

# Manual for estimating the economic costs of injuries due to interpersonal and self-directed violence



World Health  
Organization

and

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION





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A Butchart, D Brown, A Khanh-Huynh, P Corso, N Florquin, R Muggah



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# Foreword

Every day, children, women and men live inside their homes with the fear of violence by close family members. In many communities, all around the world, young people are afraid of violence on the way to school, the local store or the café. Every year, millions of people take or attempt to take their own lives. Such acts of violence cause enormous shock and suffering. They often change the lives of individuals, families and communities for ever.

In addition to the wide-ranging emotional costs, violence also causes substantial financial damage. Fatal and non-fatal injuries due to interpersonal and self-directed violence result in large direct expenditures for the health care, law enforcement, criminal justice and welfare systems. Meeting these direct costs diverts huge quantities of money from more constructive societal spending. Far larger still are the indirect costs of violence-related injuries that arise from lost productivity and an inability to continue with the activities of daily life. These massive indirect costs result in slower economic development, increased socioeconomic inequality, and an erosion of human and social capital.

Violence does not need to be accepted as a fact of life. It can be prevented by implementing programmes that address its root causes. Information on the economic costs of violence is often essential in convincing policy-makers of the importance of intervening and the possible savings that could result from prevention programmes.

Some countries have made progress in documenting these economic costs, and using the findings to advocate for increased investment in prevention. In most countries, however, systematic research into the economic impact of violence is almost totally lacking.

This manual provides a simple set of guidelines for estimating the economic costs of injuries due to interpersonal and self-directed violence. It is hoped that this guidance will support a growing number of scientific analyses of the economic impacts of violence, and ultimately result in additional prevention programmes and lives saved.

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## Case studies

The case studies presented in Section 5 of this manual were conducted by the following people.

- Brazil: AT Miranda Soares de Moura, G Loureiro Werneck and M de Sousa Nascimento, Institute for Religious Studies, State University of Rio de Janeiro, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.
- Jamaica: E Ward and A Grant, Jamaica Ministry of Health, Health Promotion and Protection Division and Jamaica Violence Prevention Alliance, Kingston.
- Thailand: K Bundhamcharoen, P Odton, S Mugem, S Phulkerd, K Dhisayathikom and V Tangcharoensatien, International Health Policy Program, Bangkok.

## Other contributors

The document reflects the input of many other health economists and public health experts from Australia, Brazil, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, the Netherlands, South Africa, Thailand, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States and WHO, through their participation in an expert meeting at WHO in Geneva in April 2005, a pilot training workshop in Entebbe, Uganda in June 2007 and peer review of the draft

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