

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 U.S. Census Bureau, there were 216,289 children living with one or more of their parents in Rhode Island in 2007. Of these, 31% (66,079) were living with an unmarried parent, an increase from 27% in 2000. In 2007, 69% of Rhode Island children living with one or more of their parents were living in married-couple households.^{1,2}

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.³

In 2007 in Rhode Island, 78% of children living in poverty were living in single-parent families. Children in single-parent families in Rhode Island were seven times more likely to be

living in poverty than those in married-couple families. In 2007, 42% of children in single-parent households lived in poverty, compared to 6% of children in married-couple households.⁴

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 (whether they were due to divorce or the parents never having been married) 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.⁵

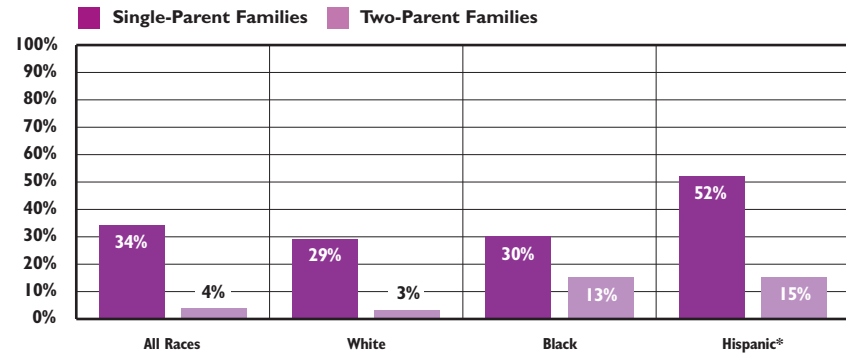
| Single-Parent Families | | |
|------------------------|------|------|
| | 2000 | 2007 |
| RI | 32% | 33% |
| US | 31% | 32% |
| National Rank* | | 31st |
| New England Rank** | | 6th |

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data center. (n.d.). *Comparisons by topic: Children in single-parent families, 2000 and 2007*. Retrieved January 13, 2009 from www.kidscount.org/datacenter

Families with Children under Age 18 and Income below the Poverty Threshold by Race & Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2007



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2007. Tables B17010, B17010A, B17010B & B17010I. *Hispanic families may also be in any race category.

- ◆ **Hispanic single-parent families are more likely than other single-parent families in Rhode Island to live in poverty. Black and Hispanic married-parent families are also more likely than White married-parent families in Rhode Island to live in poverty.**⁶
- ◆ **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.**⁷ In 2007, 7% of children in Rhode Island lived in a household where the unmarried head of household lived with a partner.⁸

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.**⁹
- ◆ **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.**¹⁰
- ◆ **Government policies can better support work and marriage by targeting tax and transfer programs towards efforts that help low-income men develop skills, find stable employment and be involved with their families.**¹¹

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% |
| <i>Core Cities</i> | <i>82,957</i> | <i>44,251</i> | <i>53%</i> | <i>38,706</i> | <i>47%</i> |
| <i>Remainder of State</i> | <i>145,434</i> | <i>116,162</i> | <i>80%</i> | <i>29,272</i> | <i>20%</i> |
| <i>Rhode Island</i> | <i>228,391</i> | <i>160,413</i> | <i>70%</i> | <i>67,978</i> | <i>30%</i> |

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

- ¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2007. Table B09002.
- ² U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census Supplementary Survey Summary Tables. Table P013.
- ^{3,7} 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.
- ⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2007. Table B17006.
- ⁵ 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.
- ⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2007. Tables B17010, B17010A, B17010B & B17010I.
- ⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2007. Table B09008.
- ^{9,10} 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.
- ¹¹ Carasso, A., Holzer, H., Maag, E. & Steuerle, C. (2008). *The next stage for social policy: encouraging work and family formation among low-income men*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.