



## Youth Attitudes to Serious and Organised Crime – July 2021

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Members of the Mayor's Youth Advisory Group were asked to conduct a survey amongst their friends and peers to look at youth attitudes towards serious and organised crime. Members were provided with 6 questions and had between April 2021 – July 2021 to gather their data from young people across West Yorkshire aged between 13-25 years.

Data was gathered from a total of 66 respondents across all 5 districts in West Yorkshire, appreciating that the majority of respondents lived in either Leeds or Bradford.

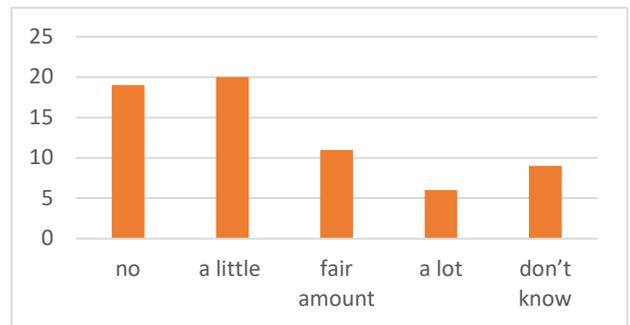
### Main Findings

- Most people said they thought SOC affected where they lived either 'a little' or not that they were aware of.
- In areas where SOC was an issue, drugs was the most common issue highlighted.
- Approximately 26% of respondents said they knew someone who was part of a criminal gang.
- The majority of respondents were not aware of any good projects already doing work linked to gangs and SOC that they knew about. This highlighted the need for further promotion and advertisement of such projects.
- In terms of ideas for projects around gangs and SOC, some of the most common suggestions included: youth clubs and community groups where young people could speak to a trusted adult, school workshops, including talks from ex-offenders and anonymous reporting methods for young people.
- Respondents also highlighted the need for funding for community organisations such as sports clubs to allow them to continue.
- In order for young people to become part of the solution, respondents said that increasing reporting in young people was essential, there was some apprehension around this due to the repercussions they felt they may face.
- 53% of young people said that social media was the best way for police to get information to young people about current issues, particularly newer platforms such as Tik Tok.

### Question 1 - How much does Serious and Organised Crime affect where you live?

Answers to this question varied and responses have been grouped into one of 5 categories ranging from 'not at all' to 'a lot'. The most common answer to this question was that Serious and Organised Crime affected where respondents lived 'a little' with 31% of respondents falling into this category.

	Count	%
Not at all	19	29%
A little	20	31%
A fair amount	11	17%
A lot	6	9%
Not sure	9	14%
Total	65	100%



Amongst those who had recorded that Serious and Organised Crime did affect the area they lived, the most common crimes mentioned were drugs, knife crime, and gangs.

*“Drug dealing is the biggest issue in my area, I see lots of people advertising drugs on social media, particularly Snapchat – Leeds”*

*“Bradford is highly affected by Serious and Organised Crime as there are lots of gang related crimes such as: drug dealing, rape, knife crime and children being used to pass on drugs.”*

Notably, those from the Calderdale and Wakefield districts reported that SOC was less of a problem in their area. The small number of responses from these districts should however be taken into account.

*“Wakefield is not highly affected by Serious and Organised Crime. There are gangs that deal with drugs, but it is not very common.”*

## Question 2 - Do you know people that are part of criminal gangs?

This question was answered with a simple yes or no. Of the 66 respondents who answered this question 74% said that they did not know people that were part of criminal gangs, 26% however said that they did which suggests their prevalence given the relatively small response pool.

	Count	%
Yes	17	26%
No	49	74%

## Question 3 - Are there any good projects already doing work linked to gangs and SOC that you know about and can share details of?

We know that there are many organisations and projects working in areas linked to gangs, however 80% of respondents said that they were not aware of any. This highlights the need for further work to better promote and advertise these projects to ensure that young people know where to turn should they need help or advice.

	Count	%
Yes	13	20%
No	53	80%

Of those that answered yes to this question and provided further details, examples included CATCH youth centre, local sports clubs tying in awareness sessions, and national charities such as Childline and Barnados.

## Question 4 - What ideas do you have for other projects around gangs and SOC?

The most common answer to this question was that young people felt more education was needed in schools (43%) with suggestions that this should be in the form of workshops to increase the interest of young people, rather than assemblies as it was thought that young people did not always give assemblies their full attention. If delivered in the form of an assembly they should include the police, ex-offenders, or those with lived experience in order to bring the sessions to life. A number of responses also highlighted the need to start these conversations at an earlier age e.g., from primary school as we know that gangs are now targeting younger children.

*“Education in school, specifically educating students in primary school at younger ages. Also, making sure students actually stay in school. An interesting answer was: “More information in schools, perhaps workshops because students don't really pay attention in assemblies.”*

	Count	%
Youth/ Sports Clubs	7	25%
More education in schools	12	43%
Removing Graffiti/ gang tags	1	4%
Anonymous reporting/ dedicated reporting/ helplines for young people	4	14%
Work with ex-offenders	2	7%
Social Media advertising	1	4%
More funding for projects	4	14%

***\*Please note that some answers were double coded***

Youth and sports clubs were also common answers to this question (25%). These facilities were identified as diversionary and preventative methods to get young people off the streets where they were vulnerable and at risk of being targeted by gangs. Young people felt that providing a safe space for young people with a trusted adult who they could talk to was essential. It was highlighted however that in order for these clubs to be successful, more funding needed to be provided to allow youth and sports clubs and community projects to be sustained long term.

*“Providing a safe space for young vulnerable people who may be at risk of being targeted to join gang’s e.g., community group where they have access to a trusted adult who they can talk to about potential concerns relating to gangs.”*

Other suggestions included social media advertising of the dangers involved in becoming part of a criminal gang, and what a young person should do if they needed help. Clean up operations to remove gang tags and graffiti, and anonymous reporting methods or helplines targeted specifically at young people.

*“A final purposed solution is a safe space or a phone line to be provided in schools/colleges which youths can attend in and out of school hours, whenever they like with no specific appointment required, so if they feel the need to talk to a safeguarding adult which they trust they can at any point.”*

### **Question 5 - How can young people help become a part of the solution?**

In terms of becoming part of the solution, young people felt that reporting incidents and intelligence was the best way to make a difference with 35% of responses falling into this category. The fear of repercussions however featured heavily in these responses and many respondents felt young people were scared to report and didn't want to be labelled as a 'snitch'.

*“Young people need to feel they are able to report any SOC that they witness or are involved in, I think the biggest fear of young people is the repercussions they will face from their community if they are found out to have reported SOC.”*

Support from friends and peers was also a theme that ran through this question with 30% of young people stating that it was an important factor. Young people felt that peer support was essential both to prevent others from getting involved in serious and organised crime and also to help them get out of it. Having friends and peers not involved in criminal activity and a sense of belonging outside of a gang was seen as a powerful diversionary tool.

*“Helping their friends if they start to become involved and reporting anything to the police if needed.”*

*“Discourage friends from taking part in crime and allow them to socialise with you rather than gangs.”*

Interestingly, some young people felt that this was not an issue that could or should be tackled by young people, they felt that the burden was too great for young people, or that adults should safeguard young people more to protect them from exploitation. Comments also included *“Not much they can do – no one listens to teenagers”*

*“I personally don't think it's good to burden young people to be part of the solution, because sometimes they don't know the full extent of issues regarding crime, e.g., the wider societal impact. It may be more beneficial to have ex-offenders raise awareness and connect with young people.”*

	Count	%
Looking out for friends/ discouraging/ diverting them	13	30%
Reporting	15	35%
Educating on the dangers	6	14%
Raising awareness inc. of available services	7	16%
Other	6	14%

As shown in the table above, other recommendations for young people becoming part of the solution included educating young people/ peers on the dangers of becoming involved in SOC and raising awareness of services available should a young person feel they needed help. Working to de-glamourise gang involvement and the perceived rewards was also a way young people could become part of the solution by showing them alternate ways to make money.

**Question 6 - How could the police be better at getting information to young people about current issues? How can we make it more engaging or use different platforms such as social media or videos?**

It is known that the majority of young people have access to social media, so it is not surprising that 53% of young people felt the best way for police to get information to young people was through social media platforms.

The most common platforms suggested were Tik-Tok, Instagram and Snapchat, suggestions also included adverts on You Tube videos that could not be skipped, adverts when the app is opened, and short, powerful Tik-Tok videos. Several respondents said that newer platforms such as Tik-Tok were the most powerful ways to engage with young people.

*“Tik-Tok is a good platform as pretty much everyone I know has it, it should be in the form of an advert when the app is first opened but creating a Tik-Tok account would also be useful in educating young people.”*

	Count	%
Social Media	23	53%
Education in schools/ telling true stories	15	35%
Hold youth events/ collaborate with local services	4	9%
Break down barriers/ be friendly	2	5%
Other	4	9%

More education in schools is a theme that has run throughout this survey and is again the second most common answer from young people. Holding awareness events in schools and involving ex-offenders and gang members were common answers, young people felt that true stories would be a powerful way of educating and getting information to them.

*“Lots of people say that Police shouldn’t educate youths and instead previous offenders who are now rehabilitated should talk to youths, by sharing their own personal story which youths may be able to relate to, in order to advise them on how to not go down the wrong path and how not to give into peer pressure and to educate them that the consequences and that lifestyle.”*

Holding youth events, collaborating with local youth services and breaking down barriers in terms of appearing as a ‘friend not a foe’ were also suggestions.

## Section 7 - Demographics

### Gender

There was a relatively equal split between male and female respondents with 58% male and 42% female.

	Count	%
Male	31	58%
Female	22	42%

## Age

Young people were asked to gather data from respondents aged between 13 and 25 years. More than 80% of respondents fell into the 3 youngest age categories, between 13 and 18 years.

	Count	%
13-14	9	17%
15-16	14	26%
17-18	21	40%
19-20	2	4%
21-22	3	6%
23-24	2	4%
25	2	4%

## Location

Respondents were also asked to record which district they lived in. as shown below, the vast majority of respondents lived in either Leeds or Bradford, making up 93% of the responses to this survey.

	Count	%
Leeds	32	62%
Bradford	16	31%
Kirklees	1	2%
Calderdale	1	2%
Wakefield	1	2%