

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 well-being, 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 minority children 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 (77%) of Rhode Island's minority children live in one of the six core cities where child poverty rates are over 15%.³ 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, children of color now comprise over 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, Black and Hispanic 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

The racial and ethnic segregation of U.S. neighborhoods over the past three decades, while decreasing overall, decreased less for children than the general population, and was countered by increased school segregation.⁸ 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 2000.⁹ More than three-quarters of Rhode Island's Latinos live in Providence, Pawtucket or Central Falls.¹⁰



Rhode Island's Native American Children

◆ According to Census 2000, there were 1,877 children who were identified as Native American or Alaska Native living in Rhode Island.¹¹ Three-quarters of the Native American children in Rhode Island live in the towns of Providence, South Kingstown, Newport, Cranston, Pawtucket, Narragansett, Warwick and East Providence.¹² There were 3,901 children identified in the Census as Native American or Alaska Native in combination with another race.¹³

Economics

◆ Native American children are among the most likely to live in families with incomes below the poverty threshold.¹⁴ More than 50% of the 1,877 Native American children in Rhode Island are poor, compared to 17% of children overall.¹⁵

◆ Household income in these families is low at \$22,813 compared to \$42,090 statewide.¹⁶ Native American children are the most likely to live in a single parent family, with 62% of children living in single parent families compared to 30% of all children in Rhode Island.¹⁷ Only 34% of Native Americans in Rhode Island live in housing that they own compared to 60% overall and 71% of White, non-Hispanic households.¹⁸

Health

◆ Rhode Island children of Native American background are the most likely of all racial backgrounds in the state to be born without adequate prenatal care (17% compared to 9% overall) and to women with less than a high school diploma (34% compared to 15% overall).¹⁹ Rhode Island Native American teens are nearly four times as likely to be teen mothers as other teens in the state (83.0 per 1,000 teens compared to 22.5 per 1,000 overall).²⁰

Education

◆ Native Americans in Rhode Island have lower educational attainment levels than the population overall. Only 78% of Native American youth graduate from high school compared to 84% of all youth in the state.²¹ Of those Native Americans 25 years of age and over, 14% hold a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 26% of all Rhode Islanders.²²

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%
% with maternal education < 12 years	14%	34%	22%	18%	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 all except Maternal Education Levels from Rhode Island Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health Database. 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 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.²³

◆ Children living in single parent families are much more likely to be poor. Native American, Black, and Hispanic children in Rhode Island are about twice as likely to live in a single-parent family as their White counterparts. In 2000 in Rhode Island, 24% of White children, 62% of Native American children, 61% of Black children, and 53% of Hispanic children lived in single parent families.²⁴

Health Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	WHITE	HISPANIC	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	ALL RACES
Women with delayed prenatal care	8.1%	13.5%	15.3%	15.1%	16.5%	9%
Births to teens ages 15 – 17 (per 1,000 teens)	21.7	62.6	51.1	43.7	83.0	22.5
Infants born low birthweight	6.7%	7.4%	11.8%	9.1%	10.7%	7.4%
Children under age 6 with high lead levels (>= 10ug/dL)	5%	10%	18%	12%	NA	7%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Office of Family Health, 1997-2001 (prenatal care, teen births, low birthweight). Teen births were calculated for Native American teens based on births for the five year period and denominator from the 2000 Census. 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 much 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 obtaining prenatal care and are much more likely to have given birth while still teenagers.²⁵

◆ In 1999 in Rhode Island, 9% of White adults were uninsured as compared with 17% of Blacks, 14% of Asians/Pacific Islanders and 10% of Hispanics.²⁶ Comparable data for Rhode Island children are not available. Nationally, Hispanic children and poor children are the most likely to be uninsured.²⁷

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)	2.7	7.1	16.9	NA	NA	4.3
Children of Incarcerated Parents (per 1,000)	9.9	23.7	92.9	NA	NA	15.7
Children in Out of Home Placement (per 1,000)	3.6	5.6	19.6	2.5	11.4	4.6

Source: *Juveniles at 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 1/1/02-12/31/02. *Children of Incarcerated Parents*: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT analysis of data from the Rhode Island Department of Justice, 2002. *Children in Out-of-Home Placement*: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT analysis of data from the Department of Children Youth and Families RICHIST Database from December 2000, January 2002 and January 2003. All denominators based on children under age 18 by race from Census 2000. Information not reported for Native American and Asian children because one year of data does not produce statistically reliable 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 more likely than White, non-Hispanic youth to be placed in secure detention, even when the type and severity of the offense is the same.²⁸ 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.²⁹

◆ National data indicate that poor families and families of color are more likely to have their child removed and placed in foster care. Once in foster care, children of color are more likely to remain there for longer periods of time and to experience multiple placements in different homes.³⁰

Education Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	WHITE	HISPANIC	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	ALL RACES
% of Children Attending Low Performing Schools	26%	82%	74%	63%	46%	39%
4th Grade Children Meeting the Standard for Reading						
<i>Basic Understanding</i>	83%	50%	52%	62%	58%	74%
<i>Analysis and Interpretation</i>	71%	32%	34%	42%	45%	60%
High School Graduation Rate	87%	72%	76%	83%	78%	84%
% of Adults Over Age 25 with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	27%	9%	17%	36%	14%	26%

Source: *Attending Low Performing Schools*: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT analysis of Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2002 School Performance Categories, denominator is school enrollment by race 2001-2002 school year. *4th Grade Reading Scores*: Rhode Island State Assessment Program, Report of Student Performance by Demographic Characteristics, State Report Grade 4, Spring 2002 Data. *High School Graduation Rate*: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. *Adult Educational Attainment*: Census 2000.

◆ Currently in Rhode Island, children of color are far more likely to attend low-performing schools than are White children. Rhode Island's Hispanic and Black children are more than three times as likely as White children to attend a low-performing school.³¹

◆ Children of color are more likely to be identified as needing special education. According to the *2000-2001 Biennial Performance Report of Children with Disabilities in Rhode Island*, a disproportionate number of Black, Hispanic, and Asian students were represented in special education placement.³²



Immigrant Children

◆ In 2001, Rhode Island was home to 8,476 children under age 18 who were born outside the United States, 4% of all children in the state.³³ This is likely to be an underestimate as immigrant children are among the most likely to be undercounted by population estimates. Between 1990 and 2000 in Rhode Island, the total immigrant population grew by 25%, increasing from 95,088 to 119,277.³⁴

◆ An additional 31,415 Rhode Island households with children under age 18 are headed by immigrants.³⁵ Children of immigrants are the fastest growing segment of the United States population under age 18.³⁶ Nationally, over half (52%) of all children of immigrants lived in families with incomes below 200% of the Federal Poverty threshold.³⁷

◆ 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.³⁸ Children of immigrants are more likely than children of native-born parents 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.³⁹

◆ In Rhode Island, 21% of immigrants (including those born in Puerto Rico) are poor compared with 11% of native born people.⁴⁰ Two out of three (65%) immigrants live in the core cities, of these two-thirds live in Providence and Central Falls.⁴¹ Immigrants tend to live in poorer neighborhoods within these cities and to live in more crowded housing units.⁴² Half (48%) of immigrants in Rhode Island are not naturalized citizens.⁴³

References for Indicator

^{1,2,3,4,10,16,17,18,22,23,24,34,40,41,45} U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

⁵ Census 2000 data as analyzed by The Providence Plan. www.provplan.org, February 2003.

⁶ *Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children and Youth* (2001). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

⁸ *The Report of the Century Foundation Task Force on the Common School Divided We Fail: Coming Together through Public School Choice* (2002). New York, NY: The Century Foundation.

⁹ Iceland, J et al (August 2002). *Racial and Ethnic Residential Segregation in the United States 1980 - 2000*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

¹⁴ Goodluck, C. and Willetto A. (December 2001). *Native American Kids 2001: Indian Children's Well-Being Indicators Data Book*. Seattle WA: Casey Family Programs and Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.

^{12,13,11,15} *2000 Census Data: Race Profile for Rhode Island*, Population Reference Bureau, Analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census Summary File 1 (Tables P28A - P28G) www.kidscount.org, February 2003, Annie E. Casey Foundation.

^{19,20,25} Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health Maternal and Child Health Database, based on births between 1997 - 2001.

²¹ Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2001 - 2002 School Year.

²⁶ Nolan, P. (March 2002). *Disparities in Health Coverage among Adults in Rhode Island*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Health.

²⁷ *Health Insurance Coverage: 2001* Table HI08 (September 2002). Washington DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

²⁸ *Changing America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being by Race and Hispanic Origin* (September 1998). Washington, DC: Council of Economic Advisors for the President's Initiative on Race.

^{29,30} Soler, M. (October 2001). *Public Opinion on Youth Crime and Race: A Guide for Advocates*. San Francisco, CA: Youth Law Center.

³¹ Rhode Island KIDS COUNT analysis of data from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

³² *Biennial Performance Report of Children with Disabilities in Rhode Island* (May 2002). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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