

Children Enrolled in Head Start

DEFINITION

Children enrolled in Head Start is the percentage of eligible children enrolled in a Rhode Island Head Start preschool program.

SIGNIFICANCE

Head Start is a federally-funded comprehensive early childhood program for the lowest income preschool children and their families. It is designed to address a wide variety of needs during the two years before kindergarten so that low-income children can begin school on a more equal footing with their economically advantaged peers.¹ Head Start programs deliver early education, medical and dental screenings and referrals, nutrition services, mental health services, family engagement activities, and social service referrals for the whole family.²

Family income is strongly correlated with children's cognitive, language, and literacy skills at school entry. Before kindergarten entry, children in the highest socio-economic group have cognitive test scores that are 60% higher than the average scores of children in the lowest socio-economic group. Children in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold are typically 18 months behind their peers at age four.³

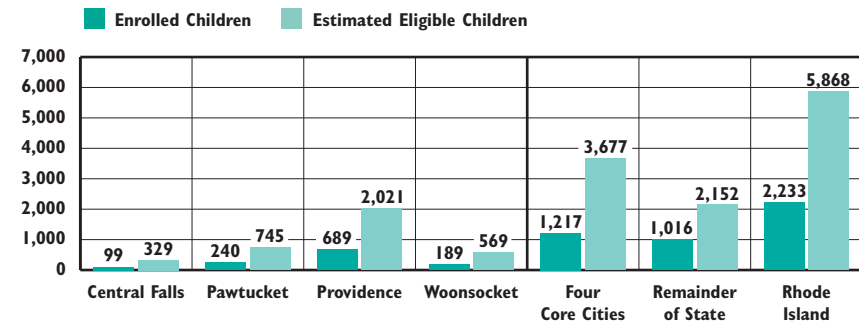
On average, Head Start centers are higher quality than most other early care and education programs available

to low-income parents.⁴ Head Start also has been found to be more effective than many other early learning programs.⁵ Children who participate in Head Start show improvements in language and literacy skills. However, those improvements may no longer be discernible at the end of third grade. Researchers suggest that early elementary "fade out" may be related to other low-income children "catching up" in the early grades or stagnation associated with attending low-quality elementary schools.^{6,7,8,9}

Lasting impacts for children who were in Head Start have been found in reduced grade retention and special education placement and increased high school graduation and college enrollment. Head Start participation is also associated with reduced arrests, child mortality, and childhood obesity.¹⁰

As of October 2015, there were 2,233 children enrolled in Head Start and 368 eligible children on the waiting list.¹¹ Rhode Island Head Start programs served significant numbers of children with high needs including 240 preschool children with developmental delays or disabilities (11% of all children enrolled), 48 children who were in foster care, and 70 children who were homeless. Fifteen percent of children enrolled in Rhode Island Head Start programs were also participating in the Child Care Assistance Program.¹²

Access to Head Start for Children in Poverty, Rhode Island, 2015

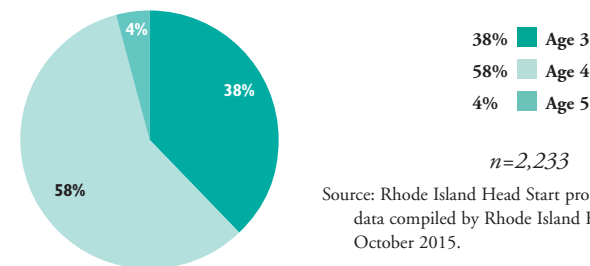


Source: Rhode Island Head Start program enrollment data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2015. Estimated eligible children is the number of children ages three and four according to Census 2010 multiplied by the % of children under age six living in families with incomes below the federal poverty line (FPL) according to the Population Reference Bureau's analysis of 2010-2014 American Community Survey data.

◆ **Head Start is not funded at a level to serve all eligible children and all Rhode Island Head Start programs maintain active waiting lists of eligible children. In October 2015, Rhode Island Head Start programs served 2,233 children, 38% of the estimated 5,868 income-eligible three- and four-year old children and 9% of all children ages three and four.**^{13,14}

◆ **In the four core cities, 33% of the estimated eligible children were enrolled in Head Start, compared with 47% in the remainder of the state. The estimated percentage of eligible children enrolled in Head Start for each core city is: Central Falls – 30%, Pawtucket – 32%, Providence – 34%, and Woonsocket – 33%.**^{15,16}

Children Enrolled in Head Start by Age, Rhode Island, 2015



Source: Rhode Island Head Start program enrollment data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2015.

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Table 36.

Children Enrolled in Head Start, Rhode Island, 2015

CITY/TOWN	ALL CHILDREN AGES 3 & 4	% CHILDREN <AGE 6 IN POVERTY	ESTIMATED ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AGES 3 & 4 IN POVERTY	# OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HEAD START	ESTIMATED % OF CHILDREN AGES 3 & 4 ENROLLED IN HEAD START	ESTIMATED % OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HEAD START
Barrington	369	1.3%	5	3	1%	60%
Bristol	401	5.6%	22	13	3%	59%
Burrillville	321	12.6%*	40	16	5%	40%
Central Falls	699	47.1%**	329	99	14%	30%
Charlestown	153	32.3%***	49	7	5%	14%
Coventry	734	25.9%**	190	55	7%	29%
Cranston	1,684	16.4%*	276	182	11%	66%
Cumberland	810	6.8%*	55	10	1%	18%
East Greenwich	277	13.4%**	37	1	0%	3%
East Providence	982	23.6%*	232	86	9%	37%
Exeter	105	NA	NA	3	3%	NA
Foster	99	13.8%***	14	0	0%	0%
Glocester	191	9.6%**	18	2	1%	11%
Hopkinton	167	14.5%***	24	5	3%	21%
Jamestown	102	7.9%***	8	0	0%	0%
Johnston	528	20.4%*	108	44	8%	41%
Lincoln	412	13.8%*	57	0	0%	0%
Little Compton	49	17.8%***	9	1	2%	11%
Middletown	431	13.3%*	57	34	8%	60%
Narragansett	210	9.7%*	20	7	3%	35%
New Shoreham	15	10.0%***	22	0	0%	0%
Newport	514	13.3%*	68	74	14%	109%
North Kingstown	593	20.0%**	119	33	6%	28%
North Providence	575	21.1%**	121	60	10%	50%
North Smithfield	218	3.6%*	8	5	2%	63%
Pawtucket	2,053	36.3%*	745	240	12%	32%
Portsmouth	359	4.0%*	14	8	2%	57%
Providence	4,743	42.6%*	2,021	689	15%	34%
Richmond	190	15.7%***	30	5	3%	17%
Scituate	197	9.4%**	19	4	2%	21%
Smithfield	343	NA	NA	4	1%	NA
South Kingstown	504	13.1%**	66	13	3%	20%
Tiverton	287	11.1%*	32	15	5%	47%
Warren	240	12.8%**	31	25	10%	81%
Warwick	1,579	8.7%	137	124	8%	91%
West Greenwich	115	NA	NA	0	0%	NA
West Warwick	703	24.1%**	169	108	15%	64%
Westerly	490	14.5%**	71	69	14%	97%
Woonsocket	1,218	46.7%*	569	189	16%	33%
Four Core Cities	8,713	42.2%	3,677	1,217	14%	33%
Remainder of State	14,947	14.4%	2,152	1,016	7%	47%
Rhode Island	23,660	24.8%	5,868	2,233	9%	38%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Head Start Programs, all children enrolled (ages three to five) as of October 2015. Children enrolled are listed by residence of child, not location of the Head Start program.

The estimated number of children ages three and four in each community is from Census 2010, Summary File 1. Estimated eligible children is the number of children ages three and four according to Census 2010 multiplied by the % of children under age six living in families with incomes below the federal poverty line (FPL) according to the Population Reference Bureau's (PRB) analysis of 2010-2014 American Community Survey data. Estimated eligible children for the four core cities, remainder of state, and Rhode Island is calculated using PRB estimates for those groupings and is not a sum of estimates by community.

The American Community Survey is a sample survey, and therefore the number and percentage of children living in poverty are estimates. The reliability of these estimates varies by community.

* The Margin of Error around the percentage is greater than 5 but less than 10 percentage points.

** The Margin of Error around the percentage is greater than 10 but less than 15 percentage points.

*** The Margin of Error around the percentage is greater than or equal to 15 percentage points.

NA: American Community Survey estimate of % of children under age six in poverty is not available for this community.

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

References

^{1,46} Resnick, G. (2010). Project Head Start: Quality and links to child outcomes. In A. J. Reynolds, A. J. Rolnick, M. M. Englund, & J. A. Temple (Eds.), *Childhood programs and practices in the first decade of life: A human capital integration*. (121-153). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

² Schmit, S. (2013). *Head Start participants, programs, families and staff in 2012*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

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