



Family Snapshot: An Australian strength measurement tool for Intensive Family Services

Department of Human Services, SA
AIFS, Melbourne September 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

We would like to pay our respects and acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land we are meeting on today, the Eastern Kulin Nation.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to Kulin Elders past, present and emerging.

We also welcome and acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

We acknowledge that this work has occurred on Kurna country.

We thank our Aboriginal colleagues and partners in the system who share their cultural expertise.

This work could not happen without you.



The Child and Family Support System (CFSS)

Response to growing rates of children entering
Out of Home Care

Mismatch between families' needs and services

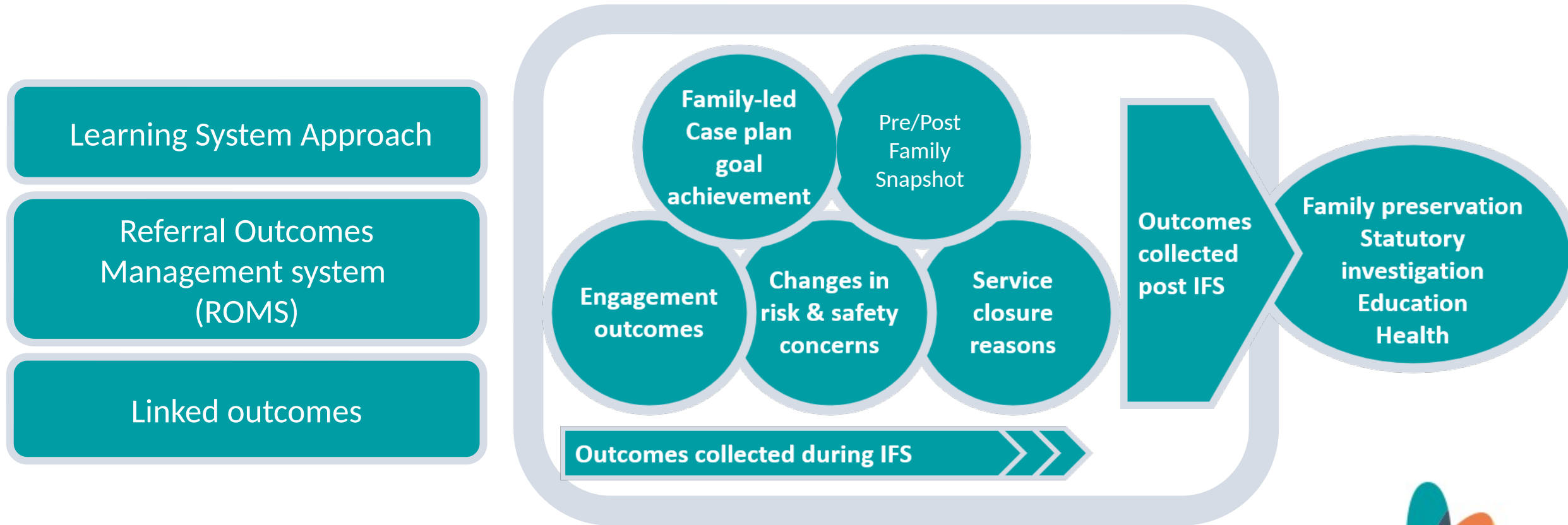
No formal centralised referral system

Poor data system capability and limited evidence

Intensive Family Services (IFS) created as CFSS secondary
prevention system



Intensive Family Services (IFS) Learning System



The Family Snapshot Measuring change in family strengths and stressors.

27-items
across 4 domains

Practitioner completed
tool*

Reduces bias



Australian specific and open
access

Culturally tailored for
Aboriginal families

Validated



*Berry, M., Cash, S., & Mathieson, S. (2003). Validation of the strengths and stressors tracking device with a child welfare population. *Child Welfare*, 82(3), 293-318.



Strength measures: Methodology and sample

Sample: 1,888 completed IFS referrals
(2023-2026)

Measurement: 27-item Family Snapshot
Service Start-Service Closure using ROMS
6-point labelled Stress/Strength scale
Strengths converted to binary measure

**Outcome: Success measured using service
closure outcomes**

Safe & Well

Family adequately supported/IFS no longer
required

Engagement not maintained/relocated

Child protection involvement

- Is paying attention to your child's developmental needs a ...
- Is maintaining attendance at school or accessing childcare/kindy or school a...
- Is having friends/family you can trust to look after children at short notice or in an emergency a...
- Is managing routines, setting boundaries, managing conflict or power struggles with children a...?

Stress **or** **Strength**

1	2	3	4	5	6
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The *Strengths measurement framework*

Measuring strengths at increasing intensity.

Strengths are defined using the two strength categories on the six-point Snapshot scale.



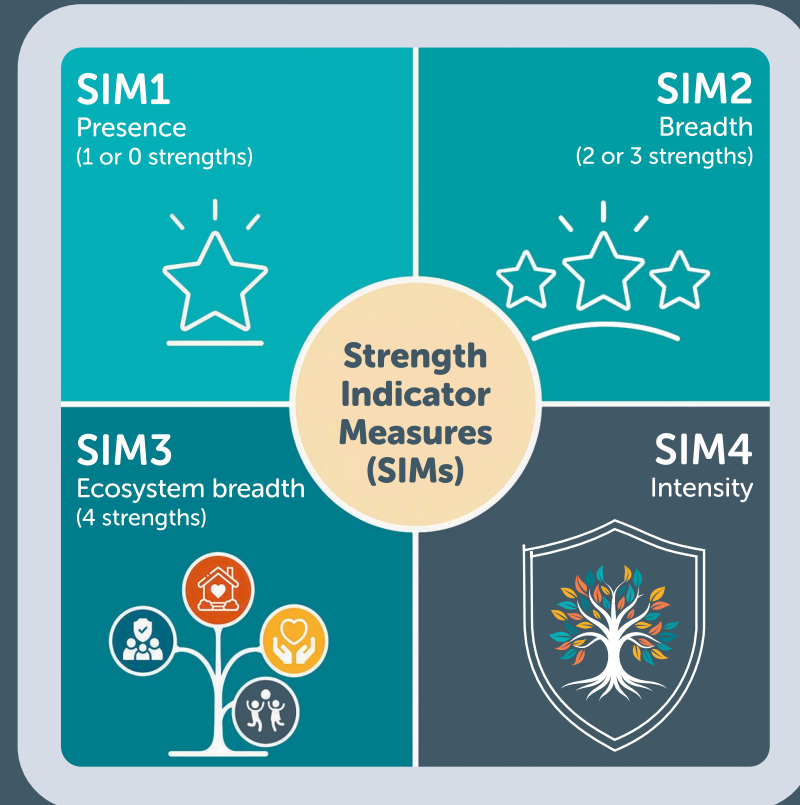
Prevalence of strengths (SIM1)
Do any strengths exist?



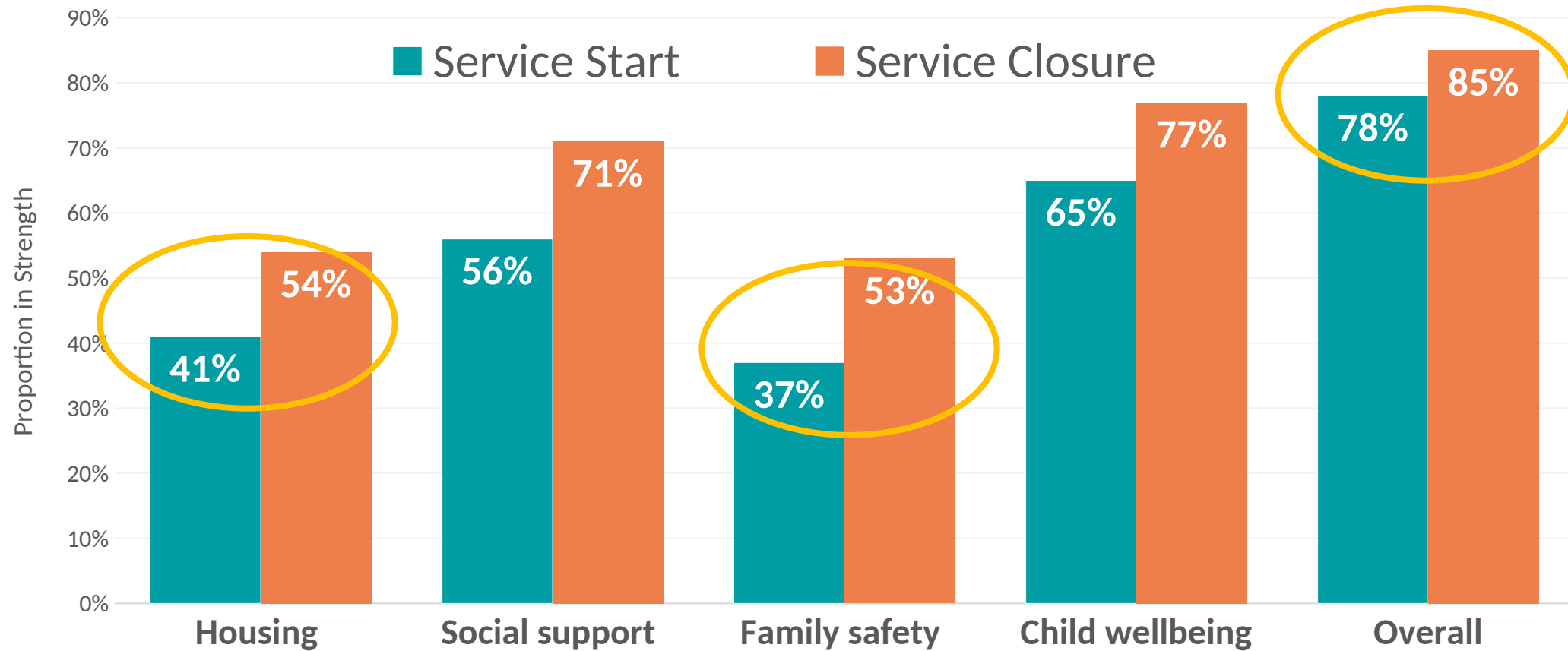
Breadth of strengths (SIM2/SIM3)
Do strengths span multiple domains?



Strength Intensity (SIM4)
How developed are those strengths?

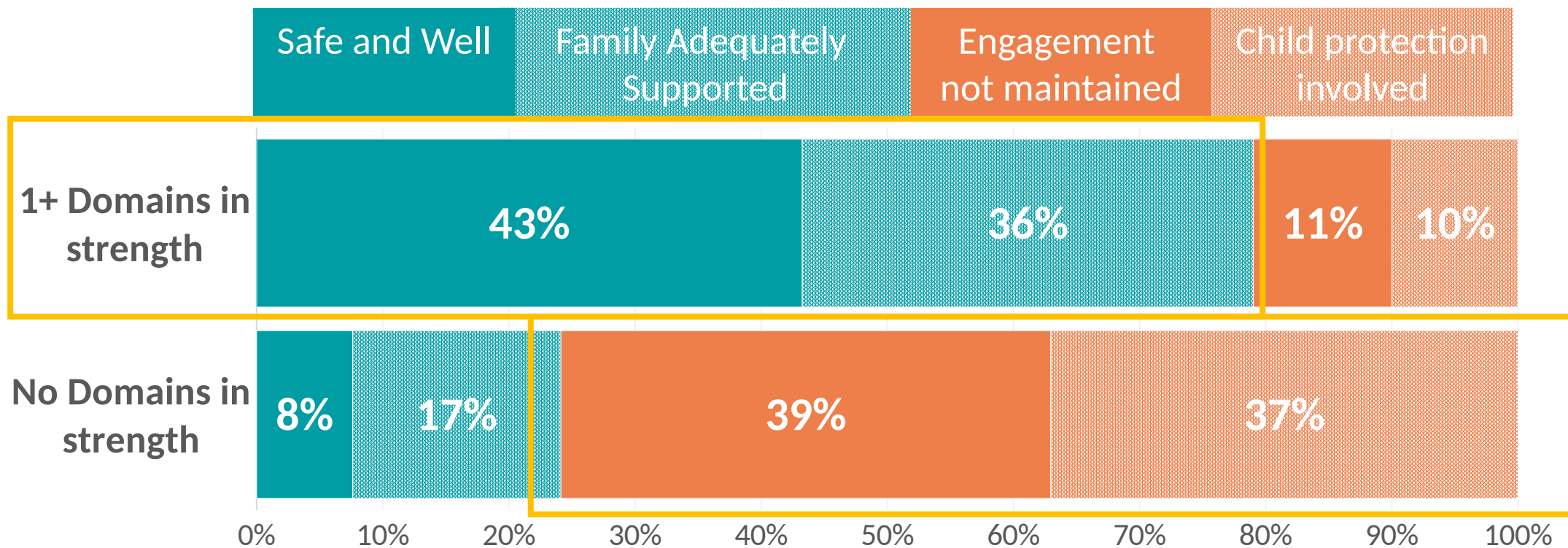


Prevalence of Strengths (SIM1)



Do strengths matter?

Prevalence of 1+ Strengths (SIM1) and Service Closure Outcome



The 10% escalation rate to Child Protection within the 1+ group suggests a single strength domain may be insufficient to buffer complex risk



Breadth of Strengths: (SIM2 & SIM3)

Quantifying strengths across the family ecosystem



SIM2 - tracks emerging strengths



SIM3 - acts as the threshold,
requiring strength across all four
domains

SIM2

Strength extent
(2 or 3 strengths)



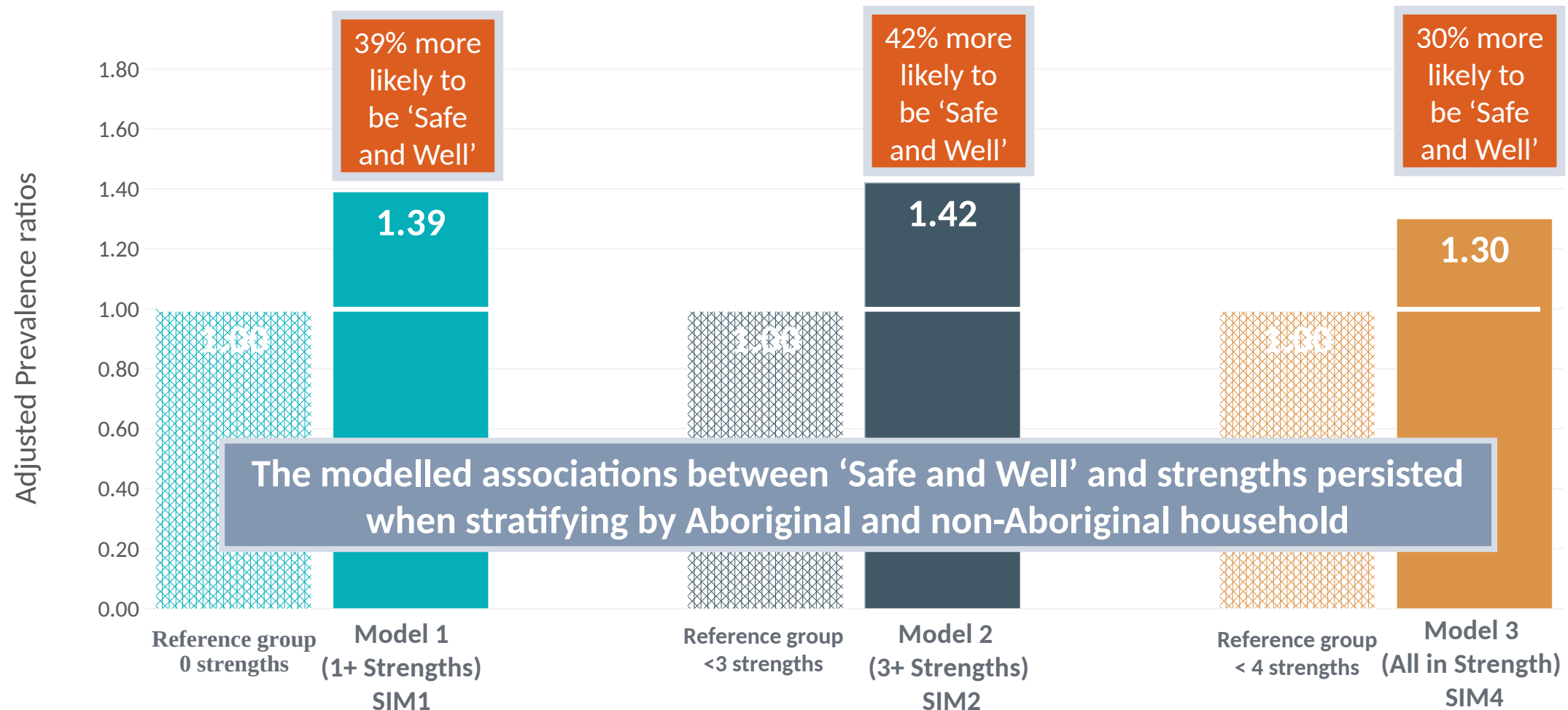
SIM3

Ecosystem breadth
(4 strengths)



Are families with 1+ domains in strength more likely to close a service 'Safe & Well'?

Adjusted prevalence ratios by strength measures



Aboriginal households n=791

Data source: CFSS Family 20260113_FAROSEV31 (N = 1,888 paired Snapshots)

Analysed by Dr K Jones EIRD



Strength Intensity: (SIM4)

Measuring depth of strengths across the family ecosystem

Uses the cumulative score across all Snapshot items

Higher scores indicate more developed strengths

Can be reported as a mean score or population distribution

Complements Prevalence (SIM1) and Breadth of Strengths (SIM2/3)

SIM4
Intensity



Same Breadth, different Intensity



Family A



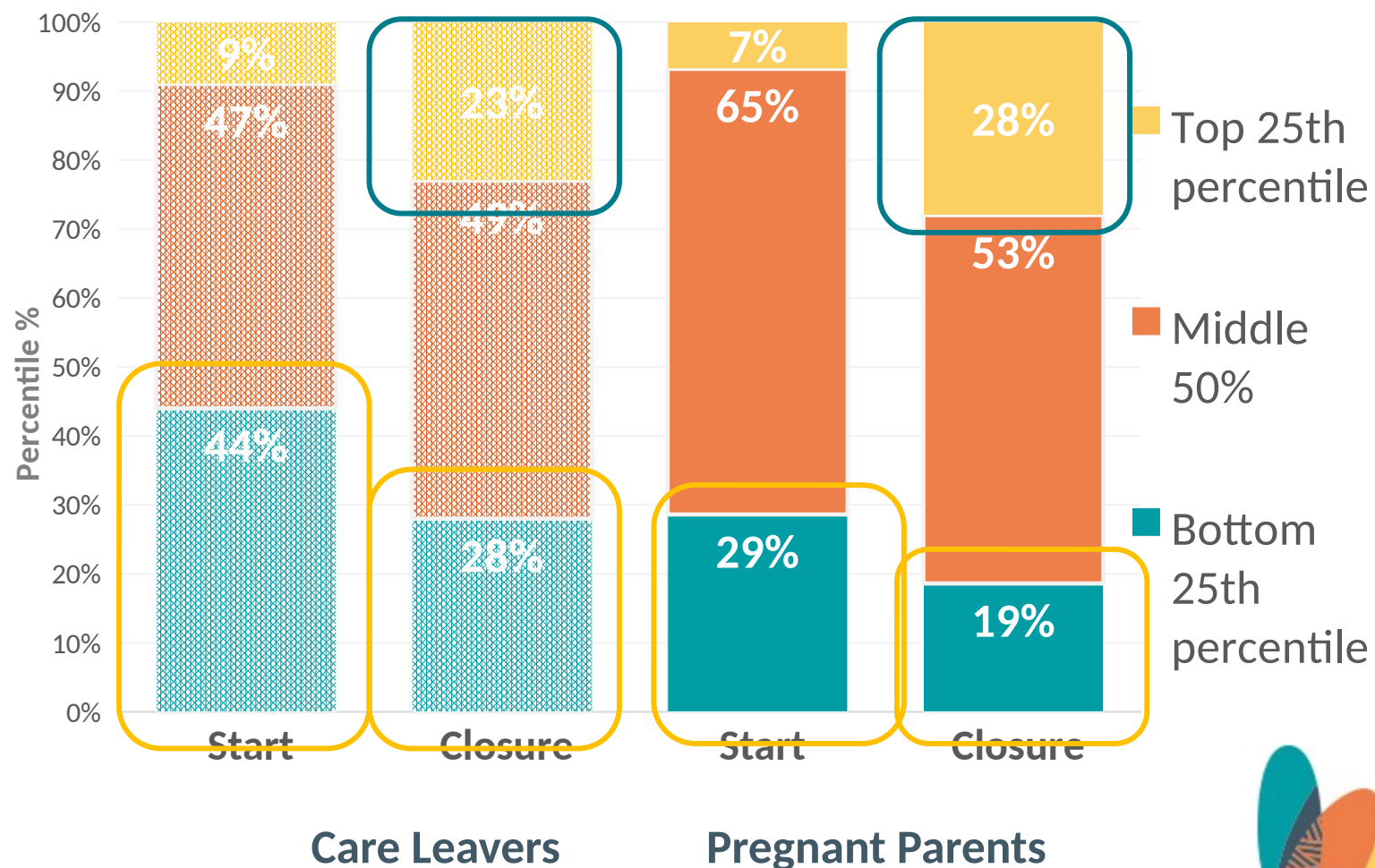
Family B



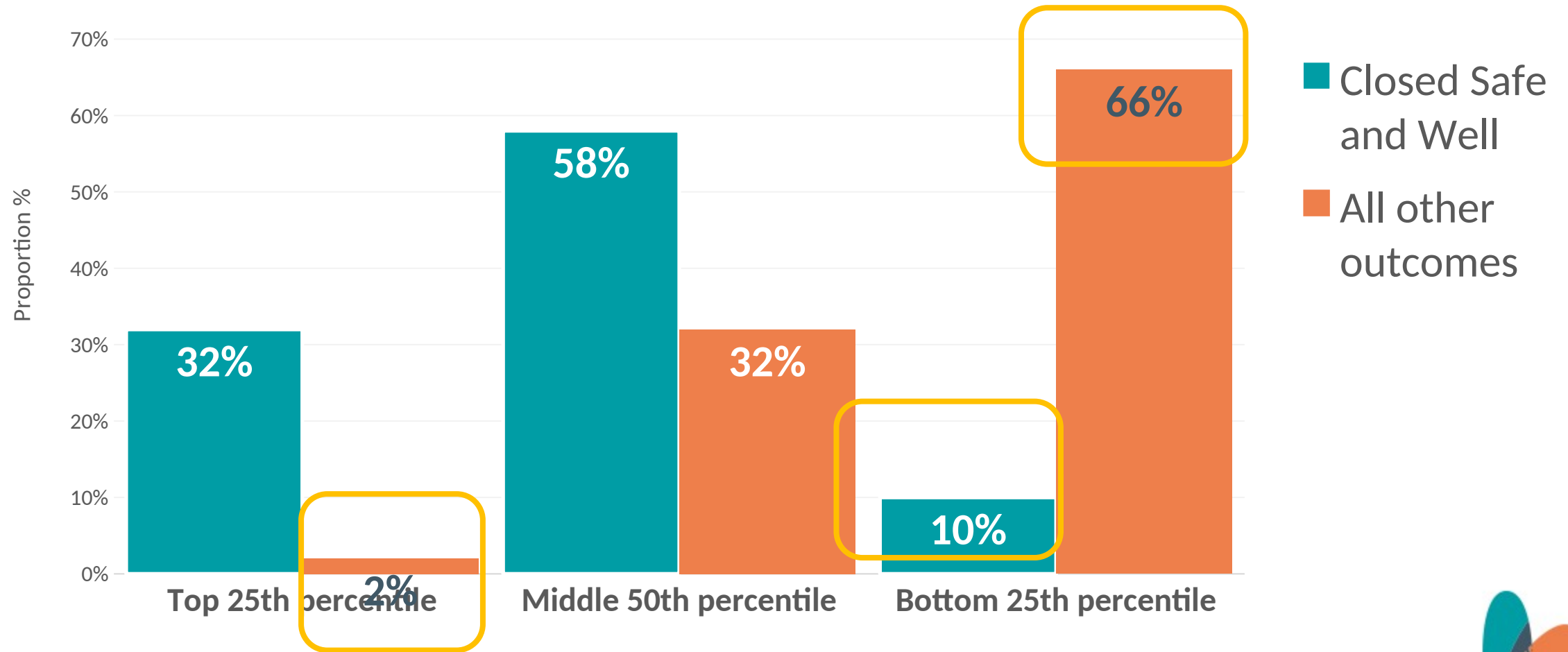
Strength Intensity: Looking Beyond the Mean

Average scores summarise change. Distributions reveal its pattern.

Cohort	Strength Intensity Service Start (mean)	Strength Intensity Service closure (mean)
Care leavers	75.5	86.0
Pregnant parents	79.6	89.6



Strength Intensity and Service Outcomes (SIM4)



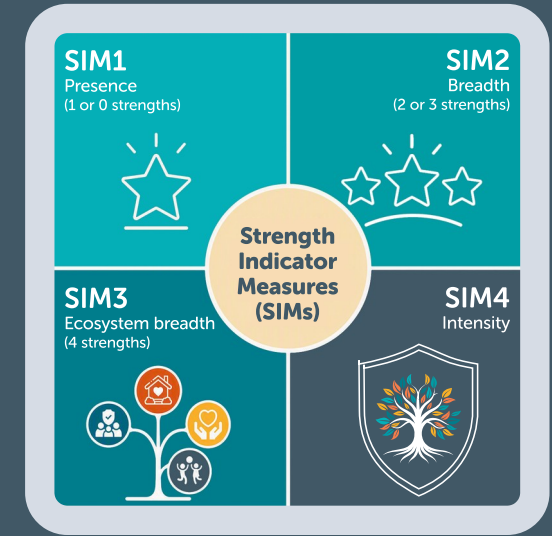
Validity of the Family Snapshot and the Strength Measurement Framework

Strong associations with change and service outcomes

Performs consistently across levels of family complexity

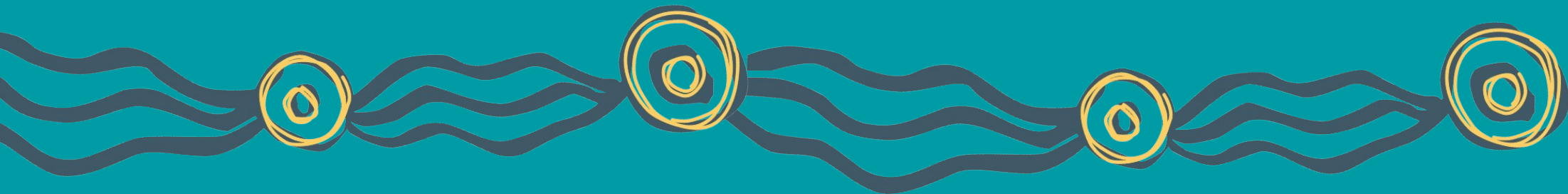
No observed structural bias across population groups

Reporting possible at family and domain levels

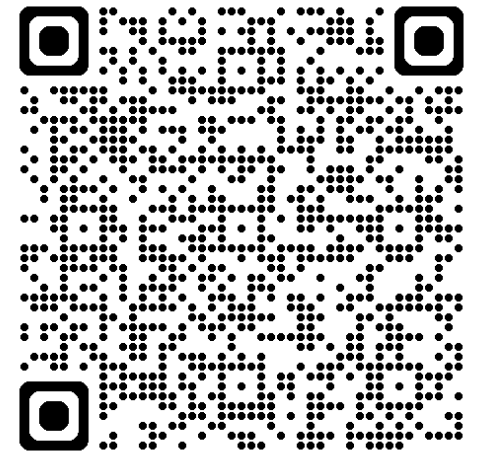


Conclusion &

- Family Snapshot addresses the gap in measuring family change and wellbeing in Intensive Family Services.
- Family Snapshot and the strengths measurement framework provide a practical way to measure meaningful social-ecological change in family safety & wellbeing.
- Ongoing development includes linked-data analyses, an 8-item short form, and critical difference methodology.



Thank you



**View the Family
Snapshot Validation
report**



Government
of South Australia



human
services