

Are the claims Victoria has an African gang problem exaggerated?

What they said...

'It's the No 1 issue in Victoria'

Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt

'You've got a few hundred offenders engaging in offending in a city of 4½ million people'

Victoria's Police Chief Commissioner, Graeme Ashton

The issue at a glance

On January 3, 2018, the federal Home Affairs Minister, Peter Dutton, called on Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, to take action against what the Minister termed 'African gang violence' which he claimed was prevalent in Victoria.

On December 31, 2017, similar remarks had been made by the federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, who had stated 'We know that African gang crime in some areas in particular is clearly out of control.' Similar remarks were made by the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, who, without making specific reference to 'African gangs', stated, 'We are very concerned at the growing gang violence and lawlessness in Victoria, in particular in Melbourne.'

These comments by the Prime Minister and two prominent federal ministers were challenged by Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, Victoria's Police Minister, Lisa Neville, and several spokespeople for Victoria Police.

A number of commentators, including federal shadow minister, Anthony Albanese, accused the federal Liberal Party of trying to advantage the Liberal Party in Victoria in the lead-up to the election to be held in November, 2018.

The comments and responses have provoked further dispute about the existence and nature of a gang problem in Victoria and the extent of criminality among African refugees and their children.

Background

When 'African' gangs are referred to in Victoria, the reference is usually to groups composed of Sudanese or South Sudanese humanitarian immigrants or their Australia-born children.

The issue of crime among the Sudanese community in Australia has become particularly vexed in Victoria, the Australian state with the largest Sudanese population.

The South Sudanese community in Victoria are a refugee community fleeing from the civil war in their homeland, their community of about 20,000 arrived mostly between 2003-2006.

The community has faced difficulties in adjusting to Australia, including facing casual racism and the difficulties faced in adjusting to a new society and culture.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apex_\(gang\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apex_(gang))

The community faces challenges, with an over-representation in the crime statistics. The Sudanese community is about 0.14% of the population and responsible for about 1.% of the total crime. Despite this over-representation, it is far more likely that crime will be perpetrated by an Australian or New Zealander. This situation also seems to be localised around Melbourne and has not infiltrated regional Sudanese communities. The statistics are listing alleged offences, but not those charged with a crime. Part of the over representation is connected to the deliberate targeting and racial profiling of Sudanese Australians under the assumption that they are part of the gang. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apex_\(gang\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apex_(gang))

Timeline of supposed gang violence and crime <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/06/were-not-a-gang-the-pain-of-being-african-australian>
January 2015

The “Apex gang”, thought to be an unstructured group of various backgrounds, largely from southern Melbourne, comes to the attention of Victoria Police after a fight with a rival group. Members are allegedly linked to string of carjackings, assaults and burglaries.

November 2015

Victoria Police launch Taskforce Tense to monitor the group.

March 12, 2016

Moomba violence

Police use capsicum spray to dispel men and boys, allegedly affiliated to Apex, who rampaged through Melbourne CBD during the Moomba festival.

March 11, 2017

Second Moomba affair

Police arrest 53 people after Moomba festival disrupted by brawling youths for a second year, but police say offenders are from across Melbourne and not gang or race related.

April 12, 2017

Police calm Apex fears

Victoria Police deputy commissioner Shane Patton declares Apex gang is no longer active, and was never a predominantly ethnic group.

May-December, 2017 <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/tarneit-park-trashed-while-the-west-tries-to-stop-gang-crime-20171229-p4yy3e.html>

Damage to Ecoville Community Park in Tarneit

Youths of African appearance occupied and vandalised a new estate’s community centre and park over several months. Local homes were also vandalised and families intimidated.

The gang tags 'Menace to Society' and 'Apex' are used.

December 13, 2017

McDonald's brawl

A brawl at St Kilda McDonald's reportedly involves about 60 youths of African appearance, includes alleged assaults and robberies.

December 14, 2017 <https://www.smh.com.au/national/victoria/explainer-does-melbourne-have-a-street-gang-problem-20180102-h0cku6.html>

A large group of youths allegedly bashed and robbed beachgoers in a wild brawl on the St Kilda foreshore in the early hours of the morning

December 20, 2017

Airbnb incident

A Melbourne Airbnb property in Werribee is trashed by youths of African appearance, who tag the name 'Menace to Society'.

December 26, 2017

Alleged assault on police

A police officer is allegedly assaulted by a gang of youths of African appearance at Highpoint Shopping Centre in Maribyrnong. A 17-year-old is charged.

December 28, 2017

Police reject 'gang' references

Amid mounting media pressure, Victoria Police superintendent Therese Fitzgerald says there is a problem with 'youth crime in general', not gangs. Deputy commissioner Andrew Crisp urges media not to 'play up to the ego' of offenders by calling them gangs.

December 29, 2017 <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/tarneit-park-trashed-while-the-west-tries-to-stop-gang-crime-20171229-p4yy3e.html>

Warning from Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews

The Premier said those involved in attacking police, rioting on the streets and wrecking the park had 'a wanton disregard for the safety of others.' He further said, 'What's completely unacceptable is people behaving in a riotous manner. Be in no doubt, if you're involved in those behaviours, you will feel the full force of the law.

Whilst I know it is tempting to try and excuse some of this behaviour, it's not excuses we need, it's arrests that we need.'

January 1, 2018

Prime Minister attacks Labor

Malcolm Turnbull blames the Victorian Labor government for the 'gang problem' in Melbourne.

January 3, 2018

Dutton refers to community fear

Home affairs minister Peter Dutton says people are too scared to go to restaurants in Melbourne because of 'African gang violence'.

Internet information

On January 23, 2018, The Age published a reported titled 'Top cop admits police unable to "put youth crime problem to bed"'

The report details the difficulties Victoria Police confront in dealing with youth crime and the need for broader community support to address underlying causes.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/top-cop-admits-police-unable-to-put-youth-crime-problem-to-bed-20180123-p4yyr1.html>

On January 23, 2018, the ABC published a news report titled 'What statistics can and can't tell us about Melbourne's African crime issue'

The article gives the percentage of a range of crimes committed in Vitoria committed by members of the Sudanese community.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-17/what-statistics-tell-us-about-melbournes-african-crime-issue/9336604>

On January 22, 2018, The Herald Sun published a news report titled 'Gang violence fears lead to homeowners installing bollards, spending thousands'

The report details the security precautions frightened homeowners are taking in Melbourne's western suburbs following a spate of burglaries and home invasions.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/news/gang-violence-fears-lead-to-homeowners-installing-bollards-spending-thousands/news-story/2d536955a2486b7eb51442a82f19c0a9>

On January 18, 2018, The Guardian published a comment by Jason Wilson titled 'Australia's "African gang crisis" has been brewing for years'

The opinion piece outlets what it regards as the years of conservative misrepresentation of the 'African gang issue' conducted by sections of the Australia media.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/commentisfree/2018/jan/18/the-african-gang-crisis-has-been-brewing-in-australias-media-for-years>

On January 17, 2018, The Daily Telegraph published an opinion piece by Tim Blair titled 'Groups thrive in Sudan Andrews' gangless paradise'

The comment criticises the Victorian government for inaction and ridicules those who quibble over questions of definitions when describing gangs.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/blogs/tim-blair/groups-thrive-in-sudan-andrewss-gangless-paradise/news-story/aa540e78648b097f362ec60834db3ff1>

On January 15, 2018, The Age published a report titled 'Dutton, Turnbull legitimising anti-immigrant vigilantes, say experts'

The report examines concerns that recent statements about the prevalence of African gang crime may trigger vigilante responses.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/dutton-turnbull-legitimising-antiimmigrant-vigilantes-say-experts-20180115-h0ikfc.html>

On January 11, 2018, The Guardian published a report titled 'Melbourne police say Daily Mail provoked African "gang flare-up" scuffle'

The report accuses The Daily Mail of both misrepresenting an altercation that occurred between African youths and police in Tarneit and of having provoked the incident.

The full text can be accessed <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/jan/11/victoria-police-say-daily-mail-provoked-african-gang-flare-up-scuffle>

On January 11, 2018, The Sydney Morning Herald published a report titled 'Peter Dutton steps up attack on Daniel Andrews over street gang crime in Victoria'

The report details the Home Affairs Minister's continued criticism of the Victorian government's handling of what he refers to as African gang crime in Victoria.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/peter-dutton-steps-up-attack-on-daniel-andrews-over-street-gang-crime-in-victoria-20180111-h0gn32.html>

On January 11, 2018, The Australian published a report titled 'Outrage as top Victorian cop says gang crime crisis "rubbish"'

The report looks at reactions to Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton's claim that the gang problem in Victoria had been overstated.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/state-politics/outrage-as-top-victorian-cop-says-gang-crime-crisis-rubbish/news-story/bf1eb764e2b196d47e713fa01ccbd8e3>

On January 11, 2018, The Conversation published a comment by Melanie Baak, Convener, Migration and Refugee Research Network, University of South Australia titled 'Sudanese heritage youth in Australia are frequently maligned by fear-mongering and racism' The opinion piece looks at the negative impact on the young Sudanese community in Australia of negative perceptions regarding youth violence. The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/sudanese-heritage-youth-in-australia-are-frequently-maligned-by-fear-mongering-and-racism-89763>

On January 10, 2018, the ABC published a report titled 'Victoria Police establish African-Australian community taskforce to tackle youth crime' The article looks at the establishment of a taskforce drawing on Sudanese community members to support Victoria Police in reducing crime committed by African youths. The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-10/victoria-police-establish-african-australian-community-taskforce/9317898>

On January 9, 2018, the ABC's site, Triple Hack, published a comment and analysis titled "Does Victoria have an African gang crime problem?" The analysis examined a range of data and comments and concluded that the African gang problem had been overstated. The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/african-gangs-factcheck/9313994>

On January 9, 2018, the ABC published a news report titled 'African gangs in Melbourne are a problem, police admit, as Victorian Government defends strategy' The report details Victoria's Police Minister, Lisa Neville, defending her government's policies for the management of youth crime. It gives Sudanese crime involvement statistics. The full text of the article can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-02/street-gangs-are-a-problem-in-melbourne-police-admit/9297984>

On January 6, 2018, The Guardian published a comment and analysis by Calla Wahlquist titled "'We're not a gang": the unfair stereotyping of African-Australians' The article details the difficulties faced by many within the African Australian community in response to the African gang issue. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/06/were-not-a-gang-the-pain-of-being-african-australian>

On January 6, 2018, The Australian published a news report titled 'African gang's reign of fear in Melbourne's West' The report details a home invasion, street assaults and attempted burglaries in Melbourne's western suburbs apparently linked to Sudanese youths. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/state-politics/african-gangs-reign-of-fear-in-melbournes-west/news-story/deb78713fb90f132c8df28b2b163fd24>

On January 6, 2018, The Australian published a comment and analysis by Rebecca Urban titled 'Streets of menace: gang violence in the suburbs' The article reports and gives background and opinion on recent gang violence in Victoria's western suburbs. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/inquirer/streets-of-menace-gang-violence-in-the-suburbs/news-story/ecb449200f062c57a900a1ae85edfbdd>

On January 4, 2018, The Australian published a report titled 'Anthony Albanese accuses Peter Dutton of playing politics on gangs'

The report details the accusations made by the Opposition shadow minister.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/anthony-albanese-accuses-peter-dutton-of-playing-politics-on-gangs/news-story/992cd0228e5f3d2119c3b86161ef3586>

On January 4, 2018, the ABC published a report titled "' There are no gangs": African community leaders in Melbourne issue challenge to Malcolm Turnbull'

The report gave the view of some African community leaders that there are no African youth gangs in Victoria.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-03/african-migrants-face-unfair-stigma-as-gang-stoush-escalates/9300382>

On January 3, 2018, the federal Home Affairs Minister, Peter Dutton, gave an interview on Sydney radio station 2GB in which he criticised the Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, for leading a state government under which prison sentences were too light and 'African gang violence' was not being checked.

A full audio file of this interview can be accessed at <https://www.2gb.com/frankly-they-dont-belong-in-australian-society-dutton-comes-down-hard-on-sudanese-crime-gangs/>

On January 3, 2018, The Guardian published an analysis by Calla Wahlquist titled 'Is Melbourne in the grip of African crime gangs? The facts behind the lurid headlines' The article supplies a range of statistics showing differing crime involvement rates for different sectors of Victoria's population. It backgrounds the issue and supplies a detailed timeline.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/03/is-melbourne-in-the-grip-of-african-gangs-the-facts-behind-the-lurid-headlines>

On January 3, 2018, The Herald Sun published an opinion piece by Dr Berhan M Ahmed, head of the African Australian Multicultural Employment and Youth Services and a Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

The piece is titled 'African gangs crisis: Poverty and hopelessness producing violent crime in Melbourne'

The comment looks at social causal factors behind crime among African youth.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/african-gangs-crisis-poverty-and-hopelessness-producing-violent-crime-in-melbourne/news-story/9041408cdd98f1e8977135739c887fca>

On January 2, 2018, The Sydney Morning Herald published an opinion piece by Kate Habgood who teaches Sudanese students at a Melbourne high school. The comment is titled 'African gang violence is a problem - but so is our primitive view of Africans'

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/african-gang-violence-is-a-problem--but-so-is-our-primitive-view-of-africans-20180102-h0cdr2.html>

On January 2, 2018, The Herald Sun published an opinion piece by columnist Rita Panahi titled 'A trip to Tarneit is a must for head-in-the-sand Lefties'

The comment details the vandalism and assaults that groups of Sudanese youths are claimed to have perpetrated in Tarneit. Panahi uses these events to ridicule those who claim Victoria does not have a gang crime problem involving African youths.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/rita-panahi/rita-panahi-a-trip-to-tarneit-is-a-must-for-headintheland-lefties/news-story/1de28ba04890812e0e009c70375dc853>

On January 2, 2018, the ABC published the transcript of an interview with Victoria's Police Minister, Lisa Neville, in which the minister discusses Victoria Police's response to gang crime, particularly that involving Sudanese youth
The full transcript can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/victorias-police-minister-lisa-neville-on-tackling/9299822>

On December 29, 2017, The Australian published a news report titled 'Victoria Police chief forced to admit African youth gangs a problem'
The report details Victoria Police's Acting Chief Commissioner Shane Patton commenting on the manner in which Victoria Police was responding to the problem.
The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/state-politics/victoria-police-chief-forced-to-admit-african-youth-gangs-a-problem/news-story/ac2321bb5cba7b4f925591eb2b230669>

On October 19, 2017, The Herald Sun published a report titled 'Ethnic offenders 'over-represented' in youth crime population'
The report detailed the extent to which Sudanese and Islanders were over-represented in Victoria's crime statistics.
The full text can be accessed at <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/ethnic-offenders-overrepresented-in-youth-crime-population/news-story/ea4b1793d2c25fae3674677b598d8518>

On April 21, 2017, The Age published an analysis by Chris Johnston titled 'New data shows African crime wave small, but rising'
The article gives statistics on the incidence of crime among African communities in Australia and suggests some possible causal factors.
The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/new-data-shows-african-crime-wave-small-but-rising-20170420-gvols6.html>

On April 13, 2017, The Herald Sun published an Andrew Bolt blog post titled 'Police admit: Sudanese 44 times more likely to break the law'
The comment gives background on the issue of the supposed criminality of Sudanese immigrants.
The full text can be accessed at <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/blogs/andrew-bolt/police-admit-sudanese-44-times-more-likely-to-break-law/news-story/8ca308022ba8fbbc4b89ed50504271c5>

On January 13, 2017, The Conversation published a comment by Mark Wood, PhD Candidate, University of Melbourne. The opinion piece is titled 'For gangs with a social media presence like Apex, there's no such thing as bad publicity'
It argues that high media exposure may actually engage gang criminality.
The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/for-gangs-with-a-social-media-presence-like-apex-theres-no-such-thing-as-bad-publicity-70730>

On November 28, 2016, the ABC published a report titled 'South Sudanese parents in Australia sending kids to school in Africa to avoid crime'

The report details the parenting problems faced by South Sudanese parents in Australia. The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-28/south-sudanese-parents-sending-kids-to-africa-to-avoid-crime/8064540>

On September 19, 2016, The Conversation published a comment by Nawal El-Gack, Assistant Professor, International Studies, University of Canberra and Gabriel Yak PhD Candidate, University of Canberra, titled 'A degree doesn't count for South Sudanese job seekers'

The comment examines the difficulty degree-holding South Sudanese have in finding employment in Australia.

The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/a-degree-doesnt-count-for-south-sudanese-job-seekers-64667>

On July 26, 2016, The Australian published an analysis by Rick Morton titled "'Failure to fit in" feeding African-linked crime surge'

The analysis looks at the impact of social isolation and economic disadvantage on African youth.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/failure-to-fit-in-feeding-africanlinked-crime-surge/news-story/956eb35d41405180ae7eb4241318c95e>

In June 2015, the Criminology Research Advisory Council produced a report titled "'Sudanese refugees" experiences with the Queensland criminal justice system'

The report includes a detailed account of the nature and impact of media accounts of African criminality in Australia.

The full text can be accessed at <http://crg.aic.gov.au/reports/1415/38-0809-FinalReport.pdf>

In February 2016, The African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) published a study by Santino Atem Deng titled 'South Sudanese family dynamics and parenting practices in Australia'

The study treats the difficulties encountered by South Sudanese parents rearing their children in Australia.

The full text can be accessed at http://afsaap.org.au/assets/Santino_Deng_AFSAAP2015.pdf

In February 2014, the Australian Department of Social Security published a background paper on the background and social situation of Sudanese living in Australian. The paper is titled 'The South Sudan-born Community'

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-south-sudan-born-community>

On November 22, 2008, Crikey published a comment by Scott Steel (writing under the penname Possum Comitatus) titled 'Of race and crime and Andrew Bolt'

The comment discusses in detail Andrew Bolt's treatment of the African gang crime issue and disputes the conclusions Bolt draws.

The full text can be accessed at <https://blogs.crikey.com.au/pollytics/2008/11/22/of-race-and-crime-and-andrew-bolt/>

On October 8, 2007, the ABC's Media Watch televised a segment titled 'Ganging Up' which challenged the accuracy of news reports on Channels 7, 9 and 10 purporting to deal with African gang violence.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s2054150.htm>

The SAIL (Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning) Program is a volunteer-run, non-profit, secular organization which provides free English support and community services to the Sudanese Australian community.

SAIL has published a background document explaining the cultural, educational and language background of the Sudanese students with whom its volunteers work.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.sailprogram.org.au/site/category/about/#history>

Arguments that claims about African gangs have been exaggerated

1. African youths are involved in a small percentage of youth crime

Those who argue that claims about the African gang problem in Victoria are exaggerated note that the number of gang attacks involving 'African gangs' are numerically very small.

To put the problem in perspective they suggest the contribution of non-Australian born offenders be compared with that of the Australian born. In 2016-7, 1,462 Australian-born individuals were charged with serious assault. Three other groups, New Zealand-born residents, Kenyan-born residents and Sudan-born residents together were charged with 151 cases of serious assault. All three groups combined committed slightly over a tenth of the assaults committed by Australian-born assailants. Sudan-born residents were charged with a total of 45 assaults, less than half the 91 attributed to New Zealand-born residents. The number of serious assault charges brought against Kenyan-born residents was only 15. In the two preceding years the contribution made to serious assaults in Victoria by Sudan- and Kenyan-born residents was even smaller.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-02/street-gangs-are-a-problem-in-melbourne-police-admit/9297984>

Those who believe claims about African youth crime in Victoria are exaggerated do not argue that African youth are not involved in crime, rather they argue that the contribution these ethnic groups make is very small relative to that of Australian-born citizens.

On the ABC's site Triple Hack it was noted 'The stats...show that a Victorian is 25 times more likely to be seriously assaulted by someone born in Australia or New Zealand than someone born in Sudan or Kenya.

They are almost five times more likely to be the victim of an aggravated burglary committed by an Australian or New Zealand-born offender, than one born in Sudan or Kenya.'

<http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/african-gangs-factcheck/9313994>

The second-highest cohort charged with committing a crime in the year up to September 2017, after those born in Australia, were New Zealanders, which are the fourth-largest migrant group in Victoria. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/03/is-melbourne-in-the-grip-of-african-gangs-the-facts-behind-the-lurid-headlines>

In an article published in The Age on April 21, 2017, Chris Johnston stated, 'The new data shows overwhelmingly that people born in Australia commit most crimes in Victoria – 67 per cent of murders, 71 per cent of rapes or indecent assaults, nearly 90 per cent of "non-aggravated" burglaries and 84.4 per cent of car thefts.'

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/new-data-shows-african-crime-wave-small-but-rising-20170420-gvols6.html>

Victoria's Police Chief Commissioner, Graeme Ashton, has stated, 'I wouldn't describe it as a crisis. I think if you put it into context, you've got a few hundred offenders engaging in offending in a city of 4½ million people.' <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national->

affairs/state-politics/outrage-as-top-victorian-cop-says-gang-crime-crisis-rubbish/news-story/bf1eb764e2b196d47e713fa01ccbd8e3

Those who are sceptical about African refugees capacity to integrate into Australian society argue that what is significant is not the relatively small contribution these groups make to Victoria's total crime figures, rather, they argue, what needs to be considered is the size of their contribution relative to the very small proportion of the Victorian population they form. Those urging caution when making judgements about African youth argue that critics need to be aware of the unique circumstances of groups such as the Sudanese in Victoria. Anthony Kelly, the executive officer of Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre, which covers areas with a significant migrant population, has noted the Sudanese community has a much younger average age and a higher incidence of other factors associated with a high crime rate, such as poverty and lack of engagement in work and school.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/03/is-melbourne-in-the-grip-of-african-gangs-the-facts-behind-the-lurid-headlines>

Age is a critical factor in explaining an elevated crime participation rate relative to the percentage of Victoria's population a group forms. Scott Steel, in a comment published in Crikey on November 22, 2008, noted '15-29 year olds make up the highest proportion of distinct offenders when it comes to crime across Australia.' Scott concludes that any cohort that is disproportionately young is likely to have a high crime rate.

<https://blogs.crikey.com.au/pollytics/2008/11/22/of-race-and-crime-and-andrew-bolt/>

Supporters of Sudanese youth argue these young people are not intrinsically criminal, rather they are vulnerable and steps should be taken to provide peer support, role models, language and educational support and assistance with entering the job market.

On January 9, 2018, it was announced that Victoria Police has established a community taskforce with African-Australian leaders. The aim of this group is to act early on anti-social behaviour among African youth and also to act against the sort of vilification that makes integration difficult for young African people. The focus of the taskforce is prevention.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-10/victoria-police-establish-african-australian-community-taskforce/9317898>

2. African youths are not part of traditional 'crime gangs'

Victoria Police have not referred to the groups of African youths who have been involved in vandalism, assaults and burglaries as 'crime gangs'.

Opponents of the position the police have taken argue this refusal to use the term 'gang' is simply 'political correctness', an unwillingness to call something for what it is through fear of giving offence or provoking unease.

However, Victorian Police have maintained their refusal to refer to these groups as gangs has been in the name of accuracy. From the point of view of their current crime potential the groups of Sudanese youths being referred to in the media do not constitute a 'crime gang' as police understand and use the term.

Victoria Police Deputy Chief Commissioner, Shane Patton, has stated, 'From a Victoria Police perspective we have been consistent all the way along that what we traditionally view as organised crime gangs are...high-level organised crime gangs.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/03/is-melbourne-in-the-grip-of-african-gangs-the-facts-behind-the-lurid-headlines>

Deputy Chief Commissioner Patton further stated, 'These young thugs, these young criminals, they're not an organised crime group like a Middle Eastern organised crime group or an outlaw motorcycle gang. But they're behaving like street gangs, so let's call them that — that's what they are.' <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-03/african-migrants-face-unfair-stigma-as-gang-stoush-escalates/9300382>

The Deputy Chief Commissioner stressed it was important not to give these groups a status beyond the current nature of their offending. He stated, 'We don't shy away from calling people gangs, it's not an issue for us. It's about the offending ... Let's not elevate them to a status they should not be elevated to...

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/03/is-melbourne-in-the-grip-of-african-gangs-the-facts-behind-the-lurid-headlines>

From a Victoria Police point of view, 'crime gang' is a term used to refer to those such as criminal bikie gangs which are involved in drug and firearms trafficking

<http://www.news.com.au/national/victoria/outlaw-motorcycle-gang-arrests-in-towns-near-victoria-and-new-south-wales-border/news-story/c4fb8a89a7082d1a46d9b13213bb77e4> and who have inter-gang rivalries which can result in gang wars and the assassination of opposing gang members. <https://thewest.com.au/news/crime/dramatic-footage-shows-vic-bikie-shooting-ng-s-1845347>

Victoria Police Chief Commissioner, Graeme Ashton, has also stated that in some areas the groupings were not simply of one ethnicity. Commissioner Ashton has referred to a 'United Nations of offending'. Commissioner Ashton has further stated, 'They're coming together with social media ... it's kids coming together to offend. They'll hook up with whoever they can hook up with that they know, even loosely know, to do that. It's not like we traditionally think about with gangs.' <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/top-cop-admits-police-unable-to-put-youth-crime-problem-to-bed-20180123-p4yyrl.html>

Sudanese community youth leaders have also been reluctant to see the term 'gang' applied to groups of young offenders of Sudanese origin. South Sudanese community leader, Richard Deng, stated, 'These are young people who like to make a name for themselves to look tough in front of the Victorian Police, for example.' <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-03/african-migrants-face-unfair-stigma-as-gang-stoush-escalates/9300382>

3. The vast majority of African immigrants are law-abiding citizens harmed by 'African gang' references

On both sides of this issue (those highlighting the extent of African gang crime and those arguing it is being overstated) there is a general consensus that the vast majority of the Sudanese community in Victoria, and in Australia overall, is law-abiding.

On January 2, 2018 Victoria Police Deputy Chief Commissioner, Chris Patton, stated, 'Let's not say that all of the African community are criminals because they are not. The vast majority are good people.' <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/03/is-melbourne-in-the-grip-of-african-gangs-the-facts-behind-the-lurid-headlines>

On January 2, 2018, during an interview on the ABC's 7.30, Victoria's Police Minister, Lisa Neville, similarly stated, 'Most African community members are law-abiding citizens doing the right thing, their kids are at school, they're looking for jobs.'

<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/victorias-police-minister-lisa-neville-on-tackling/9299822>

On January 6, 2018, The Guardian published a comment by Victoria Police Commander, Russell Barrett, in which he also stated, 'The vast majority of the African community, irrespective of their ages, are respectable and law-abiding people.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/06/were-not-a-gang-the-pain-of-being-african-australian>

It has been claimed that the readiness to see groups of African people as 'gangs' and the association of African ancestry with criminality is harming this large, law-abiding group.

On January 6, 2018, The Guardian treated the position of this majority group, focusing on the situation of one Sudanese woman and her family.

The Guardian article stated, 'Nyadol Nyuon arrived in Australia as an 18-year-old in 2005 and works as a commercial litigation lawyer at Melbourne law firm Arnold Bloch Leibler.'

Her children and her sister's children consider themselves Australian, she says, because they are. They have not known anywhere else. "They see themselves only as Australians; they happen to be black," she says.

She says the conflation of people of South Sudanese descent with gang crime is hurtful because it not only associates people who look like her and her children with criminality, but also draws a line between them and the rest of Australian society.

It isolates community members and makes them think they are not part of the society, and actually that they can never become part of the society, because somehow their citizenship or their stay in Australia is constantly up for negotiation... You are an Australian until a South Sudanese person commits an offence and then you are a South Sudanese-Australian, who is likely to be a potential criminal." <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/06/were-not-a-gang-the-pain-of-being-african-australian>

On January 11, 2018, (a week after his African gang crime remarks) the federal Home Affairs Minister, Peter Dutton, stated, 'I'm not, like any Australian, wanting to see a very small element of a community – in this case the African community – define the rest of the community, which is law abiding, engaged in society, working, employed, studying, whatever it might be.' <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/peter-dutton-steps-up-attack-on-daniel-andrews-over-street-gang-crime-in-victoria-20180111-h0gn32.html>

Critics of Mr Dutton's original remarks argue that, whatever his intentions, he has helped to stigmatise this law-abiding majority and fed far-right, racially-based hostility.

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/dutton-turnbull-legitimising-antiimmigrant-vigilantes-say-experts-20180115-h0ikfc.html>.

4. African criminality has been sensationalised and misrepresented by sections of the media. Critics of the treatment the issue of African gang violence has received in sections of the Australian media argue it has been dramatised and over-stated in a manner likely to cause public panic.

Critics of this supposed media over-statement and misrepresentation claim that it has been occurring for over ten years, at least since 2007. In 2008 the Australian Press Council upheld a complaint against The Australian newspaper surrounding the murder of a 19-year-old Sudanese refugee, Liep Gony. 'The Press Council...upheld a complaint that The Australian incorrectly implied that the fatal bashing of a young Sudanese student in Melbourne was at the hands of a Sudanese gang.

The Australian's report, six months later, on March 25, 2008, stated, "Sudanese gang violence escalated last September with the fatal bashing of 19-year-old Liep Gony. The wording implies that his death arose from Sudanese gang violence yet, on October 3, 2007, just one week after Gony's death, two Caucasian men were extradited from Adelaide and charged with his murder.

The newspaper then ran another report on April 16, 2008 as well as a feature article the same day, which said in part: "... following a spike in crime among young Sudanese men that escalated last September with the fatal bashing of 19-year-old refugee Liep Gony..." Once more the suggestion is that Gony's death was caused by violence involving groups of Sudanese men.' <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AUPressCINews/2008/28.pdf>

The Press Council finding and the previous misreporting in The Australian were significant because the then federal Immigration Minister, Kevin Andrews, used the supposed circumstances of Gony's death as an after-the-event explanation of his decision to reduce the number of humanitarian settlement places in Australia that would be made available to African refugees.

Questioned about Gony's death, the minister stated, 'I have been concerned that some groups don't seem to be settling and adjusting into the Australian way of life as quickly as we would

hope and therefore it makes sense to put the extra money in to provide extra resources, but also to slow down the rate of intake from countries such as Sudan.'

<https://www.theage.com.au/articles/2007/10/01/1191091031242.html>

On October 8, 2007, the ABC's Media Watch presented reports televised on Channels 7, 9 and 10 supposedly showing African gang violence. Examination of each report appeared to disprove this. <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s2054150.htm>

Following the Media Watch segment, The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) ruled that channels Ten, Nine and Seven breached the Commercial Television Industry code of practice by blaming people of African origin for violent offences and wrongly implying they were prone to crime.

<http://crg.aic.gov.au/reports/1415/38-0809-FinalReport.pdf>

Concern has been expressed that exaggerated media reports and ill-judged media conduct could precipitate the criminal behaviour supposedly being reported. It has been claimed by Victoria Police that a recent alleged 'gang flare-up' at Tarneit reported by The Daily Mail on January 3, 2018, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5231329/African-youths-clash-police-outside-Tarneit-shops.html> was in fact provoked by a Daily Mail photographer taking close-up photographs of Sudanese youths who had not been engaged in any sort of illegal activity. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/jan/11/victoria-police-say-daily-mail-provoked-african-gang-flare-up-scuffle>

5. Politicians have sensationalised the issue for electoral advantage

Critics of claims made about the crime problem supposedly associated with African youth argue that some politicians are making these claims for political advantage.

There is to be a state election in Victoria on November 24, 2018. Some commentators have stated that remarks made about the supposed African gang crime problem in Victoria by the federal Home Affairs Minister, Peter Dutton, and the Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt were intended as attacks on the Victorian Labor Government.

Those who claim this argue that as members of the Liberal National Coalition in the federal Parliament, these two ministers were acting to support their colleagues in Victoria who are currently in opposition. Both Dutton <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/peter-dutton-accuses-daniel-andrew-of-causing-gang-crime-problem/news-story/baa05af933e05437509fcabbd4cd306c> and Hunt <https://www.4bc.com.au/minister-greg-hunt-the-answer-to-victorias-sudanese-gang-crisis-simple/> placed the blame for the current supposed problem with the Labor Premier, Daniel Andrews, and his government.

On January 4, 2018, Labor federal front bencher, Anthony Albanese accused Home Affairs Minister, Peter Dutton, of 'playing politics' over the African gangs issue. Albanese stated, 'I think Peter Dutton's comments should be seen for what they are — all about politics, obviously in conjunction with the Liberal Party in Victoria, which is obviously desperate for an issue against the Andrews government that is governing effectively here in Victoria.'

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/anthony-albanese-accuses-peter-dutton-of-playing-politics-on-gangs/news-story/992cd0228e5f3d2119c3b86161ef3586>

Albanese argued that if the federal government were actually concerned about youth crime in Victoria or the position of refugees it should offer targeted assistance. Albanese stated, 'The Commonwealth government could make a contribution by actually not cutting the AFP funds, as they have; the Commonwealth government could make a contribution by not cutting new migrant services, as they have; and new support for people to get into employment and addressing those issues.' <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/anthony-albanese-accuses-peter-dutton-of-playing-politics-on-gangs/news-story/992cd0228e5f3d2119c3b86161ef3586>

These points were also made by Victoria's Police Minister, Lisa Neville, who stated, I would appreciate the Commonwealth Government focusing on other issues, like providing migration support to immigrants coming into our community, stop cutting youth employment programs that are also so critical, TAFE problems and university.

All of those things that are so critical to really getting to some of the root causes of this issue rather than playing politics of this nature.' <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/minister-accuses-government-of-playing-politics-amid-rise-in-african-youth-crime>

Sudanese community leaders have similarly accused political leaders of trying to gain a political advantage through the issue. Richard Deng, from the South Sudanese Community Association of Victoria, has claimed that the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, was using the issue as 'a tool to win elections'. Mr Deng stated, 'The Prime Minister needs to man up, support the State Government, support the African community, don't target them just because of the political agenda you want to drive.'

<http://www.news.com.au/national/victoria/crime/african-leader-turns-on-turnbull-over-street-gang-issue/news-story/1c3275cb3a9c5192d2925d36fd5c6c53>

Arguments that claims about African gangs have not been exaggerated

1. African youths have a high crime involvement relative to the proportion they form of Victoria's population

Those who maintain that Victoria has an African youth gang violence problem argue that young African people are disproportionately represented in crime statistics relative to their representation in the total state population.

In an analysis published by the ABC on January 23, 2018, it was noted that people born in Sudan make up just 0.1 per cent of Victoria's total population, or about 6,000 people.

The same analysis observed that in the year to September 2017, focusing on statistics for alleged youth offenders aged between 10 and 18, Sudanese-born Victorians were involved in 3 per cent of serious assaults, 2 per cent of non-aggravated burglaries, 5 per cent of motor vehicle thefts and 8.6 per cent of aggravated burglaries. This indicates, for example, that young Sudanese are involved in serious assaults thirty times more often than would be expected from their prevalence within the Victorian population.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-17/what-statistics-tell-us-about-melbournes-african-crime-issue/9336604>

The same point was made in a report published in The Guardian on January 3, 2018, which noted, 'On the face of it, Sudanese immigrants are over-represented in the crime statistics.

About 1% of alleged criminal offenders in Victoria in the year ending September 2017 were Sudanese-born, the Victorian Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) says, while the Sudanese and South Sudanese communities together make up just 0.14% of the state's total population.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/03/is-melbourne-in-the-grip-of-african-gangs-the-facts-behind-the-lurid-headlines>

The same Guardian article noted that in particular categories of crime Sudanese youth seemed even more over-represented. For example, 'in charges of riot and affray, people born in Sudan made up 6% of all recorded offenders, compared with 71.5% born in Australia and 5.2% born in New Zealand, a federal parliamentary inquiry reported, citing CSA statistics.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/03/is-melbourne-in-the-grip-of-african-gangs-the-facts-behind-the-lurid-headlines>

On April 13, 2017, Andrew Bolt, in a blog published in The Herald Sun, used 2015 crime statistics to make the point that Sudanese youth had a disproportionately high representation in Victoria's crime statistics. Bolt notes, 'Sudanese youths were vastly over-represented in the

2015 data, responsible for 7.44 per cent of home invasions, 5.65 per cent of car thefts and 13.9 per cent of aggravated robberies, despite Sudanese-born citizens making up about 0.11 per cent of Victoria's population.' Bolt underlined the point by concluding, 'Nearly 70 times more likely, then, to commit a home invasion than are Australian-born youths.'

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/blogs/andrew-bolt/police-admit-sudanese-44-times-more-likely-to-break-law/news-story/8ca308022ba8fbbc4b89ed50504271c5>

An article published in The Australian on December 29, 2017, used 2016 crime statistics to note, 'Figures from the Crime Statistics Agency show Sudanese and South Sudanese people were 6.135 times more likely to have been arrested last year than offenders born in Australia and 4.8 times more likely than those born in New Zealand.'

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/state-politics/victoria-police-chief-forced-to-admit-african-youth-gangs-a-problem/news-story/ac2321bb5cba7b4f925591eb2b230669>

In an article published in The Herald Sun on October 19, 2017, related claims were made about the proportion of Victorian's youth prison inmates and parolees which is drawn from what the article refers to as 'high offending racial groups'. The article states 'The...2016-17 Youth Parole Board annual report, reveal(s) more than 40 per cent of the state's youth inmates and parolees were from high-offending racial groups. Africans, mostly from Sudan, represented 12 per cent of the state's youth criminal population.' The other disproportionately incarcerated or paroled groups that the article refers to are Maoris and Pacific Islanders.

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/ethnic-offenders-overrepresented-in-youth-crime-population/news-story/ea4b1793d2c25fae3674677b598d8518>

2. African youths have been involved in serious offences against persons and property

In addition to noting the proportion of African youth involved in criminal activities in Victoria, those concerned also focus on the type of crime being committed.

In 2014-5 29 offenders born in Sudan were charged with serious assault. In 2015-6 the figure was 50 and in 2016-7 it was 45.

In 2014-5 20 offenders born in Sudan were charged with aggravated burglary. In 2015-6 the figure was 53 and in 2016-7 it was 98.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-02/street-gangs-are-a-problem-in-melbourne-police-admit/9297984>

The violent nature of many of these crimes has been a cause of concern for some commentators, as has the audacity with which they were committed.

Media coverage has highlighted the trauma inflicted on the victims. A report published in The Australian on January 6, 2018, stated, 'A woman was terrorised after being punched in a home invasion in which at least 10 men, described as being of African appearance, broke in and ransacked the property, then threatened to kill her unless she waited at least five minutes before calling for help.

"She's traumatised. I wonder how we'll be able to stay here," a distraught family member, Sam, told The Weekend Australian. "How are you meant to go back to normal after this?"

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/state-politics/african-gangs-reign-of-fear-in-melbournes-west/news-story/deb78713fb90f132c8df28b2b163fd24>

In an article published on January 21 in The Herald Sun, Arry Papoutsis, owner of Prowatch Security, stated, 'People are scared because in the past crime would be committed when people weren't home but now crimes are taking place when they're at home — and it's terrifying for people.' <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/news/gang-violence-fears-lead-to-homeowners-installing-bollards-spending-thousands/news-story/2d536955a2486b7eb51442a82f19c0a9>

Traralgon resident, Harish Rai, has stated, 'I went for a walk through the park and they were watching me. I heard them laughing and then they came from nowhere. They punched and

kicked me. I used to walk every day. Now I know not to.'

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/rita-panahi/rita-panahi-a-trip-to-tarneit-is-a-must-for-headintheland-lefties/news-story/1de28ba04890812e0e009c70375dc853>

Another Tarneit resident, Arnav Sati, was quoted stating, 'People are fearful in their own homes and to walk the streets at night. It has to stop because we deserve the right to feel safe in our community.' <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/news/gang-violence-fears-lead-to-homeowners-installing-bollards-spending-thousands/news-story/2d536955a2486b7eb51442a82f19c0a9>

Mr Sati has further stated, 'OK, the 99 per cent across the state are fine, but the 1 per cent who have to deal with it are very, very scared by what they've seen or put up with in their neighbourhoods.' <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/state-politics/outrage-as-top-victorian-cop-says-gang-crime-crisis-rubbish/news-story/bf1eb764e2b196d47e713fa01ccbd8e3>

Former National Crime Commission chairman Peter Faris QC has stated, 'Crime always comes in waves, but this is a very serious one -because, as far as we can make out this group, while it might be small, has no respect for people's safety or property.'

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/state-politics/outrage-as-top-victorian-cop-says-gang-crime-crisis-rubbish/news-story/bf1eb764e2b196d47e713fa01ccbd8e3>

3. Traditional definitions of 'crime gang' are not relevant

Those who maintain that Victoria has a problem with African youths committing crimes in groups argue that it does not matter whether or not they conform to the traditional definition of a criminal gang used by Victoria Police.

In Tim Blair's blog published in The Daily Telegraph on January 17, 2018, he ridiculed official Victoria Police definitions of gang violence which excluded that perpetrated by groups of African youths. Blair states ironically, 'There are no African gangs in Victoria... Instead, there is "just a group of young kids who are going together in a group and they are terrorising people".'

A group of young kids terrorising people, you say? Sounds like a gang. But "gang" is forbidden terminology when it comes to our Sudanese brothers. Among polite folk, it's as rare as the verb "rogered" in correspondence between the Bronte sisters.'

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/blogs/tim-blair/groups-thrive-in-sudan-andrewss-gangless-paradise/news-story/aa540e78648b097f362ec60834db3ff1>

Similarly, in a comment published in The Australian on January 6, 2018, Rebecca Urban quoted an informant described as a 'veteran police officer, based in Melbourne's west' who stated, 'If your average Joe Blow in the west is watching the TV news and sees vision of a large group of Sudanese kids mucking up, causing mayhem, what he sees is a "gang".'

I think trying to tell the public that it's not a gang, just because it might not meet the criteria of a bikie-style, organised-crime gang, is splitting hairs and it's a big mistake.

The reality is we do have an issue with groups of young men, who largely come from Sudanese backgrounds, who are absolutely obsessed with American gang culture — the music, the clothing the lifestyle, the language — and they're running around town acting exactly like a gang.' <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/inquirer/streets-of-menace-gang-violence-in-the-suburbs/news-story/ecb449200f062c57a900a1ae85edfbbd>

It has been noted that even Victoria Police seems to have shifted somewhat in the terminology it is prepared to apply to groups of African youth who commit violent acts.

On January 2, 2018, Victoria Police Acting Chief Commissioner Shane Patton stated, 'These young thugs, these young criminals, they're not an organised crime group like a Middle Eastern organised crime group or an outlaw motorcycle gang. But they're behaving like street

gangs, so let's call them that — that's what they are.' <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-03/african-migrants-face-unfair-stigma-as-gang-stoush-escalates/9300382>

4. Many young African migrants have destabilised backgrounds and face major adjustment challenges in Australia

Those who attempt to explain why some African youth may be becoming involved in violent crime highlight the particular difficulties facing Sudanese communities. Some of their members have experienced war and many have endured long-term residence in refugee camps. Low levels of education and disruption to families and their traditional value systems have created further problems .

The Sudanese population in Australia is overwhelmingly a young one. Their prior experience of education is limited and their family structures have often been disrupted. The median age of the South Sudan-born residing in Australia in 2011 was 27 years. The age distribution showed 15.5 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 24.9 per cent were 15-24 years, 48.9 per cent were 25-44 years, 10.1 per cent were 45-64 years and 0.6 per cent were 65 years and over. <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-south-sudan-born-community>

62 per cent of all Sudanese settlers in Australia are aged 24 years old or younger on arrival. Often it is mothers and children or young people and children, rather than whole family groups who are resettled in Australia. <http://www.sailprogram.org.au/site/tutor/the-sudanese-community/>

In addition to those born in Sudan, a significant number of ethnically Sudanese settlers to Australia were born in Egypt or Kenya. The majority of them are children born of Sudanese parents in refugee camps in surrounding countries. Most Sudan-born entrants (79 per cent) described their English proficiency as 'nil' or 'poor' as most Sudanese people speak Arabic, Swahili, Dinka or tribal languages. <http://www.sailprogram.org.au/site/tutor/the-sudanese-community/>

Melanie Baak, Convener, Migration and Refugee Research Network, University of South Australia, stated, 'Most families who were resettled in Australia had been living in refugee camps or as urban refugees in Kenya, Uganda or Egypt for at least ten years prior to arriving in Australia.' <https://theconversation.com/sudanese-heritage-youth-in-australia-are-frequently-maligned-by-fear-mongering-and-racism-89763>

In South Sudan less than 30 percent of children attend school. Adult literacy in South Sudan is poor. Only 12 percent of South Sudanese women are literate. This is particularly relevant to the Sudanese community in Australia as many families from Sudan are headed by single mothers. <http://www.sailprogram.org.au/site/tutor/the-sudanese-community/>

In an article published in The Sydney Morning Herald, on January 2, 2018, Kate Habgood, who teaches African students at a Melbourne high school suggests the impact that years of living as a refugee could have on students. She states, 'Students who have come from South Sudan, Sudan and Somalia may have lived in refugee camps all their lives. The skills needed to survive in a camp can be very different from the compliant behaviour expected in an Australian classroom. The frustration that arises from having your life and future livelihood beyond your control, for years on end, in the hands of a remote UN organisation, is difficult to imagine.' <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/african-gang-violence-is-a-problem--but-so-is-our-primitive-view-of-africans-20180102-h0cdr2.html>

It has also been argued that Sudanese families in Australia often make a difficult transition as child-rearing practices are very different between the Sudanese and African cultures. A 2016 Victoria University study on Sudanese parenting practices in Australia quoted one Sudanese parent who stated, 'Here as parents, we face a lot of challenges. Parenting practices have

changed a lot here. For example, a child has a right to say anything, even not listening to his/her parent...you can't force your child to listen to you.'

http://afsaap.org.au/assets/Santino_Deng_AFSAAP2015.pdf

Africa Media Australia chief executive Clyde Salumu Sharady has stated, 'Kids are growing with very little structure within families, many of them don't have male figures in their families. Child protection laws are actually fuelling this crisis. There has got to be some understanding of the cultural background of people. In most African families, the rearing of the children is a little on the tough side rather than being very permissive. When that happens it is easy for child protection services to go in and qualify that as abuse and remove children from parents and that actually makes things worse.'

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/failure-to-fit-in-feeding-africanlinked-crime-surge/news-story/956eb35d41405180ae7eb4241318c95e>

Kot Monoah, chair of the South Sudanese Community in Victoria notes, 'Typical South Sudanese culture is one of strict upbringing. We need to help parents find alternative parenting, if we all of a sudden say that strict parenting is not the way to go in Australia.'

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-28/south-sudanese-parents-sending-kids-to-africa-to-avoid-crime/8064540>

5. Young African migrants are economically disadvantaged, often unemployed and face discrimination

Those who attempt to explain why some African youth become involved in violent crime stress the significance of economic disadvantage and unemployment.

Dr Berhan M Ahmed, head of the African Australian Multicultural Employment and Youth Services and a Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne, has stated, 'Crime has many roots, but the most important root is poverty. We need to understand that it is the combination of poverty and hopelessness that produces violent crime.'

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/african-gangs-crisis-poverty-and-hopelessness-producing-violent-crime-in-melbourne/news-story/9041408cdd98f1e8977135739c887fca>

At the time of the 2011 Census, the median individual weekly income for the South Sudan-born in Australia aged 15 years and over of \$272 was approximately half that of the rest of the Australian population when compared with \$538 for all overseas-born and \$597 for all Australia-born. <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-south-sudan-born-community>

This low weekly income is attributable to low participation in professional or highly skilled fields of employment and to a high unemployment rate. As indicated by the 2011 census, of the 1028 South Sudan-born who were employed, only 18.8 per cent were employed in either a skilled managerial, professional or trade occupation. The corresponding rate in the total Australian population was 48.4 per cent. Among South Sudan-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 50.7 per cent and the unemployment rate was 28.6 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 65 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively.

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-south-sudan-born-community>

In some areas, the level of unemployment among African youth is even higher than the overall figures suggest. Such elevated levels of unemployment can have a very negative effect on the communities involved.

In an article published in The Age on April 21, 2017, Abeselom Nega, a board member of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, stated, 'Unemployment is at

40-50 per cent in some African and Pacific Islander communities. By the time kids reach 17 or 18, they know they have very little chance. They have very little skill, they don't have the language to compete in the market effectively, they can't go to uni or TAFE or become a tradie. It's a hopelessness.

There are a lot finding it very difficult to get a job and I am even talking about the African kids who have gone to uni and do the right thing for themselves and for their families. They are struggling, too.' <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/new-data-shows-african-crime-wave-small-but-rising-20170420-gvols6.html>

It has been suggested that racism in addition to a lack of qualifications is making it difficult for Sudanese Australians to find employment. A recent study in the Australian Capital Territory found that while 42% of the 72 South Sudanese participants had tertiary qualifications, 96% of this participant group were seeking employment – with many unemployed or underemployed, despite their qualifications. <https://theconversation.com/a-degree-doesnt-count-for-south-sudanese-job-seekers-64667>

Further implications

Racism is an uncomfortable issue. To be accused of being racist is wounding for a majority of people. As Dr Tim Soutphommasane, Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner, stated in October, 2017, 'Few would ever openly endorse the idea of racial discrimination.' <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/many-faces-racism> It is a charge most reject. Few of us see ourselves as unreasonably prejudiced against others because of their country of origin or their skin colour. Those who hold negative perceptions of particular races usually justify them by citing characteristics that members of that race are genuinely believed to possess.

Yet it is difficult not to see racism in popular and media responses to instances of criminal behaviour among Victorians of Sudanese origin.

The following is a selection of comments posted in response to Andrew Bolt's blog published in The Herald Sun on December 21, 2017, titled, 'Who let them in? Another riot and an ambush': <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/blogs/andrew-bolt/who-let-them-in-another-riot-and-an-ambush/news-story/7d6f1626e5a59ef3c28eefd14e86d49b> 'Our politicians have absolutely no idea of the way these Africans think - have no idea how these Muslims think. They need to live in these countries to actually experience the way of life there and how their values are so different to ours.' 'Maybe Pauline Hanson had the right idea after all. We would not be living in fear, afraid to go to sleep at night for fear African gangs would break in and attack us. That our government has allowed this problem to escalate as it has is unforgivable. Our politicians need to grow a backbone cut back on paroles and support our overworked police.' 'How long until good citizens get fed up with the inaction of the police and Leftist rulers? When this happens expect to see vigilante gangs roaming the streets searching for these gangs in order to put them right back in their place.'

One of the concerning aspects of responses such as those reprinted above is the manner in which they classify one group of people as suspect based on country of origin or supposed belief system. They recognise no common ground with the groups they condemn. However, the 2011 census showed that over 36% of Sudanese living in Victoria were Catholic and almost as many were Anglicans as followed Islam. Well over 50% of Sudanese immigrants to Victoria are Christian.

<https://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/stories/documents/2013/Censusfactsheetscommunityprofiles/commprofiles/43-sudan.pdf> This is slightly higher than the figure given for Australian-born Victorians who profess to be Christians.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/MediaReleasesByCatalogue/C508DD213FD43EA7CA258148000C6BBE?OpenDocument>

Sudanese youths involved in crime may be less committed to a religious group than the Sudanese community as a whole; however, given that engagement with community is seen as a protective factor against criminal involvement, that is likely to be true for most Victorian youth involved in crime. <https://www.crimeprevention.vic.gov.au/grants/youth-crime-prevention/risk-and-protective-factors>

Despite the existence of shared values, the responses to the Andrew Bolt blog quoted above focus on the criminal behaviour of a group seen as outsiders. These African youths are designated as completely different to us and perhaps unknowable to us. This group is seen as the sole source of threat and the only possible responses to this threat are punitive police action or for citizens to take the law into their own hands.

As a partial explanation of such reactions, the impact of 'visibility', perhaps better thought of as 'visible difference', needs to be considered. The fact that a group is physically different to the majority within a community heightens the likelihood that its members will be perceived as outsiders. A study published by RMIT University, Melbourne, of the life satisfaction of three refugee populations – ex-Yugoslavs, black Africans and people from the Middle East – who had recently (1990s–2000s) arrived in Western Australia, found that ex-Yugoslavs were more satisfied with their situation than the other two groups, which was at least partly attributed to their whiteness and therefore reduced visibility in the host population.

<http://mams.rmit.edu.au/9cli26ex5c421.pdf>

There is no dispute that Sudanese youth are over-represented in Victoria's crime statistics relative to the proportion of the population they represent. Equally, however, there is no dispute that these youths constitute a small proportion of those who commit vandalism, assault, home invasions, aggravated burglary or car theft. It is disturbing that they have come to be seen as virtually embodying the risk of such criminal incursions. In a ReachTEL phone poll conducted by The Age in early January 2018, 67% of those surveyed in Cranbourne believed African gangs were 'the main issue' with youth crime.

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/poll-shows-african-youth-crime-a-key-issue-and-andrews-better-to-deal-with-it-20180107-h0enyq.html>

A number of studies have tracked media representations of criminality among Sudanese migrants from their arrival in Victoria. The Police Accountability Project has considered the role of the media in shaping public perceptions: 'The journalist Walter Lippmann wrote that societal feelings, beliefs, opinions and actions are responses to "pictures in our heads," not to the world itself. What we see in the media provides most of these pictures, which, as the majority of crimes being reported on are those involving young people 'of African appearance', has created a distortion in the public's perception of crime.'

<http://www.policeaccountability.org.au/commentary/10-things-you-need-to-understand-about-the-media-and-crime-reporting/>

When considering this issue it is important to acknowledge the pervasiveness of racial prejudice within all cultures, including Australia's, and the intensifying effect that concerted media attention can have on the public's perception of an issue.