

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 access to health care, mental and physical health, community issues (such as environmental toxins and exposure to violence, particularly related to firearms), access to and use of safety devices and practices (such as bicycle helmets, seat belts, and smoke alarms), a variety of risk behaviors including distracted driving and substance use, and the level of adult supervision children and teens receive.^{1,2,3}

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 other racial and ethnic groups.^{4,5}

Children are particularly vulnerable to injury due to their size, development, inexperience, and natural curiosity.⁶ In 2020, unintentional injuries were the leading cause of death for children ages one to 14 both in Rhode Island and in

the U.S. Nationally, the leading causes of unintentional injury deaths among children ages one to 14 were motor vehicle crashes and drowning.^{7,8} 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 the use of helmets during sports), enforcing laws that promote safety (such as the mandatory use of seatbelts and child passenger restraints), and through continued environmental and product design improvements.⁹

Factors that protect against teen deaths include parent and family involvement, safe driving policies (such as zero tolerance on drunk driving, and graduated licenses), as well as violence and substance use prevention programs. 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.^{10,11}

Child and Teen Death Rate (per 100,000 Children Ages 1-19)		
	2011	2020
RI	15	18
US	26	28
National Rank*		4th
New England Rank**		2nd

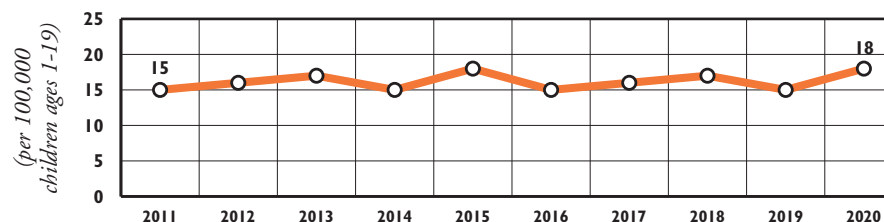
*1st is best; 50th is worst

**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, 2011-2020



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

◆ In 2020, Rhode Island's child and teen death rate for children ages one to 19 was 18 per 100,000 children and teens, which was an increase from 2019. Rhode Island's child and teen death rate is the fourth lowest in the nation.¹²



Child Deaths Due to Injury, by Cause, Children Ages One to 14, Rhode Island, 2017-2021

Drowning	10
Motor Vehicle	<5
Fire/Smoke Inhalation	<5
Suicide	<5
Homicide	<5
Other Injury	6
TOTAL	26

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2017-2021.

◆ Between 2017 and 2021, 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.¹³



Teen Deaths Due to Injury by Cause, Teens Ages 15 to 19, Rhode Island, 2017-2021

Motor Vehicle	19
Suicide	17
Firearm	11
Homicide	9
Drowning	<5
Other	5
TOTAL	62

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Vital Records 2017-2021. 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. 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 2017 and 2021 in Rhode Island, 31% of all teen injury deaths involved motor vehicles. Twenty-seven percent of the 62 teen deaths caused by injury were suicide.¹⁴
- ◆ Among the 23 teens killed in Rhode Island motor vehicle crashes between 2017 and 2021, 16 were driving, four were passengers in vehicles driven by others and three were pedestrians.¹⁵
- ◆ Four (17%) of the teen drivers who died in motor vehicle crashes in Rhode Island between 2017 and 2021 had been drinking, and two (9%) teen fatalities occurred with adult drivers who had been drinking.¹⁶
- ◆ Eleven (48%) of the teen drivers and passengers killed in automobile accidents in Rhode Island between 2017 and 2021 were not wearing a seatbelt.¹⁷
- ◆ In 2021, 27% 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*. Thirteen percent reported riding in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol, and 36% reported that they did not always wear a seatbelt while riding in a car driven by someone else in the month prior.¹⁸



Teen Suicide

- ◆ According to the *2021 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, 10% of Rhode Island high school students reported attempting suicide one or more times in the 12 months before the survey was administered.¹⁹
- ◆ Of the 17 youth ages 15 to 19 who died from suicide between 2017 and 2021 in Rhode Island, 76% were male.²⁰
- ◆ In 2021 in Rhode Island, 521 teens ages 13 to 19 were admitted to the emergency department after a suicide attempt. Of these attempts, 76% percent of teens admitted were girls, and 24% were boys.²¹
- ◆ In 2021 in Rhode Island, 325 teens ages 13 to 19 were hospitalized after a suicide attempt. Of these hospitalizations, 78% were girls, and 22% were boys.²²
- ◆ Nationally, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health issues and suicide among adolescents had increased with sharper increases among girls and young women than males. This may be due to the rise in digital media/social media use.²³ Mental health problems, physical or sexual abuse, substance use, exposure to bullying or violence, experiencing partner violence, and having a family member or friend attempt suicide are associated with an increased risk of suicide or attempted suicide among youth.²⁴

References

- ¹⁴ The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org
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- ¹⁶ Goldstick, J. E., Cunningham, R. M., Carter, P. M. (2022). Current causes of death in children and adolescents in the United States. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 386(20).
- ¹⁷ *Infant, child, and teen mortality*. (2019). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- ¹⁸ Sleet, D. A. (2018). The global challenge of child injury prevention. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(9).
- ¹⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Leading causes of death for ages 1-14 in Rhode Island, United States – 2020*. Retrieved February 23, 2023, from www.wisqars.cdc.gov
- ²⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Leading causes of death for ages 1-14, United States – 2020*. Retrieved February 23, 2023, from www.wisqars.cdc.gov

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