

Gun deaths among kids keep rising, but studies show state gun laws can help

March 29 2023, by Cara Murez



Following a mass shooting that killed three children and three adults at a

private Christian school in Tennessee on Monday, public officials are again talking about how to stop the never-ending cycle of gun violence in the United States.

Recent research offers both bad and good news on the issue.

Two separate studies from the same researcher found that firearms deaths involving preschool-aged [children](#) had increased at an alarmingly high rate in the United States in the past decade, but state laws may help curb shooting deaths among young children.

"Firearms are among the top causes of [death](#) for American children now, and no other industrialized nation has such high rates of firearm deaths," said researcher [Jagdish Khubchandani](#), a professor of public health at New Mexico State University.

In the first study, published in the [Journal of Community Health](#), Khubchandani and co-author [James Price](#) from the University of Toledo tracked changes in firearm death trends in preschool children from 2010 to 2020.

The study found that 1,220 children were shot and killed during that period. Firearm death rates among preschoolers increased by 75%.

About 66% of all firearm deaths in preschool children were homicides, 30% were unintentional deaths and 4% were undetermined, according to the study.

Homicides caused the most firearm deaths among white children, 61%; Black children, 65%; and Hispanic children, 81%.

"The data indicates that the worsening epidemic of firearm violence is not just limited to [youth](#) and adults, it is also affecting very [young](#)

[children](#)," Khubchandani said in a university news release. "Our findings show that since the past decade, we have been losing almost 10 children every month due to firearm injuries. To prevent this problem, we will need inter-sectoral approaches, with participation from families, health care providers and policymakers."

Male children were more at risk, comprising about two-thirds of the shooting deaths. More than half of the shooting deaths involving children occurred in the South, followed by 24% in the Midwest, 17% in the West and 6% in the Northeast.

"Unfortunately, in recent years, the majority of firearm-related deaths have been observed among [preschool children](#) of color or racial/ethnic minorities," Khubchandani noted.

In the second study, also published in the [Journal of Community Health](#) by the same authors, firearm death rates were tracked among Black children under 19, based on whether they lived in a state that had a child access prevention (CAP) law.

CAP laws have been proposed as a strategy to prevent children from accessing firearms. While states with the strongest laws impose criminal liability, those with the weakest laws only prohibit individuals from providing firearms to children.

Between 2015 and 2019, a total of 6,778 Black youths died from firearm violence, according to the study. The leading causes were homicides, at 86%, and suicides, at 9%.

Researchers also analyzed data on state CAP laws, the average Black poverty rate, the average number of federal firearm licensees, total firearm deaths among Black youths and firearm mortality rates per 100,000 individuals among Black youths.

In the end, states with no CAP laws or weak laws had higher Black youth firearm mortality rates compared to states with strong CAP laws, the study found.

States without a CAP law were about five times more likely to have a higher Black youth firearm mortality rate than the national average. Poverty was also a significant predictor of rates of Black youth firearm mortality, the researchers added.

"Our analysis was limited to one group of youth but shows [the] promise of [state laws](#) in helping reduce youth [firearm](#) deaths," Khubchandani said. "Adults have a major role to play in ensuring safer households, and law enforcement and policymakers must ensure that all should be done to make communities safer."

More information: Pew Research Center has more on [U.S. gun deaths](#)

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