

Children in Poverty

DEFINITION

Children in poverty is the percentage of related children under age 18 who live in families below the federal poverty threshold, as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. “Related children” include the family head’s children by birth, marriage and adoption, as well as other persons under age 18 who are related to and live with the family head, such as nieces and nephews.

SIGNIFICANCE

Poverty is related to every KIDS COUNT indicator. Children in poverty, especially those in poverty for extended periods of time, are more likely to have health and behavioral problems, experience difficulty in school, become teen parents, earn less as adults and be unemployed more frequently.^{1,2} Children in low-income communities are more likely to attend schools that lack resources and rigor; have limited access to high quality child care programs; and have fewer opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports and recreations programs, clubs, and lessons such as music and computers.^{3,4}

Children of color and children of immigrants are more likely to grow up poor.⁵ Single parenthood, low

educational attainment, part-time or no employment and low wages of parents place children at risk of being poor.⁶

The 2003 federal poverty threshold for a family of three with two children is \$14,824. The poverty threshold for a family of four with two children is \$18,660.⁷ Historically, the poverty threshold fails to include the cost of basic goods such as housing, taxes, work related expenses, medical expenses by region, and child care. The poverty threshold also fails to account for increased expenses that occur as family size increases. Under recommendation from the National Academy of Sciences, the Census Bureau has begun to conduct research and examine six alternative measurements of poverty and income.⁸

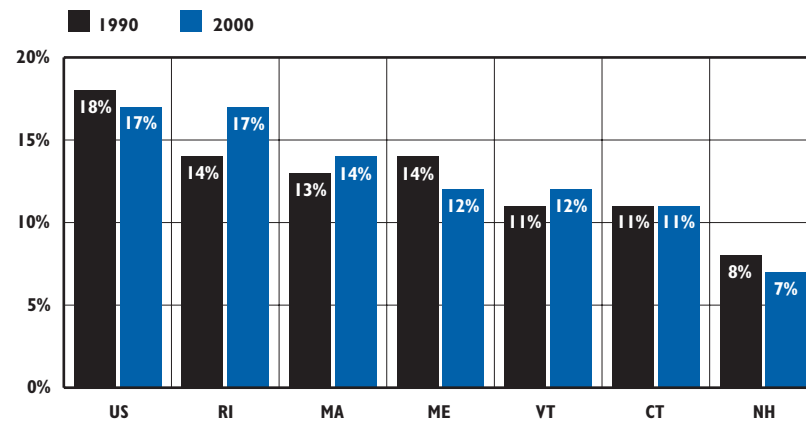
| Children in Poverty | | |
|---------------------|------|------|
| | 1990 | 2000 |
| RI | 14% | 17% |
| US | 18% | 17% |
| National Rank* | | 30th |
| New England Rank** | | 6th |

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: *Children at Risk: State Trends: 1990-2000*. (2002). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Children Living Below the Federal Poverty Threshold, New England and the U.S., 1990 and 2000



Source: *Children at Risk: State Trends: 1990-2000*. (2002). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

◆ Between 1990 and 2000 the percentage of children living below the federal poverty threshold decreased nationally and in two New England states, Maine and New Hampshire. Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Vermont all experienced increases in the percentage of children living below the federal poverty threshold, while Connecticut remained constant. The percentage of children living below the federal poverty threshold in Rhode Island increased from 14% in 1990 to 17% in 2000.⁹

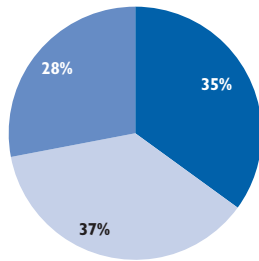
◆ Rhode Island now has the highest percentage of children living below the federal poverty threshold in New England.¹⁰ According to the Census, in 2000 there were 40,117 children living below the federal poverty threshold in Rhode Island.¹¹

◆ Rhode Island has the largest percentage of Latino children living below the federal poverty threshold (47%), compared to the national rate of (28%).¹² Rhode Island also has the highest percentage of African American children living below the federal poverty threshold (38%) in New England.¹³

Rhode Island's Children Living Below the Federal Poverty Threshold, 2000

By Age

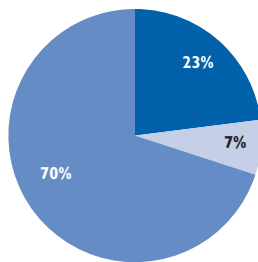
- 35% ■ Ages 5 and younger
- 37% ■ Ages 6 to 11
- 28% ■ Ages 12 to 17



n = 41,162 (includes unrelated children living in households)

By Family Structure

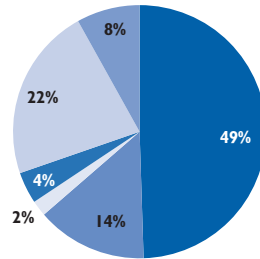
- 23% ■ Married Couple Family
- 7% ■ Male Householder Only
- 70% ■ Female Householder Only



n = 40,117

By Race*

- 49% ■ White
- 14% ■ Black
- 2% ■ Asian
- 4% ■ American Indian
- 22% ■ Some Other Race
- 8% ■ Two or More Races

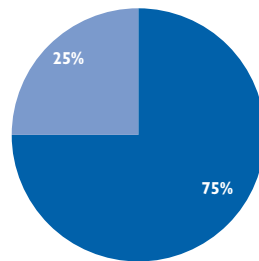


n = 40,117

**Hispanic children may be included in any race category. Of Rhode Island's 40,117 poor children, 15,750 (39%) are Hispanic.*

By Residence

- 75% ■ Core Cities
- 25% ■ Remainder of State



n = 40,117

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000. Except where otherwise noted, population includes related children under age 18, who are living in households for whom poverty status was determined and are somehow related to the householder. This could include nieces, nephews, step children, adopted children, etc.

Children Living in Extreme Poverty

◆ Families with income below 50% of the federal threshold level are considered to be living in extreme poverty.¹⁴ The extreme poverty level in 2003 is family income below \$7,412 for a family of three with two children and \$9,330 for a family of four with two children.¹⁵

◆ Of the 40,117 children living in poverty in Rhode Island, nearly half live in extreme poverty. In 2000, 8% (19,773) of all children in Rhode Island lived in extreme poverty.¹⁶

◆ Children who live in deep, long term poverty experience the worst health outcomes, such as child asthma and malnutrition, as a result of their family's income status.¹⁷

Young Children Under Age 6 in Poverty in Rhode Island

◆ Research shows that increased exposure to risk factors associated with poverty compromise children's emotional and intellectual development. Risk factors associated with poverty include: inadequate nutrition, environmental toxins, maternal depression, trauma and abuse, lower quality child care and parental substance abuse.¹⁸

◆ In 2000, 19% (14,548) of Rhode Island children under 6 were living in poverty, compared to 18% nationally.¹⁹ Of these children, half (7,230) were extremely poor.²⁰

◆ As of December 1, 2003 there were 5,709 children under age 3 and 4,906 children ages 3 to 5 in families receiving cash assistance from the Family Independence Program. Of all children in the Family Independence Program, 46% are age 6 or under.²¹

Children in Poverty

Building Blocks of Economic Security

Access to Health Care

◆ Many workers in low-wage jobs are often not offered affordable employer-sponsored health insurance. Access to health insurance improves the likelihood of having a regular and affordable source of health care.²²

Affordable Quality Child Care

◆ The quality and stability of the child care setting is critical to a parent's ability to work and to the child's development.²³ Child care costs represent a significant part of the budget of low-income families and are associated with a mother's refusal or termination of employment.²⁴

Income Supports

◆ Income supports include the FIP Earned Income Disregard, Food Stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit, child care subsidies, health care subsidies, and Energy Assistance programs. Income supports help to ensure that low-income working families have adequate resources to meet their basic needs.²⁵

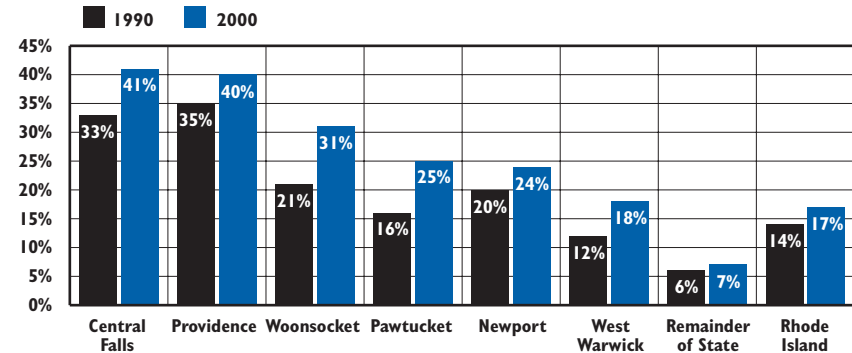
Affordable Housing

◆ Stable housing is a critical requirement for job retention and performance.²⁶ In 2003, the average rent for a two bedroom apartment in Rhode Island is \$1,032, more than double the amount that is considered affordable for a family of three with income below the poverty level.²⁷

Educational Attainment

◆ Individuals with higher education generally have more job opportunities, higher wages and greater job security than those with lower levels of education.²⁸

Rate of Children Living Below the Federal Poverty Threshold, 1990 and 2000, Core Cities, Remainder of State and Rhode Island



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Census of the Population.

◆ The rate of Rhode Island children living below the federal poverty threshold increased from 14% to 17% over the decade of the 1990s. The child poverty rate increased in each of the core cities between 1990 and 2000. For the core cities overall, the child poverty rate increased from 26% to 33% during the 1990s even as it remained relatively stable at 6% to 7% in the remainder of the state.²⁹

◆ Rhode Island KIDS COUNT defines core cities as those communities in which 15% or more of the children live in families with income below the federal poverty threshold. Three-quarters (75%) of Rhode Island's poor children live in one of the six core cities.³⁰

◆ Because of increases in child poverty between 1990 and 2000, West Warwick is now a core city with 18% of children living below the federal poverty threshold.³¹ Providence now has the third highest child poverty rate (40%) in the country among cities with a population of 100,000 or more. Central Falls has the highest child poverty rate (41%) of any city or town in Rhode Island.³²

Table 8.

Children Living Below the Federal Poverty Threshold, Rhode Island, 2000

| CITY/TOWN | FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN BELOW POVERTY | | CHILDREN UNDER 6 BELOW POVERTY | | CHILDREN UNDER 18 BELOW POVERTY | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % | N% | % |
| Barrington | 56 | 2.3% | 23 | 1.9% | 116 | 2.5% |
| Bristol | 216 | 8.7% | 157 | 11.4% | 396 | 9.2% |
| Burrillville | 106 | 5.0% | 80 | 7.9% | 236 | 6.0% |
| Central Falls | 988 | 34.6% | 740 | 42.7% | 2,189 | 40.8% |
| Charlestown | 42 | 4.2% | 18 | 3.7% | 78 | 4.7% |
| Coventry | 232 | 5.1% | 149 | 6.4% | 455 | 5.6% |
| Cranston | 794 | 8.4% | 437 | 8.6% | 1,417 | 8.6% |
| Cumberland | 162 | 3.8% | 89 | 3.6% | 237 | 3.1% |
| East Greenwich | 65 | 3.6% | 57 | 6.1% | 147 | 4.1% |
| East Providence | 613 | 10.2% | 452 | 14.5% | 1,109 | 10.7% |
| Exeter | 49 | 5.6% | 69 | 16.3% | 112 | 7.5% |
| Foster | 18 | 3.1% | - | 0.0% | 32 | 2.9% |
| Glocester | 76 | 5.2% | 37 | 5.7% | 171 | 6.4% |
| Hopkinton | 64 | 5.5% | 55 | 8.9% | 107 | 5.5% |
| Jamestown | 9 | 1.3% | - | 0.0% | 17 | 1.4% |
| Johnston | 287 | 8.2% | 183 | 9.5% | 527 | 9.0% |
| Lincoln | 178 | 6.3% | 76 | 5.6% | 316 | 6.2% |
| Little Compton | 8 | 1.9% | 8 | 3.5% | 8 | 1.0% |
| Middletown | 161 | 6.7% | 70 | 5.0% | 264 | 6.2% |
| Narragansett | 133 | 7.8% | 50 | 6.5% | 230 | 8.4% |
| New Shoreham | 14 | 13.0% | 3 | 4.8% | 19 | 10.2% |
| Newport | 654 | 22.4% | 628 | 34.3% | 1,223 | 23.8% |
| North Kingstown | 362 | 9.4% | 239 | 11.1% | 657 | 9.6% |
| North Providence | 327 | 9.0% | 212 | 12.0% | 559 | 9.8% |
| North Smithfield | 38 | 2.9% | 45 | 6.3% | 67 | 2.8% |
| Pawtucket | 2,229 | 22.7% | 1,711 | 29.2% | 4,353 | 24.5% |
| Portsmouth | 65 | 2.8% | 63 | 5.0% | 118 | 2.8% |
| Providence | 7,651 | 34.3% | 6,137 | 42.5% | 17,714 | 40.1% |
| Richmond | 38 | 3.4% | 17 | 2.4% | 82 | 4.2% |
| Scituate | 52 | 3.7% | 30 | 4.2% | 113 | 4.3% |
| Smithfield | 85 | 3.7% | 11 | 1.0% | 153 | 3.9% |
| South Kingstown | 166 | 5.0% | 82 | 4.6% | 297 | 4.9% |
| Tiverton | 62 | 3.2% | 48 | 5.4% | 90 | 2.7% |
| Warren | 104 | 7.3% | 60 | 7.6% | 198 | 8.1% |
| Warwick | 642 | 6.1% | 386 | 6.8% | 1,175 | 6.4% |
| West Greenwich | 7 | 0.9% | 18 | 3.7% | 40 | 2.7% |
| West Warwick | 604 | 16.1% | 606 | 26.8% | 1,170 | 17.9% |
| Westerly | 204 | 7.0% | 141 | 8.0% | 512 | 9.6% |
| Woonsocket | 1,581 | 26.8% | 1,361 | 35.0% | 3,413 | 31.3% |
| Core Cities | 13,707 | 28.8% | 11,183 | 37.3% | 30,062 | 33.4% |
| Remainder of State | 5,435 | 6.3% | 3,365 | 8.0% | 10,055 | 6.6% |
| Rhode Island | 19,142 | 14.2% | 14,548 | 20.2% | 40,117 | 16.5% |

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

References for Indicator

- ^{1,14} *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*. (2003). Washington, DC: U.S. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.
- ^{2,3,17} Moore, K and Redd, Z. (November 2002) *Children in Poverty: Trends, Consequences, and Policy Options*. Washington: DC: Child Trends.
- ⁴ Lugaila, Terry A. (August 2003). *A Child's Day: 2000 (Selected Indicators of Child Well-Being)*. Household Economic Studies. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports.
- ⁵ *Children of Immigrants: A Statistical Profile*. (September 2002) New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- ⁶ *Child Poverty: Characteristics of Poor Children in America*. (February 2003). Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund.
- ^{7,15} U.S. Census Bureau, Thresholds for 2003 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years. Retrieved February 2003 from www.census.gov.
- ⁸ Proctor, B. and J. Dalaker. (September 2003). *Poverty in the United States 2002*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- ^{9,10} *Children at Risk: State Trends: 1990-2000*. (2002). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- ^{11,16,19,20,29,30,32} U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.
- ¹² *Latino Children: State-Level Measures of Child Well-Being From the 2000 Census*. (2003). Pocket Guide. Baltimore, MD: Population Reference Bureau for The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- ¹³ *African-American Children: State-Level Measures of Child Well-Being From the 2000 Census*. (2003). Pocket Guide. Baltimore, MD: Population Reference Bureau for The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- ¹⁸ *Early Childhood Poverty: A Statistical Profile*. (March 2002). New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- ²¹ Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, December 2003.

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