

# Children’s disclosures: Adults’ ability to detect and respond to child sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse is very prevalent in Australia but

**It is rare for a child to directly tell an adult about being sexually abused**

Only **9%** of adults had received a child’s disclosure about sexual abuse by an adult

**7%** had received a child’s disclosure about sexual abuse by another child or teenager

**Most adults had not discovered child sexual abuse**

Only **10%** discovered child sexual abuse by an adult without a child’s disclosure

**5%** discovered child sexual abuse by another child or teenager

**It is likely many adults miss the signs and most lacked confidence to tell if a child is being sexually abused**

Only **1 in 5** (20%) had high confidence they could recognise the signs or behaviours of when a child has been sexually abused

Almost **one-quarter** said they were ‘not at all’ confident

**If a child does tell an adult about being sexually abused, they may be met with disbelief, doubt, or be blamed.**

**7%**

of adults thought that children are too unreliable for their word to be accepted over an adult’s and

**18%**

were unsure

**1 in 3**

Almost may disbelieve a child.

**7%**

disagreed that children should always be believed if they disclose child sexual abuse

**22%**

and were unsure

**40%**

think that older children have a responsibility to actively resist sexual advances made by adults

**If an adult does believe the child, many don’t know how to respond – leaving the child unsupported or unprotected.**

Only about

**40%**

of the adults who received a child’s disclosure said they had a supportive conversation with the child

**21%**

had high confidence to talk to the parent/carer of a child suspected of being sexually abused

**31%**

were ‘not at all confident’

**20%**

had high confidence to start a conversation with a child suspected of being sexually abused

**28%**

were ‘not at all confident’

**37%**

had high confidence in knowing how to keep a disclosing child safe

**13%**

were ‘not at all confident’

**This new data tells us that urgent action is needed to better equip adults to respond to and support child victims and survivors of sexual abuse.**