Youth + Crime in Media

CSS x Represent Justice

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Arielle Shanker, M.Ed.;
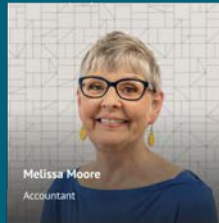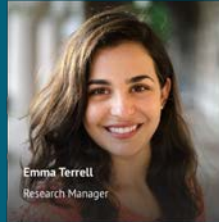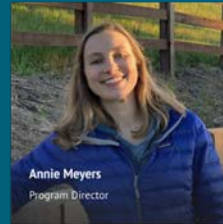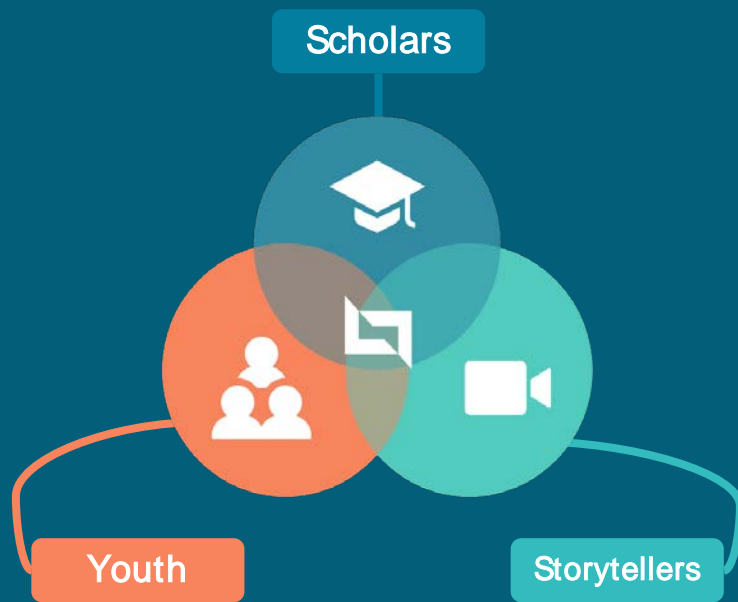Alisha J. Hines, PhD;
Emma Terrell, M.Ed.;
Yalda T. Uhls, MBA, PhD

FAST
FUNDERS for ADOLESCENT
SCIENCE TRANSLATION

ABOUT US

CENTER FOR SCHOLARS & STORYTELLERS

UCLA

Dr. Yalda T. Uhls
Founder and CEO

Sandy Wax
Chief Strategic Advisor

David Devries
Co-Content Director

Jill Sanford
Co-Content Director

Dr. Alisha J. Hines
Director of Research

Annie Meyers
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Sheena Brevig
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Jamie Azar
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Sabrina Poon
Social Media Coordinator

Melissa Moore
Accountant

Richard Thompson
Attorney

Rich Amory
Grants and Fundraising Consultant

Don Halcombe
Communications Consultant

SEE INFO →

WHAT WE DO

The Center for Scholars & Storytellers (CSS) at UCLA works with youth, academics, and creative communities to unlock the power of storytelling to help the next generation thrive and grow. Our primary aim is to support content creators who are working toward changing entrenched cultural narratives around the key issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, mental health, and inequality.

Scholars

Youth

Storytellers

MEET THE RESEARCH TEAM

Dr. Alisha J. Hines is the Director of Research for CSS. She leverages research and storytelling to direct organizational strategies in the private and philanthropic sectors. Dr. Hines has earned several fellowships and awards for her academic research and writing. She earned her PhD in History & African American Studies from Duke University and is a former faculty member of Wake Forest University's History Department.

Emma Terrell, Research Manager, holds a Master of Education from Harvard University. Her work focuses on developing evaluation strategies to support organization's goals of improving culturally-sustaining educational experiences for children through the arts and storytelling. Emma has worked with a variety of educational organizations within the arts, philanthropic, and entertainment industries, such as Carnegie Hall, the William Penn Foundation, and Mattel.

Arielle Shanker, Research Fellow, brings her passion for youth engagement to our team. With extensive experience, she excels in conducting qualitative research to better understand and elevate the voices of young people. Arielle holds a Master's in Early Childhood Education from Dominican University and a Bachelor's in Organizational Studies from the University of Michigan. Her work, inspired by a commitment to equity and inclusion, empowers children and families through joyful learning experiences, with clients including LEGO, LeapFrog, tonies, and more.

GOALS OF THE STUDY

Quantitative and qualitative survey of youth respondents ages 13-24 (N=696)

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND…

- How youth view and interact with media content related to youth and crime
- Youth perspective on media representation in media narratives related to youth and crime
- Impact of media content related to youth and crime on self-perception, societal perception, and personal behavior
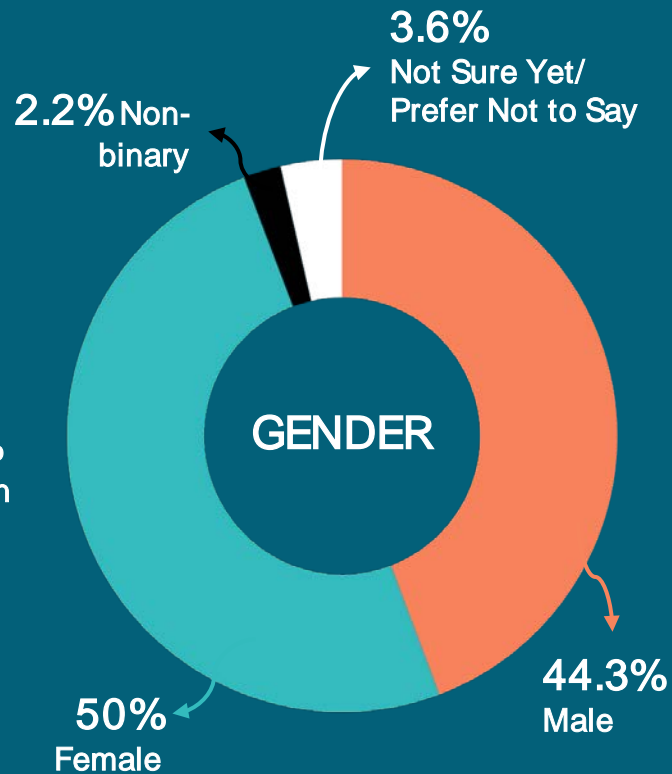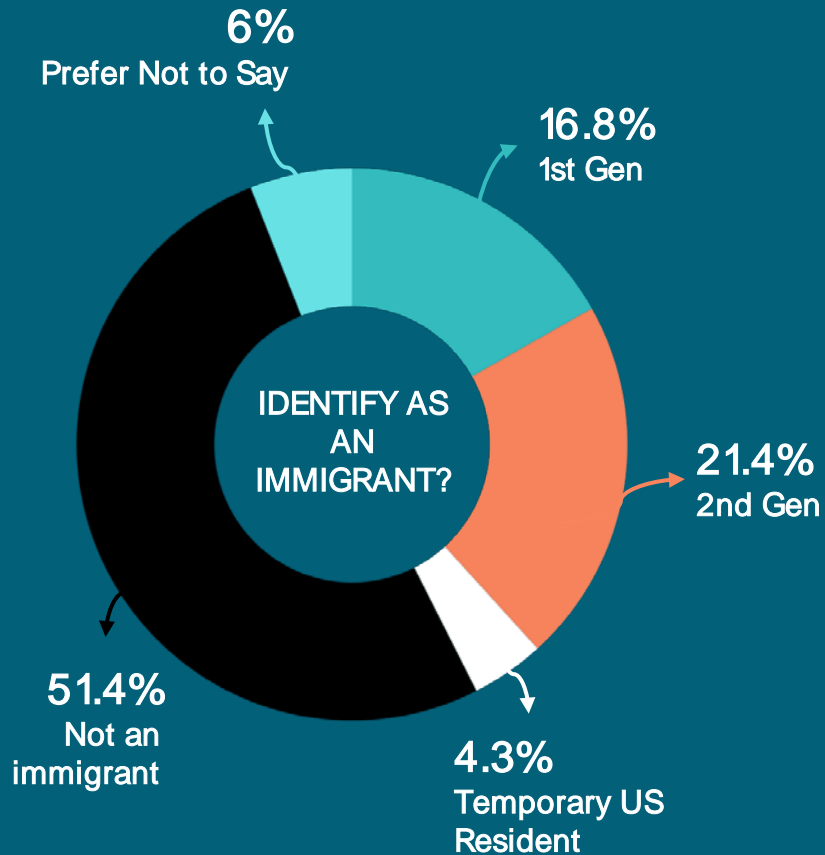
WHAT WE KNOW: PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Media plays a crucial role in shaping youth perceptions and behavior related to crime and justice, emphasizing the need for accurate and balanced portrayals in media content.

- Exposure to crime-related media increases fear of crime and support for punitive measures among youth.
- Media often sensationalizes youth crime, leading to distorted perceptions and increased public fear.
- Media content can shape attitudes toward criminal justice, influencing support for harsher punishments or reform.

Sources: Surette and Otto (2018) Gruenewald et. al. (2020; Donnerstein and Linz (2017)

DEMOGRAPHICS

IDENTIFY AS AN IMMIGRANT?

6% Prefer Not to Say

16.8% 1st Gen

21.4% 2nd Gen

4.3% Temporary US Resident

51.4% Not an immigrant

GENDER

3.6% Not Sure Yet/ Prefer Not to Say

2.2% Non-binary

44.3% Male

50% Female

DEMOGRAPHICS

19.7%
System-impacted

6.6%
Formerly incarcerated

73.7%
Neither system impacted nor formerly incarcerated
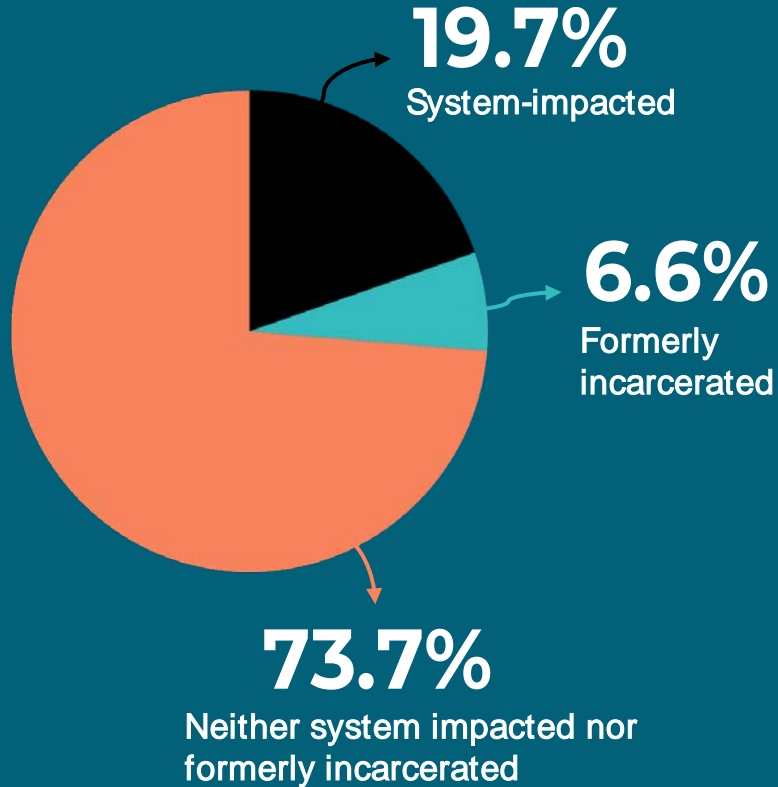
SYSTEM IMPACTED YOUTH:

- Foster care system
- Subject to school discipline (suspension, expulsion, and/or detention)
- School Resource Officer interaction
- Family member current/formerly incarcerated

FORMERLY INCARCERATED YOUTH:

- Prior arrest, conviction, probation/parole, and incarceration

AGENDA

1. How do youth view and interact with media content related to youth and crime?

2. What are young people's perspectives on media representation in storytelling narratives related to youth and crime?

3. What is the impact of media content related to youth and crime on self-perception, societal perception, and personal behavior?

4. Case Studies

5. Recommendations

How do youth view and interact with media content related to youth and crime?

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How often do you watch or read stories about young people and crime?

47.6% of participants report that most or at least half of all the media they watch or read includes content related to young people and crime

- Participants who have been system impacted are 3.8 times more likely to actively watch or read stories about young people and crime than non-system impacted participants

- Participants of color are 1.51 times more likely to actively watch or read stories about young people and crime than White-identifying participants

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*Both analyses were statistically significant (p<.001 and p=.012)

How likely are you to use the following platforms to watch or read stories about young people and crime?

Most Popular Media Use of All Participants

Bar chart showing percentage of participants likely to use media by platform:
- YouTube: 70.20%
- Streaming Services: 66.10%
- TikTok: 68.00%
- Instagram: 61.60%

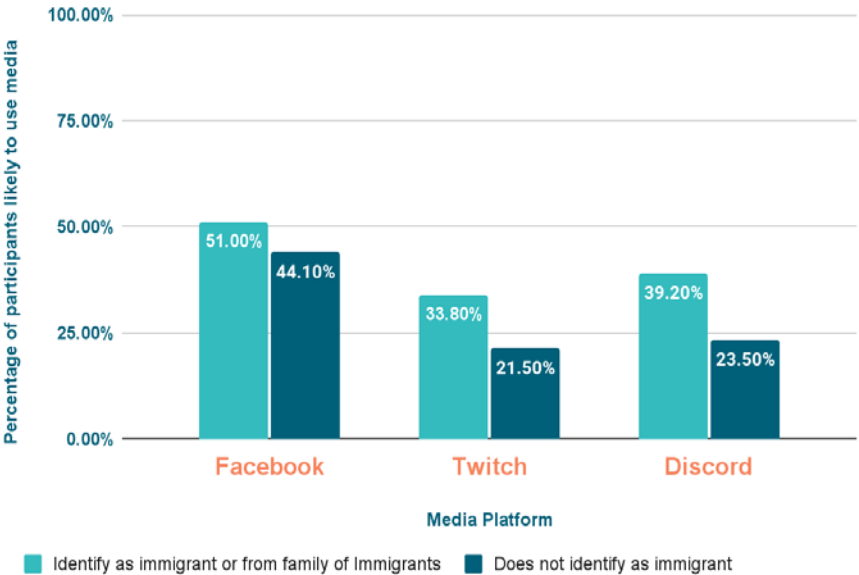Y-axis: Percentage of participants likely to use media (0.00% to 100.00%)
X-axis: Media Platform
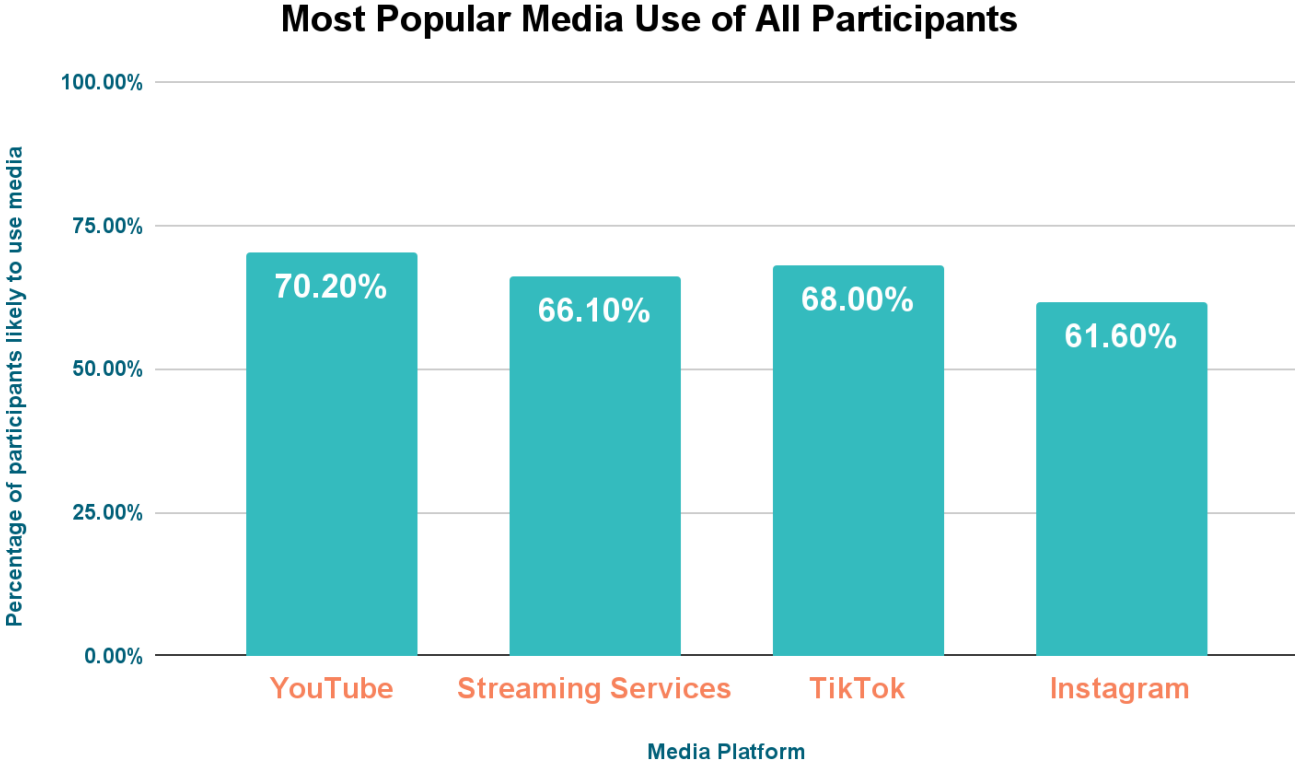
Is there another platform or media content source not mentioned above where you typically watch or read stories about young people and crime?

News Outlets	*ABC News, CNN.com, NBC News, New York Times, News websites, Google, Gmail, TMZ, WTKR*	10
Online Sources	*Buzzfeed Unsolved, Google, The New York Times, NewsBreak, Pocket, WorldstarHipHop.com*	7
Podcasts	*I think thru the podcast app, Spotify- podcasts on the topic, podcast*	3
Streaming Services	*Crunchyroll, Episode stories, Tubi*	3
TV Channels	*Id Discovery, Tv channel*	2
Social Media	*Tumblr, TRUTH Social*	2
News App	*News app*	2
Radio	*Radio*	1

How likely are you to use the following platforms to watch or read stories about young people and crime?

Significant Differences in Media Use by Immigration Status

Percentage of participants likely to use media

- Facebook: 51.00% (Identify as immigrant or from family of Immigrants), 44.10% (Does not identify as immigrant)
- Twitch: 33.80% (Identify as immigrant or from family of Immigrants), 21.50% (Does not identify as immigrant)
- Discord: 39.20% (Identify as immigrant or from family of Immigrants), 23.50% (Does not identify as immigrant)

Media Platform

■ Identify as immigrant or from family of Immigrants   ■ Does not identify as immigrant

FACEBOOK

Participants who identify as immigrants or family of immigrants are 1.88 times more likely to use Facebook than participants who do not identify as immigrants

TWITCH

Participants who identify as immigrants or family of immigrants are 1.35 times more likely to use Twitch than participants who do not identify as immigrants

DISCORD

Participants who identify as immigrants or family of immigrants are 1.56 times more likely to use Discord than participants who do not identify as immigrants

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*All above analyses were either trending towards significance or statistically significant (p>.001, p=.075, p=.007)

How likely are you to use the following platforms to watch or read stories about young people and crime?

FACEBOOK

Younger participants (13-18) are .76 less likely to use Facebook than older participants (19-24)

TWITTER

Younger participants are .53 times less likely to use Twitter than older participants

TWITCH

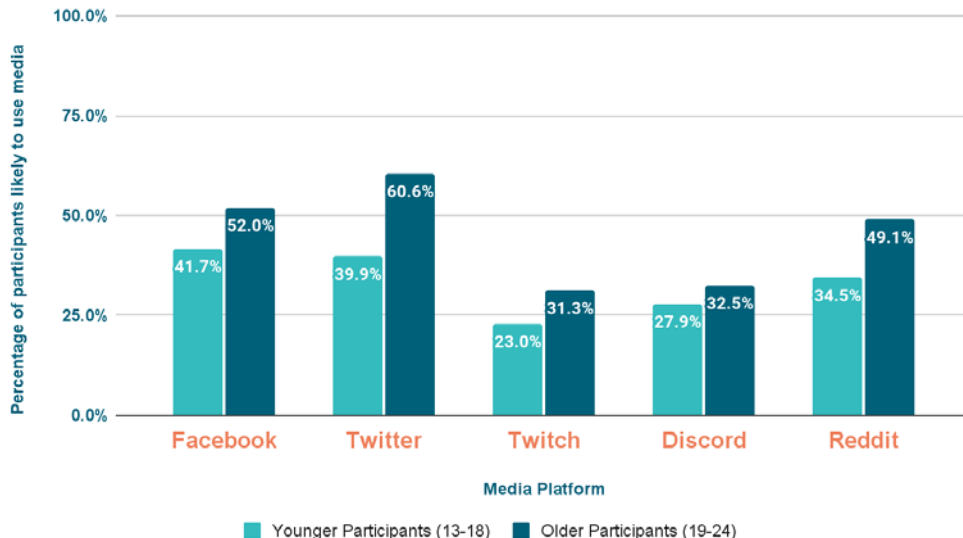Younger participants are .84 times less likely to use Twitch than older participants

DISCORD

Younger participants are .74 times less likely to use Discord than older participants

REDDIT

Younger participants are .54 times less likely to use Reddit than older participants

Significant Differences in Media Use by Age

Percentage of participants likely to use media

Media Platform	Younger Participants (13-18)	Older Participants (19-24)
Facebook	41.7%	52.0%
Twitter	39.9%	60.6%
Twitch	23.0%	31.3%
Discord	27.9%	32.5%
Reddit	34.5%	49.1%

*All analyses were either trending towards significance or statistically significant (p=.066, p>.001, p=.05, p=.038, p>.001)

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How likely are you to use the following platforms to watch or read stories about young people and crime?

Significant Difference in Media Use by System Impacted Participants

Media Platform	Impacted by the system	Not impacted by the system
Twitter	62.30%	46.00%
Snapchat	61.70%	40.00%
Twitch	48.60%	19.50%
Discord	51.40%	22.60%
Reddit	54.60%	37.20%
YouTube	72.70%	69.40%
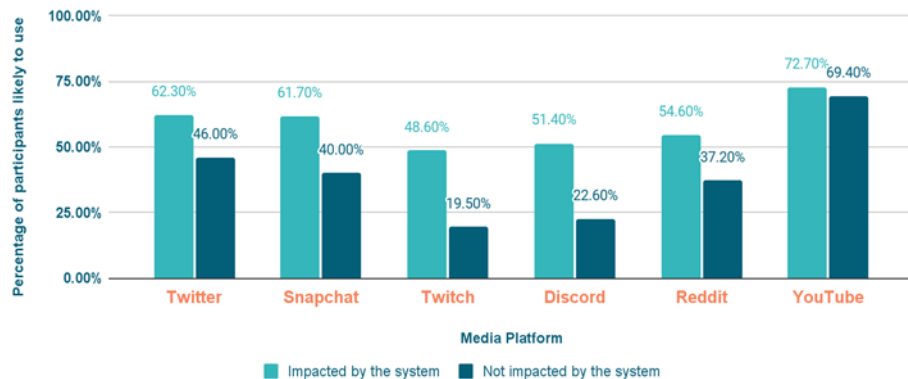
*All analyses were statistically significant at p=.001 or p<.001

** "System impacted" and "Formerly incarcerated" were collapsed into one group that is referred to as "system impacted".

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TWITTER
System impacted** participants are 1.7 times more likely to use Twitter than non-system impacted participants

SNAPCHAT
System impacted participants are 2.48 times more likely to use Snapchat than non-system impacted participants

TWITCH
System impacted participants are 3.97 times more likely to use Twitch than non-system impacted participants

DISCORD
System impacted participants are 3.21 times more likely to use Discord than non-system impacted participants

REDDIT
System impacted participants are 2.24 times more likely to use Reddit than non-system impacted participants

Recommendations: Content Distribution

Youth are using a diverse array of media platforms, with major differences in the use of media platforms depending on whether participants identify as older, system-impacted, or are from immigrant families.

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RECOMMENDATIONS - Content Distribution

DIVERSE PLATFORMS

Expand content distribution across diverse platforms to reach a wider audience.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Make effective use of social media platforms, especially Twitter, Discord, and Reddit, where participants actively engage with content.

AGE APPROPRIATE CONTENT

Customize content to align with the platform's user base and demographics.

CROSS-MEDIA STORYTELLING

Explore cross-media storytelling possibilities to engage audiences across multiple platforms. Acknowledge the popularity of storytelling through podcasts and streaming services.

Do you feel your community is portrayed accurately in current TV shows and movies about young people and crime?

56.6% of respondents feel that their community is **portrayed accurately** in current TV shows and movies about young people and crime

56.6% agree

43.4% disagree

25.2%

45.2% other

29.6%

For those who did not feel that their community was portrayed accurately…

25.2% felt that their community was over represented *and* misrepresented

29.6% felt that their community was misrepresented

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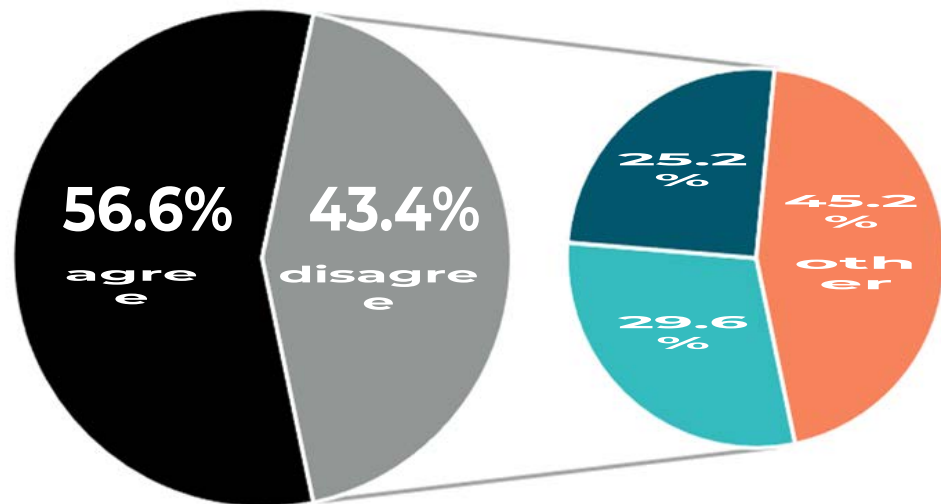
Do you feel your community is portrayed accurately in current TV shows and movies about young people and crime?

GENDER

Women participants are 1.45 times more likely to disagree that their community is accurately portrayed in current TV shows and movies about young people and crime than men participants
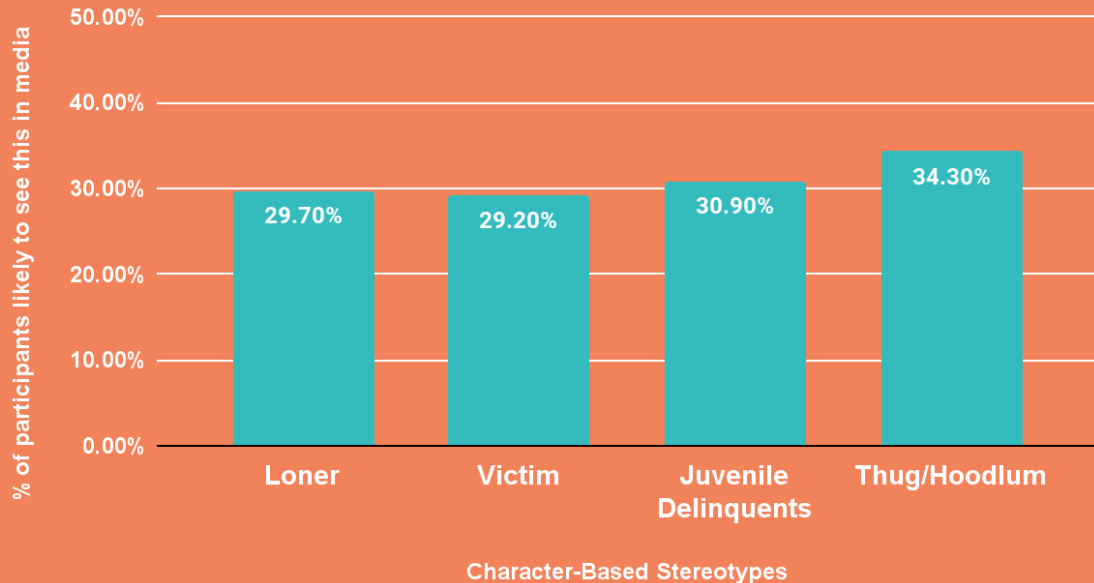
RACIAL IDENTITY

Participants of color are 2.09 times more likely to disagree that their community is accurately portrayed in current TV shows and movies about young people and crime than White participants

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*Above analyses were statistically significant at p=.04 and p<.001

How often do you see the following character-based stereotypes portrayed in media content related to young people and crime?

Most Popular Character-Based Stereotypes

% of participants likely to see this in media

Character-Based Stereotype	Value
Loner	29.70%
Victim	29.20%
Juvenile Delinquents	30.90%
Thug/Hoodlum	34.30%

Character-Based Stereotypes

THUG/HOODLUM - A "thug" or "hoodlum" is a person who engages in violent or criminal behavior, often as a member of a gang or a group involved in illegal activities.
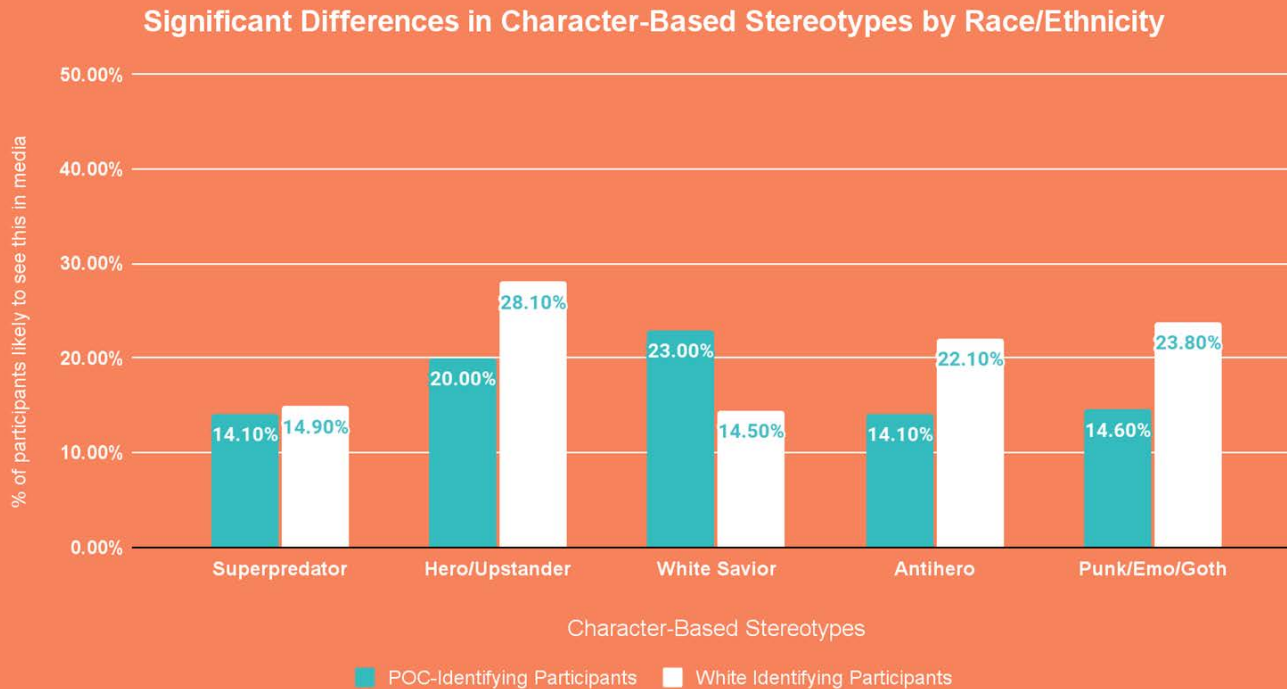
JUVENILE DELINQUENTS - "Juvenile delinquents" are young people who have engaged in illegal or troublesome behavior, sometimes breaking the law.

LONER - A "loner" or "lone wolf" is someone who prefers spending time by themselves and doesn't often join groups or hang out with lots of friends.

SUPERPREDATOR - A "superpredator" is a term used to describe an extremely dangerous young person who is believed to show no remorse for their actions and is involved in serious crimes.

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How often do you see the following character-based stereotypes portrayed in media content related to young people and crime?

DIFFERENCES ACROSS RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY

Significant Differences in Character-Based Stereotypes by Race/Ethnicity

Character-Based Stereotype	POC-Identifying Participants	White Identifying Participants
Superpredator	14.10%	14.90%
Hero/Upstander	20.00%	28.10%
White Savior	23.00%	14.50%
Antihero	14.10%	22.10%
Punk/Emo/Goth	14.60%	23.80%

y-axis: % of participants likely to see this in media

How often do you see the following character-based stereotypes portrayed in media content related to young people and crime?

DIFFERENCES ACROSS RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY

SUPERPREDATOR: Participants of color are 1.4 times more likely to say that they often see superpredator stereotypes in median than White participants

WHITE SAVIOR: Participants of color are 1.68 times more likely to say they see the white savior stereotype often in media in comparison to White participants

ANTIHERO: Participants of color are .70 times less likely to say they see the anti hero stereotype often in media in comparison to White participants

PUNK/EMO: participants of color are .62 times less likely to see punk/emo stereotypes often in media in comparison to White participants

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*All analyses were statistically significant (p=.033, p=.001, p=.032, p=.003)

How often do you see the following character-based stereotypes portrayed in media content related to young people and crime?

DIFFERENCES ACROSS GENDER

JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

Women participants are 1.8 times more likely to say that they see juvenile delinquent stereotypes often in media in comparison to men participants

Nonbinary participants are 4.62 times more likely to say that they see juvenile delinquents stereotypes often in media in comparison to men participants

THUG/HOODLUM: Women participants are 1.6 times more likely to say that they see thug/hoodlum stereotypes often in media in comparison to men participants

WHITE SAVIOR: Women participants are 1.43 times more likely to say that they see the white savior stereotype often in media than men participants

VICTIM: Women participants are 1.52 and NB participants are 4.33 times more likely to see victim stereotypes often in media in comparison to men participants

*All above analyses were statistically significant (p<.001, p=.011 p=.002, p=.020, p=.007, p=.019). No differences found for the Antihero stereotype.

How often do you see the following character-based stereotypes portrayed in media content related to young people and crime?

DIFFERENCES ACROSS SYSTEM IMPACTED

PUNK/EMO

Participants who are impacted by the system are .64 times less likely to say that they see punk/emo stereotypes often in media in comparison to non-system impacted participants

ANTI HERO

Participants who are impacted by the system are .65 times less likely to say that they see anti hero stereotypes often in media in comparison to non-system impacted participants

*All analyses were statistically significant at p=.013 and p=.016
**"System impacted" and "Formerly incarcerated" were collapsed into one group that is referred to as "system impacted"

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How often do you see the following character-based stereotypes portrayed in media content related to young people and crime?

DIFFERENCES ACROSS GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION (NOT CORRECTED)

SUPER PREDATOR
Participants from the northeast and midwest were .51 and .60 less likely to say that they often see superpredator stereotypes in media in comparison to participants from the west

THUG/HOODLUM
Participants from the midwest and south are .53 and .57 less likely to see thug/hoodlum stereotypes often in media in comparison to participants from the west

HERO/UPSTANDER
Participants from the north east were .61 times less likely to see the hero/upstander stereotype often in media in comparison to participants from the west
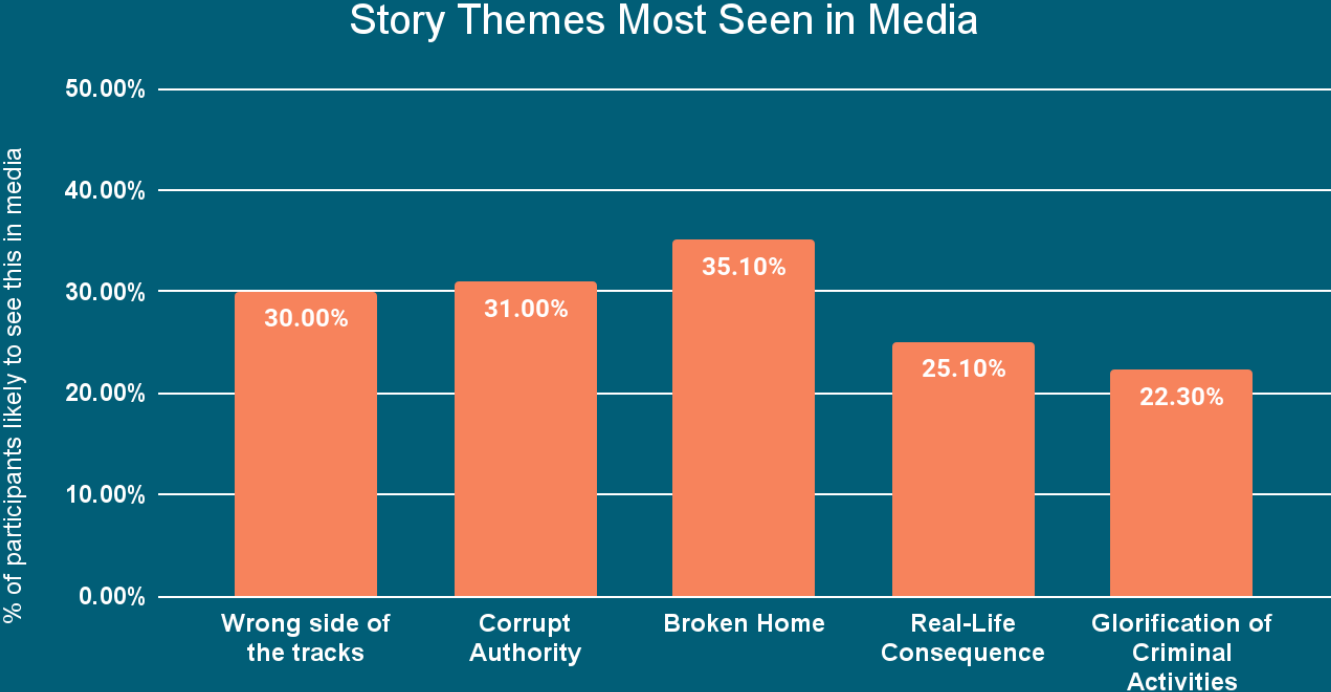
LONER
Participants from the midwest are .55 times less likely to see loner stereotypes often in media compared to participants from the west

VICTIM
Participants from the midwest and the south were .55 and .74 times less likely to see victim stereotypes often in media in comparison to participants from the west

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*All above analyses were statistically significant (p=.013 for NE, p=.043 for MW, p=.045, p=.019, p=.015 for MW, p=.091 for S)

How often do you see the following story theme- or setting-based stereotypes portrayed in media content related to young people and crime?

Story Themes Most Seen in Media

% of participants likely to see this in media

Story Theme	Percentage
Wrong side of the tracks	30.00%
Corrupt Authority	31.00%
Broken Home	35.10%
Real-Life Consequence	25.10%
Glorification of Criminal Activities	22.30%

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How often do you see the following story theme- or setting-based stereotypes portrayed in media content related to young people and crime?

DIFFERENCES ACROSS AGE

GLORIFICATION OF CRIMINAL THEMES: Younger participants are .72 times less likely to see glorification of criminal themes often in media in comparison to older participants

DIFFERENCES ACROSS GENDER

BROKEN HOME: Women participants are 1.72 times more likely to see broken home themes often in media than men participants

REAL LIFE CONSEQUENCE: Women participants are 1.3 times more likely to see real life consequence themes often in media than men participants

*All above analyses were statistically significant (p=.025, p<.001, p=0.048)

How often do you see the following story theme- or setting-based stereotypes portrayed in media content related to young people and crime?

DIFFERENCES ACROSS GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION (NOT CORRECTED)

WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS: Participants from the midwest and south are **.58 and .67 times less likely** to see themes of the wrong side of the tracks often in media than participants in the west
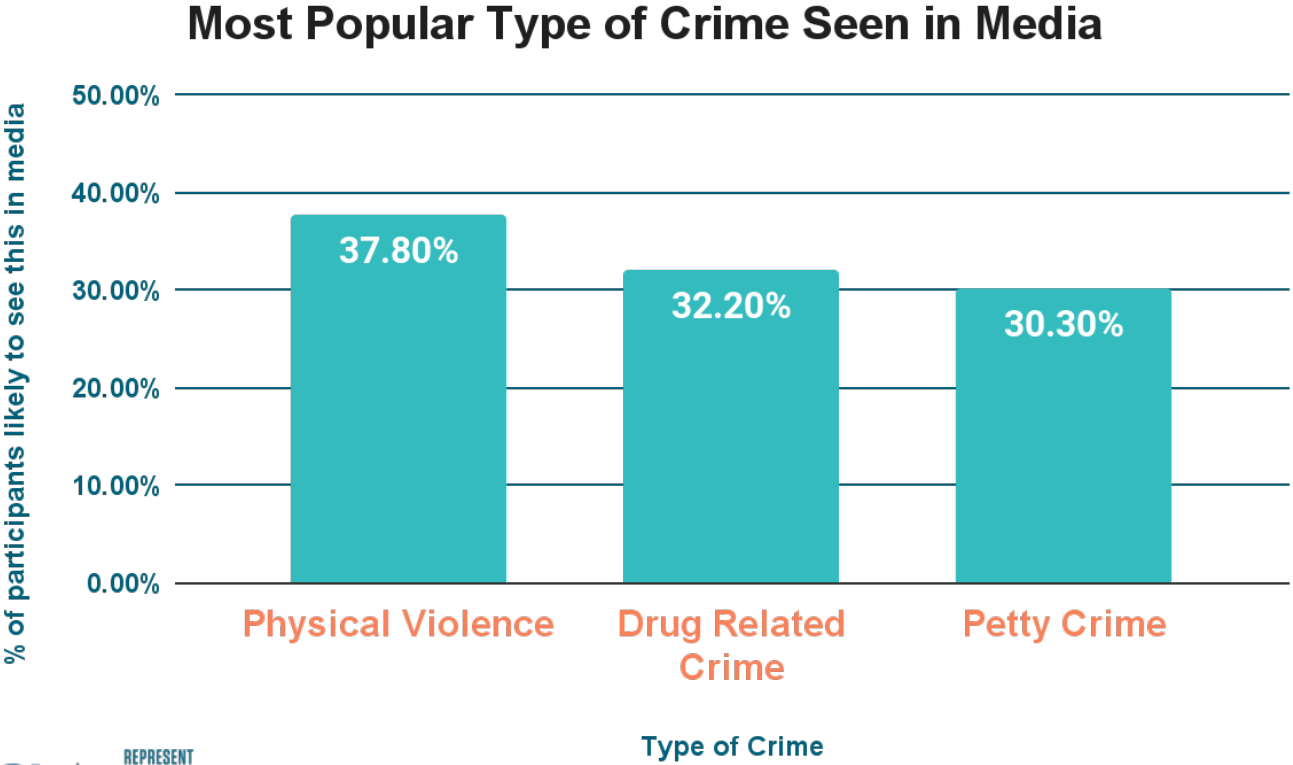
BROKEN HOME: All other regions of the United States are **less likely (NE is .56; midwest is .54; south is .51)** to see broken home themes often in media in comparison to participants from the west

REAL LIFE CONSEQUENCE: Participants from midwest and south are **less likely (.57 for midwest and .67 times for south)** to see real life consequence themes often in media in comparison to participants from the west

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*All above analyses were statistically significant (p=.028 for MW, p=.026 for S, p=.033 for NE, p=.013 for MW, p<.001 for S, p=.026 for MW, p=.028 for S)

Are there other common themes or stereotypes you see when watching media content that involves young people and crime?

Theme	Survey responses	Frequency
Racial Stereotyping	Black people, Division of people by race, Minorities tend to be the criminals and white people tend to be more heroic roles, People of color being criminals, Racism, Racism, white supremacy, That black and Hispanics are bad, Thugs, yes. many related to race or demographic and crime.	13
Family and Home Life	"He's a good kid with a troubled home life", A lot of my feed on TikTok is about kids/teenagers that were killed or kidnapped. A lot of the theme is that people didn't look because they believed it the teenager just being a teenager or that they come from a broken home, Mother being abused, The broken home stereotype, they all come from homes who taught the behavior or influenced	6
Violence and Bullying	Antisemitism, Beatings, Guns, Hate Crime, Racism, Sexual assault, Thugs, Young missing persons cases	8
Substance Abuse	Drinking problem or drug problem, Drug dealer being judged out through looks	2
LGBTQ+ Stereotypes	Gay bash, Predatory gay	2
Police Bias and Misconduct	Seeing people of color get stereotyped as evil and mean or police being given credit when they do the wrong thing "the mindset that police are always right"	1

What types of crimes do you feel like you see the most in media content related to young people and crime?

Most Popular Type of Crime Seen in Media

% of participants likely to see this in media

Physical Violence	37.80%
Drug Related Crime	32.20%
Petty Crime	30.30%

Type of Crime

What types of crimes do you feel like you see the most in media content related to young people and crime?

DIFFERENCES ACROSS GENDER

HATE CRIMES: Women participants are 1.46 times more likely to say they often see hate crimes the most in media in comparison to men participants

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE: Women participants are 1.95 times more likely to say that they often see physical violence in media in comparison to men participants

DRUG-RELATED CRIME: Women participants are 1.77 times more likely to say that they often see drug related crime often in media in comparison to men participants

SURVIVAL: Women participants are 1.56 times more likely to say that they often see survival in media in comparison to men participants

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*All above analyses were statistically significant (p=.016, p<.001, p<.001, p=.004)

DIFFERENCES ACROSS LGBTQ

CRIMES OF PASSION

LGBTQ participants are 1.4 times more likely to say that they often see crimes of passion in media in comparison to non-LGBTQ participants

*Above analysis was statistically significant at p=.036

Recommendations: Diverse, Authentic, and Inclusive Storytelling

Today's media contains various stereotypical narratives and themes, but perceptions of media representation in narratives about youth and crime differ among individuals based on their identities. Specifically, individuals from more marginalized groups, such as women, people of color, and LGBTQIA+ individuals, are more inclined to report observing stereotypes in the media.

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RECOMMENDATIONS - Diverse, Authentic, and Inclusive Storytelling

COMBAT STEREOTYPES
Develop multifaceted characters and authentic portrayals of diverse communities to counter harmful stereotypes and biases, and reflect real-life experiences.

COLLABORATE
Collaborate with system-impacted youth, experts, and advocacy organizations to create authentic and accurate media.

PORTRAY CRIME REALISTICALLY
Incorporate and explore a range of crime types and setting-themes that reflect real-life contexts and consequences.

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What is the impact of media content related to youth and crime on self-perception, societal perception, and personal behavior?

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The TV shows, movies, and news stories about youth and crime I've seen have impacted how I think and feel about myself and others like me.

7.9% Strongly Disagree

6.2% Strongly Agree

17.7% Disagree

30% Agree

38.2% Neutral
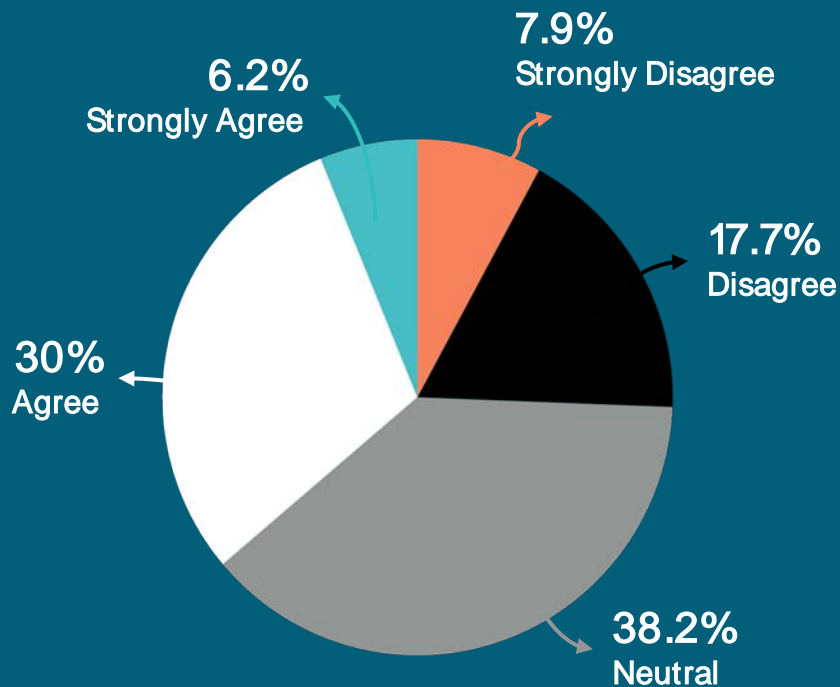
DIFFERENCES ACROSS AGE

Younger participants are .61 times less likely to agree that media impacts the way they think and feel about themselves in comparison to older participants

DIFFERENCES ACROSS LGBTQ

LGBTQ participants are 1.45 times more likely to agree that media impacts the way they think and feel about themselves in comparison to non-LGBTQ participants

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*All above analyses were statistically significant (p<.001, p=.036)

The way young people are shown in movies, TV shows, and news stories about crime affects how society sees young people in real life.
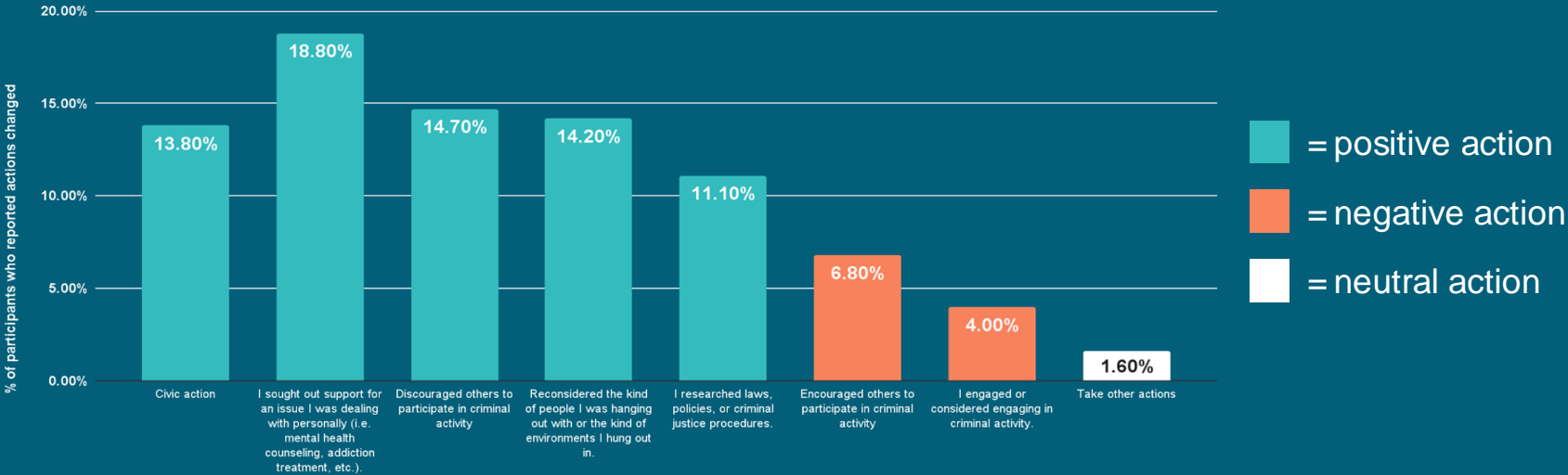
50.4% of participants either agree or strongly agree that media about young people and crime affects how society sees young people in real life

System impacted participants are 1.38 times more likely to agree that media about young people and crime impacts the laws and policies that are made for them in comparison to non-system impacted participants

*Above analysis was trending towards significance (p=.077)

Have you ever seen a tv show, movie, or news story about young people and crime that influenced or changed your behavior? If so, what kind of action did you take?

Actions Influenced by Media

% of participants who reported actions changed

Category	Value
Civic action	13.80%
I sought out support for an issue I was dealing with personally (i.e. mental health counseling, addiction treatment, etc.).	18.80%
Discouraged others to participate in criminal activity	14.70%
Reconsidered the kind of people I was hanging out with or the kind of environments I hung out in.	14.20%
I researched laws, policies, or criminal justice procedures.	11.10%
Encouraged others to participate in criminal activity	6.80%
I engaged or considered engaging in criminal activity.	4.00%
Take other actions	1.60%

= positive action

= negative action

= neutral action

45.8% of respondents said that media about young people and crime influenced or changed their behavior

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Recommendations: Impact

Numerous participants hold the belief that media addressing youth and crime has an influence on their self-perception, societal perception, and personal behavior. Among those whose behavior was affected, the majority reported that the actions they took had positive effects on themselves or their community.

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RECOMMENDATIONS - Impact

ADVOCACY AND POLICY IMPACT

Create media that sheds light on the impact of policy and legislation on young people.

BEHAVIORAL IMPACT

Create media that encourages positive behavior such as civic action.
Be cautious about content that romanticizes crime, especially for younger audiences.

Case Studies

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43% of participants saw the film

OF THOSE WHO SEEN IT, WHEN ASKED:

Do you identify with the main characters of this story or the environment in which the story takes place?

53.5% said yes	46.5% said no

Would you like to see more TV shows and movies that depict young people and crime in this way?

75.3% said yes	24.7% said no
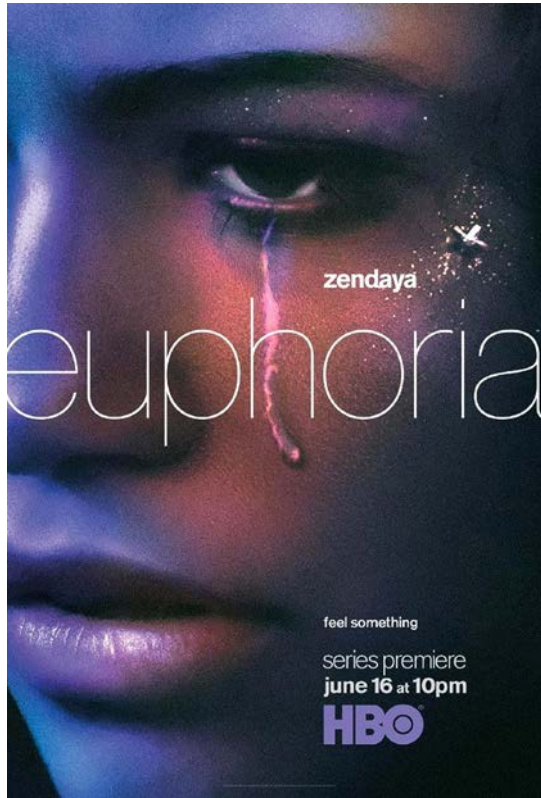
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55.6% of participants saw the film

OF THOSE WHO SEEN IT, WHEN ASKED:

Do you identify with the main characters of this story or the environment in which the story takes place?

53.2% said yes   46.8% said no

Would you like to see more TV shows and movies that depict young people and crime in this way?

61% said yes   39% said no

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What other memorable TV shows or films have you watched recently that include depictions of young people and crime?

Self-reported TV shows/Films about Young People and Crime	Frequency
Law and Order	12
Shameless	11
Criminal Minds	8
Breaking Bad	7
Beyond Scared Straight	4
Cobra Kai	4
Orange Is the New Black	4
21 Jump Street	3
NCIS	3
Riverdale	3
Skins	3
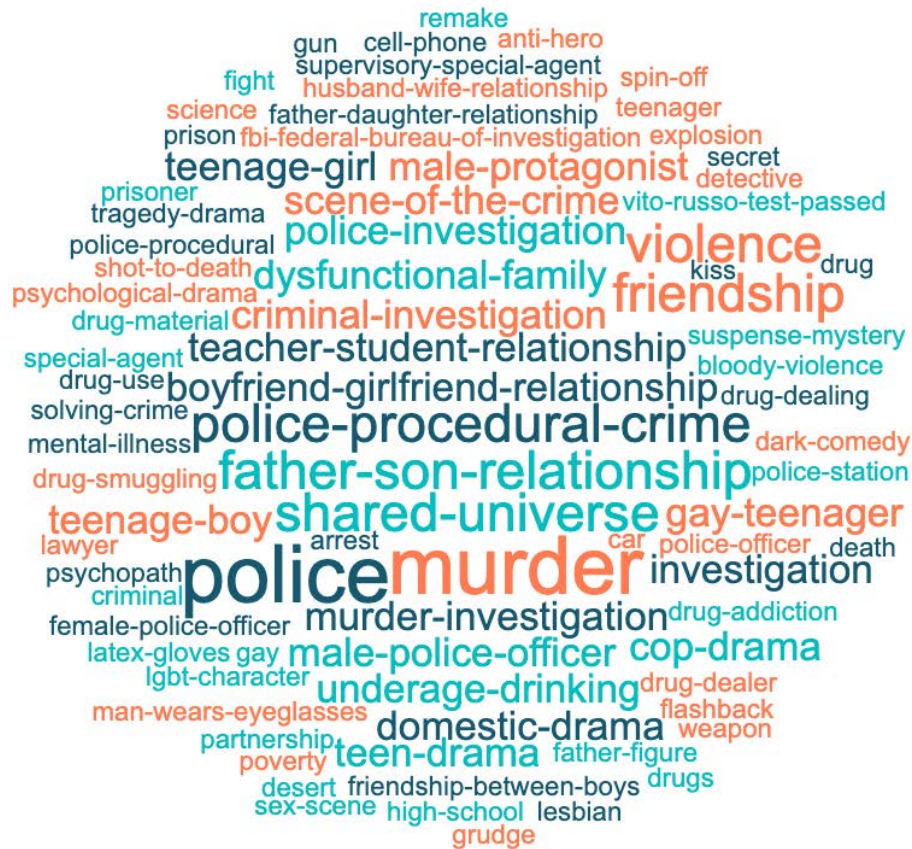
Recommendations: Youth Perspectives

Participants identifying with the media examples are more likely to want to see more stories of youth and crime in the media landscape. They desire authentic, realistic portrayals of youth and crime that challenge stereotypes, motivating youth to seek educational resources and create positive change.

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Please provide any additional recommendations you'd give to content creators and storytellers who are writing about young people and crime.

AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION

12.9% of respondents' recommendations fell into this category

"Go out and talk to them more and stop making assumptions. Listen to what they say and believe them." -Man, 2nd gen, CA, 14

"Most content creators and storytellers often portray the negative sides of young people, while neglecting the positive side, I think majority of the writers and creators should focus on the positive side."
-Man, 2nd gen, system-impacted, CA, 22

EDUCATIONAL ELEMENTS/RESOURCES

10.3% of respondents' recommendations fell into this category

"Help list resources for people trying to get out of situations like these. If your content pertains to that and you make money off of it, you should be giving those people help even if it's just saying "hey, this resource is here for you"
-Woman, Queer, White, MO, 21

"Provide prevention methods and causes in our society. What could be leading them to commit these crimes if not just being crazy"
-Man, White, GA, 16

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Please provide any additional recommendations you'd give to content creators and storytellers who are writing about young people and crime.

ADDRESS BIAS, AVOID STEREOTYPES

7.3% of respondents' recommendations fell into this category

"it'd be best to not stereotype the entire community and villainize them, rather talk about the environment that influences those actions."
-Woman, Hispanic/Latinx, 1st gen, CA, 15

"To not portray people in certain way. When telling stories about what has happen to people or events that have occurred it was needs to be told with an unbiased perspective."
-Woman, White, CA, 18

EMPOWERING YOUTH VOICES

4.9% of respondents' recommendations fell into this category

"Find the balance between realism and entertainment. Talk to those who have experienced it."
-Man, White, NC, 17

"I think writers give a lot more credit to young people than we deserve. While writers for movies depict teens as wild and crazy party goers, the statistics actually show the opposite. After covid ruined everyone's social lives, statistics shown that teens were going out less and staying in more. Although this is the truth, I doubt it will ever be shown truthfully in the media, as this doesn't make as good a story."
-Woman, Hispanic/Latinx, CA, 20

Please provide any additional recommendations you'd give to content creators and storytellers who are writing about young people and crime.

REALISTIC STORYTELLING

4.5% of respondents' recommendations fell into this category

"Crime can either be satirely and hilariously funny or it can be gritty and realistic. Then there's the secret third option that is rarely done well but when it is, it's really good. The secret third option is both satirical and realistic."
-Non-Binary, White, CA, 23

"Find the balance between realism and entertainment. Talk to those who have experienced it. "
-Man, White, NC, 17

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC ISSUES

3.7% of respondents' recommendations fell into this category

"Please represent us accurately. There is usually always a reason for the crime committed especially in youth, it takes place in environmental factors, home, community, media, etc. And a lot is rooted in the racist judicial and political system we have today."
-Woman, Bisexual, Black/African American, CA, 19

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METHODOLOGY

Survey Design: The research team created a survey with both quantitative and qualitative questions to explore how young people view and engage with media about youth and crime. The survey aimed to answer questions about youth's perceptions of media representation and how such media might affect their self-image, societal views, and behavior.

Participants: The study included 696 adolescents, aged 13 to 24, from various backgrounds across the United States. They were recruited to represent diverse gender, sexuality, racial/ethnic identities, immigration status, and interactions with the system. The sample was evenly distributed by age, and the demographics were proportionate to census data. Half of the participants (348) were from California, with the rest distributed across the United States based on population density.

Survey Administration and Data Collection: A third-party platform called Alchemer was contracted to conduct the survey nationwide. Participants received compensation and were guided on how to complete the survey online. Minors required parental/caregiver consent to participate, and the survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

METHODOLOGY

Limitations: The study had limitations, including the use of convenience sampling, which may limit the generalizability of findings to the broader adolescent population. There was also a potential for response bias or social desirability bias due to the self-report nature of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the overrepresentation of participants from California skewed responses and affected the ability to detect geographic differences in responses.

Analysis: The research team analyzed the survey data using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were processed with SPSS, primarily using descriptive statistics to examine frequencies, percentages, and means of responses. Logistic regression was used to analyze how different participant groups answered Likert-scale questions. Qualitative data underwent thematic and content analysis, involving the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and keywords related to youth, crime, and media portrayal. Themes were refined iteratively, offering context and insights into respondents' perspectives, sometimes supported by quantification. Demographic and contextual data were cross-referenced to identify trends.

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QUESTIONS?
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THANK YOU!

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