

Gun Violence

DEFINITION

Gun violence is the number of firearm-related deaths and hospitalizations to Rhode Island children and youth under age 20. The data are reported by place of residence, not place of death, injury, or hospitalization.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children and youth can experience gun violence as victims of firearm assaults, self-inflicted firearm injuries, or accidental shootings.¹ Gun violence also can impact children and youth when someone they know is the victim or perpetrator of a shooting. Exposure to violence at home, in schools, and in the community can lead to lasting psychological and emotional damage, including post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, behavioral problems, depression, anxiety, cognitive and attention difficulties, delinquent acts like assault and property destruction, and adult criminal behavior.^{2,3}

In the U.S. during 2019, 60% (2,023) of the 3,390 firearm deaths of children and youth under age 20 were the result of homicide, 34% (1,167) were the result of suicide, 3% (117) were the result of unintentional injuries, 2% (64) were the result of shootings with an undetermined intent, and less than 1% (19) were the result of a legal intervention (e.g., law enforcement shooting).⁴

Firearms are the second leading cause of death in the U.S. overall among children and teens.⁵ Of the 3,390 U.S. children and youth under age 20 killed by firearms during 2019, 85% (2,880) were ages 15 to 19.⁶ In the U.S., 2017 marked the highest number of child and teen gun related deaths since 1998.

Black and Native American children and teens are disproportionately more likely to be hurt or killed by gun violence, and gun violence is the leading cause of death for Black children and teens.⁷ Nationally in 2019, males ages 15 to 19 were more than six times more likely to die from a firearm-related incident than females of the same age. Among teens 15 to 19 years old in the U.S., the rate of firearm deaths for Black males (67.8 per 100,000) was approximately four times the rate of both Hispanic males (17.4 per 100,000) and white males (15.1 per 100,000) in 2019.⁸

Preventing access to guns is an important measure in preventing firearm-related injuries and death in children and youth. The presence and availability of a gun is strongly associated with adolescent suicide risk. Keeping guns unloaded and locked, as well as storing and locking ammunition separately, reduces the risk of gun-related injury and death by suicide or homicide.^{9,10}



Gun-Related Emergency Department (ED) Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths Among Children and Youth, Rhode Island, 2015-2019

AGE	# OF ED VISITS	# OF HOSPITALIZATIONS	# OF DEATHS
1 to 14	48	4	0
15 to 17	50	10	4
18 to 19	47	17	3
TOTAL	145	31	7

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2015-2019.

Note: 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 2015 and 2019 in Rhode Island, seven (9%) of the 79 injury deaths of children and youth under age 20 were the result of firearms. Of these, three were youth ages 18 to 19, four were youth ages 15 to 17, and zero were children ages one to 14. Between 2015 and 2019 in Rhode Island, there were two youth under age 20 who committed suicide using a firearm.¹¹
- ◆ In Rhode Island between 2015 and 2019, there were 145 emergency department visits and 31 hospitalizations of children and youth for gun-related injuries, down from 153 and 36 respectively, between 2014 and 2018.^{12,13}



Weapon Carrying Among Rhode Island Public Middle and High School Students, 2019

	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL
High School students who carried a weapon on school property at least once in the past 30 days	3%	4%	4%
Middle School students who ever carried a weapon	11%	26%	19%

Source: 2019 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis.

- ◆ Nationally and in Rhode Island, male students report higher rates of weapon carrying on school property and gun carrying than females.^{14,15}

References

¹ Murphy, S. L., Xu, J., Kochanek, K. D., Arias, E., & Tejada-Vera, B. (2021). Deaths: Final data for 2018. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 69(3).

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