



UN-HABITAT

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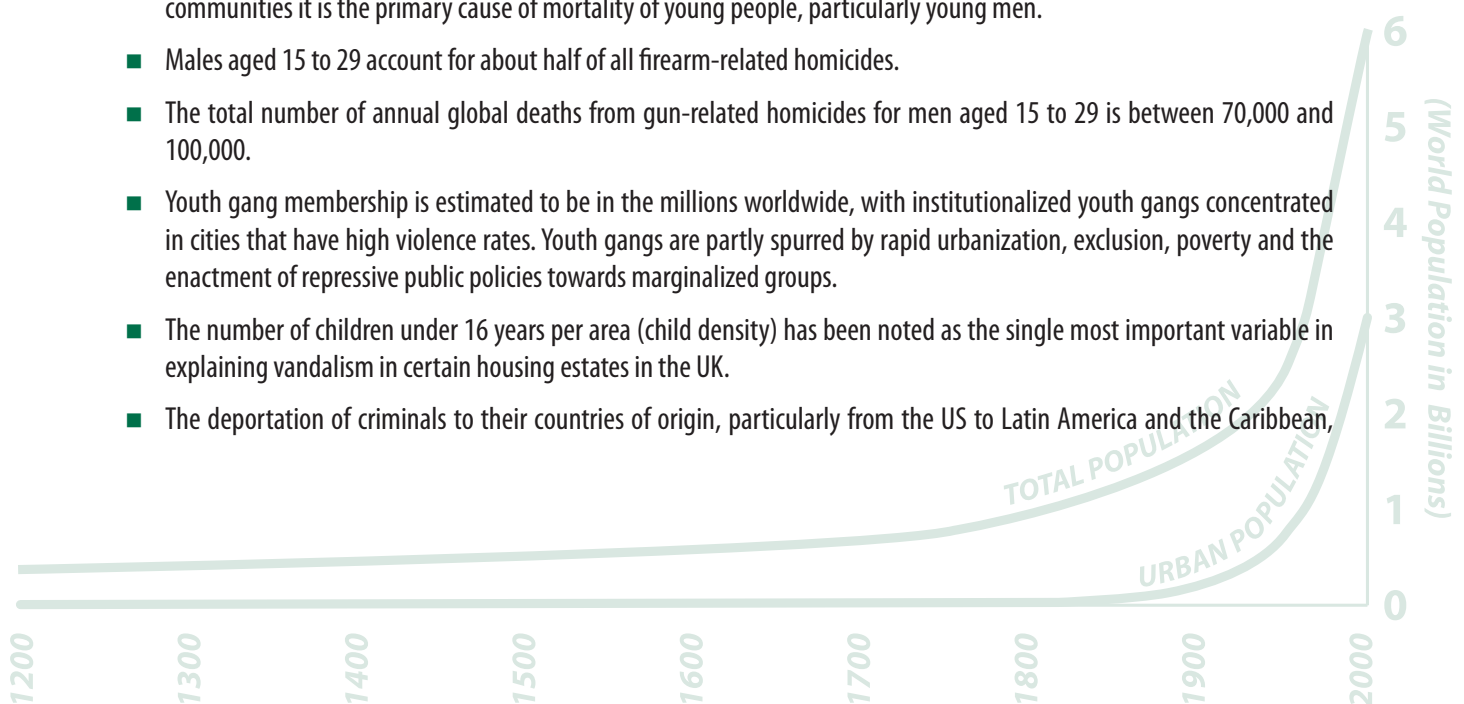


Feature 3

Crime's young face

Crime rates are on the rise and more youths than ever before are engaged in violent activities. Youth crime and violence rates are associated with factors such as the level of policing, conviction and imprisonment rates, drug cultures and specific circumstances that people, especially young men, are living under. The new UN-HABITAT report *Enhancing Urban Safety and Security: Global Report on Human Settlements 2007* looks into trends, impacts of and solutions to youth crime and violence.

- Globally, 74 million people between the ages of 15 and 24 are unemployed, this amounts to 41 per cent of all unemployed persons.
- The prevalence of as many as 100 million street children in cities around the world is associated with drug and human trafficking, interpersonal violence, child abuse and poverty.
- 57,000 children were murdered around the world in 2000 alone. About 199,000 youth homicides took place globally in 2000, implying an average of 565 young people aged between 10 and 29 dying daily due to various types of violence.
- Youth homicide rates are lowest in Western Europe and in the high-income countries of the Pacific; and highest in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. Japan has the lowest youth homicide rate worldwide (with 0.4 per 100,000 individuals), followed by France (0.6 per 100,000); Germany (0.8 per 100,000); and the UK (with 0.9 per 100,000).
- Countries with high rates of youth homicide include Colombia (with 84.4 per 100,000 individuals); El Salvador (50.2 per 100,000); Puerto Rico (41.8 per 100,000); Brazil (with 32.5 per 100,000); Albania (28.2 per 100,000); Russia (18 per 100,000); and the US (11 per 100,000).
- For people between 14 and 44 years old, violence has been identified as a major cause of death, and in some distressed communities it is the primary cause of mortality of young people, particularly young men.
- Males aged 15 to 29 account for about half of all firearm-related homicides.
- The total number of annual global deaths from gun-related homicides for men aged 15 to 29 is between 70,000 and 100,000.
- Youth gang membership is estimated to be in the millions worldwide, with institutionalized youth gangs concentrated in cities that have high violence rates. Youth gangs are partly spurred by rapid urbanization, exclusion, poverty and the enactment of repressive public policies towards marginalized groups.
- The number of children under 16 years per area (child density) has been noted as the single most important variable in explaining vandalism in certain housing estates in the UK.
- The deportation of criminals to their countries of origin, particularly from the US to Latin America and the Caribbean,



accounts for increasing levels of youth crime and gang-related activities in the region.

- In Nairobi, Kenya, a distinctive attribute of perpetrators of crimes, such as bank robbery, violent car robbery, house breaking, street muggings and snatching, is their youthfulness. Most criminals are in their teens and 20s.
- In the US, increase gang violence has been popularly linked to the growth in cocaine markets beginning in the 1980s.
- The use of firearms in violent crime is more likely to take place in, or adjacent to, distressed low-income neighbourhoods rather than high-income areas.
- Violence is among the highest causes of death among African–American males in the US. The homicide death rate for African–American males aged 15 to 24 is 12 times the rate for white males in the same age category and twice the rate for Hispanic males. The firearm-related death rate for African–American males aged 15 to 19 is four times the rate for white males in the same category.
- In Brazil, two-thirds of all homicides involve youths, where children as young as six years are drawn into gangs to serve as lookouts and carriers of hard drugs.
- A major strategy of public and private crime prevention programmes – from Kenya and Papua New Guinea to the US – is targeting unemployed urban youths, especially males, by providing training and job opportunities.
- In Tanzania, the Sungusungu groups established by the communities recruit unemployed youth who receive militia training and various forms of support from the communities and municipalities and operate jointly with the government for law enforcement and protection of people and property.
- Sporting or cultural activities are popular strategies designed to show young people that there are better alternatives to a life of crime.
- In Kingston, Jamaica, the creation of a peace park has provided recreational opportunities for young people that were previously absent and contributed to lowering the murder rate in the area.