

# Neighborhood poverty in childhood increases risk of death by unnatural causes, study finds

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The degree of neighborhood poverty in early childhood is significantly associated with death by unnatural causes in early adulthood, according to a [study](#) published online Feb. 23 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Kimberly B. Roth, Ph.D., from the Mercer University School of Medicine in Savannah, Georgia, and colleagues examined whether childhood factors are associated with death from unnatural causes through mid-adulthood in a longitudinal cohort study. Longitudinal data were available for 2,180 participants who were in first grade in 1985 to 1986 and were followed up to mid-adulthood through Dec. 31, 2020. Exposures included individual factors, family and peer factors, and neighborhood factors.

Overall, 111 [male participants](#) (10.2 percent) and 29 female participants (2.7 percent) died; of these, 96 male and 14 [female participants](#) died of unnatural causes. The researchers observed significant associations for two factors with mortality from unnatural causes: Female sex was associated with a [reduced risk](#), while increased risk was seen in association with neighborhood public assistance (hazard ratios, 0.13 and 1.89, respectively).

"To make long-term gains in reducing health disparities, efforts targeting concentrated neighborhood-level poverty in childhood should be a priority," the authors write.

**More information:** Kimberly B. Roth et al, Childhood Factors Associated With Unnatural Death Through Midadulthood, *JAMA Network Open* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.0327](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.0327)

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