

South Australian  
Commissioner  
for Children and  
Young People  
2024

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# Teenagers and Safety

Views and experiences  
of South Australian young  
people in relation to safety

PROJECT REPORT NO. 45 | OCTOBER 2024



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### The Commissioner's Role

The South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People is an independent statutory position, established under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016*. The Commissioner's role includes advocating for systemic change to policies, programs and practices that impact the rights, development and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people. This work is informed by the experiences and issues of children and young people themselves, with a specific focus on those who struggle to have their voices heard.

The Commissioner's strategic agenda was formulated with direct input from children and young people. In particular children and young people asked the Commissioner to facilitate their involvement in decision making and to create opportunities for them to experience authentic participation. The Commissioner is working with a number of partners on this agenda including ways in which children and young people can have input into the design and delivery of policies, processes, services and practices that affect their lives.

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### Acknowledgements

Thank you to the over 900 South Australian young people who completed my Teenagers and Safety Survey sharing their experiences and insights. Thank you also to the many young people with whom I have had conversations about safety and their views on how it can be improved. Throughout this report your unedited quotes have been used to ensure your views are being faithfully communicated.

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### Suggested citation

Connolly, H. Commissioner for Children and Young People, South Australia (2024). *Teenagers and Safety: Views and experiences of South Australian young people in relation to safety*. October 2024.

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# Commissioner's Foreword

Since becoming South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2017, I have engaged with tens of thousands of children and young people across the state. During this time, an issue that South Australian children and young people have repeatedly raised with me is their feelings of safety when they are at school, at work, at home, online, in sports clubs, on public transport, and in other community spaces and places.

I advocate for systemic change to be made wherever this is needed. This includes making South Australia a safe place for all children and young people. Achieving systemic change around safety means addressing the underlying social drivers that relate to children and young people's experiences of feeling unsafe. These include verbal and/or physical aggression and violence, as well as children and young people's more general perceptions of safety, including their understanding and views on what they say is needed for them to feel safe at home, at school and when out in their community.

I routinely hear from primary school children on issues of safety through my postcards initiative. However, the experiences of teenagers and safety is more a feature of individual conversations and consultations.

Teenagers are particularly prone to issues around safety for a range of reasons. These relate in part to the rapid mental and physical changes that are occurring throughout adolescence. It includes their greater awareness of and desire for independence, and navigating changing relationships with family, friends, teachers, employers, coaches and partners, as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

Over the past year or so there has been a significant amount of commentary and opinion on issues of teenage safety, violence and crime. The narrative of young people being 'out of control' or 'terrified to go to school', or needing to 'have more controls placed on them' to curtail their behaviour has become dominant.

In response, I felt it was important to explore the issue of personal safety for teenagers to enable their views and experience to inform decision makers on how to keep them safe. Any effective response must include a deeper understanding of what safety means to teenagers and how they currently experience safety at home, school and in the community.

This report examines the responses from 908 South Australians aged 12–19 years who participated in my Teenagers and Safety survey conducted from May to June 2024. The findings provide a rare insight into South Australian teenagers' understanding of what feeling safe means to them and where and why they feel safe. It also provides insight into where and when they do not feel safe and sheds light on the reasons why this is the case.

Children and young people tell me they have experienced a range of unsafe behaviours exhibited by other children, young people and adults, and that these include regular use of abusive language and physical aggression and in some cases violence.

This report identifies the stark differences of safety experienced by young people of different genders. The survey results demonstrate that teenage boys generally feel safer in all environments than teenage girls. The reasons for this are complex and beyond the scope of this report, but may reflect the different understandings of safety as described by boys and girls. Safety for boys was more likely to be described as physical safety with girls reflecting on the social, emotional, and physical aspects of safety.

This relationship between safety and gender must be explicitly addressed in any policy strategies or activities that address safety and violence.

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 systemic discrimination in their schools, workplaces and in the community. Any efforts to support their safety must include addressing the impact of homophobia, transphobia, racism and ableism on their everyday lives.

In addition to the big structural and systemic reforms required to combat discrimination, teenagers want actions that support them to be included and celebrated, and for their specific safety concerns to be acknowledged. It also includes involving them in determining local solutions.

Feeling unsafe in their local communities was identified by a number of teenagers.

Many often feel marginalised in public spaces and say they are viewed as disruptive and troublesome by adults. They describe feeling excluded and unwelcome in their communities.

These inclusive spaces are not readily available in local communities, and as a result a number of teenagers report that apart from home, school and online, they have limited connection to their peers. They also report that a lack of dedicated spaces for young people contributes to their feelings of being unsafe in their community.

For teenagers, their ability to independently access community is linked to public transport. Yet public transport is a common environment in which children and young people have repeatedly told me they do not feel safe, and where they would like responsible adults to be more alert to their safety.

It is clear from the survey responses that we cannot expect to start to address teenager's issues of safety, unless we understand what's driving them. Integral to gaining this understanding is hearing from them. We need to know what makes teenagers feel safe or unsafe at home, at school, and out in the community, and we need to listen to what they suggest we do to improve their safety and their associated feelings of safety.

This report opens the conversation up to include the voices of teenagers and to consider their ideas on how to enhance their feelings and experiences of safety.



**Helen Connolly**

Commissioner for Children and Young People,  
South Australia



“ We need to know what makes teenagers feel safe or unsafe at home, at school, and out in the community, and we need to listen to what they suggest we do to improve their safety and their associated feelings of safety.  
– Commissioner Helen Connolly



# Context

Children and young people have the right to be and feel safe in all aspects of their lives.

The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was the first international Convention to acknowledge that children have rights and that these rights should be protected.

The UNCRC covers all aspects of a child's life and sets out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to receive. It also explains how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.

Safety and wellbeing is clearly enshrined in the UNCRC. This includes in relation to the best interests of the child (Article 3) and being free from discrimination (Article 2) and violence (Article 19), as well as having a say in matters impacting them (Article 12).

Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC recognise the rights of every child to access and participate in education that respects their dignity and develops their individual personality and talents to the full. A good education is central to lifelong physical and mental health outcomes, social inclusion and employment prospects. Education is not only a human right in itself but is also a means of realising other human rights, supporting social and emotional development, and building fair and inclusive societies.

South Australia's *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* established or continued key positions and bodies in South Australia which give effect to the UNCRC. The Act established the role of

the Commissioner for Children and Young People as an independent statutory position. It also established the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People and the Child Development Council and continued the Guardian for Children and Young People and the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People's role includes advocating for systemic change to policies, programs and practices that impact the rights, development and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people. This work is informed by the experiences and issues of children and young people, with a focus on those who are systematically excluded and ignored and less likely to be heard. Safety is one of the key elements of wellbeing, as stated in the Act.

South Australia's *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* was introduced to implement recommendations from the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission. The Act sets out the Parliament of South Australia's commitment to promoting and achieving the following outcomes for all children and young people:

- To be safe from harm
- To do well at all levels of learning and to have skills for life
- To enjoy a healthy lifestyle
- To be active citizens who have a voice and influence.



These outcomes align with Australia's national goals for education. The Mparntwe Education Declaration establishes that education systems must promote equity as well as excellence in educational outcomes, while also preparing all young people to become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed citizens.<sup>1</sup>

In South Australia, the Department for Education has introduced a number of measures targeted at making schools safer. The Education Minister's Violence Prevention in Schools Roundtable, held in December 2022, discussed issues of safety in school with a particular focus on violence.<sup>2</sup>

Building on the roundtable, the education department's Safe and Supportive Learning Environments Plan of Action 2024–2026 is an attempt to address violence in schools in a holistic way with a focus on wellbeing and involving students.<sup>3</sup> The 15 point Plan focuses on inclusive school culture, social and emotional wellbeing, bullying prevention and response, physical environments that promote safety and inclusion, responses to violence and responding to learner needs.

The Department for Education has also been surveying students on their wellbeing with the Wellbeing and Engagement Collection. The WEC is conducted annually in South Australia government schools with Years 4–12. The survey asks students about their views on wellbeing and engagement at school, and what they think and feel about their experiences outside of school. The results have been made available to all schools since 2013.

The WEC highlights that children and young people are experiencing poor emotional wellbeing and are not feeling connected to school, which increases with age.<sup>4</sup> However, there is no clear process for how these results are used to inform policy and improve school experiences for children and young people.

# Key messages

## Teenagers have different understandings of safety and what it means to feel safe

- These understandings range from being free from danger and harm altogether to not being worried about danger and harm to being happy and able to be yourself in all settings.
- Safety and feeling safe is understood as relating to the physical, emotional/mental and/or social aspects of a person's individual wellbeing.

## Demographics contribute to different experiences of safety and the likelihood of when or why a teenager may feel unsafe

- Gender is a key factor with teenage girls often feeling unsafe in many areas of their lives, particularly out in the community and at school. Fewer teenage boys said they experience feeling unsafe in these places, and that generally, but not always, they have minimal concerns about their personal safety.
- LGBTQ+ teenagers, those living with a disability, those who are culturally or linguistically diverse background, and/or those who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander say they are less likely to feel safe at school and out in the community. Racism, homophobia, and transphobia are key safety issues that teenagers in these groupings fear and are known to experience on an all too frequent basis.

## Safety is experienced differently in different settings

- Home is the place where most teenagers say they feel safest, particularly when they are with members of their family and/or in their bedrooms. However, some teenagers feel unsafe at home due to family issues, with some noting that they have safety concerns in relation to family members fighting or parents and carers who have substance abuse issues and/or mental health issues.
- School is a place where many teenagers say they feel unsafe. Bullying and discrimination, physical and verbal aggression and fighting amongst peers, along with threats of aggression and violence, contribute to these feelings.
- A lack of action on the part of school authorities and leaders, to both preventing and responding to issues and incidents relating to student safety, contributes to these feelings of being unsafe, while perpetuating these behaviours in students who are not held to account.
- The community is often viewed by teenagers as a place in which there is imminent danger and threat to their safety. Teenagers say they are least likely to feel safe on public transport and/or on the street. Some report that they do not feel welcome within their local community and that they therefore prefer not to engage with others, in part due to the lack of (safe) spaces made available to them.

## There are some common experiences around when teenagers feel safe, when they don't feel safe, and what they need adults to do to improve their feelings of safety

- Teenagers feel safest when they're with trusted people. This includes people they live with (family and others at home), friends and sometimes teachers at school, as well as other people, friends, and family when they're out in the community.
- Teenagers don't feel safe around some people and in some situations. They want more action taken on prevention of, and responses to, safety issues, such as schools acting on unsafe behaviours when these occur. They also want police, security guards, law makers, and policy makers to work on controlling and preventing danger and threats to their safety and wellbeing while they're out in the community.
- Teenagers said their feelings of safety would increase if schools and the broader community were more positive and friendlier toward teenagers in general. They want to be welcomed into community places and spaces by friendly, nice, kind and respectful people of all ages.
- Teenagers had some suggestions for ways in which aspects of the physical environment could be changed to improve teenager's feelings of safety. These include putting locks on doors at home, increasing street lighting, and installing more security cameras across the community.
- Teenagers said they want more support services, safe places and other safety measures to be put in place to ensure their safety at school and when they're moving around their communities. They want more wellbeing supports and safer spaces and places to go to that they know have been put there for them. They want places they can access easily when they're feeling unsafe, or when they want or need to be somewhere that is in proximity to others with whom they feel safe.
- Teenagers said they view access to a mobile phone as important for when they need to get support quickly, and that having a mobile phone enables them to call a parent or other trusted adult when they're feeling unsafe, or when they're in an emergency situation.
- Teenagers highlighted the 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, and verbal and physical violence.

# Recommendations

- 1** **Develop a comprehensive overarching legislative framework for children's safety** underpinned by guiding principles and supported by leadership and practices that address the broad range of safety issues identified by children and young people. This must include investment in the services, resources and infrastructure to build strong family relationships and community connections to ensure children experience safety at home, in school and in the community.
- 2** **State and local governments to work together to create more youth friendly communities** through investment in outdoor and indoor welcoming spaces across neighbourhoods. This includes dedicated youth infrastructure specifically designed and operated with young people, so they can experience belonging, create social connections, build relationships and have opportunities to contribute. This includes ensuring public buildings and libraries have facilities and welcome young people to them.
- 3** **Create safer school environments for students by:**

  - Working with students to identify their current experiences of violence, harassment and discrimination within the school community.
  - Developing a plan to respond to unsafe physical environments and relationships between peers, teachers and parents.
  - Creating partnerships with community agencies that support violence prevention and open the school as a place for community activities to take place.
  - Implementing safe and child-friendly reporting and community-based referral pathways for young people who have experienced feeling unsafe at school.
- 4** **Work with external partners on evidence-based violence prevention programs** that develop skills and capability to challenge gender, social and cultural norms that justify discrimination, harassment and violence. Collect data on the impact of these programs and share this with school community, external partners, and relevant sectors to drive continuous improvements to young people's safety and emotional wellbeing.
- 5** **Work with school-based student bodies to conduct diversity reviews** within their school communities to regularly review policies, curriculum, co-curricular groups and staff backgrounds to ensure they embrace diversity and inclusiveness so that all students are supported to be, and celebrated as, their authentic selves. Review results to help determine the steps to be more inclusive, and less racist, homophobic, transphobic, sexist or ableist.

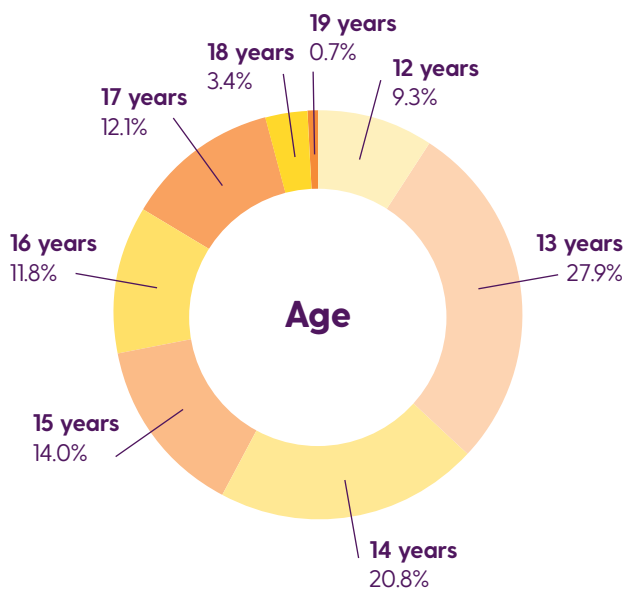
# What we did

The Commissioner conducted a Teenagers and Safety Survey from May to July 2024. The survey focused on teenagers' experiences of, and views on, safety across a broad range of issues, and within particular places and locations; including home, school and out in the community.

A total of 908 teenagers responded to the survey with an additional 20 responses received but excluded from the analysis due to the age and/or location of the respondents.

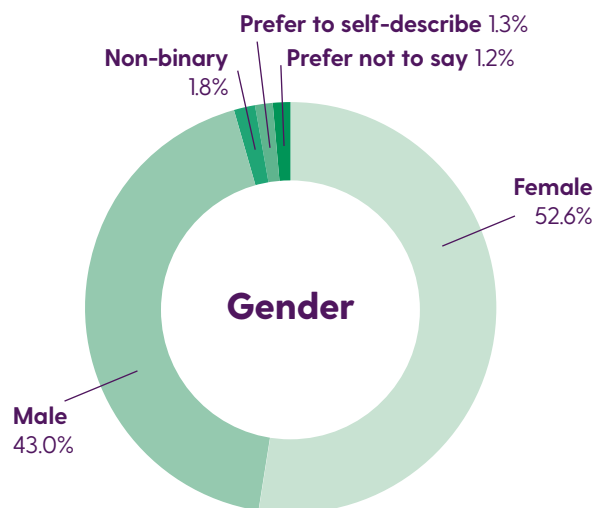
## Age

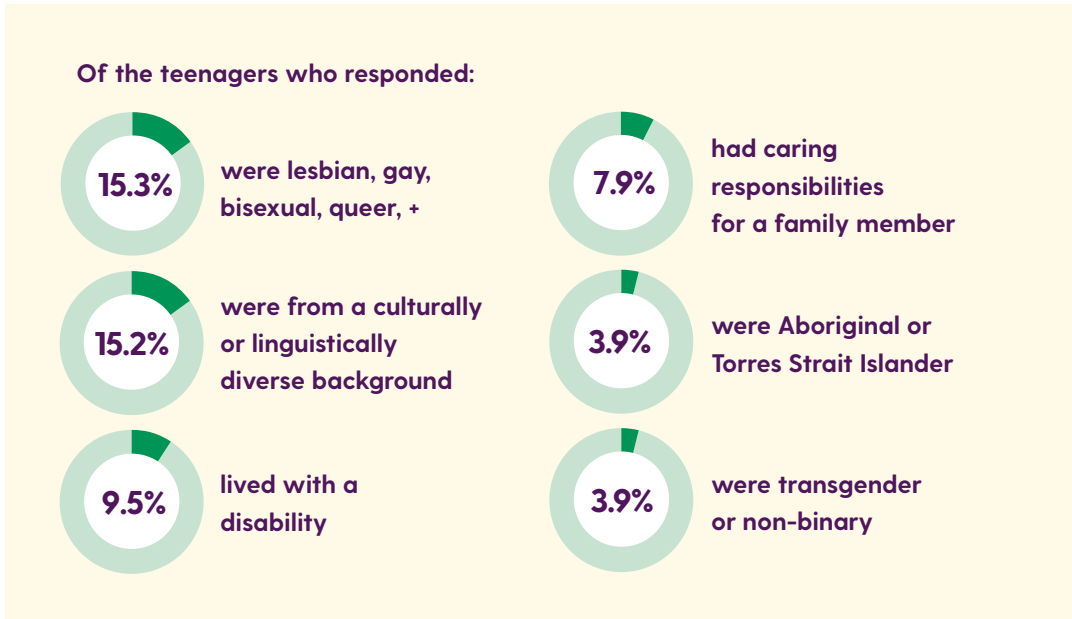
The survey was completed by young people aged 12–19 years across South Australia, nearly half of whom were aged 13 or 14 years. While the survey was originally aimed at teenagers (13–19 years), a sizeable number of 12-year-olds participated given the survey was often completed in schools. Therefore, their responses have been included in the analysis. The word teenager in this report is therefore used to represent all young people who participated, including those who were 12 years.



## Gender

Most respondents gave their gender as being female (52.6%) or male (43.0%). A smaller number selected 'non-binary', 'prefer not to say', or 'prefer to self-describe'. Of those who self-described their gender, their descriptions included 'genderfluid', 'no idea', 'don't care', 'hard to describe', 'agender', 'gender questioning female', 'trans male', and 'FTM'. All genders are included in the analysis and the total numbers are reported. In the gender analysis, only female and male responses were included as the numbers for non-binary and other genders were too small to analyse.

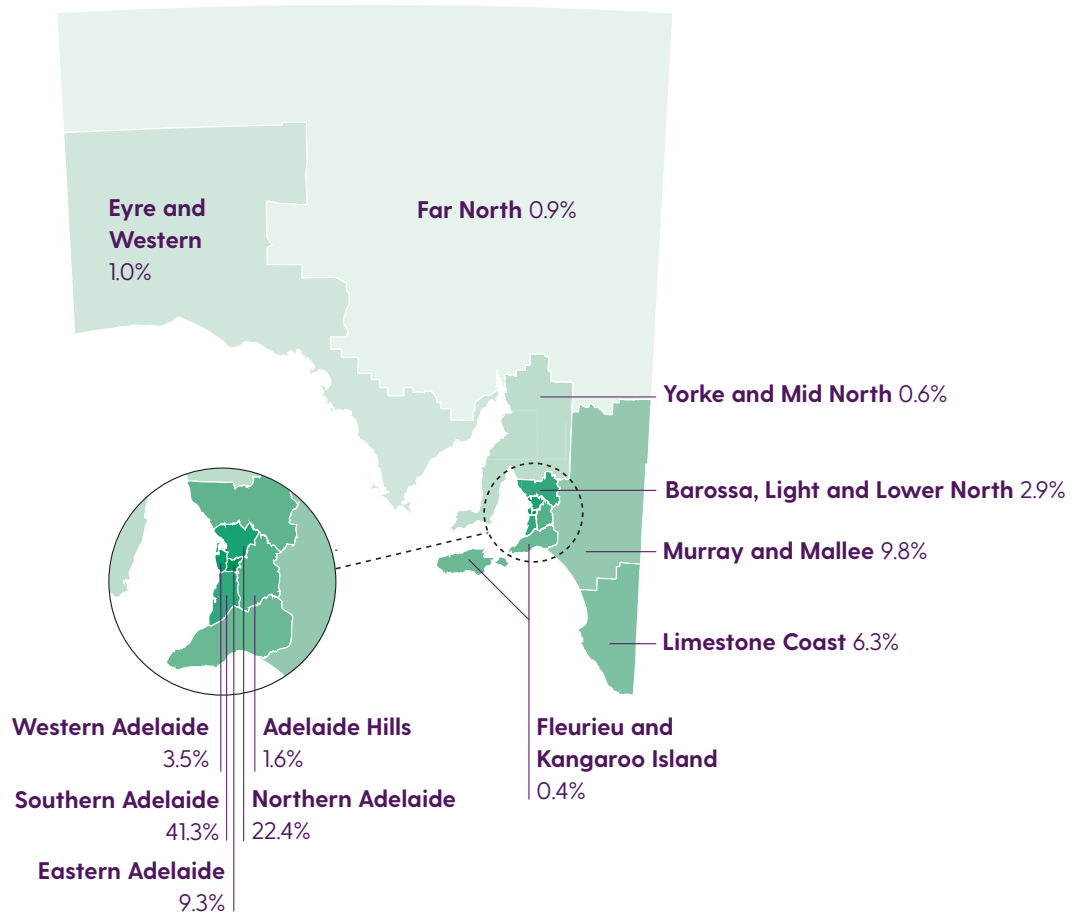




## Region

The survey was completed by teenagers in each of the regions across South Australia. Over three quarters of the responses came from teenagers living in metropolitan Adelaide.

These responses were concentrated in Southern Adelaide and Northern Adelaide due to the survey being completed by several schools in these regions.







# What does feeling safe mean to teenagers?

Teenagers have different understandings of what feeling safe means. These include being free from danger and harm, not being worried about danger and harm, and/or being happy and able to be yourself. The variations between these three kinds of responses highlights the richness and complexity of what feeling safe means to different teenagers throughout South Australia.

Survey responses focused on physical, emotional/mental and/or social aspects of wellbeing. A number of respondents mentioned multiple dimensions to safety.

- “ *Not being in any physical or emotional danger as well as feeling happyish.*” (14, female, Murray and Mallee)
- “ *Feeling and knowing that you won't get hurt mentally and physically.*” (13, male, Southern Adelaide)
- “ *There is physical safety, knowing that the likelihood of getting physically attacked is low in the places I frequent (also considering I am accompanied and not alone when going out too). It also means not being verbally attacked or emotionally hurt. This could be from slurs to micro-aggressions (degrading/condescending/ignorant comments about heritage).*” (16, non-binary, Eastern Adelaide)

## Being free from danger, harm and hurt

Teenagers gave meanings for feeling safe which were often more general in nature. They wrote about being free from (or having a low risk of encountering) danger, harm, hurt or something 'bad' happening to them. Thus feeling safe was viewed both as an absence of harm and as an absence of feeling that they may encounter harm.

Responses ranged from wanting to being able to go to particular places, or go out at night and feel safe, to always feeling safe – 'feel like I am not in danger at any times'.

Others wrote about safety as a feeling that depended on the moment; where they would feel safe 'knowing there is nothing harmful around me' and/or 'feel like nothing bad will happen to you at that moment'.

- “ *Being in an environment where there are no dangers or threats.*” (14, female, Eastern Adelaide)

- “ To me, being safe means being free from harm, danger, or risk. It means taking precautions to protect myself and others from potential threats or hazards.” (14, male, Murray and Mallee)
- “ To me being safe is being somewhere that has a very low possibility of having someone hurt me.” (16, female, Northern Adelaide)
- “ To me it means I don't have to worry if bad stuff will happen to me.” (17, prefer not to say, Northern Adelaide)

## Being and feeling comfortable and protected

Teenagers said that feeling safe can also mean being and feeling comfortable, protected, and secure. They wrote that feeling safe meant 'being comfortable everywhere you go' and 'being comfortable with my surroundings'.

Being and feeling comfortable and secure also related to other ways teenagers described what it meant to feel safe. These included being comfortable that they were free from harm, and being comfortable that they could be themselves. They said being comfortable and secure also related to being with people they felt comfortable with, or who made them feel protected.

- “ It means to feel comfortable where you are in certain areas and even online too. Sometimes people don't feel comfortable in places from certain people making them feel a certain way, or doing things that they don't like and need to seek help.” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)

- “ Feeling comfortable with your surroundings. Knowing that you are ok.” (12, female, Southern Adelaide)
- “ A place where you feel comfortable and feel like you are at home and protected wherever you go.” (14, female, Southern Adelaide)
- “ A sense of security and confidence in your surroundings.” (17, female, Eastern Adelaide)

## Not being worried or scared

Another key aspect relating to what feeling safe meant to teenagers was not being 'worried' or 'scared'. This included not having to worry about being unsafe, and/or not being 'afraid of the people or environment' that they were in.

Responses from teenage girls included not feeling scared or fearing for their safety. They viewed feeling safe as 'not feeling on edge or anxious about my surroundings' and 'feeling secure and not jumpy'.

- “ Being safe means never having to worry about where or who you are with.” (16, female, Northern Adelaide)
- “ Feeling okay about being in a space. Not being scared or worried whilst there. Being able to relax - not relax, but not have your guard up all the time.” (14, female, Adelaide)
- “ Not having fear of my surroundings or events in my life.” (16, male, Barossa, Light and Lower North)

- “ Not having to be paranoid about my surroundings and the people around me. Not having to worry about how the actions of other[s] might affect me and my safety.” (17, female, Adelaide)
- “ Feeling at ease and able to enjoy the activity I am engaging in without worry.” (19, non-binary, Western Adelaide)
- “ Being able to exist without the fear of being harmed.” (16, male, Eastern Adelaide)

## Not being in physical danger and being able to move around freely

For some teenagers, understanding what was meant by feeling safe often related to their physical safety. Sometimes physical danger was explicitly mentioned, while at other times it related to freedom of movement.

Physical safety had a wide range of meanings amongst teenagers. These included not experiencing or worrying about death or being killed, being ‘kidnapped’ or ‘stolen’, being sexually assaulted or raped, or being ‘stabbed’, ‘jumped’, ‘bashed’ or ‘beaten up’.

More teenage male respondents mentioned having a fear of explicit physical danger than teenage females, with the exception of a fear of being sexually assaulted or raped, which was predominantly expressed by female respondents.

- “ Having no threat to your life.” (17, male, Murray and Mallee)
- “ Not feeling like you’re going to get stabbed or kidnapped.” (12, male, Southern Adelaide)

- “ Being able to dress how I want, including not needing a ‘subway/bus shirt’ to avoid harassment in public. Not having to buy bottles with tiny necks, so I can easily block the hole with my thumb to avoid being drugged when drinking. My ‘no’ being respected. (18, non-binary, Eastern Adelaide)

More implicitly, however, teenagers viewed an absence of physical danger as being something that was related to having greater freedom of movement. This included being able to go places and do things they wanted to do without having to ‘look behind your shoulder’ or ‘look at your surroundings 24/7’. This framing of an ever-present threat of physical danger was more often mentioned by females.

- “ To me, being safe means being free and having freedom to be somewhere without a constant threat to my wellbeing.” (16, female, Northern Adelaide)
- “ Feeling at ease without having to look behind your shoulder every few minutes.” (15, female, Southern Adelaide)
- “ Being safe means never having to worry about where or who you are with.” (16, female, Northern Adelaide)

## Being happy and being yourself

For some teenagers feeling safe related more broadly to being ‘happy’ and being able to be ‘yourself’. They described feeling safe as being happy where they were and because of who they were with. For these teenagers, safety was about ‘being content and relaxed’ and ‘feeling good’.

Being able to be yourself was written about in a broad range of ways, including being able to express yourself, dress how you want, and being able to express your ideas and opinions. It also meant being able to do things without feeling judged and being able to let your guard down. Females were more likely to write about safety in relation to being yourself.

- “ *Feeling happy and comfortable in myself and my environment, where I feel that I am valued.*” (16, female, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island)
- “ *Being able to feel happy and free where I am and not feel threatened.*” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)
- “ *Being able to express myself having fun and able to talk and share emotions and what I’m feeling, not having to be scared.*” (14, female, Northern Adelaide)
- “ *What [feeling] safe means to me is that you feel comfortable and able to express yourself wherever you are and with whoever you are with.*” (15, female, Murray and Mallee)
- “ *Being able to go somewhere without feeling anxious about being judged/beat up, being able to speak freely, not having to hide my identity.*” (16, prefer not to say, Adelaide)

## Having and being with trusted others

Being with other people, or having someone to turn to when this was needed, was also important for teenagers to feel safe. Generally, teenagers felt safe when they were with (trusted) others (such as their family) and being loved, cared for and treated well by others.

More generally, they highlighted the importance of being able to talk to someone, and to having someone to go to, or call, when they needed help, or ‘if a situation goes south’.

Importantly, these responses depended on individual teenagers. While teenagers often wrote about their family, one teenager who ‘never’ felt safe at home, expressed that to them safety meant having ‘friends and places that aren’t my house’.

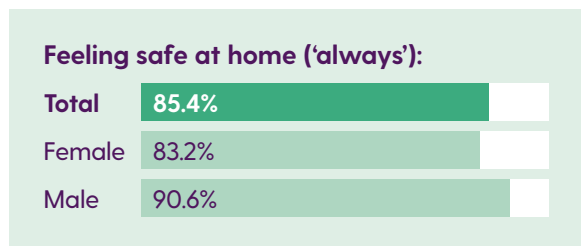
- “ *To me being safe means that you have close friends or family that really cares about you.*” (14, female, Northern Adelaide)
- “ *Being somewhere I know well and if possible, also being with someone I know and trust while at the place/area.*” (14, male, Northern Adelaide)
- “ *Having someone with you who can bring a home sensation to you, making you feel comfortable enough no matter where you go.*” (17, female, Western Adelaide)
- “ *Not feeling threatened. When I’m with my friends and family I feel comfortable, happy and relax.*” (14, female, Murray and Mallee)
- “ *Being near someone that I trust in and believe. To be safe means that I’m somewhere I’m comfortable in and to be with someone that can protect me and can call people if needed.*” (12, female, Southern Adelaide)



# Feeling safe at home

Home is the place where teenagers said they feel safe most often. Certain factors contribute to their feelings of safety while at home, such as the presence of family members, or other people they know and trust. Whilst most teenagers feel safe at home, some teenagers said they feel unsafe at home because of family issues.

## How safe do teenagers feel at home?



Overall, 85.4% of teenage respondents reported 'always' feeling safe when at home. However, 'always' feeling safe at home was lower for teenage females (83.2%) than teenage males (90.6%). A small proportion of all respondents (1.7%) reported that they 'never' feel safe at home.

LGBTQ+ teenagers and those living with a disability reported being less likely to feel safe when they're at home.

## What makes teenagers feel safe at home?

Teenagers said they often feel safe at home because their family or other people they know are there. They also said that at home they feel safe from the outside world because of the physical security measures that are in place (such as locks on doors). They also feel safe at home when they are in their own spaces, and doing activities they enjoy.

### Being with other people, particularly family

Many teenagers said they felt safest at home when they were with members of their family, or with other people. They wrote about the importance of having people they know and trust with them, particularly adults. Some wrote that they felt safe at home when they were not alone.

They wrote about the importance of being with family, as well as having family nearby, with some emphasising the importance of having a family that is kind, supportive and trustworthy.

Parents were viewed as being particularly important to teenagers' feelings of safety with some teenagers saying that 'my parents always being there' made them feel safe.

A smaller number of teenagers specified the importance of having siblings at home with them to feel safe. Some emphasised the importance of pets, mainly pet dogs or cats, in helping them to feel safe. This included 'knowing where my pets are' or feeling safer 'having another pet'.

A small number of teenagers who did not live with their family, mentioned the importance of other people, such as their guardian helping to make them feel safe. They said 'having a stable care team' made them feel safe, or 'In the boarding house I would feel safer if my room mate was there'.

“ Don't need to feel safer. My parents always make sure I'm safe at home. (17, male, Northern Adelaide)

“ At home because I know I'm safe. I'm with family, pets, and friends close by.” (13, female, Murray and Mallee)

“ Having at least one adult at home with, but if no-one is home with me I'll still feel a little safe.” (14, male, Northern Adelaide)

“ I always feel safe at home except when I am home alone. That would be better if I wasn't left home alone.” (12, female, Southern Adelaide)

### Having fewer family issues and better communication

While many teenagers noted having members of their family and other people with them at home made them feel safe, a small number of respondents said they felt unsafe due to family members being at home with them.

In addition, some teenagers wished for better communication and connection with and between members of their family and said that this would make them feel safer.

For some teenagers home would feel safer if they were not yelled at or didn't have the threat of being yelled at. They also said they would feel safer at home if there were fewer fights and less arguing between them and their parents, or between parents, siblings and other members of their family.

Other teenagers said they would feel safer if their family situation was different altogether. They noted issues with having to be the 'parent of the person who is supposed to be parenting me', or their parents' relationships breaking up, and/or problematic relationships between siblings and parents.

Some noted specific issues, such as feeling safer if parents were sober and 'not pissed drunk'. Others shared that their parents had 'mental health issues' and that they would feel safer if their parents could receive help for this.

As well as issues with and between parents and/or between parents and their partners, some teenagers commented on issues they have with their siblings, such as having a brother who 'is scary', a 'little crazy' or who 'threatens you', or that they would feel safer with their 'sister being calmer'.

“ For my mum and her boyfriend to break up and move out.” (16, female, Northern Adelaide)

“ Not being financially coerced/manipulated by my father, knowing that he is leaving my mum alone and probs living with my mum.” (18, female, Limestone Coast)

“ Knowing my parents are coming home sober and no abuse or violence against one another would really help.” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)

“ Not having a brother that threatens you.”  
(12, female, Southern Adelaide)

Some teenagers said they would feel safer at home if there was better communication and understanding between them and their family members. They said they would feel safer if their parents and family listened to them, understood them, and supported them more. They wanted better communication overall and to be able to have more open conversations with their parents and siblings. These issues were mentioned more often by LGBTQ+ teenagers.

Essentially, to feel safe at home, teenagers said they want kind, supportive and trusting parents, siblings, and extended family members.

“ Being list[en]ed to when I am going through a hard time with my mental health.”  
(18, prefer not to say, Western Adelaide)

“ Knowing my parents would support me through anything.” (13, prefer to self-describe: ‘no idea honestly’, Southern Adelaide)

“ Having my family all home more often and to have more open conversations.”  
(18, female, Eastern Adelaide)

“ Less homophobia/transphobia at my Dad’s.”  
(13, non-binary, Southern Adelaide)

### Having locks and other aspects of physical security

For some teenagers feeling safe at home related to feeling safe from the outside world. Forms of physical security such as locks, doors and security cameras were mentioned as things that already make teenagers feel safe, or that would make them feel safe if they were installed.

The most common mention of physical safety related to locks on doors. The responses included having lockable doors and better locks more generally. For a few teenagers, this meant having locks within their house, particularly on their bedroom doors.

Security cameras were viewed as useful ‘so I know who’s at the door’ and to feel secure. There were a small number of teenagers who mentioned other physical security measures such as alarm systems, fences and gates.

“ Nothing [is needed to make me feel safer]. I’ve got alarms, security cameras, locks, everything I need to stay safe.” (14, female, Southern Adelaide)

“ Having everything locked when I’m alone or at night.” (13, male, Southern Adelaide)

“ Having more secure lock systems for houses and cars.” (14, female, Western Adelaide)

“ Having more cameras around the side of my house, because our camera can’t see the side, only the front.” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)

### Having activities to do and a private and comfortable space to be in

Being comfortable in their own space was important to teenagers’ feelings of being safe at home. This included being able to undertake activities that made them feel happy and relaxed, as well as having privacy and being able to be in their own bedroom. Sometimes several of these things were mentioned together, highlighting the need for not just having a safe home, but also having safe places within a home that they could go or be in where their privacy was being respected.



Many teenagers said that having activities and things they enjoyed doing was important to them feeling safe at home. This included having 'something to entertain me' and 'stuff to clear my mind' such as music, games, sport and watching TV. Some teenagers said that having a phone and better Wi-Fi would make them feel safer at home.

Teenagers said having privacy and a bedroom, or their own space in which to be, was very important to their feelings of safety. Things like relaxing, sleeping, napping, and having 'time to rest' or 'chilling in my room' helped teenagers to feel safe, and this included having their privacy in their own room respected by family members who understood the need to have 'more personal space' some times.

Being warm and having a warm home was part of having a comfortable space, but this was also linked to housing conditions and other issues that some teenagers mentioned, such as wanting more food and money, and having 'financial stability'.

“ I feel safe here because I have food, a home, a bed and a great family.” (12, female, Limestone Coast)

“ Just being by myself because I can enjoy my music.” (15, female, Murray and Mallee)

“ Play music in my room, texting/playing games with my friends, being in my room alone, talk to a family member.” (12, female, Southern Adelaide)

## Improving neighbourhood and location

A small number of teenagers noted the importance of their neighbourhood in contributing to how safe they felt at home. Some noted the presence or absence of crime as an important aspect of how safe they feel. Others noted the importance of location, such as not being so close to a main road, living in a different or better neighbourhood and not living 'near an alley way' impacted on their feelings of safety.

The type of people near their home was also important to some teenagers. Some noted that they had good neighbours and lived on a 'quiet street', while others wished for better neighbours, or the absence of people nearby who might be involved in crime.

One teenager living in the Adelaide Hills noted that they would feel safer if there was less risk of bushfires.

“ I would feel safer at home if I wasn't aware of crimes etc that have taken place in my area.” (15, female, Eastern Adelaide)

“ If we weren't so close to the main road.” (15, female, Northern Adelaide)

“ I don't think I could possibly feel any safer at home because I live with safe people in a safe neighbo[ur]hood. We also live on a quiet street surrounded by our neighbours who we have grown close to.” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)

“ Less risk of bushfires because of my area?” (13, male, Adelaide Hills)



# Feeling safe at school

Teenagers said they often feel unsafe at school. They commonly experience and witness bullying and discrimination along with physical fights and threats of violence, and these negative interactions contribute to teenagers not feeling safe. Feeling unsafe is also exacerbated by what they view as a lack of action from schools to address and prevent these behaviours.

## How safe do teenagers feel at school?

### Feeling safe in the schoolyard ('always'):



### Feeling safe in class ('always'):



Teenagers said they often do not feel safe at school with less than half (47.3%) reporting that they 'always' feel safe in the school yard. Males were more likely than females to report feeling safe at school (58.1% compared to 40.0%).

Although teenagers felt a bit safer in class than in the school yard, this figure was still low with 57.1% reporting that they 'always' feel safe in class.

Two thirds of males (66.1%) reported that they 'always' feel safe, compared to just over half of all female respondents (51.3%).

For LGBTQ+ teenagers and those living with a disability, feelings of safety in the schoolyard and in class were even lower.

When asked about a range of issues impacting on their feelings of safety at school, teenagers identified racism, homophobia, transphobia, and sexism as key issues of safety at school, with these being the top four issues noted by both females and males. Higher numbers of females rated these four issues as 'always' being an issue, particularly in relation to sexism and homophobia.

LGBTQ+ teenagers were twice as likely to view homophobia and transphobia as being key issues of safety, and were also more likely to view sexism and sexual harassment as key issues of safety.

**Issues at your school ('always' an issue):****Racism**

34.3%

**Homophobia**

32.8%

**Transphobia**

30.8%

**Sexism**

30.4%

**Drug use**

19.4%

**Theft**

17.8%

**Violence**

17.3%

**Sexual harassment**

15.9%

**Drug dealing**

15.3%

**Gangs**

13.1%

**People carrying knives**

7.0%

## What can make teenagers feel safe at school?

Key to teenagers' feelings of safety at school is the behaviour of others. They reported wanting poor behaviour that is being exhibited by their fellow students to be addressed by their school, including establishing a range of prevention measures.

They also highlighted the importance of making schools safer by building more positive school communities, and the need for more supports and wellbeing spaces to be made available to students. Several teenagers noted the

importance of friends in making school a safe place to be, while there were mixed views on teachers.

### Taking action to address and prevent behaviours

Behaviour at school was mentioned by many students as being key to their feelings of safety. Students reported feeling that their school would or could be safer if issues such as bullying and discrimination, and fights and threats of violence were addressed by schools, both by responding to and preventing these incidents from occurring.

Many teenagers mentioned experiencing or witnessing bullying and discrimination. They wished for less judgment, 'less verbal bullying and constant picking on people', and no body shaming.

To feel safer at school they wanted harassment and discrimination to be addressed and for more action to be taken against racism, sexism, transphobia and homophobia. This included addressing hate speech and the harassment of girls by boys. Some also wanted boys to have more empathy for others, including teaching boys how to engage in safer behaviours more generally.

Teenagers often reported fighting and violence, or threats of violence, occurring at their school. They wanted to go to schools where they did not feel intimidated or threatened, where they know that other students are not going to hurt them, and where 'no one can randomly attack me'.

Schools were viewed as being key to taking action against poor behaviour to make schools safer for all students. Teenagers wanted teachers and school staff to intervene in bullying and fighting and to 'handle problems' better.

To prevent and control issues, they wanted teachers to have more awareness of what was happening in classrooms, and for there to be better supervision of students in the school yard. Some suggested more teachers be placed on yard duty at recess and lunch.

- “ People who bully and harass others actually getting in trouble instead of it being brushed off by teachers and other staff members.” (17, female, Northern Adelaide)
- “ Teachers and leadership to make sure students are behaving correctly and dealing with problems when the[y] come up.” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)
- “ If the teachers were more active and more concerned about keeping kids safe.” (15, male, Eastern Adelaide)
- “ Having teachers watch more carefully in what’s going on in the yard.” (13, male, Murray and Mallee)

At a higher level, some teenagers wanted more school leadership and accountability, such as ‘a strong anti-bully[ing] policy’ and ‘schools actually taking action against homophobia, transphobia, racism, etc’. It was also viewed as being important that teachers receive training around some of these topics and issues, including around diversity and inclusion.

- “ Better management of students who actively discriminate against other students who are of a different race, sexuality, or gender as them. My government school does not take these issues seriously enough, especially the gender issues. As a young women I am often referred to in derogatory, disrespectful terms and they are never taken as a serious issue.” (17, female, Adelaide)

- “ I’m not sure. Maybe if I knew teachers were getting training for open mindedness regarding diversity (maybe semi regularly as well). Again, if these topics were talked about more there is more opportunity for people to see things from other perspectives.” (16, non-binary, Eastern Adelaide)

Teenagers also called for more education for students on a broad range of issues, including bullying, sexism, inclusion, consent and rights. Several students wanted more promotion of diversity and inclusion, and better education around respecting people who are ‘different’ to you, ‘more visibility for minority groups’ and ‘better accessibility’.

- “ Teach people not to bully or harm anyone at a younger age.” (13, female, Northern Adelaide)
- “ Educate people at an early age about being inclusive. Hard to describe, but not Cisgender. It’s under the Non-binary umbrella.” (16, prefer to self-describe, Barossa Light and Lower North)
- “ I honestly think SA would be safer if consent education were better taught to boys. We had a day where three independent girls schools and a boy[s] school got together to ensure that we all knew consent and things along that line, but it turned out that the girls were actually there to teach the boys, because while we had to do sex ed every year since year 5, they had only done it once many years before. But the boys all thought that this one instance was enough for them. Though when we did consent in different situations, they didn’t know what was clearly right and wrong for us. And I think this is translating into unsafe encounters and relationships later on.” (17, female, Adelaide Hills)

“ Talking to children and young people about their rights, including their rights to speak up and make a complaint when they feel unsafe or uncomfortable.” (16, female, Northern Adelaide)

Finally, some teenagers specifically mentioned the need for programs for early intervention and ‘better management plans for students at risk of harming themselves or others’.

“ Programs for violent kids to be able to regulate emotions. So they don’t hurt or scare other children.” (15, female, Northern Adelaide)

### Creating positive school communities, with safe spaces and wellbeing support

More broadly, teenagers wanted schools as a whole to be more welcoming and to have a ‘greater sense of community among students’. They felt this could help prevent some of the negative behaviours being experienced by – but also engaged in by – students. They wanted a school with students and staff who are caring, nice, respectful, and inclusive, with less judgment overall.

“ A more welcoming and comfortable environment.” (15, male, Murray and Mallee)

“ To have a non toxic environment where you know the teachers and students care about you.” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)

Having safe spaces to go, along with easy access to support for student wellbeing, were viewed as important ways school leaders should address safety at school. Teenagers said that addressing these two issues could also contribute to creating more positive school communities.

They want safe spaces at school that include quiet spaces where they can focus on work, or be alone if they need to be. Others highlighted the importance of ‘being able to go somewhere when I feel overwhelmed’ and ‘having a well-being room’. Some respondents wanted more sheltered places to go when it was cold.

More broadly teenagers noted the need for more support for those who are experiencing loneliness and anxiety, or who need someone to talk to, such as a responsible adult.

“ A place to go to when feeling nervous or anxious.” (16, female, Northern Adelaide)

“ Having safe spaces where I can go to have quiet time if something has happened.” (16, female, Northern Adelaide)

In some cases, having access to mobile phones at school contributed to students’ feelings of safety, and was important to supporting their wellbeing and helped in easing their feelings of anxiety.

“ Bringing phones in, not using them during class, but having them close in case of emergency at home.” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)

### Being with friends

Teenagers reported that being with friends was also important for their safety at school. This included having friends in class and nearby, as well as being able to work with friends. Teenagers had (or sometimes wanted) friends who were nice to them, who were trustworthy, and who would stick up for them. They noted the importance of having a friendship group and close friends.

While many teenagers appeared to be sharing that they had current friends that helped them to feel safe, some students expressed a wish for 'more friends' and/or having friends that would support them.

“ Be with my friends and talk with them.”  
(12, female, Southern Adelaide)

“ Always having friends near me or in my class.” (13, male, Southern Adelaide)

“ Being able to work in quiet spaces or working with my friends because they have my back.” (16, female, Northern Adelaide)

“ Having more friends and knowing they would support me.” (13, prefer to self-describe: 'No idea honestly', Southern Adelaide)

### Having supportive teachers

While several teenagers were critical of teachers not taking enough action on negative behaviours displayed by other students, some shared that their feelings of safety at school were increased by 'wonderful teachers' and teachers who were there to 'support' them.

Others highlighted the need for more teachers and more SSOs to be in classrooms to help students more.

“ I feel safer when there is a teacher or someone in charge nearby.” (15, female, Southern Adelaide)

“ Being near my teachers or sso.” (14, female, Eastern Adelaide)

Some respondents, however, wanted 'better' teachers that were more 'caring' and 'helpful' and not as 'mean', 'weird' or 'angry'. They wanted teachers who listened and who understood the diverse needs and rights of their students.

“ The teachers need to relax and stop being weirdos (male).” (12, female, Southern Adelaide)

“ Teachers tend to disregard autism and slow processing as 'just procrastinating' and sometimes refuse to give leniency on assignments as a result because you don't seem 'autistic enough'.” (16, non-binary, Northern Adelaide)

### Having more security measures

While less common, some students shared that they would feel safer at school if there was more 'security' in place, with this relating to security measures that would ensure they were safe in relation to other people both inside and outside of school.

Security measures included having lockable doors for personal safety, as well as school gates and fences that prevented other people from entering their school grounds. They also suggested using locks to keep students' property safe, with suggestions to put 'locks on class doors when your stuff is in them' and 'school bike locks'.

Other suggestions made more broadly asked for better 'security' and 'more safety measures', as well as more 'appropriate use of security cameras'.

“ Having lockable doors and teachers nearby.” (13, male, Southern Adelaide)

“ Schools having gates not open for people and cars to come in.” (14, female, Eastern Adelaide)





# Feeling safe in the community

The community was often seen by teenagers as an unsafe place to be, with some spaces seen as being less safe than others. Some community members were seen as being potential threats to teenager's safety. Some teenagers reported not being that engaged with their communities, in part due to a lack of (safe) spaces being made available to teenagers.

## How safe do teenagers feel in the community?

Teenagers said that they often did not feel safe in their community. Only a quarter of all respondents 'always' felt safe on public transport and on the street, with less than half reporting that they 'always' felt safe in pubs and clubs, in parks, and in shopping centres.

Females reported that they were much less likely to feel safe in all the community places that were asked about. LGBTQ+ teenagers reported even lower levels of 'always' feeling safe on the street, in pubs and clubs, in parks, and in sports clubs.

### Feeling safe ('always'):

#### On public transport



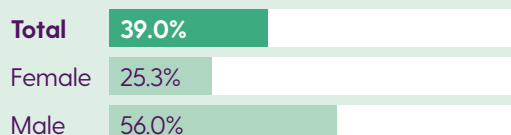
#### On the street



#### In pubs and clubs



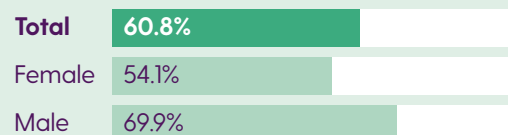
#### In parks



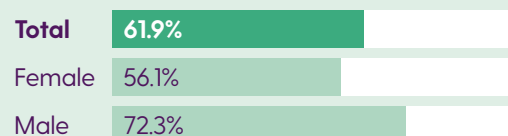
#### In shopping centres

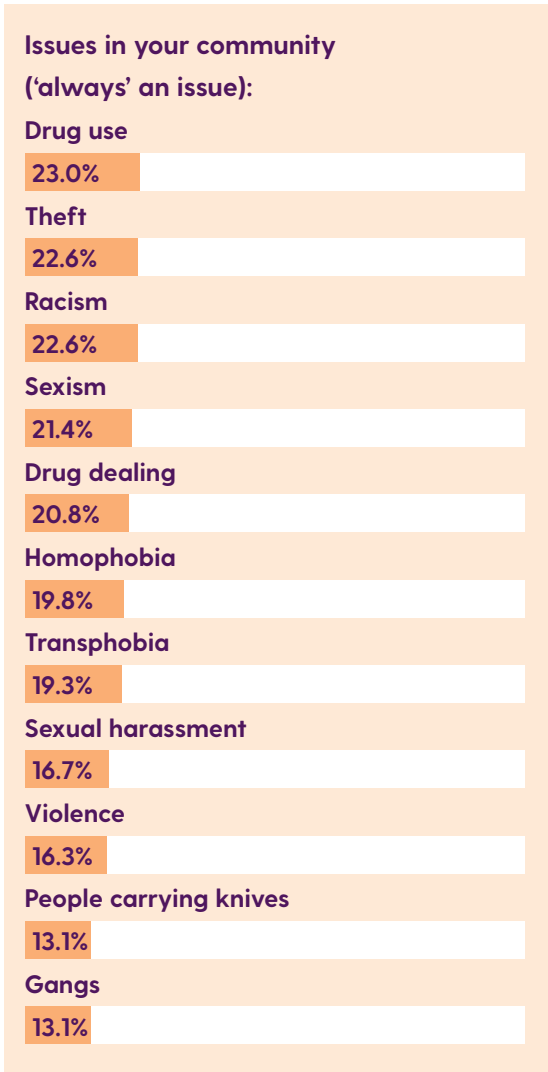


#### In your neighbourhood



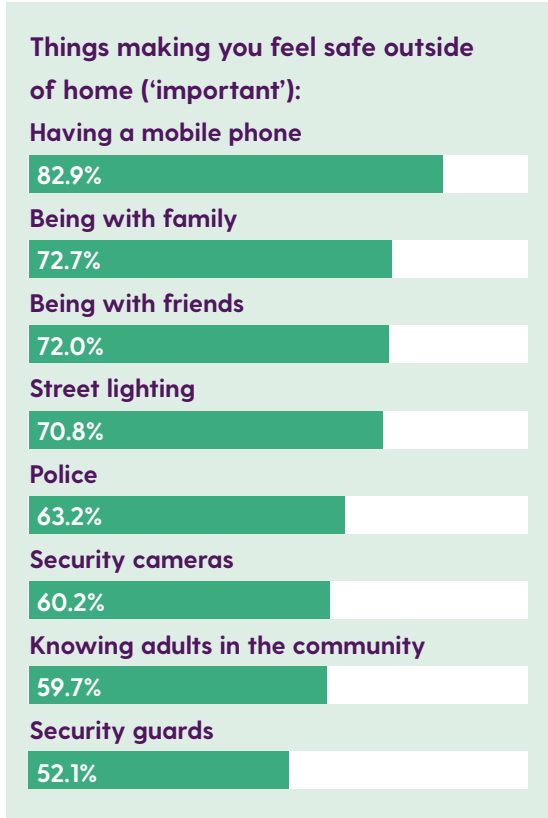
#### In sports clubs





When asked about a range of issues in the community, more than 1 in 5 teenagers selected drug use, racism, theft, sexism and drug dealing as ‘always’ being issues in their community. Females were more likely than males to identify all of these as ‘always’ being issues, with the biggest difference being sexism. While just under 1 in 5 shared that homophobia and transphobia were ‘always’ issues in their community, this increased to 1 in 3 for LGBTQ+ teenagers.

More than 4 out of 5 (82.9%) teenagers shared that having a mobile phone was the most ‘important’ thing making them feel safe when they were outside of their home. Other key things were being with family, being with friends and street lighting.



More females than males shared that all of these things were ‘important’ to making them feel safe outside of home, reflecting a greater concern for their safety more broadly expressed by females. Respondents who were LGBTQ+ were less likely to view being with family and the presence of police as ‘important’ to their safety.

## What can make teenagers feel safe in the community?

Teenagers often reported feeling unsafe in the community due to other people and situations which they viewed as being a danger or threat to them. They wanted action to prevent and respond to dangerous and threatening behaviours.

## Taking action to address and prevent behaviours

Many teenagers wanted more control over negative behaviours that were being displayed by others in the community and made them feel unsafe. They mentioned things like threatening and violent behaviour, assault, predatory behaviour, and sexual harassment. They also reported that they sometimes felt unsafe due to crime, drugs and alcohol, as well as behaviour/s displayed by some men and boys.

Some teenagers were focused on arresting, punishing, and increasing gaol time for people who engaged in these predatory behaviours.

- “ Give actual punishments for things like rape and listen to people of any identity if they report something that made them uncomfortable.” (14, male, Southern Adelaide)
- “ Implement safety policy’s and having harsher punishments and actually doing things when people do stuff to us.” (19, female, Eastern Adelaide)
- “ More awareness and more convictions towards the people who abuse or assault younger people in the community.” (15, female, Northern Adelaide)
- “ Stronger laws and punishments for people who commit acts of violence that make us feel unsafe.” (17, female, Eastern Adelaide)
- “ More harsh laws around sexual assault.” (17, female, Adelaide)

Others, however, were more focused on introducing and improving education aimed at prevention and early intervention. They wanted community education for the general public that included prevention of domestic and sexual

violence and what to do if you knew it was occurring. Several teenagers felt that the general public did not fully understand these issues.

In addition, teenagers wanted more education for people to have more understanding about diversity in relation to gender, religion, culture and disability. They also noted the need to ‘teach adults about respecting young people’.

- “ Teaching more people about stopping violence against women and children and informing people about sexual harassment and stuff.” (14, female, Barossa, Light and Lower North)
- “ Re-educate the populous so they are aware that domestic violence isn’t just ‘hitting’ their partner but so many other things, and implement greater penalties for perpetrators of domestic violence.” (18, female, Limestone Coast)
- “ Bring more knowledge and acknowledgment to the fact that physical and sexual [violence] can happen to people of any age.” (15, female, Yorke and Mid North)
- “ Teach people that it’s not on victims to protect themselves from assault and rape, but on the perpetrator. Fix the behaviour. Teach and educate more.” (15, female, Southern Adelaide)
- “ More knowledge about other diverse communities and religions and cultures.” (17, female)

Others had a broader focus on the need to improve policies and actions that would help prevent negative behaviours. These included the need to address poverty and inequality, and other ‘social determinants of crime’, and by directly addressing drug and alcohol issues.

Programs and resources aimed at supporting young people early were also mentioned, as were programs that improved mental health services and reduced stigma. This included providing easier access to counselling services and supporting those who were being impacted by aggression and violence resulting from adults with substance abuse issues.

“ To make South Australia safer, the government could put into place new policies that will more greatly discourage harmful actions onto young people.” (14, male, Barossa, Light and Lower North)

“ It’s difficult to pinpoint a single most important action. However, a key area for focus could be addressing social determinants of crime. These are factors linked to a higher risk of crime, like poverty, unemployment, and lack of education. By investing in programs that address these issues, the government can create a safer environment for everyone.” (16, male, Eastern Adelaide)

“ Substantially improving treatment and services for substance abuse. Many young people are at risk due to substance abuse or feel unsafe being around adults who abuse substances.” (18, agender, Limestone Coast)

“ The number one thing the government could do to make South Australia safer for young people is to invest in better mental health support. This means more funding for school and community mental health services, easier access to counselling, and programs to reduce stigma. By improving mental health resources, young people can get help early, leading to a safer and healthier environment.” (16, male, Eastern Adelaide)

“ Put more funding towards programs for the safety and wellbeing of youth, along with making sure to include youth with the discussions about what funding is needed.” (14, female, Barossa, Light and Lower North)

## Increasing and improving police and security guards

Teenagers had mixed views and experiences in relation to their interactions with police officers and security guards. Some reported increased feelings of safety when police officers and security guards were present, or the need to increase their presence. This included having more police in the city, at night, in shops and malls, and on the street.

“ More police patrolling high risk areas.” (17, male, Eastern Adelaide)

“ Having more police stations not just in the big towns.” (14, female, Murray and Mallee)

“ More street light[ing] and maybe security or police during night time.” (15, female, Eastern Adelaide)

“ Having people like cops around so I know if I don’t feel safe or if I have lost a family member I can go to them.” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)

For some teenagers, police officers and security guards made them feel less safe. Some said that police can be ‘scary’ and make young people feel ‘unsafe’ and ‘uncomfortable’. Some commented that some security guards ‘don’t do anything’, ‘abuse their power’ and ‘can provoke things with people’.

Several respondents highlighted negative experiences of being targeted by police and security guards, with nearly all these responses coming from teenagers who are LGBTQ+.

living with disability, and/or culturally or linguistically diverse. Others shared that police and security guards unfairly target young people in general, and that police and security guards 'have a Reputation among young people'.

- “ Education and workshops for security guards/teachers and general adults that deal with young diverse people.” (16, non-binary, Eastern Adelaide)
- “ I had a bad encounter with the police a week ago while I was walking back home from work at night. They refused to believe I lived in the neighbourhood and made me feel unsafe. I wish for better training for police officers. The last thing teenagers should be feeling is unsafe because of the people hired to protect them.” (16, male, Eastern Adelaide)
- “ Police often make me feel unsafe as a queer person because they do not always do things that make the queer community feel safe.” (19, non-binary, Western Adelaide)

Some teenagers called for police officers to be more 'approachable' and more willing to support all young people. They also noted the need for police to be more inclusive of diversity, including the need for them to have more education and training on this.

- “ Make police more approachable/less intimidating.” (16, trans male, Murray and Mallee)
- “ Trustworthy police and security guards would make them completely important.” (15, female, Southern Adelaide)
- “ Police listen to children and teens about problems they are having and give advice or a safe space for them to stay.” (18, prefer not to say, Western Adelaide)

## Having more street lighting and security cameras

Teenagers often suggested the need for more physical security measures to be installed in their communities, particularly more street lighting and security cameras. These were viewed as not only helping to make young people feel safer, but were also helping to prevent others from exhibiting unsafe behaviours.

These types of security measures were viewed as being relatively easy to implement, which may have been why they were mentioned by so many teenagers. As one teenager commented, these are 'the most simple option'.

Improving street lighting was often mentioned in relation to improving safety at night. Some suggested the need for 'working street lights' and 'bright street lights', while others highlighted the need for lighting on 'side streets at night'.

Security cameras were also called for more generally, sometimes specifically for 'busy areas', 'shady places', 'sketchy streets' and 'dodgy areas'. A few teenagers suggested these would be useful to use as 'evidence' if there was a crime and 'to help solve crime' or to find someone if they were lost. However, some also noted the importance of balancing safety with privacy.

- “ More streetlighting everywhere. There are a lot of areas/suburbs in South Australia that just are not well lit enough.” (16, female, Adelaide Hills)
- “ More and better street lighting and stuff like that to make walking at night easier and safer.” (15, male, Eastern Adelaide)
- “ Fund more infrastructure such as street lights, cameras, guards, support.” (17, male, Eyre and Western)
- “ I like having street lights, so at night time I can feel safe. I also think security cameras.” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)

## Being with or near other people

As with home and school, teenagers often felt safest when they were out in the community with other (safe) people. They generally shared that they felt safer with other people or adults around, particularly those they trusted. More specifically they mentioned feeling safe when they were with friends and parents or family.

- “ Being with friends and family when I am out in the community.” (16, female, Northern Adelaide)
- “ Friends, family or friendly people when you need help.” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)
- “ Being around a trusted adult that my family knows.” (13, female, Southern Adelaide)
- “ If I knew someone was close by who I can trust.” (16, male, Eastern Adelaide)

## Creating friendlier communities, with safe spaces for teenagers

Some teenagers suggested the community would be safer if people got along better and were more connected. They suggested that this could be done by increasing respect between community members and for people to be more ‘friendly’, ‘nice’ and ‘kind’.

They also suggested increasing the number of safe spaces available to young people and the need for more ‘family-friendly community events’.

- “ If everyone respected each other.” (14, female, Northern Adelaide)
- “ Having responsible neighbours that keep an eye out for each other.” (17, male, Western Adelaide)
- “ If I knew I could trust more people/just knew more people in general or knew the area better.” (15, prefer to self-describe: genuinely don’t care but go as female, Northern Adelaide)
- “ Checking in more. More opportunities for safe spaces. There aren’t a lot of public spaces for youth specifically apart from schools.” (16, non-binary, Northern Adelaide)
- “ Make more spaces accommodating for young people, more events spaces or programs for teens.” (15, female, Southern Adelaide)



# Next steps

It is clear from those who participated in my Teenagers and Safety survey that safety means different things to different teenagers. It means different things to teenage girls and teenage boys, as well as to LGBTQ+ teenagers, and those living with disability, those who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and those who are culturally or linguistically diverse.

I've had many conversations with South Australian children and young people about what being safe means to them, with the issues they raised supported by the findings in this report. They told me that feeling safe is about having physical, mental, emotional, and social safety across all aspects of their lives. They shared their insights and experiences with me, about how it feels to be unsafe and what they would like adults to do about it.

They do not want to always be on the alert to potential threats, or have the fear of finding themselves in situations where they feel threatened or concerned about the levels of aggression being expressed verbally and physically around and toward them. These fears are coming from their peers, their parents and sometimes their siblings, as well as from other adults they know at home, at school and when they're out in the broader community.

It is concerning that the teenagers who report feeling the most unsafe are those who are LGBTQ+, those living with a disability, those who are culturally or linguistically diverse and those who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This needs to change.

The proposed changes teenagers have suggested are sensible and practical. They want education relating to safety to be taught from a young age, so that children can learn how to manage their emotions in ways that do not lead them to use behaviours that make others feel unsafe.

They want adults to behave better and to model behaviours that show children and young people how to resolve conflict without resorting to verbal and physical abuse of others.

They want support to be provided to children, young people and adults who need it, both the victims and the perpetrators, and with a particular focus on early intervention for those already displaying extreme behaviours while young – including understanding the complex reasons for this.

They want practical safety measures adopted that include putting more physical safety elements in place such as better lighting, creation of places and spaces where teenagers feel welcomed and safe, and where the consequences for those who use aggression and violence are proportionate and relevant to their age and situation.



We all have a role to play in modelling behaviour that shows children and young people how to effectively achieve conflict resolution without resorting to verbal or physical abuse, aggression, or violence. It starts in childhood with good communication.

**“ We are much more likely to build trust in children and young people if we start by being kind, trustworthy, good listeners, and reliable grownups, who they know they can approach and with whom they can confidently discuss issues that arise in their lives clearly and calmly.**

For those who report feeling and being unsafe due to the actions of adults it is important we make it easier for these children and young people to be supported in the places they feel safe with trusted adults – like school.

Placing a strong emphasis on ensuring all young people have supportive positive relationships with adult role models and mentors through school and community-based programs would improve feelings of safety for many South Australian young people.



# Appendix

Note: Total percentages include all genders (not just female and male).  
 Numbers were too small to break down by non-binary and other genders.

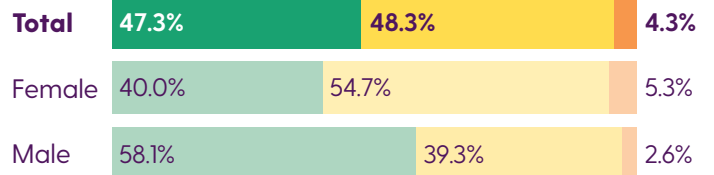
## How often do you feel safe in the following places?

Always Sometimes Never

### At home



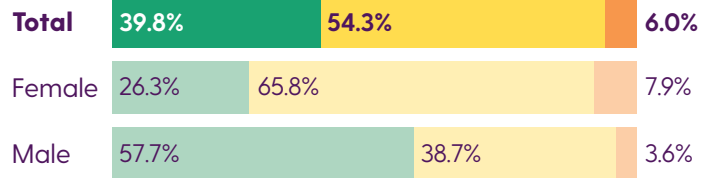
### In the school yard



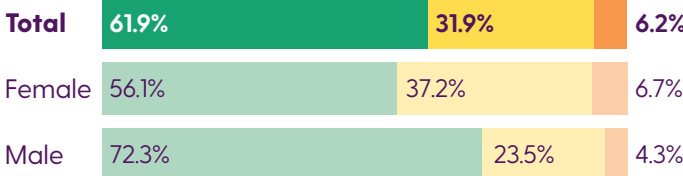
### At friends' places



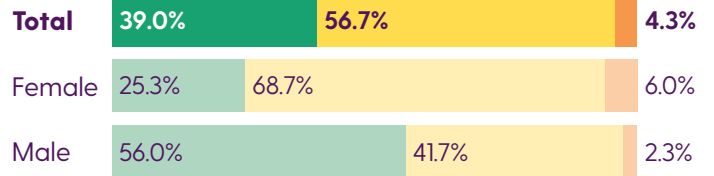
### In shopping centres



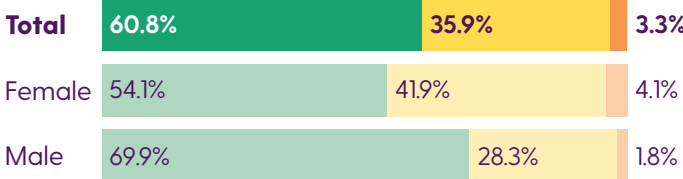
### In sports clubs



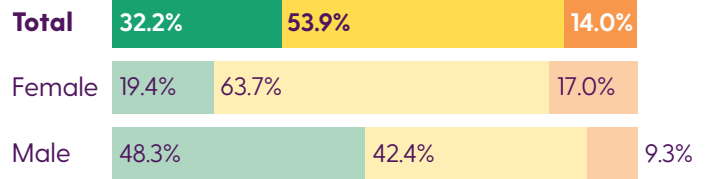
### In parks



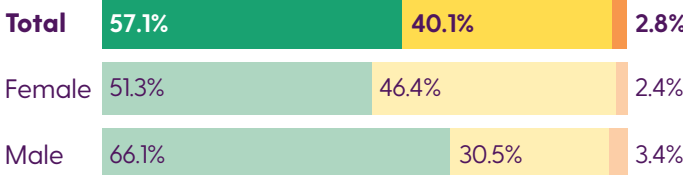
### In your neighbourhood



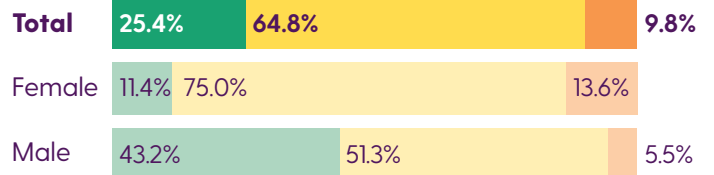
### In pubs and clubs



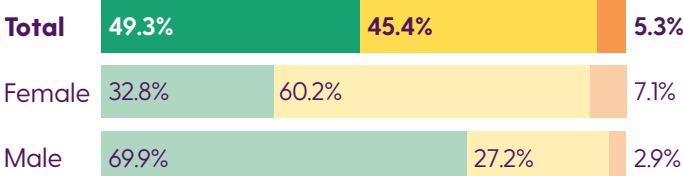
### In class



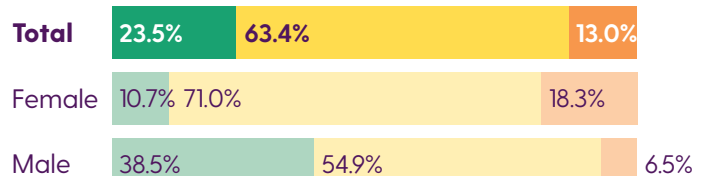
### On the street



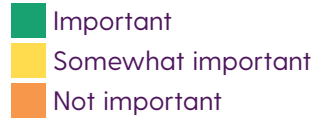
### Online



### On public transport



**How important are these things in making you feel safe outside of home?**



**Having a mobile phone**



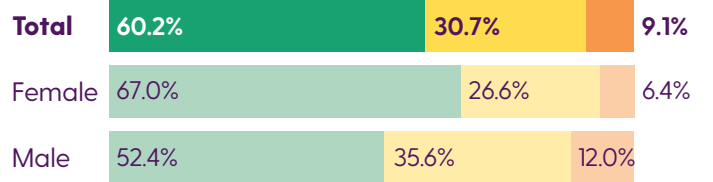
**Police**



**Being with family**



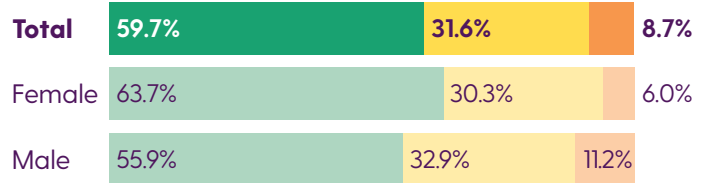
**Security cameras**



**Being with friends**



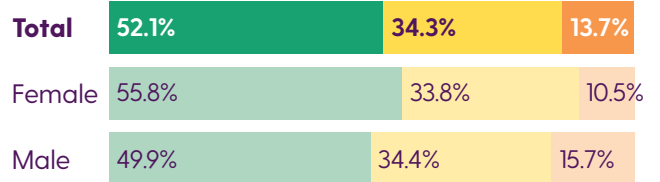
**Knowing adults in the community**



**Street lighting**



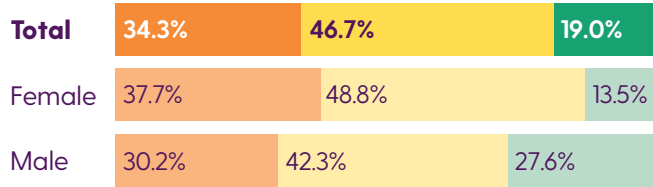
**Security guards**



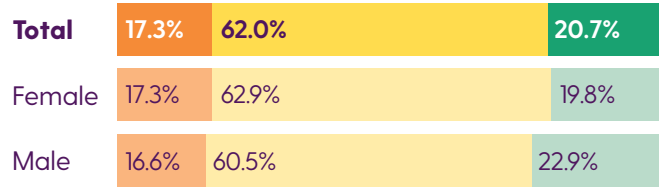
**Do you think these are an issue at your school?**

Always Sometimes Never

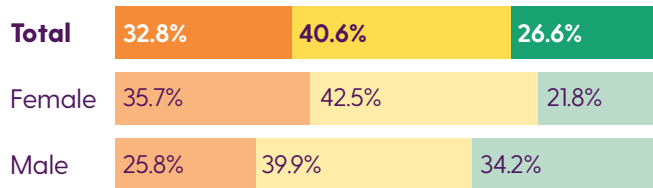
**Racism**



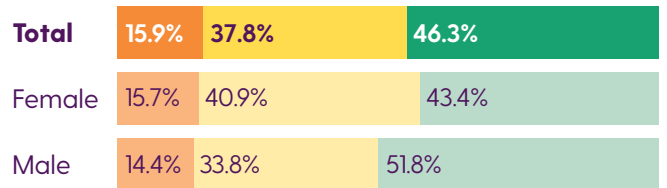
**Violence**



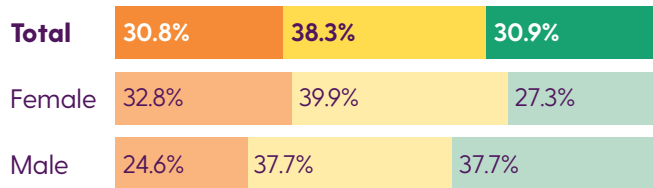
**Homophobia**



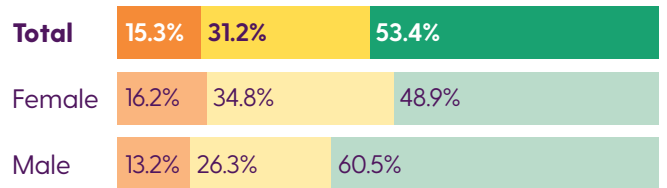
**Sexual harassment**



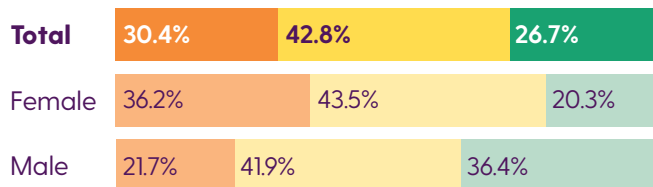
**Transphobia**



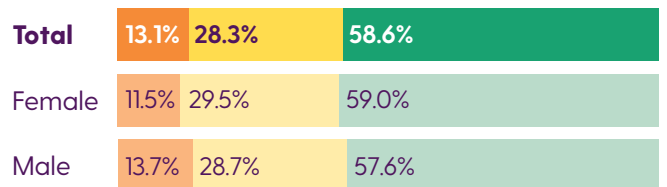
**Drug dealing**



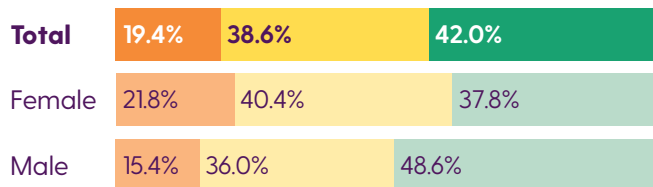
**Sexism**



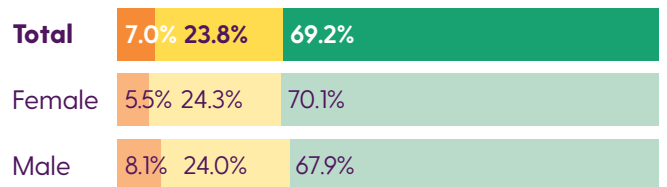
**Gangs**



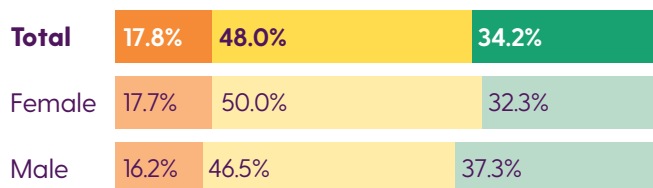
**Drug use**



**People carrying knives**



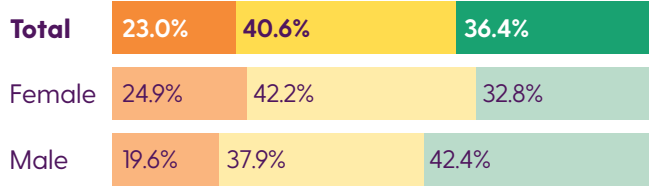
**Theft**



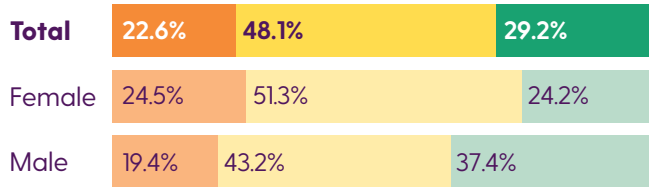
**Do you think these are an issue in the community?**

Always Sometimes Never

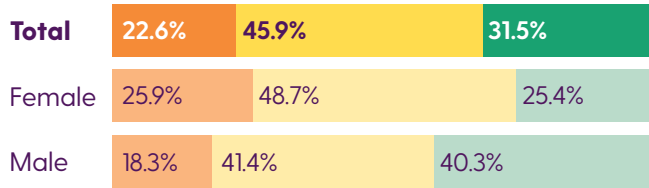
**Drug use**



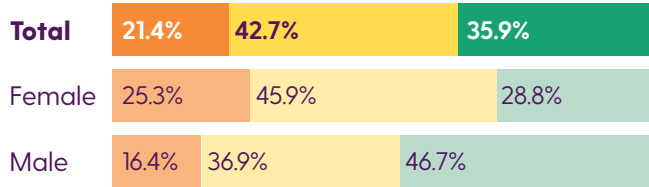
**Theft**



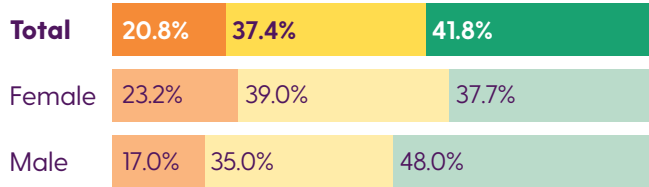
**Racism**



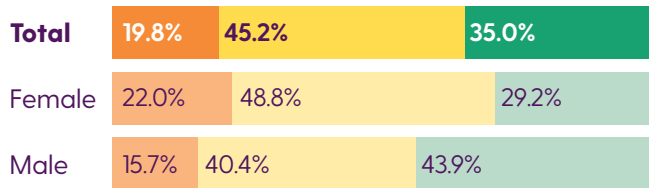
**Sexism**



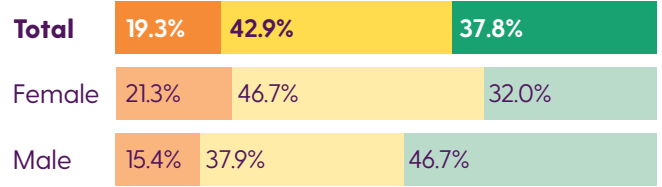
**Drug dealing**



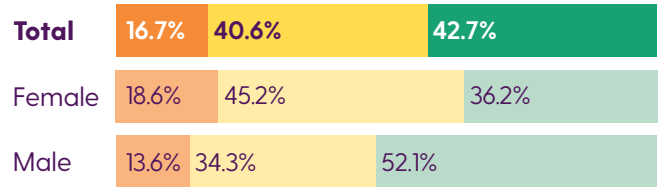
**Homophobia**



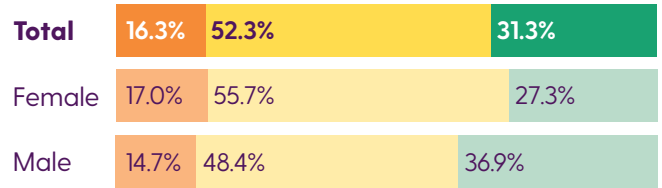
**Transphobia**



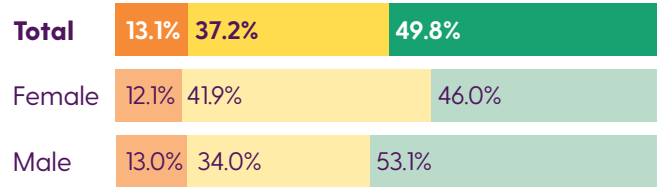
**Sexual harassment**



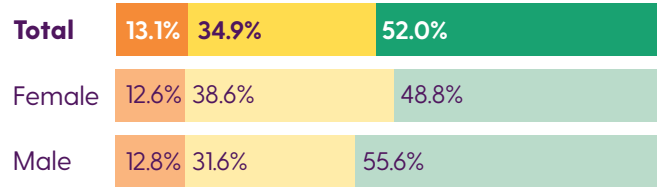
**Violence**



**People carrying knives**



**Gangs**



### Endnotes

- 1 Education Council, *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*, 2019, <https://www.education.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>.
- 2 Department for Education, *Taking immediate action to prevent violence in schools: Minister's roundtable on violence prevention in schools: summary report*, 2023, <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/docs/support-and-inclusion/engagement-and-wellbeing/violence-in-schools/violence-prevention-roundtable-summary-report.pdf>.
- 3 Department for Education, *Safe and Supportive Learning Environments Plan of Action 2024–2026*, 2024, <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/docs/support-and-inclusion/engagement-and-wellbeing/violence-in-schools/safe-and-supportive-learning-environments-plan-of-action.pdf>.
- 4 Department for Education, *Wellbeing and engagement collection: All SA students survey year: 2023*, 2023, <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/docs/system-performance/data-reports/wec-results-report-2023.pdf>.



