

Student Voice

Data, Guidance & Resources

2021

International Taskforce on Child
Protection (ITFCP)



International Taskforce on Child Protection



All children have equal rights to be protected from harm and abuse.

Everyone has a responsibility to support the protection of children.

All schools have a responsibility to build a community that values diversity, equity, and inclusion for each child.

All schools have a duty of care to children enrolled in the school and those who are affected by the operations of the school.

All actions on child protection are taken with consideration for the best interests of the child, which are paramount.

Student Voice

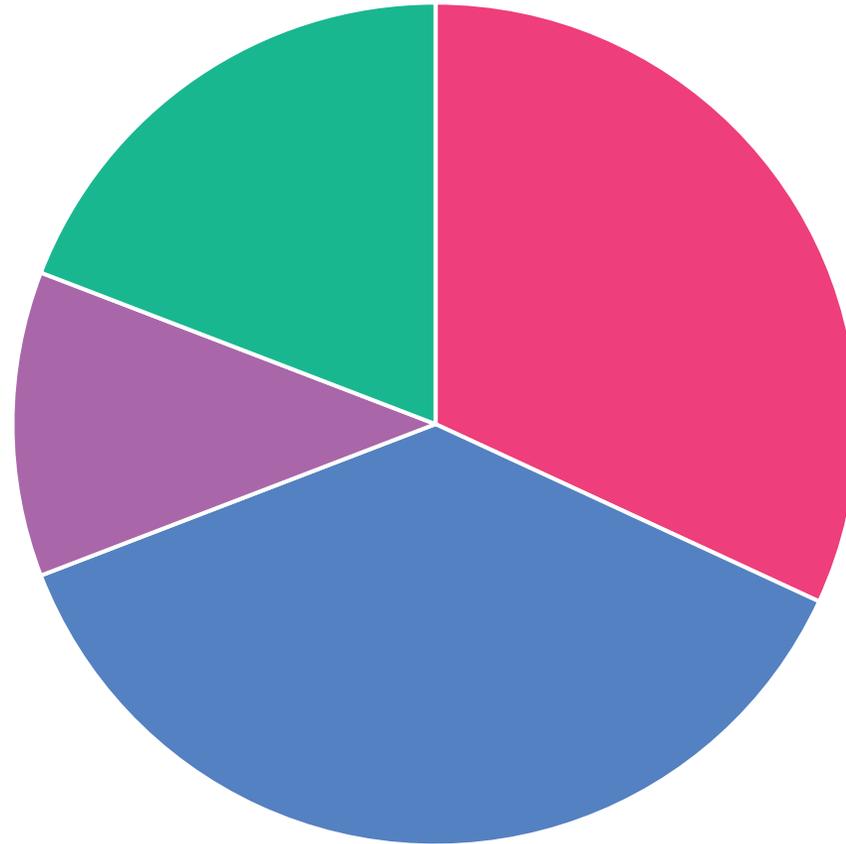
Survey of School Leaders



Data

Respondents

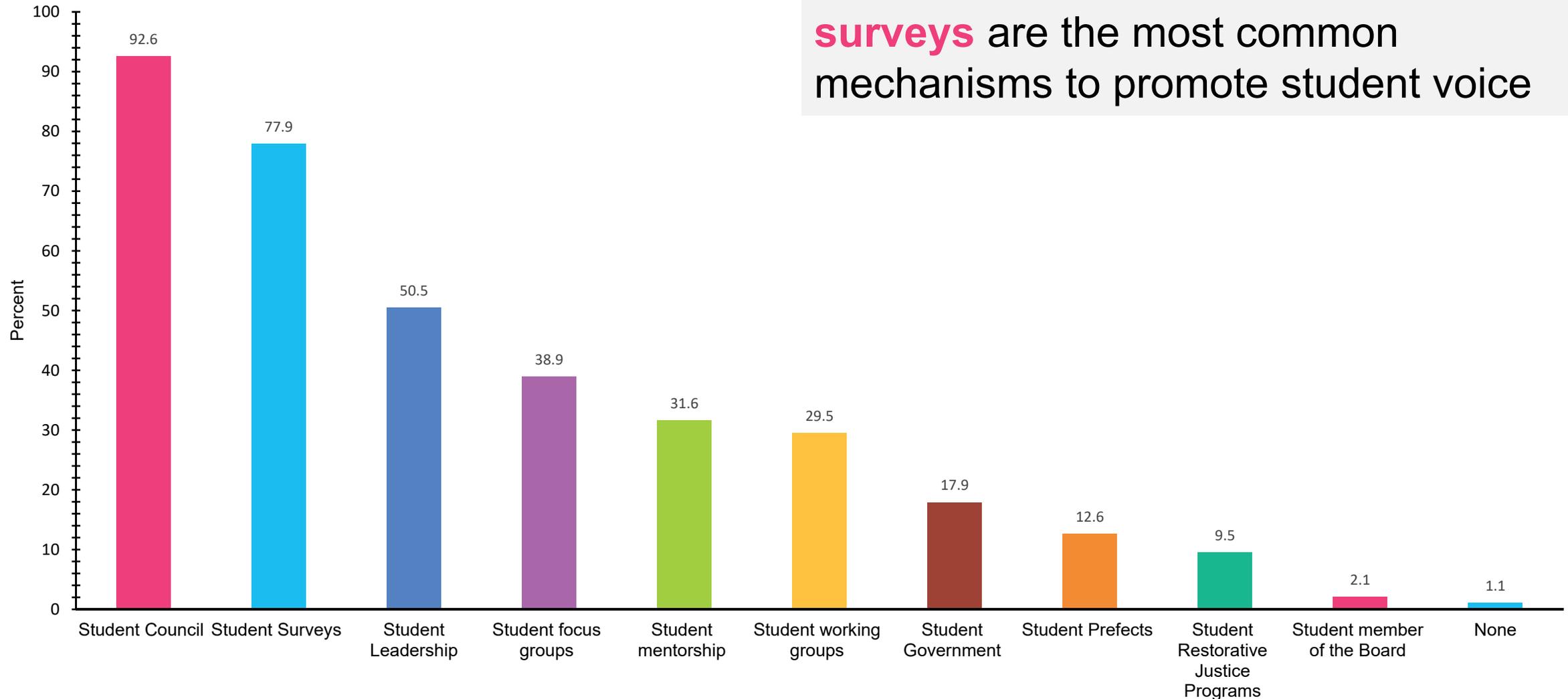
48 countries
across
5 continents



Leaders from **94**
international
schools

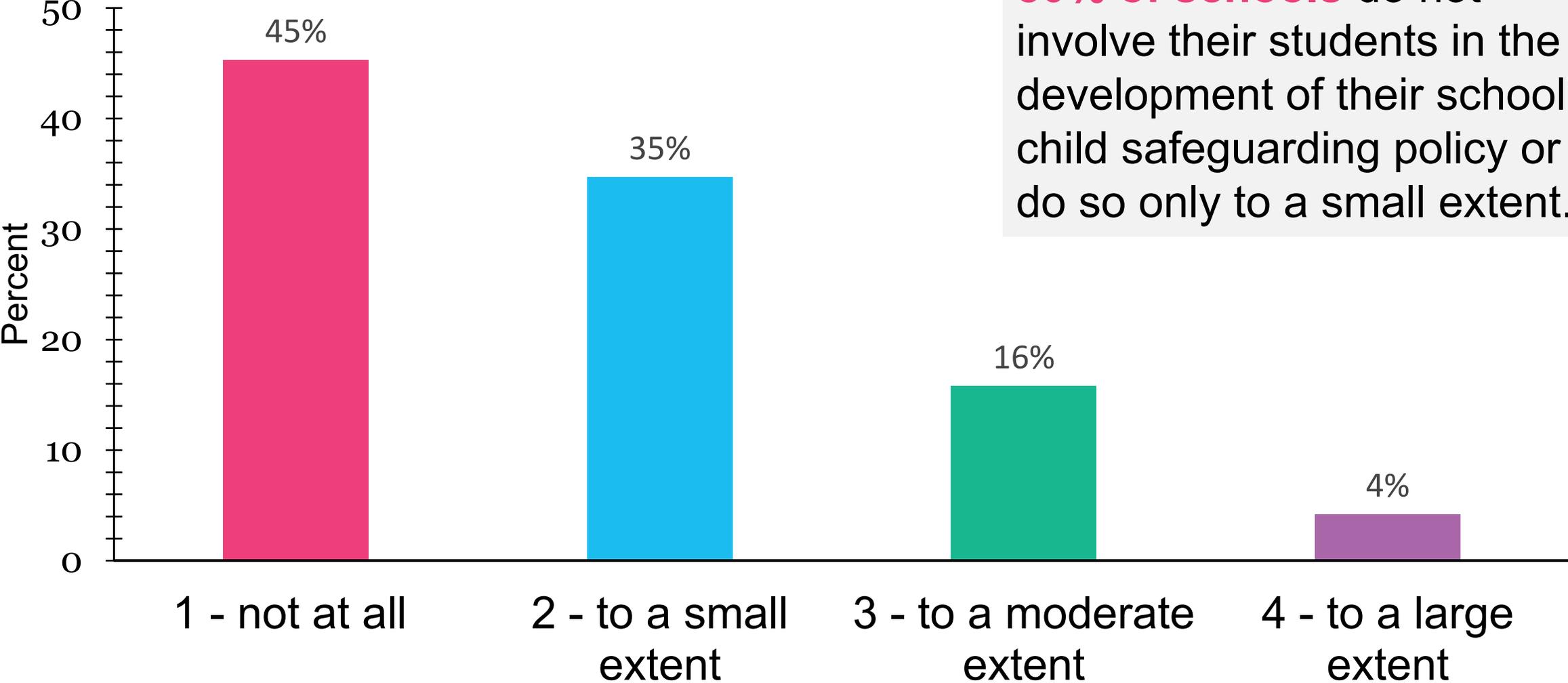
■ Europe ■ Asia ■ Africa & The Middle East ■ The Americas

Which Student Voice mechanisms does your school have in place?



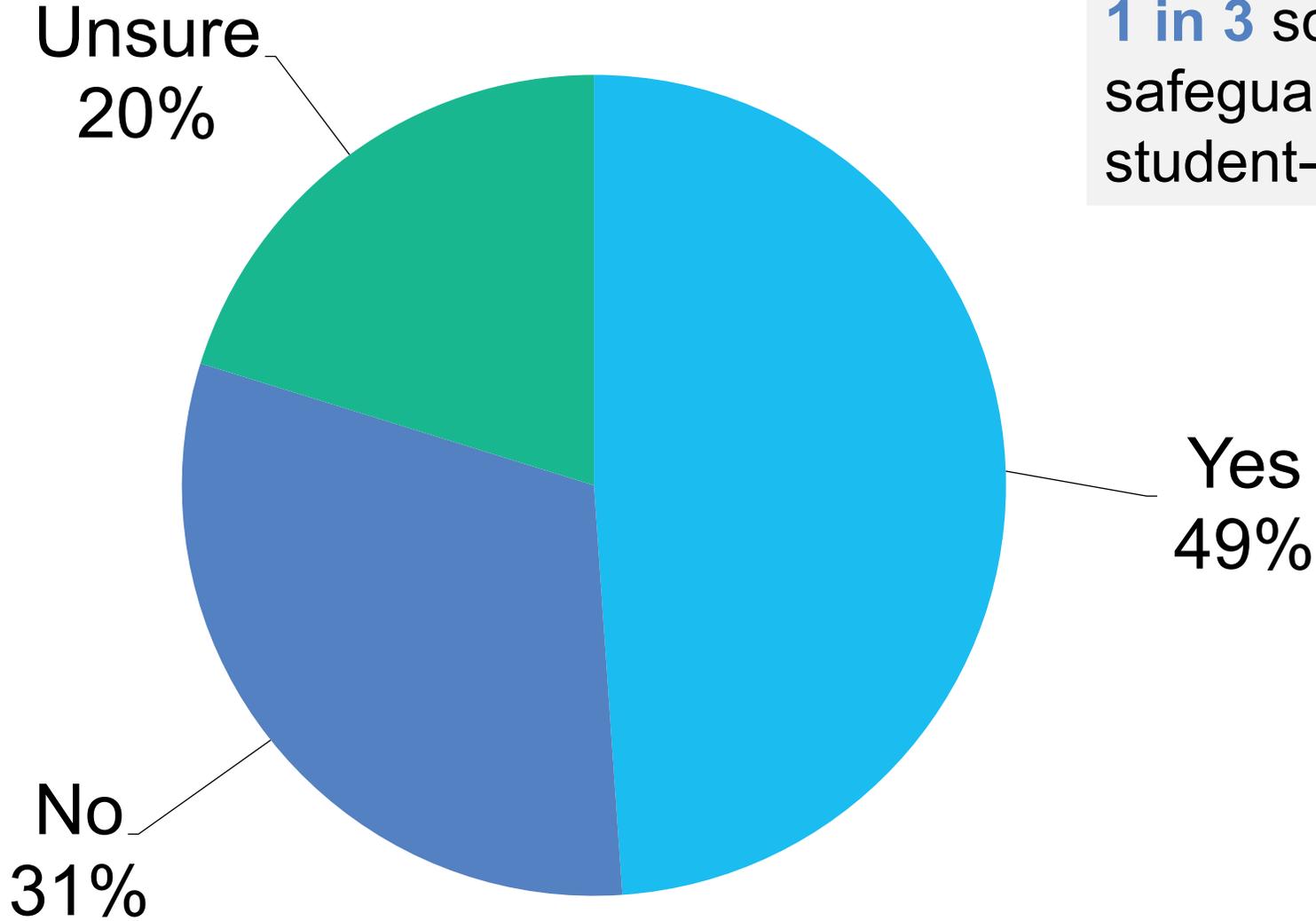
Student Council and student surveys are the most common mechanisms to promote student voice

To what extent were your students involved in the development of your school's Child Safeguarding Policy?



80% of schools do not involve their students in the development of their school's child safeguarding policy or do so only to a small extent.

Are your safeguarding policies in a format that students can access?



1 in 3 schools do not have safeguarding policies in a student-friendly format.

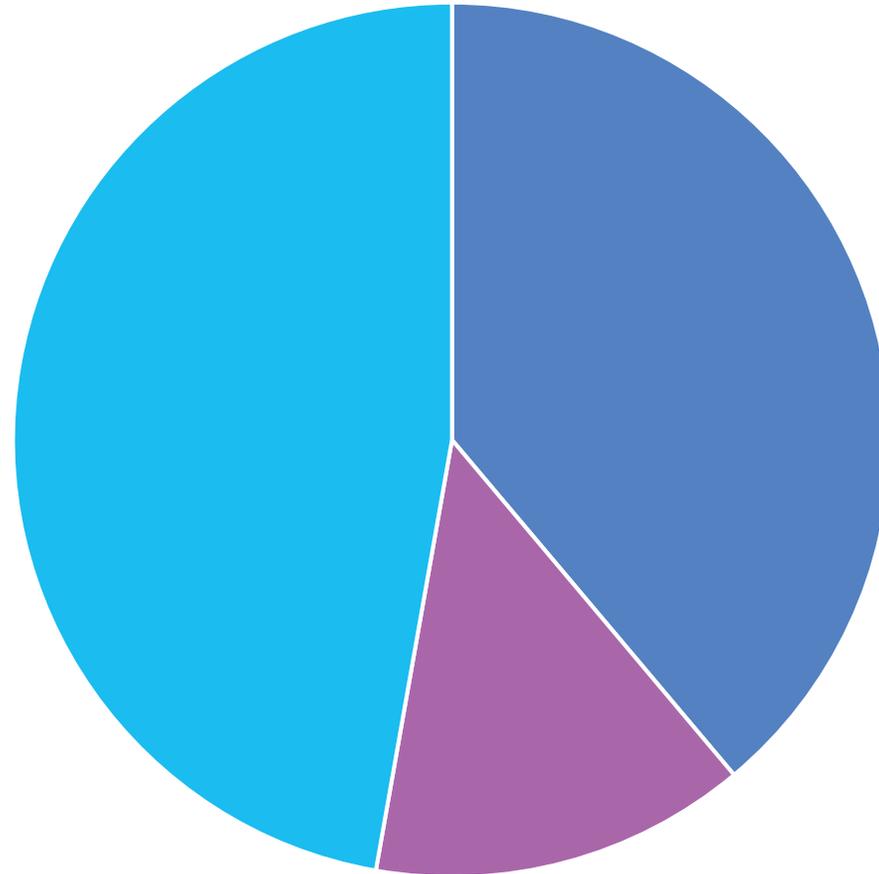
Student Engagement Sessions



Data

Student Participants

6 engagement sessions
3 schools
2 continents



23 students
13 girls
10 boys

■ 10 to 11 ■ 12 to 14 ■ 16 to 18

What does safeguarding mean to you?

Ages 10 to 14

To protect students in and out of school

Feeling safe

Talking to an adult if you feel pressured

Not allowing outsiders to take pictures in school

Being able to say what you think without being afraid you will get into trouble

What does safeguarding mean to you?

Ages 16 to 18

Boundaries, it's all about boundaries

Protecting people from abuse

Equity

Being able to speak freely

It is to protect students' physical and mental states

Safety in school means students and teachers feel safe in what they are doing,
how people are treating them

How does the school keep you safe?

“The peer mediator scheme [when older students are trained to support younger students with friendship difficulties] really helped me and my friend, we are more comfortable talking to our peers than an adult, it helped us find a solution.”

“We have a good culture in this school, students will stop to help other students if they are hurt.”

How does the school keep you safe?

- The friendship bench and unstructured time in school to make friends
- Physical and operational safety measures (cameras, lanyards, guards, gates)
- Digital citizenship awareness and cyber safety
- Online reporting tools for bullying and safety concerns
- Counsellors, counsellors, counsellors!

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

My school often asks me and other students about how well and safe we feel

“We have time in class to talk about our weekend, if something bad happens we can share.”

“[The counsellor] comes in quite often, but some students have more to share and don’t think she comes in enough.”

“Usually they want good/bad/alright – short answers not detail. They don’t let you go into the specifics, there’s not enough time.”

“Our school does not ask for our views on how they can keep us safe, we are told how to be safe, rather than consulted on the process.”

“I don’t think I have ever heard anyone ask about how we are feeling.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever been asked what the school can do to keep me safe. In this session, it’s the first time I’ve been asked.”

“It’s very general, no one ever digs down to find out detailed information.”

“Surveys and posters are superficial and impersonal.”

My school asks for students' feedback on the ways that it teaches us about safety and adapts the curriculum in light of feedback.

“I think when students give feedback on the curriculum or how we are taught...teachers ask what to keep doing, stop doing, and then make changes.”

“There are undertones of ‘urgh why are you talking about that?’”

“In sex-ed they talk about LGBT sex but in school they haven't even acknowledged that community. There isn't much acceptance.”

“I've been in other schools, and they have LGBTQ+ posters around that advertise their club. Why don't we have this?”

“Can we educate parents so that students feel safe?”

“When we are asked for feedback, we don't see anything change.”

“It's never happened for me; if we give feedback then it should be used – we have given feedback but it was a waste of time because nothing changed”

My school involves students when designing student safety policies and takes student feedback into account.

“I’ve never heard of a safeguarding policy.”

“The policies are designed for students but not with students.”

“Parents and students do not read ‘boring’ policies because they are too long and contain lots of text.”

“The school’s safeguarding policies should be shorter and should have headline paragraphs at the beginning, then people would take more notice of them, because they are easier to read.”

If I thought my school wasn't doing enough to keep students safe,
I would tell a teacher or counsellor.

“Teachers are being so careful not to break rules that it makes interactions uncomfortable.”

“I wouldn't talk to teachers if I had a problem because I don't trust them because I haven't had the chance to get to know them.... I would go to my friends.”

“There's a contradiction because on the one hand they want a professional relationship between students and teachers but then on the other hand they are wanting you to tell them everything.”

If I thought my school wasn't doing enough to keep students safe,
I would tell a teacher or counsellor.

“Some people are scared to tell teachers so why don't they foster a culture where its more comfortable instead of making it seem like there's something wrong?”

“I wouldn't talk to anyone on one of the posters, because I don't know them.”

“It's happened before where teachers overdo it and tell all the other teachers. It's tainted my view on speaking up.”

“Sometimes I'm scared to speak up as I don't know what will happen after.”

If I told an adult that I thought the school wasn't doing enough to keep students safe, then I am confident that the school would listen to me and make changes to their systems if they could.

Almost all students disagreed with this statement, saying that they didn't feel listened to, that they didn't see any changes made in response to their feedback and that they felt that the school only sought their feedback so that they could publish statistics.

My school listens to all students' voices equally and doesn't prioritize some students over others.

"There are people from all over the world including teachers, we are all from all over the world and we know about each other's cultures...I think the school does really well with that."

"The older kids get chosen more."

"It depends where you come from."

"The students that do more are chosen more...the more they do, the more they get asked to do...because teachers know they will participate, but this is unfair for other students."

"If you are not shining then they don't listen to you."

"Now people listen to me because I've got good grades."

"Children whose parents do a lot get picked more."

What do you think should be covered in the curriculum?

“How to express our feelings.”

“What abuse is and how to stop it from happening.”

“More open dialogue about sensitive subjects like sex ed and ‘taboo’ subjects like gender and sexual identity. More information about how we can protect ourselves from our peers.”

“Smaller sessions to talk about things rather than larger information sharing settings.”

You are in charge of leading the school. What changes would you make to ensure all student voices are listened to?

- Safeguarding policies should be more accessible and schools should explain to students how safeguarding issues are handled, including who staff would tell if they needed to share information with people who 'need to know' and some of the actions these people would take.
- More transparency about actions that the school takes when there are safeguarding concerns.
- Counsellors more present in class and more involved in curriculum.
- More ways to report a problem.
- Teachers to ask students how they are doing.

Student Voice Committee



Guidance

Examples of student voice activities

Policy & curriculum development & training

- Presentations at safeguarding workshops for parents and younger students
- Collaboration on curriculum development
- Input into digital safety and peer-on-peer abuse policies

Safeguarding champions

- Student safeguarding committee to advise on areas of development
- Having student representatives on the school's safeguarding committee
- Training to be safety ambassadors

Examples of student voice activities

Consultation

- Survey on wellbeing and safeguarding practices
- Location mapping – asking students to map where they feel safe and unsafe; for example, on school campus or online
- Mapping harm – asking students to tell you the types of harm their friends are experiencing
- Student engagement sessions - small group discussions, typically with 4 to 8 students

Examples of areas/themes to cover in consultation activities

- Safe and unsafe spaces on school campus and online
- Levels of trust between students and staff
- How safeguarding is taught in school
- Barriers to disclosure
- Forms of harm students are experiencing

Safeguarding & Ethical Considerations

Key Principles

All activities are student centred.

The mindset for all activities is that the students are treated as equal to the adults in school.

No student is harmed by any activity.

No student feels pressured into participating.

Students benefit from all activities they participate in.

The purpose of all activities and the ways that the data will be used are clear from the outset and communicated to students.

The school always reviews any data collected and considers what action to take in response to student feedback, any action taken is communicated to students.

Safeguarding & Ethical Considerations

Before consulting with students on safeguarding, schools must consider the associated risks and put in place measures to mitigate them.

Examples of risks

- A student becomes upset during an engagement session
- A student discloses in a group setting

Examples of mitigation measures

- No questions about personal experiences, questions are age-appropriate and students have access to support. Facilitators chosen carefully. Check ins with students after.
- No questions about personal experiences, an exercise like the toothpaste exercise (link to CSN guidance on student focus groups) discourages group disclosures. Practice [protective interrupting](#).

Safeguarding & Ethical Considerations

Selecting Students

- Involve a diverse group, considering identity factors such as race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, and/or intellectual ability, age, nationality, language and socioeconomic status.
- Be careful to exclude any students who you think might find the experience distressing, whether because of their personality, personal experiences of harm or their learning needs.
- Consider which students would enjoy and be able to contribute meaningfully to the discussion.
- Try to include students who may not normally be selected or self-select into/ volunteer for these sorts of opportunities.
- Consider whether the young people selected will be appropriate to put together. For example, are there any current concerns or problematic peer group dynamics at play?
- Reach out to student leaders, advisory educators and counsellors to identify students.
- Be aware that minority status may make a student feel less comfortable speaking up and needing to “represent” that minority group.
- Consider which language to conduct the activity in and which students may need additional support if the chosen language is not their first language.
- Differentiate the process and materials according to the strengths and capabilities of the individuals in the student group. This may include but is not limited to offering additional or alternative avenues to share information during or after the activity.

Safeguarding & Ethical Considerations

Other Considerations

- Consent should be sought from the student and, where appropriate (given the student's age, the law in the country and the school's policy) their parents or carers.
- Students should be fully informed about the purpose of the activity and how their information will be used, before they are asked to decide if they'd like to participate.
- Although key themes should be shared, students shouldn't be named or identifiable from the information shared. The limits to confidentiality should be explained to students.
- A plan should be put in place in advance, setting out how the school will manage any safeguarding disclosures and/or distress.
- Personal data, including consent forms, should be retained for the period necessary to process and analyse the data, and then deleted after this time. Privacy notices may also be needed depending on your jurisdiction.
- Anonymous data collection measures often solicit more honest responses. However, any concerns raised cannot be followed up on if they are anonymous. See the template survey and guidance for how to manage this.

Resources: ICMEC Education Portal

- Contextual Safeguarding Network (CSN) Resources
 - Student Engagement Sessions - Guidance on how to carry out a focus group with students
 - Student Engagement Sessions – Example Facilitator slides
 - Student Survey Guidance
 - Student Survey Template
 - Podcast - Leading Student Focus Groups
- Preventing Peer on Peer Abuse – Mapping Exercises
- UNICEF Guidance on Ethical Research and Children