

Knife Crime Discussions on Social Media Analysis

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Methods

The four researchers searched popular media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google, Google+, Periscope etc.) using direct search engines on each page and Google Social Searcher which aggregates results across a number of sites. Key search terms were knife crime; knife; blade; stabbing; shank; strap; tool; tooled up; stab; cut. Searches were conducted with geographic limitations (Gloucestershire/South West) and without them. The resulting data were then analysed by the research group for key themes.

Findings

1. There is very open, direct discussion of carrying knives in Gloucestershire

In other areas we found open discussion of carrying knives on social media (examples below)



Be careful if you go grays mate I'd stay tooled up at all times 
twitter.com/andywilkins201...
12:12 AM - 16 Jan 2017 from Corringham, East
1 RETWEET 1 LIKE

I carry a knife and I don't intend to use it as a weapon.
In fact it's been useful more times than I can count
Like · Reply · 1 · Yesterday at 8:24am



I've been carrying a pocket knife for tool/defense for about 7 years now, it's apart of my daily carries such as wallet keys and phone. Nothing wrong with it
Like · Reply · 6 · January 25 at 7:57pm

Mistakes:
1. Going by yourself to meet more than one person
2. Not having a shank or strap
3. Not being aware [twitter.com/FatjackStacks/...](https://twitter.com/FatjackStacks/)
5:55 am - 24 Jan 2016

However in Gloucester(shire) there was very little open, direct discussion of carrying knives or intending to carry knives. Below is an example of what was found:

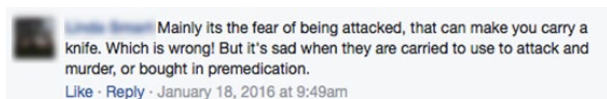


The last time I had a knife war with my brother I cut him

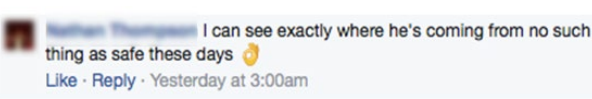


Can't wait for a cut throat blade

This could be an issue of language and that we did not uncover the right local words to search for although we did take advice from a local youth worker on contemporary terms. Where discussion did take place about carrying within the area it mostly related to issues of feelings of fear and that the knife offers protection. This discourse of safety and fear continued in other discussions about knife crime more generally in Gloucestershire.

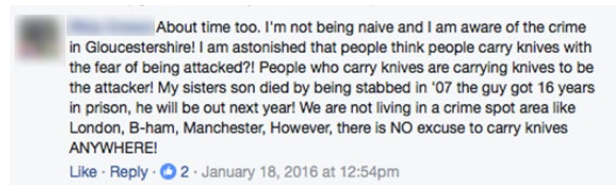
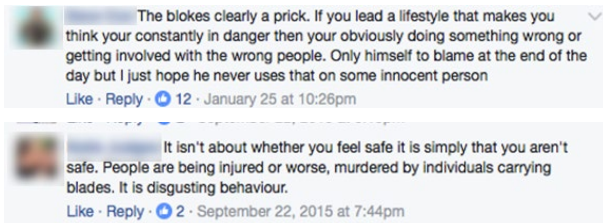


Mainly its the fear of being attacked, that can make you carry a knife. Which is wrong! But it's sad when they are carried to use to attack and murder, or bought in premedication.
Like · Reply · January 18, 2016 at 9:49am



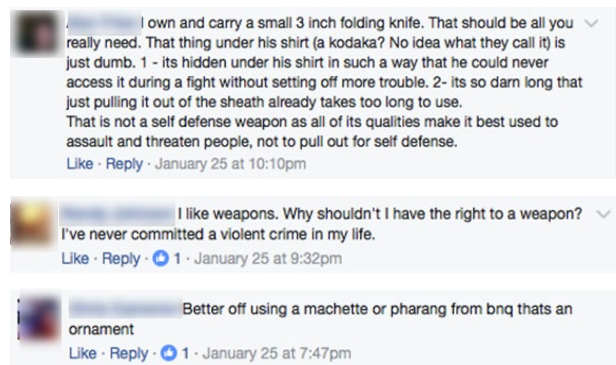
I can see exactly where he's coming from no such thing as safe these days 🙄
Like · Reply · Yesterday at 3:00am

However there was some challenge to the discourse of fear leading to carrying.



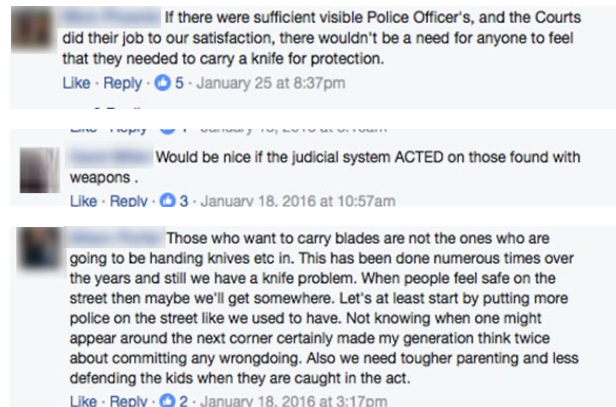
2. Wider discussions of crime were polarised between those against knives who were often vehement in their opposition and calling for punitive measures and those who saw carrying knives as a normalised part of modern life.

The examples below are all from a single local discussion thread on one particule knife crime story.



Within the examples we found, there was no sustained discussion about the issue but instead deeply entrenched positions being restated without interaction with other people's views. This lack of a discursive discourse or sustained dialogue may lead to inhibit open discussion of carrying and the reasons for it.

3. Most commentators blamed a lack of trust in the criminal justice system for both why people feel afraid and may choose to carry a knife and for not tackling knife crime in the area.



Some also blamed parenting and a lack of holding children and young people accountable for their actions.



4. Overall there was a sense that knife crime in Gloucestershire was on the rise and was a serious issue. However, this may be due to the social amplification effect of social media particularly as the media coverage of knife crime was noted to over-represent the number of crimes by posting repeated stories at every stage of the case but not linking them together (unless the reader keeps the case details in mind) making it appear that knife crime is a bigger problem in Gloucestershire than it is.

It has become a real problem nationwide. The number of people walking around 'tooled up' is the highest it has ever been.
Like · Reply · 1 · December 24, 2015 at 8:07am

So knife crime is falling tell the police to explain this and all the other stabbings

Gloucestershire Constabulary
Gloucestershire Constabulary are investigating the death of a man in Gloucester.
Police were called at around 4.05am today (Thursday 24 September) to a property on Nettleton Road in Gloucester.
A man, believed to be in his 30s, sustained what are b... Continue Reading

Error 404 - Page Not Found
A man, believed to be in his 30s, sustained what are believed to be stab wounds at the scene. He was taken to Gloucestershire Royal Hospital. How...
group

14 Likes · 25 Comments
Like · Comment · Share

Like · Reply · September 24, 2015 at 4:53pm

5. We did find a culture of normalised knife crime threats used on social media as “banter” and these were rarely challenged by alternative scripts around knife carrying.

Jackalove
Imma stab you

he will stab you once or twice or thrice

Ben Symons
@Lechachi @besty_pencil thrice...what an amazing word! Stab him in the face, stab him the face what.

Emma, do want want to stab him first or me?

Don't know why I have a massive urge to jump across the table and stab you, but it sure would be fun!

A bunch of people with animal stripes n spots got on the bus and I already wanna stab em, so loud

pricks my psn is still down they're getting acid thrown on them

@Callum__Grieve they've left Xbox live haha it's all working now but I still wanna stab them

Some examples of challenges include

Roadman Dan
Beef is all fun and games until someone pulls a shank on you in real life. Happen to me twice both times i ran off. Im still here tweeting
12:59 pm - 22 Jan 2017

Just managed to stab myself in the arm cos it was dark and my granny had a very large knife in her bagdon't ask