



## **Breastfeeding Initiation and Duration in Florida, 2015-2020**

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## Key Findings:

- Since 2015, breastfeeding initiation in Florida has remained relatively stable, increasing by less than 1.0% point.
- From 2018 to 2020, more than half of the counties in Florida exceeded the HP 2020 objective to increase breastfeeding.
- The percentage of mothers who initiated breastfeeding increased among Non-Hispanic White and Non-Hispanic Black mothers.
- Breastfeeding initiation increased with age.
- Breastfeeding initiation was highest among women who graduated high school or obtained higher levels of education, were not covered by Medicaid, and were married.
- Breastfeeding initiation decreased by 2.0% points among those who had a preterm birth.
- The leading reason for not initiating breastfeeding was because the mother did not want to (32.8%).
- The top reasons for stopping breastfeeding was the mother thought that she did not produce enough milk or that her milk had dried up (49.2%).

## Background

Breastfeeding is considered the “clinical gold standard for infant feeding and nutrition” by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), providing many health benefits to infants, children and mothers; including reduced risks of sudden infant death, asthma, obesity, type 1 diabetes among infants and reduced risks of high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer among mothers [1]. As a result, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding as the sole source of nutrition for babies for about the first six months with continued breastfeeding while introducing other foods for at least one year [2,3]. In fact, the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion established the following Healthy People (HP) 2030 objectives: to increase the proportion of infants who are breastfed exclusively through six months of age, to 42.4%, and at one year of age, to 54.1% [4].

Accordingly, the Florida Department of Health (Department) supports the implementation of breastfeeding policies and programs as stated in the Florida State Health Improvement Plan 2017-2021 (Strategy HW1.2) [5]. One example is the Department’s Healthiest Weight Florida Initiative, a project which—in collaboration with the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative—recognizes hospitals and birthing facilities that promote/support breastfeeding [6].

Breastfeeding initiation in Florida has exceeded the Healthy People 2020 Objective of 81.9%, averaging at about 85.8% from 2015 to 2020 [7]. While these rates have remained stable since 2015, breastfeeding initiation still differs by race/ethnicity, education, and age.

## Methods

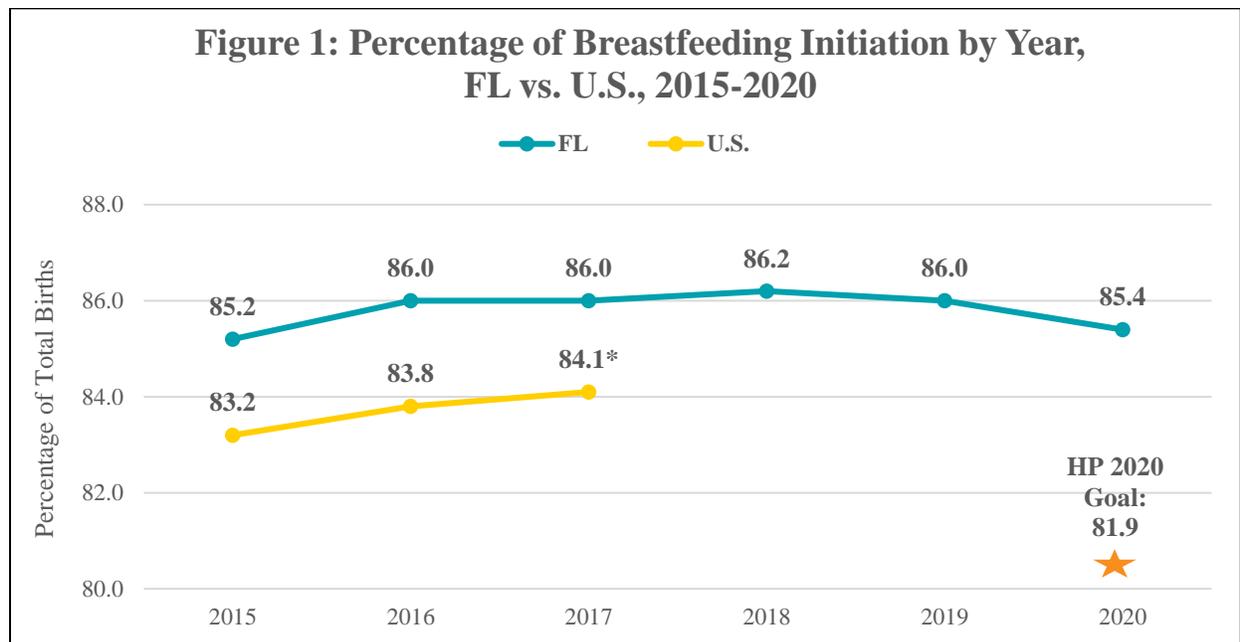
This report uses data from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), a population-based surveillance survey which has collected valuable information on maternal attitudes, behaviors, and experiences before, during, and shortly after pregnancy since

1993. This report also uses breastfeeding initiation data obtained from the FLHealthCHARTS birth query systems—which is provided by the Department’s Bureau of Vital Statistics. Using data reported to the Bureau of Vital Statistics on birth certificates, the birth query system provides counts and rates for Florida’s resident births where the infant was breastfed at the time the birth certificate was completed. National data and Healthy People objectives utilize the National Immunization Surveys (NIS), which are a group of telephone surveys sponsored and conducted by CDC’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

Statistical significance of observed increases/decreases in data trends were tested using JoinPoint Regression Program software. This report is intended to inform policy makers and program administrators of recent trends of breastfeeding behaviors among mothers in Florida from 2015 to 2020, with the purpose of assessing the need to support positive breastfeeding behavior.

## Results

### Breastfeeding initiation in Florida has remained stable.



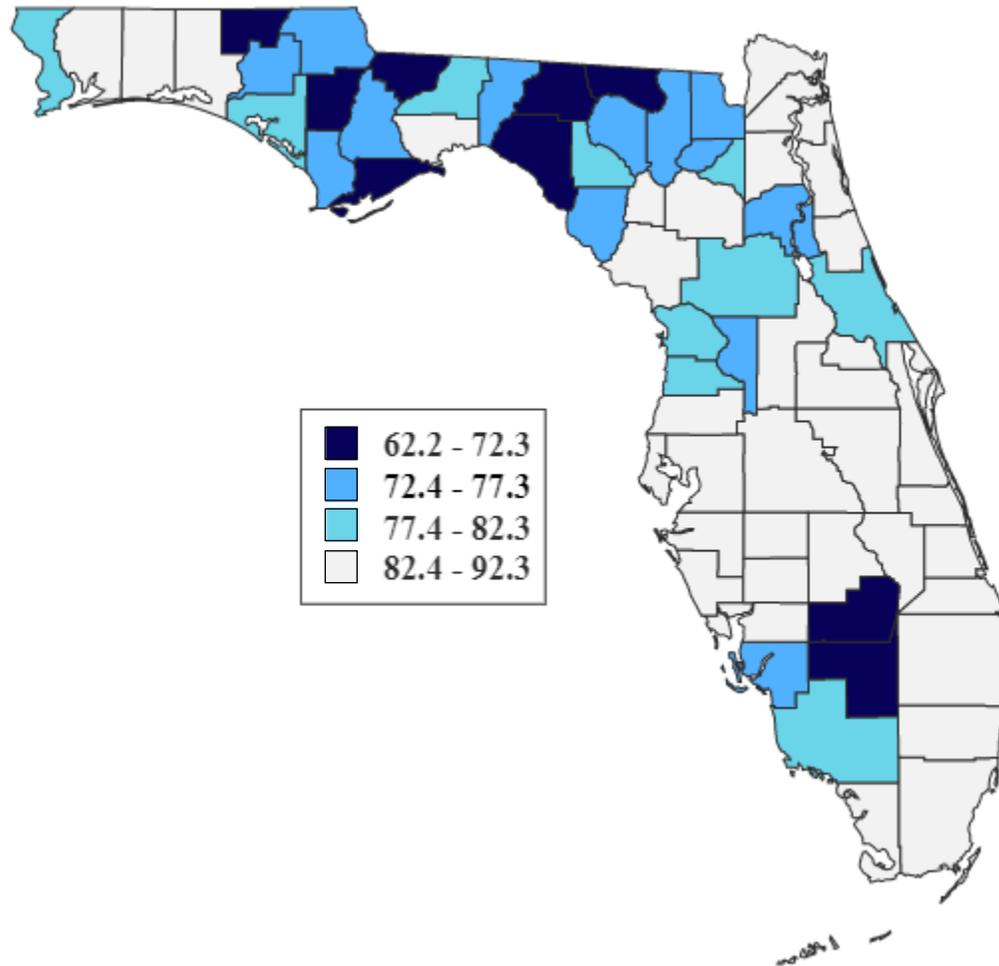
Source(s): FLHealthCHARTS [8], CDC – National Immunization Survey [9]

Note(s): \* 2017 is the most recent national data available.

- From 2015 to 2020, the rate of breastfeeding initiation in Florida has increased by 0.2% points from 85.2% to 85.4% (Figure 1). This increase was statistically nonsignificant.

**County breastfeeding initiation rates ranged from a low of 62.2% to a high of 92.3%**

**Figure 2: Mothers who initiate breastfeeding, Percentage of Total Births, 2018-2020**

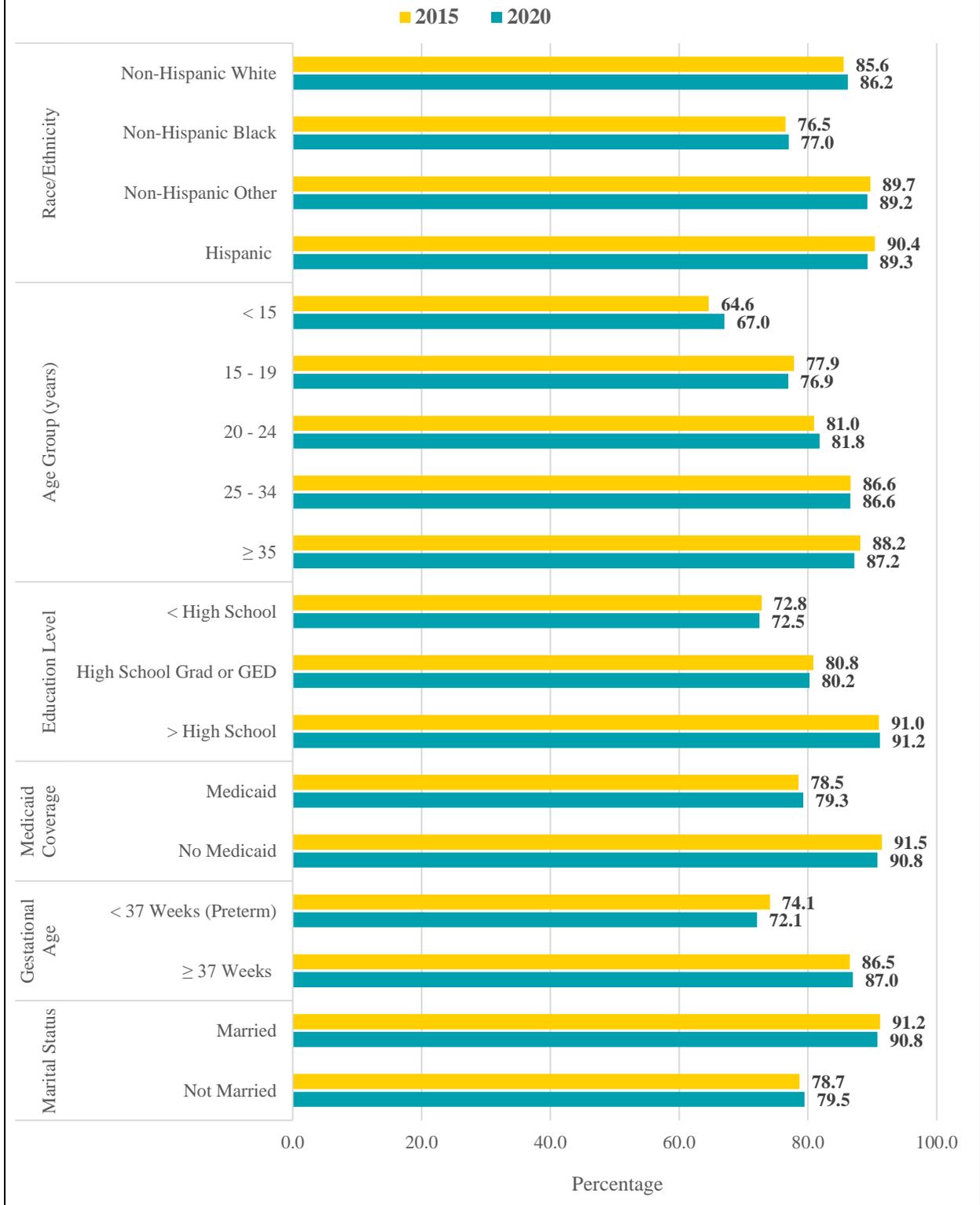


Source: FLHealthCHARTS [10]

- In 2018-2020, 35 of the 67 counties in Florida (52.2%) met or exceeded the HP 2020 goal (81.9%) of increasing the proportion of infants who are ever breastfed (Figure 2).

**Percentage of mothers who initiated breastfeeding varied by several characteristics (race/ethnicity, age, education level, Medicaid coverage, gestational age, and marital status).**

**Figure 3: Breastfeeding Initiation by Maternal Characteristics, Percentage of Total Births, Florida, 2015 vs. 2020**



Source: FLHealthCHARTS [8]

Note(s): No Medicaid includes private insurance, self-pay, other, and unknown sources.

- In comparing breastfeeding initiation data from 2015 and 2020, the percentage of total births where the mother initiated breastfeeding increased by 0.6% points among Non-Hispanic White and 0.5% points among Non-Hispanic Black populations. In contrast, there were decreases observed among Non-Hispanic Other (0.5% points) and Hispanic (1.1% points) populations (Figure 3). Although, these changes were statistically nonsignificant.
- While there was a slight increase in breastfeeding initiation among Non-Hispanic Black mothers, this group had the lowest percentage of all other race/ethnic groups during this period (Figure 3).
- Women ages 35 and over made up the highest percentage of mothers who initiated breastfeeding. The percentage of mothers in this age group who initiated breastfeeding stood at 88.2% in 2015 versus 87.2% in 2020, depicting a nonsignificant decrease of 1.1% points (Figure 3).
- The percentage of mothers who initiated breastfeeding was higher among women who graduated high school and/or obtained higher levels of education. Mothers who did not graduate high school had the lowest percentage of breastfeeding initiation at 72.8% in 2015 and 72.5% in 2020. In comparing 2015 and 2020 data, percentages of breastfeeding initiation varied by less than one percent across all education levels (Figure 3).
- In both 2015 and 2020, higher percentages of breastfeeding initiation were observed among mothers with no Medicaid coverage. Over 90.0% of mothers who were not covered by Medicaid, in both 2015 and 2020, initiated breastfeeding. In comparison, less than 80.0% of mothers with Medicaid coverage initiated breastfeeding for both years. However, there was a nonsignificant 0.7% point decrease among mothers with no Medicaid coverage who initiated breastfeeding, from 91.5% in 2015 to 90.8% in 2020 (Figure 3).
- The percentage of mothers who had a preterm birth (gestational age of less than 37 weeks) and initiated breastfeeding saw a nonsignificant decrease of 2.0% points, from 74.1% in 2015 to 72.1% in 2020 (Figure 3).
- The percentage of breastfeeding initiation was higher among married women, with over 90.0% in both 2015 and 2020 who initiated breastfeeding. There was a nonsignificant 0.4% point decrease among married mothers, from 91.2% in 2015 to 90.8% in 2020 (Figure 3).

## Reasons varied for not initiating breastfeeding.

**Table 1: Prevalence of ever breastfeeding and reasons for not breastfeeding among mothers, Florida PRAMS, 2018**

Indicator	N	Weighted %	95% CI
<b>Prevalence of ever breastfeeding</b>	Yes - 187,341	90.7	88.3 - 92.6
	No - 19,314	9.3	7.5 - 11.7
<b>Reasons for not breastfeeding among mothers who never initiated breastfeeding</b>			
<b>Did not want to</b>	7,683	32.8	23.8 - 43.4
<b>Other children to take care of</b>	5,519	23.6	15.5 - 34.2
<b>Tried but it was too hard</b>	5,059	21.6	14.0 - 31.8
<b>Did not like breastfeeding</b>	4,164	17.9	11.3 - 27.2
<b>Other</b>	4,144	17.7	10.9 - 27.4
<b>Too many household duties</b>	3,657	15.6	9.2 - 25.4
<b>Went back to work</b>	3,349	14.3	8.2 - 23.8
<b>Sick or on medicine</b>	3,034	13.0	7.4 - 21.7
<b>Went back to school</b>	Insufficient data to report		

Source: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) [11]

- According to the most recent PRAMS data available (2018), the prevalence of mothers who initiated breastfeeding (ever breastfed) was 90.7% (Table 1). This represents a 2.0% point increase from 88.7% in 2015 [11].
- In 2018, the top three reasons mothers reported for not breastfeeding were that they “didn’t want to” (32.8%), followed by “other children to take care of” (23.6%), and “tried but it was too hard” (21.6%).

## Reasons varied for stopping breastfeeding after initiation.

**Table 2: Prevalence of current breastfeeding duration and reasons for stopping among those not currently breastfeeding, Florida PRAMS, 2018**

Indicator	N	Weighted %	95% CI
<b>Prevalence of current breastfeeding and breastfeeding continuation, and reasons for stopping</b>	Yes - 107,357 No - 80,012	57.3 42.7	53.5 - 61.0 39.0 - 46.5
<b>Duration of breastfeeding</b>			
<b>4+ Weeks</b>	163,010	78.2	75.1 – 81.0
<b>12+ Weeks</b>	123,467	59.6	56.0 – 63.1
<b>Reasons for stopping breastfeeding among mothers who initiated breastfeeding</b>			
<b>Thought I did not have enough milk or milk dried up</b>	41,417	49.2	43.6 - 54.8
<b>Breast milk alone did not satisfy baby</b>	31,312	37.2	31.9 - 42.8
<b>Baby had difficulty latching or nursing</b>	25,924	30.8	25.9 - 36.2
<b>Went back to work</b>	16,949	20.1	16.1 - 24.9
<b>Too painful</b>	15,861	18.8	14.9 - 23.5
<b>Other</b>	15,207	18.1	14.1 - 22.9
<b>Thought baby was not gaining enough weight</b>	10,070	12.0	8.7 - 16.2
<b>Too many other household duties</b>	9,106	10.8	7.9 - 14.6
<b>Felt it was the right time to stop</b>	7,668	9.1	6.4 - 12.7
<b>Baby was jaundiced</b>	7,416	8.8	6.0 - 12.8
<b>Got sick or had to stop for medical reasons</b>	6,205	7.4	5.0 - 10.7
<b>Went back to school</b>	1,844	2.2	1.1 - 4.4
<b>Partner did not support breastfeeding</b>	1,173	1.4	0.6 - 3.4

Source: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) [11]

- In 2018, among those currently breastfeeding, 78.2% breastfed for four or more weeks, while 59.6% continued breastfeeding for 12 or more weeks (Table 2).
- The top three reasons mothers reported for stopping breastfeeding in 2018 were “thought I did not have enough milk or milk dried up” (49.2%), “breast milk alone did not satisfy baby” (37.2%), and “baby had difficulty latching or nursing” (30.8%).

## Conclusions

From 2015 to 2020, the percentage of mothers who initiated breastfeeding increased non-significantly by 0.2% points, from 85.2% in 2015 to 85.4% in 2020. Among mothers who initiated breastfeeding, there were nonsignificant increases observed among Non-Hispanic White and Non-Hispanic Black mothers, with nonsignificant decreases among Non-Hispanic Other and Hispanic mothers. Moreover, Non-Hispanic Black mothers, had the lowest percentage of all other race/ethnic groups examined. Additionally, breastfeeding initiation percentages were higher among women who were ages 35 and over, graduated high school, obtained a GED or higher levels of education, were not covered by Medicaid, and were married.

According to data collected from PRAMS (2018), the leading reasons reported for why mothers did not initiate breastfeeding was because they did not want to, because they had other children to take care of, and because it was too hard. Finally, the top reasons reported for why mothers stopped breastfeeding after initiation were because they thought they either did not have enough milk or that their milk dried up, breastmilk alone did not satisfy the baby, and difficulty with latching or nursing.

## Discussion

The increases in the percentage of mothers who initiated breastfeeding and decreases in the percentage of mothers who did not indicates a generally positive trajectory of breastfeeding behavior in Florida. In addition, the state has made strides toward supporting breastfeeding policies and programs. For example, the number of Baby-Friendly hospitals—hospitals that are certified in recognition for promoting breastfeeding initiation and continuation—in Florida have increased from 10 in 2015 to 26 in 2020. The state has also exceeded the established goal to increase the number of breastfeeding-friendly early care and education programs to 500, by reaching 539 before the end of 2021. Lastly, the Florida Breastfeeding Coalition recognizes businesses that provide support in the workplace to their breastfeeding employees by awarding the business Gold, Silver, or Bronze level certifications. Since 2015, over 130 workplaces have been awarded Gold level certification, over 220 received Silver level certifications, and 40 received Bronze level certifications [13].

Tracking and monitoring variation in breastfeeding initiation and duration across demographic characteristics helps measure the progress in meeting the need for supporting positive breastfeeding outcomes. Utilizing this information can help guide strategic planning in implementing effective policies and programs that aim toward meeting these outcomes.

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