

Gun Violence

DEFINITION

Gun violence is the number of firearm-related deaths and hospitalizations to Rhode Island children and youth under age 20. The data are reported by place of residence, not place of death, injury, or hospitalization.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children and youth can experience gun violence as victims of firearm assaults, self-inflicted firearm injuries, or accidental shootings.¹ Gun violence also can impact children and youth when someone they know is the victim or perpetrator of a shooting. Exposure to violence at home, in schools, and in the community can lead to lasting psychological and emotional damage (such as increased fear, anxiety, and depression, attachment problems, and conduct disorders), as well as cognitive and attention difficulties, and involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.^{2,3}

In the U.S. during 2015, 58% of the 2,824 firearm deaths of children and youth under age 20 in the United States were the result of homicide, 36% were the result of suicide, 4% were the result of unintentional injuries, 1% was the result of shootings with an undetermined intent, and 1% was the result of a legal intervention (e.g., law enforcement shooting).⁴

While the number of children and youth killed by guns has decreased since peaking in the early 1990s, firearms remain one of the leading causes of deaths for youth ages 15 to 19 in the United States.^{5,6} Of the 2,824 U.S. children and youth under age 20 killed by firearms during 2015, 84% (2,381) were ages 15 to 19. Children under age 15 have the lowest rates of firearm-related deaths of any age group.⁷

Nationally, males ages 15 to 19 are eight times more likely to die from a firearm-related incident than females of the same age. Among teens in the U.S., the rate of firearm deaths for Black males (47 per 100,000) was more than three times the rate of Hispanic males (13 per 100,000) and more than four times the rate of White males (11 per 100,000) in 2014.⁸

Preventing access to guns is the most reliable measure to prevent firearm-related injuries and death in children and youth. The presence and availability of a gun is strongly associated with adolescent suicide risk. Possessing a gun also increases a person's risk for being shot in an assault. Keeping guns unloaded and locked, as well as storing and locking ammunition separately, reduces the risk of gun-related injury and death by suicide or homicide.^{9,10,11}

Gun-Related Deaths, Emergency Department (ED) Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths Among Children and Youth, Rhode Island, 2011-2015

AGE	# OF ED VISITS	# OF HOSPITALIZATIONS	# OF DEATHS
1 to 14	51	5	2
15 to 17	53	21	3
18 to 19	64	35	7
TOTAL	168	61	12

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2011-2015. Data for 2015 are provisional.

◆ Between 2011 and 2015 in Rhode Island, 12 (12%) of the 97 injury deaths of children and youth under age 20 were the result of firearms, down from 14 deaths between 2010 and 2014. Of these, 58% (7) were among youth ages 18 to 19, 25% (3) were among youth ages 15 to 17, and 17% (2) were among children ages 14 or younger. Between 2011 and 2015 in Rhode Island, there were two youth under age 20 who committed suicide using a firearm.¹²

◆ In Rhode Island between 2011 and 2015, there were 168 emergency department visits and 61 hospitalizations of children and youth for gun-related injuries, down from 189 and up from 59 respectively, in 2010-2014.¹³

Weapon Carrying Among Rhode Island Public Middle and High School Students, 2015

	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL
High School students who carried a weapon on school property at least once in the past 30 days	2%	7%	5%
Middle School students who carried a weapon on school property at least once in the past 30 days	2%	2%	2%

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

◆ Nationally and in Rhode Island, male students self-report higher rates of weapon carrying on school property and gun carrying than females. In 2015, Rhode Island high school students ranked 15th lowest among 32 states for self-reported weapon carrying on school property.^{14,15,16}

References

¹ Kochanek, K. D., Murphy, S. L., Xu, J., & Tejada-Vera, B. (2016). Deaths: Final data for 2014. *NVSR*, 65(4).

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