

# Provider-Based Needs Assessment for Lactation Support in Washington State

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## Background

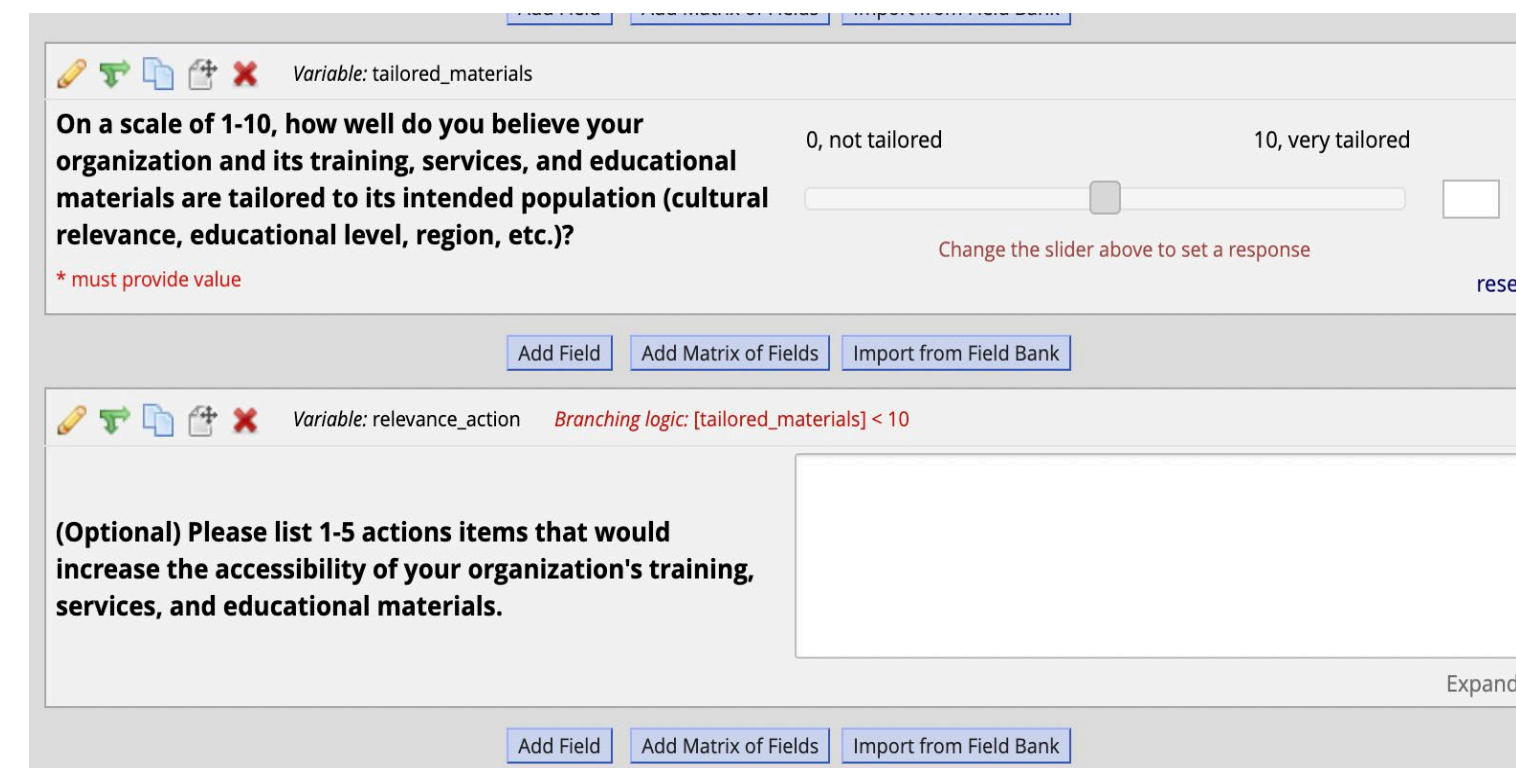
- 30% of Washington (WA) infants breastfed (BF) exclusively through 6 months<sup>1-3</sup>
  - National average: 25%
  - Healthy People 2030 goal: 42%
- WA has strong, 12-week paid family and medical leave (PFML). Strong PFML related to a higher likelihood of BF, especially for families on Medicaid.<sup>1,4</sup>
- Lactation support is not spread equitably across the state causing worse BF outcomes in underserved regions/populations.<sup>5</sup>
- The likelihood of Black and Hispanic mothers in the Northwest to exclusively BF is 50% that of white mothers.<sup>6</sup>
- 10 counties in WA, all rural, lack WIC BF peer counseling services.<sup>7</sup>
- WA counties with higher rates of families in poverty also had lower rates of fully breastfed infants compared to the state average.<sup>8,9</sup>

## Project Goal:

Gauge the perceived capacities, assets, and barriers lactation support providers experience across WA state.

## Methods

- Online needs assessment of 20 required multiple choice questions. Branching logic, free response questions, and optional questions also included.
- Distributed the survey link to:
  - 209 recipients on WLC email list
  - Specific contacts at organizations of interest,
  - WIC BF coordinators through DOH



**Figure 1.** Sample questions from online needs assessment used for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

- Quantitative analysis: frequencies and proportions
- Qualitative analysis: coding of survey responses
- Interpreted and shared results via written report for WLC and online and in-person presentations.

**Table 1. Sample Codebook**

Code	Guideline
Insurance/Medicaid (deductive)	Use when respondent refers to expanded Medicaid or insurance coverage of lactation services.
Training/education (inductive)	Use when respondent references a lack of lactation-related training.

## Results

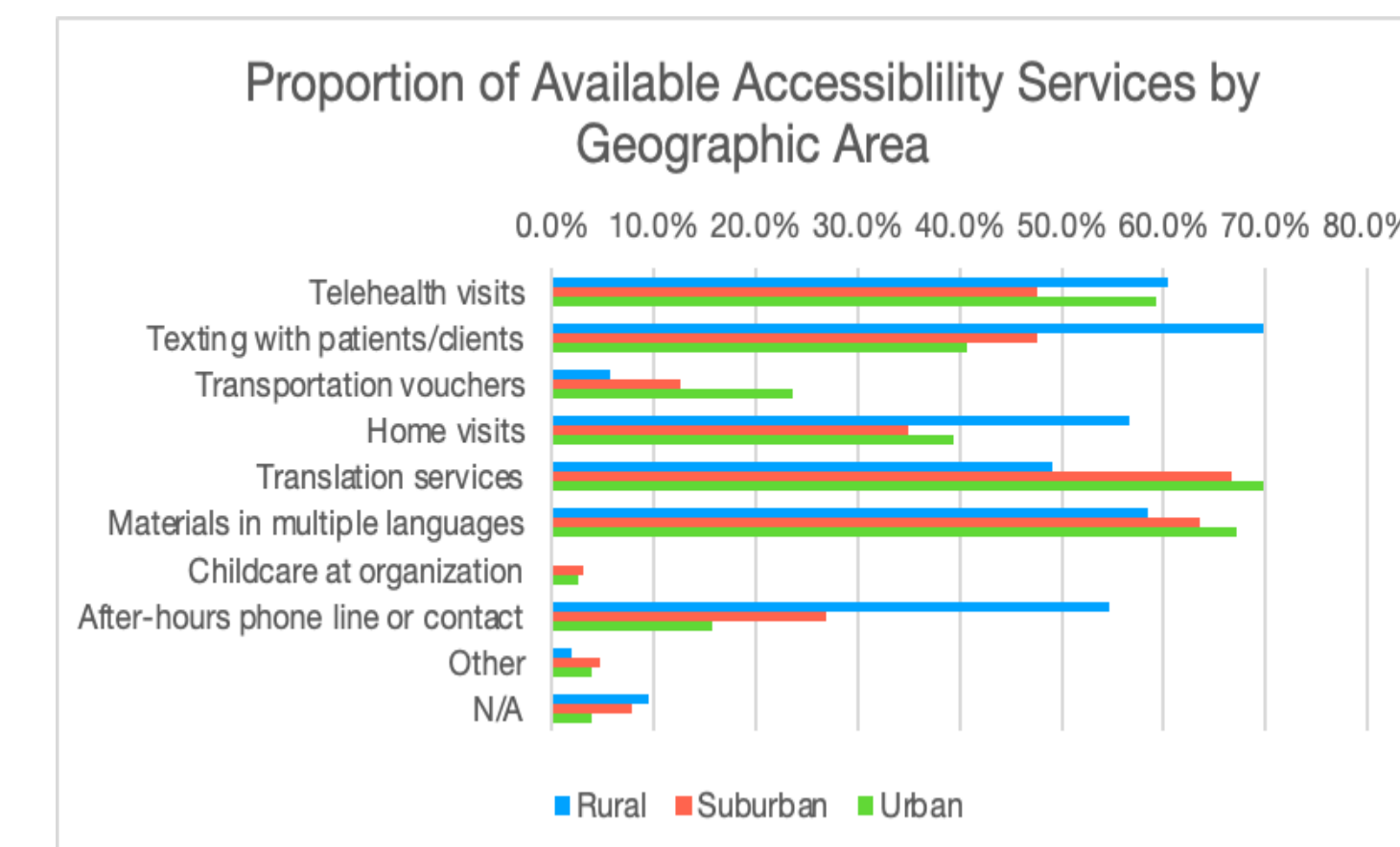
**n=192 unique responses**

### Available Services

- 64 of the 192 providers offered group classes (33%) & 51 offered support groups (26%).
- Group support most frequently cited services providers wished to offer communities (35 of 135 providers).
- 23 of 135 providers believed there was a shortage of lactation professionals in their community or organization, 15 specifically cited a lack of IBCLCs.

### Accessibility of Services

- Culturally relevant materials (n=122) and translator services (n=121) were the most common accessibility services.
  - Providers perceived these services to be insufficient for culturally diverse populations.
- Need for BIPOC and multilingual representation among lactation providers (n=13).
- Proportion of rural providers offering texting with patients (70%), home visits (57%), and after-hours phone lines (55%) much higher than suburban and urban providers.

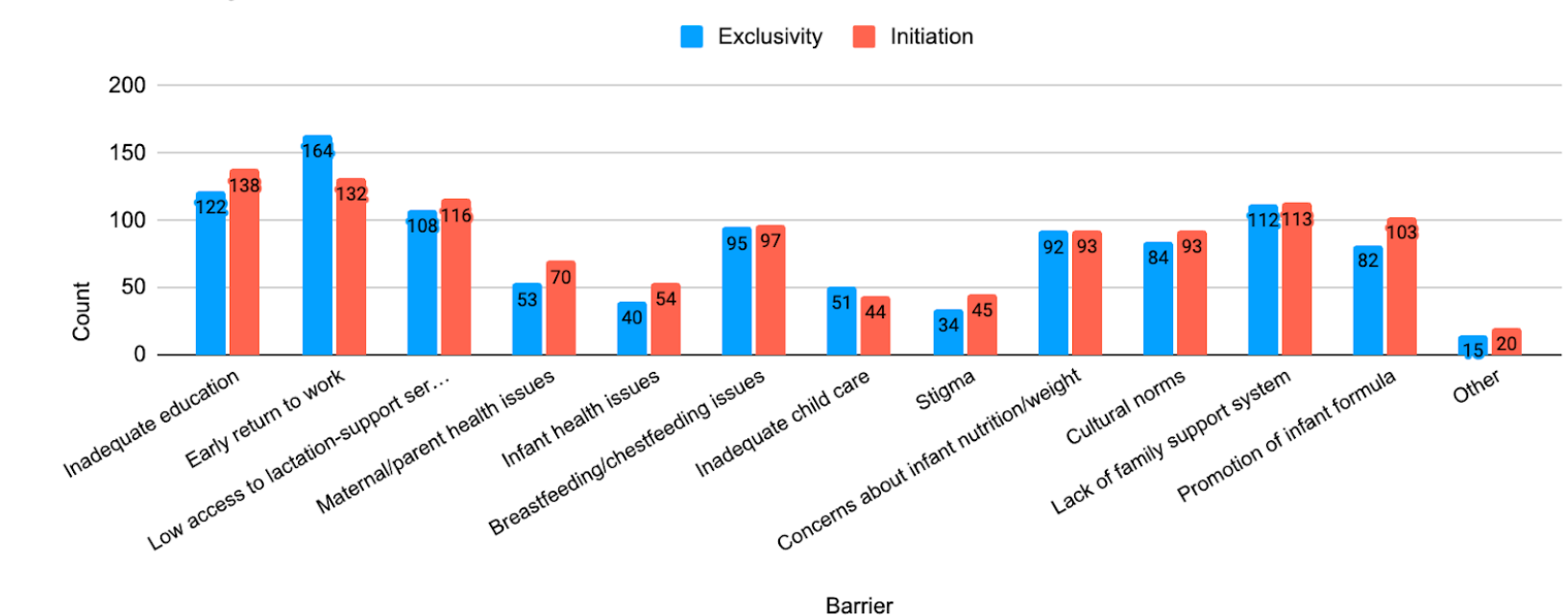


**Figure 2.** Accessibility of services by geographic area

### Policy, Systemic, Environmental Strengths and Barriers

- Policies that would improve BF exclusivity:
  - Stronger PFML policies (64% -- 38% of which wanted >6mos)
  - Expanded Medicaid/insurance coverage of lactation services (28%)
  - More workplace protections (19%)
- Community engagement not a barrier to lactation service provision except among rural providers
- Greatest barrier to achieving BF recommendations is early return to work (n=164) and inadequate or improper education (n=122).

**Provider Perception of the Greatest Barriers to Reaching Breastfeeding Initiation and Exclusivity Recommendations**



**Figure 3.** Greatest barriers to reaching initiation and exclusivity recommendations

## Recommendations and Future Directions

1. Programming for training opportunities accessible to WA lactation providers.
  2. Support traineeships, scholarships, or mentorships for BIPOC and multilingual IBCLC students.
  3. Compile culturally-tailored breastfeeding resources and materials translated into multiple languages.
  4. Advocate for state policies surrounding Medicaid coverage of lactation services or expanding PFML.
- Future research should be directed at nursing parents and families perceived assets and barriers to receiving lactation support

### References:

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