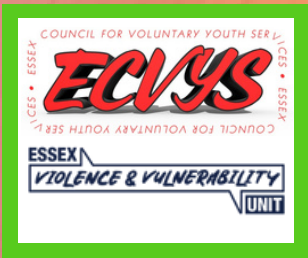




2024-2025 VVU Youth Voices LISTENING PROJECT 'Youth violence & feelings of safety in local communities'



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-

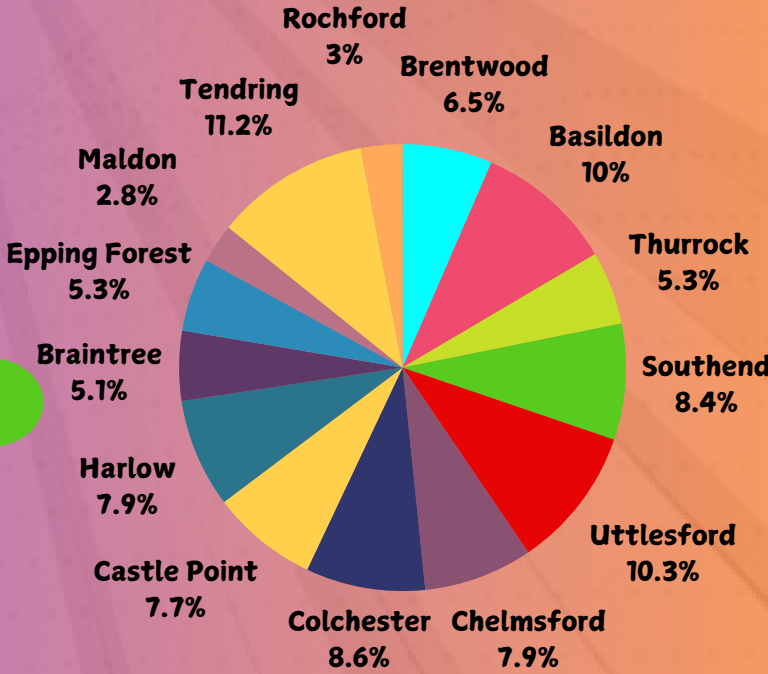
1168 Young people participated through 'in-depth' discussion and gave comprehensive insight on all the questions at 74 local youth clubs/groups/activity sessions, and through detached youth work. This in-depth work is the glue of our report, and is used to form the Essex-wide report, and the key insights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

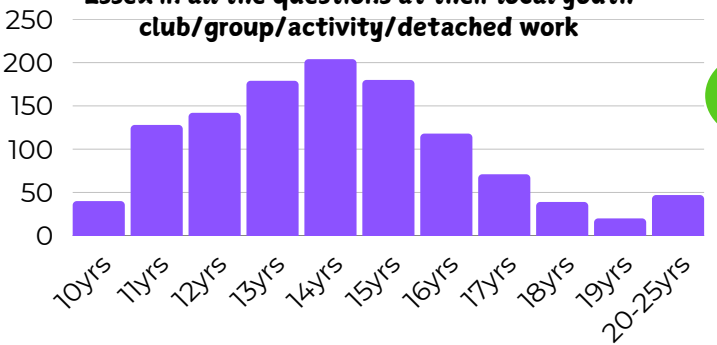
1035 Young people also got the chance to participate through assemblies and detached work with questions that could mainly had a yes/ no response. This insight has been used in both our Essex-wide report, and in the local reports.

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)

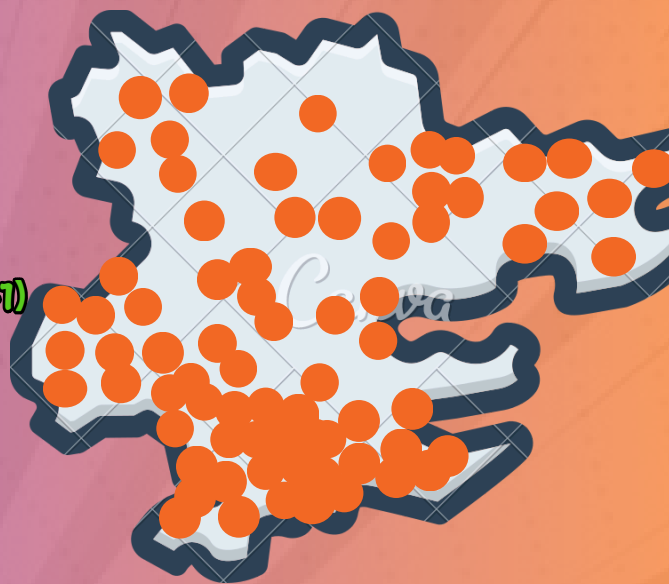
- **Yellow Door**
(Open access youth club)
- **2nd Hadleigh Guides**
(Girl Guides)
- **Canvey Island Boxing Club**
(Essex Boys and Girls Club)
- **ATF**
(Sports outreach)
- **TrustLinks & Yellow Door**
(Next level; performing arts group)

Thurrock (P83)

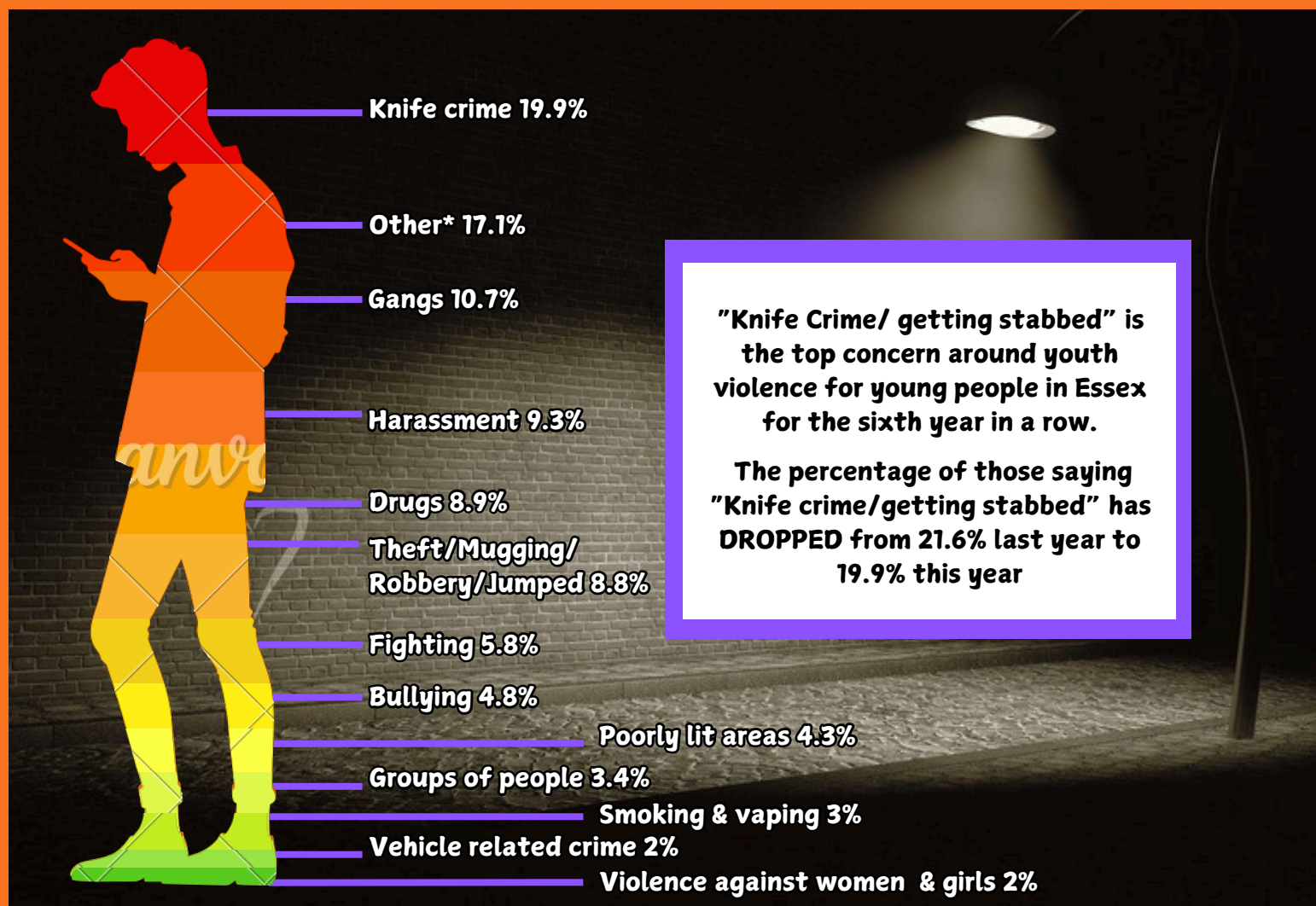
- **Seabrook Rise Youth Club**
(Open access)
- **Riverview Charitable Trust**
(Open Access)
- **Thurrock Youth Cabinet**
(Youth Council)
- **Orsett Fire Cadets**
(Fire Cadets)
- **Arts Outburst Express**
(Art group)
- **Super Social**
(SEN group)

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.

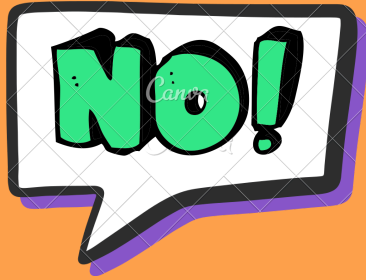
The young people that stated "global affairs", were referring to the discriminatory and homophobic views and policy changes that are happening in the USA. They explained that they are worried about policies threatening inclusivity and equality.



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

GANGS

BEING ALONE

MEN/ BOYS

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%

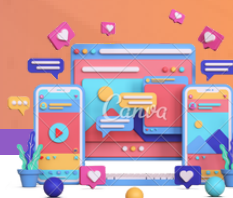
have seen content of people they know – friends, friends of friends or people they know from their local area?

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.



62 Young People took part in the EPPING FOREST DISTRICT

The brilliant youth organisations that took part;



Youth Unity
(Lime Farm)



Epping Forest Youth Council
(Youth Council)

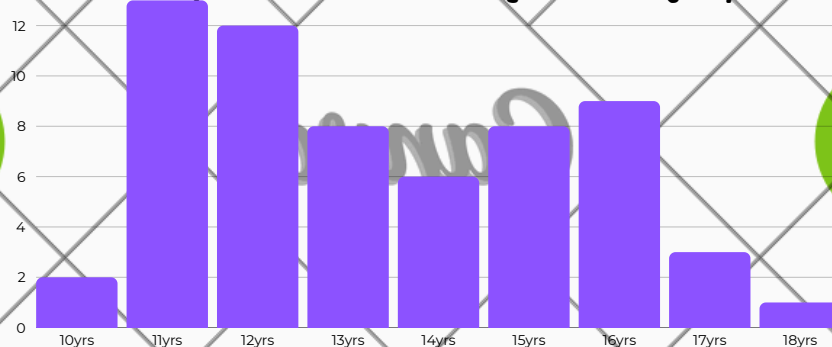


Action for Family Carers
(Young Carers)



Bancroft Cricket Club
Epping Forest

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



Gender: Female 52%. Male 48%.

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

Compared to last year's report, concerns around knife crime from young people has dropped by two thirds in Epping Forest

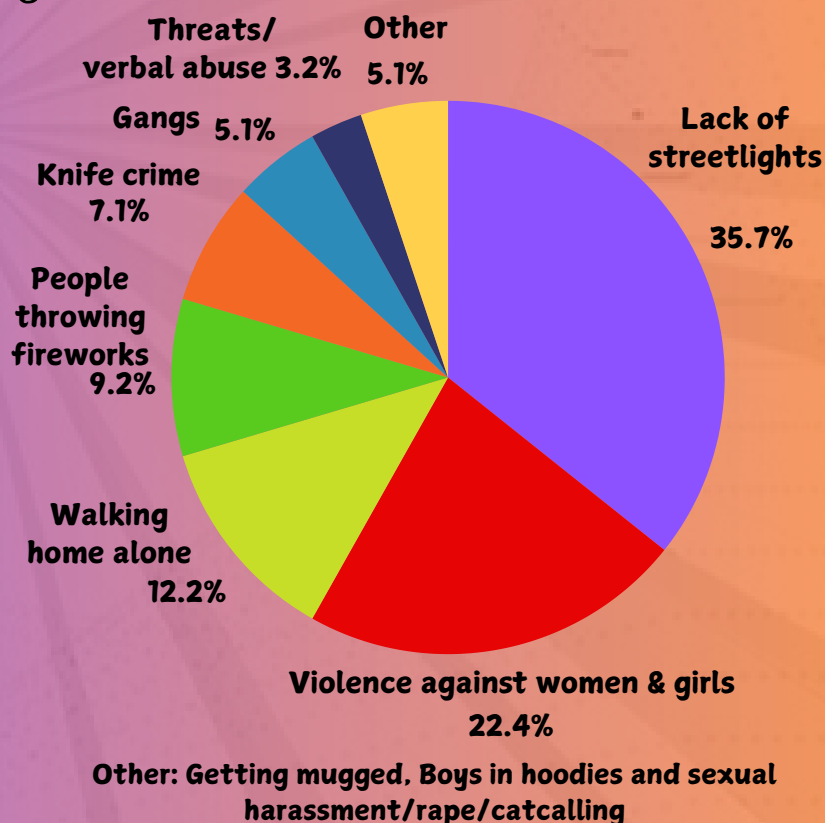
"Knives are being brought into school by kids"

"We know a gang selling drugs to younger kids, inside school"

"Why are there no police on the estate anymore" ~ Young person from Limes Farm

Comment from a youth leader:

"A few people have been mugged at knife point across Epping Forest"



'Poorly lit areas' is the main concern for over a third of young people in Epping Forest, and despite there being an almost 50/50 split between males and females taking part in this district this year, **nearly a quarter of young people said that violence against women and girls is their biggest concern.**

Last year there were many young people who said their biggest concern was around fighting in school, bullying, and other young people hanging around school. None of these issues were mentioned this year. However, through discussions with young people, they did speak about gangs inside school selling drugs to younger children, phones getting stolen outside school and students bringing knives into school.

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



75%
of young people
said they are
NOT worried

This year sees a huge change in the level of young people's worries about being exploited by gangs in Epping Forest-
Down from 71% saying they ARE worried, to 25% this year.

Those that expressed their concerns said-
"County Lines use young people as 'mules'"

"Because there are gangs here"

"The threats are outside school"

The young people who are NOT worried about exploitation from gangs say that they don't mix with people involved in gangs.

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

53%
of young people
said they **DO**
feel safe



Less young people are saying that they feel safe in their local area with their friends compared to the last listening project.

There were comments from young people that they have seen muggings take place at local public transport stations and alleyways recently.

"We've seen people get mugged at the station"

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

As a Victim 90% said NO

As a Witness 63% said NO

Someone who took part 98% said NO

ALL of these figures have improved since last year!!!

In the 2023-24 project:
88% had NOT been a victim
44% had NOT been a witness
95% had NOT taken part



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

- 1) Train stations ~ Loughton, Debden and Epping Forest**
- 2) Debden Broadway**
- 3) Parks ~ Loughton and Epping Forest**
- 4) Bus stops**
- 5) Outside pubs**
- 6) Epping High Street**
- 7) School ~ inside and outside**
- 8) Woolston Manor**
- 9) Honey Lane in Waltham Abbey**

Debden train station was at the top of the list for hot spot areas last year, followed by Debden Broadway.

Public transport stations and parks are consistently mentioned across most districts as areas young people feel are crime hotspots.

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

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

FAMILY KNOWING YOUR LOCATION

HAVING A PHONE

STREET LIGHTS

LESS FREQUENT RESPONSES:

- POLICE PRESENCE
- KNOWING A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THIS AREA
- CAMERAS/CCTV
- KNOWING THE AREA
- SHOPS BEING OPEN



The majority of young people in Epping Forest feel protected and safe when they are with a group of friends.

“The fact we’re together makes us feel safe”

“We feel safe when we’re in a large group ‘cos we stick together”

“Having a phone” was the second most frequent answer with a third of the young people saying that having location apps on their phone helps them feel safe.

“Nothing makes me feel safe, I stay at home”

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

GROUPS OF BOYS

GANGS FROM LONDON WITH WEAPONS

ALLEYWAYS/ UNDERPASSES

LESS FREQUENT RESPONSES:

- PHONE OUT OF CHARGE
- PEOPLE ON DRUGS
- CARS ON THE ROAD
- ROBBERY

POORLY LIT AREAS

PEOPLE WE DON'T KNOW

LACK OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

TAKING ISOLATED ROUTES

“Poorly lit areas” remains the top answer from young people in Epping Forest as what makes them feel unsafe. The next most recurrent responses are “confined alleyways and underpasses”, followed by “groups of boys”.

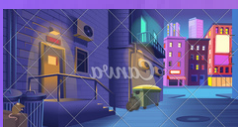
Young people in Epping Forest mentioned that the lack of transport makes them unsafe because they feel that it is inconsistent, infrequent and

“Public transport is unsafe, gangs use it and you can’t get away easily”

Some other comments from young people in Epping Forest were;

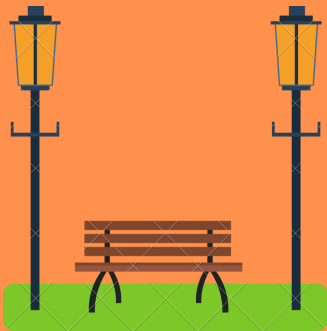
“Being with a small number of people is not safe”

“Creepy men make me feel unsafe”



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

1. Better phone signal
2. More police presence
3. More street lights ~ to be kept on later
4. Parents collecting them from school
5. More (and better) paved walkways
6. Free phone charging stations
7. More CCTV cameras
8. Street wardens



The same number of young people that suggested phone charging stations were unsure about this proposal because they thought that phones could be stolen or personal information taken from the phones.

~

A small group of young people were against more police presence because they felt that having more police walking around relates to there being “trouble” close by.

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



It is very important to young people that groups, activities and services are affordable



There is a big difference in the types of activities young people in Epping Forest would like to see made more available to them. Last year just over 64% of young people asked for more sporting activities. This year (after affordable/free activities) 16% of young people voted on social and chillout spaces.

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



95%

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

Over 50% of young people that have seen serious violence on social media said that this involved fighting!

Which platform have young people seen the serious violence on?



1) TikTok 51%



2) Snapchat 18%



3) X/Twitter 14%



4) Reddit 7%



5) Instagram 6%



6) Facebook 2%



7) WhatsApp 1%



8) YouTube 1%

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

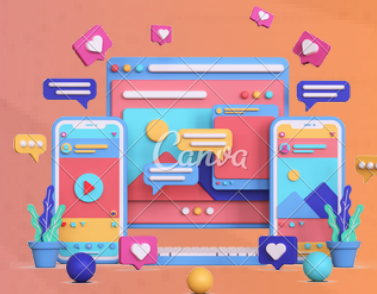
39%

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

100%

have seen content of people they don't know

OVER HALF of the comments from young people who said that the serious violence that they had seen online involving people they know, said it was because "People from school shared videos of school fights"



Comments and Observations

MORE THAN 35% of the young people that **HAVE** seen violence on social media said they have seen **KNIFE ATTACKS**

Other examples of serious violence seen by young people include-

- Riots
- Muggings
- Threats to beat up another child or group of children
- Sexually violent content or threats
- Young people being part of, or promoting, gangs
- Young people using, or promoting, illegal drugs
- Glorifying previous attacks of other young people



KEY OBSERVATIONS, COMPARISONS AND COMMENTS FOR EPPING FOREST

Young people in Epping Forest said that their biggest concern around youth violence was the **lack of street lights (35.7%)**. Last year the top concern was getting robbed or mugged (28%).

This year **22.4% of young people said their biggest concern is about violence against women and girls**. This was **NOT** raised as a concern last year.

Knife crime, as young people's biggest concern, has dropped by two thirds since last year

This year, young people in Epping Forest are much less worried about being exploited by a gang, with 75% this year saying they are **NOT** worried, compared to 71% last year saying that they **WERE** worried about being exploited by a gang.

53% of young people from Epping Forest said that they feel safe when they are out with their friends in their local area. Last year 82% said that they feel safe.



When asking young people what helps them feel safe, **nearly 45% of young people expressed that when they are in big groups with friends they feel protected and safe.**

Having a phone is really important for young people to help them feel safe, and this has increased in importance from just 2% last year to over 24% this year. A third of the young people that mentioned their phone, also talked about location apps on their phone.

Poorly lit areas, and alleyways and underpasses make young people feel unsafe in Epping Forest.

Last year, young people said that "groups of people" made them feel unsafe. This year young people specifically mentioned **"Groups of boys"**

To help young people feel safer they have asked for- more police presence, better phone signals and more street lights

Any new activities provided for young people needs to be **AFFORDABLE**.
"Social chill out spaces" was the next most recurring answer.

Compared to last year, LESS young people have been a victim of violent crime, LESS have taken part in it, and over 20% LESS have witnessed it.

95% of the young people that took part in Epping Forest HAVE seen serious violence on social media and ALL of these young people said it involved people they DO NOT know. 39% said they have seen content involving people they DO know and over half of these said the content they had seen were of videos of school fights being shared.

35% of the young people that HAVE seen violent content on social media said they have seen knife attacks.

50% of young people said that they have viewed violent and sexual content on TikTok, and this was the most predominant platform where any violent content was viewed. Snapchat was second on the list at 18%.

