

# 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

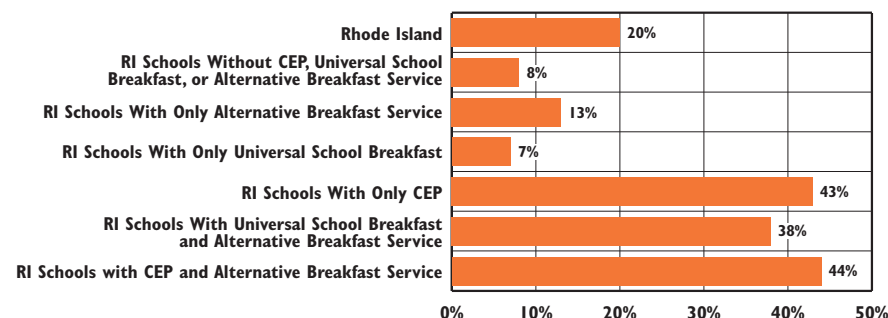
poorer cognitive functioning when they miss breakfast. They are more likely to have behavior, emotional, and academic problems, more likely to repeat a grade, and more likely to be suspended. Children experiencing hunger are also more likely to be tardy or absent from school.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

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>**

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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%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>11,277</i>	<i>3,575</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,827</i>	<i>182</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>13%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>36,076</i>	<i>14,696</i>	<i>41%</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>84,553</i>	<i>8,643</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>25,756</i>	<i>4,944</i>	<i>19%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>133,864</i>	<i>27,113</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>

### 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)