

Key Baby Feeding Statistics from the 2005 UK Infant Feeding Survey¹



“ ” NCT Document Summary

The UK Infant Feeding Survey is carried out every five years. This is the seventh UK-wide survey of infant feeding practices. The figures for the 2005 survey were published in May 2007. The 2005 figures show little significant difference from the 2000 survey and when standardised figures are used there has only been a 2% increase in breastfeeding in the last 20 years.

Breastfeeding Rates

- 48% of mothers in the UK were breastfeeding at six weeks
- 25% of mothers in the UK were breastfeeding at six months
- Between 2000 and 2005 there was an increase in breastfeeding at all ages up to nine months in both England

and Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland the increase in prevalence was seen at ages up to six weeks only.

Exclusive Breastfeeding

- 45% of all mothers in the UK were exclusive breastfeeding at one week
- 21% of all mothers were exclusively breastfeeding at six weeks
- At six months the number of mothers breastfeeding exclusively was negligible <1%
- Prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding was highest in England at ages up to four months and lowest in Northern Ireland and Wales
- Prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding was highest among mothers from managerial and professional occupations, mothers aged 30 and over and mothers with the highest education level

Intention to Breastfeed

- Before birth, 70% of mothers in the UK intended to breastfeed their baby
- 84% of mothers said they were aware of the health benefits of breastfeeding
- 79% of mothers had received some advice during pregnancy about the health benefits of breastfeeding, with midwives been the most common source
- Mothers who received advice were more likely to initiate breastfeeding than mothers who did not receive advice
- Mothers who attended antenatal classes where breastfeeding was discussed or where they were taught how to position the baby were more likely to breastfeed than mothers who did not attend antenatal classes

Prevalence of breastfeeding at ages up to 9 months by country (2000 and 2005)

	England & Wales		Scotland		Northern Ireland		United Kingdom		England		Wales	
	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Birth	71	78	63	71	54	62	69	76	n/a	78	n/a	68
2 days	n/a	73	n/a	66	n/a	57	n/a	72	n/a	74	n/a	63
3 days	n/a	71	n/a	63	n/a	54	n/a	70	n/a	72	n/a	59
4 days	n/a	69	n/a	61	n/a	50	n/a	67	n/a	70	n/a	58
5 days	n/a	67	n/a	59	n/a	49	n/a	66	n/a	68	n/a	55
6 days	n/a	66	n/a	58	n/a	47	n/a	64	n/a	66	n/a	53
1 week	57	65	50	57	37	46	55	63	n/a	66	n/a	52
2 weeks	54	61	47	54	34	44	52	60	n/a	62	n/a	48
6 weeks	43	49	40	44	26	32	42	48	n/a	50	n/a	37
4 months	29	35	30	31	14	20	28	34	n/a	35	n/a	24
6 months	22	26	24	24	10	14	21	25	n/a	26	n/a	18
9 months*	14	19	15	15	7	10	13	18	n/a	19	n/a	12
Base: All Stage 3 mothers	4112	6145	1718	1666	1437	1605	7267	9416	n/a	4563	n/a	1582

*Based on reduced number of cases excluding those babies who had not reached 9 months by stage 3

- 9 out of 10 mothers who said most of their friends breastfed their babies were intending to breastfeed their baby, compared with 57% of mothers who said their friends did not breastfeed

Breastfeeding and Socio Economic Classification

- The highest incidences of breastfeeding were found among mothers from managerial and professional occupations, those with the highest education levels, those aged 30 or over and first time mothers.
- The greatest increases in breastfeeding rates were seen among mothers in routine and manual occupations and mothers who had never worked.
- In England and Wales breastfeeding rates increased from 60% in 2000 to 67% in 2005 among mothers in routine and manual occupations and from 54% to 67% among mothers who had never worked
- In Scotland the biggest increases were among mothers in intermediate occupations (from 64% in 2000 to 72% in 2005) and among mothers who had never worked (from 41% in 2000 to 52% in 2005).
- In Northern Ireland the increases were broadly similar among all socio economic groups

Breastfeeding and Birth Order

- In the UK 8 out of 10 (79%) first time mothers breastfed their babies initially compared with 73% of mothers of second or later babies
- However between 2000 and 2005 there was an increase in breastfeeding rates across the UK among mothers of second or later babies
- There is an increase in the proportion of mothers who had not breastfed their previous baby switching to breastfeeding. In 2000, a quarter (26%) of mothers switched to breastfeeding compared with a third (33%) in 2005.
- Mothers who switch to breastfeeding later babies are more likely to be younger, less well educated and from intermediate or routine and manual groups.

Breastfeeding and Age of Mother

- Across the UK breastfeeding rates are lowest among mothers aged 20 or below (51%) and highest among mothers aged 35 or over (84%)
- The incidence of breastfeeding among mothers aged 20 or below was particularly low in Scotland (40%) and Northern Ireland (35%).

Breastfeeding and Ethnicity

- Across the UK mothers from all ethnic minority groups were more likely to breastfeed compared with white mothers
- More than 9 out of 10 mothers who classified themselves as Asian, Black, Chinese or other ethnic origin initially breastfed compared with around ¾ of white mothers
- Between 2000 and 2005, incidence of breastfeeding increased among both white mothers (68% to 74%) and Asian mothers (87% to 94%)
- Black mothers are most likely to continue to breastfeed. 97% of Black mothers breastfed initially, dropping to only 87% at six weeks and 72% at four months.

Breastfeeding in the Hospital Setting

- Mothers who gave birth without any form of analgesic were the most likely to initiate breastfeeding (79%) while those who gave birth under general anaesthetic were slightly less likely to initiate breastfeeding (71%) compared with other mothers
- Seven in ten mothers reported skin to skin contact with their baby within an hour of the birth
- Breastfeeding rates was higher for mothers who had skin to skin contact than those who did not (79% immediately and 87% within an hour compared with 57% of babies with no contact)
- 1/3 babies received additional feeds in the form of formula, water or glucose while in hospital. This was particularly associated with low birth weight babies and those in special care
- 7 in 10 mothers breastfeeding in hospital had been shown how to put their baby to the breast in the first few days (89% of first time mothers and 53% of mothers of later babies)
- Mothers who received help or advice found this most useful when the person giving the advice stayed with them until the baby had started to feed

Stopping Breastfeeding Before Wanting to

Most mothers stopped breastfeeding before they wanted to:

Baby's age when breastfeeding stopped	% who would have liked to breastfeed for longer	% who would have liked to breastfeed for longer
< 1 week	84	
1 – 2 weeks	91	
2-6 weeks	85	
6 weeks – 4 months	71	
4 – 6 months	57	
> 6 months	40	
All mothers	73	

Breastfeeding Difficulties

- 1/3 of breastfeeding mothers experienced some kind of feeding problem either in hospital or in the early weeks of leaving hospital
- The highest level of problems were experienced by mothers using a combination of breast and formula feeding (over half of mixed feeding mothers reported difficulties). Problems cited by this group were inability to breastfeed, a need to top up with formula and blocked milk ducts.
- 8 in 10 mothers experiencing problems received help or advice. Mothers who did not receive help or advice were more likely to have stopped breastfeeding within two weeks than those who did receive advice or help.
- Insufficient breastmilk was the most important factor behind mothers giving up breastfeeding between one week and four months
- Common reasons for giving up breastfeeding in the first or second week of the birth were baby not sucking/rejecting the breast (35%), having insufficient milk (25%) and having painful breasts or nipples (24%)
- In later months return to work was commonly cited as a reason for stopping breastfeeding although this was a less significant factor in 2005 compared with 2000

Use of Milk other than Breastmilk

- ¾ of all mothers had given their baby milk other than breastmilk in the first six weeks. This rose to 92% by six months.
- In 2005 just under a quarter (24%) of mothers used formula milk as the sole source of nutrition for their baby. This was a reduction from 2000 (30%) which reflects the increase in breastfeeding incidence.
- Mothers from managerial and professional occupations and older mothers were the most likely to introduce milk other than breast milk at a later age. This reflects the higher levels of breastfeeding amongst these mothers
- At four to six months most mothers who had given their baby milk other than breastmilk were mainly giving infant formula
- Just under half of all mothers who had prepared powdered infant formula in the last seven days had not followed the key recommendations for preparing formula, either by not always using boiled water that had cooled for less than 30 minutes or not always adding the water to the bottle before the powder.
- About a third of mothers did not follow the recommendations for preparing formula when away from home, either by not keeping pre-prepared formula chilled or by using cold or cooled water to make up feeds

Problems with Formula Feeding

- The most frequent problems cited by mothers who formula fed their baby was vomiting (27% compared with 4% of breastfeeding and 6% of mixed feeding mothers) and colic/wind (27% compared with 8% and 6%).
- Babies formula fed from birth had the highest rate of chest infections and thrush

Supplementary drinks and vitamins

- 1/3 of all mothers were giving drinks in addition to breastmilk or formula milk by four weeks. This had risen to two thirds by four months
- Mothers who initially breastfed were less likely to supplement with additional drinks at all ages up to six months
- 3% of babies aged four to ten weeks were being given vitamin supplements, rising to 7% by the age of eight to ten months. Vitamin supplementation was associated with low birth weight or special care after birth

- A third of all breastfeeding mothers were taking vitamin or iron supplements at four to ten weeks. This fell to 28% by four to six months and 23% by eight to ten months.

Introduction of Solid Foods

- Mothers introduced solid foods later in 2005 compared with 2000
- In 2000 85% of mothers had introduced solid foods by four months, but by 2005 this figure had fallen to 51%. This shift is evident in all countries in the UK
- Later weaning was particularly pronounced among mothers within the highest occupation and education groups
- Introduction of solids at a younger age was highest amongst mothers in Wales and Scotland, those in lower social classes and those with lower educational levels
- Mothers with babies between four and six months were more likely to provide commercially prepared foods than home prepared foods. However by eight to ten months mothers increased provision of home prepared foods.
- Most mothers avoided the use of salt in the diets of their eight to ten month year old babies.
- Use of salt rose among mothers from lower social occupation groups and ethnic minority backgrounds
- Compared with 2000, in 2005 a higher proportion of mothers avoided salt, honey and nuts in their babies' diets. A key reason behind this shift is a higher awareness of food allergies

Breastfeeding at Work

- One in seven (15%) of mothers who returned to work said they were provided with facilities to either express milk or breastfeed at work.
- Such facilities were particularly associated with mothers using a workplace crèche (29%).

Breastfeeding in Public

- Half (51% of mothers) initially breastfed in public. Propensity to breastfeed in public increases with duration of breastfeeding, with 4% feeding in public at two weeks to nearly 86% of mothers who fed for at least six months.
- 3% of mothers said they had been stopped or asked not to breastfeed in public.
- 13% of mothers said they had been made to feel uncomfortable
- 8% of breastfeeding mothers said they wanted to breastfeed in public but had been deterred from doing so.

- Mothers in Scotland tended to have more positive experiences when breastfeeding in public. 55% of Scottish breastfeeding mothers' breastfed compared with between 40% and 52% in other countries.
- Scottish mothers were less likely to report problems finding a suitable venue and were less likely to report being stopped or being made to feel uncomfortable.

Lifestyle Factors

Vitamin Supplementation

- 8 in 10 (83%) of mothers took action to increase their intake of folic acid during pregnancy
- Over half of mothers took extra vitamin or iron supplements during pregnancy

Smoking

- A third of mothers smoked in the 12 months before or during pregnancy
- Of mothers who smoked before pregnancy, 48% gave up at some point before the birth
- One in six (17%) of mothers continued to smoke throughout their pregnancy
- The proportion of mothers who smoked during their pregnancy fell from 19% in 2000 to 17% in 2005
- Almost 9 in 10 (87%) of mothers who smoked before or during pregnancy received some type of advice or information on smoking

Alcohol

- Over half (54%) of mothers drank alcohol during their pregnancy although the proportion of mothers drinking during pregnancy fell between 2000 and 2005
- Consumption levels were low among mothers who drank alcohol during pregnancy.
- Only 8% of mothers drank more than two units of alcohol per week on average
- Older mothers, mothers from managerial and professional occupation groups, and mothers in England and Wales were the most likely to drink during pregnancy.

References and further sources of information

1. *Bolling K, Grant C, Hamlyn B et al. Infant Feeding Survey 2005. London: The Information Centre for Health and Social Care; 2007.*

Available from: www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/ifs06

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For further press information, please contact NCT Press Office on 020 8752 2404 or email: press@nct.org.uk

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For more information visit www.nct.org.uk or call the NCT Enquiries line at 0300 33 00 770.

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