

The Children's Safety Survey

Prospectus

A tool for monitoring perceptions of interpersonal safety and institutional responses to issues of concern

ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies



Institute of Child Protection Studies

The Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) enhances outcomes for children, young people and families through quality research, program evaluation, training and community education, advocacy and policy development. We are nationally recognised for our expertise in child protection, and preventing and responding to the abuse and neglect of children. We promote children's participation, strengthen service systems, inform practice and support child-safe communities.

ICPS manages the ACU Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal. The Portal provides a central pathway to the range of ACU research projects, professional development opportunities, and capacity-building tools that aim to support institutions to better safeguard children and young people from sexual abuse and other forms of harm. Child safety is a priority for everyone, everywhere – from parents to parishioners, sporting clubs to dance classes. And at Australian Catholic University (ACU), we are committed to supporting and enabling the safety of children and young people in families, communities and organisations. ACU offers a range of services, courses and professional development programs to help individuals and organisations understand and apply child-safe and child-friendly practices and policies.

See: <https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/>

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Why explore children’s perceptions of safety and institutional responses

In light of the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, many Australian organisations have implemented (or are planning to implement) programs, services and strategies to help adults and institutions better prevent, identify and respond to issues of child sexual abuse and other forms of harm.

To be effective, these approaches need to be utilised by staff, parents and community members, as well as by children and young people. One of the key barriers to children and young people raising concerns about interpersonal safety and child sexual abuse is a lack of confidence in adults and organisations, and a perception that they are unable to adequately respond.

Evidence suggests that children are not able to learn, grow or develop within environments where they feel unsafe. To address this issue, the survey includes questions that ask children about their experiences of wellbeing, including strengths and difficulties, as a way of measuring their current wellbeing.

Organisations will benefit from understanding children’s perceptions of safety, their confidence in adults and institutions, and any barriers that restrict their attempts to seek help. The Children’s Safety Survey provides organisations with an opportunity to gain an understanding of children’s perceptions of safety.



Is your organisation child-safe?

The ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) is offering an online child-informed survey to help gauge and monitor children and young people's perceptions of safety within organisations.

You can use this survey to help your organisation measure:

- the extent to which children and young people perceive that they are safe and feel safe within your organisation
- the level of confidence that children and young people have that your organisation will prevent and respond to their concerns related to child sexual abuse and other forms of harm
- children and young people's help-seeking behaviours.

By exploring children's perceptions, you can demonstrate a commitment to children and young people's participation and effectively evaluate your organisation's success in meeting children's safety needs, as encouraged by the following:

- Victorian Child Safe Standards: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/the-child-safe-standards/who-do-the-standards-apply-to/>
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/projects/child-safe-organisations>).



A survey *designed by* children and young people for children and young people

Children's views make this survey unique.

This survey was developed in partnership with children and young people. Researchers conducted focus groups with 110 children and young people across Australia who were engaged with organisations. Findings from the participatory method informed the survey.

Australia's leading children's researchers and expert child protection practitioners provided expertise into the development of the survey content and participated in extensive peer-review processes to ensure it could be applied to a broad context.

The Children's Safety Survey has been designed for children and young people aged 10-18. It is easy for them to independently complete the survey with minimal adult intervention.



Who can use the Children’s Safety Survey?

Any organisation (or network of organisations) that engages directly with children and young people can use the survey including:

- individual services, clubs, teams, schools, groups or other similar organisations
- organisations and services that work across a variety of locations, jurisdictions and service contexts
- membership organisations such as sector peaks, federated bodies and networks or clusters of services and programs for children/young people
- funding bodies and government agencies that contract services and programs for delivery to children and young people.

IS THE SURVEY SUITABLE FOR YOUR ORGANISATION?

The Children’s Safety Survey can be used by a wide range of youth-serving organisations, including organisations providing services such as:

Alcohol and Other Drugs Programs	Health
Arts/Drama/Cultural Groups	Mental Health and Medical Services
Carer Support and Respite	Housing and Homelessness Services,
Child Welfare (e.g. counselling)	Out of home care –
Children’s Facilities	(Residential/Foster/Kinship care)
Children’s Services	Outreach
Community Development/Community Engagement	Recreational/Youth Development/Youth Services/Holiday Programs
Domestic and Family Violence Services	Religious, Worship or Faith Development
Early Childhood Education and Care (including kindergarten)	Sexual Health
Education – Schools/Tuition	Sports Clubs/Groups
Employment Services	Youth Justice
Families and Children Services	Youth Work
Family Law Services	

Here are some examples of how organisations use the survey:

Dalinga School is interested in examining children’s perceptions of the school’s safety, how confident students feel approaching staff regarding abuse or concerning behaviours, and what barriers may be preventing children from speaking up. They will share the findings with the children and parents in the school community.

Rotator Victoria is a sports body which oversees 36 individual Rotator sports clubs across the state of Victoria. They’re interested in supporting these clubs in developing their child safeguarding strategies. They’ve chosen to roll out the survey over three years and want to test it with 12 clubs for the first year. Each club will be able to access their results, and the state-wide results, but won’t be able to another clubs’ results.

The Diocese of Garut is eager to support its parishes in developing cultures of safeguarding across the Diocese. The Diocese wants a report discussing each of its 14 parishes in detail, so they can develop support to help each Parish to make improvements and share their strengths. Each parish will be to see their results, and those of the entire Diocese, but not the results of other parishes.



Selecting scenarios

In addition to asking general questions about how safe children and young people feel, the survey also invites them to respond to questions about two short scenarios describing situations where a child/young person may feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

One scenario describes interactions between young people (with a male or a female peer); and another scenario describes interactions between an adult and a young person. Children are asked what they would do in the scenarios and how they think an organisation might respond. Organisations choose one scenario from each category that is most relevant to their service context (see below).

Organisations can use different scenarios for different services, locations and programs that they run for children and young people or use the same scenario across their entire organisation. ICPS can develop new scenarios for specific contexts and organisations, based on child-centred research methods. If you would like a new scenario related to your type of work with children and young people, please contact the Children’s Safety Studies manager.

ADULT SCENARIO OPTIONS	PEER SCENARIO OPTIONS
<p>1. Practicing the Play (Teacher-Young person) This scenario relates to a student at school who is working with their teacher on the school play. The teacher does things which make the student feel uncomfortable, but the student gets told the rehearsals are important and they have to do them.</p>	<p>2. Swim Squad (Young person-Young person) In this scenario a young person is paired up with a good swimmer on the swim team at school to improve in swimming before going on a beach camp later in the year. The peer is a good swimmer but often does things that make the young person feel uncomfortable.</p>
<p>3. Facebook Friendship (Support worker-Young person) In this scenario a young person gets support from a youth worker who sometimes gives unwanted extra attention to them, and makes direct contact via social media. Even though the young person likes the attention, sometimes the discussions they have are uncomfortable. The youth worker says he may stop hanging out with the young person if they say they’re feeling uncomfortable.</p>	<p>4. My Mentor (Young person-Young person) This scenario presents a young person who gets support from another young person who also attends a local youth service. Because they have similar stories, the other young person suggests they hang out so he can protect them from being bullied, but often this leads to uncomfortable conversations and bullying.</p>
<p>5. Creepy Coach A young person is hoping to be selected for an upcoming competition, but the coach makes fun of the young person in front of others. The coach makes remarks about the young person’s body during training making the young person feel uncomfortable and telling the young person he’ll help someone else if the training is uncomfortable.</p>	<p>6. Team Tussles Being the youngest member of the local sports team, a young person has been getting help from a team mate after practice has finished. Although grateful for the help, sometimes there are uncomfortable situations involving touching which upset the young person. The team mate notices and suggests he help others instead.</p>

Administering the Children’s Safety Survey

Children and young people complete the Children’s Safety Survey online, using desktop or laptop computers, smart phones and other personal devices with an internet connection.

They can complete the survey on-site (e.g. at their school, community organisation or sports centre) or off-site (via a URL link that your organisation will give to parents of 10-15 year-olds, or directly to 16-18 year-olds).

TIMING OF THE SURVEY

The survey can be implemented twice in the survey period. This time frame can help your organisation understand whether programs, initiatives or new child-safe strategies contribute to changes in children and young people’s perceptions of safety. The benefit of capturing the experiences of young people at different points in time is that it will help your organisation explore the extent to which your child-safe initiatives change children’s perceptions. ICPS can provide advice on the timing if your organisation decides to repeat the survey.

PRIVACY AND CONSENT

Australian Catholic University must comply with Australian Privacy Laws and Copyright Law and parental or legal guardian consent is sought for the participation of all children and young people aged 10-15 by the parent or legal guardian signing a Parent/Legal Guardian Consent Agreement. Consent is sought from young people aged 16 by agreeing to an online Consent Agreement. Organisations are responsible for contacting, informing and seeking signatures from parents or legal guardians of 10-15 year-olds. The Parent/Legal Guardian Consent Agreement is available online or a PDF can be emailed to participants.



Reporting findings from the survey

During the survey period your organisation will be able to view the survey data using user-friendly web-based data visualisation software.

At the end of the survey period ICPS will provide your organisation with a report summarising key findings for children and young people who have participated in the survey.

The report will provide snapshots of children and young people's perceptions of safety within your organisation, their confidence in adults they interact with, and any barriers that prevent them from seeking help when faced with uncomfortable situations.



Depending on the number of young people who respond, it can help identify groups of children and young people who might need extra support and provide guidance to areas that need improvement.

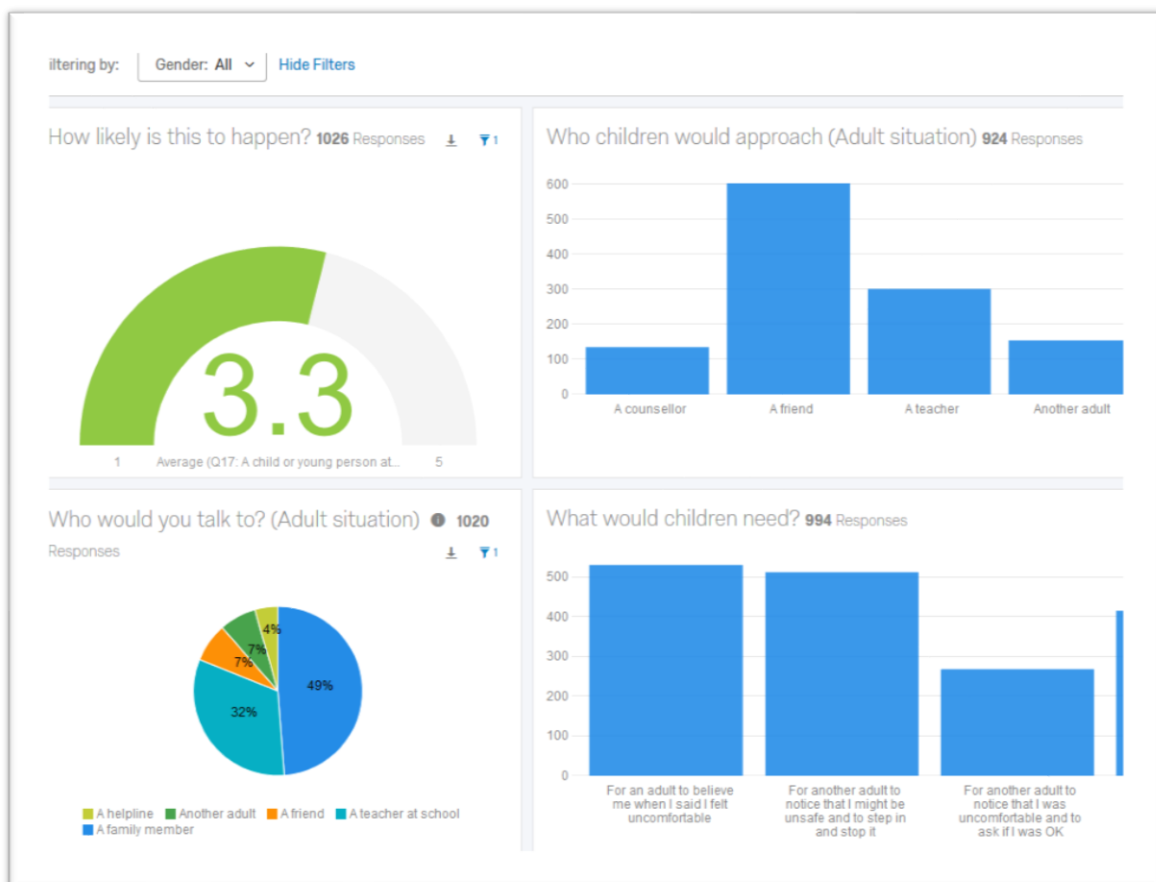


You can share your report with management and governance groups, funding bodies, staff, parents, children and young people, as well as the broader community.

Data visualisation during the survey period

The user-friendly web-based data visualisation software (also known as a ‘dashboard’) will allow your organisation to view the survey data during the survey period.

Data visualisation allows organisations to easily access their results, often through percentages, graphs, plots and tables (see figure below).



MORE ABOUT THE DATA

The data visualisation software we use enables you to do the following:

- filter results in your dashboard based on a variety of variables such as age, gender, service type (e.g. where an organisation runs more than one program or service)
- compare your results with a broader data set
- identify characteristics of children and young people who are feeling less safe, so that sub-groups can then be targeted for specific child-safe strategies or supports
- monitor change over time with new cohorts of young people engaging with your organisation or a service
- access practice tools on ACU's Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal to support the growth of a child-safe culture and improve children's safety within your organisation (see: <https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/>).

Your organisation will be able to 'filter' data by gender and age, allowing for targeted data to be visualised relating to specific subgroups of children who have participated (e.g. you could see results for just 12-year-old girls), provided there are more than 15 participants in that subgroup.

Your organisation will also be able to see findings from the data collected across individual programs, locations and services. For example, if there were seven clubs who form a state or regional body and that body signed up to use the survey, each club could see their own results in the form of customisable graphs, tables and statistical plots, and the state/regional body could see the overall results of all seven clubs.

If your organisation has multiple programs, locations and services, you will be able to breakdown the findings by individual areas of the organisation and compare the findings between these (individual areas/groups must be identified prior to data collection commencing).

Your organisation will also have access to practice tools on the ACU Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal to support the growth of a child-safe culture and improve children's safety within your organisation (see: https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/practice_tools).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Your organisation will need to:

- communicate with parents and legal guardians to inform them about the survey
- seek parental or legal guardian consent for all participants aged 10-15
- encourage participation of children and young people
- identify a key contact within your organisation to support children who may feel uncomfortable about issues of safety or want to discuss their thoughts and feelings
- share results with staff, parents, children and young people.

ICPS will support you by:

- guiding your organisation on how to plan for the survey, how to invite participants (who, how many and when) and how to understand and make use of the results shown on your dashboard
- preparing relevant documentation (e.g., invitation emails, parent/guardian information letters, FAQ for parents/guardians and workers, Parent/Legal Guardian Consent Agreements)
- providing access to the Children's Safety Survey and the ACU Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal (see: <https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/self-assessment>)
- providing a standard report of the findings for your organisation.

ICPS Children’s Safety Study – A research project

Your organisation’s survey data will be used as part of an overarching research project, the ICPS Children’s Safety Study.

The data your participants provide for the Children’s Safety Survey will not only enable your organisation to identify characteristics of children and young people who are feeling unsafe and implement specific child-safe strategies to support those children and young people in your organisation, it will also be used for the purposes of the ICPS Children’s Safety Study research project.

This research project has been approved by the ACU Human Research Ethics Committee (Application 2018-5H). Your organisation’s survey data will be de-identified so that no participants or organisation will be able to be identified. The data will then be used by the research project to investigate trends and broad results across all organisations that participate in the Children’s Safety Survey.

Findings from the Children’s Safety Study research project will be presented through regular reports that will be made available on the ACU Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal, in journal articles and other publications.

The research project involves ICPS providing other research agencies (in Australia and overseas) with the de-identified data so that comparisons can be made with different locations and countries.

Findings from the Children’s Safety Study research project will be used to inform further research, policy development and child-safe strategies. It is our hope that these findings will lead to improvements in child-safe practice in Australian organisations and internationally.



Elements of the Children's Safety Survey

The Children's Safety Survey includes a number of elements including:

- the ASK-YP survey (owned by the Commonwealth of Australia)
- the CHU9D survey (owned by Sheffield University)
- the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (owned by YouthinMind)
- adult-child and peer-to-peer scenarios.

The ASK-YP survey was created by a project team for the Royal Commission's Advisory Group. ICPS staff acted as part of that Advisory Group and on the project team.

The following credits apply for the ASK-YP survey:

- development by: former ACU staff A/Prof Tim Moore, Prof Morag McArthur, Steven Roche, Erin Barry, Jane Lawson, Dr Jane Koerner, Dr Jessica Heerde; Griffith University staff Prof Patrick O'Leary and Prof Bob Lonne; Queensland University of Technology staff Dr Jodi Death
- survey scales validated by: Monash University staff A/Prof Helen Bourke-Taylor; University of South Australia staff A/Prof Tim Moore; and ACU staff Prof Morag McArthur, with input from Dr Bianca Hoban, Prof Daryl Higgins, and Douglas Russell
- additional scenarios were developed by ACU staff A/Prof Tim Moore, Dr Debbie Noble-Carr and Douglas Russell, with support from Dr Bianca Hoban and Prof Daryl Higgins; these scenarios were funded by Wesley Mission and the Australian Sports Commission; children and young people participated in focus groups that informed the scenarios
- animated versions of the ASK-YP scenarios were created by Louise Grant (Fuzz Animations), and ACU staff Erin Barry, Tim Moore and Fiona Nelson with assistance from Diane Charleson and her students.

The ASK-YP survey is available in its original form as Appendix 2 in the Our Safety Counts Report: https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/research_and_resources/institute_of_child_protection_studies_report_our_safety_counts

Get in touch

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the survey

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