YouPrev

Youth deviance and youth violence: A European multi-agency perspective on best practices in prevention and control.

International Self-Report Questionnaire

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Results from the Belgian Study

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1 Introduction

The International Self Report Delinquency study in general aims to describe and explain juvenile delinquency cross-nationally. Its main objective is to compare trends in (youth) offending and victimization between countries but also to explain delinquent behaviour and test criminological theories (Junger-Tas e.a., 2010).

The self-report study is an instrument to find out more about young people's experiences as perpetrators and victims of deviance, crime and violence. According to lifestyle approaches, delinquent behaviour and victimization was tested with lifestyle aspects via statistical analysis. Considering the aim of the project, namely a broad perspective on successful prevention practices of youth deviance and violence, also questions were included about young people's views, experiences and opinions on prevention activities and strategies. In general the instrument was structured as follows: demographic background, family, school, victimization, leisure and peers, attitudes, offending, substance use and prevention.

2 Methodology

Before discribing the construction of our sample and the data collection process, we want to shed a light on some problems emerging with the use of an ISRD instrument. Much criticism mainly focuses on methodological issues. In general this implies more often problems with underrepresentation of 'interesting respondents', (partial) non response, threats of validity and reliability (Junger-Tas & Marshall, 1999). Although we will not elaborate in detail on this matter, we want to stress that also our research could not escape the previously mentioned pitfalls, on the contrary. Many aspects of for example the construction of the sample make it very difficult, not to say impossible, to draw conslusion for the whole population. Several issues are addressed throughout the report.

To construct our sample, we selected 3 regions to conduct the survey. To encounter the country specific situation of Belgium, we opted to select three regions[1]. The first one Hasselt was chosen as a semi-urban city for the Flemish part of Belgium; Dinant was selected as a French speaking rural area, and finally Brussels as a central urban city.

[1] The other participants in the YouPrev project selected one urban area and one rural area.

We first made a list of all the schools in the 3 regions offering the different types of education together with the contact details. In Belgium education is compulsory between the age of 6 and 18. The primary school takes 6 years divided in 3 cycles. From the age of 12 until 18 youngsters usually go to secondary school. In general there are public sector schools and privately run schools (more often by the church). These privately run schools are subsidized like public schools. Secondary school consists of different options. There is general secondary education, technical secondary education, vocational secondary education, art secondary education and special schools for children and youngsters with antisocial behaviour, personality or psychological problems.

For the majority we obtained the email address of the director or the deputy director hence the first contact was made through email, offering general information on the research and the survey and a request for participation. We also mentioned the possibility of parent consent letters that could be placed at their disposal if requested or deemed necessary.[2] After one week all the schools were contacted by telephone (except for those who replied on the email, appointments were made to conduct the survey).

In total 82 schools were contacted: 12 schools in Hasselt, 60 in Brussels[3] and 9 in Dinant. To enlarge the response rate and to counterbalance the high amount of urban schools, we also contacted institutions in other rural areas besides Dinant. Unfortunately only one extra school (in Lennik, Flemish Brabant) was willing to participate. It is clear that from the beginning the amount of schools are disproportionately divided across the several regions. Therefore we also opted to exclude this variable for the major part of the analysis.
We started to contact the schools in January after the winter vacation. The last surveys were conducted in June 2012. In total only 15 schools participated in the survey. Several reasons may underlie this very low response rate. First of all the requests were distributed in the middle of the school year, whereas a lot of schools had already decided in September in which studies they would participate. On the other hand a lot of schools are 'over questioned' due to numerous school surveys that are conducted in Belgium. Several institutions may also fear that classic prejudices would become endorsed with regards to the relation of delinquency and certain school types.

[2] Eventually the majority of the schools did not want to work with parent consent letters. In total only 2 times the parents did not allow their child to participate. However in class, the students were informed that they were free to choose whether they wanted to fill in the survey or not.
[3] For Brussels we selected all schools in the Brussels Capital Region in order to reach as many schools as possible.

The instrument that was jointly constructed by all the project partners was somewhat adjusted in Belgium. Three questions were removed. The first one asked the students how happy they felt in the past six months. We found this question rather irrelevant for the information we wanted to gain with the survey. A school survey should also be limited in length to keep students motivated to finish it accurately. This is partly the reason why we removed the two other questions that asked the students what they would do in reducing alcohol and drug use (and in the second question violence) amongst youngsters. Moreover previous experiences with the use of school surveys pointed out that students often skip open questions (this format requires an extra effort to complete), don't understand them quite well or simply don't take them serious. Finally to distinct the ones commuting to their school one question was added: "Do you live in the same municipality / village / city as where your school is located?".

All the surveys were anonymously conducted in the classrooms through paper and pencil versions. At least one researcher was always present to supervise, respond to possible questions and to make sure teachers did not interfere.

3 Sample description

In Belgium 1180 pupils from different schools were surveyed. In order to get an insight in the composition of this research sample, a number of background characteristics are described in this chapter. First of all information on the location of the schools where the surveys are held is provided. Other characteristics that will be described include age, sex, socio-economic status (SES), household composition and (migration-) background.

3.1 Location of schools

The school survey was held in several schools located in distinct areas: Brussels Capital Region (bilingual), Hasselt (Dutch speaking) and Dinant (French speaking). Brussels Capital Region can be regarded as urban area, Hasselt as semi urban and Dinant as rural. The number of respondents and corresponding percentages for each area are given in the figure below. 477 respondents (45.1%) were surveyed in an urban area, 334 respondents (31.6%) in a semi-urban area and 247 respondents (23.3%) in a rural area. We will not pay much attention to this distinction in degree of urbanization for reasons that were mentioned in the methodology section.

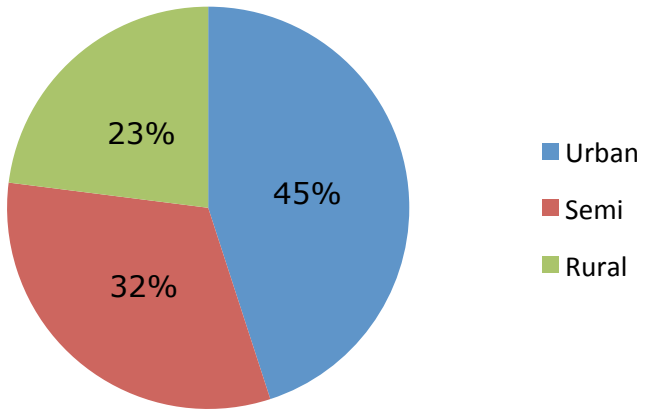


Figure 3.1: Number of respondents per area

The surveys were held in 15 different schools. The table below shows the number of participants per school, classified by region. It is important to keep in mind the unequal distribution of respondents per school and per region, because this has probably led to biases of the results that will be presented further on. For example, one school counts 10 respondents whether another school has 288 participants. For ethical reasons, the identity of schools is not given so that the anonymity of the respondents and the schools is being guaranteed. Therefore schools were given randomly a number between 1 to 15.

Table 3.1.2: Number of respondents per school, divided into the distinct areas

Region	School	N	Percentage
Urban	School nr 8	33	3,1
	School nr 7	43	4,1
	School nr 15	10	0,9
	School nr 6	13	1,2
	School nr 5	40	3,8
	School nr 12	10	0,9
	School nr 14	40	3,8
	School nr 2	82	7,8
	School nr 1	126	11,9
	School nr 10	80	7,6
Semi	School nr 9	46	4,3
	School nr 3	288	27,2

Rural	School nr 4	29	2,7
	School nr 11	171	16,2
	School nr 13	47	4,4
Total		1058	100,0

3.2 Age

The respondents of our original sample are aged between 13 and 25. Initially, this report would focus on youth aged 14 to 17 because according to the age-crime curve (see among other Farrington, 1986; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983), criminal behaviour increases with age, peaks during adolescence and subsequently declines. On the basis of an *Independent samples T-test* we must conclude that in our sample, respondents aged 18 and older significantly differ from the ones under 18 in terms of self-reported delinquency. For this reason, ideally we would delete all respondents over 17 from our sample. However, in that case our sample size diminishes dramatically from 1172 to 900. Therefore, we decided to also include 18 year old respondents in our sample, as well as 13 year olds which leads to a sample of pupils aged 13-18. Respondents who had a missing score on age (N=8) were deleted. This resulted in a sample consisting of 1058 respondents. The average age of the respondents in our dataset is 15.9. The precise distribution of respondents by age is given in appendix 3.2.1 at the end of this report.

Comparing mean ages and the range of age between schools, differences can clearly be observed (appendix 3.2.2.).

In general it can be stated that respondents who attend school in an urban area (Brussels) are the oldest (mean 16.28), and respondents that are surveyed in the rural area (Dinant and Lennik) and the semi urban area (Hasselt) are the youngest (means respectively 15.6 and 15.7). The average age, as well as the minimum and maximum age per school, is given in appendix 3.2.2. as well. Because of the assumed relations between age and criminal or deviant behaviour, it is relevant to keep differences in the distribution of age between schools and areas into account. For instance, students with age 16-18 might have a very different lifestyle and different experiences with victimization and offending than 13-16 year olds.

3.3 Sex

The research sample is composed of 508 males (48.1%) and 549 females (51.9%). The ratio between sexes differs between the distinct areas as well as between schools. Whereas in Hasselt females are overrepresented (65%), in Brussels and Dinant the distribution of sexes is somewhat more equal; the

percentage of females is respectively 45 and 48 per cent. This sex ratio also differs depending on the school. For instance, as also can be seen in appendix 3.3, girls are overrepresented in art education, whereas at technical school males are the vast majority. As already shown in previous scientific research, criminality is more common among men than among women (see for example Junger-Tas e.a., 2010). For that reason we must take into account the differences in sex ratios between areas while comparing the urban to the (more) rural areas.

3.4 Socio-economic status (of parents)

The socio-economic status of the respondent is based on the incomes of the parents. Hence this variable ranges from 0 (neither of the parents has paid employment) to 2 (both parents have paid employment). The majority of the respondents (69.5%) has two parents that have a paid job, over a fifth as one parent with a paid job and 8.5 per cent has no parent with a paid job.

Table 3.4: Frequencies socio-economic position of parents

	Frequency	Percentage
No parent paid job	88	8,5
1 parent paid job	226	21,9
2 parents paid job	717	69,5
Total	1031	100,0

3.5 Household composition

In order to get more insight in the situation at home of the participants, the table below displays information on whether the respondents live with either none, or one or both parents. The vast majority of the participants live together with both their father and their mother (80.3 per cent). Almost 15 per cent of the respondents lives with one parents; most of them live together with their mom. A small percentage of the respondents (4.9 per cent) lives without their parents.

Table 3.5: Parents in household of participant

	Frequency	Percentage
Respondent lives without parents	52	4,9
Respondent lives with mother, without father	114	10,8
Respondent lives with father, without mother	41	3,9
Respondent lives with father & mother	850	80,3
Total	1058	100,0

3.6 (migrant-) Background

The (migrant-) background of the participants is determined on the basis of both the country of birth of the respondent as well as on the country of birth of the parents of our respondents. A participant is regarded as native if he or she and his or her both parents were born in the country where the survey took place. Participants who were born in Belgium, but who have one or two parents who were born elsewhere, are considered as second-generation migrants. The third group that has been defined are first-generation migrants: these participants were born in another country than where the survey was conducted (Belgium in this case).

Table 3.6.1: (migrant-) background of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Native	650	61,5
Second-generation	250	23,7
First-generation	157	14,9
Total	1057	100,0

Of all respondents, 61.5 % indicates that he or she is native, 23.7 % belongs to second generation and 14,9% to first generation immigrants. The group first-generation as well as second-generation immigrant pupils are the highest in the urban region (app. 3.6.2).

4 Findings

4.1 Descriptive results of lifestyle aspects

We start with an overview of the most important descriptive results of some lifestyle aspects. Lifestyle theories link these aspects to juvenile violence and violent victimization (see for example Bottoms, 2006; Nofziger & Kurtz, 2005; Pauwels & Svensson, 2009).

4.1.1 Bonding with family

Students were demanded to reply on four questions that measure the concept of bonding with their family. The percentages below show how well respondents are bonded with their family (and vice versa) according to their own opinion. From the results we can in someway state that the respondents are in a significant way bonded with their parents. According to Hirshi's social control theory (Hirschi, 1969, 2004), close relationships with parents and social institutions can protect youngsters from a delinquent life path.

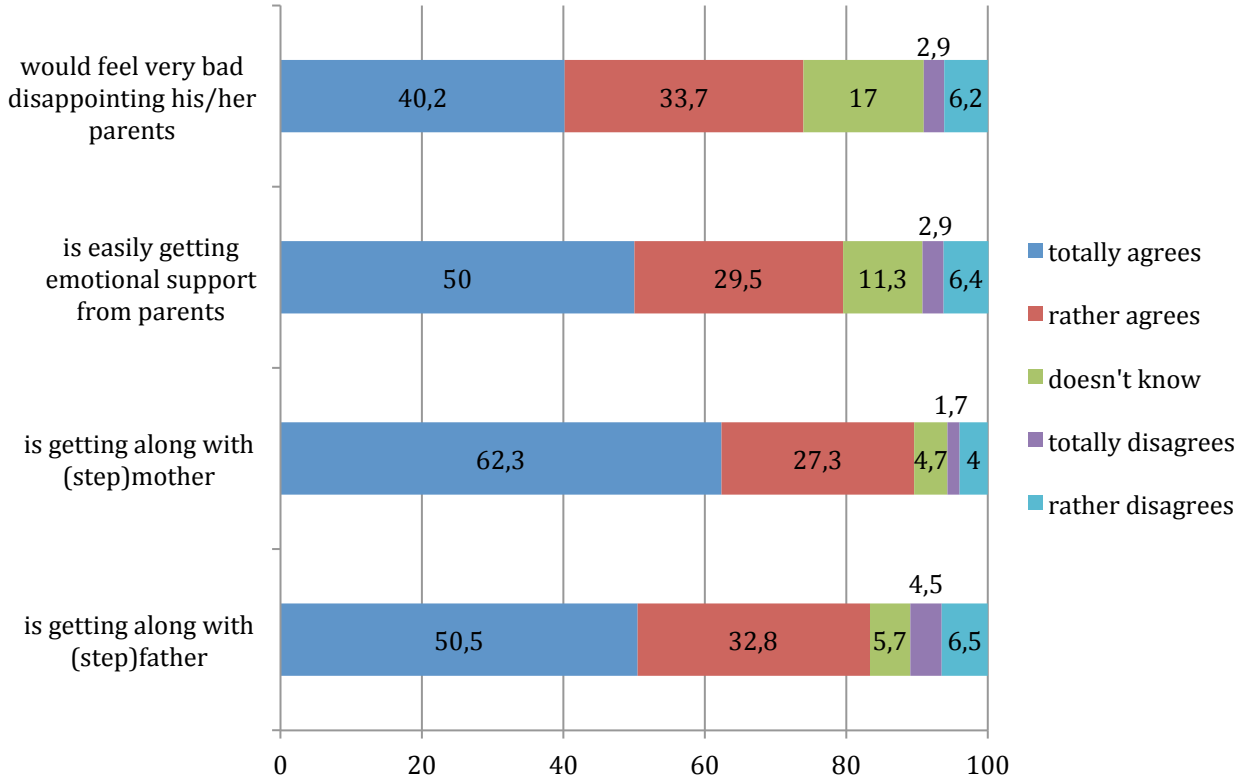


Figure 4.1.1: Descriptive results of 'bonding with family'

4.1.2 School climate

Participants were asked for their opinion about the general school climate. We divided this category in 4 groups: school attachment, school disorganization, bonding with teacher and school performance. Each concept consists of several items questioned by the survey. Extensive results of the items can be found in appendix 4.1.2.

We can conclude that participants have rather positive attitudes towards their school. The item "if participant would have to move, he/she would miss school" delivers the most striking result for school attachment: 73,3% agrees with this statement (fully agrees + somewhat agrees). School disorganization was measured through estimates on statements like for example: "there is a lot of stealing/fighting/drug use in school." The average answer on these questions was 'rather disagrees'. Especially the occurrence of fighting at school has been denied by respondents. In the light of these results we can conclude that participants are not inclined to evaluate their school as disorganised.

Percentages show that participants are quite well bonded with their teacher.

Results about school performance indicate that 'school tries to solve problems' is the item where most respondents agreed.

4.1.3 Supervision

The degree of supervision from parents was measured by the opinion of participants on the following items. When it comes to parental supervision, we should distinct two statements from the others, namely: 'parents check if participant did his homework' and 'parents check if participant watches only films and DVDs allowed for his age'. This observation may point out that in general parents don't see much danger in the fact that their children could be displayed to violence on television.

When we look at the other items, we may conclude that there is some parental control according to the respondents: parents know where their children are and with whom, parents give their children a curfew and demand them to call if they are out late.

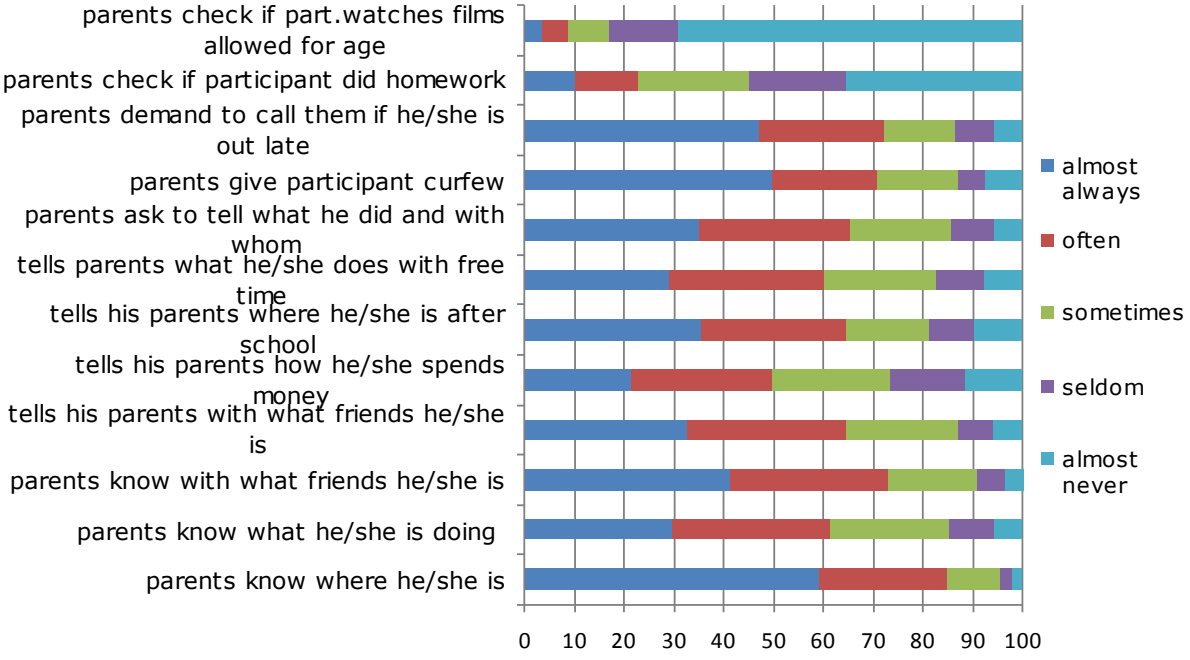


Figure 4.1.3: Descriptive results concerning 'supervision of parents'

4.1.4 Attitudes

- Attitudes towards violence: "How wrong does participant thinks it is to…?"

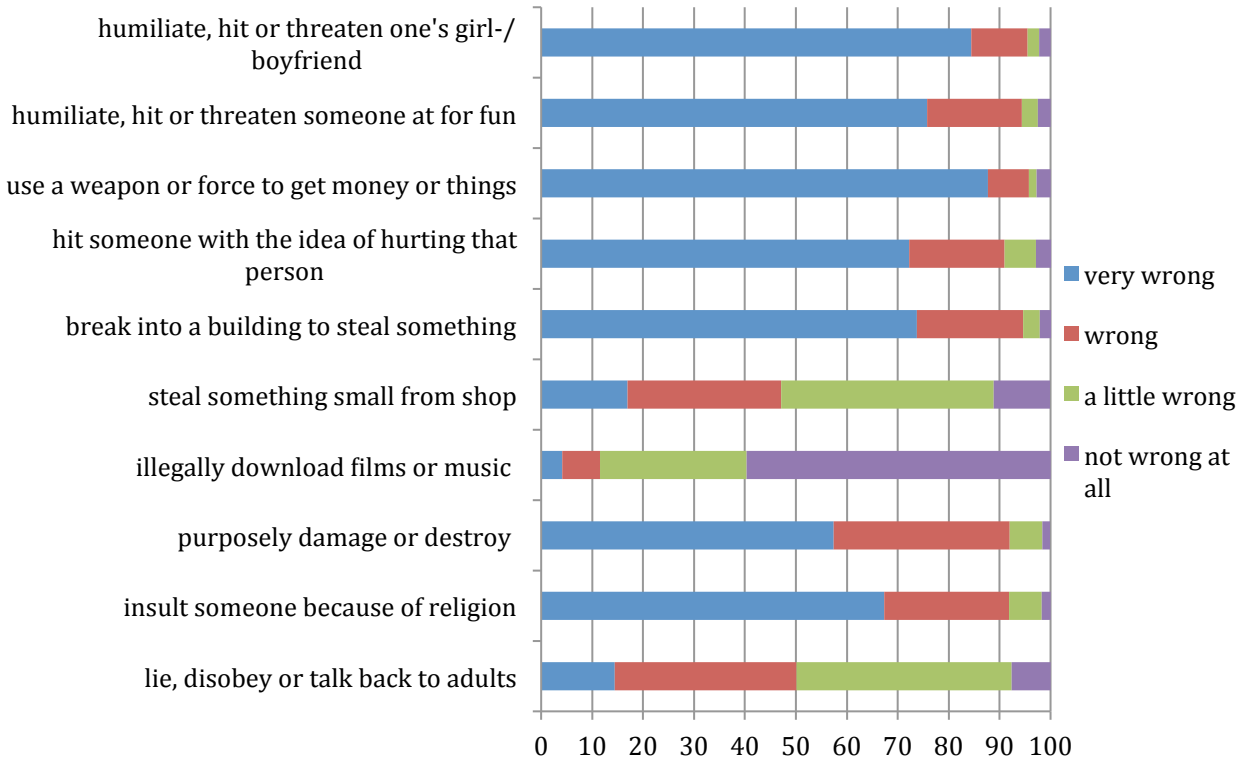


Figure 4.1.4.1: Descriptive results concerning 'attitudes'

It is notable that the respondents have a significant sense of morality. There are 3 statements whereby respondents do accept certain behaviour. This is the case with lying or disobeying adults, illegal downloading and stealing something small like a chocolate bar from a shop. These types of behaviour can be perceived as more 'socially accepted' deviance and typical boundary exploring.

- Attitudes towards neighborhood

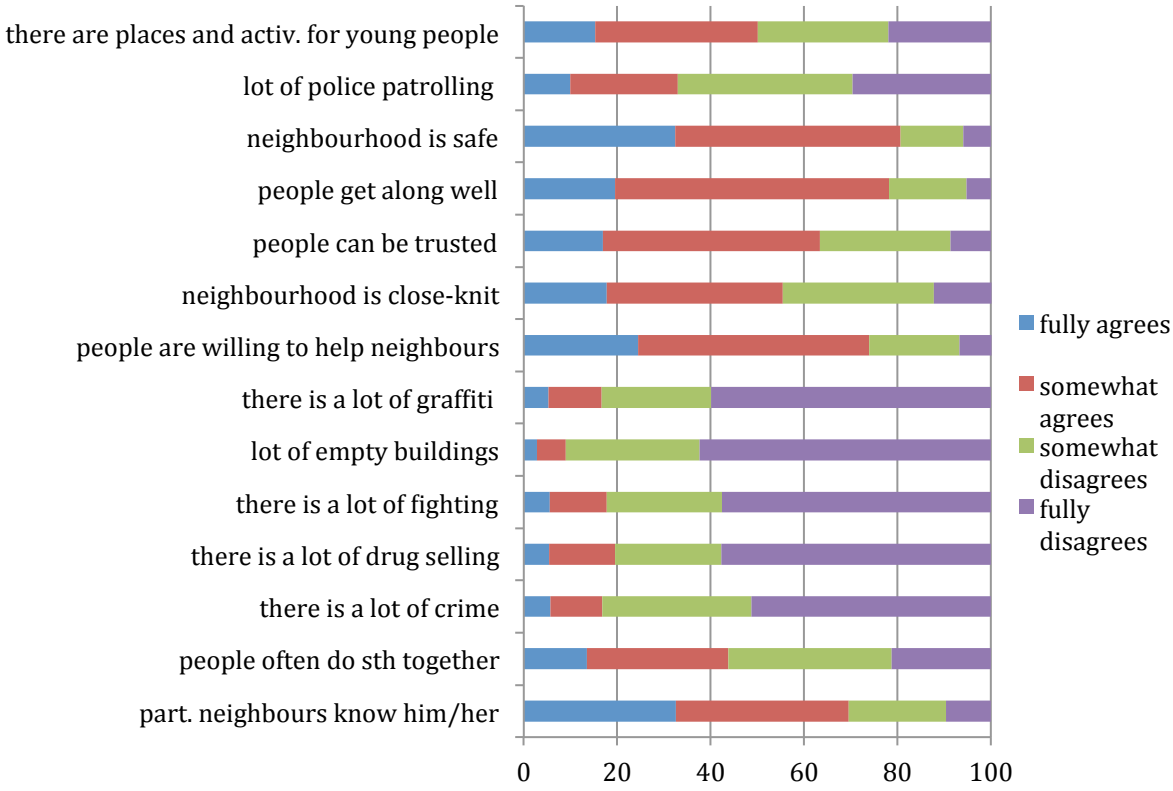


Figure 4.1.4.2: Descriptive results concerning 'evaluation of neighbourhood'

Respondents' opinion was demanded about the items above. The results show that the majority of participants have positive attitudes towards the neighbourhood they live in and are well bonded in their neighbourhood. In general, participants feel quite safe and fine in their neighbourhood.

4.1.5 Peers

The results displayed below that the judgement of friends is rather important for most respondents. This corresponds to previous findings in criminological research pointing at the important influence of peers among youngsters. Sutherland's differential association theory assumes that strong relationships with significant others are important for deviant behaviour (Sutherland, 1924, 1947). From the viewpoint of prevention, peers can thus play an important role in reducing and avoiding juvenile crime. This observation will be later on confirmed when discussing the findings of views and perspectives of prevention methods (page 31).

Table 4.1.5: 'How important is it to you what your friend or group of friends think about you?'

	Frequency	Percentage
Unimportant	73	7,1
Rather unimportant	207	20,1
Rather important	445	43,2
Important	304	29,5
Total	1029	100,0

4.1.6 Truancy

Participants were asked to answer the following question with regard to truancy: '*Have you ever skipped school without excuse in the last 12 months?*'. Of all participants 31% responded to this question with 'yes' and 69% answered with 'no, never'. Respondents that answered 'yes' were also asked to indicate how often they skipped school during that period. For this group of respondents (N=727) the frequency of skipping school was 4,26 times in the last 12 months (range 0-120, median 2). This observation confirms the methodological problem of questioning youngsters through school survey. It is rather logic that the persistent truant is hard to find in the 'typical' classroom and therefore underrepresented in school surveys like these.

We must notice that pupils that skip school very frequently are possibly underrepresented in our research sample. This might have led to an underestimation of truancy in our analyses.

4.1.7 Victimization

Criminological research shows that young people are relatively often involved as victim in violent crimes. Young people between 15 and 19 are over a period of 1 year almost 3 times more at risk for being badly treated or threatened than 25-29 year olds and almost 10 times more than 50-64 year olds (Wittebrood, 1997). Protecting adolescents from violent victimization is thus very important for prevention.

Questions about some bad things that may have happened to the participants were:

'Thinking back; have any of the following ever happened to you and did anyone report this to the police?'

- Someone wanted you to give them money or something else (like a watch, shoes, mobile phone and threatened) you if you refused? → **robbery**
- Someone hit you violently or hurt you so much that you needed to see the doctor? → **assault**
- Something was stolen from you (such as a book, money, mobile phone, sport equipment, bicycle…) → **theft**
- Someone threatened him/her or committed physical violence against you because of your religion, the language you speak, the colour of your skin, your social or ethnic background, or for similar reasons? → **hate crime**
- Someone made fun of you or teased you in a hurtful way through e-mail, instant messaging, in a chat room, on a website, or through a text message sent to your cell phone? → **cyber bullying**
- Have you ever been badly treated or humiliated by your girlfriend/ boyfriend or by a person you went out with? → **bad treatment**

Table 4.1.7: Percentage of respondents that has ever become victim of…

	Robbery	Assault	Theft	Hate Crime	Cyber Bullying	Bad Treatment
% No	92,3	93,7	70,2	91,9	83,5	86,3
(N)	(974)	(989)	(741)	(929)	(881)	(909)
%Yes	7,7	6,3	29,8	8,1	16,5	13,7
(N)	(81)	(67)	(315)	(82)	(174)	(144)
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(1055)	(1056)	(1056)	(1011)	(1055)	(1053)

From the results above, it can be stated that the vast majority of respondents has never been a victim of any of these crimes. Theft is the most common bad thing that happened among the participating youngsters. Attention must be paid on cyber bullying in the light of prevention. Especially from the viewpoint of the school, it can be difficult to prevent cyber crime or cyber bullying because this type of crime is hard to detect and to discover the character, extent and impact of this.

4.2 Self-reported delinquent behaviour

4.2.1 Descriptive results of self-reported crime

To determine the extent to which young people in Belgium commit criminal offences, respondents were asked about their criminal behavior. They were asked if they committed any of the specifically mentioned forbidden acts. Subsequently they were asked to report how often it had happened during the last twelve months.

Example

Have you ever painted on a wall, train, subway or bus (graffiti)? 'No' or 'Yes'

Follow-up question:
If you ticked 'yes': How often in the last 12 months? … times

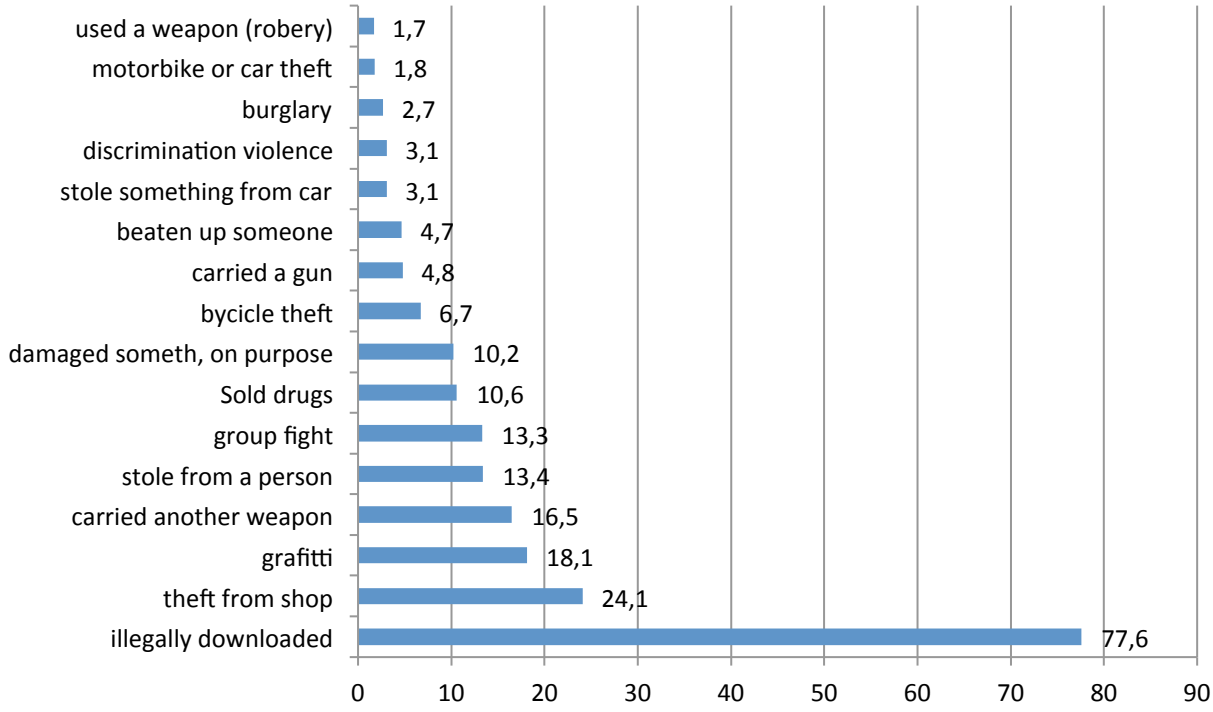


Figure 4.2.1.1: Percentages of respondents who ever committed the different criminal offences that were described.

In the figure above, for each criminal act the percentage of respondents that had ever done this is provided. Although it can be stated that for the most criminal acts the percentages of respondents who reported 'yes' is rather low, for some of these offences we found somewhat, or even considerably higher percentages. Most striking is the relatively high percentage of respondents that

have ever illegally downloaded music or films from the internet (77,6 percent). Also the percentage of questioned youngsters that ever stole something from a shop or department store is rather high (24,1%) even as the percentages for 'graffiti' (18,1%), 'stole something from a person' (13,4%), 'carried a weapon other than a gun' (16,5%), 'took part in a group fight' (13,3%).

It should be noted that the forbidden (or criminal) acts were not very precisely described. For instance, theft from a shop is very broadly defined by asking the question '*Have you ever stolen something from a shop or department store?*' This can be anything varying from sweets to expensive electronic equipment. The same holds for 'carrying another weapon than a gun': this was the case for one sixth of our respondents. However, we don't have information about what kind of weapon (or '*object that could be used as weapon*') they carry. This could be a penknife but also a chain between which there are substantial differences. Also graffiti was broadly defined as '*painted on a wall, train, subway or bus*'. Consequently one has to be cautious while interpreting the results and take into account the possible non-visible differentiation.

Comparison of area's (degree of urbanization)

In figure below the data are grouped by type of area, so that the differences between rural, semi-rural and urban can be observed. Except for carrying a gun and illegal downloading we can state that participants from the semi urban region reported more crime than respondents who attend school in rural or urban area. The lowest percentages of offences were found for the rural area. It should be emphasized that a substantial part of these disparities can be explained by differences *between schools*. For instance, large differences are found between the two schools that are located in Hasselt (semi). Percentages of self-reported offences are in any case much higher for school 9 than for school 3. Also compared to other schools (in Dinant and Brussels), self-reported offences for pupils at school 9 are in general particularly high. We must therefore take into account the possibility that the students in our sample are not representative for the entire student population in the three distinct areas. For this reason the following analyses include all pupils in our data-file (no split by area). Also, the type of school (general, technical, vocational or artistic education) might have a great influence on the behavior of students.

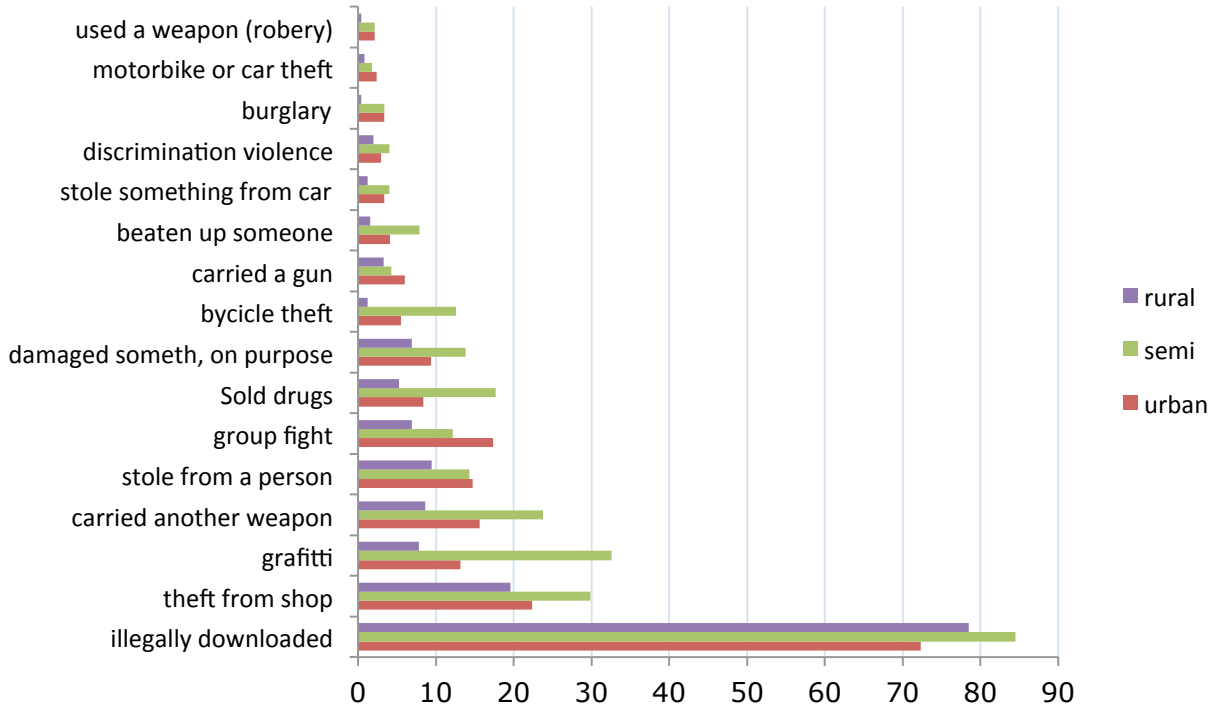


Figure 4.2.1.2: Percentages of respondents who ever committed the different criminal offences that were described, disaggregated by area.

4.2.2 Factors related to offending

A large amount of factors seem to be related to offending as shown in the table below. Correlations between the probabilities of reporting certain criminal acts (rows) and characteristics of respondents (columns) are determined using Spearman's rho. For correlations with variables that are ordinal (sex) an *independent samples T-test* was executed. All positive correlations are denoted with the symbol '+' and negative correlations with the symbol '-'. Empty cells point to the absence of a (significant) correlation. It should be emphasized that statements can only be made on correlations between different variables and not on causal relations. We also point to the fact that the correlations are bivariate, and thus not controlled for factors that possibly relate to both of the concerning variables. For that reason we cannot exclude the possibility that the correlations are spurious (in that case both variables are influenced by another variable). To better understand the mechanisms that lie behind the relations that are found, multivariate analyses need to be done.

Table 4.2.2.1: Spearman correlations between offences and different background- and other characteristics of participants

	Sex (fem)	Age	SES	Victim	Delinquency friends	School attachment	School disorganization	Bonding teacher	School performance	Neighborhood	Truancy
Graffiti			-	+	+		+			-	+
damage	+		-	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	+
Theft from shop			-	+	+	-	+	-		-	+
Burglary	+		-		+	-	+			-	+
Bicycle theft	+	+	-		+		+	-		-	+
theft of car	+		-		+	-	+	-	-	-	+
Stolen from car	+	+	-		+		+	-		-	
robbery	+	+			+					-	+
Theft from person	+			+	+	-	+	-	-	-	
Carried a gun	+	+	-		+	-	+	-	-	-	+
Carried other weapon	+		-	+	+		+	-		-	
Group fight	+	+	-	+	+	-	+		-	-	
Beaten up somebody	+	+	-		+		+	-	-	-	+
Discrimination violence	+				+	-					
Illegally downloading			+	+	+	-					
Sold drugs	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-		-	+

- Sex

An independent sample T-test revealed that, in general, male respondents reported more offences than female participants. No significant differences between sexes were found for graffiti, theft from a shop and illegal downloading.

- Age

Age correlates positively with some of the offences that were described, which means the older the participants are, the more they report certain criminal acts. This is true for bicycle theft, robbery, carrying a gun, taking part in a group fight, beating up somebody and selling drugs.

- SES parents

The socio-economic status of the parents of the respondent is based on the number of incomes in the family. Hence this variable ranges from 0 (neither of the parents has paid employment) to 2 (both parents have paid employment). This variable shows a negative correlation with the most of the criminal acts which implies that, the better the socio-economic situation of the parents is, the smaller the probability to report offences. For three of the offences questioned in the survey no significant relation with 'SES parents' has been found ('robbery', 'theft from a person' and 'discrimination violence'). Furthermore the positive correlation between illegal downloading and SES parents is striking. A possible explanation for this may be that youngsters whose parents possess a better socio-economic status, have more (financial) resources and thus (better) access to the internet. In general it can still be stated that socio-economic status and offending are negatively related to each other.

- Victimization

The often assumed relationship between victimization and offending is also found with our data. Although we cannot make any statements on causality here because the information we have is cross-sectional, we can assign a correlation between victimization and offending. For the greater part of the criminal acts a positive correlation with victimization has been found.

- Delinquency friends

All sixteen offences correlate positively with the scale variable 'delinquency friends'. This demonstrates that friends are of great influence when it comes to criminal behavior. Although there are no significant correlations found between 'opinion of friends' (*how important is it to you what your group of friends think of you?*) and offending.

- School attachment

The more positive participants evaluate their school; the lower is the probability that they report offences. This goes for the greater part of the various criminal acts, except for graffiti, bicycle theft, robbery and beating up somebody.

- School disorganization

A positive relation is found between individual offences and school disorganization. This means: the more stealing, fighting, drugs and vandalism there is ongoing in school (according to the respondent), the more offences are reported by de participants from that school.

- Bonding teacher

Stronger involvement of teachers or strong bonding with teachers is associated with less offending.

- School performance

School performance regards the evaluation of pupils about problem-solving orientation at school, activities that the school organizes for those who don't do well enough in school and activities that give information on topics like sexuality; drugs, violence or peaceful conflict resolution. The more positive the students evaluate the performance of their school; the smaller the probability of reporting offences. This was not true for all the offences that were submitted, but still for six of them.

- Neighbourhood

Participants evaluated their neighborhood on the basis of 14 statements (e.g.: '*People in this neighborhood generally get along well with each other'*). It seems to be true that a positive evaluation of the neighborhood goes along with a higher probability of reporting forbidden acts. From this we presume that besides the school also the residential context - or rather the way young people evaluate their neighborhood - can be designated as an influential context when it comes to youth delinquency and deviance. In terms of prevention it is therefore important to pay attention to the residential environment of young adults.

- Truancy

In most cases truancy is positively related to offending.

4.2.3 Frequency of offending

Respondents who reported offenses were asked how often they committed the criminal act that was described during the last 12 months. For the respondents who answered the first question ('Have you ever…?') with 'yes' the frequency is provided in the table below. Since extreme scores could

strongly influence mean scores and to get a reliable image of the frequency of offending also the median is given in this table. From all questioned offences, the median scores were highest for 'theft from a shop' and 'illegal downloading'.

Table 4.2.2.2: 'How often during the last 12 months?'

	Mean	Median	Min	Max	N
graffiti	3,5	2,0	0	150	236
damaged something on purpose	12,7	1,0	0	900	154
theft from shop	8,3	49,0	0	366	269
burglary	7,8	1,0	0	126	106
bycicle theft	14,3	1,0	0	656	132
motorbike or car theft	6,4	1,0	0	60	101
stole something from car	2,8	1,0	0	25	105
used a weapon (robbery)	7,9	2,0	0	58	98
stole from a person	2,6	1,0	0	54	193
carried a gun	30,1	3,0	0	365	116
carried another weapon	60,8	3,5	0	365	193
group fight	5,4	2,0	0	104	171
beaten up someone	3,5	1,0	0	20	115
discrimination violence	44,0	2,5	0	700	106
illegal downloading	640,5	20,0	0	160.000	611
sold drugs	16,2	3,0	0	200	159

4.2.4 Contact with police

11.9 percent (N=124) of the respondents reported that they ever had contact with the police because they did something illegal. The average number of times they were in contact with the police during the twelve months before the survey was held is 2.7 (range 0-90, st. dev. 8.59). The respondents who have been in contact with the police were asked because of which offence this was the last time. A wide variety of offences was mentioned here. The most frequently reported offences are theft (N=18), vandalism (N=12) and violence (N=10).

Based on statistical correlations, we can conclude that male respondents have more contact with the police than females. Also the probability to come into contact with the police increases with age. Furthermore occupation of parents (socio-economic position) is positively related to contact with the

police, even as delinquency of friends and school disorganization (stealing, fighting, vandalism and drug use in school). Finally, attachment to school goes with a lower probability of contact with the police.

4.3 Self-reported alcohol and substance use

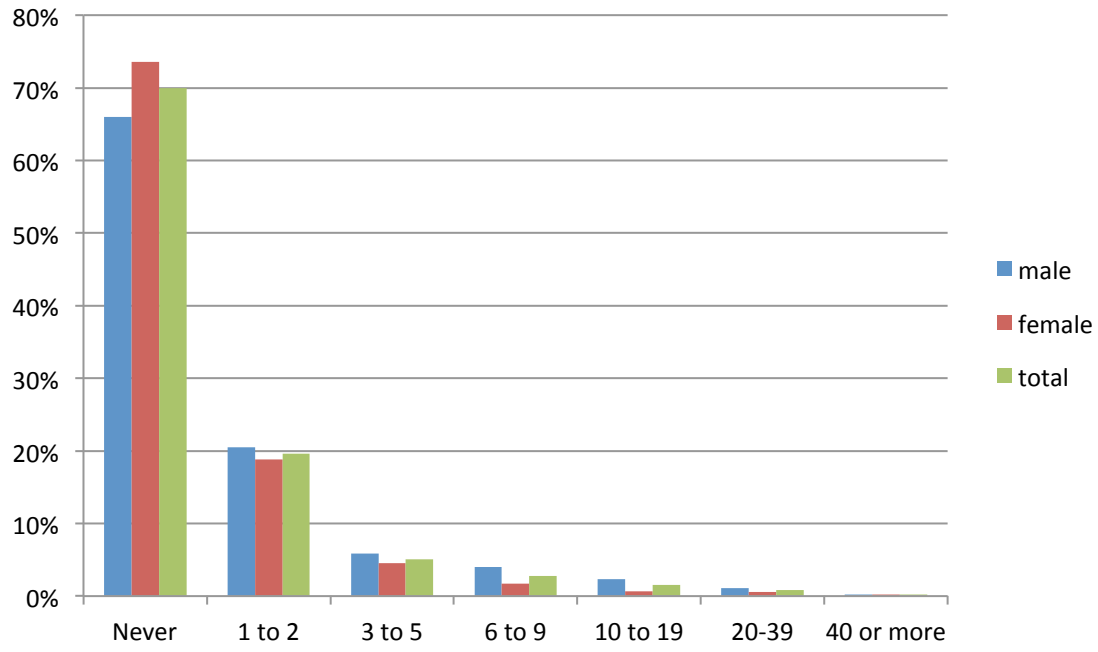
4.3.1 Descriptive findings of alcohol and substance use

Participants were asked about their experiences with alcohol, soft drugs and hard drugs. For alcohol and cannabis 3 time periods were placed:

- On how many occasions in his/her lifetime did participant have enough alcohol to make him/her drunk?
- On how many occasions during the last 12 months
- During the last 30 days.

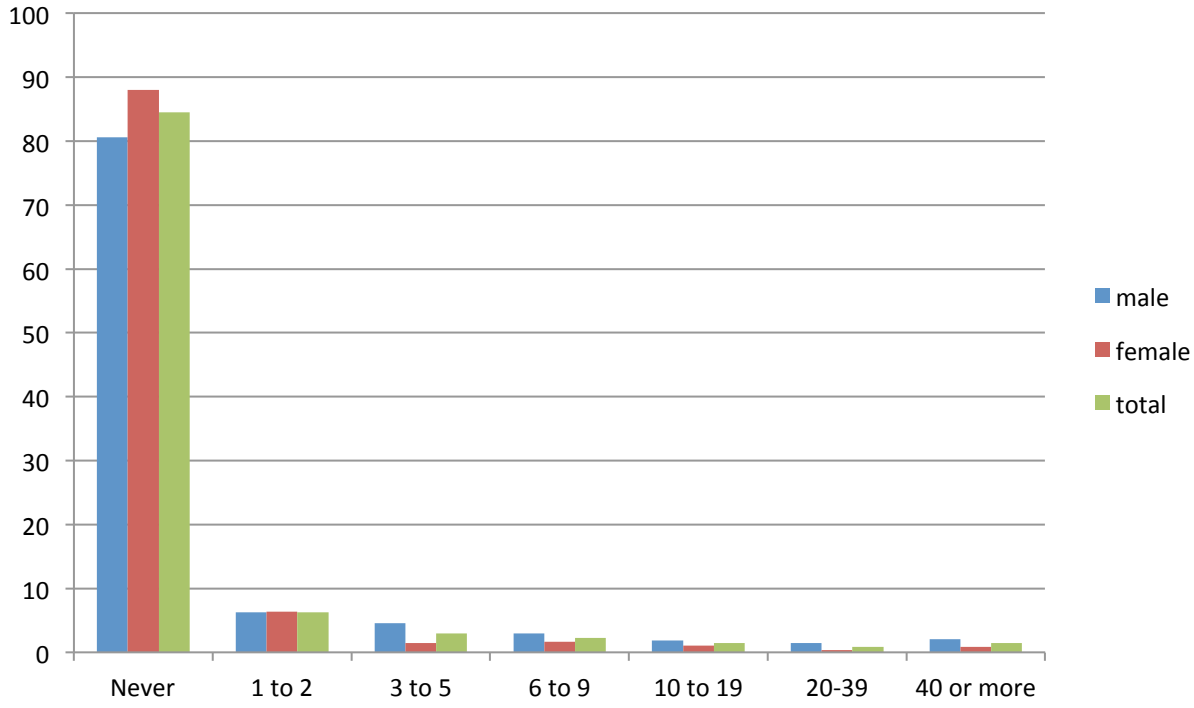
For the use of hard drugs participants were only asked whether and how many times they have tried hard drugs in their lifetime. We chose to demonstrate the use of alcohol and cannabis in the last 30 days because respondents might remember this better than the other 2 questions and the answers are possibly more valid. In this section, results and differences in sex, age and schools will be discussed.

- Sex



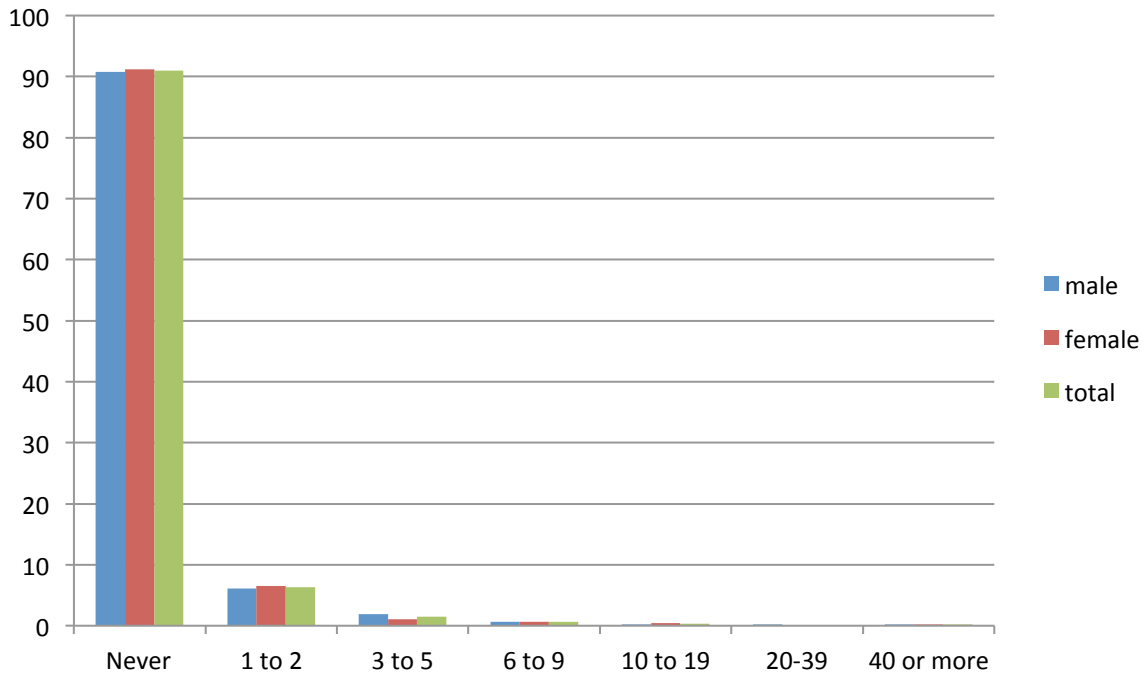
Graph 4.3.1.1: 'On how many occasions during the last 30 days had participant enough alcohol to make him/her drunk?'

The most respondents (70,1%) weren't drunk on any occasion during the last 30 days. Compared to alcohol use in their lifetime, 49,3% were never drunk on any occasion.
There is a small difference in sex notable: a higher percentage of girls never had enough alcohol to get drunk, although the majority of both boys and girls replied 'never'. When looking at the other categories (more than once drunk), boys have higher frequencies.



Graph 4.3.1.2: 'On how many occasions in the last 30 days has participant had cannabis?'

84,5% of respondents didn't use cannabis in the last 30 days and 74,6% never used it in their lifetime. Here, we notice the same trend as on alcohol use: boys used more often cannabis than girls. There are some respondents who declare a problematic use of soft drugs. The use of alcohol and drugs can be important for the comprehensive approach of prevention, as violence occurs more often among youngsters who drink alcohol and/or use drugs (Van der Laan & Nijboer, 2000; Van der Laan e.a., 2006). The fact that boys report more drugs and alcohol use than girls is not new and may point out that boys show possibly more experimental behaviour or even macho behaviour.



Graph 4.3.1.3: 'On how many occasions has participant had…: ritalin, anabolic steroids, tranquilizer, ecstasy, glue, LSD, mushrooms, heroin/cocaine/crack, medical pills?'

Respondents were inquired after their experiences with hard drugs in their lifetime. They replied on how many occasions they have had any of the substances above. The figure shows the mean score on all the questions about these substances. 91% (921 of 1021 respondents) never used any of these drugs. There is almost no difference between both sexes.

In the last question, participants were asked if they have ever tried other substances. 7 respondents indicated the use of MDMA, 5 respondents laxative and 1 replied ketamine.

- Age

Respondents with the age of 16,17 and 18 used alcohol the most often in the last 30 days (see app. 4.3.1.4, 4.3.1.5 and 4.3.1.6). 13-15 year-old respondents seem to use less alcohol and drugs. A comparison between these 2 groups was made, as the minimum age for alcohol consumption in Belgium is 16 years and this might have an influence on the effective use. The Independent Sample T-Test showed a significant difference in mean score between the 2 groups (13-15 and 16-18).

84,5% of all respondents indicate that they didn't use cannabis in the last 30 days. The younger the age of participants, the less they have used it. A few participants with age 16-18 used cannabis very often in the last 30 days. It is possible that in this case, we can't speak anymore of experimental behaviour but problematic drug use.

Of 1013 respondents, 922 (91%) have never used substances such as Ritalin, anabolic steroids, ecstasy, glue, tranquilizer or sedative, LSD or other hallucinogens, magic mushrooms, heron/cocaine/crack or medical pills in combination with alcohol.

We can conclude that youngsters, especially between 15-18 may experiment with drugs a few times but we absolutely can't speak of problematic drug use. In the last 3 columns (10-19; 20-39; 40 or more) there is only 1 respondent that indicates this frequency of drug use.

- Schools

Table 4.3.1.7: Use of substances by school

Area	School	Never drunk in 30 days (%)	Once or more drunk	Never used soft drugs in 30 days	Once or more cannabis	Never used hard drugs	Once or more hard drugs
Urban	Nr 8	90,3	9,7	87,1	12,9	87,1	12,9
	Nr 7	70,7	29,3	90,2	9,8	97,7	2,3
	Nr 15	75,0	25,0	75,0	25,0	90,0	10,0
	Nr 6	83,3	16,7	91,7	8,3	84,6	15,4
	Nr 5	82,1	17,9	94,9	5,1	100,0	0
	Nr 12	40,0	60,0	55,6	44,4	88,9	11,1
	Nr 14	94,1	5,9	97,0	3,0	91,4	8,6
	Nr 2	73,7	26,3	93,7	6,3	97,5	2,5
	Nr 1	65,8	34,2	83,1	16,9	95,8	4,2
	Nr 10	71,8	28,2	87,2	12,8	88,3	11,7
Semi	Nr 9	47,1	52,9	55,6	44,6	71,8	28,2
	Nr 3	57,1	42,9	76,3	23,7	85,5	14,5
Rural	Nr 4	78,6	21,4	81,5	18,5	100,0	0
	Nr 11	86,5	13,5	95,3	4,7	95,2	4,8
	Nr 13	63,0	37,0	84,4	15,6	93,2	6,8

The table above shows the percentages of students in each school who weren't drunk and didn't use soft drugs in the last 30 days and never used hard drugs in their lifetime. The other categories: 1-2, 3-5, 6-9, 10-19, 20-39, 40 or more were put together in 1 category, namely: *once or more*.

There is little difference in percentages of participants that never used hard drugs from school to school. Students from school 12 and school 9 reported more alcohol and soft drug use than students

from other schools. But, we should take into account the total number of participants in the surveyed schools. For example, in school 12 only 10 pupils were surveyed (so 40% means 4 respondents) and in school 3, the number of participants is 287. This is a huge difference and makes it difficult to compare alcohol and substance use in schools.

4.3.2 Factors related to alcohol and drug use

Correlations between the reported alcohol and drug use and specific characteristics of repondents are determined using Spearman's rho. All positive correlations are denoted with symbol '+' and negative correlations with the symbol (-). Empty cells point to the absence of a significant correlation. It should be emphasized that statements can only be made on correlations between different variables and not on causal relations.

Table 4.3.2: Spearman correlations between alcohol/drug use and different background- and other characteristics of participants

	Times drunk in last 30 days	**Times cannabis in last 30 days**	**Times hard drugs**
Supervision	-	-	-
School attachment	-	-	-
School disorganization	+	+	+
Bonding teacher	-	-	-
School performance			
Self control	-	-	-
Bonding family	-	-	-
Neighbourhood	-	-	-
SES		-	
Information given about alcohol & drugs	+	+	+
Delinquent friends	+	+	+
Truancy		+	

- Supervision

Supervision correlates negatively with alcohol and drug use: the more supervision from parents, the less alcohol/drug use that participants reported.

- School attachment

School attachment correlates negatively with alcohol and drug use. This means: the more positive that participants are about their school, the less self-reported drug and alcohol use.

- School disorganization

There is a positive association between school disorganization and alcohol and drug use. The more fighting, stealing, drugs and vandalism at school (according to the respondents), the more reported alcohol and drug use.

- Bonding with teacher

Bonding with teachers at school is associated with less alcohol and drug use: the more that participants are bonded with their teachers, the less alcohol and drug use.

- School performance

No significant association between school performance and alcohol or drug use.

- Self-control

The degree of self-control of participants is measured by 7 items.

These items were put into a scale 'self-control': the higher the score on the scale, the more self-control. Self-control correlates negatively with alcohol and drug use: the more self-control of participants, the less alcohol and drug use they report.

- Bonding with family

Bonding with family correlates negatively with alcohol and drug use: the more participants are bonded with their family, the less they were drunk or used drugs.

- Neighbourhood

There is a negative association between neighbourhood evaluation and alcohol and drug use: the more positive that participants are about their neighbourhood, the less alcohol and drug use they report.

- Socio-economic status

No significant correlation with socio-economic status of parents, except for soft drug use: the higher economic status of parents (0= neither of parents has paid employment, 2=both parents have paid employment), the less reported use of cannabis.

- Information given about alcohol and drugs

Information about alcohol and drugs correlates possitively with alcohol and drug use: if participants were given information about alcohol and drugs in the last 12 months, they reported more alcohol and drug use. This can for example mean that their curiosity was perhaps aroused by this activity and inspired youngsters to use alcohol or drugs.

- Truancy

There is a positive association between truancy and cannabis use: the more often that participants have skipped classes without excuse, the more they reported soft drug use. There is no significant correlation for alcohol use and hard drug use.

4.4 Prevention of delinquent behavior

4.4.1 Preventive role of school

Participants were asked for their opinion about school's influence on reducing students' violent behaviour and alcohol and drug use.

- How much influence can school have on keeping students away from alcohol or drugs by participants' opinion?
- How much influence can school have on reducing students' violent behavior by participants' opinion?

The graph below shows the percentages of how much influence school has according to the respondents. We can carefully state that the respondents do not foresee a large influence of school for both the prevention of alcohol and violence.

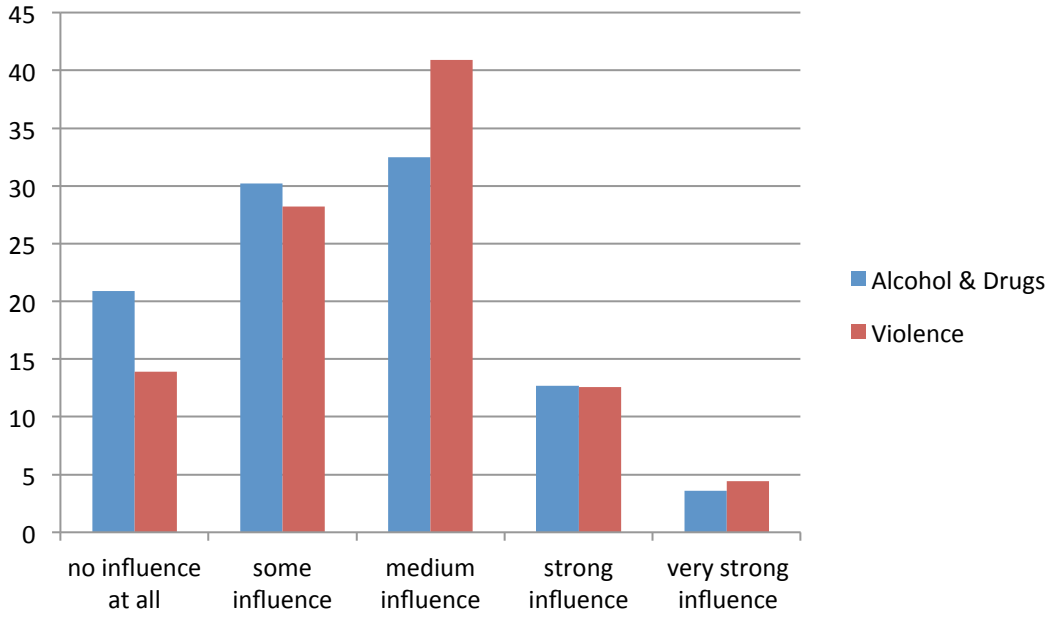


Figure 4.4.1: Descriptive results of participants opinions on the role of the school in keeping students away from alcohol or drugs and on reducing student's violent behavior

4.4.2 Prevention methods

Participants were asked for their opinion about what works in prevention of delinquent behaviour: *'What do you think would work when trying to keep young people from doing forbidden things (like violence, stealing something, taking drugs)?'*

When we take a look at the results, each item 'works' according to the majority of participants. 'Listening to sorrows and problems' has the highest score on what works according to the students.

It must be stated that the way of questionning might influence the high scores on the category 'works' by each item. If opinions would have been demanded by open questions, the answers would probably look different.

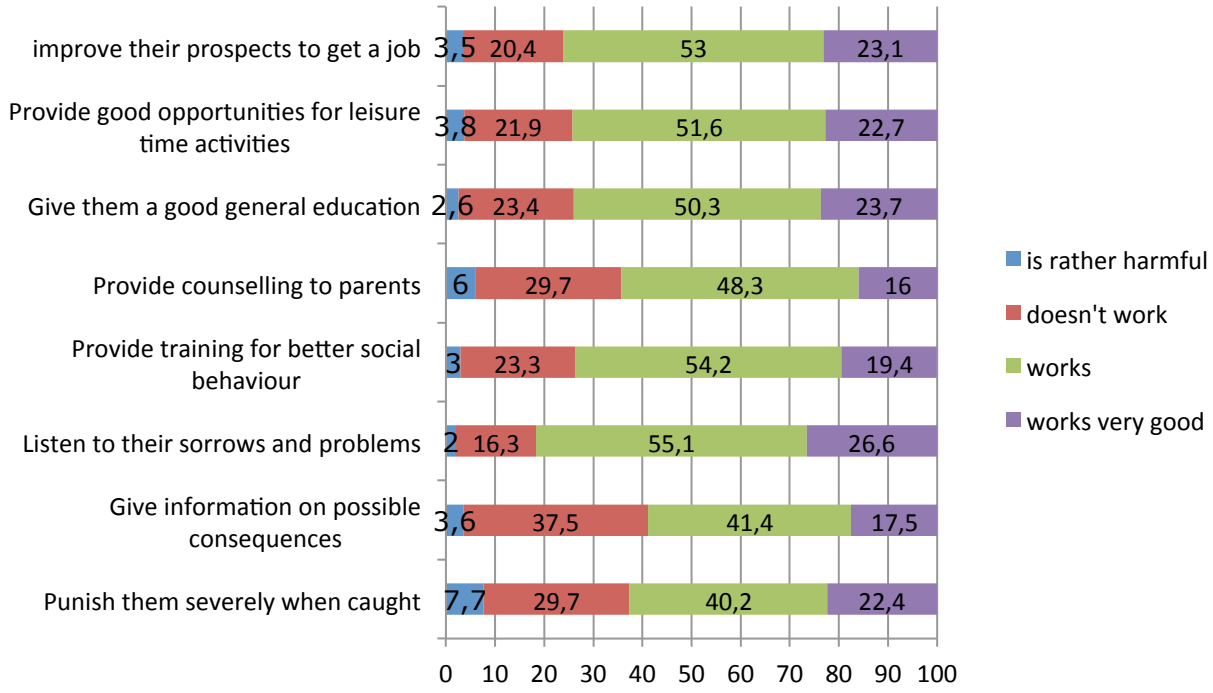


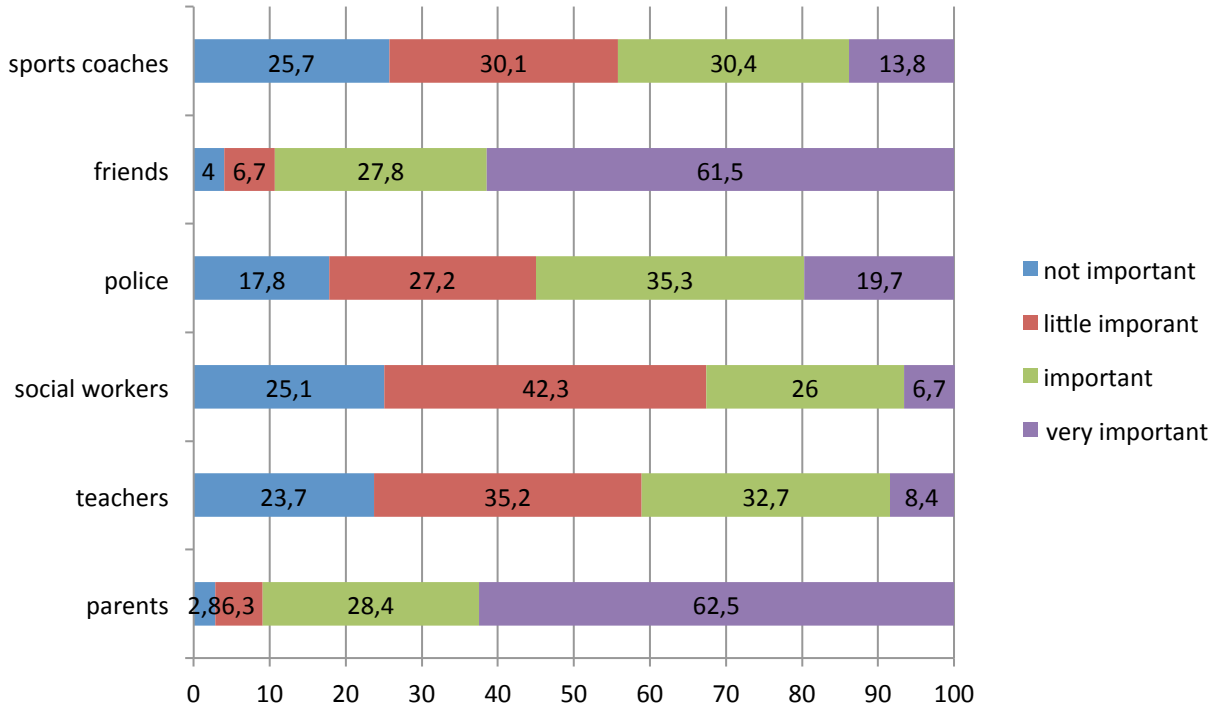
Figure 4.4.2: Descriptive results of opinions of participants on prevention methods

Some participants indicated other prevention methods that would work or work very good in their opinion. Because frequencies of these methods are very low, we just mention a few of them: 3 participants indicated 'sports', 3 participants 'corporal punishment', 3 respondents prefer prison, and 2 chose for tolerance.

4.4.3 Prevention actors

Participants were asked for their opinion about who has a preventive role in juvenile delinquency: *'In your opinion, who is important when trying to keep young people from doing forbidden things?'*

Table 4.4.3: Descriptive results of opinions of participants on which persons are important in prevention



The results in the table show that parents and friends are the most important actors when it comes to prevention according to the surveyed youngsters. It is obvious that young people underline the value of informal preventive actors rather than the formal preventive actors like social workers and police.

Participants were able to mention other important actors by an open question. 13 respondents quoted that family is an important actor, 15 respondents mentioned brothers and sisters and 6 respondents mentioned boyfriend or girlfriend.

4.4.4 Experiences with prevention

Another question dealt with experiences of youth violence prevention. Table 4.4.4. shows that the majority (77.7 %) never took part in activities directed at preventing youth violence. We would also like to point to the relatively high number of missing values. This may tell us something about the knowledge of young people. Besides the fact that they might never have been targeted by prevention activities, it could also imply that the youngsters simply do not perceive certain prevention activities as such.

Table 4.4.4. Experiences of activities of violence prevention

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	No	822	77.7	81.7	81.7
	Yes	184	17.4	18.3	100.0
	Total	1006	95.1	100.0	
Missing		52	4.9		
Total		1058	100.0		

4.4.5 Comparison offender/non-offender

A comparison between participants who ever committed one or more of the criminal acts that were mentioned in the 'offending-part' was made. We thus compare participants that never committed any of the mentioned forbidden acts with participants that ever committed one or more of the mentioned offences. For this purpose an *independent samples T-test* has been used. In comparison to pupils that never committed a criminal fact, youth that broke the law at least once attaches (significantly) less importance to teachers, social workers and the police, and puts more importance to friends in trying to keep young people from doing forbidden things. The 'criminal group' is also less positive about almost all prevention methods than the group of pupils that did not report any of the mentioned offences. Less positive about:

- Punish them severely when caught
- Give information on possible consequences
- Provide training for better social behavior
- Provide counseling to their parents
- Give them a good general education

It can be interesting to investigate the meaning of these attitudes in further research and to explore which initiatives the 'criminal group' think are good. For them, the importance is possibly more concrete than just friends in prevention. Otherwise, it can signify that they attach a lot of importance to the influence of friends, which relates to the previous results discussed results on judgements of friends (page 14).

4.4.6 Information about alcohol, drugs and other harmful substances

Respondents were asked if they have been given information on alcohol, drugs, and other harmful substances in the last 12 months. 390 participants (36,9%) answered this question with 'no', 626 participants (59,9%) answered 'yes'. The latter group of participants was also requested to indicate where and/or by whom they were informed about these things. As shown by the figure, most information has been given at school by the teacher.

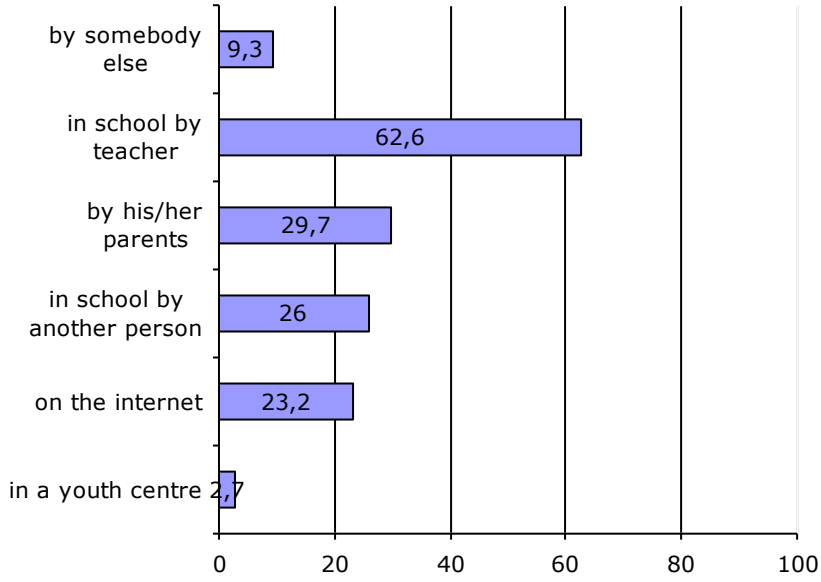


Figure 4.4.5: Participant had been given information about alcohol and harmful substances

58 participants stated that they were informed by somebody else than the persons provided. The vast majority, made up of 39 respondents, has written down 'by a friend'. Other persons that were mentioned are: 'boyfriend/girlfriend', 'brother/sister', 'worker of center for drug and alcohol problems (CAD)', 'on the street', 'TV', 'a doctor', 'the radio'. We can in someway state that the surveyed youngsters have little knowledge of official information that is being exposed everywhere.

5 Conclusion

This national report discusses the findings from the ISRD 3 based school survey in Belgium. This type of survey implies important methodological limitations that are strongly present in our study as well. Therefore it was difficult or even impossible to generalise the results to the population. Schools were selected in a pragmatic way because of difficulties with the response rate and the willingness to participate which leaded to an unequal amount of schools for the three regions, resulting in a very

different number of respondents in each school. That's why we were very cautious to (and actually did not) focus on the degree of urbanization. Another important remark is that in the Belgian survey, no distinction was made between school types so this variable was not included in our analysis.

The school survey was held in 15 different schools located in 3 areas: urban, semi-rural and rural. The respondents of our sample are aged 13 to 18.

According to the goal of the ISRD, we tested some theoretical issues related to juvenile delinquency by statistical analysis. In general, similar findings with what literature says around juvenile delinquency resulted from our study. For example, the influence of peers still seems very important for young people. Victimization correlates with offending, although we don't know anything about the relation. Some factors related to offending are sex (male), age, socioeconomic status of parents, delinquent friends, school climate and bonding with neighbourhood. The offences most committed are 'theft from a shop' and 'illegal downloading'. The associations were described but we must repeat that we don't know what is behind these correlations.

According to the respondents, school has a greater influence in the prevention of violence than in the prevention of alcohol and drug use. Participants think that every prevention method works on keeping young people from doing forbidden things. 'Listening to sorrows and problems' works the most for them, 'give information on possible consequences' the least. For the young respondents, informal preventive actors like parents, friends and family are more important than formal preventive actors. For the participants who ever committed one or more offences, friends are more important in keeping young people from doing forbidden things.

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7 Attachments

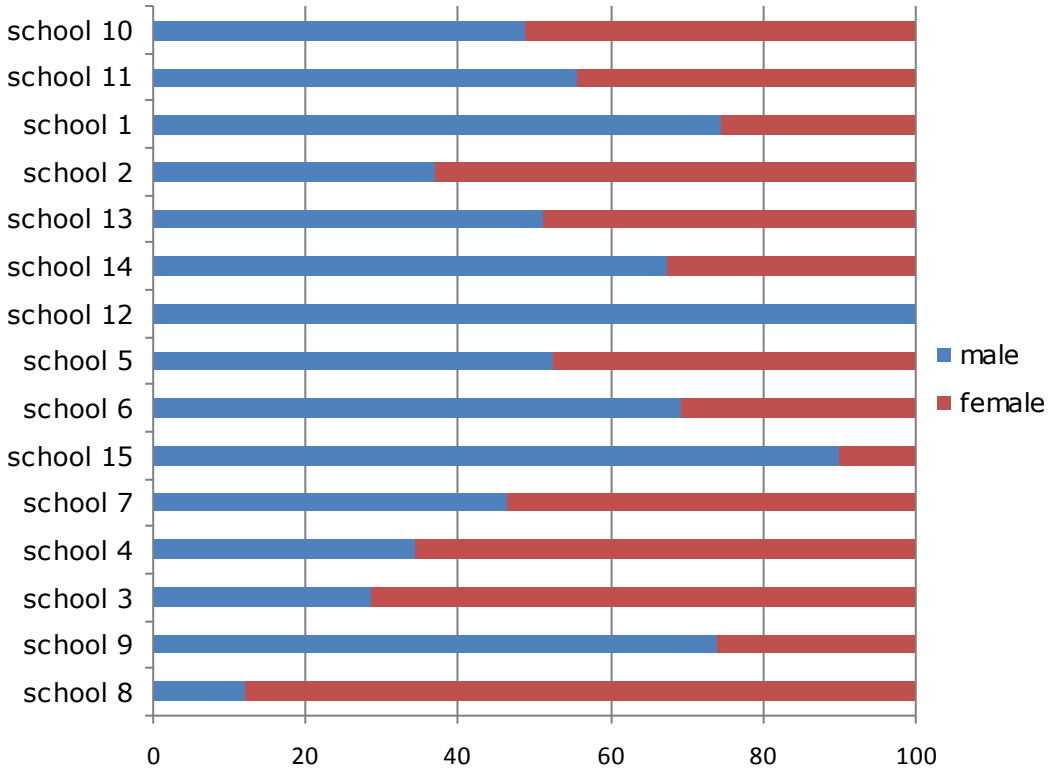
Appendix 3.2.1: Distribution of respondents per age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
13	2	0,2
14	137	12,9
15	301	28,4
16	259	24,5
17	201	19,0
18	158	14,9
Total	1058	0,2

Appendix 3.2.2: Average age in surveyed schools, divided into the distinct areas

	School	**Average Age**	**Minimum Age**	**Maximum Age**
Urban	School 8	16,6	15	18
	School 7	16,3	14	18
	School 15	16,5	15	18
	School 6	17,2	16	18
	School 5	17,1	15	18
	School 12	17,5	17	18
	School 14	16,2	14	18
	School 2	16,3	14	18
	School 1	16,4	14	18
	School 10	15,2	14	18
Semi	School 9	17,1	15	18
	School 3	15,5	13	18
Rural	School 4	17,4	16	18
	School 11	14,9	13	16
	School 13	17	16	18

Appendix 3.3: Sex ratio per school

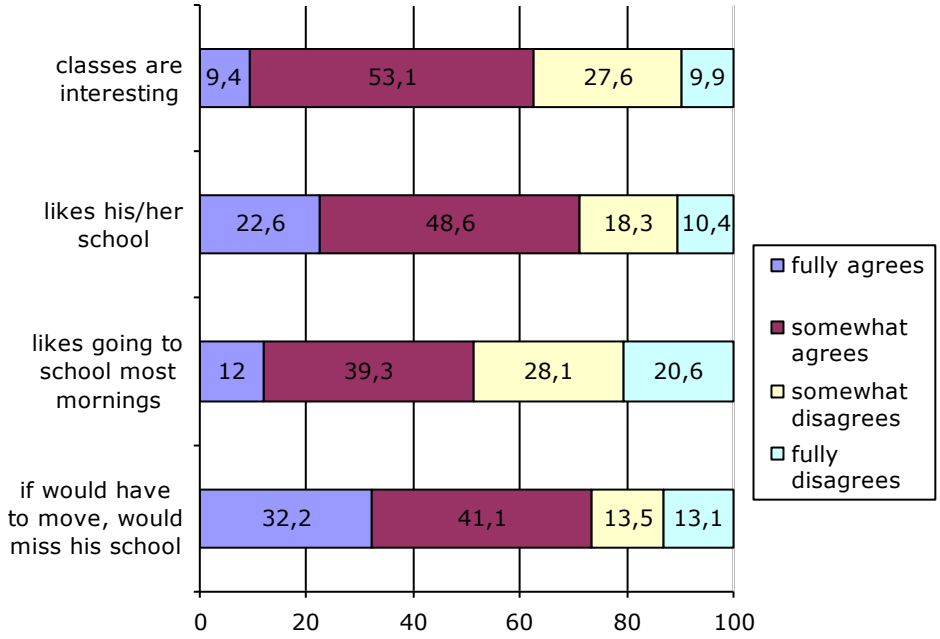


Appendix 3.6.2: *(migrant-) background of respondents*

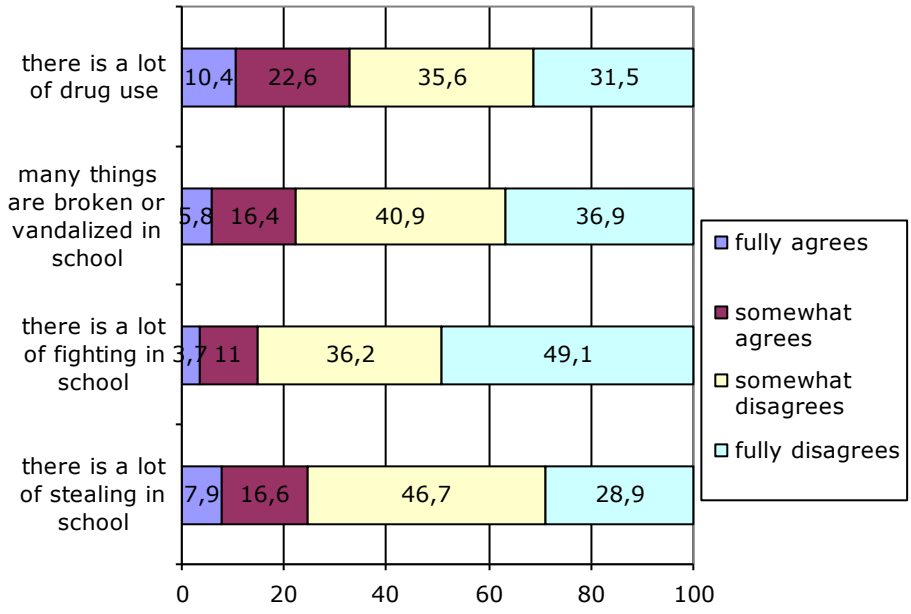
	Native		Second Generation		First generation		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Urban	183	38,4	177	37,1	117	24,5	477	100
Semi	241	72,4	56	16,8	36	10,8	333	100
Rural	226	91,5	17	6,9	4	1,6	247	100
Total	650	61,5	250	23,7	157	14,9	1057	100

Appendix 4.1.2 School climate

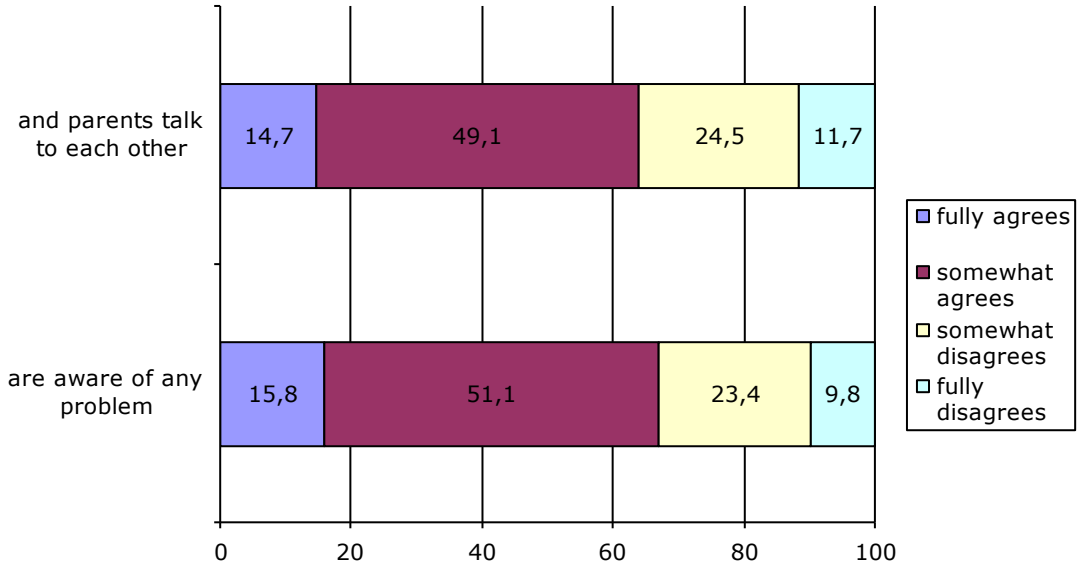
a) school attachment *("Participant thinks that…")*



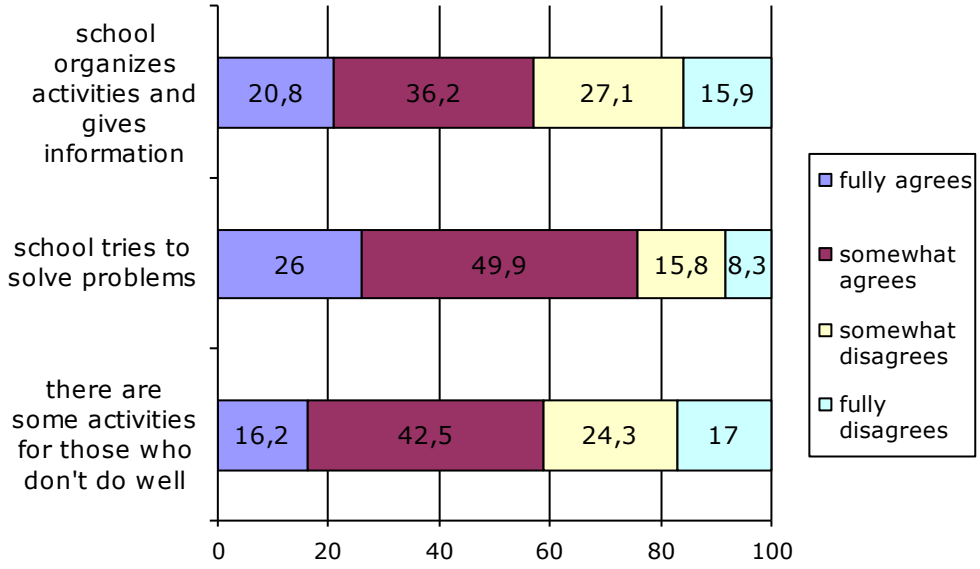
b) school disorganization *("Participant thinks that…")*



c) bonding with teacher *("Participant thinks that teachers…")*



d) School performance *("Participant thinks that…")*



Appendix 4.3.1.4: Drunkenness in the last 30 days by age

Age	Never	1-2	3-5	6-9	10-19	20-39	40 or more	total
13	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
14	116 (85,9%)	14 (10,4%)	4 (3%)	1 (0,7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	135 (100%)
15	211 (72%)	60 (20,5%)	9 (3,1%)	9 (3,1%)	2 (0,7%)	1 (0,3%)	1 (0,3%)	293 (100%)
16	162 (64,3%)	57 (22,6%)	19 (7,5%)	8 (3,2%)	5 (2%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	252 (100%)
17	121 (65,4%)	40 (21,6%)	9 (4,9%)	4 (2,2%)	4 (2,2%)	6 (3,2%)	1 (5%)	185 (100%)
18	97 (66,9%)	27 (18,6%)	11 (7,6%)	6 (4,1%)	4 (2,8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	145 (100%)
Total	709 (70,1%)	198 (19,6%)	52 (5,1%)	28 (2,8%)	15 (1,5%)	8 (0,8%)	2 (0,2%)	1012 (100%)

Appendix 4.3.1.5: Use of soft drugs in the last 30 days by age

Age	Never	1-2	3-5	6-9	10-19	20-39	40 or more	total
13	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
14	124 (91,2%)	7 (5,1%)	2 (1,5%)	1 (0,7%)	2 (1,5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	136 (100%)
15	255 (88,2%)	17 (5,9%)	7 (2,4%)	7 (2,4%)	1 (0,3%)	1 (0,3%)	1 (0,3%)	289 (100%)
16	210 (82,4%)	19 (7,5%)	8 (3,1%)	6 (2,4%)	6 (2,4%)	4 (1,6%)	2 (0,8%)	255 (100%)
17	147 (80,8%)	10 (5,5%)	9 (4,9%)	5 (2,7%)	3 (1,6%)	1 (0,5%)	7 (3,8%)	182 (100%)
18	115 (79,3%)	11 (7,6%)	4 (2,8%)	4 (2,8%)	3 (2,1%)	3 (2,1%)	5 (3,4%)	145 (100%)
Total	853 (84,5%)	64 (6,3%)	30 (3%)	23 (2,3%)	15 (1,5%)	9 (0,9%)	15 (1,5 %)	1009 (100%)

Appendix 4.3.1.6: Use of hard drugs in lifetime by age

age	Never	1-2	3-5	6-9	10-19	20-39	40 or more	total
13	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
14	124 (94,7%)	4 (3,1%)	2 (1,5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0,8%)	131 (100%)
15	270 (91,2%)	21 (7,1%)	2 (0,7%)	1 (0,3%)	1 (0,3%)	1 (0,3%)	0 (0%)	296 (100%)
16	227 (90,1%)	19 (7,5%)	4 (1,6%)	2 (0,8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	252 (100%)
17	163 (88,6%)	14 (7,6%)	4 (2,2%)	2 (1,1%)	1 (0,7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	184 (100%)
18	136 (91,9%)	6 (4,1%)	3 (2%)	1 (0,7%)	1 (0,7%)	0 (0%)	1 (0,7%)	148 (100%)
total	922 (91%)	64 (6,3%)	15 (1,5%)	6 (0,6%)	3 (0,3%)	1 (0,1%)	1 (0,1%)	1013 (100%)