

Publication Summary



Breastfeeding Statistics Scotland

Financial Year 2014/15

Publication date – 27 October 2015



About this Release

This release from the Information Services Division provides an update of breastfeeding statistics to include data for babies born in the financial year 2014/15.

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. Breastfeeding rates in Scotland are monitored and published annually.

Key Points

- Across Scotland, the overall breastfeeding rate has remained at a broadly similar level over the last decade. There has been a slight increase in the rate at the first child health review visit (around 10 days of age) due to an increase in mixed feeding where the baby is fed both breast and formula milk.
- In 2014/15, 48% of babies were breastfed at the first visit, falling to 38% at the 6 - 8 week review.
- There is a clear association between breastfeeding and deprivation. Mothers in the least deprived areas were nearly three times as likely to exclusively breastfeed at 6 - 8 weeks compared with mothers in the most deprived areas. However there has been an increase in overall breastfeeding rates in the most deprived areas at the first visit over the last decade from 26% to nearly 33%.
- In 2014/15, mothers who did not smoke were around three times more likely to exclusively breastfeed as mothers who were smokers at the first visit (39% compared to 13%). This is likely to be a reflection of an association between smoking and other social and cultural factors.
- Breastfeeding rates vary by geographical area. There are a range of possible reasons for this, including differences in deprivation in an area, local practice in maternity hospitals and primary care teams. A small proportion of this variation may be accounted

for by differences in the timing of the 6-8 week review between NHS Boards. The timing of this review is important to consider as there is a known drop-off in breastfeeding rates with time i.e. breastfeeding rates decrease with increasing age of child at the review.

Background

Nutrition plays a crucial role in the early months and years of life and is important in achieving optimal health. “Improving Maternal and Infant Nutrition: A Framework for Action” was published by the Scottish Government in January 2011. It outlines actions which can be taken by NHS Boards, local authorities and others to improve the nutrition of pregnant women, babies and young children in Scotland. Promoting and supporting breastfeeding is a key component of this framework as breastfeeding rates are low in Scotland.

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.

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Further Information

Find out more in the [Breastfeeding Statistics Financial Year 2014/15](#) report.

Downloadable data tables can be found [here](#)

ISD publishes a wide range of information on breastfeeding, maternal and child health.
[Further information is available on our website](#)

About ISD

Scotland has some of the best health service data in the world combining high quality, consistency, national coverage and the ability to link data to allow patient based analysis and follow up.

Information Services Division (ISD) is a business operating unit of NHS National Services Scotland - and has been in existence for over 40 years. We are an essential support service to NHSScotland and the Scottish Government Health Department and others, responsive to the needs of NHSScotland as the delivery of health and social care evolves.

Official Statistics

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of 'Official Statistics'. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Code of Practice is produced and monitored by the UK Statistics Authority which is independent of Government. Under the Code of Practice, the format, content and timing of statistics publications are the responsibility of professional staff working within ISD.

Further information on ISD's statistics, including compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and on the UK Statistics Authority, is available on the [ISD website](http://www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/About-Our-Statistics/) www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/About-Our-Statistics/