



# YOUTH AS RESEARCHERS

## ON PEACE, CITIZEN SECURITY AND SAFETY

### • FACTSHEET •

*This factsheet is a knowledge product created through the UNESCO Youth as Researchers' pilot initiative on Peace and Citizen Security in the framework of the Amplifying Youth Voice and Action to address Citizen Security and Safety (AYVA) project coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme.*

*The Youth as Researchers (YAR) methodology was developed by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at the National University of Ireland, Galway and the UNESCO Chair in Community, Leadership, and Youth Development at the Pennsylvania State University, USA. The focus of the methodology is for young people to co-create knowledge production and enhance their capacities during the process. Youth are supported through training, mentoring and coordination. The focus of the methodology lies on acquiring important competencies including critical thinking and team building skills.*

*The findings presented are those of the Youth as Researchers participants. These are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.*

### Identifying factors hindering youth participation in policy formation as it relates to Peace Citizen Safety and Security in Jamaica

#### Participants

Jahmel Brown, Raneeka Cain, Johnoi Elliston, Chris-Ann Gordon-Samuels, Kadisha Mitchell.

A group of five young adults from Jamaica aged 20-23, with education ranging from an associate to bachelor's degree or in pursuit of an undergraduate degree in Social Sciences. The YAR participants stem from various socioeconomic backgrounds and are passionate about nation-building through policy development for which youth involvement is crucial.

#### Project Description

The youth population (15-29) of Jamaica comprises approximately 28 percent of the country's overall population. The relative size of the youth population and the role of youth in the development of citizen security and peacebuilding calls for greater focus to be placed on their involvement in policy-making to achieve a safer Jamaica by 2030. This is also in alignment with the global [Youth, Peace and Security Agenda](#) that calls for "meaningful youth engagement in decision-making at all levels. The direct correlation between age group and the propensity to commit crimes is reflected in Jamaica's crime statistics showing that youth are both the primary victims and perpetrators of crime<sup>1</sup>. Jamaica has extensive security and youth policies, albeit their integration has been limited. While progress on including young people in public life has been made, meaningful youth participation in the maintenance of peace and security remains a challenge. This participation is integral in ensuring that the policies are representative of youth issues and also in ensuring that youths play a part in shaping our society.

1. Harriott, A., & Jones, M. (2016). Crime and violence in Jamaica. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank.

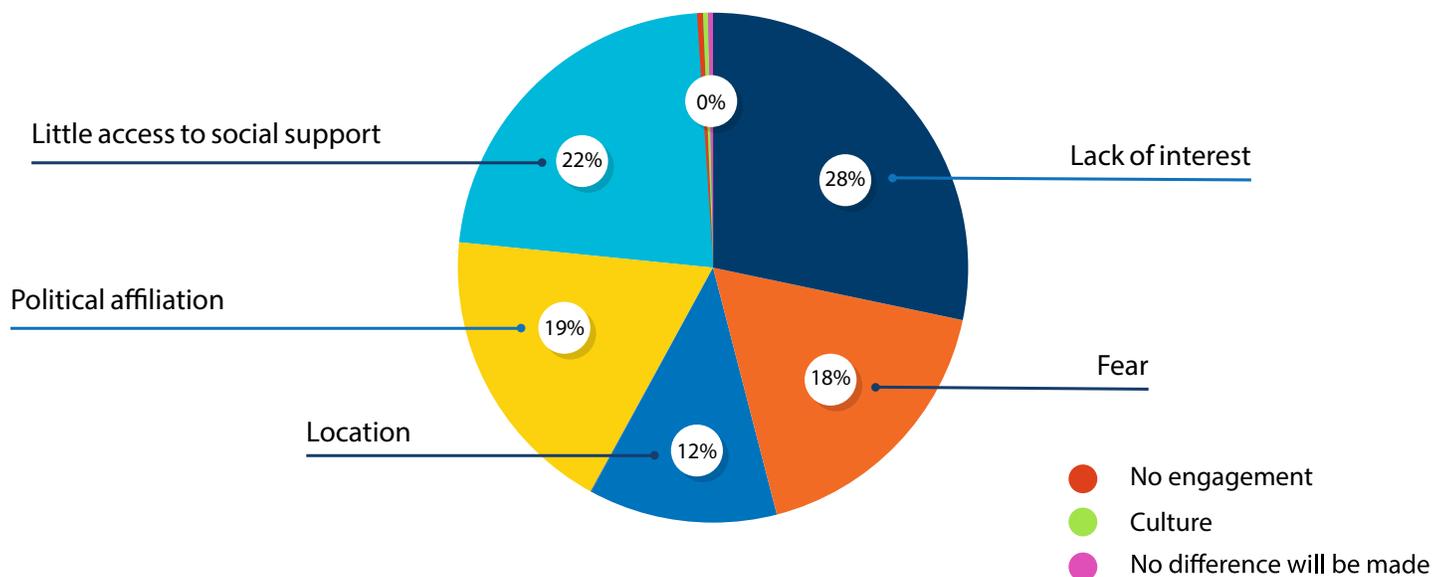
## Project Methodology

The research was conducted utilizing a mixed-method approach. Questionnaires were the primary source of data collection for this research. It was chosen because it is the most appropriate instrument for collecting a large amount of data and identifying variations, trends and patterns. The questionnaire consisted of 31 open and close-ended questions. It was issued online, participants had a two-week window to complete and submit their responses. The researcher's contacted primarily youth groups and other community service organizations within their networks to reach a wide cross-section of youths. Limitations of the study include the small sample size reaching 101 respondents and the fact that it was conducted solely online, thus possibly excluding a youth cohort without access to internet.

## Results

1. 28 percent of the respondents opine that lack of interest is the primary hindrance to the lack of youth participation in policy formation as it relates to Peace Citizen Safety and Security in Jamaica. However, youth unanimously agree that it is important for them to participate in policymaking.
2. There are not many opportunities to include youth in the policymaking process, more than half of our respondents 55.5 percent have not participated in the policymaking process in any manner. Of those who participated their participation was mainly limited to completing online surveys 34.7 percent and where opportunities do exist policymakers do not know how to involve youth beyond a tokenistic approach or the generation gap stifles proper communication.

## Barriers hindering youth participation in policy-formation in Jamaica



## Recommendations

1. To combat the lack of interest in policymaking, an awareness-raising campaign should be launched that provides information about policymaking in an attractive and easily digestible manner that makes policymaking enticing to youth. A wise decision would be to employ the use of social media in this campaign to ensure that a large demography of youths is reached.
2. Involve youth in all phases of policymaking, that is, design, implementation, review and evaluation. Youth involvement should be meaningful and must extend beyond consultations.
3. It is recommended that policymakers attend a capacity development workshop/complete a course that will enable them to better integrate youth in the policymaking process.