



Speaking out on gun, knife and gang crime The survey results

Why did the British Youth Council run a survey on gun, knife and gang crime?

The British Youth Council (BYC) is led by young people for young people, aged 26 and under, across the UK. This year BYC is celebrating 60 years of empowering young people to have a say and be heard. With funding from the Speaking Out Small Grants programme, BYC sought the views of young people through an online survey to take a snapshot of young people's opinion on gun, knife and gang crime.

BYC thinks it is important that young people should become part of the solution, not just seen as the problem. Solutions for young people are undoubtedly more effective when young people help to design them themselves; the participation of young people in constructive debate on this issue is crucial.

Who took part?

40 young people took part in this short survey on gun, knife and gang crime by young people which ran for 3 weeks. This survey was undertaken as part of activity funded by the Speaking Out Small Grants Programme. 22.5% of young people surveyed said they were from organisations that are members of BYC and 75% said they were not. The majority of those who answered the survey, 87.5% were aged 18 to 26. 5% were aged 16 to 17 and 7.5% were aged 13 to 15.

Speaking up on being affected by gun, knife and gang crime.

32.5% of those surveyed said they had come across someone who had carried a knife.

12.5% said they had come across someone who had carried a gun.

22.5% said they had some across someone who had been part of a gang.

**“CARRYING A WEAPON IS
A LOSE/LOSE SOLUTION
TO THE PROBLEM”**

When asked if they had ever come across someone who had been a **victim** of knife crime 22.5% said they knew someone, 7.5% ticked the victim of gang crime option and 2.5% said they knew a victim of gun crime.

Thinking about why some young people carry knives or guns and get involved with gangs.

**“One of the main
problems is that
there are too
many reasons for
gun culture”**

The top three reasons those surveyed chose to explain why they think some young people carry knives or guns were:

- 1) **To gain respect** – with 65% of the vote.
- 2) **To gain a certain ‘image’** – 62.5%.
- 3) **Peer pressure** – 47.5%.

**“There is a vicious
circle of people not
feeling safe and
wanting to protect
themselves from
supposed threats”**

The top three reasons chosen to explain why they felt some young people get involved with gangs were:



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- 1) **To have a sense of identity** – 65%.
- 2) **Peer pressure** – 62.5%.
- 3) **Because friends or family are already in the gang** – 45%.

“The young people that I have known who have been in gangs have not been exposed to opportunities to gain a positive sense of identity in a healthy or safe setting”

Talking about the media’s portrayal of young people and gun, knife and gang crime.

The majority of young people surveyed by BYC, 67.5%, thought that media coverage of gun, knife or gang crime by young people had a **negative** effect.

45% believed the media coverage of this issue has a negative effect as it leads to an **unfair negative portrayal of all young people** and 22.5% believed media coverage has a negative effect as it exaggerates the amount of gun, knife and gang crime committed.

“It is has a negative effect on how young people are seen!”

“It has a negative effect as it shifts the focus from the problem, dangerous streets and endemic violent crime, to the symptom, people carrying weapons”

15% of young people thought media coverage of gun, knife and gang crime by young people has a positive effect as it urges politicians to take action to tackle this type of crime by young people. However, only 5% saw the media coverage as being able to have a positive effect through raising awareness amongst young people of the problem of gun, knife and gang crime.

Outlining ways to tackle gun, knife or gang crime committed by young people

BYC asked young people answering the survey to choose out of the statements provided the ones that corresponded with their views on how to tackle gun, knife and gang crime. Their choices reflect an understanding amongst those surveyed that there is a need to both help prevent offending and also provide ways for young people to get out when they do end up involved. The top four choices were:

- 1) **Ex-gang members educating young people about the reality of being in a gang** – 60%.
- 2) **Better ways to deal with young people who are excluded from school** – 57.5%.
- 3) **Increasing employment opportunities for young people in the community** – 55%.
- 4) **Ways out for those who get involved in gun, knife or gang crime to get out (such as safe houses)** – 52.5%.

Discussing the issue

BYC wanted to know where young people feel they can discuss the topic of guns, knives and gangs. 70% had discussed this issue with friends, 35% with family and 22.5% in school. Only one person had discussed this issue with their MP and none had talked to their local councillors.

For more information on this survey please contact Helen Deakin, BYC’s Policy and Press Officer via Helen.deakin@byc.org.uk or 020 7022 1974.

