

tool kit for teen care

Violence and Teens



How often are violent crimes committed against teens?

- Of teen murder victims: 30% are female; 40% are killed by family members, 45% by acquaintances, and 15% by strangers; and 50% are between the ages of 15 and 17 years.
- Three out of four murdered juveniles aged 12 years or older are killed with a firearm. For girls, 31% are killed with a firearm; 27% are killed by other means such as hands, fists, or feet; and 17% are killed by knife or blunt object.
- Approximately one third of all murders of victims younger than 18 years are committed by youths aged 13–17 years.
- Nearly 48% of serious violent juvenile victimizations (rape, robbery, aggravated assault) occur between noon and 6 PM.
- Those who use drugs are more likely to become victims.
- Juveniles are less likely to report violent crimes than adults, regardless of the location of the incident, presence of a weapon, degree of injury, age of the attacker, or relationship between the victim and the attacker.
- Refer to the fact sheet “Acquaintance and Date Rape” for information on sexual assault.

How often do girls commit crimes?

- Although girls still make up only about 25% of all juvenile arrests, this percentage is increasing at an alarming rate.
- Between 1989 and 1993, females were responsible for 17% of the growth in juvenile arrests for violent crimes versus a 5% increase for boys.
- Historically, female juvenile crimes almost always were minor offenses, such as truancy or running away. Increasingly, girls are more likely to be arrested for robbery, assault, drug trafficking, and gang activity. Between 1994 and 1995:
 - The number of girls arrested for aggravated assault increased by 3% (versus a decline of 4.5% for boys).
 - The number of girls arrested for other assaults increased 7.7% (versus 1.8% for boys).
 - The number of girls arrested for drug abuse increased 26.6% (versus 16.7% for boys).

What makes a teen more likely to repeat crimes?

- Several things, which rarely occur alone, put girls at risk of becoming juvenile delinquents. They include:
 - Sexual and physical abuse—among female delinquents, an estimated 70% have a history of sexual abuse.
 - Substance abuse.
 - Teen pregnancy.
 - Poor grades in school—the most significant risk factor relating to early onset of delinquency is poor academic performance; 26% of female juvenile offenders have learning disabilities.
 - Mental health needs—more than 50% of young women in correctional and training schools have reported attempting suicide.
 - As gang members, girls face higher risks of unsafe sex, sexual abuse, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and suicide.

Does the media have an effect on violence?

- By age 12 years, the average child is estimated to have witnessed 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on network television.
- In a study of 573 distinct products of popular entertainment (television series, movies, music videos, and feature films), 8,350 scenes of violence were found. Of this number, 4,204 were life threatening (assaults with deadly weapons and brutal beatings) or serious (gunplay, assaults with other weapons, severe beatings, suicides, and sexual assaults).
- The amount of violence in the media is increasing dramatically.
- The number of scenes showing gunplay tripled in recent years.
- Excessive exposure to media can cause: increased violent behavior, obesity, poor school performance, increased sexual activity, tobacco and alcohol use, and callousness toward violence.



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Are schools safe?

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey:
 - A total of 6.9% of high-school students carried a weapon on school property during the 30 days preceding the survey. Overall, male students (11.0%) were significantly more likely than female students (2.8%) to have carried a weapon on school property.
 - When asked, 7.7% of high-school students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property one or more times in the 12 months preceding the survey.
 - A total of 14.2% of students had been in a physical fight on school property one or more times during the 12 months preceding the survey. Male students (18.5%) were significantly more likely than female students (9.8%) to have been in a physical fight on school property. This significant difference was identified for white and Hispanic students and all grade subgroups.
 - Nearly 5.2% of students had missed 1 or more days of school during the 30 days preceding the survey because they felt unsafe at school or when traveling to or from school.

What are the consequences of witnessing or being a victim of violence?

- Post traumatic stress disorder may be seen in children who have been victims of or exposed to violence.
- For more information, refer to the fact sheet "Stress and Trauma."

What can be done?

- Teens can talk with a health care practitioner or counselor about abuse and previous violence.
- Teens should be protected from entertainment and media violence. Efforts to protect a teen from media violence should start before the teen years. Not being around media violence may even help very young children.
 - Parents can set time limits for viewing television or being on the Internet.
 - Parents can watch television or go to movies with the teen, or try to see the same shows or movies.
 - Parents can use the rating systems for television, movies, and games.
 - School or school board officials can become informed about violence at school and ways to prevent it.
 - Access to and risk from firearms can be limited.

For More Information

We have provided information on the following organizations and web sites because they have information that may be of interest to our readers. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists does not necessarily endorse the views expressed or the facts presented by these organizations or on these web sites. Further, ACOG does not endorse any commercial products that may be advertised or available from these organizations or on these web sites.

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Fax: (202) 484-3917
www.acog.org

American Medical Association
515 North State Street
Chicago, IL 60610
Telephone: (312) 464-5000
www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/1947.html

Center for Media and Public Affairs
2100 L Street, NW
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20037
Telephone: (202) 223-2942
www.cmpa.com/tvent/violence.htm

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
4770 Buford Highway, NE, Mailstop K65
Atlanta, GA 30341-3724
Telephone: (770) 488-1506
www.cdc.gov/ncipc/org2.htm

National Center for Education Statistics
1990 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
Telephone: (202) 502-7300
www.nces.ed.gov

Office for Victims of Crime
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/welcome.html

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse/NCJRS
PO Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
Telephone: 800-638-8736
www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org