# Fears rise over violent crimes involving young female gangs across the UK



Fears are rising over a surge in violent activity involving young female gangs across the UK, with incidents encompassing attacks on vulnerable elderly individuals, children, and emergency service workers. Experts and law enforcement authorities have noted a significant increase in the participation of girls and young women in such criminal behaviour, which often goes inadequately addressed.

The British Transport Police (BTP) recently circulated CCTV images of three teenage girls suspected of perpetrating several unprovoked assaults on elderly passengers on Southeastern rail services in south London. The attacks occurred on March 18 within a short span, targeting a man travelling from London Bridge to Woolwich Arsenal and later an elderly woman on a separate train from London Bridge to Erith. These assaults were described by officers as "vicious and cowardly," with intervening passengers subjected to further aggression.

Concerns have also been raised regarding a West Sussex village, Barnham, reportedly "held hostage" by teenage girls involved in violent disorder and shoplifting. Sussex Police issued dispersal orders following a series of incidents, including a notable brawl at Barnham rail station involving girls aged between 13 and 16. Local accounts describe the youths acting like a "feral pack," exploiting transport links to move between towns to cause mayhem and looting shops. Despite the severity of the incidents, the involved girls received referral orders rather than custodial sentences due to their ages.

The Old Bailey in London saw three girls, aged 14, 16, and 17, charged with manslaughter following the death of 75-year-old Bolivian-born Fredi Rivero. He was attacked near a bus stop in Islington, north London, on 27 February, subsequently collapsing and later dying in hospital. Police investigations are ongoing, with Superintendent Annmarie Cowley emphasising community concern and the thoroughness of the inquiry.

In Lancashire, a 13-year-old schoolgirl, Olivia Allan, suffered serious injuries in an alleged assault by a gang of girls on 24 March. Olivia reportedly sustained chipped teeth, bruising, and back and neck injuries after being "kicked like a football." Intervention by a stranger prevented potentially life-threatening harm. A 12-year-old girl has been arrested on suspicion of assault in connection with this attack.

A Local Government Association (LGA) report highlights the increasing involvement of girls and young women in gang-related violence, including assaults on frontline workers and participation in county lines drug trafficking. The report identifies contributing factors such as childhood trauma, poverty, adverse experiences with authorities, and instability in the care system. It also notes that gender biases may result in under-recognition by police, leaving vulnerable girls at greater risk. The LGA recommends increased funding for youth-oriented activities and trauma-informed support initiatives.

Damian Allain, a former Metropolitan Police detective and current criminology lecturer at Brunel University, has spoken to MailOnline about the growing problem of female gang involvement. He explained that 35 per cent of gang affiliations include women, many groomed and exploited yet sharing criminal complicity. According to Mr Allain, girls frequently serve as drug and weapon couriers, as male gang members are more heavily targeted by police. He noted that shoplifting and organised crime involving females have risen considerably, often escaping law enforcement attention due to prevailing stereotypes about gang membership.

The issue of grooming by county lines drug gangs was raised by Jade Hibbert of the St Giles Trust, who explained that girls are increasingly lured into criminal activity with offers of cosmetic treatments such as lip fillers, Botox, and beauty products—a shift from material incentives seen in the past. The trust now provides female-only services to better support exploited girls and young women across hospital A&E departments in the West Midlands.

The British Transport Police have stated they are no longer seeking to identify the teenage suspects involved in the Southeastern rail attacks but expressed appreciation for public assistance. Sussex Police continue to enforce preventive measures in Barnham, while investigations into the Islington manslaughter and the Lancashire assault remain ongoing.

These developments reflect a widening scope of youth violence involving girls and young women across multiple regions, with law enforcement and community bodies striving to respond to complex challenges presented by changing patterns of criminal involvement.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://news.sky.com/story/at-risk-vulnerable-and-invisible-the-thousands-of-girls-in-england-exploited-within-gangs-12922878> - This article discusses a report estimating that as many as 60,000 girls in England are vulnerable to serious violence, often in gangs, but are 'invisible,' with most gang prevention services aimed at boys.
* <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/story/tens-thousands-girls-risk-violence-exploitation-and-gang-involvement> - The report highlights that many thousands of girls in England are at risk of serious violence, sexual assault, and criminal exploitation, with a lack of recognition of the scale of the problem leaving support services ill-equipped and girls vulnerable.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-47952075> - This article reports that two-thirds of children in England assessed by councils as being involved in gangs are boys (66%) and one third girls (34%), with estimates from the Office for National Statistics suggesting a higher figure—that as many as half may be girls.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-27815220> - The article discusses how girls involved in gangs are often sexually exploited and used as tools, with gangs capitalizing on their relative 'invisibility' to advance their economic interests in county lines and stay below police radar.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/jun/08/ukcrime.prisonsandprobation> - A study found that more than half of all teenage crime gangs have female members, with some likely involved in serious offences, including drug dealing and murder.
* <https://chscp.org.uk/gangs-activity-and-serious-youth-violence/> - This resource outlines how young people associated with gangs are highly vulnerable, with sexual violence among peers being commonplace and used as a means of power and control over others, most commonly young women.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14642951/Britain-vicious-girl-gangs-female-youths-wreaking-havoc.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data