

Reflections on Riots, Reality and Root Causes – a young person's view



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Thank you!

We would expressly like to thank the young people of Sandwell who gave their time and thought when completing this questionnaire, we couldn't have done it without you! Thanks also goes to Sandwell local policing unit for funding this piece of work to Sandwell Youth Services, West Bromwich Albion Foundation and St Michaels school for giving us access to the young people they work with. We give additional thanks to the youth workers from across the borough who assisted in carrying out the questionnaire.

Finally, thanks also goes to Dr Lindsey Cameron and Julie Van de Vyver from the University of Kent for analysing all the data collected and giving it some meaning.



For further information on this project and its findings please contact;
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Introduction to report

After the disturbance across the country in the summer of 2011, and in particular the incidents that occurred in Sandwell, RES was asked to conduct research to;

- Develop an understanding of young peoples' involvement in the riots.
- See if there is a correlation between involvement and aspiration levels.
- Identify what could have been done to prevent this kind of thing happening again.
- Use the information to inform decision / policy makers.

Methodology

We approached young people through detached youth workers or established youth groups across Sandwell and used questionnaires that measured self-esteem and aspirations as well as asking for opinions on why the disturbances took place and whether young people would get involved in the future. Although the questionnaires were anonymous we collected data on the town where they lived, age, gender and ethnicity in order to gauge any differences between the groups. The surveys were conducted by detached youth workers or RES staff and took place between October and December 2011.

Young people were asked to comment on;

- How they saw themselves.
- State what jobs they thought they would like to do one day.
- State what jobs they thought they could do one day.
- How they spent their spare time.
- Why they thought the riots happened.
- And what they would do in the future if rioting occurred again.

Executive Summary

Who completed the survey?

156 young people from across the borough took part by completing a questionnaire. The respondents were aged between 10 – 23 years, however, the majority were aged 12-16 years (131 young people). Of these 64 were female; and 90 were male (2 undisclosed). 88 respondents described themselves as white British and 66 described themselves as being from a black or minority ethnic background. (see charts for further breakdown)

What did we find?

Young people's self-esteem:

Was generally high.

Significantly higher in males than females.

Young people's career aspirations & confidence they can achieve this:

Young people were more likely to want to have *Associate Professional* careers and *Professional Careers* (e.g. doctor, retail manager) in the future, compared with Non-Professional careers.

But they are more likely to think they could achieve Non-professional careers compared with Professional careers.

What do young people report doing in their spare time?

The most common ways to spend their time were: youth clubs or church groups, sports, spending time with friends and also on computer.

Where did they say they were during the riots?

Most young people reported being at home when the riots happened.

More than a quarter reported being on the streets.

Girls were more likely to report being at home than boys.

Boys were more likely to report being on the streets or youth club.

16 + respondents were more likely than other age groups to report being at home.

Asian respondents were more likely than other ethnic groups to report being at home during the riots.

Why did they think the riots happened?

The most commonly cited reasons were: lack of money, jobs and future and boredom.

Respondents over 16 years were more likely than other age groups to think that the riots happened due to lack of jobs.

4-15 year olds were more likely to think the riots happened due to 'rebelling'.

How did young people think they would respond to future rioting, if they witnessed it?

Most likely responses were 'telling a friend or family' and 'ignore and walk away'.

Young people were more likely to 'tell a friend/family', 'intervene' and 'ignore' than 'join in'.

What are the drivers or correlates of different responses to future rioting;

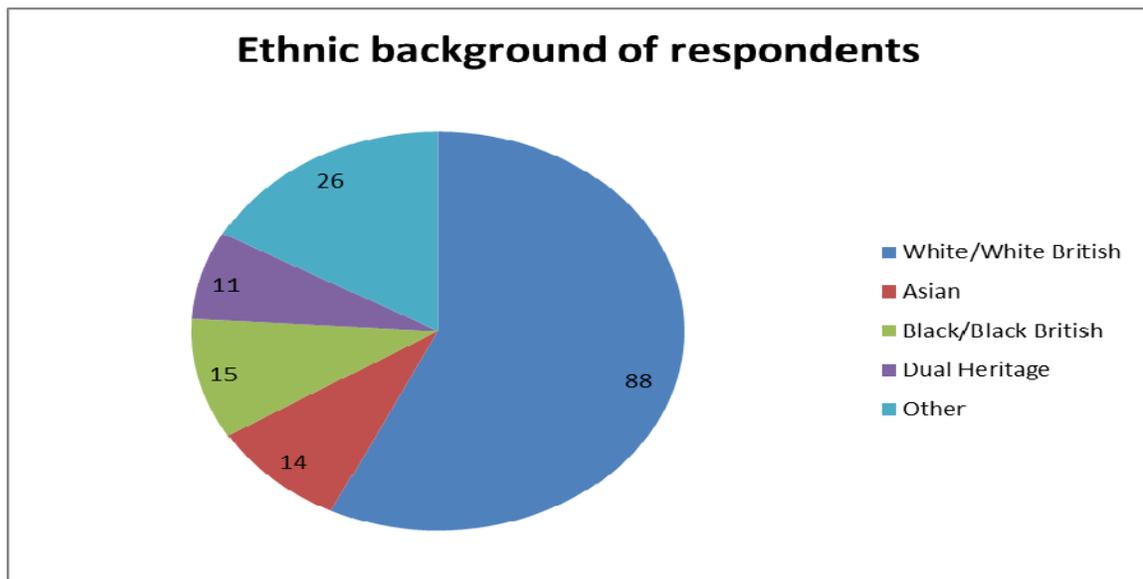
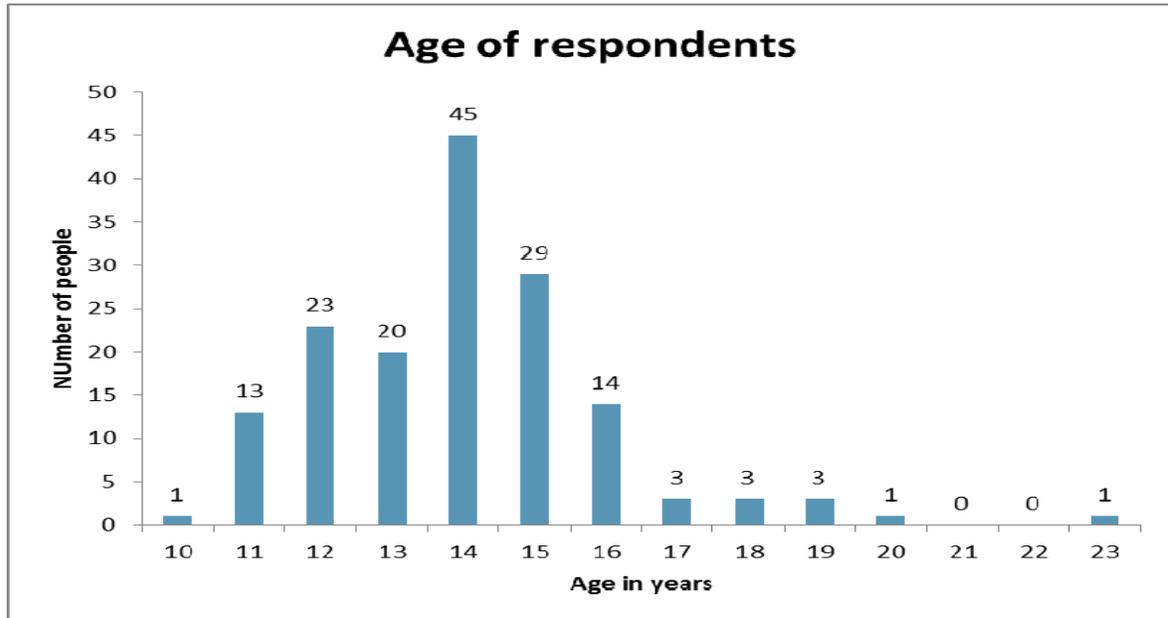
Career aspirations.

Spare-time activities.

Detailed Report of Findings

Who took part?

156 young people took part. Most were aged 12-16 years. There were 64 females and 90 males. 88 considered themselves White British and 66 described themselves as being from a BME background.



Self-esteem

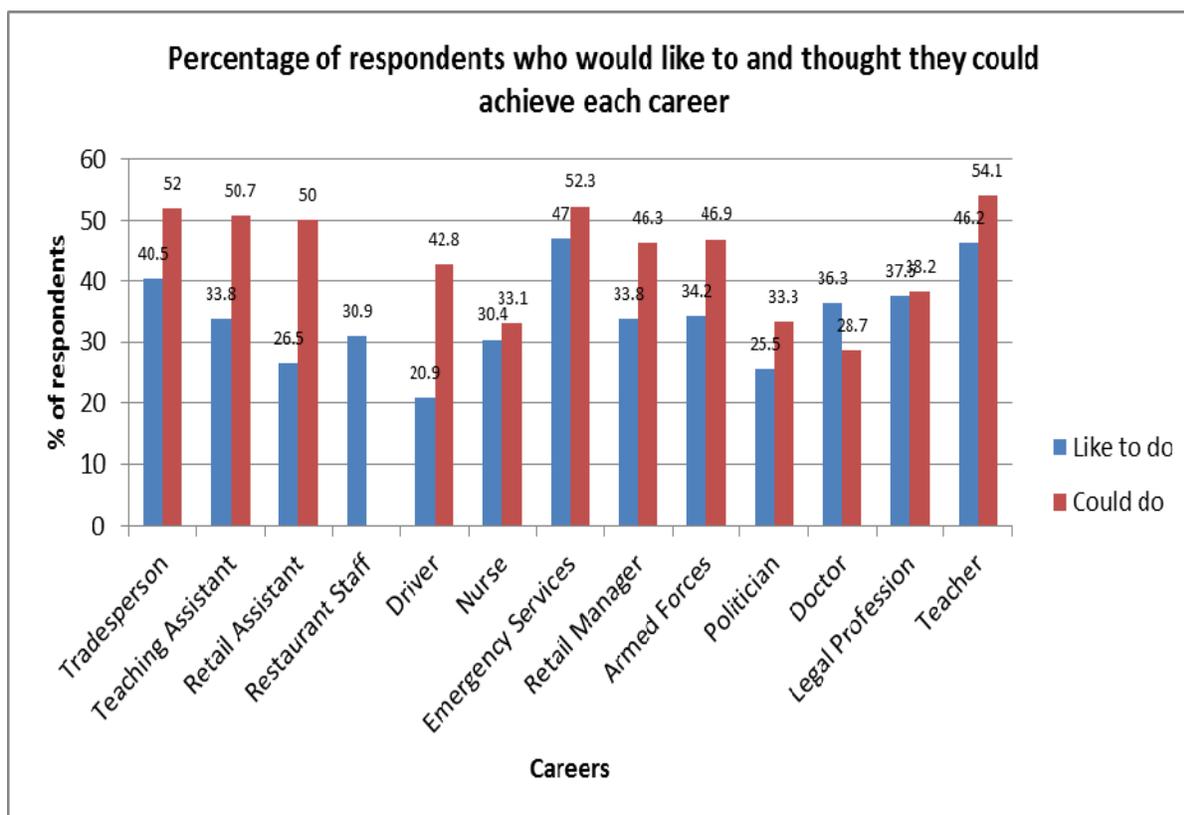
Self-esteem was generally high (average score= 2.94 (on a 4 point scale).
Significantly higher in males than females.

Career aspirations

Young people were given a list of occupations and asked to rate the extent to which they would like to do each in the future (scale 1-5).

Occupations were then classified using a standard technique.

Professional	Associate Professional	Non-Professional
Politician	Nurse	Tradesperson
Doctor	Emergency services	Teaching Assistant
Legal profession	Retail Manager	Retail Assistant
Teacher	Armed Forces	Restaurant Staff
		Driver



Young people were more likely to want to have in the future *Associate Professional* careers and *Professional Careers* (e.g. doctor, retail manager), compared with Non-Professional careers.

But they are more likely to think they could achieve Non-professional careers compared with Professional careers.

The higher self-esteem young people had, the more likely they are to want to have a Professional Career in the future.

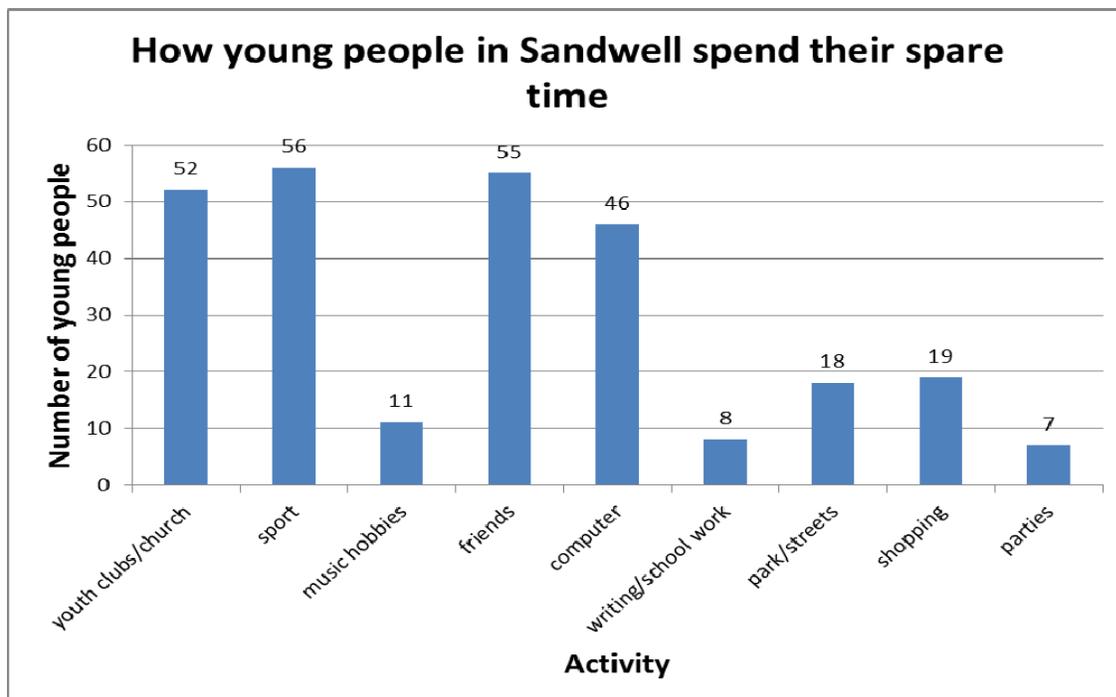
The higher self-esteem young people had, the more likely they are to believe they could achieve any of the different careers in the future (Professional, Associate Professional and Non-Professional).

Nearly two thirds were confident they would get a job in the future (60.9%).

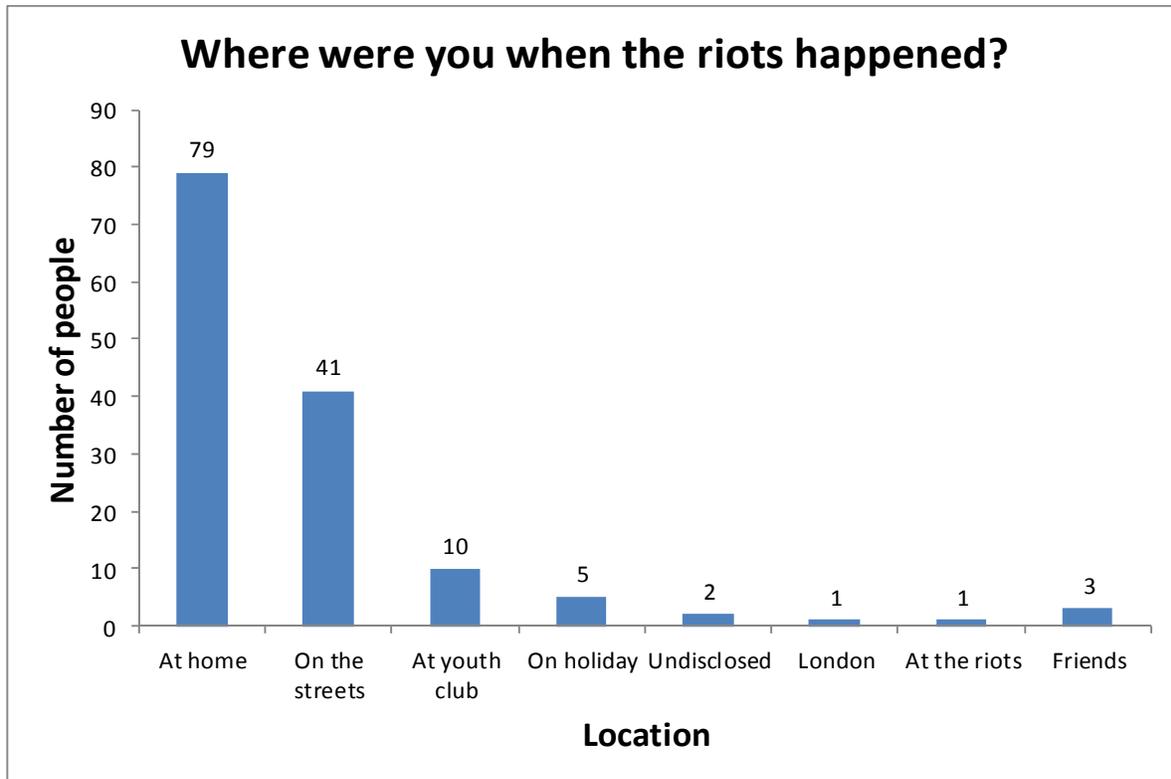
What do the young people sampled like to do in their spare time?

We asked young people to describe in their own words what they did in their spare time.

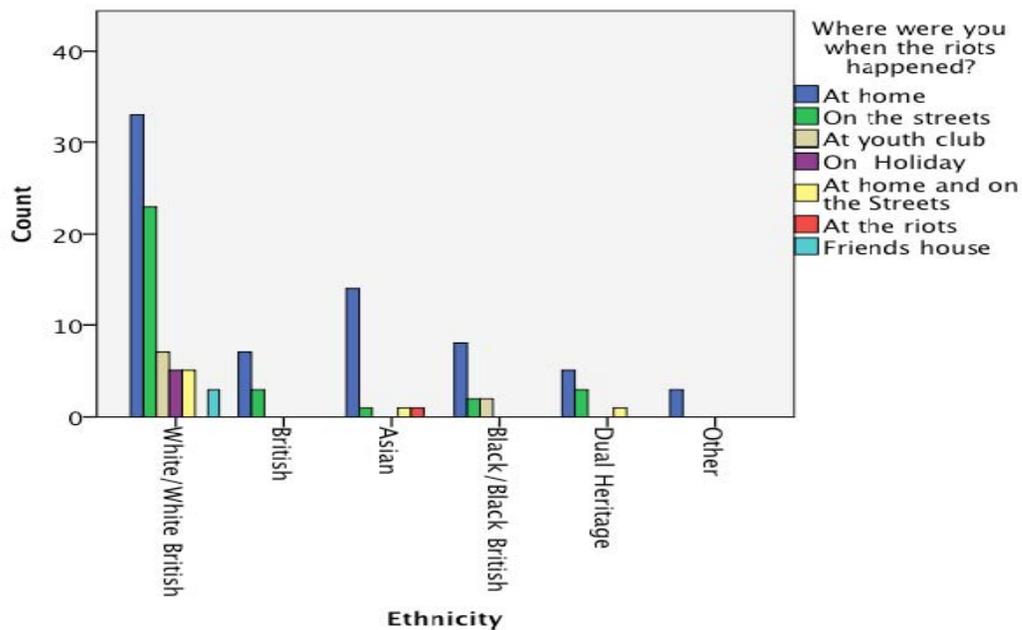
We categorised the responses (depicted in graph below).



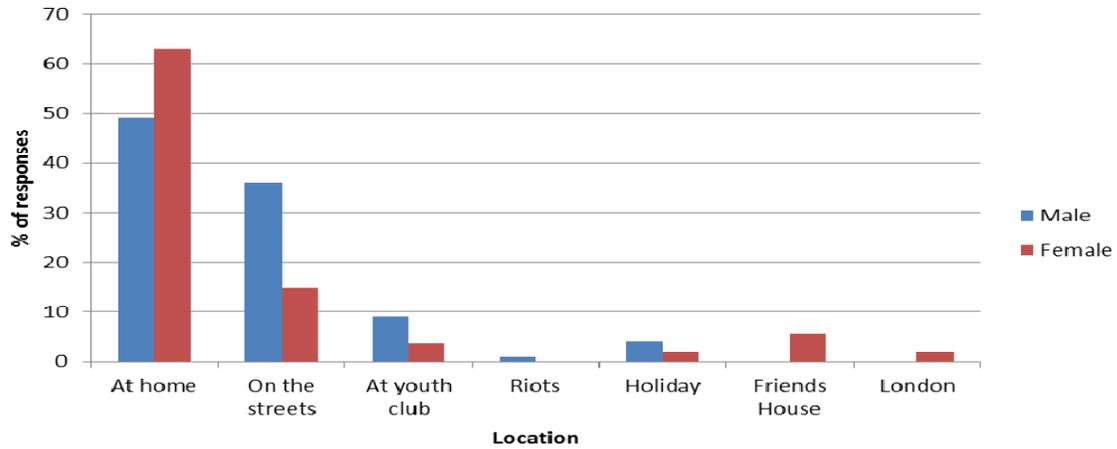
The most common ways in which young people spend their time were: youth clubs or church groups, sports (organised and individual), spending time with friends and also on computer (e.g. x-box, laptop, phone).



Most young people reported being at home when the riots happened.
More than a quarter reported being on the streets.

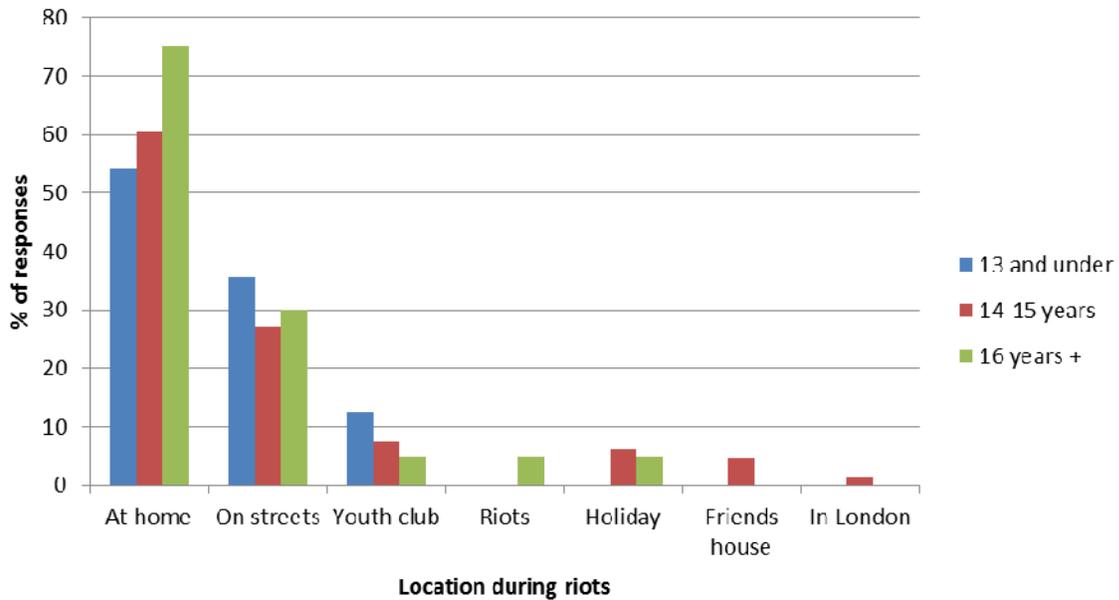


Involvement in riots according to gender



Boys were more likely than girls to say they were on the streets. 13 year olds were more likely to be on the streets, as were white/ white British young people.

Involvement in riots according to age



Most young people *of all ages* reported being at home when the riots happened.

More than a quarter reported being on the streets, and this was consistent across the age groups.

Older respondents were more likely to say they were at home when the riots were happening: younger respondents were the least likely to say they were at home.

Youngest respondents (13 years and under) were more likely to say they were at a youth club.

NB Number of respondents for each age group were as follows:

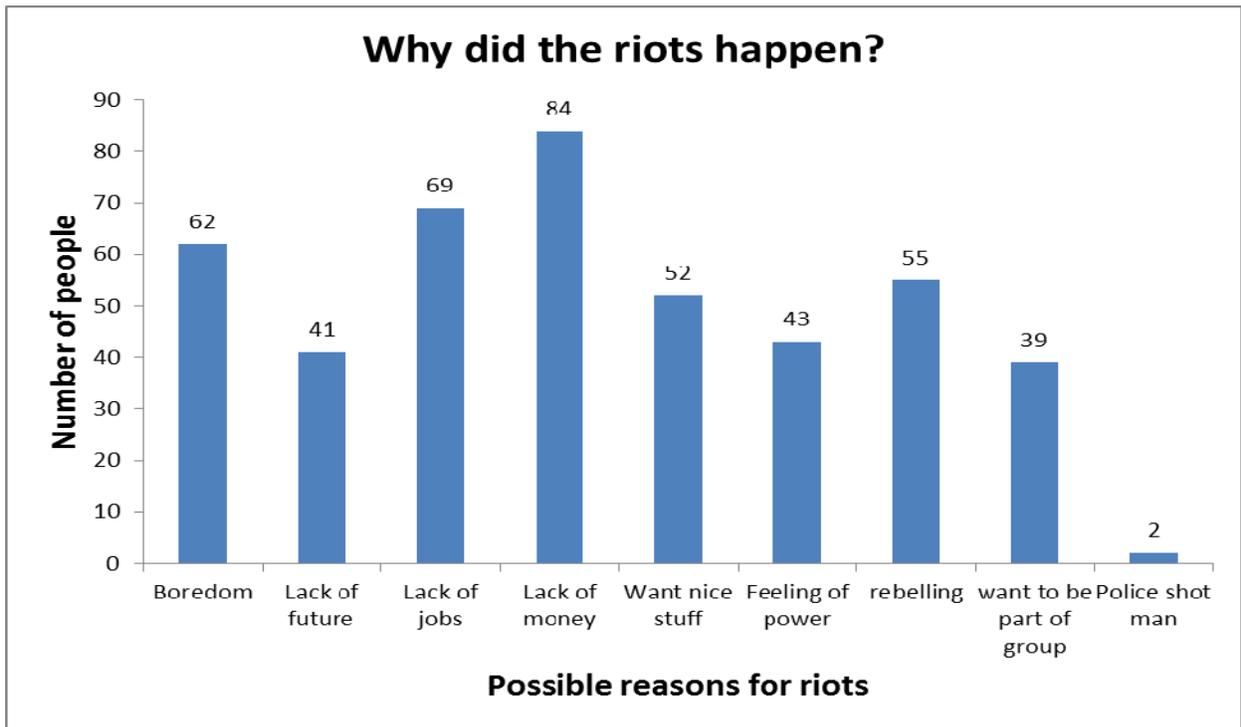
13 and under: 48

14-15: 66

16+: 20

Asian children were most likely to say they were at home during the riots.

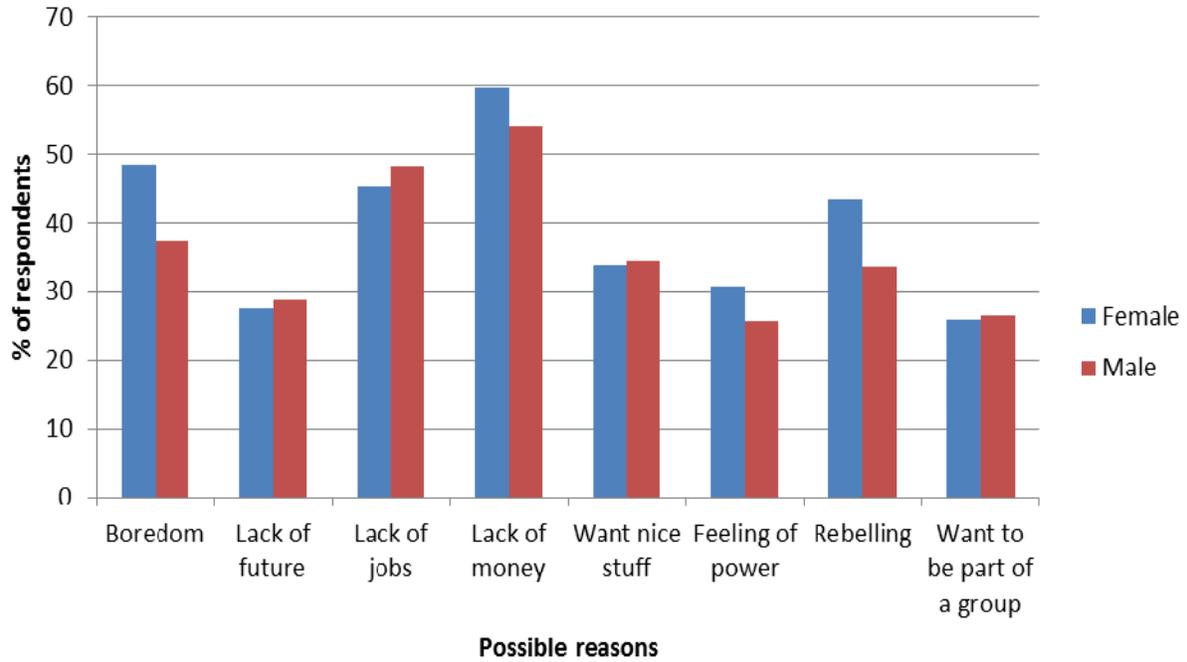
White and White British children were least likely to say they were at home during the riots but were most likely to say they were on the streets.



The most commonly cited reasons were: lack of money, rebelling, jobs and future and boredom.

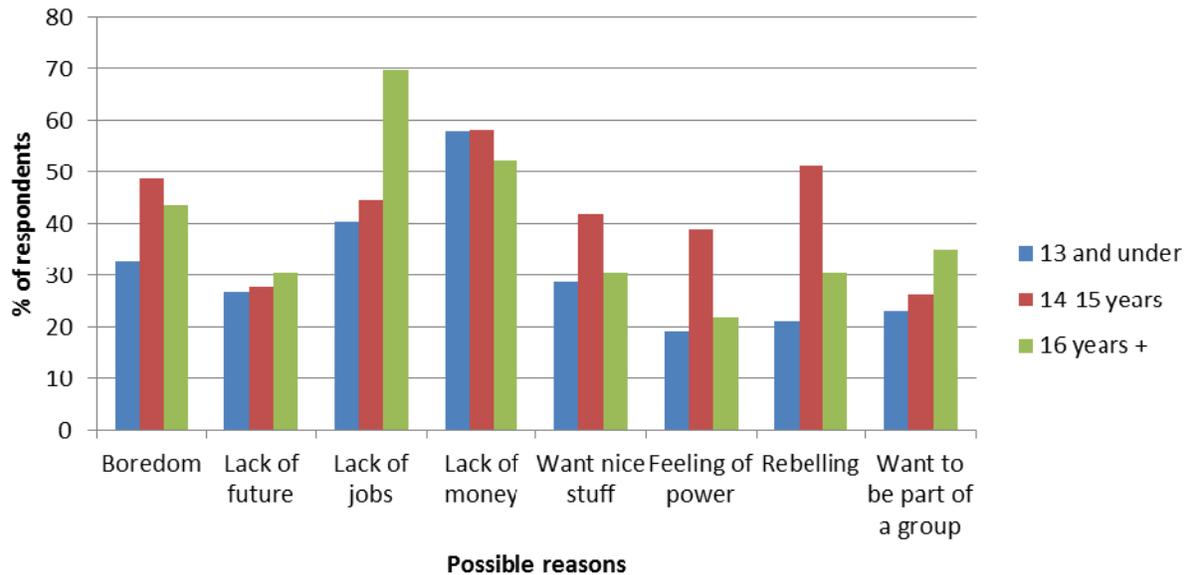
NB Respondents were not given 'the police shot the man' as a possible response – this response was volunteered by 2 respondents.

Possible reasons for riots according to gender



There was very little different between males and females in terms of the possible reasons for the riots.

Possible reasons for riots according to age

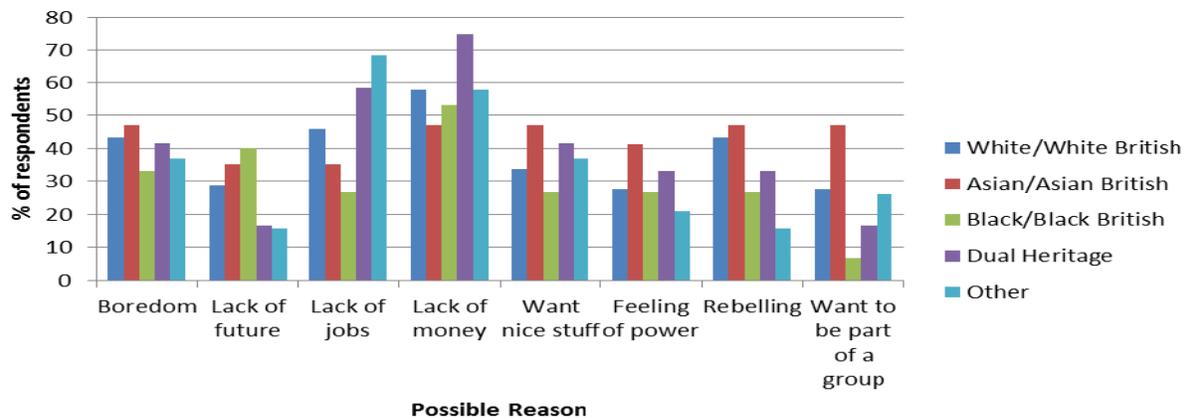


Young people aged 16 and over were more likely than other age groups to say the rioting was due to lack of jobs.

Among under 13's and 14-15 year olds, lack of money was the most often cited reason for the riots.

Children aged 14-15 were more likely than other age groups to say that the rioting was a result of people 'rebellin'g'.

Possible reasons for riots according to ethnic background

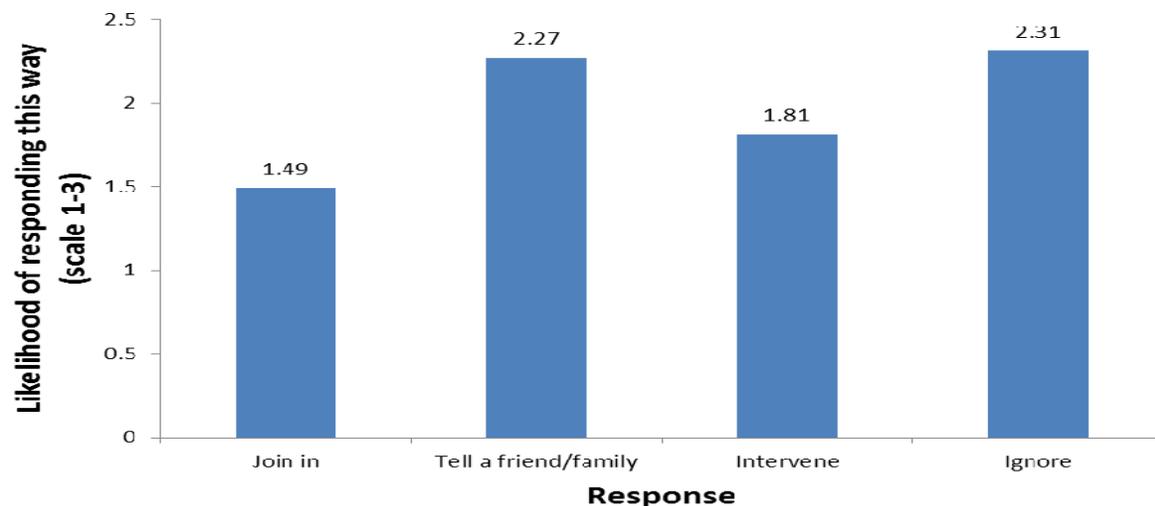


How did young people think they would respond to future rioting, if they witnessed it?

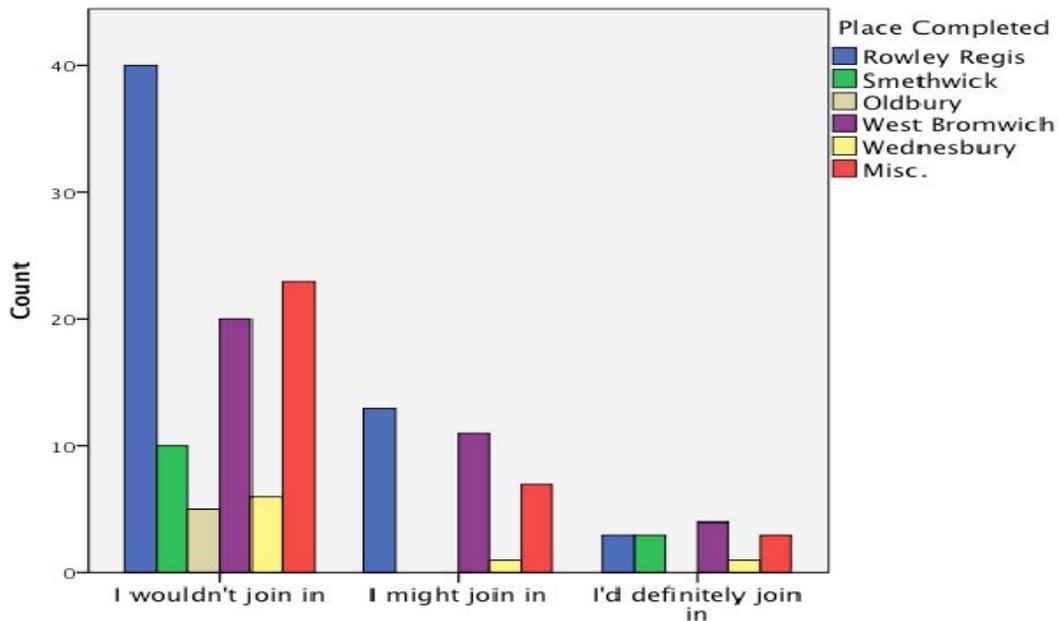
The responses could be simplified and grouped together as:

- Join in or watch.
- Tell a friend/family.
- Intervene by tell the Police or telling them to stop.
- Ignoring (and walking away).

Anticipated response if witness rioting in future



Location of Young People when questionnaires' were completed and how they would respond to future rioting:



Most likely responses were 'telling a friend or family' and 'ignore and walk away'.

Young people were more likely to 'tell a friend/family', 'intervene' and 'ignore' than 'join in'.

They were more likely to 'ignore' than 'intervene' by telling the Police or telling them to stop.

What might cause future involvement in rioting?

Self-esteem: This was unrelated to response to future rioting.

Career aspirations:

Young people who are more likely to aspire to Non-professional occupations were more likely to say they would 'join in' 'watch' or 'ignore the rioting and looting and walk away'.

Those who are more likely to aspire to a Professional career, are more likely to 'tell a friend or family'.

A desire for Professional careers was unrelated to 'joining in'.

Those with lower career aspirations are more likely to get involved in the rioting and looting or to ignore it.

Belief in ability to get a job in the future: The respondents belief that they could get a job in the future was unrelated to the different possible responses to future rioting and looting.

Spare time activities:

Young people who said they attended youth clubs or church groups in their spare time were: LESS likely to say they would join in and MORE likely to say they would intervene.

Young people who said they attended sports clubs were more likely to say they would 'ignore' future rioting and looting.

Young people who said they spent spare time at the park or on the streets were LESS likely to say they would intervene and LESS likely to say they would ignore it.

How young people spend their spare time is important for how they say they would respond if they witnessed looting and rioting in the future.

Involvement in organised activities on one hand, and spending time on the streets or in parks on the other, are important for how young people believe they would respond to future rioting or looting.

Conclusions and suggested next steps

The majority of respondents were measured as having reasonably high self esteem and aspired to professional roles. However, they were more likely to believe they could achieve non professional roles as opposed to professional ones. Those with lower career aspirations are more likely to get involved in the rioting and looting or to ignore it.

60% of young people believe they could get a job in the future.

On the night of the riots the majority of the young people interviewed stated they were at home. However, boys, those who described themselves as white, or 13 years old and under were more likely to be on the streets than any other group.

When asked why they thought the riots happened the majority of respondents believed it to be because of; lack of money, lack of jobs, no future, boredom and wanting nice stuff. 70% of 16 years and above stated it was because of no jobs, whereas, 13 – 15 year olds felt it was because of lack of money.

When asked about whether they would join in rioting in the future the majority of the young people said they wouldn't. However, 30% of 14 year olds, 33% of 15 year olds, 40% Black British, 30% of White British and young people from Rowley Regis and West Bromwich said they might.

How young people spend their spare time is important for how they say they would respond if they witnessed looting and rioting in the future. Involvement in organised activities on one hand, and spending time on the streets or in parks on the other, are important for how young people believe they would respond to future rioting or looting.

Suggested next steps

Further research is needed to find out why 40% of young people do not believe they can get a job in the future

Further research into why young people do not believe they can achieve their aspirations and what can be put in place to assist them in reaching their goals.

Provide structured activities for young people across the borough to prevent them from becoming involved in any form of criminal activity.

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