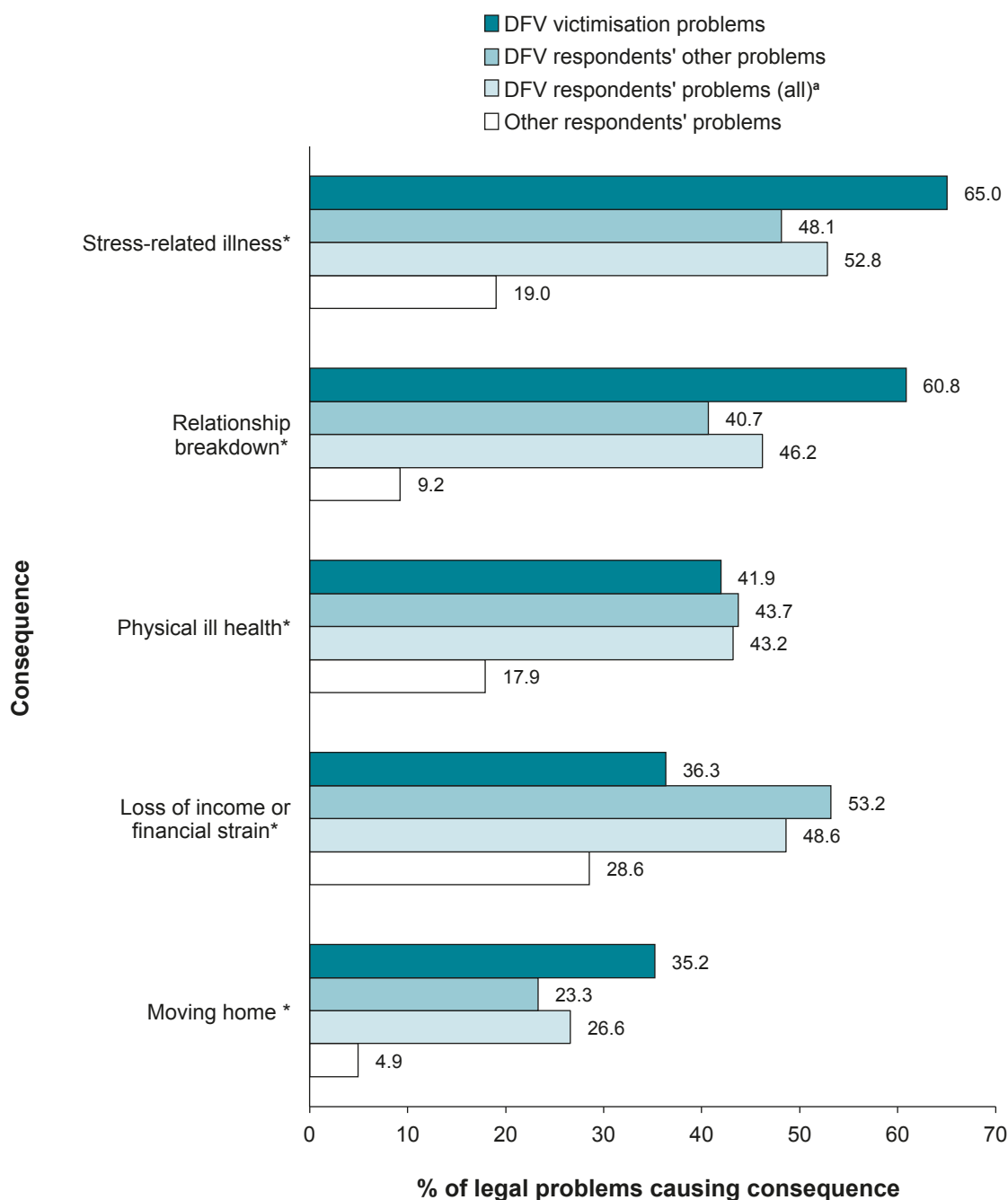
The survey examined the following types of adverse consequences of legal problems on life circumstances:

- stress-related illness
- physical ill health
- relationship breakdown
- moving home
- loss of income or financial strain.

As shown in [Figure 4](#) (p. 16), the legal problems experienced by DFV respondents often caused negative impacts on broad life circumstances, including, health, social and financial circumstances. Each of the five adverse consequences examined by the LAW Survey was reported to result from a significantly higher proportion of the legal problems experienced by DFV respondents than by the legal problems experienced by other respondents (see [Figure 4](#)). For example, stress-related illness and physical ill health were reported to result from more than two-fifths of both the DFV victimisation

and were thus asked about the adverse consequences of these problems. The other 39 DFV respondents were only asked about the adverse consequences of other types of legal problems, which they had rated as being more severe than their DFV victimisation problems.

FIGURE 4: ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF LEGAL PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA



^a Includes both DFV victimisation problems and other legal problems experienced by DFV respondents.

* Significant difference between DFV respondents' legal problems (including both DFV victimisation and other problems) and other respondents' legal problems on this adverse consequence.⁸⁹

Notes: N=467 legal problems for DFV respondents and 18,921 legal problems for other respondents. Data was missing for the following numbers of these problems for DFV and other respondents, respectively: stress-related illness – 7 and 309; physical ill health – 7 and 250; relationship breakdown – 11 and 265; moving home – 6 and 249; loss of income or financial strain – 6 and 265.

⁸⁹ A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test was conducted on each adverse consequence, comparing the legal problems of DFV respondents (both their DFV victimisation problem and their other legal problems grouped together) to the legal problems of other respondents. These analyses were based on respondents' 'three most serious' problems. Stress-related illness: $\chi^2=323.01$, $F_{1,10320}=130.14$, $p=0.000$; Physical ill health: $\chi^2=190.92$, $F_{1,10320}=75.34$, $p=0.000$; Relationship breakdown: $\chi^2=673.71$, $F_{1,10320}=267.43$, $p=0.000$; Moving home: $\chi^2=410.30$, $F_{1,10320}=143.87$, $p=0.000$; Loss of income or financial strain: $\chi^2=87.72$, $F_{1,10320}=35.03$, $p=0.000$.

problems and the other legal problems experienced by DFV respondents, but less than one-fifth of the legal problems experienced by others. More than one-third of DFV victimisation problems, and almost one-quarter of the other legal problems experienced by DFV respondents resulted in having to move home, compared to only 4.9 per cent of the legal problems experienced by other respondents.

On average, each legal problem experienced by DFV respondents resulted in 2.2 adverse consequences, compared to only 0.8 adverse consequences for each legal problem experienced other respondents.⁹⁰ Both DFV victimisation problems and other types of legal problems experienced by DFV respondents resulted in just over 2 adverse consequences on average (2.4 and 2.1, respectively).⁹¹

Thus, the present findings reveal that DFV victimisation, and the other legal problems associated with it, increase the negative knock-on effects on broader life circumstances beyond the legal sphere.

Responses to legal problems

Six types of action in response to respondents' 'three most serious' legal problems were measured by the survey:

- sought advice from a legal or non-legal professional
- communicated with the other side
- consulted relatives or friends
- used a website or self-help guide
- court or tribunal proceedings had occurred or were likely
- formal dispute resolution had occurred or was likely.

Figure 5 (p. 18) shows the percentage of legal problems for which DFV respondents and other respondents took these actions to try to resolve these problems. Apart from communication with the other side, DFV respondents took each action in response to a significantly higher percentage of legal problems than did other respondents. For example, DFV respondents sought advice from a legal or non-legal professional for 74.6 per cent of problems compared to only 50.5 per cent for other respondents. Compared to other respondents' problems, those of DFV respondents were 3.1 times as likely to result in court or tribunal proceedings and 2.6 times as likely to result in formal dispute resolution processes. DFV respondents took an average of 2.3 actions in response to their legal problems, compared to only 1.5 for other respondents.

Respondents' actions were also categorised according to the highest-level or most formal strategy that they used, as follows:

- 'sought advice' from a legal or non-legal professional – regardless of whether they took any of the other actions
- 'handled without advice' from legal and non-legal professionals – that is, they only used one or more of the other actions
- 'took no action' – that is, they took none of the six actions.⁹²

Figure 6 (p. 19) shows that DFV respondents, compared to other respondents, were significantly more likely to seek advice from a legal or non-legal professional as their highest-level strategy, and significantly less likely to handle the problem without professional advice or do nothing. DFV respondents did nothing for only 5.9 per cent of their legal problems – for only 2 of their 130 DFV victimisation problems and only 25 of their other 337 legal problems.⁹³ This finding was evident for both the DFV victimisation and other legal problems of DFV respondents, but was slightly more pronounced for their DFV victimisation problems.⁹⁴ In addition, DFV respondents used a greater number of advisers when they sought advice – 3.1 advisers on average for DFV victimisation problems and 2.3 advisers on average for their other problems – compared with 1.0 for other respondents.

Figure 7 (p. 20) shows the types of advisers used for the 9,783 legal problems where respondents sought professional advice. When they sought advice for their legal problems, DFV respondents were significantly more likely than other respondents to consult legal advisers (51.6% versus 29.6% of problems) and were also significantly more likely to use health or welfare advisers (56.4% versus 26.2% of problems).

When DFV respondents used a legal adviser for either their DFV victimisation or other legal problems, they used at least one free legal service in 53.7 per cent of cases and least one private lawyer in 60.5 per cent of cases.⁹⁵ The free legal services used were predominantly legal aid commissions and court services, but also included advisers from community legal centres and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services. At least one of these free legal

⁹² These categories are identical to those used by Coumarelos et al. (2012).

⁹³ Based on respondents' 'three most serious' legal problems. Given the small number of problems for which DFV respondents did nothing, analyses on the reasons for doing nothing were not conducted as such analyses would likely be unreliable.

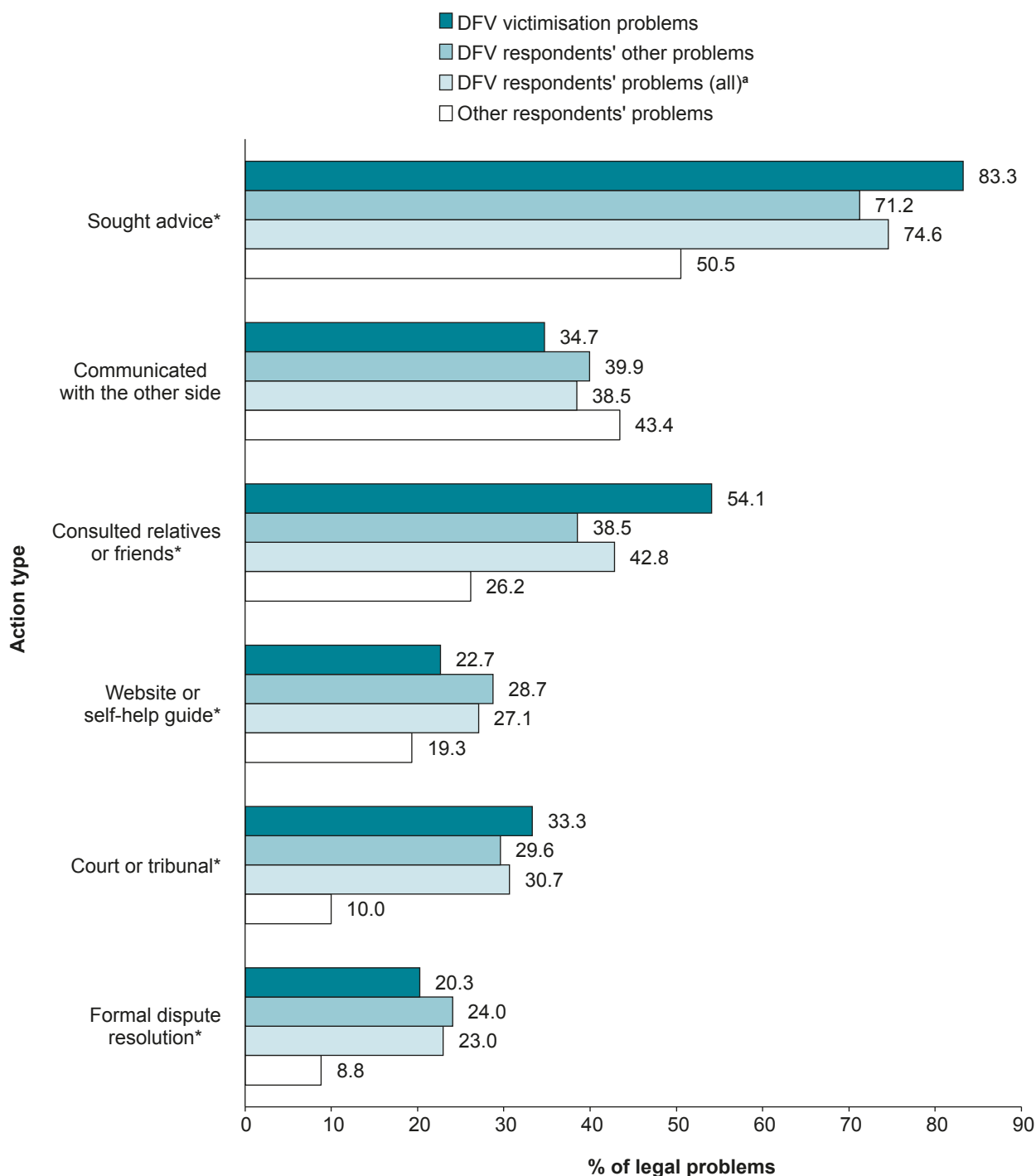
⁹⁴ DFV respondents sought advice for 83.3 per cent of their DFV victimisation problems and took no action for 1.9 per cent of these problems. The corresponding percentages for DFV respondents' other problems were 71.2 and 7.4 per cent.

⁹⁵ Based on their 'three most serious' legal problems, including both DFV victimisation and other problems. Note that people may sometimes receive services for free from a private lawyer who is funded by legal aid commissions to provide duty lawyer services in court or assistance under a grant of aid.

⁹⁰ These means are based on the five adverse consequences examined by the survey for respondents' 'three most serious problems'.

⁹¹ As per previous note.

FIGURE 5: ACTIONS TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO LEGAL PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA



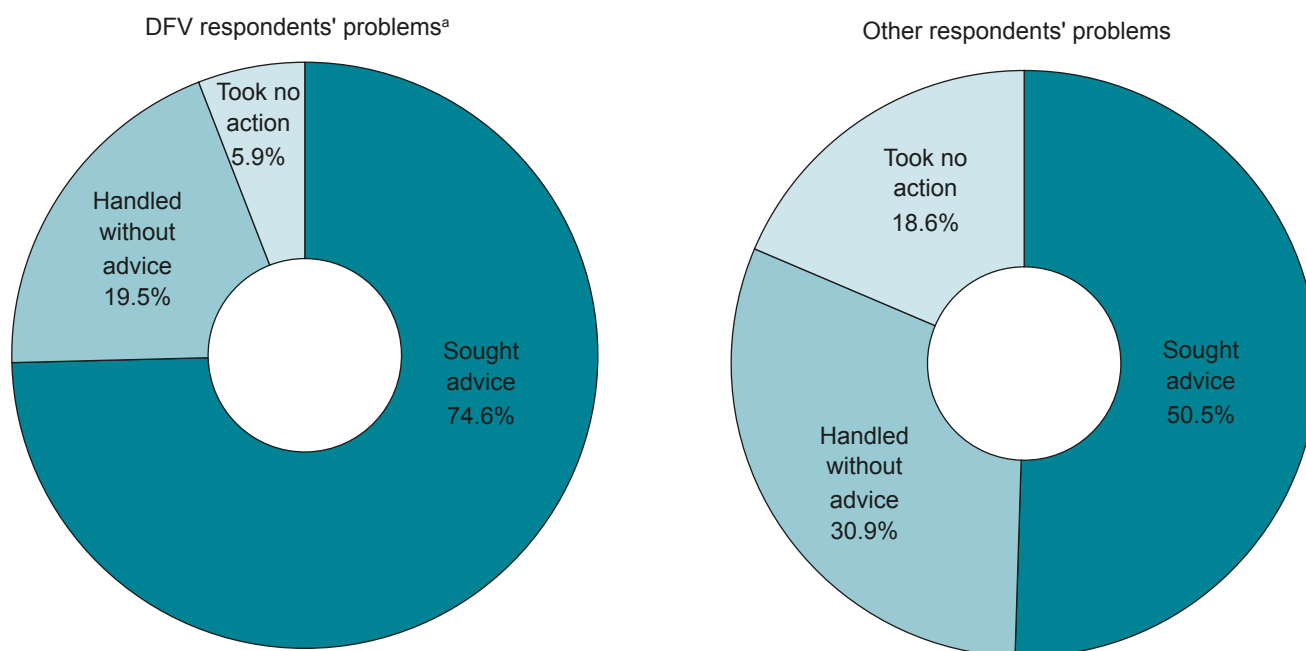
a Includes both DFV victimisation problems and other legal problems experienced by DFV respondents.

* Significant difference between DFV respondents' legal problems (including both DFV victimisation and other problems) and other respondents' legal problems.⁹⁶

Notes: N=467 legal problems for DFV respondents and 18,921 legal problems for other respondents. Data was missing for the following numbers of these problems for DFV respondents and other respondents, respectively: sought advice – 7 and 239; communicated with the other side – 23 and 2,522; consulted relatives or friends – 7 and 240; website or self-help guide – 9 and 236; court or tribunal – 41 and 1,336; formal dispute resolution – 33 and 917.

⁹⁶ A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test was conducted on each type of action, comparing the legal problems of DFV respondents (both their DFV victimisation problem and their other legal problems grouped together) to the legal problems of other respondents. These analyses were based on respondents' 'three most serious' problems. Sought advice: $\chi^2=104.24$, $F_{1,10320}=49.81$, $p=0.000$; Communicated with the other side: $\chi^2=4.34$, $F_{1,10320}=1.79$, $p=0.181$; Website or self-help guide: $\chi^2=17.02$, $F_{1,10320}=7.32$, $p=0.007$; Court or tribunal: $\chi^2=192.00$, $F_{1,10320}=92.45$, $p=0.000$; Formal dispute resolution: $\chi^2=102.44$, $F_{1,10320}=49.06$, $p=0.000$; Consulted relatives or friends: $\chi^2=64.37$, $F_{1,10320}=32.28$, $p=0.000$.

FIGURE 6: STRATEGY IN RESPONSE TO LEGAL PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA



^a Includes both DFV victimisation problems and other legal problems experienced by DFV respondents.

Notes: N=467 legal problems for DFV respondents and 18,921 legal problems for other respondents. Data was missing for 7 of these problems for DFV respondents and 239 of these problems for other respondents. Significant difference between DFV respondents' legal problems (including both DFV victimisation and other problems) and other respondents' legal problems.⁹⁷

services was used for 68.1 per cent of the DFV victimisation problems for which DFV respondents used a legal adviser.⁹⁸

... self-help is typically not sufficient on its own for people experiencing DFV to resolve their legal problems, and they are often high consumers of health and legal services.

Where DFV respondents used health or welfare advisers for either their DFV victimisation or other legal problems, these advisers were predominantly doctors (51.5% of problems), psychologists or counsellors (43.8% of problems) or social or welfare workers (19.6% of problems).⁹⁹

In short, the present analyses reveal that

people who have experienced DFV have elevated levels of taking action to try to resolve their legal problems, with especially high levels of seeking professional advice, typically using a greater number of professional advisers, particularly legal and health professionals. Thus, the results indicate that self-help is typically not sufficient on its own for people experiencing DFV to resolve their legal problems, and they are often high consumers of health and legal services.

Finalisation and outcome of legal problems

Respondents were asked whether each of their 'three most serious problems' were over or were still ongoing. Figure 8 (p. 21) shows that DFV respondents' legal problems were significantly less likely to have been finalised compared to the problems of other respondents. Smaller percentages of both their DFV victimisation problems (40.0%) and their other legal problems (41.6%) had been finalised compared to the percentage (64.4%) for others' problems.

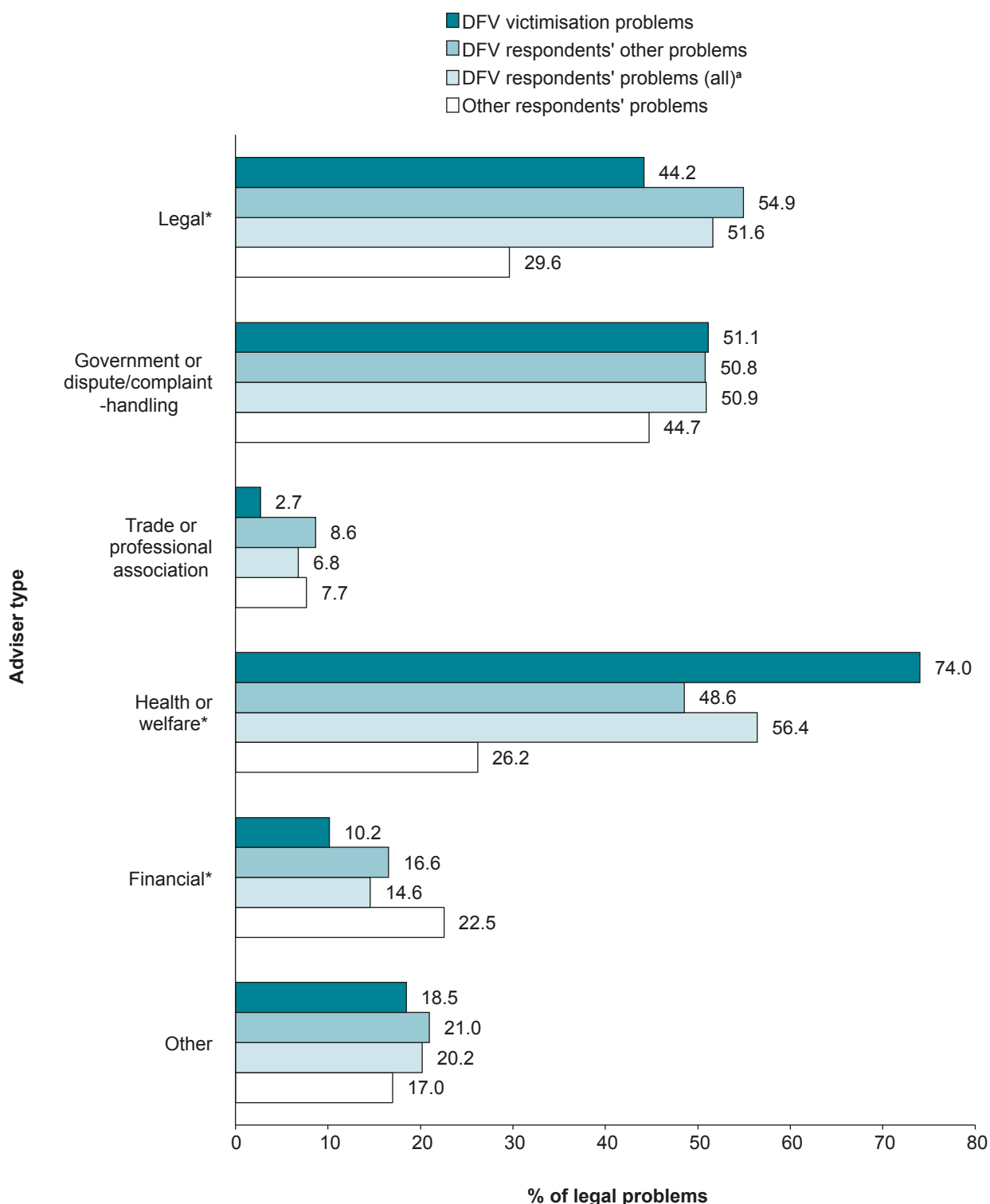
For legal problems that had been finalised, respondents were asked by what means finalisation had occurred. Figure 9 (p. 22) shows a significant difference between the manner of finalisation of DFV respondents' legal problems and those of other respondents. In particular, DFV respondents' legal problems, compared to those of other respondents, were:

⁹⁷ A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test was conducted on (highest-level) strategy, comparing the legal problems of DFV respondents (both their DFV victimisation problem and their other legal problems grouped together) to the legal problems of other respondents. This analysis was based on respondents' 'three most serious' problems. $\chi^2=109.60$, $F_{2,20585}=25.72$, $p=0.000$.

⁹⁸ The corresponding figure for DFV victims' other problems was 48.5 per cent.

⁹⁹ The corresponding percentages for DFV victimisation problems only were: doctors (77.2%), psychologists or counsellors (43.0%) and social or welfare workers (22.8%). The corresponding percentages for only the other legal problems faced by DFV respondents were: doctors (49.6%), psychologists or counsellors (44.3%) and social or welfare workers (17.4%).

FIGURE 7: ADVISERS USED FOR LEGAL PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA



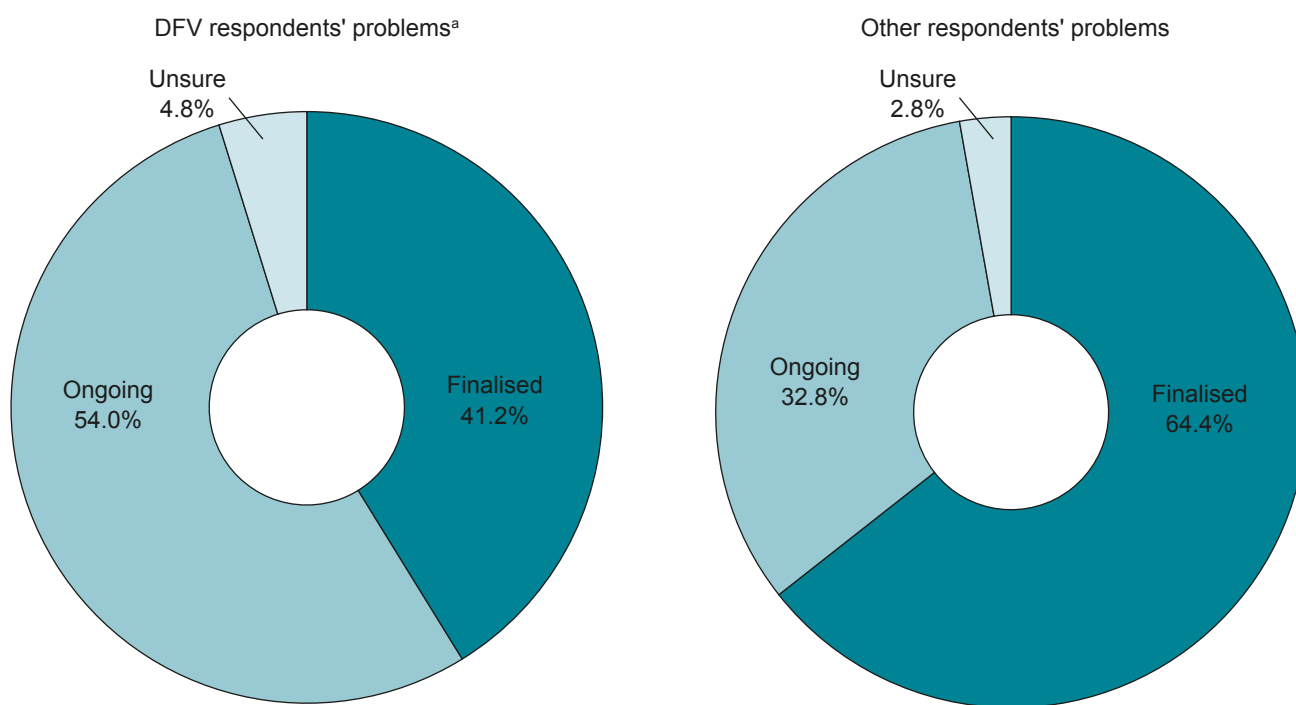
^a Includes both DFV victimisation problems and other legal problems experienced by DFV respondents.

* Significant difference between DFV respondents' legal problems (including both DFV victimisation and other problems) and other respondents' legal problems.¹⁰⁰

Notes: N=343 legal problems where DFV respondents sought advice and 9,440 legal problems where other respondents sought advice. Data was missing for the following numbers of these problems for DFV respondents and other respondents, respectively: legal adviser – 0 and 22; government or dispute/complaint-handling adviser – 2 and 28; trade union or professional association – 0 and 25; health or welfare adviser – 0 and 12; financial adviser – 0 and 20; other adviser – 2 and 11.

¹⁰⁰A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test was conducted on each adviser type, comparing the legal problems of DFV respondents (both their DFV victimisation problem and their other legal problems grouped together) to the legal problems of other respondents. These analyses were based on respondents' 'three most serious' problems, and only included those problems where respondents had sought advice. Legal adviser: $\chi^2=75.76$, $F_{1,6653}=37.65$, $p=0.000$; Government or dispute/complaint-handling adviser: $\chi^2=5.14$, $F_{1,6653}=2.64$, $p=0.105$; Trade union or professional association: $\chi^2=0.36$, $F_{1,6653}=0.21$, $p=0.649$; Health or welfare adviser: $\chi^2=153.45$, $F_{1,6653}=73.81$, $p=0.000$; Financial adviser: $\chi^2=12.13$, $F_{1,6653}=5.35$, $p=0.021$; Other adviser: $\chi^2=2.40$, $F_{1,6653}=1.14$, $p=0.286$.

FIGURE 8: FINALISATION OF LEGAL PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA



^a Includes both DFV victimisation problems and other legal problems experienced by DFV respondents.

* Significant difference between DFV respondents' legal problems (including both DFV victimisation and other problems) and other respondents' legal problems.¹⁰¹

Notes: N=467 legal problems for DFV respondents and 18,921 legal problems for other respondents. Data was missing for 1 of these problems for DFV respondents and 81 of these problems for other respondents.

- more often finalised via court or tribunal proceedings (8.7% versus 3.3%)
- less often finalised via direct (informal) agreement with the other side (21.8% versus 30.0%).

The higher percentage of court or tribunal finalisations for DFV respondents was especially apparent for their DFV victimisation problems (18.8%).

For legal problems that had been finalised, respondents were also asked about their satisfaction with the outcome and whether the outcome was in their favour. There was no significant difference between DFV respondents and other respondents in their likelihood of reporting satisfaction with the outcome of their legal problems.¹⁰²

However, as shown in [Figure 10](#) (p. 23), there was a significant difference in how respondents rated the favourability of the outcome of their problems.¹⁰³ Although they rated similar percentages of legal problems as having a favourable outcome, DFV respondents, compared to other respondents, were more likely to rate their legal problems as having a somewhat favourable outcome (33.3% versus 18.6%) and less likely to rate them as having a mostly unfavourable outcome (24.3% versus 33.5%).

The results therefore indicate that while people experiencing DFV take longer to finalise their often serious legal problems, and more often require professional assistance to do so, they rate the outcomes they achieve similarly to non-DFV respondents.

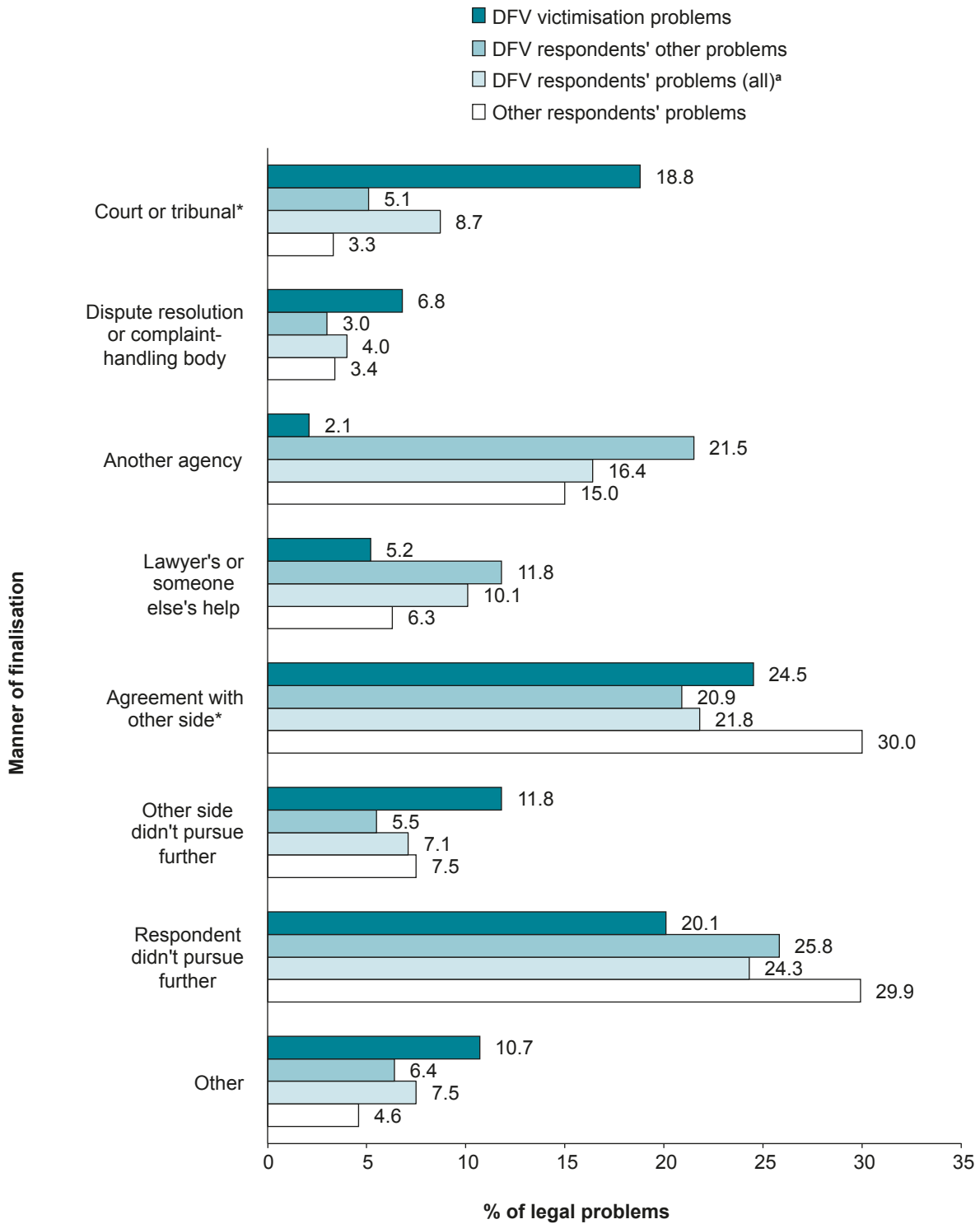
¹⁰¹ A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test was conducted on the finalisation of legal problems, comparing the legal problems of DFV respondents (both their DFV victimisation problem and their other legal problems grouped together) to the legal problems of other respondents. These analyses were based on respondents' 'three most serious' problems. $\chi^2=106.73$, $F_{2,20273}=29.38$, $p=0.000$.

¹⁰² A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test was conducted on satisfaction with the outcome of legal problems, comparing the legal problems of DFV respondents (both their DFV victimisation problem and their other legal problems grouped

together) to the legal problems of other respondents. The test was based on finalised problems among respondents' 'three most serious' legal problems. Respondents were asked to choose between being 'very satisfied', 'somewhat satisfied', 'somewhat dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with the outcome. $\chi^2=4.65$, $F_{3,27357}=0.88$, $p=0.440$.

¹⁰³ Respondents were asked to choose between the outcome being 'mostly in my favour', 'somewhat in my favour' or 'mostly not in my favour'.

FIGURE 9: MANNER OF FINALISATION OF LEGAL PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA



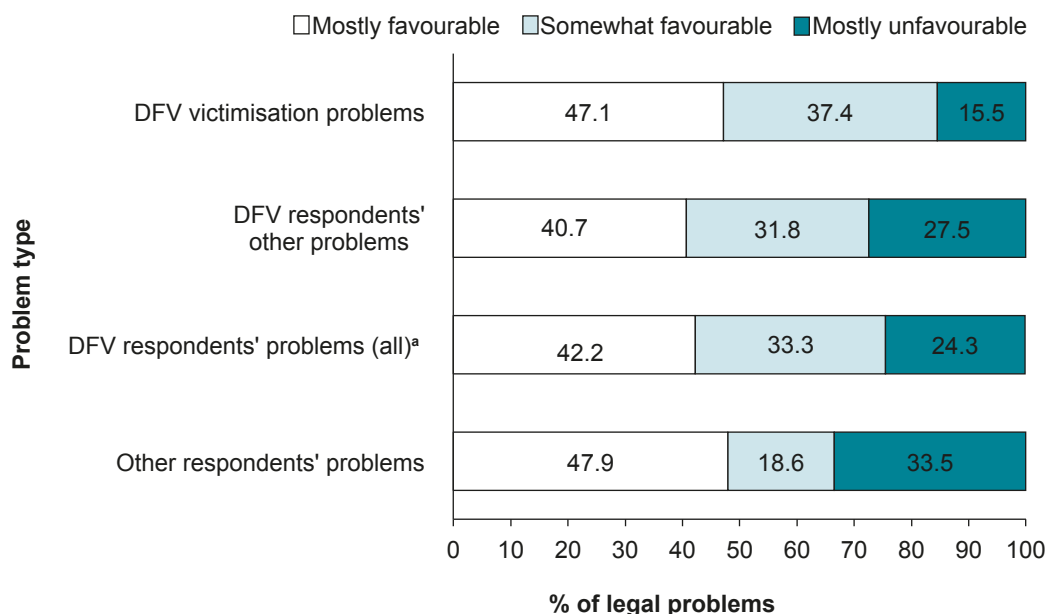
^a Includes both DFV victimisation problems and other legal problems experienced by DFV respondents.

* Significant difference between DFV respondents' legal problems (including both DFV victimisation and other problems) and other respondents' legal problems.¹⁰⁴

Notes: N=192 finalised legal problems for DFV respondents and 12,135 finalised legal problems for other respondents. Data was missing for 3 of these problems for DFV respondents and 234 of these problems for other respondents.

¹⁰⁴ A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test was conducted on the manner of finalisation of legal problems, comparing the legal problems of DFV respondents (both their DFV victimisation problem and their other legal problems grouped together) to the legal problems of other respondents. These analyses were based on respondents' 'three most serious' problems, and only included finalised problems. $\chi^2=30.52$, $F_{7,68620}=2.61$, $p=0.012$.

FIGURE 10: FAVOURABILITY OF OUTCOME OF LEGAL PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA



^a Includes both DFV victimisation problems and other legal problems experienced by DFV respondents.

Notes: N=192 finalised legal problems for DFV respondents and 12,135 finalised legal problems for other respondents. Data was missing for 8 of these problems for DFV respondents and 467 of these problems for other respondents. Significant difference between DFV respondents' legal problems (including both DFV victimisation and other problems) and other respondents' legal problems.¹⁰⁵

Discussion

The present paper provides the first quantitative assessment based on representative population data of the legal problems that often precede, coincide with or follow from the experience of DFV in Australia. It demonstrates the serious nature of DFV victimisation and the gamut of legal problems and broader human service needs that often result from or accompany DFV. Experiencing DFV has a ‘compounding’ effect on legal and human service needs. DFV not only increases the experience of a wide range of other serious legal problems, but also increases the negative impacts of these legal problems on broader life circumstances and reduces the likelihood of resolving these legal problems. The study reveals that DFV and related legal problems require assistance from multiple professional advisers, usually lawyers and health and welfare professionals, to successfully reach resolution. In addition, consistent with the literature, the results confirm that DFV victimisation is more prevalent among demographic groups who have increased likelihood of experiencing disadvantage.

The present results have important implications for legal and broader human service delivery to people experiencing DFV, indicating the need for:

- free or low-cost legal services that are accessible to disadvantaged people experiencing DFV
- comprehensive ‘legal diagnosis’ to identify all the legal problems accompanying DFV victimisation, including family, civil and criminal law problems
- joining up between different types of legal services to address these broad-ranging legal problems
- joining up between legal services and human services to address the adverse impacts of these legal problems on broad life circumstances
- bi-directional referrals between legal and human services to facilitate streamlined access to wrap-around assistance for the legal and related needs of people experiencing DFV.

Each of these implications for service delivery to people experiencing DFV is discussed below.

First, given the disadvantaged profile of many people experiencing DFV, it is critical that legal services for this group are either free or low-cost so that they are accessible. DFV victimisation was more prevalent among the following demographic groups who are more likely to experience disadvantage – Indigenous people, people with a

Experiencing DFV has a ‘compounding’ effect on legal and human service needs. DFV not only increases the experience of a wide range of other serious legal problems, but also increases the negative impacts ... on broader life circumstances.

¹⁰⁵ A Rao-Scott adjusted chi-squared test was conducted on the favourability of the outcome of legal problems, comparing the legal problems of DFV respondents (both their DFV victimisation problem and their other legal problems grouped together) to the legal problems of other respondents. These analyses were based on respondents’ ‘three most serious’ problems, and only included finalised problems. $\chi^2=27.05$, $F_{2,20453}=7.20$, $p=0.001$.

disability, unemployed people, single parents, people with disadvantaged housing circumstances and people on government payments as their main source of income. Notably, however, the present results showed that the elevated legal need of people experiencing DFV is not simply due to their relatively disadvantaged profile, but also appears to be intrinsically linked to the experience of DFV itself. That is, the circumstances that give rise to the experience of DFV may also give rise to a wide range of other legal problems, or the experience of DFV may either cause or contribute to other legal problems.

These findings reinforce the importance of ensuring that accessible, low-cost public legal assistance for people experiencing DFV remains a government policy priority. The results indicate the likely benefit of duty lawyer services in courts, such as DVUs and the FASS scheme, and initiatives that increase referrals to legal services more broadly, such as the 1800RESPECT and DV-Alert initiatives. They also indicate the potential benefit of accessible, appropriate legal assistance tailored to specific disadvantaged groups experiencing DFV, such as FVPLSs for Indigenous people.

Second, the present study indicates that diagnosing and addressing the full range of legal problems tied up with DFV victimisation is critical. In keeping with clinical experience, the results confirm that serious family law problems often go hand in hand with DFV. Second to the DFV victimisation problem, family law problems most often featured among the most severe legal problems faced by DFV respondents. This study provides new quantitative evidence about the strength of this association between DFV and family law problems – the risk of experiencing family law problems was a massive 16 times higher for those who had experienced DFV. These family law problems often involved child custody, contact, or care and protection issues, consistent with other literature indicating the considerable risks to the physical and psychological wellbeing of children in abusive households.¹⁰⁶

... family law problems [were] a massive 16 times higher for those who had experienced DFV.

However, the results also reveal that the experience of DFV is not only linked to elevated prevalence of family law problems, but also to increased experience of a raft of civil law and other criminal law problems.

Further, experiencing DFV appeared to compound the severity of these additional family, civil and criminal law problems. DFV respondents were more likely to rate their legal problems as severe, including both their DFV victimisation problem and their other legal problems. Thus, comprehensive 'legal

diagnosis' is needed to identify all the family, civil and other criminal law problems that clients presenting with DFV may be experiencing. Full legal diagnosis may often be a critical step towards achieving comprehensive resolution of the complex legal issues that people experiencing DFV face. Their broader legal issues may need to be resolved successfully to prevent future DFV. Although the process for comprehensive legal diagnosis may appropriately vary depending on the type of legal service, various screening tools are available to facilitate identification of a client's full range of legal needs across family, civil and criminal law practice, including 'legal health check' tools and the *I-HELP* tool.¹⁰⁷

Crucially, however, screening or diagnosis of all the legal problems associated with DFV victimisation cannot improve client outcomes effectively in a vacuum. Comprehensive legal diagnosis obviously needs to be supported by suitable service infrastructure and resourcing, so that the legal needs accompanying DFV victimisation that are identified can be appropriately addressed.

... the experience of DFV is not only linked to elevated prevalence of family law problems, but also to increased experience of a raft of civil law and other criminal law problems.

Given the complexity of the law, legal expertise tends to be specialised and lawyers typically do not have expertise across criminal, family and civil areas of law. The legal problems associated with DFV victimisation not only extend across different areas of legal practice and expertise, but also across Commonwealth and state/territory jurisdictions. In Australia, DFV is a criminal offence under state and territory laws. DFVPOs are civil orders under state and territory laws, while breaches of DFVPOs are criminal offences under state and territory laws.¹⁰⁸ Family law problems variously fall under Commonwealth law (e.g. divorce, division of property and assets, child contact, custody and child support) and state and territory law (e.g. care and protection of children). Civil law issues that can be tied up with DFV (e.g. consumer, credit/

¹⁰⁷ Examples of legal health check tools include: Legal Aid NSW's *Law Check-Up* which was developed to assist community and health workers to identify clients' legal needs and referral options (see <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/workshops/law-checkup>); and the *Legal Health Check* developed by Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House (QPILCH) for the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) (see http://www.naclc.org.au/cb_pages/legal_health_check.php). For information on the I-HELP tool, see <https://medical-legalpartnership.org/screening-tool/>; <https://sirenetwork.ucsf.edu/tools-resources/mmi/ihelp-pediatric-social-history-tool>; and Coumarelos, Pleasence & Wei (2013).

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Taylor, Ibrahim, Lovatt, Wakefield, Cheyne & Finn (2017).

¹⁰⁶ AIHW (2018); Angus (2015); Morgan & Chadwick (2009); Special Taskforce (2015).

debt, housing, social security and rights issues) also variously fall under Commonwealth law and state and territory law. Thus, people experiencing DFV may require assistance from more than one specialist lawyer or legal service to successfully address their different types of legal problems, and they can be involved in multiple types of legal proceedings in different court systems, often simultaneously.¹⁰⁹

A collaborative or joined-up approach to legal services for DFV clients has potential advantages for both clients and service providers.

clients with multiple types of legal problems has potential advantages for both clients and service providers. Coordinated legal and justice services can potentially produce more streamlined assistance and more holistic and enduring outcomes for clients.¹¹⁰ Joined-up legal services can also provide time- and cost-efficiencies for service providers in assisting with linked problems, through swifter and more effective problem noticing, referral, assistance and resolution, and through economies of scale.¹¹¹ Although there can be many challenges to coordinated legal and justice system services, even less intensive forms of joining up can potentially produce benefits for clients and service providers.¹¹²

Appropriately joining up services requires shared aims, good referral pathways, information sharing, communication and trust between service providers, as well as adequate resourcing and organisational commitment.¹¹³ Importantly, detecting the additional legal needs of people experiencing DFV, and coordinating services to address these legal needs, may well increase demand for certain types of legal services and may require additional resourcing.

A fourth key implication of the present study is that legal services for people experiencing DFV also need to be joined up with broader human services. The results show that the elevated and more severe legal needs faced by people experiencing DFV cause increased levels of other human service needs. Their legal problems cause an array of adverse impacts on broader life circumstances, including significantly greater levels of stress-related illness, physical ill health, relationship

Consequently, a third important implication of the present results is that a joined-up, client-focused approach to legal assistance may often be required to address the multiple types of legal problems faced by people experiencing DFV.

A collaborative or joined-up approach to legal services for DFV

breakdown and financial strain and negative impacts on housing circumstances. For example, over one-third of DFV victimisation problems resulted in the victim having to move home, with approximately 1 in 8 respondents who had experienced DFV in the previous 12 months reporting that they had been homeless at some point in that period.

These high rates of moving home and homelessness are in keeping with the high proportion of people accessing homelessness services to flee DFV. Previous research findings show that 2 in 5 clients of specialist homelessness services have experienced DFV and that people experiencing DFV often face difficulties in securing long-term housing.¹¹⁴ Thus, the present findings further underscore the need for initiatives such as those in Victoria and NSW to increase the availability of safe housing for people experiencing DFV.¹¹⁵

Together, the present analyses indicate that people experiencing DFV may often be at crisis point, facing multiple, difficult, emotionally-charged, legal and related problems with an array of negative consequences for which they are likely to require expert assistance to resolve. Thus, accessible, streamlined and coordinated legal and human services are critically important to address the broad-ranging legal and related needs of people experiencing DFV.

The study therefore adds weight to recent reform in Australia which has provided more coordinated, wrap-around legal and human service responses to DFV. The results indicate that the policy reform provided by the NPA – which promotes the use of collaborative legal and non-legal services for disadvantaged groups with high needs, including people experiencing DFV – is a step in the right direction.¹¹⁶ The results also reinforce the value of recent Commonwealth and state and territory government initiatives to provide more coordinated, wrap-around service responses to DFV, including joined-up legal and human services. These initiatives include:

- state initiatives to better coordinate and streamline access to legal and non-legal services, such as the safety hubs and specialist navigators in Victoria and the Safer Pathway reforms in NSW¹¹⁷

Detecting the additional legal needs of people experiencing DFV ... may well increase demand for certain types of legal services and may require additional resourcing.

109 ALRC (2019a, 2019b); ALRC & NSW Law Reform Commission (NSWLRC, 2010); Stubbs & Wangmann (2015).

110 See Coumarelos et al. (2012); Pleasence et al. (2014).

111 See Coumarelos et al. (2012); Pleasence et al. (2014).

112 Pleasence et al. (2014).

113 Pleasence et al. (2014).

114 AIHW (2017b); Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS, 2019); Flanagan, Blunden, Valentine & Henriette (2019).

115 See, for example, NSW Government (2014a, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c); State of Victoria (2016a, 2017).

116 See COAG (2011).

117 NSW Government (2014a, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c); State of Victoria (2016a, 2017).

- state initiatives such as those in Victoria and Queensland introducing or expanding specialist DFV courts¹¹⁸
- Commonwealth initiatives to better respond to DFV victimisation in Indigenous communities, such as the 14 FVPLSs across Australia that provide culturally appropriate legal services, casework, counselling and court support to Indigenous women and children experiencing DFV¹¹⁹
- Commonwealth initiatives under the Women's Safety Package introducing specialist DVUs and the FASS scheme to provide joined-up duty lawyer and social support services in Local Courts and the Family Court, respectively, and introducing HJPS to provide legal assistance in health settings.¹²⁰

The specialist DFV courts in Victoria and Queensland aim to increase victim safety and provide more collaborative service responses to DFV matters that reach the court. For example, these specialist courts provide improved coordination between police prosecutors, duty lawyers, court staff and victim support services. They can also hear (civil law) DFVPOs together with other matters related to the DFV case, such as bail applications, criminal pleas, family law parenting orders and Victims of Crime applications related to DFV, streamlining court resolution and thereby reducing risk to victim safety.¹²¹

An evaluation of the specialist DFV court in Southport, Queensland, found benefits to this more collaborative response at court, with higher satisfaction for victims and greater accountability of perpetrators.¹²² There have been calls to introduce or further develop similar specialist DFV courts in NSW and other states and territories.¹²³

An evaluation of one of the specialist DVUs – operated by Legal Aid NSW in Local Courts in the central and southwest Sydney areas – also revealed the value of trauma-informed, holistic legal and human services for many clients experiencing DFV.¹²⁴ The evaluation found that the DVU provides clients experiencing DFV assistance with a broad range of legal issues, including: DFVPOs; family law issues such as living with children, spending time with children, divorce and property settlement; civil law issues such as victim's compensation, immigration, human rights, housing and debt; criminal law

issues for 'primary victims' of DFV who had been charged as the perpetrator of the violence; and social work services such as advocacy, case management, referrals, risk assessment and safety planning, and finding crisis accommodation. Stakeholders stated that the DVU filled important service gaps with numerous benefits for clients, including timely access to services, a safer, more supported and empowering experience, and better wrap-around services to address the range of legal and non-legal issues faced by clients, resulting in more positive and enduring outcomes.¹²⁵

An evaluation of the FASS scheme similarly concluded that it fills a gap in legal and social services to Family Court clients experiencing DFV.¹²⁶ It noted that FASS clients are often self-represented, are particularly vulnerable due to DFV, experience a range of complex social issues which compound the impacts of DFV, often present with other legal matters which cross over jurisdictions, and have often not received risk assessment for DFV and safety planning previously. The evaluation found that FASS had increased awareness of DFV by clients and family law stakeholders, increased feelings of support and levels of help-seeking by family law clients experiencing DFV and contributed to positive legal and social outcomes for these clients.

The positive findings of these evaluations of the specialist DFV court in Queensland, DVU in Sydney and FASS scheme further validate the policy reform direction of the NPA, indicating the benefit of appropriate, targeted, timely and joined-up legal and human services for complex life problems experienced by disadvantaged people, such as victims of DFV, who may have low capability for self-resolution.¹²⁷

The results highlight the potential utility of not only retaining but expanding joined-up legal and human services for DFV, such as specialist DFV courts, DVUs, HJPs, the FASS scheme and FVPLSs so that they are widely accessible. The DVUs, HJPs and FASS scheme are currently funded only until 2022 and operate in only a limited number of locations across Australia. There are 18 DVUs and 5 HJPs, and the FASS scheme is operating in 23 service locations.¹²⁸ In addition, the network of FVPLSs consists of

118 Bond et al. (2017); State of Victoria (2016a, 2017).

119 See <http://www.nationalfvpls.org>.

120 See <https://www.dss.gov.au/women-programs-services-reducing-violence/womens-safety-package>; <https://www.malcolmturnbull.com.au/media/release-womens-safety-package-to-stoptheviolence>.

121 Bond et al. (2017); State of Victoria (2016a, 2017); <https://familyviolence.courts.vic.gov.au/resources/family-violence-court-division>.

122 Bond et al. (2017).

123 See, for example, NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team (2017); Smith (2017).

124 Coumarelos et al. (2018).

125 Coumarelos et al. (2018).

126 Inside Policy (2018).

127 Cf. COAG (2015) and Pleasence et al. (2014).

128 ALRC (2019a); <https://www.ag.gov.au/FamiliesAndMarriage/Families/FamilyViolence/Pages/default.aspx>; <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/Media/Pages/Additional-funding-for-Family-Violence-support-services-18-december-2018.aspx>; <https://www.dss.gov.au/women-programs-services-reducing-violence/womens-safety-package>; https://infrastructure.gov.au/department/statements/2018_2019/ministerial-statement/attorney-generals.aspx; <https://www.malcolmturnbull.com.au/media/release-womens-safety-package-to-stoptheviolence>.

14 services across Australia and is only funded until 30 June 2020.¹²⁹

The evaluation of the FASS scheme and the recent Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) review of the family law system similarly recommended retaining and expanding the FASS scheme to additional regional areas, and enhancing it to provide case management to family law clients so that clients with complex needs are better connected with appropriate services and do not ‘fall through the gaps’.¹³⁰ There have also been calls to retain and expand the network of FVPLSs in rural and remote locations so that these culturally appropriate services are more readily accessible throughout Australia to Indigenous people experiencing DFV.¹³¹

In addition to expanding the FASS scheme, the ALRC review recommended a complete overhaul of the family law system to provide an even more streamlined and coordinated service response to people experiencing DFV who have family law problems. Recent literature and reviews have noted the difficulties that people experiencing DFV can face having to navigate different types of legal proceedings across separate jurisdictions and systems – the federal Family Court system, the state and territory child protection systems, and the state and territory DFV systems. These different legal proceedings not

... the present results suggest the further expansion of wrap-around legal and human services for people experiencing DFV so that they can address not only the family law problems but also the broad range of civil law and other criminal law problems that can be tied up with DFV.

only can impose competing requirements on people experiencing DFV, but can sometimes result in their needs and those of their children falling through the justice ‘gap’.¹³² The ALRC recommended that family law disputes be returned to the states and territories so that they can be integrated with state and territory responses to DFV and child care and protection.¹³³

In addition to more streamlined, coordinated responses to DFV and family law problems, the present results suggest the further expansion of wrap-around legal and human services for

people experiencing DFV so that they can address not only the family law problems but also the broad range of civil law and other criminal law problems that can be tied up with DFV – including problems related

to employment, financial, government payment, health, housing, personal injury and rights issues. These legal problems may require efficient resolution to prevent future DFV. Further expanding wrap-around services for people experiencing DFV to cover a comprehensive range of criminal, family and civil law problems may require coordinated funding from Commonwealth and state and territory governments.

The findings regarding the actions people experiencing DFV take to resolve their legal problems also have implications for service delivery. The findings highlight the importance they place on satisfactorily resolving their legal problems. In keeping with their more severe legal and related needs, people experiencing DFV take more actions to try to reach resolution. They are especially more likely to seek expert advice, particularly from lawyers and from health and welfare professionals, such as general practitioners (GPs), psychologists, counsellors, social workers, welfare workers and homelessness services.

Although people experiencing DFV consult lawyers for their legal problems relatively more often than other people do, there are many instances where they do not access a lawyer. A legal adviser was consulted for less than half of the present DFV victimisation problems. This finding will partly reflect the high proportion of cases where DFV is not reported to police.¹³⁴ People who report their DFV victimisation to police or apply for an DFVPO may receive legal information, advice or assistance at court from court staff or duty lawyers. However, where there is no court hearing, people experiencing DFV will not be connected to legal advice at court and may not proactively access a lawyer at all. The results suggest that, in these cases, health and welfare professionals may be the first or only point of contact with a professional for many people experiencing DFV.

Consequently, a fifth major implication of the present results is that there is potential to use health and welfare professionals as major ‘gateways’ to legal services in response to DFV victimisation. Health and welfare professionals could act as early gateways to legal advice for people experiencing DFV who do not proceed through the court system or are initially reticent to do so. Thus, initiatives providing access to duty lawyers at court need to be supplemented by initiatives that provide links to legal advice outside the formal justice system for people experiencing DFV. Health and welfare professionals could provide relevant legal referral information to DFV clients or make more direct referrals to legal assistance. There is also the possibility that these professionals could use screening tools to identify potential legal problems for referral. Thus, the results indicate that joined-up legal and human services for DFV

129 Attorney-General’s Department (2018); Cox Inall Ridgeway (2019); National FVPLS (2019).

130 ALRC (2019a, 2019b); Inside Policy (2018).

131 Cox Inall Ridgeway (2019); National FVPLS (2019).

132 ALRC (2019a, 2019b); ALRC & NSWLRC (2010); Stubbs & Wangmann (2015).

133 ALRC (2019a, 2019b).

134 AIHW (2018); Angus (2015); Birdsey & Snowball (2013); Cox (2015); Stavrou et al. (2016).

should ideally operate with referrals occurring in both directions – both from legal services to human services and vice versa.

Health and welfare professionals who are often early points of contact for people experiencing DFV are GPs and telephone and online crisis and counselling services. There are telephone and online crisis and counselling services for DFV victimisation in each Australian state and territory, in addition to the national 1800RESPECT helpline.¹³⁵ The 1800RESPECT helpline provides counselling, information and referral services for all Australians experiencing sexual violence or DFV.

While health and welfare professionals may be well-placed to make referrals to legal services, they may not always be well-equipped to do so. They may require more formal collaborative mechanisms with legal service providers, as well as training, support and additional funding, to effectively ‘notice’ legal problems and refer clients to legal assistance.¹³⁶ Thus, initiatives such as DV-Alert are needed, which train non-legal professionals such as community workers, teachers and GPs to recognise and refer clients experiencing or at risk of DFV to relevant legal and broader human services.¹³⁷

This study reinforces the need for initiatives that facilitate early access to legal advice, and to broader wrap-around assistance, for people experiencing DFV, such as the 1800RESPECT and DV-Alert initiatives. The results demonstrate the value of maintaining and extending these initiatives beyond their current funding till 2022.¹³⁸ As confirmed by the present study, given that people experiencing DFV are likely to require both legal and health and welfare services, there are likely to be efficiencies in streamlined bi-directional referrals between these services and in working collaboratively more generally.¹³⁹

Also consistent with their more severe and complex legal problems, people experiencing DFV were less likely to have finalised their legal problems. In addition, they were more likely to require recourse to formal justice system processes to achieve resolution of their legal problems. The results revealed that DFV victimisation problems, as well as some of the other legal problems faced by those experiencing DFV, were more likely to be finalised via formal court or tribunal proceedings and less likely to be resolved via direct (informal) agreement with the other side. These findings are likely to largely reflect the use of DFVPOs as one means of managing and overcoming

DFV, as well as the use of court resolution for the serious family law problems that can often accompany DFV.¹⁴⁰ The increased level of resolution of DFV victimisation and related legal problems via the formal justice system further adds weight to the utility of people experiencing DFV being able to access streamlined, wrap-around legal and human services via the court system.

The lower level of resolution of DFV victimisation problems via direct (informal) agreement with the other side is consistent with the safety risks that may arise for the victim from continued contact with the perpetrator.¹⁴¹ It is worth noting in this context that although risk assessment for further DFV is being conducted more routinely once DFV is reported to police, it does not always accurately predict further violence.¹⁴²

Importantly, the present findings indicate that when respondents experiencing DFV were able to finalise their victimisation and other legal problems, typically after using expert assistance, they achieved outcomes that were on par with those achieved by other respondents. Those experiencing DFV were just as likely as others to be satisfied with the outcome, and, while they were no more likely to rate the outcome as ‘mostly’ favourable, they were more likely to rate it as ‘somewhat’ favourable. It is likely that this finding partly reflects the use of DFVPOs to achieve some favourable conditions for people experiencing DFV. These findings regarding outcomes further reinforce the value of providing people experiencing DFV with the expert assistance they require to successfully resolve their victimisation problem and their related legal problems.

... collaborative, wrap-around legal and human services to more comprehensively address and reduce DFV require adequate ongoing funding as well as professional expertise and training to meet demand and operate effectively.

Conclusion

The present results, from a representative sample survey of legal needs, reinforce the potential value of recent government policy reforms in Australia to provide holistic, joined-up legal and human service assistance to address the serious issue of DFV

¹³⁵ See, for example, <https://www.respect.gov.au/services/>.

¹³⁶ See Coumarelos et al. (2012).

¹³⁷ <https://www.dss.gov.au/women-programs-services-reducing-violence/womens-safety-package>.

¹³⁸ Commonwealth of Australia (2019); <https://ministers.dss.gov.au/media-releases/4626>.

¹³⁹ See, for example, Pleasence et al. (2014).

¹⁴⁰ Coumarelos et al. (2012); Poynton et al. (2016); Pleasence (2006).

¹⁴¹ The present finding that communication with the other side was the only action of those examined that was not more likely to be used by DFV respondents in response to their legal problems is also consistent with such safety concerns.

¹⁴² Ringwald (2018).

victimisation. The study underscores the importance of ongoing funding for such wrap-around services.

The results reveal that there are likely to be benefits to legal and human services working collaboratively to address DFV victimisation, given that it is often tied up with a raft of serious family, civil and criminal law problems that have heightened negative knock-on effects on broad life circumstances. The legal problems of people experiencing DFV not only cut across different areas of legal practice and expertise, but also across the Commonwealth and state and territory jurisdictions. Similarly, the adverse impacts of these legal problems on broader human service needs span health, social, financial and housing circumstances. Joined-up legal and human services may often be necessary to achieve comprehensive and enduring resolution for people experiencing DFV.

Joined-up legal and human services for DFV should screen for a broad array of legal and human service needs and should provide streamlined, coordinated service responses both across different legal practice areas and jurisdictions and across different types of human services. The results highlight the need for bi-directional referrals between legal and human services to increase access to the full range of assistance required by those experiencing DFV, including the opportunity to use health and welfare professionals as gateways to legal services. Thus, initiatives that facilitate accessibility to wrap-around legal and human services are critical, such as coordinated duty lawyer and social services at court,

well-resourced crisis, counselling and referral lines, and initiatives that train community frontline workers to identify and refer people experiencing DFV to appropriate legal and human services.

Notably, the results confirm that DFV frequently goes hand in hand with serious family law problems, suggesting that coordinated service approaches to these co-occurring legal problems, such as DVUs and the FASS scheme, should remain a key priority. However, the study reveals that people experiencing DFV are also disproportionately burdened with a wide range of civil and other criminal law problems. Consequently, there is potential utility in further expanding joined-up services to cover not only the family law problems, but also the civil and criminal law problems, that are often tied up with DFV.

While joined-up legal and human services for DFV are likely to provide advantages for both clients and services providers, there may also be challenges to collaboration to overcome, particularly in more remote parts of Australia where local legal and broader human services are thin on the ground.¹⁴³ Furthermore, collaborative, wrap-around legal and human services to more comprehensively address and reduce DFV require adequate ongoing funding, as well as professional expertise and training, to operate effectively and meet demand. The disadvantaged profile of many people experiencing DFV also emphasises the importance of joined-up legal and human services for DFV victimisation being either free or low-cost so that they are accessible to those who need them.

¹⁴³ See, for example, Pleasence et al. (2014).

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Appendix 1: Regression analyses

TABLE A1: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF ANY PROBLEM TYPE (OTHER),^a DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable	Categories compared	β	SE	p	Odds ratio ^b
Gender	Female male	-0.117	0.029	0.000	0.9
Age (years)	15–17 65+	0.479	0.073	0.000	1.6
	18–24 65+	1.071	0.055	0.000	2.9
	25–34 65+	1.123	0.051	0.000	3.1
	35–44 65+	1.227	0.051	0.000	3.4
	45–54 65+	1.006	0.051	0.000	2.7
	55–64 65+	0.742	0.053	0.000	2.1
DFV respondent	Yes no	2.307	0.285	0.000	10.0
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	0.125	0.032	0.000	1.1
	3+ types none	0.464	0.046	0.000	1.6
Constant		-0.950	0.048	0.000	0.4

a Any type of legal problem other than a DFV victimisation problem.

b Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A2: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF ANY SUBSTANTIAL PROBLEM TYPE (OTHER),^a DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable	Categories compared	β	SE	p	Odds ratio ^b
Gender	Female male	0.207	0.041	0.000	1.2
Age (years)	15–17 65+	-0.426	0.117	0.000	0.7
	18–24 65+	0.086	0.084	0.305	1.1
	25–34 65+	0.400	0.079	0.000	1.5
	35–44 65+	0.547	0.078	0.000	1.7
	45–54 65+	0.418	0.079	0.000	1.5
	55–64 65+	0.302	0.084	0.000	1.4
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.478	0.230	0.000	4.4
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	0.416	0.045	0.000	1.5
	3+ types none	1.109	0.066	0.000	3.0
Constant		-0.613	0.075	0.000	0.5

a Any type of 'substantial' legal problem, rated as having a moderate or severe impact, other than a DFV victimisation problem.

b Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A3: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF ACCIDENTS PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable	Categories compared	β	SE	p	Odds ratio ^a
Gender	Female male	-0.013	0.052	0.808	1.0
Age (years)	15–17 65+	0.309	0.155	0.047	1.4
	18–24 65+	1.208	0.102	0.000	3.3
	25–34 65+	0.754	0.103	0.000	2.1
	35–44 65+	0.611	0.104	0.000	1.8
	45–54 65+	0.431	0.107	0.000	1.5
	55–64 65+	0.189	0.117	0.106	1.2
DFV respondent	Yes no	0.178	0.271	0.510	1.2
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	-0.092	0.057	0.111	0.9
	3+ types none	-0.345	0.091	0.000	0.7
Constant		-2.940	0.099	0.000	0.1

^a Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A4: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF CONSUMER PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable	Categories compared	β	SE	p	Odds ratio ^a
Gender	Female male	-0.164	0.035	0.000	0.8
Age (years)	15–17 65+	-0.222	0.112	0.049	0.8
	18–24 65+	0.511	0.072	0.000	1.7
	25–34 65+	0.777	0.066	0.000	2.2
	35–44 65+	0.905	0.064	0.000	2.5
	45–54 65+	0.741	0.066	0.000	2.1
	55–64 65+	0.558	0.069	0.000	1.7
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.428	0.158	0.000	4.2
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	0.059	0.039	0.132	1.1
	3+ types none	0.159	0.055	0.004	1.2
Constant		-1.920	0.063	0.000	0.1

^a Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A5: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF CREDIT/DEBT PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable	Categories compared	β	SE	p	Odds ratio ^a
Gender	Female male	-0.281	0.059	0.000	0.8
Age (years)	15–17 65+	-0.023	0.266	0.932	1.0
	18–24 65+	1.712	0.150	0.000	5.5
	25–34 65+	2.043	0.142	0.000	7.7
	35–44 65+	1.761	0.145	0.000	5.8
	45–54 65+	1.527	0.147	0.000	4.6
	55–64 65+	1.334	0.153	0.000	3.8
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.632	0.178	0.000	5.1
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	0.397	0.070	0.000	1.5
	3+ types none	1.188	0.082	0.000	3.3
Constant		-4.489	0.145	0.000	0.0

a Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A6: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF CRIME (OTHER)^a PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable	Categories compared	β	SE	p	Odds ratio ^b
Gender	Female male	-0.264	0.041	0.000	0.8
Age (years)	15–17 65+	1.169	0.111	0.000	3.2
	18–24 65+	1.437	0.089	0.000	4.2
	25–34 65+	1.193	0.087	0.000	3.3
	35–44 65+	1.160	0.087	0.000	3.2
	45–54 65+	0.965	0.089	0.000	2.6
	55–64 65+	0.793	0.093	0.000	2.2
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.748	0.158	0.000	5.7
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	0.062	0.047	0.185	1.1
	3+ types none	0.497	0.061	0.000	1.6
Constant		-2.821	0.085	0.000	0.1

a Any type of crime legal problem other than a DFV victimisation problem.

b Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A7: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

<i>Demographic variable</i>	<i>Categories compared</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Odds ratio^a</i>
Gender	Female male	-0.190	0.059	0.001	0.8
Age (years)	15–17 65+	2.782	0.319	0.000	16.2
	18–24 65+	3.584	0.297	0.000	36.0
	25–34 65+	3.268	0.296	0.000	26.3
	35–44 65+	3.213	0.296	0.000	24.9
	45–54 65+	3.401	0.296	0.000	30.0
	55–64 65+	2.608	0.303	0.000	13.6
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.454	0.181	0.000	4.3
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	0.271	0.067	0.000	1.3
	3+ types none	0.716	0.086	0.000	2.0
Constant		-5.933	0.296	0.000	0.0

^a Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A8: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF FAMILY PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

<i>Demographic variable</i>	<i>Categories compared</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Odds ratio^a</i>
Gender	Female male	0.369	0.069	0.000	1.4
Age (years)	15–17 65+	0.088	0.270	0.745	1.1
	18–24 65+	0.842	0.188	0.000	2.3
	25–34 65+	1.968	0.155	0.000	7.2
	35–44 65+	2.284	0.152	0.000	9.8
	45–54 65+	1.592	0.160	0.000	4.9
	55–64 65+	1.064	0.172	0.000	2.9
DFV respondent	Yes no	2.787	0.176	0.000	16.2
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	1.108	0.095	0.000	3.0
	3+ types none	2.092	0.104	0.000	8.1
Constant		-5.771	0.170	0.000	0.0

^a Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A9: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF GOVERNMENT PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

<i>Demographic variable</i>	<i>Categories compared</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Odds ratio^a</i>
Gender	Female male	-0.218	0.046	0.000	0.8
Age (years)	15–17 65+	-0.431	0.162	0.008	0.6
	18–24 65+	0.769	0.092	0.000	2.2
	25–34 65+	0.739	0.087	0.000	2.1
	35–44 65+	0.817	0.086	0.000	2.3
	45–54 65+	0.665	0.088	0.000	1.9
	55–64 65+	0.637	0.090	0.000	1.9
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.526	0.164	0.000	4.6
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	0.263	0.053	0.000	1.3
	3+ types none	0.657	0.068	0.000	1.9
Constant		-2.865	0.085	0.000	0.1

a Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A10: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF HEALTH PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

<i>Demographic variable</i>	<i>Categories compared</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Odds ratio^a</i>
Gender	Female male	0.273	0.081	0.001	1.3
Age (years)	15–17 65+	-1.211	0.335	0.000	0.3
	18–24 65+	0.211	0.160	0.188	1.2
	25–34 65+	0.630	0.135	0.000	1.9
	35–44 65+	0.652	0.134	0.000	1.9
	45–54 65+	0.352	0.142	0.013	1.4
	55–64 65+	0.413	0.142	0.004	1.5
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.686	0.202	0.000	5.4
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	0.913	0.117	0.000	2.5
	3+ types none	1.960	0.123	0.000	7.1
Constant		-4.859	0.154	0.000	0.0

a Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A11: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF HOUSING PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable	Categories compared	β	SE	p	Odds ratio ^a
Gender	Female male	-0.065	0.044	0.137	0.9
Age (years)	15–17 65+	0.326	0.126	0.010	1.4
	18–24 65+	0.800	0.090	0.000	2.2
	25–34 65+	0.979	0.083	0.000	2.7
	35–44 65+	0.898	0.084	0.000	2.5
	45–54 65+	0.636	0.087	0.000	1.9
	55–64 65+	0.441	0.092	0.000	1.6
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.243	0.165	0.000	3.5
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	0.136	0.050	0.007	1.1
	3+ types none	0.532	0.065	0.000	1.7
Constant		-2.804	0.083	0.000	0.1

^a Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A12: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF MONEY PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable	Categories compared	β	SE	p	Odds ratio ^a
Gender	Female male	-0.309	0.061	0.000	0.7
Age (years)	15–17 65+	-0.935	0.284	0.001	0.4
	18–24 65+	-0.427	0.163	0.009	0.7
	25–34 65+	0.275	0.125	0.028	1.3
	35–44 65+	0.787	0.115	0.000	2.2
	45–54 65+	0.875	0.115	0.000	2.4
	55–64 65+	0.873	0.118	0.000	2.4
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.505	0.210	0.000	4.5
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	-0.230	0.066	0.000	0.8
	3+ types none	-0.413	0.103	0.000	0.7
Constant		-2.995	0.112	0.000	0.1

^a Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A13: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF PERSONAL INJURY PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable	Categories compared	β	SE	p	Odds ratio ^a
Gender	Female male	-0.357	0.056	0.000	0.7
Age (years)	15–17 65+	2.147	0.175	0.000	8.6
	18–24 65+	2.339	0.158	0.000	10.4
	25–34 65+	1.832	0.160	0.000	6.2
	35–44 65+	1.926	0.158	0.000	6.9
	45–54 65+	1.876	0.159	0.000	6.5
	55–64 65+	1.442	0.167	0.000	4.2
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.387	0.182	0.000	4.0
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	0.448	0.066	0.000	1.6
	3+ types none	0.622	0.087	0.000	1.9
Constant		-4.529	0.158	0.000	0.0

^a Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

TABLE A14: REGRESSION — PREVALENCE OF RIGHTS PROBLEMS, DFV AND OTHER RESPONDENTS, AUSTRALIA

Demographic variable	Categories compared	β	SE	p	Odds ratio ^a
Gender	Female male	-0.129	0.061	0.036	0.9
Age (years)	15–17 65+	2.497	0.187	0.000	12.1
	18–24 65+	2.192	0.178	0.000	9.0
	25–34 65+	2.146	0.174	0.000	8.5
	35–44 65+	2.388	0.172	0.000	10.9
	45–54 65+	1.748	0.179	0.000	5.7
	55–64 65+	1.177	0.193	0.000	3.2
DFV respondent	Yes no	1.808	0.173	0.000	6.1
Level of disadvantage	1–2 types none	0.690	0.080	0.000	2.0
	3+ types none	1.522	0.091	0.000	4.6
Constant		-5.303	0.179	0.000	0.0

^a Significant odds ratios (ORs) are in bold. A bolded OR>1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly higher odds of legal problems of this type than the second category (at the 95% confidence level). A bolded OR<1.0 indicates that the first category had significantly lower odds (at the 95% confidence level). The size of the bolded OR indicates the strength of the relationship. E.g. OR=2.0 means that the odds for the first category were twice those for the second category; OR=0.5 means that the odds for the first category were half those for the second category (i.e. the odds for the second category were twice those for the first category).

Notes: N=20,716 respondents, including 169 DFV respondents.

Appendix 2: Shortened forms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ALRC	Australian Law Reform Commission
ANROWS	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DFV	domestic and family violence
DFVPO	domestic and family violence protection order
DFV respondents	LAW Survey respondents who had experienced DFV in the previous 12 months
DVU	Domestic Violence Unit
FASS	Family Advocacy and Support Services
FVPLS	Family Violence Prevention Legal Service
GP	general practitioner
HJP	Health Justice Partnership
IAS	Indigenous Advancement Strategy (under the National Plan)
LAW Survey	Legal Australia-Wide Survey
National Plan	National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children
NPA	National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services
NSW	New South Wales
NSWLRC	New South Wales Law Reform Commission
OR	odds ratio
Special Taskforce	Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland
Victorian Royal Commission	Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence

