

Publication Summary



Breastfeeding Statistics

Financial Year 2011/12

Publication date – 30 October 2012



About this Release

Breastfeeding rates in Scotland are published annually. This release provides an update of breastfeeding statistics to include data for babies born in the financial year 2011/12.

Key Points

- Across Scotland, the overall breastfeeding rate at the First Visit review, which takes place around 10 days of age, has remained at a broadly similar level over the last decade, with slight increases in the most recent years due to an increase in mixed feeding. Over the same period there has been a slight decrease in the exclusive breastfeeding rate at the First Visit. The prevalence of overall and exclusive breastfeeding at the 6-8 week review has remained static across Scotland over the last decade.
- In 2011/12, 47.0% of babies were breastfed at the First Visit review, which takes place at around 10 days of age (a slight increase from 46.8% in 2010/11). The overall breastfeeding rate comprises 35.9% of babies who were exclusively breastfed (a decrease from 36.3% in 2010/11) and 11.1% who were mixed fed both breast milk and formula milk (an increase from 10.5% in 2010/11).
- In 2011/12, 36.7% of babies were breastfed at the 6-8 week review (a slight decrease from 37.1% in 2010/11). The overall breastfeeding rate comprises 26.2% of babies who were exclusively breastfed (a decrease from 26.5% in 2010/11) and 10.5% who were mixed fed both breast milk and formula milk (similar to 10.6% in 2010/11).

Background

Encouraging and supporting breastfeeding is recognised as an important public health activity. There is good evidence that breastfeeding in infancy has a protective effect against many childhood illnesses. Breastfed infants are likely to have a reduced risk of infection, particularly those affecting the ear, respiratory tract and gastro-intestinal tract. This protective effect is particularly marked in low birth weight infants. Other probable benefits include improved cognitive and psychological development, and a reduced risk of childhood obesity. There is evidence that women who breastfed have lower risks of breast cancer, epithelial ovarian cancer and hip fracture later in life.

Support and encouragement for breastfeeding can be provided at many levels. For example: health promotion campaigns at a national level; policies in maternity hospitals at NHS board level and primary care teams working with individual women and groups within the community. While these can support and encourage mothers to initiate and continue breastfeeding, there are a wide range of other factors that influence mothers. Maternal age and deprivation are known to be strongly associated with the likelihood of breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding rates in Scotland are monitored and published annually. Statistics are presented by NHS Board, Council Area and Community Health Partnership (CHP), and also by maternal age, deprivation and smoking status. The information is derived from data collected at routine child health reviews at around 10 days and 6-8 weeks of age, and recorded on the Child Health Systems Programme Pre-School system (CHSP Pre-School).

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Further Information

Further information can be found in the [Full Publication Report](#) or on the [ISD website](#).

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