NM Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (NM PRAMS)

PRAMS is an ongoing, statewide survey of women giving live birth about their preconception, prenatal and early postpartum experiences. PRAMS is New Mexico's only representative source of live birth population data.

Breastfeeding in New Mexico, 2020-2022 Births

MCH Epidemiology, Family Health Bureau, PHD-NM Department of Health

The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans from the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS) [1] recommend continued breastfeeding with complementary foods for at least 12 months. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [2] and the World Health Organization (WHO) [3] also support exclusive breastfeeding for six months, followed by continued breastfeeding with complementary foods for up to two years or longer, as mutually desired. Breastfeeding is the optimal source of nutrition for most infants, as it provides essential nutrients, strengthens the baby's immune system, and fosters bonding between mother and child.

Additionally, it reduces the risk of infections, post-perinatal infant deaths, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), obesity, and chronic diseases later in life [4,5]. For mothers, it may lower the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and postpartum depression [5,6].

This report describes breastfeeding patterns among New Mexico births (2020-2022) based on select maternal characteristics. In this report, **breastfeeding** refers to the feeding of breast milk directly from the breast or pumped milk from the breast. Data from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) survey are presented as weighted percentages, representative of the New Mexico population. This descriptive analysis does not employ statistical testing or display confidence intervals; this information may be requested from the program. Key measures include **breastfeeding initiation** (infants who were ever breastfed or were fed pumped breast milk) and **duration** (feeding breast milk at two months). To maintain consistency, "mother" refers to the person who breastfed or experienced breastfeeding, while acknowledging and respecting the diversity of all experiences and identities.

Report Contents

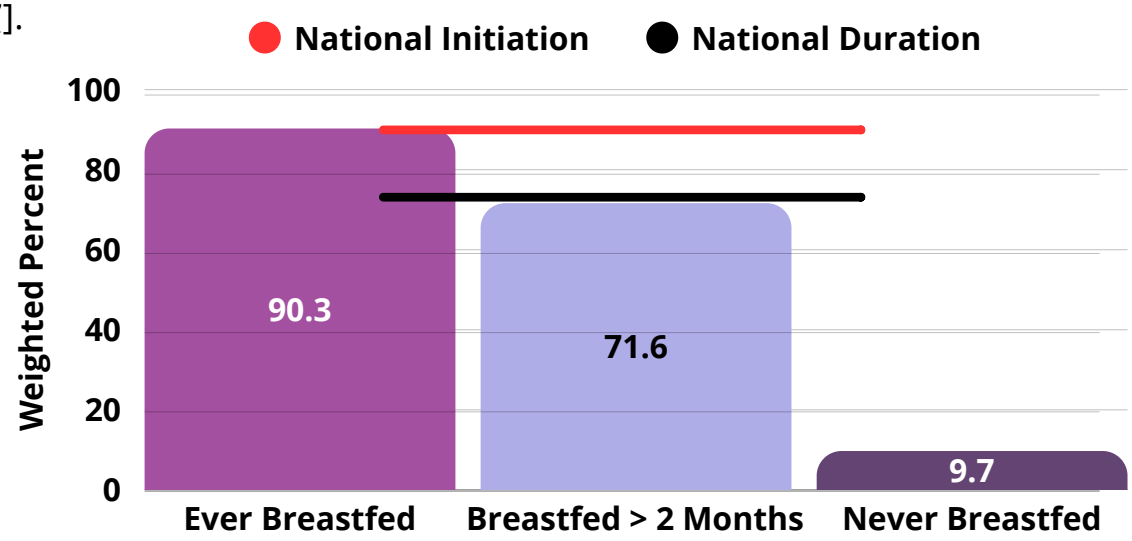
NMHealth

Breastfeeding Patterns in NM

Among 2020-2022 Births in New Mexico

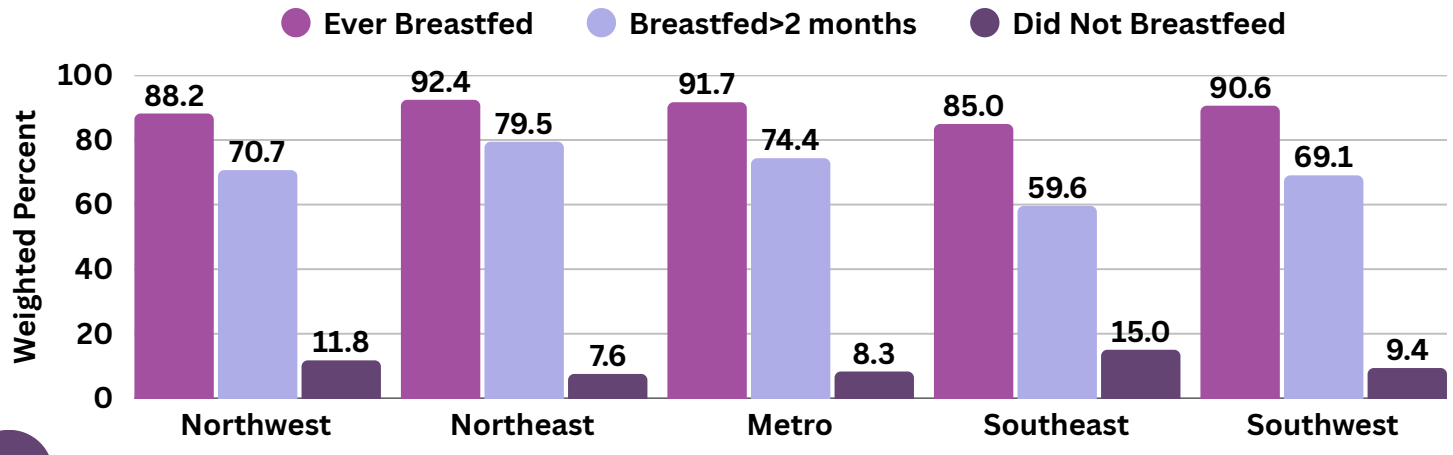
Initiation and Duration

In New Mexico, breastfeeding initiation rates remain high, with 90.3% of infants starting to breastfeed. However, like national trends, these rates decline over time, with a duration of two months reported at 71.6%. Nationally, the breastfeeding initiation rate in 2022 was 91.2%, with a two-month duration rate of 74.2%, closely aligning with New Mexico's figures [7].



NM Region

Breastfeeding initiation rates remain relatively consistent across New Mexico, with the Northeast having the highest rate at 92.4% and the Southeast the lowest at 84.9%. However, as seen statewide, duration declines over time. Duration is lower in the Southeast (59.6%) and Southwest (69.1%) regions, while the Northeast (79.5%) and Metro (74.4%) regions report higher durations.

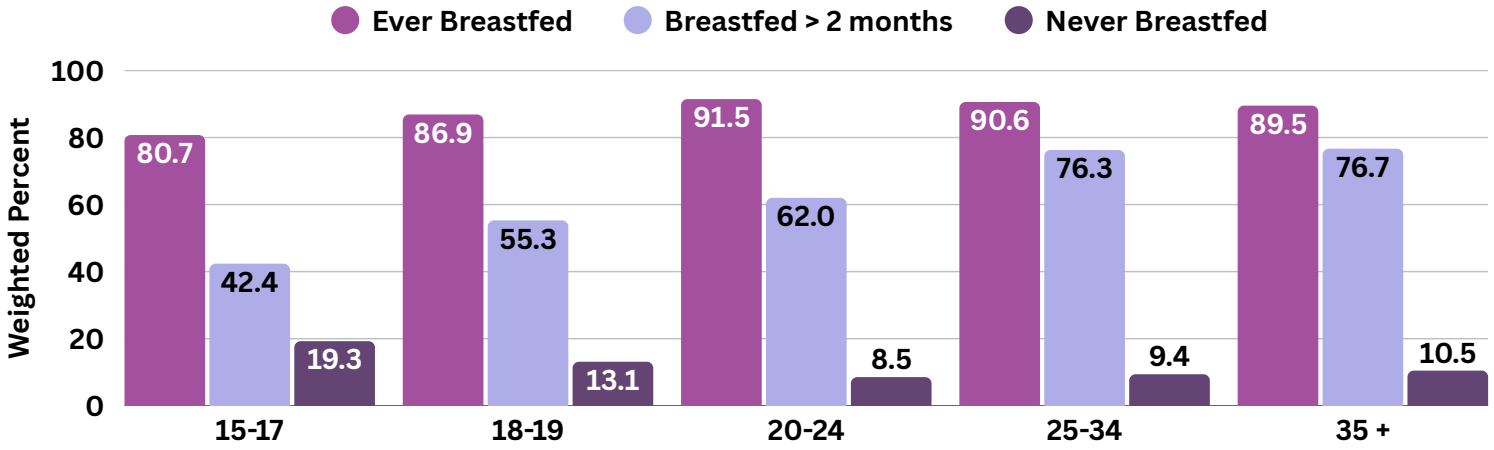


Breastfeeding by Select Maternal Demographics

Among 2020-2022 Births in New Mexico

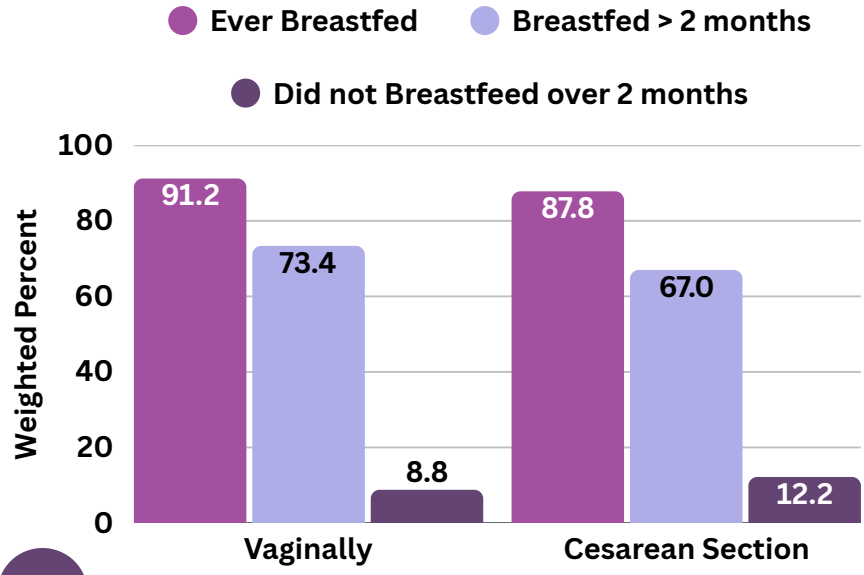
Maternal Age

Breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in NM varied by maternal age, with younger mothers having lower rates compared to older mothers.



- Among mothers aged 15–17, the breastfeeding initiation rate was 80.7%, the lowest of any age group, while the duration rate at two months was 42.4%.
- Rates increased with age, peaking among mothers aged 20–24, who had the highest initiation rate at 91.5% and a duration rate of 62%.
- Mothers aged 25–34 and those 35 and older had similar patterns, with initiation rates of 90.6% and 89.5%, respectively, and duration rates at two months of 76.3% and 76.7%.

Mode of Delivery

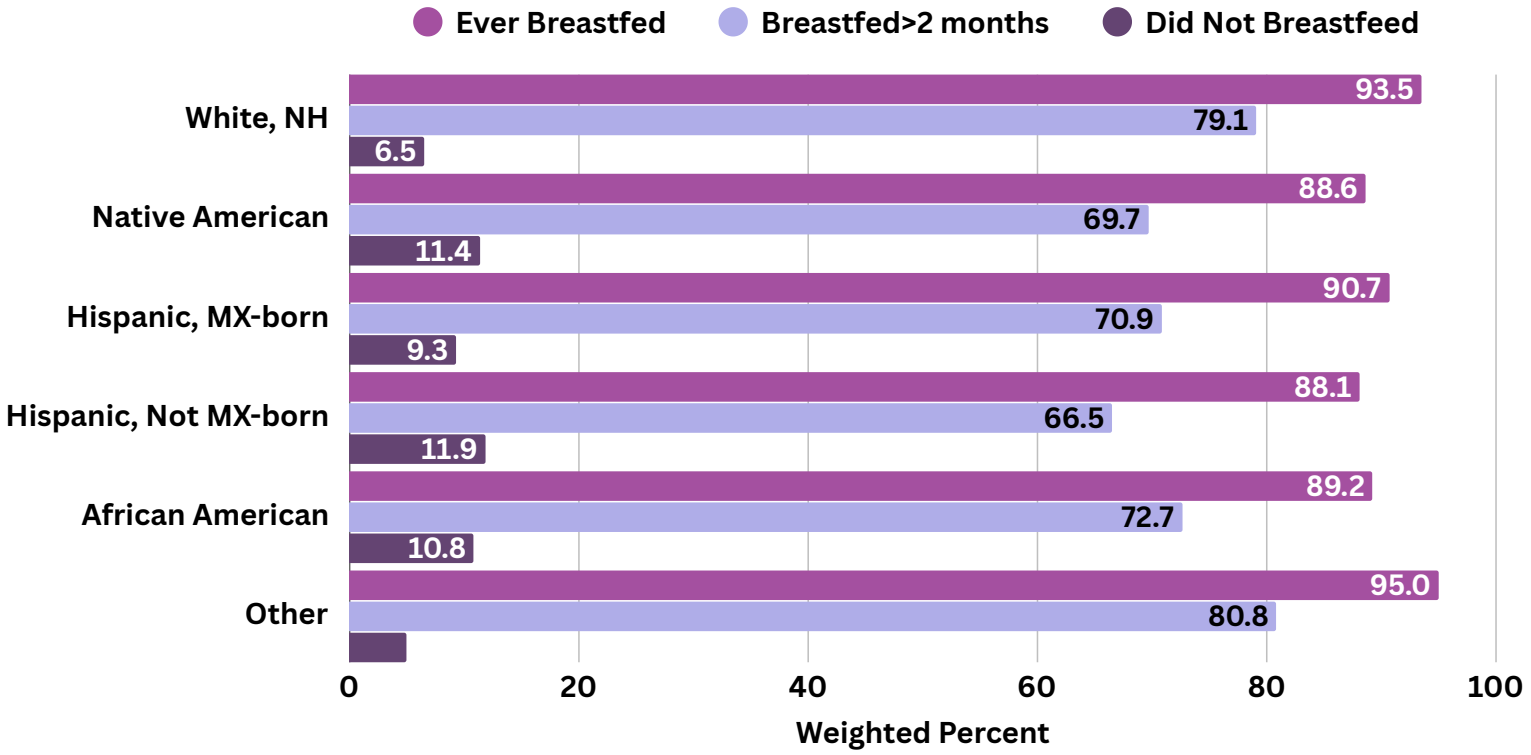


Breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in NM vary by mode of delivery, with higher rates among those who had vaginal births.

- Among individuals who delivered vaginally, the breastfeeding initiation rate was 91.2%, and the duration rate at two months was 73.4%.
- In comparison, those who had a Cesarean section had lower rates, with an initiation rate of 87.8% and a duration rate at two months of 67%.

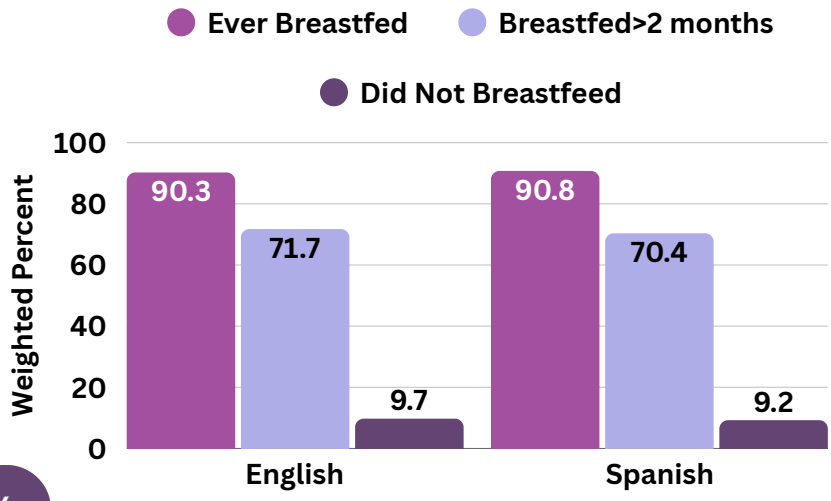
Maternal Ethnicity

Breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in NM vary by ethnicity.



- White, Non-Hispanic mothers had the highest breastfeeding initiation rate at 93.5%, with a duration rate at two months of 79.1%.
- The group categorized as "Other" also demonstrated high rates, with 95.0% initiating breastfeeding and 80.8% continuing for two months.
- Native American mothers and Mexican-born Hispanic mothers had similar initiation rates of 88.6% and 90.7%, respectively. However, their duration rates at two months were lower, at 69.7% for Native American mothers and 70.9% for Mexican-born Hispanic mothers.
- Non-Mexican-born Hispanic mothers had a slightly lower initiation rate at 88.1%, and the lowest duration rate at two months, at 66.5%.
- African American mothers had an initiation rate of 89.2%, with a duration rate at two months of 72.7%.

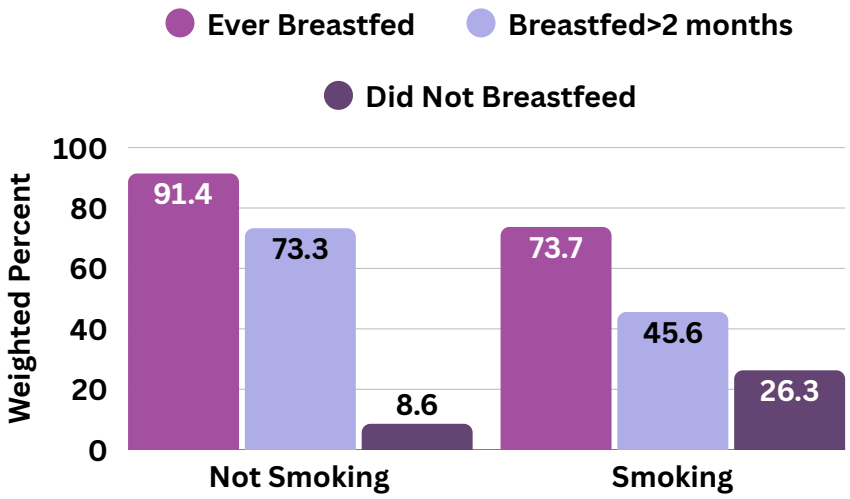
Maternal Language



Breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in NM are similar among English- and Spanish-speaking mothers.

- Among those who primarily speak English, the breastfeeding initiation rate was 90.3%, with a duration rate at two months of 71.7%.
- Spanish-speaking mothers had a slightly higher initiation rate at 90.8%, while their duration rate at two months was 70.4%.

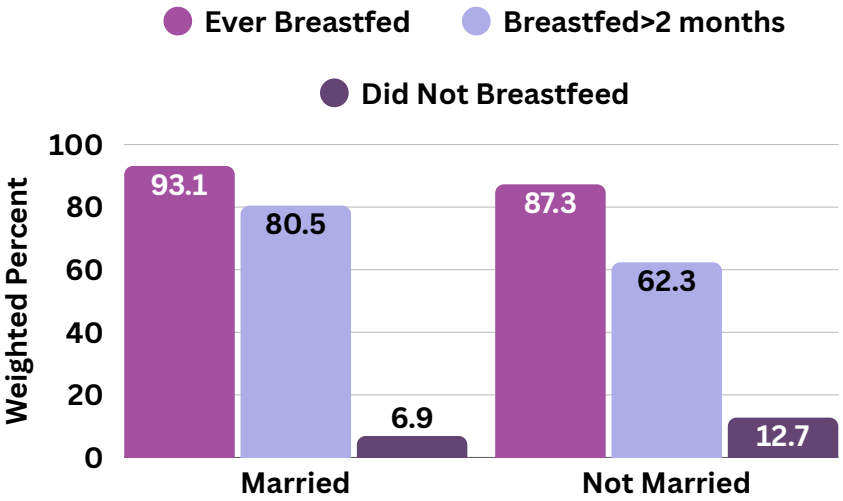
Maternal Smoking (at time of survey)



Breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in NM were lower among those who smoked at the time of the survey.

- Among non-smokers, the breastfeeding initiation rate was 91.4%, with a duration rate at two months of 73.3%.
- In contrast, those who smoked had lower rates, with an initiation rate of 73.7%, a duration rate at two months of 45.6%, and 26.3% not breastfeeding.

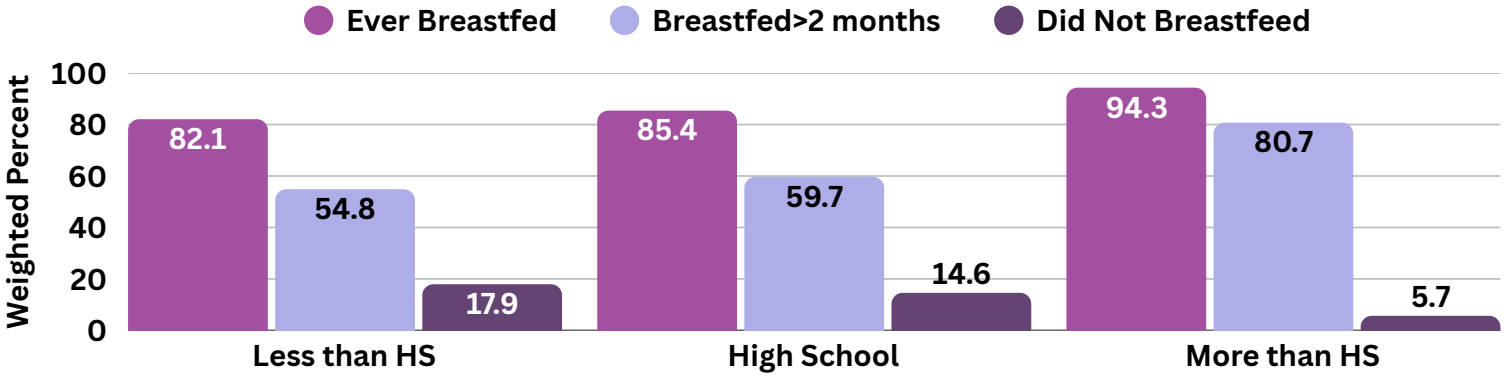
Maternal Marital Status



Breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in NM vary by marital status, with higher rates among married mothers.

- Among married mothers, the breastfeeding initiation rate was 93.1%, with a duration rate at two months of 80.5%.
- In contrast, unmarried mothers had lower rates, with an initiation rate of 87.3% and a duration rate at two months of 62.3%.

Maternal Education



- Among mothers with less than a high school education, the breastfeeding initiation rate was 82.1%, with a duration rate at two months of 54.8%.
- High school graduates had slightly higher rates, with an initiation rate of 85.4% and a duration rate at two months of 59.7%.
- Mothers with more than a high school education had the highest rates, with an initiation rate of 94.3% and a duration rate at two months of 80.7%.

Breastfeeding by Select Socioeconomic Indicators

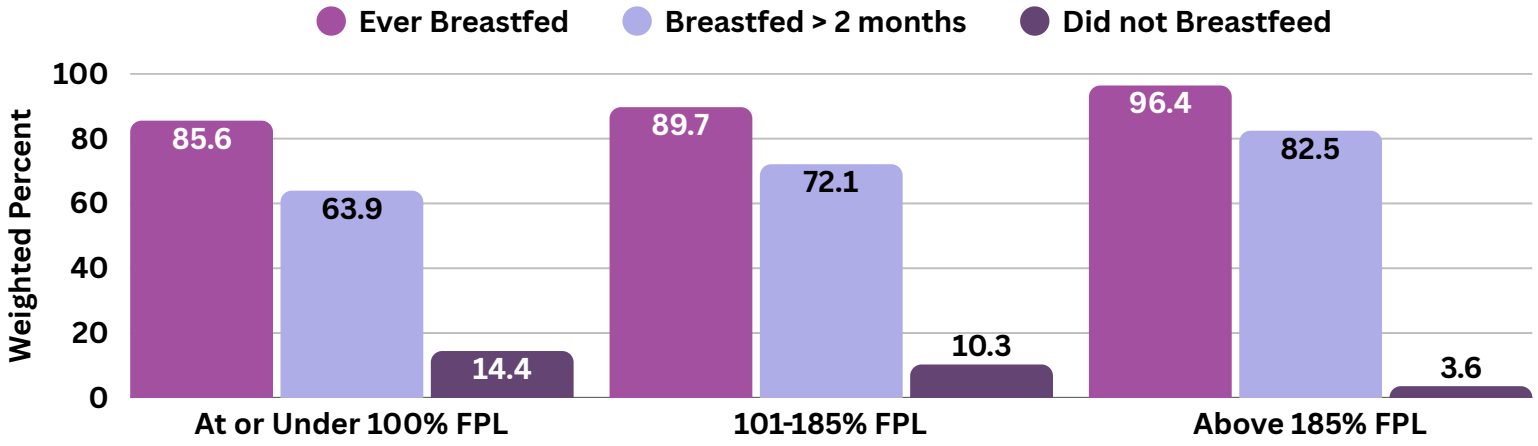
Among 2020-2022 Births in New Mexico

In NM, breastfeeding initiation and duration rates vary by socioeconomic factors, including income, type of insurance, and maternity leave options.

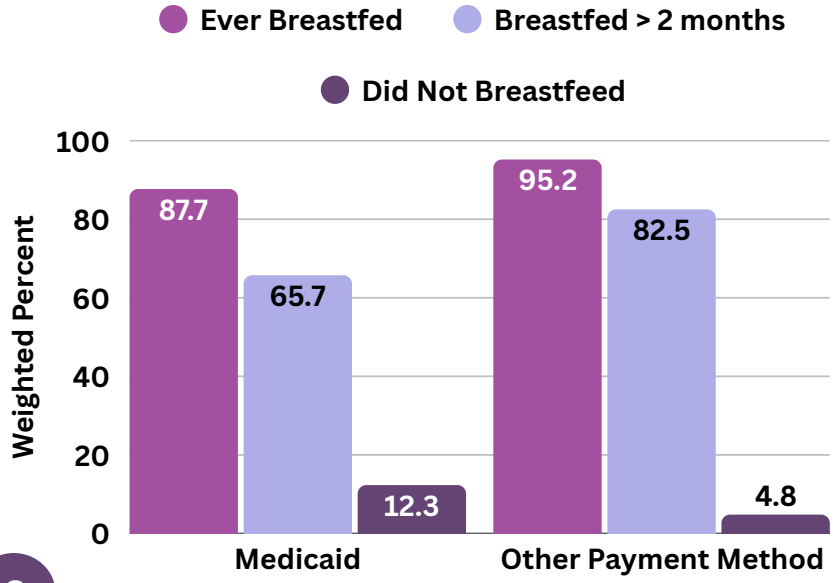
Maternal Income

Breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in NM increase with income level.

- Among mothers at or below the federal poverty line (FPL), the breastfeeding initiation rate was 85.6%, with a duration rate at two months of 63.9%.
- Mothers with incomes between 101–185% of the FPL had higher rates, with an initiation rate of 89.7% and a duration rate at two months of 72.1%.
- Those above 185% of the FPL had the highest rates, with an initiation rate of 96.4% and a duration rate at two months of 82.5%.



Type of Payment for Prenatal Care

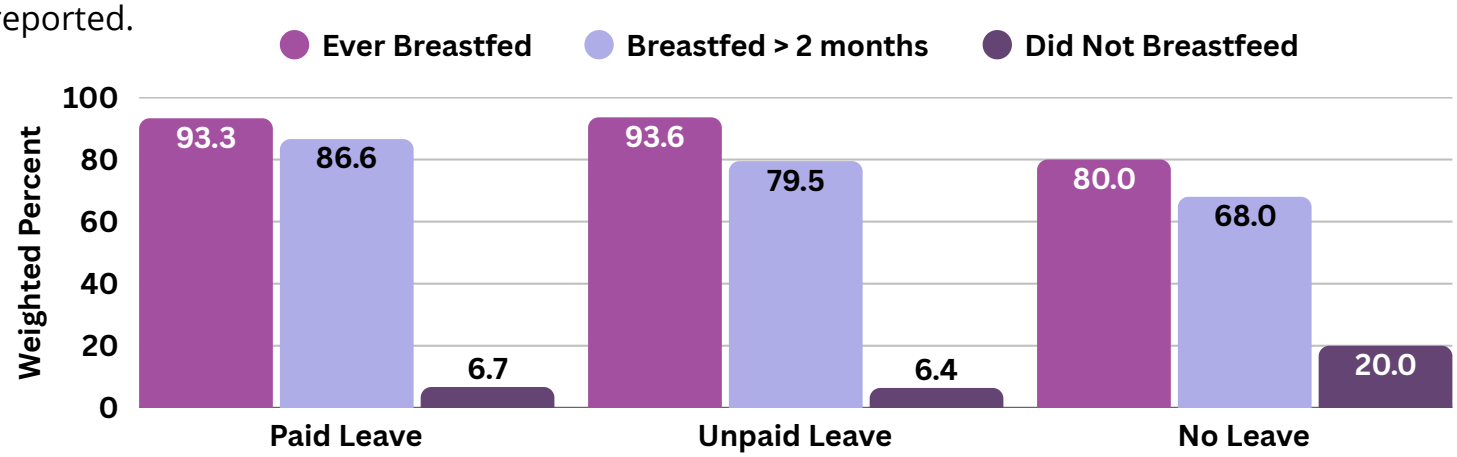


Breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in NM vary by prenatal care payment method.

- Among mothers whose prenatal care was covered by Medicaid, the breastfeeding initiation rate was 87.7%, with a duration rate at two months of 65.7%.
- In contrast, mothers using other payment methods had higher rates, with an initiation rate of 95.2% and a duration rate at two months of 82.5%.

Maternity Leave

Breastfeeding initiation and duration rates vary with the type of maternity leave mothers reported.



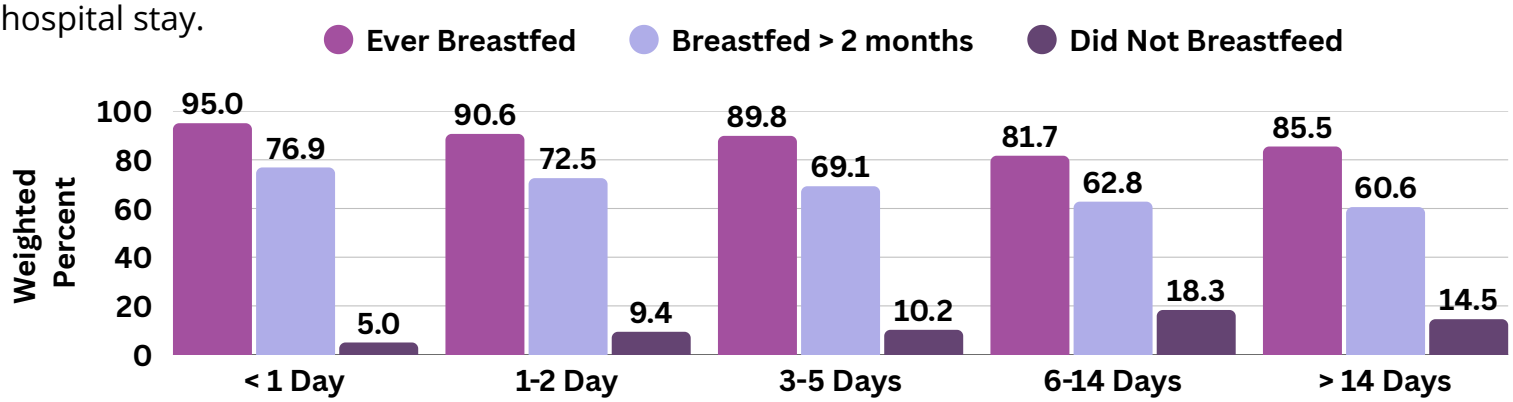
- For mothers who reported Paid Maternity Leave, the breastfeeding initiation rate was 93.3%, higher than New Mexico's overall initiation rate of 90.3%. Their breastfeeding duration rate was 86.6%, also surpassing the state's overall duration rate of 71.6%.
- Mothers who took Unpaid Maternity Leave had a breastfeeding initiation rate of 93.6%, which was similar to those with paid leave and higher than the state's overall initiation rate. However, their breastfeeding duration rate dropped to 79.5%.
- As for mothers who reported No Maternity Leave, they showed lower rates across all categories. Their breastfeeding initiation rate was 80%, and their duration rate was 68%. Both of these figures are lower than the rates for the other groups and lower than the overall New Mexico rates. This group also had the highest percentage of mothers who reported never breastfeeding, at 20%.

Hospital Experiences

Among 2020-2022 Births in New Mexico

Length of Infant Hospital Stay

Breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in New Mexico vary by the length of a newborn's hospital stay.



- Individuals whose babies stayed less than a day had an initiation rate of 95% and a duration rate at two months of 76.9%, while those with a hospital stay of 1–2 days had slightly lower rates at 90.6% and 72.5%, respectively.
- Longer hospital stays had lower rates, with infants hospitalized for 6–14 days having an initiation rate of 81.7% and a duration rate at two months of 62.8%.

Baby-Friendly Experiences

Among 2020-2022 Births in New Mexico

This section explores the landscape of Baby-Friendly hospitals & practices within New Mexico, examining their definition, benefits, and the extent to which mothers experience these supportive maternity care measures.

Baby-Friendly Hospitals & Facilities

Baby-Friendly Hospitals are healthcare facilities that adhere to specific guidelines set by the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), a global program launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support breastfeeding and improve maternity care practices [8].

These guidelines include adhering to the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding [9], such as encouraging early skin-to-skin contact, supporting exclusive breastfeeding, implementing a rooming-in policy, educating mothers on breastfeeding benefits and techniques, limiting the marketing of breast milk substitutes, offering lactation support, and coordinating post-discharge support.

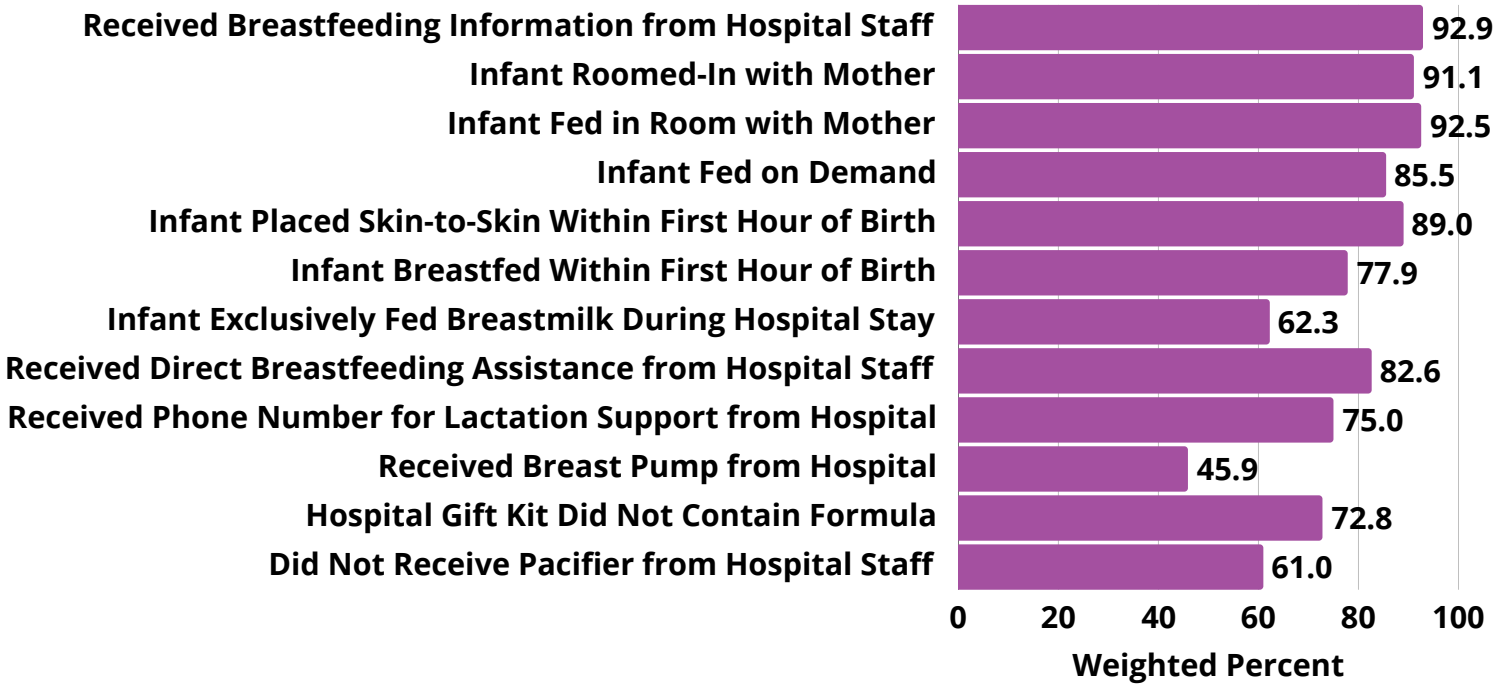
New Mexico currently has 15 accredited Baby-Friendly hospitals, with others in the process of seeking accreditation. It is important to note that even hospitals not officially designated as "Baby-Friendly" can still promote maternity care practices that align with the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative's principles.

Benefits of Baby-Friendly Practices

The widespread adoption of Baby-Friendly hospitals and practices is highly beneficial for both mothers and infants. These practices actively promote breastfeeding [10,11], encourage best practices for infant feeding, strengthen healthy birth experiences [12], and have the potential to reduce racial and ethnic breastfeeding disparities [13].

Baby-Friendly Practices in NM

To explore the landscape of baby-friendly practices experienced in New Mexico, 12 key maternity care measures were utilized. The weighted percentages of respondents from the 2020-2022 PRAMS survey who reported experiencing these practices are described below.

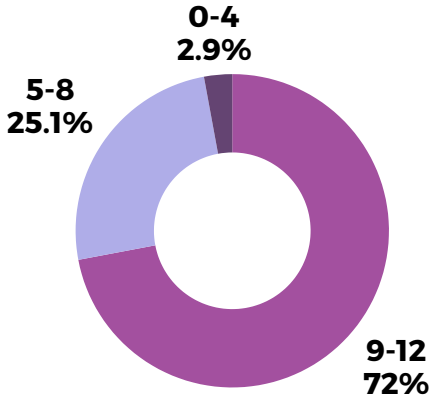


The Baby-Friendly USA BFHI Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria (2021) [14] set benchmarks to assess hospital adherence to breastfeeding-supportive practices.

- In New Mexico, rooming-in (91.1%), skin-to-skin contact within the first hour (89.0%), provision of breastfeeding information (92.9%), and direct breastfeeding assistance (82.6%) exceeded the 80% BFHI targets.
- Early breastfeeding initiation (77.9%) and exclusive breastmilk feeding during the hospital stay (62.3%) fell below the 80% target, suggesting areas for improvement.
- Notably, over 72.8% of mothers reported receiving a hospital gift kit that did not contain formula, and 61.0% did not receive a pacifier from hospital staff—both indicators of alignment with baby-friendly hospital practices.

Experiences with Baby-Friendly Care in NM

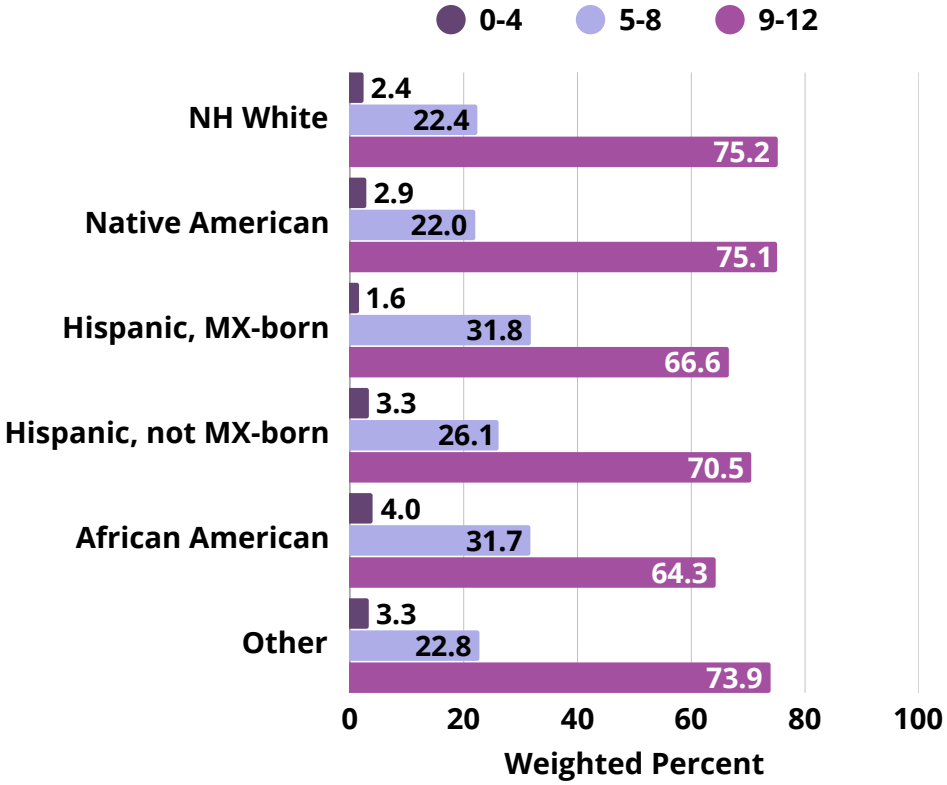
When these measures are aggregated, we find that approximately **72.1%** of individuals experienced 9-12 of these Baby-Friendly measures, 25.1% experienced 5-8 measures, and 2.9% experienced 0-4 measures during their hospital stay.



Baby-Friendly Practices by Select Maternal Demographics

Analyzing the aggregated data on Baby-Friendly measures reveals notable differences across various demographic groups and modes of delivery, suggesting differences in access to these beneficial practices.

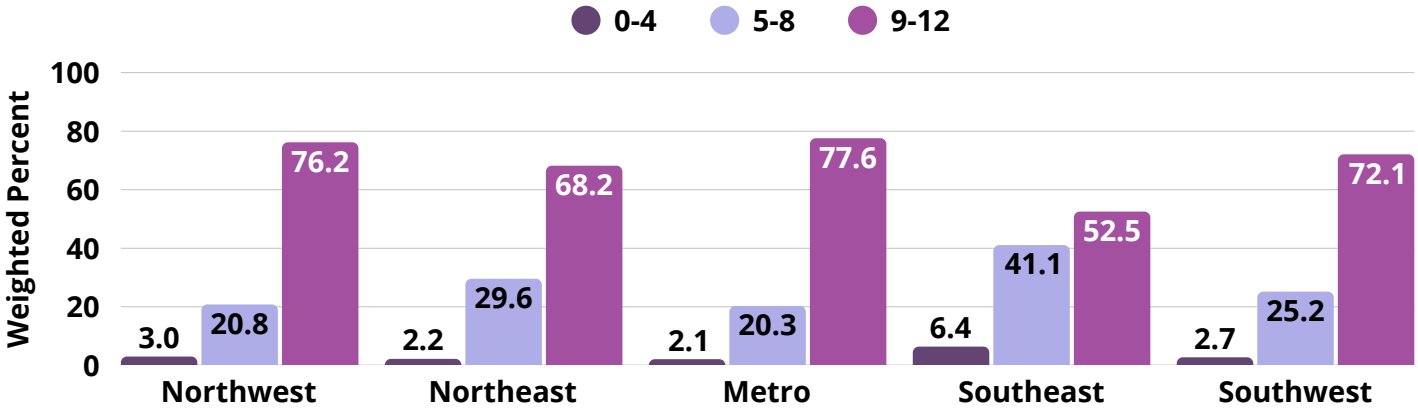
Baby-Friendly Practices by Maternal Race/Ethnicity



Non-Hispanic White and Native American mothers reported the highest rates of experiencing 9-12 Baby-Friendly measures (75.2% and 75.1% respectively).

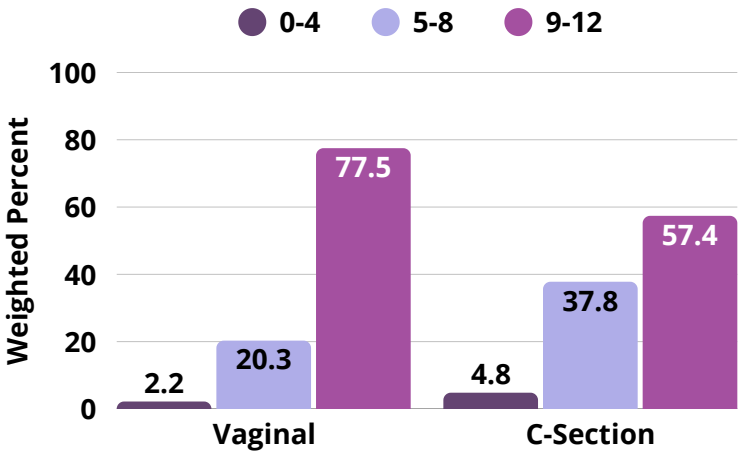
Conversely, African American mothers and Mexican-born Hispanic mothers reported lower rates in this category (64.3% and 66.6% respectively), and higher percentages in the 5-8 measures range, indicating potential gaps in comprehensive Baby-Friendly care for these groups.

Baby-Friendly Practices by NM Region



- The Metro region has the highest percentage of mothers who reported experiencing 9-12 Baby-Friendly measures (77.6%), closely followed by the Northwest region at 76.2%.
- In contrast, the Southeast region has the lowest percentage at 52.5%. The Southeast region also has the highest percentage of mothers experiencing only 5-8 measures (41.1%). This regional variation suggests uneven distribution of Baby-Friendly practices across New Mexico.

Baby-Friendly Practices by Mode of Delivery



Mothers who had a vaginal delivery more commonly reported experiencing 9-12 Baby-Friendly measures (77.5%) compared to those who had a C-section (57.4%). This difference highlights specific challenges in implementing comprehensive Baby-Friendly practices for mothers undergoing C-sections.

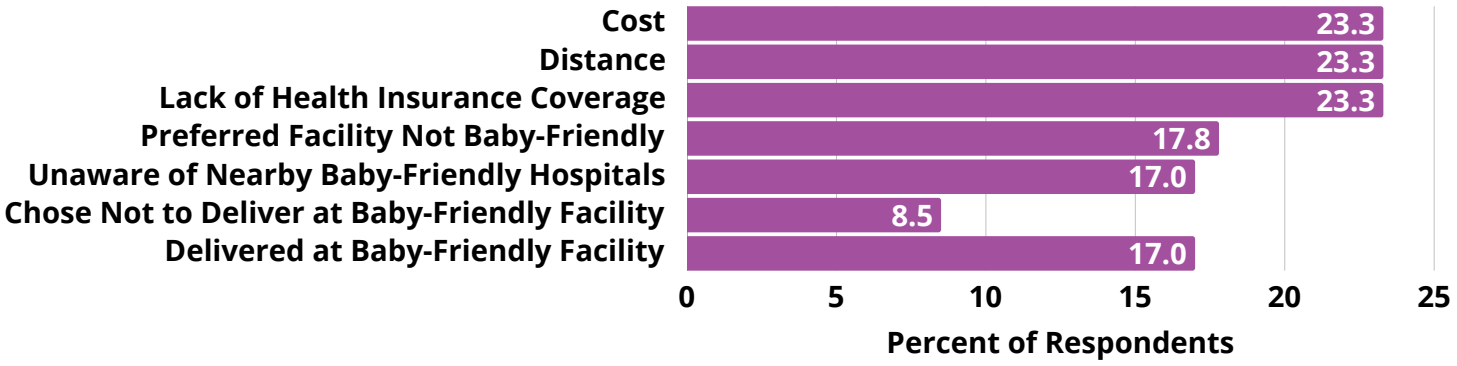
Access to Baby-Friendly Facilities and Awareness

The observed differences in the experience of Baby-Friendly practices across various demographic groups and modes of delivery underscore existing disparities in access to optimal maternity care in New Mexico. Given the profound influence these practices have on maternal and child health outcomes, promoting equitable access and consistent implementation of Baby-Friendly initiatives throughout the state is crucial.

A recent New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) Maternal & Child Health Community Health Survey (2025) provides further insight into awareness and barriers related to Baby-Friendly hospitals. Among the maternal domain respondents (n=235)*****:

- Only **39.0%** were aware of and understood what "Baby-Friendly" hospitals were.
- 33.3% had heard the term but did not fully understand it.
- 23.4% had no awareness regarding them, suggesting significant gaps in knowledge and awareness.

Barriers to Delivering at a Baby-Friendly Facility



Based on responses (n=235) from the NMDOH Maternal & Child Health Community Health Survey, 2025*

The MCH Community Health Survey also asked mothers to indicate any barriers that prevented them from using Baby-Friendly facilities.

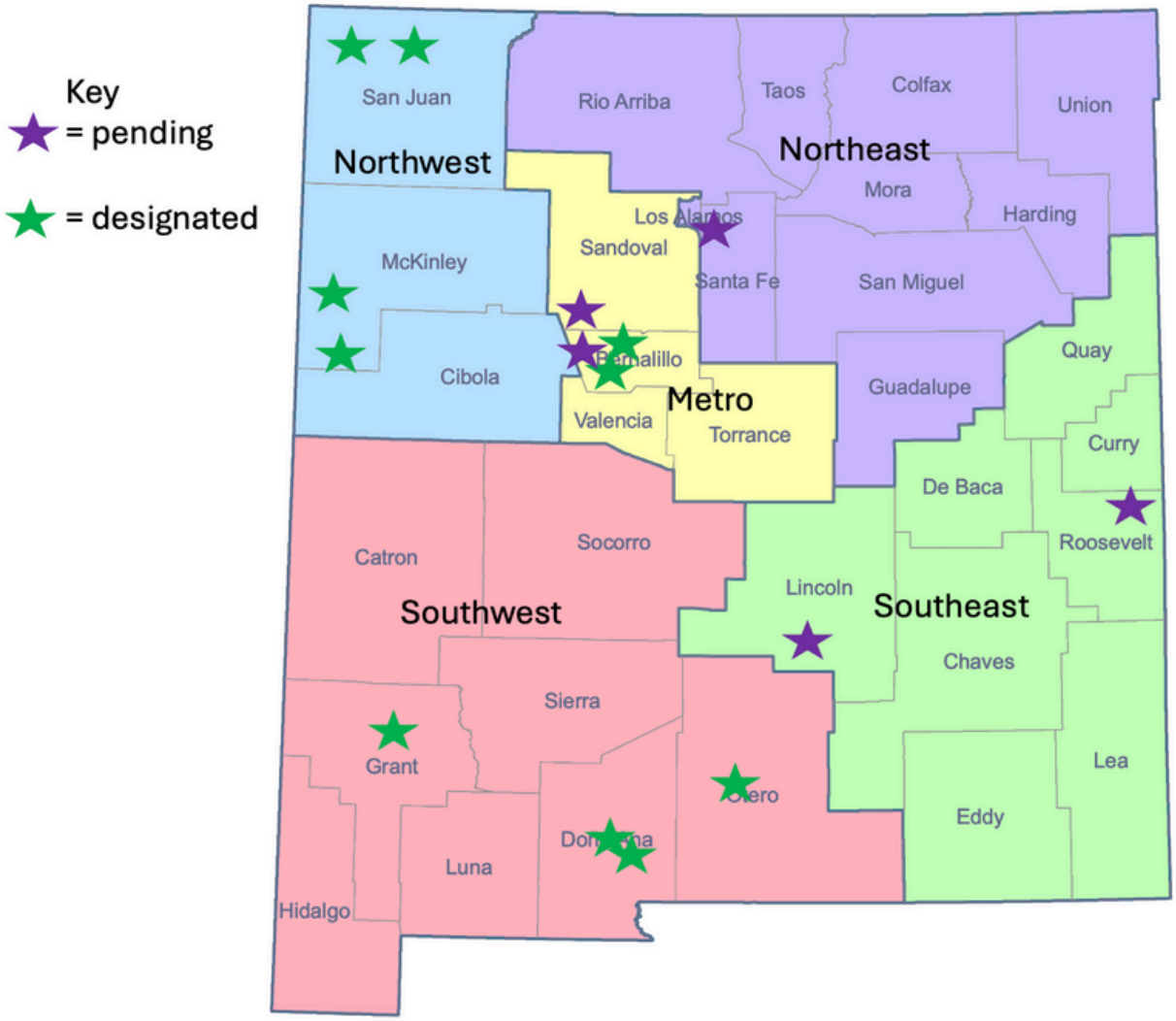
- The most cited barriers reported included cost (23.3%), distance (23.3%), and lack of insurance coverage (23.3).
- Notably, **17.0%** reported that they *did* deliver at a Baby-Friendly facility!

***Note:** Since survey questions allowed for "select all that apply" responses, percentages may not sum to 100%.

Breastfeeding Resources

Baby-Friendly Hospitals in New Mexico

Baby-Friendly hospitals in New Mexico are shown on the map below and can also be found on the Baby-Friendly USA website.



Breastfeeding Resources

New Mexico offers a variety of resources to support lactation efforts, providing education, guidance, and assistance to families across the state. The following organizations and programs offer breastfeeding support:

- NM Breastfeeding Task Force
- La Leche League of New Mexico
- New Mexico WIC Lactation Providers List
- Southwest Mother's Milk Bank (Human Milk Repository of New Mexico)
- Presbyterian Lactation Clinic
- UNM Lactation Clinic
- Lovelace Lactation Clinic

Data Sources and References

Data Source

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National Breastfeeding Rates:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2023). Breastfeeding Report Card, United States 2022. Available at https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding-data/breastfeeding-report-card/index.html

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Baby-Friendly Facilities - Barriers & Awareness

- NMDOH Maternal & Child Health - Community Health Survey, 2025

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