

# 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, physical 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 increase risk for violent behavior and promote factors that decrease risk for perpetrating violence.<sup>3</sup> Efforts to prevent youth violence should begin in early childhood and address a wide range of individual, family, and community factors. Effective violence prevention strategies include strengthening youth 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. 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> Youth who are victims of violence are at increased risk for physical and mental health problems, academic difficulties, smoking, high-risk sexual behavior, and suicide.<sup>8</sup>

Nationally in 2015, 23% of students in grades nine through 12 reported being in a physical fight during the previous year, 20% reported being bullied on school property during the previous year, and 16% reported carrying a weapon during the previous month.<sup>9</sup>

The number of youth arrested for violent crimes in the U.S. reached a 33-year low in 2012, with youth making up 12% of all serious violent crime arrests. The Rhode Island juvenile arrest rate for serious violent crimes in 2012 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 2016 in Rhode Island, there were 447 juvenile arrests for assault offenses and 123 juvenile arrests for weapons offenses.<sup>11</sup> In 2017, violent crimes made up 10% (274) of the 2,704 juvenile offenses referred to Rhode Island Family Court.<sup>12</sup>

## Bully Status by Gender and Grade Level, Rhode Island, 2017

	MIDDLE SCHOOL		HIGH SCHOOL	
	MALE	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALE
Bullied on School Property	27%	40%	15%	19%
Bullied Electronically	13%	31%	11%	17%
Been in a Physical Fight*	21%	10%	13%	8%

Source: *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, 2017, 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 2017, 7% of high school students (6% of males and 7% of females) reported not going to school due to safety concerns.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ Victims of bullying are at risk of emotional, behavioral, and mental health problems. Both victims and perpetrators of bullying are more likely to contemplate or attempt suicide.<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online or by digital communication through text messages, instant messengers, social media, and/or other digital applications.<sup>16</sup> In 2017 in Rhode Island, 21% of middle school students (31% of females and 13% of males) and 14% of high school students (17% of females and 11% of males) reported being electronically bullied.<sup>17</sup>

## Youth Witnessing Violence and Youth Gun Violence

- ◆ 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>18</sup>
- ◆ Guns are the leading cause of fatal violence to teens and are used in 88% of teen homicides and 41% of teen suicides in the U.S.<sup>19</sup> In Rhode Island between 2012 and 2016, there were 113 emergency department visits, 43 hospitalizations, and seven deaths of children and youth ages 15 to 19 attributed to firearms.<sup>20</sup>

Table 27.

## Youth Violence, Rhode Island

## Youth Violence

CITY/TOWN	COMMUNITY CONTEXT		VIOLENCE IN HIGH SCHOOLS, 2014*		JUVENILE ARRESTS FOR VIOLENCE, 2016		
	VIOLENT CRIME OFFENSES (ALL AGES) 2016	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	18	1,545	12%	11%	1	0	1
Burrillville	15	1,526	10%	8%	4	1	5
Central Falls	126	2,089	12%	11%	17	12	29
Charlestown	7	659	23%	9%	0	0	0
Coventry	NA	3,509	23%	8%	11	1	12
Cranston	124	6,984	16%	10%	9	1	10
Cumberland	35	3,271	21%	8%	3	0	3
East Greenwich	8	1,671	13%	5%	2	0	2
East Providence	69	3,730	18%	8%	20	0	20
Exeter	NA	673	11%	7%	NA	NA	NA
Foster	5	467	20%	10%	0	0	0
Glocester	1	1,000	20%	10%	0	0	0
Hopkinton	6	826	23%	9%	2	0	2
Jamestown	1	528	14%	8%	0	0	0
Johnston	43	2,376	24%	11%	14	2	16
Lincoln	20	2,189	12%	7%	5	1	6
Little Compton	0	284	11%	7%	0	0	0
Middletown	14	1,504	12%	9%	5	2	7
Narragansett	11	1,052	21%	6%	5	0	5
New Shoreham	0	64	NA	NA	1	0	1
Newport	62	1,484	24%	10%	15	0	15
North Kingstown	22	2,917	14%	8%	6	1	7
North Providence	43	2,303	17%	7%	20	0	20
North Smithfield	10	1,132	10%	6%	3	0	3
Pawtucket	305	6,268	15%	10%	67	14	81
Portsmouth	18	1,881	11%	7%	4	0	4
Providence	1,031	16,024	18%	10%	147	63	210
Richmond	5	759	23%	9%	5	1	6
Scituate	4	1,143	13%	8%	0	0	0
Smithfield	12	1,729	10%	8%	5	1	6
South Kingstown	13	2,498	16%	9%	5	0	5
Tiverton	22	1,318	13%	12%	5	1	6
Warren	12	777	12%	11%	1	0	1
Warwick	61	6,781	14%	10%	14	1	15
West Greenwich	5	678	11%	7%	2	0	2
West Warwick	60	2,139	13%	9%	7	2	9
Westerly	19	2,003	13%	7%	7	4	11
Woonsocket	212	3,649	22%	12%	32	12	44
State Police/Other	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	2	4
Four Core Cities	1,674	28,030	NA	NA	263	101	364
Remainder of State	749	65,586	NA	NA	184	22	206
Rhode Island	2,423	93,616	16%	9%	447	123	570

**Sources of Data for Table/Methodology**

Total violent crime offense data are from U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2016). *Crime in the United States 2016: Rhode Island offenses known to law enforcement*. Retrieved March 7, 2018, from ucr.fbi.gov

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

\* 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.

Data on high school students experiencing violence at school are from the 2016-2017 administration of *SurveyWorks!*, Rhode Island Department of Education. 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 can choose to attend high school in North Kingstown or Narragansett.

Juvenile arrests for assault and weapons offenses data are from Mongeau, T. & Tocco, G. (2017). *2016 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 for Youth Violence**

<sup>16</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). *Understanding youth violence: Fact sheet*. Retrieved March 8, 2018, from www.cdc.gov

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