

# Children in Poverty

## DEFINITION

*Children in poverty* is the percentage of related children under age 18 who live in families below the 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 and to earn less as adults.<sup>1,2</sup> Children in low-income communities are more likely to attend poorly equipped schools; have less access to libraries and cultural activities; have limited access to high quality child care programs; and have fewer opportunities to participate in sports and recreations programs after school and in the summer.<sup>3,4</sup>

Children of color and children of immigrants are more likely to grow up poor.<sup>5,6</sup> Single parenthood, low educational attainment, part-time or no employment and low wages of parents place children at risk of being poor.<sup>7,8</sup>

Family economic conditions in early and middle childhood appear to be more important for shaping ability and achievement than do economic conditions during adolescence.<sup>9</sup> Efforts that improve the quality of a child’s environment and increase family income in the early years of life will improve the likelihood of healthy child development.<sup>10</sup>

There is considerable movement into and out of poverty each year.<sup>11</sup> Low-income working families often must choose between the demands of work and the needs of raising children without the supports available to higher income families.<sup>12</sup> For these families, the margin of income to expenses makes it difficult to build an asset base to cushion against falling back into poverty in tough times.<sup>13</sup>

According to the Census, in 2000 there were 40,117 children living in poverty in Rhode Island, 16.5% of all children in the state.<sup>14</sup> The 2002 poverty threshold for a family of three with two children is \$14,494.<sup>15</sup>

Children in Poverty		
	1990	2000
RI	14%	17%
US	18%	17%
<b>State Rank</b>	<b>30th</b>	

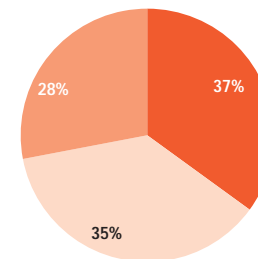
*1st is best; 50th is worst*

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

## Rhode Island's Poor Children, 2000

### By Age

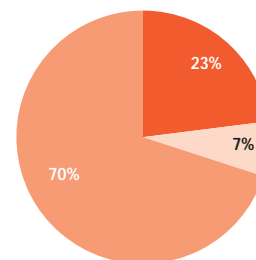
- 35% Ages 5 and younger
- 37% Ages 6 to 11
- 28% Ages 12 to 17



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

### By Family Structure

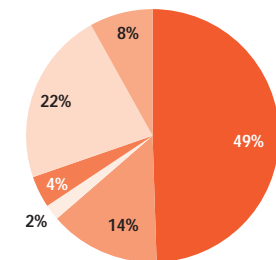
- 23% Married Couple Family
- 7% Male Householder Only
- 70% Female Householder Only



*n = 40,177*

### By Race\*

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

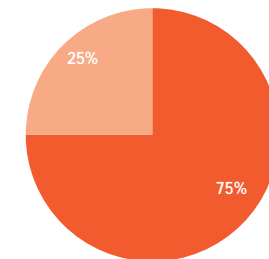


*n = 40,117*

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

### By Residence

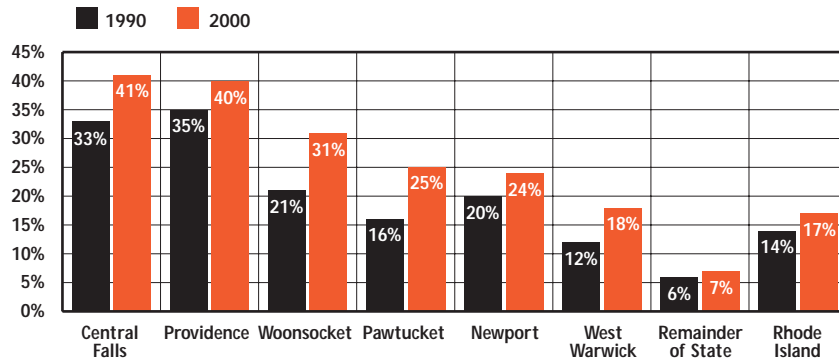
- 75% Core Cities\*
- 25% Remainder of State



*n = 40,177*

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.

Child Poverty Rates, 1990 and 2000, Core Cities, Remainder of State and Rhode Island



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

- ◆ Rhode Island's child poverty rate 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.<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ 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.<sup>17</sup>
- ◆ Because of increases in child poverty between 1990 and 2000, West Warwick is now a core city with 18% of children living in poverty.<sup>18</sup> Providence now has the third highest child poverty rate (40%) in the country among cities with a population of 100,000 or more.<sup>19</sup> Central Falls has the highest child poverty rate (41%) of any city or town in Rhode Island.<sup>20</sup>

Children Living in Extreme Poverty

- ◆ Families with income below 50% of the federal poverty level are considered to be living in extreme poverty.<sup>21</sup> The extreme poverty level in 2002 is family income below \$9,122 for a family of four.<sup>22</sup>
- ◆ Children who live in deep, long-term poverty experience the worst outcomes as a result of their family's income status.<sup>23</sup> In 2000, 19,773 children in Rhode Island lived in extreme poverty. This is 8% of all Rhode Island children and half of all poor children in Rhode Island.<sup>24</sup>

Young Children Under Age 6 in Poverty in Rhode Island

- ◆ Research shows that young children who live in poverty are more likely to have impaired development because of their increased exposure to risk factors associated with poverty including: inadequate nutrition, environmental toxins, maternal depression, trauma and abuse, lower quality child care and parental substance abuse.<sup>25</sup>
- ◆ In 2000, 19% (14,548) Rhode Island children under 6 were living in poverty, compared to 17% nationally.<sup>26,27</sup> Of these children, 7,230 were extremely poor.<sup>28</sup>
- ◆ As of December 1, 2002, there were 5,909 children under age 3 and 5,097 children ages 3 to 5 in families receiving cash assistance from the Family Independence Program. Of all children in the Family Independence Program, 40% are under age 6.<sup>29</sup>

# Children in Poverty

## Children in Low-Income Families, Rhode Island, 2000

Annual Income	% of Poverty Threshold	#	%
Under \$9,122	Under 50%	19,773	8%
\$9,122 - \$18,243	50% - 99%	21,389	9%
\$18,244 - \$27,365	100% - 149%	20,932	9%
\$27,366 - \$36,487	150% - 199%	21,326	9%
<b>Total Income Below 200%</b>		<b>83,420</b>	<b>35%</b>

*n=243,838*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. Income amounts are calculated for a family of four with two children. The poverty threshold in 2002 for a family of four with two children was \$18,244.

◆ More than one in three children (35%) in Rhode Island live in a low-income family with income below 200% of the poverty threshold. The federal poverty threshold is an underestimate of the number of families with children in Rhode Island who are unable to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and other necessities.<sup>30</sup>

◆ The Rhode Island Standard of Need considers the costs of housing, child care and health care as well as the cash value of tax credits and income support programs. Due to child care and health care subsidies, a family making about 150% of poverty is able to make ends meet. If the family earns more than 225% of the federal poverty threshold, they become ineligible for child care subsidies and expenses begin to exceed income.<sup>31</sup>

## Building Blocks of Economic Security

### Income Supports

◆ Income support includes: the FIP Earned Income Disregard, Food Stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and Energy Assistance programs. Income supports help to ensure that low-income working families have adequate resources to meet their basic needs.<sup>32</sup>

### 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.<sup>33</sup>

### 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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup>

### Affordable Housing

◆ Stable housing is a critical requirement for job retention and performance.<sup>36</sup> In 2002, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Rhode Island is \$863, more than double the amount that is considered affordable for a family of three with income below the poverty level.<sup>37</sup>

### Educational Attainment

◆ Individuals with higher education generally have more job opportunities, higher wages and greater job security than those with lower levels of education.<sup>38</sup>

Table 7.

## Child Poverty, 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%
<b>Core Cities</b>	<b>13,707</b>	<b>28.8%</b>	<b>11,183</b>	<b>37.3%</b>	<b>30,062</b>	<b>33.4%</b>
<b>Remainder of State</b>	<b>5,435</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>3,365</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>10,055</b>	<b>6.6%</b>
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>19,142</b>	<b>14.2%</b>	<b>14,548</b>	<b>20.2%</b>	<b>40,117</b>	<b>16.5%</b>

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

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

### References for Indicator

- <sup>1,21</sup> *America's Children: Key Indicators of Well Being* (2002). Washington, DC: U.S. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.
- <sup>2,23</sup> Moore, K. et. al. (November 2002). *Children in Poverty: Trends, Consequences, and Policy Options*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- <sup>3,34</sup> *Years of Promise: A Comprehensive Strategy for America's Children* (1996). New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation.
- <sup>4</sup> Jargowsky, P. (1997). *Poverty and Place: Ghettos, Barrios and the American City*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- <sup>5,7</sup> Children's Defense Fund. *Child Poverty: Characteristics of Poor Children in America - 2000*. www.childrens-defense.org, February 2003.
- <sup>6</sup> *Children of Immigrants: A Statistical Profile* (September 2002). New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- <sup>8,38</sup> *Poverty in the United States 2001* (September 2002). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- <sup>9</sup> Duncan G.J. et al (1997). "Longitudinal Indicators of Children's Poverty and Dependence" in Hauser, R. et. al. (eds.) *Indicators of Children's Well-Being*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- <sup>10,11</sup> *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* (2000). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- <sup>12,13,32,33</sup> *KIDS COUNT Databook* (2002). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- <sup>14,16,17,18,20,24,26,28,30</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.
- <sup>15,22</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Thresholds for 2002 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18" Years, www.census.gov., February 2003.

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