

## Economic Well-Being

### *In Hopes of Living the Dream*

by Pauline Perkins-Moye

Am I living the Dream?  
Or am I just Dreaming  
about Living the Dream  
I wake up to reality  
And I find that the world looks different for me

I'm trying to live the dream  
Tain't easy you know  
Many obstacles are in my way  
Not sure which way to go

I live in a place that's not very good  
Way out here in this depressed neighborhood  
But I have hope and faith  
that all is not doom and gloom  
I will rise up someday  
and move out of this room

Can I live the dream  
where the future looks bright?  
For my children  
So they can live the dream  
Without have to put up a fight

I can't wait for the day to come  
When someone ask me  
how am I doing and I can beam  
and say "Oh, I'm Just Living the Dream"



# Median Family Income

## DEFINITION

*Median family income* is the dollar amount which divides Rhode Island families' income distribution into two equal groups – half with incomes above the median and half with incomes below the median. The numbers include only families with their “own children” under age 18, defined as never-married children who are related to the family head by birth, marriage, or adoption.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Median family income is a measure of the ability of families to meet the costs of food, clothing, housing, health care, transportation, child care, and higher education. In 2021, the median family income for Rhode Island families with their own children was \$87,553.<sup>1</sup>

Between 2017 and 2021, in Rhode Island, the median family income for married two-parent families (\$116,567) was twice that of male-headed single-parent families (\$56,827) and more than three times that of female-headed single-parent families (\$35,658).<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, Rhode Island's unemployment rate was 3.5%, before increasing to 9.3% in 2020 and falling back to 3.5% in 2022. Rhode Island continues to have gaps in unemployment rates by race and ethnicity. In 2022, the unemployment rate was 6.0% for Hispanic workers, 5.0% for Black

workers, and 3.0% for white workers.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

Even when Rhode Island's unemployment rate is low, many workers are unable to find full-time work and struggle to make ends meet with inadequate and unpredictable income.<sup>6</sup> In 2018, more than 22 million people in the U.S. worked in low-wage jobs (less than \$12 per hour), and job losses during the pandemic disproportionately affected low-wage workers.<sup>7,8</sup> Conditions at low-wage jobs, such as unstable and inadequate work hours, lack of paid time off, and strict attendance policies can harm children's development by making it difficult for parents to find and keep affordable high-quality child care for their children.<sup>9</sup>

In the U.S., income inequality has grown substantially since the 1970s.<sup>10</sup> In 2018 in Rhode Island, the top 1% of households held almost 17% of total income. Rhode Island has the 29th highest income inequality of the 50 states based on the share of income held by the top 1% of households.<sup>11</sup>

Median Family Income	
	2021
RI	\$90,300
US	\$84,200
National Rank*	17th
New England Rank**	4th

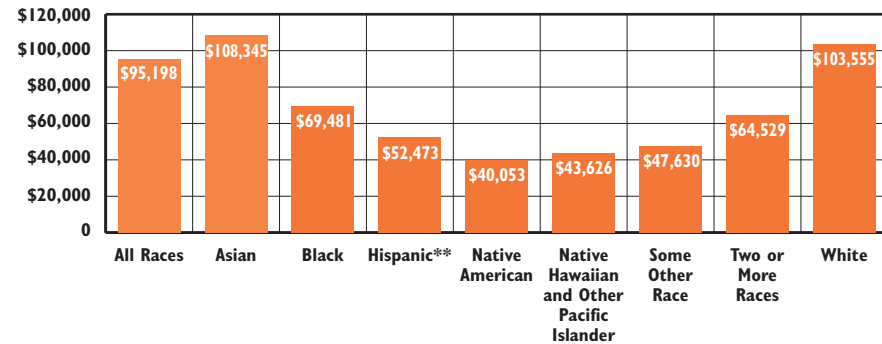
\*1st is best; 50th is worst

\*\*1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, [datacenter.kidscount.org](https://datacenter.kidscount.org)



Median Family Income, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2017-2021\*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020. Tables B19113, B19113A, B19113B, B19113C, B19113D, B19113E, B19113F, B19113G, and B19113I. \*Median Family Income by race and ethnicity includes all families because data for families with “own children” are not available by race and ethnicity. \*\*Hispanics may be in any race category.

◆ The median income for Asian and white families in Rhode Island is much higher than that of Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander families, and families of Some other race or Two or more races.<sup>12</sup>

◆ Educational attainment is strongly associated with economic well-being. Rhode Islanders who have achieved a bachelor's degree have double the median earnings compared to workers who have not completed high school. In Rhode Island, one in four Hispanic adults, almost one in six Black adults, and nearly one in 10 white adults lack a high school diploma.<sup>13</sup>

◆ According to the *2022 Rhode Island Standard of Need*, it costs a single-parent family with two young children \$66,567 a year to pay basic living expenses, including housing, food, health care, child care, transportation, and other miscellaneous items. This family would need an annual income of \$78,219 to meet this budget without government subsidies.<sup>14</sup>

◆ An adequate minimum wage and income support programs (including RIte Care health insurance, child care subsidies, SNAP benefits, the Child Tax Credit, and the Earned Income Tax Credit) are critical for helping low-and moderate-income working families in Rhode Island make ends meet, and expanding these programs would help decrease racial and ethnic disparities in meeting basic needs.<sup>15</sup>

# Median Family Income

Table 7.

## Median Family Income, Rhode Island, 2017-2021

### 2017-2021 MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18

CITY/TOWN	ESTIMATES WITH HIGH MARGINS OF ERROR*	ESTIMATES WITH LOWER, ACCEPTABLE MARGINS OF ERROR
Barrington		\$153,625
Bristol		\$133,963
Burrillville		\$111,786
Central Falls		\$36,196
Charlestown		\$85,571
Coventry		\$108,622
Cranston		\$89,679
Cumberland		\$119,769
East Greenwich		\$190,170
East Providence		\$84,664
Exeter	**	
Foster		\$109,828
Glocester		\$109,010
Hopkinton	\$123,214	
Jamestown	\$250,000+	
Johnston		\$86,968
Lincoln		\$121,155
Little Compton	\$94,045	
Middletown		\$94,681
Narragansett	\$84,961	
New Shoreham		\$58,448
Newport		\$74,731
North Kingstown		\$129,982
North Providence		\$70,091
North Smithfield		\$97,102
Pawtucket		\$53,688
Portsmouth		\$164,516
Providence		\$56,624
Richmond		\$116,410
Scituate	\$130,298	
Smithfield		\$140,000
South Kingstown		\$117,356
Tiverton		\$114,297
Warren		\$105,982
Warwick		\$93,039
West Greenwich		\$137,727
West Warwick		\$71,066
Westerly		\$100,955
Woonsocket		\$44,083
Four Core Cities		NA
Remainder of State		NA
Rhode Island		\$87,553

#### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Median family income data include only households with children under age 18 who meet the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of a family. The U.S. Census Bureau defines a family as a household that includes a householder and one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.

The 2017-2021 data come from a Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2017-2021 American Community Survey data. The American Community Survey is a sample survey, and therefore the median family income is an estimate. The reliability of estimates varies by community. In general, estimates for small communities are not as reliable as estimates for larger communities.

\*The Margin of Error around the estimate is greater than or equal to 25 percent of the estimate.

The Margin of Error is a measure of the reliability of the estimate and is provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Margin of Error means that there is a 90 percent chance that the true value is no less than the estimate minus the Margin of Error and no more than the estimate plus the Margin of Error. See the Methodology Section for Margins of Errors for all communities.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

\*\*The estimate or margin of error could not be computed due to an insufficient number of observations.

NA: Median family income cannot be calculated for combinations of cities and towns (i.e., Four Core Cities and Remainder of State).

#### References

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021. Table B19125.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021. Table B19126.

<sup>3</sup> *Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and detailed age, 2019 annual averages – Rhode Island.* (n.d.). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

<sup>4</sup> *Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and detailed age, 2020 annual averages – Rhode Island.* (n.d.). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

<sup>5</sup> *Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and detailed age, 2022 annual averages – Rhode Island.* (n.d.). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

<sup>6</sup> *State of working Rhode Island 2017: Paving the way to good jobs.* (2017). Providence, RI: The Economic Progress Institute.

<sup>7</sup> Tucker, J., & Vogtman, J. (2020). *When hard work is not enough: Women in low-paid jobs.* Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center.

<sup>8</sup> Gould, E., & Kandra, J. (2021). *Wages grew in 2020 because the bottom fell out of the low-wage labor market: The state of working America 2020 wages report.* Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

<sup>9</sup> *Collateral Damage: Scheduling Challenges for Workers in Low-Paid Jobs and Their Consequences.* (2020). Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center.

<sup>10</sup> Stone, C., Trisi, D., Sherman, A., & Beltrán. (2020). *A guide to statistics on historical trends in income inequality.* Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

<sup>11</sup> Frank, M. W. (2021). *U.S. state-level income inequality data.* Retrieved January 26, 2023, from www.shsu.edu

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021. Tables B19113, B19113A, B19113B, B19113C, B19113D, B19113E, B19113F, B19113G, & B19113I.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021. Table S1501.

<sup>14,15</sup> *The 2022 Rhode Island standard of need.* (2022). Providence, RI: The Economic Progress Institute.



# Cost of Housing

## DEFINITION

*Cost of housing* is the percentage of income needed by a very low-income family to cover the average cost of rent.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a very low-income family as a family with an income less than 50% of the Area Median Income. A cost burden exists when more than 30% of a family's monthly income is spent on housing.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Poor quality, unaffordable, or crowded housing has a negative impact on children's physical health, development, school performance, and emotional well-being and on a family's ability to meet a child's basic needs. In contrast, when children live in high-quality housing that is safe, affordable, and located in well-resourced, low-poverty neighborhoods, they do better in school and their parents report improved mental health.<sup>2,3</sup>

In 2022, a worker would have to earn \$38.38 an hour and work 40 hours a week year-round to be able to afford the average rent in Rhode Island without a cost burden. This hourly wage was over three times the minimum wage of \$12.25 per hour in 2022.<sup>4,5</sup> Rhode Island required the 15th highest hourly wage of any state in 2022 to afford the rent for a two-bedroom home.<sup>6</sup> In 2022, the median renter in Rhode Island could

affordably rent in only one Rhode Island city or town – Burrillville.<sup>7</sup>

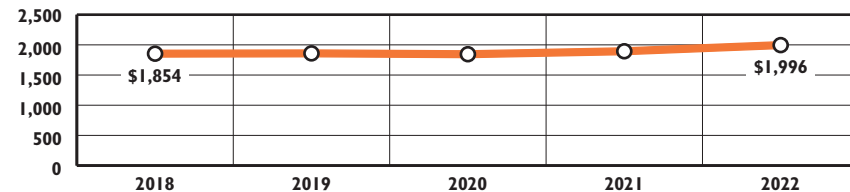
According to HousingWorks RI, a household earning the state's median household income of \$70,305 would not be able to affordably buy in any of Rhode Island's cities or towns.<sup>8</sup>

Federally-funded Section 8 Housing Choice rental vouchers can help low-income individuals and families afford the cost of rent; however, there are not enough vouchers to meet the need and long waiting periods are common.<sup>9</sup> In 2021, the General Assembly enacted legislation that prohibits discrimination in housing based on lawful source of income, including housing vouchers.<sup>10</sup>

Rhode Island law establishes a goal that 10% of every community's housing stock qualify as Low- and Moderate-Income Housing (LMIH). Currently, only six of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns meet that goal. A permanent funding stream for affordable housing was enacted in 2021, financed through an increase in the real estate conveyance tax on homes over \$800,000. This funding source is estimated to provide about \$4 million a year for the production and preservation of affordable housing. Rhode Island continues to rely heavily on federal funding to meet its housing needs. During FY 2022, only 27% of the state's expenditures on housing were from state funds (e.g., housing bonds and the real estate conveyance tax).<sup>11,12</sup>



## Average Rent, Two-Bedroom Apartment, Rhode Island, 2018-2022



Source: Rhode Island Housing, Rhode Island Rent Survey, 2018-2022. Rents are adjusted to 2022 dollars and include adjustments for the cost of gas, fuel, water, and electricity. Adjustments for utilities for each year vary according to U.S. Census American Community Survey's (ACS) annual one-year estimates. Due to a change in methodology, data cannot be compared to Factbooks prior to 2019.

◆ In 2022, the average cost of rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Rhode Island was \$1,996. When adjusted for 2022 dollars, rents remained fairly stable from 2018 through 2020, and then increased in 2021 and 2022.<sup>13</sup>

◆ In June 2022, the Providence metropolitan area had the fifth highest year-over-year increases in rent in the nation. Low rates of multifamily construction and low vacancy rates in Rhode Island have contributed to rising rents.<sup>14</sup>

◆ While renter cost burdens are relatively similar across race and ethnicity, a much higher percentage of Black and Hispanic households experience cost burdens as homeowners.<sup>15</sup> Only 34% of Black Rhode Islanders own their homes compared to 42% of Black Americans and 62% of all Rhode Islanders.<sup>16</sup>



## Legislative and Budget Initiatives Addressing Affordable Housing

◆ Rhode Island's FY 2023 budget included \$250 million in federal funds from the *American Rescue Plan Act* dedicated to housing initiatives, including \$30 million for downpayment assistance for homebuyers, \$36.5 million to address homelessness, and \$155 million toward housing production.<sup>17,18</sup>

◆ In 2022, the Rhode Island General Assembly approved a package of bills addressing the state's housing crisis. The new legislation updates the *Low and Moderate Income Housing Act*, streamlines the approval of construction of low and moderate income housing, creates a new Department of Housing and allows for the repurposing of school buildings for affordable housing.<sup>19</sup>

Table 8.

## Cost of Housing for Very Low-Income Families, Rhode Island, 2022

CITY/TOWN	FAMILY INCOME		HOMEOWNERSHIP COSTS		RENTAL COSTS		
	2022 POVERTY LEVEL FAMILY OF THREE	2022 VERY LOW- INCOME FAMILY	TYPICAL MONTHLY HOUSING PAYMENT	% INCOME NEEDED FOR HOUSING PAYMENT, VERY LOW-INCOME FAMILY	AVERAGE RENT 2-BEDROOM APARTMENT	% INCOME NEEDED FOR RENT POVERTY LEVEL FAMILY OF THREE	% INCOME NEEDED FOR RENT VERY LOW- INCOME FAMILY
Barrington	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$3,864	106%	\$1,468	76%	40%
Bristol	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$3,031	84%	\$1,206	63%	33%
Burrillville	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,466	68%	\$1,026	53%	28%
Central Falls	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$1,949	54%	\$1,599	83%	44%
Charlestown*	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,901	80%	\$1,234	64%	34%
Coventry	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,235	62%	\$1,883	98%	52%
Cranston	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,211	61%	\$1,961	102%	54%
Cumberland	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,537	70%	\$2,333	122%	64%
East Greenwich	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$4,544	125%	\$1,772	92%	49%
East Providence	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,236	62%	\$2,156	112%	59%
Exeter*	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$3,069	85%	\$1,234	64%	34%
Foster*	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,690	74%	\$1,234	64%	34%
Gloicester*	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,417	67%	\$1,234	64%	34%
Hopkinton*	\$23,030	\$47,250	\$2,539	64%	\$1,259	66%	32%
Jamestown*	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$5,420	149%	\$1,234	64%	34%
Johnston	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,385	66%	\$2,121	110%	58%
Lincoln	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,924	81%	\$1,690	88%	47%
Little Compton*	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$4,350	120%	\$1,234	64%	34%
Middletown	\$23,030	\$52,500	\$3,424	78%	\$1,977	103%	45%
Narragansett	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$3,944	109%	\$1,805	94%	50%
New Shoreham	\$23,030	\$47,250	\$8,108	206%	\$1,769	92%	45%
Newport*	\$23,030	\$52,500	\$4,310	99%	\$1,705	89%	39%
North Kingstown	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$3,463	95%	\$1,877	98%	52%
North Providence	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,302	63%	\$1,934	101%	53%
North Smithfield	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,744	76%	\$1,860	97%	51%
Pawtucket	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$1,925	53%	\$1,677	87%	46%
Portsmouth	\$23,030	\$52,500	\$3,309	76%	\$1,723	90%	39%
Providence**	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,200	61%	\$2,073	108%	57%
Richmond*	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,698	74%	\$1,234	64%	34%
Scituate*	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,565	71%	\$1,234	64%	34%
Smithfield	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,623	72%	\$1,965	102%	54%
South Kingstown	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$3,069	85%	\$1,234	64%	34%
Tiverton	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,430	67%	\$1,901	99%	52%
Warren	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,713	75%	\$2,310	120%	64%
Warwick	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,132	59%	\$1,966	102%	54%
West Greenwich	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$3,478	96%	\$1,380	72%	38%
West Warwick	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,182	60%	\$2,646	138%	73%
Westerly	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,802	77%	\$2,086	109%	57%
Woonsocket	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,102	58%	\$1,403	73%	39%
Four Core Cities	\$23,030	\$43,550	\$2,044	56%	\$1,688	88%	47%
Remainder of State	\$23,030	\$44,529	\$3,146	85%	\$1,867	97%	50%
Rhode Island	\$23,030	\$44,300	\$2,412	65%	\$1,996	104%	54%

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Family Income: 2022 poverty level for a family of three as reported in: *Federal Register*, 87(14), January 21, 2022, pages 3315-3316.

A very low-income family as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is a three-person family with income 50% of the Area Median Income and is defined separately for each of the three metropolitan areas comprising Rhode Island and for the state as a whole. Core city and remainder of state are calculated by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT using unweighted community data. Reported by Rhode Island Housing. (2022). *FY2022 Rhode Island income limits for low- and moderate-income households*. Retrieved February 28, 2023, from [www.rihousing.com](http://www.rihousing.com)

Homeownership costs: Data on typical monthly housing payments are from HousingWorks RI's 2022 *Housing Fact Book*. They are based on the median selling price of a single-family home using year-end 2021 data and calculated based on a 30-year mortgage at a 2.96% interest rate with a 3.5% down payment. The typical monthly housing payment for the state comes from HousingWorks RI, but core city and remainder of state are calculated by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT using unweighted community data.

Rental Costs: Rhode Island Housing, Rhode Island Rent Survey, 2022. Estimates include rent and utility costs. Starting with the 2019 *Factbook* average rent is calculated using the CoStar database for two-bedroom units. Average utility costs are from the U.S. Census American Community Survey's (ACS) annual one-year sample, which includes gas, fuel, water, and electricity for two-bedroom units. For 2021, 2019 ACS data were used for utility costs due to COVID-related data collection issues for the 2020 ACS. All values are adjusted for 2022 dollars. Statewide average based on all units in state. Core city and remainder of state are calculated by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT using unweighted community data. Data cannot be compared to Factbooks prior to 2019.

\*Rhode Island Housing 2022 Rhode Island Rent Survey data are not available. Average rent used for these communities is the HUD FY 2022 Fair Market Rent for the metropolitan area as reported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The average rents calculated for the four core cities and the remainder of state do not include communities for which data from the 2022 Rhode Island Rent Survey was not available.

(Sources continued with References on page 175)

# Children Experiencing Homelessness

## DEFINITION

*Children experiencing homelessness* is the number of children in preschool through grade 12 who are identified as homeless by public school personnel because they meet the federal *McKinney-Vento* definition of homelessness, which includes any child who does not have a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence,” including children doubled up with families due to financial hardship.

## SIGNIFICANCE

In the United States, 1.4 million school-age children experience homelessness each year, meaning that one in 41 school-age children are homeless. The rate is even higher for young children under age six -- one in 18.<sup>1</sup> Black children and families are more likely to experience homelessness than other racial and ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup>

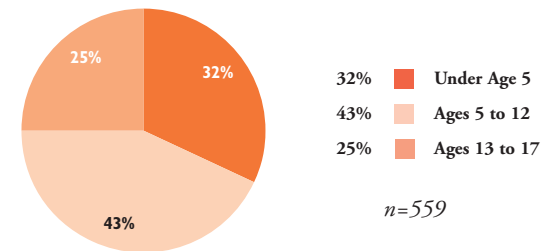
For many families living in deep poverty, episodes of homelessness are part of a cycle of housing instability that often includes living in housing that is unaffordable and/or unsafe, doubling up with families or friends, and being evicted. For these families, the shortage of housing that is affordable to them is the primary reason they become homeless. However, family violence is another major factor. More than 80% of women with children who experience homelessness have experienced domestic violence.<sup>3</sup>

Lack of stable housing is often a precipitating factor for a family’s involvement in the child welfare system, and unstable or inadequate housing can delay family reunification. Addressing families’ housing needs can reduce child neglect and abuse and help families stay together.<sup>4,5</sup>

Children experiencing homelessness have higher rates of acute and chronic health problems than low-income children who have homes. Compared to their peers, homeless children have four times as many respiratory infections, twice as many ear infections, and five times as many gastrointestinal problems. They are also at higher risk of abuse and exposure to violence. This trauma can lead to an increase in developmental delays and emotional stress. When homeless children are exposed to multiple traumatic events, they may have increased levels of anxiety, poor impulse control, or difficulty developing trusting relationship.<sup>6,7,8</sup>

In 2022, 280 families with 559 children stayed at an emergency homeless shelter, domestic violence shelter, or transitional housing facility in Rhode Island. Children made up almost one fifth (18%) of the 3,075 people who used emergency homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and transitional housing in 2022. One-third (32%) of these children were under age five. As of January 20, 2023, there were 176 families with 357 children in the shelter queue awaiting shelter.<sup>9</sup>

  
**Children in Emergency Shelters, Domestic Violence Shelters, and Transitional Housing Facilities by Age, 2022**



Source: Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness, 2022.

## Supporting Homeless Children in Schools

- ◆ **Family residential instability and homelessness contribute to poor educational outcomes for children. Homeless children are more likely to change schools, be chronically absent from school, and have lower academic achievement than children who have housing.**<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ **The federal *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act)* requires that states identify homeless children, allow them to enroll in school even if they lack required documents, allow them to stay in their “home school,” provide transportation when needed, and provide access to all services and programs that the child is eligible for, including preschool, before- and after-school care, school meals, and services for Multilingual Learners/English Learners.**<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ **The *McKinney-Vento Act* defines a child as homeless if he or she does not have a “fixed, regular and adequate night-time residence.”**<sup>12</sup> During the 2021-2022 school year, Rhode Island public school personnel identified 1,461 children as homeless. Of these children, 66% (971) lived with other families (“doubled up”), 16% (238) lived in shelters, 15% (226) lived in hotels or motels, and 2% (26) were unsheltered.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ **The number of students identified as homeless is likely a severe undercount. Nationally, an estimated 300,000 students entitled to services are unidentified because there is little national or state enforcement of laws requiring identification of these students and inadequate funding to support schools’ efforts.**<sup>14</sup>

# Children Experiencing Homelessness

Table 9. Homeless Children Identified by Public Schools, Rhode Island, 2021-2022 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	# OF CHILDREN IDENTIFIED AS HOMELESS BY PUBLIC SCHOOL PERSONNEL
Barrington	3,377	*
Bristol Warren	2,941	17
Burrillville	2,128	44
Central Falls	2,701	70
Chariho	3,200	29
Coventry	4,392	30
Cranston	10,258	43
Cumberland	4,724	32
East Greenwich	2,552	*
East Providence	5,053	58
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,572	*
Foster	221	0
Foster-Glocester	1,396	*
Glocester	537	0
Jamestown	444	0
Johnston	3,067	31
Lincoln	3,252	18
Little Compton	209	0
Middletown	2,073	72
Narragansett	1,206	*
New Shoreham	129	0
Newport	1,975	43
North Kingstown	3,914	33
North Providence	3,464	37
North Smithfield	1,614	*
Pawtucket	8,127	77
Portsmouth	2,247	*
Providence	21,656	341
Scituate	1,196	0
Smithfield	2,392	84
South Kingstown	2,608	21
Tiverton	1,678	0
Warwick	8,168	79
West Warwick	3,562	22
Westerly	2,738	34
Woonsocket	5,664	153
Charter Schools	10,537	69
State-Operated Schools	1,846	10
UCAP	108	0
Four Core Cities	38,148	641
Remainder of State	87,927	752
Rhode Island	138,566	1,461



## Educational Outcomes for Children Experiencing Homelessness

◆ The federal *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, which re-authorized McKinney-Vento in 2015, strengthens existing provisions for homeless students, guarantees school stability for students starting in preschool, and requires schools to report on student achievement and graduation rates for homeless students.<sup>15</sup>

◆ In Rhode Island in 2022, 10% of homeless students met expectations on the third grade *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)* English language arts assessment compared to 37% of non-homeless students, and 11% of homeless students met expectations on the third grade mathematics assessment compared to 35% of non-homeless students.<sup>16</sup>

◆ In Rhode Island, the four-year high school graduation rate for the Class of 2022 was 64% for homeless students and 84% for non-homeless students.<sup>17</sup>

◆ Over the past few years, an increasing number of states have been supporting postsecondary access and success for students experiencing homelessness by providing homeless liaisons on college campuses, housing support, and tuition and fee waivers.<sup>18</sup>

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, Public School Enrollment in grades preschool to 12 on October 1, 2021.

Number of children identified as homeless by public school personnel includes children in preschool through grade 12 who are identified by public school personnel as meeting the *McKinney-Vento* definition of homelessness, which includes any child who does not have a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." This includes children who are living with other families ("doubled up"), in shelters, living in hotels or motels, and unsheltered.

Charter schools reporting include Achievement First Rhode Island, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, Charette High School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Highlander Charter School, The Learning Community, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, SouthSide Elementary Charter School, and Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts. State-operated schools reporting include the Metropolitan Regional Career & Technical Center and William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School.

The Central Falls, Middletown, Newport, North Kingstown, Providence, Warwick, West Warwick, and Woonsocket school districts received grants that provide additional resources to identify and serve homeless students.

\*Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

Rhode Island totals are not the sum of all of the districts because some students move districts during the school year and are counted as homeless in both districts.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Baldari, C., & McConnell, M. (2021). *Child, youth, and family homelessness in the U.S.* Retrieved April 6, 2022, from [campaignforchildren.org](https://campaignforchildren.org)

(continued on page 175)



# Secure Parental Employment

### DEFINITION

Secure parental employment is the percentage of children living with at least one parent who has full-time, year-round employment.

### SIGNIFICANCE

Secure parental employment increases family income and reduces poverty. Children with parents who have steady employment are more likely to have access to health care. Secure parental employment improves family functioning by reducing the stress brought on by unemployment and underemployment of parents. Children with working parents are more engaged academically and less likely to repeat a grade or be suspended or expelled from school than children with non-working parents.<sup>1,2</sup>

Rhode Island's annual unemployment rate decreased from 9.3% in 2020 to 5.5% in 2021. In 2022, Rhode Island's unemployment rate decreased further to the pre-COVID rate of 3.5%, slightly lower than the U.S. unemployment rate of 3.6%.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

In 2021, 6% of children in Rhode Island and in the U.S. had at least one unemployed parent.<sup>6</sup> Children with unemployed parents are at increased risk for homelessness, child neglect or abuse, and failure to finish high school or college.<sup>7</sup>

Even when families have adults with secure parental employment, low wages cause many families to remain in poverty. People of Color are overrepresented among low-income working families. In 2016 in the U.S., families headed by People of Color represented 41% of all working families, while accounting for 60% of low-income working families.<sup>8</sup> In Rhode Island, 88% of Latino single-parent families and 51% of Latino two-parent families earn less than the income required to meet their basic needs, compared to 59% of white single-parent families and 19% of white two-parent families. The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for Rhode Island's essential workers, many of whom are Black and Latino, earn low wages, and did not have the luxury of working from home during the pandemic.<sup>9</sup>

Children Living in Families Where No Parent Has Full-Time, Year-Round Employment		
	2016	2021
RI	31%	32%
US	28%	29%
National Rank*	40th	
New England Rank**	6th	

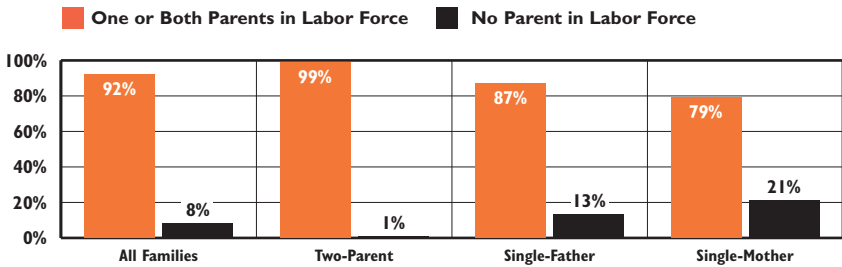
\*1st is best; 50th is worst

\*\*1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org



Employment Status of Parents by Family Type, Rhode Island, 2017-2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021. Table B23008.

- ◆ The majority of children living in Rhode Island between 2017 and 2021 had one or both parents in the labor force. Children living with a single parent were more than 19 times more likely than children living in a two-parent family to have no employed parent. Of children in two-parent families, 74% had both parents in the labor force.<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ Between 2017 and 2021, there were 16,234 Rhode Island children living in families with no parent in the labor force. Children living in families with a single parent represented 92% (14,960) of families with no employed parents.<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ Between 2017 and 2021, 16% (3,059) of Rhode Island families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold had at least one adult with full-time, year-round employment, and 39% (7,588) of Rhode Island families living in poverty had at least one adult working part-time.<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ According to the 2022 Rhode Island Standard of Need, 70% of Rhode Island single-parent families with two children and 25% of two-parent families with two children earn less than the income required to meet their basic needs without work supports, such as SNAP, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), child care subsidies, and health insurance.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ Between 2017 and 2021, 74% of children under age six and 78% of children ages six to 17 in Rhode Island had all parents in the labor force. In comparison, nationally, 67% of children under age six and 72% of children ages six to 17 had all parents in the labor force.<sup>14</sup>



## Barriers to Secure Employment for Low-Income Families

- ◆ Families leaving cash assistance can face many barriers to employment. Research shows that families who leave due to time limits or sanctions often have barriers such as mental and physical impairments, running away from domestic violence, or low levels of education and limited work experience that can impede their ability to secure or sustain employment.<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ Low-income workers are less likely to have benefits, such as paid time off and flexible work schedules, that would allow them to address the needs of sick children.<sup>16</sup> Fifty-six percent of the U.S. workforce qualifies for the federal *Family and Medical Leave Act* (FMLA), but many who are eligible cannot afford to take it.<sup>17</sup> In 2013, Rhode Island passed legislation that created the Temporary Caregivers Insurance (TCI) Program, which now provides up to six weeks of benefits for workers who need to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a newborn, foster, or adopted child.<sup>18</sup> Rhode Island is one of nine states, in addition to Washington, DC, that have enacted paid family leave programs.<sup>19</sup>
- ◆ Limited education also can be a barrier to sustained employment. Between 2017 and 2021 in Rhode Island, adults without a high school diploma were more than three times as likely to be unemployed as those with a bachelor's degree.<sup>20</sup>
- ◆ Having access to work supports, such as tax credits, SNAP, child care subsidies, and health insurance, can facilitate steady employment over time. Researchers have found links between these programs and positive employment outcomes for parents, such as work stability and earnings.<sup>21</sup>

### References

<sup>1</sup> Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2021). *America's children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2021*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

<sup>2</sup> Isaacs, J. (2013). *Unemployment from a child's perspective*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute and First Focus.

<sup>3</sup> *Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and detailed age, 2020 annual averages*. (n.d.). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

(continued on page 176)



## Secure Employment and Child Care

- ◆ Research shows a link between affordable, quality child care availability and sustained maternal employment. Studies find that mothers report that the lack of reliable and affordable child care arrangements affected their ability to remain employed.<sup>22</sup>
- ◆ In 2020 in Rhode Island, a single mother earning the state median income for a single-parent family (\$30,482) would have had to spend 45% of her income to pay for child care for an infant in center-based care.<sup>23</sup>
- ◆ In Rhode Island, child care assistance is available to families with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (\$49,720 for a family of three in 2023) who work at least 20 hours per week. Families can continue to receive a subsidy until their income reaches 300% of the federal poverty level (\$74,750 for a family of three).<sup>24,25</sup>



## Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC)

- ◆ State and federal Earned Income Tax Credits (EITCs) provide tax reductions and wage supplements for low- and moderate-income working families. EITCs reduce child poverty, decrease taxes, and serve as an incentive to keep families working. The federal EITC is one of the nation's most effective poverty prevention programs for working families. It lifted 5.6 million people, including about 3 million children, out of poverty in 2018.<sup>26,27</sup>
- ◆ Benefits of the EITC and the Child Tax Credit extend well beyond the time families receive the credit. Recipients are more likely to work and earn higher wages, and their children do better in school, are more likely to attend college, and earn more as adults.<sup>28</sup>
- ◆ State EITCs can supplement the federal EITC to further support working families. In 2016, the Rhode Island General Assembly increased the state's EITC from 12.5% to 15% of the federal EITC.<sup>29</sup> In 2022, approximately 92,000 Rhode Island working families and individuals received a total of \$170 million in federal EITC tax credits.<sup>30</sup>
- ◆ The CTC helps families offset the cost of raising children. In 2021, the CTC lifted 5.3 million people, including 2.9 million children out of poverty.<sup>31</sup> *The American Rescue Plan Act* temporarily expanded the CTC, keeping 3.7 million children out of poverty and reducing child poverty by 30% with the largest impact on Black and Latino children.<sup>32</sup>

# Paid Family Leave

## DEFINITION

*Paid family leave* is the number of approved claims to bond with a new child or to care for a seriously ill family member through Rhode Island's Temporary Caregiver Insurance Program (TCI).

## SIGNIFICANCE

Rhode Island's Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI) program, launched in 2014, provides up to six weeks of wage replacement benefits to eligible workers who need to take time off from work to bond with a newborn, adopted or foster child, or to care for a seriously ill family member. The TCI program is financed entirely by employee contributions.<sup>1,2</sup>

Almost all advanced, industrialized nations guarantee paid leave for new mothers and many include new fathers. In many European countries, families receive at least six months of paid leave to care for a new baby.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. requires employers with 50 or more workers to offer 12 weeks of leave for workers to care for a new child or to care for a seriously ill family member. However, the time off can be unpaid.<sup>4</sup> Rhode Island's 1987 *Parental and Family Medical Leave Act* requires a 13-week leave but does not require that the leave be paid.<sup>5</sup>

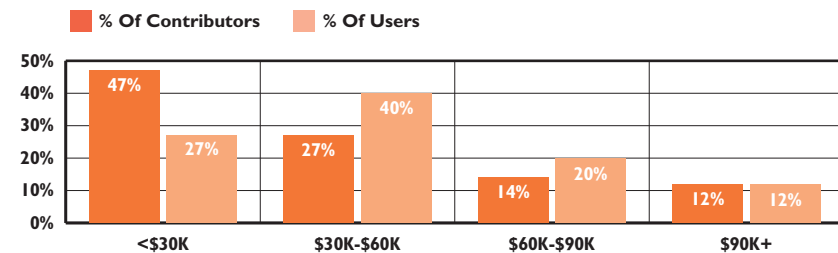
Access to — and being able to take — paid leave is a matter of equity.

High-wage workers are much more likely to have access to paid family leave than low-wage workers. Women ages 18 to 34, Black and Hispanic workers, those without a college degree, and low-income workers are less likely to have access to paid leave.<sup>6,7</sup>

Paid family and medical leave reduces the incidence of preterm births, low birthweight, and infant mortality. It also increases the likelihood and duration of breastfeeding, decreases infant hospitalizations, reduces child neglect and abuse, and increases preventive medical care and immunizations. Mothers who take at least 12 weeks off from work after the birth of a child are less likely to experience mental health issues and report better overall health. Providing time off from work for new parents gives babies time to form secure attachments, which is the foundation for healthy relationships and development.<sup>8,9,10,11</sup>

Rhode Island's Temporary Disability Insurance Program (TDI) provides partial-wage replacement for participating workers who are temporarily unable to work because of a physical or mental condition, including pregnancy complications and recovery from childbirth. TCI supplements TDI; women who give birth are eligible for both.<sup>12,13</sup>

## Approved Temporary Caregiver Insurance Claims Compared to Contributions by Wage Range, 2022



Source: Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, TCI Program, 2022.

- ◆ There were 8,084 approved claims for TCI during 2022 (up from 7,031 in 2021); 77% were to bond with a new child and 23% were to care for a seriously ill family member. In 2022, 47% of individuals contributing to TCI earned less than \$30,000, yet only 27% of all approved TCI claims were for individuals with wages in this category.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ Of the 6,186 approved claims to bond with a new child, 99% (6,095) were for a newborn and 1% were for a newly adopted (18), foster (49), or other child (24). Fifty-six percent of claims to bond with a new child were filed by women and 44% were by men.<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ Of the 1,898 approved claims to care for a seriously ill family member, 40% were to care for a child, 35% were to care for a spouse or domestic partner, 24% were to care for a parent or parent-in-law, and 1% were to care for a grandparent. Seventy percent of claims to care for a seriously ill family member were filed by women and 30% were filed by men.<sup>16</sup>

## Temporary Disability Insurance for Pregnancy Complications & Childbirth

- ◆ In 2022, there were 4,000 approved TDI claims for disabling pre/post pregnancy conditions and/or to recover from childbirth. Recovery from childbirth is a disabling condition covered by TDI. In general, six weeks is covered for vaginal births and eight weeks for cesarean section births. More time can be approved for postpartum complications, based on the health care provider's determination. TDI is not available to new parents who do not give birth (e.g., fathers and adoptive parents).<sup>17,18</sup>

Table 10. **Approved Temporary Disability Claims for Childbirth & Temporary Caregiver Claims for Paid Family Leave, Rhode Island, 2022**

CITY/TOWN	TEMPORARY DISABILITY INSURANCE (TDI) CLAIMS			TEMPORARY CAREGIVER INSURANCE (TCI) CLAIMS		
	TDI FOR PREGNANCY COMPLICATIONS	TDI FOR CHILDBIRTH	TOTAL TDI CLAIMS	TCI TO BOND WITH NEW CHILD	TCI TO CARE FOR FAMILY MEMBER	TOTAL TCI CLAIMS
Barrington	20	19	39	48	12	60
Bristol	32	31	63	76	25	101
Burrillville	29	22	51	73	28	101
Central Falls	29	19	48	72	36	108
Charlestown	14	13	27	49	13	62
Coventry	83	68	151	250	88	338
Cranston	142	142	284	513	151	664
Cumberland	73	51	124	165	40	205
East Greenwich	35	32	67	73	21	94
East Providence	95	62	157	227	84	311
Exeter	10	16	26	37	14	51
Foster	11	5	16	23	15	38
Glocester	15	17	32	42	15	57
Hopkinton	20	7	27	35	17	52
Jamestown	*	*	5	*	*	6
Johnston	49	47	96	184	63	247
Lincoln	34	31	65	105	36	141
Little Compton	*	*	*	7	3	10
Middletown	21	18	39	50	19	69
Narragansett	11	16	27	35	14	49
New Shoreham	*	*	*	*	*	5
Newport	36	29	65	64	15	79
North Kingstown	39	53	92	150	38	188
North Providence	59	54	113	197	58	255
North Smithfield	24	14	38	44	19	63
Pawtucket	137	108	245	404	117	521
Portsmouth	16	22	38	67	19	86
Providence	381	278	659	943	316	1259
Richmond	9	19	28	37	8	45
Scituate	38	17	55	73	27	100
Smithfield	34	48	82	112	33	145
South Kingstown	32	41	73	105	25	130
Tiverton	16	16	32	39	11	50
Warren	17	19	36	67	18	85
Warwick	163	162	325	583	139	722
West Greenwich	7	10	17	44	11	55
West Warwick	67	60	127	233	74	307
Westerly	30	28	58	73	30	103
Woonsocket	75	36	111	184	62	246
Out-of-State	222	234	456	694	182	876
Four Core Cities	622	441	1,063	1,603	531	2,134
Remainder of state	1,285	1,196	2,470	3,889	1,185	5,074
Rhode Island	1,907	1,637	3,544	5,492	1,716	7,208
Total Program Claims	2,129	1,871	4,000	6,186	1,898	8,084

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, approved TDI claims for pregnancy complications and for childbirth and approved TCI claims, 2022.

Women without complications typically receive six weeks of TDI for vaginal births and eight weeks for cesarean births.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

Out-of-State are approved claims for residents of states other than Rhode Island. TDI and TCI are available to employees of Rhode Island companies and organizations, including employees who are not residents of the state. Employees of certain governmental entities do not contribute to and cannot claim TDI or TCI.

\*Data for any town with less than five approved claims are suppressed by the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training.

## References

- <sup>1,12</sup> Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training. (n.d.). *Temporary Disability/Caregiver Insurance*. Retrieved March 7, 2023, from dlt.ri.gov
- <sup>2</sup> The State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Department of Labor and Training. (2014). *Temporary Caregiver Insurance [Brochure]*.
- <sup>3</sup> Donovan, S. A. (2020). *Paid family leave in the United States*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.
- <sup>4</sup> Paid leave in the U.S. (2021). San Francisco, CA: The Kaiser Family Foundation.
- <sup>5</sup> *Rhode Island Parental and Family Medical Leave Act*, Title 28 Rhode Island General Law § 28-48-2 (1987,1990).
- <sup>6</sup> Boyens, C., Karpman, M., & Smalligan, J. (2022). *Access to paid leave is lowest among workers with the greatest needs*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- <sup>7,11</sup> *A national paid leave program would help workers, families*. (2021). Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- <sup>8</sup> O'Neill Hayes, T., & Barnhorst, M. (2020). *How children benefit from paid family leave policies*. Washington, DC: American Action Forum.

(continued on page 176)



# Children Receiving Child Support

## DEFINITION

*Children receiving child support* is the percentage of parents who make child support payments on time and in full as indicated in the Rhode Island Office of Child Support Services system. The percentage does not include cases in which paternity has not been established or cases in which the non-custodial parent is not under a court order because he/she cannot be located. Court orders for child support and medical support require establishment of paternity.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Child support is a major part of the safety net for children and families. In 2021, almost one in five U.S. children (13.2 million) received public child support services.<sup>1,2</sup> Child support provides a mechanism for non-custodial parents (usually fathers) to contribute to the financial and medical support of their children. Child support programs can encourage responsible co-parenting and increase the reliability of child support paid by helping custodial parents locate the non-custodial parent, establishing paternity and support orders, and monitoring and enforcing child support obligations.<sup>3</sup>

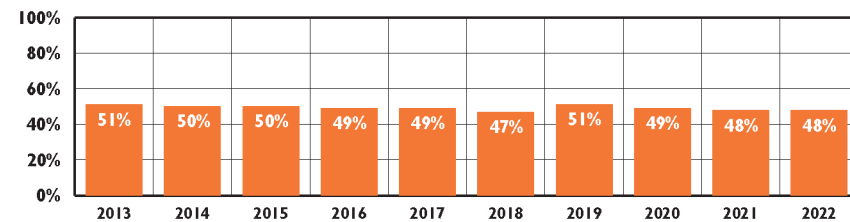
Child support is a critical tool to provide resources for low-income families and can also keep children out of poverty. The receipt of child support

payments can significantly improve the economic well-being of children with single parents — child support nearly doubles the average income of recipients living in poverty. Custodial parents who receive steady child support payments are less likely to rely on public assistance programs and more likely to find work than those who do not.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

While child support is intended to provide financial stability and improve child well-being, it can be an economic hardship for non-custodial parents. Non-custodial parents of poor children are often poor themselves and have limited ability to provide financial support to their children.<sup>7</sup> Incarcerated parents with active child support orders are unable to pay while in prison and may face legal and financial burdens upon release.<sup>8</sup> Child support systems that encourage relationship building with the co-parent and positive parenting can strengthen parent-child relationships and increase child support payments. Non-custodial parents who pay regular child support are more involved with their children, providing them with critical emotional support and care. Child support has a positive effect on children's academics and behavior and is associated with greater employment and earnings as an adult.<sup>9,10,11</sup>



**Non-Custodial Parents With Court Orders  
Who Pay Child Support on Time and in Full, Rhode Island, 2013-2022**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support Services, 2013-2022.

◆ As of December 1, 2022, there were 64,282 children in Rhode Island's Office of Child Support Services system, including private, interstate, and IV-D cases (i.e., families receiving RI Works, RIte Care, or child care assistance). Children receiving child support live across all 39 cities and towns in Rhode Island. Forty-eight percent of non-custodial parents under court order in Rhode Island were making child support payments on time and in full.<sup>12</sup>

◆ In 2022, the Rhode Island Office of Child Support Services collected \$86.5 million in child support, a decrease of about \$7 million over the previous year when many non-custodial parents received COVID relief checks. Eighty-six percent (\$74.4 million) of the funds collected were distributed directly to families and the remainder was retained by the state and federal governments as reimbursement for RI Works cash assistance, RIte Care health coverage, and other expenses.<sup>13</sup>

◆ In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2021, the Rhode Island Office of Child Support Services collected \$5.31 for every \$1.00 Rhode Island spent on administering the program.<sup>14</sup>

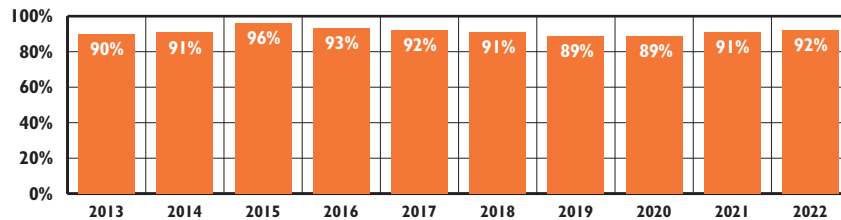
◆ During FFY 2022, there were 15,684 court orders for non-custodial parents to provide medical insurance and 9,037 orders for non-custodial parents to contribute funds toward medical coverage. About \$5.5 million in payments was retained by the state to offset the cost of RIte Care, while approximately \$1.7 million was disbursed directly to families to offset the cost of private health insurance coverage or other medical expenses.<sup>15</sup>

◆ In 2017, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed a law that allows the Office of Child Support Services to automatically file a motion to modify or a motion for relief when a non-custodial parent is or will be incarcerated for 180 days or more. This law also clarifies that incarceration may not be considered by the court as "voluntary unemployment."<sup>16</sup>

# Children Receiving Child Support



## Rhode Island Children in the Office of Child Support Services System With Paternity Established, 2013-2022



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support Services, 2013-2022. Includes all children in the child support system – private, interstate, and IV-D cases.

◆ The percentage of children in the Rhode Island child support system with paternity established increased from 90% of children in 2013 to 96% of children in 2015 but has since fallen to 92% of children in 2022.<sup>17</sup>

◆ When applying for RI Works, RIte Care, or the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), custodial parents are asked to provide information on the other parent to the Office of Child Support Services. This information is used to establish paternity (if not already established), and to seek child support payments and/or medical support. For CCAP, parents must provide information on the non-custodial parents for all children in the family, whether or not the child is receiving a child care subsidy (not a federal requirement). Victims of domestic violence can apply for a child support waiver if providing this information could endanger themselves or their children.<sup>18,19,20</sup>

◆ In FFY 2021, Rhode Island had the lowest rate of court orders established for child support in New England (Maine – 95%; Connecticut – 94%; Vermont – 91%; New Hampshire – 90%; Massachusetts – 82%; Rhode Island – 71%). The national average for cases with child support orders established was 87%.<sup>21</sup>

◆ In FFY 2021, Rhode Island had the highest case/staff ratio in New England at 735 cases per person, nearly six times that of the lowest state, Vermont (126 cases per person).<sup>22</sup> High caseloads and a low number of full-time staff affects the Office of Child Support Services' ability to establish court orders for child support.



## Child Support and Rhode Island Works

◆ As of December 1, 2022, Rhode Island's Office of Child Support Services system included 3,683 children enrolled in the cash assistance program (RI Works).<sup>23</sup>

◆ In December 2022, the average child support obligation for children enrolled in RI Works was \$364 per month, compared to an average child support obligation of \$458 per month for children in non-RI Works families.<sup>24</sup> (Calculations for child support payments are based on both parents' incomes, so it is expected that the average child support obligation for children enrolled in RI Works would be lower.)

◆ In Rhode Island, only the first \$50 of child support paid on time each month on behalf of a child receiving RI Works cash assistance (called a pass-through payment) goes to the custodial parent. The remainder of the payment is retained by the state as reimbursement for cash assistance received.<sup>25</sup>

◆ An average of 275 families received a pass-through payment each month, for a total of \$161,477 paid to families enrolled in RI Works in FFY 2022.<sup>26</sup>

◆ States have the option to pass through a part or all of a family's child support payment to families and to disregard this income when calculating the amount of a family's cash assistance benefit. Rhode Island limits the pass-through amount to \$50, regardless of the number of children in the household. Some states pass through up to \$100 per month for one child (and up to \$200 per month for two or more children) and others, like Colorado and Minnesota, pass through the entire child support payment.<sup>27</sup>

◆ More generous child support pass-through policies for families receiving cash assistance provide a greater incentive for custodial parents to seek child support and for non-custodial parents to make regular payments, because more of the child support payment goes to the child. Increased pass-throughs could therefore increase total child support collections, increase custodial family income, and can decrease poverty and reduce the risk of child maltreatment.<sup>28,29</sup>

### References

<sup>1,14,21,22</sup> U.S. Office of Child Support Enforcement, Administration for Children & Families. (2022). *FY 2021 preliminary report*. Retrieved January 24, 2023, from [www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov)

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# Children in Poverty

## DEFINITION

*Children in poverty* is the percentage of children under age 18 who are living in households with incomes below the poverty threshold, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Poverty is determined based on income received in the year prior to the survey.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Poverty is related to every KIDS COUNT indicator. Children in poverty, especially those who experience poverty in early childhood and for extended periods, are more likely to have physical and behavioral health problems, experience hunger, difficulty in school, become teen parents, and earn less or be unemployed as adults.<sup>1,2</sup> Children in poverty are less likely to be enrolled in preschool, more likely to attend schools that lack resources, and have fewer opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

Nationally and in Rhode Island, Black, Hispanic, and Native American children are more likely than Asian and white children to live in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold. Children under age five, who have single parents, whose parents have low educational levels, or whose parents work part-time or are unemployed are at increased risk of living in poverty.<sup>6,7,8</sup>

In 2022, the federal poverty threshold was \$23,578 for a family of three with two children and \$29,678 for a family

of four with two children.<sup>9</sup> The official poverty measure does not reflect the effects of key government programs that support families living in poverty, or consider the increased cost of transportation, child care, housing, and medical care, and geographic variations in the cost of living. The U.S. Census Bureau publishes a Supplemental Poverty Measure that does not replace the official measure, but provides policy makers with an additional way to evaluate the effects of anti-poverty policies.<sup>10</sup>

According to the *2022 Rhode Island Standard of Need*, it costs a single-parent family with two young children \$66,567 a year to pay basic living expenses, more than two and a half times the federal poverty level for a family of three. This family would need an annual pre-tax income of \$78,219 to meet this budget. Work supports can help families with incomes below the federal poverty level meet their basic needs.<sup>11</sup>

Children in Poverty				
	2018	2019	2020*	2021
RI	18.0%	14.0%	11.5%	15.0%
US	18.0%	16.8%	15.7%	16.9%
National Rank*	24th			
New England Rank**	5th			

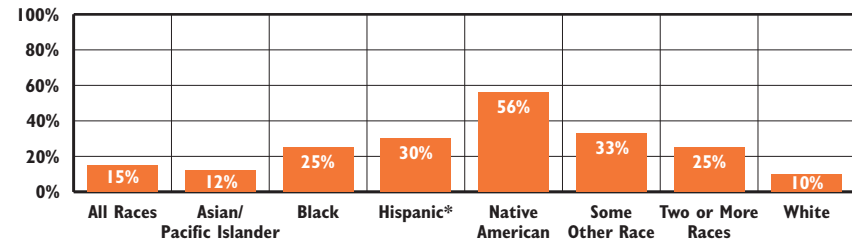
\*1st is best; 50th is worst

\*\*1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Tables S1701, C17024, and XK201701. \*The U.S. Census Bureau urges caution when comparing to standard ACS data due to low response rate during COVID-19 pandemic.



Children in Poverty, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2017-2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Tables B17020, B17020A, B17020B, B17020C, B17020D, B17020E, B17020F, B17020G and B17020I. \*Hispanic children may be included in any race category.

◆ Between 2017 and 2021, 15% (31,854) of Rhode Island's 208,925 children under age 18 with known poverty status lived in households with incomes below the federal poverty threshold.<sup>12</sup>

◆ Between 2017 and 2021, 56% of Native American, 30% of Hispanic, and 25% of Black children in Rhode Island lived in poverty, followed by 12% of Asian/Pacific Islander children and 10% of white children.<sup>13</sup>

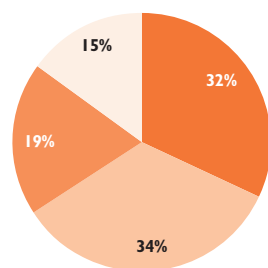
◆ While Asian American and Pacific Islander children have a lower overall poverty rate, both nationally and in Rhode Island, there are significant disparities across Asian ethnic groups, with significantly higher poverty rates for many Southeast Asian and South Asian groups.<sup>14,15</sup>

◆ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Rhode Island's unemployment rate surged higher in the spring and summer of 2020 than its peak in the Great Recession.<sup>16</sup> Job losses in 2020 disproportionately occurred in low-wage occupations, and occupations employing Black and Hispanic workers and female workers. Federal COVID-relief measures, such as enhanced unemployment benefits and economic impact payments, reduced poverty rates and lessened material hardship.<sup>17,18</sup>

◆ The federal *American Rescue Plan Act*, enacted in March 2021, included a one-year expansion of the Child Tax Credit, including distributing a portion of the credit in monthly payments from July through December 2021. These payments reduced child poverty by an estimated 30%, with the largest impact on Children of Color.<sup>19,20</sup>

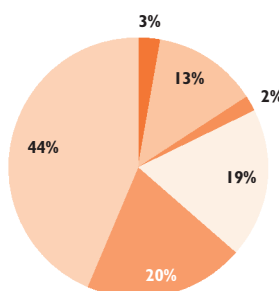
## Rhode Island's Children Living in Poverty, 2017-2021

By Age



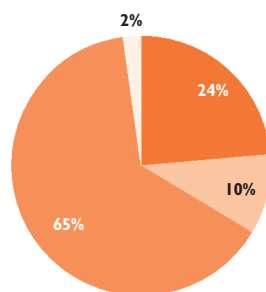
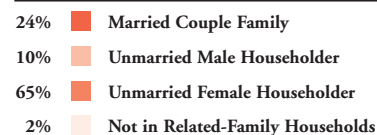
n=31,854

By Race\*



n=31,854

By Family Structure



n=31,854

\*Hispanic children may be included in any race category. Between 2017 and 2021, 53% of Rhode Island's 31,854 children living in poverty were Hispanic. The Census Bureau asks about race separately from ethnicity, and the majority of families who identify as Some other race also identify as Hispanic.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021. Tables B17001, B17006, B17020, B17020A, B17020B, B17020C, B17020D, B17020E, B17020F, B17020G, & B17020I. Population includes children for whom poverty status was determined. Cohn, D. (2017). *Seeking better data on Hispanics, Census Bureau may change how it asks about race*. Retrieved March 9, 2022, from [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org). Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

## Child Poverty Concentrated in Four Core Cities, Rhode Island, 2017-2021

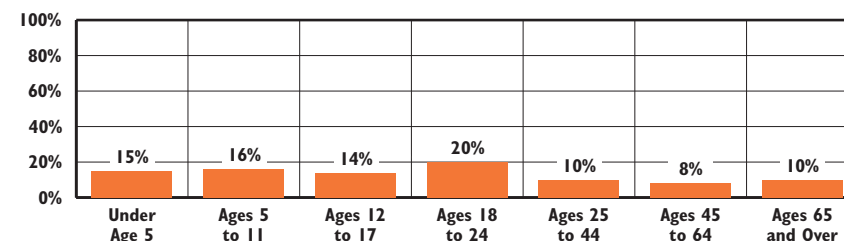
CITY/TOWN	NUMBER IN POVERTY	PERCENTAGE IN POVERTY	NUMBER IN EXTREME POVERTY	PERCENTAGE IN EXTREME POVERTY
Central Falls	2,190	35.0%	676	10.8%
Pawtucket	3,637	22.8%	1,520	9.5%
Providence	11,900	30.0%	5,705	14.5%
Woonsocket	2,739	29.5%	1,137	12.2%
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>31,854</b>	<b>15.2%</b>	<b>14,612</b>	<b>7.0%</b>

Source: Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2017-2021 American Community Survey data.

◆ Between 2017 and 2021 64% of Rhode Island's children living in poverty lived in just four cities—Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket. These cities, termed core cities, had a combined child poverty rate of 30% between 2017-2021. The four core cities also have substantial numbers of children living in extreme poverty.<sup>21</sup>

◆ In Rhode Island between 2017 and 2021, Black and Hispanic children were about 16 and 13 times more likely, respectively, to live in high-poverty neighborhoods than non-Hispanic white children.<sup>22</sup> Living in high-poverty neighborhoods (those with poverty rates of 30% or more) provides fewer opportunities for children and their families.<sup>23</sup>

## Poverty, by Age, Rhode Island, 2017-2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021, Table B17001.

◆ Between 2017 and 2021 in Rhode Island, 20% of young adults ages 18 to 24 lived in poverty. In Rhode Island, young adults are at a higher risk of living in poverty than any other age group.<sup>24</sup> In the U.S., 3.4 million children live with parents ages 18 to 24, and 37% of them, mostly babies, toddlers, and preschoolers, live in poverty.<sup>25</sup>



# Children in Poverty



## Financial Asset Building

- ◆ Many low-income families have limited or no access to traditional banks and instead must rely on cash transactions or alternative financial services, such as check-cashing stores, payday lenders, and rent-to-own stores. These families pay high fees for financial transactions and high interest rates on loans, and often struggle to build credit histories and achieve economic security.<sup>26,27</sup>
- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2021, 3.5% of households did not have a checking or savings account, lower than the U.S. rate of 4.5% and the lowest it has ever been. During the pandemic, the quick government financial relief payment made many families bankable. Many consumers took advantage of enhanced, safe online and mobile bank accounts, which resulted in a meaningful gain in connecting families to the banking system.<sup>28</sup> Nationally, households with lower income, disabled working-age adults, or adults with less than a high school education, as well as Black and Hispanic households, are less likely to have a checking or savings account.<sup>29</sup>
- ◆ States can protect consumers from high-cost payday lending by prohibiting these loans outright or enacting measures that make the loans more affordable, such as an annual rate cap or limiting the amount of monthly payments as a percentage of a borrower's monthly income. Rhode Island is the only New England state that does not currently protect against payday lending.<sup>30,31</sup>
- ◆ Many public assistance programs have eligibility provisions that limit the amount of assets and/or the value of vehicles a family can own. Such policies discourage families from saving and building the assets they need to improve their economic security.<sup>32</sup>
- ◆ Rhode Island currently has a \$5,000 asset limit to qualify for and retain RI Works cash assistance and is one of only eight states with such a restrictive asset limit. Under Rhode Island law, the value of one vehicle for each adult household member (not to exceed two vehicles per household) does not count toward the family's asset limit.<sup>33</sup>
- ◆ Discrimination and historical racism have resulted in large and persistent disparities in wealth between different racial and ethnic groups. In 2019, the median family wealth for white families was almost eight times greater than the median wealth of Black families and five times greater than the median wealth of Hispanic families.<sup>34</sup>



## Building Blocks of Economic Security

### Income Supports

- ◆ The Supplemental Poverty Measure shows the positive impact of government programs, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit, Social Security, SNAP, and housing subsidies. These programs kept millions of children out of poverty.<sup>35</sup>

### Health Coverage and Access to Care

- ◆ People with low incomes are the most likely to be uninsured; some cannot afford the cost, some do not have access to coverage through their employers, and others do not have access to employer-based coverage due to job loss.<sup>36</sup> In Rhode Island low-income children are now eligible to enroll in RIte Care regardless of immigration status.<sup>37</sup>

### Affordable Quality Child Care

- ◆ In Rhode Island in 2021, the average annual cost of center-based child care for one infant was \$13,780.<sup>38</sup> Child care subsidies can help families living in poverty afford the cost of high-quality child care, which can help parents maintain employment and support children's development.<sup>39</sup>

### Educational Attainment

- ◆ Between 2021 and 2031, jobs requiring a postsecondary degree or certificate are projected to grow faster than jobs requiring a high school diploma or less.<sup>40</sup> Forty-five percent of Rhode Islanders had a postsecondary degree or certificate in 2017-2021.<sup>41</sup>

### Affordable Housing

- ◆ In 2022, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Rhode Island was \$1,996.<sup>42</sup> In Rhode Island, a family of three with an income at the federal poverty level would need to spend all of its income on rent to pay this amount.<sup>43,44</sup> Nationally, only one in four eligible low-income families receive rental assistance to help them afford the high cost of housing.<sup>45</sup>

### Child Support

- ◆ As of December 1, 2022, there were 64,282 children in Rhode Island's Office of Child Support Services system.<sup>46</sup> Child support helps reduce poverty. Custodial parents who receive steady child support payments are less likely to rely on public assistance and more likely to be employed than those who do not.<sup>47</sup> Among poor custodial parents that received full child support in 2017 in the U.S., these payments represented 57% of their mean personal income.<sup>48</sup>

Table 11.

## Children Living Below the Federal Poverty Threshold, Rhode Island, 2017-2021

CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18 LIVING BELOW POVERTY 2017-2021				
CITY/TOWN	ESTIMATES WITH HIGH MARGINS OF ERROR*		ESTIMATES WITH LOWER, ACCEPTABLE MARGINS OF ERROR	
	N	%	N	%
Barrington			168	3.5%
Bristol			102	3.5%
Burrillville			73	2.4%
Central Falls	2,190	35.0%		
Charlestown	146	12.9%		
Coventry			538	8.2%
Cranston			1,382	8.2%
Cumberland			451	6.1%
East Greenwich			223	6.5%
East Providence			1,083	13.2%
Exeter	18	1.5%		
Foster	30	3.3%		
Glocester	103	4.8%		
Hopkinton	110	8.0%		
Jamestown	-	-	-	
Johnston	518	9.8%		
Lincoln			336	6.6%
Little Compton	7	1.6%		
Middletown	350	11.3%		
Narragansett			25	1.5%
New Shoreham	10	5.6%		
Newport	1,008	29.0%		
North Kingstown			515	9.6%
North Providence			750	11.6%
North Smithfield	257	10.9%		
Pawtucket			3,637	22.8%
Portsmouth	272	7.5%		
Providence			11,900	30.3%
Richmond	-	-	-	
Scituate			20	1.3%
Smithfield			18	0.5%
South Kingstown			440	9.1%
Tiverton			103	4.1%
Warren	89	5.3%		
Warwick			1,116	7.5%
West Greenwich			2	0.2%
West Warwick	759	14.8%		
Westerly	366	11.2%		
Woonsocket	2,739	29.5%		
Four Core Cities			20,466	28.9%
Remainder of State			11,388	8.2%
Rhode Island			31,854	15.2%

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data are from a Population Reference Bureau analysis of 2017-2021 American Community Survey data. The data include the poverty rate for all children for whom poverty was determined, including “related” children and “unrelated children” living in the household.

The American Community Survey is a sample survey, and therefore the number and percentage of children living in poverty provided are estimates, not actual counts. The reliability of these estimates varies by community. In general, estimates for small communities and communities with relatively low poverty rates are not as reliable as estimates for larger communities and communities with higher poverty rates.

\*The Margin of Error around the percentage is greater than or equal to five percentage points.

The Margin of Error is a measure of the reliability of the estimate and is provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Margin of Error means that there is a 90 percent chance that the true value is no less than the estimate minus the Margin of Error and no more than the estimate plus the Margin of Error. (See the Methodology Section for Margins of Error for all communities.)

-There were either no sample observations or too few sample observations to compute an estimate.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

### References

- <sup>1,8</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). *A roadmap to reducing child poverty*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- <sup>2</sup> Ratcliffe, C. (2015). *Child poverty and adult success*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- <sup>3</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2021). *Number of children under 6 years old and not yet enrolled in kindergarten, percentage in center-based programs, average weekly hours in nonparental care, and percentage in various types of primary care arrangements, by selected child and family characteristics: 2019*. Retrieved March 3, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov>

(continued on page 177)

# Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance

## DEFINITION

*Children in families receiving cash assistance* is the percentage of children under age 18 who were living in families receiving cash assistance through the Rhode Island Works Program (RI Works). These data measure the number of children and families enrolled in RI Works during the month of December. Children and families who participated in the program at other points in the year but who were not enrolled in that month are not included.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The goal of RI Works is to help very low-income families meet their basic needs by providing cash assistance and work supports, including employment services, SNAP benefits, health insurance, subsidized childcare, and a small annual clothing allowance for children. Children and families qualify for cash assistance based on their income, resources, and the number of people in their families.<sup>1</sup>

RI Works cash assistance recipients must participate in an employment plan unless they meet specific criteria for an exemption. This employment plan must consider the parent's skills, education, and family responsibilities as well as place of residence and should outline a process for helping the parent meet his or her employment goals. Parents should be informed about

opportunities to seek additional education or training to improve their employability prospects.<sup>2</sup>

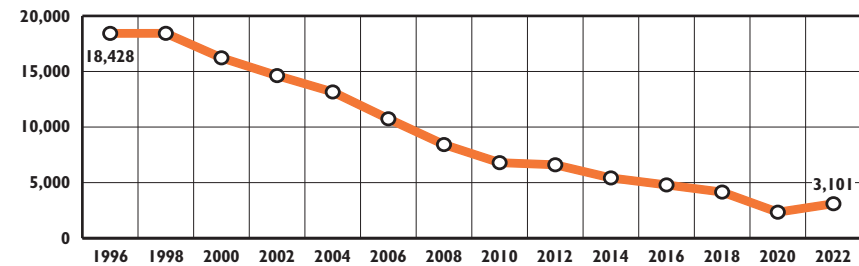
RI Works provides a safety net for some children whose parents are unable to work due to a disability and can function as an unemployment system for parents with insufficient earnings or work experience to qualify for unemployment benefits. RI Works also provides time-limited supplementary cash assistance to very low-income working families.<sup>3</sup> In 2022, the average hourly wage of working parents enrolled in RI Works was \$16.59 per hour.<sup>4</sup>

RI Works connects families to the Office of Child Support Services, which assists families in establishing paternity (when applicable), identifying and locating non-custodial parents, and obtaining child support payments from non-custodial parents.<sup>5</sup> In Rhode Island, the first \$50 of child support paid on time each month on behalf of a child enrolled in RI Works goes to the custodial parent caring for the child. The balance is kept by the state and federal governments as reimbursement for assistance received through RI Works.<sup>6,7</sup>

The maximum monthly RI Works benefits for a family of three is \$721 per month.<sup>8</sup> Benefits were increased by 30% in 2021, the first increase in 30 years, but the maximum benefit is still only 37% of the federal poverty threshold.<sup>9,10</sup>



Cash Assistance Caseload, Rhode Island, 1996–2022\*



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, December 1, 1996-2015, and RI Bridges Database, December 2016-2022. Cases can be child-only or whole families, and multiple people can be included in one case. \*The Rhode Island Department of Human Services changed the method for calculating the caseload data starting in the 2012 Factbook. This change is reflected in the 2010-2022 caseload data. Comparisons to earlier years should be made with caution. Starting in 2016, caseload data are for the month of December and not for a point in time, December 1.

◆ Since 1996, when the program began, the Rhode Island cash assistance caseload has declined steadily. Between 1996 and 2022, the Rhode Island cash assistance caseload decreased by 83%, from 18,428 cases to 3,101 families. There was a small increase in the number of families receiving cash assistance from 2021 to 2022, but this level was still below the 2019 pre-pandemic caseload.<sup>11</sup>

◆ The RI Works caseload declined due to policies implemented in 2008 when the program changed from the Family Independence Program (FIP) to RI Works. These policies included new time limits (which have since been removed so that now only a 60-month lifetime limit is in place), closing the entire family's case when parents reach their time limit, and limiting eligibility for legal permanent residents to those who have had that status for five years.<sup>12,13</sup>

◆ In December 2022, there were 2,417 adults and 5,773 children under age 18 enrolled in RI Works. Seventy percent of RI Works beneficiaries were children, and 39% of the children enrolled in RI Works were under the age of six.<sup>14</sup>

◆ In December 2022, 65% (2,001) of RI Works cases were single-parent families, 30% (944) were child-only cases, and 5% (156) were two-parent families.<sup>15</sup>

◆ From 2019-2020, only about one quarter (26%) of families with children living in poverty in Rhode Island received cash assistance, down from two-thirds (64%) in 2005-2006.<sup>16,17</sup>

# Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance



## RI Works Policies

### Work Requirements

◆ Single-parent families must participate in a work activity for a minimum of 20 hours per week if they have a child under age six and a minimum of 30 hours per week if their youngest child is age six or older. For two-parent families, one or both parents must participate in work activities for an individual or combined total of 35 hours per week.<sup>18</sup>

### Time Limits and Hardship Extensions

◆ The lifetime limit for RI Works is 60 months. Families can apply for hardship extensions that allow them to continue receiving cash assistance after reaching the time limit if the parent has a documented significant disability, is caring for a significantly disabled family member, is unable to pursue employment due to domestic violence, is homeless, or is unable to work because of “a critical other condition or circumstance.” While parents must submit requests for hardship extensions (for six-month periods), there is no limit on the total time a family can receive a hardship extension.<sup>19,20,21</sup>

### Child-Only Cases

◆ Child-only cases are those that receive assistance for only the children in the family because the child’s parent is ineligible. Child-only cases include children living with a non-parent or a parent who is disabled and receiving Supplemental Security Income.<sup>22</sup>

### Sanctions

◆ If a parent misses a required appointment, refuses or quits a job, or in some other way fails to comply with an employment plan and is not able to establish “good cause” (e.g., lack of child care, illness, a family crisis, or other allowed circumstance), the family’s cash benefit is reduced. If benefits are reduced for a total of three months (consecutive or not) due to non-compliance, the family’s case is closed, and the entire family loses the RI Works benefit. Benefits can be restored in the month after the parent reapplies and comes into compliance.<sup>23</sup>

### Recent Policy Changes

◆ The FY 2023 budget includes improvements to the Rhode Island Works program. It extends the lifetime limit from 48 to 60 months, amends the work requirements to allow a parent to attend the Community College of Rhode Island for two years, increases the earnings disregard from \$170 to \$300 a month, increases the asset limit from \$1,000 to \$5,000 so families can have savings and build a financial safety net, and excludes all state and federal tax returns and tax rebates from income eligibility.<sup>24</sup>



## RI Works by Case Type, December 2022

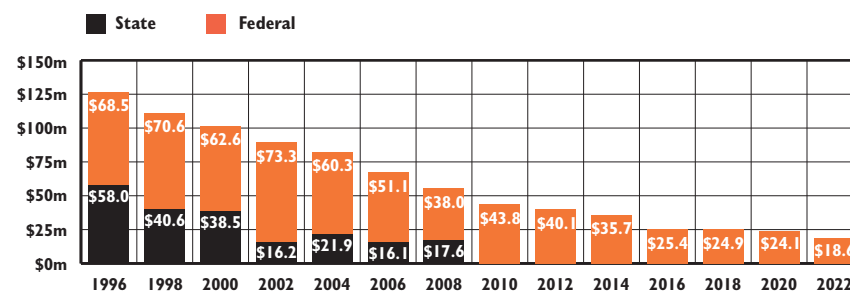
	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Child-only cases	944	30%
Cases with adults with a work activity	1,736	56%
Cases with adults exempt from a work activity*	372	12%
Unknown status	49	2%
<b>Total RI Works Caseload</b>	<b>3,101</b>	

Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, December 2022.

\*RI Works regulations require that all parents and caretaker relatives included in the cash assistance grant participate in a work activity unless they receive a temporary exemption. Exemptions from work activities include illness or incapacity (171), youngest child under age one (83), second parent is a non-participant (83), in third trimester of pregnancy (26), being a victim of domestic violence (2), or multiple reasons (7).



## Rhode Island Cash Assistance Expenditures, State Fiscal Years 1996-2022



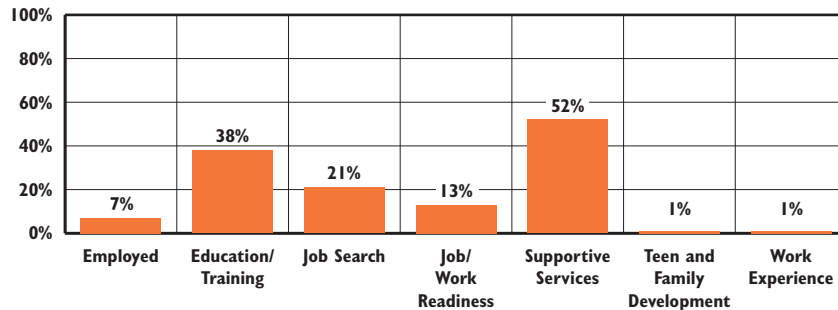
Sources: Rhode Island Department of Human Services. (2007). *Family Independence Program 2007 annual report*. (FY 1996-2001); House Fiscal Advisory Staff. (2004-2019). *Budget as enacted: Fiscal Years 2005-2019*. (FY 2002-2017); House Fiscal Advisory Staff. (2020). *FY 2020 revised budget: 2020-H 7170, Substitute A, as amended*. (FY 2018-19); House Fiscal Advisory Staff. (2022). *Budget as enacted: Fiscal Year 2023*. (FY 2021-2022). Fiscal years 1997-2021 are funds spent and FY 2022 is final budget.

◆ In State Fiscal Year 2022, for the thirteenth year in a row, no state general revenue was allocated for cash assistance. State general revenue spending for cash assistance decreased steadily from 1996 through 2010, and the program is now entirely supported by federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds. Total expenditures for cash assistance in Rhode Island (federal and state) decreased by 85% between 1996 (when the program began) and 2022.<sup>25,26</sup> In 2021, Rhode Island spent 12% of its TANF funds on cash assistance, significantly lower than the national share of 23%.<sup>27</sup>



# Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance

**Families Enrolled in the RI Works Program,  
by Type of Work Activity, December 2022**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, December 2022. The total number of work activities (2,321) is larger than the number of families with a work activity (1,736) because some families (254) had multiple work activities during the month.

- ◆ As of December 2022, 7% of families with work activities were employed, and 1% were in community work experience. Most of these families were also engaged in other work activities during the month.<sup>28</sup>
- ◆ Parents with limited training and skills can participate in basic education and work skills programs. Parents also can receive up to two years of education as part of their 60-month lifetime limit.<sup>29</sup> As of December 2022, 38% of families were participating in education or training programs.<sup>30</sup>
- ◆ Twenty-one percent of families with a work activity were participating in job search activities, including job search and job skills development programs delivered in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, and were participating in other job readiness activities. Fifty-two percent of families were receiving supportive services, including mental or physical health and substance abuse treatment, and housing and homelessness services needed to address barriers to employment.<sup>31,32</sup>
- ◆ An additional 1% of families received educational support through the Teen and Family Development Program, a program for young parents.<sup>33</sup>

## Support for Young Parents

- ◆ Seventy-eight percent of children born to teen mothers who never marry and do not graduate from high school live in poverty.<sup>34</sup>
- ◆ RI Works provides additional support to young parents. Parents who are under age 20 and do not have a high school diploma or GED are required to receive parenting skills training and are supported in completing their high school education while enrolled in RI Works. In addition, pregnant or parenting teens under age 18 are required to live with their parent, legal guardian, or adult relative or in an adult-supervised setting.<sup>35</sup>
- ◆ In December 2022, there were 84 parents under the age of 20 enrolled in RI Works. Some are parent heads of household, and others may be part of multi-generational households.<sup>36</sup>

## Support for Individuals with Disabilities and Their Families

- ◆ Recent research conducted in several states shows that cash assistance recipients report physical and mental health disabilities at higher rates than the general population. Parents with physical or mental health conditions can face barriers to employment, including discrimination by employers.<sup>37</sup>
- ◆ Under RI Works, parents with disabilities may be exempt from work requirements only if they are receiving SSI or SSDI or determined to be eligible for SSI or SSDI. Other parents with disabilities are referred to the Office of Rehabilitation Services for further assessment, vocational rehabilitation services, and help applying for SSI or to substance abuse or mental health treatment, as appropriate.<sup>38</sup>
- ◆ As of December 2022, 623 families (20% of the total RI Works caseload) had hardship extensions, 27 for a physical or mental disability, 13 who were unable to work due to a domestic violence situation, seven to care for a disabled family member, seven due to homelessness, and 569 because of economic hardship or another critical condition or circumstance.<sup>39</sup> Nationally, many families leave cash assistance not because they find work, but because they reach their time limit or are sanctioned. These families often have barriers to employment, such as a mental or physical impairment, or low levels of education and limited work experience.<sup>40,41</sup>

# Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance

Table 12. Children in Families Receiving Cash Assistance (RI Works), Rhode Island, December 2022

CITY/TOWN	# OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18	NUMBER RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE		% OF CHILDREN RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE
		FAMILIES	CHILDREN	
Barrington	4,489	11	21	<1%
Bristol	2,887	19	23	1%
Burrillville	3,229	22	38	1%
Central Falls	6,411	147	310	5%
Charlestown	1,161	1	1	<1%
Coventry	6,655	37	57	1%
Cranston	15,744	153	258	2%
Cumberland	7,550	30	51	1%
East Greenwich	3,465	10	19	1%
East Providence	7,886	107	177	2%
Exeter	1,175	3	5	<1%
Foster	790	5	12	2%
Glocester	1,896	4	6	<1%
Hopkinton	1,613	7	14	1%
Jamestown	871	5	9	1%
Johnston	5,119	50	75	1%
Lincoln	4,640	38	66	1%
Little Compton	568	2	4	1%
Middletown	3,487	34	55	2%
Narragansett	1,651	5	12	1%
New Shoreham	189	0	0	0%
Newport	3,660	126	256	7%
North Kingstown	5,496	38	65	1%
North Providence	5,802	72	119	2%
North Smithfield	2,274	6	8	<1%
Pawtucket	16,455	369	663	4%
Portsmouth	3,444	14	25	1%
Providence	41,021	1,128	2,200	5%
Richmond	1,627	2	3	<1%
Scituate	1,866	8	10	1%
Smithfield	3,411	14	26	1%
South Kingstown	4,339	18	33	1%
Tiverton	2,723	21	36	1%
Warren	1,826	16	31	2%
Warwick	14,034	114	198	1%
West Greenwich	1,251	4	5	<1%
West Warwick	5,787	80	150	3%
Westerly	3,826	15	25	1%
Woonsocket	9,467	360	701	7%
Other/Unknown	NA	6	6	NA
Four Core Cities	73,354	2,004	3,874	5%
Remainder of State	136,431	1,091	1,893	1%
Rhode Island	209,785	3,101	5,773	3%

(continued on page 177)



## Education and Training Supporting Employment

◆ Between 2017 and 2021, almost 60,000 working-age adults (18 to 64) in Rhode Island did not have a high school diploma or GED.<sup>42</sup>

◆ Nationally, between 2021 and 2031, jobs requiring a postsecondary degree or certificate are projected to grow faster than jobs requiring a high school diploma.<sup>43</sup> Between 2017 and 2021, the unemployment rate for Rhode Islanders without a high school diploma was 10.4%, compared to 6.5% for those with a high school degree and 3.1% for those with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>44</sup>

◆ Parents enrolled in RI Works face significant barriers to success in the labor market. Thirty percent of parents enrolled in RI Works report did not finish high school. Among a group of parents receiving cash assistance who were tested in March 2020, about one-third (34%) of those tested in English tested at or below the sixth grade reading level, while more than half (56%) of native Spanish speakers enrolled in RI Works tested at or below the sixth-grade reading level on a Spanish-language version of the test.<sup>45</sup>

◆ Recent research has shown that well-designed and well-implemented programs that focus on building skills and providing support can increase future employment and earnings of cash assistance recipients. Programs that combine education, training, and support services are more effective than standalone job search or skills instruction programs.<sup>46</sup> States should explore how to meet their work participation rate while offering beneficiaries a chance to improve job skills and long-term work preparedness.<sup>47</sup>

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, December 2022. The Rhode Island Department of Human Services changed the method for calculating the caseload and persons receiving cash assistance starting in the 2012 Factbook. Comparisons to data presented in previous Factbooks should be made with caution.

The denominator is the total number of children under age 18 from U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2020, Table P2 and Table P4.

Communities may have more families than children receiving cash assistance because a pregnant woman without children is eligible if in the final trimester of her pregnancy.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

### References

1,2,3,5,8,18,19,20,22,23,29,32,35,38 Rhode Island Works Program rules and regulations, 218-RICR-20-00-2 (2021). Retrieved March 28, 2023, from sos.ri.gov

4,11,14,15,28,30,31,33,36,39,45 Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database and RI Bridges Database, December 1996-2022.

6 Child Support Program rules and regulations, 218-RICR-30-00-1 (2021). Retrieved March 28, 2023, from sos.ri.gov

# Children Receiving SNAP Benefits

## DEFINITION

*Children receiving SNAP benefits* is the number of children under age 18 who participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

## SIGNIFICANCE

Hunger and lack of regular access to sufficient food are linked to serious physical, psychological, emotional, and academic problems in children and can interfere with their growth and development.<sup>1,2</sup> The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income individuals and families obtain better nutrition through monthly benefits they can use to purchase food at retail stores and some farmers' markets.<sup>3</sup> Child hunger has been shown to decrease by almost one-third after their families have received SNAP benefits for six months.<sup>4</sup>

Nationally, SNAP is available to households with gross monthly incomes below 130% of the federal poverty level, net monthly incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level, and no more than \$2,750 in resources.<sup>5</sup> Rhode Island is one of 41 states that have implemented broad-based categorical eligibility, which allowed Rhode Island to increase the gross income limit and remove the resource limit for most applicants.<sup>6</sup> The gross monthly income limit for Rhode Island is 185% of the federal poverty level (\$42,606 per year

for a family of three in 2022).

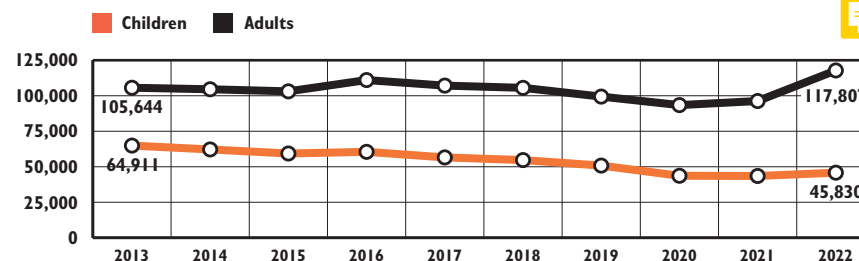
Households must still meet the net monthly income limit of 100% of the federal poverty level after allowable deductions, which include deductions for housing costs and child care.<sup>7,8</sup>

SNAP is an important anti-hunger program that helps individuals and families purchase food when they have limited income, face unemployment or reduced work hours, or experience a crisis.<sup>9</sup> In Rhode Island during October 2022, 69% of SNAP households had gross incomes below the federal poverty level (\$23,030 for a family of three in 2022).<sup>10,11</sup> In October 2022, the average monthly SNAP benefit for a family of three in Rhode Island was \$549 (this average does not include supplemental benefits provided during the COVID-19 pandemic).<sup>12</sup> Beginning October 2021, maximum monthly benefits increased due to an update of the Thrifty Food Plan on which benefits are based.<sup>13</sup>

Participation in SNAP in early childhood is associated with improvements in short- and long-term health outcomes, improved high school graduation rates, and increases in adult earnings. In 2020, SNAP and the School Lunch Program lifted 3.2 million Americans out of poverty and was the most effective program for lifting families out of deep poverty.<sup>14,15,16</sup> SNAP is also an effective form of economic stimulus because it moves money directly into the local economy.<sup>17</sup>



## Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Children and Adults, Rhode Island, 2013-2022



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, 2013–2015 and RI Bridges Database, 2016–2022. Data represent children under age 18 and adults who participated in SNAP during the month of October.

◆ Of the 163,637 Rhode Islanders enrolled in SNAP in October 2022, 72% were adults and 28% were children. Of the children enrolled in SNAP, 32% were under the age of six.<sup>18</sup>

◆ Between 2020 and 2022, the number of adults receiving SNAP benefits increased, while the number of children enrolled decreased from 2020 to 2021 and then increased slightly in 2022.<sup>19</sup>



## Child Hunger in Rhode Island

◆ Food insecurity is a method to measure and assess the risk of hunger.<sup>20</sup> The USDA defines food insecurity as not always having access to enough food for an active, healthy life. From 2018 to 2020, 8.2% of Rhode Island households and 10.7% of U.S. households were food insecure. In 2020, 14.8% of all U.S. households with children and 40.5% of U.S. households with children living in poverty experienced food insecurity.<sup>21</sup> Rhode Island launched a retail SNAP incentive pilot program which gives discounts on fruits and vegetables, improves nutrition, and reduces food insecurity in households.<sup>22</sup>

◆ Several federal nutrition programs provide nutrition assistance to children and families, including SNAP, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.<sup>23</sup> The Rhode Island Community Food Bank network served, on average, 10,000 more people each month in 2022 than in 2021, with nearly one in three Rhode Island households unable to afford adequate food.<sup>24</sup>

# Children Receiving SNAP Benefits

Table 13. Children Under Age 18 Receiving SNAP Benefits, Rhode Island, October 2022

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER PARTICIPATING
Barrington	139
Bristol	257
Burrillville	380
Central Falls	2,280
Charlestown	76
Coventry	726
Cranston	2,588
Cumberland	663
East Greenwich	161
East Providence	1,510
Exeter	100
Foster	92
Glocester	86
Hopkinton	169
Jamestown	21
Johnston	923
Lincoln	570
Little Compton	23
Middletown	363
Narragansett	118
New Shoreham	1
Newport	1,013
North Kingstown	615
North Providence	1,076
North Smithfield	188
Pawtucket	5,344
Portsmouth	164
Providence	16,857
Richmond	163
Scituate	119
Smithfield	226
South Kingstown	356
Tiverton	262
Warren	300
Warwick	1,683
West Greenwich	80
West Warwick	1,450
Westerly	499
Woonsocket	4,395
Unknown	61
Four Core Cities	28,876
Remainder of State	17,160
Rhode Island	46,097

## COVID-19 and SNAP Benefits

◆ According to 2022 survey data from the RI Life Index, 41% of households with children in Rhode Island reported not being able to meet their basic food needs, compared to 31% of all households, up from 25% for households with children and 18% for all households in 2021.<sup>25</sup>

◆ Between March 2020 and February 2023, SNAP households that were not already receiving the maximum benefit temporarily received supplemental benefits. All SNAP households were eligible for a supplemental benefit of at least \$95 during the COVID-19 public health emergency.<sup>26,27</sup>

◆ SNAP participants can now select and pay for their groceries online using their EBT card at participating online retailers.<sup>28</sup>

◆ Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) provides benefits to replace free and reduced-price school meals missed due to school closures and distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2022, almost half (49%) of students receiving P-EBT benefits in Rhode Island also received SNAP benefits.<sup>29,30</sup>

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) data are from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, October 2022. \*267 children changed addresses mid-month resulting in the total being greater than the total number of distinct children

Due to changes in the availability of data, we report participation for the entire month of October, rather than October 1 in this Factbook. Due to this change in methodology, *Children Receiving SNAP Benefits* cannot be compared with Factbooks prior to 2016.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Gallegos, D., Eivers, A., Sondergeld, P., & Pattinson, C. (2021). Food insecurity and child development: A state-of-the-art review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(17), 8990. MDPI AG. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/>
- <sup>2</sup> Thomas, M. M. C., Miller, D. P., & Morrissey, T. W. (2019). Food insecurity and child health. *Pediatrics*, 144(4), 1-9.
- <sup>3,15</sup> Food Research and Action Center. (2020). *FRAC facts: SNAP strengths*. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)
- <sup>4,14</sup> Carlson, S., & Llobrera, J. (2022). *SNAP is linked with improved health outcomes and lower health care costs*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- <sup>5,8</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2021). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): SNAP eligibility*. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov)
- <sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2020). *Broad-based categorical eligibility*. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov)
- <sup>7,11</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2022). Annual update of the HHS poverty guidelines. *Federal Register*, 87(14), 3315-3316.
- <sup>9,17</sup> *Policy basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*. (2022). Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

(continued on page 178)



# Women and Children Participating in WIC

## DEFINITION

*Women and children participating in WIC* is the percentage of eligible women, infants, and children enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

## SIGNIFICANCE

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a federally funded preventive program that provides participants with nutritious food, nutrition education, and referrals to health care and social services. WIC serves pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children under age five living in low-income households. Any individual who participates in SNAP, RIte Care, Medicaid, or Rhode Island Works is automatically income-eligible for WIC. Participants also must be at nutritional risk to qualify. This can include inadequate nutrition, or medical risks such as anemia or high-risk pregnancy.<sup>1,2</sup>

WIC improves the quality of participants' diets and promotes healthy eating habits. Studies have shown that WIC participants access more nutritious foods, including more produce, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. WIC participation also may decrease

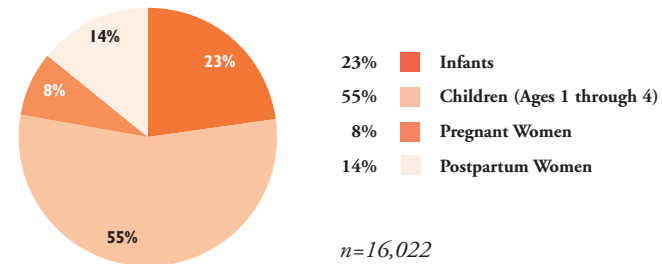
household food insecurity (families that do not have regular access to enough food for an active, healthy life). Food insecurity in early childhood can lead to impaired cognitive, behavioral, and psychosocial development, and can limit academic achievement. Pregnant women also have special nutritional needs that influence pregnancy outcomes and the health of their children.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

WIC participation has been shown to reduce infant mortality, improve birth outcomes (including reducing the likelihood of low birthweight and prematurity), improve cognitive development, reduce risk of child neglect and abuse, increase child immunization rates, and increase access to preventive medical care.<sup>6,7</sup>

Revisions to the WIC food package that were implemented in 2009 increased access to a wider variety of nutritious foods, increased state flexibility to provide culturally appropriate foods, and strengthened breastfeeding support.<sup>8,9</sup> In Rhode Island in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022, 36% of infants participating in were breastfed, and 64% of infants were fully formula fed.<sup>10</sup>

In 2020, WIC began providing an EBT (electronic benefit transfer) card called eWIC to all Rhode Island users.<sup>11</sup>

  
**Women, Infants, and Children Enrolled in WIC,  
Rhode Island, September 2022**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, WIC Program, September 2022.

◆ **Infants and children ages one through four comprised more than three-quarters (78%) of the population served by WIC in September 2022 in Rhode Island. Women accounted for over one-fifth (8% pregnant and 14% postpartum) of the population served.**<sup>12</sup>

◆ **In September 2022, 3% of WIC participants in Rhode Island were Asian, 17% were Black, 3% were Native American, 65% were white, and 13% identified as another race or more than one race. Fifty-eight percent of WIC participants identified as Hispanic. Hispanic women and children may be included in any race category.**<sup>13</sup>

◆ **Three of the four core cities had participation rates at or exceeding the statewide participation rate of 40% in September 2022: Providence (49%), Central Falls (45%), Woonsocket (45%).**<sup>14</sup>

◆ **WIC is not an entitlement program (there is not enough funding for all eligible women and children to participate). Congress determines funding for WIC annually.<sup>15</sup> Rhode Island received \$19.8 million in federal WIC funding during FFY 2022, slightly higher than the \$17.1 million received in FFY 2021.**<sup>16</sup>

◆ **The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) improves participants' intake of fresh fruits and vegetables by enabling participants to purchase produce at authorized local farmers' markets using WIC benefits.<sup>17</sup> In Rhode Island, 8,252 WIC participants purchased fresh produce at 26 farmers' markets and 14 farm stands through the FMNP in FFY 2022, an increase of 7,237 participants from the previous year.**<sup>18</sup>

# Women and Children Participating in WIC

## Stigma Associated With Participation in WIC

◆ Individuals may feel uncomfortable participating in WIC and be less likely to use their benefits. Nationally, many participants express frustration that stores do not have signs indicating which items are WIC-eligible and feel stigmatized by store employees and other customers during checkout. Granting flexibility for the quantity of items purchased, improving signage for eligible products, allowing WIC items to be rung up along with SNAP and other food purchases, and allowing self-checkout for WIC items may help to reduce stigma.<sup>19,20</sup>

## COVID-19 and WIC Participation

◆ Waivers granted by the federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic provided flexibility in enrollment, benefit issuance, and redemption. Nationally, WIC participation increased 1.2% overall and 8.7% among children in February 2022 compared to February 2020 (pre-pandemic). Changes in participation varied widely and 28 states had declines in participation, including in Rhode Island, which had a 5.6% decline in the number of participants over this period. Community outreach and coordination with other program operators can help increase access to WIC.<sup>21</sup>

Table 14. Women, Infants, and Children Enrolled in WIC, June 2022

CITY/TOWN	ESTIMATED NUMBER ELIGIBLE	NUMBER ENROLLED	% OF ELIGIBLE ENROLLED
Barrington	139	31	22%
Bristol	323	101	31%
Burrillville	393	71	18%
Central Falls	1,943	883	45%
Charlestown	140	41	29%
Coventry	771	225	29%
Cranston	2,700	1,156	43%
Cumberland	674	198	29%
East Greenwich	121	30	25%
East Providence	1,528	525	34%
Exeter	122	30	25%
Foster	114	23	20%
Glocester	162	32	20%
Hopkinton	174	115	66%
Jamestown	25	2	8%
Johnston	1,003	400	40%
Lincoln	530	174	33%
Little Compton	41	6	15%
Middletown	356	140	39%
Narragansett	142	33	23%
New Shoreham	25	0	0%
Newport	731	348	48%
North Kingstown	447	114	25%
North Providence	1,166	353	30%
North Smithfield	184	70	38%
Pawtucket	4,275	1,633	38%
Portsmouth	206	51	25%
Providence	13,009	6,387	49%
Richmond	155	9	6%
Scituate	158	19	12%
Smithfield	331	105	32%
South Kingstown	377	86	23%
Tiverton	251	87	35%
Warren	266	89	34%
Warwick	1,921	614	32%
West Greenwich	107	24	22%
West Warwick	1,197	398	33%
Westerly	545	130	24%
Woonsocket	2,848	1,289	45%
Four Core Cities	22,075	10,192	46%
Remainder of State	17,768	5,830	33%
Rhode Island	39,843	16,022	40%

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Estimated Number Eligible: Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Medicaid Management Information System, September 30, 2022.

Number Enrolled: Rhode Island Department of Health, WIC Program, September 2022.

Note: WIC participation rates in this Factbook are based on a single date in September. Factbooks from 2020-2022 used a reference date in June, and Factbooks prior to 2020 used a September 30 reference date, with the exception of the 2011 Factbook, which used a July reference date. Additionally, since 2007, the “estimated number eligible” is based on calculations done by the Rhode Island Department of Health to determine the number of pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children under age five who live in families with an income less than 185% of the federal poverty level. In previous years, the “estimated number eligible” was based on 2000 Census data (2005 and 2006 Factbooks) and 1990 Census data (all Factbooks prior to 2005).

EOHHS data indicated that there were 246 women, infants, or children eligible who had an unknown residence. These are included in the Rhode Island state total but not assigned to any city or town.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

### References

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2022). *The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC program)*. Retrieved February 8, 2023, from [www.fns.usda.gov](https://www.fns.usda.gov)
- <sup>2,3,6,9</sup> Carlson, S., & Neuberger, Z. (2021). *WIC works: Addressing the nutrition and health needs of low-income families for more than four decades*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- <sup>4</sup> Coleman-Jensen, A., McFall, W., & Nord, M. (2013). *Food insecurity in households with children: Prevalence, severity, and household characteristics, 2010-11*, EIB-113. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

(continued on page 178)

# Children Participating in School Breakfast

## DEFINITION

*Children participating in school breakfast* is the percentage of low-income 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

The School Breakfast Program helps ensure that the nation's most vulnerable children start their day off with a healthy meal. Nationally, during the 2021-2022 school year, 15.5 million children ate breakfast at school each day through the School Breakfast Program, an increase of 11% from the previous year.<sup>1</sup> The School Breakfast Program offers nutritious meals, which together with school lunches, make up a large proportion of the daily dietary intake of participating children.<sup>2</sup> The School Breakfast Program helps schools support academic success and improves attendance, behavior, and health, including reduced obesity rates.<sup>3</sup>

Food-insecure families often do not have sufficient food to provide nutritious breakfasts every morning, and children in these families are at risk of falling behind their peers physically, cognitively, academically, emotionally, and socially. Children who are undernourished are more likely to have

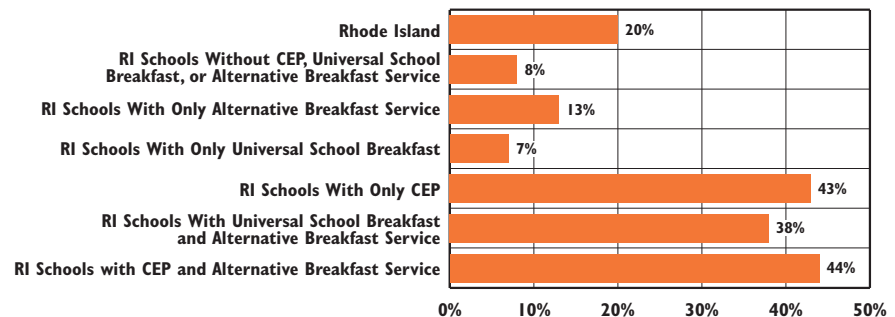
poorer cognitive functioning when they miss breakfast. They are more likely to have behavior, emotional, and academic problems, more likely to repeat a grade, and more likely to be suspended. Children experiencing hunger are also more likely to be tardy or absent from school.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

Rhode Island law requires that all public schools make breakfasts and lunches available to all students, including students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on their income (less than 130% of the federal poverty level for free meals and between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty level for reduced-price meals).<sup>7,8</sup>

During the 2021-2022 school year in Rhode Island, 118 students participated in the School Breakfast Program for every 100 students who participated in the School Lunch Program. Rhode Island's school breakfast participation rate increased by 214% from the previous year and was the highest in the nation.<sup>9</sup>



## Children Participating in the School Breakfast Program, Rhode Island, October 2022



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs, Office of Statewide Efficiencies, October 2022.

◆ **The federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)** allows schools and districts with 40% or more students identified as low-income, homeless or in foster care to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students and reduces administrative burdens. In Rhode Island, in the 2021-2022 school year, 67% of eligible schools participated in CEP, the same as the previous year.<sup>10</sup> Nationally during the 2021-2022 school year, 33,300 schools participated in CEP down 107 schools (<1%) from the previous year. Rhode Island's school district participation rate, which increased from 41% of eligible schools districts participating in the 2020-2021 school year to 45% of eligible school districts during the 2021-2022 school year, is still among the lowest in the nation.<sup>11,12</sup>

◆ **Universal School Breakfast Programs**, which provide free breakfast to all children regardless of income, increase school breakfast participation by removing the stigma often associated with school breakfast and can reduce the administrative burden for schools.<sup>13</sup> All schools in Rhode Island offered universal free breakfast during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>14</sup> The waiver authorizing free school meals for all students expired in June 2022. California, Colorado, Maine, and Minnesota have passed *Healthy School Meals for All* bills making universal school meals permanent. Other states, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont, passed bills to provide universal school meals to all students for the 2022-2023 school year and are working to make these policies permanent.<sup>15</sup>

◆ **Making breakfast part of the school day** is another proven strategy for increasing breakfast participation, reducing stigma, and increasing convenience.<sup>16</sup>

# Children Participating in School Breakfast

Table 15.

Children Participating in School Breakfast, Rhode Island, October 2022

SCHOOL DISTRICT	OCTOBER 2022 ENROLLMENT	ESTIMATED AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	% OF ALL CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN BREAKFAST	# OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS	ESTIMATED AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION IN BREAKFAST	% OF ALL LOW-INCOME CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL BREAKFAST
Barrington	3,382	109	3%	226	26	12%
Bristol Warren	2,837	177	6%	867	116	13%
Burrillville	2,045	118	6%	718	76	11%
Central Falls	2,516	1,213	48%	2,337	1,149	49%
Chariho	2,984	196	7%	621	90	14%
Coventry	4,215	348	8%	1,253	183	15%
Cranston	9,990	1,895	19%	4,251	998	23%
Cumberland	4,623	437	9%	934	186	20%
East Greenwich	2,532	119	5%	154	25	16%
East Providence	5,052	947	19%	2,417	578	24%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,010	67	7%	160	28	17%
Foster	221	84	38%	69	48	70%
Foster-Glocester	1,347	78	6%	197	30	15%
Glocester	575	97	17%	69	26	37%
Jamestown	410	*	1%	26	*	4%
Johnston	2,899	348	12%	1,270	220	17%
Lincoln	3,264	186	6%	935	114	12%
Little Compton	200	0	0%	14	0	0%
Middletown	1,920	105	5%	607	74	12%
Narragansett	1,114	54	5%	179	25	14%
New Shoreham	130	13	10%	0	0	0%
Newport	1,876	471	25%	1,359	348	26%
North Kingstown	3,798	277	7%	859	195	23%
North Providence	3,445	586	17%	1,286	338	26%
North Smithfield	1,603	70	4%	322	33	10%
Pawtucket	7,909	2,406	30%	5,463	1,790	33%
Portsmouth	2,164	88	4%	333	34	10%
Providence	20,089	9,413	47%	17,871	9,115	51%
Scituate	819	45	6%	111	13	12%
Smithfield	2,463	176	7%	363	105	29%
South Kingstown	2,428	125	5%	437	70	16%
Tiverton	1,603	75	5%	327	44	13%
Warwick	7,860	521	7%	2,668	346	13%
West Warwick	3,491	522	15%	1,888	349	18%
Westerly	2,182	279	13%	796	202	25%
Woonsocket	5,562	1,664	30%	4,009	1,293	32%
Charter Schools	11,277	3,575	32%	NA	NA	NA
State-Operated Schools	1,827	182	10%	NA	NA	NA
UCAP	131	17	13%	131	17	13%
Four Core Cities	36,076	14,696	41%	NA	NA	NA
Remainder of State	84,553	8,643	10%	25,756	4,944	19%
Rhode Island	133,864	27,113	20%	NA	NA	NA

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs, Office of Statewide Efficiencies, October 2022.

NA indicates that data on low-income students and their participation in school breakfast was not available because some or all schools in this district were using the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and therefore not collecting data on the incomes of students' families. During the 2022-2023 school year, Central Falls, Providence, some schools in Pawtucket and North Kingstown, Highlander Charter School, Providence Preparatory Charter School, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, Southside Elementary Charter School, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, and UCAP were using CEP.

\*Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

Charter schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, Charette Charter School, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Excel Academy, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, Nowell Academy, Nuestro Mundo Public Charter, The Learning Community, RI Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, Southside Elementary Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and The Village Green Virtual Charter School. State-operated schools include William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, and Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

(Sources and References are continued on page 178)