

# **‘Stay Safe Online, Tell Someone’ Evaluation Report**

**Institute of Child Protection Studies**

**September 2021**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This evaluation was commissioned by the Y, formerly known as the YMCA

## AUTHORS

The project leader for this report was Douglas Russell, assisted by a team from the Institute of Child Protection Studies at Australian Catholic University:

**Douglas Russell**, Senior Research Officer  
**Professor Daryl Higgins**, Director  
**James McDougall**, Policy Officer & Project Manager  
**Sebastian Trew**, Research Officer

The authors would like to thank Maria Battaglia, Communication Officer, for editing services

## INSTITUTE OF CHILD PROTECTION STUDIES

Australian Catholic University  
Postal: PO Box 256, Dickson, ACT, 2602  
Phone: (02) 6209 1228  
Email: [icps@acu.edu.au](mailto:icps@acu.edu.au)  
Web: [www.acu.edu.au/icps](http://www.acu.edu.au/icps)  
Twitter: [@ACU\\_ICPS](https://twitter.com/ACU_ICPS)  
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/institute-of-child-protection-studies/>

## TO CITE THE REPORT

Institute of Child Protection Studies. (2021). *'Stay Safe Online, Tell Someone' Evaluation Report*. Melbourne: Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University.

© Australian Catholic University 2021

With the exception of the ACU logo, content provided by third parties, and any material protected by a trademark, all textual material presented in this publication is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence (CC BY 4.0) . You may copy, distribute, and build upon this work for commercial and non-commercial purposes; however, you must attribute ACU as the copyright holder of the work. Content that is copyrighted by a third party is subject to the licensing arrangements of the original owner. Any copyright questions please contact ACU at [copyright.officer@acu.edu.au](mailto:copyright.officer@acu.edu.au).

## Contents

Executive summary .....	4
1. Background .....	6
The Y .....	6
Program overview .....	6
The Y's 'Stay Safe Online, Tell Someone' program .....	7
Project details .....	8
2. Literature review of online safety .....	9
Children and young people online .....	9
Preventing online abuse .....	11
Evaluation of in-person (not digital) programs aimed at reducing online abuse .....	12
Digitalising safety programs .....	13
3. How the Y evaluated the program .....	16
4. Results .....	17
5. Conclusions and implications .....	19
Things to consider .....	19
Reference list .....	21

## Executive summary

### Introduction

Children and young people are spending more time online than ever before. In addition to other forms of abuse and harm, online abuse—including sexual abuse, grooming, sextortion, child sexual abuse (CSA) material related offenses and cyberbullying—is a concern that must be addressed.

The Y developed and evaluated an adapted version of the ‘Stay Safe, Tell Someone’ program. The ‘Stay Safe Online, Tell Someone’ program was developed through adapting the existing program using data analysed from focus groups with children and young people and utilises an online/digital delivery method.

The aim of the program is to increase program users’ resilience, confidence and perception of online safety, and to ensure users have the information they need to have their voices heard and to go to someone if they have concerns or worries.

### Method

As part of an initial high-level evaluation of the efficacy of the ‘Stay Safe Online, Tell Someone’ program participants across three age groups: (1) children aged 8 to 12, (2) young people aged 13 to 17 and (3) adults, answered four or five Yes/No evaluation questions directly after participating in the program.

The questions asked participants about whether participation in the program had the following effect:

- did they feel safer, more confident, and more resilient when online?
- did they have the information to tell someone if they had concerns or worries about online activity?
- did they have a voice about online safety?

The target rate for positive (Yes) responses to the evaluation questions across all three age groups was 80%.

### Results

Across all three age groups, and across all questions, more than 80% of program users responded positively to the questions. These findings suggest that program users who answered the evaluation questions directly after taking part in the ‘Stay Safe Online, Tell

Someone' program felt more resilient, confident and safer, felt they had information to talk to someone if they were concerned, and had a voice regarding their safety online.

### **Conclusion**

Based on data collected immediately post-completion, we found that the 'Stay Safe Online, Tell Someone' program increases children, young people and adults' feelings and perceptions of online safety.

Further evaluation of the programs ability to improve online safety among the community could focus on the following:

- measuring improvements in confidence, resilience and perceptions of safety online using a longitudinal design (say 12 months after taking part in the program)
- utilising Likert scale-based questions to collect more finely detailed aspects of individuals perceptions of online safety and character traits related to this (i.e., confidence, resilience etc.)
- evaluating different delivery methods (i.e., online vs. in-person) of the program to identify any potential benefits or disadvantages to digital/online delivery of the program.

## 1. Background

### The Y

The Y (previously YMCA) was founded in 1844 in England as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), its original focus was on the welfare of young men. It expanded to the United States and then to Australia in 1851. By the 1960s, the emphasis was on youth work, youth clubs, physical development, leadership training, education, and welfare. Now calling itself 'the Y', it is a community not-for-profit and the oldest youth organisation in the world. Its services in Australia include children's services (early learning, kindergarten, and Outside School Hours Care), recreation (swimming, gyms, gymnastics), camping, youth programs and disability services.

As an entity of YMCA Australia, Y Safeguarding provides support, advise, resources and training to Member Ys. Y Safeguarding aims to support all Member Ys to empower all children and young people to feel safe and be safe at the Y, in their families and in their communities.. It also ensures that the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse are fully implemented within the networks of organisations.

### Program overview

The Y co-designed and created an abuse prevention program called 'Stay Safe, Tell Someone' with children and young people. The 'Stay Safe, Tell Someone' program:

- is based on nudge theory (encouraging people to change their behaviour through the use of activities, images, and words)
- supports the safeguarding vision and pillars of the Y in culture, operations, and environment
- was co-designed and developed in consultation with over 500 young people from across Australia
- empowers children and young people
- was designed for delivery in-person (face-to-face) in Y programs.

While there are many overlapping features between the different types<sup>1</sup> of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, and exposure to family violence), recent attention now also

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/what-child-abuse-and-neglect>

focuses on abuse that occurs online. The following categories of concerns related to abuse of children online have been identified (UK Safer Internet Centre, 2021):

1. **Conduct:** at risk through their own behaviour; for example, by sharing too much information
2. **Content:** age-inappropriate or unreliable content available to children and young people
3. **Contact:** exposed to the risk of abuse including through predatory entrapment ('grooming')
4. **Commercialism/Cyberscams:** hidden costs or advertising in apps, games, and websites.

Online safety (or 'e-safety') is a growing area of research, policy and professional development and learning—particularly for children and young people for whom the internet is such an integral part of their lives. Safety discussions can be done at home with parents and carers. They can also occur as part of more formal education, such as through the curriculum or in school settings (i.e., Internet Safety Days). Important aspects of e-safety include:

- having conversations (sometimes uncomfortable ones) regarding online safety
- understanding the nature of online grooming, online abuse, and cyberbullying
- teaching digital resilience
- understanding the effect of pornography on children and young people
- fostering the rights of children and young people in the digital world (Higgins, 2021).

## **The Y's 'Stay Safe Online, Tell Someone' program**

In 2020, Y Safeguarding secured funding from Australia's eSafety Commissioner to develop and evaluate an online education program to empower children, young people, and community members to report unsafe online behaviours. The aim is to digitalise 'Stay Safe, Tell Someone' for online delivery with a focus on staying safe online.

In preparing for digitising the online safety education program 'Stay Safe Online, Tell Someone' program, the Y was informed by the original 'Stay, Tell Someone' program (for all forms of abuse). Development was also informed by analysis of data collected in six focus groups across Australia with children aged 5 to 12, young people aged 13 to 18, and with families. The aim of conducting the focus groups was to understand:

- **Use of the internet:** How do children, young people and adults use the internet? What apps/programs/services do they use?
- **Knowledge of online safety:** What does e-safety mean to children, young people, and adults? Do they feel safe online? Where do they get information regarding online safety?
- **Learning preferences and online safety learning desires:** What are children and young people's favourite way to learn? What do children, young people and adults want to know about online safety?

Data analysis informed the content and methods used in the digitalised program. Key findings from a program development report<sup>2</sup> (provided to the Y in March 2021) used to support the design of the program included:

- children, young people's, and adults' internet use is mostly centred around social media
- even young children have a basic understanding of online safety
- adults are concerned about both their safety and that of their children.

## Project details

The Y additionally engaged the Australian Catholic University's Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) for support with analysing data on the effectiveness of the program. This initial analysis looked at how effective the program was achieving the following aims:

1. Increase program users' confidence to talk to someone if they feel worried about something online
2. Ensure program users have the knowledge of how to tell someone if they are worried about something online
3. Ensure program users know who to tell if they are worried about something online

The results from analysis of these evaluation data will be used both in the ongoing design of the online program and evaluation of the program's initial roll out from March 2021.

---

<sup>2</sup> See the program development report '*Children and young people's perceptions of online safety: Findings from six focus groups at the Y*', Institute of Child Protection Studies, 2021, for details.



## 2. Literature review of online safety

### Children and young people online

It is recognised that globally, most children have access to the internet via a wide range of internet-enabled devices such as mobile phones, tablets, computers, and game consoles. One in three internet users is a child or young person (Stoilova et al., 2021). Online learning for children of all ages has increased in recent years (Livingstone et al., 2019). This increase was particularly pronounced in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Kim, 2020).

With increased online learning, and more children globally accessing the internet daily, it is timely and crucial to clarify how children can be safeguarded from harm or abuse online (Livingstone et al., 2019). As such, an important aspect of child sexual abuse (CSA) prevention is the significance of children's safety from online risks (Wurtele, 2009). Children's education regarding the digital world and how to use the internet and internet-enabled devices predominantly focuses on learning how to use the technologies for educational and personal purposes. Education is also important for the development of skills required in an ever-increasing job landscape requiring digital systems skills and information and computational thinking (Cameron, 2020). As stated by Trew, Russell, et al. (2021), globally the focus of those providing material about online learning and using digital tools has been focused on broader digital citizenship or literacy, not CSA prevention:

CSA prevention is almost never included in programs, despite a major shift to online learning in education. Prevention of CSA seems to get lost in the plethora of other content. And even though prevention of CSA is acknowledged universally with numerous in-person CSA prevention programs, and largely universal access, there is a dearth of literature that identifies or evaluates online-delivered CSA prevention programs. If CSA is addressed at all, the topic often takes a very 'light touch' approach to serious harms (p. 24).

At present, the range of approaches organisations take to addressing children's safety from online risks are limited, typically through online safety being covered on Safer Internet Day or through stand-alone, one-off e-safety presentations and workshops delivered to children in school by for-profit consulting companies (Trew, Higgins, et al., 2021).

## Online abuse and safety

Online or technology-facilitated abuse is defined as “Use of the internet, mobile phone or other form of information and communications technology (ICT) to bully, threaten, harass, groom, sexually abuse or sexually exploit a child.” (Radford et al., n.d. p. vii). This definition can be further broken down into two parts.

1. **Cyberbullying:** this includes harassment and threatening behaviour which is often defined as “an aggressive, intentional act carried out by an individual or a group using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly over time against a target who cannot easily defend him/herself” (Smith & Slonje, 2010 p. 349).
2. **Online sexual abuse:** this includes the grooming behaviours that often precede abuse and involves direct contact with a child or young person.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a broader term and does not always involve direct contact with a victim. For example, possession of CSE material is an example of CSE. Sexting, another example of CSE, occurs when a sexually explicit message, image, or video of a person under the legal age is created or shared without consent, electronically (Strasburger et al., 2019).

Although evidence indicates that participation in some internet safety interventions are associated with an increase in online safety knowledge (Mishna et al., 2010), there is limited evidence to suggest it leads directly to changes in children and young people’s online risky behaviour. Third et al. (2014) found that many young people (aged 6-18 years across eight countries) know about CSE and the related risks they may encounter online, such as viewing adult content such as pornography and online sexual content such as nudity. Third et al. also found that some young people, in particular girls, expressed the concern of being groomed online and sexting. In the EU Kids Online project, the incidence rate for having a negative experience online in the previous year—which the authors chose not to define due to the notion that the same experience could be either positive or negative depending on the child and the situation—ranged from 7% to 45% for the 9-17-year-olds surveyed as part of the project (Smahel et al., 2020).

Prevalence of online abuse varies depending on the type of abuse being considered:

- **Cyberbullying:** varies substantially in prevalence depending on the methodology used (Campbell & Bauman, 2018) but has been conservatively estimated through an extrapolation process in Australia (2007 to 2013) at approximately 20% (Spears et

al., 2014). A meta-analysis by Modecki et al. (2014) found a victimisation rate of 15% across 80 international studies.

- Receiving unwanted sexual solicitations: between 13% and 19% (Ospina et al., 2010)
- Forwarding a sext without consent: 12% (Madigan et al., 2018)
- Having a sext they sent forwarded without consent: 8.4% (Madigan et al., 2018)
- Being an adolescent victim or offender of sextortion: 5% and 3% respectively - (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020)

## **Preventing online abuse**

The digital landscape is changing quickly and the nature of risk of online abuse is evolving in such ways that children are exposed to emerging risks before adults have the knowledge and tools to limit the chance of exposure and reduce the associated harm caused (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2021). Seven years ago, Livingstone and Smith (2014) presented an assessment of the state of online risks, including contributing and protective factors towards these risks that are threatening, aggressive, and sexually harmful in nature. Since then, attention has shifted from the prevalence of online risks and factors that contribute to them, towards a focus on solutions that benefit, not just protect, teens (Pinter et al., 2019). The thinking around solutions includes “designing solutions to effectively protect, mitigate, and empower children and young people to cope with the risk that they will inevitably encounter online” (Pinter et al., 2019, p. 352).

Efforts have been made to incorporate the views of children into the design of online safety programs. The significance of including children’s ideas into the design and creation of online safety tools, programs and curriculums is not only evident within research where children’s views have been sought, but is also an important part of ensuring children’s digital rights are considered (Livingstone & Third, 2017). Much of this research is often done with children aged eight and above. This is important considering the high number of young children (under eight) accessing the internet, as well as the number of hours these children spend online. Pre-school children do not have the same ‘internet cognition’ as older children; that is, they do not understand that the programs and services they use are part of a socially connected abstract world. Simply adapting for younger children the existing online safety programs developed for older children is unlikely to be successful without consideration of young children’s understanding of the internet and other developmental differences (Edwards et al., 2018). It is therefore important that even very young children are included in the development of online safety programs.

Kumar et al. (2018) reviewed existing resources focusing on managing privacy online with a group of children aged 8 to 11 to identify recommendations for online safety program designers. The findings of their study indicate the importance of including relatable characters in easy-to-follow storylines, going beyond simple lists of 'dos and don'ts', and exposing children to a range of positive and negative outcomes as a result of personal information privacy choices that they make online. To inform recommendations for the design of online safety programs, Hartikainen et al. (2019) ran workshops with children aged 11 to 12. They interpreted the findings through the lens of Schwartz's theory of basic human values and recommended that online safety programs include the following elements:

- include concrete advice for learners through a positive tone
- consider both children's and educators' objectives and related values,
- integrate aspects of children's contemporary media culture.

## **Evaluation of in-person (not digital) programs aimed at reducing online abuse**

A range of initiatives and strategies aimed at preventing and reducing online abuse have been trialled by a range of stakeholders including schools, parents, technology companies and regulatory bodies (Livingstone et al., 2017). Awareness campaigns, such as Safer Internet Day, are one such strategy expected to bring about changes to attitudes and practice. Parents provide protective barriers or mediate likely exposure to potential online risks by screening or restriction of their children's online use. Online industries (including social media platform providers) work to ensure suitable policies are implemented that limit risk by blocking easy or unrestricted access to online high-risk content, scenarios, and situations. However, most of these have not been independently evaluated, and those that have been evaluated are limited in their content or modes of teaching and learning (Livingstone et al., 2017). For example, results of an evaluation of internet safety education programs for children and young people in the United States (US) indicate that many of these programs lack key elements of effective prevention education, including a lack of research-based messages, skill-based learning objectives, opportunities for youth to practice new skills, and sufficient time for learning (Jones et al., 2013).

Law enforcement presenters in the US have tried to implement an evidence-based tool to evaluate programs that address online harassment and to monitor outcomes (Jones et al., 2013). However, Jones et al. argued that law enforcement is potentially not well positioned to communicate a successful message or tone to young people due to the orientation of crime and danger and punishment. The authors stressed that outcome evaluation of online

safety-based programs is the critical next step. They also argued that programs must have a clearly defined program logic, and an explicit connection between message and skills and how intended behaviours will lead to improved safety, reduction in harm, and improvement in wellbeing. A gap remains in current knowledge for understanding what works and why to reduce online abuse, making it difficult to facilitate a reduction in harm and promote wellbeing (Livingstone et al., 2017).

There is some evidence to suggest that face-to-face (traditional) bullying prevention programs could be effective for use in the prevention of cyberbullying (Ang, 2015; Cassidy et al., 2013). Bullying and cyberbullying have overlapping risk factors (Hajnal, 2021). A whole-school approach to preventing face-to-face bullying is widely applied but there are not many evaluations of this approach. This approach includes teachers, parents, students, and other professional school-based staff, such as counsellors or psychologists, (Ang, 2015; van Cleemput et al., 2014). As such, a whole-school approach should be considered to address cyberbullying (Hajnal, 2021).

Despite these suggestions, and others such as broader education crime prevention initiatives, psychoeducation or social-emotional learning or empathy training, and peer mentor-led interventions (see for example Cassidy et al., 2013; Ciocancel et al., 2017; Hinduja & Patchin, 2014; Mishna et al., 2011), significant gaps remain. There is a lack of independent and rigorous evaluations that determine what program elements are effective towards prevention or reduction of online abuse and the associated long-term harms (Gaffney et al., 2019), or whether one approach is more effective than another, and why (Hutson et al., 2018).

## **Digitalising safety programs**

The increase in children and young people's engagement online and use of digital platforms has led to an increase over the last decade in the development of programs that aim to strengthen children's self-protection and enhance their safety online (Smahel et al., 2020). At the same time, online learning environments and digitally accessible education programs—sometimes called e-learning—have become more common and mainstream for both children and adults (Kentnor, 2015). One of the reasons behind the notion of presenting abuse prevention programs (relating to sexual abuse, CSE, and other forms of online abuse such as bullying) digitally or online, is the ability for such programs to be delivered at scale and more fiscally viable. Additionally, digital programs eliminate or reduce the need for employee travel and is more convenient and flexible in terms of the place and time programs are deployed (Paranal et al., 2012). When comparing face-to-face with online discussions in a

classroom environment, Wang and Woo (2007) concluded that online environments offered more opportunities for participants to express their opinion and were more comfortable and less aggressive (noting that this study was conducted with tertiary age students).

However, children—particularly young children aged under eight—learn best through play (Chism, 2006; Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2012) and will learn best when they get to use their senses, exchange information, and when there is rehearsal, feedback, application, and transfer of the material being learned (Chism, 2006). In evaluations of in-person abuse prevention programs (particularly on CSA) teaching methods that utilise active participation—such as modelling and rehearsal of skills—are more effective than programs that utilise passive teaching methods, such as watching videos or individual study (Brassard & Fiorvanti, 2015; Topping & Barron, 2009; Wurtele & Kenny, 2012). These teaching and learning methods do not always occur easily in digital environments.

There is a growing research base evaluating the efficacy of digitally provided online safety programs and interventions. From 2014 to 2018, programs and their associated evaluations tended to focus on CSA with individual modules or sections related to online safety. Studies evaluating purely online safety related programs or initiatives only started appearing from 2019.

Müller and colleagues (2014) evaluated ‘Cool and Safe’, a web-based training program for elementary school children, aged 8 to 11. The program mainly focuses on child sexual abuse but also, in one of the five units, it includes topics related to online abuse: friend requests, harassment in chats and protecting private information. The major goal of the program is to “prevent child sexual abuse by teaching knowledge about safe behaviours, appropriate and inappropriate touches, as well as good and bad secrets” (Muller et al., 2014, p. 61). The findings by Müller and colleagues suggested that the program improves knowledge and secure behavioural strategies and decreases children’s tendency to hide emotions. However, the findings were reported for the whole program with its focus largely on child sexual abuse (not CSE or other forms of online harm) and does not compare the efficacy of the web-based program against an in-person equivalent.

A mobile application (app) designed and evaluated by Lazarinis et al. (2019) covered online safety topics but largely—particularly in relation to the evaluation of application—focused on internet addiction and excessive screen time. The app was liked by both teachers and children aged 6 to 10. Children were able to identify the ‘lesson’ portrayed by the story within the app, signalling the app’s ability to portray online-related learning through a digital program. Similarly, but with older children, Nicolaidou and Venizelou (2020) designed and

evaluated a learning environment program entitled 'Be smart when online!' which is aimed at children age 11 to 12. Topics cover protection of personal data, protection from hackers and avoiding cyberbullying. The evaluation compared participants who engaged with the learning environment with a control group who received no e-safety formal instruction. Nicolaidou and Venizelou found that the e-safety skills of the children who engaged with the learning environment increased after using it while the children who received no training saw no increase.

Gushwa and colleagues (2019) evaluated an online CSA prevention training program (Enough! Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in MY School) aimed at teachers and adults responsible for protecting children. It was not, like the other programs we found in the literature, a child-focused prevention program. Gushwa and colleagues found that participants had higher knowledge and willingness to take action when required. The study did not report any comparison to an in-person training covering the same content, so it is not possible to claim that digital facilitation has better or equal intended efficacy. Another evaluation that didn't actually assess children's learning, a firsthand content analysis of Google's 'Be Internet Awesome' by Seale and Schoenberger (2018), found that it focused on e-safety concepts such as a digital version of the 'malevolent stranger' concept and individual users' use and misuse of information. In evaluating the program, Seale and Schoenberger noted concern about the lack of the information regarding the role organisations (such as Google) play in user privacy, and a surface level approach to e-safety.

We found one study (Moon et al., 2017) that developed and evaluated the effects of a mobile application for primary school-aged and pre-school children. It compared the online method with an equivalent in-person teaching method. While it is important to note that this program focuses on CSA (not online abuse) the study found no statistical difference between the two teaching methods. This could be seen as a positive outcome as it highlights the fact that the in-person method is not, in this case, better than the digital method.

There is overall knowledge of what works in digital delivery of online CSA and e-safety education prevention programs for children, but a particularly significant gap in the literature of what works for younger children (pre-school and primary school-aged children) and whether digital delivery methods are as effective as in-person presented programs and education. The large (and growing) proportion of children, including very young children, who have access to internet-enabled devices makes this an urgent priority and opportunity for enhancing the suite of prevention strategies that are available to organisations.

### 3. How the Y evaluated the program

Evaluative questions (see Tables 1, 2 and 3 in results section), developed by project staff at the Y, were presented to users of the program at the end of their engagement with the material. Using a Yes/No dichotomous response, the questions were designed to understand whether the program led to improvements in five areas:

- feelings of safety online
- feelings of confidence online
- resilience to face online safety issues
- knowledge of information needed to tell someone if they were concerned
- perception of having a voice regarding online experiences (particularly safety)

The Y set a target that 80% of children, young people, and adults would respond positively (Yes) in relation to the questions in the evaluation as these related directly to the intended outcomes of the program.

To supplement the data provided by the Yes/No questions, ICPS and the Y applied for ethics approval from the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee to conduct interviews and focus groups with individuals across the three age groups who have taken part in the program.

The method and results of the data collected through that methodology will be provided in a subsequent addendum report.



## 4. Results

The findings below represent responses to the questions presented at the end of each respective program for children (aged 8-12), young people (aged 13-17), and of adult community members who took part.

*Table 1. Number of participants who answered the evaluation questions across the three programs*

	Children (8-12)	Young people (13-17)	Adults (18+)
Number of participants who answered evaluation questions	53	29	133

Supplementary findings from interviews and focus groups with a select sample of program users is planned and a subsidiary report will be provided to supplement the below findings.

*Table 2. Children (8-12-years-old) responses to the four evaluation questions*

Survey items	Yes	No
After learning about Jarrah, Beth and Jo do you feel safer online?	90%	10%
After learning about Jarrah, Beth and Jo do you feel more confident online?	89%	11%
After learning about Jarrah, Beth and Jo do you have the information you need to tell someone if something worries or concerns you online?	92%	8%
Do you feel you have a voice and a right to be heard about what happens to you online?	91%	9%

The results from the questions asked at the end of the children's program show a high percentage of children—who filled out the evaluation questions—feel safer and more confident online after taking part in the program. A similar number of children felt they now have the information needed to tell someone if something concerned them and feel they have a voice regarding what happens to them online.

*Table 3. Young people's (13-17-years-old) responses to the five evaluation questions*

Survey items	Yes	No
After learning about Nadira, Robert and Zain do you feel your resilience online has increased?	93%	7%
After learning about Nadira, Robert and Zain do you feel safer online?	90%	10%
After learning about Nadira, Robert and Zain do you feel more confident online?	90%	10%
After learning about Nadira, Robert and Zain do you have the information you need to tell someone if something worries or concerns you online?	86%	14%
Do you feel you have a voice and a right to be heard about what happens to you online?	83%	17%

Similar to the children aged eight to twelve, 90% of the young people said they felt safer and more confident online. A slightly higher percentage said they felt their resilience online had increased. Compared to their feelings of safety, and to the 8-12-year-old children, slightly fewer young people (13–18-year-olds) who responded to the evaluation questions felt they had the information they needed to tell someone if they were concerned or worried online or that they had a voice regarding what happens to them online. The percentage of young people however who did feel they had the required information and who felt they had a voice was above target rate of 80%, which was set as a success criterion prior to development of the program.

*Table 4. Adult's responses to the five evaluation questions*

Survey items	Yes	No
After learning about Billy, Deb and Bilal do you feel your resilience online has increased?	89%	11%
After learning about Billy, Deb and Bilal do you feel safer online?	83%	17%
After learning about Billy, Deb and Bilal do you feel more confident online?	88%	12%
After learning about Billy, Deb and Bilal do you have the information you need to tell someone if something worries or concerns you online?	91%	9%
Do you feel you have a voice and a right to be heard about what happens to you online?	96%	4%

The adults who took part in the program and who answered the evaluation questions—which was a much higher number than in either the children or young people's groups—had differing results to the other two groups.

While a similar percentage of adult program evaluators felt their resilience had increased and that they felt more confident online, the percentage who reported feeling safer online after having done the program was lower when compared to the children and young people, at only 83% (still above the desired 80% level).

In comparison to the young people's (and to a lesser extent, the children's) views regarding having the information they need to tell someone if something concerns them online or feeling they have a voice, the adults were more likely to agree to these questions.

There were no statistically significant differences between the three groups of participants (young children, adolescents, and adults) in how they responded<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> We analysed whether there were any differences between the three age groups in the proportion who answered Yes/No to each question. Only the proportion of participants who reported they had a voice significantly differed by age group,  $\chi^2(2, N = 215) = 7.3, p = .026$ . However, the statistical significance of this difference disappeared once correcting for the number of groups being compared.

## 5. Conclusions and implications

Around 90% of children and young people who engage with the ‘Stay Safe Online, Tell Someone’ program feel safer and have more confidence regarding being online. This percentage was slightly lower for adults who take part in the program regarding feelings of safety, but not in relation to feeling more confident. This may reflect the increased aspects of safety adults face when online (i.e., banking, scams based on services they use such as Netflix or PayPal).

Both young people and adults felt more resilient when asked about their feelings of resilience online after taking part in the program (89-93%). This finding may suggest that where program users are asked about character traits related to their online activity (i.e., their confidence and their resilience) they feel more positively when compared to being asked about the broader and less personally controllable aspect of online safety.

In relation to the questions regarding having the information needed to tell someone if they have concerns and having a voice regarding what happens to them online, 90% or more of children (8-12-years-old) and adults agreed they had the information and a voice. Although still relatively high at 86% and 83% respectively, young people (teenagers) are the least likely to feel they have the information they need or are being heard in relation to their online activity.

### Things to consider

The ‘Stay Safe Online, Tell Someone’ program follows a ‘story design’ which guides participants through stories about characters involved, introduce them to each character’s problems, and outlines the lessons the character has learnt as a result of their experience. The program then explicitly tells participants that they can also respond to online safety concerns in the same ways the characters have.

The programs’ intentions are clear and explicitly state what participants can do if they feel unsafe online or have concerns. However, there is not much opportunity for active participation or rehearsal and feedback (an important consideration in the delivery of abuse prevention programs; Trew et al., 2021). This is particularly important in the children and young people’s programs, as they benefit from active participation in learning situations. As can be seen from evaluation and reviews related to children’s learning related to abuse prevention—both in-person and online—these are important aspects that should be considered when implementing digitally provided safety programs/interventions.

One way of employing active learning and rehearsal and feedback may be to consider the use of ‘gamification’—where learning is embedded in game-style interactions that mimic the online activities many children and young people engage in. Gamification has been used in other areas where learning is digitalised, such as in the promotion of children’s resilience and wellbeing. For example, *Rumble’s Quest*—a video game designed to support and promote children’s wellbeing developed by researchers from Griffith University (<https://www.realwell.org.au/rumbles-quest/>)—uses gamification to teach children about their wellbeing. *Rumble’s Quest* is currently being trialled in schools in Australia. *Swoosh & Glide*, an interactive audio book, teaches young children about online safety behaviour by engaging children in reading and singing (<https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/children-under-5/picture-book-and-song>). Users remember online education programs that utilise narration and character-based animation better than printed materials, such as text in books or stories (Moon et al., 2017).

Participants have responded to the questions directly after completing the program. A longitudinal design that asks participants about their feelings regarding online safety 6 to 12 months after taking part in the program would be an important indicator regarding the stability of the programs’ effects over time. Such a design would benefit from Likert scale-based questions (i.e., 1-5) allowing for more fine-grained comparison across time to measure whether any increase or decrease is statistically significant. Additionally, this initial evaluation could be extended by asking participants qualitative questions such as: Have they have had an opportunity to use the skills they learned? Did it change the way in which they responded during an actual situation? How has completing the program contributed to their feelings of safety?

An important aspect of understanding the cost-benefit ratio of presenting the program in a digital format—as it is much cheaper and more accessible to present it that way but unclear whether the same benefits are achieved compared to in-person presentation—would be to evaluate the digital and in-person versions of the program. Since the ‘Stay Safe Online, Tell Someone’ program was adapted from the same program that was delivered in-person, we recommend further research that evaluates the two modes of implementation evaluating the two modes of implementation of the program would provide an opportunity to confirm the benefits of the in-person delivery are not lost in the digitally delivered version.

## Reference list

- Ang, R. P. (2015). Adolescent cyberbullying: A review of characteristics, prevention and intervention strategies. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 25*, 35-42.
- Brassard, M. R., & Fiorvanti, C. M. (2015). School-based child abuse prevention programs. *Psychology in the Schools, 52*(1), 40-60.
- Cameron, L. (2020). A robot took my job! How STEM education might prepare students for a rapidly changing world. *Curriculum Perspectives, 40*(2), 233-239.
- Campbell, M., & Bauman, S. (2018). Cyberbullying: Definition, consequences, prevalence. In M. Campbell & S. Bauman (Eds.), *Reducing Cyberbullying in Schools* (pp. 3-16). Elsevier.
- Cassidy, W., Faucher, C., & Jackson, M. (2013). Cyberbullying among youth: A comprehensive review of current international research and its implications and application to policy and practice. *School Psychology International, 34*(6), 575-612.
- Chism, N. (2006). Challenging traditional assumptions and rethinking learning spaces. In D. G. Oblinger (Ed.), *Learning Spaces*. Educause.
- Ciocanel, O., Power, K., Eriksen, A., & Gillings, K. (2017). Effectiveness of positive youth development interventions: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 46*(3), 483-504.
- Edwards, S., Nolan, A., Henderson, M., Mantilla, A., Plowman, L., & Skouteris, H. (2018). Young children's everyday concepts of the internet: A platform for cyber-safety education in the early years. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 49*(1), 45-55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12529>
- Gaffney, H., Farrington, D. P., Espelage, D. L., & Ttofi, M. M. (2019). Are cyberbullying intervention and prevention programs effective? A systematic and meta-analytical review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 45*, 134-153.
- Gushwa, M., Bernier, J., & Robinson, D. (2019, Feb-Mar). Advancing Child Sexual Abuse Prevention in Schools: An Exploration of the Effectiveness of the Enough! Online Training Program for K-12 Teachers. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 28*(2), 144-159. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2018.1477000>
- Hajnal, Á. (2021). Cyberbullying Prevention: Which Design Features Foster the Effectiveness of School-Based Programs? : A Meta-Analytic Approach. *Intersections, 7*(1), 40-58. <https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v7i1.648>

- Hartikainen, H., Iivari, N., & Kinnula, M. (2019). Children's design recommendations for online safety education. *International Journal of Child-Computer Interaction*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijcci.2019.100146>
- Higgins, D. J. (2021). *Child rights to online safety: how parents can offer support – Part 1 & Part 2*. LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/child-rights-online-safety-how-parents-can-offer-support-higgins/>
- Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2014). *Cyberbullying Identification, Prevention, and Response*. Cyberbullying Research Center.
- Hutson, E., Kelly, S., & Militello, L. K. (2018). Systematic review of cyberbullying interventions for youth and parents with implications for evidence-based practice. *Worldviews on Evidence-based Nursing*, 15(1), 72-79.
- Institute of Child Protection Studies. (2021). *Children and young people's perceptions of online safety: Findings from six focus groups at the Y*. Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University.
- Jones, L. M., Mitchell, K. J., & Finkelhor, D. (2013). Online harassment in context: Trends from three Youth Internet Safety Surveys (2000, 2005, 2010). *Psychology of Violence*, 3(1), 53-69. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030309>
- Kennedy, A., & Stonehouse, A. (2012). *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. Practice Principle Guide 6: Integrated Teaching and Learning Approaches*. [www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/profresources.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/profresources.htm).
- Kentnor, H. (2015). Distance Education and the Evolution of Online Learning in the United States. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, 17.
- Kim, J. (2020, Jul 30). Learning and Teaching Online During Covid-19: Experiences of Student Teachers in an Early Childhood Education Practicum. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-020-00272-6>
- Kumar, P., Vitak, J., Chetty, M., Clegg, T. L., Yang, J., McNally, B., & Bonsignore, E. (2018). *Co-designing online privacy-related games and stories with children* Proceedings of the 17th ACM Conference on Interaction Design and Children,
- Lazarinis, F., Alexandri, K., Panagiotakopoulos, C., & Verykios, V. S. (2019). Sensitizing young children on internet addiction and online safety risks through storytelling in a mobile application. *Education and Information Technologies*, 25(1), 163-174. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-019-09952-w>
- Livingstone, S., & Smith, P. K. (2014, Jun). Annual research review: Harms experienced by child users of online and mobile technologies: the nature, prevalence and

management of sexual and aggressive risks in the digital age. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry*, 55(6), 635-654. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12197>

Livingstone, S., & Stoilova, M. (2021). *The 4Cs: Classifying Online Risk to Children*. Hamburg: Leibniz-Institut für Medienforschung | Hans-Bredow-Institut (HBI); CO:RE - Children Online: Research and Evidence. <https://doi.org/10.21241/ssoar.71817>.

Livingstone, S., & Third, A. (2017). Children and young people's rights in the digital age: An emerging agenda. *New Media & Society*, 19(5), 657-670. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816686318>

Livingstone, S., Winther, D. K., & Saeed, M. (2019). *Global kids online comparative report*. UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti Florence.

Madigan, S., Ly, A., Rash, C. L., Van Ouytsel, J., & Temple, J. R. (2018, Apr 1). Prevalence of Multiple Forms of Sexting Behavior Among Youth: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 172(4), 327-335. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2017.5314>

Mishna, F., Cook, C., Saini, M., Wu, M.-J., & MacFadden, R. (2010). Interventions to Prevent and Reduce Cyber Abuse of Youth: A Systematic Review. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 21(1), 5-14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731509351988>

Modecki, K. L., Minchin, J., Harbaugh, A. G., Guerra, N. G., & Runions, K. C. (2014). Bullying prevalence across contexts: A meta-analysis measuring cyber and traditional bullying. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 55(5), 602-611.

Moon, K. J., Park, K. M., & Sung, Y. (2017, Jul). Sexual Abuse Prevention Mobile Application (SAP\_MobAPP) for Primary School Children in Korea. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 26(5), 573-589. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2017.1313350>

Müller, A. R., Röder, M., & Fingerle, M. (2014). Child sexual abuse prevention goes online: Introducing "Cool and Safe" and its effects. *Computers & Education*, 78, 60-65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2014.04.023>

Nicolaidou, I., & Venizelou, A. (2020). Improving Children's E-Safety Skills through an Interactive Learning Environment: A Quasi-Experimental Study. *Multimodal Technologies and Interaction*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/mti4020010>

Ospina, M., Harstall, C., & Dennett, L. (2010). *Sexual exploitation of children and youth over the internet: A rapid review of the scientific literature*. I. o. H. Economics. <http://www.ihe.ca/documents/Online%20Sexual%20Exploitation.pdf>

Paranal, R., Washington Thomas, K., & Derrick, C. (2012). Utilizing online training for child sexual abuse prevention: benefits and limitations. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 21(5), 507-520. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2012.697106>

- Patchin, J. W., & Hinduja, S. (2020, Feb). Sextortion Among Adolescents: Results From a National Survey of U.S. Youth. *Sex Abuse*, 32(1), 30-54.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063218800469>
- Radford, L., Allnock, D., & Hynes, P. (n.d.). *Promising programmes to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse and exploitation*. UNICEF  
<https://www.unicef.org/media/66741/file/Promising-programme-responses.pdf>
- Seale, J., & Schoenberger, N. (2018). Be Internet Awesome. *Emerging Library & Information Perspectives*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.5206/elip.v1i1.366>
- Smahel, D., Machackova, M., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Olafsson, K., Livingstone, S., & Hasebrink, U. (2020). *EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries*.
- Smith, P. K., & Slonje, R. (2010). Cyberbullying: The nature and extent of a new kind of bullying, in and out of school. In S. R. Jimerson, S. M. Swearer, & D. L. Espelage (Eds.), *Handbook of bullying in schools: An international perspective*. Routledge.
- Spears, B., Keeley, M., Bates, S., & Katz, I. (2014). *Research on youth exposure to, and management of, cyberbullying incidents in australia: Part A-literature review on the estimated prevalence of cyberbullying involving australian minors (SPRC Report 9/2014)*. Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Australia.  
[https://www.communications.gov.au/search?search\\_api\\_views\\_fulltext=cyberbullying](https://www.communications.gov.au/search?search_api_views_fulltext=cyberbullying)
- Stoilova, M., Livingstone, S., & Khazbak, R. (2021). *Investigating risks and opportunities for children in a digital world: A rapid review of the evidence on children's internet use and outcomes* (Innocenti Discussion Papers no. 2021-01, Issue. F. UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti).
- Strasburger, V. C., Zimmerman, H., Temple, J. R., & Madigan, S. (2019, May). Teenagers, Sexting, and the Law. *Pediatrics*, 143(5). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-3183>
- Third, A., Bellerose, D., Dawkins, U., Keltie, E., & Pihl, K. (2014). *Children's rights in the digital age: A download from children around the world*.
- Topping, K. J., & Barron, I. G. (2009). School-Based Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs: A Review of Effectiveness. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 431-463. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325582>
- Trew, S., Higgins, D. H., Russell, D., Walsh, K., & Battaglia, M. (2021). *Parent engagement in education for children and young people's online, relationship, and sexual safety: A rapid evidence assessment and implications for child sexual abuse prevention education*. Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University.



Trew, S., Russell, D., Higgins, D., & Walsh, K. (2021). *Effective delivery methods and teaching strategies for child sexual abuse prevention: A rapid evidence check*. Institute of Child Protection Studies. Australian Catholic University.

UK Safer Internet Centre. (2021). *What are the issues? Safer Internet Centre*. Retrieved 17/08/2021 from <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/what-are-issues>

van Cleemput, K., Desmet, A., Vandebosch, H., Bastiaensens, S., Poels, K., & de Bourdeaudhuij, I. (2014). A systematic review and meta-analysis of the efficacy of cyberbullying prevention programs. *Etmaal van de Communicatiewetenschap*, Wageningen (NL).

Wang, Q., & Woo, H. L. (2007). Comparing asynchronous online discussions and face-to-face discussions in a classroom setting. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 38(2), 272-286.

Wurtele, S. K. (2009). Preventing sexual abuse of children in the twenty-first century: Preparing for challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 18(1), 1-18.

Wurtele, S. K., & Kenny, M. (2012). In P. Goodyear-Brown (Ed.), *Handbook of child sexual abuse: Identification, assessment and treatment* (pp. 531-565). Wiley Press.