

How does working part-time versus working full-time affect breastfeeding goals?

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Image: Wikipedia.

Breastfeeding is known to provide significant health benefits for both infants and their mothers. However, while many women intend to breastfeed despite returning to work, a new study finds that mothers who plan to breastfeed for at least three months but return to work full-time are less likely to meet their breastfeeding goals. Conversely, there is no association between women who return to work part-time and failure to reach the breastfeeding goal of at least three months. This new study was published today in the *Journal of Human Lactation*.

Studying [survey data](#) from 1,172 U.S. mothers, study authors Kelsey

Mirkovic, Cria Perrine, Kelley Scanlon, and Laurence Grummer-Strawn found that 28.8% of all [women](#) who intended to breastfeed for three months were unable to meet their goal. The researchers also found the following:

- Mothers who returned to full-time work before six weeks had 2.25 times the odds of not meeting their breastfeeding goals compared to those who stayed at home for at least three months.
- Mothers who returned to work full-time between six weeks and three months had 1.82 times the odds of not reaching their goals.
- No association was observed between returning to work part-time and not meeting intentions to breastfeed for at least three months.

"Support for a mother's delayed return to paid employment, or return at part-time hours, may help more mothers achieve their breastfeeding intentions," the researchers wrote. "This may increase breastfeeding rates and have important public health implications for US mothers and [infants](#)."

More information: "Maternity Leave Duration and Full-time/Part-time Work Status Are Associated with US Mothers' Ability to Meet Breastfeeding Intentions," *Journal of Human Lactation*, 2014.

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