



FAMILY STRUCTURE

RI RANKS 46TH NATIONALLY

TABLE 9

FAMILY STRUCTURE MAJOR INDEX RANKINGS		
Measure	National Rank	New England Rank
Family Structure	46th	6th
Marriage	19th	4th
Divorce	11th	2nd
Children in Married Couple Households	46th	6th
Families with Related Children in Poverty	36th	6th
State of Households	49th	6th

Source: Rhode Island Center for Freedom and Prosperity and American Conservative Union Foundation

Children in Married-Couple Households

► Rhode Island ranks 46th nationally and last in New England on this FPI sub-index

The composition of families — specifically, the number of children involved and, in particular, the marital state of the parents — has a direct and distinct influence on their own economic circumstances as well as on those of the communities in which they live. This is critical to the well-being of children. In fact, a recent study by David Ribar concluded:

*My analysis [of why marriage matters for child well-being] includes many mechanisms that have been investigated in previous studies, including economic resources, specialization, father involvement, parents' physical and mental health, parenting quality and skills, social supports, health insurance, home ownership, parental relationships, bargaining power, and family stability. However, it also points to many others that have received less attention, including net wealth, borrowing constraints, informal insurance through social networks, and inefficiencies associated with parents living apart . . . [T]he likely advantages of marriage for children's well-being are hard to replicate through policy interventions other than those that bolster marriage themselves. While interventions that raise income, increase parental time availability, provide alternative services, or provide other in-kind resources would surely benefit children, these are likely to be, at best, only partial substitutes for marriage itself. **The advantages of marriage for children appear to be the sum of many, many parts. (emphasis added)**²⁶*

Unfortunately, Rhode Island is not sufficiently “inoculating” children with the benefits of married parents and ranks only 46th on the 2016 FPI sub-index for children in married couple households.

[T]he likely advantages of marriage for children's well-being are hard to replicate through policy interventions other than those that bolster marriage themselves.

State of Households

► Rhode Island ranks 49th nationally and last in New England on this FPI sub-index

As noted in the discussion on migration, married taxpayers tend to be clustered at higher income levels, be more entrepreneurial, and to have the largest families. All of these characteristics are very much needed in Rhode Island today given the dearth of entrepreneurship and the state's ongoing Demographic Winter — not to mention the obvious increases in government revenue and the potential relief for taxpayers.

The state of household sub-index measures marriage levels and family size for all taxpayers as well as for taxpayers earning over \$100,000. In all cases, Rhode Island's marriage rates and family size are well below the national averages. This means that all family households — regardless of income — are suffering from a weakened social environment. Rhode Island only ranks 49th on the 2016 FPI sub-index for the state of households.

Again, our state's civil society infrastructure should play a larger role in addressing these issues.

²⁶ Ribar, David C., “Why Marriage Matters for Child Wellbeing,” *The Future of Children*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Fall 2015. <http://www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/WhyMarriageMatters.pdf>