Key facts

- **Youth violence is a global public health problem. It includes a range of acts from bullying and physical fighting, to more severe sexual and physical assault to homicide.**
- **Worldwide some 200 000 homicides occur among youth 10–29 years of age each year, which is 42% of the total number of homicides globally each year.**
- **Homicide is the fourth leading cause of death in people aged 10-29 years, and 84% of these homicides involve male victims.**
- **For each young person killed, many more sustain injuries requiring hospital treatment.**
- **In one study, from 3–24% of women report that their first sexual experience was forced.**
- **When it is not fatal, youth violence has a serious, often lifelong, impact on a person's physical, psychological and social functioning.**

  Youth violence is a global public health problem. It includes a range of acts from bullying and physical fighting, to more severe sexual and physical assault to homicide.

Scope of the problem

Worldwide an estimated 200 000 homicides occur among youth 10–29 years of age each year, making it the fourth leading cause of death for people in this age group. Youth homicide rates vary dramatically between and within countries. Globally, 84% of youth homicide victims are males, and most perpetrators are males too. Between 2000-2016, rates of youth homicide decreased in most countries, although the decrease has been greater in high-income countries than in low- and middle-income countries.

For every young person killed by violence, more sustain injuries that require hospital treatment. Firearm attacks end more often in fatal injuries than assaults that involve fists, feet, knives, and blunt objects.

Sexual violence also affects a significant proportion of youth. For example, one in eight young people report sexual abuse.

Physical fighting and bullying are also common among young people. A study of 40 developing countries showed that an average of 42% of boys and 37% of girls were exposed to bullying.

Youth homicide and non-fatal violence not only contribute greatly to the global burden of premature death, injury and disability, but also have a serious, often lifelong, impact on a person's psychological and social functioning. This can affect victims' families, friends and communities. Youth violence increases the costs of health, welfare and criminal justice services; reduces productivity; decreases the value of property.

Risk factors within the individual

- attention deficit, hyperactivity, conduct disorder, or other behavioural disorders

- early involvement with alcohol, drugs and tobacco
- low intelligence and educational achievement
- low commitment to school and school failure
- involvement in crime
- unemployment
- exposure to violence in the family

Risk factors within close relationships (family, friends, intimate partners, and peers)

- poor monitoring and supervision of children by parents
- harsh, lax or inconsistent parental disciplinary practices
- a low level of attachment between parents and children
- low parental involvement in children's activities
- parental substance abuse or criminality
- parental depression
- low family income
- unemployment in the family
- associating with delinquent peers and/or gang membership

Risk factors within the community and wider society

- access to and misuse of alcohol;
- access to and misuse of firearms;
- gangs and a local supply of illicit drugs;
- high income inequality;
- poverty; and
- the quality of a country's governance (its laws and the extent to which they are enforced, as well as policies for education and social protection).

Prevention

Promising prevention programmes include:

- life skills and social development programmes designed to help children and adolescents manage anger, resolve conflict, and develop the necessary social skills to solve problems;
- whole school approaches to violence prevention in educational facilities;
- programmes that support parents and teach positive parenting skills;
- preschool programmes that provide children with academic and social skills at an early age;
- therapeutic approaches for youths at high risk of being involved in violence;
- reducing access to alcohol;
- interventions to reduce the harmful use of drugs;
- restrictive firearm licensing;
- community and problem-oriented policing; and
- interventions to reduce concentrated poverty and to upgrade urban environments.

Preventing youth violence requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the social determinants of violence, such as income inequality, rapid demographic and social change, and low levels of social protection.

Critical to reducing the immediate consequences of youth violence are improvements in pre-hospital and emergency care, including access to care.

WHO response

WHO and partners decrease youth violence through initiatives that help to identify, quantify and respond to the problem, these include:

- strengthening school-based violence prevention programmes;
- drawing attention to the magnitude of youth violence and the need for prevention;
- building evidence on the scope and types of violence in different settings;
- developing guidance for Member States and all relevant sectors to prevent youth violence and strengthen responses to it;
- supporting national efforts to prevent youth violence; and
- collaborating with international agencies and organizations to prevent youth violence globally; and
- contributing to the "Safe to learn campaign" to end violence in and through schools.