The Scottish Government

Youth Violence in Scotland:

Literature Review

Crime and Justice

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YOUTH VIOLENCE IN SCOTLAND: LITERATURE REVIEW

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The views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Government or Scottish Ministers.

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RESEARCH AIMS AND OVERVIEW

1. This review was commissioned by the Scottish Government. The main aim is to identify and collate available qualitative and quantitative research data and information about youth violence in Scotland, in order to construct a research-informed picture of 'what is currently known' about youth violence.

2. The review draws on readily available sources of data from administrative sources (recorded crime, criminal proceedings, school exclusions, referrals to the Children's Hearings System) and from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) in order to construct a picture of what is known about youth violence using official data sources.

3. It also draws on the range of primarily, but not solely, qualitative research studies that have been undertaken within Scotland over the past 15-20 years. These studies have been funded by a range of sources, including local and central government, research councils and charities. Whilst some have focussed specifically on youth violence, others had a broader research remit in relation to youth offending in general, or were focused on aspects of youth lifestyles, or youth identities.

4. Whilst there are clear definitional and methodological differences between the studies that require due attention, all of them tell us something about young peoples' experiences or uses of violence, and hence enrich our understanding of this complex phenomena.

5. Taken together, information from these two sources – the administrative statistics and the research-base – provide a broad-brush picture of young people and violence in Scotland. This is also a rather limited picture, as much remains unknown about youth violence in Scotland. There is little doubt that there is a significant lack of available data on youth offending and the wider experiences of young people in Scotland. The administrative statistical data has a range of limitations, and there is no large-scale youth offending survey such as those found in other jurisdictions. The data deficiencies have clear implications for understanding underlying causes of offending amongst young people, trends in offending over time, longer term outcomes for offenders and effectiveness of current intervention policies and practice.

6. A secondary aim of the review is to collate key messages from contemporary research and debates on 'risk factors' for youth violence, and provide a brief overview of effective interventions to reduce youth violence. This part of the review draws on a wider body of national and international literature, including that from the risk factors prevention paradigm, and the desistance paradigm.

THE 'ADMINISTRATIVE PICTURE' OF YOUTH VIOLENCE IN SCOTLAND

7. There are significant differences in reporting and data-collection procedures both between and within different statutory agencies, creating substantial problems in gaining an accurate picture of youth violence in Scotland today. In particular, there are significant differences in definitions of 'youth' and 'violence' between different bodies, creating problems in making comparisons between sources of information.

8. The 'Administrative Picture' of youth violence in Scotland is therefore incomplete. Information is not routinely disaggregated by age and gender, such that the best available evidence from it relates to violent offences in general, rather than on young people specifically. Where youth violence is recorded specifically, it is frequently recorded in ways that are not directly comparable between sources.

Police Recorded Crime

9. Whilst recorded numbers of all violent crimes have been relatively steady or decreasing since 2006, it is not possible to estimate the number attributable to young people.

10. 16-30 year-olds make up the most significant number of offenders in homicide cases. Since 2002, however, it has not been possible to break this figure down to solely those involving young offenders.

Criminal Proceedings

11. Long-term trends in criminal convictions for violent crimes and offences show an increase over a ten-year period for assault, handling offensive weapons, and serious assault; an overall decrease in robbery convictions; and no significant change in homicide.

12. Proceedings for serious violent crime (robbery, serious assault, homicide) have increased since 2006, while those involving more minor violent offences (assault, handling offensive weapons) have levelled off or decreased. These overall trends are generally replicated for crimes and offences involving under-21 year olds.

Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

13. The SCJS has undergone a range of methodological changes over the past decade, making trend information relating to youth violence difficult to estimate. Broadly, however, the data shows similarities to comparable police recorded crime; with a long-term increase in assault, and robbery remaining at a steadily low level.

14. The 2000 youth survey found violence to be 'relatively common' amongst young people; generally involving friends or peers, in public places in or near the home or school.

15. While the survey of under-16s is no longer included in SCJS sweeps, data relating to young people aged 16-24 is routinely collected. According to data from the past ten years, males aged 16-24 are the group most likely to be both the offenders and victims of violent crime; with correlations between victimisation and offending.

Referrals to SCRA

16. SCRA referrals have decreased over the past two years, after a steady increase in years previous. Notably, offence referrals have decreased at a more significant rate than non-offence referrals.

17. For the year 2008/09, girls made up 44% of all referrals, and boys 56%; boys were far more likely to be referred on offence grounds (76% compared to 24%). The most common age of referrals remains 14-15.

18. In line with the overall decrease in offence referrals, the number of referrals for assault have decreased significantly over the past two years – from 10,084 in 2006/07 to 7,582 in 2008/09.

School Exclusions

19. Recording procedures for school exclusions have also altered in the past three years, with greater specificity in offences, making longer-term trend data difficult to estimate.

20. The one violent offence that has remained constant is 'fighting' (though the definitional criteria is unclear). Exclusions for fighting have fluctuated quite significantly during the past ten years, with the last two years showing a slight decrease. Data for school exclusions, however, is not broken down by age or gender.

THE RESEARCH PICTURE OF YOUTH VIOLENCE IN SCOTLAND

MEANINGS, EXPERIENCES AND FEAR OF VIOLENCE

21. The available research material provides some information about the role of violence in the lives of children and young people in Scotland. In particular, it provides information on the meanings of violence, young peoples' views about and experiences of violence; their fears and concerns about violence, and, relatedly, the role of youth 'gangs' and territoriality in young peoples' lives.

22. Drawing from the available Scottish research base, the following broad observations can be made:

Meanings and Experiences

23. Qualitative research which draws on the voices of young people suggests that violence has multiple, contingent, and context-specific meanings for young people.

24. While some forms of violence are negatively construed as being hurtful or harmful, other forms of 'violence', such as 'play' fighting, may be seen as playing a more positive role in developing group solidarity. This emphasises the complexities of young people's approach to the meaning of violence, and frequent divergence from official definitions.

25. Young people report experiencing range of different forms of violence in the context of their everyday lives, although for the most part this is low level violence that does not involve significant physical harm.

26. Included in these experiences, however, are examples of victimisation by older young people, or adults, which create a higher level of fear amongst young people. These risks may be exacerbated by time spent in public places, particularly if alcohol is involved.

27. Young people are unlikely to report violent events or occurrences to the police.

Fear of violence

28. While research evidence indicates the pervasiveness of low-level violence in the lives of young people in Scotland, it is important to locate these fears within the context of other everyday fears in the lives of young people.

29. Research evidence indicates that fear of violence is heightened in areas with a perceived problem with youth 'gangs'. It is unclear, however, to what extent these perceptions are rooted in reality or experience.

VIOLENT OFFENDERS AND VIOLENT OFFENDING

30. Research material in relation to violent offending in Scotland is limited. However, the following broad observations can be made in relation to the following: family context; background and personal circumstances; weapons-carrying, and motivations for involvement in violence.

Prevalence

31. Self-report studies reveal a level of violence among young people that is higher than that reported by official sources of data.

32. Most of this violence is relatively low-level and occurs between young people of around the same age, sometimes siblings.

33. Low-level violence may be considered as a normal, routine form of behaviour among young people.

Family and community factors

34. Research evidence on the background and characteristics of young violent offenders in Scotland remains limited, focused predominantly on prison populations.

35. Available data points in particular to the role of domestic violence and parental drug and/or alcohol abuse, which may themselves be influenced by stress related to socio-economic disadvantage and societal attitudes and norms of behaviour.

36. Most convicted violent young offenders grow up in poor neighbourhoods characterised by territorial violence and the defence of respect and reputation.

Alcohol and drug misuse

37. Recent research with young people in custody points to the significant role of substance misuse, especially excessive drinking, in the backgrounds of convicted violent offenders.

38. Most young offenders report being under the influence of drugs and/or especially alcohol during the commission of their last violent offence.

39. Violence is also perpetrated alongside financially motivated offences (e.g. shoplifting, robbery), which are committed to support a drug habit.

Knives and weapons

40. Self-report data suggest that the number of young people who report having ever carried a weapon is relatively high, but that weapon use is far less common.

41. The majority of young people who claim to have carried a weapon report that they do so as a means of self-defence.

42. Levels of weapon carrying and use are significantly higher amongst prison samples than the general youth population, but even amongst this group carrying is not always equivalent with use.

43. The use of non-bladed weapons, such as bottles, bricks and bats, is as least as common as the use of knives.

Motivations and rewards

44. Some research with young offenders identifies three main motivations for violence: excitement, status and protection.

45. The majority of violent young offenders engage in violence as a means to counteract boredom and as a source of exhilaration, pleasure and power.

46. Violence also serves as important source of status and esteem, particularly for young men.

47. This search for respect is in itself a form of self-protection, an attempt to pre-empt violent victimisation through the display of an aggressive or violent disposition.

AGE, CRIME AND RISK RESPONSES TO YOUTH VIOLENCE

48. This section summarises key messages from contemporary research and debates on 'risk factors' for youth violence, and will also provide a brief overview of effective interventions to reduce youth violence.

Risk paradigm

49. Over the past 15 years, the risk factors approach to devising preventative strategies has become a dominant discourse in youth justice. Risk analysis is common and there is something of a consensus around the precipitative factors of family conflict, truancy, drug use, irresponsible or lack of parenting, low intelligence, delinquent peers, and community organisation.

50. However, whilst research evidence from the identification of both risk and protective factors has established the potential for strategies to reduce young people's risk of offending and involvement in anti-social behaviour, this is an area characterised by intense debate.

51. Many writers have warned of the dangers of the risk approach on the basis that defining and measuring risk factors is problematic and that the interpretation of risk factor evidence is difficult. Whilst many risk factors are relatively well-established, far less established are the causal mechanisms linking such factors with offending. The accuracy of early childhood risk predictors are by no means established.

52. Most research on risk factors has focused on prevalence and onset, but relatively little is known about risk factors for prediction, duration and escalation of offending and on the developmental sequences which lead to persistent offending.

Risk-Focused Prevention

53. Although recent meta-analytic reviews of research have shown some promising evidence that some intervention approaches are effective in reducing re-offending rates, they have tended only to highlight general principles of effectiveness.

54. In general terms, the most well-known risk-focused programmes that have been targeted towards individual and family risk factors draw on cognitive-behavioural concepts. The most effective programmes involve skills training, parental education, pre-school programmes and so-called multi-component programmes (Farrington 2007; Sherman et al 1998).

55. It is important to note however that relatively little attention has been given to the effectiveness of interventions with distinct types of offenders, especially those serious or violent offenders who might be expected to be most resistant to change Those that have focused on violent offending have important and well-documented methodological and analytical limitations.

56. A key message from the research literature is that for any intervention to be effective, the targeted risk factors must be amenable to change. The data

from one of the best-known reviews of serious and violent offending (Lipsey and Derzon 1998) suggests that the strongest predictors of subsequent serious and violent offending for both age groups are relatively changeable factors – early offending and substance abuse, and anti-social associates and social ties. This suggests that disrupting early patterns of anti-social behaviour and negative peer association appear to be important. The promotion of positive social ties is likely to be an effective strategy for the prevention of future violent and serious offending.

Effective Interventions for Young people

57. The research literature indicates that patterns in antisocial and offending behaviour tend to be age-graded which suggests that different forms of intervention will be required at different stages of the life-course.

58. Early intervention is key to improving outcomes for young people and early indicators of risk factors for poor outcomes include multiple disadvantage, social isolation and bullying.

59. The most successful interventions make use of family, school, community etc in innovative way to support individual change (for example through peer mentoring), working with the needs and motivation of offenders to enhance change.

60. To be effective interventions need to be targeted to specific offenders and their needs.

61. Structured programmes can contribute to a reduction in offending for different types of crime but the effect is limited by wider social and individual factors.

Desistance from Crime

62. The desistance literature broadly concurs that most young people 'grow out' of crime, although both social structure and context are important for successful transitions. Findings from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (ESYTC) show that young people's ability to desist was inhibited by living in neighbourhoods characterised by deprivation, social instability and high crime rates.

63. Desistance typically requires both personal change and better integration within mainstream society; there need to be reasons to change, supports for change, and mechanisms for recognising change.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Youth violence remains a contentious public and political issue. A great deal of media attention and public debate is devoted to the phenomenon of youth violence. Yet very little is known about the scale or nature of violence committed by youth, trends in violent youth offending, or the role played by violence in the everyday lives of children and young people in Scotland.

1.2 The aim of the review is to identify and collate available qualitative and quantitative research data and information about youth violence in Scotland, in order to construct a research-informed picture of 'what is currently known' about youth violence in this country. It will form part of a wider programme of work on youth violence currently being conducted within the Scottish Government and, in particular, will complement an ongoing audit of official data sources.

1.3 This review is intended to facilitate an enhanced awareness of potential gaps in recording procedures within the Scottish Government for capturing data on youth violence, identify areas in which there is a particular dearth of information about youth violence, and suggest areas for future research.

Report Structure

1.4 There are a range of relevant literatures and data-sources relating to youth violence in Scotland. The review is structured broadly by source of information – Chapter Two dealing with official statistical sources, Chapter Three with empirical research in Scotland, and Chapter Four with international research evidence.

1.5 Chapter Two, the 'Administrative Picture' of youth violence, comprises an analysis of publicly-available statistics on youth violence in Scotland. Data is drawn from publications from the Scottish Government and statutory agencies, and is divided into the following five categories:

    1) Police Recorded Crime
    2) Criminal Proceedings
    3) Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS)
    4) Referrals to the Scottish Children's Reporter's Administration (SCRA)
    5) School Exclusions

1.6 Chapter Three represents an assessment of available research evidence on youth violence in Scotland. The section is divided into three parts. After discussion of the methodologies employed both in the literature search, and in the research itself, 'Meanings, Experiences and Fear of Violence' assesses the research evidence relating to the role of violence in the lives of children and young people. 'Violent Offending and Violent Offenders' analyses evidence relating to violent offenders, focusing on: a) family and community context, b) alcohol and drug misuse, c) knives and weapons, and d) motivations and rewards of violence. 'Findings on violence from the ESYTC' summarises key

conclusions on youth violence from the sole longitudinal Scottish study of violence.[1]

1.7　Chapter Four summarises key messages from contemporary research and debates on 'risk factors' for youth violence, as well as providing a brief overview of effective interventions to reduce youth violence. This includes an outline of the role of gender in pathways to violence and in desistance, and identifies key gender differences, where known. Chapter Four draws on national and international literature, including that from the risk factors prevention paradigm, and the desistance paradigm. Chapter Five provides a conclusion, and Chapter Six pus forward a set of recommendations arising from this review.

1.8　Each section concludes with a series of 'key points', which constitute the core messages of the section.

Key Definitions

1.9　Both 'youth' and 'violence' are elastic concepts, used to refer to a wide range of ages and behaviours. This section of the report will highlight some of the difficulties involved with defining youth violence, and the ways in which these issues have been approached in the context of this report.

Defining Youth

1.10　While it was requested that the report focus on the age-range 11-26 years, it is important to note that none of the official data or empirical research used in compiling this report gives a complete overview of this particular (and very wide) age-range. Official data from statutory agencies draws on different age-groups in reporting violent offences; at times using different age-ranges for different offences. Empirical research on youth violence, on the other hand, tends to focus on children and young people (frequently 11-18 years), and less on young adults. The international research on risk and protective factors for youth violence inevitably uses a wide-range of definitions of 'youth'. It should also be emphasised that this literature frequently refers to early years and childhood in this context; although this age-group is not directly within the scope of the report, this research forms a fundamental element in understanding violent offending in later life.

1.11　As a result, the age-range of 11-26 years should be viewed as a relatively arbitrary overarching category for the report, designed to encompass both administrative data and empirical research in Scotland alongside international research relating to risk and protective factors in youth violence. The specific age-ranges for each data-source, as well as difficulties involved with comparison between data-sources, will be highlighted throughout the report.

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[1] The research team are deeply indebted to Susan McVie for her contribution to this section of the report.

Defining Violence

1.12 The World Health Organization defines violence as:

'The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.' (Krug et al 2002: 5)

1.13 This definition recognises the breadth and complexity involved in defining violence, incorporating self-inflicted violence, family and intimate partner violence, and political/economic violence (perpetrated by states or businesses); as well as recognising that violent harm may be physical, sexual, psychological, or involving deprivation or neglect (Krug *et al* 2002: 5-7). The agreed definition of 'violence' employed in the report, however, is restricted to interpersonal violence by young people which involves or threatens physical harm.

1.14 It should be emphasised that there is little consistency in either official data or empirical research on youth violence regarding definitions. On one hand, while some official data-sources (notably police recorded crime and courts service) use legal definitions for violent offences, others (SCRA, education) do not specify the definitions employed. On the other, empirical research relating to violence frequently questions the appropriateness of legal definitions, particularly as they relate to children and young people, and therefore employ broader definitions; closer to the WHO definition outlined. Much of this research draws attention to the disproportionate focus on public instances of youth violence – particularly relating to youth 'gangs' and knife crime – as compared with the various forms of 'hidden' violence – for example sexual and domestic violence, or self-harm – in the lives of children and young people. As such, much of the empirical research referred to in the report draws on young people's definitions and understandings of violence and victimisation, which contradicts or expands the legally accepted definitions used in official sources.

1.15 While it is understood that domestic abuse, sexual violence, and self-inflicted violence are outwith the scope of this report, these points are outlined to emphasise the lack of definitional consistency within both official data and empirical research, and the lack of 'fit' between these definitions and the agreed definition within the context of this report. Specific definitions employed by official data-sources and research studies are highlighted throughout the report, as well as relevant caveats relating to data-comparison.

2 THE ADMINISTRATIVE PICTURE

2.1 This section comprises an analysis of publicly-available statistics on youth violence in Scotland. Data is drawn from publications from the Scottish Government and statutory agencies, and is divided into the following five categories:

1) Police Recorded Crime
2) Criminal Proceedings
3) Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS)
4) Reports to the Scottish Children's Reporter's Administration (SCRA)
5) School Exclusions

2.2 These sources of data constitute the 'Administrative Picture' of youth violence in Scotland – the best available official information relating to youth violence. These sources, however, represent a very poor indication of the current level of, or long-term trends in, youth violence in Scotland. Different statutory agencies operate under different principles and imperatives, and record and present data in very different ways. As a result, it is not possible to make a clear assessment of the extent or nature of youth violence in Scotland through these sources alone.

2.3 **Table 1** outlines the differences in recording procedures between different statutory agencies. As is evident, there are significant differences in both the classifications of violent offences, and the age-ranges involved. It is apparent that data relating to youth violence is not currently collected or published in a joined-up or coherent way.

Table 1: Recording Procedures for Youth Violence, Selected Statutory Agencies

Reporting Agency	Publication	Classifications	Age-range
Police	Recorded Crime*	Simple assault	Not recorded
		Robbery	Not recorded
		Serious assault	Not recorded
		Handling an offensive weapon	Not recorded
	Homicide in Scotland	Homicide	16-30
Government	SCJS	Victim of assault	16-24
		Victim of robbery	16-24
Courts	Criminal Proceedings	Simple assault	16-21
		Robbery	16-21
		Serious assault	16-21
		Handling an offensive weapon	16-21
		Homicide	16-21
SCRA	SCRA Annual Report	Referral for assault	8-16
		Referral for carrying an offensive weapon	8-16
Education	School Exclusions	Fighting	5-17

* As Recorded Crime figures include incidents with no known offender, data is not disaggregated by age.

2.4 As **Table 1** makes clear, it is difficult to extrapolate an overall picture of youth violence from these sources alone. Different agencies employ different categorisations, definitions, and levels of proof – for example, the crime of 'assault' requires a police report to form part of the Recorded Crime figures, corroborated evidence to form part of Criminal Proceedings, self-report to form part of SCJS, and referral because it is believed that compulsory measures are required (no corroboration needed) to form part of SCRA data.[2] While the police and courts service employ legal definitions, SCRA and education authorities do not specify a definition for 'assault or 'fighting'.

Police Recorded Crime

2.5 Police recorded crime represents the crimes and offences reported to and recorded by the police. While numerous research studies have cast doubt on the reliability of these figures for calculating the 'true' level of crime, they constitute an important point of reference in assessing general trends in violence. However, as recorded crime refers only to crimes reported to the police, many have no known offender; as such, no data exists on the age of offenders in many recorded crimes.

Assault

2.6 Assault, referred to as 'petty' or 'minor' assault in recorded crime statistics, is a common law offence in Scotland; generally defined as occurring:

> *'when one person makes an attack upon another with the intention of effecting the immediate bodily injury of that other person or producing the fear of immediate bodily injury in his mind.' (Jones and Christie 2003: 200)*

2.7 As **Graph 1.1** illustrates, the offence of assault has increased steadily over the past twenty years, levelling off since 2004.[3]

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[2] Anyone can refer a child to the Reporter, however, referrals come from five main sources – the police, social work, education, health and parents/relevant persons.
[3] The introduction of the Scottish Crime Reporting Standard (SCRS), in 2004, removed the requirement of corroboration for crimes and offences to be recorded, resulting in an artificial increase in figures.

Graph 1.1: Recorded assaults in Scotland, 1988-2009
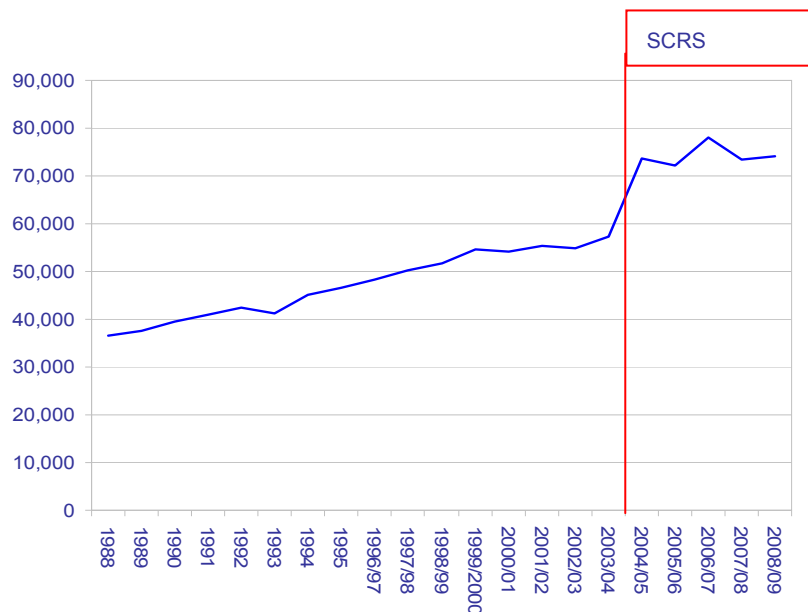
Source: Adapted from Scottish Executive (1998); Scottish Government (2007, 2009a) Recorded Crime in Scotland

Serious assault and robbery

2.8   The figures recorded under the heading of 'serious assault, etc' include both murder and culpable homicide (including death by dangerous driving or causing death by careless driving while under the influence of drink or drugs), as well as any assault in which:

> *'the victim sustained an injury resulting in detention in hospital as an in-patient or any of the following injuries whether or not he was detained in hospital: fractures, internal injuries, severe concussion, loss of consciousness, lacerations requiring sutures which may lead to impairment or disfigurement or any other injury which may lead to impairment or disfigurement. (Scottish Government 2009b: 36)*

2.9   Robbery is generally defined as 'the deliberate taking of moveable and corporeal property from another by force and against his will' (Jones and Christie 2003: 290), including offences involving intent to rob (Scottish Government 2009b: 36).

2.10 As **Graph 1.2** illustrates, after peaking in the early 1990s, numbers of serious assaults have remained relatively steady over a twenty year period, with a slight reduction over the past two years (2007/08-2008/09), while the number of robberies has decreased significantly.

Graph 1.2: Recorded numbers of serious assault and robbery in Scotland, 1988-2008/09
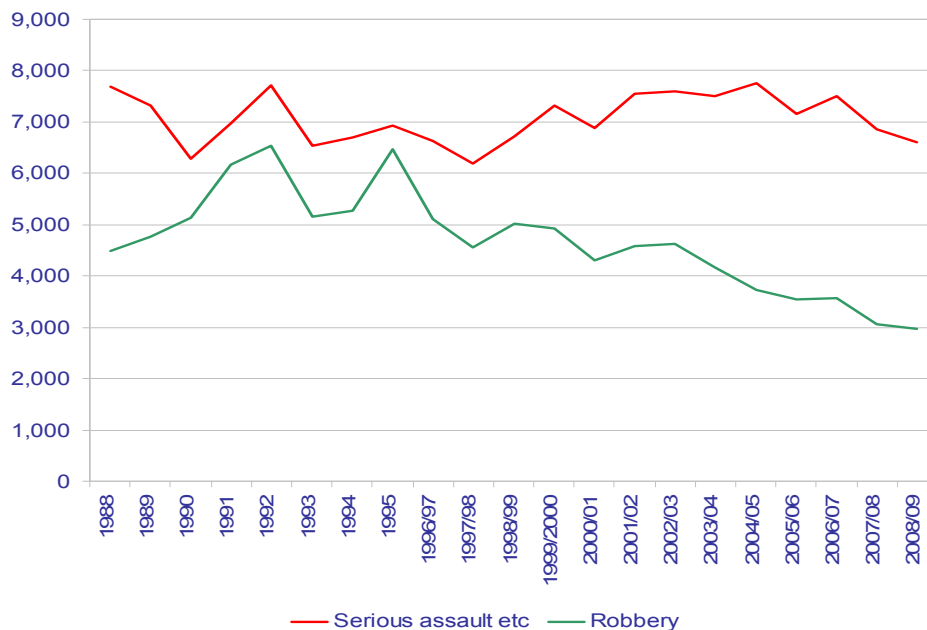
Source: Adapted from Scottish Executive (1998); Scottish Government (2007, 2009a) Recorded Crime in Scotland

Handling offensive weapons

2.11 Handling offensive weapons is a statutory offence, involving the contravention of section 47 of the Criminal Law (Consolidation) Act 1995, which prohibits:

> 'Any person who without lawful authority or reasonable excuse … has with him in any public place any offensive weapon … [defined as] any article made or adapted for use for causing injury to the person, or intended by the person having it with him for such use by him.' (s47(4) Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1995)

2.12 In a pattern very similar to that of assault, the number of offences involving weapons increased steadily between 1988 and 2007, with a noticeable decline over the past two years.

Graph 1.3: Recorded numbers of 'handling of offensive weapons' offences, 1988-2009
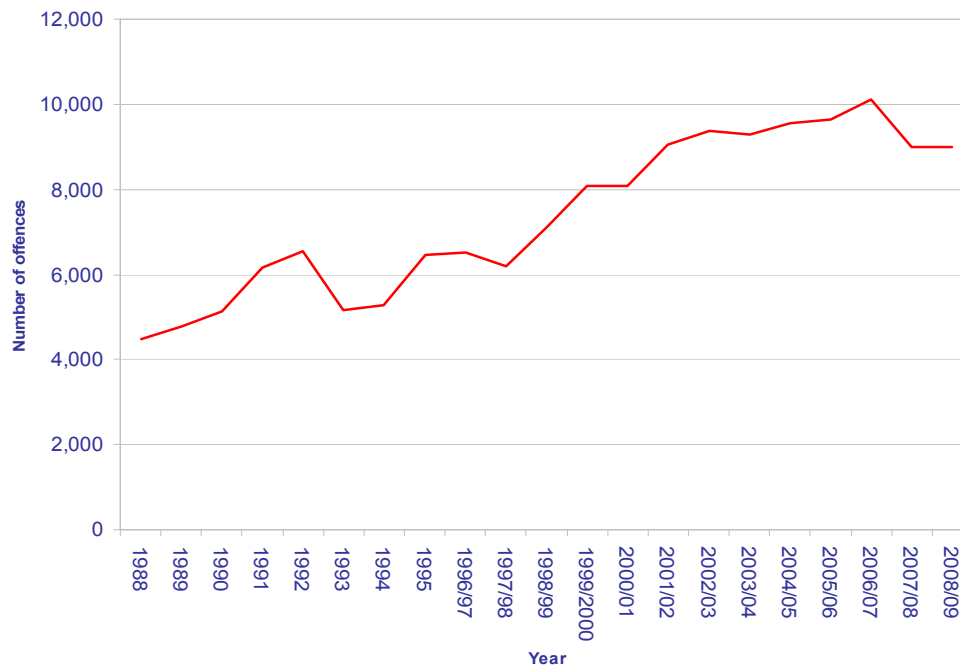
Homicide

2.13 Homicide data represents one of the few sources with a high proportion of known offenders, and is therefore one of the few violent crimes where reliable estimates relating to age and gender can be made. There are, however, relatively few homicides in Scotland per year, and thus these figures must be read in the wider context of violent crime described in this report; giving some indication as to the age and gender composition of serious violent crimes.

2.14 **Graph 1.4a** and **1.4b** illustrate twenty-year trend data in homicide rates (per million population) for selected categories: overall, total male, total female and young people (16-30). The graphs are separated as a result of the change in recording procedure from 2000, which altered the age-ranges from 16-20 and 21-29, to 16-30 alone; meaning that the data is not directly comparable.

2.15 As can be seen, homicide (offender) rates have overall remained relatively steady over this period; fluctuating around a rate of 30-40 homicides per million population. While examination of yearly figures may yield shock figures – for example, from 1991 to 1992 homicides with female perpetrators rose by 100%, from 5 to 10 – longer-term trend analysis illustrates that female homicides have remained steadily low for this period. **Graph 1.4a** shows, however, that males aged 16-20 are significantly more likely to be the accused in a homicide case. While **Graph 1.4b** shows that 16-30 year-olds are more likely still, the clarity of the data is compromised by the breadth of age-range.

Graph 1.4a: Number of accused in homicide cases per million population,1989-2000
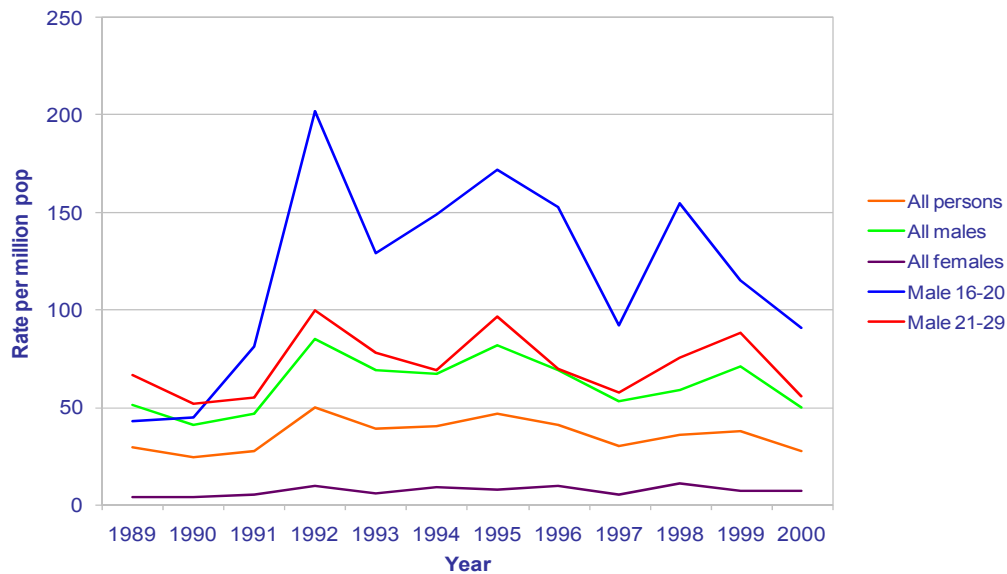
Graph 1.4b: Number of accused in homicide cases per million population, 2001/02-2008/09
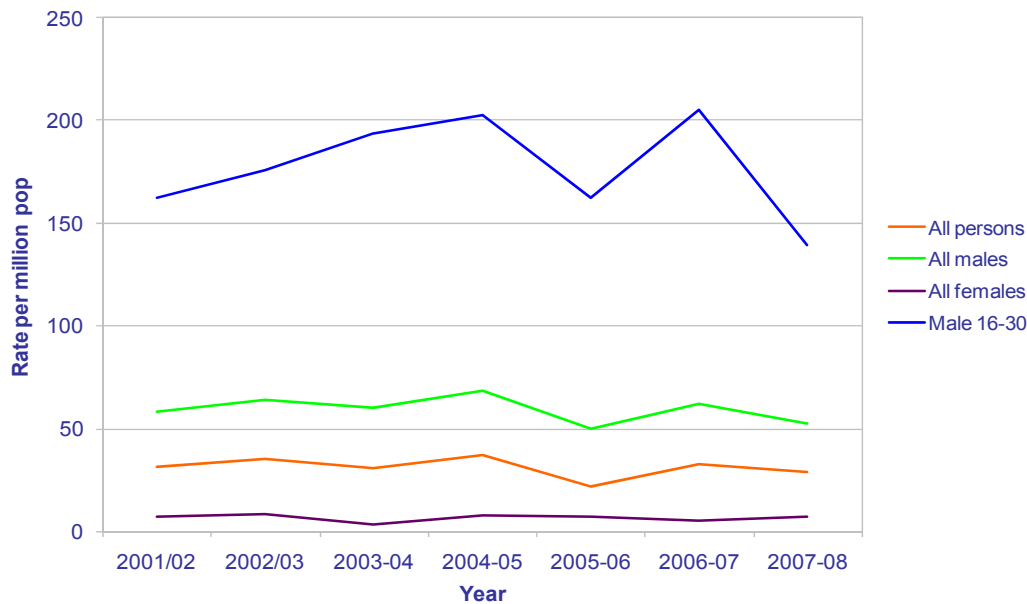
Source: Adapted from Scottish Executive (1999, 2000); Scottish Government (2008) *Homicide in Scotland*.

2.16 Over this period, 16-30 year-olds have consistently accounted for more than 50% of homicide offenders. It is also worth noting that during the same time-period 16-30 year-olds accounted for between 30 and 35% of homicide victims. In terms of gender differences, males are consistently more likely to be both victims and offenders in homicide cases—accounting yearly for an approximate 90% of offenders, and 70-85% of victims, since 1989.

Police Recorded Crime: Key Points

2.17 Recorded numbers of all violent crimes (assault, serious assault, robbery, handling offensive weapons, homicide) have been relatively steady or decreasing since 2006. However, it is not possible to estimate the number of these crimes attributable to young people.

2.18 These trends are most marked for the offences of assault and handling offensive weapons, which had previously shown steady increases over a fifteen year period. While serious assaults have remained relatively steady over a fifteen year period, robbery has been decreasing steadily.

2.19 16-30 year-olds make up the most significant number of offenders in homicide cases. Since 2002, however, it has not been possible to break this figure down to solely those involving young offenders.

Criminal Proceedings

2.20 Data on criminal proceedings refer only to crimes which have gone to trial in the criminal courts, and as such represent only a partial picture of youth violence in Scotland. Proceedings may be affected by a range of independent factors – government strategy, policing practices, or legal policy – and therefore a rise in proceedings may not equate to a rise in violent crime per se. Data in this section is presented for under-21s, as compared with overall criminal proceedings.

Assault

2.21 In a pattern comparable to recorded crime, convictions for assault show a yearly increase from 1999-2006, with a levelling off thereafter (data post-2007 not yet available). This general trend is also borne out for under-21s, both male and female, though at a more gradual rate.

Graph 2.1: Assault proceedings by gender, selected ages, 1996-2007
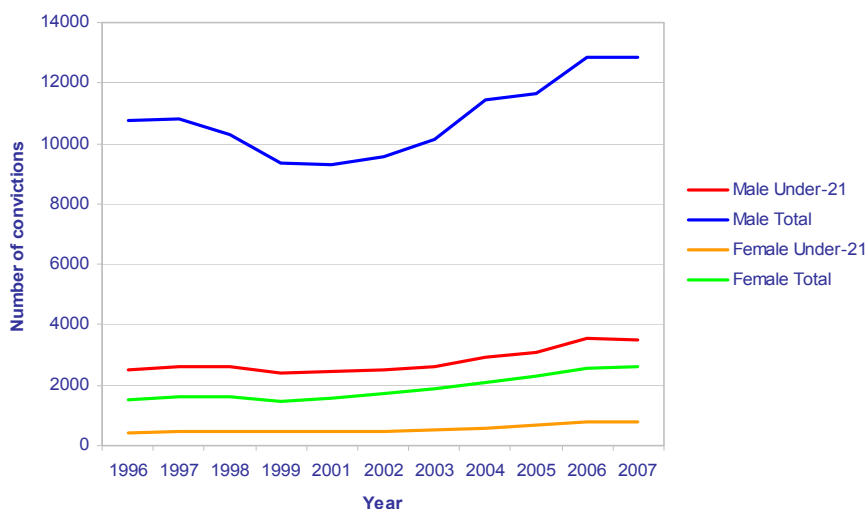
Source: Scottish Government (1996-2008) Criminal Proceedings in Scottish Courts 1996-2007/08
*Note: Data for 2000 unavailable from Scottish Government website.

Serious assault and robbery

2.22 **Graph 2.2a** illustrates proceedings for serious assault for the same time-period. Proceedings for serious assault have increased overall for both males and females since 2001, with the trend for under-21 males increasing at a more gradual rate. For proceedings involving males, both under-21 and overall, rates have increased most significantly over the past two years. Convictions involving females under the age of 21 have remained consistently low during this period.

2.23 Like the trends in recorded crime for robbery, proceedings for robbery show a marked overall decline for males (**Graph 2.2b**), though rates for both under-21s and overall have increased over the past two years. Overall rates for females, however, show a slight increase over the period; with convictions for females under the age of 21 remaining relatively constant. The number of proceedings for assault has increased overall for both females and males since 1996, with a slight levelling off in the past two years. For under-21s, proceedings for both females and males have increased at a similar, though slightly more gradual rate.

Graph 2.2a: Serious assault proceedings by gender, selected ages, 1996-2007

Source: Scottish Government (1996-2007) Criminal Proceedings in Scottish Courts 1996-2007/08
*Note: Data for 2000 unavailable from Scottish Government website.

Graph 2.2b: Robbery proceedings by gender, selected ages, 1996-2007
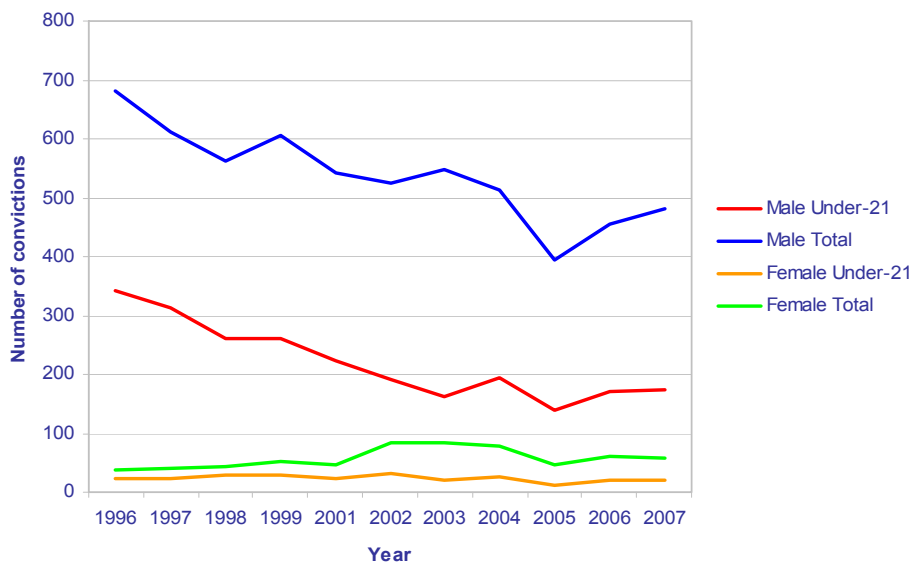
Source: Scottish Government (1996-2007) Criminal Proceedings in Scottish Courts 1996-2007/08
*Note: Data for 2000 unavailable from Scottish Government website.

Handling offensive weapons

2.24 Graph 2.3 illustrates long-term trends in proceedings for 'handling offensive weapons', showing a steady upwards trend, levelling out over the past four years; with young male offenders increasing at a more gradual rate, and young female offenders accounting for a very small minority of proceedings. This trend is similar to police recorded crime for handling offensive weapons, and to the trend in assault in both recorded crime and criminal proceedings.

Graph 2.3: Proceedings for 'handling offensive weapons' by gender, selected ages, 1996-2007
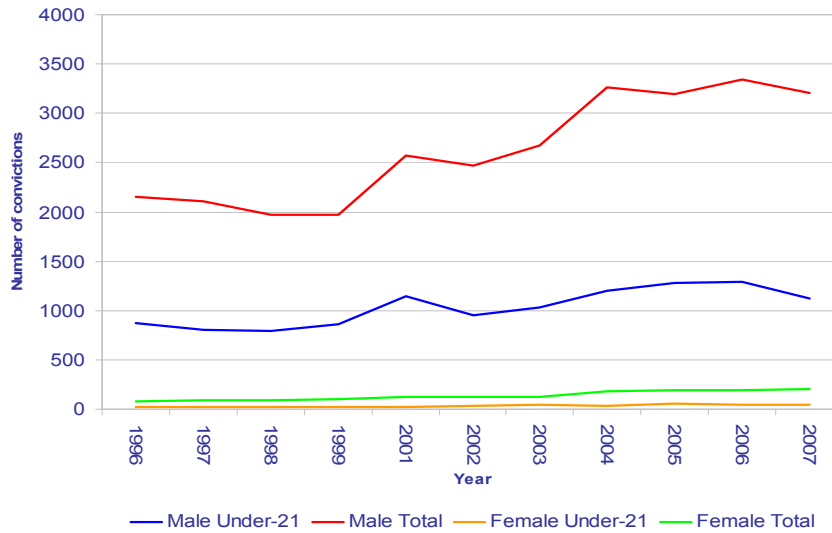
Homicide

2.25 **Graph 2.4** illustrates trends in homicide proceedings for males and females, for the years 1996-2007. As can be seen, the number of proceedings involving males under the age of 21 has increased year-on-year since 2001, though at a more gradual rate than overall homicide proceedings for men. Proceedings involving females have increased slightly overall since 2000, and decreased slightly for females under the age of 21.

Graph 2.4: Homicide proceedings by gender, selected ages, 1996-2007
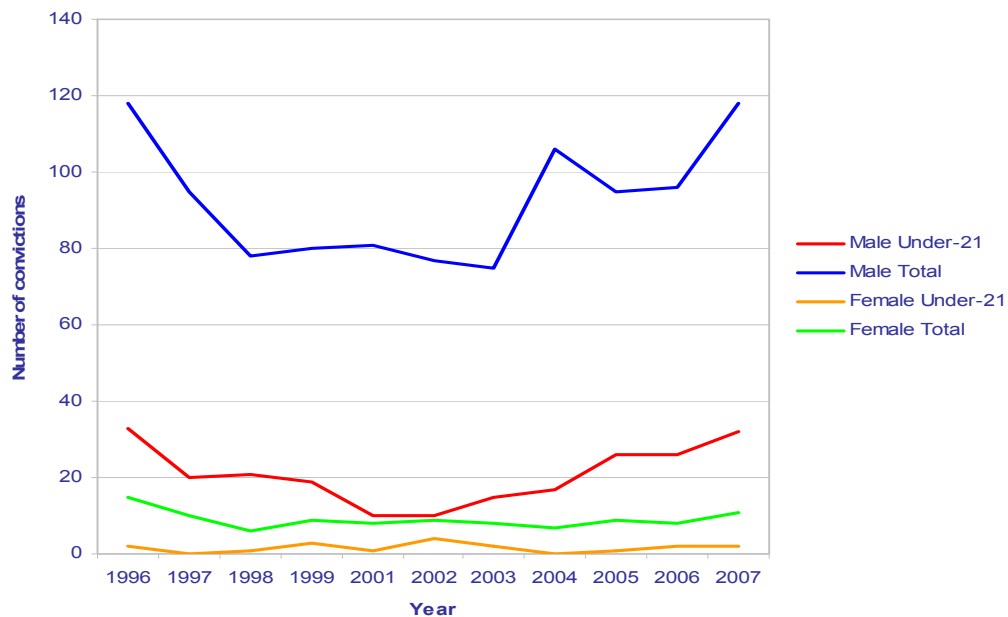
Source: Scottish Government (1996-2007) Criminal Proceedings in Scottish Courts 1996-2007/08
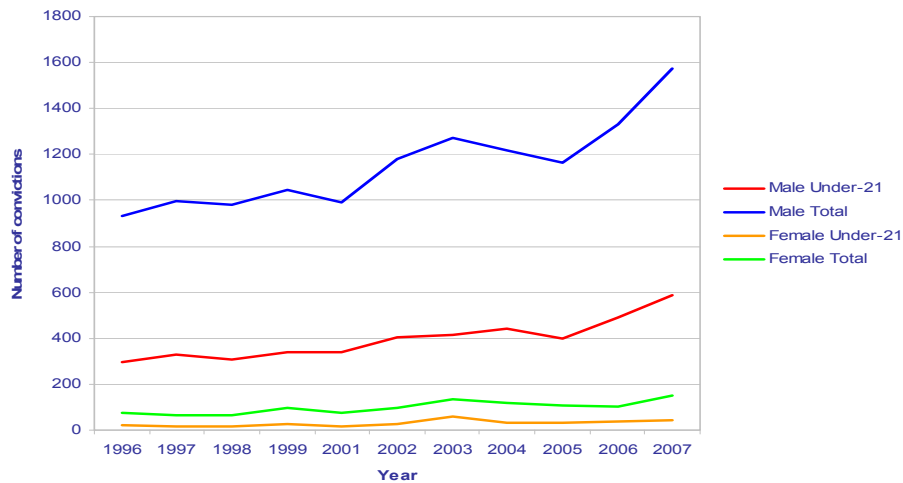*Note: Data for 2000 unavailable from Scottish Government website.

Criminal Proceedings: Key Points

2.26 Long-term trends in criminal convictions for violent crimes and offences show an increase over a ten-year period for assault, handling offensive weapons, and serious assault; an overall decrease in robbery convictions; and no significant change in homicide.

2.27 The number of proceedings for serious violent crime (robbery, serious assault, homicide) have increased since 2006, while those involving more minor violent offences (assault, handling offensive weapons) have levelled off or decreased. These overall trends are generally replicated for crimes and offences involving under-21s, both male and female, though at a more gradual rate.

Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS)

2.28 The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (formerly the Scottish Crime and
Victimisation Survey and Scottish Crime Survey)[4] is a study of self-reported
crime and victimisation, administered by the Scottish Government, which aims
to gain a fuller picture of victimisation in Scotland than statistics on recorded
crime or convictions allow. Initially modelled on the British Crime Survey (which
only covers England and Wales), the SCJS has undergone a series of
alterations in focus and methodology since its inception: from a combination of
survey and face-to-face interview method with a relatively small sample of
5,000 (1996-2003), to a telephone-based survey with a much larger sample of
27,000 (2004-2007), and back to a combination of survey and face-to-face
interviews with a more moderate, though still significant, sample of 16,000. As
a result of these alterations in sample size and methodology, recent trend
information is difficult to ascertain. For this reason, only historical trends and
general points are presented here.

Trends in violent crime

2.29 **Graph 3** illustrates long-term trends in violent crime, for the years 1992-2002.
Exhibiting a broadly similar trend to police recorded crime during the same
time-period, 'petty' assault increased significantly, while serious assault
remained relatively steady, with an overall decrease over this period.

Graph 3: SCJS trends in violent crime, 1992-2002
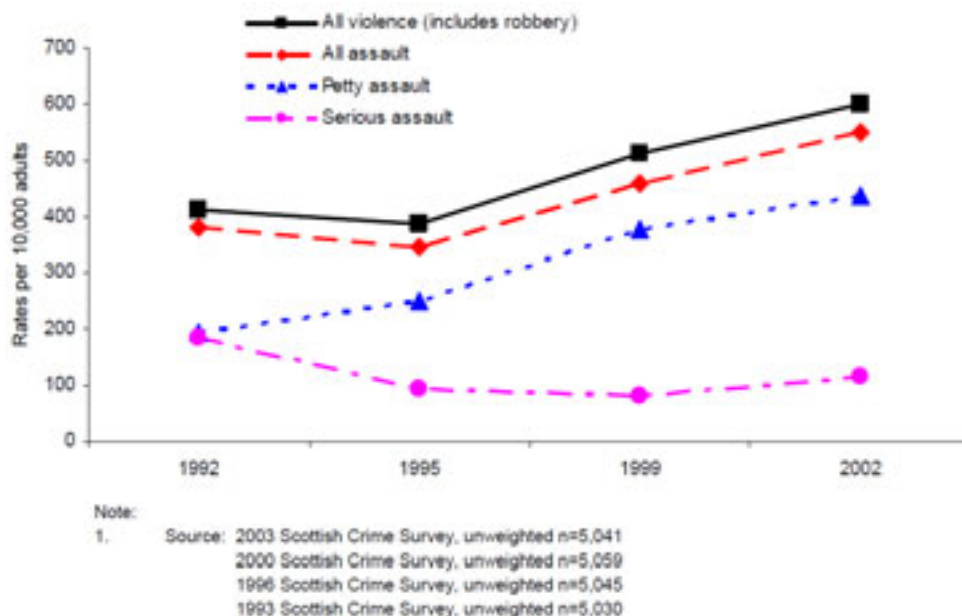
Source: Scottish Executive (2004) Scottish Crime Survey 2003: Main Report, p.14,
Figure 3.8

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[4] Hereafter all surveys will be referred to as SCJS.

2.30 The similarities between SCJS and police data is supported by the most recent SCJS sweep. While there are a number of caveats to estimates, primarily due to the alterations in methodology noted, the most recent SCJS found a steady increase in assault since the 1990s, and a stable, low level of robbery over the same period (Scottish Government 2009b: 24).

Young People and Violent Crime

2.31 In 2000, SCJS appended a small-scale youth study to the main survey, involving a sample of 403 12-15 year-olds (Scottish Executive 2002a). As this involved a very small sample, these findings should be read as exploratory and indicative, not final or definitive. There was a high level of non-response to some of the questions, in particular, the sections on experience of victimisation and offending behaviour are based on very small numbers, only 135 respondents completed the questions on offending, thus reducing the reliability of results. Another report from 2000, focusing on violence in Scotland (Scottish Executive 2002b), as well as the 2009 SCJS (Scottish Government 2009b) include some data relating to young people (aged 16-24); this data is presented alongside.

2.32 The 2000 survey found that violence amongst peers was relatively common. 19% had been involved in a fight with someone outside the family; though this figure was markedly lower than estimates for 1993 (26%) and 1996 (24%) (Scottish Executive 2002a: 10).[5] The majority of these incidents occurred in public places in or near home or school, frequently in public places; leading the report to conclude that 'fellow school pupils carry out the majority of assaults'. (Scottish Executive 2002a: 11). Boys were more likely to report being victims of violence (24%) than girls (14%), but no significant differences were found according to age or social class (Scottish Executive 2002a: 16). Though not specific to violent offending, the survey found a very strong correlation between offending and victimisation among young people. (Scottish Government 2002a: 18).

2.33 Data from 2000 and 2009 contextualise these initial findings within the context of the wider SCJS. Both report that the risk of violent victimisation varies significantly by age, gender, and area of residence. In 1999, groups most likely to be victimised were: 'those aged 16-24; males; those in Scottish *Acorn group E (better-off council areas, often owners); people who live in private-rented property; those living in high rise flats' (Scottish Executive 2002b: 8). While the 2009 report does not specify these variables in relation to violent victimisation, a similar picture is reported in relation to victimisation in general – the highest risk group was males, aged 16-24, and those living in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland (Scottish Government 2009: 3). Where victims could give details on their assailant, the most common age was 16-24 years old (46%) (Scottish Government 2009: 57).

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[5] The reduction from 1996 to 2000 is only significant at the 90% level.

Scottish Crime and Justice Survey: Key Points

2.34 The SCJS has undergone a range of methodological changes over the past decade, making trend information relating to youth violence difficult to estimate. Broadly, however, the data shows similarities to comparable police recorded crime; with a long-term increase in assault, and robbery remaining at a steadily low level.

2.35 The 2000 youth survey (based on a very small sample size) found violence to be relatively common amongst young people; generally involving friends or peers, in public places in or near the home or school.

2.36 While the survey of under-16s is no longer included in SCJS sweeps, data relating to young people aged 16-24 is routinely collected. According to data from the past ten years, males aged 16-24 are the group most likely to be both the offenders and victims of violent crime; with correlations between victimisation and offending.

Referrals to Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)

2.37 SCRA deals with violent offenders under the age of 16, and in most cases 16-18 year-olds already involved in the Children's Hearing System. Importantly, SCRA operates under quite different principles to the criminal justice system; placing explicit primacy on the welfare and wellbeing of the child or young person referred, regardless of the nature of the referral. As such, referrals for violent offences are not subject to a burden of proof, but rather taken as an indicator of potential concern for the individual child or young person. As a result, though in many cases a referral will involve repeat offences, only one referral is recorded. While the offences referred to in this section – 'assault' and 'carrying an offensive weapon' – are not defined in SCRA publications, it is likely that police definitions form their basis.

Referrals to SCRA

2.38 Overall, the number of children referred on offence grounds has decreased over the past two years, after steady increases in the years previous. Notably, offence referrals have decreased slightly more intensely than non-offence referrals. For the year 2008/09, girls made up 44% of all referrals, and boys 56%; boys were far more likely to be referred on offence grounds (76% against 24%). The most common age for referrals remains 14-15 (SCRA 2009: 5).

2.39 **Graph 4.1** illustrates the trend in referrals for assault and carrying an offensive weapon, for the years 2003/04-2008/09. In line with the overall decrease in offence referrals, the number of referrals for assault and carrying an offensive weapon have decreased significantly over the past two years – from 10,084 in 2006/07 to 7,582 in 2008/09. Along with breach of the peace (8,963) and vandalism (8,864), assault (7,582) remains among the most common types of alleged offence (SCRA 2009: 16).

2.40 The trend in **Graph 4.1** for 'assault' and 'carrying an offensive weapon' broadly mirrors the trend in recorded assaults and weapons offences described above, under sections 1.1 and 1.3; however, trend data beyond 2003/04 is unavailable. Statistics for specific referral grounds, such as assault, are not recorded in the SCRA Annual Report by age or gender. This data would be helpful in analysing trends in youth violence.

Graph 4.1: Number of referrals to SCRA, selected grounds, 2003/04-2008/09
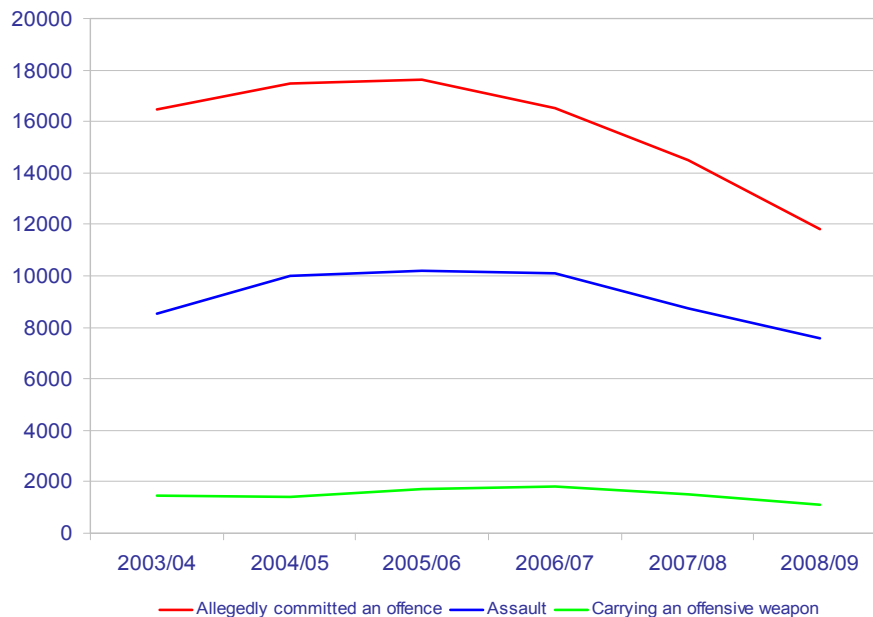
Source: Adapted from SCRA (2006, 2009) Annual Report 2005/06, pp.30-31; Statistical Analysis 2008/09, p.9&13.

Referrals to SCRA: Key Points

2.41 SCRA referrals have decreased over the past two years, after a steady increase in years previous. Notably, offence referrals have decreased slightly more intensely than non-offence referrals.

2.42 For the year 2008/09, girls made up 44% of all referrals, and boys 56%; boys were far more likely to be referred on offence grounds (76% compared to 24%). The most common age of referrals remains 14-15.

2.43 In line with the overall decrease in offence referrals, the number of referrals for assault have decreased significantly over the past two years – from 10,084 in 2006/07 to 7,582 in 2008/09.

2.44 Statistics for specific referral grounds, such as assault, are not recorded in the SCRA Annual Report by age or gender. This data is essential to gaining accurate trends in youth violence.

School Exclusions

2.45 Recording procedures for school exclusions have also altered in the past three years, with greater specificity in offences, making longer-term trend data difficult to estimate. Previous categories were as follows:

➢ Physical abuse of members of staff
➢ Physical abuse of fellow pupils
➢ Aggressive or threatening behaviour
➢ Fighting

2.46 Current categories, which are also now sub-divided by whether directed at a member of staff or a pupil, are as follows:

➢ Threat of physical violence, no weapon
➢ Physical assault using improvised weapon
➢ Threat of physical violence using weapon or improvised weapon
➢ Physical assault with no weapon
➢ Physical assault using weapon
➢ Fighting

2.47 Due to this change in recording practices, however, trend data relating to the nature of exclusions is not reliable. The greater degree of specificity, however, will assist in future analyses. The one violent offence that has remained constant is 'fighting'; which, though not defined in the report, is likely to involve low-level violence in the school play-ground. Data for 1998-2008 is presented below, in **Graph 5**. Exclusions for fighting have fluctuated quite significantly during the past ten years, with the last two years showing a slight decrease. Data for school exclusions, however, is not broken down by age or gender.

Graph 5: School exclusions for fighting, 1998-2008

Source: Adapted from Scottish Government (2002-2009) Exclusions from School, 2000/01 to 2007/08

School Exclusions: Key Points

2.48 Recording procedures for school exclusions have also altered in the past three years, with greater specificity in offences, making longer-term trend data difficult to estimate.

2.49 The one violent offence that has remained constant is 'fighting' (though the definitional criteria is unclear). Exclusions for fighting have fluctuated quite significantly during the past ten years, with the last two years showing a slight decrease. Data for school exclusions, however, is not broken down by age or gender.

Conclusion

2.50 Overall, there are significant differences in reporting and data-collection procedures between different institutional bodies, creating substantial problems in gaining an accurate picture of youth violence in Scotland today. There have also been significant changes in reporting and recording procedures in each of the institutional bodies in recent years, creating difficulties in making reliable trend estimates relating to youth violence in Scotland. Further, there are significant differences in definitions of 'youth' and 'violence' between different institutional bodies, creating problems in making comparisons between sources of information. As a result, the 'Administrative Picture' of youth violence in Scotland is incomplete. It is not possible to give an accurate picture of youth violence in Scotland using publicly available data. It is, however, possible to piece together a very broad, generalised picture of youth violence in Scotland using these sources:

Assault

2.51 Police recorded crime shows that assault has decreased over the past two years, after a twenty year period of increase. While the long-term increase is supported by self-report data from SCJS, however, these recent decreases are not. While data from SCJS estimate that young people are disproportionately responsible for assault, it is not possible to estimate trends in this proportion.

2.52 Criminal convictions for assault have levelled off after regular increases over a ten-year period, with this trend replicated for males and females aged 16-24. Data from SCRA show a decline in the number of referrals for assault since 2006; and the number of school exclusions for fighting have also decreased since 2006/07.

Serious assault and Robbery

2.53 After peaking in the early 1990s, numbers of serious assaults have remained relatively steady over a twenty year period, with a slight reduction over the past two years (2007/08-2008/09), while the number of robberies has decreased significantly. While it is estimated that young people are disproportionately responsible for serious assaults and robberies, it is not possible to estimate trends in this proportion.

2.54 Proceedings for serious assault have increased overall for both males and females since 2001, with the trend for under-21 males increasing at a more gradual rate. For proceedings involving males, both under-21 and overall, rates have increased most significantly over the past two years. Proceedings against females under the age of 21 have remained consistently low during this period.

2.55 Like the trends in recorded crime for robbery, proceedings for robbery show a marked overall decline for males (**Graph 2.2b**), though rates for both under-21s and overall have increased over the past two years. Overall rates for females, however, show a slight increase over the period; with females under the age of 21 remaining relatively constant.

Handling Offensive Weapons

2.56 In a pattern very similar to that of assault, the number of offences involving weapons has increased steadily between 1988 and 2007, with a noticeable decline over the past two years. This is broadly mirrored by data from SCRA.

2.57 Long-term trends in proceedings for 'handling offensive weapons' show a steady upwards trend, levelling out over the past four years; with young male offenders increasing at a more gradual rate, and young female offenders accounting for a very small minority of proceedings. This trend is similar to police recorded crime for handling offensive weapons, and to the trend in assault in both recorded crime and criminal proceedings.

Homicide

2.58 Homicide (offender) rates have overall remained relatively steady over a twenty-year period; fluctuating around a rate of 30-40 homicides per million population. 16-30 year-olds make up the most significant number of offenders in homicide cases. Since 2002, however, it has not been possible to break this figure down to solely those involving young offenders.

2.59 The number of homicide proceedings involving males under the age of 21 has increased year-on-year since 2001, though at a more gradual rate than overall homicide proceedings for men. Proceedings involving females have increased slightly overall since 2000, and decreased slightly for females under the age of 21.

3 THE RESEARCH PICTURE

3.1 This section represents an assessment of available research evidence on youth violence in Scotland, and is divided into four parts. The first section details the methodology employed in the report. The second, 'Meanings, Experiences, and Fear of Violence' assesses the research evidence relating to the role of violence in the lives of children and young people in Scotland. The third, 'Violent Offending and Violent Offenders' analyses evidence relating to violent offenders, focusing on: a) family and community context, b) alcohol and drug misuse, c) knives and weapons, and d) motivations and rewards of violence. Finally, 'Findings on violence from the ESYTC' summarises key conclusions on youth violence from the sole longitudinal Scottish study of violence.

Methodology employed in report

3.2 The review aimed to identify and summarise available research evidence on youth violence undertaken in Scotland. The research was conducted within a restricted timetable. Research material for this section of the review was gathered through a number of methods.

3.3 It is important to note that the research literature identified has not been subjected to rigorous methodological assessment as part of this review. All material included here has, however been published, which presumes some academic credibility. There is a greater tendency for more rigorous research to be published in academic journals and/ or undergo peer review. Due to the restricted time period unpublished material (excepting a number of unpublished PhD theses) were not included.

3.4 A set of criteria for including and excluding studies based mainly on the type and quality of the studies was developed. The search for relevant studies involved a number of strategies including: contact with leading researchers in the area; searches of electronic databases of publications, and; focused internet searches.

3.5 Searches on academic databases for the terms "youth" or "violence" and "Scotland" were filtered for relevance and eligibility, and an initial bibliography constructed. This draft bibliography was then circulated among key academic and public sector contacts, including all SCCJR staff and associates, for additional input. This led to the identification of 41 relevant publications, some of which referred to the same research study.

3.6 The resulting bibliography, including methodology used, location, sample and age-range, is summarised in Annex A.

3.7 Sample sizes (for, e.g., Anderson et al (1994)) are quoted in the first instance, and also in the bibliography in Annex A.

3.8   These research studies have been funded by a range of sources, including local and central government, research councils and charities. Whilst some have focussed specifically on youth violence, others had a broader research remit in relation to youth offending in general, or were focused on aspects of youth lifestyles, or youth identities. All have been carried out in Scotland and/or have a Scottish focus. Whilst there are clear definitional and methodological differences between the studies which mean that they are not directly comparable, all of them tell us something about young peoples' experiences or uses of violence, and hence considerably enrich our understanding of this complex phenomena.

3.9   As is evident, empirical research relating to youth violence in Scotland has been conducted using a range of methodologies and approaches. Most of the studies identified in this review employ qualitative methodologies, primarily interviews, focus groups and observation. Others employ mixed methods, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods.

3.10   Many employ self-report methods as a sole method or in combination with other methods. In self-report studies young people are asked directly about their involvement in violence (or offending more generally), whether this was detected or not and/or about their views on violence. Self-report studies go some way in documenting some of the omissions in official statistical data; they provide an estimate of offending unaffected by selection and processing by the criminal justice system (Graham and Bowling 1995), and have the benefit of including offending activity that has not resulted in detection and conviction. Self-report studies have been used not only to gain a 'truer' picture of offending, but also as a means of shedding light on why offending occurs, and the degree to which it correlates with other social factors, particularly gender, race and socio-economic position (Muncie, 1999). On the whole, they have tended to focus on less serious law-breaking behaviour, such as acquisitive and expressive property offences (e.g. vandalism, theft) and some violent offences (e.g. threats, fights, use of weapon), and have been used mostly in relation to juvenile populations (e.g. Flood-Page et al, 2000; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Jamieson et al, 1999).

3.11   Self-report methodology is hindered by a different set of methodological and ethical problems than those associated with official statistics. Self-reports rely on respondent's ability and willingness to report; there is a danger of exaggeration on the part of respondents; and there is often a lack of validation measures. Nevertheless they do provide a somewhat different picture to administrative data and are used successfully. Most conclude that offending, and especially offending by youth, is more widespread in the population than may be supposed by official statistics, whilst at the same time challenging commonly held conceptions about offender characteristics (Coleman and Moynihan 1996: 67).

Meanings, Experiences and Perceptions of Violence

3.12 This section summarises and analyses the available research evidence relating to the role of violence in the lives of children and young people in Scotland. The section is divided into three parts: 1) meanings of violence; 2) experiences of violence; and 3) fear of violence. The section focuses on the multiple and various forms of violence in the lives of children and young people in Scotland, and the disjuncture between these complex understandings and 'official' definitions.

3.13 Whilst the 'Administrative Picture' of youth violence in Scotland shows that legally constituted violence plays a relatively marginal role in the lives of most young people in Scotland, the 'research picture' shows that, according to young people's definitions, violence plays a more complex and embedded role. Whilst, on one hand, young people have a wide and nuanced understanding of violent behaviour – in particular the ways in which violence impacts their daily life – this behaviour is frequently not thought of as 'illegal' in the conventional sense. This divergence between legal definitions and young people's understandings accounts in part for the fact that young people are the group least likely to report victimisation to the police (Waiton 2001; Ipsos Mori 2003: 26; Scottish Government 2009b).

Meanings of violence

3.14 Whilst official statistics relating to youth violence utilise formal legal definitions of crimes and offences, empirical research carried out in Scotland suggests that these definitions are often divergent from young people's understandings of the meanings of violence. Young people encounter multiple and various forms of violence on a daily basis – verbal and physical conflicts with friends, family, or siblings – that are seen simply as part of the fabric of daily life, distinct from what might be understood to be a matter for the police. As a result, much youth violence goes unseen, unrecognised and unrecorded.

3.15 The ESRC project 'A View from the Girls: Exploring Violence and Violent Behaviour' (Burman et al. 2000), and related publications (Batchelor et al. 2001; Brown et al. 2001; Burman et al. 2003; Burman 2004) represents the most significant and comprehensive investigation of the meanings of violence to young people in Scotland; notwithstanding the projects' focus on girls and young women. Carried out between 1998 and 2000, the research involved a series of interviews, focus groups and surveys with girls and young women, aged 13-16, about their understandings, experiences and perceptions of violence (800 girls participated in one or more aspects of the study).

3.16 The research uncovered a marked distinction between girls' understanding of the legal category of 'violence', and the meaning of violence in their daily lives. When asked to define the abstract category of 'violence', most offered a legalistic notion 'of intentionally harmful physical behaviour, such as fighting, slapping, punching, kicking, and the use of weapons, etc. to hurt another individual' (Burman 2004: 84). When asked to discuss personal experiences and understandings of violence, however, the girls' accounts highlighted a

range of behaviours and activities that went well beyond legal definitions: 'stalking, boxing, sexual assault, playground fighting, tormenting, verbal threats, stabbing, racial harassment, self-harm, offensive name calling, bullying, and intimidation, as well as vandalism, fire-raising, and cruelty to animals' (Burman 2004: 84).

3.17 Importantly, the research also uncovered multiple forms of insidious, non-physical, and symbolic violence in the lives of girls and young women. In particular, girls spoke of 'peer pressure', 'scaring people', 'threats' and 'bullying' as being common instances of 'violence' in daily life (Brown et al. 2001: 41). As Batchelor et al. (2001) state:

> *Verbal conflicts are a pervasive feature of girls' social worlds, occurring on an everyday basis, and for many they are a major source of anxiety. According to the self-report data, 91% of girls had been verbally intimidated by offensive name-calling, threats, taunts or ridicule. Being the target for malicious gossip emerged as the greatest overall fear for girls (61% of girls reported being worried about someone gossiping about them) and half of the survey sample (50%) said that they were worried about being verbally bullied or threatened. (Batchelor et al. 2001: 127)*

3.18 Crucially, these instances of violence were often hurtful or harmful, but often went unspoken or unrecognised, operating as they did within the context of friendship networks or peer groups. At times, however, these episodes were viewed by the girls as being an acceptable form of social interaction – with verbal 'slagging' and 'play' fights constituting 'permissible and acceptable forms of behaviour' (Brown et al. 2001: 47). While there has been no directly comparable research with boys and young men, evidence from Anderson et al. (1994) tends to support these findings in a male context. These findings demonstrate powerfully the multiple meanings of violence for young people; a depth of complexity that is not currently captured by official statistics.

Meanings of violence: Key Points

3.19 While young people may 'define' violence in narrow terms in the abstract, further probing reveals that violence has multiple, contingent, and context-specific meanings; including name-calling, threats, taunts and ridicule.

3.20 While some of these forms of violence are negatively construed as being hurtful or harmful, other forms of violence – such as 'play' fighting, were seen as playing a more positive role in developing group solidarity. This finding emphasises the complexities of young people's approach to the meaning of violence, and their frequent divergence from official definitions.

Experiences of violence

3.21 The ESRC study, described above, highlighted the multiplicity of meanings of 'violence' for girls and young women, and presumably young people more generally. Overall, this research reflects the subjective, contingent and context-specific nature of defining violence, particularly for young people, and the role

of external factors in categorising an incident as 'violent'. However, the research also spotlights the normalisation of violence in the lives of children and young people – indicating that young people witness and experience low-level, physical violence more frequently than statistical data would indicate.

3.22 Research carried out by Anderson, Kinsey, Loader and Smith (n=1,142)[6], for example, found that 70 percent of young people had witnessed a physical fight, and 31 percent a serious crime of violence (Anderson et al. 1994: 62). In terms of victimisation, 37 percent had been victim of an assault; this figure was more or less constant, independent of social class (Anderson et al. 1994: 39). Fifty percent of boys reported being the victim of an assault, as compared with 23 percent of girls – though the report states that the survey 'results are probably skewed towards typically male forms of violence' (Anderson et al. 1994: 40). Crucially, too, the study found that low-level violence was common. Sixty to 80 percent of participants reported being subjected to 'harassment' – being stared at, followed, shouted at, or threatened – from both adults and other young people (Anderson et al. 1994: 48). These findings illustrate the relative normality of certain forms of violence in the lives of children and young people.

3.23 Similarly, in the ESRC study (n=800), the girls involved in the study reported witnessing or experiencing violence regularly. Ninety-nine percent of girls reported having seen some form of interpersonal violence on one occasion, and 70 percent on five or more occasions (Batchelor et al 2001: 129). Sixty-five percent of girls knew someone that had been 'physically hurt or injured by physical violence' – behaviour which was commonly described as 'normal', 'routine', 'everyday', and 'unremarkable' (Batchelor et al 2001: 129) – and 41 percent reported violent victimisation (Batchelor et al. 2001: 130). By contrast, in Waiton's study of young people in Hamilton, only two participants (of 58) claimed to have witnessed a fight (Waiton 2001: 66).

3.24 Much of the violence described by the girls in the ESRC study was bound up with the complex range of relationships and interactions that form the basis for young people's lives. For example, although some 59 percent of the physical acts of violence reported by girls were directed towards siblings (Batchelor et al 2001: 127), respondents claimed that these fights 'didn't count' as violence (Burman 2004: 90). Similarly, as described above, 'play' fighting was deemed 'just a carry on' and therefore not violent (Brown et al. 2001: 47). In a report by Burman and Cartmel (2006), relating to young people's attitudes to gendered violence, 12 percent of young people (male and female, aged 14-18) reported being 'either hurt or frightened in the context of a fight or argument with a partner' (p. ii). Behaviour which might be defined as violence, therefore, may be normalised and hidden within relationships with friends, families, or partners. This may account for the consistent finding that young people are relatively unlikely to report victimisation to the police. In Anderson et al.'s study, for example, of the incidents involving violent victimisation, only 14 percent had been reported to the police; of those involving witnessing violence, 11 percent had been reported (Anderson et al. 1994: 66-67).

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[6] The study consisted of two connected research projects conducted in Edinburgh between 1989 and 1990 – an initial pilot survey (n=250) and the principal study (n=892), including 120 interviews.

3.25 However, as the study by Anderson et al. makes clear, not all victimisation occurred between peers. In 35 percent of reported assaults, young people did not know the assailant, and almost half of assailants were significantly older (Anderson et al. 1994: 41-43). The likelihood of witnessing a violent incident was increased where young people spent significant periods of time 'messing around' in public space (Anderson et al. 1994: 65). Recent research on street drinking by Galloway, Forsyth and Shewan (2007) reported that the risk of violent victimisation may be heightened by spending time in public places, particularly if alcohol is involved. Young people drinking in public places, in particular, felt themselves to be at serious risk of victimisation (Galloway et al 2007: 1).

Experiences of violence: Key points

3.26 Young people experience a comparatively high degree of low-level violence in their everyday lives. Several research studies report a majority of young people witnessing fights, and a high percentage experiencing some form of violent victimisation.

3.27 Frequently, these experiences of witnessing or experiencing violence occur in the context of young people's everyday activities and routines, and are therefore not viewed as remarkable or necessarily against the law. Young people are the group least likely to report offences to the police.

3.28 Included in these experiences, however, are examples of victimisation by older young people, or adults, which create a higher level of fear amongst young people. These risks may be exacerbated by time spent in public places, particularly if alcohol is involved.

Fear of violence

3.29 Where previous sections have examined the multiple, contested, and contingent *meanings* and *experiences* of violence for young people, this section examines research evidence relating to young people's *fear* of violence. In many cases, fear of violence relates directly to experience, in the form of personal experiences of victimisation. However, in other circumstances, fear of violence – like fear of crime – may operate independently of either experience or perception of risk. This section will examine research relating to the fear of youth violence amongst young people, and the restrictions on mobility which this may cause; drawing connections with the fear of violence amongst the general population.

3.30 As Anderson et al. (1994) report, while violence figures high in many young people's everyday fears, these must be understood within the context of other popular fears and concerns. From a list of items young people might worry about, including several questions relating to fear of different forms of victimisation, 45% reported worrying 'a lot' about being attacked by strangers, 25% being attacked by people known, 11% being bullied at school, and 9% being bullied out of school. Being attacked by strangers, however, was listed fourth overall; after nuclear war (50%), doing well at school (48%), family (47%), being attacked by strangers (45%), and the environment (43%) (p. 75).

While fear of violence is undoubtedly an important feature in young people's lives, this occurs in a wider context of fears and concerns relating to family, school and the wider social environment.

3.31 Importantly, these fears and concerns vary by area of residence. For example, young people in the Wester Hailes and Broughton sub-samples of Anderson et al.'s research worried more about crime than young people from Marchmont and Corstorphine. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that levels of witnessing crime are higher amongst young people in Broughton and Wester Hailes (locales characterised by areas of multiple deprivation) than they are in either Corstorphine or Marchmont (predominantly affluent, middle-class areas). While there has been a marked lack of research examining the risk and fear of violence, some evidence suggests that fear of violence may be higher in areas of social and economic deprivation; though the connections between risk, victimisation, experience and perception are unclear. The Ipsos Mori Youth Survey in Glasgow (n=1,551), for example, reported that 25 percent of young people did not feel safe in their area; and that young people living in housing schemes, or areas with problems with youth 'gangs' felt particularly intimidated (Ipsos Mori 2003: 15-16).

3.32 Qualitative research on territoriality in Scotland (Ipsos Mori 2003; Seaman et al. 2005; Turner et al. 2006; Bannister and Fraser 2008; Frondigoun et al 2008; Kintrea et al. 2008; Suzuki 2009; Holligan and Deuchar 2009; Deuchar 2009) has uncovered a particular fear of violence in areas with a perceived problem with youth 'gangs'. In summary, this research points to a perception of heightened risk in these areas amongst young people, and a corresponding fear of public space. Consequently, young people report a restriction on mobility both within their local area, and beyond; impacting on both friendship networks and leisure opportunities (Bannister and Fraser 2008: 102-103; Frondigoun et al. 2008: 43-50).

3.33 Qualitative research into young people's use of public space in disadvantaged communities (Seaman et al. 2005; Turner et al. 2006) further illuminates these fears and concerns amongst young people and their wider communities (n=67). In this research, carried out in four separate locations spanning a range of socio-economic demographics, some children and young people reported youth 'gangs' as being amongst the most prominent risks in their negotiation of public space (Turner et al. 2006: 457). Young people reported employing various risk-avoidance techniques – staying within 'safe' areas, remaining in groups, and returning at 'safe' times among them (Seaman et al. 2005: 51-54). However, the research also identified the 'double-edged sword' of these avoidance strategies. When hanging around in groups, young people found that they may attract attention from the police, or local residents, who perceive them to be a youth 'gang'. The report thus highlights the 'need to distinguish between individuals "ganging together" to keep safe and "gang behaviour"' (Turner et al. 2006: 463).

3.34 This last point is an important factor in our understandings of youth violence. Perceptions of children and young people, and correspondingly of youth violence, are frequently coloured by factors other than experience – notably popular opinion, folk knowledge, and media coverage. Recent social attitude

surveys in Scotland (Anderson et al. 2006, 2008) have highlighted the difference between *perception* and *experience* of crime in the local area. In relation to young people, the survey found a correlation between 'lack of contact with 16 to 24 year-olds' and 'seeing youth crime problems as common' (Anderson et al. 2008: 2).

3.35 Our understandings of youth violence, therefore, must incorporate not only young people's definitions, experiences, and fear of violence, but also the ways in which young people are defined, stereotyped and stigmatised by the adult population. The view of groups of young people as dangerous, threatening or violent – whether this perception is rooted in reality or not – has real impacts on the lives of children and young people in Scotland.

Fear of violence: Key points

3.36 While research evidence indicates the pervasive fear of violence in the lives of young people in Scotland, it is important to locate these concerns within the context of other everyday fears in the lives of young people.

3.37 Research evidence indicates that fear of violence is heightened in areas with a perceived problem with youth 'gangs'. It is unclear, however, to what extent these perceptions are rooted in reality or experience.

3.38 Young people, particularly groups of young people, are frequently viewed as dangerous or threatening by the adult population. This fear is frequently not based on experience, but relies on a stereotyped and distant view of young people.

Violent offending and violent offenders

3.39 This section assesses available research evidence relating to young violent offenders in Scotland, focusing on: a) family and community context, b) alcohol and drug misuse, c) knives and weapons, and d) motivations and rewards of violence.

3.40 As will become apparent, the majority of available evidence on youth offending in Scotland focuses on offending in general and comparatively little research has been conducted into violent offenders per se. Two notable exceptions are McKinlay et al.'s (2009) study of alcohol and violence amongst young male offenders and Batchelor's (2007) research with young women convicted of violent offences. Both of these studies were conducted with prison samples and therefore are not representative of violent youth generally. Young people in custody are more likely to have more prolific and persistent criminal careers than those in the community, and their violent offending is likely to be more serious.

Self-report data on prevalence

3.41 Most self report studies reveal that violent offending is more common amongst young people than official sources of data suggest. In their research with young people in Edinburgh, for example, Anderson et al. (1994) found that 43 percent

of young people (57% boys and 29% girls) reported having been involved in a street fight in the preceding nine months. A large majority of such incidents occurred in the context of altercations between male-dominated groups of rival 'casuals'. Such incidents were not considered to constitute 'serious' offences by participants and were therefore distinguished from more grave forms of violence such as deliberate injury/assault and mugging, the figures for which were much lower (15% and 2% respectively).

3.42 Broadly similar results were reported by Jamieson, McIvor and Murray (1999) in their study of offending amongst S3 and S4 pupils in two Scottish towns:[7]

Table 2: Violent offences committed by boys and girls in the last 12 months

	Boys (n=610)	Girls (n=636)
Street-fight	317 (52%)	224 (36%)
Beat someone up	269 (47%)	132 (21%)
Hurt someone using a weapon	171 (28%)	69 (11%)
Beat up family member	134 (22%)	108 (17%)
Mug someone	77 (13%)	32 (5%)

Source: Jamieson et al. (1999) *Understanding Offending among Young People*. (p 14)

Table 3: Violent offences committed by boys and girls (at any time)

	Boys (n=610)	Girls (n=636)
Street-fight	413 (68%)	309 (49%)
Beat someone up	396 (65%)	221 (35%)
Hurt someone using a weapon	269 (45%)	121 (19%)
Beat up family member	189 (31%)	142 (23%)
Mug someone	114 (19%)	53 (8%)

Source: Jamieson et al. (1999) *Understanding Offending among Young People*. (p 13)

3.43 Like the official data, Jamieson et al.'s findings indicate that girls are less likely to engage in violent offending than boys and that when they do it tends to involve less serious behaviours. They also tend to offend on a lesser number of occasions. For example, 54 percent of girls who reported having ever beaten someone up said that they had done so on fewer than three occasions, compared to 30 percent of boys. Age-related patterns of offending also varied according to gender, with violent offending becoming steadily more common with increasing age amongst young men (13-15 years), whereas girls' involvement peaked at age 14 and tailed off thereafter.

3.44 The low-level nature of much of the violence reported by girls was also substantiated in Burman et al.'s (2001) research, which asked respondents how many times they had *ever* committed a list of 10 acts of violence against the person. Table 5 shows that whereas pushing someone, hitting someone, kicking someone and pulling someone's hair were all reported relatively frequently, burning someone, cutting someone and trapping someone's fingers in a door were all relatively uncommon.

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[7] Jameson et al use the pseudonyms of 'Eastburgh' and 'Westburgh' to refer to these two towns.

Table 4: Violence perpetrated by girls (at any time)

	Percentage of respondents (n=671)
Deliberately pushed someone	73%
Hit someone	73%
Deliberately pulled someone's hair	54%
Deliberately kicked someone	58%
Hit someone with an object	39%
Deliberately shaken someone	23%
Deliberately spat at someone	18%
Deliberately burnt someone	10%
Deliberately trapped someone's fingers in a door	7%
Deliberately cut someone	7%

Source: Burman and Batchelor (2011, forthcoming) *Challenging Violence*.

3.45 When questioned about the *last* time they had committed each of these acts, girls identified siblings as the most likely victim (overall, and in seven out of 10 individual categories). Violence was accordingly reported as predominantly taking place within the home, with 49 percent of all acts recorded there. A further 19 percent of self-reported acts took place in the street or park, 10 percent occurred in the school playground, three per cent at the dancing, three per cent in school toilets and 16 percent in some other public place.

3.46 Participants in the girls and violence research were also asked if they had ever been involved in a physical fight. Over half (54%) reported participation on more than one occasion, and of these one third said that they had fought four or more times. The vast majority (80%) of girls claimed that the last time they had been involved in a fight it was started by their opponent; 23 percent claimed that they wanted to fight, 34 percent said they were forced to fight and 44 percent said they were 'not bothered' one way or the other. Fights were marginally more likely to occur when girls were in a group (40%), but also took place when the respondent was with a single friend (32%) or was alone (28%). That said, the vast majority of fights were reported as one-on-one (82%), as opposed to one-on-many (11%) or many-on-many (7%).

3.47 For the year 2002, an independent research study funded by the Scottish Executive (DTZ Pieda 2005), made an assessment of the proportion of crime attributable to young people. An estimated 43% of serious assaults, 60% of robberies, and 59% of 'handling offensive weapons' were attributable to young people. For serious assault, 28% of these were estimated to involve young people aged 15 and under, 18% those aged 16-17, and 61% those aged 18-21; involving 92% males, and 8% females. For robbery, 21% were estimated to involve young people aged 15 and under, 24% those aged 16-17, and 49% those aged 18-21; involving 89% males and 11% females (DTZ Pieda 2005: 25). Young people were responsible for 47% of 'Miscellaneous offences', which includes assault, breach of the peace, and offences involving drunkenness (DTZ Pieda 2005: 23). However, it is not possible to extrapolate this data to trends in these offences.

3.48 Studies such as these suggest that a majority of young people in Scotland have perpetrated some form of physical harm at some point in their lives and that low-level violence, such as street fighting and violence between siblings, is both routinized and normalized. As a result, and as Anderson et al. (1994) acknowledge, 'It is by no means an exaggeration to say that violence is an accepted part of life, for girls as well as boys' (p.94).

Prevalence: Key points

3.49 Self-report studies reveal a level of violent offending among young people that is higher than that reported by official sources of data.

3.50 Most of this violence is relatively low-level and occurs between young people of around the same age, sometimes siblings.

3.51 Low-level violence may be considered as a normal, routine form of behaviour among young people.

Family and community context

3.52 Within the wider violence literature, there is general agreement that family factors can play an important role in the development of violent attitudes and behaviour in childhood and later life (Boswell 2000; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 1999). There is currently very little research on the relationship between family factors and violent offending within the Scottish context, although available data on persistent young offenders – many of whom who have committed violent (amongst other) offences – tends to support this view. A Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) study of children and young people referred to the Reporter offending in Glasgow, for example, demonstrated that children with 20 or more offence referrals often had long and complex histories of concern about their welfare and offending:

- One third of the group was initially referred in relation to physical abuse by parents or carers. One third were referred due to a likely lack of parental care. The remainder was referred for other reasons, including alleged sexual abuse and serious physical neglect.
- Almost without exception, these children had experienced unstable or disrupted family relations. Around the time of referral 11 of the 15 children were living with a single birth mother but in most of these cases there was some, albeit erratic, contact with fathers.
- Most lived in families with violence and conflict. More specifically, in eight out of the 15 cases, background reports disclose the existence of domestic abuse.
- Parental alcohol or drug abuse was apparent in the majority of the cases. (Gault 2003: 13)

3.53 The majority (62%) of persistent young offenders in Jamieson's et al's (1999) study reported that they had family members who had offended, with frequent references being made to relatives who had been in prison.

3.54   The only Scottish study to present a sustained discussion of the impact of family and parenting in the lives of young people convicted of violent offending is Batchelor's (2007) qualitative research with young women in Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institute (HMYPOI) Cornton Vale (n=21).

3.55   More than half of the young women in Batchelor's sample did not grow up in an intact two-parent family and this group reported experiencing significant family disruption in terms of changes to their main caregiver. Almost three-quarters reported previous social work involvement and involvement in the children's hearing system (CHS) and more than half had been looked after by the local authority. The average age of first referral to the CHS was 11, most commonly for school non-attendance, followed by lack of parental care, being considered outside of parental control, and offending behaviour. Two-fifths of the young women said they had been sexually abused, usually by a member of their family. A significant amount of violence within the home was also reported, with two-fifths of the young women describing witnessing regular incidents of 'serious' physical violence between their parents, most of which were attributed to their father's (and sometimes their mother's) alcohol abuse. The young women also witnessed physical violence between and against their siblings ('beatings' sometimes involving the use of weapons, such as majorette batons, bricks or belts), and two-fifths had been victimized themselves, usually by their parents, sometimes seriously. Largely as a result of these experiences, participants reported a series of complex, ambivalent and multifaceted relationships with their families. Some reported strong family ties; others considered families as source of anger and frustration, either because they were the perpetrators of abuse or because they failed to protect young women from abuse.

3.56   Batchelor's research also points to the contribution of socio-economic inequality and societal norms to the development of violent attitudes and behaviour. All of her participants came from low-income families housed in neighbourhoods characterised by social disorganisation and socio-economic disadvantage, and where they witnessed violence as a routine, everyday occurrence. Half of the young women lived with their parents prior to custody – all of who rented properties from the local authority – whilst a quarter resided in hostels, supported accommodation, or were formally homeless. Only one young woman had been employed prior to custody, 'but even she was reliant on benefits because she worked part-time' (Batchelor 2007: 93). The only research participant who did not claim state benefits was still at school and therefore financially supported by her mother. Four-fifths of the young women reported participation in street-orientated peer groups involved in underage drinking, drug taking, and territorial violence. On the weekends these groups could be fairly large, consisting of 20 to 30 boys, girls, and young adults aged between 11 and 28 years. During the week, however, the groups tended to be smaller – comprising six or seven core young people – and were much more male dominated. In order to be respected and accepted as 'wan o' the troops,' young women reported that they had to prove themselves through participation in violence and other stereotypically masculine criminal pursuits, as well as colluding with male group members to uphold a distinct gender hierarchy that

included a double standard with regard to sexual activities, the sexual exploitation of some girls, and most girls' exclusion from serious offending.

Family and community factors: Key points

3.57 Research evidence on the background and characteristics of young violent offenders in Scotland remains limited, focused predominantly on prison populations.

3.58 Available data points in particular to the role of domestic violence and parental drug and/or alcohol abuse, which may themselves be influenced by stress related to socio-economic disadvantage and societal attitudes and norms of behaviour.

3.59 Most convicted violent young offenders grow up in poor neighbourhoods characterised by territorial violence and the defence of respect and reputation.

Alcohol and drug misuse

3.60 Alcohol and drug misuse are associated in various ways with violence, not as direct causal factors but as part of a complex interaction that combines physiological effects with other cultural, social and economic factors. For example, alcohol may act to reduce inhibition and as a consequence may increase the likelihood of an argument escalating into an assault, but is also mediated by individual and societal attitudes towards violence, gender role expectations, socially learned alcohol expectancy effects, and the social setting in which participants are located. Illegal drugs, on the other hand, are largely related to violence through violent crimes committed in the course of distribution and purchase, or during the commission of property offences carried out to support a drug addiction.

3.61 The overwhelming majority of violent offences committed by young women in Batchelor's (2007) study were related to drugs or alcohol in some way. Four-fifths of her sample reported some experience of illicit drug use and three-fifths claimed that they were addicted to heroin at the time of their last offence. Four-fifths had experienced problems in relation to their alcohol consumption, with one-third of the sample reporting daily drinking daily prior to custody and just under a half describing a pattern of regular binge drinking. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the vast majority of violent offences committed by the young women took place when the offender was intoxicated (six young women were under the influence of drugs during the commission of their index offence,[8] eight were under the influence of alcohol and three were under the influence of both drugs and alcohol) and/or were committed alongside acquisitive crimes carried out to fund a drug addiction. These findings led Batchelor to conclude that:

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[8] An 'index offence' represents the main offence for which charges have been brought. In Batchelor's research, this refers to the offence which has resulted in imprisonment.

'what we are witnessing is not an increase in violence among young women per se, but an increase in excessive alcohol and drug misuse, a correlate of which is involvement in violent offending' (p. 232).

3.62 McKinlay et al.'s (2009) self report data on young male offenders' use of alcohol and illicit drugs (whilst at liberty) provides an important insight into how patterns of alcohol and drug misuse have changed over time, as well as their respective relationships with violence (n=96 in 1979; n=152 in 1996; n=172 in 2007). Drawing on questionnaires conducted with new admissions to HMYPOIs, Glenochil (1979) and Polmont (1996 and 2007), McKinlay et al. demonstrate that the proportion of respondents who stated that they got 'drunk daily' rose from 7.3 percent in 1979, to 22.6 percent in 1996 and 40.1% in 2007. The proportion who considered that alcohol had contributed to their previous offending rose from 47.9 percent to 58.4 percent to 79.6 percent. In contrast, the proportion that blamed illegal drugs fell from 40.1 percent (1996) to 30.1 percent (2007); those blaming illegal drugs not in association with alcohol fell from 21.7 percent (1996) to 9.7 percent (2007). The pattern of 'extreme' drinking by young offenders reported in the most recent sample was confirmed by qualitative interviews conducted for the same report in 2008. Interviewed young offenders rarely attributed their offending, especially violence, to illegal drugs – the sole exception to this pattern was the drug diazepam, which was usually blamed in conjunction with alcohol use (indicating that illegal drug use in this population was more of an extension to their drinking behaviours than an alternative lifestyle choice).

Alcohol and drug misuse: Key points

3.63 Recent research with young people in custody points to the significant role of substance misuse, especially excessive drinking, in the backgrounds of convicted violent offenders.

3.64 Most young offenders report being under the influence of drugs and/or especially alcohol during the commission of their last violent offence.

3.65 Violence is also perpetrated alongside financially motivated offences (e.g. shoplifting, robbery), which are committed to support a drug habit.

Knives and weapons

3.66 Another recent cause for concern among young people in Scotland is their involvement with gangs, knives and weapons. Thirty percent of the respondents in Anderson et al.'s (1994) study reported carrying a knife or other weapon on at least one occasion during the preceding nine months. Of these, 17 percent reported having carried knives on one or two occasions while 13 percent had done so on three or more occasions. Most of these weapons were carried defensively rather than offensively: 'girls would carry a weapon when out alone (even in their own area) for self-defence against men. For boys, on the other hand, carrying weapons was usually restricted to occasions when they went "up the toon" or ventured into areas they felt unsafe' (p. 99). According to McKeganey and Norrie (2000), the carrying of weapons is closely

associated with illegal drug use. As indicated by their schools' survey data, both girls and boys who report illegal drug use are more likely to report having ever 'carried a weapon in case it was needed in a fight'. As Table 6 illustrates, reported weapon carrying increases with the number of drugs used:

Table 5: Weapon carrying by number of illegal drugs used

	No of illegal drugs used					
	None	**1**	**2**	**3 or 4**	**>5**	**Total***
Males	n=987	n=239	n=85	n=85	n=51	n=1447
1 weapon	174 (17.6%)	87 (36.4%)	39 (45.9%)	41 (48.2%)	19 (37.3%)	360 (24. 9%)
>1 weapon	28 (2.8)	37 (15.5)	19 (22.3)	22 (25.9)	28 (54.9)	134 (9.2%)
Any weapon	202 (20.5%)	124 (51.9%)	58 (68.2%)	63 (74.1%)	47 (92.2%)	494 (34.1%)
Females	n=1239	n=235	n=77	n=75	n=38	n=1664
Any weapon	46 (3.7%)	36 (15.3%)	16 (20.8%)	25 (33.3%)	20 (52.6%)	143 (8.6%)
All students	n=2226	n=474	n=162	n=160	n=89	n=3111
Any weapon	248 (11.1%)	160 (33.8%)	74 (45.7%)	88 (55.0%)	67 (75.3%)	637 (20.5%)

*Data missing for five males and five females.

Source: McKeganey and Norrie (2000) Association between illegal drugs and weapon carrying in young people in Scotland: schools' survey.

3.67 McKeganey and Norrie's data also indicated that knives were not the only nor the type of weapon carried. Other bladed items included machetes, swords and razors, alongside air rifles, pistols, replica guns, clubs, metal pipes, baseball bats, snooker cues, screwdrivers, hammers, cata-pults and knuckleduster. Non-bladed weapons were marginally more popular (12.7%) than bladed weapons (12%).

3.68 Studies involving prison populations report significantly higher levels of weapon carrying as well as providing further detail about actual use. Four fifths of the young women in Batchelor's (2007) study claimed ever to have carried a weapon, and weapons were utilised in approximately half of the young women's index offence. The use of knives, however, was comparatively rare, with most young women claiming that they used objects to hand, notably bottles and bricks. Despite their high rates of self-reported use, most – but not all – of the young women considered the use of weapons to be 'out of order,' and many made a distinction between deliberately carrying a weapon (which was regarded as inexcusable) and picking up and using an object in the 'heat of the moment' (comprehensible but not condoned).While most young women disagreed with both using and carrying a 'chib,' for a significant minority both were justified if used to protect oneself from potential and/or actual assault.

3.69 The majority (63.2%) of young male offenders in McKinlay et al.'s (2009) prison survey sample stated that they had 'ever' carried a weapon and a similar

number (61.4%) admitted to weapon use. Significantly, however, the two groups were not equivalent: many of the respondents who said that they were weapon carriers had never used; many who used were not weapon carriers. Again, this can be partially explained by the fact that weapons were carried, in the main, as a means of defence rather than offence, and also because bottles (and other accessible objects) appeared to be a more frequently used weapon than knives. Young men also described scenarios in which they had initially not been carrying, but following a disagreement or conflict returned home to obtain a weapon, specifically to commit an offence. Alcohol use (either on its own or in conjunction with diazepam) was a common factor in turning weapon owners into weapon carriers and weapon carriers into weapon users.

3.70 Like the young women in Batchelor's sample, the young offenders interviewed by McKinlay et al. often expressed a reluctance to use weapons, sometimes because they felt that it was not 'macho' to resort to weapon use. Others claimed that they had considered the pros and cons of weapon carrying, particularly knives, but decided not to carry one because of the consequences of using, such as imprisonment, or owing to the effects of alcohol on their self-control: 'what might have seemed like a fashion accessory or ornament while sober could easily become something more risky when alcohol is involved (p. 69). Participants also pointed to the impact of others carrying weapons, especially others carrying a knife, on their own propensity for violence. Where an opponent was perceived or known to be carrying a weapon, young offenders reported that their response could often be an extreme one, in order to counter the perceived threat which such a weapon represented. Thus, carrying a knife, rather than improving safety, could actually result in the carrier becoming the victim. This links to the finding that as well as being the perpetrators of serious violence, McKinlay et al.'s participants were often also the victims of such crime including stabbings or 'glassings'.

Knives and weapons: Key points

3.71 Self-report data suggest that the number of young people who report having ever carried a weapon is relatively high, but that weapon use is far less common.

3.72 The majority of young people who claim to have carried a weapon report that the do so as a means of self-defence.

3.73 Levels of weapon carrying and use are significantly higher amongst prison samples than the general youth population, but even amongst this group carrying is not coextensive with use.

3.74 The use of non-bladed weapons, such as bottles, bricks and bats, is as least as common as the use of knives.

Motivations and rewards of violence

3.75 Young people's motivations for violence can be grouped under three key headings: excitement, status and protection. In relation to the former, young people claim to engage in violence as a means to counteract boredom and as a source of exhilaration, pleasure and power. The thrill of transgression was a central theme in the accounts provided by young women in Batchelor's (2007) study, and also amongst a small number of respondents in the ESRC Girls and Violence study (Burman et al, 2001). In Batchelor's (2007) study, those involved in street robbery, for example, often claimed that the value of the goods stolen was of less importance than the sense of euphoria and exhilaration associated with 'putting one over' on someone. Thus violence presented some young women with a measure of self-esteem and self-efficacy; a sense that they had crossed the boundaries into someone else's world and 'gotten away with it' (p. 155). This sense of status and esteem was also reported by participants in McKinlay et al.'s (2009) study, who claimed that violence could provide a drug-like 'rush', a sense of 'satisfaction' or even a social status, both within and outwith their male peer group.

3.76 Violence also serves to maintain group solidarity, reinforce kinship ties, affirm allegiances, and enhance status within the group (Burman et al 2001). As might be expected from a sample of male young offenders, issues relating to 'masculinity' (male honour, proving one's-self/showing off and male group loyalty/bonding) were given as explanations for violent behaviour by the young men interviewed by McKinlay et al. (2009). Perhaps more surprisingly, these factors were also identified as important motivations and rewards of violence by the young women in Batchelor's (2007) sample. According to Batchelor, this is because street-based peer groups are male-dominated enterprises in which young women are either stereotyped as sex objects or tomboys. Given the pejorative nature of the former categorisation, it is unsurprising that young women are keen to distinguish themselves from those who are 'used' for sex, portray themselves as 'wan of the troops' through public displays of aggressive prowess.

3.77 As discussed in Section 2.2, most convicted violent young offenders come from disruptive family backgrounds, characterised by violence and neglect. Often as a result of these difficult personal circumstances, they turn to their neighbourhood peers as an important source of support and esteem. The research by both Batchelor and McKinlay et al. demonstrates that such young people are fiercely loyal toward their peers and their local area, and much of their violence entails '"backing up" a friend, becoming involved in a fight so as not lose face and conforming to the norms of their peer group by 'necessarily' responding to aggression from others' (McKinlay et al. 2009: 67). Both samples placed a high premium on being treated with 'respect,' defined as being treated right or granted the deference one deserves (Anderson 1999). One way to acquire respect was by developing a reputation as someone 'not to be messed wi,' who would 'step up' in response to any perceived slight or pejorative comment: 'Almost without exception, the young women expressed the importance of being seen to "stand up for yourself," repeating the mantra: "Better a sair face than a red face" (in other words, it is better to fight and lose

than have the embarrassment of backing down)' (Batchelor 2007: 180). Adopting a tough, aggressive approach was regarded as an *unavoidable* aspect of life growing up in a 'rough' area and was something that many young offenders report being taught by their parents, explicitly and by example, from a very early age. The consequences of not doing so was unthinkable: 'refusing to become involved in the fight would risk them losing their friends, and potentially becoming a victim of violent retribution' (McKinlay et al 2009: 67).

Motivations and rewards: Key points

3.78 Qualitative research with young offenders identifies three main motivations for violence: excitement, status and protection.

3.79 The majority of violent young offenders engage in violence as a means to counteract boredom and as a source of exhilaration, pleasure and power.

3.80 Violence also serves as important source of status and esteem, particularly for young men.

3.81 This search for respect is in itself a form of self-protection, an attempt to pre-empt violent victimisation through the display of an aggressive or violent disposition.

Findings on violence from the ESYTC (Susan McVie)

3.82 The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (ESYTC) is a longitudinal programme of research on pathways into and out of offending for a single cohort of around 4,300 young people who started secondary school in the City of Edinburgh in 1998[9]. Core aims of the Study are: (i) to explore from the early teenage years onwards the factors leading to criminal offending (including violent offending) and desistance from it; and to show how distinctive these processes are in the case of serious, frequent, and persistent offenders; and (ii) to examine the impact of interactions with formal agencies of control, such as the police, social work, the Scottish children's hearing system and the courts, on subsequent behaviour. Children from all school sectors were included (mainstream, special and independent) and response rates have been consistently high.

3.83 Six annual sweeps of data collection were conducted while the cohort was aged (on average) 12 to 17. Self-completion questionnaires were administered in which the young people were asked a range of questions about their involvement in forms of delinquent or offending behaviour. This included questions on involvement in assault (defined as hitting, kicking or punching someone on purpose), robbery (defined as using force, threats or a weapon to steal money or something else from somebody) and carrying a weapon (defined as carrying a knife or other weapon with them for protection or in case it was needed in a fight). For the purposes of analysis, involvement in

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[9] The ESYTC has been funded by grants from the Economic and Social Research Council (R000237157; R000239150), the Scottish Government and the Nuffield Foundation.

'violence' was defined as involvement in at least one of these three activities (only counting those who had engaged in more than five incidents of violence, since less frequent violence tended to be associated with very minor forms of behaviour). The graph below shows the percentage of young people in the cohort who reported that they had been violent between the ages of 12 and 17, showing separately for boys and girls. This indicates that self-reported involvement in violence peaked at around age 14 before declining to age 17. Similar trends were evident for boys and girls, however.

Graph 6: Percentage of young people in cohort
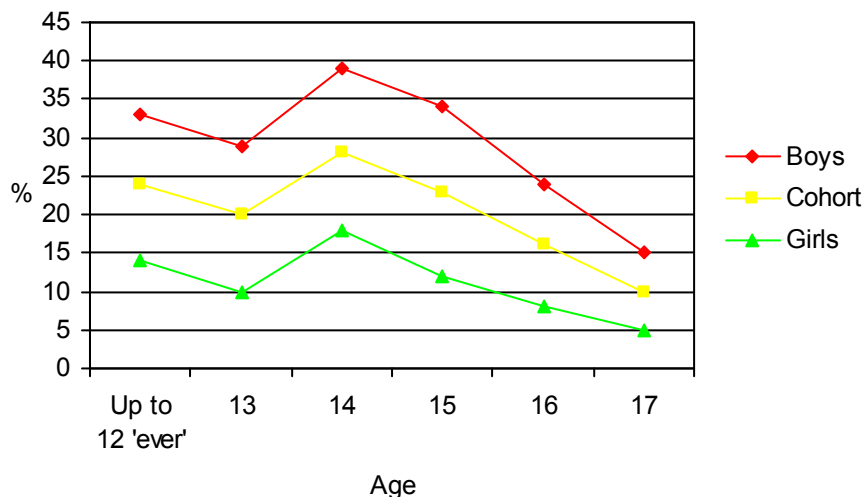
3.84 ESYTC findings show a particularly strong relationship between involvement in violent offending at age 15 and a range of vulnerabilities, including self harm (see McAra and McVie 2010, forthcoming). At age 15, 23 per cent of respondents reported involvement in one or more episodes of violence, with boys (33 per cent) being more likely to do so than girls (12 per cent). Importantly, those involved in violent offending were the most vulnerable and victimized young people in the cohort. Violent offenders were compared with other cohort members across a range of aspects of vulnerability. Briefly, this analysis found that violent offenders were significantly more likely than non-violent youths to be: victims of crime and adult harassment; engaged in self-harming and para-suicidal behaviour; exhibiting a range of problematic health risk behaviours including drug use, regular alcohol consumption, disordered patterns of eating, symptoms of depression and early experience of sexual intercourse; having more problematic family backgrounds; and, *for girls* in particular, coming from a socially deprived background.

3.85 Data from the ESYTC has shown that individual vulnerabilities are strongly predictive of involvement in violence at age 15 for both males and females, even when controlling for early involvement in violence (by age 12) and family, school, leisure and peer-related factors. Among both boys and girls, violent behaviour at age 15 was significantly predicted by being a victim of crime at age 15, engaging in self-harming behaviour and risk-taking, even when controlling for a range of other potential explanatory factors. In addition, violent behaviour was strongly associated with other forms of problematic behaviour

among boys and girls, including bullying others and substance misuse (both drug and alcohol use).

3.86 There were, however, some important differences between girls and boys in the regression models. Girls' involvement in violence at age 15 was significantly explained by other aspects of vulnerability and adversity that were not shared with the boys. For example, girls who reported engaging in early sexual intercourse were 1.5 times more likely to be violent at age 15 than those who did not engage in sexual behaviour. Family turbulence was another key predictor for girls, with those experiencing many family crises in the previous year being significantly more likely to be involved in violence at age 15 than girls with no such history. Furthermore, deprivation at the familial level as measured by caregivers in manual work or unemployed and frequent truancy from school were significant predictors of violence among girls at age 15.

3.87 For boys, on the other hand, violence was linked to variables relating to other aspects of risk. This includes the risk of starting to offend at an early age, since boys who reported involvement in violence by age 12 were almost twice as likely to be involved in violence at age 15 than those with no such history. The boys model also includes risk in terms of increased motivation and opportunity to offend. For example, being highly impulsive, having offending peers, hanging out regularly in public places and being poorly monitored by their parents all emerged as significant factors in explaining boys involvement in violence at age 15. Nevertheless, violence among boys was also strongly related to wider elements of vulnerability. Boys who had been harassed by adults were more likely to be violent than those who were not harassed; while there was also a complex interaction between early experience of crime victimization (by age 12) and later experience of family crises among boys. This interaction suggests that violence at age 15 is predicted by elements of sustained adversity over time.

3.88 These findings provide support for the Kilbrandon ethos, showing strong and consistent links between deeds and needs and the ways in which violence itself can be seen as 'symptomatic' of a broad spectrum of vulnerability among both boys and girls. Of key importance is that many of the adversities faced by violent offenders are not always structural but more often stem from close interactions in respect of peers, family and other adults in the young person's milieu and the mechanisms which they use to cope with the negative consequences of such interactions (such as self-harming behaviours).

Findings from the ESYTC: Key points

3.89 Findings on violence from the ESYTC indicate a particularly strong relationship between involvement in violent offending and a range of vulnerabilities, including self-harm. These findings provide support for the Kilbrandon ethos, showing strong and consistent links between deeds and needs and the ways in which violence can be as 'symptomatic' of a broad spectrum of vulnerabilities.

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4   INTERVENTIONS AND DESISTANCE

Age, Crime and Risk Responses to Youth Violence

4.1   In this final section of the review, we provide first, a brief overview of the international literature on criminal careers life course, paying particular attention to the research on developmental pathways.   Second, we summarise key messages from contemporary research and debates on the identification of 'risk factors' for youth violence and briefly summarise debates on risk-focussed prevention. Finally, we offer a brief overview of interventions to reduce youth violence.

Age, Criminal Careers and Developmental Pathways

4.2   It is widely assumed that age is a major indicator of involvement in crime, and that crime is mostly committed by young people. The concept of the 'age-crime curve' – the sharp incline in offending behaviour during early adolescence, peaking during the mid-late teenage years and then declining, steeply at first (to the mid 20s) and, thereafter, more steadily – is well known, although there is considerable debate both about the consistency of the age-crime curve across time, jurisdictions and the degree of similarity between the sexes (Gottfredson and Hirshi 1990; Smith 2007; Steffensmeier and Streifel 1991; McVie 2009). Recent work suggests that although crime is mostly committed by the young, and tends to decline with age, substantial variation can be found in the parameters of the 'age-crime curve' (Smith 2007; McVie 2009).

4.3   A large body of research evidence has been accumulated in relation to the study of crime and the life-course, which is concerned primarily with the development of offending behaviour, and specifically how the nature and patterning of offending is affected by age and life-events over the life-course (Loeber and Le Blanc 1990; Farrington 2007). Research effort is directed primarily towards understanding more about the age(s) of onset of offending, the prevalence and frequency of offending at different ages, offender specialisation in terms of types of offending, and the exploration of within-individual changes in offending over time (Loeber et al 1993; Farrington and West 1993; Farrington 2007).

4.4   Exploring within-individual changes over time involves studying the pathway (or trajectory) of a person's offending from their first offence through their 'criminal career'. There is a large body of research on different types of behavioural trajectories (see, for example Moffitt 1993). Close research attention has also been paid to the processes of development, and in the social meanings and social roles associated with developmental phases, and how this links to offending behaviour (Smith 2007).   This approach recognises that pathways may vary between individuals and that such variations may be caused by a range of different influences over the life-course. The focus on criminal careers implies a strong relationship between childhood and adulthood, seeing offending as a continuity of behaviour that first arises in childhood and persists into adulthood (Farrington 2007), although with the recognition that life events can influence or even fundamentally alter trajectories. Whilst it is not at all inevitable that an anti-social child will become an offending adult, the study of

pathways often takes the form of identification of sequences where one type of behaviour acts as a bridge to, or facilitates, another type of behaviour (Farrington 2007). This includes the identification of non-criminal behaviours that lead to criminal behaviours, as well as the identification of indicators of later, more frequent or more serious offending (Loeber et al. 1993).

Criminal Careers and Risk Prediction

4.5   In the UK context, perhaps the most influential study investigating the onset of offending by young people and attempting to assess how far criminality can be predicted on the basis of childhood characteristics is the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development (Farrington 1995), although other major international studies are the Dunedin Study (Henry et al. 1993) and the Pittsburgh Youth Study (Loeber et al. 2003). The Cambridge Study is a longitudinal study which, from 1961, followed a sample of 411 boys from age eight onwards to examine which of them became involved in offending and why some continued offending into, and throughout, adulthood. Of the small sample of 'chronic' offenders (approximately 6%, or n=23) who continued to offend into adulthood, most of them shared a number of common childhood characteristics: tending to come from larger, poorer families; rated as troublesome, restless, impulsive by teachers at primary school; more likely to have criminal parents and/or older siblings, and; subject to erratic parental supervision (Farrington 1994, 2003, 2007). Based on this, the Cambridge Study identifies a number of *predictors* of future criminality, variously identified as individual family and environmental factors. Other UK and international longitudinal studies have given rise to some apparently generally applicable results which identify similar factors in young people's lives that appear to be associated with an increased risk of problems at school, drug and alcohol misuse and the likelihood of youthful offending.

4.6   This work identifies *risk* factors, derived from this body of research evidence accumulated primarily as a result of longitudinal and life-course studies (Farrington and West 1990; Farrington, 1995; 2003; Farrington et al. 2006). Risk factors are those prior factors that increase the risk of occurrence of the onset, frequency, persistence or duration of offending (Kazdin et al. 1997).

4.7   The list of risk factors is now well-known and fairly long, and typically divided into separate categories – biological, individual, peer, school, neighbourhood, and situational factors. Research has also identified other – *protective* – factors which are linked to positive outcomes, and which protect young people from difficulties, even when they are growing up in adverse circumstances and are heavily exposed to risk. The list of protective factors is also well-known, although much shorter and less is known about them.

4.8   Most research on risk factors has focused on prevalence and onset, but relatively little is known about risk factors for prediction, duration and escalation of offending and on the developmental sequences which lead to persistent offending.

Risk factors associated with violent offending

4.9   Whilst research suggests that some offenders specialise in one particular type of offending, the majority of offenders – particularly young offenders – engage in a range of different types of offending behaviour (Farrington 1999; Farrington et al. 1988). It is important to note, at the outset, that males commit most violent offences and largely for this reason, most research on violence and the risk of violence has concentrated on males (Farrington 2007).

Figure 1: Risk Factors identified from life-course and longitudinal research

Individual risk factors
Low intelligence
Low school attainment (beginning at primary school)
Poor ability to control behaviour (impulsiveness; hyperactivity; acting without thinking)
Poor techniques of thinking, problem-solving
Low self-esteem

Family
Poor parental supervision and discipline
Family conflict
Family history of problem behaviour
Parental involvement in / attitudes condoning problem behaviour

School
Low achievement (beginning in primary school
Disruptive and aggressive behaviour, including bullying
Lack of commitment, including truancy/poor attendance
Lack of discipline and disorganisation in school

Community
Community disorganisation and physical deterioration/neglect
Availability of drugs
Disadvantaged neighbourhood
High turnover and lack of neighbourhood/community attachment

Individuals, friends and peers
Alienation and lack of social commitment
Attitudes that condone problem behaviour
Early involvement in problem behaviour
Friends involved in problem behaviour

Sources: Farrington 1994, 2007; Lipsey and Derzon 1998; Farrington and Loeber 1999; Rutter et al. 1998.

Individual factors

4.10 Amongst the most important individual factors said to predict offending are low intelligence and attainment, low empathy, and impulsiveness (Lipsey and Derzon 1998). In the Cambridge Study, low intelligence predicted both juvenile and adult convictions (Farrington 1992); aggression and bullying in mid teen years (Farrington 1993); and chronic offenders (Farrington and West 1993).

4.11 Poor ability to control behaviour (variously impulsiveness, motor restlessness, hyperactivity) is reported as a crucial factor predicting offending (White et al. 1994). A Swedish longitudinal study (Klinteberg et al. 1993) involving 540 male subjects reported that hyperactivity at age 13 predicted violence up to age 26, and that the highest rates of violence were amongst boys with both motor restlessness and concentration. In a second Swedish study, attention problems were reported to be the most important components of hyperactivity that predicted later violent offending (Eklund and Klinteberg 2003).

4.12 Empathy is also considered an important personality trait, although as Farrington (2007) points out, strong empirical evidence about this factor is lacking. Using a measure known as the basic Empathy Scale in a study of British 15 year olds (n=363), Jolliffe and Farrington (2006) found that low affective empathy was related to self-reported offending and violence for both males and females, and low affective and cognitive empathy was related to fighting and vandalism for males.

Family factors

4.13 In the Cambridge Study, having a convicted parent or older sibling were the strongest predictors of a boys later offending (Farrington 1992); and those boys with convicted fathers were more likely to be convicted themselves than boys whose dads were not convicted.

4.14 Different types of child-rearing methods are also said to predict delinquency. Of child-rearing methods, poor parental supervision is the strongest predictor of offending (Smith and Stern 1997; Farrington and Loeber 1999). There are differing findings in relation to the role played by parental criminality in predicting violence. Some studies maintain that the most important predictor of young male youth delinquency was father arrest, although this could be linked via the correlating variables of having a young mother, living in a deprived area and low individual guilt (Farrington, Joliffe, Loeber, Stouthamer- Loeber and Kalb 2001). For example, some studies found that young men with criminal fathers were over three times more likely to have committed violent criminal acts than those with non criminal fathers (Baker and Mednick 1984). The Cambridge Study found that boys who had a parent arrested before their 10th birthday were twice as likely to commit violent crimes than those with non criminal parents (Farrington, 1989). In contrast, however, Moffitt (1987) found that adults (aged 29-52 years) with criminal parents were no more likely to be arrested for a violent offence than those with non criminal parents.

Persistent offending

4.15 Early onset of violence and offending is associated with more serious and chronic violence in later life (Thornberry et al. 1995; Tolan and Thomas 1995). Research also suggests an overlap between serious, violent and persistent offending, in that a proportion of persistent offenders become involved in serous violence. For example, using data from the Cambridge Study, Farrington (1989) found that one half of boys convicted of a violent offence between the age of 10 and 16 were convicted of a violent crime by age 24, compared with only eight percent of controls.

4.16 Persistent offenders often experience multiple and overlapping difficulties including problem drug use, mental health problems, school and family difficulties (Bradshaw 2006; Hagell and Newburn 1994; McNeill and Batchelor 2004).

4.17 In their meta-analysis of longitudinal research on predictive risk factors for adolescent and early adult violent or serious delinquency, Lipsey and Derzon (1998) found that the best predictors of violence differed according to age group. At age six to 11 years the most important predictor variable was committing an offence (violent or otherwise), followed by substance use (mainly tobacco or alcohol). Moderate risk factors for this age group included male gender, family socio-economic status and anti-social parents.

4.18 The most important predictors for 12-14 year olds were weak social ties, antisocial peers, and committing a general offence. Other risk factors included: family factors, particularly antisocial or abusive parents and poor parent-child interactions; individual factors, particularly low intelligence and antisocial attitudes and beliefs; and contextual factors, particularly neighbourhood crime and social disorganisation.

4.19 The table below draws on Lipsey and Derzon's (1998) review and lists the predictors of violent or serious offending in later life for the two age groups, in order of significance determined by statistical analysis and in groups based on estimated aggregated effect size.

4.20 Whyte (2000: 2) summarises these findings thus: substance abuse was considered to be among the best predictors of future violence for children ages 6-11 years, but one of the poorest predictors for young people aged 12-14 years. The strongest predictors of subsequent violence for the older age group – lack of positive social ties, and involvement with anti-social associates – seem to be relatively weak predictors at age 6-11 years. Relatively fixed family and personal characteristics which may not be readily open to change were the second and third-rank predictors of subsequent violence for the 6-11 year age-group, whereas for the older group, dynamic and relatively changeable behavioural predictors were second and third-rank predictors of subsequent violence (general offences, aggression, and school performance). Broken and disrupted homes and abusive parents were among the poorest predictors of subsequent violence for both age groups. The significance of anti-social peers is a strong predictor of future violent offending at age 12-14, yet a weak predictor at age 6-11 years (Lipsey and Derzon 1998; Whyte 2000).

4.21 There is a considerable body of evidence to suggest that violent behaviours are associated with intellectual and educational difficulties, problem parenting, and substance use/misuse (Lipsey and Derzon 1998; Hawkins et al. 1998). Contextual factors, such as the availability of drugs or weapons, are also important to consider, as these may also contribute to risk for violence (Hawkins et al. 1998).

Figure 2: Ranking of ages 6-11 and ages 12-14/Predictors of violent or serious offending at ages 15-25

Predictors at ages 6-11	*Predictors at ages 12-14*
Rank 1 Group	
General offences (.38) Substance use (.30)	Social ties (.39) Anti-social peers (.37)
Rank 2 Group	
Gender (male) (.26) Family socio-economic status (.24) Anti-social parents (.23)	General offences (.26)
Rank 3 Group	
Aggression (.21) Ethnicity (.20)	Aggression (.19) School attitude/performance (.19) Psychological state (.19) Parent-child relations (.19) Gender (male) (.19) Physical violence (.18)
Rank 4 Group	
Psychological state (.15) Parent-child relations (.15) Social ties (.15) Problem behaviour (.13) School attitude/performance (.13) Medical/physical characteristics (.13) IQ (.12) Other family characteristics (.12)	Anti-social parents (.16) Person crimes (.14) Problem behaviour (.12) IQ (.11)
Rank 5 Group	
Broken home (.09) Abusive parents (.07) Anti-social peers (.04)	Broken home (.10) Family socio-economic status (.10) Abusive parents (.09) Other family characteristics (.08) Substance abuse (.06) Ethnicity (.04)

Source: Lipsey and Derzon (1998)

4.22 A past history of offending (violent or otherwise) is one of the most significant factors associated with future violent behaviour. Situational-level influences, which are rarely measured in longitudinal studies, are also important as they can indicate potential triggers for violence (Sampson and Lauritson 1994).

4.23 It is important to acknowledge that the risk factors related to whether an individual becomes involved in offending behaviour are not the same for every young person, and that there may be exceptions to the rule (McNeill and

Batchelor 2004). Some offenders may come from relatively stable family backgrounds, for example, but have particularly issues in relation to antisocial peers or problems at school. For others, factors associated with deviant parental attitudes and behaviours may be key.

Critiques of the Risk-based Approach

4.24 Over the past 15 years, the risk factors approach to devising preventative strategies has become a dominant discourse in youth justice. Risk analysis is common and, as Muncie (2009) points out, something of a consensus around the precipitative factors of family conflict, truancy, drug use, irresponsible or lack of parenting, low intelligence, delinquent peers, and community organisation has occurred (Muncie 2009: 27).

4.25 Whilst research evidence from the identification of both risk and protective factors has established the potential for strategies to reduce young people's risk of offending and involvement in anti-social behaviour, there is intense debate about the relationship between the identification of childhood risk factors and risk-focused prevention. Many writers have warned of the dangers of the risk approach on the basis that defining and measuring risk factors is problematic and that the interpretation of risk factor evidence is difficult (e.g. Goldson 2000; Haines and Case 2008; Hudson 1998; Phoenix 2008).

4.26 Whilst many risk factors are relatively well-established, far less established are the causal mechanisms linking such factors with offending. The accuracy of early childhood risk predictors are by no means established. A major problem of risk-based prevention is to establish which risk factors are causes and which are merely correlations (Farrington 2000; Farrington 2007). Hinshaw (2002:436) states 'there is distressingly little evidence for the causal status of nearly all [of the list of risk factors]'. Armstrong (2006) argues that correlations between risk factors provide little information about *why* young people behave as they do. Most identified risk factors are, in fact, merely correlates of relatively vague proxies for criminality, such as self-reported offending, arrest, conviction or a history of persistent offending (O'Mahoney 2009). Moreover, whilst risk factors may correlate with (recorded) offending, their more general applicability to all, or specific types, of offending is unclear.

4.27 A second major problem is that risk factors tend to be inter-related. It appears that risk factors work cumulatively, in that the greater the number of risk factors to which an individual is exposed, the greater the likelihood of future convictions for violence. (Kazdin et al. 1997). Yet, despite the fact that much research has been conducted into identifying which factors predict offending independently of other factors, the precise nature of such interaction is not fully understood.

4.28 Many writers have offered critiques of the risk-focused prevention paradigm (see for example, Armstrong 2006; Goldson and Muncie 2006, Gray 2005; Phoenix 2009), pointing to the collapsing of the distinction between causes and correlates (Armstrong 2006); the conceptual conflation between 'risk' and 'need' in contemporary risk thinking (Phoenix, 2009), and the risks that risk-

based targeting may have for stigmatising, criminalising and marginalising young people (Case 2007; O'Mahoney 2009).

4.29 In summary, the risk literature is hampered by a range of outcome variables encompassing many less serious forms of anti-social and problem behaviour, along with a bias towards white, male offenders. The difficulties of predicting such offences within adult populations are well documented (Monahan 1996) and it can be argued that these problems are greater in relation to young offenders than adults, on account of the process of maturation and the often rapid rate of change that occurs during adolescence (Baker 2004, 2007). Consideration must also be given to variations in the needs, deeds and characteristics of different 'types' of offenders; a young black woman, for example, may engage in violence for different reasons than a young white man. Unfortunately very little evidence currently exists in relation to the differential patterns of risk for female young offenders and young offenders from an ethnic minority background, as most research to date has focused on white males. That said, several studies have highlighted the importance of victimisation to an understanding of the onset and continued involvement in violence among girls and young women (Baskin and Sommers 1998; Burman 2004; Batchelor 2005, 2007; Burman and Batchelor, 2009 Chamberlain and Moore 2002; Ryder 2003; Miller 2001).

Risk paradigm: Key points

4.30 Over the past 15 years, the risk factors approach to devising preventative strategies has become a dominant discourse in youth justice. Risk analysis is common and there is something of a consensus around the precipitative factors of family conflict, truancy, drug use, irresponsible or lack of parenting, low intelligence, delinquent peers, and community organisation has occurred.

4.31 Whilst research evidence from the identification of both risk and protective factors has established the potential for strategies to reduce young people's risk of offending and involvement in anti-social behaviour, this is an area characterised by intense debate.

4.32 Many writers have warned of the dangers of the risk approach on the basis that defining and measuring risk factors is problematic and that the interpretation of risk factor evidence is difficult. Whilst many risk factors are relatively well-established, far less established are the causal mechanisms linking such factors with offending. The accuracy of early childhood risk predictors are by no means established.

4.33 Most research on risk factors has focused on prevalence and onset, but relatively little is known about risk factors for prediction, duration and escalation of offending and on the developmental sequences which lead to persistent offending.

Effective Interventions

Risk-focused interventions

4.34 Delivering interventions that are effective is essential to any strategy designed to reduce the rates of offending behaviour, particularly for young people involved in violent behaviour who have the potential for long and harmful criminal careers.

4.35 Although recent meta-analytic reviews of research have shown some promising evidence that some intervention approaches are effective in reducing re-offending rates, they have tended only to highlight general principles of effectiveness (Andrews et al. 1990; Garrett 1985; Gendreau and Ross 1987; Lipsey 1992; Palmer 1994). It is important to note that relatively little attention has been given to the effectiveness of interventions with distinct types of offenders, especially those serious or violent offenders who might be expected to be most resistant to change.

4.36 Most information about risk-focused prevention programmes emanates from US research. In general terms, the most well-known risk-focused programmes that have been targeted towards individual and family risk factors draw on cognitive-behavioural concepts. Farrington (2007) summarises a selection of what are considered effective programmes as evidenced by high quality evaluation research. These are: skills training, parental education, pre-school programmes and so-called multi-component programmes.

4.37 The National Institute of Justice in the USA evaluated a great number of programmes on relatively strict criteria and identified some they considered worked, some which were promising and some which did not work (Sherman et al. 1998). In terms of the proposed reintegration of young people, early intervention with those starting to offend and reducing reoffending via community programmes, the following had positive outcomes:

Figure 3: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising

Preventing offending:
Education and health home visits and programmes for pre-school intervention; capacity building in schools; awareness raising campaigns in schools with clear messages and pro-social norms; training in 'social competency' e.g. managing stress, self-control, problem solving, emotional intelligence.

Reducing re-offending:
The use of civil and criminal responses as situational management to reduce re-offending (e.g. responding quickly to breaches); specific rehabilitation programmes for juvenile (and adult) re-offenders 'using treatment appropriate to their risk factors'; intensive supervision and aftercare for more serious offenders; proactive arrests for carrying weapons.

'Promising' Strategies:
Proactive police strategies focusing on specific offences delivered in a respectful manner e.g. polite field interrogation of suspicious people; community based mentoring; after-school pro-social activities; residential employment focussed interventions for youths; thinking skills intervention for high risk youth; situational risk management e.g. metal detectors in schools; 'gang' monitoring by community workers, probation and police.

What has not 'worked' (in the USA):
Short term non residential employment interventions, summer work programmes, diversion from court to job training for young people, arrest for minor offences, increased arrests on drug dealing locations, 'boot' camps or 'scared straight programmes ' (taking young offenders to adult prisons), 'shock' probation, parole or sentencing, home detention and electronic monitoring vague unstructured rehabilitation programmes (Sherman et al, 1998).

Source: Sherman, L., Gottfredson, D., MacKenzie, J., Eck, Reuter, P., & Bushway S. (1998) *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising – A report to the United States Congress*

4.38 In their systematic review of US interventions, Lipsey and Wilson (1998) addressed whether intervention programmes can reduce re-offending rates among serious offenders, and if so, what types of programmes are likely to be most effective. It is important to state however that systematic reviews of this nature are not without their limitations and sufficient research has yet to be conducted on the effects of intervention with serious and violent offenders.

4.39 Lipsey and Wilson's review (1998) included over 200 experimental or quasi-experimental studies of interventions with young people (mainly males) aged between 10 and 21 years. Most had records of prior offences, usually property crimes and aggressive behaviour. Overall, offenders who received 'human service'[10] interventions showed an average 12 percent decrease in re-offending compared to the control groups controls. Three intervention types showed the strongest and most consistent evidence of reducing re-offending. These were

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[10] 'Human service' interventions refer to interventions involving support professionals focusing on the development of human skills and pro-social development.

interpersonal skills training; individual structured counselling; and behavioural programmes. The review found that these interventions reduced re-offending by about 40 percent. Close behind the top three intervention approaches was a second tier of promising intervention types; these included multi-modal services (combinations of services or interventions that involved several different approaches) and restitution programmes (Lipsey and Wilson 1998). However, only a very small number of studies were available for each type of intervention and more data is required before strong conclusions can be drawn (Farrington 2007).

4.40 Lipsey and Wilson's (1998) review included programmes for those in young offenders' institutions or in residential facilities. The general characteristics of institutional intervention (the way in which a programme was organised, staffed, and administered) showed the strongest relationship to the effect of the intervention's impact on re-offending. Of particular note is the longevity of the programme and who it was administered by irrespective of the individual characteristics of the young people. Interpersonal skills programmes (involving training in social skills, aggression replacement and anger control and cognitive restructuring) provided very promising outcomes in institutional and residential settings as did family group living homes. This suggests that well-structured community based alternatives to secure confinement even for serious offending young people are at least as effective in reducing re-offending and are much less costly (Whyte 2000).

4.41 For any intervention to be effective, the targeted risk factors must be amenable to change The data from Lipsey and Derzon's (1998) review of serious and violent offending suggests that the strongest predictors of subsequent serious and violent offending for both age groups are relatively changeable factors – early offending and substance abuse at age 6-11 and anti-social associates and social ties at age 12-14.

4.42 The second and third rank of risk factors for the 6-11 age group provide few intervention leads; with the exception of aggressive behaviour, the main variables – anti-social parents, socio-economic status – are not readily amenable to change. As Whyte (2000) points out, the data from Lipsey and Derzon's (1998) review provides some promising leads on changeable risk factors, particularly in the 12-14 age-group, where disrupting early patterns of anti-social behaviour and negative peer association appear key. This suggests that the promotion of positive social ties is likely to be an effective strategy for the prevention of future violent and serious offending.

Risk-Focused Prevention: Key Points

4.43 Although recent meta-analytic reviews of research have shown some promising evidence that some intervention approaches are effective in reducing re-offending, they have tended only to highlight general principles of effectiveness.

4.44 In general terms, the most well-known risk-focused programmes that have been targeted towards individual and family risk factors draw on cognitive-behavioural concepts. The most effective programmes involve skills training, parental education, pre-school programmes and multi-component programmes.

4.45 It is important to note however that relatively little attention has been given to the effectiveness of interventions with distinct types of offenders, especially those serious or violent offenders who might be expected to be most resistant to change Those that have focused on violent offending have important and well-documented methodological and analytical limitations.

4.46 A key message from the research literature is that for any intervention to be effective, the targeted risk factors must be amenable to change. The data from one of the best-known reviews of serious and violent offending suggests that the strongest predictors of subsequent serious and violent offending for both age groups are relatively changeable factors – early offending and substance abuse, and anti-social associates and social ties. This suggests that disrupting early patterns of anti-social behaviour and negative peer association appear to be important. The promotion of positive social ties is likely to be an effective strategy for the prevention of future violent and serious offending.

Effective Interventions for Young People

4.47 Key messages from the 'what works?' literature in relation to preventing a range of poor outcomes for children and young people (including offending) focus on providing early and effective intervention and a strategic approach to provision of services tiered according to levels of need and the age and stage of development of the young person. Given the links between persistent offending and involvement in serious or violent offending, supporting and encouraging desistance at an early age are key.

4.48 In general, the research literature indicates that patterns in antisocial and offending behaviour tend to be age-graded which suggests that different forms of intervention will be required at different stages of the life-course (Sampson and Laub 1993; 2004). Whilst many studies concur that early intervention is key, findings from the ESYTC show that early adolescence (particularly age 13-15) is a critical turning point in terms of negotiating a pathway out of offending and preventing long-term and chronic conviction patterns (McAra and McVie, forthcoming 2010), which indicates that services for this age group need to be carefully considered.

4.49 For young offenders in general, the most successful interventions make use of family, school, community etc in innovative ways to support individual change (for example through peer mentoring), working with the needs and motivation of offenders to enhance change. For young offenders, in particular, however

there is a need to be clear about key factors affecting effectiveness of intervention for different types of offender, and this is particularly so in relation to young offenders (Rutter and Smith, 1995). To be effective interventions need to be targeted to specific offenders and their needs, and this means recognition of key difference on the basis of gender as well as age (Burman and Batchelor 2009).

4.50 To be most effective, 'interventions' need to situated within a supportive wider social context, they need to be focussed and targeted, they should be positive and engage those for whom the programmes are designed and they need to be tailored to the abilities, learning styles, personalities and social and cultural background of the participants. Research suggests that it is unlikely that tackling offending itself will be successful without a range of measures aimed at addressing wider 'psychosocial disorders' that generally accompany offending (including substance misuse, mental health problems, eating disorders, self harming, etc.) (Rutter and Smith, 1995).

4.51 Recent work drawing on analyses from the ESYTC (McAra and McVie 2007) further highlights the importance of non-stigmatising approaches and the impact that negative labelling of young people within formal agencies of support can have in terms of reoffending. This is an important strand of work in that it also is a possible explanation for declining offending after adolescence. It could be that most adolescent offenders are not captured by the criminal justice system and hence not labelled (stigmatised) as official offenders. Evidence from the ESYTC (McAra and McVie 2005) shows that the actual level and seriousness of offending as reflected in self-reports cannot explain why some young people and not others are drawn into the Scottish youth justice system, and that offending declined more slowly from its adolescent peak among young people captured by the system than among a matched group who had not, although they had shown the same offending patterns (McVie and McAra 2007).

Families and social ties

4.52 Much of the current research evidence is concerned with addressing poor outcomes for young people in the context of the family. However, the research literature identifies that the family should not be the sole focus of any intervention work. Those young people with the highest level of need are often those who are no longer part of any family unit and who, for various reasons, may not have any contact with parents. Furthermore, for those young people who remain with their families, it has been highlighted that there is a need to look beyond the family to the wider community context that influences and impacts on parents' ability to parent effectively (Smith 2007).

4.53 Families can have a positive influence however, particularly as individuals mature. Family, particularly the commitment to an adult life partner, and work can increase the individual's stake in conformity, increase the cost of offending and be the trigger to prompt a moving away from crime. Laub, Nagin and Sampson (1998), following up the Glueck's study of 500 young offenders in 1940, suggested that gradually increasing positive bonds linked to work and

family would have a gradually increasing effect on reduction in criminal activity. Comparing across four groups of juvenile offenders they found that two of the groups evidenced the expected peak of offending in teenage years and then a tail off over the late 20s and the other early 30s, but the other two groups continued to reoffend post aged 32 at either a high or a moderately high rate. These groups could not be adequately differentiated by childhood predictors of delinquent behaviours, but did differ in terms of stability of good relationships and employment.

4.54 A recent review of the 'what works?' literature in relation to engaging and supporting parents (MacQueen et al. 2008) shows that the available evidence on good practice points to the importance of providing early 'pick-up' mechanisms for the identification of risk factors for poor outcomes, for example multiple disadvantage, social isolation, bullying and so on, backed up by the provision of a combination of universal and targeted services within non-stigmatising early years universal provision.

4.55 The *Good Lives* model takes a holistic approach to offender rehabilitation which focuses less on the deficits of offenders, moving away from looking at offenders as a set of criminogenic needs towards a holistic appraisal of the individual in context (see Langlands, Ward and Gilchrist 2009). The main theme underpinning the *Good Lives* model is that those who offend are seeking to achieve primary human goods in a similar manner to the rest of society and that by recognising this and harnessing this we can work more humanely and more effectively in partnership to reduce offending (Ward and Brown 2004).

4.56 In summary, there are a number of different programmes of support and intervention, appropriate to a range of need and age and stage of child/young person development, that have been demonstrated to have some degree of success in addressing risk factors within families. However, evidence around 'what works' in a Scottish or UK context is limited and much of the evaluative research had been based on American populations (MacQueen et al. 2008). Moreover, evidence on issues around required duration, intensity and sequencing of programmes of intervention is also limited (MacQueen et al. 2008).

Effective Interventions for Young people: Key points

4.57 The research literature indicates that patterns in antisocial and offending behaviour tend to be age-graded which suggests that different forms of intervention will be required at different stages of the life-course.

4.58 Early intervention is key to improving outcomes for young people and early indicators of risk factors for poor outcomes include multiple disadvantage, social isolation and bullying.

4.59 The most successful interventions make use of family, school, community etc in innovative way to support individual change (for example through peer mentoring), working with the needs and motivation of offenders to enhance change.

4.60 To be effective interventions need to be targeted to specific offenders and their needs

4.61 Structured programmes can contribute to a reduction in offending for different types of crime but the effect is limited by wider social and individual factors.

Key messages from the desistance literature

4.62 Despite the proposition that those with the greatest propensities towards offending continue to do so throughout their lives (Farrington 1997) even the most serious offenders appear to show evidence of an eventual decline in offending (McVie 2009). Explanations for desistance from offending have tended to centre on changes in maturity (e.g. Moffitt 1993) and social bonds with peers, adults and communities (e.g. Laub and Sampson 1993). Most of this work has related to youth offending in general, with relatively little focused on serious or violent offending by youth.

Social control

4.63 In developing their age-graded theory of informal social control, Laub and Sampson (1993) argue that structural context mediated by informal family and school social controls explains delinquency in childhood and adolescence; that there is continuity in antisocial behaviour through adulthood in a variety of life domains, and; informal social bonds in adulthood to family and employment explain changes in criminality over the life span despite early childhood propensities. The mediating influence of social bonds is crucial. Weak social bonds in childhood are strongly associated with delinquency and both later predict criminality (Laub and Sampson 1993). However, offending can also begin in adulthood, where there are weak social bonds. Conversely, the development of strong social bonds in adulthood is associated with desistance from crime. Sampson and Laub (2003) argue that desistance is the result of personal transformation and engagement with conventional social roles. As Newburn (2007) points out, it is as much the timing of life events as the nature and strength of social bonds and informal social controls that is crucial in this regard.

4.64 A second body of influential, although deeply controversial, work is that which distinguishes between offender types: 'life-course persistent' and 'adolescent-limited' offenders (Caspi and Moffitt 1995; Moffitt 1997) which offers an opposing view to social control theories. For the former group, 'life-course persistent' offending behaviour tends to begin early and continues throughout life; whereas for the latter group the onset of offending is later, accelerates rapidly and then declines quite sharply around the age of 18 years. Key to this argument is that although both groups are difficult to distinguish in adolescence, their adult offending patterns are quite different. It is argued that 'normal' adolescent-limited offending arises out of the 'autonomy wars' associated with youth transitions (see, for example Moffitt 1997). Offending is explained by the need for teenagers to show their maturity, as measured by their ability to freely choose to engage in forbidden behaviour. In so doing, they mimic life-course persistent offenders but, once they reach maturity, there is no further need for such gestures of independence (Smith 2007), so they stop. Desistance is therefore indicative of a growth in maturity, and represents a departure from the influence of peers.

4.65 The desistance literature broadly concurs that most young people 'grow out' of crime, although both social structure and context are important for successful transitions. Findings from the ESYTC show that young people's ability to desist was inhibited by living in neighbourhoods characterised by deprivation, social instability and high crime rates (Smith 2006).

4.66 Essentially, the desistance research literature suggests that people give up (or desist from) offending as a consequence of the development of personal maturity, changing social bonds associated with certain life transitions (such as significant personal relationships, employment, parenthood) and the individual subjective changes in the person's sense of self and identity (see for example Farrall 2002; McNeill 2006; McNeill 2009; Maruna 2001; Weaver and McNeill 2007). In a recent review of evidence about the effectiveness of community disposals in reducing reoffending, the problems experienced by offenders, their processes of desistance and the merits of different rehabilitative interventions, McNeill (2009) argues that rehabilitative efforts should be built on understandings of the individual change processes experienced by 'offenders', and on the broader literature which attends to why and how people desist from offending.

4.67 Qualitative studies have repeatedly confirmed that desisting from crime involves deep changes in the way that individuals see themselves and their relations to others (Maruna 2001; Farrell and Calverley 2006). The process of desistance can stretch over a long time; it is very rarely a sudden epiphany. It is not an event but a process. Personal and social relationships are crucial and also play a role in helping a 'reconstitution of the self'. In their accounts of achieving change, there is evidence that desisters have to discover agency (the capacity to exercise choice and exert control over their lives), which seems to relate to the role of 'significant others' in envisioning an alternative identity and future for the offender, even where this is not readily apparent to the offender themselves. Research also confirms the centrality of effective working relationships between the offender and professionals in supporting the process

of change (Rex 1999; Barry 2000; Batchelor and McNeill 2005; Burnett 2004; Burnett and McNeill 2005; McNeill et al. 2005; McNeill 2009).

4.68 The desistance literature emphasises the importance of interventions attending to the personal, social and community contexts within which they are situated. So, the individual's access to resources and support from within their own familial and social networks is also crucial (Hill 1999; Farrall 2002; Calverley 2009). There is evidence from a range of studies that engagement in conventional social roles is a critical factor leading towards desistance. Taken together, this would suggest the importance of the development of social capital, which inheres in the relationships which facilitate participation and inclusion in society (McNeill 2009). The concept of 'generativity' – which essentially involves giving back (a form of reparation that involves contributing to the wellbeing of others) – has recently been linked to successful desistance from offending (Barry 2006, 2007; McNeill and Maruna 2007). Later in the change process, involvement in 'generative activities', confirms to the desister that this alternative, agentic identity has been realised.

4.69 In summary, desistance typically requires both personal change and better integration within mainstream society; there need to be reasons to change, supports for change, and mechanisms for recognising change.

Desistance from Crime: Key points

4.70 The desistance literature broadly concurs that most young people 'grow out' of crime, although both social structure and context are important for successful transitions. Findings from the ESYTC show that young people's ability to desist was inhibited by living in neighbourhoods characterised by deprivation, social instability and high crime rates.

4.71 Desistance typically requires both personal change and better integration within mainstream society; there need to be reasons to change, supports for change, and mechanisms for recognising change.

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5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1   This review has identified a number of key conclusions relating to violent young people in Scotland, and the role of violence in the lives of children and young people in Scotland; alongside a number of shortcomings with the available data. These are summarised below.

Lack of available data

5.2   Officially recorded statistical data on recorded crime, criminal proceedings, referrals to the Children's Hearings System, school exclusions, and data from the SCJS currently constitute the best available official information relating to youth violence in Scotland. Data relating to youth violence, however, is currently not collected in a joined-up or coherent way.

5.3   There are significant differences in definitions of 'youth' and 'violence', as well as in principle and method of data-collection, between these agencies which disallow comparison between sources of information. In addition, there have also been significant changes in reporting and recording procedures in each of the institutional bodies in recent years, creating difficulties in making reliable trend estimates relating to youth violence in Scotland.

5.4   Whilst the SCJS collects data relating to those aged 16-24, the survey has undergone several methodological changes, making trend information relating to youth violence difficult to estimate. The survey of under 16 year olds is no longer included.

5.5   Because of the limitations of the data, only a broad generalised picture of youth violence in Scotland can be painted using these sources. Data particularly pertaining to youth violence is not routinely collected or collated by age, gender, social class, geographical area or ethnic background.

Fragmented research on young people and violence in Scotland

5.6   This review identified a range of research studies relating to youth violence conducted in Scotland over the past 15-20 years. This constitutes a broad and diverse body of work with limited points of convergence. Individual research projects were conceived and conducted with different aims and objectives; undertaken with young people of quite different age-ranges; drawn from different populations (e.g. prisons, schools, secure units, residential areas); and using a range of different methodological approaches. This precludes any meaningful comparison between studies. Rather, taken together, the 'research picture' offers only a very broad brush picture of some aspects of youth and violence.

5.7   There are also key differences in research focus. Not all the research reviewed here focused specifically on young people and violence, although some did. Some studies had a primary focus on youth offending more generally, but also generated some information concerning young people's involvement in, or views about violence. There are, inevitably, a number of large gaps. In

particular, there is scarce data about ethnic minority youth involvement in or views about violence; most of the research has focused on urban areas in Scotland with relatively little to say about rural locations; there is a dearth of material about young peoples' pathways into offending, and; there is little research-informed information on interventions for serious or violent offending in Scotland. Research evidence on the background and characteristics of young violent offenders in Scotland remains limited, as it is focused predominantly on incarcerated populations.

5.8 There has never been any Scottish national survey of young people which is comparable to the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS) that is undertaken south of the border and so estimates of the prevalence of youth violence remain problematic. Scotland currently has only one major longitudinal study of youth offending (ESYTC), but this provides data from just one locality, and has struggled to obtain funding to study young people beyond the teenage years. This gap in the data has some clear implications for understanding underlying causes of offending amongst young people, trends in offending over time, longer term outcomes for offenders and effectiveness of current intervention policies and practice.

Young people's views on violence diverge from official definitions

5.9 Whilst the 'Administrative Picture' of youth violence shows that legally defined violence plays a relatively marginal role in the lives of most young people in Scotland, the 'research picture' shows that, according to young people's definitions, violence plays a more complex and embedded role.

5.10 Several studies have focused on young people's own experiences and views about violence and its role in their lives. This work reveals the multiplicity of meanings of 'violence' for young people, and emphasises the subjective and context-specific nature of what counts as 'violence' for young people. Young people encounter various forms of verbal and physical conflict - with friends, family, or siblings – that are seen by them simply as part of the fabric of daily life, distinct from what might be understood to be a matter for the police. As a result, much of that experienced by young people goes unseen, unrecognised and unrecorded.

Young people's experiences of violence are not fully captured by official data

5.11 There are no prevalence studies of youth violence in Scotland. Most self report studies reveal that violence – particularly low level violence - is more common in young people's everyday lives than official sources of data suggest. Several research studies report young people witnessing fights, and experiencing different forms of, usually low-level violent victimisation, such as brawls and punch-ups, at levels well above official figures.

5.12 These experiences of witnessing or experiencing violence occur in the context of young people's everyday activities and routines, and are therefore not viewed as remarkable or necessarily against the law; most of this occurs between young people of around the same age. It is important to note that young people as a group are least likely to report offences to the police.

5.13 While research evidence indicates the pervasiveness of low-level violence in the lives of young people in Scotland, it is important to locate these fears within the context of other everyday fears in the lives of young people. Several studies suggest that young peoples' fear of violence is heightened in areas with a perceived problem with youth 'gangs'. However, data relating to young people's fear of violence is not currently collected.

Information relating to violent offending and violent offenders is unfocused

5.14 The majority of available evidence on youth offending in Scotland focuses on offending in general and comparatively little research has been conducted into violent offenders specifically. The only two meaningful exceptions are McKinlay et al.'s (2009) study of alcohol and violence amongst young male offenders and Batchelor's (2007) research with young women convicted of violent offences. Both of these studies were conducted with prison samples however and therefore are not representative of young violent offenders generally.

Both 'needs' and 'deeds' are important to understanding youth violence

5.15 Research with young people in custody points to the significant role of substance misuse, especially excessive drinking, in the backgrounds of convicted violent offenders, both male and female. Indeed, some studies state that young offenders report being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol during the commission of their last violent offence. Violent offences are commonly perpetrated alongside financially motivated offences (e.g. shoplifting, robbery), often are committed to support a drug habit.

5.16 Some self-report data suggest that, whilst the number of young people who report having ever carried a weapon is fairly high, actual weapon use is far less. The majority of young people who claim to have carried a weapon report that they do so as a means of self-defence. Levels of weapon carrying and use are significantly higher amongst prison samples than the general youth population, but even amongst this group weapon carrying does not mean that weapons are used.

5.17 The Scottish studies which address background and demographic characteristics confirm that most young people convicted of violent offending grow up in neighbourhoods characterised by socio-economic deprivation. This research reveals the complex range of issues which underpin violent behaviour – with a range of background and foreground factors interweaved. Qualitative research with young offenders identifies three main motivations for involvement in violence: excitement, status and protection.

5.18 Findings on violence from the ESYTC indicate a particularly strong relationship between involvement in violent offending and a range of vulnerabilities, including self-harm. These findings provide support for the Kilbrandon ethos, showing strong and consistent links between deeds and needs and the ways in which violence can be as 'symptomatic' of a broad spectrum of vulnerabilities.

Information on effective interventions for violent offending is not available for Scotland

5.19 Apart from the ESYTC, the available evidence on interventions relating to youth violence comes from the international literature, in particular from the United States, England, and elsewhere in Europe.

5.20 Most information about risk-focused prevention programmes emanates from US research and, although recent meta-analytic reviews of research have shown promising evidence that some intervention approaches are effective in reducing re-offending rates, they have tended only to highlight general principles of effectiveness (Andrews et al. 1990; Garrett 1985; Gendreau and Ross 1987; Lipsey 1992; Palmer 1994).

Conclusions from international evidence on risk and protective factors

5.21 Over the past 15 years, the risk factors approach to devising preventative strategies has become a dominant discourse in youth justice. Risk analysis is common and there is something of a consensus around the precipitative factors of family conflict, truancy, drug use, irresponsible or lack of parenting, low intelligence, delinquent peers, and community organisation has occurred. Whilst research evidence from the identification of both risk and protective factors has established the potential for strategies to reduce young people's risk of offending and involvement in anti-social behaviour. Yet this is an area characterised by intense debate, in particular the causal mechanisms linking such factors with offending relationship between the identification of childhood risk factors and risk-focused prevention is unclear.

5.22 In general terms, the most well-known risk-focused programmes that have been targeted towards individual and family risk factors draw on cognitive-behavioural concepts. Research suggests that the most effective programmes involve skills training, parental education, parental education, pre-school programmes and so-called multi-component programmes (Farrington 2007; Sherman et al 1998).

5.23 It is important to note however that relatively little attention has been given to the effectiveness of interventions with distinct types of offenders, especially those serious or violent offenders who might be expected to be most resistant to change. Those that have focused on violent offending have important and well-documented methodological and analytical limitations.

5.24 A key message from the research literature is that for any intervention to be effective, the targeted risk factors must be amenable to change. The data from one of the best-known reviews of serious and violent offending (Lipsey and Derzon 1998) suggests that the strongest predictors of subsequent serious and violent offending for both age groups are relatively changeable factors – early offending and substance abuse, and anti-social associates and social ties. This suggests that disrupting early patterns of anti-social behaviour and negative peer association appear to be important. The promotion of positive social ties is likely to be an effective strategy for the prevention of future violent and serious offending.

Conclusions from the desistance literature

5.25 Desistance is characterised as a consequence of the development of personal maturity, changing social bonds associated with certain life transitions (such as significant personal relationships, including peers, employment, parenthood) and the individual subjective changes in the person's sense of self and identity.

5.26 For young offenders in general, the most successful interventions make use of family, school, community etc in innovative way to support individual change (for example through peer mentoring), working with the needs and motivation of offenders to enhance change. For young offenders, in particular, however there is a need to be clear about key factors affecting effectiveness of intervention for different types of offender, and this particularly so in relation to young offenders. To be effective interventions need to be targeted to specific offenders and their needs, and this means recognition of key difference on basis of gender as well as age.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The review has identified several key gap areas in both the available administrative data, and academic research conducted to date relating to youth violence in Scotland. This section summarises these gaps, and makes recommendations for alterations to processes of data-capture, and for future research.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Recorded homicides use the age-range 16-30, which tells us little about youth violence. **It is recommended that recorded homicides use the age-range 16-21.**

The most recent estimates as to the proportion of violent offences attributable to young people date from 2002. **It is recommended that an up-to-date estimate of the level of youth violence be carried out.**

Data from the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) is not disaggregated by age or gender for specific offences such as assault or handling offensive weapons. **It is recommended that consideration be given that SCRA data be disaggregated by age and gender for each offence-type.**

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey gives little concrete data relating to youth violence. **It is recommended that more detail relating to youth violence be reported in SCJS publications, particularly relating to age and gender**.

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey no longer collects data on victimisation of under-16s. **It is recommended that the youth component of SCJS be reviewed.**

The definitional criteria for statistics relating to school exclusions is unclear, and the data is not disaggregated by age or gender. **It is recommended that definitions of exclusion criteria be made explicit, and data disaggregated by age and gender**.

Data relating to ethnicity and youth violence is not routinely published by any statutory agency. **It is recommended that consideration be given to devising appropriate mechanisms for recording ethnicity in administrative statistics**.

ACADEMIC RESEARCH

The review identified a notable lack of academic research relating to youth violence in Scotland in several key areas. It is recommended that the Scottish Government consider commissioning research in the following areas:

Youth lifestyles and transitions: The role of violence in young people's everyday lives is complex and contingent, and forms part of the wider context of youth experiences. Research on youth lifestyles and transitions has a great deal of potential in illuminating these complexities.

Violent young offenders: The review identified only two published studies involving qualitative research on violent young offenders in the last twenty years; both of which were carried out in prisons. Much more needs to be known about the life circumstances, biographical histories, and offending pathways amongst this group of young people; research in this area is a key priority.

Scotland-wide comparison: The majority of research has been conducted in urban areas, with an overwhelming bias towards Glasgow and Edinburgh. More research on youth violence in rural locations, and/or involving a comparative dimension, should be prioritised.

Longitudinal study: There is no large-scale youth offending survey in Scotland comparable to those found in other jurisdictions. Without this baseline information, statistics relating to youth violence are prone to incomplete or distorted readings. A large-scale national longitudinal study that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data collection could provide information to aid understanding of underlying causes of offending amongst young people, trends in offending over time, longer term outcomes for offenders, and inform effectiveness of current intervention policies and practice.

ANNEX A

Table 6: Methodologies and locations of Scottish research on youth violence (1990-2010)

Author(s)	Year	Publication	Methodology (n)	Location	Age-range
Anderson, S, Kinsey, R., Loader, I. and Smith, C.	1994	Book	Survey (892), interview (120)	Edinburgh	11-15
Anderson, S, Bromley, C. and Given, L.	2005	Research Report	Survey (1,600)	Scotland-wide	18-24
Anderson, S. and Dobbie, F.	2008	Research Report	Survey (1,594)	Scotland-wide	18-24
Bannister, J. and Fraser, A.	2008	Article	Focus group (8)	Glasgow	10-15
Batchelor, S., Burman, M. and Brown, J.	2001	Article	Survey, interview, focus group (800)	Scotland-wide	13-16
Batchelor, S.	2005	Article	Oral-history interviews (21)	Women's prison	16-24
Batchelor, S.	2007	Book Chapter	Oral-history interviews (21)	Women's prison	16-24
Batchelor, S.	2007	PhD Thesis	Oral-history interviews (21)	Women's prison	16-24
Bradshaw, P.	2005	Book Chapter	Longitudinal survey (4,300)	Edinburgh	12-13
Bradshaw, P.	2006	Research Report	Examination of SCRA case-files	Scotland-wide	9-17
Brown, J.A., Burman, M. and Tisdall, K	2001	Book Chapter	Focus groups (23 participants)	Scotland-wide	11-15
Burman, M.	2004	Article	Survey, interview, focus group (800)	Scotland-wide	13-16
Burman, M., Tisdall, K., Brown, J. and Batchelor, S.	2000	Research Report	Survey, interview, focus group (800)	Scotland-wide	13-16
Burman, M., Brown, J. and Batchelor, S.	2003	Article	Survey, interview, focus group (800)	Scotland-wide	13-16
Burman, M. and Batchelor, S.	2009	Article	Literature/policy review	Scotland-wide	
Burman, M. and Cartmel, F.	2006	Research Report	Survey (1500), focus group (12)	Scotland-wide	14-18
Deuchar, R.	2009	Book	Interview (50)	Glasgow	16-18
Deuchar, R.	2009	Article	Interview (50)	Glasgow	16-18
Deuchar, R.	2009	Article	Interview (20)	Glasgow	14-19
Deuchar, R. and Holligan, C.	2009	Research Report	Interview, focus group (40)	Glasgow	16-18
Forsyth, A.J.M. and Barnard, M.	2000	Research Report	Survey (1,253)	Perth & Kinross	13-16
Frondigoun, L., Nicholson, J., Robertson, A. and Monigatti, S.	2008	Research Report	Focus group (10)	Glasgow	Not stated
Galloway, J., Forsyth, A.J.M and Shewan, D.	2007	Research Report	Focus group (24)	Scotland-wide	16-25
Gault, I.	2003	Research Report	Examination of SCRA case-files	Glasgow	8-17
Hammersley, R., Lavelle, T.L. and Forsyth, A.J.M	1992	Article	Survey (210)	Glasgow	15-25
Hammersley, R., Forsyth, A.J.M and Lavelle, T.L.	1990	Article	Survey (210)	Glasgow	15-25
Hanlon, P., Walsh, D. and Whyte, B.	2006	Research Report	Literature review, VRU data analysis	Glasgow	Not stated
Hartless, J.M., Ditton, J., Nair, G. and Phillips, S.	1995	Article	Survey (208)	Glasgow	12-15
Holligan, C. and Deuchar, R.	2009	Article	Interview, focus group (40)	Glasgow	16-18
Jamieson, J., McIvor, G. and Murray, C.	1999	Book	Survey (1,274), interviews (104)	Westburgh' and 'Eastburgh'*	14-25
Kintrea, K., Bannister, J., Pickering, J. Reid, M. and Suzuki, N.	2008	Research Report	Focus group (12-30)	Glasgow	8-25
McKinlay, W., Forsyth, A.J.M and Khan, F.	2009	Research Report	Longitudinal survey, interviews (30)	Men's prison	Not stated
McKeganey, N. and Norrie, J.	2000	Article	Survey (3,121)	Perth & Kinross	11-16
McVie, S.	2010	Research Report	Longitudinal survey (4,300)	Edinburgh	12-17
Ipsos Mori	2003	Research Report	Survey (1,551), interview (12), focus group (6)	Glasgow	11-18
Seaman, P., Turner, K., Hill, M., Stafford, A. and Walker, M.	2005	Book	Interviews (60), focus group (16)	Glasgow	8-14
Suzuki, N.	2007	PhD thesis	Participant-observation, interviews (15), focus group (6)	Glasgow	5-18
Turner, K., Hill, M., Stafford, A. and Walker, M.	2006	Article	Interviews (60), focus groups (16)	Glasgow	8-14
Walton, S.	2001	Book	Interviews (58)	Hamilton	13-15
Wallace, K. and Henderson, G.	2004	Research Report	Examination of SCRA case-files	Glasgow, Inverclyde, Aberdeenshire	0-17
Whyte, B.	2003	Article	Review of research	Scotland-wide	10-16

* Pseudonyms for two Scottish towns where research was conducted.

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