

UK: Serious violence dips

April 25 2013



Reports of serious violence dropped by 14% in 2012 compared to the previous year, according to the findings of a national study undertaken by Cardiff University.

The study estimates that 267,291 people attended Emergency Departments (EDs) and Minor Injury Units (MIUs) for treatment following a violent incident in 2012 – 40,706 fewer than in 2011.

The data was gathered from serious violence incident reports sourced from 54 EDs and MIUs in England and Wales, all of which are certified members of the National Violence Surveillance Network (NVSN).

Lead author of the study and Director of the Violence and Society Research Group at Cardiff University, Professor Jonathan Shepherd said: "Overall in England and Wales, serious violence has decreased by 14% in 2012 compared to 2011.

"Apart from a 7% increase in 2008, levels of serious violence have fallen every year since 2001.

"Moreover, young children and adolescents affected by serious violence dropped by nearly a quarter (24%), while [young adults](#) were also down at 13%.

"These findings are important because they show that England and Wales became safer, that people can be less worried about being harmed, and that the cost of violence to the [NHS](#) and to communities is coming down."

The findings also revealed the demographic most at risk from serious violence-related injury; males aged 18-30 came out on top, while violence-related attendance at Emergency Departments was most frequent on Saturday and Sunday.

The months of February, April and November marked the least busy periods for [Emergency Department](#) visits. This is likely owing to these months falling between major festivals such as Christmas, New Year and Easter, and outside the summer months when increased numbers of the population gravitate into cities and town centres.

[Interpersonal violence](#) is a major contributor to [premature death](#), disability and both psychological and physical injuries.

Recognition by [medical practitioners](#) and policy makers that information from patients treated in EDs following violent injury can be utilised to measure violence trends and for enhancing community safety has increased public health contributions to violence prevention.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW: formerly the British Crime Survey, BCS) is an established measure of violence which is not

influenced by reporting and recording changes that can impact on police statistics. Since 2010 it has focused on violence experienced by [adolescents](#) (over the age of 10) as well as by adults.

Research shows that police records underestimate violence levels mainly because of low reporting rates which in turn reflect fear of reprisals; an inability of those injured to identify assailants, and a lack of benefit for the injured of reporting to the police, and an unwillingness to have their own conduct scrutinised.

ED injury records are more representative of serious community violence than police statistics, Professor Shepherd says.

The purpose of the report is to identify overall gender and age-specific violence-related injury rates and [violence](#) trends in England and Wales from Emergency Department injury records for the period ending 31st December 2012.

The report and findings are published in the *Journal of Public Health* and in the journal, *Injury*.

More information: www.cardiff.ac.uk/dentl/research/violenceandsociety/

Provided by Cardiff University

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