

# Snapshot 1: Navigating the family law system

1 September 2017

The inquiry's questionnaire has been online for just over five months now, and over 3,800 people have shared their personal experiences of family violence and the family law system. Ninety-four per cent of respondents identified that they have experience with family violence, 82 per cent of whom reported that they had been the target of that violence. Almost 70 per cent of respondents were women. This snapshot compiles some of the responses about the challenges of navigating state and federal court jurisdictions and concerns about safety during court proceedings when moving through the family law system.

## Multiple jurisdictions

Responses revealed the seriousness of the challenges associated with navigating multiple jurisdictions. Almost 50 per cent of respondents had legal proceedings in more than one court and of those 82 per cent felt unsatisfied with the coordination between courts. Some respondents reported, the following about their personal experiences of managing multiple courts and multiple jurisdictions:

- » *The process is not holistic and lacks continuity.*
- » *The Magistrate and Family Courts do not share information as easily and freely as they should.*
- » *The process is very long. The less court appearances, the safer I would have felt.*
- » *So much travel and a lot of expense.*
- » *The two courts are unaware of the action occurring in the other court... [causing] huge delay and confusion.*
- » *There is little coordination between the courts.*
- » *No communication between courts and the departing and incoming judges regarding adjourned matters.*

The Committee thanks everyone who completed the questionnaire and took the time to share their personal experiences. We will publish further snapshots online in the coming months. For inquiry information, and to complete the questionnaire, please visit our website: [www.aph.gov.au/flawreform](http://www.aph.gov.au/flawreform)

## Safety during court proceedings

Responses to the questionnaire also indicate significant safety concerns when respondents were in the court room. Fifty-seven per cent felt unsafe during court proceedings, and 78 per cent were not offered a safety plan regarding their court appearance.

Respondents also wrote the following about their safety during court proceedings:

- » *The court I attended had no facilities for being separated, I felt very unsafe.*
- » *There wasn't enough security and help in the court room itself.*
- » *I had to queue up with my children in the same entrance with the perpetrator.*
- » *Interacting with my ex-partner in court triggered post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms for me, there should be as minimal contact as possible.*
- » *Every additional moment families are waiting [for] the courts exposes them to further trauma relating to the abuse and violence they incurred.*

**PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO A BETTER FAMILY LAW SYSTEM TO  
SUPPORT AND PROTECT THOSE AFFECTED BY FAMILY VIOLENCE**

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