



LIVES NOT KNIVES

The Flavasum Trust knife crime survey

Damilola Taylor Centre
29 March 2008

www.theflavasumtrust.org



**The Peace Tree “Walk Free... Respect Life”
Anti-gun, knife and gang crime event**

Saturday 29 March, 2-8pm

Damilola Taylor Centre, East Surrey Grove, London, SE15 6DR

REPORT

Two trustees attended on behalf of the Tom Easton Flavasum Trust, a registered charity established after Tom Easton, a 22-year-old sound recording engineer, was stabbed to death on 15 September 2006 while he was working at the EC1 Music Project, an Islington Council music studio helping disadvantaged young people develop their creative talents. Tom’s killer was found guilty of manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility on 21 December 2007 and committed to Broadmoor indefinitely.

The Flavasum Trust was set up to promote public safety and the prevention of crime by raising awareness of the consequences of carrying knives and other weapons. To do this, the Trust supports the use of music and other creative activities to reach and engage young people, especially the most disaffected.

At the Peace Tree event, the trustees distributed a four-page survey (Appendix 2) and a free pencil with the slogan *LIVES NOT KNIVES* printed on it. The same survey was accessible on computers in the mobile internet bus parked in the car park.

Questionnaires were completed by 74 people – 70 paper versions and 4 online (7 were partially completed). As an incentive, free Peace Tree promo CDs were given to respondents in exchange for completed surveys.

The Flavasum Trust survey

Boroughs

The majority of those completing the survey lived in Southwark (45%) and Lewisham (10%). The remaining respondents were from other boroughs including Lambeth, Wandsworth, Hackney, Newham, Merton, and Croydon.

Gender

Most of the respondents were female (82%) which reflected the make-up of those attending the event, and their greater willingness to take part in completing the survey – males were generally more diffident.

Age

The majority of the respondents were aged between 12 and 16 (55%), with fewer 17 to 24 year-olds (18%), 25 and over (16%) and just 10% of those 11 and under.

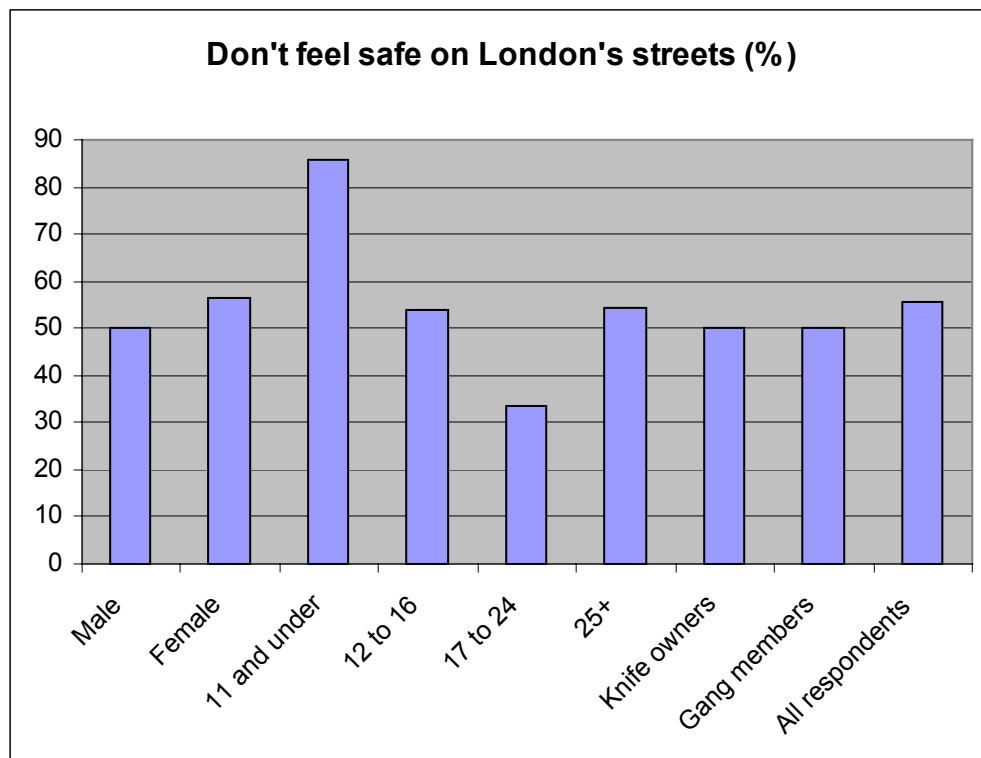
Ethnicity

The overwhelming make-up of those completing the survey was Black (56%), most of whom were Black British Caribbean – again reflecting attendance. White respondents made up 21%, Mixed 17%, Asian 3% and other ethnic groups 3%.

What follows is a brief analysis of the answers to each question.

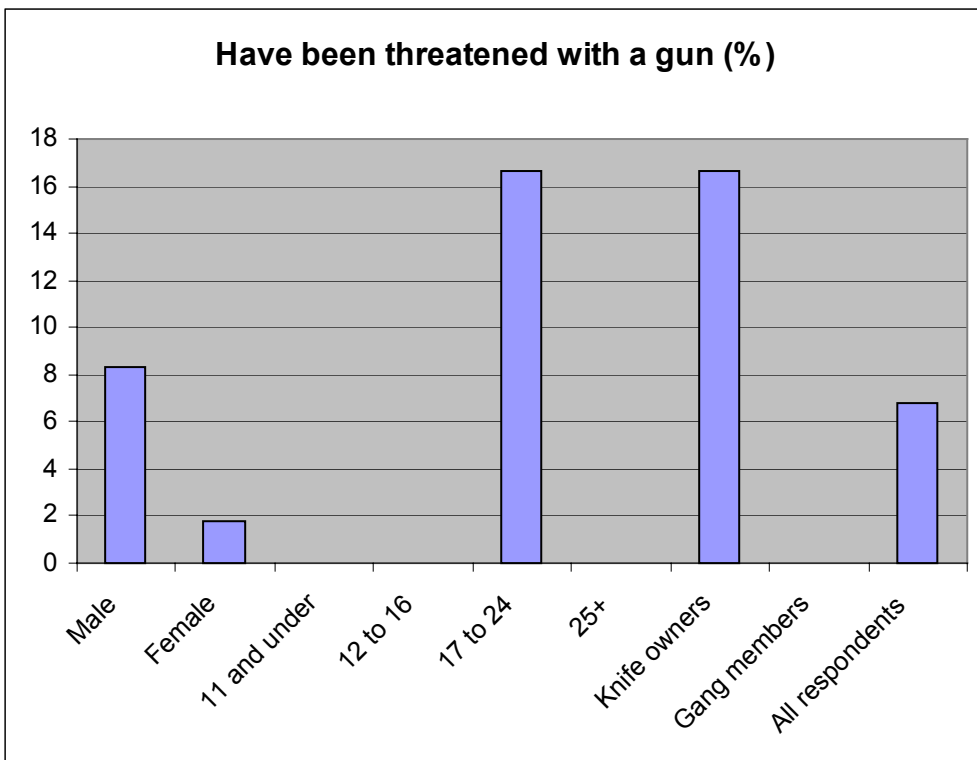
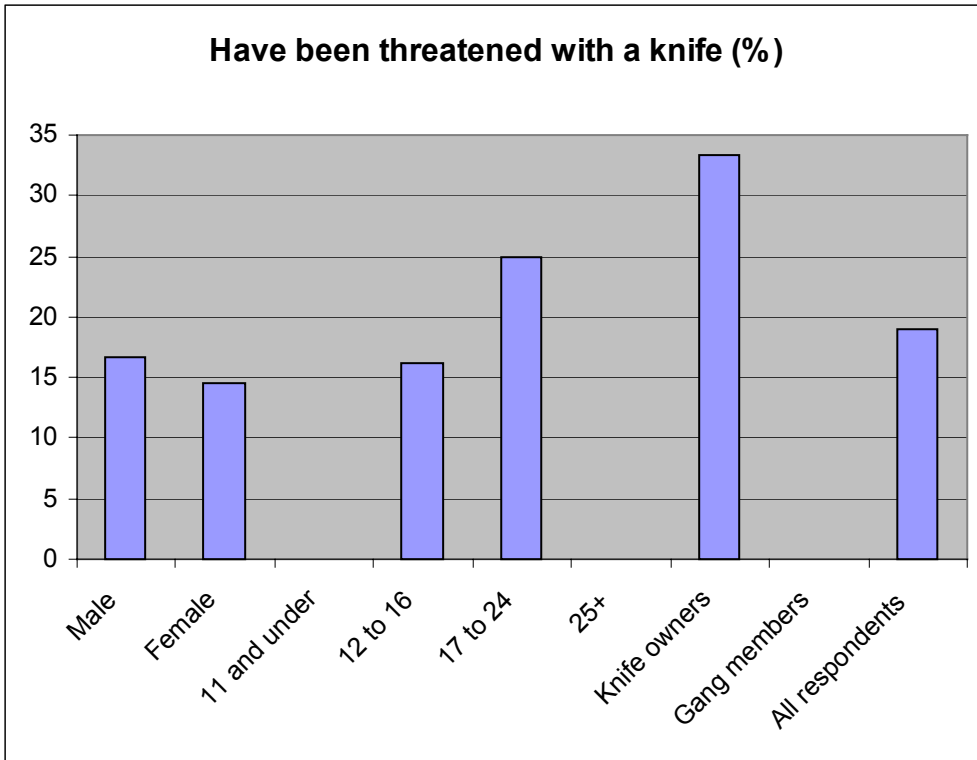
1. Do you feel safe on London's streets?

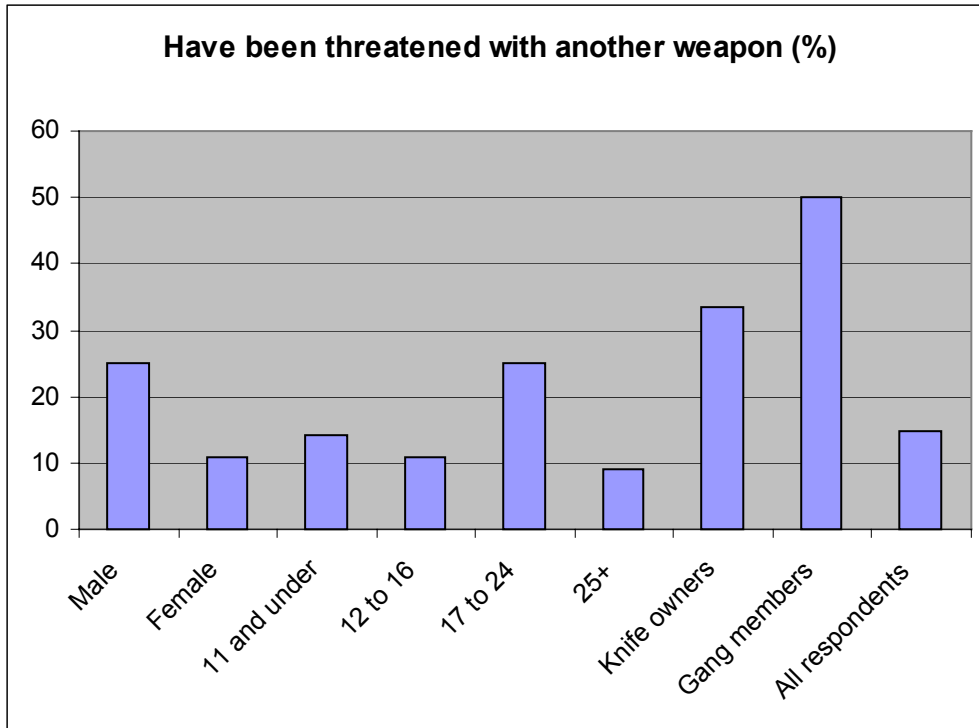
58% of the respondents do not feel safe on London's streets. The highest percentage of respondents who do not feel safe on London's streets were aged 11 and under:



2. Have you ever been threatened with a knife, a gun, another weapon?

Over 30% of knife owners have been threatened with a knife and 25% of those aged between 17 to 24 years of age, whereas 16% of both 17 to 24 year-olds and knife owners have been threatened with a gun. A half of gang members have been threatened with another weapon.

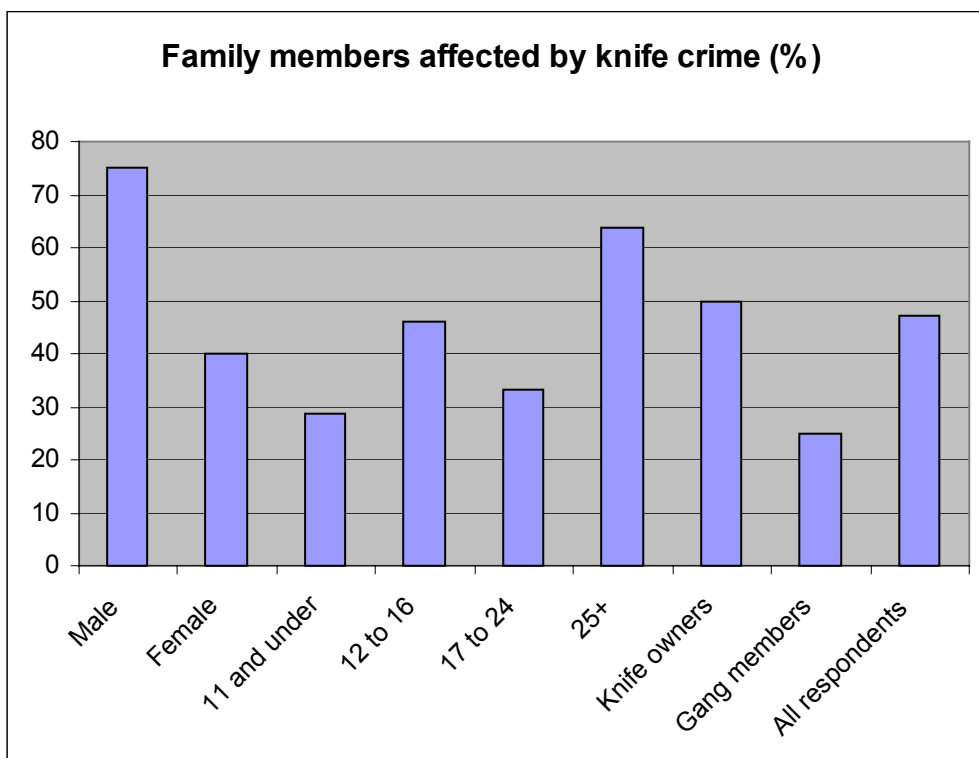


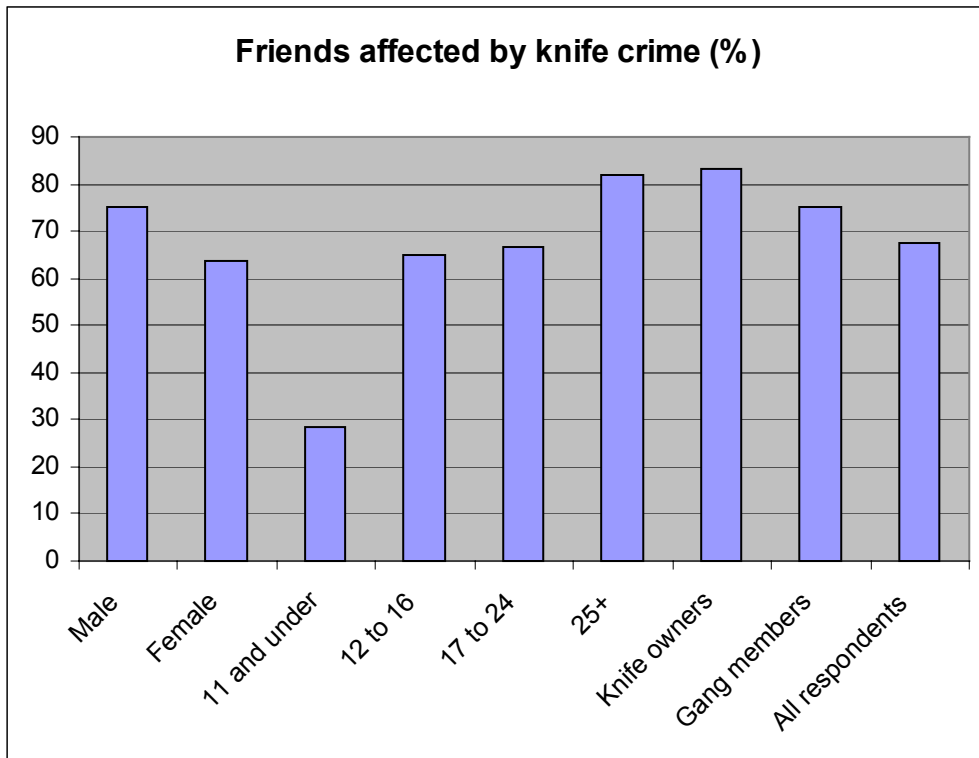


3. Has anyone in your family been affected by knife crime?

4. Have any of your friends been affected by knife crime?

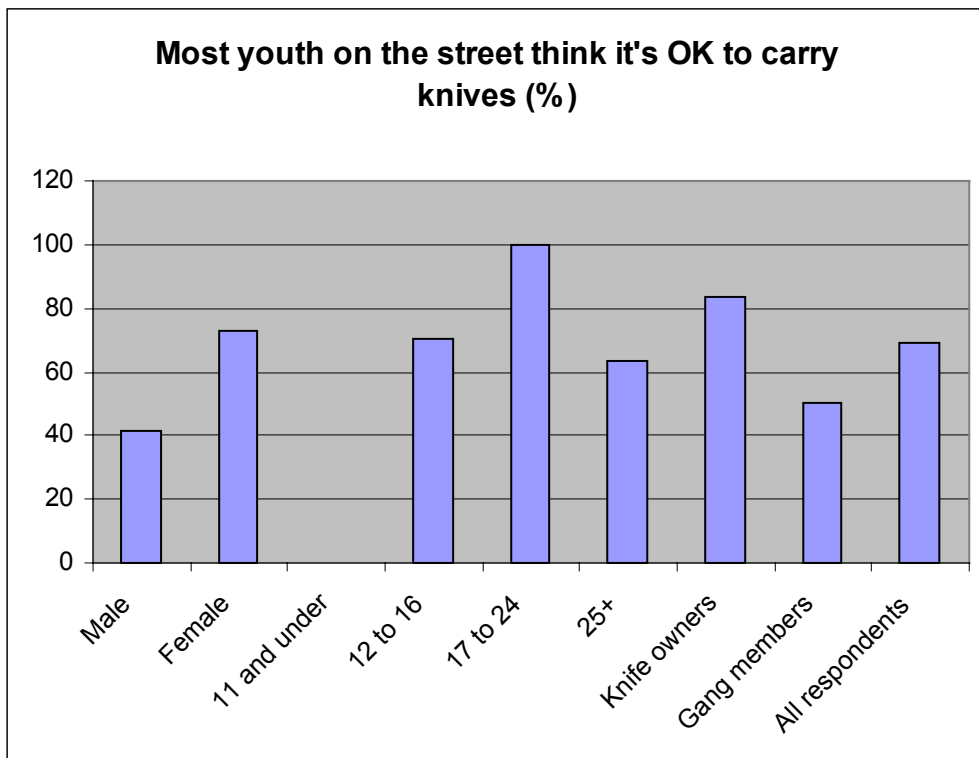
Large percentages of respondents have families who have been affected by knife crime, particularly males. Even higher percentages have friends who have been affected, especially friends of those who have purchased knives. A large percentage of over 25s and knife owners have families and friends affected by knife crime:



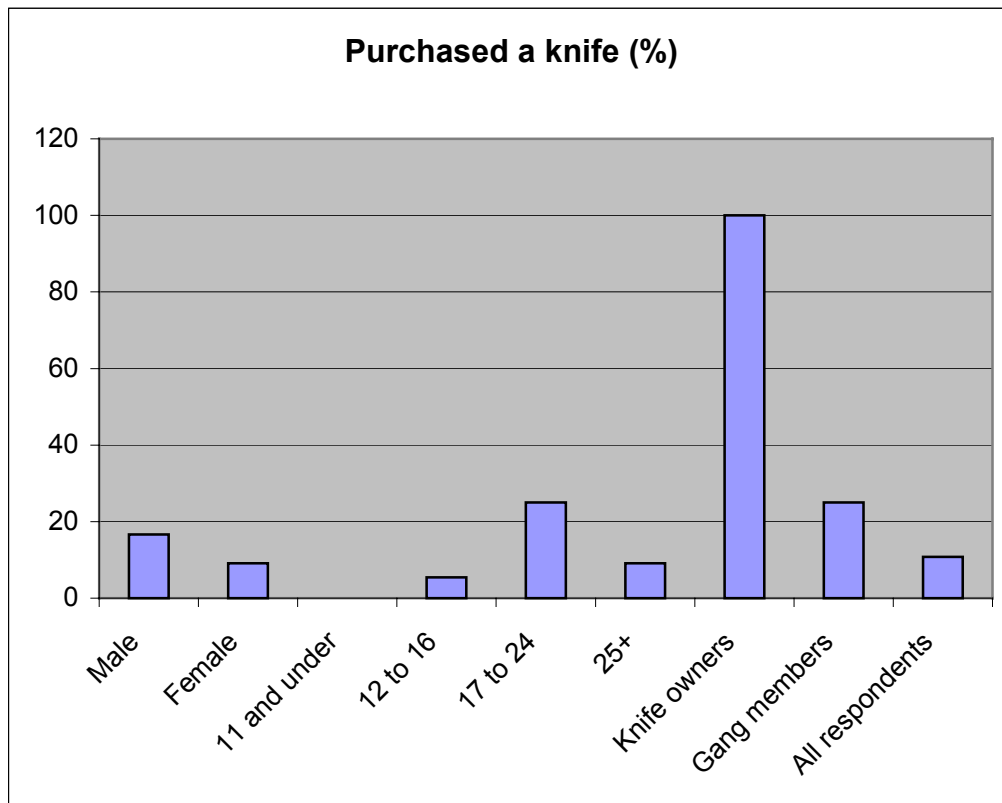


5. Do you think most youth on the street think it's OK to carry knives?

All 17 to 24 year-olds think that youth on the street believe it's OK to carry knives. Over half of all respondents agreed (70%) although none of those aged 11 and under agreed.



6. Have you ever bought a knife?



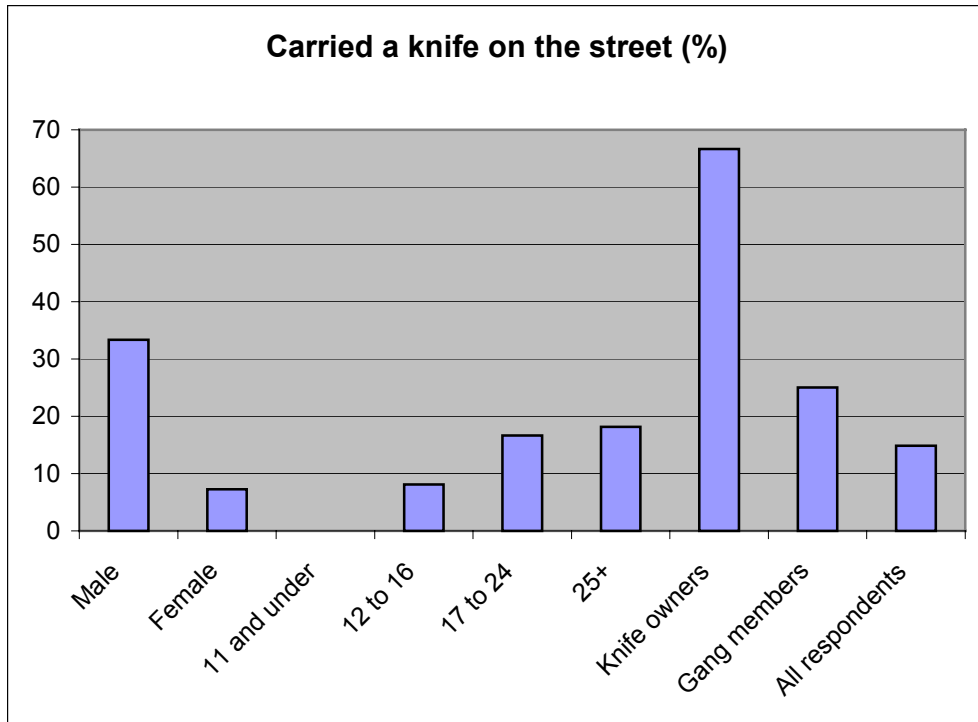
Males, 17 to 24 year-olds and gang members all indicate they have purchased knives, as well as a smaller number of females.

7. If you have bought a knife, were you asked your age?

Of the 8 respondents who purchased a knife, 6 were not asked their age.

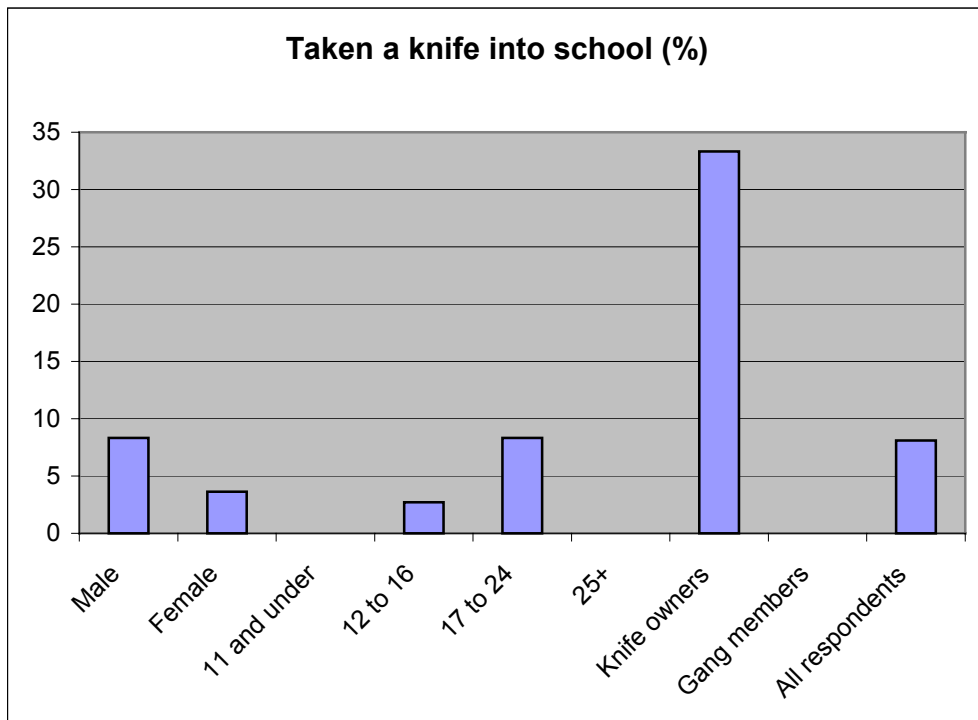
8. Have you ever carried a knife on the street?

This question was answered by those who said they had bought a knife and also those who hadn't. A higher percentage of those who purchased a knife have carried one on the street, but 30% of male respondents and 25% of gang members have also carried knives – even if they hadn't purchased one.



9. Have you ever taken a knife into school?

A smaller percentage of knife owners have taken them into school (33%) than carried them on the street (67%). A higher proportion of females to males have taken a knife into school compared to carrying one on the street, although these statistics need to be treated with caution given the observation previously made.

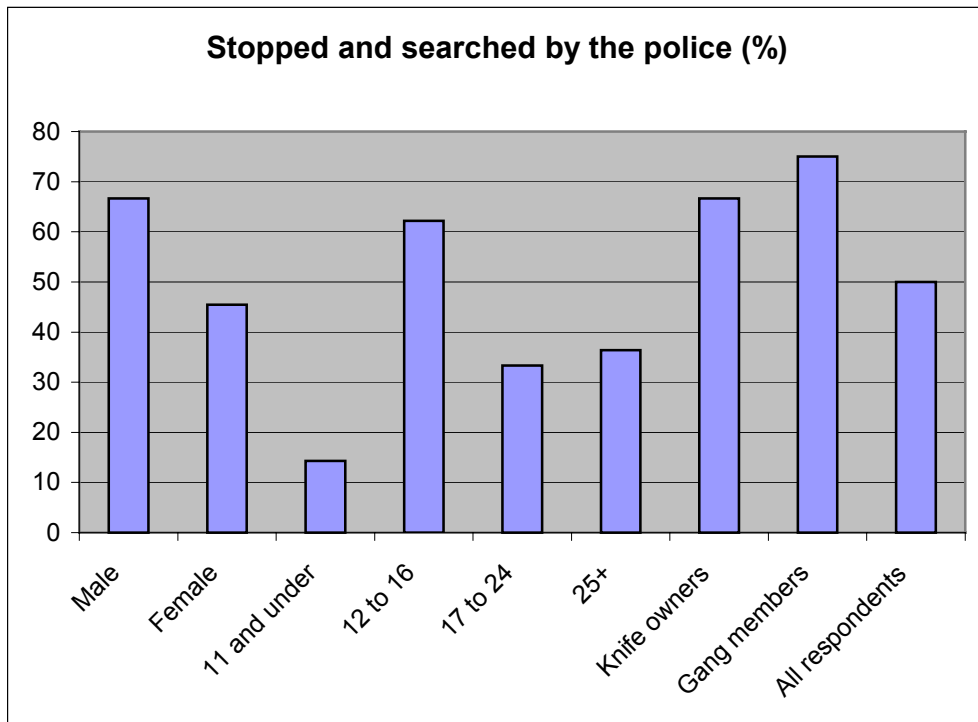


10. Do you think schools should search pupils for weapons?

Over three quarters of the respondents thought that schools should search pupils for weapons, and more than 90% of 17 to 24 year-olds. Unsurprisingly, slightly less knife owners agreed.

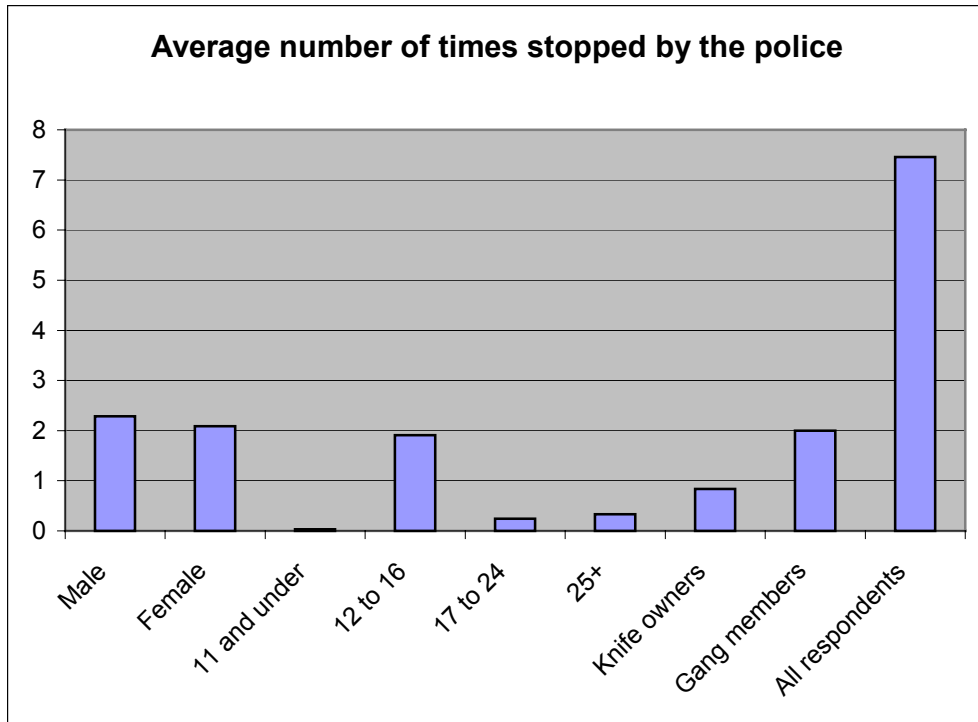
11. Have you ever been stopped and searched by the police?

Half of all respondents have been stopped and searched by the police, over 70% of gang members, and over 60% of 12 to 16 year-olds, males, and knife owners. 15% of those aged 11 and under have also been stopped and searched.



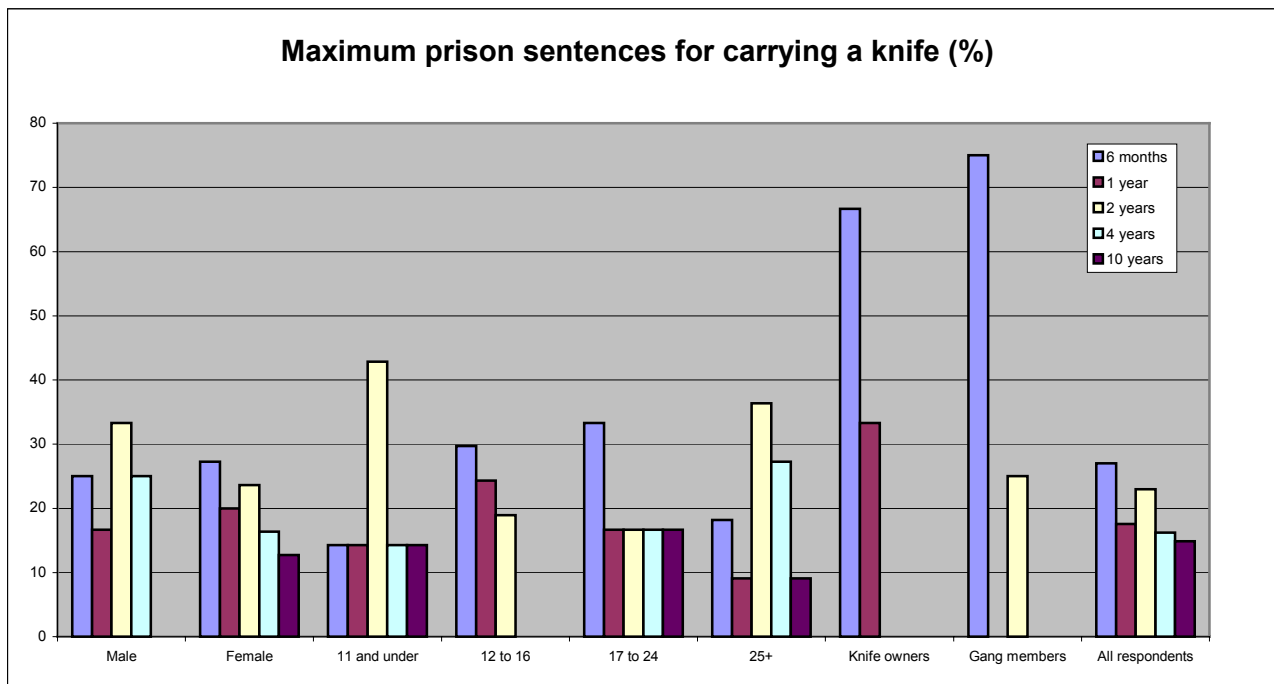
12. If you have been stopped by the police, how many times?

Answers to this question ranged from 0 to 100 times, so the average for all respondents is likely to be false. Excluding some of the higher values (which may not be untrue, just exaggerated), brings the average down to 3, which is closer to the median. The average for the other groups has not been distorted by the reported higher values.



13. What do you think the maximum prison sentence is for carrying a knife: 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, 4 years, 10 years?

What is significant about the answers to this question is that most groups, especially knife owners and gang members, assumed that the maximum prison sentence is shorter than it is. The next was 2 years, followed by 1 year. Lower percentages thought that it was 4 years, and some as high as 10 years. Overall, only 16% knew the correct period.



14. If this sentence was higher, do you think it would stop people from carrying knives?

Whatever the answer had been given to the previous question, around 60% of all respondents thought that a higher sentence would stop people from carrying knives, with slightly more aged 11 and under (71%). Only 25% of gang members thought it would make a difference.

15. Do you think the ‘media’, eg video games, music lyrics, television, violent films, contributes to knife crime?

Over 60% thought that the media contributes to knife crime. Slightly more males, gang members and 12 to 16 year-olds agreed, but fewer knife owners (50%).

16. If you think the media has an effect on knife crime, please rate them: matter a lot, matter a bit, not important.

Video games: most thought they matter a bit (42%), with a larger proportion of males and over 25s (57% and 55% respectively).

Song lyrics: there was more variation here, with 50% of knife owners and gang members believing they matter a lot and most of the other groups believing they mattered a bit. Generally, though, lyrics were not seen as important.

Television: there were more similar percentages of all groups who believed television mattered a lot – all over 40%, except 17 to 24 year-olds (30%).

Violent films: a greater percentage of all groups believed violent films matter a lot, especially those aged 11 and under, 17 to 24 year-olds, and knife owners. Most males and over 25s thought they mattered a bit and far fewer thought they were not important.

17. Are you a member of a gang?

Only 5% of respondents were members of gangs. The largest percentages being those aged 11 and under, and knife owners. No males admitted they were members, which has to be associated with their disinclination to be seen completing a survey asking such questions.

18. Do you take part in any activities at a youth club or community centre in your area?

Over half of the respondents took part in activities, although less than 15% of those aged 11 and under. This is likely to be explained by the greater fear the youngest respondents had of being on the streets, suggesting that their activities were mainly at home or in friends' homes.

19. If any of the following activities were provided locally, which would you prefer?

This question didn't ask whether respondents were already taking part in the following activities, or that these activities were already available locally.

Theatre: over 40% of those aged 11 and under and those 25 and over chose theatre.
Dance: dance appealed to higher percentages of females (65%), 11 and under (86%), and 12 to 16 year-olds (62%) making it the most preferred activity (55% of all respondents).

Music: three quarters of 17 to 24 year-olds and gang members preferred music, and half of all respondents.

Multimedia: none aged 11 and under or gang members chose multimedia, but it did appeal to the over 25s (45%).

Football: unsurprisingly, the largest percentage of males chose football (58%), but very few 17 to 24 year-olds (8%) and gang members (0%). Nearly half of those aged 11 and under (43%) and 25 and over (45%) included football in their preferences.

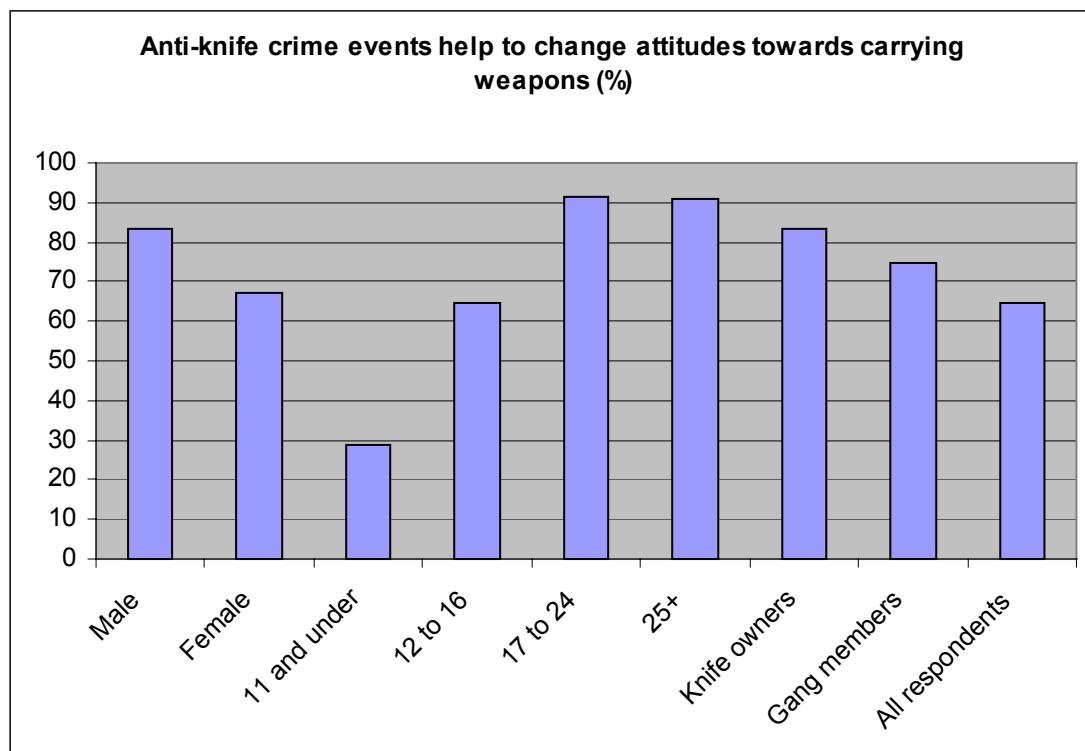
Basketball: this was the least favoured sport, with the highest interest shown by males (25%) and knife owners (33%). Overall, only 14% of respondents chose basketball.

Martial arts: only the over 25s (45%) and knife owners (33%) showed much interest in martial arts, with the lowest percentage amongst 12 to 16 year-olds (8%).

Athletics: this was interesting for over 25s (55%) and knife owners (50%), but only 22% of all respondents chose it.

20. Do you think anti-knife events help to change attitudes towards carrying weapons?

Over 60% of all the respondents thought that events like the Peace Tree event could change attitudes towards carrying weapons, and more than 90% of 17 to 24 year-olds and over 25s. A higher percentage of male respondents than females thought it would make a difference. The lowest percentage was from the youngest group.



Conclusions

Although the survey was completed by a statistically small sample of respondents, they made up about 10% of those attending the Peace Tree event. The disinclination of young males to fill in the survey will have skewed the results, especially when comparing results for females and males. For instance, no male respondents admitted they were gang members, whereas 8% of females reported they were. This would have changed if more males had completed the questionnaires. Inevitably, the conclusion has to be that those attending were unlikely to be a representative cross section of the local community, so only the very broadest conclusions can be drawn from the statistics.

Most important is that the number of people who don't feel safe on London's streets is almost the same as those who do. It is significant that the youngest members of the community are the most fearful about being on the streets.

Equally important is the number of people whose families and friends have been affected by knife crime, which is probably an important reason why they were attracted to the event. Only a small percentage of respondents reported being threatened by knives, guns and other weapons, but it is important to note this.

The general feeling amongst respondents is that most young people think it is OK to carry knives on the street, but few respondents had ever purchased one. Of those who had, most have carried them on the street and some have taken them into school but, importantly, three quarters weren't asked their age when they purchased them. The majority of respondents agreed that schools should search pupils for weapons.

Half the respondents have been stopped and searched by the police, averaging three times. This, however, disguises a large variation, with some being stopped many times, and many not being stopped at all. Interestingly, only a minority knew the correct maximum prison sentence for carrying a knife, with the majority thinking it was only 6 months or 2 years. Whatever sentence they chose, nearly two thirds believed a higher sentence would help to prevent people carrying knives.

Most thought the media contributes to knife crime, and the majority believed that television and violent films have the most effect. Just about half of the respondents took part in activities in youth clubs or community centres in their local areas, the exception being those aged 11 and under, which could be a direct result of their heightened fear of being on the streets. Of all of the activities preferred by the respondents, dance (55%) and music (50%) were the highest.

In general, it was felt anti-knife crime events like the Peace Tree event could help to change attitudes towards carrying knives and other weapons. A smaller percentage took the view that they don't have an effect.

Most respondents found it difficult to answer the final two questions: What do you think is the cause of knife crime? and What do you think must be done to reduce knife crime?

The answers to the first centred on gangs and turf wars being the main cause. Being threatened and fear of bullying led to young people wanting to protect themselves and feel safer. Some put the cause down to drugs, video games and violent films, others to family life and social background, with inequality and peer pressure important features. Lack of education about knife crime and too few positive role models were also mentioned.

The second was even harder – as a respondent remarked, “If there were an easy solution, it would already be in place.” Most answers fell into three broad areas:

1. More police presence, stop and searches, and higher prison sentences;
2. More education and activities for young people;
3. Greater support for organisations that are campaigning about knife crime and its consequences.

Several mentioned specific actions, like banning the sale of some video games, restricting the sales of knives to over 20s, mandatory searches at schools and youth clubs, and more role models in the media celebrating positive lifestyles.

Appendix 1

The survey will continue to be promoted by the Flavasum Trust on its website, and can be accessed at:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=hLBN5KINCjrkQdwjvJAUCa_3d_3d

Appendix 2



LIVES NOT KNIVES

www.theflavasumtrust.org

Please let us know what *YOU* think about knife crime...

1. Do you feel safe on London's streets? Yes No

2. Have you ever been threatened with
 a knife? Yes No
 a gun? Yes No
 another weapon? Yes No

3. Has anyone in your family been affected by knife crime?
 Yes No

4. Have any of your friends been affected by knife crime?
 Yes No

5. Do you think most youth on the street think it's OK to carry knives? Yes
 No

6. Have you ever bought a knife? Yes No

7. If you have bought a knife, were you asked your age?
 Yes No

8. Have you ever carried a knife on the street? Yes No

9. Have you ever taken a knife into school? Yes No

10. Do you think schools should search pupils for weapons?
 Yes No

11. Have you ever been stopped and searched by the police?

Yes No

12. If you have been stopped by the police, how many times?

13. What do you think the maximum prison sentence is for carrying a knife?

- 6 months
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 4 years
- 10 years

14. If this sentence was higher, do you think it would stop people from carrying knives? Yes No

15. Do you think the 'media', eg video games, music lyrics, television, violent films, contributes to knife crime? Yes No

16. If you think the media has an effect on knife crime, please rate them:

| | Matter a lot | Matter a bit | Not important |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Video games | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Song lyrics | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Television | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Violent films | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

17. Are you a member of a gang? Yes No

18. Do you take part in any activities at a youth club or community centre in your area? Yes No

19. If any of the following activities were provided locally, which would you prefer?

- Theatre
- Dance
- Music
- Multimedia
- Football
- Basketball
- Martial arts
- Athletics

20. Do you think anti-knife events help to change attitudes towards carrying weapons? Yes No

21. Which London borough do you live in?

22. Are you male or female?

Male

Female

23. What age are you?

11 or under

12-16

17-24

25+

24. What is your ethnic background?

White British

White Irish

Other White

Mixed White and Black Caribbean

Mixed White and Black African

Mixed White and Asian

Other Mixed

Asian British Indian

Asian British Pakistani

Asian British Bangladeshi

Other Asian

Black British Caribbean

Black British African

Other Black

Chinese British

Other ethnic group

25. What do you think is the cause of knife crime?

26. What do you think must be done to reduce knife crime?