

Carrying on in 2019

A 20-year follow-up report about young people and their personal safety

by

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SHEU

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Summary

This report summarises recent findings from large opportunity samples of secondary-aged young people surveyed in schools from local authorities across England between 2002 and 2018.

Headline Findings

- 6% of pupils aged 12-15y in 2018 were 'fairly sure' or 'certain' that they or their friends carry weapons or other items for protection. In a related question, asked in different parts of the country, 8% of pupils aged 12-15y in 2018 said they at least 'sometimes' carry weapons or other items for protection.
- The most common item reported as being carried was something with a blade or point (64% of those describing a weapon).
- 8% of pupils aged 12-15y in 2018 say they have been the victim of violence or aggression in the area where they live.
- 77% of pupils aged 12-15y in 2018 rate their safety at school as 'good' or 'very good' (or say they feel 'safe' or 'very safe'). They find going out during the day safer than being at school, while going to and from school is reported as less safe, and going out after dark as much less safe.
- 11% of pupils aged 12-15y in 2018 worry about crime 'quite a lot' or 'very much'.
- 40% of pupils aged 12-15y in 2018 say their lessons at school about safety are at least 'quite useful'.

Trends

- Between 2008 and 2018, reports of carrying weapons have been roughly stable, in both versions of the question; however, the figures are rather lower than we saw in 1996.
- Being the victim of violence or aggression in the area where they live declined from 16% to 8% between 2004 and 2014, and have been stable at around 8% since then.
- Worrying about crime 'quite a lot' or 'very much' has fallen from 20% to 11% between 2006 and 2018. In one local authority, worries about crime declined from 23% to 16% between 2008 and 2011, but have risen since to 23% in 2018.
- Pupils were less likely to rate their lessons at school about safety as at least 'quite useful' in 2018 than in 2008.
- Perception of safety in various settings (going out and at or near school) was higher in 2018 than in 2006, but perhaps is lower in 2018 than it was in around 2014. There are regional differences in perceived safety, and local differences in how trends play out.

Demographic Differences

- Carrying something for protection (by self or friends) is reported more often by boys and older pupils, and most often of all by Year 10 males (14%).
- Carrying something for protection (by self or friends) is reported more often by pupils from ethnic minorities.
- Carrying something for protection (by self or friends) is reported more often by pupils attending a school with a postcode in a more deprived area.
- Carrying something for protection (by self or friends) is reported more often by pupils in London boroughs (12%) than by pupils from other regions of England.

- Being the victim of violence or aggression in the area where they live is reported more often by boys and older pupils, and most of all by Year 10 males (13%).
- Being the victim of violence or aggression in the area where they live is reported slightly more often by pupils from ethnic minorities (9% vs 8%).
- Being the victim of violence or aggression in the area where they live is reported slightly more often by pupils attending a school with a postcode in a more deprived area, especially among White British pupils (in the least deprived areas, ethnic minority pupils are more likely to report being a victim)

Links between safety questions

- Carrying something for protection (by self and/or friends) is associated with higher rates of being a victim of violence or aggression in the area where they live.
- Carrying something for protection (by self and/or friends) is associated with higher worry about crime.

Links between safety questions and other topics

- Carrying something for protection by self and/or friends is associated with:
 - Having fewer adults they can trust
 - Higher frequency of fear of going to school because of bullying
 - Lower self-esteem
 - Poorer perceptions of school
 - Dissatisfaction with life
- Being the victim of violence or aggression in the area where they live is associated with:
 - Having no adults they can trust
 - Higher frequency of fear of going to school because of bullying
 - Lower resilience scores
 - Lower self-esteem
 - Lower wellbeing scores

Introduction

In 1996, we produced a report (*Cash and Carry?*¹) explaining what we knew about young people and carrying weapons, in the wake of the murders by stabbing of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 and of Philip Lawrence in 1995. In 2018, the stabbings of and by young people are again in the news, and we have revisited the issue for this report.

The key findings from the 1996 report were:

- Almost a third of the 14-15 year old boys sometimes *carried defensive or potentially offensive items* for personal protection; 20% reported that they carried a weapon with a blade.
- A quarter of all the young people rated safety in their home neighbourhood *poor or very poor* after dark.
- More than a quarter of the 12-13 year olds sometimes, often, or very often *felt afraid of going to school* because of bullying.
- When they went out, a half of the 14-15 year olds *felt afraid of being physically attacked* sometimes, often, or very often.

The second part of the report examined the 14-15 year old group in more detail and uncovers links between carrying personal protection of the potentially offensive variety (e.g. knife) and other lifestyle characteristics.

For example, it is found that people likely to carry weapons for protection are also:

- More likely to worry about various problems
 - More likely to have a girlfriend or boyfriend
 - More likely to play on arcade machines
 - More likely to smoke
 - More likely to drink alcohol
 - More likely to have experimented with illegal drugs
 - Less likely to do homework after school
- and the finding that suggested our title:
- More likely to have a high personal 'income' (wages and/or pocket money)

These findings are largely duplicated in this report, but we have been able to extend our analysis in a number of ways.

¹ Balding JW, Regis D, Wise A, Bish D and Muirden J (1996). *Cash & Carry? Young people, their friends and offensive weapons*. Exeter: University of Exeter, 82pp. <http://sheu.org.uk/content/page/report-weapons>

■ The Schools Health Education Unit

SHEU provides a range of services to those involved in the planning, providing and commissioning of health and education programmes. The Schools Health Education Unit is part of SHEU and is involved in the collection of robust baseline data about young people's health-related behaviour.

The Questionnaire

Most of the work is through surveys in schools using the Health-Related Behaviour Questionnaire (HRBQ), which has been evolving and developing since 1977.

The primary and secondary versions of the HRBQ have been used in 14,894 separate school surveys, some schools repeating surveys of their pupils on many occasions, and over one million pupils (1,788,369) between the ages of 9 and 16+ have taken part in the surveys from across the UK.

Pupils complete an anonymous questionnaire with teacher supervision and support, mostly online but also sometimes using paper booklets. Schools receive a report comparing their results with the overall local findings. Local authorities usually commission the surveys, and the Council will receive a report of the aggregate findings and other analysis.

The resulting baseline data identify and confirm priorities for health needs assessment, intervention programmes, and health education planning. Behaviour changes can also be monitored over time and compared with local and national trends.

Repeated use of the HRBQ allows intervention programmes to be monitored and evaluated.

Please contact us if you would like to know more about our work, or if you are interested in carrying out a survey of the young people in your locality.

The SHEU databanks

This continuous survey activity builds up large data sets going back many years. These are unique in being very large, deep and long-lasting. The 'opportunity' nature of the samples, and the local variability of wording and context, make them less easy to work with that is ideal, but they are a rich resource for research. We have confidence that our data sets can reflect the levels and trends in behaviours going on nationally. The detailed evidence for this conclusion is presented in our annual reports, the most recent of which is *Young People into 2018*² (Balding and Regis, 2018).

Some questions are asked in only one or a few parts of the country. Findings limited to one or a few areas of the country are marked below in tone.

² Balding AD and Regis D (2018). *Young People into 2018*. Exeter: SHEU. <http://sheu.org.uk/content/young-people-2018>

Sample

The source of the findings in this report is the archive of aggregate survey data from our work for local authorities over the last few years, although on occasion we reached back to 2002. Only the secondary-phase samples are used in this report. The composition of the 2017 sample was as below:

Overall numbers in the 2017 sample

Sample / Yr.	2017
Schools	1199
Primary pupils	62870
Secondary pupils	68090
All pupils	134216
Secondary only:	
M 12-13 y*	13653
F 12-13 y*	13608
M 14-15 y*	12513
F 14-15 y*	12360

The English regions represented in the 2017 data, showing the percentage of the schools

	% of schools
East Midlands (England)	3%
East of England	23%
London	18%
North East (England)	13%
North West (England)	4%
Overseas	2%
South East (England)	16%
South West (England)	17%
West Midlands (England)	2%
Yorkshire and The Humber	2%

School parameters from the 2017 sample

	% of schools		% of schools
<i>Type of school*</i>		<i>School catchment*</i>	
Community School	17%	Postcode in NI/Channel Islands/IoM	2%
Foundation School	10%	Rural hamlet and isolated dwellings	2%
Voluntary-aided School	4%	Rural town and fringe	10%
Voluntary-controlled School	1%	Rural town and fringe in a sparse setting	2%
Independent School	3%	Rural village	3%
Academy	59%	Rural village in a sparse setting	0%
Free School	3%	Urban city and town	47%
Other type of institution	3%	Urban major conurbation	31%
<i>Gender of school population*</i>		Urban minor conurbation	2%
Boys	5%	<i>Percentage of children in the school qualifying for a free meal*</i>	
Girls	7%	0-1%	1%
Mixed	89%	2-5%	15%
<i>Percentage of ethnic-minority children in the school**</i>		6-10%	26%
0 to 1	7%	11-15%	16%
2 to 5	7%	16-20%	17%
6 to 10	22%	21-30%	14%
11 to 15	15%	31-40%	5%
16 to 20	10%	41-50%	5%
21 to 30	12%	>50%	2%
31 to 40	5%		
41 to 50	4%		
51+	18%		

Sources

* DfE 'Get information about schools' website

<https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk>

** SHEU

In many cases in the analysis below, we reach back into the previous decade of reports. All the sample sizes are appended and the full descriptions of each sample is to be found in the respective annual reports.

Method and preliminary analysis

We have asked about carrying weapons for protection through the last two decades, but some local commissioners have sought to improve their understanding of the issue by asking slightly different questions, and some surveys omit the issue completely. This adds some variability, which is unhelpful when trying to generalise about trends or patterns in the figures, but it is not prohibitive.

General question	Personal question
<p>1 Do you or your friends carry weapons or other things for protection when going out?</p> <p>Please choose the nearest answer</p> <p>No 0 <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Not sure 1 <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Fairly sure 2 <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Certain 3 <input type="radio"/></p> <p>If so, what weapons or other things are they?</p> <p>Please write <input type="text"/></p>	<p>2 Do you carry weapons or other things for protection when going out?</p> <p>Please choose the nearest answer</p> <p>Never 0 <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Sometimes 1 <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Usually 2 <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Always 3 <input type="radio"/></p> <p>If so, what weapons or other things are they?</p> <p>Please write <input type="text"/></p>

Figure 1. Two main versions of the question

6% of pupils aged 12-15y in 2018 were ‘fairly sure’ or ‘certain’ that they or their friends carry weapons or other items for protection.

In the related question, asked in different parts of the country, 8% of pupils aged 12-15y in 2018 said they at least ‘sometimes’ carry weapons or other items for protection.

The pictures we gain from responses from these questions are not, in fact, hugely different.

The chart below shows levels of positive responses for each question over the last decade:

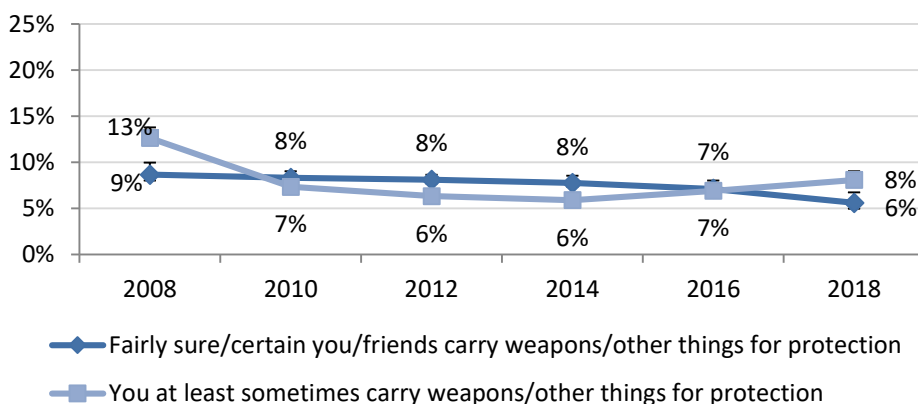


Figure 2. Carrying seen in the two main versions of the question from a selection of districts across England, ages 12-13 and 14-15yo, 2008-2018 (N=113,055).

These figures are rather lower than we saw in 1996, when about 1/3 of Year 10 males reported that they carried something for protection – possibly a defensive spray, but 20% said they carried a weapon.

■ What are they carrying? [pupils who carry a weapon only]

As seen above, the open text boxes ask what they carry. The most common response when the prompt offers ‘*weapons or other things*’ is a mobile phone. When we restrict the responses to weapons, there are five main classes of weapons that we see. The figures in the table below are percentages of those giving a positive response, that is, of those saying that they do carry weapons.

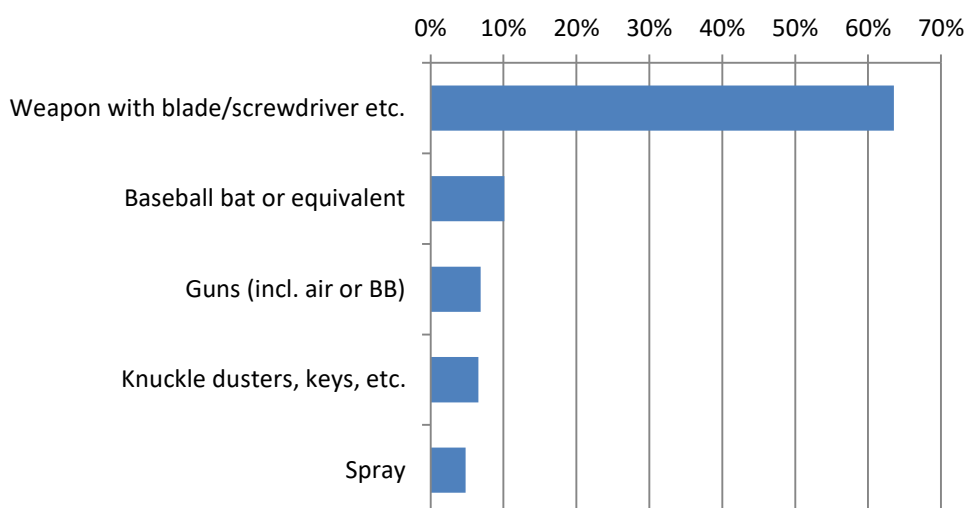


Figure 3 Top five items carried by pupils who carry weapons or other things for protection (2012-2018, N=3,419).

Knives and other stabbing or cutting tools are overwhelmingly the most common class of weapon mentioned, reported by 64% of those carrying a weapon. This would be about 10% of all Year 10 males; in 1996, about 20% of Year 10 males reported ever carrying a weapon a blade.

Guns are reported by 7% of those carrying a weapon, that is, about 1% of the whole sample. We do know that some young people carry guns, but we are also challenged to wonder if their answers are sincere – is this just bravado, even in the context of an anonymous questionnaire, privately completed?

■ Why do you carry weapons? [pupils who carry a weapon only]

In 1996, pupils were more likely to report carrying something for protection if they feared being physically attacked.

In a metropolitan area of the West Midlands (over 2012-2018), we asked students in Year 8 and Year 10 to choose from a list why they carry weapons. Of the 847 respondents who at least sometimes carried weapons, 67% said *self-defence*; 54% said *protection*; 12% said it was *part of their gang*; 7% said *because others do* and 5% gave another reason.

In two London boroughs in 2017/2018, we asked pupils in Year 8 and Year 10 to write out reasons why they think their *friends* carry weapons. Of the 623 respondents who were at least fairly sure their friends carry weapons, 76% gave *self-defence/protection* as the reason; 14% said *image*; 7% said *gangs*; 6% said *to scare people* and 2% believed it was for *hurting others*.

Demographic differences

Region

Carrying something for protection (by self or friends) is reported a little more often by pupils in London boroughs (12%) than by pupils from other regions of England within the period 2012-2018.

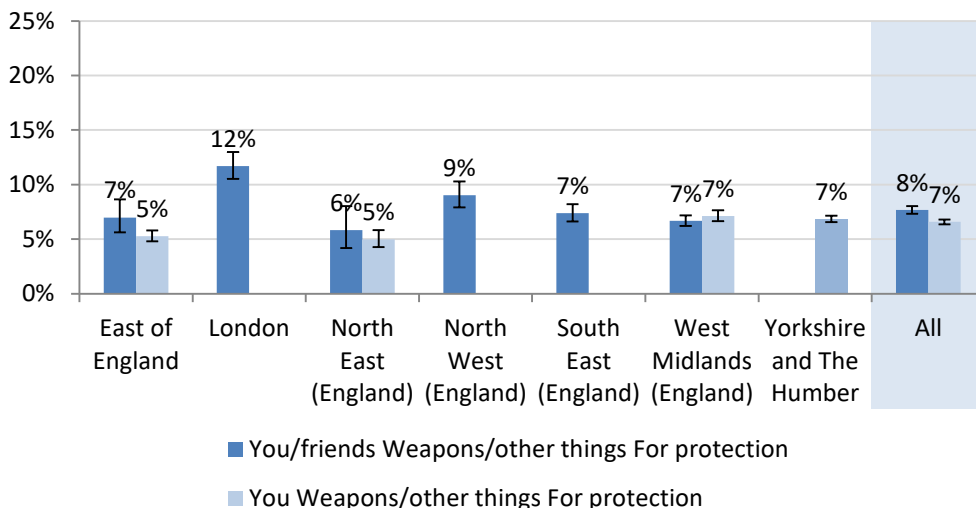


Figure 4. Two main versions of the question for Year 8 and Year 10 - a selection of districts across England grouped by region over 2012-2018 (N=72,987).

7% of pupils across the whole sample (last column) said they at least sometimes carry something for protection.

Age and sex

We also explored differences by age and sex:

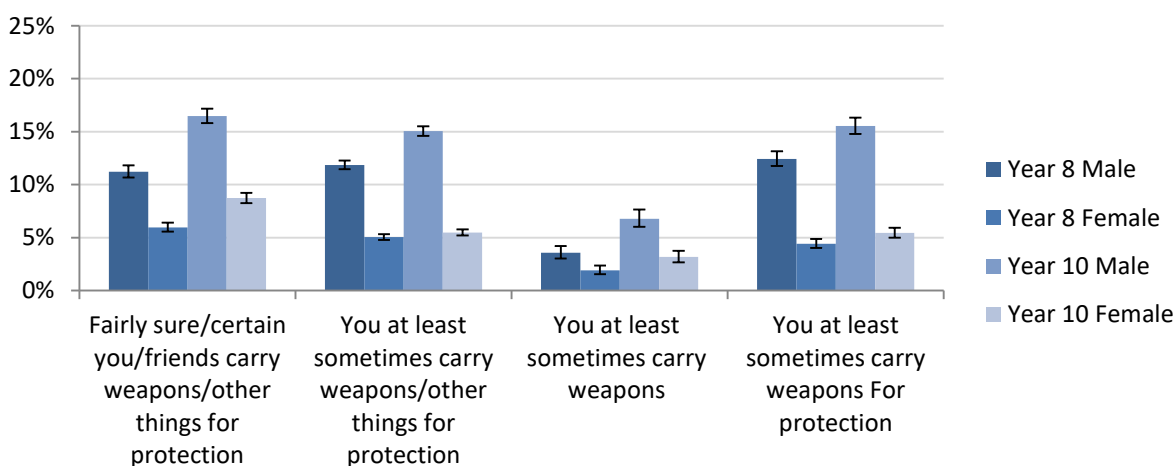


Figure 5. Percentage of pupils carrying weapons etc. by question type by year group by sex (2002-2018, N=201,134).

These are rather consistent. Year 10 males were most likely to report carrying weapons or other things for protection (or knowing someone who does); Year 8 girls were least likely to do so.

A variation we see among the versions of the question is the inclusion or omission of the prompt about the motivation for carrying: *do you carry weapons* or *do you carry weapons for protection*. The difference between boys and girls is most obvious when pupils are asked about carrying for *protection* (see Figure 6).

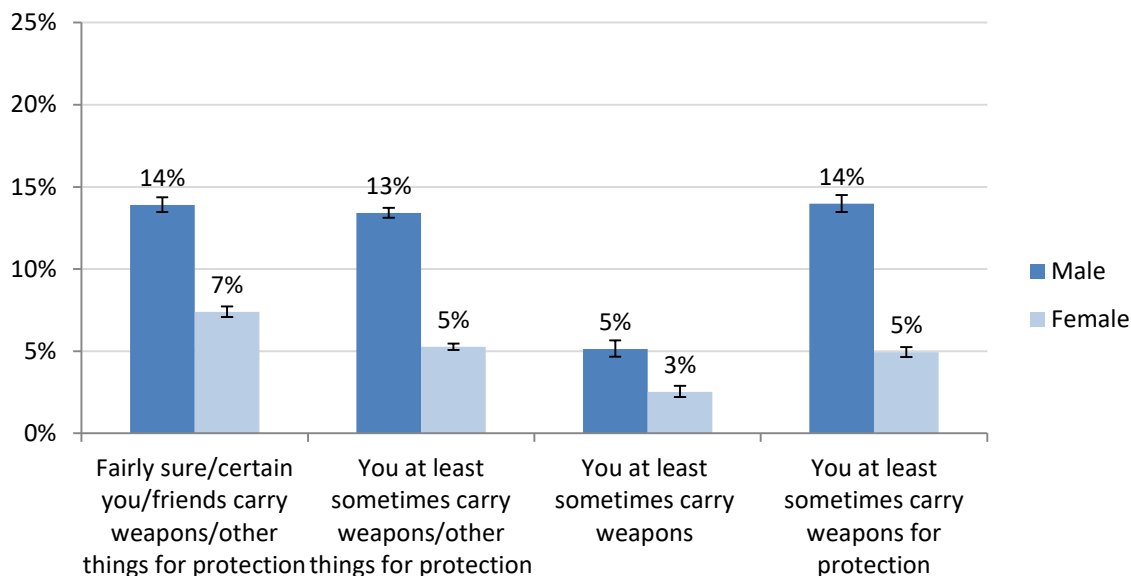


Figure 6. Percentage of pupils who carry weapons or other things, by question type by sex (2002-2018, N=197,440).

78% of Year 10 and 69% of Year 8 pupils who said they always carry weapons or other things for protection were male. 72% of Year 8/Year 10 pupils who said they at least sometimes carry weapons or other things for protection were male.

Ethnicity

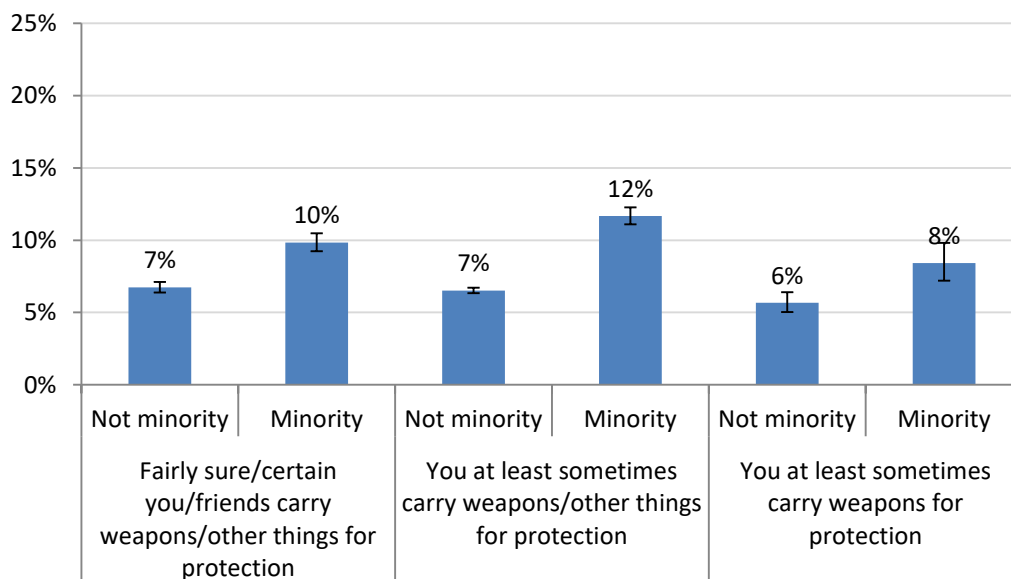


Figure 7. Percentage of pupils who carry weapons etc. by question version by ethnic group - from a range of areas across England over the period 2002-2018 (N=109,163).

Pupils in Years 8/10 from minority ethnic groups (not White-British or not White-UK depending on the questionnaire) were somewhat more likely to say that they were fairly sure/certain that they or their friends carry weapons or other things (these include e.g. mobile phones/personal alarms) for protection. Minority ethnicity pupils were also more likely to report carrying weapons other things for protection at least sometimes (i.e. themselves only), and similarly when we ask just about weapons [only] for protection.

It may be suggested that the additional reports of carrying by ethnic minority pupils may be explained by the practice by Sikhs of carrying a *kirpan* (dagger). Sikhs are not the largest proportion of pupils who come under the heading of ethnic minorities, so, even if carrying a kirpan is practised by 100% of Sikhs and reported as a weapon under this question, it would not account for much of the difference.

Deprivation

We know the postcode of each school, and these have been analysed using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015 (Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)), using national quintiles of deprivation to identify the proportion living in each fifth (20%) of LSOAs ranked by deprivation – ranging from least deprived to most deprived. The domains used by the DCLG in calculating the index are: Income; Employment; Education, Skills and Training; Health Deprivation and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing and Services; Living Environment. There are also two supplementary domains - Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and Income Deprivation Affecting Older People (IDAOP).

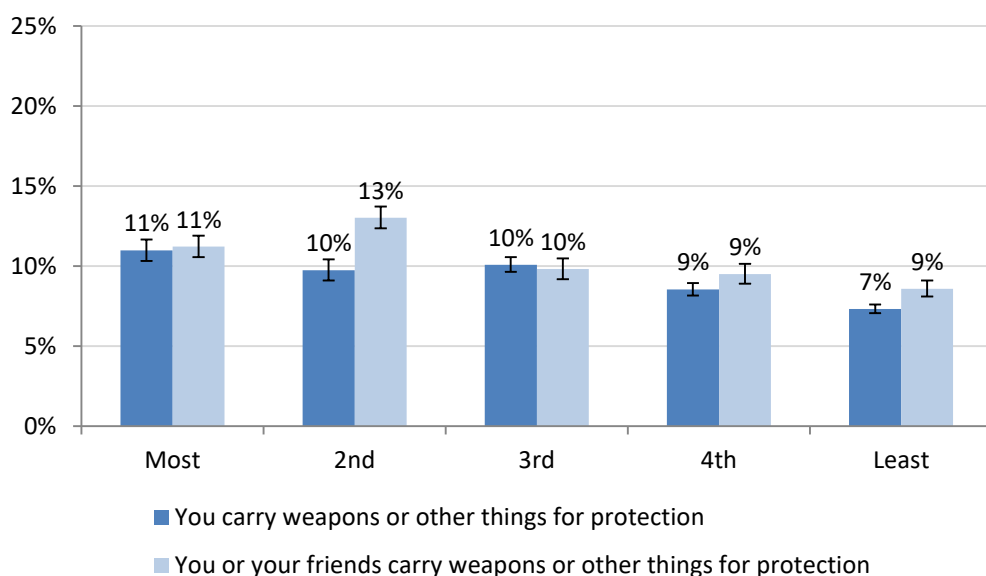


Figure 8. Percentage of pupils carrying weapons/other items for protection by IMD quintile (2002-2018, N=134,057).

In general, pupils who attend schools in the two least deprived IMD quintiles were less likely to report that they or friends carry weapons.

For some areas, we have a high proportion of responses from pupils for their postcode, and then we can look more directly at the deprivation scores of the home area of the pupils.

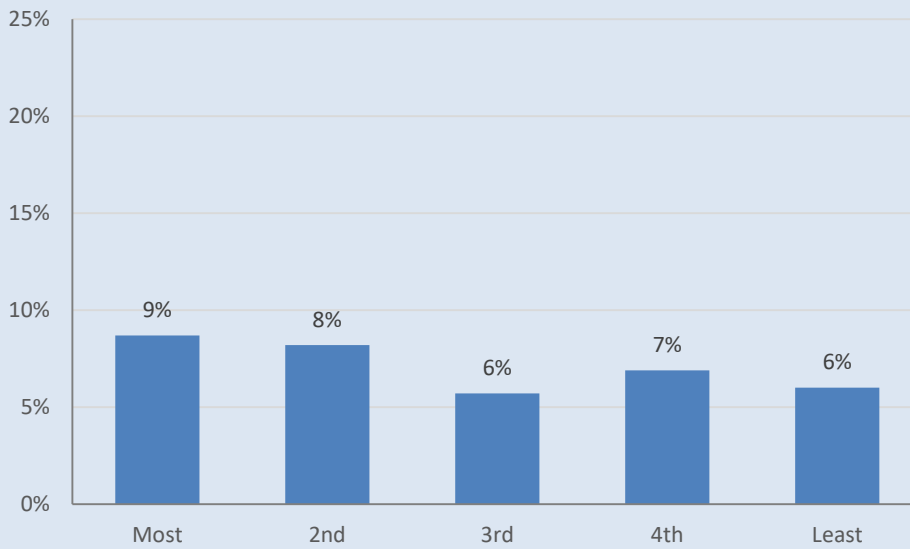


Figure 9. Percentage of pupils carrying weapons/other items for protection by IMD quintile, one local authority in 2018, N=5,245.

Related safety questions

Victims of violence or aggression

8% of pupils in 2018 said that they were the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months.

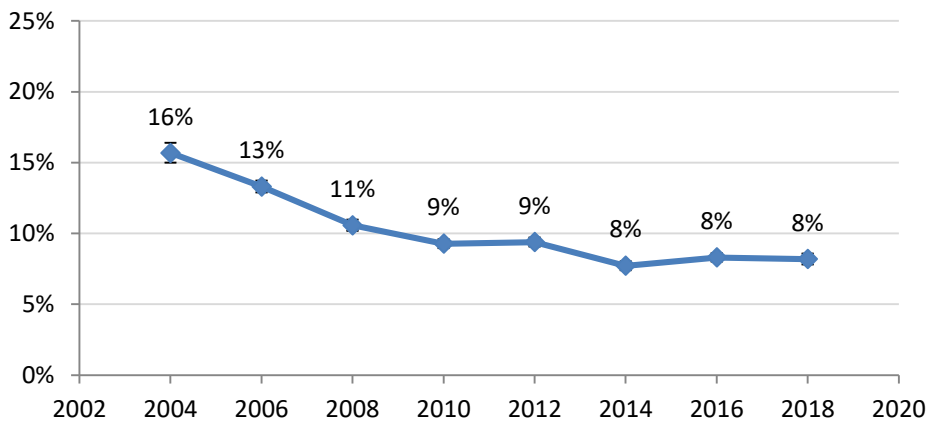


Figure 10. Victims of violence or aggression in the last 12 months – a selection of districts across England, 2004-2018 (N=210,452).

The proportion of pupils in Year 8 and Year 10 who report being the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months declined between 2004 and 2014, but seems to have levelled off at a new lower level since then.

There is always the suspicion, given the origins of the data, that trends like these represent not a change among English pupils but a change in the nature of the SHEU samples. However, we have direct evidence that this is not the case here.

We carry out a yearly survey with one area of East England who ask a slightly different question 'Have you been the victim of crime in the last 12 months?', which is shown below. The proportion of pupils in Years 7-11 who report being victims of crime in this area has declined to a new low level, and shows very much the same pattern as in the previous chart.

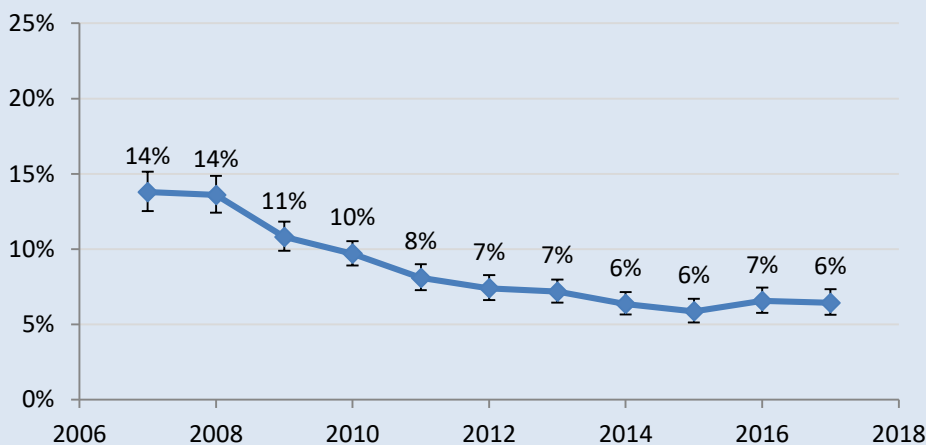


Figure 11. Percentage of pupils who were victims of crime in the last 12 months in one area in SE England (Years 7-11) 2007-2017 (N=40,928).

Demographic differences

Age and sex

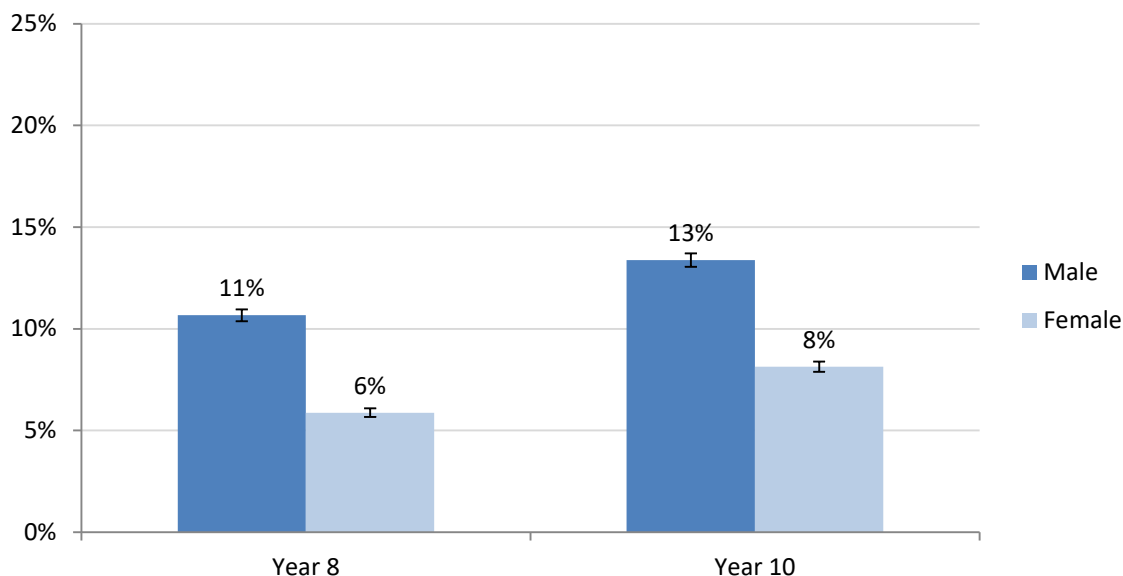


Figure 12. Percentage of pupils who have been the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months by Year group and gender (2002-2018, N=174,710).

12% of boys reported being the victim of violence or aggression within the 12 months before the survey, compared with 7% of girls and 16% of pupils who did not wish to give their gender or were of a non-binary gender. 61% of Year 8/Year 10 pupils who said they've experience violence/aggression in the last 12 months were male.

Ethnicity

8% of White-British/White-UK pupils reported being the victim of violence or aggression, while 9% of minority ethnicity pupils said the same; this is, of course, not a large difference, but with the large samples available, we can say that it is statistically significant.

Deprivation

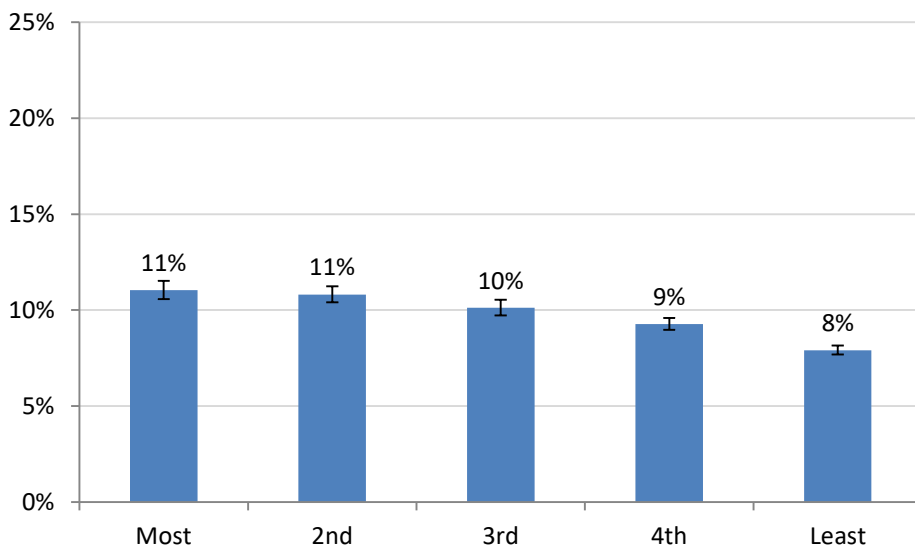


Figure 13. Percentage of pupils who have been the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months by the IMD quintile that their school resides in 2002-2018, N=172,557.

In general, pupils who attend schools in the two least deprived IMD quintiles were less likely to report that they have been the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months (Figure 13).

Again, if we have pupil postcode information, we can examine the connection more directly:

IMD Quintile	Percentage
Most	13%
2nd	11%
3rd	8%
4th	6%
Least	7%

Figure 14. Percentage of pupils who have been the victim of violence or aggression in the area where they live by IMD quintile, one local authority in 2018, N=5,267.

We have the same pattern, of higher levels in the more deprived quintiles, for the deprivation of the pupil’s home postcode.

Deprivation and ethnicity

We have also found a curious interaction of ethnicity with deprivation.

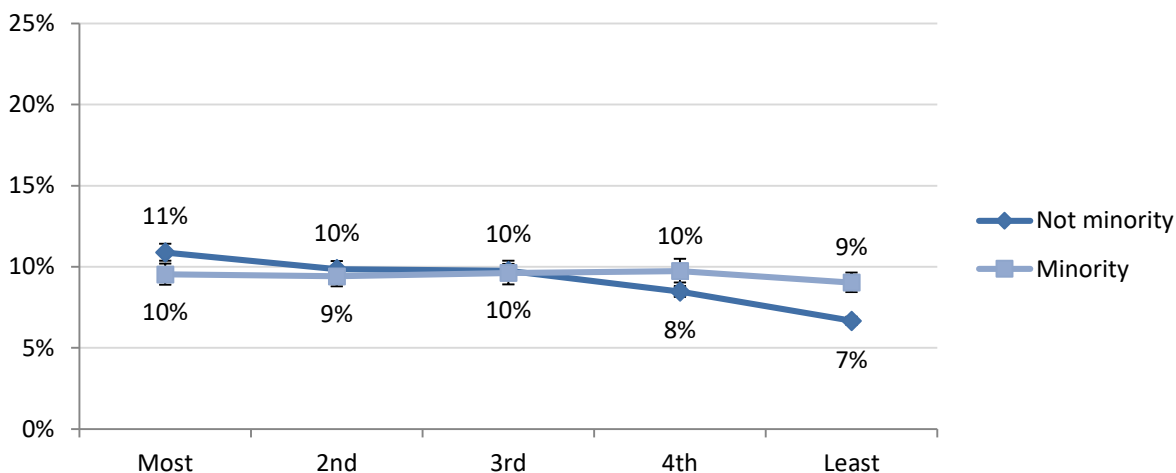


Figure 15. Percentage of pupils who have been the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months by IMD quintile and ethnicity (2002-2018, N=147,752).

White-British pupils attending schools in the most deprived fifth (quintile) being more likely to be victims of violence than their ethnic minority counterparts (11% vs 10%); while at the other end of the deprivation scale, minority ethnicity pupils who attend schools in the least deprived quintile were more likely to be victims of violence than their White-British counterparts (9% vs 7%). The differences are small but statistically significant.

■ Feeling safe

77% of pupils aged 12-15y in 2018 rate their safety at school as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ (or say they feel ‘safe’ or ‘very safe’). They find going out during the day safer than being at school, while going to and from school is reported as less safe, and going out after dark as much less safe. We were also interested to see trends in this long-standing question:

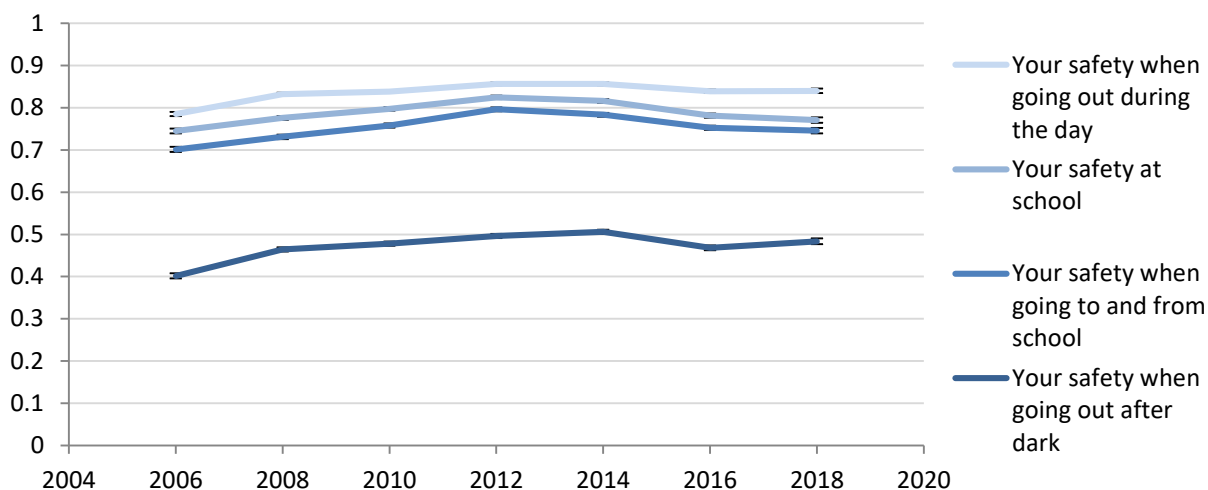


Figure 16. Percentage of pupils who rate their safety in various situations as safe/very safe (or good/very good); a selection of areas across England (N=267,647).

There is some local variation in these trends. For example, within the West Midlands, we can track changes in three local authorities.

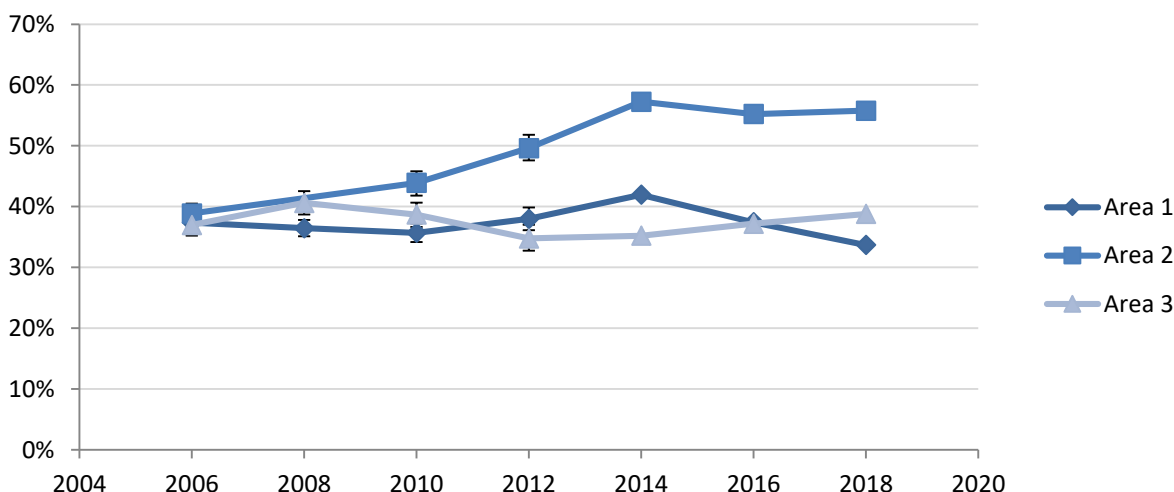


Figure 17. Percentage of pupils who rated their safety after dark as quite/very good (three areas of the West Midlands, Area 1 N=33,189; Area 2 N=16,807; Area 3 N=14,939).

We have found that pupils in one local authority have, over time, been more likely to rate their safety as good/very good ('Area 2' - Figure 17), whereas their counterparts in a neighbouring area were slightly less likely to rate their safety after dark as good/very good in 2018 than in recent years ('Area 1' - Figure 17). Area 3 had seen a drop, but has in recent years seen an improvement.

Rating of safety in their local area varies somewhat across the country, although perhaps the levels are more similar than they are different.

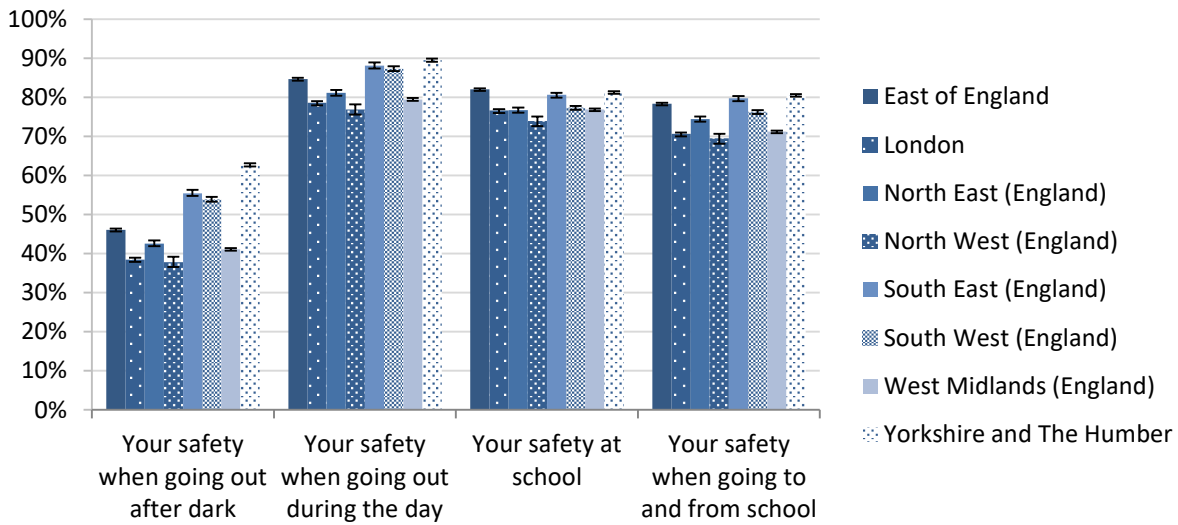


Figure 18 Percentage of pupils who rated their safety in various situations as good or very good or safe or very safe; 316,449 Year 8 and 10 pupils over the period 2002-2018

Pupils in areas in London and the North West (and to a lesser extent, the West Midlands) being less likely than pupils in other areas to feel safe in the situations we asked about (see Figure 18).

■ Worry about crime

It is a common comment that public concern about crime can be disconnected from the actual incidence of crime. How do young people fare?

We ask young people about issues that may concern them, and how worried they are about them, if at all; one of the issues listed is crime.

The proportion of pupils in Year 8 and Year 10 who worry at least quite a lot about crime has been declining (see Figure 19).

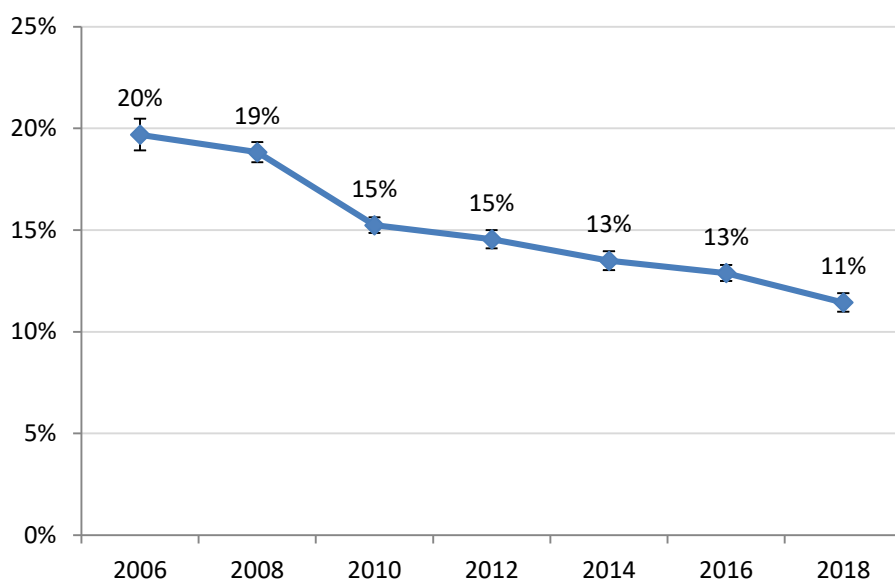


Figure 19. Percentage of pupils who worry about crime ‘quite a lot’ or ‘very much’ - a selection of areas from across England (N=159,307).

It may be of course that the crime that young people worry about is not their own risks, or not about being a victim of physical aggression – financial fraud, identity theft and fake online profiles may be on their mind when responding. We can address this issue:

In one series of surveys, we asked specifically about crime in their local area. Young people’s worry about crime in their local area is tracked over the last decade or so on the chart below.

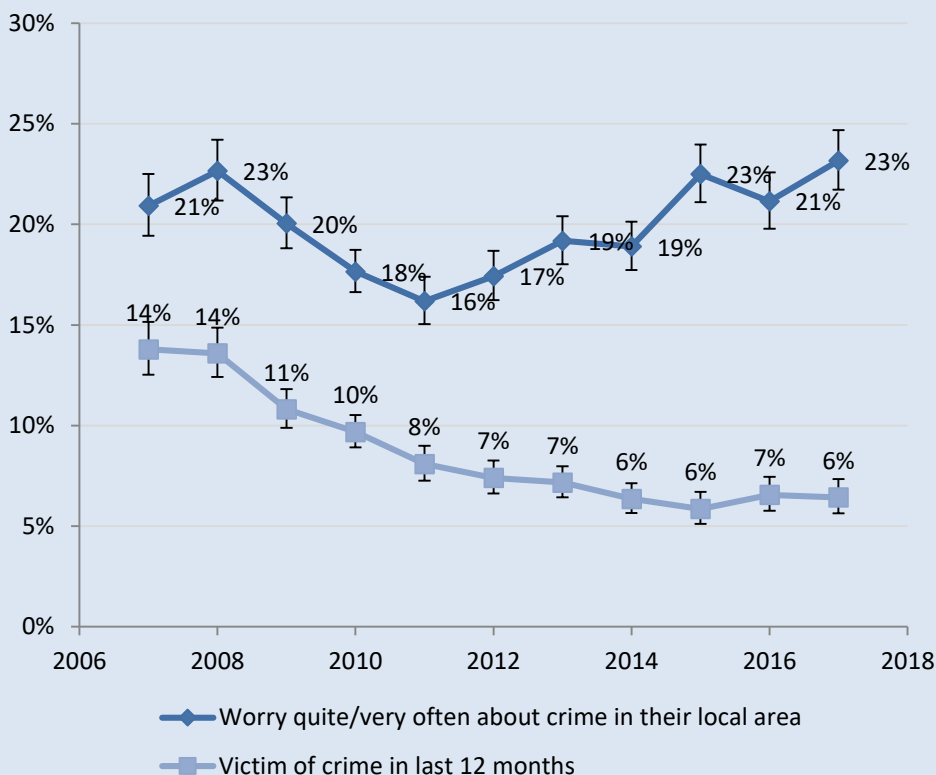


Figure 20. Worrying about crime (N=39,741) and victims of crime (N=40,928) for one area of East England (Years 7-11).

Young people’s worry about crime in this area declined between 2008 and 2011, but then the trend took a turn upwards, which seems to be continuing.

We have added a line on the chart which is these young people’s experience of being the victim of crime in the last year. It too showed a decline at first, but the decline continued until 2015, and then levelled off rather than turning back up.

There were some marked differences by age:

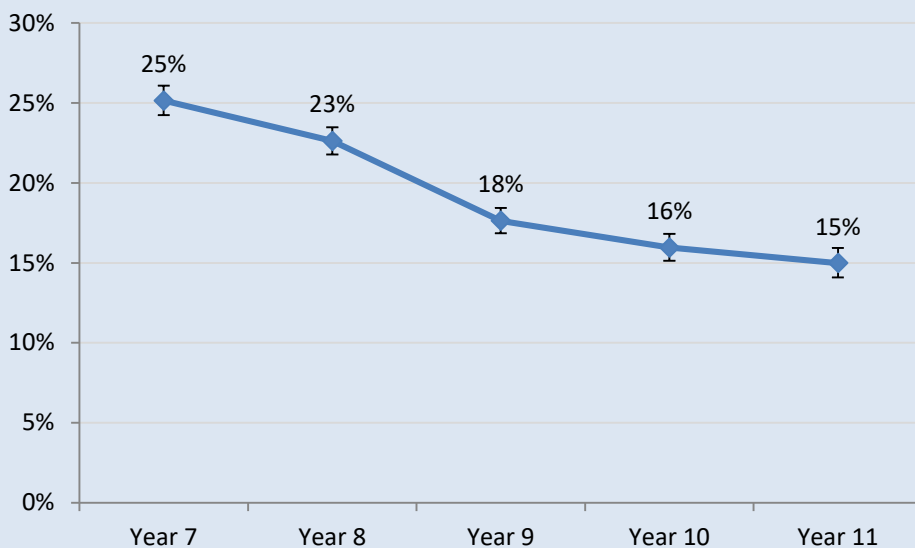


Figure 21. Percentage of pupils worrying about crime in their local area 'quite a lot' or 'very much'; average from 2007 to 2017 for one area of SE England.

Older students are rather less likely to be worried about crime in their local area; there is about ten percentage points drop between Year 7 (11-12yo) and Year 11 (15-16yo), which is 40% of the Year 7 figure.

28% of Year 8/10 pupils surveyed in one West Midlands area in 2018 said that they know someone who is a gang member outside of school; 5% said that they were a member of a gang themselves.

32% of Year 8/10 pupils surveyed in one NW England area in 2017 said that they worry at least somewhat about pressure to be part of a gang; 10% worry a lot and 2% worried enough to want to talk to someone about it.

■ Threatened by a weapon

Between 2014 and 2018, 9% of boys and 5% of girls in Year 8/10 in one East England area said that they have ever been involved in a violent incident where a weapon was used or threatened.

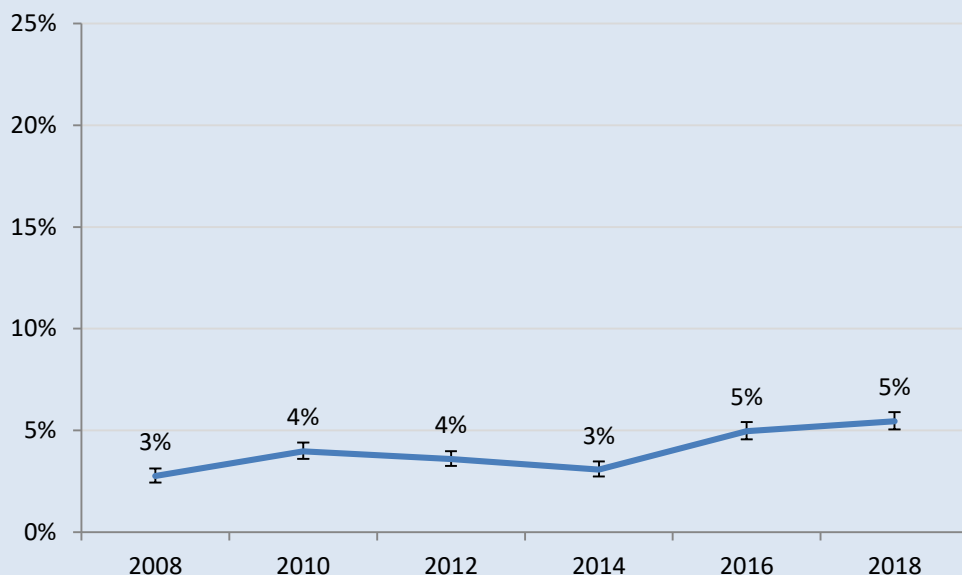


Figure 22. Percentage of pupils who have been threatened with a weapon at least monthly in the last year - sample from one East England area (N=49,041)

Over the last 10 years, we have seen a slight increase in the proportion of Year 8/10 pupils in this East England area who report that they have been threatened with a weapon in the last year (see Figure 22).

■ Safety lessons

40% of pupils in the 2018 sample rated school lessons about safety as ‘quite useful’ or ‘very useful’.

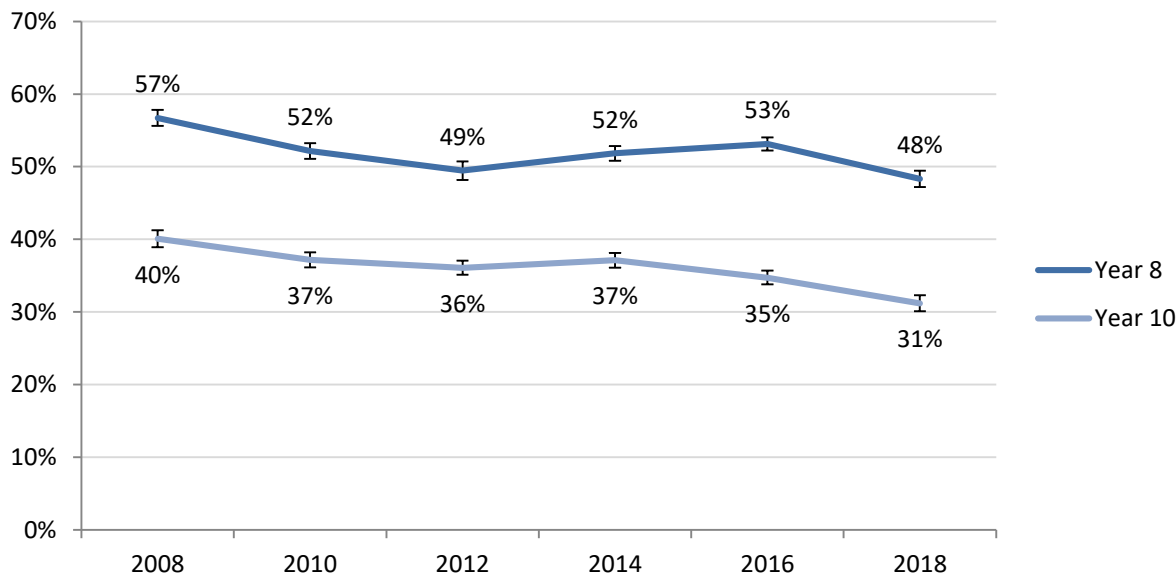


Figure 23. Percentage of pupils who rated their school safety lessons as quite or very useful - from a selection of areas across England (N=101,672).

Over the last ten years we have seen fewer Year 8/10 pupils are rating their school lessons on safety as ‘quite useful’ or ‘very useful’ (see Figure 23); this is more the case for Year 10 than Year 8. This follows the general pattern we have seen for some other PSHE subjects such as sex and relationships education; healthy eating; drugs, alcohol, and tobacco; and citizenship, so the decline may have something to do with schools’ difficulty in finding time to deliver PSHE in general, and not just safety education.

Links between safety questions

Are there associations between the responses on one safety question and another? It is the characteristic of social science that ‘everything is correlated’, but how and to what extent is always interesting and can be important.

Victims and carrying

We were first interested in exploring the link between carrying and being the victim of crime. The chart below shows the incidence of being a victim by reports of carrying protection.

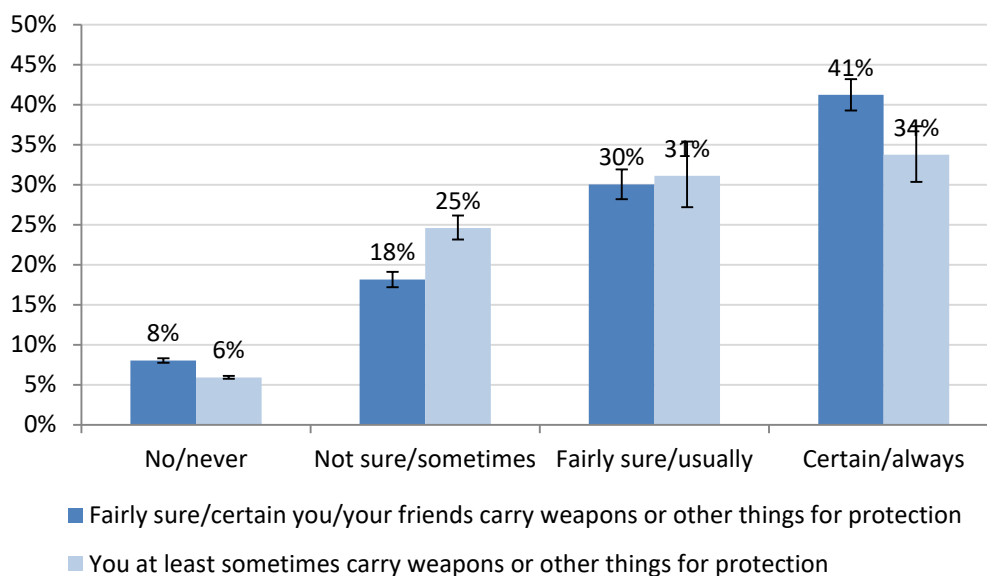


Figure 24. Percentage of pupils who have been the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months by whether they/their friends carry weapons or other things for protection (N= 107,091).

27% of pupils who at least sometimes carry weapons or other things for protection said that they have been the victim of violence or aggression within the last 12 months, compared with 6% of pupils who never carry weapons or other things for protection. Similarly, 36% of pupils who are fairly sure/certain that they/their friends carry weapons/other things for protection said that they were the victim of violence/aggression in the last 12 months, compared with 8% of pupils who said they/their friends never carry anything for protection.

■ Worry and carrying

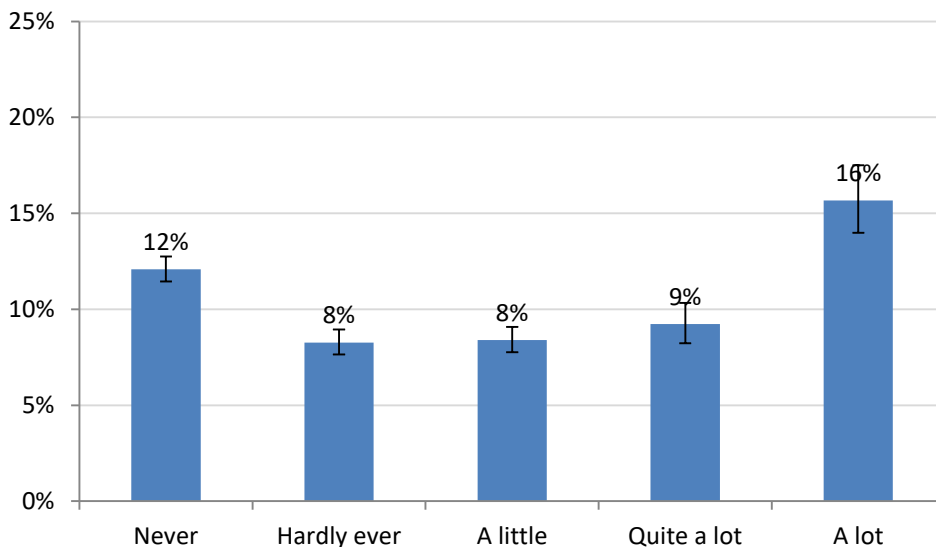


Figure 25. Percentage of Year 10 pupils who at least sometimes carry weapons or other things for protection, by worry about crime (5 areas across England, 2004-2016, N=27,904).

10% of year 10 pupils in 2017 say that they at least ‘sometimes’ carry a weapon or something else for protection; if the pupils are not at all worried about crime, the figure is 12%, while if they are at least ‘quite a lot’ worried about crime, the figure is 16%.

In one London borough in 2017 we asked if pupils 'know anyone who carries a weapon?' and also if they worry about 'youth violence' and 'gangs'; we have repeated the analysis above for these questions.

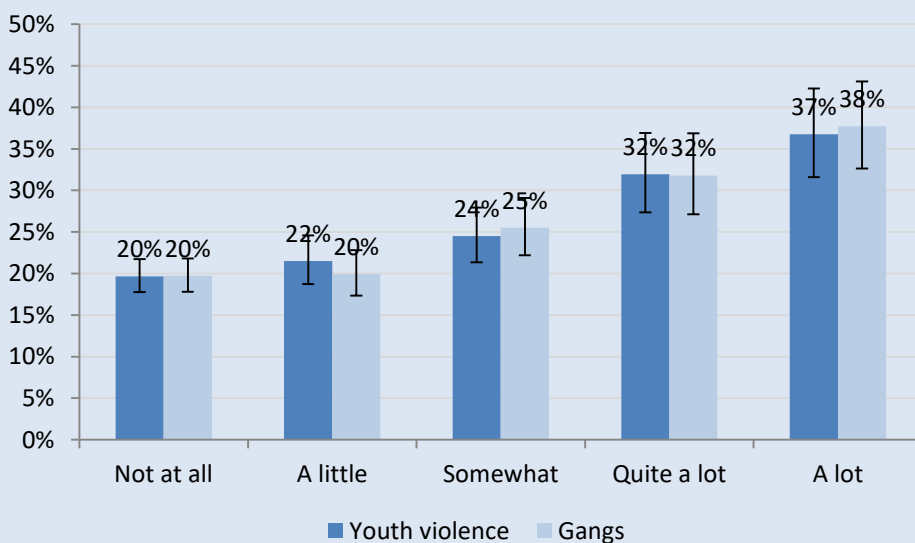


Figure 26. Percentage of Year 8/10 pupils in one London borough in 2017 who are fairly sure/certain they know someone who carries a weapon, by worrying about youth violence (N=3606) and by worrying about gangs (N=3616)

Links between safety questions and other topics

Self-esteem

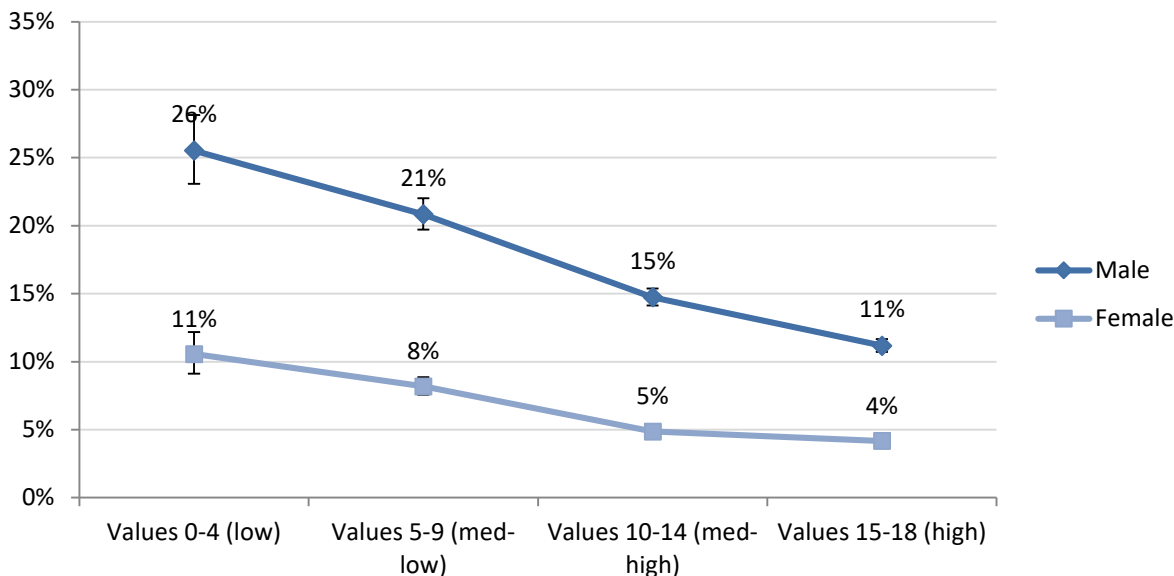


Figure 27. Percentage of pupils who carry a weapon or something else for protection at least sometimes by sex and by self-esteem score (2002-2016, N=72,287).

There seems to be a relationship between self-esteem and reporting of carrying weapons/other things for protection (see Figure 27); 26% of boys in the lower half of the self-esteem scale said that they carry a weapon or something else for protection at least sometimes, compared with 11% of boys in the upper half of the scale.

■ Emotional wellbeing

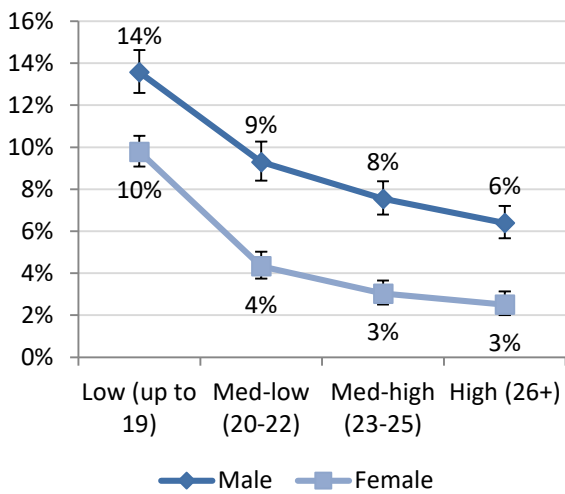


Figure 28. Percentage of pupils who have been the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months by resilience score (2012-2018, N=33,032).

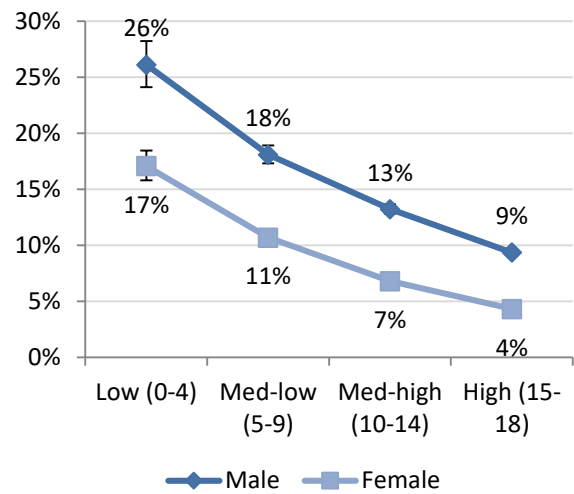


Figure 29. Percentage of pupils who have been the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months by esteem score (2004-2018, N=146,913).

Pupils with lower resilience (Figure 28) and lower self-esteem (Figure 29) were more likely to report being the victim of violence or aggression within the last 12 months; 19% of boys at the lower half of the esteem scale said they were victims compared with 11% of boys in the upper half.

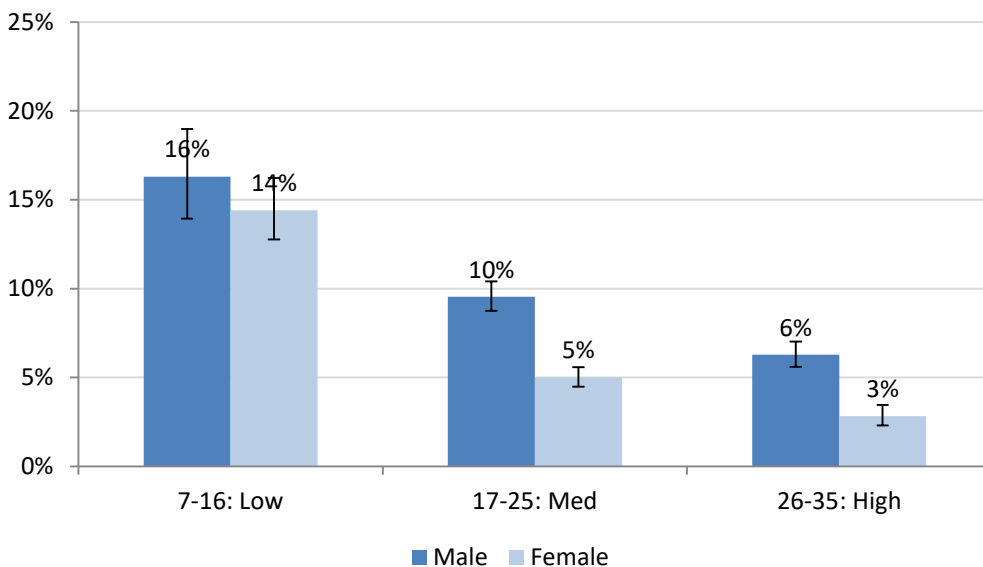


Figure 30. Percentage of pupils who have been the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months by Short Warwick-Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (N= 20,997)

This pattern was also seen among pupils using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale; pupils at the lower end of the scale were more likely to report being the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months.

Pupils who were less satisfied with their current life were more likely to report that they/their friends at carry weapons or other things for protection (Figure 31).

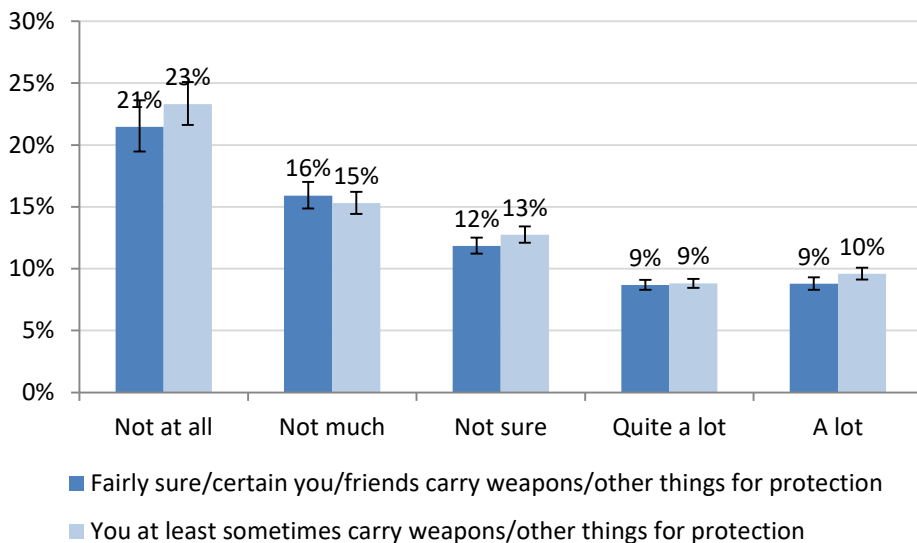


Figure 31. Percentage of pupils who carry weapons or other things, by question type by degree of satisfaction with life (2002-2018, N=103,691).

■ Trusted adults

Pupils who trust no adults or only a few were more likely to say that they were 'fairly sure'/'certain' that they or their friends carry weapons or other things for protection; pupils who trust 11-20 adults were least likely to do so (Figure 32).

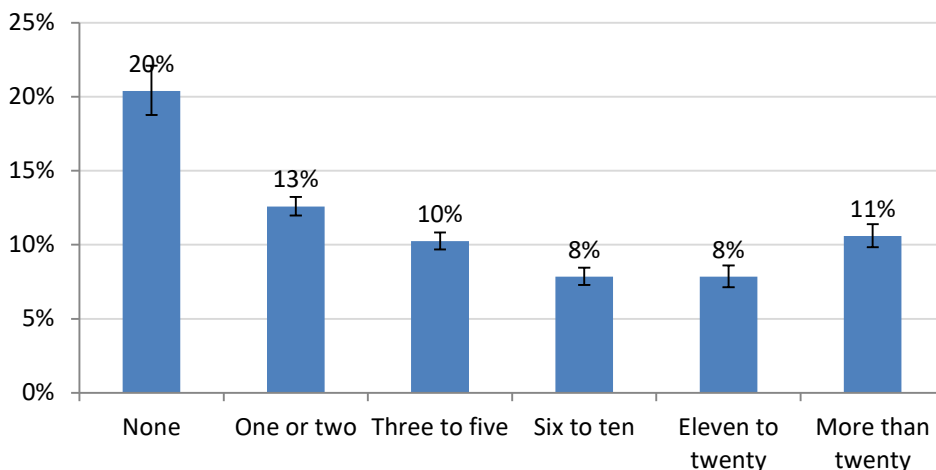


Figure 32. Percentage of pupils who are 'fairly sure'/'certain' that they or their friends carry weapons or other things for protection by how many adults they trust (2004-2018, N=42,669).

Pupils who trust no adults or only a few were more likely to say they had been victims of violence or aggression within the last 12 months; pupils who trust 11-20 adults were least likely to do so (Figure 33) – this fits the same pattern as carrying weapons/other things for protection (Figure 32).

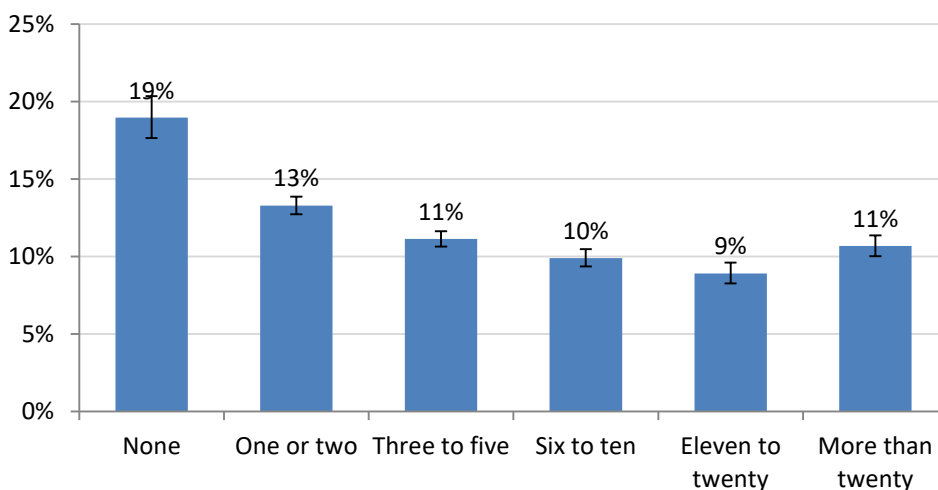


Figure 33. Percentage of pupils who have been the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months, by how many adults they trust (2004-2018, N=58,140).

Bullying

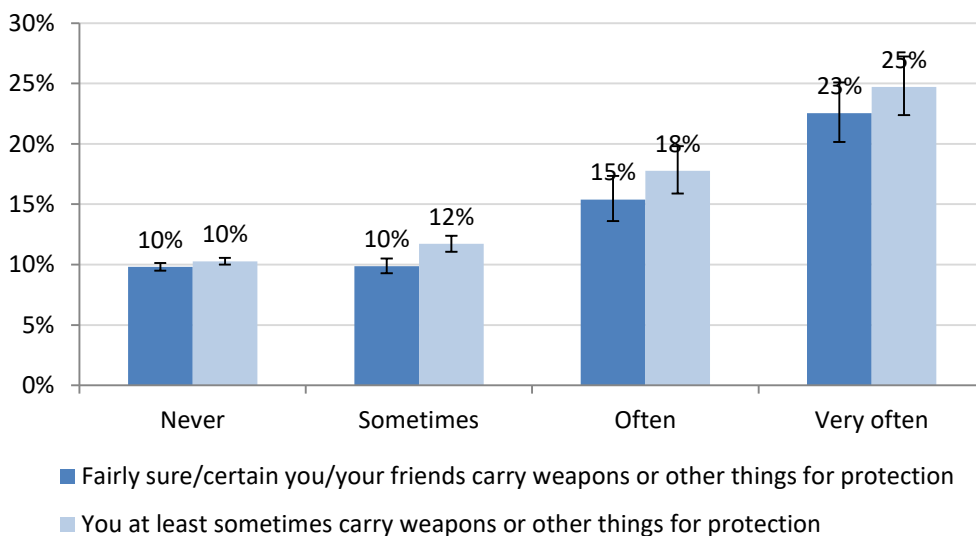


Figure 34. Percentage of pupils carrying weapons/other things for protection, by frequency of fear of going to school because of bullying (2002-2018, N=56,788).

23% of pupils who are 'very often' afraid of going to school because of bullying reported that they are 'fairly sure' or 'certain' that they or their friends at carry weapons or other things for protection; this compares with 10% of the pupils who are never afraid.

We see the same pattern in the parallel question 25% of pupils who are 'very often' afraid of going to school because of bullying reported that they at least sometimes carry weapons or other things for protection; this compares with 10% of the pupils who are never afraid.

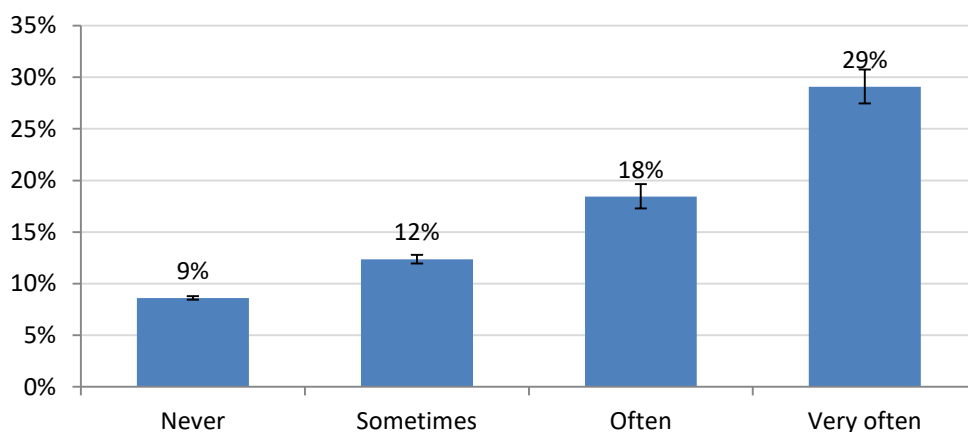


Figure 35. Percentage of pupils who report being the victim of violence or aggression within the last 12 months, by frequency of fear of going to school because of bullying (2004-2018, N=125,076).

Similarly, 29% of pupils who are 'very often' afraid of going to school because of bullying reported being the victim of violence or aggression in the last 12 months; this compares with 9% of the pupils who are never afraid.

■ Perceptions of school

Figure 36 shows the results of comparing pupils who at least sometimes carry weapons/other things for protection against a pupil perception score. This score is derived from their levels of agreement to each of a list of positive statements relating to their experience of school (e.g. 'The school cares whether I am happy or not'; 'The school prepares me for when I leave this school' etc.).

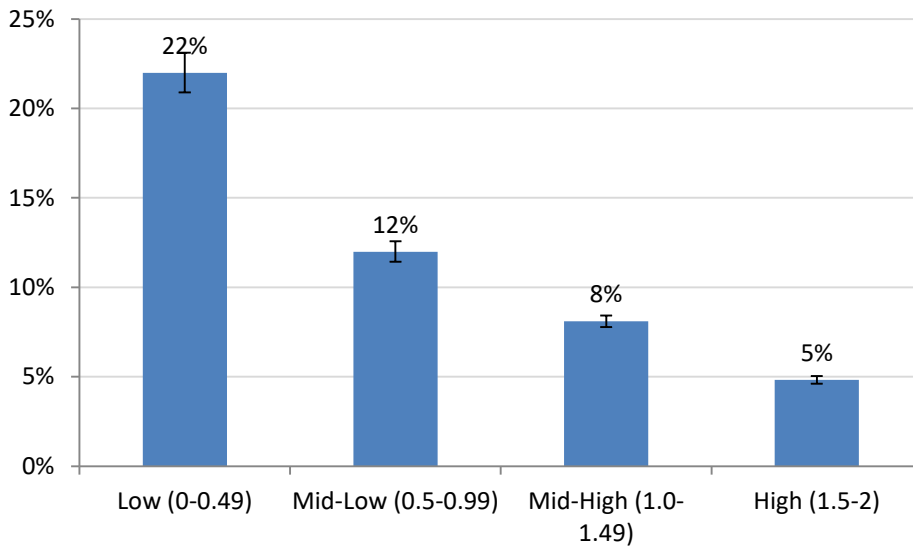


Figure 36. Percentage of pupils who at least sometimes carry weapons or other things for protection by pupil perception score (pupils in Years 8 & 10, 2006-2018 data set, N= 84,446)

There is a marked excess of carrying weapons among those students who have poorer perceptions of school. This may be an artefact of age – older pupils being more likely to carry weapons and also less likely to be positive about school. However, if we restrict the analysis by year group and gender, then we still see the same pattern of results.

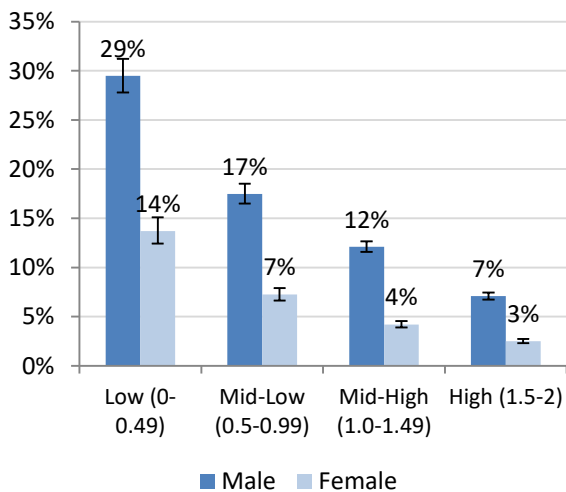


Figure 37. Percentage of pupils who at least sometimes carry things for protection by pupil perception score by sex (2006-2018, N=84,004)

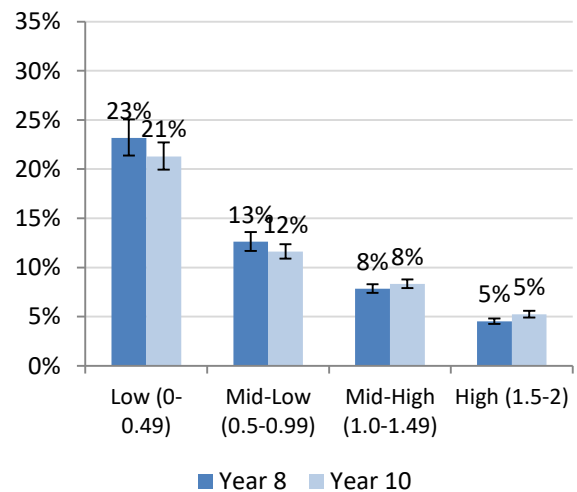


Figure 38. Percentage of pupils who at least sometimes carry things for protection by pupil perception score by year (2006-2018, N=84,446)

Replication of 1996 findings

We can confirm some of the associations first found in 1996, although the question about income that gave the report its title has been dropped by nearly all our clients since then. We have retained a related question about having a paid job during term-time.

	1996	2017
Carrying by self/others more common in Year 10 pupils among smokers	✓	✓
Carrying by self/others more common in Year 10 pupils among drinkers	✓	✓
Carrying by self/others less common in Year 10 pupils if parents always/usually know when they drink at home	✓	✓
Carrying by self/others more common in Year 10 pupils if they didn't do homework on the night before the survey	✓	✓
Carrying by self/others more common in Year 10 pupils if they worried about school problems	✓	✓
Carrying by self/others more common in Year 10 pupils if they have a higher personal income	✓	
Carrying by self/others more common in Year 10 pupils if they have a paid job during term-time		✓

We haven't reported all the 2017 replication analysis in the current report, as it doesn't really advance our understanding, but we have given it on our website: www.sheu.org.uk/content/carrying-2019

Conclusions

We are aware of a number of news stories about young people and weapons, especially knives, just as we were 20 years ago.

The evidence from these figures is that carrying weapons, including knives, is overall less prevalent now than 20 years ago, but many of the same patterns and connections are present, suggesting that the same drivers and processes are still operating.

The multiple connections also suggest that the factors and processes that produce knife crime are complex, and any policy responses may need to be equally complex.

■ Appendix: Sample sizes

Complete sample sizes in each annual data set, SHEU 2000-2017

Sample /Yr.	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Schools	389	334	499	196	452	310	787	526	1100	783	1199	579	507	619	1070	1097	1038	1199	
Primary pupils	23988	14157	13859	8158	17309	13978	37874	16061	39882	24854	38417	28083	41569	35727	54705	60488	53864	62870	
Secondary pupils	30276	11575	29190	10804	32973	23954	53557	29400	66352	39343	76583	25965	52059	22513	55987	47635	61026	68090	
All pupils	54264	25732	43049	18962	50282	37932	91431	45461	106234	64650	115000	54058	93628	58242	110692	108123	114930	134216	
Selected ages	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	10-11 12-13 14-15	8-9 10-11 12-13 14-15	8-9 10-11 12-13 14-15	8-9 10-11 12-13 14-15	
M 8-9 y																	9940	7693	10299
F 8-9 y																	9683	7590	10363
M 10-11 y	6511	3367	4067	2422	4947	3373	10339	4549	11363	6491	13373	6470	11091	6068	12644	11768	11824	11824	
F 10-11 y	6391	3425	3938	2300	4870	3336	9910	4348	10952	6215	12970	6321	10823	5746	12506	11380	11700	11700	
M 12-13 y*	7180	2553	7075	3101	7553	3028	11682	4464	14211	6842	14273	4662	11078	4605	13515	9999	14459	13653	
F 12-13 y*	7548	2249	7057	2891	7427	2664	11933	4646	15133	7253	14819	4750	10754	5041	13770	10683	14927	13608	
M 14-15 y*	7034	2219	7533	2474	8782	2691	11987	6762	14079	8067	13790	4487	12308	4412	12909	7867	11900	12513	
F 14-15 y*	7409	2088	7480	2448	9220	2651	12644	7393	14810	8168	14499	4664	12540	4838	13107	8900	12100	12360	
Total	42,073	15,901	37,150	15,636	42,799	17,743	68,494	32,162	80,548	43,014	83,724	31,354	68,594	30,710	78,451	80,220	92,193	100,976	

* Included in this report

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