

Children Participating in School Breakfast

DEFINITION

Children participating in school breakfast is the percentage of low-income public school 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 under-nutrition have poorer overall health status than well-nourished children, miss more days of school and are less ready to learn when they do attend.¹ Students who eat breakfast have significantly higher math and reading scores, fewer absences, improved attentiveness and lower incidences of social and behavioral problems.²

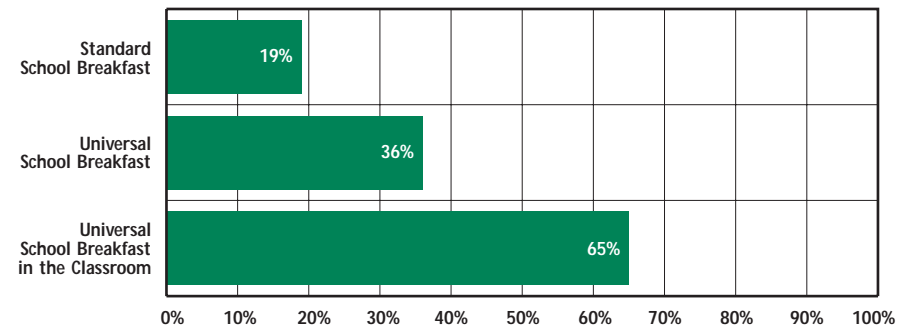
Low-income students are more likely than other students to arrive at school without an adequate breakfast. Research shows that when there is a school breakfast program available, low-income students are significantly more likely to consume a breakfast.³ The School Breakfast Program offers nutritious meals, providing children who participate with one-fourth or more of their Recommended Daily Allowance for key nutrients.⁴

In Rhode Island in 2000, one in three households with children did not

have enough food to meet basic needs at all times.⁵ Rhode Islanders who are Hispanic, have children under the age of 6, are single parents or have not finished high school are the most likely to report that they did not have enough food to meet their basic needs.⁶ For other children, long commute times and rushed family schedules make having time for eating breakfast before school difficult and put children at a disadvantage in their ability to arrive and concentrate in class.⁷

In 1995, almost two-thirds (62%) of Rhode Island public schools did not offer the breakfast program.⁸ Rhode Island state legislation now requires all public schools to provide students with access to school breakfast.⁹ Federal and state funds are available to support the costs of the School Breakfast Program. To receive a reduced-price meal, household income must be below 185% of the federal poverty level. For free meals, household income must fall below 130% of poverty. Children in Food Stamp and Family Independence Program households are automatically eligible for free meals.¹⁰ In October 2004, an average of 19,743 breakfasts was served daily in schools across Rhode Island. Of these, 80% (15,728) were to low-income children eligible for free or reduced-price meals.¹¹

U.S. Participation Rates in School Breakfast for Three Different Program Models



Source: *Evaluation of the universal school breakfast program pilot project: Key interim report findings from the first year of implementation.* (2002). Washington, DC: Food Research and Action Center.

- ◆ Universal School Breakfast Programs offer school breakfast free to all students, regardless of family income. Universal programs increase school breakfast participation dramatically, especially among low-income students. When schools offer breakfast in the classroom at the start of the school day, participation increases three-fold.¹²
- ◆ Currently, Central Falls, Cranston, Pawtucket and Providence all offer universal free school breakfast.¹³
- ◆ Rhode Island increased participation in the school breakfast program by students receiving free or reduced price meals by 18% between the 2002-2003 and the 2003-2004 school years, making it one of five states to increase participation by more than 10%.¹⁴
- ◆ Rhode Island ranks 35th in the country for participation in school breakfast. During the 2003-2004 school year, 38 low-income students participated in the breakfast program for every 100 that participated in the lunch program.¹⁵ Were Rhode Island to increase this ratio from 38 to 55 low-income students participating in the school breakfast program, the state could garner an additional \$1.7 million of federal funds that can support the program and flow into the state's economy.¹⁶

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Table 11. Children Participating in School Breakfast, Rhode Island, Fall 2004

SCHOOL DISTRICT	2004 FALL ENROLLMENT	DISTRICT WIDE AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	PERCENT OF ALL CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN BREAKFAST	NUMBER OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS	LOW-INCOME AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	PERCENT OF ALL LOW-INCOME CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL BREAKFAST
Barrington	3,302	16	<1%	89	3	3%
Bristol Warren	3,543	234	7%	810	172	21%
Burrillville	2,517	112	4%	492	67	14%
Central Falls	3,540	933	26%	2,804	772	28%
Charlho	3,706	94	3%	512	59	12%
Coventry	5,548	356	6%	814	187	23%
Cranston	10,775	1,242	12%	2,528	673	27%
Cumberland	5,104	255	5%	661	264	40%
East Greenwich	2,404	78	3%	131	66	50%
East Providence	5,925	481	8%	1,975	419	21%
Exeter-West Greenwich	2,076	43	2%	235	26	11%
Foster	315	29	9%	54	13	24%
Foster-Glocester	1,683	68	4%	157	27	17%
Glocester	711	46	6%	101	36	36%
Jamestown	474	6	1%	40	4	10%
Johnston	3,254	167	5%	778	128	16%
Lincoln	3,568	154	4%	385	134	35%
Little Compton	304	2	1%	23	0	0%
Middletown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Narragansett	1,624	26	2%	168	21	13%
New Shoreham	140	19	14%	11	8	73%
Newport	2,554	499	20%	1,205	489	41%
North Kingstown	4,514	212	5%	543	159	29%
North Providence	3,379	257	8%	827	208	25%
North Smithfield	1,836	43	2%	169	19	11%
Pawtucket	9,126	2,163	24%	6,245	1,751	28%
Portsmouth	2,947	90	3%	186	44	24%
Providence	26,386	9,287	35%	21,252	7,953	37%
Scituate	1,765	25	1%	128	16	13%
Smithfield	2,556	75	3%	182	32	18%
South Kingstown	3,955	138	3%	424	121	29%
Tiverton	2,102	124	6%	316	65	21%
Warwick	11,325	754	7%	2,462	528	21%
West Warwick	3,599	375	10%	1,150	309	27%
Westerly	3,595	388	11%	807	250	31%
Woonsocket	6,658	1,408	21%	3,957	1,198	30%
Core Cities	51,863	14,665	28%	36,613	12,472	34%
Remainder of State	94,947	5,534	6%	16,009	3,749	23%
Rhode Island	146,810	20,199	14%	52,622	16,221	31%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of School Food Services, October 2004. Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

Fall enrollment is the public school enrollment as of October 1, 2004. Average daily participation in breakfast is the number of students eating breakfast in school on average in the month of October 2004. Number of low-income students is the number of students eligible for and enrolled in free or reduced price lunches in the month of October 2004. Low-income average daily participation in breakfast is the number of students eligible for and enrolled in free or reduced price lunches, eating breakfast in school on average in the month of October 2004. Half-day kindergarten, private schools and residential child care facilities may offer the School Breakfast Program, but are not included in these calculations.

References for Indicator

- ¹ *The consequences of hunger and food insecurity for children: Evidence from recent scientific studies*. (2002). Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, Center on Hunger and Poverty.
- ^{2,3,4,7,9,10,13,14} *School breakfast scorecard 2003: FRAC's annual status report on the School Breakfast Program*. (2003). Washington, DC: Food Research and Action Center.
- ^{5,6} *The Rhode Island food security monitoring project: Assessing the prevalence of hunger and food Insecurity in Rhode Island year 2000 summary report*. (2001). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health.
- ⁸ Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of School Food Services, Fall 1995.
- ¹¹ Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of School Food Services, Fall 2004.
- ¹² *Evaluation of the Universal School Breakfast Program Pilot Project: Key interim report findings from the first year of implementation*. (2002). Washington, DC: Food Research and Action Center.
- ^{14,15,16} *School breakfast scorecard 2004: FRAC's annual status report on the School Breakfast Program*. (2004). Washington, DC: Food Research and Action Center.