

How accessible is child sexual abuse prevention in Australia?

Key Lessons from a National Accessibility Study

All children and families in Australia deserve access to child sexual abuse prevention activities.

Through a national survey, we explored (1) How accessible current prevention activities are; (2) What impacts accessibility; and (3) How to make prevention easier to reach.

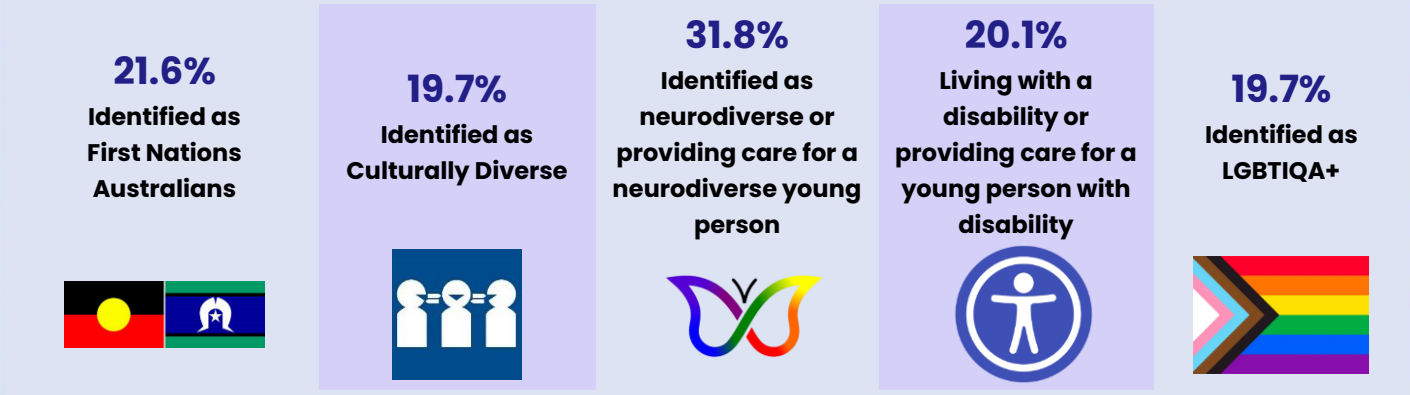
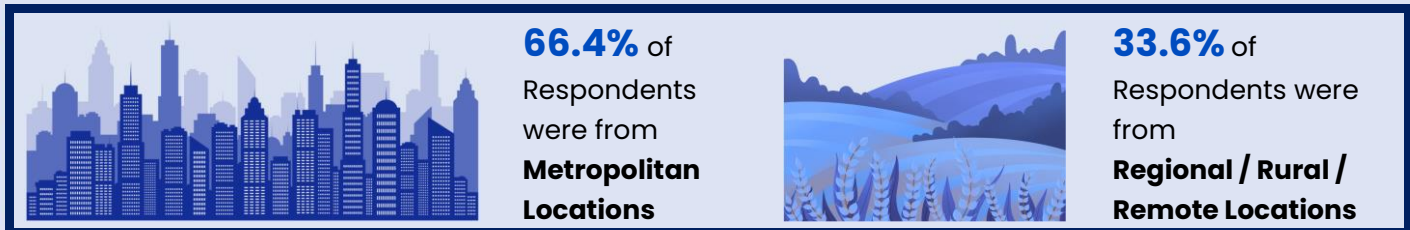
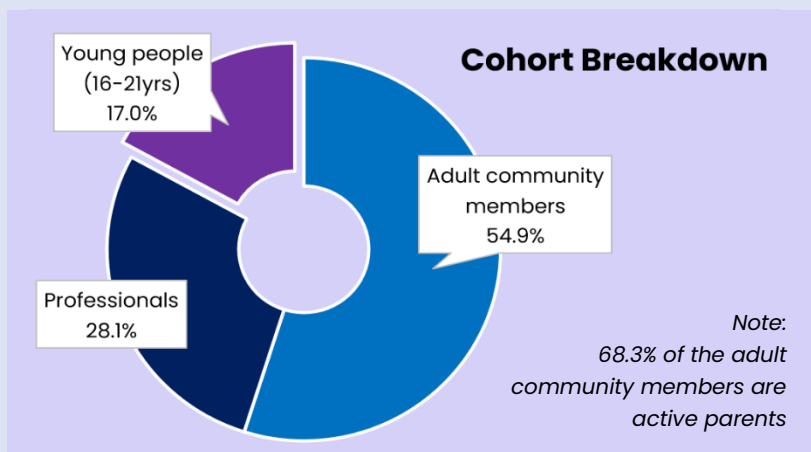
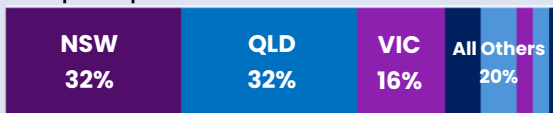
Accessibility is about the opportunities or pathways that determine whether children and families can meaningfully engage with prevention opportunities.



The survey was:
➤ Tailored to cohort

And available:
➤ Online from Aug 2025 to Jan 2026
➤ In 6 languages

Participants represented all states and territories across Australia



Definition of CSA prevention for this study: There are lots of different ways that we can prevent child sexual abuse. This includes services, activities and resources that help to raise awareness of the issue, educate people about abuse and how to keep children safe, make sure the places children visit are safe, support people who are concerned about someone's behaviour or their own, and provide counselling to victims of abuse, and to those who engage in harmful sexual behaviour.

What Prevention Activities are Available?

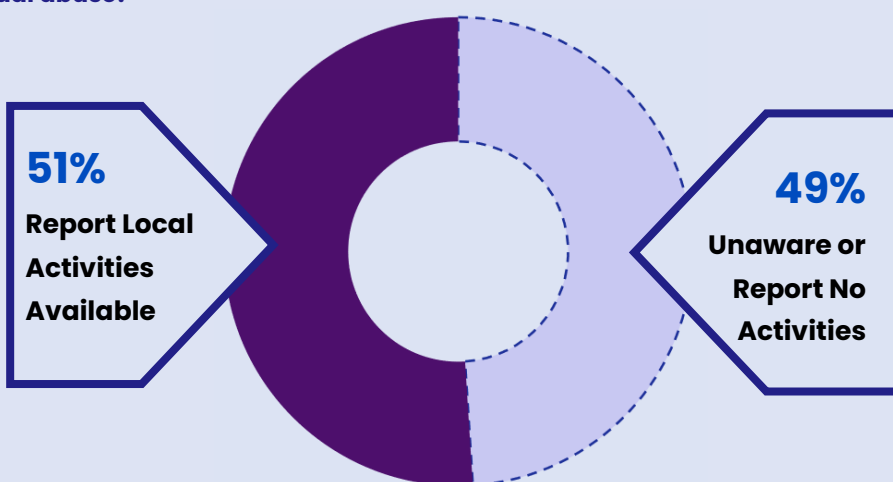
We asked participants about what prevention activities exist locally and how accessible they are.

UNCOVERING AN AVAILABILITY AND AWARENESS GAP

About half of adult community members could identify a prevention activity available in their local area. This suggests that either child sexual abuse prevention activities are not available to some people in Australia or are not well known, with both impacting accessibility.

Adult community members were asked:

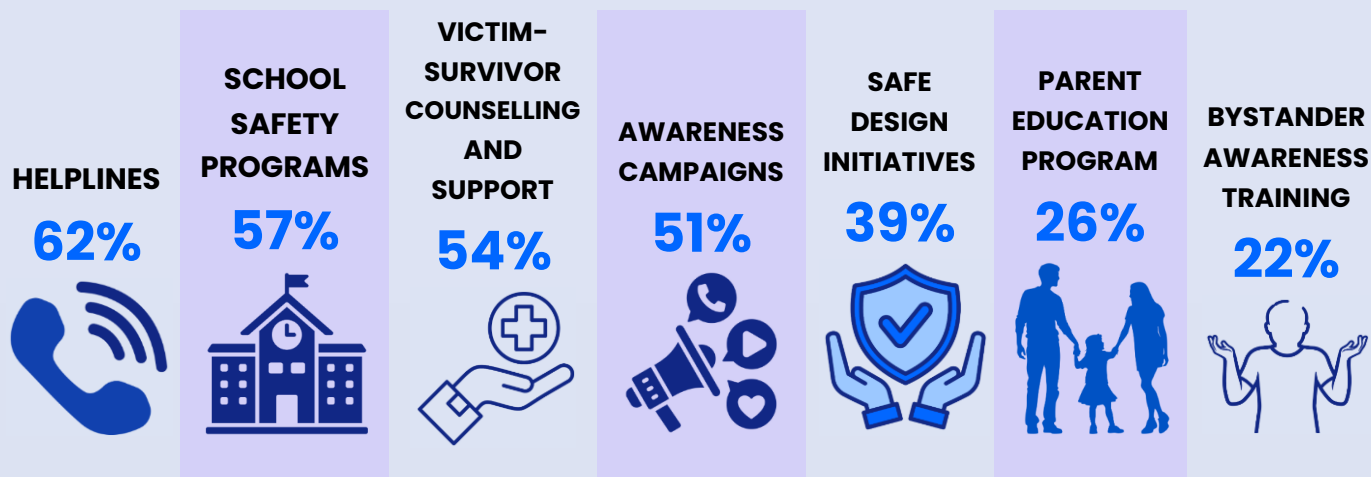
Can you think of any services or resources available in the area where you live that raise awareness and provide information and support to help prevent child sexual abuse?



But less than half of all adults (43%) and professionals (35%) could identify a standout prevention activity in their area.

WHERE WE INVEST MATTERS

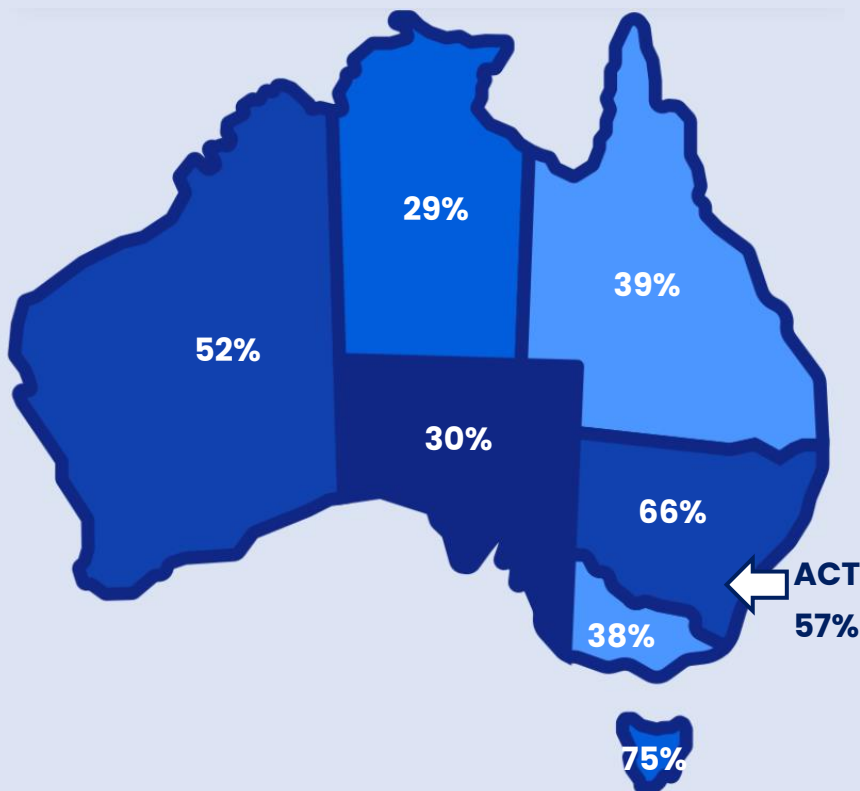
Findings highlight that prevention activities that have received the most investment to date are the most reported by participants, like helplines, school safety programs and counselling and support. Contextual prevention activities aimed at making places safer for children and young people, like safe design initiatives, bystander intervention and parent education programs were among the least known.



Who Can Access Prevention Activities?

We investigated geographic and age differences and considered accessibility from the perspective of priority groups including First Nations, multicultural, neurodiverse and LGBTIQ+ communities, and those living with a disability.

WHERE YOU LIVE MATTERS



Reported availability of prevention activities differed between states and territories.

"It is difficult to reach out to those you don't know"
(Adult community member)

"Visibility is really important as well"
(Adult community member)

"No local services in remote communities"
(Adult community member)

Reported availability of prevention activities dropped outside of metropolitan settings, with the lowest in rural areas.



Accessibility

And...



For every priority group, professionals reported increased difficulty in accessing prevention activities the further the distance from Metropolitan locations.

1.2X

In **Rural locations** it was harder to access services.

1.3X

In **Remote locations** it was harder to access services.

However, adult community members reported difficulties with accessibility for all priority populations, regardless of location.

YOUR AGE MATTERS

Young people and adults reported different barriers to accessing prevention activities. This suggests young people may face different accessibility challenges and have unique accessibility needs. For example, while young people and adults believe online options for engaging with child sexual abuse prevention activities would improve accessibility, this was much higher for young people.

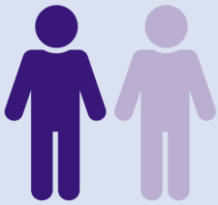


28%

more **young people** endorsed online access to prevention activities, compared to adults.

"If one person did the wrong thing or didn't help the right way, there quickly becomes talk of how unsafe or untrustworthy the support is. People who you can talk to need to be kind and understanding!"

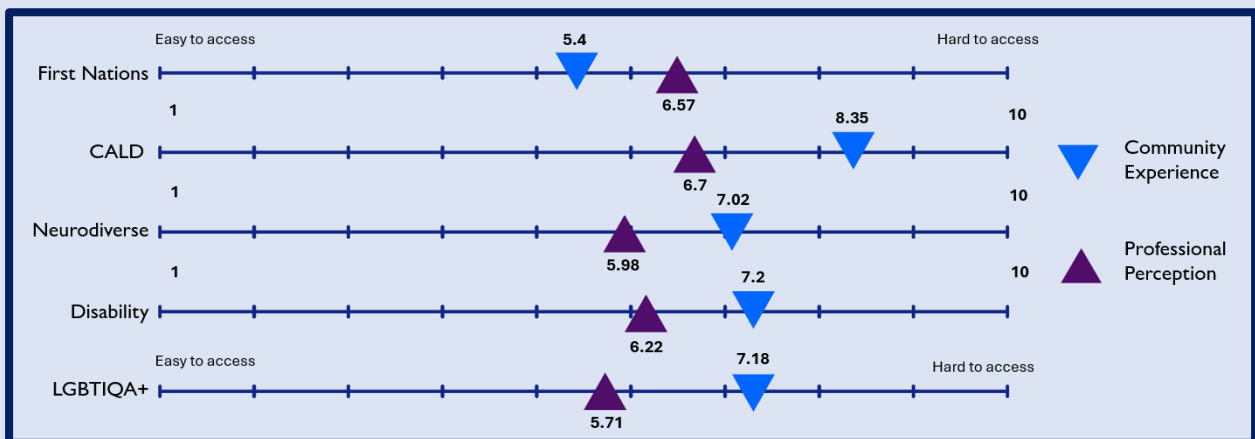
(Young Person)



1 in 2 young people said major barriers to accessing prevention activities include feeling unwelcome, and staff being unhelpful and unfriendly.

ACCESSIBILITY CHALLENGES ARE OFTEN UNDERESTIMATED BY PROFESSIONALS

Adults from each priority group **rated prevention activities as difficult to access** regardless of location. Professionals also perceived access to be difficult for these priority groups but underestimated the challenges in accessibility for many.



Compared to adult community members:

Professionals **over-estimated** how hard it is to access prevention activities for **First Nations Australians** by

18%

Professionals **under-estimated** how hard it is to access prevention activities for **peoples from multicultural backgrounds** by

25%

Professionals **under-estimated** how hard it is to access prevention activities for **Neurodiverse Australians** by

17%

Professionals **under-estimated** how hard it is to access prevention activities for **individuals living with Disability** by

16%

Professionals **under-estimated** how hard it is to access prevention activities for **individuals identifying as LGBTIQA+** by

26%

What Shapes Access to Prevention Activities?

We asked participants about factors they think make access to prevention activities easy and what factors create barriers to engagement.

NO SINGLE FACTOR DETERMINES ACCESSIBILITY

Beyond availability, accessibility of child sexual abuse prevention activities is also impacted by: people's awareness of these services, practical factors, and safe and inclusive experiences.

Service Experience Impacts Accessibility (Safe & Suitable)



- Safe
- Culturally safe
- Trustworthy
- Non-judgemental
- Confidential
- Welcoming
- Inclusive
- Tailored to the client
- Child-friendly
- Flexible
- Skilled staff

"Listens to the people who use it, doesn't shame or judge the people who use it"

(Adult community member)

But, it is **not one single factor** that determines accessibility. It is a combination of multiple factors.

"It's less accessible because the programs are not well advertised, and many people don't know about them. The information is mostly in English, with few options for other languages, and most sessions are held in areas that are hard for some families to reach"

(Professional)



"Multiple entry points: schools, health services, online platforms, helplines, community centres"

(Professional)

Practical Factors Impact Accessibility (Convenient and Affordable)



- Open when needed
- No wait list
- Available online
- Easy to travel to
- Available parking
- Many different ways to engage
- Free or low cost

Accessibility of child sexual abuse prevention activities is also impacted by systems and individual level factors for example funding limitations or people not recognising the benefits of engaging with prevention activities.

ACCESS TO PREVENTION IS NOT EQUAL

It is filtered through multiple layers – from what's available, to what's known, to what's accessible, to what's recognised as needed – **reducing access to child sexual abuse prevention activities across Australia.**



When we understand what shapes access—what makes prevention easier or harder to reach—we can take action to remove barriers and strengthen pathways, ensuring all children and families have real opportunities for child sexual abuse prevention.

¹This project was funded by the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse.

²Graphics created using NotebookLM and Canva.

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