



For Immediate Release
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Online Kids Count Report on Newborns in All 50 States Released

***Over the Past 15 Years, Rhode Island Shows Improvements on
Five of Nine Measures of Infant Health and Development***

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***Rhode Island Has the Best Rate in the Nation for Women Receiving  
Prenatal Care***

**PROVIDENCE, RI** – The new online report, *The Right Start for America's Newborns: City and State Trends*, has been updated to include 2004 data. A joint project of Child Trends and the National KIDS COUNT Project, an initiative of The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the report presents 15 years worth of data (1990-2004) on nine measures of healthy births for each state and the nation's 50 largest cities, as well as Providence. Conditions surrounding a child's birth often reflect the forces that will shape a young person's life. The nine state-level conditions measured in the report include: births to teens; births to teens who were already mothers; births to unmarried women; births to mothers with less than 12 years of education; births to mothers receiving late or no prenatal care; births to mothers who smoked during pregnancy; low birthweight births (less than 5.5 pounds); preterm births (less than 37 weeks of gestation); and new national data on birth outcomes by the race and ethnicity of the mother for every year since 1990. The new data show that for nearly all birth outcomes measured, babies born to White non-Hispanic mothers fare better than babies born to Hispanic mothers and Black non-Hispanic mothers. Available at <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/sld/rightstart.jsp>, the report allows viewers to create custom reports such as state and city profiles, line graphs showing trends over time, color-coded U.S. maps, and ranking tables.

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The circumstances under which a baby is born can have lifelong implications. The report shows that Rhode Island is making progress in improving many of those circumstances, but risks remain for many newborns. In five of the nine measures, Rhode Island made positive progress since 1990 and Rhode Island ranks in the top half of the nation in six of the nine measures. Rhode Island ranks best in the nation in the lowest percentage of total births to mothers who received late or no prenatal care (1.5%, compared with the national average of 3.6%). “Rhode Island has continued to stay the course on health care for pregnant women and children, and the investments made are reflected in the positive outcomes in these data,” said Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Executive Director Elizabeth Burke Bryant. “Rhode Island’s nationally recognized RItE Care health insurance program for pregnant women and children ensures that women have access to regular prenatal care, which plays a large role in achieving the positive results described in this report.”

### **Maternal Risk Factors**

- Births to mothers who smoked during pregnancy in Rhode Island declined by 50%, from 22.4% in 1990 to 11.3% in 2004. In the city of Providence, the percentage of mothers who smoked during pregnancy decreased by more than half, from 20.6% in 1990 to 9.5% in 2004, which is slightly below the 2004 national rate of 10.2%.
- Between 1990 and 2004, births to women with less than 12 years of education in Rhode Island declined by 19%, from 19.2% of all births in 1990 to 15.5% of all births in 2004, well below the national rate of 22.2%. In Providence, the percentage of births to mothers with less than 12 years of education decreased by 16%, from 34.5% of births in 1990 to 29.0% of births in 2004.
- The percentage of all births to teen mothers in Rhode Island declined from 10.5% of all births in 1990 to 9.2% of all births in 2004. Nearly one in five (18.9%) births to Rhode Island teens in 2004 was to a teen who was already a mother. In Providence, the percentage of teen births to women who were already mothers decreased from 30.0% in 1990 to 23.3% in 2004.
- Similar to national trends, births to unmarried women in Rhode Island increased by 42% between 1990 and 2004, from 26.3% of all births to 37.3% of all births. Births to unmarried women in Providence increased from 48.1% of all births in 1990 to 58.2% in 2004.

## **Birth Outcomes**

- There was a 29% increase in the percentage of low birthweight babies born in the state, from 6.2% of all births in 1990 to 8.0% in 2004. The percentage of Providence births that were low birthweight increased by 16%, from 7.7% of all births in 1990 to 8.9% of all births in 2004. Nationally there was also an increase in the percentage of low birthweight babies born, from 7.6% in 2000 to 8.1% in 2004.
- The percentage of preterm births (less than 37 weeks gestation) increased by 23%, from 9.6% of all births in 1990 to 11.8% of all births in 2004. In Providence, the percent of preterm births increased from 11.9% in 1990 to 13.9% in 2004.

“Over the past 15 years, Rhode Island has seen many improvements in health conditions for newborns, including more women receiving timely prenatal care, fewer women who smoke during pregnancy, fewer first and repeat births to teens, and fewer births to mothers with less than a high school education. We need to build on our successes in these areas of prenatal care to further improve child well-being outcomes,” stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “The best way to do this is to improve access to comprehensive health services for mothers and children and to invest in high quality education for youth which will reduce the rate of teen pregnancy.”

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve and ensure the health, economic well-being, education, and safety of Rhode Island children. The organization is one of fifty state-level organizations that works in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the social condition of children at the state and local level across the country.