No Offence to ‘Neds’

Exploring public perceptions and media reporting of young people involved in offending
Youth crime in Scotland

• The vast majority of young people do not get involved in offending behaviour

SPPF, 2013; GRO(S), 2012

www.cycj.org.uk
Youth crime has steadily fallen since 2006/07

SCRA (2013)
Youth crime has steadily fallen since 2006/07

SPPF (2013)
Youth crime in Scotland

- Youth crime has fallen at a faster rate than adult crime.

SPPF (2013)
Youth crime in Scotland

- The majority of youth crime involves petty or nuisance crime

SPPF (2013)
Perceptions of Crime

- 76% of the general public perceive crime in their area to have stayed the same or reduced in the past two years

SCJS (2014)
Perceptions of Crime

• However you could also say that 85% of the public think crime has stayed the same or increased in the past two years
• Adults overestimate their likelihood of being a victim of crime (i.e. burglary 6x overestimated)

SCJS (2014)
Perceptions of youth crime

- In 2004, 60% of respondents to the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey think that young people’s behaviour was worse than it was in the past.
- 69% thought that youth crime was higher than a decade ago.
- Up to two-thirds of respondents thought that various types of youth crime-related problems (groups of young people hanging around; vandalism etc.) were common in their area.
Perceptions of Crime

• Studies tended to find a perception that crime was increasing even when it was falling
• Ipsos MORI (2006) survey of 1001 respondents: young people were perceived to commit 47% of crimes (on average)
• (In Scotland in 2012/13 the actual proportion was 16%)
Reasons behind the perceptions?

- **Personal experience** of crime (the risk of being a victim was 16.9% in 2012/2013)
- **Contact with young people**: In SSA 2004 biggest concerns were framed as either a ‘lack of opportunities for young people’ or ‘young people hanging around’ around depending on contact
Reasons behind the perceptions?

- **Media**: most common sources of crime information in CYCJ survey were: Newspapers (100%); TV News (73%).

- **Sources of information about youth crime** (Hough and Roberts, 2004)
  - Media 64%
  - Crimes committed against me or people I know 18%
  - What other people say 16%
  - Personal observation 9%
  - Government statistics 5%
The role of the media?

• “print media influences public opinion on crime trends by increasing coverage of certain crimes disproportionately to the amount of crime in a community”  Carli (2008)

• “…heavy media consumption had statistically significant relationships with fear of crime and punitive attitudes”  Boda and Szabó (2011)
The role of the media?

- Certainly media reporting can paint a negative picture of young people.
Media Reporting

• However, does the media get a ‘bad press’?
• Analysis of 6 papers across: Glasgow; Edinburgh and Aberdeen
• Compared headlines relating to young people from a six month period in 2006, to the same six-month period in 2013
Almost half of all headlines painted a negative picture of young people (46.6%)

“Teen ‘mob’ sprays seat at museum”
EE, July 22 2006

“Tougher action needed on neds”
ET, Dec 4 2006

Only 17.2% of headlines outlined young people doing something positive

“Reward for young volunteers”
P&J, Sept 1 2006

The rest were either neutral (15.2%) or reported the young person to be a victim of crime or other circumstances (21%).

“Teenagers in China to sit Highers”
Scotland on Sunday, Sept 3 2006
Media Reporting: 2013

• There was a notable decrease in headlines that painted a negative picture of young people (28.9%, compared to 46.6% in 2006)

“Teenager admits travel fraud charges”
The Herald, Aug 17 2013

“Gang of 40 young thieves causes havoc”
P&J, Sept 20 2013

• There was an increase in headlines that describe young people as a victim of crime or circumstance (31.1%, compared to 21%)

“Criminal records ruin young lives”
Scotland on Sunday, Nov 3 2013

• There was an increase in headlines that were neutral about young people (22.5% compared to 15.2%)

“Referendum drive to get young voters”
ET, Oct 1 2013
However, only 17.4% of headlines outlined young people achieving something positive (compared to 17.2% in 2006)

“Teenagers march in support of their deported classmates”
*The Herald, Oct 18 2013*

“Young choir raises £450 for charity”
*EE, Dec 27 2013*
Media Reporting

2006

• 1,088
• “thug” 103 (9.5%)
• “knife” 32 (2.9%)
• “gang” 25 (2.3%)
• “yob” 9 (0.8%)
• “ned” 9 (0.8%)

2013

• 768
• “thug” 48 (6.3%)
• “knife” 10 (1.3%)
• “gang” 6 (0.8%)
• “yob” 0 (0%)
• “ned” 1 (0.1%)
What is behind the change?

• Less stories about young people in general?
• Less crime?
• Changes in the media?
• Societal changes?
Conclusions?

• Whatever the reason these are positive changes.
• However, given that less 5% of young people were involved in any level of offending is this still a fair reflection of young people in the media?