

Los Angeles county's growing youth firearm crisis

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The majority of pediatric firearm injuries in Los Angeles County occur in neighborhoods with limited social, health and educational opportunity, according to a new study exploring incidents from 2010 to 2021. The

research will be presented during the [Pediatric Academic Societies \(PAS\) 2023 Meeting](#) taking place April 27-May 1 in Washington, D.C.

Researchers from Children's Hospital Los Angeles analyzed firearm injuries in 1,383 [children](#) under 18 years old using records from the Trauma and Emergency Medicine Information System, which contains data from 15 trauma centers in LA County. Researchers applied the national Childhood Opportunity Index—a measure of factors that contribute to healthy, productive childhood development—to understand how a lack of resources in a child's environment relates to firearm injury exposure. The Index is administered by Brandeis University.

The study noted the highest rates of pediatric firearm injuries among children were in neighborhoods with very low (62.7%) and low (22.6%) opportunity, compared to areas with moderate (10.5%), high (3.0%) and very high (1.3%) opportunity.

Findings also revealed that approximately 9.7 pediatric [firearm](#) injuries per year occurred for every 100,000 children in neighborhoods with a very low level of opportunity, compared to approximately 0.5 incidences for every 100,000 children living in a very high opportunity environment.

Childhood Opportunity Index	Frequency (%)	Incidence per 100,000 Children	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Very Low	867 (62.7%)	116.6	19.9 (12.5-31.7)
Low	312 (22.6%)	56.5	9.6 (6.0-15.5)
Moderate	145 (10.5%)	33.4	5.8 (3.6-9.3)
High	41 (3.0%)	13.9	2.4 (1.4-4.1)
Very High	18 (1.3%)	5.9	Reference

"Firearms are the leading cause of deaths in children across the United States and this data speaks volumes that a child's individual risk is far from equal," says Abigail Brenner, M.D., pediatric resident physician at Children's Hospital Los Angeles and presenting author. "We must advocate for children who are disproportionately exposed to [firearm injuries](#) and prevent the issue from growing."

These findings represent a pressing need for targeted advocacy and policy that advances community-level interventions and support, according to the authors.

Provided by American Pediatric Society

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