

Health Disparities in the Medi-Cal Population

Breastfeeding



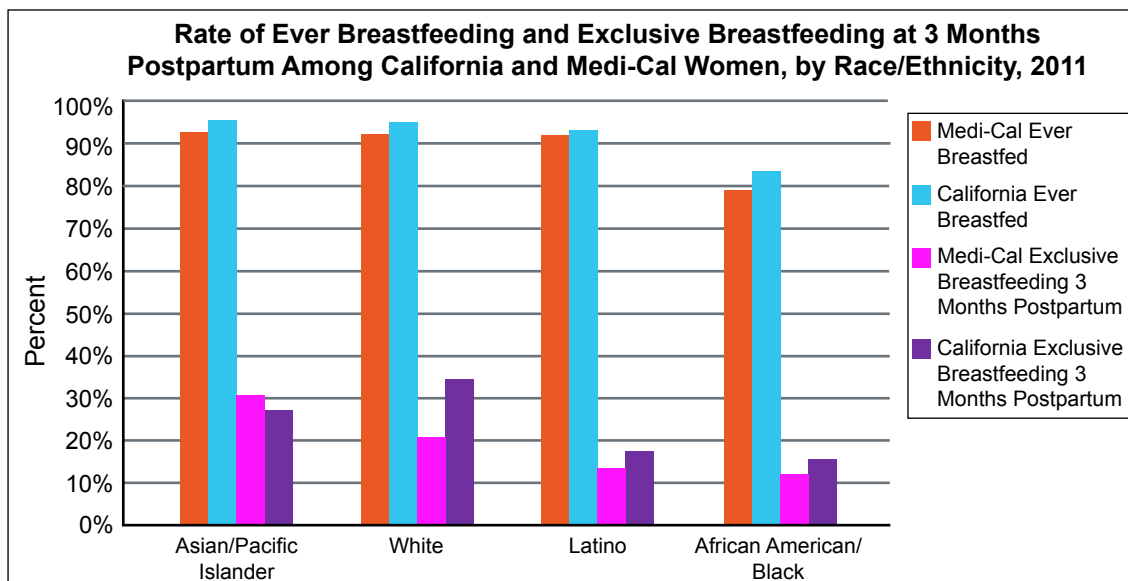
Breastfeeding is one of the most effective measures to prevent diseases among mothers and their infants.¹ The American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization recommend that a mother exclusively breastfeed for at least six months.² While 75% of mothers in the United States initiate breastfeeding, only 13% exclusively breastfeed at the end of six months.¹ Additionally, research has shown that breastfeeding rates among African Americans/Blacks are significantly lower.¹ However, women who reported giving birth in hospitals that supported breastfeeding were more likely to exclusively breastfeed at three months postpartum.³

Among California women, Asians/Pacific Islanders, Whites, and Latinos reported higher rates of having ever breastfed than African Americans/Blacks (see Figure). African Americans/Blacks and Latinos reported the lowest rates of exclusive breastfeeding three months after delivery as compared to Whites and Asians/Pacific Islanders.

Among California Medi-Cal women, African Americans/Blacks reported the lowest rate of having ever breastfed. Also, African Americans/Blacks and Latinos reported the lowest rates of exclusive breastfeeding three months after delivery. Overall, women with Medi-Cal were slightly less likely to report having breastfed than Californians in general, with the exception of exclusive breastfeeding at three months among Asians/Pacific Islanders.



Figure



Source: California Department of Public Health, Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health Program, Maternal and Infant Health Assessment Survey, 2011 (www.cdph.ca.gov/miha).

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *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; 2011.
2. Feldman-Winter, L and Lawrence, R. Policy Statement: Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk. *Peds* 2012;129:e827-e841.
3. California Department of Public Health, Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health Program. Hospital practices and breastfeeding fact sheet. Maternal and Infant Health Assessment Survey, 2010. <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/mcah/Documents/MO-MIHABriefHospitalPracticesBreastfeeding.pdf>. Published January 2012. Accessed July 2013.

Link to Data Sources and Methods