

ARE GIRLS
BECOMING
MORE
VIOLENT?

A 25 per cent increase in girl crime over three years has shocked the UK. CLUB asks: why are girls committing more crimes?

BEFORE YOU READ:

Do you think that girls are more violent nowadays? Why / Why not?





“ I was a
very angry
person ”

VIOLENT GIRL:
Juliana in the East
End of London,
where she grew up.

“ I HAD NO FEAR! ”

HERE IS ONE GIRL'S STORY OF HER DESCENT* INTO VIOLENCE.

Juliana, 21, traces* her descent into violence to a horrific attack during her childhood. When she reported this to the police, they did nothing. Juliana became severely depressed. Juliana had been a high achiever, but she dropped out of school at 15, and by that point, she says: “I had no fear and no care. After the attack, my mother didn't know how to support me. My father had died when I was seven, and I felt full of hatred.”

Teaming up with a small group of similarly disaffected* girls, she found that fighting other young women was an outlet for her rage. It also won her attention from the male gang members in the East End of London, where she lives. “They were fighting all the time and I was accepted because I was tough too. It was a gang of about 20. I remember walking through Stratford shopping centre and some girls looked at us in a funny way, so we set about* slapping and kicking them, and took their phones. It left us feeling very superior. The point was that we were there to support each other, so we would call the troops to help if we wanted someone beaten up.”

“I was a very angry person,” she says, “but I didn't want to do permanent harm. I never carried a knife and I wouldn't have wanted to kill. It was recreation*.”

Juliana was arrested and was sent to prison at 17.

Juliana has left gang life behind, and credits* the *Little Miss Raw* programme - which involves group counselling* over the course of 16 weeks - for giving her the strength to do so. Juliana gives a big laugh as she describes the change in her, saying, “I really like myself - enough to have entered the Miss African Beauty 2008 finals, and I came fourth. And in the MTV Euro model search, I got sixth place.”

Taken from an article by Angela Neustatter. Copyright Guardian News & Media Ltd 2008

**VIOLENT GIRLS: A 25% leap in
girl crime is worrying the experts.**

WHY ARE GIRLS COMMITTING MORE CRIME?

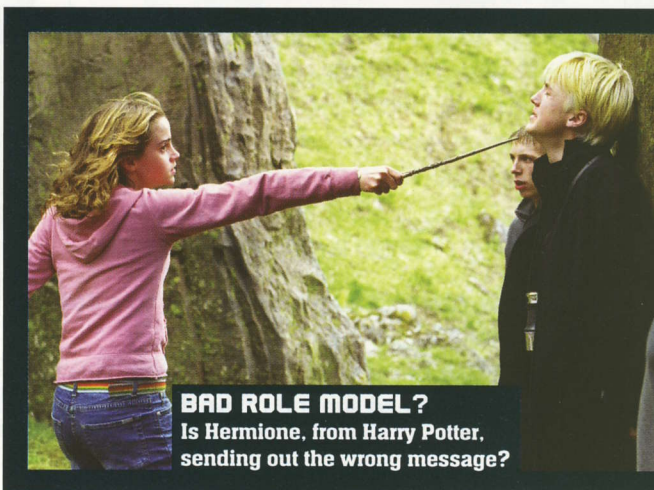


Q: What are the facts?

A: In May, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) revealed that the number of offences committed by girls leapt by 25 per cent in just three years, but the number of offences committed by boys fell by two per cent.

Q: Could the statistics be wrong?

A: Yes, although the trend is correct, it could be that the figures are less dramatic. Elaine Arnall, an expert on girl crime at London's South Bank University, says: “We think the response to girl crime by schools and police has changed, so girls are being prosecuted* for offences they weren't prosecuted for before.”



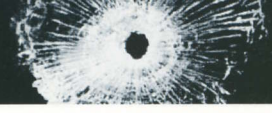
BAD ROLE MODEL?
Is Hermione, from *Harry Potter*,
sending out the wrong message?

**Q: What are the causes of this rise in
violence among girls?**

A: Experts give many reasons including:

- **A rise in “ladette**” culture** in Britain. Recent police figures show that 50 per cent more women were arrested for being drunk and disorderly* in 2007/08 than five years ago.
- **Girls copying boys:** “In Leeds, every little area has its own gang,” says Pat Regan, who runs a *Mothers Against Violence* group in the city. “All these gangs have girls in them. They see the boys in nice clothes and driving flash* cars and they want a part of it.”
- Psychologist, Professor James Garbarino, author of *Why Girls Are Growing More Violent and What Can Be Done About It*, says it is due to a **change in our attitude** towards girls and violence. He says Hermione from the *Harry Potter* movies is the new role model for girls. In the third movie Hermione hits Malfoy, “Afterwards she says ‘Boy, that felt good!’ and she is cheered on by her friends,” Professor Garbarino explains, “Girls hit, it feels good and people appreciate it - that's the message.”





Q: Are there any real examples of girls behaving violently in the press?

A: Yes – unfortunately! In April this year, there was a big fight between rival girl gangs at a railway station near Brighton. In May, girls were in the news again. This time it was because of an explosion in North London. It killed a man and injured a woman. It was carried out by a girl gang.

Q: So are girls just becoming more like boys?

A: Professor Sue Bailey, a child psychiatrist in North-West England, says that while there are similarities to boys, there are also differences. “The typical thing about girls is that the aggression is displayed through relationships. For instance, *bitching** about others. But there have also been small rises over 20 years in actual violence. Whereas before they would have been the look-out [for boys], some will now be doing these things themselves.”

Q: Is violence among girls just part of a general increase in violence among young people?

A: Certainly, there is a crisis in London at the moment with younger and younger children (boys and girls) getting involved in knife violence. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner reports that in the last five years the proportion of young people killed has risen.

Q: How are the experts trying to address this problem?

A: Professor Bailey says evidence shows girls from certain backgrounds need support to avoid violence and crime. Some may share the same experiences as violent boys such as rejection by parents and poor education. Girls might also become bullies because they have grown bigger and faster than their classmates. “The Youth Justice Board, is looking at ways of addressing these issues,” says Professor Bailey, “The key is to target the high-risk girls.”

Passives

Read the newspaper report and write the verbs in brackets in the correct passive form.

Cat Fight in Station

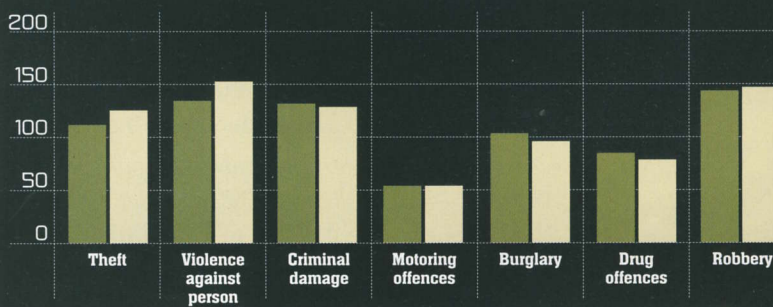


Four teenage girls 1. have been injured (injure) and one (kill) 2. _____ in a fight in London. Twenty girls 3. _____ (involve) in a big fight between two girl gangs. The police 4. _____ (call) by a passer-by at 10.19pm and broke up the brawl. Two girls aged 14 and 16 5. _____ (charge) last night but witnesses to the incident 6. _____ (interview) by the police at the moment. One witness told our reporter how she 7. _____ (shock) by the scale of the violence: “It was astonishing. These girls were really going for each other. I’ve never seen anything like it,” explained Cheryl Jones, 24, from London.

THE ANSWERS ARE ON PAGE 15. →

THE RISE IN CRIME COMMITTED BY GIRLS AGED 10-17

THE INCREASE IN GIRLS COMMITTING CRIME
% INCREASE SINCE 2003



LOOK AT THE GRAPH. WHICH CRIME HAS SEEN THE BIGGEST RISE IN OFFENCES BY GIRLS?

***WORDWISE** • **descent** (n) move down into something • **trace** (v) find the connection between the past and the present • **disaffected** (adj) dissatisfied with society’s values • **set about** (phrasal verb) started to • **recreation** (n) fun, freetime activity • **credit** (v) praise • **counselling** (n) helping someone with their problem through talking • **prosecute** (v) take someone to court for a crime • **laddette** (n) used to describe a girl who gets involved in noisy, energetic and sometimes rude behaviour that some young men show in social groups, comes from *laddish behaviour* • **disorderly** (adj) violent or angry behaviour • **flash** (adj) expensive-looking in a way that attracts attention • **bitch** (v) make unkind remarks about someone