

Racial and Ethnic Disparities

DEFINITION

Racial and ethnic disparities is the gap that exists in outcomes for children of different racial and ethnic groups in Rhode Island. Child well-being outcome areas include economic well-being, health, safety, and education.

SIGNIFICANCE

Rhode Island's children are diverse in racial and ethnic background. In 2020 in Rhode Island, less than 1% of children under 18 were American Indian or Native Alaskan, 3% were Asian, 6% were Black or African American, 27% were Hispanic or Latino, less than 1% were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 1% were Some other race, 8% were Two or more races, and 53% were white.¹

Children who live in poverty, especially those who experience deep poverty in early childhood, are more likely to have health, behavioral, educational, economic, and social problems.^{2,3} Between 2016 and 2020, 16% of all Rhode Island children lived in poverty, 72% of whom were Children of Color.⁴

Black, Latino, and Native American children are more likely than Asian and white children to live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and face challenges above and beyond the burdens of individual poverty.⁵ In Rhode Island, almost one-third (31%)

of Hispanic children live in concentrated poverty, higher than in any other state.⁶

In 2020, more than half (59%) of Rhode Island's Children of Color lived in one of the four core cities (those cities with the highest percentages of children living in poverty), and more than three quarters of the children in Central Falls (90%) and Providence (85%) were Children of Color.⁷

Black-white neighborhood segregation has decreased in the U.S. over the past 50 years, but high levels still exist. Asian and Hispanic or Latino residents also experience high rates of neighborhood segregation, but lower than the rates for Black residents. The Providence-Warwick metropolitan area was the second most segregated metropolitan area in the nation for Hispanic or Latino residents between 2015 and 2019.⁸

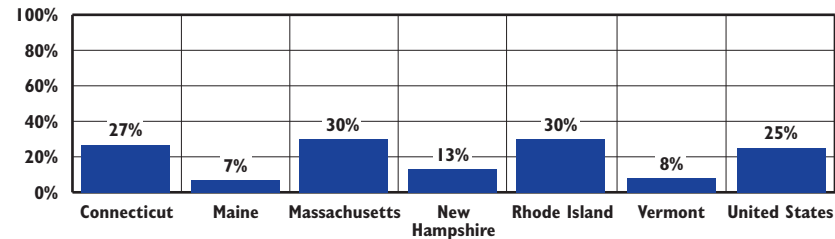
Long-standing disparities in wealth continue to persist between families in different racial and ethnic groups. In 2019, the median net worth of non-Hispanic white households was eight times higher than that of non-Hispanic Black families and five times higher than that of Hispanic families.⁹ In Rhode Island, Black and Latino families have higher rates of unemployment and earn lower wages than white families.¹⁰ Nationally, Households of Color reported the highest levels of economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹¹

Residential Segregation and Its Impact on Education

◆ In the U.S., Black and Latino students have become increasingly segregated from white students over the last 30 years. Black and Latino students generally attend schools in which students are disproportionately Students of Color and high-poverty, while white students attend schools in which students are disproportionately white and low-poverty.^{12,13}

◆ Students in schools with high concentrations of low-income students and Students of Color have unequal educational opportunities, with classmates who generally have more absences and lower graduation rates and teachers who have less teaching experience and are more likely to teach outside their subject area of expertise. Students living in poverty often face a host of challenges outside the classroom that can negatively impact academic performance, including inadequate housing, less access to health care, lower parental educational levels, and fewer opportunities for enriching after-school and summer activities.^{14,15}

Percentage of Children Living in Immigrant Families*, New England and United States, 2019-2020



Source: The Urban Institute Children of Immigrants Data Tool, Data from 2019-2020, www.urban.org *Percentage reported represents children living in a family with at least one foreign-born parent.

◆ Children in immigrant families are defined as children under age 18 living in a family with at least one foreign-born parent. In 2019-2020, 30% (61,000) of Rhode Island children were living in immigrant families.¹⁶

◆ More than half (53%) of Rhode Island's Hispanic children live in an immigrant family.¹⁷

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

	ALL RACES	ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC	NATIVE AMERICAN	WHITE
Children in Poverty	16%	9%	26%	30%	34%	11%
Births to Mothers with <12 Years Education	12%	7%	12%	25%	22%	5%
Unemployment Rate	5.5%	NA	9.4%	10.1%	NA	5.0%
Median Family Income	\$89,330	\$98,549	\$60,840	\$48,379	\$38,000	\$96,387
Homeownership	62%	47%	34%	34%	20%	66%

Sources: *Children in Poverty* data are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020. Tables S1701, B17020A, B17020B, B17020C, B17020D & B17020I. *Maternal Education* data are from the Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2016-2020 (race data is non-Hispanic). *Unemployment Rate* data are from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2021. *Median Family Income* data are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020, Tables B19113, B19113A, B19113B, B19113C, B19113D & B19113I. *Homeownership* data are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020, Tables B25003, B25003A, B25003B, B25003C, B25003D & B25003I. For U.S. Census Bureau data, Hispanics may be included in any of the race categories. All Census data refer only to those individuals who selected one race. NA indicates that the rate was suppressed because the number was too small to calculate a reliable rate.

- ◆ From 2016-2020 in Rhode Island, 16% of all children, 34% of Native American children, 30% of Hispanic children, 26% of Black children, 11% of white children, and 9% of Asian children lived in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold.¹⁸
- ◆ In 2021 in Rhode Island, the unemployment rate was 10.1% for Hispanic workers, 9.4% for Black workers, and 5.0% for white workers. Nationally, the unemployment rate was 8.6% for Black workers, 6.8% for Hispanic workers, and 4.7% for white workers.¹⁹
- ◆ 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 Rhode Island, 56% of Latinx two-parent families earn less than the income required to meet their basic needs, compared to 20% of white two-parent families.²⁰
- ◆ In Rhode Island, white residents have a homeownership rate more than double the rate of Latino residents, twice the rate of Black residents, and higher than Asian residents. Forty percent of Black and Latino homeowners experience cost burdens with one in five Black homeowners paying more than 50% of their income to housing costs.²¹
- ◆ Nationally, median Black and Latino households would require 242 and 94 years respectively to gain wealth equal to the net wealth held by white families in 2016.²²

Health Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	ALL RACES	ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC	NATIVE AMERICAN	WHITE
Children Without Health Insurance	1.9%	2.0%	4.9%	3.1%	*	1.4%
Women With Delayed or No Prenatal Care	15.8%	18.0%	21.6%	18.2%	23.6%	13.5%
Low Birthweight Infants	7.7%	8.2%	11.1%	8.1%	9.2%	6.8%
Any Infant Breastfeeding	71%	80%	62%	62%	*	76%
Combined Overweight and Obesity	35%	*	41%	41%	*	32%

Sources: All data are from the Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2016-2020 unless otherwise specified. Race and ethnicity is self-reported. Race data is non-Hispanic. *Children Without Health Insurance* data are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019, Tables B27001, B27001A, B27001B, B27001D & B27001I. For U.S. Census Bureau data, Hispanic also may be included in any of the race categories. For *Combined Overweight and Obesity* data are from Brown University School of Public Health analysis of BMI clinical and billing records of children ages two to 17 in Rhode Island from KIDSNET, Current Care, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, United Healthcare, and Tufts Health Plan collected by the Department of Health, 2021.

**The data are statistically unreliable and rates are not reported and should not be calculated.

^The data are statistically unstable and rates or percentages should be interpreted with caution.

- ◆ Although progress has been made on many health indicators across racial and ethnic populations, disparities still exist for a number of maternal and infant health outcomes in Rhode Island. Women of Color are more likely than white women to receive delayed or no prenatal care and have infants with low birth weight. Black and Hispanic infants are less likely to be breastfed than white and Asian infants.²³
- ◆ Important early health disparities persist throughout childhood in outcomes such as the prevalence of asthma and combined overweight and obesity. Black and Hispanic youth have a higher prevalence of overweight and obesity than white youth. Hispanic and Black children have higher rates of asthma than non-Hispanic white children, and between 2016-2020 were more likely to visit the emergency room due to asthma.^{24,25}
- ◆ Barriers and environmental factors, e.g., discrimination in the health care setting, due to structural racism contribute to the differences in outcomes by race and ethnicity that impact Rhode Island families and Children of Color.²⁶

Racial and Ethnic Disparities

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)	1.7	0.0	6.8	3.2	2.5	0.6
Children of Incarcerated Parents (per 1,000 children)	9.1	2.2	44.5	12.1	24.8	5.4
Children in Out-of-Home Placement (per 1,000 children)	8.4	1.6	18.1	10.9	4.6	6.1

Sources: *Youth at the Training School* data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Training School, Calendar Year 2021. *Children of Incarcerated Parents* data are from the Rhode Island Department of Corrections, September 30, 2021 and reflect the race of the incarcerated parent (includes only the sentenced population). *Children in Out-of-Home Placement* data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RIC HIST Database, December 31, 2021. Population denominators used for *Youth at the Training School* are youth ages 13 to 18 by race from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010, SF1. Population denominators used for *Children of Incarcerated Parents* and *Children in Out-of-Home Placement* are the populations under age 18 by race from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010, SF1.

◆ Nationally, racial and ethnic disproportionality in the juvenile justice, adult corrections, and child welfare systems is well-documented with disproportionality occurring at multiple steps within each system. While we do not know the exact causes of this disproportionality, structural racism (e.g., policies that concentrate policing in Communities of Color), institutional racism (e.g., policies that disproportionately place Children of Color out of their homes), and racial bias and discrimination (e.g., beliefs held by workers about people from different racial or ethnic groups) all contribute to worse outcomes for Children of Color who come in contact with these systems.^{27,28,29}

◆ During 2021 in Rhode Island, Black youth were 11 times more likely to be at the Rhode Island Training School compared to white youth and four times more likely compared to youth of all races. Hispanic and Native American youth were also more likely to be at the Training School compared to white youth. These trends have remained unchanged since 2020.³⁰

◆ In Rhode Island on December 31, 2021, Black and Hispanic children were both more likely than youth of all races to be put in out-of-home placements through the child welfare system. Asian, Native American, and white children were less likely to be placed out-of-home.³¹

Education Outcomes, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island

	ALL RACES	ASIAN*	BLACK	HISPANIC	NATIVE AMERICAN	WHITE
3rd Grade Students Meeting Expectations in Reading	40%	53%	24%	23%	26%	52%
3rd Grade Students Meeting Expectations in Math	25%	39%	10%	11%	11%	35%
Four-Year High School Graduation Rates	84%	88%	82%	77%	76%	88%
Immediate College Enrollment Rates	59%	69%	47%	45%	47%	67%
% of Adults Over Age 25 With a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	35%	54%	24%	16%	15%	37%

Sources: *Third Grade Students Meeting Expectations in Reading and Math* data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education, *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2021. *Four-Year High School Graduation Rates* data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2021. *Immediate College Enrollment Rates* data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2021. *Adult Educational Attainment* data are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020, Tables B15003, C15002A, C15002B, C15002C, C15002D & C15002I. All Census data refer only to those individuals who selected one race and Hispanic or Latino also may be included in any of the race categories. *Data for Asian and Pacific Islander students is not disaggregated by ethnic group. National research shows large academic disparities across Asian ethnic groups.

◆ Educators of Color benefit all students, especially Students of Color.³² In October 2020, 46% of Rhode Island public school students identified as Students of Color while 96% of Rhode Island public school educators identified as white.³³

◆ In Rhode Island, Native American, Black, and Hispanic children are more likely to attend school in the four core cities and less likely to meet expectations in reading and mathematics in third grade than white or Asian children.^{34,35}

◆ The students with the highest levels of chronic absence were also in the populations hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Rhode Island during the 2020-2021 school year, Native American (43%), Hispanic (42%), and Black (36%) K-12 students had higher rates of chronic absence than Asian (19%) and white (18%) students.³⁶

◆ In Rhode Island, Native American, Hispanic, and Black students are less likely to graduate from high school within four years and are less likely to immediately enroll in college than white or Asian students. Gaps in college enrollment are particularly large for four-year college enrollment.³⁷



Rhode Island's Southeast Asian Children and Youth

- ◆ The Asian American community is diverse, the fastest-growing, and the most economically divided racial and ethnic group in the United States.³⁸
- ◆ Southeast Asian children and youth identify with one or more ethnic groups originating from countries in Southeast Asia including Burma, Cambodia, the Philippines, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.³⁹
- ◆ Cambodians make up the largest Southeast Asian population in Rhode Island. Providence has the eighth highest Cambodian population (8,000) in the United States.⁴⁰

Economic Well-Being

- ◆ Nationally, from 1970 to 2016, the gap in the standard of living between higher-income Asian households and lower-income Asian households has nearly doubled.⁴¹
- ◆ The disparity across Asian subgroups can be attributed to differences in immigration origins, educational attainment, occupations, and generational wealth.^{42,43}
- ◆ Cambodian children in the U.S. and Rhode Island have higher poverty rates, lower median household incomes, and lower postsecondary attainment rates compared to all Asians.⁴⁴

Education

- ◆ In 2017, The Rhode Island General Assembly passed the *All Students Count Act* which requires the Rhode Island Department of Education to collect and publicly report disaggregated education data on the many subgroups within the Asian American and Pacific Islander population and requires disaggregation of this data by gender, disability, and English proficiency.⁴⁵ Rhode Island was the third state in the country to pass this law.⁴⁶
- ◆ The Rhode Island Department of Education does not currently report disaggregated data for Asian students by ethnic group.

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