



get support



learn more



take action

end violence against  
children **nOW**

be a part of changing  
the world **forever**

public perceptions on  
violence against children  
what adults had to say

## reference

---

**Office** Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People  
**Report** Violence Against Children Survey 2017  
**Date** December 2017



## contact us

---

**Phone** 02 9248 0970  
**Email** [acyp@acyp.nsw.gov.au](mailto:acyp@acyp.nsw.gov.au)  
**Website** [www.acyp.nsw.gov.au](http://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au)

### Street and mail address

NSW Advocate for Children and Young People  
Ground Floor, 219-241 Cleveland Street, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012  
The Advocate for Children and Young People is under the FACS ABN 80 597 369 676

## connect with us

---



**Twitter**  
[twitter.com/acypNSW](https://twitter.com/acypNSW)



**Facebook**  
[facebook.com/acypNSW](https://facebook.com/acypNSW)



**Instagram**  
[instagram.com/acypNSW](https://instagram.com/acypNSW)



**YouTube**  
[youtube.com/c/acypNSW](https://youtube.com/c/acypNSW)

We wish to pay our respects to Aboriginal elders – past, present and emerging – and acknowledge the important role of Aboriginal people and culture within the NSW community. ACYP advises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers this report may contain images of people who may have passed away.

# Contents

- Background..... 4**
- Methodology..... 4**
- Summary..... 6**
- Key Findings..... 8**

## Background

The NSW Advocate for Children and Young People works to improve the welfare and wellbeing of all children and young people in NSW. This involves engaging the children and young people of NSW and collecting feedback and input and working to ensure children's views are heard by decision-makers.

Its activities include:

- making recommendations to Parliament and government and non-government agencies on legislation, policies, practices and services that affect children and young people;
- promoting children and young people's participation in activities and decision-making about issues that affect their lives;
- conducting research into children's and young people's issues and monitoring children's and young people's well-being;
- providing information to help children and young people.

The NSW Advocate for Children and Young People has commissioned Galaxy Research to undertake a poll among the general population 18 years and older living in NSW to gauge their attitudes towards violence against children. The findings from the study will provide input into policy development and communications strategies to increase awareness of child safety issues and improve the welfare of children and young people across NSW.

This report documents the findings of the 2017 Violence Against Children Survey.

## Methodology

The 2017 Violence Against Children Survey was administered online among a sample of 1,006 respondents 18 years and older living in New South Wales. The sample was sourced from an online community MyOpinions, managed by Survey Sampling International in Australia. Respondents were sent an invitation to participate in the survey via an email with a link to the online questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed by the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People in conjunction with Galaxy Research.

The sample was post-weighted using the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics population estimates for NSW.

### Sample Composition (unweighted)

Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
1,006	502	504	298	274	242	192

Total	Location		Speak a language other than English at home	
	Sydney	Rest of NSW	Yes	No
1,006	626	380	126	880

Comparisons between proportions for different demographic groups have been made using a 2-tailed z test with significant differences reported at the 95% significance level.



# violence against children

## what adults in NSW had to say

Top 5 responses when asked what forms violence against children can take:



physical abuse



verbal abuse



emotional abuse



sexual abuse



punching /beating



of people in NSW believe that violence against children is more prevalent in some communities

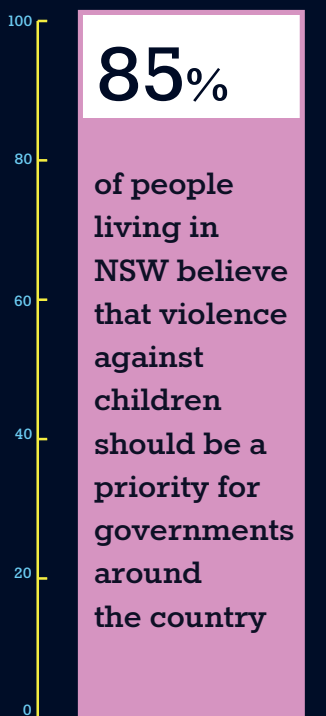
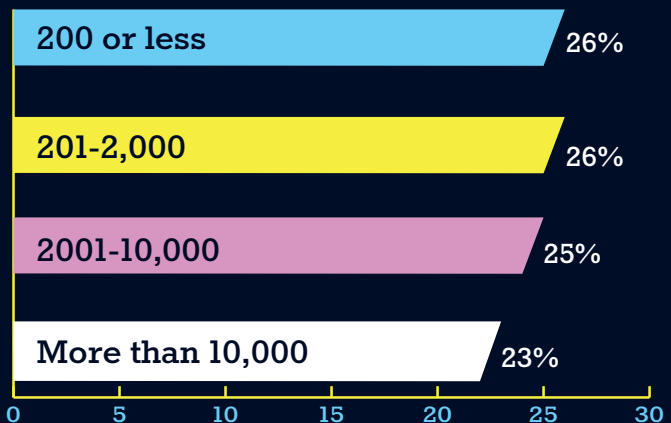
On average, people think that about

**1 in 5**

cases of children reporting abuse are not true



Estimated number of children in NSW who are victims of violence



more than **4 in 5** (82%) people living in NSW would support a campaign raising awareness of violence against children

**41%**



say they would be prepared to pay a levy that was invested in programs that are proven to reduce violence against children

## Summary

1. When people 18 years and older living in NSW were asked what forms they thought violence against children could take, they were most likely to mention physical abuse (60%), emotional / mental / psychological abuse (40%), verbal abuse (28%), hitting / punching / whipping / slapping / beating (26%), sexual abuse (19%) and neglect/ mistreatment / starving (10%).
2. The locations where children are thought to be most at risk of violence are at home (82%), at school (70%) and online (59%) while the locations where children are thought to be least at risk of violence are at daycare / creche (28%), in community groups / centres (23%) and at work (19%).
3. On average, people living in NSW think that about 1 in 5 (19%) cases of children reporting abuse are not true. Overall, 13% think all cases where a child reports abuse are true, 49% think up to 25% of cases where children report abuse are not true, 11% think 25%-50% of cases where children report abuse are not true and just 7% think it is more than 50% of cases. The remaining 20% say they don't know.
4. While the majority of people living in NSW think it is never okay to bash (94%) or hit (72%) men and those 50 years and older are more likely to think there are circumstances when it is acceptable to hit a child.
5. The vast majority (88%) of people living in NSW say they would classify emotional / mental abuse as violence against children. Women, those 65 years and older and those living in regional and rural NSW are more likely to say they would classify emotional / mental abuse as violence against children.
6. When asked to estimate the number of children in NSW who are victims of violence, 26% think it is 200 or less, 26% think it is between 200 and 2,000 children, 25% think it is between 2,000 and 10,000 children and 23% think it is more than 10,000 children in NSW.
7. More than three quarters (77%) of people in NSW think that violence against children is more prevalent in some communities. Those who speak English at home are more likely to think that violence against children is more prevalent in some communities.
8. Those who believe there are communities who have a lower incidence of violence against children were most likely to mention wealthy/affluent/upper class (26%), middle class (9%), Australian / European/white communities (9%) and well-educated communities (7%).
9. Almost four in five (78%) people living in NSW say they would report the issue to police if they became aware of a child who was a victim of violence, 62% would report the issue to the Department of Family and Community Services, 24% to the school / club / institution the child is in and 21% to family and/or friends.
10. One in four (25%) people living in NSW say they know of family members, friends or neighbours who have been the victims of child violence while one in three (32%) say they have heard of violence in their community but they don't personally know anyone involved. The remaining 43% are not aware of any child violence in their community.
11. Almost two thirds (64%) of people living in NSW say they are optimistic that violence against children can be reduced while one in ten (11%) are not optimistic and 26% are neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Men, those 18-34 years and those who speak a language other than English at home are more likely to say they are optimistic that violence against children can be reduced.
12. Almost two thirds (63%) of people living in NSW believe there is action being taken to prevent violence against children while one in ten (10%) do not believe this and 27% neither



believe nor disbelieve that action is being taken to prevent violence against children. Men are more likely to believe action is being taken to prevent violence against children while women, those who are 50 years and older and those living in regional and rural NSW are more likely to believe no action is being taken to prevent violence against children.

13. People living in NSW are most likely to rank families (41%) and the justice system (39%) in their top two most important groups / organisations in addressing the issue of violence against children. This was followed by schools (22%), organisations for social workers (19%), social workers (17%) and the Government (17%).
14. On average, people living in NSW think there may have been three children in their class at school who were victims of violence. Overall, one in five (21%) think there were no children in their class at school who were victims of violence, 22% think they were one or two children, 11% think they were three to four children, 11% think they were five or more children and 35% say they don't know.
15. The vast majority (85%) of people living in NSW believe that violence against children should be a priority for governments around the country. Women, those 65 years and older and those living in regional and rural NSW are more likely to believe that violence against children should be a priority for governments around the country.
16. Four in ten (41%) people living in NSW say they would be prepared to pay a levy that was invested in programs that are proven to reduce violence against children while 27% say they would not be prepared to do so and the remainder (32%) say they don't know. Women and parents are more likely to say they would be prepared to pay a levy that was invested in programs that are proven to reduce violence against children.
17. More than four in five (82%) people living in NSW would support a campaign raising awareness of violence against children. Women are more likely to say they would support a campaign raising awareness of violence against children.
18. The main reasons why people say they would support a campaign raising awareness about violence against children are to raise awareness/get the message to the public (27%), to help stop violence against children (22%), because they believe in the cause (17%) and to protect children (16%). The main reasons why people would not support a campaign to raise awareness about violence against children are because it's a waste of money (19%), it won't prevent violence against children (12%) and it won't target the right communities (5%).

# Key Findings

## 1. What forms violence against children can take

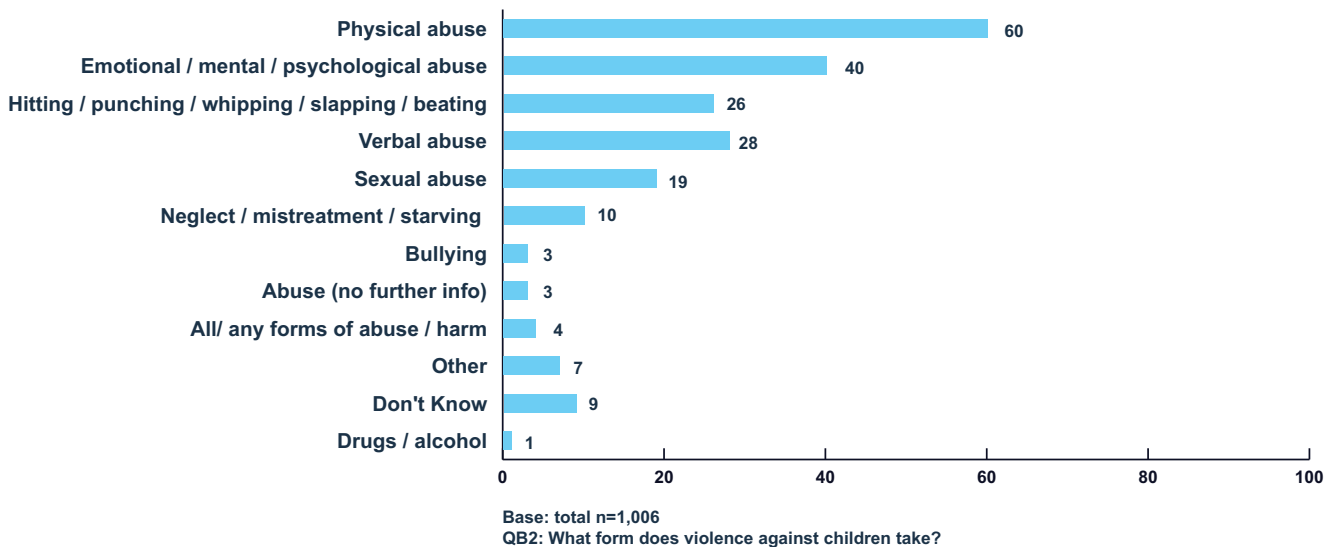
When people 18 years and older living in NSW were asked what forms they thought violence against children could take, they were most likely to mention physical abuse (60%), emotional / mental / psychological abuse (40%), verbal abuse (28%), hitting / punching / whipping / slapping / beating (26%), sexual abuse (19%) and neglect / mistreatment/starving (10%).

Women (44%) are more likely than men (36%) to mention emotional/mental/psychological abuse.

Those 65 years and older (37%) are more likely than those 18-64 years (23%) to mention hitting/punching/whipping/slapping/ beating.

Those living in regional and rural NSW (31%) are more likely than those living in Sydney (23%) to mention hitting / punching / whipping / slapping / beating.

Those who speak English at home are more likely than those who speak a language other than English at home to mention physical abuse (61% compared to 52%), emotional / mental / psychological abuse (41% compared to 34%), verbal abuse (29% compared to 20%), hitting / punching / whipping / slapping / beating (27% compared to 15%) and sexual abuse (20% compared to 11%).





## 2. Locations adults believe children are most and least likely to be at risk of violence

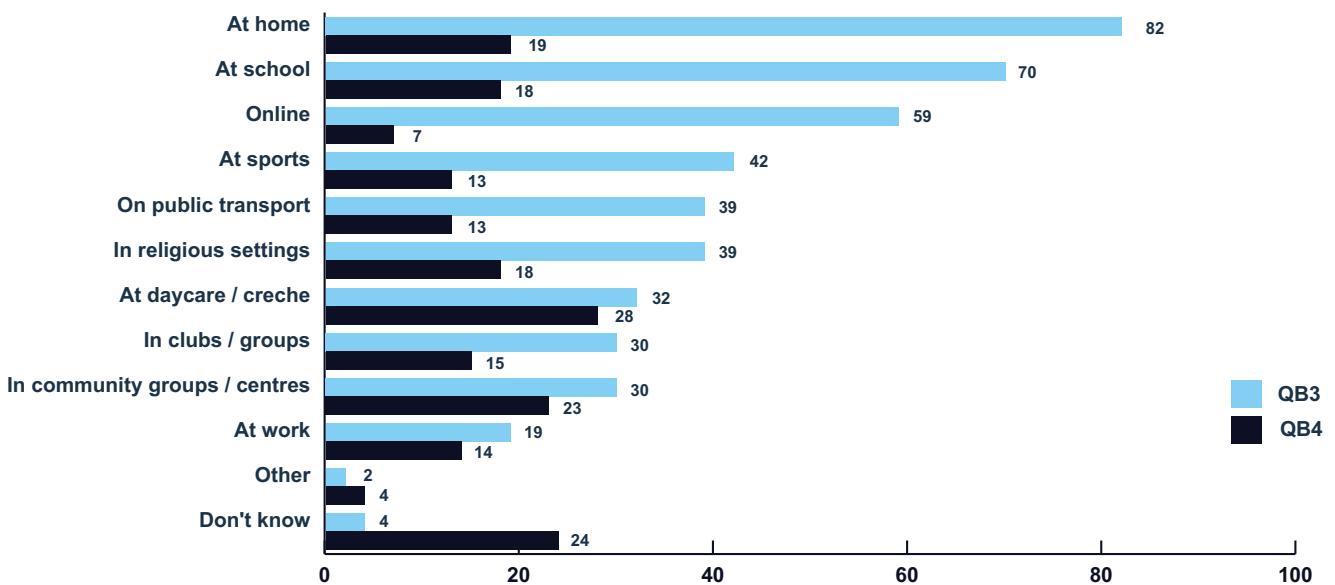
The locations where children are thought to be most at risk of violence are at home (82%), at school (70%) and online (59%) while the locations where children are thought to be least at risk of violence are at daycare/creche (28%), in community groups/centres (23%) and at work (19%).

Women are more likely than men to think children are most at risk of violence online (64% compared to 54%), at daycare / creche (37% compared to 28%) and in community groups / centres (33% compared to 26%).

Those aged 50 years and older are more likely than those aged 18-49 years to think children are most at risk at any of the locations.

Those living in regional and rural areas of NSW are more likely than those living in Sydney to think children are most at risk of violence at home (86% compared to 79%), at school (75% compared to 66%), at sports (49% compared to 38%), in religious settings (45% compared to 35%) and on public transportation (44% compared to 37%).

Those who speak English at home are more likely than those who speak a language other than English at home to think children are most at risk of violence at home (84% compared to 66%) and in religious settings (40% compared to 26%) while those who speak a language other than English at home think children are more likely to be at risk of violence in clubs / groups (38% compared to 29%).



Base: total n=1,006  
 QB3: In what locations do you think children are most likely to be at risk of violence?  
 QB4: And in what location do you think children are least likely to be at risk of violence?

When it comes to locations where children are least at risk of violence, men (23%) are more likely than women (16%) to think children are least at risk of violence at home.

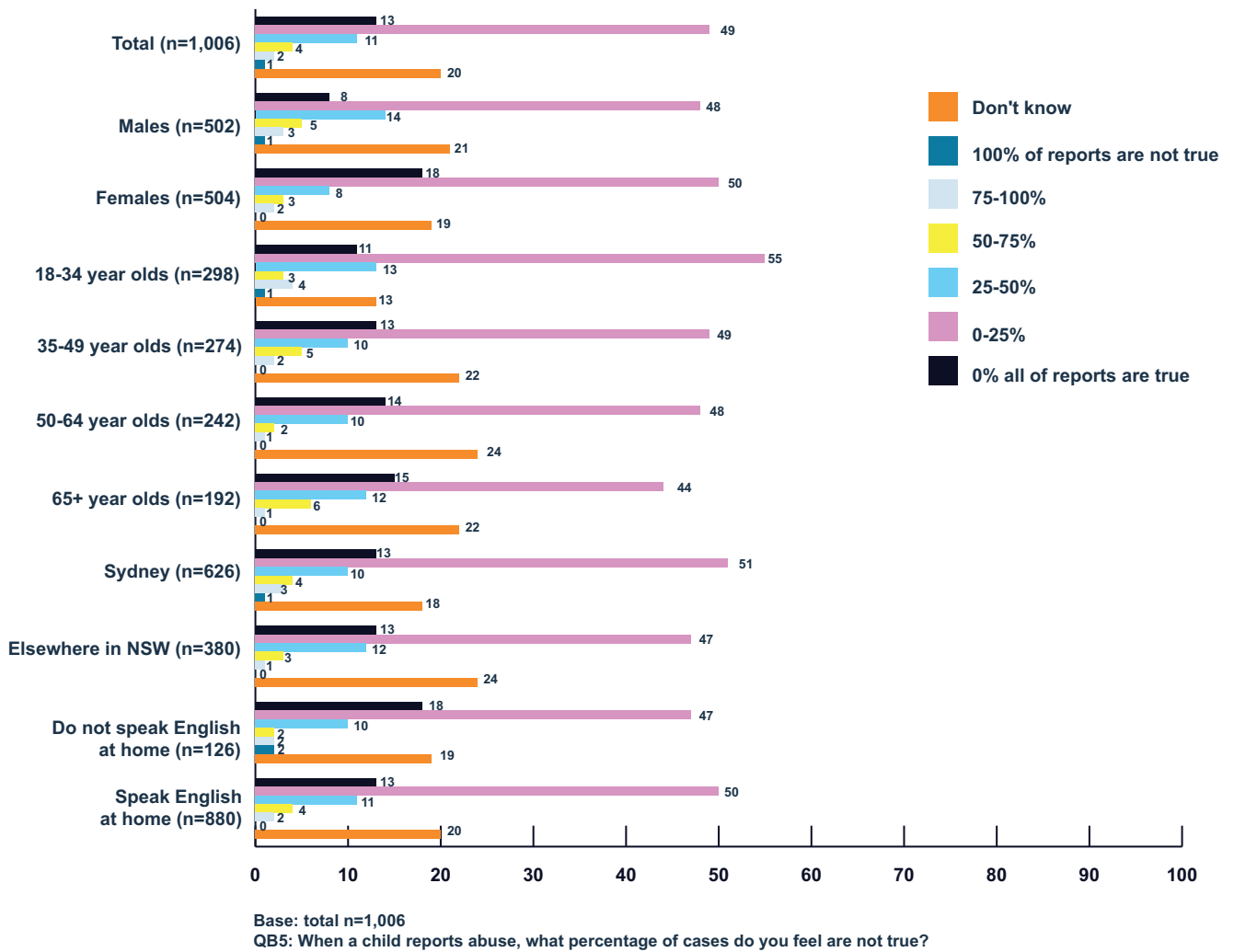
Those who speak a language other than English at home (32%) are more likely than those who speak English at home (17%) to think children are least at risk of violence at home while those who speak English at home are more likely to think children are least at risk of violence at clubs / groups (16% compared to 9%).



### 3. Beliefs about the incidence of children falsely reporting abuse

On average, people living in NSW think that about 1 in 5 (19%) cases of children reporting abuse are not true. Overall, 13% think all cases where a child reports abuse are true, 49% think up to 25% of cases where children report abuse are not true, 11% think 25%-50% of cases where children report abuse are not true and just 7% think it is more than 50% of cases. The remaining 20% say they don't know.

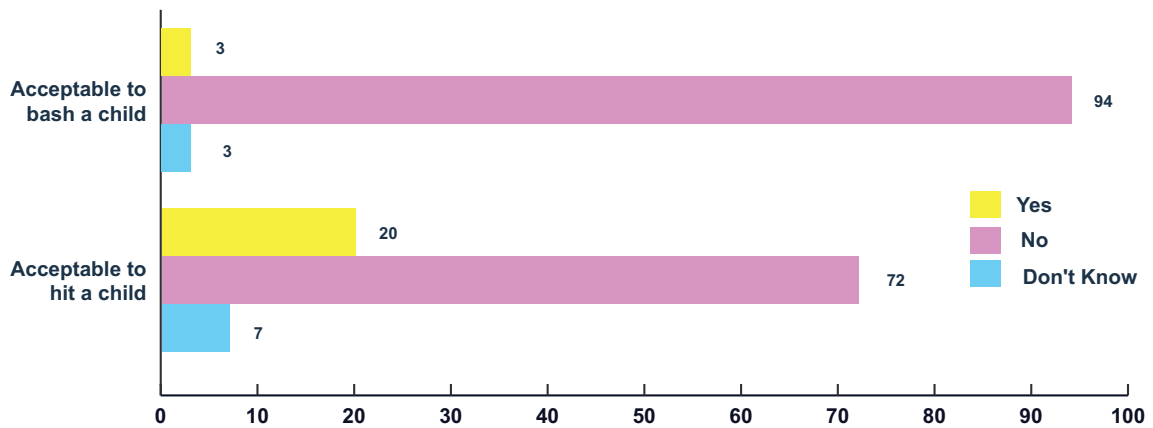
Women (18%) are more likely than men (8%) to think all cases where a child reports abuse are true.



#### 4. Circumstances in which people believe it is acceptable to bash or hit a child

The majority of people living in NSW think it is never okay to bash (94%) or hit (72%) a child. Men (24%) are more likely than women (17%) to think there are circumstances when it is acceptable to hit a child.

Those 50 years and older (25%) are more likely than those 18-49 years (17%) to think there are circumstances when it is acceptable to hit a child.



Base total n=1.006

QB8: In your opinion, are there any circumstances when it is acceptable to bash a child?

QB9: In your opinion, are there any circumstances when it is acceptable to hit a child?

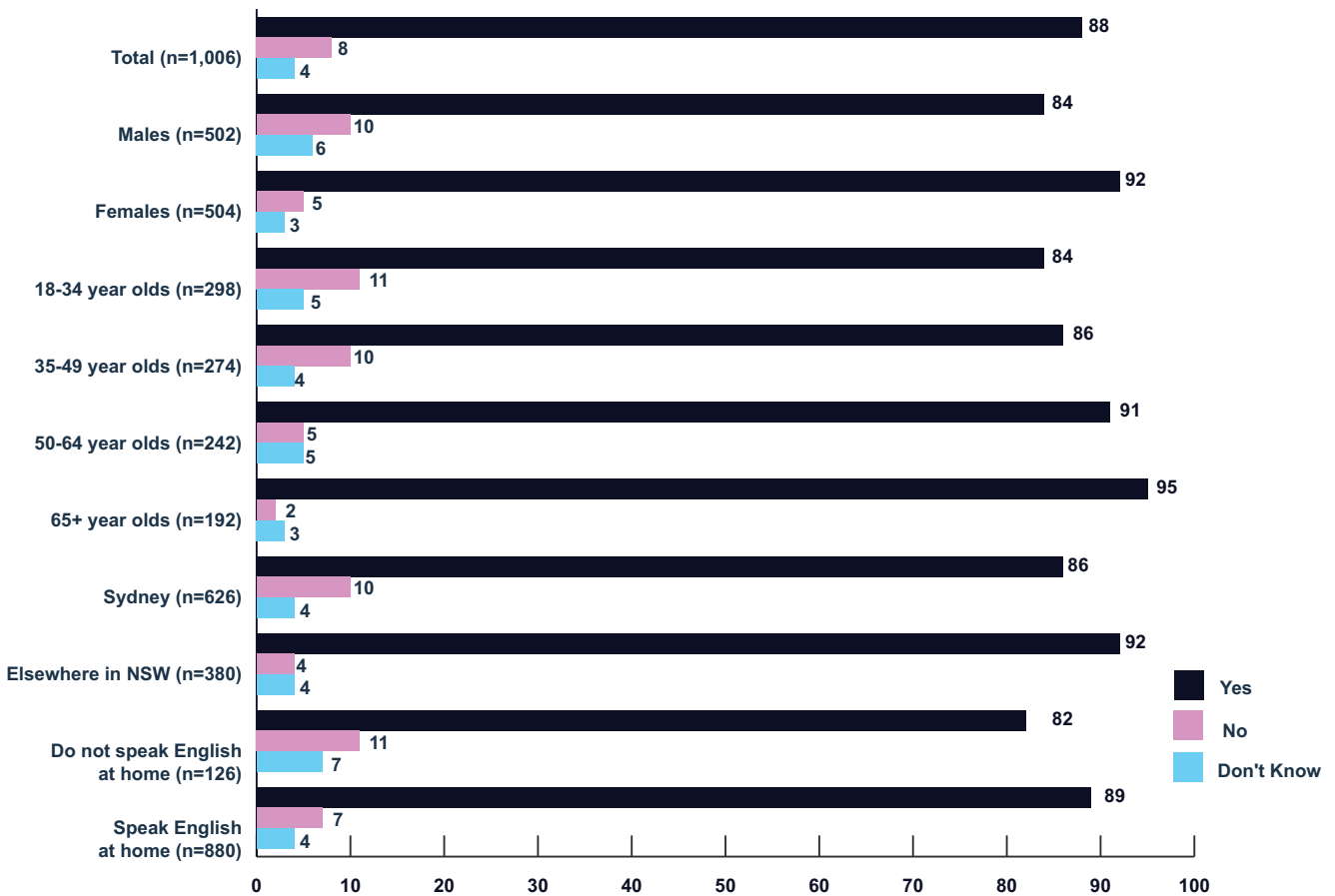
## 5. Whether people would classify emotional/mental abuse as violence against children

The vast majority (88%) of people living in NSW say they would classify emotional / mental abuse as violence against children.

Women (92%) are more likely than men (84%) to classify emotional / mental abuse as violence against children.

Those 65 years and older (95%) are more likely than those 35-49 years (86%) and those 18-34 years (84%) to classify emotional / mental abuse as violence against children.

Those living in regional and rural NSW (92%) are more likely than those living in Sydney (86%) to say they would classify emotional / mental abuse as violence against children.



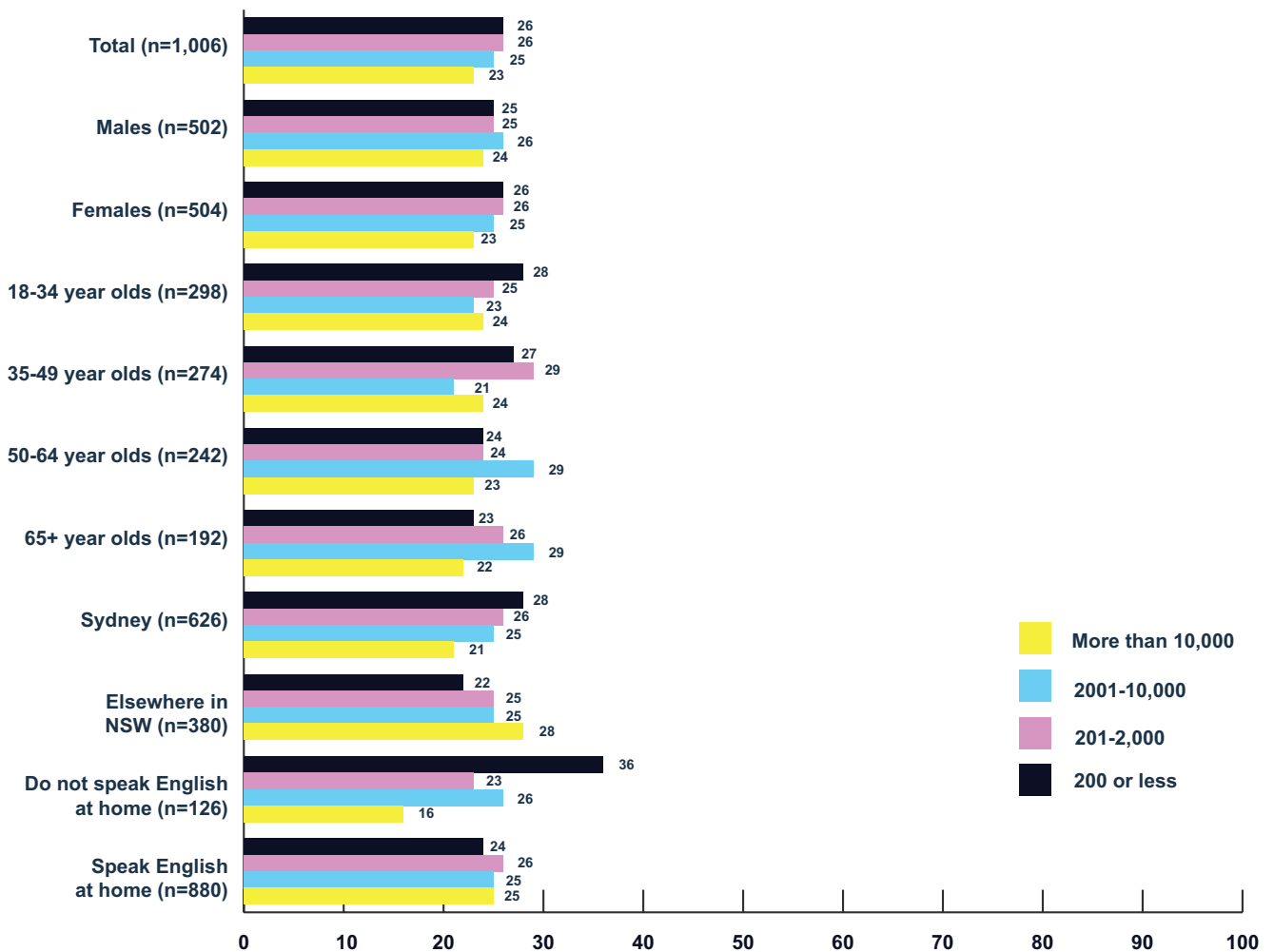
Base: total n=1,006  
 QB11: Would you classify emotional / mental abuse as violence against children?



## 6. Estimated number of children in NSW who adults think are victims of violence

When asked to estimate the number of children in NSW who are victims of violence, 26% think it is 200 or less, 26% think it is between 200 and 2,000 children, 25% think it is between 2,000 and 10,000 children and 23% think it is more than 10,000 children in NSW.

Those in regional and rural NSW (53%) are more likely than those living in Sydney (46%) to estimate that there are between 2,000 to 10,000 or 10,000 or more children who are victims of violence in NSW.



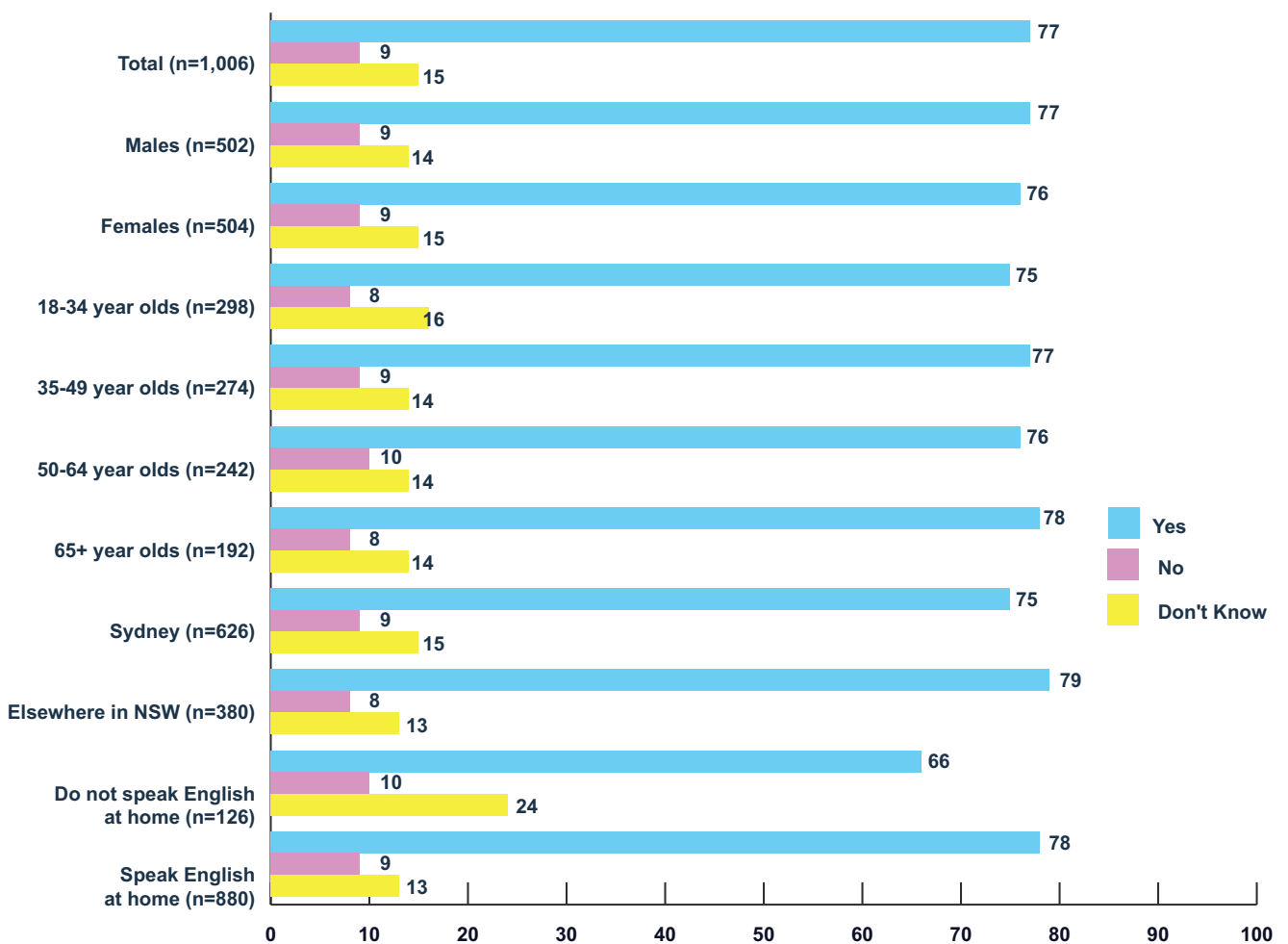
Base: total n=1,006  
 QB13: What is your estimate for the number of children in NSW who are victims of violence?



## 7. Whether people believe violence against children is more prevalent in some communities

More than three quarters (77%) of people in NSW think that violence against children is more prevalent in some communities while 9% do not and 15% say they don't know.

Those who speak English at home (78%) are more likely than those who speak a language other than English at home (66%) to think that violence against children is more prevalent in some communities.



Base: total =n1,006

QB14: Do you think violence against children is more prevalent in some communities than in others?



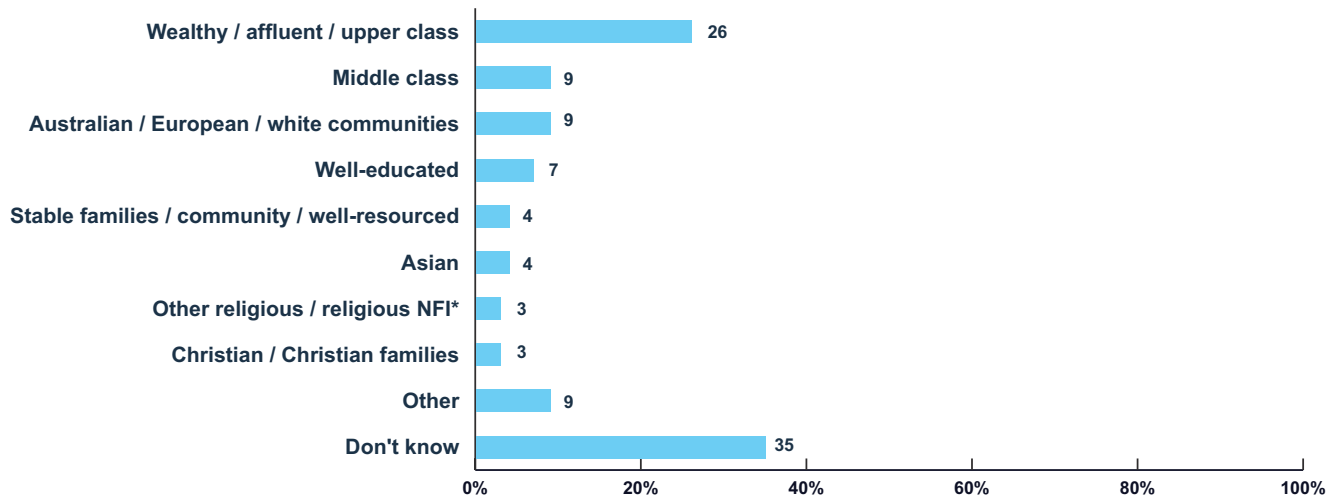
## 8. Communities believed to have a lower incidence of violence against children

Those who believe there are communities who have a lower incidence of violence against children were most likely to mention wealthy / affluent / upper class (26%), middle class (9%), Australian / European / white communities (9%) and well-educated communities (7%). Men (30%) are more likely than women (22%) to think the incidence of violence against children is lower in wealthy / affluent / upper class communities.

Those 18-34 years (30%) are more likely than those 65 years and older (19%) to think the incidence of violence against children is lower in wealthy / affluent / upper class communities.

Those living in regional and rural NSW (13%) are more likely than those living in Sydney (6%) to think the incidence of violence against children is lower in middle class communities while those living in Sydney are more likely to think the incidence of violence is lower in well-educated communities (9% compared to 4%).

Those who speak a language other than English at home are more likely than those who speak English at home to think that violence against children is lower among well-educated communities (14% compared to 6%) and some religious communities (10% compared to 2%).



Base: total n=1,006  
 QB16: Which communities do you think have a lower incidence of violence against children?  
 \*NFI = no further information



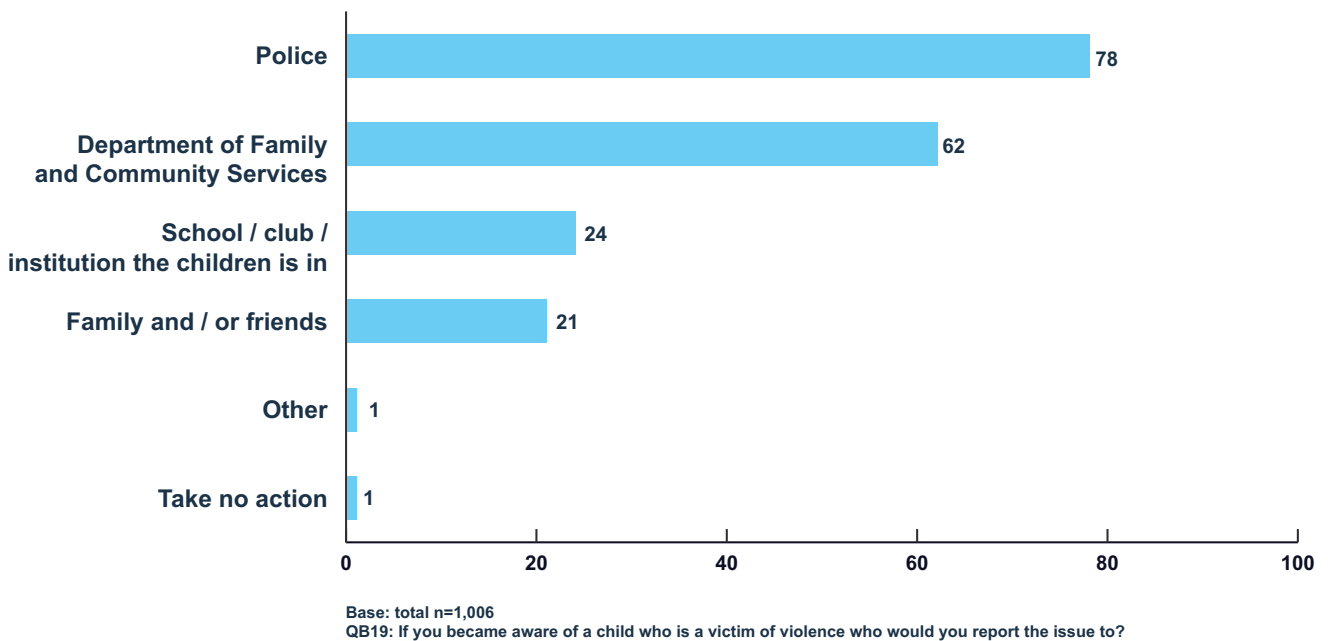
## 9. Who people would report the issue to if they became aware of a child who was a victim of violence

Almost four in five (78%) people living in NSW say they would report the issue to police if they became aware of a child who was a victim of violence, 62% would report the issue to the Department of Family and Community Services, 24% to the school / club / institution the child is in and 21% to family and/or friends.

Women are more likely than men to say they would report the issue to the Department of Family and Community Services (70% compared to 53%) and to the school / club / institution the child is in (29% compared to 19%) if they became

aware of a child who was a victim of violence. Those 18-34 years (31%) are more likely than those 35 years and older (17%) to say they would report the issue to family and/or friends if they became aware of a child who was a victim of violence.

Those who speak a language other than English at home (31%) are more likely than those who speak English at home (20%) to say they would report the issue to family and/or friends if they became aware of a child who was a victim of violence



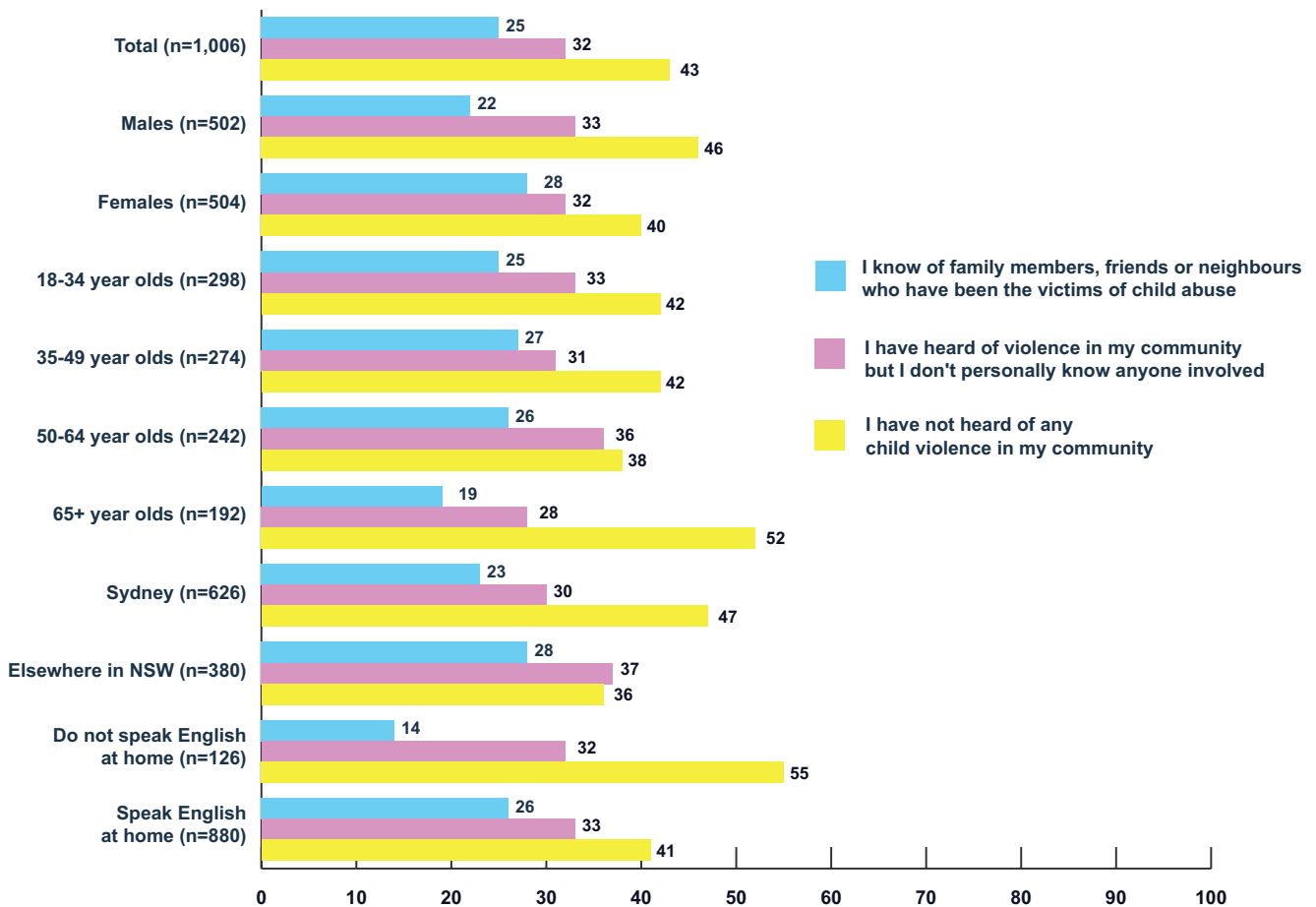


### 10. Awareness and knowledge of instances of child violence in local community

One in four (25%) people living in NSW say they know of family members, friends or neighbours who have been the victims of child violence while one in three (32%) say they have heard of violence in their community but they don't personally know anyone involved. The remaining 43% are not aware of any child violence in their community.

Those who speak English at home (26%) are more likely than those who speak a language other than English at home (14%) to say they know of family members, friends or neighbours who have been the victims of child violence while those who speak a language other than English at home are more likely to say they have not heard of any child violence in their community (55% compared to 41%).

Those living in regional and rural NSW (37%) are more likely than those living in Sydney (30%) to say they have heard of violence in their community but they don't personally know anyone involved while those living in Sydney are more likely to say they have not heard of any child violence in their community (47% compared to 36%).



Base: total n=1,006  
 QB21: Which of these statements best applies to you?



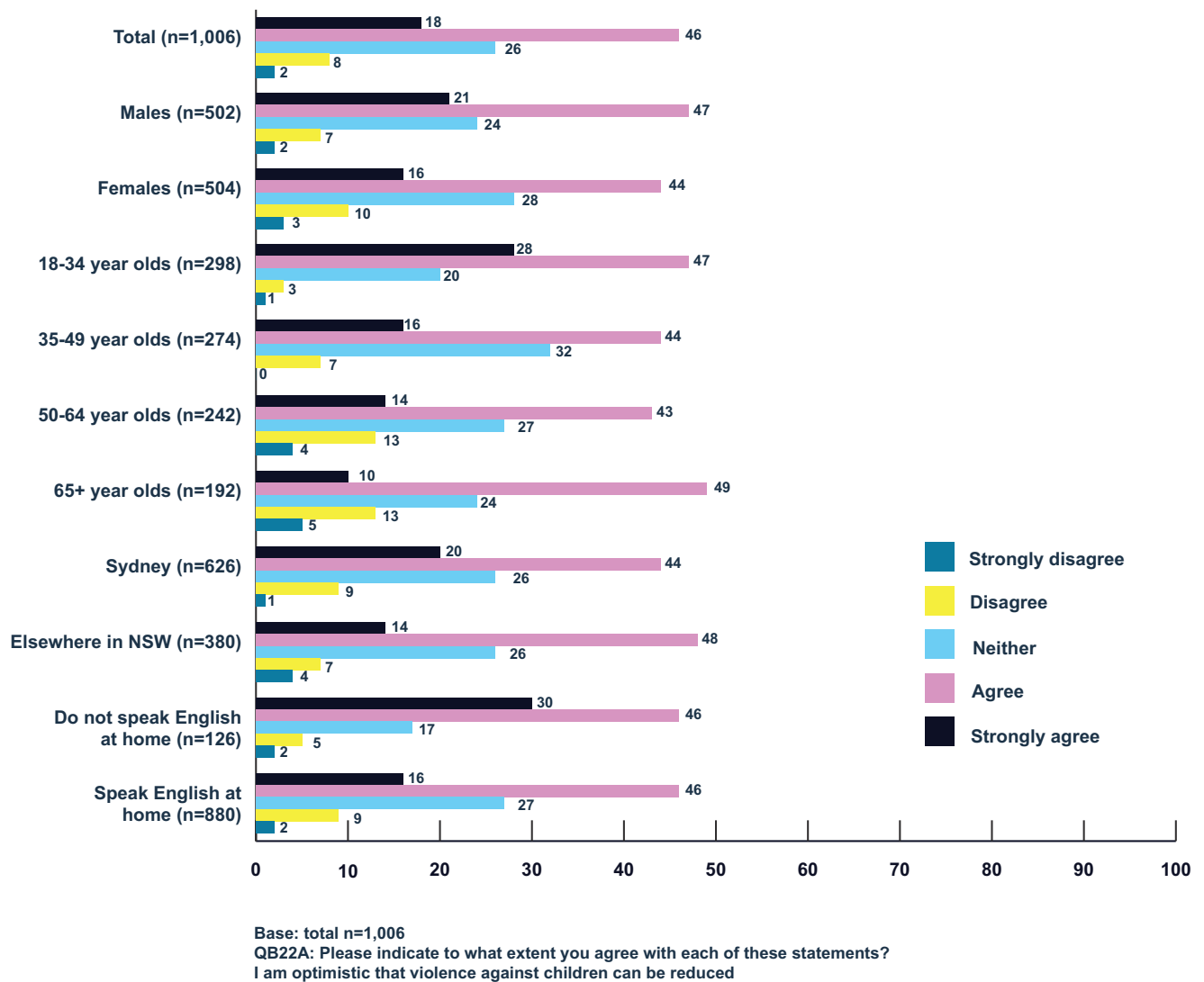
## 11. Whether people are optimistic that violence against children can be reduced

Almost two thirds (64%) of people living in NSW say they are optimistic that violence against children can be reduced while one in ten (11%) are not optimistic and 26% are neither optimistic nor pessimistic.

Men (68%) are more likely than women (60%) to say they are optimistic that violence against children can be reduced while women are more likely to say they are not optimistic (13% compared to 8%).

Those 18-34 years (76%) are more likely than those 35 years and older (58%) to say they are optimistic that violence against children can be reduced while those 50 years and older (17%) are more likely than those 18-49 years (6%) to say they are not optimistic.

Those who speak a language other than English at home (76%) are more likely than those who speak English at home (62%) to say they are optimistic that violence against children can be reduced.



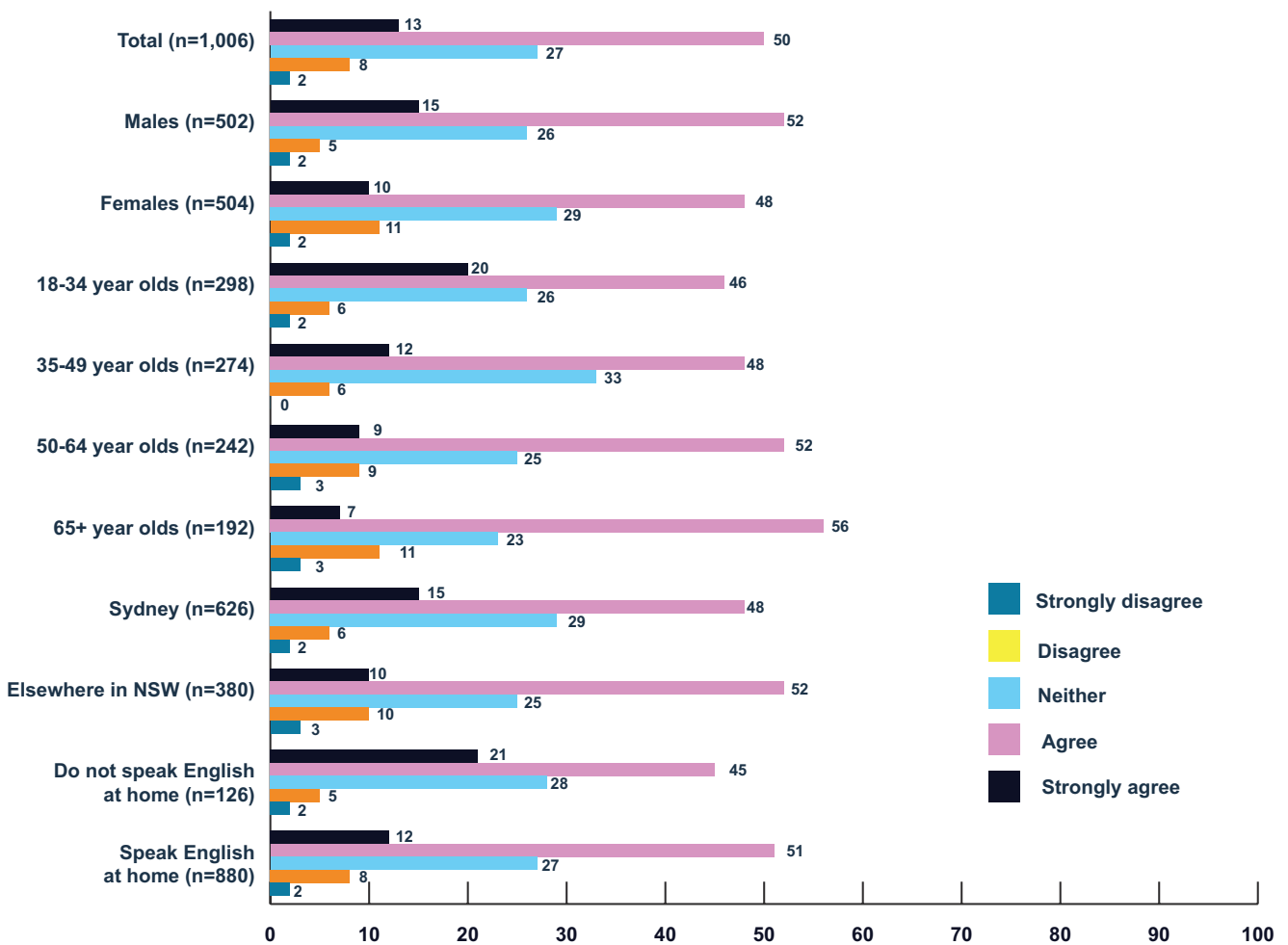
## 12. Whether people believe action is being taken to prevent violence against children

Almost two thirds (63%) of people living in NSW believe there is action being taken to prevent violence against children while one in ten (10%) do not believe this and 27% neither believe nor disbelieve that action is being taken to prevent violence against children.

Men (67%) are more likely than women (58%) to believe action is being taken to prevent violence against children while women are more likely to not believe this (13% compared to 7%).

Those who are 50 years and older (13%) are more likely than those 18-49 years (7%) to believe no action is being taken to prevent violence against children.

Those living in regional and rural NSW (13%) are more likely than those living in Sydney (8%) to believe no action is being taken to prevent violence against children.



Base: total n=1,006  
 QB22B: Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of these statements?  
 There is action being taken to prevent violence against children.



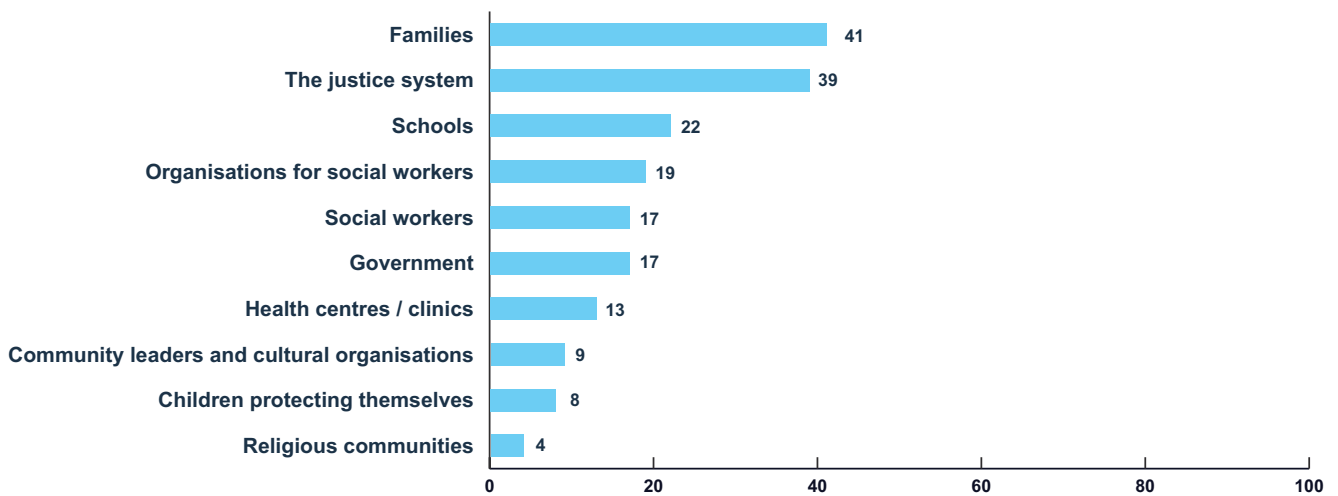
### 13. Perceived relative importance of different groups/organisations in addressing the issue of violence against children

People living in NSW are most likely to rank families (41%) and the justice system (39%) in their top two most important groups / organisations in addressing the issue of violence against children. This was followed by schools (22%), organisations for social workers (19%), social workers (17%) and the Government (17%).

Women (21%) are more likely than men (14%) to rank social workers in their top two most important groups in addressing the issue of violence against children while men are more likely to rank the Government (21% compared to 13%) in their top two most important organisations.

Those 35 years and older (41%) are more likely than those 18-34 years (33%) to rank the justice system in their top two most important organisations in addressing the issue of violence against children.

Those who speak a language other than English at home (32%) are more likely than those who speak English at home (20%) to rank schools in their top two most important organisations in addressing the issue of violence against children while those who speak English at home are more likely to rank social workers (19% compared to 9%) in their top two most important groups.



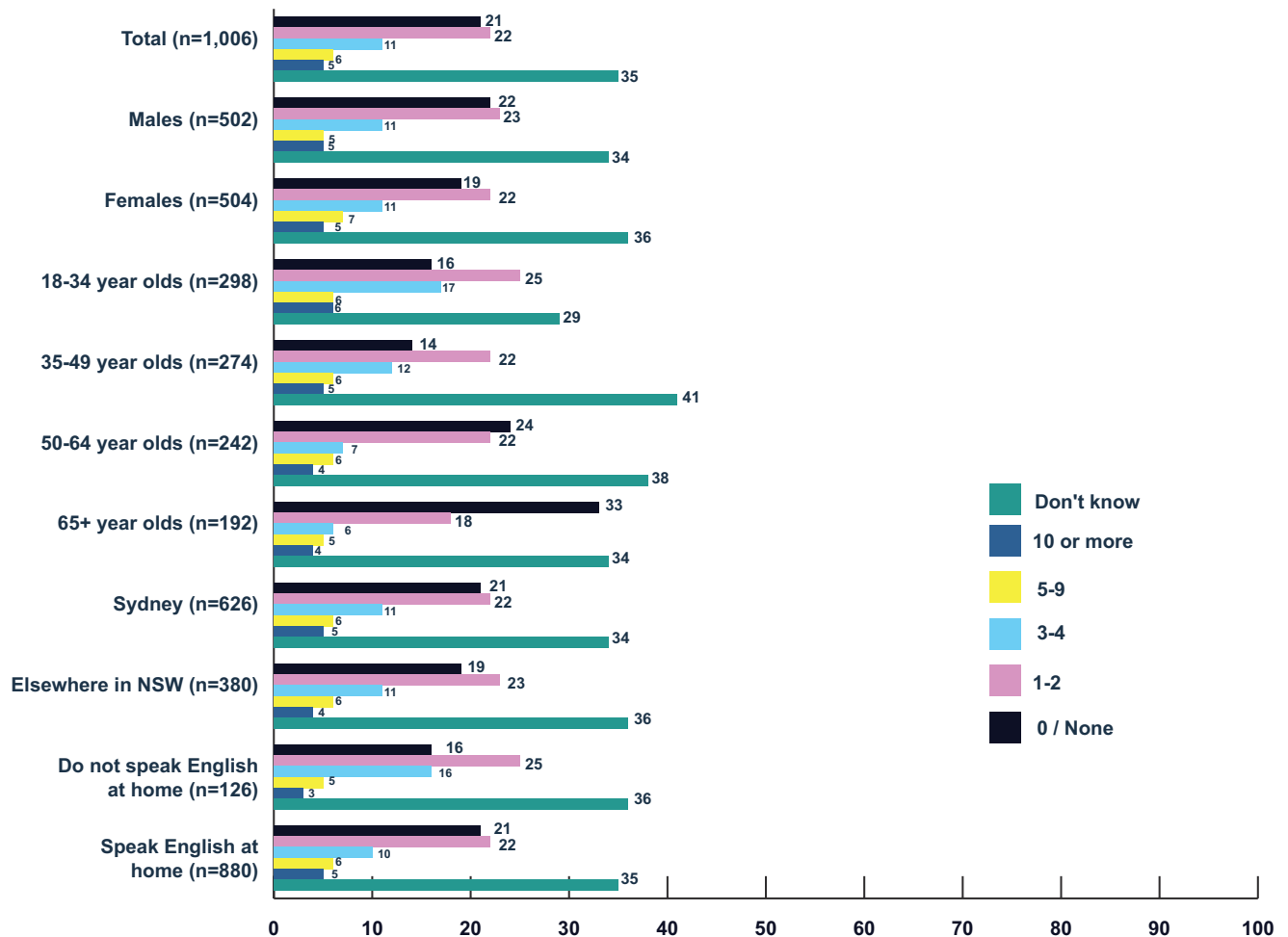
Base: total n=1,006  
 QB23: Please rank the following government agencies, organisations and groups from most important to least important in terms of the role they play in addressing the issue of violence against children?



### 14. When they were at school, how many victims of violence they believed were in their classroom

On average, people living in NSW think there may have been three children in their class at school who were victims of violence. Overall, one in five (21%) think there were no children in their class at school who were victims of violence, 22% think one or two children, 11% think three to four children, 5% think five or more children and 35% say they don't know.

Those 50 years and older (28%) are more likely than those 18-49 years (15%) to think there were no children in their class at school who were victims of violence while those 18-49 years are more likely to think there were 3-4 children who were (15% compared to 7%).



Base: total n=1,006  
 QB24: Thinking back to your own childhood, how many children in your class at school do you believe may have been victims of violence?



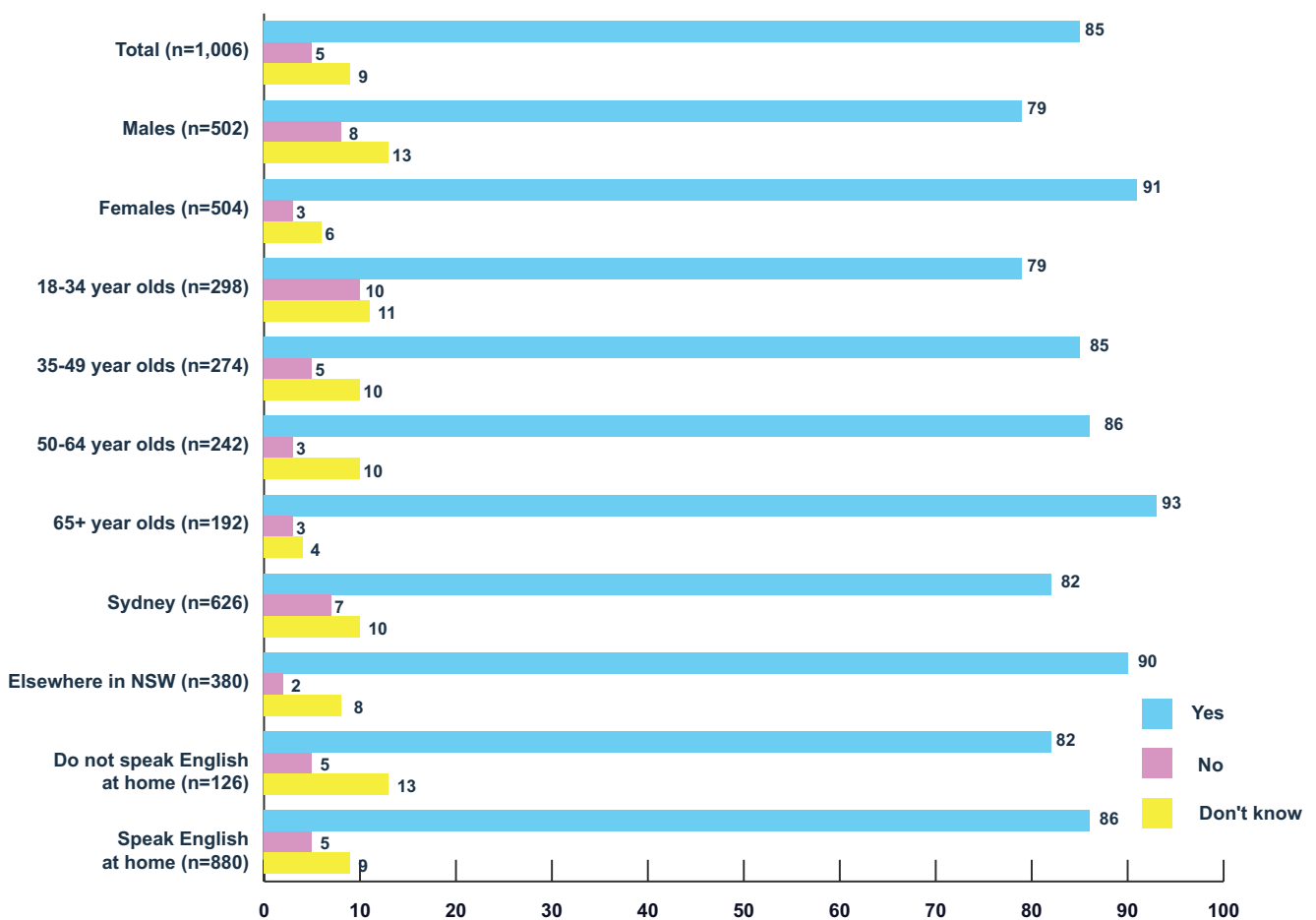
## 15. Whether people believe violence against children should be a priority for governments around the country

The vast majority (85%) of people living in NSW believe that violence against children should be a priority for governments around the country.

Women (91%) are more likely than men (79%) to believe that violence against children should be a priority for governments around the country.

Those 65 years and older (93%) are more likely than those 50-64 years (86%), those 35-49 years (85%) and those 18-34 years (79%) to believe that violence against children should be a priority for governments around the country.

Those living in regional and rural NSW (90%) are more likely than those living in Sydney (82%) to believe that violence against children should be a priority for governments around the country.



Base: total n=1,006

QB27: Should violence against children be a priority for governments around the country?



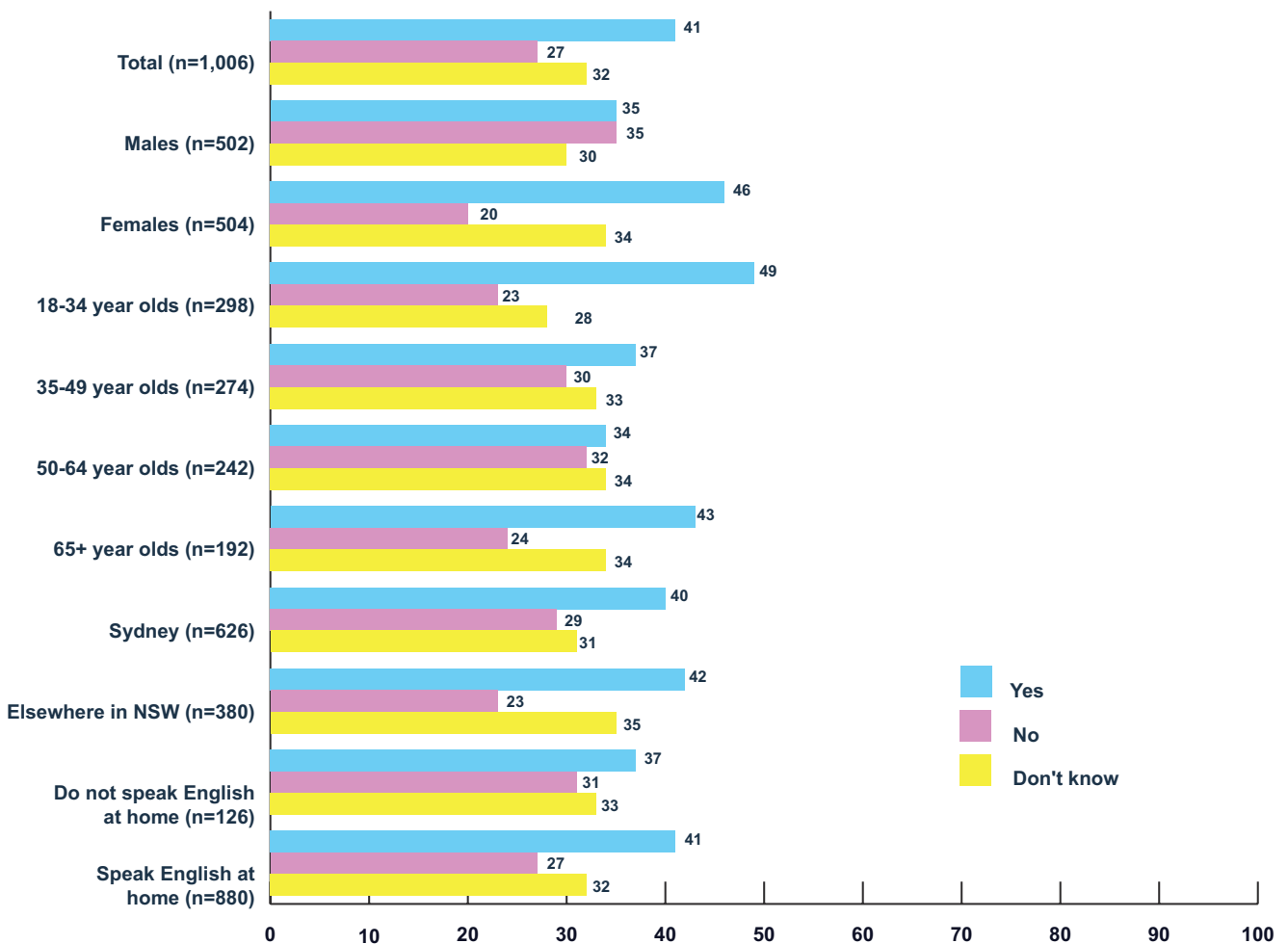
### 16. Whether people would be prepared to pay a levy that was invested in programs that are proven to reduce violence against children

Four in ten (41%) people living in NSW say they would be prepared to pay a levy that was invested in programs that are proven to reduce violence against children while 27% say they would not be prepared to do so and the remainder (32%) say they don't know.

Women (46%) are more likely than men (35%) to say they would be prepared to pay a levy that

was invested in programs that are proven to reduce violence against children while men are more likely to say they are not prepared to do so (35% compared to 20%).

Parents (48%) are more likely than those who are not parents (38%) to say they would be prepared to pay a levy that was invested in programs that are proven to reduce violence against children.



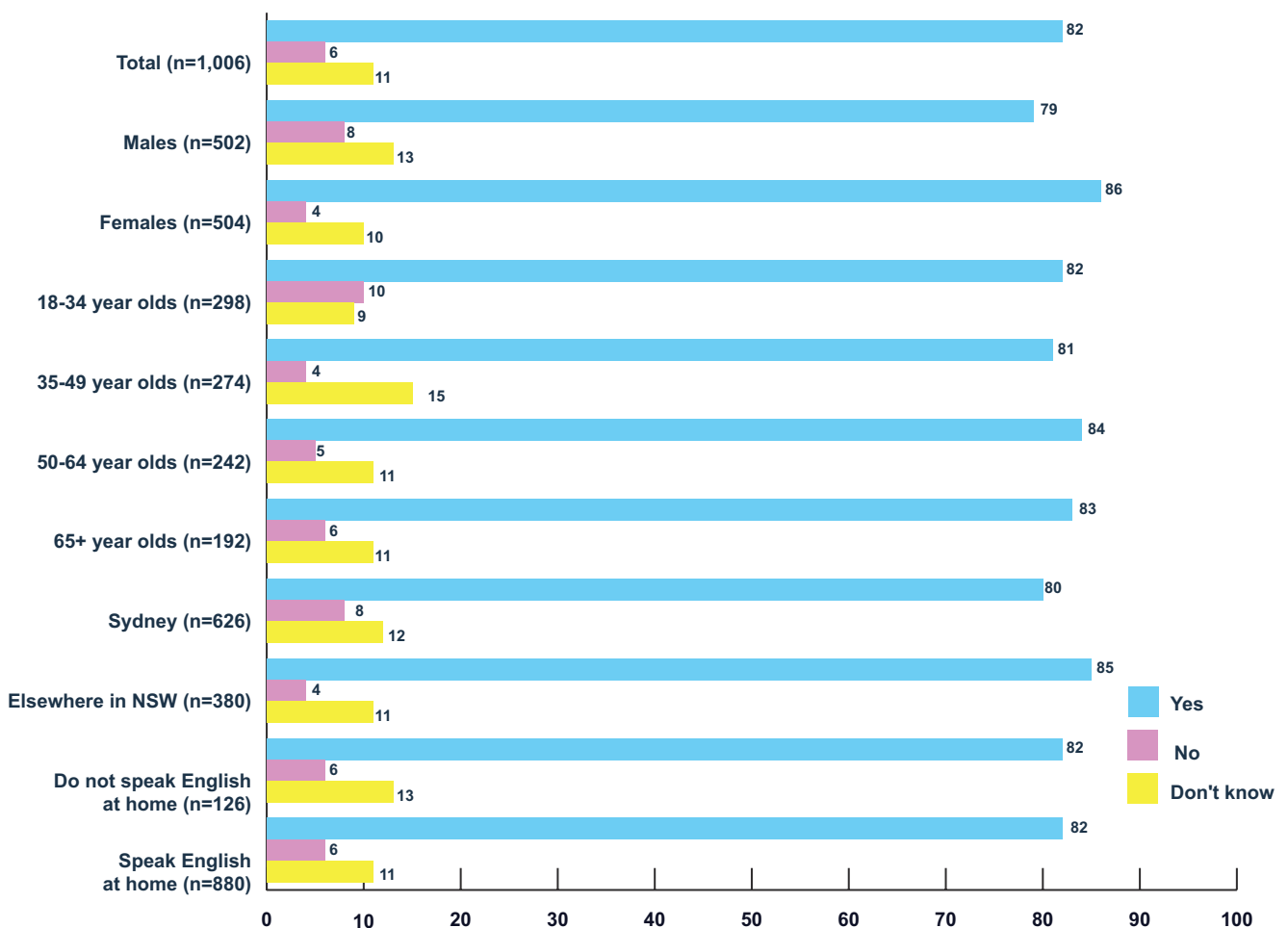
Base: total n=1,006  
 QB28: Would you be prepared to pay a levy that was invested in programs that are proven to reduce violence against children?



## 17 Whether people would support a campaign raising awareness of violence against children

More than four in five (82%) people living in NSW would support a campaign raising awareness of violence against children.

Women (86%) are more likely than men (79%) to say they would support a campaign raising awareness of violence against children.



Base: total n=1,006  
QB29: Would you support a campaign raising awareness of violence against children?

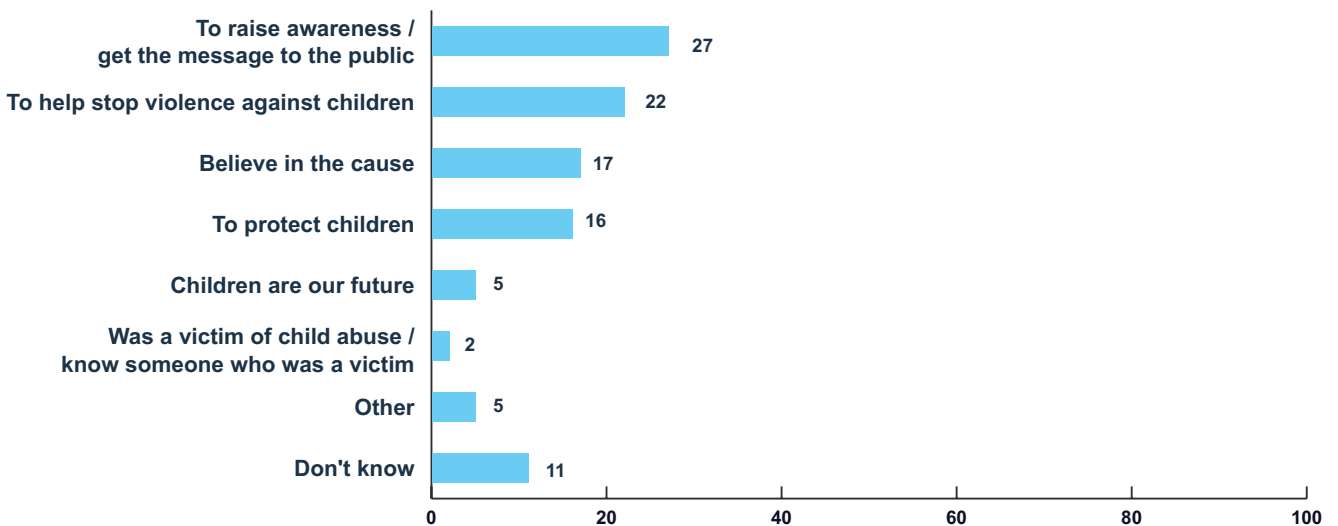




### 18. Reasons for supporting/not supporting a campaign raising awareness about violence against children

The main reasons why people say they would support a campaign raising awareness about violence against children are to raise awareness / get the message to the public (27%), to help stop violence against children (22%), because they believe in the cause (17%) and to protect children (16%).

Women are more likely than men to say the reasons why they would support a campaign raising awareness about violence against children are to raise awareness / get the message to the public (30% compared to 23%) and to protect children (19% compared to 12%).



Base: B29 (yes, would support a campaign raising awareness about violence against children); n=828  
 QB30: Why would you support a campaign raising awareness of violence against children?





get support



learn more



take action



now and forever

[nowandforever.nsw.gov.au](http://nowandforever.nsw.gov.au)



Office of the  
Advocate for Children  
and Young People

acyp.