

Injury & Violence Prevention Program

Homicides & Firearm Deaths in Los Angeles County

Homicide was the leading cause of death for residents aged 5-44 years in Los Angeles County¹, disproportionately impacting youth and young adults, particularly minorities and males in the county's most underserved communities. Additionally nearly one-third of all firearm deaths in the county are suicides, and these rates have been increasing.

Homicides

- There were a total of 9,917 homicides in Los Angeles County between 2000 and 2009; approximately 43% of these were gang-related homicides.²
- Homicide was the leading cause of premature death for Hispanic and African American males.
- Homicide rates among African American males were six times higher than the county overall.
- Homicide was the leading cause of premature death in SPA 6 (South LA).
- Homicide was the second leading cause of premature death countywide (1999-2008) behind coronary heart disease. While an average of 4 years of life was lost from every coronary heart disease death, an average of 46 years of life lost was lost from every firearm homicide.

Firearm Deaths

- In 2010 there were 798 firearm deaths in Los Angeles County, including 504 homicides, 281 suicides, and 13 other intent (unintentional shooting, legal intervention, undetermined).
- Firearm death rates among youth in SPA 6 (South LA) were nearly eight times the county overall.

Homicides

- Firearm homicide rates in Los Angeles County remain higher than the national rate: in 2010 the firearm-related homicide rate was 4.8 per 100,000 (compared to 3.2 per 100,000 nationwide³).
- A firearm was used in 78% of all homicides.⁴ Among youth (age 15-24), 91% of homicides are firearm-related.
- Firearm homicide was the leading cause of death for youth (age 15-24) from 2000-2009. Nationally, the leading cause of death for this age group was motor vehicle traffic.⁵

¹ Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology. Mortality in Los Angeles County 2008: Leading causes of death and premature death with trends for 1999-2008. December 2011.

² Number of Gang Homicides from LA Sheriff's Department and LA Police Department

³ National rates based on Uniform Crime Report statistics: www.fbi.gov/ucr/hrm.

⁴ Mortality data from the Death Statistical Master File, California Dept of Health Services, Office of Vital Statistics.

⁵ CDC. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>. Accessed July 13, 2012.

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- More than half (58%) of all deaths among African American youth were caused by firearm homicide.

Suicides

- Nearly one-third of all firearm deaths in Los Angeles County are suicides.
- Firearm-related suicide rates have been increasing in the county while firearm-related homicide rates have decreased.
- Firearm-related suicides are the fourth leading cause of injury death among Males, Whites, and residents of SPA 1, 2, and 5.

Violence Prevention Resources

CDC's Injury Center Violence Prevention page includes issue briefs and reports related to school violence and youth violence, national and state level youth violence statistics, information about risk and protective factors and best practices. www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/index.html. CDC's VetoViolence website also provides tools and resources for violence prevention, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence, suicide, and youth violence: www.vetoviolence.cdc.gov.

The Violence Prevention Coalition (VPC) is a joint venture of community-based organizations, individuals, and public institutions and agencies in the Greater Los Angeles area to prevent violence using a public health approach. www.vpcgla.org

Prevention Institute is a national non-profit that has played a leading role since its founding in promoting legislation, initiatives, and alliances in violence prevention. www.preventioninstitute.org

The Brady Campaign works to pass and enforce sensible federal and state gun laws, regulations, and public policies through grassroots activism, electing public officials who support common sense gun laws, and increasing public awareness of gun violence. www.bradycampaign.org

www.preventionviolence.org is an archive of public education materials funded by the California Wellness Foundation as part of their Violence Prevention Initiative.

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