



Safety and Violence

#CovidUnder19: Life Under Coronavirus is an initiative to meaningfully involve children in responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. 26,258 children from 137 countries across all five UN regions responded to our survey. More detail on this can be found at the end of this paper. This briefing presents our findings relating to safety and violence



UNCRC ARTICLE 19

Article 19 of the [UNCRC](#) says that children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence including physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.

Children were asked a range of questions on feelings of safety, exposure to violence and access to support. They were asked to compare their experiences since Coronavirus began, to those prior to it – were things better, the same or worse?

Many children reported feeling safer than, or as safe as, they had done before the pandemic, and many felt at no greater risk of violence. However, this was not the case for all children. The survey results demonstrate that some children are at increased risk of violence as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This highlights groups that may require specific attention and support in protecting their right to safety and freedom from violence during periods of lockdown and global crises.



THE VIEWS OF THE CHILDREN'S ADVISORY GROUP

The Children's Advisory Group were presented with some of the comments left by children on their surveys which related to safety and violence. They identified four themes: safety at home/ where children live; safety online; the impacts of Covid-19 on mental health; dealing with the impact of Covid-19 on mental health. The first two topics are discussed in detail below, integrating some of the quotations the Advisory Group identified as important. In relation to mental health, their analysis revealed that for some children, home could be less safe during the pandemic due to feelings of isolation or feeling 'trapped' which could increase anxiety, depression and stress.



Safety and Violence

FEELING SAFE WHERE THEY LIVE

36% of children felt **safer at home** (or where they lived) since Coronavirus began; 56% reported feeling as safe as they had done prior to the pandemic.

Younger children, those aged 8-10 years, were the age group most likely to report feeling more safe at home or where they lived.

Some of those who reported feeling safer noted this was because indoors was the safest place to be during the pandemic. For others being at home meant they were less exposed to violence in communities and schools.

'I feel safe at home. Because of Covid-19 I feel unsafe outside the house' (Boy, 9, Pakistan)

'I didn't have to go outside and be bullied about the way I look and how I act'. (NB*, 13, UK)

'Previously my mother used to be outside home most of the times. Now she is always at home. I don't need to do household works. I'm spending time with my mother all day. As liquor shops are closed so case of domestic violence is less. Previously the male members became drunk and used to create nuisance within the family as well as community. But during lockdown, the male members are doing household work and outside work together.'
(Girl, 15, India)

*Children who did not identify with a binary gender are identified as NB throughout the report

FEELING LESS SAFE WHERE THEY LIVE

9% of children felt **less safe in their homes** or where they lived since the outbreak of Coronavirus.

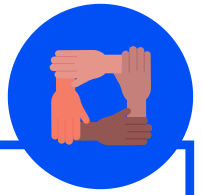
Feeling unsafe was particularly high among some groups: almost one-quarter of **migrant children** (24%) and those living in a **detention centre, refugee camp or homeless centre** (23%) felt less safe at home/ where they lived, and 22% of children who were **seeking asylum** felt less safe at home/ where they lived.

ONLINE SAFETY

While the **majority** of children reported **feeling safer** (14%) or as safe (70%) online during Coronavirus, **17% reported feeling less safe**

Almost one in five children aged 8-10 years (19%) felt less safe online

'The online is sometimes unsafe and there are many anonymous messages who speak vulgar to you. I know how to report or block them but many don't. We need to make a change.' (Girl, 15, India)



EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE

Most children reported hearing, witnessing or experiencing **less violence** (52%), or the same levels of violence (39%), as they had done prior to the Coronavirus pandemic. This may reflect the high levels of community violence that some were previously exposed to (see above 'feeling safe').

9% of all children reported hearing, witnessing or experiencing **more violence**.

Some groups experienced higher levels of violence than others: 22% of children from **migrant communities**; 20% of children **living in a detention centre, refugee camp or homeless centre**; 20% of children **seeking asylum**; 19% of children who identify as **LGBTQ+**; and 14% of children with **disabilities** said they had heard, witnessed or experienced more violence than before the pandemic.

'I suffer domestic abuse because I'm a trans person. I don't have any support from my family, and I have no friends' (Girl, 17, Chile)

'I heard from my mother some of the children in the community have experienced violence such as forced for early marriages, other working too much because they spend more time at home while others are involved in casual work which is not safe for children especially now with covid in town' (Boy, 13, Tanzania)



HELP WHEN FEELING UNSAFE

Overall, **one-third (33%)** of children had **greater awareness of how to seek help** if they felt unsafe compared to before the pandemic. This was particularly the case for **younger children** (8-10 years) (41%) and **children living in residential care/ homes** (42%).

These findings may point to effective communication, information (Art. 17, UNCRC) and processes put in place to support these children at this time of crisis.



LESS HELP WHEN FEELING UNSAFE

11% of all children reported having **less knowledge of how to seek support** since the start of the pandemic. Some groups were more likely than others to say they had less knowledge of how to access help if worried or unsafe: 18% of children who identify as **LGBTQ+**; 21% of children **seeking asylum**; and **22%** of children identifying as belonging to **migrant communities reported less knowledge of how to access support since the start of the pandemic.**

37% of children who felt less safe at home or where they lived also reported having less knowledge, since the pandemic began, or how to get help or support if they needed it.

One in five (20%) children who reported feeling less safe at home or where they lived since Coronavirus began said that they 'never' had an adult they could talk to or contact if they needed support.

'In case of quarrels or violence in the family I cannot ask for help, because they cannot help me to go in another place. This is an issue, all the people are in quarantine. Many emergency phone numbers for certain issues are not working at the moment, or you keep calling and nobody answers.' (Girl, 10, Moldova)

'It's a fact that the cases of violence have increased during lockdown and its possible that a lot of children have experienced violence. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough information available to young people on how to deal with situations like these and who to reach out to for help' (Boy, 16, Greece)

WHAT WOULD YOU ASK GOVERNMENT TO DO?



Some children offered advice on how the government could protect children from abuse/violence. These are some of the things they said:

'Even though there is a pandemic going on there are people out there who experience abuse daily. The awareness, even in Canada and how to access the resources is not explains/told in the best way. Finding that information should be basic knowledge for any human being' (Girl, 16, Canada).

'Get Social Workers to check up on families and children, preferably those with any slight history of abuse. Provide children-specific guidelines for dealing with COVID-19'. (Boy, 17, Nigeria)

'Many children have abusive households all across the globe. Child physical abuse, mental abuse and also sexual abuse is very common. They thought of school as an escape way to stay away from their household. As the corona virus has arrived, they have to stay home and deal with the traumatic experiences. The government should try to make sure children have a way to call for help and to make sure households are protecting them.' (Girl, 14, Pakistan)

'Ensure that every child has a safe home that is not subject to violence' (Girl, 17, Greece)



Initiative Co-leads

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All children have rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). #CovidUnder19 is a multi-stakeholder initiative that brings together children, civil society organisations, academia and other partners to work together in understanding children's experiences of their rights during the COVID19 pandemic. A goal of #CovidUnder19 is to create a space for children across the globe to be meaningfully involved in the discussions around issues triggered by the COVID19 pandemic and contribute towards shaping the post-COVID19 world.

On 28 May 2020, the initiative launched a global consultation survey to understand children's experiences of their rights under the coronavirus pandemic and their views on how their rights could be better realised. The survey applied the Centre for Children's Rights' innovative approach to rights-based research directly involving children and young people as advisors from the outset. The survey has been designed by child rights experts and 270 children from 26 countries. The survey was open until 31 July 2020. It was made available in 27 languages as well as an Easy Read version for children and young people with intellectual disabilities.

Children and young people contributed to data analysis and interpretation. Each thematic paper presents key findings. Data is disaggregated as far as possible and where findings are significant. Please note that the survey is not intended to be representative of the global child population. Findings are presented on a global basis.

For more information please contact covidunder19@gmail.com

The Centre for Children's Rights at Queen's University Belfast designed and conducted the survey and developed the thematic briefings in collaboration with Initiative partners and a team of child advisors. This was supported by an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account award through Queen's University Belfast