

## Young girls charged in connection to swarming



**The alleged attack occurred on this busy street in London, Ont., on Feb. 2, 2008.**



**London Police Cst. Amy Phillippo told CTV News that 'this is a very alarming, violent crime.'**

*CTV.ca News Staff*

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Seven girls are facing charges in connection with a vicious swarming-style assault in London, Ont., in early February, authorities confirmed Friday.

Police say a 19-year-old girl and her 15-year-old brother were attacked by as many as 25 teens on busy street in a commercial neighborhood of the city. The boy was stabbed in the back. His sister was beaten and punched by a group of girls, at least one as young as 12.

The boy is now recovering and his sister didn't receive serious physical injuries. The attack has left the community and even police in shock.

"This is a very alarming, violent crime. Again the ages of the females were 12 to 16 years. They were very young," London Police Const. Amy Phillippo told CTV News.

The shocking assault may indicate a growing problem. A report by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health released earlier this year found that violence, bullying and sexual harassment are rampant in high schools across southwestern Ontario.

It stated that there's ample evidence that kids face violence regardless of whether or not they live in small towns or big cities. More than 1,800 students at 23 high schools were surveyed about their experiences in Grade 9 and Grade 11, and almost a third said they had felt unsafe at school at some point.

Recent statistics also show the rate of youth violence is increasing twice as fast in girls as it is in boys, and experts call that an alarming trend.

"We need to be concerned with our girls like we've always been concerned with our boys," said psychologist Alan Leschied, an expert in teen violence.

More and more images of teen violence are showing up on the Internet and many of those videos include girls beating girls. Last fall, parents in Montreal were shocked when an assault was captured on a cellphone outside a high school and posted online.

Those who work with teenagers in the city are taking notice. There is zero tolerance for violence for both boys and girls, said one staff member at a Montreal centre that tries to keep kids off the street.

Youth workers say that often times, community and recreation centres become a haven for kids who want to escape the violence that is increasing on the streets.

David Wolfe, the author of the Ontario study, has said schools also need to find ways to address abuse and violence so kids feel safe during every year of their schooling.

*With a report by CTV'S Genevieve Beauchemin*