

Children Participating in School Breakfast

DEFINITION

Children participating in school breakfast is the percentage of low-income children who participate in the School Breakfast Program. Children are counted as low-income if they are eligible for and enrolled in the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children who suffer from undernutrition have poorer overall health status, miss more days of school and are less ready to learn when they do attend than well-nourished children.¹ Students who participate in school breakfast programs have higher standardized test scores, fewer absences, reduced tardiness, improved attentiveness, better behavior and lower risks of obesity.²

Food-insecure families often do not have sufficient food to provide nutritious breakfasts to their children every morning. Nationally, children in households experiencing food-insecurity missed on average over two days more of school than their peers in food-secure households.³ In Rhode Island, 11% of families experienced food insecurity and 4% experienced hunger, comparable to national rates.⁴ Risk factors for food insecurity in Rhode Island include: being Hispanic, having children under the age of six, being a single parent, and not finishing high school.⁵

School breakfast improves student

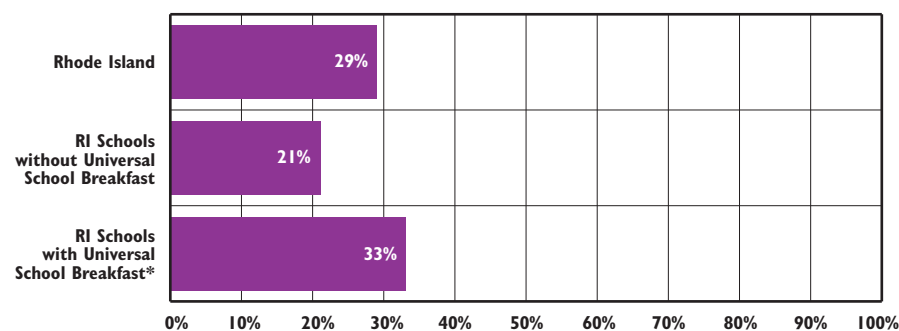
health, school performance and student behavior.⁶ Additionally, students who participate in school breakfast programs are less likely to be overweight or obese than non-participants.⁷ School Breakfast Programs offer nutritious meals, and participating children are more likely to meet their Recommended Daily Allowances of at least four key nutrients.⁸

Rhode Island state law requires all public schools to provide students with access to school breakfast, although higher-income parents may be required to pay for some share of the costs. Rhode Island also receives over \$5.4 million in federal funds for the School Breakfast Program, which flows directly into the state's economy.⁹

If Rhode Island increased low-income student participation in the School Breakfast Program from 40% to 60% of School Lunch Program participation, the state would receive more than \$2.3 million in additional federal funds to support school breakfast.¹⁰

Rhode Island ranks 37th in the country for participation in school breakfast when participation is analyzed as the ratio of low-income students in the breakfast program to low-income students in the lunch program. During the 2007-2008 school year, 40 low-income students participated in the breakfast program for every 100 low-income students that participated in the lunch program.¹¹

Low-Income Children Participating in the School Breakfast Program, Rhode Island, October 2008



* Includes all schools in Central Falls, Cranston, Pawtucket, Providence and Woonsocket that offer universal breakfast throughout the district, as well as selected schools in East Providence and South Kingstown.

Source: Rhode Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of School Food Services, Office of Finance and Office of Network & Information Systems, October 2008.

◆ In 2008, the percentage of low-income students participating in School Breakfast Programs in Rhode Island schools offering universal school breakfast was 33% compared with 21% of students participating in programs in the remainder of the state. There were 15 school districts in Rhode Island in the 2007-2008 school year with severe need schools (schools in which 40% or more of students qualify for free or reduced price schools meals) that did not offer universal school breakfast.¹²

◆ Universal School Breakfast Programs, which provide free breakfast to all children regardless of income, increase school breakfast participation, especially among low-income students; they also reduce administrative costs. When schools offer breakfast in the classroom at the start of the school day, participation rates increase even more.¹³

◆ In October 2008, an average of 21,956 breakfasts were served daily in Rhode Island public schools. Of these, 80% (17,664) were to low-income children eligible for free or reduced-price meals, comparable to the national rate.^{14,15}

◆ In the 2007-2008 school year in Rhode Island, \$300,000 was allocated as support for administration of the School Breakfast Program, down from \$600,000 in 2006-2007. The state per-breakfast subsidy was \$0.08 per meal served during the 2007-2008 school year.¹⁶

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Table 12.

Children Participating in School Breakfast, Rhode Island, October 2008

SCHOOL DISTRICT	OCTOBER 2008 ENROLLMENT	DISTRICT-WIDE AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	% OF ALL CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN BREAKFAST	# OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS	LOW-INCOME AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	% OF ALL LOW-INCOME CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL BREAKFAST
Barrington	3,443	50	1%	111	12	11%
Bristol Warren	3,648	325	9%	1,056	177	17%
Burrillville	2,676	224	8%	740	144	19%
Central Falls	3,951	1,080	27%	2,895	837	29%
Chariho	3,675	138	4%	681	98	14%
Coventry	5,688	429	8%	1,127	255	23%
Cranston	11,331	687	6%	3,187	475	15%
Cumberland	5,286	340	6%	883	250	28%
East Greenwich	2,560	32	1%	355	31	9%
East Providence	5,660	354	6%	2,283	288	13%
Exeter-West Greenwich	2,184	55	3%	263	29	11%
Foster	224	9	4%	29	7	24%
Foster-Glocester	1,546	46	9%	164	27	16%
Glocester	541	61	11%	100	58	58%
Jamestown	497	4	1%	45	3	7%
Johnston	3,699	352	10%	1,164	263	23%
Lincoln	3,599	199	6%	708	184	26%
Little Compton	311	11	4%	34	5	15%
Middletown	2,380	148	6%	533	104	20%
Narragansett	1,564	32	2%	168	22	13%
New Shoreham	133	23	17%	17	7	41%
Newport	2,102	441	21%	1,235	422	34%
North Kingstown	4,450	381	9%	717	259	36%
North Providence	3,456	317	9%	1,070	262	24%
North Smithfield	1,883	62	3%	232	25	11%
Pawtucket	9,296	2,136	23%	6,691	1,758	26%
Portsmouth	2,675	92	3%	247	48	19%
Providence	29,543	9,845	33%	22,407	8,484	38%
Scituate	1,748	19	1%	149	14	9%
Smithfield	2,639	104	4%	345	51	15%
South Kingstown	3,691	135	4%	543	120	22%
Tiverton	1,929	128	7%	326	75	23%
Warwick	10,822	493	5%	2,918	426	15%
West Warwick	3,862	483	13%	1,474	391	27%
Westerly	3,273	418	13%	895	311	35%
Woonsocket	6,710	2,303	34%	4,196	1,742	42%
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>55,464</i>	<i>16,288</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>38,898</i>	<i>13,634</i>	<i>35%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>97,211</i>	<i>5,668</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>21,090</i>	<i>4,030</i>	<i>19%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>152,675</i>	<i>21,956</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>59,988</i>	<i>17,664</i>	<i>29%</i>

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of School Food Services, Office of Finance and Office of Network & Information Systems, October 2008.

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

“2008 Fall Enrollment” is the school enrollment in October 2008. “District-Wide Average Daily Participation in Breakfast” is the average number of students who ate breakfast in school per school day during October 2008. “Number of Low-Income Students” is the number of students eligible for and enrolled in free or reduced-price meals during October 2008. “Low-Income Average Daily Participation in Breakfast” is the average number of students eligible for and enrolled in free or reduced-price meals who ate breakfast in school per school day during October 2008.

To participate in the Reduced-Price Breakfast Program, students’ household income must fall between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty guideline. For the Free Breakfast Program, household income must fall below 130% of the federal poverty guideline. Children in households receiving Food Stamp Benefits and households participating in the Rhode Island Works (formerly the Family Independence Program) are automatically eligible for free meals.

References

- ¹ *The consequences of hunger and food insecurity for children: Evidence from recent scientific studies.* (2002). Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Center on Hunger and Poverty.
- ² Food Research and Action Center. (n.d.). *Child nutrition fact sheet: Breakfast for learning.* Retrieved on February 22, 2009 from www.frac.org/pdf/breakfastforlearning.pdf
- ³ Romero, M. & Lee, Y. (2008). *The influence of maternal and family risk on chronic absenteeism in early schooling.* New York, NY: Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, National Center for Children in Poverty.
- ⁴ Nord, M., Andrews, M. & Carlson, S. (2008). *Household food security in the United States, 2007.* (ERR-66). Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

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