

States with more gun laws have lower youth gun violence, study finds

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Gun violence among children is lower in states with more gun laws, according to a Rutgers-led study.

The study, published in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, examined youth gun and weapon carrying data from 2005 and 2017 across several [states](#). Researchers found the rates of youths carrying guns was higher in states and lower in states with more [gun laws](#). According to researchers, this phenomenon could be associated with [large urban areas](#) and more significant safety concerns within these areas.

Louisiana and Arkansas reported the highest percentages of youth reporting gun carrying behavior in 2017 and 2013 respectively, with 12.7 percent and 12.5 percent respectively. These two states had 13 gun laws in place while the lowest rates of gun carrying among youth were reported in New York in 2013 and Iowa in 2007, with 3.0 percent and 3.5 percent respectively. They had 63 laws and 20 laws, respectively for these years.

"We understood the role of individual characteristics in youth gun carrying, but we often

ignored the broader environmental context surrounding youth gun carrying behavior, such as whether gun laws are in place in a state to discourage access to guns," said Professor Paul Boxer, a co-author and director of the Rutgers Center on Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice. "Our study helped provide clarity to these associations."

Gun violence among children is a significant public health concern in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, firearms are the third leading cause of death among U.S. children ages 1 to 17.

Researchers highlighted how legislation potentially influences [gun violence](#) trends regardless of whether youth carry guns and the need for improved safety in communities and schools.

"Though more work is needed, the current findings point to the potential of gun laws to lower youth gun carrying behavior, which all sides of the gun-law debate can agree is unwanted and dangerous," said John Gunn, the study's lead author and a postdoctoral researcher at the Rutgers Gun Violence Research Center.

More information: John F. Gunn et al. Gun Laws and Youth Gun Carrying: Results from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2005–2017, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (2021). [DOI: 10.1007/s10964-020-01384-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01384-x)

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