



*Valuing Children*

INITIATIVE

# **ARE YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN?**

A SYNOPSIS OF THE VALUING  
CHILDREN INITIATIVE BENCHMARK  
SURVEY: 2016

PART C – April 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:  
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# 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 children, far more attention must be given to our attitudes towards all children and how we value them. This includes considering public perception of who is really responsible for the wellbeing of 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 C – April 2017 considers data relevant to the vision of ensuring that children are seen as the shared responsibility of the entire community.

### **Are you responsible for Australia's children? Survey Highlights**

- 74% of survey respondents agree that the wellbeing of children is the shared responsibility of the entire community.
- 79% believe that parents are most responsible for protecting and promoting the wellbeing of children, and;
- 70% believe that children 'belong' to their parents until the age of 18 years.
- Just over half (59%) believe that Australian society is committed to protecting and prioritising the needs of children.
- 94% described their feelings towards their own children as 'very positive'.
- Just over half (54%) said they have a positive view of all children.
- Almost half (46%) believe that governments give too little consideration to children.

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### Are you responsible for Australia's Children?

With a sizeable number of children in Australia not faring as well as they could be , the Valuing Children Initiative sought to better understand how modern, affluent 21st century Australian society tolerates a life for some children that we would never tolerate for our own. The Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016 (the survey) asked Australians a range of questions about who they believe is responsible for children.

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The survey found that the majority of adults nationwide agreed that the wellbeing of children is the shared responsibility of the entire community, and that all Australian adults are responsible for the best interests of children, including those who are not their own.

Whilst these responses reflect a widespread sense of shared responsibility for children's safety and wellbeing, it is still significant that almost one in five respondents rejected this notion.

There appears to be some disconnect between a professed shared societal responsibility to children and the reality, when more specific questions were asked.

The majority of those surveyed labelled parents as the most responsible for protecting and promoting the wellbeing of children, while only 12% of respondents saw "everyone" as being responsible for children, with just 1% allocating responsibility to the wider community.

*Almost 1 in 5 do not believe that the wellbeing of children is a shared societal responsibility*

*70% agreed that until children are 18 they 'belong' to their parents*

The survey also supported a strong consensus on the traditionally subordinate place of the child in the family, with 70% agreeing that children 'belong' to their parents, until they reach the age of 18 years of age.

Almost one-quarter (24%) of respondents believed that Australian society is **not** committed to protecting and prioritising the needs of children, and 17% of respondents did not know whether society is committed to children.

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The Valuing Children Initiative (VCI) believes that funding for community awareness raising activities is needed to promote a positive focus on children, raise awareness that a child's wellbeing is the shared responsibility of the entire community and that a society that is good for children is good for everyone.

The VCI continues to advocate for the creation of a Ministerial portfolio 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. A Minister should lead the development of a plan for children, and establish and oversee a cabinet subcommittee to ensure better integration, and continuity, of policies across portfolios with responsibly for children.

The VCI has also called for the instigation of a rigorous and transparent process to ensure that all policy, legislative and decision making processes actively considers the impact on children and future generations.

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The Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016 findings provided respondents with opportunity to rank their answers in order of opinion and provide comments where appropriate. The tables below contain a sample of responses to survey questions.

The full report can be accessed on the VCI website [www.valuingchildreninitiative.com.au](http://www.valuingchildreninitiative.com.au)

### 1. Which of the following groups do you see as being responsible for protecting and promoting the wellbeing of children in Australia today?

	Rank 1 %	Parents	Non-Parents	Male	Female
Parents	79%	83%	80%	83%	80%
Everyone (including people like myself)	12%	12%	13%	10%	14%
Haven't really thought about it	4%	3%	4%	4%	2%
Governments	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%
Teachers	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Extended family	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%
The wider community	1%	14%	10%	1%	1%

#### Comments

An overwhelming 79% of Australians believed that parents are the most responsible for protecting and promoting the wellbeing of children in Australia.

As the results above demonstrate, there are only minor differences across the key segments.

### 2. From the scale below, please select the scale point that best describes how you feel about children.

	TOTAL Positive	TOTAL Negative	Indifferent	I've never thought about it
Your own children (parents only, n=590)	94%	2%	4%	<1%
All Australian children*	53%	9%	22%	16%

#### Comments

Parents had an overwhelmingly positive view of their children; 94% described their feelings towards their own children as 'very positive'.

However, parents held a significantly less favourable view of 'all Australian children'; although 65% described their feelings as positive, 8% said they had negative feelings and 25% said they were indifferent.

Just over half (53%) of Australians said they have a positive view of all Australian children

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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 C: April 2017.

## Data Source

Essential Research 2016, Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016

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## References

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<sup>1</sup> <http://valuingchildreninitiative.com.au/2017/02/23/children-forefront-considerations/>

(Accessed 28th February 2017).

<sup>ii</sup> 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 28th February 2017).

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