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REPORT,  
WORK STREAM IV  
Part I

# The girls' perspectives

*- A presentation of the results from a questionnaire answered  
by girls who have used violence*



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**Table of content**

- 2. The background of the girls and young women ..... 3
- 2.1 Victims of violence ..... 5
  - 2.1.1 *The family* ..... 5
  - 2.1.2 *Relationship/from a partner* ..... 6
  - 2.1.3 *Friends and familiar peers* ..... 7
  - 2.1.4 *Random/Blind Violence* ..... 9
  - 2.1.5 *Sexual Violence* ..... 9
- 2.2 Where do girls and young women experience violence and in which form ..... 10
  - 2.2.1 *Family* ..... 11
  - 2.2.2 *Amongst Friends* ..... 12
  - 2.2.3 *In the Community and Neighborhood* ..... 12
  - 2.2.4 *In School* ..... 13
- 3. The own share of Violence - the girls themselves as offenders ..... 14
  - 3.1 Violence Use in the Context of a Group/Gang or Relationship ..... 17
  - 3.2 Description of the Victims ..... 17
- 4. Reasons for girls and young women to use violence ..... 18
- 5. How do the girls and young women perceive their use of violence themselves ..... 21
- 6. Support ..... 23
  - 6.1 Which support measures on the girls and young women were effective in decreasing their violent behavior? ..... 23
  - 6.2 What was your personal “turning point” to abandon using violence? ..... 27
- 7. Self-esteem of the girls and young women ..... 29
  - 7.1 Self-reflection on the own use of violence ..... 29
  - 7.2 Outlook into future ..... 33
- 8. Summary ..... 34
- 9. References ..... 35

## **1. Introduction and the methods of the questionnaire**

This report elaborates on the results from the questionnaire made as a part of the EU co-funded project “Girls Using Violence – Intervention and Prevention”. It is a contribution to the last part of the project, work stream 4. The main focus of the work stream is to get the girls own perspectives on their violence and effective measures. We provided a written questionnaire and distributed it to all of the participating countries. The main objective of the questionnaire was to listen to the girls’ own stories; to understand their point of view and get data in order to analyse potential international conceptual patterns in terms of girls and violence. Who are these girls, why do they use violence and what are good measures when working with girls and violence? Thus, in the questionnaire we tried to cover as many aspects of the underlying and precipitating causes, as well as the consequences, of the girls use of violence (see Appendix I). The issue of psychological abuse or violence was not addressed in the questionnaire. Furthermore, the questions were not site specific, but focused on more general aspects of being a girl who uses violence, trying to find commonalities across the seven countries involved.

The questionnaire was completed by 67 girls and young women from all partner countries (Germany, Poland, Norway, England, Wales, Sweden and Spain). All of the participants were given the same questionnaire, so the results show an average from all participants in all the seven countries. This allows a general view on the perception, backgrounds and type of violence exercised by girls and young women. The young women were chosen on the basis of criteria listed below. The questionnaire as a whole was subdivided into logical blocks and consisted of 71 items in total. Participation was voluntary and the young women had the possibility of omitting questions. Thus, not all of the questions were answered by all 67 survey participants. The questionnaire consisted of fixed response alternatives, which obviously potentially can have its shortcomings. There was however a range of response alternatives to every question, based on existing theories on the topic, as well as experience based on focus groups and other direct work with girls with experience with violence.

None of the girls filled out the questionnaire by themselves; all of the girls had a practitioner/key person sitting beside them talking them through the questionnaire. An important issue for the staff involved was to avoid retraumatizing the girls, seeing that many of the questions were both very sensitive and personal. Therefore, in addition to the questionnaire being voluntary, a criteria for the girls to participate was that they were at a psychologically stable place at the time. The staff had to get familiar with the questions before they conducted the questionnaire, and the staff was given instructions on how to lead the girls through the questionnaire (Appendix 2). The questionnaire was handled anonymously so tracking of statements made is not possible and the anonymity of the girls and young women is assured.

## **2. The background of the girls and young women**

The girls and women taking part were between 15 and 23 years old, the greater number of them being 16 or 17 (46,16%).

Most of the girls still attended school, a small percentage went to university, others were employed part - or fulltime and some did none of the listed options.

A majority of the girls and women questioned said that they lived in in custody (41,54%). Seeing that this number is so high, it is reasonable to suspect that the girls involved somehow misinterpreted this response alternative. Some stated that they lived at their parents home, some alone. One quarter of the interviewees had foster families or lived in institutions (Fig. 1).

61,54% had already stayed at an institution run by local authorities or the social services (Fig. 2)

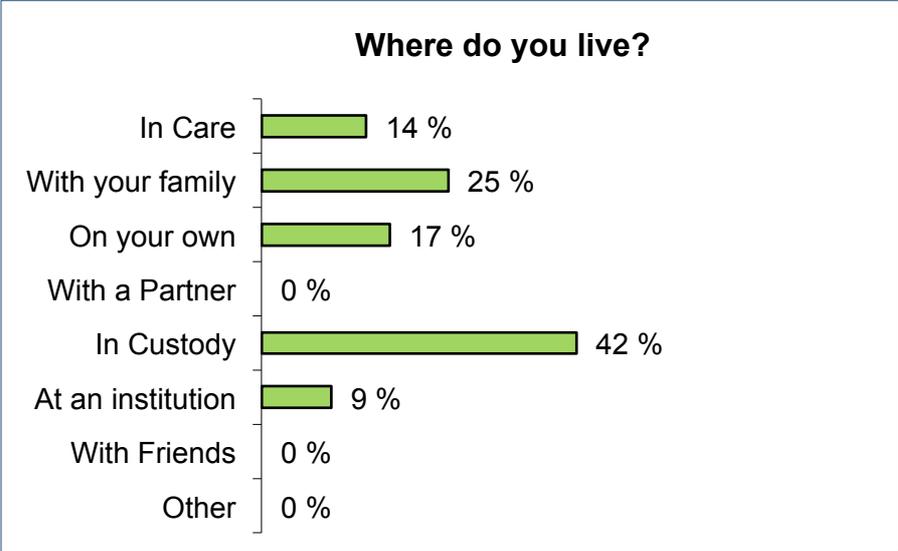


Fig 1: Form of residence

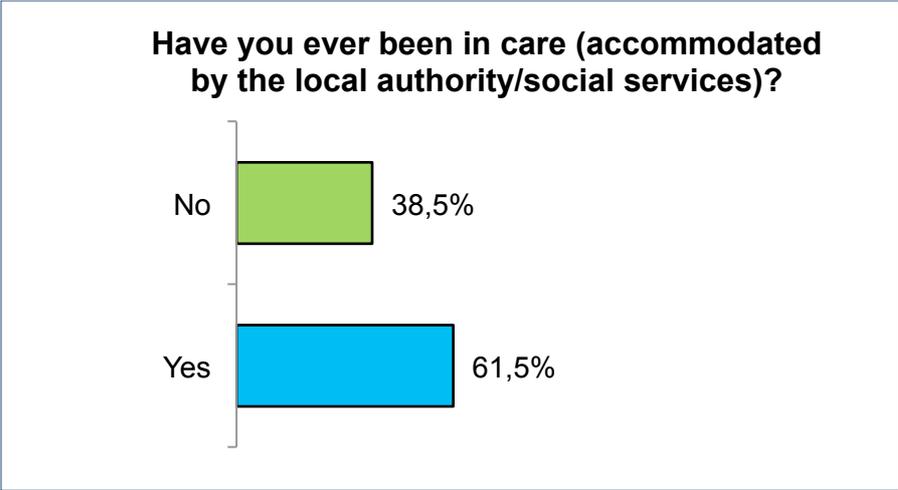


Fig. 2: Placement in social institutions

As this overview shows, a majority of girls and young women have been in contact with the social service and many of them where currently living in some kind of care at the time of the survey (especially the under aged girls).

## 2.1 Victims of violence

The next topic addressed the girls and young women's experiences of being victims of violence. The questionnaire was split into blocks pursuing: the issues of *violence within the family*, *violence in a relationship*, *violence amongst peers* and *random/blind violence*. In all of these parts the following questions were asked about the violence:

- Had it occurred more than once?
- How often did it happen?
- Who exerted the violence?
- Was the incident reported?
- Was the person exerting violence convicted?
- Did the girl/young woman go to the hospital for the injuries she suffered from the violence?
- Did she get help?
- When did the violence stop, and how?

### 2.1.1 The family

53,23% of the girls who answered the questions had been victims of violence by family members, nearly all of them (91,43%) several or many times.

Most of the girls answered that their parents were the perpetrators of the violence (81,91%) whereby fathers had the greater part with 45,45%. Furthermore, stepfathers clearly acted violent more often (15,15%) than stepmothers (3,03%).

Most of these incidents were not reported (73,53%). In the cases where it was reported, the offenders were mostly not convicted (only 9,68% of the incidents).

More than half of the girls and young women who stated that they had been victims of domestic violence didn't go to hospital afterwards; about a third of them (29,42%) had received hospital treatment, whereas 5,88% said they only were treated once.

50% of those questioned had not received any help after these incidents. 17,65% received help from a social worker, 11,76% by the Child Welfare Agency and 5,88% from a teacher or a police officer. 23,53% were not able to specify their answer since there weren't any applicable response alternatives in the questionnaire.

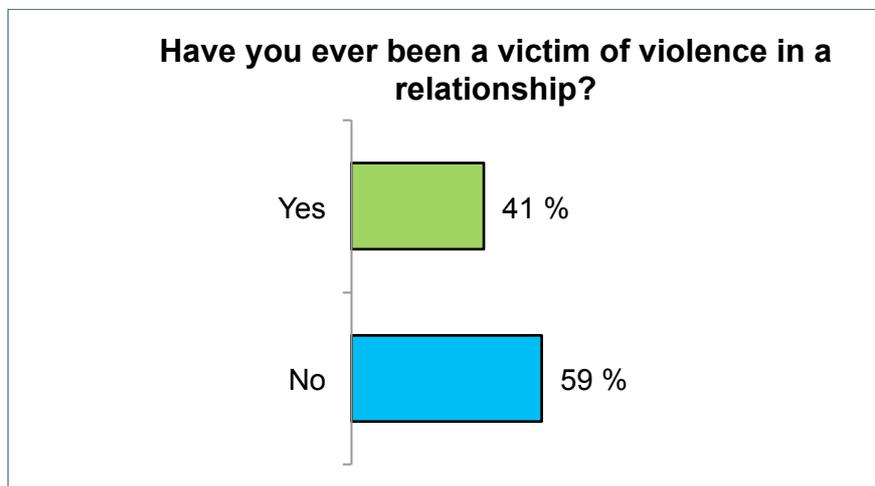
The girls and young women were asked whether there was a "turning point" that decreased or ended the domestic violence. Responses suggest that this often was achieved through an intervention by the Child Welfare Agency or participation in a family assistance program. Other possibilities were leaving home or the offender being punished criminally. 11,76% of the interviewees didn't experience any improvement and 14,71% could not decide on whether things had turned to the better. On the whole, the situation of domestic violence had been altered to the better in 73,53% of the cases.

### 2.1.2 Relationship/from a partner

61 of the 67 girls and young women answered this block of questions.

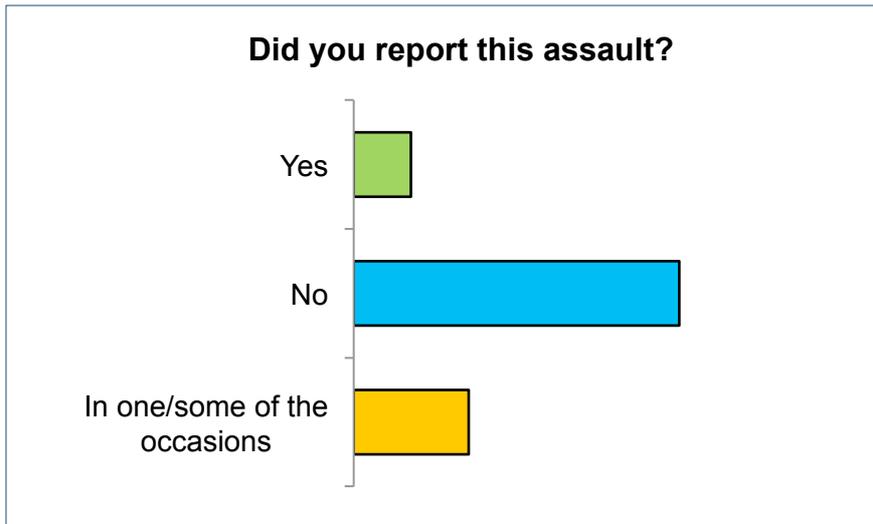
40,98% of the girls and young women who participated in the survey reported to have experienced physical violence from their partners. Thus a considerably high percentage of the girls had been exposed to violence in their relationships. This confirms the assumption from the literature, which argues that girls using violence often lives in partnerships where they are victims to violence. Nonetheless we found that 59,02% didn't have this experience and skipped the following related questions.

Most of the girls who were victims of violence in their partnership (88%) stated that this happened on a few or many occasions. Only 12% had experienced this just on a single incident (Fig. 3).



*Fig. 3 Violence in a relationship*

This form of abuse was seldom reported (11,54%). Most of the girls and young women didn't report their partner to the police at all (65,38%) or did this only once (23,08%) (Fig. 4). In the cases where the partner was reported to the police he or she was not usually not convicted, only in 19,23% of these cases the culprit was prosecuted.



*Fig. 4 Did you report this assault?*

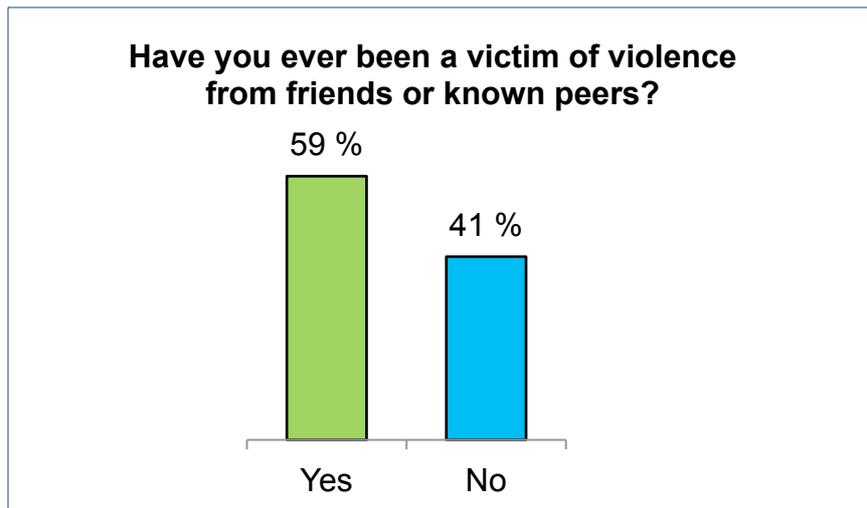
After these assaults 33,77% of the girls needed medical attention, 15,38% once or a few times. 53,85% of the girls stated that they didn't seek medical treatment in hospital. About half of the girls and young women reported not to have been offered any help after being abused by their partner. 12% of the survey participants received help from the police and 12% received support from a social worker. 28% stated that they did not receive help from any of these.

29,13% of the young women who often suffered from violence from their partner said that breaking up with their partner was the critical event that ended or decreased the assaults. In these cases, being victim to violence was the momentum that triggered them to leave their partner.

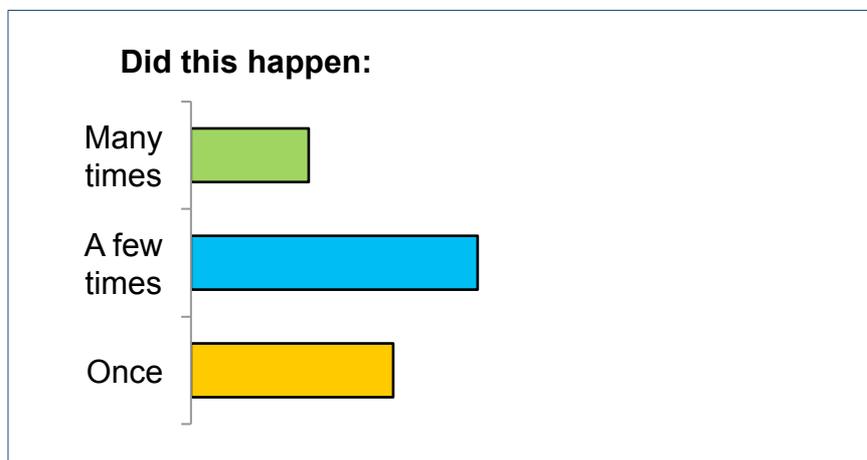
29,09% of the girls never saw an improvement in their situation, whereas 26,09% of the young women received help in some form that did not fit in with any of the answers of the survey. Some of the girls were assaulted only once.

### **2.1.3 Friends and familiar peers**

61 of the 67 girls and young women answered the question about whether they had been attacked by friends or peers, which almost 60% of them had (Fig. 5).



*Fig. 5 Victim of Violence from Friends or Known Peers*



*Fig. 6 Frequency of violence from friends or known peers*

Our findings seem to confirm the assumption that girls and young women often are victims of violence by people they have a relationship with, being inside the family, in a partnership or from someone in their peer-group.

Peers had assaulted almost a half (47,22%) of the young women several times, up to 20% multiple times and 30% once (Fig. 6).

A majority of the young women didn't report these incidents to the police (80,56%), merely 22% reported the incidents one or several times.

The offenders were rarely prosecuted, this happened in only 5,72% of the cases.

22,22% of the victims were taken to hospital after the assaults (8,33% were taken only once). Most of the girls and young women (72,22%) were not treated in hospital. We could not assess whether this was because they didn't require medical attention, or because they chose not to call upon service in spite of their need.

More than 17 of the affected girls and young women (51,43%) reported not to have received any help after the incidents. Some received help from the police (11,43 %), a teacher (5,72%) or a social worker (14,29%).

**2.1.4 Random/Blind Violence**

The girls / young women were asked whether they had suffered “blind” or random violence at some point. 20 of the 61 girls who answered this question reported of such incidents. 10 of them cited only one case; the rest several cases. Only 2 of the 20 reported the incident. The fact that none of the acts were punished might be due to the low number of cases.

Three victims (15,79%) were treated in hospital. In these incidents to 57,89% of the girls and young women reported not to have received help. Support was provided in a few cases by the police, a school nurse or a social worker. 5 girls had help from other sources, which were specified in the questionnaire.

**2.1.5 Sexual Violence**

59 of the 67 girly answered this block of questions.

Twenty-one of the girls and young women reported they had been exposed to sexual violence (Fig. 7).

57,14% of these had been victims of sexual assaults several times, one girl said it had occurred many times and eight girls had experienced this once.

Only 4 of the girls reported this offence, two of them just in one of the incidents. Most of the girls and young women (71,43%) did not report the crime to the police.



*Fig. 7 Victims of sexual violence*

In merely two of the 21 cases the offenders that were reported were actually convicted. Thus, in 19 cases no consequences followed.

One girl had to be taken to hospital after the abuse. After initial medical treatment, more than half of the girls left without any further help offered to them. Three girls got support from a

Child Welfare Agency, one from the police, one from a teacher and three from social workers. Three of the girls didn't find the right answer in the questionnaire, so we assume they might have had help from someone else who where close to them.

20 of the girls and young women answered the question concerning whether and whereby there was a change in the situation. 15% said no change had happened, and another 15% stated that change came through intervention by the police or a Child Welfare Service (Fig. 8).

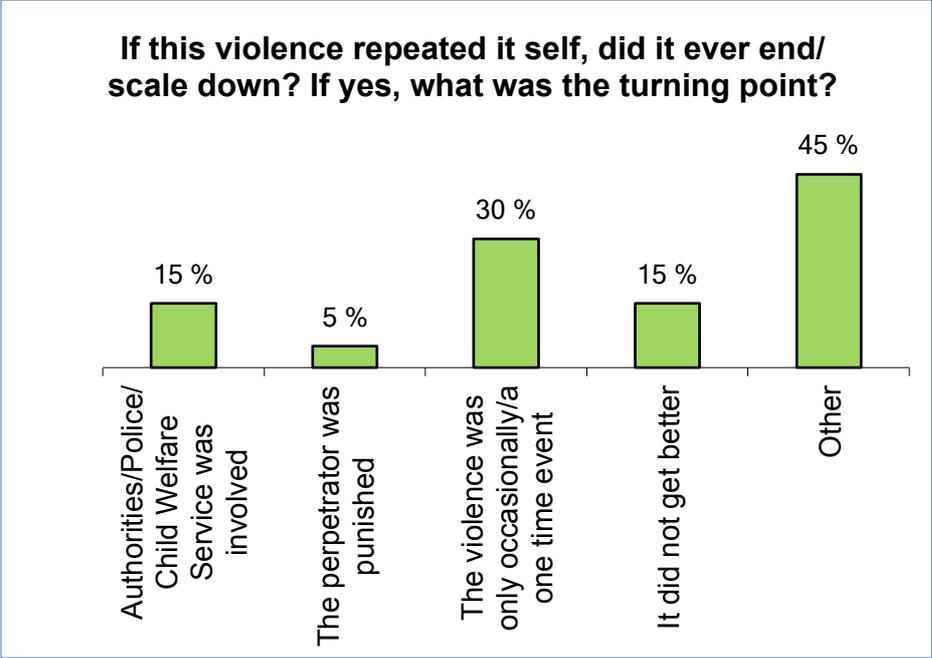


Fig. 8 Turning points that decreased violence

Regarding the topic “victim of violence” as a whole, we can state that most of the participants of our questionnaire have been subjected to violence in some form. This confirms the thesis that girls using violence indeed often are or were victims of violence (see Daphne 2013: Literature research, S. 13ff). Another remarkable discovery is that many of the girls report that they didn't receive any help after being victims of these assaults. We could not assess why this was – whether they did not sough help or whether they did not accept the help offered them. Strikingly, social workers appeared to have been a relatively minor source of support. A general conclusion is none the less difficult to draw; due to the highly diverse ways social welfare systems are structured in the different countries participating.

**2.2 Where do girls and young women experience violence and in which form**

To take a deeper look into the conditions of socialization that formed the questionnaire respondent, the next block of questions investigated their environment and looked for causes of their violent behaviour. The following topics were addressed: family, friends, community, neighbourhood and school. The results are as follows:

## 2.2.1 Family

62 of the 67 girls and young women answered these questions.

The questions referred to situations of conflict, violence and strategies of solution inside the families. The term “family” was expanded to not only involving the closest relatives, like parents and siblings, but also other relatives who might live in the girls’ close surroundings. The questions each presented a statement and gave the girls and young women possible responses (strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree and strongly agree).

The questions were:

- My family members often argue
- My family members often lose control
- I have witnessed domestic violence at home
- The Social Service/other authorities intervened in my family because of family problems
- The Police ever attended my home when tempers got out of hand

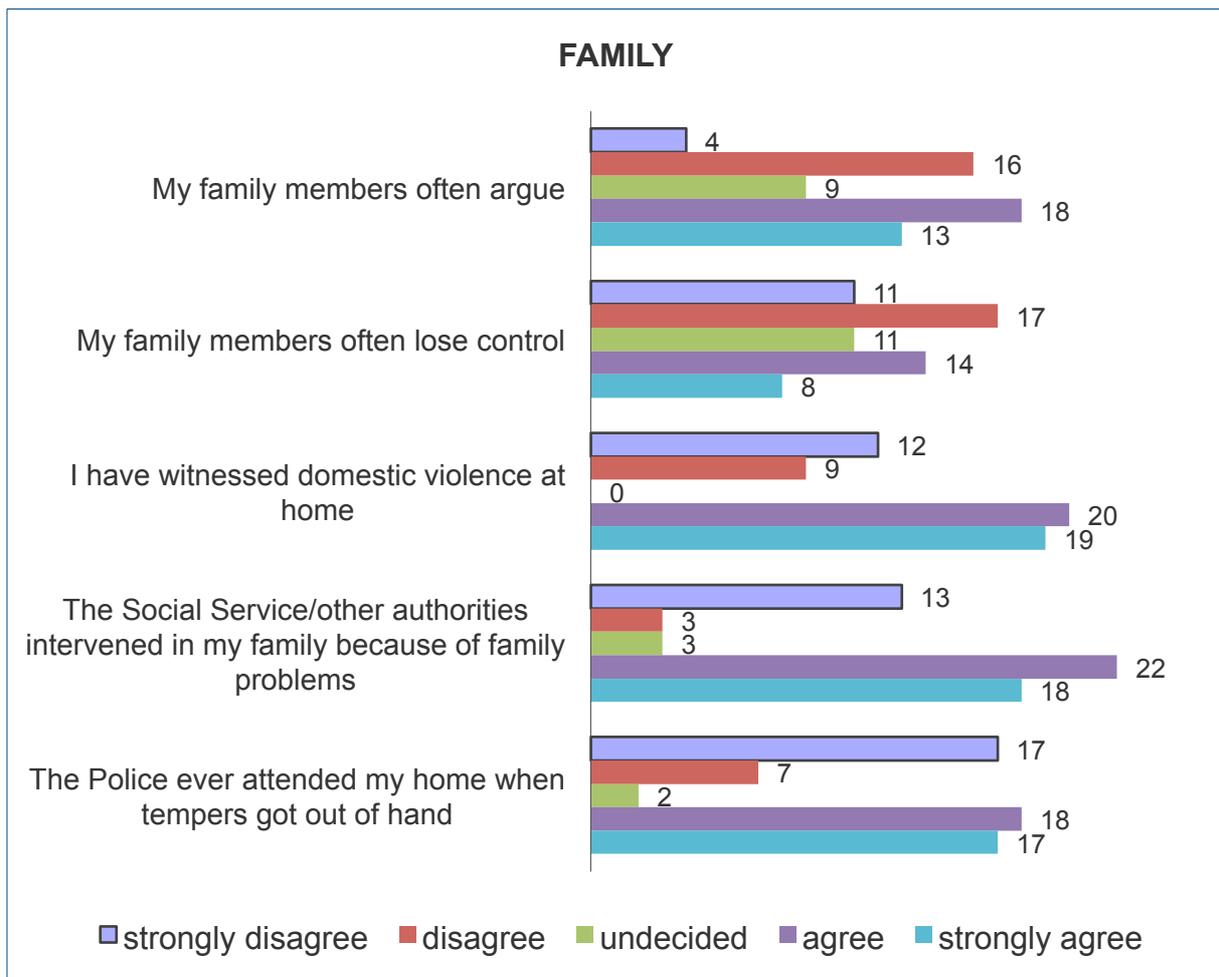


Fig. 9 Family environment

As Fig. 9 clearly indicates more than half of 62 girls and young women experienced conflict, quarrel and violence on many occasions, as they had been witnesses of violence and interventions by the police or other institutions. This shows that a great percentage (65% in total) had experienced violence in the family and in 67,8% of the cases community institutions had to step in in order to support the families.

This underlines that the girls and young women questioned had a challenging family background and were/are often confronted with violence.

**2.2.2 Amongst Friends**

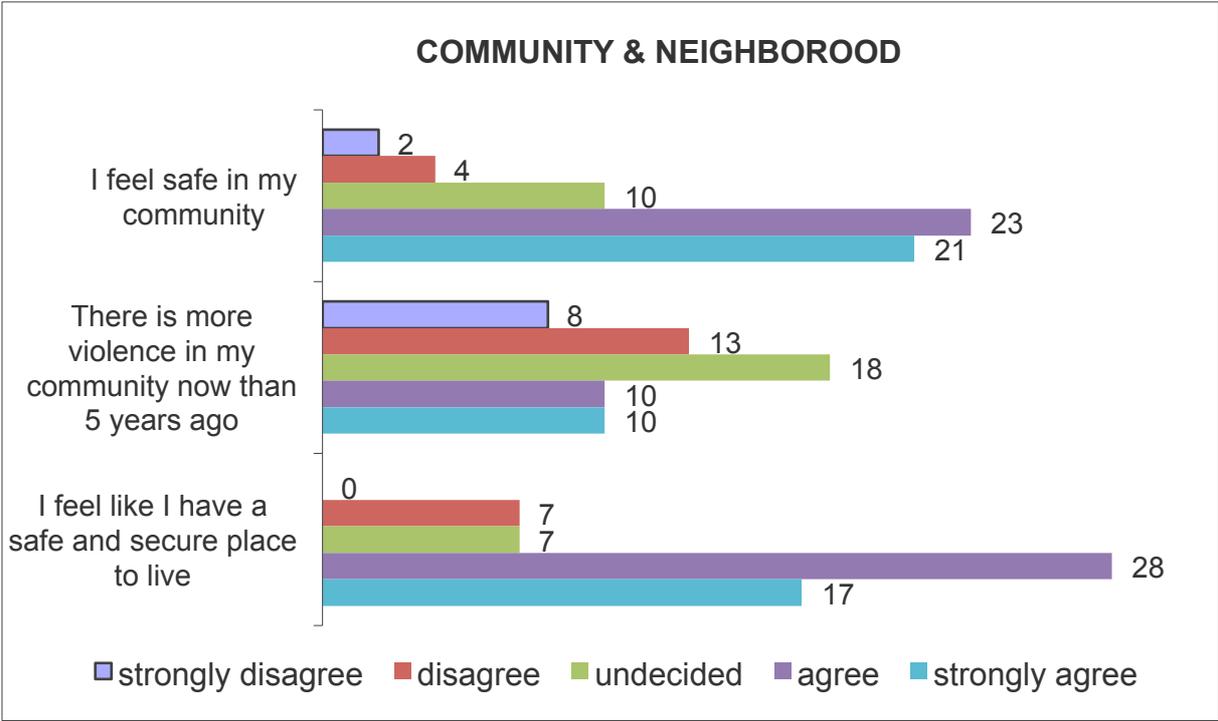
61 of the 67 girls and young women answered this question.

59,01% of the girls stated that their friends acted violently. The remaining 40,99% disagreed or were undecided. 59,02% admitted that their friends broke the law at times, in which form was however not specified.

This finding shows that more than half of the girls and young women grouped with peers who were prone to violent behaviour.

**2.2.3 In the Community and Neighbourhood**

60 of the 67 girls and young women answered this question. The results are shown in Fig. 10.



*Fig. 10 Feeling of security in the community and neighbourhood*

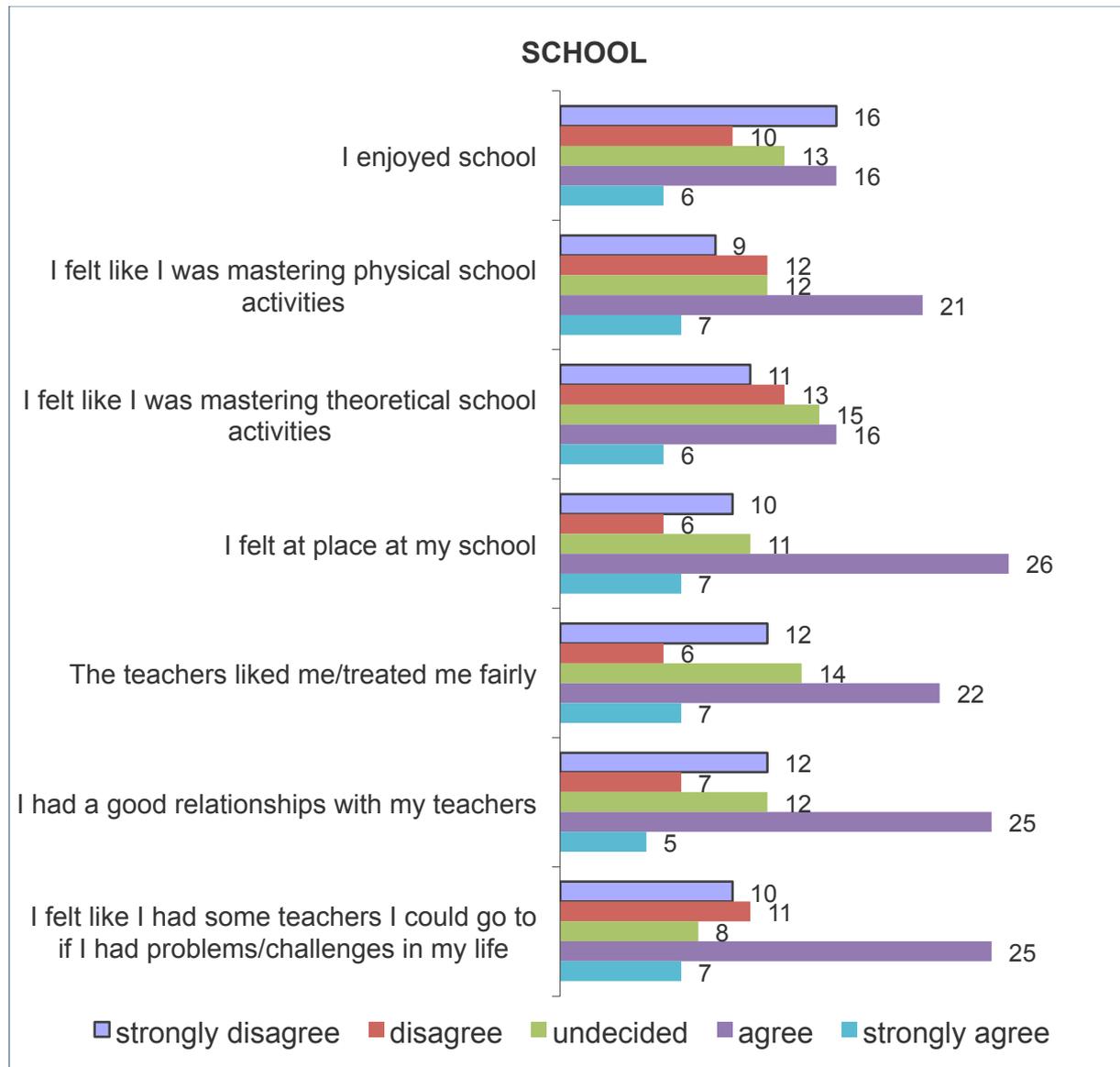
A high percentage of the girls and young women feels safe in their neighbourhood, although 33,9% said that violence had increased in the last 5 years.

## 2.2.4 In School

61 of the 67 girls and young women answered these questions.

This question refers to contents of lessons in school, the school community and the relationship to the teaching staff.

Following Figure (Fig. 11) illustrates the answers:



*Fig. 11 conditions of socialization in school*

Positively striking was that nearly half of the girls and young women participating felt at place in school, and had the impression that their teachers treated them justly. So half of the girls reported they had a positive relationship with their teachers and the majority of them felt they could approach them with problems of any sort.

Especially school plays a paramount role in adolescence. Girls and young women, who are exposed to an insecure environment, (particularly at home), need reliable relationships in their

lives. It seems like the school and the teaching staff has provided this kind of support to half of the respondent to this questionnaire.

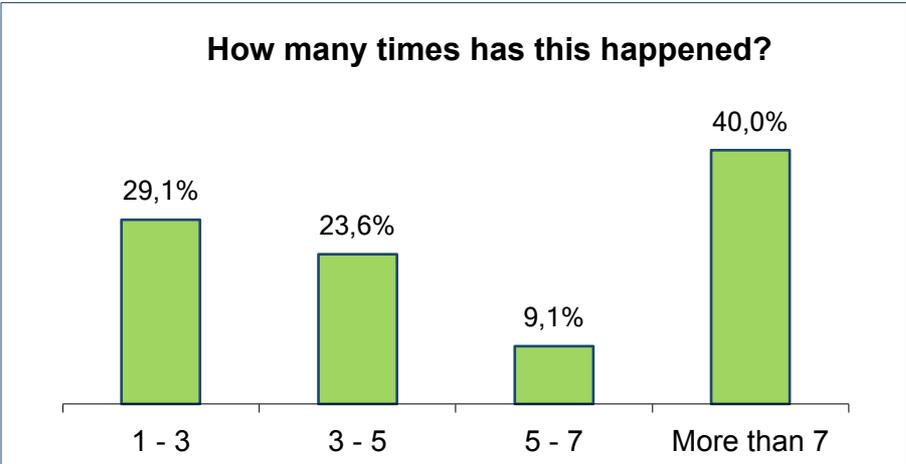
**3. The own understanding of their own violence - the girls as offenders**

To get a holistic view of the survey participants, the respondents were asked a series of questions that dealt with the issue of being an offender. The following questions were asked:

- Have you ever lost control and assaulted anyone?
- How many times has this happened?
- What was the main type of violence you where involved in?
- Have you ever been reported of a violent crime?
- Have you ever been convicted of a violent offence?
- How old were you at the time?
- Was a weapon involved?
- Had you used any drugs / alcohol at the time?

51 of 61 of the girls and young women said they had lost control at some point. 6 girls stated that they had never lost control and 6 didn't answer on this question. Considering the fact that all of the girls and young women taking part in the questionnaire evidently had been using violence, denying the question was somewhat confusing. A possible explanation could be that the girls personally did not feel that they at any time lost control.

40% of the 55 respondents reported to have lost control more than seven times. As showed in Fig. 12 more than half of the girls couldn't control themselves in 1 to 5 cases, and nearly a half in 5 - 7 or more cases. Thus using violence wasn't a one-time incident for most of the girls questioned. For nearly 50% of them, exerting violent behaviour was part of their life history.



*Fig. 12 Frequency of loss of control*

57 of the interviewees answered the questions on the content of their violence (Fig. 13). Supporting previous research on the topic, more than half of the girls (56,14%) reported to have been fighting with other girls (see Daphne 2013: Literature research, S. 9f). As violence performed by girls very often is associated with disagreement about relationships (e.g. about a boyfriend, abuse of confidence between friends) fights that turn violent are mainly amongst girls themselves. A relatively high percentage (42,11%) stated that they fight among friends, which confirms the above-mentioned thesis. Some have stated that much of the violence committed by girls are preformed with others. 35,09% of the participants defines themselves as gang members, and violence in the gangs often follow quite distinct rules. The term “gang” is not specified in further detail, as it often has diverse meanings in different countries.

In Fig. 13, violence in the family or at school is also included. Our data shows that 57 of the 67 girls and young women use violence in different contexts of relationship.

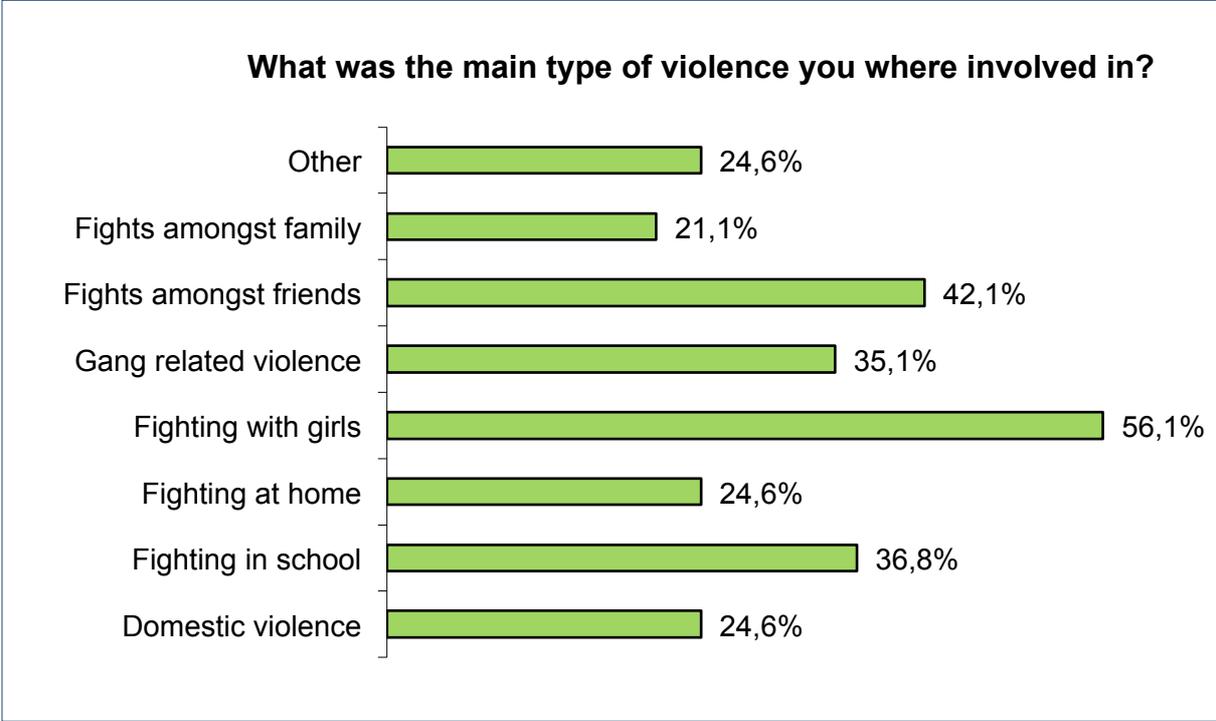


Fig. 13 Types of violence

70,91% of the violent incidents from the 55 girls who answered this question were reported. For 16 girls (29,09%) this was only the case once, for 15 girls (27,27%) the accidents were reported two to four times, 7 of them (12,73%) said that is was reported 4-7 times and merely 2 were reported more than 6 times.

25 of the 57 girls and young women (43,86%) were not convicted for any of their violent offences. 33,33% (19 girls) were convicted once, 19,30% two to four times and 3,5% (2 girls) more than four times.

Most of the girls and young women were sentenced while being 14-17 years old, 33,33% were 10-13. This indicates that these girls are from England and Wales, because juveniles

under 14 years are not convicted in any of the other partner countries. Merely 3,92% was aged 18 or older when being punished.

This shows that highly persistent violence is relatively rare among the girls and young women. Violent acts were not an every day matter and only a small percentage of the participants accounted for a very high tendency to use violence, and convictions because of violent connected offences were relatively scarce.

The high percentage of girls who were prosecuted between 14 and 17 years of age confirms the arguments from the excising literature concerning action-centred violence in this period (Literature research Daphne 2013: S.16).

54 of the 67 girls and young women provided details about their use of weapons. More than half of them (57,41%) didn't use weapons at all, 5,56% used teargas, 27,78% other objects, 25,93% a knife and 1,85% a pistol.

77,19% of the 57 in question admitted to have used drugs in some form before the incidents. Fig. 14 shows which sorts of drugs that were involved:

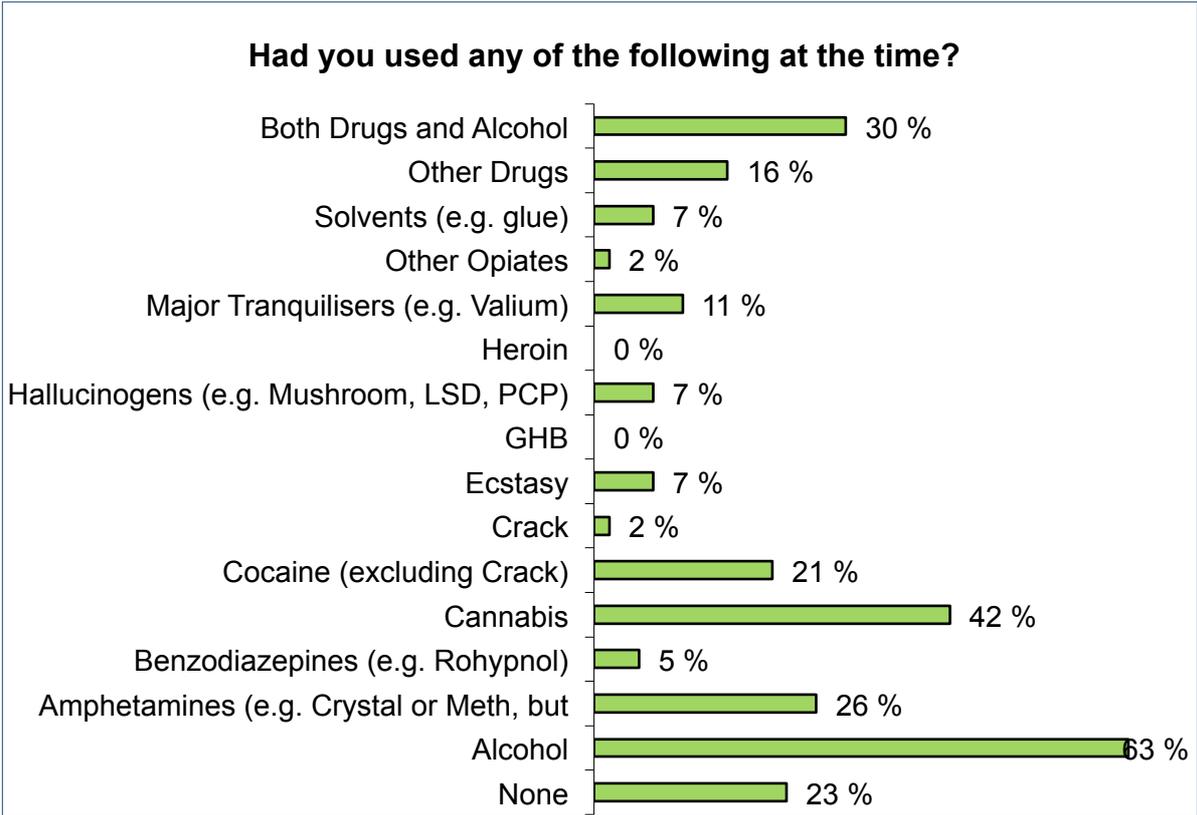


Fig. 14 Involvement of drugs

Alcohol and marihuana, as well as a mixture of alcohol and drugs, seems to be prominent. Nearly three thirds of the girls were under drug-influence of some sort when acting out violence.

### 3.1 Violence Use in the Context of a Group/Gang or Relationship

Surprisingly 54,72% of the girls and young women stated to have been alone during the violent incidents. Admittedly we cannot conclude on whether they truly acted by themselves, or just without help of others in a group. These numbers contradicts the thesis that girls mostly act around in cliques and that most of the violent incidences take place in this context. 35,85% stated to have acted violently together with other girls, 24,53% together with boys and about half of them (45,28%) in gender mixed groups.

Only 13 of the 55 girls referred to themselves as gang-members. Once again we have to point out that the term “gang” preferably should be based on local and national understandings of the term.

### 3.2 Description of the Victims

56 of the 67 girls and young women answered the question about who were the victims.

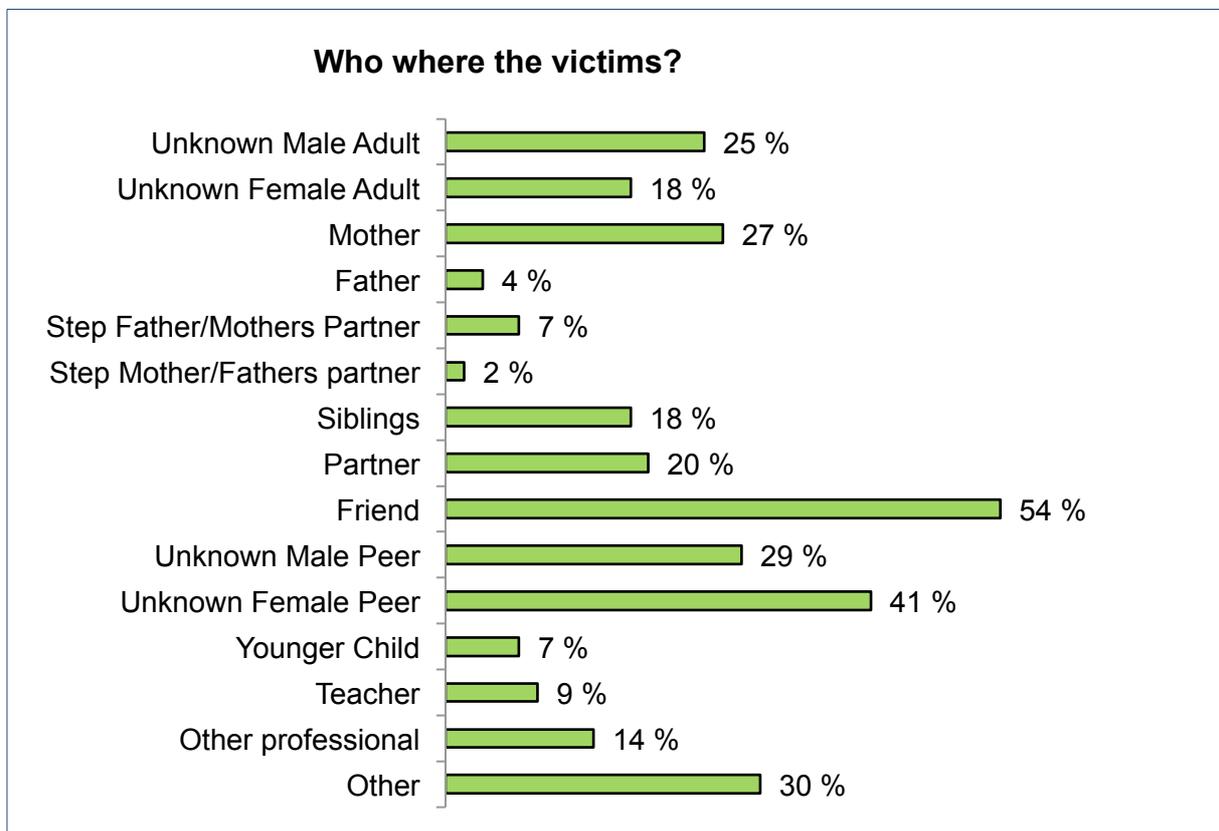


Fig. 15 Who were the victims

Fig. 15 confirms statements in much of the current research: that violence used by girls is mostly connected to issues of relationships. Most of the victims are friends and slightly fewer incidents with unknown female peers, supposedly “rivals” in some form that threaten a relationship. In a quarter of the cases the mother was the victim. This corresponds to the observations of the Instituto de la Familia in Alicante/Spain.

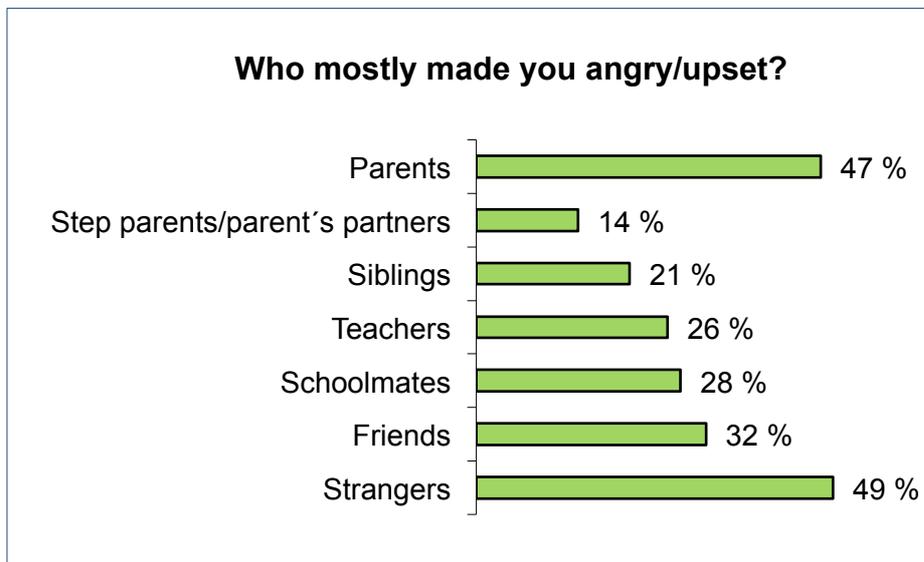
#### 4. Reasons for girls and young women to use violence

To understand why girls start using violence it is crucial to explore the motives and to have a holistic approach to the girls and their situation.

Why do girls turn violent? What lies behind their acts of violence? Who or what triggers the aggression? This is some of the issues that was highlighted in the next part of the questionnaire.

57 of the 67 girls and young women answered to the question concerning in which situation they got annoyed/angry most often. 59,65% stated that it was during leisure times, 54,39% said at home, 38,60% at school and 8,77% at work.

Triggers for feeling upset were for 47,37% the parents, and for 49,12% strangers. Further findings are shown in Fig. 16.



*Fig. 16 Persons who triggered violent incidents*

Reasons for acting violently are shown in Fig. 17. 58 girls answered this question.

Based on the next section, we can see some trends in why the girls used violence:

- defending someone
- to have a bad temper
- to have been annoyed by someone
- to solve conflicts
- somebody threatened them with violence
- to protect friends
- someone talked behind their backs

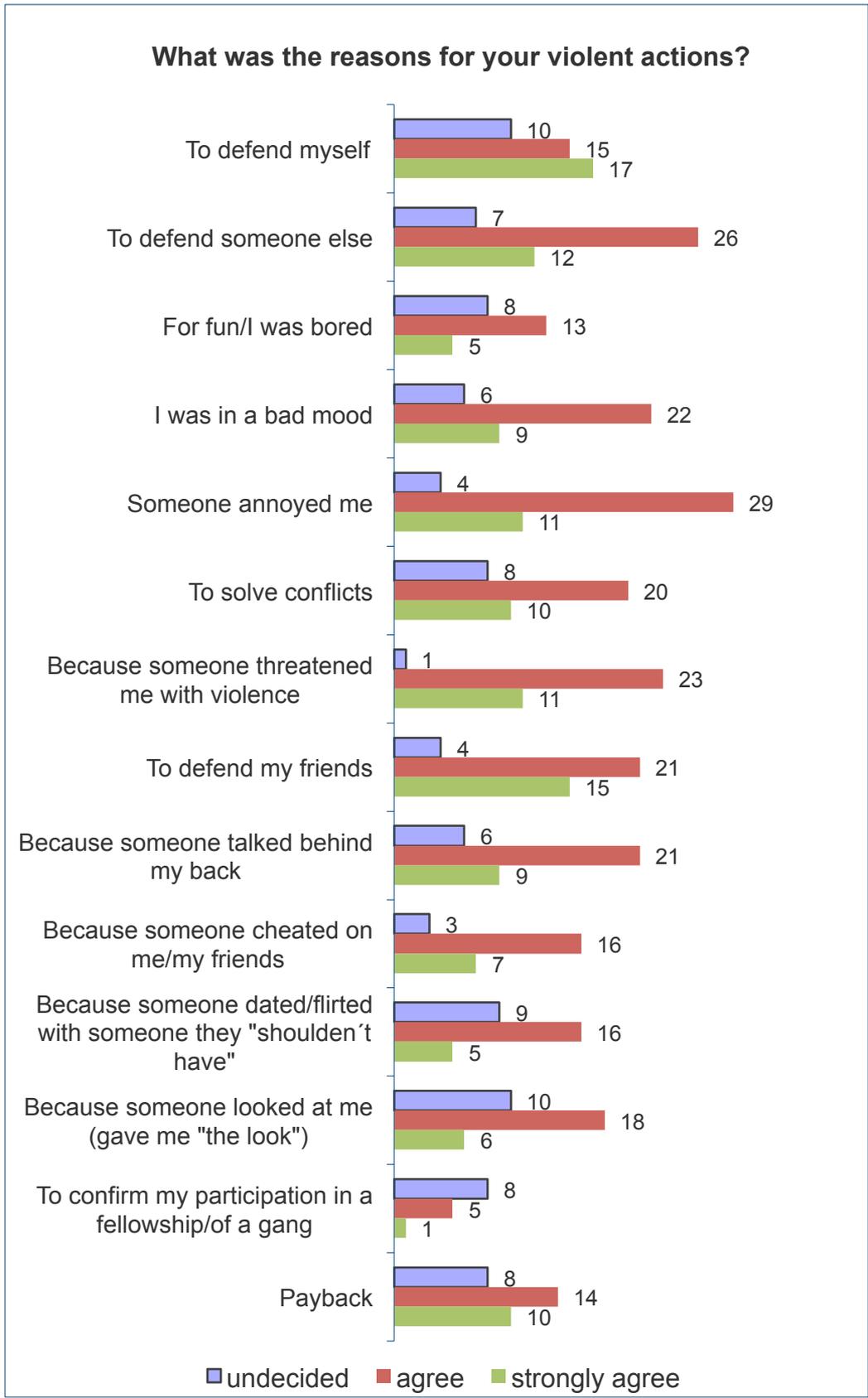


Fig. 17 Reasons given for using violence

On the question concerning how they felt right before a violent incident, the majority if the respondents (66,67%) said that they were upset. 44,44% felt disturbed by something, 12,96% each said they were feeling “blue” or frightened. 14,81% had a feeling of apathy or carelessness before the incident. 25,93% said they had other feelings.

55 of the participants answered the question on how they felt directly after a fight. The answers are summarized in Fig. 18:

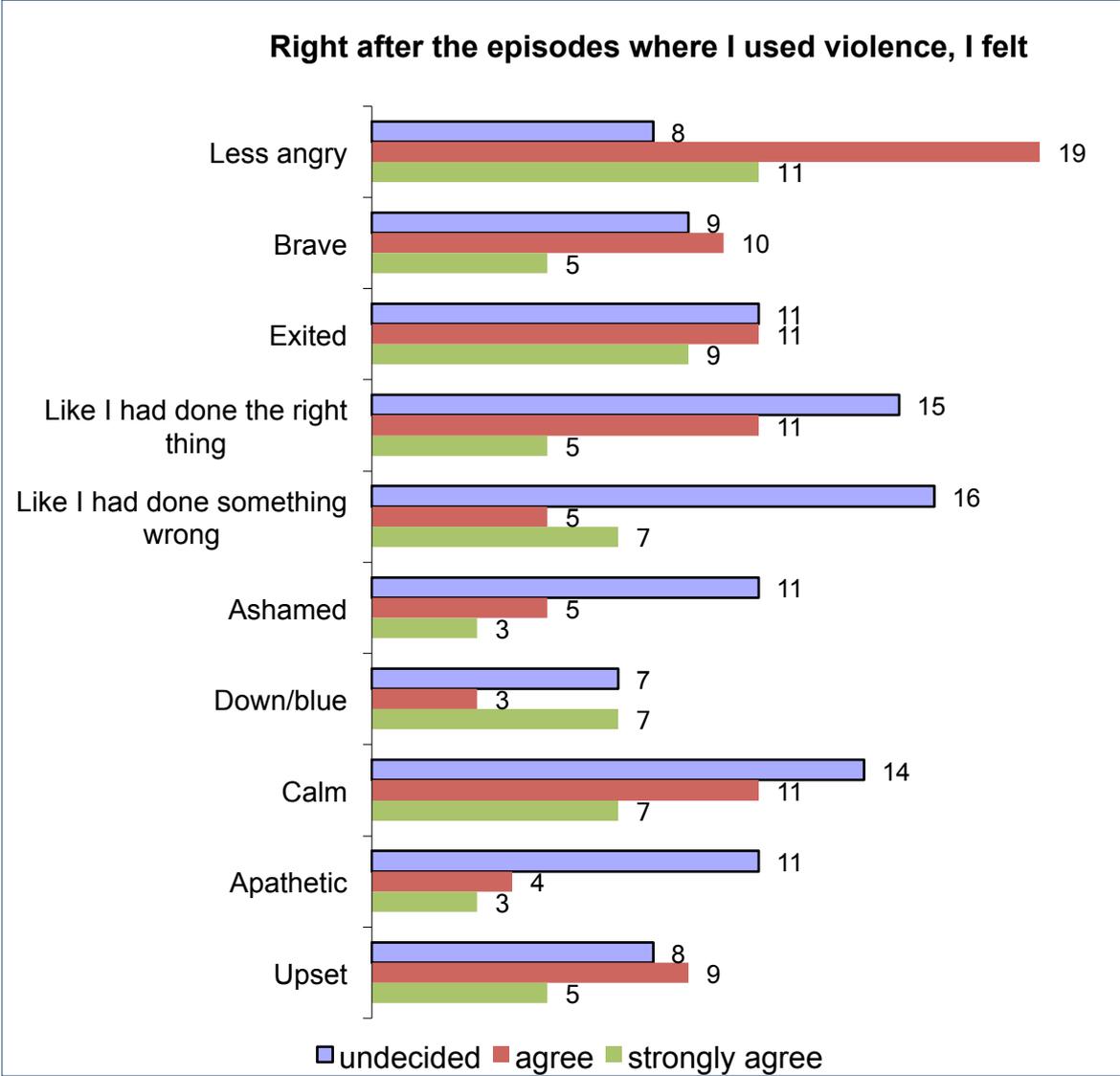


Fig. 18 State of mind directly after using violence

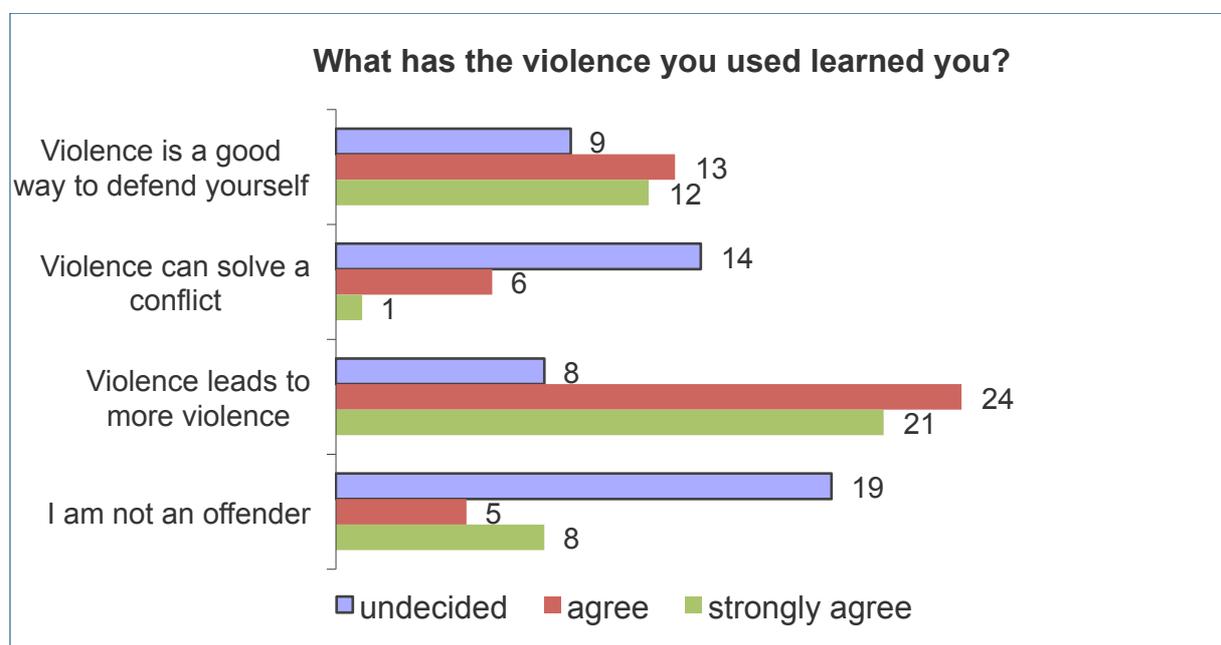
It is remarkable that 72,73% of the 55 girls and young women stated that they were aware of a nonviolent alternative on how to act, but turned to violence anyhow. 32,73% of the girls claimed not to have had a choice.

## 5. How do the girls and young women perceive their use of violence themselves

Essential to us, while examining the use of violence by young women, is their personal perception. Paramount is here: did she feel like an offender or as victim? 56 of our questionees answered these questions.

46,43% feel like being the offender, 14,29% feel more like a victim and 41,07% stated that they mostly were in both roles. One of the most interesting things we can draw from this is how reflective the girls are on their own violent behaviour. Nearly half of them were aware of being both victim and offender at the same time.

Fig. 19 shows what the young women said they learned from using violence.



*Fig. 19 What did I learn from using violence*

More than a half of the questionees see violence as a possible strategy for conflict solving. At the same time, they realize that violence mostly leads to more violence. Nearly 50% see violence as a good option for self-defence. 22 girls (39,62%) don't regard themselves as offenders and 20% couldn't classify themselves as neither victim nor offender.

In the following part the girls and young women were asked to decide under which circumstances it is ok to use violence. 60 of the 67 participants answered these questions (Fig. 20).

### When do you think it is ok to use violence?

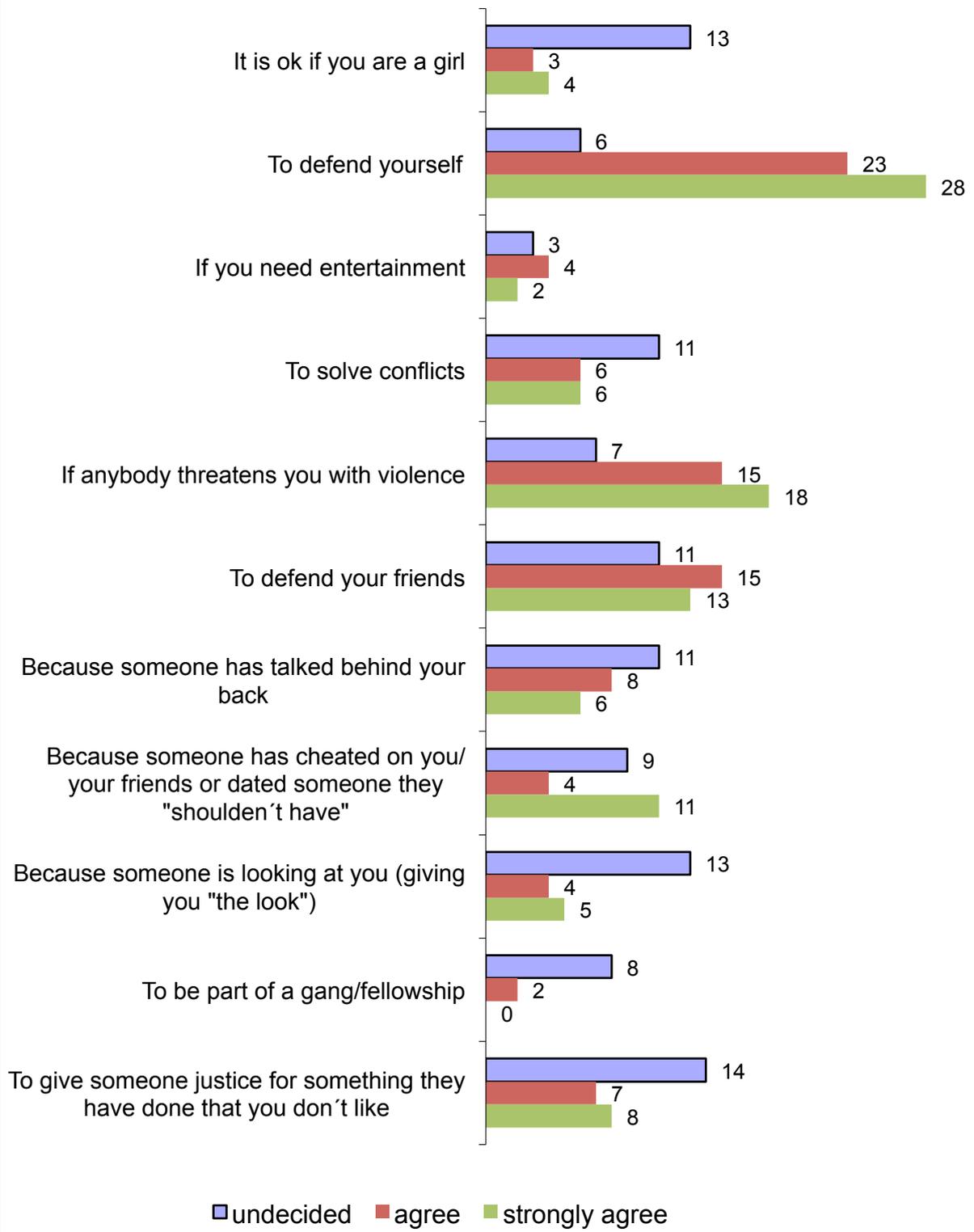


Fig. 20 Legitimate reasons for using violence

The girls and young women to a large extent agreed that it is ok for girls to use violence in self-defence. 86,44% of all the questionees consented to this. 55,93% said it is ok to use violence when threatened.

57 of the 67 girls and young women answered the questions concerning whether they still feel/felt that violence is the only way to protect themselves. The answers are shown in Fig. 21.

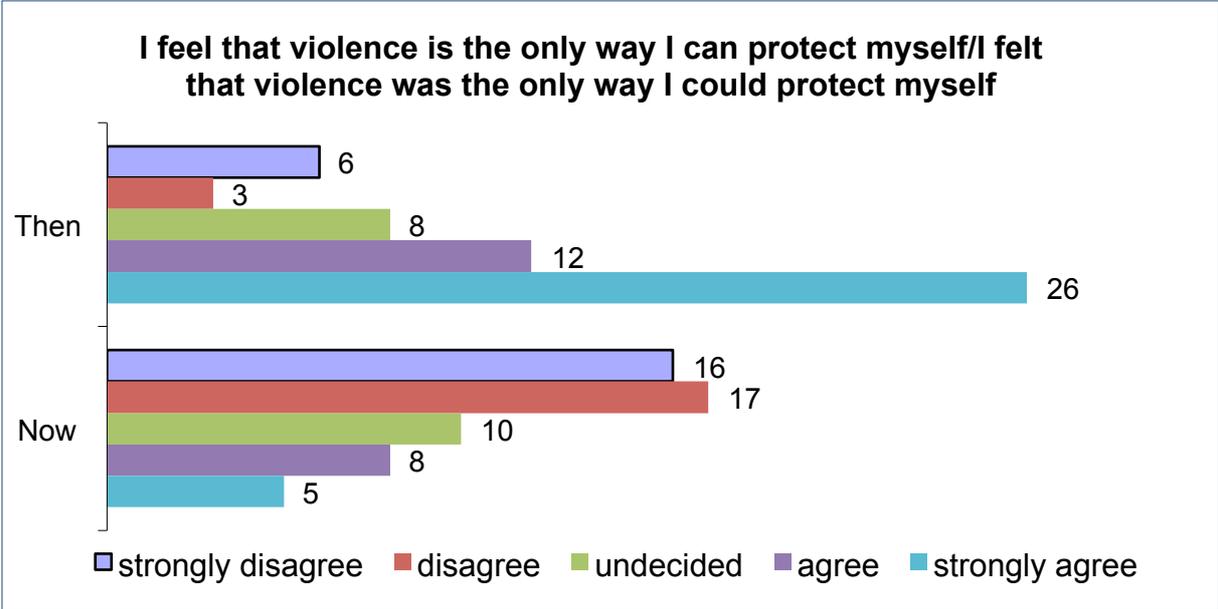


Fig. 21 Violence is the only way I can protect myself

Immediately after the incident a major part of the girls didn't see an alternative way of defending themselves than through violence. At the present state they do see other non-violent possibilities of dealing with a frustrating situation.

**6. Support**

The questions addressing the support systems deals with measures that had a positive impact on the behaviour of the girls, diminishing their violent behaviour.

**6.1 Which support measures on the girls and young women were effective in decreasing their violent behaviour?**

The girls and young women were asked which measures had been successful, and were asked only to answer on those measures they had gone through; the others should be left blank (Fig. 22).

54 girls answered these questions:

**What support/measure did you get for your violent behavior and how helpful do you think it was? (Just answer on the measures you got and leave the others blank)**

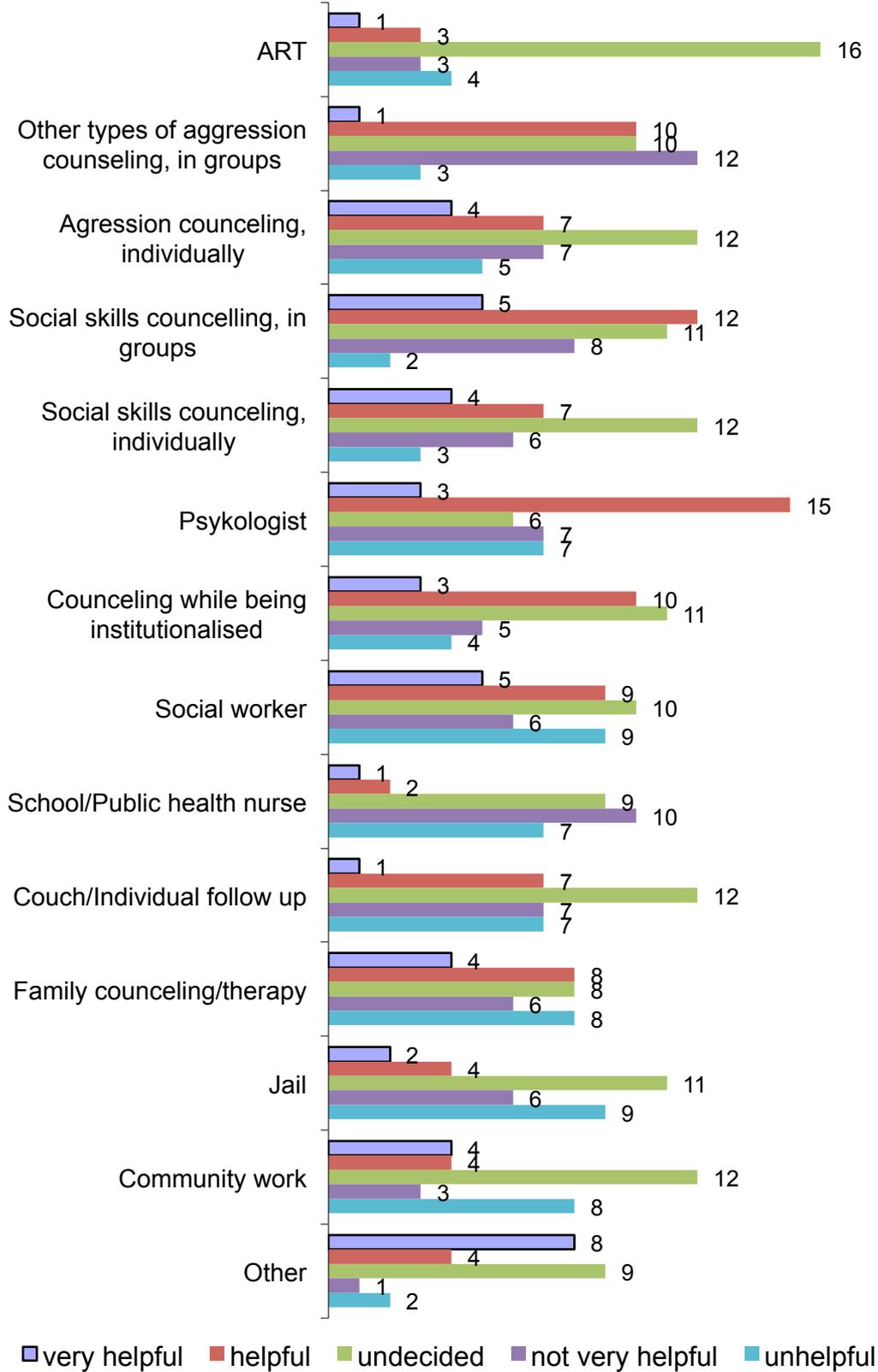


Fig. 22 Assessing different methods of support

From Fig. 22 no significant trend can be identified. The question on whether a particular measure was helpful was often answered with “undecided”. Most remarkable was how 59% of the questionees wrote “undecided” on the question of the efficiency/value of ART as a violence preventive/reducing measure.

Half of the girls thought social skills counselling in a group as well as working with a psychologist had been “helpful” or “very helpful”. Measures by the school/school nurse or jail were distinctly perceived as “not helpful”. Half of the girls and young women had other sources of helpful support supposedly from friends, family members or other trusted persons from their surroundings.

### **Key factors for successful measures**

More than half of the girls said the subject of focus in the measures had been “important” or “very important”. The coaches and positive role models played a vital part. Three-thirds of the girls had realized how important it was to work on refining themselves. Most of the girls and young women stated that it was crucial to have someone who would listen to them, give them advice and support. Half of the girls and young women acknowledge that norms and regulations are important, and that someone should impose this. To unfold oneself and the own abilities, to develop self-esteem and faith in one-self is also essential to be able to cope with aggression. Just as important is to have work that the girls’ feels satisfied about (Fig. 23).

### What do you think is the most important part of a measure like the ones you had?

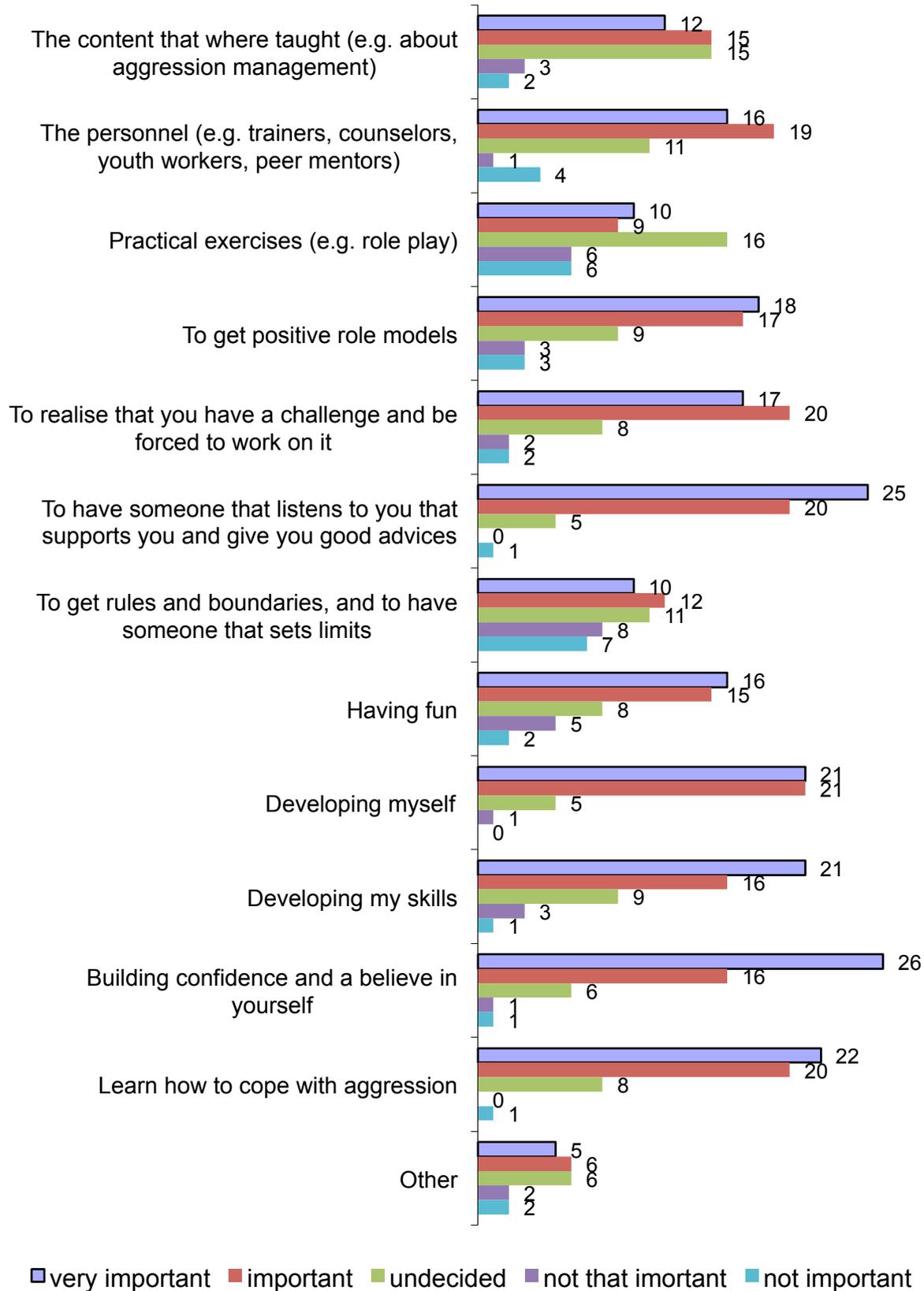


Fig. 23 Helpful measures

## 6.2 What was your personal “turning point” to stop using violence?

The girls and young women had several predefined answers they could choose from to describe the reasons why they stopped using violence. This question was answered by only 51 of the interviewees. This may lead to the conclusion that some of them are still in the process and haven't reached their turning point yet.

Fig. 24 shows that every one of our answer alternatives had been chosen by some of the participants. Solely “I hurt someone really bad“ and “I had positive role models who helped me to change my behaviour” were picked most often (31,37% each). Noteworthy are further the statements “I wanted to "grow up"”, “Things in my life got better”, “I got a boyfriend/girlfriend”, “Someone hurt me really bad” and “I moved away from the environment I used to be in”. The composition of answers implies that the point of decision to change something in their lives relies on individual incidents that vary from girl to girl. This shows that the support measures for the girls and young women have to be personally adjusted, and that practitioners needs a diversified toolbox in order to reach out to the girls they are working with in a sufficient way.

### What was your personal turning point/why did you stop using violence?



*Fig. 24 Turning point*

52 of 67 of the questionees answered a question about how they would advise a friend in a similar situation (someone who has challenges with aggressive/violent behaviour).

The answer that got the highest percentage was to talk to a friend. About half of the girls and young women (44,23%) said they would advise a friend to start working on her/his behavior. 40,38% stated that she/he should speak to a trustworthy adult.

**7. Self-esteem of the girls and young women**

The last part of questionnaire dealt with the girls and young women analysing their previous lives and prospect of their future.

**7.1 Self-reflection on the own use of violence**

57 of the girls and young women answered this question; the results are given in Fig. 25.:

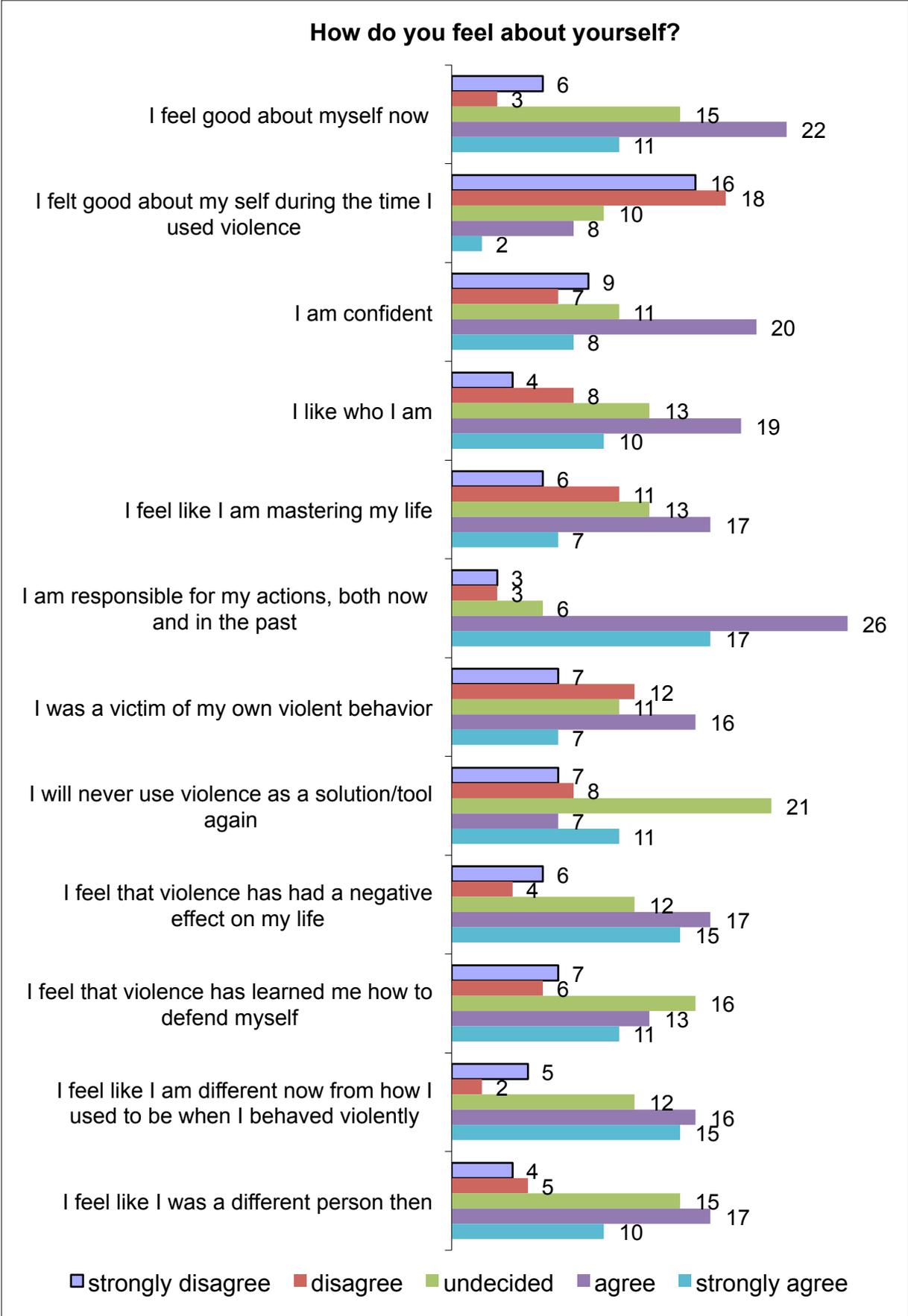


Fig. 25 How do you feel about yourself?

Following prominent answers were given by at least half of the questionees: 57,90% of the girls and young women felt good about themselves at the time, 62,92% stated that they did not feel good about the violent acts they committed. More than half of the girls (50,91%) felt confident and 53,71% said they liked who they were. More than three thirds (78,18%) stated that they felt responsible for their actions, both now and in the past. 38,89% were not sure whether they would use violence again. 59,26% had the feeling that violence had had an impact on their lives. 62% said they felt like a different person in comparison to the periode they used violence. 52,94% claimed to have felt like they were a different person at the time.

The next question assessed whether violence changed the respect people had for them, and the respect they had for themselves.

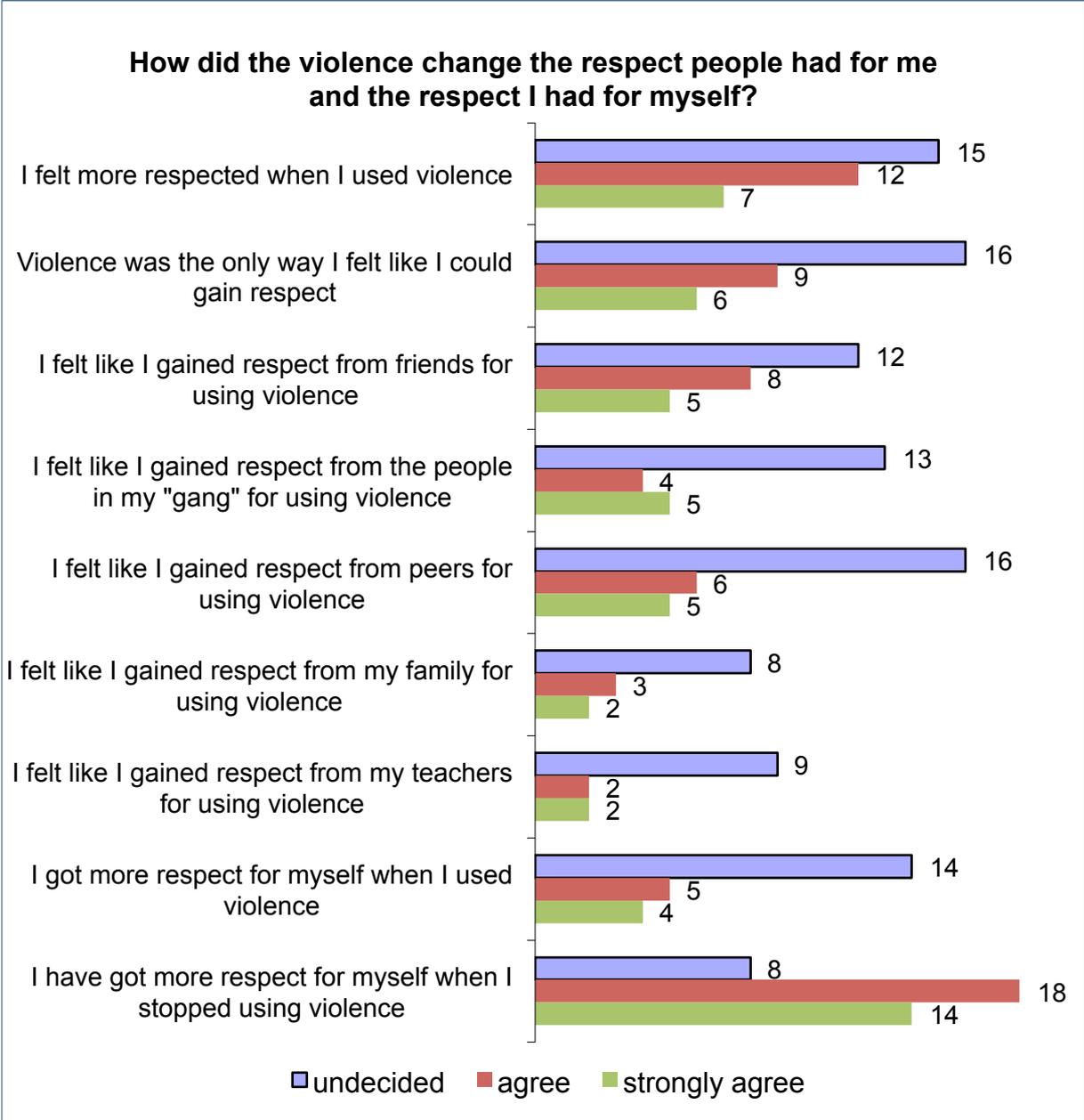
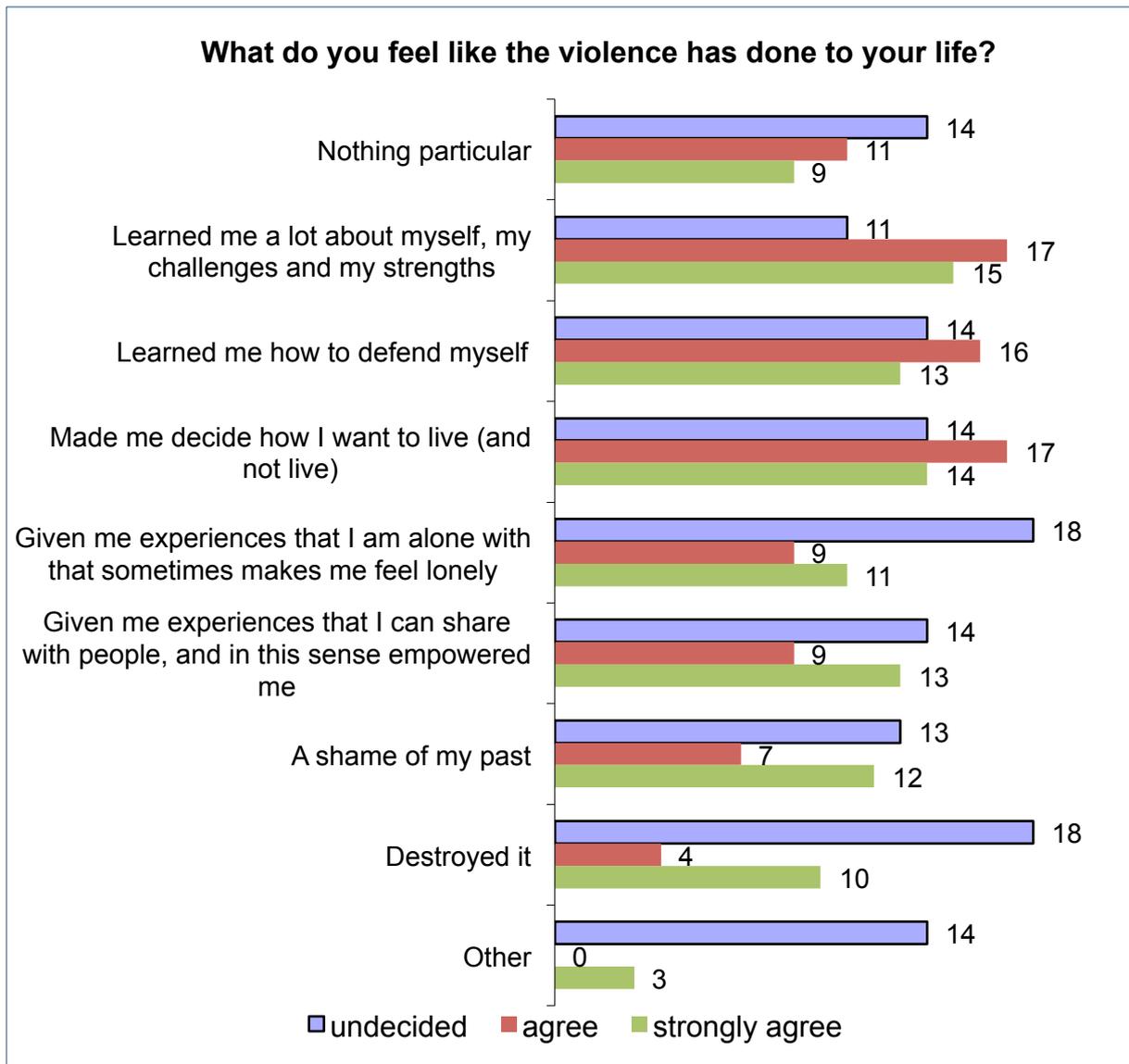


Fig. 26 the Aspect of respect in connection with using violence

53 of the interviewees answered this question. As shown in Fig. 26 many of the girls are undecided here. The following answers catch our interest: About half of the girls and young women denied that they had gotten more respect from their friends in times when they had been using violence. Equally 56% didn't feel more respected in their gangs after using violence. About half of them gave the same statement about the respect gained from peers. In accordance to this, "no" was the answer to whether the girls and young women (47,51%) had lead to more respect in the family or from teachers (75%).

54,9% stated that self-respect didn't rise through the use of violence and 62,74% affirmed that they had gotten more self-respect after changing their behaviour. This shows a clear tendency that violence didn't generate more self-respect or respect from their surroundings, so it is desirable to stop using violence in order to gain more respect for yourself.

To complete this section, the girls and young women were asked what influence violence had had on their lives. As is shown in fig. 27 many of the questionees couldn't decide on what to answer:



*Fig. 27 What do you feel like the violence has done to your life?*

We would like to highlight following answers:

Clearly more than half of the girls and young women (62,74%) state that they have learnt to deal with challenges and know their own strength better now. 59,18% state that they have learnt how to defend themselves. 60,78% explained that the violent period of their life helped them to decide on how they wanted to live and how they did not want to live.

When answering the last questions, many of the participants showed clear signs of exhaustion, as they had to concentrate intensely on the questionnaire for about an hour. So it is reasonable to account the high number of undecided answers and unanswered questions to this fact.

## 7.2 Outlook into future

The last questions were meant to cover the girls future prospects, in the light of having stopped using violence.

54 participants answered this question and the answers gave following picture (Fig. 28):

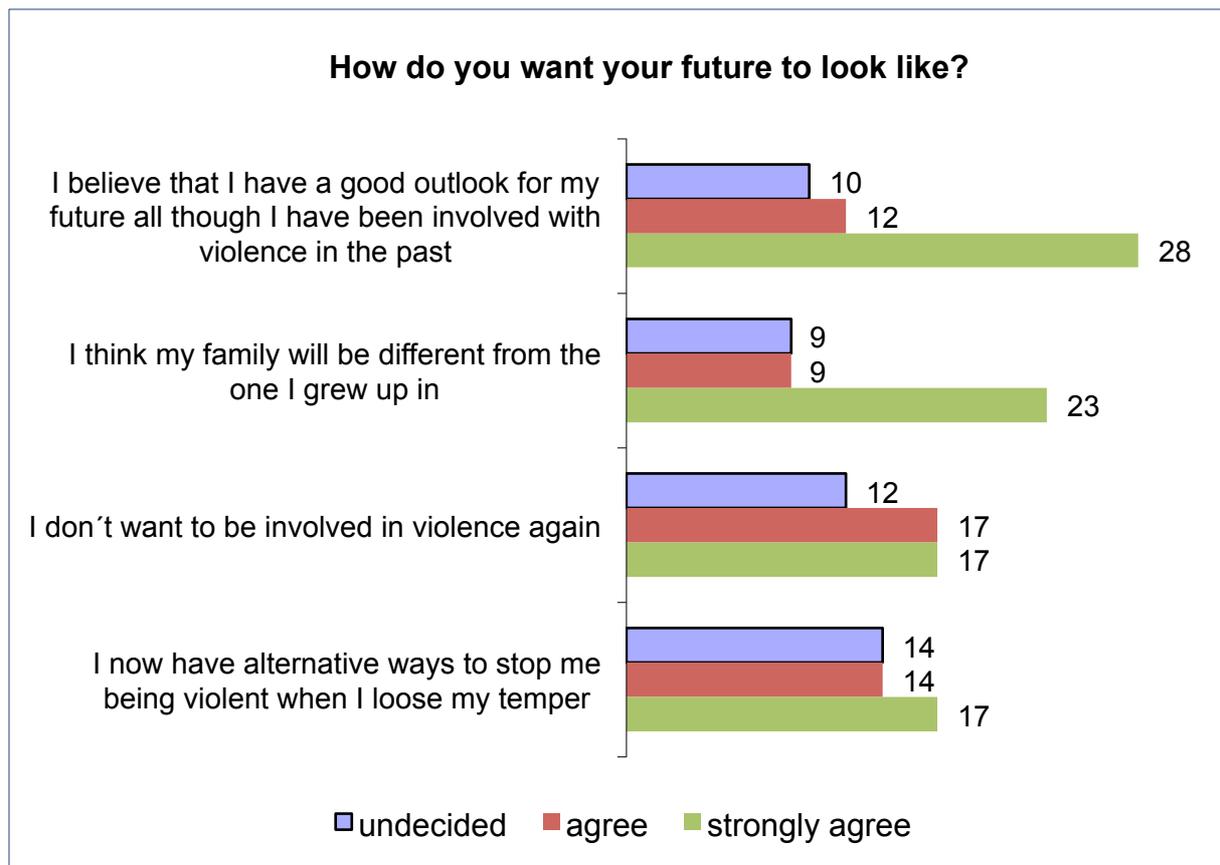


Fig. 28 Assessment of the future perspective

74,07% of all the questionees had positive future prospects, in spite of their past with violence. 65,31% wants a different family situation than the one they grew up with. 65,38% had decided never again to get involved with violent behaviour. More than half (62%) have found possibilities to react non-violently in situations when they lose their temper. These answers powerfully show that the girls and young women have a predominantly positive view of their future and are done with violence, both as victim and offender. They seem to have found ways of dealing with the consequences of violence in themselves.

## 8. Summary

The detailed analysis of the questionnaire gives an overview over different issues concerning girls and young women being victims and offenders violence. People working with girls using violence has been given a chance to get important insight into their personal perspectives and backgrounds.

Which institution and measures that facilitated the questionnaire is not identifiable. Therefore the results display an average of 7 EU countries. The results may not meet scientific demands, but it does allow some interesting bases for analysis.

Many statements from the references (Daphne 2013: Literature research, What is girls' violence?) support our findings. Girls and young women frequently experience violence,

themselves be it domestic settings, from partners, friends or peers. Furthermore, many of our respondents had been victims of sexual violence. Most of the girls see themselves as victims just as much as offenders. The point Daphne (Daphne 2013 Literature research, S. 13ff) describes as “challenging childhood” seems to be true for most of our questionees, in one way or another. The reasons why the girls start using violence are often based on their environment. Some of the contributing causes most accounted for in this survey was: membership in a peer-group that approves using violence, being subjected to bad influence and “false” friends, to feel deprived of positive social options or not to have learnt/felt that it was sufficient to solve conflicts in a socially approved way. Alcohol, drugs, little respect for yourself and a low self esteem also seems to be important factors, often violence is used as a method of gaining increased respect for themselves. Many girls also stated that they used violence simply as a matter of self-defence.

Some of the girls involved in this survey had already begun to reach for a better life, to reflect their former behaviour and to start working on themselves.

The question concerning what helped the girls to break free out of the vicious spiral of violence, many stated that persons close to them, often from their family or circle of friends, was the greatest help. Institutional support systems or persons working in this field were observed as less helpful, although the personal contact to their worker seemed to be very important. There were no specific measures of violence prevention that were regarded as especially effective, as in the whole none of the measures listed in the questionnaire were seen as very helpful. To have a stable person that cared about them seemed to be very importing, being a positive role-model and backing the girls up on their way into a more self-determined lifestyle without violence.

For professionals who work with these girls and young women, this means that to show a caring attitude towards the girls, to guide them on their way to more self-confidence, to work on their talents and abilities and contribute to giving them positive future perspectives might be the most effective way of dealing with their problems. This requires developing and keeping a holistic view of the girls and to avoid focusing on their violent behaviour.

At this point we would like to thank all the girls and young women who volunteered to take part in our questionnaire, and were willing to share their very personal experiences with us. Thank you so much for the insight and awareness you enabled us to gain.

## 9. References

Daphne 2013: What is girls` violence - Existing theory and research on girls and violence, literature research, <http://daphne-vip.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Report-WS-I.pdf>

## **Appendixes**

Appendix 1: Questionnaire data

Appendix 2: Guide for the girls' questionnaire