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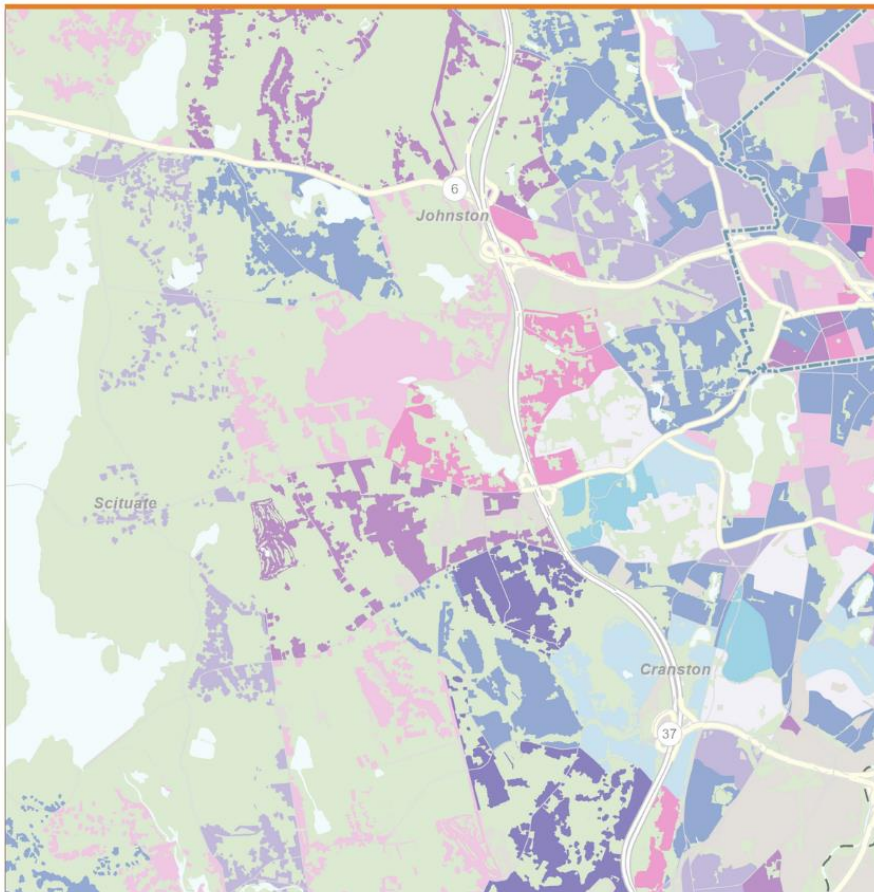


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Estimating the Supply of and Demand for Early Childhood Education in Rhode Island

Prepared by **REINVESTMENT FUND** for the **Rhode Island Department of Human Services** in partnership with the **Local Initiatives Support Corporation**

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This report was prepared by **Reinvestment Fund** for the **Rhode Island Department of Human Services** in partnership with the **Local Initiatives Support Corporation** as part of a strategic planning initiative to articulate Rhode Island's child care supply and demand and plan targeted strategies to improve equitable access to quality care for all Rhode Island families.

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Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) is critical for young children. It prepares them to enter school academically and socially prepared. It is also a necessary community resource that allows parents to participate in the labor force and complete training or education programs, in turn helping local economies thrive. Decisions, actions, and advocacy in the childcare sector are often based on anecdotal information rather than on comprehensive place-based data specific to the geography of interest. This is partially because there is no single source of supply or demand data and thus no way of directly assessing how many families are being left out of child care (especially that which is high-quality). Reinvestment Fund's ECE analysis is a powerful analytic that locates gaps in access to high-quality ECE. This approach allows stakeholders and investors to better understand the existing ECE landscape and make data-based decisions on where to expand or improve the quality of ECE to have the greatest impact.

Early Childhood Education Supply In Rhode Island

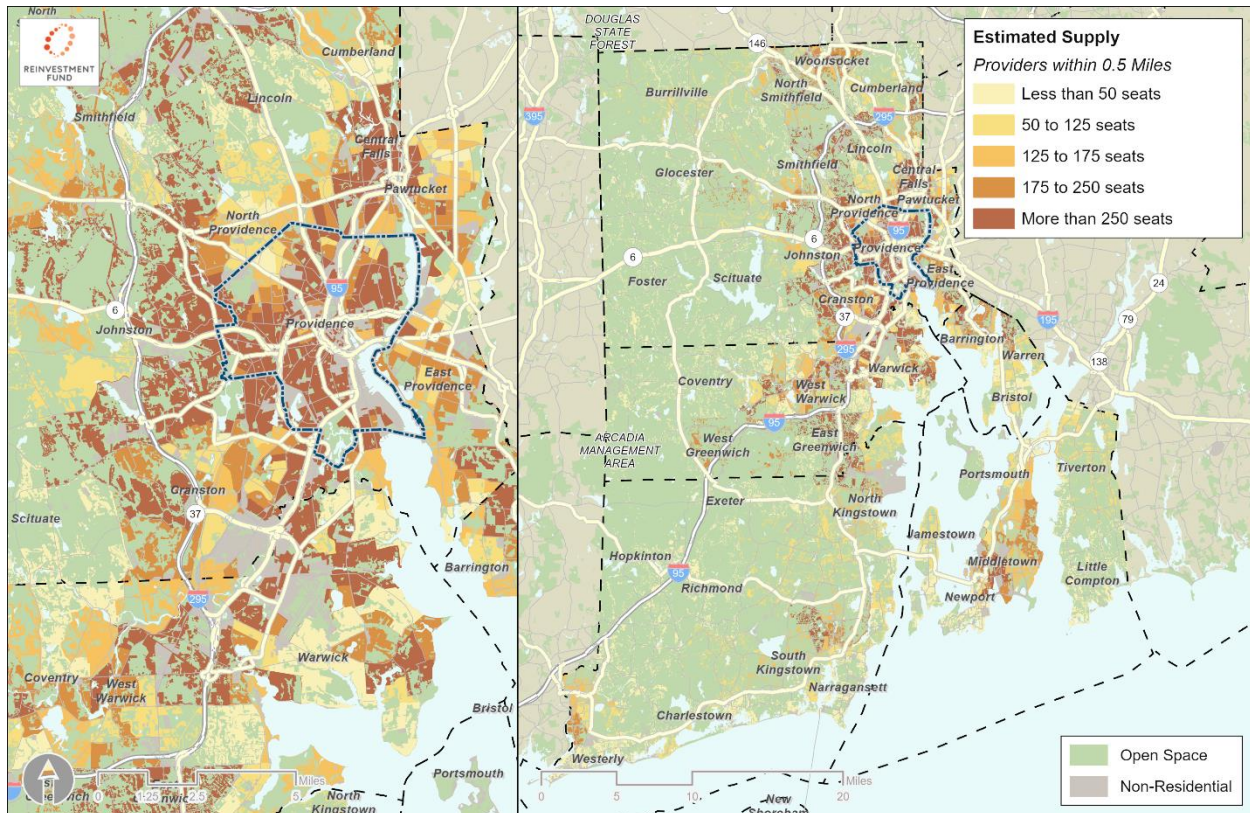
Reinvestment Fund gathered information on ECE providers to estimate the number of seats available to families seeking care. Statewide there are 22,367 ECE seats available, 6,870 (31%) of which are highly rated and 7,833 (35%) serve infants and toddlers (children younger than 3 years old). Table 1 shows how ECE seats are distributed by provider type. Centers account for 85% of all and 99% of highly rated seats statewide.

Table 1 ECE Seats by Provider Type

Type	Providers	Estimated Seats		
		All	Highly Rated	Infants and Toddler
Regulated	802 (97%)	22,240 (99%)	6,870 (100%)	7,833 (100%)
Center	319 (39%)	19,033 (85%)	6,786 (99%)	6,289 (80%)
Family Care Homes	402 (49%)	2,713 (12%)	24 (0.3%)	1,544 (20%)
Public School	56 (7%)	322 (1%)	60 (0.9%)	-
Independent School	25 (3%)	172 (1%)	0 (0%)	-
Other	17 (2%)	127 (0.6%)	0 (0%)	-
Total	819 (100%)	22,367 (100%)	6,870 (100%)	7,833 (100%)

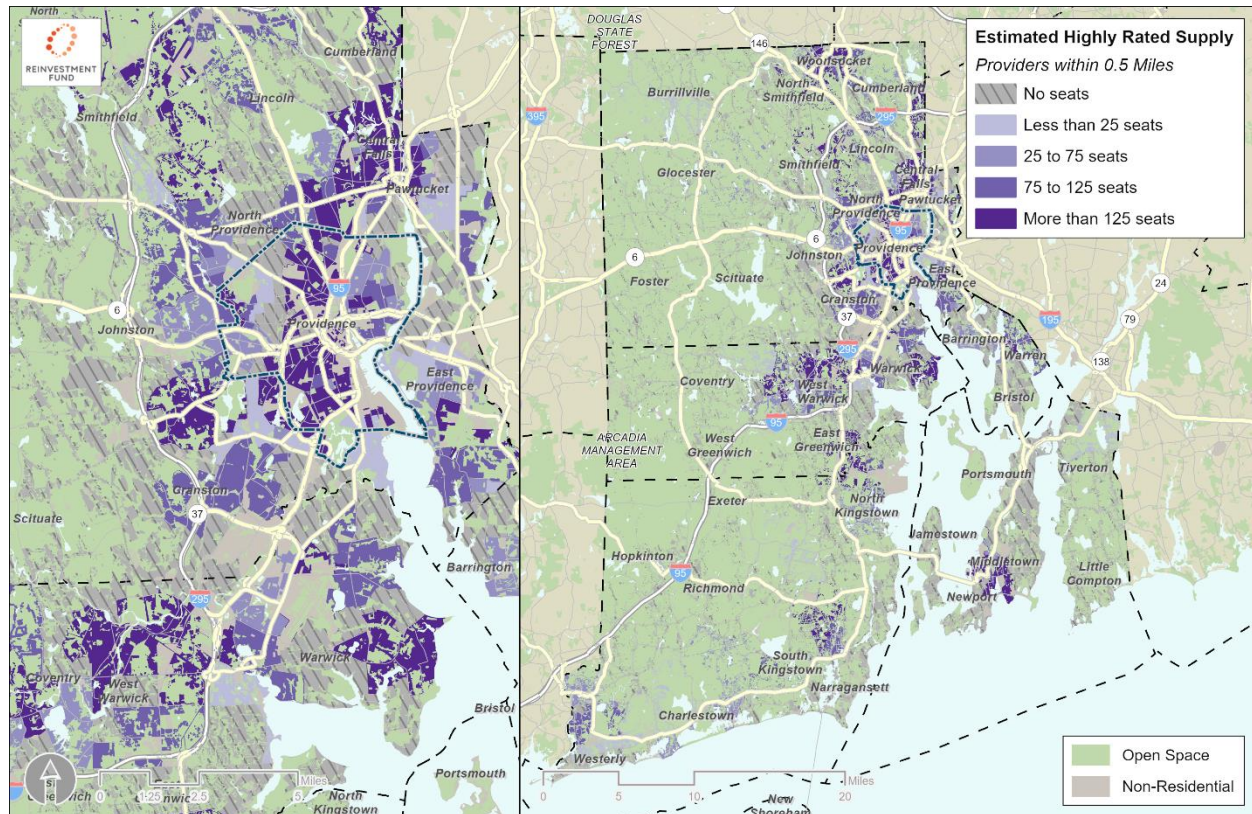
Figure 1 shows how the supply of ECE seats varies across Rhode Island. Supply is most concentrated in and around Providence, Pawtucket, Warwick, West Warwick, East Greenwich, South Kingstown, and Middletown. In the more rural block groups in western Rhode Island there are often fewer than 50 seats available within a half-mile radius of each block group.

Figure 1 Estimated Supply of ECE Seats



Highly rated ECE seats are even more spatially concentrated. Figure 2 shows the estimated supply of highly rated ECE seats. Block groups with the most seats are located in Providence, Central Falls, Warwick, West Warwick, East Greenwich, and Middletown.

Figure 2 Estimated Supply of Highly Rated ECE Seats



There are 7,833 seats available for infants and toddlers statewide. Most are in Providence, West Warwick, Smithfield and Newport. Twenty-one percent of seats available for infants and toddlers are at highly rated providers. The spatial distribution of highly rated seats for infants and toddlers was similar to that of all seats.

Demand for Early Childhood Education In Rhode Island

Not all households with children require care out of the home. Some children are cared for informally by friends or family members or privately by babysitters or nannies. And not all households seeking care will do so close to home; some families will look for care closer to their workplace. Reinvestment Fund estimates the maximum possible demand for ECE starting with the number of children under five within a block group and adjusting that demand based on parental commuting patterns derived from the US Census Bureau and adjusted to estimate the impact of remote work.

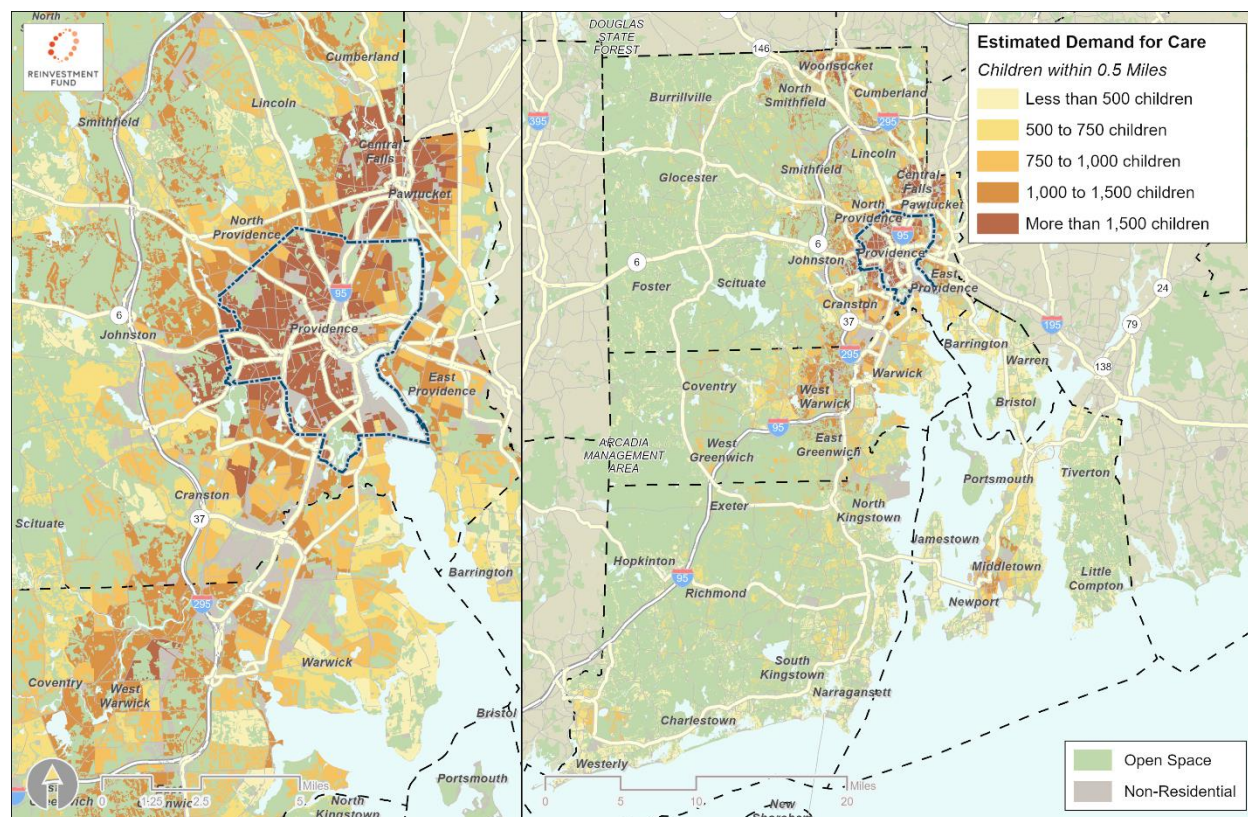
Table 2 shows the total maximum demand for ECE care across Rhode Island. There are 53,954 children under five years old statewide, over a quarter of whom live within the city of Providence. Other cities including Pawtucket, Warwick, and Cranston have sizeable shares of ECE aged children.

Table 2 Estimated Resident and Maximum Demand

	Resident Demand	Commuter Net Demand	Max. Possible Demand
Rhode Island	55,184 (100.0%)	-1,239	53,954 (100.0%)
Providence (County)	36,835 (66.7%)	-61	36,783 (68.2%)
Providence (City)	12,027 (21.8%)	1,260	13,295 (24.6%)
Pawtucket	4,847 (8.8%)	-304	4,543 (8.4%)
Cranston	3,980 (7.2%)	-208	3,772 (7.0%)
Warwick	3,621 (6.6%)	15	3,636 (6.7%)
Newport	1,120 (2.0%)	47	1,167 (2.2%)

Figure 3 shows how the maximum possible demand varies across the state in more detail. Maximum possible demand is particularly high in Rhode Island's population centers, including in and around Providence, Warwick, and Newport. Block groups in those areas typically have more than 1,500 children under five living within a half-mile radius. In less populated areas in the western and southern edges of the state demand is lower. Block groups there typically have fewer than 500 ECE aged children within a half-mile radius. Maximum possible demand is greatest within and around Providence.

Figure 3 Estimated Maximum Demand for Care

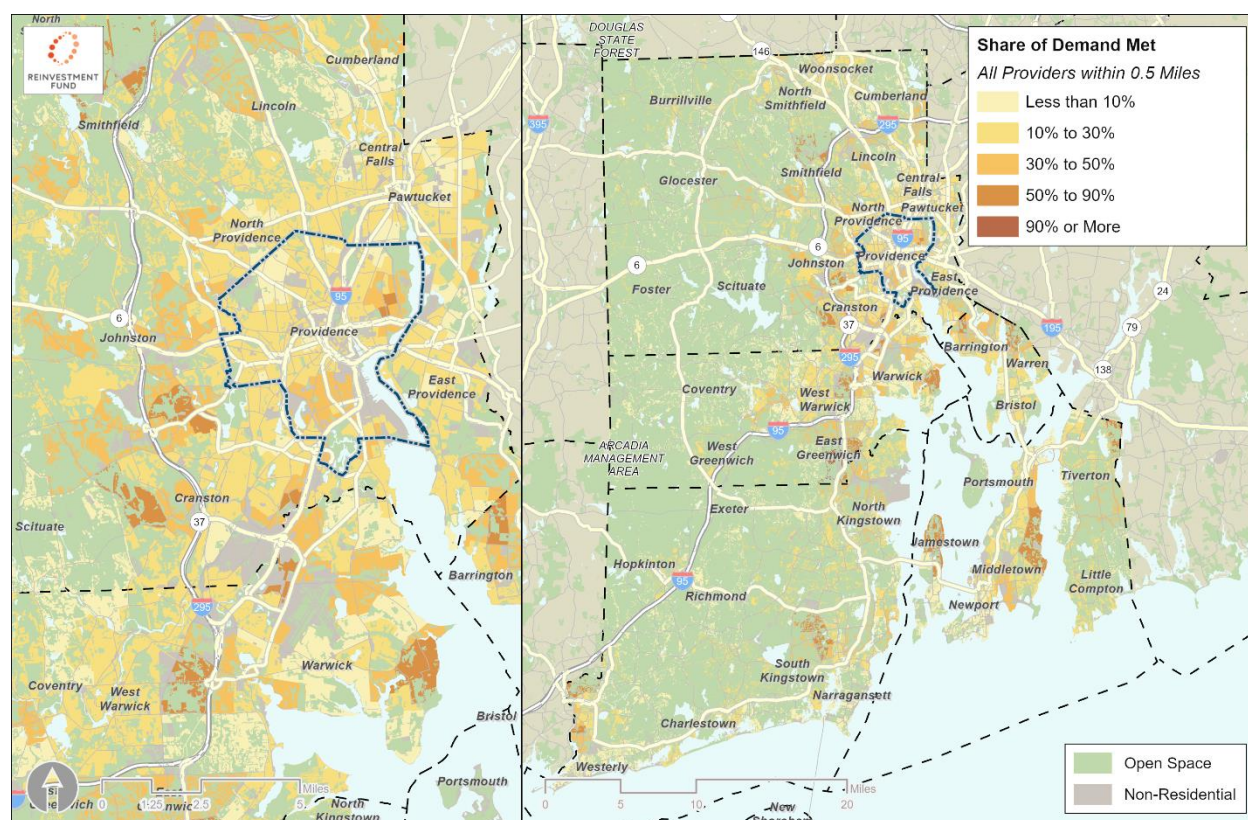


Estimating Shortages in Early Childhood Education

Reinvestment Fund estimates the *absolute shortage* of ECE seats by combining the maximum number of children in need of ECE with information about the number and types of seats available within each block group. Statewide there is a shortage of ECE seats to serve the maximum estimated number of children requiring care; shortages are common in many parts of the state.

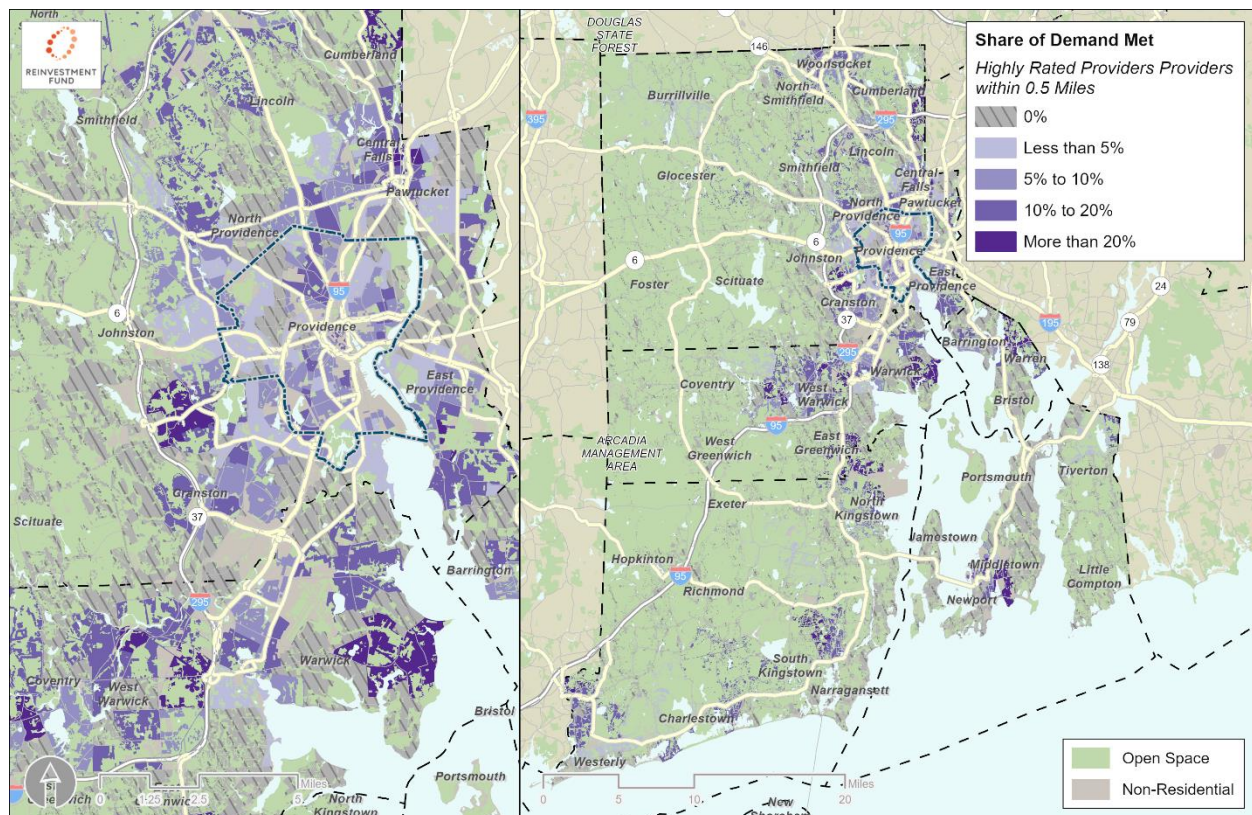
Figure 4 shows the percentage of the estimated maximum demand that can be met within a half-mile radius of each block group. Only one block group in East Greenwich can meet the estimated maximum ECE demand. Most block groups in Providence and all block groups in Pawtucket, Central Falls, North Providence, East Providence, Coventry, Newport, and Narragansett could meet less than half of the estimated maximum demand.

Figure 4 Share of Maximum Estimated Maximum Demand Met by All Providers



Statewide capacity for meeting the maximum estimated demand at highly rated ECE providers is even lower as illustrated by Figure 5. In 43% of the state's 792 block groups, there were no seats available at highly rated ECE providers within a half-mile radius. The best served block groups, which are located in Providence, Central Falls, Cumberland, Warwick, West Warwick, East Greenwich, Middletown, North Kingstown, and Warren could meet between 20 and 52 percent of the maximum demand at a highly rated provider.

Figure 5 Share of Maximum Estimated Demand Met by Highly Rated Providers



Given the statewide ECE seat shortage, it is helpful to also calculate a *relative shortage* for each block group. This measure accounts for the fact that not all families use childcare by comparing the relationship between supply and demand in each block group with the typical relationship across the state. It is intended to highlight areas where, relative to the region's market for childcare, the gap between supply and demand is especially large or small.

Across the state, 5,876 children live in block groups where the relative shortage is much larger than the typical statewide shortage. Notably, children under 5 and families living in poverty were *not overrepresented* in these high-gap block groups.¹ About 10% of the children and 6% of families who lived in these areas were living in poverty, neither of which was significantly different than 9% of children and 6% of families in the lowest gap block groups.

Table 3 Relative Shortages and Children and Families in Poverty

Relative Shortage	Children Under 5	% of Children Under 5 in Poverty	% Family in Poverty
Much Larger than Typical Shortage	5,876 (10.6%)	10%	6%
Larger than Typical Shortage	10,139 (18.4%)	9%	4%
Typical Shortage	23,563 (42.7%)	19%	10%
Less than Typical Shortage	11,108 (20.1%)	17%	8%
Much Less than Typical Shortage	4,498 (8.2%)	9%	6%
Total	55,184 (100%)	14%	7%

Figure 6 shows each block group's relative shortage, highlighting places where the shortage for care is particularly high. East Greenwich, Scituate, Lincoln, Smithfield, Warwick, Narragansett, Newport, and Portsmouth all have shortages of ECE seats that are much greater than the typical Rhode Island block group. Figure 7 shows each block group's relative shortage of highly rated care. Places with a particularly high relative shortage of highly rated care include block groups in Providence, East Providence, Pawtucket, Smithfield, Cranston, and East Greenwich.

¹ The data source for the share of children under 5 and families living in poverty is the 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. The Census Bureau measures poverty using the poverty thresholds, which is a federal poverty measure that is primarily used for statistical purposes where precision is important. The poverty threshold for 2021 for a family of three was about \$21,800.

Figure 6 Relative Shortage for All ECE Supply

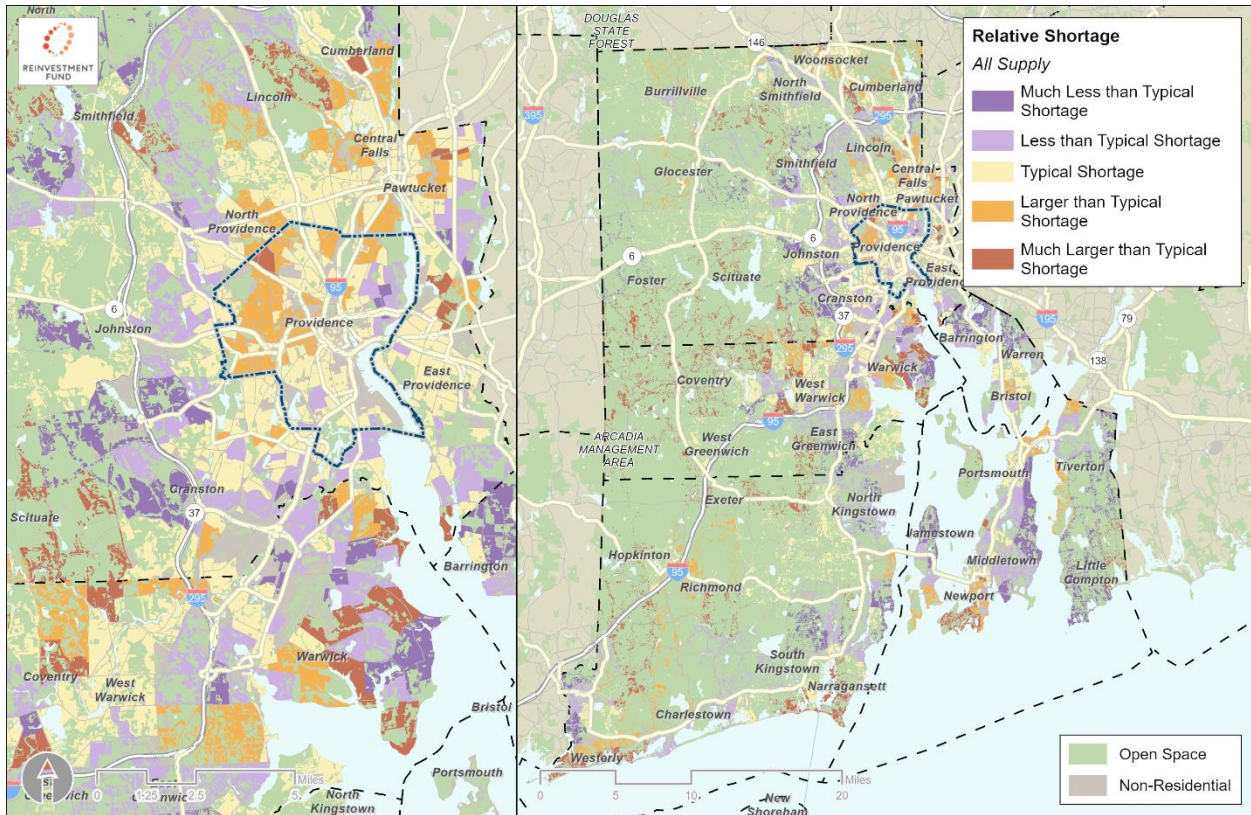
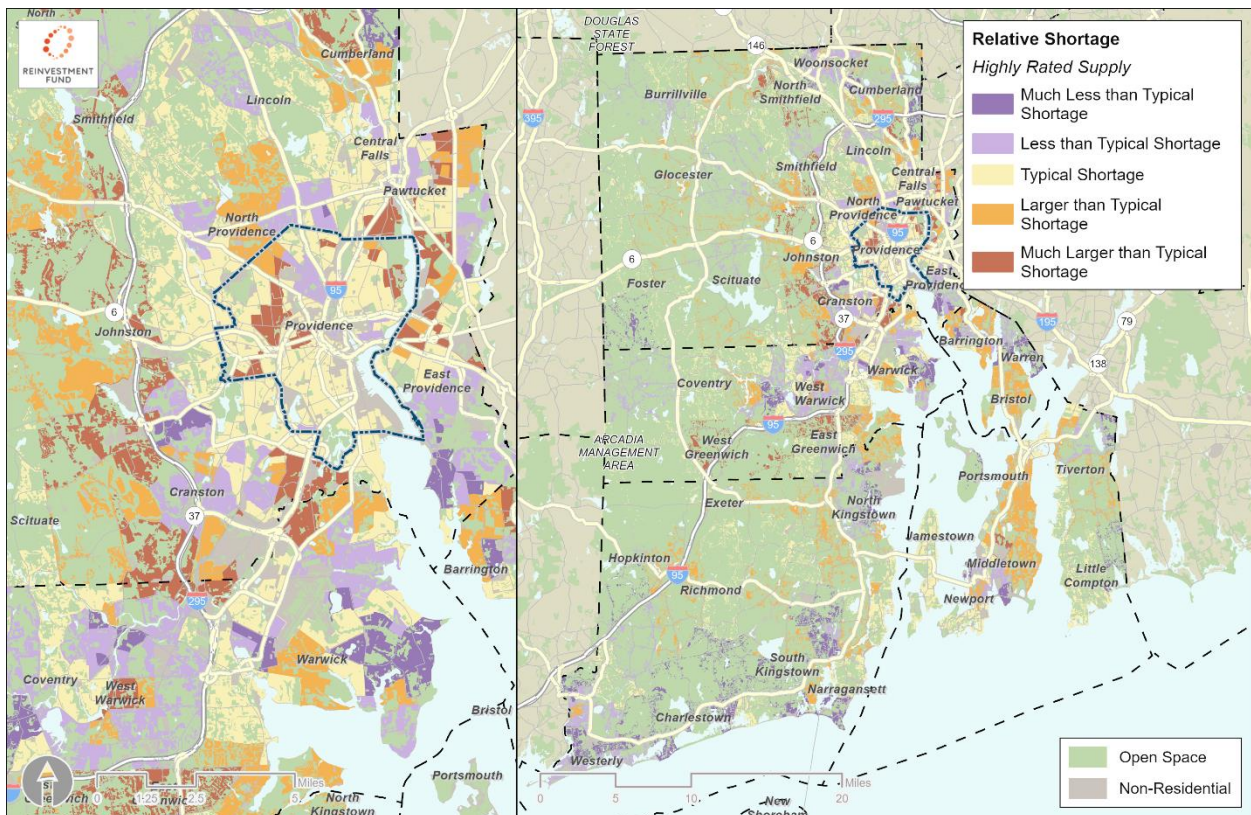


Figure 7 Relative Shortage for Highly Rated Supply



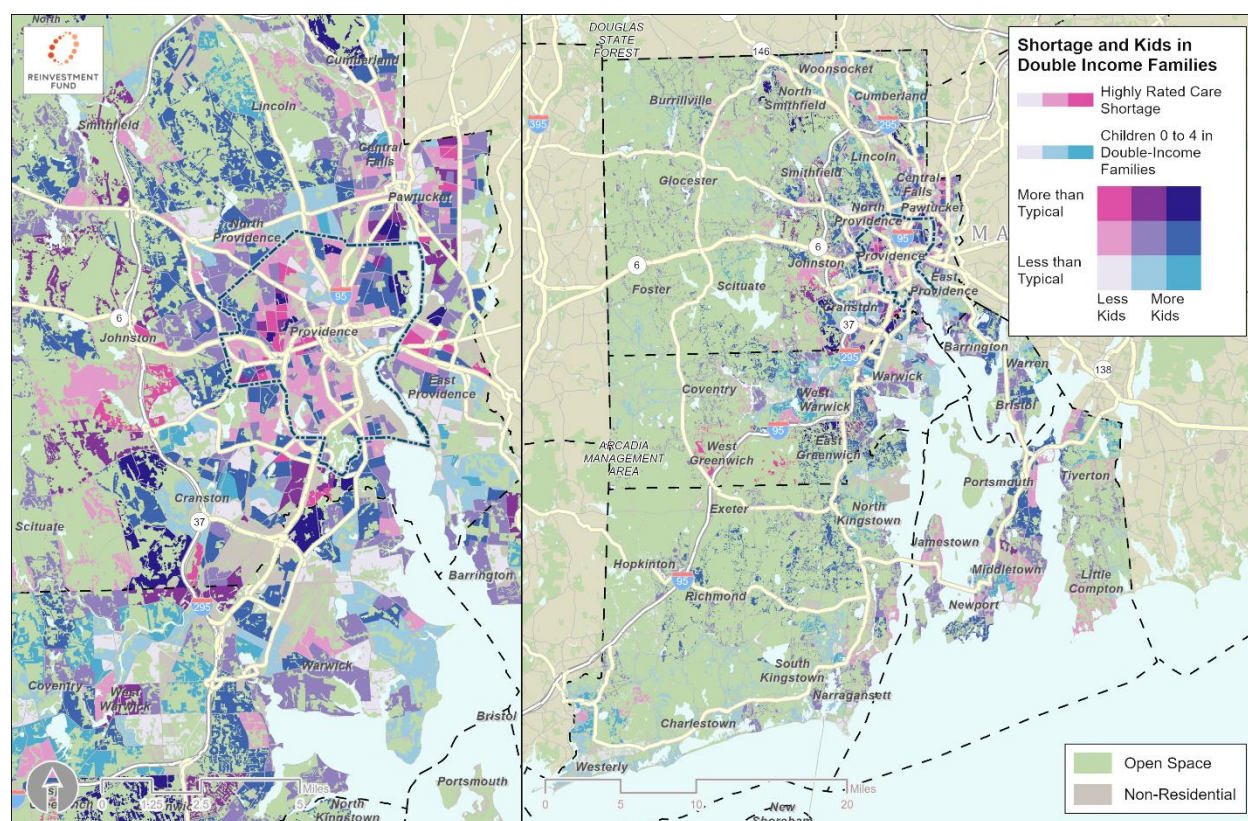
Overlays

Household attributes like family composition, income, and capacity to speak English can impact early childhood education outreach and needs. This section examines the intersection of household attributes and shortages of highly rated ECE seats to show not just *where* but *who* is likely to be impacted.

Double Income Households

While having two employed caregivers can increase the overall amount of income available within a household, it can also reduce the number of adults available to care for young children. Block groups with more children living in double income households may have higher levels of actual demand (as distinct from maximum possible demand) for care outside the home. Figure 8 shows the interaction of the shortage in highly rated ECE care relative to the share of double income families in the community. Block groups that are dark blue, including some in Cumberland, North Smithfield, East Greenwich, have both a *larger than typical* shortage of highly rated ECE seats and a *high share of families with two incomes*.

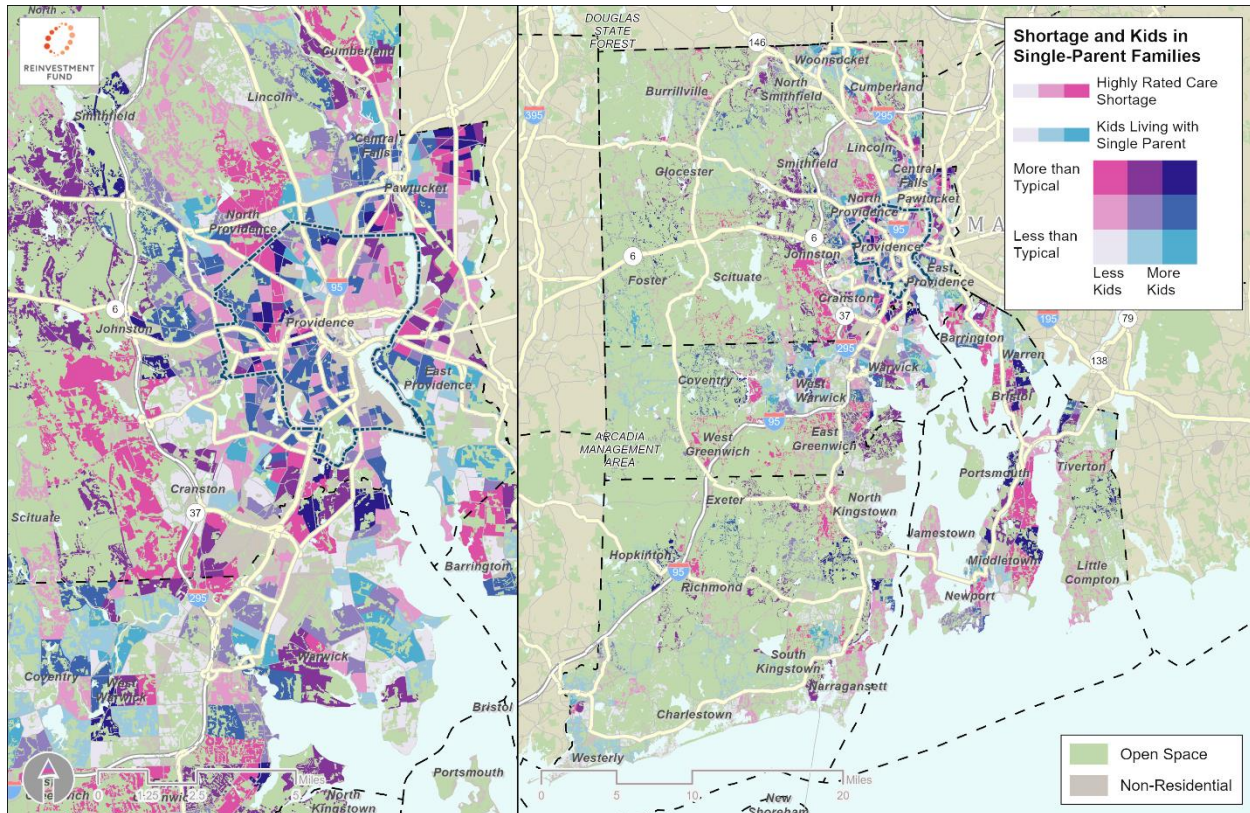
Figure 8 Relative Shortage by Double Income Families



Single-Parent Households

Children living in single parent households are more likely to be in weekly childcare and more likely to spend more hours in care than those in two parent households.² Figure 9 shows the number of children living in single parent households in block groups across Rhode Island. Map locations in dark blue, including some sections of Providence, Johnstown, West Warwick, Smithfield, Warren, Bristol, Portsmouth and Middletown, show the areas with a high concentration of *single-parent households* and a *higher than typical shortage* of highly rated ECE seats.

Figure 9 Relative Shortage by Single-Parent Families

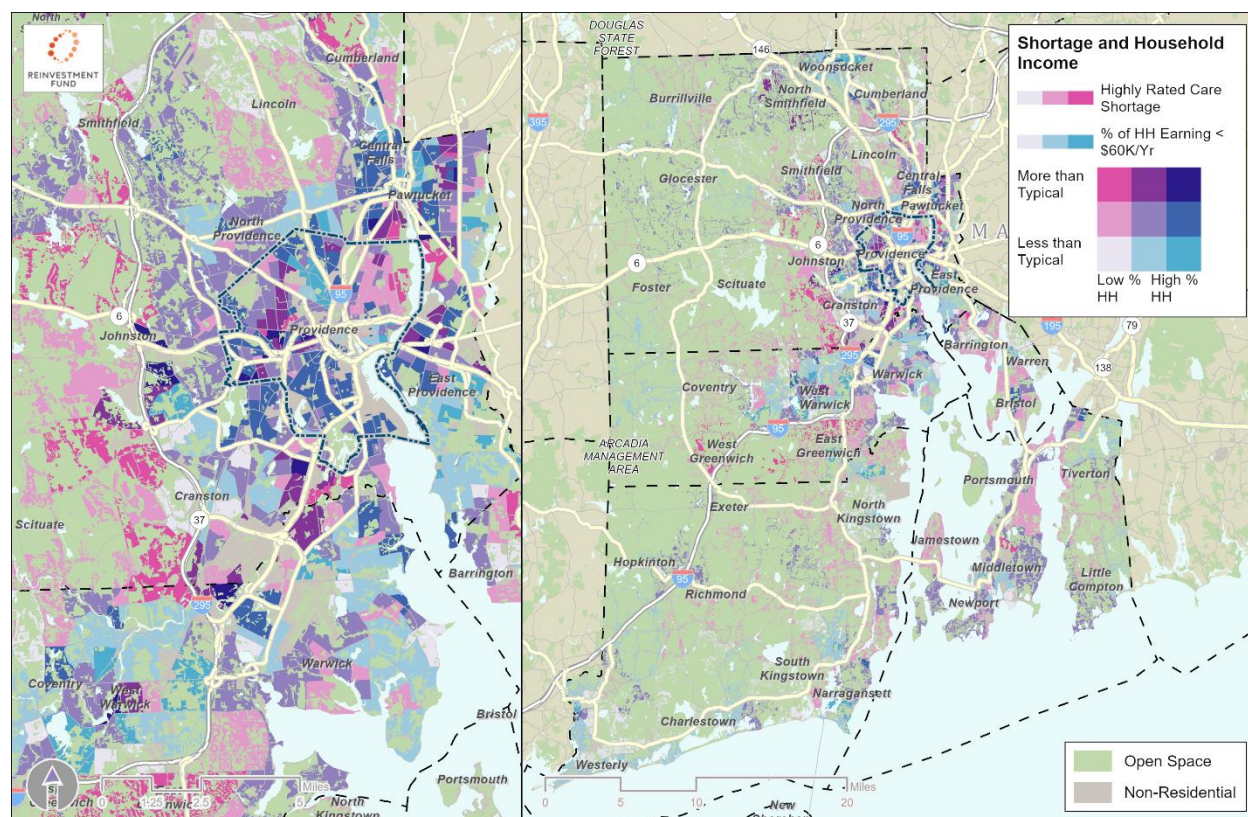


² [Early Child Care in Single-Parent and Two-Parent Families: 2019 \(ed.gov\)](https://www.ed.gov)

Household Income of Less than \$60,000

Families with up to four members and household incomes of less than \$60,000 meet the income eligibility criteria for the Rhode Island Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).³ In Figure 10, dark blue places have both *high shares of households with incomes of less than \$60,000* and a *higher than typical shortage* of highly rated ECE seats available. Included in this category are block groups in Providence, Johnston, Pawtucket, and West Warwick.

Figure 10 Relative Shortage and Household Income of Less than \$60,000

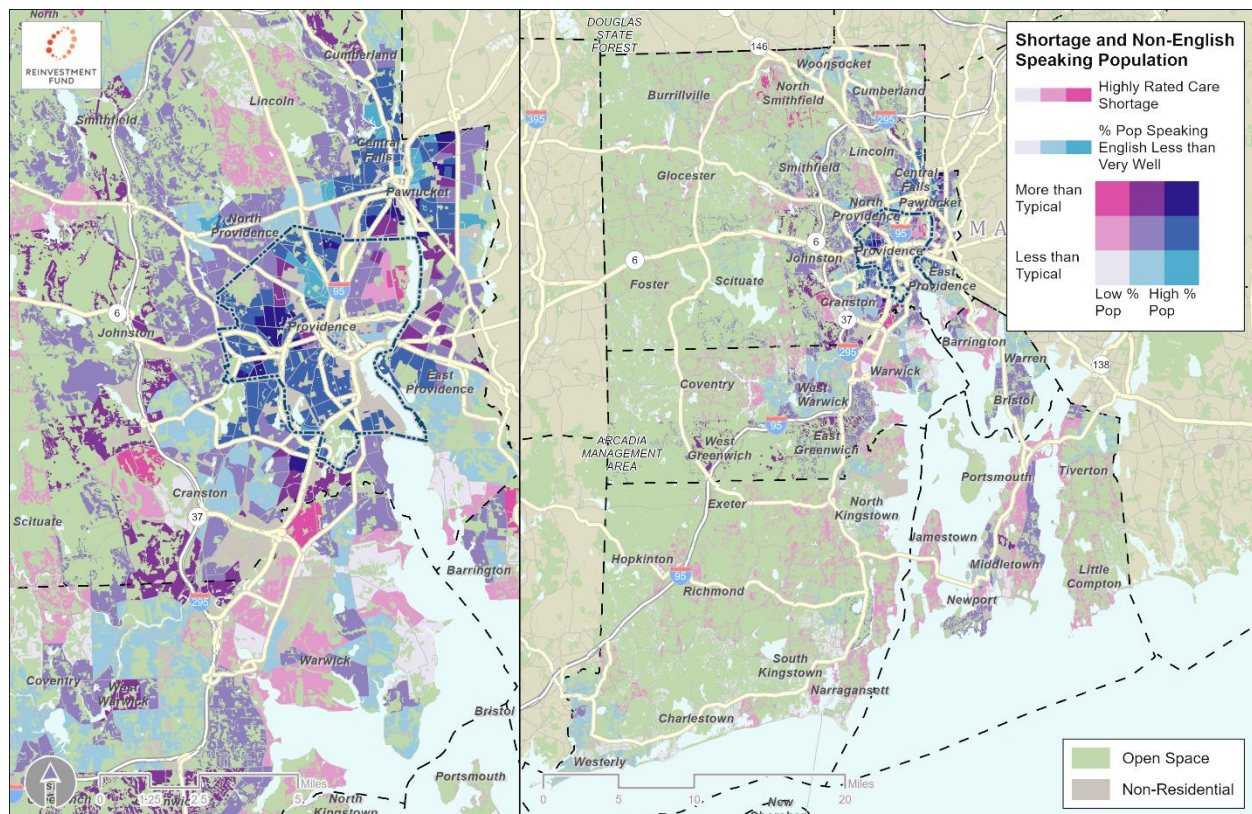


³ [CCAP one pager final.8.16 0.pdf](#)

Non-English-Speaking Households

Non-English-speaking families have unique ECE needs. Outreach is more successful if performed in the family's native language and in coordination with trusted community-based organizations.⁴ Areas in dark blue on Figure 11 show block groups where there is both a high share of non-English Speaking residents and a higher than typical shortage of highly rated ECE seats. These areas are mostly within Providence, Pawtucket and East Providence.

Figure 11 Relative Shortage and Non-English Speaking Population



⁴ [Family Outreach Series Strategies for Outreach to Families with Limited English Proficiency \(hhs.gov\)](https://www.hhs.gov/family-outreach-series-strategies-for-outreach-to-families-with-limited-english-proficiency)

Appendix

Figure A1 Estimated Number of Highly Rated Seats Available for Children Under 2

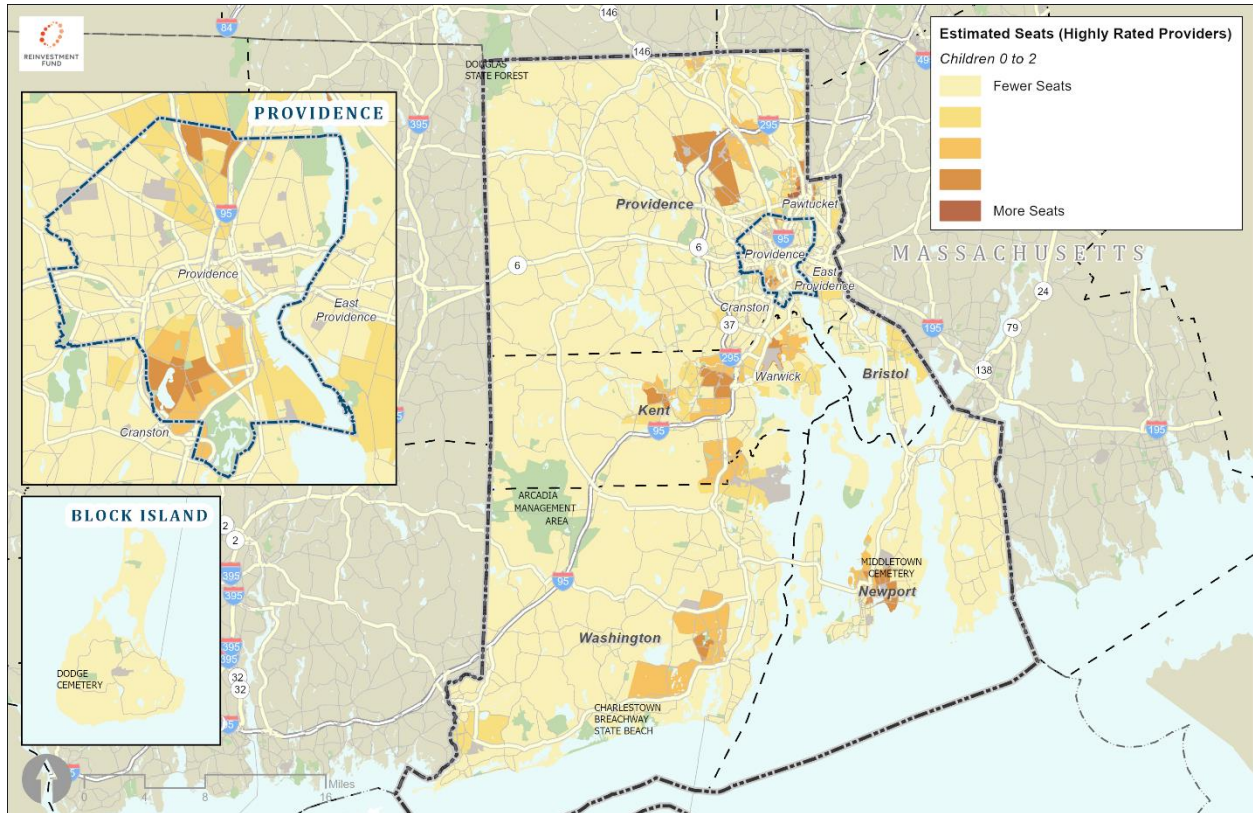


Figure A2 Maximum Possible Demand for Children 0 to 2

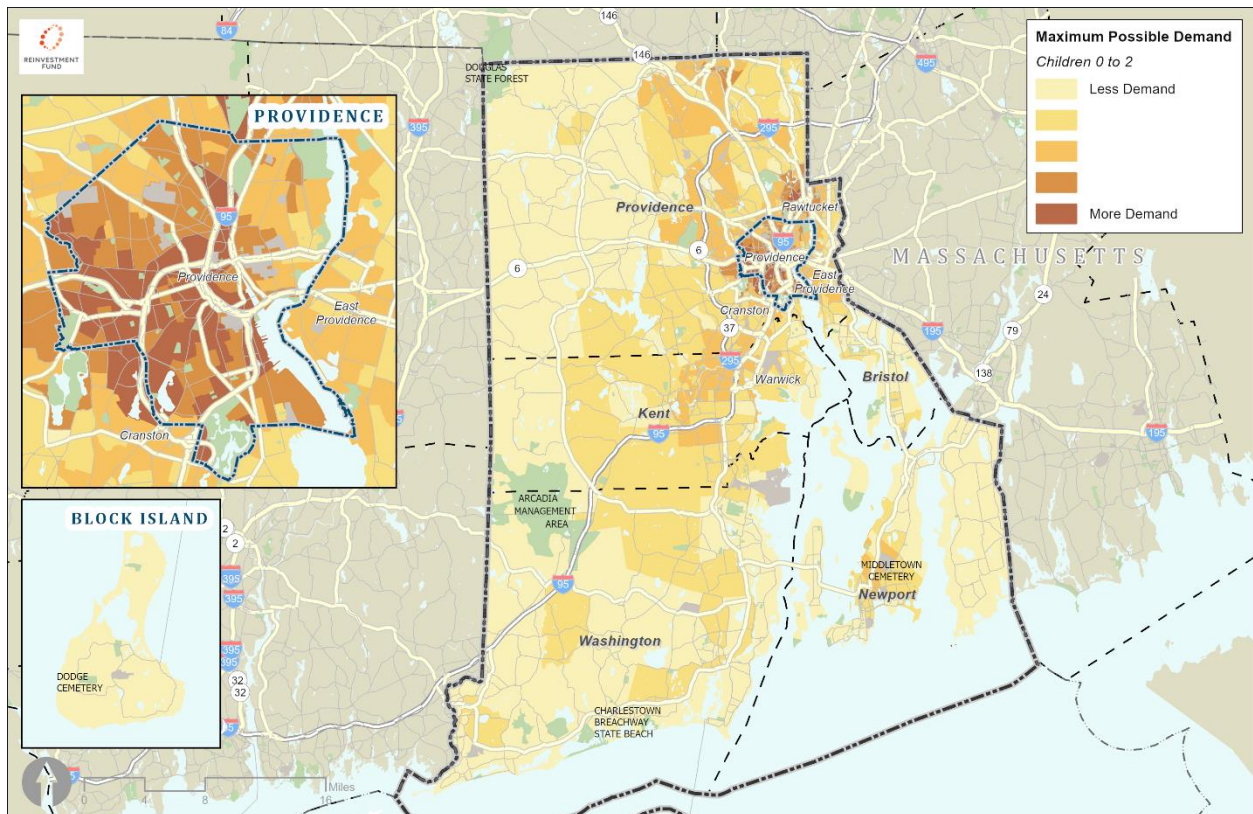


Figure A3 ECE Aged Children in Double Income Households, Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2017-21

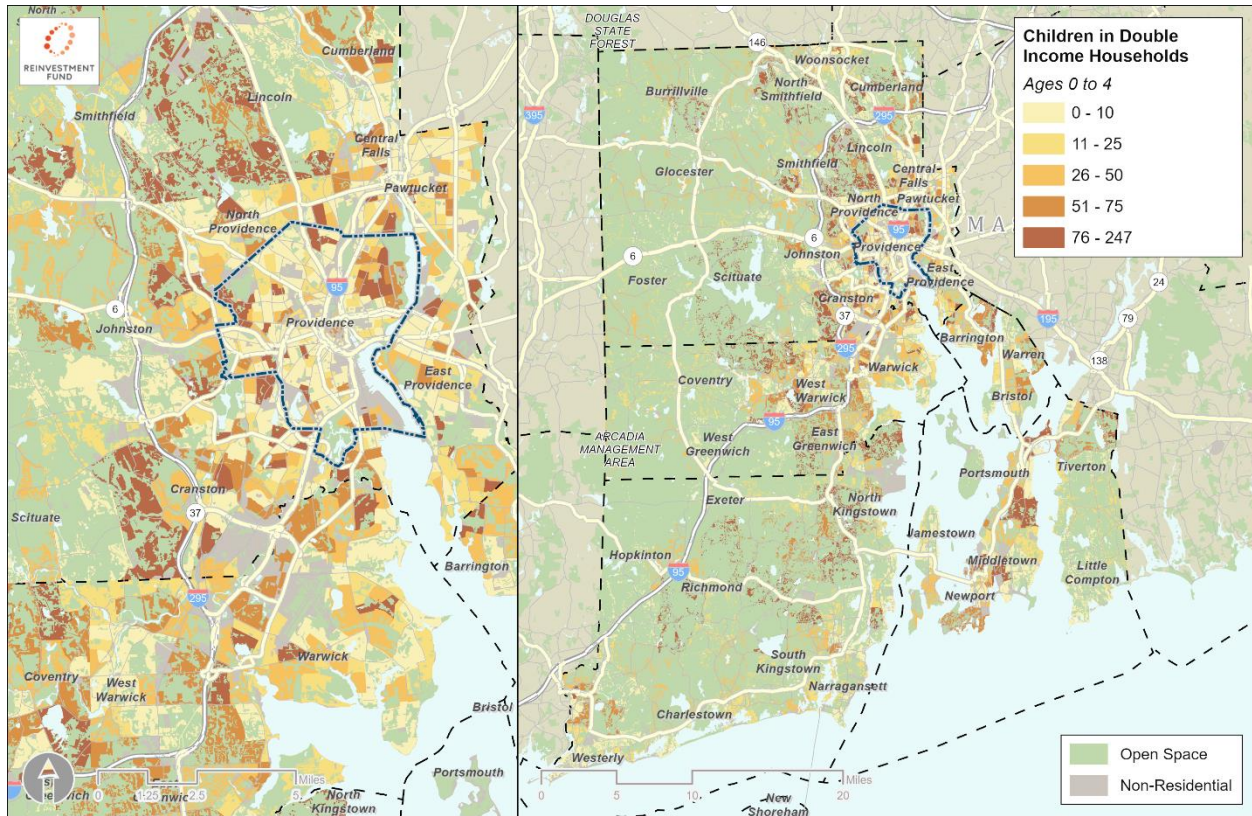


Figure A4 ECE Aged Children in Single Parent Households, Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2017-21

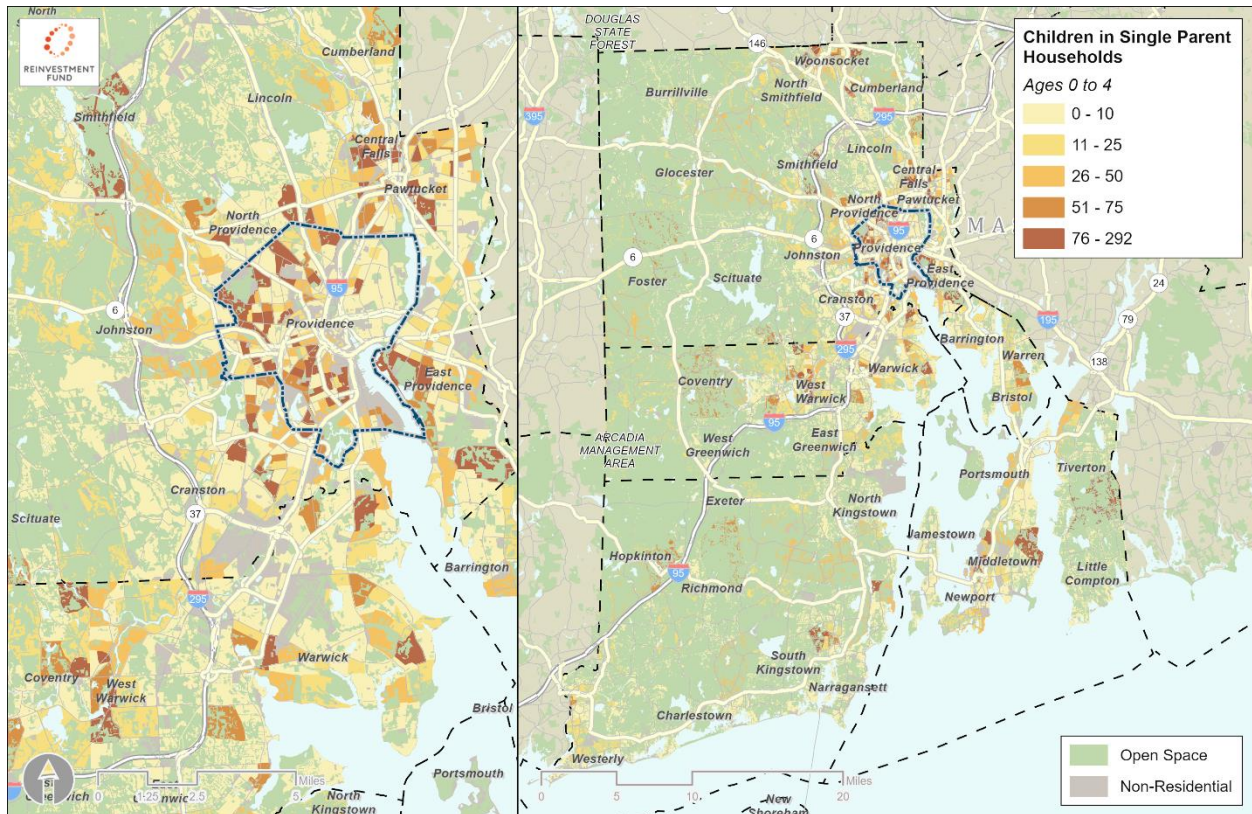


Figure A5 Share of Households with Incomes Below \$60,000, Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2017-21

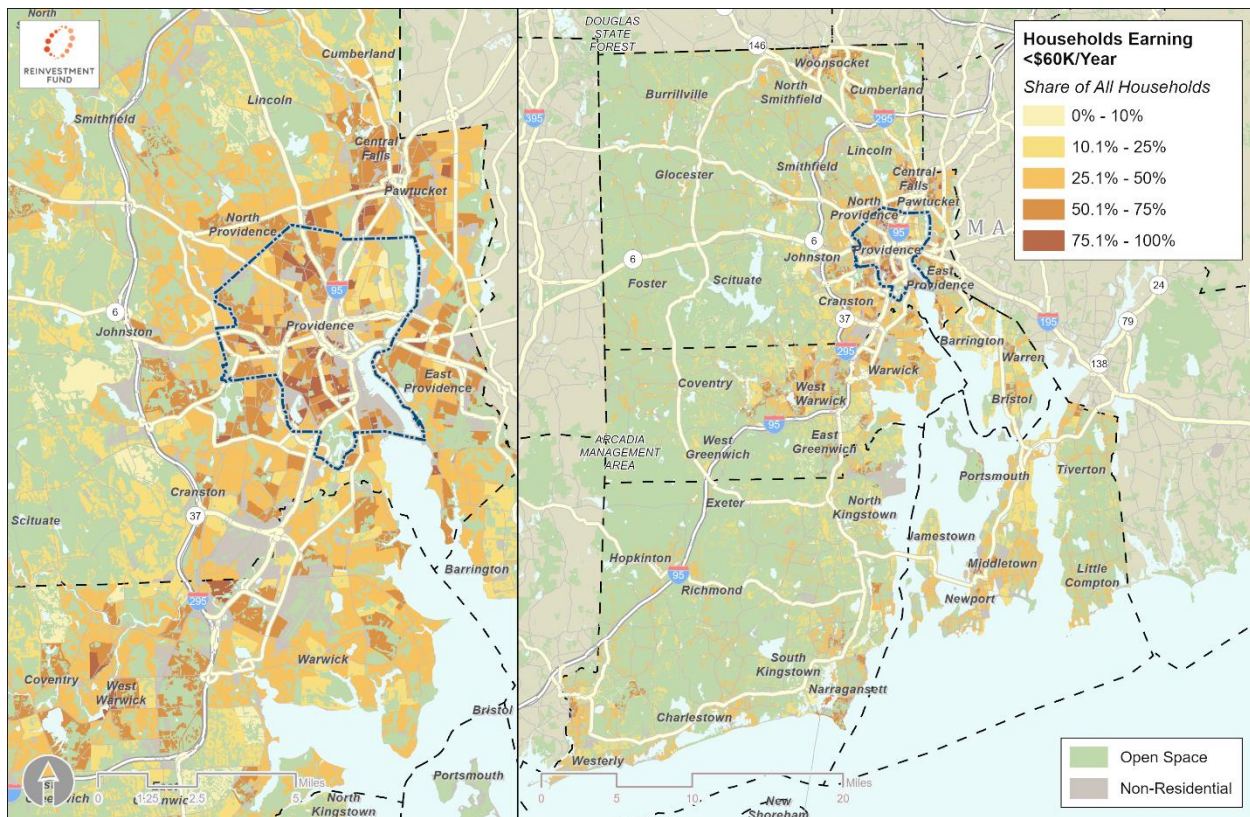


Figure A6 Share of Households with Incomes Below \$75,000, Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2017-21

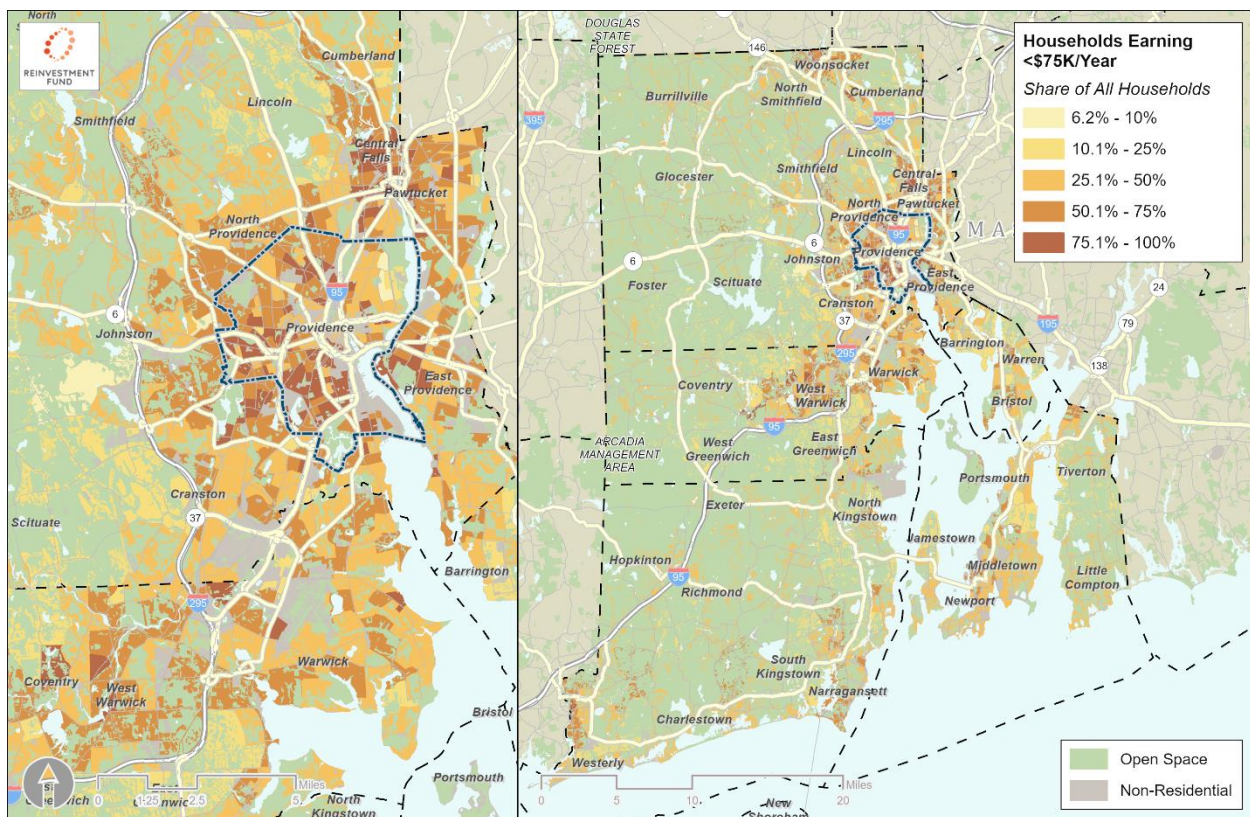
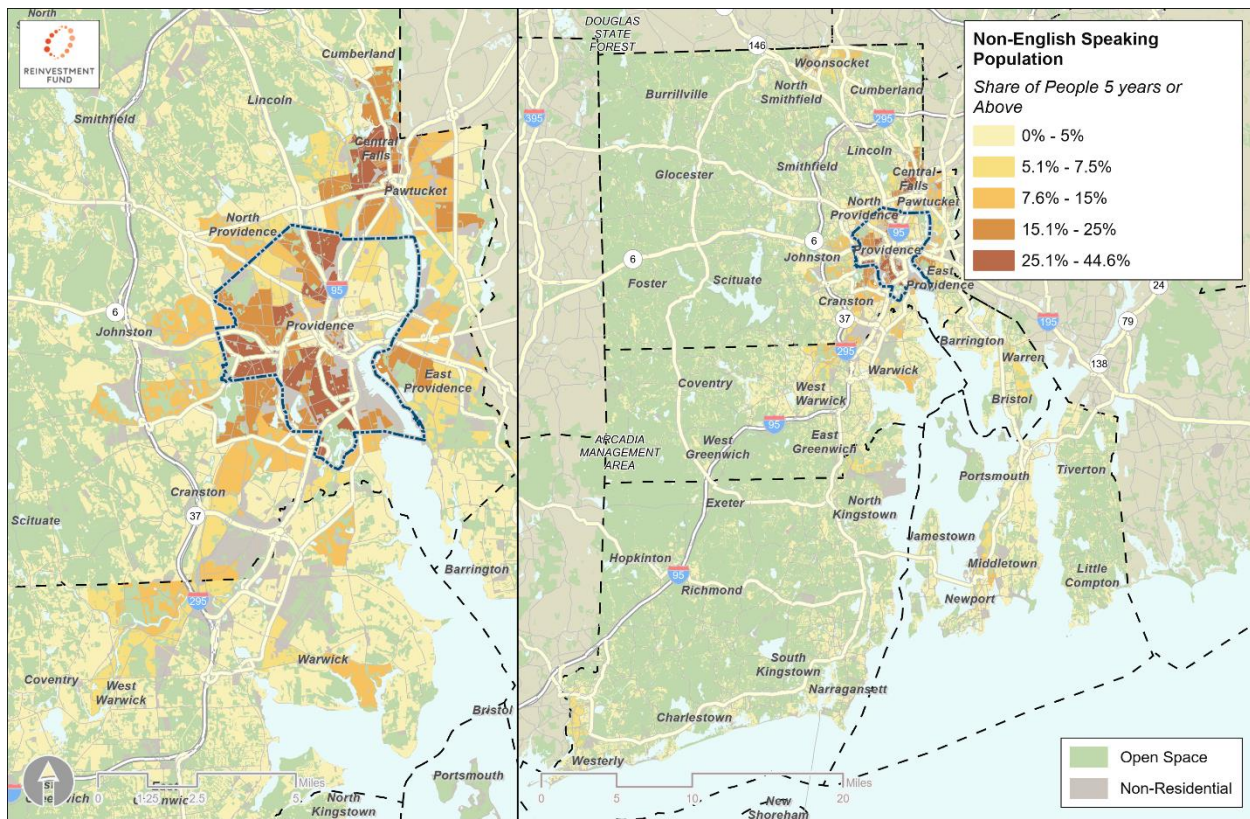


Figure A7 Share of Population that is Non-English Speaking, Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2017-21



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