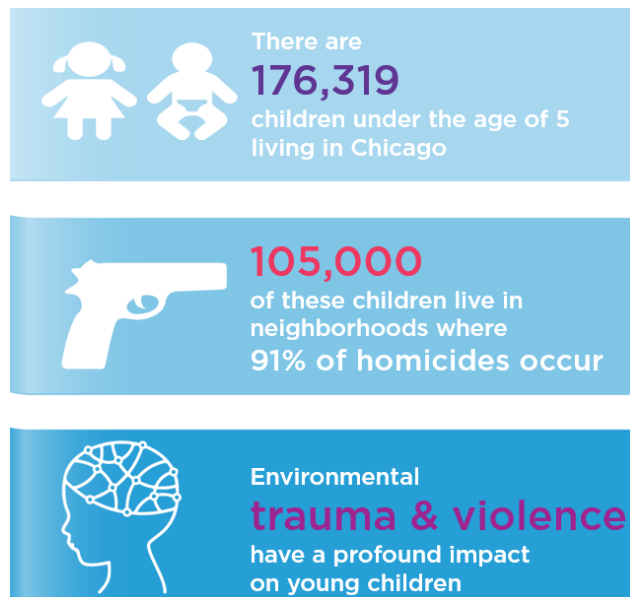


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New homicide data analysis reveals most of Chicago's young children live in communities with high violence
While homicides are down city-wide, the number of young children exposed to excessive violence has increased



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As summer in Chicago heats up with rising temperatures and increased shootings, new data analysis reveals the majority of Chicago's youngest children live in communities with high homicide rates, increasing the likelihood of an adverse impact on their early development due to environmental trauma, according to Chicago-based Erikson Institute. Erikson's analysis of the homicide data that is available through the City of Chicago Data Portal, shows more than half – nearly **60%** -- of all children under the age of five in Chicago live in communities that experienced more than three homicides, raising concerns about their mental health.

A child's development during the first five years sets the foundation for the rest of his or her life, and early violence exposure may negatively impact that development. Children exposed to violence, especially repeated incidents, can become extremely fearful and may demonstrate aggression, anxiety, depression, sadness, and may have difficulty feeling safe and secure. "We know that even if an infant or child does not witness a

homicide, they are deeply affected by the stress and fear experienced by the adults around them when violence occurs,” said **Geoffrey Nagle**, PhD, President and CEO of Erikson Institute. “The challenges associated with exposure to violence and trauma can emerge very early in a child’s development and are a threat to their educational achievement and long-term health.”

Community-level data helps pinpoint need for services

U.S. Census data showed that there are 176,319 children under the age of five living in Chicago. The most recent data available from the city shows that **nearly half** (37) of Chicago’s 77 community areas had more than three homicides (the city’s median) in 2018. Nearly 60% (approximately 105,000) children under 5 live in those 37 communities, indicating how great the need is for interventions such as infant and early childhood mental health services in those neighborhoods to mitigate the impact of toxic stress, a form of chronic stress that undermines brain development and child well-being. Data further revealed that approximately **30%** or 54,529 Chicago children under 5 lived in a community that experienced over 10 homicides, and **7%** or 12,248 **young children** lived in a community that experienced over 30 homicides. Despite the demographic trends in Chicago showing both a decrease in population numbers and the annual number of homicides, unfortunately, the number of children under age 5 exposed to excessive homicides has not decreased. “The number of children exposed to gun violence and homicide in Chicago is staggering,” said Nagle. “We need to act with urgency to address the trauma this community violence causes while at the same time address the root causes of violence across our city—this is paramount if we expect to see different outcomes in the future, and we applaud the city’s recent announcements and beginning investments in violence prevention strategies.”

Community violence is an issue across the state of Illinois. Erikson’s [Risk and Reach](#) report, released earlier this year, shows that exposure to violence is a risk factor that is prevalent throughout the state, with 436 violent crimes occurring on average for every 100,000 population. In Cook County however, the rate was 665 violent crimes per 100,000 population, underscoring the extreme level of violence exposure facing very young children in the Chicago area.

Erikson’s work with infant/early childhood mental health

Erikson’s Center for Children and Families (CCF) provides infant and early childhood mental health services for families, including those exposed to trauma, through clinics across the city. Intervening early is key to mitigating the adverse developmental impact trauma and violence cause for young children. This spring, Erikson began providing services in a new, first-of-its-kind CCF facility in Chicago’s **Little Village** neighborhood, a primarily

Latinx immigrant community experiencing high rates of poverty, violence, and additional immigration stressors, such as those related to deportation. CCF also has been operating a clinic in Chicago's **Austin** neighborhood since 2012. CCF provides direct services including home visits, crisis intervention, medical diagnostic assessments, neuro-developmental evaluations, and trauma focused parent-infant/early childhood mental health assessments and treatment. Erikson also provides clinical services in **Humboldt Park** through a partnership with the Department of Family and Support Services, **Oak Park**, and **River North** communities.

Erikson Institute educates, inspires, and promotes leadership to serve the needs of children and families. We have the premier graduate school dedicated to child development. We provide direct services to our community's most vulnerable children and families. We are leaders in influencing early childhood policy. We work tirelessly every day so that all children can achieve optimal educational, social, emotional, and physical well-being. At Erikson Institute, we know that investing in the early years of children will last a lifetime.

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