

American Samoa Breastfeeding Report, 2023



USBC

U.S. Breastfeeding Committee

About this Report

Breastfeeding has a profound impact on population health outcomes. The [evidence for the value of human milk](#) to the overall health of infants, children, and mothers is scientific, robust, and continually reaffirmed by new research. Breastfed infants are at lower risk of certain infections and sudden unexplained infant death. Children who were breastfed have decreased risk of obesity, type 1 and 2 diabetes, asthma, and childhood leukemia. Women who breastfeed reduce their risk of chronic illnesses, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and breast and ovarian cancers. A [recent CDC study](#) of over 3 million U.S. births found that ever breastfeeding is associated with a 26% reduction in the odds of post-perinatal (between 7-364 days) infant death.

The [American Academy of Pediatrics recommends](#) infants be exclusively breastfed for about six months with continued breastfeeding while introducing complementary foods for two years or beyond. Unfortunately, barriers to establishing and maintaining the breastfeeding relationship are persistent and pervasive in the United States, and only a small proportion of dyads meet these recommendations.

This is why increasing breastfeeding rates and creating lactation-friendly environments have been identified as critical public health priorities both nationally and globally. This year, in addition to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many families also had to navigate the devastating infant formula recall and shortage, stripping away their confidence in keeping their babies safely fed.

The good news is that federal investments are making a difference for babies, mothers, and our nation. The American Samoa breastfeeding report describes current breastfeeding rates and other measures and highlights the lactation projects and programs in American Samoa made possible through federal funding in 2021 and 2022.

Our values and priorities are reflected through the care and attention we show to our nation's infants and young children, and we all have a role to play. In the words of Surgeon General Regina Benjamin, "We can all help make breastfeeding easier."

We hope this report illustrates the importance of breastfeeding and human milk and sheds a light on the policy, system, and environmental factors that impact infant feeding outcomes. To access reports from other states and territories, please visit www.usbreastfeeding.org/state-breastfeeding-reports.



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Breastfeeding Rates

In the United States, 84.1 percent of infants initiate breastfeeding, however, there is a 16.7 percentage point disparity between racial/ethnic groups.

Source: [National Vital Statistics System birth certificate data](#), a census of all 2019 births and the largest collection of breastfeeding data. Breastfeeding initiation is measured as a percentage. Largest disparity in breastfeeding initiation between racial/ethnic groups is measured as a percentage difference.

By six months of age, only 24.9 percent of infants are still exclusively breastfeeding, falling far short of the [Healthy People 2030 objective of 42.4 percent](#).

Source: [CDC Breastfeeding Report Card](#), a biannual publication highlighting progress towards breastfeeding goals in the United States. Breastfeeding rates are measured as a percentage.

WIC Program Breastfeeding Performance Measures

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program provides supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five. The WIC program serves approximately 53 percent of all infants born in the United States.

See how American Samoa rates compare to national levels.

	Fully Breastfed Rate	Partially Breastfed Rate	Total Breastfed Rate	Fully Formula Fed Rate
American Samoa WIC Rates	5.7%	63.4%	69.1%	30.9%
National WIC Rates	12.1%	21.9%	33.9%	66.1%

Source: [Fiscal Year 2021 WIC Breastfeeding Data Local Agency Report](#). Breastfeeding and formula feeding rates are measured as a percentage of participating children under one year of age.

Federally Funded Lactation Projects in American Samoa

Each year funding is allocated to a variety of federally funded programs that address infant nutrition security through the federal appropriations process. These investments are making a real difference. Breastfeeding rates have risen substantially in recent decades, but additional efforts are needed to help our nation reach Healthy People 2030 goals.

Federally funded lactation support programs are low-cost, high-impact interventions that work to reduce the persistent and pervasive barriers to breastfeeding success. This funding supports critical national efforts, including monitoring and evaluation, research, public education, resource development, and beyond. Funding also supports a wide range of state, territorial, and community-level projects to address the challenges faced by specific populations. These programs support and reinforce each other, reaching distinct audiences and environments.

See how federal investments are making a difference in American Samoa below.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- The [CDC Hospitals Promoting Breastfeeding program](#) provides critical support to advance breastfeeding continuity of care and increase access to lactation-friendly environments in states, hospitals, and communities. In Fiscal Year 2022, this program was funded at \$9.75 million.

Health Resources & Service Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (HRSA, MCHB)

- The [Title V Maternal and Child Health \(MCH\) Block Grant](#) provides funding for states and jurisdictions to meet the unique health needs of their children and families. In its five-year action plan, American Samoa has chosen increasing the percentage of infants who are ever breastfed and infants who are breastfed exclusively through 6 months as one of their Title V Maternal and Child Health grant National Performance Measures.
- The [Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting \(MIECHV\) program](#) supports pregnant people and parents with young children who live in communities that face greater risks and barriers to achieving positive maternal and child health outcomes, including through lactation support. In 2022, the American Samoa Department of Health Services received \$970,915 in funding to implement the MIECHV program.