

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 including post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation as well as cognitive and attention difficulties, and involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.^{2,3}

In the U.S. during 2017, 56% (1,927) of the 3,443 firearm deaths of children and youth under age 20 were the result of homicide, 38% (1,296) were the result of suicide, 3% (115) were the result of unintentional injuries, 2% (72) was the result of shootings with an undetermined intent, and 1% (33) was the result of a legal intervention (e.g., law enforcement shooting).⁴

Firearms are the third leading cause of death in the U.S. overall among children ages one to 17.⁵ Of the 3,443 U.S. children and youth under age 20 killed by firearms during 2017, 85% (2,912) were ages 15 to 19.⁶ In the U.S., 2016 marked the highest number of child and teen gun related deaths since 2006. Although Black children made up only 14% of all children and teens in the nation in 2016, 43% of all gun deaths were among Black children and teens.⁷ Nationally, in 2016, males ages 15 to 19 are six times more likely to die from a firearm-related incident than females of the same age. Among teens 15-19 years old in the U.S., the rate of firearm deaths for Black males (61 per 100,000) was more than four times the rate of both Hispanic males (15 per 100,000) and White males (13 per 100,000) in 2016.^{8,9}

Preventing access to guns is an important measure in preventing 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 unintentionally and in an assault or suicide. 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.^{10,11,12}

Gun-Related Emergency Department (ED) Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths Among Children and Youth, Rhode Island, 2013-2017

AGE	# OF ED VISITS	# OF HOSPITALIZATIONS	# OF DEATHS
1 to 14	57	7	1
15 to 17	49	14	4
18 to 19	56	23	4
TOTAL	162	44	9

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2013-2017.

Note: Effective October 1, 2015, the International Classification of Disease (ICD) codes changed from the 9th classification to the 10th classification, which may impact comparability across the years.

◆ Between 2013 and 2017 in Rhode Island, nine (11%) of the 81 injury deaths of children and youth under age 20 were the result of firearms, up from eight deaths between 2012 and 2016. Of these, four were among youth ages 18 to 19, four were among youth ages 15 to 17, and one was a child age 14 or younger. Between 2013 and 2017 in Rhode Island, there were three youth under age 20 who committed suicide using a firearm.¹³

◆ In Rhode Island between 2013 and 2017, there were 162 emergency department visits and 44 hospitalizations of children and youth for gun-related injuries, down from 170 and 47 respectively, between 2012 and 2016.¹⁴

Weapon Carrying Among Rhode Island Public Middle and High School Students, 2017

	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL
High School students who carried a weapon on school property at least once in the past 30 days	3%	7%	5%
Middle School students who ever carried a weapon	11%	33%	22%

Source: 2017 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for health Data and Analysis.

◆ Nationally and in Rhode Island, male students report higher rates of weapon carrying on school property and gun carrying than females.^{15,16}

References

¹ Xu, J., Murphy, S. L., Xu, J., Kochanek, K. D., Bastian, B., & Arias, E. (2018). Deaths: Final data for 2016. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 67(5).

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