



Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Youth Gang and Gun Violence Prevention

DEFINITIONS¹

- **Individual level:** Focus on factors that can place individuals at risk of being criminalized or victimized.
- **Family / peer level:** Focus on enhancing the strength and well-being of families or peer groups (such as friends, classmates).
- **Community / school / workplace level:** Focus on increasing the ability of schools, workplaces or of a community in general to prevent violence and victimization.
- **Societal level:** Focus on increasing the ability of society to promote positive values, laws, and rules. They may include initiatives that build structures and social systems to aid in the development of a supportive and resilient society.
- **Risk factors:** These are negative influences in the lives of individuals or a community. These may increase the presence of violence, victimization, or fear of crime in a community and may also increase the likelihood that individuals engage in violence or become victims.
- **Protective factors (resiliencies):** These are positive influences that can improve the lives of individuals or the safety of a community. These may decrease the likelihood that individuals engage in violence or become victims. Building on existing protective factors makes individuals and communities stronger and better able to counteract risk factors.

¹ <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/crm-prvntn/fndng-prgrms/rsk-fctrs-en.aspx>



EXAMPLES OF RISK FACTORS²

Individual	Peer Group	School	Family	Community	Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior delinquency or criminalization • Illegal gun ownership • Drug trafficking • Desire for status, identity, self-esteem, companionship, and protection • Aggression or violence • Alcohol and drug use • Early sexual activity • Violent victimization • Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gang members in class • Friends who use drugs • Friends who are gang members • Interaction with peers who are in conflict with the law • Pre-teen exposure to stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor school performance • Low educational aspirations • Negative labelling by teachers • Few teacher role models • Educational frustration • Low attachment to school • Learning difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family violence, neglect, and drug use • Family members in a gang • Lack of adult and parental role models • Criminalized and/or incarcerated parents • Violence from parents or siblings • Lack of presence of parents before and after school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of gangs in the neighbourhood • Availability or perceived access to drugs in the neighbourhood • Availability of firearms • Cultural norms supporting gang behaviour • Feeling unsafe in neighbourhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High poverty • Discrimination, stigma, racism, and oppression • Lack of access to affordable and safe housing options • Lack of services (social, recreational, cultural)

² <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/yth-gng-nvlvmnt/index-en.aspx>



EXAMPLES OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS (RESILIENCIES)³

Individual	Peer Group	School	Family	Community	Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intolerant attitude toward violence • Positive self-esteem and sense of belonging • Popularity acknowledged by friends • Highly developed social skills / competencies • Religious beliefs • Strong conflict resolution skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong and close relationships with classmates • Close relationships with peers who are not in conflict with the law • Membership in peer groups that do not condone violent behaviour • Involvement in after-school activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to school • Clear behaviour rules in school • Engagement of parents and teachers • Academic achievement and aspirations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectedness to family or adults outside the family • Ability to discuss problems with parents • Frequent shared activities with parents • Consistent presence of parent(s) in the morning or evening • Involvement in social or recreational activities • Parental/family use of constructive strategies for coping with problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement • Volunteering • Participation in traditional healing and cultural activities • Availability of services (social, recreational, cultural) • Supports for parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and economic policies that support positive youth development • Access to basic needs and services • Community norms of shared responsibility for supporting youth and families

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>