

# African Americans

IN RHODE ISLAND  
2015



This report provides information about major health indicators in the black/African American population of Rhode Island. A black/African American is defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget as a person having origins in areas of the black racial groups of Africa. A white person is defined as a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.

This report presents data on population demographics, socio-economic characteristics, maternal and child health, behavioral risk factors, access to healthcare, infectious disease, and the leading causes of death among black/African American Rhode Islanders compared to whites and to the state as a whole.

Please note that for some data sets, race and ethnicity status are based on self-identification. The tables present point estimates, which should not be used to imply statistical significance.

## Population Demographics

According to the 2011-2013 American Community Survey 3-year estimate, there are 67,099 blacks/African Americans in Rhode Island, making this group the second largest minority population in the state (6.4%). The median age for the black/African American population is 29.3 years whereas the state median age is 39.7 years. Nearly 94% of the black/African American population is age 65 or younger, while 85% of the state population is age 65 or younger. Approximately 29.3% of the black/African American population in Rhode Island is foreign born. It is important to recognize that the racial category of blacks/African Americans is broad, and certain subsets of the population may have different health outcomes.

## Socioeconomic Characteristics

The following are socioeconomic characteristics of Rhode Island's black/African American population. These characteristics are a few of the social determinants that can have a profound effect on an individual's health.

- The percentage of blacks/African Americans living in poverty is nearly double that of the state as a whole and just less than three times that of the white population.
- A larger percentage of blacks/African Americans are unemployed, compared to whites and the state as a whole.
- The median household income for blacks/African Americans is \$34,893, roughly \$21,000 less than the overall state household median and \$25,000 less than that for the white median household income.
- Only 31.1% of blacks/African Americans own their housing unit, which is about half that of whites and the state as a whole.

TABLE A: POPULATION DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

	BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN <sup>1</sup>	WHITE <sup>1</sup>	STATE
Median age	29.3	43.1	39.7
Percentage of population younger than 18 years	28.9	18.3	20.6
Percentage of population age 65 years or older	6.2	17.2	15.0
Percentage of population born in another country	29.3	7.3	13.2
Percentage of population speaking only English at home*	63.9	87.1	78.9

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2011–2013 American Community Survey 3-Year estimates  
<sup>1</sup> Hispanic ethnicity may be included in racial category  
 \*Population 5 years and older

TABLE B: SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA

	BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN <sup>1</sup>	WHITE <sup>1</sup>	STATE
Percentage of children living in poverty (<18 years old) <sup>3</sup>	39.0	14.0	20.2
Percentage of population living in poverty <sup>2</sup>	28.4	11.3	14.4
Percentage of population that is unemployed <sup>2</sup>	13.5	8.6	9.7
Median household income <sup>2</sup>	\$34,893	\$60,140	\$55,675
Percentage of population that owns their housing unit <sup>2</sup>	31.1	64.7	60.2

Sources: <sup>2</sup>US Bureau of the Census, 2011–2013 American Community Survey 3-year estimates  
<sup>3</sup>2014 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook  
<sup>1</sup> Hispanic ethnicity may be included in racial category



## Maternal and Child Health

Both the white population in Rhode Island and the state as a whole have more favorable maternal and child health outcomes than the black/African American population of Rhode Island.

- A higher percentage of black/African Americans have delayed prenatal care, compared to whites and the state as a whole.
- The black/African American infant mortality rate is approximately double that of the white population.
- The rate of black/African American children with incarcerated parents is eight times that of the white population.

## Youth Behavioral Risk

- A higher percentage of black/African American youth report never wearing a seatbelt, compared to the white and overall state populations.
- Black/African American youth have a lower high school graduation rate than white youth and the state as whole.

## Adult Behavioral Risk

- A lower percentage of blacks/African Americans meet physical activity guidelines, compared to whites and to the state as a whole.
- A higher percentage of blacks/African Americans aged 20 years and older are considered obese, compared to whites and to the state as a whole.

## Access to Healthcare

- The percentage of blacks/African Americans younger than 65 years of age that report having no health insurance is twice that of the white population.

**TABLE C: MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH INDICATORS**

	BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN <sup>1</sup>	WHITE <sup>1</sup>	STATE
Percentage of pregnant women with delayed prenatal care <sup>2a</sup>	18.7	10.5	12.8
Percentage of births to mothers with less than 12 years of education <sup>2</sup>	17.3	8.6	13.8
Percentage of infants with low birth weight <sup>2y</sup>	11.4	6.8	7.6
Rate of births to teens ages 15-19 (per 1,000 teens) <sup>2</sup>	34.4	13.4	21.4
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) <sup>2c</sup>	11.2	5.3	6.6
Rate of children with incarcerated parents (per 1,000 children) <sup>3</sup>	63.8	8.0	13.1

Sources:

<sup>2</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2009-2013

<sup>2</sup> 2014 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook

<sup>a</sup> Delayed prenatal care is defined as care received after the first trimester or no prenatal care received

<sup>y</sup> Low birth weight is defined as less than 2,500 grams or 5.5 pounds

<sup>c</sup> Infant mortality rate is defined as the number of infants who died before their first birthday per 1,000 live births

<sup>1</sup> Hispanic ethnicity may be included in racial category

**TABLE D: YOUTH BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTOR INDICATORS (YOUTH IN GRADES 9-12)**

	BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	WHITE	STATE
Percent of youth who used marijuana in past 30 days <sup>1</sup>	25.5	26.6	25.6
Percent of youth who engaged in binge-drinking in past 30 days <sup>1</sup>	12.6	18.5	17.5
Percent of youth who have ever had sexual intercourse <sup>1</sup>	49.9	38.6	41.3
Percent of youth who smoked cigarettes in past 30 days <sup>1</sup>	6.3	12.9	11.0
Percent of youth who did not get the recommended physical activity <sup>1y</sup>	76.3	73.3	75.5
Percent of youth who never/rarely wore seatbelt with other driver(s) <sup>1</sup>	16.9	7.0	9.8
Percent of youth who got in a physical fight in the past 12 months <sup>1</sup>	28.8	19.7	22.6
Percent of youth who were bullied on school property in past 12 months <sup>1</sup>	13.7	19.5	17.8
Percent of youth who ever took prescription drugs without having a prescription for the drug <sup>1</sup>	11.9	15.8	15.0
Percent of high school seniors that graduated high school <sup>2</sup>	72.1	83.9	79.7

Sources: <sup>1</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2009, 2011 and 2013

<sup>2</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, Cohort Graduation Rates, 4-Year Cohort for 2013.

<sup>y</sup> Recommended physical activity is 60 minutes, 7 days per week

**TABLE E: ADULT BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTOR INDICATORS (ADULTS 18 YEARS AND OLDER)**

	BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	WHITE	STATE
Percent of adult population who meets physical activity guidelines <sup>1</sup> [2011 & 2013 only]	41.6	51.7	49.0
Percent of adult population (age 20+) who is overweight/obese <sup>2</sup>	67.1	64.2	64.7
Percent of adult population (age 20+) who is obese <sup>3</sup>	32.3	26.4	26.8
Percent of adult population who consumes 5+ servings of fruit/vegetables daily (2011 & 2013 only)	17.3	17.4	17.5
Percent of adult population who is a current smoker	19.2	18.4	18.4
Percent of adult population who binge-drank in the last month <sup>4</sup>	13.4	18.8	18.3

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011-2013

<sup>1</sup> Physical activity guidelines are 150 minutes per week

<sup>2</sup> Overweight/obese defined as body mass index (BMI) ≥ 25

<sup>3</sup> Obesity defined as BMI ≥ 30

<sup>4</sup> Binge-drinking defined as 5+ drinks for men and 4+ drinks for women

**TABLE F: ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND SCREENING INDICATORS (ADULTS 18 YEARS AND OLDER)**

	BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	WHITE	STATE
Percent of adults (<65) years old who reported having no health insurance	25.9	13.0	17.9
Percent of adults who reported having no person they thought of as their personal healthcare provider(s)	20.8	10.8	14.4
Percent of adults who had no routine checkup within the past year	21.1	20.4	22.4
Percent of adults who reported being unable to afford to see a doctor when needed at least once in the past year	17.3	11.5	14.6

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011-2013

**TABLE G: SELECTED INCIDENCE RATES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES: CASES PER 100,000 POPULATION**

	BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	WHITE	STATE
Gonorrhea <sup>1</sup>	241.7	19.1	36.8
Chlamydia <sup>1</sup>	1587.8	214.7	377.4
Tuberculosis <sup>2</sup>	10.9	1.4	2.4
HIV/AIDS <sup>3</sup>	30.5	4.6	9.1

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Infectious Disease and Epidemiology, 2009-2013

<sup>1</sup> Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) Surveillance Data, 2009-2013

<sup>2</sup> Tuberculosis Surveillance Data, 2009-2013

<sup>3</sup> HIV/AIDS Surveillance Data, 2009-2013

**TABLE H: LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH**

RANK	BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	WHITE	STATE
1	Heart Disease	Heart Disease	Heart Disease
2	Cancer	Cancer	Cancer
3	Stroke	Chronic Respiratory Diseases	Chronic Respiratory Diseases
4	Unintentional Injuries	Stroke	Stroke
5	Diabetes Mellitus	Alzheimer's	Alzheimer's

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Office of Vital Records, RI Resident Deaths, ICD-10 Codes, 2009-2013

## Infectious Disease

- Black/African American rates of gonorrhea are nearly 13 times higher than those of whites.
- Black/African American rates of chlamydia are more than seven times higher than those of whites.
- HIV rates are approximately three times higher for blacks/African Americans than for the state as a whole and about six times higher than the rates for the white population.

## Leading Cause of Death

- The five leading causes of death for blacks/African Americans in Rhode Island are heart disease, cancer, stroke, unintentional injuries, and diabetes mellitus.

## Chronic Disease

Although not mentioned in this report, racial and ethnic disparities exist in health outcomes related to chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. For detailed reports of the burden of these chronic diseases on Rhode Island residents and the disproportionate impact on the state's minorities, see the Rhode Island Commission for Health Advocacy and Equity Legislative Report, 2015, which can be found at <http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/reports/2015CommissionOnHealthAdvocacyAndEquityLegislativeReport.pdf>



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