



Family &  
Community  
Services

## FACSAR REPORT

# The views of NSW children and young people in out-of-home care

NSW results from the National Out-of-Home Care and  
NSW Residential Care Surveys

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## Summary

- This report presents an overview of the results of two state-wide surveys conducted by NSW Family and Community Services (FACS) in 2015 looking at the experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) – the [NSW] National OOHC Survey and the NSW Residential Care Survey.
- The [NSW] National 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 were tracking against key factors that influence better outcomes.
- NSW data was collected as part of a national pilot survey process to enable national reporting of children’s views for the first time.
- The NSW results are 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 are generally less positive 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 highlights 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 that 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%).
- The survey results set a benchmark and help to identify areas of strength and weakness to improve practice.
- A FACSAR Snapshot summarising the NSW results is available on the FACS website. National level survey results, and the national survey process, are described in more detail in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Bulletin [The views of children and young people in out-of-home care](#) (AIHW 2016).
- The National OOHC Survey is expected to be run again in 2018.

## Introduction

This report presents an overview of the results of two state-wide surveys conducted by FACS in 2015 looking at the experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) – the [NSW] National OOHC Survey and the NSW Residential Care Survey.

FACS conducted these surveys as part of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* and to inform planning for children in care. Both surveys report against key factors that influence outcomes for children and young people in OOHC, and enable data to be reported against the eight child-reported measures under the *National Standards for OOHC*:

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

NSW data was collected as part of a national pilot survey process to enable national reporting of children's views for the first time. The [NSW] National OOHC Survey 2015 was completed online by 359 children and young people aged 8-17 years, while the NSW Residential Care Survey 2015 was completed online by 321 children and young people aged 8-17 years.

In this report, we present a summary of the NSW survey results providing a comparison between the NSW and national results, and between the OOHC and residential care surveys in NSW. Detailed results are presented for each of the eight survey indicators. High level results are then reported across key characteristics of children and their experiences of care including: age, gender, Aboriginality, type and duration of their current placement, and the time they have been in care. Results are also broken down by whether children reside in a FACS or Non Government Organisation (NGO) managed placement.

The analyses are descriptive only and do not imply causal relationships or take into account other underlying factors that could contribute to the findings. Tests of statistical significance have not been undertaken so findings should be interpreted with this in mind. Disaggregated results with small numbers should be interpreted with caution.

A FACSAR Snapshot summarising the NSW results is available on the FACS website. National level survey results, and the national survey process, are

described in more detail in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Bulletin *The views of children and young people in out-of-home care* (AIHW 2016).

## 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' (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2011).

The eight indicators explored in the surveys were designed to be mapped to seven of the 13 OOHC national standards (Table 1). The survey questions and indicators are intended to drive improvements in the consistency and quality of care provided to children and young people. Responses to a core set of national questions were collected as part of the survey process by all jurisdictions to facilitate national reporting. A complete list of the indicators, their definitions and related survey questions is provided in Appendix 1.

**Table 1: Comparison of National OOHC Standards and survey indicators**

National OOHC Standard		Survey indicators
1	Children and young people will be provided with stability and security during their time in care	Sense of security
2	Children and young people participate in decisions that have an impact on their lives	Participation
8	Children and young people in care are supported to participate in social and/or recreational activities of their choice, such as sporting, cultural or community activity	Community activity
9	Children and young people are supported to safely and appropriately maintain connection with family, be they birth parents, siblings or other family members	Family connection
		Family contact
10	Children and young people in care are supported to develop their identity, safely and appropriately, through contact with their families, friends, culture, spiritual sources and communities and have their life history recorded as they grow up	Sense of community
11	Children and young people in care are supported to safely and appropriately identify and stay in touch, with at least one other person who cares about their future, who they can turn to for support and advice	Children have a significant adult
13	Children and young people have a transition from care plan commencing at 15 years old which details support to be provided after leaving care	Leaving care average

The surveys were seen as a valuable opportunity to initiate conversations with children and young people about various aspects of their life, which could contribute to their case plan review and be used to set goals for the year ahead. As such, the administration of the surveys was integrated with casework management and planning processes.

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. Importantly, the results from the surveys enable children's views to be considered in decision-making.

## Method and data

For the pilot National OOHC Survey, states and territories conducted the survey as part of their case management processes during the period from 1 February 2015 to 30 June 2015. Non-identifying NSW data was submitted to the AIHW for national collation and analysis.

Completion of the surveys required the state-wide coordination of staff from both FACS and NGO providers, to ensure appropriate supports were in place to assist participants in expressing their views and experiences and to better inform planning outcomes.

### The [NSW] National OOHC Survey

The NSW data used for the National OOHC Survey was collected between 1 February 2015 and 30 June 2015, via an internet-based survey tool, 'Viewpoint'. The sample comprised children and young people:

- aged 8-17 years
- residing in OOHC under the *NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1988*
- whose care arrangements were ordered by the Children's Court of NSW and for whom parental responsibility was transferred to the Minister/Chief Executive
- who had been on a relevant court order for three months, or more
- where a case review for the child or young person was due within three months of the sample extract date
- who had not been previously selected for the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study.

A sample of 571 children and young people who met the criteria was randomly selected. Of these, 359 children and young people responded (a response rate of 63%), 133 (23%) declined to respond and 79 (14%) did not respond for other reasons.



Since the selected children and young people were on final orders (as opposed to interim orders or other arrangements), there were no children or young people in the sample who had been in care for less than 12 months.

While children and young people completed the survey questions themselves, all participants were supported to complete the survey by either a caseworker or a support worker to ensure they felt safe, informed and supported throughout the process. Participation was voluntary and children and young people were provided with an easy to understand information sheet about the survey to inform their choice to participate.

Caseworkers were encouraged to use the survey tool as part of their regular case planning with the children and young people invited to participate. Caseworkers were responsible for: talking with the child or young person about a suitable time to undertake the survey (either with the caseworker or on their own) and providing them with log in details; reviewing their answers; identifying any child protection concerns; and talking with the young person about the answers they gave to identify what is going well or what they would like to improve.

This approach may have affected the children and young people's responses to the survey questions.

### The NSW Residential Care Survey

Data for the Residential Care Survey was collected in the same way as the [NSW] National OOHC Survey, using the online system 'Viewpoint'. Data was collected over a slightly different collection period, 1 May 2015 to 17 July 2015.

All children and young people aged between 8 and 17 years who were in residential care were included, regardless of whether a child or young person was on final orders or interim orders (or had other arrangements in place). Of the 476 children and young people selected, 321 responded (a response rate of 67%), 87 (18%) declined to respond and 68 (14%) did not respond for other reasons.

### Characteristics of survey respondents

Data was collected for 359 children who completed the [NSW] National OOHC Survey and 321 children who completed the NSW Residential Care Survey. Key characteristics of the respondents include (see Appendix 2):

- the most common age range of children who completed the [NSW] National OOHC Survey was 8-11 years (45%), while almost 60% of children who participated in the Residential Care Survey were aged 15-17 years
- more female than male children participated in both surveys
- just under one-third of children were Aboriginal in both surveys
- about two-thirds (69%) of children responding to the [NSW] National OOHC Survey were living in foster care, while the other third (31%) were living in relative/kin care.

In the [NSW] National OOHC Survey children and young people included in the sample were more likely to respond if they: identified as non-Aboriginal rather than Aboriginal; were in foster care rather than relative/kin care; and were managed by the NGO sector rather than by FACS. Comparing those who participated in the NSW Residential Care Survey with those who did not shows only minor differences in demographics. Appendix 2 provides more detail on survey respondents compared to non-respondents.

### Comparison of results across surveys

In comparing results between the [NSW] National OOHC Survey, the NSW Residential Care Survey, and the National OOHC Survey, it should be noted that observed differences may be due to differences in the characteristics of the cohorts of children and young people included in the surveys, as well as the different collection methodologies used across jurisdictions. For example, 44% of the children and young people in the National OOHC Survey were in foster care while 40% were in kinship/relative care, 10% were in residential care and 5% were in other types of care. In comparison, 69% of children and young people in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey were in foster care and 31% were in relative/kinship care, while all children and young people in the NSW Residential Care Survey were in residential care.

The age distributions of the samples also differ. While 60% of children and young people in the NSW Residential Care Survey were aged between 15 and 17 years, only 23% of children and young people in both the [NSW] National OOHC and National OOHC surveys were in this age range.

## Summary of NSW results

### Where are NSW children faring well?

Overall, the results from the [NSW] National OOH Survey are encouraging with children and young people reporting positively against all indicators (Figure 1):

- 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 having a significant adult that cares about what happens to them (99%).
- Results appear to be more positive for children and young people who had been in their current placement for longer.
- Higher proportions of children and young people in relative/kinship care reported being 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).
- While the results from the NSW Residential Care Survey were generally less positive, it is encouraging that the majority of children and young people still responded positively to most indicators.

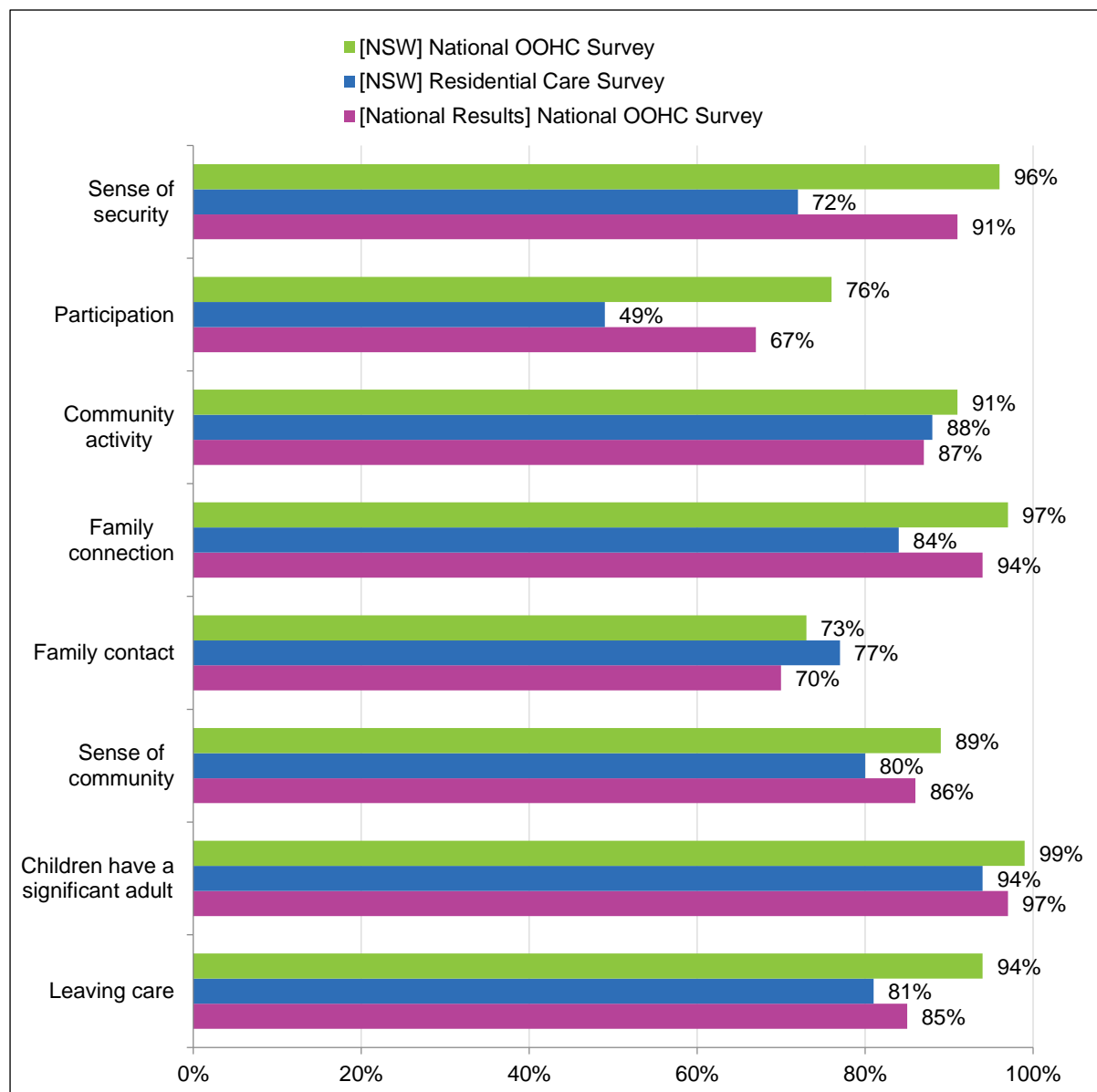
### Where is there room for improvement?

The results highlight policy and practice areas that may require further investigation and improvement:

- Almost a quarter of children and young people in the [NSW] National OOH Survey 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%).
- Results from the NSW Residential Care Survey were generally less positive than the [NSW] National OOH Survey. These differences are most notable with the 'participation' indicator, where 49% of residential care respondents reported that they had a say in decisions that affected them and felt listened to, compared to 76% of children in foster/relative care placements.
- A considerable proportion of children and young people in residential care responded negatively to a number of indicators. As noted above, only around half of young people reported they usually had a say in decisions that affected them and felt listened to; more than a quarter reported not feeling safe and settled (28%); and almost a quarter were not satisfied with the level of contact they have with their family (23%).
- Results tended to be less positive for female children and young people in residential care compared to males 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%).

**Figure 1: [NSW] National OOHC Survey, National OOHC Survey and NSW Residential Care Survey 2015**



Note: For ‘Leaving care’, the official national result of 58% is not appropriate for comparisons with NSW data as it is based on a question which was not included in the NSW implementation of the survey. The national figure of 85%, based on a calculated average score categorised as ‘Yes, as much as I need’, is used for comparison with the NSW results.

Source: NSW National OOHC 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.

### How does NSW compare?

Overall, the [NSW] National OOHC Survey results are similar to or more positive than the national results across all indicators (as shown in Figure 1). In contrast, the NSW Residential Care Survey results are consistently less positive than the national

results except for the 'community activity' and 'family contact' indicators (where they are similar or more positive).

However, in comparing these results it should be noted that these differences may be due to differences in the characteristics of the children and young people that are included in the survey results, as well as the different collection methodologies used across jurisdictions. For example, the National OOHC Survey included a small sample of children in residential care, which was not the case in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey. Most children in the NSW Residential Care Survey were aged between 15-17 years, whereas this was the case for only around a quarter of children in the other surveys.

Bearing in mind the underlying differences in the samples, children and young people in the NSW Residential Care Survey seemed to respond less positively than their counterparts in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey and the national survey across all indicators except 'family contact' and 'community activity'.

## Overview of NSW results by indicator

This section provides detailed results for each of the eight indicators measured in the three surveys. For children surveyed through the [NSW] National OOHC Survey, differences of 3 percentage points or more are also reported by placement type, placement duration, time in care, Aboriginality, age and sex. Detailed tables reporting the data breakdowns for each indicator are provided in Appendix 3.

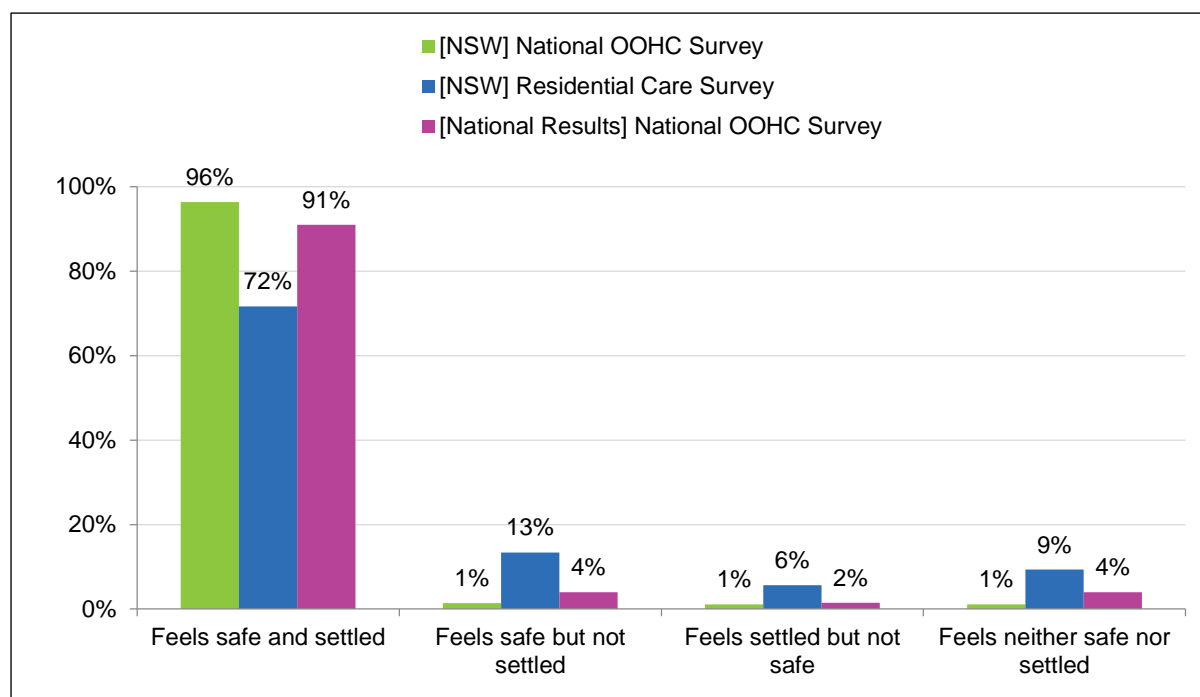
### Sense of security

Children were asked four questions related to this indicator (see Appendix 1). These questions aimed to assess the extent to which children felt safe and settled in their current placement.

#### Key findings

- 96% of children in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey reported feeling both safe and settled in their current placement compared to 91% nationally (Figure 2).
- A smaller proportion of children in NSW residential care reported feeling both safe and settled in their current placement (72%) than in the other surveys.

**Figure 2: Children in care, aged 8-17, by self-reported sense of security in their current placement, NSW and nationally, 2015**



Notes: 'Feel safe' and 'Feel settled' includes the response categories 'Yes completely' and 'Just about'. 'Not safe' and 'Not settled' includes the response categories 'Not really' and 'Not at all'. Children with 'not stated' responses are excluded.

Source: NSW National OOHC Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS. National data based on AIHW material, OOHC Survey national data set 2015.

The [NSW] National OOHC Survey showed that for children in OOHC (excluding residential care) in NSW there were few differences for this indicator by sex,

placement type or time in care. Slightly more older children than younger children reported feeling safe and settled in their current placement (98% of 15-17 year olds and 95% of 8-11 year olds), and slightly more non-Aboriginal children than Aboriginal children reported feeling safe and settled in their placement (97% and 94% respectively).

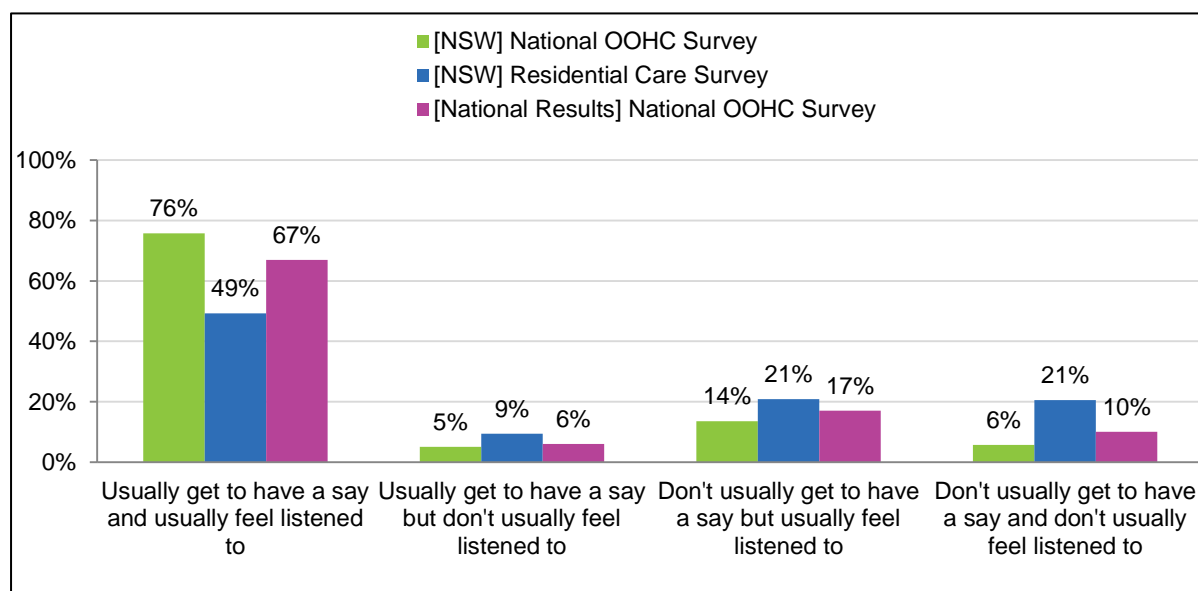
## Participation

Children aged 8 to 17 years were asked three questions related to this indicator. These questions aimed to assess children’s perception of having the opportunity to participate in decision-making, in particular whether they feel they get to have a say and whether they feel listened to. Children were also asked whether someone explains the decisions made about them.

### Key findings

- 76% of children in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey reported they usually participate in decision-making, compared to 67% nationally (Figure 3).
- Children in NSW residential care were much less likely than children in other types of care to report participating in decision-making (49% of children in residential care reported they usually get to have a say and usually feel listened to).

**Figure 3: Children in care, aged 8-17, by self-reported participation in decision-making, NSW and Nationally, 2015**



Notes: 'Usually' includes the response categories 'All of the time' and 'Most of the time'. 'Don't usually' includes the response categories 'Not very often' and 'Never'. Children with 'not stated' responses are excluded.

Source: NSW National OOHC Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS. National data based on AIHW material, OOHC Survey national data set 2015.

The [NSW] National OOHC Survey showed that for children in OOHC (excluding residential care) in NSW, participation increased the longer they were in a

placement, with 79% of children in a placement for more than five years reporting that they usually have a say and usually feel listened to, compared to 73% of children in a placement for between 12 months and 5 years, and 64% (n=16) of children in the survey who had been in their current placement for less than 12 months. Participation in decision making was also more common among older children (80% of 15-17 year olds compared with 74% of 8-14 year olds). Children reported similar levels of participation in decision-making by sex, Aboriginality and placement type.

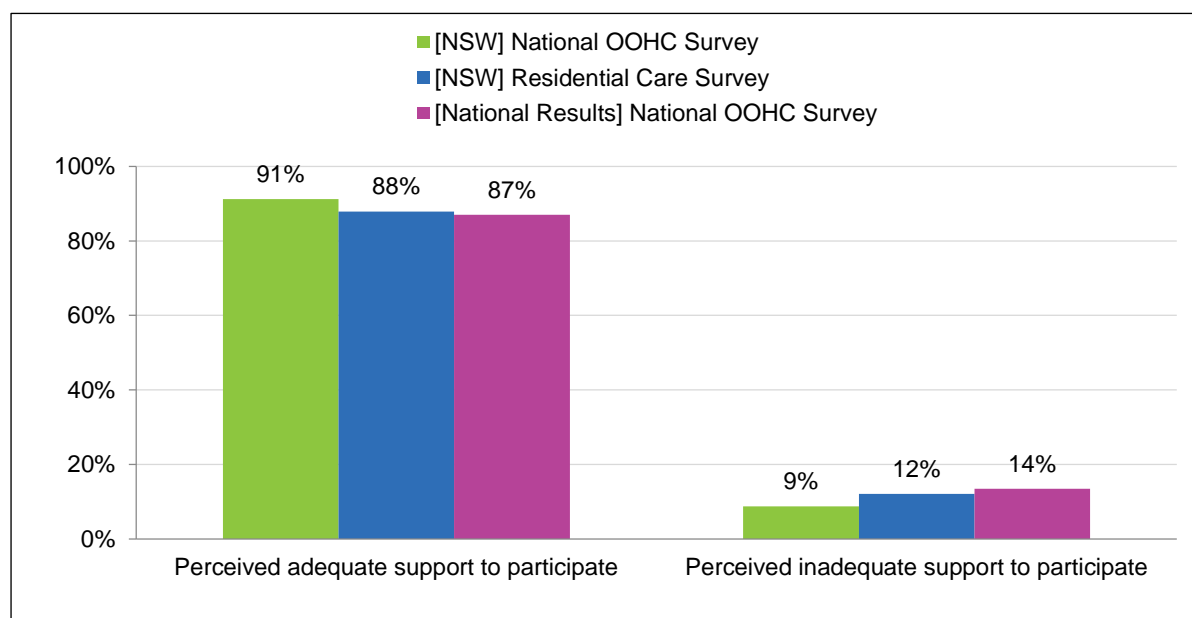
## Community activity

Children aged 8 to 17 years were asked two questions that aimed to assess children’s perceived support to participate in sporting, cultural or community activities.

### Key Findings

- 91% of children in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey reported they received adequate support (from their carer or someone else) to participate in sport, community or cultural activities, compared to 87% nationally (Figure 4).
- 88% of children in NSW residential care reported receiving adequate support to participate in community activities.

**Figure 4: Children in care, aged 8-17, by self-reported support to participate in community activities, NSW and nationally, 2015**



Notes: 'Perceived adequate support' includes the response categories 'All of the time' and 'Most of the time'. 'Perceived inadequate support' includes the response categories 'Not very often' and 'Never'. Children with 'not stated' and 'I am not interested in these things' responses are excluded.

Source: NSW National OOHC Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS. National data based on AIHW material, OOHC Survey national data set 2015.



The [NSW] National OOHC Survey showed that for children in OOHC (excluding residential care) in NSW, support to engage in community activities increased the longer children were in a placement (93% or 181 children in a placement for more than five years compared to 83% or 19 children in a placement for less than 12 months). There was little difference across all other demographic characteristics of children in taking part in community activities (placement type, aboriginality, age, sex), showing more than 90% across all demographic groups.

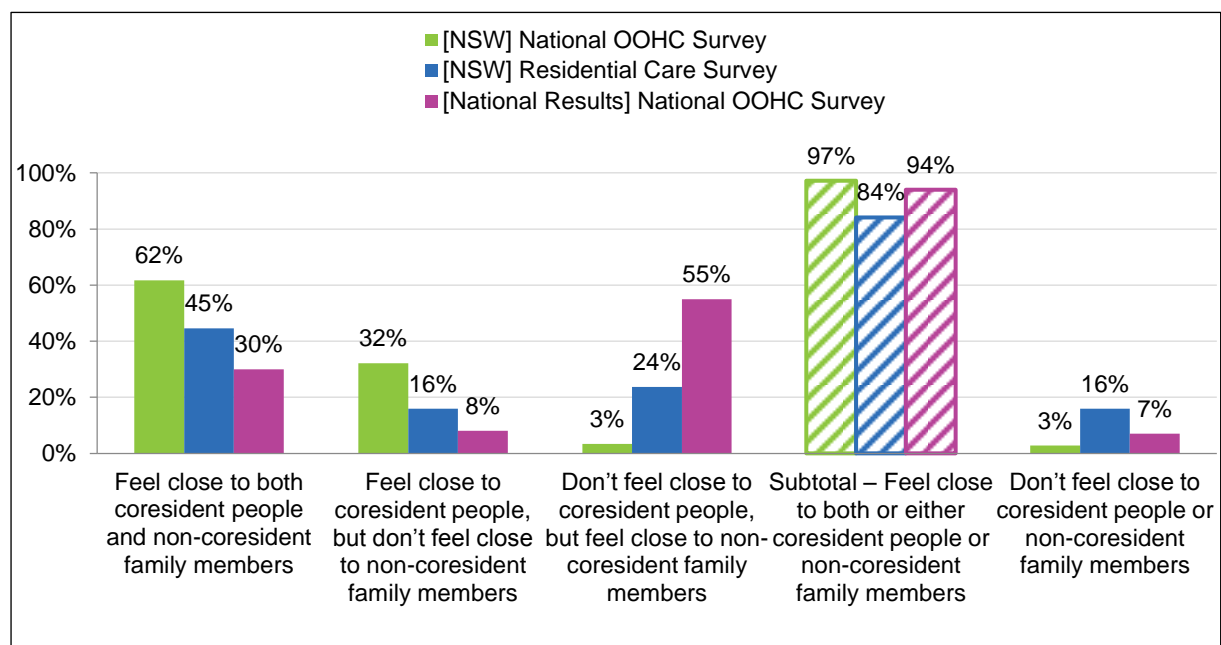
### Family connection

Children aged 8 to 17 years were asked two questions that aimed to assess children’s feelings of connection and closeness to family, regardless of the level of contact. This includes people they are living with now (coresident family), and family members they don’t live with (non-coresident family).

### Key Findings

- 97% of children in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey reported feeling close to their family (either coresident family or non-coresident family, or both) compared to 94% nationally (Figure 5).
- Children in NSW residential care were less likely than children in the other surveys to report feeling a close family connection (84%).

**Figure 5: Children in care, aged 8-17, by self-reported connection with family, NSW and nationally, 2015**



Notes: Children were asked how close they felt (i.e. how important and special they are to you) to 'people you are living with now' (coresident family) and 'family members who you don't live with' (non-coresident family)'. Source: NSW National OOHC Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS. National data based on AIHW material, OOHC Survey national data set 2015.

The [NSW] National OOHC Survey showed that over 95% of children in OOHC (excluding residential care) in NSW across all demographic groups reported they

have a connection with a family member. Connection with a family member was slightly higher amongst Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal children (99% and 96% respectively) and was slightly higher for males than females (99% and 96% respectively). There was no reported difference between children living in foster care and relative/kin care, or by time in care.

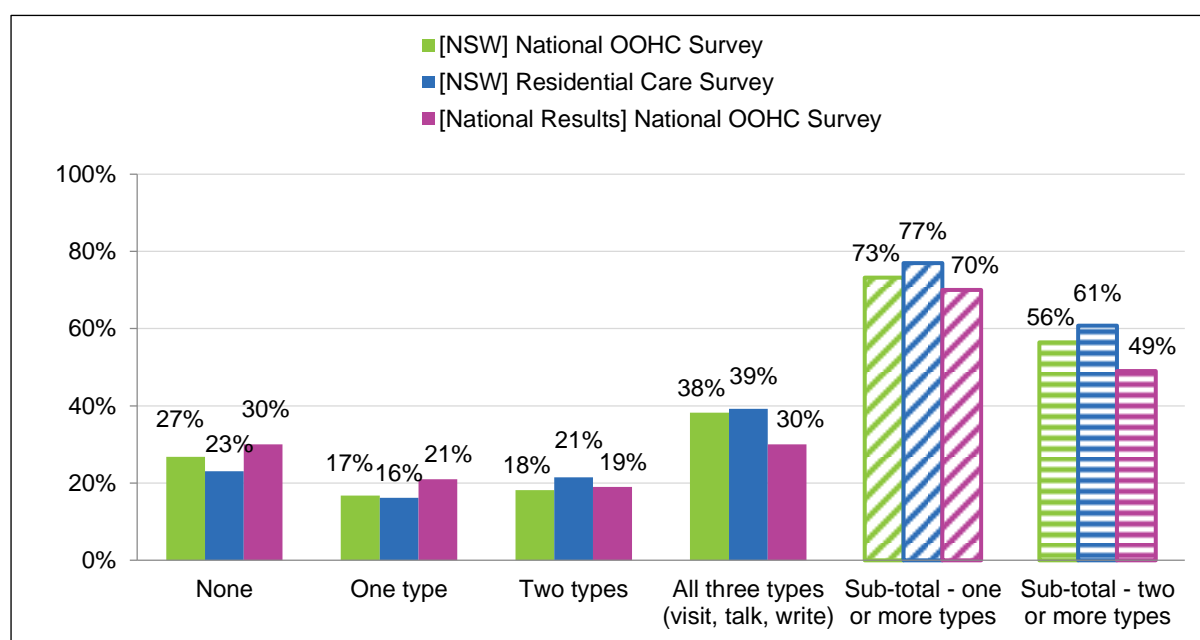
## Family contact

Children aged 8 to 17 years were asked four questions to assess their satisfaction with their contact with family they don't live with (non-coresident family). The family contact measure was based on getting 'as much' contact as the child or young person 'wanted' by visiting, talking, or writing to their families. Non-satisfaction (and thus exclusion from this result) was classified as contact 'less than' or 'more than I want'.

## Key Findings

- 73% of children in the [NSW] National OOHHC Survey reported satisfaction with one or more types of contact with the family they don't live with, compared to 70% nationally (Figure 6).
- A slightly larger share of children in NSW residential care reported satisfaction with one or more contact types (77%) than children in the other surveys.

**Figure 6: Children in care, aged 8-17, by self-reported satisfaction with non-coresident family, NSW and nationally, 2015**



Notes: Figure shows the number of contact types children reported satisfaction with. Children were asked about satisfaction with three types of contact; visiting, talking and writing. 'Satisfied' includes the response category 'As much as I want'. 'Not satisfied' includes the response categories 'Less than I want' and 'More than I want'. Children with 'not stated' responses are excluded. The subtotals are the sums of the relevant preceding categories. The subtotals are not mutually exclusive and so will not sum to equal 100.

Source: NSW National OOHHC Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS. National data based on AIHW material, OOHHC Survey national data set 2015.

The [NSW] National OOHC Survey showed that for children in OOHC (excluding residential care) in NSW, this indicator had the least positive responses across all demographic groups of children. Older children were more likely to report being satisfied with the amount of family contact they have than younger children (79% for the age group 15-17 and 67% for the age group 8-11). Male children report being more satisfied with the amount of family contact they have than female children (76% and 70% respectively). There was little difference by Aboriginality.

Slightly more children in relative/kin care (76%) were satisfied with their family contact, than in foster care (72%), as were children who had been in care for longer than 5 years (74%) compared to those in care for 1-5 years (71%). Satisfaction with contact varied by the amount of time children had been in their current placement. Those who had been in their placement for less than 12 months were least satisfied with their family contact (60% n=15), however, children who had been in a placement for more than 5 years (72% n=145 ) were less satisfied than those who had been in a placement for 1-5 years (77% n=102).

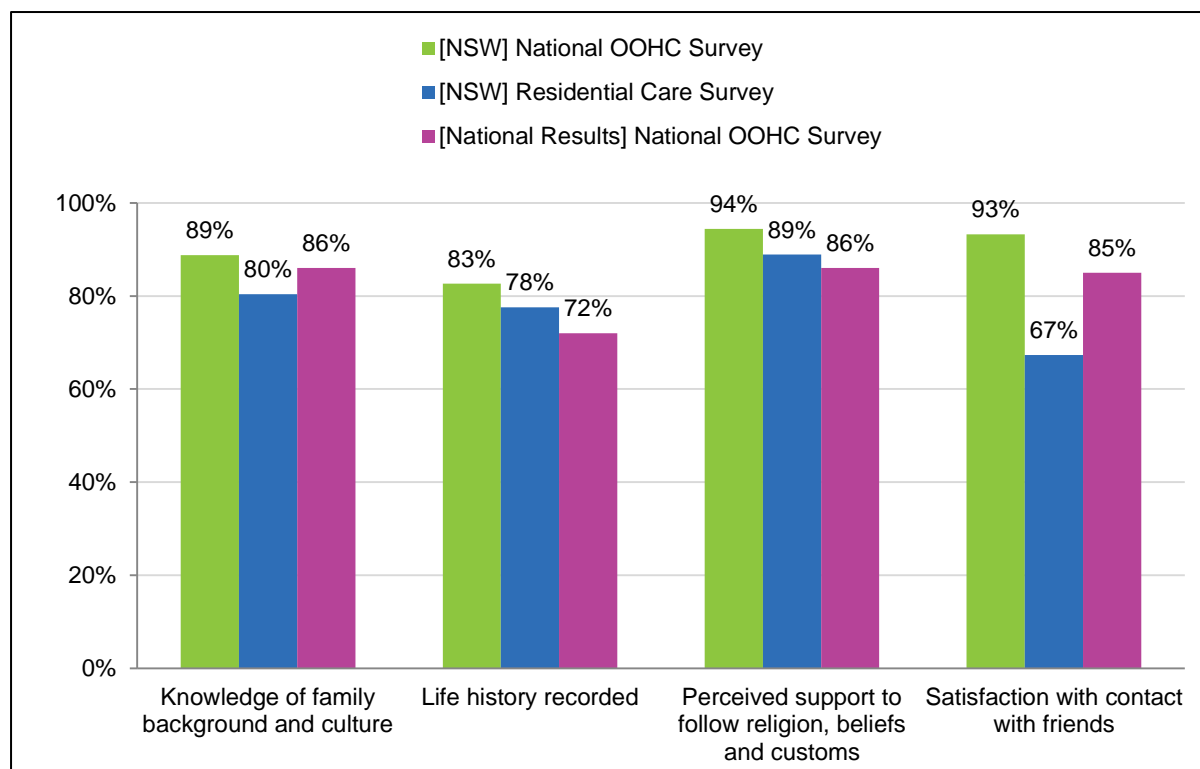
### Sense of community

Children aged 8 to 17 years were asked four questions aimed to assess children's sense of community through knowledge of their life history, whether their life history is being recorded, feeling connected to their culture or religion and contact with friends.

### Key Findings

- 89% of children in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey reported they had at least some knowledge of their family background and culture, compared to 86% nationally (Figure 7).
- Children in NSW residential care were less likely to report having some knowledge of their family background and culture (80%), than children in the other surveys.
- While a large majority of children in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey (93%) reported satisfaction with contact with friends, this was the case for only two-thirds (67%) of children in NSW residential care.

**Figure 7: Children in care, aged 8-17, by self-reported sense of community, NSW and nationally, 2015**



Notes: Figure shows children who reported 'at least some' for each of the 4 topics. The categories in this figure are not mutually exclusive and so will not sum to equal 100.

Source: NSW National OOH Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS. National data based on AIHW material, OOH Survey national data set 2015.

The [NSW] National OOH Survey showed that for children in OOH (excluding residential care) in NSW, children in relative/kin care reported greater knowledge of their family background and culture than children in foster care (93% and 87% respectively), as did children who had been in care for a shorter period of time (91% of children in care between 1-5 years compared to 88% of children in care for more than 5 years). Aboriginal children were slightly more likely to report they had some knowledge of their family background and culture than non-Aboriginal children (92% of Aboriginal children compared to 87% of non-Aboriginal children), and female children were slightly more likely than male children to report having some knowledge of their family background and culture (91% and 87% respectively).

A larger share of younger children reported knowledge of their family background and culture than older children (92% of children in the age group 8-11 reported having some knowledge of their family background and culture, compared to 85% in the age group 12-14 and 88% in the age group 15-17).

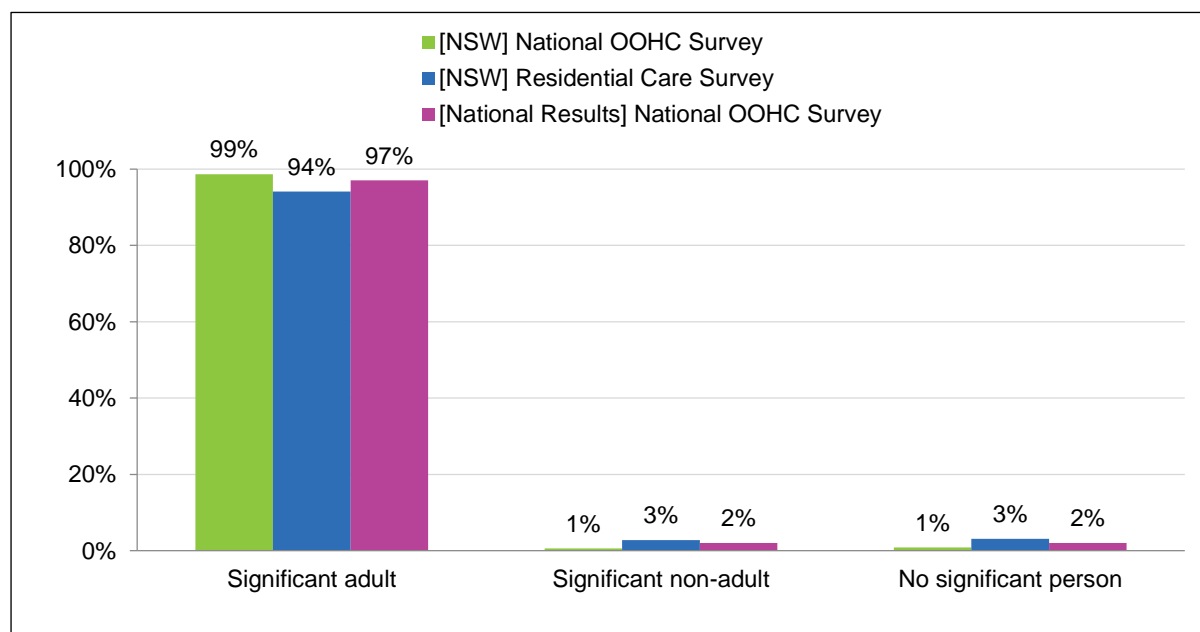
## Significant adult

Children aged 8 to 17 years were asked three questions that aimed to assess whether children could nominate an adult who cares about them. Children were also asked about their satisfaction with the amount of contact with their nominated person.

### Key Findings

- 99% of children in the [NSW] National OOH Survey reported they had a significant adult who cares about them now and in the future, compared to 97% nationally (Figure 8)
- Children in NSW residential care were less likely than children in the other surveys to report they have a significant adult, however the result is still high (94%).

**Figure 8: Children in care, aged 8-17, by self-reported significant person, NSW and nationally, 2015**



Notes: 'Significant non-adult' only includes children who reported they didn't have a significant adult. 'No significant person' only includes children who reported they didn't have a significant adult, or a significant non-adult. Children with 'not stated' responses are excluded.

Source: NSW National OOH Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS. National data based on AIHW material, OOH Survey national data set 2015.

The [NSW] National OOH Survey showed that almost all children in OOH (excluding residential care) in NSW, across all demographic groups, have at least one significant adult who cares about them, regardless of placement type, duration, time in care, aboriginality, age or sex (over 97% in each category responded positively).

## Leaving care

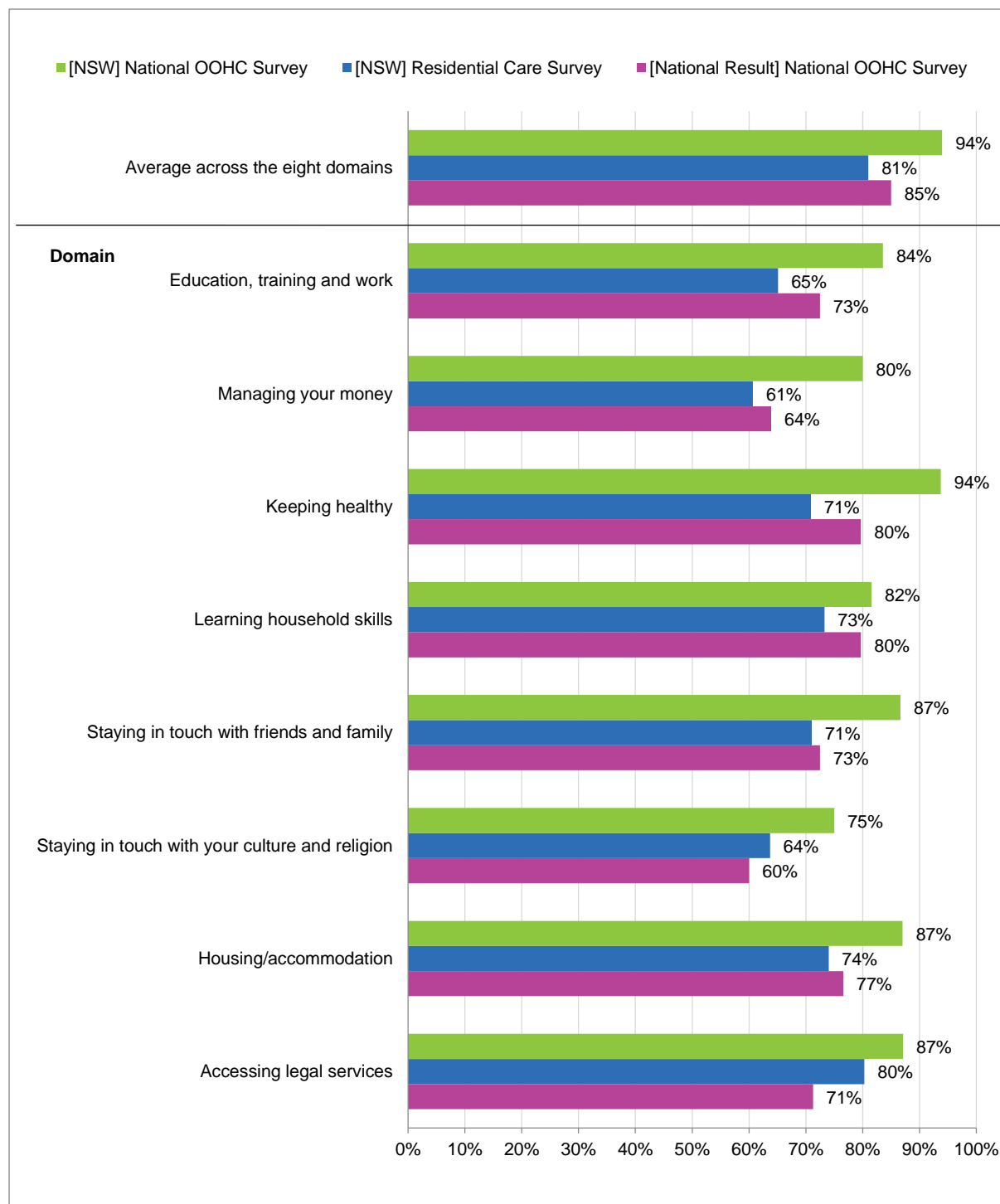
Young people aged 15 to 17 years were asked nine questions that aimed to assess young people's perceptions of the adequacy of the assistance they are currently receiving to help prepare them for adult life.

### Key Findings

- Of the 79 young people aged 15 to 17 years who answered the question about leaving care in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey, 94% felt they received as much help as they needed to prepare for adult life. More than 80% reported they were getting as much help as they needed to make decisions about their future across all domains except 'Staying in touch with your culture and religion' (Figure 9).
- Of the 188 young people in NSW residential care who answered the question about leaving care, 81% felt they received as much help as they needed to prepare for adult life.

The [NSW] National OOHC Survey showed that for the 79 young people aged 15 to 17 years who answered the question about leaving care in NSW, across all demographic groups, more than 90% of young people felt that overall they received adequate assistance to prepare them for adult life. More young people who were in their current placement for longer than five years reported receiving adequate assistance to transition to independence than those who had been in their placement for shorter periods of time. The proportion of male young people who reported adequate assistance is slightly higher than female young people (96% and 91% respectively). Placement type, time in care and Aboriginality did not have an effect on the result for this indicator.

**Figure 9: Children in care, aged 15-17, by self-reported adequacy of leaving care assistance, NSW and nationally, 2015**



Notes: Figure shows children who reported they were getting 'as much help as I need' across the 8 file domains to be considered in transition planning, as identified in transitioning from OOH to independence. The average response for each child was calculated as follows: responses were allocated a number (yes =3, some=2, no=1). Each child's responses across the eight domains was summed ('not stated' and 'doesn't apply to me' responses were excluded). This sum was then divided by the number of domains the child provided a yes/some/no response to ('not stated' and 'doesn't apply to me' responses were excluded). These average scores were then grouped into the categories (yes=scores of 2.1-3; some=scores of 1.1-2; no=scores of 0-1). The overarching measure, as defined by the National Standards Survey Working Group, was not appropriate for comparisons with NSW data as it was based on a question which was not included in the NSW implementation of the survey. Therefore the 'average across the eight domains' is used as a proxy.

Source: NSW National OOH Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS. National data based on AIHW material, OOH Survey national data set 2015.

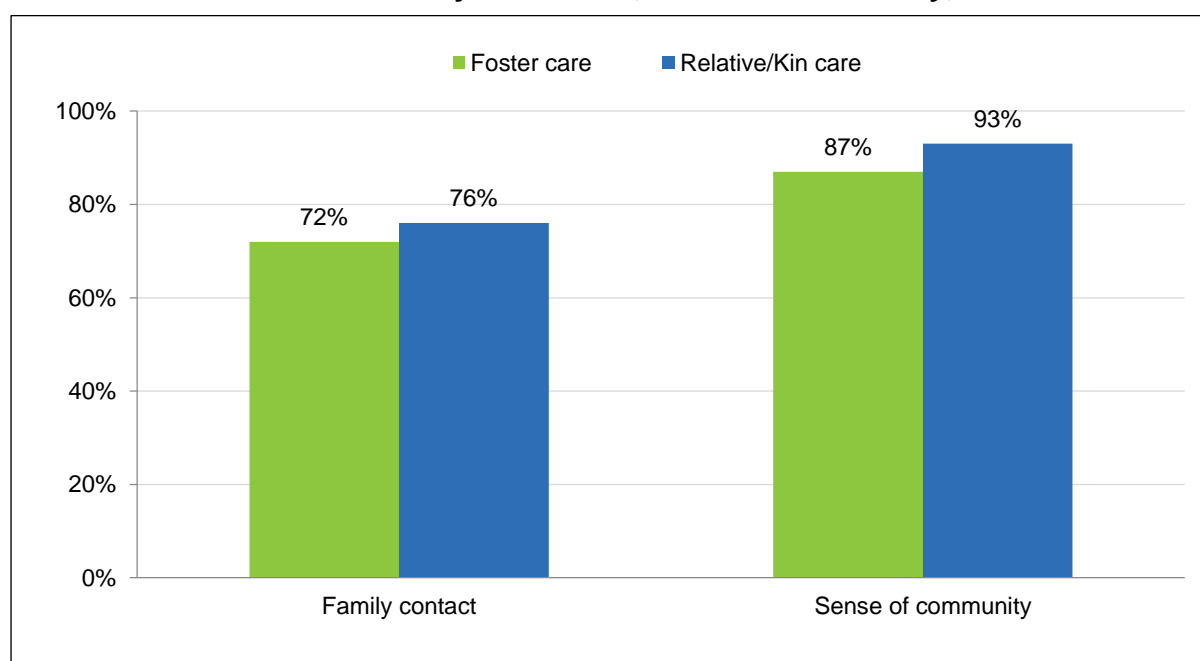
## Overview of NSW results for key characteristics of children and young people and their placements

This section examines key findings in the NSW survey results by characteristics of children and young people and their placements. Placement characteristics refer to the type and duration of the current placement, and whether the placement is managed by FACS or the NGO sector (provider type). Other characteristics examined include the overall length of time a child or young person has spent in care, and their Aboriginality, age and sex.

### Placement type

There were minimal differences in the NSW results across children in foster care and relative/kin care. The largest difference was that 87% of children in foster care reported feeling a sense of community, compared to 93% in relative/kin care. Also, a smaller proportion of children in foster care (72%) reported that they were satisfied with the level of contact with their family than those in relative/kin care (76%) (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Results for Foster care and Relative/Kin care for family contact and sense of community indicators, NSW OOHC Survey, 2015**



Source: NSW National OOHC Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS.

As noted in the discussion in previous sections of this report, results from the NSW Residential Care Survey were generally less positive than the [NSW] National OOHC Survey results, particularly for the 'participation', 'sense of security', 'family connection' and 'leaving care' indicators. Children and young people in residential care had a similar result to those in relative/kin care in terms of 'family contact' but appeared to have a more positive result than children in foster care.



## Duration of current placement

Results for children who had been in their current placement for longer tended to be more positive in both the [NSW] National OOHC Survey and the NSW Residential Care Survey.

For the [NSW] National OOHC Survey, the largest difference was for participation, with 64% of children in placements of less than 12 months (n= 16) reporting they feel listened to and have a say in decisions that impact on their lives compared with 79% of children with a placement duration of more than five years (n=156). Given that just 25 children had a placement duration of less than 12 months, these results should be interpreted with caution.

The most notable difference among children in residential care appears to be in the 'leaving care' indicator. While around three quarters (74%) of children and young people in placement durations of less than 12 months reported that they were receiving adequate assistance to prepare for adult life, this increased to 85% for placement durations of between 12 and 60 months. A larger proportion of children with longer placements also reported a sense of community (85% for placements between 12 and 60 months) compared with those whose current placement was less than 12 months (76%).

## Time in care

As one of the sample selection criteria for the [NSW] National OOHC Survey was that children and young people had received final orders, there were no children in the survey with a care period of less than 12 months. Comparing the other two categories, between 12 and 60 months and more than five years, results appear to be similar across each of the indicators.

In the NSW Residential Care Survey (which did not have the criteria that children and young people had to be on final orders) responses were generally more positive among children who had been in care for longer – although the relatively small number of children who had been in care for less than 12 months may have skewed the results slightly (less than 40 children). The largest differences for children and young people living in residential care were:

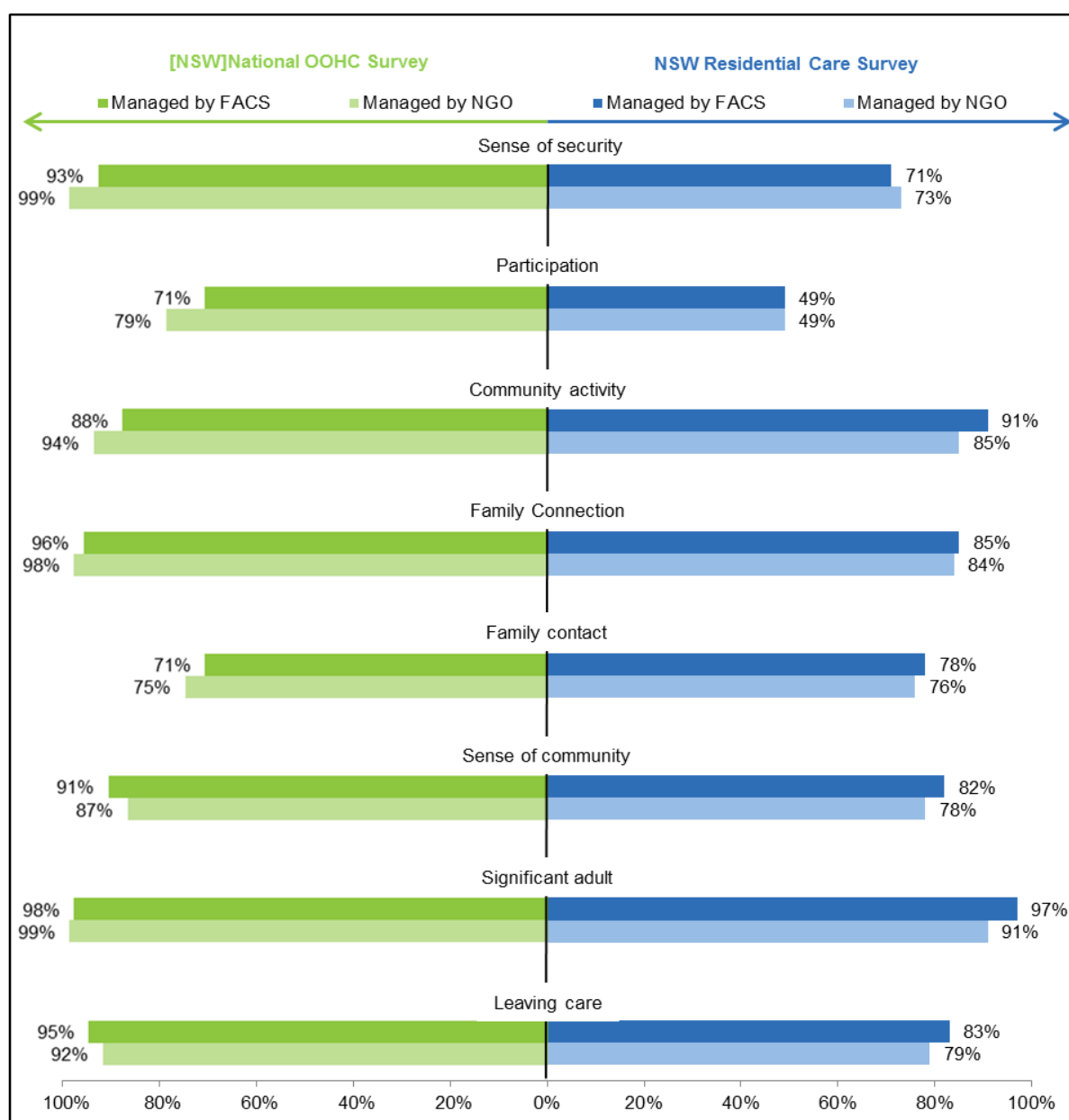
- More children who had been in care for longer periods of time reported being interested in, or encouraged to participate in, sport, hobbies and community or cultural activities (81% of those in care for less than 12 months compared with 94% of those in care for more than five years).
- More children who had been in care for longer periods of time were able to identify at least one significant adult who cares about them and who they believe they will be able to depend upon (87% of those in care for less than 12 months compared with 98% of those in care for more than five years).
- Prior to exiting out-of-home care, young people who had been in care for longer periods of time were more likely to report they were receiving adequate

assistance to prepare for adult life (76% for those in care less than 12 months to 89% for those in care more than five years).

## Provider type

Figure 11 shows that in the [NSW] National OOH Survey, results tended to be slightly more positive for children and young people managed by the NGO sector compared with those with FACS, except for the 'leaving care' and 'sense of community' indicators. In contrast, the NSW Residential Care Survey results appear to be slightly more positive for FACS-managed placements when compared with NGO-managed placements across a number of indicators, in particular 'community activity' and children having a 'significant adult'.

**Figure 11: NSW results by indicator and provider type, FACS or NGO, 2015**



Source: NSW National OOH Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS.

## Aboriginality

For the [NSW] National OOHC Survey, the results for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents were fairly consistent. The largest difference was for the sense of community indicator, where 92% of Aboriginal children and young people reported having at least some knowledge of their family background and culture compared with 87% of non-Aboriginal children and young people.

For the NSW Residential Care Survey, the results appeared to be consistent or more positive for Aboriginal respondents compared with non-Aboriginal respondents, although the differences are quite small. Most notably, Aboriginal children and young people reported closer connections to their family and more satisfaction with family contact than non-Aboriginal children (89% and 81% reported positive family connections and contact compared with 82% and 75% respectively). Aboriginal children were also more likely than non-Aboriginal children to report receiving enough support to prepare for adult life (85% compared with 79% of non Aboriginal children).

## Age

In the [NSW] National OOHC Survey, there were minor differences in results by age. For example, 74% of 8-11 and 12-14 year olds reported that they participated in making decisions that impact on their lives, increasing to 80% of 15-17 years olds. Satisfaction with family contact also increased with age, from 67% of 8-11 year olds to 78% of 12-14 year olds and 79% of 12-17 year olds.

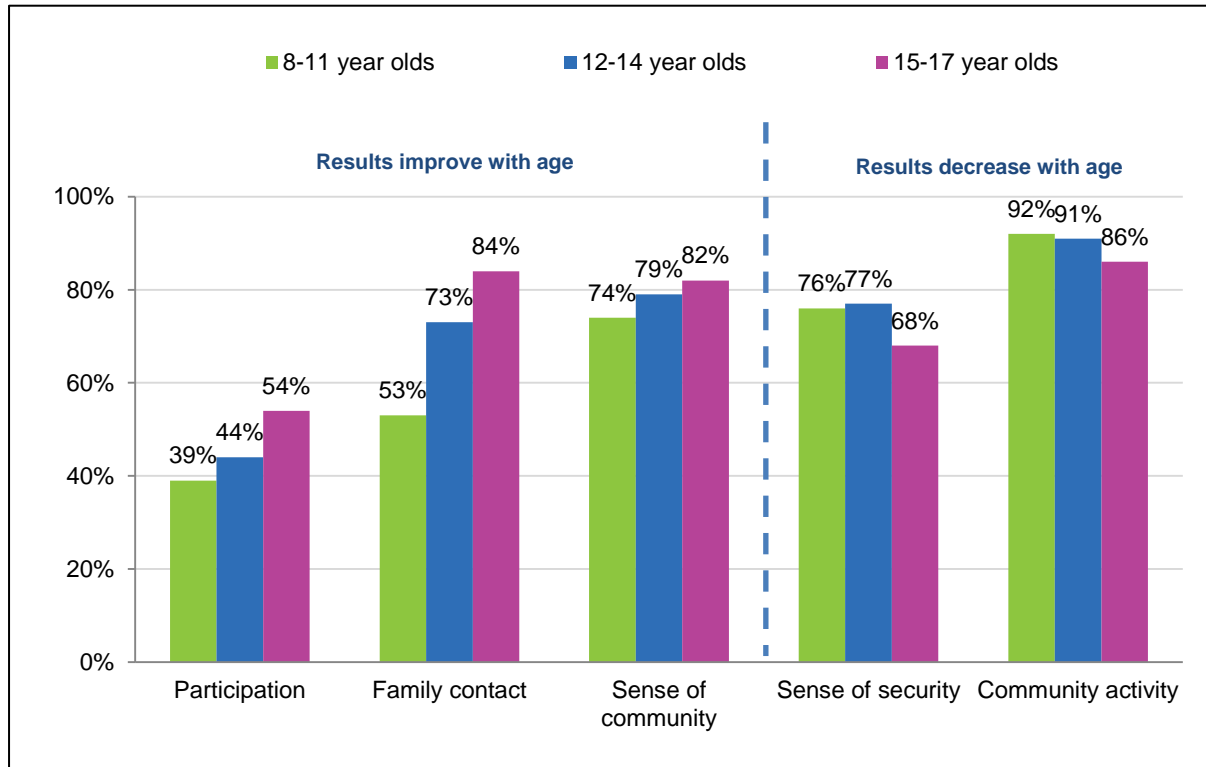
For most indicators in the NSW Residential Care Survey the results were similar or more positive among older age groups (see figure 12), however, note that the number of children that make up the youngest age bracket is relatively small (37-38 children aged 8-11).

## Sex

In the [NSW] National OOHC Survey, the results were generally similar for males and females. The largest difference was that male children and young people reported greater satisfaction with their level of contact with family members (76%) compared to females (70%).

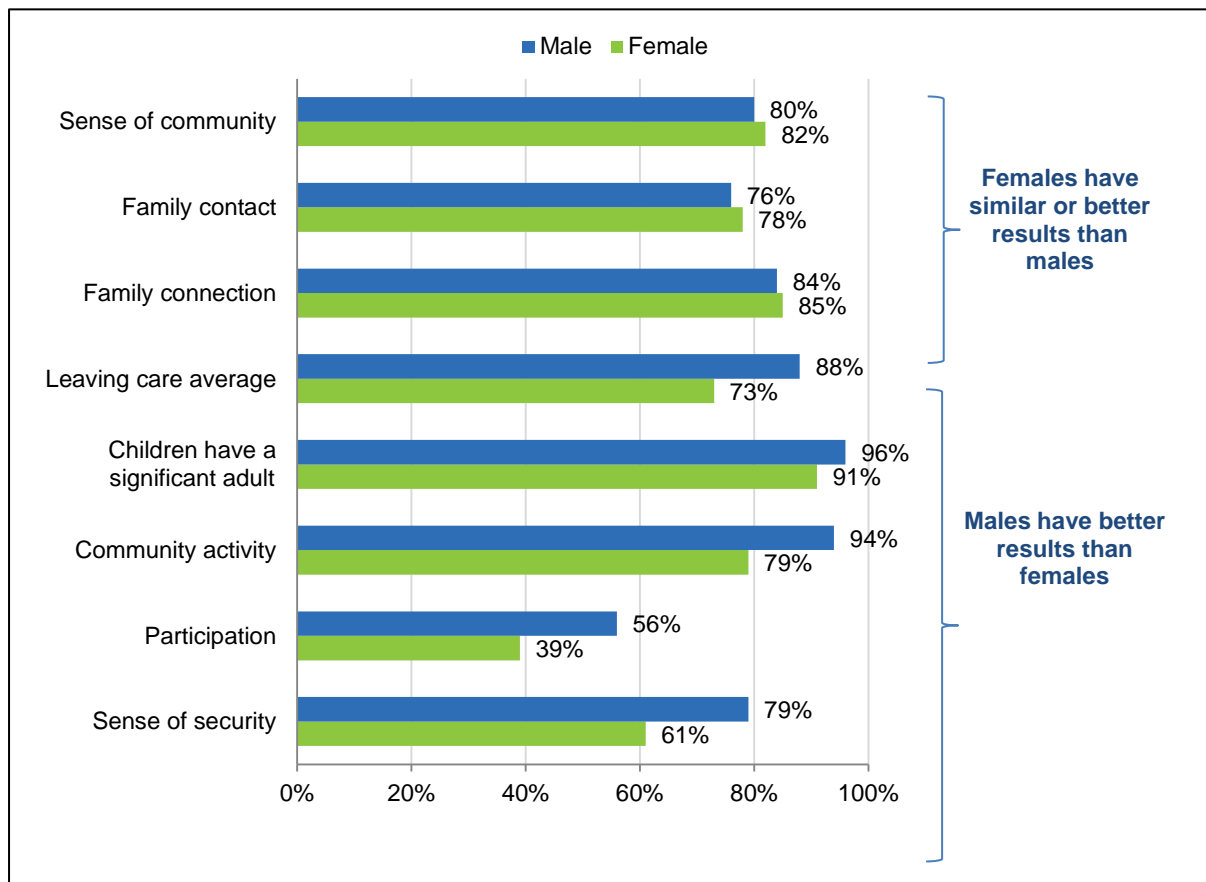
There was wider disparity in the NSW Residential Care Survey results, with males generally responding more positively than females across a number of indicators (see figure 13). These include 'sense of security' (61% for females compared to 79% for males), 'participation' (39% for females and 56% for males), 'community activity' (79% for females and 94% for males), and 'leaving care' average (73% for females and 88% for males).

**Figure 12: NSW Residential Care Survey, selected indicators by age, 2015**



Source: NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS.

**Figure 13: NSW Residential Care Survey, indicators by sex, 2015**



Source: NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS.

## 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. Retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129554600>.

FaHCSIA (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs), 2011, *An outline of National Standards for out-of-home care: a Priority Project under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, FaHCSIA, Canberra. Retrieved from <http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/an-outline-of-national-standards-for-out-of-home-care-2011>.

## Appendix 1

### Selected OOHC National Standards indicator definitions and survey questions

National Standard	Indicator Definition	Survey Questions
<p>Standard 1: Children and young people will be provided with stability and security during their time in care.</p>	<p>Sense of security: The proportion of children and young people in out-of-home care who report feeling safe and secure in their current placement.</p>	Do you feel settled where you live now?
		Can you say why you don't feel settled?
		Do you feel safe where you live now?
		Can you say why you don't feel safe?
<p>Standard 2: Children and young people participate in decisions that have an impact on their lives.</p>	<p>Participation: The proportion of children and young people who report that they have opportunities to have a say in relation to decisions that have an impact on their lives and that they feel listened to.</p>	Do you get to have a say in what happens to you, such as where you live, your school and learning, and your future?
		Do people listen to what you say?
		Do people explain the decisions made about you?
<p>Standard 8: Children and young people in care are supported to participate in social and/or recreational activities of their choice, such as sporting, cultural or community activity.</p>	<p>Community activity: The proportion of children and young people who report they may choose to do the same sorts of things (sporting, cultural or community activities) that children and young people their age who aren't in care do.</p>	Does your carer or someone else encourage you to do things with other people, such as sport, community or cultural activities?
		Are there any sports, hobbies or other activities you would like to try?
<p>Standard 9: Children and young people are supported to safely and appropriately maintain connection with family, be they birth parents, siblings or other family members.</p>	<p>Family connection: The proportion of children and young people who report they have an existing connection with at least one family member which they expect to maintain.</p>	<p>How close do you feel to:</p> <p>(a) the people you are living with now?</p> <p>(b) family members who you don't live with?</p> <p>By 'how close', we mean: how important and special they are to you?</p>

	<p>Family contact: The proportion of children (as age appropriate) and young people who report having contact with family members, by the reported frequency of contact, by their reported satisfaction with contact arrangements.</p>	<p>For family you don't live with:</p> <p>(a) Do you get to visit your family?</p> <p>(b) Do you get to talk to your family? (including phone calls)</p> <p>(c) Do you get to write to your family? (including emails, messaging, letters)</p> <p>Is there anything you want to change about contact with family?</p>
<p>Standard 10: Children and young people in care are supported to develop their identity, safely and appropriately, through contact with their families, friends, culture, spiritual sources and communities and have their life history recorded as they grow up.</p>	<p>Sense of community: The proportion of children (as age appropriate) and young people who demonstrate having a sense of connection with the community in which they live.</p>	<p>Do you see your friends as much as you want?</p> <p>How much do you know about your family background and your culture?</p> <p>Do you keep things about your life, such as photos, a life story book, or a memory box?</p> <p>Are you helped to follow your religion, beliefs and customs where you live?</p>
<p>Standard 11: Children and young people in care are supported to safely and appropriately identify and stay in touch, with at least one other person who cares about their future, who they can turn to for support and advice.</p>	<p>Significant person: The proportion of children and young people who are able to nominate at least one significant adult who cares about them and who they believe they will be able to depend upon throughout their childhood or young adulthood.</p>	<p>Do you have an adult who cares about what happens to you now and in the future?</p> <p>Do you have someone else (who is not an adult) who cares about what happens to you now and in the future?</p> <p>Do you see this person as often as you want?</p>

<p>Standard 13: Children and young people have a transition from care plan commencing at 15 years old which details support to be provided after leaving care.</p>	<p>Leaving care: The proportion of young people who, at the time of exit from out-of-home care, report they are receiving adequate assistance to prepare for adult life.</p>	<p>(for 15-17-year-olds) Do you get enough help to make decisions about your future?</p>
		<p>(for 15-17-year-olds) Do you get enough help with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) education, training and work?</li> <li>(b) managing your money?</li> <li>(c) keeping healthy?</li> <li>(d) learning household skills like cleaning and cooking meals?</li> <li>(e) staying in touch with friends and family?</li> <li>(f) staying in touch with your culture and religion?</li> <li>(g) housing/accommodation?</li> <li>(h) accessing legal services?</li> </ul>



## Appendix 2

### Characteristics of survey respondents and non-respondents

Data was collected for 359 children who completed the [NSW] National OOHC Survey and 321 children who completed the NSW Residential Care Survey. Key characteristics of children and young people who responded include (Table 2):

- the majority of children who completed the [NSW] National OOHC Survey were aged 8-11 years (45%) while almost 60% of children who participated in the Residential Care Survey were aged 15-17 years
- more female than male children participated in both surveys (56% and 44% respectively for the [NSW] National OOHC Survey)
- just under one third of children were Aboriginal in both surveys
- the majority of children responding to the [NSW] National OOHC Survey were living in Foster Care (69%), while 31% of children were living in relative/kin care.

Children and young people invited to participate in the [NSW] National OOHC Survey were more likely to respond if they (Table 2):

- identified as non-Aboriginal rather than Aboriginal (68% of non-Aboriginal children and young people invited to participate responded compared to 53% of Aboriginal children and young people)
- were in foster care rather than relative/kin care (68% of those in foster care invited to participate responded compared to 53% of those in relative/kinship care)
- were managed by the NGO sector rather than by FACS (55% of those that responded were NGO-managed compared to 43% of those that didn't respond).

Comparing those who participated in the NSW Residential Care Survey with those who did not shows only minor differences in demographics (Table 2).

**Table 2: Characteristics of children in the [NSW] National OOH Survey and Residential Care Survey**

Characteristics		[NSW] National OOH Survey				(NSW) Residential Care Survey				Total Respondents	
		Respondents		Non-respondents		Respondents		Non-respondents			
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Age group	8-11	161	44.8	85	40.1	38	11.8	10	6.5	199	29.3
	12-14	117	32.6	69	32.5	91	28.3	44	28.4	208	30.6
	15-17	81	22.6	58	27.4	192	59.8	101	65.2	273	40.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Sex	Female	158	44.0	95	44.8	130	40.5	57	36.8	288	42.4
	Male	201	56.0	117	55.2	191	59.5	98	63.2	392	57.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Aboriginal status	Aboriginal	103	28.7	91	42.9	96	29.9	45	29.0	199	29.3
	Non-Aboriginal	256	71.3	121	57.1	225	70.1	110	71.0	481	70.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Placement type	Foster Care	249	69.4	116	54.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	249	36.6
	Relative / Kin	110	30.6	96	45.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	110	16.2
	Residential care	0	0.0	0	0.0	321	100.0	155	100.0	321	47.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: NSW National OOH Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS.

## Appendix 3

### Detailed NSW data tables by indicator, respondent demographics and placement characteristics

All data is sourced from the NSW National OOHC Survey dataset 2015 and NSW Residential Care Survey dataset 2015, NSW FACS.

Sense of Security (NSW results)					
Characteristics		OOHC		Residential Care	
		No.	%	No.	%
Placement type	Foster care	240	97	-	-
	Relative/kin care	105	95	-	-
Placement duration	Less than 12 months	23	92	108	71
	Between 12 and 60 months	128	97	122	73
	More than 5 years	194	97	-	-
Time in care	Less than 12 months	-	-	26	67
	Between 12 and 60 months	90	96	98	71
	More than 5 years	255	97	106	74
Aboriginality	Aboriginal	96	94	71	74
	Non-Aboriginal	249	97	159	71
Age	8-11	152	95	29	76
	12-14	114	97	70	77
	15-17	79	98	131	68
Sex	Female	152	96	79	61
	Male	193	97	151	79

Notes: Table shows children that feel 'safe and settled'. 'Feel safe' and 'Feel settled' includes the response categories 'Yes completely' and 'Just about'. Children with 'not stated' responses are excluded.

Participation (NSW results)					
Characteristics		OOHC		Residential Care	
		No.	%	No.	%
Placement type	Foster care	186	75	-	-
	Relative/kin care	82	77	-	-
Placement duration	Less than 12 months	16	64	74	48
	Between 12 and 60 months	96	73	84	50
	More than 5 years	156	79	-	-
Time in care	Less than 12 months	-	-	23	59
	Between 12 and 60 months	69	74	61	44
	More than 5 years	199	76	74	51
Aboriginality	Aboriginal	76	75	47	49
	Non-Aboriginal	192	76	111	49
Age	8-11	116	74	15	39
	12-14	87	74	40	44
	15-17	65	80	103	54
Sex	Female	117	75	51	39
	Male	151	77	51	39

Notes: Table shows children who usually get to have a say and feel listened to. 'Usually' includes the response categories 'All of the time' and 'Most of the time'. Children with 'not stated' responses are excluded.

Community Activity (NSW results)					
Characteristics		OOHC		Residential Care	
		No.	%	No.	%
Placement type	Foster care	214	91	-	-
	Relative/kin care	98	92	-	-
Placement duration	Less than 12 months	19	83	118	86
	Between 12 and 60 months	112	90	136	89
	More than 5 years	181	93	-	-
Time in care	Less than 12 months	-	-	29	81
	Between 12 and 60 months	79	90	106	84
	More than 5 years	233	92	119	94
Aboriginality	Aboriginal	91	91	80	91
	Non-Aboriginal	221	91	174	87
Age	8-11	144	92	33	92
	12-14	104	90	77	91
	15-17	64	91	144	86
Sex	Female	136	92	89	79
	Male	176	91	165	94

Notes: Table shows children who received support to participate in community activities all or most of the time. 'Perceived adequate support' includes the response categories 'All of the time' and 'Most of the time'. Children with 'not stated' and 'I am not interested in these things' responses are excluded.

Family Connection (NSW results)					
Characteristics		OOHC		Residential Care	
		No.	%	No.	%
Placement type	Foster care	241	97	-	-
	Relative/kin care	107	97	-	-
Placement duration	Less than 12 months	25	100	124	81
	Between 12 and 60 months	126	95	146	87
	More than 5 years	197	98	-	-
Time in care	Less than 12 months	-	-	31	79
	Between 12 and 60 months	91	97	119	86
	More than 5 years	257	97	120	83
Aboriginality	Aboriginal	101	99	85	89
	Non-Aboriginal	247	96	185	82
Age	8-11	156	98	32	84
	12-14	112	96	79	87
	15-17	80	99	159	83
Sex	Female	151	96	110	85
	Male	197	99	160	84

Notes: Table shows children who felt close (i.e. how important and special they are to you) to either or both 'people you are living with now' (coresident family) and 'family members who you don't live with' (non-coresident family).

Family Contact (NSW results)					
Characteristics		OOHC		Residential Care	
		No.	%	No.	%
Placement type	Foster care	178	72	-	-
	Relative/kin care	84	76	-	-
Placement duration	Less than 12 months	15	60	113	74
	Between 12 and 60 months	102	77	134	80
	More than 5 years	145	72	-	-
Time in care	Less than 12 months	-	-	30	77
	Between 12 and 60 months	67	71	100	72
	More than 5 years	195	74	117	81
Aboriginality	Aboriginal	73	72	78	81
	Non-Aboriginal	189	74	169	75
Age	8-11	107	67	20	53
	12-14	91	78	66	73
	15-17	64	79	161	84
Sex	Female	111	70	102	78
	Male	151	76	145	76

Notes: Table shows children who were satisfied with one or more types of contact. Children were asked about satisfaction with three types of contact; visiting, talking and writing. 'Satisfied' includes the response category 'As much as I want'. Children with 'not stated' responses are excluded.

Sense of Community (NSW results)					
Characteristics		OOHC		Residential Care	
		No.	%	No.	%
Placement type	Foster care	215	87	-	-
	Relative/kin care	102	93	-	-
Placement duration	Less than 12 months	25	100	116	76
	Between 12 and 60 months	115	87	142	85
	More than 5 years	177	89	-	-
Time in care	Less than 12 months	-	-	32	82
	Between 12 and 60 months	86	91	113	82
	More than 5 years	231	88	113	79
Aboriginality	Aboriginal	94	92	80	83
	Non-Aboriginal	223	87	178	79
Age	8-11	146	92	28	74
	12-14	100	85	72	79
	15-17	71	88	158	82
Sex	Female	144	91	106	82
	Male	173	87	152	80

Notes: Table shows children who have at least some knowledge of their family background and culture. 'Some' includes the response categories 'Some things' and 'A lot'.

Significant Adult (NSW results)					
Characteristics		OOHC		Residential Care	
		No.	%	No.	%
Placement type	Foster care	244	99	-	-
	Relative/kin care	108	98	-	-
Placement duration	Less than 12 months	25	100	139	91
	Between 12 and 60 months	128	97	161	97
	More than 5 years	199	100	2	100
Time in care	Less than 12 months	-	-	34	87
	Between 12 and 60 months	92	98	127	92
	More than 5 years	260	99	141	98
Aboriginality	Aboriginal	102	100	93	97
	Non-Aboriginal	250	98	209	93
Age	8-11	157	99	36	95
	12-14	114	97	86	95
	15-17	81	100	180	94
Sex	Female	156	99	118	91
	Male	196	98	184	96

Notes: Table shows children who have contact with a significant adult. Children with 'not stated' responses are excluded.

Leaving Care (NSW results)					
Characteristics		OOHC		Residential Care	
		No.	%	No.	%
Placement type	Foster care	58	94	-	-
	Relative/kin care	16	94	-	-
Placement duration	Less than 12 months	7	88	55	74
	Between 12 and 60 months	22	85	97	85
	More than 5 years	45	100	-	-
Time in care	Less than 12 months	-	-	13	76
	Between 12 and 60 months	14	93	58	73
	More than 5 years	60	94	81	89
Aboriginality	Aboriginal	11	92	40	85
	Non-Aboriginal	63	94	112	79
Age	8-11	-	-	-	-
	12-14	-	-	-	-
	15-17	74	94	152	81
Sex	Female	30	91	66	73
	Male	44	96	86	88

Notes: Table shows children who reported they were getting 'as much help as I need' across the 8 file domains to be considered in transition planning, as identified in transitioning from OOHC to independence. The average response for each child was calculated as follows: responses were allocated a number (yes =3, some=2, no=1). Each child's responses across the eight domains was summed ('not stated' and 'doesn't apply to me' responses were excluded). This sum was then divided by the number of domains the child provided a yes/some/no response to ('not stated' and 'doesn't apply to me' responses were excluded). These average scores were then grouped into the categories (yes=scores of 2.1-3; some=scores of 1.1-2; no=scores of 0-1). The overarching measure, as defined by the National Standards Survey Working Group, was not appropriate for comparisons with NSW data as it was based on a question which was not included in the NSW implementation of the survey. Therefore the 'average across the eight domains' is used as a proxy.