



HEALTH DISTRICT

MATERNAL HEALTH REPORT 2025

PREPARED BY

Olivia Artman, MA
Epidemiologist
330-296-9919 Ext. 152

OVERVIEW

In 2025, Portage County Health District and University Hospitals embarked on a Community Health Assessment (CHA) process, engaging over 30 community partners, including Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County, Kent City Health Department, Axxess Family Services, Townhall II, PARTA, and Coleman Health Services.

Following the CHA, these community stakeholders participated in the community health improvement process using CHA data to determine community priorities with accompanying strategies. Population Health and Safety, including maternal, child and infant health, was identified as a priority in the 2026–2028 Portage County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), along with Chronic Disease and Mental Health, Substance Use, and Addiction.

Portage County Health District, in collaboration with community partners, collects and reports local data related to pregnancy, maternal and child health. The data in this report was retrieved from the DataOhio.gov data portal. The data was published by the Ohio Department of Health Vital Statistics Bureau.

The goal of this report is to inform Portage County stakeholders about positive outcomes and areas of potential improvement pertaining to various aspects of pregnancy, prenatal monitoring, delivery, and post-partum health behaviors. Stakeholders might include, but are not limited to, community agencies, healthcare providers, and Portage County residents. Any questions about this report or its contents can be directed to Olivia Artman, Portage County Health District Epidemiologist, via phone.

WIC PROGRAM

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a supplemental nutrition program that provides healthy foods, personalized nutrition education, breastfeeding support and referrals to other services. Portage County WIC and Columbiana County WIC are both part of the Portage County Health District (PCHD). Portage County WIC is located in the Health District building at 999 East Main Streets in Ravenna next to Marcs.

In order to be eligible for WIC you must:

- Be pregnant, breastfeeding or have had a pregnancy end less than six months ago OR
- Be the caregiver of an infant or child who is under five years old
AND
- Live in Ohio AND
- Meet WIC income guidelines

A prescreening tool to help figure out if you are eligible is available, and is linked on our website: portagehealth.net. To apply for WIC, make an appointment at our WIC clinic by calling 330-297-9422 (Portage County) or 330-424-7293 (Columbiana County).

You'll need to bring some things to your appointment, including:

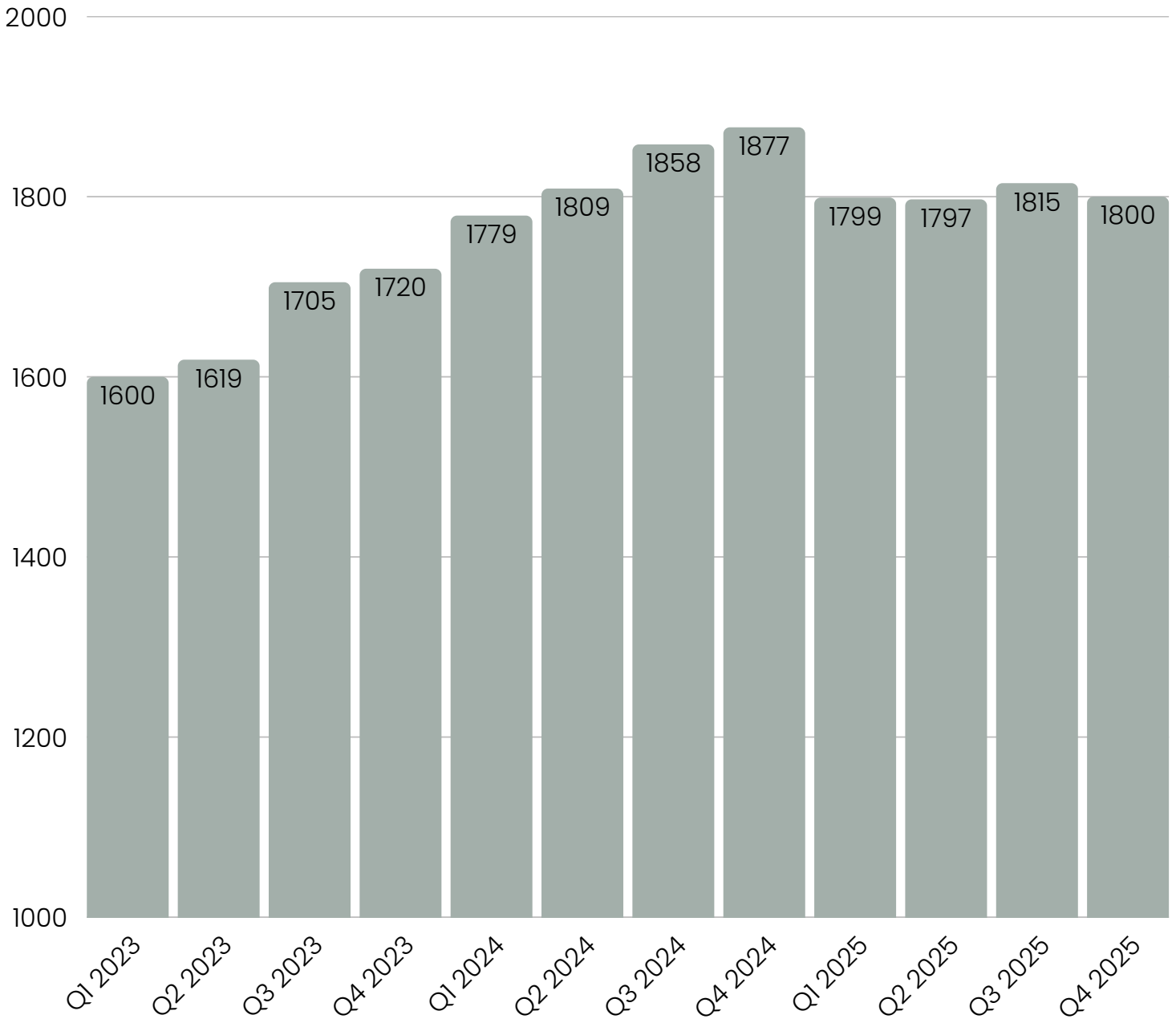
- Proof of household income (e.g. paystubs, Medicaid, SNAP)
- ID for all family members applying (e.g. photo ID, birth certificate, passport)
- Proof of address (e.g. driver's license, utility bill, lease agreement)
- If pregnant, proof of pregnancy with due date



**Department of
Health**

Women, Infants, and
Children Program (WIC)

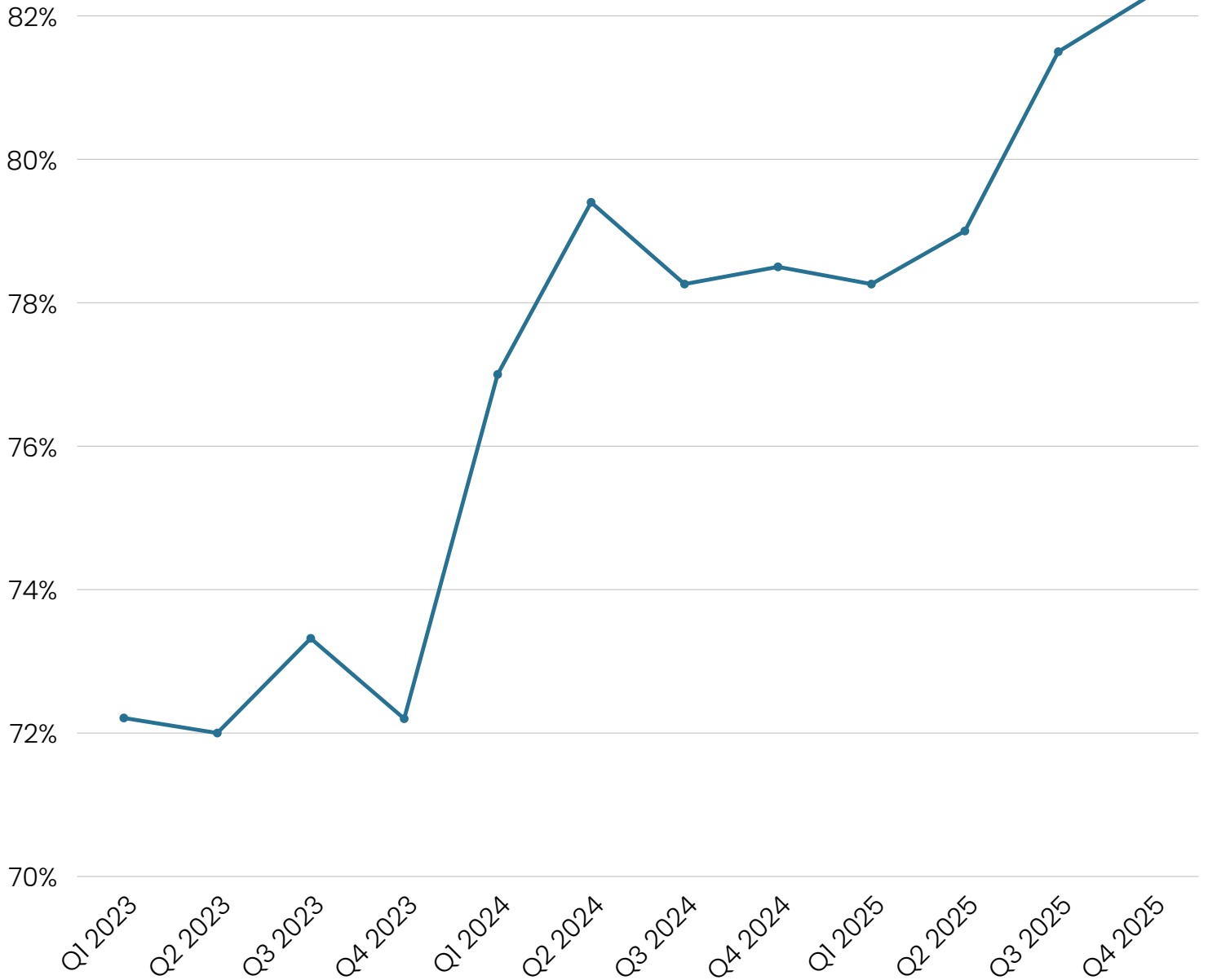
Portage County WIC Average Case Load: Last 12 Quarters



Department of Health

Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC)

WIC Breastfeeding Initiation Rate: Last 12 Quarters



Department of Health

Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC)

2025 SUMMARY

In 2025, 1,290 Portage County residents gave birth to 1,312 babies, including 11 sets of twins. Data was unavailable for one mom and her baby because delivery took place outside of Ohio. Any additional missing data is noted below figures when applicable.

Unfortunately, one mom passed away soon after giving birth. This tragic loss highlights the importance of early and consistent prenatal care and access to maternal health services. Grief services for loved ones after a traumatic event like this one is also of critical importance. It should be noted that maternal health is an important focus of the new 2026–2028 CHIP (more information on page 7).

Two potential areas of improvement for Portage County's community agencies to note are (1) while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a child's life, the percentage of Portage County mothers exclusively breastfeeding their newborns is only 61% and (2) about 21% of Portage County women that gave birth in 2025 presented with risk factors for gestational hypertension.

However, this report contains several very encouraging metrics. First, pregnancies under the age of 18 were very rare in 2025. Additionally, despite the closure of the UH Portage Labor and Delivery Unit late in 2022, complications during delivery and spontaneous home births remain uncommon; moreover there were no deliveries enroute to the hospital in 2025. Furthermore, a large majority of babies are born at a healthy weight, at or after 32 weeks gestation, and have good APGAR scores. Finally, reported alcohol use by mothers during pregnancy is very rare. Overall, most Portage County pregnancies and births had positive outcomes during 2025.

ADDRESSING MATERNAL HEALTH NEEDS

Improving maternal, child and infant health is a sub-focus within the Population Health and Safety priority of Portage County's 2026-2028 CHIP. The activities being implemented to reach this goal are:

- Increase WIC enrollment
- Track health outcomes of WIC participant newborns including gestational age at birth, weight, and breastfeeding practices
- Akron Children's Hospital will offer the Nurturing Families Program, which is one-on-one education for parents, starting during pregnancy

Outside of these CHIP activities, PCHD does several things to support healthy pregnancies and babies, including:

- Hosting a Breastfeeding Awareness Month event each August
- Administering the Portage County Mothers' Milk Bank, where breastmilk is collected to be used for babies in hospitals (more information on the next page)
- WIC staff provides perinatal education on Urgent Maternal Warning Signs, referring pregnant/postpartum women to their OBGYNs or emergency healthcare providers for appropriate treatment when signs are reported
- Partnering with the American Heart Association and University Hospitals to ensure the availability of blood pressure cuffs at libraries throughout Portage County
- Conducting blood pressure screenings and providing blood pressure education at events throughout our community, like at the Portage County Randolph Fair

MOTHERS' MILK BANK

BY THE NUMBERS



1 ounce of breastmilk



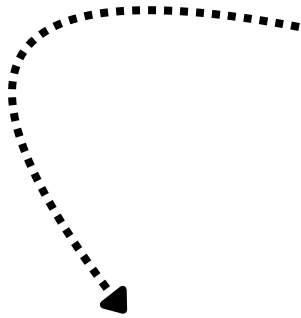
can feed



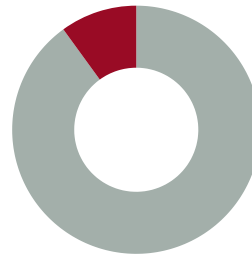
1 baby in the NICU for up to 3 days



The most recent CDC estimate shows that about



10% of babies end up



going to the NICU.

In Ohio, that is about **12,500 babies per year.**

In 2025, with just **6 donors**, Portage County WIC sent



of breastmilk to Columbus for pasteurization, and distribution to hospitals throughout Ohio!

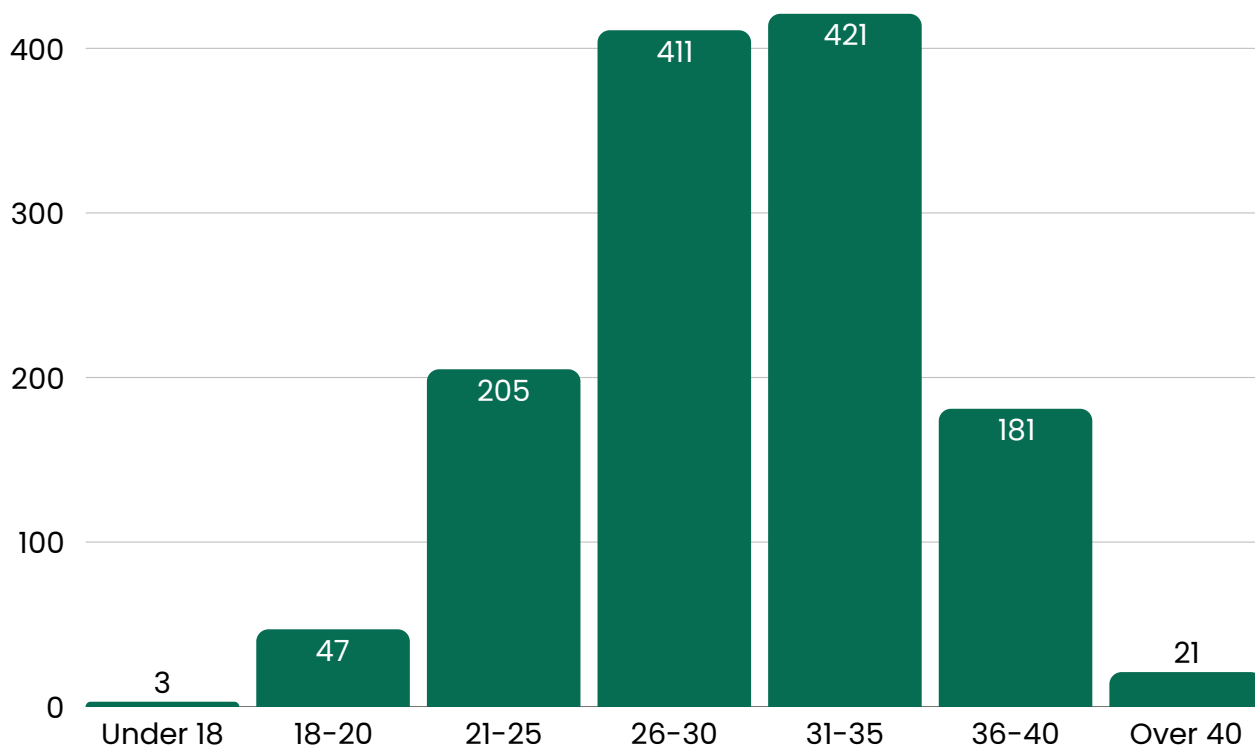


That's almost three days of food for **every baby** that will be in one of Ohio's NICUs next year!

Maternal Demographics	% of Moms
Married	69.90%
Non-English Primary Language	2.64% (36 blanks)
On WIC	23.04% (14 unknown)
Single Race, White	85.96%
Single Race, Black/African-American	6.52%
Single Race, Asian	3.57%
Multiracial	2.64%
Other/Unknown Race (includes American Indian/Alaska Native and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander)	1.32%

Most of the Portage County mothers that gave birth in 2025 were white, with English as their primary language. At the time of birth, a majority of mothers were married, but many were not. While marriage is not a necessity for a two-parent household, some unmarried moms are also single moms. Furthermore, about 23% of mothers were receiving WIC at the time of birth. This table serves as a reminder that some new mothers might be unable to afford and access prenatal care, housing, childcare, adequate nutrition, and post-partum medical care for themselves and their babies. Connecting them with necessary services will benefit the health of our whole community.

Maternal Age



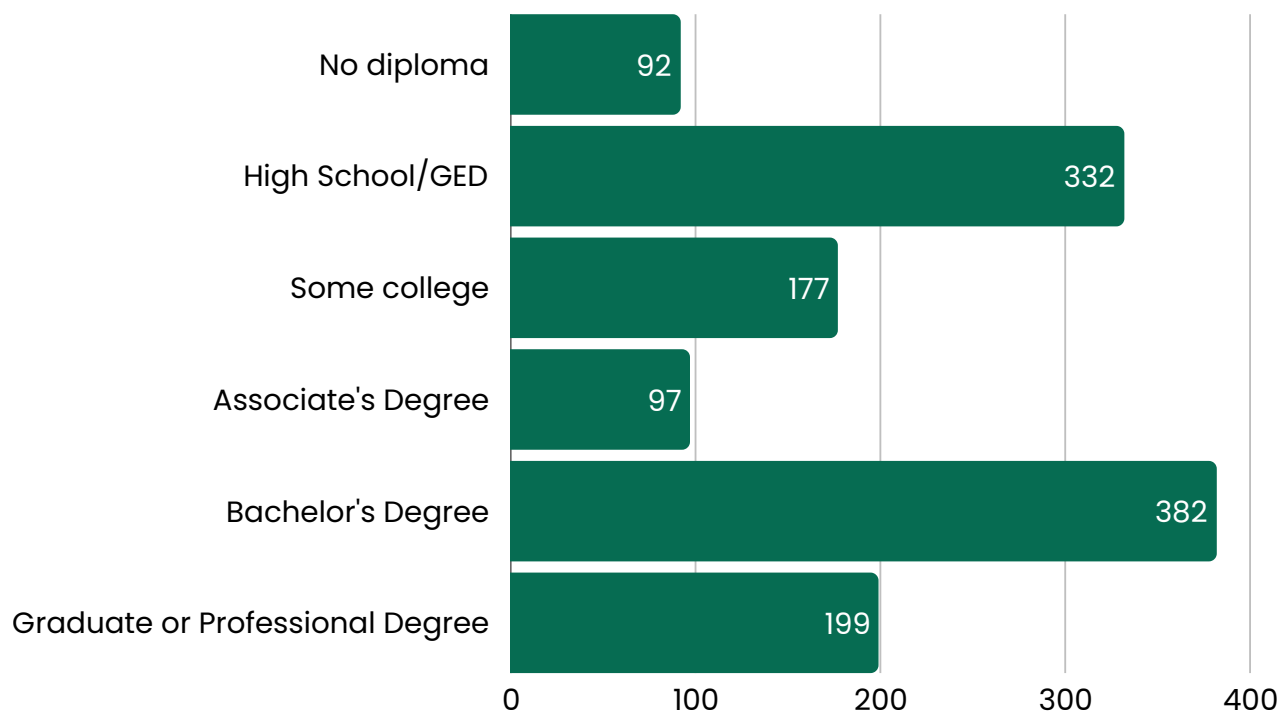
Ten women had unreported levels of education

Most Portage County women who gave birth in 2025 were between 21 and 40 years old. Pregnancies in minors were extremely rare, with only 3 occurring in 2025. UNICEF defines adolescent pregnancy as a pregnancy of someone 15-19 years old. The UNICEF website states the following:

“Adolescent girls, especially those in early adolescence, are particularly vulnerable to the health consequences of pregnancy and delivery as their bodies may not be physically ready. Obstetric fistula, eclampsia, puerperal endometritis and systemic infections are just some of the serious conditions that they may face in the short- and long-term. Globally, maternal conditions are among the top causes of disability-adjusted life years and death among girls aged 15-19.”

Therefore, the low number of adolescent pregnancies in Portage County in 2025 is encouraging.

Maternal Education Level



Ten women had unreported levels of education

Education can be directly correlated with positive pregnancy outcomes. From 1990 to 2015, the maternal mortality rate in Peru declined by over 70%. Dr. Abigail Weitzman (University of Michigan) examined the connection between this decline and compulsory schooling laws, which were implemented in 1993. These laws increased the required number of years of primary school from six years to 11. The author compared mothers who had received six years of primary schooling with mothers that received 11 years using statistical modeling. Ultimately the study found that extending women's years of schooling reduced the probability of several maternal health complications at last pregnancy/birth, sometimes by as much as 29%. Most Portage County women who gave birth in 2025 had at least a high school diploma or GED, and even more held Bachelor's degrees. Less than 10% had no diploma at all. Ohio requires schooling from ages 5-16, so all of the women who gave birth in Portage County in 2024 received 10-11 years of primary school. This is likely a contributing factor to the county's low maternal mortality rate in 2025.

Characteristics of birth	% of Moms
Spontaneous Vaginal Birth	63.77%
Cesarean Section (No Attempted Vaginal Birth)	20.95%
Cesarean Section (Attempted Vaginal Birth)	11.40%
Vacuum-Assisted Vaginal Birth	3.10%
Forceps-Assisted Vaginal Birth	<1.00%
Multiple Births (Twins)	1.71%
Infant death	<1.00%

Most births in 2025 were completed vaginally, with no assistance. Approximately 32% of births were Cesarean section (C-section), however a third of those were completed after attempting a vaginal birth first. Only 11 sets of twins (just under 2% of births) were born to Portage County mothers in 2025. Though rare, there were unfortunately some infant deaths that occurred in 2025.

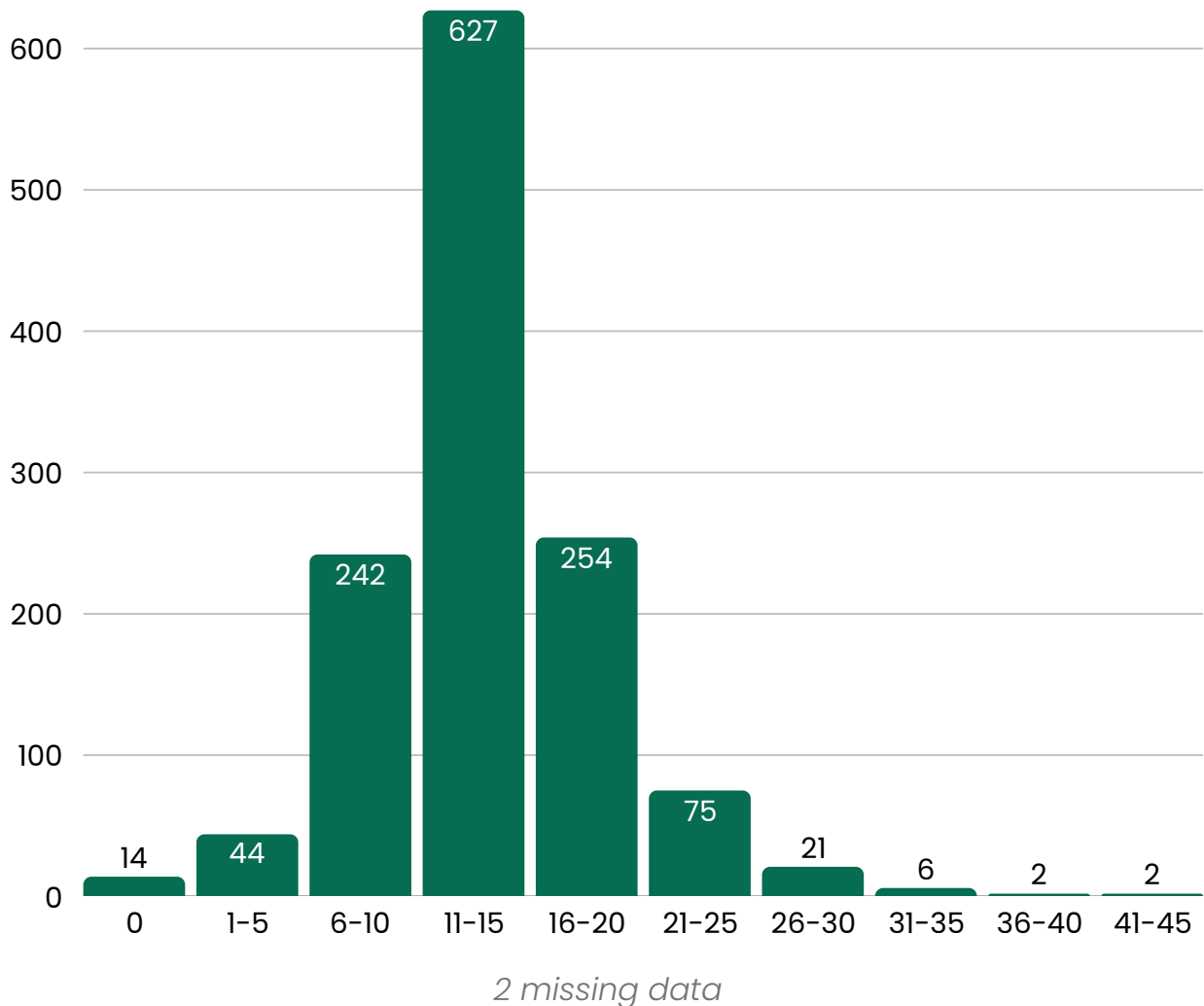
Type of Complication	% of Moms
Gestational Hypertension Risk Factors	21.80%
Gestational Diabetes Risk Factors	10.09%
Perineal Laceration	1.86%
Blood Transfusion Needed	<1.00%
Uterine Rupture	0.00%
Admitted to Intensive Care Unit	<1.00%
Unplanned Hysterotomy	<1.00%

In 2025, most complications occurred during pregnancy as opposed to occurring during birth. About 21% of pregnant women had risk factors for gestational hypertension (high blood pressure), including pre-eclampsia, and a little over 10% had risk factors for gestational diabetes. Complications during birth were relatively uncommon. For example, less than 1% of women were admitted to the Intensive Care Unit after giving birth. Overall, most Portage County women experienced complication-free pregnancies and births in 2025.

Prenatal Substance Use Behavior	% of Moms
First Trimester Drinking	<1.00%
Second Trimester Drinking	<1.00%
Third Trimester Drinking	<1.00%
Pre-pregnancy Smoking	4.89%
First Trimester Smoking	3.57%
Second Trimester Smoking	3.41%
Third Trimester Smoking	3.34%
Cannabis Use	1.32%

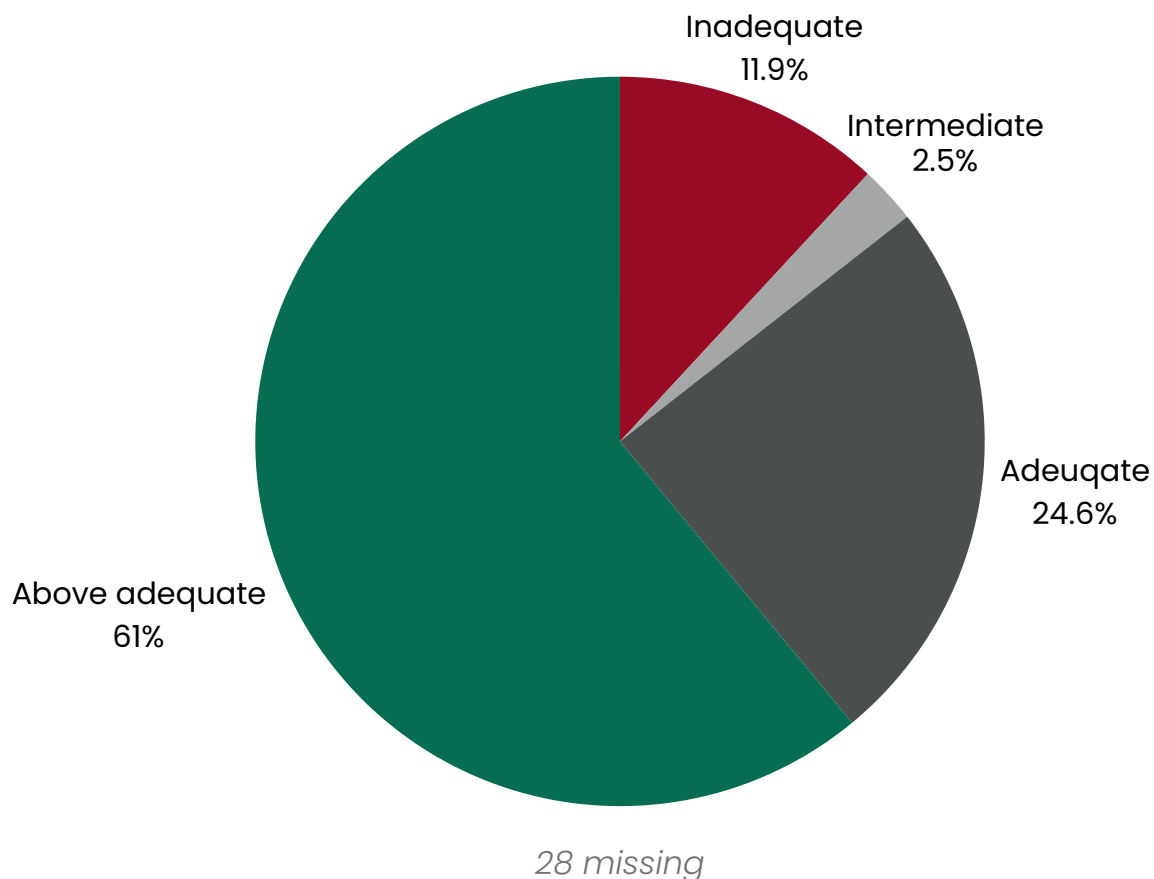
Prenatal alcohol consumption and smoking are not very common for Portage County women. In fact, this table shows that of the women who gave birth in 2025, and smoked before becoming pregnant, several quit over the course of their pregnancy. However, this is an incomplete dataset. Information regarding the use of smokeless tobacco and e-cigarettes/vapes is not available.

Number of Prenatal Visits



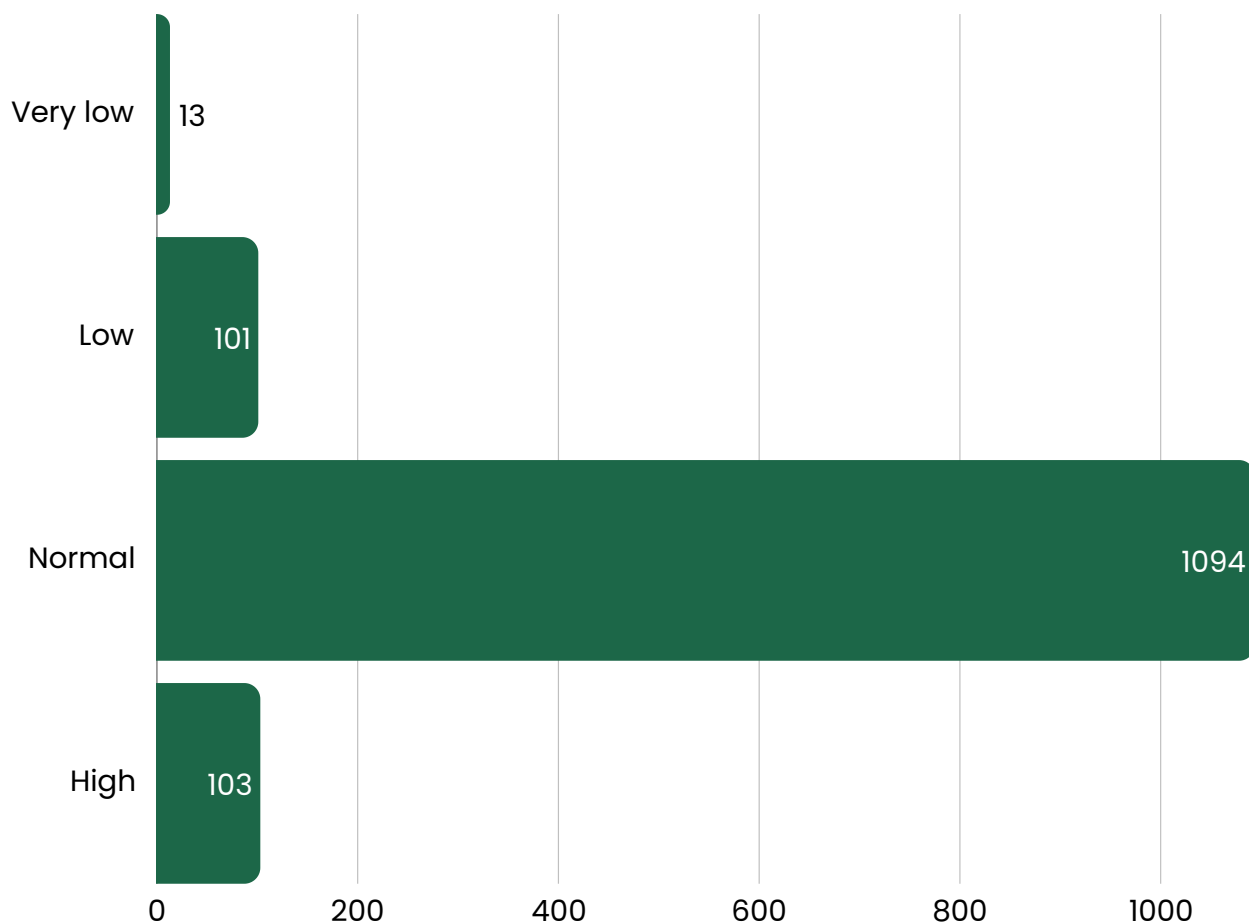
Most Portage County women who delivered in 2025 had 11-15 prenatal care appointments before giving birth in 2025. If a mother approximately followed a typical prenatal care schedule, she would have appointments at weeks 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40. This is 14 appointments. Fewer prenatal care appointments might be warranted if a woman discovers she is pregnant well into the first trimester or delivers early. Additionally, some appointments may be missed, and not made up. It is also possible the provider or mother incorrectly recalled the number of appointments when filling out the birth certificate.

Adequate Prenatal Care



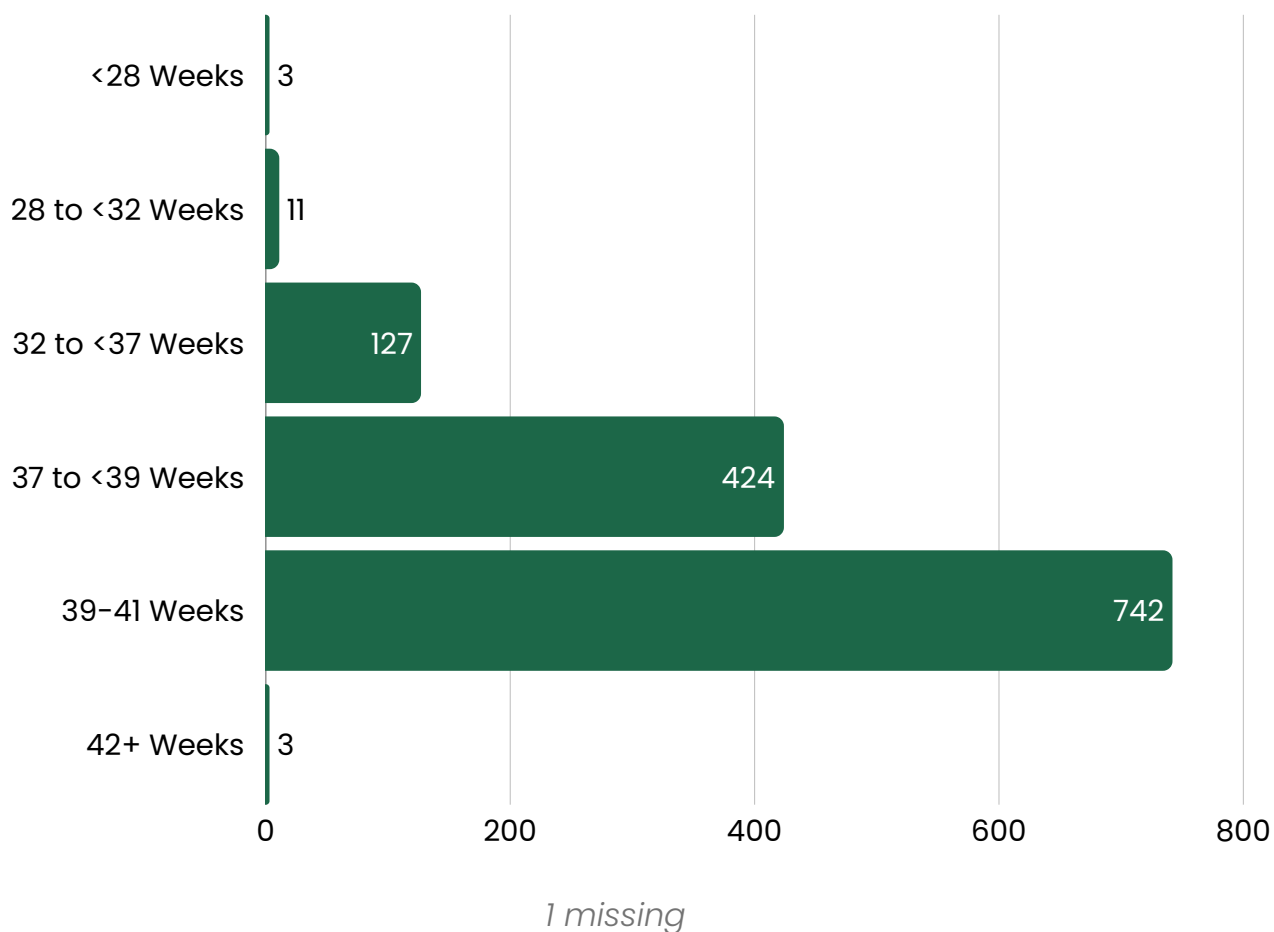
The pie chart shows the proportion of Portage County moms that received prenatal care in each category: inadequate (shown above in red), intermediate (shown above in light grey), adequate (shown above in dark grey) and above adequate (shown above in dark green). The categories displayed on the pie chart were assigned on birth certificates by providers using the Kotelchuck Index. This index was not reported for 28 Portage County moms in 2025. About 85% of Portage County moms that gave birth in 2025 got adequate or above adequate prenatal care. The two metrics used to calculate the index are when prenatal care began (initiation) and the number of prenatal visits from when prenatal care began until delivery (received services). It should be noted that this index does not measure the quality of prenatal care, and it depends on the accuracy of the patient or health care provider's memory.

Birth Weights



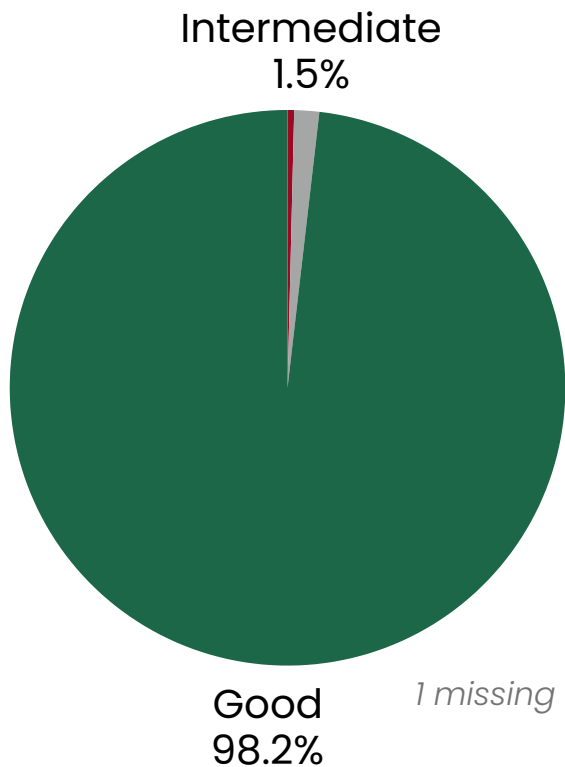
The chart shows the number of babies in each birthweight category that were born to Portage County moms in 2025. Very low birthweight is less than 3lbs 5oz, low birthweight is 3lbs 5oz - 5lbs 7oz, normal birthweight is 5lbs 8oz - 8lbs 13 oz, and high birthweight is over 8lbs 13 oz. Less than 1% of babies born in 2024 had very low birthweight. Approximately 7.7% of babies were in the low birthweight category. In total, less than 1 in 10 Portage County babies were below normal birthweight. This is approximately on par with the national measurement of 8.6% of babies being born with low or very low birthweight in the United States (most recent data available). Having a healthy birthweight is important for the health of a newborn. According to the Cleveland Clinic, “[Low birthweight babies] may have difficulty eating, gaining weight and fighting infection. In addition, babies with low birth weight frequently have trouble staying warm because they have so little body fat.”

Gestational Age at Birth



The chart above shows that only 14 babies were born before 32 weeks in 2025. Babies at a gestational age of 32 weeks or greater are considered moderately pre-term. According to the University of Utah, babies born at 32 weeks have a 95% chance of survival. Premature babies can have a variety of short- and long-term complications including anemia, heart and lung defects, jaundice, cerebral palsy, vision or hearing defects, and learning disabilities. Mothers can experience negative impacts to their mental health as a result of their babies being born early. According to the Cleveland Clinic, some things that can help prevent pre-term birth are avoiding alcohol and other drugs while pregnant, eating a balanced diet, starting prenatal care as early as a possible, minimize stress and try to leave at least 18 months between pregnancies.

Five Minute APGAR Scores



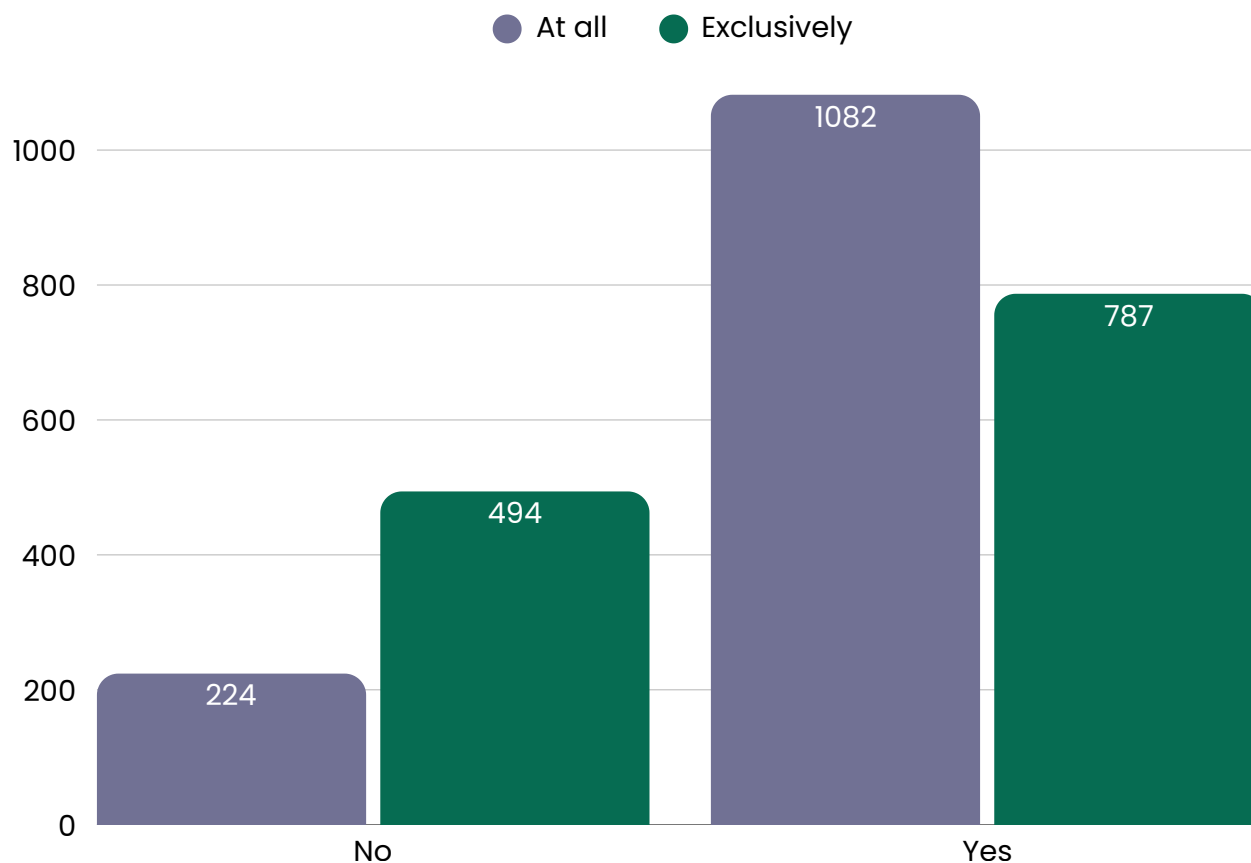
This pie chart shows the five-minute APGAR scores of babies born to Portage County moms last year. APGAR tests are used to determine how a baby is doing immediately after birth, and scores range from 0 to 10. There are five signs that are monitored to develop an APGAR score, and each sign is scored 0, 1 or 2 (see the table below for more details). Once the scores of each sign are added up, a total APGAR score is determined. An APGAR score of 1-3 indicates a baby needs resuscitation (shown above in red). An APGAR score of 4-6 is intermediate, and the baby might need some extra monitoring (shown above in grey). An APGAR score of 7-10 is good, and the baby is considered healthy (shown above in dark green). As shown above, only 1.8% of babies born in Portage County had

low APGAR scores five minutes after birth. The large majority of babies born in Portage County in 2025 were healthy immediately after being born.

SIGN	0	1	2
Appearance	Blue and pale	Body pink, limbs blue	All pink
Pulse	Absent	Less than <100	More than >100
Grimace	No response	Grimace	Coughing and crying
Activity	Limp	Weak	Strong
Respiration	Absent	Irregular, slow	Good, crying

Table source: Cleveland Clinic

Breastfeeding

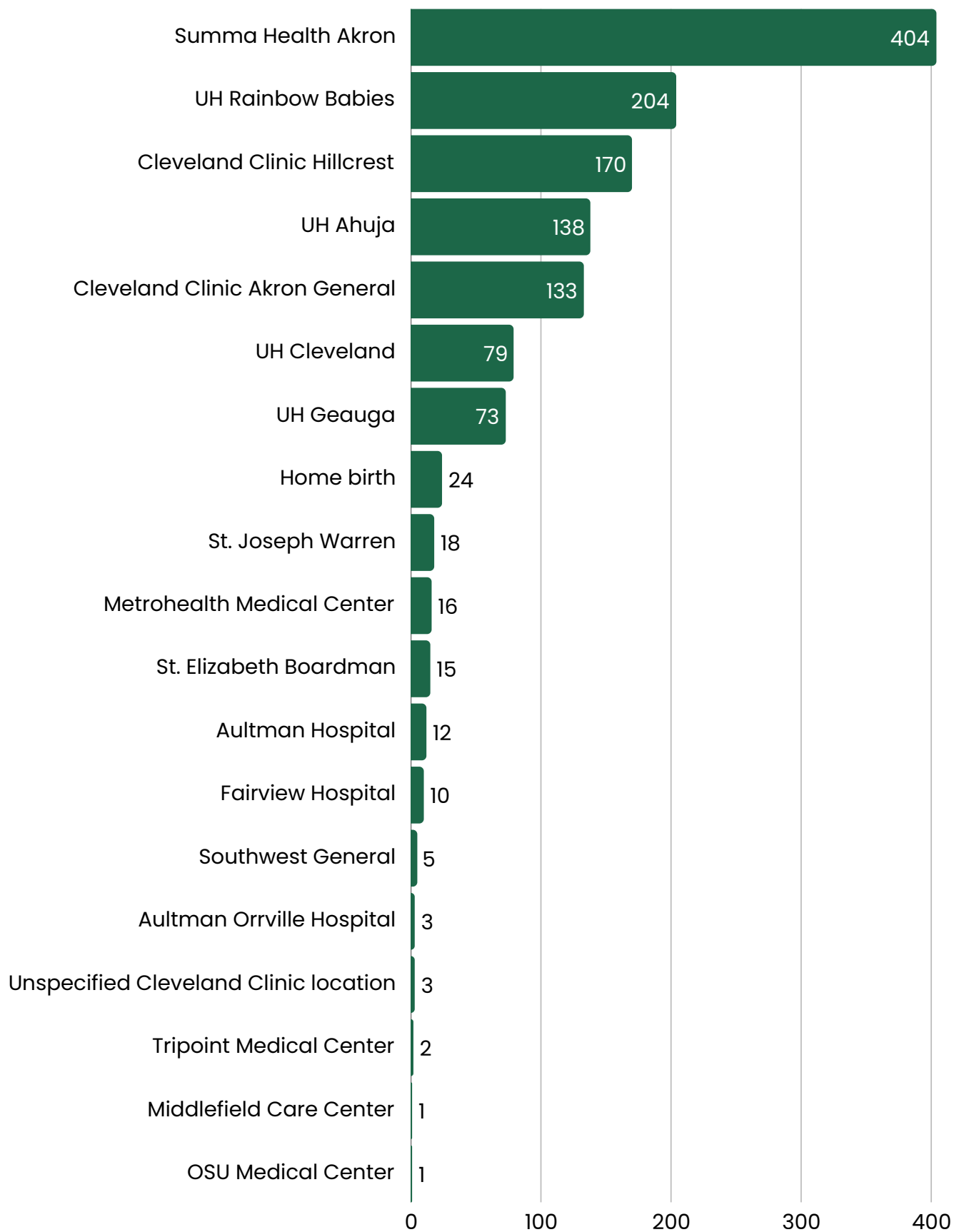


Not shown: 5 babies for which breast feeding is unknown and 30 babies for which exclusive breastfeeding is unknown

This chart shows the number of mothers that were breastfeeding their newborns at all after birth (shown above in purple), and the number of mothers that were exclusively breastfeeding (no formula) their newborns after birth (shown above in dark green). Many women in Portage County are breastfeeding their newborns at least sometimes, which is very beneficial. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are many benefits of breastfeeding for mom and baby:

- Breastfed babies have a lower risk of asthma, obesity, type 1 diabetes, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Breastfed babies are also less likely to have ear infections and stomach bugs
- Breastfeeding gives babies "antibodies" from mom to help them develop a strong immune system and protect them from illnesses
- Breastfeeding can reduce the mother's risk of breast and ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Birth Locations



Most Common Birth Location by Municipality of Residence

City/Township	Total Births	Most Common Birth Facility	% of Births at Facility
Atwater	46	Summa Health Akron	52.17%
Aurora	152	Cleveland Clinic Hillcrest	53.95%
Brimfield	2	Summa Health Akron	50.00%
Deerfield	17	Summa Health Akron	29.41%
Diamond	24	Summa Health Akron	37.50%
Freedom	2	No data	-
Garrettsville	90	UH Geauga	35.56%
Hartville	3	Summa Health Akron	66.67%
Hiram	17	UH Geauga	52.94%
Kent	291	Summa Health Akron	47.77%
Mantua	52	UH Ahuja	21.15%

Mogadore	92	Summa Health Akron	73.91%
Newton Falls	10	Summa Health Akron	40.00%
North Benton	5	Summa Health Akron and St. Elizabeth Boardman	40.00% each
Palmyra	1	No data	-
Randolph	1	Summa Health Akron	100%
Ravenna	275	Summa Health Akron	29.09%
Rootstown	37	Summa Health Akron	45.95%
Streetsboro	153	UH Rainbow Babies	24.18%
Suffield	1	No data	-
Tallmadge	4	Summa Health Akron	100%
Wayland	1	Summa Health Akron	100%
Windham	32	Summa Health Akron and UH Rainbow Babies	21.88% each
Alternate	3	-	-

MAPPING DELIVERY LOCATIONS

The maps [below](#) break down the number of residents in each Portage County municipality that delivered at each birthing location in 2025.

Only the top five most common birthing locations used by Portage County residents are referenced here. In 2025, that included Summa Health Akron, UH Rainbow Babies, Cleveland Clinic Hillcrest, UH Ahuja, and Cleveland Clinic Akron General.

Please note that in the maps [below](#), “Kent” addresses are only shown as Kent City, but could include the neighboring areas of Franklin and Brimfield Townships.

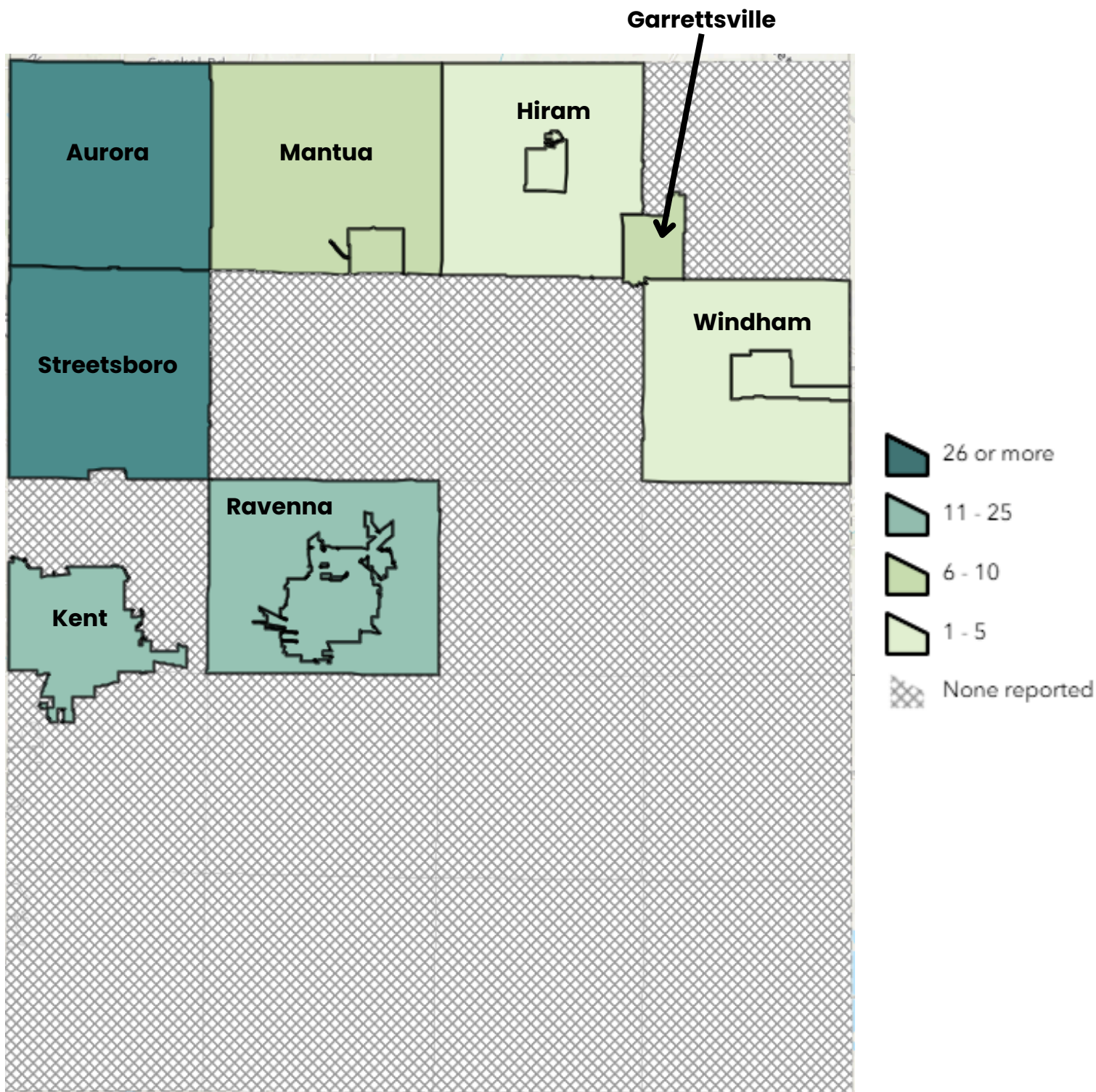
Summa Health Akron Births 2025



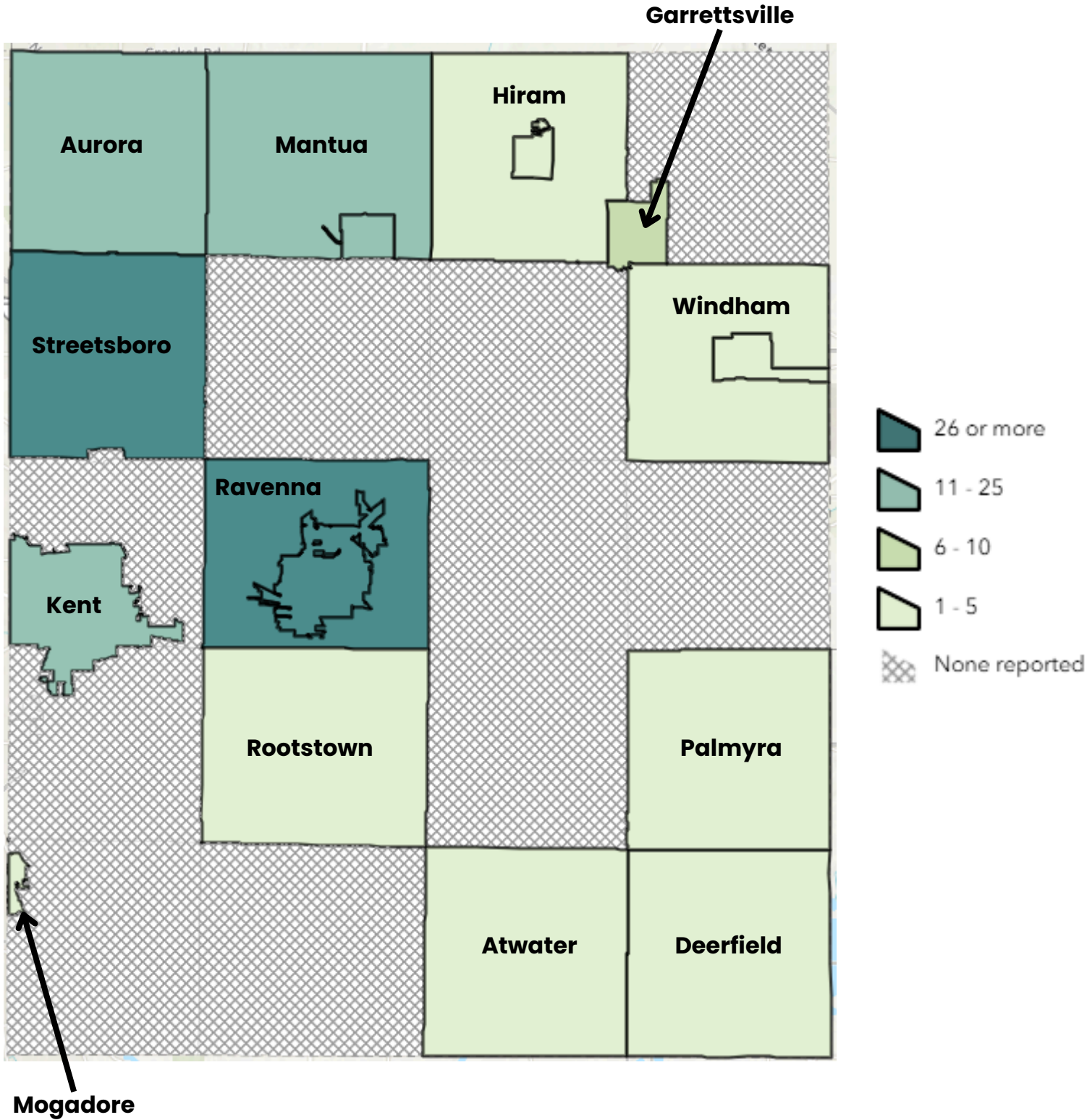
UH Rainbow Babies Births 2025



Cleveland Clinic Hillcrest Births 2025



UH Ahuja Births 2025



Cleveland Clinic Akron General Births 2025

