

Section 3: Major Findings in the Sydney Survey

Concern with crime in contemporary capitalist societies

Concern about crime and fear of crime appear to be one of the characteristics of the age, not just in Australia but also in all western societies. As Findlay (1999: 1) recently put it: 'Crime has been a silent partner in modernization... Globalisation creates new and favourable contexts for crime'. This is particularly the case in the cities of the western world. Reviewing the crime issue in the UK and USA, Schneider and Kitchen (2002: 25) state that: 'Crime and fear of crime are major issues in British and American Societies that help mould our cities and influence the qualities of life in both nations'. Similarly, McCord, Widom and Crowell (2001: 1) argue that in the United States '[j]uvenile crime is one of the nation's serious problems. Concern about it is widely shared by federal, state and local government officials and by the public'.

This concern about crime is also manifest in Australian cities. Lupton (1999) found strong evidence of fear of crime among those that she surveyed in 1997 in Sydney, Bathurst and Wollongong in NSW and Hobart in Tasmania. This fear seems to be linked to increasing globalisation, persistent unemployment and job insecurity as well as uncertainty following rapid technological, economic and social change that has characterised Australian society in the past decade. As Collins, Noble, Poynting and Tabar (2000: 69) argued:

Fear of crime is widely reported in Australian cities and towns. It appears to be part of the fabric of the current age of uncertainty that has emerged in the last few decades in Australia, characterised by increasing globalisation, rising unemployment and growing economic insecurity.

This fear of crime is particularly associated with youth crime. This is evident in the United States, according to the latest review of juvenile crime and juvenile justice there. As the recent report *Juvenile Crime, Juvenile Justice* (McCord, Widom and Crowell, 2001: 25) put it:

Since the late 1980s, there has been growing concern about crimes committed by young people. New accounts of serious crimes committed by children and adolescents and criminologists' warnings of a coming tide of vicious juveniles... have encouraged the belief that young people are increasingly violent and uncontrollable and that the response to juvenile justice system has been inadequate.

This is also the case in Australia. For example, Lawlink NSW (1999: 5) reported the results of a survey on *Perceptions of Crime or Public Nuisance Problems in the Neighbourhood*, conducted in NSW in April 1995. The findings suggested that youth and youth gangs were thought to be a problem for one in five people surveyed. In the last few years, concern about youth crimes and youth gangs, particularly those related to immigrant youth, has escalated to near fever pitch in Sydney (Collins *et al.* 2000).

This escalation of fear about crime in general, and youth crime in particular, seems to be at odds with the criminological data that, for many crimes at least, appears to indicate that crime rates are falling. For example, a detailed assessment of US crime data suggests that while there was a dramatic rise of juvenile crime rates from the mid-1980s, this peaked in the mid-1990s. However, there appears to be no corresponding decline in the fear of crime in the US from the late 1990s on. As McCord, Widom and Crowell (2001: 13) put it, 'Although juvenile crime rates appear to have fallen since the mid-1990s, this decrease has not alleviated concern'. This decline in actual crime is, of course, not universal in western countries—Britain, for example, appears to be on a rising crime trajectory with 'significant [crime rate] increases having typified the British position until relatively recently' (Schneider and Kitchen (2002: 59).

What are the trends in the Australian crime rate? Do they lay firm basis for an increase in the fear of crime? Recent criminological data for Australia is not so clear cut since, as Don Weatherburn (2002: 3) argues, 'Unlike Britain and the United States, Australia doesn't have a comprehensive set of national crime data stretching back to the Second World War. Except for homicide our earliest set of crime data covers the 15 years between 1973/74 and 1988/89'. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that for some crime rates are falling, although for others it is increasing. Overall, however, there is a suggestion of declining crime trends (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2001). National police crime figures for the period since 1993 suggest that property and violent crime rates continued to grow in Australia in the 1990s but rates are uneven, with big increases in break and enter, car theft and robbery, although sexual assault data is not clear (Weatherburn 2002: 4–5).

How does Australia compare with other countries in the crime stakes? The problem is that many crimes are not reported. As Weatherburn (2002: 6) points out, it is estimated, for example, that twenty three percent of assault victims fail to report that assault, mainly because they take the view that police either won't or can't do anything or because they fear reprisal. Weatherburn cites the results of a 2000 international survey of crime victims, conducted in 17 countries, to conclude that Australia ranked second in terms of motor vehicle theft, highest in terms of burglary, third highest in terms of personal theft and highest in terms of assault. Weatherburn rejects the notion of a 'crime wave' in Australia, however, but concludes that 'the evidence supports the conclusion that Australia has a serious and growing problem with both property and violent crime' (Weatherburn, 2002: 7).

In this section of the report we review the findings of the Sydney survey regarding the perceptions of crime in general and of youth crime in particular. We also present self-reported and friend-reported evidence on youth crime in Sydney and investigate those parts of the municipalities in which we conducted our surveys where youth and adults reported that they felt unsafe. We will leave the issue of youth gangs to a later section of this report.

Perceptions of criminality and fear of crime in Sydney

One of the strong conclusions to emerge from the Sydney survey is that concern about crime and about safety is very widespread. Nearly three quarters (72%) of our adult respondents—and two thirds of our youth respondents—thought that crime had been on the increase in Sydney, as Figure 3.1 shows. We can also break down the data on the respondents' perceptions of increased criminality in Sydney by the local government area in which the respondents lived. As Table 3.1 shows, over three quarters (76.2%) of the respondents living in Bankstown thought that crime had increased in Sydney, a higher percentage than respondents living in any other Sydney LGA. Other LGAs with over 70% of respondents reporting that they perceived an increase in crime in Sydney were Fairfield (73.5%), Auburn (72.0%), Liverpool (72.8%) and Canterbury (70.6%). Two thirds of respondents living in Rockdale and one half of respondents living in Hurstville LGAs also thought that crime had increased in Sydney.

Figure 3.1: Has Crime Increased in the Sydney Area?

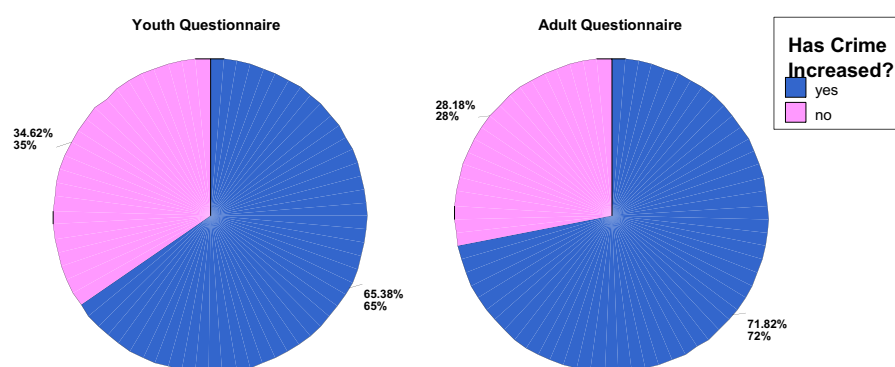


Table 3.1: Has Crime Increased in the Sydney Area (by LGA)

Crime Increased in Area	Local Government Area							Total
	Auburn	Banks-town	Canter-bury	Fair-field	Hurst-ville	Liver-pool	Rock-dale	
Yes	72.0	76.2	70.6	73.5	51.9	72.8	64.4	68.2
No	28.0	23.8	29.4	26.5	48.1	27.2	35.6	31.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Figures expressed as percentages

It is not possible to say why respondents living in Bankstown, Fairfield, Auburn, Liverpool and Canterbury LGAs were more likely to think that crime had increased in Sydney in recent years. It may be that these really are regions of higher criminality in Sydney. Certainly sensationalist media reportage in Sydney's media since late 1998 has put Canterbury

Bankstown and Fairfield in the headlines with ‘Middle Eastern’ crime in the first two areas and ‘Asian’ crime in the third—particularly in Cabramatta, a suburb in the heart of the Fairfield LGA (Collins *et al.* 2000: 37-49). However, it is equally plausible that these perceptions are merely echoing the fears generated by such headlines—media sensationalism could be creating a crime panic in these areas of the city of Sydney. As Findlay (1999: 52–3) has argued: ‘The manner in which the media report on crime will affect a vast range of individuals who otherwise have little immediate experience of it, as well as those connected to crime relationships’. In Sydney, the authenticity of media reports about crime—and the gravity of the fears expressed in them—appeared to be confirmed by both the public statements and the actions of the NSW Police Commissioner, Peter Ryan and the NSW Premier, Bob Carr (Collins *et al.* 2000: 4-8). The result is that, in the minds of Sydney public whose attitudes and concerns this Sydney survey is reporting, a crime-infested community is running unchecked in the city. To quote Findlay (1999:52-3) once again:

When the media and the official account feed off one another in stimulating public reaction to crime, then a ‘moral panic’ may emerge within the wider community which may not only be out of all proportion to the reality of the phenomena, but also may not require any reliance on this reality to galvanise an accepted representation of crime and demands for action.

The Law and order issue was a major one in the 1999 NSW State election, which was won by the Carr-led Labor party with the slogan ‘tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime’ prominent in the campaign. Premier Carr’s tough stance on ethnic crime won him votes, despite the Opposition Leader, Kerry Chikarovski also pledging to introduce ‘tough new law-and-order issues’ (Collins *et al.* 2000: 4–5). The danger here, of course, was that in exploiting this political advantage of being seen as being tough on crime, both political parties served to exacerbate fear of crime in their electorates in the Sydney community. Indeed, the NSW Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Nick Cowdry, QC, argued against government claims that its law-and-order push just responded to concern in the electorate, saying that ‘to a very large extent they are the ones who are creating that community concern’ (Garcia 1988: 8). More recently, Cowdry has criticised Premier Bob Carr and Opposition Leader John Brogden for ‘fostering racial intolerance’. On August 10, 2002 *The Weekend Australian* reported him as saying:

There is an element of racism in the community, and politicians prey on those mind-sets and make statements which are sympathetic with the prejudices of people they wish to vote for them...

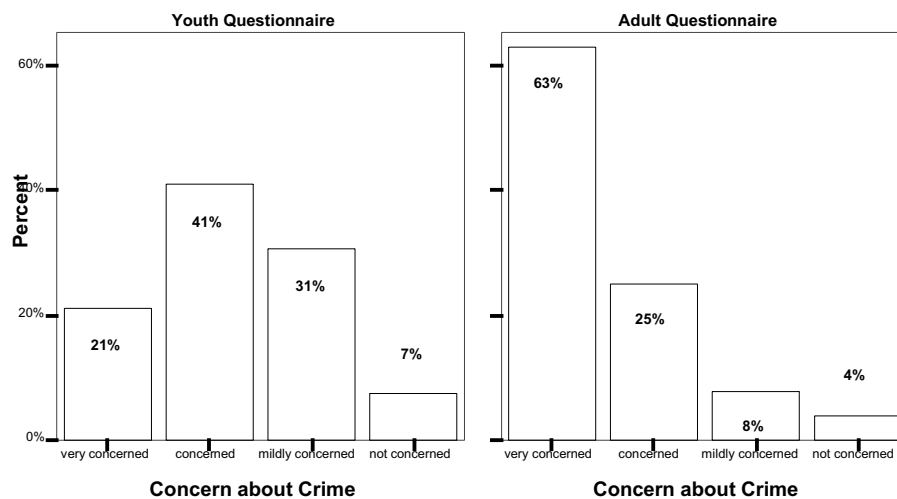
Such political opportunism, of course, is not the sole preserve of Australian politics, although the Australian experience does indicate that conservative and social democratic parties strive hardest to be perceived as the toughest on crime. New York Mayor, Rudy Giuliani’s political exploitation of the crime issue through his zero tolerance policy in New York is legendary. On the other side of the Atlantic, Tony Blair’s ‘New’ Labor Party also utilised, very successfully as it happens, the slogan ‘Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime’—familiar?—in the 1997 British general election. Again, the Conservative Party tried

to match Blair on this issue, Schneider and Kitchen (2000: 52) report, highlighting the symbiosis between the media and political parties in this regard:

crime statistics are often regarded as fair game politically, with politicians freely blaming each other when they get worse, massaging them to suit their particular stances and quickly claiming the credit when they improve, all of which in turn generates further headlines.

In light of the above arguments, it is not surprising that there was a great degree of concern about crime reported by those surveyed in our Sydney survey. Fear of crime has been found to be common among many urban and rural communities in Australia (Lupton, 1999) but the ethnic dimension of this fear of crime has not hitherto been investigated. Our fieldwork in Sydney is designed to partly redress this important omission. It also shows that there is also an ‘age’ dimension to this fear of crime in Sydney—adults are more fearful of crime than are youth.

Figure 3.2: Concern about Crime



As Figure 3.2 shows, most (63%) of the adults surveyed in Sydney were very concerned about crime, with another 25% concerned. Only 12% of those adults surveyed were mildly concerned or not concerned at all about crime. In contrast, only a minority of youth (21%) reported that they were very concerned about crime, with another 41% concerned. One in three youth surveyed (31%) were only mildly concerned, while 7% were not concerned at all about crime. Whilst the literature on crime often paints youth as the perpetrators and villains, it should be remembered that many youth are themselves the victims of crime. For this reason it is not surprising to see that the majority of youth surveyed in Sydney were actually concerned about crime. Whilst the concern of youth about crime is decidedly less than for adults surveyed, nevertheless about two in three youth surveyed were either very concerned or concerned about crime.

We can also break down the data on the respondents' concern about crime by the Local Government Area (LGA) in which the respondents lived. As Table 3.2 shows, respondents living in Canterbury were most likely (54.3%) to be very concerned about crime, followed by Rockdale (49.5%) and Fairfield (49%). In these three Sydney LGAs, about half the people surveyed were very concerned about crime. In contrast, 40.7% of those surveyed in Hurstville, 37.7% of those surveyed in Bankstown, 30.5% of those surveyed in Liverpool and only 25.3% of those surveyed in Auburn were very concerned.

Table 3.2: Concern About Crime (by LGA)

Concern About Crime	Local Government Area							
	Auburn	Banks-town	Canter-bury	Fair-field	Hurst-ville	Liver-pool	Rock-dale	Total
Very Concerned	25.3	37.7	54.3	49.0	40.7	30.5	49.5	41.4
Concerned	45.3	33.1	29.5	25.5	36.3	37.1	30.5	33.6
Mildly Concerned	20.0	21.5	11.4	22.4	16.3	26.7	18.1	19.4
Not Concerned	9.3	7.7	4.8	3.1	6.7	5.7	1.9	5.6
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Figures expressed as percentages

This very low figure for Auburn can be explained because most of those surveyed in Auburn were youth, and youth across the board are less likely to be very concerned when compared to adults. However, the question remains: is this high concern for crime of those living in Canterbury and Fairfield based on their experiences of crime or on the media and political construction of crime that has continually stamped these regions as the 'crime precincts' of Sydney? We will explore our respondents' experiences of crime—as victims and as perpetrators—later in this report.

Table 3.3: Concern About Crime (by Gender)

Concern About Crime	Males (Number)	Male (%)	Female (Number)	Female (%)
Very Concerned	135	34.4	194	45.4
Concerned	133	33.8	144	33.7
Mildly Concerned	95	24.2	71	16.6
Not Concerned	30	7.6	18	4.2
TOTAL	393	100	427	100

There is an important gender dimension to fear or concern about crime. As Table 3.3 shows, 45.4% of females surveyed were very concerned about crime, compared to 34.4% of males. Overall, eight out of ten females surveyed, and 7 out of ten males surveyed, were concerned or very concerned about crime. Only 4.2% of females and 7.6% of males were not concerned about crime.

Table 3.4: Concern About Crime (by Age)

Concern About Crime	Youth (Number)	Youth (%)	Adults (Number)	Adults (%)
Very Concerned	94	21.1	238	62.6
Concerned	182	40.9	95	25.0
Mildly Concerned	136	30.6	30	7.9
Not Concerned	33	7.4	15	3.9
TOTAL	445	100	378	100

In addition, the survey found that adults were far more likely to be concerned about crime. As Table 3.4 shows, two thirds of adults (62.3%) reported that they were very concerned about crime, and another 25% said that they were concerned. Put another way, nine out of every ten adults who responded to the Sydney survey were very concerned or concerned about crime. In comparison, only two out of every ten youth (21.1%) surveyed were very concerned about crime, although another four out of ten (40.9%) youth were concerned. One in three youth surveyed were either mildly concerned or not concerned at all.

A number of points can be made here. First, these Sydney findings are consistent with findings in the UK and USA that women are more likely to fear crime than men, and that older people are more likely to fear crime than younger people. Moreover, this fear translates into daily decisions that people make about what they do and where they go in the local area. As Schneider and Kitchen (2002: 19) put it in their transatlantic study of crime, citing the work of Valentine (1991) and Pettersson (1997):

In both nations, women, especially elderly women, were more likely than men to restrict their activities because of fear of crime. Women’s heightened fear of crime and their likelihood to change shopping, recreational, and entertainment-related behaviours, especially after dark, are borne out by research conducted across a range of different sized urban and suburban areas, and across income groups.

We will be exploring the spatial dimensions of fear of crime later in this report.

Concerns about crime or fear of crime are very broad phenomena. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines crime as an ‘act punishable by law, as being forbidden by statute or injurious to the public welfare’ (cited in Schneider and Kitchen 2002: 4). This covers an enormous range of territory, from trespassing to shoplifting to house breaking and drug taking to violent assaults and sexual assaults. Clearly, we need to ‘unpack’ the perceptions and fears of crime among those who responded to our Sydney Survey.

In order to probe this more fully, we asked the respondents to indicate the crimes that they ranked as the biggest social problem in Sydney. The responses to this question are shown in Table 3.5. This shows that drugs were considered to be the biggest social problem in Sydney—by more than one out of every four (27.7%) of those surveyed. Burglary was ranked the next greatest social concern—by one in five (20.5%) respondents; with violent assault ranked next as the greatest concern—by 17.7% of respondents. The only other crime ranked as the greatest social problem by more than 10% of respondents was street theft (13.9%).

Sexual assault was the greatest concern of only 8% of respondents, while only 4.5% thought that car theft was the crime that was the biggest social problem in Sydney.

Table 3.5: Crimes Perceived as the Biggest Social Problem (by LGA)

Crime Perceived as Biggest Social Problem	Local Government Area							
	Auburn	Banks-town	Canter-bury	Fair-field	Hurst-ville	Liver-pool	Rock-dale	Total
Burglary	4.3	14.0	27.2	21.8	26.7	12.5	32.9	20.5
Car Theft	5.8	2.6	6.8	6.9	5.8	2.1	1.2	4.5
Street Theft	21.7	6.1	12.6	13.8	18.3	16.7	10.6	13.9
Sexual Assault	5.8	6.1	11.7	5.7	5.0	8.3	14.1	8.0
Violent Assault	20.3	21.9	23.3	21.8	14.2	14.6	7.1	17.7
Murder	11.6	7.9	2.9	5.7	3.3	7.3	10.6	6.7
Drugs	30.4	40.4	15.5	19.5	25.8	37.5	23.5	27.7
Other	-	0.9	-	4.6	0.8	1.0	-	1.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Figures expressed as percentages

We also can provide some suburban breakdown of these fears of crime by listing the crimes thought to be the biggest social problems for each LGA in which we conducted our research. As Table 3.5 also shows, violent assault was thought to be the biggest social problem and hence, perhaps, the most feared by those respondents living in Canterbury, Bankstown, Fairfield and Auburn. Over 20% of respondents in these LGAs rated violent assault as the crime that was the main social problem. In contrast, only 7.1% of respondents from the Rockdale LGA, and 14% of those living in Hurstville and Liverpool, rated violent assault as the crime that was the main social problem.

There is also an important age dimension to this question. We asked youth (Figure 3.3) and adults (Figure 3.4) about the crime they thought was the biggest social problem today and for youth these were violent assault, burglary and street theft—only 10% were concerned about the social impact of drugs and the criminal activity that surrounds the drug culture. In contrast, 41% of adults reported that drugs were the biggest social problem, although both adults and youth rated violent assault as the crime that they considered the biggest social problem. Clearly generational issues shape crime experiences and fear of crime in Sydney. These results are similar to similar to research carried out in the UK and the USA, surveyed by Schneider and Kitchen (2002: 4–5), with the exception of car theft: [N]ational surveys in Britain and the United States tell us [the crimes] citizens fear the most: “stranger to stranger” personal and property crimes, such as assault, robbery, burglary and car-related burglary and theft’. As Schneider and Kitchen note, white collar crimes, such as fraud and cyber crime, rarely feature in the crimes that concern the public.

Figure 3.3: Crimes that are perceived as the Biggest Social Problem—Youth

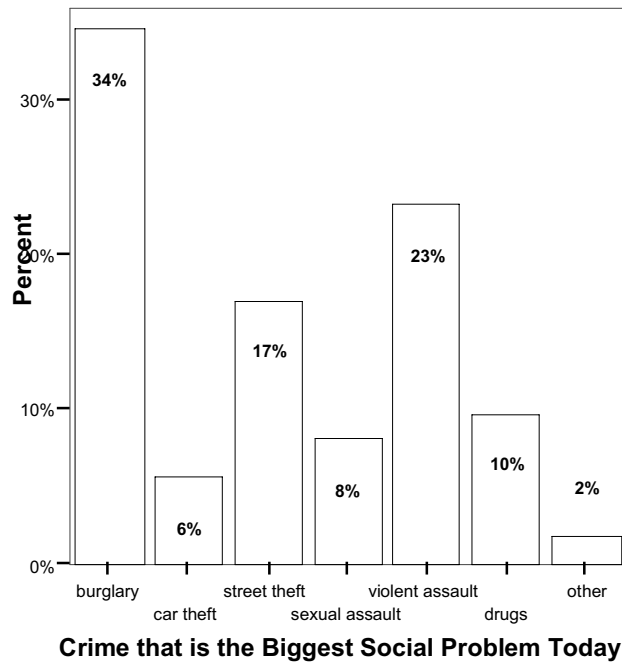
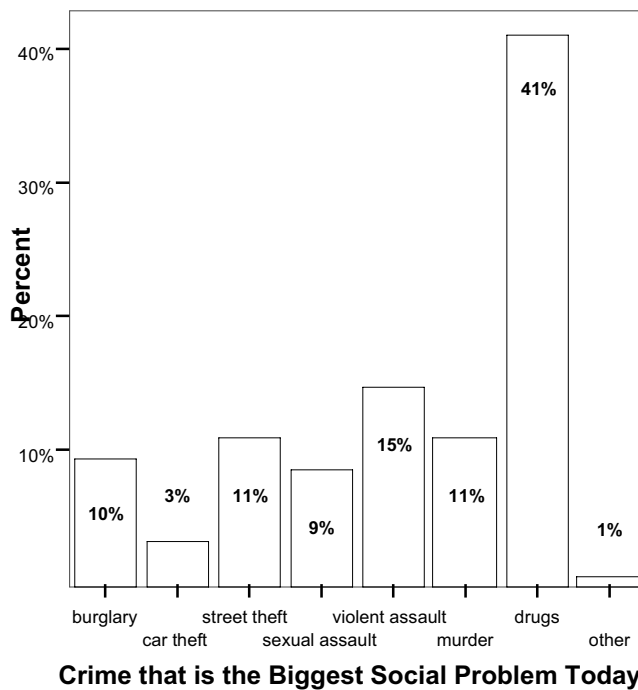


Figure 3.4: Crimes that are Perceived as the Biggest Social Problem—Adults



There is of course an important gender aspect of concern about crime. As Table 3.6 shows, the greatest gender discrepancy in the frequency of crimes identified as the biggest social problem relates to sexual assault: Females are four times more likely (13.4%) to identify sexual assault as the greatest social problem than males (3.3%). Perhaps more significantly, sexual assault is ranked last amongst the crime that is the greatest social concern of males. As for other crimes, twice as many males (5.8%) consider car theft to be the major social problem than do females (2.9%), although in both cases the concern about car theft is ranked very lowly. Drugs, burglary and violent assault are most often the crimes identified as the major social problem by both males and females.

Table 3.6: Crimes Perceived as the Biggest Social Problem (by Gender)

Crime Perceived as the Biggest Social Problem	Males (Number)	Males %	Females (Number)	Females %
	Burglary	68	18.7	82
Car Theft	21	5.8	11	2.9
Street Theft	48	13.2	52	13.9
Sexual Assault	12	3.3	50	13.4
Violent Assault	69	19	65	17.4
Murder	28	7.7	18	4.8
Drugs	111	30.6	92	24.7
Other	6	1.7	3	0.8
Total	363	100	373	100

Experiences of crime in Sydney

In order to understand the phenomena of fear about crime or concern about crime it is important to use the experience of crime as a reference point. There are three main ways that criminologists construct a picture of the extent of crime in a society: arrest or imprisonment statistics; victim reports of crime; and self-reports of offences (McCord, Widom and Crowell, 2001: 26). In this section we will briefly comment on arrest or imprisonment statistics in Australia, as compared to statistics from other western countries, in order to give a comparative picture of the crime situation in Australia. We then draw on the Sydney survey to construct a recent picture of crime in Sydney by providing data on the crimes that respondents claim they have experienced (victim reports) and the crimes that they claim to have committed (self-reporting).

It is difficult to measure rates of criminality in Australia, particularly since only one in ten crimes committed here are solved each year (Muckerjee, 1994: 4). Moreover, arrest data itself is flawed, not only because for some crime no arrests are made and for others several people may be arrested who may or may not have committed the crime, but also because '[a]rrests also depend on a number of factors other than overall crime levels, including the policies of particular police agencies; the co-operation of victim; the skill of the perpetrator; and the age,

sex, race, and social class of the suspect (McCord, Widom and Crowell, 2001: 27). Most Australian criminology data centres not on arrests but on imprisonment or incarceration statistics from the national prison census, published since 1982. It is also difficult to compare crime rates between countries because the way that criminal statistics are collected and reported varies considerably. With these reservations in mind, criminologists have attempted to construct a comparative criminality league table for England and Wales, Germany, France, USA, Canada, Australia and Japan (Schneider and Kitchen 2002: 57).

In terms of overall criminality, as measured by the total number of crimes per 100,000 people, Australia (6979 crimes per 100,000 people) ranks behind England and Wales (8545 crimes per 100,000 people); Canada (8094 crimes per 100,000 people); and Germany (7682 crimes per 100,000 people) but ranks ahead of the USA (4617 crimes per 100,000 people) and Japan (only 1612 crimes per 100,000 people). In terms of particular types of crime, the USA outstrips Australia and the other countries by miles in terms of homicide rates, although Australia is equal second with Canada in this regard (6.3 per 100,000 people in the USA compared to 1.8 per 100,000 people in Australia and Canada). Australia (926 per 100,000 people) is also second, this time to Canada (974 per 100,000 people), in terms of the rate of violent crime and second to England and Wales in terms of theft of a motor vehicle (Australia 703 per 100,000 people; England and Wales 745 per 100,000 people).

One of the features that emerges from a comparative study of Australian crime is the very high relative rate of property crimes when compared to other comparable societies. Edgar *et al.* (1993: 489) point out that property crimes in Australia outnumber personal crimes by a ratio of 25:1. As Schneider and Kitchen (2002: 57) show, in 1998 Australia experienced 1580 domestic burglaries per 100,000 people, far in excess of any other country and 50% higher than England and Wales and nearly twice as much as in the USA.

Victim reports of crime in Sydney

Victim reports are another source of information about the extent of criminality in a society or city, and are particularly important because of the problems, discussed above, of police records of arrest rates or prison data. In the United States, a National Crime Victimization Survey, which began in 1973, is conducted annually and reports on the findings of a survey of 43,000 households about crimes committed against people over 12 years of age (McCord, Widom and Crowell, 2001: 29).

There is a very big inconsistency between fear about crime and the actual incidence of crime. We pressed both adults and youth a bit further on this, asking them about their personal experiences of crime. As Figure 3.5 shows, burglary (167 reports) and car theft (121 reports) are the crimes of which most adults surveyed in Sydney had been victims. These far outweigh the other experiences of crime among adults surveyed: 47 adults had been victims of street theft, 38 were victims of violent assault, while eight adults reported being a victim of sexual assault.

Figure 3.5: Personal Experiences as Victims of Crime—Adults

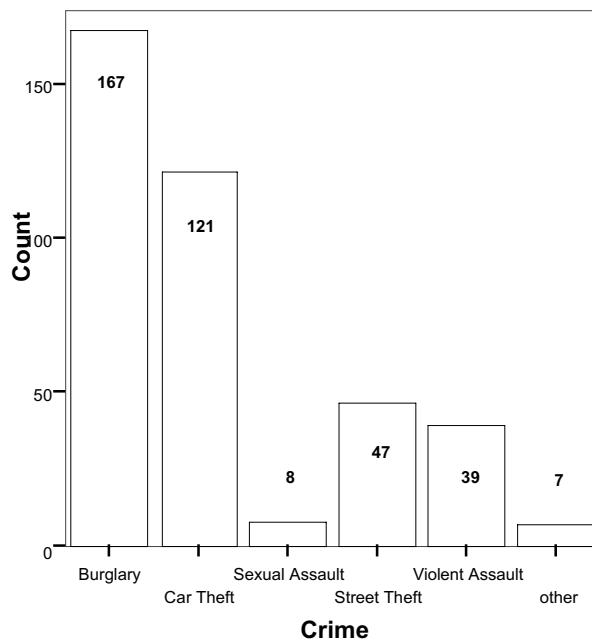
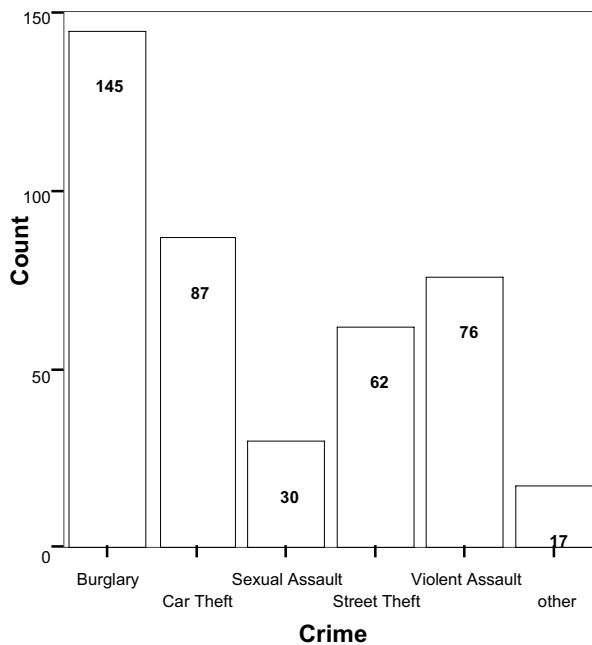


Figure 3.6: Personal Experiences as Victims of Crime—Youth



We asked a similar question of the youth we surveyed. As Figure 3.6 shows, youth experience matches that of the adult sample in that burglary (145 reports) and car theft (87 reports) are the most common criminal experiences that youth interviewed for our study have experienced as victims of crime. Importantly, however, youth also reported a higher incidence of being victims of violent assaults (76 reports), sexual assault (30 reports) and street theft (62 reports)

than adults. Moreover, the incidence of sexual assault is much higher for youth (mainly girls) than for adults. These findings indicate that a surprisingly high number of respondents had personal experiences of crime, although most of this is related to theft of cars or property. Thus, whilst youth are often portrayed as perpetrators of crimes, they are the victims of violent assaults as well.

Self-reporting of crime in Sydney

Another insight into crime in Sydney comes from the responses to questions in the Sydney survey asking adults and youth about the crimes that they have committed themselves. Of course, this data source also has problems. There is a question about the accuracy of the information provided, although research in the United States suggests that the validity of self-reported data tends to vary by race and gender. In particular, some studies have argued that black and minority youth in the USA are less likely to report offences that are already known to officials than are white youth (Tracy 1987). But, as McCord, Widom and Crowell (2001: 31) argue: It is not known whether the self-reports or the official records are more accurate... Each type of data for analyzing crime trends has advantages and disadvantages'. In the light of these qualifications, we asked those surveyed if they themselves had ever been involved in committing a crime. Of course researchers would need annual survey that asked about crime committed in the past year to construct an authoritative picture of the rate of crime. We did not set out to do this. We also asked those surveyed if their friends had ever committed a crime to get a sort of self-reporting-once-removed insight into the crimes of youth in particular in our survey. The logic behind this question is that, as Warr (2002: 3) argues:

Criminal conduct is predominantly social behaviour. Most offenders are embedded in a network of friends who also break the law, and the single strongest predictor of criminal behaviour known to criminologists is the number of delinquent friends an individual has.

In this section of the report we will present data of both aspects of the self-reporting of youth crime: the self-reporting of crimes admitted to have been committed by those surveyed; and the knowledge of the crime committed by friends of those surveyed. The Sydney survey revealed that it is only a minority of youth who have committed crimes, and that male youth are twice as likely than female youth to have been involved in criminal activity. Table 3.7 shows that, overall, one in four Sydney youth surveyed reported that they had committed a crime. However, while 34.3% of the males had self-reported criminal activity in the past (no time period was specified in the question), only 15.4% of the female youth had been involved in criminal activity.

Table 3.7: Youth in Sydney Survey Self-reporting Criminal Activity (Nos and %)

	Male (numbers)	Male %	Female (numbers)	female %	Total (numbers)	Total %
Yes	82	34.3	30	15.4	112	25.8
No	157	65.7	165	84.6	322	74.2
Total	229		195		434	

There is of course a spatial dimension to youth crime in Sydney because crime occurs in different suburbs at different rates. Criminological data of arrests of youth, or of criminal incidents allegedly involving youth in different LGAs, is one take on this spatial dimension of crime within the metropolis. Table 3.8 shows the youth respondents who admitted to criminal activity in the past by the LGA in which they live. This shows that, of those surveyed, the highest proportion of youth who reported a criminal past lived in the Bankstown LGA (33%), closely followed by youth who lived in the North Shore (29%), Liverpool (28%), Rockdale (28%) and Auburn (27%) LGAs. The lowest proportion of youth who reported a criminal past lived in the Canterbury (24%), Hurstville (19%) and Fairfield (17%) LGAs. Of course, the sample is not random, so that these figures are not necessarily representative of all youth in these areas. Nevertheless, it is interesting that youth surveyed in Sydney’s North Shore LGA self-reported similar rates of criminality to those in the Liverpool, Rockdale and Auburn LGAs, and that Fairfield was the LGA with the lowest rate of self-reported youth criminality. This finding upsets the stereotypes that generally represent the middle-class North Shore as a less criminal place than Fairfield, particularly given the constant media depiction of Cabramatta—within the Fairfield LGA—as the heroin and crime capital of western Sydney (Dreher 2000; Castillo and Hirst 2000).

Table 3.8: Youth Admitting Criminal Activity by the Sydney LGA in which they Live

	Local Government Area							
	Auburn	Banks-town	Canter-bury	Fairfield	Hurst-ville	Liver-pool	Rock-dale	North Shore
Yes	17	22	9	9	11	19	15	7
No	44	45	28	34	47	49	39	17
% yes	27	33	24	17	19	28	28	29

When we asked the youth surveyed in Sydney if any of their friends had ever been involved in committing a crime—that is, friend-reporting of youth criminal activity in Sydney—the most striking finding was that the rates of criminality of youth were much higher than the self-reporting findings. As Table 3.9 shows, just over half (51.7%) of youth reported that they had friends who had committed crimes. Of course, these ‘criminal friends’ may be known to many of the youth surveyed, so this does not necessarily give a clear picture of the rate of criminality *per se*. However, given the significance of youth crime as a group phenomenon that is steeped in peer group behaviour, networks and relationships, this finding is still very significant. Moreover, there was a convergence of male and female experiences in this regard: nearly half of all female youth surveyed (44.6%) reported that they had friends who had been engaged in criminal activities. This finding suggests that criminal activity plays a greater part in the life of female peer groups and in the lives of young females in Sydney—at least indirectly—than the well-worn cliché that ‘crime is a masculine behaviour’ would imply. We will return to these gender considerations later in this report.

Table 3.9: Youth in Sydney Survey Friend-reporting of Criminal Activity (Nos and %)

	Male (numbers)	Male %	Female (numbers)	Female %	Total (numbers)	Total %
Yes	138	57.5	86	44.6	224	51.7
No	102	42.5	107	55.4	209	48.3
Total	240		193		433	

As Table 3.10 shows, around two in three youth surveyed in the North Shore, Auburn and Rockdale LGAs reported that they had friends who had engaged in criminal activity, as did about half of youth who lived in Liverpool, Bankstown and Canterbury LGAs. In contrast, only one third of the youth surveyed in the Hurstville LGA, and one fourth of the youth surveyed in the Fairfield LGA, reported that they had friends who had committed criminal acts. Again the picture emerging of Fairfield LGA in particular is more benign with respect to youth crime than popular media stereotypes would lead us to believe.

Table 3.10: Youth Admitting that they have Friends who have been involved in Criminal Activity by the Sydney LGA in which they Live

	Local Government Area							
	Auburn	Banks-town	Canter-bury	Fairfield	Hurst-ville	Liver-pool	Rock-dale	North Shore
Yes	37	32	18	16	25	35	31	16
No	24	34	19	26	33	33	21	8
% yes	61	48	49	38	43	51	60	66

The face of crime in Sydney

Fear of crime also becomes fear of a criminal. We wanted to put a face to the criminal in people's minds. From our earlier work in ethnic crime in Sydney, we pointed to the media moral panic about crime in Sydney. We showed how the fear of crime in Sydney was given an ethnic face: In the Sydney media, crime was regularly associated with Middle Eastern or Asian appearances (Collins *et al.* 2000). We wanted to explore this further and, to do this, we first asked the adults surveyed to nominate what socio-economic groups in society they were afraid of in the Sydney area. We later ask them to put an 'ethnic face' to the criminal they fear.

As Figure 3.7 shows, most adults identified 'youth gangs' as the group that they most felt threatened by. Surprisingly, fear of youth gangs (mentioned by 284 adults) exceeded fear of organized criminal gangs (mentioned by 207 adults) or criminals working alone (mentioned by 168 adults). Clearly, fear of crime in Sydney is strongly associated with fear of criminal or youth *gangs*. 'Kids on the street' were also of concern to the adults surveyed, whilst very few (31 respondents) reported that they feared the poor or homeless.

Figure 3.7: Groups that Sydney Adults Feel Threatened By



How safe are Sydney's suburbs?

Crime is one thing and safety is another. As we have seen in this section of the report, there is a very strong, even overwhelming, fear of, or concern about, crime expressed by the majority of those we surveyed in South Western Sydney. This fear seems to exist despite the fact that crime statistics tell us that crime rates are falling in Sydney—although the evidence for this is uneven and, admittedly in some instances, somewhat unclear. It would appear that the sensationalist coverage of crime in South Western Sydney suburbs in the media—fuelled by public statements from the NSW government and NSW Police service over the past few years—has led to an exaggeration of reasonable levels of concern about crime in the minds of Sydneysiders.

Safe living in the local area?

There is some support for the above interpretation emerging from an analysis of Sydney survey questions relating to how safe respondents feel living in their own area. As Table 3.11 shows, despite overwhelming evidence that a fear of crime is deeply embedded in those we surveyed, there is also overwhelming evidence to suggest that people still feel, equally strongly, that they are safe in the areas that they live in. Overall, two in every three people surveyed (71.7%) reported that they felt safe in their own area. This finding seems inconsistent with earlier findings, presented above, about fear of crime that the youth and adults we surveyed expressed, and fear for their children that the adults we surveyed expressed. Sydney is not actually an unsafe place to live in, according to our respondents.

There are gender, spatial and age dimensions to the question of feeling safe in your local area. First, taking the gender aspect, as Table 3.11 shows, males in Sydney feel safer living in their suburbs (77.7%) than do females (65%). Certainly, this finding is not surprising and it ties in with research carried out in other western countries that also shows that there are important gender dimensions to fear about crime. The British Crime Survey (Home Office 2000: 48) compared female to male ratios for those who felt ‘very worried’ about certain types of crime. The findings showed that women were four times more likely to be ‘very worried’ about rape; three times more likely to be ‘very worried’ about physical attack; between two and three times more likely to be ‘very worried’ about being insulted or pestered; and twice as likely to be ‘very worried’ about mugging.

Table 3.11: Do You feel Safe in your Own Area (% Yes by LGA and Gender)

Feeling of safety in own area	Local Government Area							
	Auburn	Banks-town	Canter-bury	Fairfield	Hurst-ville	Liver-pool	Rock-dale	Total
Male	85.7	58.3	79.6	60.7	84.7	86	88.4	77.7
Female	57.6	53.3	72.2	45.2	76.7	59.3	66.7	65
Total	73.3	55.3	75.7	54	81.2	72.1	75.5	71.1

There is also an important age or generational aspect to this issue of feeling safe in your own suburbs. Overall, as Table 3.12 shows, while nearly eight out of every ten youth surveyed in South Western Sydney felt safe in their local area, only two out of every three adults reported that they felt safe in their local area. Perhaps adults are more responsive to the media message that South Western Sydney is a criminal place than are youth, or perhaps the ageing process leads to greater insecurity. Whatever the answer, the point still remains that an overwhelming majority of youth and adults, males and female, felt safe living in their suburbs despite, at the same time, harbouring fears about the levels of crime in Sydney.

Table 3.12: People of Sydney LGAs who feel Safe Living There

Feeling of safety in own area	Youth (Numbers)	Youth (%)	Adults (Numbers)	Adults (%)
Yes	347	78.5	234	62.4
No	95	25.1	141	37.6
Total	442	100	375	100

Concern for Safety of Children

One strong finding from the pilot survey is that eight out of every ten immigrant adults surveyed in the Canterbury LGA are ‘very concerned’ for the safety of their children, while most others are ‘concerned’. This finding was confirmed for the Sydney survey as a whole, as Table 3.13 and Table 3.14 show. Overall, three-quarters of all parents surveyed were very concerned about the safety of their children, with female parents slightly more concerned than their male counterparts. Most other parents surveyed were concerned about the safety of their children, with only 1 parent in twenty either mildly concerned or not concerned at all.

Table 3.13: How Concerned are you for the Safety of your Children? (numbers)

	Male	Female	Total
Very concerned	105	179	284
Concerned	29	29	58
Mildly concerned	9	8	17
Not concerned		3	3
Not applicable	6	8	14
Total	149	227	376

Table 3.14: How Concerned are you for the Safety of your Children? (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Very concerned	70.5	78.9	75.5
Concerned	19.5	12.8	15.4
Mildly concerned	6.0	3.5	4.5
Not concerned		1.3	.8
Not applicable	4.0	3.5	3.7
Total	100	100	100

This data can also be presented by the LGA in which the parent lived, as Table 3.15 shows. The Sydney LGAs where parents were most likely to be very concerned about the safety of their children were Auburn (84%) Fairfield (83%) and Rockdale (83%). Those LGAs where parents were least likely to be very concerned about the safety of their children were the North Shore (62%) and Hurstville (66%).

Table 3.15: Parents Very Concerned and Concerned about the Safety of their Children (% by LGA)

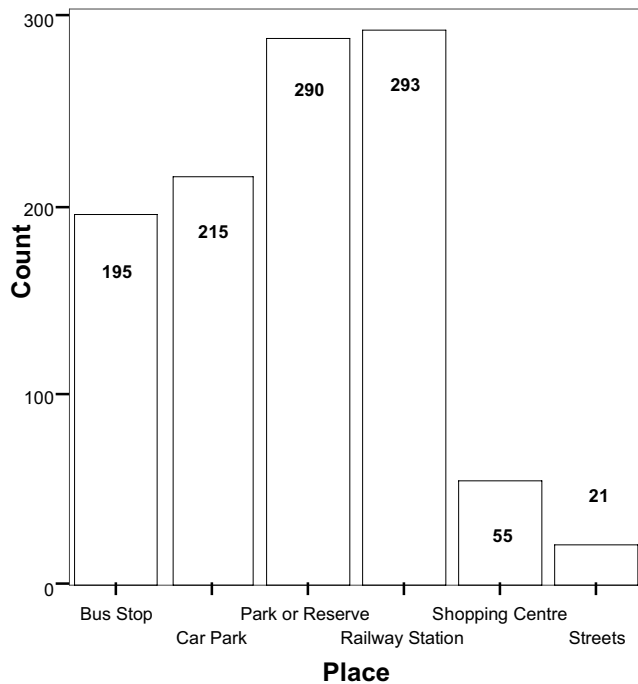
Local Government Area	Very concerned	Concerned
Auburn	84	0
Bankstown	78	19
North Shore	62	20
Canterbury	74	20
Fairfield	83	7
Hurstville	66	21
Liverpool	76	8
Rockdale	83	15
Miscellaneous	55	11
Total	76	58

Where Sydneysiders feel unsafe

We decided to further explore the relationship between fear about crime and public space in Sydney. What was the local, spatial dimension into crime and fear of crime? We asked those surveyed in each municipality to identify the sites of crime and what areas were thought to be dangerous places. To help answer the latter question, we asked Sydney youth (Figure 3.8) and Sydney adults (Figure 3.9) where they felt unsafe after dark. In the Sydney region the answer, almost invariably, was related to the use of transport. The railway station was the place most feared after dark, with the car park and the bus stop also areas of concern to Sydney youth.

Parks and recreation areas were also felt to be dangerous by many youth. There is, thus, a shortage of safe public space available for Sydney youth to access at night. (It is important to note that multiple responses were allowed for this question).

Figure 3.8: Where Youth Feel Unsafe After Dark in Sydney

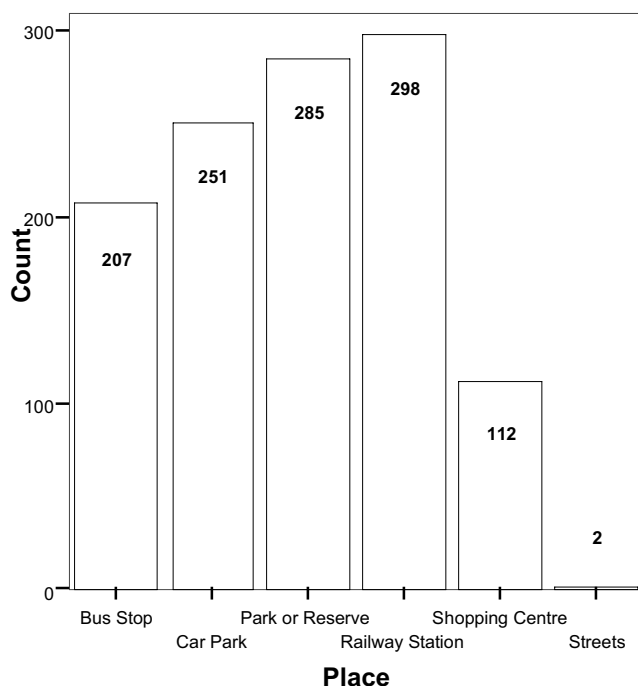


We also asked adults living in Sydney where they felt unsafe (Figure 3.9). Transport nodes—the railway station, bus stops and car parks—again topped the list, followed by suburban parks or reserves. Perhaps the biggest inconsistency between youth and adult responses to this question is related to the safety, or lack thereof, of shopping centres. While 55 youth responded that they felt unsafe in the local shopping centre, over twice the number of adults (112) felt unsafe in the shopping centre. This points to the shopping centre or shopping mall as a site of contestation between adult and youth—an issue that we shall explore in more depth later in this research project. The other interesting finding from this question is that only two adults felt unsafe on their local streets. Local streets were also designated the safest public space by Sydney’s youth, with only 21 youth concerned for their safety on local streets.

Safety and Public Transport

We pursued the public transport theme further by asking the Sydney youth and adults surveyed about when they felt safe using public transport. Table 3.16 shows that, on average, two out of every three Sydneysiders felt safe using public transport only during the day and only three out of every ten surveyed felt safe using public transport at any time. One in ten surveyed never felt safe using Sydney public transport.

Figure 3.9: Where Adults Feel Unsafe After Dark in Sydney



There were significant variations by LGA to this. Nearly half of those surveyed who lived in North Shore LGAs felt safe using public transport at any time, while only 3% surveyed never felt safe using Sydney public transport. At the other end of the spectrum, only 14% of those living in Fairfield felt safe using public transport at any time, while one in four—21%—never felt safe using Sydney public transport. Most other Sydney LGAs lie in between these two extremes.

Table 3.16: When Does Public Transport Feel Safe? (% by LGA)

Local Government Area	Only during day	All the time	Never
Auburn	57	35	8
Bankstown	63	24	13
North Shore	50	47	3
Canterbury	60	36	4
Fairfield	65	14	21
Hurstville	57	38	5
Liverpool	67	23	10
Rockdale	67	25	8
Miscellaneous	60	34	5
Total	62	29	9

There are, of course, important age and gender dimensions to feelings of safety relating to public transport. As Table 3.17 shows, four out of ten youth (41.4%) surveyed felt safe on Sydney's public transport at all times, while about half of youth only felt safe using public transport during the day. Less than one in ten youth surveyed never feel safe using public

transport. The results are significantly different for adults. Only 14.4% of the adults surveyed reported that they felt safe on Sydney’s public transport at all times. Three out of every four adults only felt safe using public transport during the day, while 10% never felt safe regardless of the time of day.

Table 3.17: When Does Public Transport Feel Safe? (%)

When	Youth	Adults	Total
Only during day	49.9	75.5	61.7
all the time	41.4	14.4	28.9
never	8.7	10.1	19.4

Moreover, as Table 3.18 shows, females are much less likely to feel safe using Sydney’s public transport than are males. While four out of ten males surveyed felt safe on Sydney’s public transport at all times, only about two out of ten females (17.8%) felt as safe. At the other end of the spectrum, three out of every four females felt safe on Sydney’s public transport only during the day, while 11% of females surveyed never felt safe regardless of the time of day.

Table 3.18: Gender Dimensions of Public Transport Safety? (%)

When	Males	Females	Total
Only during day	50.9	71.1	61.6
all the time	41	17.8	29.0
never	5	11	9.4