

Injury Risk Behavior

This section addresses some of the behavioral risk factors associated with injuries. Chapter Four shows data on injury outcomes in Los Angeles County. Injuries are often classified on the basis of the intent and the behaviors of the people involved, thus, unintentional or intentional. Unintentional injuries, formerly referred to as “accidents,” include those due to motor vehicle-related injuries, falls, poisoning, and drowning. Intentional injuries include homicide and suicide, and injuries from physical assaults or weapons. From 1993 through 1995, injuries accounted for 51,695 deaths, ranking them as the third leading cause of death in California.

Injuries occur as a result of complex interaction between behavioral, psychological, social, and physical factors. Many of these factors are potentially modifiable and, therefore, injuries are largely preventable occurrences with identifiable risk factors. For example, driving while intoxicated on alcohol is a major risk factor for motor vehicle crashes, and not wearing a seat belt is a major risk for injury in a crash.¹⁹ In order to reduce injury-related morbidity and mortality, injury prevention efforts must address these and other risk factors at the individual and population levels (i.e. personal counseling and public education campaigns) and in the policy arena (i.e. policies, laws, and regulations that create safer environments and mandate safer behaviors).

This section presents data on selected behaviors associated with increased risk for intentional and unintentional injuries. Because of the limited data available at the county level, this section should not be viewed as a complete accounting of injury risk factors.

Table 3.5: Injury Risk Behavior

		L.A. County	California
Seat belt use, adults 18+		89% ¹	85% ²
Adults, 18+, who reported not always using seat belts. ¹	Men	14%	*
	Women	9%	*
	18–29 years	14%	*
	30–39 years	10%	*
	40–49 years	9%	*
	50+ years	11%	*
Children, 0-17, whose parents reported not always using seat belts or child car seat. ¹	<4 years	2%	*
	5–12 years	6%	*
	13–17 years	6%	*
Children and youth, under 18, whose parents reported always using seat belts or child car seats.		95% ¹	*
Driving under the influence ⁴ (arrests per 100,000)		17.6	19.7
Total number of juvenile arrests		13.0	108.0
Total number of adult arrests		1,654.0	6,256.0
Adults, 18+, who reported having guns in the home.		20% ¹	30% ³

1. 1997 LACHS, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services.

2. California Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 1995.

3. CDHS, EPIC, EPIC Gram, Gun Ownership in California, 1998.

4. 1996 California Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Justice Information Services.

* Data not available

→ Episodic consumption of alcohol is associated with violent behavior and alcohol-impaired driving, thereby increasing the risk for intentional and unintentional injury.²⁰ In 1996, there were 17.6 arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol per 100,000 Los Angeles County drivers (see Table 3.5).

Among public high school students in the city of Los Angeles:

- 36.7% reported riding in a vehicle at least one or more times within the last month with a driver who had been drinking (see Table 3.5A).
- 17% reported carrying a weapon including a gun, knife, or club, within the last 30 days (see Table 3.5A).
- Within the last 12 months, 23.2% of students in Los Angeles reported having considered attempting suicide (see Table 3.5A).
- Within the last 12 months, 12.6% of students in Los Angeles reported having attempted suicide compared to 8.3% in the rest of the state (see Table 3.5).

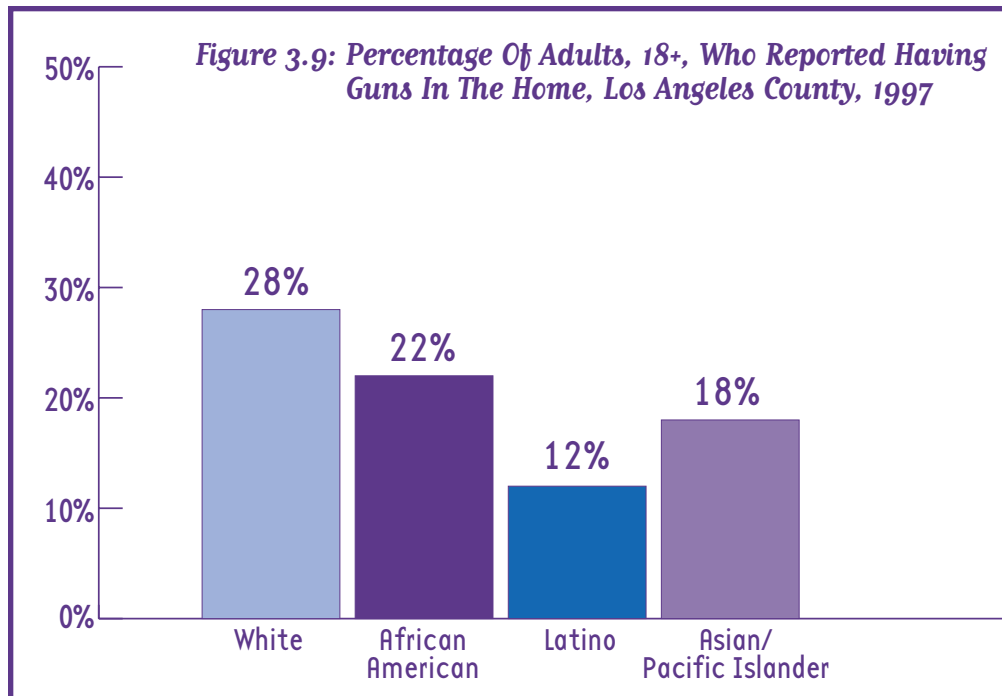
Table 3.5A: Injury Risk Behavior Among High School Students, 1997

	L.A. City ¹	California ²
High school students who reported always wearing seat belts when riding in a car or truck driven by someone else	91.8%	93.9%
High school students who rarely or never wore motorcycle helmets among those that rode motorcycles in the past 12 months	46.7%	26.4%
High school students who reported driving after drinking alcohol	9.3%	9.8%
High school students who rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol. (one or more times within last thirty days)	36.7%	29.8%
High school students who reported carrying a weapon within last 30 days	17%	16.7%
High school students who carried a weapon on school property within last 30 days	5.8%	7.4%
High school students who carried a gun	6%	4.7%
High school students who reported being in a physical fight in the past year	36.7%	28.6%
High school students who reported having considered attempting suicide (within last 12 months)	23.2%	22.3%
High school students who reported attempting suicide (within last 12 months)	12.6%	8.3%

1. Weighted data provided for Los Angeles includes only city-wide statistics.

2. Unweighted data for California does not include high school students from the LAUSD.

→ Having access to loaded household firearms is a risk factor for firearm-related injuries.^{21,22,23} Among Los Angeles County residents who reported having a gun in the home, 28% were white, followed by African American (22%), Asian (18%), and Latino (12%). These survey results should be considered minimum estimates of gun ownership. Overall, these numbers are influenced by self-reporting bias since response to this particular question may be influenced by many factors. For example, a respondent may be hesitant to admit to purchasing a gun, especially if the purchase was illegal or not appropriately registered with local authorities. Low-income individuals may resort to buying cheap handguns through illegal means, further adding to underestimation of the prevalence of handguns in the home (see Figure 3.9).



Source: 1997 LACHS, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services.

Injury Risk Behavior—Data Sources

1. Los Angeles County Department of Health Services—Public Health
Injury and Violence Prevention Program

2. Los Angeles County Department of Health Services—Public Health
Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology
1997 Los Angeles County Health Survey

3. California Department of Health Services
Cancer Surveillance Section
CATI Unit
California Behavioral Risk Factor Survey

4. United States Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Epidemiology Program Office
MMWR Series

See Appendix for complete references on these and other data resources.