

# Youth Violence

## DEFINITION

*Youth violence* is the number of arrests of youths under age 18 in Rhode Island for assault and weapons offenses and the percentage of high school students who report experiencing violence at school. These two measures of youth violence are used to account for violence that leads to arrest as well as some of the violence experienced by youth that may not come to the attention of the police.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Youth violence refers to a variety of harmful behaviors that youth can experience as victims, witnesses, or offenders and that can cause emotional harm, injury, or death. Violence can impact the well-being of individuals, families, schools, and communities and can generate high social and economic costs.<sup>1,2</sup>

Effective youth violence prevention aims to reduce factors that place youth at risk for violent behavior and promote factors that protect youth at risk for perpetrating violence.<sup>3</sup> Efforts to prevent youth violence should begin in early childhood and continue through adolescence and address a wide range of individual, family, and community factors. Effective violence prevention strategies include strengthening youth's capacity to choose nonviolence, promoting supportive relationships between youth and adults, and

improving economic conditions and safety in communities.<sup>4</sup>

Youth at risk for committing violent acts often live in high-poverty neighborhoods with limited economic opportunities. They are more likely to have histories of substance use, association with delinquent peers, academic failure, poor family functioning, and be victims of child maltreatment.<sup>5,6,7</sup> Youths who are victims of violence are at increased risk for developing physical and mental health problems, having academic difficulties, smoking, engaging in high-risk sexual behavior, and suicide.<sup>8</sup>

Nationally in 2013, 25% of students in grades nine through 12 reported being in a physical fight during the previous year, 20% reported being bullied at school during the previous year, and 18% reported carrying a weapon during the previous month.<sup>9</sup>

The number of juveniles arrested for violent crimes in the U.S. reached a 33-year low in 2012, with juveniles making up 12% of all serious violent crime arrests. The Rhode Island juvenile arrest rate for serious violent crimes was 128 per 100,000 youth ages 10 to 17, compared to the U.S. rate of 187 per 100,000 youth ages 10 to 17.<sup>10</sup> In 2014 in Rhode Island, there were 476 juvenile arrests for assault offenses and 110 juvenile arrests for weapons offenses.<sup>11</sup> In 2015, violent crimes made up 5% (234) of the 4,885 juvenile offenses referred to Rhode Island Family Court.<sup>12</sup>

## Violent Behavior and Victimization, Rhode Island Public High School Students, 2015

	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL
Been bullied on school property during the past 12 months	16%	15%	16%
Carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property one or more of the past 30 days	2%	7%	5%
Did not go to school on one or more of the past 30 days because they felt they would be unsafe at school or on their way to or from school	5%	7%	6%
Were in a physical fight one or more times on school property during the past 12 months	7%	11%	9%
Experienced physical dating violence in the past 12 months (among those who have dated someone during the past 12 months)	10%	8%	9%
Were ever physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to	10%	6%	8%

Source: 2015 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis.

◆ Violence in schools affects individual victims and disrupts the functioning of entire schools and communities.<sup>13</sup> In Rhode Island in 2015, 6% of high school students reported not going to school due to safety concerns and 16% had been bullied at school in the past year.<sup>14</sup>

◆ Witnessing violence can cause emotional, physical, and mental harm, even for children who are not the direct victims of violence. Early, chronic exposure to violence can damage a child's brain development and condition them to react with fear and anxiety to a range of circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

◆ Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place through computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices.<sup>16</sup> In 2015 in Rhode Island, 21% of middle school students (30% of females and 12% of males) and 12% of high school students (15% of females and 10% of males) reported being electronically bullied.<sup>17</sup>

## Gun Violence Among Youth

◆ Guns are the leading instrument of fatal violence to teens and are used in 88% of teen homicides and 41% of teen suicides in the U.S.<sup>18</sup> In Rhode Island between 2010 and 2014, there were 136 emergency department visits for gunshot injuries, 53 hospitalizations, and 12 deaths of youth ages 15 to 19 attributed to firearms.<sup>19</sup>

Table 26.

## Youth Violence, Rhode Island

## Youth Violence

CITY/TOWN	COMMUNITY CONTEXT		VIOLENCE IN HIGH SCHOOLS, 2014		JUVENILE ARRESTS FOR VIOLENCE, 2014		
	VIOLENT CRIME OFFENSES (ALL AGES) 2014	TOTAL POPULATION AGES 11-17 2010	% OF STUDENTS SAW ANOTHER STUDENT BRING A WEAPON TO SCHOOL IN PAST YEAR	% OF STUDENTS IN A PHYSICAL FIGHT AT SCHOOL IN PAST YEAR	# FOR ASSAULT OFFENSES	# FOR WEAPONS OFFENSES	TOTAL # FOR ASSAULT AND WEAPONS OFFENSES
Barrington	4	2,186	14%	6%	1	1	2
Bristol	12	1,545	12%	11%	4	0	4
Burrillville	14	1,526	10%	8%	2	0	2
Central Falls	134	2,089	12%	11%	17	13	30
Charlestown	5	659	23%	9%	1	0	1
Coventry	25	3,509	23%	8%	15	0	15
Cranston	106	6,984	16%	10%	8	2	10
Cumberland	18	3,271	21%	8%	6	1	7
East Greenwich	4	1,671	13%	5%	0	0	0
East Providence	52	3,730	18%	8%	16	1	17
Exeter	NA	673	11%	7%	NA	NA	NA
Foster	11	467	20%	10%	1	0	1
Glocester	4	1,000	20%	10%	0	0	0
Hopkinton	4	826	23%	9%	0	0	0
Jamestown	2	528	14%	8%	2	0	2
Johnston	42	2,376	24%	11%	8	2	10
Lincoln	12	2,189	12%	7%	1	0	1
Little Compton	1	284	11%	7%	1	0	1
Middletown	19	1,504	12%	9%	10	3	13
Narragansett	5	1,052	21%	6%	7	0	7
New Shoreham	0	64	NA	NA	0	0	0
Newport	95	1,484	24%	10%	33	7	40
North Kingstown	29	2,917	14%	8%	4	2	6
North Providence	49	2,303	17%	7%	13	1	14
North Smithfield	3	1,132	10%	6%	2	0	2
Pawtucket	208	6,268	15%	10%	52	10	62
Portsmouth	13	1,881	11%	7%	6	3	9
Providence	927	16,024	18%	10%	162	48	210
Richmond	5	759	23%	9%	3	0	3
Scituate	3	1,143	13%	8%	0	0	0
Smithfield	6	1,729	10%	8%	12	1	13
South Kingstown	14	2,498	16%	9%	9	0	9
Tiverton	19	1,318	13%	12%	8	0	8
Warren	16	777	12%	11%	2	0	2
Warwick	84	6,781	14%	10%	21	2	23
West Greenwich	8	678	11%	7%	1	0	1
West Warwick	61	2,139	13%	9%	5	0	5
Westerly	25	2,003	13%	7%	7	3	10
Woonsocket	219	3,649	22%	12%	32	8	40
State Police/Other	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	1	5
Four Core Cities	1,488	28,030	NA	NA	263	79	342
Remainder of State	770	65,586	NA	NA	209	30	239
Rhode Island	2,258	93,616	16%	9%	476	110	586

## Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Total violent crime offense data are from U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2015). *Crime in the United States 2014: Rhode Island offenses known to law enforcement*. Retrieved January 19, 2016, from www.fbi.gov

Total population ages 11–17 data are from U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

High school students experiencing violence at school data are from *SurveyWorks!* student survey, Rhode Island Department of Education, 2014. Percentages reflect students answering yes to the question of whether “they saw a student with a weapon like a gun, knife, or club at this school” and “they were in a physical fight at school” in the 12 months prior to the survey. *SurveyWorks!* data for communities that belong to regional districts reflect the district’s overall survey results. Students from Little Compton attend high school in Portsmouth and students from Jamestown attend high school in North Kingstown. Due to a change in the *SurveyWorks!* question format, the weapons data in *Violence in High Schools* cannot be compared to previous Factbooks. In earlier years, the *SurveyWorks!* survey asked students if they had brought a weapon to school in the past year; since then, students are asked if they had seen another student with a weapon at school in the past year.

Juvenile arrests for assault and weapons offenses data are from Mongeau, T. & Tocco, G. (2015). *2014 juvenile detention data*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Public Safety, Grant Administration Office. A complete list of assault and weapons offenses can be found in the Methodology Section of this Factbook.

NA indicates that the data are not available. Exeter arrest numbers are included in the State Police totals.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

## References

- <sup>1,6</sup> *Understanding youth violence: Fact sheet*. (2015). Retrieved January 19, 2016, from www.cdc.gov
- <sup>2,4,5,9</sup> David-Ferdon, C. & Simon, T. R. (2014). *Preventing youth violence: Opportunities for action*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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