

# The 2021 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Rhode Island Children

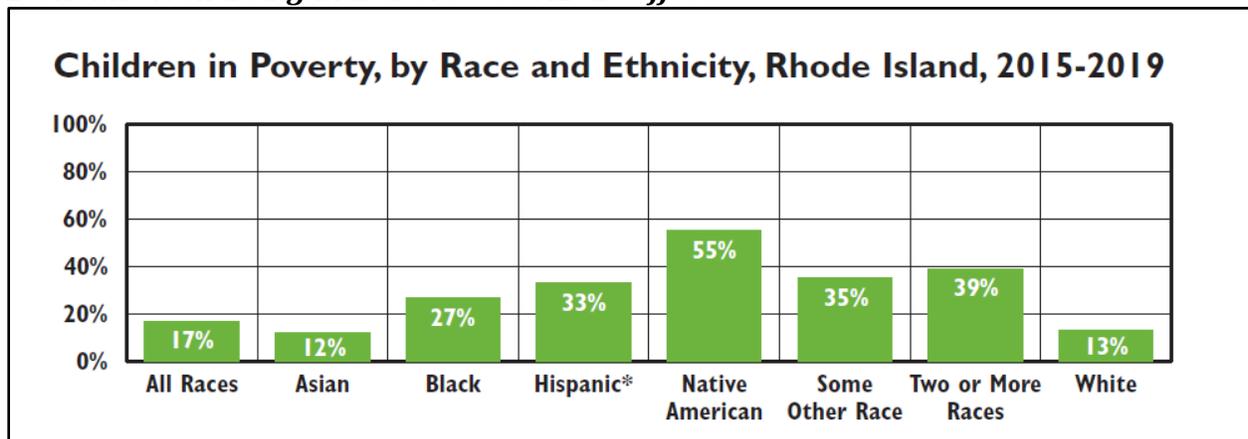
In this year's *Factbook*, we highlight the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Rhode Island children and families' economic well-being, physical and mental health, safety, access to education, and educational outcomes as well as the strategies that the federal government, state government, and community agencies have put in place to support Rhode Island children and families during the pandemic.

### Racial and Ethnic Disparities

Throughout the *Factbook*, data on racial and ethnic disparities are presented in as many indicators as possible and summarized in the Racial and Ethnic Disparities indicator. Collecting and reporting on data disaggregated by race and ethnicity is an important first step to identifying ways to eliminate them. Data on disparities and information about the historical and systemic racism that has resulted in these disparities can be used to identify policies to dismantle racism and reduce and eliminate disparities.

**Also included in this Executive Summary are key trends and highlights across the five sections of the *Factbook* – Family and Community, Economic Well-Being, Health, Safety, and Education.**

### *Economic Well-Being indicators – COVID-19 effects*



- **Children in Poverty:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in the spring and summer of 2020, Rhode Island's unemployment rate surged higher than its peak in the Great Recession. In the U.S., loss of employment in low-income households is expected to impact economic mobility and have devastating long-lasting effects on children in poverty. **Black and Hispanic households are projected to face the greatest increases in poverty**, and racial and ethnic disparities may be exacerbated if People of Color face greater employment disadvantages.
  - The **Child Tax Credit (CTC)** helps working families offset the cost of raising children. The CTC lifted 4.3 million people out of poverty in 2018, including 2.3 million children. The *American Rescue Plan Act* includes critical

expansions of the CTC that will lift another 4.1 million children out of poverty, cutting child poverty by more than 40%.

- **Housing:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, in both the U.S. and in Rhode Island, one in five renters reported that they were unable to keep up with their rent. Nationally, **Black renters and families with children faced the greatest hardships in housing stability.**
  - In 2021, Rhode Island voters approved a \$65 million housing and community opportunity bond, but the state still does not have a permanent funding stream for affordable housing.
- There were 8,083 approved claims for **TCI** during 2020 (up from 7,175 in 2019). In March 2020, Rhode Island extended eligibility to employees absent from work to care for a child due to a COVID-19-related school or child care closure. Of the 3,277 approved claims to care for a seriously ill family member, 67% were to care for a child (including for COVID-19 child care and school closings).
  - Nationally, among workers who did not take family leave when needed, almost half report they could not afford to take the leave. In 2020 in Rhode Island, 38% of individuals contributing to TDI/TCI earned less than \$20,000, yet only 16% of all approved TCI claims were for individuals with wages in this category.
- It is projected that the **child food insecurity** rate will increase to 27% in Rhode Island due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2020, food pantries and soup kitchens provided emergency food assistance to 67,900 Rhode Islanders who needed additional help to meet their nutritional needs, up from 53,700 Rhode Islanders each month before the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Innovative approaches to combatting child hunger include:**

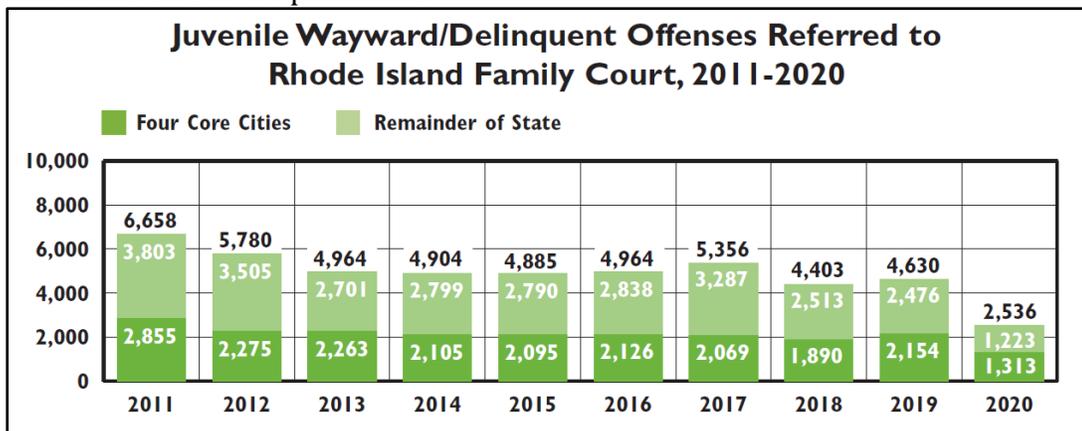
- Since March 2020, SNAP households that were not already receiving the maximum benefit received supplemental SNAP benefits. The maximum monthly benefit has been temporarily increased through September 30, 2021.
- SNAP participants can now select and pay for their groceries online using their EBT card at Amazon and participating Walmart stores.
- The COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to close their buildings and transition to hybrid or distance learning. From March-June 2020, in Rhode Island, 2.3 million "Grab 'n Go" meals were distributed, almost half of the free and reduced-price meals served when school buildings are open.
- In March 2020, the U.S. Congress enacted Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), a new nutrition assistance program, that allowed states to provide funds in grocery store benefits to make up for meals missed due to school closures. Rhode Island was the second state to be approved to administer the P-EBT program.

**Health indicators – COVID-19 effects**

- **Kids’ Link RI** is a behavioral health triage service and referral network and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help triage children and youth in need of mental health services and refer them to treatment providers. This program has been critical to addressing the **mental and behavioral health** needs of children during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, there were 4,849 calls to Kids Link RI, up 22% from 3,796 in 2019.
- Due to COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown, **routine childhood vaccinations** were disrupted. Fewer children received vaccinations and well-visits early in the pandemic.
  - In response, the state created the Pediatric Primary Care Relief Program to provide support to pediatric primary care providers. These grants helped pediatric primary care providers reopen and meet new safety requirements so that children and families would not experience barriers to access care. As of fall 2020, vaccination rates had caught up to where they were the previous year.

**Safety indicators – COVID-19 effects**

- **Decreases in reports of child abuse and neglect:** In 2020 in Rhode Island, there were 1,862 indicated investigations of child neglect and abuse involving 2,681 Rhode Island children. This is a decrease from 2019, when there were 2,49 indicated investigations of child abuse and neglect involving 3,109 Rhode Island children.
  - Between 2019 and 2020 in Rhode Island, the number of unduplicated child maltreatment reports decreased by 17%, the number of completed investigations decreased by 22%, and the number of indicated investigations decreased by 17%. In 2020, 33% of completed investigations were indicated investigations in which there is a “preponderance of evidence” that a child has been abused and/or neglected.”
- Some of the 2020 decrease in reports is the result of a sharp decrease in reports at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic when school buildings were closed and children were not being regularly seen by teachers, coaches, and other caring adults.
- **Youth Referred to Family Court:** The number of juvenile offenses has been falling steadily since 2011 and fell by 45% from 4,630 in 2019 to 2,536 in 2020, primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



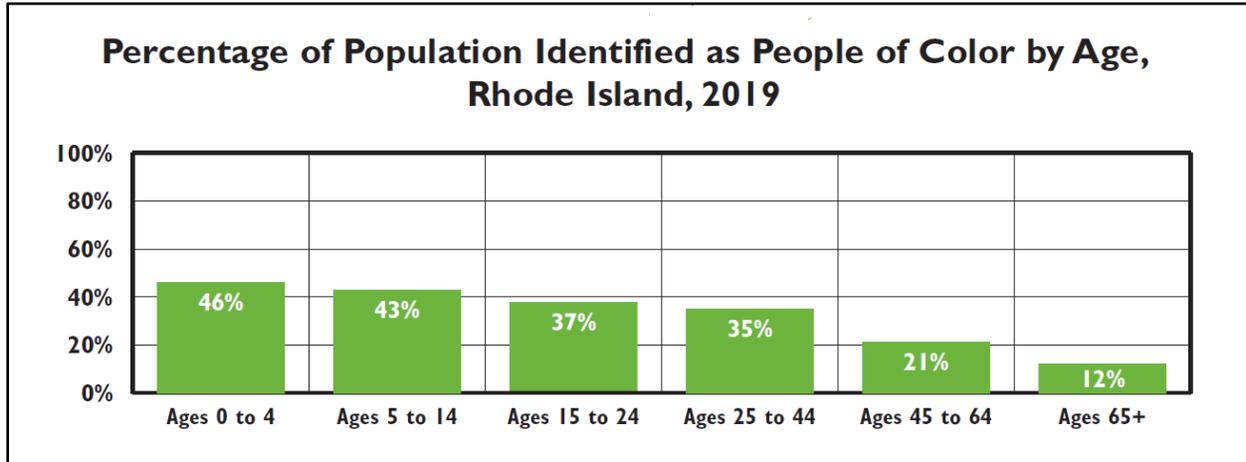
- **Youth in the Juvenile Justice System:** A total of 207 youth were at the Rhode Island Training School during calendar year 2020, down 21% from 261 during 2019. A total of 493 youth were on probation during 2020, down 20% from 618 in 2019.
  - Some of the decreases in youth at the Training School were due to decreases in offenses referred to Family Court, but the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and Family Court also instituted procedures to reduce counts because of risks related to the **COVID-19 pandemic**.
  - Despite drastic decreases in the number of youth involved in the juvenile justice system nationally, Youth of Color continue to be disproportionately represented at every stage of the juvenile justice system.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic stay-at-home orders, **an increase in domestic violence was expected**. However, nationally, there was a significant decrease in hotline calls, as victims trapped at home were unable to safely access resources.

### ***Early Care and Education indicators – COVID-19 effects***

- Financially unstable before the pandemic, **child care programs have faced tremendous financial difficulties** as enrollment has dropped markedly and operating costs have gone up significantly due to the need to maintain small, stable groups of children and staff and pay for cleaning and sanitation. The state made a temporary increase in child care rates through the Child Care Assistance Program and created the Child Care Stabilization Fund for DHS-licensed providers to alleviate some of the economic and operational hardships associated with COVID-19, and these investments need to continue and additional investments made in order to sustain and strengthen the child care system.
- On October 1, 2020, there were 8,948 children enrolled in public kindergarten in Rhode Island, down 11% from the 10,038 children enrolled the previous year. National reports indicate that **kindergarten enrollment dropped** 13% to 16% from pre-pandemic levels.
- The U.S. Department of Education waived assessments for all states for the 2019-2020 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Rhode Island, interim assessments administered in the Fall of 2020 suggest **the pandemic significantly impacted student math skills**, especially for students in grades two through seven.
- Nationally, 20% of high school seniors reported they are not likely to immediately enroll in college because of the pandemic while others reported changing their plans of attending a four-year college to instead attend community college.
  - Disparities in immediate **college enrollment** by income and race increased significantly, jeopardizing the equity gains of the previous year.
- Nationally, **youth disconnection** (teens not in school and not working) declined in recent years, from the Great Recession high of 14.7% in 2010, to 11.2% in 2018. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are – and will continue to be – catastrophic for youth. It is estimated that the educational and economic fallout could push the youth disconnection rate close to 25%.

## ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2021 RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT FACTBOOK

- Racial and Ethnic Diversity:** Young children in Rhode Island are more likely to be identified as People of Color than any other age group. In 2019 in Rhode Island, 46% of children under age five were People of Color, compared with 35% of adults ages 25 to 44 and 12% of people age 65 or over.



- Racial and Ethnic Disparities:** Racial and ethnic disparities is the gap that exists in outcomes for children of different racial and ethnic groups in Rhode Island. *The charts below outline disparities among Rhode Island children, across several issue areas:*

**Economic Well-Being Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island**

	ALL RACES	ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC	NATIVE AMERICAN	WHITE
Children in Poverty	17%	12%	27%	33%	55%	13%
Births to Mothers with <12 Years Education	11%	7%	12%	25%	22%	5%
Unemployment Rate	9.3%	NA	9.4%	15.2%	NA	8.6%
Median Family Income	\$86,258	\$85,378	\$56,681	\$44,704	\$36,447	\$92,986
Homeownership	61%	48%	34%	30%	20%	66%

<b>Education Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island</b>						
	<b>ALL RACES</b>	<b>ASIAN+</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>HISPANIC</b>	<b>NATIVE AMERICAN</b>	<b>WHITE</b>
3rd Grade Students Meeting Expectations in Reading	48%	58%	33%	33%	23%	57%
3rd Grade Students Meeting Expectations in Math	36%	52%	24%	21%	17%	45%
Four-Year High School Graduation Rates	84%	92%	80%	76%	69%	88%
Immediate College Enrollment Rates	67%	76%	61%	56%	48%	72%
% of Adults Over Age 25 With a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	34%	52%	21%	14%	15%	36%

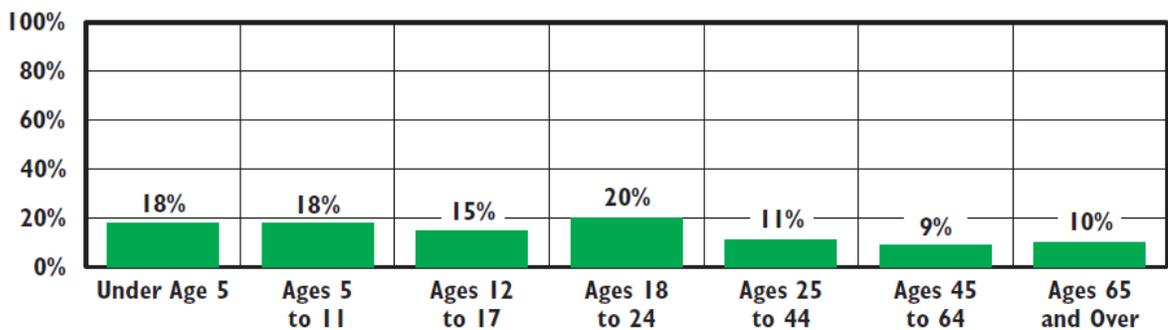
<b>Health Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island</b>						
	<b>ALL RACES</b>	<b>ASIAN</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>HISPANIC</b>	<b>NATIVE AMERICAN</b>	<b>WHITE</b>
Children Without Health Insurance	1.9%	2.0%	4.9%	3.1%	*	1.4%
Women With Delayed or No Prenatal Care	16.1%	17.8%	23.5%	19.0%	21.3%	13.1%
Preterm Births	8.9%	7.7%	11.5%	9.6%	13.7%	8.2%
Low Birthweight Infants	7.7%	7.6%	11.7%	8.1%	11%	6.6%
Infant Mortality (per 1,000 live births)	5.4	4.8 <sup>^</sup>	12	6.3	*	3.5
Births to Teens Ages 15-19 (per 1,000 teens)	12.4	3.3	14.9	29.5	27.9	6.4

### Safety Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	ALL RACES	ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC	NATIVE AMERICAN	WHITE
Youth at the Training School (per 1,000 youth ages 13-18)	2.4	0.0	10.7	4.7	2.5	1.0
Children of Incarcerated Parents (per 1,000 children)	9.6	1.6	42.2	14.1	35.0	5.6
Children in Out-of-Home Placement (per 1,000 children)	9.1	2.1	19.7	11.8	5.5	6.7

- New in this year’s Factbook — Poverty by Age:

### Poverty, by Age, Rhode Island, 2015-2019

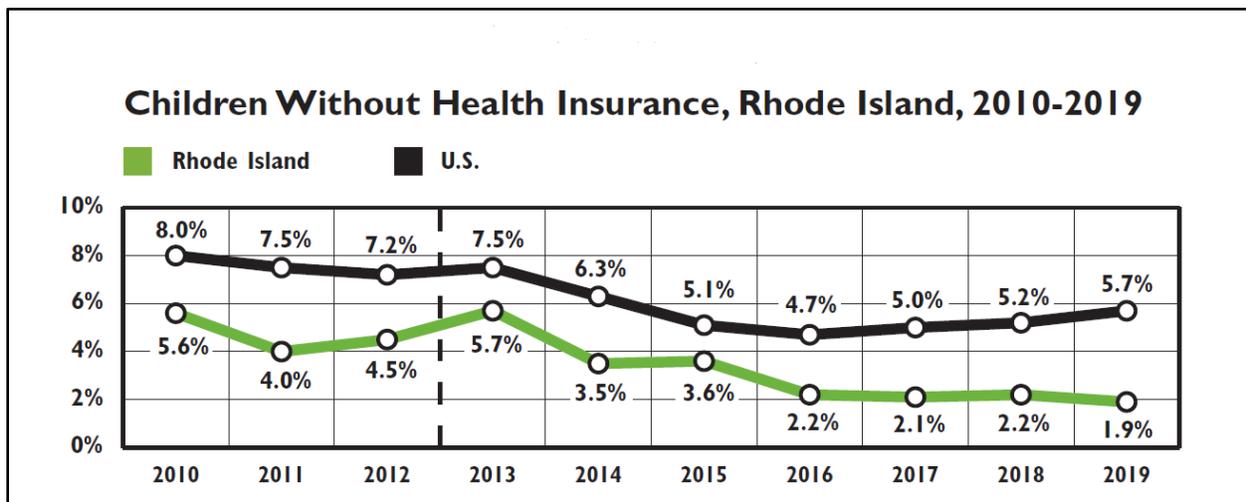


- Between 2015 and 2019 in Rhode Island, 20% of young adults ages 18 to 24 lived in poverty. In Rhode Island, young adults are at higher risk of living in poverty than any other age group.
- **Child Poverty:** In 2019, one in seven (14%) children in Rhode Island (a total of 28,009 children) lived in poverty and 7% (13,154 children) lived in extreme poverty, defined as families with incomes below 50% of the federal poverty threshold, or \$10,426 for a family of three with two children and \$13,123 for a family of four with two children in 2020.
- **RI Works:** In December 2020, there were 1,361 adults and 4,121 children under age 18 enrolled in RI Works. Three-quarters (75%) of RI Works beneficiaries were children, and 39% of the children enrolled in RI Works were under the age of six. The maximum monthly RI Works benefit for a family of three is \$554 per month. This benefit amount provides \$6 per person per day and has not been increased in 30 years.

- **Housing instability:** In 2020, 323 families with 623 children stayed at an emergency homeless shelter, domestic violence shelter, or transitional housing facility in Rhode Island. This is an increase of 44 families with 20 children from the previous year.
- **Homeless Children, Youth, and Young Adults:** During the 2019-2020 school year, Rhode Island public school personnel identified 1,531 children as homeless. This is an increase of 56 children from the previous year.
  - Of these children, 66% lived with other families (“doubled up”), 23% lived in shelters, 9% lived in hotels or motels, and 3% were unsheltered. Eleven were unaccompanied youth living in doubled up situations or shelters without their parents.

## Health

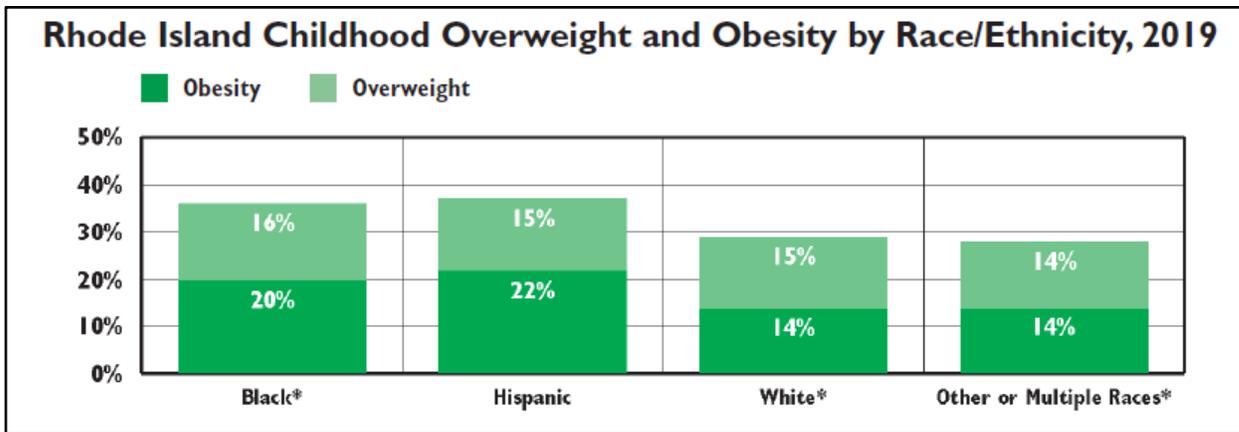
- **Children’s Health Insurance:**



- In 2019, 1.9% of Rhode Island’s children under age 19 were uninsured. Rhode Island ranks second best state in the U.S. with 98.1% of children covered.
- RItE Care ranks in the top quartile in first trimester prenatal care, compared to other Medicaid plans in the nation.
- **Access to Dental Care:** Forty-nine percent (62,540) of the children who were enrolled in RItE Care, Rite Share, or Medicaid fee-for-service on June 30, 2020 received a dental service during State Fiscal Year 2020. This is more than a 10% decrease from the year prior.
- **Sharp disparities in maternal and infant outcomes:**
  - Between 2015 and 2019 in Rhode Island, Black women (23.5%), American Indian and Alaskan Native (21.3%), Hispanic women (19.0%), and Asian women (17.8%) were more likely to receive **delayed prenatal care** than white women (13.1%).
  - In 2019, the Rhode Island **severe maternal morbidity** rate was 271 per 10,000 delivery hospitalizations up from 223 per 10,000 in 2018. Black (383

per 10,000) and Hispanic (333 per 10,000) women had higher rates of maternal morbidity than white women (225 per 10,000) in 2019.

- The overall **infant mortality rate** in Rhode Island between 2015 and 2019 was 5.4 deaths per 1,000 live births. In Rhode Island between 2015 and 2019, the Black infant mortality rate was 10.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, which is nearly three times the white infant mortality rate of 3.8 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- **Children’s Mental Health:**
  - In Federal Fiscal Year 2020, there were 795 children and youth awaiting psychiatric inpatient admission (**psychiatric boarding**), compared to FFY 2019 when there were 437 boarders.
  - In 2019 in Rhode Island, 294 teens ages 13 to 19 were admitted to the **emergency department after a suicide attempt**, nearly double the number in 2015 (156).
    - Seventy-two percent of teens admitted were girls, and 28% were boys.
  - In 2019 in Rhode Island, 174 teens ages 13 to 19 were **hospitalized after a suicide attempt**, nearly double the number in 2014 (95).
    - Seventy-eight percent of teens hospitalized were girls, and 22% were boys.
  - Twenty children under age 20 **died due to suicide** in Rhode Island between 2015-2019.
- **Children with Lead Poisoning Decreasing:** The number of children under age 6 in Rhode Island who had a confirmed venous blood test of  $\leq 5$  ug/dL has decreased by 81% over the past 15 years, from 349 in 2005 to 66 in 2020.
- **Child Overweight and Obesity:** Fifteen percent of Rhode Island children ages 2 to 17 are overweight and 16% are obese.

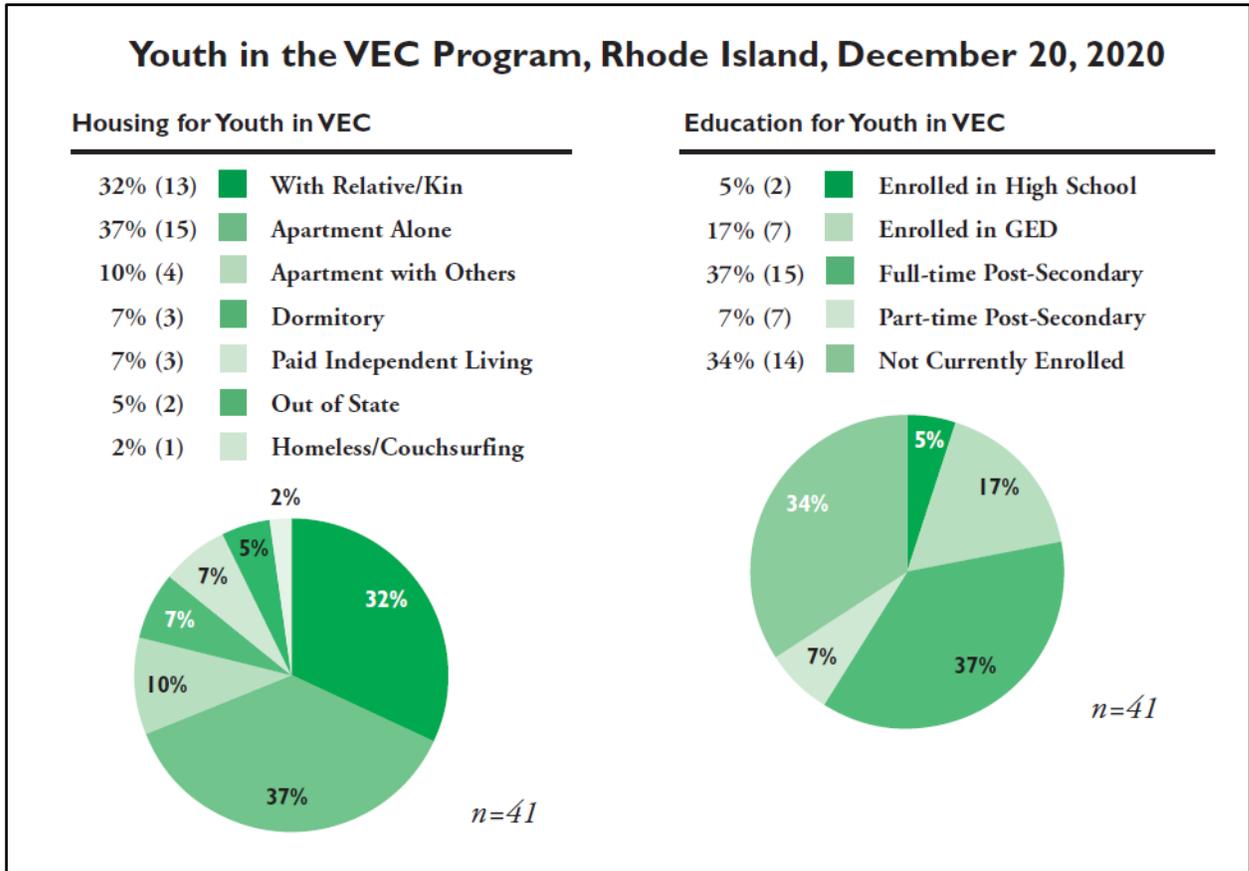


- Hispanic children (15% overweight and 22% obese) and Non-Hispanic Black children (16% overweight and 20% obese) have the highest rates of overweight and obesity.

## **Safety**

- **Youth Violence/Gun Violence:** In Rhode Island between 2015 and 2019, there were 145 emergency department visits, 31 hospitalizations, and 7 deaths of children and youth under age 20 attributed to firearms.
  - Firearms are the second leading cause of death in the U.S. overall among children and teens, and gun violence is the leading cause of death for Black children and teens.
  - Between 2015 and 2019 in Rhode Island, there were two youth under age 20 who committed suicide using a firearm.
- During 2020 in Rhode Island, 1,477 youth were referred to **Family Court**, down from 2,588 youth during 2019. Of the juvenile offenses in 2020, 122 (5%) involved violent crimes.
  - In 2020, **16% of offenses referred to Family Court involved youth ages 13 or younger**, 30% youth ages 14 to 15, 50% youth ages 16 to 17, and 4% youth of other or unknown age.
  - Developmentally, young children are unable to understand court proceedings and participate meaningfully in their defense. They are also more likely to experience trauma through the court process and physical harm if sentenced to custody.
  - **Rhode Island is one of 28 states that currently has no minimum age of jurisdiction** for Family Court. In New England, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont have laws that set a minimum age for children to be tried in juvenile court.
  - Research suggests that setting a minimum age of jurisdiction at age 14 would be developmentally appropriate and in the best interest of children, especially Children of Color.
  - **Youth of Color are disproportionately referred to the Family Court** compared to their representation in the youth population.
- **New in this year's Factbook – Data on Youth on Probation:** Between 2008 and 2020, the number of youth on probation during the year has declined by 70% from 1,624 to 493 in 2020. Of the 493 youth on probation in 2020, 83% (408) were on probation at home, and 17% (85) were on probation in out-of-home placements.
- **Children of Color are overrepresented at various points in the child welfare system**, including reporting, screening, investigation, and assessment, and child welfare systems often fail to find and retain foster and adoptive Families of Color. Children of Color in child welfare systems are more likely to be removed from their homes, are less likely to receive preservation services, remain in the child welfare system longer, are less likely to be adopted, and are more likely to age out of care.
- **Decreases in adoption:** During 2020, 127 children in the care of DCYF were adopted in Rhode Island, down 30% from 2019.
- **New in this year's Factbook – Data on the Educational Outcomes of Children in the Child Welfare System:** In 2019, less than 5% of eighth graders who were in foster care met expectations in English language arts compared to 36% of all students. In Rhode Island, the four-year graduation rate for the Class of 2020 was

57% for students in the foster care system, compared to an overall graduation rate for all students of 84%.



- **New in this year's Factbook – Data on Youth in the Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) program:** In 2018, Rhode Island established the VEC program, allowing youth ages 18 to 21 who were in foster care on their eighteenth birthday the option of continuing to receive services until age 21.

### ***Early Care & Education***

- In January 2021, there were 106 fewer slots for infants and toddlers and 453 fewer slots for preschoolers in licensed centers, and there were 384 fewer slots in licensed family child care homes than in January 2020. Since 2011, the number of infant/toddler slots is up 5% and the number of preschool slots is down 6% in centers. The number of family child care slots is down 36%.
- During the 2019-2020 school year in Rhode Island, districts completed developmental screenings for 28% of children ages three to five, down from 39% the previous year (pre-pandemic).

### ***Kindergarten – College & Career***

- As of October 14, 2020, 43% of Rhode Island public school students, 47% of low-income students, 45% of Students of Color, 40% of Multilingual Learners, and 38% of students with disabilities were enrolled in **in-person learning**.
- The number of **Multilingual Learner/English Learner** students in Rhode Island has nearly doubled (increased by 99%) from the 2009-2010 to 2019-2020 school years, from 7,622 to 15,306 students.
- **Teacher chronic absenteeism** is the percentage of teachers who missed 10% or more of school days. Rhode Island is the first state to include teacher absenteeism as part of its school accountability system. As of March 15, 2020, in Rhode Island, 556 (5.8%) of teachers were chronically absent. Teacher chronic absence rates were higher for teachers assigned to Black (7.1%) and Hispanic (6.1%) students, than for teachers assigned to Asian (5.7%) and White (5.5%) students.
- **Disparities in college and career readiness:** In Rhode Island, high school graduation requirements and college admission requirements are misaligned. In 2020, an audit of 2,253 Rhode Island high school student transcripts found 14% of ninth graders were already off track for college eligibility.
  - Audit findings showed that 78% of Black students and 76% of Latinx students were not college or career ready.
- **Improvements in education outcomes:**
  - The Rhode Island four-year **graduation rate** for the Class of 2020 was 84%, up from 76% for the Class of 2010.
  - In 2020, 6,398 Rhode Island public school students took an **AP course** and 41% of twelfth graders took an AP exam, more than double in 2010 and above the national average.
  - During the 2020-2021 cycle, Rhode Island ranked fifth in the U.S. for the number of high school seniors completing the **FAFSA**.
  - Since the **RI Promise Scholarship** program was established, the overall college enrollment rate has increased from 59% to 67%.

### Immediate College Enrollment by Family Income, Race, Ethnicity, and Type of College, Class of 2019, Rhode Island

