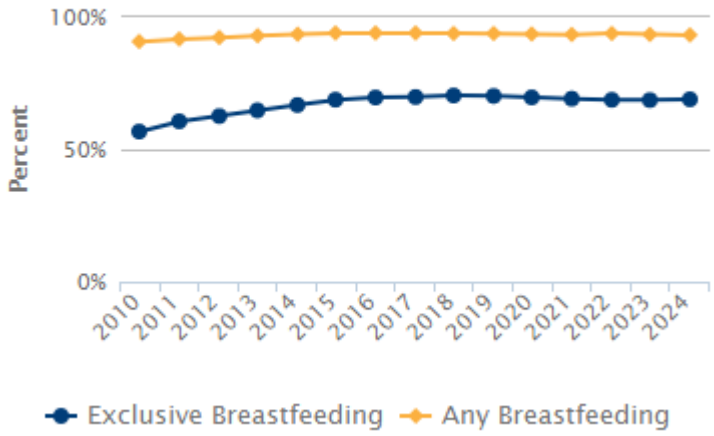
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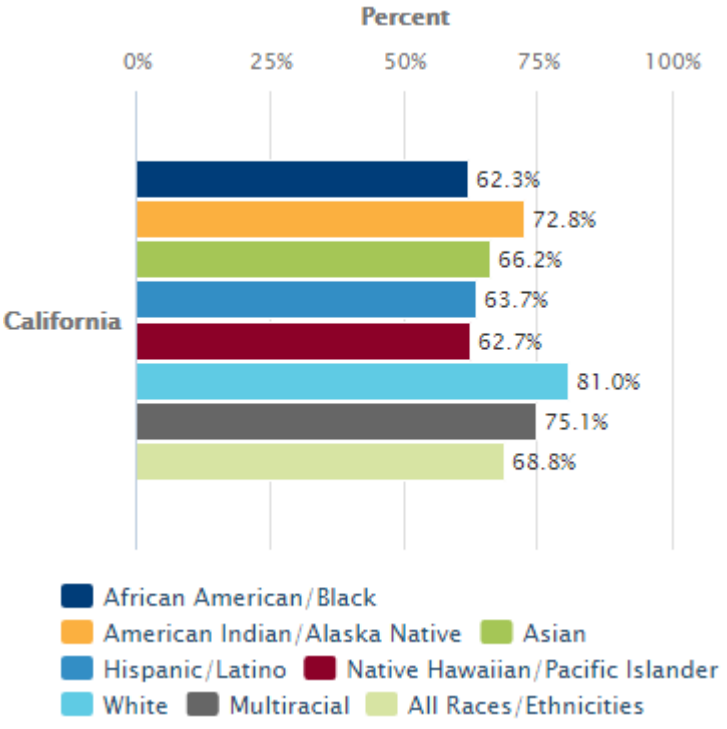
Breastfeeding in California

Newborns Breastfed During Their Hospitalization
California



Definition: Percentage of newborns fed breast milk during their hospitalization, by type of breastfeeding (e.g., in 2024, 69% of infants born in a hospital to California mothers were breastfed exclusively during their hospitalization).
Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, In-Hospital Breastfeeding Initiation Data (Aug. 2026).

Newborns Breastfed Exclusively in Hospital, by Race/Ethnicity: 2022-2024



Definition: Percentage of newborns fed breast milk during their hospitalization, by type of breastfeeding and race/ethnicity (e.g., in 2022-2024, 63.7% of

What It Is

Kidsdata.org provides county-level indicators of in-hospital breastfeeding initiation overall, by newborn's race/ethnicity, and, for Asian newborns, by Asian subgroup. Data are based on feedings from birth to the time of specimen collection by the California Department of Public Health's Newborn Screening Program (usually 24 to 48 hours after birth). Two types of breastfeeding are reported: (i) *exclusive breastfeeding*, which measures the number and/or percentage of newborns who receive breast milk only, and (ii) *any breastfeeding*, which measures the number and/or percentage of newborns who receive at least some breast milk (i.e., those who receive breast milk only *and* those who receive both breast milk and formula).

Why This Topic Is Important

Growing evidence indicates that nutrition in the first two years of life provides a foundation for long-term health. Breast milk is widely acknowledged as the most complete form of nutrition for infants, with a range of benefits for health, growth, and development. Breastfeeding is safe and recommended for nearly all families, with very few exceptions. Infants who are breastfed are at reduced risk for serious and chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, obesity, infectious disease, and sudden infant death syndrome. Breastfeeding also offers health advantages to mothers, such as reducing the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. Increasing the proportion of children who are breastfed for at least the first year of life—as well as the percentage who are breastfed exclusively for the first six months—are important public health goals. In fact, California has a statewide goal to make breastfeeding the normal method of infant feeding for at least the first year of life.

By reducing long-term health care costs for children and mothers, breastfeeding offers broad economic benefits. Experts also point to the environmental benefits of breastfeeding, which does not require product packaging, transportation, or use of cows.

Access to high-quality support to help initiate and sustain breastfeeding is uneven, with lower rates of evidence-based maternity care in underserved communities, as well as consistently lower breastfeeding rates among African American mothers, in particular. Many mothers also face occupational or insurance barriers, such as a lack of paid family leave, limited workplace flexibility, and inadequate

Hispanic/Latino infants born in a hospital to California mothers were breastfed exclusively during their hospitalization).
Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, In-Hospital Breastfeeding Initiation Data (Aug. 2026).

Newborns Breastfed Exclusively in Hospital: 2024

Locations	Percent
California	69.0%
Alameda County	80.7%
Contra Costa County	83.4%
Fresno County	51.6%
Kern County	60.7%
Los Angeles County	61.5%
Orange County	65.6%
Riverside County	64.8%
Sacramento County	74.7%
San Bernardino County	61.9%
San Diego County	76.2%
Santa Clara County	78.7%

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Newborns Breastfed in Hospital, by Asian Subgroup: 2022-2024

California	Percent	
Asian Subgroup	Exclusive Breastfeeding	Any Breastfeeding
Asian Indian	76.4%	97.5%
Cambodian	56.6%	89.2%
Chinese	54.7%	87.3%
Filipino	73.5%	97.1%
Japanese	81.5%	97.9%
Korean	66.3%	96.8%
Laotian	54.1%	84.4%
Southeast Asian	63.4%	89.0%
Vietnamese	65.1%	95.2%
Multiple Asian Subgroups	73.0%	95.4%

Definition: Percentage of newborns fed breast milk during their hospitalization, by type of breastfeeding and Asian subgroup (e.g., in 2022-2024, 54.7% of Chinese infants born in a hospital to California mothers were breastfed exclusively during their hospitalization).
Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, In-Hospital Breastfeeding Initiation Data (Aug. 2026).

coverage for breastfeeding supplies and support.

How Children Are Faring

Since 2010—the first year for which in-hospital breastfeeding data are available—more than 9 in 10 California newborns have received at least some breast milk during their hospitalization (93% in 2024). The share of newborns fed only breast milk in 2024 was 69%, up from 57% in 2010. Across counties with data for 2024, the percentage of newborns breastfed exclusively ranged from lower than 40% (Imperial) to higher than 90% (Nevada).

Statewide, rates of exclusive breastfeeding have risen overall for all racial/ethnic groups with data. Figures for African American/black, Hispanic/Latino, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander newborns, in particular, were more than 20% higher in 2022-2024 than in 2010-2012. Over this period, the percentages of American Indian/Alaska Native, white, and multiracial newborns breastfed exclusively before leaving the hospital (more than 7 in 10 in 2022-2024) were consistently higher than for newborns in other groups.

Rates of in-hospital breastfeeding vary widely across Asian subgroups in California. Overall, 66% of Asian newborns were breastfed exclusively in 2022-2024, but rates for Chinese and Laotian newborns were lower than 55% while the rate for Japanese newborns was higher than 80%. Exclusive breastfeeding among Vietnamese newborns increased more than 40% between 2010-2012 (46%) and 2022-2024 (65%).

View references for this text and additional research on this topic:
https://m.kidsdata.org/topic/46/breastfeeding/summary

