

Young People in Public

community safety
survey results



**BLUE MOUNTAINS WOMEN'S
HEALTH & RESOURCE CENTRE**



@EVIE_EQUALITY

Created & distributed by the EViE youth advisory group

EViE is the acronym for 'Ending Violence, improving Equality' and operates as a Primary Prevention of Domestic Violence Project facilitated & led by The Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resource Centre in Katoomba, and funded by the DSS National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children.

The EViE advisory group is a collective of passionate Blue Mountains teens & young adults. Ages range from 13- 24, with both women & non-binary people as the regular participants. Team EViE is open to all genders & gender identities & has flexible engagement options. The group is facilitated & led by the youth team from BMWHRC, Katoomba.

You can follow EViE on Instagram via @evie_equality.

To learn more about The Blue Mountains Women's Health & Resource Centre, visit our website via www.bmwhrc.org

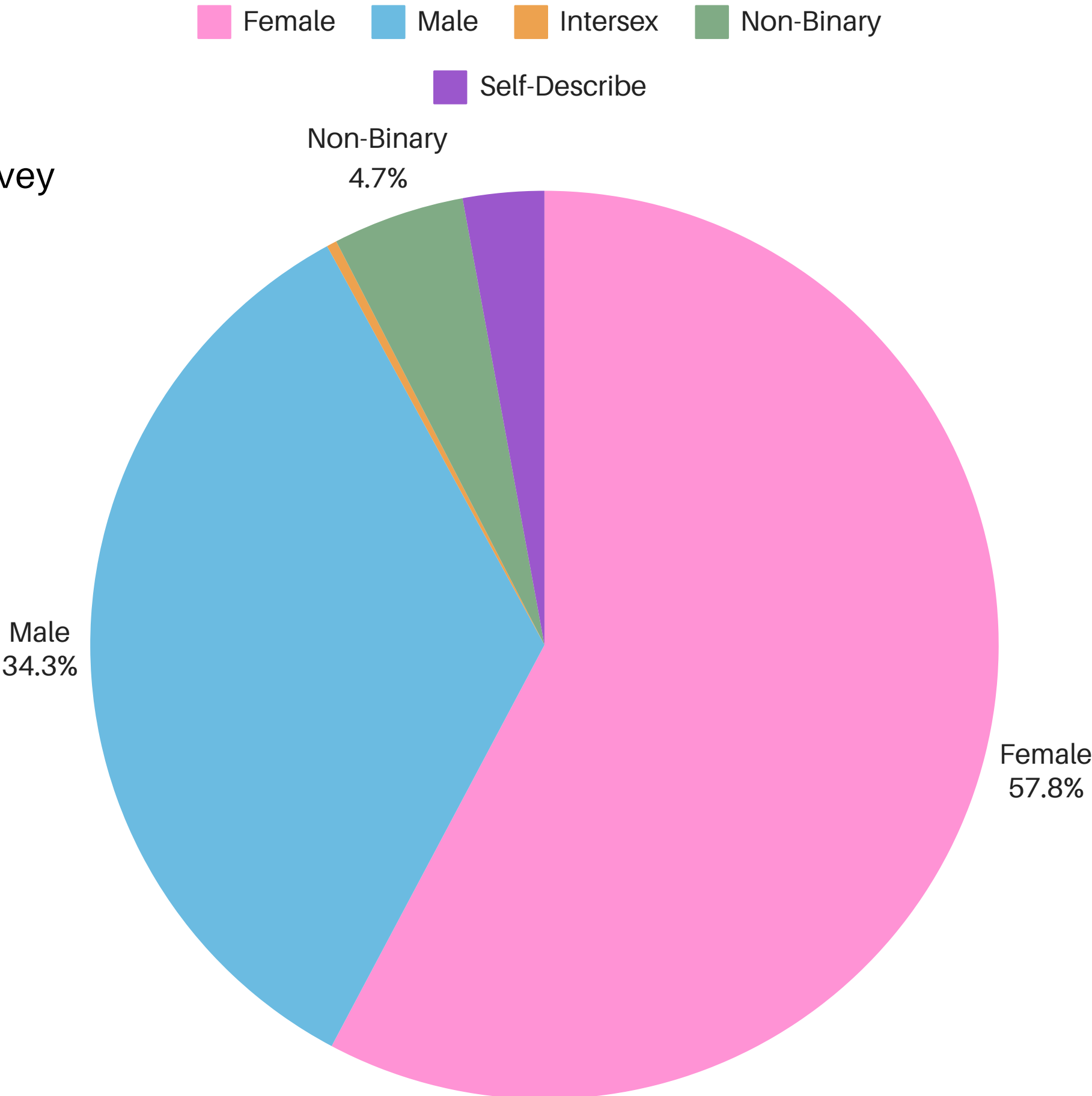




Submissions by Gender

- 278 total responses collected from the EViE survey
- Majority of respondents identified as female making up 57.8%
- Majority of respondents who identified outside the gender binary were under 25, with only one indicating they were older

- 160 Female
- 95 Male
- 13 Non-Binary
- 8 Self Described
- 1 Intersex



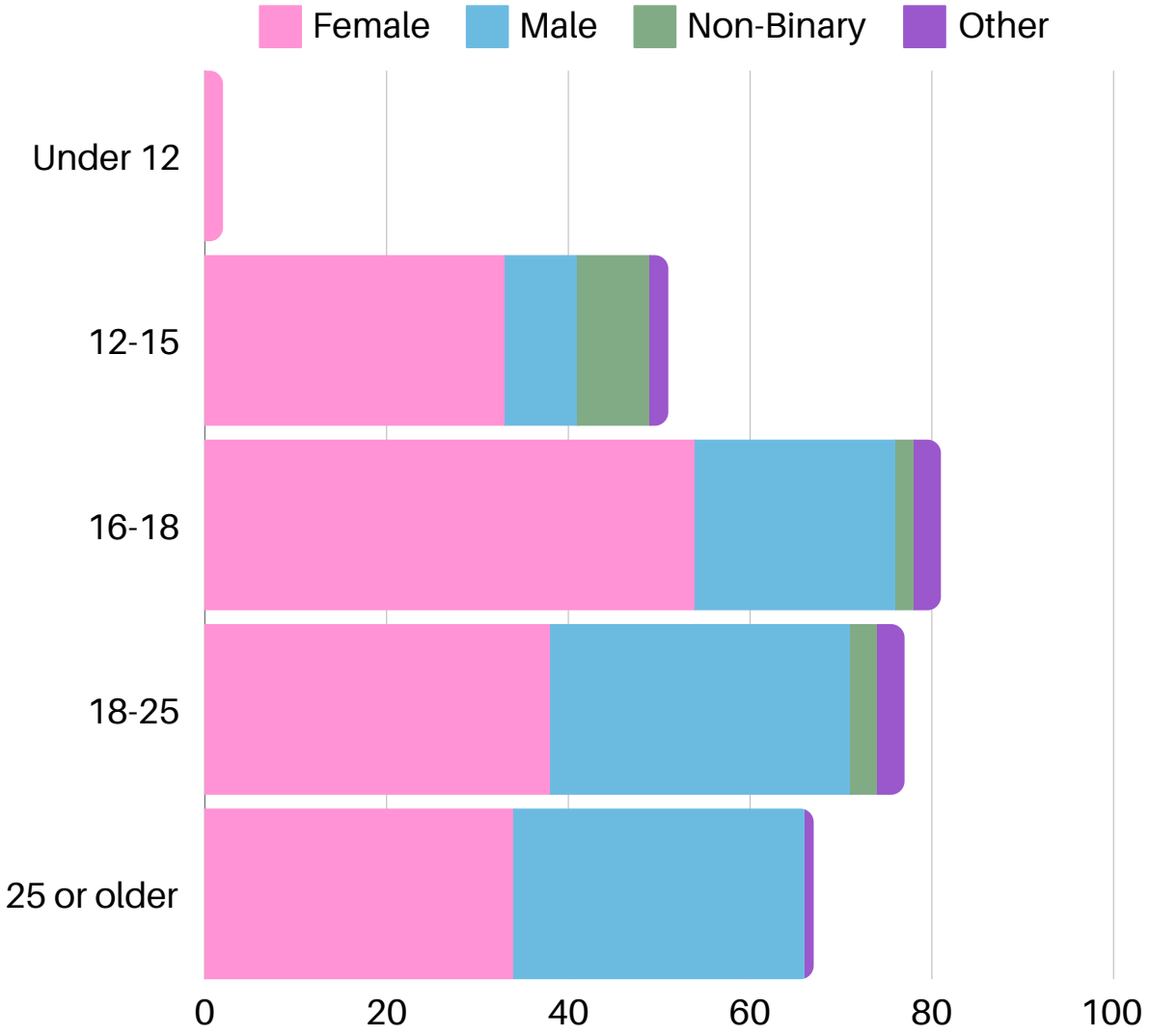


Submissions by Age

Gender and Age group

- Majority of Female entrants were aged 16-18
- Majority of Male entrants were aged 18-25 by a small margin
- Majority of Non-Binary entrants were aged 12-15
- Majority of Intersex or self-described entrants were aged 16-25

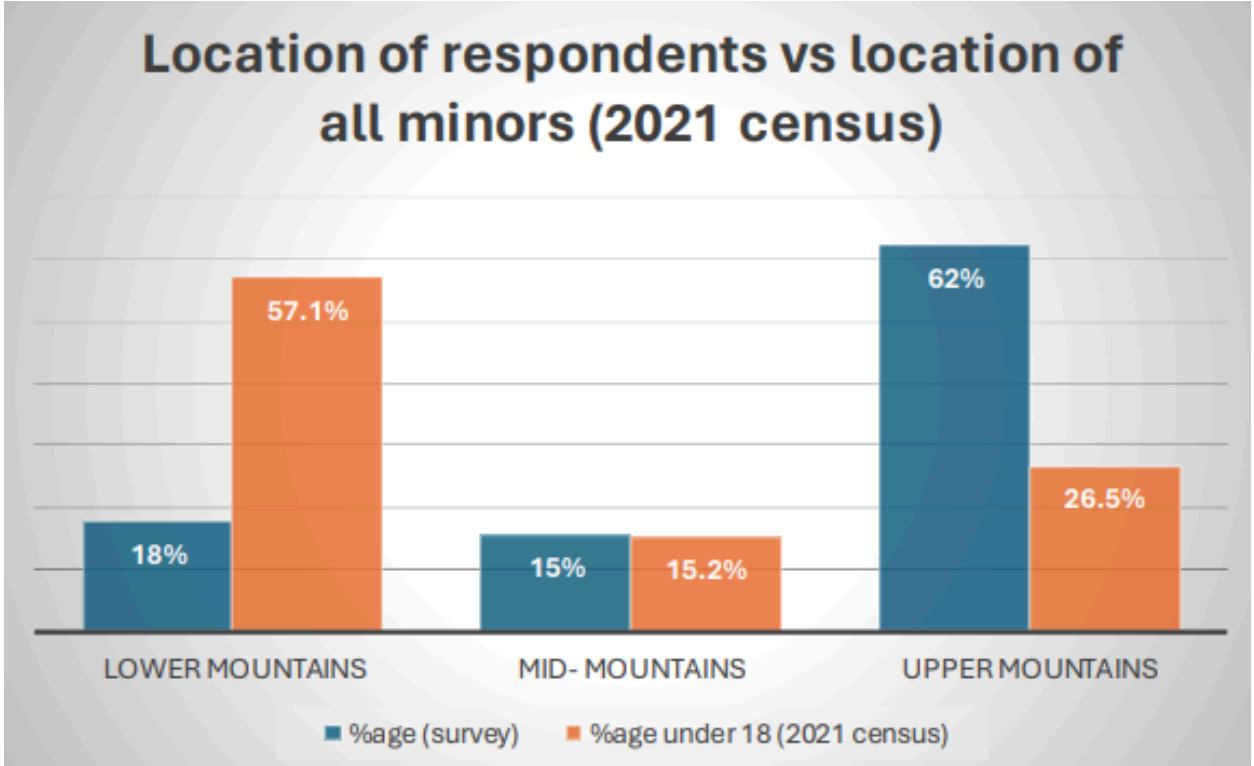
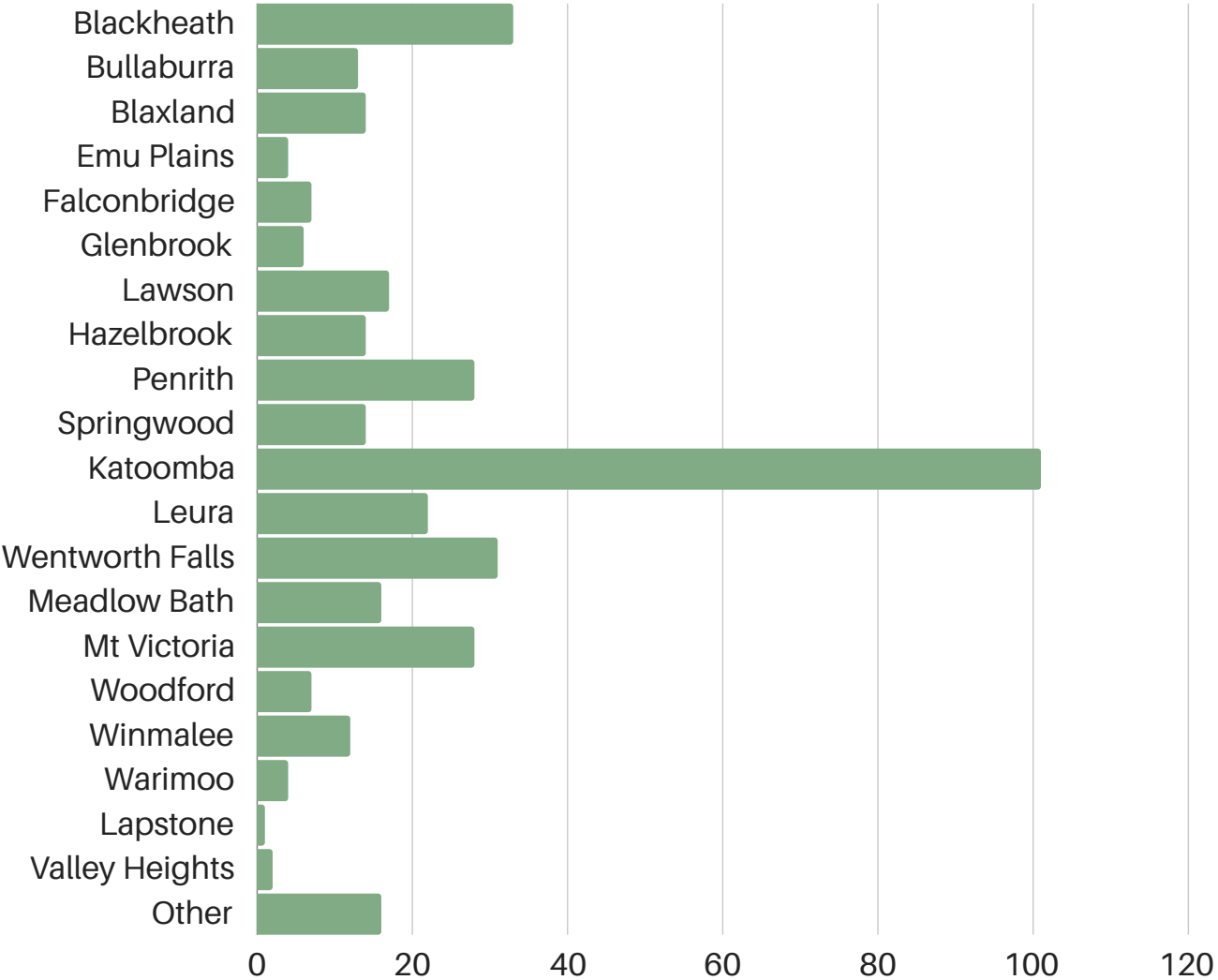
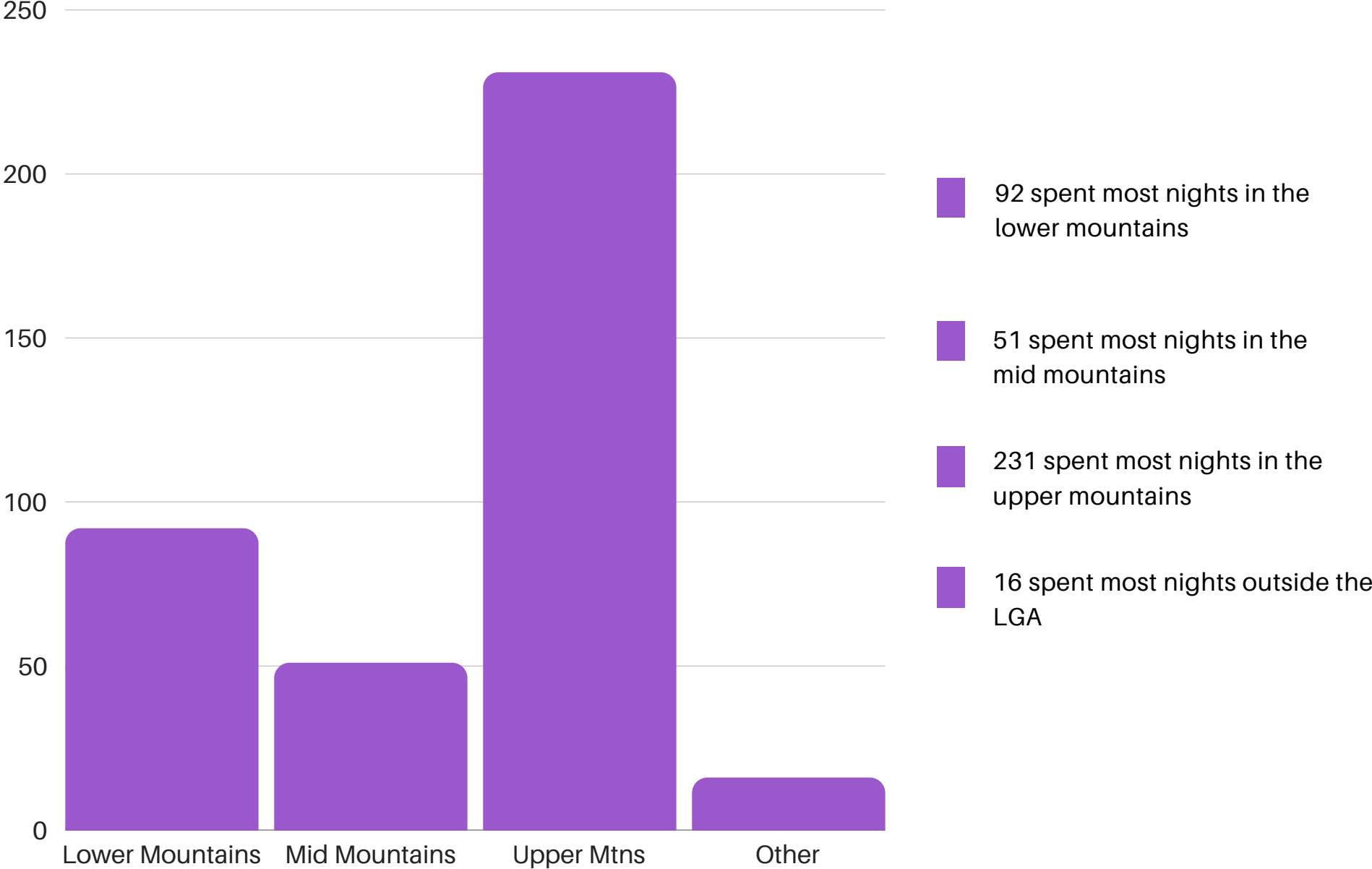
- 89 of the responses received from minors (under 18) identified as female, with only 30 identifying as male
- The majority of Men responding to the EViE survey were in the adult age brackets (18 and above)
- Only Female entrants appeared in the under 12 age group
- Almost 50/50 split between minors (under 18) and adults (over 18) responding to the EViE survey





Submissions by location

- Most respondents said they spend most nights in the upper mountains, and around 20% in Katoomba specifically
- Our data varies from 2021 census data for where young people live within the LGA, perhaps because we asked 'where do you spend most nights?' and offline promo was limited





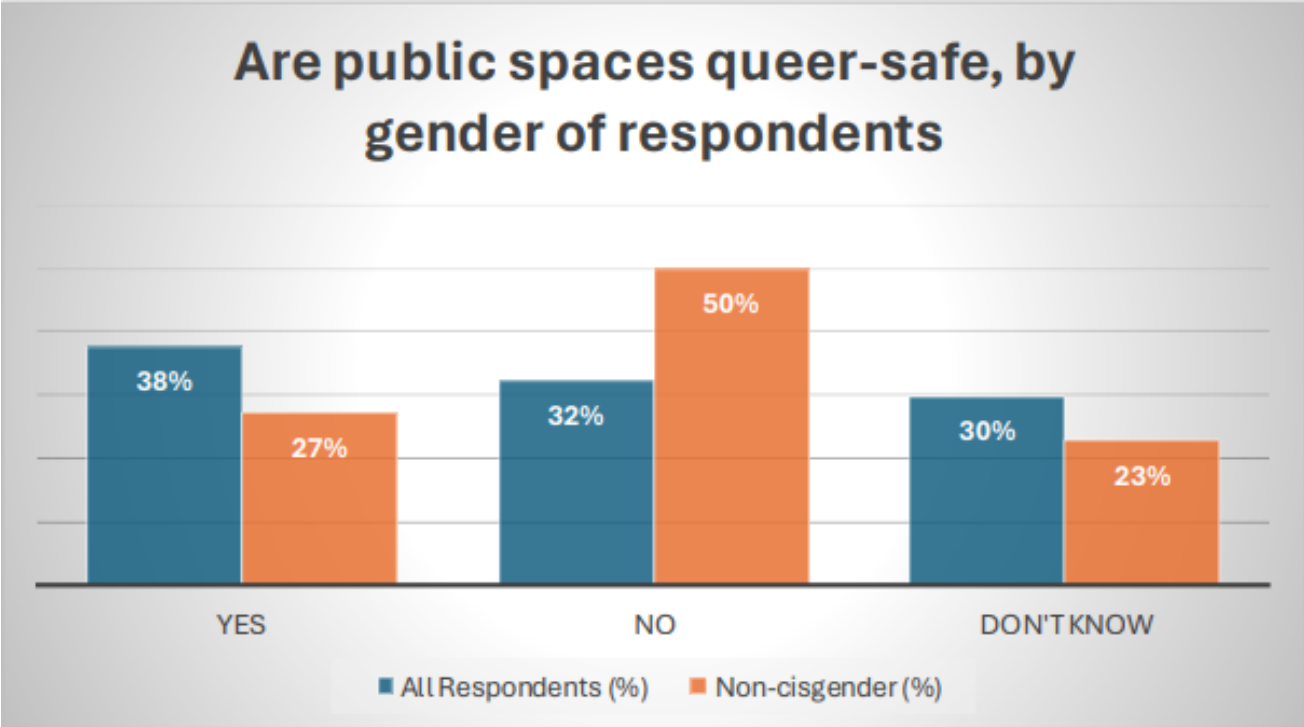
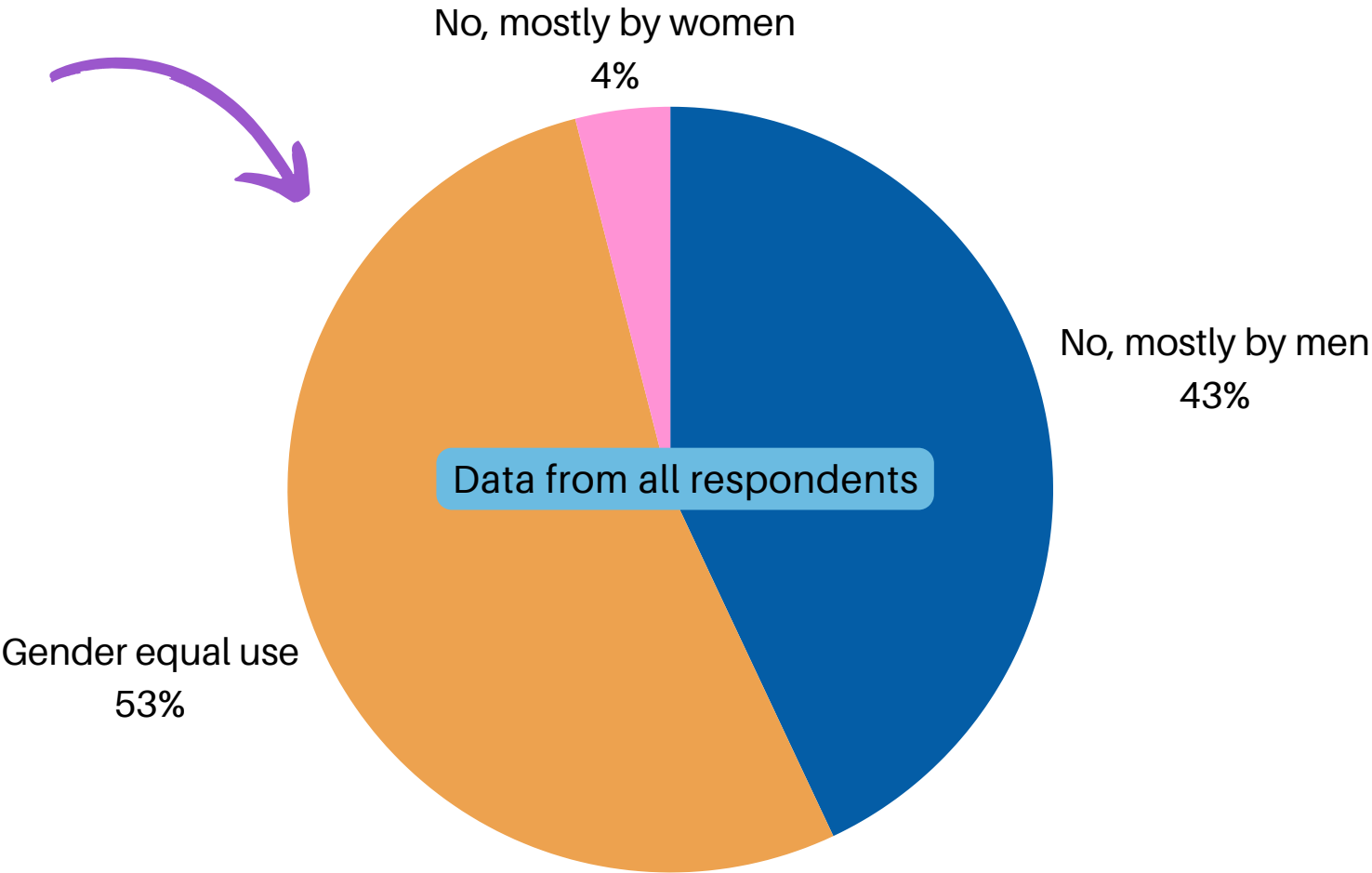
Is gender inequality affecting our public space?

Question 9. "Do you think the public spaces available to young people in the Blue Mountains are used equally by young men & women?"

- Consensus amongst all respondents that there are very few, if any, public spaces occupied by 'mostly women'
- All respondents agree that men are occupying most public space, often becoming the majority group

Question 10. "Do you think public spaces available to young people in the Blue Mountains are safe for gender non-conforming or individuals perceived as queer?"

- Less than 40% of all respondents thought public spaces were safe for gender non-conforming people or individuals perceived as queer
- Over 70% of respondents who did not identify as cis-gender said they were either unsure or that public spaces were unsafe for them and the wider LGBTQIA+ community

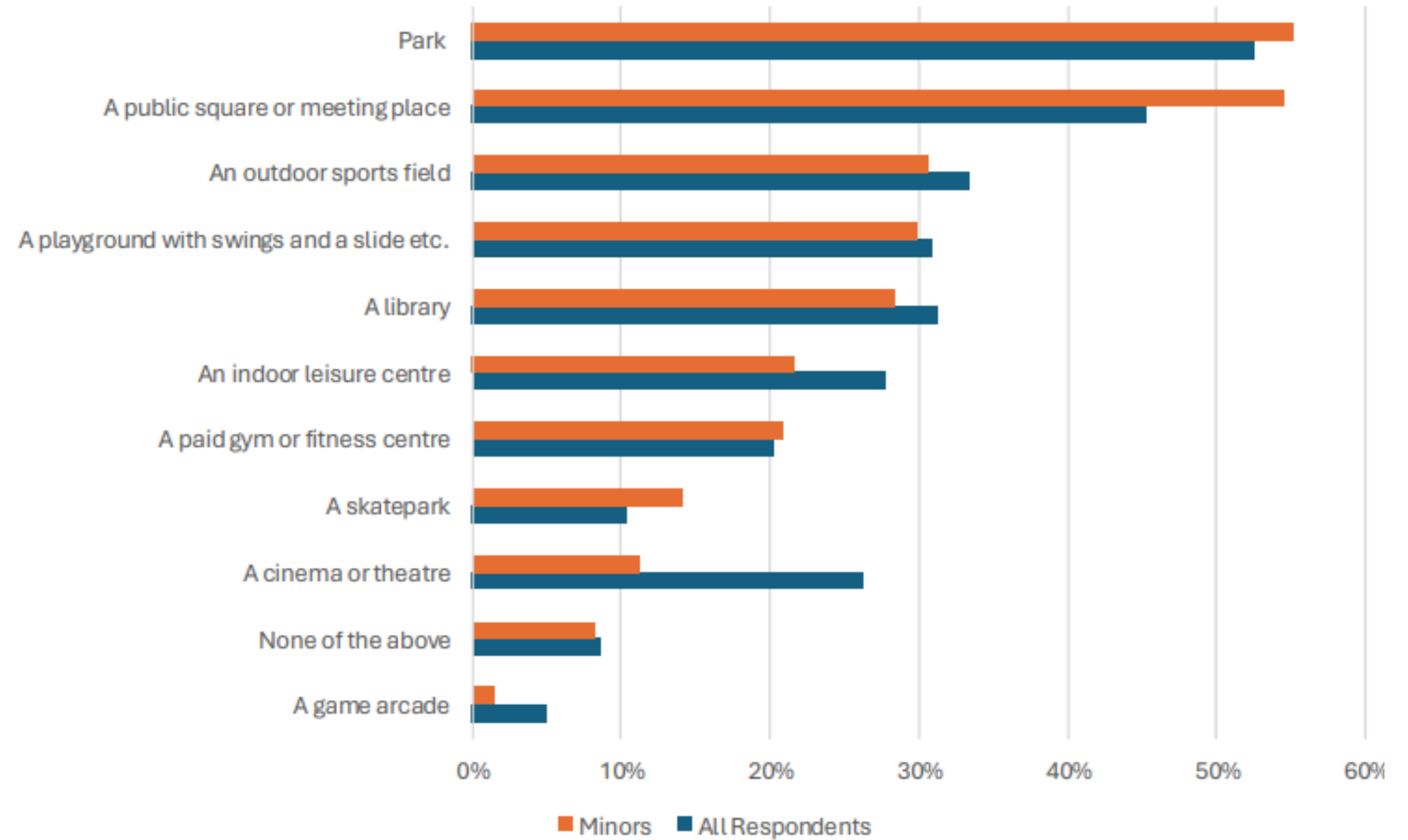




Which public spaces are young people using the most?

Question 7. "Thinking about where you live, which of these spaces do you access at least once a week? Tick all that apply."

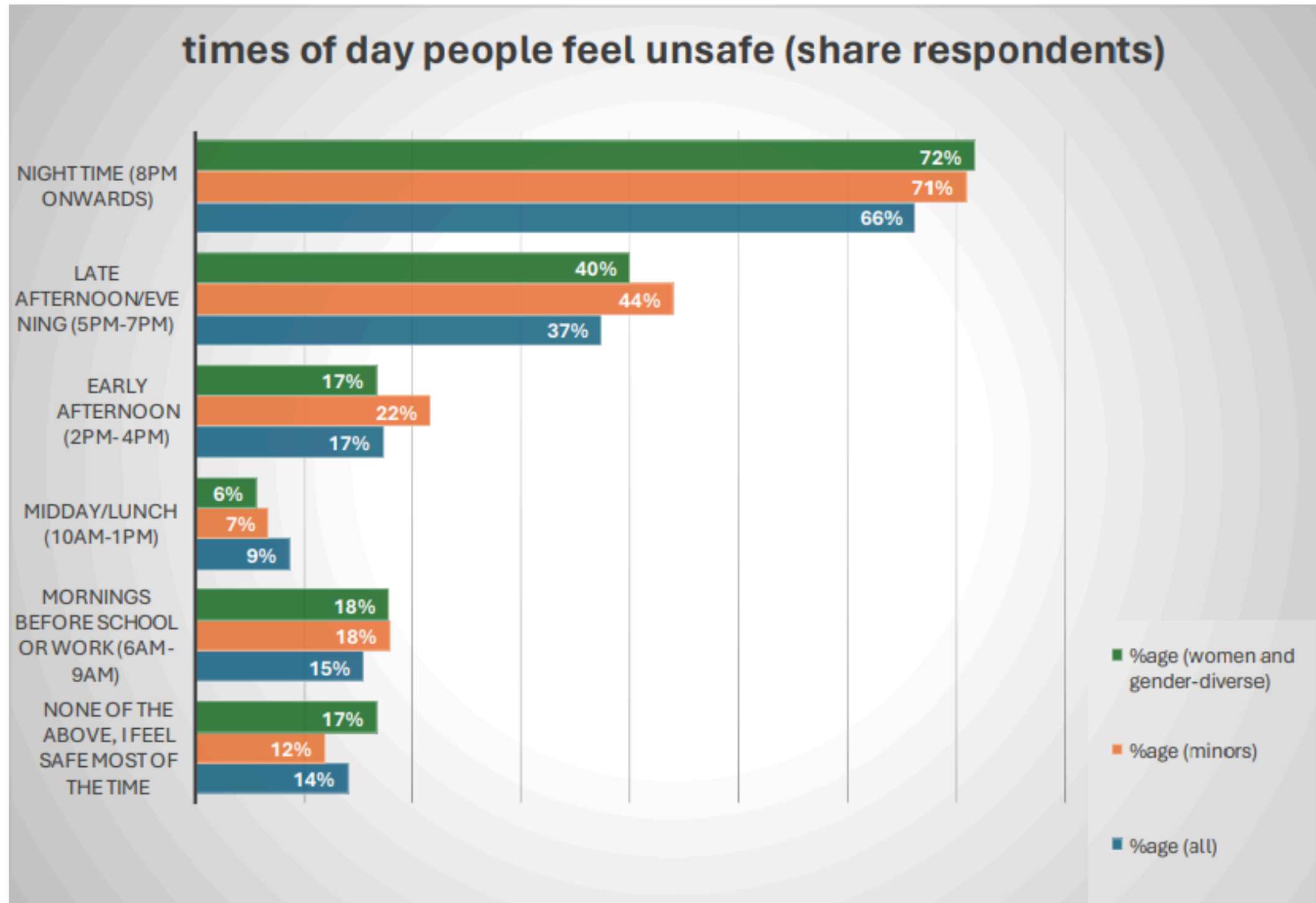
- Minors more likely to use parks, skate parks and public meeting places, less likely to use costed venues (leisure centre, cinema, etc.)
- Parks & public squares/meeting places are most popular by some distance prompting the question about how welcoming, accessible and safe these spaces are.
- When asked about where respondents have experienced or witnessed problematic behaviour, 'Katoomba Main Street' and 'parks or playgrounds' ranked in the top 5 unsafe locations





Does the time of day impact the perception of safety?

“Are there specific times when you feel less safe in your community?”



- Feelings of safety deteriorates throughout the day, with very low numbers answering that they 'feel safe most of the time'.
- Minors, women & gender-diverse groups report feeling unsafe more than other groups.
- Minors report a spike in feeling unsafe outside school hours, most likely when they travelling through or spending time in public spaces.
- Women & gender-diverse groups of all ages report feeling unsafe throughout the day at higher rates.
- Majority of all respondents feel unsafe at night



Time of day and perception of safety - qualitative data

Question 20. In your opinion, what is the top safety concern you think needs to be addressed in your community?

"Not enough light at night, too few pedestrians."
- Respondent age 18-25, identifying as male

"Night sexual harassment."
- Respondent age 18-25, identifying as male

"Roadside street lamps are too dim."
- Respondent age 25+, identifying as male

"Night fighting"
- Respondent age 25+, identifying as male

"Safety Improvements: Invest in community safety improvements such as installing better street lights..."
- Respondent age 25+, identifying as male

"public transport at night"
- Respondent age 16-18, identifying as female

"Night time safety"
- Respondent age 18-25, identifying as female

"Homeless people on streets after sun down and young people drinking and smoking"
- Respondent age 18-25, identifying as female

"Increase security on night patrols."
- Respondent age 18-25, identifying as female

"Ensure the safety of women and children at night."
- Respondent age 18-25, identifying as female

"Night street lighting"
- Respondent age 25+, identifying as female

"Safety for women after dark "
- Respondent age 25+, identifying as female

"Safety issues at night."
- Respondent age 25+, identifying as female



What kind of public behaviour is making people feel unsafe?

Question 11: "Have you ever personally experienced or witnessed any of the following in a public space in your community? (Check all that apply)"

- Majority of respondents reported witnessing or experiencing antisocial behaviours in public, with only 21 selecting 'none of the above'
- Vandalism/property damage, Bullying and Drug/Alcohol use ranked as the 3 most occurring amongst all respondents

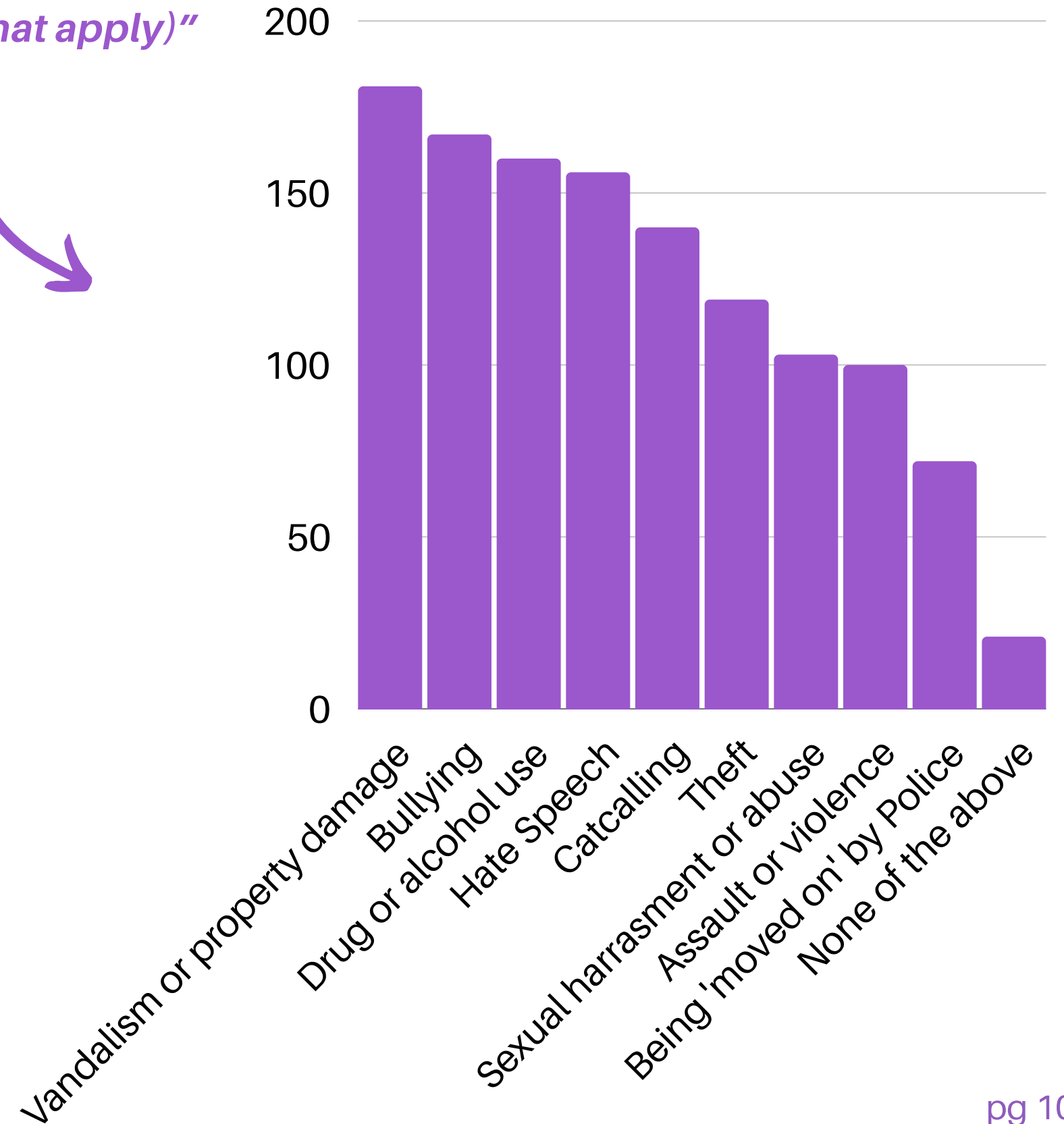
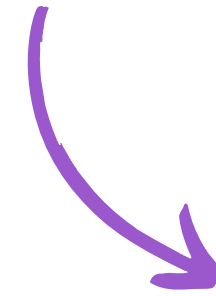
Qualitative data about types of anti-social behaviour:

Question 20. In your opinion, what is the top safety concern you think needs to be addressed in your community?

"Violence, drug abuse and harassment "
 - Respondent age 16-18, identifying as female

"Safety in more empty areas that are sketchy"
 - Respondent age 12-15, identifying as female

"The harassment from other people "
 - Respondent age 12-15, identifying as non-binary





Who are we seeing behaving this way?

“Question 11.5: “If you have witnessed or experienced unsafe public behaviour, which of the below were the primary perpetrator/s?”

- Men of all ages were identified as the primary perpetrators of antisocial behaviours witnessed/experienced in public by all respondents
- Women were identified as primary perpetrators at less than half the rate of their male counterparts (could be due to less women using public spaces overall)

Qualitative data about perpetrators of anti-social behaviour:

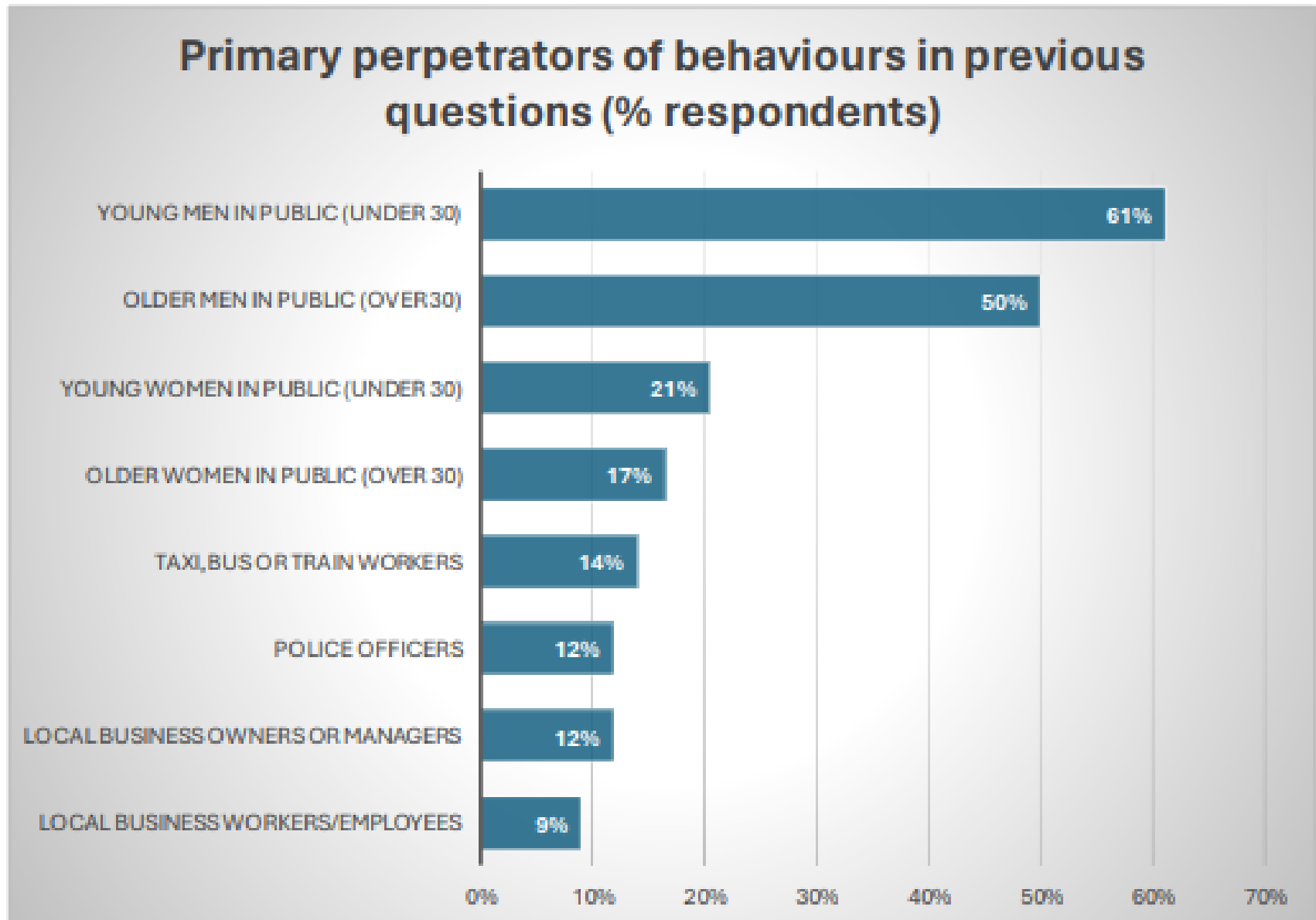
Question 20. In your opinion, what is the top safety concern you think needs to be addressed in your community?

“male students outside of school hours harassing and yelling at people ”
- Respondent age 12-15, identifying as non-binary

“Older men being creepy to under-age girls”
- Respondent age 12-15, identifying as male

“Teenage boys harassing EVERYONE ”
- Respondent age 16-18, identifying as male

“ Young women and high school girls being harassed by both older men and teenage boys ” - Respondent age 16-18, identifying as male



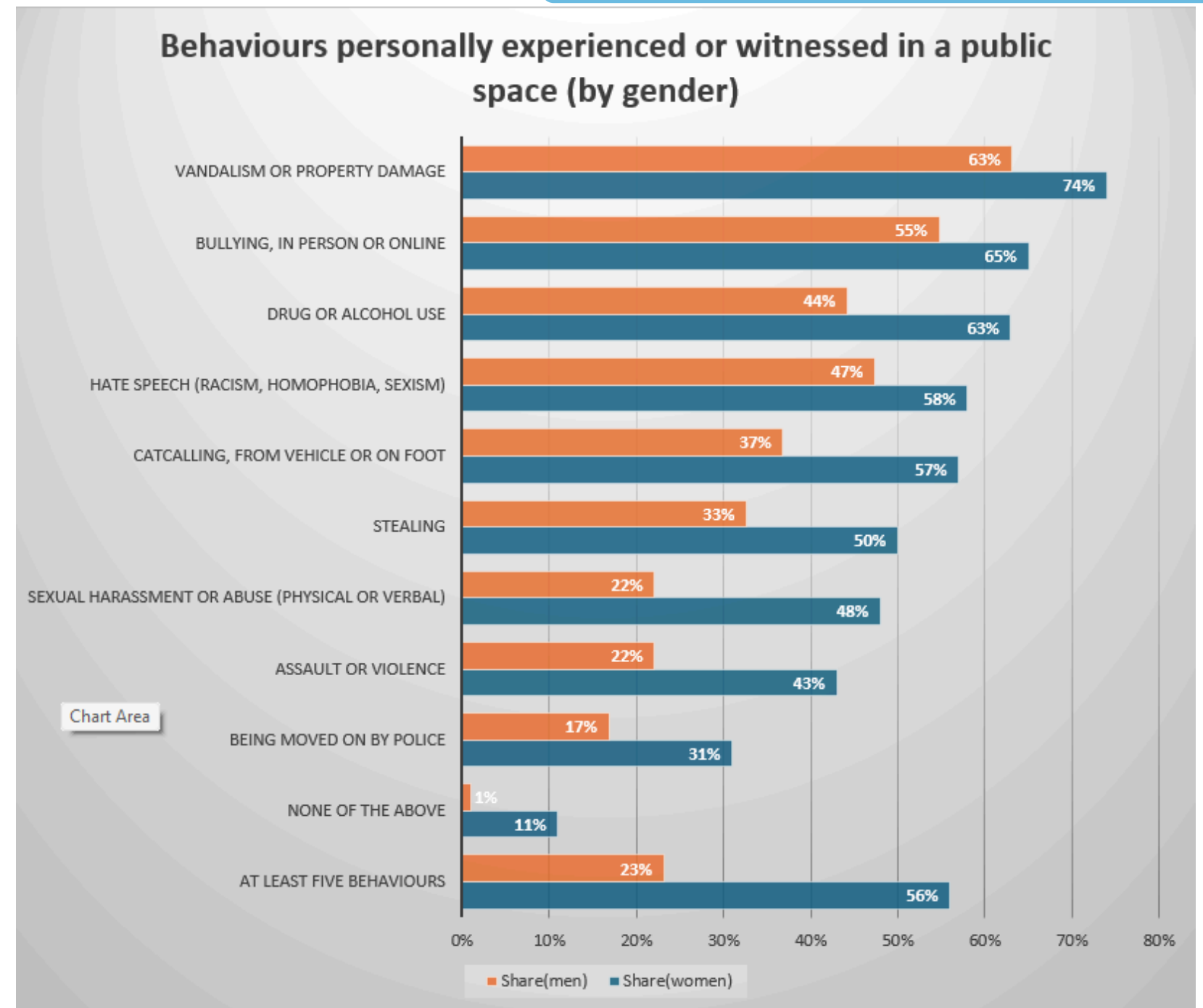


Is safety being perceived differently based on age & gender?

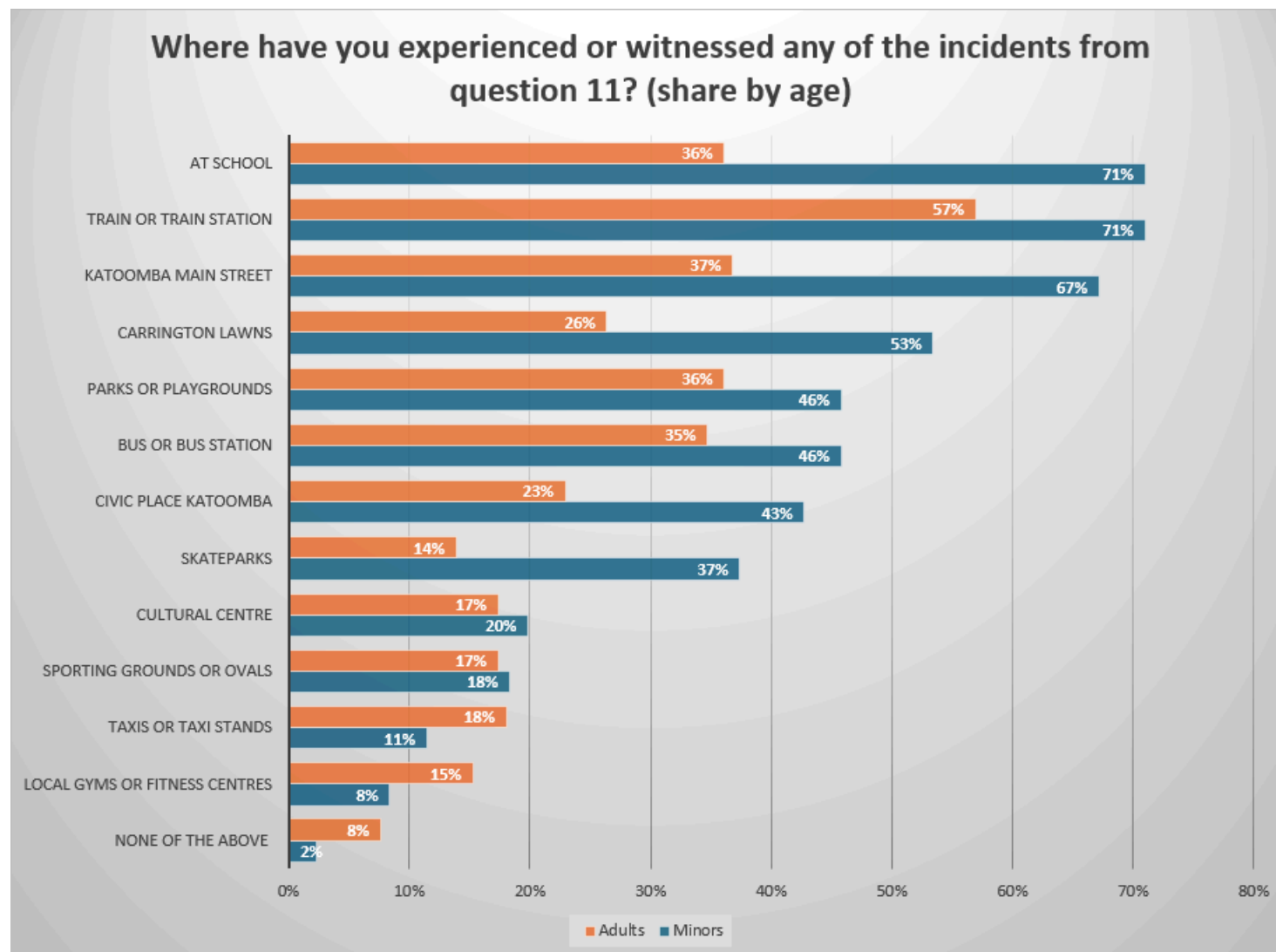
Question 11: "Have you ever personally experienced or witnessed any of the following in a public space in your community?"

- Women more likely to experience and witness antisocial behaviours than men, especially sexual harassment
- Women report at higher rates across the board which could be an indication of the hypervigilance required when out in public
- Minors much more likely than adults to witness/experience behaviours at school, on public transport and various public locations youth are encouraged to use

Data from all respondents separated by gender



Data from all respondents separated by location & age





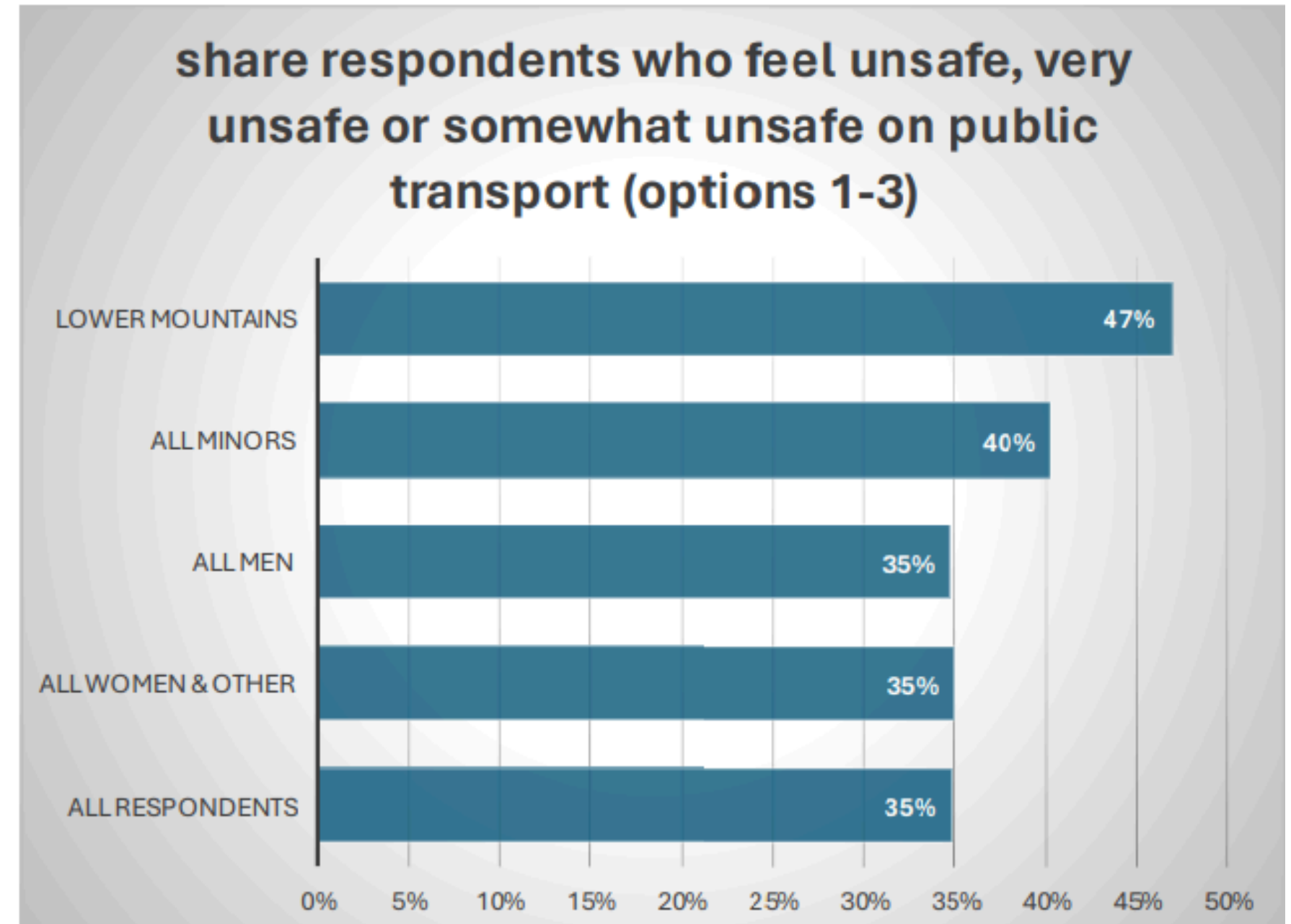
Safety & Public Transport

Question 8: “How safe do you feel using public transport in the Blue Mountains?”

- About one third of *all* respondents feel unsafe using public transport (selecting options 1-3)
- Minors reported higher rates of feeling unsafe on public transport
- Respondents spending most nights in the lower mountains reported higher rates of feeling unsafe compared to those from other areas
- When asked about where respondents have experienced or witnessed problematic behaviour, ‘Train or train station’ was the top reported location at 63% with ‘Bus or bus station’ also making the top 5.
- 14% of respondents reported ‘taxi, bus or train workers’ as the perpetrators of problematic behaviour they’ve experienced or witnessed.

Response Options:

- 1 - Very unsafe, I actively avoid it
- 2 - Unsafe, but I have limited transport options so have to use it often
- 3 - Somewhat unsafe, I only use it during certain times and never alone
- 4 - Somewhat safe, I feel confident travelling alone but only at certain times
- 5 - Very safe, I feel confident travelling any time alone





Safety & Public Transport - qualitative data

Question 20. In your opinion, what is the top safety concern you think needs to be addressed in your community?

“eshays in public places like carington lawn or the train station ”
- Respondent age 16-18, identifying as male

‘personally i find train stations the scariest place and they might need more attention. For example a week or two ago I was on the station when a big fight was happening. Someone older stepped in and tried to calm things down but it didn't really work and it was honestly a bit scary and lots of people were very eager to get off the station quickly. I'd like for it not to feel like a dangerous place in that way. but this is not to say that i have any problem with people just hanging out there as i sometimes see. I think young people shouldn't be ushered out of hangout places especially because they are so limited here’

- Respondent age 12-15, identifying as non-binary

“Public transport safety for women and queer folks”
- Respondent age 25+, identifying as female

“creepy dudes who lurk around the train station.”
- Respondent age 12-15, identifying as female

“harassment on public transports and in the streets to youth and specifically queer youth”
- Respondent age 16-18, identifying as female

“Woman feeling comfortable to travel at night, especially if they have to commute”
- Respondent age 18-25, identifying as female

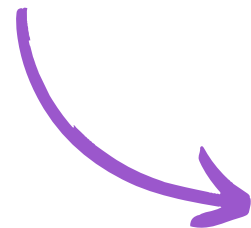
“I feel like safety concerns on trains is a big one for me I wouldn't really know what to do in the event that I feel unsafe on the train or any sort of public transport really. Idk if this is really a safety concern, but there's a lot of teens who hang around katoomba who ditch school and also wreak havoc in the shops, stealing things, abusing customers and workers. And idk I just feel like they need help at that they could potentially be considered at risk. ”
- Respondent age 18-25, identifying as female

“I think it is a quite safe area, but maybe more frequent public transport at night, a better bus system, and more for young people to do with their leisure time would help resolve a few issues.”
- Respondent age 18-25, identifying as female



Confidence in community - part 1

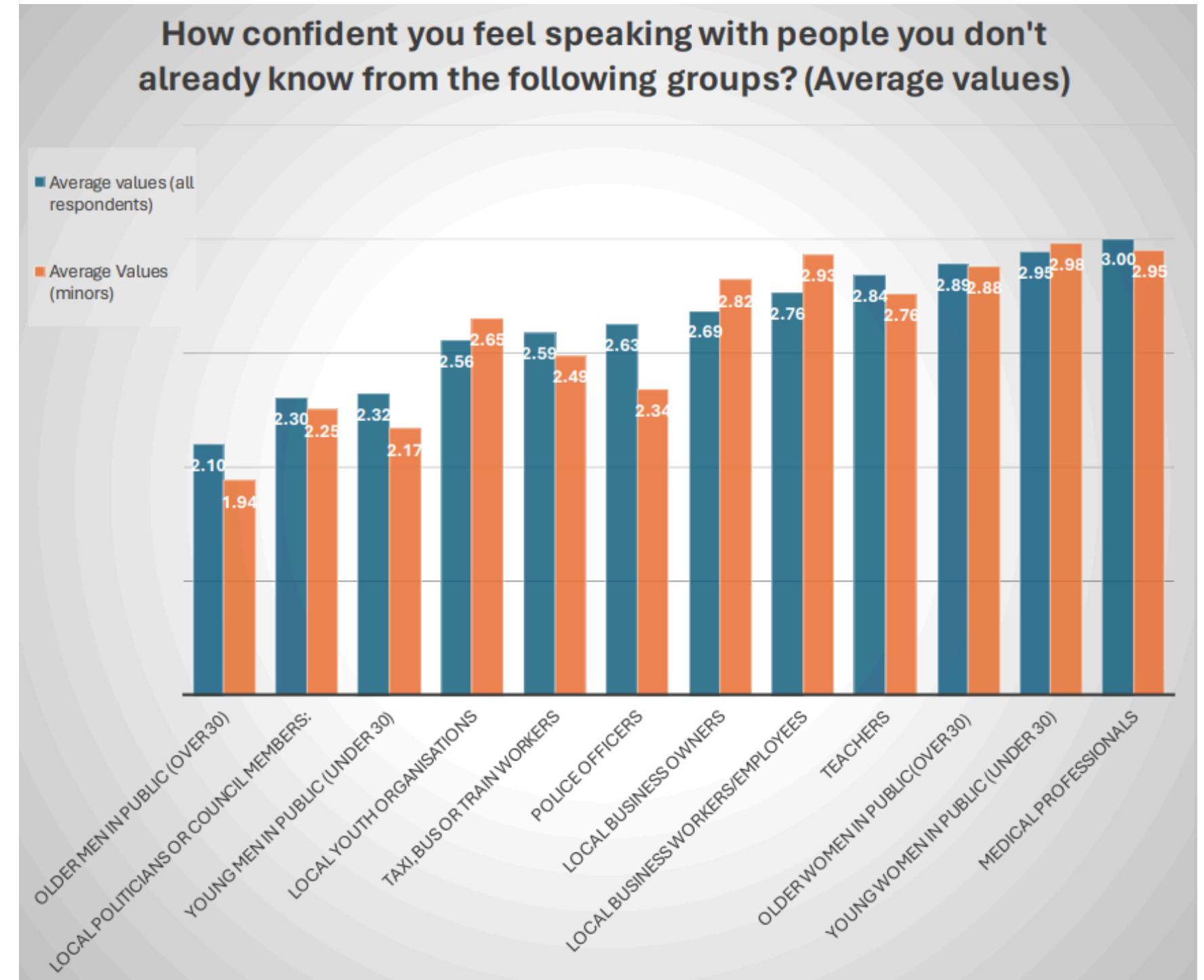
Question 15. "Please rank how confident you feel speaking with people you don't already know from the following groups"



- **Medical professionals, young women and older women ranked as the 3 most approachable groups amongst all respondents.**
- **Older men, politicians or council members and young men ranked as the 3 least approachable groups by all respondents.**
- Minors were less confident overall, but particularly with police officers and men of all ages when compared to the average.
- Local youth organisations ranked in the bottom 5 amongst all respondents, though minors did rank them slightly higher than the average.
- Minors felt more confident approaching young women, local business owners, workers/employees and youth organisations when compared to the average.

Response Options:

- 4 - VERY CONFIDENT: I'd have no issue contacting even for something minor
- 3 - QUITE CONFIDENT: I'd contact under the right circumstances
- 2 - SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT: I'd only contact in an emergency
- 1 - NOT CONFIDENT: I'd deliberately avoid contact



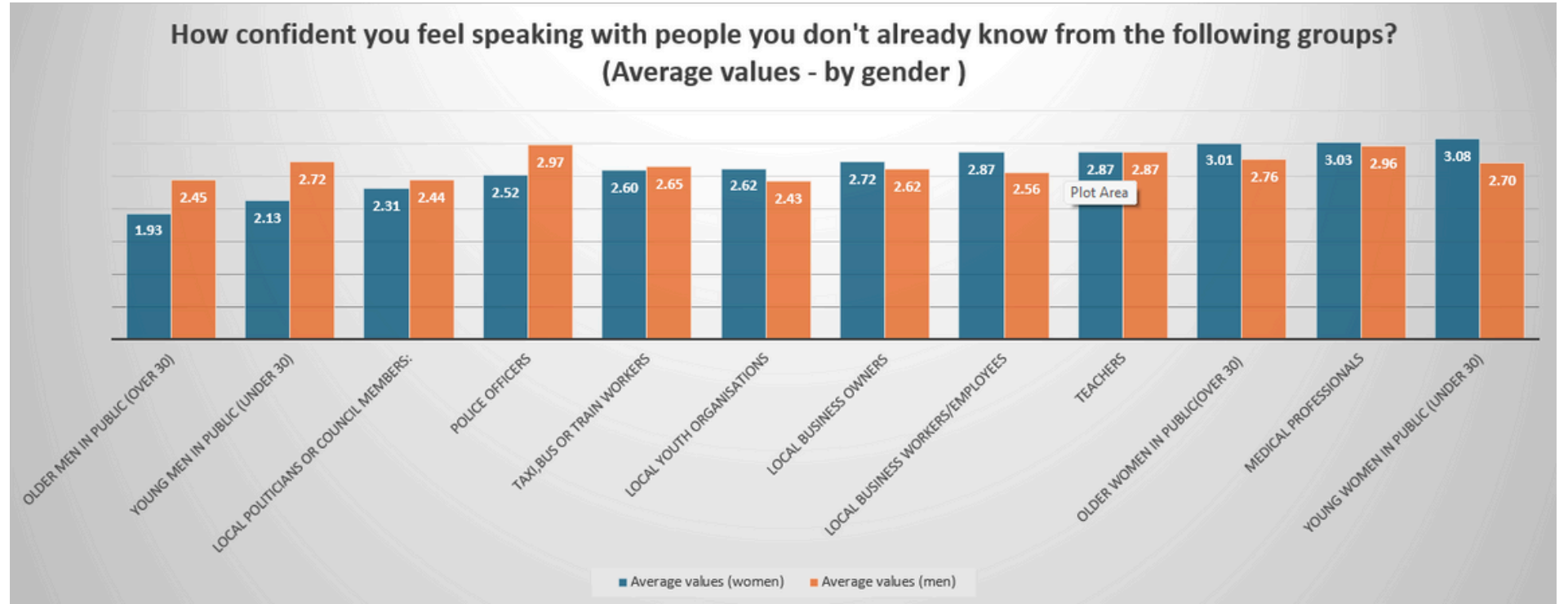


Confidence in community - part 2

Question 15. "Please rank how confident you feel speaking with people you don't already know from the following groups"

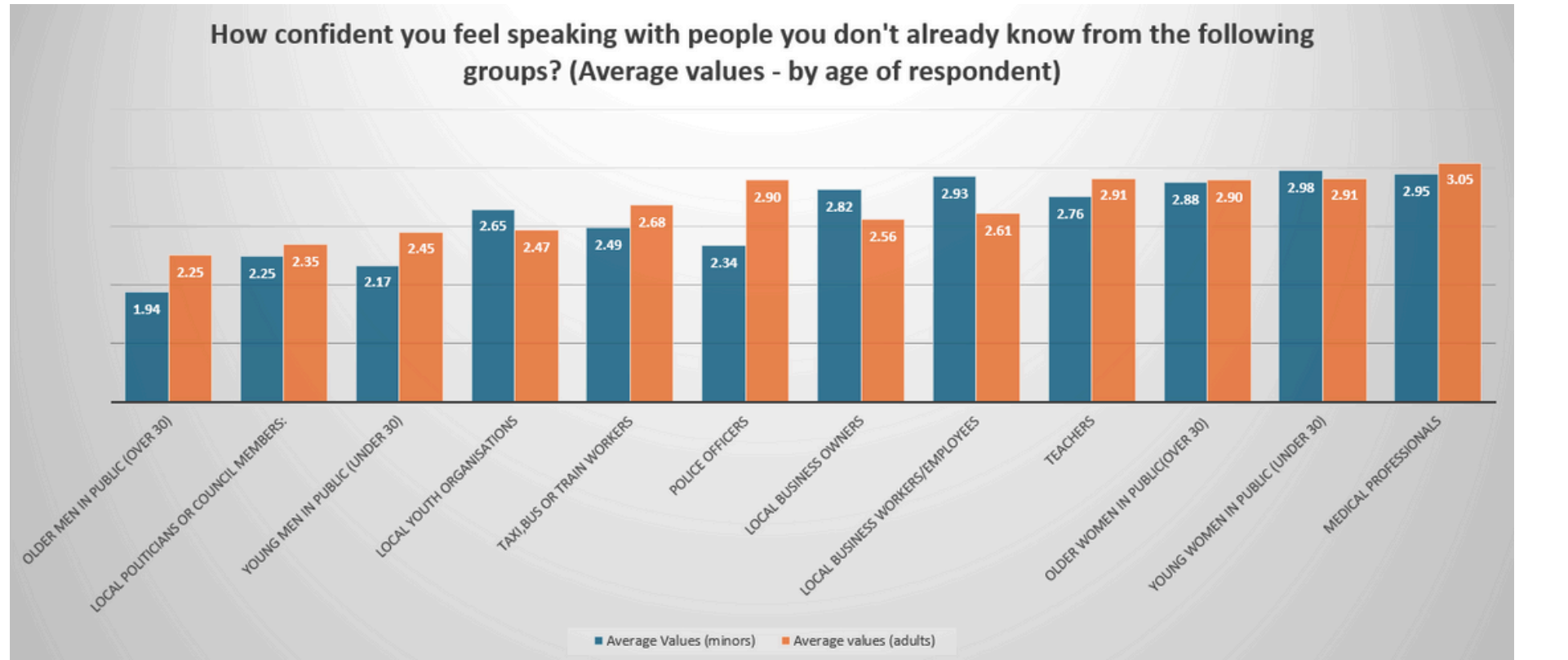
Data from all respondents separated by gender

- Women of all ages less likely to trust men of all ages
- Men more likely to trust police officers than women (perhaps because police officers are mostly men?)



Data from all respondents separated by age

- Minors were less confident overall, particularly with police officers and men of all ages when compared to the average for adults.
- Minors reported more confidence speaking with youth orgs, local business owners & workers and only slightly more confidence with young women than the average for adults.



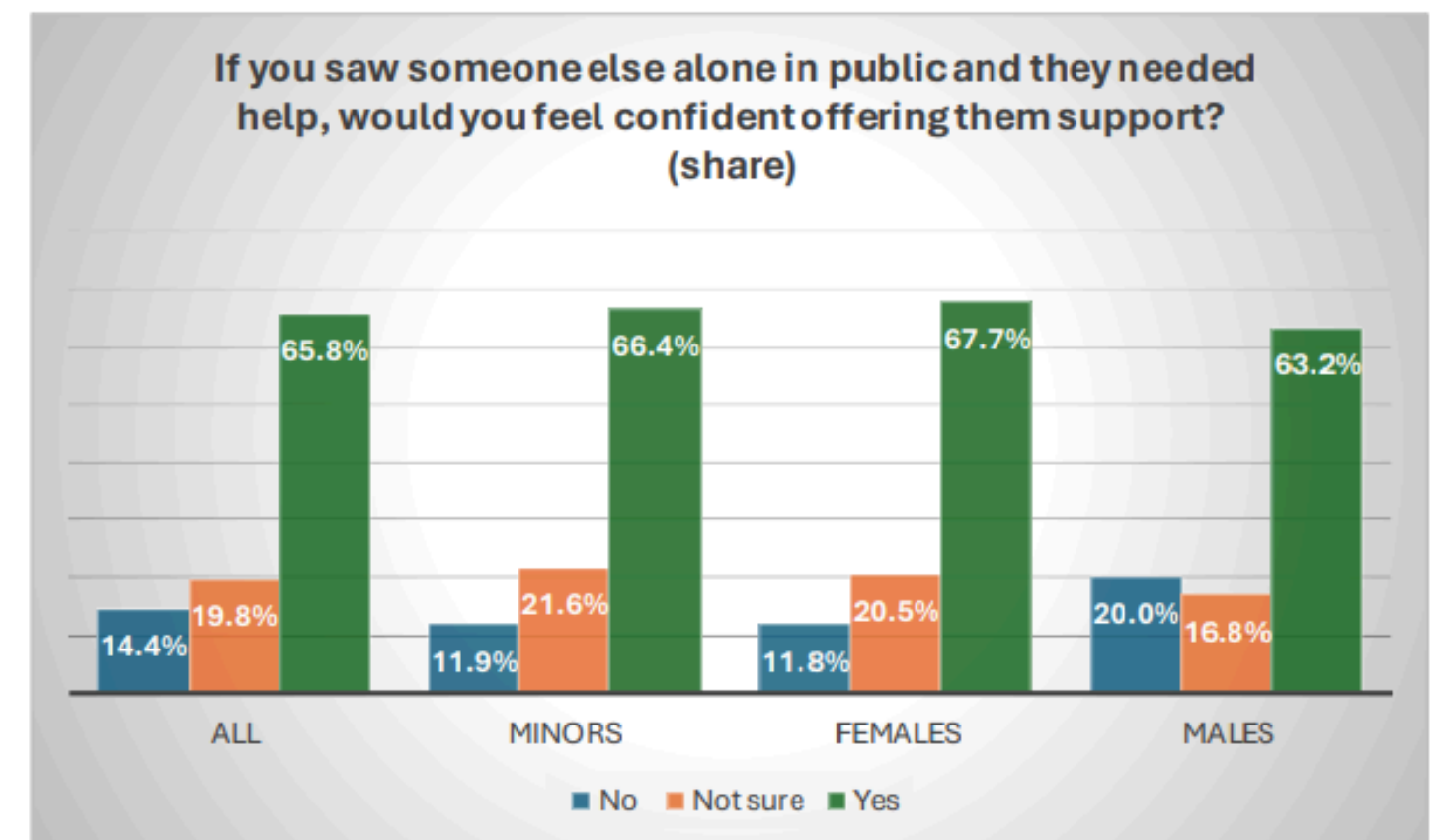
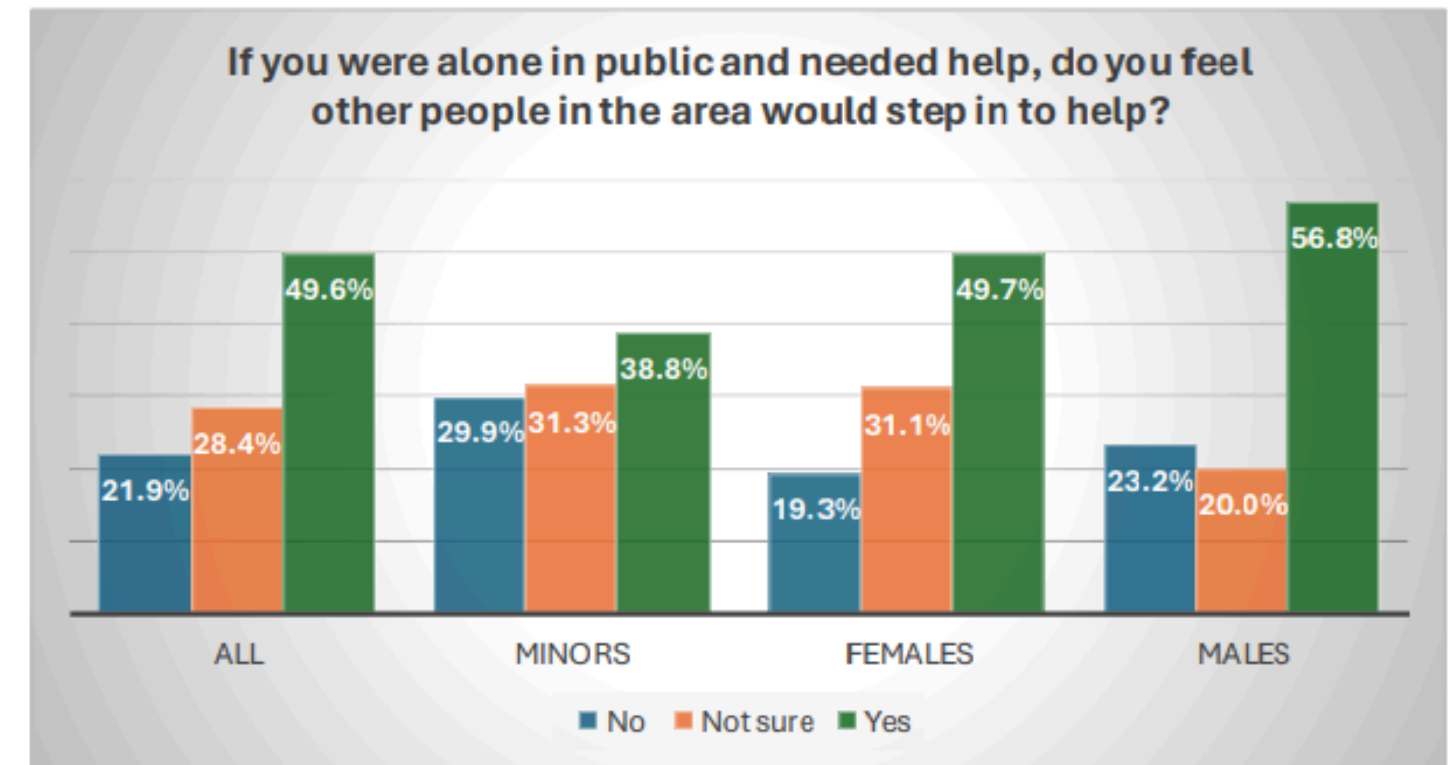


Confidence in community - part 3



Do we feel supported & protected by the community at large?

- Minors are less confident they would receive help when compared to the average
- On average respondents had more confidence offering support VS receiving it. This could reflect individual perception (I'm the type of person to act) vs individual action (I have acted or seen others act)
- Men less confident overall offering or receiving help in public, possibly indicating an awareness of public perception and/or lack of positive support systems
- Women and minors indicated higher levels of uncertainty about whether bystanders would step in if they needed help





Awareness of existing resources

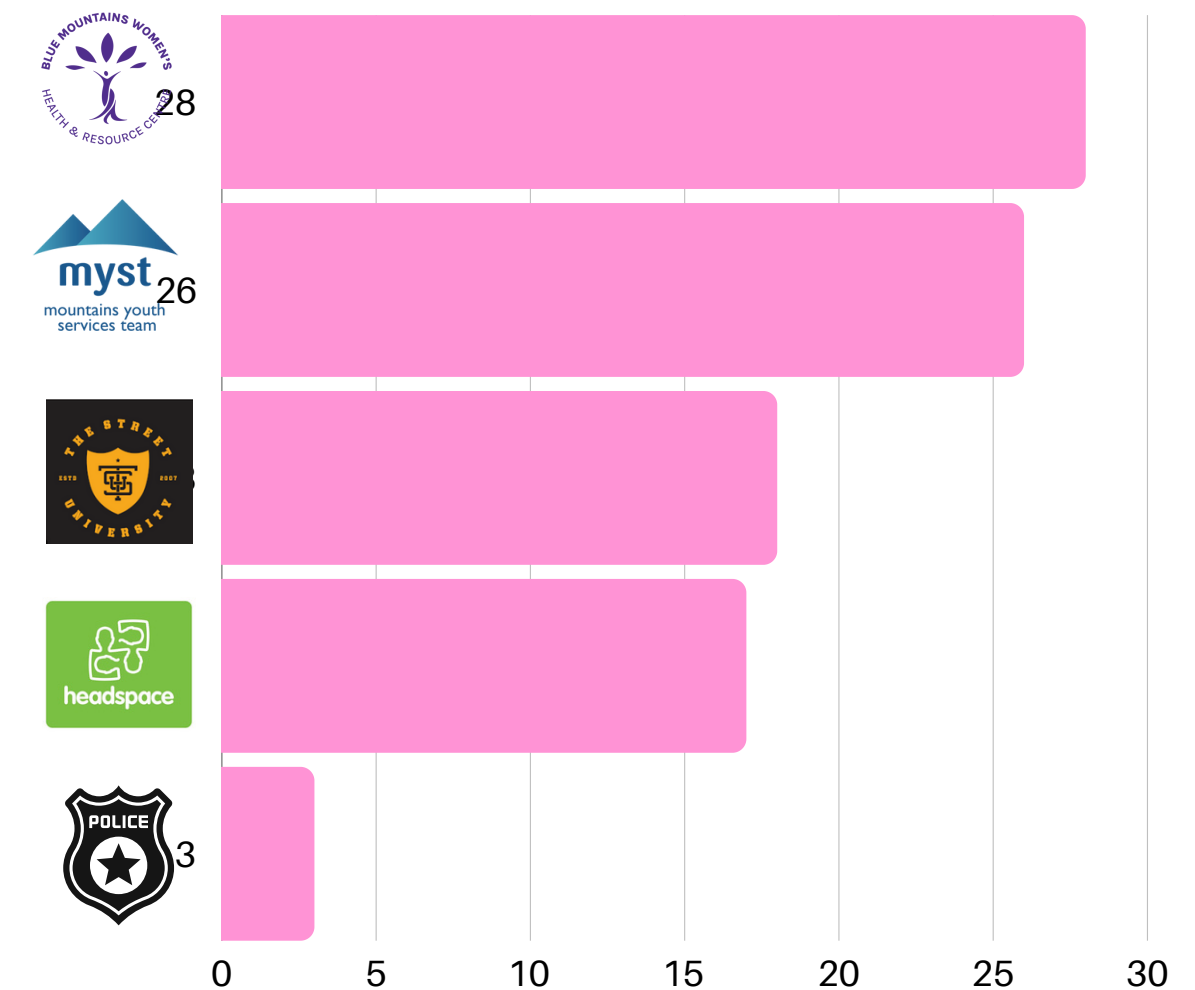
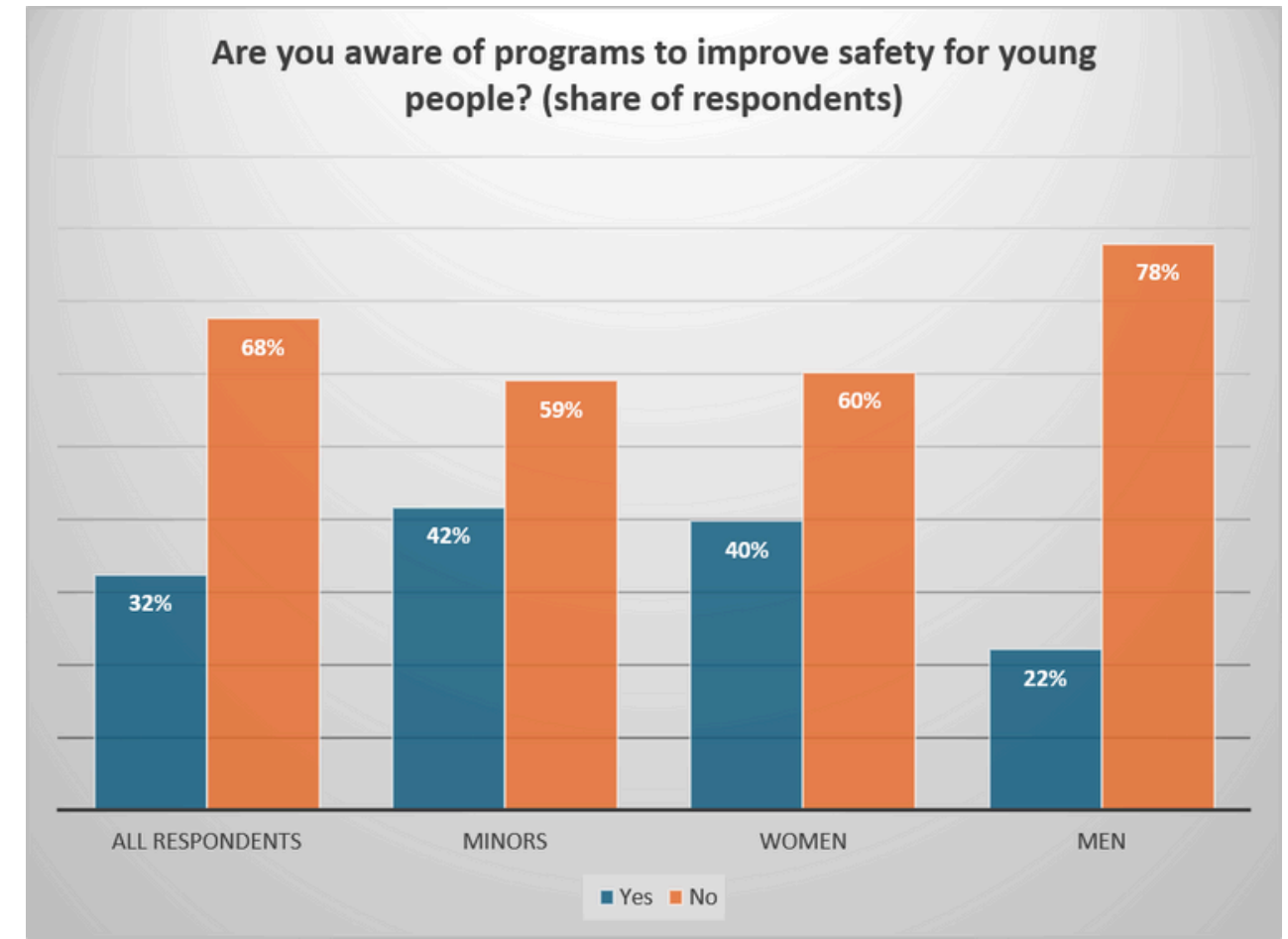
“Q 18. Are you aware of any community programs or initiatives aimed at improving safety for young people in your area?”

- **68% of all** survey respondents **were not aware** of any existing safety resources for young people
- **Men of all ages were the group least aware** of existing safety resources with only 22% selecting ‘yes’
- Awareness of community resources was **greater amongst minors and women**, when compared to men (possibly reflecting an imbalance in carer responsibility?)

Qualitative data collected from ‘yes’ responders:

- The programs mentioned were almost exclusively local youth **services primarily in the upper mountains/Katoomba area**
- EViE and Women’s Health Centre mentioned 28 times combined despite being the same org and *not a mixed gender ‘youth specific’ service*
- MYST mentioned 26 times
- STREET UNI mentioned 18 times
- HEADSPACE mentioned 17 times
- POLICE mentioned 3 times

Respondents could tick YES or NO with option to type response.





Top safety concerns-



“Q 20. In your opinion, what is the top safety concern you think needs to be addressed in your community?”

“Probably harassment. But maybe that’s just because that’s the one I’m most familiar with. *But not a full week can go by without encountering at least 1 creepy man.* Actually, it’s always a lot more than that ... I think it’s really sad to have to worry about this as a teenage girl. But I truly don’t feel safe with any men in public anywhere, and I know it’s the same for most girls my age. It’s not even like we are just being paranoid - our reactions to men in public are solely based on our own real experiences.”

- Respondent age-16-18, identifying as female, Katoomba

“Probably violence, especially amongst under 25’s young men. There’s a lot of toxic masculinity which is developing into violence, and it’s becoming more of an issue with the rise of Andrew Tate. I know multiple people who have been victims of violence perpetrated by cis-men. These perpetrators are fiercely defended by “their boys” *I don’t see enough men holding other men accountable.*” -

Respondent age-18-25, identifying as female, Springwood

Open-ended responses (coded, to identify themes)



Some notes about this coding from Altin:

- Harassment (all) includes sexual harassment
- Sexual Harassment includes catcalling
- Violence includes Domestic Violence (not a common response by itself, interestingly...)
- Women’s safety only includes responses which explicitly mention this as a general issue. Many other responses (esp. sexual harassment/assault) are obviously implicitly flagging women’s safety as an issue.



Top safety concerns - qualitative data

Question 20. In your opinion, what is the top safety concern you think needs to be addressed in your community?

"The stereotype on teens " - **Respondent age 16-18, identifying as female**

"The fact that older men in cars or vehicles cat call people in school uniform and the people around them don't flinch.." - **Respondent age 18-25, identifying as female**

"Outside carrington" - **Respondent age 12-15, identifying as male**

"I think the top safety concern is harassment towards women and no resources for youth " - **Respondent age 25+, identifying as female**

"The prevalence of misogynistic language and attitudes in our community seem to be getting worse and not better. Many of my female and femme-presenting friends describe incredibly uncomfortable and unsafe experiences in every aspect of society from the street, to public transport to during shifts at their work." - **Respondent age 12-15, identifying as 'still figuring out'**

"Lack of listening to young people and racism by police officers (not all)" - **Respondent age 18-25, identifying as female**

"catcalling or the need to feel safe wherever you go. locally, I'd love to feel safe on my own street but unfortunately can't due to the distrust in older people. I feel people need to respect each other and know that if they're catcalling or making someone unsafe there should be something done about it " - **Respondent age-16-18, identifying as female**

Much of the qualitative data collected in response to Question 20. indicates that young people are feeling misrepresented, mistreated and/or unimportant when out in the community. This could be contributing to the distrust of others, anti-social behaviour and low confidence seeking/offering help we see throughout the data collected.



Who is already doing great work creating safer public spaces for women and girls?

UN Women's global initiative, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls

UN Women's global initiative, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls, has worked with leading women's organizations, local and national governments, UN agencies, and other partners to develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive approaches to prevent and respond to sexual harassment against women and girls in public spaces in different settings.

Safe City partners commit to:

1. Identify gender-responsive locally relevant and owned interventions. Conducting a scoping study is essential as it provides specific data to ensure a deep understanding of local forms of SVAWG in public spaces. Multiple stakeholders reflect on the findings to develop programmes with a specific set of results based on the local context and ensuring joint accountability.
2. Develop and effectively implement comprehensive laws and policies to prevent and respond to sexual violence in public spaces. Through capacity building, awareness raising, community mobilization and other strategies, authorities, women's grassroots and community partners are equipped to advocate, develop, and monitor the effective implementation of laws and policies, and to make sure that accompanying resources are in place to support this action.
3. Investments in the safety and economic viability of public spaces. A gender approach to urban planning ensures that the needs of women and men are taken into account across all municipal departments' planning. This includes public infrastructure (investments in safe potable water, improved sanitation, lighting, creation of market stalls, provision of training on financial literacy) and economic development, focusing on opportunities for women's empowerment.
4. Change social norms in order to promote women's and girls' rights to enjoy public spaces free from violence. Girls, boys and other influential champions are engaged in transformative activities in schools and other settings to promote respectful gender relationships, gender equality, and safety in public spaces. UN Women is a strong technical partner in city led programmes. At global level, a package of guidance notes and other tools are available which can be adapted to context. In collaboration with partners across cities, UN Women facilitates a Global Community of Practice for the FPI. It also convenes a biennial Global Leaders' Forum to promote exchanges and advance knowledge on trends, and practices in safe city and safe public space initiatives with women and girls.



“Across the world, women and girls fear and experience various types of sexual violence in public spaces, from unwelcome sexual remarks and touching to rape and femicide. It happens on streets, in and around schools, public transportation, workplaces, parks, public toilets and other spaces in urban, rural, online, and conflict/post conflict settings. Women's and girls' experience of sexual harassment was further exacerbated during the global pandemic. This reality reduces women's and girls' freedom of movement. It reduces their ability to participate in school, work and public life. It limits their access to essential services and their enjoyment of cultural and recreational activities, and negatively impacts their health and well-being.”



<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces>



Who is already doing great work creating safer public spaces for women and girls?- continued

Transport NSW 'Safer Cities Program' -

The program is engaging with women, girls and gender diverse people to understand their perspectives and co-design place-based approaches to improve perceptions of safety when walking to, through and within public spaces including our streets.

The program has three aims, which are aligned with the United Nations Safer Cities for Girls program:

- 1. Increasing women and girls' safety and access to public spaces
- 2. Enabling women and girls' to move freely and alone in their community
- 3. Increasing women and girls' engagement with how the spaces around them are designed and managed.

Transport for NSW is working collaboratively with delivery partners within the NSW Government and with 10 local Councils across NSW to trial interventions that will deliver the objectives of the program.



<https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/industry/cities-and-active-transport/cities-revitalisation-and-place/festival-of-place-0>





Who is already doing great work creating safer public spaces for women and girls?- continued

NSW Safer Cities Survey

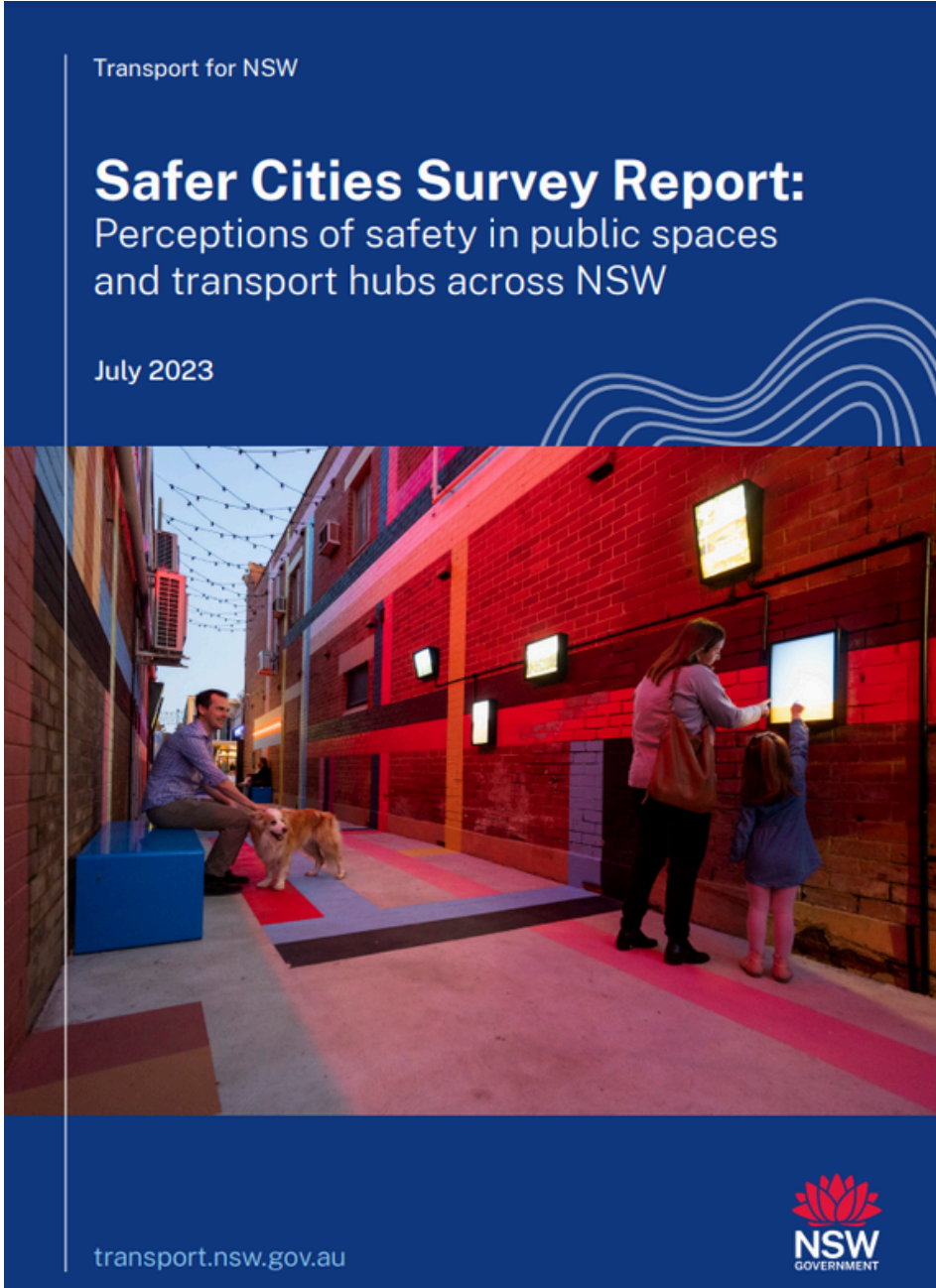
Perceptions of safety for people across NSW

The NSW Safer Cities Survey ran from December 2022 to February 2023. The purpose of the survey was to gather data and evidence around perceptions of safety for people across NSW when going about their day-to-day travel in public spaces.

- 42% of women feel unsafe in public spaces at night, compared to 17% of men.
- 59% of women feel 'not so safe' or 'not at all safe' at night, compared to 31% of men.
- 92% of women say feeling safe changes the routes they choose.
- Most people would walk more (74%), use public transport more (67%), and go out more during the day (64%) and at night (51%) if they felt safer.
- Some groups feel less safe in public spaces: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, LGBTIQ+ women, people with disabilities, young women, and women over 75.
- 68% of women in regional NSW feel unsafe in public spaces at night, compared to 57% in cities.



<https://www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/safer-cities/news-feed>





Who is already doing great work creating safer public spaces for women and girls? - continued

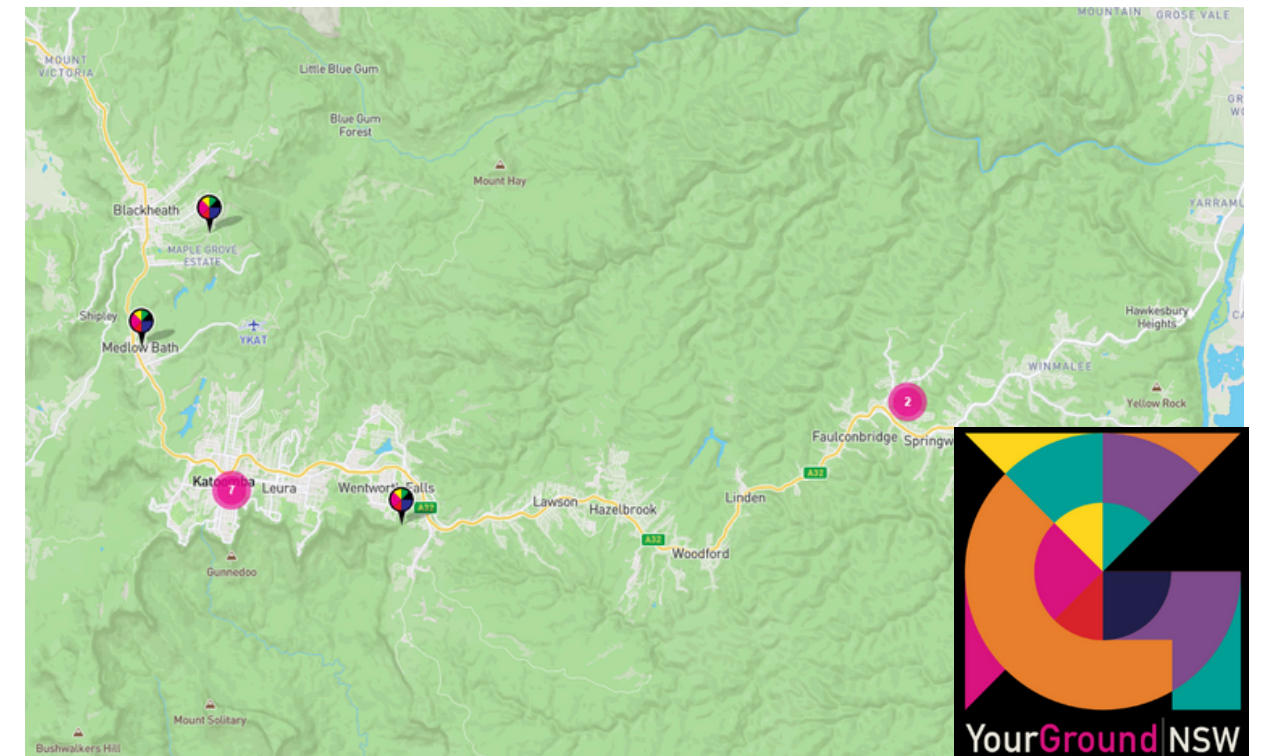
YourGround NSW

- YourGround is a crowdmapping website that enables women and gender diverse people to identify and share places that make them feel uneasy, scared, unwelcome; or happy, safe and included.
- YourGround is a collaboration between Monash University XYX Lab and CrowdSpot. This project has been funded by Transport for NSW through the Safer Cities program, in partnership with the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner and the NSW Department of Communities & Justice.
- **Blue Mountains LGA's and identified 'hotspots' mentioned in the EVIE survey match sites found on YourGround map**
- The previous YourGround project from 2021 in Victoria received more than 6,000 submissions identifying key safe and unsafe locations across the state.



<https://www.yourground.org/>

“With this project, we hope to empower women and gender diverse people to call out safe and unsafe experiences and geographically identify spaces where they have good as well as concerning experiences. The map unearths real stories of women and gender diverse people and makes them visible to advocate for change.”

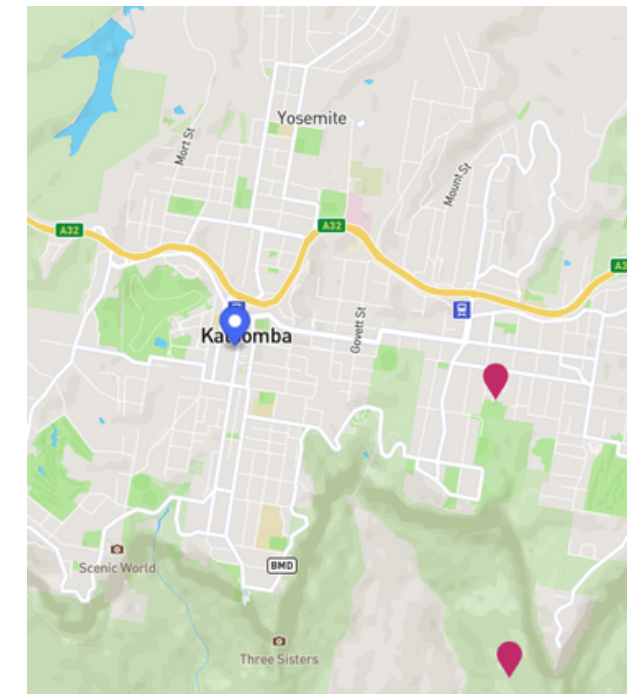




Who is already doing great work creating safer public spaces for women and girls? - continued

She's a Crowd

- She's A Crowd has crowdsourced the biggest location-based set of gender-based violence data in the world to provide insights and mapping tools on survivors' experiences.
- The organisation provides a safe and anonymous crowdsourcing platform where survivors from anywhere in the world can share their stories of sexual assault, street harassment, domestic violence and other gendered incidents of violence.
- **Blue Mountains LGA's and identified 'hotspots' mentioned in the EVIE survey match sites found on She's a Crowd map**
- Having built a database of approximately 120,000 stories of gender-based violence from around the world to date, She's A Crowd has been focusing on getting the survivor storytelling side of the platform 'right' before exploring scaling their business further.



<https://shesacrowd.com/about-us/>



The EViE Youth Activists list of recommendations & follow up actions:

- 1 ----- **Local council & relevant stakeholders actively commit to a program that improves the safety of women and girls in public spaces.**
- 2 ----- **Develop co-designed free public meeting spaces for young people with a target to create spaces specifically for young women, girls and queer people that will be accessible outside of business/school hours.**
- 3 ----- **Investigate police interactions with young people to address concerns around trust & over-policing/bias.**
- 4 ----- **Improve safety on Blue Mountains public transport by addressing problematic behaviour from both users & workers, ensure vulnerable groups most impacted are closely consulted.**
- 5 ----- **Commit to providing well-lit and safe passageways for pedestrians, with a particular focus on the experience of women & girls targeting the identified 'hotspots' like bus stops, train stations, and parks.**
- 6 ----- **Launch a campaign addressing antisocial behaviour, particularly sexual harassment and discrimination in public, provide educational resources about being an 'active bystander', including safe space indicators & community-wide participation.**

Special mentions:

Thank you to everyone who supported and contributed to this important project.

If you have any enquiries please email them to evie@bmwhrc.org

With special thanks to:

- The wonderful community of The Blue Mountains
- The Blue Mountains Women's Health & Resource Centre who created & resource the EVIE Project
- Blue Mountains City Council and the Community Assistance Program
- Altin Gavranovic, Clare Egan & Sophie Davies from BMCC
- Emily Cooper from Hands, Heart & Feet
- Katoomba High School & their student leadership team
- CAVA (coalition against violence & abuse)

All the 2024 EViE Youth Advisory members and activists:

- Isla Burton
- Miette Hoekstra
- Katya Zheluk
- Scarlett Donovan
- Zoe Keep
- Lily Keep
- Tessa McKay
- Odette Kepferer
- Lili Cornish
- Ruby Cornish
- Olivia Andersen

