

# Youth Violence

## DEFINITION

*Youth violence* is the number of arrests of youth 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 stop youth violence from happening in the first place and requires an understanding of the factors that influence 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 2017, 24% of students in grades nine through 12 reported being in a physical fight during the previous year, 19% 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 2017 in Rhode Island, there were 535 juvenile arrests for assault offenses and 106 juvenile arrests for weapons offenses.<sup>11</sup> In 2018, violent crimes made up 5% (234) of the 4,403 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 2013 and 2017, there were 105 emergency department visits, 40 hospitalizations, and eight deaths of children and youth ages 15 to 19 attributed to firearms.<sup>20</sup>

Table 28.

## Youth Violence, Rhode Island

## Youth Violence

CITY/TOWN	COMMUNITY CONTEXT		VIOLENCE IN HIGH SCHOOLS, 2017		JUVENILE ARRESTS FOR VIOLENCE, 2018		
	VIOLENT CRIME OFFENSES (ALL AGES) 2017	TOTAL POPULATION AGES 11-17 2010	% OF STUDENTS WHO WORRY ABOUT VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL	% OF STUDENTS WHO REPORT PHYSICAL FIGHTS IN SCHOOL	# FOR ASSAULT OFFENSES	# FOR WEAPONS OFFENSES	TOTAL # FOR ASSAULT AND WEAPONS OFFENSES
Barrington	10	2,186	9%	4%	4	1	5
Bristol	15	1,545	26%	45%	3	0	3
Burrillville	16	1,526	24%	7%	2	0	2
Central Falls	97	2,089	29%	49%	12	4	16
Charlestown	9	659	10%	12%	0	0	0
Coventry	35	3,509	20%	39%	10	1	11
Cranston	111	6,984	20%	43%	8	1	9
Cumberland	15	3,271	8%	15%	5	1	6
East Greenwich	6	1,671	2%	1%	0	0	0
East Providence	69	3,730	22%	54%	23	3	26
Exeter	NA	673	16%	2%	NA	NA	NA
Foster	7	467	11%	2%	1	0	1
Glocester	3	1,000	11%	2%	1	0	1
Hopkinton	4	826	10%	12%	2	0	2
Jamestown	8	528	14%	21%	0	0	0
Johnston	45	2,376	13%	31%	8	2	10
Lincoln	28	2,189	7%	7%	11	2	13
Little Compton	0	284	27%	21%	0	0	0
Middletown	16	1,504	11%	16%	7	1	8
Narragansett	10	1,052	8%	6%	3	1	4
New Shoreham	0	64	8%	3%	0	0	0
Newport	60	1,484	26%	31%	17	3	20
North Kingstown	18	2,917	14%	14%	15	2	17
North Providence	43	2,303	14%	29%	14	2	16
North Smithfield	8	1,132	5%	1%	2	0	2
Pawtucket	311	6,268	17%	25%	77	15	92
Portsmouth	11	1,881	27%	21%	6	0	6
Providence	960	16,024	19%	15%	184	46	230
Richmond	3	759	10%	12%	5	1	6
Scituate	5	1,143	12%	2%	1	0	1
Smithfield	10	1,729	7%	3%	8	0	8
South Kingstown	14	2,498	9%	5%	9	0	9
Tiverton	21	1,318	6%	10%	2	1	3
Warren	15	777	26%	45%	3	0	3
Warwick	97	6,781	24%	34%	24	2	26
West Greenwich	2	678	16%	2%	0	0	0
West Warwick	66	2,139	12%	7%	11	2	13
Westerly	17	2,003	36%	56%	15	0	15
Woonsocket	221	3,649	23%	42%	41	15	56
State Police/Other	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	0	1
Four Core Cities	1,589	28,030	20%	23%	314	80	394
Remainder of State	797	65,586	15%	22%	221	26	247
Rhode Island	2,386	93,616	16%	22%	535	106	641

## Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Total violent crime offense data are from U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2017). *Crime in the United States 2017: Rhode Island offenses known to law enforcement*. Retrieved March 12, 2019, from ucr.fbi.gov

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

Data on high school students experiencing violence at school are from the 2017–2018 administration of *SurveyWorks!*, Rhode Island Department of Education. Percentages reflect students answering frequently or almost always to the question of “how often do you worry about violence at your school” and “how often do students get into physical fights in your school.” *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. Rhode Island total and remainder of state include charter schools, state operated schools, and UCAP.

Juvenile arrests for assault and weapons offenses data are from Mongeau, T. & Tocco, G. (2018). *2017 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>1,6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). *Understanding youth violence: Fact sheet*. Retrieved March 6, 2019, from www.cdc.gov
- <sup>2,4,5</sup> David-Ferdon, C. & Simon, T. R. (2014). *Preventing youth violence: Opportunities for action*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- <sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). *The social-ecological model: A framework for prevention*. Retrieved March 8, 2019, from www.cdc.gov

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