

# Nebraska Breastfeeding Coalition

## **Nebraska Breastfeeding Support in the Workplace**

*A Summary of Statewide Survey Findings*

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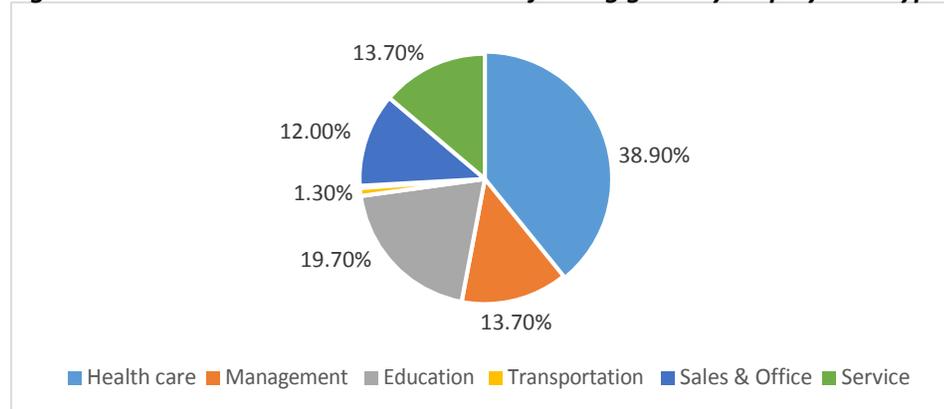
## Executive Summary

Approximately 70% of women who have a child under the age of three works full-time outside of the home. Unfortunately, working outside of the home is associated with shorter breastfeeding intention and duration to begin breastfeeding. Given the multitude of women who work outside of the home and the significant benefits associated with breastfeeding it is clear women require support to continue breastfeeding, specifically regarding pumping within the workplace. To evaluate the level of support women in Nebraska are receiving from employers, the Nebraska Breastfeeding Coalition conducted an exploratory survey throughout the state in October of 2016.

A total of 1,060 women completed the survey. The majority of women were Caucasian (94.5%), had a Bachelor's degree or advanced degree (e.g., MD, PhD) (53.0%) and worked in healthcare (34.3%) or management (22.5%). Women from across the state took part in the study with representation primarily from Douglas County (34.2%), Lancaster County (19.0%) and Central Nebraska (18.6%). Below is a list of the key findings.

- Women most commonly reported they pumped for at least 10 months (46.9%).
- Women working in healthcare were most likely to pump for 12 months or longer (22.8%) while women working in production/ transportation jobs were least likely to pump for 12 months or longer (13.0%).
- Over half of women discussed pumping with their employer prior to maternity leave (54.7%).
- A majority of women felt they were given a flexible schedule to allow for pumping (62.7%).
- Almost a third of women (27.6%) felt their employers did not support their breastfeeding or pumping goals and were more likely to pump for a shorter duration than those who felt supported.
- Almost a quarter of women (22.4%) were not provided a suitable location for pumping other than a restroom. Women in education were most likely to report not receiving lactation space (31.0%).
- Over half of women reported their employers (60.4%) did not have a policy around breastfeeding.
- A majority of women (77.9%) met their breastfeeding goals; however, those in the healthcare field were least likely to acknowledge meeting their breastfeeding goals (38.9%).

**Figure 1. Mothers who did not meet breastfeeding goals by employment type**



Although the majority of women surveyed felt supported to pump in their workplace, discrepancies were seen based on employment type. Additionally, women reported that the majority of their employers did not have a policy around pumping in the workplace. It appears women in healthcare/management received more workplace support than women in production/transportation careers. However, women in healthcare were still more likely to not reach their own breastfeeding goals. Further conversations with women are needed to determine why they are not meeting their breastfeeding goals and to determine the best practices of the employers that are helping women achieve their goals.

### Background & Purpose

A multitude of evidence contributes to our understanding of the benefits of breastmilk. From protection against infectious disease and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) to improvements in motor and neurodevelopment, breastmilk provides a significant health advantage. Despite the benefits associated with breastmilk, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported in 2014 only 49% of women breastfed their infants for 6 months and this number was reduced to 27% at 12 months. Specific to Nebraska, 50% of women were breastfeeding their infants at 6 months of age and this number decreased to 30% at 12 months of age. In addition, only 22% of Nebraska infants were exclusively breastfed at 6 months despite this being the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics. It is evident the majority of Nebraska women are not meeting national recommendations and thus need better support to reach these guidelines.

One potential barrier hindering women from meeting their breastfeeding goals is lack of a supportive work environment. Approximately 70% of women with a child under the age of three works full-time outside of the home. Unfortunately, working outside of the home is associated with reduced breastfeeding intention and shorter breastfeeding duration. The environment and support a woman may or may not receive from her employer regarding her decision to utilize a breast pump could contribute to the reduction in breastfeeding. Therefore, the purpose of this survey was to ask women in Nebraska to evaluate the level of support they received from employers for pumping.

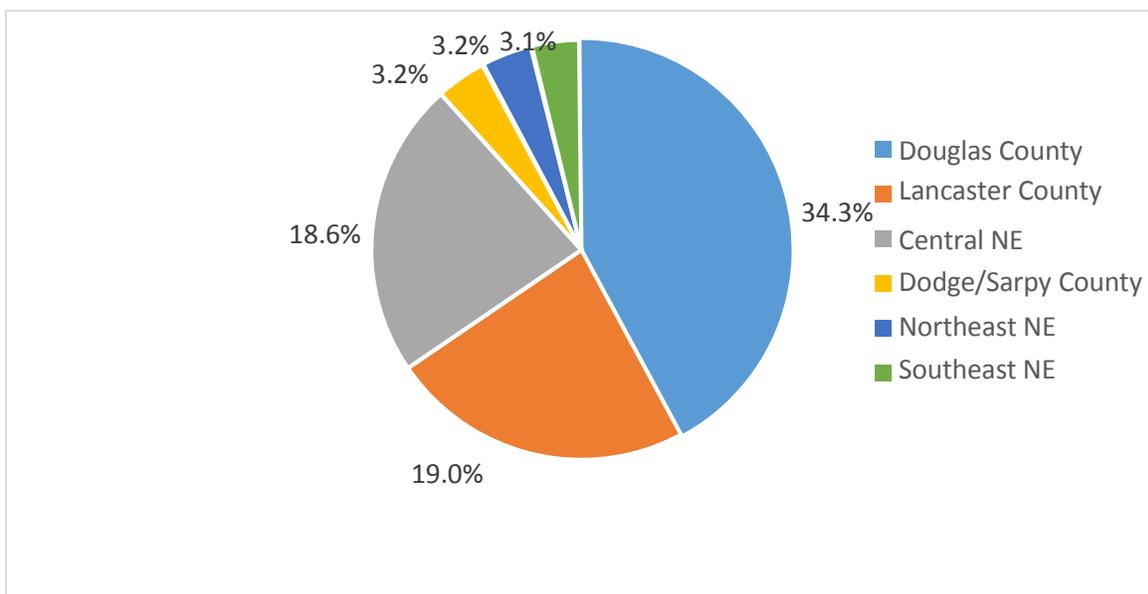
### Methods

Mothers were eligible to participate if they had returned to work breastfeeding within the last 5 years. The 26-question survey was conducted via Google forms and was distributed via social media (i.e., Facebook) as well as the Nebraska Breastfeeding Coalition website and e-mail registry. Data were analyzed utilizing SPSS statistical software. Crosstabs analysis and descriptive frequencies were computed to examine survey findings.

### Results

A total of 1,060 women completed the survey. The majority of women were Caucasian (94.5%), had a Bachelor's degree or advanced degree (e.g., MD, PhD) (53.0%) and worked in healthcare (34.3%) or management (22.5%). Women from across the state took part in the study with representation primarily from Douglas County (34.2%), Lancaster County (19.0%) and Central Nebraska (18.6%) (Figure 1). Additional demographic information can be seen in Table 1.

**Figure 1. Geographic Representation**

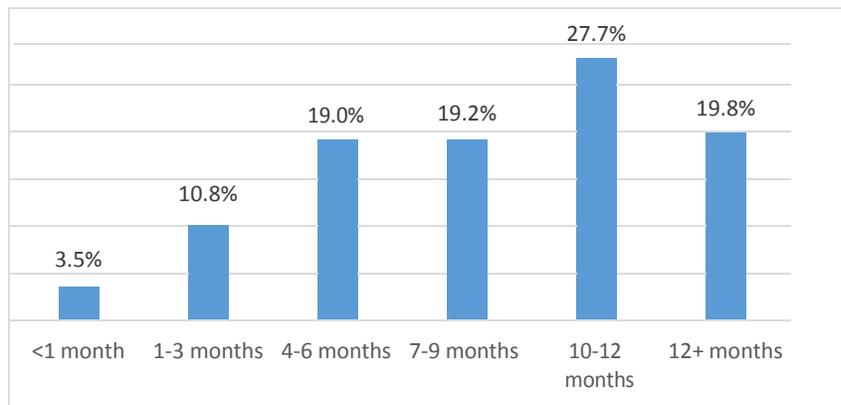


**Table 1. Mother Demographics**

Variable	n	Total (%)
Ethnicity		
White	1,002	94.5
Black or African American	27	2.5
Asian or Pacific Islander	9	0.8
2 or more races	7	0.7
N/A	15	1.5
Education		
High School Education & Below	27	2.5
Bachelor's Degree & Below	683	64.4
Master's Degree & Above	326	30.7
N/A	24	2.4
Employment Type		
Healthcare	364	34.3
Management/Professional	238	22.5
Education	184	17.4
Production/Transportation	23	2.2
Sales/Office	136	12.8
Service	112	10.6
Other	3	0.3

**Figure 2. Duration of Breastfeeding After Return to Work (%)**

In regards to pumping duration, women most commonly reported they pumped for at least 10 months (27.2%) followed by pumping for 12 months or more (19.8%). Only 3.5% of women reported pumping for less than one month.



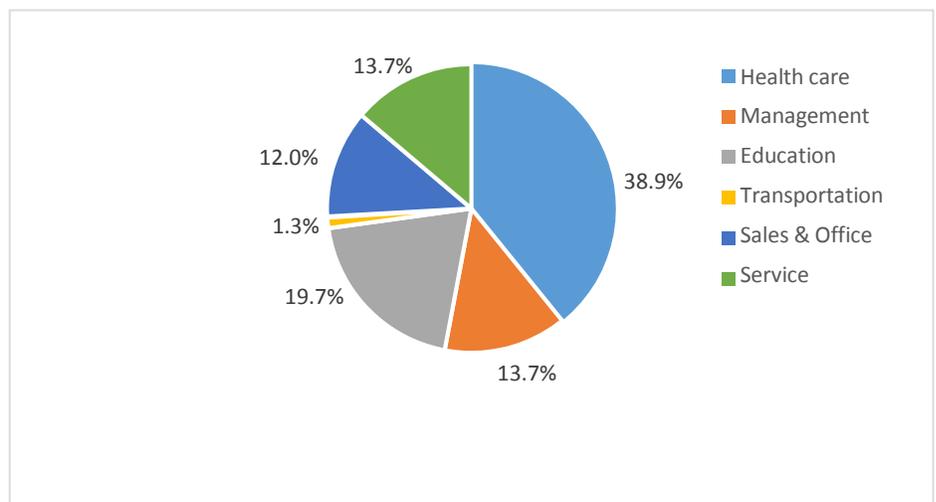
There were significant differences between the type of employment women had and their breastfeeding duration. Those working in healthcare had the highest percentage of women who breastfed for 12 months or greater (22.8%) while those in education were least likely to be breastfed for 12 months (14.1%). Women in all employment types were breastfeeding at a lower rate than the state average of 30% at 12 months. Those employed in production or transportation jobs were most likely to report breastfeeding for <1 month after returning to work. Additional information can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2: Breast Pumping Duration (Month) by Employment Type (%)**

Month	<1	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	12+
Employment Type						
Healthcare	3.6	9.3	19.5	15.4	29.4	22.8
Management/professional	2.5	9.7	13.4	20.6	31.1	22.7
Education	2.2	12.5	20.1	27.2	23.9	14.1
Productions/Transportation	13.0	4.3	17.4	26.1	26.1	13.0
Sales & Office	5.1	12.5	22.1	14.0	27.9	18.4
Service	3.6	13.4	24.1	20.5	22.3	16.1

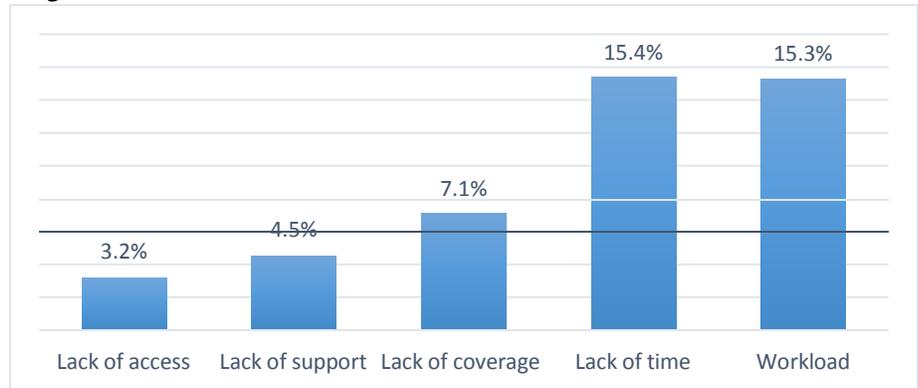
**Figure 3. Unreached Breastfeeding Goals by Employment Type**

Women were asked to report if they had reached their breastfeeding goals. A majority of women (77.9%) reported they had met their goals however findings varied based on employment type. Those working in a healthcare field (38.9%) were most likely to report they had not met their goals.



Women were asked to report if their employers provided a flexible schedule for pumping. Regardless of employer type, 28.4% reported their employers did not provide a flexible schedule for pumping. Upon requesting further information women indicated the lack of flexibility was due to factors such as workload, lack of time, lack of coverage, lack of support and lack of access. Quotes regarding lack of flexibility are provided below.

**Figure 4. Barriers to a Flexible Schedule**



Workload

*“Lots of meetings, often got scheduled over my pumping time” –Management/professional employee*

*“Patient care and workload sometimes limited my pumping schedule”-Healthcare employee*

Lack of Time

*“The time given for a lunch break is not always enough to pump, clean parts, and get re-dressed. All of that alone takes 30 minutes which leaves no time to even go to the bathroom or do anything else” –Sales & Office Employee*

Lack of Coverage

*“I’m a nurse, so if we are busy there isn’t time to pump. We don’t have enough staff to cover my patients and let me leave the floor” – Healthcare Employee*

*“With students, I could not just go and pump when I had the need in the beginning. I could only pump when my students were not with me or when they were supervised by another adult” –Teacher*

Lack of Support

*“Lack of staff and lack of my needs to pump in a male oriented environment” –Service Industry Employee*

*“I was given coverage but felt that it was an inconvenience and received complaints” –Education Employee*

Lack of Access

*“My pump room isn’t even in my company so I have to go to a different business to pump and my time is closely monitored” –Sales & Office Employee*

*“Scheduling with other mothers who use the single room available”- Sales & Office Employee*

## Discussion

Although the majority of women surveyed felt supported to pump in their workplace, discrepancies were seen based on employment type. Additionally, women reported that the majority of their employers did not have a policy around pumping in the workplace. It appears women in healthcare/management received more workplace support than women in service and transportation careers. However, approximately 40% of women in healthcare still reported not reaching their breastfeeding goals. Regardless of employment type, some women seemed hindered from expressing milk due to a large workload and a lack of time. A flexible schedule appeared to be the key to women reporting satisfaction with their return to work experience while pumping. Of the women who reported not having a flexible schedule, 69.8% were not satisfied with their pumping experience and 44% did not meet their breastfeeding goals. Further, approximately a quarter of women did not have adequate lactation space, especially women working in education. Based on findings, consideration for greater flexible scheduling, multiple on-site lactation rooms and better workplace coverage while pumping should be given. Further conversations with women are needed to determine why they are not meeting their breastfeeding goals, identify specific efforts of supportive employers, and to help encourage employers in all employment sectors to adopt best practices for pumping within the workplace.

*Questions or Comments? Please contact Dr. Danae Dinkel at [dmdinkel@unomaha.edu](mailto:dmdinkel@unomaha.edu) or 402.554.3259*