

Appendix D – Results from Online Survey on the Impact of Violence on Young Australians

Consulting with young people about their perceptions and experiences of violence was a priority for the Committee. The Committee recognised that young people were unlikely to provide formal written submissions to the inquiry. This proved to be correct. Very few young people, besides those who were an employee or member of an organisation, made written submissions providing their views or experiences.

To ensure that the experiences and views of young people were captured, the Committee agreed to conduct an online survey. The survey questions, based on the inquiry's terms of reference, were developed in partnership with an external consultant with expertise in social research.¹ The questions were framed using accessible language and plain English so that younger respondents could complete the survey without adult assistance.

The survey was advertised extensively through e-mails to youth organisations, many of which promoted the survey through their e-mail distribution lists. Members of Parliament and Senators were also contacted to request that they place a link to the survey on their own websites. Thinking about the survey's target group, that is young people aged 12-24 years, the Committee realised that online advertising would be essential. Facebook and Google advertising were used for the first time by the Department of House of Representatives as a method to promote the survey. The survey opened on 22 October 2009 and closed on 16 February 2010.

The intention of the survey was to gather opinions and experiences of young people. Importantly, the Committee recognises that the survey methodology, which relied on respondent self-selection rather than cross-sectional population

¹ Mr Patrick Shanahan, E & S Research.

sampling, does not allow for results to be interpreted as rigorous, statistical measurements of levels of youth violence. Rather the survey was intended to be descriptive and findings should not be used to extrapolate to the general youth population. As such, the data is provided in basic graphs, and the raw data is generally not presented. Furthermore, as responses to the survey were anonymous the veracity of input cannot be guaranteed.

The survey divided into four parts. In the first part young people were asked about their perceptions of violence. In the second part they were asked about their experiences of violence. In the third part young people were asked to give their views on what causes violence and in the fourth part what should be done about it. While responses to the survey were anonymous, respondents were asked to provide some basic demographic information to assist with analysis of responses.

It should be noted that not all respondents finished the survey. While all questions were mandatory, it was possible to close down the survey browser to exit without completing the survey. Therefore the graphs and data presented reflect that not all respondents answered all of the questions.

The Respondents

Overall, there were 1,379 respondents to the survey. Of these, 48% were male and 52% female. Half of the respondents were from a capital city, 36% from a regional city and 14% were from rural/remote locations. Over half (58%) were under 18 years old and the remainder were aged 18 to 24 years.

The Survey Preamble

The survey was preceded by the following preamble.

Are you aged between 12 and 24 years and have experienced physical violence, directly or indirectly, or know someone who has experienced it, or have a view on youth violence in your neighbourhood, town or city? If so, we would like to hear about your experiences and your views on youth violence generally.

The Australian Parliament is holding an inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians, and would really like to hear your views. What we mean by violence is the sort of violence that's physical and is more likely to happen out on the street or in a public place.

This survey will be completely anonymous. We ask that you provide your age, sex and location so that we can get an idea of what's happening across the country. It will not be possible to identify anybody who participates in this survey.

The information you provide will be used to inform the House of Representatives Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth about the experiences young people have had with violence. It will also be used to help shape the final report, which will contain recommendations to the Australian Government on what to do about this issue.

If you wish to provide us with more information about your experiences, or have an idea of what sort of strategies could be used to reduce violence, please send an email to fchy.reps@aph.gov.au.

For more information about the inquiry please visit www.aph.gov.au/youthviolence.

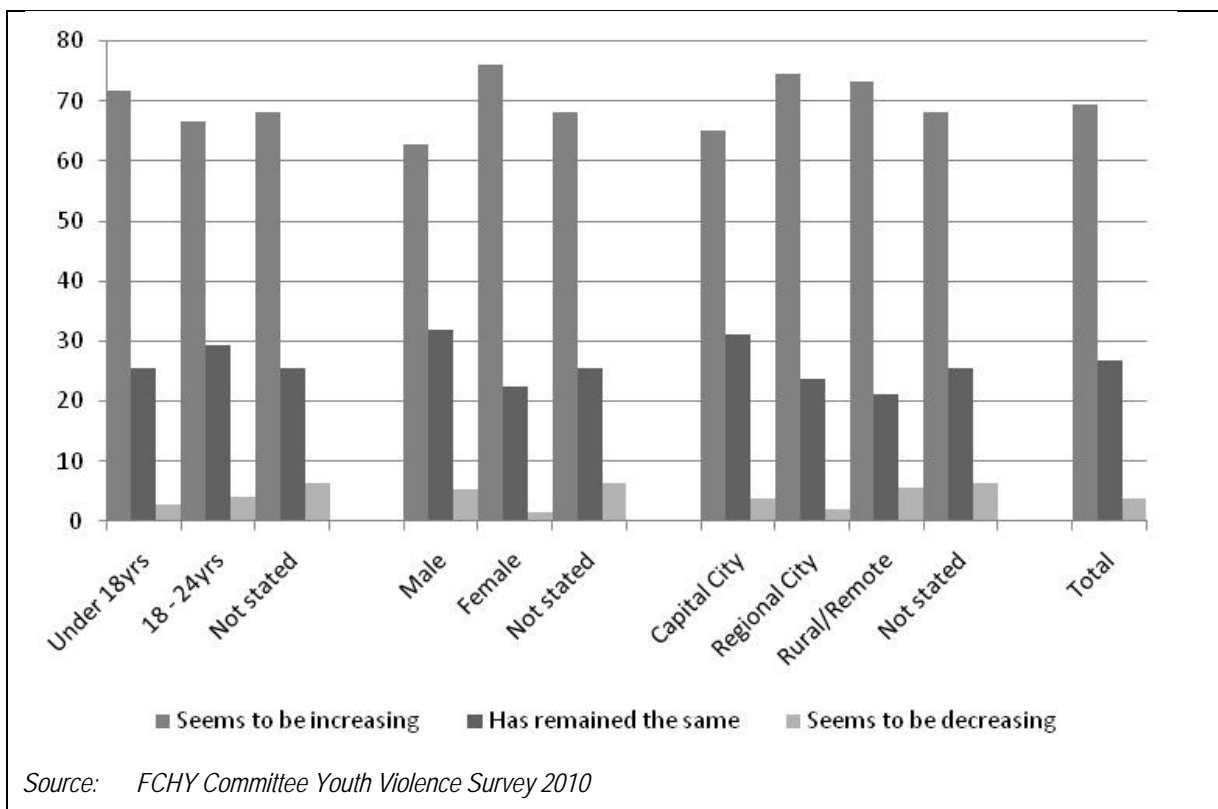
Young People's Perceptions of Violence

The survey started by asking respondents a number of question regarding their own perceptions of violence, including whether it had increased and its severity. It also asked about perceptions of their own safety.

Q1. Thinking generally of physical violence (e.g. fights, hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, using weapons, etc) that can occur among young people when they are out and about, would you say that each year physical violence among young people ...

- *seems to be increasing ()*
- *seems to be decreasing () or,*
- *has remained the same ()*

Figure D.1 Young people's perceptions of whether physical violence is increasing

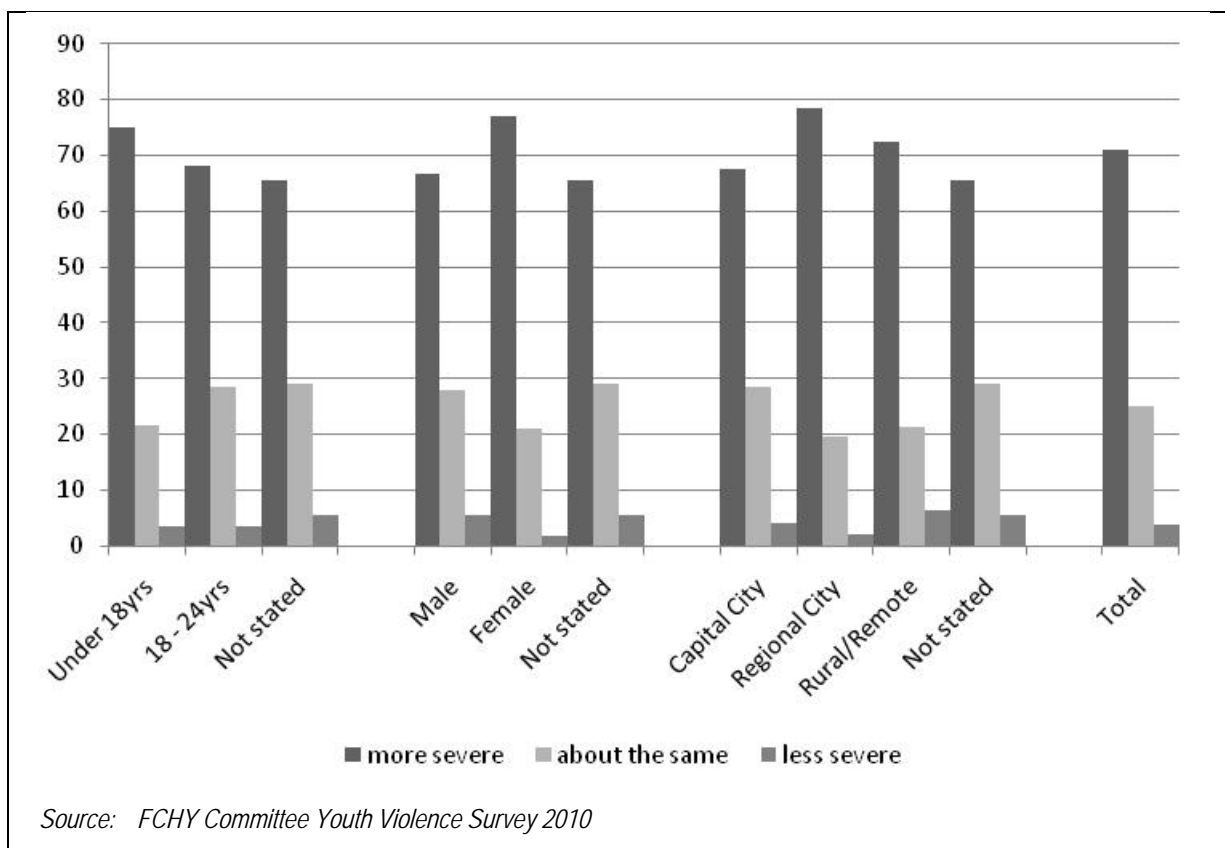


Of all the respondents, nearly 70% believed that violence seems to be increasing, with only 4% believing that it was decreasing. This varied depending on the age, sex or location of the respondent. For example, respondents aged less than 18 years were more likely than those aged 18 to 24 years to think that violence was increasing. Females much more likely than males to believe violence is increasing, and interestingly those who live in regional cities or rural/remote locations were more likely to think violence was increasing than those living in capital cities.

Q2. Do you think violence among young people is becoming more severe, less severe or is about the same as it always has been?

- more severe ()
- less severe ()
- about the same ()

Figure D.2 Young people’s perceptions about the severity of physical violence

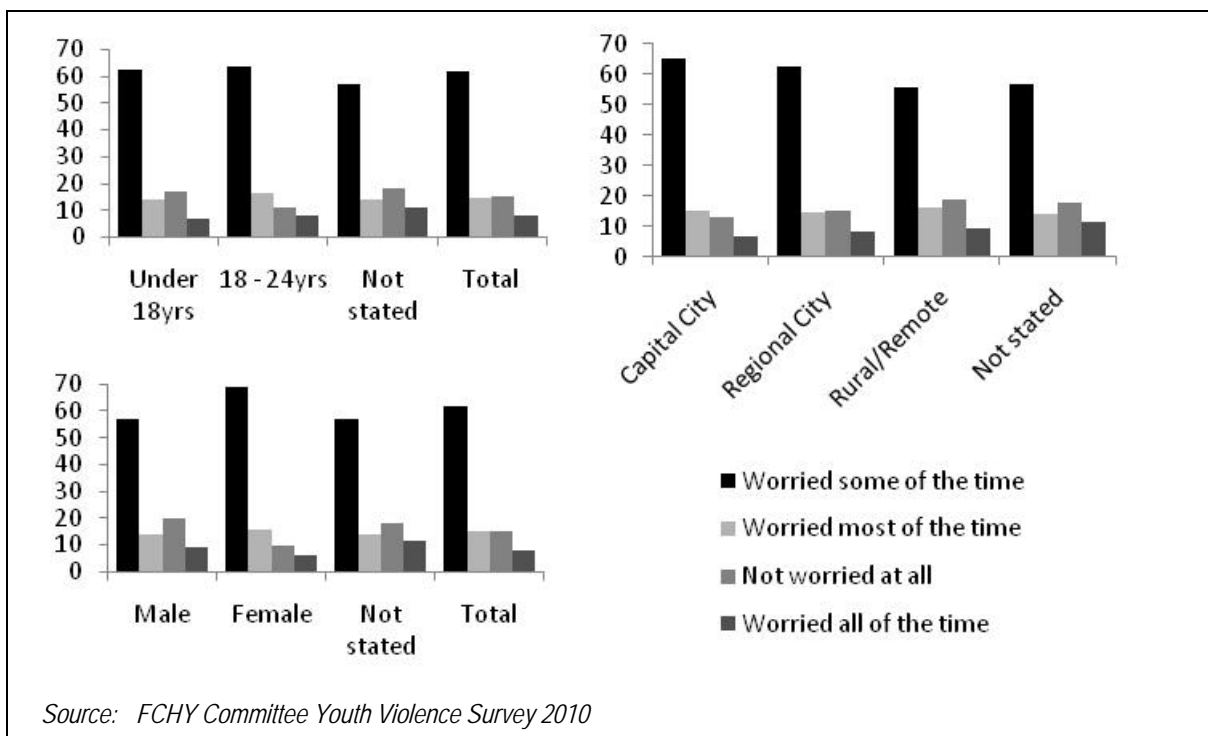


The results regarding the severity of violence were similar to the results on whether violence had increased. Just over 70% of respondents believed that the severity of violence had increased. Respondents aged less than 18 years, females and those living in regional cities were most likely to think that the severity of violence had increased.

Q3. How worried are you about your personal safety when you are out and about? Would you say...

- worried all of the time ()
- worried most of the time ()
- worried some of the time ()
- not worried at all () - go to Q5.

Figure D.3 Young people's concern about their personal safety while out and about

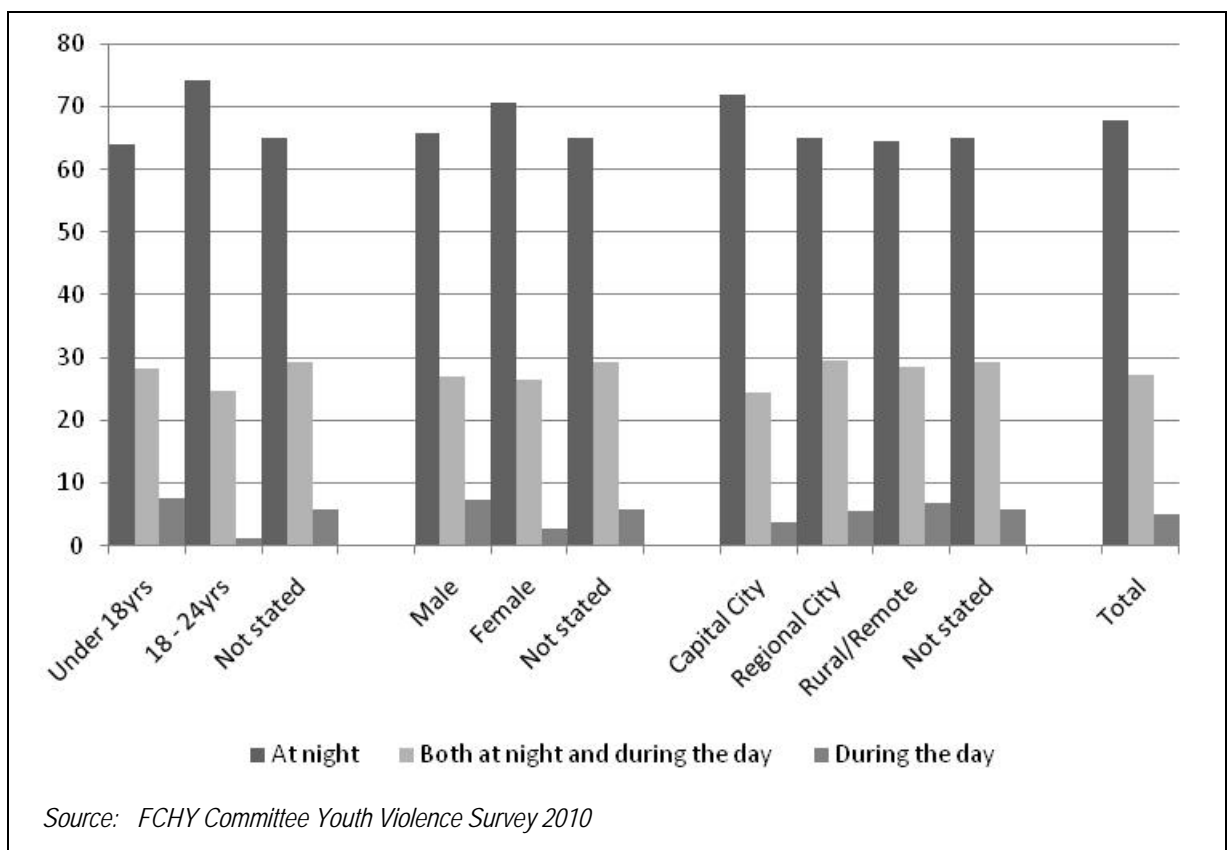


When asked how concerned they were about their personal safety while out and about, only 15% of young people were not worried at all. Nearly two-thirds were worried some of the time, 15% most of the time and 8% all of the time. Females were more worried than males. Young people aged 18-24 years were more worried than those under 18 years, and those in capital cities were more worried than those living in rural or remote locations.

Q4. Are you worried more about your personal safety ...

- at night ()
- during the day ()
- both at night and during the day ()

Figure D.4 Young people who were concerned with their safety by when they were most concerned

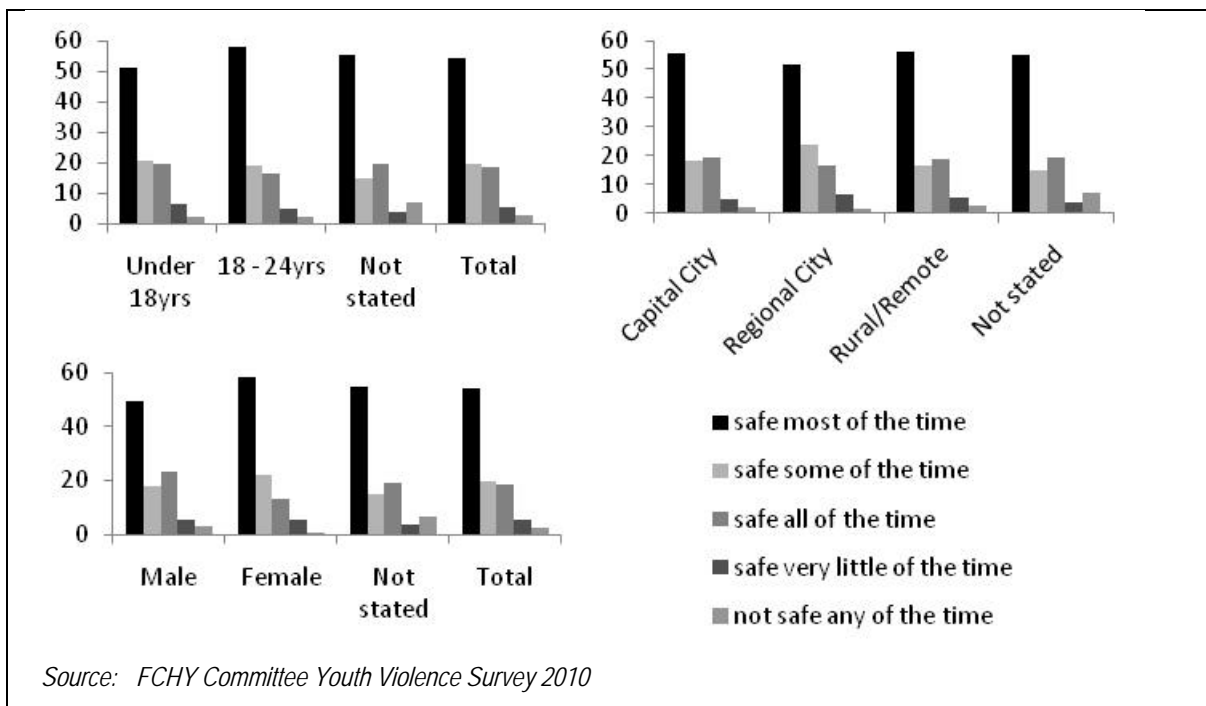


Not surprisingly, the majority of young people who were concerned with their safety were concerned at night. A quarter of the respondents were concerned both during the night and day. Young people aged 18–24 years were more concerned at night than those under 18 years, which could reflect that the older group are more likely than the younger group to be out at night.

Q5. How safe do you feel in your suburb or local area? Would you say you feel ...

- safe all of the time ()
- safe most of the time ()
- safe some of the time ()
- safe very little of the time ()
- not safe any of the time ()

Figure D.5 Young people's perception of their personal safety in their own suburb or local area

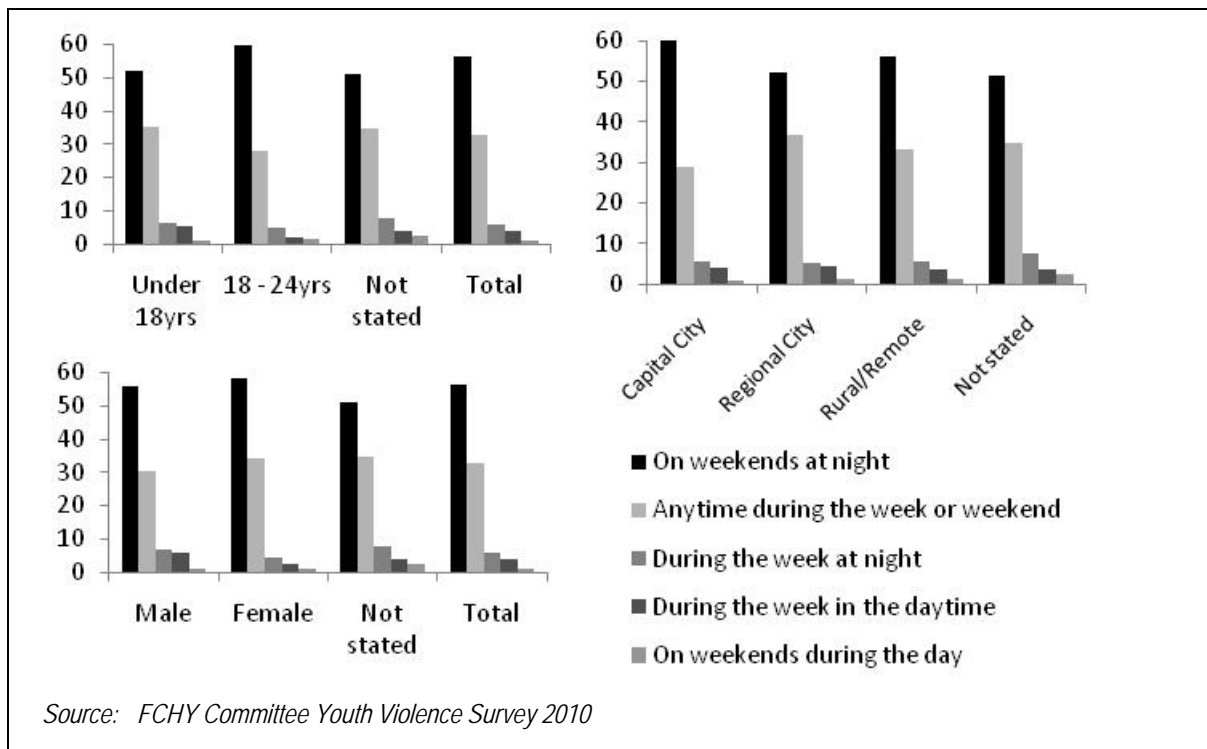


Interestingly, although most of the respondents were concerned about their safety at least some of the time, the majority believed they were safe in their own suburb or locality at least most of the time. Where they lived did not seem to influence their feelings of safety, but males tended to feel safer in their own locality than females.

Q6. When do you think violence among young people is most likely to occur? (Choose one)

- Anytime during the week or weekend ()
- During the week in the daytime ()
- During the week at night ()
- On weekends during the day ()
- On weekends at night ()

Figure D.6 Young people’s perceptions of when violence is more likely to occur

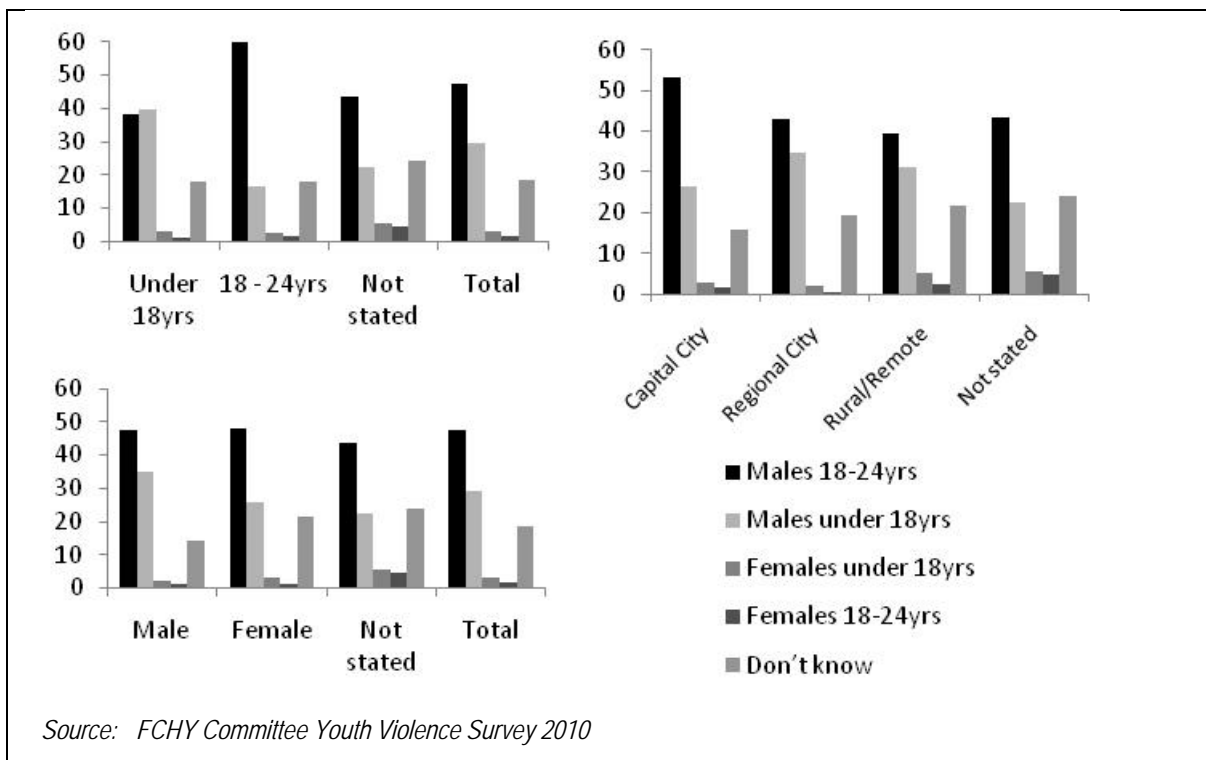


Over one half of respondents believed that violence is most likely to occur on weekends at night, while a further third believed that it can occur at any time.

Q7. Who do you think is most often responsible for physical violence among young people?

- Males under 18yrs ()
- Males 18-24yrs ()
- Females under 18yrs ()
- Females 18-24yrs ()
- Don't know ()

Figure D.7 Young people's perceptions of who is most often responsible for physical violence among young people

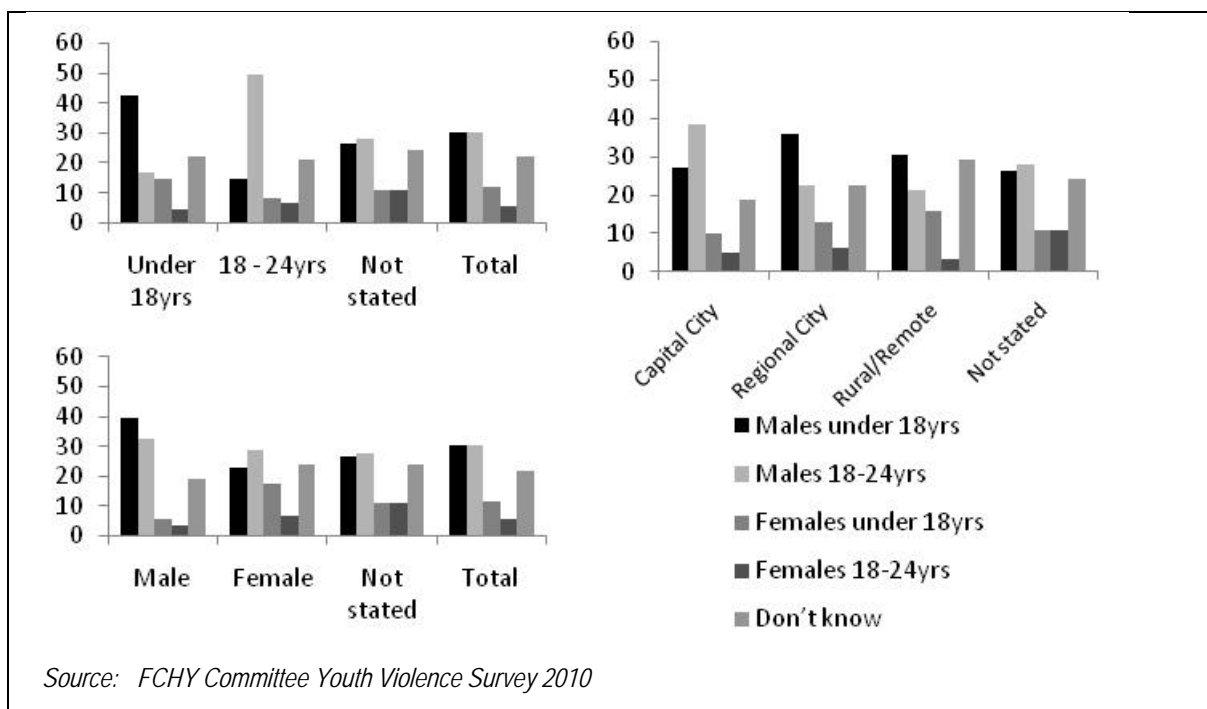


Overall, around three-quarters believed that males were most often responsible for violence. Only 5% believed females were most often responsible for violence. When breaking down the data by age, sex and locality of respondents, all but under 18 year olds believed that males aged 18–24 years were the most likely of all four age groups to be responsible for the violence. Marginally more under 18 year olds thought that males aged under 18 were the group most often responsible for violence, followed closely by males aged 18-24 years.

Q8. Who do you think is most often the victim of physical violence among young people? (Choose one).

- Males under 18yrs ()
- Males 18-24yrs ()
- Females under 18yrs ()
- Females 18-24yrs ()
- Don't know ()

Figure D.8 Young people's perceptions of who is most likely to be the victim of violence



Around 60% of respondents believed that young men were most likely to be the victim of physical violence. However, when breaking the data down by the sex, age and locality of respondents interesting factors emerged. When looking at age group, under 18 year olds are much more likely to believe that under 18 year olds are the victims, while 18–24 year olds believe that 18–24 year olds are. While females believe that males aged 18–24 year olds are most likely the victim, they also believe more than male respondents that females are likely to be victims. The locality of the respondent also had an effect on who they believed were the most likely to be a victim of violence.

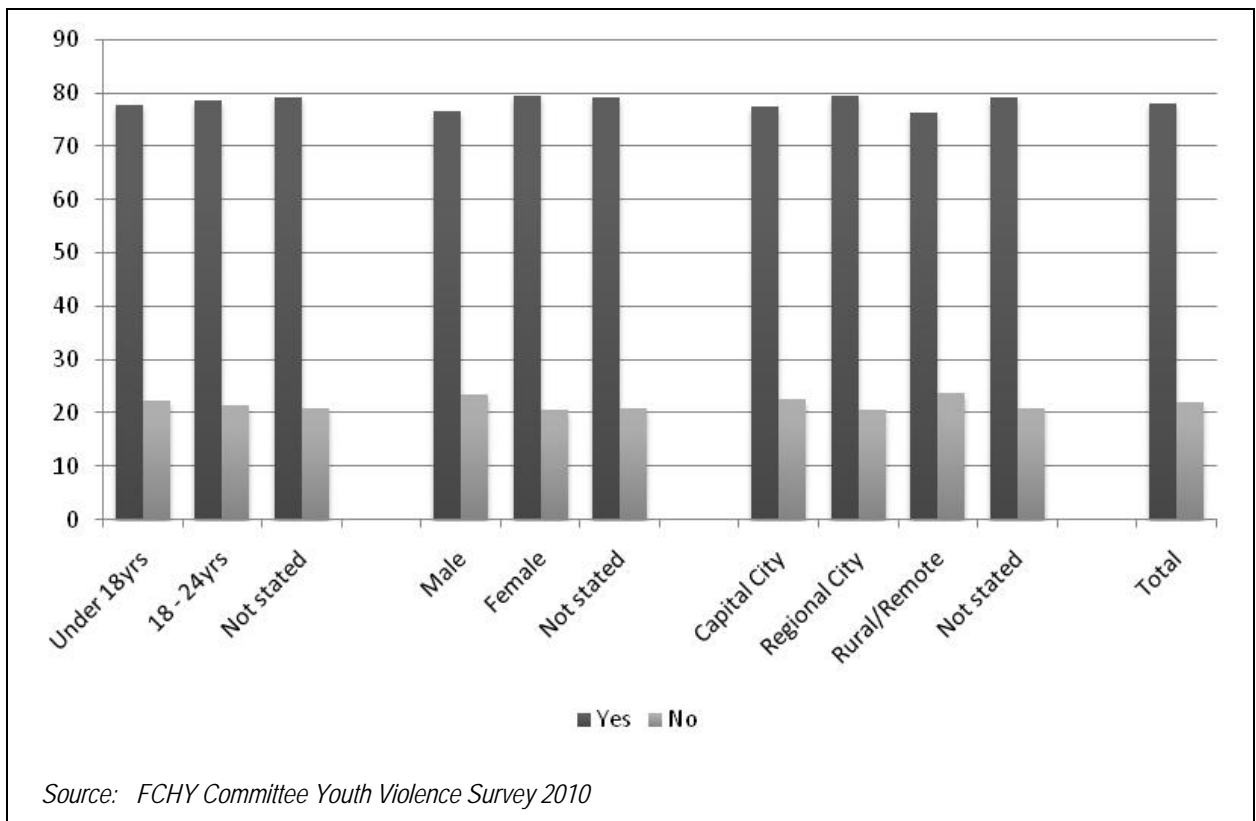
Young people's experiences with violence

Respondents were asked a number of questions regarding their experiences with violence. The first section concentrated on those that had seen violence in the past 12 months and respondents were asked a few questions about what they had seen. The second part focussed on victims and perpetrators of violence.

Q9. *In the last 12 months, have you seen (but not been involved) in physical violence while you were out in the street, at a club/pub, at school, or in a public place?*

- *yes ()*
- *no () - go to Q14*

Figure D.9 Young people by whether they have seen physical violence in the past 12 months

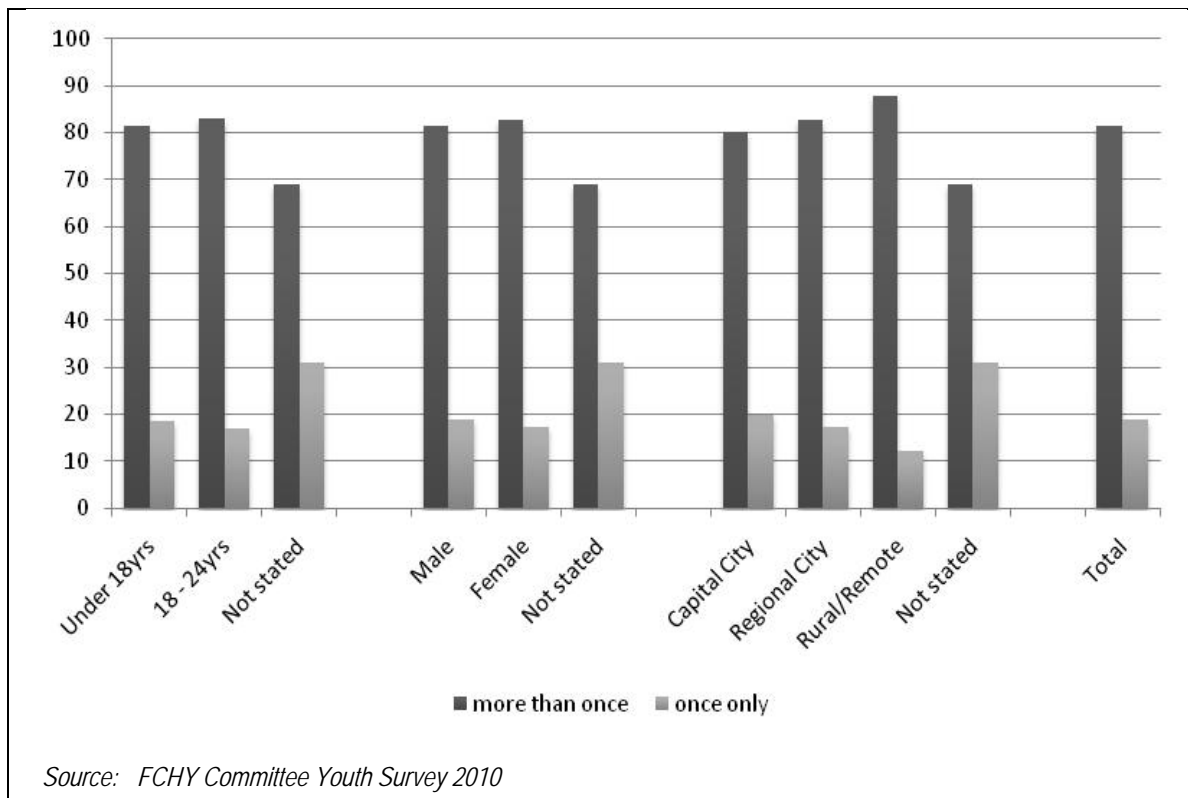


Nearly four in five young people had seen physical violence in the past 12 months. This is true regardless of age, sex or locality. However, males and those living in a rural or remote location were slightly less likely to have seen violence in the past 12 months.

Q10. In the last 12 months did you see physical violence on one or on more than one occasion?

- once only ()
- more than once ()

Figure D.10 Young people who have seen violence in the past 12 months by how often they had seen it



Of those who have seen violence in the past 12 months, over 80% had seen it more than once. Those living in rural or remote locations were the most likely to have seen violence on more than one occasion.

Q11. In the last 12 months and on the last occasion you saw physical violence in a public place, what did you see? (Choose one only)

- street violence ()
- gang violence ()
- racial violence ()
- pub/club violence ()
- school/workplace violence ()
- bullying ()
- violence in park/beach ()
- violence at a party ()
- violence on public transport ()
- violence at station/bus stop ()
- road rage ()
- other (free text option)

Table D.1 Young people who have seen violence in the past 12 months by type of violence

Table D.1	Sex		Age (years)		Locality			Not stated	Total
	Male	Female	< 18	18– 24	Capital city	Regional city	Rural/remote		
street violence	23	22	19	27	26	18	19	23	22
pub/club violence	13	18	4	33	21	12	10	13	16
school/workplace violence	14	14	22	3	12	16	19	15	14
bullying	8	11	13	4	6	12	14	18	10
gang violence	9	5	8	5	5	8	7	10	7
violence at a party	6	7	10	2	5	8	8	0	6
violence at station/bus stop	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4
racial violence	6	3	4	5	4	6	2	3	4
violence on public transport	2	3	1	5	4	2	0	2	3
Other	14	13	15	12	12	14	17	11	14
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010

Note: Other includes violence at a park/beach, violence at a sporting event, road rage, don't know and a free text option.

Overall, street violence was the most common (22%) type of violence seen by respondents in the past 12 months. This was followed by pub/club violence (16%), school/workplace violence (14%) and bullying (10%). However, this varied depending on the respondents' age, sex and locality.

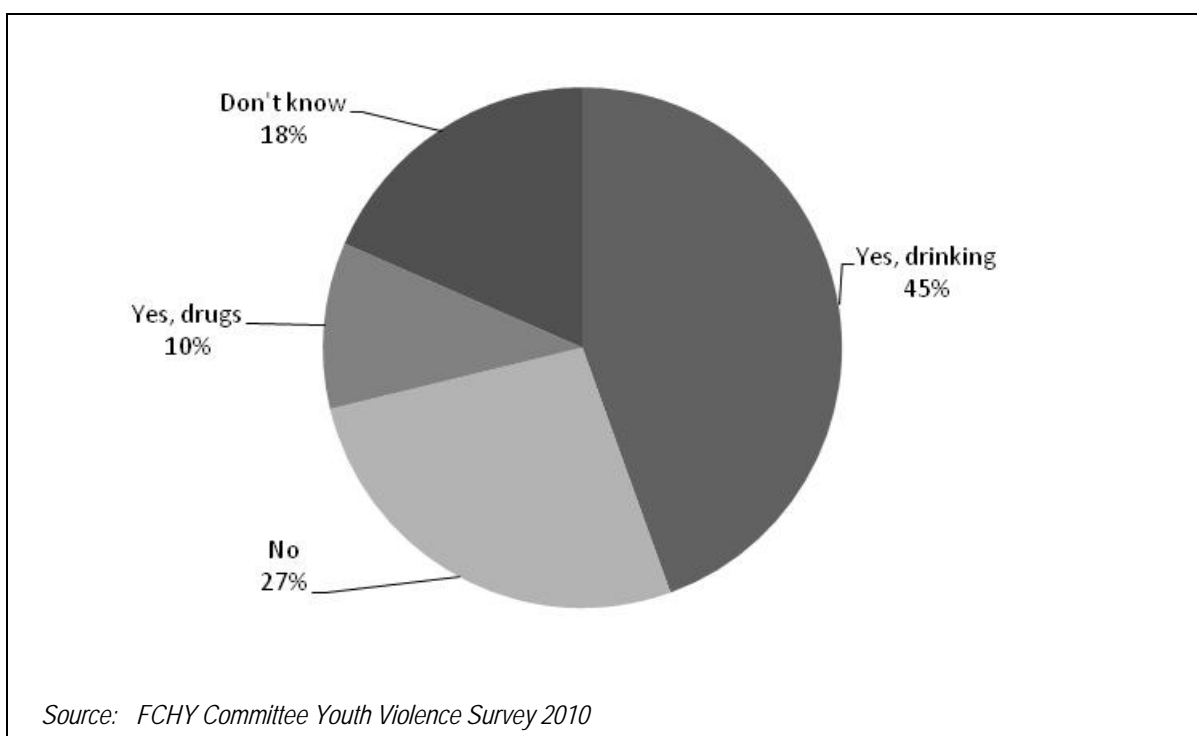
Young people aged less than 18 years were more likely to witness school or workplace violence, followed by street violence, bullying and violence at a party. Those aged 18–24 years were most likely to see street violence or pub/club violence. Street violence was the type of violence most likely to have been witnessed regardless of respondents' locality. Pub/club violence was less frequently witnessed by those living in regional cities and rural/remote locations while school/workplace violence and bullying was witnessed more frequently.

In the 'other' category, respondents were able to provide free text responses. These included: all of the above, homophobic violence, drunken violence and violence to impress others.

Q12. On this last occasion do you think the person responsible for the violence had been drinking or had used drugs?

- Yes, I think the person had been drinking ()
- Yes, I think the person had been using drugs ()
- No ()
- Don't know ()

Figure D.11 Of those who had seen violence in the past 12 months by whether they believed drugs or alcohol were involved



Respondents were also asked whether they believed alcohol or drugs were involved in the latest incident they witnessed. Overall, 45% believed that the person responsible had been drinking, 10% that the responsible person had been using drugs and 27% believed that the responsible person had been doing neither.

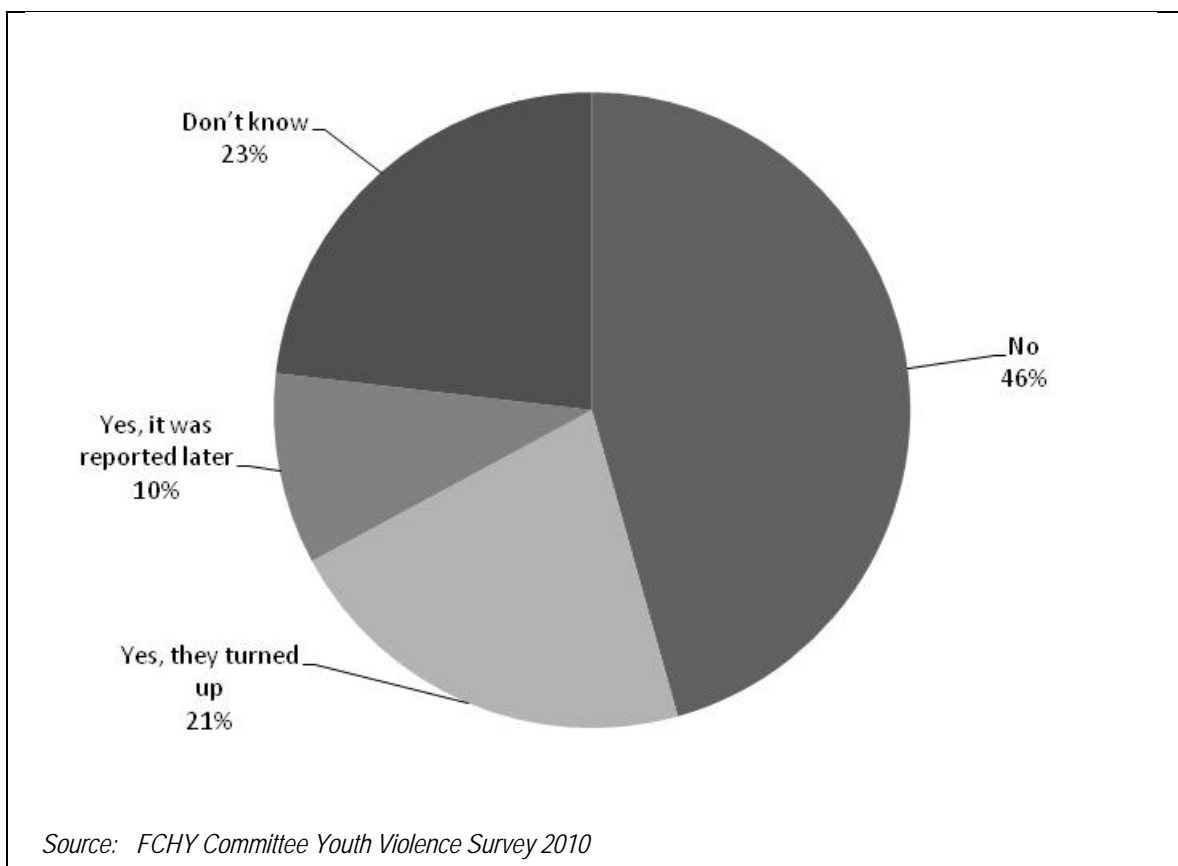
Whether the person responsible had been drinking or using drugs depended on the type of violence witnessed. Alcohol was more likely to have been used in pub/club violence, street violence, violence at a party and gang violence. Drugs were likely to have been used in street violence, pub/club violence, gang violence and violence at a station or bus stop. The person believed responsible was less likely to have been drinking or using drugs in school/workplace violence or bullying.

Just over one third of respondents under the age of 18 years believed that the person hadn't been drinking or using drugs compared to just 12% of those aged 18-24 years. This may be because the younger age group are more likely to witness bullying and school or workplace violence rather than street violence or pub/club violence.

Q13. Did the police become involved?

- Yes, they turned up ()
- Yes, it was reported later ()
- No ()
- Don't know ()

Figure D.12 Of those who had seen violence in the past 12 months by whether the police were involved



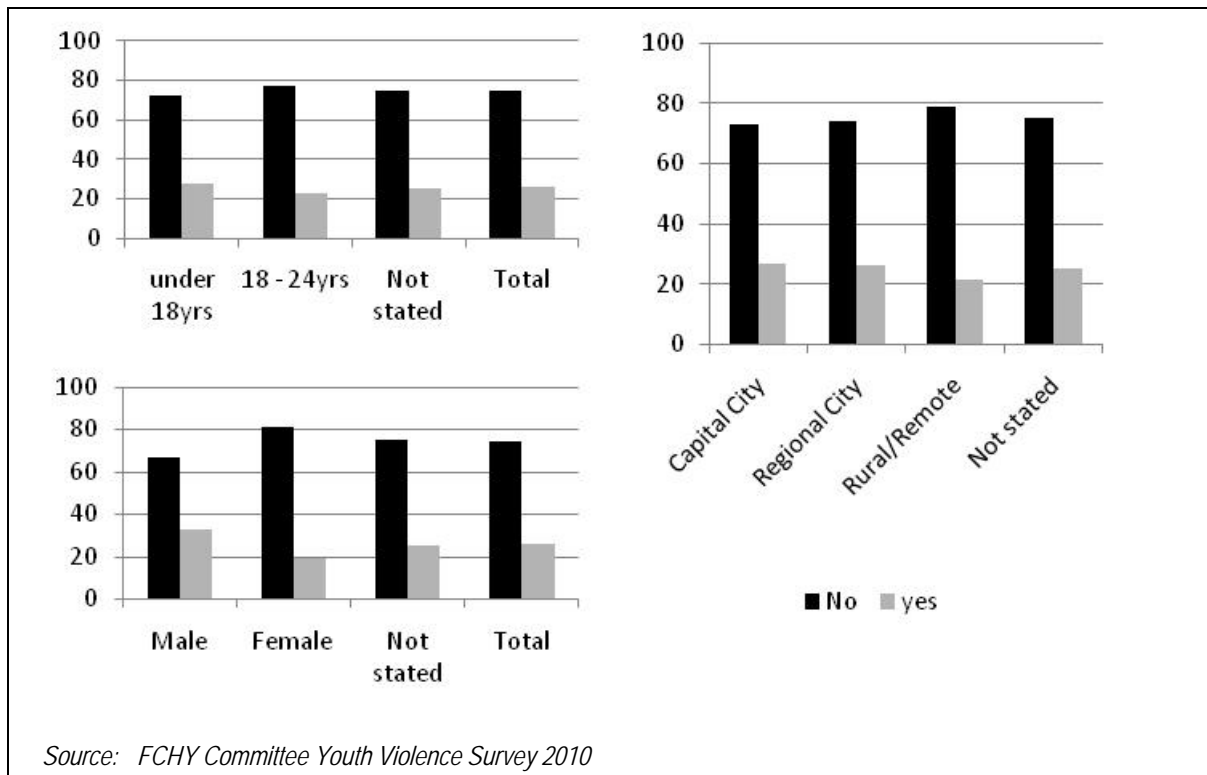
Police were involved in only 31% of incidences witnessed by the respondents. This is similar to results from the Crime and Safety Survey which states that only a minority of young people (20%) will report their assault to the police. This is for various reasons. The most common reasons for not reporting incidents were the belief that it was too trivial or unimportant, followed by it being a private matter or one that they would take care of themselves.²

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006), *Crime and Safety, Australia 2005*, Cat No 4909.0.

Q14. In the last 12 months have you been the victim of physical violence in a public place?

- yes ()
- no () - go to Q16

Figure D.13 Young people who have been a victim of violence

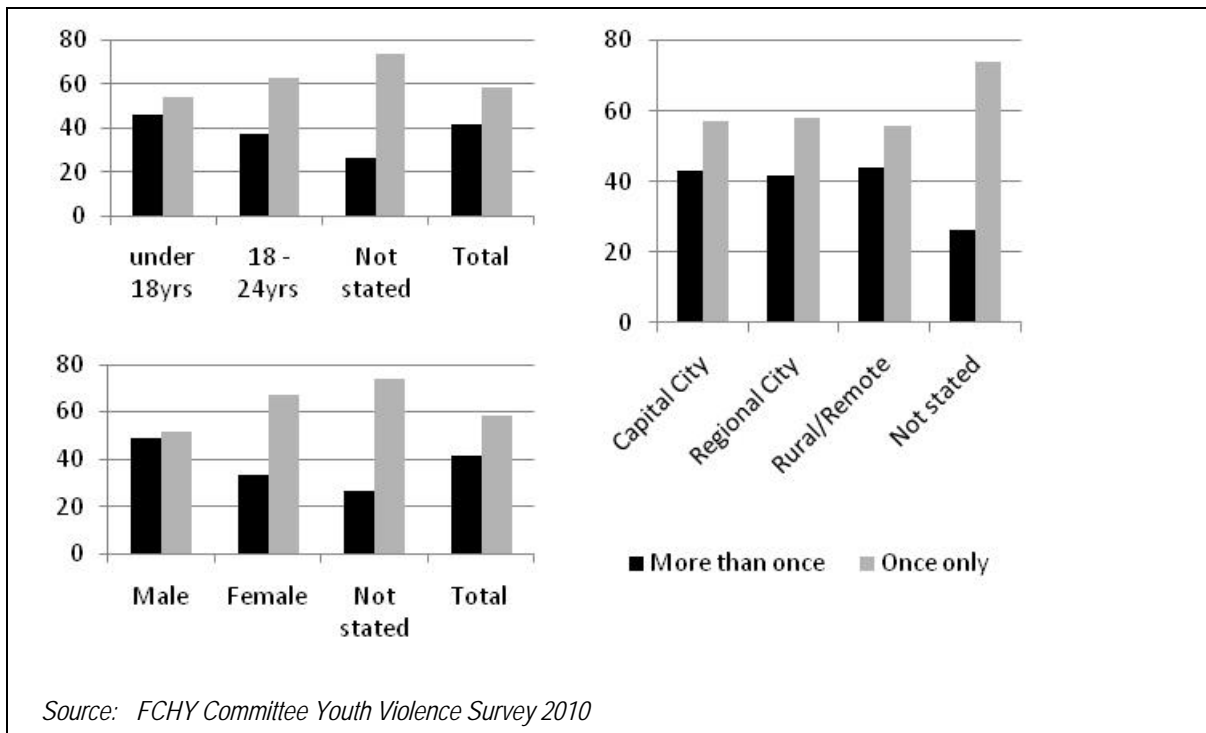


The respondents were asked whether they had been a victim of physical violence in the past 12 months. Nearly one-quarter of respondents stated that they had. Those aged less than 18 years were more likely to have been a victim than those aged 18 to 24 years. Males were more likely to have been victims than females, and those living in cities more likely to have been victims than those living in rural or remote localities.

Q15. In the last 12 months have you been the victim of physical violence in a public place on one or more than one occasion?

- once only ()
- more than once ()

Figure D.14 Young people who have been a victim of violence by how often



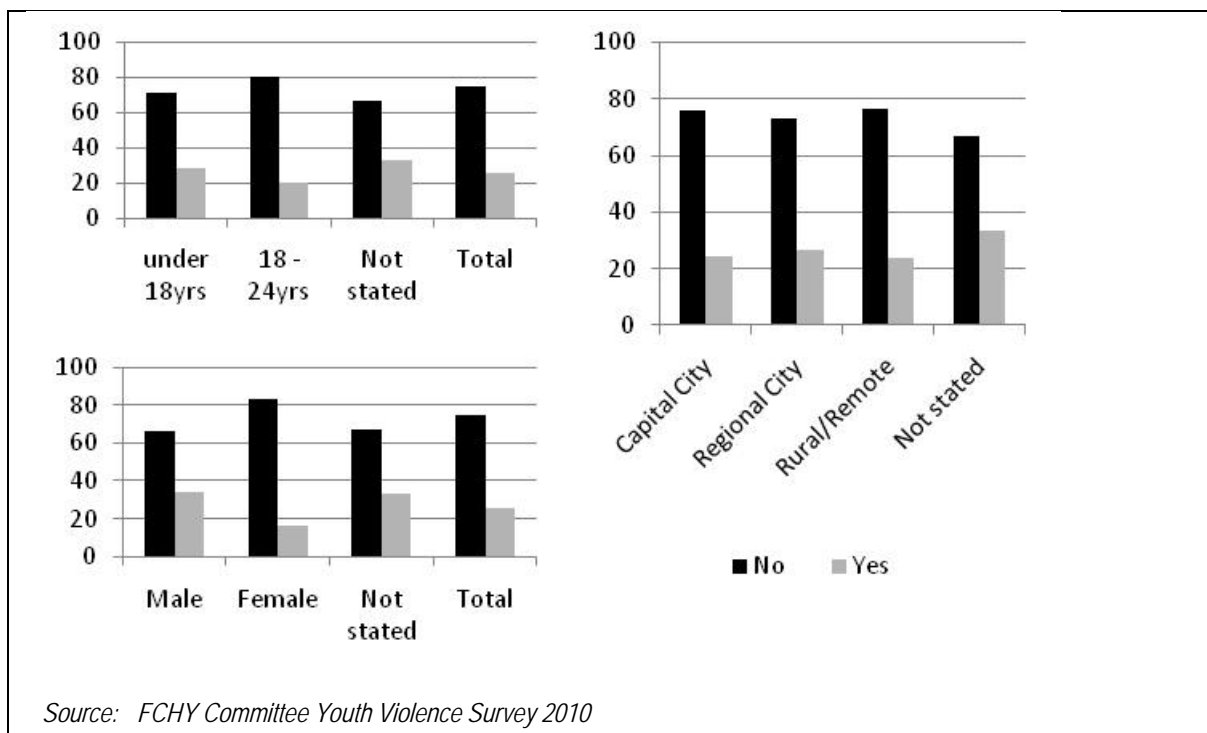
Of those young people who had been a victim of violence in the past 12 months, 58% stated that it was once only. However, the remaining 42%, a sizeable proportion, had been a victim more than once.

Males were more likely to have been a victim more than once, as were people aged less than 18 years. Locality did not appear to make a difference.

Q16. And in the last 12 months have you been directly involved in physical violence (for example in a fight) in a public place?

- yes ()
- no ()

Figure D.15 Young people who have been directly involved in violence

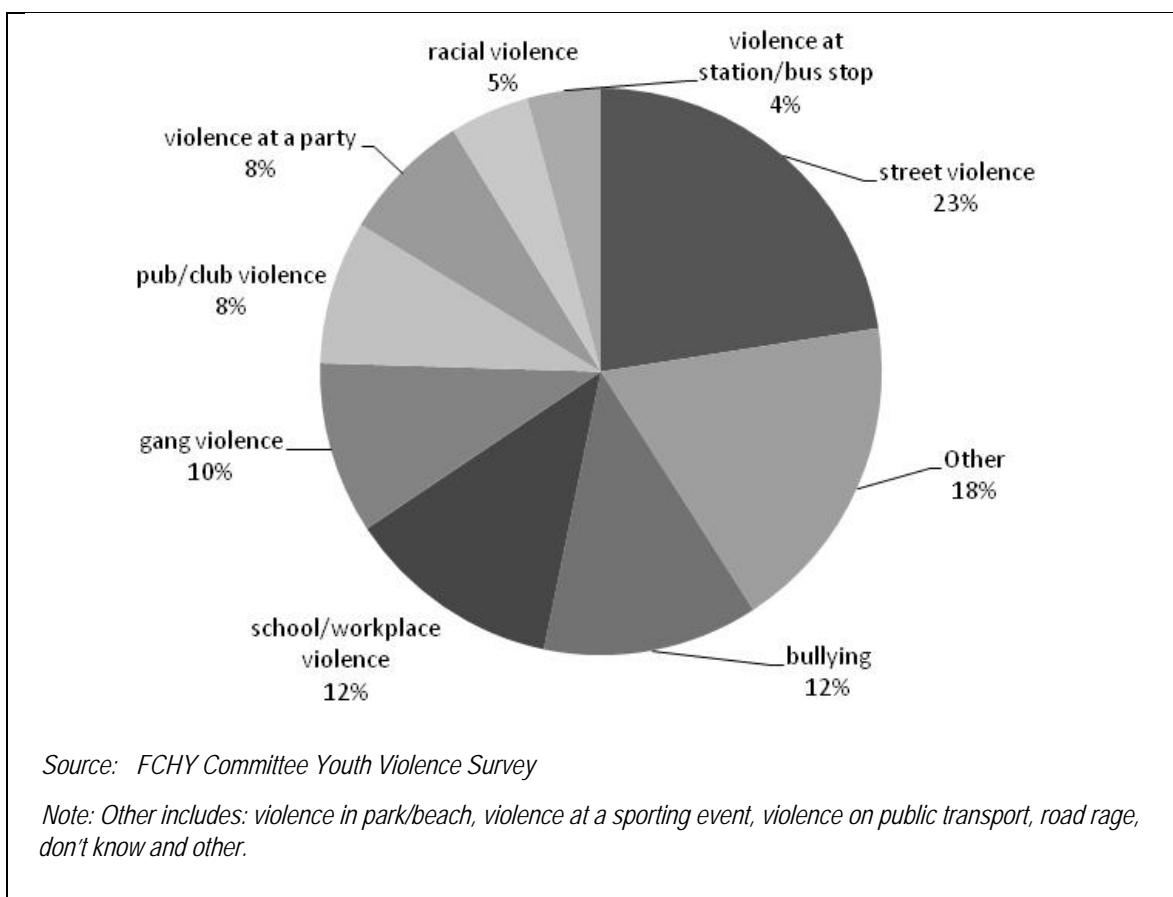


Respondents were also asked whether they had been directly involved in physical violence in the past 12 months either as a perpetrator or as a victim. One-quarter stated that they had. Respondents aged less than 18 years were more likely than the older age group to have been directly involved in violence, and males were more likely than females to have been directly involved in violence.

Q17. And if you have experienced violence in the last 12 months either involved in it or as a victim, thinking of the last occasion what kind of violence was it?

- street violence ()
- gang violence ()
- racial violence ()
- pub/club violence ()
- school/workplace violence ()
- bullying ()
- violence in park/beach ()
- violence at a sporting event ()
- violence at a party ()
- violence on public transport ()
- violence at station/bus stop ()
- road rage ()
- other (free text option)

Figure D.16 Young people who have directly been involved in physical violence by type of violence



Respondents were asked what type of physical violence they had been directly involved in. The most common response was street violence (23%), followed by bullying (12%), school/workplace violence (12%) and gang violence (10%).

Respondents were also given the option of 'other' and answers included all or nearly all of the above, homophobic bashing, being in the wrong place at the wrong time and domestic violence.

Young people's Views on What Causes Violence and What Government Can Do About It

Respondents were asked two questions on what they believe causes violence and what can the government do about it.

Q18. What do you think are the three (3) main factors that lead to physical violence among young people in public places? (Choose 3 only)

- *Drug use ()*
- *Drinking too much alcohol ()*
- *Mixing with the wrong crowd ()*
- *Unemployment ()*
- *Aggressive personality ()*
- *Being poor ()*
- *Gangs looking for a fight ()*
- *Fighting over girls ()*
- *Poor education ()*
- *Violence on TV/in films ()*
- *Boredom ()*
- *Bad home life ()*
- *Lack of respect for other people ()*
- *A hatred of other ethnic groups ()*
- *Other (free text option)*

Table D.2 Young people’s view on the main factors that lead to physical violence

	Number	Percent
Drinking too much alcohol	745	63%
Lack of respect for other people	394	34%
Drug use	362	31%
Mixing with the wrong crowd	332	28%
Aggressive personality	319	27%
Gangs looking for a fight	288	25%
Bad home life	239	20%
Boredom	201	17%
A hatred of other ethnic groups	137	12%
Poor education	123	10%
Other	379	32%

Source: FCHY Committee Youth Violence Survey 2010

Note: This table cannot be totalled as respondents were asked to choose three responses. Other includes: unemployment, being poor, fighting over girls, violence on TV/in films and don't know. It also includes a free text response option.

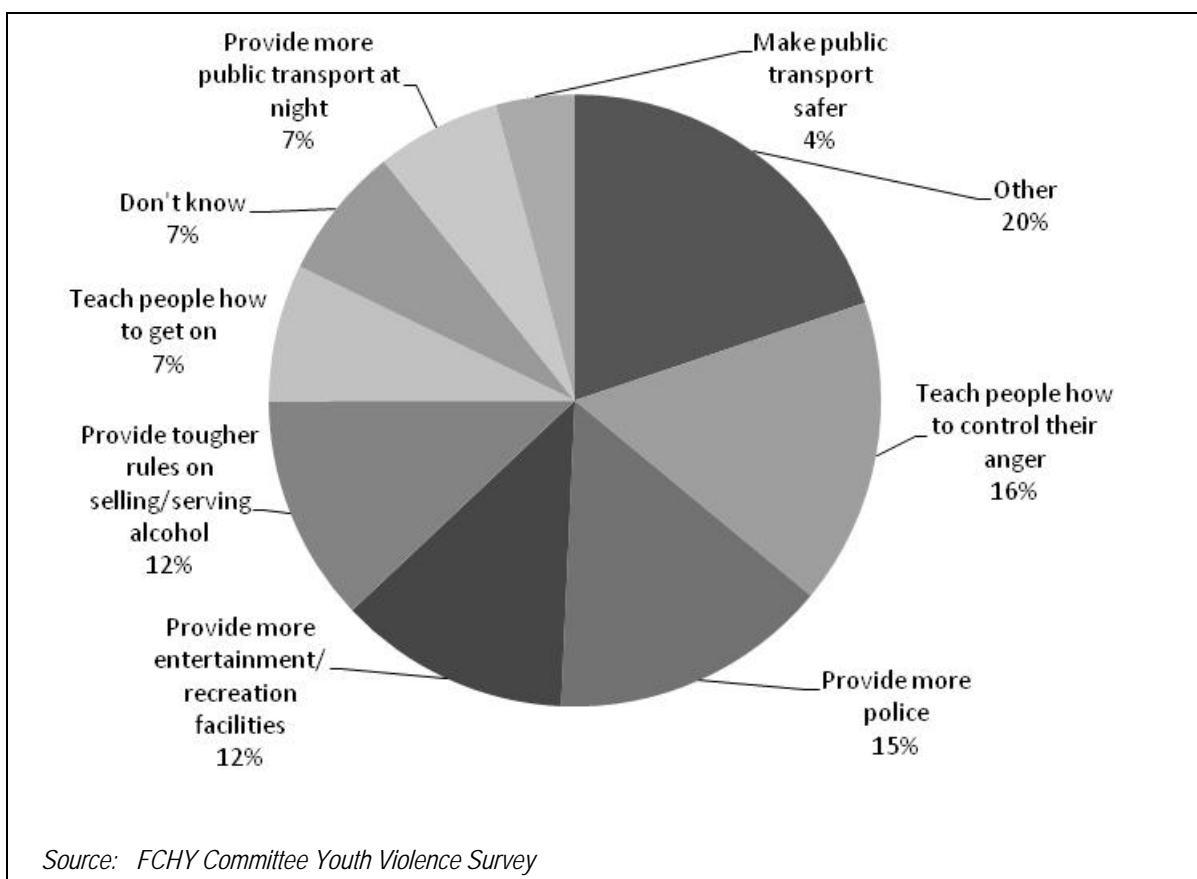
Respondents were asked to provide their views on the main causes of violence. For this question respondents were able to choose up to three factors from a predetermined list or to provide their own response. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) believe that drinking too much alcohol is the main factor that leads to physical violence. This is followed by lack of respect for other people (34%), drug use (31%) and mixing with the wrong crowd (28%).

Of those that provided their own cause of violence the most common responses were: homophobia, lack of role models, trying to fit in or looking for acceptance from others, poor home life and not understanding the consequences.

Q19. What do you think can be done to reduce the amount of physical violence among young people?

- Teach people how to get on ()
- Teach people how to control their anger ()
- Provide more police ()
- Provide more public transport at night ()
- Provide more entertainment/recreation facilities ()
- Provide tougher rules on selling/serving alcohol ()
- Make public transport safer ()
- Other (free text option)

Figure D.17: Young people's view on what can be done to reduce the amount of physical violence



As young people are most likely to be the victims or perpetrators of violence it was important to gather their views on what should be done to reduce the levels of youth violence. Respondents were given a list to choose from which included an 'Other' box. Twenty per cent of respondents chose the 'Other' category, and

within this the most common responses were harsher consequences, more education programs in schools and more support for young people and their families. The most common responses chosen from the list included teach people how to control their anger, provide more police, provide more entertainment/recreation facilities and provide tougher rules on selling/serving alcohol.

Q20. Do you have any other comments to make about youth violence?

- *(free text option)*

Respondents were invited to provide any other comments they would like to make about youth violence. Many young people took the opportunity to respond with 392 comments provided. Selected comments are interspersed throughout the body of the main report.

The survey concluded by asking for the following basic demographic information:

Now just to help us analyse the results please indicate:

- *Your sex: Male () Female ()*
- *Your age: Under 18 years () 18-24 years ()*
- *Your locality: Capital city () Regional city () Rural/remote ()*

This basic demographic information was completed by 83% of respondents.

Summary

While acknowledging that the survey is not statistically rigorous in terms of population sampling, on the basis of responses received it would appear that youth violence is an issue that concerns most young people. The majority of respondents have witnessed violence and believe that both the incidence and severity of physical violence is increasing. They mainly believe that it occurs between males, although a sizable proportion perceived that females were potentially involved, primarily as victims. Youth violence appears to be occurring across Australia in capital cities, regional centres and through to remote locations. Much of the violence is street or pub/club violence although school or workplace violence is also common.

The respondents believe that alcohol and drugs and lack of respect for other people are the main reasons for violence. They believe that education programs are a way to minimise violent behaviour, but support for more police and harsher penalties for perpetrators also featured strongly. Limiting access to alcohol was also raised, but more in the context of the responsible serving of alcohol rather than increasing the legal age of drinking.