

STUDENT OPINION: SPIKING AMONGST STUDENTS AND SAFETY IN NIGHT TIME VENUES



Please note...

Some content in this report will include topics that some may find triggering of emotional distress (drink/ drug spiking, drug use, physical abuse and implied sexual assault).

If you believe that you will find these topics traumatising, you may choose not to continue reading this report.

If you require any advice or support in relation to any of the issues covered by this research the following organisations are available:

- If you are a victim of spiking: [Victim Support](#)
- Helping a friend who has been spiked: [Drink Aware](#)
- Student helpline: [Nightline](#)
- Rape & Sexual Assault Support Centre: [RASASC](#), [Rape Crisis](#)

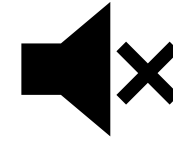
Summary



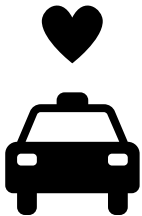
14% of respondents reported that they know or think they've had their drinks spiked with drugs.



Over one third of respondents that think or know they've been spiked say it happened at a local nightclub.



71% of students who thought or knew they had been spiked did not report their experience.



11% of respondents who thought or knew they had been spiked said they were supported to get home safely after reporting their experience.



Students' feelings of safety varies between venues. **88%** of students felt safe at a local café and **71%** felt at a students' union bar.



Over one fifth of students want heightened security measures, prevention kits and awareness campaigns at night-time venues to their ensure safety.

About the research

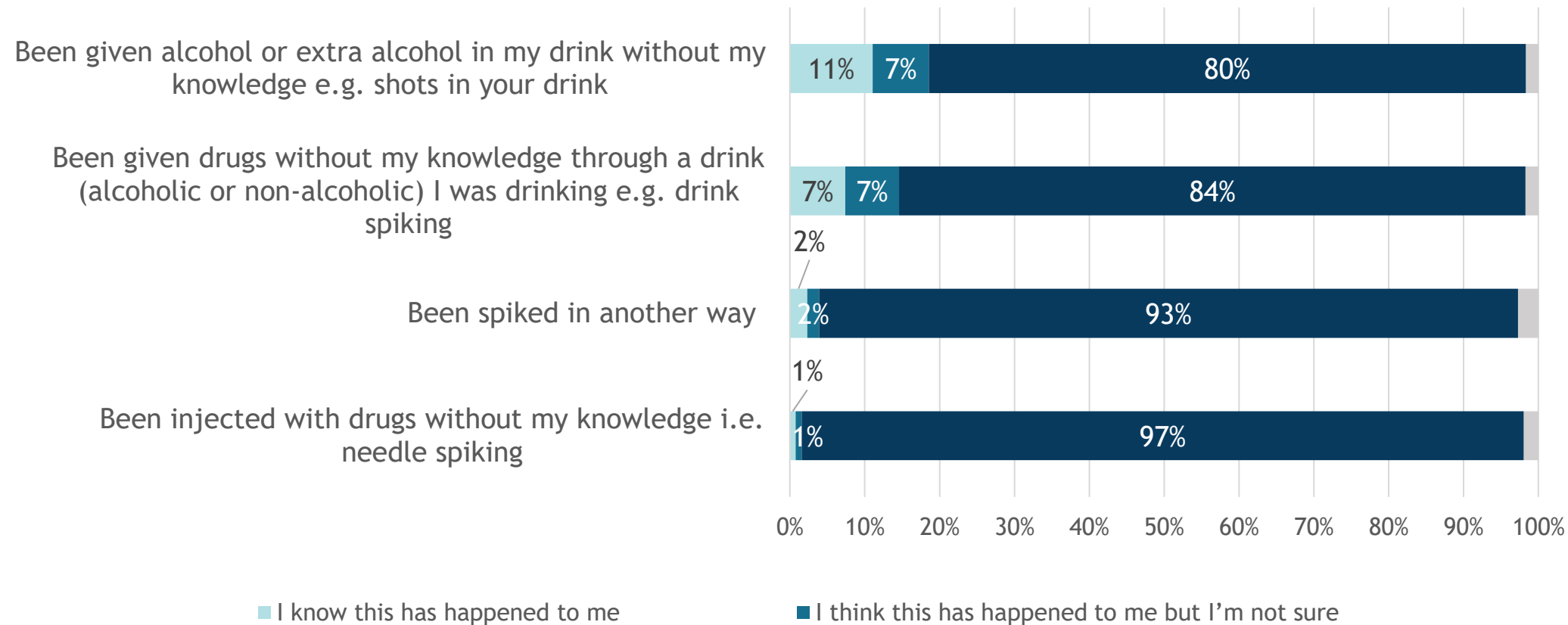
To support our work on alcohol and drug cultures amongst students, we've investigated experiences of spiking alongside the desire for action from education institutions by students in the UK. This report also includes research carried out by NUS on student opinion on safety in night-time venues.

Both surveys were distributed through the National Union of Students to the database of TOTUM cardholders. SOS-UK carried out research in November 2021 and NUS carried out research in January 2022. They formed part of a wider omnibus survey containing questions on a variety of topics. Respondents are incentivised to complete the survey with a cash prize draw.

Responses have been weighted by gender to reflect the demographic make up of the UK higher education student population. Just over 2700 students responded to the SOS-UK's survey, and details of their characteristics can be found at the end of this report. 1030 students responded to NUS's survey, therefore this report will discuss the results of over 3730 students.

STUDENT OPINION ON DRINK AND DRUG SPIKING

The majority of respondents do not think they have been victim to spiking, however 14% know or think they have been given drugs through their drinks without their knowledge



Q. Which of the following applies to you? Base: c. 2697 Balance: No response



Differences in experience are seen across different respondent demographics

Been given alcohol or extra alcohol in my drink without my knowledge e.g. shots in your drink

- Women (inc. trans women) respondents more likely to say they know this has happened to them than men (inc. trans men) - 13% compared to 8%
- Respondents who consider themselves to have a disability are more likely to say they know this has happened to them than those that don't - 18% compared to 9%
- UK students are more likely to say they know this has happened to them compared to those from outside the EU - 13% compared to 2%

Been given drugs without my knowledge through a drink (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) I was drinking e.g. drink spiking

- Women (inc. trans women) respondents more likely to say they know this has happened to them than men (inc. trans men) - 9% compared to 5%
- Respondents who consider themselves to have a disability are more likely to say they know this has happened to them than those that don't - 12% compared to 5%
- UK students are more likely to say they know this has happened to them compared to those from outside the EU - 8% compared to 2%

Been injected with drugs without my knowledge i.e. needle spiking

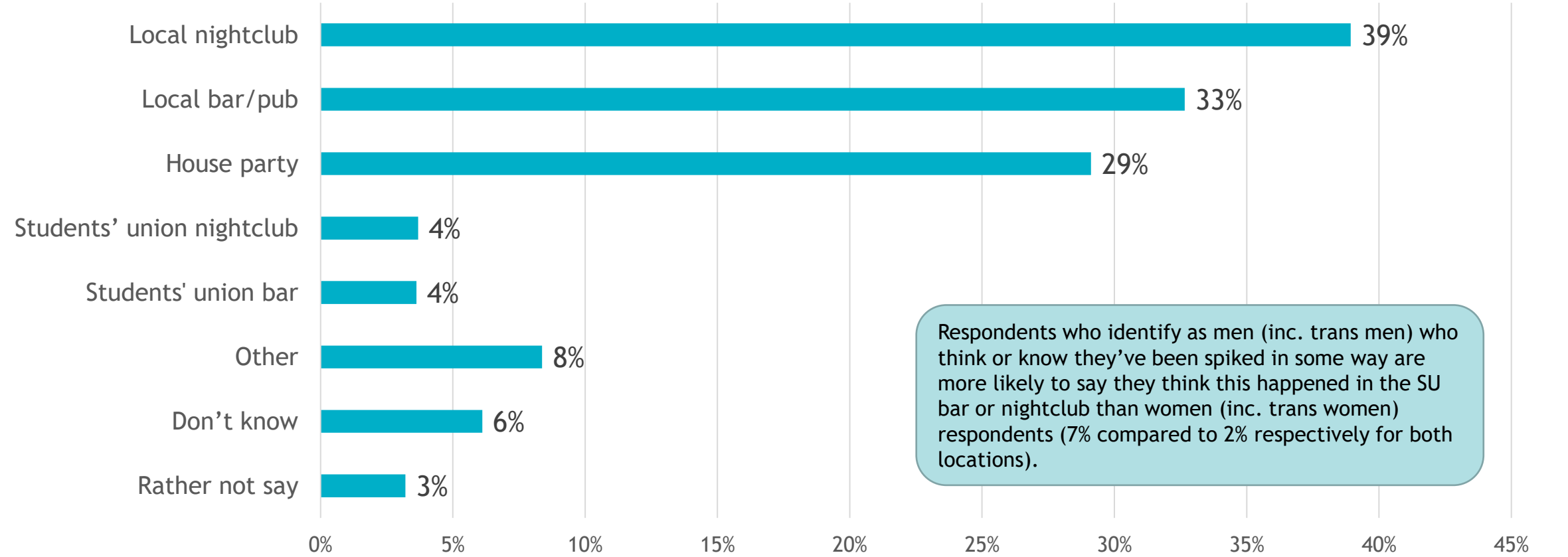
- No significant differences reported

Been spiked in another way

- Respondents who consider themselves to have a disability are more likely to say they know this has happened to them than those that don't - 4% compared to 2%

All differences are reported at 99% significance level.

Spiking has been reported in different locations - over a third of respondents who know or think they have been spiked say it happened at a local nightclub



Q. You said you know or think you have been ‘spiked’ through your drink or by needle. Where do you think this took place? Base: 651 Balance: No response and those who do not think or know they have been spiked



8% chose 'Other' to describe their experience , with common themes expressed including:

FOOD

"Cannabis in baked brownies"

"In take away food"

"Cannabis in food"

POLYDRUG ABUSE

"Cannabis laced with other drugs"

"Drugs were put in a rolled cigarette I smoked"

"Given a cigarette laced with synthetic cannabinoid"

"laced cigarette"

DECEPTION

"Someone gave me a drug that wasn't what they said it was..."

"medication been tampered with"

"Offered one substance and given a different one"

"given ketamine and not told that was what it was"

PHYSICAL FORCE

"At a concert years ago a guy kissed me with something in his mouth"

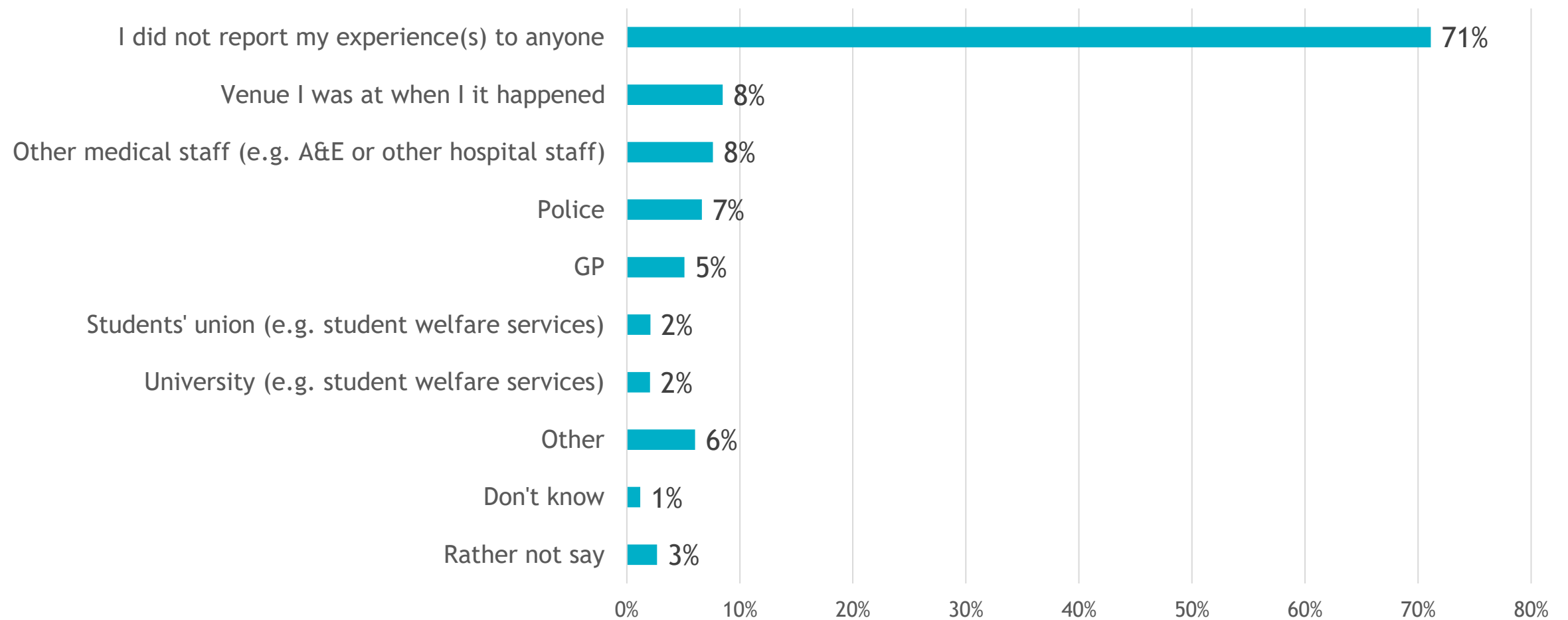
"Liquid drugs put on my skin"

"a guy pin me against a wall and pour some powder into my mouth"

"Drugs on fingertips shoved in mouth"

Q. You said you know or think you have been 'spiked' through your drink or by needle. Where do you think this took place? Base: 651 Balance: No response and those who do not think or know they have been spiked

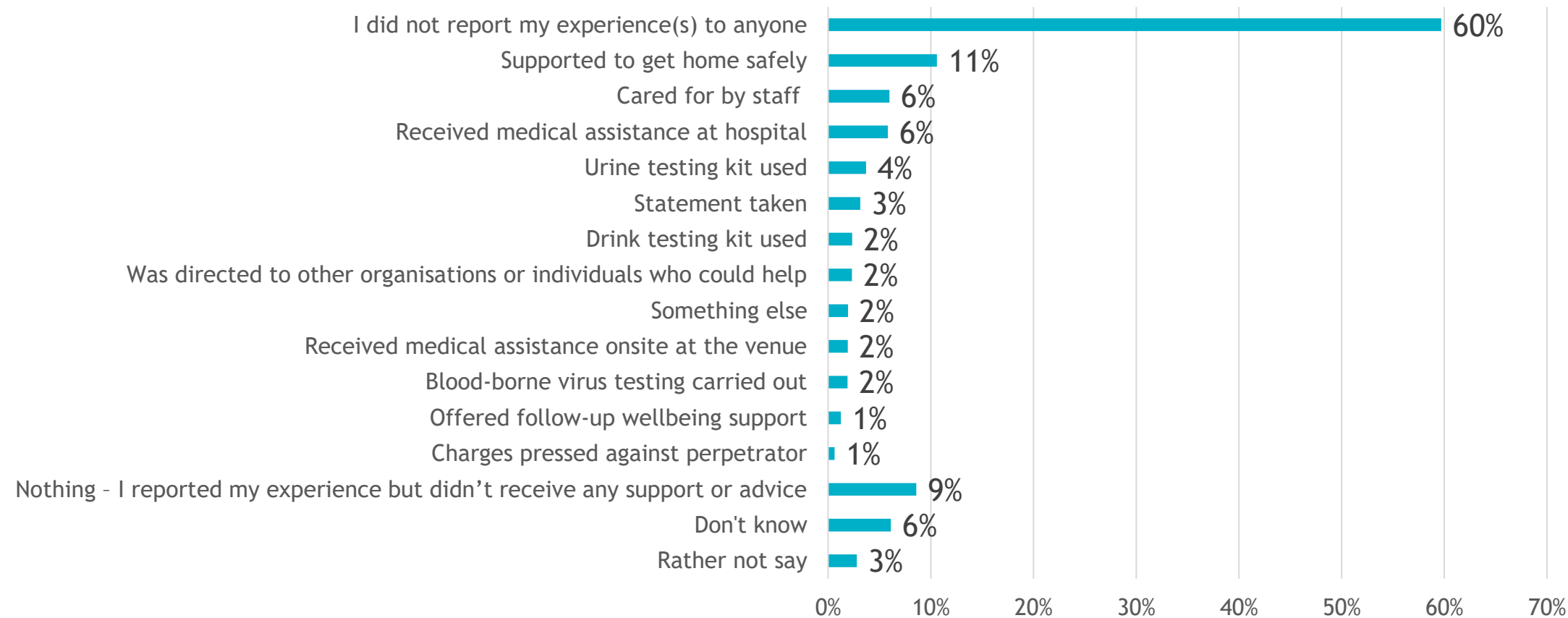
Over 70% of respondents who think or know they've been spiked did not report their experience(s) of spiking to anyone



Q. Did you report your experience to anyone? Base: 651 Balance: No response and those who do not think or know they have been spiked



11% of respondents who know or think they've been spiked say they were supported to get home safely after reporting their experience. 9% say they didn't receive any support or advice.



Q. What, if anything, happened as a result of reporting your experiences? Base. 647



Respondents would like students' unions and universities to provide mental health support to victims of spiking

Respondents were also asked what support they would like their university to provide to victims of spiking. All responses were coded into common themes, with the number of comments under each theme shown in the table below.

Counselling, mental health, wellbeing support inc. extensions for university deadlines	448
Safe space (at venue/ university) that provide support with getting home	202
24hr helpline or chat service as a point of contact	127
Peer/ group support with other victims	116
Advice on reporting and steps towards justice / legal aid	103
Accessible medical support for physical health	102
Training for night time venue staff	46
Call the police, with cases to be taken seriously by the police	80
Action due to spiking experience e.g. heightened security / more testing	63

Q. What action, if anything, would you like to see from your students' union or university to: Support individuals who have experienced spiking? Base: 1287
Balance: No response

Examples of suggestions for support from universities and students' unions to help victims of spiking include:

"Safe spaces in clubs, better signal/WiFi in clubs/bars so people can contact others and get help if they think themselves or a friend has been spiked."

"Make sure staff take their details and the time of the incident. To allow CCTV to be reviewed. Ensure the person is safe to get home and arrange safe transport or arrange a safe hospital visit if needed."

"Help with reporting - I was unwell after I left my drink with someone and I wasn't able to seek help at the time and didn't know who/where to report to at a later date."

"Continue to work with police to ensure they are taking pragmatic approaches to ensure that spiking is taken seriously to help victims feel confident that if they make a report, the police will actually investigate it. I'd like to see them working with our councils, to encourage them to set up testing facilities in the city where victims can go straight after a suspected spiking, to collect a sample of the drug before it leaves their system (roughly 3 hours window here!) which can be provided as evidence in court partnered with CCTV footage."

"Better counselling, more trust in victims and ensuring they are heard."

"This would be helpful so that there are safe spaces for students to go if they have been spiked."

"Extensions on deadlines offer counselling or mental health help to then have early intervention for potential anxiety or PTSD. Additionally, provide support helping the student report it to the police if that is their wish."

Respondents would like night time venues to have additional security measures to help prevent incidents of drink spiking

Respondents were also asked what their university or students' union could do to help prevent incidents of spiking. All responses were coded and are provided below.

Additional security measures including police presence	400
Raising awareness for students to avoid spiking, especially for perpetrators not to spike	382
Provide prevention 'kit' e.g. drinks covers, testing kits	296
Punishment for perpetrators inc. government intervention and zero tolerance policy	114
Self-awareness and caring for others on nights out e.g. buddy system	93
Hold locations accountable exc. Staff training e.g. safe rooms, signage, record of reports, staff checks	76
Improved incident reporting and support post-spiking i.e. medical and wellbeing support	59
Information of consequences of spiking for both victim and perpetrator	44
Training for non-student and student staff	44
Active university presence e.g. background checks, monitor warnings and reports, termination of perpetrators	24
Education on safe drink and drug use	14
Alternative social activities e.g. girls' nights	12

Q. What action, if anything, would you like to see from your students' union or university to: Help prevent incidents of spiking taking place? Base: 1558
Balance: No response

Examples of suggestions for action by universities and students' unions to help prevent incidents of spiking include:

"Make people more aware of it and how to see signs of it happening and how to stop it, also encourage tighter security at clubs and bars, better checks of what people maybe carrying and have checks on bar staff."

"Check everyone's bags and have a security scanner check before letting people into clubs to help stop people from being able to bring any spiking stuff in. Also could have security guards watching the queues outside to spot dodgy people before they can even enter."

"Make sure to educate people on spiking, it's not a joke or something to do for fun. If people know the dangers maybe they will consider not spiking or stopping someone who might spike."

"Strict consent training upon entry to the university, including harsh penalties for those caught spiking, and thorough, proper bag checks before anyone is allowed inside any university party."

"More medics/ SU bar app has button if think you've been spiked."

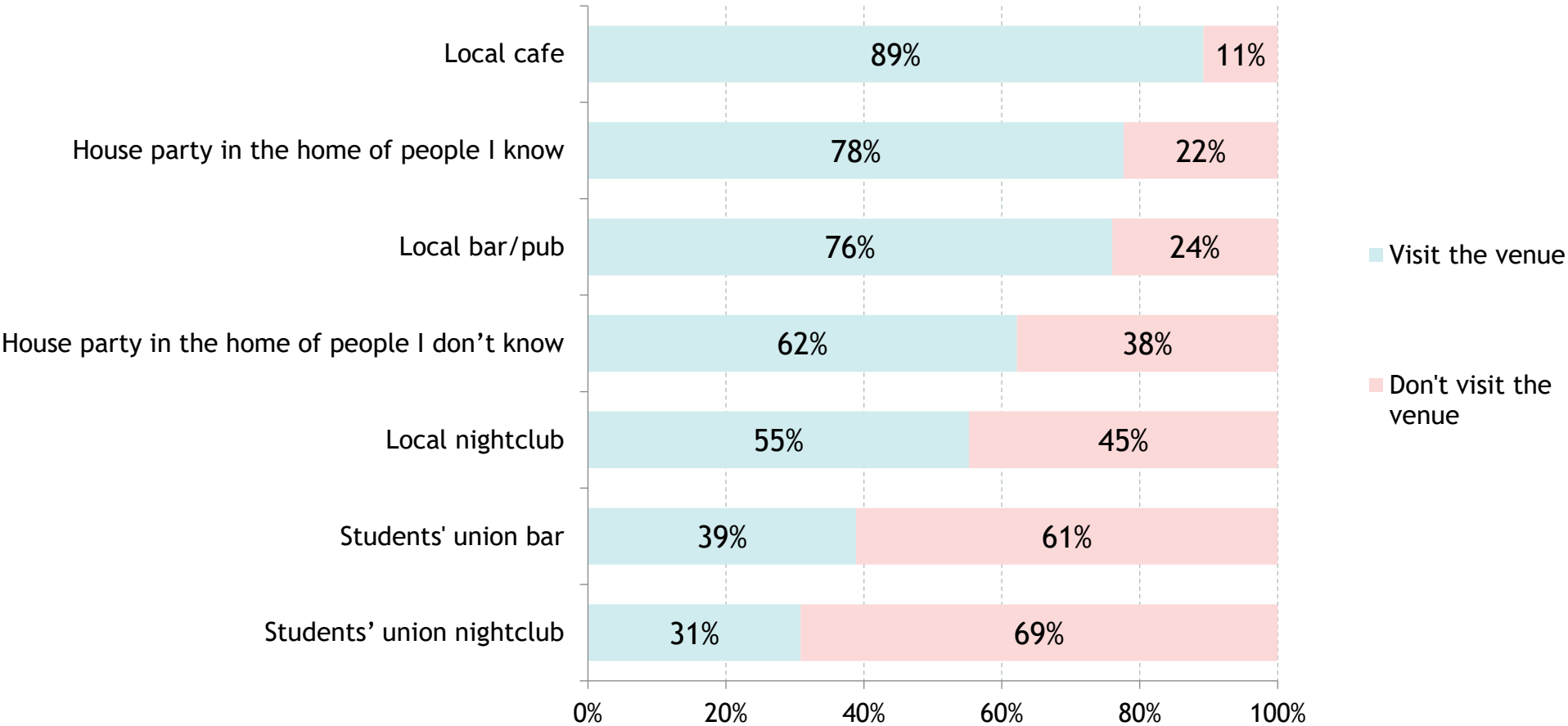
"Awareness campaign on spiking, i.e. on how it can possibly happen, how to avoid spiking, further actions to take."

"Provide the testing kits at clubs and pubs to test drinks for anything."

"Encourage students to slow down on their drinking and provide more information on the dangers of excessive alcohol and drugs. Encourage friends to look out for one another."

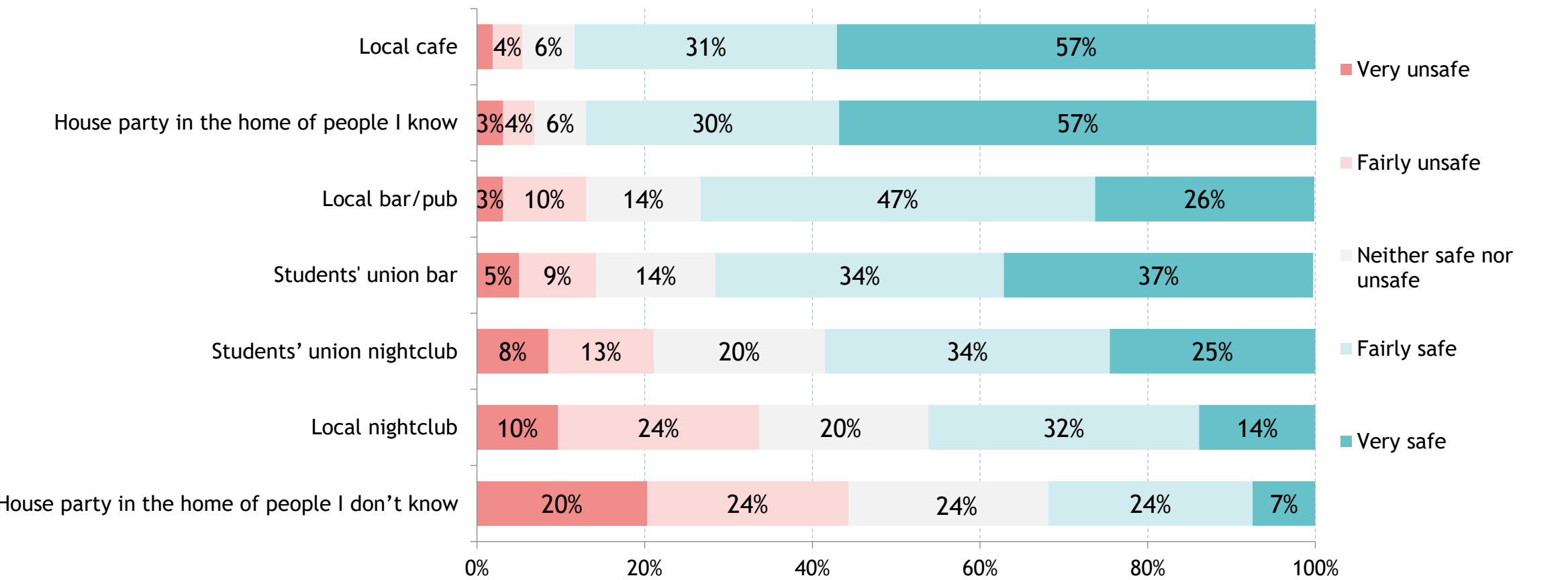
SAFETY IN NIGHT TIME VENUES

The most commonly used night-time venues include local cafes (89%) and house parties of people they know (79%). Students' union venues are frequented by a lower proportion (39% visit SU bars and 31% visit SU nightclubs)



Base: 1031

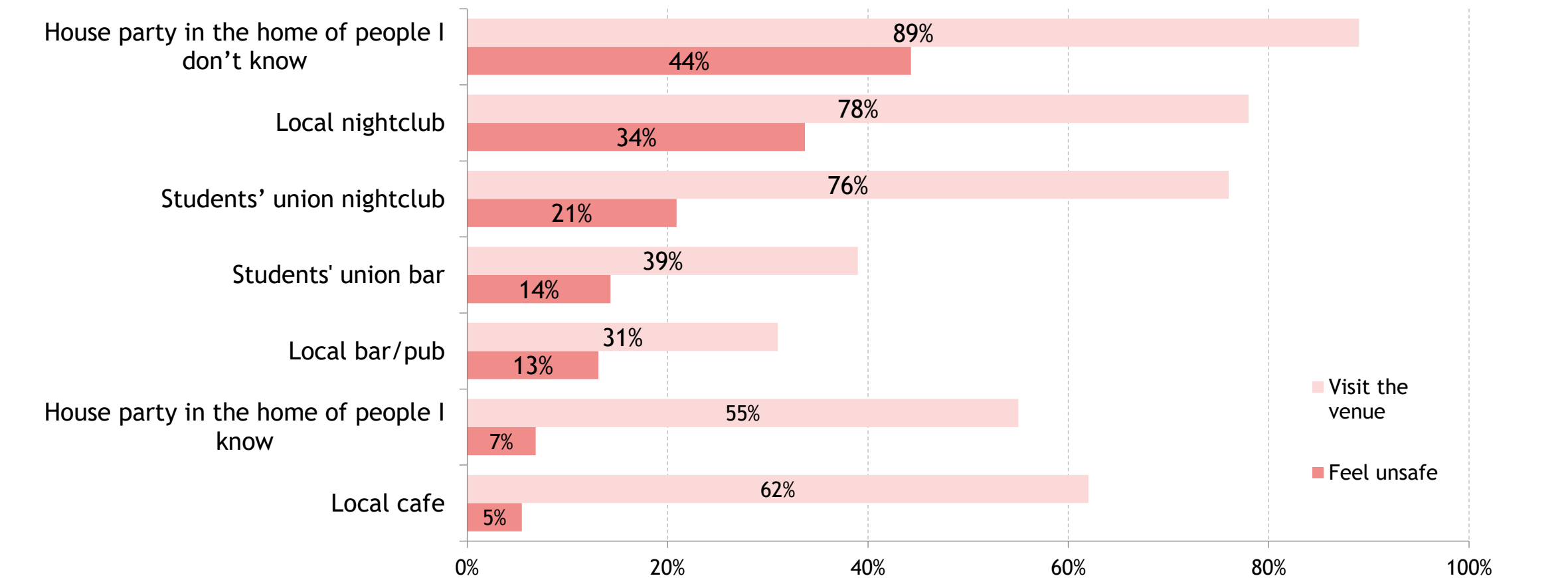
71% of students feel safe at a SU bar, however over four fifths of respondents would feel most safe in a local café. Students would feel most unsafe at a stranger’s house party or local nightclub.



Q. How safe do you feel in the following night time venues? Base: 633 Balance: don't visit this venue



Despite showing the highest levels of feeling unsafe, night time venues such as house parties in the homes of people they don't know, local nightclubs and SU nightclubs are amongst the most visited night time venues.



Q. How safe do you feel in the following nighttime venues? Base: 633 Balance: don't visit this venue



The intersectionality of night-time safety in venues



Those aged 16-17 and living with parents more likely to feel **unsafe** in a local bar/pub



Those aged 18-22 and living in halls more likely to feel **safe** in their SU bar



Disabled students and women more likely to feel **unsafe** in their SU and a local nightclub



Those in FE, living with parents, disabled and women more likely to feel **unsafe** at the house party of someone they don't know

Q. How safe do you feel in the following nighttime venues? Base: 633 Balance: don't visit this venue

Reasons for feeling safe in a student's union venue

Students reasons for feeling safe in SU venues were coded into themes:

Student's only

Actions taken towards student safety

Well-trained/ friendly staff

Good/ visible security

Safe campus

Examples:

"The campus is quite small, so everyone knows everyone and there's constantly security around and the bar staff are very friendly if there is a problem."

"My university has taken actions to make us feel safer - cup covers etc, bouncers"

"I feel safe knowing I'm usually surrounded by people I know well, or people living in the same area as me – I feel more comfortable that there's less potential for danger."

Q. Why do you feel safe in the students' union bar / nightclub?

Reasons for feeling unsafe in night-time venues

Students reasons for feeling unsafe in night-time venues were coded into themes:

Risk of spiking

Too alcohol orientated

COVID-19 precautions

More strangers around

Exposure to drugs

Examples:

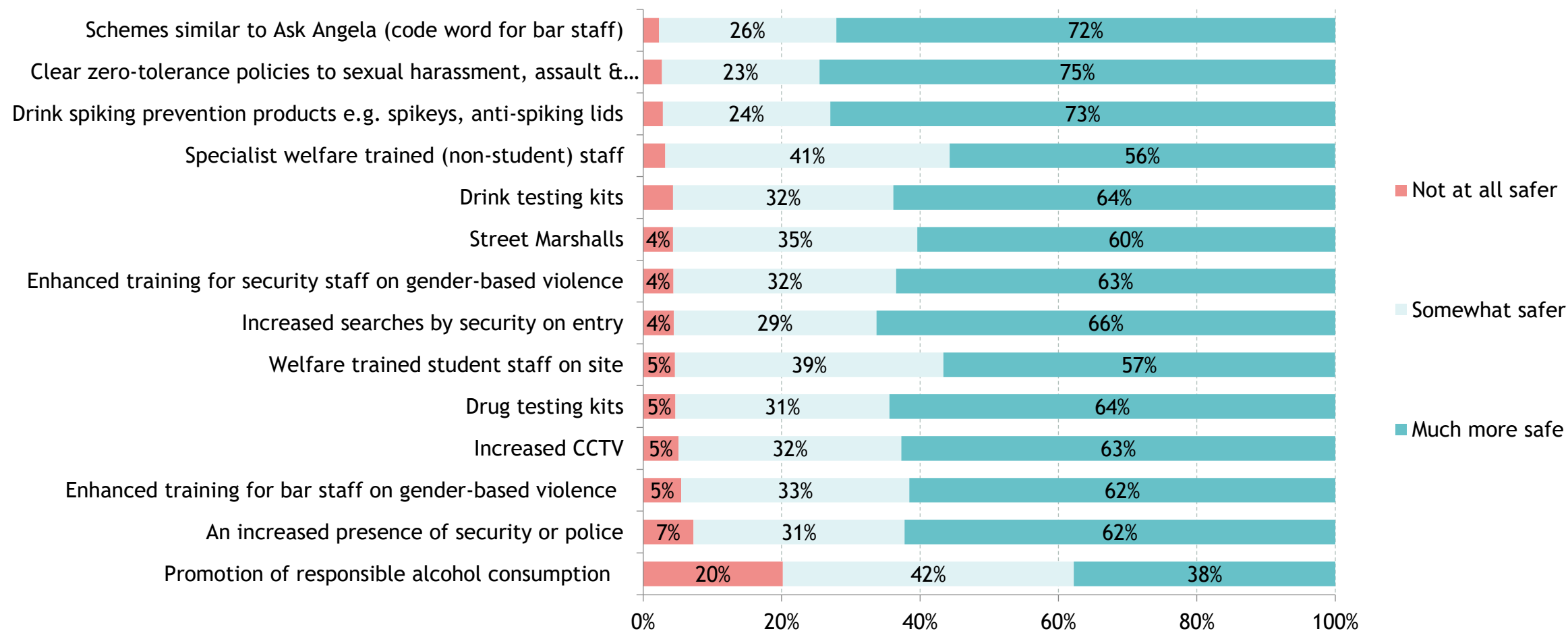
“A local bar/nightclub and a party hosted by strangers isn't typically an event I would feel safe at. After hearing a lot of spiked drinks and injected drugs into women, I can't say I'd feel safe at any of these venues.”

“Lots of strangers that could take advantage of you. There's a high chance of getting spiked or drugged without knowing”

“I would feel unsafe in any city centre pub, bar or nightclub on an evening when they were busy from the races- just walking through the city centre can feel very intimidating and unsafe due to large groups who are extremely drunk.”

Q. Why do you feel unsafe in any of these venues?

Schemes like Ask Angela, zero tolerance policies and drink spiking prevention products were highly rated safety measures by students.



Q. How much safer would the following measures make you feel in nighttime venues? Base: 842 balance: don't know/ no response

Student's views on what night-time venues could do to ensure safety

Students views and opinions on how night-time venues could ensure the safety of their customers:

Heightened security: more checks and searches

More visible security

Limit number of people

Better trained staff

Examples:

“Increase the involvement of security in any situations that look like tension is brewing to prevent arguments or intervene if harassment/assault looks to be imminent. Alcohol regulations should also be tighter, to decrease drunk-related incidents and help people feel safer.”

“Night-time venues should conduct security checks for drugs and injections to avoid spikings and other unfortunate events.”

“More security personnel and measures e.g. checking bags at door”

Q. What do you think could nighttime venues do to ensure the safety of their customers?

DEMOGRAPHICS

Student Opinion: Spiking amongst students' respondents

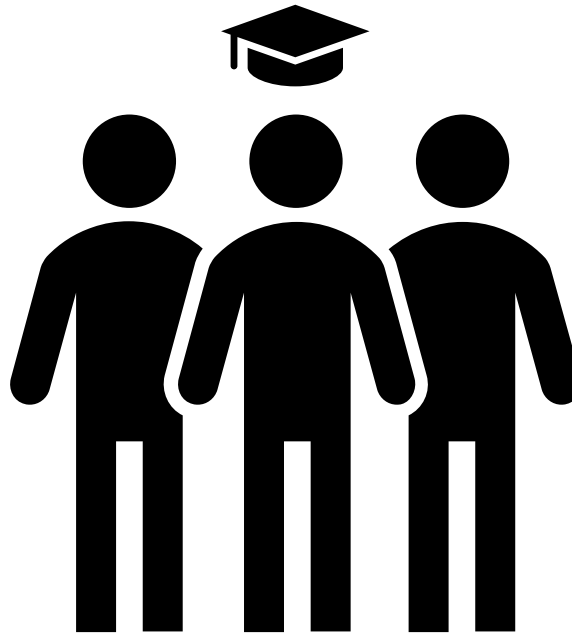
Over half of participants are **under 30 years old**

Nearly 1/3 of participants have a disability, impairment or long-term health condition

79% of participants are **UK citizens** studying in the UK

64% of participants are **White British**

2730 students completed the survey



64% of participants are at university, over half of whom are in first year

55% of students are women, **40%** are men and **2%** are non-binary

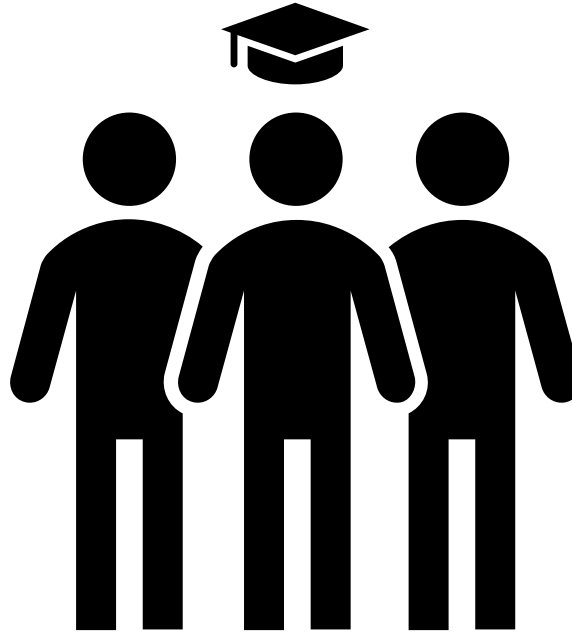
Student Opinion: Safety in night-time venues respondents

Over half of participants are **under 30 years old**

Over 1/3 of participants have a disability, impairment or long-term health condition

89% of participants are **UK citizens** studying in the UK

86% of participants study in **England**



46% of participants are undergraduates, 41% of whom are in first year

1018 students completed the survey

55% of students are women, 40% are men and 2% are non-binary

To read more of SOS-UK's research reports, please visit:
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