

## DEFINITION

*Teen deaths* are the number of deaths from all causes to teens ages 15 to 19, per 100,000 teens. The data are reported by place of residence, not place of death.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The main threats to adolescents' health and safety are risk behaviors, including substance abuse and violence. Teens' emotional health, including self-esteem and mental illness, further impacts their safety. Risk factors for teens include poverty, diminished economic opportunity, neighborhood violence and academic failure. Important factors which protect against risk behaviors are engagement in school and the presence of strong positive relationships with parents, family or other caring adults.<sup>1,2</sup>

According to the *2003 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, Rhode Island high school students are exposed to numerous risks and frequently engage in risk behaviors. Students report that at least once during the past month, 6% did not go to school because they felt unsafe. During the past year, 5% of students were injured in a physical fight requiring treatment by a health professional and 8% of students were physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend. Other risk behaviors reported by youth include, attempting suicide in

the past year (8%); riding in a vehicle during the past 30 days driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol (28%); and never or rarely wearing a seatbelt when riding in a car (16%).<sup>3</sup>

Between 1999 and 2003 there were 180 deaths of teens ages 15 to 19 in Rhode Island, a rate of 51.2 deaths per 100,000 teens.<sup>4,5</sup> Of these, 53 (29%) were due to disease, 48 (27%) were due to intentional injury, 68 (38%) were due to unintentional injuries (accidents) and 11 (6%) were undetermined. Of the intentional injuries, 30 were homicides and 18 were suicides. More than three-quarters of the unintentional deaths involved motor vehicles.<sup>6</sup>

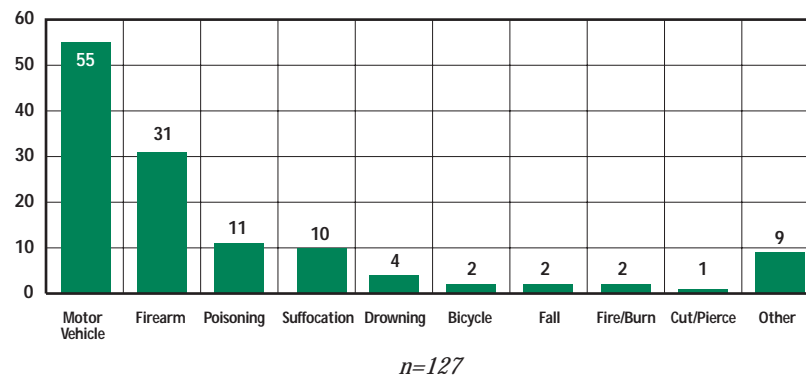
Teen Deaths by Accident, Homicide and Suicide (deaths per 100,000 Children Ages 15-19)		
	1996	2001
RI	24	31
US	60	50
National Rank*	2nd	
New England Rank**	1st	

\*1st is best; 50th is worst

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

Source: *KIDS COUNT Data Book: State Profiles in Child Well-Being 2004*. (2004). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Injury Deaths by Cause, Teens Ages 15 to 19, 1999-2003



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 1999-2003.

◆ Between 1999 and 2003 in Rhode Island, nearly two thirds (62%) of all teen deaths caused by injury were unintentional or undetermined. The majority of fatal accidents (81%) were automobile accidents.<sup>7</sup>

◆ Protective factors, those individual and environmental factors that can shield teens from the effects of risk behaviors, are important measures in reducing the teen death rate. Examples of protective factors are parental involvement in daily life and other support systems such as friends, religious groups and extracurricular activities. Expanding access to family mental health services is another protective factor that can help teens to manage their response to conflict and their ability to manage stress.<sup>8,9</sup>

## References for Indicators

<sup>1,8</sup> *Youth violence fact sheet*. (n.d.) Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. Retrieved January 14, 2005 from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

<sup>4,6,7</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 1999-2003.

<sup>2,9</sup> *Kids Count indicator brief: Reducing the teen death rate*. (2003). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

<sup>5</sup> Rhode Island KIDS COUNT calculation using the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Estimates, 1999-2003.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2004). *Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 2003* [data tables]. Retrieved from Centers for Disease Control website, <http://www.cdc.gov>.