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The Burden of Child and Adolescent Firearm Homicide

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Published on: Mar 10, 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21428/cb6ab371.fa8fdd5c>

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ABSTRACT

Firearm homicide is a leading cause of death among children and adolescents. This study examined variability in the correlates of firearm homicide across child and adolescent firearm homicide victims. U.S. firearm homicide victims comprising three developmental groups were identified in the National Violent Death Reporting System (2003–2021): infant and early child victims aged 0–5 years ($N = 3992$); middle and late child victims aged 6–12 years ($N = 996$); and adolescent victims aged 13–19 years ($N = 8350$). Descriptive statistics and multivariate regression analysis demonstrated strong support for the study hypotheses. First, firearm homicide victimization peaked among young children (0–5) and adolescents (13–19). Second, older victims were disproportionately male and overwhelmingly had male perpetrators. Third, younger victims were more likely to be killed by their caregivers, family members, and in the home. Finally, situational characteristics were more relevant for adolescent victims. The results suggest that the correlates of child and adolescent firearm homicide are developmentally patterned and reflect age-graded differences in familial reliance, autonomy, and social involvement.