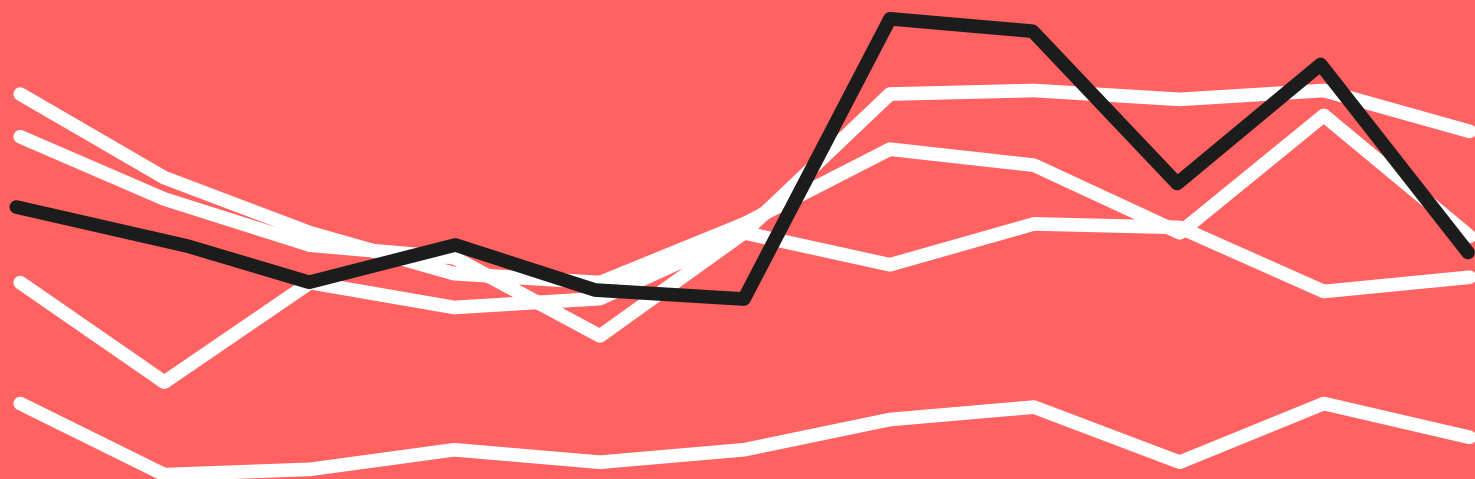


Children, violence and vulnerability 2022

A Youth Endowment Fund
report into young people's
experiences of violence



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Acknowledgements

This report has been produced in collaboration with Crest Advisory. Crest Advisory are a crime and justice consultancy. They were commissioned to provide: an analysis of national indicators of serious violence and vulnerability; a survey of over 2,000 children and young people across England and Wales; engagement with vulnerable young people and their support workers. We would like to thank Crest's Executive Director Samantha Cunningham and analysts Madeline Rolfe, Sarah Hibbert, James Stott and Cassia Rowland.

We'd also like to thank the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) network, Steve Chalke, founder of the Oasis Charitable Trust, and the teachers and leaders of Oasis schools, who helped us to distribute our survey.

Lead contributions from the Youth Endowment Fund have been Billy Readman and William Teager.

All views expressed in this report are those of the Youth Endowment Fund.

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Foreword

Jon Yates, Executive Director of the Youth Endowment Fund

Over the last three years, the Youth Endowment Fund has been working to protect children from violence.

So far, we've committed over £60 million to projects and research – and our grantees have already reached more than 100,000 children. That includes an **£18 million investment** to find out how different types of **diversionary activity** – like therapies, mentoring and sports – could make a difference to children who've already been arrested or involved in crime. We've set up a **£6 million fund** to see how an innovative partnership model that brings together policing, community organisations and public services (often called 'focused deterrence') could make a difference in England and Wales, after it was shown to significantly reduce crime in the Scotland and the United States. We've developed **ground-breaking community partnerships**, to find out how involving local people in decision-making could reduce crime in their areas. And we've launched a world-leading **Toolkit**, summarising the highest quality evidence on what works to protect children from serious violence.

By investing in promising projects and high-quality research, we'll make sure that everyone working to keep children safe – in education, local government,

youth work, policing or social care – has the knowledge they need to make the best possible decisions.

However – as important as high quality impact evaluation is – to truly make a difference, we also need to understand the experiences of young people. That's why we set up the **Peer Action Collective**, a network of over 120 young researchers, all looking to find out what life is like for children affected by violence in England and Wales today.

It's also why we've created this report: our first investigation into children's experiences and perceptions of and vulnerability to violence. We've listened to over 2,000 teenage children, aged 13 to 17, to find out how their experiences and perceptions of crime and violence are making a difference in their life. And we've drilled down into national data, to show how trends in serious violence are changing.

Through our online survey of over 2,000 children, they told us that being in a gang was rare (with just 2% saying they were members), while few (also 2%) said they'd carried a weapon themselves. Some experiences were, however, much more commonplace. 14% of children told us that they'd been the victim of violence in the last twelve months. This includes everything from minor playground scuffles, through to more serious acts including robbery and sexual assault. 55% of children said they'd seen violence on social media, with 44%

saying they had seen young people fighting. 65% of children changed something about their behaviour due to fears about violence.

Meanwhile, the national data tells a complicated picture – while violence has increased substantially since the early 2010s, it was stable in the years immediately before the pandemic and fell when national lockdowns were in place. Since restrictions have eased, some forms of violence have returned, while others remain below their pre-Covid levels.

At the Youth Endowment Fund, we know that violence isn't inevitable – it's preventable. We're only at the start of our ten-year programme of work. But as we continue to listen to children, learn more about their lives we can build a clearer picture of what works. By sharing our knowledge through evidence-based resources, like our Toolkit, we hope that we can help frontline workers, commissioners and policymakers get support to the children who need it most.

Working together, we can make a real and lasting difference.

Executive summary

Understanding children's experiences

The Youth Endowment Fund's mission is to find out what works to prevent children from becoming involved in violence. To do that, we need to understand young people's lives. That's why we've created a Youth Advisory Board, so that we're giving young people, including those with experience of violence, a stake in our decision-making. We've invested in the Peer Action Collective, to develop young people-led approaches to research. And it's why we've written this report, which uses a survey of over 2,000 teenage children and official statistics to present an overview of young people's experiences today. We also interviewed young people and youth offending team workers, to see how the data matches their experiences (and will be publishing more details on what they said in the coming months). We'll repeat this research every year, so we can track trends and changes. This is a summary of our first year's findings.

When asking children about their experiences of violence, we used the following definition:

"By violent crime, we mean the use of force or threat of force against another person or people, for example punching someone, threatening someone with a weapon, or mugging someone. This also includes sexual assault, which is when somebody intentionally touches someone in a sexual way without their consent."

This is a broader measure of violence than is captured in police recorded crime data. It includes incidences that might include playground fights and scuffles that might not meet the threshold for police involvement or involve serious physical harm.

What children told us: a summary of our survey findings

Real-world experiences of violence

A minority of teenage children have experienced violence, but some groups are significantly overrepresented

Based on the definition of violence we've set out above, which includes sexual violence, 14% of children have been victims in the past 12 months. 39% were either a victim or witness.

Children who were supported by a social worker (60%), regularly missing classes (55%), receiving free school meals (46%), or not from a two-parent household (42%), were more likely to have been a victim or witness compared to children who weren't from one of these backgrounds (31%).¹

19% of those who answered the question said they'd committed an act of violence, based on the broad definition set out above including sexual violence, in the last 12 months.

2% reported being a member of a gang and 2% said they'd carried a weapon.

Violence online

More than half of children have seen violence online

55% had seen real-life acts of violence on social media in the last 12 months, increasing to three in four for witnesses of violence and 85% for victims of violence.

The most common violence seen online was fighting (44%) and threats of physical assault (33%). A small but worrying proportion (13%) had seen sexual assaults.

Perceptions and drivers of violence

Children felt less safe in places without adult supervision

66% thought gangs² were a major factor in driving teenage violence – 79% for those living in London. Two thirds also identified drug use.

Over 90% felt safe at home or at friends' houses and 83% felt safe at school. Children felt less safe in places where there's less adult supervision including parks (43%) and in the streets (45%). They felt significantly less safe near pubs and nightclubs (18%).

To address violence, 26% said they wanted to see more police. 15% wanted more activities for young people.

Impact on behaviours

A majority of children changed their behaviour out of a fear of violence

65% had changed their behaviour, appearance or where they go due to fears of violence.

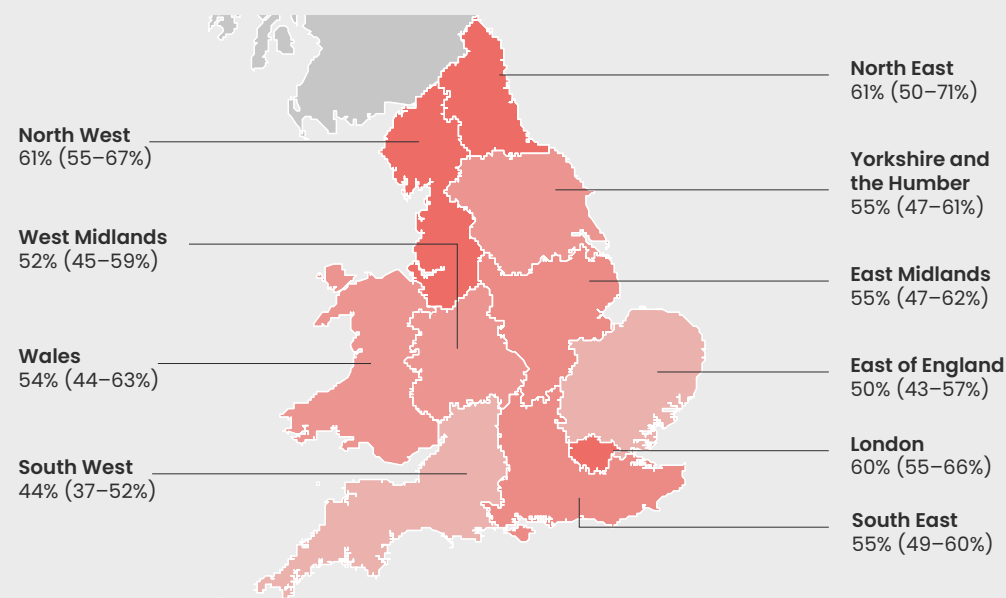
14% had been absent from school in the last 12 months because they felt they would be unsafe. 14% also said they struggled to concentrate.

18% changed their appearance, increasing to 43% for victims, 30% for children living in London, and more than one in four for children receiving free school meals.³

- 1 All results for the presented subgroups are statistically significantly different at the 5% level compared to the results for children who weren't from one of these backgrounds.
- 2 By a 'gang', we used the following definition: "a group of young people who think of themselves as a gang, probably with a name, and are involved in violence or other crime."
- 3 Results for the victims of violence, children living in London and children receiving free school meals are all statistically significant different at the 5% level compared to the results for all children.

Real life violence seen through online profiles

Where in England and Wales are experiences of violence online the highest? **



*95% confidence intervals in brackets. Not all differences between regions are statistically significant.

**Unweighted response rate by region: North East (134); Yorkshire and the Humber (224); East Midlands (140); East of England (151); London (240); South East (306); South West (183); Wales (134); West Midlands (193); North West (320).

As well as asking children about their experiences of violence in real life, we asked them what they saw online. 55% said that they'd seen violent material on social media in the last 12 months. One in three children said they'd seen threats to beat up another child and 44% had seen young people fighting.

Social media also exposes children to other behaviours associated with serious violence. In the last 12 months, 20% said they'd seen other children being part of a gang or promoting gang membership. And nearly a quarter (24%) had seen other children carrying or promoting weapons on social media.

“There has been an emergence of urban street gangs in the last two years. They've always been there but I think it's the boredom of young people over the pandemic. Young people have been more drawn into it because of social media as well.”

A Youth Justice Service worker

The national picture: a summary of our review of publicly available data

Violence before the pandemic

Violence was down in the years before Covid, but was still higher than in the early 2010s

Between 2012/13 and 2019/20, homicides were up 28%, robberies 38% and violence with injury 73%. And between 2014/15 and 2018/19, 0-17-year-old knife-related hospital admissions more than doubled.

But child knife related hospital admissions fell 7% between 2018/19 and 2019/20, and 16-24-year-old homicides fell 7% between 2016/17 and 2019/20.

The impact of Covid

Violence fell during the pandemic and latest data has shown a mixed picture as restrictions have eased

Between 2019/20 and 2020/21, robberies fell 34%, homicides 20% and child admissions to hospital due to knife assault 14%.

Nationally, since restrictions have eased, homicides have returned to the same level as before the pandemic. In London in 2021, 13-17-year-old homicide victims surpassed their pre-Covid levels (30 in 2021 compared to 25 in 2019).

However, robberies in 2021/22 remained 27% below the rate in 2019/20. 0-17-year-old knife-related hospital admissions fell in 2020/21 and in 2021/22 and are now 24% below their pre-Covid levels.

Trends in key risk factors

Risk factors related to involvement in violence present a complicated picture, with a number worsening

Children not in education, employment or training (NEET) fell significantly in the past 16 years – down from 8.5% of 16 and 17 year-olds, to in 2005 to 5% in 2021.

Rates of poverty and temporary accommodation are increasing – 67% more children were living in temporary accommodation at the end of 2019 compared to 2012. Changes to eviction rules during Covid led this to fall more recently however.

Prior to the pandemic, permanent school exclusions had increased – 70% between 2012/13 and 2018/19. They fell significantly during the pandemic and have stayed low.

Children whom social services suspect of being at risk of serious harm.

Police recorded domestic abuse more than doubled between 2015/16 and 2021/22, in part due to changes in reporting and recording.

Racial disproportionality

While far fewer children are in the criminal justice system overall, Black children are increasingly overrepresented

Since 2011/12, there's been an 81% fall in children entering the criminal justice system.

However, ethnic minority children and particularly Black children are overrepresented at all levels and this disproportionality is growing.

Black children make up 4% of 10-17-year-olds but 29% of children in custody – up from 17% in 2011/12.

Escaping violence at home through crime: Jordon's story

Jordon had a difficult childhood. He grew up in a home where abuse and violence were common. He's since been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress. As a result of this abusive relationship, he was moved along with his mum to a new city at the age of 10.

Jordon found it difficult to make friends at his new school. He went from having good attendance to not wanting to attend school at all. His mum was dealing with her own issues, including mental health and the trauma of an abusive relationship and it was difficult for her to keep on top of her son's attendance. When he did go to school, he found that taking on the role of class clown helped him to fit in. Sometimes this involved disrupting class, which led to isolation and exclusion. Eventually, he was transferred out of mainstream school and into Alternative Provision. This made his attendance drop further.

At this time Jordon was befriended by another young person living on his estate, who introduced him to vehicle theft. Though he would often go missing for days at a time, his mum never reported it to local authorities for fear that she'd get him into trouble. Jordon was remanded in custody three times before being sent to youth prison due to persistent offending. Once out of custody and after some initial struggles, at around 17 years old, Jordon started to turn his life around. He attributes this to the maturity that comes with age and the positive relationships he developed with his Youth Justice Service worker, who he said took the time to really get to know and understand him.

Jordon was recently accepted into a competitive training programme for young people, helping them prepare for employment. The week-long programme helps young people to gain work-based qualifications. Jordan explained that getting a job and a legal source of income was why he wanted to take part.

Case-study based on interviews

All content anonymised to protect identities

What will the Youth Endowment Fund do to support children?

At the Youth Endowment Fund, our mission is to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. This report is our attempt to understand the problems we want to address. But what do we do about it?

We're here to find out what works. We do it by investing in promising projects, building evidence and then sharing what we know with frontline workers, policymakers and service leaders. One of the main ways we do this is through the YEF Toolkit. It's a free, online resource that offers easy to find, easy to read summaries of the best available research evidence on what works to keep children safe. If you work with children and young people – whether that's in education, youth work, the police or a youth offending team – you can use the YEF Toolkit to help you put evidence of what works to prevent serious violence into action.

Sometimes individual programmes or interventions won't be enough to create change. Instead, we might need to see changes to parts of the system itself – such as criminal justice, education, health, social care, welfare and community services. We'll build a movement of people throughout England and Wales who are passionate about using evidence about what works to prevent children becoming involved in violence. And we'll work with them to push for change where it's needed.

Section 1: Teenage children's views and experiences of violence

About this section

National statistics give us a broad – and important – view of trends relating to violence. But, if we truly want to understand how violence is experienced by children, we need to ask them. That's why we commissioned a new online survey of over 2,000 children, aged between 13 and 17.⁴ We asked them about their experiences of violence, how they think violence is changing and how violence – and the fear of violence – affects their daily lives.

What we found

A minority of teenage children have experienced violence, but some groups are significantly overrepresented

Two fifths of teenage children have been a victim or witness

A relatively high proportion of children are victims of violence – 14% in the past 12 months. A higher proportion (39%) have been directly affected by violence (either as a victim or witness).

The risks of violence are not shared equally by all children

Children who were supported by a social worker (60%), regularly missing classes (55%), receiving free school meals (46%), or not from a two-parent household (42%), were more likely to have been a victim or witness compared to children who are not from one of these backgrounds (31%).⁵

51% of Black children have been a victim or witness, 12% points higher than the rate for White children – although sample sizes were small, meaning the results are not statistically significantly different.

Around one in five said they'd committed an act of violence

Of those who answered the question, 19% said they'd committed an act of violence in the last 12 months. Most acts were things like kicking, hitting, or shoving (16%). However, some had been involved with serious violence, like threatening or hurting someone with a weapon (6%).

⁴ For more details on how the survey was conducted and how representative the sample was, see the methods section on page 14.

⁵ All results for the presented subgroups are statistically significantly different at the 5% level compared to the results for children who are not from one of these backgrounds.

Gang membership and weapon carrying were more common among victims

2% of children reported being a member of a gang and the same percentage reported carrying a weapon in the last 12 months. This increases to 10% and 12% for victims of violence, for gang membership and carrying a weapon respectively.

More than half of children have seen violence online

Most children have seen real-life violence on social media

55% of children had seen real-life acts of violence on social media in the last 12 months. It rose to three in four for witnesses of violence and 85% for victims of violence.

It's mainly linked to fighting

The most common violence seen online was fighting and threats of physical assault, with 44% and 33% of children saying they'd seen each respectively in the last 12 months. A small but worrying proportion had seen sexual assaults, with 13% of teenage children having seen this material.

Children felt less safe in places without adult supervision

Children think gangs and drugs are the main causes of violence

66% thought gangs were a major factor in why teenage children commit violence. This rose to 75% for victims of violence and 79% for those living in London. Two thirds also identified drug use. 62% of children who were victims of violence thought social media was a major factor, compared to half of all children.

Most children felt safe at home but not while unsupervised

95% of children felt safe at home, 93% at friends' houses and 83% at school. Feelings of safety fell in places where there's less adult supervision including parks (43%) and in the streets (45%). Children were significantly less likely to feel safe near pubs and nightclubs (18%). Children had mixed feelings about youth clubs, with only 44% saying they felt safe there.

A quarter of children want to see more police

26% of teenage children said they wanted to see more police or increased police activity and visibility. This compares to 15% of teenage children who wanted more activities for young people or youth clubs to prevent violence.

A majority of children changed their behaviour out of a fear of violence

Violence, and the fear of violence, led children to change their behaviour

65% had changed their behaviour, appearance or where they went due to fears of violence. This increases to 76% for Black children, and 93% for children who were victims of violence.

A large proportion were absent from school because of their concerns

14% had been absent from school in the last 12 months because they felt they would be unsafe. 14% also said they struggled to concentrate in lessons due to worries about violence. Half of victims said they'd skipped school due to safety concerns.

1 in 5 changed their appearance

18% changed their appearance. This increased to 43% for victims and 30% for children living in London. Of children who received free school meals, more than one in four had changed their appearance.

In London, the impacts were the greatest

77% of children from London said they'd changed their behaviour and a quarter skipped school. This compares to Wales, where 57% of children told us they'd changed their behaviour and a tenth had skipped school.

About our survey

Context

There aren't many published surveys of how teenage children understand and experience violence. The ONS Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) includes a study of around 3,000 children (aged 10–15), which asks about their experiences of crime. However, it misses the critical ages of 16 and 17 (who are captured in the wider CSEW), and doesn't ask about children's understanding of crime, nor how violence (and fear of violence) affects their day-to-day lives. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) routinely publishes a 'Youth Voice' survey of 11 to 16-year-olds. However, this only covers children living in London.

We wanted to understand not just children's experiences of and opinions on violence, but also *how it affects their lives*. Through our survey, we've explored the link between experiences of violence and its effect on children's behaviours: where they go and feel safe, who they see and how it changes their day-to-day experiences.

Method

We conducted an online survey of 13–17-year-olds with help from our research partner, Crest Advisory, and online survey provider, Walr. Fieldwork was conducted over 8 weeks, from 25/04/2022 to 10/06/2022, and recruited a sample of 2,025 teenage children across England and Wales. For more detail on the approach to recruiting participants, see the [annex](#). The sample included around 1,000 boys and 1,000 girls, around 400 from each age group within the eligible range and at least 130 respondents from each region. Once we had the responses, they were weighted to ensure they were representative of the age, gender, and regional distribution of the population of England and Wales as a whole. The [annex](#) contains more details on the methodology and the representativeness of the sample.

The survey asked about experiences of violence and described this using language that's appropriate for children and can be easily understood.

When generating the questions and definitions, we reflected on other relevant surveys on crime and violence, particularly the ONS's CSEW and MOPAC's Youth Voice survey. For a full description of the definition of violence used, how we estimated the numbers of children impacted by violence and how our estimates compare to the CSEW, please see the [annex](#).

Due to the sensitive nature of some of our questions, we also completed an independent ethical review, to ensure safeguarding concerns were appropriately considered and mitigated. We provided links to various support services throughout the survey. Participants were also able to skip any questions they felt uncomfortable answering.

How did we measure experiences of violence?

To measure experiences of violence we asked two sets of questions. Firstly, we asked all children whether they had experienced or witnessed violence, based on the following definition.

“By violent crime, we mean the use of force or threat of force against another person or people, for example punching someone, threatening someone with a weapon, or mugging someone. This also includes sexual assault, which is when somebody intentionally touches someone in a sexual way without their consent.”

Secondly, we asked children whether they'd experienced or witnessed any of the following and how they knew the person that did it:

- **Robbery** – “Someone used force or threats to steal or take something from another person.”
- **Physical assault** – “Someone kicked, hit, pushed/shoved, or was physically violent in some way towards another person.”
- **Sexual assault** – “Someone intentionally touched another person in a sexual way, e.g. touching, grabbing or kissing, without their consent (permission). Both girls/women and boys/men can be sexually assaulted by either boys/men or girls/women.”
- **Weapons offences** – “Someone used or threatened to use a weapon on another person.”

Children were able to skip this set of detailed questions, as we didn't want to force anyone to respond to questions that might be difficult for them

to think about. Any child who said they were a victim or witness (either in response to the first, broad question or the more specific questions about certain crimes) was counted as a victim of or witness to violence. For more detail on our calculations, see the [annex](#).

When we asked about committing acts of violence, we asked children whether they had done any of the specific crimes above (robbery, physical assault, sexual assault, weapons offences). Children were also able to skip this set of questions, in case they were unhappy thinking about specific acts of violence.

Elsewhere in the survey we asked about other things linked to violence, such as involvement with drugs, gangs⁶ and weapons carrying. While these experiences are linked to potentially higher risks of involvement in violence, we don't count them in our measure of experiences of violence.

Won't your definition capture some behaviour we might expect of children, like playground fights?

The definition of violence we've used in our survey of teenage children captures a broad range of violence: from "pushing, kicking, and shoving" through to robbery, weapon use, and sexual assault. Where possible, we aim to separate out which specific experiences children are referring to. For example, in Figure 1.1 we show that 11% of children report being victims of "kicking, shoving or other forms of physical violence", whereas 5% report "being threatened or assaulted with a weapon". It's important to emphasise that not all surveys or reports will use this definition of violence. For example, the CSEW doesn't include sexual violence.

Experiences like "pushing, kicking and shoving" are unlikely to require police involvement. As adults, we sometimes treat as acceptable a level of violence among teenage children that we would see as assault among adults. To adults they might seem like playground fights or scuffles that are part of normal growing up. However, we believe it's important to include them in our survey, because there's a large body of evidence that shows a link between such behaviours in childhood and involvement in later crime and violence. For example, a meta-analysis of 41 studies shows that 'externalising problems' such as fighting and physical aggression in childhood significantly predicts involvement in crime.¹ Similarly, bullying other children at school has been found to predict later offending in many longitudinal

⁶ By a 'gang', we used the following definition: "a group of young people who think of themselves as a gang, probably with a name, and are involved in violence or other crime."

studies.¹¹ YEF's mission focuses on prevention, so it's important that we understand the prevalence of early problems, as well as more serious forms of violence.

Points to consider when interpreting the findings

The panel was recruited to provide a sample of 13 to 17-year-olds, with sufficient numbers to report breakdowns by age and gender across England and Wales. Although the results were weighted to ensure they were representative of the population as a whole, this weighting only used a limited number of factors. Although we believe our results to be representative (see the [annex](#) for a further discussion), it's possible not all findings are generalisable. Children were recruited into the survey through our survey panel provider and had the option not to take part. The self-selecting nature of the response may have biased the results.

While the overall sample size (over 2,000 respondents) provides us with rich insights, we acknowledge that when we cut the results by smaller sub-groups (such as gender, ethnicity and region) the numbers get smaller. In the report, we highlight where results between groups are statistically significant from each other and the uncertainty in these estimates for key breakdowns.

Consideration should also be given to the sensitivity of the subject matter and the impact this may have had on our respondents. We can't discount the possibility that some children may have been unwilling to admit to acts of violence or confirm that they had been affected by different types of violence. Around a third of children opted out of answering more detailed questions on the specific types of violence they might have experienced, and a similar amount didn't answer questions about the violence they may have committed. Response rates to all other questions were generally high.

Finally, caution should be taken when comparing our results with the results from other surveys. In the [annex](#), we provide a comparison between our survey and the CSEW and explain why our results differ. Differences in the make-up of who responded, the way children were asked to complete the survey, the phrasing of questions and the time periods covered mean the results are not directly comparable. Our results provide a baseline for understanding how teenage children experienced violence (as it's been defined in this survey). We'll use it to track statistically significant changes in future updates to the survey.

Survey findings

14%

of teenage
children have
been a victim
of violence in the
last 12 months

A minority of children have experienced violence, but some groups are significantly overrepresented

Most violence experienced by children involved physical assault, such as kicking, hitting or pushing.

Our survey revealed the scale of children's experiences of violence, with many reporting direct experiences. 14% of all teenage children who responded to our survey (287 out of 2,025 total respondents) reported being a victim of violence in the last 12 months. We also asked about the types of violence experienced. Of all children that responded, 11% (157) said they'd been the victim of assault;⁷ 5% (63) robbery;⁸ 5% (67) sexually assault; and 5% (63) had been threatened with or had someone use a weapon against them.⁹ For an analysis of how these estimates compare to the findings from other surveys, see the [annex](#).

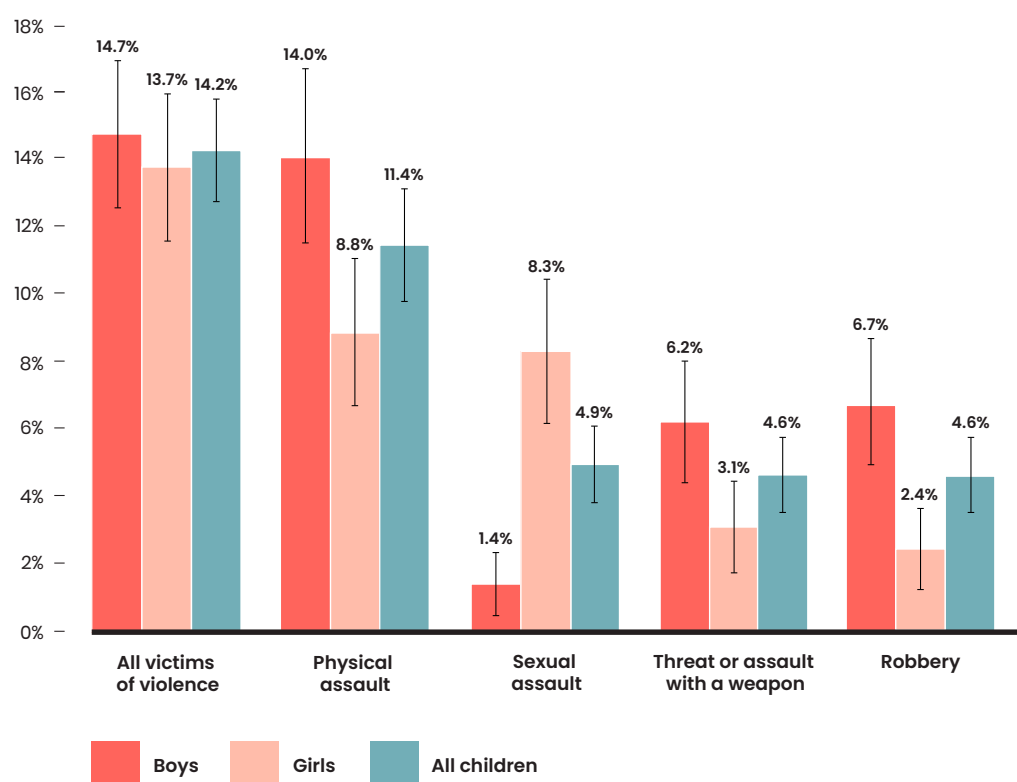
Overall victimisation rates for boys and girls in the past 12 months are similar – 15% of boys and 14% of girl (the difference is not statistically significant). However, there are larger differences when we look at the types of violence experienced by gender. For example, girls were nearly five times more likely to be the victims of sexual assault compared to boys, with 8.3% of girls who responded to this question reporting being a victim, compared to 1.4% of boys. Boys were much more likely to be the victims of robbery – 6.7% reported being a victim in the past 12 months, compared to 2.4% of girls who responded to this question, which is over two and a half times greater.

7 Defined as kicking, hitting, pushing/shoving, or being physically violent in some way.

8 Our survey finds particularly large figures for the proportion of children that experienced robbery. This may in part be due to children misinterpreting the question. Robbery relates to theft with force or the threat of force. Some respondents may have interpreted this as relating to any act of theft.

9 These numbers won't sum to 100%, as some children reported being the victim of more than one type of violence.

Figure 1.1: Proportion of teenage children who were victims of violence in the past 12 months, by type of violence and gender***



*Results for all victims of violence relate to all teenage children that took part in the survey. Individual violence categories are the proportions for just those who responded to this question – around a third skipped it.

**Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the estimates to likely fall within.

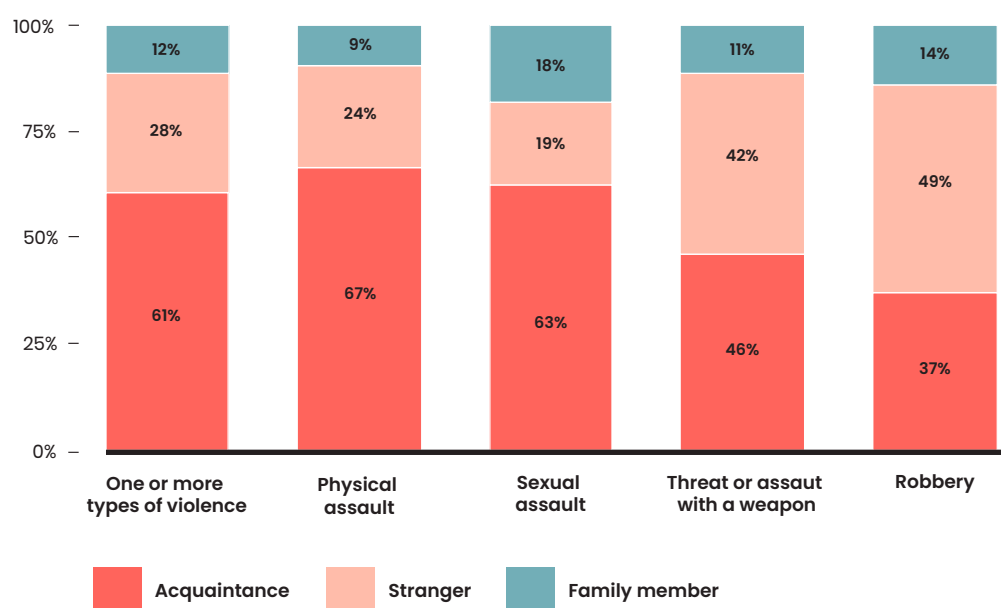
How do our results compare to the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW)?

As part its annual survey of household's experience of violence, the ONS also surveys 3,000 10–15-year-olds. In their latest survey, conducted before the pandemic, they found that 7% of children have been the victim of violence. This compares to the 14% found in our survey; our figure is double that of the ONS. There are a number of things that might explain this. Firstly, we were asking an older group of children, aged 13–17, who may experience higher rates of violence. Secondly, we defined violence in a different way. For example, we included sexual violence in our definition, which the ONS doesn't. Finally, we also asked children in a different way, through an online questionnaire, rather than the face-to-face interviews used by the ONS. It's important to emphasise that differences in how we approached our survey mean our results should not be directly compared with the CSEW. For a more in-depth comparison between the two, please see the [annex](#).

83%
of victims
reported that
the perpetrator
was an
acquaintance
outside of
their family

We also asked victims who caused them harm. Where there were multiple perpetrators, or the child was a victim multiple times, we asked them to select all that apply. Respondents were more likely to be victimised by someone outside their families. 83% of victims who agreed to answer questions reported being victimised by an acquaintance who wasn't a family member. Victims of robbery and weapon related offences were more likely to be victimised by a stranger when compared to other violent offences. Around one in five (18%) victims of sexual assault were victimised by a family member, the highest of any violent offence.

Figure 1.2: Victim-offender relationship by the type of violence experienced in the past 12 months*



**Results based on only those who agreed to respond to this question – around a third skipped it.*

Notably, some children who initially said they weren't a victim of violence did respond to a later question about specific types of violence saying they had experienced one of the acts listed. 49% of teenage children who reported being the victim of robbery, assault, sexual assault, or had been threatened or assaulted with a weapon did not report themselves as having been a victim of violence when asked in earlier questions.

It's unclear why this is. One explanation might be that some children have become normalised to violence. In other words, they might not immediately recognise these acts as violent, because it's become commonplace for them. Another explanation might be a lack of clarity in the way the question was originally asked, meaning children didn't initially recognise the sorts of acts we were referring to. The [annex](#) contains a further breakdown of how questions on victimisation were responded to.

39%

of teenage children have been a victim or witness of violence in the last 12 months

Significantly more children were exposed to violence in the last 12 months as witnesses

Just over one in three teenage children (35%) witnessed violence in the last 12 months. When combined with the number of victims, the total number of children with direct experiences of violence in the last 12 months rises to 39%. This results in our headline figure – that two fifths of children have been directly affected by violence in the last year.

The risks of violence are not shared equally by all children

Certain regions report disproportionate numbers of teenage children being affected by violence

We know that violence across England and Wales is highly concentrated in certain areas. The children we surveyed reported various levels of experience depending on where they lived. Response rates from individual regions were low in some cases,¹⁰ meaning caution is needed when comparing results at the regional level.

Among the regions with the highest levels of violence, the proportion of teenage children being victims or witnesses of violence in the last 12 months in London was 47%. This compares to 39% for England and Wales as a whole and 31% in the South East and East of England, which had the lowest rates of teenage children who'd been directly affected by violence as a victim or witness.¹¹

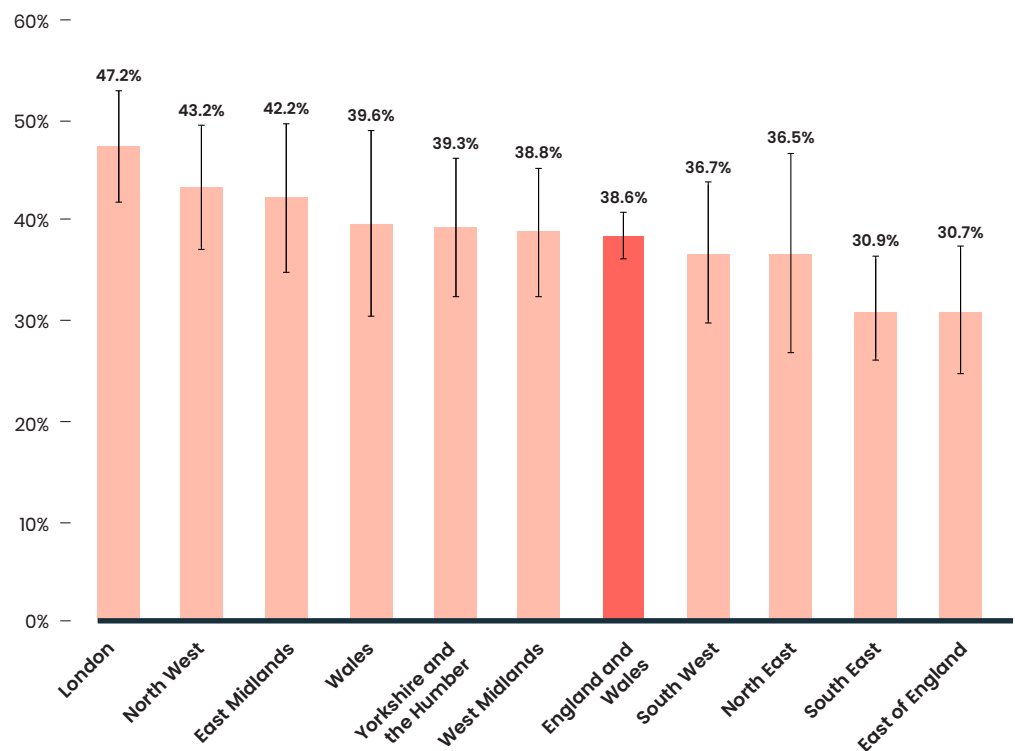
1/2

Nearly half of teenage children in London have been a victim or witness of violent crime in the last 12 months, compared to 31% in the South East and the East of England

¹⁰ Unweighted response rate by region: North East (134); Yorkshire and the Humber (224); East Midlands (140); East of England (151); London (240); South East (306); South West (183); Wales (134); West Midlands (193); North West (320).

¹¹ The differences between London and the South East and East of England are statistically significant at the 5% level. Whilst the difference between London and the whole of England and Wales (39%) are not statistically significant different, they are when compared to England and Wales excluding London (37%).

Figure 1.3: Proportion of teenage children who were a victim or witness of violence in the past 12 months, by region*

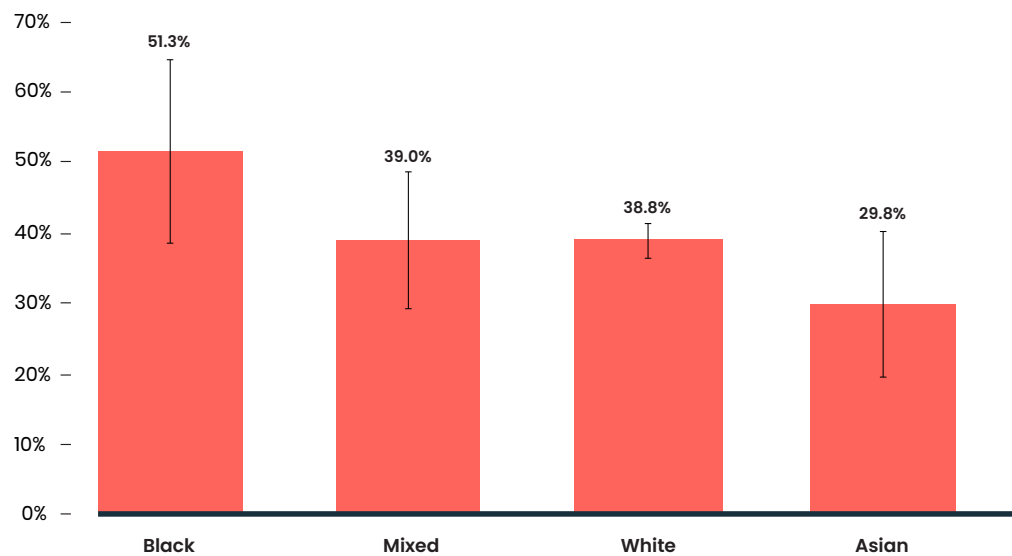


*Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the estimates to likely fall within.

Race and gender both seem to make a difference in teenage children's experiences of violence

Not all children experienced violence equally. A high-level breakdown shows Black children are disproportionately affected by violence. 33% of Black children were victims of violence in the last 12 months, compared to 13% for White children and 11% for Asian children. And more than half of Black children were victims or witnesses, compared to 30% for Asian children and 39% for White children. Due to the low number of responses from children from individual ethnic groups (64 children were from Black backgrounds and 90 Asian), caution should be taken in comparing the size of these differences.

Figure 1.4: Proportion of teenage children who were a victim or witness of violence in the past 12 months, by ethnicity***



**Responses that were not sure or preferred not to say are excluded.*

***Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the estimates to likely fall within.*

Receipt of free school meals, experiences of care and lack of access to opportunity also seem to be linked to children's experiences of violence

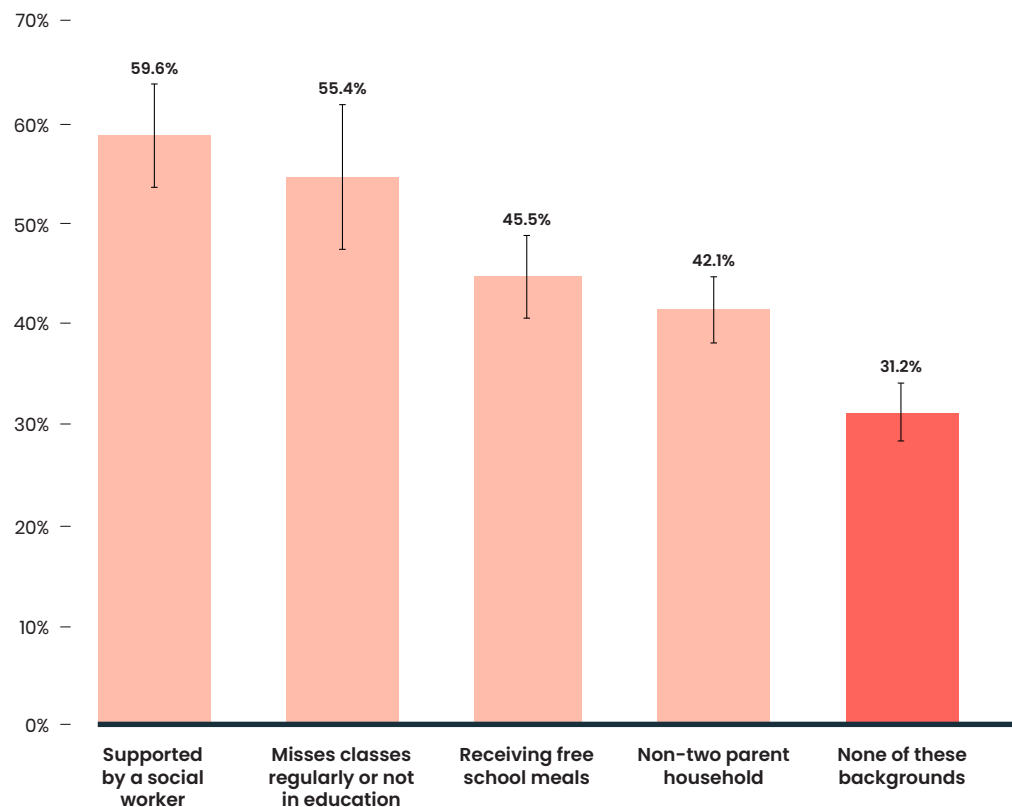
46%

of teenage children who received free school meals this year were victims or witnesses of violence in the last 12 months

Teenage children from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to report being a victim or witness of violence. Those who have been supported by a social worker (60%) and those that regularly miss classes or were not in education (55%) reported higher rates of exposure to violence when compared to all children (39%).

Teenage children who were receiving free school meals (46%) and lived in a non-two parent household (42%) also had higher rates of experiencing violence, but these results are not statistically significantly different when compared to all respondents. However, when we compare these rates to teenage children who were not in any of these four subgroups (31%), the results are statistically significant.

Figure 1.5 Proportion of teenage children who were a victim or witness of violence in the past 12 months, by family and educational experiences***



**Responses that were not sure or preferred not to say are excluded.*

***Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the estimates to likely fall within.*

Most violence committed by children involved physical assault, such as kicking, pushing or hitting

Around two thirds of the teenage children surveyed (1,377 out of 2,025) agreed to respond to questions about the types of violence they may have committed. Of those who responded, around one in five (19%) said they'd committed an act of violence in the last 12 months. The most common act was kicking, hitting, shoving or another act of physical violence, with 16% of those who answered this question saying they'd committed an act like that.

The estimate of one in five children committing an act of violence might seem high, although other studies have found similar rates (see box on page 25). It's important to emphasise that children were able to opt out of answering this question and around a third did. This means the results might be biased. 18% of those who responded reported being a victim of violence, which compares to 7% of those who chose not to answer these questions. It's possible that some children assumed they hadn't been violent and that these questions therefore didn't apply to them.

That means that higher proportions of children may have committed violence than have reported their involvement through our survey.

The demographic characteristics of perpetrators were similar across most categories with only a small difference by gender. Girls were slightly more likely to have committed robbery – 8% of girls compared to 7% of boys. Boys were somewhat more likely to report using or threatening someone with a weapon – 7% of boys compared to 6% of girls. Overall, however, these differences were small and not statistically significant. In total, 19% of boys and 19% of girls said they'd committed an act of violence.

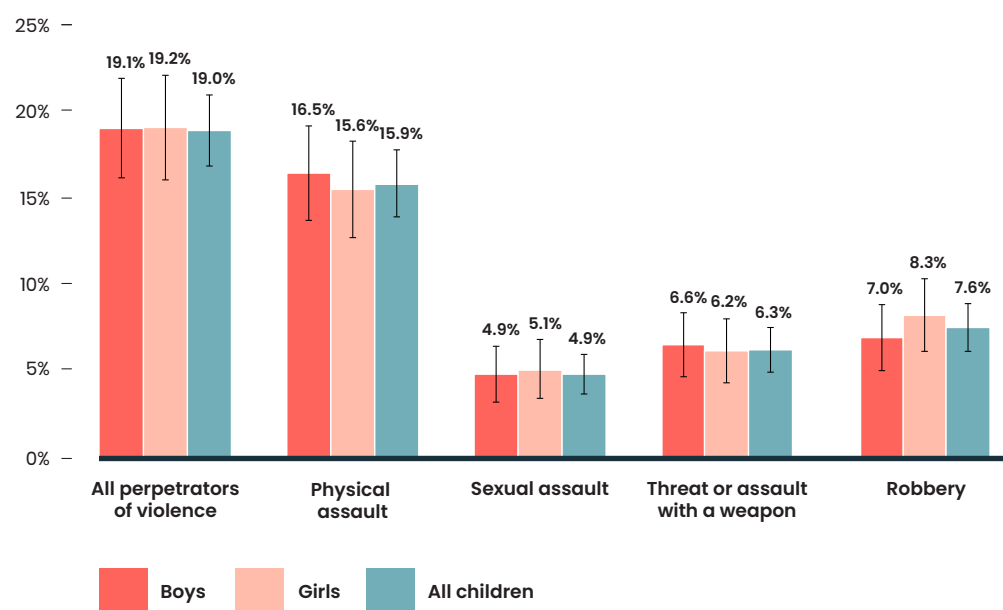
This small difference between boys and girls is surprising and it's not immediately clear why this might be. It's well documented that boys are significantly more likely to be in the criminal justice system than girls. Evidence from a large-scale study tracking the same cohort of children over time – the Millennium Cohort Study – found that boys were twice as likely as girls at 17 to use substances or carry weapons.ⁱⁱⁱ

How do these results compare to other surveys?

There aren't many surveys that ask about children's self-reported involvement in violence. The Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS)^{iv} was a self-report offending survey carried out annually between 2003 and 2006. The survey was focused on young people aged 10–25 with approximately 5,000 interviewed each year. The OCJS found 15% of respondents had committed assault (which was defined in similar terms our explanation) in a single year, which is in-line with our result of 16%.

However, unlike our survey the OCJS found girls were much less likely to have been involved in any offending. This suggests our results may overrepresent the proportion of girls that are involved in violence.

Figure 1.6: Proportion of respondents who committed acts of violence in the past 12 months, by type of violence***



*Of those who agreed to respond to this question – around a third skipped it.

**Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the estimates to likely fall within.

There is substantial overlap between children who experienced violence as victims and those who committed violence

When comparing the results across teenage children who agreed to answer both sets of questions, 44% of perpetrators of violence were victims of violence in the last 12 months. This was slightly lower for the reverse; 40% of victims of violence were also perpetrators.

Other risky behaviours, such as drug use, were more common among children who had either experienced or committed violence

Rates of drug use were significantly higher among both victims and perpetrators of violence, particularly the use of cannabis. 6% of all respondents said they had used cannabis within the last 12 months and less than 1% reported using another illegal drug. Victims of violence reported heightened rates, with 19% and 2% respectively. Perpetrators reported similar levels of drug use as victims – 22% for cannabis and 4% for another illegal drug.¹² These rates do suggest there may be a link between drug use and violence, but it's not possible to identify the direction of this link or whether there is another factor driving both (e.g. a preference for

44%
of perpetrators
of violence
were victims of
violence in the
last 12 months

risky behaviour). Moreover, the majority of victims and perpetrators did not report using illegal drugs.

Gang membership was rare, but a majority of those who reported being part of a gang were also victims of violence

When we asked children about 'gangs' we used the following definition

"By a 'gang', we mean a group of young people who think of themselves as a gang, probably with a name, and are involved in violence or other crime."

This definition was adapted from 2010 Home Office guidance, which outlines what constitutes a 'Street Gang', adapting it to use child-appropriate language. A 'Street Gang' was defined in the guidance as:

"groups of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity."

Only 2% of all respondents said they'd been in a gang in the past 12 months (a total of 45 responses). Of these, 77% reported committing an act of violence in the past 12 months, and 63% reported being a victim of violence. Weapons carrying was also low, with 2% of all respondents saying they'd carried a weapon in the past 12 months. However, 85% of these children said they'd committed acts of violence in the past 12 months. There was a large overlap between whether children were in gangs and whether they carried a weapon. 42% of those who said they've been in a gang also said they'd carried a weapon. And 40% of those that had carried a weapon said they'd been in a gang.

Weapon-carrying and gang membership

Only a small minority of teenage children were involved in gangs or weapons. In the last 12 months:

- 2% of teenage children said they had been in a gang.
- 2% said they had carried a weapon.
- 13% of perpetrators of violence said they had been in a gang in the last 12 months, and 15% said they had carried a weapon.
- Of those who said they were in a gang, 42% said they had carried a weapon and 53% said someone they knew well had carried a weapon.

These figures illustrate the close relationship between gangs and violence, but also show that those who are in gangs and those who carry weapons are not identical groups. More than half of those who say they are in a gang do not carry weapons, and 66% of those who reported hurting or threatening someone with a weapon said they were not in a gang.

Our results are broadly in line with figures from the MOPAC Youth Violence Survey, which found 3% of children in London self-reported being a member of a gang and 3% carried a knife. Our results for weapons carrying are somewhat lower than that found in the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), which found weapons carrying among 14-year-olds was 3.7% and 6.4% among 17-year-olds.^v

However, our survey findings on gang membership and weapons-carrying are higher than those found in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (2015/16 to 2017/18), which found that 0.5% of 10 to 15-year-olds had carried a knife and 0.7% were members of a street gang.

These differences may in part be due to the older age group in our survey, the fact we asked about types of weapons other than knives. It may also reflect differences in the definition of a 'gang.'

55%
of teenage
children had
been exposed
to violence on
social media
in the past
12 months

More than half of children have been exposed to violence online

Most children viewed real-life violent content online in the last 12 months

In addition to violence experienced or witnessed by children, we also asked about the types of real-life violent content they may have seen online.

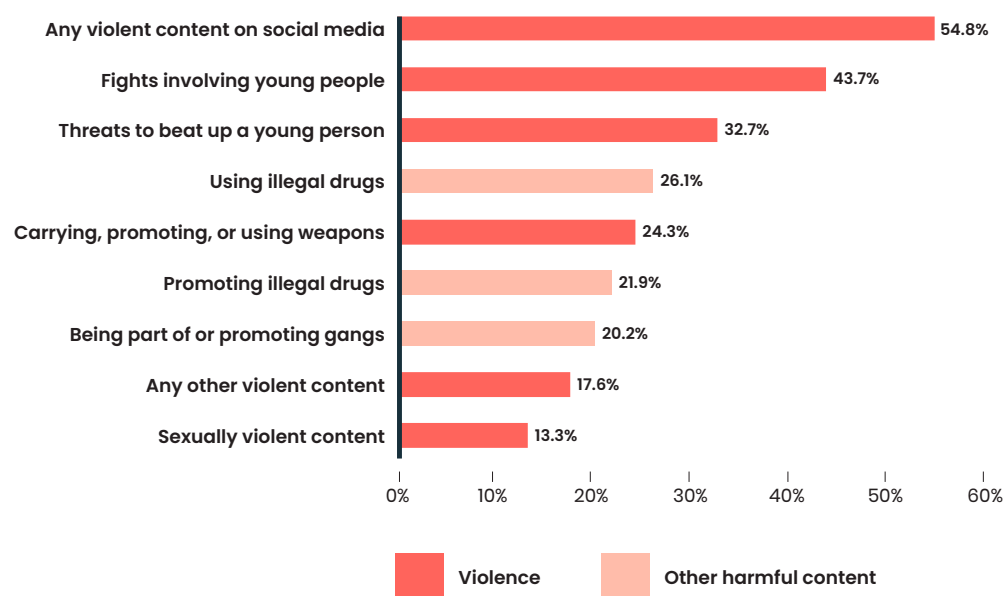
When asking children about the violent content they may have seen online, we asked:

“Have you ever seen content on social media in the form of messages or posts (text, audio or video) that included the following? Don’t include anything you have heard about on the news or seen in films or TV shows – we’re interested in things involving people you know, friends of friends or people in your local area.

- Threats to beat up another child, or a group of children or young people
- Fights involving children or young people
- Sexually violent content or threats, e.g. images or threats of sexual assault
- Children or young people carrying, promoting, or using weapons (e.g. a knife, screwdriver or club)
- Children or young people being part of or promoting gangs
- Children or young people using illegal drugs
- Children or young people promoting illegal drugs
- Any other violent content”

Most teenage children were exposed to violence on social media. 55% reported seeing real-life violence on social media in the last 12 months, with the most common material being people fighting (44%), or threats of physical assault (33%). Teenage children with direct experience of violence were more likely to see violence on social media, with 75% of witnesses and 85% of victims saying they’d seen this kind of content.

Figure 1.7: Proportion of children that said they'd seen different types of violent content online in the past 12 months



There were different levels of exposure to violence on social media by gender, with 57% of girls and 53% of boys viewing violence on social media in the last 12 months. However, the most significant differences were in the types of violence that girls and boys saw, with girls being more likely to have seen sexual assault and boys more likely to have seen gang activity.

57%

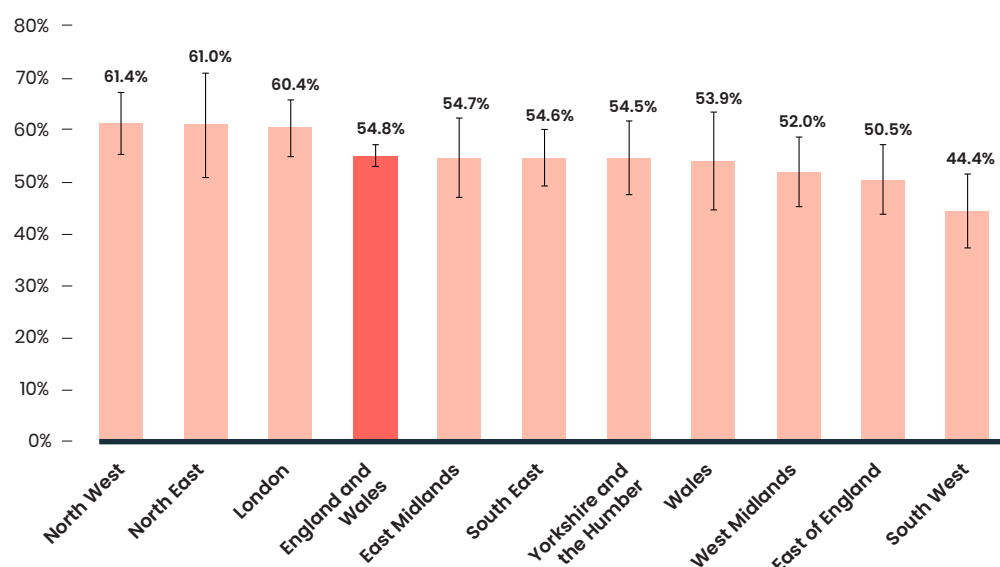
of girls had been exposed to violence on social media in the past 12 months

Where a young person lived also had some impact on their exposure to violence on social media. In the North West, North East and London, the proportion who'd seen violence on social media was over 60%. In the South West the proportion was just over 44%. It's important to emphasise however that many of the differences in rates across regions were not statistically different to each other.

61%

of teenage
children from the
North West had
been exposed
to violence on
social media
in the past
12 months

Figure 1.8: Proportion of children who had seen different types of violent content online in the past 12 months, by region*



*Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the estimates to likely fall within.

When comparing these figures to those found in The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's (MOPAC) Youth Violence Survey 2018,^{vi} we find similar rates of exposure to online violence. MOPAC reported that 53% of the children had seen violent content (e.g. pictures/videos showing fights/weapons) in the last 12 months. This can be compared to our survey, where 60% of children living in London told us they'd seen online violence. Other results were also similar; MOPAC found that 38% of children had been exposed to gang-related material online, while we found that 30% of teenage children had seen this kind of content.

Children feel less safe in places without adult supervision

Most children think violence is increasing

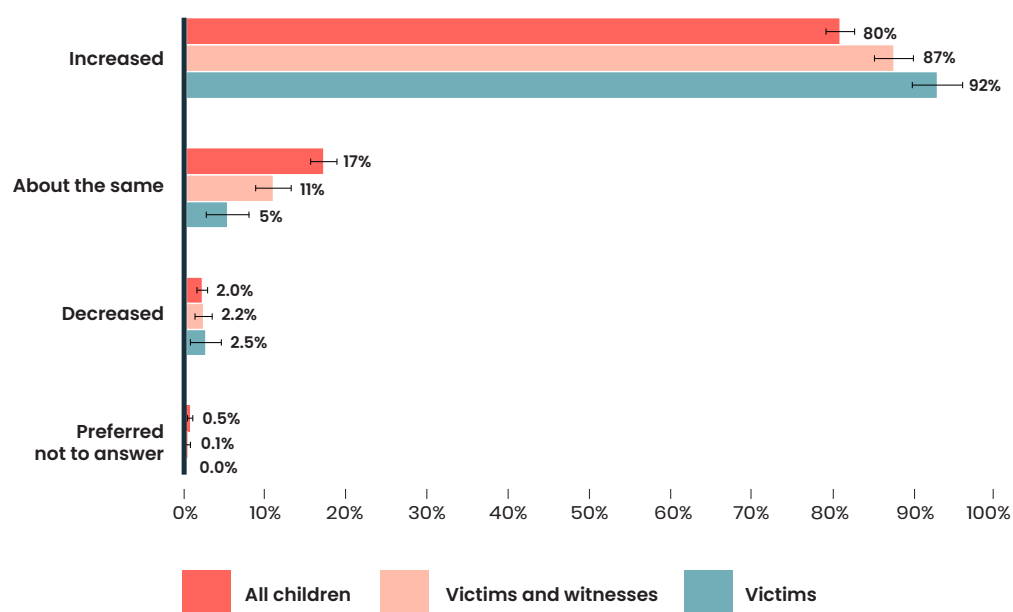
Our survey was carried out in Spring 2022 and we asked children whether they thought violence had increased compared to the year before, nationally and in their local area. As our review of the national data shows, violence did increase over this period, as some crime began to return to pre-pandemic levels.

We found that most children believed that violence had increased over this period, both nationally and in their local area. 80% of children thought violence increased in the past year nationally, with this figure rising to 87% for witnesses and 92% for victims of violence. 56% of children thought

80%
of teenage
children
thought that
violence crime
increased
nationally
last year

violence increased in the past year in their local area, with this figure rising to 68% for witnesses and 76% for victims of violence.

Figure 1.9: Views on how violence changed nationally in the past year, by exposure to violence*



*Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the estimates to likely fall within.

Although these results may seem concerning, they are in line with other surveys. As outlined in the [annex](#), in 2019/20 the Crime Survey of England and Wales reported that 82% of respondents aged 16 and over thought that crime had increased nationally in the past 12 months.

People tend to assume that crime is getting worse, even when it's getting better. There could be for lots of reasons for this – like personally knowing someone who's been a victim or viewing media coverage of high-profile incidences. Even though children might not be right about what's happening in their area, it's important that we understand their feelings of safety. That's because (as discussed below), children told us that fear of violence often leads them to change their behaviour.

Children felt that their homes and schools were generally safe places

Teenage children overwhelmingly viewed their homes, and the homes of friends and relatives, as safe spaces. 95% of respondents said they felt safe or very safe in their homes and 93% in friends' or relatives' homes. The group of teenage children who were victims of violence felt less safe in all locations, but 93% still viewed their homes as safe spaces.

95%

of teenage
children felt safe
in their homes

Teenage children also felt safe in school, with 83% of teenage children feeling safe or very safe while inside. However, feelings of safety outside school or before and after the school day were lower, at 69%. Teenage children who were victims of violence reported feeling less safe at school, with 69% feeling safe during the school day and only 53% feeling safe outside of the school.

Children have mixed views about safety around youth clubs and felt unsafe in areas where there were fewer adults

44%

of children felt
safe around
clubs. 34%
were unsure

When asked about youth clubs, teenage children had mixed feelings of safety. 44% felt safe, 20% unsafe, and 34% felt neither safe nor unsafe around these locations. This compares to schools, where 83% felt safe, 6% unsafe and 11% felt neither safe nor unsafe.

In areas with less or no adult supervision, teenage children felt less safe. Over half of teenage children felt unsafe near and around pubs and nightclubs. This is the only location where there are more teenage children who feel unsafe (51%) than safe. Over a quarter of teenage children feel unsafe in the street and while travelling on public transport, and this is higher for girls and victims of sexual violence.

The teenage children we asked were split on the reasons why children become involved with violence

2/3

Two thirds of
teenage children
said drugs were
a major factor in
driving violence

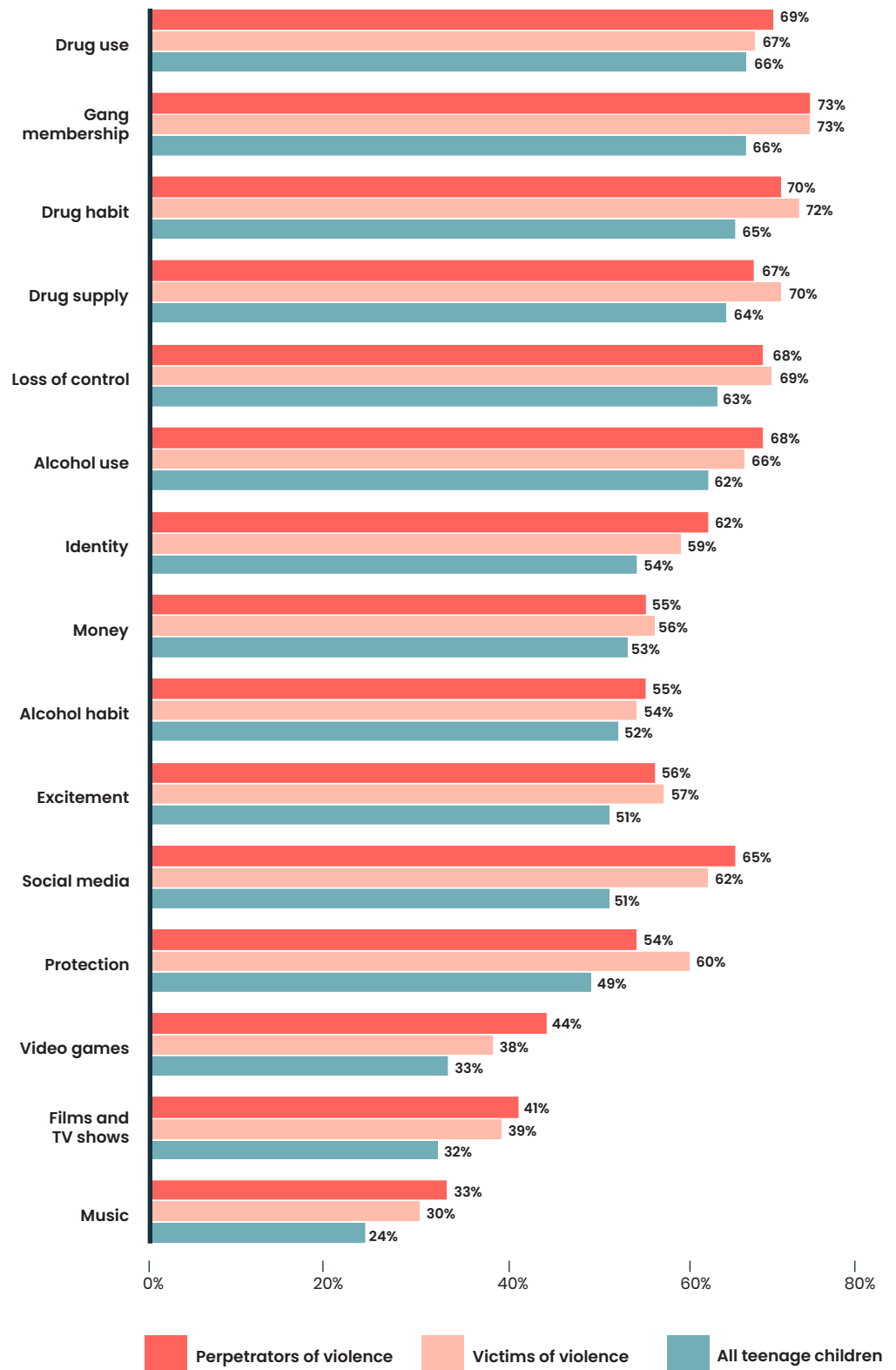
Drugs were frequently identified by teenage children as a major factor driving youth violence in their local area. More than three fifths of teenage children identified drug use (66%), addiction (65%) and supply (64%) as major factors leading teenage children in their area to commit violent crimes. Gang membership was also highlighted, with 66% saying it was a major factor. This rose to 75% for victims of violence and 79% for those living in London.

While some teenage children recognised the role of culture, the majority did not identify music, film or TV as important drivers of crime. 24% thought music was a major factor, 33% thought this of video games and 32% of films/TV shows. Girls were more likely to think these were relevant, with one in three reporting video games as films/TV shows as major factors.

Teenage children were more evenly split on the role of social media. 51% of teenage children reported this being a major factor in driving violence. By contrast, 39% said it was a minor factor or not a factor at all in driving violence.

Those who had been involved in acts of violence were much more likely to consider social media to be a major driver. 62% of teenage children who reported committing an act of violence in the last 12 months thought social media played a major role in why children commit violence.

Figure 1.10: Proportion of children who thought individual factors were a major driver of violent crime, by perpetrators and victims of violence



24%
of teenage
children said
music was
a major factor

62%

of teenage children that had committed acts of violence thought social media was a major factor in why children committed violence in their local area

Increased police visibility and performance, followed by more youth clubs and activities, were the main things teenage children said would reduce violence

We asked teenage children about the one thing they would change in their local area to reduce violence. The most common theme among these responses was policing, with 26% of teenage children suggesting the police should do more to tackle violence. Specific actions such as having a more visible presence, improving performance, and having more police stations were identified.

15% of teenage children suggested more activities or youth clubs for teenage children to give them something to do, while 10% discussed drug and alcohol use and suggested better support services. Although gang membership was frequently identified by teenage children as a major factor driving violence, few responses mentioned gangs or groups of teenage children, with around 5% of responses mentioning these themes to reduce violence.

A majority of children changed their behaviour out of a fear of violence

65%

of teenage children had changed their behaviour in the past 12 months to protect themselves from violence

Violence, and the fear of violence, led children to change their behaviour

Fear of violence has a significant impact on how teenage children go about their day-to-day lives. Nearly two thirds (65%) of teenage children told us they'd changed their behaviour in some way in the last 12 months to protect themselves.

The most frequent changes were avoiding travelling alone (37%) and avoiding going out at certain times of day (28%), but teenage children also changed their relationships, including leaving a group of friends (21%). 14% said they had been absent from school in the last 12 months because they felt they would have been unsafe at school or on their way to or from school.

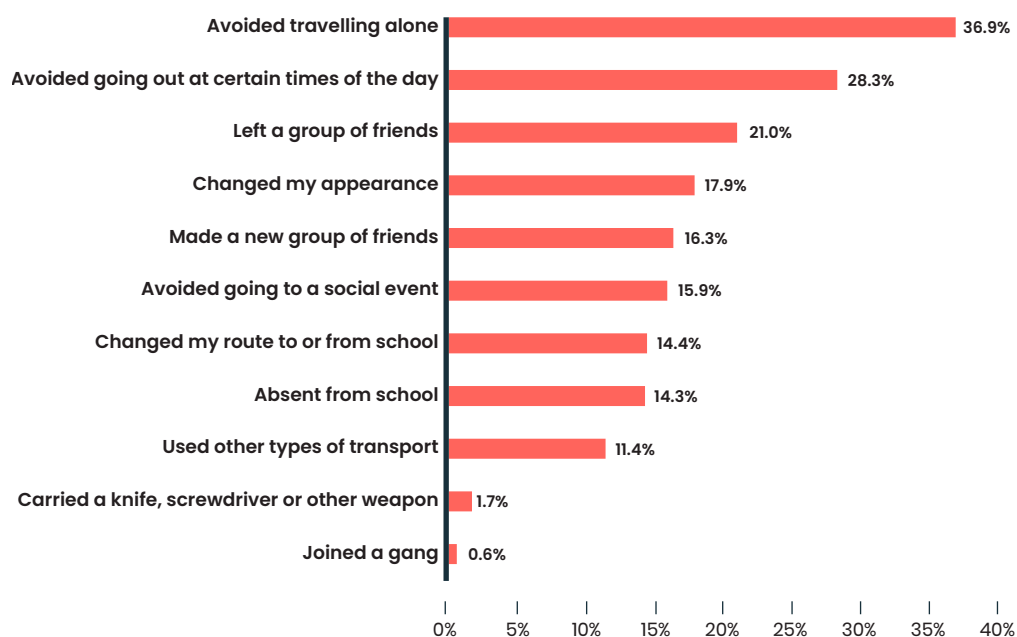
14%

of teenage children were absent from school to protect themselves from violence in the past 12 months

18%

of teenage children changes their appearance to protect themselves from violence in the past 12 months

Figure 1.11: Proportion of children who reported changing specific behaviours in the past 12 months, to protect themselves or make themselves feel safe



One in five (18%) children also reported changing their appearance in the last 12 months to protect themselves from violence. This was more common among those with direct experiences of violence, with 43% of victims and 45% of perpetrators saying they'd changed something about the way they look. Some groups of teenage children were overrepresented, with one in four children who'd received free school meals saying that they'd altered their appearance. The most common reason all children said they did this was to blend in and not be noticed (12%).

The extent of behaviour change varied significantly based on children's backgrounds and where they lived

These hidden harms associated with violence were more pronounced among teenage children from ethnic minority backgrounds. 73% of mixed-race children and 76% of Black children reported changing something about their behaviours in the last 12 months. Those children with direct experiences of violence were significantly more likely to have changed something about their behaviour; 93% of victims of violence had done something differently to try and protect themselves.

There is variation in how children have changed their behaviour across regions, with London having the highest rates of behavioural change (at 77%). In all but one region, more than half of teenage children have changed their behaviour to make themselves feel safer: The East of England (48%) and Wales (55%) had the lowest rates of behaviour change. Londoners were much more likely to have skipped school than children in other areas,

76%

of Black children
changed
their behavior
to protect
themselves from
violence in the
last 12 months

with 25% having done so in the last year because they felt unsafe. That rate is two thirds higher than the second-highest region, North West England.

Children who had witnessed or been a victim of violence were more likely to report changes in behaviour

Witnessing or being a victim of violence can impact many areas of a child's life. Those who had been victims or witnesses of violence were less likely to say they felt safe in public places, and more likely to have changed their appearance or behaviour to make themselves feel safer. They were also more likely to struggle sleeping or concentrate at school because they were worried about violence. More than three quarters (81%) of teenage children exposed to violence had altered their behaviour in some way during the last 12 months to make themselves feel safer. 46% had avoided travelling alone and 39% avoided going out at certain times of the day. 32% had left a group of friends or stopped spending time with them, while more than a quarter (27%) have skipped school at some point in the past because they felt unsafe.

1 in 4

children in
London has
skipped school
in the last 12
months because
they felt unsafe
at or on their way
to or from school

Almost all victims and witnesses spoke to someone about their experiences, but few told the police

It was normal for a teenage child who was a victim or witness of violence to tell someone what they had gone through. 81% of those with direct experience of violence told someone, with the most common trusted adult being a parent or carer (57%). Many victims and witnesses also informed a friend (33%), schoolteacher (29%) or sibling (17%).

Notably, only one in five (19%) reported violent incidences to the police. The generally low figure for the proportion that reported any violence to the police is perhaps not surprising. It's important to remember that our definition of violence used in the survey will capture many incidents such as kicking, pushing and shoving, which we wouldn't expect to meet the threshold of requiring police involvement.

When we look at certain more serious types of offences, the proportion reporting these to the police increases substantially. 45% of teenage children reported acts of robbery to the police and 43% reported offences involving weapons.

81%

of teenage
children exposed
to violence
had altered
their behaviour
to make
themselves
feel safer

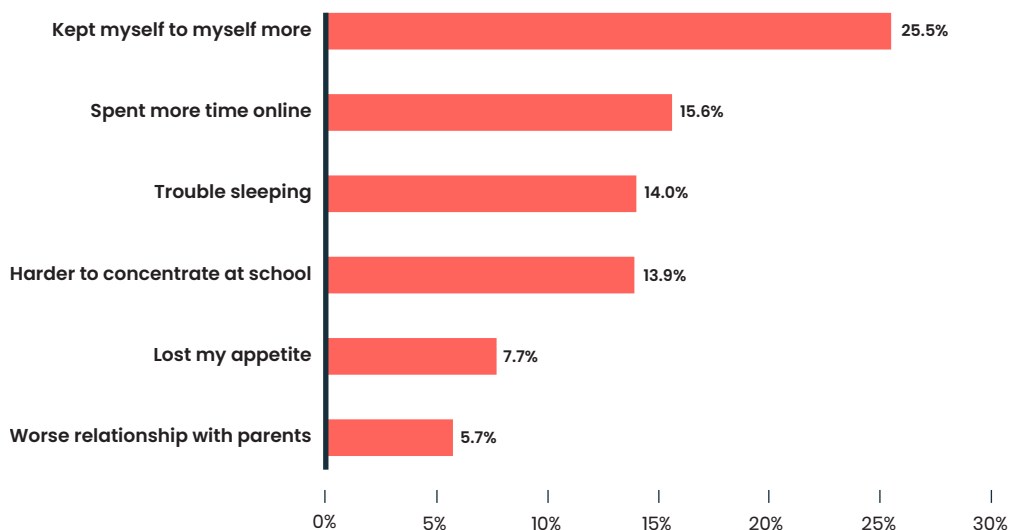
41%

of teenage
children reported
negative
consequences
due to being
worried about
violence

Violence has a negative impact on the wellbeing of teenage children

Violence not only affects how teenage children act, but also their emotional and physical well-being, their relationships, and how well they can do at school. 41% of teenage children said they'd experienced some negative consequence due to worrying about violence. The most common impact on their day-to-day lives was keeping themselves to themselves more (26%) and having trouble sleeping (14%). Victims of violence were significantly more likely to report negative consequences, with more than three out of four reporting negative impacts on their well-being.

Figure 1.12: Proportion of teenage children who reported changes in their day-to-day lives in the past 12 months, due to worrying about violence



Section 2: Violence and vulnerability trends

About this section

To achieve our mission and reduce violence, we need to understand how it's affecting children across England and Wales. That's why we've conducted an analysis of publicly available data. It'll help us better understand the national picture of violence, how it impacts children and how changes in wider society might be making violence more or less likely. To help us measure this, we've selected ten core indicators. We'll update these year-on-year to track changes in how violence affects children. Three of these indicators relate to the trends in violence. Six relate to other things that are well-evidenced as being linked to violence. We also use a measure that tracks changes in racial disproportionality in the youth justice system.

What we found

Violence was down in the years before Covid, but was still higher than in the early 2010s

Prior to Covid, police recorded violence was up (although stable)...

Between 2012/13 and 2019/20, our measure of police reported violence for adults and children¹³ increased – up 84%. This includes violence with injury (73%), robberies (38%), homicides (28%), and sexual offences, which more than doubled. However, in the years just before Covid, some forms of violence had started to level off or fall. Our measure of police recorded violence fell by 1% between 2018/19 and 2019/20. There were 714 homicides in 2019/20, around the same level as in 2016/17.

...and the number of child victims had also increased across the 2010s, but declined in the year before Covid

Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, child knife-related hospital admissions more than doubled. But in the two years before Covid they'd levelled off and started to fall. 16–24-year-old homicide victims show a similar trend. They were up significantly in 2016/17 – 78% on the year before. Although volatile, they were below 2016/17 levels in each of the following four years – and had reduced by 7% in 2019/20, the year before Covid.

¹³ In this report we combine four key measures of police recorded violence: Homicide, robbery (which is theft with the use or threat of force); violence with injury (which is mainly made up of assault with injury) and; sexual violence.

Violence fell during the pandemic, but latest data has shown a mixed picture as restrictions eased

Most forms of violence fell during the pandemic

Our measure of police recorded violent crime fell 15% between 2019/20 and 2020/21. The largest falls were for robbery (-34%) and homicides (-20%) and coincided with the periods of national lockdowns. The number of children admitted to hospital due to knife assault fell 14%.

Homicides, assaults and sexual offences have now returned to pre-Covid levels

In 2020/21 there were 710 homicides, in-line with the numbers in 2018/19. In London in 2021 there were 30 child homicide victims, surpassing pre-Covid highs. Other forms of police recorded violence were up on 2018/19 levels – including violence with injury (+5%) and sexual violence (+9%).

However, child hospital admissions and robberies have not returned to levels seen before restrictions

Robberies experienced some of the steepest falls during Covid and in 2021/22 were still 27% below levels in 2018/19. Similarly, the number of 0–17-year-olds admitted to hospital due to knife assault were still 24% below their 2018/19 levels in 2021/22 and were lower still than the levels during Covid.

Risk factors related to involvement in violence present a complicated picture, with a number worsening

Fewer children are not in education or work

The number of 16–17-year-olds who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) has fallen from 8.5% in 2005 to 5% in 2021, driven by an increase in training and education. More recently, NEET rates are up – 1% on last year.

More children are growing up in poverty

There were 67% more children living in temporary accommodation at the end of 2019 compared to 2012.

Exclusions fell over the pandemic, following increases prior to Covid

Permanent school exclusions fell during the pandemic, down 50% between 2018/19 and 2020/21. However, prior to the pandemic, they'd increased – 70% between 2012/13 and 2018/19.

There's increasing demand for mental health support

Over one million children contacted NHS mental health services in 2021/22, an increase of 29% from the year before and up 56% when comparing 2021/22 and 2018/19.

More children are thought to be at risk of serious harm

The number of children suspected of being at the most serious risk of harm increased by 56% between 2012/13 and 2020/21.

Violence at home increased

Domestic violence and abuse rose during and after the pandemic, with over 900,000 offences in 2021/22, a rise of 116% between 2015/16 and 2021/22.

While far fewer children are in the criminal justice system overall, Black children are increasingly overrepresented

Overrepresentation of Black children in the justice system is increasing

Since 2011/12, there's been an 81% fall in the number of children entering the criminal justice system. However, ethnic minority children are increasingly overrepresented, particularly Black children. Black children make up 4% of 10–17-year-olds, but 15% of arrests, 18% of children stopped and searched and 29% of children in custody – up from 17% in 2011/12.

But ethnic minority children often don't get the early help needed

Analysis shows disproportionality is not just a result of the types of crime that ethnic minority children commit – other reasons have also led to harsher sentencing. One significant reason identified is the barriers faced when accessing early help.

Core indicators of violence and vulnerability to violence

Indicator	Latest year ¹⁴	Latest year compared to the previous year		Latest year compared to the 10-year average ¹⁵	
Violent crime					
1. Police recorded serious violence	828,284	↑	23%	↑	36%
2. 0–17 knife related hospital admissions	478	↓	2%	↑	5%
3. 16–24 homicide victims	94	↓	33%	↓	15%
Vulnerability to violence					
4. 16–17-year-olds not in education, employment or training	5.0%	↑	1%pt	↑	0.1%pt
5. Children in temporary housing	118,900	↓	2%	↑	14%
6. Permanent exclusions	3,928	↓	22%	↓	37%
7. Child mental health contacts	1,067,849	↑	29%	↑	37%
8. Children at risk of serious harm	198,790	↓	1%	↑	15%
9. Domestic abuse incidence	909,504	↑	8%	↑	40%
Racial disproportionality					
10. Black children in custody	29%	↑	1%pt	↑	6%pt

1. Police figures for selected violent crimes: violence with injury; robbery; homicide and sexual offences. (latest year 2021/22) – [here](#)
2. 0–17-year-olds admitted to hospital due to assault with a sharp object. (latest year 2020/21), derived from several years' worth of data from NHS Digital, Hospital Episode Statistics for England. Admitted Patient Care statistics – [here](#)
3. Offences currently recorded as homicide, of 16–24-year-olds. (latest year 2020/21). Home Office homicide index – [here](#)
4. 16–17-year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET), (latest year 2021) – [here](#)
5. Total number of children in temporary accommodation, Oct-Dec (latest year 2021) – [here](#)
6. Total permanent school exclusions from English state schools (latest year 2020/21) – [here](#)
7. 0–18-year-old primary and secondary mental health contacts with the National Health Service (latest year 2021/22) – [here](#)
8. Section 47 Child Protection Enquires (latest year 2020/21) – [here](#)
9. Police recorded crimes flagged as domestic abuse related (latest year 2021/22) – [here](#)
10. The proportion of average monthly youth custody population that identifies as Black (latest year 2020/21) – [here](#)

¹⁴ The most recent figures relate to either 2019/20 or 2020/21 data, depending on the measure.

¹⁵ Where 10 years' worth of historic data wasn't available, we've used the longest timeseries that was.

About our review of national data

We've drawn on multiple sources of data to provide as full a picture as possible for what's happening to violent crime, how it's affecting children and children's vulnerability to violence. These cover publications from government departments, hospital records and other records from public bodies and charities. Each data source brings its strengths and weaknesses, which is why we've combined several here.

We've specifically focused on ten key measures of violence and vulnerability to violence. For these, we've compared the latest year's data with the previous year's figures and the average figure for the past 10 years (or the longest time series that data is available for). This allows us to judge how each indicator is doing compared to the recent past and over longer periods of time.

Some judgement has been required in selecting these indicators. We specifically wanted measures that we could use to track changes over time, so we need to be confident they will be available in future years and offer comparable estimates. When looking at vulnerability to violence specifically, we've drawn on evidence to identify factors that are associated with increased risk of violence. We have also aimed to select a diverse set of measures to cover different types of vulnerability.

It's important to emphasise that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on many of the data sources we've used. In some cases, Covid has affected how data has been collected during the pandemic. Across all datasets, it's affected trends in the data we're using. Throughout the report we've highlighted where recent trends have been impacted.

Comparing police data with the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW)

Two key data sources on the overall level of crime and violence are police figures – which provide the total number of crimes reported to the police – and household survey figures from the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW).

The CSEW is an annual survey of around 34,000 households. It relies on victims agreeing to share their experiences of crime. This data provides a picture of victimisation by the general population. However, there are questions about how well the CSEW captures the experiences of everyone. Some groups most susceptible to violence are excluded or underrepresented, such as children experiencing abuse or neglect, looked-after children and homeless people. As a result, the survey can fail to capture low-frequency but high-harm crime types.^{vii}

Police recorded crime data provides an insight into the demands being made on the police, and on where policing effort is being spent.^{viii} This means only those crimes that are reported to the police are captured. It can be susceptible to changes in how figures are reported and recorded. For example, if people are more confident coming forward to report things like sexual offences to the police, then these will increase. While this can limit the reliability, high-harm offences, such as robbery, are likely to be more accurately reflected than in the CSEW.

Given the strengths and limitations of both datasets, we must use both CSEW and police recorded crime data to understand the full picture of crime levels in England and Wales.

Statistics review findings

Violence was down in the years before Covid, but was still higher than in the early 2010s

Police recorded violence (which covers adults and children), had increased significantly since the early-2010s, but levelled off before the pandemic

1. Core indicator: Police recorded serious violence*

*This includes all offences recorded by the police, regardless of the age of the victim or perpetrator

Latest year (2021/22)	828,284		
Previous year (2020/21)	674,258	Latest year compared to previous	+23%
Annual average (2011/12–2020/21)	611,068	Latest year compared to average	+36%

We've constructed a measure of police recorded violence. This includes violence with injury, homicides, sexual offences, and robberies, to allow us to track the overall trends in violent crime. This data relates to all offences reported to the police, so the perpetrators and victims could be adults or children.

How have we defined police recorded violent crime?

In our measure of police recorded violent crime, we combine several different crime categories:

- **Homicides** – which includes murder (86% of homicides) manslaughter (12% of homicides), corporate manslaughter and infanticide (around 1% of homicides).
- **Violence with injury** – police recorded violent crime that results in someone being injured, whether the act is intentional or not. This mainly comprises Assault with Injury (around 90% of such offences).
- **Robberies** – which is defined as the use or threat of force in a theft from a person (making up 91% of robberies) or a business (making up 9% of robberies).

- **Sexual offences** – which includes rape (making up 57% of sexual offences) and a range of other sexual offences. In constructing our measure, we were limited by data that's publicly available and regularly reported on. We wanted a measure that touched on most areas of violence. While all definitions will involve a degree of judgement, we've made the decision to include these offences so that we are capturing a wide range of people's experiences – and, as part of our mission, working to prevent children's involvement in violence, which includes sexual violence.

This isn't the same approach adopted by others. For example, the Home Office Serious Violence Strategy (2018), while not explicitly setting out a single measure of police recorded violent crime, did look at trends in homicides, firearms offences, knife crime, and robbery. This was alongside other measures of violence, including hospital admissions for knife assault.

The Department for Education in their recent analysis of education, children's social care and offending, measured serious violence as any 'indictable only' (meaning trial by jury in the Crown Court) violence against the person and robbery offences and triable either way (meaning it can be tried in either the magistrates' court or the Crown Court) possession of weapons offences.

84%

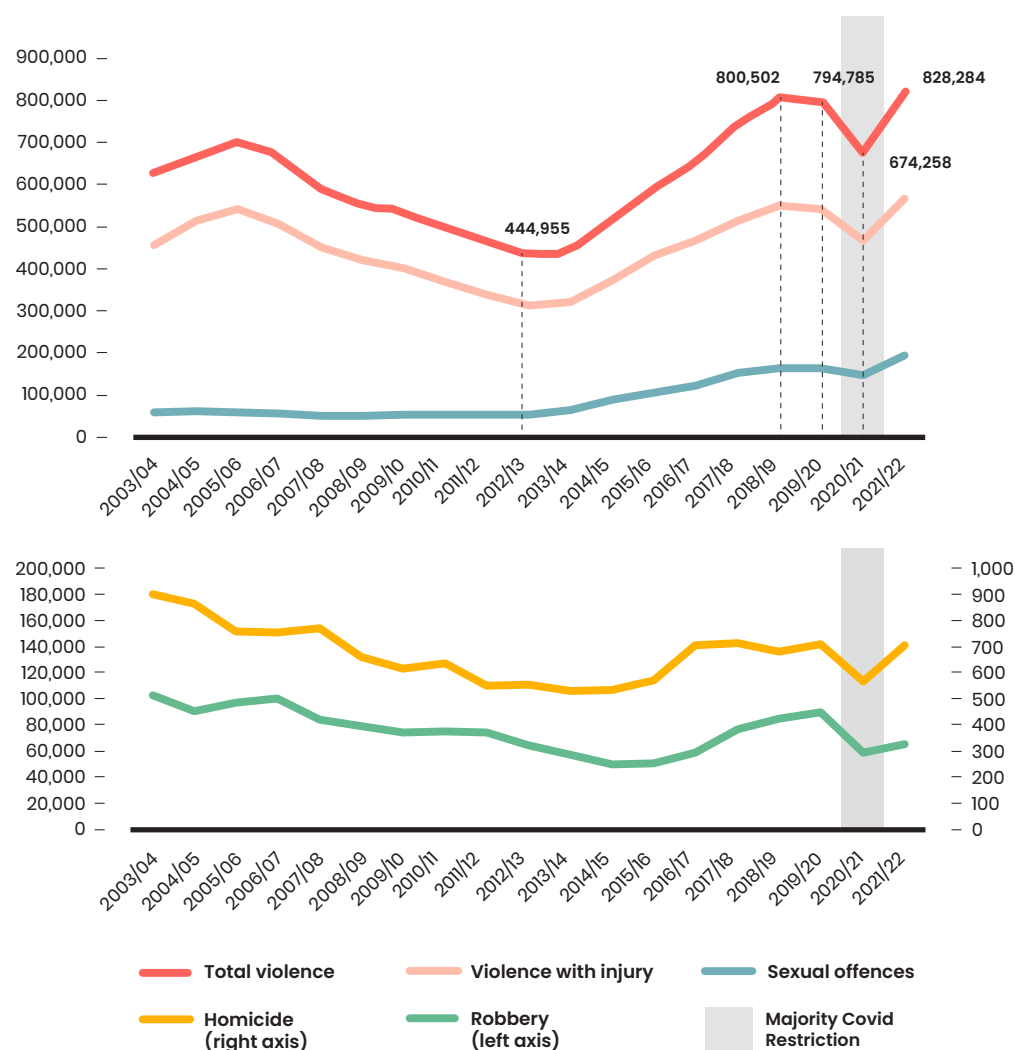
Our measure of police recorded violent crime increased by 84% between 2012/14 and 2019/20

Between 2003/04 and 2012/13, our measure of police recorded violent crime fell by 31%. This was in line with broader falls in most other types of crime (see the box below for a further discussion on the past 25 years of falling crime). However, between 2013/14 and 2019/20 (the year before Covid), it was up 84% in total, from 431,052 to 794,785 offences. There were particularly large increases in sexual offences, which more than doubled, and violence with injury, which increased by 73%.

Homicides, while still fortunately rare (with 710 in 2021/22), were up by 28% over this period, but have been at about the same level since 2016/17. Robberies increased by 80% between 2014/15 and 2019/20.

Some of these crimes had stabilised in the years before Covid. Homicides, for example, peaked in 2016/17 and have since been broadly flat. Robberies were still increasing the year before Covid, but at a slower rate. Some crimes had started to fall. Violence with injury fell 1.6% between 2018/19 and 2019/20, although it's not clear how much of this reflects the early impact of Covid on behaviour and social distancing in February and March of 2020. All measures of violence fell between 2019/20 and 2020/21, due to the impact of restrictions put in place to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Our overall measure of violence fell by 15%, violence with injury by 14%, sexual offences by 9%, robberies by 34% and homicides by 20%.

Figure 2.1. Police recorded violent crimes, in England and Wales



Children were increasingly affected by violence, but this had begun to stabilise prior to the pandemic

2. Core indicator: 0–17 knife assault related hospital admissions^{16,17}

Latest year (2021/22)	478		
Previous year (2020/21)	487	Latest year compared to previous	-2%
Annual average (2012/13–2020/21)	453	Latest year compared to average	+6%

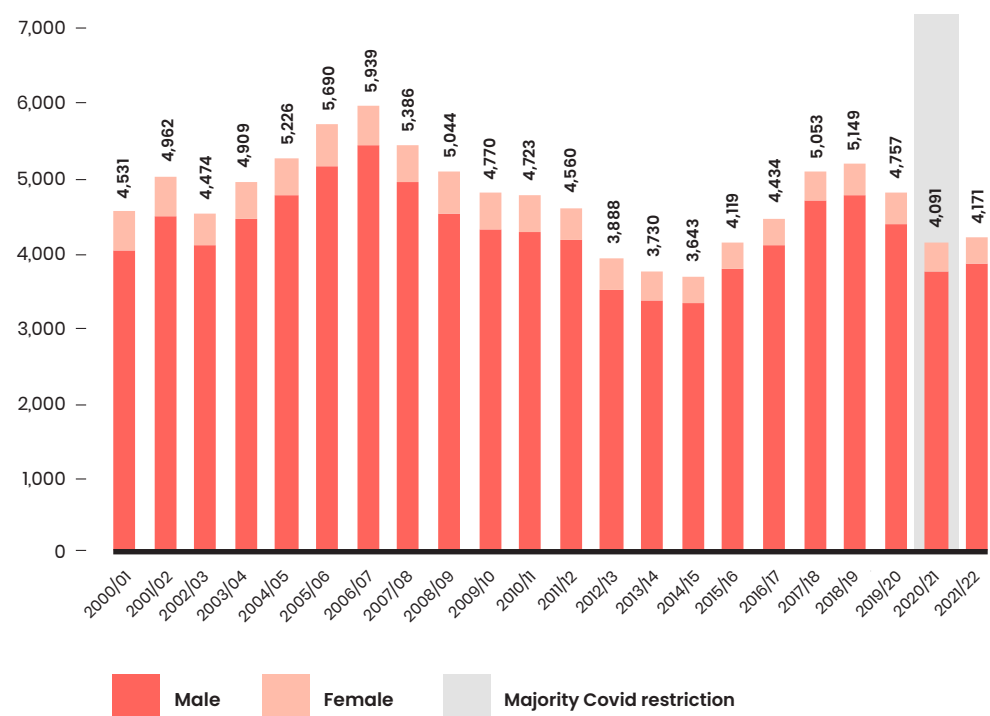
¹⁶ Data covers all admissions for assault with a sharp object, which may include knives or other sharp objects. Throughout this report we refer to knife related admissions for simplicity.

¹⁷ Data represent the number of finished consultant episodes (FCEs). This measures a continuous period of admitted patient care under one consultant within one healthcare provider. FCEs are counted against the year in which they end. Figures do not represent the number of different patients, as a person may have more than one episode of care within the same stay in hospital, or different stays in the same year. For simplicity we refer to the number of admissions.

There aren't many nationally available data sources that show how children are specifically affected by violence. Police data records the crimes that are reported, not who the perpetrators or victims are. In addition, data on who's arrested only shows us who's caught. Hospital data provides an independent measure, which helps us understand how children are affected by the most serious violence, specifically knife assaults.

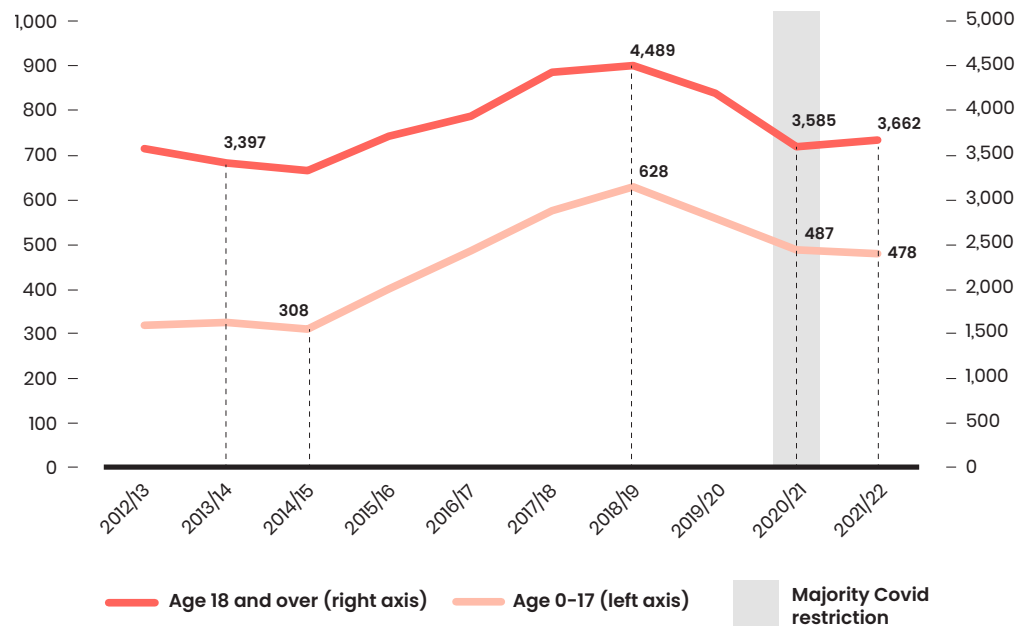
The number of hospital admissions for knife assaults for adults and children combined fell by 39% between 2006/07 and 2014/15.^{ix} However, they increased by 39% between 2014/15 and 2017/18. Since then, numbers have been more stable, increasing by 2% in 2018/19 on the year before and falling back by 6% on their 2017/18 levels in 2019/20. The 2019/20 data may reflect some of the early effects of Covid on people's behaviours and the social distancing restrictions introduced in March 2020. In 2020/21, hospital admissions for knife assault fell by 14% from the year before, which also reflects the impact of the national restrictions to limit social contact.

Figure 2.2: Hospital admissions for knife assaults, in England (all ages)



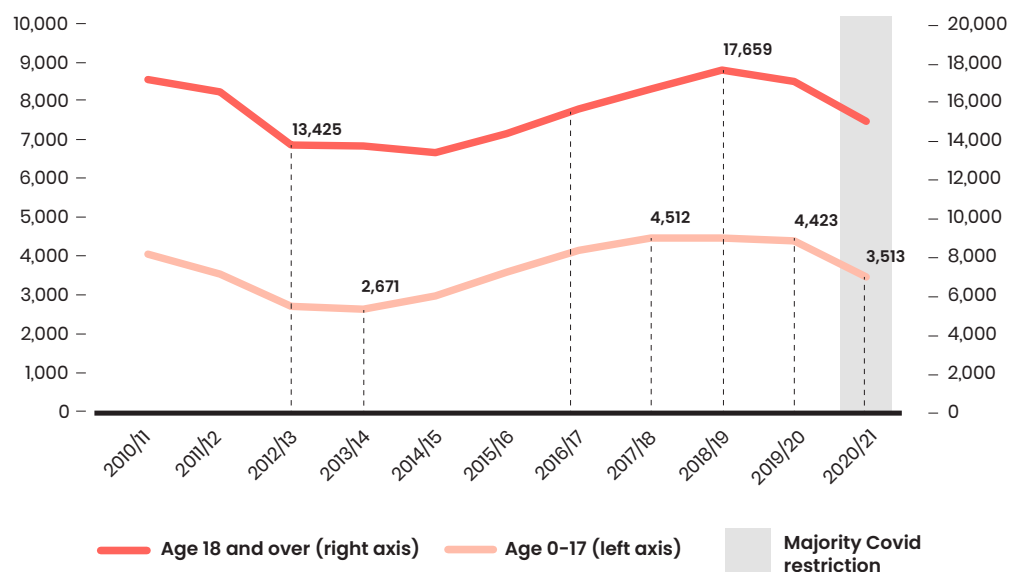
The number of child victims of knife assaults had increased at a faster rate than for adults. In 2014/15 there was 308 child knife assault related admissions to hospital. This more than doubled to 628 in 2018/19 – an increase of 104%. This compares to 3,643 and 5,149 adult admissions in 2014/15 and 2018/19 respectively – an increase of 41%. The number of child victims fell in 2019/20 by 12% compared to the year before and another 12% in 2020/21, the year most affected by Covid restrictions.

Figure 2.3: Hospital admissions for knife assaults, in England by age



We see a similar picture when we look at children committing offences involving weapons. These could be any offence that the police flagged as involving a knife. The total number of offences involving knives and offensive weapons committed by children increased by 69% between 2013/14 and 2017/18. It was broadly flat over the next two years but fell by 29% in 2020/21. Among adult offenders, offences involving knives increased by 21% between 2013/14 and 2017/18, a lower rate than the increase seen among children.

Figure 2.4: Number of knife or offensive weapon offences resulting in a caution or sentence, in England and Wales by age



Homicides had also peaked and levelled off prior to Covid

3. Core indicator: 16–24 homicide victims

Latest year (2020/21)	94		
Previous year (2019/20)	140	Latest year compared to previous	–33%
Annual average (2010/11–2019/20)	111	Latest year compared to average	–15%

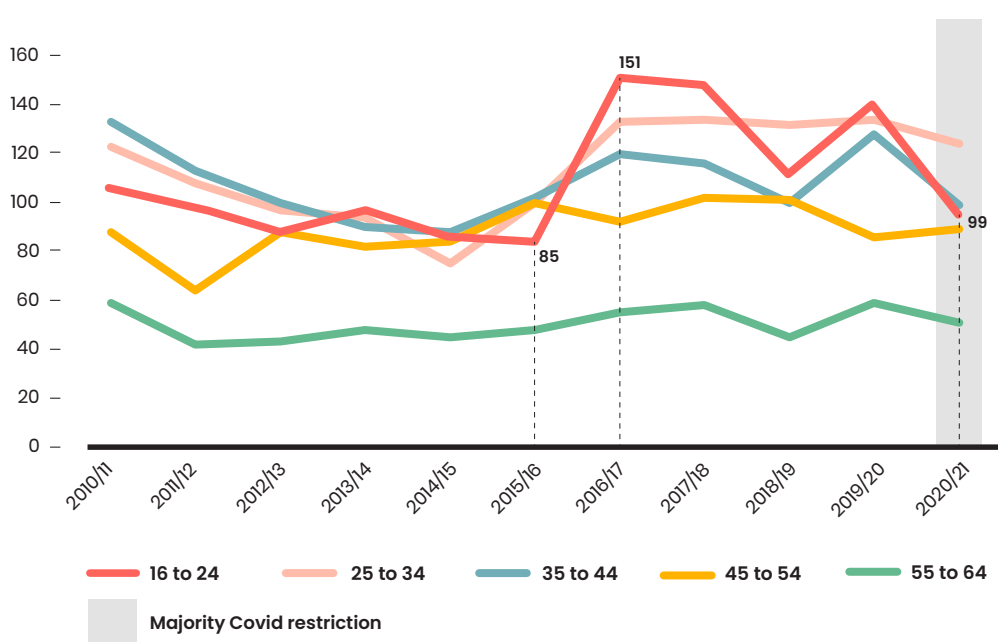
Homicide is the most serious form of violence. It can be used as a more reliable measure to understand serious violence than tracking other types of serious violence. That's because the way homicide cases are recorded is less likely to be affected by changes in reporting and recording practices. Data homicides of children (0–17-olds) aren't published nationally. Therefore, we've reported on figures for 16–24-year-olds.

Prior to the pandemic, the number of homicide victims aged 16 to 24 had been increasing, reaching 141 victims in 2019/20 – a 27% increase from the previous year.^x Between 2016/17 and 2019/20 this age group has had the highest homicide rates of any age group, with an average of 21.5 homicides per 1,000,000. This compares to 17 homicides per 1,000,000 for 25–34-year-olds over the same period, which is 21% lower. Since 2016/17, homicides in this age group have fallen. Between 2016/17 and 2019/20, numbers fell 7%. In 2020/21, homicides fell 33% from the year before, reflecting the impact of Covid.

1/3

Homicides of
16–24-year-olds
fell by a third in
2020/21

Figure 2.5: Number of homicides for selected age group, in England and Wales



Violence fell during the pandemic, but latest data has shown a mixed picture as restrictions eased

Despite falls during the pandemic, homicides, violence with injury and sexual offences have now returned to pre-Covid levels

The biggest falls in police recorded violent crime coincided with periods of tightest Covid restrictions. These include the first national lockdown between March and July 2020. Between April and June 2020 (Q1 2020/21), our measures of police recorded violent crime fell by nearly a quarter (24%) compared to the same period in 2019/20. The largest fall was for robbery, falling by nearly half (47%). There were also large falls in violence in the winter of 2020/21, in line with the partial and second full national lockdown.

Figure 2.6: Police recorded violence, by quarter and phase of Covid restrictions, in England and Wales^{xi}

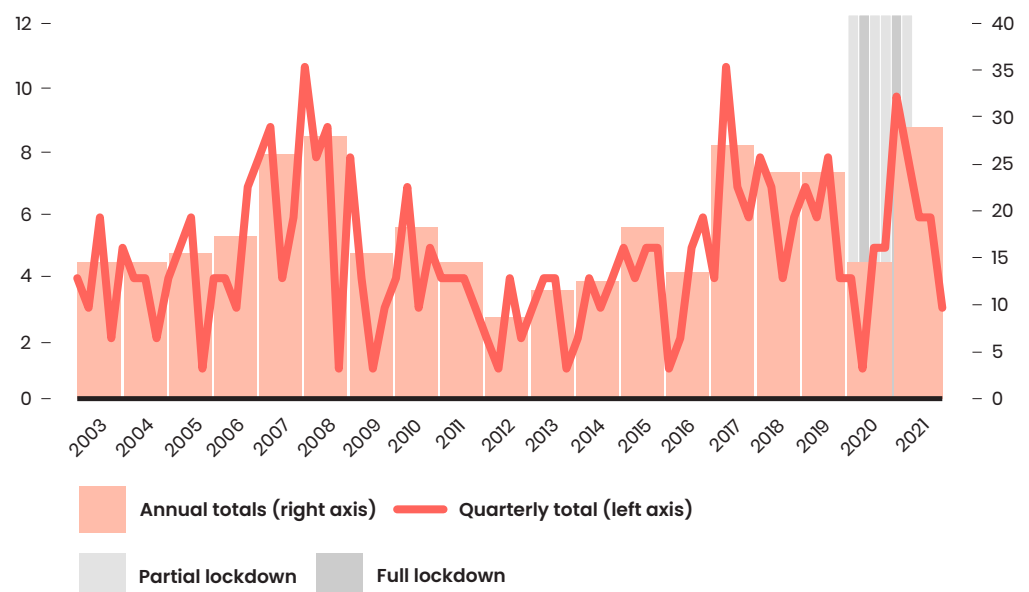


^{xi}Partial or mixed Covid restrictions or restrictions only applied for part of the period.

Since the easing of Covid restrictions, several measures of police recorded violent crime now surpass their pre-Covid levels. Looking at the period July to March 2021/22 (Q2-Q4) – the longest period we have data for since Covid restrictions have been lifted – violent crime is now 5% higher than the same period two years ago. Sexual offences are up by 19%, homicide by 6% and violence with injury by 5%, over the same period.

Metropolitan Police data also helps to highlight how this increase in violence is affecting children. They're one of the few forces that routinely publish up-to-date figures on teenage homicide victims.^{xiii} Data for London show there were 30 teenage child homicide victims in 2021. This is the highest number since at least 2003, and above the pre-Covid high of 28 in 2017. While overall numbers are low and therefore volatile, this provides some evidence that violence affecting children has followed a similar pattern to broader violence trends, returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 2.7: London homicide victims aged 13–17*



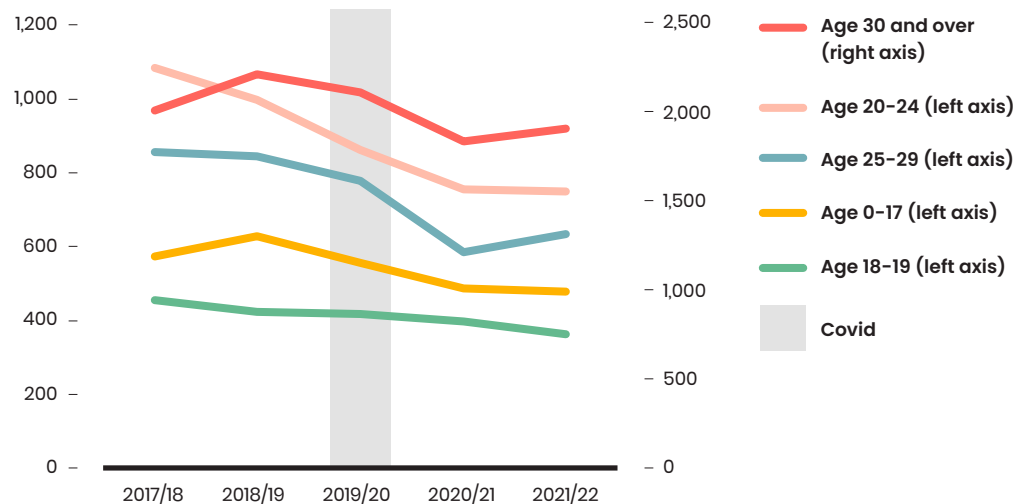
**Partial or mixed Covid restrictions or restrictions only applied for part of the period.*

However, child hospital admissions and robberies have not returned to levels seen before restrictions

Despite the increase in homicides since the ending of Covid restrictions, not all forms of violence have returned. Robbery is one of the main categories of police recorded violent crime that remains below their level two years ago – down 22% when comparing July to March 2021/22 with July to March 2018/19.

Hospital data also shows that not all violence has returned to pre-Covid rates. The total number of hospital admissions for knife related assaults remains 14% lower when comparing the latest data in 2021/22 to 2019/20. This includes knife admissions for 0–17-year-olds, which fell 12% between 2019/20 and 2020/21 and were fell again in 2021/22 – down a further 2%. Despite recent falls, the number of admissions for 0–17-year-olds in 2021/22 was still 6% higher than the average number over the past 10-years.

Figure 2.8: Hospital admissions for knife assault, in England by age



It's not immediately clear why homicides may have returned to pre-Covid levels, but other indicators, such as knife related hospital admissions, have not. It could be that different factors are driving these trends. It may be that overall levels of violence are down but increasing pressure on health services have led to an increase in deaths due to longer wait times. It may be that while overall violence is down, the severity of those instances has increased, leading to more fatalities. These are just theories however, and it's entirely possible that something else is driving these diverging trends. It'll be important to monitor what's going on as we continue to emerge from the pandemic.

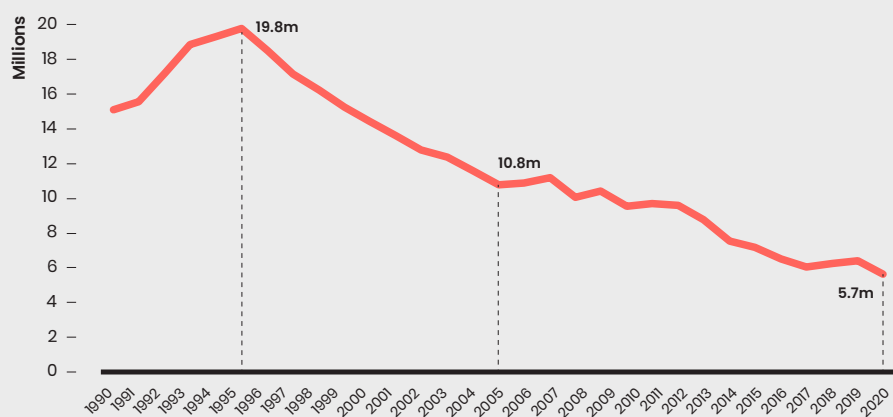
For a quarter century, crime has been declining – how does violence compare to broader crime trends?

While police data shows that – prior to the pandemic – violence had increased compared to the early 2010s, other data points show overall levels of crime falling. What's going on?

There have been overall falls in the number of crimes over the past 25-years

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a survey of around 34,000 households. It shows a consistent fall in crime over the past 25 years. The total number of crimes experienced by households peaked at around 20 million in 1995 and fell to 5.7 million in 2020/21. The latest data from the CSEW (during Covid) wasn't collected in the same way, so the figures can't be directly compared with previous years. However, do they show a similar downward trend.^{xiii}

Figure 2.9: Number of crimes (millions) experienced by households, in England and Wales*

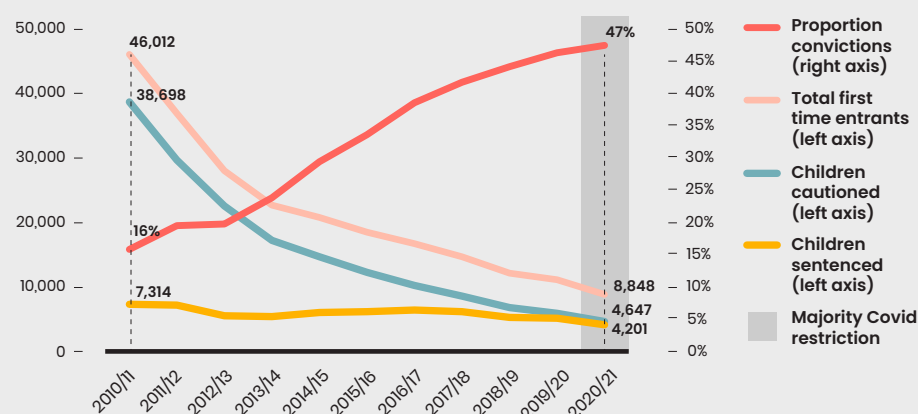


*1990–2000 are calendar years, 2001 onwards are financial years April–March.

Are children offending as much as they once did?

Children are much less likely to become involved in crime. The number of children arrested fell from 351,644, in 2006/07 to 62,443 in 2019/20, a fall of 82%.^{xiv} And the number of first-time entrants (FTEs) aged 0–17 to the criminal justice system has also fallen. In 2020/21 there were 8,848 FTEs aged 10–17, a decrease of 20% from the previous year and an 81% decrease from 2011/12.^{xv}

Figure 2.10: Number of children aged 0–17 who were first time entrants to the criminal justice system, in England and Wales



The big reductions in the number of children entering the criminal justice system reflect two things. Firstly, children may simply be less likely to offend. This is in line with the overall reduction in crime and violence reported in surveys like the CSEW. The other reason is there has been a policy shift, to divert low level and first offenders from entering the criminal justice system.^{xvi} This includes activities like police triage schemes, which involve Youth Offending Team workers working from police stations to help officers understand the needs of the children and, where appropriate, divert some away from formal criminal justice processing.

So what's going on?

The CSEW shows that society has been getting safer overall. And fewer children are getting caught up in crime. However, the other data that we've looked at (such as police recorded violent crime) shows that Particular forms of rare but high harm offences have, since the mid-2010s, been increasing.

Risk factors related to involvement in violence present a complicated picture, with a number worsening

We’ve tracked the trends of six key risk factors to show the impact on a young person’s vulnerability to violence. These include indicators related to: education and employment participation; unstable accommodation; exclusion from school; children with complex needs; being known to social services; and childhood trauma. Vulnerability to experiencing violence increases in line with certain key risk factors, and a combination of these risk factors increases vulnerability even further.^{xvii} Where possible, these indicators relate to data on both England and Wales. However, in some cases, we’ve had to rely on data relating only to England.

The proportion of children not in education or work has fallen significantly since 2005, but increased last year

4. Core indicator: Proportion of 16–17-year-olds not in education, employment or training

Latest year (2021)	5.0%		
Previous year (2020)	4.0%	Latest year compared to previous	+1% pt
Annual average (2011–2020)	4.9%	Latest year compared to average	+0.1% pt

What are we tracking and what’s the link to violence?

Not engaging with education or the labour market can have lasting effects on young people’s mental and physical health. While there are a few studies that find a causal link between not being in education or employment and violence, there is evidence that lack of qualifications and job opportunities are linked to crime.^{xviii} Being part of the drug trade, an area of extreme risk to violent exploitation, can seem a lot more appealing to children who struggle to find meaningful opportunities for training or work.

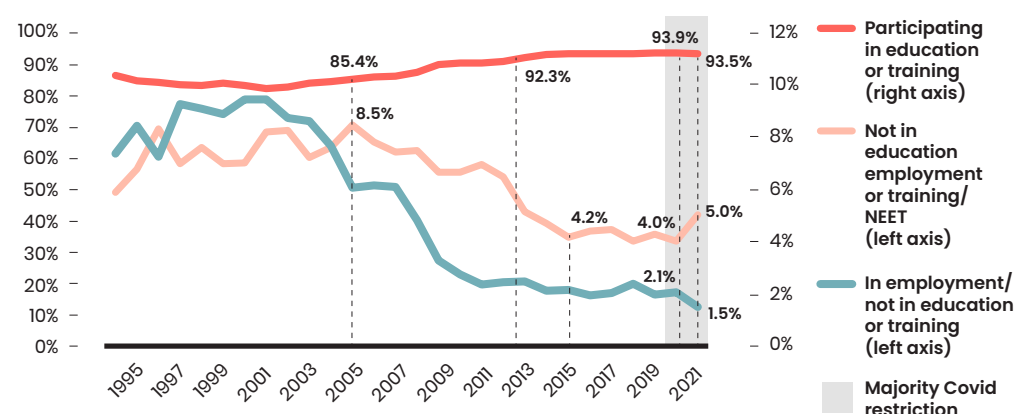
We’ve used Department for Education data on the proportion of 16 to 17-year-olds who are NEET as our core measure. Other data exists (published by the Office for National Statistics) which covers the whole of the UK. While the Department for Education data only covers England, it does allow for a more detailed breakdown of the work and employment activities 16 to 17-year-olds are undertaking.

Since 2005, the proportion of 16 to 17-year-olds NEET has been falling from 8.5% in 2005 to 5% in 2021.^{xix} This has mainly been driven by an increase in the number of children remaining in education (including being at school

or undertaking apprenticeships or other forms of training). Since 2014, it has been compulsory for students leaving Year 11 to remain in education or training until the age of 18.

Between 2015 and 2020, the NEET rate for 16 to 17-year-olds decreased from 4.2% to 4% – a slower rate than in previous years. In 2021, NEETs increased by 1% point, from 4% to 5%. This reflects both a fall in the proportion of young people in education and training and the proportion in employment.

Figure 2.11 Proportion of 16–17-year-olds Not in Educational Employment or Training (NEET), in England



The number of children growing up in poverty has increased, although rates have recently stabilised

5. Core indicator: Children in temporary accommodation

Latest year (Q4 2021)	118,900		
Previous year (Q4 2020)	120,870	Latest year compared to previous	-2%
Annual average (Q4 2011-Q4 2020)	104,223	Latest year compared to average	+14%

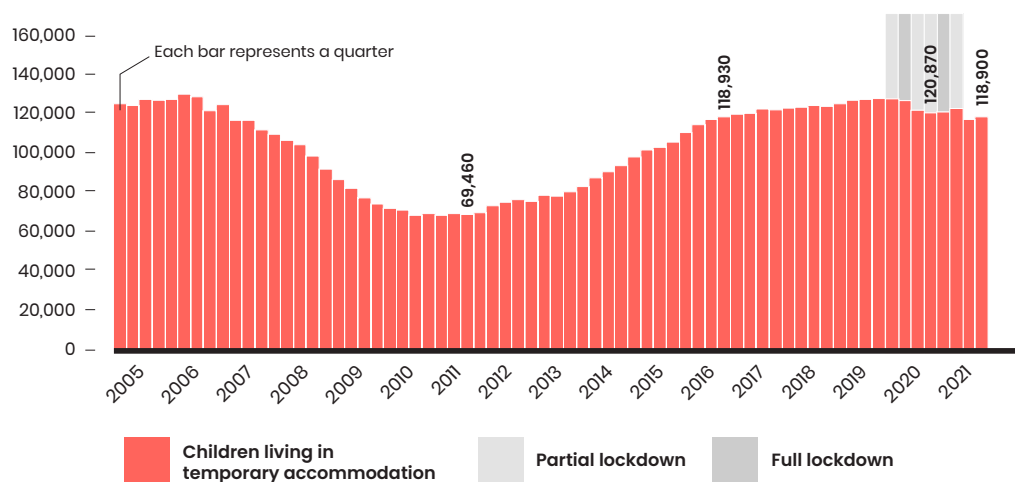
What are we tracking and what's the link to violence?

There is significant evidence of an association between growing up in poverty and later offending. Recent analysis by the Department of Education and the Ministry of Justice^{xx} shows that 2% of children who were eligible for free school meals were cautioned or sentenced for a serious violent offence. The rate for all pupils was 1%. This means the rate of violence for children in low-income households was double that of all children.

While there are several measures which could be used as a proxy to measure child poverty, we've selected temporary accommodation. This is because it's a direct measure of households struggling to make ends meet. We also think it's particularly relevant to violence, because housing instability can lead children into risky situations to escape difficulties at home.^{xxi}

Between October and December 2021, there were 118,900 children living in temporary accommodation. This compares to 120,870 children the year before – a 1.6% fall.^{xxii} During the pandemic, measures were introduced to protect renters and homeowners; this included mortgage payment holidays, restrictions on private rented sector evictions and lengthened notice periods for landlords. The measures led to a fall in the number of households with children moving into temporary accommodation.^{xxiii}

Figure 2.12: Number of children living in temporary accommodation, in England*



*Partial or mixed Covid restrictions or restrictions only applied for part of the period.

Over the past 10 years as a whole, however, the numbers of children in temporary accommodation are up significantly – there are 71% more children in temporary accommodation between October to December 2021, compared to the same period in 2011. Most of this increase happened between 2011 and 2016, with numbers rising at a lower rate since then.

Other indicators show a more mixed picture of what's happening. The proportion of children aged under-16 living in relative poverty¹⁸ has been relatively flat over the past decade. In 2009/10, 29% of children were living

¹⁸ Measured as the proportion of children living in households earning below 60% of median income, after housing costs.

in poverty, falling to 27% in 2010/11. It has since increased gradually year-on-year from 2014/15 onwards, peaking at 31% in 2019/20.

During the pandemic, headline measures of poverty fell. The proportion of children in poverty went from 31% in 2019/20 to 27% in 2020/21.

A combination of factors, including government support schemes and a quick rebound in the labour market, meant that the most extreme predictions were mitigated.

However, the increase in the cost of living that followed the pandemic in 2021 is predicted to exacerbate financial inequalities. High inflation rates have triggered a fall in disposable income, outstripping wage and benefit increases. In March 2022, the Resolution Foundation forecast that the number of people living in absolute poverty would rise in 2022–23 by 1.3 million, including 500,000 children.^{xxiv}

Children that were permanently excluded from school fell over the pandemic, following increases prior to Covid

6. Core indicator: Permanent exclusions from school

Latest year (2020/21)	3,928		
Previous year (2019/20)	5,057	Latest year compared to previous	-22%
Annual average (2010/11–2019/20)	6,200	Latest year compared to average	-37%

What are we tracking and what's the link to violence?

We know that absence from school (missed attendance as well as fixed and permanent exclusion) not only impacts students' attainment but is also associated with involvement in violence. For example, recent analysis by the Department of Education and the Ministry of Justice^{xxv} shows that while only 1% of all pupils were convicted or cautioned for a serious violent offence, the proportion was 22% among children who had been permanently excluded from school.

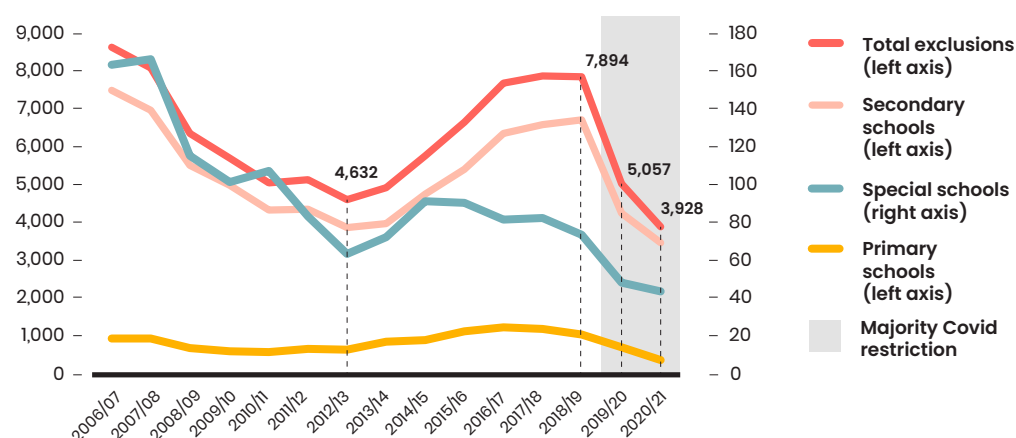
We've chosen to focus on permanent exclusions as our core measure. While permanent exclusions will sometimes be necessary for the safety of children and teachers, children who are excluded from school potentially lose an important source of support and protection.

In the 2020/21 academic year, there were 3,928 permanent exclusions from schools in England, a decrease of 22% from the previous year^{xxvi} and 37% below the average number of exclusions over the past 10 years. As with the year before, 2020/21 was significantly impacted by Covid. Schools were open to all pupils in the Autumn term, although from January for the first half-term schools were only open to key workers and vulnerable children. Exclusions were still possible, but due to the lack of direct contact and supervision, there would have been less opportunity or reason to exclude pupils.

Prior to the pandemic, school exclusions had been increasing. Permanent exclusions increased to 7,894 in the school year 2018/19 – an increase of 70% compared to 2012/13. The rate of growth had been levelling off and the number fell slightly in the year before the pandemic. Between 2017/18 and 2018/19 permanent school exclusions fell by 0.1% – driven largely by falling exclusions in special and primary schools.

It'll be important to see whether exclusions remain at these lower levels in the 2021/22 school year (the first full year free from restrictions on school opening since the start of the pandemic), or whether they'll start increasing.

Figure 2.13: Number of permanent exclusions for all schools (state-funded primary, state-funded secondary and special schools), in England

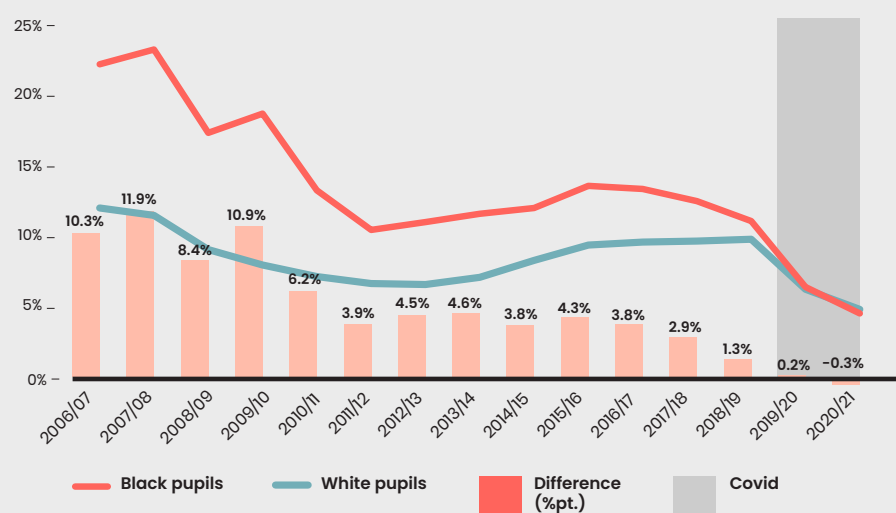


The closing gap – why has the gap between White and Black pupils' exclusions closed?

We published our analysis on *racial disparity in exclusions*, where we looked at what's happened to the difference in exclusion rates between White and Black pupils. We showed that historically there was a big gap in the exclusion rates between White and Black children. In 2007/08, 11.8% of White children were permanently excluded and 23.7% of Black children – over twice the rate.

However, over time this gap has been closing. The latest data from the Department for Education shows the exclusion rate among White pupils is now slightly above that for Black pupils. This hasn't impacted pupils from all backgrounds equally – Black Caribbean pupils are still more likely to be excluded than White pupils. But the gap here too has been closing.

Figure 2.14: Permanent exclusion rates of White and Black pupils, in England



In our analysis, we explore some of the possible reasons that might be driving this, based on what we can learn from the data. We show that changing demographics and regional differences in the use of exclusion might have played a small part in closing the gap. But we still don't know if this trend is to do with the way schools address issues of race and racism, factors related to the pandemic or something else.

There has been an increasing demand for support services for children with complex needs

7. Core indicator: 0–18-year-olds in contact with mental health services

Latest year (2021/22)	1,067,849		
Previous year (2020/21)	828,461	Latest year compared to previous	+29%
Annual average (2018/19–2020/21)	778,476	Latest year compared to average	+37%

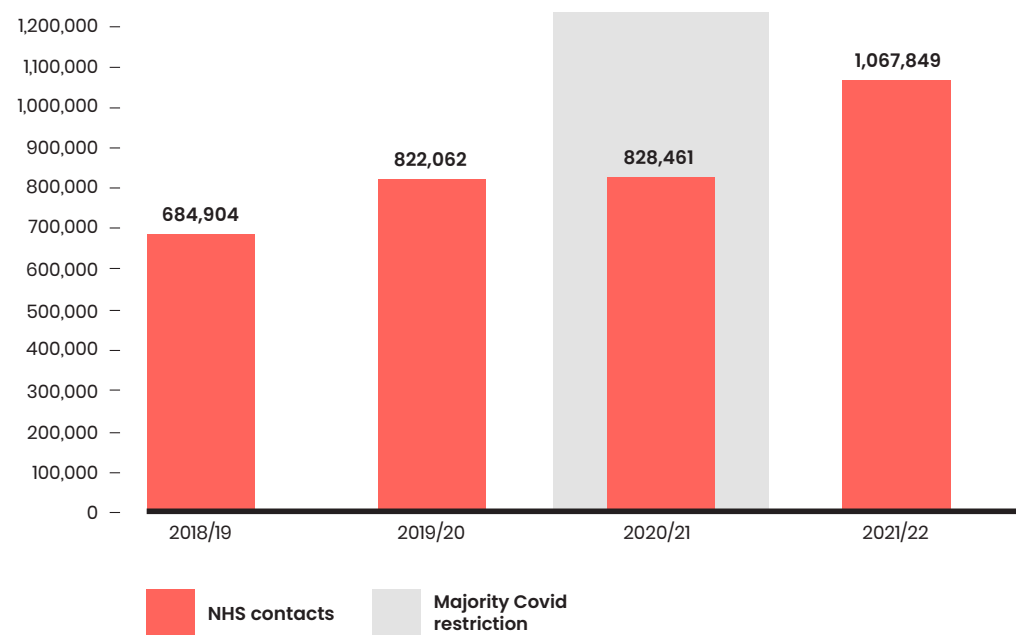
What are we tracking and what's the link to violence?

Poor mental health can be a risk factor for serious violence and gang affiliation.^{xxvii} Rates of weapon carrying are higher among children with mental health problems, including self-harm, conduct problems and hyperactivity.^{xxviii} Many of the risk factors for gang membership overlap with the risk factors for poor mental health, including histories of abuse or neglect, low self-esteem and substance misuse. Gang activities may appeal to children with impulsive and externalising behaviours. Also, the social status associated with gang affiliation may be appealing specifically to children with low self-esteem and self-worth.^{xxix,xxx}

There aren't many consistent indicators for the number of children with additional mental health needs. Data often only reflects the numbers of children who received support and so excludes those waiting for help. It's for these reasons that we've decided to use the total number of children in contact with NHS-funded community mental health services as the most reliable indicator for this measure. Although we could only look at secondary referrals – those that require a referral from a GP or other healthcare professional to hospital or community care – we would exclude children who accessed support without meeting these criteria.

There is evidence of increasing demand for mental health services for children in England and Wales. 1,067,849 under 18-year-olds accessed NHS mental health services in 2021/22. This is a 29% increase from the year before and is 37% above the average number for the previous three years.

Figure 2.15: Total number of 0–18-year-olds in contact with NHS funded community mental health services, in England



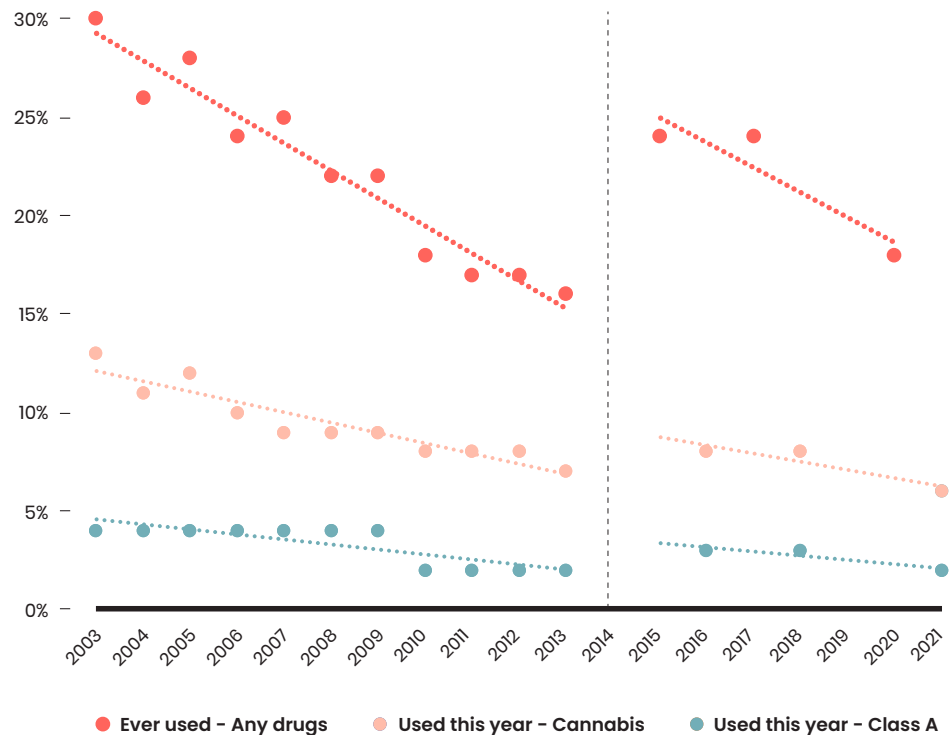
There is some evidence that the pandemic has heightened existing mental health issues in children. It also poses new challenges for practitioners in their work to support vulnerable children. The NHS conducted a study into mental health services during the pandemic in one particular district.^{xxxI} The report found that almost half of children surveyed agreed it was difficult to access support when they first experienced mental health issues. The research also highlighted racial disproportionality, with ethnic minority children being significantly (20%) less likely than all children to report that they knew where to go for help if they, or a friend, experienced a mental health problem.

The risks of substance misuse have fallen significantly since the 2010s but have increased more recently

Drug misuse overlaps with both poor mental health and involvement in crime and violence.^{xxxII} Drug use among children also increases their risks of becoming involved in the drug trade.

The number of children using drugs decreased substantially prior to 2014. An NHS survey of secondary school pupils found that the proportion who had ever taken drugs decreased from 30% in 2003 to 15% in 2014, half the rate as before. Similar decreases were recorded in the proportions taking both class A drugs and cannabis – falling from 13% and 4% in 2003 to 7% and 2% in 2014 respectively.

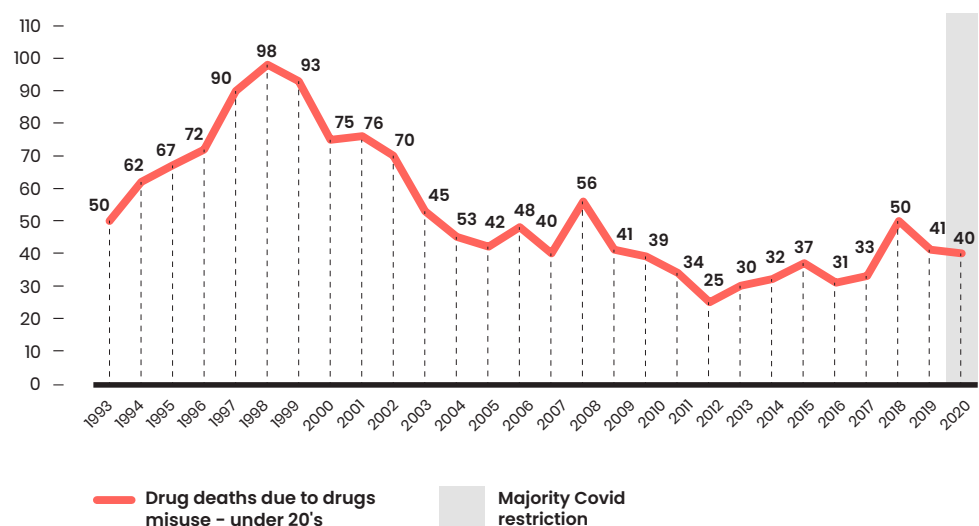
Figure 2.16: Proportion of pupils who have ever taken drugs, in England*



*The methodology used in this survey changed in 2016 and moved to be carried out once every two years. Data after this point cannot be directly compared.

The methodology of this survey changed after 2014, meaning we can't compare trends on a like-for-like basis since then. However, for the three years after 2014 that we have data for, it points to drug use among secondary school pupils falling at a slower rate. The proportion of children that had said they'd ever used drugs fell from 24.3% in 2016 to 18.4% in 2021. Cannabis use was down slightly from 7.9% to 5.6%. Class A drug use was down from 3.2% to 2.4%. We cannot rule out Covid having some impact on drug usage over this later period.

Figure 2.17: Number of drug misuse related deaths for under 20s in England and Wales



Another way to look at recent patterns in harmful drug use is to look at data on the numbers that lose their lives. Published data exists on the number of people aged under-20 who die from drug misuse, which shows numbers have been greatly reducing since 1998. However, since 2012, fatalities linked to drug use have risen. The number of drug misuse related deaths for those under 20 increased from 25 in 2012 to 40 in 2020 – an increase of 60%. It’s important to recognise that this is significantly below the number of deaths at its peak in the late-1990s.

Despite increases in the number of young people suffering serious harm from substance misuse since 2012, there has been a continued reduction in the number of young people accessing substance misuse services.^{xxxiii} Funding for specialist treatment for young people has fallen significantly since 2013/14 (by 28%), with similar large falls in the number of young people accessing these services (by 25%).^{xxxiv} Young people presenting to specialist services often have multiple vulnerabilities alongside their drug use and these services are important in ensuring that the proper support is provided.

Local authorities suspect increasing numbers of children to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm

8. Core indicator: Child at risk of significant harm
Section 47 enquiries (see box below)

Latest year (2020/21)	198,790		
Previous year (2019/20)	201,000	Latest year compared to previous	-1%
Annual average (2012/13–2019/20)	173,605	Latest year compared to average	15%

What are we tracking and what’s the link to violence?

The 1989 Children’s Act requires local authorities Children’s Social Care Services to have a statutory duty to carry out a Section 47 Enquiry in any of the following circumstances: there is information to indicate that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm; a child is subject to an Emergency Protection Order; or a child is subject to Police Protection Powers Police Protection. Once the review has been conducted Children’s Services will make a referral to the most appropriate service or organisation. These children are more likely to have experiences that increase their risk of exploitation, and often need to be supported through direct intervention by the

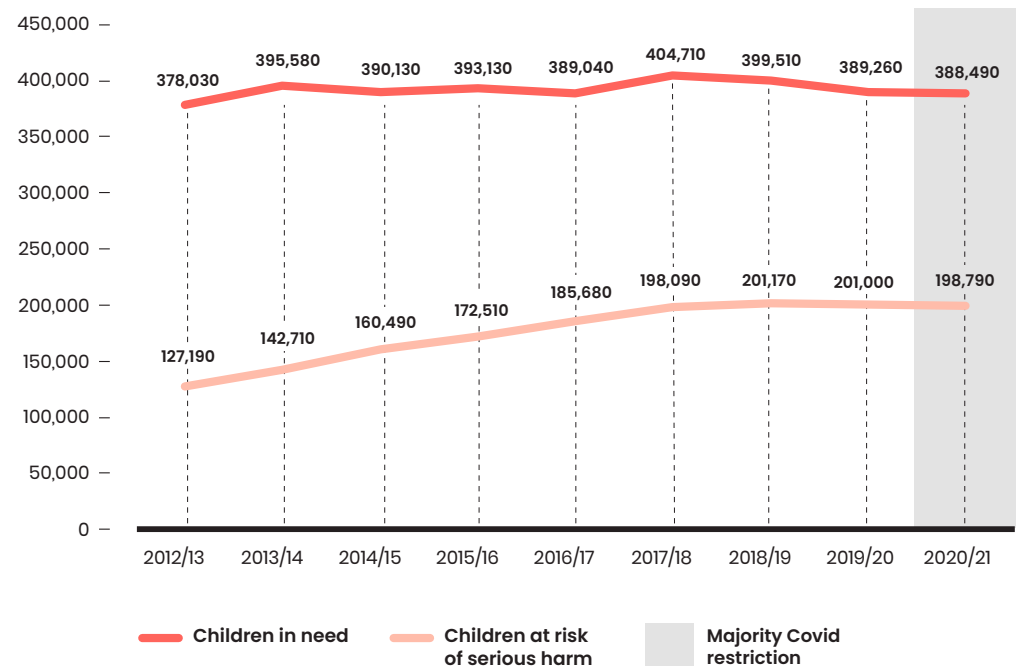
police or social services. We use the number of Section 47 enquiries as a core measure.

Children known to social services are more likely to be exposed to the risk factors associated with later offending. For example, recent analysis by the Department of Education and the Ministry of Justice has shown that 6% of children who have been supported by a social worker – otherwise known as Children in Need – were cautioned or sentenced for a serious violent offence. This compares to 1% of all pupils. This means that the rate is six times higher for Children in Need. At the most intensive end of the social service spectrum are those children which are identified as being victims of abuse, neglect or other significant harm.

The number of children known to social services has stayed relatively stable over the past eight years. At the end of March 2013, there were 378,030 Children in Need. At the end of March 2021, there were 388,490 – an increase of 3%. However, the number of children most at risk of significant harm has been increasing at a much faster rate. There were 198,790 Section 47 enquiries in 2020/21. This is a decrease of 1% on the previous year but is 15% higher than the annual average number of enquires carried out since 2012/13.^{xxxv}

The number has been gradually increasing since 2012/13 – by 56% between 2012/13 and 2018/19, falling only during the pandemic.

Figure 2.18: Children in need and Section 47 Enquiries, in England*



*Children in Need figures at 31st March at the end of the financial year. Section 47 enquiries relate to the total number of enquiries in the financial year.

Domestic abuse related offenses continued to rise

9. Core indicator: Offences flagged as domestic abuse related

Latest year (2021/22)	909,504		
Previous year (2020/21)	845,734	Latest year compared to previous	+8%
Annual average (2015/16–2020/21)	649,891	Latest year compared to average	+40%

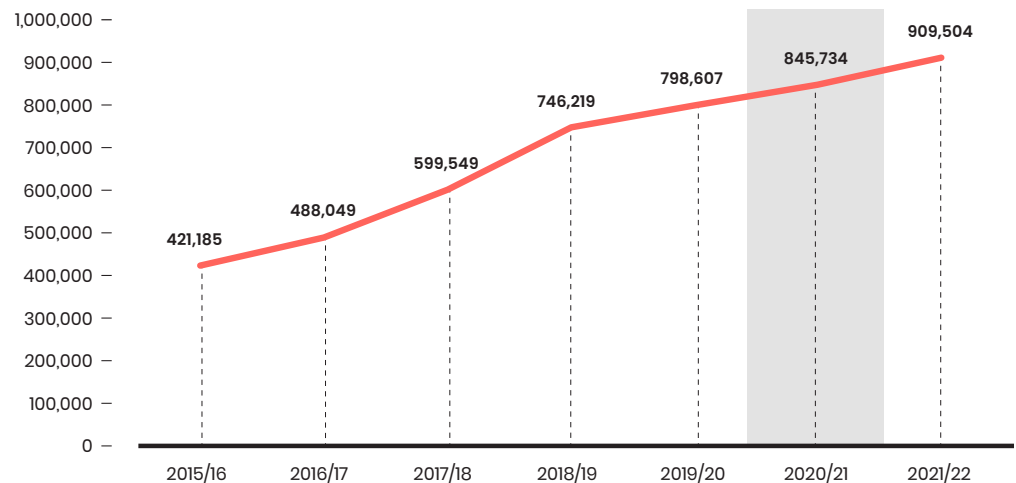
What are we tracking and what's the link to violence?

Evidence shows that children who are exposed to violence in the household are at greater risk of later offending. For example, evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study shows that children experiencing domestic abuse in early childhood are more likely to carry a knife at age 17, controlling for other factors.^{xxxvi} An evidence review commissioned by the Local Government Association^{xxxvii} found several studies showing a link between parent-to-child physical abuse with involvement in youth offending. The findings were more mixed about whether witnessing violence led to greater risks of offending. While not all studies showed a link, one large scale study found that witnessing parental violence increased children's likelihood of becoming involved in crime by 77%.^{xxxviii}

We've found no national datasets that track the number of children who witness or experience domestic abuse. However, we know that a significant proportion of domestic abuse is either directly experienced or witnessed by children. Data from the CSEW shows that among 18 to 74-year-olds in England and Wales, around one in six (16.5%) experienced some form of abuse during childhood and around one in every thirteen adults (7.6%) witnessed domestic violence or abuse.^{xxxix} As our core measure of domestic violence, we use the total number of domestic abuse related crimes flagged by the police. There are some issues with this data, as we note below. For example, recent increases may reflect changes in reporting rather than underlying incidence.

The latest data points to increasing reporting of domestic violence, particularly during the pandemic. There were 909,504 crimes flagged as being domestic abuse related in 2021/22 across England and Wales. This represents an 8% increase on the previous year and 40% higher than the average annual number of domestic abuse related offences since 2015/16 when the police began to record such offences using this measure.

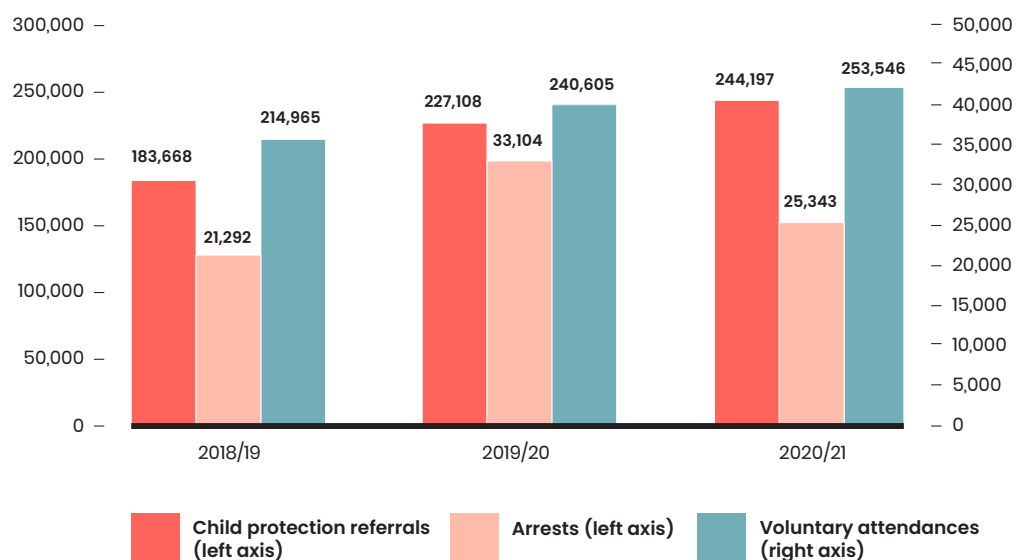
Figure 2.19: Number of police recorded domestic abuse-related crimes, in England and Wales*



*Data is only available going back to 2015/16 as previously crimes involving domestic abuse were not recorded in the same way.

It's important to note that much of the large increases in domestic abuse recorded crime in recent years are likely to reflect improved recording by the police and not just increases in higher incidence. However, there is some evidence that the most recent data, particularly that recorded over the pandemic, does (at least in part) show increases in domestic abuse incidence. Separately published data shows that there have been more arrests related to domestic abuse and there have been more child protection referrals. Arrests increased by 15% and child protection referrals by 33%, between 2018/19 and 2020/21.^{XL} Over this period more potential perpetrators of domestic abuse were also voluntarily attending police stations – up 19%.

Figure 2.20: Arrests, voluntary attendances and child protection referrals for domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes, in England and Wales



Research by Safer Lives showed that the pandemic increased vulnerabilities for children living in violent homes. They report that 1,811 children engaged with specialist domestic abuse services between April 2020 and March 2021.^{xli} This is an increase of more than twice the numbers in 2019/20 and over three times the numbers in 2018/19. Of those who accessed support in 2020/21, the majority (94%) had not used these services before.

However we recognise, that of all our indicators, the historic data on police recorded domestic abuse crimes are most susceptible to changes in recording. We will primarily use this measure as a baseline to look at future changes in domestic abuse.

While far fewer children are in the criminal justice system overall, Black children are increasingly overrepresented

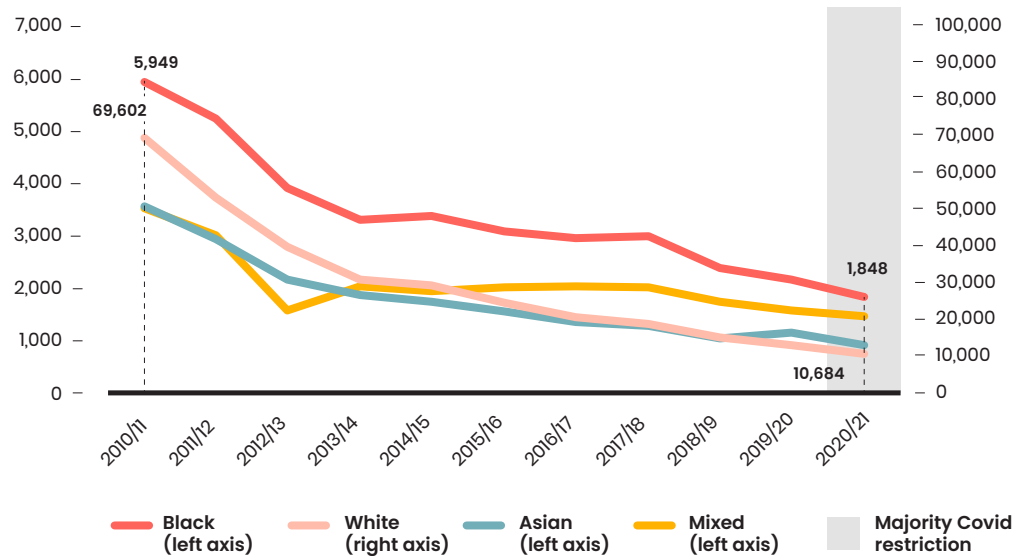
Black children are significantly overrepresented in the youth justice system, while Asian and other ethnic minority children are also disproportionately arrested, convicted and held in custody

10. Core indicator: Percentage of Black children in custody

Latest year (2020/21)	29%		
Previous year (2019/20)	28%	Latest year compared to previous	+1%pt
Annual average (2010/11–2019/20)	23%	Latest year compared to average	+6%pt

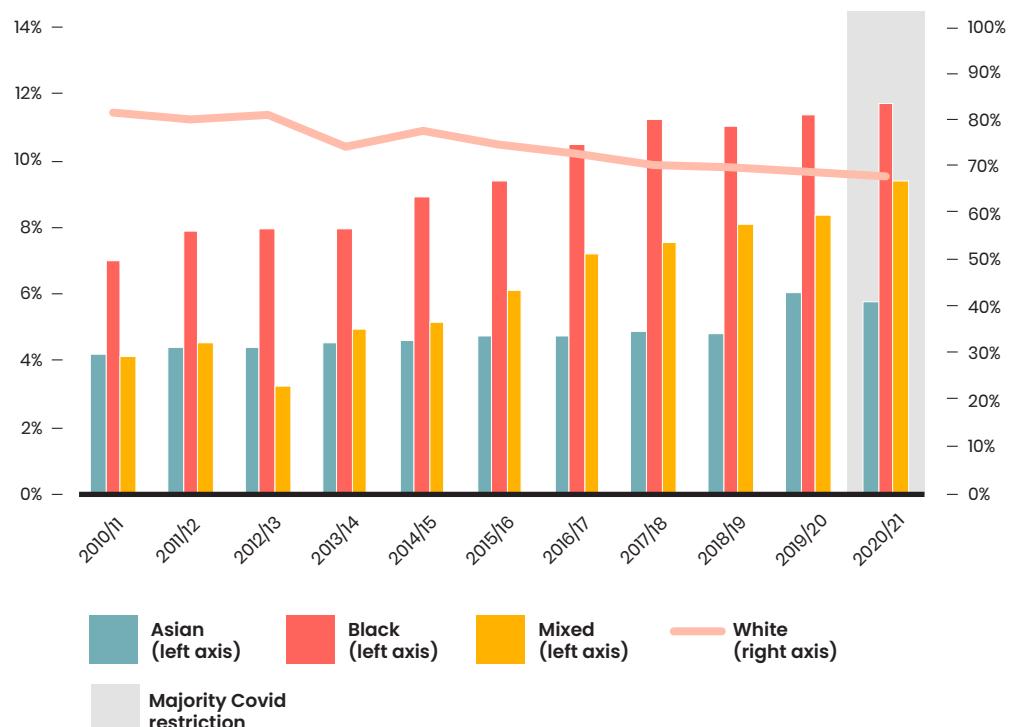
The rate of decline in the number of children in the criminal justice system has not been the same across children from all ethnic backgrounds. For White children, the number of children convicted or cautioned in 2020/21 was 85% lower than in 2010/11. For Black children, the fall was just over 69%. This means Black children experienced a slower rate of reduction when compared to White children, despite both decreasing.

Figure 2.21: Number of children cautioned or convicted by ethnicity, in England and Wales



This means that, while the absolute numbers of Black, Asian and other ethnic minority children being cautioned and convicted has fallen, the proportion of children convicted and cautioned from these backgrounds has gone up. Between 2010/11 and 2020/21, the share of Black children who were convicted or cautioned increased from 7% to 12%, from 4% to 10% for children from mixed ethnic backgrounds and from 4% to 6% for Asian children. We see this trend across areas of the criminal justice system, such as the proportion of Black, Asian and other ethnic minority children being arrested has increased from 21% to 31% between 2010/11 and 2020/21.

Figure 2.22: Proportion of children receiving a caution or sentence by ethnicity, in England and Wales



x7

Black children
are over 7 times
more likely to
be in custody
compared to
their share of
the population

Black children are particularly overrepresented in the most punitive end of the criminal justice outcomes, representing 29% of the proportion of children in custody in an average month in 2020/21. But Black children only represent 4% of children aged 10–17. This means that Black children are over seven times more likely to be in custody than predicted by their share of the population.

When we look at all Black, Asian and ethnic minority children, they represented 53% of the average monthly custody population in 2020/21, despite only being 18% of the 10 to 17-year-old population. This means Black, Asian and other ethnic minority children are nearly three times more likely to be in custody compared to their share of the population.

This compares to White children who represent 82% of the 10 to 17-year-old population, but only 47% of children in custody.

Figure 2.23: Proportions of children in custody by ethnicity, in England and Wales

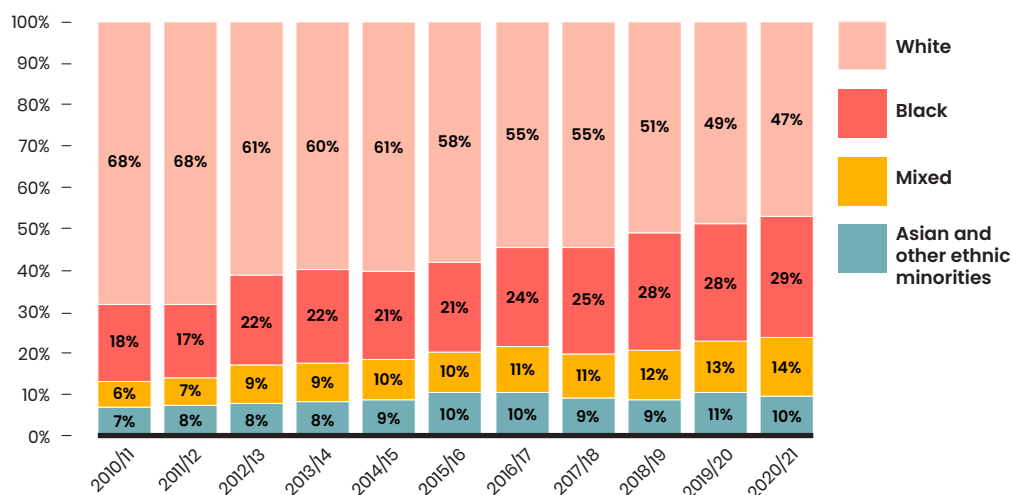
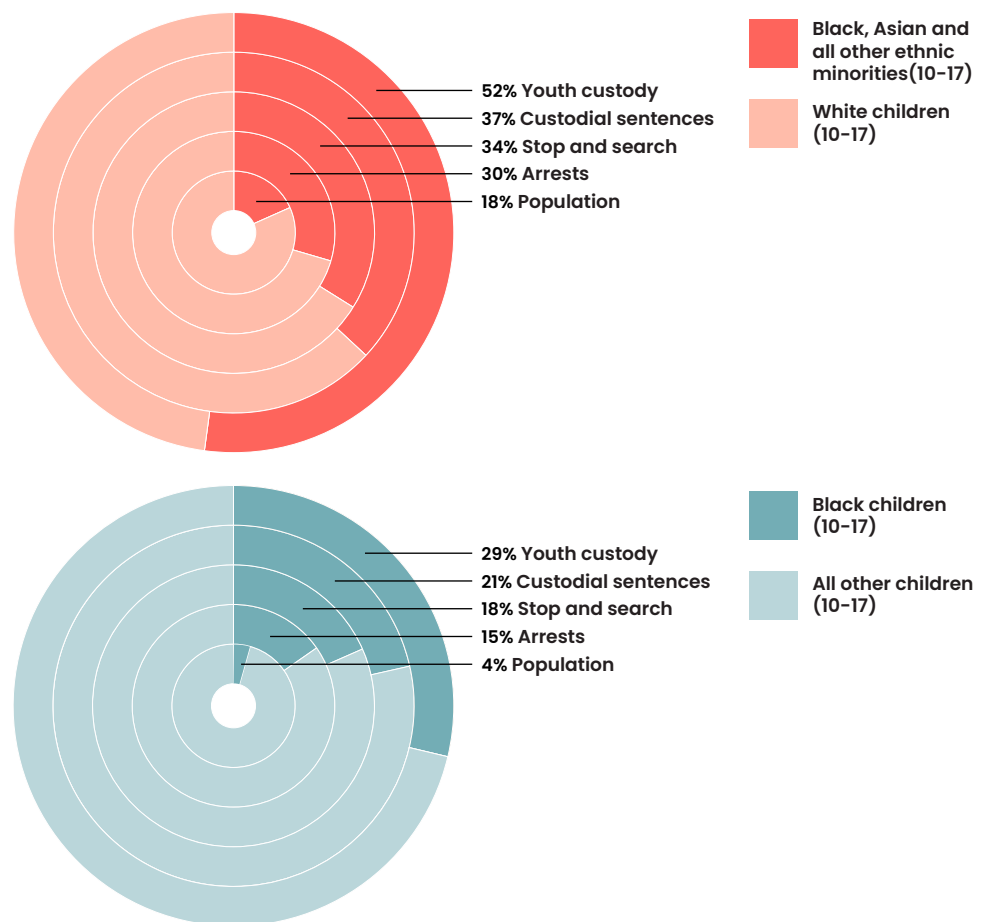


Figure 2.24: Proportion of 10 to 17-year-olds in the criminal justice system from Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities (2020/21), in England and Wales



Black, Asian and other ethnic minority children may struggle to access appropriate support

Data clearly shows us that there are significant racial inequalities in the criminal justice system – an issue that urgently needs to be addressed.

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) conducted an analysis of racial disproportionalities in remand¹⁹ and sentencing decisions.^{XLII} They used data on over 89,000 children in the youth justice system. Taking into account the backgrounds of the children and types and the severity of offenses that they were charged with, the YJB showed that there were still differences in the way children of different ethnicities were treated. Specifically, there are more restrictive remand outcomes for Black and Mixed ethnicity children; there are fewer out-of-court disposals for Black, Asian and Mixed ethnicity children; and there are harsher court sentences for Black children.

¹⁹ The period between being charged with a crime and sentencing carried out, where children are typically held in secure detention or local authority accommodation.

We need to better understand structural inequalities that can exist in other systems – like school, welfare and employment or access to family support – to see how we can make change earlier in Black, Asian other ethnic minority children’s lives.

At the moment, the best quality evidence we have about why this is happening (and what needs to change) is based on small samples, which means it’s hard to draw conclusions that we can apply across the board. That being said, we do have valuable insights on what might be going wrong – and when.

When children and young people come into contact with the police, there’s often the chance to offer an alternative to formal criminal justice processing through a diversionary activity (like mental health support or an employment programme), to help get children back on the right track.

However, research suggests that this support isn’t always equally available or accessible for Black and other ethnic minority young people. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), for example, conducted interviews with 38 boys and 99 case managers which found that Black and mixed heritage boys often don’t receive any support prior to entering the criminal justice system. And, despite their over-representation, HMIP also found that there are few services commissioned specifically for them.^{XLIII}

In a small study looking particularly at diversion, the Centre for Justice Innovation^{XLIV} conducted interviews with 20 practitioners and young people to see why children from Black, Asian or other ethnic minority backgrounds might struggle to access these opportunities. Researchers suggest that practitioners’ misconceptions about young people and families (particularly about Gypsy, Roma or Traveller young people) might make them less likely to offer diversionary support, because they assume there’ll be a lack of engagement from the outset.

The same study also indicated that higher rates of stop-and-search of Black young people could result in unequal access to diversionary interventions. That’s because eligibility criteria for diversion mean those opportunities are often only open to those with lower numbers of prior offences – and increased police surveillance through stop and search means a higher chance of having been cautioned or convicted. There’s also been a suggestion that mistrust of other statutory systems, due to poor treatment, could mean that fewer Black, Asian or other ethnic minority children trust in the support that they’re offered.

Some of these findings are echoed in studies of earlier interventions, like family support, which we know are linked to reductions in violence later in a child's life. For example, a report from the Early Intervention Foundation and Action for Children^{XLV} surveyed 102 parents and 29 children (all of whom were Black, Asian or from other minority backgrounds) about their experiences of family services. They found that experiences of racism were commonly reported, with one in three saying they had been treated unfairly when seeking out support. Many also faced barriers to accessing services and even where they did receive support, 40% said it was no help or even made things worse, mostly because they didn't feel heard, understood or empowered by their practitioner. Overall, a lack of cultural sensitivity was identified as a potential problem.

At the Youth Endowment Fund, we're committed to making sure that our funding reaches Black, Asian and other ethnic minority young people, which is particularly important because we know that there's a problem with underrepresentation in high-quality impact evaluations,^{XLVI,XLVII} like randomised control trials. We're also looking to use our endowment to commission more research about the role of racism in young people's lives, so that we can make practical, actionable suggestions to policymakers, service leads and practitioners. That way, we can make sure that every young person's life is free from violence.

Annex – survey technical detail

1.1 How representative is our sample of respondents?

The YEF survey was an online survey that was live between 25/04/2022 to 10/06/2022. In total, 2,025 children responded. Children ineligible to complete the survey were screened out – including those not living in England or Wales, or those that fell outside the target age range of 13–17-years-old. We aimed to recruit at least 1,000 boys and 1,000 girls, with around 200 of each gender per age group. Regional recruitment targets were not set; however, no region had fewer than 130 respondents. Young people who fitted the criteria were recruited by the survey platform provider, Walr, through their existing pool of adult survey respondents with children. It was these young people (the children of existing survey panellists) who completed the survey. As those that responded were self-selecting, this may have led to some bias in the results. It's unclear in what direction those biases may affect the results.

Table A1.1 Total survey respondents by age and gender (unweighted)*

Age	Boys	Girls	Total
13	201	200	406
14	200	200	406
15	200	200	408
16	200	200	407
17	187	200	398

**26 non-binary respondents also responded to the survey along with 11 children skipping this question. Breakdowns for these children are suppressed due to the small numbers. The totals won't therefore equal the total for boys and girls.*

Table A1.2 Total survey respondents, by region and gender (unweighted)*

Age	Boys	Girls	Total
East Midlands	62	75	140
East of England	63	81	151
Greater London	113	125	240
North East England	71	61	132
North West England	157	160	320
South East England	148	154	306
South West England	87	90	183
Wales	72	60	134
West Midlands	97	93	193
Yorkshire and the Humber	118	101	224

**26 non-binary respondents also responded to the survey along with 11 children skipping this question. Breakdowns for these children are suppressed due to the small numbers. The totals won't therefore equal the total for boys and girls.*

All results are weighted by age, region and gender, based on England and Wales population totals, to ensure the results are nationally representative based on these three key characteristics. It would have been possible to weight on other characteristics as well, such as ethnicity. However, due to the relatively low response rates from some key demographic groups, adding multiple factors to the weighting could have undermined the validity of the findings. This is because we may have resulted in placing unduly large weights on individuals from multiple underrepresented groups.

To provide an indication of how representative the final results are, below we compare other key demographic information collected via the survey (ethnicity, free-school-meals eligibility, parental qualifications, and support from social workers), with nationally available figures. It's important to emphasise that all responses to questions about children's backgrounds are self-reported and will therefore differ from what official data sources show. Nonetheless, these key measures compare well to the equivalent estimates that can be found from official data.

Ethnicity

Overall, White children are somewhat overrepresented in our survey, 85% in our weighted survey responses, compared to 82% for the English and Welsh populations as a whole, based on the 2011 census (the most

recent available). Mixed race children are also somewhat overrepresented (6% v 4%). Asian children were underrepresented (5% v 9%) as were Black children (3% v 4%). In total, responses to our survey from Black, Asian and other ethnic minority children were 4% points lower than their equivalent share of the population implied by the 2011 census.

2011 census figures are not published with single-year age breakdowns that directly align with our survey coverage. Data from the latest 2021 census would provide a better comparison, but the specific breakdowns we need are not yet publicly available.

Table A1.3 Ethnic breakdown compared

Ethnicity	YEF Survey Aged 13–17	2011 Census Age 10–17
White	85% (1,725)	82%
Mixed	6% (113)	4%
Asian	5% (90)	9%
Black	3% (64)	4%
Other	1% (17)	1%
Not stated	1% (15)	–
Total Black, Asian and other ethnic minority backgrounds	14% (284)	18%

Free school meal eligibility

We asked all respondents if they “...received free school meals this year at your school?”. 25% of survey respondents said they had. Latest DfE data for the academic year 2021/22 shows that 21% of secondary school pupils were eligible for Free School Meals, as at the January 2022 school census. At face-value, this suggests that respondents to our survey were somewhat more likely to come from more economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

It’s important to note our question asked if respondents had received free meals at any point in the year. Children may have taken that to include the previous academic year as well DfE figures relate to the proportions eligible as at the January school census. This may in part explain why our figures are higher than DfE’s.

Table A1.4 YEF survey respondents that had free school meals in the previous year

	YEF Survey
Yes	25% (510)
No	72% (1,467)
Don't know/didn't answer	2% (48)
All teenage children	2,025

Parents qualifications

We asked respondents *“Did either of your parents, or your carers, go to university?”*. 38% of respondents said one or more of their parents or carers had. It's challenging to find a comparable figure based on national data. We need the proportion of households with teenage children where one or more parents have a degree. Figures from the 2011 census show that 36% of all adults aged 25–49 had a degree level qualification. Broadly these figures compare well, although we note the census figures are for all adults, not those with children. They are also over a decade old, over which time the proportion of adults with degree level qualifications has increased.

Table A1.5 YEF survey respondents whose parents have a degree

	YEF Survey
Yes	38% (775)
No	61% (1,239)
Don't know/didn't answer	1% (11)
All teenage children	2,025

Care status

We asked respondents *“Do you now interact, or have you ever interacted, with a care worker or social worker?”*. Among our survey sample, the proportion was 16%. This is a life-time figure, so will reflect whether children had ever been supported by a social worker.

We cannot find equivalent published figures that offer a direct comparison. The 2019 DfE review of Children in Need found, “at least 1.6 million children needed a social worker at some point between 2012 to 2013 and 2017

to 2018”. This is equivalent to 10% of all children in these two-year spans. Our estimates are lower than this, but reflect life-time figures, so we’d expect our figures to be higher. In a separate release, DfE Children and Families Minister, Will Quince, has stated that “around 20% of children having had the support of a social worker before their 16th birthday”. Taken together these data suggest our figures are broadly reflective of the national picture.

Table A1.6 Proportion of survey respondents who said they’d ever interacted with a social or care worker*

	YEF Survey*
Yes	16% (313)
No	81% (1,640)
Don't know/didn't answer	4% (73)
All teenage children	2,025

**Totals do not sum to 2025 to due to rounding on the weighted response totals.*

1.2 How have the results been derived?

Experiences of violence

To estimate the number of children that had experienced violence, we asked two sets of questions.

Firstly, we asked all survey participants whether they’d witnessed or experienced violence. We gave participants the following definition of violence:

“By violent crime, we mean the use of force or threat of force against another person or people, for example punching someone, threatening someone with a weapon, or mugging someone. This also includes sexual assault, which is when somebody intentionally touches someone in a sexual way without their consent.”

The responses to the first question are shown below.

Table A2.1 Number and proportion of respondents that were victims or witnesses of violence, by questions responded to

Response	Victim	Witness	Victim or Witness
Yes, in the last 12 months	169 (8%)	287 (14%)	351 (17%)
Yes, more than 12 months ago but not in the last 12 months	159 (8%)	267 (14%)	333 (17%)
No, I have never been	1,659 (82%)	1,412 (70%)	1,326 (66%)
Don't know	43 (2%)	59 (3%)	15 (1%)
Didn't answer	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total asked	2,025	2,025	2,025

We then asked whether respondents would agree to answer questions about the nature of specific incidents of violence they have experienced and how they knew the person that may have committed it. We gave all children the option to answer these questions (regardless of whether they had said they'd experienced violence). They were also able to skip this set of questions. This was to ensure anyone that felt uncomfortable about thinking about the specific nature of violent incidents that may have happened to them didn't feel compelled to answer. Of the 2025 participants offered the question 1372 (68%) agreed to respond and 653 (32%) skipped this set of questions.

For those that agreed to answer the detailed list of questions children were asked whether they had experienced or witnessed any of following (they could select more than one):

- **Robbery** – “Someone used force or threats to steal or take something from another person.”
- **Physical assault** – “Someone kicked, hit, pushed/shoved, or was physically violent in some way towards another person.”
- **Sexual assault** – “Someone intentionally touched another person in a sexual way, e.g. touching, grabbing or kissing, without their consent (permission). Both girls/women and boys/men can be sexually assaulted by either boys/men or girls/women.”
- **Weapons offences** – “Someone used or threatened to use a weapon on another person.”

The summary of responses to this second question are shown below.

Table A2.2 Number and proportion of respondents that were victims or witnesses of any violence in the past 12 months, based on the list of individual violence types

Offence type	Response	Victim	Witness	Victim or Witness*
Robbery	Yes	63 (5%)	197 (14%)	245 (18%)
	No	1,273 (93%)	1,139 (83%)	1,091 (80%)
	Don't know/ no response	36 (3%)	36 (3%)	36 (3%)
	Total asked	1,372	1,372	1,372
Physical assault	Yes	157 (11%)	498 (36%)	606 (44%)
	No	1,183 (86%)	842 (61%)	734 (54%)
	Don't know/ no response	32 (2%)	32 (2%)	32 (2%)
	Total asked	1,372	1,372	1,372
Sexual assault	Yes	67 (5%)	117 (9%)	175 (13%)
	No	1,264 (92%)	1,214 (89%)	1,156 (84%)
	Don't know/ no response	41 (3%)	41 (3%)	41 (3%)
	Total asked	1,372	1,372	1,372
Weapon offences	Yes	63 (5%)	175 (13%)	221 (16%)
	No	1,274 (93%)	1,162 (85%)	1,116 (81%)
	Don't know/ no response	35 (3%)	35 (3%)	35 (3%)
	Total asked	1,372	1,372	1,372

**Victims or witnesses may be either a victim, witness or both. Therefore, total victims or witnesses will in many cases be less than the sum of victims or witnesses.*

To estimate the proportion of children that had experienced or witnessed violence, we combined all children who had responded yes to the first question with any children who, from the second question, indicated they'd been a victim or witness to any specific acts of violence from the detailed list.

Table A2.3 Total estimated number and proportion of respondents that were victims or witnesses of violence in the past 12 months

Response	Victim	Witness	Victim or Witness
Yes to Q1 and Yes to Q2	121 (42%)	188 (27%)	-
Yes to Q1 and No/skipped Q2	47 (16%)	99 (14%)	-
No/don't know to Q1 and Yes to Q2	118 (41%)	419 (59%)	-
Yes to any	287 (14%)	706 (35%)	781 (39%)
No to Q1 and No/skipped Q2	1,738	1,319	-
Total asked	2,025	2,025	2,025

One interesting observation is that several children indicated they'd not been a victim or witness of violence based on the first question but then selected they had been a victim or witness based on the detailed list of questions. 118 teenage children said that they had not been a victim of violence in the first question but had in the second (41% of all victims). 419 teenage children said they had not been a witness of violence in the first question but had in the second (59% of all witnesses).

Table A2.4 Overlap in responses to Q1 and Q2 by experiences of violence

Victim	Yes to Q2	No to Q2	Skipped Q2
Yes to Q1	121	28	19
No to Q1	113	1,085	611
Don't know to Q1	5	16	22
Witness	Yes to Q2	No to Q2	Skipped Q2
Yes to Q1	188	48	51
No to Q1	400	699	569
Don't know to Q1	15	15	29

Perpetration of violence

To estimate the proportion of children who committed acts of violence, we asked participants if they had done any of the following acts in the last 12 months and whether it was to a family member, someone they knew not in their family, or a stranger:

- Used force or threats to steal or take something that belonged to someone else.
- Kicked, hit, pushed/shoved, or been physically violent in some way.
- Threatened or hurt someone with a weapon (such as a knife, screwdriver or bat).
- Intentionally touched someone in a sexual way, e.g. touching, grabbing or kissing, without their consent (permission).

Any respondent who confirmed they had done at least one of these acts were considered a perpetrator of violence. As with the questions about victimisation, participants were asked whether they wished to skip this set of questions. 664 (33%) opted out of answering.

Those who skipped questions on perpetration were similar to those that didn't skip, in terms of their age, gender and ethnicity. However, those who had been victims or witnesses of violence were much less likely to skip questions about perpetration. 83% of victims and 85% of witnesses responded to questions on perpetration. This compares to 56% of children who were neither victims or witnesses.

Given the overlap between victims and perpetrators, it's likely many of the children who skipped this question did so because they felt it didn't apply to them. This means estimates of perpetration for children that responded to the question are likely to be higher than those for all children.

Table A2.5 Completion rates on detailed questions about violence perpetration

Experience of violence	Answered	Skipped	Total
Victims	243 (85%)	44 (15%)	287
Witnesses	611 (87%)	95 (14%)	706
Victims or witnesses	673 (86%)	108 (14%)	781
All teenage children	1,377 (68%)	648 (32%)	2,025

1.3 How do our results compare to other surveys?

Crime Survey of England and Wales

About the ONS survey

The ONS Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a face-to-face victimisation survey in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of a range of crimes in the 12 months prior to the interview. It includes a study of around 3,000 children (aged 10–15) and asks about their experiences of all crime, including violence. A parent or other household member may be present while the questions are asked.

The CSEW ask the following questions about experiences of violence:

- **Robbery** – “Force, or the threat of force, is used either during or immediately prior to a theft or attempted theft” where theft is “Stolen or taken something that belonged to you without your permission.”
- **Assault** – “Kicked you, hit/slapped/punched you, pushed or shoved you, used or hit you with a weapon, been physically violent towards you in some other way.”
- **Weapons** – “Threatened to use a weapon against you or threatened you with a weapon.”

Violence measures are broken down into the ONS’s “broad” and “preferred” measures. The broad measure includes anyone who was a victim of one of the three crime types listed above. This is most equivalent to the approach used in the YEF survey. The preferred measure limits the number of offences to only instances where either:

- the perpetrator was a stranger;
- the offender was over 16 and not a family;
- a weapon was involved; or
- where there were visible injuries and the perpetrator was known to the victim and was either a family member or an acquaintance aged under 16.

Offences which do not contain enough information about the incident or the offender are not included in the preferred measure.

Differences with the YEF survey

The CSEW and our survey of young people differ in several key ways:

- **Age-range:** The YEF survey sampled teenage children aged 13–17, while the ONS includes just children aged 10–15.
- **Definition of violence:** Our approach to measuring violence differs in a number of ways. Firstly, we include questions about sexual violence which the ONS doesn't. Secondly, while the specific wording for individual types of violence is similar, there are differences. Thirdly, as set out above, we offer a broad introductory question on any violence experienced. The ONS survey doesn't include this.
- **Delivery of the survey:** As noted above, the YEF survey was delivered entirely online and we encourage the children to do it while they're alone. The ONS survey is delivered face-to-face and other family members may be present.

Comparison of results

Due to the differences outlined above, we do not suggest that the ONS and YEF surveys are directly compared. We didn't set out to replicate the top-level estimates generated by the CSEW or for the results to be directly comparable. However, it's natural to ask what the differences are in the results. The table below summarises the key findings on experiences of violence found in the YEF and ONS surveys, based on the CSEW broad measure of violence.

Table A3.1 Comparison of results by offence type between YEF and CSEW

Indicator	CSEW – 2019/20* children aged 10–15	YEF Survey – 2021/22 children aged 13–17
Victim of violence	7%	14.2%
Victim of robbery	0.4%	4.6%**

*Crime in England and Wales: Appendix tables: Year ending March 2020 ([here](#)).

**Over those children that agreed to answer questions about the nature of violence experienced.

Children in our survey were more likely to report being victims of violence when compared to the CSEW. This is likely due to the way in which we ask about experiences of violence – asking both a broad and specific set of questions. When we compare the proportion of respondents that were victims of violence based solely on the direct question about victimisation (question 1), 8% of those that responded were victims. There are other differences (noted above) such as sampling from an older population and asking about sexual violence, which may also increase our estimates, compared to the CSEW.

Other findings from the CSEW

The ONS also asked about the nature of violence and respondents' views on how crime trends have changed in the last 12 months. Previous surveys have included specific questions about perceptions with indicators around whether crime has gone up locally and nationally. Unfortunately, this part of the survey is only run for adults, which means the results aren't directly comparable.

Table A3.2 Comparison of results by perceptions of violence between YEF and CSEW

Indicator	CSEW Aged 16 or over	YEF Survey Children aged 13–17
Crime gone up nationally	82%*	80%
Crime gone up locally	52%*	56%
Violent incidents reported to the police	49%**	21%

*Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables: Year ending March 2020 ([here](#)).

**Crime in England and Wales: Annual Trend and Demographic Tables: Year ending March 2020 ([here](#)).

Despite asking very different age groups, our findings about national and local crime trends are similar to those found in the CSEW. Teenage children in our survey were slightly less likely to think that crime had gone up nationally but more likely to think it had increased locally.

However, these results are broadly comparable.

Respondents to our survey were much less likely to have reported acts of violence to the police. Roughly half of all CSEW victims of violence went to the police while this figure was one in four for our survey. This could be linked to agency, with young people being less likely to have the ability, knowledge or same level of motivation as adults to contact the police. It could also be linked to the types of violence experienced by children being less likely to meet threshold of an incident requiring police involvement.

The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime

In 2018 MOPAC ran its Youth Voice Survey to investigate young people's experiences of crime, perceptions about the police, exposure to gangs and knife crime and online safety. It was delivered online and distributed via schools, with over 7,750 responses from children aged 11–16 in London.

As with the CSEW, our survey and MOPAC's differ in several key ways. Firstly, the MOPAC survey only covered children living in London, while the YEF survey covers all regions across England and Wales. MOPAC's survey also has a different age range, with theirs excluding 17-year-olds and including those aged 11 and 12.

Table A3.3 Comparison of results between the YEF and MOPAC surveys

Indicator	MOPAC Survey Aged 11–16	YEF Survey Aged 13–17
Exposed to violence content online	53%	54%
Violent incidents reported to the police	44%	21%
Felt safe at school	84%	83%
Was a member of a gang	3%	2%
Carried a weapon	3%*	2%

**MOPAC only asked about knife carrying. The YEF survey asked about any weapons possession.*

1.4 Key results tables

Below we summarise the results presented in section 1 of the report. Each table represents the data used to derive one of the charts. All the results reflect experiences in the past 12 months and are based on the weighted total survey responses. The tables include the number and proportion of responses to each question (with the relevant population base). The phrasing in each of the tables reflects the exact wording used in the survey.

Table A4.1 The proportion victims by gender and type of violence experienced (Figure 1.1)***

Type of violence	Boys	Girls	All surveyed
One or more types of violence and/or identified as a victim of violence in the last 12 months	150*** (15%) [13%-17%]	133*** (14%) [12%-16%]	287*** (14%) [13%-16%]
Someone kicked, hit, pushed/shoved, or was physically violent in some way towards you	97 (14%) [12%-17%]	58 (9%) [7%-11%]	157 (11%) [10%-13%]
Someone intentionally touched you in a sexual way, e.g. touching, grabbing or kissing, without your consent (permission)	10 (1%) [1%-3%]	55 (8%) [6%-11%]	67 (5%) [4%-6%]
Someone used or threatened to use a weapon on you	43 (6%) [5%-8%]	20 (3%) [2%-5%]	63 (5%) [4%-6%]
Someone used force or threats to steal or take something from you	47 (6%) [5%-9%]	16 (2%) [2%-4%]	63 (5%) [4%-6%]
All respondents that agreed to answer detailed questions on the type of violence experienced	695 (68%) [65%-71%]	656 (68%) [65%-71%]	1,372 (68%) [66%-70%]
All teenage children	1,021	968	2,025

*Responses from non-binary respondents have been suppressed due to the lower number (less than 5).

**Percentages in square brackets represent +/- 95% confidence intervals.

***These numbers reflect children who identified as a victim in either sets of questions and thus the percentage is reflected out of the full sample.

Table A4.2 Proportion of violent incidences experienced in the past 12 months by the victim's relationship to the perpetrator and the type of violence experienced (Figure 1.2)*.***

Type of violence	A member of my family did it	Someone I know who is not in my family did it	A stranger did it
One or more types of violence	38 (12%)	198 (61%)	91 (28%)
Someone kicked, hit, pushed/shoved, or was physically violent in some way towards you	19 (9%)	133 (67%)	48 (24%)
Someone intentionally touched you in a sexual way, e.g. touching, grabbing or kissing, without your consent (permission)	16 (18%)	57 (63%)	18 (19%)
Someone used or threatened to use a weapon on you	8 (11%)	32 (46%)	29 (42%)
Someone used force or threats to steal or take something from you	11 (14%)	30 (37%)	39 (49%)

*Of those who agreed to respond to this question and provided a response.

**The small number of children who didn't know who the perpetrator was have been excluded.

***The columns above will not sum to the totals in table A.4.1 for individual offence types as children may have been victims more than one and by a different perpetrator.

Table A4.3 Regional breakdown of those with direct experiences of violence as either a victim or witness (Figure 1.3)*

Region	Victim or witness of violence	All surveyed
London	143 (47%) [42%-53%]	303
North West	108 (43%) [37%-49%]	251
East Midlands	69 (42%) [35%-50%]	163
Yorkshire and the Humber	74 (39%) [32%-46%]	189
Wales	41 (40%) [31%-49%]	104

West Midlands	81 (39%) [32%-45%]	210
North East	32 (37%) [27%-47%]	87
South West	67 (37%) [30%-44%]	183
East of England	66 (31%) [25%-37%]	214
South East	99 (31%) [26%-36%]	322
All teenage children	781 (39%) [36%-41%]	2,025

**Percentages in square brackets represent +/- 95% confidence interval.*

Table A4.4 The proportion of teenage children reporting being victims or witnesses of violence by ethnicity (figure 1.4)*

Ethnic group	Victim or witness of violence	All surveyed
African, Caribbean, or any other Black, African or Caribbean background	33 (51%) [40%-63%]	64
White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, or any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background	44 (39%) [30%-48%]	113
English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish, Gypsy, Irish Traveller, or any other White background	669 (39%) [36%-41%]	1,727
Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, or any other Asian background	27 (30%) [22%-40%]	90

**Percentages in square brackets represent +/- 95% confidence intervals.*

Table A4.5 Family and educational experiences and rates of experiencing or witnessing violence in the past 12 months (Figure 1.5)*

Demographic	Victim or witness of violence	All surveyed
Not living with both parents in the same house	339 (42%) [39%-46%]	804
Received free school meals this year	232 (46%) [41%-50%]	510

Missed classes regularly or not in education	97 (55%) [48%-63%]	175
Ever Interacted with a social or care worker	187 (60%) [54%-65%]	313
Not from one of these backgrounds	279 (31%) [28%-34%]	894

**Percentages in square brackets represent +/- 95% confidence interval.*

Table A4.6 The proportion of respondents (who agreed to answer the question) who committed acts of violence in the past 12-months (Figure 1.6)*

Type of violence	Boys	Girls	All surveyed**
One or more acts of violence	135 (19%) [16%-22%]	124 (19%) [16%-22%]	261 (19%) [17%-21%]
Kicked, hit, pushed/shoved, or been physically violent in some way	117 (17%) [14%-19%]	101 (16%) [13%-19%]	219 (16%) [14%-18%]
Intentionally touched someone in a sexual way, e.g. touching, grabbing or kissing, without their consent (permission)	35 (5%) [4%-7%]	33 (5%) [4%-7%]	68 (5%) [4%-6%]
Threatened or hurt someone with a weapon (such as a knife, screwdriver or bat)	47 (7%) [5%-9%]	40 (6%) [5%-8%]	87 (6%) [5%-8%]
Used force or threats to steal or take something that belonged to someone else	50 (7%) [5%-9%]	54 (8%) [6%-11%]	104 (8%) [6%-9%]
All respondents that agreed to answer detailed questions on the type of violence experienced	706 (69%) [66%-72%]	648 (67%) [64%-70%]	1,377 (68%) [66%-70%]
All teenage children	1,021	968	2,025

**Percentages in square brackets represent +/- 95% confidence interval.*

***Totals will not sum as data for non-binary respondents and children that did not provide their gender has been omitted due to small number of responses.*

Table A.4.7 The proportion of children that said they'd seen different types of violent content online in the last 12 months (Figure 1.7)

Type of harmful content	Number of children who had seen	All surveyed
Threats to beat up another child, or a group of children or young people	663 (33%)	2,025
Fights involving children or young people	885 (44%)	2,025
Sexually violent content or threats, e.g. images or threats of sexual assault	270 (13%)	2,025
Children or young people carrying, promoting, or using weapons (e.g. a knife, screwdriver or club)	492 (24%)	2,025
Children or young people being part of or promoting gangs	410 (20%)	2,025
Children or young people using illegal drugs	529 (26%)	2,025
Children or young people promoting illegal drugs	444 (22%)	2,025
Any other violent content	356 (18%)	2,025
Any violence content	1,110 (55%)	2,025

Table A4.8 The proportion of children that said they'd seen violent content online in the last 12 months by region (Figure 1.8)*

Region	Seen violence online	All surveyed
London	183 (60%) [55%-66%]	303
North West	154 (61%) [55%-67%]	251
East Midlands	52 (55%) [47%-62%]	163
Yorkshire and the Humber	103 (55%) [47%-61%]	189

Wales	56 (54%) [44%-63%]	104
West Midlands	109 (52%) [45%-59%]	210
North East	53 (61%) [50%-71%]	87
South West	81 (44%) [37%-52%]	183
East of England	108 (50%) [44%-57%]	214
South East	176 (55%) [49%-60%]	322
All teenage children	1,110 (55%) [53%-57%]	2,025

**Percentages in square brackets represent +/- 95% confidence interval.*

Table A4.9 Views on how violence changed nationally in the past year, by exposure to violence (Figure 1.9)*

National trend	Victims of violence	Victims or witnesses of violence	All surveyed
The amount of violent crime has increased a lot or a bit in the past year in the country as a whole	265 (92%) [89%-95%]	679 (87%) [84%-89%]	1,628 (80%) [79%-82%]
The amount of violent crime has stayed about the same in the past year in the country as a whole	15 (5%) [3%-8%]	84 (11%) [9%-13%]	345 (17%) [16%-19%]
The amount of violent crime has reduced a lot or a bit in the past year in the country as a whole	7 (3%) [1%-5%]	17 (2%) [1%-4%]	41 (2%) [2%-3%]
Preferred not to answer	0 (0%)	1 (0.1%) [0%-1%]	11 (1%) [0%-1%]
All teenage children	287	781	2,025

**Percentages in square brackets represent +/- 95% confidence intervals.*

Table A4.10 Percentage of teenage children who thought each factor was a major driver of violence crime, by perpetrators and victims of violence (Figure 1.10)

Driver of violence	Victims of violence	Perpetrators of violence	All surveyed
Money – they need money to support themselves or their family	160 (56%)	143 (55%)	1,064 (53%)
Drug use – they were under the influence of drugs	191 (67%)	181 (70%)	1,341 (66%)
Alcohol use – they were under the influence of alcohol	188 (66%)	177 (68%)	1,264 (62%)
Drug habit – to support a drug habit	206 (72%)	182 (70%)	1,306 (65%)
Alcohol habit – to support an alcohol habit	154 (54%)	144 (55%)	1,052 (52%)
Drug supply – as part of selling drugs to others	201 (70%)	175 (67%)	1,286 (64%)
Protection – to avoid being hurt or becoming a victim of crime	171 (60%)	141 (54%)	998 (49%)
Identity – to feel part of something	170 (59%)	163 (62%)	1,095 (54%)
Loss of control or frustration – for example, they lose their temper	198 (69%)	177 (68%)	1,273 (63%)
Excitement – they get a thrill from getting involved in violence	164 (57%)	146 (56%)	1,039 (51%)
Social media – influenced by things they have seen online	177 (62%)	171 (65%)	1,023 (51%)
Music – influenced by the content in some music or music videos	87 (30%)	83 (33%)	492 (24%)
Video games – influenced by the content in some video games	109 (38%)	116 (45%)	670 (33%)
Films and TV shows – influenced by the content in some films or TV shows	111 (39%)	108 (41%)	645 (32%)

Gang membership – they are, or they want to be, part of a gang	211 (74%)	190 (73%)	1,331 (66%)
All teenage children	287	261	2,025

Table A4.11 Percentage of teenage children who reported changing specific behaviours in the past 12 months, to protect themselves from violence (Figure 1.11)

Behaviours	Children who have changed behaviour	All surveyed
Been absent from school, including just part of a school day, because you felt you would be unsafe at school, or on your way to or from school	290 (14%)	2,025
Changed your route to or from school	292 (14%)	2,025
Avoided travelling alone	748 (37%)	2,025
Used other types of transport	231 (11%)	2,025
Made a new group of friends	331 (16%)	2,025
Left a group of friends or stopped spending time with them	426 (21%)	2,025
Avoided going out at certain times of the day	573 (28%)	2,025
Joined a gang	12 (1%)	2,025
Carried a knife, screwdriver or other weapon	35 (2%)	2,025
Avoided going to a social event	322 (16%)	2,025
Changed your appearance to make yourself feel safer	363 (18%)	2,025
Changed any behaviours	1,312 (65%)	2,025

Table A4.12 Percentage of teenage children who reported changes in their day-to-day lives, due to worrying about violence (Figure 1.12)

Day to day impact	Number of children who have been impacted by violence	All surveyed
Had trouble sleeping	284 (14%)	2,025
Kept themselves to themselves more	516 (26%)	2,025
Found it harder to concentrate at school	283 (14%)	2,025
Worse relationships with parents or primary carer	115 (6%)	2,025
Lost appetite	156 (8%)	2,025
Spent more time online	316 (16%)	2,025
Been impacted in any way	829 (41%)	2,025

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