

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 by mother and child.³

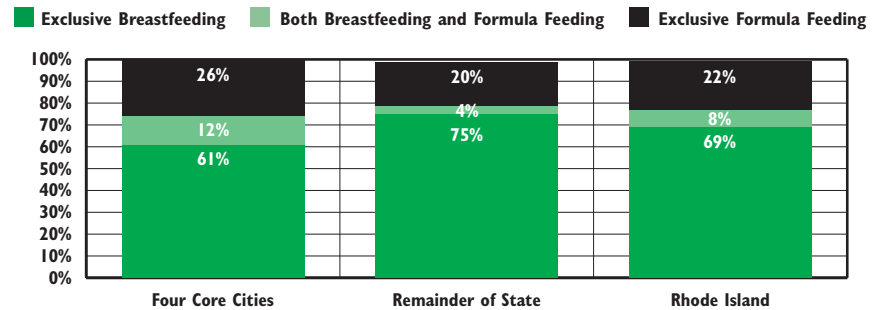
Breastfeeding decreases infant mortality and morbidity. Infant benefits include optimal nutrition and reduced risk for sudden infant death syndrome, infectious disease, and chronic conditions such as childhood obesity, type 1 and 2 diabetes, and otitis media. Breastfeeding benefits mothers by creating a strong bond with infants and decreasing risk for postpartum depression, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, 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.^{4,5,6}

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 mother-to-mother lactation 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. Rhode Island ranks best in the U.S. in the percentage of babies born at Baby-Friendly hospitals.⁸

Breastfeeding rates generally increase with maternal age, higher educational attainment, and higher income levels.⁹ Whether the pregnancy was intended or not also affects 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 National rates were 81.1% ever breastfed, 51.8% at six months, and 30.7% at 12 months.¹² Rhode Island exceeds national rates in all three, reporting 81.8% of infants ever having been breastfed, 56.0% at six months, and 36.7% at one year of age.

Breastfeeding and Formula Feeding, Rhode Island, 2011-2015



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Newborn Developmental Risk Screening Program, 2011-2015. 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 2011 and 2015, 69% of new mothers in Rhode Island indicated that they intended to exclusively breastfeed when discharged from the hospital, 22% intended to exclusively formula feed, and 8% intended to use a combination of both.¹³ Nearly nine out of ten (87%) new mothers in Rhode Island who were surveyed about three months after giving birth between 2012-2014 reported ever having breastfed. Forty-six 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 Since 2015, Rhode Island law prohibits 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.¹⁶
- ◆ 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 2015, Rhode Island had 55 IBCLCs.^{17,18}
- ◆ Rhode Island is one of four states that have established paid family leave programs, which can support breastfeeding initiation and duration. 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 months when compared to mothers with no paid leave.¹⁹

Table 22.

Breastfeeding, Rhode Island, 2011-2015

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER OF BIRTHS SCREENED	NUMBER BREAST AND FORMULA FEEDING	NUMBER EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFEEDING	PERCENT WITH ANY BREASTFEEDING	PERCENT EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFEEDING
Barrington	503	9	454	92%	90%
Bristol	697	39	517	80%	74%
Burrillville	602	13	448	77%	74%
Central Falls	1,545	262	893	75%	58%
Charlestown	239	6	194	84%	81%
Coventry	1,429	40	1,053	76%	74%
Cranston	3,843	265	2,753	79%	72%
Cumberland	1,511	62	1,172	82%	78%
East Greenwich	567	10	471	85%	83%
East Providence	2,316	126	1,634	76%	71%
Exeter	241	14	197	88%	82%
Foster	164	7	133	85%	81%
Glocester	333	12	253	80%	76%
Hopkinton	311	4	266	87%	86%
Jamestown	125	0	119	95%	95%
Johnston	1,303	66	896	74%	69%
Lincoln	920	35	697	80%	76%
Little Compton	61	1	49	82%	80%
Middletown	805	28	655	85%	81%
Narragansett	339	16	279	87%	82%
New Shoreham	51	3	46	96%	90%
Newport	1,194	72	871	79%	73%
North Kingstown	1,037	32	830	83%	80%
North Providence	1,606	82	1,141	76%	71%
North Smithfield	386	9	319	85%	83%
Pawtucket	4,723	556	2,961	74%	63%
Portsmouth	518	6	438	86%	85%
Providence	12,463	1,672	7,555	74%	61%
Richmond	285	10	241	88%	85%
Scituate	360	12	276	80%	77%
Smithfield	604	15	470	80%	78%
South Kingstown	885	46	709	85%	80%
Tiverton	344	9	274	82%	80%
Warren	430	13	324	78%	75%
Warwick	3,777	183	2,731	77%	72%
West Greenwich	225	6	174	80%	77%
West Warwick	1,722	87	1,109	69%	64%
Westerly	823	31	654	83%	79%
Woonsocket	2,726	202	1,622	67%	60%
Four Core Cities	21,457	2,692	13,031	73%	61%
Remainder of State	30,556	1,369	22,847	79%	75%
Rhode Island	52,013	4,061	35,878	77%	69%

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, 2011-2015.

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 Lessen, R. & Kavanagh, K. (2015). Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Promoting and supporting breastfeeding. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 115(3), 444-449.
- ^{5,9} *Breastfeeding*. (2016). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- ^{6,19} The Center for Law and Social Policy. (2016). *Public policies to support breastfeeding - Paid family leave and workplace lactation accommodations*. Retrieved January 20, 2017, from www.clasp.org
- ^{7,12} *Breastfeeding report card – Progressing toward national breastfeeding goals - United States, 2016*. (2016). Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ⁸ Women & Infants Hospital. (2015). *Women & Infants achieves baby-friendly designation* [Press release]. Retrieved from www.womenandinfants.org
- ¹⁰ *Issue brief: Unintended pregnancy among women in Rhode Island, 2009-2011*. (2015). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Health.

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