



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
ONE UNION STATION
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

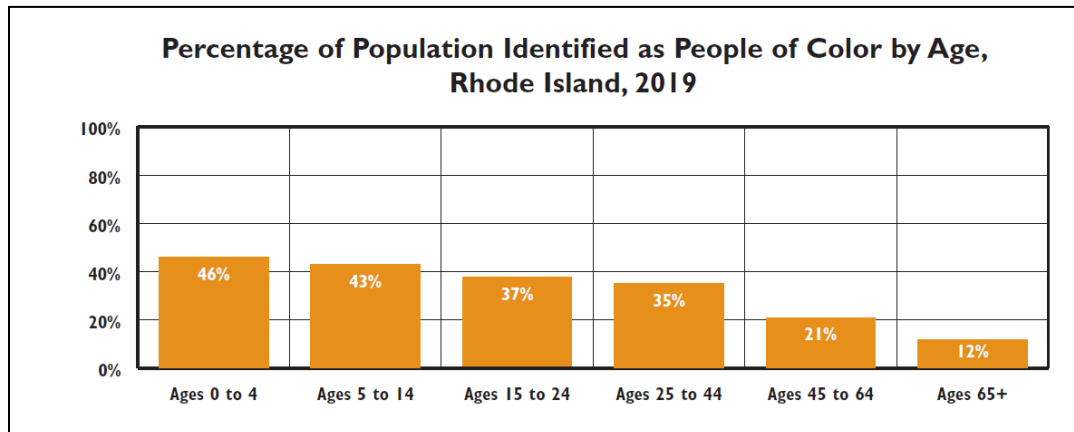
Contact: Katherine Linwood Chu, Communications Manager
401.678.0443, kchu@rikidscount.org #ActForEquityRI

New Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Policy Brief: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Children’s Economic Well-Being in Rhode Island

Providence, RI (December 14, 2021) – More than 150 community leaders, youth, parents, elected officials, and advocates will gather virtually on December 15, 2021 for the release of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT’s latest *Policy Brief: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Children’s Economic Well-Being in Rhode Island*. Speakers will include Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, and Cortney Nicolato, President and CEO of United Way of Rhode Island, who will provide welcoming remarks. Paige Clausius-Parks, Senior Policy Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, will provide an overview of data and policy recommendations. A panel will provide their perspectives, including:

- Adama Brown, United Way of Rhode Island
- Chanda Womack, Alliance of RI Southeast Asians for Education
- Darrell Waldron, RI Indian Council
- James Monteiro, Reentry Campus Program
- Mario Bueno, Progreso Latino

Racial and ethnic diversity has increased in the United States and Rhode Island over



the last several decades and is projected to rise in the future. In Rhode Island, young children are more likely to be identified as People of Color than any other age group with 46% of children under age five identified as People of Color, compared with 35% of adults ages 25 to 44 and 12% of people ages 65 or over. In Rhode Island between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic child population grew by 31% while the non-Hispanic white child population declined by 21%. **The diversity of Rhode Island is an asset; however, there are wide, persistent, and unacceptable disparities in children’s economic well-being by race and ethnicity.**

Root Causes of Disparities in Economic Well-Being: A Legacy that Continues to Harm Rhode Island's Children

- **Disparities in economic well-being can be traced to the founding of the United States.** The removal of Native Americans from their lands and use of Africans as enslaved labor prevented the country's first People of Color from fully participating in the economy while simultaneously building wealth for the country and its white citizens. Racism became an economic tool infused into laws, policies, and practices that has harmed Asian, Black, Latinx, Native American, and low-income white people for centuries. Substantial changes to these laws and policies did not occur until the late 1960s, and the harm continues to reverberate in the lives of Children of Color.
 - Between 2015 and 2019 in Rhode Island, 55% of Native American, 33% of Hispanic, and 27% of Black children in Rhode Island lived in poverty, followed by 13% of white children and 12% of Asian children.
 - The median income for white families in Rhode Island is higher than that of Asian, Black, Hispanic, families of Some other race, and Two or more races, and much higher than Native American families.
 - In the U.S. in 2019, the median white household had \$188,200 in wealth, compared to \$24,100 for Black households and \$36,100 for Hispanic households.
 - In Rhode Island, white residents have a homeownership rate more than double the rate of Hispanic residents, twice the rate of Black residents, and higher than Asian residents.
 - In Rhode Island on September 30, 2020, 42.4 per 1,000 Black children had an incarcerated parent compared to 5.6 per 1,000 white children. Native American children also experience higher rates of parent incarceration (35.0 per 1,000).
- Assets and wealth are financial safety nets that allow families to deal with unexpected expenses and disruptions of income without accumulating large amounts of debt. **Historic government policies and current systemic racism impact generations of Black, Indigenous, People of Color making it difficult to weather emergencies and uncertainties such as the one brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.**
 - In the U.S., between August and September 2021 during the COVID-19 delta variant outbreak, more than half of Latino (57%) and Black (56%) and half of Native American (50%) households in the U.S. reported facing serious financial problems in the past few months, as did 32% of Asian households and 29% of white households.
 - In the U.S., between August and September 2021, nearly one in three Black (31%) and more than one in four Latino (27%) and Native American (26%) households report losing all their savings during the COVID-19 outbreak and not currently having any savings to fall back on compared to 16% of Asian and 15% of white households.

“Rhode Island must work with urgency to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in children’s economic well-being,” said Paige Clausius-Parks, Senior Policy Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “Policies and practices must be equity-centered and acknowledge the histories and lived experiences of Children of Color, utilize disaggregated data to make informed policy decisions, and remove barriers to economic stability, mobility, and freedom for each racial and ethnic group. The future of Rhode Island’s prosperity depends on it. We must act now for equity and for the prosperity of all.”

A Need for Better Data

- In the U.S. and Rhode Island, research and data collection for **Native Americans** is limited due to the small population size, making it difficult to evaluate the economic impact of employment, training, education, and pandemic recovery efforts. The creation of datasets focused on the Native American population and oversampling of these groups could help provide valuable information needed to create policies and programs that address the economic needs of Native American children and families.
- The disparity across **Asian** subgroups can be attributed to differences in immigration origins, educational attainment, occupations, and generational wealth. 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. The lack of disaggregated data for the Asian population contributes to the misperception that all Asian Americans are excelling, resulting in underrepresentation in equity initiatives, especially for Southeast Asians where the largest disparities are found.

“Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is committed to equity and the elimination of unacceptable disparities by race, ethnicity, disability, zip code, immigration status, neighborhood, and income. We can’t eliminate these disparities without acknowledging the historical and structural racism that led to these disparities. We look forward to working with our community partners, funders, and elected officials to advance equitable policies and programs that will ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

Recommendations

- The *Policy Brief* contains key recommendations so all families have the freedom to meet their basic needs and pursue economic security and mobility. Please see pages 10-11 of the publication for our full list of recommendations across several areas:
 - Equity
 - Data Collection
 - Income and Employment
 - Mass Incarceration
 - Debt, Assets, and Wealth
 - Postsecondary Education

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education, and development of Rhode Island children with a core focus on equity.