

Teenage girls face greater violence threat from poverty

November 18 2010

Living in a deprived area increases the risk of violence more sharply for girls than boys, according to a Cardiff University study of former industrial areas.

The new results suggest [violence](#) prevention strategies need to focus more on local inequalities, especially to protect vulnerable [adolescent girls](#).

The survey was conducted by the Violence and Society Research Group at Cardiff University. The team studied nearly 700 young people, aged 11 to 17, who attended casualty departments in South Wales with injuries from violence. The researchers matched the patients against the levels of deprivation in their home neighbourhoods.

The team found that assault injury rates were uniformly higher in the most deprived areas. Overall, boys were more at risk of violence than [girls](#). However, the team also found that the risk of injury increased more rapidly for girls than boys as material deprivation increased. In one deprived area, girls faced a risk of violence six times greater than in more affluent wards. Boys in the same area were twice as likely to be injured than in more affluent areas. This means that the risk to girls was three times more sensitive to deprivation.

Professor Jonathan Shepherd, Director of the Violence and Society Research Group, said: "The study clearly shows that poverty raises the risk of violence dramatically more for girls than boys. There's no reason

to believe this will not apply to all former industrial areas in the UK.

"The facts linking deprived neighbourhoods to violence are complex and include social cohesion, substance abuse and family stress. It is not clear why the risk to girls should be so much more sensitive to deprivation but the reason may be linked to the different ways girls of different backgrounds resolve disputes.

"There is already concern about the violence risk to young women. Our findings show that adverse [economic conditions](#) could make the problem even worse. [Injury prevention](#) schemes need to be directed at children and [adolescents](#) in areas of highest deprivation to improve their life chances and well-being. Emergency department doctors responsible for treating the results of this violence have an important role to play in this, working with community safety partners and child protection agencies."

The study has just been published in *Emergency Medical Journal*. It is the latest work published by the Violence and Society Research Group, awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize earlier this year for its pioneering work in the understanding and prevention of community violence.

More information: The study 'Gender inequality in the risk of violence: material deprivation is linked to higher risk for adolescent girls' is published in the *Emergency Medical Journal* for November 2010 and can be viewed online at emj.bmj.com/content/27/11/811.full

Provided by Cardiff University

Citation: Teenage girls face greater violence threat from poverty (2010, November 18) retrieved 23 April 2024 from

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