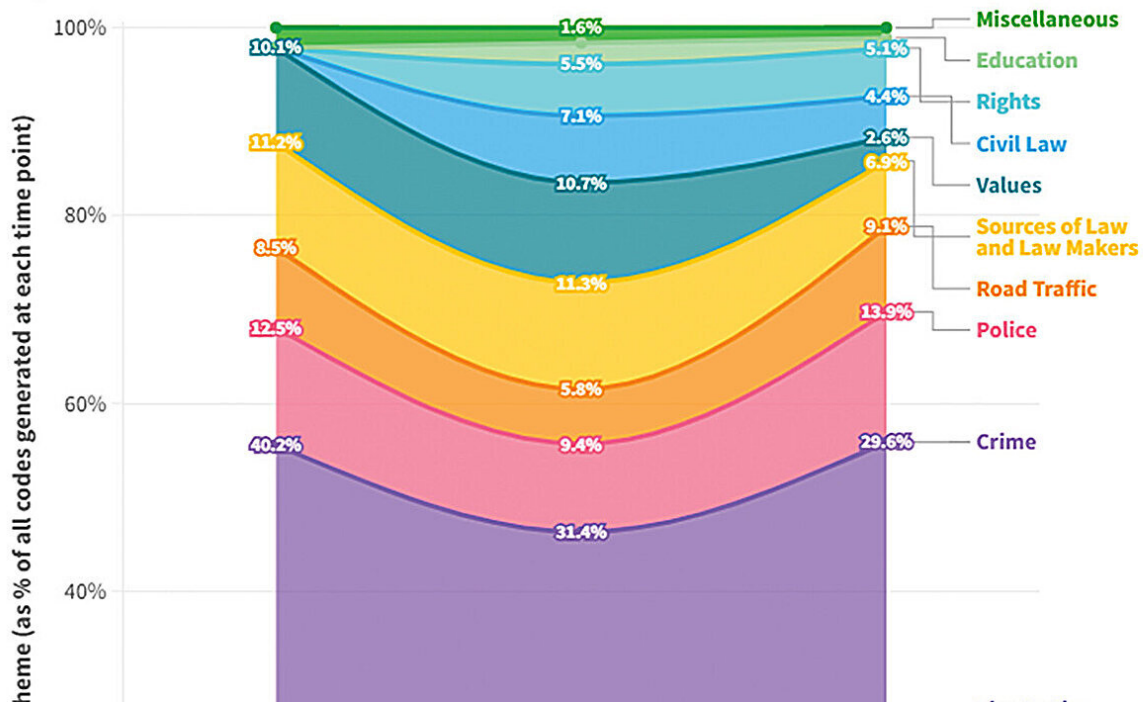


UK project enhances legal understanding for legally accountable 10-year-olds, research finds

December 15 2023, by Bron Mills

'Draw the Law' analysis

Key themes : The Justice System Crime Police Road Traffic Sources of Law and Law Makers Values Civil Law Rights Education Miscellaneous



“Draw the Law” analysis. Credit: *The Law Teacher* (2023). DOI: 10.1080/03069400.2023.2282860

Most Year 5 children will know little about the law and their rights, yet

at the stroke of midnight on their 10th birthday, they become criminally responsible in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

With this in mind, and drawing inspiration from Channel 4's Taskmaster, Dr. Ali Struthers from the Law School at the University of Warwick created "School Tasking." The primary outreach project has now become a national competition in 32 universities (working with up to 6000 children) across the UK and Ireland, from Aberdeen to Kent and from Newcastle to Cardiff.

New research on the project has found a marked improvement in children's understanding of the law following the sessions, making connections with cases impacting their consumer rights, [human rights](#) and broader themes of justice and equality.

The research suggests that children's pre-existing understanding of the law may be based on media depictions, from what a lawyer looks like, complete with gowns, gavels, and briefcases—to what crime looks like, including Americanized imagery from crime-based television shows and weaponry from violent computer games.

By week four, children begin to include technical terminology in their work, including "case law," "statute," and "duty of care." In addition, the concept of an individual's "rights" begins to appear, including reference to specific human rights, including education, family, protection from abuse, and freedom.

The emergence of these additional themes that directly reflect the subject matter covered in the sessions suggests that School Tasking is, at least by the final session, disrupting, to some extent, children's conceptions of what law is, how it works, and who it is for.

Dr. Ali Struthers, creator of School Tasking and Associate Professor at

the University of Warwick's Law School, said, "The project has succeeded in broadening children's perspectives on law, making it more relatable and significant in [everyday life](#) beyond the narrow perception of crime and criminality.

Importantly, the findings reveal that children are enjoying the project and engaging with the law on a deeper level while also showing that this learning is being retained, even up to a year after their participation in the classroom sessions. This interest in the more curious or contentious aspects of law will, in turn, we hope, encourage more [children](#) from less-advantaged backgrounds to consider university study and even the study of Law itself."

Next year, Taskmaster's creator and star, Alex Horne, will receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Warwick, marking his continuous support for and contribution to the [project](#) and its roll-out.

The findings are [published](#) in *The Law Teacher* journal.

More information: Ali Struthers et al, Improve children's legal knowledge and skills through School Tasking: your time starts now, *The Law Teacher* (2023). [DOI: 10.1080/03069400.2023.2282860](https://doi.org/10.1080/03069400.2023.2282860)

Provided by University of Warwick

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