



# CSPV FACT SHEET

FS-003

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## Ethnicity, Race, Class and Adolescent Violence

Adolescence and early adulthood are characterized by much higher rates of both perpetration and victimization of violence than other years and stages of life. Adolescents have also been shown to have higher rates than younger children and adults for both minor and serious forms of violence. The following facts indicate the extent of the problem:

- Homicide is the second leading cause of death among youth aged 10–24 years in the United States.
- Violence is a major cause of nonfatal injuries among youth. In 2006, a total of 720,371 young people aged 10–24 years were treated in emergency departments for nonfatal injuries sustained from assaults.
- The United States has the highest rate of youth firearm-related violence in the industrialized world.
- The modal age for involvement in serious and lethal injuries has decreased over time, meaning that children are becoming involved at a younger age.

Youth violence is a concern in every segment of American society. Although race, ethnicity and class may be a risk marker for violence, considered in isolation from other life circumstances they do not explain a given youth's propensity for violence. There are, however, ethnic, racial and class differences and similarities in rates of adolescent violence:

- From 2003 to 2005, firearms were the leading mechanism for homicide among males age 10 to 24 years. The firearm homicide rate among males ages 10 to 24 years was highest for Non-Hispanic Blacks with 51.4 deaths per 100,000 population. The firearm homicide rate among males ages 10 to 24 years was lowest for Non-Hispanic Whites with 2.4 deaths per 100,000.
- According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, in 2006 about 50% of murder victims were black, 47% were white, and 3% were Asians, Pacific Islander, and Native Americans. The Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) have consistently indicated that African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans are substantially overrepresented among those arrested for acts of interpersonal violence in the United States.

- Self-report studies have suggested that racial differences in rates of involvement in violence are smaller than indicated by the UCR. Further, these differences may be less pronounced for adolescent involvement in nonlethal aggression than for adolescent involvement in homicide. Such studies have also reported that as black and white adolescents age into early adulthood, the black-white gap widens rather than narrows.
- Low family socioeconomic status or poverty is a strong risk factor for violence during childhood.
- African Americans, Native Americans and Hispanics are more likely to be victims and perpetrators of lethal violence than those of European or Asian ancestry and are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system.
- Substantial evidence exists to support the accuracy of the belief that higher rates of lethal aggression are found among the economically marginal than among the more economically privileged sectors across all ethnic and racial groups.

Although ethnicity, race and class have been considered a risk factor for violence in the past, the Surgeon General's Report on Youth Violence clarifies that these variables, by themselves, do not explain a youth's propensity for becoming violent. Other known risk factors must be taken into account. Studies which can identify the relationship of ethnicity, race and class to other risk factors in a youth's environment will ensure a better understanding of the causes of youth violence and discover better methods of prevention.

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