



INTERPERSONAL YOUTH VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN

Interpersonal violence is a significant health problem and the leading cause of death among youth and young adults in Latin America and the Caribbean (World Health Organization, 2014). This fact sheet provides estimates of violent behaviors, among youth aged 13-15, in Latin American and the English-speaking Caribbean countries, using data from the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS). These estimates are divided here into four sub-regions: the Andean countries, Central America, the English-speaking Caribbean, and the Southern Cone. The estimates were drawn from the most recent GSHS survey data for each country, with survey years ranging between 2007 and 2013.^{1,2}

The analysis shows that males are usually more likely than females to be associated with violent behaviors, specifically being physically attacked and being in a physical fight. Bullying, on the other hand, is not sex-specific. These behaviors are significantly influenced by alcohol use, parental relationship, and peer social support.³ This knowledge is important for devising comprehensive, context-specific prevention strategies that have been shown to be effective.

Prevalence of youth violence. Youth violence is a serious health problem throughout Latin America and the English-speaking Caribbean. With few exceptions, GSHS data show that male youth across all subregions are more likely than females to be associated with violent behaviors. The prevalence of being physically attacked during the 12 months prior to the survey ranged from about 20% for males and 17% for females in Central America to 44% for males and 33% for females in the English-speaking Caribbean. The prevalence of being in a physical fight during the 12 months prior to the survey ranged from about 35% for males and 17% for females in Central America to 53% for males and 32% for females in the English-speaking Caribbean. Bullying, on the other hand, was not a sex-specific behavior in the subregions. The prevalence of bullying ranged from about 20% in the Southern Cone to about 40% in the Andean countries (Figure 1).

¹ The countries included in the analysis, by subregion, were: Bolivia, Colombia (subnational, capital city only), Ecuador (subnational, capital city only), Peru; Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago; Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras; and Argentina, Chile, Uruguay.

² The countries used a two-stage survey design to produce data representative of the entire population aged 13-15. The scientific sample selection process involved a two-stage cluster design. In the first stage the schools were selected based on probability proportional to school enrollment, and in the second stage the classes were selected at random. All the students in the sampled classes were eligible to participate. The students self-reported their responses to each question on a computer-scannable answer sheet. The school response rates for the regions ranged from 90% to 100%; the student response rates ranged from 70% to 93%; and the overall response rates ranged from 60% to 90%.

³ Violent behaviors may also be influenced by factors that are not included in the GSHS database.

Risk factors associated with an increase in the prevalence of youth violent behaviors. Current alcohol use and poor peer social support increases the prevalence of youth violent behaviors (being physically attacked, being in a physical fight, and bullying). Although these associations were not observed in every subregion by sex, the trends were consistent across all the behaviors analyzed and are seen in most of the subregions. For example, being a current alcohol drinker almost doubled the prevalence of being in a physical fight for female youth in the Andean countries and Central America (Figure 2) and having poor peer

social support more than doubled the prevalence of being physically attacked for both males and females in Central America (Figure 3).

Protective factors associated with a decrease in the prevalence of violent acts among youth. Having a strong parental relationship appears to be a protective factor primarily for females in most of the subregions. For example, having a strong parental relationship decreased the prevalence of female youth being in a physical fight by about half in Central America and the Southern Cone (Figure 3).

Figure 1. Prevalence of being physically attacked, in a physical fight, and bullied among students aged 13-15, by sex, in the sub-regions of Latin America and the English-speaking Caribbean

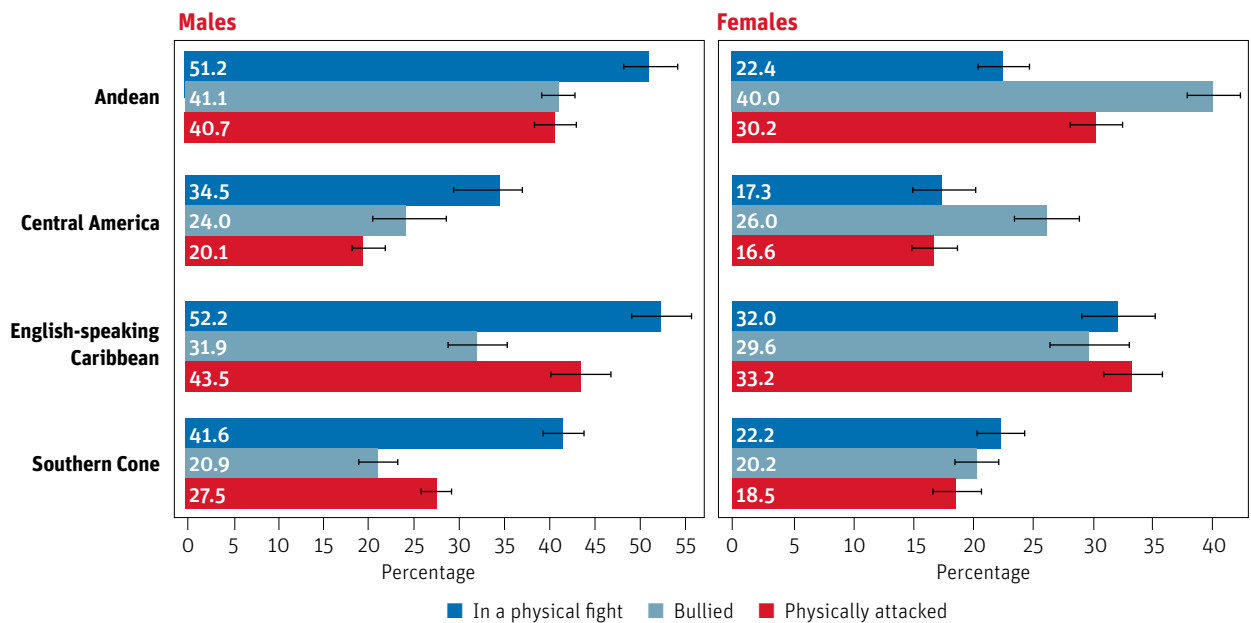


Figure 2. Prevalence of being in a physical fight among students aged 13-15, by current drinker and overall prevalence in the subregions of Latin America and the English-speaking Caribbean

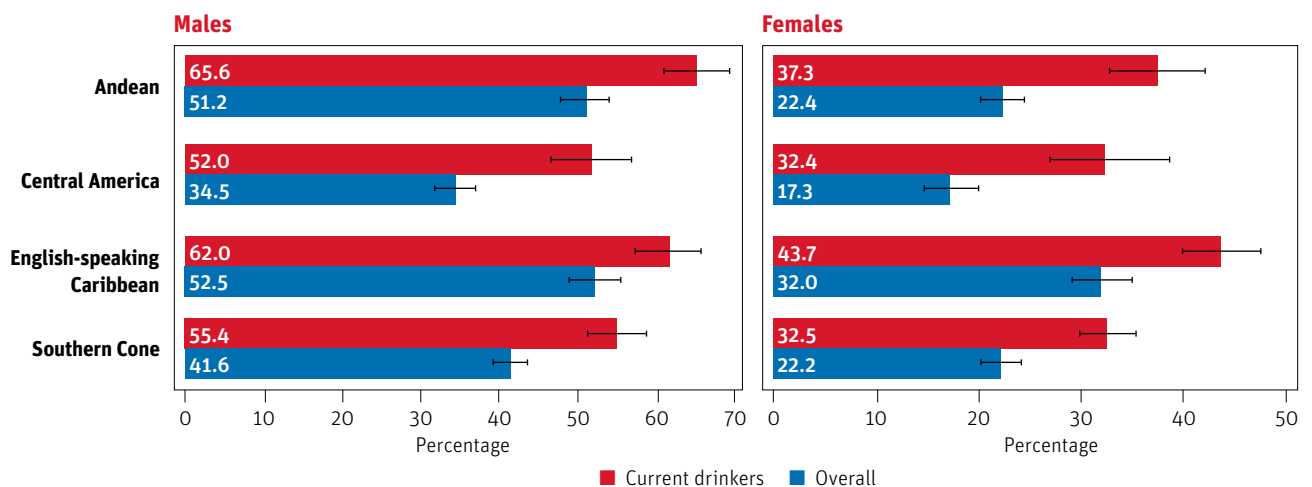
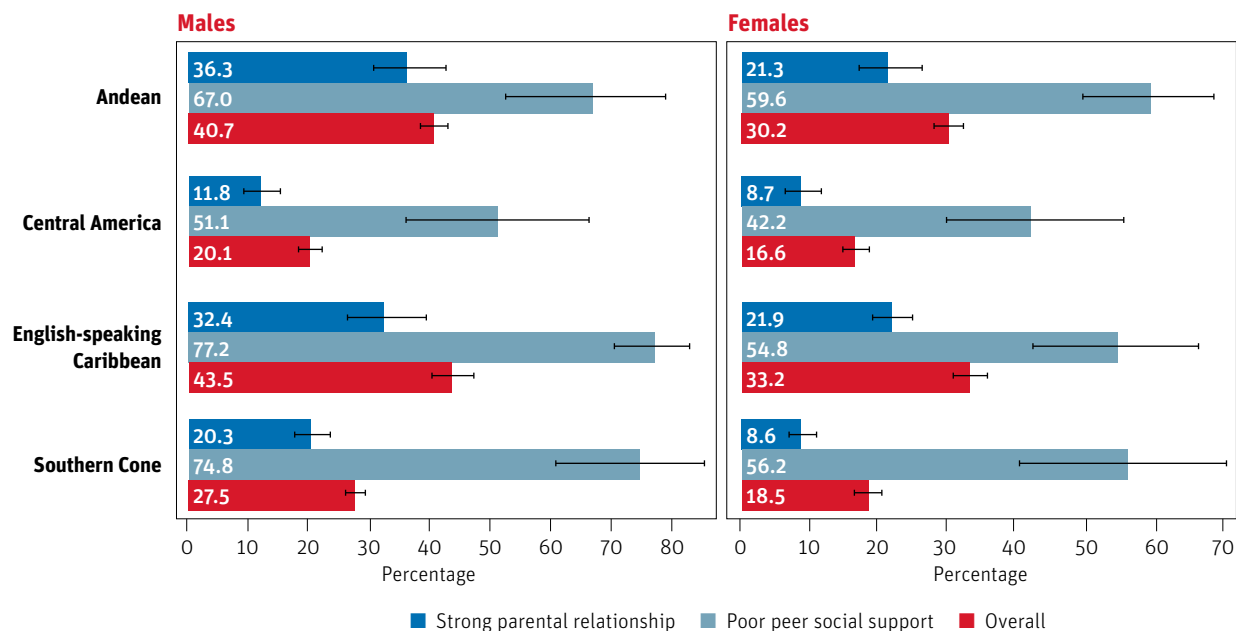


Figure 3. Prevalence of being physically attacked among students aged 13-15, by strong parental relationship, poor peer social support, and overall prevalence, in the subregions of Latin America and the English-speaking Caribbean



Youth violence is preventable. In order for responses to be effective, prevention strategies must be context-specific, comprehensive, and evidence-based. According to our analysis, strategies that can help prevent interpersonal youth violence include developing safe, stable, and nurturing relationships between children

and their parents and caregivers; developing life skills and nurturing peer social support in children and adolescents; and reducing the availability and harmful use of alcohol. In addition, WHO recommends reducing access to guns and knives (WHO, 2010).

Andean Countries

Results for students aged 13-15 years	Total	Males	Females
General			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	35.4% (33.7%-37.1%)*	40.7% (38.4%-43.1%)	30.2% (28.1%-32.4%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	36.4% (33.9%-39.0%)	51.2% (48.2%-54.2%)	22.4% (20.3%-24.7%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	40.5% (39.0%-42.1%)	41.1% (39.2%-43.0%)	40.0% (37.8%-42.2%)
Among students who were current drinkers[†]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	43.8% (41.0%-46.6%)	47.3% (43.1%-51.7%)	40.1% (36.7%-43.6%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	51.3% (47.9%-54.6%)	65.6% (61.2%-69.8%)	37.3% (32.7%-42.1%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	48.6% (45.8%-51.4%)	47.2% (43.1%-51.3%)	49.8% (45.8%-53.9%)
Among students with poor social support[§]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	62.3% (53.6%-70.3%)	67.0% (52.3%-79.0%)	59.6% (49.7%-68.8%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	34.1% (26.1%-43.1%)	49.6% (35.5%-63.7%)	25.2% (16.7%-36.2%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	**	**	**
Among students with strong parental relationships[¶]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	27.9% (23.5%-32.8%)	36.3% (30.5%-42.6%)	21.3% (17.0%-26.3%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	26.5% (21.4%-32.2%)	46.4% (38.5%-54.4%)	10.7% (7.7%-14.8%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	29.7% (26.6%-33.1%)	33.8% (28.7%-39.3%)	26.6% (22.6%-30.9%)

* 95% confidence interval.

† Current drinker defined as having at least one drink containing alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days.

§ The peer social support construct is composed of 4 questions related to respondents' perceptions of their relationships with their peers (how often the respondent feels lonely, the number of close friends they report, how often other students are kind and helpful, and how often they report being bullied).

¶ The parental relationship construct is composed of 3 questions related to the respondents' perceptions of the behavior and attitudes of their parent/guardians (whether the parent/guardian (1) checks if homework is complete, (2) understands problems and worries, and (3) really knows what the respondent did in his or her free time).

** Not available.

Central America

Results for students aged 13-15 years	Total	Males	Females
General			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	18.4% (16.9%-20.1%)*	20.1% (18.2%-22.0%)	16.6% (14.8%-18.6%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	25.8% (23.7%-28.0%)	34.5% (31.9%-37.1%)	17.3% (14.8%-20.1%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	25.1% (23.3%-27.0%)	24.0% (21.8%-26.4%)	26.0% (23.3%-28.9%)
Among students who were current drinkers[†]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	26.7% (23.7%-29.9%)	29.5% (25.2%-34.1%)	24.0% (19.9%-28.6%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	41.7% (37.8%-45.7%)	52.0% (46.8%-57.2%)	32.4% (26.9%-38.6%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	35.5% (31.5%-39.6%)	33.0% (28.6%-37.6%)	37.8% (31.9%-44.1%)
Among students with poor social support[§]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	45.2% (34.3%-56.5%)	51.1% (35.8%-66.3%)	42.2% (29.8%-55.7%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	46.3% (36.7%-56.2%)	77.2% (59.2%-88.8%)	30.7% (20.4%-43.5%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	**	**	**
Among students with strong parental relationships[¶]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	10.2% (8.2%-12.6%)	11.8% (9.2%-15.2%)	8.7% (6.4%-11.6%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	16.9% (14.4%-19.7%)	25.0% (21.7%-28.6%)	8.6% (5.9%-12.4%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	14.9% (12.4%-17.8%)	16.1% (12.8%-20.1%)	13.8% (10.8%-17.4%)

* 95% confidence interval.

† Current drinker defined as having at least one drink containing alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days.

§ The peer social support construct is composed of 4 questions related to respondents' perceptions of their relationships with their peers (how often the respondent feels lonely, the number of close friends they report, how often other students are kind and helpful, and how often they report being bullied).

¶ The parental relationship construct is composed of 3 questions related to the respondents' perceptions of the behavior and attitudes of their parent/guardians (whether the parent/guardian (1) checks if homework is complete, (2) understands problems and worries, and (3) really knows what the respondent did in his or her free time).

** Not available.

English-speaking Caribbean

Results for students aged 13-15 years	Total	Males	Females
General			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	38.4% (36.1%-40.8%)*	43.5% (40.2%-46.9%)	33.2% (30.8%-35.8%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	42.2% (39.3%-45.3%)	52.5% (49.1%-55.9%)	32.0% (28.9%-35.1%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	31.0% (28.4%-33.7%)	31.9% (28.7%-35.4%)	29.3% (26.4%-33.1%)
Among students who were current drinkers[†]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	46.4% (43.5%-49.4%)	48.2% (42.8%-53.7%)	44.1% (41.7%-46.5%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	53.7% (49.6%-57.8%)	62.0% (57.6%-66.2%)	43.7% (39.8%-47.5%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	36.6% (33.4%-39.8%)	37.5% (33.1%-42.1%)	34.9% (31.2%-38.8%)
Among students with poor social support[§]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	64.8% (57.9%-71.2%)	77.2% (70.2%-83.0%)	54.8% (42.3%-66.6%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	58.1% (50.0%-65.9%)	72.1% (64.5%-78.6%)	45.6% (33.1%-58.7%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	**	**	**
Among students with strong parental relationships[¶]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	26.6% (23.6%-29.9%)	32.4% (26.2%-39.3%)	21.9% (19.0%-25.2%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	30.3% (27.5%-33.2%)	40.0% (35.2%-44.9%)	22.4% (19.0%-26.2%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	23.3% (18.8%-28.4%)	26.3% (19.4%-34.6%)	20.8% (17.2%-24.9%)

* 95% confidence interval.

† Current drinker defined as having at least one drink containing alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days.

§ The peer social support construct is composed of 4 questions related to respondents' perceptions of their relationships with their peers (how often the respondent feels lonely, the number of close friends they report, how often other students are kind and helpful, and how often they report being bullied).

¶ The parental relationship construct is composed of 3 questions related to the respondents' perceptions of the behavior and attitudes of their parent/guardians (whether the parent/guardian (1) checks if homework is complete, (2) understands problems and worries, and (3) really knows what the respondent did in his or her free time).

** Not available.

Southern Cone

Results for students aged 13-15 years	Total	Males	Females
General			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	23.0% (21.7%-24.3%)*	27.5% (25.8%-29.2%)	18.5% (16.5%-20.6%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	31.5% (29.9%-33.2%)	41.6% (39.3%-43.9%)	22.2% (20.2%-24.2%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	20.7% (19.3%-22.1%)	20.9% (18.9%-23.1%)	20.2% (18.4%-22.1%)
Among students who were current drinkers[†]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	29.7% (27.7%-31.8%)	33.5% (30.6%-36.5%)	26.2% (23.8%-28.8%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	43.3% (41.0%-45.6%)	55.4% (51.4%-59.2%)	32.5% (29.7%-35.5%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	25.1% (22.7%-27.7%)	24.8% (21.3%-28.8%)	25.0% (22.1%-28.1%)
Among students with poor social support[§]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	63.8% (50.1%-75.6%)	74.8% (60.6%-85.1%)	56.2% (40.5%-70.7%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	55.1% (40.1%-69.2%)	62.2% (45.9%-76.1%)	49.7% (33.2%-66.4%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	**	**	**
Among students with strong parental relationships[¶]			
Percentage of students who were physically attacked one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	13.8% (12.0%-15.9%)	20.3% (17.5%-23.4%)	8.6% (6.7%-11.0%)
Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months before the survey	25.7% (23.0%-28.5%)	36.1% (32.5%-39.8%)	17.1% (13.8%-21.1%)
Percentage of students who were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey	17.7% (16.0%-19.6%)	19.9% (17.0%-23.2%)	16.0% (13.6%-18.8%)

* 95% confidence interval.

† Current drinker defined as having at least one drink containing alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days.

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** Not available.

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