



Department of
Public Health
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Commissioner

CHART



Shootings Near Public Spaces

Firearm violence poses a threat to the health and safety of any community, and exposure to violence has long-lasting effects on the well-being and perceptions of safety for [children and adults](#). Public spaces contribute to a sense of community and to physical and emotional health*. Schools, recreation centers, and parks¹—environments where families learn and play—should be free of firearm violence.

However, these public spaces are too often the sites of firearm violence. This issue of CHART focuses on shooting victims injured or killed near public spaces—specifically schools, recreation centers, and parks—in Philadelphia in 2019, and examines their geographic distribution.

**In the era of COVID-19, spending time in public spaces means protecting yourself and others. Wearing masks and staying six feet apart are important steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Stay up to date on recommendations to prevent COVID-19 [here](#).*

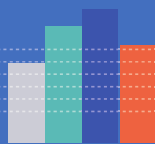
KEY TAKEAWAYS

Almost half of shooting victims in 2019 were injured or killed near schools, recreation centers, or parks.

1 in 4 shooting victims in 2019 were injured or killed near schools.

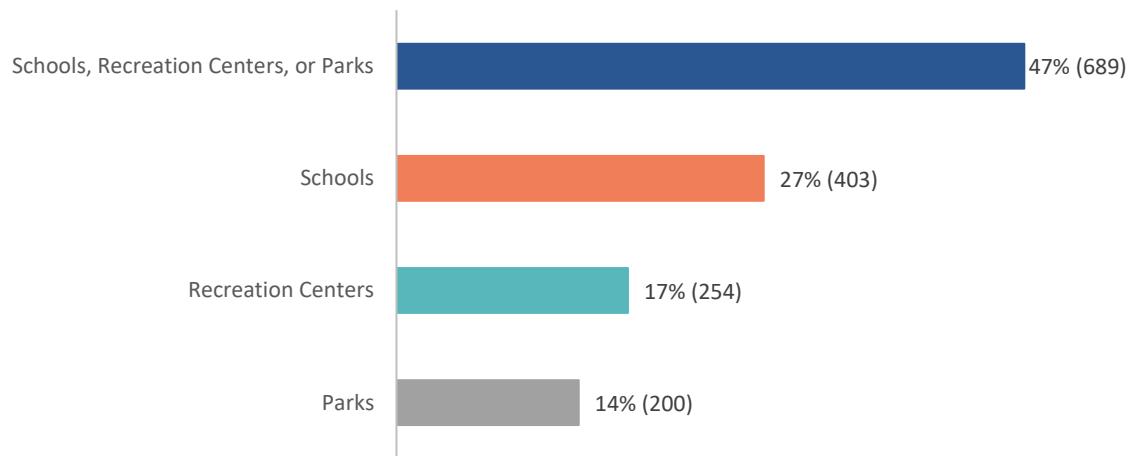
Exposure to shootings in public spaces differs by neighborhood.

Common-sense firearm safety laws can decrease firearms in circulation and prevent violence in public spaces.



Almost Half of Shooting Victims in 2019 Were Shot Near Schools, Recreation Centers, or Parks

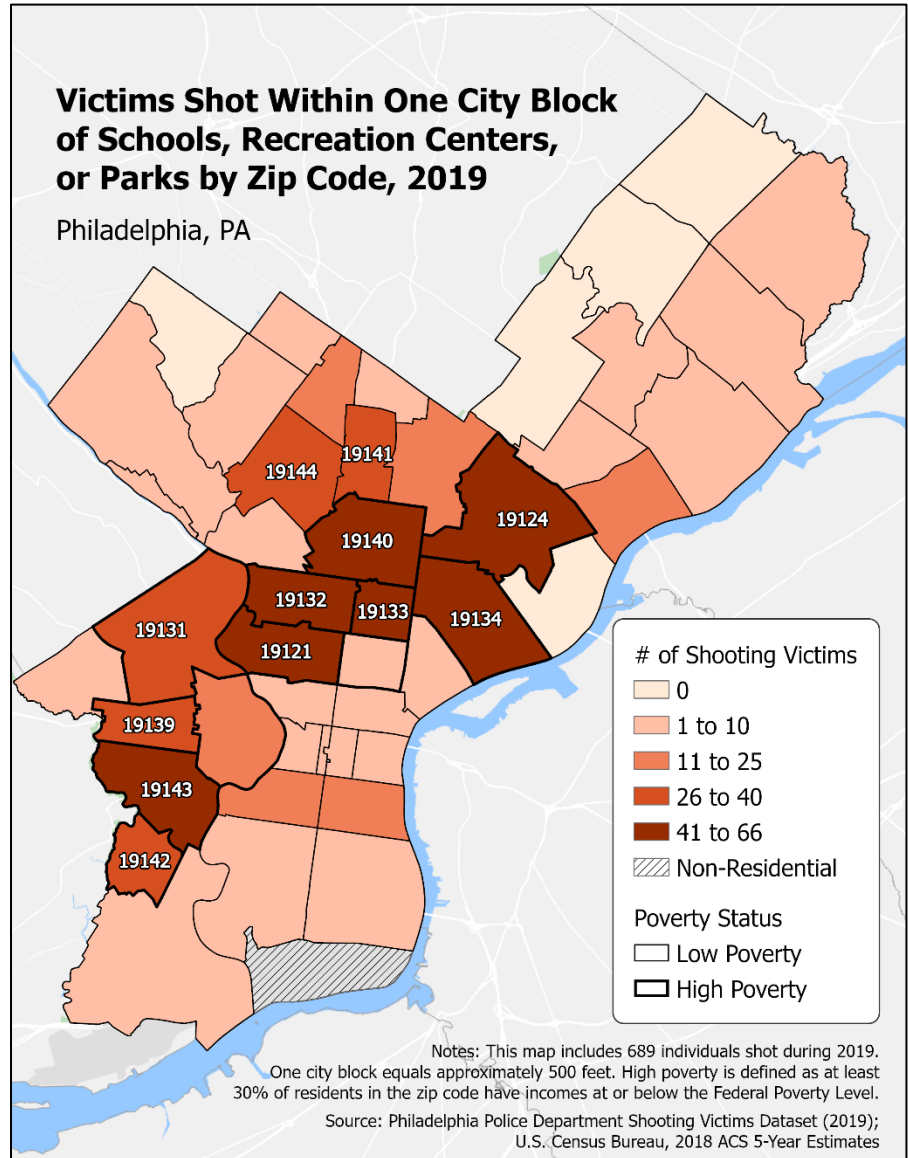
% of All Shooting Victims (1,469) Injured or Killed Within One City Block of Public Space²



- In 2019, 47% (689) of shooting victims were injured or killed within one city block of schools, recreation centers, or parks. Schools were the most common location: 27% (403) of shooting victims were injured or killed within one city block of a school.
- 40% (277) of the 689 victims shot near schools, recreation centers, or parks were injured or killed during daytime or early evening hours (8 AM to 8 PM) when families are more likely to be engaging in activities in public spaces, such as attending school or playing outside.
- 20% (141) of the 689 victims shot near schools, recreation centers, or parks died from their injuries.

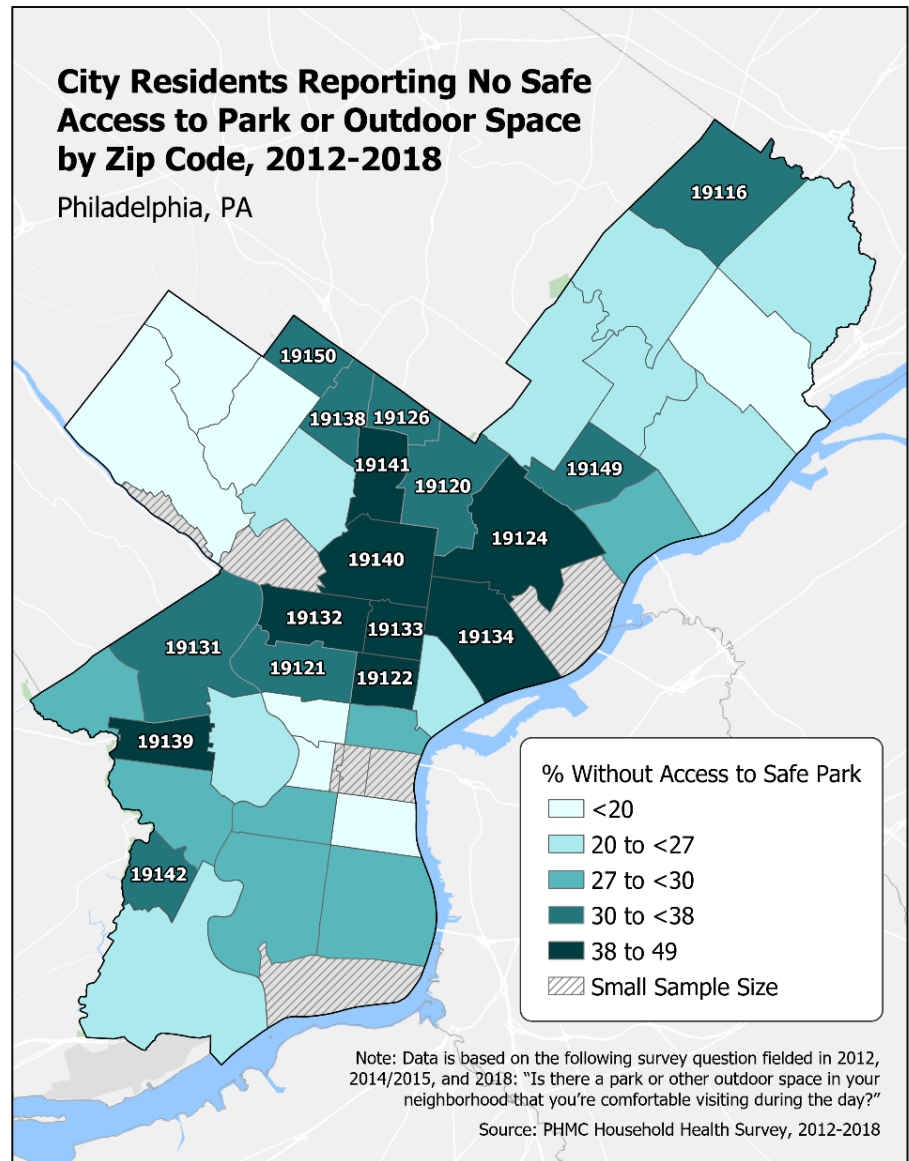
Source: Philadelphia Police Department Shooting Victims Dataset (2019)

Philadelphia Families
are Exposed to
Firearm Violence
Near Where They
Play and Attend
School

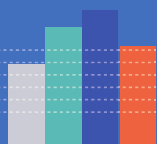


- In Philadelphia, the number of shooting victims near schools, recreation centers, or parks varied dramatically by geographic location. The North and Southwest regions of the city had the highest exposure to firearm violence near public spaces.
- Neighborhoods that experience high rates of violent crime also have high rates of poverty, and exposure to both can create a cycle of disadvantage that is difficult to break.

Residents Near Public Spaces Where Shootings Occur Report Limited Access to Safe Outdoor Space



- People living in the North and Southwest of Philadelphia were more likely to report a lack of access to a safe park than people living in other parts of the city. The geographic trends in shootings near public spaces and low access to safe parks were similar.
- Limited access to safe parks has implications for physical health, as families that live in environments with high rates of violence are less likely to report feeling safe engaging in outdoor activities in local parks.⁴



WHAT CAN BE DONE

The Health Department is:

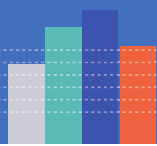
- Working with City partners to study trends in the locations of shootings and identify opportunities to intervene to prevent violence.
 - Convening City agencies to review firearm deaths and injuries in depth to identify potential preventative strategies.
 - Working with other City departments on the [Roadmap to Safer Communities](#) to promote coordination of City services, strong community partnerships, and youth engagement, starting with the neighborhoods at highest risk of firearm violence.
 - Promoting education about [safe firearm storage](#) to limit the transfer of firearms to people who are not permitted to have them. Safe firearm storage can also reduce suicides, accidental shootings and intimate partner homicides.
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Policy makers can:

- Work to repeal state preemption laws so that Philadelphia can enact local laws that benefit its residents.
 - Support common-sense firearm safety laws, which [most surveyed Pennsylvanians favor](#).
 - Require licenses for firearm owners to minimize the illegal transfer of firearms and reduce homicides and suicides.
 - Recognize the right to safe education by supporting legislation that keeps schools firearm-free.
 - Identify safe zones throughout Pennsylvania that should be free of firearms.
 - Improve access to safe routes to school and reduce exposure to violence among school children. These factors may affect school performance for students in high violence neighborhoods.
 - Mandate safe firearm storage and better reporting of lost and stolen firearms to track the transfer of firearms to those who should not have them.
 - Prioritize improvements in education and employment, which can help prevent violence before it occurs.
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People can:

- Avoid carrying firearms in public.
 - Recognize that having a firearm in the home increases your risk of homicide and suicide. Avoid keeping firearms in the home or in a car. If you do own a firearm, ensure that it is [stored safely](#) (unloaded, locked with a trigger lock or in a firearm safe, and ammunition locked separately).
 - Report any firearm that is lost or stolen to the police immediately.
 - Never buy a firearm for someone else – too many people who are not permitted to carry firearms obtain them through others, putting everyone involved in danger.
 - Reclaim public spaces for community engagement, exercise, conversation, and healing.
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TECHNICAL NOTES

1. For this analysis, schools include K-12 public, private, parochial, or charter schools in Philadelphia Department of Planning and Development's schools dataset, and parks and recreation centers include areas designated as parks and recreation sites in Philadelphia Parks & Recreation's Assets dataset.
2. Percentage of shootings within one city block of schools, recreation sites, and parks will not sum to the combined percentage because shootings that occurred within one city block of more than one public space were counted for each type of public space they were near.
3. Self-reported data is based on the following question from the Household Health Survey fielded by Public Health Management Corporation in 2012, 2014/2015, and 2018: "Is there a park or other outdoor space in your neighborhood that you're comfortable visiting during the day?"

Suggested citation:

Philadelphia Department of Public Health. Shooting Victims Near Public Spaces. CHART 2020;5(8):1-6.

