

Children Enrolled in Head Start

DEFINITION

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

SIGNIFICANCE

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

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

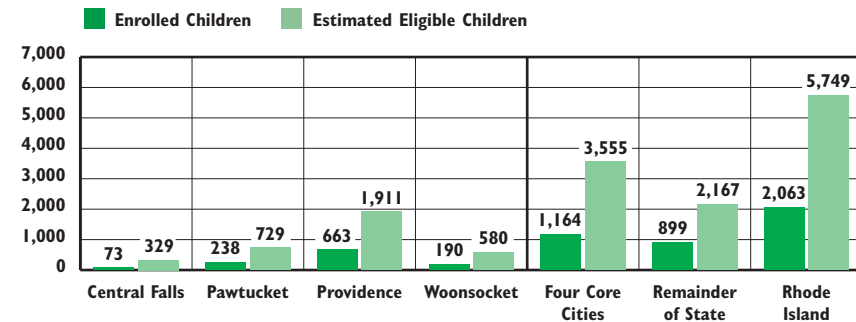
On average, Head Start centers are higher quality than many other early care and education programs available.⁴

Head Start also has been found to be more effective than many other early learning programs.⁵ Children who participate in Head Start show improvements in language and literacy skills. However, those improvements may no longer be discernible at the end of third grade. Researchers suggest that early elementary “fade out” may be related to other low-income children who did not attend preschool “catching up” in the early grades or stagnation associated with attending low-quality elementary schools.^{6,7,8,9}

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

As of October 2016, there were 2,063 children enrolled in Head Start and 339 eligible children on the waiting list.¹¹ Rhode Island Head Start programs served significant numbers of children with high needs including 236 preschool children with developmental delays or disabilities (11% of all children enrolled), 32 children who were in foster care, and 56 children who were homeless. Sixteen percent of children enrolled in Rhode Island Head Start programs were also participating in the Child Care Assistance Program.¹²

Access to Head Start for Children in Poverty, Rhode Island, 2016

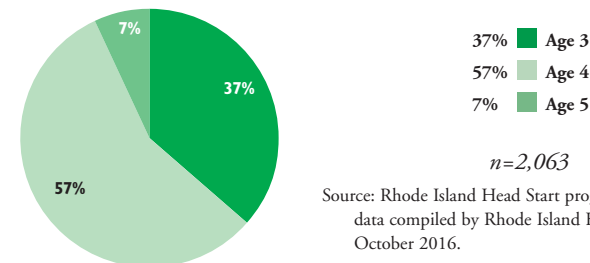


Source: Rhode Island Head Start program enrollment data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2016. Estimated eligible children is the number of children ages three and four according to Census 2010 multiplied by the % of children under age six living in families with incomes below the federal poverty line (FPL) according to the Population Reference Bureau’s analysis of 2011–2015 American Community Survey data.

◆ **Head Start is not funded at a level to serve all eligible children and all Rhode Island Head Start programs maintain active waiting lists of eligible children. In October 2016, Rhode Island Head Start programs served 2,063 children, 36% of the estimated 5,749 income-eligible three- and four-year old children and 9% of all children ages three and four.**^{13,14}

◆ **In the four core cities, 33% of the estimated eligible children were enrolled in Head Start, compared with 41% in the remainder of the state. The estimated percentage of eligible children enrolled in Head Start for each core city is: Central Falls – 22%, Pawtucket – 33%, Providence – 35%, and Woonsocket – 33%.**^{15,16}

Children Enrolled in Head Start by Age, Rhode Island, 2016



Source: Rhode Island Head Start program enrollment data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2016.

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Table 39.

Children Enrolled in Head Start, Rhode Island, 2016

CITY/TOWN	ALL CHILDREN AGES 3 & 4	% CHILDREN <AGE 6 IN POVERTY	ESTIMATED ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AGES 3 & 4 IN POVERTY	# OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HEAD START	ESTIMATED % OF ALL CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HEAD START	ESTIMATED % OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HEAD START
Barrington	369	1.0%	4	4	1%	108%
Bristol	401	2.3%	9	30	7%	325%
Burrillville	321	9.1%*	29	19	6%	65%
Central Falls	699	47.0%*	329	73	10%	22%
Charlestown	153	38.0%***	58	5	3%	9%
Coventry	734	25.7%**	189	54	7%	29%
Cranston	1,684	18.8%*	317	182	11%	57%
Cumberland	810	8.9%*	72	4	<1%	6%
East Greenwich	277	10.8%**	30	1	<1%	3%
East Providence	982	23.8%*	234	47	5%	20%
Exeter	105	NA	NA	1	1%	NA
Foster	99	7.9%**	8	1	1%	13%
Glocester	191	13.5%**	26	3	2%	12%
Hopkinton	167	14.8%***	25	4	2%	16%
Jamestown	102	NA	NA	0	0%	NA
Johnston	528	13.0%*	69	40	8%	58%
Lincoln	412	17.3%*	71	4	1%	6%
Little Compton	49	26.7%***	13	0	0%	0%
Middletown	431	14.8%*	64	37	9%	58%
Narragansett	210	9.8%**	21	2	1%	10%
New Shoreham	15	10.0%***	2	0	0%	0%
Newport	514	21.2%*	109	58	11%	53%
North Kingstown	593	21.6%**	128	17	3%	13%
North Providence	575	14.9%*	86	60	10%	70%
North Smithfield	218	3.9%*	9	1	<1%	12%
Pawtucket	2,053	35.5%*	729	238	12%	33%
Portsmouth	359	1.6%	6	5	1%	87%
Providence	4,743	40.3%*	1,911	663	14%	35%
Richmond	190	10.6%***	20	1	1%	5%
Scituate	197	11.0%***	22	2	1%	9%
Smithfield	343	NA	NA	6	2%	NA
South Kingstown	504	14.5%**	73	13	3%	18%
Tiverton	287	10.9%*	31	15	5%	48%
Warren	240	13.7%**	33	15	6%	46%
Warwick	1,579	8.6%	136	135	9%	99%
West Greenwich	115	NA	NA	2	2%	NA
West Warwick	703	25.1%**	176	98	14%	56%
Westerly	490	14.1%**	69	33	7%	48%
Woonsocket	1,218	47.6%*	580	190	16%	33%
Four Core Cities	8,713	40.8%	3,555	1,164	13%	33%
Remainder of State	14,947	14.5%	2,167	899	6%	41%
Rhode Island	23,660	24.3%	5,749	2,063	9%	36%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Head Start Programs, all children enrolled (ages three to five) as of October 2016. Children enrolled are listed by residence of child, not location of the Head Start program.

The estimated number of children ages three and four in each community is from Census 2010, Summary File 1. Estimated eligible children is the number of children ages three and four according to Census 2010 multiplied by the % of children under age six living in families with incomes below the federal poverty line (FPL) according to the Population Reference Bureau's (PRB) analysis of 2011-2015 American Community Survey data. Estimated eligible children for the four core cities, remainder of state, and Rhode Island is calculated using PRB estimates for those groupings and is not a sum of estimates by community.

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

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

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

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

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

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

References

- ^{1,46} Barnett, S. W. & Friedman-Krauss, A. H. (2016). *State(s) of Head Start*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.
- ² Mohan, A. & Walker, C. (2016). *Head Start participants, programs, families and staff in 2014*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.
- ³ Klein, L. & Knitzer, J. (2007). *Promoting effective early learning: What every policymaker and educator should know*. New York, NY: Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, National Center for Children in Poverty.

(continued on page 186)