



Official Statistics Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth (Experimental Statistics)

2015/16
Statistical Commentary (October 2016 release)

Main findings

- The aggregate breastfeeding rate for England for 2015/16 is 43.2% (with confidence intervals of 43.0– 43.3%) This is based on 141 out of 150 reporting local authorities submitting a return and passing initial validation.
- This compares to 43.8% for 2014/15 based on data collected by NHS England.
- Breastfeeding prevalence at a PHE centre level can be published for the North East. All other areas fail to meet validation at stage 3 (known breastfeeding status for infants age 6-8 weeks is lower than the 95% quality standard).
- Breastfeeding prevalence can be published for 72 local authorities (passing all 3 stages of validation) and percentages range from 18.0% to 76.5%.

This statistical commentary should be considered alongside the 2015/16 Annual Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth statistical release, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/breastfeeding-at-6-to-8-weeks-after-birth-annual-data>.

Please treat the figures with caution. Where totals are presented for England and PHE centres, these are aggregate totals of the areas that submitted information and passed initial validation. Any reference to previous quarters' data relates to 'refreshed' figures provided in the latest reporting quarter. Where no reference to a particular quarter is mentioned it should be assumed that the data refers to the most recent quarter's data.

Background

In October 2015 the responsibility for commissioning children's public health for the 0-5 years population transferred from NHS England to local authorities. There are a number of key performance indicators associated with these services which it is critical to monitor and report. In the longer term NHS Digital will collect data on these performance indicators as part of the Maternity and Children's Dataset (MCDS).

The MCDS infrastructure will support the flow of standardised information on children's health from local IT systems to NHS Digital on a monthly basis. The Children and Young People's Health Services data set infrastructure (which is part of the MCDS) was made available in October and data has just begun to flow, however it is expected to take some time for all providers of children's and young people's services to flow complete and accurate data.

Until such time as the MCDS has reached full coverage and maturity an interim reporting system is required.

The breastfeeding information within this publication has therefore been obtained via the interim reporting system to collect health visiting activity at a local authority resident level. Quarter 1 of 2015/16 was the first reporting period and the information contained within this report was submitted to Public Health England by local authorities on a voluntary basis. The full data publication can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/breastfeeding-at-6-to-8-weeks-after-birth-annual-data>.

The decision has been taken to publish this information as 'experimental statistics' on the basis that there has been a significant change to the reporting method, both in units of collection and the mandatory/voluntary nature. This has been reviewed in this reporting period.

Data Collection Method

An interim reporting system is hosted on the Local Government Association (LGA) website to collect the data on health visiting indicators. The reporting window to refresh all 2015/16 data was 22 August to 16 September 2016.

To support local authorities to submit data, detailed full guidance was published to explain what analysts and commissioners in local authorities needed to do to submit health visiting indicators (this can be found at www.chimat.org.uk/transfer). A dedicated mailbox (interimreporting@phe.gov.uk) is also in place to respond to questions and comments.

Once the collection window closes the data received is centrally collated, validated and reported. This process will be repeated quarterly.

Validation rules applied may be subject to change in future quarters.

Joint Submissions

Following the publication of Quarter 2 2015-16 (January release) information was received to confirm that Hackney and City of London would be making a joint submission of the data. Also, any data that had been submitted in previous quarters for Hackney also included City of London residents. The information has been adjusted and the entries within the data release are combined, showing as one row.

As the data submitted for the Isles of Scilly showed very small numbers which in some cases would have needed to be suppressed, these have been combined with Cornwall, and they have been treated within the publication as a joint submission.

Any percentages calculated will be based on 150 reporting local authorities.

Data Quality Findings

The following data relates to refreshed data for 2015/16.

Out of 150 reporting local authorities, all submitted a return for the interim reporting collection for at least 3 quarters in 2015/16.

Prior to validation, a process of estimation was applied to any local authority data where a return was submitted for only 3 quarters in 2015/16, or DK was submitted for any data item. An estimated numerator for the missing quarter was calculated as an average of the numerators of the other 3 quarters, and the same for an estimated denominator. Where a numerator or denominator has been submitted as 0, no estimation has been performed. An annual numerator and denominator have been calculated based on the estimated numerator and denominator and the known numerators and denominators.

9 local authorities did not submit sufficient data for estimation to take place, and no data have been published:

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Cumbria	North West
Bexley	London
Ealing	London
Enfield	London
Haringey	London
Lambeth	London
Southwark	London
Kent	South East

This has affected areas which reported DK for any data item in two or more quarters. Further validation was performed on annual data for 141 local authorities.

Stage 1 Validation

Definition: Local authorities to submit integers for the 'number of infants totally breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks' and/or the 'number of infants partially breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks' and the combined total must be lower than or equal to the integer for the 'number of infants due a 6-8 week check'. If there are DK "Don't Knows" in the combined total or the denominator the area will automatically fail validation.

Stage 1 validation was not applied to annual data as areas with a valid annual figure automatically passed stage 1 validation.

Stage 2 Validation

Definition: The value submitted for infants due a 6-8 week review must to be within 20% of the resident population of babies aged zero for that local authority. This is based on the 2015 mid-year ONS population estimates by local authority for babies aged zero. Any values within 20% tolerance of the mid-year population figure for the quarter will pass this check.

Of the 141 submissions, 140 went on to pass stage 2.

The local authority that failed stage 2 validation is:

Local Authority	PHE Centre
York	Yorkshire and The Humber

Please see the section 'Data Quality Notes' towards the end of this commentary which provides further details.

Stage 3 Validation

Definition: The percentage of infants whose breastfeeding status was recorded must meet the data quality standard of 95%, being between 95% and 100%. This means the sum of those infants totally breastfed, partially breastfeed and not breastfed should be greater than or equal to 95% of the number of infants due a 6-8 week review.

The threshold of 95% coverage applies to local authorities and PHE centres, but for the aggregated England value the threshold is 85%.

Of the 140 submissions passing stage 2 validation, 72 went on to pass stage 3 validation.

The 68 local authorities that failed stage 3 validation are:

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Hartlepool	North East
Stockton on Tees	North East
Blackburn with Darwen	North West
Blackpool	North West
Cheshire West and Chester	North West

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Lancashire	North West
Manchester	North West
Sefton	North West
Trafford	North West
Kirklees	Yorkshire and The Humber
Leeds	Yorkshire and The Humber
North Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber
North Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber
Rotherham	Yorkshire and The Humber
Sheffield	Yorkshire and The Humber
Leicester	East Midlands
Leicestershire	East Midlands
Rutland	East Midlands
Coventry	West Midlands
Dudley	West Midlands
Sandwell	West Midlands
Staffordshire	West Midlands
Walsall	West Midlands
Warwickshire	West Midlands
Essex	East of England
Hertfordshire	East of England
Milton Keynes	East of England
Barking and Dagenham	London
Barnet	London
Brent	London
Bromley	London
Camden	London
Greenwich	London
Hackney and City of London*	London
Hammersmith and Fulham	London
Harrow	London
Havering	London
Hounslow	London
Islington	London
Kensington and Chelsea	London
Kingston upon Thames	London
Merton	London
Newham	London
Redbridge	London
Richmond upon Thames	London
Sutton	London
Tower Hamlets	London
Waltham Forest	London

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Wandsworth	London
Westminster	London
Buckinghamshire	South East
East Sussex	South East
Hampshire	South East
Medway	South East
Portsmouth	South East
Southampton	South East
Surrey	South East
West Sussex	South East
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East
Bath and North East Somerset	South West
Bristol	South West
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly*	South West
Devon	South West
Dorset	South West
Gloucestershire	South West
South Gloucestershire	South West
Torbay	South West
Wiltshire	South West

** joint submission*

Each local authority has to pass all three stages of validation in order for its values to be shown.

Full information is published in the statistical release
 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/breastfeeding-at-6-to-8-weeks-after-birth-annual-data>) for 72 local authorities that passed all validation:

Local Authority	PHE Centre
County Durham	North East
Darlington	North East
Gateshead	North East
Middlesbrough	North East
Newcastle upon Tyne	North East
North Tyneside	North East
Northumberland	North East
Redcar and Cleveland	North East
South Tyneside	North East
Sunderland	North East
Bolton	North West
Bury	North West
Cheshire East	North West
Halton	North West
Knowsley	North West
Liverpool	North West
Oldham	North West
Rochdale	North West
Salford	North West
St Helens	North West
Stockport	North West
Tameside	North West
Warrington	North West
Wigan	North West
Wirral	North West
Barnsley	Yorkshire and The Humber
Bradford	Yorkshire and The Humber
Calderdale	Yorkshire and The Humber
Doncaster	Yorkshire and The Humber
East Riding of Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber
Kingston upon Hull	Yorkshire and The Humber
North East Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber
Wakefield	Yorkshire and The Humber
Derby	East Midlands
Derbyshire	East Midlands
Lincolnshire	East Midlands
Northamptonshire	East Midlands
Nottingham	East Midlands
Nottinghamshire	East Midlands

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Birmingham	West Midlands
Herefordshire	West Midlands
Shropshire	West Midlands
Solihull	West Midlands
Stoke on Trent	West Midlands
Telford and Wrekin	West Midlands
Wolverhampton	West Midlands
Worcestershire	West Midlands
Bedford	East of England
Cambridgeshire	East of England
Central Bedfordshire	East of England
Luton	East of England
Norfolk	East of England
Peterborough	East of England
Southend on Sea	East of England
Suffolk	East of England
Thurrock	East of England
Croydon	London
Hillingdon	London
Lewisham	London
Bracknell Forest	South East
Brighton and Hove	South East
Isle of Wight	South East
Oxfordshire	South East
Reading	South East
Slough	South East
West Berkshire	South East
Wokingham	South East
Bournemouth	South West
Plymouth	South West
Poole	South West
Somerset	South West
Swindon	South West

Summary

An aggregate England value can be published for 2015/16 based on 141 reporting local authorities that submitted valid quarterly data which was combined into annual data.

- The aggregate breastfeeding rate for England for 2015/16 is 43.2% with confidence intervals of 43.0 – 43.3%.
- This compares to 43.8% for 2014/15 based on data collected by NHS England
- Breastfeeding prevalence at a PHE centre level can be published for the North East. All other areas fail to meet validation at stage 3 (known breastfeeding status for infants age 6-8 weeks is lower than the 95% quality standard).
- Breastfeeding prevalence can be published for 72 local authorities (passing all 3 stages of validation) and percentages range from 18.0% to 76.5%.

Data Quality Notes

When making a submission local authorities have the opportunity to enter comments in a free text box to explain any issues with reporting. During the Quarter 1 2016/17 submission comments were received from 16 local authorities related to 2015/16, of collective interest:

- 9 local authorities reported they had made an incomplete submission. This may include receiving confirmation of nil returns from neighbouring authorities. The majority of these areas informed that work is being undertaken at a local level to address this for future submissions.
- 6 local authorities reported that recent migration to a new Child Health Information System had impacted on the short-term reliability of the figures.
- 7 local authorities reported that they were unable to provide separate figures for totally and partially breastfed infants.

Review of experimental statistics status

Official statistics showing breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks were published by PHE for the first time in September 2015, for activity in quarter 1 2015/16. The statistics were published as 'experimental statistics' for the following reasons:

- The data items for the indicator are collected via an interim arrangement on a voluntary basis. This interim arrangement is expected to end in 2017 when the indicator is reported through NHS Digital's Children and Young People's Health Services (CYPHS) data set.
- The previous data collection and reporting ceased, and although every effort has been made to align definitions, significant changes to the collection method and validation were unavoidable. In addition, it was expected that the methods and validation would be refined throughout the interim collection arrangement.
- The interim arrangement was intended to ensure continuity for users of reporting of this important public health indicator relating to the Best Start in Life PHE priority.
- It was expected that coverage would be poor, both because of historical poor coverage for the indicator which would be worsened by the change in methodology and the new voluntary nature of the collection.

The decision to publish as experimental statistics was taken on the understanding that efforts would be made to improve the quality of these statistics and resolve any of the issues described above, and the following work took place in 2015/16 in order to achieve these aims:

- Publishing documentation for local areas to aid the collection and central reporting process
- Contacting local directors of public health to explain the process and ask for their support
- Ongoing identification of areas who were struggling to submit data and following up via regional contacts to offer assistance
- Creating and monitoring a central mailbox for enquiries, which received over 500 emails in the quarter 1 submission window.
- Publishing a 'frequently asked questions' document based on commonly occurring enquiries
- Monitoring frequent issues with the data and taking steps through either changes to the data entry system or communication with the individuals submitting the data to address these specific issues.

As a result:

- Despite the data collection's voluntary nature, submissions were received from all local authorities in quarter 4 (revised); an improvement on quarter one, where 15 areas were not able to submit at all.
- The indicator of breastfeeding prevalence could be calculated for 85 local authorities which passed further validation in quarter 4; an improvement on quarter one, where the indicator was reported for only 43 local authorities.

However, this still leaves 65 local authorities (City of London reports jointly with Hackney and the Isles of Scilly reports jointly with Cornwall) whose breastfeeding prevalence indicator cannot be reported in quarter 4. Validation failures of local areas at earlier stages mean that

the PHE Centre figures and the national figure are not as accurate as they would otherwise be, as these are aggregated from their constituent areas.

It is clear that there has been a high level of engagement with the data collection, and many areas are working to address and resolve issues. We are receiving feedback that the statistics are highly valuable, however it is clear that the level of coverage and data quality are not yet sufficient to be confident that the statistics are trustworthy and of sufficiently high quality. These will therefore continue to be reported as experimental statistics until the indicator is reliably reported by the CYPHS data set.

Responsible statistician/product lead: Helen Duncan

For queries relating to this document, please contact: Interimreporting@phe.gov.uk

First published: October 2016

© Crown copyright 2016

Re-use of Crown copyright material (excluding logos) is allowed under the terms of the Open Government Licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/> for terms and conditions.