

# 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 promoting nurturing family environments that support healthy development, providing high-quality early education, strengthening youth's interpersonal, emotional, and

behavioral skills, connecting youth to caring adults in the community, and creating protective environments to reduce youth exposure to violence.<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, poor academic performance, 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 juvenile arrest rate for violent crimes in the U.S. reached a historic low in 2018, down 71% from its peak in 1994.<sup>10</sup> In 2018, the number of juvenile arrests for violent crimes made up 6% of the total number of juvenile arrests in the U.S.<sup>11</sup> In 2018 in Rhode Island, there were 537 juvenile arrests for assault offenses and 81 juvenile arrests for weapons offenses.<sup>12</sup> In 2018, violent crimes made up 5% (209) of the 4,630 juvenile offenses referred to Rhode Island Family Court.<sup>13</sup>



## Bully Status, by Gender and Grade Level, Rhode Island, 2019

	MIDDLE SCHOOL		HIGH SCHOOL	
	MALE	FEMALES	MALE	FEMALE
Bullied on School Property	27%	37%	13%	20%
Bullied Electronically	15%	27%	9%	17%
Been in a Physical Fight	24%	9%	12%	7%

Source: 2019 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>14</sup> In Rhode Island in 2019, 8% of high school students reported not going to school due to safety concerns.<sup>15</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>16</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>17</sup> In 2019 in Rhode Island, 20% of middle school students (27% of females and 15% of males) and 13% of high school students (17% of females and 9% of males) reported being electronically bullied.<sup>18</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>19</sup>
- ◆ Nationally, the number of firearm-related deaths for youth ages 15 to 19 was at a record low (9.7 per 100,000) in 2013, but has begun to climb in the last few years reaching 13.8 deaths per 100,000 in 2017.<sup>20</sup> In Rhode Island between 2014 and 2018, there were 101 emergency department visits, 32 hospitalizations, and eight deaths of children and youth ages 15 to 19 attributed to firearms.<sup>21</sup>

Table 28.

## Youth Violence, Rhode Island

## Youth Violence

CITY/TOWN	COMMUNITY CONTEXT		VIOLENCE IN HIGH SCHOOLS, 2019		JUVENILE ARRESTS FOR VIOLENCE, 2018		
	VIOLENT CRIME OFFENSES (ALL AGES) 2018	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	8	2,186	5%	2%	6	0	6
Bristol	10	1,545	19%	23%	0	0	0
Burrillville	19	1,526	12%	6%	8	1	9
Central Falls	83	2,089	27%	16%	19	3	22
Charlestown	7	659	19%	39%	1	0	1
Coventry	35	3,509	20%	45%	21	4	25
Cranston	118	6,984	18%	28%	27	6	33
Cumberland	23	3,271	8%	5%	8	0	8
East Greenwich	10	1,671	3%	1%	1	0	1
East Providence	50	3,730	31%	61%	14	3	17
Exeter	NA	673	7%	2%	NA	NA	NA
Foster	6	467	4%	2%	0	0	0
Glocester	5	1,000	4%	2%	3	0	3
Hopkinton	4	826	19%	39%	1	0	1
Jamestown	3	528	NA	NA	2	0	2
Johnston	40	2,376	16%	28%	12	0	12
Lincoln	17	2,189	9%	5%	6	2	8
Little Compton	2	284	NA	NA	0	0	0
Middletown	13	1,504	10%	4%	9	0	9
Narragansett	8	1,052	7%	4%	4	1	5
New Shoreham	4	64	4%	0%	0	0	0
Newport	85	1,484	18%	21%	19	4	23
North Kingstown	10	2,917	14%	18%	12	1	13
North Providence	38	2,303	23%	49%	17	2	19
North Smithfield	13	1,132	6%	1%	0	0	0
Pawtucket	321	6,268	19%	32%	67	13	80
Portsmouth	7	1,881	12%	9%	14	2	16
Providence	819	16,024	20%	19%	84	21	105
Richmond	4	759	19%	39%	7	1	8
Scituate	8	1,143	3%	3%	3	0	3
Smithfield	21	1,729	5%	4%	11	1	12
South Kingstown	16	2,498	9%	5%	6	0	6
Tiverton	16	1,318	10%	6%	4	0	4
Warren	18	777	19%	23%	5	0	5
Warwick	73	6,781	21%	36%	27	3	30
West Greenwich	5	678	7%	2%	0	0	0
West Warwick	65	2,139	8%	6%	30	3	33
Westerly	17	2,003	18%	16%	10	1	11
Woonsocket	246	3,649	27%	62%	45	7	52
State Police/Other	NA	NA	NA	NA	34	2	36
Four Core Cities	1,469	28,030	21%	27%	215	44	259
Remainder of State	778	65,586	14%	19%	288	35	323
Rhode Island	2,247	93,616	15%	21%	537	81	618

**Sources of Data for Table/Methodology**

Total violent crime offense data are from U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2018). *Crime in the United States 2018: Rhode Island offenses known to law enforcement*. Retrieved March 2, 2020, from ucr.fbi.gov

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

Data on high school students experiencing violence at school are from the 2018-2019 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 Rhode Island Department of Public Safety, Unified Crime Reporting/National Incident Based Reporting, 2018. NA indicates that the data are not available. Exeter arrest numbers are included in the State Police/Other totals.

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

**References for Youth Violence**

<sup>1,6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). *Preventing youth violence*. Retrieved February 28, 2020, from www.cdc.gov

<sup>2,4,5</sup> David-Ferdon, C., Vivolo-Kantor, A. M., Dahlberg, L. L., Marshall, K. J., Rainford, N., & Hall, J. E. (2016). *A comprehensive technical package for the prevention of youth violence and associated risk behaviors*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *The social-ecological model: A framework for prevention*. Retrieved February 28, 2020, from www.cdc.gov

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