



This project is funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation



UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement Ireland
CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE

Participation for Protection

Questionnaire Findings Ireland

Introduction

The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre is a research partner in a project entitled Participation for Protection (P4P) being led by the Children's Rights Centre at Queens University Belfast. Funding for this project was allocated under the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, 2014 – 2020. The aim of P4P is to elevate the voices and experiences of children and young people in training for professionals on how best to respond to children and young people who experience violence, whilst also enhancing children and young people's understanding of reporting mechanisms and support structures.

Foregrounding the views of children and young people in this area was achieved through:

- Two Children's and Young Person's Advisory Groups who informed and guided the research methodologies and outputs from the project;
- The completion of over 1,000 questionnaires by children aged between 9 to 12 years and 14 to 16 years;
- The facilitation of working groups with children and young people comprising seldom heard voices.

This report focuses on the findings from the questionnaires distributed to the Irish children and young people. It presents key findings on Irish children's and young people's knowledge of violence, their help-seeking behaviour and their views on how best to respond to children and young people seeking help.

Defining Violence

This project adopted a definition of violence as set out by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The WHO defines violence as:

"the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation".

The Children and Young Person's Advisory Groups revised the definition to be more easily understood by the children and young people who completed the questionnaire. The child-friendly version, which was made available to the children and young people prior to their completion of the questionnaire, read as follows:

"Violence is understood to mean all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or not caring of children, bad treatment, using children to make money including sexual abuse".



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Methodology

To facilitate a gender balance, the research team approached mixed gender primary and secondary schools based in counties Sligo and Galway. Convenience sampling was used. An initial email was sent to the principals of the identified schools and five schools responded expressing an interest to participate in the research. Information sheets were given to the children and young people and their parents. An opt-out form was provided alongside the parent's information sheet, which parents were advised to complete if they *did not* want their child to participate.

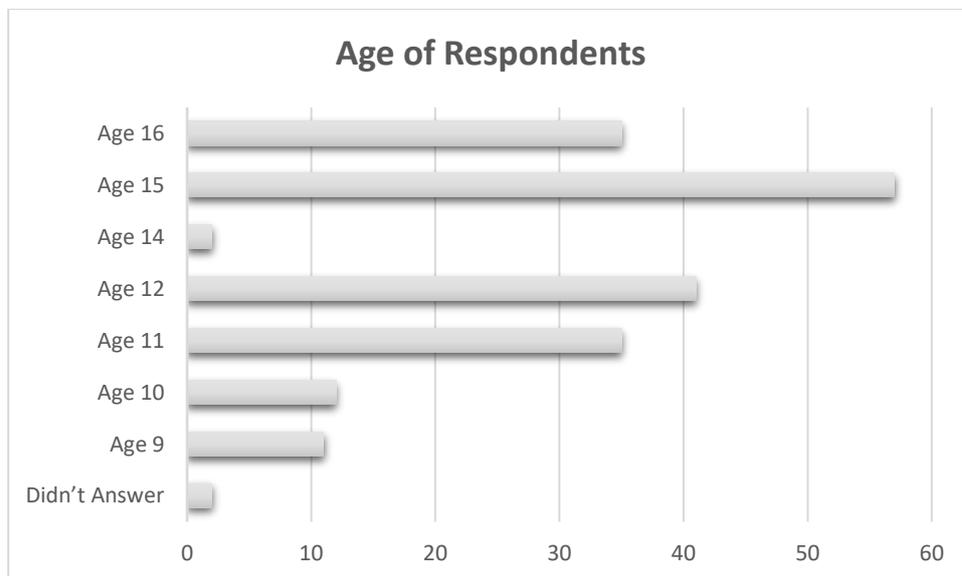
Before the completion of the questionnaires the children and young people were advised:

- They did not have to participate if they did not want to and would not suffer any negative consequences as a result of their withdrawal;
- Of the limitations to their privacy with regard to Child Protection concerns and mandatory reporting.

Upon completion of the questionnaire, children and young people were given a signposting leaflet which contained information on where they can get help if they needed support or advice about violence and harm. See Appendix 1.

Profile of Respondents

The initial questions were designed to establish the demographic profile of respondents. A total of 195 children and young people participated in completing the questionnaire in the West of Ireland, of whom 52% were boys, 47% were girls, and 1% didn't answer or did not want to say. There was a good spread of ages across the respondents, as set out below.





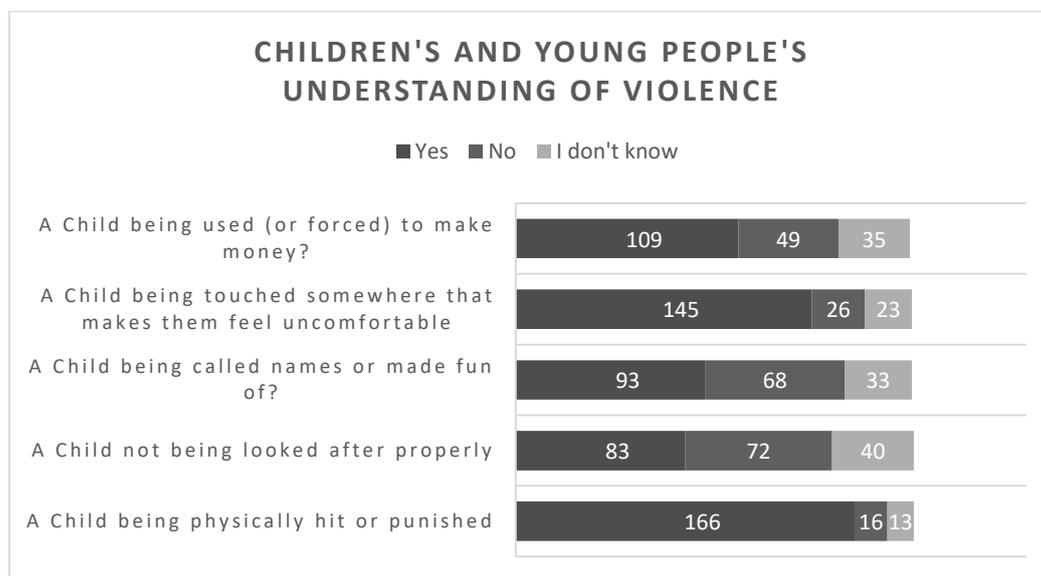
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Overview of Questionnaire Findings

Children's and Young Peoples Understanding of Violence

When given a list of different forms of violence and asked which of these they recognised as violence, most children and young people (83%) identified physical violence (being hit or punished) as a form of violence. Regarding sexual violence (a child being touched somewhere that makes them feel uncomfortable), over half of the participants (73%) recognised this to be a form of violence, with more girls (81%) than boys (67%) believing this to be the case. Other behaviours identified as violence included, a child being used or forced to make money (56%) or a child being called names or made fun of (48%). Children and young people were least likely (42%) to identify neglect (a child not being looked after properly) as a form of violence. Further detail is provided in the chart below.



Forms of Harm Children and Young People are Likely to Experience

The children and young people were asked what behaviours they thought children and young people were likely to experience. They were advised that they could tick as many answers as they wanted. As set out in Table 1 below, the majority of respondents 148 (76%) thought that children and young people were likely to be called names or be made fun of. A third of respondents (35%) believed children and young people are likely to experience sexual abuse (being touched in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable). Of note, more girls than boys believed children and young people were likely to experience neglect (not being looked after properly).

Table 1: Forms of Harm Children and Young People are Likely to Experience

Form of Harm	Number of Respondents
A child being called names or made fun of	148
A child being physically hit or punished	123



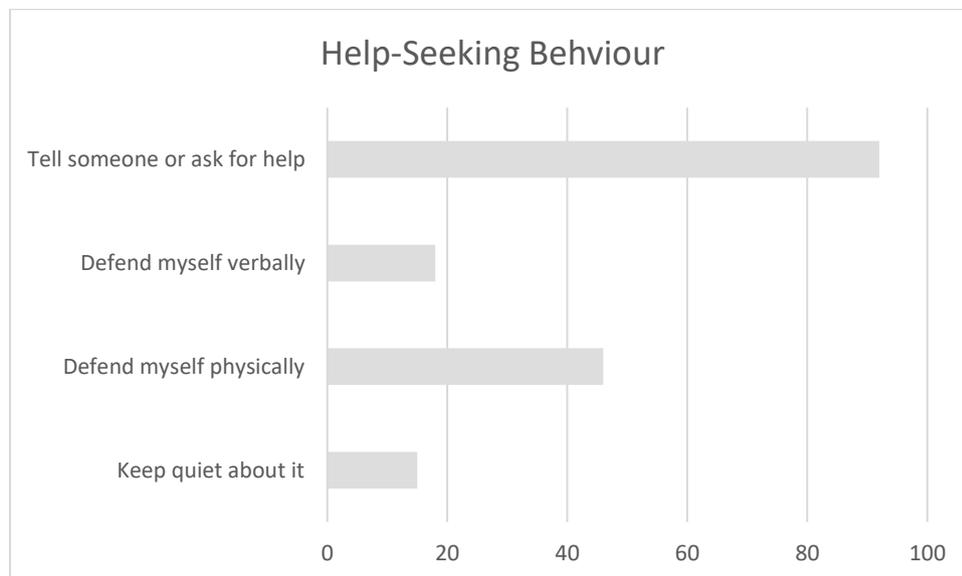
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A child not being looked after properly	92
A child being touched in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable	67
A child being used (or forced) to make money	47
I don't know	19

Help Seeking Behaviours

The next section of the questionnaire asked the children and young people what they would do if they experienced violence or harm. Just over half (51%) of children and young people said that they would tell someone and ask for help, with more girls (61%) than boys (39%) saying they would ask for help. Only a small number (8%) said they would keep quiet about it. There were 24 respondents who did not know, identified something else to the answers provided or did not answer the question.



The children and young people were then asked who they would tell if they were to experience violence or harm. Parents/guardians or other family members and friends was the most frequent response.

Reasons for not Seeking Help

The children and young people were presented with a list of reasons, as compiled by the Children and Young People's Advisory Groups, which may act as a barrier to seeking help. They were asked to identify why children and young people might not ask for help if they were being harmed by someone and advised that they could select as many answers as they wanted. The top three barriers identified were as follows:

- They might be scared it would only make things worse or they would be harmed even more (70%);
- They might think the person would find out (63%);



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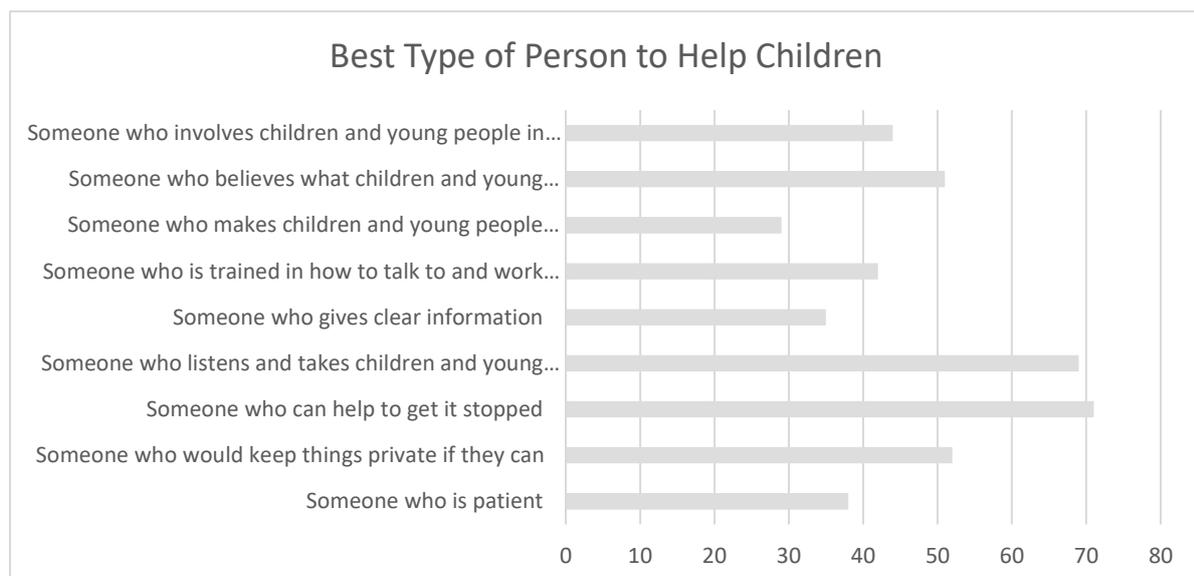
- They might not know where to go to get help (50%).

How Best to Support Children and Young People Seeking Help

The questionnaire set out a list of places where children and young people could learn how to get information or help if being harmed and asked if the respondents agreed or disagreed. The results found that children and young people believed that schools were an important place to learn how to get information or help if experiencing violence or harm, with 80% of the respondents agreeing that in schools taught by teachers is the best way, followed by 72% strongly agreeing that in school but not taught by the teachers was best. Websites where information can be looked up was the next most popular source with just over half (56%) agreeing that this is a good source of information. The least popular place to source information or help was on social media, such as Facebook.

The children and young people were then asked, what the best way is to help children and young people. The clear majority (71%) identified that talking to someone personally is the best way to seek help if being harmed. A small number identified telephone helplines (7%) text helplines (3%) and websites (7%) as the best sources of help.

The questionnaire sought to determine the most important qualities that children and young people would like a person to demonstrate, should they seek help and support from them. They were given a list of nine qualities and asked to list, in order of preference, which was the most important for a person to have when helping children and young people who have experienced violence or harm. As set out below, the most important quality identified was, a person they can confide in and who can get the violence stopped, with 71% children stating this to be very important. This was followed closely by listening and taking the child seriously (69%). Trusting the person will keep it private is another important quality, with 52% of children and young people expressing this as a main quality. Similarly, just over half of children and young people also expressed a preference for the person to believe them (51%).





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The questionnaire concluded with asking children and young people to identify two things they think would help if children and young people are being harmed. The words 'Tell', 'Help' and 'Talk' featured strongly.



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Appendix 1: Children's and Young People's Signposting Leaflet (Page 1 and 2)

Other useful contacts: Ireland

CHILDLINE
A free and confidential service to empower, support and protect children and young people up to the age of 18.
Phone: 1800 66 66 66
Text: 'Talk' to 50101
Web: www.childline.ie

TEENLINE IRELAND
A helpline for young people who feel lonely, anxious, vulnerable, depressed or suicidal
Phone: 1800 833 634
Email: info@teenline.ie
Web: teenline.ie

JIGSAW
We intervene early to support young people's mental health
Phone: 01 472 7010
Email: info@jigsaw.ie
Web: www.jigsaw.ie

SPUNOUT
Youth information website created by young people, for young people
Web: www.spunout.ie

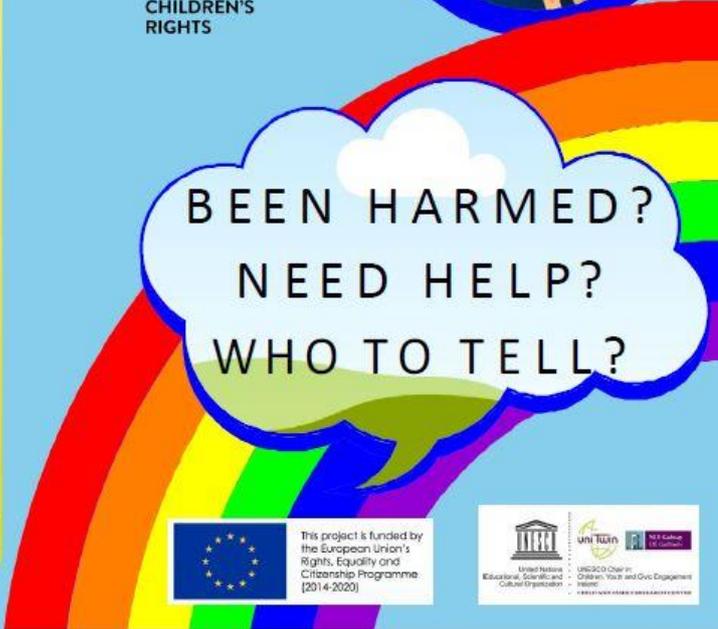
BeLongTo
Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans young people in Ireland
Phone: 01 670 6223
Email: info@belongto.org
Web: www.belongto.org



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

CENTRE FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS





**BEEN HARMED?
NEED HELP?
WHO TO TELL?**



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TYPES OF HARM	This happens when	Who to tell - If this happens at		
		Home	School	Outside
NEGLECT is when a child's basic needs are not being met and a parent or carer does not look after them properly. 	A child might not be given enough food and drink or the proper clothing. A child is left on their own for too long.	YOU CAN SPEAK TO Another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a teacher; neighbour; sports coach; social worker; nurse; doctor	YOU CAN SPEAK TO	YOU CAN SPEAK TO
PHYSICAL ABUSE is when an adult deliberately hurts a child's body. This may leave marks on their body such as cuts and bruises. 	Someone might hit, punch, kick, bite, or shake a child.	Another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a teacher; neighbour; sports coach; social worker; nurse; doctor	A child protection teacher; parent or guardian; another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a neighbour; sports coach; social worker; nurse; doctor	A parent or guardian; another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a neighbour; teacher; sports coach; security person; caretaker; the Gardaí (telephone 999)
EMOTIONAL ABUSE is when an adult hurts a child's feelings. This hurts a child on the inside. 	An adult makes fun of a child, calls them names, or makes them feel bad about themselves. Seeing or hearing parents or carers hurting each other can also make a child feel bad. This is called domestic abuse.	Another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a teacher; neighbour; sports coach; social worker; nurse; doctor	A parent or guardian; another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a neighbour; child protection teacher; sports coach; social worker; nurse; doctor	A parent or guardian; another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a neighbour; child protection teacher; sports coach; security person or caretaker
BULLYING is when children are mean and unkind to each other, not just once but again and again and again. 	Some children might push another child around, leave them out of games, or send them nasty texts or emails. This can hurt on the inside, or on the outside, and often both.	A parent or guardian; another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a teacher; sports coach	A parent or guardian; another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a neighbour; teacher; sports coach	A parent or guardian; another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a neighbour; teacher; sports coach; security person; caretaker
SEXUAL ABUSE is when a child is made to do anything with their body that frightens or worries them. An adult using a child in this way to make money is called sexual exploitation. 	An adult touches, kisses or makes a child show private parts of their body, or makes them do this to another person. Being made to look at rude films or pictures in books, magazines or on the internet is also sexual abuse.	A parent or guardian; another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a neighbour; teacher; sports coach	A parent or guardian; another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a neighbour; teacher; sports coach	A parent or guardian; another family member like an aunt; uncle; grandparent. Or a neighbour; teacher; sports coach; security person; caretaker; the Gardaí (telephone 999)



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The authors are responsible for the choice and presentation of views expressed in this report and for opinions expressed herein, which are not necessarily those of the European Commission or UNESCO and do not commit the Organisations.

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The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC) is part of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society at the National University of Ireland, Galway.

The Mission of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre is to help create the conditions for excellent policies, services and practices that improve the lives of children, youth and families through research, education and service development.