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consultations with children and
young people about violence
what children had to say

The Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People would like to pay special thanks to all the children and young people involved in the process of developing this report

reference

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Report consultations with children and young people about violence - what children had to say
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We wish to pay our respects to Aboriginal elders – past, present and emerging – and acknowledge the important role of Aboriginal people and culture within the NSW community. ACYP advises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers this report may contain images of people who may have passed away.

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- Awareness Campaigns
- Safe houses
- Support services for both adults and children and young people.

Summary of findings

The Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People undertook focus groups with 202 children and young people in seven schools across NSW. They were asked three key questions:

1. What does violence mean to you?
2. Where are the locations that violence happens to children and young people?
3. What should happen in your communities to stop violence against children and young people?

Key findings

Children and young people conceptualise violence as physical, emotional and sexual and that it can happen to anyone, not just certain types of children and young people.

Overwhelmingly, children and young people reported that violence against children and young people takes place anywhere and everywhere – both in private and in public spaces, in “safe places” and “even with people you trust.”

Children and young people had many ideas to help stop violence against children and young people:

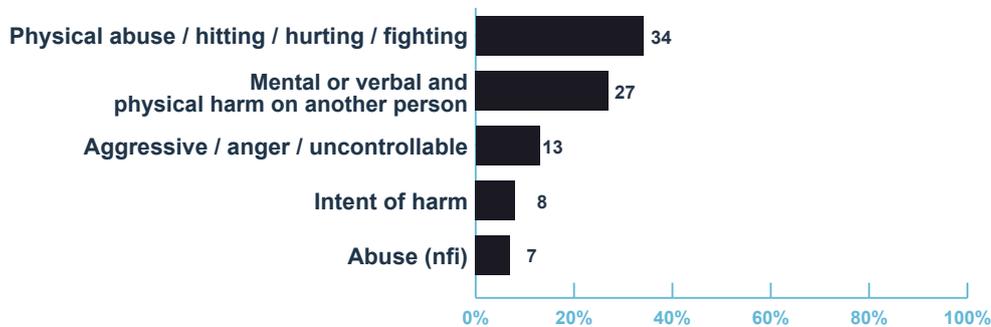
Children and young people’s recommendations

- Campaign to raise awareness about violence against children and young people
- Compulsory education in schools for all children and young people about what violence is and what help is available
- Child rights education for all children and young people
- Free parenting courses
- Safe houses for children and young people that can be accessed through schools
- Professionals and other adults to check-in with children and young people
- Mandatory check-ups for parents with a history of substance abuse or violence
- Safety alert system for children in emergency situations
- Children and young people should be able to report incidences of violence anonymously so the issue is not taken further if they don’t want it to be
- Have a specific helpline for children and young people to report violence
- Children and young people want to be asked what they would like to happen and to develop a plan together with the intervening adult
- More shelters for boys and men
- Stricter enforcement of laws for offenders

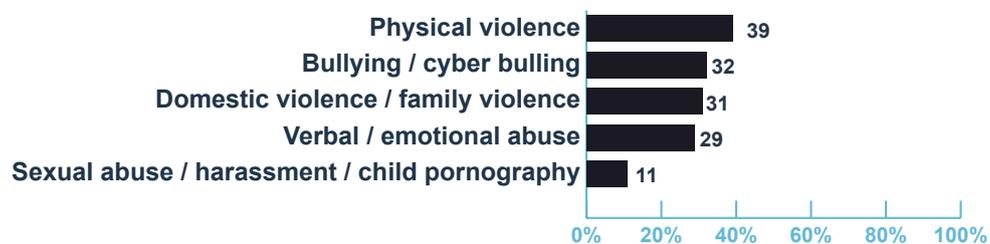
These findings were confirmed through an online poll of 1,000 children and young people.

One hundred children and young people that took part in the face to face focus groups also attended a one-day international conference on ending violence against children and young people. They heard from international speakers in the field and also further developed their ideas on three proposed solutions to stopping violence against children and young people: awareness campaigns, safe houses, and support services for both adults and children and young people. They presented their ideas to adult delegates and decision-makers at the conference.

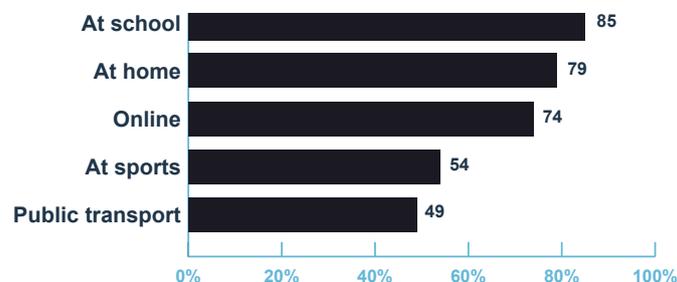
What the term 'violence' means to children and young people



What types of violence children and young people are affected by



Where violence against children and young people takes place



What would be possible solutions to reduce violence against children



Methodology

The Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People adopted a three-staged approach to gather children and young people's views on violence:

Stage 1: Focus groups

The Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People undertook 26 focus groups with children and young people in seven schools across NSW. Five of the schools were located in Sydney and two were located in regional areas. Six of the seven schools were Government schools and one was Independent.

In total, 202 children and young people aged 10-18 years (74 males and 128 females) took part in the focus group discussions, which centred around three key questions:

1. What does violence mean to you?
2. Where are the locations that violence happens to children and young people?
3. What should happen in your communities to stop violence against children and young people?

Stage 2: Online poll

In Stage 2, ACYP conducted an online poll of 1,025 children and young people aged 12-24 years across NSW (see Appendix for sample composition). The questionnaire included four questions in relation to violence against children:

1. What does the term 'violence' mean to you? (open-ended question)
2. What kinds of violence do you think children and young people are affected by? (open-ended question)
3. Where do you think violence against children and young people happens? (respondents ticked all that applied from a range of options – these options were drawn from participants responses in Stage 1)
4. What do you think would be possible solutions to reduce violence against children and young people? (open-ended question)

Stage 3: Ending violence against children conference

In Stage 3, ACYP gathered 100 children and young people that had taken part in Stage 1 at a one-day international conference on ending violence against children and young people. The conference took place in two separate rooms; adult delegates in one room and children and young people in another room. Children and young people listened to the same international speakers as the adult delegates and heard what is currently being done globally to end violence against children.

In the afternoon, children and young people worked at their tables to further discuss their ideas for ending violence against children and young people. They discussed the following four questions:

1. What does violence mean to you?
2. Where are the locations that violence happens to children and young people?
3. What should happen in your communities to stop violence against children and young people?
4. The following four responses were what ACYP heard most when speaking to children and young people in the first consultation. Getting more specific, what would each of these strategies look like?
 - a) Awareness Campaigns
 - b) Safe houses
 - c) Support services for both adults and children and young people.

While the first three questions were the same as those asked in Stage 1, children and young people were told that the purpose of going over these questions again was to build upon the strategies that both they and other children and young people across NSW had previously suggested.





Stage 1 findings: Focus groups



1. What does violence mean to you?

When asked to describe what violence means to them, students across all schools articulated that violence against children and young people is physical, emotional and sexual. They reported that violence can happen to anyone, not just certain types of people. Children and young people also said that violence can be linked to drug and alcohol use, racism, bullying including online-bullying, and terrorism. Some groups also discussed that violence can be self-inflicted through self-harm and suicide.

“It can come under as sexual, emotional, physical, mental and it can really impact someone’s life as they go through it.”

“When we think of violence, we think that it’s non discriminative because it can happen to anyone so we can’t just say it happens to particular people....no one’s safe from it.”

In describing what violence means to them, many groups discussed the feelings associated with experiences of violence. They said that violence makes children and young people feel unsafe, scared, hurt, in pain, alone, depressed, powerless, betrayed and ashamed. Children and young people conveyed that violence causes trauma and long lasting damage:

“Its life changing, there’s no peace. It can wreck your childhood. It’s very scary, it’s harmful, you can feel very afraid.”

Some children and young people discussed the portrayal of violence in the media and in movies and that to some extent violence is normalised in Australian culture.

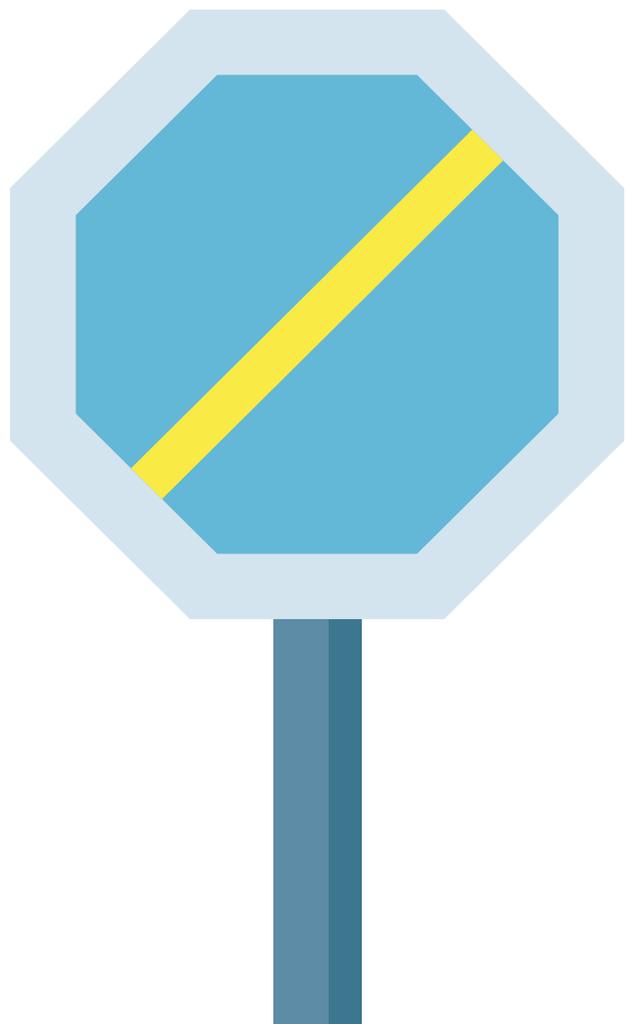
“It’s spreading, it’s universal. It’s in the media. It’s portrayed as a normal thing in movies, therefore it’s reflected in the home.”

“We’ve seen it so much... when you’re exposed to anything for so long, it becomes the norm.”

Children and young people said that violence against children and young people is perpetrated by both adults and peers. Some discussed that when parents are the perpetrators there is a fine line between discipline and abuse. In the domestic setting, many groups discussed the cycle of abuse where victims of child abuse become the perpetrators against their own children.

“We also had physical violence from our parents and peers. We had discipline needs to be distinct from violence, so the use of appropriate force.”

“It can lead to a cycle of abuse.”



2. Where are the locations that violence happens to children and young people?

Overwhelmingly, children and young people reported that violence against children and young people takes place anywhere and everywhere. They said that violence takes place both in private and in public spaces.

“It can pretty much happen anywhere at any time.”

“We were actually debating over what and where so much so that we just concluded that it could happen anywhere.”

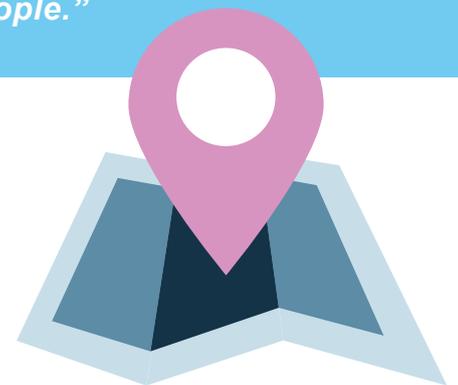
Children and young people talked about violence taking place in the home; at school in the classroom, playground and school toilets; travelling to and from school both walking and on public transport; in the workplace; on the sporting

field; at parties and in clubs; in public spaces such as parks, shopping centres and public toilets; and online, including group messages, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and email.

Some focus groups also discussed the occurrence of violence against children and young people in “safe places”, such as schools, churches, the family home and “even with people you trust”.

Others talked about terrorism and violence:

“Violence can be in major cities, or like when there was the things in London, how they have terror attacks in big areas of people.”



3. What should happen in your communities to stop violence against children and young people?

Children and young people had a wide range of ideas to help stop violence against children and young people. These centred around raising awareness of the issues through education and campaigns, including parent education and training; better

prevention and intervention strategies and services, including providing more safe places for children and young people to go; and better enforcement of laws and mandatory reporting processes.

Raising awareness through education and campaigns

Children and young people spoke about the need to educate both adults and young people about different kinds of violence. Many said that this should be compulsory through schools and should teach young people to identify violence, who to talk to and how to report. It was suggested that this could be done through the PDHPE curriculum.

“...education on violence, making it a compulsory program for primary and high school. That’s to identify what violence is in general, because most people don’t exactly know what it is, especially emotional violence. It’s not talked about.”

Children and young people also spoke about the need for all children to be educated about their right to be free from violence.

“I know that kids in out-of-home care they get this charter of rights book where they’re read to that annually, I think that all kids should be exposed to that and they should learn that they have the right to feel safe, that they have the right to not be harmed.”

Some groups of children and young people said that the actual exercise of taking part in the consultation was a good way to raise awareness of the issues and students suggested that this should happen in schools more often.

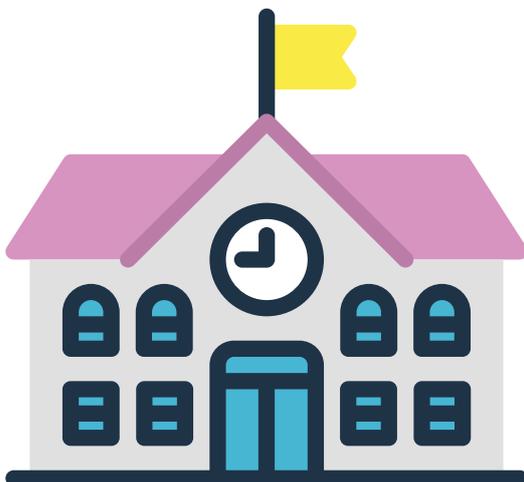
“To educate and raise awareness at school, this will shape our future generations and how they view child violence. For example, having workshops, where all students can participate in it, just as this.”

Students also said that schools could offer free parenting courses in schools.

“We believe that you know how to parent from your parents. And if there’s violence in the family, it’s potentially hereditary... you need to educate the parents on how to parent.”

Children and young people identified the need for education and campaigns to break down stereotypes that violence only happens to women.

“...reducing the stigma around only women are affected and that children are victims as well through the media and whatnot, letting people know. Getting awareness up.”



Better prevention and intervention strategies and services

Children and young people most frequently spoke about the need for more places for children and young people to get help, including support groups and “safe spaces”. They also said these “safe spaces” or “safe houses” need to be widely publicised to children and young people.

“We could have more safe houses...somewhere where you can talk to people...and you can go there and its kind of like a childcare but you can go freely.”

“My friend just told me about a place I can go, if that was me or if it was someone else. But it’s the fact that we don’t know. I think resources have to be advertised.”

One focus group took the idea of safe houses further and talked about the need for “safe times” and for safe places to come to where children are.

Children and young people also discussed the importance of being able to speak with trusted adults, such as family, police, teachers, doctors and psychologists. They would also like these adults to regularly check-in with them.

“Check-ups will help, but meaningful check-ups. So asking if you’re okay can help, but it has to be meaningful. It can’t just be in passing.”

Some groups also suggested mandatory check-ins for parents with a history of drug abuse and violence.

“Stricter laws for parents who have been known for abuse of substances and they end up having regular check-ins with doctors and child services to check that everything is okay.”

Students in one school came up with the idea of a safety alert system for children in emergency situations.

“Some type of safety alert thing that a child can have. Like some type of whistle or alarm or something that will save people, can find them if something’s happened and they need help.”

Some groups talked about making all adults mandatory reporters.

“I know it’s compulsory for teachers and doctors to do it but we should make it all adults, their duty of care is to report child abuse and just spreading awareness, letting people know that it does happen and that it can be reduced.”

However, other groups discussed problems associated with mandatory reporting. In particular, that once a young person raises an issue with a mandatory reporter, they have to take the matter further and this is not necessarily what the young person wants:

“But even like teachers, they say to you, anything you tell me, I have to report....you can’t have that relationship with your teacher where you just want to have a simple conversation about it. And just unload onto someone, without them being like, we need to tell someone bigger. We need to fix this right now. I think there needs to be people available where you can just unload and talk to them simply, without having this big ripple effect after it.”

Children and young people raised that they would like to be able to report incidences of violence anonymously. They said that this would give them a space to just talk without the matter being taken any further:

“We kind of had this idea of putting posters in school toilets, behind the doors, to privately write down numbers...because, at the end of the day, kids want to privately be able to talk, but they just can’t, because they’re scared of the consequences.”

Children and young people said that they don’t want adults to immediately contact their parents/guardians or even the police to remove the child from the dangerous situation. Rather, they want adults to talk with them about what it is they want to happen and to work out a plan together:

“Instead of immediately jumping to get them out of that situation, I guess we need a plan...but it can be really destructive to them, if they immediately get taken away from their families. You need to discuss it with them, and what they want. Talk about their needs, I guess.”

Other prevention and intervention ideas raised by children and young people included:

- Helplines: children and young people mentioned the Kids Helpline specifically while others spoke about the need for a specific helpline to report violence and for the helpline to be widely publicised
- Better rehabilitation such as counselling and therapy for abused children and also for abusers to prevent the cycle of abuse
- Stricter laws around domestic violence; clear and realistic policies; harsher punishments for offenders and more security cameras in public places
- Creating more shelters specifically for men and boys

“Create more places like women’s shelters for men and boys.... women’s shelters are pretty prominent, so having places where children as well as men could go to stay.”



Stage 2 findings: Online poll



UNUSUAL MESSAGE -
DATA ON SUBJECT AT SCHOOL
74

ENVIRONMENTS

PARENT + CAREER
SUPPORT

Review of NCFE's package for promoting and responding to learners' special needs' (2014-2015)

Strategy	Approach	Safety	Priority
1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	1.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	1.1.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	1.1.1.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs
2. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	2.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	2.1.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	2.1.1.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs
3. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	3.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	3.1.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	3.1.1.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs
4. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	4.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	4.1.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	4.1.1.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs
5. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	5.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	5.1.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs	5.1.1.1. Provide a range of support for learners with special needs

1. What the term ‘violence’ means to children and young people

Similarly to the children and young people who participated in Stages 1 and 2, the online poll respondents recognised that violence against children and young people can be physical and emotional; although they were less likely to report that violence can be sexual (respondents did raise sexual violence in question 2 – see below).

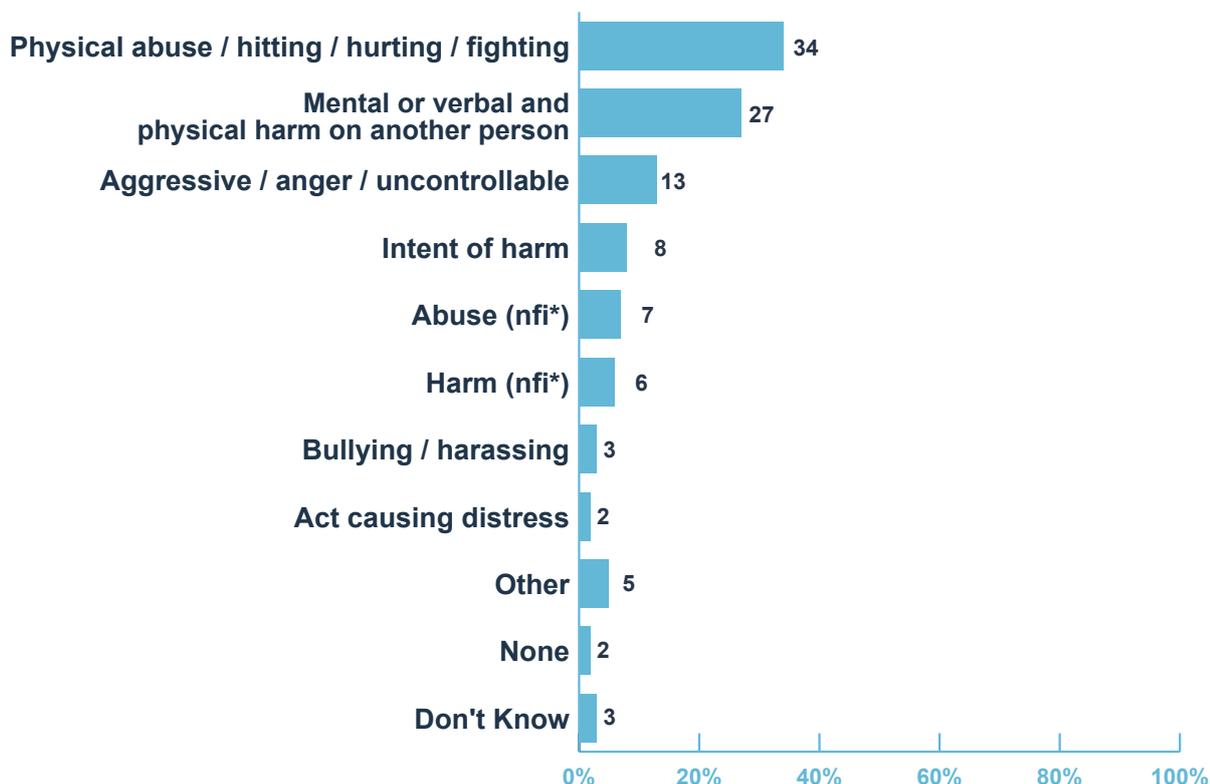
Children and young people were most likely to say the term violence means physical abuse/ hitting/ hurting/ fighting (34%), mental, verbal or physical harm to another person (27%) and aggressive/ uncontrollable anger (13%).

Females (31%) were more likely than males (24%) to say that the term violence means mental, verbal or physical harm to another person while males were more

likely to say it means physical abuse/ hitting/hurting/fighting (37% compared to 31%).

Those 12-18 years (38%) were more likely than those 19-24 years (30%) to say violence means physical abuse/hitting/ hurting/fighting while those 19-24 years were more likely to say it means aggressive/uncontrollable anger (16% compared to 10%).

Those living in Sydney (38%) were more likely than those living in regional and rural NSW (27%) to say violence means physical abuse/hitting/hurting/fighting while those who live in regional and rural NSW were more likely to say it means mental, verbal or physical harm to another person (32% compared to 25%).



Base: total n=1,025

Q7: Now thinking about another topic. What does the term ‘violence’ mean to you?

*nfi = no further information

2. What types of violence children and young people are affected by

Children and young people's responses to this question were consistent with the types of violence raised by children and young people in Stages 1 and 2.

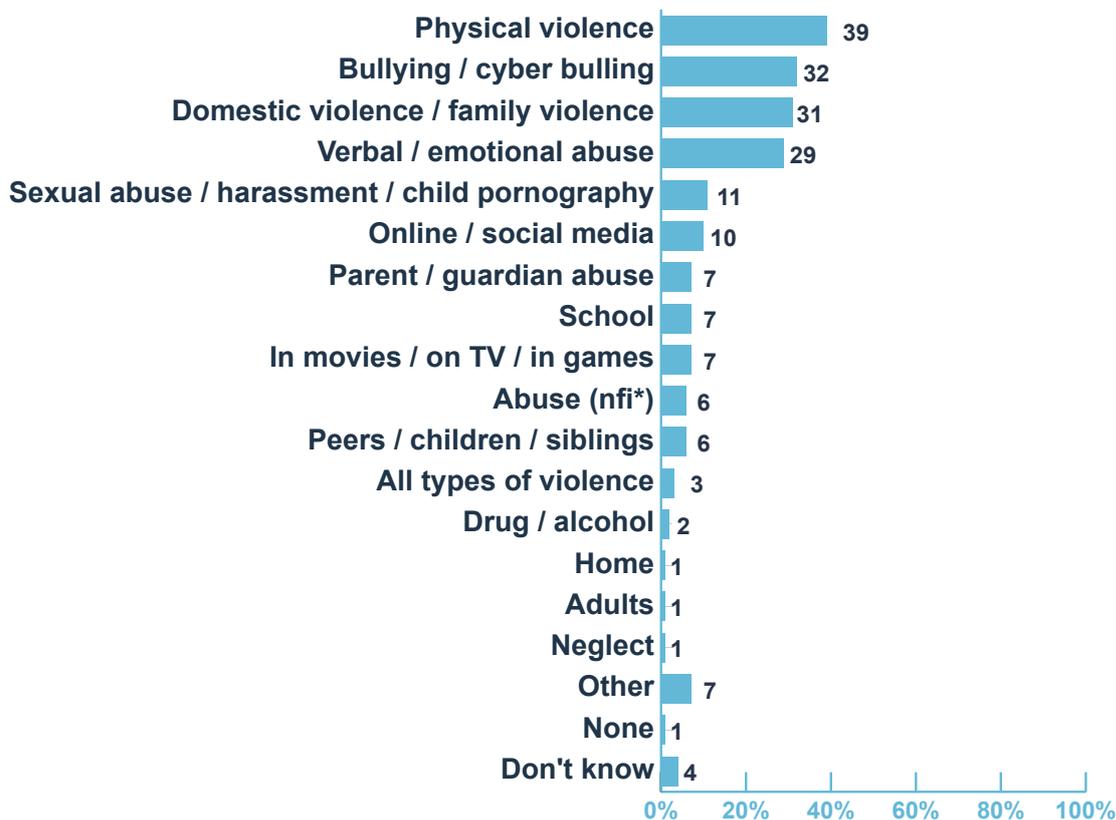
The main types of violence that children and young people think they are affected by are physical violence (39%), bullying/cyber bullying (32%), domestic/family violence (31%) and verbal/emotional abuse (29%).

Females were more likely than males to say that the violence they believe children and young people are affected by is domestic violence/family violence (37% compared to 26%) and verbal/emotional abuse (36% compared to 23%) while males were more likely to say it is bullying/cyber bullying (35% compared to 29%).

Those 12-18 years (36%) were more likely than those 19-24 years (27%) to say that the violence they believe children and young people are affected by is bullying/cyber bullying.

Those living in regional and rural NSW were more likely than those living in Sydney to say that the violence they believe children and young people are affected by is physical violence (47% compared to 35%) and verbal/emotional abuse (35% compared to 26%).

Those who speak English at home (33%) were more likely than those who speak a language other than English at home (26%) to say that the violence they believe children and young people are affected by is domestic/family violence.



Base: total n=1,025

Q8: What kinds of violence do you think children and young people are affected by?

*nfi = no further information

3. Where violence against children and young people takes place

As shown in the figure below, online respondents reported that violence against children and young people takes place anywhere and everywhere. Once again, these findings are consistent with children and young people's responses in Stage 1.

Children and young people reported that violence against children is most likely to take place at school (85%), at home (79%) and online (74%).

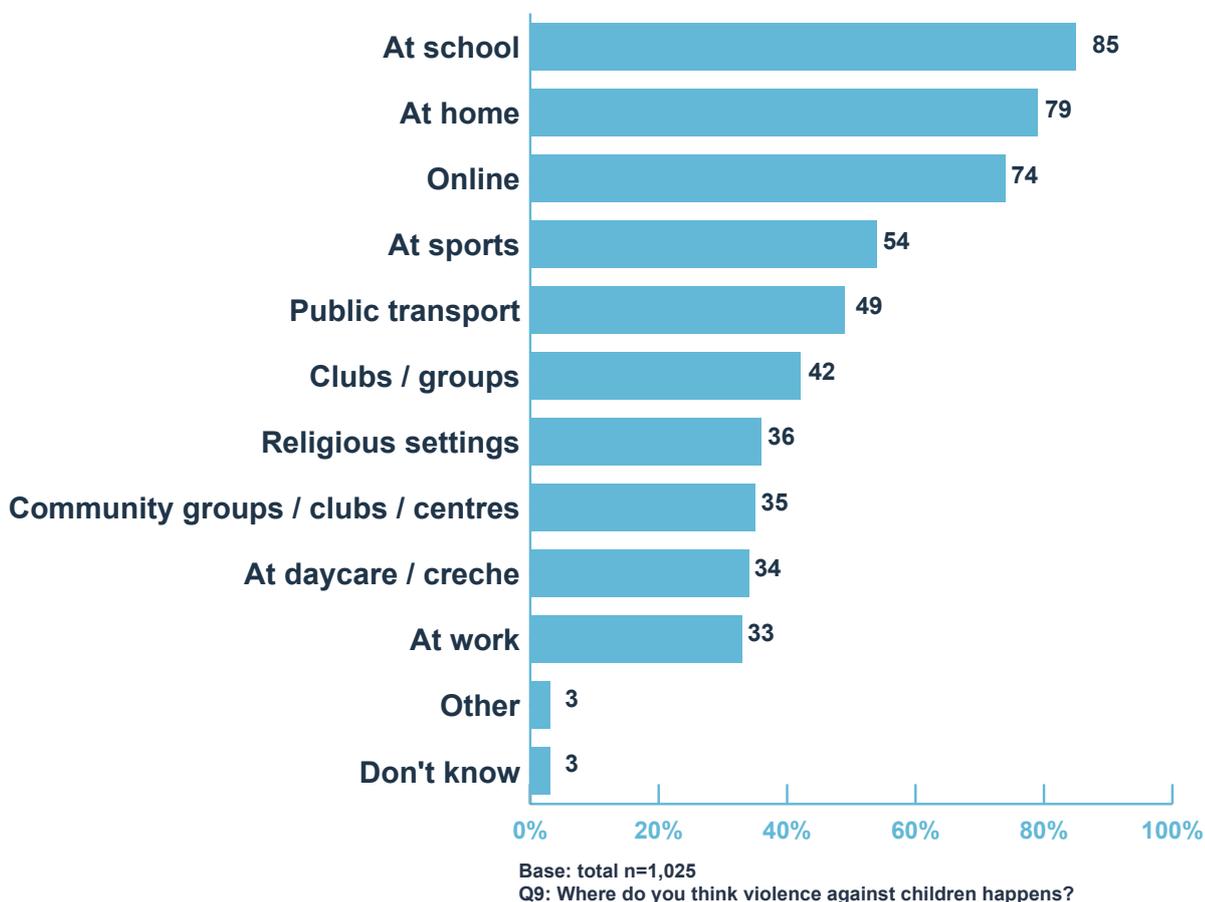
Females were more likely than males to believe violence against children takes place at home (86% compared to 73%), online (77% compared to 70%) and at

daycare/ creche (39% compared to 29%).

Young people 19-24 years (41%) were more likely than those 12-18 years (32%) to believe violence against children takes place in religious settings.

Young people living in regional and rural NSW (85%) were more likely than those living in Sydney (76%) to believe violence against children takes place at home.

Young people who speak English at home (81%) were more likely than those who speak a language other than English at home (75%) to believe violence against children takes place at home.



4. What would be possible solutions to reduce violence against children

Once again, online respondents raised similar solutions to reduce violence against children to those offered in Stages 1 and 2. These included awareness campaigns, safe spaces, law enforcement and support services.

Children and young people provided a range of suggestions for possible solutions to reduce violence against children including making sure there were consequences for acts of violence/enforcing laws (16%), protecting children/ provide supervision/safe spaces/prevent violence occurring (14%) and raising awareness through a campaign or discussions (14%).

Females were more likely than males to suggest possible solutions to reduce violence against children such as raising

awareness through a campaign or discussions (17% compared to 10%) and teaching children self-defence/how to call for help/speak up (16% compared to 11%).

Those 19-24 years (18%) were more likely than those 12-18 years (12%) to suggest that a possible solution to reduce violence against children would be to protect children/ provide supervision/safe spaces/prevent violence occurring.

Young people who do not have a disability (17%) were more likely than those who have a disability (7%) to suggest that a possible solution to reduce violence against children would be to make sure there were consequences for acts of violence/enforcing laws.



Base: total n=1,025

Q10: What do you think would be possible solutions to reduce violence against children?





Stage 3 findings: Ending Violence Against Children conference



ACYP brought together 100 children and young people that had taken part in the face-to-face focus groups at a one-day international conference on ending violence against children and young people. The conference took place in two separate rooms; adult delegates in one room and children and young people in another room. Children and young people listened to the same international speakers as the adult delegates and heard what is currently being done globally to end violence against children.

In the afternoon, children and young people worked at their tables to further discuss their ideas for ending violence against children and young people. They discussed the following four questions:

1. What does violence mean to you?
2. Where are the locations that violence happens to children and young people?
3. What should happen in your communities to stop violence against children and young people?
4. The following responses were what ACYP heard most when speaking to children and young people in the first consultation. More specifically, what would each of these strategies look like?
 - a) Awareness Campaigns
 - b) Safe houses
 - c) Support services for both adults and children and young people.

While the first three questions were the same as those asked in Stage 1, children and young people were told that the purpose of going over these questions again was to build upon the strategies that both they and other children and young people across NSW had previously suggested.

Children and young people's responses to the first three questions were largely consistent with their responses in the earlier face-to-face focus groups. Their discussions around question four, strategies for ending violence against children and young people, are detailed sequentially.



a) Awareness campaigns

Children and young people had very clear ideas about what an awareness campaign to reduce violence against children and young people would look like, what the key messages should be, and where it should appear:

What violence against children (VAC) campaigns should look like:

“They have to be blunt and show the direct consequences of violence, however horrific they might be. This will significantly deter people from violence.”

“Victims talking to appropriate audiences such as perpetrators in detail as the more realistic graphic details the more effective it is on the target audiences to see the horrors of VAC - don’t sugar coat it.”

“Real people sharing personal stories.”

“Their journey, how they got help, what got them help, where they got help, where they are now, how they experienced it, who did it, emphasis on it can get better.”

“Celebrities and athletes (role models) in advertisements.”

“A special ‘violence day’ like a white ribbon focusing violence against children.”

Key messages:

“The message should be that violence affects your whole future.”

“Campaign should stress that violence has many forms and takes a long time to heal. The impacts of violence can go on for a long time after it’s over. The effects of violence go beyond what can be seen.”

“Having a slogan like ‘keep calm and don’t inflict harm’.”

“Eradicating the stigma of not being able to address violence and learning to be comfortable to speak out about these issues.”

Where VAC campaigns should appear:

“The campaign should be advertised on TV, social media etc. This advertising should be important to the campaign and very regular.”

“Advertisements in public places”

“A video you can watch on the internet”

“Advertisements that are accessible for everyone”

“Posters in bathrooms”

b) Safe houses

Children and young people had in-depth discussions about what safe houses in their community should look like, where they should be located, who should be able to access them and what should be available for children and young people in the safe house.

What should safe houses look like:

“Comforting and homely decorations. The space has to be vibrant and full of energy to make people feel comfortable.”

“These safe houses can be in the form of apartments or other discrete buildings that are located just on the outskirts of a town or of a city. They should be equipped with appropriate securities but not over the top to the point that it feels like a prison.”

Where should safe houses be located:

“Safe houses. Need to be somewhere accessible, near public transport and should be youth centres as well.”

“In remote areas where there isn't much help for children.”

Who should be able to access safe houses:

“Safe houses have to be accommodating for everyone - even men, who are usually uncomfortable about leaving violent situations and admitting they have been abused.”

What should children and young people be able to access in a safe house?

“These should be places where victims of violence can go to receive essential provisions. Safe houses should be places where people can focus solely on recovering from their violent experiences.”

“Counselling, other people that have experienced it, blankets and welcoming comforts, rec room.”

“Support to access Medicare, Centrelink jobs.”

“Safe houses should have all the essential facilities and psychologists that people can talk to and other support services.”

“These should be places where victims of violence can go to receive essential provisions. Safe houses should be places where people can focus solely on recovering from their violent experiences.”

“Counselling, other people that have experienced it, blankets and welcoming comforts, rec room.”

“Support to access Medicare, Centrelink jobs.”

“Safe houses should have all the essential facilities and psychologists that people can talk to and other support services.”

“At a safe house they would be provided with a bed, shelter, food and someone to talk to.”

“Safe numbers to call, Kids Helpline, counselling services, meals.”

“Qualified people who understand the circumstances of the victims.”

“Being able to stay for as long as you need.”

Some children and young people discussed the idea of safe houses offering a shuttle service so that everyone could get to them. They also said they just wanted authorities to make note of where the violence had occurred (“red dots on a map”) as they didn’t think the police should have to be notified of an incident if it was something that might not happen again.

There was also discussion around the need to ensure that no violence occurs in safe houses and that there should be punishment when there is a violent incident.



c) Support services for both adults and children and young people

Discussions were around what services were needed and how they should be delivered. Much of the discussion was around the need for adults to get help in re-directing their anger.

“Safe houses. Need to be somewhere accessible, near public transport and should be youth centres as well.”

“In remote areas where there isn’t much help for children.”

“Help adults control their violence. Services need to be comfortable and private.”

“Offer a form of support not only to the victim.”

“Implementing ways for adults to get help as well to get their frustration out but not on children.”

“Freely accessible mediation classes.”

“Support groups for parents to talk.”

“Compulsory parenting lessons.”

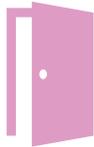
“Finding out why adults do what they do. No one talks about it so no one knows.”

“More financial help for parents. Stress of financial hardship.”

“Support services for children: apps and areas on social media for reporting and therapy.”

“Places for people to go in private during school.”

“Teachers to create safe, appropriate spaces that are more meaningful.”



get support



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