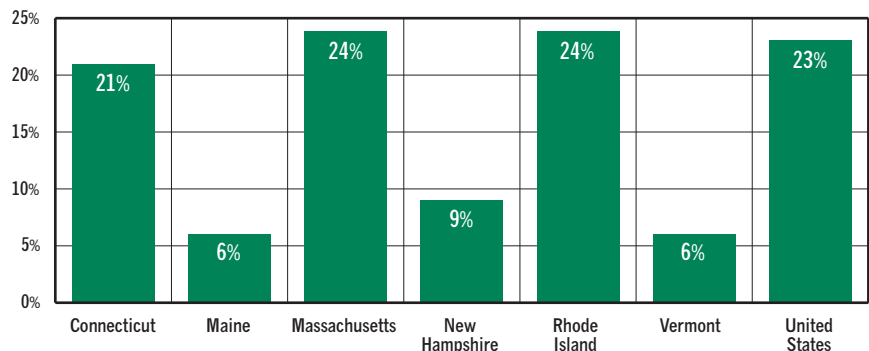


RHODE ISLAND CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

The majority of immigrant families in Rhode Island are long-term residents of the United States. In Rhode Island in 2008, only 1% of parents in immigrant families with children arrived in this country less than 5 years ago. Rhode Island is tied with three other states for the lowest percentage of recently arrived immigrant parents in the U.S.¹

Immigrant families contribute to the state and the nation through payment of property, sales and income taxes, cultural contributions and small business ownership. Eighty-seven percent of children in immigrant families in Rhode Island are U.S. citizens born in the United States.² More than nine out of ten children ages 5 to 17 in immigrant families in Rhode Island speak English.³

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN LIVING IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES, NEW ENGLAND AND UNITED STATES, 2006-2008



Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2009). *Children in immigrant families (Percent) - 2008*. Retrieved on April 7, 2010 from www.datacenter.kidscount.org

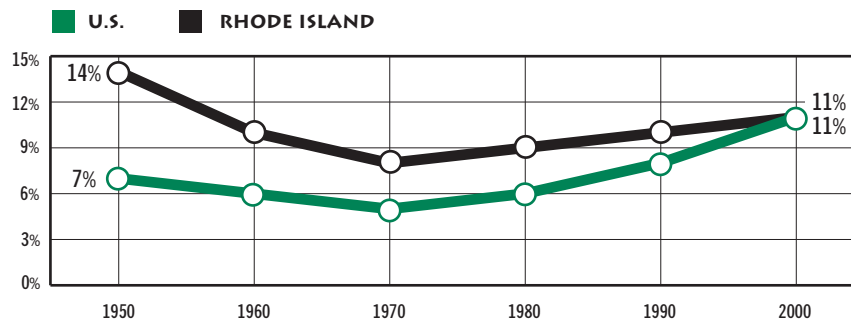
◆ Between 2006 and 2008, 24% (54, 025) of Rhode Island children were living in immigrant families, comparable to the U.S. rate of 23%.⁴

◆ Children in immigrant families are defined as children under age 18 who are foreign born or who have at least one foreign-born parent, regardless of citizenship status or year of arrival in the United States.⁵

FACTS ABOUT IMMIGRATION IN RHODE ISLAND

◆ According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, there were 128,453 foreign-born people living in Rhode Island in 2008, making up 12.2% of Rhode Island's population, comparable to the U.S. rate of 12.5%.⁶

FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION, RHODE ISLAND AND UNITED STATES, 1950-2000



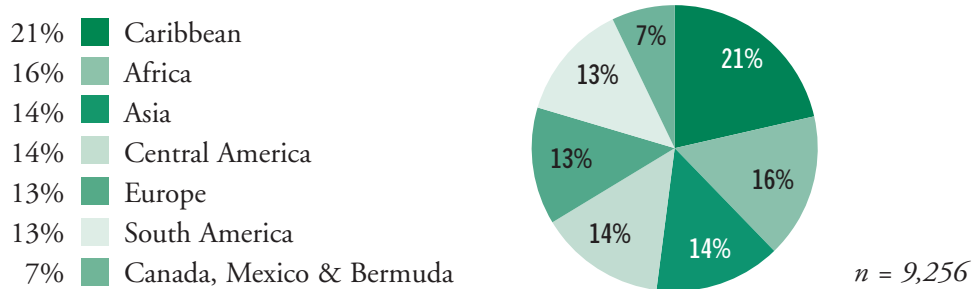
Sources: Analysis of U.S. Census data in *Destination Rhode Island: Domestic and international migration in the Ocean State*. (2007). Statewide Planning Program Technical Paper No. 159. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Administration. Gibson, C. J., and Lennon, E. (1999). *Historical Census statistics on the foreign-born population of the United States: 1850-1990*. Population Working Paper No. 29. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Summary File 1 and Summary File 3.

- ◆ Immigration is not a new phenomenon in the United States or in Rhode Island. The U.S. Bureau of the Census began collecting data on nativity of residents in 1850; at that time, foreign-born residents made up 10% of the total U.S. population. Between 1860 and 1920, the foreign-born population in the U.S. fluctuated between 13% and 15%, declining to 7% by 1950. In 1900 in Rhode Island, 31% of the population was foreign-born, declining to 14% by 1950.^{7,8}
- ◆ In 2000, the percentage of the population that was foreign-born was 11% in the U.S. and 11% in Rhode Island. Between 2000 and 2008, there was an 8% increase in Rhode Island's foreign-born population (from 119,277 in 2000 to 128,453 in 2008).^{9,10}
- ◆ Of the 128,453 foreign-born residents living in Rhode Island in 2008, 62,275 (48%) were citizens and 66,178 (52%) were non-citizens. Non-citizen foreign-born residents made up 6% of Rhode Island's total population in 2008.¹¹
- ◆ Rhode Island's ranking among the 50 states based on the percentage of the population that is foreign-born has fallen from 8th in 1990 to 12th in 2000 and 15th in 2008.¹²
- ◆ A recent report by the Migration Policy Institute indicates that Rhode Island and the other New England states are not considered to be "high growth" immigration states or "major immigration destination states" based on the total foreign-born population and changes in the foreign-born population between 2000 and 2008.¹³
- ◆ Most non-citizens are in the U.S. legally, including legal permanent residents, refugees, asylees and people with student visas and work visas. Nationally, it is estimated that approximately a third of foreign-born residents are unauthorized (undocumented).¹⁴
- ◆ The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service estimated that unauthorized immigrants made up 1.5% of Rhode Island's total population in 2000.¹⁵ More recent estimates indicate that there are between 20,000 and 35,000 unauthorized immigrants in Rhode Island, making up approximately 2% - 3.5% of the state's population.¹⁶

FOREIGN-BORN CHILDREN IN RHODE ISLAND

◆ Between 2006 and 2008, 4% (9,301) of Rhode Island's 231,960 children under age 18 were foreign-born, 25% of whom were naturalized citizens of the United States.¹⁷

REGIONS OF BIRTH, FOREIGN-BORN CHILDREN, RHODE ISLAND, 2006-2008



Source: Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2006-2008 American Community Survey data.

◆ Of foreign-born children living in Rhode Island between 2006 and 2008, 21% were born in the Caribbean, 16% were born in Africa, 14% were born in Central America, 14% were born in Asia, 13% were born in South America, 13% were born in Europe, and 7% were born in Canada, Bermuda or Mexico.¹⁸ Children born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens and are not counted as foreign-born.

CATEGORIES OF FOREIGN-BORN PEOPLE IN THE U.S.

- ◆ **Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs)** are persons who have been granted permission to live and work permanently in the United States. They are also known as “green card” recipients. LPRs may apply for citizenship after 5 years.
- ◆ **Refugees and Asylees and other "humanitarian" immigrants** are persons who sought residence in the United States in order to avoid persecution in their country of origin. Persons granted refugee status applied for admission while outside the United States. Persons granted asylum applied either at a port of entry or at some point after their entry into the United States. Refugees and asylees may apply to adjust their status to LPR after 1 year.
- ◆ **Naturalized Citizens** refer to persons aged 18 and over who become citizens of the United States. Most legal permanent residents are eligible to apply for naturalization within five years after obtaining LPR status. Immigrant children generally become citizens automatically when their parents become citizens.
- ◆ **Non-immigrant admissions** refer to arrivals of persons who are authorized to stay in the United States for a limited period of time. Most non-immigrants enter the United States as tourists or business travelers, but some come to work, study, or engage in cultural exchange programs.
- ◆ **Unauthorized immigrants (sometimes referred to as undocumented or illegal immigrants)** refer to persons who entered the country without permission or who entered through legal channels but then violated the terms of entry by staying past his or her visa expiration date or by engaging in unauthorized work.

Source: 2006 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics. (2007). Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics and Dinan, K.A. (2005) *Children in low-income immigrant families policy brief: Federal policies restrict immigrant children's access to key public benefits*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.



RHODE ISLAND'S CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

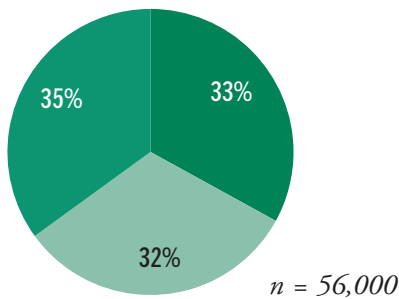
Immigrant families in Rhode Island are diverse in terms of country of origin, socio-economic status, education level and language skills.

◆ More than half (56%) of all children in immigrant families in Rhode Island live in families with incomes above 200% of the federal poverty level.¹⁹ Almost one-third of children in Rhode Island's immigrant families have at least one parent with a college or graduate level education, many of whom work in professional capacities as doctors, engineers, teachers and researchers.²⁰

◆ Almost half of children in immigrant families are poor (19%) or low-income (25%), and one in five (20%) live in families where none of their resident parents have a high school degree.²¹ Understanding the needs of this more vulnerable group of immigrants can help policymakers and community leaders to ensure that all children grow up with the opportunities they need to succeed.

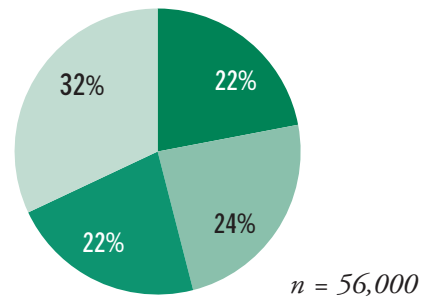
**BY AGE,
2006-2008**

- 33% ■ 5 and under
- 32% ■ Ages 6 to 11
- 35% ■ Ages 12 to 17



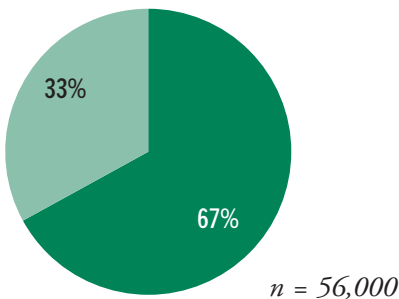
**BY PARENT'S EDUCATION,
2006-2008**

- 22% ■ Less than High School
- 24% ■ High School Degree
- 22% ■ Some College
- 32% ■ College Degree or higher



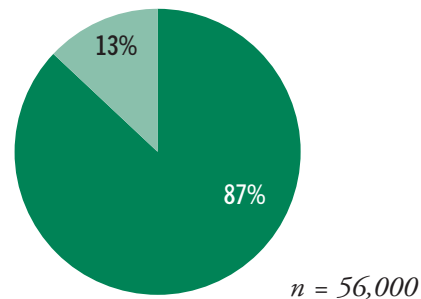
**BY FAMILY STRUCTURE,
2006-2008**

- 67% ■ Two Parent
- 33% ■ Single Parent



**BY CITIZENSHIP STATUS,
2006-2008**

- 87% ■ U.S. Citizen
- 13% ■ Non-Citizen

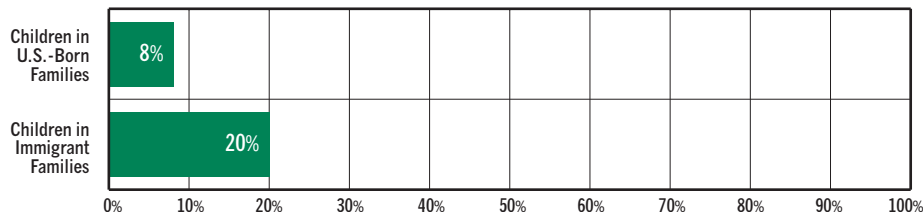


Source: Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2006-2008 American Community Survey data. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

PARENTAL EDUCATION LEVELS

◆ Parental educational attainment can impact many aspects of child well-being, including health, education and material resources.²² Lack of education can also put parents at a disadvantage in their attempts to secure a better life for their children.²³ Parents in immigrant families in Rhode Island are less likely to have a high school diploma than those in U.S.-born families, often due to circumstances in their countries of origin.²⁴

CHILDREN IN FAMILIES WHERE ALL RESIDENT PARENTS HAVE LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE, RHODE ISLAND, 2008



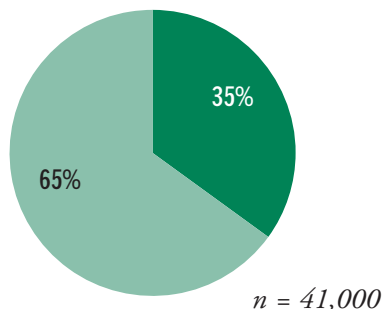
Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2009). *Children whose parents all have less than a high school degree by children in immigrant families (Percent) - 2008*. Retrieved on April 7, 2010 from www.datacenter.kidscount.org

◆ In Rhode Island, 20% of children with immigrant parents lived in families where all resident parents had less than a high school degree, compared to 8% of children with U.S.-born parents.²⁵

LANGUAGE ABILITY OF CHILDREN AGES 5 TO 17 IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

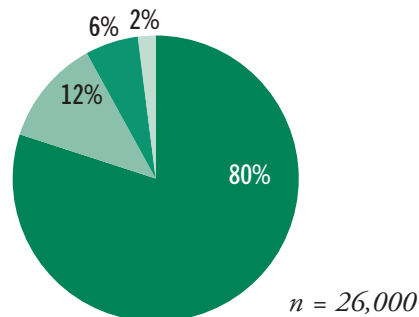
BY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME, 2006-2008

35% ■ English only
65% ■ Language other than English



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY OF CHILDREN AGES 5-17 WHO SPEAK ANOTHER LANGUAGE AT HOME, 2006-2008

80% ■ Speak English "very well"
12% ■ Speak English "well"
6% ■ Do not speak English "well"
2% ■ Do not speak English "at all"



Source: Population Reference Bureau Analysis of 2006-2008 American Community Survey Data.

LINGUISTICALLY ISOLATED HOUSEHOLDS

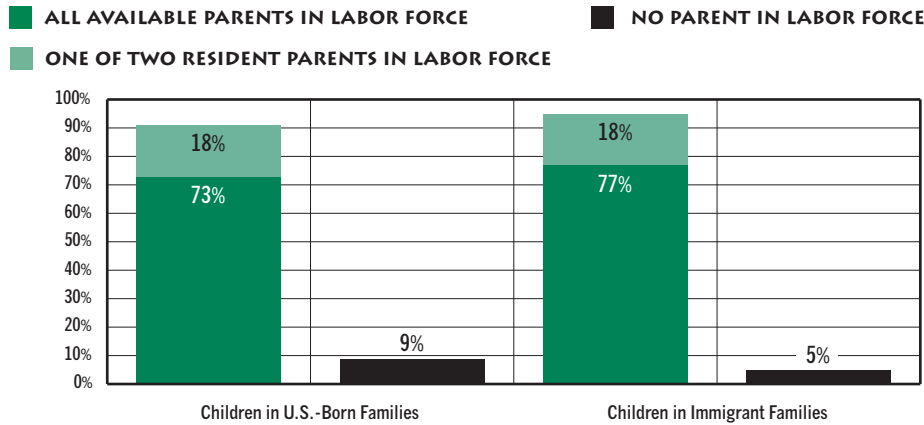
◆ Children living in families where no one over the age of 14 either only speaks English or speaks English "very well" are considered to be linguistically isolated. Linguistic isolation contributes to family economic barriers and impacts parents' ability to communicate effectively with their children's teachers and health care providers.²⁶

◆ Twenty-one percent of children in immigrant families in Rhode Island lived in linguistically isolated households.²⁷ Adequate access to English-language classes for adults can help to reduce linguistic isolation.

PARENTAL LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

◆ Virtually all immigrant families with children are working families, with 95% labor force participation. In Rhode Island in 2008, children in immigrant families had higher parental labor force participation rates than children in U.S.-born families.²⁸

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PARENTS BY FAMILY NATIVITY, RHODE ISLAND, 2008



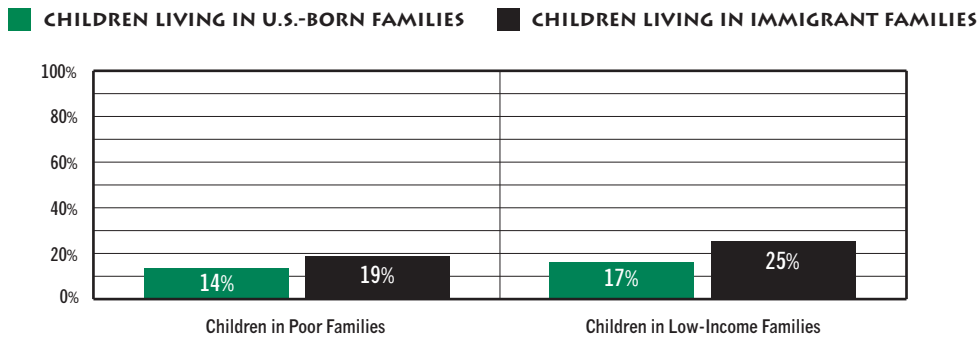
Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2009). *Children with all available parents (not) in the labor force by children in immigrant families (Percent) - 2008*. Retrieved on April 12, 2010 from www.datacenter.kidscount.org

FAMILY INCOME

◆ Compared to children of U.S.-born parents, children with immigrant parents are more likely to be poor (incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level) or low-income (incomes between 100% and 200% of the federal poverty level). More than half (56%) of all children in immigrant families in Rhode Island live in families with incomes above 200% of the federal poverty line.²⁹

◆ Children in immigrant families are slightly more likely to be poor than children in U.S.-born families.³⁰ Over two-thirds (69%) of Rhode Island's poor children live in families with U.S.-born parents.³¹

CHILDREN LIVING IN POOR AND LOW-INCOME FAMILIES, RHODE ISLAND, 2008



Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2009). *Children living below the poverty threshold and Children living in low-income families by children in immigrant families (Percent) - 2008*. Retrieved on April 9, 2010 from www.datacenter.kidscount.org

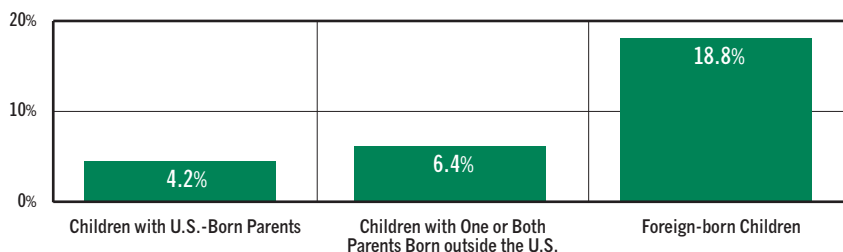
◆ In 2008, Rhode Island's child poverty rate among children of U.S.-born parents was 14%, compared with 19% of children living in immigrant families. Seventeen percent of children in Rhode Island with U.S.-born parents were low-income in 2008, compared with 25% of children in immigrant families.³²

◆ Low family incomes among immigrant families in the U.S. are mainly due to lower labor force participation among immigrant women than native-born women and to the low wages received by many immigrants. Many immigrant parents earn low wages because of low levels of educational attainment and limited English proficiency.³³

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

◆ Children's health insurance status is the major determinant in whether children have access to care.³⁴ Children who lack insurance coverage are more likely to have poorer health outcomes, have fewer well-child visits, and are more likely to delay seeking medical care.^{35, 36} Children in immigrant families are more likely to be uninsured than those with U.S.-born parents.³⁷

CHILDREN WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE BY FAMILY NATIVITY, RHODE ISLAND, 2007



Source: Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health analysis of data from the *2007 National Survey of Children's Health*.

◆ According to the *2007 National Survey of Children's Health*, 18.8% of foreign-born children in Rhode Island lacked health insurance, compared with 6.4% of Rhode Island children with one or both parents born outside the U.S., and 4.2% of children with U.S.-born parents.³⁸

◆ While immigrant families in the U.S. have high labor force participation rates, immigrants are more likely than U.S.-born workers to hold low-wage jobs that are less likely to offer health benefits.³⁹

STATE AND FEDERAL PUBLIC BENEFIT PROGRAMS

◆ The federal *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act* (PRWORA) of 1996 restricted the eligibility of lawfully-present immigrant children and adults for Medicaid and children's health insurance programs. Unauthorized immigrants were never eligible for federal funding through these programs.⁴⁰ Emergency medical services are available to all people regardless of immigration status.⁴¹

◆ After 1996, a number of states, including Rhode Island, created state-funded programs for non-citizen children who met income guidelines. During the 2006 legislative session, eligibility for Rhode Island's **RIte Care** health insurance program was eliminated for undocumented and LPR children who were not enrolled in RIte Care prior to January 1, 2007. As of June 1, 2008, approximately 2,800 legal permanent resident children who have lived in the U.S. less than five years and undocumented children who were previously enrolled in RIte Care lost coverage. **Federal matching funds for lawfully residing children became available to states as a result of the reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in 2009.** As of April 1, 2010, lawfully-residing immigrant children are eligible for the **RIte Care, RIte Share, and Katie Beckett programs** without waiting five years to be eligible. Pregnant immigrant women (regardless of legal status) who meet income guidelines continue to be eligible.

◆ State and federal public benefit programs, such as the **Rhode Island Works (RI Works) Program** and the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program)** provide a safety net for children and work-supports for families. Legal permanent resident children are eligible for SNAP benefits if they meet the other eligibility guidelines. LPR children who meet other program eligibility criteria can receive RI Works benefits after they have had LPR status for five years. Some other lawfully-present children (including refugees and asylees) are also eligible for RI Works and SNAP benefits. Unauthorized immigrants are not eligible for either of these benefits.⁴²

ACCESS TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

- ◆ High quality early learning opportunities improve the odds that children will succeed in school. Children attending high quality early care and education programs are less likely to repeat grades, drop out of school, or need special education than children who have not had high quality early educational experiences.⁴³ These programs also can connect families to other supports they need and for which they are eligible. Children in immigrant families are less likely to participate in high quality child care and early education programs than children in U.S.-born families.⁴⁴
- ◆ Each year large numbers of children, especially low-income and minority children, enter school without the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. Research shows that offering linguistically and culturally competent high quality early childhood and school readiness programs can improve educational outcomes for cultural and linguistic minority children.⁴⁵
- ◆ Between 2006 and 2008, 37% of 3- and 4-year-old children in immigrant families in Rhode Island attend child care or preschool as compared with 51% of their U.S. born peers.⁴⁶
- ◆ Child care subsidies improve access to quality child care and early educational opportunities for children in working families. Rhode Island children who are citizens, legal permanent residents, refugees and asylees are eligible to receive child care subsidies if their parents meet the income eligibility guidelines and work requirements.⁴⁷

K-12 EDUCATION

- ◆ Given the proven link between educational attainment and family economic success, a high-quality education is the most important vehicle for upward mobility for children in immigrant families.⁴⁸ Efforts that increase high school graduation and college completion rates among immigrant students are critical to young people's future success in the workforce.
- ◆ National research shows that children in immigrant families are more likely to be concentrated in under-resourced schools in high poverty communities.⁴⁹ In Rhode Island, students in the core cities consistently have lower reading proficiency, attend lower performing schools and have lower graduation rates than students in the remainder of the state.⁵⁰

U.S. SUPREME COURT DECISION GUARANTEES RIGHT TO PUBLIC EDUCATION

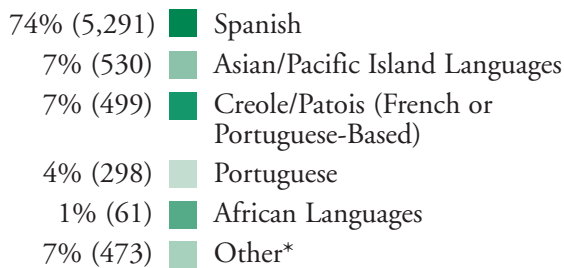
- ◆ In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe* that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits states from denying a free public education to undocumented immigrant children regardless of immigration status. The Equal Protection Clause provides that no State shall "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."
- ◆ In its ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court stated, "...Public education has a pivotal role in maintaining the fabric of our society and in sustaining our political and cultural heritage; the deprivation of education takes an inestimable toll on the social, economic, intellectual and psychological well-being of the individual, and poses an obstacle to individual achievement. In determining the rationality of the Texas statute, its costs to the Nation and to the innocent children may properly be considered."

Source: Supreme Court Collection. *Plyler v. Doe* (No. 80-1538). Retrieved from www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0457_0202_ZS.html

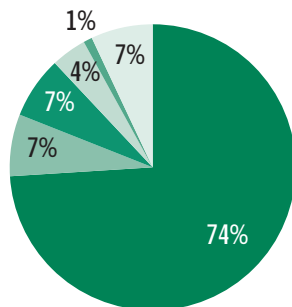
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

- ◆ Strong language skills in multiple languages are an economic asset for individuals as well as communities. In Rhode Island in 2008, 20% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 spoke a language other than English at home.⁵¹ Among children in immigrant families, 65% speak a language other than English at home; of these children, nine out of ten (92%) spoke English "well" or "very well."⁵²
- ◆ However, children who speak languages other than English at home and who also have difficulty speaking English can face greater challenges progressing in school and often encounter more barriers to success in the workforce as adults than their peers.⁵³
- ◆ Schools play a critical role in helping children to transition to the culture of the United States and in providing an education that supports academic success for children with a primary language other than English.⁵⁴ Rhode Island schools are legally mandated to provide programs to ELL students that are comparable in structure and content to instruction provided to English-proficient students.⁵⁵
- ◆ During the 2008-2009 school year, there were 7,152 English Language Learners (ELLs) in Rhode Island public schools. Seventy-five percent of all ELL students in Rhode Island live in the six core cities.⁵⁶ Core cities are those with more than 15% child poverty according to the 2000 U.S. Census; they include Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

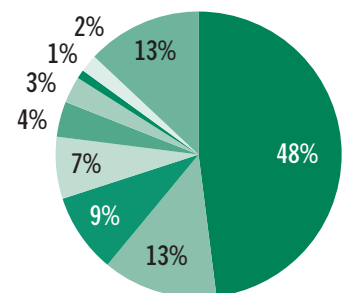
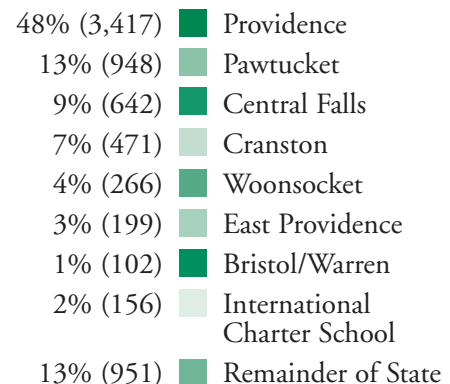
**ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS,
BY LANGUAGE, RHODE ISLAND,
2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR**



* Includes Arabic, French, German, Italian and other languages.



**ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS,
BY COMMUNITY, RHODE ISLAND,
2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR**



n = 7,152

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008-2009 School Year.

- ◆ In the 2008-2009 school year, ELL students in Rhode Island public schools spoke 80 different languages; the majority (74%) spoke Spanish. Twenty-eight percent were enrolled in a bilingual program and 72% were enrolled in an English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Central Falls, Cranston, East Greenwich, the International Charter School and Providence were the only districts to offer bilingual programs in the 2008-2009 school year.⁵⁷



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Restore access to RIte Care health insurance for income-eligible children who are undocumented immigrants.** All children need access to health care that supports their healthy growth and development and promotes school success. Health insurance coverage increases the likelihood that children will receive needed preventive services and reduces emergency room costs.
- ◆ **Increase access to high-quality child care and early education programs for children in families from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.** Children in immigrant families are less likely to attend child care or preschool in the two years before kindergarten and are less likely to have the skills needed to be ready to succeed in school.
- ◆ **Ensure that ESL and bilingual education programs in public schools provide high-level academic content and improve English proficiency.** Support bilingual programs that simultaneously develop proficiency in English and proficiency in another language. Appropriately transition ELL students to mainstream classrooms with the supports they need to succeed. Provide high-quality teacher preparation and professional development for teachers of ELL students.
- ◆ **Use the new student identifier and the Rhode Island Department of Education data warehouse to track the academic proficiency levels, academic progress and graduation rates of students who are English Language Learners.** Use the data to improve academic supports for these students.
- ◆ **Increase access to college through in-state tuition rates for undocumented students who have graduated from Rhode Island high schools and who are admitted to public colleges and universities through the regular admissions process.** Currently, public colleges and universities do not have consistent policies for setting tuition rates for students who have graduated from high schools in the state but who are undocumented. Many of these students and their families are actively in the process of obtaining legal status, which can sometimes take up to several years. In Rhode Island, many of these students are charged out-of-state tuition, which is several times the in-state tuition rate. Ten states have passed legislation allowing undocumented students to access in-state tuition rates, usually based on criteria that include graduating from high school in the state and minimum number of years in residence in the state.⁵⁸
- ◆ **Increase the availability of high-quality adult basic education and English-language classes, with special attention to communities with waiting lists.** According to the Office of Adult Education at the Rhode Island Department of Education, there currently are not enough adult education and English as a Second Language (ESL) services to meet demand.
- ◆ **Improve access to college transition services and financial aid for full-time and part-time adult students, including parents in immigrant families.** Higher education, technical training programs and technical colleges enable low-income adults to earn better wages and access career ladders.
- ◆ **Support federal efforts to achieve comprehensive immigration reform.** Federal immigration reform is critical to ensure appropriate levels of enforcement while providing unauthorized immigrants with a clear path to obtain legal status. The majority of children in immigrant families are U.S. citizens, even if their parents are not. Establishing an earned path to legal status through federal immigration reform is important for industries that currently rely on undocumented workers as well as for the well-being of children who are affected by workplace raids and the deportation of parents.

NATIONAL RESOURCES ON IMMIGRANT ISSUES

U.S. Bureau of the Census
www.census.gov

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
(formerly the Immigration and
Naturalization Service)
www.uscis.gov

Annie E. Casey Foundation
www.aecf.org/Home/KnowledgeCenter/
SpecialInterestAreas/ImmigrantsRefugees.aspx

**Children in America's Newcomer Families:
An Initiative of the Center for Demography
and Analysis at SUNY Albany and Child
Trends, Inc.**
www.albany.edu/csda/children

**Future of Children Journal:
Children of Immigrant Families**
http://www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/14_02_FullJournal.pdf

Migration Policy Institute
www.migrationpolicy.org

National Council of La Raza
www.nclr.org

National Immigration Law Center
www.nilc.org

Pew Hispanic Center
www.pewhispanic.org

RHODE ISLAND RESOURCES ON IMMIGRANT ISSUES

**Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy
(CHisPA)**
Michelle Cortés-Harkins, Executive Director
(401) 467-0111, www.chispari.org

Dorcas Place Adult and Family Learning Center
(401) 273-8866, www.dorcasplace.org

English for Action
(401) 421-3181, www.englishforaction.org

Genesis Center
Pheamo R. Witcher, President/CEO
(401) 781-6110, www.gencenter.org

Immigrants United
Michelle DePlante, Coordinator
(401) 784-8644

International Institute Rhode Island
William Shuey, Executive Director
(401) 461-5940, www.iiri.org

Progreso Latino
Mario Bueno, Executive Director
(401) 728-5920

Project Hope/Proyecto Esperanza
401-728-0515

**Socio Economic Development Center for
Southeast Asians (SEDC)**
Anthony Layton, Interim Executive Director
(401) 274-8811, www.sedcsea.com



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REFERENCES

- ^{1,4,19,21,24,25,27,28,29,30,32,51} Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center (www.datacenter.kidscount.org)
- ^{2,5} U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2008. Table B05009.
- ^{3,18,20,46,52} Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2006-2008 American Community Survey data.
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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Staff

Elizabeth Burke Bryant,
Executive Director
Catherine Boisvert Walsh,
Deputy Director
Leidy Alves, Administrative Assistant
Leanne Barrett, Policy Analyst
Jill Beckwith, Policy Analyst
Dorene Bloomer, Finance Director
Elaine Budish, Research Analyst
Raymonde Charles,
Communications Coordinator
W. Galarza, Executive Assistant/
Office Manager
Stephanie Geller, Policy Analyst
Jessica Mack, Policy Analyst
S. Katie Glover, Intern, Brown University
Katie Fairhead, Intern, Brown University

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903
401-351-9400
401-351-1758 (fax)
rikids@rikidscount.org
www.rikidscount.org



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