

# Children in Single-Parent Families

## DEFINITION

*Children in single-parent families* is the percentage of children under age 18 who live in families headed by a person – male or female – without a spouse present in the home. These numbers include “own children,” defined as never-married children under age 18 who are related to the family head by birth, marriage, or adoption.

## SIGNIFICANCE

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, there were 196,254 children living with one or more parents in Rhode Island between 2010 and 2014. Of these, 36% (70,567) were living with an unmarried parent, up from 32% of children between 2005 and 2009.<sup>1,2</sup>

Children living in single-parent families are more likely to live in poverty than children living in two-parent families. Single-parent families have only one potential wage earner, compared with the two potential wage earners in two-parent families.<sup>3,4</sup>

Between 2010 and 2014, 77% of children living in poverty in Rhode Island were living in single-parent families. Children in single-parent families in Rhode Island were nearly six times more likely to be living in poverty than those in married-couple families. Between 2010 and 2014 in Rhode Island, 40% of children in single-parent

households lived in poverty, compared to 7% of children in married-couple households.<sup>5</sup>

The financial hardship and time constraints experienced by many single parents explain some of the differences in well-being between the children in single-parent households and those in two-parent households.<sup>6,7</sup> Regardless of parents’ race and level of educational attainment, children who reside in single-parent households (whether due to divorce or the parents never having been married) are at an increased risk for low academic achievement and low levels of social and emotional well-being.<sup>8,9</sup> Compared to children in married families, children in single-parent families are more likely to lack health insurance coverage, drop out of school, disconnect from the labor force, and become teen parents.<sup>10,11</sup> Regardless of whether children grow up with one or two parents, parenting quality is an important predictor of children’s well-being.<sup>12</sup>

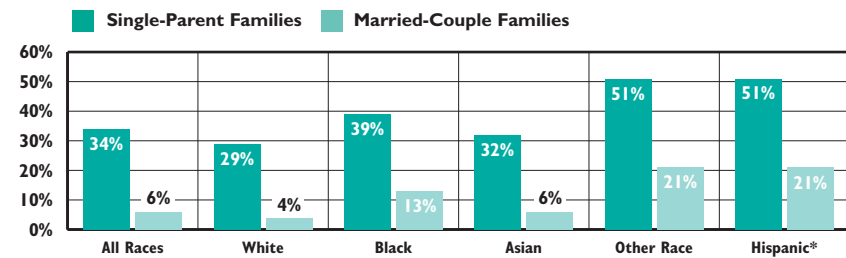
Single-Parent Families		
	2004	2014
RI	39%	39%
US	31%	35%
National Rank*		47th
New England Rank**		6th

\*1st is best; 50th is worst

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

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

## Families With Children Under Age 18 and Income Below the Poverty Threshold by Race & Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2010-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2014. Tables B17010, B17010A, B17010B, B17010D, B17010F, B17010I. \*Hispanics may be in any race category.

◆ **Hispanic single-parent families in Rhode Island are more than one and a half times as likely as White single-parent families to live in poverty. Hispanic, Other race, and Black married-couple families are more likely than White and Asian married-couple families in Rhode Island to live in poverty.**<sup>13</sup>

## Economic Well-Being and Family Structure

◆ **Family structure influences children’s social, emotional, and cognitive development. Children born into married parent families have a higher rate of economic, social, and psychological stability compared to children in single-parent families. Children living in single-parent households are more likely to face educational challenges and are more likely to live in poverty than children in married-couple families.**<sup>14</sup>

◆ **Approximately one-third (35%) of cohabitating parents still live together five years after the child’s birth and less than half of them are married.**<sup>15</sup>

◆ **More than half of unmarried births occur among cohabiting parents. Although there are variations by race, ethnicity, age, and poverty status, 58% of non-marital births in the U.S. between 2006 and 2010 were to cohabiting parents, compared with 40% in 2002.**<sup>16</sup>

# Children in Single-Parent Families

Table 2.

Children's Living Arrangements, Rhode Island, 2010

CITY/TOWN	CHILDREN LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS	CHILDREN WHO ARE A HOUSEHOLDER OR SPOUSE		CHILDREN LIVING WITH NON-RELATIVES		CHILDREN LIVING WITH OTHER RELATIVES		CHILDREN LIVING IN MARRIED-COUPLE FAMILIES		CHILDREN LIVING WITH GRANDPARENTS		CHILDREN LIVING IN SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Barrington	4,597	2	<1%	31	1%	15	0%	3,871	84%	85	2%	593	13%
Bristol	3,621	1	<1%	37	1%	51	1%	2,564	71%	225	6%	743	21%
Burrillville	3,548	0	0%	110	3%	26	1%	2,353	66%	232	7%	827	23%
Central Falls	5,634	3	<1%	90	2%	209	4%	2,159	38%	429	8%	2,744	49%
Charlestown	1,506	0	0%	15	1%	20	1%	1,059	70%	106	7%	306	20%
Coventry	7,762	2	<1%	148	2%	72	1%	5,343	69%	549	7%	1,648	21%
Cranston	16,262	5	<1%	226	1%	324	2%	10,462	64%	1,027	6%	4,218	26%
Cumberland	7,535	0	0%	97	1%	53	1%	5,651	75%	334	4%	1,400	19%
East Greenwich	3,436	0	0%	21	1%	13	0%	2,889	84%	71	2%	442	13%
East Providence	9,100	2	<1%	127	1%	154	2%	5,329	59%	675	7%	2,813	31%
Exeter	1,300	0	0%	23	2%	16	1%	996	77%	82	6%	183	14%
Foster	986	0	0%	24	2%	10	1%	741	75%	69	7%	142	14%
Glocester	2,098	0	0%	39	2%	26	1%	1,581	75%	137	7%	315	15%
Hopkinton	1,845	0	0%	46	2%	24	1%	1,327	72%	113	6%	335	18%
Jamestown	1,043	0	0%	3	0%	5	0%	799	77%	49	5%	187	18%
Johnston	5,473	2	<1%	90	2%	114	2%	3,591	66%	380	7%	1,296	24%
Lincoln	4,743	3	<1%	61	1%	52	1%	3,270	69%	211	4%	1,146	24%
Little Compton	654	0	0%	5	1%	1	0%	528	81%	42	6%	78	12%
Middletown	3,634	3	<1%	45	1%	38	1%	2,606	72%	166	5%	776	21%
Narragansett	2,240	2	<1%	35	2%	25	1%	1,533	68%	105	5%	540	24%
New Shoreham	163	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%	111	68%	4	2%	46	28%
Newport	4,060	2	<1%	66	2%	56	1%	2,034	50%	204	5%	1,698	42%
North Kingstown	6,322	1	<1%	57	1%	49	1%	4,639	73%	247	4%	1,329	21%
North Providence	5,481	0	0%	81	1%	131	2%	3,266	60%	378	7%	1,625	30%
North Smithfield	2,456	0	0%	40	2%	13	1%	1,831	75%	96	4%	476	19%
Pawtucket	16,550	17	<1%	239	1%	460	3%	7,488	45%	1,228	7%	7,118	43%
Portsmouth	3,940	2	<1%	47	1%	24	1%	2,977	76%	172	4%	718	18%
Providence	41,497	41	<1%	632	2%	1,663	4%	16,931	41%	3,094	7%	19,136	46%
Richmond	1,836	0	0%	32	2%	16	1%	1,437	78%	104	6%	247	13%
Scituate	2,272	0	0%	24	1%	22	1%	1,731	76%	139	6%	356	16%
Smithfield	3,615	2	<1%	46	1%	29	1%	2,802	78%	164	5%	572	16%
South Kingstown	5,364	0	0%	81	2%	31	1%	3,951	74%	248	5%	1,053	20%
Tiverton	2,998	1	<1%	41	1%	20	1%	2,109	70%	162	5%	665	22%
Warren	1,935	4	<1%	42	2%	19	1%	1,124	58%	136	7%	610	32%
Warwick	15,795	3	<1%	308	2%	223	1%	10,476	66%	1,109	7%	3,676	23%
West Greenwich	1,468	2	<1%	22	1%	13	1%	1,131	77%	79	5%	221	15%
West Warwick	5,746	1	<1%	151	3%	121	2%	3,118	54%	365	6%	1,990	35%
Westerly	4,787	4	<1%	82	2%	83	2%	3,012	63%	269	6%	1,337	28%
Woonsocket	9,842	10	<1%	203	2%	176	2%	4,237	43%	683	7%	4,533	46%
Four Core Cities	73,523	71	<1%	1,164	2%	2,508	3%	30,815	42%	5,434	7%	33,531	46%
Remainder of State	149,621	44	<1%	2,304	2%	1,890	1%	102,242	68%	8,534	6%	34,607	23%
Rhode Island	223,144	115	<1%	3,468	2%	4,398	2%	133,057	60%	13,968	6%	68,138	31%

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

The denominator is the number of children under age 18 living in family households according to Census 2010. A family household is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as consisting of a householder and one or more people living together in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage or adoption – it may include others not related to the householder.

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

## References

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2014. Table B09002.
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005-2009. Table B09002.
- <sup>3,6,12</sup> Waldfogel, J., Craigie, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2010). Fragile families and child wellbeing. *The Future of Children*, 20(2), 87-112.
- <sup>47</sup> Child Trends Data Bank. (2015). *Family structure*. Retrieved January 8, 2016, from www.childtrendsdatabank.org
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2014. Table B17006.
- <sup>8,9</sup> Barajas, M. S. (2011). Academic achievement of children in single parent homes: A critical review. *The Hilltop Review*, 5(1), 13-21.
- <sup>10</sup> Blackwell, D. L. (2010). Family structure and children's health in the United States: Findings from the National Health Interview Survey, 2001-2007. *Vital and Health Statistics*, 10(246). Hyattsville, MD: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- <sup>11</sup> Mather, M. (2010). *U.S. children in single-mother families*. Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau.
- <sup>13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2014. Tables B17010, B17010A, B17010B, B17010D, B17010F, B17010I.

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