

Discuss the causes of the Toxteth Riots

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Figure 1

First, overaggressive policing and selective law enforcement such as 'stop and search on suspicion' also known as the 'SUS laws' is one main factor that sparked the riots. The over-used 'SUS' laws by police damaged the relationship with the community, causing anger and resentment by young people especially from those in the black community. The hatred towards the police got to the point that the local youth were no longer willing to obey the law and the police force.

Toxteth riots also known as L8 riots, erupted on the night of July 5th and lasted over nine days. There were 468 police officers injured, 500 people got arrested and more than 100 vehicles were set on fire in the rioting. The disturbance was eventually terminated by the police using CS gas to disperse crowds – this marked the first time CS gas was used on British mainland. There are a variety of explanations on the cause of the riots in the studies: aggressive policing, racial tension, criminal opportunism and political neglect resulting in the economic decline and the increasing unemployment (Marren, 2016).

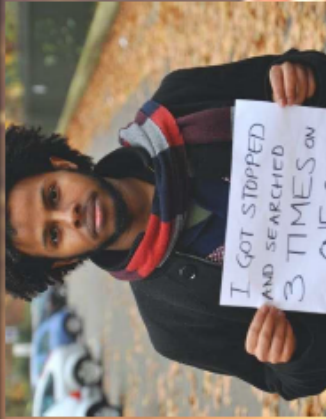


Figure 2



Figure 4

Second, studies show that the economic deprivation and unemployment may possibly be one of the root problems that caused the riots. The election of Margaret Thatcher to Prime Minister in 1979 and the Conservative Party's determination of reducing public spending resulting in high levels of unemployment. Marren (2016) uses quantitative methods showing the rate of unemployment and poverty in Toxteth were much higher than other Liverpool areas. Jobless, hopeless, frustrated, angry and bored, teenagers especially black youths with limited levels of educational attainment were the majority among the rioters.



Figure 3

Third, the racial tension in Liverpool dating back to the slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Black people facing racial discrimination in terms of being excluded from employment, exposure to threats and violence, abused and harassed by an over-aggressive police force. Black people were forced to live in neglected inner-city areas such as L8 in Liverpool, and racial discrimination against black students and teachers remains controlling in British schools. As a result of which their suppressed frustrations led to anger and the riots were the only way for them to fight for their right to be treated equally.

Most common methods used in the literatures are: The quantitative methods which are in the form of analysing the content and the secondary data, surveys, and questionnaires. The qualitative methods are in the form of document analysis, focus groups and unstructured interviews.

References:

Figure 1: Liverpool Echo (2011) Toxteth Riots 1981 background - and how it all began. [online image] Available at: <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/toxteth-riots-1981-background> Accessed: 03/04/2021

Marren, B. (2016) The Toxteth riots, 1981: Unemployed youth take to the streets. In *We shall not be moved: How Liverpool's working class fought redundancies, closures and cuts in the age of Thatcher* (pp. 110-143). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Figure 2: Pearson, G & Powe, M (2020) We spent seven years observing UK police stop and search – here's what we found [online image] Available at: <https://phys.org/news/2020-11-spent-years-uk-police.html> Accessed at: 03/03/2021

Figure 3: Sandbrook, D (2019) A nation torn apart, civil unrest, and a deeply divisive Tory PM fighting for survival. No net Boris in 2019, but the infinitely grimmer state of the nation under Margaret Thatcher [online image] Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-7513433/DOMINIC-SANDBROOK-Margaret-Thatchers-divided-Britain.html> Accessed at: 04/04/2021

Figure 4: The Thatcher years (2013) 1981 MOSS SIDE RIOTS – POLICE STATION MOBBED [online image] Available at: <https://thatchercrisisyears.com/2013/04/20/moss-side-riot-1981/> Accessed: 03/04/2021