

Breastfeeding Statistics Scotland

Year Ending 31 March 2016

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About this release

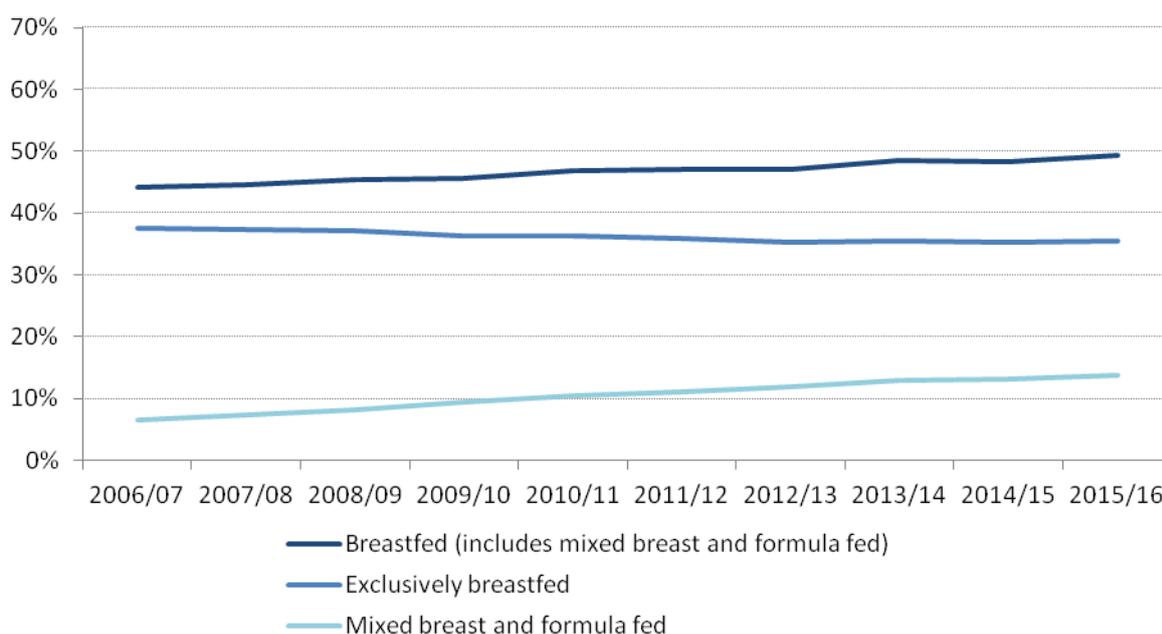
This release from the Information Services Division provides an update of breastfeeding statistics to include data for babies born in the financial year 2015/16.

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.

Main points

- Across Scotland, almost half of babies born in 2015/16 (49.3%) were being breastfed at their Health Visitor first visit (around 10 days of age).
- The proportion of babies being breastfed at their first visit has increased slightly over the last 10 years. This reflects an increase in the proportion receiving mixed breast and formula feeding, and a slight decrease in the proportion receiving breastfeeding only (exclusive breastfeeding).

**Breastfeeding at the First Visit; All participating NHS Boards;
Year of Birth 2006/07 to 2015/16**



- Breastfeeding rates decline as babies get older. Across Scotland, 38.9% of babies born in 2015/16 were being breastfed at their 6-8 week review.
- Breastfeeding rates are lower in more deprived areas and among younger mothers.
- Breastfeeding rates vary across Scotland. This may reflect differences in factors such as deprivation and local services.

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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Find out more

Find out more in the [Breastfeeding Statistics Financial Year 2015/16 report](#), and the [downloadable data tables](#).

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

The next update of this publication will be in October 2017 when the publication will take a slightly different format, and report on some new measures. See the [publication report](#) for further details.

ISD and 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. [Find out more about our statistics](#).