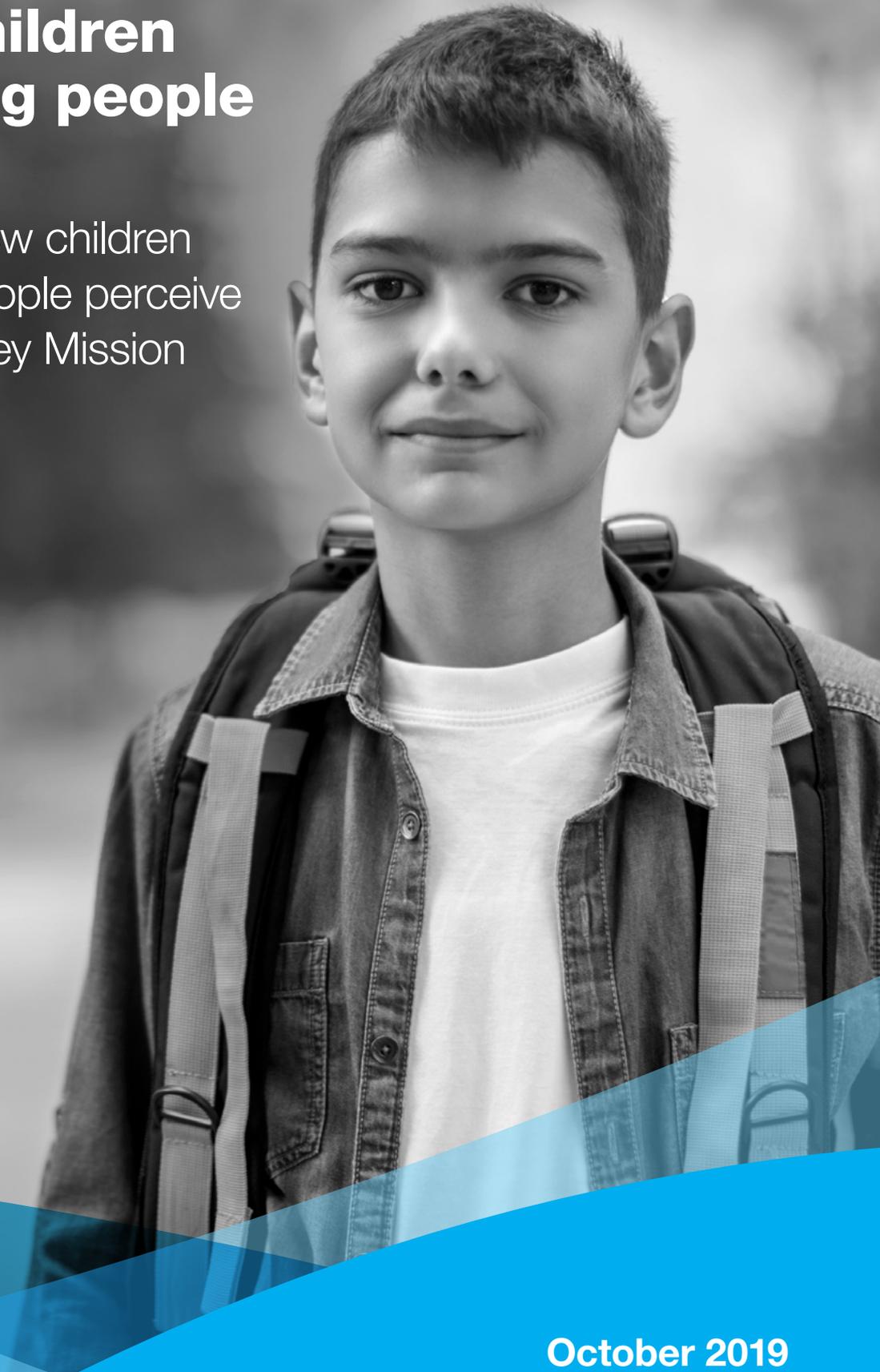




Giving children and young people a voice

A survey of how children
and young people perceive
safety in Wesley Mission
programs



October 2019

‘Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.’



Foreword

Listen, acknowledge, act. Let this become the watchword of every organisation working with children; guiding us to empower children in decisions about their safety and responses to their concerns.

To create truly safe environments for children and young people we must give them a voice, take their views seriously and act on what they tell us. As you read through this report, which presents the findings of a survey completed by children and young people across five Wesley Mission programs, you'll see this message rings clearly throughout the responses.

All children and young people have a right to feel and be safe, and we all have a responsibility to do the best we can to ensure that safety. As an organisation with more than 120 years' experience in every aspect of child and family care, Wesley Mission takes this responsibility seriously. So, I'm pleased to present you with the findings of this study—the first in what will be an ongoing exercise to monitor child safety in Wesley Mission's programs and identify areas for improvement.

We were grateful to collaborate with researchers from the Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) at the Australian Catholic University on this study, and to draw on their experience conducting research for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

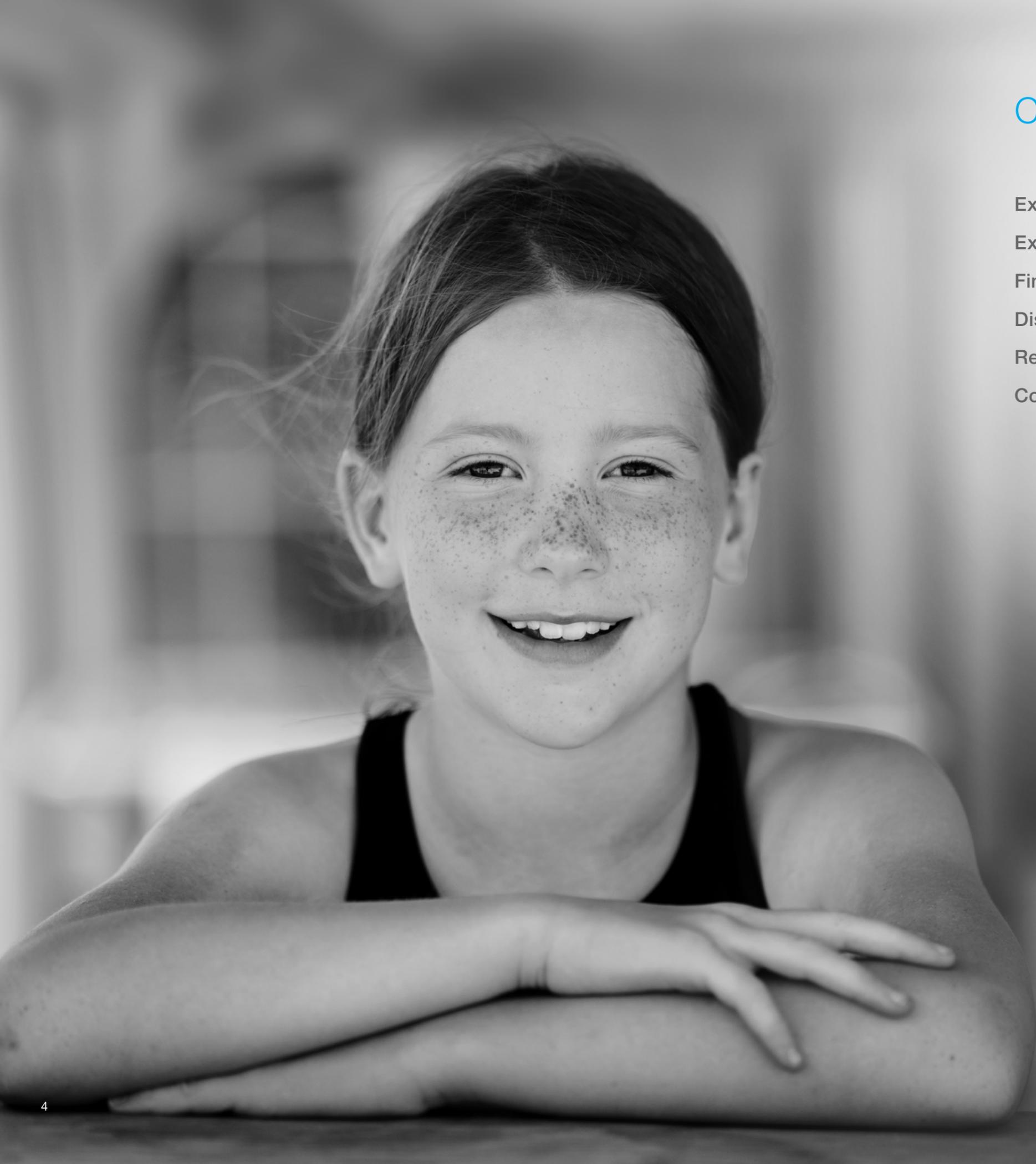
The responses to the survey demonstrate that, overall, children and young people in our services have positive perceptions of their safety at Wesley Mission. The findings also indicate there is room for improvement, and so, you'll find in this report a list of recommendations, primarily focused on what we can do within Wesley Mission to help children and young people feel safer and have more confidence in the ability of our staff to help them in unsafe situations.

I offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to all the children and young people who participated in this survey, and their families. This report, and more importantly the actions that will arise from it to make our programs safer, was made possible by the children and young people who gave their time to express their views. Thank you, also, to the Wesley Mission staff who assisted the survey participants; without their encouragement and support, the voices of some participants may not have been heard.

Please take time to read this important report and its recommendations. The abuse of a child is intolerable and I implore you to join Wesley Mission in acknowledging that as a community we're all responsible for the safety of our children and young people.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith V Garner". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Rev Dr Keith V Garner AM
CEO/Superintendent
Wesley Mission



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Executive summary

In 2018, Wesley Mission engaged researchers at the Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) at the Australian Catholic University to survey children and young people about their perceptions of safety at Wesley Mission.

We invited children and young people across our programs to complete the Australian Safe Kids and Young People (ASK-YP) survey, which the ICPS developed and used in its research for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) commencing in 2013.

In the wake of the release of the Royal Commission's findings and recommendations—which emphasise the need to empower children and young people in their safety from sexual abuse—we sought to identify any areas where we can strengthen our engagement with children and young people, ensure their voices are heard and incorporate their feedback into Wesley Mission's safeguarding processes.

This report outlines the findings of the survey administered at Wesley Mission, discusses how the results compare to benchmarks from the ICPS's national implementation of the survey, and provides recommendations for future action. Our recommendations outline what Wesley Mission, other youth-serving organisations and institutions and the Australian Government can do to empower children and young people and help ensure their safety.

Why we conducted this survey

Wesley Mission administered the ASK-YP survey within its own organisation as a tool to self-audit, benchmark and improve child safety. We were motivated to conduct the survey because as a child safe organisation we recognise the importance of maintaining an open and aware culture that encourages the participation and empowerment of children.

Our specific aims for this research were to:

Establish benchmarks for child safety and engagement in Wesley Mission

The study has provided us with a baseline of how children and young people in our programs perceive safety and responses to safety in Wesley Mission. We'll continue to administer this survey across Wesley Mission programs involving children on a regular basis to monitor and continually improve the way we engage with children and young people in our care.

Improve child safety across Wesley Mission programs and services

One of our aims was to identify opportunities to improve the way we engage with children and young people and how we involve them in the design and delivery of our programs and services. The research findings provide important indicators regarding children and young people's perceptions of safety, safety needs and desires. This information will help us better respond to the safety concerns of the children and young people we serve.

Give children and young people a voice

Conducting this survey offered children and young people the opportunity to voice their views, talk about their experiences of safety in Wesley Mission and provide us with valuable information and knowledge about how children understand, experience and respond to safety issues.

Background research: the Australian Safe Kids and Young People survey

In 2013, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse commissioned the ICPS to conduct the Children's Safety Study to develop an understanding of how children perceive safety and consider it within institutional contexts.

Specifically, the study explored:

- how children and young people conceptualise and perceive safety
- what they believe shapes their perceptions of safety
- their perceptions of safety within institutions
- what children and young people consider is already being done to respond to safety issues and risks in institutions
- what they think should be done to respond to safety issues in institutions.

As part of this study the ICPS developed the Australian Safe Kids and Young People (ASK-YP) survey, which they used to test children's perceptions of how adults

and institutions demonstrate they're meeting children's safety needs and respond when children and young people are unsafe.

Two groups of children and young people provided ongoing feedback to the ICPS as they developed the ASK-YP survey. And another group of children and young people trialled the survey before it was launched.

Under the Children's Safety Study, the survey was completed online by 1,480 children and young people aged 10 to 18 across Australia. Participants were recruited directly through schools, youth-serving organisations and online through digital marketing. The results are presented in the Our Safety Counts report which is published at safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au. The results provide benchmarks for children and young people's perceptions of safety, and responses to safety, in Australian institutions that work with children.

Administering the ASK-YP survey at Wesley Mission

For the Wesley Mission study, we used a modified version of the ASK-YP survey to gauge perceptions of safety within Wesley Mission specifically. Some of the issues and topics the survey asked participants included:

- to what extent Wesley Mission demonstrates child safe characteristics (as determined by focus groups)
- what the respondent would do if they encountered an unsafe adult or peer at Wesley Mission
- what they would need if they were in a situation similar to scenarios provided in the survey which depicted unsafe situations
- what they believe Wesley Mission already does and has in place to prevent and respond to safety concerns
- who they would seek support from
- what would stop the child or young person from seeking and receiving support.

Using the ASK-YP survey allowed us to compare the data collected in Wesley Mission with the benchmark data presented in the Our Safety Counts report.

Participants

A total of 164 children and young people from five programs across Wesley Mission completed the survey between 19 April and 30 June 2018. The respondents participated in an online survey which they could choose to complete alone or assisted by familiar Wesley Mission staff as needed. The survey and assisting staff did not ask the children and young people about their own experiences, but about safety more generally.

We chose participants based on their age (between 10 and 17 years) and because they're involved with one of the Wesley Mission programs we selected to focus on for this study.

While there were slightly more female respondents, overall respondent gender was fairly evenly represented, with some fluctuations among specific programs. For example, almost two thirds of respondents from the Wesley Out of School Hours Care program were male, while there was an almost even gender split among respondents from Wesley Youth Hope.

The average age of participants was 12.7 years, but it should be noted that since all respondents from Wesley Out of School Hours Care were aged between 10 and 12 years, there was a significantly larger proportion of younger respondents.

One quarter of the respondents speak a language other than English at home and 14 per cent identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The largest group of respondents were from Wesley Dalmar, our out-of-home care service. This group made up 46 per cent of the participants. The next largest groups were from Wesley Out of School Hours Care and Wesley Youth Hope, which each represented 23 per cent of the participants. The respondents who participate in Wesley Mission's carer respite services and Wesley Family Centres, combined, represented the remaining eight per cent.

Table 1: Age and gender of participants

Gender	Age (Years)							Total
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16 and over	
Males (N)	18	17	11	8	11	4	10	79
Females (N)	11	17	14	10	9	14	10	85
Total	29	34	25	18	20	18	20	164





Executive summary: key findings

Children and young people feel safe at Wesley Mission

- Overall, participants in the Wesley Mission survey were more confident in the adults they interact with than the respondents in the Our Safety Counts study.
- The overwhelming majority of survey participants said they feel safe either 'all of the time' (76.2 per cent) or 'most of the time' (20.1 per cent) they're at their Wesley Mission program.

There is room for improvement

- Young people in Wesley Out of School Hours Care are more unsure than their peers in other Wesley Mission programs about whether staff know children well enough to know when something is not right.
- Young people in Wesley Out of School Hours Care were more likely to believe they might encounter an unsafe situation than respondents from other Wesley Mission services.
- Some children and young people felt adults at Wesley Mission would only know if children were unsafe if the child or young person told them.

What children and young people want in order to feel safe

- Children and young people want a trusted adult who they can approach if they ever feel uncomfortable.
- Multiple barriers prevent children from feeling confident enough to discuss their safety with workers at Wesley Mission including: feeling uncomfortable talking to workers, being worried things will get worse and not feeling confident that adults will fix the situation.
- Children and young people were more likely to discuss unsafe situations with a friend or their mother, rather than talking to an adult in their Wesley Mission program.

Findings

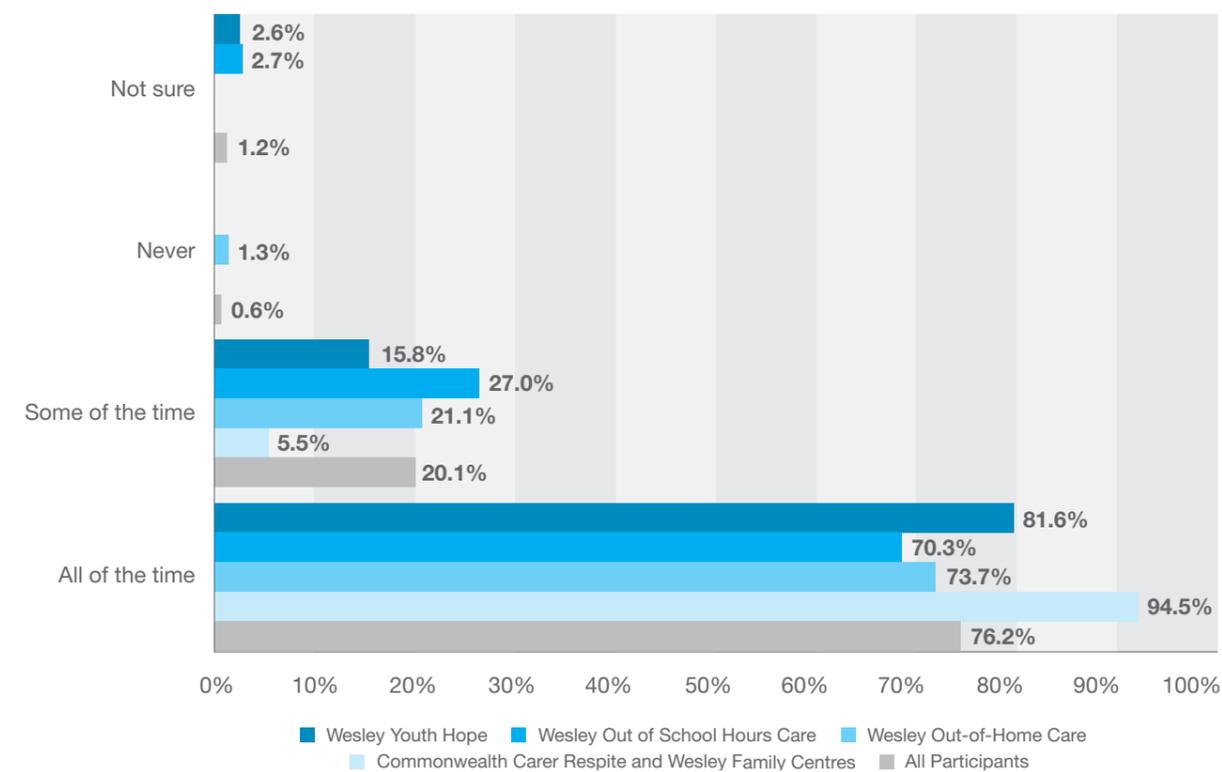
These findings are based on the responses children and young people involved in Wesley Mission programs gave to the Australian Safe Kids and Young People (ASK-YP) survey between 19 April and 30 June 2018.

However of the 164 respondents, not all participants answered all questions. That means the statistics presented here are descriptive and aim to summarise the sample of participants who answered the questions.

Young people feel safe at Wesley Mission

The survey asked respondents how much they agree or disagree with the statement, 'I feel safe most of the time that I'm at Wesley Mission'. The overwhelming majority of young people said, 'all of the time' (76.2 per cent) or 'some of the time' (20.1 per cent). Very few people responded 'never' (0.6 per cent) or 'I'm not sure' (1.2 per cent).

Figure 1: I feel safe most of the time that I'm at Wesley Mission – by program/service



Wesley Mission is a safe institution that responds to young people's safety needs

Respondents evaluated how well Wesley Mission demonstrates a range of important characteristics of safe institutions and responds to young people's safety needs.

The majority of the survey respondents believe the adults who deliver Wesley Mission's services pay attention to children's concerns and worries. More than 70 per cent of the respondents said this happens 'all of the time', and 19.5 per cent said 'some of the time'.

The young people who completed the survey felt there are high levels of dialogue between adults and young people about things that worry them. They also reported that they rely on peers if they're worried about something. So, it's clear that peers are also important for young people in responding to concerns about their safety.

Another important indicator of institutional safety for children and young people is the degree to which adults value children's and young people's views and opinions. A third of the respondents thought adults in Wesley Mission demonstrated this characteristic all the time.

Figure 2: Adults at Wesley Mission care about children and young people

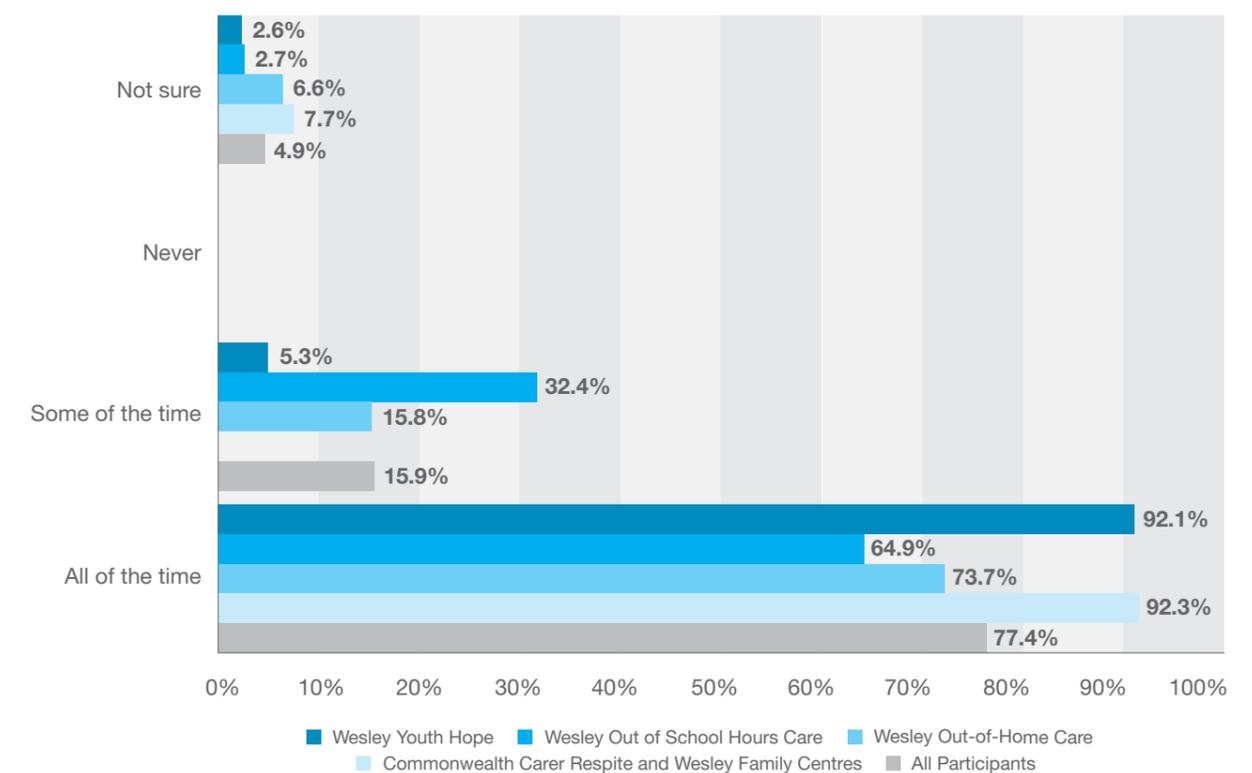


Figure 3: At Wesley Mission, adults pay attention when children and young people raise a concern or worry

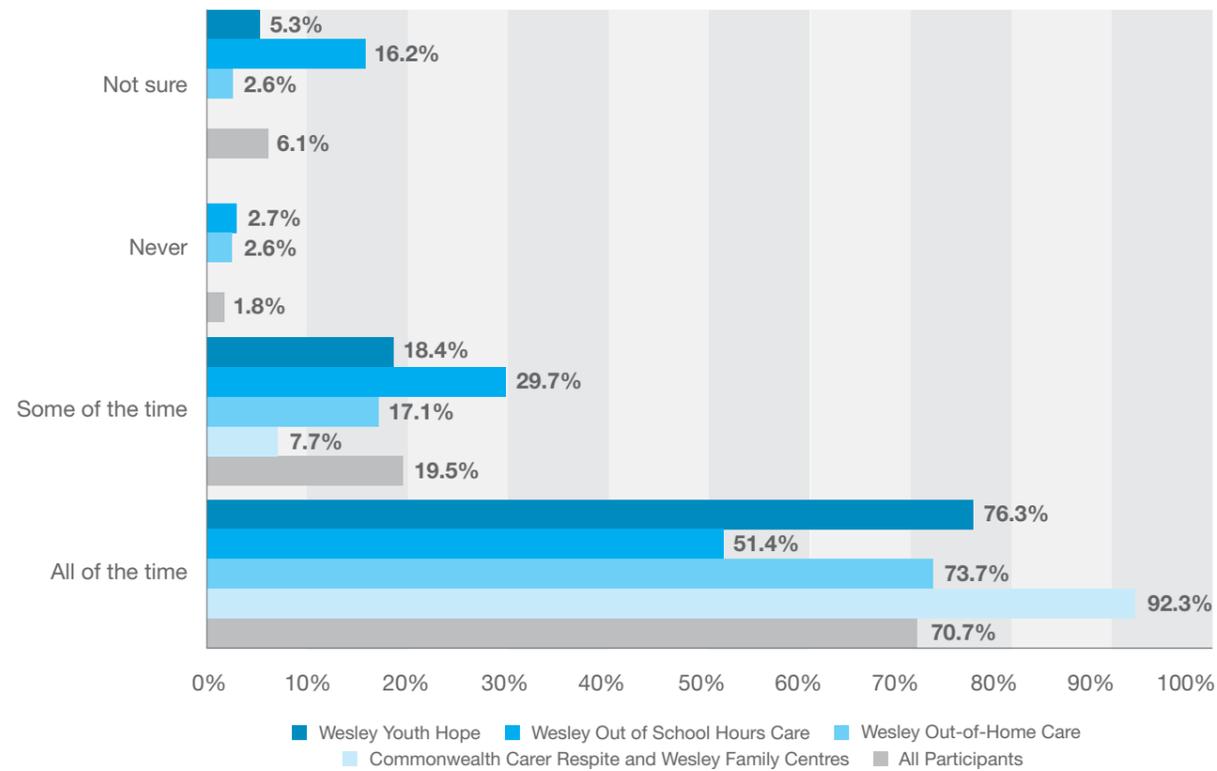


Figure 4: Adults at Wesley Mission know children and young people well enough to know if something isn't right

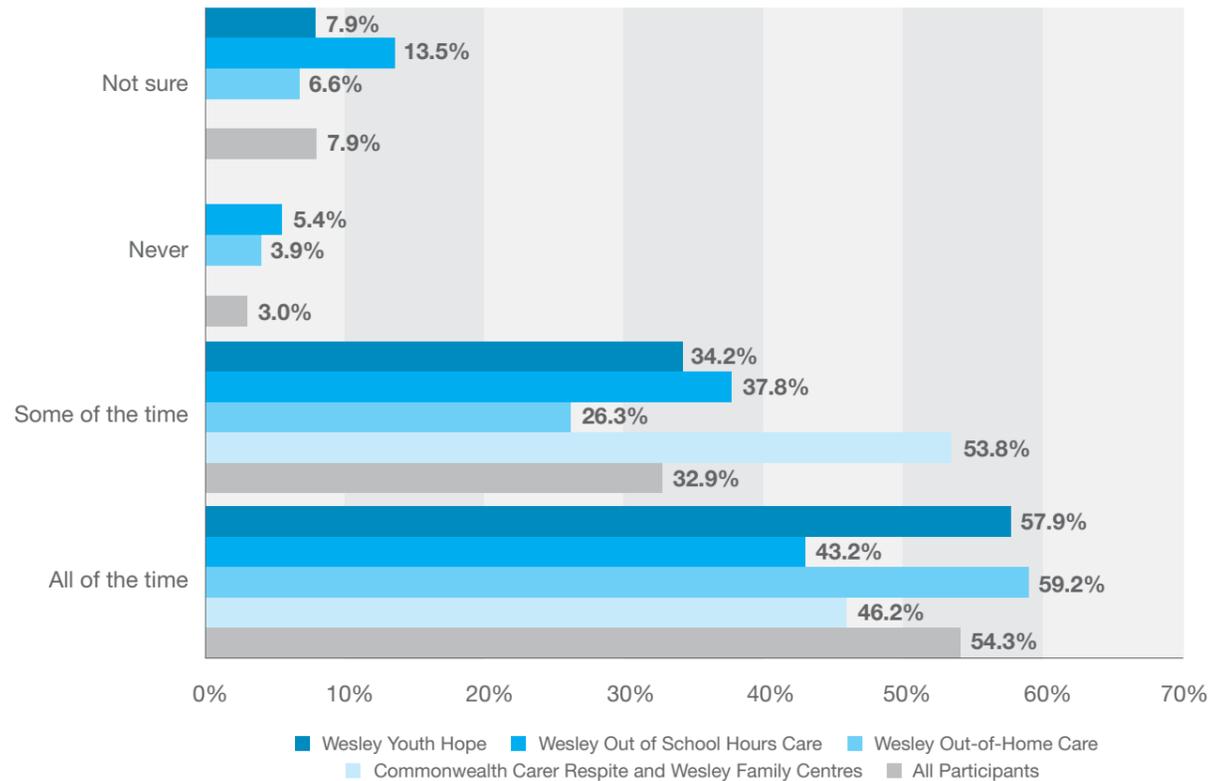
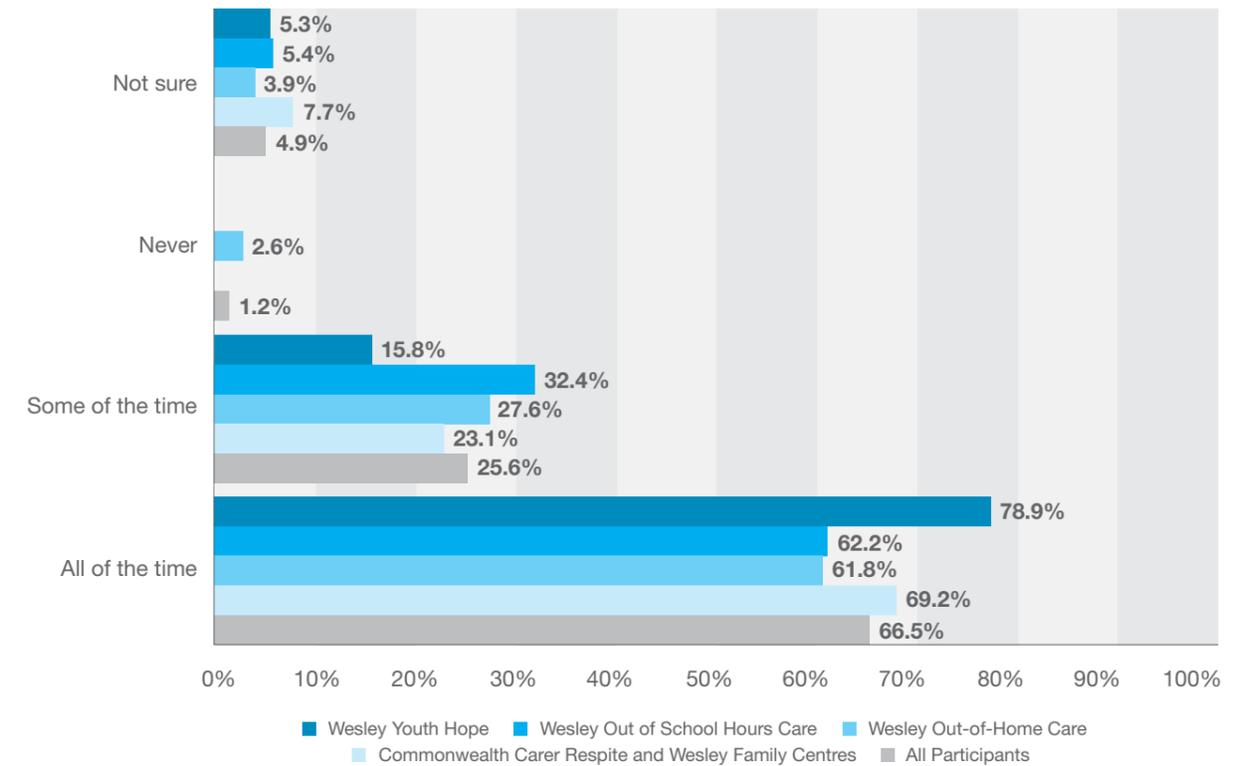


Figure 5: Adults at Wesley Mission value children's views and opinions



Young people need adults to listen, believe them, and act

The survey presented the participants with two scenarios to consider. In the first, an adult who demonstrated grooming-like behaviours made the young person feel uncomfortable. In the second scenario, one of the young person's peers made them feel uncomfortable.

For each scenario, the survey asked, "If you were in a situation like this, what do you think you would need most? You can choose up to 3."

For both scenarios, the priorities for children and young people were to have a trusted adult that believed them, was available to talk, and would step in and act and know what to do.

The responses to this question for both scenarios—where an adult, and then a peer, made them uncomfortable—were very similar, although some differences did exist between different Wesley Mission services. For example, young people from Wesley Out of School Hours Care were less interested in rules and more interested in having an adult to rely on. Children in the combined care respite service and Wesley Family Centres group were more interested than other participants in the rules surrounding such situations, but they also wanted an adult to step in or to have someone to talk to.

Overall, the respondents indicated they would need an adult's assistance. This suggests that adults are crucial for young people in responding to unsafe situations within Wesley Mission programs.

Table 2: If you were in a situation like this, what do you think you would need most?

Scenario 1 (adult-to-child)	Total	CCR & FC ¹	OOHC ²	OOSC ³	YH ⁴
For an adult to believe me when I said I felt uncomfortable	52.4%	46.2%	48.7%	62.2%	52.6%
For another adult to notice that I might be unsafe and to step in and stop it	44.5%	61.5%	44.7%	43.2%	39.5%
To know what I could do or say so that I could get out of this situation	32.3%	46.2%	27.6%	32.4%	36.8%
To have another adult I trusted be available to talk	50.0%	61.5%	38.2%	45.9%	65.8%
To know whether what the adult was doing was OK or not	26.2%	30.8%	23.7%	35.1%	21.1%
For another adult to notice that I was uncomfortable and to ask if I was OK	29.9%	15.4%	34.2%	29.7%	26.3%
To know what the rules are about situations like this	12.2%	15.4%	10.5%	5.4%	21.1%
To make sure that no one else knows because things would be bad if they did	9.1%	15.4%	9.2%	8.1%	7.9%
Scenario 2 (peer-to-peer)	Total	CCR & FC ¹	OOHC ²	OOSC ³	YH ⁴
For an adult to believe me when I said I felt uncomfortable	47.6%	61.5%	44.7%	45.9%	50.0%
For another adult to notice that I might be unsafe and to step in and stop it	49.4%	53.8%	46.1%	51.4%	52.6%
To know what I could do or say so that I could get out of this situation	32.9%	46.2%	30.3%	35.1%	31.6%
To have another adult I trusted be available to talk	55.5%	61.5%	48.7%	56.8%	65.8%
To know whether what the guy was doing was OK or not	27.4%	38.5%	21.1%	37.8%	26.3%
For another adult to notice that I was uncomfortable and to ask if I was OK	26.8%	23.1%	30.3%	18.9%	28.9%
To know what the rules are about situations like this	10.4%	7.7%	9.2%	13.4%	10.5%
To make sure that no one else knows because things would be bad if they did	10.4%	7.7%	6.6%	13.5%	15.8%

¹CCR & FC = Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres

²OOHC = Wesley Out-of-Home Care

³OOSC = Wesley Out of School Hours Care

⁴YH = Wesley Youth Hope



Most young people have confidence in Wesley Mission adults, but some are unsure if the adults can support them

The survey asked respondents to indicate how likely it was that a young person at Wesley Mission would encounter a situation similar to the two scenarios described. Responses to this question were similar for both adult and peer scenarios, with more young people expressing concern that a peer-to-peer scenario was more likely. While participants believed the scenarios were mostly unlikely to occur at Wesley Mission, a high number of participants were unsure if young people encounter these types of situations at Wesley Mission programs.

Young people attending Wesley Mission services have high levels of confidence in the adults they interact with. A relatively large number of young people, however, were unsure whether adults had the skills and capacity to support them in unsafe situations such as those presented in the scenarios.

Table 3: How likely is it that a child or young person at your organisation would be in a situation like this?

Scenario*	Very likely		Likely		Unlikely		Very unlikely		I'm not sure	
	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2
All participants	6.7%	9.1%	17.1%	22.6%	25.0%	29.3%	25.0%	15.9%	23.8%	19.5%
Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	0%	7.7%	23.1%	15.4%	7.7%	30.8%	46.2%	30.8%	23.1%	15.4%
Wesley Out-of-Home Care	6.6%	7.9%	21.1%	25.0%	23.7%	25.0%	17.1%	7.9%	28.9%	27.6%
Wesley Out of School Hours Care	13.5%	18.9%	8.1%	5.4%	27.0%	27.0%	24.3%	32.4%	24.3%	13.5%
Wesley Youth Hope	2.6%	2.6%	15.8%	36.8%	31.6%	39.5%	34.2%	10.5%	13.2%	10.5%

*Scen 1: An adult to child encounter that made the young person feel uncomfortable
 Scen 2: A peer-to-peer encounter that made a young person feel uncomfortable

Table 4: Based on the scenario, how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements for your Wesley Mission program?

Scenario*	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		I'm not sure	
	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2
I would know what to do because we've talked about it at Wesley Mission	29.3%	28.7%	22.0%	20.1%	18.9%	17.7%	9.1%	12.2%	3.0%	3.0%	14.6%	14.6%
Adults at Wesley Mission would notice if another adult/a young person was doing the wrong thing	40.9%	34.8%	36.6%	34.1%	9.8%	12.2%	0.0%	3.0%	0.6%	1.8%	8.5%	9.8%
Adults at Wesley Mission would only know if a child or young person was unsafe if they told them	16.5%	22.6%	25.6%	14.0%	22.6%	18.3%	13.4%	17.1%	6.1%	7.9%	13.4%	15.2%
I have an adult at Wesley Mission I trust that I would talk to	55.5%	48.8%	21.3%	24.4%	10.4%	7.3%	3.7%	4.3%	1.8%	1.2%	4.9%	9.1%
Adults at Wesley Mission would probably not believe me	6.7%	7.3%	9.8%	7.9%	9.1%	11.6%	26.8%	19.5%	31.7%	34.8%	12.8%	13.4%
Adults at Wesley Mission would see it as their job to do something about a situation like this	42.1%	39.6%	34.1%	30.5%	8.5%	6.1%	3.0%	2.4%	0.6%	2.4%	7.3%	12.2%
Adults at Wesley Mission would know what to say to me if I told them I was unsafe	47.0%	41.5%	28.0%	31.1%	8.5%	8.5%	4.3%	0.6%	0.0%	1.2%	6.7%	11.0%
Adults at Wesley Mission would know what to do if I told them I was unsafe	51.2%	48.2%	26.2%	29.9%	9.1%	4.3%	2.4%	1.2%	0.6%	1.2%	5.5%	9.1%
Adults at Wesley Mission would ask me what I would like to have happen, instead of dealing with it without me	37.2%	29.9%	25.0%	24.4%	14.0%	15.9%	3.7%	2.4%	2.4%	0.6%	14.0%	21.3%

*Scen 1: An adult to child encounter that made the young person feel uncomfortable
 Scen 2: A peer-to-peer encounter that made a young person feel uncomfortable

Young people are most likely to ask a friend or parent for help

Respondents were asked to identify who they would most likely turn to for help if they were in situations like the ones presented in the scenarios. The responses indicate young people are most likely to ask a friend or parent for help, followed by a worker at their Wesley Mission program. Young people were more likely to tell each of the support people if they encountered an unsafe peer (as portrayed in the second scenario in the survey), rather than an adult who made them feel uncomfortable.

Table 5: If you were in a situation like this and were going to tell someone, who would it most likely be?

Answer		Scen 1*	Scen 2*
A friend	All participants	50.0%	53.6%
	Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	61.5%	69.2%
	Wesley Out-of-Home Care	48.7%	50.0%
	Wesley Out of School Hours Care	56.8%	62.2%
	Wesley Youth Hope	57.9%	47.4%
My Mum	All participants	59.1%	62.1%
	Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	76.9%	76.9%
	Wesley Out-of-Home Care	52.6%	52.6%
	Wesley Out of School Hours Care	70.0%	73.0%
	Wesley Youth Hope	55.3%	65.8%
My Dad	All participants	39.0%	45.1%
	Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	53.8%	53.8%
	Wesley Out-of-Home Care	25.0%	32.9%
	Wesley Out of School Hours Care	56.8%	59.5%
	Wesley Youth Hope	44.7%	52.6%
My sister or brother	All participants	29.8%	31.1%
	Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	23.1%	30.8%
	Wesley Out-of-Home Care	35.5%	38.2%
	Wesley Out of School Hours Care	29.7%	27.0%
	Wesley Youth Hope	21.1%	21.1%
A worker at Wesley Mission	All participants	38.4%	44.5%
	Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	46.2%	61.5%
	Wesley Out-of-Home Care	34.2%	42.1%
	Wesley Out of School Hours Care	59.5%	40.5%
	Wesley Youth Hope	42.1%	47.4%
Another adult at Wesley Mission	All participants	18.2%	21.3%
	Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	23.1%	38.5%
	Wesley Out-of-Home Care	18.4%	19.7%
	Wesley Out of School Hours Care	13.5%	13.5%
	Wesley Youth Hope	21.1%	26.3%
A counsellor	All participants	19.5%	19.5%
	Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	46.2%	46.2%
	Wesley Out-of-Home Care	18.4%	17.1%
	Wesley Out of School Hours Care	5.4%	8.1%
	Wesley Youth Hope	26.3%	26.3%

Answer		Scen 1	Scen 2
A teacher at school	All participants	26.2%	29.2%
	Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	38.5%	30.8%
	Wesley Out-of-Home Care	22.4%	26.3%
	Wesley Out of School Hours Care	43.2%	35.1%
	Wesley Youth Hope	13.2%	21.1%
Someone else?	All participants	16.3%	18.9%
	Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	15.4%	7.7%
	Wesley Out-of-Home Care	23.7%	18.4%
	Wesley Out of School Hours Care	21.6%	32.4%
	Wesley Youth Hope	5.3%	10.5%
Someone on a telephone helpline (like Lifeline or Kids Helpline)	All participants	9.7%	11.5%
	Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	15.4%	15.4%
	Wesley Out-of-Home Care	5.3%	9.2%
	Wesley Out of School Hours Care	13.5%	13.5%
	Wesley Youth Hope	13.2%	13.2%
I wouldn't tell anyone	All participants	10.4%	9.1%
	Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres	0%	0%
	Wesley Out-of-Home Care	13.2%	14.5%
	Wesley Out of School Hours Care	13.5%	8.8%
	Wesley Youth Hope	5.3%	5.6%

***Scen 1:** An adult to child encounter that made the young person feel uncomfortable
Scen 2: A peer-to-peer encounter that made a young person feel uncomfortable



Some young people feel uncomfortable talking to adults about safety

In relation to the scenarios provided, the survey asked participants, “If you were in a situation like this, there might be a number of things that kept you from getting help. How strongly do you agree with the following statements?”

Although young people were quite confident that adults in Wesley Mission would care for the young people in the presented scenarios and have the capacity and knowledge to respond appropriately, almost half of the respondents indicated they would feel uncomfortable talking to an adult at their service about these kinds of scenarios. Young people were also uncertain about whether things would get worse if they told a worker at Wesley Mission.

Table 6: How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

Answer	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		I'm not sure	
	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2	Scen 1	Scen 2
I would feel uncomfortable talking to an adult at Wesley Mission about things like this	20.3%	16.1%	29.4%	28.3%	25.2%	25.3%	11.9%	13.8%	6.9%	8.8%	6.2%	8.0%
Adults at Wesley Mission don't really care about young people in situations like this so I wouldn't ask	7.6%	6.3%	7.4%	9.7%	17.7%	22.4%	34.5%	28.7%	23.5%	22.8%	9.3%	10.1%
Adults at Wesley Mission are too busy to deal with things like this	7.6%	7.0%	8.0%	8.7%	27.0%	28.0%	31.4%	29.0%	19.3%	18.1%	6.6%	9.1%
I would be worried that things would get worse if I told an adult at Wesley Mission	11.1%	7.6%	16.7%	18.5%	28.2%	26.5%	20.9%	21.9%	15.2%	17.3%	8.0%	9.2%
Adults at Wesley Mission wouldn't know what to do in situations like this	6.6%	5.1%	7.5%	10.3%	26.2%	23.3%	29.5%	30.9%	17.9%	16.9%	12.4%	13.8%
I would deal with this type of thing by myself	10.2%	12.4%	15.2%	20.2%	26.4%	26.1%	21.8%	13.5%	17.7%	16.1%	8.9%	11.8%
I don't feel confident that adults at Wesley Mission would fix a situation like this	10.4%	7.3%	10.2%	17.6%	27.8%	24.4%	24.4%	24.2%	16.7%	16.0%	10.6%	10.5%

*Scen 1: An adult to child encounter that made the young person feel uncomfortable
Scen 2: A peer-to-peer encounter that made a young person feel uncomfortable

Most young people are confident Wesley Mission is keeping them safe

Participants selected one of four possible responses to finish the sentence “I think Wesley Mission is doing...”. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents believe Wesley Mission is “doing enough” to prevent children and young people from being unsafe, while 15 per cent believe Wesley Mission is not doing enough. Respondents from the carer respite service, Wesley Family Centres and Wesley Youth Hope were more confident that Wesley Mission was keeping them safe.

Table 7: Finish this sentence: “I think Wesley Mission is doing... (all participants)”

Answer	All participants
enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	66.5%
some things but not enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	15.2%
nothing to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	3.7%
I'm not sure	11.6%

Table 8: Finish this sentence: “I think Wesley Mission is doing... (responses by program)”

Answer	CCR & FC ¹	OOHC ²	OOSC ³	YH ⁴
enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	92.3%	53.9%	62.2%	86.8%
some things but not enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	0%	26.3%	5.4%	7.9%
nothing to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	0%	2.6%	10.8%	0%
I'm not sure	7.7%	11.8%	18.9%	5.3%

¹CCR & FC = Commonwealth Carer Respite and Wesley Family Centres

²OOHC = Wesley Out-of-Home Care

³OOSC = Wesley Out of School Hours Care

⁴YH = Wesley Youth Hope

Discussion: comparing the findings to benchmark data

Overall, the findings from the survey highlight many positive perceptions about safety among children and young people participating in Wesley Mission programs.

The findings demonstrate children and young people mostly feel safe when attending Wesley Mission programs. Their perspectives of the culture of safety within Wesley Mission programs is positive, particularly within Wesley Youth Hope. And children and young people are generally confident in the adults they interact with at Wesley Mission, demonstrating much higher levels of confidence than the benchmark data.

Young people at Wesley Mission programs are confident knowing who they would approach if they felt unsafe, although it's more likely to be someone outside their Wesley Mission program, such as a parent or friend. This seems to be the result of feeling Wesley Mission workers can't fix a situation even though they believe adults at Wesley Mission care about them and their safety.

Based on this, we can make the following conclusions from the survey responses:

Wesley Mission meets or exceeds many of the safety benchmarks outlined in the Our Safety Counts study

Compared to national benchmark data from the Our Safety Counts report, children and young people feel safe participating in Wesley Mission programs. Findings from the responses to questions related to organisational culture in Wesley Mission are similar to the benchmarks provided by the Our Safety Counts study, although there are some significant differences between programs. Respondents from Wesley Out of School Care report more negative findings than those in other programs. In that group of respondents, fewer participants than those in the Our Safety Counts study said they felt adults at Wesley Mission care about them and more said they feel adults at Wesley Mission don't pay attention when young people are concerned.

Wesley Mission participants were overall more confident in the adults they interact with than respondents in the Our Safety Counts study. This is of note since Wesley Mission respondents were also more likely, in an unsafe situation, to want an adult they can trust and who would notice when something is wrong.

When children and young people feel unsafe, they want an adult to listen and notice something is wrong

Children and young people in Wesley Mission programs indicated they want a trusted adult who they can approach if they ever feel uncomfortable. When considering what young people feel they need when they encounter unsafe situations, participants from Wesley Mission programs were less interested in knowing the rules and more interested in being supported by adults who would believe them if they said something was wrong, and notice if something was wrong.

We need to help children and young people feel more safe at Wesley Mission and more confident that adults can help them in unsafe situations

When considering what might stop them seeking help, the responses from children and young people in Wesley Mission programs mostly matched the benchmark data. Wesley Mission respondents, however, did report feeling less comfortable talking to adults and were more likely to believe adults are too busy to help them.

Children and young people said they're more likely to discuss unsafe situations with a friend or their mother, rather than talk to Wesley Mission staff in their program. Some of the reason they gave for this included feeling uncomfortable talking to workers, being worried things would get worse, and not feeling confident adults would fix the situation.

Compared to participants in the Our Safety Counts study, more Wesley Mission participants felt they were likely to encounter an unsafe situation. This could be explained by the fact that many of the children and young people who participate in Wesley Mission programs come from vulnerable backgrounds and have encountered unsafe situations in the past. Respondents from Wesley Out of School Hours Care were particularly concerned about encountering unsafe situations, especially situations where their peers made them feel unsafe.

There are significant differences in perceptions of safety among children and young people in different Wesley Mission programs

Children and young people who participate in Wesley Out of School Hours Care, carer respite services and Wesley Family Centres were more likely than the respondents from other programs to feel like Wesley Mission adults don't know young people well, and that this may prevent them knowing if something is not right.

Recommendations

For Wesley Mission

While the survey findings are generally positive about perceptions of safety at Wesley Mission, they also identify a need to help children and young people feel more confident in the ability of Wesley Mission staff to help in unsafe situations. Therefore, Wesley Mission has developed the following recommendations for next steps following this survey:

- Commit to ongoing surveys on the perceptions of child safety in Wesley Mission on a regular and ongoing basis to track progress and continue to identify areas for improvement. Also commit to broadening the capacity of future surveys to include children in our disability services and other programs not represented in this initial study.
- Distribute this report internally and communicate the survey findings to staff across Wesley Mission, with the aim of raising awareness of where we are succeeding in making children feel safe and where we need to improve.
- Establish better ways for children to report safety concerns about Wesley Mission staff: we discuss our existing feedback channel with families, but there is a need for a more accessible and child-friendly way to raise issues.
- Establish/participate in Child Safety Communities of Practice, not only within Wesley Mission but across the sector with other organisations working with children.
- Establish more, and better, ways to represent the voices of children and young people in Wesley Mission programs, including:
 - creating dedicated channels such as an online youth portal to publish information created for, and by, children and young people in our services
 - publishing more stories and case studies on the children and young people we work with through our existing communication channels.
- Roll out mandatory training for child protection, case work and identifying and responding to child protection for all staff in all services involving children.

- Provide more support and guidance for staff in understanding and applying the Mandatory Reporting Guideline. Staff need more guidance on how to use this tool, including knowing when to tell families a report is being made due to safety concerns.
- Find ways to encourage more cross-unit collaboration to increase consistency in practices and, ultimately, perceptions and feelings of safety across our services.
- Develop a public awareness campaign to provide education on what children and young people want the adults in their life to do to help them feel safe. The campaign should also help educate children and young people on ways to respond when they don't feel safe.

For the Australian Government

- Identify ways to address instability in the sector resulting from changes in the regulatory and operating environment, including the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Instability in the services affects feelings of safety of young people within the system.
- Encourage collaboration between organisations working with children and explore ways to identify, document and build on examples of best practices throughout the sector.

For other organisations working with children

- Consider administering the Australian Safe Kids and Young People (ASK-YP) survey in their organisation to hear children's voices and develop strategies to improve safeguarding practices. Wesley Mission can attest to the fact that the ASK-YP survey has served as a highly effective tool to self-audit youth serving programs and support organisational goals to identify, reflect upon and improve child safeguarding strategies.
- Work together with us, Wesley Mission, to explore ways to facilitate collaboration within the sector.
- Explore ways to focus on increased peer to peer safety across the sector, despite limited capacity.



Conclusion

The survey results from this study have provided Wesley Mission with a baseline from which we'll continue to monitor our engagement with children and young people, identify areas for improvement, and find ways to give children and young people more of a voice in how they're supported.

Wesley Mission commissioned this research in the wake of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and we plan to actively encourage other organisations in the sector to conduct similar evaluations and ongoing studies of their services.



Get involved

To volunteer, donate or leave a gift in your Will
visit wesleymission.org.au

Wesley Mission

220 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000

PO Box A5555, Sydney South NSW 1235

(02) 9263 5555

communications@wesleymission.org.au

wesleymission.org.au

Superintendent/CEO: Rev Keith V Garner AM

Wesley Mission is a part of the Uniting Church in Australia.

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