

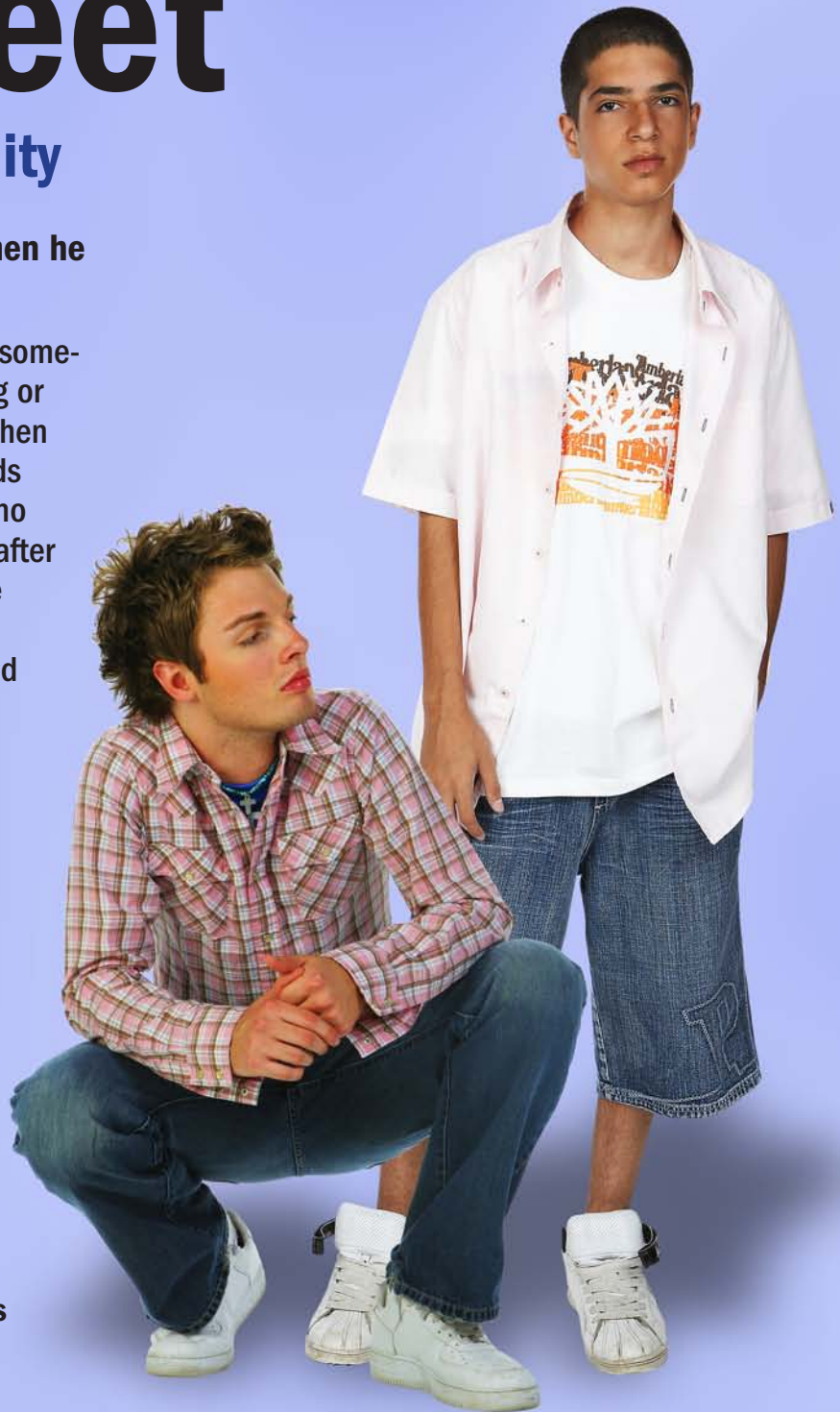
What Challenges Are Boys Facing, and What Opportunities Exist To Address Those Challenges?

Fact Sheet

Victimization and Mortality

Russell would usually cross the street when he saw those three guys.

They didn't live in his neighborhood, but he'd sometimes see them hanging around—just smoking or drinking. They weren't always in school, but when they were, they usually bullied the younger kids and caused trouble. But this time, there was no avoiding them. Walking home with his friend after band practice, he turned the corner and there they were. Russell gave a nod, but they didn't want to be friendly. They wanted his jacket and his wallet. Russell's not a violent person, but he's starting to think that he should carry a gun to protect himself.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Office of the Assistant Secretary for
Planning and Evaluation

This fact sheet is based on a comprehensive review of scientific literature, including computer searches of the major bibliographic databases (e.g., PsychINFO, MEDLINE/PubMed, EBSCOhost) looking, in particular for epidemiological studies that determine what factors make boys more or less prone to certain outcomes. The literature search was limited to scholarly journal articles and government documents published in 2000 and later unless an article was a seminal piece in the field or contributed to tracking trends over time. The statistics provided are from the most recent year for which data were available. Where possible, data related specifically to boys are included, but when these data were not available, data on youth, ages 10 to 18, are provided.

Some Facts About Boys and Victimization and Mortality

Boys as Victims and as Victimizers

- Adolescent boys are more likely than girls to be the victims of almost all types of serious violent crimes, including assault, robbery, and homicide. Boys' risk of victimization increases as they get older.^{1,2,3}
- In 2006, school was the most common setting for violent victimizations: 53% of victimization for 12- to 14-year-olds and 32% of victimization for 15- to 17-year-olds occurred on school grounds.⁴
- From 1993 to 2003, the nonfatal violent victimization rate for boys, ages 12 to 17, was about 50% higher than for girls.⁵
- A 2005 study found that about 1 in 11 adolescents reported being a victim of physical dating abuse.⁶
- In 2001, 30% of boys and girls in the sixth through tenth grades bullied others; the same percentage of boys and girls were a target of bullying.⁷

Mortality

- In 2005, the three major causes of death for all adolescents were car accidents, homicide, and suicide, respectively.⁸
- In 2004, boys ages 15 to 19 were five times more likely to die from homicide and seven times more likely to die from a firearm-related incident than girls.⁹

- Nearly three-quarters of teen homicides were attributed to gang violence in 2002.¹⁰
- Teen homicide and firearm death rates declined overall from the mid-1990s through 2004, but suicide rates increased slightly between 2003 and 2004.¹¹
- In 2004, rates of suicide for adolescent boys (12.6 per 100,000 youth) were about three and a half times the rate for adolescent girls (3.5 per 100,000 youth).¹²
- In 2004, the homicide rate for Black teen boys was 55 per 100,000, compared with 26 for Hispanic boys, 15 for American Indian boys, and 3 for non-Hispanic White boys.¹³
- In 2006, more than 1,500 youth under the age of 18 were murdered in the United States. Almost 75% of these young people were boys.¹⁴
- Overall, the mortality rates for adolescent boys decreased from 1980 to 2003. Rates for boys ages 10 to 14 decreased from 38 to 23 per 100,000. For boys ages 15 to 19, the rates dropped from 141 per 100,000 in 1980 to 92 per 100,000 in 2003.¹⁵
- In 2006, death rates were higher for adolescent boys than for adolescent girls. For adolescents ages 10 to 14, the death rate for boys was 1.5 times that of girls; this difference in rates increased to 2.4 times for adolescents ages 15 to 19 and 2.8 times for young adults ages 20 to 24.¹⁶



What Factors Increase or Decrease Boys' Risks for Victimization and Mortality?

By studying boys who behave aggressively as well as those, like Russell, who become the victims of violence, researchers have learned valuable lessons about boys' and girls' risk factors—those traits and life experiences that can jeopardize a person's healthy development—and protective factors—the characteristics and life experiences that can increase a person's likelihood of positive outcomes.

Individual risk factors that may contribute to victimizing behavior:

- Antisocial beliefs or attitudes ¹⁷
- Early aggressive behavior, especially for boys ¹⁸
- Involvement with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs ^{19,20}
- Association with delinquent peers ²¹
- Involvement in gangs ²²
- Poor academic performance ²³

Ways families, schools, and communities may contribute to the risk of victimization:

- Access to firearms in the home, especially for boys ²⁴
- Exposure to family violence or conflict ²⁵
- Low parental education and income ²⁶
- Lack of parental monitoring and supervision ²⁷
- Socially disorganized neighborhoods ²⁸

Individual and family factors that may help protect youth from the risk of victimization and early mortality:

- Intolerant attitude toward deviance ²⁹
- High IQ or grade point average ^{30,31}
- Religiosity ³²
- Connectedness to family ³³
- Ability to discuss problems with parents ³⁴
- Consistent presence of parent during at least one of the following: when awakening, when arriving home from school, at evening mealtime, and when going to bed ³⁵



Conclusion

Youth violence is an important public health issue that results in injuries, victimization, and often death, especially for boys. Given the serious consequences of violence among young people, researchers have made considerable efforts to understand what factors make boys more susceptible to violence and victimization and what factors protect them from harm.

Research indicates that boys, like Russell—who have a negative attitude toward aggressive behavior, have positive friendships, and are involved in structured activities—are less likely to become violent. Other protective factors include having supportive and caring parents, having good problem solving and conflict resolution skills, living in neighborhoods where firearms are not readily available, and not being involved in gangs. Boys who have been exposed to family or neighborhood violence, or spend time among aggressive peers, are more likely both to engage in violent acts and to become victims of violence.

Although researchers have learned a lot about boys' mortality and victimization, there is a need to build on prior research to continue to identify what strengths make some boys more likely to succeed and what risks, or challenges, increase the likelihood that they will struggle.

Additional Resources

To download an electronic copy of this document visit:
<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/boys/FactSheets>

For additional fact sheets in this series or for more information and resources on boys, including promising interventions and federal approaches to help boys, visit:

Fact Sheets

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/boys/FactSheets>

Findings Brief

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/boys/Findings1>

Annotated Bibliography

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/boys/Biblio>

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