

SUMMARY OF

PARTICIPANTS'

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list of recommendations for police forces, schools, and government, is based on the comments of youth and adult study participants, the specific wording is that of the author. It is important to keep in mind the small sample size in the study and to gauge the appropriateness of the suggested recommendations in the context of the reader's own community and local resources.

Police

1. Recognize the seriousness of the youth gang/group phenomenon and youth violence.
2. Police Forces should continue to build on and enhance current community-based policing initiatives to bring law enforcement officers into more regular and intimate contact with the communities they serve.
3. Police Forces should create a career track youth officer specialization and provide these officers with the skills and knowledge they need to provide a professional police service to youth populations.
4. Given the rapidly changing social conditions in our country, Police Forces should establish working partnerships with universities, colleges, professional schools, and the wider youth-serving community to keep youth officers' knowledge and skills related to youth work up to date.
5. Smaller Police Forces who lack the resources to develop a career track youth officer stream should work with the police colleges and universities, colleges, professional schools, and the wider youth-serving community to ensure all their officers have the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively with youth.
6. Police Forces should recognize that a professional police service to youth serves a primary and secondary crime prevention purpose.
7. Police Forces should forge working partnerships with schools and other youth-serving professionals and organizations in order to build an integrated community-based response to youth gangs/groups and youth violence.
8. Police Forces should make themselves available to students, parents, and educators and provide them with information about youth gangs/groups and youth violence.
9. Police Forces should form partnerships with schools based on the approach used by the Street Crime Unit of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force or the Guelph Police Force.
10. Police Forces should ensure that all law enforcement officers possess the sensitivity, knowledge, and skills necessary to work with youth from different cultural backgrounds and continue to support hiring practices that bring more minority officers into police services.
11. Police officers should recognize the need to foster communication links and close community contacts with young people involved in gangs/groups and to ensure that their law enforcement and bridge building efforts are accomplished in a manner that is respectful and open.
12. Police officers should recognize that youth have a need to feel safe and protected under the law and are willing to work with police to keep communities and schools safe.
13. Police Forces should begin or continue to carefully document the incidents of youth gang/group activities in

order to obtain an accurate picture of the phenomenon and how it is evolving.

87

Schools

14. Recognize the seriousness of the youth gang/group phenomenon and youth violence and that it is a problem in schools.
15. School administrators should recognize that they cannot handle the problem of youth gangs/groups or youth violence alone.
16. Schools should develop and enforce sexual harassment and zero tolerance to violence policies that clearly spell out expectations for behaviour and consequences.
17. Schools should support the disclosures of victims of violence and ensure their safety and protection.
18. Schools should recognize the need to balance the rights of offending youth with those of victims and the non-offending student majority in policies and procedures dealing with violence and gang/group activities.
19. Schools should recognize the need to provide counselling and other support services to both victims and perpetrators of violence.
20. Schools should recognize that victims and the non-offending student majority need to see that they will be protected and that offenders are being held accountable.
21. Schools should ensure that counselling and other supports are available to teachers and non-teaching staff who are victims of student of youth gang/group violence.
22. Schools should understand that if victims and non-offending students do not see offenders being held accountable, they will find their own solutions to settle the score and escalate the level of violence in schools.
23. Schools should provide teachers with the training necessary to recognize victims of child abuse and neglect and to support and assist them through their healing process.
24. Schools should provide teachers with skills in conflict resolution and aggression management.
25. Schools should involve students and parents in the planning and development of strategies to respond to youth violence and gangs/groups.
26. Schools should work cooperatively with police to forge a working partnership to help keep schools safe.
27. Schools should forge working partnerships with community-based agencies to bring services and other supports and resources to students on school premises.
28. Schools should recognize the growing problem of racial tension in gang/group conflicts.
29. Schools should provide opportunities for students from different cultural backgrounds to interact and learn from each other and appreciate and understand cultural differences.
30. Schools should support and encourage the development of in-school peer mediation programs such as "Peacemakers" or other programs that address students' life skills deficits in areas such as anger management, conflict resolution, impulse control, listening, and cooperation.
31. Schools should support and encourage the development of media literacy courses to give students the critical and analytic skills they need to reflect on the violent, sexist, heterosexist, ethno-centric, and other images that they observe through the media.

32. Schools should recognize that it is a student's right to expect respect and direct honest dialogue with teachers and school administrators.
33. Recognize that it is a student's right to expect schools to be a learning environment free from all forms of physical, sexual, emotional, and mental abuse and violence.
34. Schools should ensure that teachers are provided with information concerning the cultural makeup of the student body and special issues or concerns that are likely to arise in a multicultural education setting.
35. Schools should ensure that students are held accountable for any racist, sexist, anti-gay comments they make or jokes they tell.
36. Teaching and non-teaching staff should be held accountable for any racist, sexist, anti-gay, or pro-violence attitudes or beliefs they convey through jokes, sarcasm, use of threats or corporal punishment.

Government

37. Government should recognize the seriousness of the youth gang/group phenomenon and youth violence.
38. Using a community consultation model government should work with all those involved in dealing with the problem of youth gangs/groups and youth violence to review obstacles in the Young Offenders Act, Education Act, Freedom of Information and Privacy legislation, and any other Acts of Legislation that impede the development of a coordinated community-based response.
39. Government should develop and implement a public education program through the media to challenge the perceptions of young people and adults that the Young Offenders Act is too lenient and ineffective.
40. Government should provide the counselling, assessment, treatment and other supports and service communities need to better implement the "alternative measures" provisions of the Young Offenders Act.
41. Government should support and fund public and private efforts to research and document the evolution of the youth gang/group phenomenon.
42. Government should support Police Force initiatives to develop career track youth officer streams and professional police services to youth.
43. Government should recognize that living in poverty makes some young people vulnerable to the lure of gangs/groups and the need to address high youth unemployment.
44. Government should be conscientious and ensure that families are resourced to a sufficient enough level to provide optimal care for their offspring.
45. Government should seriously consider action to address the widespread portrayal of excessive and gratuitous violence in media images.
46. Government should seriously consider action to address the portrayal of media images that denigrate and stereotype men, women, children, teens, and members of cultural minorities.
47. Government should recognize the growing problem of inter-racial conflict among youth gangs/groups.

48. Government should continue to support programs that foster cross-cultural understanding.

49. Government should continue to support the development of curriculum and educational materials that reflect the cultural diversity of the country.

50. Government should establish a special commission to examine the growing problem of youth violence, youth gangs/groups, and violence in schools.

51. Government should support the establishment of local community crime prevention councils and assist them by every means possible to forge community-wide and coordinated strategies to deal with youth gangs/groups and youth violence.

SUGGESTIONS FOR

FUTURE RESEARCH

The phenomenon of youth gangs/groups and youth violence described by study participants is complex and multi-faceted and their recommendations cover a wide range of policy, legal, and service issues pertaining to both law enforcement and prevention. Many of the concerns identified in the research raise secondary issues and pose enormous challenges to government, schools, police, and parents. In the struggle to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon and plan appropriate and comprehensive responses the following areas will require further development and focused investigation.

1. Recommendations provided by study participants should be analysed for the contribution they can make to policy and program development in the areas of youth violence and youth gang/group prevention and suppression.
2. Comprehensive community-based programs that link schools in partnership with the wider youth-serving community need to be developed, supported and evaluated for their impact on youth violence and perceptions of safety.
3. In-service programs that provide in-service training to police and school personnel need to be developed, supported, and evaluated for their effectiveness in providing professionals with skills to help them prevent or intervene in violent situations.
4. Current prevention, diversion, or corrections programs in Canada and the United States that have been successful in responding to youth gangs/groups should be reviewed and assessed for their usefulness in other communities across the country.
5. School Boards across Canada should be encouraged to survey their students and solicit their views concerning school safety, youth gangs/groups, youth violence, and the impact of violence on the learning environment.
6. Communities across the country should be supported and encouraged to hold public consultations in order to determine and document their experiences and concerns pertaining to youth crime and violence.
7. School Boards should be encouraged to develop and evaluate policy and prevention programs aimed specifically at youth gangs/groups and youth violence.
8. Schools and Police Forces in cities and communities across the country should make every effort to document the incidence of multiple perpetrator youth crime and violence, and keep current and detailed demographic information on victims and perpetrators.
9. Police Forces should keep detailed information on the types and extent of use of weapons in multiple perpetrator youth crime and violence.
10. The federal government must consult a wide range of front-line youth serving professionals and undertake a comprehensive analysis of the Acts of Legislation that pertain to youth crime and violence and evaluate their effectiveness in terms of prevention and intervention.
11. Provinces, in cooperation with community-level partners, should develop and evaluate diversion or "alternative measures" programs that focus specifically on youth involved in multiple perpetrator youth crime and violence.
12. The literature on recidivism in young offender populations should be reviewed and assessed and promising intervention approaches incorporated in these programs specifically designed for

youth involved in multiple perpetrator youth crime and violence.

13. Communities should be encouraged to develop and evaluate outreach programs to youth involved in gangs/groups.

14. Research needs to be undertaken that will examine the specific needs and risks that leave a young person vulnerable to the lure of gangs/groups or to be victimized

15. Research needs to be undertaken that will examine the rise of female involvement in multiple perpetrator youth crime and violence and document the risks and needs specific to young women.

16. Research needs to be undertaken that will help us understand young peoples' wellness and why youth do not become involved in youth gangs/groups or violence.

17. Research into the involvement of children under the age of 12 and developmentally delayed youth also needs to be undertaken.