

# Tennessee 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 Tennessee 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](http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/state-breastfeeding-reports).



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## Breastfeeding Rates

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

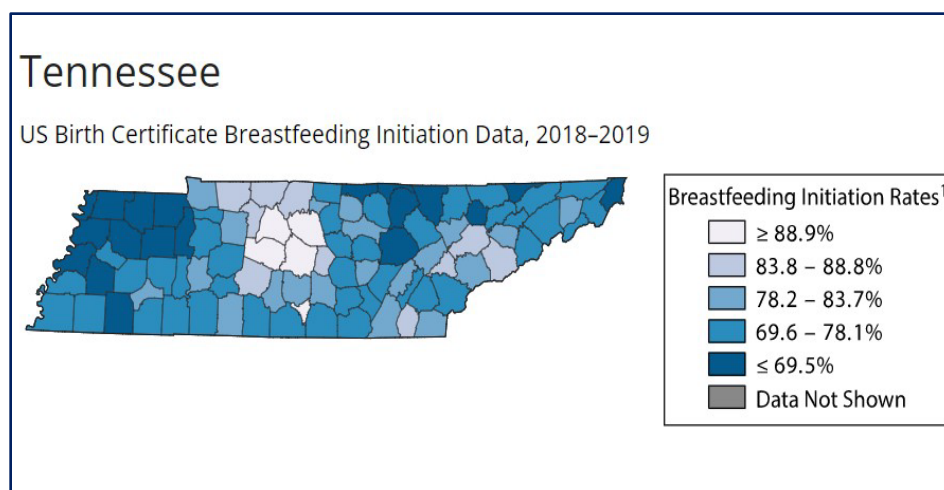
	Breastfeeding Initiation Rate	Largest Disparity Between Racial/Ethnic Groups
Tennessee	81.1%	20.7%
U.S. National	84.1%	16.7%

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
Tennessee	24.9%	31.5%	22.3%
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
<b>Tennessee WIC Rates</b>	8.7%	18.7%	27.5%	72.5%
<b>National WIC Rates</b>	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
<b>Tennessee</b>	14.8%	70	No	--	70
<b>U.S. National</b>	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 Tennessee

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 Tennessee:

- [Shelby County Breastfeeding Coalition](#)
- [Tennessee Breastfeeding Coalition](#)
- [Tennessee Valley Breastfeeding Coalition](#)

## *Federally Funded Lactation Projects in Tennessee*

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 Tennessee 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.
- [\*\*Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country\*\*](#) (GHWIC) is the CDC's largest investment to improve American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) tribal health and is focused on health promotion and chronic disease prevention, including increase breastfeeding rates. In Tennessee, the United South and Eastern Tribes Inc. received \$1,240,625 through the GHWIC program.

### *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, Tennessee 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. Tennessee received two Healthy Start awards totaling \$2,330,686. Centerstone of Tennessee, Inc. in Nashville and the Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County each were awarded \$1,165,343.
- 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 Tennessee was directed to the Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County.
- 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 Tennessee Department of Health received \$9,867,744 in funding to implement the MIECHV program in Tennessee.



- The **Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Nutrition program** promotes the healthy nutrition of mothers, children, and families by establishing and enhancing MCH Nutrition Centers of Excellence to provide training for future and current MCH nutrition professionals and technical assistance to state Title V and other MCH programs. MCH Nutrition Training programs include education on breastfeeding. The University of Tennessee received funding to support the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Nutrition Education and Training Program.

## *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. The following Tennessee agencies were awarded:
  - 2022 Gold Award:
    - East Region
    - Southeast Region
    - West Region Jackson
    - West Region Union City
  - 2021 Gold Award:
    - Hamilton County
    - Metro-Davidson County
    - Mid Cumberland Region
    - Northeast Tennessee Region
    - South Central Region of Tennessee
    - Sullivan County
    - Upper Cumberland Region

## *Office on Women's Health*

- 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 Tennessee, Technology Platform for Providers from MedHaul Inc. in Memphis was a winner of the HHS Racial Equity in Postpartum Challenge. This program provides rides for patients who need to get to health-related appointments, including postpartum care visits. This program has provided over 9,000 rides and increased attendance at appointments from 40% to 92%. Providers directly schedule roundtrip patient transportation appointments utilizing a dedicated technology platform.

## *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 Tennessee, the following organizations received funding:
  - Vanderbilt University was funded to complete a research project titled "Bioorganic Approaches Toward Novel Antimicrobial Agents Against Gram-Negative Bacteria."
  - St. Jude Children's Research Hospital was funded to complete a research project titled "Household Respiratory Virus SARS-CoV-2 Transmission and Immunity Sub-Study (HRTS)."