

Focus: The financial and social costs & benefits of prevention vs those of the formal justice system

Goal: Calculating and articulating these costs & benefits to advocate for investments in prevention



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Violence and aggression are not the same thing; latter is a learned behavior that can be altered by counter-messaging at a young age.

- Child exposure to violence leads to subconsciously copied behavior, exacerbated when the environment normalizes violence
 - Counter-messaging and opportunities for healthy processing counteract this

Exposure to violence at young age is single most predictive—not determinative—risk factor.

- Exposure can occur directly or via media; latter has weaker effect
- Violence is ultimately a choice
 - Made less likely by offering attractive non-violent options

Violence and sexual harassment prevention can be taught from early age by establishing common language and critical thinking around values.

- *Key values:* respect, dignity, and equality
- Working with all children, not only highest risk, ensures values and language are embedded
- Impact continues well beyond school as children learn to advocate for themselves
- Teachers and parents begin using the language, treating children differently and reflecting on their own experiences

Parents may be positive or destructive forces in their children’s lives.

- Vary in their experiences, education, and personal trauma exposure
- Some cause initial exposure to violence or trauma, generating intergenerational cycle
- Others reflect, change mindset, and become engaged in countering violence

Violence reduction interventions can be broken into three categories with different stakeholders, funding structures, and cost/benefit analyses:

1. **Preemptive prevention:** intervention before an individual commits a violent act
2. **Discipline/adjudication:** occurs after violent act is committed, focused on accountability and deterrence of individual or society at large
 - i. Can be customized to youth
 - ii. E.g. divergence, therapeutic alternatives, formal & informal sanctions

3. **Reintegration:** post-adjudication, uses disciplinary time to facilitate re-entry and adoption of productive, violent-free habits

Modeling the cost of status quo is a powerful advocacy tool to fund preventative measures.

- Heckman et al. calculated that \$1 in prevention can save several in treatment

Total cost is a function of prevalence of violence, range of long-term outcomes, attributable risk increase of those outcomes due to exposure to violence, and the cost of those outcomes.

- One US estimate is almost \$200,000 per lifetime and c. \$500B annually
- Lifetime cost approach risks labelling people
 - Consider racial and social factors carefully

Having a model does not guarantee policy action.

- Academic work is striking but impact limited
- Challenging to evaluate programs and track real savings to public budgets, especially long-term



KEY EXAMPLES

- [Voice of Child Association](#) (Israel)
- Diversion of Public Safety funding to hospital-based intervention (New Jersey)
- [“Handle with Care”](#) program (New Jersey)
- Online mandatory human rights courses for teachers (Ukraine)



RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- [“The Tragedy of Wasted Funds and Broken Dreams: An Economic Analysis of Childhood Exposure to Crime and Violence”](#) by Michal Gilad and Abraham Gutman
- [“What Can We Do As a Partnership to Prevent and Reduce Youth Offending and Serious Youth Violence?”](#) JSNA
- [“The Economic Cost of Gun Violence”](#) by Everytown