

Breastfeeding

DEFINITION

Breastfeeding is the percentage of newborn infants who are exclusively breastfed at the time of hospital discharge.

SIGNIFICANCE

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) identifies breastfeeding as the ideal method of feeding and nurturing infants and recognizes breastfeeding as a critical component in achieving optimal infant and child health, growth and development. The AAP recommends exclusive breastfeeding for six months after birth, continuous breastfeeding for at least 12 months after birth, and thereafter as long as mutually desired.¹

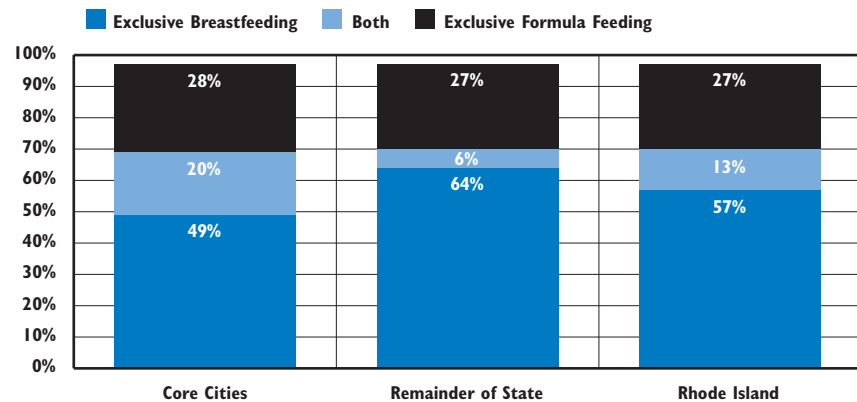
Breastfeeding decreases infant mortality and morbidity.² Benefits for infants include optimal nutrition, reduced risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) as well as reduced risk for chronic conditions such as obesity, type 1 and 2 diabetes and childhood leukemia. Additionally, breastfeeding benefits mothers by creating a strong bond with infants and decreasing risk for postpartum depression, type 2 diabetes, breast and ovarian cancer.³ Breastfeeding provides significant social and economic benefits including reduced cost to the family, reduced health care costs and reduced employee absenteeism.⁴

Breastfeeding can be effectively

promoted by practices that take place before, during, and after labor and delivery.⁵ Educating new mothers and women of childbearing age about breastfeeding is instrumental to increasing practice initiation. Hospital and other birth facility policies and practices influence the success of breastfeeding.⁶ Access to professional lactation consultants, involvement in mother-to-mother lactation support networks, and birth facility support for breastfeeding all factor into protecting, supporting and promoting breastfeeding.⁷ Without adequate support, women are more likely to stop breastfeeding earlier.⁸ Certain social determinants also influence exclusivity and duration of breastfeeding. Breastfeeding rates generally increase with maternal age, higher educational achievement and higher income levels.⁹

Healthy People 2010, the nation's health agenda, established target breastfeeding rates of 75% at birth, 50% at 6 months and 25% at one year.¹⁰ Rhode Island exceeded the *Healthy People 2010* goal with 75% of infants born in 2006 having ever been breastfed.¹¹ Nationally, the percentage of infants who were ever breastfed has significantly increased from 60% among infants born in 1993-1994 to 77% among infants born between 2005-2006, which exceeds the *Healthy People 2010* target.¹²

Breastfeeding and Formula Feeding Rates in Rhode Island, 2004-2008



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Newborn Developmental Risk Screening Program, 2004-2008. *Breastfeeding* and *formula feeding* are defined as intended feeding method at hospital discharge. Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket. Totals may not sum to 100% because data on feeding methods were not available on 3% of births.

- ◆ Nationally in 2007, Hispanic children were the most likely to have ever been breastfed, followed by Asian and Native American children.¹³ Nationally, non-Hispanic black children are the least likely to have been breastfed, although significant increases in breastfeeding rates have occurred in this group since the mid-1990s.¹⁴
- ◆ Between 2004 and 2008, more than half (57%) of all women who gave birth in Rhode Island chose to exclusively breastfeed their children, nearly one-third (27%) chose to exclusively formula feed, 13% chose to use a combination of breast and formula feeding and data on feeding method was not available for 3% of births.¹⁵
- ◆ Of new mothers in Rhode Island between 2004 and 2008 who were surveyed approximately 3 months after giving birth, 73% reported having ever breastfed. Fifty-two percent of these mothers reported continued breastfeeding at the time of the survey.¹⁶
- ◆ In 2008, the Rhode Island General Assembly enacted a law that provides mothers with the explicit right to breastfeed in public places. Despite protective laws, mothers and babies who breastfeed in public can still face obstacles and negative reactions from others. Rhode Island does not have legislation that mandates support for breastfeeding mothers who return to work, as do fifteen other states.¹⁷

Table 17.

Breastfeeding Rates, Rhode Island, 2004-2008

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER OF BIRTHS SCREENED	NUMBER BREAST AND FORMULA FEEDING	NUMBER EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFEEDING	PERCENT WITH ANY BREASTFEEDING	PERCENT EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFEEDING
Barrington	644	23	531	86%	82%
Bristol	878	46	575	71%	65%
Burrillville	686	37	402	64%	59%
Central Falls	1,997	588	861	73%	43%
Charlestown	367	9	272	77%	74%
Coventry	1,663	65	987	63%	59%
Cranston	4,230	457	2,453	69%	58%
Cumberland	1,578	106	1,038	72%	66%
East Greenwich	564	25	420	79%	74%
East Providence	2,541	223	1,463	66%	58%
Exeter	254	7	182	74%	72%
Foster	229	18	164	79%	72%
Glocester	361	20	234	70%	65%
Hopkinton	464	18	333	76%	72%
Jamestown	180	6	146	84%	81%
Johnston	1,372	116	714	60%	52%
Lincoln	876	51	573	71%	65%
Little Compton	111	5	92	87%	83%
Middletown	962	43	724	80%	75%
Narragansett	472	28	347	79%	74%
New Shoreham	48	1	43	92%	90%
Newport	1,492	89	1,044	76%	70%
North Kingstown	1,281	62	883	74%	69%
North Providence	1,713	169	956	66%	56%
North Smithfield	399	23	261	71%	65%
Pawtucket	5,400	1,026	2,737	70%	51%
Portsmouth	733	23	576	82%	79%
Providence	14,559	3,507	7,087	73%	49%
Richmond	416	21	298	77%	72%
Scituate	436	26	290	72%	67%
Smithfield	689	33	458	71%	66%
South Kingstown	1,167	45	874	79%	75%
Tiverton	357	17	250	75%	70%
Warren	498	19	296	63%	59%
Warwick	4,104	216	2,446	65%	60%
West Greenwich	243	15	162	73%	67%
West Warwick	1,987	112	1,045	58%	53%
Westerly	1,232	66	870	76%	71%
Woonsocket	3,067	460	1,225	55%	40%
Unknown	3	1	0	NA	NA
Core Cities	28,502	5,782	13,999	69%	49%
Remainder of State	31,748	2,039	20,313	70%	64%
Rhode Island	60,253	7,822	34,312	70%	57%

Notes

The number of births screened may differ from the total number of births reported elsewhere in the Factbook as not all documented births received a screening.

“Percent with Any Breastfeeding” includes infants fed breast milk in combination with formula and those exclusively breastfed.

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Newborn Developmental Risk Assessment Screening Program Database and Maternal and Child Health Database, 2004-2008. *Breastfeeding* is defined as breastfeeding as intended feeding method at hospital discharge. Births to Rhode Island women that occurred outside Rhode Island are not included.

References

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