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New Census Data Shows: Rhode Island Ranked 21st in Child Poverty

14.0% of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty in 2019

COVID-19 expected to result in large increase in child poverty and existing racial and ethnic disparities in 2020 and beyond

Providence, RI (September 17, 2020) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released new data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) today. The ACS provides national and state-level data on poverty, income, and health insurance coverage. Data on children's health insurance coverage was released on Tuesday, September 15th.

In 2019, 14.0% – an estimated 28,009 – of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty. This is a decrease from 2018, when 18.0% of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty.

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 difficulty in school, become teen parents, and earn less or be unemployed as adults.

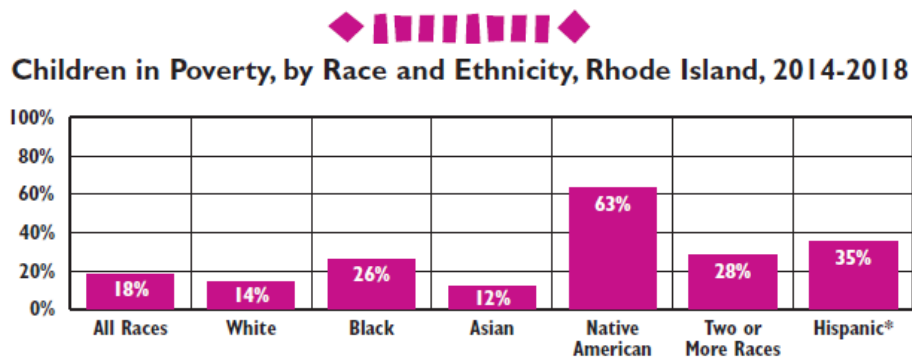
According to the ACS, in 2019:

- 14.0% – an estimated 28,009 – of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty in 2019. This is a decrease from 2018, when 18.0% of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty.
 - The poverty data are based on the federal poverty threshold, which was an annual income of \$20,598 for a family of three with two children and \$25,926 for a family of four with two children in 2019.
- 6.6% – an estimated 13,154 – of Rhode Island's children lived in extreme poverty in 2019.
 - This is a decrease from 2018, when 8.2% - and estimated 16,505 - of Rhode Island's children lived in extreme poverty.

- Extreme poverty is defined as families with incomes below 50% of the federal poverty level, or \$10,299 for a family of three with two children and \$12,963 for a family of four with two children in 2019.
- Rhode Island ranks 21st in the nation — and 5th in New England — for the percentage of children in poverty.

Systemic Racism and Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Child Poverty

In Rhode Island and the U.S., Native American, Hispanic, and Black children are more likely than White and Asian children to live in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold. Between 2014 and 2018 in Rhode Island, 63% of Native American, 35% of Hispanic, and 26% of Black children in Rhode Island lived in poverty, compared to 12% of Asian children and 14% of White children. These disparities in child poverty are due to our nation’s long history of structural and institutional racism and discriminatory policies in housing, banking, and education.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014-2018. Tables S1701, B17020A, B17020B, B17020C, B17020D, B17020G and B17020I. *Hispanic children may be included in any race category.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Child Poverty

The child poverty rates from 2019 do not reflect the current catastrophic economic, racial, and social impact of COVID-19 on our children and families. Data from the weekly [Census Household Pulse Survey](#) give us a sense of the hardship that the pandemic is currently causing for millions of children and families. According to recent data from the Census Household Pulse Survey (collected August 19 – 31, 2020):

- 31.4% of Rhode Island adults surveyed lived in households where it has been somewhat or very difficult to pay for usual household expenses during the coronavirus pandemic.
- 29.8% of Rhode Island adults surveyed lived in a household where eviction or foreclosure in the next two months was either somewhat or very likely.

- 28.4% of Rhode Island adults surveyed expect someone in their household to have a loss in employment income in the next four weeks.
- 12.1% of Rhode Island adults surveyed reported their household sometimes or often did not have enough to eat in the past seven days

“The child poverty rates from 2019 do not reflect the current impact of COVID-19 on our children and families,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “We know that the pandemic and resulting economic downturn are likely to cause child poverty rates to rise, particularly among Black, Latino, and Native American children. Children of color are disproportionately hurt by poverty due to systemic racism. Until we end child poverty and address racial inequities, too many children will be put at risk of long-lasting harm to their healthy development and long-term success.”

For more information on child poverty in Rhode Island and recommendations on how to address this crisis, see our recent [*Issue Brief, Child Poverty in Rhode Island*](#).

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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.