

East Hartford, CT Community Issue Analysis: Youth Crime

My local community is East Hartford, Connecticut, East Hartford sits within the larger community of Hartford County. There are many issues that are in the Hartford Community and in Connecticut in general. To name a few, the area has drug usage, crime both adult and youth, family problems, poverty and low income, health concerns, and racial issues. This is to name the more prevalent I've found after some google searches and most of these issues bleed into the East Hartford community from Hartford itself and other outside sources. Most of these issues already have services from the towns or from the Hartford Public Library which has more funding for services to begin with over the East Hartford Library, but one issue that seems to still be a large issue in the area is the issue of crime and more specifically youth crime. Many of the above issues can lead to youth crime, poverty, family issues, drugs, the proximity to Hartford and it is for this reason that this analysis will look at the issues of crime and youth crime. The topic of youth crime has been growing in East Hartford since 2021. The East Hartford Police Chief believes the pandemic to be among one of the causes, but this has been fast growing. Among the many issues youth crime seems to be perceived as the largest problem after a death of a 51-year-old in 2021 caused by teens fleeing a crime scene in a stolen car. This sparked many meetings about youth crime not only in East Hartford but all of Connecticut with talks about youth crime taking place in other towns.

While crime has been an issue in Hartford County for a long time there has been an uptick in in recent years with a crime rate according neighborhoodscout.com of 32 crimes committed per 1000 residents, this is way above the average for other CT towns with that being 16 per 1000. For reference East Hartford has a population of about 50,000 as of 2020 according to the US census. There are also many community concerns with the majority of articles coming from 2021 about concerns of youth crime being on the rise in East Hartford, this all came from an incident where a 51-year-old man died after two teens jump a curb in a stolen car while fleeing from a man, they just stole a wallet from. It is tragic that it took an incident like this to attract people's attention.

It would be obvious to think that the kids and youth behavior needs to change to solve the problem, which is true, but it would be the responsibility of the adults to change their behavior since they are just kids and teens. My mom works as the secretary for the Silver Lanes Elementary School, and constantly has stories of parents coming in late smelling like drugs while their kid had to wait at school, there are stories of parents yelling and being mean to school staff in front of their kids, and parents giving no punishments to kids who got in trouble for fighting. So, the first group's behavior that would need to change is the parents and role models of these kids during their most impersonate years. There are also many environmental factors at play here and many factors are argued when it comes to crime, so it is hard to pinpoint an exact root cause and even harder or impossible to fully change some to solve the problem. East Hartford

suffers from many problems that could be attributed as the environmental issue to family problems some of which were mentioned above, to drugs, to low income and poverty, as well as the location to the states capital of Hartford which has a large crime problem as well, to the fact that talks about what should be done only started 2 years ago in 2021 from local officials. There has also been talks that juvenile corrections for youth crime in Ct has been soft on punishment according to a local new paper the Hartford Current. When officials talk about youth crime, they also tend to talk about how to handle the punishment rather than about prevention, this is a problem that can be the easiest to solve. It can be easy to point out what needs to be changed but actually changing the environment is not always easy, and it will definitely take a long time to make changes necessary to reduce youth crime. Some of these problems have also been an issue nationwide and not just in my community and still have not been fully solved.

There are so many potential causes for youth crime that it is hard to narrow down and analysis a definitive root cause, and I am no criminologist or psychologist. It could be a problem in the school system, which does not seem to be the case for East Hartford, it can be a problem of family and how kids were raised, it could be an issue of they grew up around crime so they will commit crime, the East Hartford Police Chief said one of the causes could be related to the Pandemic. It is clear that the current systems in place are also a root cause since officials are discussing how they should be punishing this behavior, thinking that since they have a lighter hand with youth crime that the youth see the benefits out weight the punishment, this way of thinking can be more hurtful than helpful. These are issues that are just starting to be discussed in the past few years for East Hartford and it took a horrible incident and death to spark the conversations with is another problem that people are starting discussions to these issues only after there is a problem and not before people's lives have been forever altered.

Not to overlap and repeat too much with the environmental factors but the existing relationships that are connected to the problem are one and the same to many of them. The main problems in the community are drugs, poverty/low income, and family issues. And these are also all connected as well, some family issues come from drug use which often can affect low-income homes. Also, with general crime rates being somewhat high in East Hartford not just youth Crime it's just showing youths that crime is okay especially if kids grow up around it, they can see it as being okay if their parents do it. Another issue that seems to pop up is that the East Hartford youth are underserved according to East Hartford officials themselves when they talked about building a sports center for youth in 2022, that don't have many outlets in the community other than school activities, and for many being at home after school is a poor option.

To conclude there are many issues that the East Hartford Public Library system could tackle and there are many issues that they are trying to tackle, but the issue of Youth Crime is one of importance within the community both local and statewide. With

youth crime trends on the rise in East Hartford, and CT this is definitely a issue worth looking into, and by looking into this issue it can open doors for the issues attached to youth crime such as drugs, poverty/low income, lack of punishments by local officials, and the issue of youth being underserved in the community. The problems of crime will never fully go away but even lowering rates by a small amount is still progress.

References

- Austin ••, M. (2021, July 29). East Hartford Discusses Youth Crime Problem & Possible Solutions. *NBC Connecticut*. <https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/east-hartford-discusses-youth-crime-problem-possible-solutions/2542974/>
- Care, E. C. (n.d.). *Youth Crime | MST Services*. Retrieved August 18, 2023, from <https://www.mstservices.com/youth-crime>
- East Hartford*. (n.d.). Travel Safe - Abroad. Retrieved August 18, 2023, from <https://www.travelsafe-abroad.com/united-states/east-hartford/>
- East Hartford, 06108 Crime Rates and Crime Statistics—NeighborhoodScout*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 18, 2023, from <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/ct/east-hartford/crime>
- East Hartford is moving toward restorative justice practices for youths. There is debate in CT over whether the approach is soft on crime. (2023, January 3). *Hartford Courant*. <https://www.courant.com/2023/01/03/east-hartford-is-moving-toward-restorative-justice-practices-for-youths-there-is-debate-in-ct-over-whether-the-approach-is-soft-on-crime/>
- Juvenile Delinquency—Causes, Prevention, and the Ways of Rehabilitation*. (n.d.). Penal Reform International. Retrieved August 18, 2023, from <https://www.penalreform.org/blog/juvenile-delinquency-causes-prevention-and-the-ways-of/>
- Lamont, H. N. M. (n.d.). *CRIME IN CONNECTICUT, Annual Report of the Uniform Crime Reporting Program State of Connecticut*. (2022, September)
- Residents upset by uptick in juvenile crime – East Hartford Gazette*. (2021, July 31). <https://www.ehgazette.com/?p=954>
- U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: East Hartford CDP, Connecticut*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 18, 2023, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/easthartfordcdpconnecticut/PST045222>