

HEAR ME OUT



Do I feel safe?

Feeling Safe is fundamental to children's security and well-being. Conversations about safety help children to identify what it means to feel safe, who a safe person is, where a safe space is, what actions can be taken to increase safety and what can be avoided to reduce risk.

We asked 52 girls and 41 boys in five cities five questions about safety in their everyday life. These are adolescents we work with through *Shakti* and *Chauraha* in Patna, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Varanasi and Mumbai. This is what they had to say:

Where do you feel safe?

➤ Where do you feel the most safe?

- A whopping 97% of children we spoke to said they feel safest when they are home with their parents
- As many as 28% also found school safe, mainly because 'there are women teachers'

Where do you feel the least safe?

- 43% of children felt most unsafe outdoors in their own neighbourhoods
- Public toilets, local trains, and factories where they work were also identified as unsafe areas
- Crowded markets where it is easy to be harassed were identified as unsafe by 7% of children

➤ Who is safer, boys or girls?

- 65% of children think that boys are safer than girls
- Some children talked about the double danger girls face – if they complain about being harassed or teased they will be “locked into their homes” or worse, they will be married off at a young age
- Interestingly, about 20% of children think that girls are actually safer because most girls stay at home and so are less likely to get into fights or do anything illegal. Boys are more at risk because they have to go out and be independent and they also get less parental support
- Another 20% of children believe that girls are safer because they receive more scholarships and encouragement from government programs and can get help easily if in trouble as compared with boys
- Sadly, 13% children believe that no child is safe – neither boy nor girl

➤ **If you were a parent what would you do to keep your child safe?**

Many children thought about what they might do differently from their own parents and interestingly four of the five most popular responses were about engaging, talking and sharing more with their children:

If I were a parent, I would keep my child safe by:

- Sending my children to school everyday: 50%
- Talking more to my children: 22%
- Getting to know their friends and peers: 22%
- Teaching them how to defend themselves 20%
- Talking to them about my values: 18%

➤ **If you were a grown up, how would you make your community safe for children?**

- By building a toilet inside my house because it is unsafe to go to the public toilet, especially in the dark
- Talking more to children about what they can do if they are in trouble
- Telling the government that children are in trouble
- Opening a school for parents in the community where they can learn ways to take care of and protect children.
- Teaching karate or other self-defence to all kids
- Getting together with others because how can I do anything alone?
- I would leave. In my neighborhood there is no hope of change and support
- Fighting child marriage and child labour
- Going house to house and telling children they must go to school
- Lay down harsh laws for sexual offenders.
- Take complaints about harassment made by girls seriously
- Ensure unity across religions
- Make safer playgrounds in the vicinity
- Reporting all criminal and illegal activities that happen here

➤ **If you were in the government what would you do to make children safe?**

- Make sure there was equal treatment for all children
- Make better schools
- More security for children
- Only have government people who are not scary
- Make a law so nobody can ask children for bribes

“Keep children in the Observation Home for only one day because usually they are innocent and get into trouble through no fault of their own”

- Swapnil, Varanasi

“Open a school that treats boys and girls equally and teaches them about life; put policemen on duty in the places where drunk people meet to gamble”

- Ritu, Patna

“Establish more vocational training centers for children”

- Anup, Patna