

Racial and Ethnic Disparities

DEFINITION

Racial and ethnic disparities is the gap that exists in outcomes for children of different racial and ethnic groups in Rhode Island. Child well-being outcome areas include economic security, health, education, and safety.

SIGNIFICANCE

Rhode Island's children are diverse in race, ethnic background, language, and country of origin. During the 1990s, the percentage of children of color in Rhode Island increased from 16% to 27%, with a particularly large increase in the number of Hispanic children.¹ Although there have been substantial improvements in child well-being over the last century across racial and ethnic lines, large disparities still exist between White, non-Hispanic children and children from other racial and ethnic groups.

The growing diversity of Rhode Island's children is not evenly distributed. Increasingly, minority children are concentrated in core urban communities which also have increasingly high rates of child poverty.² More than three-quarters (78%) of Rhode Island's minority children live in one of the six core cities where child poverty rates are more than 15%.³ Approximately three-quarters of the children in Providence (76%) and in Central Falls (72%) are of minority racial and ethnic backgrounds.⁴ In several neighborhoods of Providence, minority

children now comprise more than 90% of all children. These neighborhoods have some of the highest child poverty rates in the state.⁵

Research demonstrates a significant relationship between residence in low-income or poor neighborhoods and increased teen pregnancy and high school drop-out rates.⁶ When compared with White, non-Hispanic children in poverty, Hispanic and Black children living in families with income below the poverty line are more likely to live in neighborhoods in which 40% or more of the residents live in poor families.⁷ Rhode Island has the country's largest percentage of Hispanic children (79%) and fourth largest percentage of Black children (71%) living in neighborhoods in which more than 18% of persons are in poverty.⁸

The racial and ethnic segregation of U.S. neighborhoods has generally diminished over the past three decades. Yet, residential segregation for the child population has shown a less substantial decrease and has been countered by increased school segregation.⁹ The Providence-Warwick-Fall River, MA metropolitan area was the second most segregated large metropolitan area in the nation for Hispanics in 2000, and was also the metropolitan area with the largest increase in segregation between 1980 and 2000.¹⁰



Rhode Island's Latino Children

◆ According to Census 2000, there were 35,002 Latino children living in Rhode Island. Three-quarters of the Latino children in Rhode Island live in Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence.¹¹

Economics

◆ Among all 50 states, Rhode Island has the highest percentage of Latino children living in poverty, with a rate of 47% compared to the national rate of 28%.¹² Rhode Island Latinos have the lowest median family income of all Latinos in the United States.¹³

◆ Rhode Island has the country's highest percentage (63%) of female-headed Latino families living in poverty and the highest percentage (82%) of Latino children living in neighborhoods where more than 35% of families are female-headed households (no spouse present).¹⁴

Health

◆ In Rhode Island, 13% percent of Latino women who give birth receive delayed prenatal care, compared to 9% of all races.¹⁵ Latino teens are nearly three times as likely to give birth between the ages 15 and 17 as non-Hispanic White teens (61.7 per 1,000 teen girls compared to 21.5 per 1,000 teen girls).¹⁶

Education

◆ Latinos in Rhode Island have lower educational attainment levels than the population overall. Only 66% of Latino youth graduate from high school compared to 81% of all youth in the state.¹⁷ According to Census 2000, 9% of Latinos 25 years of age and over hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 26% of all Rhode Islanders.¹⁸

Economic Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	WHITE	HISPANIC	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	ALL RACES
Children in Poverty	8%	47%	38%	26%	51%	17%
% Births to Mothers with < 12 years Education	14%	33%	22%	17%	34%	15%
% Children with All Parents in the Workforce	65%	49%	63%	54%	50%	62%
Median Household Income	\$45,314	\$22,851	\$24,973	\$36,473	\$22,813	\$42,090
Homeownership	71%	24%	33%	48%	34%	60%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 with the exception of Maternal Education Levels from Rhode Island Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 1998-2002. All Census 2000 data refers to only those individuals who selected one race. Black, Asian and Native American categories include both those individuals who identified themselves as Hispanic and those who identified themselves as non-Hispanic.

◆ In 2000, there were 40,177 poor children in Rhode Island. Sixty-four percent of Rhode Island's poor children and 78% of the core cities' poor children are children of color. Rhode Island's child poverty rates for Hispanic and Asian children are significantly higher than the U.S. rates for these racial and ethnic groups.¹⁹

◆ Children living in single-parent families are much more likely to be poor. Native American, Black, and Hispanic children in Rhode Island are more than twice as likely to live in a single-parent family as their White counterparts. In 2000, in Rhode Island 53% of Native American children, 52% of Black children, 47% of Hispanic children, and 21% of White children, lived in single parent families.²⁰

Health Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	WHITE	HISPANIC	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	ALL RACES
Women with Delayed Prenatal Care	8.0%	12.9%	15.8%	15.2%	17.2%	9.1%
Births to Teens Ages 15 – 17 (per 1,000 teens)	21.5	61.7	49.5	39.5	88.9	21.3
Infants Born Low Birthweight	6.9%	7.3%	11.8%	9.3%	10.7%	7.5%
Children Under Age 6 with High Lead Levels (>= 10ug/dL)	5%	10%	18%	12%	NA	7%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database 1998-2002 (prenatal care, teen births, low birth-weight). Information based on self-reported race and ethnicity. Rhode Island Department of Health, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program based on highest lead test result during calendar year 2002. Data for Native American children not reported because only 27 children were tested.

◆ Although progress has been made on many health indicators, racial and ethnic disparities still exist for a number of child outcomes. Minority women are far more likely to have delayed prenatal care and are much more likely to give birth while still teenagers.²¹

◆ In 2002 in the United States, 8% of White children under 18 years of age were not covered by health insurance, as compared with 23% of Hispanic children, 14% of Black children, 12% of Asian children, and 23% of American Indian and Native Alaskan children.²²

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Safety Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	WHITE	HISPANIC	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	ALL RACES
Juveniles at the Training School (per 1,000)	2.7	7.0	14.9	NA	NA	4.3
Children of Incarcerated Parents (per 1,000)	10.4	25.5	93.4	NA	NA	16.6
Children in Out of Home Placement (per 1,000)	3.6	6.1	18.0	3.3	13.5	4.9

Source: *Juveniles in the Training School*: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT analysis of Rhode Island Department of Children Youth and Families, based on children who passed through the RITS between 1/1/03 – 12/31/03. *Children of Incarcerated Parents*: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT analysis of data from the Rhode Island Department of Justice, 2003. *Children in Out-of-Home Placement*: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT analysis of data from the Department of Children Youth and Families RICHIST Database from January 2002, January 2003, and January 2004. Out-of-Home Placement includes licensed and pending-license non-relative foster homes, licensed and pending-license relative foster homes, and private agency foster care. All denominators based on population under age 18 by race from Census 2000. Information not reported for Native American and Asian children because two years of data do not produce statistically significant rates.

◆ Racial and ethnic minority groups continue to be disproportionately represented in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Research shows that minority youth are treated more harshly than White, non-Hispanic youth for the same type and severity of offenses at every critical point in the justice system, from detention and formal processing in juvenile court, to sentencing and incarceration in juvenile and adult facilities.²³ In the U.S., Black youth adjudicated for drug offenses with no prior admissions were incarcerated 48 times as often as their White counterparts. Similarly, Latino youth adjudicated for violent offenses remained in state institutions for 150 days longer than White youth adjudicated for the same offenses.²⁴

◆ Children of color comprise 33% of the child population in the United States and more than 55% of children in foster care. This disproportion most affects Black children, comprising 15% of the child population and 38% of children in foster care. Higher poverty rates among families of color contribute to this trend.²⁵ National data indicate that low-income families and families of color are more likely to have their child removed and placed in foster care.²⁶

Education Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	WHITE	HISPANIC	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	ALL RACES
% of Children Attending Schools In Need of Improvement						
<i>Attending Schools Making Progress</i>	10%	6%	10%	7%	12%	9%
<i>Attending Schools With Insufficient Progress</i>	28%	74%	62%	54%	43%	39%
4th Grade Children Meeting the Standard for Reading						
<i>Basic Understanding</i>	80%	45%	49%	66%	72%	70%
<i>Analysis and Interpretation</i>	68%	31%	36%	55%	59%	57%
High School Graduation Rate	85%	66%	71%	81%	62%	81%
% of Adults Over Age 25 with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	27%	9%	17%	36%	14%	26%

Source: *Percentage Attending Schools In Need of Improvement*: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT analysis of Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003 School Performance Classification. Denominator is school enrollment by race 2002 – 2003 school year. *4th Grade Reading Scores*: Rhode Island State Assessment Program, Report of Student Performance by Demographic Characteristics, State Report Grade 4, Spring 2003 Data. *High School Graduation Rate*: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Adult Educational Attainment: Census 2000.

◆ Currently in Rhode Island, Hispanic and Black children are twice as likely as White children, to attend schools in need of improvement based on 2003 school performance data.²⁷

◆ In the 2000-2001 school year, Black, Hispanic, and Asian students were under-represented in special education placements.²⁸ Within the population of students in special education, however, Black and Hispanic children are disproportionately likely to be identified as mentally retarded and disproportionately unlikely to be identified as speech or hearing impaired or autistic.²⁹



Immigrant Children

◆ In 2003, Rhode Island was home to 12,597 children under age 18 who were born outside the United States, 5% of all children in the state.³⁰ This represents an increase since 1998, when 4,888 immigrant children constituted 2% of Rhode Island's child population.³¹ These numbers are likely to be an underestimate as immigrant children are among the most likely to be undercounted by population estimates.

◆ In 2003, 30,176 Rhode Island households with children under age 18 were headed by immigrants.³² Children of immigrants are the fastest growing segment of the United States population under age 18.³³ Nationally, over half (52%) of all children of immigrants lived in families with incomes below 200% of the Federal Poverty threshold.³⁴

◆ Children of immigrants living in two-parent working families are substantially more likely to be low-income than their native-born counterparts. Lower wages, not employment levels, account for most of this income disparity.³⁵ Children of immigrants are more likely than children of natives to: be in fair or poor health and lack health insurance; live in families with problems affording food but receive no food stamps; and live in crowded housing but receive no housing assistance.³⁶

◆ In Rhode Island, the poverty rate for immigrants is 20% compared with a statewide rate of 12%.³⁷ Two out of three (62%) immigrants live in the core cities; of these, 82% live in Providence and Pawtucket.³⁸ Immigrants tend to live in poorer neighborhoods within these cities and to live in more crowded housing units.³⁹

References for Indicator

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¹⁷ Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003.

¹⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 4.

²⁰ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 1.

²² *Health Insurance Coverage: 2002 Table H108*. (September 2003). Current Population Survey, 2003, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Washington DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

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²⁷ Rhode Island KIDS COUNT analysis of data from the Rhode Island Department of Education.

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³⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 3.