

Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania breastfeeding report describes how breastfeeding rates and other measures compare to national levels, lists the coalitions serving communities in the state, and highlights state and community-based lactation projects 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

See how Pennsylvania breastfeeding rates and other measures compare to national rates and targets set by the Healthy People 2030 (HP2030) initiative.

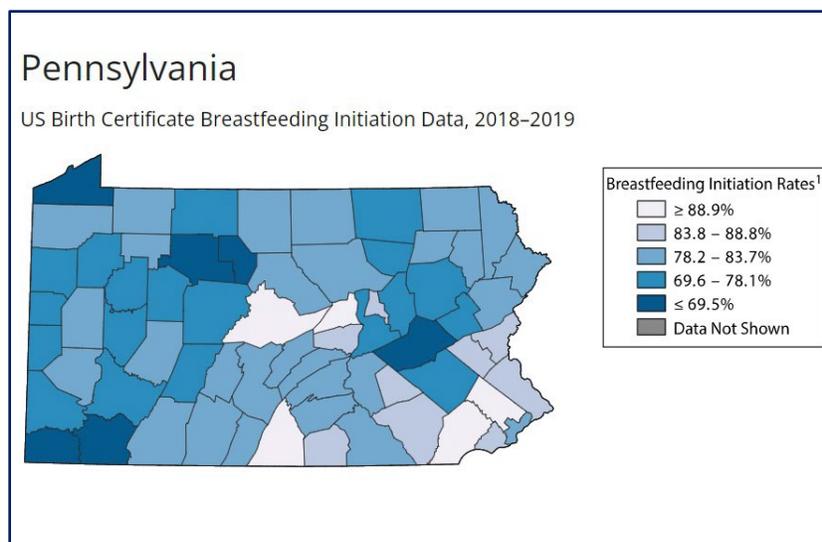
	Breastfeeding Initiation Rate	Largest Disparity Between Racial/Ethnic Groups
Pennsylvania	82.2%	14.2%
U.S. National	84.1%	16.7%

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.

	Exclusive Breastfeeding at 6 Months	Any Breastfeeding at 12 months	Formula Supplementation at 2 Days
Pennsylvania	24.6%	35.2%	22%
U.S. National	24.9%	35.9%	19.2%
HP2030 Target	42.4%	54.1%	N/A

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

State and territorial breastfeeding rates provide important insights about how families are supported, but data shows that there are significant disparities across counties.



Source: [CDC Breastfeeding Initiation Rates and Maps by County](#), presenting 2018-2019 National Vital Statistics System data.

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.

	Fully Breastfed Rate	Partially Breastfed Rate	Total Breastfed Rate	Fully Formula Fed Rate
Pennsylvania WIC Rates	10.3%	9.6%	19.9%	80.1%
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.

Creating a Landscape of Support

The policy, systems, and environments that surround and shape our lives have a profound impact on the infant feeding experience, either helping or hindering breastfeeding. Maternity care practices, paid family and medical leave, and childcare practices are proven to impact breastfeeding outcomes, and are highlighted in the CDC Breastfeeding Report Card.

	% of live births occurring at Baby-Friendly facilities	mPINC Score	Has enacted paid family and medical leave legislation	# of weeks available to care for a new child	ECE licensing breastfeeding support score
Pennsylvania	29.8%	80	No	--	70
U.S. National	28.9%	81	No	--	--

Source: [CDC Breastfeeding Report Card](#). CDC's national Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care (mPINC) survey assesses maternity care practices that affect how babies are fed. Among states with enacted paid family and medical leave legislation, the number of weeks presented are those that can be claimed by eligible employees for the care of a new child by birth, adoption, or foster care. ECE score indicates the extent to which a state's licensing regulation for early child education centers meet the Caring for our Children's standard to encourage and fully support breastfeeding/feeding of breast milk.

Breastfeeding Coalitions Serving in Pennsylvania

An extensive network of state, tribal, territorial, local, and cultural breastfeeding coalitions across the United States are working to create policy, systems, and environmental interventions to better serve babies, mothers, and families. The following coalitions serve in Pennsylvania:

- [Allegheny County Breastfeeding Coalition](#)
- [Breastfeeding Resource Center](#)
- [La Leche League of Eastern Pennsylvania](#)
- [Pennsylvania Breastfeeding Coalition](#)

Federally Funded Lactation Projects in Pennsylvania

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 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 Pennsylvania 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.
- [Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health](#) (REACH) funding is used to reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic populations with the highest burden of chronic disease through culturally tailored interventions to address preventable risk behaviors. In 2021, the Geisinger Clinic was funded through the REACH program to collaboratively design and implement improvements for important health and social outcomes for the Hispanic community in Scranton, Pennsylvania through nutrition and community clinical linkages strategies.
- The [State Physical Activity and Nutrition](#) (SPAN) program funds recipients to implement evidence-based strategies at state and local levels to improve nutrition and physical activity. As part of the SPAN program, Pennsylvania is implementing comprehensive strategies to increase settings that implement supportive breastfeeding interventions.
- With funding from the CDC, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials awarded [innovation grants to support SPAN recipients](#) to implement innovative projects that advance breastfeeding initiatives and health equity. In Pennsylvania, the American Academy of Pediatrics, Pennsylvania Chapter (PAAAP) formed an Equity Workgroup consisting of Black and Hispanic breastfeeding leaders in the state to identify breastfeeding gaps, barriers, and facilitators in breastfeeding support and create an action plan to reduce disparities. After completing the action plan, the PA Innovation team organized a training series for physicians on implicit bias and racial equity in healthcare delivery and breastfeeding support and provided 25 scholarships to community-based and clinical maternal-child healthcare providers for professional lactation support certification, prioritizing Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and other providers of color.

- **EMPower Best Practices** is a hospital-based quality improvement initiative funded by the CDC Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. The purpose of this initiative is to improve knowledge and skills in evidence-based maternity practices supportive of optimal infant nutrition with a focus on culturally diverse, at-risk populations and those from low-income families. This project is coordinated in partnership with the Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Population Health Improvement Partners. The EMPower Best Practices initiative is supporting the following hospitals in Pennsylvania:
 - Abington Hospital Jefferson Health
 - Lehigh Valley Hospital Hazleton
 - Lehigh Valley Reilly Children's Hospital
 - LVHN Muhlenberg
 - LVHN Pocono
 - Thomas Jefferson University Hospital
 - UPMC Altoona
 - UPMC Williamsport
 - Wellspan Good Samaritan Hospital

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, Pennsylvania 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 purpose of the **Healthy Start program** is to improve health outcomes before, during, and after pregnancy, and reduce racial/ethnic differences in rates of infant death and adverse perinatal outcomes through local projects that can include lactation education. Pennsylvania received six Healthy Start awards totaling \$6,991,995. The City of Philadelphia, the Foundation for Delaware County, the Hamilton Health Center, Inc. in Harrisburg, Healthy Start, Inc in Pittsburgh, and Maternity Care Coalition, Inc. in Philadelphia each received \$1,165,343. Albert Einstein Healthcare Network in Philadelphia was awarded \$1,165,280.
- The **Healthy Start Doula Supplement** provides funding to increase the availability of doulas in Healthy Start service areas most affected by infant and maternal mortality and to increase the number of women with a higher risk of poor birth outcomes receiving doula services. In 2021, funding in Pennsylvania was directed to the Foundation for Delaware County and Albert Einstein Healthcare Network. In 2022, funding in Pennsylvania was directed to Healthy Start, Inc.
- 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 Pennsylvania Department of Human Services received \$11,482,443 in funding to implement the MIECHV program.

Office on Women's Health

- The **Reducing Disparities in Breastfeeding Innovation Challenge** sought innovative ways to increase breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates and decrease disparities. In Pennsylvania, two organizations won the Reducing Disparities in Breastfeeding Innovation Challenge:
 - Breastfeeding Awareness and Empowerment (BAE) increased breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates among Black women living in Philadelphia through community-based lactation support groups, training curriculums, consultative services, and an annual family-centered cookout.
 - Healthy Start, Inc. Pittsburgh was a winner of the Reducing Disparities in Breastfeeding Innovation Challenge. Founded in 2018, the Healthy Start Center for Urban Breastfeeding closed the breastfeeding disparity gap between mothers residing in Allegheny County. In the first two years, program participants still breastfeeding after 6 months increased from 8% to 36%.
- The **Racial Equity in Postpartum Care Challenge** sought innovative methods to improve equity of postpartum care for Black or African American and American Indian/Alaska Native women enrolled in Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program. In Pennsylvania, the following initiatives were winners of the HHS Racial Equity in Postpartum Challenge:
 - MommaConnect mHealth App from Benton Technologies in Philadelphia is a digital healthcare platform for Black/African American mothers that facilitates remote psychotherapy. This program offers two evidence-based therapies to reduce PPD symptoms and promote the quality of maternal-infant interaction. The app is designed to address potential access challenges for Black/ African American mothers in underserved communities.
 - The Diversifying Doulas Initiative in Lancaster focuses on increasing access to certified doula services for Black/African American women in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The program has the option for Black/African American women to be trained as doulas and for patients to receive doula services free of charge.
 - Greater Harrisburg Healthy Start, Healthy Start Initiative from Hamilton Health Center, Inc in Harrisburg utilizes a combination of strategies to improve postpartum care, including patient engagement and incentives, adding qualified healthcare professionals, creating a network between the health center and providers, and evaluation and performance monitoring. Case managers and nurse practitioners educate patients on the postpartum period and work with patients to develop postpartum care plans.
 - Heart Safe Motherhood, Way's Text Message Based Platform to Improve Blood Pressure Control from Heart Safe Motherhood Institution provides patients with automated reminders to check their blood pressure. It tracks blood pressure measurements and alerts patients and medical providers if certain thresholds are exceeded. The program enrolled close to 12,000 patients and received 157,000 blood pressure measurements.
 - Maternity Care Management (MCM) Baby Steps Program, Payment Models, Outpatient and Remote Services from the University of Pittsburgh Physicians in Pittsburgh utilizes a combination of strategies to provide care to postpartum families. It includes The Maternity Care Management (MCM) Baby Steps Program; payment and data collection models to increase access to services and eliminate barriers to payment; increased quality of care; postpartum hypertension remote monitoring; and standardized depression and IPV assessment and support.
 - Technology to Improve Postpartum Care, Courage and Perinatal Coaching from Vital Start Health, focuses on mental health and education. It utilizes digital technologies (virtual and augmented reality) to assess, screen, and treat patients for behavioral health needs.
 - Postpartum Hypertension Follow Up Program from Wellspan Postpartum Hypertension Program in York uses a multidisciplinary approach, including registered nurses, maternal health, and cardiology specialists, to assess and provide follow-up care for postpartum patients with hypertension. As a result of this program's efforts, there was an increase in follow-up visits with providers from 16% to 37% over three months.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service

- Each year, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) presents the [WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence](#) to recognize local WIC agencies that have provided exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support activities. In Pennsylvania, the Bi-County WIC agency received the 2021 Gold Award.

National Institutes of Health

- The National Institutes of Health and National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [conduct and fund a variety of clinical research](#) related to breastfeeding and breast milk. In Pennsylvania, the following organizations received funding:
 - University of Pittsburgh at Pittsburgh was funded to complete the following research projects:
 - “Mechanisms of maternal Immunoglobulin A control over the neonatal microbiota and the development of Necrotizing Enterocolitis”
 - “Infant Protection from Influenza through Maternal Influenza Immunization”
 - “Randomized Evaluation of Bromocriptine in Myocardial Recovery Therapy for Peripartum Cardiomyopathy (REBIRTH)”
 - “Effect of Antenatal Milk Expression on Breastfeeding Outcomes among Overweight and Obese Women”
 - University of Pennsylvania was funded to complete a research project titled “Effects of reproduction and lactation on postmenopausal bone health.”
 - Magee-Womens Research Institute & Foundation was funded to complete a research project titled “Leadership and Operations Center (LOC): Microbicide Trials Network.”
 - Monell Chemical Senses Center was funded to complete a research project titled “Secondary Analyses of RCT Data on Sensitive Periods in Flavor Learning and Diet Among Breastfeeding Dyads.”
 - University of Pennsylvania was funded to complete the following research projects:
 - “Preconception phthalate exposure and offspring outcomes”
 - “Effects of reproduction and lactation on the functional spinal unit post menopause”
 - Carnegie-Mellon University was funded to complete a research project titled “Diversity Supplement to Fate, Function and Genetic Engineering of Breast Milk Cells for Infant Therapy.”