

# Children and young people in out-of-home care in NSW: a summary of their views and experiences

## Summary

- The [NSW] National Out-Of-Home Care (OOHC) and NSW Residential Care Surveys asked children and young people about their views and experiences of care. The aim of the surveys was to understand how they are tracking against key factors that influence better outcomes.
- The NSW results were generally encouraging across all types of care, with children and young people responding positively across all indicators. However, the results from the NSW Residential Care survey were generally lower than results from the [NSW] National OOHC Survey.
- Most children and young people in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey reported feeling safe and settled (96%), having strong family connections (97%) and having a significant adult that cares about what happens to them (99%).
- Despite these positive indicators, the survey also highlighted areas for improvement. About a quarter of children and young people reported that they don't usually get a say in what happens to them or don't usually feel listened to (24%) and a similar percentage were not satisfied with the level of contact they had with their birth family (27%).
- When comparing the two surveys, children and young people in residential care reported lower levels of satisfaction across some key indicators. For example, around half reported they didn't usually get to have a say in what happens to them or didn't usually feel listened to (51%) and more than a quarter didn't feel safe and settled (28%).

## Introduction

This FACSAR Snapshot presents a summary of the results of two state-wide surveys conducted by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) in 2015 looking at the experiences of children and young people in OOHC – the [NSW] National OOHC Survey and the NSW Residential Care Survey (Box 1).

The surveys were designed to report against key factors that influence better outcomes for children and young people, and to inform planning and drive improvement in the consistency and quality of care provided to children and young people.

The survey results reported here are descriptive only and do not indicate causal relationships or take into account other underlying factors that could contribute to the findings. No significance testing has been undertaken.

## Why we conducted the surveys

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 provides the context for these surveys with the overarching agenda to improve the safety and wellbeing of Australia's Children. The National Framework defines 13 standards 'to ensure children in need of out-of-home care are given consistent, best practice care, no matter where they live' (FAHCSIA, 2012).

The survey results are reported against eight indicators which map to a sub-set of the OOHC national standards:

- sense of security
- participation
- community activity
- family connection
- family contact
- sense of community
- children have a significant adult
- leaving care

### Box 1 – About the Surveys

The [NSW] National OOHC Survey was collected as part of the National OOHC Survey and was completed by 359 children and young people who were:

- Aged 8-17 years residing in OOHC under the *NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1988* and
- Whose care arrangements were ordered by the Children's Court and for whom parental responsibility was transferred to the Minister/Secretary and
- who had been on a relevant court order for three months or more.

The NSW Residential Care Survey was completed by 321 children and young people who were:

- Aged 8-17 years residing in residential OOHC under the *NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1988*.

The survey enables results for each indicator to be reported for a range of characteristics including age, sex, Aboriginality, placement type, and provider type.

Similar surveys were conducted during 2015 across all states and territories to facilitate national reporting, although there were some differences in the sampling and methodologies used (AIHW 2016).

As this was the first time the surveys were run, the results set a benchmark and also help to identify areas of strength and weakness, which can help improve practice.

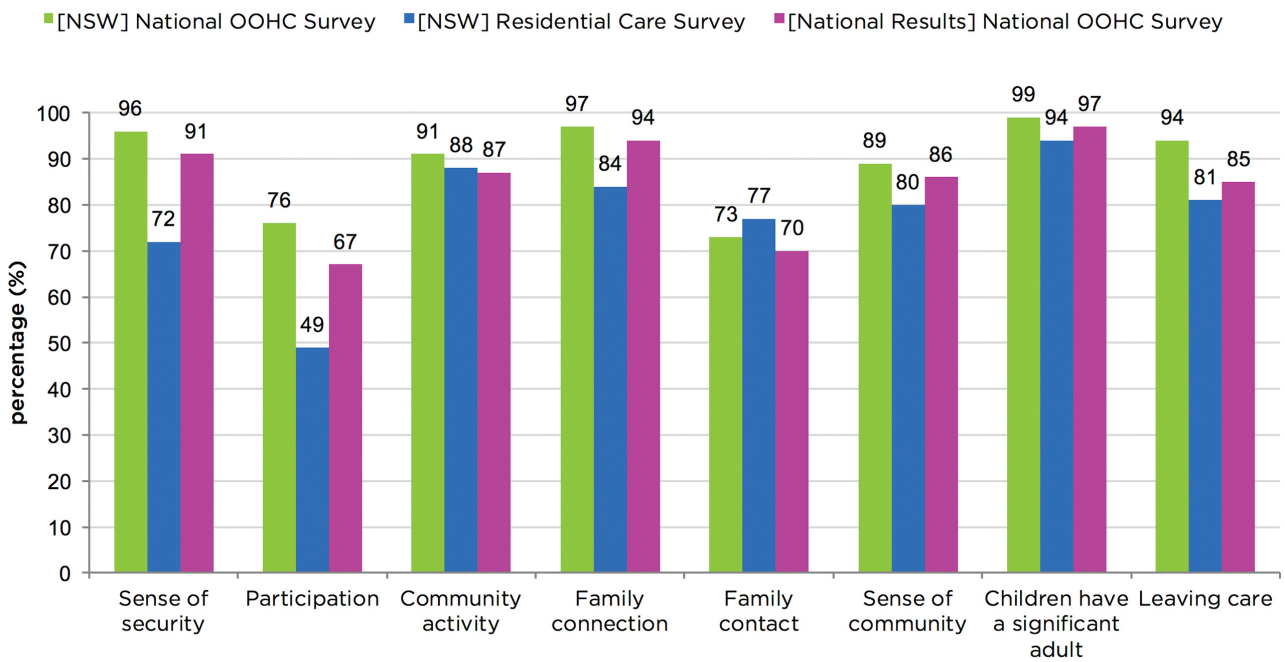
## What did the surveys find?

The results from the [NSW] National OOHC Survey were consistently higher than the national results across all indicators. Results from the NSW Residential Care Survey were generally below the national results (Figure 1).

In comparing these results, it should be noted that these differences may be due to differences in the characteristics of the populations of children and young people that were included in each survey, as well as the different collection methodologies used across jurisdictions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For example, the [NSW] National OOHC Survey almost exclusively included children and young people who were in either foster care or relative/kin care.

Figure 1: NSW and National OOH and NSW Residential Care Survey results by indicator, 2015

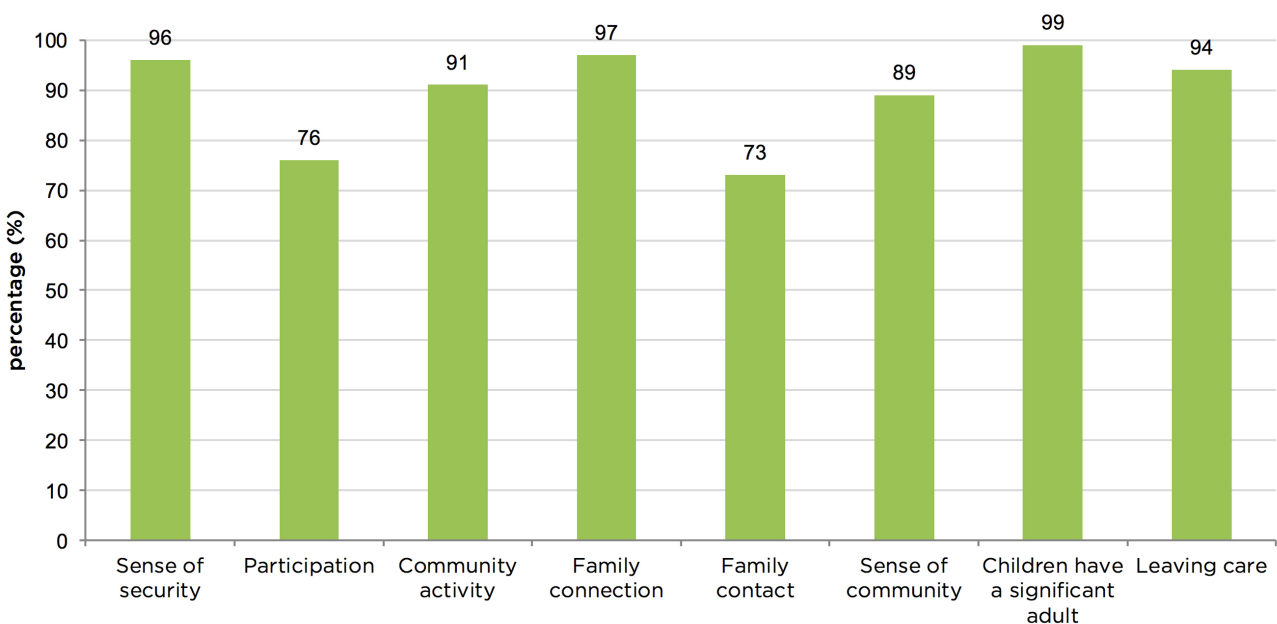


Source: NSW National OOH Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015. National data based on AIHW material, out-of-home care survey national data set 2015 (except for the leaving care average).

### Key findings for children and young people in OOH in NSW

Overall, the results from the [NSW] National OOH Survey are encouraging with children and young people reporting positively against all indicators.

Figure 2: [NSW] National OOH survey results by indicator, 2015



Source: [NSW] National OOH Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS

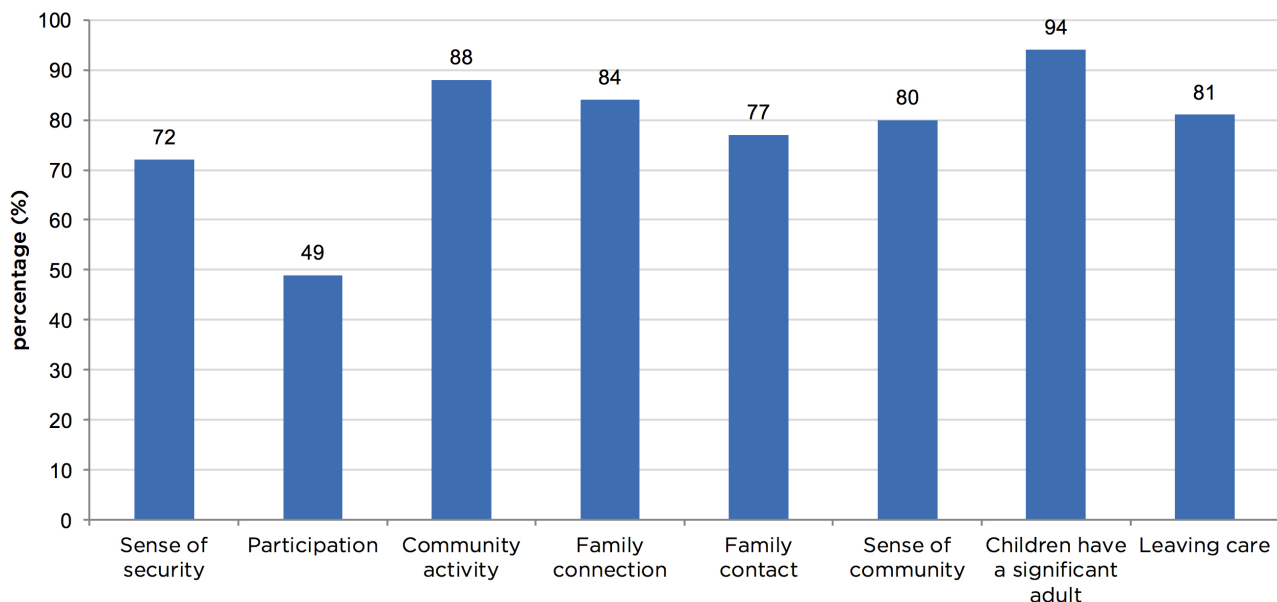
Nearly all children and young people reported feeling safe and settled (96%); feeling close to the people they were currently living with and/or to family they didn't live with (97%); and that they had a significant adult that cares about what happens to them (99%).

However, the results also highlight policy and practice areas that may require further investigation and improvement. For example, almost a quarter of children and young people reported that they don't usually get to have a say in what happens to them and/or don't usually feel listened to (24%) and a similar proportion were not satisfied with the level of contact they had with their family (27%).

## Key findings for children and young people in Residential Care in NSW

While the results from the NSW Residential Care Survey were generally lower, they are also encouraging with the majority of children and young people responding positively to most indicators.

Figure 3: NSW Residential Care Survey results by indicator, 2015



Source: NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS

However, a considerable proportion responded negatively to a number of indicators. In particular, only 49 per cent of children and young people felt that they usually get to have a say in what happens to them and usually felt listened to; more than a quarter didn't feel safe and settled (28%); and almost a quarter were not satisfied with the level of contact they have with their family (23%).

## Key findings by characteristics

Looking at the survey results by key characteristics of children and young people and their placements shows:

- Higher proportions of children and young people in relative/kinship care were satisfied with the level of contact they had with their family (76%) and with their sense of community (93%) than those in foster care (72% and 87% respectively).
- Just over half of the children aged 8-11 years in residential care were satisfied with the amount of contact they had with their family compared to 73 per cent for 12-14 year olds and 84 per cent of 15-17 year olds in residential care. This was also observed with those children in foster and relative/kinship care, although to a lesser extent.
- Results appear to be better for children and young people with longer placements.
- Female children and young people in residential care responded less positively than males in residential care across a number of indicators including sense of security (61% of females reported feeling safe and settled compared to 79% of males); participation (39% of females reported that they usually got to have a say in what happens to them and usually felt listened to compared to 56% of males); community activity (79% compared to 94%); and leaving care (73% compared to 88%).

## Where can I found out more?

More detailed analysis of the NSW survey results is available in NSW Department of Family and Community Services 2017, *The views and experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care in NSW: NSW results from the National Out-of-Home Care and NSW Residential Care Surveys* [FACSAR Report](#).

## References

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016, *The views of children and young people in out-of-home care: overview of indicator results from a pilot national survey 2015*, Bulletin 132, Cat no. AUS 197, AIHW, Canberra, [www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129554764](http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129554764).

Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA) 2012, *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children – Second three year action plan 2012-2015*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.

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