

JUST SIX
QUESTIONS

RESEARCH
SUMMARY



Review of the Roots of Youth Violence, Vol 1: Findings, Analysis and Conclusions

Key Details

KEY WORDS

safety, social inclusion, violence, prevention, crime, poverty, racism

POPULATION GROUP

Aboriginal Youth, Racialized Youth, Newcomer Youth, Youth in and leaving care, Youth living in poverty, Youth in conflict with the law

STEPPING UP THEMES

Diversity, Social Inclusion and Safety

RESEARCH ORIGIN

Ontario

SOURCE

Government

“Youth who feel connected to and engaged with the broader society, and who feel valued and safe and see a positive future for themselves in it, will not experience [conditions of exclusion] and will not commit serious violence”

1. What is the research about?

The *Roots of Youth Violence Report* is the product of an extensive literature review and public consultation. Volume 1 goes beyond merely identifying the immediate risk factors associated with youth violence to examine the underlying conditions that lead to youth violence. The volume concludes with recommendations for how Ontario can make its neighbourhoods, communities, and schools safer.

2. Where did the research take place?

The scope of the literature review is international. The primary research took place in the province of Ontario.

3. Who is this research about?

The *Roots of Youth Violence Report* focuses on youth most likely to experience violent crime either as perpetrators or victims. Young Black or Aboriginal males who come from disadvantaged, complex-needs communities facing the prospect of little opportunity for change are most at risk. The report calls for moving away from pathologizing these youth to working toward changing the conditions that contribute to the creation of a risk profile.

4. How was the research done?

The authors of the report worked with the Government of Ontario to create a Roots of Youth Violence Secretariat. The Secretariat included youth, researchers, community and government officials who created a five-part strategy:

- involve youth in research effort
- hold community consultations
- conduct an overview of the issue by drawing on academic and grey literature
- conduct key-informant and focus group interviews
- use an online survey (completed by 5,400 respondents) to understand the problem of youth violence in Ontario

Researchers worked with a grassroots youth organization, the Grassroots Youth Collaborative (GYC), and the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) to ensure that the process and findings connected with culturally and racially diverse youth across Ontario.

5. What are the key findings?

Exclusion is at the heart of youth violence. The pathways to exclusion are multiple and interconnected. Experiences of exclusion can also lead to other negative outcomes for youth – e.g., disengagement from school, political life, and society; involvement in criminal activity, including gangs; increased street involvement; and experiences of victimization.

Community-level risk factors are complex and intersect with each other. Neighborhood poverty, racism, and structural barriers to equitably accessing opportunities compound individual-level risk factors.

6. Why does this research matter for youth work?

If we want to address the multiple and overlapping processes of exclusion that negatively shape the development of some youth in Ontario, then we will need to work together. Youth-serving organizations will play key roles. These organizations are well-positioned to support service navigation, cross-sector planning and service-delivery coordination for youth who need to access systems that don't always work together (e.g., mental health, youth justice, education and child welfare).

You can use this report to identify programming and coordination gaps that your organization can fill. For example, many communities need to improve access to safe youth-friendly spaces for recreation, sports, homework and leisure activities. There is also a need for bridging supports for young people transitioning between service delivery systems (e.g., youth discharging from inpatient mental health services) as well as supports for youth and families who are trying to navigate complicated institutional processes. This is particularly an issue for newcomer families and families who have not historically experienced positive interactions with mainstream institutions.

This report also highlights a number of bigger picture issues that we need to collectively address if we want end youth violence – namely, poverty and racism. The *Roots of Youth Violence Report* can be used as a resource, lens, and tool by governments, funding organizations, youth-organizations, and youth to work towards building systems of inclusion and equity.



McMurtry, R., & Curling, A. (2008). *The review of the roots of violence (Volume 1)*, Toronto, Canada: Queens Printer for Ontario.

FIND IT ONLINE

www.rootsofyouthviolence.on.ca