

# Child and Teen Deaths

## DEFINITION

*Child and teen deaths* is the number of deaths from all causes among children ages one to 19, per 100,000 children. The data are reported by place of residence, not place of death.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The child and teen death rate is a reflection of many factors: mental and physical health, access to health care, community issues (such as environmental toxins and exposure to violence, particularly related to firearms), access to and use of safety devices and practices (like bicycle helmets, seat belts, and smoke alarms), risk behaviors (including distracted driving and substance use), and adult supervision.<sup>1-3</sup>

The U.S. child and teen death rate has declined steadily since 1980, but disparities still exist by age, gender, and race and ethnicity. Children ages one to four and teens ages 15 to 19 die at higher rates than children ages five to 14. The child and teen death rate is higher for boys than girls and higher for Black and Native American children and teens than for children and teens of all other racial and ethnic groups.<sup>4,5</sup>

Children are particularly vulnerable to injury due to their size, development, inexperience, and natural curiosity.<sup>6</sup> Between 2019 and 2023, unintentional injuries were the leading cause of death for children ages one to 14 both in

Rhode Island and in the U.S.<sup>7,8</sup> Nationally, the leading causes of unintentional injury child deaths were motor vehicle crashes and drowning.<sup>9</sup> Child injury deaths can be reduced by educating families about injury prevention strategies and the importance of using safety products (such as fencing around pools and using sports helmets), laws that promote safety (like mandatory use of seat belts and child passenger restraints), and through continued environmental and product design improvements.<sup>10</sup>

Protective factors include parent and family involvement, safe driving policies, mental health screening and treatment, violence prevention (including bullying prevention), community safety (including firearm safety), and trauma-informed care. Developmentally appropriate health education, access to preventive health care and integrated mental health services, and safe, supportive environments can support positive behavior changes and overall teen health.<sup>11,12</sup>

Child and Teen Death Rate (per 100,000 Children Ages 1-19)		
	2013	2023
RI	17	23
US	24	29
National Rank*		8th
New England Rank**		4th

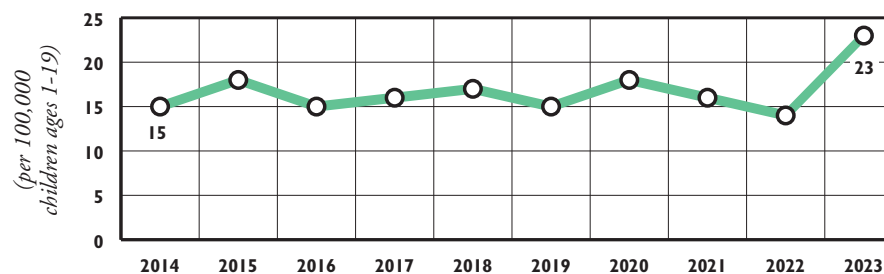
\*1st is best; 50th is worst

\*\*1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org.



**Child and Teen Death Rate per 100,000 Children Ages One to 19, Rhode Island, 2014-2023**



Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org.

◆ In 2023, Rhode Island's child and teen death rate for children ages one to 19 was 23 per 100,000 children and teens, the highest rate in the past decade.<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island's child and teen death rate rose from lowest in the nation in 2022 to 8th in 2023.<sup>1</sup>



**Child Deaths Due to Injury, by Cause, Children Ages One to 14, Rhode Island, 2020-2024**

Accidental Drowning	12
Suicide	<5
Homicide	<5
Accidental Drug Overdose	<5
Motor vehicle accidents	0
Other accidents	7

n=26

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2020-2024.

◆ Between 2020 and 2024, 26 Rhode Island children ages one to 14 died as a result of injury. Drowning was the leading cause of these child deaths in Rhode Island during this period.<sup>13</sup>



## Teen Deaths Due to Injury by Cause, Teens Ages 15 to 19, Rhode Island, 2020-2024

Motor Vehicle	20
Suicide	17
Homicide	13
Accidental Drug Overdose	>10
Accidental Drowning	<5
Other Injury	<5

*n* => 69

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2020-2024. This chart and the first bullet below report deaths of teens residing in Rhode Island. Data reported in the second, third, and fourth bullets below reflect teen motor vehicle deaths that occurred in Rhode Island, regardless of residence.

- ◆ Between 2020 and 2024 in Rhode Island, 29% of all teen injury deaths involved motor vehicles. Twenty-five percent of teen deaths between 2020 and 2024 caused by injury were suicide.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ Among the 24 teens ages 15 to 19 killed in Rhode Island motor vehicle crashes between 2020 and 2024, 16 were driving, seven were passengers in vehicles driven by others, and one was a riding a standup scooter.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ Six (38%) of the teen drivers who died in motor vehicle crashes in Rhode Island between 2020 and 2024 had been drinking alcohol.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ Seventeen (71%) of the teen drivers and passengers killed in motor vehicle crashes in Rhode Island between 2020 and 2024 were not wearing a seatbelt.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ In 2023, 39% of Rhode Island high school students reported texting or e-mailing while driving on at least one day in the month prior to taking the *Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. Sixteen percent reported riding in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol, and 38% reported that they did not always wear a seatbelt while riding in a car driven by someone else in the month prior.<sup>15</sup>



## Teen Suicide

- ◆ According to the *2023 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, 9% of Rhode Island high school students reported attempting suicide one or more times in the 12 months before the survey was administered. Rates were higher for Hispanic (12%) and Black (10%) youth than for white youth and higher for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth (17%) and for other/questioning youth (20%) than for heterosexual youth (6%).<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ Of the 17 youth ages 15 to 19 who died from suicide between 2020 and 2024 in Rhode Island, 65% were boys.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ In 2024 in Rhode Island, 406 teens ages 13 to 19 were admitted to the emergency department after a suicide attempt. Of these attempts, 77% of teens were girls, and 23% were boys. Of these teens, 52% were white, 24% were Hispanic, 11% were Black and 11% identified as another race.<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ In 2024 in Rhode Island, 184 teens ages 13 to 19 were hospitalized after a suicide attempt, a 44% decrease from 328 teens in 2020. Of these hospitalizations in 2024, 83% were girls, and 17% were boys. Of these teens, 52% were white, 25% were Hispanic, 15% were Black and 7% identified as another race.<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ Mental health problems, physical or sexual abuse, substance use, exposure to bullying or violence, partner violence, and having a family member or friend attempt suicide are associated with an increased risk of suicide or attempted suicide among youth.<sup>17</sup>

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