

## Stark differences between genders in relation to teenagers' experiences of safety

South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly, has today released her latest report *Teenagers and Safety* – an examination of the 908 survey responses received from South Australian 12 to 19-year-olds who participated in her Teenagers and Safety Survey conducted throughout May and June this year.

Commissioner Connolly highlights the different understandings and meanings of safety that young people of different genders have, thereby identifying the need to explicitly address the relationship between safety and gender in any policy strategies or activities relating to teenagers and safety currently in development.

Along with gender, demographics contribute to different experiences of safety amongst teenagers, and the likelihood of when or where a teenager may feel unsafe. It is clear from the responses that teenagers experience safety differently in different settings.

The responses show that teenage boys generally feel safer than teenage girls in all environments. The reasons for this are complex and go beyond the scope of the report but may reflect the different understandings of safety evident between boys and girls. Boys were more likely to describe their physical safety, while girls reflected on the physical, emotional and social aspects of safety.

Likewise, the experiences of teenagers who are LGBTQ+, live with a disability, are culturally or linguistically diverse, or are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander are linked to discrimination in their schools, workplaces, and communities. Any efforts to support their safety must therefore include a commitment to addressing the impact homophobia, transphobia, racism and ableism has on their everyday lives.

Given the wide-ranging impact experiences and feelings around safety have on all aspects of a young person's life, the onus is on education, business, health, and the wider community to recognise children and young people's right to feel safe.

The facts are that teenagers don't always feel safe in public spaces and that they feel marginalised a lot of the time. They should not be considered disruptive and troublesome by adults, and neither should they feel unwelcome and/or unsafe at home, at school, and when they're out in the broader community, particularly when using public transport.

Of concern are the threats of violence and crime that young people raised with the Commissioner, and how common their experiences of being or feeling unsafe in their own homes, schools and neighbourhoods were.

**Quotes attributable to Commissioner Helen Connolly:**

We have an opportunity to allay the very real fears teenagers have expressed through this survey in relation to their personal safety. Teenagers were clear their feelings of safety would increase if schools and the broader community were more positive toward them in general. They want to be welcomed into community places and spaces by friendly, nice, kind and respectful people of all ages. There is a clear need for more education around aspects of safety to be taught within the school curriculum, as well as across the broader community. Topics could include teenage safety in relation to domestic and sexual violence, consent, racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, bullying, aggression, verbal and physical violence.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

For more information about the work of SA Commissioner for Children and Young People go to:  
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