

Breastfeeding

DEFINITION

Breastfeeding is the percentage of newborn infants who are exclusively 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, continuous breastfeeding for at least 12 months after birth, and thereafter as long as mutually desired.³

Breastfeeding decreases infant mortality and morbidity. Benefits for infants include optimal nutrition and reduced risk for sudden infant death syndrome, as well as reduced risk for chronic conditions such as childhood 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, and breast and ovarian cancer. Breastfeeding provides significant social and economic benefits, including reduced cost to the family, reduced health care costs, and reduced employee absenteeism.^{4,5}

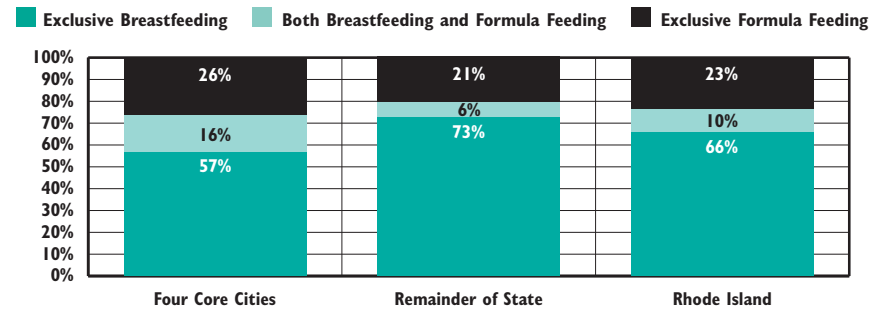
Breastfeeding can be effectively promoted by practices that take place before, during, and after labor and delivery. Hospital and other birth facility policies and practices influence the success of breastfeeding. Access to professional lactation consultants, involvement in mother-to-mother lactation support networks, and birth facility support for breastfeeding all factor into protecting, supporting, and promoting breastfeeding. Rhode Island hospitals rank among the best in the U.S. for breastfeeding support.^{6,7}

Without adequate support, women are more likely to stop breastfeeding earlier.⁸

Breastfeeding rates generally increase with maternal age, higher educational attainment, and higher income levels.⁹ Whether or not the pregnancy was intentional or not also affects rate of breastfeeding. In Rhode Island between 2009-2011, 17% of babies from intended pregnancies were not breastfed at all, compared with 22% of babies from unintended pregnancies.¹⁰

Healthy People 2020 sets target breastfeeding rates of 81.9% of infants ever having been breastfed, 60.6% at six months of age, and 34.1% at one year of age.¹¹ Rhode Island reports 79.7% of infants ever having been breastfed, 47.0% at six months, and 22.2% at one year of age. Comparable national averages were 79.2% ever breastfed, 49.4% at six months, and 26.7% at 12 months.¹²

Breastfeeding and Formula Feeding, Rhode Island, 2010-2014



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Newborn Developmental Risk Screening Program, 2010-2014. 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.

- ◆ Between 2010 and 2014, 66% of new mothers in Rhode Island indicated that they intended to exclusively breastfeed when discharged from the hospital, 23% intended to exclusively formula feed, and 10% intended to use a combination of both.¹³
- ◆ More than three-quarters (86%) of new mothers in Rhode Island who were surveyed about three months after giving birth between 2012-2013 reported having ever breastfed. Fifty-three percent reported continued breastfeeding at the time of the survey.¹⁴
- ◆ Rhode Island is one of 45 states with legislation that provides mothers with the explicit right to breastfeed in public places.¹⁵ In Rhode Island in 2015, legislation passed that prohibits job discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions. It requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for workers for conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth, including breastfeeding.¹⁶
- ◆ In 2014, Rhode Island became the first state to establish licensure for International Board Certified Lactation Consultants. State-certified lactation consultants provide comprehensive lactation support and counseling for pregnant and postpartum women.¹⁷
- ◆ In 2015, Women & Infants Hospital became the second-largest hospital in the U.S. to achieve the “Baby-Friendly” designation, which recognizes facilities that support and promote breastfeeding. Rhode Island ranks number one in the country in the percentage of babies born at Baby-Friendly hospitals.¹⁸

Table 22.

Breastfeeding, Rhode Island, 2010-2014

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER OF BIRTHS SCREENED	NUMBER BREAST AND FORMULA FEEDING	NUMBER EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFEEDING	PERCENT WITH ANY BREASTFEEDING	PERCENT EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFEEDING
Barrington	491	11	441	92%	90%
Bristol	741	44	542	79%	73%
Burrillville	590	18	434	77%	74%
Central Falls	1,593	360	841	75%	53%
Charlestown	252	8	206	85%	82%
Coventry	1,394	50	999	75%	72%
Cranston	3,839	340	2,632	77%	69%
Cumberland	1,484	79	1,115	80%	75%
East Greenwich	540	11	447	85%	83%
East Providence	2,395	168	1,638	75%	68%
Exeter	253	22	193	85%	76%
Foster	157	9	127	87%	81%
Glocester	329	13	251	80%	76%
Hopkinton	354	6	291	84%	82%
Jamestown	112	1	107	96%	96%
Johnston	1,267	79	833	72%	66%
Lincoln	872	39	638	78%	73%
Little Compton	61	1	49	82%	80%
Middletown	798	35	649	86%	81%
Narragansett	368	18	294	85%	80%
New Shoreham	54	6	46	96%	85%
Newport	1,236	93	886	79%	72%
North Kingstown	1,013	44	767	80%	76%
North Providence	1,554	99	1,072	75%	69%
North Smithfield	385	11	308	83%	80%
Pawtucket	4,739	699	2,816	74%	59%
Portsmouth	532	11	448	86%	84%
Providence	12,659	2,161	7,184	74%	57%
Richmond	331	11	280	88%	85%
Scituate	328	14	246	79%	75%
Smithfield	582	17	449	80%	77%
South Kingstown	916	57	717	84%	78%
Tiverton	364	13	284	82%	78%
Warren	440	17	324	78%	74%
Warwick	3,773	221	2,614	75%	69%
West Greenwich	238	12	177	79%	74%
West Warwick	1,757	105	1,115	69%	63%
Westerly	892	40	702	83%	79%
Woonsocket	2,780	267	1,563	66%	56%
Four Core Cities	21,771	3,487	12,404	73%	57%
Remainder of State	30,692	1,723	22,321	78%	73%
Rhode Island	52,463	5,210	34,725	76%	66%

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Newborn Developmental Risk Screening Program Database and Maternal and Child Health Database, 2010-2014.

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.

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

- ^{1,3} American Academy of Pediatrics. (2012). Policy statement: Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. *Pediatrics*, 129(3), 827-841.
- ^{2,15,17} *Breastfeeding: 2015-2020 Rhode Island strategic plan*. (2015). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Health.
- ^{4,6} James, D. C. S. & Lessen, R. (2009). Position of the American Dietetic Association: Promoting and supporting breastfeeding. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 109(11), 1926-1942.
- ^{5,9} *Breastfeeding*. (2014). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- ^{7,12} *Breastfeeding report card – United States, 2014*. (2014). Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ⁸ *The Surgeon General's call to action to support breastfeeding*. (2011). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General.
- ¹⁰ *Issue brief: Unintended pregnancy among women in Rhode Island, 2009-2011*. (2015). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Health.

(continued on page 176)