



YOUNG MALE HEALTH: VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA

By the time most American adolescents reach the age of 13 they've stopped seeing a pediatrician – over 80% of all pediatric visits are by children under 13.¹ Less than half of adolescent and young adults have primary care visits within the last year.² Males are less likely than their female counterparts to seek care.^{3,4,5} Females have a relatively seamless transition with age with gynecologists accounting for 23-42% of AYA female preventive visits.⁶ For males, however, there is no similar continuity of care. On the whole, with the exception of episodic school exams, sports physicals and visits to the ER, once they leave the pediatrician's office adolescent and young adult males are left outside of our health care system, a pattern that extends into adulthood.

Yet, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, young males, or males within the age range of 10 to 27, are at higher risk than their female contemporaries for:

- ▶ Certain eating and body disorders
- ▶ Certain sexually transmitted infections, including HIV
- ▶ Violence and trauma, including homicide
- ▶ Abuse of certain substances
- ▶ Certain mental health conditions, including ADHD and autism spectrum disorders
- ▶ Suicide
- ▶ Accidental injury

EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

Exposure to violence is significantly more common in males,⁷ and the homicide rate among young males ages 15-19 in 2017 was six times that of young females of the same age. Males in

this age group were also more than seven times more likely to die from firearm-related incidents of any kind.⁸

Nationwide, in 2017 24.2% of males had carried a weapon on at least one day during the previous 30 days; for females, only 7.4%. In that same year the prevalence of having carried a gun among male students was four times that of females.

Males were also more apt to have been threatened with a weapon on school property than females, and the prevalence of having been in a physical fight in males was over double that of females.⁹

In a national survey, approximately half of all 13- to 17-year-olds witnessed violence in the previous year, with nearly 10% witnessing family assault, 42% witnessing an assault in their community, 1.3% witnessing murder, 10% witnessing a shooting, and 2% witnessing war.¹⁰

Witness to violence has negative health effects, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, distress,

aggression, and externalizing behaviors.

TRAUMA

A traumatic event is one that threatens injury, death, or the physical integrity of self or others and also causes horror, terror, or helplessness at the time it occurs.

- ▶ The range of traumatic events is broad. It includes bullying, sexual and other physical abuse, domestic violence, community and school violence, medical trauma, motor vehicle accidents, natural and human-made disasters, suicides, and other traumatic experiences.¹¹
- ▶ National surveys estimate that by age 16, about 48 percent of children have experienced a traumatic event,¹² with boys having a higher rate than girls.¹³
- ▶ A recent study has found that it is possible that boys and girls could exhibit different trauma symptoms and that they might benefit from different approaches to treatment for trauma.¹⁴

ACTING OUT

Male adolescents may exhibit depression by “acting out” or other risky or destructive behaviors, whereas females typically express depression through self-doubt, sadness and withdrawal.

SEXUAL MINORITY MALE YOUTH

Lesbians and gay men, bisexuals, and heterosexuals who reported any same-sex sexual partners over their lifetime had greater risk of childhood maltreatment, interpersonal violence, trauma to a close friend or relative, and unexpected death of someone close than did heterosexuals with no same-sex attractions or partners...This higher risk was largely accounted for by sexual orientation minorities' greater exposure to violence, exposure to more potentially traumatic events, and earlier age of trauma exposure.¹⁵

Statistics documenting transgender people's experience of sexual violence indicate shockingly high



levels of sexual abuse and assault. One in two transgender individuals are sexually abused or assaulted at some point in their lives.¹ Some reports estimate that transgender survivors may experience rates of sexual assault up to 66 percent, often coupled with physical assaults or abuse.² This indicates that the majority of transgender individuals are living with the aftermath of trauma and the fear of possible repeat victimization.¹⁶ In addition to experiencing high rates of domestic and sexual violence, trans and non-binary people are often the targets of transphobic hate crimes and state violence.¹⁷

According to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey:

- ▶ Nearly half (46%) of respondents were verbally harassed in the past year because of being transgender.
- ▶ Nearly one in ten (9%) respondents were physically attacked in the past year because of being transgender.
- ▶ Nearly half (47%) of respondents were sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime and one in ten (10%) were sexually assaulted in the past year. In communities of color, these numbers are higher: 53% of Black respondents were sexually assaulted in their lifetime and 13% were sexually assaulted in the last year.
- ▶ 72% of respondents who have done sex work, 65% of respondents who have experienced homelessness, and 61% of respondents with disabilities reported being sexually assaulted in their lifetime.
- ▶ More than half (54%) experienced some form of intimate partner violence, including acts involving coercive control and physical harm.¹⁸

RESOURCES

- ▶ Healing the Hurt: Trauma-Informed Approaches to the Health of Boys and Young Men of Color [<https://unnaturalcauses.org/assets/uploads/file/HealingtheHurt-Trauma-Rich%20et%20al.pdf>]
- ▶ How trauma affects boys and girls differently [<https://www.headspace.com/blog/2017/04/26/trauma-boys-girls>]
- ▶ Traumatic stress changes brains of boys, girls differently [<https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2016/11/traumatic-stress-changes-brains-of-boys-girls-differently.html>]
- ▶ Sexual Assault of Men and Boys [<https://www.rainn.org/articles/sexual-assault-men-and-boys>]

¹ Bocian AB, Wasserman RC, Slora EJ, Kessel D, Miller RS. Size and age-sex distribution of pediatric practice: a study from Pediatric Research in Office Settings. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 1999.

² Rand, Cynthia M, Goldstein, Nicolas P.N. Patterns of Primary Care Physician Visits for US Adolescents in 2014: Implications for Vaccination. *Academic Pediatrics.* Volume 18, Issue 2, S72 - S78.

³ Lau JS, Adams SH, Boscardin WJ, et al. Young Adults' Health Care Utilization and Expenditures Prior to the Affordable Care Act. *J Adolesc Health.* 2014;54:663-671.

⁴ Callahan ST, Cooper WO. Gender and Uninsurance Among Young Adults in the United States. *Pediatrics.* 2004;113:291-297.

⁵ Fortuna RJ, Robbins BW, Haterman JS. Ambulatory Care Among Young Adults in the United States. *Ann Intern Med.* 2009;151:379-385.

⁶ Rand, Cynthia M, Goldstein, Nicolas P.N. Patterns of Primary Care Physician Visits for US Adolescents in 2014: Implications for Vaccination. *Academic Pediatrics.* Volume 18, Issue 2, S72 - S78.

⁷ Buka SL, Stichick TL, Birdthistle I, Earls FJ. Youth exposure to violence: prevalence, risks, and consequences. *Am J Orthopsychiatry.* 2001;71(3):298-310

⁸ Child Trends. Teen Homicide, Suicide and Firearm Deaths. 2019.

⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2017. 2018.

¹⁰ Finkelhor D, Turner H, Ormrod R, Hamby SL. Violence, abuse, and crime exposure in a national sample of children and youth. *Pediatrics.* 2009;124(5):1411-1423 (2013 Update)

¹¹ 2008 Presidential Task Force on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Trauma in Children and Adolescents. *Children and Trauma.* American Psychological Association. 2008.

¹² The Atlantic. Half of All Kids Are Traumatized. 2014 December.

¹³ American Psychological Association. *Children and Trauma Update for Mental Health Professionals.* 2008.

¹⁴ Stanford Children's Health. Traumatic stress changes brains of boys, girls differently. 2016 November.

¹⁵ Roberts, Andrea et al. Pervasive Trauma Exposure Among US Sexual Orientation Minority Adults and Risk of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. 2010. December.

¹⁶ Office for Victims of Crime. Sexual Assault in the Transgender Community. 2014 June.

¹⁷ National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. Violence Against Trans and Non-Binary People. 2019.

¹⁸ Ibid