

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, safety and education.

SIGNIFICANCE

Rhode Island's children are diverse in race, ethnic background, language, and country of origin. Between 2000 and 2005, the percentage of minority children under age 18 increased from 27% to 31%, a 15% increase.^{1,2} 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.

Rhode Island's growing diversity of children is not evenly distributed, with minority children concentrated in core urban communities that have increasingly high rates of child poverty. In 2000, more than three-quarters (78%) of Rhode Island's minority children lived in one of the six core cities where child poverty rates were more than 15%. Approximately three-quarters of the children in Providence (76%) and in Central Falls (72%) were of minority racial and ethnic backgrounds.³ In several neighborhoods of Providence, minority children accounted for more

than 90% of all children, with some of the highest child poverty rates in the state.⁴

Research demonstrates a significant relationship between residence in low-income or poor neighborhoods and increased teen pregnancy and high school dropout rates.⁵ 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 very poor neighborhoods in which 40% or more of the residents live in poor families.⁶ Rhode Island has the country's largest percentage of Hispanic children living in poverty (79%) and fourth-largest percentage of Black children (71%) living in neighborhoods in which more than 18% of persons are in poverty.^{7,8}

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 Hispanic Children

- ◆ In 2005, there were 41,296 Hispanic children under age 18 living in Rhode Island, up from 35,002 in 2000. Between 2000 and 2005 the Hispanic child population grew by 18% whereas the total child population in Rhode Island decreased by 1%.^{11,12}
- ◆ Three-quarters (78%) of the Hispanic children in Rhode Island live in Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence.¹³ While Providence has the largest population of Hispanics overall, they are most densely concentrated in Central Falls.¹⁴

Economics

- ◆ The percentage of Hispanic children living in poverty in 2005 in Rhode Island was 47%, compared to the national rate of 29%.^{15,16} In 2000, Rhode Island Hispanics had the lowest median family income of all Hispanics in the United States.¹⁷
- ◆ In 2004, the unemployment rate for Hispanics was one and a half times higher than that of White Rhode Islanders, but lower than the unemployment rates for Black and Asian Rhode Islanders.¹⁸ Hispanic families are particularly economically vulnerable given that 53% of Hispanic households with children in Rhode Island are headed by a single adult and have only one potential wage earner.¹⁹

Health

- ◆ In Rhode Island, 12% percent of Hispanic women who give birth receive delayed prenatal care, compared to 9% of all races.²⁰ Hispanic female teens between the ages of 15 and 19 in Rhode Island have a birth rate that is more than 3 times as high as the state rate overall (94.5 per 1,000 teens compared to 31.0 per 1,000).²¹

Education

- ◆ Hispanics in Rhode Island have lower educational attainment levels than the population overall. In 2006, the high school graduation rate for Hispanic youth was 74%, lower than the high school graduation rate of 85% for all youth in the state.²² In 2005, 15% of Hispanics 25 years of age and over held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 29% of all Rhode Islanders.²³

Economic Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	WHITE	HISPANIC	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	ALL RACES
Children in Poverty	12%	47%	53%	15%	43%	19%
Births to Mothers with Education < 12 years	14%	32%	22%	NA	NA	15%
% of Children with All Parents in the Workforce	71%	48%	65%	54%	47%	68%
Median Household Income for Households with Children Under 18	\$63,790	\$25,000	\$36,348	\$48,000	NA	\$60,025
Homeownership	67%	29%	33%	55%	41%	63%

Sources: *Children in Poverty* data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2005, Tables B17001, B17001A, B17001B, B17001C, B17001D & B17001I. *Maternal Education* data are from the Rhode Island Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2001-2005. *Parental Labor Force Participation* data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Tables P46, PCT70A, PCT70B, PCT70C, PCT70D & PCT70H. *Median Household Income* data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2005. *Homeownership* data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2005, Tables B25003, B25003A, B25003B, B25003C, B25003D & B25003I. Hispanics may also be included in any of the race categories. All Census data refer only to those individuals who selected one race. NA indicates that the data are statistically unreliable due to small population or sample sizes.

- ◆ In 2005, there were 46,894 children under 18 years old living in families below the poverty level in Rhode Island, more than half (55%) of whom were children of color. About half of Black (53%) and Hispanic (47%) children in Rhode Island live in poor families, compared with 12% of White children in the state.²⁴
- ◆ In 2005 in Rhode Island, about one-third of Black (33%) and Hispanic (29%) households owned their homes, compared with two-thirds (67%) of White households.²⁵
- ◆ Education is essential for economic success. Adults with less than a high school diploma are at particular risk of living in poverty and other negative outcomes.²⁶ Hispanic, Black and Native American children are all more likely than White and Asian children to be born to mothers with less than a high school diploma.²⁷

Health Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	WHITE	HISPANIC	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	ALL RACES
Women with Delayed Prenatal Care	8%	12%	16%	17%	17%	9%
Preterm Births	11%	13%	15%	14%	NA	12%
Infants Born Low Birthweight	7%	8%	11%	10%	NA	8%
Infant Mortality	5.6	8.2	12.4	9.0	7.9	6.4
Asthma Hospitalizations	3.2	5.3	7.2	2.6	0.5	3.9
Births to Teens Ages 15 – 19 (per 1,000 teens)	30.0	94.5	77.0	39.6	NA	31.0

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database 2001-2005. Information based on self-reported race and ethnicity. *Asthma Hospitalizations* data are provided by the Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 2001-2005. For *Births to Teens* and *Asthma Hospitalizations* the total population data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census population estimates for 2001-2005. NA indicates that the data are statistically unreliable due to small population sizes.

- ◆ Although progress has been made on many health indicators across racial and ethnic populations, disparities still exist for a number of maternal and child outcomes. For example, minority women are far more likely to receive delayed or no prenatal care, to give birth to preterm and low birthweight babies, and to give birth as teenagers. Minority children are more likely to die in infancy and to experience hospitalizations as a result of asthma.²⁸
- ◆ In 2005 in the United States, 7% of White non-Hispanic children under age 18 were not covered by health insurance, as compared with 22% of Hispanic children, 12% of Black children, and 12% of Asian children.²⁹

Racial and Ethnic Disparities

Safety Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	WHITE	HISPANIC	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	ALL RACES
Juveniles at the Training School (per 1,000)	1.2	5.2	10.0	1.9	3.7	2.4
Children of Incarcerated Parents (per 1,000)	6.7	15.7	51.7	3.5	6.1	11.5
Children in Out of Home Placement (per 1,000)	11.2	17.1	44.1	7.6	14.8	13.6

Sources: *Juveniles in the Training School* data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Training School, January 1, 2007 (includes only adjudicated residents). *Children of Incarcerated Parents* data are from the Rhode Island Department of Corrections, September 30, 2006 (includes only the sentenced population). *Children in Out-of-Home Placement* data are from the Department of Children, Youth and Families RICHIST Database, December 31, 2006. Population denominators used for *Children of Incarcerated Parents* and *Children in Out-of-Home Placement* are the populations under age 18 by race from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2005. The population denominators used for *Juveniles at the Training School* are the populations ages 13-21 by race from 2004 U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates.

◆ **Racial and ethnic minority groups continue to be disproportionately represented in 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 correctional facilities.³⁰ Nationally, Black youth are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system more than any other minority group, but the proportion of Hispanic youth in the juvenile justice population is growing faster than that of any other racial or ethnic group.³¹**

◆ **Children and youth of color are also overrepresented in the child welfare system; they account for 55% of children in foster care despite making up only 33% of the total child population in the United States. Black children are affected the most, as they account for 15% of the U.S. child population and 38% of children in foster care. Higher poverty rates among families of color contribute to this trend. Research also shows disparate treatment of children of color as they enter the foster care system and while they are in the system. Black and Hispanic families are more likely than non-Hispanic White families under similar circumstances to be reported for child abuse and neglect and to have their child removed. Native American children are also overrepresented in the child welfare system.³²**

Education Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	WHITE	HISPANIC	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	ALL RACES
% of Students Attending Schools Making Insufficient Progress	17%	62%	49%	41%	32%	29%
% of Students Attending Moderately Performing Schools	16%	26%	31%	23%	22%	20%
% of Students Attending High Performing Schools	67%	12%	19%	36%	47%	51%
4th Grade Children Reading at or above Proficiency	70%	32%	36%	60%	56%	60%
High School Graduation Rate	88%	74%	78%	80%	76%	85%
% of Adults Over 25 with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	31%	15%	22%	44%	NA	29%

Sources: *School Classifications, Fourth-Grade Reading Scores & High School Graduation Rates* are from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2005-2006 school year. *Adult Educational Attainment* is from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2005, Tables B15002, B15002A, B15002B, B15002C, B15002D & B15002I. All Census data refer only to those individuals who selected one race, and Hispanics may also be included in any of the race categories. NA indicates that the population sample size was too small for the Census Bureau to report.

◆ **In Rhode Island, children of color are far more likely than White children to attend schools making insufficient progress. Rhode Island's Hispanic and Black children attend schools making insufficient progress at rates about three times greater than White children.³³**

◆ **Black, Hispanic, Native American and Asian students in Rhode Island are underrepresented in many disability areas, especially autism and visual impairments. Asian students are also more likely than others to receive services for hearing impairments. Black, Hispanic and Native American students are disproportionately identified as mentally retarded.³⁴**

Immigrant Children

- ◆ In 2005, Rhode Island was home to 9,188 children under age 18 who were born outside the United States, 4% of all children in the state. Of foreign-born children in Rhode Island in 2005, 24% were naturalized U.S. citizens.³⁵
- ◆ In 2005 in Rhode Island, 25% of all children in the state lived in immigrant families where at least one parent was foreign-born. Rhode Island had the 9th highest percentage of children in immigrant families of all states. In 2005, approximately 61,000 children in Rhode Island lived in families with at least one immigrant parent.³⁶ Children of immigrants are the fastest growing segment of the United States population under age 18.³⁷
- ◆ Immigrant families are generally poorer than native families. While immigrant families are more likely than U.S. native families to include two parents and just as likely to include full-time workers, immigrants tend to earn lower wages than U.S. natives, leading to lower overall household incomes.³⁸ Immigrants are 50% more likely than U.S. natives to earn less than the minimum wage.³⁹
- ◆ Nationally in 2002-2004, half (50%) of all children with at least one foreign-born parent lived in families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty threshold, compared with 37% of children with U.S.-born parents. In Rhode Island, 43% of children in immigrant families lived in families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty threshold compared with 30% of children with U.S.-born parents.⁴⁰

References

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