

Economic Well-Being

Median Family Income

DEFINITION

Median family income is the dollar amount which divides Rhode Island families' income distribution into two equal groups – half with incomes above the median and half with incomes below the median. The numbers include only families with their “own children” under age 18, defined as never-married children who are related to the family head by birth, marriage, or adoption.

SIGNIFICANCE

Median family income is a measure of the ability of families to meet the costs of food, clothing, housing, health care, transportation, child care, and higher education. In 2015, the median family income for Rhode Island families with their own children was \$70,108.¹ Rhode Island had the 13th highest median family income nationally and the 4th highest in New England.²

Between 2011 and 2015, Rhode Island's median income for families with their own children differed significantly by family type. The median family income for married two-parent families (\$97,785) was almost two and a half times that of male-headed single-parent families (\$39,513) and more than three and a half times that of female-headed single-parent families (\$25,901).³

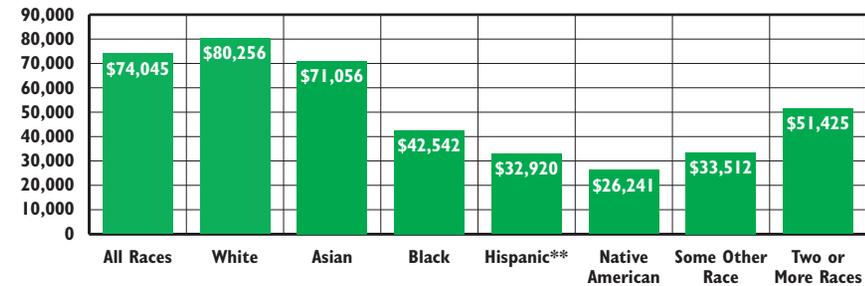
Rhode Island had one of the nation's highest unemployment rates in 2014

(7.7%), but by 2016 the state's unemployment rate had decreased to 5.4%, closer to the U.S. rate of 4.9%. Despite declines in unemployment, Rhode Island continues to have gaps in unemployment rates by race and ethnicity. In 2016, the unemployment rate for White workers was 5.1%, while it was 6.9% for Black workers and 8.7% for Hispanic workers.^{4,5}

While the national unemployment rate declined to 5% in 2015, the underemployment rate and percentage of low-wage jobs remains high.⁶ More than 23 million people in the U.S. work in low-wage jobs where they are paid \$10.50 per hour or less. Conditions at low-wage jobs, such as fluctuating work hours, lack of paid time off, and strict attendance policies can harm children's development by making it difficult for parents to find and keep affordable high-quality child care and education for their children.⁷

In Rhode Island, the average income of the wealthiest 20% of families increased by 99% (or \$94,170) during the past thirty years, while the average income of the poorest 20% of families increased by 12% (or \$2,480). The wealthiest 20% of families in Rhode Island have average incomes that are 7.5 times larger than the average incomes of the poorest 20% of families. Rhode Island is among the top ten states with the fastest growing income inequality.⁸

Median Family Income by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2011-2015*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015. Tables B19113, B19113A, B19113B, B19113C, B19113D, B19113E, B19113G, and B19113I. *Median Family Income by race and ethnicity includes all families because data for families with “own children” are not available by race and ethnicity. **Hispanics may be in any race category.

- ◆ The median income for White families in Rhode Island is higher than that of Asian families, and much higher than that of Black, Hispanic, and Native American families.⁹
- ◆ Educational attainment is strongly associated with economic well-being. Rhode Islanders who have achieved a Bachelor's degree or higher have nearly double the wages compared to residents who have only completed high school. More than one in three Hispanic and more than one in four Black adults in Rhode Island lack a high school diploma, compared to one in ten White adults.¹⁰
- ◆ According to the *2016 Rhode Island Standard of Need*, it costs a single-parent family with two young children \$52,932 a year to pay basic living expenses, including housing, food, health care, child care, transportation, and other miscellaneous items. This family would need an annual income of \$63,238 to meet this budget without government subsidies.¹¹
- ◆ An adequate minimum wage and income support programs (including RIte Care health insurance, child care subsidies, SNAP/food stamp benefits, and the Earned Income Tax Credit) are critical for helping low-and moderate-income working families in Rhode Island make ends meet.¹²

Table 6. Median Family Income, Rhode Island, 2011-2015

CITY/TOWN	1999 MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18 (ADJUSTED TO 2015 DOLLARS*)	2011-2015 MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18	
		ESTIMATES WITH HIGH MARGINS OF ERROR**	ESTIMATES WITH LOWER, ACCEPTABLE MARGINS OF ERROR
Barrington	\$126,351		\$146,440
Bristol	\$75,884		\$88,547
Burrillville	\$78,384		\$76,667
Central Falls	\$31,317		\$26,973
Charlestown	\$78,377		\$81,083
Coventry	\$87,306		\$98,491
Cranston	\$80,973		\$81,456
Cumberland	\$97,176		\$91,723
East Greenwich	\$154,470		\$160,139
East Providence	\$69,548		\$54,630
Exeter	\$104,217		\$103,644
Foster	\$90,195	\$113,750	
Glocester	\$86,713		\$90,962
Hopkinton	\$84,053		\$85,135
Jamestown	\$113,231	\$97,488	
Johnston	\$80,598		\$81,014
Lincoln	\$91,739	\$88,446	
Little Compton	\$80,652	\$127,337	
Middletown	\$78,691		\$80,161
Narragansett	\$97,117		\$123,625
New Shoreham	\$78,041	\$73,409	
Newport	\$61,365	\$48,260	
North Kingstown	\$95,033		\$101,128
North Providence	\$71,850		\$70,437
North Smithfield	\$101,125		\$102,688
Pawtucket	\$47,758		\$41,281
Portsmouth	\$95,872		\$109,911
Providence	\$34,928		\$34,164
Richmond	\$90,319		\$114,792
Scituate	\$98,377		\$97,396
Smithfield	\$95,410		\$93,750
South Kingstown	\$97,139		\$104,276
Tiverton	\$90,814		\$84,375
Warren	\$76,188		\$61,406
Warwick	\$81,163		\$82,378
West Greenwich	\$99,821		\$105,417
West Warwick	\$59,523		\$50,690
Westerly	\$73,957		\$63,398
Woonsocket	\$49,043		\$31,923
Four Core Cities	NA		NA
Remainder of State	NA		NA
Rhode Island	\$71,941		\$67,606

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Median family income data include only households with children under age 18 who meet the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of a family. The U.S. Census Bureau defines a family as a household that includes a householder and one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.

*The 1999 median family income data are adjusted to 2015 constant dollars by multiplying 1999 dollar values by 1.4229669 as recommended by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The 2011-2015 data come from a Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2011-2015 American Community Survey data. The American Community Survey is a sample survey, and therefore the median family income is an estimate. The reliability of estimates vary by community. In general, estimates for small communities are not as reliable as estimates for larger communities.

**The Margin of Error around the estimate is greater than or equal to 25 percent of the estimate.

The Margin of Error is a measure of the reliability of the estimate and is provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Margin of Error means that there is a 90 percent chance that the true value is no less than the estimate minus the Margin of Error and no more than the estimate plus the Margin of Error. See the Methodology Section for Margins of Errors for all communities.

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

NA: Median family income cannot be calculated for combinations of cities and towns (i.e., Four Core Cities and Remainder of State).

References

- ¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2015. Table B19125.
- ² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2015. Table R1902.
- ³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2011-2015. Table B19126.
- ^{4,10} *State of working Rhode Island 2015: Workers of color.* (2015). Providence, RI: The Economic Progress Institute.
- ⁵ *Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and detailed age, 2016 annual averages – Rhode Island and United States.* (2016). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.
- ⁶ Wiedrich, K., Sims, L., Jr., Weisman, H., Rice, S., & Brooks, J. (2016). *The steep climb to economic opportunity for vulnerable families.* Washington, DC: Corporation for Enterprise Development.
- ⁷ Vogtman, J. & Schulman, K. (2016). *Set up to fail: When low-wage work jeopardizes parents' and children's success.* Washington, DC: The National Women's Law Center.
- ⁸ McNichol, E., Hall, D., Cooper, D., & Palacios, V. (2012). *Pulling apart: A state-by-state analysis of income trends.* Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities & Economic Policy Institute.
- ⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2011-2015. Tables B19113, B19113A, B19113B, B19113C, B19113D, B19113E, B19113F, B19113G, & B19113I.
- ^{11,12} *The 2016 Rhode Island Standard of Need.* (2016). Providence, RI: The Economic Progress Institute.

Cost of Housing

DEFINITION

Cost of housing is the percentage of income needed by a very low-income family to cover the average cost of rent.¹ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a very low-income family as a family with an income less than 50% of the Area Median Income. A cost burden exists when more than 30% of a family's monthly income is spent on housing.

SIGNIFICANCE

Inadequate, costly, or crowded housing has a negative impact on children's health, safety, and emotional well-being and on a family's ability to meet a child's basic needs. Children who live in families with cost burdens may live in low-quality and overcrowded housing and move frequently, all of which have been linked to lower educational achievement.^{2,3}

The growth in low- and middle-income families' housing expenses has outpaced income growth, both nationally and in Rhode Island.^{4,5} In 2014, 23% of Rhode Island's 156,122 working households spent more than half of their income on housing costs, making Rhode Island the state with the highest cost burden in New England.⁶

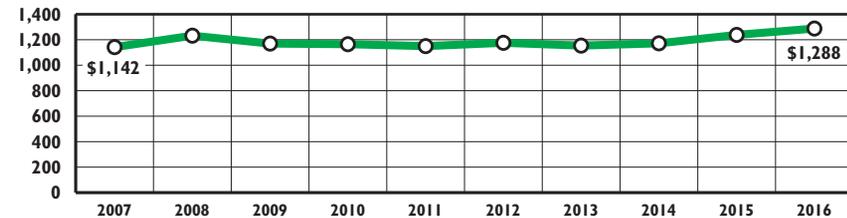
In 2016, a worker would have to earn \$24.77 an hour and work 40 hours a week year-round to be able to afford the average rent in Rhode Island

without a cost burden. This hourly wage is more than two and a half times the 2016 minimum wage of \$9.60 per hour.⁷ In 2016, Rhode Island required the 18th highest hourly wage to afford the rent for a two-bedroom home of any state.⁸

In 2016, the Area Median Income for families in Rhode Island was \$73,931.⁹ Families with this income can afford to purchase a median-priced, single-family home in 15 of the 39 communities in the state.¹⁰ In 2015, the median cost of a single-family home in Rhode Island was \$225,000, 18% higher than 2012, but still 36% lower than the 2005 peak.^{11,12}

Federally-funded Section 8 Housing Choice rental vouchers can help low-income individuals and families afford the cost of housing; however there are not enough vouchers to meet the need. Long waiting periods are common and housing authorities may close waiting lists when there are more families on the list than can be helped in the near future.¹³ Rhode Island's FY 2015 budget increased the real estate conveyance tax and created a dedicated funding stream for housing subsidies as well as homelessness prevention, housing retention, and lead abatement.¹⁴ In 2016, Rhode Island voters approved a \$50 million housing bond for affordable housing development and urban revitalization.¹⁵

Average Rent, Two-Bedroom Apartment, Rhode Island, 2007-2016



Source: Rhode Island Housing, Annual Rent Surveys, 2007-2016. Rents include adjustments for the cost of heat, cooking fuel, electricity, and hot water. Adjustments for utilities for each year vary according to HUD annual utility allowances. The HUD utility allowance decreased in 2013, so average rents which include this allowance also decreased.

◆ Between 2007 and 2016, the average cost of rent in Rhode Island remained fairly stable, increasing from \$1,142 to \$1,288.¹⁶ The percentage of renters in Rhode Island who spent 30% or more of their household income on rent increased slightly from 47% in 2007 to 48% in 2015. The percentage of homeowners who had a cost burden due to their mortgages decreased between 2007 and 2015, from 42% to 32%.^{17,18}

Cost of Heating and Other Utilities

◆ High energy costs make housing even less affordable for low-income families. Research shows that children in households experiencing energy shutoffs also are at risk of hunger and problems with health and development.¹⁹

◆ Rhode Island state law prohibits utility shutoffs for protected customers (such as the unemployed and low-income families with children under age two) and all customers facing financial hardships during the moratorium period from November 1 through April 15.²⁰

◆ The federally-funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides financial assistance to Rhode Island's low-income households to meet home heating and energy costs.²¹ In FY 2014, 31,088 low-income Rhode Island families received heating assistance through LIHEAP.²² In 2016, Rhode Island created a LIHEAP Enhancement Plan that established per-payment forgiveness of utility debt and allows previously homeless families to obtain a crisis grant to cover the down payment required to participate in this program.²³

Table 7.

Cost of Housing for Very Low-Income Families, Rhode Island, 2016

CITY/TOWN	FAMILY INCOME		HOMEOWNERSHIP COSTS		RENTAL COSTS		
	2016 POVERTY LEVEL FAMILY OF THREE	2016 VERY LOW- INCOME FAMILY	TYPICAL MONTHLY HOUSING PAYMENT	% INCOME NEEDED FOR HOUSING PAYMENT, VERY LOW-INCOME FAMILY	AVERAGE RENT 2-BEDROOM APARTMENT	% INCOME NEEDED FOR RENT POVERTY LEVEL FAMILY OF THREE	% INCOME NEEDED FOR RENT VERY LOW- INCOME FAMILY
Barrington	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$2,980	109%	\$1,327	79%	49%
Bristol	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,995	73%	\$1,327	79%	49%
Burrillville	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,527	56%	\$1,258	75%	46%
Central Falls	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$959	35%	\$983	59%	36%
Charlestown	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$2,154	79%	\$1,258	75%	46%
Coventry	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,558	57%	\$1,327	79%	49%
Cranston	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,486	54%	\$1,246	74%	46%
Cumberland	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,923	70%	\$1,292	77%	47%
East Greenwich	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$3,086	113%	\$1,538	92%	56%
East Providence	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,417	52%	\$1,225	73%	45%
Exeter*	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,942	71%	\$972	58%	36%
Foster*	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,835	67%	\$972	58%	36%
Glocester*	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,743	64%	\$972	58%	36%
Hopkinton*	\$20,160	\$35,550	\$1,657	56%	\$1,069	64%	36%
Jamestown	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$3,616	132%	\$1,651	98%	60%
Johnston	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,562	57%	\$1,255	75%	46%
Lincoln	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$2,037	75%	\$1,282	76%	47%
Little Compton*	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$2,999	110%	\$972	58%	36%
Middletown	\$20,160	\$40,550	\$2,479	73%	\$1,407	84%	42%
Narragansett	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$2,428	89%	\$1,289	77%	47%
New Shoreham*	\$20,160	\$35,550	\$7,016	237%	\$1,069	64%	36%
Newport	\$20,160	\$40,550	\$2,619	78%	\$1,508	90%	45%
North Kingstown	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$2,320	85%	\$1,406	84%	51%
North Providence	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,497	55%	\$1,273	76%	47%
North Smithfield	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,700	62%	\$1,274	76%	47%
Pawtucket	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,211	44%	\$1,174	70%	43%
Portsmouth	\$20,160	\$40,550	\$2,322	69%	\$1,714	102%	51%
Providence	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$988	36%	\$1,271	76%	47%
Richmond*	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,775	65%	\$972	58%	36%
Scituate	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,913	70%	\$1,506	90%	55%
Smithfield*	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,851	68%	\$972	58%	36%
South Kingstown	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$2,115	77%	\$1,344	80%	49%
Tiverton	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,645	60%	\$1,432	85%	52%
Warren	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,804	66%	\$1,281	76%	47%
Warwick	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,339	49%	\$1,486	88%	54%
West Greenwich*	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$2,064	76%	\$972	58%	36%
West Warwick	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,278	47%	\$1,289	77%	47%
Westerly	\$20,160	\$35,550	\$1,863	63%	\$1,315	78%	44%
Woonsocket	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,233	45%	\$1,106	66%	40%
Four Core Cities	\$20,160	\$32,800	\$1,098	40%	\$1,211	72%	44%
Remainder of State	\$20,160	\$33,700	\$2,158	77%	\$1,338	80%	48%
Rhode Island	\$20,160	\$33,608	\$1,632	58%	\$1,288	77%	46%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

2016 poverty level for a family of three as reported in: *Federal Register*, 81(15), January 25, 2016, pages 4036-4037.

A very low-income family as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is a three-person family with income 50% of the Area Median Income and is calculated separately for each of the three metropolitan areas comprising Rhode Island. Reported by Rhode Island Housing, (2016). *2016 Rhode Island income limits for low- and moderate-income households*. Retrieved January 27, 2017, from www.rhodeislandhousing.org

Data on typical monthly housing payments are from HousingWorks RI's *2016 Housing Fact Book*. They are based on the median selling price of a single-family home using year-end 2015 data and calculated based on a 30-year mortgage at a 3.85% interest rate with a 3.5% down payment. The statewide typical monthly housing payment comes from HousingWorks RI, and core city and remainder of state are calculated by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT using unweighted community data.

Rhode Island Housing, *Rhode Island Rent Survey*, 2016. Average rents are based on a survey of rents in Rhode Island between January and December, 2016. 2016 rents are adjusted using HUD's utility allowance of \$238 for a two-bedroom apartment (includes heat, cooking fuel, electricity, and hot water) unless the listing stated that utilities were included in the rent, in which case the adjustment was not made.

*Rhode Island Housing 2016 *Rent Survey* data are not available. Average rent used for these communities is the HUD 2016 Fair Market Rent for the metropolitan area as reported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The average rent calculated for the state as a whole, for the remainder of state, and four core cities do not include communities for which data from the *Rent Survey* were not available.

Statewide average rent is calculated by taking an average of all listings statewide. Rent averages for the four core cities and the remainder of state are calculated using weighted community data from RI Housing.

**Typical monthly housing payment for Providence does not include the East Side and therefore cannot be compared to data reported for Providence in Factbooks prior to 2013.

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

References are on page 175.

Homeless Children

DEFINITION

Homeless children is the number of children under age 18 who stayed at homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters or transitional housing facilities in Rhode Island with their families. This number does not include homeless and runaway youth who are unaccompanied by their families.

SIGNIFICANCE

In the United States, 2.5 million children (one in 30) are homeless each year.¹ Families can become homeless due to lack of affordable housing, unemployment, low-paying jobs, extreme poverty and decreasing government supports. Other causes include domestic violence, mental illness, substance abuse, and frayed social support networks.^{2,3,4}

Compared with their peers, homeless children are more likely to become ill (particularly with illnesses such as stomach problems, ear infections, and asthma), develop mental health issues (such as anxiety, depression, and withdrawal), experience significant educational disruption, and exhibit delinquent or aggressive behaviors. Homeless children go hungry at twice the rate of other children.⁵

Homeless children are at a higher risk of abuse and exposure to violence. This trauma can lead to an increase in developmental delays and emotional distress and a decrease in academic

achievement.^{6,7} When homeless children are exposed to multiple traumatic events, they may have increased levels of anxiety, poor impulse control, and difficulty developing trusting relationships.^{8,9}

Families who have experienced homelessness have higher rates of family separation than other low-income families, with children separated from their parents due to shelter rules, state intervention, and/or parents' desires to protect their children from homelessness. Homeless children are more likely to have been placed in foster care (12%) than other children (1%). Homelessness also can be a barrier to reunification; it is estimated that more than 30% of children in foster care in the U.S. could return home if their parents had adequate housing.¹⁰

In 2016, 515 families with 966 children stayed at an emergency homeless shelter, domestic violence shelter, or transitional housing facility in Rhode Island. Children made up 23% of the people who used emergency homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and transitional housing in 2016. Half (48%) of these children were under age six, not yet school age.¹¹ Other families are on the state's family shelter waiting list, awaiting placement when a slot opens up.

In 2016, United Way 211 received 112,563 calls from individuals and families seeking housing or shelter and 3,644 related to foreclosure prevention.¹²

Rhode Island's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness

◆ In 2012, Rhode Island released a statewide strategic plan to transform the provision of services to decrease the number of homeless individuals and families. Rhode Island's plan (*Opening Doors Rhode Island*) is based on a comparable federal initiative called *Opening Doors, the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*.¹³

◆ *Built for Zero* is a national campaign focused on helping communities across the U.S. end chronic and veteran homelessness. Rhode Island has expanded this goal to also target family homelessness.^{14,15,16}

Supporting Homeless Children in Schools

◆ Family residential instability and homelessness contribute to poor educational outcomes for children. Homeless children are more likely to change schools, be absent from school, and have lower reading and math scores than children who have housing.¹⁷

◆ The federal *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act)* requires that states identify homeless children, allow them to enroll in school even if they lack required documents, allow them to stay in their "home school," provide transportation when needed, and offer services to help them succeed in school.¹⁸

◆ The *McKinney-Vento Act* defines a child as homeless if he or she does not have a "fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence."¹⁹ During the 2015-2016 school year, Rhode Island public school personnel identified 1,057 children as homeless. Of these children, 64% lived with other families ("doubled up"), 25% lived in shelters, 10% lived in hotels or motels, and 1% were unsheltered.²⁰

◆ Schools can support homeless families by identifying children and youth experiencing homelessness, ensuring that families and staff are aware of students' rights under the *McKinney-Vento Act*, developing relationships with community agencies serving homeless families, and helping homeless children get clothing, school supplies, tutoring, and referrals to other services they may need to succeed in school.²¹ The federal *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, which re-authorized *McKinney-Vento* in 2015, strengthens existing provisions for homeless students, guarantees school stability for students starting in preschool, and requires schools to report on student achievement and graduation rates for homeless students.²²

Table 8. Homeless Children Identified by Public Schools, Rhode Island, 2015-2016 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	# OF CHILDREN IDENTIFIED AS HOMELESS BY PUBLIC SCHOOL PERSONNEL
Barrington	3,355	0
Bristol Warren	3,218	17
Burrillville	2,341	35
Central Falls	2,589	57
Charlho	3,270	25
Coventry	4,713	16
Cranston	10,415	25
Cumberland	4,568	*
East Greenwich	2,504	0
East Providence	5,238	19
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,654	*
Foster	265	0
Foster-Glocester	1,147	10
Glocester	547	*
Jamestown	488	0
Johnston	3,190	*
Lincoln	3,002	10
Little Compton	246	0
Middletown	2,191	117
Narragansett	1,326	11
New Shoreham	120	0
Newport	2,198	71
North Kingstown	4,047	48
North Providence	3,493	33
North Smithfield	1,707	*
Pawtucket	8,984	45
Portsmouth	2,464	*
Providence	23,983	146
Scituate	1,305	0
Smithfield	2,384	51
South Kingstown	3,111	*
Tiverton	1,841	0
Warwick	9,124	104
West Warwick	3,474	22
Westerly	2,865	51
Woonsocket	5,863	78
Charter Schools	7,024	33
State-Operated Schools	1,746	*
UCAP	142	0
Four Core Cities	41,419	326
Remainder of State	91,811	692
Rhode Island	142,142	1,057

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, Public School Enrollment in grades preschool to 12 on October 1, 2015.

Number of children identified as homeless by public school personnel includes children in preschool through grade 12 who are identified by public school personnel as meeting the *McKinney-Vento* definition of homelessness, which includes any child who does not have a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence."

Charter schools reporting include Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, Southside Charter School, and Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts. State-operated schools reporting include the Metropolitan Regional Career & Technical Center and the Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

The Newport, North Kingstown, Warwick, and Woonsocket school districts received grants that provided additional resources to identify and serve homeless students.

*Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

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

References

- ¹⁴ Bassuk, E. L., DeCandia, C. J., Beach, C. A., & Berman, F. (2014). *America's youngest outcasts: A report card on child homelessness*. Needham, MA: The National Center on Family Homelessness.
- ^{2,5,10} *The characteristics and needs of families experiencing homelessness*. (2011). Needham, MA: The National Center on Family Homelessness.
- ³ Aratani, Y. (2009). *Homeless children and youth: Causes and consequences*. New York, NY: Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, National Center for Children in Poverty.
- ⁶ American Academy of Pediatrics. (2013). Providing care for children and adolescents facing homelessness and housing insecurity. *Pediatrics*, 131(6), 1206-1210.

(continued on page 175)

Secure Parental Employment

DEFINITION

Secure parental employment is the percentage of children living with at least one parent who has full-time, year-round employment.

SIGNIFICANCE

Secure parental employment increases family income and reduces poverty. Children with parents who have steady employment are more likely to have access to health care. Secure parental employment improves family functioning by reducing the stress brought on by unemployment and underemployment of parents.¹ Among poor families, children with working parents are more engaged academically and less likely to repeat a grade or be suspended or expelled from school than children with non-working parents.²

In December 2016, Rhode Island's unemployment rate was 5.0%, higher than the U.S. unemployment rate of 4.7%, and the 14th highest in the nation. However, it was considerably lower than at the height of Rhode Island's recession in December 2009, when the unemployment rate was 11.2%.^{3,4,5}

In 2015, Rhode Island and the U.S. had the same rate of children with at least one unemployed parent (6%).⁶ Children with unemployed parents are at increased risk for homelessness, child abuse or neglect, and failure to finish high school or college.^{7,8}

Between 2011 and 2015, 73% of children under age six and 77% of children ages six to 17 in Rhode Island had all parents in the labor force. In comparison, nationally, 65% of children under age six and 71% of children ages six to 17 had all parents in the labor force.⁹

Even when families have adults with secure parental employment, low wages cause many families to remain in poverty. Nationally, nearly one in three (32%) working families are low income (10.6 million), with 24 million children belonging to low-income working families.¹⁰ In the workforce, low-income individuals tend to have few opportunities for development, limited benefits, and an overall lack of economic security. In addition, despite gaining experience and seniority, many low-income workers never move out of low-wage jobs.¹¹

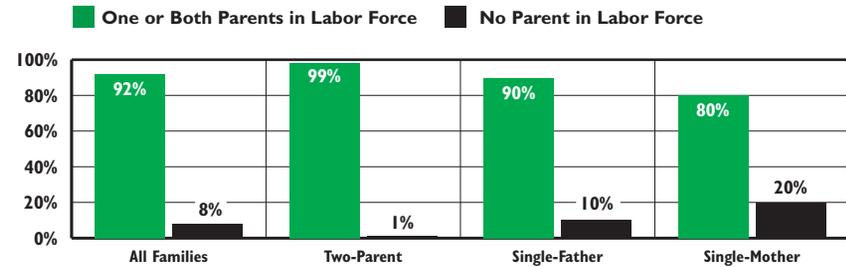
Children Living in Families Where No Parent Has Full-Time, Year-Round Employment		
	2010	2015
RI	34%	30%
US	33%	29%
National Rank*		30th
New England Rank**		5th

*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

Employment Status of Parents by Family Type, Rhode Island, 2011-2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015. Table B23008.

◆ The majority of children living in Rhode Island between 2011 and 2015 had one or both parents in the labor force. Children living with a single parent were 15 times more likely than children living in a two-parent family to have no parents in the labor force. Of children in two-parent families, 72% had both parents in the labor force.¹²

◆ Between 2011 and 2015, there were 16,367 Rhode Island children living in families with no parent in the labor force. Children living in families with a single parent represented 89% (14,547) of families with no employed parents.¹³

◆ Between 2011 and 2015, 15% (3,903) of Rhode Island families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold had at least one adult with full-time, year-round employment, and 40% of low-income Rhode Island families had at least one adult working part-time.¹⁴

◆ According to the 2016 *Rhode Island Standard of Need*, 72% of Rhode Island single parent families and 26% of two-parent families with two or more children earn less than the income required to meet their basic needs without public benefits such as SNAP/food stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), child care subsidies, and health insurance.¹⁵

Barriers to Secure Employment for Low-Income Families

- ◆ There are many barriers to employment for those leaving welfare for work. Research shows that welfare leavers who return to welfare after working are much more likely to be in poor health, to have low levels of education, and to have young children than those who remain employed.¹⁶
- ◆ Poor health or a disability may make it difficult for parents to secure or sustain employment. One national study found that 13% of low-income working mothers had some type of disability and 6% had a severe disability. It also found that 16% of low-income working mothers had a child with a disability and that 9% had a child with a severe disability. Higher-income mothers reported lower disability rates for themselves and their children.¹⁷
- ◆ Low-income workers are less likely to have benefits, such as paid time off and flexible work schedules, that would allow them to address the needs of sick children.¹⁸ Approximately 60% of the entire U.S. workforce qualifies for the federal *Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)*, but many who are eligible cannot afford to take it.¹⁹ In 2013, Rhode Island passed legislation that created the Temporary Caregivers Insurance (TCI) Program, which provides up to four weeks of benefits for workers who need to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a newborn, foster, or adopted child.²⁰ Rhode Island is one of three states that offer paid family leave.²¹
- ◆ Limited education also can be a barrier to sustained employment. Between 2011 and 2015 in Rhode Island, adults without a high school diploma were nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as those without a Bachelor's degree.²²
- ◆ Having access to work supports, such as health insurance, SNAP/food stamp benefits, and child care subsidies, can facilitate steady employment over time. Researchers have found links between these programs and positive employment outcomes for parents such as work stability and earnings.²³

References

¹ Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2016). *America's children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2016*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

²⁷ Isaacs, J. (2013). *Unemployment from a child's perspective*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute and First Focus.

(continued on page 175)

Secure Employment and Child Care

- ◆ Research shows a link between adequate child care availability and sustained maternal labor force participation. Studies find that mothers report that the lack of reliable and dependable child care arrangements affected their ability to remain employed.²⁴
- ◆ In 2015 in Rhode Island, a single mother earning the state median income for a single-mother family (\$25,798) would have to spend almost half (49.9%) of her income to pay for child care for an infant in center-based care.²⁵
- ◆ In Rhode Island, child care assistance is available to all income-eligible working families. During the 2007 legislative session, eligibility for child care assistance was rolled back from 225% to 180% of the federal poverty level (\$36,756 for a family of three in 2017).^{26,27}

Rhode Island Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

- ◆ State and federal Earned Income Tax Credits (EITCs) provide tax reductions and wage supplements for low- and moderate-income working families. EITCs reduce child poverty, decrease taxes, and increase work incentives for families struggling to make ends meet. The federal EITC is the nation's most effective antipoverty program for working families. It lifted 6.5 million people, over half of them children, out of poverty in 2015.^{28,29}
- ◆ The EITC's benefits extend well beyond the time families receive the credit. EITC recipients are more likely to work and earn higher wages, and their children do better in school, are more likely to attend college, and earn more as adults.³⁰
- ◆ State EITCs can supplement the federal EITC to further support working families. In 2016, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed legislation that increased the state's EITC from 12.5% to 15% of the federal EITC. In 2016, approximately 84,000 Rhode Island working families and individuals received a total of \$190 million in EITC tax credits for tax year 2015.³¹

Paid Family Leave

DEFINITION

Paid family leave is the number of approved claims to bond with a new child or to care for a seriously ill family member through Rhode Island's Temporary Caregiver Insurance Program (TCI).

SIGNIFICANCE

Rhode Island's Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI) program, established in 2014, provides up to four weeks of wage replacement benefits to eligible workers who need to take time off from work to bond with a newborn, adopted or foster child, or to care for a seriously ill family member. The TCI program is financed entirely by employee contributions.¹

Almost all advanced, industrialized nations guarantee paid leave for new mothers and many include new fathers. In many European countries, families receive at least six months of paid leave to care for a new baby.² The U.S. requires employers with 50 or more workers to offer 12 weeks of leave for workers to care for a new child or to care for a seriously ill family member; however the time off can be unpaid.³ Rhode Island's *1987 Parental and Family Medical Leave Act* requires a 13-week leave, but does not require that the leave be paid.⁴

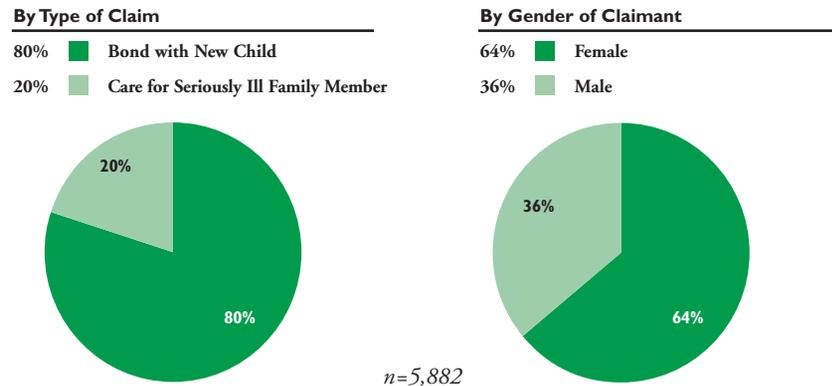
Although some workers in the U.S. have access to paid leave through their employers (estimated at 11% of private sector workers and 17% of public sector

workers), the majority do not. High-wage workers are much more likely to have access to paid family leave than low-wage workers. More than three in four employees in the U.S. report not being able to take family leave when needed because it was unpaid.⁵

Paid family leave provides job security and consistent income so that working parents can care for a new child or any worker can care for a seriously ill family member.⁶ Taking time off from work to care for a new child reduces infant mortality rates and child abuse, improves breastfeeding rates and duration, and increases preventive medical care and immunizations. Mothers who take at least 12 weeks off from work after the birth of a child are less likely to experience depression, which can improve the quality of the care they are able to provide to their infants.^{7,8} Providing time off from work for new parents gives babies time to form secure attachments, which form the foundation for future relationships and development.⁹

Rhode Island's Temporary Disability Insurance Program (TDI) provides partial-wage replacement for participating workers who are temporarily unable to work because of a physical or mental condition, including pregnancy complications and recovery from childbirth.^{10,11} TCI supplements TDI; women who give birth are eligible for both.

Approved Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI) Claims, Rhode Island, 2016



Source: Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, TCI Program, 2016.

◆ There were 5,882 approved claims for TCI during 2016 (up from 4,941 in 2015 and 3,870 in 2014); 80% were to bond with a new child and 20% were to care for a seriously ill family member.¹²

◆ Of the 4,684 approved TCI claims to bond with a new child, 98% were for a newborn child and 2% were for a newly adopted, foster, or other child. Thirty-seven percent of claims to bond with a new child were filed by men and 63% were filed by women.¹³

◆ Of the 1,198 approved TCI claims to care for a seriously ill family member, 53% were to care for a spouse or domestic partner, 31% were to care for a parent or parent-in-law, 16% were to care for a child, and 1% were to care for a grandparent. Thirty-one percent of claims to care for a seriously ill family member were filed by men and 69% were filed by women.¹⁴

Temporary Disability Insurance for Pregnancy Complications & Childbirth

◆ In 2016, there were 1,775 approved TDI claims for disabling pregnancy complications and 1,905 TDI claims to recover from childbirth.¹⁵ Recovery from childbirth is a disabling condition covered by TDI. Six weeks are typically covered for vaginal births and eight weeks for cesarean section births (more time can be approved by a physician). TDI is not available to new parents who do not give birth (e.g., fathers and adoptive parents).¹⁶

Table 9. **Approved Temporary Disability Claims for Childbirth & Temporary Caregiver Insurance for Paid Family Leave, Rhode Island, 2016**

CITY/TOWN	TEMPORARY DISABILITY INSURANCE (TDI) CLAIMS			TEMPORARY CAREGIVER INSURANCE (TCI) CLAIMS		
	TDI FOR PREGNANCY COMPLICATIONS	TDI FOR CHILDBIRTH	TOTAL TDI CLAIMS	TCI TO BOND WITH NEW CHILD	TCI TO CARE FOR FAMILY MEMBER	TOTAL TCI CLAIMS
Barrington	16	18	34	34	12	46
Bristol	28	26	54	85	24	109
Burrillville	27	24	51	46	15	61
Central Falls	29	34	63	78	15	93
Charlestown	5	12	17	26	17	43
Coventry	64	62	126	180	53	233
Cranston	118	137	255	396	107	503
Cumberland	43	50	93	110	33	143
East Greenwich	20	27	47	55	15	70
East Providence	77	72	149	218	63	281
Exeter	9	7	16	21	5	26
Foster	7	6	13	13	6	19
Glocester	14	16	30	43	11	54
Hopkinton	10	11	21	33	7	40
Jamestown	*	*	*	8	4	12
Johnston	47	42	89	161	50	211
Lincoln	31	47	78	94	23	117
Little Compton	*	*	*	*	*	*
Middletown	20	16	36	28	7	35
Narragansett	7	6	13	31	12	43
New Shoreham	*	*	*	*	*	*
Newport	31	30	61	59	11	70
North Kingstown	33	41	74	88	25	113
North Providence	51	47	98	124	40	164
North Smithfield	15	22	37	41	8	49
Pawtucket	114	153	267	360	67	427
Portsmouth	18	17	35	43	17	60
Providence	314	325	639	678	149	827
Richmond	9	5	14	11	2	13
Scituate	18	14	32	45	19	64
Smithfield	21	25	46	73	21	94
South Kingstown	30	41	71	79	17	96
Tiverton	17	18	35	39	3	42
Warren	11	19	30	43	13	56
Warwick	181	162	343	459	123	582
Westerly	25	22	47	79	15	94
West Greenwich	8	10	18	17	7	24
West Warwick	61	45	106	181	41	222
Woonsocket	52	56	108	119	33	152
<i>Out-of-State</i>	<i>189</i>	<i>230</i>	<i>419</i>	<i>480</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>586</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>509</i>	<i>568</i>	<i>1,077</i>	<i>1,235</i>	<i>264</i>	<i>1,499</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>1,077</i>	<i>1,107</i>	<i>2,184</i>	<i>2,969</i>	<i>828</i>	<i>3,797</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>1,586</i>	<i>1,675</i>	<i>3,261</i>	<i>4,204</i>	<i>1,092</i>	<i>5,296</i>
<i>Total Program Claims</i>	<i>1,775</i>	<i>1,905</i>	<i>3,680</i>	<i>4,684</i>	<i>1,198</i>	<i>5,882</i>

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, Approved TDI claims for pregnancy complications and childbirth and approved TCI claims, 2016.

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

Out-of-State are approved claims for residents of states other than Rhode Island. TDI and TCI are available to employees of Rhode Island companies and organizations, including employees who are not residents of the state.

*Data for any town with less than a total of 10 approved claims are suppressed by the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training.

References

- ¹ The State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Department of Labor and Training. (2014). *Temporary Caregiver Insurance [Brochure]*.
- ^{2,5} Ochshorn, S. & Skinner, C. (2012). *Building a competitive future right from the start: How paid leave strengthens 21st century families*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- ³ *Business support for the Family and Medical Leave Act*. (2013). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.
- ⁴ *Rhode Island Parental and Family Medical Leave Act*, Title 28 Rhode Island General Law § 28-48-2 (1987,1990).
- ^{6,9} *Family leave in the early years*. (2013). Washington, DC: Zero to Three.
- ⁷ Gault, B., Hartmann, H., Hegewisch, A., Milli, J., & Reichlin, L. (2014). *Paid parental leave in the United States: What the data tell us about access, usage, and economic and health benefits*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.
- ⁸ Klevens, J., Luo, F., Xu, L., Peterson, C., & Lutzman, N. (2016). Paid family leave's effect on hospital admissions for pediatric abusive head trauma. *Injury Prevention*, 1-4.
- ¹⁰ *Annual statistical supplement to the Social Security Bulletin, 2014*. (2015). Washington, DC: Social Security Administration, Office of Retirement and Disability Policy.
- ^{11,16} *Existing temporary disability insurance programs*. (2015). Washington, DC: National Partnership for Women and Families.
- ^{12,13,14,15} Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, 2016.

Children Receiving Child Support

DEFINITION

Children receiving child support is the percentage of parents who make child support payments on time and in full as indicated in the Rhode Island Office of Child Support Services system. The percentage does not include cases in which paternity has not been established or cases in which the non-custodial parent is not under a court order because he/she cannot be located. Court orders for child support and medical support require establishment of paternity.

SIGNIFICANCE

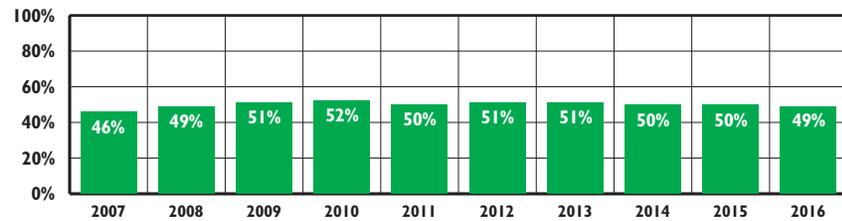
Child support is a major part of the safety net for children and families. In 2015, nearly one in four U.S. children (15.9 million) received public child support services.^{1,2} Child support provides a mechanism for non-custodial parents (usually fathers) to contribute to the financial and medical support of their children. Child support programs can increase the reliability of child support paid by helping custodial parents locate the non-custodial parent, establishing paternity and support orders, and removing barriers to payment, such as referring parents to employment services, supporting co-parenting relationships, and helping to prevent family violence.³

The receipt of child support payments can significantly improve the economic well-being of a child growing up in a

family with a non-resident parent. In 2015, child support lifted more than 750,000 U.S. children out of poverty, and for poor custodial parents that received full child support, these payments represented more than two-thirds (70%) of their mean personal income. Custodial parents who receive steady child support payments are less likely to rely on public assistance programs and more likely to find work faster and stay employed longer than those who do not.^{4,5,6}

Even when a child support order is in place, payments can be unreliable. Noncustodial parents of poor children are often poor themselves and have limited ability to provide financial support to their children.⁷ Incarcerated parents with active child support orders are unable to pay while in prison, and may face legal and financial burdens upon release.⁸ Fatherhood programs that focus on low-income, non-custodial parents and provide job skills training, employment assistance, parenting skills, relationship building with the co-parent, and links to the child support system can increase child support payments. Non-custodial parents who pay regular child support are more involved with their children, providing them with emotional and financial support. The receipt of regular child support payments can have a positive effect on children's academic achievement.^{9,10}

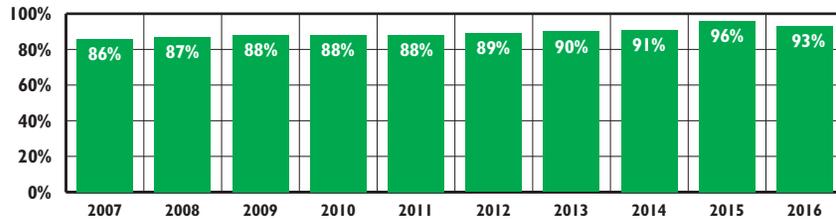
Non-Custodial Parents With Court Orders Who Pay Child Support on Time and in Full, Rhode Island, 2007-2016



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support Services, 2007-2016.

- ◆ As of December 1, 2016, there were 73,797 children in Rhode Island's Office of Child Support Services system, including private, interstate and IV-D cases (i.e., families receiving RI Works, RIte Care or child-care assistance). Forty-six percent of the children in the Child Support system with a known Rhode Island residence lived in the four core cities. Half (49%) of non-custodial parents under court order in Rhode Island were making child support payments on time and in full.¹¹
- ◆ In 2016, the Rhode Island Office of Child Support Services collected \$93.8 million in child support, a decrease of \$1.2 million over the previous year. Collections go toward both child support and medical support. Eighty-six percent (\$80.4 million) of the funds collected were distributed directly to families and the remainder was retained by the state and federal governments as reimbursement for RI Works (cash assistance), RIte Care health coverage, and other expenses.¹²
- ◆ In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015, the Rhode Island Office of Child Support Services collected \$5.86 for every \$1.00 Rhode Island spent on administering the program.¹³
- ◆ During FFY 2016, there were 19,298 court orders for non-custodial parents to provide medical insurance and 12,407 orders for non-custodial parents to contribute funds toward medical coverage. More than \$6.2 million in payments (known as "cash medical") was retained by the state to offset the cost of RIte Care, while approximately \$1.9 million was disbursed directly to families to offset the cost of private health insurance coverage or other medical expenses.¹⁴

Rhode Island Children in the Office of Child Support Services System With Paternity Established, 2007-2016



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support Services, 2007-2016. Includes all children in the child support system – private, interstate, and IV-D cases (i.e., cases that received assistance with child support because they were receiving RI Works, RIte Care, or child care assistance benefits).

- ◆ The percentage of children in the Rhode Island child support system with paternity established increased from 86% in 2007 to 93% of children in 2016.¹⁵
- ◆ When applying for cash assistance, child care assistance, or RIte Care, parents are asked to provide information on the other parent to the Office of Child Support Services. This information is used to establish paternity (if not already established), and to seek child support payments and/or medical support. Victims of domestic violence can apply for a waiver of this requirement if providing this information could endanger themselves or their children.^{16,17}
- ◆ In FFY 2015, Rhode Island had the lowest rate of court orders established for child support in New England (Maine – 95%; Vermont – 90%; Connecticut – 87%; Massachusetts – 86%; New Hampshire – 81%; Rhode Island – 76%). The national average for cases with child support orders established is 86%.¹⁸ In FFY 2015, Rhode Island had the highest case/staff ratio in New England at 759 cases per person, nearly five times that of the lowest state, Vermont.¹⁹ High caseloads and a low number of full time staff affects the Office of Child Support Services’ ability to establish court orders for child support.

References

^{1,13,18,19} U.S. Office of Child Support Enforcement, Administration for Children & Families. (2016). *FY 2015 preliminary report*. Table P-93. Retrieved January 17, 2017, from www.acf.hhs.gov

² Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2016). *Table POP-1: Child population: Number of children (in millions) ages 0-17 in the United States by Age, 1950-2015 and projected 2016-2050*. Retrieved January 19, 2017, from www.childstats.gov

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Child Support and Rhode Island Works

- ◆ As of December 1, 2016, Rhode Island’s Office of Child Support Services system included 5,713 children enrolled in Rhode Island Works (RI Works).²⁰
- ◆ In 2016, the average child support obligation for children enrolled in RI Works was \$278 per month, compared to an average child support obligation of \$388 per month for children in non-RI Works families.²¹ (Calculations for child support payments are based on both parents’ incomes, so it is expected that the average child support obligation for children enrolled in RI Works would be lower.)
- ◆ In Rhode Island, only the first \$50 of child support paid on time each month on behalf of a child receiving RI Works cash assistance (called a “pass-through” payment) goes to the custodial parent caring for the child. The remainder of the payment is retained by the federal and state governments as reimbursement for assistance received through RI Works.²²
- ◆ In FFY 2016 in Rhode Island, an average of 539 families received at least one “pass-through” payment each month, for a total of \$313,927 paid to families enrolled in RI Works during FFY 2016.²³
- ◆ States have the option to increase the amount of money passed through to children. States that pass through up to \$100 per month for one child (and up to \$200 per month for two or more children) and disregard this income in calculating eligibility for cash assistance do not have to reimburse the federal government for its share of the child support collected. Since this federal policy change went into effect, a number of states have increased the amount they pass through to children.²⁴ Rhode Island has not implemented this option.²⁵
- ◆ More generous child support “pass-through” policies for families receiving cash assistance provide a greater incentive for custodial parents to seek child support and for noncustodial parents to make regular payments because more of the child support payment goes to the child. Increased “pass-throughs” could therefore increase total child support collections, increase family income, and potentially reduce the amount of other benefits.²⁶

Children in Poverty

DEFINITION

Children in poverty is the percentage of children under age 18 who are living in households with incomes below the poverty threshold, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Poverty is determined based on income received during the year prior to the Census.

SIGNIFICANCE

Poverty is related to every KIDS COUNT indicator. Children in poverty, especially those who experience poverty in early childhood and for extended periods, are more likely to have physical and behavioral health problems, experience difficulty in school, become teen parents, and earn less or be unemployed as adults.^{1,2,3} Children in poverty are less likely to be enrolled in preschool, more likely to attend schools that lack resources and rigor, and have fewer opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.^{4,5,6}

Nationally and in Rhode Island, minority children are more likely to grow up poor than White children. Children under age six, who have single parents, whose parents have low educational levels, or whose parents work part-time or are unemployed are at increased risk of living in poverty.^{7,8}

In 2016, the federal poverty threshold was \$19,337 for a family of three with two children and \$24,339 for a family of four with two children.⁹ The official

poverty measure does not reflect the effects of key government policies and programs that support families living in poverty, does not take into account the increased cost of transportation, child care, housing, and medical care, and does not consider geographic variations in the cost of living. To address these limitations, in 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau began releasing a Supplemental Poverty Measure. This measure does not replace the official measure, but provides policy makers with a new way to evaluate the effects of anti-poverty policies.¹⁰

According to the *2016 Rhode Island Standard of Need*, a single-parent family with two children would need to earn \$52,932 a year to meet its basic needs, more than twice the federal poverty level for a family of three. Work supports such as subsidized child care, health coverage (RIte Care), food assistance, and tax credits, can help families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold meet their basic needs.¹¹

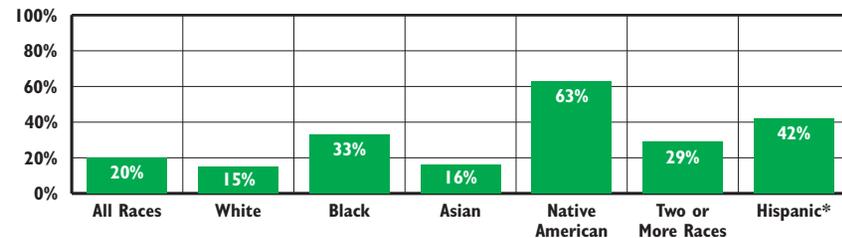
Children in Poverty				
	2012	2013	2014	2015
RI	19.5%	21.5%	19.8%	19.4%
US	22.6%	22.2%	21.7%	20.7%
National Rank*				24th
New England Rank**				6th

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2015. Table R1704.

Children in Poverty, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2011-2015



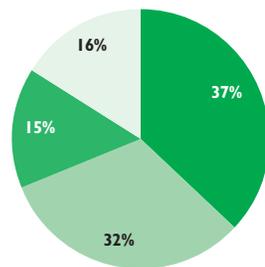
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015. Tables S1701, B17020A, B17020B, B17020C, B17020D, B17020G and B17020I. *Hispanic children may be included in any race category.

- ◆ Between 2011 and 2015, 20% (43,282) of Rhode Island's 212,038 children under age 18 lived in households with incomes below the federal poverty threshold.¹²
- ◆ In Rhode Island as well as in the United States as a whole, Hispanic, Black, and Native American children are more likely than White and Asian children to live in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold. Between 2011 and 2015, 63% of Native American, 42% of Hispanic, and 33% of Black children in Rhode Island lived in poverty, compared to 16% of Asian children and 15% of White children.
- ◆ Between 2011 and 2015, of all children living in poverty in Rhode Island, over half (54%) were White, 15% were Black, 3% were Asian, 2% were Native American, 18% were Some other race, and 8% were Two or more races.^{13,14}
- ◆ Between 2011 and 2015, 46% of Rhode Island's poor children were Hispanic. Hispanic children may be included in any race category. The Census Bureau asks about race separately from ethnicity, and the majority of families who identify as Some other race also identify as Hispanic.¹⁵
- ◆ In 2015, nearly one in five (19.4%) children in Rhode Island (a total of 40,566 children) lived in poverty.¹⁶

Rhode Island's Poor Children, 2011-2015

By Age

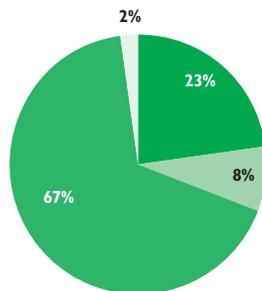
- 37% Ages 5 and Younger
- 32% Ages 6 to 11
- 15% Ages 12 to 14
- 16% Ages 15 to 17



n=43,282

By Family Structure

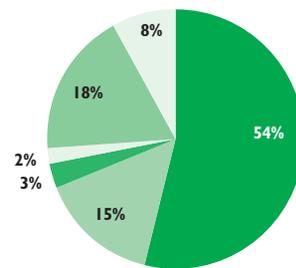
- 23% Married Couple Family
- 8% Unmarried Male Householder
- 67% Unmarried Female Householder
- 2% Not in Related-Family Household



n=43,282

By Race*

- 54% White
- 15% Black
- 3% Asian
- 2% Native American
- 18% Some Other Race
- 8% Two or More Races



n=43,282

*Hispanic children may be included in any race category. Between 2011 and 2015, 20,071 (46%) of Rhode Island's 43,282 poor children were Hispanic.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015. Tables S1701, B17001, B17006, B17020A, B17020B, B17020C, B17020D, B17020F, B17020G, & B17020I. Population includes children for whom poverty status was determined. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Child Poverty Concentrated in Four Core Cities, Rhode Island, 2011-2015

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER IN POVERTY	PERCENTAGE IN POVERTY	NUMBER IN EXTREME POVERTY	PERCENTAGE IN EXTREME POVERTY
Central Falls	2,324	41.9%	929	16.8%
Pawtucket	5,299	32.7%	2,493	15.4%
Providence	15,609	39.0%	7,303	18.2%
Woonsocket	3,649	40.8%	1,775	19.8%
Rhode Island	43,282	20.4%	19,432	9.2%

Source: Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2011-2015 American Community Survey data.

◆ Between 2011 and 2015, almost two-thirds (62%) of Rhode Island's children living in poverty lived in just four cities. These cities, termed core cities, include Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket, all communities in which more than one in four children live below poverty (38% between 2011-2015). The four core cities also have substantial numbers of children living in extreme poverty, defined as families with incomes below 50% of the federal poverty level, or \$9,669 for a family of three with two children and \$12,170 for a family of four with two children in 2016.^{17,18}

Young Children Under Age Six in Poverty, Four Core Cities and Rhode Island, 2011-2015

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER <AGE 6 IN POVERTY	PERCENTAGE <AGE 6 IN POVERTY
Central Falls	1,079	47.0%
Pawtucket	2,068	35.5%
Providence	5,308	40.3%
Woonsocket	1,553	47.6%
Rhode Island	16,045	24.3%

Source: Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2011-2015 American Community Survey data.

◆ Between 2011 and 2015, 24.3% (16,045) of Rhode Island children under age six lived in poverty.¹⁹ Children under age six are at higher risk of living in poverty than any other age group.²⁰ Exposure to risk factors associated with poverty, including inadequate nutrition, environmental toxins, crowded and unstable housing, maternal depression, trauma and abuse, lower quality child care, and parental substance abuse interferes with young children's emotional, physical, and intellectual development.^{21,22}

Children in Poverty

Financial Asset Building

- ◆ Having assets such as bank or credit union accounts provides families with a safe place to store their money and allows families to conduct basic financial transactions, manage financial emergencies related to unemployment or illness, and plan for their future.^{23,24}
- ◆ Many low-income families lack knowledge about or access to traditional banks and instead rely on cash transactions or alternative financial services, such as check-cashing stores, payday lenders, rent-to-own stores, and refund anticipation loans. These families pay high fees for financial transactions and high interest rates on loans, and often struggle to build credit histories and achieve economic security.^{25,26}
- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2013, 6.2% of households did not have a checking or savings account, compared to 7.7% for the U.S. as a whole. Nationally, households with incomes less than \$15,000 and households where Spanish is the only language spoken are less likely to have a checking or savings account. These households are more likely to use alternative financial services, such as money orders, cash checking services, or payday lenders.²⁷
- ◆ Raising awareness about the importance of saving and consumer protections, providing financial education and counseling, preventing predatory lending, and connecting families to safe and affordable financial products can support families in using traditional banking institutions and increase their savings.²⁸
- ◆ State and federal policies that protect families from predatory mortgage lending and payday lending and expand access to convenient, cost-effective, and safe financial services would allow families to keep more of their earnings, save and invest more, and could ultimately promote a more stable workforce and stronger communities.^{29,30,31}
- ◆ Many public assistance programs have eligibility provisions that limit the amount of assets and/or the value of vehicles a family can own. Such policies discourage families from saving and building the assets they need to improve their economic security.³²
- ◆ Rhode Island currently has a \$1,000 asset limit to qualify for and retain RI Works cash assistance and is one of only nine states with such a restrictive asset limit. Under Rhode Island law, the value of one vehicle for each adult household member (not to exceed two vehicles per household) does not count toward the family's asset limit.^{33,34}

Building Blocks of Economic Security

Income Supports

- ◆ The Supplemental Poverty Measure shows the positive impact of government programs, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Social Security, SNAP, and housing subsidies. These programs kept millions of children out of poverty.³⁵

Health Coverage and Access to Care

- ◆ Low-income people are the most likely to be uninsured; some because of job loss, some are ineligible for coverage through their employers because they work part-time, and other cannot afford the cost.³⁶ Children with health insurance (public or private) are more likely to have a regular and accessible source of health care than uninsured children.³⁷

Affordable Quality Child Care

- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2015, the average cost of center-based child care for one infant was \$12,091. Child care subsidies can help poor families afford high-quality child care, which can help parents maintain employment and support children's development.^{38,39}

Educational Attainment

- ◆ Fifty-two percent of Rhode Island children whose parents lack a high school diploma and 32% of those parents have only a high school diploma live in poverty.⁴⁰ By 2020, 71% of all jobs in Rhode Island will require postsecondary training beyond high school.⁴¹

Affordable Housing

- ◆ In 2016, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Rhode Island was \$1,288.⁴² In Rhode Island, a family of three with an income at the federal poverty level would need to spend 77% of its income on rent to pay this amount, well above the recommended percentage of 30%.^{43,44} Nationally, only one in four low-income eligible families receive rental assistance to help them afford the high cost of housing.⁴⁵

Child Support

- ◆ As of December 1, 2016, there were 73,797 children in Rhode Island's Office of Child Support Services system.⁴⁶ Child support helps reduce poverty. Custodial parents who receive steady child support payments are less likely to rely on public assistance and more likely to find work faster and stay employed longer than those who do not.⁴⁷ Among poor custodial parents that received full child support in 2015 in the U.S., these payments represented 67% of their mean personal income.⁴⁸

Table 10. Children Living Below the Federal Poverty Threshold, Rhode Island, 2000 and 2011-2015

CITY/TOWN	CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18 LIVING BELOW POVERTY 2011-2015					
	CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18 LIVING BELOW POVERTY, 2000		ESTIMATES WITH HIGH MARGINS OF ERROR*		ESTIMATES WITH LOWER, ACCEPTABLE MARGINS OF ERROR	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Barrington	127	2.7%			58	1.4%
Bristol	436	10.0%			252	7.3%
Burrillville	236	6.0%	374	11.7%		
Central Falls	2,210	40.9%	2,324	41.9%		
Charlestown	78	4.7%	398	26.6%		
Coventry	481	5.9%			715	10.8%
Cranston	1,496	9.1%			2,785	17.7%
Cumberland	237	3.1%			690	9.5%
East Greenwich	147	4.1%			191	5.8%
East Providence	1,126	10.8%			1,665	17.5%
Exeter	112	7.5%	102	8.5%		
Foster	32	2.9%	45	5.7%		
Glocester	178	6.7%			115	6.3%
Hopkinton	115	5.9%	99	7.4%		
Jamestown	17	1.4%	127	13.4%		
Johnston	527	9.0%			557	10.8%
Lincoln	329	6.5%			621	12.8%
Little Compton	8	1.0%	59	10.6%		
Middletown	264	6.2%			407	11.0%
Narragansett	235	8.6%			106	5.1%
New Shoreham	19	10.2%	11	9.2%		
Newport	1,267	24.4%	862	24.1%		
North Kingstown	663	9.7%			852	14.1%
North Providence	579	10.1%			620	11.7%
North Smithfield	72	3.0%			75	3.6%
Pawtucket	4,542	25.3%			5,299	32.7%
Portsmouth	118	2.8%			134	3.7%
Providence	18,045	40.5%			15,609	39.0%
Richmond	82	4.2%			62	3.5%
Scituate	113	4.3%	184	9.5%		
Smithfield	153	3.9%			35	1.0%
South Kingstown	324	5.3%			418	8.8%
Tiverton	92	2.8%			250	8.8%
Warren	205	8.4%	297	16.0%		
Warwick	1,243	6.7%			1,271	8.5%
West Greenwich	40	2.7%	-	-	-	-
West Warwick	1,186	18.1%	1,237	22.5%		
Westerly	534	10.0%	727	16.6%		
Woonsocket	3,494	31.8%	3,649	40.8%		
Four Core Cities	28,291	35.9%			26,881	38.0%
Remainder of State	12,871	7.8%			16,401	11.6%
Rhode Island	41,162	16.9%			43,282	20.4%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3, P87 and PCT.50 and Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2011-2015 American Community Survey data. The data include the poverty rate for all children for whom poverty was determined, including “related” children and “unrelated children” living in the household.

The American Community Survey is a sample survey, and therefore the number and percentage of children living in poverty provided are estimates, not actual counts. The reliability of these estimates varies by community. In general, estimates for small communities and communities with relatively low poverty rates are not as reliable as estimates for larger communities and communities with higher poverty rates.

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

The Margin of Error is a measure of the reliability of the estimate and is provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Margin of Error means that there is a 90 percent chance that the true value is no less than the estimate minus the Margin of Error and no more than the estimate plus the Margin of Error. (See the Methodology Section for Margins of Errors for all communities.)

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

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(continued on page 176)

Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance

DEFINITION

Children in families receiving cash assistance is the percentage of children under age 18 who were living in families receiving cash assistance through the Rhode Island Works Program (RI Works). These data measure the number of children and families enrolled in RI Works during the month of December. Children and families who participated in the program at other points in the year but who were not enrolled in that month are not included.

SIGNIFICANCE

The goal of the Rhode Island Works Program (RI Works) is to help very low-income families meet their basic needs by providing cash assistance and work supports, including employment services, SNAP benefits, health insurance, and subsidized child care. Children and families qualify for cash assistance based on their income, resources, and the number of people in their families.¹

RI Works cash assistance recipients must participate in an employment plan unless they meet specific criteria for an exemption. This employment plan must take into account the parent's skills, education, and family responsibilities as well as local employment opportunities and should outline a process for helping the parent meet his or her employment goals. Parents should be informed about

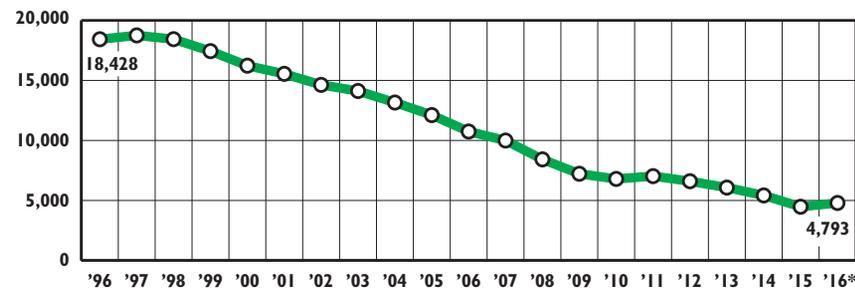
opportunities to seek additional education or training to improve their employability prospects.²

RI Works provides a safety net for some children whose parents are unable to work due to a disability and can function as an unemployment system for parents who do not have sufficient earnings or work experience to qualify for unemployment benefits. RI Works also provides time-limited supplementary cash assistance to very low-income working families.³ In December 2016, the average hourly wage of working parents enrolled in RI Works was \$11.72 per hour.⁴

RI Works connects families to the Office of Child Support Services, which assists families in establishing paternity (when applicable), identifying and locating non-custodial parents, and obtaining child support payments from non-custodial parents.⁵ In Rhode Island, the first \$50 of child support paid on time each month on behalf of a child enrolled in RI Works goes to the custodial parent caring for the child. The balance is shared by the state and federal governments as reimbursement for assistance received through RI Works.^{6,7}

The maximum monthly RI Works benefit for a family of three is \$554 per month.⁸ Families receiving the maximum monthly cash benefit have incomes that are less than one-half the federal poverty level and are living in extreme poverty.⁹

Cash Assistance Caseload, Rhode Island, 1996–2016*



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, December 1, 1996–2015 and RI Bridges Database, December 2016. Cases can be child-only or whole families and multiple people can be included in one case. *For 2016, the Rhode Island Department of Human Services provided enrollment for the month of December rather than December 1. Comparisons to earlier years should be made with caution.

◆ Since 1996, when the program began, the Rhode Island cash assistance caseload had been steadily declining. However, between 2015 and 2016, the caseload increased by 7%, from 4,479 to 4,793 families.¹⁰

◆ The RI Works caseload declined due to policies implemented in 2008, when the program changed from the Family Independence Program (FIP) to RI Works. These policies included new time limits (a 48-month lifetime limit for benefits and a periodic time limit that limits assistance to no more than 24 months of assistance in any 60-month period), closing child-only cases when parents reach their time limit, and limiting eligibility for legal permanent residents to those who have had that status for five years.¹¹

◆ The 2016 caseload increase may be due to efforts to address systems issues related to the difficult transition to the RI Bridges computer system and/or to the fact that the data represent a full month of enrollment rather a single day.¹²

◆ In December 2016, there were 3,456 adults and 8,960 children under age 18 enrolled in RI Works. Almost three-quarters (72%) of RI Works beneficiaries were children, and 41% of the children enrolled in RI Works were under the age of six.¹³

◆ High unemployment rates for adults with limited education, coupled with shorter time limits for cash assistance leaves many families with children experiencing deep poverty, hardship, and homelessness. In 2015, 15,981 children in Rhode Island lived in extreme poverty, yet only 8,960 received cash assistance in December 2016.^{14,15}

Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance

RI Works Policies

Work Requirements

◆ Single-parent families must participate in a work activity for a minimum of 20 hours per week if they have a child under age six and a minimum of 30 hours per week if their youngest child is age six or older. For two-parent families, one or both parents must participate in work activities for an individual or combined total of 35 hours per week.¹⁶

Time Limits

◆ The lifetime limit for RI Works is 48 months. Families also are limited to no more than 24 months of cash assistance in a 60-month period. All cash assistance issued in Rhode Island or any other state since May 1, 1997 counts toward the lifetime limit, while assistance received since July 1, 2008 counts toward the 24-month periodic time limit.¹⁷

Hardship Extensions

◆ Families can apply for hardship extensions that allow them to continue receiving cash assistance after reaching the time limit if the parent has a documented significant disability, is caring for a significantly disabled family member, is unable to pursue employment due to domestic violence, is homeless, or is unable to work because of “a critical other condition or circumstance.” While parents must submit requests for hardship extensions (initially for six months, and then for three-month extensions), there is no limit on the total time a family can receive a hardship extension.^{18,19}

Child-Only Cases

◆ Child-only cases are those that receive assistance for only the children in the family because the child’s parent is ineligible. Child-only cases include children living with a non-parent or a parent who is disabled and receiving Supplemental Security Income.²⁰

Sanctions

◆ If a parent misses a required appointment, refuses or quits a job, or in some other way fails to comply with an employment plan and is not able to establish “good cause” (e.g., lack of child care, illness, a family crisis or other allowed circumstance), the family’s cash benefit is reduced. If benefits are reduced for a total of three months (consecutive or not) due to non-compliance, the family’s case is closed and the entire family loses the RI Works benefit. Benefits can be restored in the month after the parent reapplies and comes into compliance.²¹

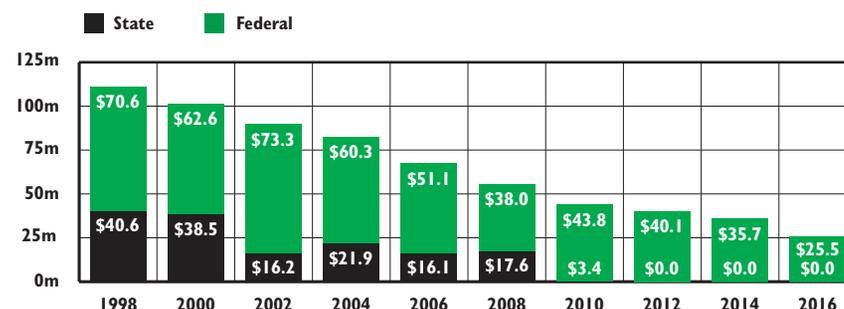
RI Works by Case Type, 2016

	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Child-only cases	1,788	37%
Cases with adults with a work activity	933	19%
Cases with adults exempt from a work activity*	733	15%
Unknown status	1,299	27%
Total RI Works Caseload	4,793	

Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, December 2016.

*RI Works regulations require that all parents and caretaker relatives included in the cash assistance grant participate in a work activity unless they receive a temporary exemption. Exemptions from work activities include: youngest child under age one (224), in third trimester of pregnancy (65), caring for a disabled spouse or child (5), being a victim of domestic violence (14), illness or incapacity (364), or second parent is a non-participant (101). Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Rhode Island Cash Assistance Expenditures, State Fiscal Years 1998-2016



Sources: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, *Family Independence Program 2007 annual report*. (FY 1998-2000); House Fiscal Advisory Staff. (2004-2016). Budget as enacted: Fiscal Years 2005-2017. (FY 2002-2016). Fiscal years 1996-2014 are funds spent and FY 2016 is final budget.

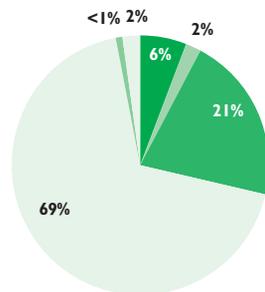
◆ In State Fiscal Year 2016, for the seventh year in a row, no state general revenue was allocated for cash assistance. State general revenue spending for cash assistance has decreased steadily over the past 18 years. The cash assistance program is now entirely supported by federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds. The total expenditures for cash assistance in Rhode Island (federal and state) decreased by 80% between 1996 (when the program began) and 2016, from \$126.5 million to \$25.5 million.^{22,23}

Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance

Activities of Families Enrolled in the RI Works Program, December 2016

By Type of Activity

6% (53)	Employed
2% (22)	Work Experience
21% (192)	Education/Training
69% (647)	Job Search/Job Readiness
<1% (2)	Youth Success
2% (17)	Undetermined



n=933

Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, December 2016. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

◆ As of December 2016, 6% of families with work activities were employed, down from 38% in December 2007. An additional 2% were in unpaid work experience.^{24,25} Work experience can help parents gain new skills, knowledge, and work habits to improve their employability.²⁶

◆ Parents with very limited literacy or English-language skills can participate in basic education and work skills programs. Parents also can receive up to one year of vocational education as part of their 48-month lifetime limit.²⁷ As of December 2016, 21% of families were participating in education or training programs.²⁸

◆ More than two-thirds (69%) of families with a work activity were participating in job search/job readiness activities, including job search and job skills development programs delivered in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, primarily through their netWORKri one-stop career center locations, vocational rehabilitation services delivered by the Office of Rehabilitation Services, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and housing and homelessness services needed to address barriers to employment.^{29,30}

◆ An additional 2% of families were in an undetermined work activity or in the Youth Success Program, a program for young parents.³¹

Support for Young Parents

◆ A child is nine times more likely to grow up in poverty if that child's mother gave birth as a teen, the parents were unmarried when the child was born, and the mother did not receive a high school diploma or GED.³²

◆ RI Works provides additional support to young parents. Parents who are under age 20 and do not have a high school diploma or GED receive mandatory parenting skills training and are supported in completing their high school education while enrolled in RI Works. In addition, pregnant, or parenting teens under age 18 are required to live with their parent, legal guardian, or adult relative or in an adult-supervised setting if it is not possible to live at home.³³

◆ In December 2016, there were 143 families with a head of household under the age of 20 enrolled in RI Works, representing 3% of the total caseload.³⁴

Support for Individuals with Disabilities and Their Families

◆ Nationally, more than one-quarter (27%) of cash assistance recipients have a physical, mental, or emotional problem that keeps them from working or limits the type or amount of work they can do, compared to 6% of all low-income single mothers.³⁵

◆ Under RI Works, parents with disabilities may be exempt from work requirements only if they are receiving SSI or SSDI or determined to be eligible for SSI or SSDI. Other parents with disabilities are referred to the Office of Rehabilitation Services for further assessment, vocational rehabilitation services, and help applying for SSI.³⁶

◆ In December 2016, 650 families (or 14% of the total RI Works caseload) had hardship extensions, 23 for a physical or mental disability, two to care for a disabled family member, four who were unable to work due to a domestic violence situation, and 621 because of economic hardship or another critical condition or circumstance.³⁷ Nationally, many families leave cash assistance not because they find work, but because they reach their time limit or are sanctioned. These families often have barriers to employment, such as a mental or physical impairment, or a child with a disability.³⁸

Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance

Table 11. Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance (RI Works), Rhode Island, December 2016

CITY/TOWN	# OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18	NUMBER RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE		% OF CHILDREN RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE
		FAMILIES	CHILDREN	
Barrington	4,597	5	7	<1%
Bristol	3,623	22	45	1%
Burrillville	3,576	21	33	1%
Central Falls	5,644	239	459	8%
Charlestown	1,506	6	8	<1%
Coventry	7,770	59	108	1%
Cranston	16,414	202	329	2%
Cumberland	7,535	65	114	2%
East Greenwich	3,436	13	23	1%
East Providence	9,177	121	223	2%
Exeter	1,334	5	11	1%
Foster	986	6	10	1%
Glocester	2,098	7	13	<1%
Hopkinton	1,845	8	14	<1%
Jamestown	1,043	5	10	<1%
Johnston	5,480	68	111	2%
Lincoln	4,751	50	84	2%
Little Compton	654	2	3	<1%
Middletown	3,652	47	82	2%
Narragansett	2,269	7	15	1%
New Shoreham	163	0	0	0%
Newport	4,083	161	297	7%
North Kingstown	6,322	36	75	1%
North Providence	5,514	63	96	2%
North Smithfield	2,456	11	16	1%
Pawtucket	16,575	527	959	6%
Portsmouth	3,996	23	28	1%
Providence	41,634	1,950	3,891	9%
Richmond	1,849	4	5	<1%
Scituate	2,272	5	9	<1%
Smithfield	3,625	15	22	<1%
South Kingstown	5,416	24	41	<1%
Tiverton	2,998	33	62	2%
Warren	1,940	14	18	<1%
Warwick	15,825	224	374	<2%
West Greenwich	1,477	2	1	<1%
West Warwick	5,746	172	292	5%
Westerly	4,787	36	64	1%
Woonsocket	9,888	512	966	10%
Other/Unknown	NA	23	42	NA
Four Core Cities	73,741	3,228	6,275	9%
Remainder of State	150,215	1,542	2,643	2%
Rhode Island	223,956	4,793	8,960	4%

Education and Training Supporting Employment

◆ An estimated 150,000 working-age adults (ages 16 or older) in Rhode Island are not enrolled in school and have no high school diploma or have limited English-language skills. Many face both of these obstacles to success in the labor market.³⁹

◆ By 2020, 71% of jobs in Rhode Island will require post-secondary education beyond high school.⁴⁰ Between 2011 and 2015, the unemployment rate for Rhode Islanders without high school diplomas was 14.6%, compared to 10.3% for those with high school degrees and 3.6% for those with a Bachelor's degree or higher.⁴¹

◆ Parents enrolled in RI Works face significant barriers to success in the labor market. Thirty-three percent of parents enrolled in RI Works report not finishing high school.⁴² Among a recently tested group of parents receiving cash assistance, more than one-third (39%) of those tested in English tested at or below the sixth-grade reading level, while two-thirds (68%) of native Spanish speakers enrolled in RI Works tested at or below the sixth-grade reading level on a Spanish-language version of the test.⁴³

◆ Research comparing mandatory job-search-first and mandatory education-or-training-first programs has found that the most effective approach is a mixed strategy where beneficiaries are encouraged to look for and take full-time jobs that pay above the minimum wage, offer benefits, have the potential for advancement, and also are offered high-quality, work-focused, and short-term education or training to improve their employability.⁴⁴ States should explore how to meet their work participation rate while offering beneficiaries a chance to improve job skills and long-term work preparedness.⁴⁵

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, December 2016. The Rhode Island Department of Human Services changed the method for calculating the caseload and persons receiving cash assistance starting in the 2012 Factbook. Comparisons to data presented in previous Factbooks should be made with caution.

The denominator is the total number of children under age 18 from U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010, Summary File 1.

Communities may have more families than children receiving cash assistance because a pregnant woman without children is eligible if in the final trimester of her pregnancy.

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

References

^{1,2,3,5,8,16,17,18,20,21,26,30,33,36} Rhode Island Department of Human Services. (2016). *Rhode Island Department of Human Services Code of Rules: RI Works Program (Policy #1400)*. Retrieved February 24, 2017, from www.policy.dhs.ri.gov

(continued on page 177)

Children Receiving SNAP Benefits

DEFINITION

Children receiving SNAP benefits is the number of children under age 18 who participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in October 2016.

SIGNIFICANCE

Hunger and lack of regular access to sufficient food are linked to serious physical, psychological, emotional, and academic problems in children and can interfere with their growth and development.¹² The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp Program, helps low-income individuals and families obtain better nutrition through monthly benefits they can use to purchase food at retail stores and some farmers' markets.³ Receiving SNAP benefits for at least four months has been shown to cut in half the probability of child food insecurity.⁴

Nationally, SNAP is available to households with gross incomes below 130% of the federal poverty level, net incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level, and no more than \$2,250 in resources.⁵ In 2009, Rhode Island implemented expanded categorical eligibility, an option encouraged by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which allowed Rhode Island to increase the gross income limit and remove the resource limit for most

applicants.⁶⁷ The gross income limit for Rhode Island is now 185% of the federal poverty level (\$37,296 per year for a family of three in 2016).^{8,9}

Households must still meet the net income limit of 100% of the federal poverty level after allowable deductions, which include deductions for housing costs and child care.¹⁰

SNAP is an important anti-hunger program that helps individuals and families purchase food when they have limited income, face unemployment or reduced work hours, or experience a crisis.¹¹ In the U.S., more than 80% of SNAP recipients have gross incomes at or below the federal poverty level (\$20,160 for a family of three in 2016) with almost all of the rest having incomes between 101% and 130% of the poverty level. About 40% of SNAP households have incomes below half of the federal poverty level (\$10,080) for a family of three in 2016).^{12,13} In 2016, the average monthly SNAP benefit for a family of three in Rhode Island was \$373.¹⁴

Participation in SNAP has been associated with improved health outcomes among low-income or food insecure children, and has been linked to lower risk of adverse outcomes such as nutritional deficiency, hospitalization and poor nutrition.¹⁵ SNAP also is a quick and effective form of economic stimulus because it moves money directly into the local economy.¹⁶

Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Children and Adults, Rhode Island, 2007-2016



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, 2007–2016. Data represent children under age 18 and adults who participated in SNAP during the month of October.

◆ Of the 179,114 Rhode Islanders enrolled in SNAP in October 2016, 66% were adults and 34% were children. More than one-third (34%) of the children enrolled in SNAP were under the age of six.¹⁷

◆ From 2008 to 2012, the number of Rhode Islanders receiving SNAP benefits increased steadily. The number of children and adults receiving SNAP benefits then decreased slowly, until increasing in 2016.¹⁸ It is possible that the recent increase is due to efforts to avoid denying eligible SNAP recipients during the difficult transition to the RI Bridges computer system.¹⁹

Food Insecurity in Rhode Island

◆ The USDA defines food insecurity as not always having access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Between 2013 and 2015, 11.8% of Rhode Island households and 13.7% of U.S. households were food insecure. In 2015, 16.6% of all U.S. households with children were food insecure, while 42.9% of U.S. households with children with incomes below the poverty level experienced food insecurity.²⁰

◆ Five federal nutrition programs provide nutrition assistance to children and families, including SNAP, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, and the Summer Food Service Program.²¹ In 2016, food pantries and soup kitchens provided emergency food assistance to an average of 59,000 Rhode Islanders each month who needed additional help to meet their nutritional needs.²²

Children Receiving SNAP Benefits

Table 12. Children Under Age 18 Receiving SNAP Benefits, Rhode Island, October 2016

SNAP Participation in Rhode Island

◆ Over the past decade, Rhode Island has implemented a number of strategies to improve access to SNAP benefits, including implementing “expanded categorical eligibility” so more families qualify, developing an online SNAP application, conducting telephone interviews so applicants do not need to apply in person, requiring less frequent recertification, and implementing same-day SNAP processing when possible.^{23,24,25,26}

◆ Rhode Island could increase access to SNAP benefits for children and families by ensuring adequate staffing in field offices, reducing wait times, allowing for a variety of application processes (i.e., internet, phone, in person), reducing documentation requirements, simplifying renewal processes, improving communications with clients and community partners, providing additional staff training, and seeking recommendations for system improvements from line staff.^{27,28}

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER PARTICIPATING IN 2016
Barrington	109
Bristol	421
Burrillville	424
Central Falls	3,441
Charlestown	175
Coventry	963
Cranston	3,242
Cumberland	813
East Greenwich	212
East Providence	1,983
Exeter	79
Foster	107
Glocester	121
Hopkinton	198
Jamestown	46
Johnston	1,022
Lincoln	687
Little Compton	44
Middletown	495
Narragansett	202
New Shoreham	9
Newport	1,522
North Kingstown	865
North Providence	1,161
North Smithfield	206
Pawtucket	7,174
Portsmouth	249
Providence	22,823
Richmond	63
Scituate	171
Smithfield	238
South Kingstown	575
Tiverton	419
Warren	352
Warwick	2,594
West Greenwich	70
West Warwick	1,823
Westerly	878
Woonsocket	4,998
Unknown	129
Four Core Cities	38,436
Remainder of State	22,538
Rhode Island	61,103

Note to Table

In 2008, the Food Stamp Program was renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) data are from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, October 2016.

Due to changes in the availability of data, we report participation for the entire month of October, rather than October 1 in this Factbook. Due to this change in methodology, *Children Receiving SNAP Benefits* cannot be compared with prior Factbooks.

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

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Women and Children Participating in WIC

DEFINITION

Women and children participating in WIC is the percentage of eligible women, infants, and children enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

SIGNIFICANCE

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a federally-funded preventive program that provides participants with nutritious food, nutrition education, and access to health care and social services. WIC serves pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children under five years of age with household incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. Any individual who participates in SNAP (formerly the Food Stamp Program), RIte Care, Medicaid, or Rhode Island Works, or is a member of a family in which a pregnant woman or an infant receives Medicaid benefits, is automatically income-eligible for WIC. Participants also must have a specified nutritional risk, such as anemia, high-risk pregnancy, or abnormal growth, or be in need of supplemental food to qualify.¹²

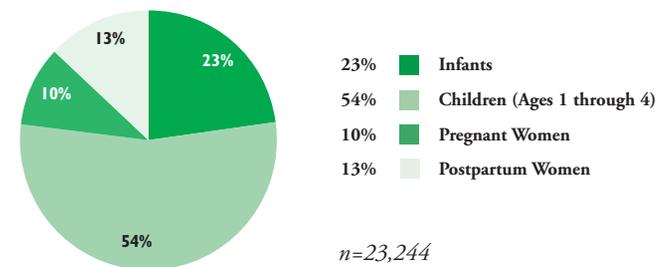
Compared to children who receive WIC benefits, young children who are eligible for WIC but not participating are more likely to be in poor health, at

risk for developmental delays, underweight, short for their age, and/or experience food insecurity (i.e., live in families that do not always have enough food for an active healthy life).³ Food insecurity in early childhood can lead to impaired cognitive, behavioral, and psychosocial development, and can limit academic achievement.⁴ Pregnant women also have special nutritional needs that influence pregnancy outcomes and the health of their children.⁵

WIC participation has been shown to reduce infant mortality, improve birth outcomes (including reducing the likelihood of low birthweight and prematurity), enhance maternal and child dietary intake, reduce child abuse and neglect risk, improve child growth rates, boost cognitive development, and increase the likelihood of having a regular source of medical care.^{6,7}

Recent revisions to the WIC food package have increased access to a wider variety of nutritious foods and strengthened breastfeeding support.⁸ WIC consistently promotes breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding.⁹ Seventy-six percent of mothers participating in WIC in Rhode Island in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016 initiated breastfeeding. Eighteen percent of infants participating in WIC were breastfed at three months of age and 10% were breastfed at six months of age.¹⁰

Women, Infants, and Children Enrolled in WIC, Rhode Island, September 2016



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, WIC Program, September 2016.

- ◆ **Infants and children ages one through four comprised more than three-quarters (77%) of the population being served by WIC in September 2016 in Rhode Island. Women accounted for over one-fifth (10% pregnant and 13% postpartum) of the population being served.**¹¹
- ◆ **In September 2016, 70% of WIC participants in Rhode Island were White, 16% were Black or African-American, 3% were Asian, and 10% identified as other races or more than one race. Forty-eight percent of WIC participants identified as Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics are included in the racial groups above.**¹²
- ◆ **The four core cities - Central Falls (65%), Pawtucket (56%), Providence (63%), and Woonsocket (57%) - had WIC participation rates exceeding the statewide enrollment rate of 54% in 2016, but there are thousands of eligible families who are not enrolled.**¹³
- ◆ **WIC is not an entitlement program. Congress determines funding annually and WIC is not funded at a level that is sufficient to serve all eligible women and children in Rhode Island.**^{14,15} Rhode Island received \$23.3 million in federal WIC funding during FFY 2016.¹⁶
- ◆ **The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) improves participants' intake of fresh fruits and vegetables by enabling participants to purchase produce at authorized local farmers' markets using WIC benefits.**¹⁷ In Rhode Island, 29 farmers' markets provided fresh produce to 12,690 WIC participants during the FMNP in FFY 2016.¹⁸

Women and Children Participating in WIC

Table 13.

Women, Infants and Children Enrolled in WIC, Rhode Island, September 2016

CITY/TOWN	ESTIMATED NUMBER ELIGIBLE	NUMBER PARTICIPATING	% OF ELIGIBLE PARTICIPATING
Barrington	148	41	28%
Bristol	435	191	44%
Burrillville	416	186	45%
Central Falls	2,046	1,322	65%
Charlestown	133	59	44%
Coventry	775	372	48%
Cranston	2,667	1,508	57%
Cumberland	651	233	36%
East Greenwich	150	49	33%
East Providence	1,551	729	47%
Exeter	116	41	35%
Foster	116	27	23%
Glocester	142	43	30%
Hopkinton	222	67	30%
Jamestown	33	5	15%
Johnston	896	421	47%
Lincoln	507	249	49%
Little Compton	51	12	24%
Middletown	396	193	49%
Narragansett	170	70	41%
New Shoreham	44	5	11%
Newport	923	527	57%
North Kingstown	632	244	39%
North Providence	1,007	487	48%
North Smithfield	223	94	42%
Pawtucket	4,838	2,718	56%
Portsmouth	258	110	43%
Providence	14,135	8,897	63%
Richmond	96	90	94%
Scituate	193	49	25%
Smithfield	308	96	31%
South Kingstown	511	176	34%
Tiverton	341	143	42%
Warren	300	122	41%
Warwick	2,169	877	40%
West Greenwich	83	53	64%
West Warwick	1,403	598	43%
Westerly	710	339	48%
Woonsocket	3,156	1,801	57%
Four Core Cities	24,175	14,738	61%
Remainder of State	18,776	8,506	45%
Rhode Island	42,951	23,244	54%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, WIC Program, September 30, 2016.

Note: WIC participation rates in this Factbook can be compared to all Factbooks, with the exception of the 2011 Factbook, which used a July rather than September 30 reference date. Additionally, since 2007, the “estimated number eligible” is based on calculations done by the Rhode Island Department of Health to determine the number of pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children under age five who live in families with an income less than 185% of the federal poverty level. In previous years, the “estimated number eligible” was based on 2000 Census data (2005 and 2006 Factbooks) and 1990 Census data (all Factbooks prior to 2005).

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

References

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Children Participating in School Breakfast

DEFINITION

Children participating in school breakfast is the percentage of low-income children who participate in the School Breakfast Program. Children are counted as low-income if they are eligible for and enrolled in the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program.

SIGNIFICANCE

The School Breakfast Program helps ensure that the nation's most vulnerable children start their day off with a healthy meal. During the 2015-2016 school year, 12.1 million low-income children in the U.S. participating in the School Breakfast Program ate breakfast at school each day, continuing a pattern of steady year-over-year growth in student participation over the past decade.¹ The School Breakfast Program offers nutritious meals, which together with school lunches, make up a large proportion of the daily dietary intake of participating children.² The School Breakfast Program helps schools support academic success and improved attendance, behavior and health, including reduced obesity rates.³

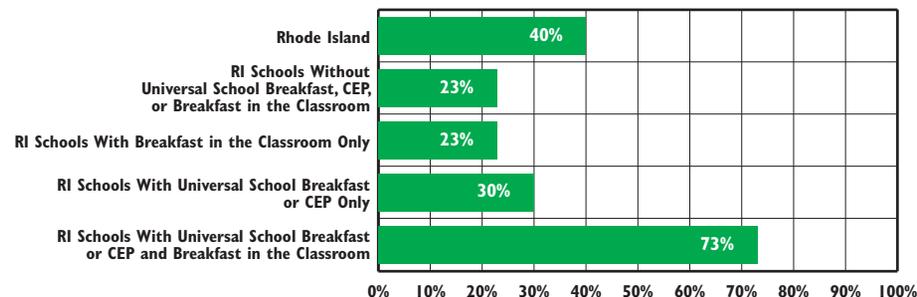
Food-insecure families often do not have sufficient food to provide nutritious breakfasts every morning, and children in these families are at risk of falling behind their peers physically, cognitively, academically, emotionally, and socially. Children who are

undernourished are more likely to have poorer cognitive functioning when they miss breakfast. They are more likely to have behavior, emotional, and academic problems, more likely to repeat a grade, and more likely to be suspended.^{4,5} Nationally, kindergarteners in households experiencing food insecurity are more likely to be chronically absent than their peers in food-secure households.⁶

Rhode Island law requires that all public schools make breakfasts and lunches available to all students, including students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on their income (less than 130% of the federal poverty level for free meals and between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty level for reduced-price meals).^{7,8}

During the 2015-2016 school year in Rhode Island, 51 low-income students participated in the School Breakfast Program for every 100 low-income students who participated in the School Lunch Program. Rhode Island ranks 33rd in the U.S. for participation in the School Breakfast Program, down from 30th last year. If Rhode Island increased low-income student participation in the School Breakfast Program from 50% to 70% of School Lunch Program participation, the state would receive \$2.8 million in additional federal funds to support the School Breakfast Program.⁹

Low-Income Children Participating in the School Breakfast Program, Rhode Island, October 2016



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of School Food Services, Office of Statewide Efficiencies, October 2016.

- ◆ **Universal School Breakfast Programs, which provide free breakfast to all children regardless of income, increase school breakfast participation by removing the stigma often associated with school breakfast and can reduce the administrative burden for schools.^{10,11} The federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows schools and districts with 40% or more students identified as low-income or at-risk (i.e., homeless or in foster care) to provide free meals to all students and offers higher reimbursements. During the 2015-2016 school year, ten of the 96 eligible schools in Rhode Island were using CEP.¹² During the 2016-2017 school year, all schools in Central Falls, Cranston, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket, selected schools in three other districts, ten charter schools, and the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center and Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program offered universal school breakfast or CEP.¹³**
- ◆ **Making breakfast part of the school day is another proven strategy for increasing breakfast participation, reducing stigma, and increasing convenience. Some states have passed legislation requiring "breakfast after the bell."^{14,15} During the 2016-2017 school year, several Rhode Island districts offered breakfast in the classroom, "grab and go" breakfasts, bagged breakfasts, or breakfast on a cart in all or some of their schools.¹⁶**
- ◆ **During the summer, many low-income children lose access to the free and reduced-price meals they rely on during the school year. In Rhode Island, 20% of the children who participated in the School Lunch Program during the 2014-2015 school year participated in the 2015 Summer Nutrition Programs. During July 2015, 193,940 lunches were served through Summer Nutrition Programs, an 18% increase over the previous year.¹⁷**

Children Participating in School Breakfast

Table 14.

Children Participating in School Breakfast, Rhode Island, October 2016

SCHOOL DISTRICT	OCTOBER 2016 ENROLLMENT	ESTIMATED AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	% OF ALL CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN BREAKFAST	# OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS	ESTIMATED LOW-INCOME AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	% OF ALL LOW-INCOME CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL BREAKFAST
Barrington	3,355	42	1%	196	16	8%
Bristol Warren	3,218	206	6%	1,048	164	16%
Burrillville	2,341	144	6%	789	112	14%
Central Falls**	2,589	1,419	55%	2,105	1,419	67%
Charlho	3,270	270	8%	612	175	29%
Coventry	4,713	443	9%	1,546	364	24%
Cranston**	10,415	2,689	26%	3,859	1,654	43%
Cumberland	4,568	448	10%	1,033	325	31%
East Greenwich	2,504	59	2%	146	39	27%
East Providence	5,238	1,166	22%	2,909	820	28%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,654	85	5%	219	47	21%
Foster	265	22	8%	49	*	18%
Foster-Glocester	1,147	69	6%	193	37	19%
Glocester	547	44	8%	72	27	38%
Jamestown	488	22	5%	50	11	22%
Johnston	3,190	351	11%	1,503	291	19%
Lincoln	3,002	244	8%	758	209	28%
Little Compton	246	0	<1%	29	0	<1%
Middletown	2,191	162	7%	719	131	18%
Narragansett	1,326	86	6%	259	56	22%
New Shoreham	120	18	15%	21	11	52%
Newport	2,198	399	18%	1,430	381	27%
North Kingstown	4,047	338	8%	885	273	31%
North Providence	3,493	614	18%	1,483	373	26%
North Smithfield	1,707	90	5%	294	57	19%
Pawtucket**	8,984	2,165	24%	6,234	1,744	28%
Portsmouth	2,464	95	4%	348	57	16%
Providence**	23,983	12,710	53%	20,719	11,915	58%
Scituate	1,305	36	3%	232	23	10%
Smithfield	2,384	93	4%	337	50	15%
South Kingstown	3,111	183	6%	524	160	31%
Tiverton	1,841	107	6%	583	83	14%
Warwick	9,124	591	6%	3,394	481	14%
West Warwick	3,474	546	16%	1,693	480	28%
Westerly	2,865	336	12%	935	296	32%
Woonsocket**	5,863	2,614	45%	4,268	2,116	50%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>7,024</i>	<i>3,114</i>	<i>44%</i>	<i>4,726</i>	<i>2,338</i>	<i>49%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,746</i>	<i>380</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>1,188</i>	<i>350</i>	<i>25%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>41,419</i>	<i>18,907</i>	<i>46%</i>	<i>33,326</i>	<i>17,193</i>	<i>52%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>91,811</i>	<i>9,998</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>28,148</i>	<i>7,212</i>	<i>26%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>142,142</i>	<i>32,505</i>	<i>23%</i>	<i>67,523</i>	<i>27,228</i>	<i>40%</i>

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, October 2016.

*Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

**These districts offer Universal School Breakfast or participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in all of their schools.

Charter schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, RI Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, South Side Elementary Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and The Village Green Virtual Charter School. State-operated schools include William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, and Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center.

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

The October 2016 enrollment and number of low-income students come from RIDE's official October 1 enrollment census. Data are not comparable to Factbooks prior to 2011.

"Estimated Average Daily Participation in Breakfast" is the average number of students who ate breakfast in school per school day during October 2016. "Estimated Low-Income Average Daily Participation in Breakfast" is the average number of students eligible for and enrolled in free or reduced-price meals who ate breakfast in school per school day during October 2016.

Children are counted as low-income if they are eligible for a Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program. To participate in the Reduced-Price Breakfast Program, students' household income must fall between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty guideline. For the Free Breakfast Program, household income must fall below 130% of the federal poverty guideline. Children in foster care, households receiving SNAP benefits and households participating in the Rhode Island Works Program are automatically eligible for free meals.

References are on page 177.