



## **New Census numbers show poverty steady in R.I.**

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New [U.S. Census Bureau](#) estimates on Tuesday reported that the number of Rhode Islanders living in poverty was essentially unchanged from 2007 to 2008.

The [Poverty Institute at the Rhode Island College School of Social Work](#) said the state's strong unemployment insurance benefits prevented the poverty rate from rising.

"For those laid off workers who are actually eligible for unemployment insurance, the benefits have helped protect them from plummeting into poverty in this harsh economy," said Rachel Flum, a policy analyst at the institute.

The Census Bureau's [American Community Survey](#) found 118,556 Rhode Islanders living below the poverty level of about \$10,990 a year. That is down from 2007, when the number was 122,128. The difference is within the survey's margin of error of 8,064, so it is not considered statistically significant.

The American Community Survey's results were at odds with another Census Bureau product, the [Current Population Survey](#), also out this month. That survey found that the number of Rhode Islanders living in poverty rose from 99,000 in 2007 to 132,000 in 2008. The difference is more than twice the survey's margin of error of 14,000, so it is considered statistically significant.

Both surveys have a 90 percent confidence level, meaning they have a 10 percent chance of the true number of Rhode Islanders living in poverty being outside their margins of error.

The new American Community Survey numbers showed that Providence County had the highest rate of poverty within Rhode Island's four largest counties, but that it was the only one among the group to have a decrease from 2007 to 2008.

The poverty rates by county were: Kent, 7.2 percent in 2008, 5.7 percent in 2007; Newport, 9.5 percent in 2008, 8.5 percent in 2007; Providence, 14.0 percent in 2008, 16.0 percent in 2007, and Washington, 8.2 percent in 2008, 5.3 percent in 2007. Bristol County, with a population of about 50,000, fell below the American Community Survey's threshold of 65,000 for reporting detailed data.