



Prince's Trust

Executive Summary

The culture of youth communities: a report by The Prince's Trust

The culture of youth communities suggests that a lack of parent and adult role models is driving young people to turn to gangs and other peers for support.

The findings indicate that young people are forming 'youth communities', where they look to peers for a sense of identity and even for role models, in the place of traditional adult role models.

A third (34%) of young people surveyed did not have a parent who they considered to be a role model.

Fifty-eight per cent of young people claimed that finding a sense of identity was a key reason for joining a gang.

Almost a quarter (22%) said young people were looking for role models in gangs.

More than half (55%) cited friends and peers as role models.

Young people were **twice as likely** to turn to a peer (60%) with a problem as they were to turn to a parent (31%).

The findings suggest that young people are creating their own 'youth communities' and gangs in search of the influences that could once have been found in traditional communities. All the threads that hold a community together – a common identity, role models, a sense of safety – were given by young people as motivations to join gangs.

The research also exposed a lack of communication between young people and older people, with **more than a third (36%)** of young people claiming they "never" or "hardly" speak to people over 40 beyond their parents, teachers or people at work.

The issue most likely to hold young people back was **low self-confidence (32%)** according to the research.

This was followed by more tangible things such as **lack of job opportunities (28%)** and **lack of training opportunities (14%)**.

The Trust's programmes aim to provide young people with positive adult role models, developing their confidence and skills for work. Anecdotal evidence suggests that having a positive adult role model increases confidence and personal development: three in four young people who have been supported through a Prince's Trust programme go on to work, education or training.

The research also puts into context recent alarm over knife crime and youth crime generally. Only **nine per cent** of young people have spent time as part of a gang, **three per cent** "regularly" take drugs, and just **two per cent** carry a knife.

In another piece of recent research conducted by The Trust, 60% of media coverage about young people was found to be negative.

The Prince's Trust's 'Change the record' campaign aims to change perceptions of young people, highlighting their positive achievements. See www.princes-trust.org.uk/changetherecord.

Key findings from 'The culture of youth communities'

"Youth communities"

- One in three (34%) of the young people surveyed did not have a parent they considered a role model
- Young people were twice as likely to turn to a peer (60%) with a problem as they were to turn to a parent (31%)
- More than half (55%) cited friends and peers as role models

Gangs

- Three per cent said they are in a gang now; six per cent used to be in a gang but are not now; 91% have never been in a gang
- Forty-one per cent said they have had contact with people in gangs
- A third (32%) currently know people in gangs
- More than half (58%) said people join gangs for a sense of identity
- Almost half (48%) said people join gangs for respect
- Almost half (47%) said people join gangs out of fear
- Forty-one per cent said people join gangs for safety
- Almost a quarter (22%) said people join gangs for role models

What is holding young people back?

- A third (32%) said self-confidence was the single most likely thing to hold them back in life
- Twenty-nine per cent said not enough job opportunities was the most likely thing to hold them back
- Fourteen per cent said lack of training opportunities was holding them back
- Eleven per cent said not having the right qualifications was holding them back
- One in ten said that not having enough qualifications was holding them back

Taking drugs

- Three per cent said they regularly take drugs; six per cent sometimes take drugs; 10% used to take drugs but don't anymore
- 72% have never taken drugs

Carrying a knife

- Safety was the main reason for carrying a knife
- Two per cent said they carry a knife; three per cent used to carry a knife but don't anymore
- 94% have never carried a knife

Future happiness

- Young people felt that we would be happier in general if we all looked after the people around us first, before our own needs (71%)
- Twenty-nine per cent think we should all look after our own needs first

The Prince's Trust helps change young lives in the UK through practical and financial support, developing skills as well as confidence and motivation. Since the charity was founded by HRH The Prince of Wales in 1976, it has helped over

575,000 young people across the UK and continues to support 100 more every working day. Further information about The Prince's Trust is available at www.princes-trust.org.uk or by calling 0800 842 842.

The culture of youth communities was carried out by YouGov on behalf of The Prince's Trust. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,754 14 to 25-year-olds across the UK. Fieldwork was undertaken between 9th - 17th July 2008. The survey was carried out online. The figures have not been weighted.