

# World's dangerous neighborhoods produce aggressive children

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Children around the world who grow up in dangerous neighborhoods exhibit more aggressive behavior, says a new Duke University-led study that is the first to examine the topic across a wide range of countries.

Many U.S. studies have described a link between [dangerous neighborhoods](#) and [children's aggressive behavior](#). Authors of the new study wanted to determine whether the pattern held true in other cultures. To find out, researchers interviewed parents and children from 1,293 families in nine countries: China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, the Philippines, Sweden, Thailand and the United States.

The study appears online today in the journal *Societies*.

The researchers asked families a series of questions about dangers in their neighborhoods. Based on the answers, the researchers scored the neighborhoods according to their degree of danger.

To measure children's aggressive behavior, researchers asked parents and children to complete a widely used child-behavior checklist that captures behaviors such as screaming and threatening people. The researchers sought answers from mothers, fathers and children for the surveys, in order to obtain a fuller portrait.

In neighborhoods that parents described as highly dangerous, children exhibited higher levels of aggressive behavior. This link held true across all nine countries studied, based on parents' responses, said lead author

Ann T. Skinner, a researcher with Duke's Center for Child and Family Policy.

"This is an incredibly diverse set of countries from around the world, representing countries from the developing and the developed world and including individualistic and collectivist societies," Skinner said. "In all the countries we studied, we see that living in a dangerous neighborhood may affect kids negatively."

The study further suggests that perilous neighborhoods may affect children indirectly, through their parents. In all nine [countries](#), when children reported living in more dangerous neighborhoods, harsh parenting practices were more common, as was child aggression. However, adults' and children's perceptions differed on that point. More research is needed to determine whether or not dangerous [neighborhoods](#) promote harsh parenting practices, Skinner said.

**More information:** "Neighborhood Danger, Parental Monitoring, Harsh Parenting and Child Aggression in Nine Countries," Ann. T. Skinner, Dario Bacchini, Jennifer E. Lansford, Jennifer W. Godwin, Emma Sorbring, Kenneth A. Dodge et al., *Societies*, January 22, 2014, 4, 45-67; [DOI: 10.3390/soc4010045](https://doi.org/10.3390/soc4010045)

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