

# Youth Violence



Youth Violence is the  
**4th leading**  
cause of death  
in young people worldwide.

**200,000 die**  
each year.

## The Health Sector Role in Prevention and Response



World Health  
Organization

# What is youth violence?

Youth violence:

Involves **children and young adults aged 10 to 29**

Peaks during **late adolescence and early adulthood**



It takes **many forms.**



Homicide  
Assault



Fighting



Bullying  
Emotional abuse



Dating violence

**Youth violence affects countries unevenly.** In some, rates of youth violence are **100 times higher than in other countries.**



# Youth violence is **widespread**.

## Worldwide:

**4 out of 10 young people** were in a physical fight in the last year



**1 out of 4 teenagers** were bullied in the last month



Males are far more likely than females to be killed in youth violence.  
**83% of victims are male.**

# Youth Violence has **severe consequences**.

Some effects of youth violence are **visible**.

Millions of young people are **admitted to hospitals for serious injuries each year** as a result of youth violence.



Others are **hidden**.

1 out of 3 victims of school violence **never tell anyone about it.**



# Youth violence has a **lasting impact.**

Mental health problems

Poor performance in school

Harmful use of tobacco, drugs, alcohol

Being a victim of violence as an adult – or committing it



Youth violence **harms communities.**



Fear and anxiety,  
loss of social cohesion

It **drains economies.**



Health care costs, legal and judicial costs,  
lost future earnings, destroyed property

# Youth violence is **predictable**.

Risk factors include problems and behaviours such as:



Struggling  
in school



Truancy  
and  
destructive  
behaviour



Having  
antisocial  
peers



Abusing  
alcohol  
and drugs



Behaviour  
problems



Criminal  
activity

Circumstances like:



- Living in an area with concentrated poverty
- Weak governance and poor rule of law
- Having easy access to alcohol, drugs, and guns

Having parents who are:



- Harsh, inconsistent, or disengaged
- Involved in crime

These factors increase the risk of involvement in youth violence –  
**the more risk factors, the greater the risk.**

# Youth violence **is not inevitable.**

We don't have to wait for it to happen and then act.



We can address the causes and prevent it.

Research has found strategies that work —  
**potentially anywhere in the world.**

# We can **prevent** youth violence.

Punishment alone is not the answer – because **we're not addressing the root causes.**

Interventions at different stages of life can make a difference – **and help stop children from becoming violent.**



## During early childhood

- ✓ Parenting programmes to help parents build strong relationships with their children
- ✓ Early childhood development programmes to help disadvantaged children keep up with their peers



## During adolescence and young adulthood

- ✓ Life and social skills development programmes to help young people build healthy peer relationships
- ✓ Schools-based violence prevention programmes to prevent bullying
- ✓ Therapeutic interventions to help children and teens manage anger and behaviour problems

## Society-level prevention strategies

- ✓ Policies and programmes to reduce alcohol and drug use
- ✓ Reducing access to firearms
- ✓ Urban upgrading and deconcentration of poverty
- ✓ Community- and problem-oriented policing

The health sector has **a vital role** in **preventing and responding** to youth violence.



1

Collect data on the impact and costs of youth violence

2

Start programmes to reduce risk factors for youth violence, such as behavioural problems, child maltreatment, and the harmful use of alcohol

3

Include interventions to prevent youth violence within existing early childhood development, education, and health programmes

4

Provide comprehensive health services to survivors, including emergency care

5

Collaborate with other sectors to address youth violence, such as criminal justice, education, and social services

**Youth violence is predictable – and preventable.**

Together, we can save lives and ensure a safer future for young people across the globe.

**WHO Resources:**

- WHO. Violence and Injury Prevention.
- WHO (2015). Preventing youth violence: an overview of the evidence.
- WHO (2014). Global status report on violence prevention 2014.
- WHO (2009). Violence prevention: the evidence.

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