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# BABIES, CHILDREN, AND FAMILIES

The well-being of babies, children, and their families impacts the health of future generations and can predict future public health challenges for communities and health system. Ensuring healthy birth outcomes, addressing health conditions early, providing access to high-quality child care, and promoting educational engagement can prevent future issues and support healthy development and well-being among individuals and their families.



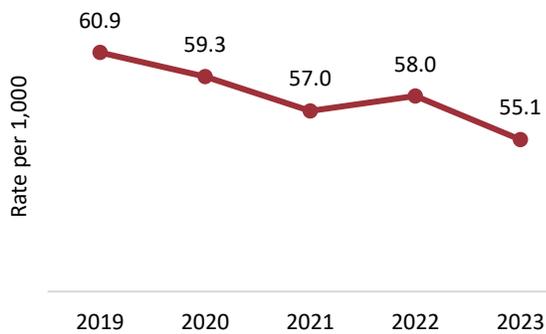
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## Fertility rate

Fertility rate is the total number of live births per 1,000 females age 15 to 44 years.

- The fertility rate in Ramsey County has declined since 2019.

### 1. Live births among females age 15-44, Ramsey County



Source: Minnesota Department of Health.<sup>127</sup>

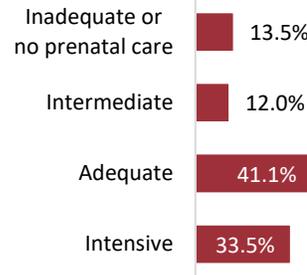
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## Prenatal care

Prenatal care is critical to ensuring healthy pregnancies, and early and consistent care can prevent complications.<sup>141</sup>

- Pregnant people in Ramsey County most often receive adequate prenatal care.
- About a third of pregnant people receive intensive care, which often includes care for high-risk pregnancies. Some people receive inadequate or no prenatal care at all.

### 2. Adequacy of prenatal care, Ramsey County, 2023



Source: Minnesota Department of Health.<sup>94</sup>

Note: Adequacy of prenatal care can be defined in different ways but is partially based on the number of visits received. “Intermediate” care refers to people who received more care than “inadequate” but less than “adequate.” “Intensive” care refers to people who received more care than “adequate” and often includes care for high-risk pregnancies. See the Minnesota Department of Health’s (MDH) County Health Tables for definition details.

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## Substance misuse during pregnancy

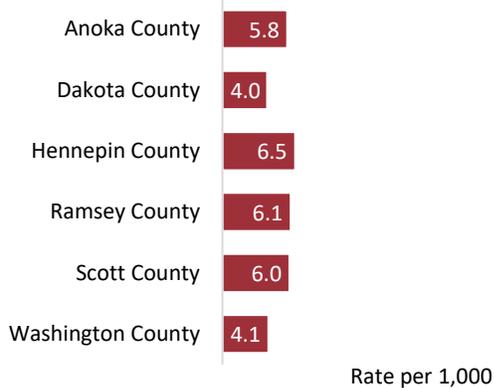
Substance misuse during pregnancy is associated with a wide range of negative impacts, including birth complications, developmental delays, maternal or infant mortality, and specific health conditions, such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.<sup>46</sup> Substance exposure during pregnancy can cause neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), which can lead to acute and/or long-term health and development problems in children.<sup>65</sup>

### ! Risk Factors

Risk factors for substance misuse during pregnancy include a history of substance misuse, unintended pregnancy, lower levels of educational attainment, unemployment, younger age, physical or mental health concerns, traumatic experiences, environmental stressors, lack of knowledge of how substance misuse affects fetal development.<sup>82</sup>

- The rate of NAS-related hospital visits in Ramsey County is similar to the statewide rate and higher than the rates in Dakota, Anoka, and Washington counties.

### 3. Neonatal abstinence syndrome-related hospital visits among live births by metro-area county, 2018-2022



Source: Minnesota Department of Health.<sup>65</sup>

Note: Data for Carver County are not reported because they are unreliable.

## Teen pregnancy and births

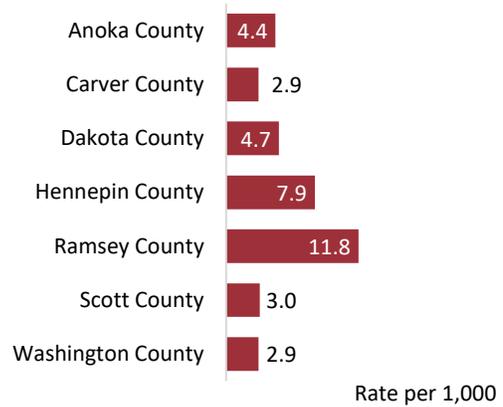
Teen pregnancy and births (age 15-19) are linked to a wide range of negative health and financial impacts for the birthing parent and their child.<sup>192</sup>

### ! Risk Factors

Teen pregnancy and births are more common among people who live in poverty, have lower maternal educational attainment, engage in early risky behavior, have lower self-esteem, and live in a home with frequent family conflict.<sup>196</sup>

- The teen pregnancy rate is highest in Ramsey County compared to other metro-area counties.

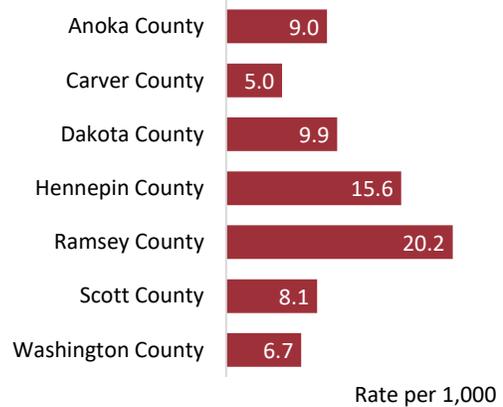
### 4. Teen pregnancy among females age 15-19 by metro-area county, 2023



Source: Minnesota Department of Health.<sup>94</sup>

- The teen birth rate is also highest in Ramsey County compared to other metro-area counties.

### 5. Teen births among females age 15-19 by metro-area county, 2023



Source: Minnesota Department of Health.<sup>94</sup>

## Severe maternal morbidity

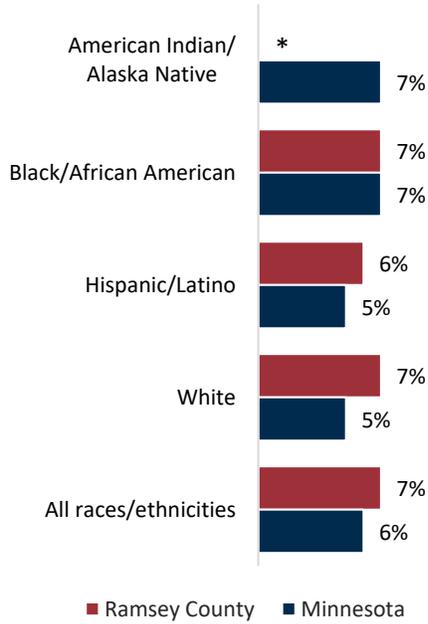
Severe maternal morbidity includes conditions caused by negative outcomes of labor or delivery that lead to short- or long-term health consequences.<sup>35</sup>

### ! Risk Factors

Severe maternal morbidity is more common among birthing parents under age 24 or older than age 35; are Black, American Indian, or Asian; have Medicaid insurance coverage; and have multiple health conditions or diseases.<sup>61</sup>

- Severe maternal morbidity rates in Ramsey County are slightly higher than Minnesota overall.

### 6. Severe maternal morbidity among all deliveries, 2023

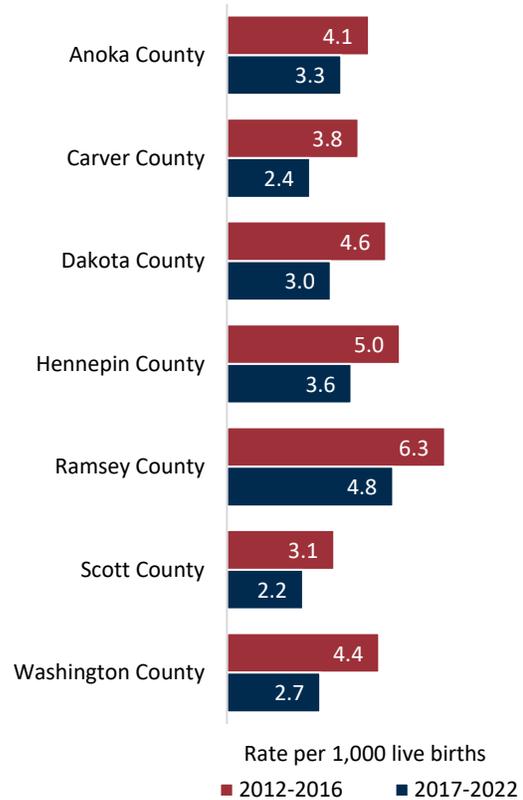


Source: Health Trends Across Communities.<sup>132</sup>  
 \* Suppressed.

Note: Visit the Health Trends Across Communities in Minnesota dashboard for condition definitions.

- Ramsey County has the highest infant mortality rate compared to other metro-area counties.

### 7. Infant mortality by metro-area county



Source: Minnesota Department of Health.<sup>94</sup>

## Infant mortality

Infant mortality rates refer to infants who are born alive but die before their first birthday.

### ! Risk Factors

Infant mortality is more common among preterm births and birthing parents with previous preterm births, infants with low birth weight, birthing parents with chronic health conditions or poor nutrition, birthing parents who receive inadequate prenatal care, and infants who experience unsafe sleeping conditions.<sup>143</sup>

- The infant mortality rates in Ramsey County and other metro-area counties has declined over time.

## Preterm births

Preterm births refer to infants born before 37 weeks of gestation. Babies who are born prematurely are more likely to experience health problems such as breathing issues, maintaining temperature, and developmental delays.<sup>51</sup>

### ! Risk Factors

Preterm births are more common among pregnancies with multiple fetuses (e.g., twins), birthing parents with family or personal history of preterm births, pregnancies affected by substance exposure, and birthing parents who are under age 17 or over age 35.<sup>51</sup>

- The percentage of births that were preterm increased in Ramsey County from 7.2% in 2018 to 7.7% in 2023.<sup>94</sup>

# Low birth weight

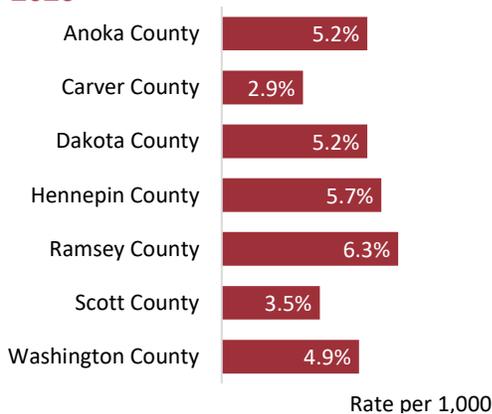
Low birth weight refers to infants who weigh less than 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds) at birth. Babies born with low birth weights are at greater risk for health issues such as poor eating, trouble gaining weight, and risk of infections.<sup>50</sup>

## Risk Factors

Low birth weight is more common among birthing parents with chronic health problems, pregnancies affected by infections or substance exposure, preterm labor, and exposure to lead or air pollution.<sup>50</sup>

- Among all metro-area counties, the percentage of newborns with low birth weights is highest in Ramsey County.

### 8. Newborns with low birth weight among all live births by metro-area county, 2023



Source: Minnesota Department of Health.<sup>126</sup>

# Breastfeeding/ Chestfeeding

Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health uses inclusive lactation terms like breast/chestfeeding, human milk feeding, lactation, etc. These terms are reflective of the diversity in our community including parents who identify as trans, non-binary, cis, and queer. It is also inclusive of varied parent-child feeding relationships including directly latching, pumping and feeding expressed milk, using lactation aides, and lactating after loss. Using inclusive

terminology ensures that all individuals and parent-child dyads are reflected in our Community Health Assessment.

Breastfeeding/chestfeeding benefits birthing parents and babies in a variety of ways, including providing ideal nutrients, supporting development and growth, and preventing illness and disease. It is recommended to continue breastfeeding/chestfeeding until age two or even longer.<sup>45</sup>

- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) program is a breastfeeding/chestfeeding and nutrition program for birthing parents, babies, and young children. Breastfeeding/chestfeeding initiation, three-month continuation, and one-year continuation among women enrolled in WIC in Ramsey County have increased over time. However, initiation was lower in Ramsey County compared to Minnesota overall in 2023.

### 9. Breastfeeding/chestfeeding initiation, three-month continuation, and one-year continuation among WIC participants in Ramsey County

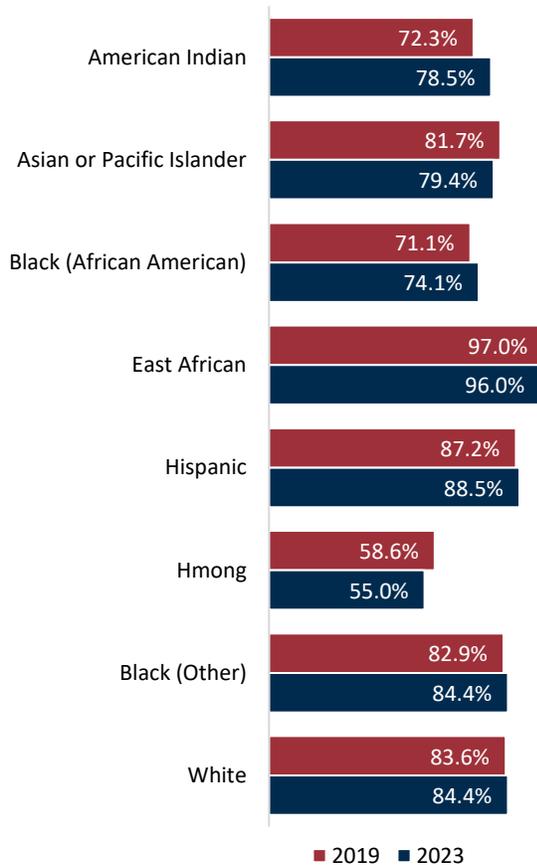


Source: Minnesota Department of Health.<sup>119</sup>

Note: One-year continuation data for 2023 was not available at the time of publishing this report.

- Between 2019 and 2023, breastfeeding/chestfeeding initiation in Ramsey County increased for birthing parents who identify as American Indian, African American, Hispanic, and white. However, it declined for birthing parents who identify as Asian or Pacific Islander, East African, and Hmong.

### 10. Breastfeeding/chestfeeding initiation among WIC participants in Ramsey County



Source: Minnesota Department of Health.<sup>50</sup>

## Child maltreatment

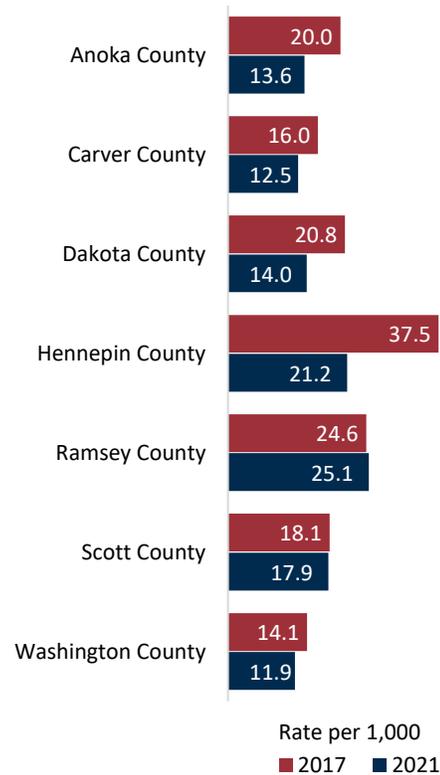
Child maltreatment is associated with a wide range of negative consequences related to children’s well-being, including their physical health, mental health, brain development, and employment and educational attainment.<sup>21</sup>

### Risk Factors

Maltreatment is more common among children under age 4 and children with needs that may increase burden on their caregivers. People are more likely to perpetrate maltreatment if they have a history of abuse or neglect, lack understanding of children’s needs and the developmental process, are young or single, have many children, have lower educational attainment or income, and have high stress levels.<sup>41</sup>

- The rate of alleged and substantiated maltreatment among children with completed assessments/investigations in Ramsey County remained relatively stable between 2017 and 2021, while rates declined in other metro-area counties.

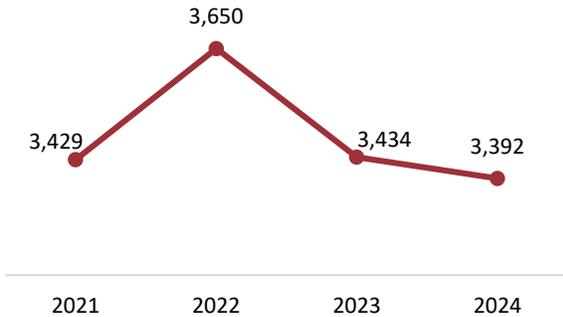
### 11. Alleged and substantiated maltreatment among children with completed assessments/investigations by metro-area county



Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services.<sup>128</sup>

- The number of alleged victims involved in child protection assessments in Ramsey County increased between 2021 and 2022. The number declined in 2023 and 2024.

**12. Alleged victims involved in child protection assessments, Ramsey County**



Source: Ramsey County.<sup>151</sup>

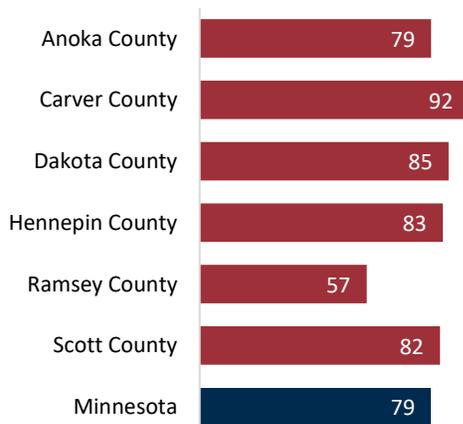
- The percentages of providers who offer non-standard hours or accept subsidies in Ramsey County are higher than most other metro-area counties.
- Child care cost as a percentage of median household income is higher in Ramsey County compared to other metro-area counties.

## Child care

Access to consistent and quality child care is critical to ensuring and promoting healthy development among children, reducing caregiving burden, and supporting financial well-being.<sup>47</sup>

- Ramsey County has fewer child care slots compared to other metro-area counties.

**13. Child care slots for infants, toddlers, or preschoolers for every 100 children whose parents work by metro-area county, 2020**



Source: Child Care Aware.<sup>48</sup>

Note: Data for Washington County are unavailable.

**14. Child care provider hours, subsidies, and cost as a percentage of income by metro-area county, 2020**

County	Percentage of providers who offer non-standard hours care	Percentage of providers who accept child care subsidies	Child care cost as a percentage of median household income
Anoka County	11%	54%	13%
Carver County	4%	50%	11%
Dakota County	6%	52%	13%
Hennepin County	13%	54%	17%
Ramsey County	12%	58%	19%
Scott County	7%	53%	12%
Washington County	4%	45%	No data

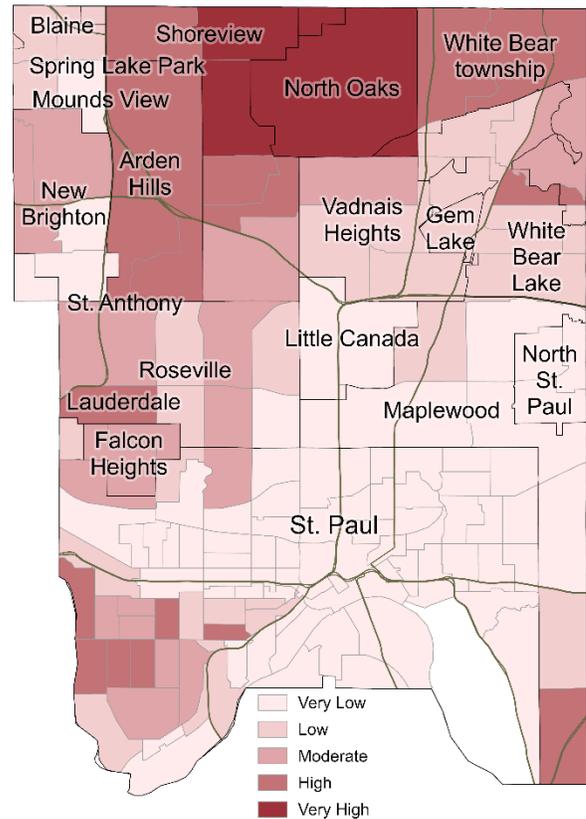
Source: Child Care Aware.<sup>41</sup>

## Childhood opportunity

The Childhood Opportunity Index uses a wide range of data to measure neighborhood conditions and resources that impact child development by census tract, such as early childhood education enrollment, poverty, teacher experience, and child enrichment-related nonprofits.

- In Ramsey County, childhood opportunity is lowest in census tracts in Saint Paul, Little Canada, Maplewood, and North Saint Paul. Opportunity is greater in census tracts in the northern suburbs and southwest Saint Paul.

**15. Childhood opportunity index score, 2021**



Source: [diversitydatakids.org](https://diversitydatakids.org).<sup>57</sup>

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## School well-being

In 2023-2024, Ramsey County's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (RC SHIP) conducted a well-being assessment of Ramsey County public schools.<sup>154</sup> The project collected input from 80 teachers, staff, and administrators to inform well-being and mental health programming initiatives, and includes the following key findings:

- Respondents rated the overall well-being of staff and students as “okay,” and they identified the COVID-19 pandemic as a significant contributor to well-being challenges.
- Respondents stressed the importance of changing district policies to support well-being (e.g., ensuring teachers and staff are able to take time off) and prioritizing family engagement with school initiatives.
- A lack of resources negatively impacts teacher, staff, and student well-being in multiple areas, including:
  - Mental health services for teachers, staff, and students
  - Teacher and staff wages and benefits
  - Teacher and staff trainings on specific topics (e.g., social-emotional learning) with adequate follow-up support for implementation
  - Supports for parental and medical leave, pregnancy, and lactation
  - Resources, strategies and services to address student behavior concerns, particularly those that do not require punitive approaches that may cause harm to students
  - Social-emotional learning programming
  - Conflict resolution opportunities
  - Trauma-informed principles
  - Tobacco and substance use education
  - Social and physical activity opportunities
  - Access to healthy and culturally connected food sources

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## School attendance

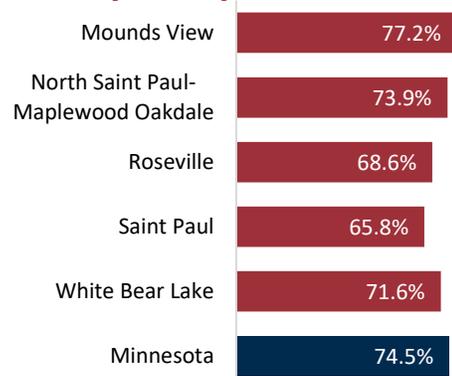
Consistent attendance is defined as students who attend more than 90 percent of enrollment time during the school year. Consistent school attendance is critical to maximizing benefits from school, including promoting healthy development, social-emotional skills, and educational attainment.<sup>54</sup>

### ! Risk Factors

Inconsistent school attendance is more common among youth with negative attitudes toward school, emotional or behavior concerns, low caregiver engagement, and among youth who misuse substances.<sup>66</sup>

- Consistent attendance is highest among students who attend Mounds View School District and North Saint Paul-Maplewood Oakdale School District, and these districts are above the statewide average. Consistent attendance is lower among students who attend Roseville Public Schools and Saint Paul Public Schools.

### 16. Students attending school regularly by Ramsey County school district, 2023



Source: Minnesota Department of Education Report Card.<sup>90</sup>

# Graduation rates

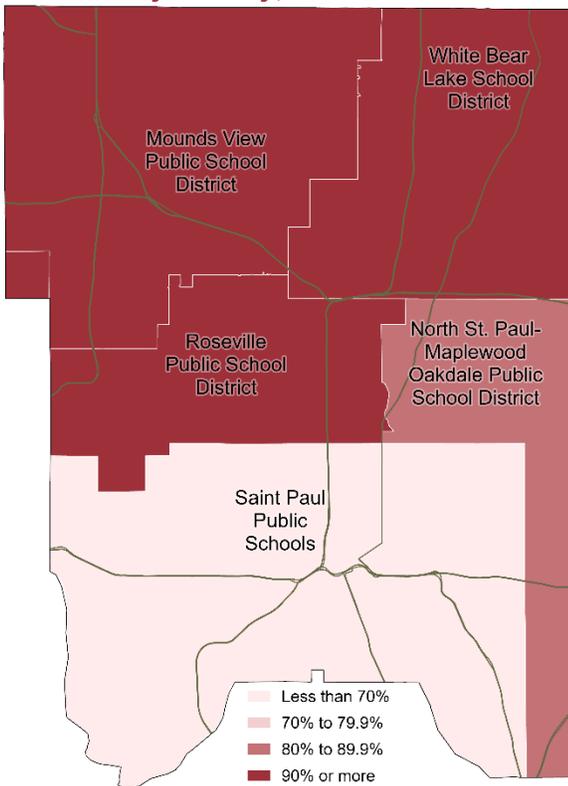
Graduating from high school is associated with a wide range of health, financial, social, and well-being benefits.<sup>73</sup>

## ! Risk Factors

Youth are less likely to graduate from high school if they experience teen pregnancy, have low educational engagement, experience financial instability, have mental health concerns, or misuse substances.<sup>73</sup>

- Graduation rates are highest within the Mounds View School District, the Roseville School District, and the White Bear Lake School District.
- Rates are lower within the North Saint Paul-Maplewood Oakdale School District and Saint Paul Public Schools.

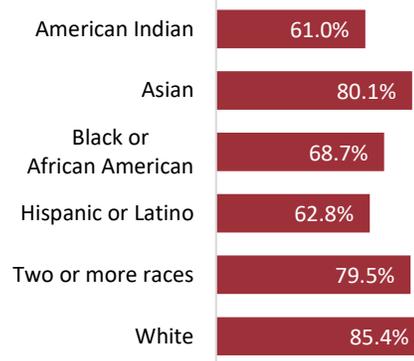
### 17. Graduation rates by school districts in Ramsey County, 2023



Source: Minnesota Department of Education Report Card.<sup>90</sup>

- Within Ramsey County, graduation rates are highest among white students, followed by Asian students and multi-racial students.

### 18. Ramsey County graduation rates by race/ethnicity, 2023



Source: Minnesota Department of Education Report Card.<sup>90</sup>