

# 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

Children living in single-parent families are at increased risk of living in poverty compared to children living in two-parent families. In 2002, 33% of single-parent families with children under age 18 were living below the poverty level compared to only 5% of married-couple families.<sup>1</sup> Of the 67,978 Rhode Island children who lived in single-parent families in 2000, 83% lived in households headed by a female.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the 247,822 children in Rhode Island live in family households (92%). The remainder live with other relatives (6%), other unrelated individuals (2%), or in group quarters, including juvenile detention facilities, hospitals and group homes (less than 1%).<sup>3</sup>

Following the national trend, more Rhode Island children are growing up in single-parent households than at any time since the census began collecting

information on household living arrangements. In 1970, only 12% of children in Rhode Island lived in single-parent families, compared to 23% in 1990 and 30% in 2000.<sup>4</sup>

Of all Rhode Island children living with at least one biological or adoptive parent, 70% lived in married-couple families and the remaining 30% (67,978) lived in single-parent families.<sup>5</sup> White children and Asian children are far more likely to live in married-couple families than are Black, Hispanic and Native American children.<sup>6</sup> The core cities, those with child poverty rates higher than 15%, continue to have the highest rates of children living in single-parent families.<sup>7</sup>

| Single-Parent Families    |      |      |
|---------------------------|------|------|
|                           | 1990 | 2000 |
| <b>RI</b>                 | 23%  | 29%  |
| <b>US</b>                 | 24%  | 28%  |
| <b>National Rank*</b>     | 32nd |      |
| <b>New England Rank**</b> | 6th  |      |

\*1st is best; 50th is worst

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

Source: *KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK: State Profiles of Child Well-Being 2003*. (2003). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.



## Single-Father Families

- ◆ In 2000, 11,514 Rhode Island children lived in single-father families. This represents 5% of all children under age 18 in the state and 17% of all children in single-parent families. In 29% of single-father families with their own children, all children were under age six.<sup>8</sup>
- ◆ 67% of Rhode Island children living in single-father families in 2000 were White, 17% were Hispanic, 8% were Black, and 3% were Asian.<sup>9</sup>
- ◆ The median family income for single fathers in Rhode Island in 1999 was significantly higher than the median income for single mothers (\$29,776 versus \$17,252), but far lower than the income of a married-couple family with children (\$63,706).<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ In comparison to poor families headed by single mothers, single-father-headed families in poverty were less likely to receive SSI or public assistance. In 1999, in the U.S. 27% of poor single father-headed families received SSI or public assistance, versus 50% of poor single mother-headed families.<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ Children in single-parent families are at higher risk for poor outcomes than are children living in households headed by two-parents in a low-conflict marriage.<sup>12</sup>

# Children in Single-Parent Families

Table 2.

Children's Living Arrangements, Rhode Island, 2000

| CITY/TOWN                 | ALL CHILDREN<br>LIVING IN FAMILY<br>HOUSEHOLDS | NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS |            |                        |            |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|
|                           |  | 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 the census. 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, 1990 Census of Population and Census 2000. Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

## References for Indicator

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2001 to 2003 average.
- <sup>2,3,4,5,7</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File One.
- <sup>6</sup> Census Data Online, <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/census>. (January 2001). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- <sup>8,10,11</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File Three.
- <sup>9</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File Four.
- <sup>12</sup> Anderson Moore, K., et al. (June 2002). *Marriage from a Child's Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can We Do About It?* Washington, DC: Child Trends.