



Rapid appraisal on Knife Crime in **Leicester & Leicestershire**

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1. **Leicestershire Cares**

Leicestershire Cares is an award winning, creative, results orientated charity that has spent the last 15 years tackling poverty and exclusion. Our vision is an inclusive and safe Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland where nobody is left behind, and all children and young people are supported to reach their full potential. We broker partnerships and create opportunities that enable the business sector to understand community needs, contribute to the growth of inclusive, safe communities and to support and inspire children and young people in their transition to the workplace.

Our Community Safety Team (WIRE & UP Projects)

We are committed to creating safe communities and one of the most effective ways we can do this is to stop people reoffending. All the research shows if ex-offenders find employment, they are far more likely to stop offending and become law abiding, tax paying citizens. Our WIRE project is able to offer two-week mentored work experience to ex-offenders. The majority of referrals are received from the Probation Service, although we do take referrals from local prisons and other agencies. On average 65% of those ex-offenders who completed a work placement went into full time paid employment or training.

The Unlocking Potential (UP) Project supports young people aged 16-25 who are ex-offenders, current offenders or at risk of offending. UP tackles youth crime by offering holistic support to address social, practical, economical and emotional issues which prevent young people from accessing education, employment or training.

2. Knife Crime in Leicester and Leicestershire

Last year, it was reported that Leicestershire had its highest rate of knife crime in a decade. According to Police reports, there were 869 serious crimes that involved knives in 2019 (up by 5% from the year previous).

In 2019, there were five killings, 13 attempted murders, eight rapes or sexual assaults, 286 robberies, 122 threats to kill, and 435 assaults involving a knife or sharp object.

Overall, crime in Leicestershire is up by 2 per cent year on year, with 91,242 offences recorded in 2019.

Chief constable Simon Cole from Leicestershire Police has said: *"We continually monitor crime data within force to determine our priorities and assist with our ongoing work. Violent crime is an issue we are constantly addressing in force. These offences are completely unacceptable, and we continue to act on information we receive to investigate offences. We also continue to work with communities and partner agencies to raise awareness of the impact these crimes can have."*

Whilst everything is going on with the lockdown, there are still many important issues that need to be discussed, such as these concerning figures.

Before the Covid-19 lockdown, Leicester City Council was planning to run a number of 'community conversations' at venues across the city. These events would have provided the public with the chance to voice their opinions on preventative measures for the knife crime issue. These events were to be led by community groups around Leicester, which would then be considered and fed into discussions for a new knife crime and serious violence strategy that is currently being developed for Leicester.

Unfortunately, the pandemic and national lockdown meant these important events had to be cancelled, and so we decided to run our own consultation about knife crime with the young people and participants we support through our projects.

3. Our findings – what our young people and participants think about Knife Crime.

We set up an independent survey and sent it out our young people and participants to see what their views were on knife crime. The survey was complete by 21 participants that live in Leicester and Leicestershire.

The results we managed to collate have been interesting, and gives further insight in to how prevalent knife crime is in our local communities, with over two-thirds of our participants reporting they know somebody who has carried a knife illegally, and over 38% admitting to considering carrying a knife at some point.

Almost 1 in 4 people said they had previously carried a knife, and when prompted to give an answer as to why, here are some of the responses we received:

" A majority of people on road feel like they've got a point to prove, so it's either me or them."

“Self-defence”.

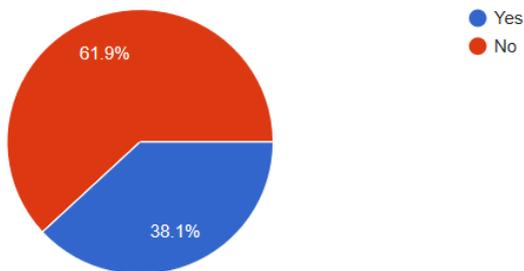
“Self-defence, someone tried to grab me off the street before when it was late at night, so now I feel very unsafe.”

“Self-defence and peer pressure”.

“Feeling threatened”

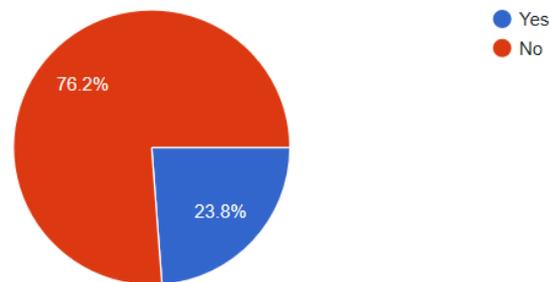
6. Have you ever considered carrying a knife?

21 responses



7. Have you ever carried a knife?

21 responses



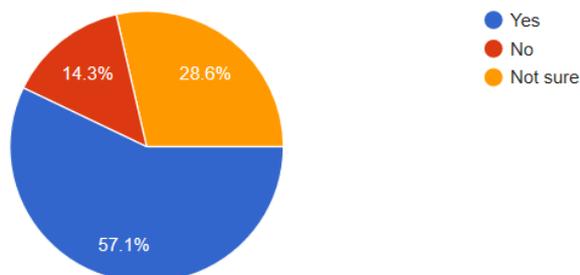
As we can see from the comments above, there is a consensus that people who consider carrying a knife, do so as a form of defence and protection from others. Over 28% said they had been a victim of knife crime, which included being threatened with a knife and in some cases being stabbed.

A majority of 57% said they were concerned about the levels of knife crime in Leicester and Leicestershire, with 14% feeling knife crime wasn't an issue at all in the city or county.

We also asked our participants whether they felt enough was being done in their local communities to prevent knife crime. Again 57% said no and the exact same number of people said knife crime was happening more frequently, with only 14% feeling the community was doing enough.

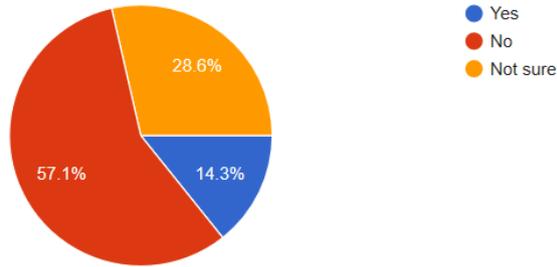
11. Are you concerned about knife crime in Leicester and Leicestershire?

21 responses



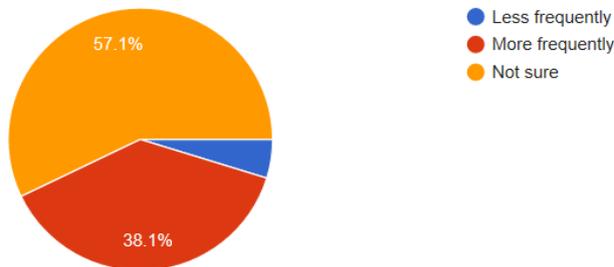
12. Do you think enough is being done to prevent knife crime in your local community?

21 responses



13. Do you feel knife crime in Leicester and Leicestershire is happening less frequently, or more frequently?

21 responses

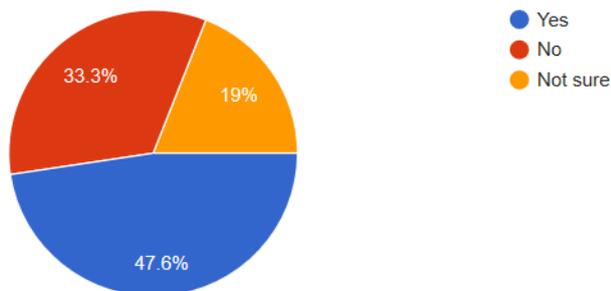


We tried to gauge participants' knowledge around law and legislation, by asking them to score themselves on a scale of 0-5 (0 being no knowledge at all, and 5 being they have excellent knowledge in this area). Our findings were varied: 28% said they felt their knowledge was good (4 or 5 out of 5); a third said it was average (2 or 3 out of 5); and the final third said they felt their knowledge around law and legislation was poor (0 or 1 out of 5).

One of the key findings of our survey, is that less than half of the people we asked, said they would report it to the police if they knew somebody was carrying a knife.

15. If you knew somebody was carrying a knife, would you report it to the police?

21 responses



4. Our reflection on the results

- The fact that over two-thirds of participants know somebody who has been affected by knife crime, indicates it is a prevalent issue that needs to be addressed.
- More work is needed to be done in order to reduce the number of people who consider carrying a knife. The survey suggested around 38% have considered carrying. If more community groups such as ours share responsibility, and introduce preventative workshops and education to young people around knife crime, then we can reduce the chances of people resorting to picking up a knife, and potentially causing serious harm.
- We established that around 1 in 4 participants had carried previously, and despite given reasons such as “self-defence” and “protection”, it is still unclear on why these numbers are so high. We need to explore who it is they need protection from, why they feel they need this kind of protection, what makes them fearful of others attacking them, and if there are any alternatives.
- With 57% feeling concerned about the levels of knife crime, and feeling that more work needs to be done in local communities, we need to consult with our participants to discuss how this can be implemented, and reflect on how we can make more of an impact within the community to make it a safer place for all.
- There is certainly scope for more educational work to be done with young people around knife crime, law and legislation and the impact it can have on victims, perpetrators, and the wider community.

5. Tackling Knife Crime

After reviewing our findings from the survey, our Community Safety Team will be running a Knife Crime workshop over the summer. This will consist of 4 or 5 virtual workshops held over Zoom. We will be encouraging participants to discuss some of the issues we have identified, and try to explore ways we can help the community and prevent others from becoming involved in knife crime.

We will be working in close partnership with agencies such as the Violence Reduction Network, the Antoin Akpom Achievements Foundation, and the BBC to help raise awareness on this topic. The participants involved in our knife crime workshops will create a video to help educate other young people about the impact and consequences of knife crime.

We plan to involve Leicestershire Police and local law solicitors in the discussions, and hope to be able to inform and empower our young people to make better decisions going forward. We believe that if young people were given more employment opportunities, then they would be less likely to get involved in crime, so will continue to provide holistic and tailored support to remove barriers to education and employment through our UP Project.

Although we may be in the middle of a pandemic at the moment, over time knife crime has become an epidemic here in the UK.

We cannot tackle the issue alone, but [#TogetherWeCan](#).