

Economic Well-Being

Chyrel of the Light

by Max Chartier

Chyrel turned the light on again.
She couldn't sleep.
The light bounced from wall to wall,
Glistening like a crystal in the ruff. The light was like a fragile
egg on a rocky cliff,
Daring to fall,
But shying away last second.
Chyrel loved the light.
She thought of it like a diamond that lit up any shadow it touched.
As the light dims,
Chyrel's mind calms.
As the light dies out,
Chyrel rests her head down till the morning light.
Then she was renewed as if she was light,
As if she was light,
As if she was light.



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 2022, the median family income for Rhode Island families with their own children was \$96,190.¹

Between 2018 and 2022, in Rhode Island, the median family income for married two-parent families (\$119,934) was twice that of male-headed single-parent families (\$55,671) and more than three times that of female-headed single-parent families (\$35,779).²

Rhode Island's unemployment rate fell back to the pre COVID-19 rate of 3.5% in 2022, and decreased further to 3.3% in 2023. Rhode Island continues to have gaps in unemployment rates by race and ethnicity. In 2023, the unemployment rate was 6.5% for Hispanic workers, 5.1% for Black workers, and 2.9% for white workers.^{3,4}

Even when Rhode Island's unemployment rate is low, many workers are unable to find full-time work and struggle to make ends meet with inadequate and unpredictable income. In 2018, more than 22 million people in the U.S. worked in low-wage jobs (less than \$12 per hour), and job losses during the pandemic disproportionately affected low-wage workers.^{5,6,7} Conditions at low-wage jobs, such as unstable and inadequate 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 for their children.⁸

In the U.S., income inequality has grown substantially since the 1970s.⁹ In 2018 in Rhode Island, the top 1% of households held almost 17% of total income. Rhode Island has the 32nd highest income inequality of the 50 states based on the share of income held by the top 1% of households.¹⁰

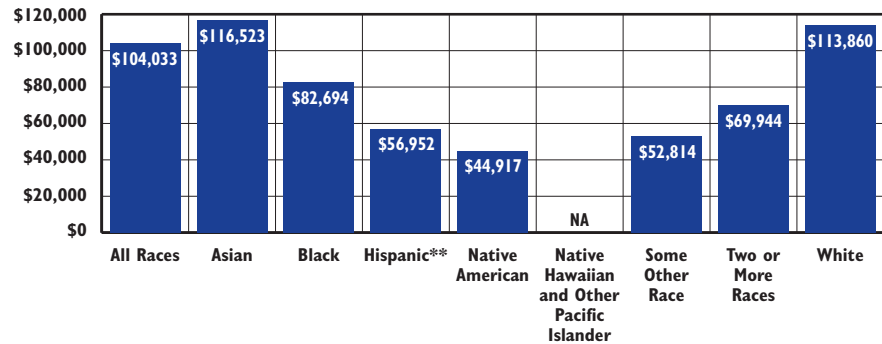
Median Family Income	
	2022
RI	\$104,400
US	\$91,100
National Rank*	10th
New England Rank**	4th

*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

Median Family Income, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2018-2022*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022. Tables B19113, B19113A, B19113B, B19113C, B19113D, B19113E, B19113F, 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 Asian and white families in Rhode Island is higher than that of Black families, and much higher than Hispanic, Native American, and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander families, and families of Some other race or Two or more races.¹¹

★ Educational attainment is strongly associated with economic well-being. Rhode Islanders who have achieved a bachelor's degree have double the median earnings compared to workers who have not completed high school. In Rhode Island, one in four Hispanic adults, one in seven Black adults, and one in 12 white adults lack a high school diploma.¹²

★ According to the 2022 Rhode Island Standard of Need, it costs a single-parent family with two young children \$66,567 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 \$78,219 to meet this budget without government subsidies.¹³

★ An adequate minimum wage and income support programs (including RIte Care health insurance, child care subsidies, SNAP benefits, the Child Tax Credit, and the Earned Income Tax Credit) are critical for helping low-and moderate-income working families in Rhode Island make ends meet, and expanding these programs would help decrease racial and ethnic disparities in meeting basic needs.¹⁴

Median Family Income

Table 7. Median Family Income, Rhode Island, 2018-2022

2018-2022 MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18

CITY/TOWN	ESTIMATES WITH HIGH MARGINS OF ERROR*	ESTIMATES WITH LOWER, ACCEPTABLE MARGINS OF ERROR
Barrington		\$172,363
Bristol		\$141,006
Burrillville		\$119,375
Central Falls		\$45,159
Charlestown		\$97,222
Coventry		\$115,919
Cranston		\$101,598
Cumberland		\$131,159
East Greenwich		\$223,333
East Providence		\$97,865
Exeter	\$108,750	
Foster	\$126,875	
Glocester	\$106,620	
Hopkinton	\$101,250	
Jamestown	\$250,000+	
Johnston		\$100,457
Lincoln		\$128,095
Little Compton	\$179,167	
Middletown		\$105,772
Narragansett	\$92,392	
New Shoreham		\$62,989
Newport	\$49,781	
North Kingstown		\$140,873
North Providence		\$80,944
North Smithfield		\$104,306
Pawtucket		\$63,012
Portsmouth		\$180,956
Providence		\$62,009
Richmond		\$119,948
Scituate		\$146,818
Smithfield		\$152,173
South Kingstown		\$119,599
Tiverton		\$123,919
Warren		\$119,914
Warwick		\$98,301
West Greenwich		\$134,746
West Warwick		\$75,664
Westerly		\$111,750
Woonsocket		\$50,592
Four Core Cities		NA
Remainder of State		NA
Rhode Island		\$96,190

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 2018-2022 data come from a Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2018-2022 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 varies 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.

**The estimate or margin of error could not be computed due to an insufficient number of observations.

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, 2022. Table B19125.
- ² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022. Table B19126.
- ³ *Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and detailed age, 2022 annual averages – Rhode Island.* (n.d.). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.
- ⁴ *Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and detailed age, 2023 annual averages – Rhode Island.* (n.d.). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.
- ⁵ *State of working Rhode Island 2017: Paving the way to good jobs.* (2017). Providence, RI: The Economic Progress Institute.
- ⁶ Tucker, J., & Vogtman, J. (2020). *When hard work is not enough: Women in low-paid jobs.* Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center.
- ⁷ Gould, E., & Kandra, J. (2021). *Wages grew in 2020 because the bottom fell out of the low-wage labor market: The state of working America 2020 wages report.* Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- ⁸ *Collateral Damage: Scheduling Challenges for Workers in Low-Paid Jobs and Their Consequences.* (2020). Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center.
- ⁹ Stone, C., Trisi, D., Sherman, A., & Beltrán. (2020). *A guide to statistics on historical trends in income inequality.* Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- ¹⁰ Frank, M. W. (2021). *U.S. state-level income inequality data.* Retrieved January 19, 2024, from www.shsu.edu
- ¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022. Tables B19113, B19113A, B19113B, B19113C, B19113D, B19113E, B19113F, B19113G, & B19113I.
- ¹² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022. Table S1501.
- ^{13,14} *The 2022 Rhode Island standard of need.* (2022). 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

Poor quality, unaffordable, or crowded housing has a negative impact on children's physical health, development, school performance, and emotional well-being and on a family's ability to meet a child's basic needs. In contrast, when children live in high-quality housing that is safe, affordable, and located in well-resourced, low-poverty neighborhoods, they do better in school and their parents report improved mental health.^{2,3}

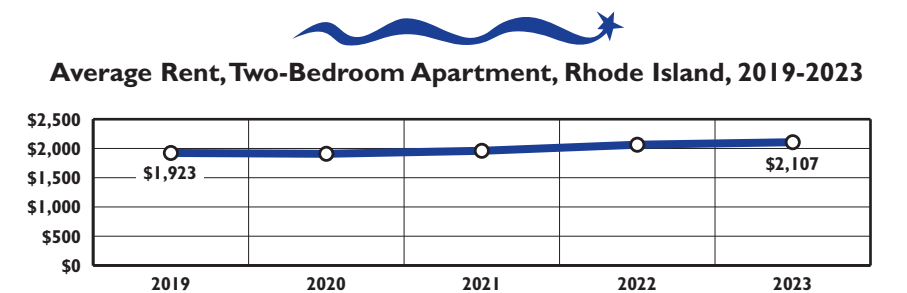
In 2023, a worker had to earn \$40.51 an hour or \$84,270 per year to be able to afford the average rent in Rhode Island without a cost burden. This hourly wage was over three times the minimum wage of \$13.00 per hour in 2023.^{4,5} In 2023, Rhode Island required the 15th highest hourly wage of any state to afford the rent for a two-bedroom home and the median renter

in Rhode Island could affordably rent in only one Rhode Island city or town – Burrillville.^{6,7}

According to HousingWorks RI, a household earning the state's median household income of \$74,489 would not be able to affordably buy in any of Rhode Island's cities or towns.⁸

Federally-funded Section 8 Housing Choice rental vouchers can help low-income individuals and families afford the cost of rent; however, there are not enough vouchers to meet the need and long waiting periods are common.⁹ In 2021, the General Assembly enacted legislation that prohibits discrimination in housing based on lawful source of income, including housing vouchers.¹⁰

Rhode Island law establishes a goal that at least 10% of every community's housing stock qualify as Low- and Moderate-Income Housing (LMIH).¹¹ Currently, only five of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns meet that goal. From FY 2018 to FY 2022, Rhode Island more than tripled its per capita investments in affordable housing. However, Rhode Island's per capita investments are still far lower than neighboring Connecticut and Massachusetts, and the state still relies heavily on federal resources.¹²



Source: Rhode Island Housing, Rhode Island Rent Survey, 2019-2023. Rents are adjusted to 2023 dollars and include adjustments for the cost of gas, fuel, water, and electricity. Adjustments for utilities for each year vary according to U.S. Census American Community Survey's (ACS) annual one-year estimates. Due to a change in methodology, data cannot be compared to Factbooks prior to 2019.

★ In 2023, the average cost of rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Rhode Island was \$2,107. Even when adjusting for 2023 dollars, rents have increased 10% from 2019 to 2023.¹³

★ Nationally, households with children are twice as likely as other households to be threatened with eviction, and Black renters are four times more likely to be evicted than white renters. Studies show that experiencing an eviction increases a child's likelihood of lead poisoning, food insecurity, emotional trauma, and academic decline.^{14,15}

★ States can reduce evictions by investing in eviction diversion programs, providing a right to counsel for those facing eviction, automatically sealing eviction records, enacting just cause eviction legislation, and passing source of income discrimination laws.¹⁶

Legislative and Budget Initiatives Addressing Affordable Housing

★ Rhode Island's FY 2024 budget included \$71 million in federal funds from the *American Rescue Plan Act* dedicated to housing production and support for people experiencing homelessness in addition to the \$250 million approved in the FY 2023 budget.^{17,18}

★ In 2023, the Rhode Island General Assembly approved a package of bills designed to address the state's housing crisis. This new legislation allowed for the adaptive reuse of certain commercial properties into high-density residential developments, encouraged the construction of housing near transportation hubs, streamlined the permitting, application, and appeal processes for housing development, created a rental registry, allowed residential eviction records to be sealed if a motion is filed, and prohibited rental application fees.^{19,20}

Table 8.

Cost of Housing for Very Low-Income Families, Rhode Island, 2023

CITY/TOWN	FAMILY INCOME		HOMEOWNERSHIP COSTS		RENTAL COSTS		
	2023 POVERTY LEVEL FAMILY OF THREE	2023 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	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$5,437	142%	\$1,504	73%	39%
Bristol	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,785	99%	\$1,247	60%	32%
Burrillville	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,077	80%	\$1,073	52%	28%
Central Falls	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$2,259	59%	\$1,637	79%	43%
Charlestown*	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$4,392	114%	\$1,409	68%	37%
Coventry	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$2,832	74%	\$1,975	95%	51%
Cranston	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$2,959	77%	\$2,108	102%	55%
Cumberland	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,398	88%	\$2,498	121%	65%
East Greenwich	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$5,480	143%	\$1,889	91%	49%
East Providence	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,054	79%	\$2,316	112%	60%
Exeter*	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,928	102%	\$1,409	68%	37%
Foster*	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,183	83%	\$1,409	68%	37%
Glocester*	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,080	80%	\$1,409	68%	37%
Hopkinton*	\$24,860	\$50,000	\$3,123	75%	\$1,416	68%	34%
Jamestown*	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$6,958	181%	\$1,409	68%	37%
Johnston	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,219	84%	\$2,228	108%	58%
Lincoln	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$4,027	105%	\$1,798	87%	47%
Little Compton*	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$5,893	153%	\$1,409	68%	37%
Middletown	\$24,860	\$55,600	\$5,005	108%	\$2,179	105%	47%
Narragansett	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$5,421	141%	\$3,175	153%	83%
New Shoreham*	\$24,860	\$50,000	\$11,327	272%	\$1,416	68%	34%
Newport	\$24,860	\$55,600	\$5,796	125%	\$1,923	93%	42%
North Kingstown	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$4,373	114%	\$2,119	102%	55%
North Providence	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,041	79%	\$1,987	96%	52%
North Smithfield	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,253	85%	\$2,304	111%	60%
Pawtucket	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$2,638	69%	\$1,765	85%	46%
Portsmouth	\$24,860	\$55,600	\$4,937	107%	\$2,082	100%	45%
Providence**	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$2,685	70%	\$2,078	100%	54%
Richmond*	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,693	96%	\$1,409	68%	37%
Scituate*	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,379	88%	\$1,409	68%	37%
Smithfield	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,338	87%	\$1,941	94%	51%
South Kingstown*	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$4,251	111%	\$1,409	68%	37%
Tiverton	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,291	86%	\$2,036	98%	53%
Warren	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$3,289	86%	\$2,397	116%	62%
Warwick	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$2,829	74%	\$2,157	104%	56%
West Greenwich	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$4,373	114%	\$3,191	154%	83%
West Warwick	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$2,717	71%	\$2,195	106%	57%
Westerly	\$24,860	\$50,000	\$3,608	87%	\$1,428	69%	34%
Woonsocket	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$2,534	66%	\$1,483	72%	39%
Four Core Cities	\$24,860	\$46,100	\$2,529	66%	\$1,741	84%	45%
Remainder of State	\$24,860	\$47,249	\$4,164	106%	\$2,073	100%	53%
Rhode Island	\$24,860	\$46,900	\$3,154	81%	\$2,107	102%	54%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Family Income: 2023 poverty level for a family of three as reported in: Federal Register, 88(12), January 19, 2023, pages 3424-3425.

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 defined separately for each of the three metropolitan areas comprising Rhode Island and for the state as a whole. Core city and remainder of state are calculated by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT using unweighted community data. Reported by Rhode Island Housing. (2023). *FY2023 Rhode Island income limits for low- and moderate-income households*. Retrieved March 20, 2024, from www.rihousing.com

Homeownership costs: Data on typical monthly housing payments are from HousingWorks RI's 2023 *Housing Fact Book*. They are based on the median selling price of a single-family home using year-end 2022 data and calculated based on a 30-year mortgage at a 5.34% interest rate with a 3.5% downpayment. The typical monthly housing payment for the state comes from HousingWorks RI, but core city and remainder of state are calculated by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT using unweighted community data.

Rental Costs: Rhode Island Housing, Rhode Island Rent Survey, 2023. Estimates include rent and utility costs. Starting with the 2019 *Factbook* average rent is calculated using the CoStar database for two-bedroom units. Average utility costs are from the U.S. Census American Community Survey's (ACS) annual one-year sample, which includes gas, fuel, water, and electricity for two-bedroom units. For 2021, 2019 ACS data were used for utility costs due to COVID-related data collection issues for the 2020 ACS. All values are adjusted for 2023 dollars. Statewide average based on all units in state. Core city and remainder of state are calculated by Rhode Island Housing. Data cannot be compared to *Factbooks* prior to 2019.

(Sources continued with References on page 175)

Children Experiencing Homelessness

DEFINITION

Children experiencing homelessness is the number of children in preschool through grade 12 who are identified as homeless by public school personnel because they meet the federal *McKinney-Vento* definition of homelessness, which includes any child who does not have a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence,” including children doubled up with families due to financial hardship.

SIGNIFICANCE

In the United States, 1.4 million school-age children experience homelessness each year, meaning that one in 41 school-age children are homeless. The rate is even higher for young children under age six -- one in 18.¹ Black children and families are more likely to experience homelessness than other racial and ethnic groups.²

For many families living in deep poverty, episodes of homelessness are part of a cycle of housing instability that often includes living in housing that is unaffordable and/or unsafe, doubling up with families or friends, and being evicted. For these families, the shortage of housing that is affordable to them is the primary reason they become homeless. However, family violence is another major factor. More than 80% of women with children who experience homelessness have experienced domestic violence.³

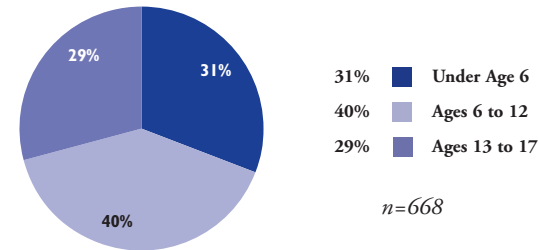
Lack of stable housing is often a

precipitating factor for a family’s involvement in the child welfare system, and unstable or inadequate housing can delay family reunification. Addressing families’ housing needs can reduce child neglect and abuse and help families stay together.^{4,5}

Children experiencing homelessness have higher rates of acute and chronic health problems than low-income children who have homes. Compared to their peers, homeless children have four times as many respiratory infections, twice as many ear infections, and five times as many gastrointestinal problems. They are also at higher risk of abuse and exposure to violence. This trauma can lead to an increase in developmental delays and emotional stress. When homeless children are exposed to multiple traumatic events, they may have increased levels of anxiety, poor impulse control, or difficulty developing trusting relationship.^{6,7,8}

In Rhode Island in 2023, 363 families with 668 children stayed at an emergency homeless shelter, domestic violence shelter, transitional housing facility, or hotel paid for by DCYF. Children made up almost one fifth (18%) of the 3,762 people who used emergency homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and transitional housing in 2023. One-third (31%) of these children were under age six. As of January 19, 2024, 86 families with 114 children reported that they had slept outside for at least one night in the previous month.⁹

Children in Emergency Shelters, Domestic Violence Shelters, Transitional Housing Facilities, or Hotels Paid by DCYF by Age, 2023



Source: Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness, 2023.

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 chronically absent from school, and have lower academic achievement than children who have housing.¹⁰

★ 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 provide access to all services and programs that the child is eligible for, including preschool, before- and after-school care, school meals, and services for Multilingual Learners.¹¹

★ The *McKinney-Vento Act* defines a child as homeless if he or she does not have a “fixed, regular and adequate night-time residence.”¹² During the 2022-2023 school year, Rhode Island public school personnel identified 1,739 children as homeless. Of these children, 66% (1,142) lived with other families (“doubled up”), 17% (288) lived in hotels or motels, 15% (266) lived in shelters, and 2% (43) were unsheltered.¹³

★ The number of students identified as homeless is likely a severe undercount. Nationally, an estimated 300,000 students entitled to services are unidentified because there is little national or state enforcement of laws requiring identification of these students and inadequate funding to support schools’ efforts.¹⁴

Children Experiencing Homelessness



Supporting Young Children Experiencing Homelessness

★ Children under age five are the age group most at risk of eviction in the United States.¹⁵ Eviction, crowded housing, frequent moves, and homelessness can all have negative effects on a child's early development.¹⁶

★ Homelessness during pregnancy is associated with low birthweight and preterm births, and homelessness during infancy is associated with language, literacy, and socioemotional delays. The younger a child is and the longer they are homeless the more severe the impact can be.¹⁷

★ Access to high-quality early childhood programs can help mitigate the effects of homelessness on young children, but many families with young children have difficulty accessing these programs. Congress has updated requirements for many federal early care, education, and homelessness programs to increase access. For example, children experiencing homelessness are now categorically eligible for Early Head Start and states must prioritize young children experiencing homelessness for child care assistance.¹⁸

★ In Rhode Island, only 27.3% (about one in four) of young children experiencing homelessness are enrolled in an early childhood program.¹⁹

Table 9. Homeless Children Identified by Public Schools, Rhode Island, 2022-2023 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	# OF CHILDREN IDENTIFIED AS HOMELESS BY PUBLIC SCHOOL PERSONNEL
Barrington	3,405	11
Bristol Warren	2,888	27
Burrillville	2,070	50
Central Falls	2,596	143
Chariho	3,102	25
Coventry	4,267	23
Cranston	10,225	36
Cumberland	4,784	23
East Greenwich	2,543	*
East Providence	5,272	67
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,550	*
Foster	221	0
Foster-Glocester	1,359	*
Glocester	577	*
Jamestown	418	*
Johnston	3,144	24
Lincoln	3,281	30
Little Compton	201	0
Middletown	1,971	93
Narragansett	1,128	*
New Shoreham	131	0
Newport	1,906	36
North Kingstown	3,842	48
North Providence	3,516	50
North Smithfield	1,618	*
Pawtucket	8,056	94
Portsmouth	2,183	*
Providence	20,725	374
Scituate	1,194	*
Smithfield	2,415	43
South Kingstown	2,509	32
Tiverton	1,634	*
Warwick	8,005	78
West Warwick	3,511	27
Westerly	2,296	45
Woonsocket	5,690	215
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>11,284</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,766</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>YouthBuild</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>37,067</i>	<i>826</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>87,166</i>	<i>812</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>137,452</i>	<i>1,739</i>

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, Public School Enrollment in grades preschool to 12 on October 1, 2022.

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." This includes children who are living with other families ("doubled up"), in shelters, living in hotels or motels, and unsheltered.

Charter schools reporting include Achievement First Rhode Island, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Charette High School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Excel Academy Rhode Island, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, The Learning Community, Nuestro Mundo Public Charter School, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, SouthSide Elementary Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and The Village Green Virtual Public Charter School.

State-operated schools reporting include the Metropolitan Regional Career & Technical Center and William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School.

The Central Falls, Middletown, Newport, North Kingstown, Providence, Warwick, West Warwick, and Woonsocket school districts received grants that provide 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 state, and state totals.

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

Rhode Island totals are not the sum of all of the districts because some students move districts during the school year and are counted as homeless in both districts.

(References are on page 176)

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. 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.^{1,2}

Rhode Island's annual unemployment rate decreased from 5.5% in 2021 to the pre-COVID rate of 3.5% in 2022. In 2023, Rhode Island's unemployment rate declined further to 3.3%, slightly lower than the U.S. unemployment rate of 3.6%.^{3,4,5}

In 2022, 4% of children in Rhode Island and in the U.S. had at least one unemployed parent.⁶ Children with unemployed parents are at increased risk for homelessness, child neglect or abuse, and failure to finish high school or college.⁷

Even when families have adults with secure parental employment, low wages cause many families to remain in poverty. People of Color are overrepresented among low-income working families. In 2016 in the U.S., families headed by People of Color represented 41% of all working families, while accounting for 60% of low-income working families.⁸ In Rhode Island, 88% of Latino single-parent families and 51% of Latino two-parent families earn less than the income required to meet their basic needs, compared to 59% of white single-parent families and 19% of white two-parent families. The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for Rhode Island's essential workers, many of whom were Black and Latino, earned low wages, and did not have the luxury of working from home during the pandemic.⁹

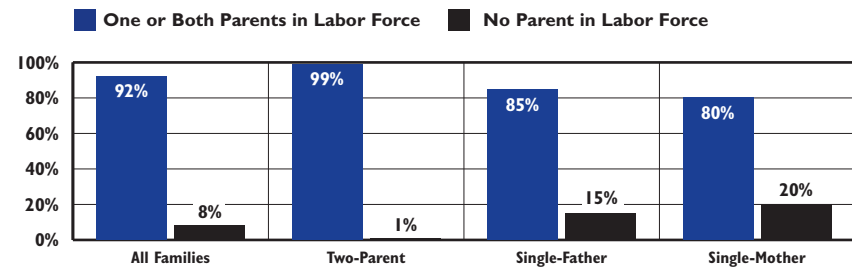
Children Living in Families Where No Parent Has Full-Time, Year-Round Employment		
	2021	2022
RI	32%	22%
US	29%	26%
National Rank*	11th	
New England Rank**	2nd	

*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, 2018-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022. Table B23008.

★ The majority of children living in Rhode Island between 2018 and 2022 had one or both parents in the labor force. Children living with a single parent were 20 times more likely than children living in a two-parent family to have no employed parent. Of children in two-parent families, 75% had both parents in the labor force.¹⁰

★ Between 2018 and 2022, there were 15,562 Rhode Island children living in families with no parent in the labor force. Children living in families with a single parent represented 91% (14,177) of families with no employed parents.¹¹

★ Between 2018 and 2022, 15% (2,858) of Rhode Island families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold had at least one adult with full-time, year-round employment, and 36% (6,902) of Rhode Island families living in poverty had at least one adult working part-time.¹²

★ According to the 2022 *Rhode Island Standard of Need*, 70% of Rhode Island single-parent families with two children and 25% of two-parent families with two children earn less than the income required to meet their basic needs without work supports, such as SNAP, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), child care subsidies, and health insurance.¹³

★ Between 2018 and 2022, 74% of children under age six and 79% of children ages six to 17 in Rhode Island had all parents in the labor force. In comparison, nationally, 67% of children under age six and 72% of children ages six to 17 had all parents in the labor force.¹⁴

Secure Parental Employment



Barriers to Secure Employment for Low-Income Families

- ★ Families leaving cash assistance can face many barriers to employment. Research shows that families who leave due to time limits or sanctions often have barriers such as mental and physical impairments, running away from domestic violence, or low levels of education and limited work experience that can impede their ability to secure or sustain employment.¹⁵
- ★ 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.¹⁶ Fifty-six percent of the U.S. workforce qualifies for the federal *Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)*, but many who are eligible cannot afford to take it.¹⁷ In 2013, Rhode Island passed legislation that created the Temporary Caregivers Insurance (TCI) Program, which now provides up to six 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.¹⁸ Rhode Island is one of thirteen states, in addition to Washington, DC, that have enacted paid family leave programs.¹⁹
- ★ Limited education also can be a barrier to sustained employment. Between 2018 and 2022 in Rhode Island, adults without a high school diploma were more than three times as likely to be unemployed as those with a bachelor's degree.²⁰
- ★ Having access to work supports, such as tax credits, SNAP, child care subsidies, and health insurance, 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.²¹

References

¹ Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2021). *America's children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2021*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

² Isaacs, J. (2013). *Unemployment from a child's perspective*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute and First Focus.

³ *Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and detailed age, 2021 annual averages*. (n.d.). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Retrieved April 4, 2022, from www.bls.gov

(continued on page 176)



Secure Employment and Child Care

- ★ Research shows a link between affordable, quality child care availability and sustained maternal employment. Studies find that mothers report that the lack of reliable and affordable child care arrangements affected their ability to remain employed.²²
- ★ In 2020 in Rhode Island, a single mother earning the state median income for a single-parent family (\$30,482) would have had to spend 45% of her income to pay for child care for an infant in center-based care.²³
- ★ In Rhode Island, child care assistance is available to families with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (\$51,640 for a family of three in 2023) who work at least 20 hours per week. Families can continue to receive a subsidy until their income reaches 300% of the federal poverty level (\$77,460 for a family of three).^{24,25}



Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC)

- ★ 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 serve as an incentive to keep families working. The federal EITC is one of the nation's most effective poverty prevention programs for working families. It lifted 5.6 million people, including about 3 million children, out of poverty in 2018.^{26,27}
- ★ Benefits of the EITC and the Child Tax Credit extend well beyond the time families receive the credit. 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.²⁸
- ★ State EITCs can supplement the federal EITC to further support working families. In 2023, the Rhode Island General Assembly increased the state's EITC from 15% to 16% of the federal EITC.²⁹ In 2023, approximately 67,000 Rhode Island working families and individuals received a total of \$156 million in federal EITC tax credits.³⁰
- ★ The CTC helps families offset the cost of raising children. In 2021, the CTC lifted 4.3 million people, including 2.3 million children out of poverty.³¹ The *American Rescue Plan Act* temporarily expanded the CTC, keeping 3.7 million children out of poverty and reducing child poverty by 30% with the largest impact on Black and Latino children.³²

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, launched in 2014, provides up to six 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.^{1,2}

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.³ 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.⁴ Rhode Island's 1987 *Parental and Family Medical Leave Act* requires a 13-week leave but does not require that the leave be paid.⁵

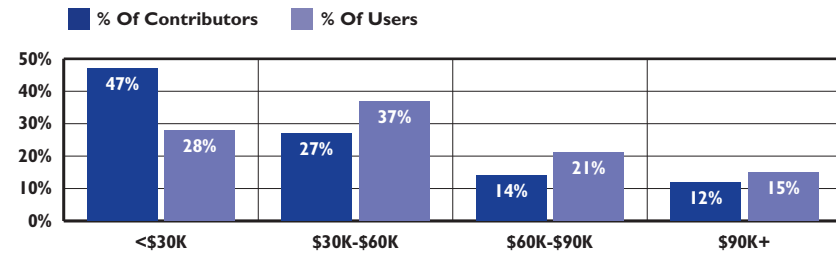
Access to — and being able to take — paid leave is a matter of equity. High-wage workers are much more

likely to have access to paid family leave than low-wage workers. Women ages 18 to 34, Black and Hispanic workers, those without a college degree, and low-income workers are less likely to have access to paid leave.^{6,7}

Paid family and medical leave reduces preterm births, low birthweight, infant hospitalizations, infant mortality, and child abuse and neglect. It also increases the likelihood of breastfeeding, 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 mental health issues and report better overall health. Providing time off from work for new parents gives babies time to form secure attachments, which is the foundation for healthy relationships and development. Paid leave has a positive effect on long-term outcomes for babies. It increases educational levels, future earnings, and college completion of children whose parents can take time off.^{8,9,10,11}

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. TCI supplements TDI; women who give birth are eligible for both.^{12,13}

Approved Temporary Caregiver Insurance Claims Compared to Contributions by Wage Range, 2023



Source: Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, TCI Program, 2023.

- ★ There were 8,932 approved claims for TCI during 2023 (up from 8,084 in 2022); 77% were to bond with a new child and 23% were to care for a seriously ill family member. In 2023, 47% of individuals contributing to TCI earned less than \$30,000, yet only 28% of all approved TCI claims were for individuals with wages in this category.¹⁴
- ★ Of the 6,876 approved claims to bond with a new child, 99% (6,790) were for a newborn and 1% were for a newly adopted (23), foster (49), or other child (14). Fifty-six percent of claims to bond with a new child were filed by women and 44% were by men.¹⁵
- ★ Of the 2,056 approved claims to care for a seriously ill family member, 43% were to care for a spouse or domestic partner, 28% were to care for a parent or parent-in-law, 27% were to care for a child, and 1% were to care for a grandparent. Sixty four percent of claims to care for a seriously ill family member were filed by women and 36% were filed by men.¹⁶

Temporary Disability Insurance for Pregnancy Complications & Childbirth

- ★ In 2023, there were 3,833 approved TDI claims for disabling pre/post pregnancy conditions and/or to recover from childbirth. Recovery from childbirth is a disabling condition covered by TDI. In general, six weeks is covered for vaginal births and eight weeks for cesarean section births. More time can be approved for postpartum complications, based on the health care provider's determination. TDI is not available to new parents who do not give birth (e.g., fathers and adoptive parents).^{17,18}

Table 10. Approved Temporary Disability Claims for Childbirth & Temporary Caregiver Claims for Paid Family Leave, Rhode Island, 2023

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	20	12	32	50	18	68
Bristol	22	13	35	86	32	118
Burrillville	34	25	59	100	26	126
Central Falls	33	25	58	78	40	118
Charlestown	8	8	16	36	14	50
Coventry	58	68	126	237	76	313
Cranston	226	133	359	569	195	764
Cumberland	53	52	105	199	58	257
East Greenwich	21	13	34	100	14	114
East Providence	117	83	200	314	87	401
Exeter	6	11	17	31	8	39
Foster	22	13	35	31	13	44
Glocester	13	12	25	50	17	67
Hopkinton	8	10	18	38	9	47
Jamestown	*	*	8	*	*	*
Johnston	64	52	116	208	66	274
Lincoln	37	21	58	117	58	175
Little Compton	*	*	*	*	*	*
Middletown	18	12	30	52	14	66
Narragansett	*	*	*	31	18	49
Newport	29	16	45	79	8	87
New Shoreham	0	0	0	*	0	*
North Kingstown	45	40	85	195	44	239
North Providence	62	58	120	198	69	267
North Smithfield	25	19	44	75	25	100
Pawtucket	176	80	256	397	131	528
Portsmouth	13	15	28	58	23	81
Providence	479	234	713	1,006	300	1,306
Richmond	15	8	23	49	12	61
Scituate	22	17	39	88	24	112
Smithfield	22	22	44	102	26	128
South Kingstown	32	33	65	123	24	147
Tiverton	18	10	28	50	20	70
Warren	12	11	23	63	6	69
Warwick	194	127	321	625	192	817
Westerly	25	19	44	89	41	130
West Greenwich	*	*	*	39	14	53
West Warwick	72	47	119	236	63	299
Woonsocket	74	39	113	199	34	233
Out-of-State	199	159	358	846	232	1078
Four Core cities	762	378	1,140	1,680	505	2,185
Remainder of state	1,334	1,001	2,335	4,350	1,319	5,669
Rhode Island	2,096	1,379	3,475	6,030	1,824	7,854
Total Program Claims	2,295	1,538	3,833	6,876	2,056	8,932

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, approved TDI claims for pregnancy complications and for childbirth and approved TCI claims, 2023.

Women without complications typically receive six weeks of TDI for vaginal births and eight weeks for cesarean births.

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. Employees of certain governmental entities do not contribute to and cannot claim TDI or TCI.

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

References

- ^{1,13} Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training. (2014). *Temporary Caregiver Insurance [Brochure]*.
- ² *Rhode Island's Paid Leave Program is Leaving Families Behind*. (2024). Washington, DC: Zero to Three.
- ³ Donovan, S. A. (2020). *Paid family leave in the United States*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.
- ⁴ Paid leave in the U.S. (2021). San Francisco, CA: The Kaiser Family Foundation.
- ⁵ *Rhode Island Parental and Family Medical Leave Act*, Title 28 Rhode Island General Law § 28-48-2 (1987,1990).
- ⁶ Boyens, C., Karpman, M., & Smalligan, J. (2022). *Access to paid leave is lowest among workers with the greatest needs*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- ⁷ *A national paid leave program would help workers, families*. (2021). Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- ⁸ O'Neill Hayes, T., & Barnhorst, M. (2020). *How children benefit from paid family leave policies*. Washington, DC: American Action Forum.

(continued on page 176)

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

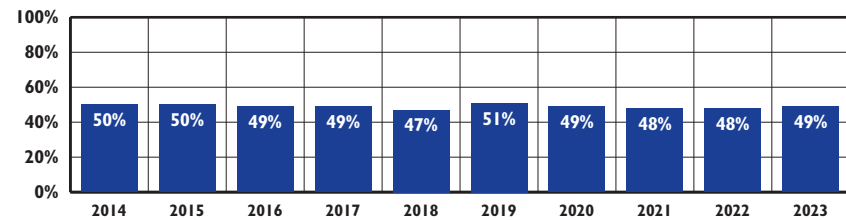
Child support is a major part of the safety net for children and families. In 2022, almost one in six U.S. children (12.8 million) received public child support services.^{1,2} Child support provides a mechanism for non-custodial parents (usually fathers) to contribute to the financial and medical support of their children. Child support programs can encourage responsible co-parenting and increase the reliability of child support paid by helping custodial parents locate the non-custodial parent, establishing paternity and support orders, and monitoring and enforcing child support obligations.³

Child support is a critical tool to provide resources for low-income families and can also keep children out of poverty. The receipt of child support payments can significantly improve the

economic well-being of children with single parents — child support nearly doubles the average income of recipients living in poverty. Custodial parents who receive steady child support payments are less likely to rely on public assistance programs and more likely to find work than those who do not.^{4,5,6}

While child support is intended to provide financial stability and improve child well-being, it can be an economic hardship for non-custodial parents. Non-custodial 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 Some families are required to pay child support to the state while their child is in foster care, which is economically burdensome to parents, can delay reunification, and is not cost effective for the state.⁹ Child support systems that encourage relationship building with the co-parent and positive parenting can strengthen parent-child relationships and increase child support payments. Non-custodial parents who pay regular child support are more involved with their children, providing them with critical emotional support and care. Child support has a positive effect on children's academics and behavior and is associated with greater employment and earnings as an adult.^{10,11}


**Non-Custodial Parents With Court Orders
Who Pay Child Support on Time and in Full, Rhode Island, 2014-2023**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support Services, 2014-2023.

★ As of December 1, 2023, there were 62,841 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). Children receiving child support live across all 39 cities and towns in Rhode Island. Forty-nine percent of non-custodial parents under court order in Rhode Island were making child support payments on time and in full.¹²

★ In 2023, the Rhode Island Office of Child Support Services collected \$88.5 million in child support, an increase of about \$2 million over the previous year. Eighty-five percent (\$75.4 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.¹³

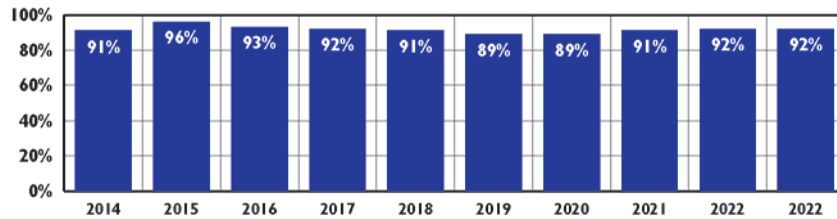
★ In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022, the Rhode Island Office of Child Support Services collected \$4.08 for every \$1.00 Rhode Island spent on administering the program.¹⁴

★ During FFY 2023, there were 16,037 court orders for non-custodial parents to provide medical insurance and 8,570 orders for non-custodial parents to contribute funds toward medical coverage. About \$6.1 million in payments 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.¹⁵

★ In 2017, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed a law that allows the Office of Child Support Services to automatically file a motion to modify or a motion for relief when a non-custodial parent is or will be incarcerated for 180 days or more. This law also clarifies that incarceration may not be considered by the court as "voluntary unemployment."¹⁶

Children Receiving Child Support

Rhode Island Children in the Office of Child Support Services System With Paternity Established, 2014-2023



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support Services, 2014-2023. Includes all children in the child support system – private, interstate, and IV-D cases.

★ The percentage of children in the Rhode Island child support system with paternity established increased from 91% of children in 2014 to 96% of children in 2015 but has since fallen to 92% of children in 2023.¹⁷

★ When applying for RI Works, RIte Care, or the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), custodial 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. For CCAP, parents must provide information on the non-custodial parents for all children in the family, whether or not the child is receiving a child care subsidy (not a federal requirement). Victims of domestic violence can apply for a child support waiver if providing this information could endanger themselves or their children.^{18,19,20}

★ In FFY 2022, Rhode Island had the lowest rate of court orders established for child support in New England (Connecticut – 95%; Maine – 95%; Vermont – 90%; New Hampshire – 92%; Massachusetts – 83%; Rhode Island – 72%). The national average for cases with child support orders established was 87%.²¹

★ In FFY 2022, Rhode Island had the highest case/staff ratio in New England at 712 cases per person, nearly six times that of the lowest state, Vermont (119 cases per person). 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.²²

Child Support and Rhode Island Works

★ As of December 1, 2023, Rhode Island's Office of Child Support Services system included 3,656 children enrolled in the cash assistance program (RI Works).²³

★ In December 2023, the average child support obligation for children enrolled in RI Works was \$407 per month, compared to an average child support obligation of \$479 per month for children in non-RI Works families.²⁴ (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. The remainder of the payment is retained by the state as reimbursement for cash assistance received.²⁵

★ An average of 318 families received a pass-through payment each month, for a total of \$187,107 paid to families enrolled in RI Works in FFY 2023.²⁶

★ States have the option to pass through a part or all of a family's child support payment to families and to disregard this income when calculating the amount of a family's cash assistance benefit. Rhode Island limits the pass-through amount to \$50, regardless of the number of children in the household. Some states pass through up to \$100 per month for one child (and up to \$200 per month for two or more children) and others, like Colorado and Minnesota, pass through the entire child support payment.²⁷

★ 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 non-custodial 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 custodial family income, and can decrease poverty and reduce the risk of child maltreatment.^{28,29}

(References are on page 176)

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 in the year prior to the survey.

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.¹² Children in poverty are less likely to be enrolled in preschool, more likely to attend schools that lack resources, and have fewer opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.^{3,4,5}

Nationally and in Rhode Island, Black, Hispanic, and Native American children are more likely than Asian and white children to live in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold. Children under age five, 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.^{6,7,8}

In 2023, the federal poverty threshold was \$24,549 for a family of three with two children and \$30,900 for a family of

four with two children.⁹ The official poverty measure does not reflect the effects of key government programs that support families living in poverty or consider the increased cost of transportation, child care, housing, and medical care, and geographic variations in the cost of living. To address these limitations, the U.S. Census Bureau publishes a Supplemental Poverty Measure. This measure does not replace the official measure, but provides policy makers with an additional way to evaluate the effects of anti-poverty policies.¹⁰

According to the *2022 Rhode Island Standard of Need*, it costs a single-parent family with two young children \$66,567 a year to pay basic living expenses, more than two and a half times the federal poverty level for a family of three. This family would need an annual pre-tax income of \$78,219 to meet this budget. Work supports can help families with incomes below the federal poverty level meet their basic needs.¹¹

Children in Poverty				
	2019	2020*	2021	2022
RI	14.0%	11.5%	15.0%	11.7%
US	16.8%	15.7%	16.9%	16.3%
National Rank*				10th
New England Rank**				5th

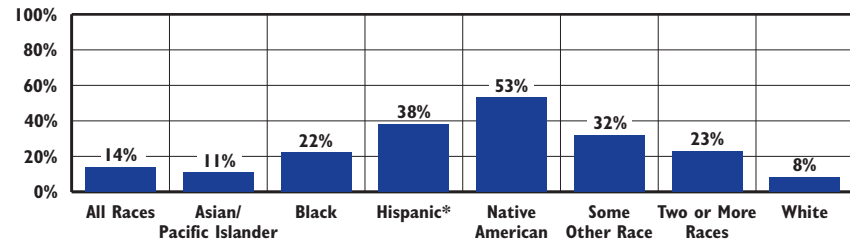
*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019-2022, Tables S1701, C17024. *The U.S. Census Bureau urges caution when comparing to standard ACS data due to low response rate during COVID-19 pandemic.



Children in Poverty, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2018-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022. Tables B17020, B17020A, B17020B, B17020C, B17020D, B17020E, B17020F, B17020G and B17020I. *Hispanic children may be included in any race category.

★ Between 2018 and 2022, 14% (28,774) of Rhode Island's 204,736 children under age 18 with known poverty status lived in households with incomes below the federal poverty threshold.¹²

★ Between 2018 and 2022, 53% of Native American, 38% of Hispanic, and 22% of Black children in Rhode Island lived in poverty, followed by 11% of Asian/Pacific Islander children and 8% of white children.¹³

★ While Asian American and Pacific Islander children have a lower overall poverty rate, both nationally and in Rhode Island, there are significant disparities across Asian ethnic groups, with significantly higher poverty rates for many Southeast Asian and South Asian groups.^{14,15}

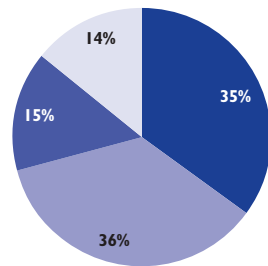
★ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Rhode Island's unemployment rate surged higher in the spring and summer of 2020 than its peak in the Great Recession.¹⁶ Job losses in 2020 disproportionately occurred in low-wage occupations, and occupations employing Black and Hispanic workers and female workers. Federal COVID-relief measures, such as enhanced unemployment benefits and economic impact payments, reduced poverty rates and lessened material hardship.^{17,18}

★ The federal *American Rescue Plan Act*, enacted in March 2021, included a one-year expansion of the Child Tax Credit, including distributing a portion of the credit in monthly payments from July through December 2021. These payments reduced child poverty by an estimated 29% in November 2021, with the largest impact on Children of Color.^{19,20}

Rhode Island's Children Living in Poverty, 2018-2022

By Age

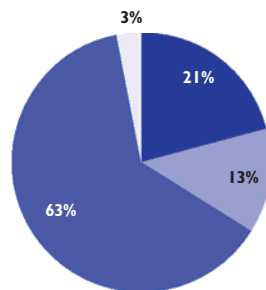
- 35% ■ Ages 5 and Younger
- 36% ■ Ages 6 to 11
- 15% ■ Ages 12 to 14
- 14% ■ Ages 15 to 17



n=28,774

By Family Structure

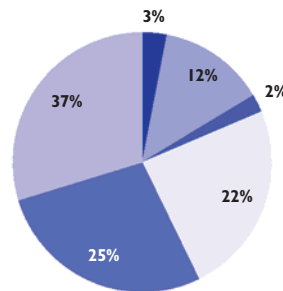
- 21% ■ Married Couple Family
- 13% ■ Unmarried Male Householder
- 63% ■ Unmarried Female Householder
- 3% ■ Not in Related-Family Households



n=28,774

By Race*

- 3% ■ Asian/Pacific Islander
- 12% ■ Black
- 2% ■ Native American
- 22% ■ Some Other Race
- 25% ■ Two or More Races
- 37% ■ White



n=28,774

**Hispanic children may be included in any race category. Between 2018 and 2022, 54% of Rhode Island's 28,774 children living in poverty were Hispanic. The Census Bureau asks about race separately from ethnicity, and the majority of families who identify as Some other race also identify as Hispanic.*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022. Tables B17001, B17006, B17020, B17020A, B17020B, B17020C, B17020D, B17020E, B17020F, B17020G, & B17020I. Population includes children for whom poverty status was determined. Cohn, D. (2017). *Seeking better data on Hispanics, Census Bureau may change how it asks about race*. Retrieved from www.pewresearch.org. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Child Poverty Concentrated in Four Core Cities, Rhode Island, 2018-2022

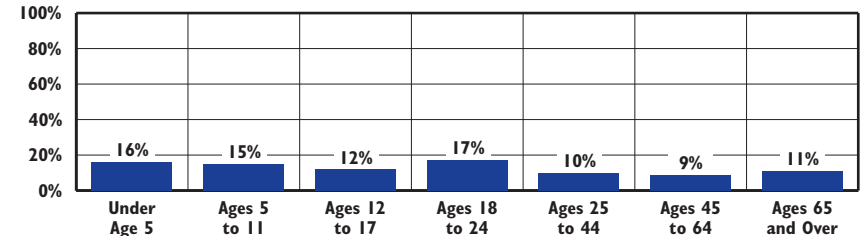
CITY/TOWN	NUMBER IN POVERTY	PERCENTAGE IN POVERTY	NUMBER IN EXTREME POVERTY	PERCENTAGE IN EXTREME POVERTY
Central Falls	1,744	27.9%	642	10.3%
Pawtucket	3,111	19.9%	1,532	9.8%
Providence	10,778	28.3%	5,628	14.8%
Woonsocket	3,065	31.0%	1,080	10.9%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>28,774</i>	<i>14.1%</i>	<i>14,352</i>	<i>7.0%</i>

Source: Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2018-2022 American Community Survey data.

★ Between 2018 and 2022, 65% of Rhode Island's children living in poverty lived in just four cities—Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket. These cities, termed core cities, had a combined child poverty rate of 27% between 2018-2022. The four core cities also have substantial numbers of children living in extreme poverty.²¹

★ In Rhode Island between 2018 and 2022, Black and Hispanic children were 12% and eight times more likely, respectively, to live in high-poverty neighborhoods than non-Hispanic white children.²² Living in high-poverty neighborhoods (those with poverty rates of 30% or more) provides fewer opportunities for children and their families.²³

Poverty, by Age, Rhode Island, 2018-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022, Table B17001.

★ Between 2018 and 2022 in Rhode Island, 17% of young adults ages 18 to 24 lived in poverty. In Rhode Island, young adults are at a higher risk of living in poverty than any other age group.²⁴ In the U.S., 3.4 million children live with parents ages 18 to 24, and 37% of them, mostly babies, toddlers, and preschoolers, live in poverty.²⁵

Children in Poverty



Financial Asset Building

- ★ Many low-income families have limited or no access to traditional banks and instead must rely on cash transactions or alternative financial services, such as check-cashing stores, payday lenders, and rent-to-own stores. 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.^{26,27}
- ★ In Rhode Island in 2021, 3.5% of households did not have a checking or savings account, lower than the U.S. rate of 4.5% the lowest it has ever been. During the pandemic, the quick government financial relief payment made many families bankable. Many consumers took advantage of enhanced, safe online and mobile bank accounts, which resulted in a meaningful gain in connecting families to the banking system.²⁸
- ★ Nationally, households with lower income, disabled working-age adults, or adults with less than a high school education, as well as Black and Hispanic households, are less likely to have a checking or savings account.²⁹
- ★ States can protect consumers from high-cost payday lending by prohibiting these loans outright or enacting measures that make the loans more affordable, such as an annual rate cap or limiting the amount of monthly payments as a percentage of a borrower's monthly income. Rhode Island is the only New England state that does not currently protect against payday lending.^{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 \$5,000 asset limit to qualify for and retain RI Works cash assistance and is one of only eight 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
- ★ Discrimination and historical racism have resulted in large and persistent disparities in wealth between different racial and ethnic groups. In 2022, the median family wealth for white families was about six times greater than the median wealth of Black families and five times greater than the median wealth of Hispanic families.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), Child Tax Credit, Social Security, SNAP, and housing subsidies. These programs kept millions of children out of poverty.³⁵

Health Coverage and Access to Care

- ★ People with low incomes are the most likely to be uninsured; some cannot afford the cost, some do not have access to coverage through their employers, and others do not have access to employer-based coverage due to job loss.³⁶ In Rhode Island low-income children are now eligible to enroll in RIte Care regardless of immigration status.³⁷

Affordable Quality Child Care

- ★ In Rhode Island in 2021, the average annual cost of center-based childcare for one infant was \$13,780.³⁸ Child care subsidies can help families living in poverty afford the cost of high-quality child care, which can help parents maintain employment and support children's development.³⁹

Educational Attainment

- ★ Between 2022 and 2032, jobs requiring a postsecondary degree or certificate are projected to grow faster than jobs requiring a high school diploma or less.⁴⁰ Forty-eight percent of Rhode Islanders had a postsecondary degree in 2018-2022.⁴¹

Affordable Housing

- ★ In 2023, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Rhode Island was \$2,107. In Rhode Island, a family of three with an income at the federal poverty level would have to spend more than its income on rent, while it is recommended that a household spend no more than 30% of its income on rent.^{42,43} Nationally, only one in four eligible low-income families receive rental assistance to help them afford the high cost of housing.⁴⁴

Child Support

- ★ As of December 1, 2023, there were 62,841 children in Rhode Island's Office of Child Support Services system.⁴⁵ 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 be employed than those who do not.⁴⁶ Among poor custodial parents that received full child support in 2017 in the U.S., these payments represented 57% of their mean personal income.⁴⁷

Table 11.

Children Living Below the Federal Poverty Threshold, Rhode Island, 2018-2022

CITY/TOWN	ESTIMATES WITH HIGH MARGINS OF ERROR*		ESTIMATES WITH LOWER, ACCEPTABLE MARGINS OF ERROR	
	N	%	N	%
Barrington			112	2.4%
Bristol			136	4.4%
Burrillville	265	8.7%		
Central Falls	1,744	27.9%		
Charlestown	85	8.1%		
Coventry			580	8.9%
Cranston			1,355	8.5%
Cumberland			489	6.6%
East Greenwich			152	4.3%
East Providence			1,095	14.3%
Exeter	67	5.6%		
Foster	19	2.1%		
Glocester			29	1.3%
Hopkinton	87	5.9%		
Jamestown	-	-		
Johnston	476	8.8%		
Lincoln			209	4.4%
Little Compton	10	2.2%		
Middletown	299	9.5%		
Narragansett			39	2.4%
New Shoreham	-	-		
Newport	731	21.0%		
North Kingstown			473	9.4%
North Providence			648	10.0%
North Smithfield	144	6.5%		
Pawtucket			3,111	19.9%
Portsmouth	217	6.3%		
Providence			10,778	28.3%
Richmond			-	-
Scituate			36	2.3%
Smithfield			17	0.5%
South Kingstown			281	6.1%
Tiverton			128	5.2%
Warren	31	2.4%		
Warwick			987	6.9%
West Greenwich	-	-		
West Warwick			612	11.7%
Westerly	267	8.0%		
Woonsocket	3,065	31.0%		
Four Core Cities			18,698	26.8%
Remainder of State			10,076	7.5%
Rhode Island			28,774	14.1%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from a Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2018-2022 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 Error for all communities.)

-There were either no sample observations or too few sample observations to compute an estimate.

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

References

^{1,8} National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). *A roadmap to reducing child poverty*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

² Ratcliffe, C. (2015). *Child poverty and adult success*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

³ National Center for Education Statistics. (2021). *Number of children under 6 years old and not yet enrolled in kindergarten, percentage in center-based programs, average weekly hours in nonparental care, and percentage in various types of primary care arrangements, by selected child and family characteristics: 2019*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov>

(continued on page 177)

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 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, subsidized child care, and a small annual clothing allowance for children. 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 consider the parent's skills, education, and family responsibilities as well as place of residence and should outline a process for helping the parent meet his or her employment goals. Parents should be informed about

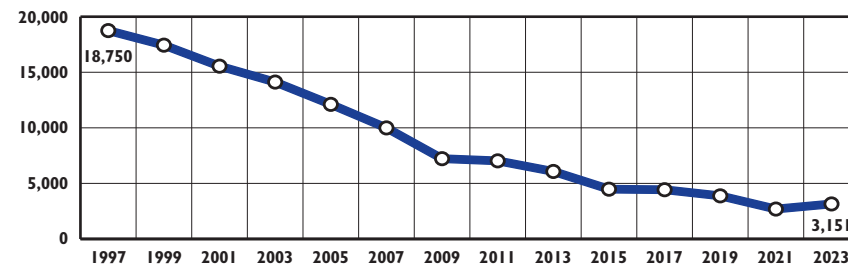
opportunities to seek additional education or training to improve their employability prospects.²

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 with insufficient earnings or work experience to qualify for unemployment benefits.³ In 2023, the average hourly wage of working parents enrolled in RI Works was \$17.46 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 kept by the state and federal governments as reimbursement for assistance received through RI Works.^{6,7}

The maximum monthly RI Works benefits for a family of three is \$721 per month.⁸ Benefits were increased by 30% in 2021, the first increase in 30 years, but the maximum benefit is still only 30% of the federal poverty threshold.^{9,10}

Cash Assistance Caseload, Rhode Island, 1997–2023*



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, December 1, 1997-2015, and RI Bridges Database, December 2016-2023. Cases can be child-only or whole families, and multiple people can be included in one case. *The Rhode Island Department of Human Services changed the method for calculating the caseload data starting in the 2012 Factbook. This change is reflected in the 2010-2022 caseload data. Comparisons to earlier years should be made with caution. Starting in 2016, caseload data are for the month of December and not for a point in time, December 1.

★ Since 1996, when the program began, the Rhode Island cash assistance caseload has declined steadily. Between 1996 and 2023, the Rhode Island cash assistance caseload decreased by 83%, from 18,428 cases to 3,151 families. The number of families receiving cash assistance increased from 2022 to 2023 but is still below the 2019 pre-pandemic caseload.¹¹

★ 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 (which have since been removed so that now only a 60-month lifetime limit is in place), closing the entire family's case when parents reach their time limit, and limiting eligibility for legal permanent residents to those who have had that status for five years.^{12,13}

★ In December 2023, there were 2,475 adults and 5,644 children under age 18 enrolled in RI Works. Seventy percent of RI Works beneficiaries were children, and 41% of the children enrolled in RI Works were under the age of six.¹⁴

★ In December 2023, 64% (2,016) of RI Works cases were single-parent families, 31% (962) were child-only cases, and 5% (173) were two-parent families.¹⁵

★ In Rhode Island in 2022, there were 23,487 children living in poverty, with 12,400 living in deep poverty (defined as being 50% below the federal poverty line). However, only 3,101 families received cash assistance.^{16,17}

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.¹⁸

Time Limits and Hardship Extensions

★ The lifetime limit for RI Works is 60 months. 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 (for six-month periods), there is no limit on the total time a family can receive a hardship extension.^{19,20,21}

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.²²

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.²³

Recent Policy Changes

★ The FY 2024 budget expanded eligibility to low-income, first-time pregnant individuals upon pregnancy verification, rather than waiting until the third trimester. The FY 2023 budget extended the lifetime limit from 48 to 60 months, amended the work requirements to allow a parent to attend the Community College of Rhode Island for two years, increased the earnings disregard from \$170 to \$300 a month, raised the asset limit from \$1,000 to \$5,000 to enable families to have savings and build a financial safety net, and excluded all state and federal tax returns and tax rebates from income eligibility.²⁴



RI Works by Case Type, December 2023

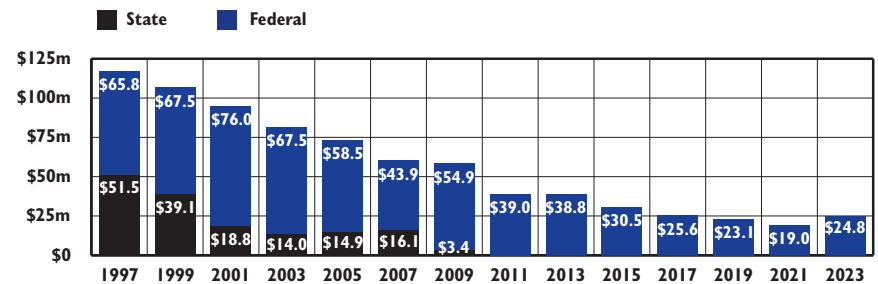
	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Child-only cases	944	31%
Cases with adults with a work activity	1,510	48%
Cases with adults exempt from a work activity*	606	19%
Unknown status	73	2%
Total RI Works Caseload	3,151	

Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, December 2023.

*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 illness or incapacity (335), youngest child under age one (142), second parent is a non-participant (89), in third trimester of pregnancy (25), being a victim of domestic violence (3), or multiple reasons (12).



Rhode Island Cash Assistance Expenditures, State Fiscal Years 1996-2023

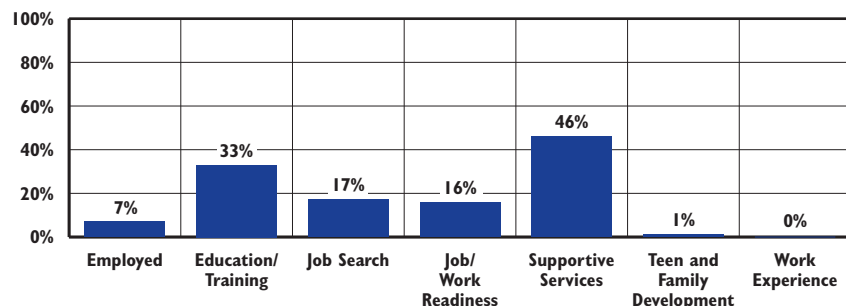


Sources: Rhode Island Department of Human Services. (2007). *Family Independence Program 2007 annual report*. (FY 1996-2001); House Fiscal Advisory Staff. (2004-2019). *Budget as enacted: Fiscal Years 2005-2019*. (FY 2002-2017); House Fiscal Advisory Staff. (2020). *FY 2020 revised budget: 2020-H 7170, Substitute A, as amended*. (FY 2018-19); House Fiscal Advisory Staff. (2022). *Budget as enacted: Fiscal Year 2024*. (FY 2022-2023). Fiscal years 1997-2022 are funds spent and FY 2023 is budget as enacted.

★ In State Fiscal Year 2023, for the fourteenth year in a row, no state general revenue was allocated for cash assistance. State general revenue spending for cash assistance decreased steadily from 1996 through 2010, and the program is now entirely supported by federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds. Total expenditures for cash assistance in Rhode Island (federal and state) decreased by 85% between 1996 (when the program began) and 2022 but then increased in 2023.^{25,26} In 2021, Rhode Island spent 12% of its TANF funds on cash assistance, significantly lower than the national share of 23%.²⁷

Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance

Families Enrolled in the RI Works Program, by Type of Work Activity, December 2023



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, December 2023. The total number of work activities (1,814) is larger than the number of families with a work activity (1,510) because some families (280) had multiple work activities during the month.

★ As of December 2023, 7% of families with work activities were employed, and <1% were in community work experience. Most of these families were also engaged in other work activities during the month.²⁸

★ Parents with limited training and skills can participate in basic education and work skills programs. Parents also can receive up to two years of education as part of their 60-month lifetime limit.²⁹ As of December 2023, 33% of families were participating in education or training programs.³⁰

★ Seventeen percent of families with a work activity were participating in job search activities, including job search and job skills development programs delivered in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, and were participating in other job readiness activities. Forty-six percent of families were receiving supportive services, including mental or physical health and substance abuse treatment, and housing and homelessness services needed to address barriers to employment.^{31,32}

★ An additional 1% of families received educational support through the Teen and Family Development Program, a program for young parents.³³

Support for Young Parents

★ Seventy-eight percent of children born to teen mothers who never marry and do not graduate from high school live in poverty.³⁴

★ RI Works provides additional support to young parents. Parents who are under age 20 and do not have a high school diploma or GED are required to receive 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.³⁵

★ In December 2023, there were 62 parents under the age of 20 enrolled in RI Works. Some are parent heads of household, and others may be parts of multi-generational households.³⁶

Support for Individuals with Disabilities and Their Families

★ Recent research conducted in several states shows that cash assistance recipients report physical and mental health disabilities at higher rates than the general population. Parents with physical or mental health conditions can face barriers to employment, including discrimination by employers.³⁷

★ 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 or to substance abuse or mental health treatment, as appropriate.³⁸

★ As of December 2023, 363 families (12% of the total RI Works caseload) had hardship extensions, 22 for a physical or mental disability, seven who were unable to work due to a domestic violence situation, five to care for a disabled family member, three due to homelessness, and 326 because of economic hardship or another critical condition or circumstance.³⁹ 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 low levels of education and limited work experience.^{40,41}

Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance

Table 12. Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance (RI Works), Rhode Island, December 2023

CITY/TOWN	# OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18	NUMBER RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE		% OF CHILDREN RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE
		FAMILIES	CHILDREN	
Barrington	4,489	8	20	<1%
Bristol	2,887	17	25	1%
Burrillville	3,229	19	35	1%
Central Falls	6,411	150	286	4%
Charlestown	1,161	2	4	<1%
Coventry	6,655	35	55	1%
Cranston	15,744	152	247	2%
Cumberland	7,550	36	64	1%
East Greenwich	3,465	6	10	<1%
East Providence	7,886	110	181	2%
Exeter	1,175	2	2	<1%
Foster	790	1	4	1%
Glocester	1,896	5	8	<1%
Hopkinton	1,613	6	11	1%
Jamestown	871	2	5	1%
Johnston	5,119	51	81	2%
Lincoln	4,640	36	60	1%
Little Compton	568	2	4	1%
Middletown	3,487	44	72	2%
Narragansett	1,651	4	9	1%
New Shoreham	189	0	0	0%
Newport	3,660	117	215	6%
North Kingstown	5,496	37	60	1%
North Providence	5,802	89	149	3%
North Smithfield	2,274	7	13	1%
Pawtucket	16,455	382	637	4%
Portsmouth	3,444	13	26	1%
Providence	41,021	1,195	2,266	6%
Richmond	1,627	4	9	1%
Scituate	1,866	9	16	1%
Smithfield	3,411	13	22	1%
South Kingstown	4,339	11	23	1%
Tiverton	2,723	17	25	1%
Warren	1,826	13	20	1%
Warwick	14,034	117	197	1%
West Greenwich	1,251	4	5	<1%
West Warwick	5,787	66	119	2%
Westerly	3,826	19	31	1%
Woonsocket	9,467	345	620	7%
Other/Unknown	NA	5	8	NA
Four Core Cities	73,354	2,072	3,809	5%
Remainder of State	136,431	1,074	1,827	1%
Rhode Island	209,785	3,151	5,644	3%



Education and Training Supporting Employment

★ Between 2017 and 2022, almost 63,354 working-age adults (18 to 64) in Rhode Island did not have a high school diploma or GED.⁴²

★ Nationally, between 2020 and 2030, jobs requiring a postsecondary degree or certificate are projected to grow faster than jobs requiring a high school diploma.⁴³ Between 2017 and 2022, the unemployment rate for Rhode Islanders without a high school diploma was 10.6%, compared to 6.8% for those with a high school degree and 2.9% for those with a bachelor's degree or higher.⁴⁴

★ Parents enrolled in RI Works face significant barriers to success in the labor market. Twenty-nine percent of parents enrolled in RI Works report did not finish high school. Among a group of parents receiving cash assistance who were tested in March 2020, about one-third (34%) of those tested in English tested at or below the sixth grade reading level, while more than half (56%) 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.⁴⁵

★ Recent research has shown that well-designed and well-implemented programs that focus on building skills and providing support can increase future employment and earnings of cash assistance recipients. Programs that combine education, training, and support services are more effective than standalone job search or skills instruction programs.⁴⁶ States should explore how to meet their work participation rate while offering beneficiaries a chance to improve job skills and long-term work preparedness.⁴⁷

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, December 2023. 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 2020, Table P2 and Table P4.

Communities may have more families than children receiving cash assistance because a pregnant woman without children is eligible upon verification of pregnancy.

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

References

^{1,2,3,5,8,18,19,20,22,23,24,29,32,35,38} Rhode Island Works Program rules and regulations, 218-RICR-20-00-2 (2021). Retrieved December 22, 2023, from sos.ri.gov

^{4,11,14,15,17,28,30,31,33,36,39,45} Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database and RI Bridges Database, December 1996-2023.

⁶ Child Support Program rules and regulations, 218-RICR-30-00-1 (2021). Retrieved March 28, 2023, from sos.ri.gov

(continued on page 178)

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).

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.^{1,2} The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) 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 Child hunger has been shown to decrease by almost one-third after their families have received SNAP benefits for six months.⁴

Nationally, SNAP is available to households with gross monthly incomes below 130% of the federal poverty level, net monthly incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level, and no more than \$2,750 in resources.⁵ Rhode Island is one of 41 states that have implemented broad-based categorical eligibility, which allowed Rhode Island to increase the gross income limit and remove the resource limit for most applicants.⁶ The gross monthly income limit for Rhode Island is 185% of the federal poverty level (\$45,991 per year

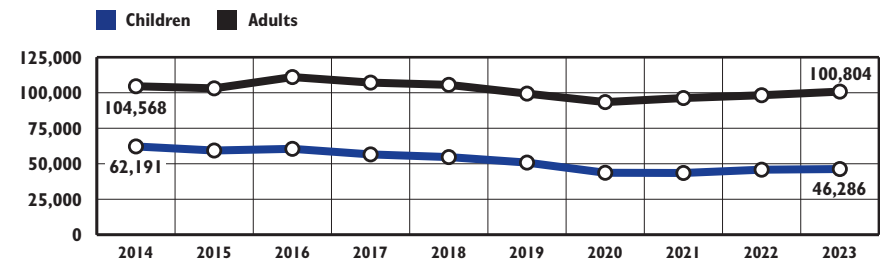
for a family of three in 2023).

Households must still meet the net monthly income limit of 100% of the federal poverty level after allowable deductions, which include deductions for housing costs and childcare.^{7,8}

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.⁹ In Rhode Island during October 2023, 72% of SNAP households had gross incomes below the federal poverty level (\$24,860 for a family of three in 2023).^{10,11} In October 2023, the average monthly SNAP benefit for a family of three in Rhode Island was \$559 (this average does not include supplemental benefits provided during the COVID-19 pandemic).¹² Beginning October 2021, maximum monthly benefits increased due to an update of the Thrifty Food Plan on which benefits are based.¹³

Participation in SNAP in early childhood is associated with improvements in short- and long-term health outcomes, improved high school graduation rates, and increases in adult earnings. In 2021, SNAP and the School Lunch Program lifted 2.8 million Americans out of poverty and was the most effective program for lifting families out of deep poverty.^{14,15,16} SNAP is also an effective form of economic stimulus because it moves money directly into the local economy.¹⁷

Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Children and Adults, Rhode Island, 2014-2023



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, 2014–2015 and RI Bridges Database, 2016–2023. Data represent children under age 18 and adults who participated in SNAP during the month of October.

★ Of the 147,090 Rhode Islanders enrolled in SNAP in October 2023, 69% were adults and 31% were children. Of the children enrolled in SNAP, 32% were under the age of six.¹⁸

★ The number of children and adults receiving SNAP benefits decreased each year from 2016 to 2020 and since then has slowly increased.¹⁹

Child Hunger in Rhode Island

★ Food insecurity is a method to measure and assess the risk of hunger.²⁰ The USDA defines food insecurity as not always having access to enough food for an active, healthy life. From 2020 to 2022, 8.6% of Rhode Island households and 11.2% of U.S. households were food insecure. In 2022, 17.3% of all U.S. households with children and 42.3% of U.S. households with children living in poverty experienced food insecurity.²¹ Rhode Island launched a retail SNAP incentive pilot program which gives discounts on fruits and vegetables, improves nutrition, and reduces food insecurity in households.²²

★ Several 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 School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.²³ The Rhode Island Community Food Bank network served, on average, 17,700 more people each month in 2023 than in 2022, with nearly one in three Rhode Island households unable to afford adequate food.²⁴

Children Receiving SNAP Benefits

Table 13. Children Under Age 18 Receiving SNAP Benefits, Rhode Island, October 2023



Summer EBT Program and SNAP Benefits

★ According to 2023 survey data from the RI Life Index, 38% of households with children in Rhode Island reported not being able to meet their basic food needs, compared to 29% of all households, down from 41% for households with children and 31% for all households in 2022.²⁵

★ Between March 2020 and February 2023, all SNAP households were eligible for a supplemental benefit of at least \$95 during the COVID-19 public health emergency. By March 2023, families no longer received these benefits as the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023* passed, ending all emergency allotments related to the COVID-19 pandemic.^{26,27}

★ SNAP participants can now select and pay for their groceries online using their EBT card at participating online retailers.²⁸

★ Beginning in summer 2024, each child in Rhode Island who is eligible for free or reduced-price school meals will be able to receive a monthly \$40 payment on an EBT card during summer months.²⁹

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER PARTICIPATING
Barrington	137
Bristol	250
Burrillville	347
Central Falls	2,270
Charlestown	100
Coventry	715
Cranston	2,789
Cumberland	646
East Greenwich	158
East Providence	1,502
Exeter	113
Foster	75
Glocester	108
Hopkinton	179
Jamestown	18
Johnston	902
Lincoln	598
Little Compton	21
Middletown	396
Narragansett	122
New Shoreham	0
Newport	1,022
North Kingstown	590
North Providence	1,055
North Smithfield	182
Pawtucket	5,202
Portsmouth	176
Providence	17,315
Richmond	174
Scituate	115
Smithfield	242
South Kingstown	370
Tiverton	282
Warren	272
Warwick	1,752
West Greenwich	75
West Warwick	1,441
Westerly	508
Woonsocket	4,229
Unknown	99
Four Core Cities	29,016
Remainder of State	17,171
Rhode Island	46,286

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 2023. *261 children changed addresses mid-month resulting in the total being greater than the total number of distinct children

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 Factbooks prior to 2016.

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

References

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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 referrals to health care and social services. WIC serves pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children under age five living in low-income households. Any individual who participates in SNAP, RIte Care, Medicaid, or Rhode Island Works is automatically income-eligible for WIC. Participants also must be at nutritional risk to qualify. This can include inadequate nutrition, or medical risks such as anemia or high-risk pregnancy.^{1,2}

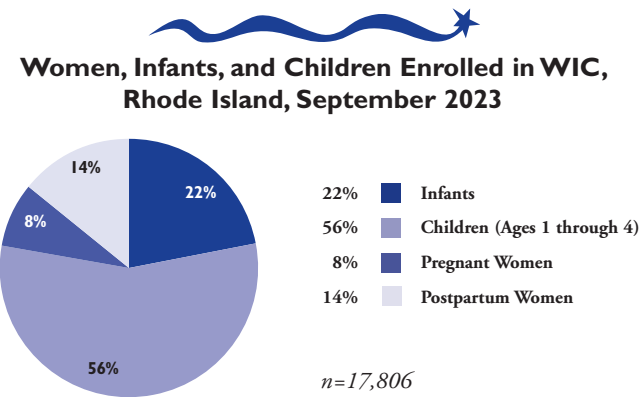
WIC improves the quality of participants' diets and promotes healthy eating habits. Studies have shown that WIC participants access more nutritious foods, including more produce, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. WIC participation also may decrease

household food insecurity (families that do not have regular access to enough food for an active, healthy life). Food insecurity in early childhood can lead to impaired cognitive, behavioral, and psychosocial development, and can limit academic achievement. Pregnant women also have special nutritional needs that influence pregnancy outcomes and the health of their children.^{3,4,5}

WIC participation has been shown to reduce infant mortality, improve birth outcomes (including reducing the likelihood of low birthweight and prematurity), improve cognitive development, reduce risk of child neglect and abuse, increase child immunization rates, and increase access to preventive medical care.^{6,7}

Revisions to the WIC food package that were implemented in 2009 increased access to a wider variety of nutritious foods, increased state flexibility to provide culturally appropriate foods, and strengthened breastfeeding support.^{8,9} In Rhode Island in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023, 35% of infants participating in WIC were breastfed, and 65% of infants were fully formula fed.¹⁰

In 2020, WIC began providing an EBT (electronic benefit transfer) card called eWIC to all Rhode Island users.¹¹



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, WIC Program, September 2023.

★ **Infants and children ages one through four comprised more than three-quarters (78%) of the population served by WIC in September 2023 in Rhode Island. Women accounted for over one-fifth (8% pregnant and 14% postpartum) of the population served.**¹²

★ **In September 2023, 4% of WIC participants in Rhode Island were American Indian, 2% were Asian, 18% were Black, 64% were white, and 12% identified as another race or more than one race. Sixty percent of WIC participants identified as Hispanic. Hispanic women and children may be included in any race category.**¹³

★ **All four of the core cities had participation rates at or exceeding the statewide participation rate of 46% in September 2023: Pawtucket (46%), Woonsocket (50%), Providence (58%), Central Falls (59%).**¹⁴

★ **WIC is not an entitlement program (there is not enough funding for all eligible women and children to participate). Congress determines funding for WIC annually.¹⁵ Rhode Island received \$20.1 million in federal WIC funding during FFY 2023, slightly higher than the \$19.8 million received in FFY 2022.**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, 7,686 WIC participants purchased fresh produce at 65 farmers' markets through the FMNP in FFY 2023.**¹⁸

Women and Children Participating in WIC

Table 14.

Women, Infants, and Children Enrolled in WIC, September 2023

CITY/TOWN	ESTIMATED NUMBER ELIGIBLE	NUMBER ENROLLED	% OF ELIGIBLE ENROLLED
Barrington	178	33	19%
Bristol	295	105	36%
Burrillville	420	90	21%
Central Falls	1,902	1,118	59%
Charlestown	157	51	33%
Coventry	754	208	28%
Cranston	2,991	1,369	46%
Cumberland	718	266	37%
East Greenwich	130	38	29%
East Providence	1,520	641	42%
Exeter	107	29	27%
Foster	122	28	23%
Glocester	157	37	24%
Hopkinton	186	141	76%
Jamestown	34	7	21%
Johnston	1,057	418	40%
Lincoln	558	185	33%
Little Compton	40	9	22%
Middletown	407	167	41%
Narragansett	131	38	29%
New Shoreham	32	0	0%
Newport	709	400	56%
North Kingstown	454	123	27%
North Providence	1,174	380	32%
North Smithfield	231	103	45%
Pawtucket	4,576	2,085	46%
Portsmouth	239	81	34%
Providence	13,619	7,886	58%
Richmond	163	12	7%
Scituate	175	26	15%
Smithfield	286	75	26%
South Kingstown	410	119	29%
Tiverton	301	95	32%
Warren	245	101	41%
Warwick	2,009	680	34%
West Greenwich	100	20	20%
West Warwick	1,189	462	39%
Westerly	541	168	31%
Woonsocket	2,990	1,500	50%
Unknown	670	-	0%
Four Core Cities	23,087	12,589	55%
Remainder of State	18,892	6,705	35%
Rhode Island	41,979	19,294	46%

Stigma Associated With Participation in WIC

★ Nationally, many participants express frustration that stores do not have signs indicating which items are WIC-eligible and feel stigmatized by store employees and other customers during checkout. Granting flexibility for the quantity of items purchased, improving signage for eligible products, allowing WIC items to be rung up along with SNAP and other food purchases, and allowing self-checkout for WIC items may help to reduce stigma.^{19,20}

Underutilization and Policy Recommendations

★ Waivers granted by the federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic provided flexibility in enrollment, benefit issuance, and redemption, and the flexibility of these waivers was extended in the *2021 American Rescue Plan*. Allowing WIC applicants and participants the option of telephone and videoconference appointments, offering evening and weekend appointments, allowing participants to submit eligibility documents electronically, and developing mobile apps or portals for participants to make and change appointments can improve participation and retention rates and limit participants' need to miss work or school.²¹

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Estimated Number Eligible: Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Medicaid Management Information System, September 30, 2023.

Number Enrolled: Rhode Island Department of Health, WIC Program, September 2023.

Note: WIC participation rates in this Factbook and the 2023 Factbook are based on a single date in September. Factbooks from 2020-2022 used a reference date in June, and Factbooks prior to 2020 used a September 30 reference date, with the exception of the 2011 Factbook, which used a July 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).

EOHHS data indicated that there were 670 women, infants, or children eligible who had an unknown residence. These are included in the Rhode Island state total but not assigned to any city or town.

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

References

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