

A close-up photograph of a woman with curly hair breastfeeding a baby. The woman is looking down at the baby with a gentle expression. The baby is wearing a light green shirt. The woman is wearing a white cardigan over a striped shirt. The background is softly blurred, showing green foliage.

Iowa WIC 2023

BREASTFEEDING REPORT

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Iowa Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and administered by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (Iowa HHS) Bureau of Nutrition and Physical Activity. Iowa HHS contracts with 15 community-based organizations called [Collaborative Service Areas \(CSAs\)](#) to provide WIC services in all of Iowa's 99 counties. WIC services include nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, supplemental food packages and referrals to other health care and social service programs. These services are provided to eligible families, including low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk.

Iowa WIC records and maintains participant-level data, including breastfeeding data, in their Iowa WIC Data System. WIC Program and participant data are reported to USDA FNS as a requirement for administering the WIC Program. The USDA FNS uses this data to monitor breastfeeding trends based on the number of partially and fully breastfed infants for each WIC state and local agency. This report presents the breastfeeding initiation (i.e., ever breastfed) and prevalence rates of Iowa WIC participants, as well as other programmatic measures related to the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program, staff training and the Breastfeeding Award of Excellence. Unless otherwise noted, data in this report are from the Iowa WIC Data System from 2018 through 2022 calendar years (January through December).

WIC SERVICES

- Nutrition education
- Breastfeeding promotion and support
- Supplemental food packages
- Health care referrals

PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE FAMILIES INCLUDING

- Low-income women:
 - Pregnant
 - Postpartum
 - Breastfeeding
- Infants and children:
 - Up to age five
 - Who are at nutritional risk





In 2020 and 2021, Iowa lawmakers began discussions that supported statewide methods to implement consistent messaging, stronger referral systems, improved utilization of programs and continuity of care related to breastfeeding and to position breastfeeding as the best choice for mother and baby. Iowa HHS saw this interest as a call to action. Collaborating with various partners, Iowa HHS led the development of the Iowa Breastfeeding Strategic Plan for supporting breastfeeding across the state.

IOWA BREASTFEEDING STRATEGIC PLAN

Iowa WIC was greatly involved in the development of the Iowa Breastfeeding Strategic Plan 2023–2026, which aims to maximize breastfeeding support and improve breastfeeding rates among all mothers in the state. The plan is supported by funding from the USDA FNS WIC Midwest Region Operational Adjustment Grant. Funds allowed Iowa to work with Coffective, a consultant that helps state and local stakeholders coordinate to improve maternal and child health outcomes. An overview of the plan development process and timeline:



The Iowa Breastfeeding Strategic Plan includes steps to build collaborative partnerships and local coalitions that follow updated evidence-based best practices, policies and procedures in supporting breastfeeding as the preferred infant feeding method. Goals and objectives are:

1 | Build collaborative partnerships to improve coordination of maternal and child health breastfeeding programs.

- Develop a statewide referral system to improve access to maternal and child health breastfeeding services.
- Build collaborative partnerships and improve coordination in five local communities in Iowa.
- Develop and enhance state organization and program partnerships.

2 | Improve access to adequate and quality lactation services across Iowa.

- Develop a resource that identifies available lactation support across Iowa and is accessible to all Iowans.
- Enhance culturally-congruent lactation services across Iowa.
- Increase availability of quality breastfeeding training to clinical, community and government organizations.

3 | Increase community-based support for breastfeeding.

- Increase the number of birthing hospitals in Iowa implementing baby-friendly evidence-based maternity care practices.
- Improve access to breastfeeding support by offering classes and support groups.
- Develop a model for lactation centers within local public health.
- Develop breastfeeding-friendly designations to increase the number of breastfeeding-friendly spaces.

4 | Improve awareness, support and access to donor breast milk.

- Obtain Medicaid, managed care organization (MCO) or private insurance payment for donor milk to ensure equitable distribution to infants at home.
- Create an awareness and social marketing campaign to increase donor milk usage and donations of ounce dispensed from the previous year.
- Increase the availability of donor breast milk across Iowa.

The full [Iowa Breastfeeding Strategic Plan \(PDF\)](#) can be found on the Iowa HHS website.

PLAN PARTNERS

The Iowa Breastfeeding Strategic Plan was developed with the involvement of the following organizations:

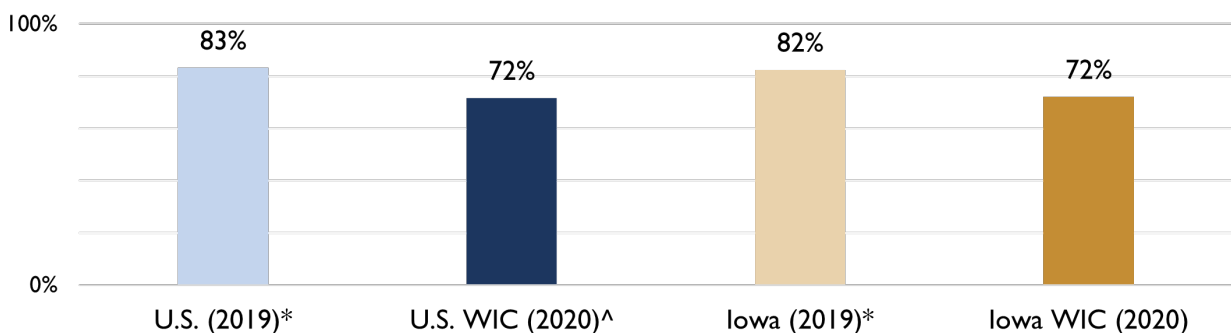
- Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, Iowa Section
- Common Good Iowa
- Iowa HHS, Bureau of Family Health
- Iowa HHS, Childhood Obesity Prevention
- Iowa HHS, Healthy Child Care Iowa Program
- Iowa HHS, SNAP-Ed
- Iowa HHS, Statewide Perinatal Care Program
- Iowa HHS, Title V and Title X
- Iowa HHS, Title V Community-Based Doula Project for African American Families
- Iowa HHS, WIC Program
- Iowa Academy of Family Physicians
- Iowa Black Doula Collective
- Iowa Breastfeeding Coalition
- Iowa Department of Administrative Services
- Iowa Department of Education
- Iowa Finance Authority
- Iowa Hospital Association
- Iowa SIDS Foundation
- Iowa Total Care
- Mother's Milk Bank of Iowa



IOWA WIC BREASTFEEDING INITIATION



Breastfeeding initiation among Iowa WIC participants was similar to the breastfeeding initiation among the U.S. WIC population. However, breastfeeding initiation among WIC participants was lower than the general population in the U.S. and in Iowa.



*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Breastfeeding Report Card: United States, 2022. Breastfeeding Report Card United States, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/pdf/2022-Breastfeeding-Report-Card-H.pdf>

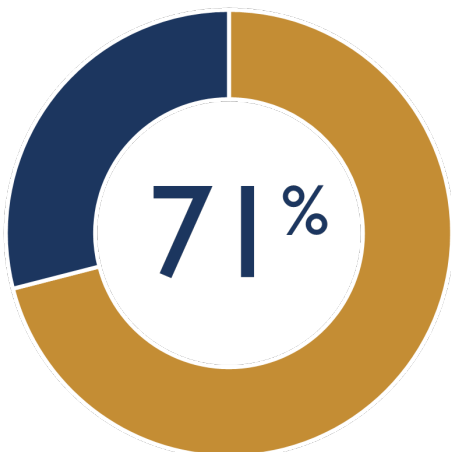
^U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2023). WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2020. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/participant-program-characteristics-2020>

The most recent data available are displayed for breastfeeding initiation across the U.S., U.S. WIC, and Iowa. Iowa WIC data from 2020 are presented for comparison.

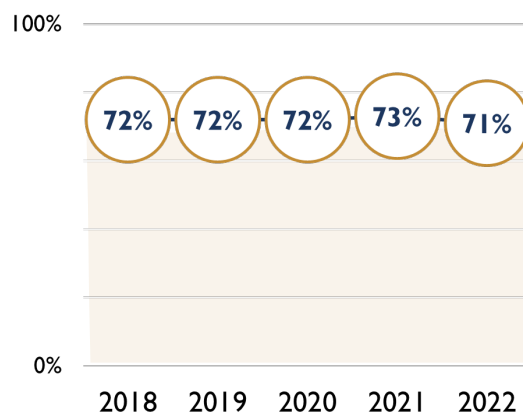


In February 2022, the Iowa WIC Program implemented a new breastfeeding panel to more easily collect breastfeeding data. Due to this change, data collected for calendar year 2022 should not be compared to data previously collected. Several factors may have contributed to the increase in breastfeeding rates observed in 2022, such as the formula recall and formula shortage impacts following the COVID-19 pandemic, increased availability of breast pumps from Iowa WIC, implementation of Medicaid MCO breast pump coverage and the change in data collection methodology in the Iowa WIC Data System.

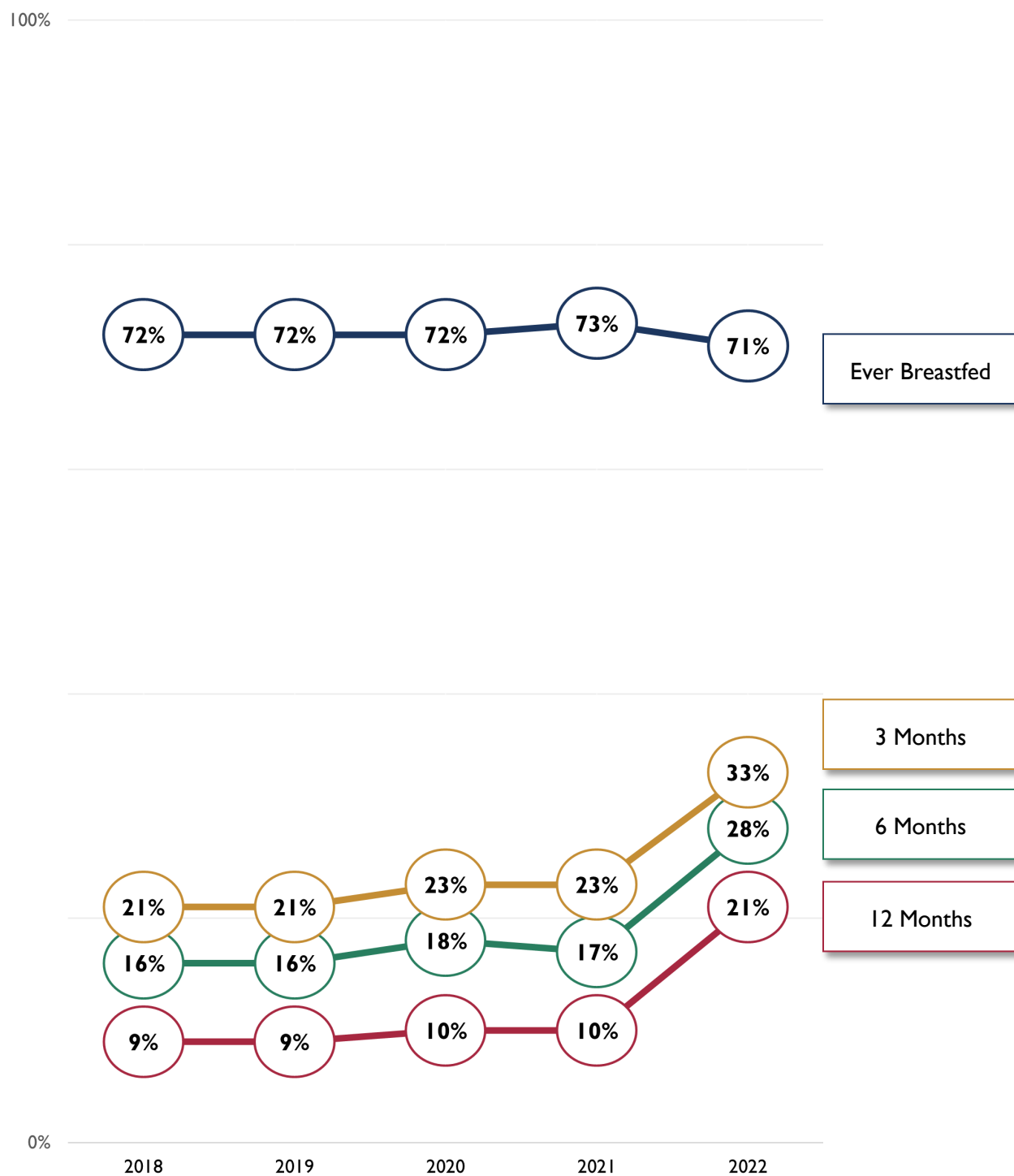
In 2022, 71% of Iowa WIC children ages 0-24 months were breastfed at some point.



From 2018 to 2022, the breastfeeding initiation among Iowa WIC children ages 0-24 months remained stable between 71-73%.

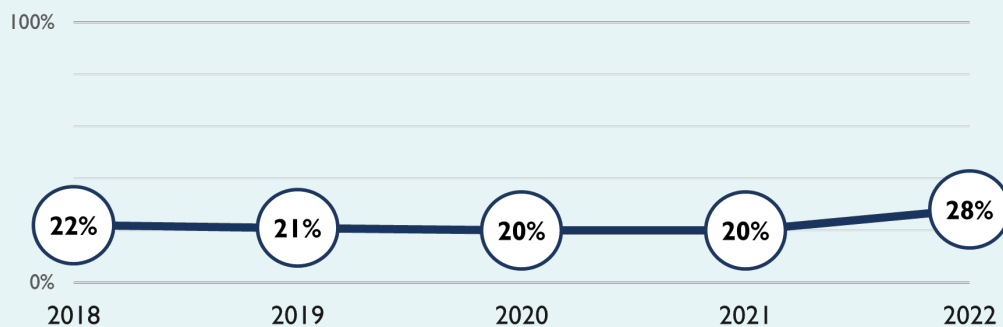


Initiation of breastfeeding overall remained stable from 2018 to 2022; however, prevalence for breastfeeding at 3 months, 6 months and 12 months increased from 2021 to 2022.

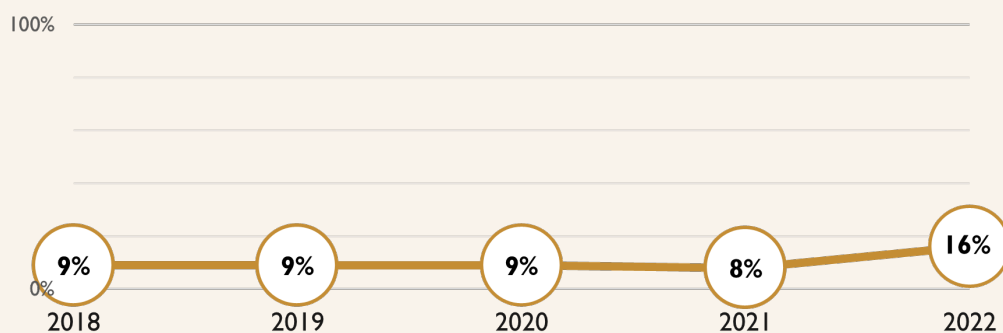


Prevalence of **exclusively** breastfeeding for at least 1 week, 3 months and 6 months increased from 2021 to 2022.

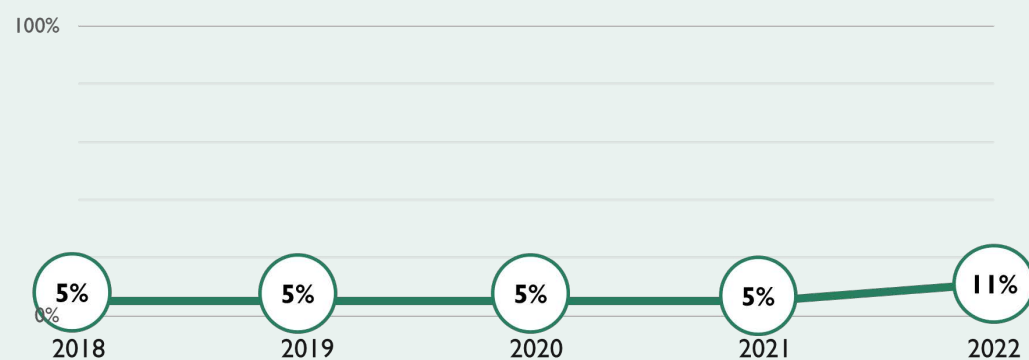
1 | Week



3 | Months



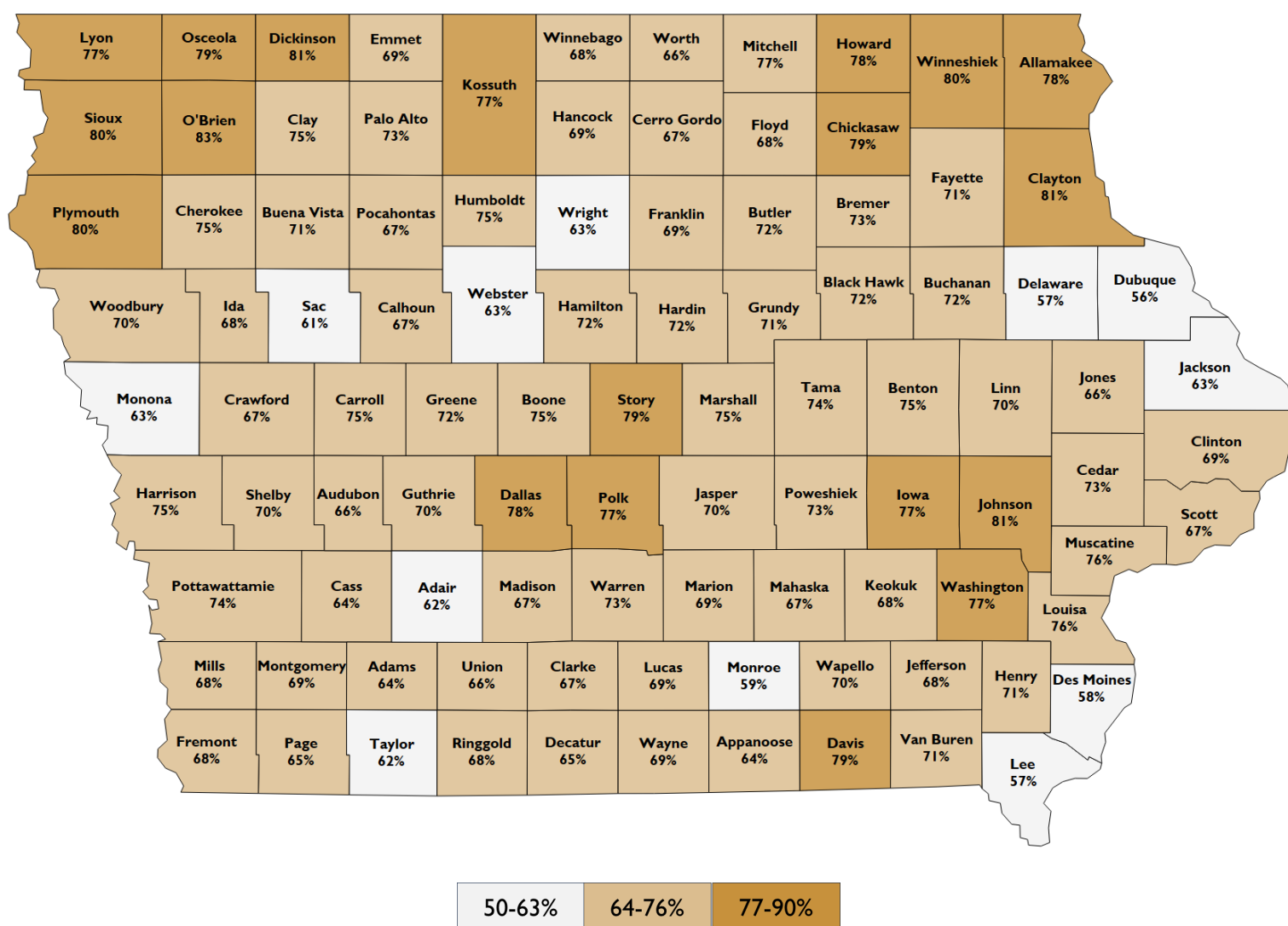
6 | Months



BREASTFEEDING INITIATION AND PREVALENCE BY IOWA COUNTY

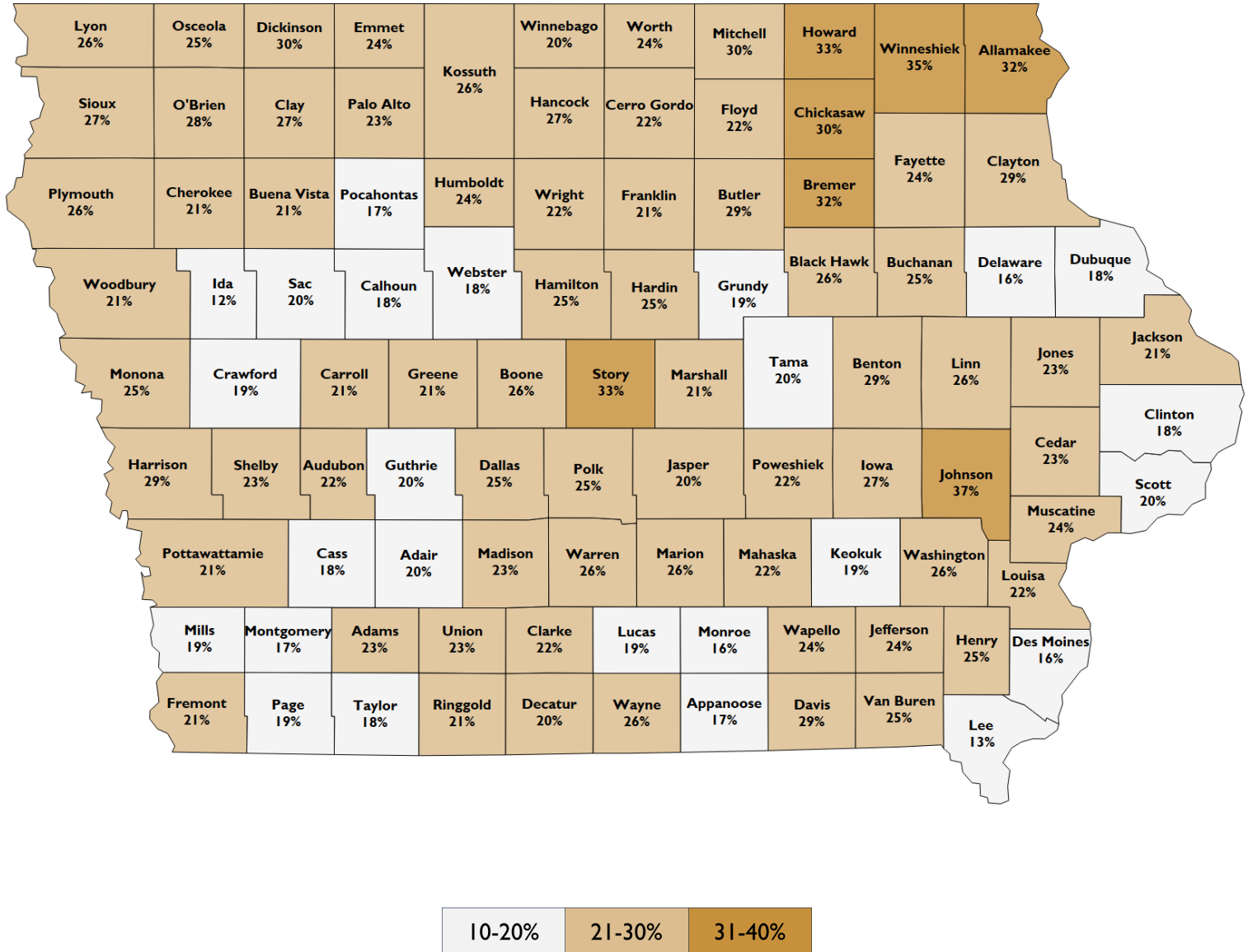
Overall Breastfeeding Initiation

Overall breastfeeding initiation among children ages 0-24 months in 2022 was highest in O'Brien (83%), Clayton (81%), Johnson (81%) and Dickinson (81%) counties.



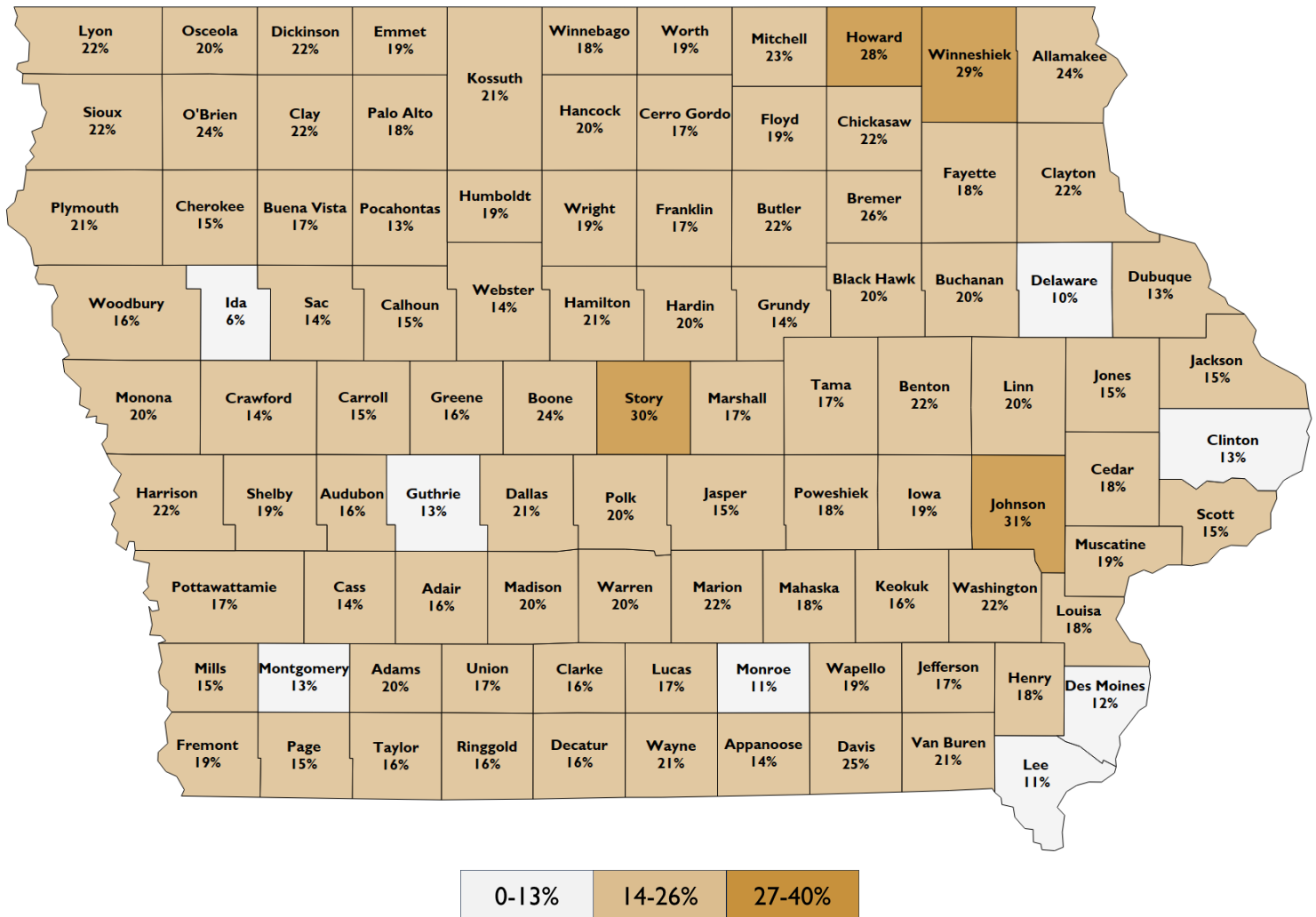
Prevalence of Breastfeeding for at Least 3 Months

Prevalence of breastfeeding for at least 3 months among children ages 3-24 months in 2022 was highest in Johnson (37%), Winneshiek (35%), Story (33%) and Howard (33%) counties.



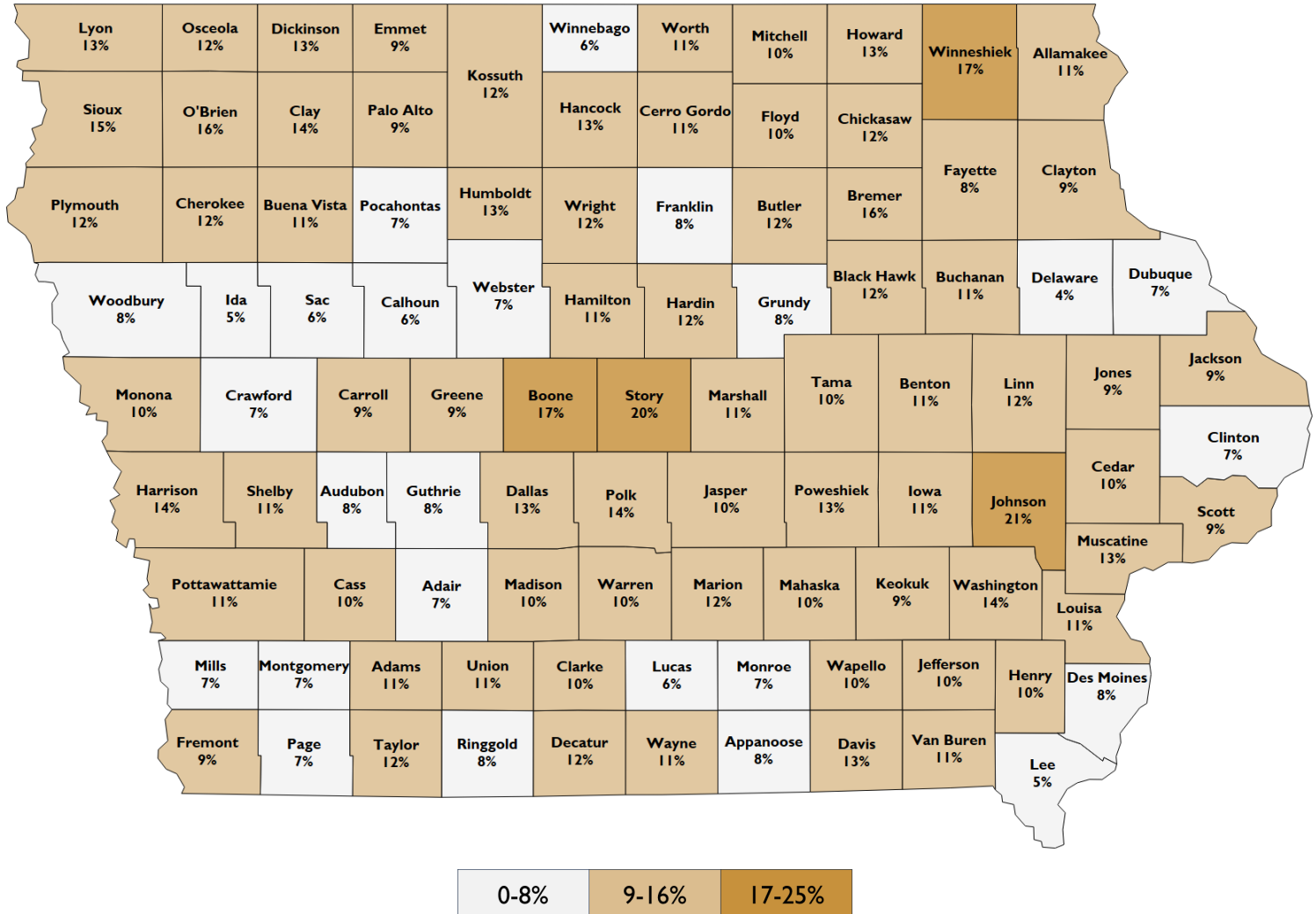
Prevalence of Breastfeeding for at Least 6 Months

Prevalence of breastfeeding for at least 6 months among children ages 6-24 months in 2022 was highest in Johnson (31%), Story (30%) and Winneshiek (29%) counties.



Prevalence of Breastfeeding for at Least 12 Months

Prevalence of breastfeeding at least 12 months among children ages 12-24 months in 2022 was highest in Johnson (21%), Story (20%), Winneshiek (17%) and Boone (17%) counties.



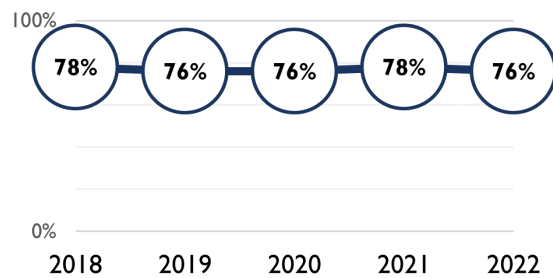
BREASTFEEDING INITIATION BY MATERNAL CHARACTERISTICS



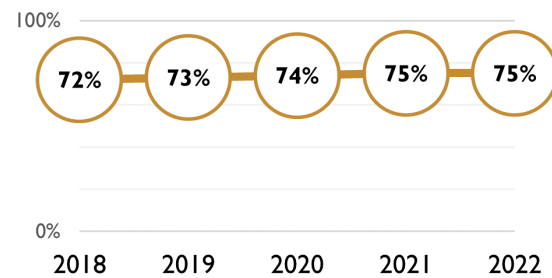
Breastfeeding Initiation by Maternal Race/Ethnicity

Breastfeeding initiation was slightly higher among mothers who identify as Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, non-Hispanic or Hispanic.

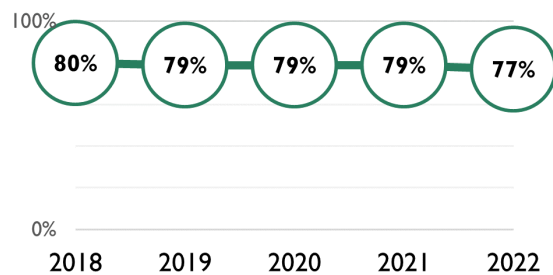
Asian or Pacific Islander



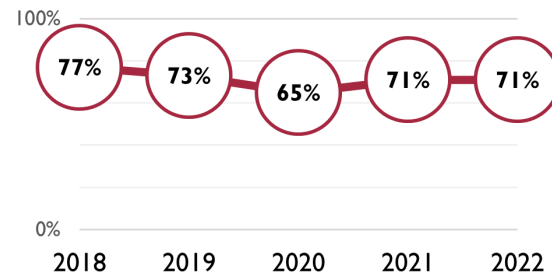
Black, Non-Hispanic



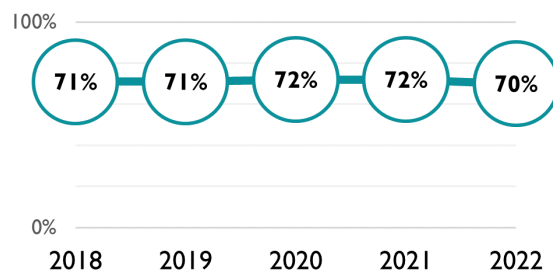
Hispanic



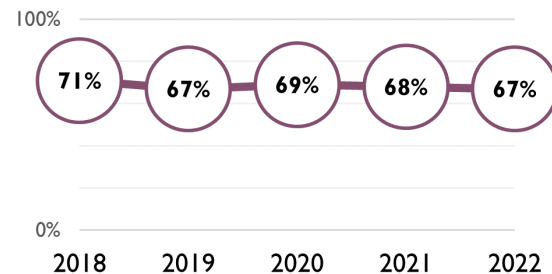
Indian or Alaska Native



White, Non-Hispanic



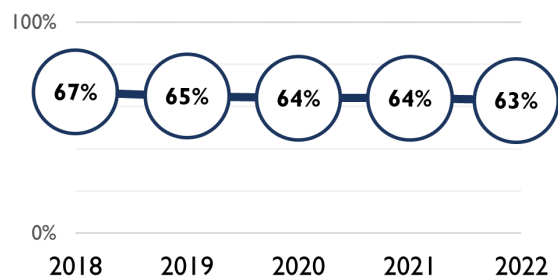
Other Races



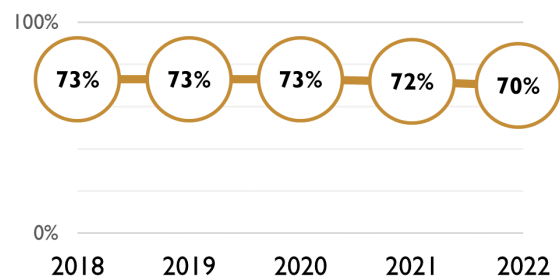
Breastfeeding Initiation by Maternal Age

Breastfeeding initiation increased with maternal age.

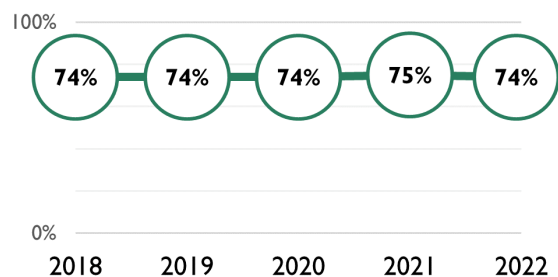
15-19 Years



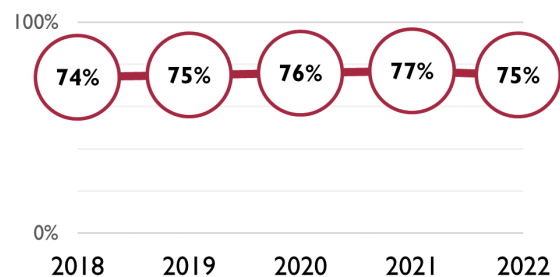
20-24 Years



25-34 Years

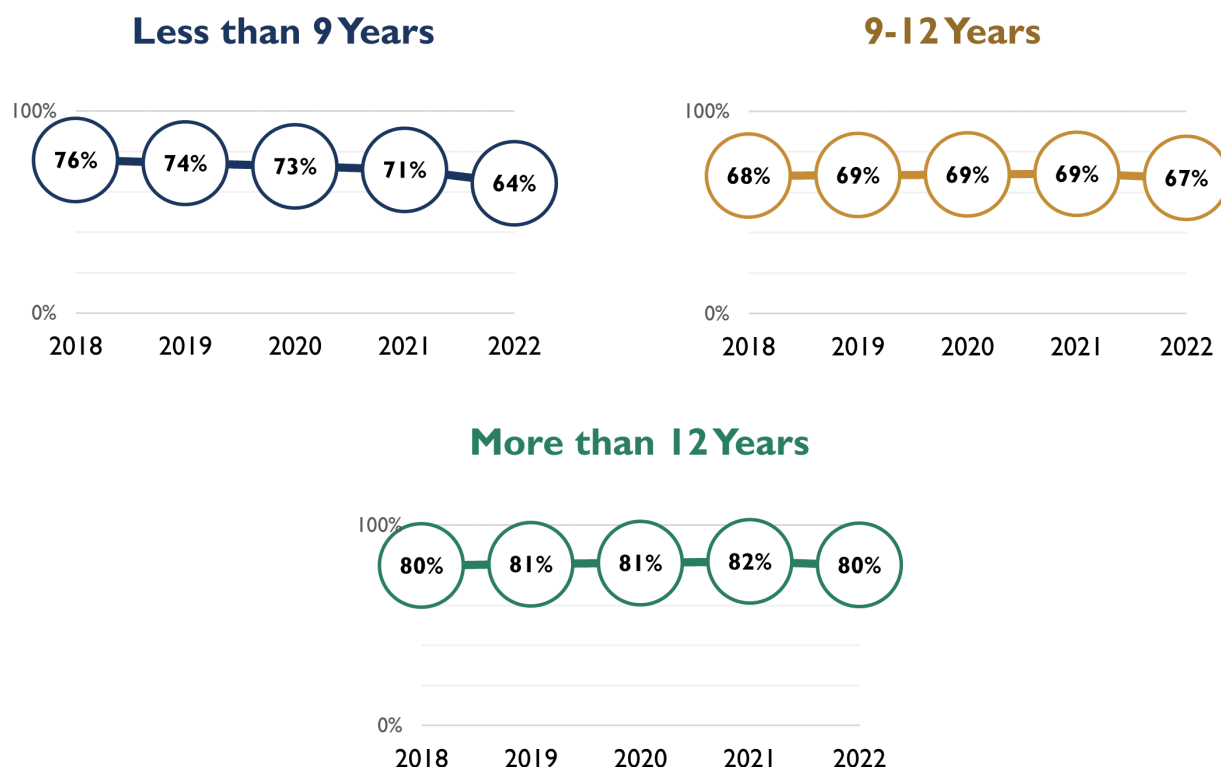


35+ Years



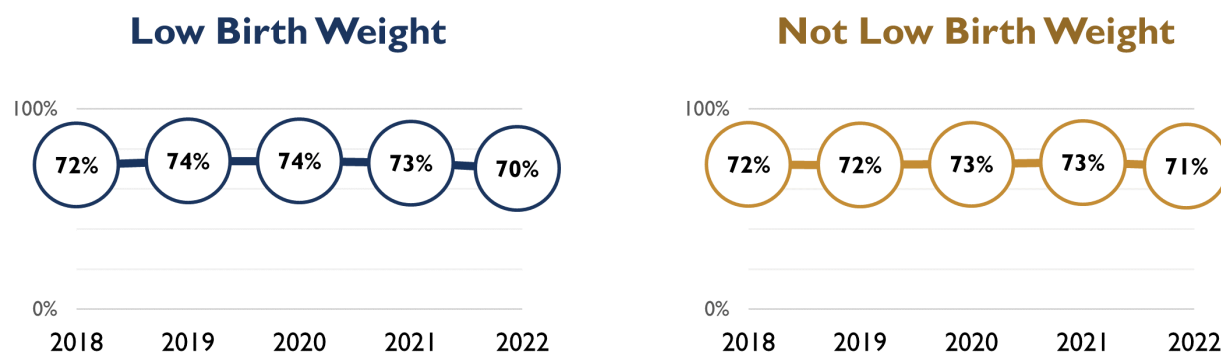
Breastfeeding Initiation by Maternal Education

Breastfeeding initiation was highest among mothers who have more than 12 years of education (i.e., beyond a high school degree).



Breastfeeding Initiation by Low Birth Weight Status

Breastfeeding initiation was similar regardless of birth weight status.



BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELING

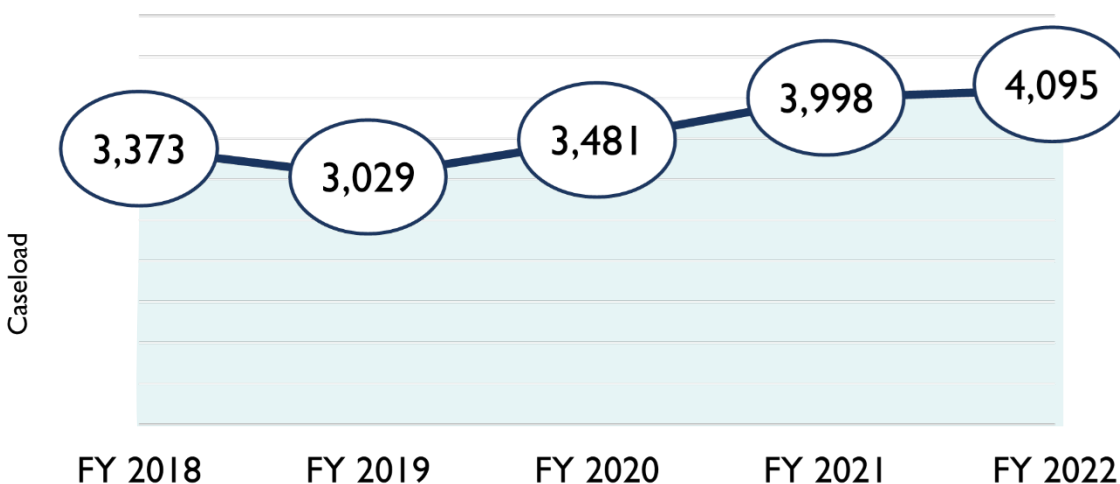
The Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program in Iowa began in 2006 with a pilot program at Operation Threshold. Following the success of the pilot, seven local agencies received funding to start peer counseling programs in their service areas. In 2017, funding was allocated to increase the number of peer counseling programs from seven to 12. In 2023, the Iowa WIC Program prioritized expanding the peer counseling program statewide to ensure services were available to all WIC families across the 15 service areas.

Iowa WIC Peer Counselors are paraprofessionals who provide breastfeeding promotion, education and support to WIC participants. They are also mothers who are currently receiving or have previously participated in WIC and have similar racial and ethnic backgrounds as the mothers they support. They have experience breastfeeding at least one baby for four months or more. Peer Counselors are available outside of the usual WIC clinic hours, as well as in the clinic during appointment hours. The data presented below represent fiscal year data (October through September) for each year.

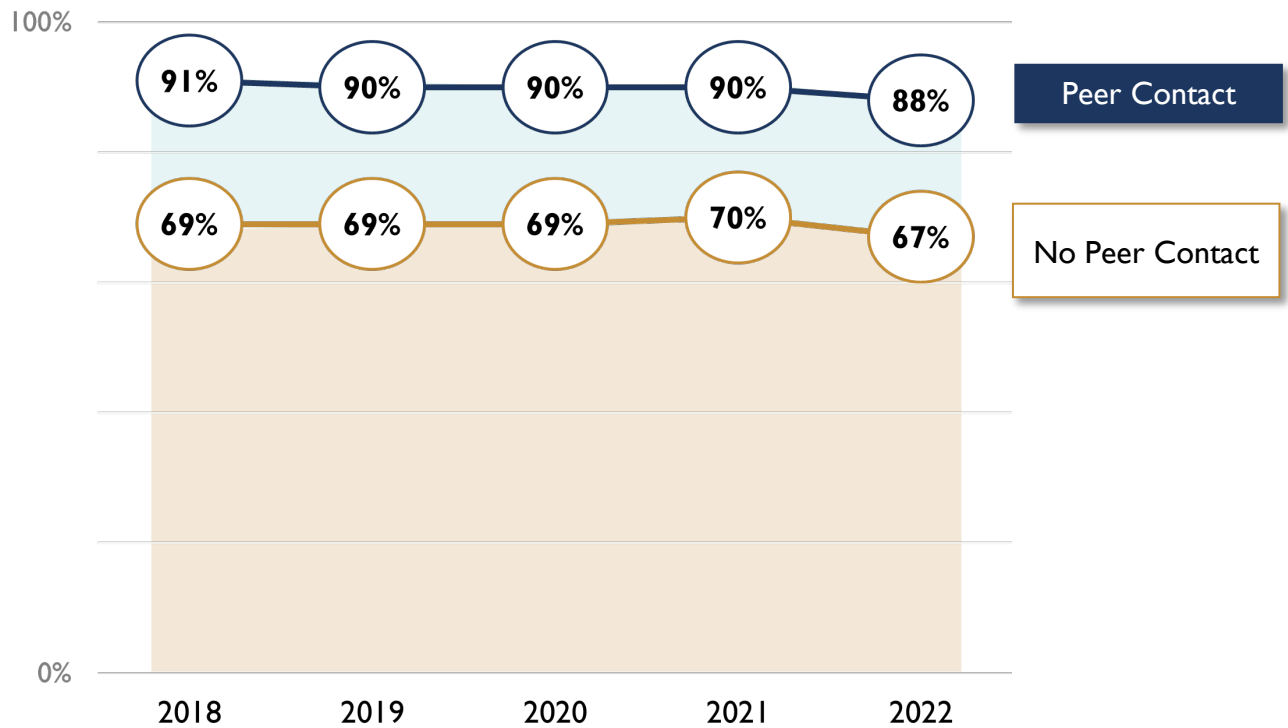
IOWA WIC HAS **NEARLY 40 PEER COUNSELORS** STATEWIDE, REPRESENTING ALL 15 LOCAL WIC AGENCIES.



The Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program caseload increased 21% over the past five fiscal years.

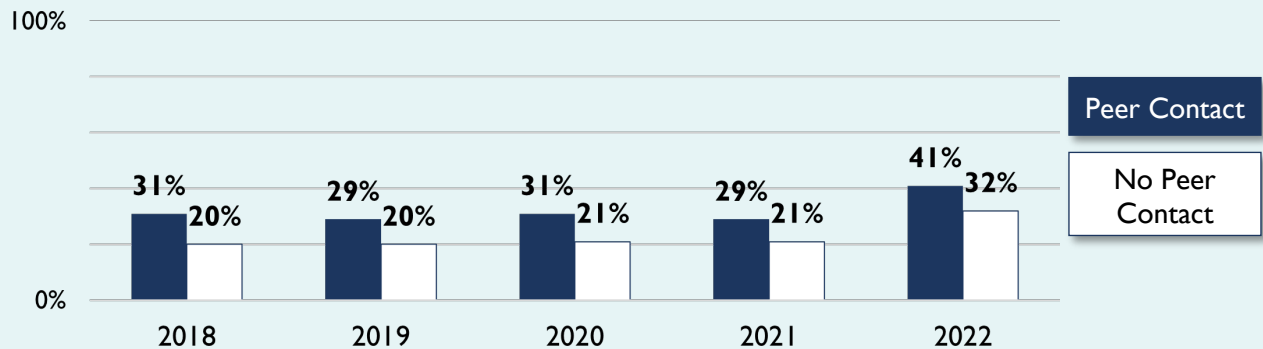


Breastfeeding initiation was higher among women who had contact with a Breastfeeding Peer Support Counselor.

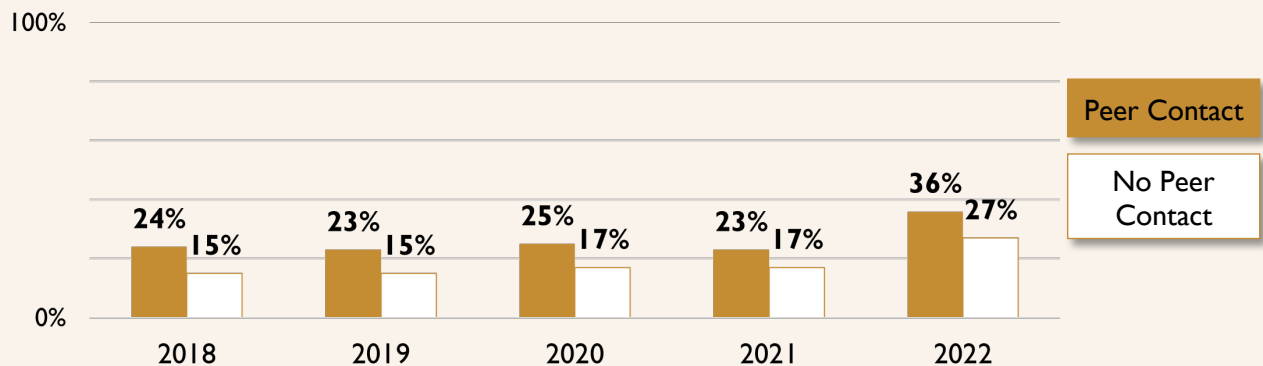


Prevalence of breastfeeding at 3, 6 and 12 months was higher if the mother had contact with a Breastfeeding Peer Support Counselor.

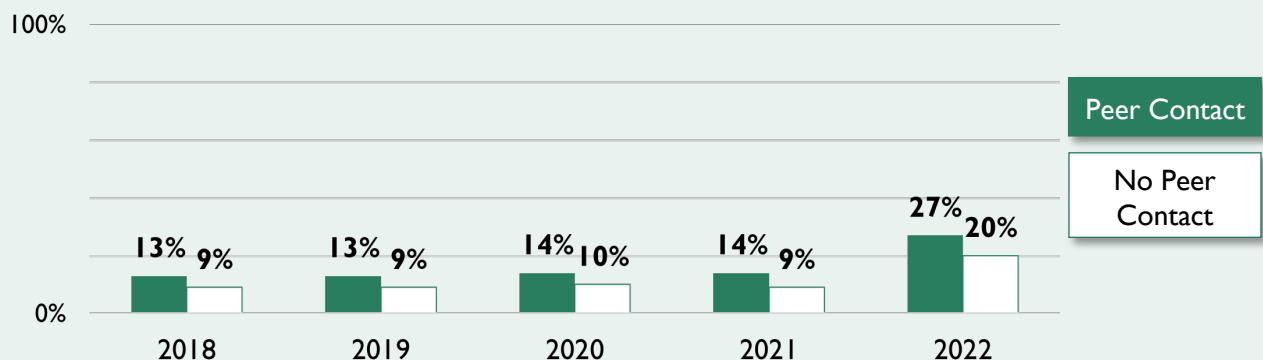
3 | Months



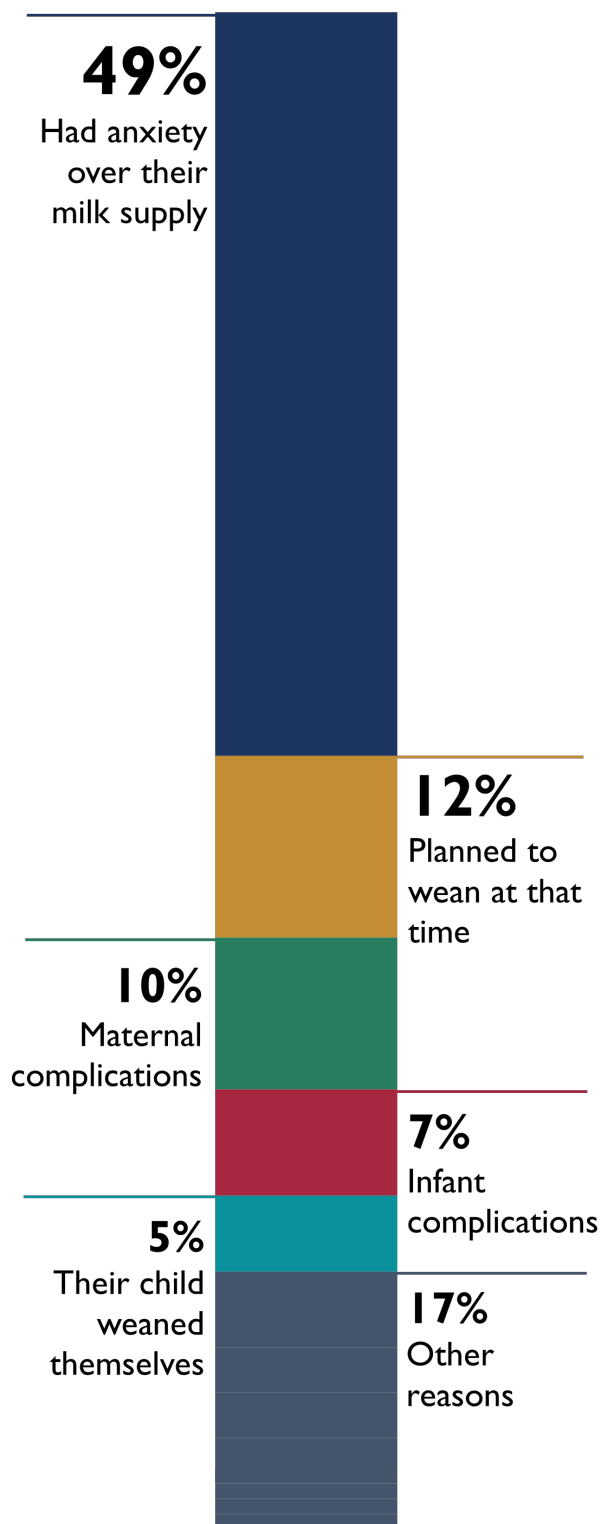
6 | Months



12 | Months



Primary reasons women reported stopping breastfeeding:



OTHER REASONS FOR STOPPING

- Being too busy or breastfeeding not fitting their lifestyle (5%)
- Worksite or school issues (3%)
- Not enjoying breastfeeding (3%)
- Receiving poor advice/misconceptions (2%)
- Medically contraindicated (1%)
- Child had teeth or was biting (<1%)
- Lack of support (<1%)
- Childcare issues (<1%)
- Embarrassment (<1%)



BREASTFEEDING AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

The USDA FNS established the WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence, formerly known as the Loving Support Award of Excellence, in 2014 to recognize WIC agencies who provide exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support activities.

The award aims to provide examples and motivate agencies to strengthen their breastfeeding support and promotion activities in an effort to increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates among WIC participants.

The award is provided at three levels of performance: Gold, Gold Premiere and Gold Elite, and each level builds on the next. The approach recognizes local agencies that demonstrate model practices, as well as those at varying stages of implementing exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support activities.

AWARD CRITERIA

GOLD

- Must be a local WIC agency.
- Must have operated a peer counseling program for at least one year.
- Peer counseling program must meet all of the required core components of the FNS WIC Breastfeeding Model for Peer Counseling.

GOLD PREMIERE

Breastfeeding performance data is considered at this level, such as greater than or equal to 15% of infants are exclusively breastfed in the previous year of published data, and the most recently published year of data shows an increase over the previous year or the rate of exclusively breastfed infants is at least greater than or equal to 25% in the most recently published year of data.

GOLD ELITE

Breastfeeding performance data is considered at this level, such as the rate of exclusively breastfed infants is greater than or equal to 40%.



IOWA BREASTFEEDING AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE



GOLD

- 2022** | American Home Finding Association and Webster County Health Department
- 2020** | Siouxland District Health Department
- 2019** | Broadlawns
- 2018** | MATURA, Mid-Iowa Community Action and Operation Threshold

GOLD PREMIERE

- 2022** | Operation Threshold
- 2021** | MATURA and Pottawattamie County

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT AND TRAINING

The Iowa WIC Program collaborates with the other states in the USDA Midwest Region to offer breastfeeding education to all staff through a FNS Operational Adjustment grant. The goal of the partnership is to provide skills and knowledge to WIC staff to improve breastfeeding outcomes for WIC families. The grant provides funding to allow all states in the region to collaborate, providing training to more individuals than would be possible if hosting trainings individually or in-person. In FY 2022, the Iowa WIC Program offered the following trainings.

CERTIFIED LACTATION SPECIALIST COURSE

The Certified Lactation Specialist Course is offered by Lactation Education Consultants and is designed for all staff interested in improving their skills in working with the breastfeeding dyad. All content included on the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners topical outline are covered. Participants are taught how to use appropriate counseling skills, how to teach parents and families and most importantly, how to function hands-on as a clinician. This course is taught virtually with three instructors via didactic information as well as discussion, videos and visual examples of lactation problems. Certification as a lactation specialist is achieved through attendance at the entire course, completion of assigned homework and passing the final course exam. In Iowa, all WIC Competent Professional Authority (CPA) staff are strongly encouraged to complete this course.

IOWA WIC TRAINING ATTENDANCE

Iowa WIC has prioritized building the capacity of their program staff by increasing the number and type of trainings offered.

In 2022, the number of WIC staff who attended each were:

- 202** | USDA WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum Training
- 28** | Certified Lactation Specialist Course
- 1** | Lactation Specialist Course Study Session
- 19** | DEI Workshop



DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI) WORKSHOP

This course provides an in-depth look at the history of lactation, turning points in the field, valuable information on what has been done and what staff practice should incorporate to provide equitable care to all. This course defined key terms and involved self-reflection. At the end of the program, Lactation Education Consultants discussed the implementation of DEI practices—turning the conversation into a valuable change agent.

USDA WIC BREASTFEEDING CURRICULUM

Through the Midwest Region Operational Adjustment grant, Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois and Indiana contracted with Cathy Carothers, co-author of the USDA WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum, to facilitate 36

training sessions throughout the spring and summer of 2022. Iowa required all staff to attend training sessions. The training was split into four levels that built upon one another.

Level 1 | was required for all staff, including support staff, and consisted of one, four-hour session.

Level 2 | was developed based on the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling curriculum and attendees included Breastfeeding Peer Counselors, WIC CPAs including nurses, dietitians and nutrition educators, WIC Coordinators and Designated Breastfeeding Experts (DBEs). Training consisted of three, four-hour sessions.

Level 3 | included CPAs, WIC Coordinators and DBEs and consisted of two, four-hour sessions.

Level 4 | was the highest level of training and designed for DBEs. Training consisted of three, four-hour sessions.



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Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (PDF) which can be obtained online, or from any USDA office by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation.

The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by either:

1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for
Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

2) Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442

3) Email: Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

QUESTIONS?

For more information, visit our website at [Iowa Women, Infants & Children \(WIC\) Program](#).

DATA TABLES ADDENDUM

An accompanying addendum presents data tables with the total number (N) and counts (n) corresponding with graphs highlighting the breastfeeding initiation and prevalence rates throughout this report.