

# 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.<sup>1,2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

Breastfeeding can be effectively promoted by hospital and other birth

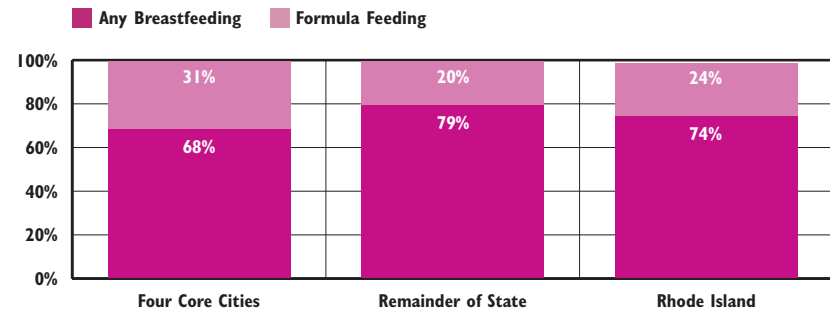
facility policies and practices that take place before, during, and after labor and delivery, including access to professional lactation consultants and involvement in community breastfeeding support networks.<sup>7</sup> In 2015, Women & Infants Hospital became the second-largest hospital in the U.S. to achieve the “Baby-Friendly” designation, which recognizes breastfeeding support and promotion by birth facilities.<sup>8</sup> Rhode Island ranks second best in the U.S. with 86% of babies born at Baby-Friendly hospitals.<sup>9</sup>

Breastfeeding rates generally increase with maternal age, higher educational attainment, and higher income levels.<sup>10</sup> Whether the pregnancy was intentional or not also affects rate of breastfeeding. In Rhode Island between 2017-2018, 8% of babies from intended pregnancies were not breastfed at all, compared with 15% of babies from unintended pregnancies.<sup>11</sup>

Healthy People 2020 sets target breastfeeding rates of 82% of infants ever having been breastfed and 34% at one year of age.<sup>12</sup> Among babies born in the U.S. in 2015, 83% were ever breastfed, 58% were breastfed at six months, and 36% were breastfed at 12 months. In 2015, Rhode Island reported rates of 81% of infants ever having been breastfed, 50% at six months, and 31% at one year of age; all decreases since 2013 and lower than the national averages.<sup>13</sup>

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### Breastfeeding and Formula Feeding at Birth, Rhode Island, 2014-2018\*



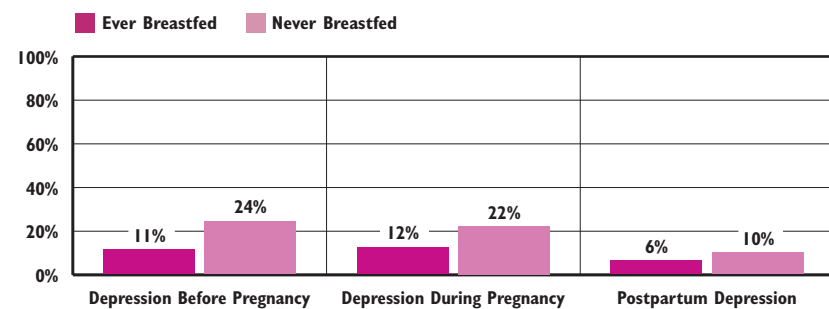
Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2014-2018. Breastfeeding and formula feeding are defined as intended feeding method at hospital discharge. Totals may not sum to 100% because data on feeding methods were not available 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 2014 and 2018, 74% of new mothers in Rhode Island indicated that they intended to breastfeed when discharged from the hospital, and 24% intended to formula feed.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>**

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### Maternal Depression by Breastfeeding Status, Rhode Island, 2018



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), 2018.

Table 22. Breastfeeding at Time of Birth, Rhode Island, 2014-2018

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER OF BIRTHS SCREENED	NUMBER ANY BREASTFEEDING	PERCENT WITH ANY BREASTFEEDING
Barrington	537	488	91%
Bristol	626	491	78%
Burrillville	603	457	76%
Central Falls	1,567	1,005	64%
Charlestown	236	190	81%
Coventry	1,454	1,159	80%
Cranston	3,852	2,929	76%
Cumberland	1,653	1,338	81%
East Greenwich	574	492	86%
East Providence	2,241	1,643	73%
Exeter	236	199	84%
Foster	183	156	85%
Glocester	305	232	76%
Hopkinton	253	207	82%
Jamestown	112	107	96%
Johnston	1,280	932	73%
Lincoln	922	741	80%
Little Compton	53	43	81%
Middletown	777	655	84%
Narragansett	255	225	88%
New Shoreham	40	33	83%
Newport	1,114	884	79%
North Kingstown	1,116	966	87%
North Providence	1,578	1,144	72%
North Smithfield	393	316	80%
Pawtucket	4,554	3,166	70%
Portsmouth	562	482	86%
Providence	11,997	8,121	68%
Richmond	287	245	85%
Scituate	429	353	82%
Smithfield	656	537	82%
South Kingstown	856	758	89%
Tiverton	357	282	79%
Warren	405	298	74%
Warwick	3,693	2,868	78%
West Greenwich	226	186	82%
West Warwick	1,668	1,173	70%
Westerly	718	602	84%
Woonsocket	2,558	1,692	66%
Four Core Cities	20,676	13,984	68%
Remainder of State	30,250	23,811	79%
Rhode Island	50,926	37,795	74%



## Rhode Island Supports for Breastfeeding

◆ All 50 states have passed legislation that provides mothers with the explicit right to breastfeed in public places.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

◆ 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 December 2019, Rhode Island had 55 licensed IBCLCs.<sup>18,19</sup>

◆ Rhode Island is one of eight states, in addition to Washington, D.C., that have enacted paid family leave programs, which can support breastfeeding initiation and duration.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup>

### Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2014-2018.

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

- <sup>13</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics. (2012). Policy statement: Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. *Pediatrics*, 129(3), 827-841.
- <sup>218</sup> *Breastfeeding: 2015-2020 Rhode Island strategic plan*. (2015). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Health.
- <sup>4</sup> 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.
- <sup>5</sup> *Breastfeeding*. (2016). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- <sup>621</sup> The Center for Law and Social Policy. (2016). *Public policies to support breastfeeding: Paid family leave and workplace lactation accommodations*. Retrieved January 7, 2019, from www.clasp.org

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