

# Gun Violence in Adolescents and Youth

Causes, risk factors and statistical figures



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# Gun Violence among the Youth and Adolescents

## Introduction and Reason for Topic Selection

Gun violence, in general refers to the ill use of personal-kept weaponry among different individuals or groups of people due to intended or unintended reasons like family feuds, bullying, socio-cultural issues and risk factors and others. The youth is generally much more afflicted with the problem and can be categorized as either school shooters or street shooters. Each year, use of firearms and guns for violence related issues in the US is third leading cause of deaths among the youth aged 0 to 17 years. The number had significantly dropped during the 1990s due to newly introduced reforms, and increased to around 2000 deaths of children under the age of 20 by the year 2000. Today, around 82% of the youth and adolescents are killed due to misuse of guns and alike weapons. The significant rise in the cases can be attributed to the psychological behavioral upsets the youth have to suffer from their peers, friends and family, and society in general. The problem is much more significant in under-developed countries where lack of education and mediocre way of lives and other socio-political issues stir unrest among the population aged less than 20 years. Lack of apposite rules and regulations and ignorance to mental and physical health and behavioral changes causes deliberate or inadvertent gun violence among the youth. Hence, the problem requires significant and substantial address to the vast majority of the people, worldwide.

## Causes

The causes that lead to violent behavior in youth are multi-faceted, with multiple variables and behaviors supporting or negotiating each other at the same time. Among school shooting, bullying can be described as the root cause of such violence. Kids in the same group and class may have entirely different family and financial backgrounds and the traumas some have had to live through maybe completely unknown to the other. Lack of empathy and basic ethical behaviors can cause some of them to bully each other to the point the other can't take anymore leading to forcefulness and physical assaults. Social rejection among the peers and from close friends or teenage romantic relationships can cause rage. The psychological behavior due to personality traits and family or societal influences may deteriorate the mental health to the extent

the indignation is forced through physical violence. Exposure to media and violence can have different impacts on different mindsets. For example, some youngsters may choose to seek the trait of ill-seeking power from villains in superhero movies while others admiring superpowers to help humanity in general. Non-existence of social order kept at the administrative level in the school or residential settlement area causes one-on-one ferocities among the youngsters. Socio-cultural and socio-political issues like poverty, racism, inadequate education, mediocrity of lifestyles and livelihood and outdated customs and traditions, in a general group in a society can cause street shooters to violently exterminate their friends and family members. Whatever the root cause is, major problem lies in the prolonged or repetitive toxic stress the youngsters have to go through at different phases of early social life.

### Causal Risk Factors

Risk factors can be defined as set of characteristics that mold violent behavior among a specific group of community. Some of the risk factors related to individuals and family related factors are listed below.

Individual Risk Factors	Family Risk Factors
Early traumas and aggressive behaviors	Lack of discipline and manners
Drug and alcohol use	Hostile family functioning
High emotional distress	Scanty children monitoring
Anti-social attitude and temperament	Conflict among siblings
Exposure to conflicted environment	Poor parental control
Low IQ, EQ, and cognitive abilities	Low quality of life offered by parents despite having resources

### Preventive Risk Factors

Prevention is better than cure, always. Attitude changes can increase likelihood towards positive social behavior among youth, especially aged between 13-17 years as they are most vulnerable to committing heinous crimes like gun shooting and violence. Following risk factors have proven to reduce the up listed risk factors among the youth:

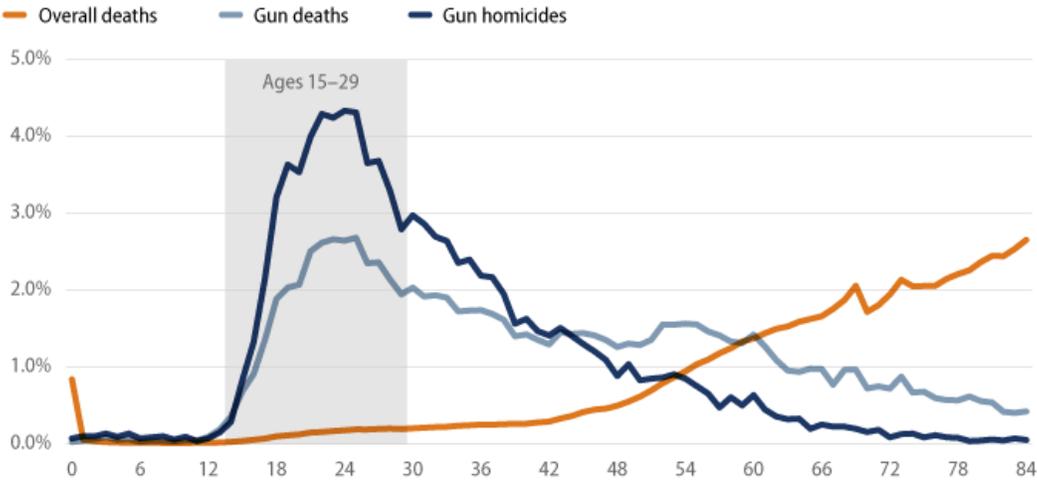
Individual Risk Factors	Social Risk Factors
High educational inspirations	Affective relationships with school teachers and friends that are strong, close, and pro-socially oriented
Positive social behavior	Commitment to school
Encouraged mental and emotional behavior	Good relationships with friends and peers
Social Skills	Confluence with people that disregard antisocial behavior
Lessened exposure to conflicted environment	Participation in social activities
High IQ, EQ, and cognitive abilities	Frequent shared activities with parents and elders

### Figures and Statistics

The graph below shows that in USA, among youth and adolescents of different age groups, gun related deaths and homicides are alarming large. Among the total deaths reported in the said year, 4.5% of the homicides could be attributed to gun-use.

#### Young people ages 15 to 29 made up a large share of gun-related deaths in 2016

Percentage of deaths in 2016, by age and cause



Source: CAP analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "About Underlying Cause of Death, 1999-2016," available at <https://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html> (last accessed April 2018).



It is also reported that while firearms were related to 74% of all homicides during 2015-2016, they were the cause of death in 87% of all youth homicides; firearm deaths have shown a recent increase in frequency, with the highest rates measured in large metropolitan areas. Age group of 13-17 years is twelve times more vulnerable to gun-violence use than those below 13. A study of arrestees from 11 urban areas in USA revealed that nearly one-third of juvenile arrestees who were gang members admitted carrying a gun all or most of the time (Decker, Pennel, and Caldwell, 1997). Self protection was the reason told by as much as two thirds of those arrestees carrying guns. According to a study by the U.S. Departments of Justice and the Treasury, the most common homicide or suicide committing age is 18, with those ages 18 to 20 accounting for 22 percent of homicide arrests. Guns are used in more than 86 percent of all homicides. The rise in homicides can thus be largely attributed to carrying on guns and other weaponry.

## Organizations addressing the Issue

Overall in the world there are many organizations fighting at local and national scales to tackle the issue of firearms and gun violence among the youth. Notable organizations in the US and in the world include:

- World Health Organization
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- American Society of Criminology, Washington, DC
- US Department of Justice
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- Children's Defense fund
- Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
- Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence
- Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America

Some of student led organizations in USA are:

- March For Our Lives. ...
- Students Demand Action. ...
- Team Enough. ...
- Orange Generation. ...

- StudentsMarch.org. ...
- Youth Over Guns. ...
- National Die-In.

## Concluding Evidences

For a problem as complex as gun violence or violence in general in youth, single sourced attribution of evidences is almost impossible. Rise in psychological issues in youth can be roughly sourced to be biggest reason, which in turn is driven by a number of individual, family, peer and societal-cultural related issues. The essay addressed the root causes and risk factors caused by the issue and how to prevent them provocatively. Different organizations all over the US are trying their best to control the issue. The need of the time is to formulate a multi-faceted, comprehensive capacity building program that aims at research and identification of problem and root causes and individual and group based training programs to effectively control the issue.

## References

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