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Continued progress lifting Rhode Islanders out of poverty will contribute to thriving economy

More needs to be done to address disparities by race/ethnicity

Providence, RI (September 14, 2017) – Rhode Island continues to see declines in the overall poverty rate (at 12.8 percent, down significantly from the recent peak poverty rate of 15.9 percent (see Figure 1)), according to new data released today by the US Census Bureau. Continued success lifting the nearly one hundred and thirty thousand (129,932) Rhode Islanders remaining in poverty in 2016 will help Rhode Island’s economy thrive. (The 2016 poverty level for a family of four was \$24,563). The 12.8 percent poverty rate for 2016 compares to a 13.9 percent poverty rate for 2015 (though the two rates are not far enough apart to indicate a statistically significant decline in poverty)¹.

The more than one in eight Rhode Islanders (12.8 percent) with income below the poverty level do not have enough to meet basic needs. Child Care

Assistance, SNAP and health insurance coverage help working families make ends meet when earnings are not enough. **“Too many Rhode Islanders continue to face obstacles to getting ahead such as a lack of access to good-paying jobs, unaffordable child care and inadequate education and job training resources,”** said Rachel Flum, Executive Director of the Economic Progress Institute.

The Ocean State had the highest rate of its residents living in poverty among the New England states and ranked 25th among all states. Diving deeper, the data also shows that Rhode Island’s communities of color were much more likely to struggle to meet basic needs. More than one in five people who are

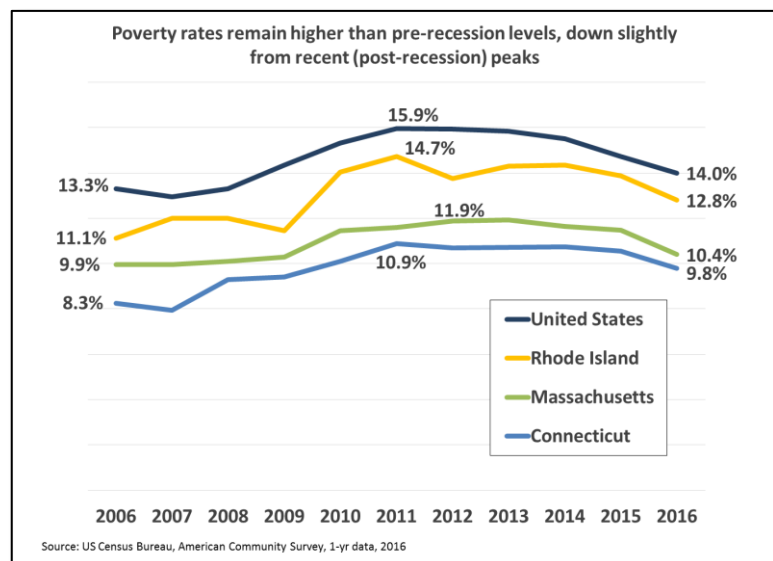
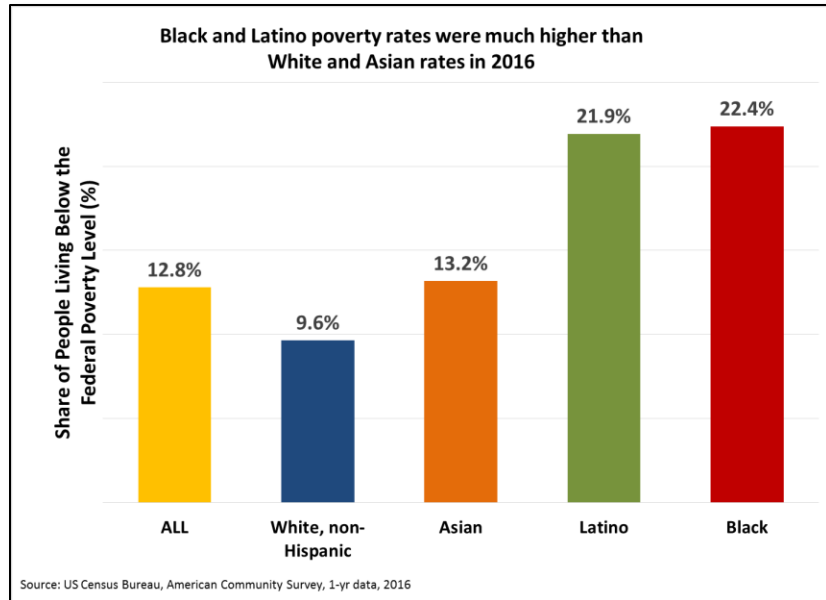


Figure 1

¹ The decline in the overall poverty rate between 2014 (14.3 percent) and 2016 (12.8 percent) is statistically significant, as is the decline between 2011 (14.7 percent) and 2016.

Black or Latino lived in poverty in 2016, compared with about one in eight people who are Asian, and about one in ten people who are non-Hispanic White.

“Rhode Island's economic vitality will continue to be stifled until we close the yawning gap in the economic well-being of Latino and Black Rhode Islanders”, said Justice Gaines, coordinator of the Racial Justice Coalition.



Similar disparities prevailed in median income. The overall median income (\$60,596) masks significant disparities. Latino (\$36,877) and Black (\$42,425) median incomes trail the overall by a wide margin, while the median income in households headed by non-Hispanic Whites (\$65,485) was slightly higher, and the median income in households headed by Asian Rhode Islanders (\$83,610) was much higher than the statewide average.²

The Census Bureau also released information on the health insurance status of Americans on Tuesday. The Economic Progress Institute [website provides additional analysis](#) of the new data for Rhode Island.

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About The Economic Progress Institute

The Economic Progress Institute is a nonpartisan research and policy organization dedicated to improving the economic well-being of low- and modest-income Rhode Islanders. For more information visit www.economicprogressri.org.

² The sample size in the American Community Survey is not sufficient to know how sub-populations of the Asian community are faring. We know from other recent studies that Southeast Asian Rhode Islanders normally do not share in the relative prosperity of the overall Asian community.