

Babies

DEFINITION

Babies is the number of babies born in Rhode Island to families that reside in Rhode Island.

SIGNIFICANCE

Births have been declining for most of the past decade, both nationally and in Rhode Island. In 2021, the U.S. general fertility rate was 56.3 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44, the first increase since 2014. Rhode Island has the second lowest fertility rate among states (48.3 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44). The general decline in the fertility rate is due to women delaying childbearing, as well as having fewer total children.^{1,2}

Nationally, fertility rates have declined across all racial and ethnic groups; however, Black and Hispanic women have higher fertility rates than other groups.^{3,4} Fertility rates, as well as immigration, an increase in multiracial marriages, and the proportion of women of childbearing age among racial and ethnic groups has led to an increasingly diverse child population, both in Rhode Island and nationally.⁵ In 2020 in Rhode Island, 46% of babies born were Babies of Color.⁶

One factor that contributes to the decision to have a child is the high cost of raising a child in the U.S. A middle-class family spends an average of

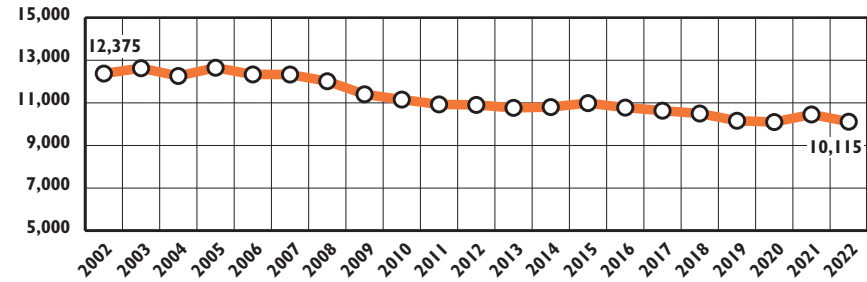
\$311,000 from birth to age 17 on housing, child care and other costs.⁷ Policies such as paid family leave, subsidized child care and housing, universal Pre-K, and tax credits can help families afford the high cost of raising a child and improve the health and well-being of children.^{8,9}

The basic architecture of the human brain develops during the infant and toddler years. Babies who have positive early childhood experiences, stable, loving relationships with parents and caregivers, and good health and nutrition have a sturdy foundation to thrive. Babies who don't get what they need for healthy growth and development in the first few years of life can encounter lifelong educational, social, health, and developmental challenges.^{10,11}

Infancy is a time of great opportunity and vulnerability. A child's development can be harmed by toxic stress caused by adverse childhood experiences (including extreme poverty, child abuse, caregiver mental health or substance use disorders, household violence) and factors such as community violence, food insecurity, and racism. These negative experiences in early childhood place a child at increased risk for developmental delays, mental health challenges, and health issues. High-quality early childhood programs can prevent or reverse the effects of early adversity.^{12,13,14}



Rhode Island Births, 2002-2022



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Vital Records, Rivers Database 2002-2022. Note: Birth data includes babies born to mothers living in Rhode Island at the time of birth whether the baby was born in Rhode Island or elsewhere. Birth data for 2022 is provisional.

◆ The number of babies born to mothers living in Rhode Island at the time of birth declined 18% between 2002 and 2022, from 12,375 babies in 2002 to 10,115 babies in 2022.¹⁵

◆ The U.S. teen birth rate reached a record low in 2021, with 13.9 births per 1,000 teens ages 15 to 19. Rhode Island had the fifth lowest teen birth rate in the U.S. in 2021, with 7.8 births per 1,000 teens ages 15 to 19.¹⁶



Births by Key Risk Factors, Rhode Island, 2022

◆ All babies born in Rhode Island are screened through the Rhode Island Department of Health's Newborn Risk Assessment Program. In 2022, there were 6,346 newborns (65%) who had developmental, socio-economic and/or health factors that potentially put them at risk for poor outcomes later in life. Babies in families considered "at risk" are referred to First Connections at the Department of Health to help support healthy child development.^{17,18,19}

◆ Of the 9,691 babies born in Rhode Island in 2022, 4,029 (42%) had a mother with a documented history of treatment for mental health conditions, 751 (8%) had a mother with a documented history of substance use disorders, and 267 (3%) had a mother with documented involvement in the child welfare system (either as an adult or as a child).²⁰

Table 2.

Babies, Rhode Island, 2022

CITY/TOWN	# OF BABIES BORN TO FAMILIES WITH MEDICAID/RITECARE	# OF BABIES BORN TO MOTHERS YOUNGER THAN AGE 20	# OF BABIES BORN WHO SCREENED RISK POSITIVE	TOTAL # OF BIRTHS
Barrington	11	0	41	114
Bristol	26	0	70	127
Burrillville	36	0	63	110
Central Falls	213	16	236	275
Charlestown	13	0	27	51
Coventry	91	5	198	327
Cranston	267	14	474	754
Cumberland	63	5	141	294
East Greenwich	15	*	53	141
East Providence	142	10	265	418
Exeter	11	0	22	49
Foster	11	*	23	38
Glocester	12	0	44	70
Hopkinton	8	0	24	55
Jamestown	*	*	8	19
Johnston	87	*	167	263
Lincoln	51	*	109	193
Little Compton	*	0	*	7
Middletown	36	*	65	138
Narragansett	13	0	34	65
New Shoreham	*	0	6	10
Newport	84	6	127	190
North Kingstown	35	*	90	204
North Providence	94	*	191	311
North Smithfield	17	0	40	79
Pawtucket	464	33	622	805
Portsmouth	21	*	49	111
Providence	1,440	130	1,780	2,245
Richmond	17	*	37	89
Scituate	16	*	39	86
Smithfield	32	*	77	157
South Kingstown	35	5	73	159
Tiverton	19	*	39	62
Warren	23	0	49	80
Warwick	171	16	382	663
West Greenwich	7	*	26	48
West Warwick	105	9	183	274
Westerly	47	*	84	142
Woonsocket	304	16	384	468
Four Core Cities	2,421	195	3,022	3,793
Remainder of State	1,624	102	3,324	5,898
Rhode Island	4,045	297	6,346	9,691

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, KIDSNET Database, 2022. Birth data from 2022 are provisional. Data include only babies born in Rhode Island to Rhode Island residents.

*Data for cities and towns with fewer than five babies are suppressed by the Rhode Island Department of Health due to the policy regarding sensitive reproductive health information of a potentially socially-stigmatizing age group. These births are still counted in the remainder of state and state totals.

“Babies who Screened Risk Positive” are newborns who had one or more developmental, socio-economic, and/or health factors that potentially put them at risk for later poor outcomes in the Rhode Island Department of Health’s Newborn Risk Assessment Program.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

References

^{1,3,16} Osterman, M. J. K., Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., Driscoll, A. K., & Valenzuela, C. P. (2023). Births: Final data for 2021. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 72(1). Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

² The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2022). *The long-term decline in fertility—and what it means for state budgets*. Retrieved February 9, 2023, from [pewtrusts.org](https://www.pewtrusts.org)

⁴ Population Reference Bureau. (2021). *Why is the U.S. birth rate declining?* Retrieved February 9, 2023, from www.prb.org

⁵ Frey, W. H. (2021). *New 2020 census results show increased diversity countering decades-long declines in America’s white and youth populations*. Retrieved February 9, 2023, from www.brookings.edu

⁶ The Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org

⁷ Parker, T. (2022). *The cost of raising a child in the United States*. Retrieved February 9, 2023, from www.investopedia.com

⁸ Gibb, H. & Hirsh-Pasek, K. (2022). *Limited family support policies create a powder keg for our nation’s future*. Retrieved February 9, 2023, from www.brookings.edu

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