

# Racial and Ethnic Diversity

## DEFINITION

*Racial and ethnic diversity* is the percentage of children under age 18 by racial and ethnic categories as defined by the U.S. Census. Racial and ethnic categories are chosen by the head of household or person completing the Census form.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Racial and ethnic diversity has increased in the United States over the last several decades and is projected to rise in the future. Since 2000, all of the growth in the child population in the U.S. has been among Children of Color.<sup>1,2</sup> In 2024, 52% of all U.S. children were Children of Color.<sup>3</sup> In Rhode Island between 2010 and 2020, the Hispanic child population grew by 22% while the non-Hispanic white child population declined by 22%.<sup>4,5</sup> In 2020, 47% of children in Rhode Island were Children of Color, up from 36% in 2010. The number of Children of Color in Rhode Island grew by over 70,000 between 2010 and 2020, and the number of non-Hispanic white children decreased by over 31,000 during the same period.<sup>5,6</sup>

In 2020 in Rhode Island, 53% of children under age 18 were white, 8% were Two or more races, 6% were Black or African American, 3% were Asian, 1% identified as Some other race, and less than 1% were American Indian or

Alaska Native. In 2020, 27% of children living in Rhode Island were Hispanic.<sup>5</sup>

In 2020, more than half (61%) of all Children of Color in Rhode Island lived in the five core cities of Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket. More than three-quarters (78%) of children living in the five core cities were Children of Color.<sup>5</sup>

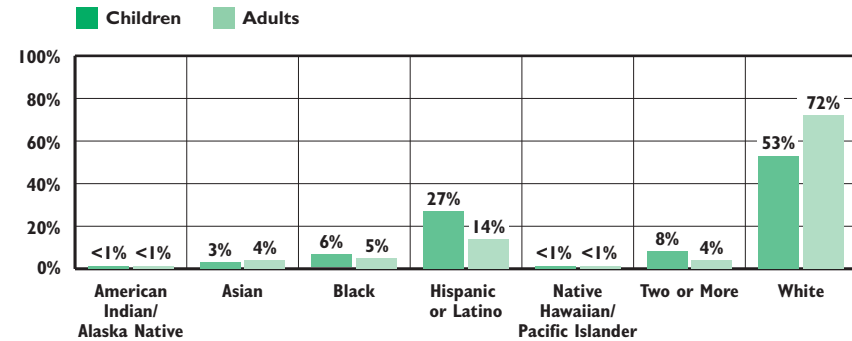
Between 2020 and 2024, there were 11,412 foreign-born children living in Rhode Island, 18% of whom were naturalized U.S. citizens.<sup>7</sup> Of Rhode Island's immigrant children, 36% were born in the Caribbean, 33% were born in Central or South America, 16% were born in Asia, 9% were born in Africa, 4% were born in Europe, and 1% were born in North America (Canada or Mexico).<sup>8</sup>

Between 2020 and 2024, 24% of children between the ages of five and 17 living in Rhode Island spoke a language other than English at home. During this same time, 18% of children spoke Spanish, 4% spoke other Indo-European languages, and 1% spoke Asian and Pacific Island languages.<sup>9</sup>

Many social service agencies and other community and family-facing organizations are working to adapt their practices to be more culturally competent and better serve this increasingly diverse child population.<sup>10</sup>



Population by Race/Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2020. Table P2 and Table P4.

- ◆ Children in Rhode Island are more likely to be identified as People of Color than adults. In 2020 in Rhode Island, 47% of children under age 18 were People of Color, compared with 28% of adults.<sup>5</sup>
- ◆ The diversity of Rhode Island is an asset; however, there are wide, persistent, and unacceptable disparities in children's economic well-being by race and ethnicity. Between 2020 and 2024, 28% of Hispanic children, 24% of American Indian or Alaska Native children, 22% of Black children, 9% of Asian/Pacific Islander children, and 7% of white children in Rhode Island lived in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold.<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ In 2023, 30% of children in Rhode Island lived in immigrant families, which is higher than the U.S. rate of 25%. Nationally and in Rhode Island, nearly all children in immigrant families, 96% and 97% respectively, have parents who have been in the U.S. for more than five years.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ There will be several changes to the 2030 Census, including: a combined question for collecting data on race and ethnicity, a new category for people of Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) descent, and detailed data on race and ethnicity. Respondents will also be able to select multiple categories for the race and ethnicity question. These changes are intended to produce more accurate data on the race and ethnicity of the United States population and to better reflect how respondents identify.<sup>12</sup>

Table 4.

Child Population, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2020

CITY/TOWN	UNDER AGE 18 BY RACE AND ETHNICITY								2020 POPULATION UNDER AGE 18
	AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC OR LATINO	NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	SOME OTHER RACE	TWO OR MORE RACES	WHITE	
Barrington	0	299	59	252	0	16	400	3,463	4,489
Bristol	7	39	36	200	1	14	180	2,410	2,887
Burrillville	9	16	34	224	2	12	213	2,719	3,229
Central Falls	9	26	368	4,628	1	246	502	631	6,411
Charlestown	29	2	15	45	0	11	102	957	1,161
Coventry	18	105	93	457	1	27	488	5,466	6,655
Cranston	28	1344	747	4,566	2	145	1134	7,778	15,744
Cumberland	10	436	197	941	0	65	527	5,374	7,550
East Greenwich	1	230	34	228	1	8	242	2,721	3,465
East Providence	11	187	415	1171	1	252	1001	4,848	7,886
Exeter	5	17	3	65	0	9	70	1,006	1,175
Foster	0	0	3	48	0	0	31	708	790
Glocester	0	10	6	138	0	19	129	1,594	1,896
Hopkinton	9	6	10	71	0	10	93	1,414	1,613
Jamestown	0	8	6	43	0	3	57	754	871
Johnston	11	157	255	1245	3	43	333	3,072	5,119
Lincoln	12	209	152	544	0	49	388	3,286	4,640
Little Compton	0	3	2	23	0	9	27	504	568
Middletown	6	113	191	504	4	45	374	2,250	3,487
Narragansett	12	24	17	53	4	6	117	1,418	1,651
New Shoreham	0	0	5	26	0	0	12	146	189
Newport	48	55	252	981	1	59	534	1,730	3,660
North Kingstown	37	115	93	404	1	23	465	4,358	5,496
North Providence	12	202	709	1462	6	92	512	2,807	5,802
North Smithfield	1	37	24	171	0	17	133	1,891	2,274
Pawtucket	75	176	2,614	5,488	10	757	2,652	4,683	16,455
Portsmouth	10	52	69	244	1	17	314	2,737	3,444
Providence	205	1,516	5,455	24,570	10	616	2,409	6,240	41,021
Richmond	13	4	7	65	2	17	100	1,419	1,627
Scituate	1	19	14	123	0	8	109	1,592	1,866
Smithfield	7	49	18	257	0	25	233	2,822	3,411
South Kingstown	78	95	79	266	0	22	429	3,370	4,339
Tiverton	0	39	43	131	3	17	236	2,254	2,723
Warren	9	32	39	108	0	17	157	1,464	1,826
Warwick	33	572	366	1,688	0	119	1149	10,107	14,034
West Greenwich	1	41	12	48	0	16	124	1,009	1,251
West Warwick	23	153	205	897	0	42	573	3,894	5,787
Westerly	48	85	26	362	4	22	294	2,985	3,826
Woonsocket	36	482	789	3,376	7	64	979	3,734	9,467
Five Core Cities	373	2,255	9,478	39,043	29	1,742	7,076	17,018	77,014
Remainder of State	441	4,700	3,984	17,070	36	1,197	10,746	94,597	132,771
Rhode Island	814	6,955	13,462	56,113	65	2,939	17,822	111,615	209,785

**Source of Data for Table/Methodology**

U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2020 Table P2 and Table P4. All categories are mutually exclusive. If Hispanic was selected as ethnicity, individuals are not included in other racial categories. Likewise, if more than one race was selected, individuals are included in Two or more races and not in their individual race categories.

Five core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

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