

‘Existence of testosterone-based effects should not be an excuse for tolerating aggression, violence, discrimination or other ills’: How the ‘male hormone’ shapes behavior

Testosterone’s wide-reaching effects occur not just in the human body, but across society, powering acts of aggression, violence, and the large disparity in their commission between men and women, according to Harvard human evolutionary biologist [Carole Hooven](#).

Hooven, lecturer and co-director of undergraduate studies in Human Evolutionary Biology, waded directly into the nature versus nurture debate [September 16], laying out her case for the hormone’s function as a foundation for aspects of male behavior. She traced the role of testosterone in the natural world, pointing out its role in differentiating males from females across the animal kingdom. Its far higher levels in males — 10 to 20 times that in females — act as a switch that turns on genes, creating stronger, more heavily muscled individuals, along with more aggressive behavior.

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That said, Hooven decried the concept of biological determinism, saying that the existence of these testosterone-based effects should not be an excuse for tolerating aggression, violence, discrimination or other ills. The high stakes, she said, should instead provide a reason to better understand whatever biological underpinnings there are for these behaviors, in order to ultimately arrive at a more effective solution.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.](#)