

Children in Single Parent Families

DEFINITION

Children in single parent families is the percentage of children under age 18 who live in families headed by a person — male or female — without a spouse present in the home. These numbers include own children defined as never-married children under age 18 who are related to the family head by birth, marriage, or adoption.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children living in single-parent families are at increased risk of living in poverty compared to children living in two-parent families. In 2001, 35% of single-parent families with children under age 18 were living below the poverty level compared to only 4% of married-couple families.¹ In 2001, the average household income in Rhode Island for two-parent families with children was \$81,271 compared to \$56,296 for single-parent families headed by a man and \$34,158 for single-parent families headed by a woman.² Of the 67,978 Rhode Island children who lived in single-parent families in 2000, 83% lived in households headed by a female.³

Most of the 247,822 children in Rhode Island live in family households (92%). The remainder live with other relatives (6%), other unrelated

individuals (2%), or in group quarters, including juvenile detention facilities, hospitals and group homes (less than 1%).⁴

Following the national trend, more Rhode Island children are growing up in single-parent households than any time since the census began collecting information on household living arrangements. In 1970, only 12% of children in Rhode Island lived in single-parent families, compared to 23% in 1990 and 30% in 2000.⁵

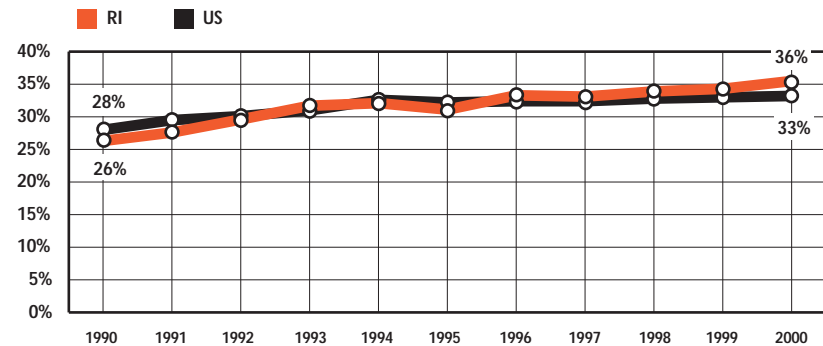
Of all Rhode Island children living with at least one biological or adoptive parent, 70% lived in married-couple families and the remaining 30% (67,978) lived in single-parent families.⁶ White children and Asian children are far more likely to live in married-couple families than are Black, Hispanic and Native American children.⁷ The core cities, those with child poverty rates higher than 15%, continue to have the highest rates of children living in single-parent families.⁸

Single Parent Families		
	1990	2000
RI	23%	32%
US	24%	30%
State Rank	34th	

1st is best; 50th is worst

Source: *Children At Risk: State Trends 1999-2000* (2002). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Births to Unmarried Women as a Percentage of All Births, Rhode Island and the United States, 1990 – 2002



Source: *The Right Start for America's Newborns: A Decade of City and State Trends 1990 – 2000* (2003). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Percentage is based on total number of births.

- ◆ In Rhode Island, the percentage of births to unmarried mothers has increased from 26% in 1990 to 36% in 2000. Rhode Island is ranked 11th in the country for the highest rates of births to unmarried mothers.⁹
- ◆ In Providence in 2000, 58% of all births were to unmarried women. When compared with the 50 largest cities in the country, Providence ranks 6th for the highest rates of births to unmarried women.¹⁰
- ◆ Children born to unmarried mothers are more likely to grow up in single-parent families and to experience multiple living arrangements during childhood. These multiple living arrangements are associated with reduced educational attainment, increased likelihood of sexual activity during adolescence, and teen pregnancy and parenting.¹¹
- ◆ Children in single-parent families, children born to unmarried mothers and children in cohabitating relationships are at higher risk for poor outcomes than are children living in households headed by two parents in a low-conflict marriage.^{12, 13}

Children in Single Parent Families

Table 2.

Children's Living Arrangements, Rhode Island, 2000

CITY/TOWN	ALL CHILDREN LIVING IN FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS			
		TWO-PARENT FAMILIES		SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES	
		N	%	N	%
Barrington	4,592	4,091	89%	501	11%
Bristol	4,092	3,222	79%	870	21%
Burrillville	3,737	3,077	82%	660	18%
Central Falls	4,977	2,607	52%	2,370	48%
Charlestown	1,586	1,305	82%	281	18%
Coventry	7,807	6,287	81%	1,520	19%
Cranston	15,626	11,817	76%	3,809	24%
Cumberland	7,273	6,049	83%	1,224	17%
East Greenwich	3,476	3,042	88%	434	12%
East Providence	9,682	6,919	71%	2,763	29%
Exeter	1,461	1,248	85%	213	15%
Foster	1,037	914	88%	123	12%
Glocester	2,453	2,082	85%	371	15%
Hopkinton	1,893	1,576	83%	317	17%
Jamestown	1,194	1,018	85%	176	15%
Johnston	5,440	4,303	79%	1,137	21%
Lincoln	4,895	3,930	80%	965	20%
Little Compton	740	627	85%	113	15%
Middletown	4,150	3,363	81%	787	19%
Narragansett	2,641	2,002	76%	639	24%
New Shoreham	171	139	81%	32	19%
Newport	4,835	2,723	56%	2,112	44%
North Kingstown	6,546	5,255	80%	1,291	20%
North Providence	5,411	3,973	73%	1,438	27%
North Smithfield	2,221	1,922	87%	299	13%
Pawtucket	16,525	9,537	58%	6,988	42%
Portsmouth	4,136	3,476	84%	660	16%
Providence	40,267	19,721	49%	20,546	51%
Richmond	1,867	1,590	85%	277	15%
Scituate	2,490	2,179	88%	311	12%
Smithfield	3,800	3,184	84%	616	16%
South Kingstown	5,887	4,789	81%	1,098	19%
Tiverton	3,121	2,598	83%	523	17%
Warren	2,288	1,657	72%	631	28%
Warwick	17,276	13,571	79%	3,705	21%
West Greenwich	1,368	1,198	88%	170	12%
West Warwick	6,084	4,101	67%	1,983	33%
Westerly	5,077	3,759	74%	1,318	26%
Woonsocket	10,269	5,562	54%	4,707	46%
Core Cities	82,957	44,251	53%	38,706	47%
Remainder of State	145,434	116,162	80%	29,272	20%
Rhode Island	228,391	160,413	70%	67,978	30%

Note to Table

The denominator is the number of children under age 18 living in family households according to the census. A family household is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as consisting of a householder and one or more people living together in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage or adoption - it may also include others not related to the householder.

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population and Census 2000. Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

References for Indicator

^{1,2} U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2000 to 2002 average.

^{3,4,5,6,8} U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File One.

⁷ Census Data Online, (January 2001). <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/census>. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT.

^{9,10} *The Right Start for America's Newborns: A Decade of City and State Trends* (1990 – 2000). (2003) Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

¹¹ Terry-Humen, E., et. al. (April 2001). *Births Outside of Marriage: Perceptions vs. Reality*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

¹² Anderson Moore, K., et. al. (June 2002). *Marriage from a Child's Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can We Do about It?* Washington, DC: Child Trends.

¹³ Acs, G. and S. Nelson (July 2002). *The Kids Are Alright? Children's Well-Being and the Rise in Cohabitation*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.