

## New Yorkers express support for breastfeeding in public

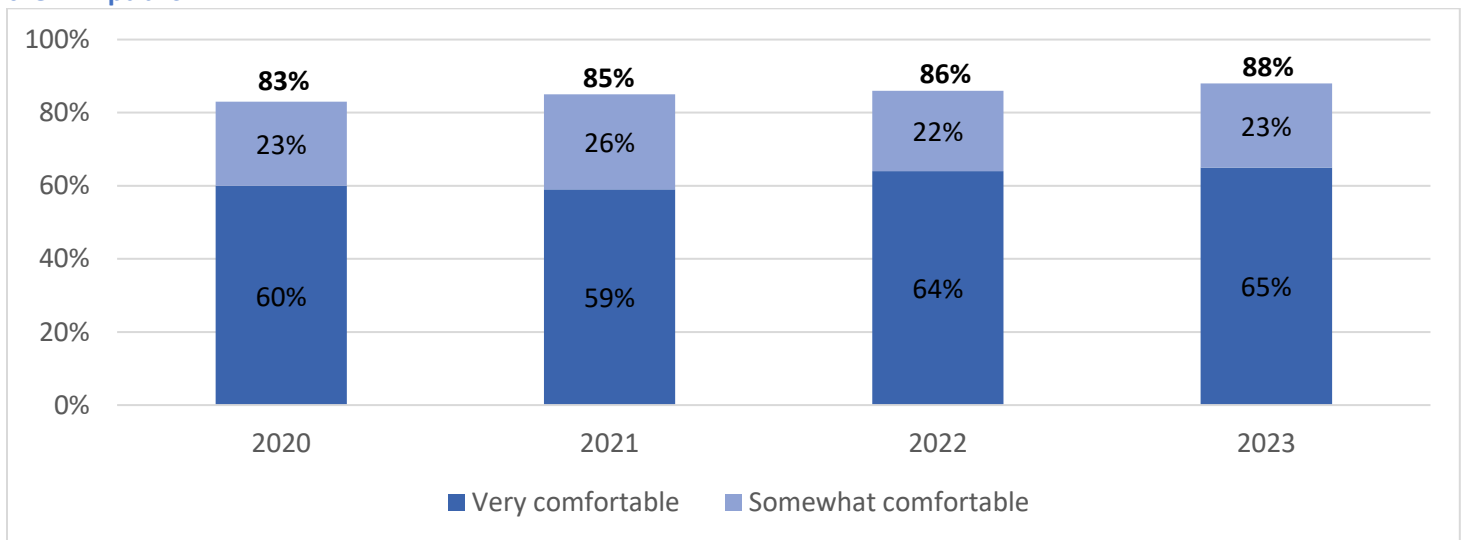
New York State Department of Health seeks to use inclusive language to recognize diversity in gender and gender identity and support diversity and inclusion in infant human milk feeding. Throughout this article, several terms, breastfeeding, breast/chestfeeding, and lactating are used interchangeably to describe feeding human milk. While the Department of Health remains committed to gender-inclusive language, the survey questions only reference breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding and all other types of infant human milk feeding lead to better health outcomes for both mothers and infants (1). However, key breastfeeding rates in New York State fall far below national targets. Only 23% of infants in New York State are exclusively breastfed at 6 months, while the national target is 42%. Only 36% of infants in New York State are breastfed at 1 year, while the national target is 54% (2,3).

Parents stop breast/chestfeeding early for a variety of reasons including issues with lactation and latching, concerns about infant nutrition and weight, unsupportive healthcare practices and work policies, lack of family support, and social norms (4). To help parents start and continue breast/chestfeeding and feeding human milk, these types of barriers must be acknowledged and addressed. For example, New York State law requires breast/chestfeeding training and support in hospitals and accommodations for breast/chestfeeding employees at worksites, and it allows parents to breast/chestfeed in any public or private location (5).

According to New York State's Chronic Disease Public Opinion Poll, most New Yorkers support laws and policies that promote breastfeeding, such as the right to breastfeed in public. In 2023, 88% of adults said they would feel comfortable if a mother breastfed a baby near them in a public space (see Figure). Comfort with a mother breastfeeding in public is higher among certain groups, including adults who are less than 65 years old, adults who have children living in their household, adults with a college degree, and adults living in a household with an income greater than \$50,000 per year (not shown).

**Figure. From 2020 to 2023, NYS Adults have consistently felt comfortable with a mother breastfeeding their baby near them in public.**



**Data Source:** NYS Chronic Disease Public Opinion Poll

Q34. How comfortable would you be if a mother breastfed their baby near you in a public place?

## PUBLIC HEALTH OPPORTUNITY

Public health practitioners can:

- Educate state and local policymakers about the public support for breast/chestfeeding and infant human milk feeding.
- Educate state and local policymakers about evidence-based solutions to promote, protect, and support infant human milk feeding, especially for families that experience disparities.
- Promote awareness of existing state and federal laws that support and protect breast/chestfeeding and infant human milk feeding.
- Adopt and implement policies and practices across community settings that help families start and continue breast/chestfeeding and infant human milk feeding.
- Tailor public health messages to priority populations to normalize and build public support for infant human milk feeding.

## REFERENCES

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4. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, August 7). Why do mothers stop breastfeeding early? <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/facts.html>
5. New York Statewide Breastfeeding Coalition, Inc. (2023). New York State Laws and Legislation <https://www.nysbreastfeeding.org/laws-and-legislation/>