

# Police blamed for vigilantism

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Johannesburg - Young South Africans feel that "useless" police lead to the exercising of vigilante justice, a survey revealed on Thursday.

About 47% of those polled thought people chose to punish criminals themselves because the police were not effective, consumer insights company Pondering Panda said.

About 34% believed it was because the courts did not hand down tough enough sentences, and 16% thought it was because the courts took too long to deliver justice.

"It's clear that young people feel the justice system in South Africa is failing their communities when it comes to tackling crime, and that vigilantism and mob justice are a valid means of punishing criminals," Pondering Panda spokeswoman Shirley Wakefield said.

"With almost four in five finding it acceptable, it is a phenomenon we're likely to start seeing even more of in communities across the country."

A total of 3 756 respondents aged between 15 and 34 were interviewed by cellphone for the survey.

The study revealed that most young people felt vigilante justice was socially acceptable.

About 79% felt it was either always or conditionally acceptable for people to catch and punish criminals themselves, while 20% felt it was never okay.

Many felt vigilante justice was on the rise, and 69% said they thought it would happen more and more.

"These findings are supported by recent surveys, conducted by Pondering Panda, which show that the majority of young South Africans do not trust the police," Wakefield said.

"The government will not see a reduction in vigilantism until police are seen to be doing their job effectively, and the courts deliver harsher sentences, more efficiently."

- SAPA