

2023 INFANT FEEDING SURVEY

Key Findings



Survey Overview

- The 2023 Infant Feeding Survey was conducted August 7th – 19th, by survey research firms GQR and Public Opinion Strategies (POS). This survey builds upon other infant feeding survey research conducted in previous years. Respondents were contacted from a panel sample of nationwide mothers and caregivers.
- Mothers and caregivers were asked a series of questions related to how they feed their infant, motivations behind their choices to feed, beliefs surrounding various feeding methods, and how they receive that information, among other questions.



Survey Overview

WHO WAS SURVEYED?

Mothers who had given birth in the last 12 months and **caregivers** of newborns and infants were surveyed to gain insights into infant feeding practices.

Caregivers were defined as individuals spending more than 30 hours per week caring for a baby under 12 months old.

WHAT THEY WERE ASKED

- Motivations behind their choices to feed.
- Sentiments surrounding various feeding methods.
- How they receive their feeding information.

Mothers: 800
Caregivers: 400

Oversample

Black Mothers: 100
Hispanic Mothers: 100
AAPI* Mothers: 100

Total Respondents:
1,500 (unweighted) / 1,200 (weighted)

Key Findings

Current Infant Feeding Practices

- Mothers of infants 0-12 months old currently use a variety of methods to feed their babies -- 22 percent exclusively use breast milk, 33 percent exclusively use infant formula and 45 percent use a mix of both. Finding physiological barriers are most often reported as the reason why mothers choose to use formula, only 16 percent of mothers have never fed their infant breast milk for this or other reasons.
- Mothers generally make their feeding decisions before giving birth and feel they are getting ample information to make an informed decision. Mothers and caregivers of infants 0-12 months old report that they get more information about breastfeeding than formula.
- The majority of mothers of infants 0-12 months old feel judged for their feeding decisions; mothers who are not exclusively using breast milk are most likely to feel judged.
- Mothers and caregivers believe that information on nutritious feeding options is important for their infant aged 12 to 24 months.
- Parents and caregivers need greater awareness of the risks related to non-recommended infant feeding options. Providing accurate, balanced information helps avoid risky feeding practices.

Key Findings

Barriers to Breastfeeding

- There are physiological barriers and obstacles in the workplace to breastfeeding. Mothers exclusively feeding with breast milk say that not having time to pump at work or lack of support from their employer is a barrier to breastfeeding.

Opinions on Breastfeeding and Infant Formula

- Mothers of infants 0-12 months old know that breast milk is the healthiest choice and say they choose to use formula because they do not produce enough milk or have medical challenges that prevent breastfeeding. Mothers who move from breast milk to formula also cite decreased milk production.

Additional Information

- A broad majority of mothers and caregivers want the government to provide resources on both breastfeeding and infant formula, even though they say they have sufficient information. They want this information to meet the needs of mothers and caregivers, be scientific and easy to understand.
- Mothers and caregivers feel the government has a role to “provide information” but not “influence” mothers’ and caregivers’ feeding decisions.

Mothers and caregivers of infants 0-12 months old want balanced information on breastfeeding and infant formula.

70%

of mothers and 69% of caregivers oppose health care professionals or the government restricting infant feeding information to breastfeeding only.

“I think people should be given information about all their options and make the decision that works best for their family and situation.”

“I don't believe that should be their [the government's] decision. Mothers should have the options to choose from.”

Mothers and caregivers **believe their government** should provide ***easy-to-understand*** and ***science-based information*** and resources beyond just breastfeeding.

Mothers and caregivers of infants 0-12 months old view the government as an important source of information on infant feeding.

How important of a source is this for you when it comes to receiving information about feeding your baby?

% Very Important	% Among Mothers of Infants 0-12 Months Old	% Among Caregivers of Infants 0-12 Months Old
Your baby's pediatrician	77	84
Your doctor or OBGYN	70	74
Lactation consultant	64	47
WIC website or clinic	51	49
Books or other materials on pregnancy/maternity	45	45
Government websites like the CDC or HHS	44	41
Birth coach or doula	43	41
Your family	42	50
Your state's department of health website	42	42
Infant formula company materials	35	39
Your friends	27	32
The Internet, YouTube, or podcasts	23	24
Social media	21	19
TV and radio	18	17
Magazines	11	16

Findings from 2023 Infant Feeding Survey

*In this report, results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted.
Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses.*

Both Mothers and Caregivers of infants 0-12 months old also believe that the government should provide information beyond just breastfeeding.

How important of a source is this for you when it comes to receiving information about feeding your baby?

The government should provide information and resources on a variety of healthy ways parents and caregivers choose to feed infants, including breastfeeding and infant formula feeding.

The government should only promote breastfeeding since it is the healthiest and most nutritious form of feeding infants.

4 out of 5

mothers of infants 0-12 months old and caregivers of infants 0-12 months old think the government should provide information and resources on a variety of healthy ways parents and caregivers choose to feed infants, including breastfeeding and infant formula feeding.

The majority of mothers of infants 0-12 months old oppose restricting information about infant formula, from the government or in hospitals.

4 out of 5

mothers of infants 0-12 months old believe breastfeeding and infant formula information should be provided to new moms and caregivers in the hospital.

3 out of 4

mothers of infants 0-12 months old believe that restricting use of, access to, or information about infant formula in the hospital would not have changed how long they breastfed.



Mothers of infants 0-12 months old do not want to be judged on how they feed their baby and instead want support in making their decision.

94%

of mothers and 94% of caregivers assert that it's their decision on how to feed their baby.

65%

of mothers and 58% of caregivers feel judged on their infant feeding choices.

"It's up to the mother to decide what is safest/best for her child. All children are different."



Mothers and caregivers of infants 0-12 months old do not want to feel pressured to breastfeed or formula feed, rather supported in the decisions they make to feed their infant.

The majority of babies receive both breast milk and infant formula in the first year.

Mothers and caregivers of infants 0-12 months old understand the benefits of breastfeeding. Mothers who can, follow through with initiating breastfeeding.

78%

of mothers and 60% of caregivers feed breast milk at some point in the first year

80%

of mothers and 91% of caregivers feed infants formula at some point in the first year



45%

of mothers and 44% of caregivers feed a combination of breastmilk and infant formula at some point in the first year

33%

of mothers and 45% of caregivers feed infant formula only at some point in the first year



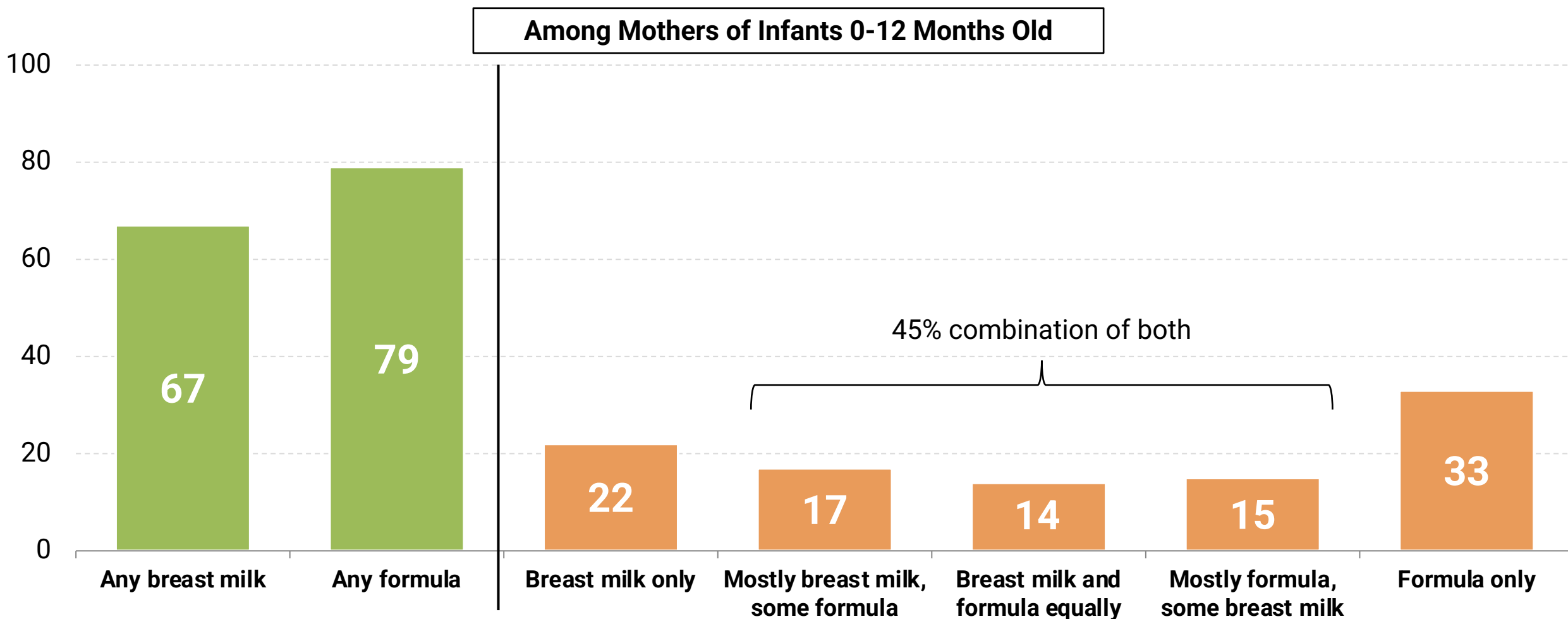
21%

of mothers and 11% of caregivers feed breastmilk only at some point in the first year

Most mothers want to breastfeed, but encounter *barriers* potentially impacting their infant's health and preventing them from initiating or continuing.

Most mothers of infants 0-12 months old feed at least some breast milk.

Which of the following best describes what you currently feed your baby in terms of breast milk/and or formula?



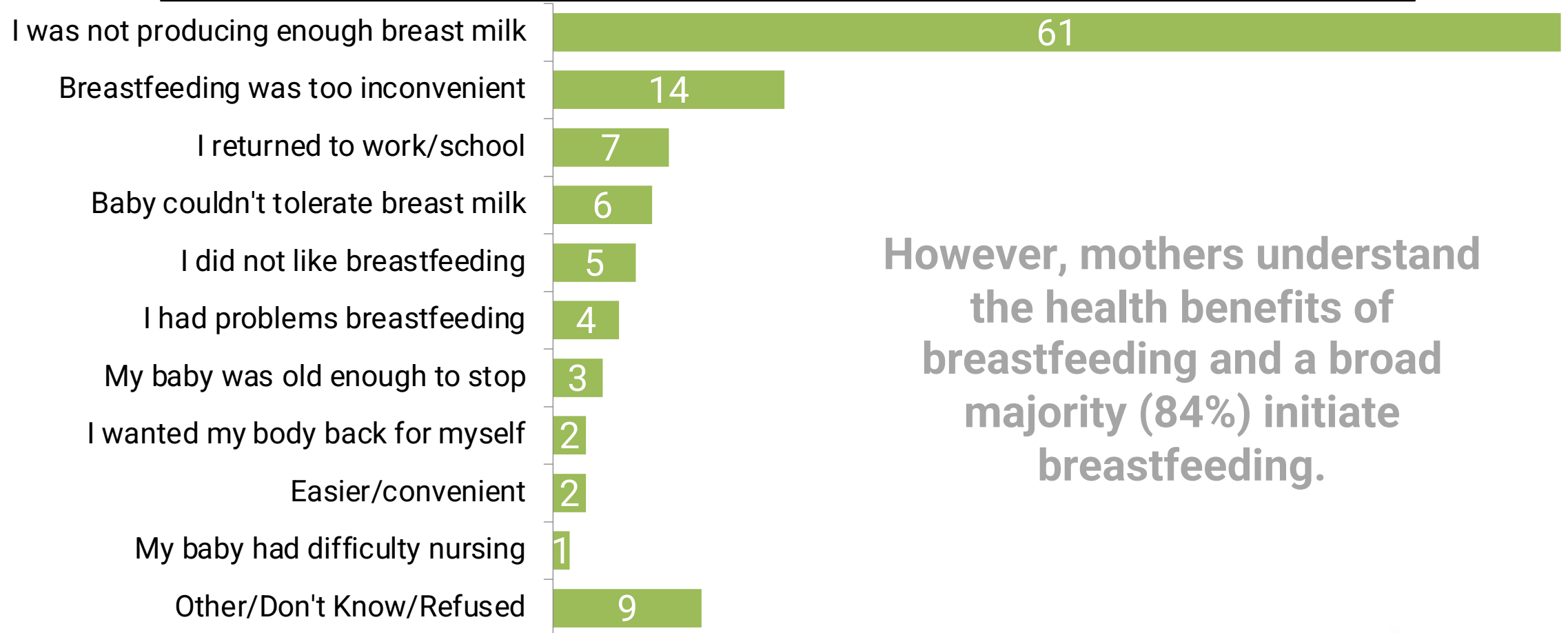
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The primary reason mothers of infants 0-12 months old introduce infant formula are health and nutrition related.

What was the primary reason you stopped feeding your baby breast milk? [ASKED AMONG THOSE WHO USED TO USE BREAST MILK AND NO LONGER DO]

Among Mothers of Infants 0-12 Months Old Who Used to Use Breast Milk and No Longer Do



However, mothers understand the health benefits of breastfeeding and a broad majority (84%) initiate breastfeeding.

Mothers and caregivers of infants 0-12 months old need greater awareness of the risks related to non-recommended infant feeding options.

Parents and caregivers need to be aware of the risks related to non-recommended infant feeding options.

47%

of mothers and 51% of caregivers view homemade or non-store-bought formula as non-risky.

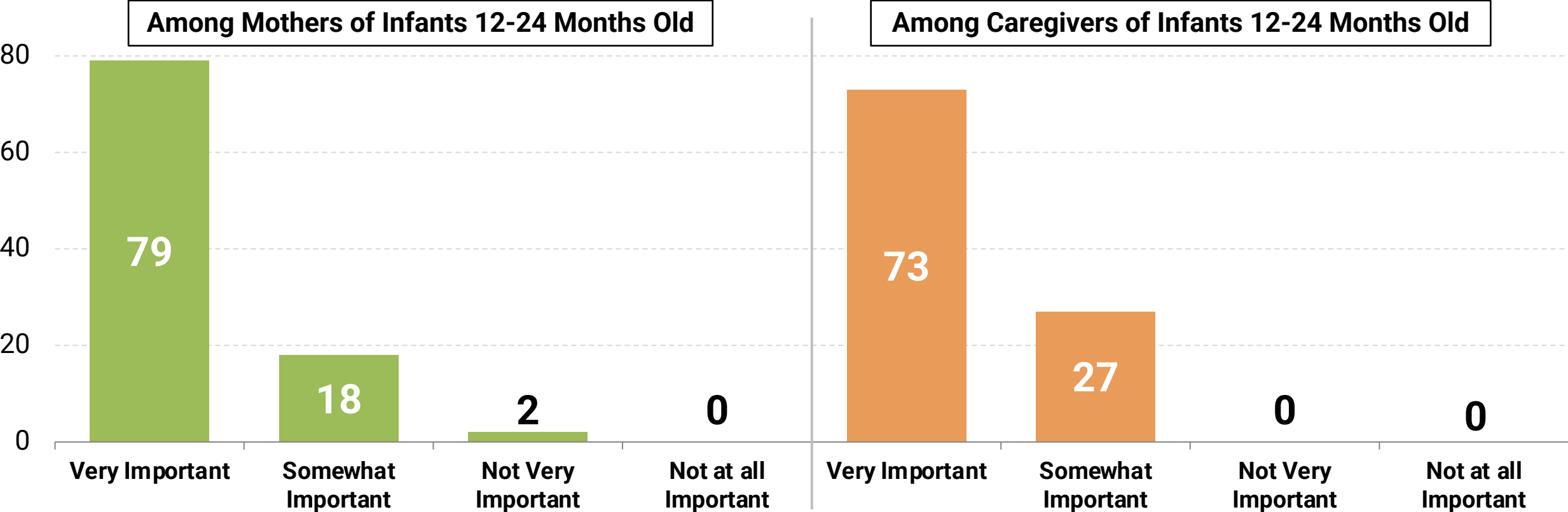
62%

of mothers and 59% of caregivers view sharing breastmilk as non-risky.

Providing accurate, balanced information helps avoid risky feeding practices.

Mothers and caregivers of infants 12-24 months old* believe access to information for nutritious feeding options for their young child is important.

Do you believe it is very important, somewhat important, a little important or not at all important to have access to information about nutritionally complete feeding options for young children ages 12-24 months?



*Asked among mothers/caregivers of infants 0-12 months old who also have a child 12-24 months old

Findings from 2023 Infant Feeding Survey

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Mothers of infants 0-12 months old feel informed, but still strongly agree hospitals should give information on both breastfeeding and infant formula.

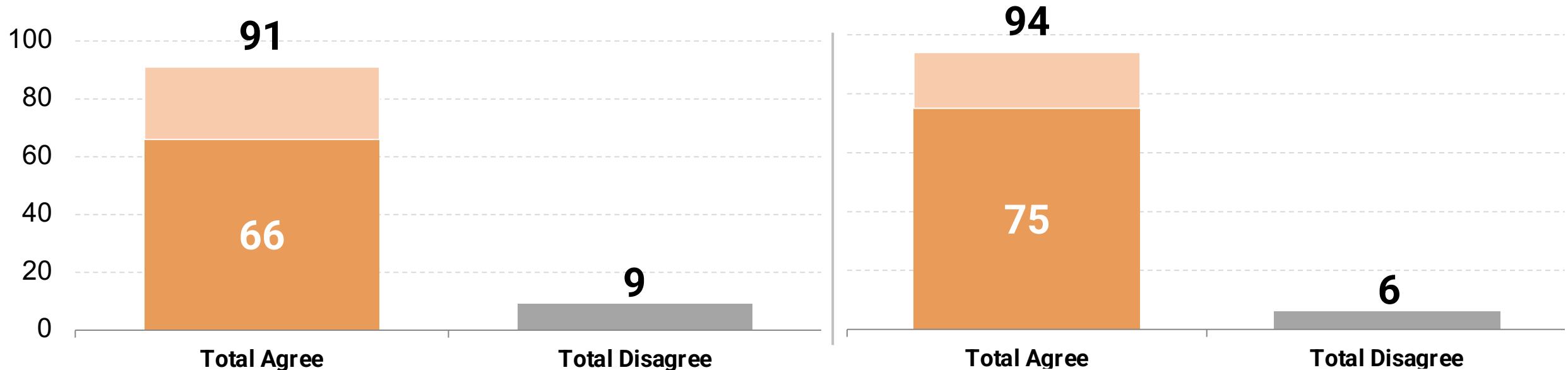
Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

(SPLIT) I feel like I have all the information I need to make a decision how to feed my baby.

(SPLIT) Hospitals should provide information about both infant formula and breastfeeding so mothers and/or caregivers have all the information they need to make an informed choice.

Among Mothers of Infants 0-12 Months Old

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree



Caregivers of infants 0-12 months old also feel they have enough information, but still want hospitals to provide information on both infant formula and breastfeeding.

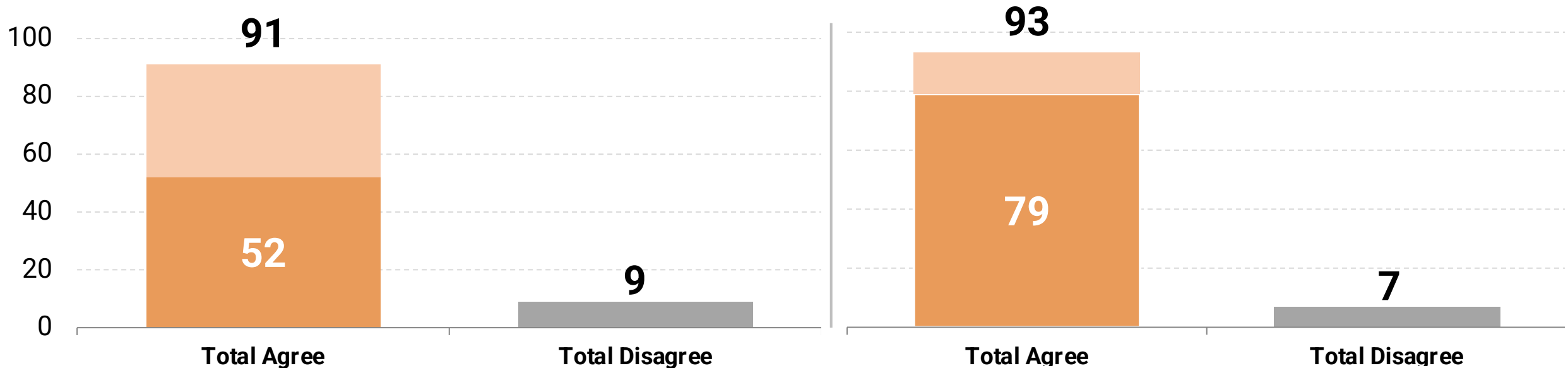
Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

(SPLIT) I feel like I have all the information I need to make a decision on how to feed my baby.

(SPLIT) Hospitals should provide information about both infant formula and breastfeeding so mothers and/or caregivers have all the information they need to make an informed choice.

Among Caregivers of Infants 0-12 Months Old

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree



Summary

Mothers and caregivers want ***options*** and ***balanced*** information when it comes to choosing how to feed their infant.

For more information on the Infant
Feeding Survey, visit
infantnutrition.org

