

Homicide a leading cause of death for kids, teens

December 19 2022, by Cara Murez HealthDay Reporter



Homicide has become a leading killer of children, with guns being the

most common weapon used in their deaths, a new study shows.

The overall rate of homicides in [children](#) has grown about 4.3% each year for a decade, with a steep rise seen between 2019 and 2020, when the number of kids who died by [homicide](#) rose 27.7%.

Firearm-related homicides rose 47.7% between 2019 and 2020, according to the study by researchers at the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, the U.S. Department of Defense and Georgia State University's School of Public Health. The findings were published Dec. 19 in the journal [JAMA Pediatrics](#).

Black male teens were impacted most: The [homicide rate](#) for Black males ages 16 to 17 was 18 times higher than that for [white males](#) and 4.6 times higher than for Hispanic males.

While the increases weren't surprising, "that doesn't mean they're not alarming," [Dr. Elinore Kaufman](#), an assistant professor in the department of surgery at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, told *CNN*.

"I think, as a society, we have to take a hard look at the systems that we have in place to protect children and to try to come to an understanding of why they're not working better for these [young children](#)," said Kaufman, who co-authored an [editorial](#) published with the study.

More than 38,000 U.S. children were homicide victims between 1999 and 2020, the researchers found using National Vital Statistics System's mortality data. This includes [death certificates](#) for U.S. residents and the National Violent Death Reporting System.

System-based inequities may have led to neighborhoods that have high concentrations of poverty, few safe places to play and underfunded

school systems, according to researchers.

Unconscious bias may have led to the perception of children in these groups as "less childlike and innocent" and "as more culpable for their actions," with "fewer childhood protections and benefit compared to their white peers," according to the study.

Rural areas have experienced higher homicide rates since 2011, with slower but longer upward growth. The rate of child homicides in the South has been increasing since 2013, according to the study.

One area of concern is growth in homicides among children ages 6 to 10, increasing since 2014.

"I think people often forget about this age group. We think about the younger kids with [child abuse](#) and the older kids with firearm injury, but that 6- to 10-year-old group—it's something that we need to get on our radar and be paying attention to," [Dr. Karen Sheehan](#) told *CNN*. She is an attending physician in [emergency medicine](#) at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago.

Children ages 10 and younger are typically killed by neglect or abuse from parents or caregivers, especially a father's or mother's companion. Victims ages 11 and older are typically killed in arguments, during a crime or by a friend or acquaintance, the study found.

Kaufman suggested a multi-pronged response to lower child homicide rates. This would include policy interventions that "create and [support services](#) for new parents and families," such as paid family leave, she said.

"Child homicides are preventable," the study authors said.

In a separate [study](#) published in the same journal, researchers found rates of firearm injuries seen at children's hospitals had grown significantly in 2020 and 2021. They increased 52%, from 1,815 between April 2018 and December 2019, compared to 2,759 from April 20 through December 2021.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [preventing violence against children and youth globally](#).

Copyright © 2022 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Homicide a leading cause of death for kids, teens (2022, December 19) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-12-homicide-death-kids-teens.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--