

Research finds street gang activity is a predictor of homicide in LA neighborhoods

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Neighborhoods saddled with gangs fighting over the same turf suffer higher homicide rates and greater instability than areas where the gangs are scarce, according to a recent study by researchers at Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science.

The study—featured online this week in the *Journal of Urban Health*: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine—examined how the presence of neighborhood street [gangs](#) influences [homicides](#) rates in communities throughout Los Angeles County.

"We found the most homicides in [neighborhoods](#) where you find the most gangs," said Paul Robinson, the lead researcher in the study. "In these communities, gang members fight with automatic and semi-automatic [weapons](#), and killings often occur in public places. This is not domestic homicide, or random serial killings. It's mayhem on the street and it's an issue of public health."

The study found that the presence of gangs—with their long term cultural and historic ties in neighborhoods—was a greater predictor of homicides than poverty and unemployment.

Using data from the Los Angeles County Coroners, the research analyzed all 10,880 homicides in Los Angeles County between 1994 and 2002.

Over the eight-year period, the study found 3.4 homicides per square mile in neighborhoods without significant gang involvement where more than 4 million people lived. On the other hand, the study found 61.1 homicides per square mile in neighborhoods with 30 or more gangs in a two mile radius.

These gang-plagued areas were home to about 460,000 persons, but contributed a disproportionate share of homicides.

"Homicides taking place inside homes don't have the same impact," he said. "Also, [gang killings](#) are more likely to spur retributive violence, leading to concentrated homicide clusters."

Combating the problem, Robinson said, will require more funding for gang intervention programs, educational support and employment assistance for young men, among other things.

Source: Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science

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