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#RIFactbook

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The 2026 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook Executive Summary: Key Takeaways and What's New

Rhode Island's children and families continue to experience both progress and persistent challenges. This year's Factbook highlights areas of improvement in health and education, alongside increasing economic strain, ongoing racial and ethnic disparities, and emerging concerns about the availability of data needed to inform policy and decision-making.

Ensuring that all children have the opportunity to thrive will require sustained attention to equity, economic stability, and the use of reliable data to guide decision-making.

The Importance of Data to Inform Policy, Planning, and Action

Data is an important tool that everyone from community leaders to policymakers to advocates use to inform their planning, policymaking, and action. The *Factbook* has always provided data to be used in this way. However, recently some data has been harder to obtain, no longer available, or missing key information on disparities by race, ethnicity, or the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced that it will no longer produce its annual Household Food Security Report, ending over 30 years of data collection on this topic. Data on pregnancy risks and maternal and infant mortality is also under threat, and a 2025 Executive Order has halted efforts to include information on sexual orientation and gender identity in national surveys.
- Data on childhood immunizations from the National Immunization Survey was delayed this year and was not available in time for publication.
- There is no October 2025 unemployment rate data available due to the government shutdown.
- Problems like food insecurity, maternal mortality, and high suicide rates among LGBTQ+ youth will not go away just because the data is not there, but not having the data will make it harder to improve child well-being and solve these problems together.

New section on Immigrant Children and Youth

This year's *Factbook* includes an expanded section (in the Racial and Ethnic Disparities indicator, pages 18-21) on **immigrant children and youth**, recognizing their growing presence in Rhode Island and the importance of understanding their experiences.

- Since the establishment of modern-day Rhode Island, immigrants have been integral to the state's economic success. Rhode Island was the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution and ever since has been home to diverse immigrant populations.
- About one in eight residents is foreign-born, and most speak English and are naturalized citizens. From 2020 to 2024, more than 160,000 Rhode Islanders were born in another country.
 - As of 2023, nearly one third (30%) of children in Rhode Island and more than half (58%) of Hispanic children lived in an immigrant family.
 - In Rhode Island, from 2012 to 2025, the number of public-school students identified as being immigrants, has more than tripled (1,893 to 6,105).
- Immigration enforcement action and anti-immigrant rhetoric is affecting children's access to health care. Families and children are delaying or avoiding seeking health care due to the presence of immigration enforcement officers at health clinics, centers, and hospitals.
- Immigration enforcement has a negative effect on student attendance, school enrollment rates, mental health, and student achievement, particularly for Students of Color. In Rhode Island, the increased presence of immigration enforcement has been associated with lower attendance rates among multilingual students.

A Changing Geography of Child Poverty: Newport Now a Core City

In 2024, **16.3% of Rhode Island children lived in poverty**, an increase from 13.3% in 2023 and higher than the national rate. Child poverty in Rhode Island remains concentrated, with **69% of children living in poverty residing in just five cities**.

This year, **Newport has been added to the list of core cities**, joining Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket. Newport's inclusion in the core cities reflects a shift in where child poverty is concentrated, as its child poverty rate has been similar to - or higher than - Pawtucket's in recent years. In fact, from 2020-2024, Newport had the second highest rate of childhood poverty in Rhode Island with 32% of children living in poverty. Only Central Falls (33%) had a higher child poverty rate. While estimates for Newport (and Central Falls) have a larger margin of error due to their smaller populations, the data points to important changes in the distribution of economic hardship across the state.

Family and Community

Pages 8-21

Rhode Island continues to experience **declining birth rates**, with the second lowest fertility rate in the country. Fewer births have implications for long-term population trends, school enrollment, and the state’s future workforce.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities Persist

At the same time, **racial and ethnic disparities remain a defining feature of child well-being** in Rhode Island. Disparities are evident across health, economic, and community indicators, reinforcing the need for policies that address structural inequities and ensure all children and families have access to opportunity.

Disparities are evident in areas including:

- **Health insurance coverage**, with 9.0% of Black children uninsured compared to 3.7% statewide
- **Neighborhood poverty**, where Hispanic children are significantly more likely to live in high-poverty areas
- **Maternal and child health outcomes**, housing conditions, and involvement in public systems

These disparities highlight the need for continued focus on policies and investments that promote equity and address systemic barriers. The charts below show racial and ethnic disparities by comparing key indicators:



Economic Well-Being Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	ALL RACES	AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC	NATIVE HAWAIIAN/ OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	WHITE
Children in Poverty	14%	24%	9%	22%	28%	0%	7%
Births to Mothers with <12 Years Education	11%	26%	6%	10%	24%	NA	4%
Unemployment Rate	4.8%	NA	NA	5.4%	7.8%	NA	4.2%
Median Family Income	\$112,375	\$80,248	\$126,074	\$84,993	\$68,226	NA	\$124,647
Homeownership	64%	40%	54%	37%	39%	22%	70%



Health Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	ALL RACES	AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC	NATIVE HAWAIIAN/ OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	WHITE
Children Without Health Insurance	3.7%	NA	1.2%	9.0%	6.1%	NA	1.5%
Women with Delayed or No Prenatal Care	16.0%	27.7%	15.9%	22.2%	19.1%	NA	12.7%
Low Birthweight Infants	7.7%	13.8%*	8.8%	10.8%	8.3%	NA	6.6%
Severe Maternal Morbidity (rate per 10,000 births)	112	NA	NA	181	142	NA	90
Any Infant Breastfeeding	82%	75%	86%	79%	79%	78%	84%
Combined Overweight and Obesity	36%	NA	NA	40%	40%	NA	30%



Safety Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	ALL RACES	AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN/ PACIFIC ISLANDER	BLACK	HISPANIC	WHITE
Youth at the Training School (per 1,000 youth ages 13-18)	2.6	2.7	0.4	9.1	4.6	1.0
Children of Incarcerated Parents (per 1,000 children)	12.8	17.8	3.1	52.0	12.6	7.7
Child Neglect & Abuse (per 1,000 children)	10.4	12.7	3.9	25.1	15.1	13.4



Education Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	ALL RACES	AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN+	BLACK	HISPANIC	WHITE
3rd Grade Students Meeting Expectations in Reading	37%	11%	55%	24%	23%	47%
3rd Grade Students Meeting Expectations in Math	38%	16%	60%	23%	25%	49%
Four-Year High School Graduation Rates	86%	76%	92%	84%	80%	89%
Immediate College Enrollment Rates	62%	48%	67%	58%	52%	68%
% of Adults Over Age 25 With a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	38%	13%	55%	25%	16%	42%

Economic Well-Being

Pages 24-47

Economic conditions for families have become more challenging, with **rising costs and uneven access to safety net supports**.

- **Child poverty increased** to 16.3% in 2024 and is concentrated in the five core cities of Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.
- In 2024, 16.3% of children in Rhode Island lived in poverty, up from 13.3% in 2023 and 11.7% in 2022 and higher than the national rate of 15.5%.
- Between 2020 and 2024, 69% of Rhode Island's children living in poverty lived in just five cities—Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.
- In Rhode Island between 2020 and 2024, Hispanic children were about 18 times more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods than non-Hispanic white children.
- **Housing affordability continues to be a significant challenge**, with rents up 20% since 2015 even when adjusting for 2025 dollars and homeownership out of reach for many families.
 - Rhode Island's FY 2025 budget included approval for a \$120 million bond. The bond was the largest housing bond in the state's history. Rhode Island voters overwhelmingly approved the bond.
- **Child and youth homelessness has increased**, with 1,994 students identified as homeless during the 2024–2025 school year.
 - The number of students identified as homeless in Rhode Island has increased by 36% (533 students) from the 2021-2022 school year.

Safety net supports have weakened in key areas:

- Rhode Island spends a relatively small share of **TANF funds on direct cash assistance**. In 2023, Rhode Island spent **9% of TANF funds on cash assistance**, below the national average.
- The number of children receiving **SNAP benefits has declined by 31%** over the past decade.

Recent federal policy changes are expected to further impact family stability in the future:

- Changes to **SNAP** will reduce benefits for some families and increase administrative requirements.

- Federal policy changes affecting SNAP and Medicaid are projected to leave 40% of families worse off by 2033.

This year introduces a new focus on **Family Tax Credits**:

- This year's *Factbook* introduces a new indicator on **Family Tax Credits**, highlighting their role in supporting family income and reducing poverty.
- In 2025, **68,800 Rhode Island filers claimed the federal Earned Income Tax Credit**, bringing \$181.9 million into the state.
- The Governor's FY 2027 proposed budget includes Rhode Island's first **permanent, refundable Child Tax Credit**. If enacted, eligible families would receive **\$325 per child**, providing additional support to low- and moderate-income households.

Health

Pages 50-83

Rhode Island has made **measurable progress in several areas of child and maternal health**, while challenges remain.

Areas of improvement include:

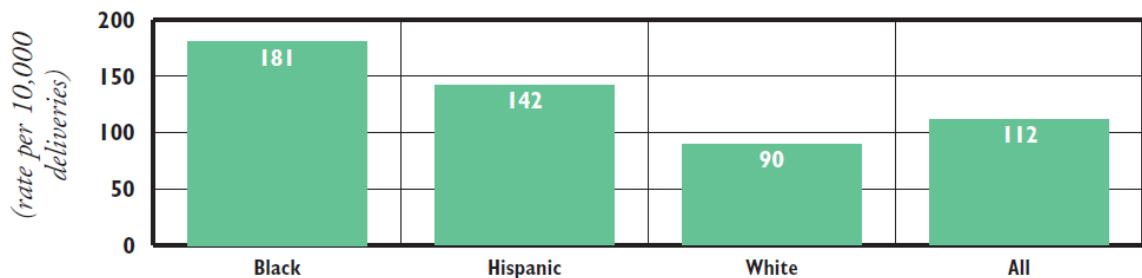
- **Decreases in infant mortality and preterm births.**
- **Reductions in psychiatric boarding** and fewer “stuck” children in hospital settings.
- **Increases in breastfeeding rates.**
- **Declines in rates of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS).**

However, several concerns persist:

- **The rate of children without health insurance has increased**
 - We anticipate seeing more uninsured Rhode Islanders with the expiration of the federal tax credits and cuts to Medicaid; while the Medicaid cuts were not aimed at children, parents losing their insurance will result in children losing their insurance even if they are still eligible for Medicaid.
- **Disparities in maternal health outcomes** remain significant



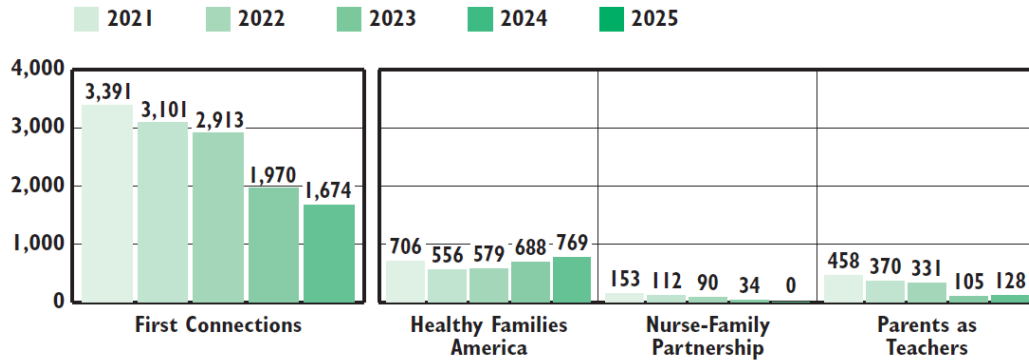
Severe Maternal Morbidity Rate per 10,000 deliveries by Race/Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2021-2024*



- **Fewer children are accessing dental care**, with declines in Rite Smiles enrollment: 5,000 fewer children and youth enrolled in Rite Smiles than the previous year.
- **Home visiting services have decreased**, including the closure of the Nurse-Family Partnership program:



Family Home Visiting Program Participation, Rhode Island, 2021-2025



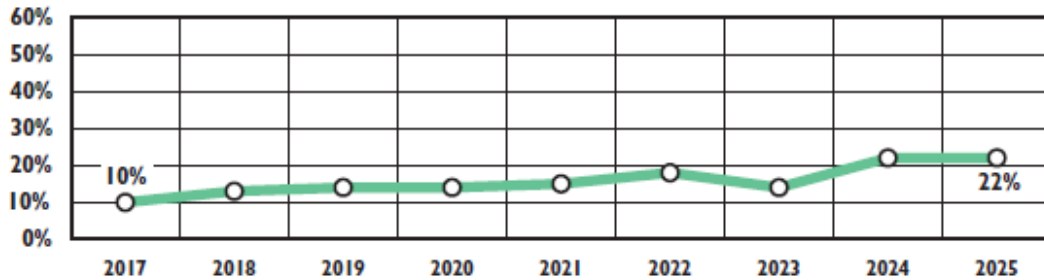
Environmental and housing-related risks also continue:

- Rhode Island has the **highest percentage of low-income children living in older housing** in the U.S.
- **Lead exposure rates are declining slowly**, but remain higher in core cities
- **Asthma-related emergency visits increased** for younger children

In addition, **data limitations affected several indicators this year**, including delayed immunization data and changes in how some measures are defined.



Young Children (Ages 0-5) Enrolled in Rite Care with Serious Emotional Disturbance, Rhode Island, 2017-2025



Source: Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). MMIS Database, 2017-2025.

Mental health conditions can be diagnosed even in young children.

- 22% of children under age five who are enrolled in Rite Care have a diagnosis of Serious Emotional Disturbance.

Safety

Pages 86-109

- **Youth homelessness has increased.**
 - The number of unaccompanied homeless youth identified by school personnel more than doubled from the 2023-2024 school year to the 2024-2025 school year.
- **More youth are involved in the justice system**, including increases in youth at the Training School and more cases transferred to adult court.
 - The average age of youth at the Training School in 2025 was 16 years, however, 7% (16) of youth who passed through the Training School at any point in 2025 were under the age of 14. Internationally, the United Nations has advised countries to establish a minimum age of criminal responsibility of at least 14.
 - Youth Referred to Family Court: In Rhode Island, youth interact with the adult correctional system in two ways—when they are “waived” to adult court at the request of the Rhode Island Attorney General or when they are “certified” resulting in sentencing beyond age 19 and transfer from the Training School to the Adult Correctional Institutions upon reaching age 19. In 2025, 20 motions to waive jurisdiction to try juveniles as adults and 20 certification motions were filed. This is the largest number of motions to waive jurisdiction since 2018, and the first time in seven years that the number of motions to waive jurisdiction has been more than nine.
- **More children in out-of-home placement are being placed out of state**, with 68 children in out-of-state placements compared to 59 the previous year

Disparities persist within the justice system, with differences in how youth experience arrest, referral, and placement across communities.

All information is embargoed until Monday, May 4, 2026

Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Rhode Island

	% OF TOTAL CHILD POPULATION, 2020	% OF YOUTH AT THE RITS, 2025	% OF YOUTH ON PROBATION, 2025
American Indian and Alaska Native	<1%	1%	1%
Asian	3%	<1%	<1%
Black	6%	26%	25%
Hispanic/Latino	27%	42%	37%
Multiracial	8%	9%	10%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	<1%	0%	0%
White	53%	21%	26%
Unknown	NA	<1%	0%
TOTAL	209,785	215	497

Education

Pages 112-165

Rhode Island has seen **progress in access to some early childhood services**, alongside ongoing workforce and access challenges. Similarly, some K-12 outcomes have improved, especially chronic absence.

Areas of improvement include:

- **Reduced wait times for Early Intervention services**, following recent rate increases
- **Increased participation in school meals** in districts offering universal meals
- **Declines in chronic absence.** Since the 2023-2024 school year, chronic early absence has gone down from 20% to 18%, middle school chronic absence went down from 25% to 22%, and high school chronic absence went down from 31% to 29%, showing continued progress.

At the same time, several challenges remain:

- **Child care wages remain low**, contributing to workforce instability. In Rhode Island in 2024, the average hourly wage for a child care educator was \$16.74, down from 2023 and among the lowest average hourly wages of all occupations in the state.
- **Enrollment in RI Pre-K declined** after more than a decade of sustained growth.
- Rhode Island has the **largest income-based gap in after-school participation** in the country.

Student demographics are also changing:

- The number of **Multilingual Learners has more than doubled** over the past decade, requiring continued investment in language supports and inclusive education practices.

Children Participating in School Meals

- School meal participation among children in schools offering universal school meals is up compared to last year.
- However, federal H.R. 1, signed into law in July 2025, introduced “structural changes” to SNAP and Medicaid eligibility which may reduce the number of families receiving benefits. With fewer children in families receiving SNAP benefits, the

percentage of students identified as low-income may fall below the 25% threshold, resulting in more children experiencing food insecurity, both at home and at school.

Declines in suspensions, but concerns remain.

- During the 2024-2025 school year, the number of out-of-school suspensions (7,648) was 23% lower than in the previous school year (9,208). However, more than half (4,018 or 53%) of out-of-school suspensions were for non-violent offenses.
- Suspension usually does not deter students from misbehaving and may instead reinforce negative behavior patterns. Suspended students are more likely to experience academic failure, youth justice involvement, disengagement from school, isolation from teachers and peers, and school dropout.



Out-of-School Suspensions by Infraction, Rhode Island, 2024-2025

TYPE OF INFRACTION*	#	%	TYPE OF INFRACTION	#	%
Fighting	1,802	24%	Obscene/Abusive Language	276	4%
Disorderly Conduct	1,398	18%	Arson/Larceny/Robbery/Vandalism	201	3%
Assault of Student or Teacher	1,274	17%	Weapon Possession	173	2%
Insubordination/Disrespect	953	12%	Electronic Devices/Technology	100	1%
Alcohol/Drug/Tobacco Offenses	854	11%	Other Offenses	55	1%
Harassment/Intimidation/Threat	562	7%	Attendance Offenses	0	0%