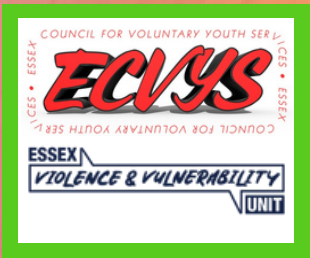




2024-2025 VVU Youth Voices LISTENING PROJECT 'Youth violence & feelings of safety in local communities'



This is the sixth year the Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VVU) have commissioned a listening project to enable young people from across Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) to share honestly and openly about how safe they feel in their communities, and what they think could be done to help them feel safer. The VVU are committed to hearing these views, because it helps to inform their work and make sure that anything delivered is always as relevant as possible.

The listening project takes place through face to face discussions and activities with young people, and the main insight is collected through youth leaders, who are already known to the young people through participation in local youth clubs/groups/activities.

The variety of groups that take part in this project is part of its beauty, and the project is accessible for any group to take part.

Because each area of Essex is very different, we have formed an Essex-wide report to give an overview of young people's views, and local reports so that the VVU and others interested in keeping people safe, can gain local insight from a young person's perspective.

This report does not claim to be based on factual information. However, the insight gained is just as valuable as it is pure and honest. Views will be imperative to creating impactful changes that are relevant for everyone in the community to feel happier, healthier and safer.

This report is compiled by ECVYS, but is the work of local youth organisations, and the voices of Essex young people, to whom we are extremely grateful.

2,466

Young people aged 10-25yrs took part in various ways-

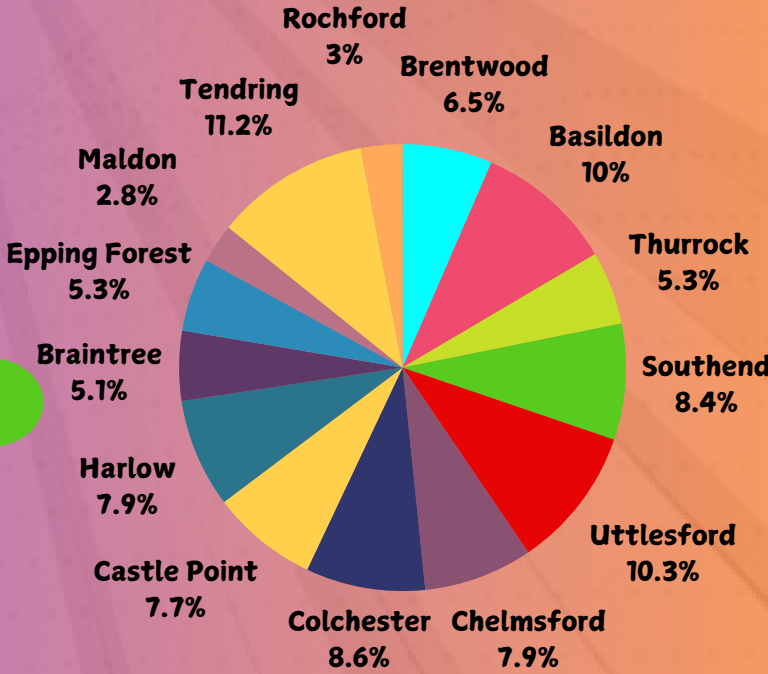
1168 Young people participated through 'in-depth' discussion and gave comprehensive insight on all the questions at 74 local youth clubs/groups/activity sessions, and through detached youth work. This in-depth work is the glue of our report, and is used to form the Essex-wide report, and the key insights shown in the local reports.

183 Young people participated via the social media platforms; TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat. Questions asked were limited to those that had a yes/no response. These views have contributed to our Essex-wide report only.

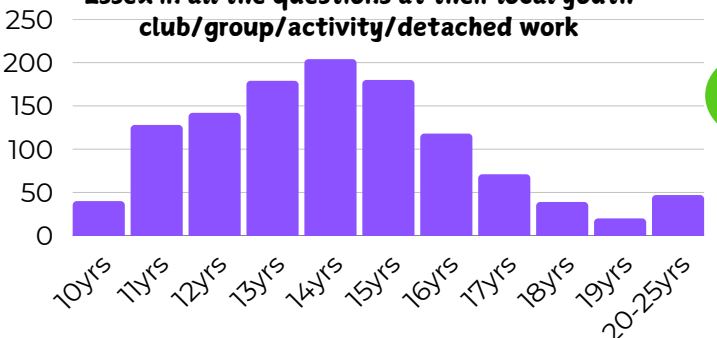
1035 Young people also got the chance to participate through assemblies and detached work with questions that could mainly had a yes/ no response. This insight has been used in both our Essex-wide report, and in the local reports.

80 The VVU youth voices conference was themed around safety in Essex and also gave young people a platform to share their views. This insight has been used in our Essex-wide report only.

Distribution, by area, of young people who took part in all the questions at their local youth club/group/activity/detached work



Distribution, by age, of young people who took part across Essex in all the questions at their local youth club/group/activity/detached work



Gender: Female 54% Male 42% Non-binary 4%

Who are the 74 Groups that ran the listening in each area?

(Through clubs/ activities/ detached work & youth resource hubs)

Uttlesford District (P11)

- **Stort Valley Schools Trust**
(Christian faith group running sessions in Saffron Walden County High School & St Thomas More School)
- **Noo Yu CIC**
(Tertiary provision, boxing group)
- **1st Thaxted Carver Scouts**
(Scouts)
- **The Garden Music Project**
(Open access music club)
- **Hyper Fusion**
(Performing arts group)

Braintree District (P41)

- **H.A.P.P.Y Youth Club**
(Open access youth club)
- **The Outhouse**
(LGBTQ+ youth club)
- **7th Witham Girl Guides**
(Girl Guides)
- **The Third Space**
(Open access youth club)

Chelmsford District (P47)

- **Kraken Explorer Unit**
(Scouts)
- **Essex YMCA**
Galleywood Youth Club
& The Y club
(Open access youth clubs)
- **Zodiac Rangers**
(Girl Guides)
- **The Outhouse**
(LGBTQ+ youth club)

Maldon District (P53)

- **Action for Family Carers**
(Young carers)
- **Maldon & District CVS**
Community Gaming Initiative
(open access games club)
- **Maldon Sea Cadets**
(Uniformed group)

Brentwood District (P59)

- **Endeavour Youth Club**
(SEN group)
- **Doddington Road Community Church**
(School assembly with year 7)
- **Ingatestone Boys Own Club**
(Open access youth club)
- **Brennan & Burch, Big Smile Collective**
(Art youth club)
- **SNAP**
(SEN Theatre group)

Basildon District (P65)

- **Gateway Radio Club**
(Open access youth club)
- **Bar'n'Bus 'Being Me'**
(All girls group)
- **Chantry Rangers**
(Girl Guides)
- **Essex Youth Service**
'Gateway' (SEN group)
& Friday night club (open access)
- **Maru Kai karate**
(Martial arts group)
- **Flex Youth Club**
(Ethnic minority group)
- **Heritage Mix**
(Ethnic minority group)

Harlow District (P17)

- **Church Langley Girl Guides**
(Girl Guides)
- **Harlow Youth Council**
(Youth Council)
- **Rainbow Services**
(Alternative education group)
- **Essex Boys & Girls Clubs**
(Respect project)

Epping Forest District (P23)

- **Youth Unity**
(Limes Farm, open access youth club)
- **Epping Forest Youth Council**
(Youth Council)
- **Action for Family Carers**
(Young Carers group)
- **Bancroft Lions Youth Cricket club**
(Cricket club)

Colchester District (P29)

- **Tiptree Youth Project Outreach**
(Open access youth club)
- **Essex YMCA**
Myland Youth Club & The Hythe youth club (open access youth clubs)
- **The Outhouse**
(LGBTQ+ youth club)
- **The Underdog Crew**
(SEND)
- **St Annes Youth Club**
(Open access youth club)
- **YAK, Firstsite**
(Youth art group)

Tendring District (P35)

- **Teen Talk**
(Open access youth club)
- **Mistley Kids Club**
(SEN club)
- **The Outhouse**
(LGBTQ+ youth club)
- **Tendring CVS**
(SEND)
- **2nd Frinton Guides**
(Girl Guides)
- **The London Bus Theatre Company**
(Drama group)
- **Walton Youth Club**
(Open Access Youth Club)

Rochford District (P71)

- **KAOS Youth Club**
(Open access youth club)
- **Bar n Bus:**
(‘Being Me’ all girls group, & detached youth work)
- **The Megacentre**
(Wellbeing group)

Castle Point District (P77)

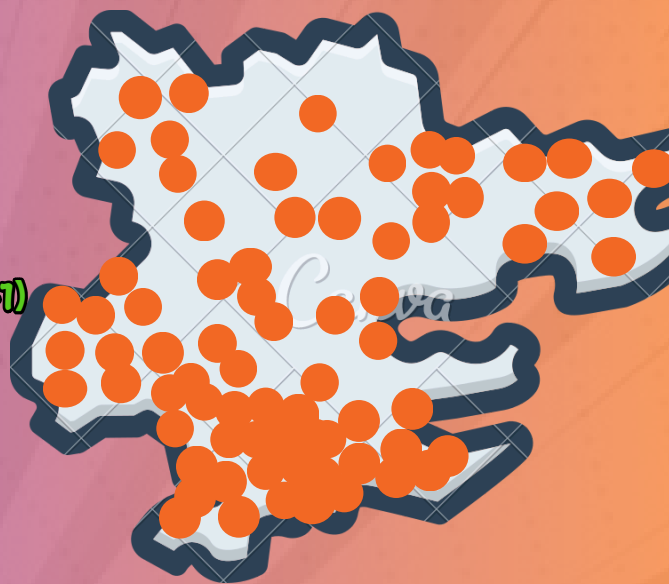
- **Yellow Door**
(Open access youth club)
- **2nd Hadleigh Guides**
(Girl Guides)
- **Canvey Island Boxing Club**
(Essex Boys and Girls Club)
- **ATF**
(Sports outreach)
- **TrustLinks & Yellow Door**
(Next level; performing arts group)

Thurrock (P83)

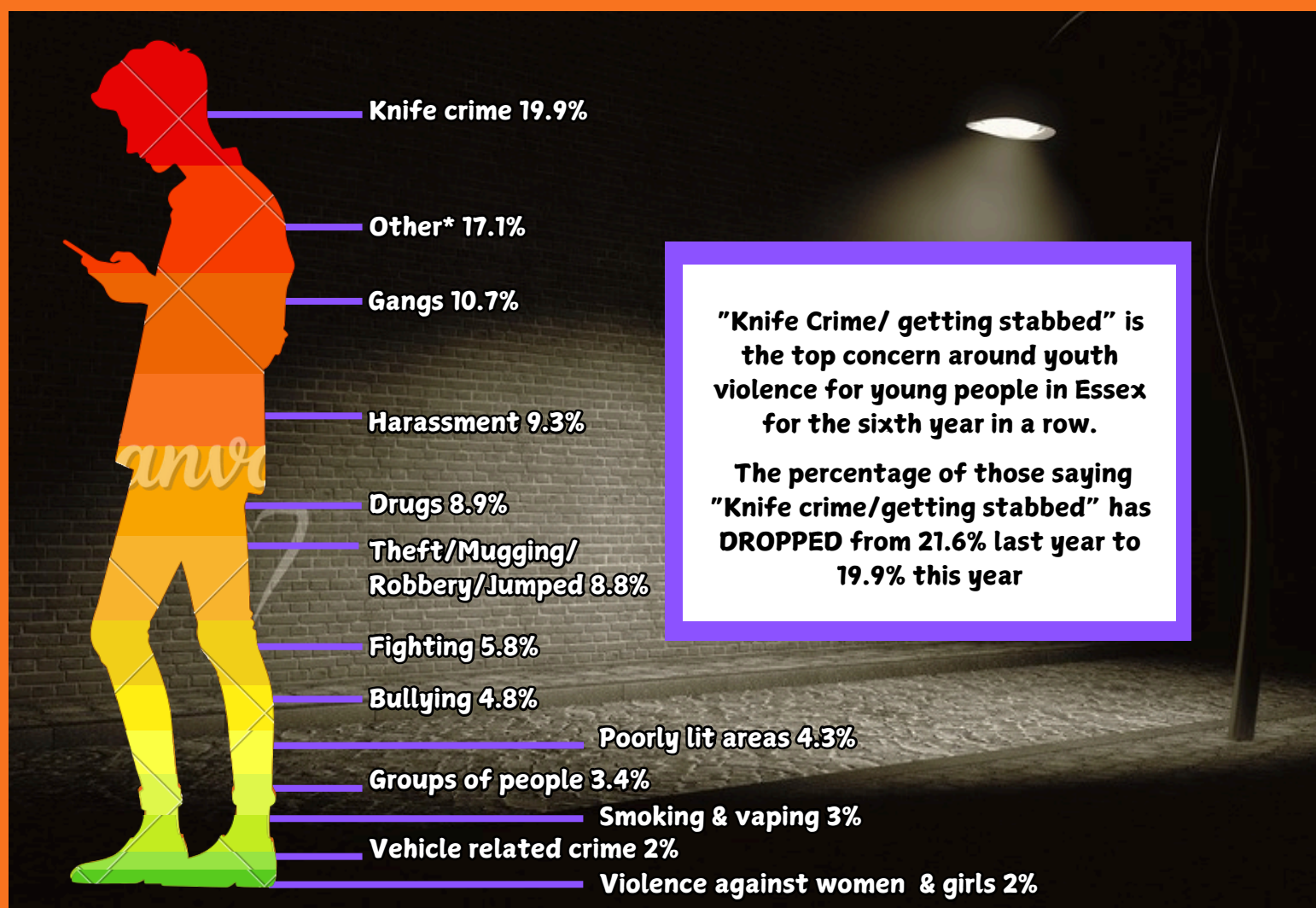
- **Seabrook Rise Youth Club**
(Open access)
- **Riverview Charitable Trust**
(Open Access)
- **Thurrock Youth Cabinet**
(Youth Council)
- **Orsett Fire Cadets**
(Fire Cadets)
- **Arts Outburst Express**
(Art group)
- **Super Social**
(SEN group)

Southend (P89)

- **South Essex Community Hub**
(SEN group)
- **Bouldering Together**
Indirock & Trustlinks
(Open Access)
- **Southend United**
(Football club)
- **Southend YMCA**
(Detached youth work)
- **Southend TEENS Group**
(7th day Adventist faith group)
- **Garon Park Youth Club**
(Open access youth club)



What is the biggest concern for young people in Essex around youth violence in their local area?



*The 'Other' category incorporates examples such as: global affairs, people throwing fireworks, threats, lack of trust in others, 'Roadmen', discrimination, violence in school, drunk people, online abuse, being alone, and kidnap

The percentage of young people saying "Gangs" has increased from 8.8% last year, to 10.7% in 2024-2025

One of the top concerns this year is "**Harassment**". This is not something that has previously been too much of a worry for young people.

Within the group that mentioned "harassment", almost 60% specifically mentioned harassment involving men or boys.

Concerns around "**Drugs**" has remained exactly the same, with 8.9% of young people giving this answer.

The percentage of young people saying "**Mugging/being jumped/robbery**" has almost HALVED compared to last year.

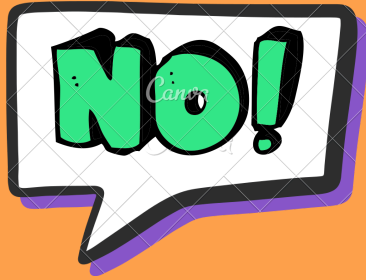
The young people that stated "global affairs", were referring to the discriminatory and homophobic views and policy changes that are happening in the USA. They explained that they are worried about policies threatening inclusivity and equality.



Six year comparison of young people’s biggest concerns around youth violence in Essex

Year Area name	2019-2020 613 young people took part)	2020-2021 379 young people took part	2021-2022 761 young people took part	2022-2023 1553 young people took part	2023-2024 1434 young people took part	2024-2025 2466 young people took part (across all areas, & various platforms)
Uttlesford	Being ignorant of dangers	1.) Getting stabbed 2.) Robbed/ mugged 3.) Assaulted 4.) Gangs 5.) Sexual assault 6.) Kidnapped 7.) Attacked with weapons 8.) Drugs		Peer pressure & violence	Drug dealing/taking	Harassment
Harlow	Gangs		Drugs	Gangs	Knife crime/ stabbing	Knife crime
Epping Forest	Getting beaten up or assaulted			No consequences for violence	Getting robbed/ mugged	Poorly lit areas
Colchester	Getting stabbed		Knife crime/getting stabbed	Fighting	Knife crime	Knife crime
Tendring	Getting stabbed/ knife crime		Harassment & knife crime	Poorly lit areas	Youth violence	Fighting
Braintree	Drugs			Knife crime	Drugs	Groups of boys on bikes
Chelmsford	Getting stabbed		Getting stabbed	Knife crime	Being attacked	Knife crime
Maldon	No safe spaces			‘Hear say’ about violence	People carrying weapons AND vaping	Gangs
Brentwood	Gangs			Roadmen	Knife crime/ being stabbed	Violence/being attacked
Basildon	Gangs		Knife crime/ getting stabbed	Knife crime & getting stabbed	Knife crime	Knife crime
Rochford	Anti-social behaviour / criminal damage			Drugs	Drugs/ drug related crime	Gangs
Castle Point	Getting beaten up			Knife crime	Knife crime/ being stabbed	Knife crime
Thurrock	Youth violence at a younger age		Knife crime/ getting stabbed	Knife crime	Knife crime/ getting stabbed	Gangs
Southend	Getting stabbed		Knife crime/ getting stabbed	Getting stabbed	Gangs	Knife crime

Are young people in Essex worried about being exploited by a gang in their local area?



56%
of young people
said they were
NOT worried

This year 27% MORE young people than last year, said they are NOT worried about being exploited by a gang in their local area.

The majority of young people in 7 of all 14 of the Essex areas said that they are NOT worried about exploitation.

(Last year this was only 2 areas in Essex)

An additional 183 young people also answered this question via social media. Their responses changed this percentage slightly from 59% down to 56%.

Only 55 out of the 183 who answered online said they are NOT worried about being exploited by a gang.

Do young people in Essex feel safe when they are out with their friends in their local area?

65%

of young people
said they **DO**
feel safe



This year sees a lower percentage of young people saying that they do feel SAFE in their local areas when out with their friends, but the majority of young people still feel safe. Last year 76% of young people said they felt safe when they were out with their friends.

Consistently in our reports, young people's responses to this question are dependent on who they are with, where they are and if it is light or 'well-lit' in the areas outside.

An additional 183 young people also answered this question via social media. These responses lowered the percentage from 67% saying that they DO feel safe, down to 65%

In the last year, have young people from Essex experienced violent crime either as a victim, a witness or have they taken part in it?

As a Victim 82% said NO

As a Witness 65% said NO

Someone who took part 95% said NO

ALL of these figures have improved since last year-

In the 2023-24 project:

78% had NOT been a victim

48% had NOT been a witness

93% had NOT taken part

These results include the young people that took part via social media platforms

The responses to these questions vary across the different areas of Essex. Overall, these statistics show progress since the last report

When comparing the percentages from the different areas, Brentwood had the HIGHEST in regards to young people witnessing and being a victim of violent crime-

60% have been a witness

38% have been a victim

Colchester had the second HIGHEST percentages-

49% have been a witness

35% have been a victim



***What helps young people feel SAFE when they are out with their friends in the local area?**

BEING AT A YOUTH CLUB/ ORGANISED ACTIVITY

BEING WITH FRIENDS

HAVING A PHONE

STAYING AT HOME

TRUSTED ADULTS

SAFETY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

POLICE PRESENCE

PUBLIC AREAS

WELL-LIT AREAS

CAMERAS/ CCTV

KNOWING THE AREA

1. Being with friends/ safety in numbers 27.4%
2. Having a phone 14.6%
3. Well-lit areas/ being out during the day 12.3%
4. Knowing the area/ staying close to home 11%
5. Being at youth clubs and organised activities 9.3%
6. Being with/having trusted adults close by 8.9%
7. Being in public spaces like shops 4.9%
8. Having a police presence 4.1%
9. Cameras & CCTV 3.6%
10. Safety management strategies 2.2%
11. Staying at home 1.7%

'Being in large groups of friends' is always a top priority for young people to help them feel safer.

Last year the top answer was "Being with friends"

This year young people mentioned Ring doorbells, location apps for phones and having plans for quick exits in case of emergencies, within the safety management category.

Over half of the young people that mentioned safe spaces specifically mentioned being at a youth club.

***What makes young people feel UNSAFE when they are out with their friends in the local area?**

KNIVES

GROUPS OF PEOPLE

CERTAIN AREAS

BULLIES

DRUNK PEOPLE

SKETCHY PEOPLE

BEING FOLLOWED

DRUGS

MEN/ BOYS

GANGS

BEING ALONE

POORLY-LIT AREAS

1. Poorly-lit areas 31.7%
2. Groups of people 12.1%
3. Men/ boys 10.1%
4. Being alone 7.9%
5. Sketchy looking people/people with hoodies/balaclavas 7.5%
6. Being followed or approached by strangers 6.9%
7. Certain areas (alleyways, underpasses, open spaces like parks at night) 5.9%
8. Gangs 4%
9. People on drugs, or smelling drugs nearby 3.9%
10. Drunk people 3.6%
11. No phone/ bad phone signal/ low phone battery 2.3%
12. Knives 2.2%
13. Bullies 2%

Young people consistently say how important street lighting is in helping them to feel safe.

Parks, and open spaces designed for children and young people, are the very spaces they do not feel safe in when it is dark. Early evening is often the time that young people want to 'hang out' in parks.

"Men/boys" making young people feel UNSAFE has MORE THAN DOUBLED since last year.

*The word clouds for the Essex-wide report only show the comments made the most. The reports for each area of Essex give more detail, and a complete breakdown of all answers given.

What do young people in Essex think should be done to help them feel safer in their local areas?

1. More/better street lighting
2. More police
3. Free phone charging stations
4. More CCTV/security cameras
5. Safe places for young people to hang out ~ that are inside
6. More trusted adults
7. Help points or free emergency phones
8. More accessible youth clubs ~ including clubs that cater for SEND, that are open more frequently
9. Location phone apps. personal safety alarms
10. Maintaining areas to look nice and improve pavements



From the Youth Voice Day, 80 young people highlighted that they want more; streetlights, police presence, CCTV and free activities for young people" to help them feel safer.

More street lights was said by EVERY area and given in the top 3 most frequent responses.

More police was asked for by each area, with 10 areas mentioning it in their top 3 answers.

Other suggestions from young people:

- Better phone signal
- Tougher punishments for people carrying weapons
- Better location maps/signage

What activities would young people in Essex, like to see more available for them to take part in?



These answers vary slightly from area to area but, across the whole of Essex, young people are consistent that any new provision needs to be free or low cost.



Over the past six years we have noticed that young people's answers to this question are very consistent. This year, using this insight, we made the question multiple choice rather than free form.

Young people did have the option to comment and add in anything else. This is important to mention because over half of the young people that chose to give individual comments, specifically mentioned wanting learning opportunities around life skill topics.

If we had included life skills as one of the multiple choice options, we suspect this would have seen an even higher response rate.

Have young people seen content on social media of *serious violence?

(Young people answered the question about social media in their youth groups and online)



78%

of young people said they had seen content on social media

These questions were answered by 1302 young people, 183 young people via social media

Which platform have young people seen the serious violence on?



1) TikTok 36%



2) Snapchat 22%



3) Instagram 13%



4) X/Twitter 10%



5) WhatsApp 7%



YouTube

6) YouTube 6%



7) Facebook 4%



8) Reddit 2%

Of those young people who have seen violence on social media:

41%

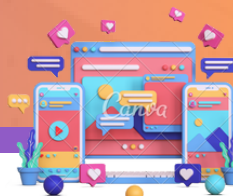
have seen content of people they know – friends, friends of friends or people they know from their local area?

87%

have seen content of people they don't know

Exposure to violence online can have a negative impact on children and young people in numerous ways

- It can encourage imitation of violent behaviour
- It can reduce sympathy for victims and normalise violence
- It can make people suspicious of other's intentions



The definition of serious violence* given to the young people was:

- Threats to beat up another child or group of children
- Fights involving children or young people
- Sexually violent content or threats (example: images or threats of sexual assault)
- Children or young people carrying, promoting or using weapons
- Children or young people being part of, or promoting, gangs
- Children or young people promoting, or using, illegal drugs
- Glorifying previous attacks on other young people



KEY OBSERVATIONS, COMPARISONS AND COMMENTS FOR ESSEX-WIDE

2466 young people from across Southend Essex and Thurrock (SET) have voiced their concerns, shared their experiences and offered their suggestions about how safe they feel in their communities, what makes them feel unsafe and how we can help them feel safer.

These young people have participated in face to face discussions at their youth clubs, in school assemblies, via social media and at the Youth Voice conference.

Concerns for young people are different in each area and therefore worth a read to ensure needs are met specifically to the young people in that area.

Looking at the Essex-wide feedback it shows that there is a REDUCED percentage of young people saying that “Knife crime/getting stabbed” is their biggest concern around youth violence, from 21.6% to 19.9%. However, this was the MOST frequent response this year and has been the top answer consistently for the previous five years.

Concerns around “Gangs” has INCREASED from 8.8% to 10.7% in this report and, new to this year, 9.3% of the young people stated that “Harassment” was their biggest worry. ALMOST 60% of these young people specifically mentioned harassment from men or boys.

The percentage of young people that mentioned “Theft/mugging/getting jumped/robbery” has almost HALVED, from 16.1% to 8.8% this year.

Young people saying “Drugs” is the same percentage as last year, at 8.9%.

This year 4.8% of young people said that “Bullying” is their biggest concern, an INCREASE of 1.3%. “Vaping” was given as a response by less young people compared to last year, from 3.9% to 3%.

**Contrary to the increase in the percentage of young people saying that their biggest concern is “Gangs”, this year sees a significant DECREASE in the percentage of young people that said they are worried about being exploited by a gang in their area.
Last year 71% said they ARE worried compared to 44% in this report.**



The percentage of young people feeling safe when out with their friends locally has DROPPED by over 10% since the previous report.

Young people continue to tell us that feeling safe is dependent on it being daylight or them being in well-lit areas, who they are with and where they are in their community.

4.6% of young people did state that “Poorly lit areas” was their biggest concern.

In regards to young people’s ACTUAL experience of violent crime, this year’s feedback shows there have been LESS young people that HAVE been a victim, witnessed it or been involved in violent crime in comparison to last year’s data.

4% LESS have been a victim

17% LESS have been a witness

2% LESS have taken part.

Young people were asked where they feel the crime hot spots are in their local area and although the feedback varies across the different districts, there are similarities to the previous report, with **parks** being given as a response most frequently at the top of their lists, followed by **town centres** and **public transport stations**.

This year there was a noticeable increase in the number of areas which mentioned “school”, with Tendring young people putting this at the top of their list for crime hot spots.





KEY OBSERVATIONS, COMPARISONS AND COMMENTS FOR ESSEX-WIDE

Nearly a quarter of the young people across Essex said that they feel safe in large groups of friends, with many of them using the phrase *“Safety in numbers”*.

The second most frequent response for “What helps young people feel safe when out in their local area” was ***“Having a phone”***. Although we categorised it separately, many young people talked about having location apps on their phones, or maintaining communication with parents/guardians as to their whereabouts, helps them feel safe.

Being in well-lit areas was third on the list and is reinforced by being at the top of the list, with over 31% saying *“Poorly-lit areas”* makes young people feel unsafe. The importance of lighting is repeatedly raised by young people of all ages, and in all areas, in multiple questions, and has been the top concern for the previous five years when asking young people what makes them feel unsafe.



To help young people feel safer in their communities they asked for more streetlights, more police presence, with some young people suggesting building more positive relations between them and the police, free phone charging stations, CCTV and more safe places for young people to socialise with friends in accessible, supportive and welcoming environments.

Young people echoed this opinion when asked what activities they would like to see more available in their areas, with ***“Social chill out spaces”*** being said by 15.1%.

This was closely followed by any activities or services provided being ***“Affordable or free”***.

Comment from Youth Leader *“All young people agreed that they had felt, or witnessed, the cost of living crisis with their families and commented on more people not being able to afford to do things or clubs”*

Sport activities was a close third on the list with many young people expressing the sense of safety and belonging from being involved in team sports and at organised clubs.

This was the second year that we asked young people if they have seen violent content on social media and it has INCREASED from 71% to 78%

This year we went more in-depth, and asked if the content involved people they know or people they don't know. The results on the Essex-wide review showed;

41% said the content involved people they DO know

87% said the content involved people they DO NOT know

TikTok and Snapchat were the top two platforms where young people are viewing the violence, the same as last year.

This year's feedback signals that efforts to make communities safer are making some tangible impact in certain areas, with fewer young people fearing gang exploitation and encountering violent situations on a personal level.

However, there is always room for improvement and being able to provide safe, welcoming spaces for young people to socialise, learn and develop, affordable activities such as sport to offer a sense of belonging and security, opportunities to learn life skills and forge better relations with authorities, as well as better streetlights could be key to encouraging young people to feeling safer, and becoming proactive contributors in their communities.



161 Young People
took part in the
COLCHESTER DISTRICT
(60 of these answered two of the
questions in an assembly)

**The brilliant youth
organisations
that took part;**



Myland Youth Club
(Essex YMCA, open access)



Tiptree youth project outreach
(Open access)



The Underdog Crew
(SEND group)



St Annes youth club
(Open access)

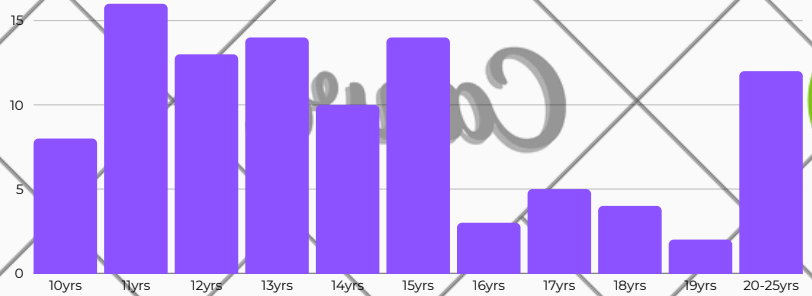


Colchester YES
(yr 6 School assembly)



The Outhouse
(Lgbtq+ youth club))

**Distribution, by age, of young people who took part in Colchester
in all the questions at their local youth club/group/activity**



Gender: Female 61%. Male 28%. Non-binary 11%.

What is the biggest concern for young people around youth violence in Colchester?

Knife crime is still the biggest concern for
young people around youth violence in
Colchester

“Drugs are in the area where we live”

*“Younger children seem more vulnerable
to gangs, especially if they have
disabilities they are at higher risk as they
may be more trusting and end up being
groomed”*

Comment from a youth leader:

*“Gang exploitation is evidenced within
schools too as we have heard several
worrying stories of drug lines recruiting in
Colchester schools”*



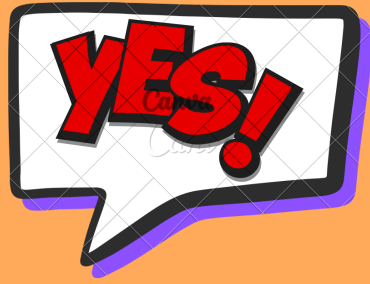
Just under a third of young people who mentioned “theft” as a concern, specifically mentioned
“Phone theft on e-scooters”

Over 38% of the young people that said “drunk people” are their biggest concern, told youth leaders about
people getting drunk and violent on the street.

Those that said “global affairs” was their biggest concern were referring to the homophobic opinions and
policy changes from the USA and are worried these are having an impact in the UK.

Within the vehicle related crime category, there were comments such as **“Boy racing and modified cars are
scary to pedestrians (loud back-firing noise)”** and that as new drivers themselves they had concerns about
navigating the roads.

Are young people in Colchester worried about being exploited by a gang in their local area?



61%

of young people said they ARE worried

In Colchester there are still more young people concerned about being exploited by a gang than those who are not, however...

Since last year there has been a 19 percent drop in the number of young people worried about being exploited by a gang.

"Young people don't have enough safe spaces to hang out, like youth club, to stop them getting involved in gang activity"

This question was put to 60 extra young people in assembly, WITHOUT their responses the feedback would be 68% said THEY ARE worried.

Do young people in Colchester feel safe when they are out with their friends in their local area?



55%

of young people said they DO feel safe

The percentage of young people that feel safe when with their friends locally has decreased since last year.

Last year 67% said they felt safe.

"There's a problem with verbal abuse and intimidation on the street. It's harmful and leaves a mark on you"

"Being harassed at bus stops by strangers, makes you feel worried about your safety"

This question was also asked in assembly, of the 60 extra young people, and WITHOUT their feedback the data showed 58% said they DO feel SAFE

In the last year, have young people from Colchester had experience of violent crime either as a victim, a witness or have they taken part in it?

As a Victim 65% said NO

As a Witness 51% said NO

Someone who took part 83% said NO

These responses show that in the last year, LESS young people have witnessed violent crime since the previous project report.

However, 20% MORE young people HAVE been a victim of a violent crime, and 14% MORE young people HAVE taken part in violent crime compared to last year.



Where do young people from Colchester think the crime hotspots are near them?

- 1) Parks (Castle Park, Tiptree Claxton Close Playground at night)**
- 2) Bus station/Train station - especially after dark**
- 3) Outside shops**
- 4) Colchester City Centre/High Street**
- 5) Greenstead (including Greenstead drug dealing activity)**
- 6) School**
- 7) Highwoods**
- 8) Tiptree ASDA car park - "there are 2 pedestrian routes so easy to escape"**
- 9) Alleyways**

Parks were mentioned more than twice as many times as the other hotspots listed, and Colchester Castle Park was mentioned as a crime hotspot more times than any other hotspot.

What helps young people from Colchester feel **SAFE** when they are out with their friends in the local area?

KNOWING
THE
AREA

STREET
LIGHTS

YOUTH
CLUB

TRUSTED
ADULTS

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

CCTV/
CAMERAS

HAVING A
PHONE

LOCATION
JEWELLERY

Almost 40% of the young people that took part in Colchester said that being in a big group helps them feel safe.

"Safety in numbers as you've always got someone to reassure you if you find yourself in a vulnerable situation"

Of the young people that mentioned that having a phone helps them feel safe, two thirds of them specifically mentioned phone location apps as they can share their location with family and friends.

Some of the other comments from young people in Colchester included-

"Having my keys for a weapon"

"We don't leave home much" ~ said by many young people

What makes young people from Colchester feel **UNSAFE** when they are out with their friends in the local area?

BALACLAVAS/
HOODIES

MEN/
BOYS

FOLLOWED BY
STRANGERS

GANGS/
LARGE GROUPS OF YOUNG ADULTS

POORLY LIT AREAS

VERBAL
ABUSE

LESS FREQUENT RESPONSES:
• LACK OF POLICE PRESENCE
• BEING ALONE

DRUNK &
DISORDERLY
BEHAVIOUR

The percentage of young people saying that poorly lit areas makes them feel unsafe has doubled since last year.

Almost 30% of the young people in Colchester said that being approached or followed by strangers makes them feel unsafe.

Last year 10.5% of young people mentioned that teenage boys make them feel unsafe, and this year almost 12% made comments about men or boys.

"Men approaching me or walking close when I'm out makes me feel unsafe"

"Everywhere seem to be trouble right now, with many people getting their phones stolen"



What do young people from Colchester think should be done to help them feel safer in their local area?

1. Better/ more street lights
2. More police presence
3. Having more safe places to go ~ "like youth group"
4. Free phone charging stations
5. Searches at schools ~ bags and blazers
6. More trusted adults ~ Young people mentioned the 'Ask Angela scheme'
7. More maps/signage to help you know your location
8. More security cameras
9. Action to stop bullying



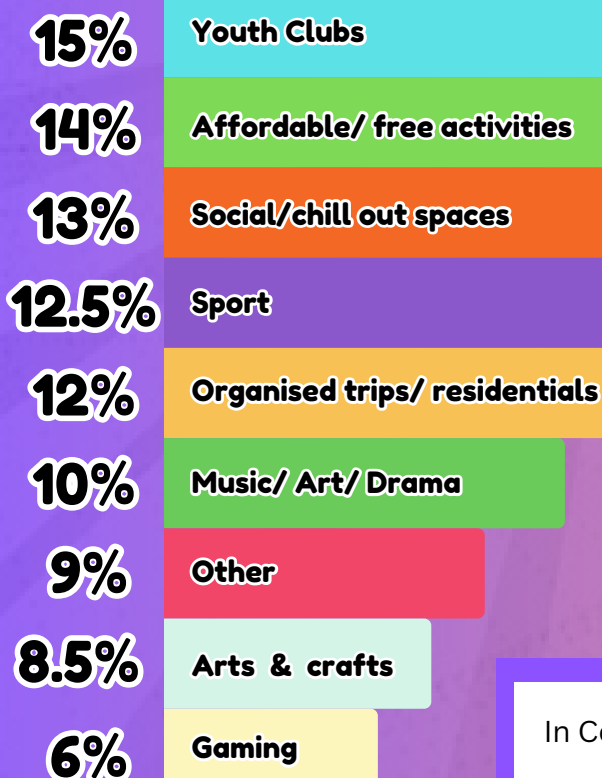
Better/ more street lighting is the top suggestion from young people about how to help them feel safer.

Young people said they would like more safe places to go, and they specifically mentioned youth groups that are open during school holidays, and clubs that cater for different groups of young people.

The majority of young people that asked for free phone charging stations, specifically said this would be helpful on public transport.

One group of young people talked about bullying issues at school that have had an impact on the local area, even after school hours.

What activities would young people like to see more available for them to take part in?



15% OF YOUNG PEOPLE in Colchester would like more youth clubs



In Colchester, young people have stated that having more youth clubs and affordable activities are important to them.

Those that said youth clubs, specifically mentioned more accessible clubs that welcome people with disabilities and have an emphasis on taking part rather than achieving certain levels of skill.

Within the "Other" category, young people suggested animal handling sessions, first aid training and film clubs

Have young people in Colchester seen content on social media of serious violence*?



75%

of young people in Colchester said they have seen content on social media

75% of young people that have seen serious violence on social media said they had seen content that involved fighting

Which platform have young people seen the serious violence on?



1) TikTok 37%



2) Snapchat 16%



3) Facebook 12%



4) X/Twitter 10%



5) Instagram 10%



6) WhatsApp 9%

7) The Main Hub 4%



8) YouTube 2%

Of those young people who have seen violence on social media:

64%

have seen content of people they know - friends, friends of friends or people they know from their local area

66%

have seen content of people they don't know

"Gangs are often linked to graffiti/tagging on estates, like Greenstead, and young people are attracted to this artform in real life, or by connecting on platforms like Discord"



Comments and Observations

There is only 2% difference in the number of young people that said they have seen content on social media that involves people THEY KNOW, compared to seeing content that involves people they DO NOT know.

Other examples of serious violence seen by young people in Colchester:

- Promoting drugs, and drug use
- Sexually related violence and graphic discussions
- Posting trophies of crimes and victims
- Someone shooting themselves
- Videos of drunk females who have not given consent to be filmed
- Students in school uniform being interviewed and encouraged to say derogatory things about other pupils, teachers and their school



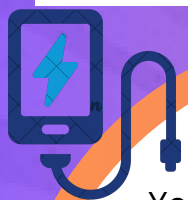
KEY OBSERVATIONS, COMPARISONS AND COMMENTS FOR COLCHESTER

Over 30% of young people say that their biggest concern around youth violence is knife crime- this is the same as last year

Theft has increased as a concern for young people in Colchester from 6.6% last year to 13.5% this year.

Sexual harassment was mentioned as a concern by 4.8% of young people in Colchester. Sexual harassment was NOT given as a response to this question last year.

The percentage of young people that said gangs are their biggest concern has dropped from 8.3% last year to 4.8% this year. This is also reflected when we asked young people if they were worried about being exploited by a gang. **Last year 80% said they were worried, and this year that has decreased to 61%**



This year's feedback shows a drop of 12% in the amount of young people in Colchester that feel safe in their local area with their friends, compared to last year.

Young people were concerned about poorly lit areas as these make them feel unsafe. They also mentioned that they feel unsafe on/ around public transport, and being followed by strangers and people shouting abuse in the street.

“Being with big groups of friends” was the most popular response from young people about what helps them feel safe. This is the same as last year.

Having a phone is really important for young people to help them to feel safe.

To help young people in Colchester feel safer, they would like better lighting, more police presence, more safe places to go with friends and free phone charging stations. This is reiterated in the responses about activities that they would like to see made more available to them. Youth clubs are the top most requested activity, followed by activities being affordable.



The percentage of young people from Colchester that have experienced violent crime as a victim has increased by 20% this year.

The percentage of young people that have taken part in serious violence has increased by 14% since last year.

This year shows a decrease in the percentage of young people that have witnessed a violent crime, from 77% last year to 49% this year.

Three quarters of the young people that took part in this project in Colchester HAVE seen serious violence on social media, 75% of these young people said it was fighting that they had seen, and 64% said the content that they had seen involved people they know, friends of friends or people from their local area.

TikTok was the most common place for young people to see this content and was mentioned more than double the amount of the next platform mentioned.