

Breastfeeding

DEFINITION

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

SIGNIFICANCE

Breastfeeding is widely recognized as the ideal method of feeding and nurturing infants and a critical component in achieving optimal infant and child health, growth, and development.^{1,2} National health experts recommend exclusive breastfeeding for six months after birth and continuous breastfeeding for at least 12 months after birth or longer as mutually desired by mother and child.³

Breastfeeding decreases infant mortality and morbidity. Infant benefits include optimal nutrition and reduced risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, infectious disease, and chronic conditions such as childhood obesity, type 1 and 2 diabetes, and otitis media. Breastfeeding benefits mothers by creating a strong bond with infants and decreasing risk for postpartum depression, type 2 diabetes, and hypertension. Breastfeeding provides significant social and economic benefits, including reduced cost to the family, reduced health care costs, and reduced employee absenteeism.^{4,5,6}

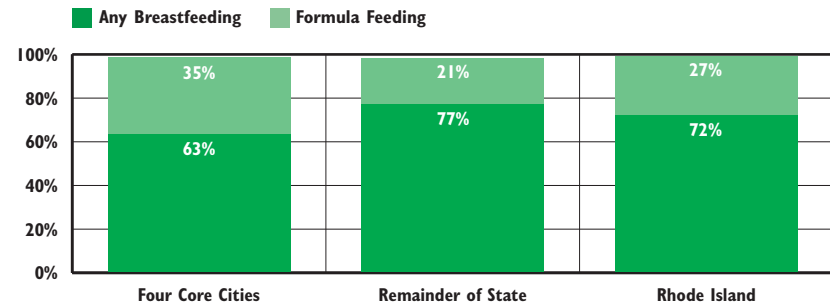
Breastfeeding can be effectively promoted by hospital and other birth

facility policies and practices that take place before, during, and after labor and delivery, including access to professional lactation consultants and involvement in community breastfeeding support networks.⁷ In 2015, Women & Infants Hospital became the second-largest hospital in the U.S. to achieve the “Baby-Friendly” designation, which recognizes breastfeeding support and promotion by birth facilities.⁸ There are now four Baby-Friendly hospitals in Rhode Island: Kent Hospital, Newport Hospital, South County Hospital, and Women & Infants Hospital.⁹

Breastfeeding rates generally increase with maternal age, higher educational attainment, and higher income levels.¹⁰ Whether the pregnancy was intentional or not also affects rate of breastfeeding. In Rhode Island between 2018-2019, 7% of babies from intended pregnancies were not breastfed at all, compared with 15% of babies from unintended pregnancies.¹¹

Healthy People 2030 sets target breastfeeding rates of 42% of infants breastfed exclusively through 6 months of age and 54% at one year of age.¹² Among babies born in the U.S. in 2017, 84% were ever breastfed, 58% were breastfed at six months, and 35% were breastfed at 12 months. In 2017, Rhode Island reported rates of 83% of infants ever having been breastfed, 54% at six months, and 35% at one year of age.¹³


Breastfeeding and Formula Feeding at Birth, Rhode Island, 2015-2019*

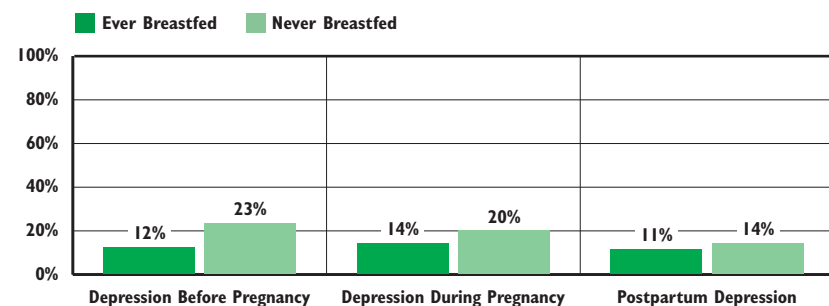


Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2015-2019. Breastfeeding and formula feeding are defined as intended feeding method at hospital discharge. Totals may not sum to 100% because data on feeding methods were not available for all births.

*Note: The data collection process at the Rhode Island Department of Health was changed in 2015. Prior to 2015, breastfeeding was recorded as “Breast,” “Bottle,” or “Both.” Since 2015, a “Yes” or “No” question on the birth certificate worksheet “Is the infant being breastfed at discharge?” has been used. Data from and prior to 2015 for “Exclusive breastfeeding” and “Both breast and formula” have been combined into the “Any breastfeeding” category to align with current data collection practices.

◆ Between 2015 and 2019, 72% of new mothers in Rhode Island indicated that they intended to breastfeed when discharged from the hospital and 27% intended to formula feed.¹⁴ Nearly nine out of ten (87%) new mothers in Rhode Island who were surveyed about three months after giving birth between 2012-2015 reported ever having breastfed. Forty-six percent reported continued breastfeeding at the time of the survey.¹⁵


Maternal Depression by Breastfeeding Status, Rhode Island, 2019



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), 2019.

Table 22. Breastfeeding at Time of Birth, Rhode Island, 2015-2019

| CITY/TOWN | NUMBER OF BIRTHS SCREENED | NUMBER ANY BREASTFEEDING | PERCENT WITH ANY BREASTFEEDING |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Barrington | 538 | 485 | 90% |
| Bristol | 614 | 480 | 78% |
| Burrillville | 576 | 424 | 74% |
| Central Falls | 1,541 | 921 | 60% |
| Charlestown | 231 | 186 | 81% |
| Coventry | 1,481 | 1,172 | 79% |
| Cranston | 3,878 | 2,847 | 73% |
| Cumberland | 1,618 | 1,284 | 79% |
| East Greenwich | 578 | 496 | 86% |
| East Providence | 2,213 | 1,558 | 70% |
| Exeter | 240 | 204 | 85% |
| Foster | 179 | 151 | 84% |
| Glocester | 300 | 219 | 73% |
| Hopkinton | 236 | 190 | 81% |
| Jamestown | 117 | 110 | 94% |
| Johnston | 1,303 | 928 | 71% |
| Lincoln | 885 | 708 | 80% |
| Little Compton | 50 | 40 | 80% |
| Middletown | 763 | 634 | 83% |
| Narragansett | 242 | 211 | 87% |
| New Shoreham | 38 | 30 | 79% |
| Newport | 1,120 | 872 | 78% |
| North Kingstown | 1,108 | 958 | 86% |
| North Providence | 1,540 | 1,080 | 70% |
| North Smithfield | 388 | 302 | 78% |
| Pawtucket | 4,411 | 2,876 | 65% |
| Portsmouth | 567 | 482 | 85% |
| Providence | 11,811 | 7,469 | 63% |
| Richmond | 287 | 246 | 86% |
| Scituate | 440 | 364 | 83% |
| Smithfield | 673 | 547 | 81% |
| South Kingstown | 859 | 758 | 88% |
| Tiverton | 344 | 266 | 77% |
| Warren | 377 | 275 | 73% |
| Warwick | 3,659 | 2,796 | 76% |
| West Greenwich | 221 | 183 | 83% |
| West Warwick | 1,606 | 1,109 | 69% |
| Westerly | 692 | 588 | 85% |
| Woonsocket | 2,511 | 1,583 | 63% |
| Four Core Cities | 20,274 | 12,849 | 63% |
| Remainder of State | 29,961 | 23,183 | 77% |
| Rhode Island | 50,235 | 36,032 | 72% |



Rhode Island Supports for Breastfeeding

◆ All 50 states have passed legislation that provides mothers with the explicit right to breastfeed in public places.¹⁶ Since 2015, Rhode Island law has prohibited job discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions and requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for workers for conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth, including breastfeeding.¹⁷

◆ In 2014, Rhode Island became the first state in the U.S. to establish licensure for International Board-Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs). State-certified and trained lactation consultants provide comprehensive lactation support and counseling for pregnant and postpartum women. In January 2021, Rhode Island had 62 licensed IBCLCs.^{18,19}

◆ Rhode Island is one of nine states, in addition to Washington, D.C., that have enacted paid family leave programs, which can support breastfeeding initiation and duration.²⁰ U.S. mothers who have 12 or more weeks of paid maternity leave are nearly three times more likely to initiate breastfeeding and twice as likely to breastfeed for six or more months, compared to mothers with no paid leave.²¹

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2015-2019.

Breastfeeding is defined as “breastfeeding as intended feeding method at hospital discharge.” “Percent With Any Breastfeeding” includes infants fed breast milk in combination with formula and those exclusively breastfed.

*Note: The data collection process at the Rhode Island Department of Health was changed in 2015. Prior to 2015, breastfeeding was recorded as “Breast,” “Bottle,” or “Both.” Since 2015, a “Yes” or “No” question on the birth certificate worksheet “Is the infant being breastfed at discharge?” has been used. Data from and prior to 2015 for “Exclusive breastfeeding” and “Both breast and formula” have been combined into the “Any breastfeeding” category to align with current data collection practices.

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. Births to Rhode Island women that occurred outside Rhode Island are not included.

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

References

- ¹³ American Academy of Pediatrics. (2012). Policy statement: Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. *Pediatrics*, 129(3), 827-841.
- ²¹⁸ *Breastfeeding: 2015-2020 Rhode Island strategic plan*. (2015). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Health.
- ⁴ Kavanaugh, K. & Lessen, R. (2015). Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Promoting and supporting breastfeeding. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 115, 444-449.
- ⁵ *CDC’s work to support and promote breastfeeding*. (n.d.). Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ⁶²¹ The Center for Law and Social Policy. (2016). *Public policies to support breastfeeding: Paid family leave and workplace lactation accommodations*. Retrieved January 24, 2021, from www.clasp.org

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