

BREASTFEEDING

In 2011, the U.S. Surgeon General released a “Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding,” stating that everyone can help make breastfeeding easier.¹ Although hospitals are not intended to be the only place a mother receives support for breastfeeding, hospitals do provide a unique and critical link between breastfeeding support before and after delivery. Therefore, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) sponsor the Baby-Friendly Health Initiative (BFHI) as a global program designed to encourage and recognize hospitals and birthing centers to offer an optimal level of care for infant feeding. There are three hospitals in Santa Cruz County. Two (Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center and Dominican Hospital) are designated “Baby-Friendly,” and the third (Watsonville Community Hospital) is currently going through the application process at the time of this report’s publication.

The CDC estimates 79% of U.S. mothers breastfed at birth, while only 17% exclusively breastfeed six months later.² County-level breastfeeding data is only collected in the hospital, usually within 24-48 hours following birth, so it is unknown how long breastfeeding continues after hospital discharge in Santa Cruz County. Hospital staff select from the following three categories to describe all feeding at birth: human milk only (i.e., exclusive breastfeeding), formula only, or human milk and formula. In 2013, 98.1% of infants residing in Santa Cruz County were given at least some breast milk while hospitalized, compared to 93.0% statewide.³ The Healthy People 2020 objective is 81.9%; therefore, both the county and the state have surpassed the national goal. However, exclusive breastfeeding is considered the ideal infant feeding, and 86.0% of infants in Santa Cruz County were given human milk only, compared to 64.8% statewide (Figure 1). Differences by ethnicity can be seen locally and statewide; however, the gap is narrowing, with more Latino infants being fed human milk only (Figure 2). By hospital, the 2013 exclusive breastfeeding rates were highest at Dominican Hospital at 94.7%, Sutter Maternity was close behind at 93.1%, and Watsonville Community Hospital was at 74.8%. The greatest improvements have been at Watsonville Hospital, where the rate was 53.4% in 2010.

Figure 1: Percentage of Mothers Exclusively Breastfeeding at Birth, by Infant Ethnicity, Santa Cruz County and California,³ 2013

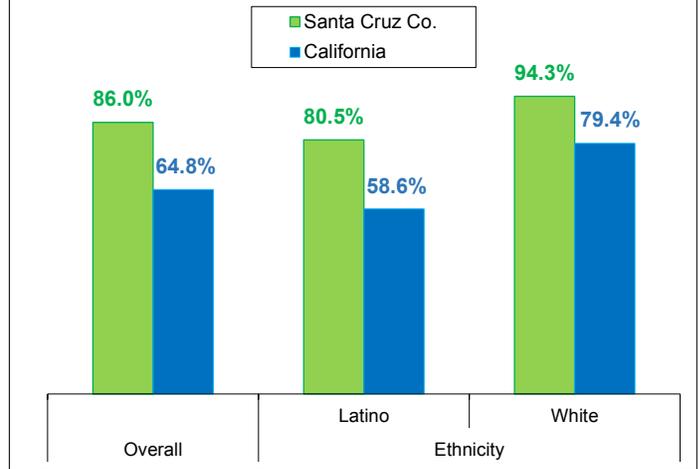
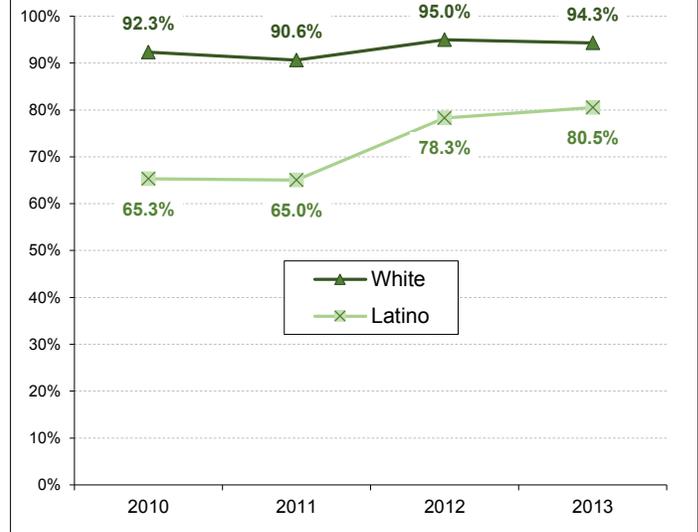


Figure 2: Percentage of Mothers Exclusively Breastfeeding at Birth, by Infant Ethnicity, Santa Cruz County,³ 2010-2013



Sources

- (1) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Executive Summary: The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General; January 20, 2011. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls/breastfeeding/executivesummary.pdf>
- (2) CDC. Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. Breastfeeding. "Promote and Support." <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/promotion/default.htm>
- (3) CDPH. In-Hospital Breastfeeding Initiation Data. County Level Data Tables, 2010-2013.