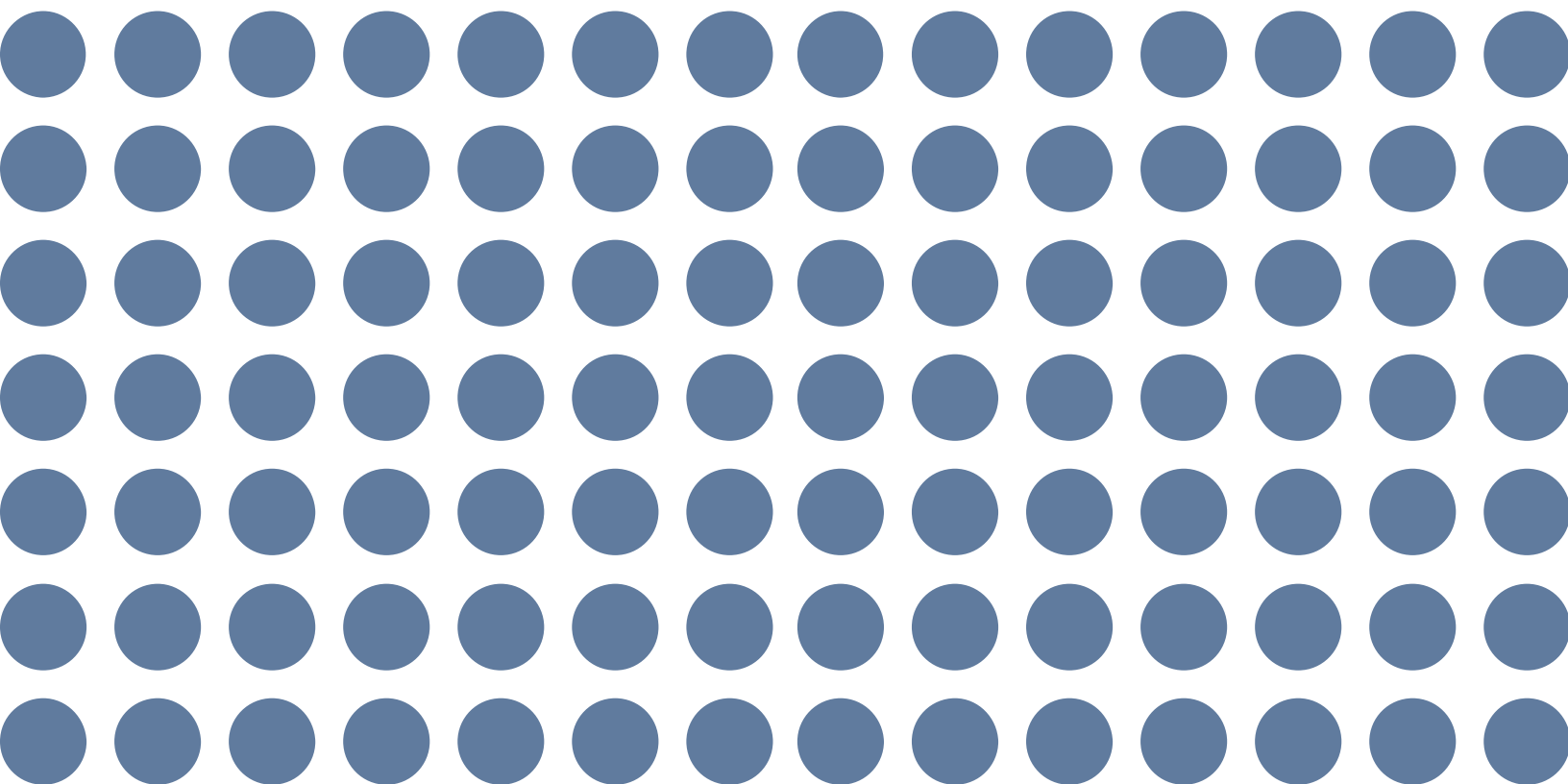


# MISSING FROM CARE

**Annual Report Fall 2021**



# OVERVIEW

The Missing From Care project began in 2019. The Court Improvement Program (CIP) and its stakeholders were interested in making educated decisions on interventions to prevent youth from running, so that the risk of victimization and harm was minimized. However, there were no reliable comprehensive statistics for youth who run in West Virginia. To that end, Missing from Care was established to gather information from the source- youth who have run from home or placement.

# MISSING FROM CARE

The Court Improvement Program, (CIP), in conjunction with DHHR and other stakeholders developed a series of questions to use when interviewing youth who run. CIP Field Coordinators began administering these interviews in 2019. The COVID 19 pandemic temporarily stopped the project in 2020. Interviews resumed in late summer of 2020 and continue.

To date, 217 interviews have been completed. Data is tracked through Survey Monkey. CIP Field Coordinators interview youth in congregate settings informally and then enter information into Survey Monkey.

CIP will continue to collect data on youth through Fall 2022. Recommendations based on findings will occur then.

**217**

Interviews  
completed

**350**

Goal for number of  
completed  
interviews

**03/30/2023**

Target  
completion date



# FINDINGS AS OF FALL 2021

The majority of interviews have taken place in juvenile detention facilities. Over 2/3 of the sample is male and Caucasian.

CIP is working on strategies to increase the diversity of the sample.

This report will examine overall findings and then explore some gender differences.

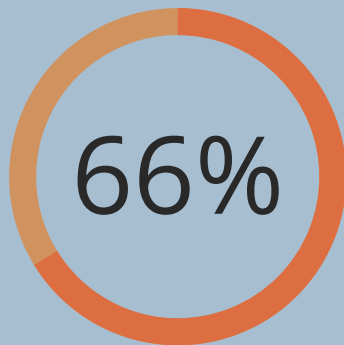
Male



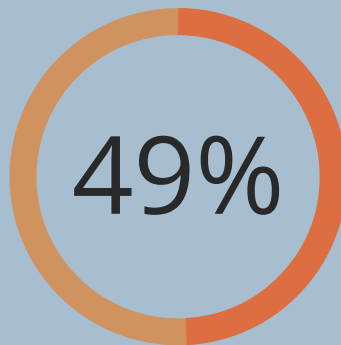
Caucasian



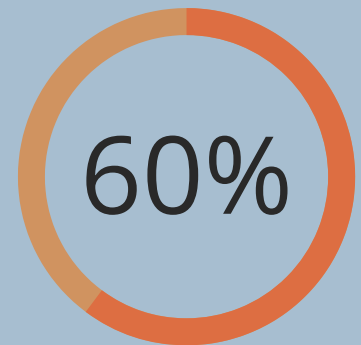
In juvenile detention



Did not plan to run- they just did.



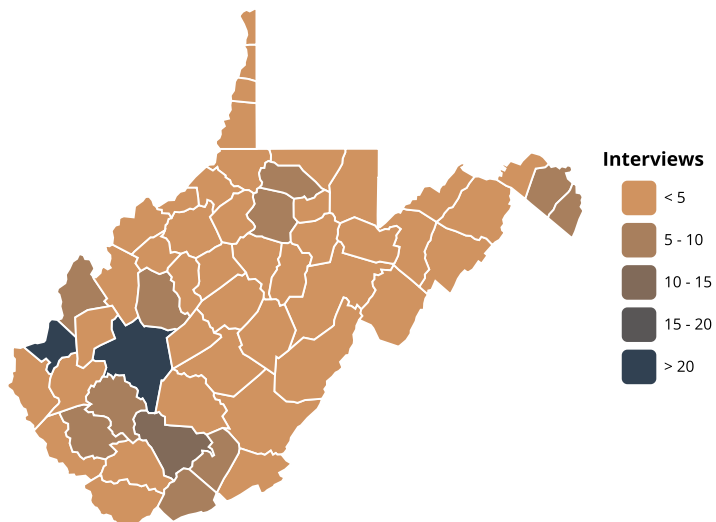
Would have returned but were scared of the consequences.



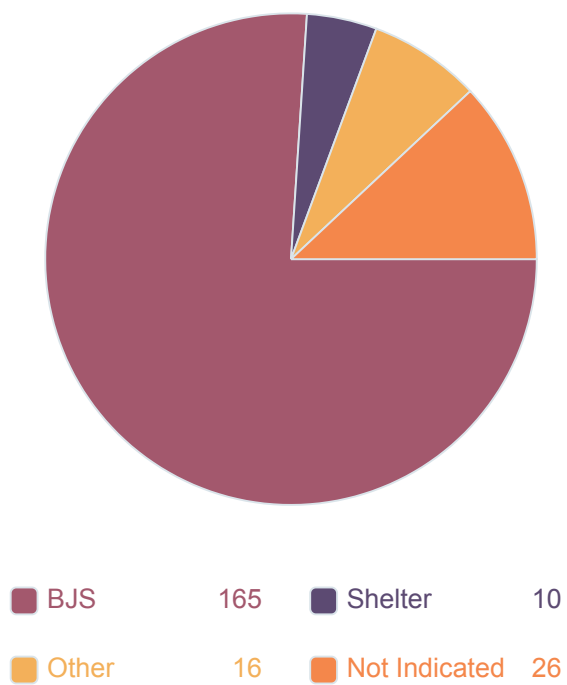
Stated their 'run' could have been prevented



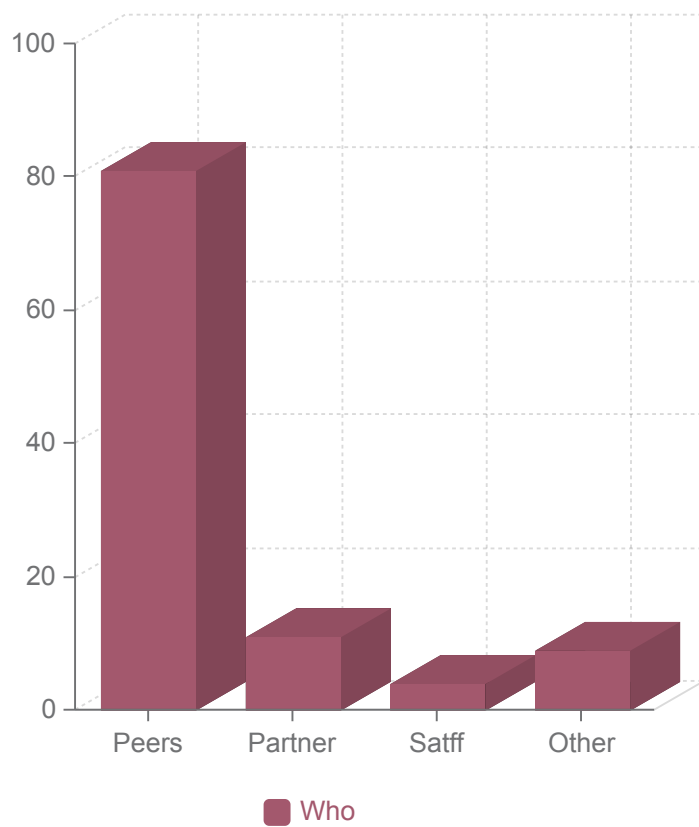
Youth interviewed  
were from all over the  
state.



## Placement During Interview



47% of youth spoke to someone before they ran.



# Runaway youth and substance use

## 67%

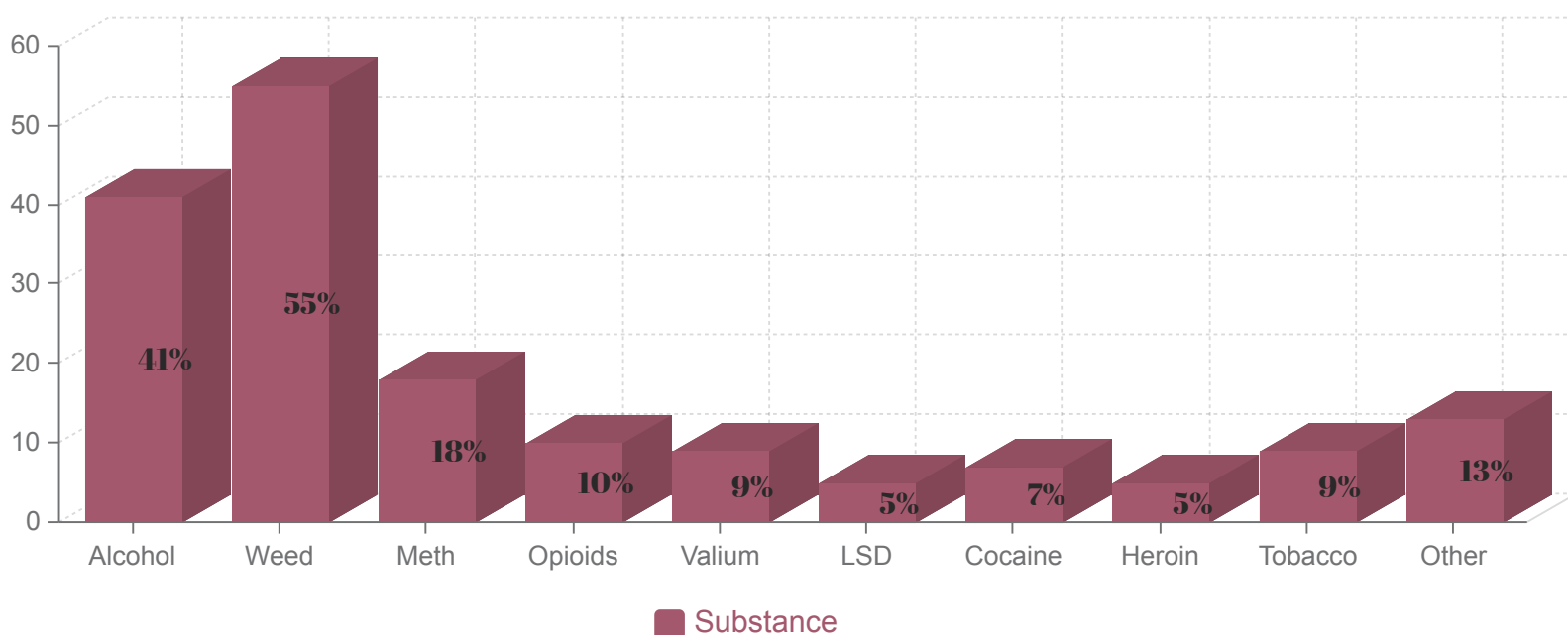
### Used Substances

At least 4% specifically stated they ran so they could use substances.

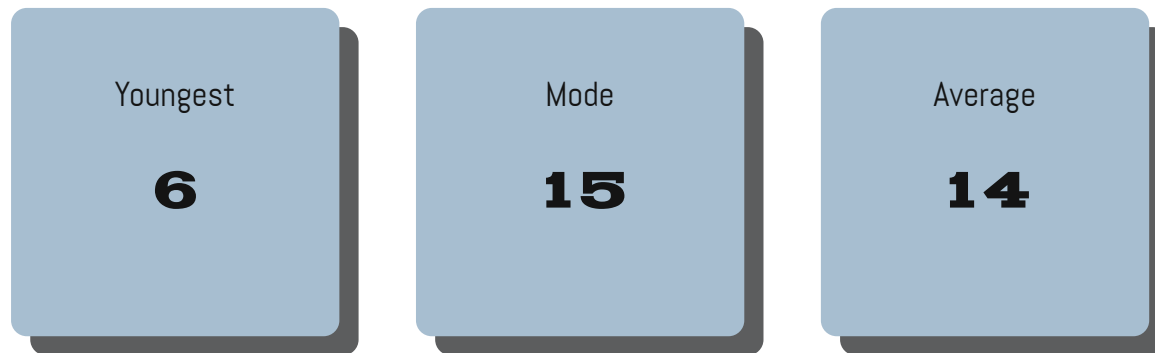
Females used substances at a rate about 9% higher than males.

Most children used multiple substances while on the run. Of those that used drugs on the run, 19% reported being victimized compared to only 13% of the overall sample. Those who used while on the run were twice as likely to experience a time with no shelter or food (46%) compared to those who did not use drugs (23%).

Substances used while on the run

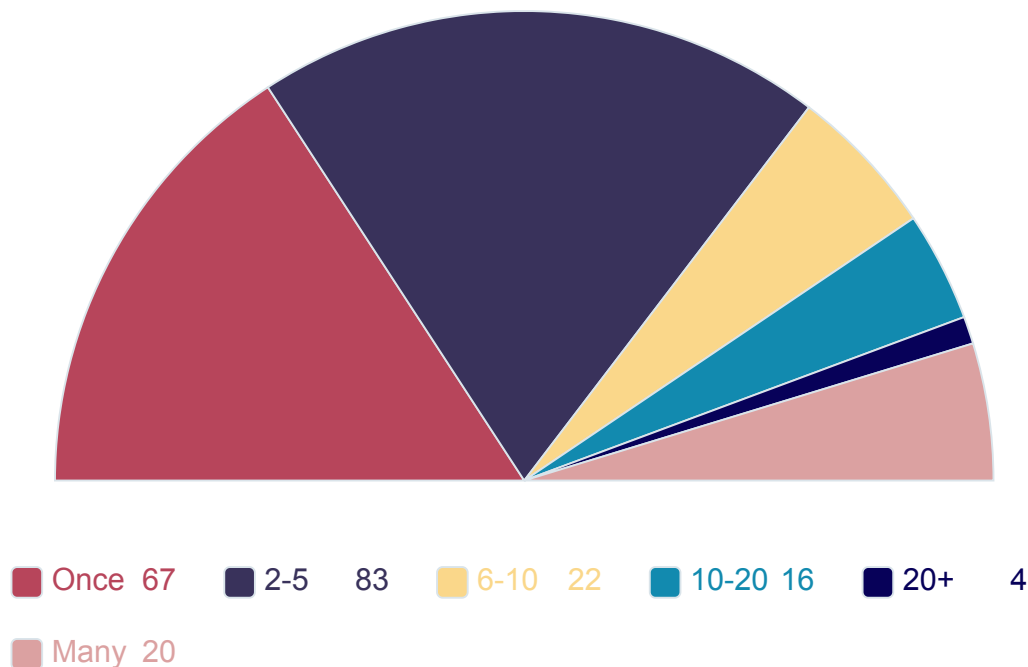


# Ages and number of 'runs'



Children's ages at the time of their first run ranged from age 6 to age 19.. Most first ran at age 15 and the average age was 14.5 years. This is consistent with national research that indicates running away peaks in the "mid-teenage years."

## Times Ran



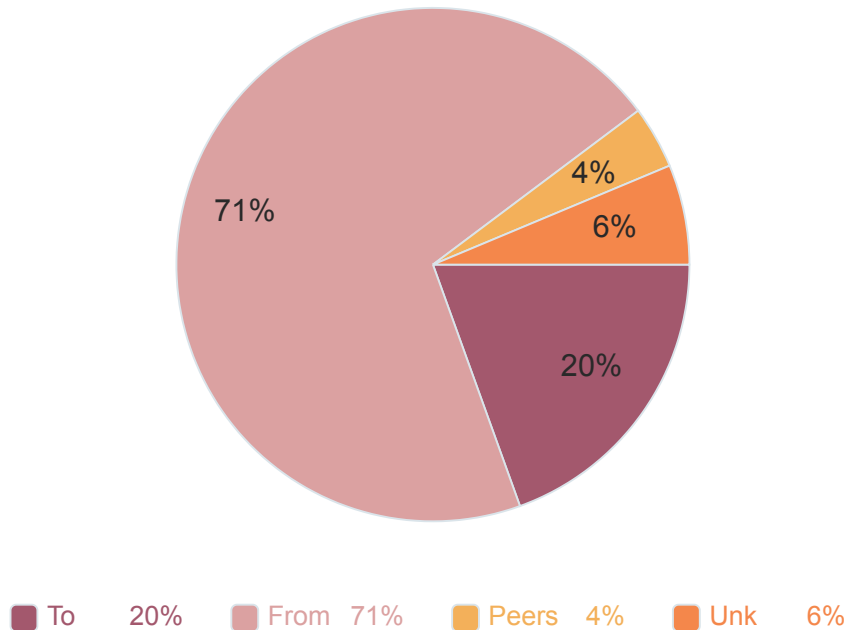
Most youth report running more than once but less than 5 times (69%). About 18% of the youth reported running more than 10 times. One youth estimated they had run 50 times. For youth reporting high rates of runs, the average time between their self-reported first run and the time of the interview was only 1.3 years.

# Reasons for running away

Studies on why youth run away divide rationale into two types of reasons- running from something or running to something. These are also called push or pull factors. Running from or push factors include restrictive placement, safety factors, or fear of going to a more restrictive placement. Running to or pull factors include running to go do drugs, to return to the youth's community, to go see biological family, or boyfriends/girlfriends.

The interviewer asked the youth why they ran, and those responses were categorized as to or from. However, a small number appeared to run due to peer pressure, in that their peers in placement were running and they simply tagged along. A couple of other youth reported that they just liked to run away.

Why youth run



While reasons for running away varied amongst the youth, in those that could articulate a specific reason for running away, there were some identifiable trends. The number one reason given for running (16%) was that the youth's placement was either unsafe or chaotic. This means either the youth did not feel safe with someone in their house or placement or there was fighting and instability. The second most common reason given (12%) was fear of the consequences of a recent action. For instance, getting in a fight and knowing they would go to detention or failing a drug screen. The other common response (11%) was the desire for freedom to do what they wanted to do- this included using drugs, a return to normalcy, and earn money. Other notable reasons included just being tired of being in a placement or not liking their current placement (9% each), not liking the staff at the current placement (6%), feeling powerless with how their case was going (5%) and fear or not wanting to go to another placement (5%).



# Preventing youth from running

60% of youth interviewed said there was something that could have prevented them from running away. Of those who stated their run could have been prevented, 16% were subsequently victimized while on the run.

While results ranged from being able to use tobacco in placement, to not being on probation and other factors, about 50% of those who were able to identify something that would have prevented them from running away gave one of the three following responses:

- Have staff treat them better at their placement - **11%**
- More contact or regular contact with family - **21%**
- Better communication from child welfare professionals involved in their case, this includes DHHR case workers, probation officers, legal team and even judges. - **18%**

Other common responses could be classified into the following items:

Not having to go to a particular placement - **8%**

Knowing the consequences up front - **6%**

Have a better parent figure in the home (includes 2 that were referencing their foster parents) - **5%**

Better therapeutic treatment - **3%**

Having someone to talk to- **3%**

Word cloud consisting of words used by youth in their response tot the questions- "Could your run have been prevented?"

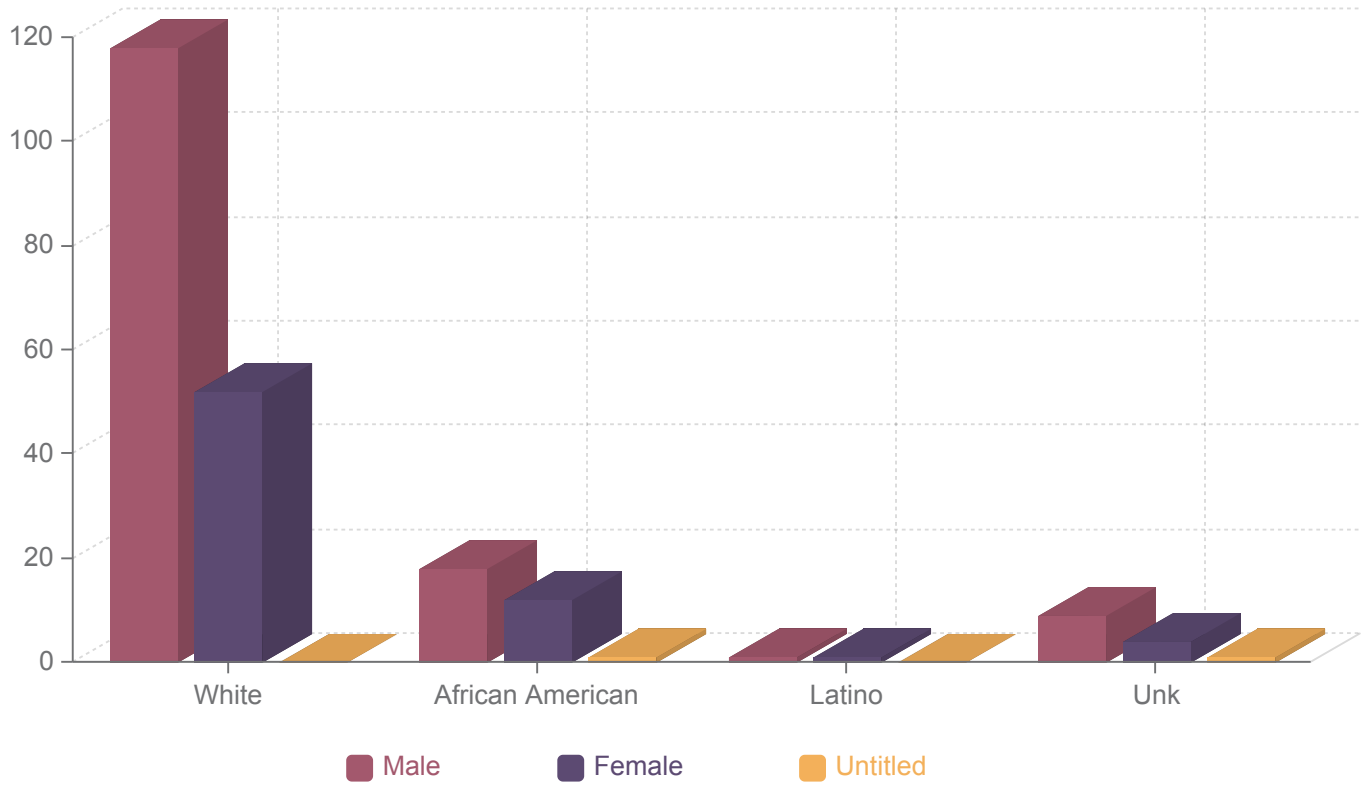


# Gender differences

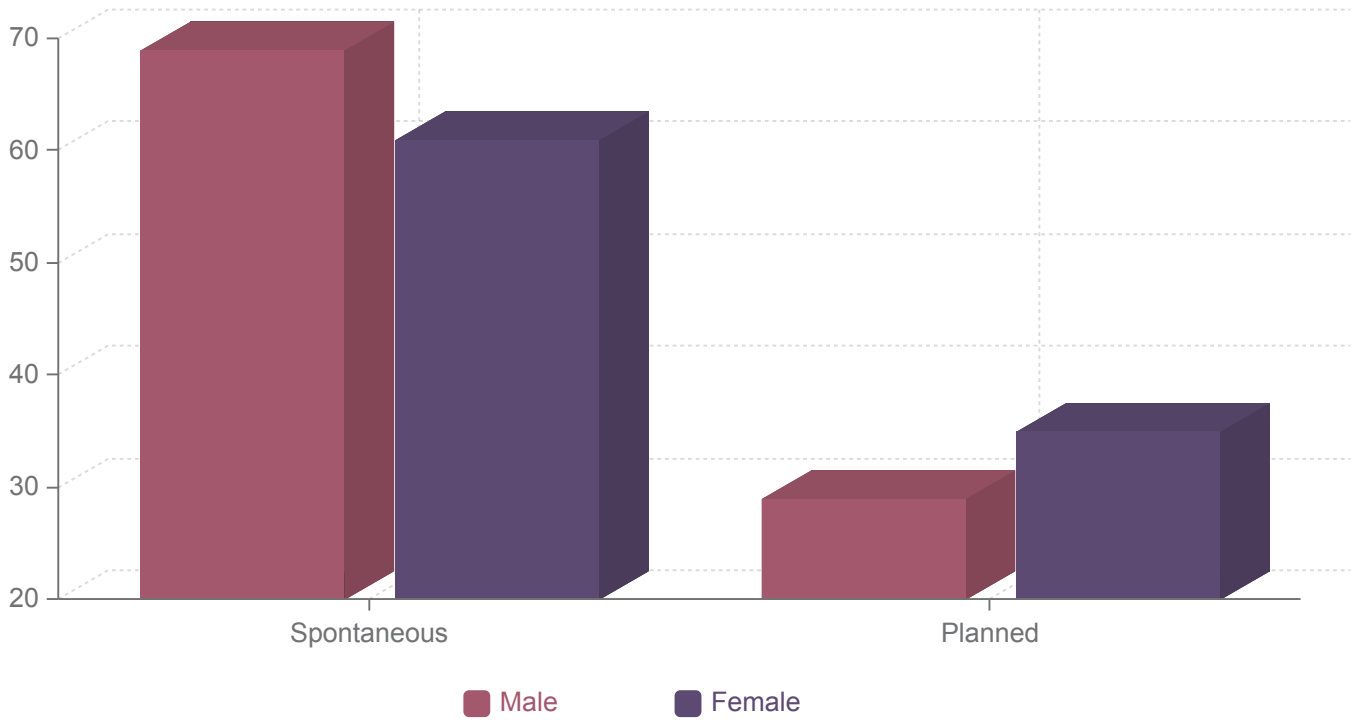
While similar in many ways there were some differences in genders.

The next 2 pages shows some differences between male and female youth.

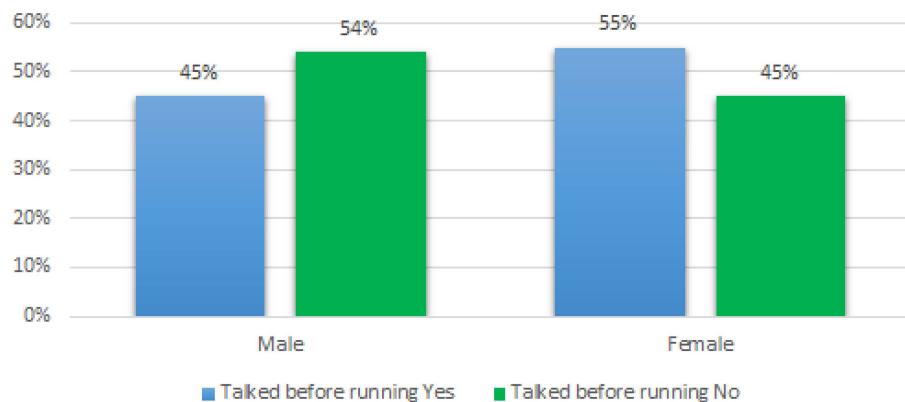
**Race & Gender**



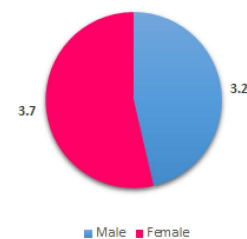
**Spontaneous vs. Planned**



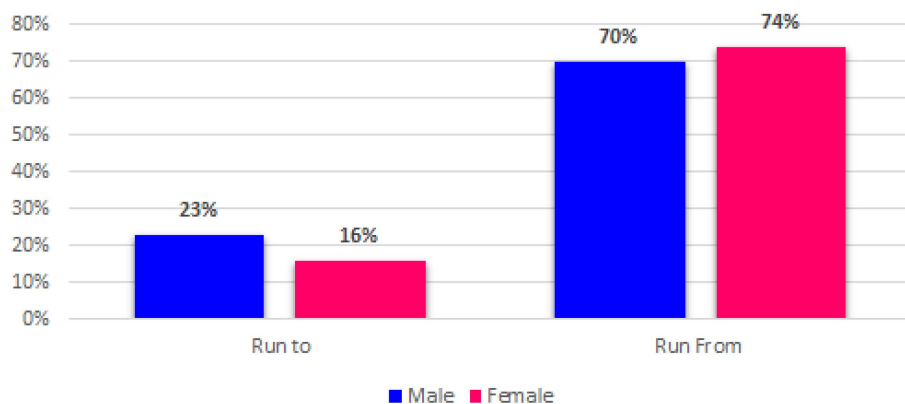
### Talked to someone about running



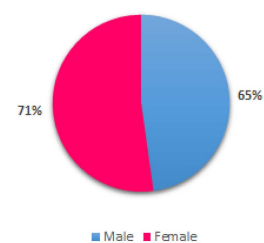
### Average Number of Runs



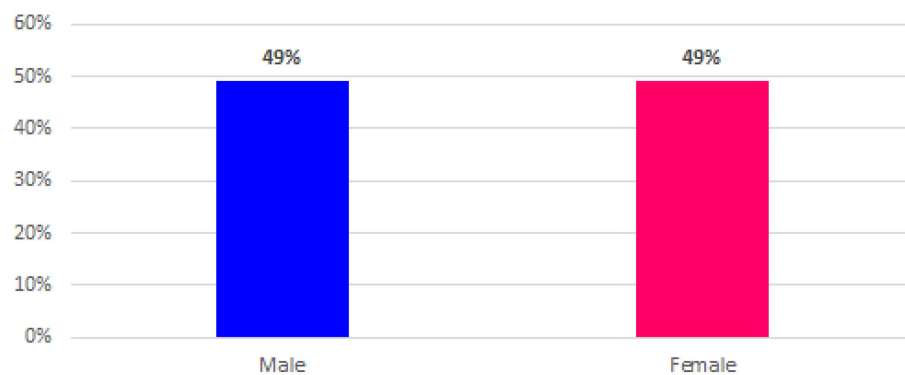
### Running to or from



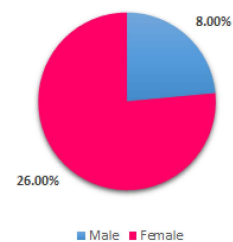
### Drug use on the run



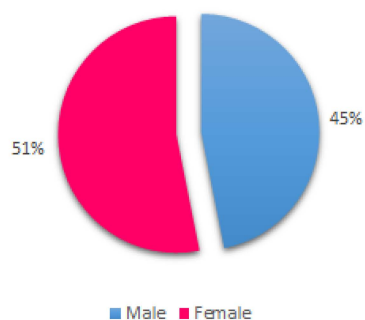
### Wanted to return but was scared of the consequences



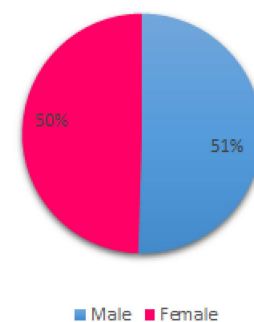
### Victimization



### Run with someone



### Stay where they planned



The next report will be completed in late Spring 2022. For questions about this report, contact Andria Jones, Court Improvement Program Project Manager, [Andria.Jones@courtsww.gov](mailto:Andria.Jones@courtsww.gov)  
For questions about the Missing from Care project, Contact Amy Sadler, Court Improvement Program Field Coordinator, [Amy.Sadler@courtsww.gov](mailto:Amy.Sadler@courtsww.gov)