

## Diversity, Disparities and Social Equity

Rhode Island's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant project, "A Sustainable Rhode Island," aims to develop a regional plan for sustainable development that values diversity and advances social equity. As part of that work, the state has had the unique opportunity to receive a pilot study on social equity indicators by the research and policy group PolicyLink and the Program on Environmental and Regional Equity at the University of Southern California. This report, *An Equity Profile of Rhode Island*, uses demographic, economic, health, transportation, and education data to analyze social disparities in Rhode Island. It finds that while populations of color\* are growing in the state, disparities by race and ethnicity present challenges for our communities and the economy. This Bulletin explores some of the indicators that planners have found most intriguing.

### Demographic Change

While the headlines in our state have focused on population stagnation and decline, Rhode Island's racial and ethnic minority populations continue to grow. For the past two decades, all the population growth in the state has occurred among populations of color while the number of Non-Hispanic White people in the state has declined.

At 44 percent, the Latino 2000-2010 growth rate was the highest among the major racial/ethnic groups in Rhode Island. The Black and Asian growth rates were

## BY THE NUMBERS

**36%** of youth in Rhode Island are people of color\*

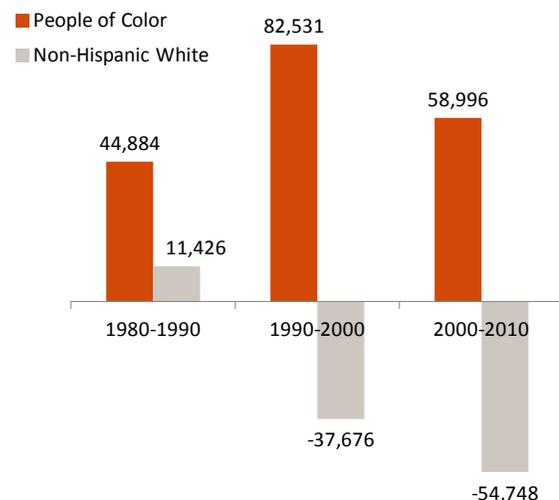
**9%** of senior citizens are people of color

**186,411** more people of color lived in Rhode Island in 2010 than in 1980

Source: U.S. Census. Analysis by PolicyLink and PERE.

both above 20%, while the White and Native American growth rates were -6% and -4% respectively. The U.S. Census projects that Rhode Island's population of color will continue to grow,

### R.I. Population Change by Decade



Graphic: Policylink and PERE. Data source: U.S. Census.

## ABOUT THE DATA

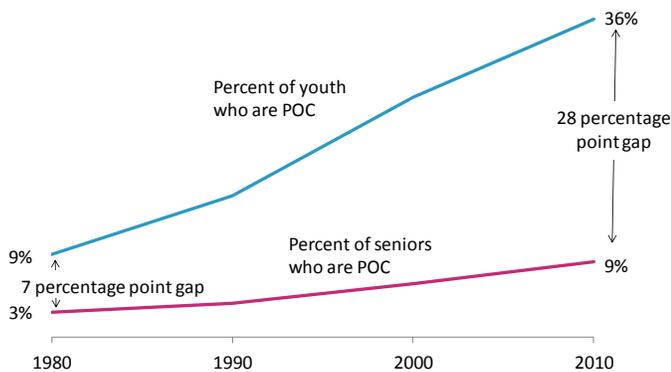
Data in this Bulletin are drawn from the report *An Equity Profile of Rhode Island* by PolicyLink and PERE. This report draws data from many sources. Data reported in this Bulletin include statistics from the Decennial Census, the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. This report was generated through technical assistance awarded with the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities' Regional Planning Grant. This report compares Rhode Island to other "regions" of the United States. Because of Rhode Island's small size and concentrated metropolitan area, it is comparable to other metropolitan regions of the United States.

\*People of color is defined here and in *An Equity Profile* as all people who do not identify as one race and non-Hispanic White.

comprising 41% of the state's population by 2040. This diversification trend lags slightly behind the country as a whole, which is expected to have a majority of people of color by 2042.

In Rhode Island, the youth population is more diverse than our senior citizen population. One in three young people in the state is a person of color (POC), while only one in ten senior citizens is a person of color. This statistic leaves many additional questions—are adults and seniors of color moving out of the state? How does this “racial generation gap” affect policy, funding, and investment decisions that affect youth but are made by adults?

### R.I. Racial Generation Gap



Graphic: Policylink and PERE. Data source: U.S. Census.

### Economic Challenges

The *Equity Profile* analyzed some of the challenges that Rhode Island faces with regard to providing opportunity for all to participate in the economy. While many are familiar with the state's high unemployment rate, the report looked at how our state's growth in gross regional product (GRP), jobs, and earnings relate to one another.

Rhode Island's GRP has grown 87% over the past thirty years, fairly close to the national rate of 93%. However, that growth has not produced as many jobs as it did in other parts of the country. During the same period, Rhode Island's jobs grew by 21% while the nation experienced over twice that rate of job growth, 54%. On the other hand, earnings growth (for those with jobs) was higher in Rhode Island, at 30%, than in the United States as a whole, 17%. Taken together, these statistics show that compared with the nation, Rhode Island's economic growth over the past 30 years provided fewer jobs but benefitted the employed more.

#### Growth in Economic Indicators: Rhode Island vs. United States

	R.I.	U.S.
GRP Growth	87%	93%
Job Growth	21%	54%
Earnings Growth	30%	17%

Disparate economic outcomes show that slow job growth has affected racial and ethnic groups in Rhode Island unequally. For example, 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates show that 11% of Blacks were unemployed and 12% of Latinos were unemployed, compared with 6% of Whites and 6% of Asians. There are many factors that drive this disparity, some of which are captured by the data better than others. For example, a smaller share of Blacks and Latinos in the state has college degrees than Whites or Asians. However, even when controlling for level of education, people of color have a higher unemployment rate at every level of education except the Associate's degree. To invest in our shared future, planners will need to gain greater understanding of direct and indirect barriers to employment and wealth that people of color face.

## TO LEARN MORE...

*An Equity Profile of Rhode Island*, by PolicyLink and the Program on Environmental and Regional Equity at the University of Southern California, is available at <http://www.planning.ri.gov/statewideplanning/sustainable/socialequity.php>. PolicyLink and PERE plan to launch a website with access to these indicators for all regions of the United States this year.

To explore demographic data on race/ethnicity and age in your municipality or in another state or region, visit the U.S. Census website, [American FactFinder](http://www.census.gov). More detailed information that incorporates race/ethnicity, nativity, and additional characteristics like education or unemployment, can be researched through the Integrated Public Use Microdata Set at the University of Minnesota: [usa.ipums.org/usa/](http://usa.ipums.org/usa/). To explore the economic indicators reported in this Bulletin, go to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis website at [www.bea.gov/](http://www.bea.gov/)

For further information about Planning Information Center resources, contact Amanda Martin at Rhode Island Statewide Planning: [amanda.martin@doa.ri.gov](mailto:amanda.martin@doa.ri.gov)