



*Valuing Children*

INITIATIVE

# **HOW DO WE PERCEIVE CHILDREN IN AUSTRALIA TODAY?**

A SYNOPSIS OF THE VALUING  
CHILDREN INITIATIVE BENCHMARK  
SURVEY: 2016

PART B – March 2017

*This report was compiled by the Convenor of The Valuing Children Initiative Linda Savage and Deputy Convenor Emma King.*

*For more information about the Valuing Children Initiative please visit: [www.valuingchildreninitiative.com.au](http://www.valuingchildreninitiative.com.au) or email [info@valuingchildreninitiative.com.au](mailto:info@valuingchildreninitiative.com.au)*

# VALUING CHILDREN INITIATIVE

## INTRODUCTION

The ambitious vision of the Valuing Children Initiative is to inspire Australians to value all children, promote understanding that a child's wellbeing is the shared responsibility of the entire community, and ensure children are at the forefront of our considerations.

The Valuing Children Initiative believes that in looking for better outcomes for all children, far more attention must be given to our attitudes towards children and how we value them.

'Value' can be described as the worth we assign to someone, or something. When we value someone we assume it is reflected in our attitudes and behaviour, and in our sense of responsibility and investment in that person's wellbeing and happiness.

Few would disagree that all children should be valued, but it is far from clear what we mean when we talk about valuing children.

In May 2016, the Valuing Children Initiative commissioned a baseline survey by Essential Research to better understand attitudes to children in Australia.

A Synopsis of the Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016 Part B – March 2017 considers data relevant to the vision of inspiring Australians to value all children.

### **How do we perceive children in Australia today? Survey Highlights**

Almost half of survey respondents (48%) believe it is more challenging to be a child today than in the past.

Only 16% believe that Australia is a safer society to grow up in today than in the past.

The top five most commonly chosen words chosen to describe children were:

Spoilt  
Fortunate  
Lazy  
Selfish  
Vulnerable

78% believe that children today are more disrespectful than previous generations.

Almost half (49%) said that children today have too many rights.

Almost one in three (32%) do not believe that the opinions of children should be considered as being as important as the opinions of adults.

63% said that a child's word is less likely to be believed than that of an adult.

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## How do we perceive children and childhood in Australia today?

What we value underpins and drives the culture of a society and in turn drives conduct. How we value children therefore, although sometimes overlooked, plays a critical role in ensuring a child's safety and wellbeing, because it directly impacts on how they are treated and the priority given to their needs and rights. To better understand how children are valued, the Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016 (the survey) asked Australians about their perception of children and childhood today.

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The survey found that the majority of respondents (73%) believe that children are valued the same, or more today, than in the past.

Almost half believe it is more challenging to be a child today than in the past, and only 16% believe that Australia is a safer society to grow up in today than in the past.

These findings appear to reflect a society that is sympathetic towards the challenges of childhood.

In a similar vein, when faced with the antiquated notion that children should be seen and not heard, only 16% of respondents agreed that this still held true today.

However, other stereotypical views of children do not appear to have changed as significantly over recent decades. Over three quarters (78%) of respondents agreed that children today are more disrespectful than previous generations.

*78% agreed that children today are more disrespectful than previous generations.*

*The words most commonly chosen to describe children were spoilt, fortunate, lazy and selfish.*

Almost half (49%) said that children today have too many rights. Almost one in three (32%) do not believe that the opinions of children should be considered as being as important as the opinions of adults. Greater than half (59%) considered children to be less capable than adults of saying what is best for them.

It was notable and of concern that even today, 63% said that a child's word is less likely to be believed than that of an adult

When asked to describe children today from a range of descriptors, both positive and negative, the four most commonly chosen words were spoilt, fortunate, lazy and selfish.

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*The VCI continues to advocate for the creation of a ministerial portfolio for a Federal Minister for Children and Future Generations to ensure children are at the forefront of considerations and that issues of concern about children, wherever they occur, are brought to the attention of the Cabinet.*

*The appointments of Ministers for Women in the 1970s played an important role in challenging attitudes to women, advancing gender equality and improving the lives of women. Appointing a Minister for Children and Future Generations would play a similar role and be a tangible sign about the value placed on all children's lives.*

# VALUING CHILDREN INITIATIVE

The Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016 provided respondents with opportunity to provide comments on whether they believe children are valued more today as when they were children, and whether it is easier to be a child today. A sample of responses to these questions are contained below. The full report can be accessed on the VCI website [www.valuingchildreninitiative.com.au](http://www.valuingchildreninitiative.com.au)

## 1. In your opinion, are children in Australia today valued more, less, or the same as when you were a child?

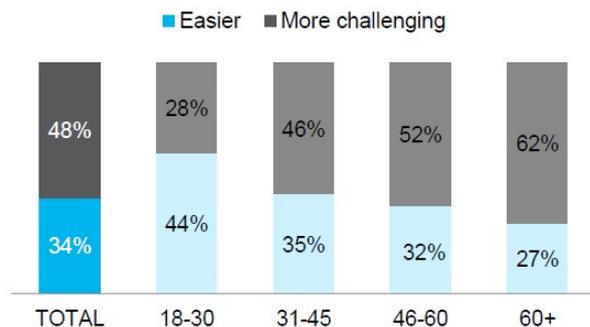
Children are more valued today than in the past. (29%)	Children are valued about the same today as in the past. (44%)	Children are less valued today than they were in the past. (16%)
There's laws FINALLY coming in to protect children and their rights.	I don't think we value children any more or less than previous generations.	Parents today don't give their children the right discipline.
When I was a child, my opinion didn't count. Children these days have a voice and are listened to a lot more.	Doesn't seem to be any increase or decrease in neglect.	Kids do not respect adults like they used to.
I think people look at children more as people now, when I was a kid there was still some of the 'seen but not heard' notion.	Why would they be more or less valued, a child is priceless always.	They have been spoiled too much.
They get given things we did not have as a child. We made our own happiness. Kids today get most things they want.	Nothing fundamentally has changed.	Kids these days have no appreciation of hard work or what older Australians have done to make their life the way it is today.
Greater outlets for children to achieve success.	Children are always valued by their parents no matter what generation.	Everyone is too busy working to spend time with kids.

## 2. In your opinion, is it easier to be a child today than it was when you were a child?

Just over a third of Australians believe that it is easier to be a child today than in the past.

The top five reasons for this were:

1. Children get everything handed to them/Handed on a silver platter/don't have to be responsible or accountable (28%).
2. Have access to technology (electronic devices, gaming consoles) (22%).
3. More opportunities available for them (range of sports or other activities) (12%).
4. Lack of discipline/ less discipline/ Children are disrespectful and are not punished (11%).
5. Children don't work/ don't do chores/ don't work hard for what they want (9%)



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## Research methodology

The Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016 was an online poll of n=1002 Australians aged 18+ and was in the field from 31 May to Monday 6 June 2016. This data was weighted after quotas were placed on age, gender and location.

The target population for this research was the Australian population aged 18+. Participants were drawn from the ResearchNow online survey panel.

The survey was designed by Essential Research in conjunction with the client (The Valuing Children Initiative).

The survey fieldwork was conducted by ResearchNow and data tables were prepared by Essential Research. Weighting was prepared by ResearchNow. The analysis of this data was conducted by Essential research. SPSS and Excel and were used to analyse the results. Open-ended questions were analysed manually using a code frame developed by Essential Research.

This data was weighted to ABS for age, gender and location. Soft quotas were placed on age, gender and location.

## Survey Reliability

Overall the confidence level was set at 95%.

## To cite this report:

A Synopsis of The Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey – Part B: March 2017.

## Data Source

Essential Research 2016, Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016

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## References

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Essential Research 2016, Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016

<http://valuingchildreninitiative.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Australians-Attitudes-to-Children-The-Valuing-Children-Initiative-Benchmark-survey-2016.pdf>

(Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017).

The Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016 was funded by Centrecare (Inc.), Parkerville Children and Youth Care (Inc.) and the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA.





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