

Babies Born

DEFINITION

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

SIGNIFICANCE

Births have been declining for most of the past decade, both nationally and in Rhode Island. In 2020, the U.S. general fertility rate hit a record low at 56.0 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44, and Rhode Island has the fifth lowest fertility rate among states (48.7 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44). The 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 Asian and white women.^{3,4} Fertility rates, as well as immigration, an increase in multiracial marriages, and differences in 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 2019 in Rhode Island, 44% of babies born were Babies of Color.⁶

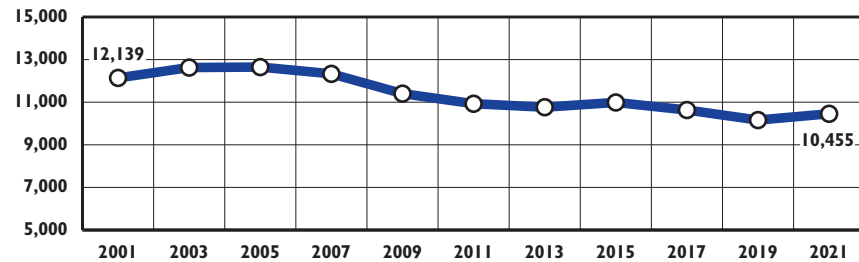
One factor that contributes to the decision to have a child is the high cost of raising a child in the U.S. A middle-class family spends an average of \$279,000 from birth to age 18. Housing accounts for the largest share of the cost of raising a child, with food as second.

Child care, transportation, health care, and clothing also account for large shares of the cost of raising a child.⁷ Policies such as paid family leave, subsidized housing and child care, universal free Pre-K, and tax credits can help families afford the high cost of raising a child in this country 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. By age three, a child's brain has grown to 80% of its adult size and the foundation of many cognitive structures and systems are in place. Babies who have positive early childhood experiences and stable, loving relationships with parents and other caregivers have a sturdy foundation to achieve healthy growth and development, while babies who go without often encounter educational, social-emotional, health, and developmental challenges.^{10,11,12}

Infancy is a time of great opportunity and vulnerability. A child's development can be compromised by "toxic stress" caused by a variety of adverse childhood experiences and risk factors, including poverty, maternal depression, exposure to violence, child maltreatment, parental substance use disorders, and/or parental incarceration. These negative experiences in early childhood place a child at increased risk for developmental delays, health problems, cognitive impairment, lowered rates of school success, and unhealthy behaviors throughout life.^{13,14,15}

Rhode Island Births, 2001-2021



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Vital Records, Rivers Database 2001-2021. Note: Includes babies born to mothers living in Rhode Island at the time of birth whether the baby was born in Rhode Island or elsewhere.

- ◆ The number of babies born to mothers living in Rhode Island at the time of birth declined from 2005 to 2020, and in 2020 the number of babies born was at the lowest point in a century (10,099) before there was a slight uptick in babies born in 2021 (10,455).^{16,17}
- ◆ The U.S. teen birth rate reached a record low in 2020, with 15.4 births per 1,000 teens ages 15 to 19. Rhode Island had the seventh lowest teen birth rate in the U.S. in 2020, with 9.4 births per 1,000 teens ages 15 to 19.¹⁸

Births by Key Risk Factors, Rhode Island, 2021

- ◆ All babies born in Rhode Island are screened through the Rhode Island Department of Health's Newborn Risk Assessment Program. In 2021, there were 6,431 newborns (65%) who had developmental, socio-economic and/or health factors that potentially put them at risk for later poor outcomes.^{19,20}
- ◆ Of the 9,892 babies born in Rhode Island to Rhode Island women in 2021, 4,059 (41%) had a mother with a documented history of treatment for mental health conditions, 823 (8%) had a mother with a documented history of substance use disorders, and 285 (3%) had a mother with documented involvement in the child welfare system (either as an adult or as a child).²¹

Table 16.

Babies Born, Rhode Island, 2021

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	14	*	39	123
Bristol	35	0	73	133
Burrillville	53	*	86	128
Central Falls	249	19	272	305
Charlestown	17	0	34	60
Coventry	73	*	151	285
Cranston	296	15	454	762
Cumberland	72	5	147	298
East Greenwich	10	0	45	128
East Providence	142	9	267	448
Exeter	14	*	20	40
Foster	8	0	19	44
Glocester	19	0	33	63
Hopkinton	21	0	40	74
Jamestown	6	0	11	28
Johnston	106	*	166	281
Lincoln	57	*	102	181
Little Compton	7	0	7	15
Middletown	34	0	65	141
Narragansett	19	0	30	53
New Shoreham	4	0	5	6
Newport	87	7	112	189
North Kingstown	48	*	107	225
North Providence	144	*	210	324
North Smithfield	19	0	38	88
Pawtucket	445	25	586	759
Portsmouth	21	*	57	119
Providence	1,561	123	1,774	2,276
Richmond	12	*	35	70
Scituate	18	0	53	94
Smithfield	30	0	72	143
South Kingstown	44	*	90	170
Tiverton	24	*	38	71
Warren	31	0	44	75
Warwick	204	9	423	730
West Greenwich	11	0	30	66
West Warwick	134	15	215	279
Westerly	59	*	88	151
Woonsocket	336	27	393	467
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>2,591</i>	<i>194</i>	<i>3,025</i>	<i>3,807</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>1,893</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>3,406</i>	<i>6,085</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>4,484</i>	<i>282</i>	<i>6,431</i>	<i>9,892</i>

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, KIDSNET Database, 2021. Birth data from 2021 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

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- ⁴ Population Reference Bureau. (n.d.). *Why is the U.S. birth rate declining?* Retrieved April 7, 2022, 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 April 12, 2022, 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 April 7, 2022, from www.investopedia.com
- ⁸ Sheehy, H., & Pamukcu, A. (2018). *6 federal policies that fall short of supporting working families*. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from https://medium.com

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