

# Serious violence in context: Understanding the scale and nature of serious violence

A report by Crest Advisory

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### **This programme of work**

Funded by The Dawes Trust, Crest is undertaking a two-year programme of work over 2019/20 designed to investigate the drivers of serious violence. This has been informed by priorities set by the Home Office, and will conclude with a suite of practical and actionable policy recommendations for senior policymakers.

### **About Crest**

We are crime and justice specialists - equal parts research, strategy and communication. From police forces to public inquiries, from tech companies to devolved authorities, we believe all these organisations (and more) have their own part to play in building a safer, more secure society. As the UK's only consultancy with this focus, we are as much of a blend as the crime and justice sector itself.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank the Dawes Trust and all those who shared their insights:

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# Executive summary

# Introduction to the programme

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England and Wales is currently experiencing a rise in recorded violence. While some of that increase is thought to be due to changes in police recording practices, a subset of (high-harm) offences, such as homicide, robbery and knife crime, show real and substantial rises. Crest is undertaking a programme of research to systematically analyse what is driving these trends.

Previous research undertaken by Crest, and by the Home Office, suggests at least four important factors that require detailed investigation:

- Changing drug markets: particularly the increasing supply of cocaine, which is driving up demand and fuelling violence
- The vulnerability of victims and offenders: children 'at risk' of falling into violence – including children in care and children excluded from school as well as vulnerable adults
- A decline in effective enforcement: a weakening of police intelligence and a reduction in the proportion of offenders charged
- Opportunity presented by social media: which can rapidly escalate petty conflicts / spread the contagion of violence

Crest Advisory is undertaking a two-year programme of research to explore the underlying drivers of serious violence and test the potential for the implementation of more problem-oriented, preventative approaches. This is the first in a series of thematic reports, looking at the national and local context, exploring the state of existing knowledge, and working with areas to shine a light on what serious violence looks like across the country.

# Executive summary (1)

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This report is the first in the series, setting out an overview of serious violence in England and Wales. We have used existing data and new research to assess whether we have a grip of the scale and nature of the problem. Key questions considered were:

- What are the key trends and patterns?
- How many people are at risk of violence and who are they?
- What do we know about the drivers and how they interact?
- How are safeguarding and criminal justice services responding?



## What are the key trends and patterns?

- Rising **homicide in England and Wales forms part of an increase in homicide across Europe**. Homicides enabled by knives in England and Wales are at the highest level since records began
- However, the headline rises in homicide, robbery and knife crime are **the tip of the iceberg**. Crest's analysis shows that **the presenting problem of serious violence is part of a wider picture of criminality**, including assaults with intent to cause harm, exploitation offences, sexual violence and drug dealing, which all sit underneath. All of these offences have been rising significantly since 2014
- The **UK is a European outlier on robbery**, and is the only country to face significant rises over the past five years. Robbery with knives has risen by 45 per cent between March 2014 and March 2018 in England and Wales

## Executive summary (2)



### How many people are at risk of violence and who are they?

- Previous research to estimate the numbers of young people at risk has looked at the number in gangs and the number who carry a knife. New research for this report shows that those at risk of serious violence are likely to include a larger group of children. Our new estimates reveals a pipeline of children (10-17s) who are at risk of being caught up in violence: **around 45,000 were victims of serious violence in 2018 whilst up to 269,000 may have been drawn into serious violence**
- There is a real **blurring of the lines between victim and offender**: children should be recognised as victims of violence and criminal exploitation, but this same exploitation makes them perpetrators of crime. This is a huge challenge for safeguarding, policing and criminal justice services where there are legal, policy and practical distinctions between victims and offender
- **Violence tends to concentrate in very small areas** - the socio-demographic factors in those areas therefore become key indicators



### What do we know about the drivers and how they interact?

- The key **drugs** driving street violence are crack cocaine and heroin through open drug markets and county lines. County lines has been driven by market saturation in urban centres
- **Policing** appears to have had less focus on drugs in recent years and is now less sighted on drugs markets in general and the middle market in particular
- Experience of domestic violence, exclusion from school, or being looked after have well-evidenced links to **vulnerability**. In turn, the systematic targeting and grooming of vulnerable children and adults in the supply and distribution of drugs increases their risks of being drawn into violence
- **Technology** including social media is making it easier for organised crime groups and gangs to market drugs, recruit and control vulnerable people and compete for status at street level

## Executive summary (3)

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### How are safeguarding and criminal justice services responding?

Policing, safeguarding and criminal justice services are struggling to respond:

- **The absence of deterrence:** neighbourhood policing has been eroded and arrest and charge rates have collapsed. In the year ending March 2019, only 7.8 per cent of offences led to charge
- **The systematic exploitation of children and young people** to commit crimes presents a significant challenge for policing and safeguarding services, predicated as they are on a clear victim/perpetrator distinction
- **The prison system is struggling** with unprecedented levels of violence, an environment which is not conducive to rehabilitation. Violence in prison is known to be driven by drugs use and drug dealing, extending the cycle of violence

Long-term budget cuts have reduced the ability of public services to grip and tackle the drivers of serious violence, which has allowed it to evolve in the spaces where public services have an increasingly fragile hold

## Executive summary (4)

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### Why do these findings matter?

This report provides an overview of serious violence, examining the scale and nature of the problem, the state of existing knowledge and where there are gaps in our understanding. By bringing together key data and trends into one place, we hope to add greater context and understanding to the problem.

Serious violence is not an isolated phenomenon. The recent spike in homicides, knife crime and robbery is the tip of a much larger 'iceberg', the culmination of a set of personal and societal factors which have escalated into serious crime – thereby becoming the responsibility of the criminal justice system as the 'service of last resort'.

Those charged with tackling this phenomenon will struggle to deal with one component without recognising other interrelated components. The need to develop a public health approach to serious violence necessitates a multi-faceted view of the problem and an appreciation of the gaps in knowledge.

We hope this report will be of help to police, PCCs and Mayors charged with setting up violence reduction units (VRUs), to local authorities, and to all those interested in public health approaches.

**Please get in touch if you are interested in our work and would like to work with us.**



# 1. Introduction

# Crest has embarked on a two year project to understand serious violence and investigate its drivers. In this report (the first in the series), we set out to examine the scale and nature of the problem

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- There has been a significant increase in some of the most serious and harmful types of violent crime since 2014, which is symptomatic of wider, less visible factors – yet the causes of this increase are not yet well understood
- The symptoms and outcomes of this problem are devastating for those involved – victims and their families, neighbours, communities, work and school colleagues
- There is a compelling need to get the problem analysis right. In order to do this, we have set out to provide an overview of serious violence with an enhanced understanding of the scale and nature of the problem based on existing and new evidence
- This paper provides an assessment of the problem nationally, placed within an international context, and outlines insights, gaps in current knowledge and areas for further exploration, covering:
  - **the context for serious violence:** the state of the debate; key trends at a macro level; and our view of the problem
  - **the drivers lying underneath this problem:** a changing drugs market; rising levels of vulnerability; developments in technology; changes in the criminal justice system (CJS); and shrinking public services

# **Drawing on a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, and viewing serious violence through a variety of lenses, we have conducted a national assessment of serious violence and placed it within an international context**

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## **Our approach**

This report provides an overview of serious violence, examining the extent to which there is a clear understanding of the scale and nature of the problem. We have used new research and existing data to view serious violence through different lenses (drugs, vulnerability, technology and criminal justice and safeguarding responses), to evaluate the evidence linking these factors to serious violence.

## **What we did**

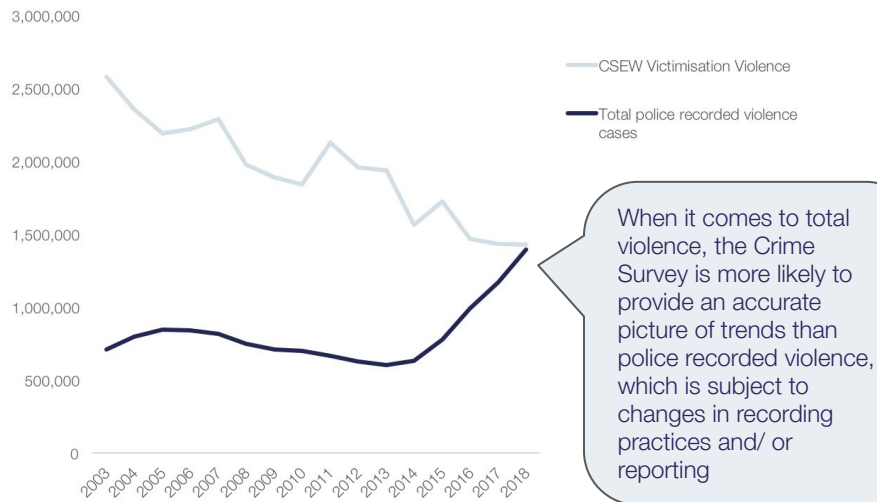
- Structured literature review (academic, government, think-tank reports)
- Statistical analysis (nationally published data, FOIs, bespoke analysis of locally-held data)
- Developed new estimates for assessing the size of the population at risk of serious violence (see pp. 25-26)
- Stakeholder interviews and engagement
- Expert input from advisors

## 2. Context

# While much of the increase in overall recorded violence can probably be attributed to changes in police recording practices, there has been a significant and real increase in serious violence offences such as stabbings and murders since 2014

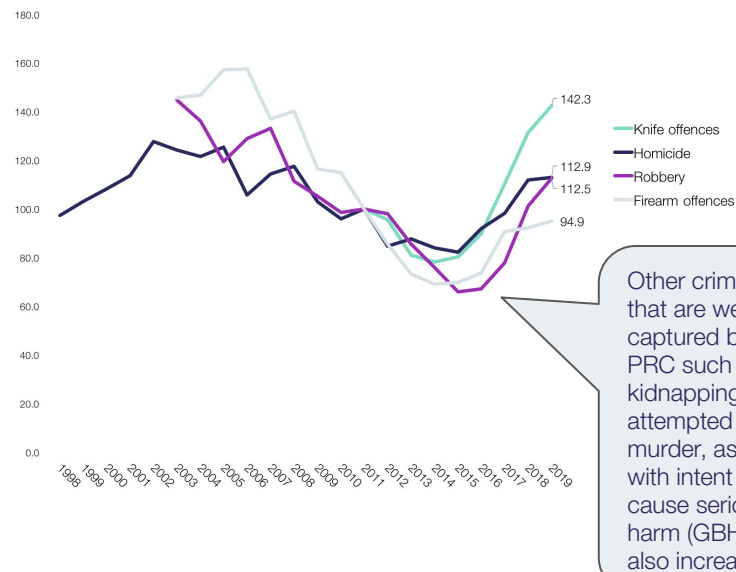
For overall measures of crime victimisation and offending, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) gives the most accurate picture - one that has generally been declining...

Volumes of CSEW violence and PRC violence, yrs ending March 2013-18<sup>1</sup>



... however, high-harm, less frequently occurring crimes such as homicides, knife crime, gun crime and robbery, are all better captured by police recorded crime (PRC) figures – and are rising

Indexed long-term trends in selected serious violent offences (100 = 2011)<sup>2\*</sup>

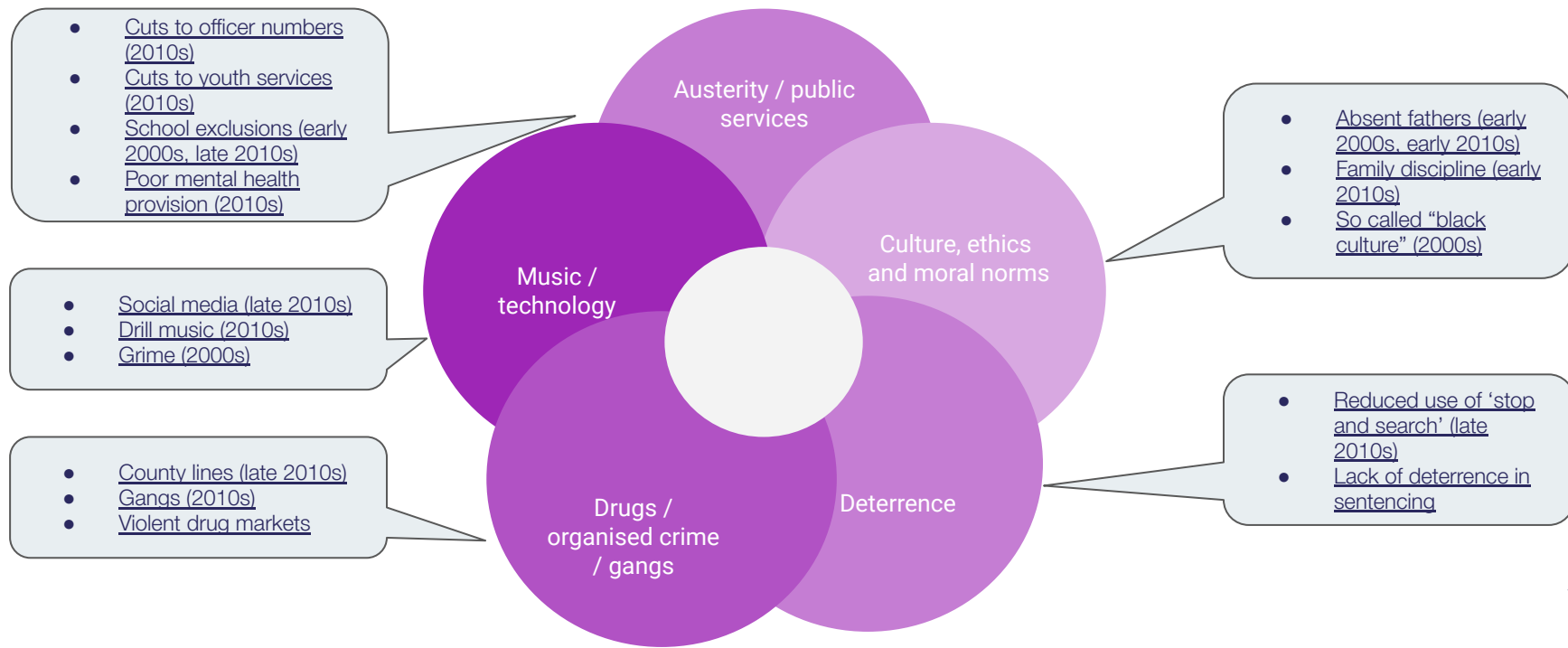


<sup>1</sup> ONS - Crime in England and Wales: Appendix tables. <sup>2</sup> Offences involving the use of weapons (Tables 2 and 15), Recorded crime data at Police Force Area level, Appendix tables: Homicide in England and Wales (Table 1)

\*Figures for homicide exclude the victims of exceptional/terror attacks. Figures for knife crime exclude West Midlands and Sussex for consistency

# The public debate about knife crime has intensified over the last two years but continues to generate single cause explanations, often overlooking the potential complexity and interconnectivity of the problem

A range of single-cause explanations have been offered for rising violence in recent years, overlapping across five broad domains



# The Home Office (HO) 2018 Serious Violence Strategy cited several possible drivers, but also treated serious violence as an isolated phenomenon, distinct from wider crime.<sup>1</sup> A similar pattern is reflected in Government funding for violence reduction

The strategy was published in response to increases in knife crime, gun crime and homicide. We intend to broaden out this focus to spot interconnections between different forms of violence

Emergency investment targeted towards serious violence aims to tackle different strands of the problem, but approaches are not integrated, and there is an absence of strategy

## Offending/ criminal behaviours

**Specific crime types:** the HO focus on homicide, knife crime, gun crime and also robbery (i.e. serious violence offences). In addition to these, we look at other serious violent crimes not included by the HO e.g. attempted murder and kidnapping, and explore the role of less violent/visible crimes e.g. drugs.

**Areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent:** the HO specifies gangs and county lines drug dealing. We look at wider manifestations of the drugs markets not addressed by the HO e.g. prison-based markets, as well as at areas of criminality excluded from the HO strategy e.g. domestic abuse, sexual abuse, modern slavery and violence against women and girls.

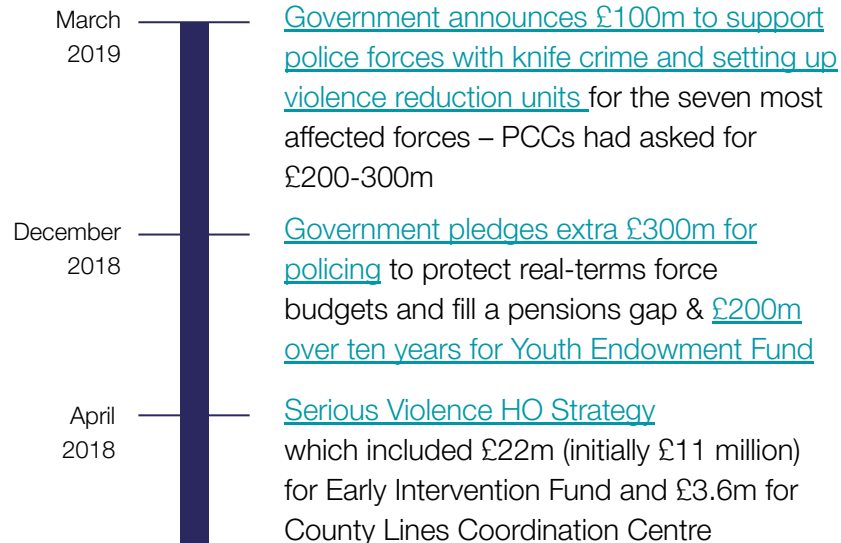
## Population

**We include vulnerable adults in our analysis** (e.g. their involvement via cuckooing, drug and alcohol addiction, domestic abuse), building on the HO focus on young people (under 18s) and young adults (up to 25).

## Drivers

**We take a CJS lens to build on the HO four key drivers of SV:** drugs and profit; effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System (CJS); character; opportunity. We look at changing drugs markets, the role of technology, the impact of rising vulnerabilities; the role of wider public services and the contagion of violence.

Funding announced in this area in 2018/19



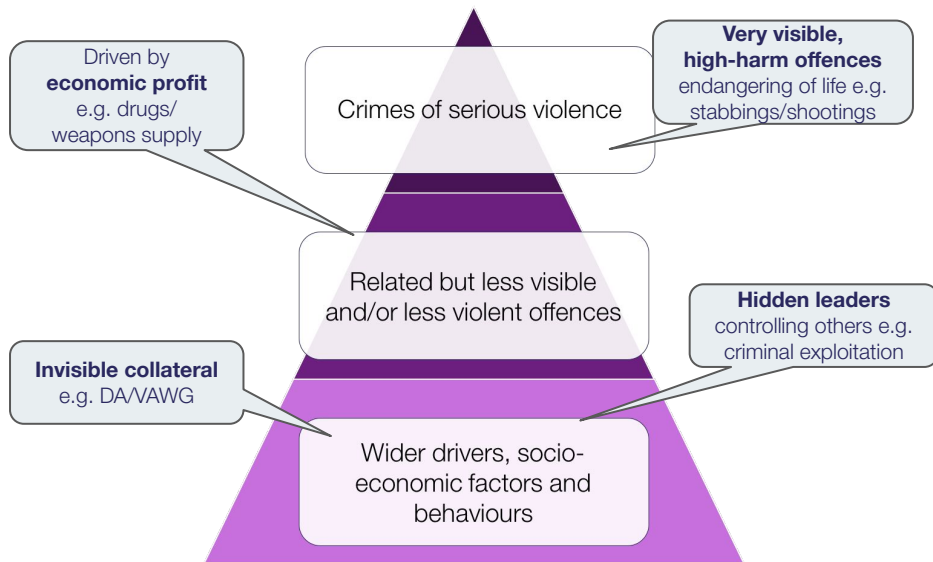
<sup>1</sup> See p. 15 of Home Office, [Serious Violence Strategy](#), 2018. [Accessed online 21.07.2019]

# The presenting problems of knife and other weapon-related attacks and murders are, in fact, the tip of the iceberg. Such violence grows from other offending, and as public services have retrenched, so too have their ability to stem the issue

The most visible and prominent manifestation of the problem are high-harm serious violent crimes, but focusing on these alone misses the wider offending context, much of which is hidden

Retreating public services have meant an absence of safe spaces, less support for those at risk and declining deterrence for offenders


A taxonomy of Serious Violence



Against growing and changing demand on public services there have been reductions in youth services (including youth justice); reductions in community policing (which has reduced intelligence); and less enforcement (including stop and search), which have loosened constraints on those carrying weapons (many of whom do so for protection and as a result of fear), and those seeking to exploit the vulnerable.

In the following sections we explore each of these drivers, the trends, gaps in our knowledge and possible interactions to be able to draw a more detailed picture of the problem

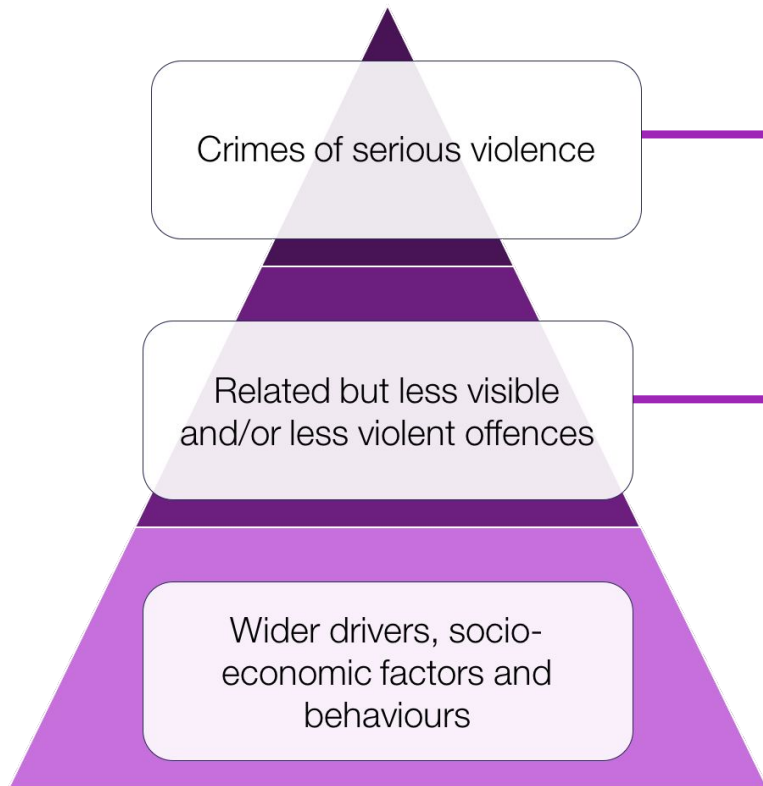




### **3. Trends in serious violence: what they tell us about the shape of the problem and who is at risk**

**This section explores trends in both crimes of serious violence (e.g. homicide, robbery, weapon-enabled crimes) and in related, less visible violent offences (e.g. possession of drugs), to understand the scale of the problem, and to quantify the size of the population at risk**

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This chapter outlines trends in serious violence and other related offences. We draw on quantitative and qualitative data sources

In chapter 4 we explore the wider drivers, factors and behaviours underpinning serious violence

**Because there is no single definition nor measure of “serious violence”, we have drawn on a range of different measures and/or used proxy indicators that are in the public domain to paint as full a picture as possible of the size and shape of the problem, and trends over time**

	Benefits	Limitations & Mitigations
Volume	<b>Police Recorded Crime (PRC)</b> is generally the most reliable measure of high-harm offences which are less affected by recording practice change and are less frequent (but likely to be reported due to their high harm).	Not all offences are reported to the police. PRC is dependent on recording methods/practices, and there have been sizeable changes to these in recent years. However, we can account for recording practice changes as they are known. Also, crimes of serious violence have been less subject to this.
	<b>Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)</b> data is a better/more reliable measure of general offending and victimisation, because it is a representative household survey of victimisation and also captures underreported crimes.	Not as effective for measuring high-harm offences which are less frequent (so less likely to be picked up in a survey.) Also, as a household sample, groups that are harder to reach may be less well represented in findings.
Harm	<b>Sentencing data</b> such as severity/seriousness scores from ONS, CHI and indicators from CPS guidelines are useful to understand the perspectives of society and the criminal justice system on “harm”, and to define “serious”.	Nonetheless, these barometers are subjective and change with time. Some technical disagreements as well, e.g. sentencing guidelines (CHI) vs actual sentences (ONS). Neither fully reflect the full extent of resultant harms (e.g. on the more serious offence based on score may not be a relevant offence.)
	<b>Health data</b> like hospital admissions give a fuller picture of harm and provides an additional record of figures related to violence.	It does not match up with criminal justice system data, and detailed data can be hard to come by in the public domain.
Risk profile	<b>Demography</b> allows us to examine age ranges and ethnicity.	The 2011 census is almost a decade out of date, but useful to link to criminal justice system data to contextualise (although not always possible).
	<b>Societal measures such as DFE, MHCLG</b> reports and data provide a fuller picture of vulnerability, such as school exclusions or homelessness.	Often ad hoc so we need to cross reference with other sources.
	<b>Location</b> data allows us to cross reference with other forms of vulnerability.	Limited published data is available so we focus on areas which may have specific circumstances e.g. London.

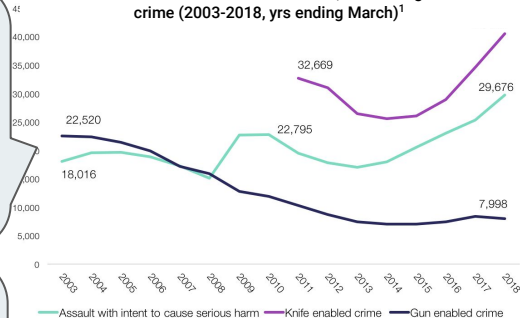
# Recorded crime statistics show that harmful, less frequently-occurring serious violent crimes have seen substantial increases; knife-enabled homicides, knife-enabled crimes, robbery and crimes of exploitation are all on the up

Over recent years, there have been increases in assaults, knife-enabled crime, homicide, attempted murder, and threats to kill

Similar increases have been witnessed in exploitation offences and offences that are economically driven

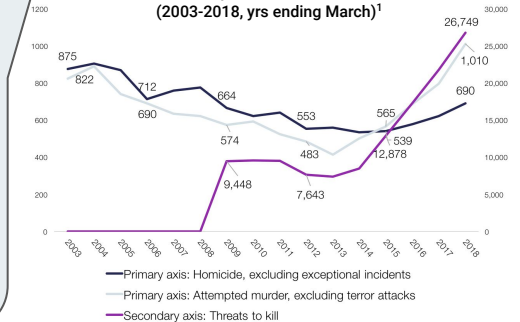
There has been a 55% increase in knife-enabled crime in the past three years, and a 25% increase in all three categories since 2010/11, when recording began

Assault with intent to cause serious harm, knife and gun enabled crime (2003-2018, yrs ending March)<sup>1</sup>



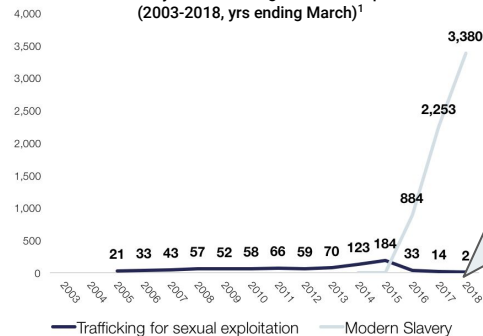
Threats to kill have increased 240% since they start to be recorded in 2008/09 – possibly a reflection of social media use. After a long-term decline, homicides are on the rise – in particular, knife-enabled homicides are up 45% in the past three years

Homicides, attempted murders and threats to kill (2003-2018, yrs ending March)<sup>1</sup>



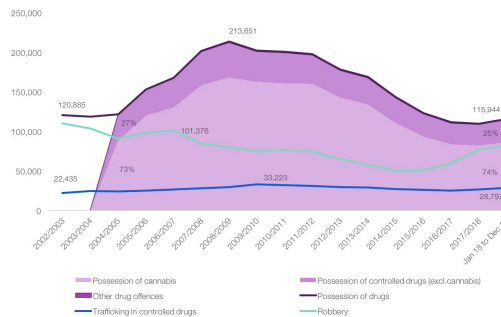
As this page demonstrates, all of the recorded crime elements forming a picture of serious violence have been rising significantly since 2014. Health data is explored on the next page, which offers corroboration given what we know about the limitations of PRC

Modern slavery and trafficking for sexual exploitation (2003-2018, yrs ending March)<sup>1</sup>



There has been a 380% increase in “exploitation offences” since 2015/16 which have displaced trafficking offences, possibly related to the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act

Drug possession, drug trafficking and robbery (2002/03-2018)<sup>1</sup>



A 60% increase in robbery since 2015 represents a meaningful rise in criminal activity. Trends in drugs trafficking (up 40% since 2002/03) and possession (down 4% since 2002/03) largely reflect police proactivity rather than levels of criminal behaviour

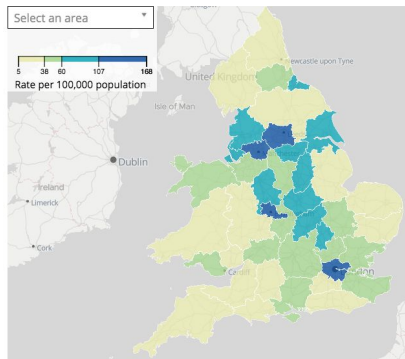
<sup>1</sup> ONS, Crime in England & Wales, year ending December 2018 - Appendix tables

# The highest volumes of serious violence are recorded in urban areas, but recent trends reveal the spreading of violence into rural / mixed areas, though the form that that violence takes is less clear

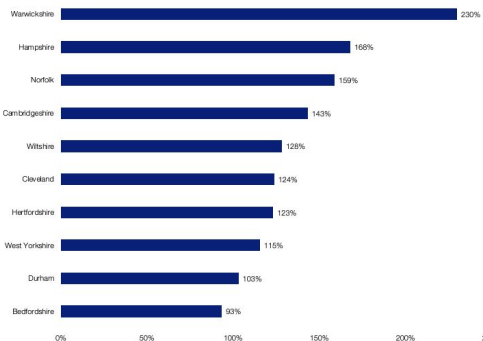
Rates of knife crime are highest in urban areas, but the largest percentage rises are occurring in other parts of the country

British Transport Police have recorded a significant increase in serious violence offences, likely to reflect the pattern of county lives activity - extending urban drug markets to towns and rural areas

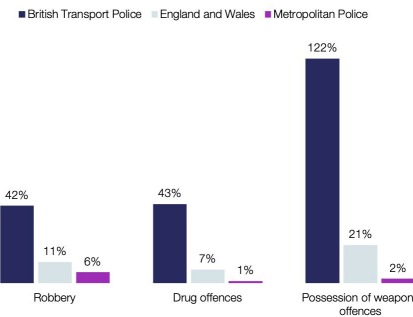
Rates of crimes involving knives or sharp instruments by Police Force Area, year ending September 2018<sup>1</sup>



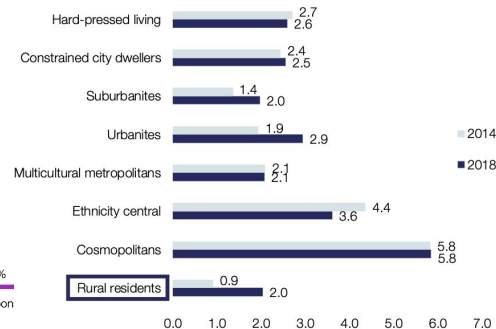
Ten police force areas with the largest percentage rise in selected recorded knife crime offences, years ending March 2014 - 2018, England<sup>2\*</sup>



Increase (%) in number of selected recorded offences (robbery, drugs, and possession of weapons) by police force area (2017 - 2018)<sup>3</sup>



Increase in the proportion (%) of 16 to 59 year olds reporting use of powder cocaine in the last year by output area classification, 2013/14 - 2017/18<sup>4</sup>



According to the [NCA](#), 35% of suspects in county lines activity encountered on the rail network had links to possession of weapons within the previous 6 months, and 3% with possession of firearms

Large increases in drug use in rural areas highlight the phenomenon of county lines. According to the ONS, the rise in cocaine and class A use by rural residents is significant

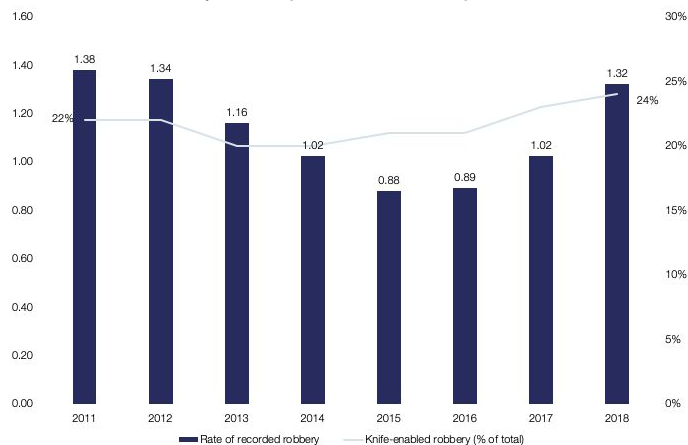
<sup>1</sup> ONS - Crime in England and Wales: year ending September 2018 (release), <sup>2,3</sup> Police Force Area data tables (year ending December 2018), Tables 2 and 5, <sup>4</sup> Home Office - Drug misuse: findings from the 2017 to 2018 CSEW: data tables, Table 3.12

\*Excluding Northumbria due to changes in data quality

# Figures suggest that violence is getting more severe: serious crimes are increasingly weapon-enabled, and the most harmful forms of serious violence are rising fastest

The rate of robbery is increasing as well as the severity of robbery, with an increasingly larger share enabled by knives

Rate of robbery offences per 100,000 population and proportion of offences by involvement of a knife or sharp instrument\*, years ending March 2011 - 2019, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>

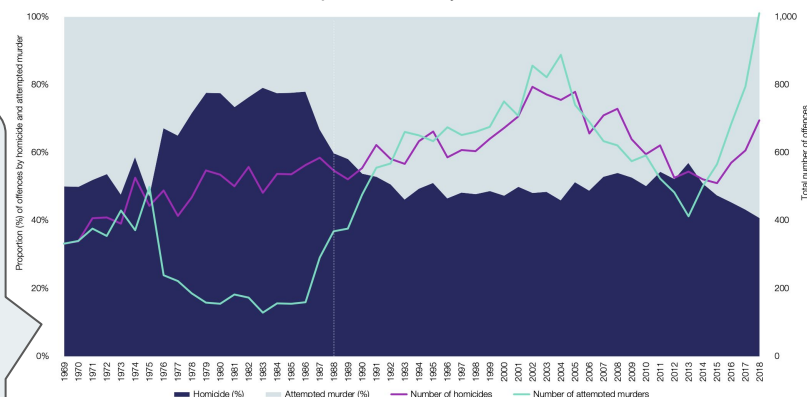


The police having better first aid training is an example of better pre-hospital care)

There has been a significant increase in the number of knife-enabled homicides (now at a historic high), and in knife-enabled robbery offences, rising by 45 per cent between March 2014 and March 2018. This increase is greater than the comparable increase for all recorded robbery offences (33 per cent)

Meanwhile, both homicide and attempted murder have sharply increased, with the growing gap between the two suggesting that the homicide figures could be higher were it not for more effective pre-hospital and hospital medical care

Balance between homicides and attempted murders (excluding exceptional incidents), with respective volumes by offence<sup>2</sup>



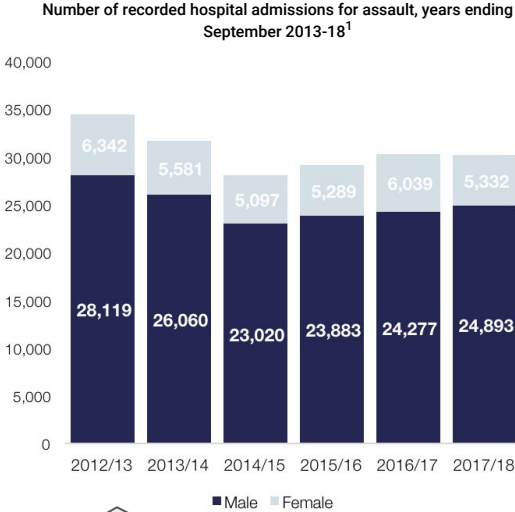
The increase is largely due to knife crime; between the years ending March 2011 and March 2018, knife-enabled attempted murder increased by 58 per cent in England and Wales

<sup>1</sup>ONS - Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables (Tables 11 / 14), Crime in England and Wales: Appendix tables (Table 4), <sup>2</sup>Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales (Table 1), Home Office - A summary of recorded crime data from 1898 to 2001/02  
 \*The total for "Weapon-enabled" offences includes firearm-enabled robbery and knife / sharp instrument-enabled robbery, assumed to be discrete. The total for "non-weapon-enabled" offences is formed by subtracting weapon-enabled offences from total robbery

# Health and emergency service data largely mirror recorded and surveyed crime patterns, showing a decline in overall violence but an increase in harm caused by violent, knife enabled crime. Given recording and reporting issues with police data, these figures offer vital corroboration

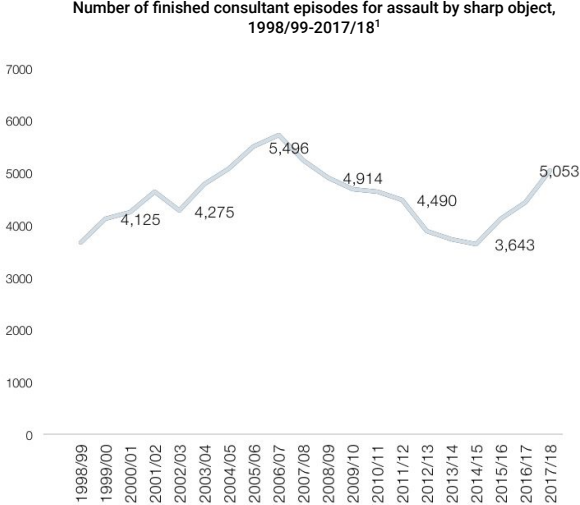
Hospital admissions for overall assault have seen a slight upturn since 2014/15...

... and there are other signs that high-harm violence is up: knife assault-related admissions to hospitals are increasing



There are significant reporting gaps within recorded crime: according to the CSEW, only **60%** of wounding incidents falling to **46%** for violent incidents more generally.<sup>2</sup>

Thus we have triangulated our findings with health data, which show the same trend.



Hospital admissions data provide little information on those who attend A&E and are patched up and sent away. Cardiff University's long-term study on patients requiring treatment for violence injuries at A&E also shows long-term declines

Trends demonstrate strong increases, but with anecdotal evidence suggesting that some victims are avoiding hospital for fear of being referred to support services, this rising trend may yet be an undercount

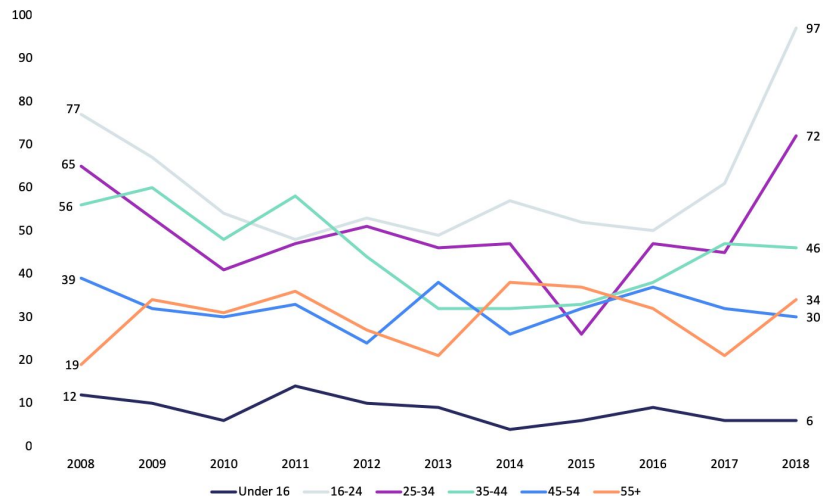
<sup>1</sup> NHS Digital, Hospital Admitted Patient Care Activity, 2017-18: External causes tables, November 2018 and earlier editions - via <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN04304> <sup>2</sup> ONS - Crime in England and Wales: Annual Trend and Demographic Tables (year ending March 2019), Table D10

# Whilst homicide victims are spread amongst the age groups, there has been a sharp rise in the number of young victims suffering homicide by knives. This is backed up by hospital admissions data for assault by sharp object

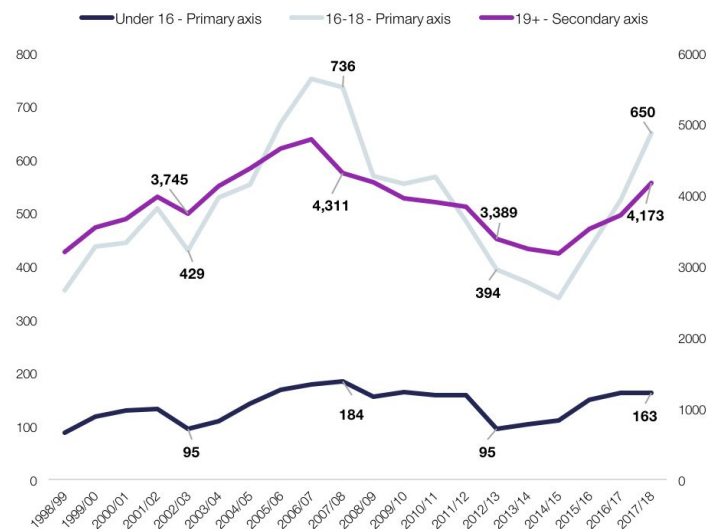
Over the last three years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of victims aged between 16 and 24 of homicide by sharp instrument. This has risen by 94 per cent since 2016

The spike in young victims of homicide by knives and other sharp instruments is reflected in hospital data, which records a large increase in knife assault admissions for the 16-18 age group since 2015

Number of victims of homicide by a sharp instrument by age group, years ending March 2008-2018<sup>1</sup>



Number of finished consultant episodes for assault by sharp object, by age group, 1998/99-2017/18<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> ONS, Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2018. <sup>2</sup> NHS Digital, Hospital Admitted Patient Care Activity, 2017-18: External causes tables, November 2018 and earlier editions - via <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN04304>



# Despite the high-profile nature of serious violence, there are no accurate figures for the number involved or affected. We have produced new estimates for the number of children at risk of suffering serious violence

Existing research has looked at quantifying the number of children in gangs and the number of children who carry a knife...

A report by the Children's Commissioner (2019) estimates that:

- 27,000 children in England identify as a gang member (only a fraction are known to children's services)
- 34,000 children are either a known gang member or know a gang member and have been the victim of violent crime in the past 12 months

The Home Office analysis of indicators related to serious violence has associated weapon carrying with serious violence-linked behaviours and estimates:<sup>2</sup>

- 25,000 14 year olds have carried/used a weapon

**Given evidence from the Home Office (2019) that risk factors for knife carrying are slightly different to gang-related crime, we aim to add to existing research in this area by using available datasets to a wider scope and quantify the number at risk of serious violence, informed by evidence such as the narrower studies above.**

... but our estimates acknowledges that those at risk of serious violence are likely to include a larger group of children – we will develop this over time to include adults

**We have estimated the number of 10-17 year olds who are at risk of experiencing serious violence in a given year, defining 'serious violence' as relating to the possibility of:**

- becoming a victim of violence (with or without injury), robbery, sexual assault
- being a perpetrator of possession of weapons offences (as an indicator of heightened risk for those who carry and are prepared to use weapons against others)

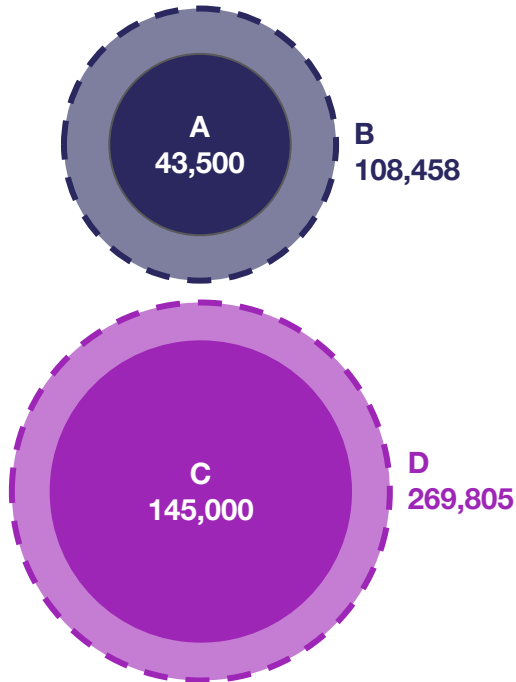
**We have quantified the size of certain groups in the population who possess characteristics that indicate they may be at risk, including:**

- Suffering forms of serious violence (ranging from homicide to serious wounding); committing knife-related offences; gang membership; and being linked as a victim or perpetrator to a serious offence

More detail on our methodology can be found in Annex I

# We know that at least 43,500 children (10-17) were victims of serious violence in 2018, but we estimate that as many as 269,805 children could have experienced some form of serious violence in this year

In the absence of data collected for the purpose of quantifying the number of children at risk of serious violence, we have used proxy measures to estimate the size of different groups of the population at risk



Various data sources help to quantify the size of strands of the population who possess a characteristic likely to represent those at risk. Different estimates are used to reflect the uncertain overlap between groups

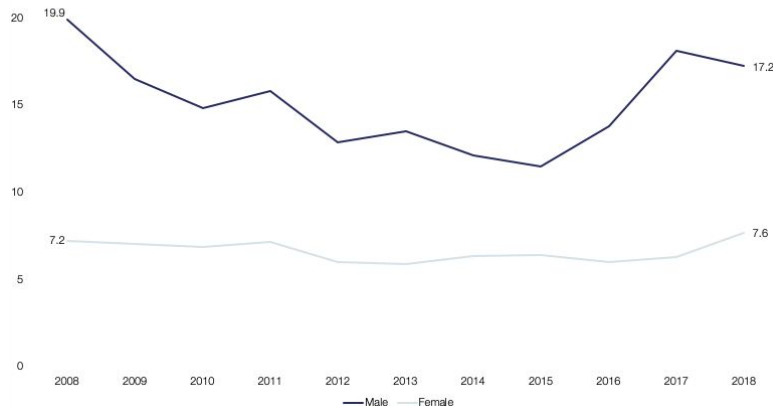
Size of different populations with an indicator for experiencing serious violence in 2018

Total population aged 10-17	5,400,000 (100%)
Group A: Victims of serious violence (wounding)	43,500 (0.8% of 10-17 population)
Group B: Victims of serious violence (wounding) and homicide-related offences; self-identified gang members who carry a knife; self-identified members of street gang	108,458 (2% of 10-17 population)
Group C: Victims of <u>all</u> violence with/without injury/wounding	145,000 (2.7% of 10-17 population)
Group D: Victims of all violence; children linked to all serious offences; those linked to a knife/sharp object related offence; and those in group B	269,805 (5% of 10-17 population)

# Various trends suggest that victims and perpetrators of serious violence are predominantly male, but we know that female involvement is a blind spot. More work is necessary to understand how serious violence affects women and girls

The statistics show that serious violence is largely a 'male problem', with men far more likely to be those presenting as victims and offenders of serious violent crimes

Rate of recorded homicides per million population by sex of victim, 2008 - 2018<sup>1</sup>



Boys are also more likely to claim to carry knives. In a recent Home Office study (2019), 71.3 per cent of weapon-carriers were male

However, evidence suggests that female involvement is prevalent but presents differently. Understanding this involvement is crucial to gaining a full picture on how to address serious violence

- According to the Greater London Authority (GLA), **70 per cent of domestic violence victims of serious youth violence (SYV) are female**, and though victims and perpetrators are predominantly male, a third of female victims are victims of domestic violence and abuse-related SYV
- The National Crime Agency (NCA) believe that **girls are underrepresented as victims and offenders** in county lines, potentially due to gender bias on the part of law enforcement
- A deep dive by the Centre for Social Justice in 2014 showed that **women and girls are linked in multiple ways to gang members**: short term / long term partners, gang members, and mothers and sisters. These links can lead to an increase in criminal activity and sexual exploitation, to the interruption of education, threats to themselves, to friends and to families.

**"There's a lot of exploitation. A lot of guys obviously use the females to carry weapons and drugs: they think they're not going to get stopped as likely as what they are."** - Ex-gang member. Research by London South Bank University (2018)

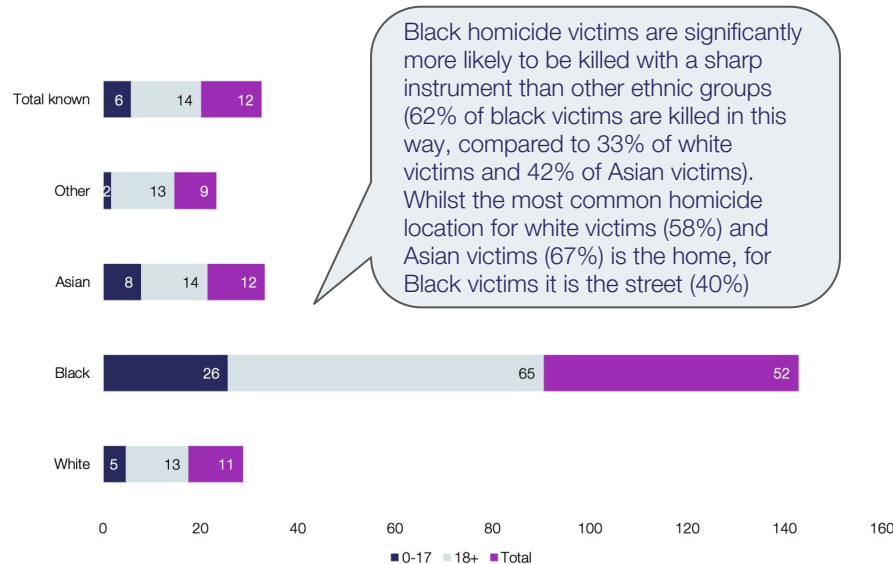
<sup>1</sup> ONS, Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales, Table 3

# National figures show particularly high rates of homicide for black people. However, other evidence from national studies and local profiles of serious violence show a more complex and nuanced set of factors at play, which need to be better understood

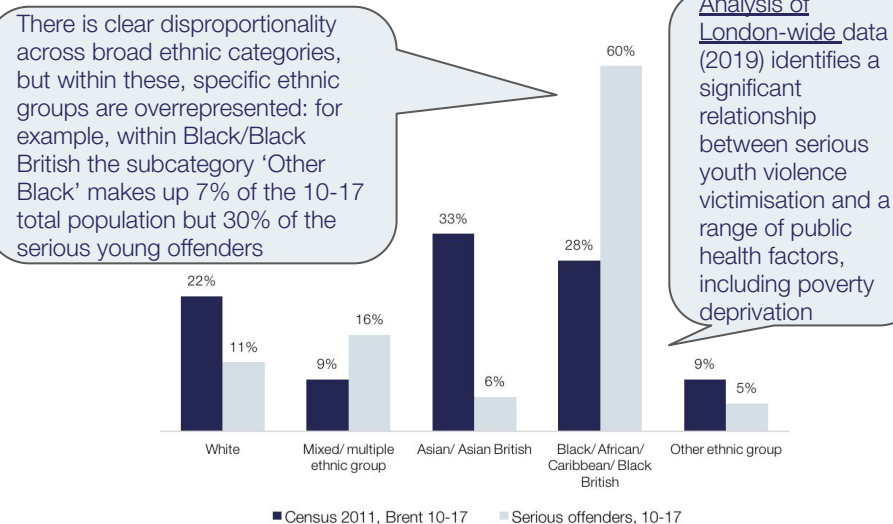
Over recent years the male homicide rate has been substantially higher for black victims than for any other ethnic group

Demographics affect the profile of victimisation and offending in local areas, we will look to explore this and the importance of socio-demographic factors in local areas

Rates per million population of homicide offences by ethnic appearance of male victims, England and Wales, annual average (2013/14 - 2015/16)<sup>1</sup>



Ethnicity of most serious young offenders (10-17) in a London borough versus ethnicity of total 10-17 London borough population, 2017/18<sup>2</sup>



According to research by the [Home Office](#) (2019), socioeconomic status/social class is a significant indicator for behaviours relating to serious violence like gang membership, but not for weapon carrying/use. This adds to research which has found no significant relationship between ethnicity and weapon carrying/use

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Justice - Race in the criminal justice system 2016: Victims tables. <sup>2</sup> Bespoke analysis of London Borough (anonymised) YOT data, most serious young offenders defined as those sentenced in 2017/18 for offences with a gravity score 6+

# There is evidence to suggest that violence is concentrated in very small areas – a few streets or less. Larger geographical targeting may overlook particular circumstances and drivers

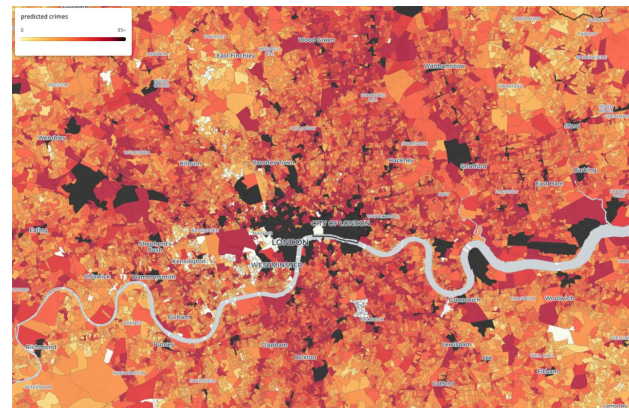
## Domestic

- According to [Massey et al](#) (2019), **over two-thirds (69%) of knife-enabled homicides in London in 2017/2018 occurred in just 1.4% of all lower super output areas, whereas knife-enabled assault occurred in 42%**. Areas where six or more knife-enabled assaults had been committed in the previous year were 14 times more likely than areas with only one assault to have a homicide the following year
- [Kearns et al](#) (2019) found that a concentration of recently active offenders in an area has a positive effect upon the subsequent number of violent crimes committed by resident offenders both inside and outside of the neighbourhood

## International

- [Braga et al](#) (2010) found that **gun violence in Boston is intensely concentrated in few street segments and intersections**. Those sites with volatile trajectories of violence over time account for just three per cent of segments / intersections, but over half of violent gun incidents
- A study in New Jersey conducted by [Schnell et al](#) (2018) found that street violence persistently concentrates at a few micro-places over time. [Another study](#) from 2017 found that **most variability in violence was at street-level, rather than neighbourhood**
- Reviewing Chicago-based homicides, [Morenoff et al](#) (2001) concluded that: “spatial proximity to homicide is strongly related to increased homicide rates”, and that “spatial dynamics coupled with neighbourhood inequalities...are consequential for explaining urban violence”

Predicted crime incidents in London, 2016<sup>1</sup>



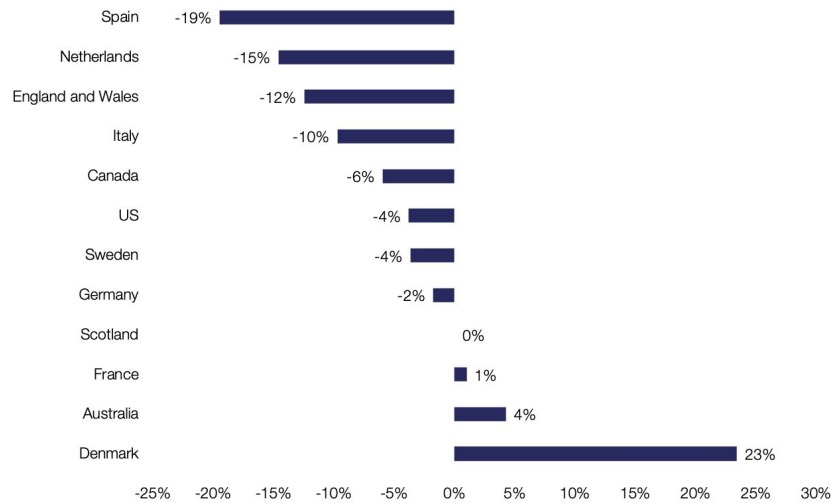
<sup>1</sup> Tom Kirchmaier (HMC / HO / LSE) (2016), [Predicted crimes](#)

[Research](#) by Kirchmaier on a sample of 496 murders in London (2014-2018), shows heavy concentration around single estates and streets within London: ten were located on or near two single streets. This street-level concentration of violence is supported [by research](#) on the exponential decay of crime away from “gang areas” (i.e. the close relationship between levels of violent and sexual crime, and proximity to a gang)

# Though subject to significant recording differences, international data suggests that a reversal in long-term declines for homicide is not a phenomenon specific to England and Wales

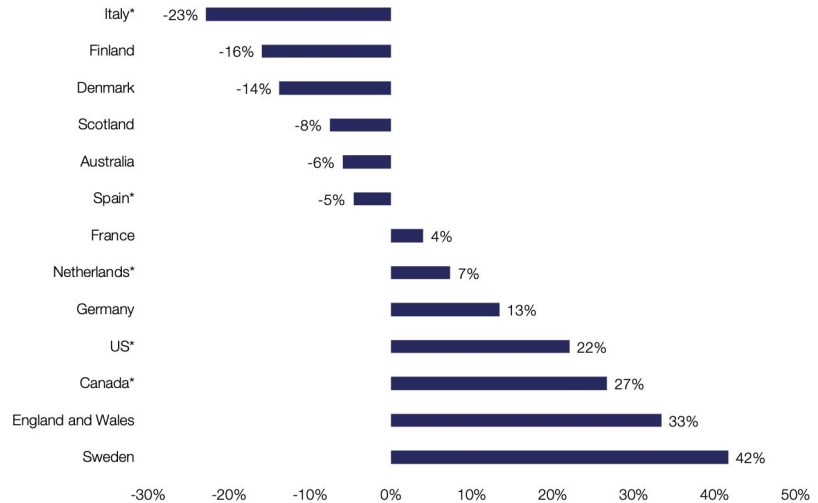
In the early part of the current decade, the number of homicides fell in most selected countries...

Change (%) in number of homicides by country, 2010 - 2014<sup>1\*\*</sup>



...however, this trend has since been reversed for most large Western countries, including France, Germany, and the US

Change (%) in number of homicides by country, 2014 - 2018<sup>1\*\*</sup>

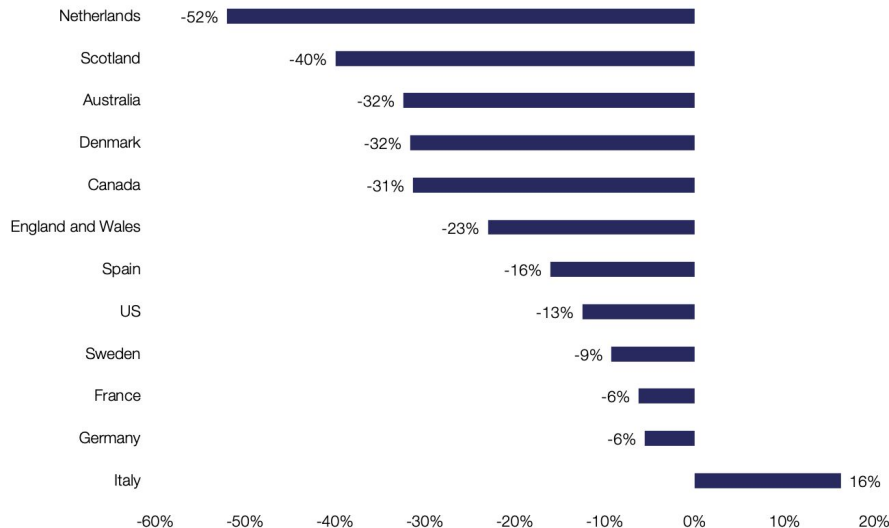


<sup>1</sup> (Domestic) ONS - Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales (Table 1), (International) See Annex.  
<sup>\*\*</sup>For countries marked with an asterisk, percentage changes have been calculated from 2014 to 2017, due to 2018 data not yet being published.  
<sup>\*\*</sup>For a full breakdown of figures and methodology used to calculate figures for each country (including the list of offences included), please see Annex. Figures for Australia relate to the number of victims, rather than the number of individual offences.

# However, the UK is an outlier for robbery, being the only major Western country to experience large rises over the last year five years

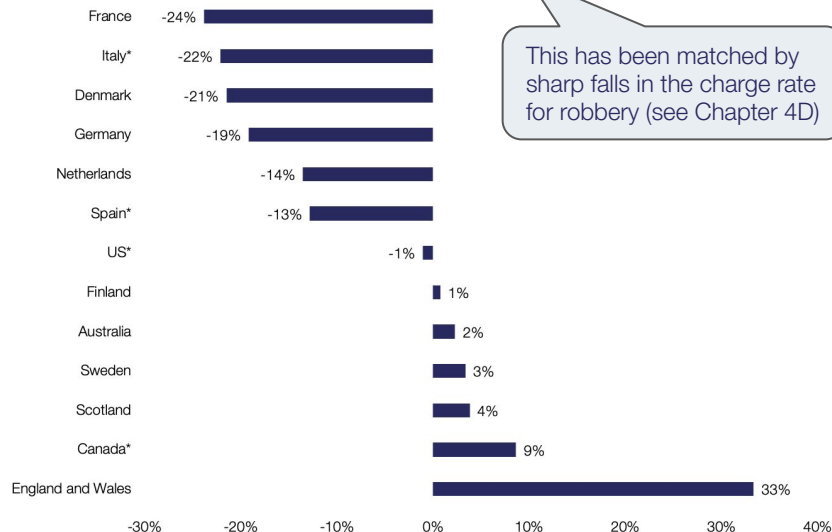
2010 - 2014 saw decreases in the number of robberies committed across most Western countries ...

Change (%) in number of robberies by country, 2010 - 2014<sup>1\*\*</sup>



...whilst these decreases have largely continued since 2014, England and Wales have bucked the trend

Change (%) in number of robberies by country, 2014 - 2018<sup>1\*\*</sup>



This has been matched by sharp falls in the charge rate for robbery (see Chapter 4D)

<sup>1</sup> (Domestic) ONS - Recorded crime at Police Force Area level (including pivot table), (International) See Annex.

\*For countries marked with an asterisk, percentage changes have been calculated from 2014 to 2017, due to 2018 data not yet being published.

\*\*For a full breakdown of figures and methodology used to calculate figures for each country (including the list of offences included), please see Annex. Figures for Australia relate to the number of victims, rather than the number of individual offences.

# The reasons behind this exceptional position are unclear. However, it is noteworthy that the UK is also an outlier for prevalence of smartphones and in terms of the scale of police cuts

Ranking of selected Western countries by level of market penetration for smartphones and reductions in the number of police officers (2010 - 2016)<sup>1,2</sup>

Rank	Smartphone penetration (%)	Reduction in number of police officers (%)
1	UK: 82.2	England and Wales: -11.5
2	Netherlands: 79.3	Spain: -6.0
3	Sweden: 78.8	Denmark: -4.2
4	Germany: 78.8	Sweden: -1.3
5	USA: 77.0	Italy: -0.6
6	France: 76.0	Scotland: +0.2
7	Spain: 72.5	Germany: +0.3
8	Canada: 72.1	France: +13.4
9	Australia: 68.6	Netherlands: +20.1
10	Italy: 58.0	N/A

The data source Eurostat warn against making direct comparisons on reductions to police staff, and data is only available for the selected European countries. They are listed here for illustrative purposes



## **Serious violence (including murder and attempted murder) is rising, and robbery (especially weapon-enabled forms) is increasing rapidly. Further work remains to ascertain a fuller picture of the scale of harm, the reasons for shifts, and the profile of those involved**

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- What is the true scale of harm inflicted by serious violence, and how far do published statistics underestimate the true scale of the challenge?
- What is the profile of serious violence outside of London? How has this profile shifted over recent years?
- How might we improve our estimate of the number of individuals at risk of serious violence?
- What is the role of women and girls within serious violence, and how far is ethnic disproportionality a function of entrenched socioeconomic disadvantage?
- Why has the UK witnessed large increases in robbery in contrast with other major Western countries? What are the domestic factors driving this shift, and do they revolve around smartphone penetration or cuts to police numbers?



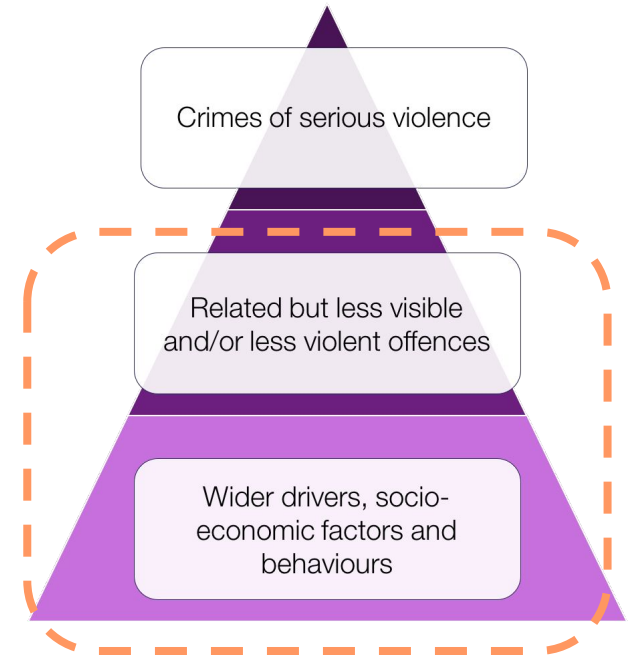
## **4. What the trends reveal about what is underneath the presenting problem**

# This section explores the dynamics underneath the presenting problem: digging into the drivers and what is known about the interaction between them

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This section explores the interactions in four key areas:

- **Drugs:** drugs market are changing, becoming associated with increasing exploitation and violence. The lack of enforcement and exploitation of technological advances has allowed these to grow
- **Vulnerabilities:** we know more about vulnerabilities that increase risks of getting involved in violence and increase chances of criminal and other exploitation
- **Technology:** and the role it plays as both an accelerant of violence and an enabler of it
- **CJS effectiveness:** our CJS is failing at every stage, and it is increasingly apparent that organised groups are able to take advantage of this



In the following slides we explore each of these areas, the trends, gaps in our knowledge and possible interactions to be able to draw a more detailed picture of the problem

## **A. Drugs**

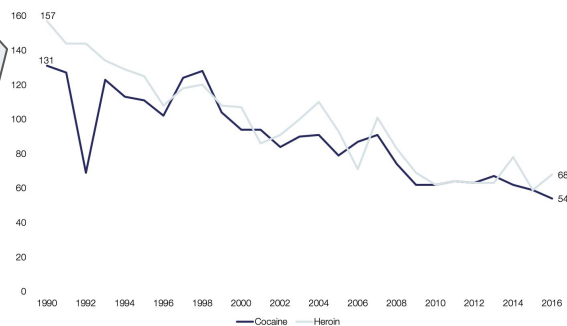
**The drugs market is changing and becoming increasingly associated with violence and exploitation**

# Key indicators suggest that supply of cocaine and heroin is up, and purity is increasing. These are the drugs most associated with supply-side violence (especially crack cocaine)

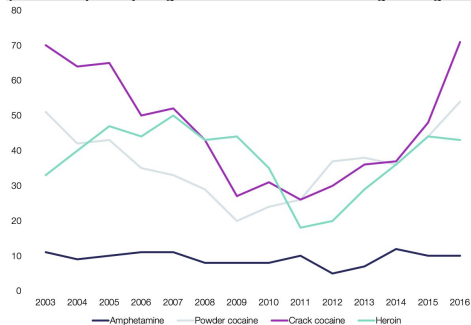
With the price of cocaine and heroin is decreasing, the purity of both drugs has spiked rapidly since 2011

Production of cocaine in particular has expanded globally, with available of the drug across Europe “at an all-time high” [EMCDDA \(2019\)](#)

Standardised UK street price (£) of cocaine and heroin per gram, 1990 - 2016<sup>1</sup>



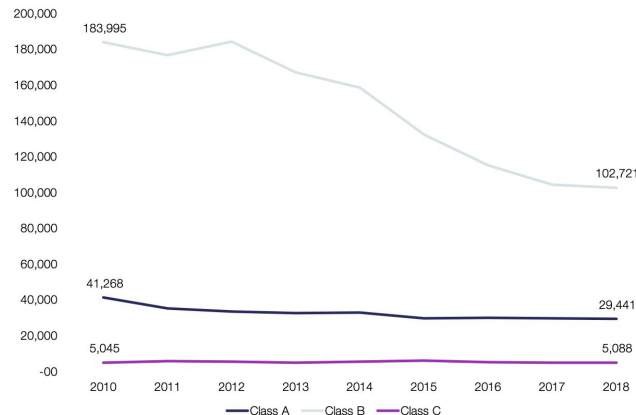
Mean purity/potency (%) of small quantity drug seizures of certain illicit drugs in England and Wales, 2003 - 2016<sup>2</sup>



The NCA (2019) claim that increased controls on cutting agents may partially account for rising purity, though this appears unlikely given falling cost

Meanwhile, the number of seizures of class A and B drugs has fallen dramatically

Number of drug seizures made by police forces and the Border Force, England and Wales, years ending March 2010 - 2018<sup>3</sup>



Though a higher quantity of cocaine is being seized, this does not imply more effective enforcement activity, as price / purity data suggest increased availability

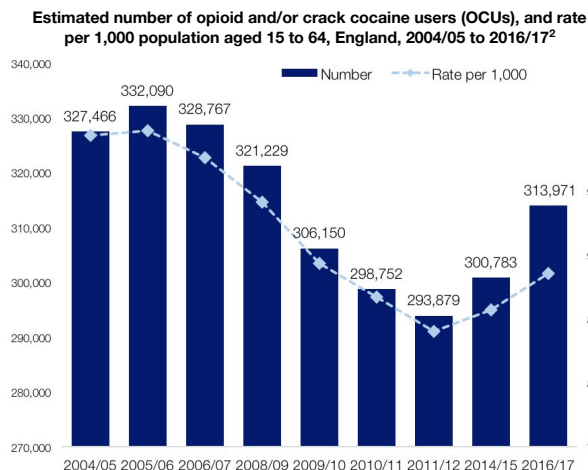
# Meanwhile, consumption of these drugs is outstripping consumption of drugs more broadly, especially amongst young people and for crack cocaine. The UK has the highest rate of cocaine use amongst young adults of any country in Europe

Use of all drugs is increasing across all European countries, particularly amongst the young, and is particularly high in the UK

	Change (percentage points) over last five years (16-59 y/o)	Change (percentage points) over last five years (16-24 y/o)
Use of any illicit drug in the last 12 months <sup>1</sup>	+0.2	+0.7
Use of a class A drug in the last 12 months	+0.5	+2.2
Use of cocaine (powder / crack) in the last 12 months	+0.3	+1.8

**Normalisation of cocaine usage?** According to the [EMCDDA](#) (2019), the UK has the highest proportion of adults who have used cocaine at least once in their life (10.7% of adults in the UK vs 5.4% EU average) as well as young adults aged 15-34 (4.7% in the UK have used cocaine in the last year vs. 2.1% EU average).<sup>\*</sup> Wastewater analysis revealed Bristol to have the highest concentration of cocaine in water residues of any city in Europe, doubling over the past five years

High-risk drug usage is also on the up in the UK, with the number of opioid and crack cocaine users increasing since 2011/12



The number of OCUs has increased 5% since 2010. **Increased use by 35-64 year olds** outweighs overall declining use by younger fusers

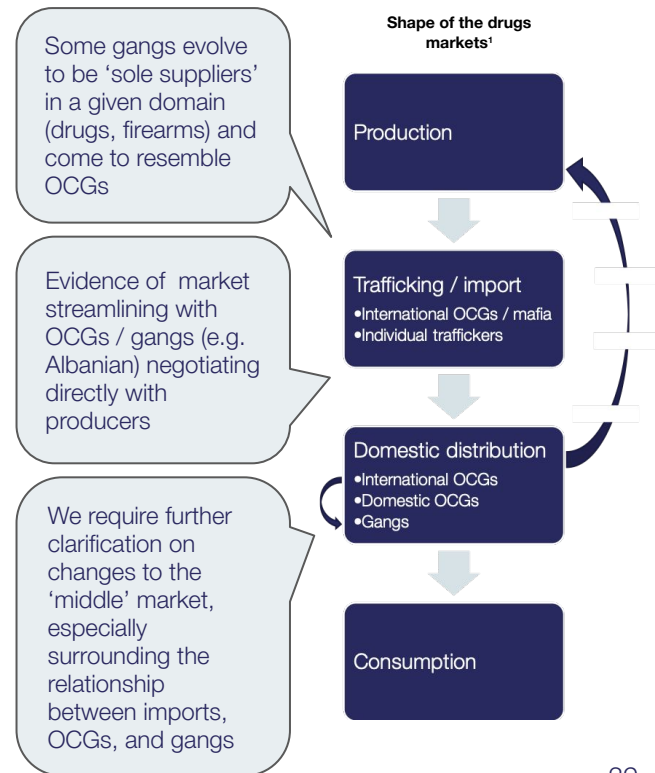
Between 2011/12 and 2016/17, there was an 8.5 per cent rise in the number of crack cocaine users in England

<sup>1</sup> Home Office - Drug misuse: findings from the 2017 to 2018 CSEW: data tables (Tables 1.02, 1.06, 2.01). <sup>2</sup> Public Health England - Estimates of opiate and crack cocaine use prevalence: 2016 to 2017.

<sup>\*</sup>There is some variation between countries on age categories used in each case. In general, adult refers to the 15-65 age bracket, whilst young adult refers to the 15-34 age bracket.

# Factors such as price and purity are affected by changing markets, especially in relation to cocaine. There is some evidence of streamlining in the supply process internationally, and a fragmentation in providers and retailers

- There has been strong growth in the size of Europe's cocaine market, affected by a range of factors including online markets and new technologies (e.g. cryptomarkets)
- *"The fragmentation of the cocaine trade in Europe appears to have resulted in increased competition among OCGs for national and cross-border territories in cocaine supply and retail. One of the consequences has been an increase in violence and drug-related homicides in a number of European countries, such as Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom."* [EMCDDA](#) (2018)
- The National Crime Agency (NCA) claim that OCGs have a proven ability to adapt their operating methods and practices, especially over recent years; OCGs are thought to be establishing increased control over parts of the market, reducing retail costs by establishing relationships directly with suppliers and cutting out wholesalers. Recent police intelligence suggests that Albanian gangs in particular are sourcing cocaine from cartels at £17,000 per kilo less than rivals paid through wholesalers ([The Guardian](#), 2019).
- The involvement of Albanian gangs / OCGs may have displaced domestic OCGs, accompanied by the 'uberisation' of parts of the market for class A drugs – 'anytime, anywhere' and '2-for-1' offers



<sup>1</sup> Whittaker, Dr Andrew (London South Bank University) (June 2018). From Postcodes to Profit: How gangs have changed in Waltham Forest; Metropolitan Police Service analysis

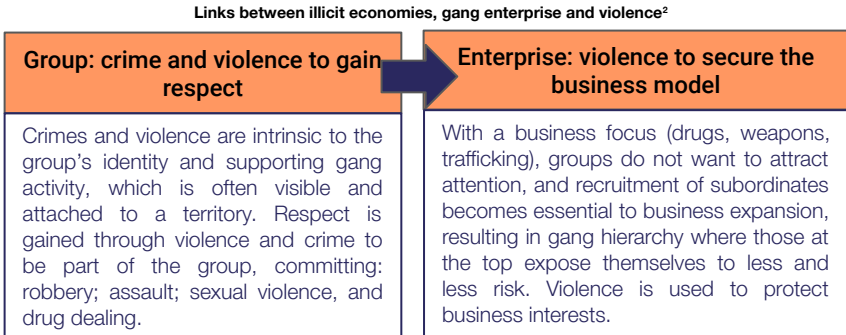
# There is a well-established link between drugs markets and violence. Domestic research suggests that some street gangs have evolved into business-like enterprises focused on profits from the drugs trade, with violence an important currency to securing their business models

Practitioners<sup>1</sup> reported their experience of very visible drug markets and violence: users and dealers alike are exposed to risky environments driven by the need to feed drug habits or sell drugs

Some areas have seen the resurgence of increasingly visible drugs markets, and it was suggested that this was linked to the volume of cocaine/heroin that has to be moved, necessitating more open dealing. Increased poverty may be expanding the pool of people willing to get involved for financial reasons and the emergence of younger dealers into these settings, who may have less self-regulation, could be increasing the propensity for violence.

Some expressed the view that the powder cocaine market - which targets a more affluent, less stigmatised, 'customer' - does not drive violence in the same way. However, there is minimal understanding as to why, relying as it does on an illicit economy which operates by the same rules as the crack cocaine market.

There is also an established and evidenced link<sup>2</sup> between violence and illicit economies, such as the sale of Class A drugs and as street groups/gangs evolve into more business-like models



As these businesses operate without recourse to the law and rules/norms, they therefore rely on trust which tends to be weak. Those working in the business, especially those closer to retail level, live with the constant risk of being preyed upon by other criminals. In these circumstances violence or its threat fill the void.

<sup>1</sup> For this research, Crest engaged with law enforcement and police officers and analysts to examine drug markets trends and their relationship to serious violence. This research will be expanded in a subsequent report

<sup>2</sup> Whittaker, Dr Andrew (London South Bank University) (June 2018). From Postcodes to Profit: How gangs have changed in Waltham Forest; other examples in: Home Office, Serious Violence Strategy (2018)

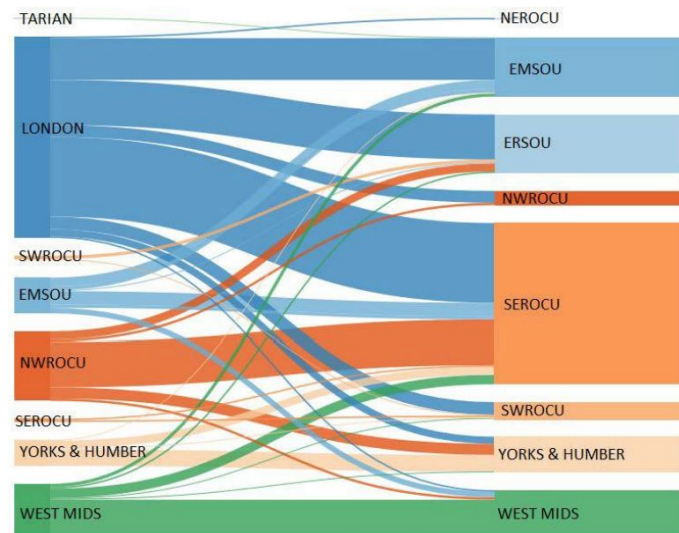


# County lines as a model of drug distribution now affects most / all police force areas and – though small as a proportion of the total drugs market – is strongly associated with violence

- ‘County lines’ involves gangs / organised criminal networks exporting drugs into new markets around the country, facilitated through young individuals working from dedicated mobile phone / social media ‘lines’
- According to the [NCA](#) (2018), the tactic is popular among groups from large urban areas eager to expand out of saturated markets: 15 per cent of individual deal lines known to police originate from the Metropolitan Police, followed by the West Midlands Police (nine per cent)
- In 2017, evidence of county lines activity was detected in 37 out of 42 police forces, with 34 and 13 forces experiencing importing and exporting of county lines respectively
- There are c. 1,000 branded lines (2018), primarily supplying crack and heroin. These can be quite transient – emerging, disappearing, then returning
- An individual deal line can make profits exceeding £800,000 per year. Multiplying the number of branded lines (c. 1000) by £600,000 (scaled down by one-quarter) gives a profit value of £600 million. The overall size of the illicit drugs trade in 2008 (extending beyond profit) was estimated to be £5.3 billion

Data on county lines shows how major cities are increasing the supply of drugs into regions, with London and the North West dominating supply

The NPCC Regional Organised Crime Unit County Line Profile 2018<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Metropolitan Police Service (2018), "Force management statement", p. 84

# Changes in the structure of drugs markets, increased supply and a ruthless focus on economic profits appear to be affecting levels of serious violence. We will explore the relationship between this business model, the wider drugs market and serious violence in more depth

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- There appear to be shifts in the structure of the 'middle' market for some drugs – but to what extent is this driving violence, and for what reasons?
- Are changes in the 'retail' end of the drugs market driving violence through less organised, more entrepreneurial dealers, or is the retail end being operated by more organised, less visible 'controlling' hands exploiting young dealers? Or are both scenarios true?
- Practitioners agree that the key drugs driving street violence are crack cocaine and heroin through open drug markets and county lines; however, are increases in supply and demand of powder cocaine related to violence and exploitation?
- What is the distinction between organised crime groups (OCGs) and more 'organised' gangs?
- What is the profile of the criminals above those who are selling drugs, and those who immediately control more junior individuals?

*Note - The role of technology and social media in fuelling the demand and supply sides of the drugs market will be explored in*

*Chapter 4.*

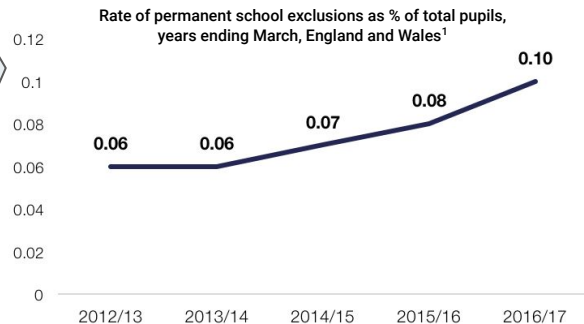
## **B. Vulnerabilities**

**Certain factors  
increase risks of  
getting involved in  
violence and the  
chances of criminal  
and other  
exploitation**

# Children who are vulnerable are at higher risk of being exploited, victimised and / or associated with crime; trends in areas of known vulnerability indicate increasing numbers of young people could be at risk

Long-term declines in permanent school exclusions have begun to reverse, with rates creeping up to 2007/08 levels

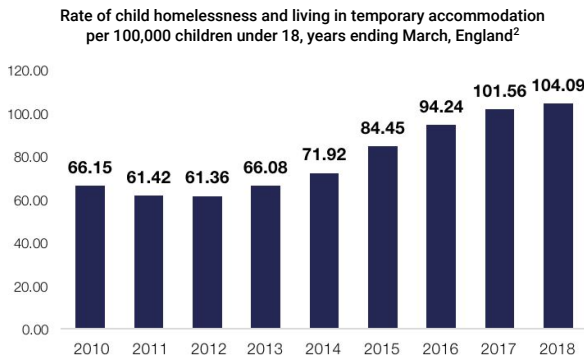
## School exclusions



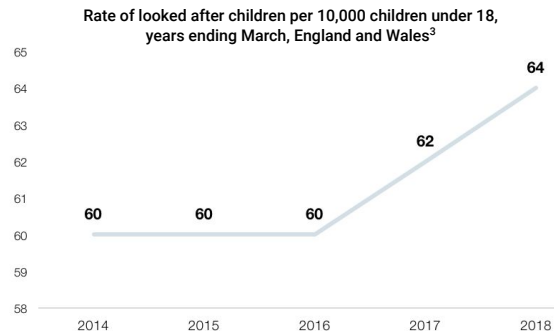
Evidence from the NSPCC (2018) suggests that vulnerability factors such as being in care and school exclusion are markers for increased risk of offending. Young people in these groups are at higher risk of being exploited

Research by Shelter indicates that in 2018 this equated to five homeless pupils per school - and 28 per school in London

## Child homelessness

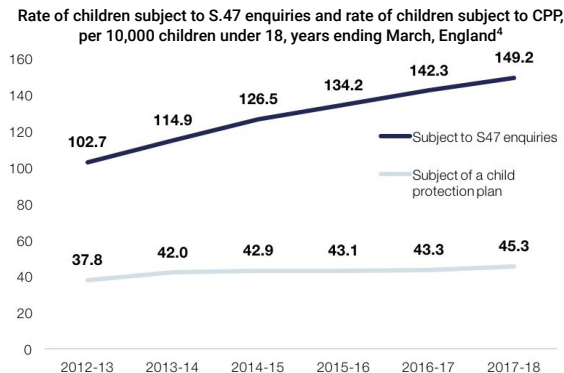


## Looked after children



The number and rate of children who are looked after due to abuse or neglect is the highest on record in England

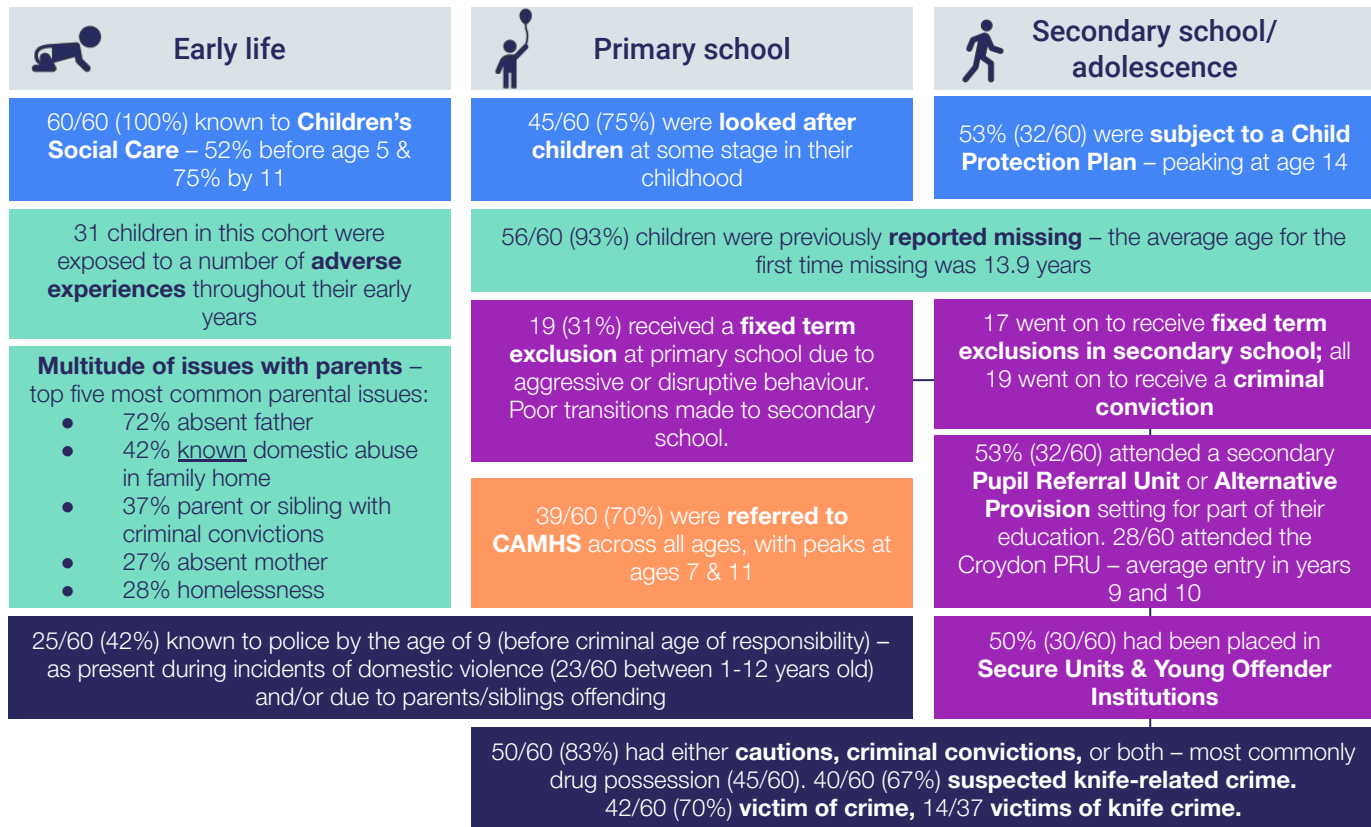
## Child protection



Long-term increases in children subject to child protection - neglect is the most common reason followed increasingly by emotional abuse

<sup>1</sup> DfE: Children looked after in England including adoption: 2017 to 2018. <sup>2</sup> MHCLG, December 2019, Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief, Temporary accommodation tables, T775\_England. <sup>3</sup> Children looked after in England (including adoption). <sup>4</sup> DfE, October 2018, Characteristics of children in need: 2017 to 2018

# A thematic review (2019) of 60 vulnerable adolescents in Croydon highlights the multitude of vulnerabilities, many from early life, experienced by the children in this sample: criminal activity and victimisation for most of these children take place side-by side



## The links between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and violence:

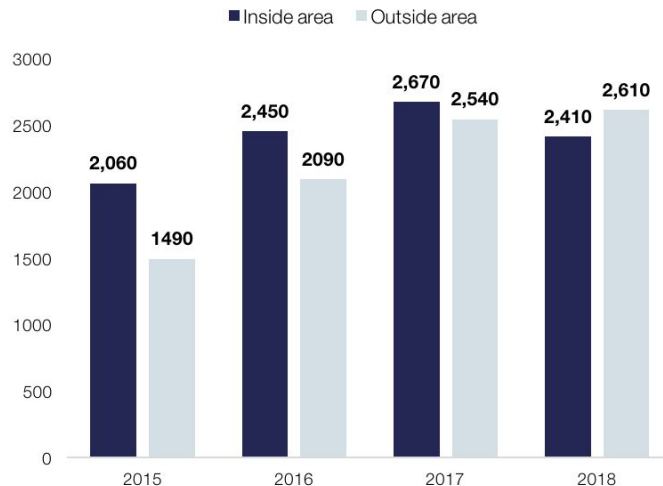
A study conducted by Public Health Wales (2015) found that people with multiple (four or more) types of adversity were 14 times more likely to have been a victim of violence and 15 times more likely to have committed violence over the last year compared to people with no reported adverse childhood experiences.

Some individuals are obviously far more vulnerable than others, and boys and girls have distinct needs. How can we identify these and intervene?

# Promises of wealth/belonging can be very persuasive when children are isolated, alone, sometimes miles from home. The power of grooming is no match for safeguarding, criminal justice or other services

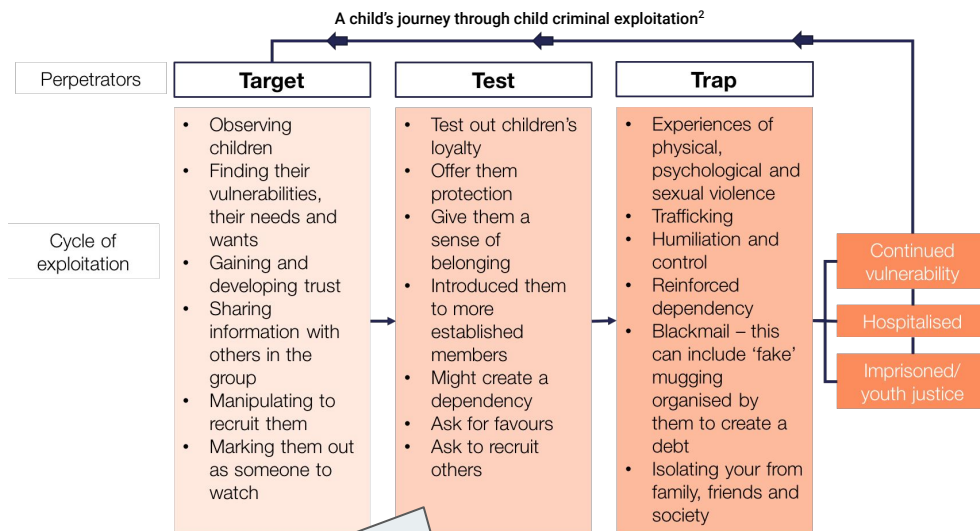
The growth in out of area placements for children in care (some of whom have been sent away to protect them from exploitation in their home area) increases risk of targeting

Children looked after in children's homes (subject to children's homes regulations) who were missing or away without authorisation during the year ending 31 March by placement location<sup>1</sup>



The number of children looked after in children's homes who went missing increased by 41% between 2015-2018 - largely driven by an increase in missing children in out of area placements (a 75% rise over the period)

An infographic produced by the Children's Society captures this cycle of exploitation



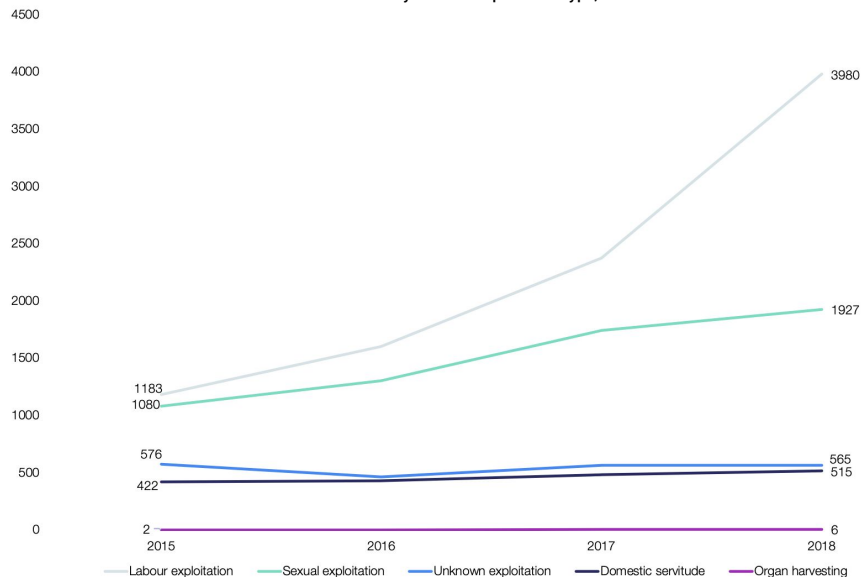
'County Lines is a job centre for underachieving young people'  
*Nequela*, speech at the London Academy for Social Justice (16th July 2019)

<sup>2</sup> Infographic adapted from Children's Society (2019), [Counting Lives](#)

# The targeting of vulnerable children to move and supply drugs at street level turns victims of exploitation into offenders, and sometimes, violent offenders

There has been a 50 per cent growth in referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for criminal exploitation, possibly due to county lines

Referrals to the NRM by claimed exploitation type, 2015 - 2018<sup>1</sup>






- According to FOI requests submitted by the Children's Society (2019), the number of 10-17-year-olds arrested for intent to supply drugs – a significant indicator of county lines trafficking – has gone up by 49% outside London, with the number rising from 338 in 2015/16 to 505 in 2017/18
- Practitioners such as the Children's Society highlight that young people are being pressured into violence to prove loyalty during the 'testing phase', and to distract police from higher-level activity (e.g. drug / weapons movement) elsewhere
- According to the Home Office (2015), Section 45 and Schedule 4 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 make clear that exploited individuals are victims in this situation (backed up by guidance from the Director of Public Prosecutions). However, dealing with this in context remains a huge challenge for policing

# Analysis of serious case reviews from across England and Wales indicates that not all victims of serious violence present to criminal justice agencies: the involvement of many individuals in serious violence may be hidden or haphazard, and may include those who are not visibly vulnerable (e.g. due to the presence of ACEs)

The search parameters for our serious case review analysis were any child over the age of 10 years old since 2014 who had died or was seriously harmed by any of the related factors:  
CSE, gun violence, knife injury, gang involvement, drug dealing, drug trafficking, homicide and county lines.

There were 16 cases that fit this criteria out of a possible 601<sup>1</sup>

 Early Life	 Primary school	 Secondary school/ adolescence
75% known to Children's Social Care: 12/16	25% looked after children at some stage in childhood: 4/16	19% placed in secure units & YOIs: 3/16
69% exposed to a number of adverse experiences throughout their early years: 11/16	31% Received fixed term exclusion: 5/16	25% attended a secondary Pupil Referral Unit or alternative provision setting: 4/16
81% had a multitude of parental issues: 13/16	50% referred to CAMHS: 8/16	
	25% subject to a Child Protection Plan: 4/16	
13% known to the police by the age of 9: 2/16		31% received cautions, criminal convictions or both: 5/16
56% exposed to/victim of sexual abuse and exploitation: 9/16		
37% perpetrator of violent or sexual behaviour/assault: 6/16		
44% reported missing across all ages: 7/16		

<sup>1</sup> A total of 601 serious case reviews published between 2014 and 2019 are in the NPCC National case review repository [accessed online 29.07.19 - <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/case-reviews/national-case-review-repository/>]



# However children are not the only victims – there is evidence that organised crime groups make the exploitation of vulnerable adults integral to drug dealing operations

## There is a clear link between organised criminal activity, county lines and the exploitation of vulnerable adults

Those running county line activity drive drug offences for profit and coerce victims to provide the services. Most potential victims referred currently are males aged 15–17, but young females and vulnerable adults are likely to be both underreported and exploited. In 2017, for example, virtually every force that reported the presence of a county line end-point reported cuckooing, more likely to involve vulnerable adults with housing than young people.

“The vulnerable adults targeted are predominantly class A drug addicts but also include the elderly, those with mental or physical health impairments, female sex workers and single mothers”

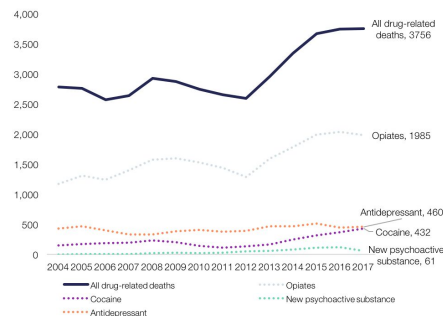
“County lines groups will target new premises by pursuing vulnerable individuals who attend recovery groups, dependency units and areas associated with those experiencing problems”

- NCA, *National Briefing Report: County Lines Violence, Exploitation & Drug Supply 2017*

Beyond county lines, victims are exploited in forced begging, cannabis cultivation, and low-value, high-frequency acquisitive crime.

## ‘Problem’ drug use appears to be on the up

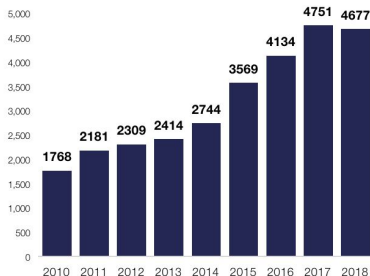
Drug-related deaths, England and Wales, total and trends in selected substances 2004-2017<sup>1</sup>



There is evidence that high-risk drug using is increasing (p. 38) and drug-related deaths are rising, with deaths related to heroin and cocaine having doubled since their low in 2011

## Adult rough sleeping has increased dramatically

Estimated number of rough sleepers, England<sup>2</sup>



Although the number of rough sleepers decreased by 2% between 2017-18, since 2010 there has been a huge increase overall (+165%)

<sup>1</sup> Public Health England - Estimates of opiate and crack cocaine use prevalence: 2016 to 2017. <sup>2</sup> MHCLG, Rough Sleeping Statistics 2018, England

## **Criminals appear to be exploiting increasing levels of vulnerability to draw individuals into drug markets and violence. Further research will aim to improve understanding in this area, and develop appropriate policy to protect vulnerable groups (including girls)**

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- Given the blurring of the lines between victim and offender, do the legal, policy, practice and attitudinal barriers in policing, safeguarding and criminal justice services need to be reformed?
- Should strategies to deal violence against women and girls and domestic violence be made integral to violence reduction, given the significant experience of domestic violence of many of those caught up in violence?
- To what extent are vulnerable adults also being exploited and involved in serious violence?
- As perpetrators become ever more vigilant for opportunities to exploit and manipulate, might we see the growth of new engineered vulnerabilities?

## **C. Technology**

**Technology is  
enabling and  
accelerating the  
spread of serious  
violence**

# Technology has served to exacerbate certain behaviours that have fuelled recent rises in serious violence. This ranges from accelerated drug supply through to the amplification of rivalries and threats

## Amplifying threats

- Music videos on YouTube can be used to quickly amplify rivalries and threats between groups and individuals
- Large viewership for taunts and threats can escalate the perceived impact on status, and the importance of the threat
- Individuals / gangs can communicate and play out rivalries at a quicker speed and with more intensity online, due to the reduced barriers (e.g. geographical) to interaction

## Enabling recruitment / exploitation

- Social media is increasingly used to recruit new gang members / drug sellers through glamourised imagery. This can take the form of music videos distributed through sometimes legitimate platforms
- Technology including tracking apps can allow more senior gang / OCG members to monitor and control juniors
- Violence can be used to seize drug contacts – e.g. robbery of a SIM card turning into a double murder

## Accelerating supply

- Online markets mean customers receive aggressive marketing and high-speed delivery, and can pick from multiple sellers (driving competition and rivalries)
- According to the Global Drugs Survey, it takes longer to receive a pizza than cocaine in the UK, driving higher consumption. **“Rapid delivery may lead some people to use more cocaine more often and, hence, more easily losing control over their use”.**

## Avoiding enforcement

- Drug suppliers and users have adapted to changing law enforcement as well as tech landscapes: traditional (and risky) street dealing is no longer necessary
- Encrypted phone technology is used by ‘county lines’ criminals, with WhatsApp and similar platforms limiting intelligence gathering opportunities through a lack of billing data. Similarly, contact details can be cloned/stored on cloud systems, limiting the impact of enforcement activity

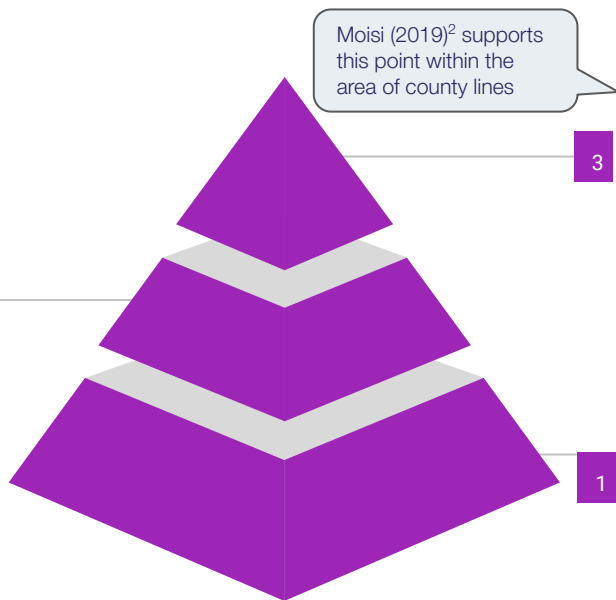
# An example of this relates to gangs in London, where academic research identifies 'expressive' and 'instrumental' advantages from social media, allowing members to secure status whilst facilitating drug supply through enhanced reputation and easier recruitment

Research from Storrod and Densley (2017)<sup>1</sup> found that London-based gangs involved in drug supply use social media to promote luxurious lifestyles

This has clear links to established patterns in violence at every stage

## Enabling drug sale ('instrumental')

The expressive act of acquiring status serves an instrumental end by creating fear of reprisal. 'Influencers' are attractive drug sellers, and users maintain strong loyalty to them. Money rather than violence for violence's sake has become the primary aim of gangs



## Facilitating recruitment ('instrumental')

Gang 'elders' occupy a position analogous to online 'influencers', respected, followed and feared within communities. This raises the appeal of direct recruitment messages, often featuring images of money

## Acquiring status ('expressive')

The dissemination of music and lifestyles (e.g. trap) through social media allows users to acquire reputation, and secure their place within a gang. This includes 'brand strategy', and enforcing gang hierarchies

- According to Storrod and Densley, "gangs monitor online spaces much like physical territory", **enforcing reputation**
- **Younger members are tracked via GPS** to ensure compliance
- **Money from drug sale is laundered** through the costs of music production, including paying cameramen
- Images of train tickets are posted online to build status connected with **county lines**, including for recruitment
- Social media is used to maintain / raise status for imprisoned members
- Girls are given attention and exploited, e.g. to test new lines or punish boyfriends

## **Technology is enabling and accelerating forms of serious violence in different ways, including through drug sale. We will seek to understand to what extent this represents a truly new threat, and how policy can react to a rapidly changing landscape**

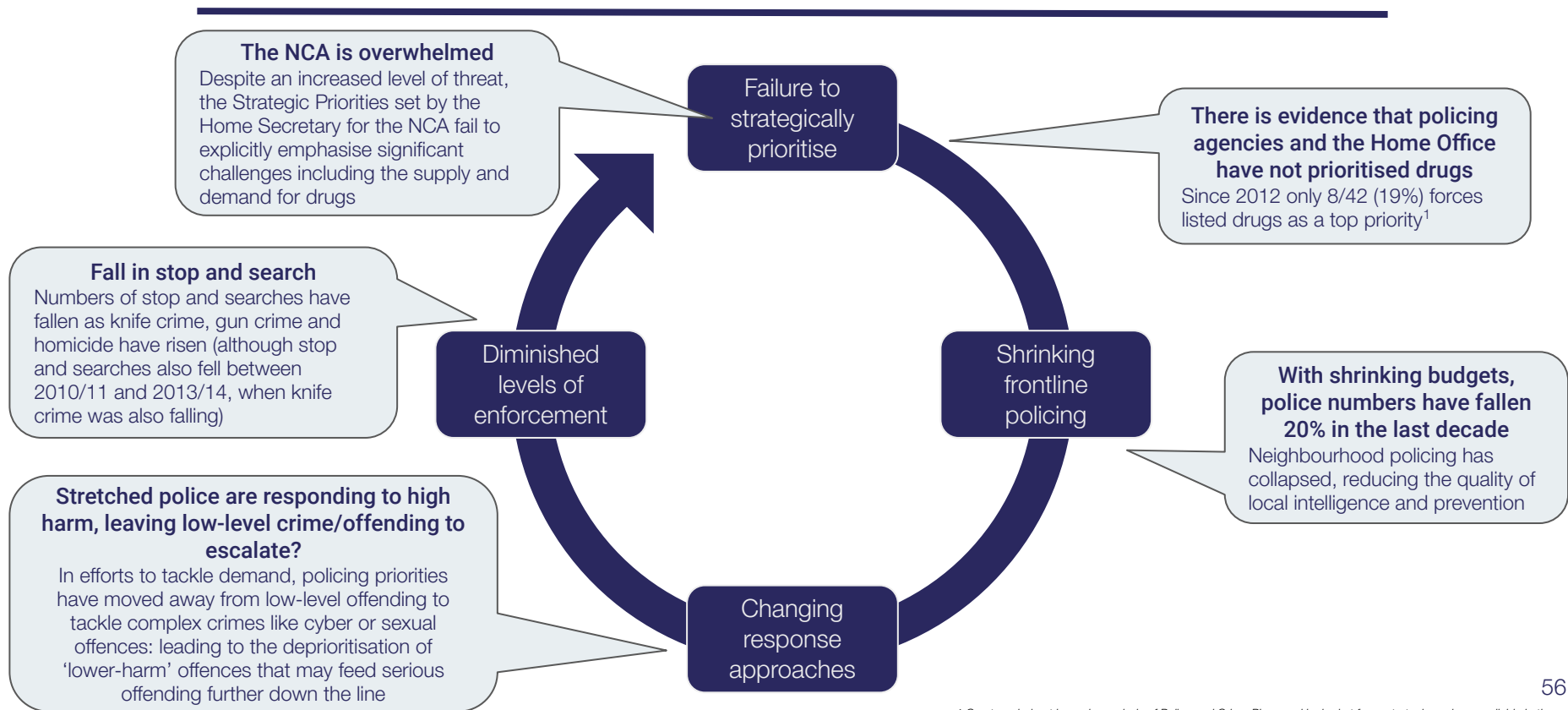
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- To what extent have developments in social media driven rises in serious violence, or is it simply a shift in *modus operandi* on the part of gangs and those involved in serious violence?
- How do new technologies intersect with turf wars? Do groups involved in county lines conflict with each other for territory online before meeting in person?
- To what extent have new technologies brought rival groups into contact with each other, and has this affected levels of inter-group violence?
- Has accelerated drug delivery simply been a market development, or has it affected violence in direct or indirect ways?

## **D. Safeguarding and criminal justice effectiveness**

**Safeguarding  
agencies and the  
CJS are struggling to  
respond to current  
threats**

# Policing and law enforcement are struggling to deal with changing demand. The de-prioritisation of drugs (that may feed serious violence further down the line) and shrinking frontline resources have led to diminishing levels of enforcement

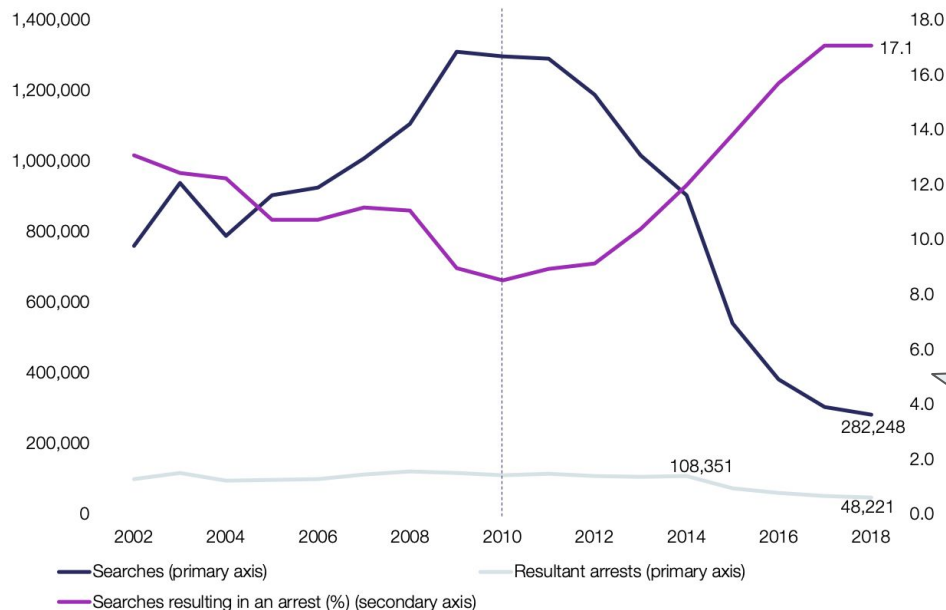




# Stop and search has become highly politicised. As an enforcement tactic, its use has decreased over recent years, due to concerns about disproportionality in its application. Resultant arrests have also fallen

The number of searches / arrests have fallen, though a greater proportion of searches are leading to arrest

Persons and vehicles stopped and searched and subsequent arrests, years ending March 2002 - 2018<sup>1</sup>



- Though use of stop and search powers was already falling, reforms to the code of practice in 2014 accelerated the decline. This began to impact on the number of arrests, including for serious offences; for example, arrests for offensive weapons under PACE fell by 5,768 between 2014 and 2018
- The number of searches is likely to rise in 2019, due to increased use in London and reported rises in use by other forces (reported in [The Guardian](#) (2019))

**“We must get beyond the binary ... We don’t have enough police officers out there and have not used stop and search adequately or sufficiently. And that has been significantly because of the politicisation of the power”**

**“My position on stop and search is clear: it saves lives. But it’s not a long-term solution.”**

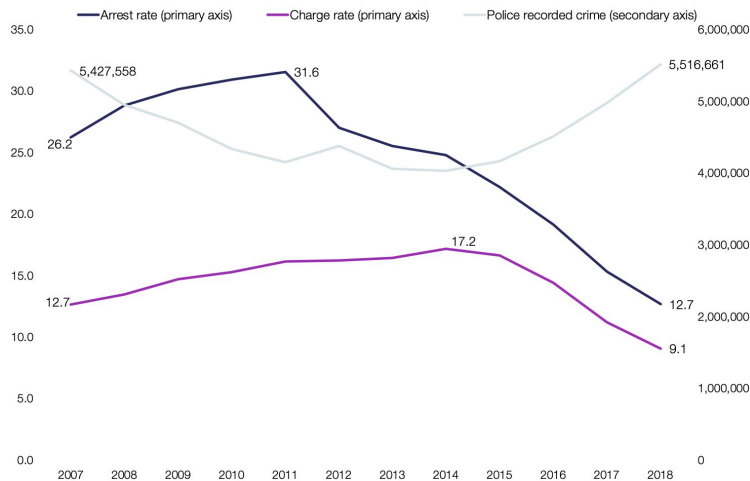
- John Sutherland (former Chief Superintendent, Metropolitan Police). [Islington Gazette](#) (2018)

<sup>1</sup> Home Office - Stop and search statistics data tables: police powers and procedures year ending 31 March 2018

# Charge and arrest rates have collapsed whilst the time from offence to charge has steadily increased, even for the most serious crime types, reducing both the 'swiftness' and 'certainty' of punishment

Charge and arrest rates have collapsed as recorded crime has increased...

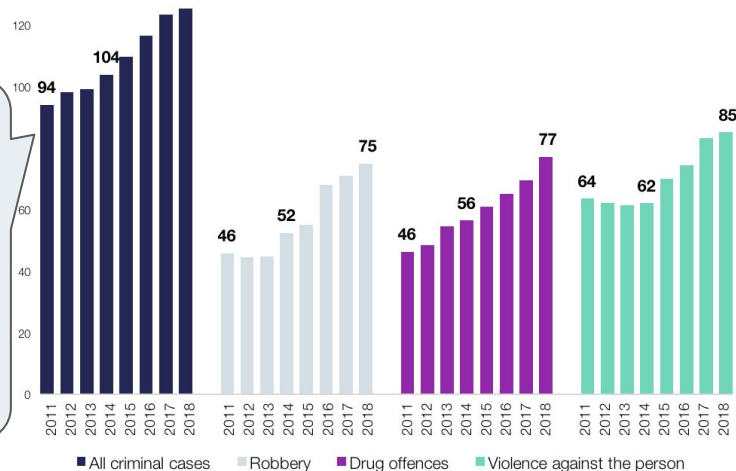
Total recorded crime, arrests as a proportion (%) of recorded crime, and proportion (%) leading to charge, years ending March, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>



In the year ending March 2018, only 12.7 per cent of total recorded crime led to arrest, whilst only 9.1 per cent of offences led to charge (falling to 7.8 per cent in 2019). This has fallen from 31.6 per cent and 16.2 per cent respectively in 2011

... and the increasing time from offence to charge has added to rising court waiting times: painting a concerning picture within the context of additional police and investigatory demand

Average number of days from offence to charge or laying of information, all criminal cases and selected indictable/trieable way cases<sup>2</sup>



Crown court waiting times have pushed up from 391 days in 2010 to 555 in 2018  
Magistrates' courts have increased from 139 days to 169

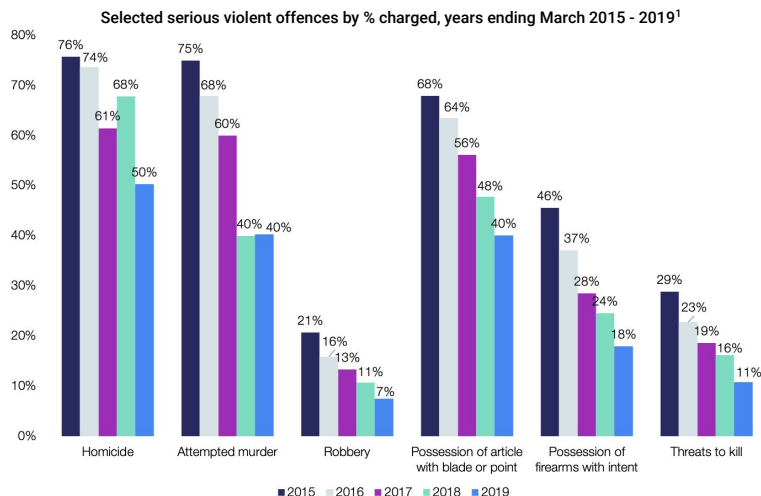
Agencies face the challenge of rising investigatory complexity: the [CPS](#) highlight increased volumes of digital data as a factor behind declining charge rates and MPS Commissioner [Cressida Dick](#) has called for technological solutions to deal with rising complexity, including more violent and sexual assault cases (taking a long time to clear). Police are increasingly forced to deal with [demand relating to mental health](#)

<sup>1</sup> Home Office - Arrest statistics data tables: police powers and procedures, TA\_01a; HO - Crime outcomes in England and Wales: data tables, T2.1 / 2.3; ONS - Recorded Crime Data at police force area level. <sup>2</sup> Arrest data for Lancashire has been excluded due to a lack of data for 2017/18

<sup>2</sup> MoJ Criminal Court Statistics (annual): January to March 2018, Courts Timeliness

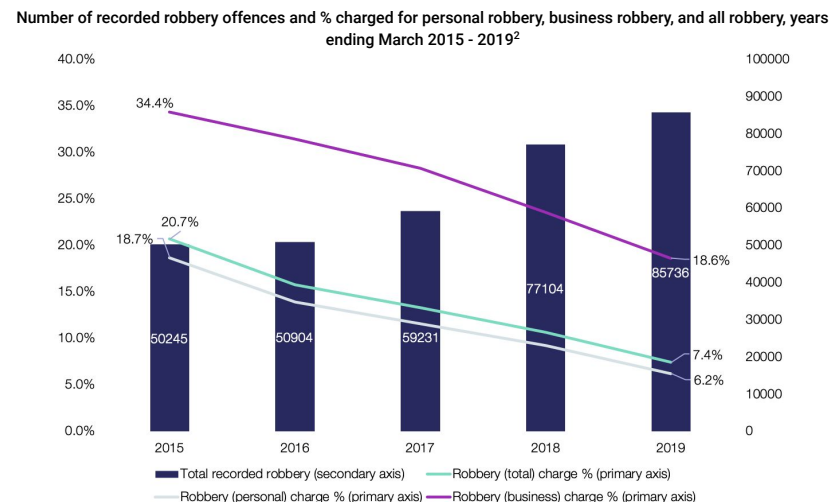
# Charge rates for serious violence are declining, with robbery at particularly low rates

## Charge rates have declined across the different types of serious violence...



An FOI to West Midlands Police starkly demonstrates how charge rates have plummeted: between 2013-18 recorded crimes of threats to kill increased by 232% (from 337 to 1,119) whilst the proportion charged fell from 37% to 14%. This falling charge rate is replicated nationally across different serious violent offences. Whilst some of this may be ascribable to delayed investigations (with recorded crime included for more recent years), this is unlikely to account for the continued and severe long-term falls

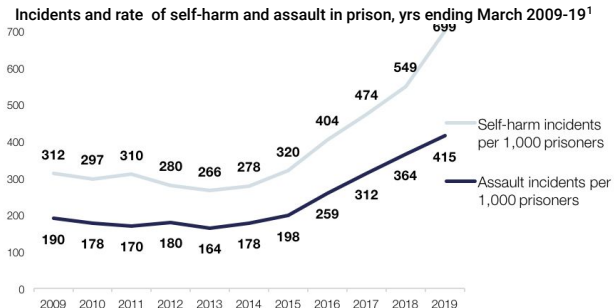
## ...and an already low charge rate for robbery decreases further when limited to personal robbery



The overwhelming majority of recorded robberies relate to the taking of personal, rather than business property. Whilst the overall charge rate is 7.4%, this falls to 6.2% for personal robbery, inflated by an 18.6% charge rate for business robbery

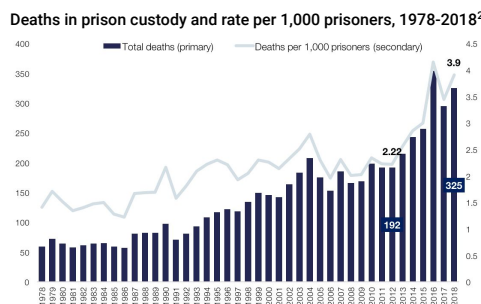
# The challenges experienced across the criminal justice system, as stripped back services attempt to deal with increasingly complex demand, are exemplified when looking at the state of prisons: increasingly unsafe and failing to rehabilitate

Prisons act as a microcosm for the world of violence: Assaults and rates of harm are at their highest since records began



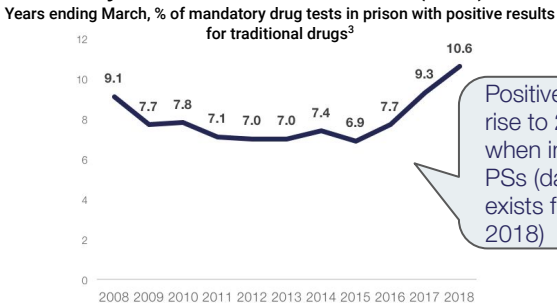
In November 2018 the former Justice Secretary David Gauke said “**prison walls alone are no longer effective in stopping crime - inside or outside of prison.**”

Prisons are becoming increasingly unsafe: the number and rates of deaths have risen continuously



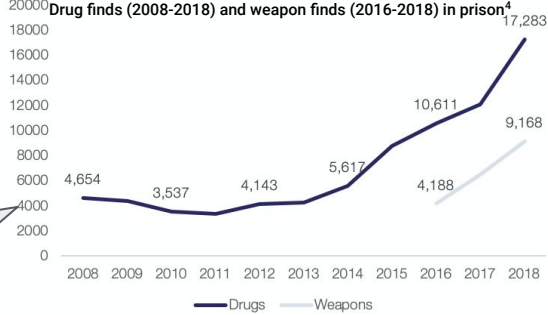
The largest increases have been in finds of class A drugs, which have quadrupled between 2016 - 2018

Illegal drug use is rife and rising, affecting at least 1 in 5 prisoners – likely to be higher with the prevalence of Psychoactive Substances (PSs)



Positive results rise to 20.4% when including PSs (data only exists from 2018)

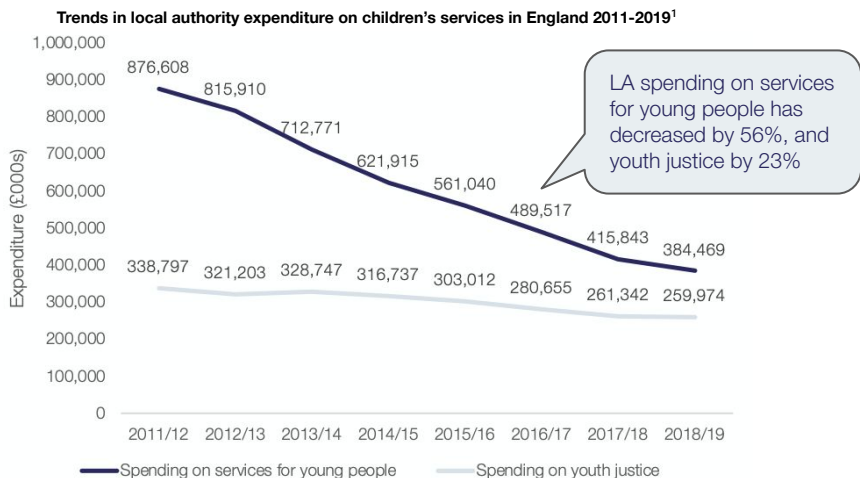
There has been more than a five fold increase in drug finds in prisons since 2011, whilst weapon finds have more than doubled in two years



<sup>1</sup>MoJ, Safety in Custody quarterly: 2019; <sup>2</sup>MoJ, 2018, Safety in Custody Statistics: Deaths annual tables, 1978 - 2017; <sup>3,4</sup>HMPPS annual digest 2018 to 2019

# Safeguarding services are also struggling, having seen a significant reorientation of resources, a historical lack of local leadership and social work practices which do not reflect real life circumstances: currently they are failing to prevent criminals exploiting vulnerable children

## Cuts to non-statutory children's services make children more vulnerable



There has been a major reorientation of spending on children's services. Around half of total children's services spending now goes on the 75,420 looked-after children (whose numbers have increased by 25 per cent since 2006).

Social Work practices do not always fit the needs of the children, and safeguarding governance is not sufficiently robust

**Agencies have insufficient understanding of the behaviours of exploited older children, leading to inadequate responses:**

"We still found some cases when children's social care teams closed children's cases prematurely because children did not engage with professionals, even when there was clear evidence of exploitation and high levels of risk. Professionals need to understand the impact of exploitation and patterns of engagement and disengagement of older vulnerable children. They need to 'stay with' the child."

- *Joint inspection into the multi-agency response to child exploitation and children missing from home, care or education*

**LSCBs have been overhauled recently:**

"LSCBs were essentially predicated on inter-familial child abuse and are not in a good position to deal effectively with a remit to coordinate services and ensure their effectiveness across a spectrum encompassing child protection, safeguarding and wellbeing. They have neither the capacity nor resources to do so."

- *Wood review of the role and functions of Local Safeguarding Children Boards*

# Recognising and responding to criminal exploitation as a key MO of the drugs trade is vital to effective policing, criminal justice and safeguarding services. Mistakes in tackling CSE which left children and young adults exposed to horrifying violence and abuse, must not be repeated

## Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

An independent inquiry found that in Rotherham, there were at least 1,400 victims of CSE between 1997 and 2013.<sup>1</sup> The police and local authority were found to have systematically ignored abuse, with an embedded culture of denial and a belief that 'it could not happen here'. Further analysis by Dame Louise Casey also found:

- A **tendency to blame victims for their situation** with families finding themselves also viewed as part of the problem
- A distinct **lack of professional curiosity** and a failure to use evidence of sexual abuse as intelligence to pursue perpetrators
- **Failure to understand the grooming process** as an absence of self-control; assuming children were capable of choosing a lifestyle on the margins of society, among adults who prey upon them
- **Failure to use tools and powers** available as a lever to stop behaviour
- **Signs were not spotted** – children going missing from education and from care homes were not identified as being at risk. Multiple missing episodes were treated less seriously than a single occurrence, precisely because the children caused concern so often

## Child criminal exploitation (CCE)

An HMICFRS thematic inspection into child sexual abuse (CSA) included an addendum on tackling criminal exploitation found evidence of similar attitudes and practices:<sup>3</sup>

- Children are not always treated as victims
- Children are often groomed and/or tricked into working before they recognise the dangers... [and] often before parents or professionals realise what is happening
- The view in some areas: that 'this does not happen here', whereas county lines in which CCE is inherent is in all parts of the country
- Some services were not curious enough about this group of children: they had not shared and interrogated the intelligence they had about highly vulnerable children that would have helped them to see patterns of exploitation
- Highlighted the importance of police and others making good use of civil orders, such as community protection notices and child abduction warning notices, to safeguard vulnerable children

"We must ensure that the mistakes that some partners made in being slow to recognise the risk of child sexual exploitation are not repeated".

<sup>1</sup> Alexis Jay OBE (2014). *"Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997 - 2013)"*

<sup>2</sup> Louise Casey CB (2015). *"Reflections on Child Sexual Exploitation"*

<sup>3</sup> HMICFRS et al (2018). *"Protecting children from criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery: an addendum"*

# There are concerning signs that safeguarding and criminal justice services are struggling to meet the demands that serious violence places upon them. The scale of this struggle will be explored further, especially relating to potentially reduced deterrence

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- To what extent have the Home Office, police forces and / or PCCs “taken their eye off the ball” on drugs in recent years? If true, to what extent has this eroded police intelligence and allowed drug traffickers and dealers to develop their businesses?
- Is there a perceived absence of police presence – whether through declining numbers, falling arrest/charge rates or reductions in stop and search – and has this reduced deterrence?
- If police presence has reduced, what impact has this had on the number of children being referred to diversion, early help and statutory safeguarding support (given that the police tend to be a major referral route)?
- How can criminal justice and safeguarding services better deal with the crossover between victims and offenders, with children being exploited and manipulated into criminal behaviour?
- To what extent are unprecedented levels of violence in the prison system linked to broader serious violence, including through the effect on rehabilitation? How does this relate to drugs?

*"I know I ain't gonna get caught. They don't even bother to come out no more"*  
Sue Roberts, ["The London killings of 2018"](#)

## **4. Conclusions and next steps**



# Serious violence is the presenting issue but there are wider national policy, practice and societal changes which have created a perfect storm – serious violence finds fertile ground to evolve in the spaces where public services have an increasingly fragile hold

## Serious violence finds fertile ground....

**The drugs market supply-side is changing** – but in ways that are not clear; there is a growing market for drugs, through growing drug dependency and for recreational purposes, as barriers to access drugs are getting lower

**Violent robbery** is also rising at an alarming rate, possibly acting an entry point for violent crime

**The systematic criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable people** adds a further dimension to an already complex picture, making victims of people who are also committing crime: it challenges the concept of victimisation; children who need help don't seek help; criminals can exploit their fear; and no-one reports

**The use of technology** facilitates both the supply and demand for drugs and those involved in selling drugs and other criminality are able to use social media both to market themselves and to threaten others

## ...in the spaces from which public services have withdrawn

Years of austerity have left **public services less able to respond** including by providing safe spaces; they are also less able to support those at risk, and alongside reductions in youth services (including youth justice) the collapse of community policing has reduced intelligence

There is **less enforcement** (including stop and search) which has loosened constraints on those tempted to carry weapons

**Policing has prioritised issues other than drugs** over recent years with increases in public protection work

**Children and vulnerable adults are slipping through the net:** the siloed nature of public services makes it hard to tackle this multifaceted problem which requires multi-agency approaches across disciplines and across geographical areas

**Violence tends to be very localised and often happens in communities where police are mistrusted** due to historic over-policing and under-protection, making it harder to get to grips with the problem

# The next stages of our serious violence programme will examine the following questions and issues in greater depth (1/2)

---

## ***What is the role of drugs markets?***

- There appear to be shifts in the structure of the 'middle' market for some drugs – but to what extent is this driving violence, and for what reasons?
- Are changes in the 'retail' end of the drugs market driving violence through less organised, more entrepreneurial dealers, or is the retail end being operated by more organised, less visible 'controlling' hands exploiting young dealers? Or are both scenarios true?
- Practitioners agree that the key drugs driving street violence are crack cocaine and heroin through open drug markets and county lines; however, are increases in demand and supply of powder cocaine related to violence and exploitation?
- What is the distinction between organised crime groups (OCGs) and more 'organised' gangs?
- What is the profile of the criminals above those who are selling drugs, and those who immediately control more junior individuals?

## ***Why are safeguarding and criminal justice services struggling to meet the demands that serious violence places upon them?***

- Have the Home Office, police forces and PCCs "taken their eye off the ball" on drugs in recent years? And to what extent has this eroded police intelligence and allowed drug traffickers and dealers to develop their businesses?
- Has reduced police presence – whether through declining numbers, falling arrest/charge rates or reductions in stop and search – also reduced deterrence?  
To what extent are unprecedented levels of violence in the prison system linked to broader serious violence, including through the effect on rehabilitation? How does this relate to drugs?

## ***How has technology created opportunities for criminals?***

- To what extent have developments in social media driven rises in serious violence, or do they simply represent a shift in *modus operandi* on the part of gangs and those involved in serious violence?
- How do new technologies intersect with turf wars? Do groups involved in county lines conflict with each other for territory online before meeting in person?
- To what extent have new technologies brought rival groups into contact with each other, and has this affected levels of inter-group violence?
- Has accelerated drug delivery simply been a market development, or has it affected violence in direct or indirect ways?

# The next stages of our serious violence programme will examine the following questions and issues in greater depth (2/2)

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## *Trends*

- What is the true scale of harm inflicted by serious violence, and how far do published statistics underestimate the true scale of the challenge?
- Why has the UK witnessed large increases in robbery in contrast with other major Western countries? What are the domestic factors driving this shift, and do they revolve around smartphone penetration or cuts to police numbers?
- What is the role of women and girls within serious violence, and how far is ethnic disproportionality a function of entrenched socioeconomic disadvantage?
- How might we improve our estimate of the number of individuals at risk of serious violence?

## *Vulnerability*

- The blurring of the lines between victim and offender raise questions about the how the legal, policy and practice structures in policing, safeguarding and criminal justice facilitate or impede a more effective response to those affected.
- Has a reduced police presence also had an impact on the number of children being referred to diversion, early help and statutory safeguarding support (given that the police tend to be a major referral route)?
- To what extent are vulnerable adults also being exploited and involved in serious violence?
- Given the links between domestic violence growing up and subsequent involvement in violence, how should strategies to deal violence against women and girls and domestic violence be integrated?
- As perpetrators become ever more vigilant for opportunities to exploit and manipulate, might we see the growth of new engineered vulnerabilities?

**The next stages of our research will involve working with local areas to explore these questions, understand their challenges and build a clearer picture. Please get in touch if you would be interested in taking part or hearing more.**

# **Annex I: Methodology for estimating the population at risk**

# We set out to quantify how many children are at risk of becoming victims of serious violence, estimating the size of different groups within the general population who have a greater likelihood of victimisation are at risk of serious violence

With no definition of serious violence or an estimate for the number at risk of it, we look to understand how many children (10-17) in a single year we think suffer from what we can measure to be serious violence

Existing evidence of factors or characteristics that are known to be linked to those who experience serious violence have been used to identify existing data sets to quantify the size of different groups in the population who possess characteristics (or indicative risk factors.) We can use these to estimate the size of the group in the wider population who are at risk of becoming a victim of serious violence.

In lieu of a definition of either (a) serious violence or (b) being at risk, we have adopted the following terms to define serious violence:

- a. "Serious violence" relates to the possibility of:
- becoming a victim of violence (with/without injury), robbery, sexual assault
  - being a perpetrator of possession of weapons offences (as an indicator of heightened risk for those who carry and are prepared to use weapons against others.)
- b. "Being at risk"
- We use a series of empirical descriptors or 'group characteristics' to quantify the size of certain groups in the population who may be at more or less risk of serious violence. These are subcategories of risk (see table 1)

Based on existing data and evidence about risk, we have assumed and assigned a relative scale to different groups based on various characteristics: from 1 (10-17 population) to 10 (homicide victims)

At the very maximum, the population at risk is the total number of children in the UK. At a minimum those at risk must number those victims of homicide aged 10-17. Everyone in that set has suffered serious violence, but if we count just this population alone, we have missed those who we know from research or that we can postulate are at risk of serious violence that results in other injury or experience.

Table 1: Population categories and relative scale

Group characteristic	Relative scale (1 - 10)
Base population (10-17)	1
Excluded from school (temp or fixed)	2
Child on a protection plan	3
Know a member of a street gang	4
Looked after child for 12+ months	4
Looked after child and convicted offender	5
Convicted offender	5
Victims of any violence (CSEW)	6
Victims of serious offences (PRC)	6
Victims of knife-related offences (PRC)	6
Victims of serious violence (wounding) (CSEW)	7
Being a member of a gang	7
Carry a knife as gang member	8
Victims of homicide (and related) offences	10

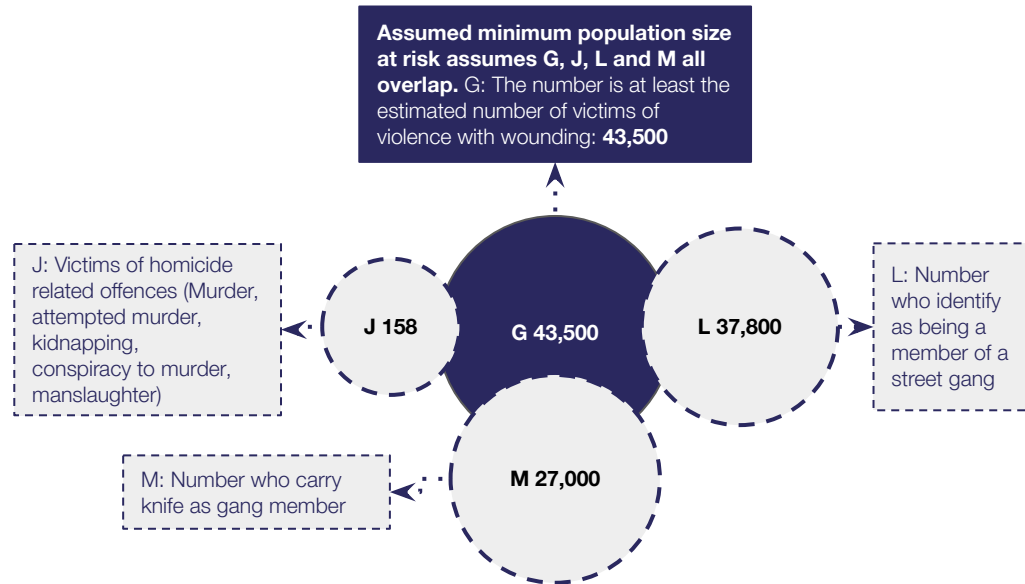
# Working from this scale, we used the size of the demographic groups to produce overall estimates for the number of those affected. We provide a set of different combinations to account for likely overlaps between the members of each group

We have adapted data collected for other purposes, from a range of sources, to quantify the size of groups with specific characteristics and how they might overlap:

Table 2: Population categories and relative scale, with estimated population size (10-17) and potential overlaps

Group Ref	Group characteristic	Size	% of base population	Overlaps or potential overlaps?	Relative scale (1 - 10)
A	Base population	5,400,000	100	All	1
B	Excluded from school (temp or fixed)	326,925	3.6	C,N,D,E,B,F	2
C	Children on a protection plan	18,030	0.33	B,N	3
N	Know a member of a street gang	388,800	7.2	B,C,D,E, F,G	4
D	Looked after children for 12+ months	38,770	0.68	E,N	4
E	Looked after children – convicted offenders	1,510	0.028	D,K	5
K	Risk associated to be an offender	44,763	0.83	E,G,H,I,M	5
F	Victim of violence (wide definition)	145,000	2.69	G,H,I,M,K,L	6
H	Victims linked to serious offence	7,944	0.147	F, G	6
I	Victims linked to knife/short related offence	8,403	0.156	F, G	6
G	Victim of violence (wounding)	43,500	0.8	M,F,G,	7
L	Being a member of a gang	37,800	0.7	K	7
M	Carrying knife as gang member	27,000	0.5	L,I,H,G	8
J	Victims of homicide related offences	158	0.00293	F,G	10

The groups are collected into two populations: one which incorporates those ranked 6 and above on the relative scale, and those ranked 7 and above. Below illustrates the population ranked 7 and above:



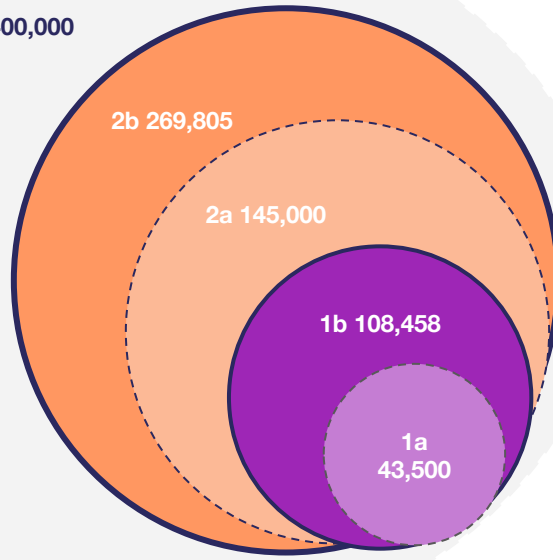
	Relative scale	
Estimated population size	≥7	≥6
Aggregated	108,458	269,805
Max	43,500	145,000

**Assumed maximum population size at risk assumes populations of G, J, L and M are distinct**, and include different individuals, the estimated number is the aggregate figure of: **108,458**

**In particular, we identified two populations working from different boundaries on the relative scale. Within those populations, a lower estimate (assuming all groups in each population overlap) and a higher estimate (assuming all of the individuals in each group in the population are unique) are provided to account for data issues**

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Total population 10-17: 5,400,000



Using the available data combined with our relative scale, we can identify two populations using different lower boundaries on the relative scale: one encompasses groups with a mark of seven and above, and the other, a wider group of those with a mark of six and above.

The minimum and aggregate estimates are intended to account for data issues - the number at risk is likely to be somewhere between these estimates:

**Relative scale  $\geq 7$**

1a = minimum: 43,500 (each risk population overlaps, the largest group is the minimum size)

1b = aggregate: 108,458 (each risk population is distinct, equates to the combination of each)

**Relative scale  $\geq 6$**

2a = minimum: 145,000 (each risk population overlaps, the largest group is the minimum size)

2b = aggregate: 269,805 (each risk population is distinct, equates to the combination of each)

# Thank you

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