

Children Enrolled in Head Start or RI Pre-K

DEFINITION

Children enrolled in Head Start or RI Pre-K is the percentage of low-income children and all children enrolled in a Rhode Island Head Start or RI Pre-K preschool program the year before kindergarten. Head Start is managed by the federal government and RI Pre-K is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Education. Both can be operated by community-based agencies or by public schools.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children begin learning at birth and brain development proceeds rapidly in early childhood. Learning disparities appear early and grow over time without access to enriching early learning experiences. Participation in high-quality early learning programs from birth through kindergarten entry helps to ensure children enter school with the skills needed to succeed. Without government funding, access to high-quality preschool is limited to higher-income families.^{1,2,3}

Decades of research have shown that high-quality preschool programs help children gain skills and knowledge prior to school entry and produce positive outcomes that last well into the school years, including improved classroom and interpersonal behavior, reduced need for special education services, and improved high school graduation rates.⁴

Head Start is a federally-funded

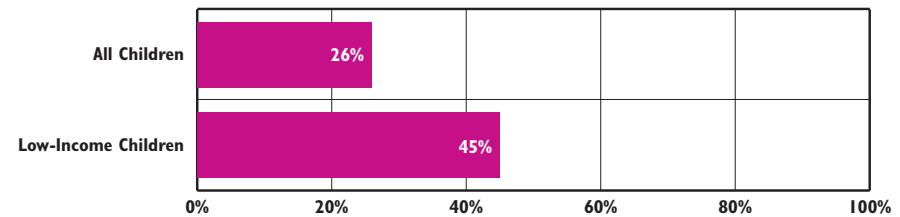
comprehensive early childhood program for the lowest income preschool children and is available to children during the two years before kindergarten. It is designed to address a wide variety of needs so that low-income children can begin school on a more equal footing with their economically advantaged peers. Head Start programs deliver early education, medical and dental screenings and referrals, nutrition services, mental health services, family engagement activities, and social service referrals for the whole family.^{5,6}

State-funded Pre-K programs are growing across the U.S. As of 2018, 44 states and the District of Columbia operated state Pre-K programs, serving 33% of four-year-olds and 6% of three-year olds across the U.S. Rhode Island launched the RI Pre-K program in 2009 serving four-year-olds in mixed-income classrooms in communities with high poverty levels.⁷ *The Rhode Island Prekindergarten Education Act* establishes a state goal to provide access to publicly-funded, high-quality Pre-K that builds on the existing early childhood education infrastructure.⁸

Head Start and RI Pre-K are an important part of a strong state early learning system that starts at birth and continues through third grade, including high-quality child care and nurturing and language-rich early elementary classrooms.⁹



Percentage of Children Enrolled in Head Start or RI Pre-K the Year before Kindergarten, Rhode Island, 2019-2020



Source: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT calculations using October 2019 enrollment in Head Start and RI Pre-K as numerator and October 2019 enrollment in public kindergarten as denominator with low-income population estimated using the % of children receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

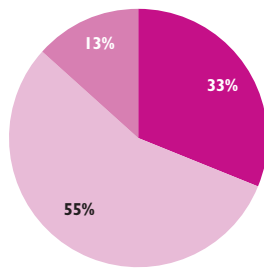
- ◆ As of the 2019-2020 school year, there were 2,584 children enrolled in either Head Start or RI Pre-K during the year before kindergarten, approximately 26% of all children and 45% of low-income children. Of those enrolled, 1,164 (45%) were enrolled in Head Start, 1,280 (50%) were enrolled in RI Pre-K, and 140 (5%) were enrolled in a classroom with braided Head Start and RI Pre-K funding.^{10,11}
- ◆ Children in the four core cities were more likely to be enrolled in Head Start or RI Pre-K (51%) than children in the remainder of the state (17%).^{12,13}
- ◆ Also, in 2019, there were 1,335 four-year-olds enrolled in a child care program with a subsidy through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) managed by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services. Children in RI Pre-K or Head Start may also participate in CCAP because Head Start and RI Pre-K do not cover the entire work day or work year for many families. In 2019, 14% of Head Start children were also enrolled in CCAP to cover hours and days when the Head Start program is not open but parents are at work.^{14,15}
- ◆ In 2019, there were 1,178 four-year-olds with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) receiving early childhood special education services through a local school district. These services are delivered in Head Start, RI Pre-K, child care, or district operated special education classrooms, or through walk-in appointments (e.g., speech therapy).¹⁶
- ◆ As of 2018, Rhode Island ranked 1st in the U.S. and DC (tied with Alabama and Michigan) for meeting research-based Pre-K quality benchmarks, but 34th in the U.S. and DC for enrollment of four-year-olds.¹⁷

Children Enrolled in Head Start or RI Pre-K

Children Enrolled in Head Start, Rhode Island, 2019

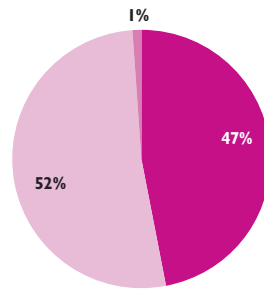
By Age Cohort

33% (633) ■ Age 3
55% (1,109) ■ Age 4
13% (268) ■ Age 5



By Length of Program Day

47% (633) ■ Four Hours
52% (1,109) ■ Six Hours
1% (268) ■ Other

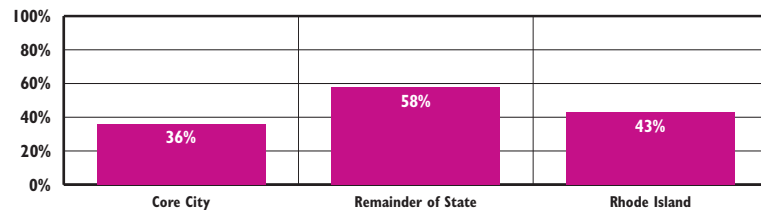


n = 2,010

Source: Rhode Island Head Start program data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2019. Percentages may not sum due to rounding.

◆ In 2019 in Rhode Island, there were 2,010 children enrolled in Head Start. Forty-seven percent were enrolled in four-hour classes and 52% were enrolled in six-hour classes.¹⁸

Estimated Percentage of Eligible Children Enrolled in Head Start by Child's Residence, Rhode Island, 2019



Source: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT calculations. The numerator is Rhode Island Head Start program enrollment data, October 2019. The denominator is the estimated number of children ages three and four from Census 2010 multiplied by the % of children under age six living in families with incomes below the federal poverty line (FPL) from the 2014-2018 American Community Surveys.

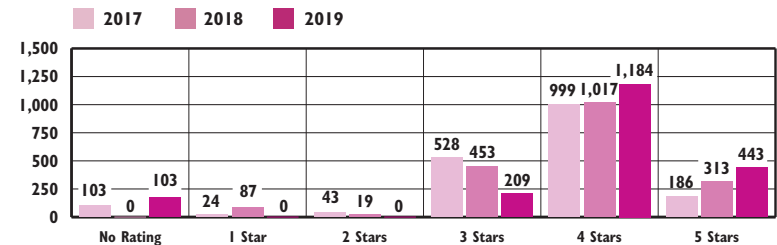
◆ As of 2019, approximately 43% of Rhode Island preschool-age children living in poverty were enrolled in Head Start.¹⁹

Head Start Quality & Effectiveness

◆ Across the U.S., Head Start centers are typically higher quality than many other early care and education programs available. Rhode Island Head Start programs score above the national benchmark and are among the highest quality Head Start programs in the U.S. based on classroom observations of teacher-child interactions.²⁰

◆ Head Start improves children's academic, cognitive, language, and social-emotional skills. Children who attend Head Start also show improved health outcomes including reduced childhood obesity and improved immunization rates. Head Start children are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college and are less likely to be charged with criminal activity as an adult.^{21,22}

Children Enrolled in Head Start by BrightStars Rating of Site, Rhode Island, 2017-2019



Source: Rhode Island Head Start data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2017-2019.

◆ As of October 2019, 81% of children enrolled in Head Start were in a program that had achieved a high-quality BrightStars rating of four or five stars. In comparison, only 20% of preschoolers in the CCAP were enrolled in a program that had achieved a high-quality BrightStars rating.^{23,24}

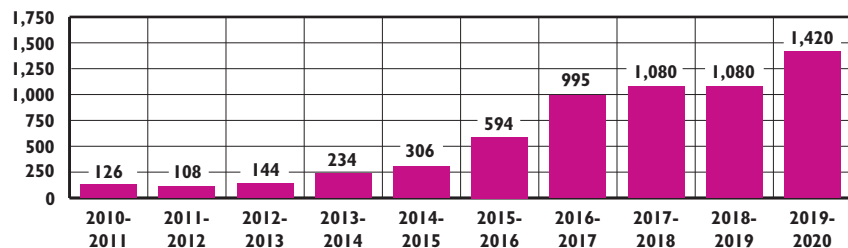
Head Start and Children with High Needs

◆ Rhode Island Head Start programs serve significant numbers of children with high needs. As of 2019, 236 (12%) children enrolled in Head Start had developmental delays or disabilities and received special education services through their local school districts. Also, in 2019, 47 (2%) of Head Start children were in foster care, and 50 (2%) were homeless.²⁵

Children Enrolled in Head Start or RI Pre-K



RI Pre-K Enrollment, 2010-2011 through 2019-2020



Sources: National Institute for Early Education Research, *The State of Preschool 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015*. Rhode Island Department of Education, RI Pre-K programs 2015-2016 through 2019-2020.

◆ Rhode Island began offering RI Pre-K for four-year-olds in the 2009-2010 school year and it is offered through public schools, Head Start agencies, and child care programs.²⁶

◆ As of the 2019-2020 school year, there were 78 RI Pre-K classrooms in Rhode Island with a total of 1,420 children enrolled, which is approximately 14% of all children estimated to enter kindergarten in 2019-2020. As of the 2019-2020 school year, 45% of the classrooms were operated by Head Start agencies, 31% were operated by child care programs, and 24% were operated by public schools.²⁷

◆ In 2019-2020, 140 children were enrolled in classrooms that had braided Head Start and RI Pre-K funding. These classrooms are economically integrated and meet both the Head Start and the RI Pre-K standards.²⁸



RI Pre-K Enrollment and Family Income

◆ Children are selected to participate in RI Pre-K through a lottery, with children from low-income families prioritized for enrollment based on the proportion of low-income children in the local school district.²⁹

◆ In 2019-2020, 1,009 (71%) children enrolled in RI Pre-K were low-income and 411 (29%) were higher income.³⁰

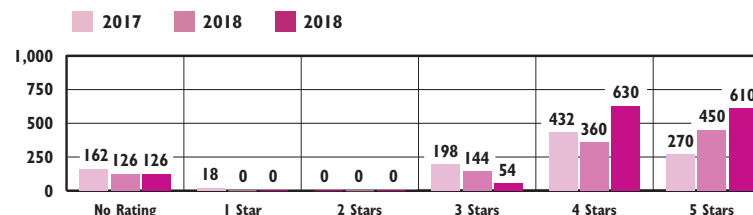


RI Pre-K Quality and Effectiveness

◆ In 2018, RI Pre-K was recognized as one of only three State Pre-K programs in the U.S. to meet all 10 recommended quality benchmarks, including requiring teachers to have a bachelor's degree with specialized training in early childhood education and conducting annual classroom observations.³¹

◆ An evaluation of RI Pre-K found that it improves children's language and math skills and closes the achievement gap between low-income children and their more affluent peers by three-quarters.³²

Children Enrolled in RI Pre-K by BrightStars Rating of Site, Rhode Island, 2017-2019



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2017-2019.

◆ As of 2019, 87% of children enrolled in RI Pre-K were in program sites with high-quality BrightStars ratings (four or five stars). In comparison, only 20% of preschoolers in CCAP were enrolled in programs with high-quality BrightStars ratings.^{33,34}



RI Pre-K and Children with High Needs

◆ RI Pre-K classrooms serve significant numbers of children with high needs. As of 2019, 210 (15%) of children in RI Pre-K had developmental delays or disabilities, 36 (3%) were in foster care, and 13 (1%) were homeless.³⁵

◆ As of 2019, 31% of the children enrolled in RI Pre-K were Hispanic/Latino and 20% spoke Spanish as a home language.³⁶

Children Enrolled in Head Start or RI Pre-K

Table 40.

Children Enrolled in Head Start or RI Pre-K, Rhode Island, 2019

SCHOOL DISTRICT	ESTIMATED # OF CHILDREN		AGE 3		AGE 4					
	AGE 3 OR 4	# LOW-INCOME CHILDREN AGE 3 OR 4	ENROLLED IN HEAD START (ALL LOW-INCOME)	ESTIMATED % OF LOW-INCOME CHILDREN AGE 3 IN HEAD START	ENROLLED IN HEAD START (ALL LOW-INCOME)	ENROLLED IN BRAIDED RI PRE-K/ HEAD START (ALL LOW-INCOME)	ENROLLED IN RI PRE-K LOW-INCOME	ENROLLED IN RI PRE-K HIGHER INCOME	ESTIMATED % OF LOW-INCOME CHILDREN AGE 4 IN HEAD START OR RI PRE-K	ESTIMATED % OF ALL CHILDREN AGE 4 IN HEAD START OR RI PRE-K
Barrington	191	8	2	26%	1	0	0	0	13%	1%
Bristol Warren	243	73	22	30%	25	0	8	10	45%	18%
Burrillville	147	50	4	8%	15	0	0	0	30%	10%
Central Falls	217	206	12	6%	46	0	79	11	61%	63%
Chariho	221	38	9	24%	7	0	0	0	19%	3%
Coventry	277	80	12	15%	3	18	8	10	36%	14%
Cranston	673	296	62	21%	81	40	58	64	60%	36%
Cumberland	329	69	2	3%	5	0	0	0	7%	2%
East Greenwich	163	10	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
East Providence	362	163	46	28%	23	0	89	89	69%	56%
Exeter-West Greenwich	111	16	0	0%	1	0	0	0	6%	1%
Foster	41	10	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Glocester	100	12	0	0%	1	0	0	0	8%	1%
Jamestown	34	2	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Johnston	223	98	10	10%	30	0	8	10	39%	22%
Lincoln	229	64	1	2%	2	0	0	0	3%	1%
Little Compton	18	2	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Middletown	156	44	20	46%	9	0	0	0	21%	6%
Narragansett	61	13	4	31%	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
New Shoreham	11	2	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Newport	172	117	42	36%	22	0	24	12	39%	34%
North Kingstown	259	57	7	12%	10	0	0	0	18%	4%
North Providence	255	120	30	25%	33	0	8	10	34%	20%
North Smithfield	100	17	1	6%	1	0	0	0	6%	1%
Pawtucket	656	472	38	8%	121	0	95	31	46%	38%
Portsmouth	139	24	4	17%	4	0	0	0	17%	3%
Providence	1,679	1,410	183	13%	507	0	322	56	59%	53%
Scituate	93	10	1	10%	1	0	0	0	10%	1%
Smithfield	154	22	2	9%	5	0	0	0	23%	3%
South Kingstown	184	31	3	10%	10	0	0	0	32%	5%
Tiverton	139	29	10	34%	11	0	0	0	38%	8%
Warwick	638	223	63	28%	54	36	18	36	48%	23%
West Warwick	264	135	33	25%	30	18	29	25	57%	39%
Westerly	194	68	7	10%	19	0	0	0	28%	10%
Woonsocket	484	363	76	21%	87	28	123	47	66%	59%
Charter Schools	814	505	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
RI School for the Deaf	7	5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Four Core Cities	3,036	2,459	309	13%	761	28	619	145	57%	51%
Remainder of State	6,181	1,854	397	21%	403	112	250	266	41%	17%
Rhode Island	10,038	4,818	706	15%	1,164	140	869	411	45%	26%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Head Start Programs, children enrolled as of October 2019. Children enrolled are listed by residence of child, not location of the Head Start program. Rhode Island Department of Education, children enrolled in RI Pre-K as of October 2019.

The estimated number of low-income children age three or four in each school district is based on October 2019 kindergarten enrollment multiplied by the percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (at or below 185% of the federal poverty level).

The city/town table was redesigned in 2018. Percentages should not be compared with prior Factbooks.

Charter Schools with kindergarten include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, and South Side Elementary Charter School.

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

References

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