

**746 Young People**  
took part in the  
**HARLOW DISTRICT**  
(654 of these answered two of the  
questions)

The brilliant youth  
organisations  
that took part;



Harlow Youth Council  
(Youth Council)



Respect Project  
(Essex Boys and Girls Clubs)

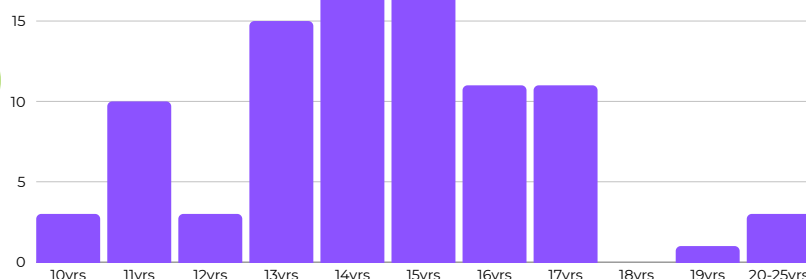


Church Langley Girl Guides  
(Girl Guides)



Rainbow Services  
(Youth Training)

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



Gender: Female 56%. Male 44%.

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

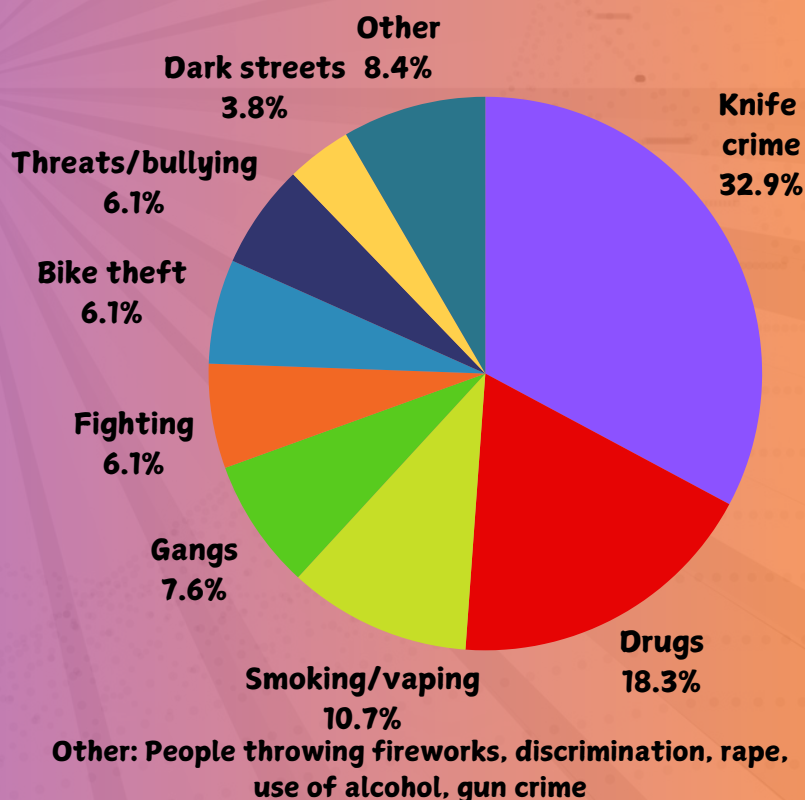
*"We're worried about knife crime because  
there was a stabbing recently in Staple Tye"*  
(This feedback was provided between  
January/February 2025)

*"I don't want my friends getting stabbed"*

*"Taking drugs is normal, everyone does it!"*

*"The gangs are running Harlow"*

*"We worry about the safety of our friends  
and family"*



This year sees an increase in the number of young people from Harlow saying that knife crime is their biggest concern. Last year it was 27%, and this year it is 32.9%

18.3% of young people in Harlow said that drugs were their biggest concern, which remains the second most frequent response. However, the proportion of young people saying this has decreased from 22%.

There are less young people expressing that gangs are their biggest concern in Harlow, dropping from 22% last year to under 8%.

Likewise, there was also a decrease in the number of young people saying that fighting was their biggest concern compared to last year, from 10% to just over 6% this year.

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



**51%**

**of young people said they ARE worried**

Over half of the young people that took part from Harlow said they ARE worried about being exploited by a gang. Last year this figure was 58%, so this has decreased slightly.

*"I've heard about people getting involved with gangs, but I'm not worried about it personally"*

*"I am 100% worried!"*

*"Gangs lead young people down the wrong path"*

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

**82%**

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



There has been an INCREASE in the number of young people saying that they DO feel safe in their local area with their friends, compared to last years report of 65%.

However, this is dependent on where young people are, the time of day, and which friends they are with.

*"We feel safer with more confident friends than with younger friends who could not stick up for you and have your back"*

This question was put to an extra 654 young people via Harlow Youth Hub.

Without their responses the feedback showed that 71% of young people DO feel safe in their local area with their friends.

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

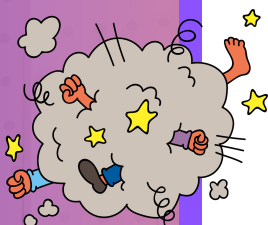
**As a Victim 87% said NO**

**As a Witness 69% said NO**

**Someone who took part 90% said NO**

**ALL of these figures have improved since last year-**

**In the 2023-24 project:  
74% had NOT been a victim  
47% had NOT been a witness  
82% had NOT taken part**



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

- 1) Shopping centres ~ Bush Fair, Staple Tye, The Stow, Queensgate**
- 2) Harlow Town centre**
- 3) Temporary bus station**
- 4) Pubs ~ Ladyshot, Weatherspoons**
- 5) Town Park**
- 6) Staple Tye**
- 7) Skate park**
- 8) Outside school**



Other places mentioned:

- Car parks
- Shops near Salvation Army
- Pennymead Tower
- Brookles Mead Flats



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

HAVING A PHONE

BEING TRANSPORTED BY PEOPLE YOU TRUST

STREET LIGHTS

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

POLICE PRESENCE

KNOWING THE AREA

BEING IN BUILT UP AREAS

“Safety in numbers” was the most common answer regarding what helps young people feel safe. There were varying comments which centred around young people feeling protected and less vulnerable when they are in large groups of friends.

*“We feel less intimidated when with our friends”*

*“Better when you’re with friends, maybe they see something that you don’t”*

There were comments about having tracking apps on their phones, keeping parents/guardians informed as to their whereabouts regularly, and making a call if they were alone.

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

POORLY LIT AREAS

BIG GROUPS OF PEOPLE WE DON'T KNOW

- LESS FREQUENT RESPONSES:
- PEOPLE ON DRINK OR DRUGS
- BALACLAVAS/DARK CLOTHES
- MOTORCYCLES/BIKES
- NOT HAVING A PHONE

SPECIFIC LOCATIONS

LARGE OPEN & QUIET AREAS

UNKNOWN AREAS

BEING ROBBED WITH A KNIFE

For the **sixth** year in a row, “Poorly lit areas” is the most frequent answer for what makes young people in Harlow feel unsafe.

Young people named specific locations in Harlow which make them feel unsafe, such as ; railway and bus stations, outside pubs, car parks and they said that *“areas which look run down ~ attract the wrong people”*

More than double the amount of young people said that “specific areas make us feel unsafe”, compared to the next most popular answer that was “being robbed with a knife”

*“I feel unsafe when friends abandon me”*

*“We don’t feel unsafe when we’re in a group of 5 or more, but would feel unsafe if there was less of us”*



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

1. More street lighting ~ especially in alleyways
2. Having a mobile phone
3. Having a safe place to go with friends, to hang out
4. Not going out at night
5. Staying with friends and family
6. CCTV ~ "Knowing that it's functioning and someone is looking out for you"
7. Making areas look nicer and feel safer ~ "Get rid of abandoned cars"
8. More police
9. Free phone charging stations
10. Affordable transport



Other suggestions included:

- Better detours around building works ~ **"Not dark or scary to walk through"**
- Having company to walk to and from school

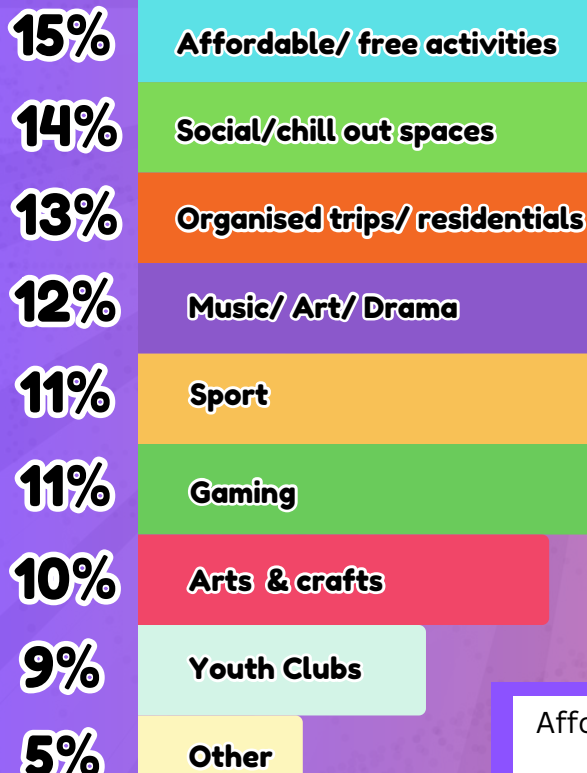
Comments from young people:

**"Knowing where to go when going out"**

**"Having company to walk to and from school"**



## 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**



Affordability was the top response for this question for young people in Harlow in the 2023-24 report.

Providing safe, welcoming and indoor social spaces specifically for young people, came in at a close second and clearly important to them.

Other activities young people mentioned they would like to see more available were:

- **Bike riding club**
- **Fishing**





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



# 76%

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

Examples included:

- Fighting
- Sexually violent threats & images
- Selling and taking drugs

## Which platform have young people seen the serious violence on?



1) Snapchat 43%



2) TikTok 32%



3) Instagram 11%



4) X/ Twitter 6%



5) Facebook 3%



6) Reddit 2%



7) Discord 1%



8) YouTube 1%



9) WhatsApp 1%

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

# 83%

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

This comment from a youth leader is an example of how violence may have been normalised:

"Young people did NOT consider fights in school as **SERIOUS VIOLENCE** and were going to say they had not seen serious violence on social media of friends, friends of friends or people from their local area"

Harlow Youth Hub asked 654 young people:  
Do you think violent videos are easy to access online?

# 74%

of young people in Harlow said



## Comments and Observations

More than half of the young people that said they HAVE seen serious violence on social media said that this was of **fighting**, and a third of all those that HAVE seen content online said the content that they had seen was of "**school fights**"

Other examples of serious violence that young people have seen include:

- Glorifying previous attacks of young people
- Young people being part of or promoting gangs
- Young people carrying, promoting or using weapons



Snapchat and TikTok are the main platforms where young people in Harlow are viewing serious violence



## KEY OBSERVATIONS, COMPARISONS AND COMMENTS FOR HARLOW

This year there was a rise in number of young people that took part in the listening project in Harlow, from 76 in 2023 to 92 (from youth clubs and groups) in the recent project, and yet **there is a higher percentage of young people expressing that knife crime is their biggest concern.**

Young people continue to say that drugs are their second biggest worry, however, it is positive to note that **there has been a decrease in the percentage of young people saying that “Gangs” are their biggest concern by almost two thirds. From 22% last year down to 7.6% in this years feedback.**

This is also evident in the responses to “Are young people worried about being exploited by gangs”, with less young people saying that they are worried compared to last year’s report.

More young people in Harlow are saying that they feel safe with their friends in their local area compared to the previous report, and this is mirrored in the responses to the question; ‘what helps young people feel safe’ with the majority of young people making comments like **“Safety in numbers,”** and **“Being with friends is comforting”**



For the past six years young people have been saying that poorly lit areas is the top reason for them feeling unsafe. This year young people let us know specific locations that make them feel unsafe too, including shopping centres, public transport stations and parks.

Affordability remains the most important factor when we asked what activities young people in Harlow would like more available.

Social and chill out spaces, followed by organised trips and residentials, were the top activities they would like to be made more available to them in their local area.

**Comparing the results from last year, there were less young people who have been a victim of a violent crime, that have witnessed or that have taken part, this year.**

**Over three quarters** of the young people that took part in the listening project in Harlow **HAVE seen serious violence on social media**, and a high proportion of these young people said this **involved people THEY KNOW (83%)**, and even more said this involved people they don’t know **(87%)**

This topic evoked interesting discussions, and youth leaders fed back to us that young people’s views of violence is being normalised by the content they are exposed to on social media.

The platforms mentioned where they view this content the most was Snapchat and TikTok

