

# Children in Single-Parent Families

## DEFINITION

*Children in single-parent families* is the percentage of children under age 18 who live in families headed by a person – male or female – without a spouse present in the home. These numbers include "own children" defined as never-married children under age 18 who are related to the family head by birth, marriage, or adoption.

## SIGNIFICANCE

According to the American Community Survey conducted by the Census Bureau, there were 214,375 children living with one or more of their parents in Rhode Island in 2006. Of these, 33% (70,712) were living with an unmarried parent, an increase from 27% in 2000. In 2006, 67% of Rhode Island children living with one or more of their parents were living in married-couple households.<sup>1,2</sup>

Children living in single-parent families are more likely to live in poverty than children living in two-parent families. Single-parent families have only one potential wage earner, compared with the two potential wage earners in a two-parent family.<sup>3</sup>

In 2006 in Rhode Island, 82% of children living in poverty were living in single-parent families. Children in single-parent families in Rhode Island were almost nine times more likely to

be living in poverty than those in married-couple families. In 2006, 35% of children in single-parent households lived in poverty, compared to 4% of children in married-couple households.<sup>4</sup>

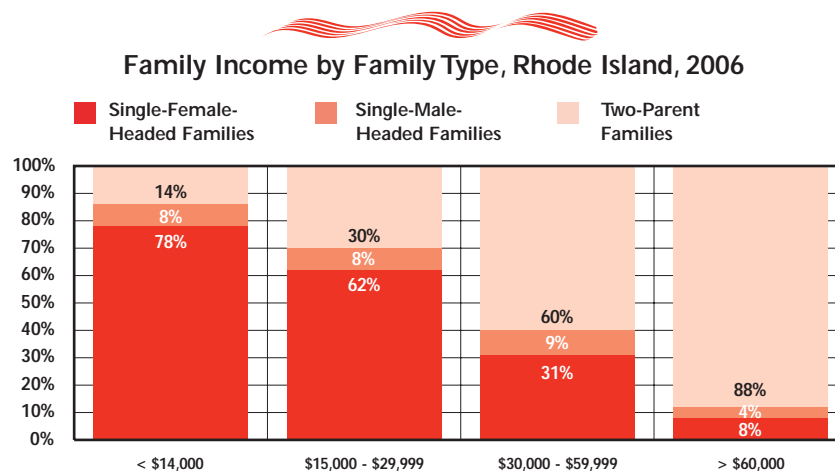
The financial barriers facing many single-parent families explain some of the differences in well-being between the children in single-parent households and those in two-parent households. Children who grow up in single-parent families are at increased risk for low academic achievement, low levels of social and emotional well-being, and increased levels of depression and stress. As adults they have diminished earnings and are more likely to have non-marital births, discordant marriages and to get divorced. Regardless of family structure, the quality of parenting is one of the best predictors of a child's well-being.<sup>5</sup>

Single-Parent Families		
	2000	2006
RI	27%	33%
US	25%	29%
National Rank*		<b>44th</b>
New England Rank**		<b>6th</b>

\*1st is best; 50th is worst

\*\*1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, Table B09002; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 American Community Survey, Supplementary Survey Summary, Table PO13.



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2006. Table B19131.

◆ In 2006, 78% of all families with incomes below \$14,000 were headed by single females, 8% were headed by single males, and 14% were two-parent families.<sup>6</sup>

◆ The poverty rate of single-parent families differs substantially by race and ethnicity in Rhode Island. Racial and ethnic minority single-parent families are more likely to be poor than White single-parent families.<sup>7</sup>

◆ The number of adults a child lives with is associated with the amount of parental and economic resources available to promote that child's well-being.<sup>8</sup> In 2006, 7% of children in Rhode Island lived in a household where the unmarried head of household lived with a partner.<sup>9</sup>

## Barriers to Marriage for Low-income Couples

◆ Researchers have found that most low-income men and women value marriage and aspire to be married. However, many low-income women face significant barriers in identifying partners with adequate social and economic resources.<sup>10</sup>

◆ Barriers to marriage in low-income communities include low educational attainment among men, untreated substance abuse and mental health issues and high rates of male incarceration.<sup>11</sup>

# Children in Single-Parent Families

Table 2. Children's Living Arrangements, Rhode Island, 2000

CITY/TOWN	ALL CHILDREN LIVING IN FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18			
		TWO-PARENT FAMILIES		SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES	
		N	%	N	%
Barrington	4,592	4,091	89%	501	11%
Bristol	4,092	3,222	79%	870	21%
Burrillville	3,737	3,077	82%	660	18%
Central Falls	4,977	2,607	52%	2,370	48%
Charlestown	1,586	1,305	82%	281	18%
Coventry	7,807	6,287	81%	1,520	19%
Cranston	15,626	11,817	76%	3,809	24%
Cumberland	7,273	6,049	83%	1,224	17%
East Greenwich	3,476	3,042	88%	434	12%
East Providence	9,682	6,919	71%	2,763	29%
Exeter	1,461	1,248	85%	213	15%
Foster	1,037	914	88%	123	12%
Glocester	2,453	2,082	85%	371	15%
Hopkinton	1,893	1,576	83%	317	17%
Jamestown	1,194	1,018	85%	176	15%
Johnston	5,440	4,303	79%	1,137	21%
Lincoln	4,895	3,930	80%	965	20%
Little Compton	740	627	85%	113	15%
Middletown	4,150	3,363	81%	787	19%
Narragansett	2,641	2,002	76%	639	24%
New Shoreham	171	139	81%	32	19%
Newport	4,835	2,723	56%	2,112	44%
North Kingstown	6,546	5,255	80%	1,291	20%
North Providence	5,411	3,973	73%	1,438	27%
North Smithfield	2,221	1,922	87%	299	13%
Pawtucket	16,525	9,537	58%	6,988	42%
Portsmouth	4,136	3,476	84%	660	16%
Providence	40,267	19,721	49%	20,546	51%
Richmond	1,867	1,590	85%	277	15%
Scituate	2,490	2,179	88%	311	12%
Smithfield	3,800	3,184	84%	616	16%
South Kingstown	5,887	4,789	81%	1,098	19%
Tiverton	3,121	2,598	83%	523	17%
Warren	2,288	1,657	72%	631	28%
Warwick	17,276	13,571	79%	3,705	21%
West Greenwich	1,368	1,198	88%	170	12%
West Warwick	6,084	4,101	67%	1,983	33%
Westerly	5,077	3,759	74%	1,318	26%
Woonsocket	10,269	5,562	54%	4,707	46%
<b>Core Cities</b>	<b>82,957</b>	<b>44,251</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>38,706</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>Remainder of State</b>	<b>145,434</b>	<b>116,162</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>29,272</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>228,391</b>	<b>160,413</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>67,978</b>	<b>30%</b>

### Note to Table

The denominator is the number of children under age 18 living in family households according to Census 2000. A family household is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as consisting of a householder and one or more people living together in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage or adoption – it may also include others not related to the householder.

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

### References

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2006. Table B09002.
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census Supplementary Survey Summary Tables. Table P013.
- <sup>3,8</sup> Thomas, A. & Sawhill, I. (2005). For love and money? The impact of family structure on family income. *The Future of Children: Marriage and Child Wellbeing* 15:2, 57-74.
- <sup>4</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2006. Table B17006.
- <sup>5</sup> Amato, P. (2005). The impact of family formation change on the cognitive, social, and emotional well-being of the next generation. *The Future of Children: Marriage and Child Wellbeing* 15:2, 75-96.
- <sup>6</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2006. Table B19131.
- <sup>7</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2004 and 2005. Tables B17010A, B17010B, B17010H, B17010I.
- <sup>9</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2006. Table B09008.
- <sup>10,11</sup> Roberts, P. (2007). *Out of order? Factors influencing the sequence of marriage and childbirth among disadvantaged Americans*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.