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New Census Data Shows Rhode Island Ranked 24th in Child Poverty; 4th for Children's Health Insurance Coverage

In 2021, 15% of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty

In 2021, 2.5% of Rhode Island children did not have health insurance

Providence, RI (September 15, 2022) – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released new data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) today. The ACS provides national and state-level data on poverty, income, and health insurance coverage.

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.

In 2021, 15% (an estimated 30,414) of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Rhode Island's child poverty rate remained fairly unchanged since 2019.*

Policy Measures to Keep Rhode Island Children out of Poverty

- A key component of the *2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)* was the Child Tax Credit (CTC) expansion. *ARPA* increased the value of the CTC from \$2,000 to \$3,600 for children under 6 years of age and to \$3,000 for children between ages 6 and 17.
- The increase in the CTC along with other pandemic aid kept many families and children out of poverty.
- However, pandemic-related aid and the improved Child Tax Credit have ended. Rhode Island leaders, elected officials, and advocates will need to ensure that families continue to be supported for success.

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In 2019, 14% (an estimated 28,009) of Rhode Island's children lived in poverty.

Key Poverty Findings — According to the ACS, in 2021:

- 2021, 15% (an estimated 30,414) of Rhode Island’s children lived in poverty. This is a small increase from 2019, when 14% of Rhode Island’s children lived in poverty.
 - The poverty data are based on the federal poverty threshold, which was an annual income of \$21,831 for a family of three with two children and \$27,479 for a family of four with two children.
- Rhode Island ranks 24th best in the nation — and 5th best in New England — for the percentage of children in poverty.
- 7.0% (an estimated 14,106) of Rhode Island’s children lived in extreme poverty. This is a slight increase from 2019, when 6.6% (an estimated 13,154) of Rhode Island’s children lived in extreme poverty.
 - Last year, the U.S. Census Bureau only released experimental data for 2020 due to a low response rate during the COVID-19 pandemic and urged caution when using this estimate.
 - In 2021, the extreme poverty threshold was \$10,916 for a family of three with two children and \$13,740 for a family of four with two children.

Children’s Health Insurance Coverage

Children who have health insurance coverage are healthier and have fewer preventable hospitalizations. They are more likely to receive preventive care, be screened for the achievement of developmental milestones, miss fewer days of school, and get treatment for illnesses and chronic conditions. Uninsured children are less likely to have medical homes and have fewer visits to doctors or dentists.

- **In 2021, 2.5% (approximately 5,697) of Rhode Island children did not have health insurance.** Pre-pandemic, 1.9% (approximately 4,000) of Rhode Island children were uninsured in 2019.
- Rhode Island ranks 4th among all states, and 4th in New England for children's health insurance coverage.

Policy Measures to Keep Rhode Island Children Healthy

- **In Rhode Island:** While many families lost employment in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and likely also lost employer-sponsored health insurance

coverage, many of Rhode Island's children remained insured due to RItE Care. RItE Care is our state's comprehensive, high-quality health insurance program for low-income families.

- **Cover All Kids:** The 2022 Rhode Island legislative session reestablished Rhode Island's commitment to provide health insurance to low-income children who are residents of the state, regardless of immigration status (also called the *Cover All Kids* bill).
- **Nationally:** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress increased funding for Medicaid and passed laws to keep individuals from losing Medicaid coverage during the national public health emergency. These changes likely helped maintain health coverage for children.

"*Cover All Kids* passed this legislative session, and that's a fantastic victory for our children and families," said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "We are thankful for the passage of *Cover All Kids* which will give more Rhode Island children access to RItE Care health insurance coverage. However, we are also aware that families will need to reapply for RItE Care in order to maintain coverage when the national health emergency ends. We will be closely monitoring the re-enrollment process to ensure that our kids stay insured."

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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.