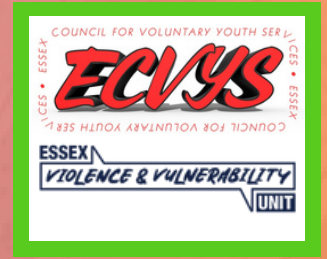




# 2024-2025 VVU Youth Voices LISTENING PROJECT 'Youth violence & feelings of safety in local communities'



## 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.

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.

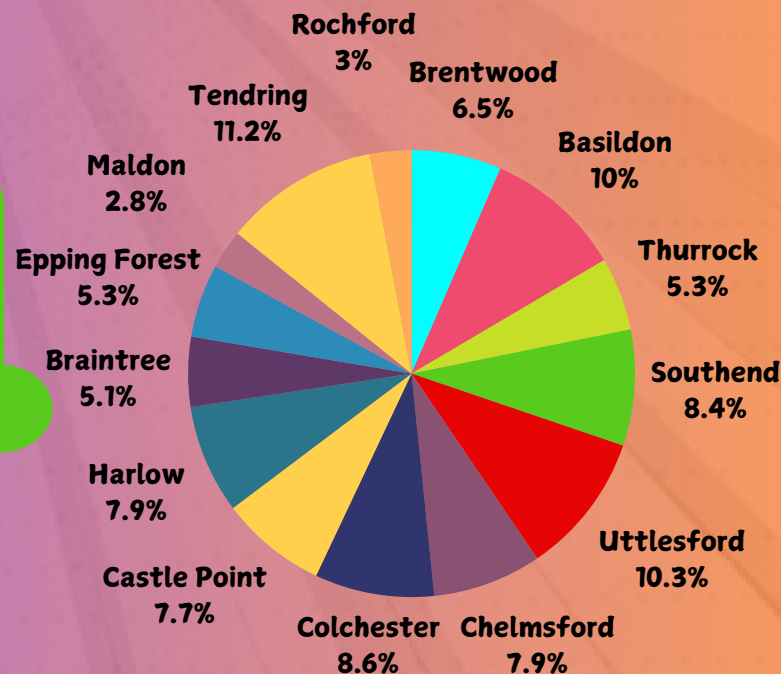
The variety of groups that take part in this project is part of its beauty, and the project is accessible for any group to take part.

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.

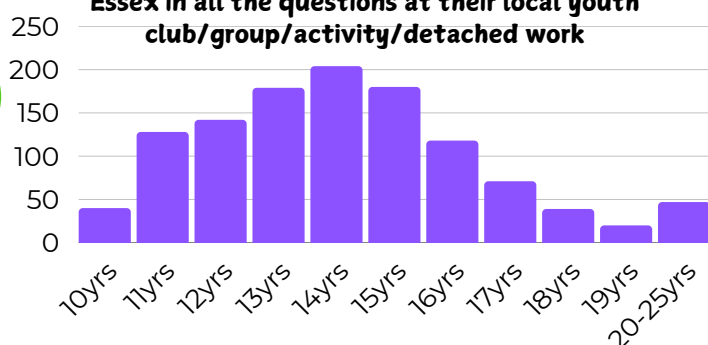
This report does not claim to be based on factual information. However, the insight gained is just as valuable as it is pure and honest. Views will be imperative to creating impactful changes that are relevant for everyone in the community to feel happier, healthier and safer.

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.

**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)

## 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)

## 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)

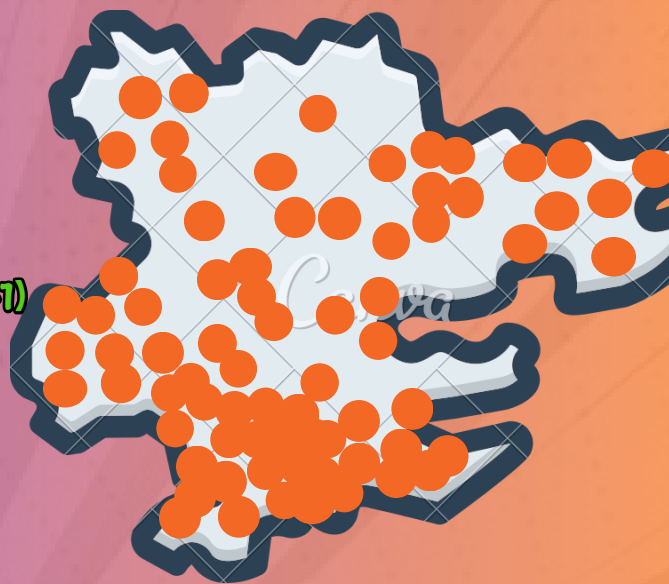
- Action for Family Carers  
(Young carers)
- Maldon & District CVS  
Community Gaming Initiative  
(open access games club)
- Maldon Sea Cadets  
(Uniformed group)

## 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)



## 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)

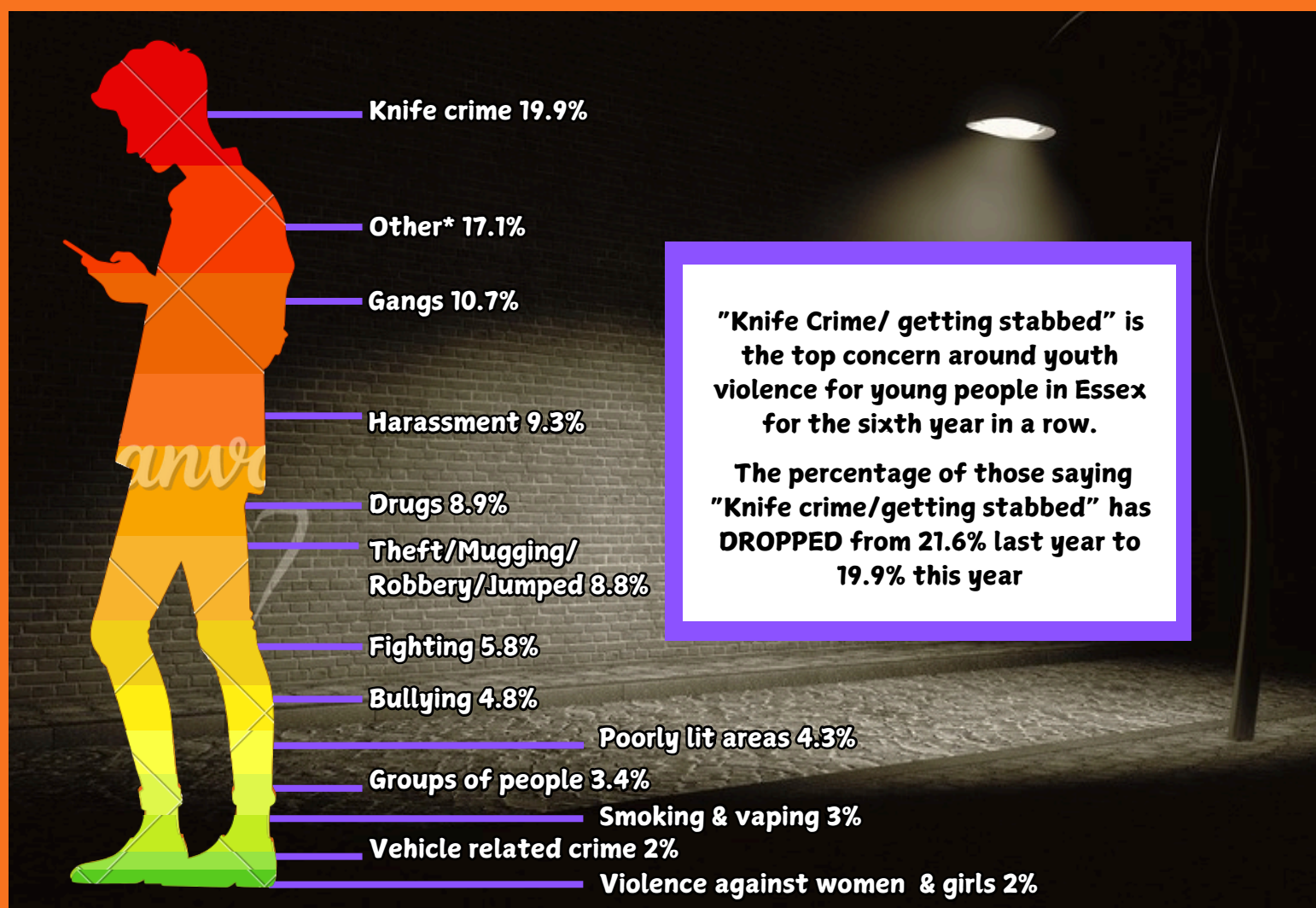
## Thurrock (P83)

- 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)
- Boulderding 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.

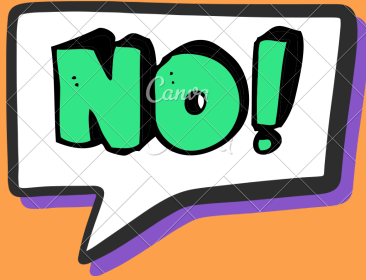
The young people that stated "global affairs", were referring to the discriminatory and homophobic views and policy changes that are happening in the USA. They explained that they are worried about policies threatening inclusivity and equality.



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%**



**6) YouTube 6%**



**7) Facebook 4%**



**8) Reddit 2%**

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

**41%**

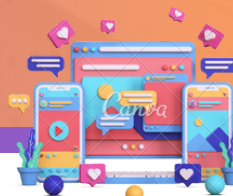
have seen content of people they know – friends, friends of friends or people they know from their local area?

**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.



## 120 Young People took part in the Uttlesford district

The brilliant youth organisations that took part:



1st Thaxted Carver (Scouts)  
Thaxted



Hyper Fusion (Performing Arts)  
Saffron Walden



Noo Yu CIC (Tertiary Provision)  
Dunmow

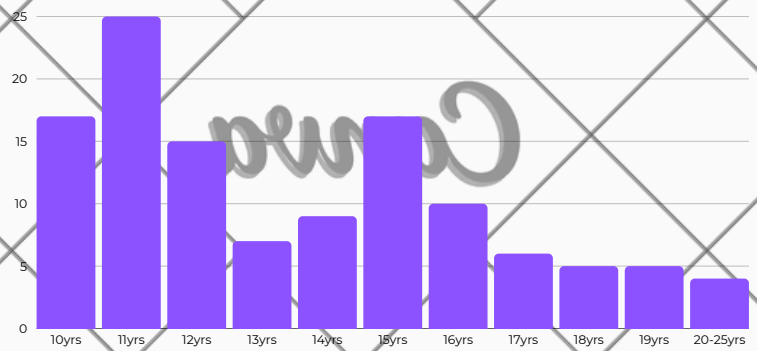


The Garden Music Project (Youth Music Group)  
Saffron Walden



Stort Valley Schools Trust (Christian Faith Group)  
Saffron Walden

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



Gender: Female 57%, Male 42 % Non-binary 1%

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

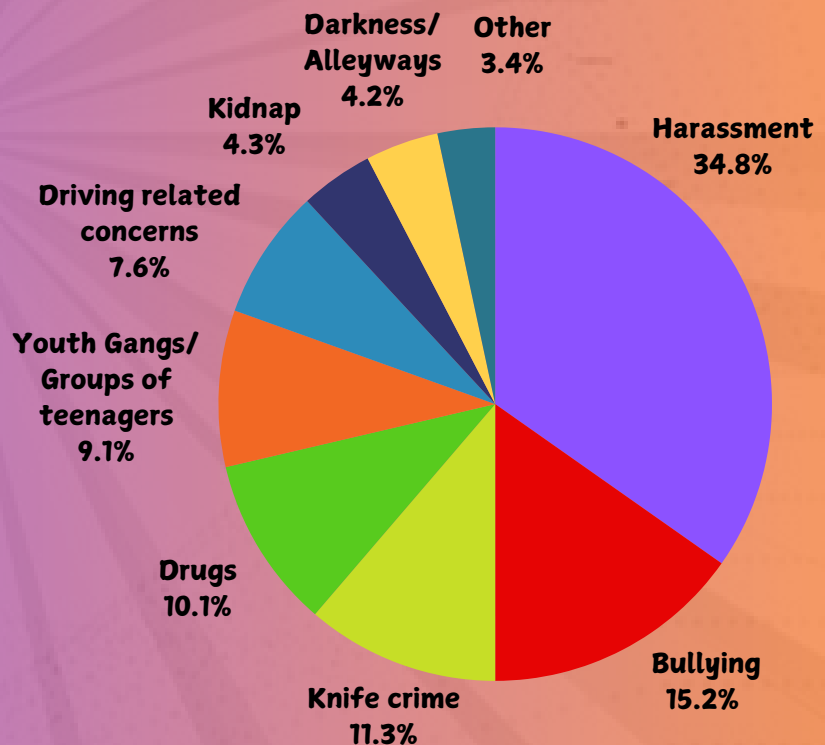
Over a third of young people in Uttlesford said that some kind of harassment was their biggest concern, and out of these young people nearly 60% of them mentioned harassment involving boys or men.

*“Most girls I know have been sexually assaulted, harassed or even raped. It’s like an awful secret loads of us keep”*

*“Guys need educating please, about how to behave and how to be good men”*

Compared to last year, the concern around **Bullying** has more than doubled.

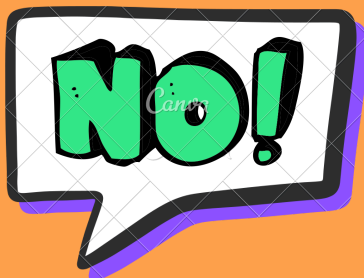
*“I’ve been harassed by groups from school in town, but also by kids coming in from Stortford”*



Other: Older children hanging around school, stalking, homophobic threats, radicalisation, drunk people

Last year **“Drugs and drug dealing”** was mentioned by 50% of the young people that took part in Uttlesford as their biggest concern. This has **DROPPED** significantly this year to 10.1%. This year has also seen a reduction in young people saying that knife crime is their biggest concern by almost half, from 21.6% in 2024 to 11.3% this year.

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



**59%**  
of young people  
said they are  
**NOT** worried

*"Not really my personal experience but we see it happening to others" ~ said by many*

*LESS young people are worried about being exploited by a gang.  
Last year ONLY 38% said they are NOT worried.*

*"A need to fit in, gain protection from the others" ~ said by many  
"County lines, drugs, they think it gives opportunity to make money and increase reputation" ~ said by many*

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



**65%**  
of young people  
said they **DO**  
feel safe

Compared to the last report, there has been a **DECREASE** in the percentage of young people that feel safe when out with their friends in their local area.

Last year 86% of the young people that took part in the listening project in Uttlesford said they **DO** feel safe.

However, this did depend on where they were, who they were with and if it was dark.

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

**As a Victim 80% said NO**

**As a Witness 67% said NO**

**Someone who took part 95% said NO**

This feedback shows there has been 13% MORE young people who **HAVE** been a victim compared to last year

Comment from a young person talking about violence against females:

**"This is just the way it is! Nothing you can do about it"**

**"Someone I know carries a knife and I've been threatened by people with a knife!"**



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

- 1) Parks & outdoor recreational places ~ Skate park, The Commons, Battlefield Ditches, Bridge End Gardens,
- 2) Alleyways (in Saffron Walden generally and near the library)
- 3) Town (Town Market, Market Square at night)
- 4) Streets & estates (roads around South St & Victoria Ave (no lights)
- 5) Supermarket car parks (top floor of Waitrose car park, Dunmow Co-op)
- 6) Transport - (Audley End Station mentioned by young people over 16)

Skate Park and The Commons were mentioned by 3 different groups, and both were mentioned more times than any other area.

Young person's comment about the Skate Park:  
**"We used to go down there but there are some sketchy people now so we don't go"**

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

BEING WITH FRIENDS

TRUSTED ADULTS

HAVING A PHONE

SAFE SPACES

CAMERAS

POLICE PRESENCE

STREET LIGHTS

KNOWING THE AREA

*“Streetlights”* was the most frequently given answer as to what helps young people in Uttlesford feel safe (This was second last year, as *“Being with friends”* was the highest answer in 2023-2024)

The majority of young people that said *“Cameras”*, specifically mentioned CCTV cameras in town, but there were a number of young people who said that house doorbell cameras helped them feel safe too.

One group of girls mentioned to their youth leader that *“Having a plan of what to do if they are attacked”* makes them feel safer. This group of girls also said *“Boys are not under the same pressure as girls, and boys don’t worry or have to plan in case of being attacked!”*

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

BEING ALONE

LACK OF POLICE

BAD PHONE SIGNAL

SKETCHY LOOKING PEOPLE

POORLY LIT AREAS

GANGS

GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE

PEOPLE SMOKING IN ALLEYS

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

DRUG USERS

MEN/BOYS

DRUNK PEOPLE

The most frequent comments for this question involved *“Men and boys”*, with statements about older boys harassing them, boys taking photos without consent and girls being followed by men.

*“They just think they have the right to do what they want”*

Harassment and violation from men and boys is repeatedly raised by young people in Uttlesford, with some suggesting that even if incidents are reported, nothing is done about it.

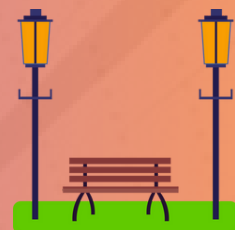
*“Think about all the girls you know who have been assaulted; how many of them went to the police? And those who have, what happened? Nothing!!”*

*“Poorly lit areas”* was the second highest answer (the same as last year, 2023-2024).

Young people who talked about *“Sketchy looking people”*, referenced people wearing balaclavas and tracksuits, and the fear they had that those people might be carrying weapons.

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

1. More street lighting ~ especially in parks and alleyways
2. More safe places for young people to hang out
3. Free phone charging stations ~ with the suggestion of these being in cupboards because they were worried phones could be vandalised or stolen
4. A greater police presence "Better responses from police when things happen"
5. People should have the 'Walksafe' App ~ Phone app combining journey sharing features and the Safe Space map
6. Have a better phone signal in town for safety
7. Provide self-defence classes ~ "For free or in school would be great"
8. Make shops stay open later
9. Have more trusted adults on the street ~ especially at night
10. More CCTV



**Phones are very important to young people to help them feel safe**

If all the responses about phones were added together, this would be the highest category.



**Other suggestions included:**

- A safe place where children can go if they get lost or separated from friends or family
- Better taxi services
- Reduce the sale of vapes
- Emergency contact boxes *"With free phones that connect to the police or something!"*

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

**18%** Affordable/ free activities

**17%** Social/chill out spaces

**14%** Sport

**14%** Music/ Art/ Drama

**12%** Youth Clubs

**11%** Organised trips/ residential

**9%** Gaming

**5%** Arts & crafts



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



**Many young people in Uttlesford were keen to have safe and affordable social/chill out places. These places should-**

- Serve affordable drinks and snacks
- Have computers for homework and gaming
- Have games such as a pool table, football etc
- Music
- Charging points
- Be run by youth workers

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



**75%**

of the young people who took part in Uttlesford said they had seen violent content on social media

In one group of 31 young people, 26 said "Yes" The remaining 5 who said "No" said this was because they did not have a phone with access to social media

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



**1) TikTok 34%**



**2) Snapchat 29%**



**3) WhatsApp 20%**



**4) Instagram 10%**



**5) X/Twitter 7%**

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

**34%**

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

**99%**

have seen content of people they don't know

Some young people mentioned that they had seen serious violence on the news



## Comments and Observations

Three quarters of the young people that took part in the listening project in Uttlesford, **HAVE** seen serious violence on social media.

Almost a third of young people that said they **HAVE** seen content online involving people they **KNOW**, said this was of fighting in and around school!

The majority of these young people said this was seen on Snapchat.

Over a third of these young people said it involved people that they know.

Out of the 90 young people that had seen violence on social media, 89 of them said they had seen content involving people that they do not know!





## KEY OBSERVATIONS, COMPARISONS AND COMMENTS FOR UTTLESFORD

More young people from Uttlesford have engaged with the listening project this year, and there has been a shift in what young people are saying is their biggest concern around youth violence. This year 'harassment' and 'bullying' were the top concerns for young people.

Last year 50% of the young people in Uttlesford said that drugs was their biggest concern. This has dropped considerably to 10.1%.

The number of young people saying that knife crime is their biggest concern has also reduced from 21.6% last year (out of 95 young people) to 11.6% (out of 120 young people).

The sale of vapes and cigarettes to those underage was third on the list of concerns for young people last year but was not mentioned at all in the feedback this time.



The feedback and comments from young people in Uttlesford about what makes them feel UNSAFE indicated a proportionately high level of concerns around harassment, and specifically harassment from boys and men.

***"Boys in this area glorify sexual violence, this is not ok and we really need to have a conversation about it"***

***"Some people think violence against women and girls is just the way of life, and are too scared to speak out or don't think anyone will believe them so they don't report it"***

Through discussions with youth leaders, young people expressed opinions that if girls report incidents of sexual harassment they fear judgement from not only their peers, but also from adults saying that they are seeking attention or are over-reacting. They are also worried that they would not be believed.

***"You're just being dramatic"***

***"No one believes you, and nothing will happen if you report it anyway"***

20% LESS young people are worried about being exploited by a gang compared to the previous report.

However, this year, there are less young people that said that they feel safe in their local area with their friends-

Last year 86% of young people said they do feel safe, and this year it was 65%

***"Street lights"*** and ***"Being with friends"*** continue to be the most common responses for young people from Uttlesford about what helps them to feel safe.

When comparing young people's experience of violent crime this year to the last report it shows that; there has been an increase in those saying they have been a victim, a decrease in young people witnessing violent crime and a decrease in young people saying that they have taken part in a violent crime.

Young people from Uttlesford have asked for more streetlights (especially in parks and alleyways) as this would help them to feel safer.

They would also like more safe places for young people to 'hang out', free phone charging stations and more of a police presence around the area.

