

# HEALTHY START: 0-5 YEARS

## MADISON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DATA BRIEF

OCTOBER 2025

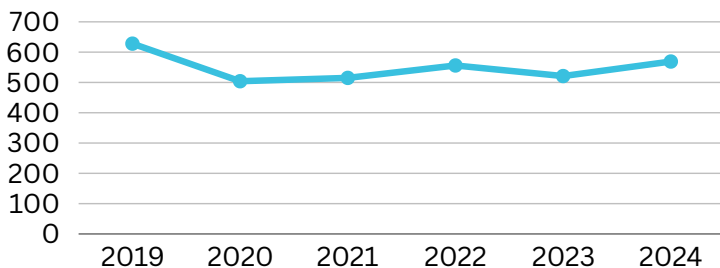


The first five years are a time of big changes for children as they grow, learn, and reach important milestones like walking, talking, and playing with others. Early childhood builds the foundation for lifelong health, learning, and wellbeing. Experiences from pregnancy through age 5—including healthcare, environment, relationships, and stress—can have lasting effects. This data brief highlights key factors that influence health in the early years, such as pregnancy and birth outcomes, prenatal care, substance use, poverty, trauma, vaccines, and developmental delays.

### Pregnancy & Birth Outcomes

In 2024, there were approximately **2,951 children** under the age of 5 making up **4.4%** of the total population in Madison County. Since 2020, annual births have declined and remain below 600 per year (Fig. 1). The average **age of first-time moms** in Madison County is **27** with about **4%** of births to **young women** between 15-19 years.

Figure 1. Number of Births in Madison County (2019-2024)



27

average age of first-time moms giving birth (2024)

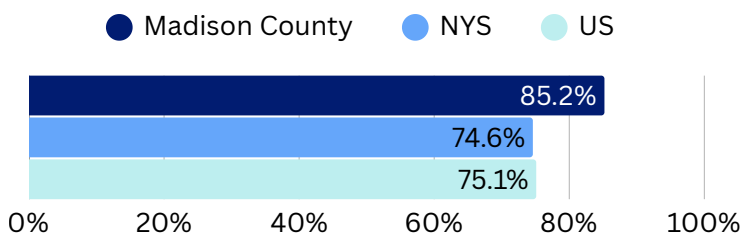
3.9%

of pregnancies were young women 15-19 years (2024)

### P R E N A T A L   C A R E :

**Prenatal care** is the medical care a woman receives when she is pregnant. It is important for tracking a baby's development, managing any health concerns, and preparing for delivery. Doctors recommend starting care in the **first trimester** (0-12 weeks) and attending about **13 appointments** throughout the pregnancy. Most pregnant women in Madison County receive the recommended number of prenatal care visits (Fig. 2). A lack of prenatal care increases the risk of low birth weight (less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces), preterm birth (born before 37 weeks), and other health complications.

Figure 2. Percent of Pregnant Women Receiving Recommended Prenatal Care (2020-2022)



## SUBSTANCE USE DURING PREGNANCY:

Using substances while pregnant poses serious health risks to both mom and baby. Common substances are alcohol, tobacco, cannabis (marijuana), and opioids.

**Alcohol use** during pregnancy can cause permanent physical, behavioral, and cognitive damage to the baby. These effects are known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs). There is no safe amount of alcohol to drink while pregnant.

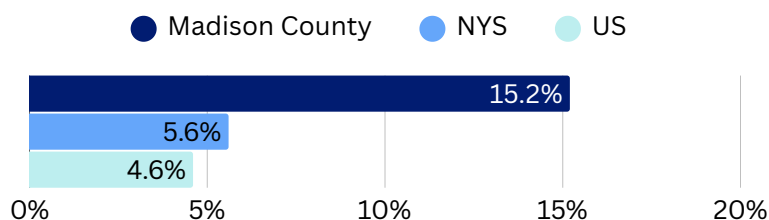
Up to **1 in 20** U.S. school children have FASDs



**5.2%** of women report alcohol use in the last three months of pregnancy in NYS (excluding NYC) (2022)

**Smoking** cigarettes and/or using tobacco during pregnancy reduces oxygen supply to the baby, increasing the risk of premature birth and low birth weight. These may contribute to long-term health problems and developmental delays. Madison County has a **higher** percentage of **pregnant women who smoke** than New York State and the national average (Fig. 3). Quitting before pregnancy lowers the risk significantly.

**Figure 3. Percent of Pregnant Women who Smoked During Pregnancy (2022)**



**Cannabis (marijuana)**, whether smoked, eaten, or applied through topical creams, can pass its chemicals like tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), from mom to baby during pregnancy. Its use has been linked to low birth weight and developmental delays. About **15%** of adults in Madison County use cannabis; however, no data are available on use among women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Using **opioids**, such as codeine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, heroin, and fentanyl, during pregnancy has been linked to serious complications, including preterm birth, stillbirth, maternal mortality, and neonatal abstinence syndrome, a condition in which a newborn experiences withdrawal symptoms after being exposed to opioids in the womb.

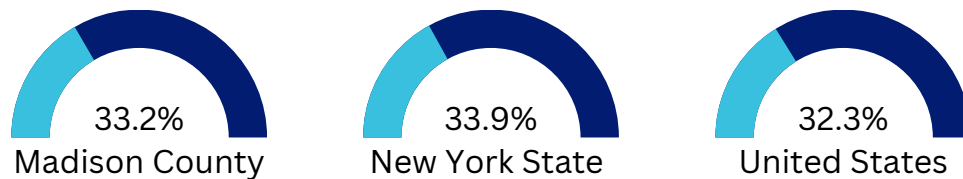
**15.9 per 1,000** newborns experience withdrawal symptoms as a result of maternal substance use in Madison County

**6.0 per 1,000** newborns experience withdrawal symptoms as a result of maternal substance use in New York State

## DELIVERY OUTCOMES :

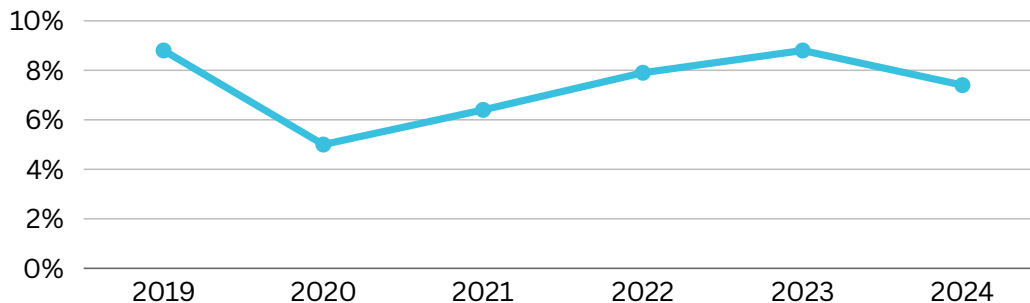
How and when a baby is born affects their immediate and long-term health. Cesarean section (“**C-section**”) deliveries are sometimes necessary, but carry increased risks for both mom and baby. Babies born by C-section may be more likely to develop issues with breathing and the immune system like asthma, allergies, or autoimmune diseases (e.g. Type 1 diabetes). Moms may face longer recovery times, and greater risk of infection and complications in future pregnancies. In 2024, **33.2%** of births in Madison County were **C-sections** (Fig. 4).

**Figure 4. Percent of C-Sections Among Women (2023)**



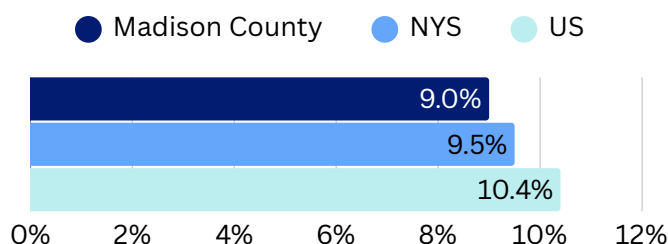
**Low birth weight**, less than 5 pounds 8 ounces, can lead to breathing issues, infections, and chronic conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure. In Madison County, the proportion of babies born with **low birth weight** has **increased** each year since 2020 but **remain below previous highs** (Fig. 5).

**Figure 5. Percent of Low Birth Weight Births in Madison County**



**Preterm birth**, which is defined as birth before 37 weeks, increases the risk of breathing issues, infections, developmental delays, and long-term health problems. In Madison County, the percent of babies are **born preterm** is **lower** compared to New York State and national averages (Fig. 6).

**Figure 6. Percent of Babies Born Preterm (2022)**



## Breastfeeding

**Breastfeeding** offers many health benefits for both infants and mothers. Breast milk provides essential nutrients and antibodies that help protect babies from infections and illnesses. It is also linked to lower rates of asthma, allergies, obesity, and Type 1 diabetes. For mothers, breastfeeding supports faster recovery after childbirth, lowers the risk of certain cancers, and promotes emotional bonding with the baby. In 2023, **62%** of Madison County babies had been fed exclusively breast milk in the delivery hospital, which is **higher** than New York State.

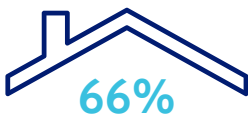
### Babies Fed Exclusively Breast Milk in the Delivery Hospital (2023)



## Lead Exposure

**Lead** is a toxic metal that can be found in older homes, especially those built before 1978. Children are often exposed by swallowing lead paint chips or drinking water from pipes that contain lead.

Even small amounts of lead can harm a child's developing brain which may cause learning issues, behavioral problems (difficulty focusing and irritability), and delays in growth. It is recommended that children be **tested for lead exposure at ages 1 and 2**. If a child's blood lead level is high (5 µg/dL or above), families should work with a healthcare provider and local health department to identify and remove sources of lead in the environment as well as seek nutritional support and follow up testing.



of Madison County homes were built before 1979

### In Madison County:

**38.3%** of children born in 2019 had at least two lead screenings by 36 months

**14.7 per 1,000** tested children aged <72 months had a confirmed high blood lead level

## Poverty & Health Insurance

Children who grow up in **poverty** face **increased health risks**, including poor birth outcomes, higher rates of illness, and delays in cognitive and emotional development. Limited household resources can also restrict access to healthcare, nutritious food, and early education opportunities—factors that are critical during the early years of development.

Poverty is measured using the federal income threshold. Families with the lowest incomes may qualify for programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Medicaid. However, many families living above the poverty line still experience financial strain. The United Way's **ALICE measure** (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) captures households that earn too much to qualify for safety net programs, but not enough to cover basic needs like housing, childcare, and food.

### In Madison County:

**6.6%** of families are below poverty level

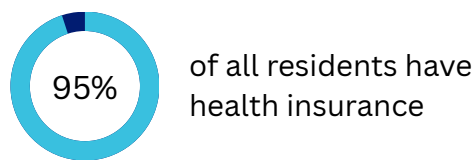
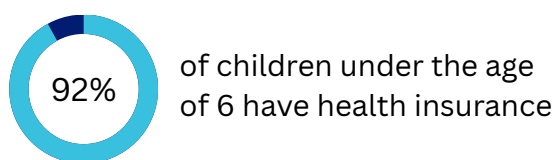
**10.6%** of children under 5 years are below poverty level

**27.0%** of households are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE)

**28.3%** of women are enrolled in WIC during pregnancy

Having health insurance helps ensure that children receive necessary care, including regular check-ups, immunizations, and treatment for illness.

### In Madison County:



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## Trauma & Toxic Stress

**Trauma** is any event that causes harm or emotional distress, such as abuse, neglect, or family instability. **Toxic stress** happens when a child experiences long-term stress without supportive relationships to help buffer its effects.

The early years are a sensitive time for brain development. Trauma and toxic stress during this period can interfere with a child's ability to learn, manage emotions, and form healthy relationships. Referred to as **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**, they can impact long-term health outcomes and even premature death. Examples of ACEs include living with adults experiencing mental health issues, substance misuse, incarceration, divorce, as well as children experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

**42.7%** of adults in Madison County report experiencing two or more ACEs

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## Vaccinations

Vaccines protect children from serious, potentially life-threatening diseases. Because young children's immune systems are still developing, they are especially vulnerable to illness. **Vaccination** is a safe and effective way to build immunity. It helps prevent the spread of diseases in families, schools, and the broader community. To view the recommended childhood vaccine schedule, [click here](#).

**77.0%** of 24-35 month old children in Madison County are up-to-date on their childhood immunization series

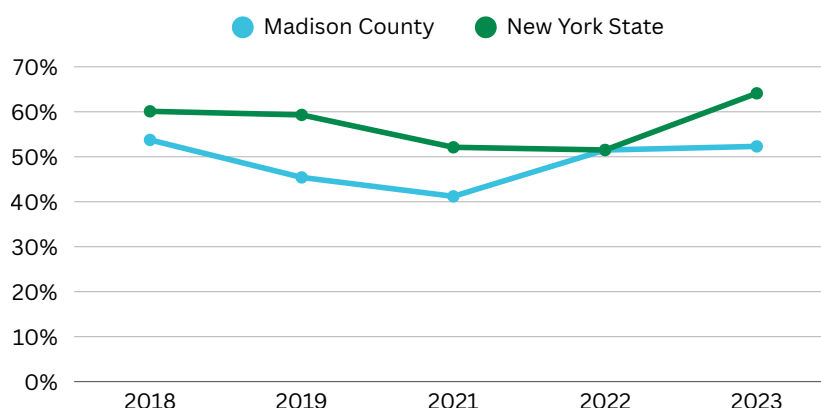
## Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education gives children a strong start to life. They can help children get along well with others, do better in school, and stay healthy. These programs teach important skills like reading, math, making friends, and handling emotions. Children who attend early childhood education programs are more likely to graduate high school on time and seek services for developmental delays sooner.



**Preschool** is one type of early childhood education for children ages 3 and 4. It is not required by law, but preschool gives children a chance to grow their skills and spend time learning with other kids in a safe and caring place. About **52%** of 3 and 4-year-olds in Madison County are enrolled in a preschool program, which is **lower** than New York State (Fig. 7).

**Figure 7. Preschool Enrollment (3-4 years old)**



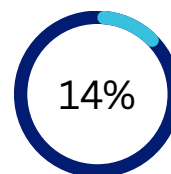
## Developmental Delays & Disabilities

Developmental delays occur when a child does not reach expected milestones in physical movement, speech and language, learning, or social-emotional skills. Milestones are typically reached within specific timeframes grouped by age brackets. These delays can impact children's ability to learn, interact with others, and manage daily tasks. **Early detection** and **participation in services** like physical therapy, speech therapy or occupation therapy, can help children catch up. For a list of age-specific developmental milestones, [click here](#).

### In the United States:



Almost **10%** of children younger than age 3 have a developmental delay.



of children 3 to 17 years old have a developmental disability

**Early intervention** refers to services and supports provided to 0-3 year olds who have developmental delays or disabilities—or who are at risk of them—with the goal of addressing needs as early as possible to improve long-term outcomes. In Madison County, rates are **lower** for children served by Early Intervention compared to New York State, suggesting reduced service reach in the county (Fig. 8). It is important to monitor your child for developmental milestones, and reach out to their doctor or Madison County Public Health if you think they may need extra support.

#### In Madison County:



**3.9%**

of children under age 3 are enrolled in Early Intervention in Madison County

Between 2022-2024, on average:

**2.3%**

of children in physical therapy

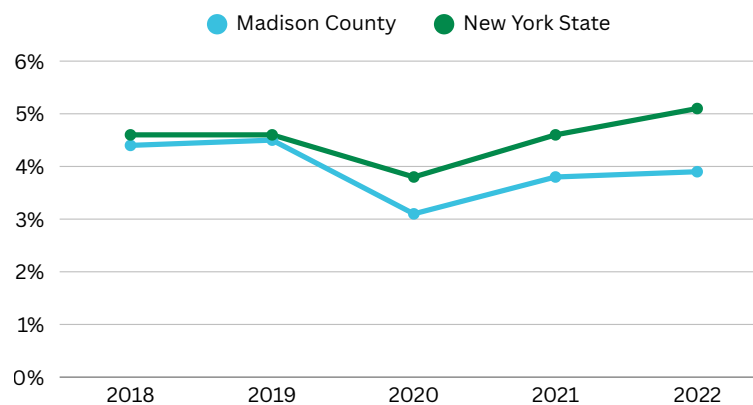
**3.5%**

of children in occupational therapy

**7.4%**

of children in speech therapy

**Figure 8. Children Served by Early Intervention**



## Conclusion

The earliest years of life are a critical period for physical, emotional, and mental development. Supporting healthy pregnancies, promoting early childhood care, and reducing risks like poverty, substance use, and toxic stress ensures that all children in Madison County have a strong, healthy start in life.

Parents and caregivers should talk to a healthcare provider or call Madison County Public Health at 315-366-2361 if they have concerns. Explore the information below on local programs and support services.



## Resources

### Community Action Partnership for Madison County

**315-684-3144 (Morrisville) or 315-697-3588 (Canastota)**

- Early Head Start: home-based program serving families with children under age 3
- WIC: offers nutrition education and breastfeeding support
- Healthy Families: home-based services to support expectant families and new parents

### Literacy Outreach for Madison County, NY | 315-345-1468

- Dolly Parton Imagination Library provides hand-selected, age-appropriate books each month to registered children from birth to age five

### Madison County Department of Social Services (DSS) | 315-366-2211

- Offers Parenting Skills classes on misbehavior, self-esteem, respect, and many other skills useful to healthy parenting

### Madison County Mental Health | 315-366-2327

- Provides assessments for any child a parent thinks may be ready for mental health treatment/therapy, discusses results, and recommends services

### Madison County Public Health | 315-366-2361

- Early Intervention: coordination of evaluations and services to children birth to age 3
- Preschool program: coordination of evaluations and services to children age 3-5
- Maternal Child Health program: home visits during prenatal and postpartum periods along with breastfeeding support
- Car Seat program: provides free car seats and booster seats with education for eligible residents
- Lead Poisoning Prevention program: conducts home visits for children with elevated blood lead levels, helps identify the source of the poisoning, and provides nutrition education
- Cavity Free Kids: provides oral health education to families through daycares

### Madison County Rural Health Council | 315-815-4141

- Doula Services: physical, emotional, and informational support to a mother before, during, and shortly after childbirth
- Cavity Free Kids: provides oral health education to school districts

### Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency | 315-624-9930

- Head Start: on-site program serving families with children age 3-5 (Canastota, Oneida)

### Oneida Health | 315-361-2065

- Breastfeeding Cafe for breastfeeding support and connection to other families
- Baby Weigh Stations to check baby's growth and development



#### Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Method of Delivery (2023).
- Substance Use During Pregnancy (2024).
- Reasons to Vaccinate (2024).

Madison County Public Health. Community Health Assessment (2020).

National Center for Education Statistics. Students with Disabilities (2024).

New York State Department of Health:

- Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (2022).
- The Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System (PedNSS) (2023).
- Community Health Indicator Reports Dashboard (2019).
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (2023).
- Prevention Agenda Dashboard (2023).

United Way. The State of ALICE New York, Madison County Report (2023).

United States Census Bureau (2023).