



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Official Statistics
Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks
after birth (Experimental Statistics)
2017/18 Statistical Commentary
(October 2018 release)

About Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct delivery organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific and delivery expertise and support.

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Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| About Public Health England | 2 |
| Main findings | 4 |
| Data Collection Method | 5 |
| Joint Submissions | 5 |
| Data Quality Findings | 6 |
| Stage 1 Validation | 6 |
| Stage 2 Validation | 7 |
| Stage 3 Validation | 7 |
| Passed all validation | 9 |
| Data Quality Notes | 11 |

Main findings

The aggregate breastfeeding rate for England for 2017/18 is 42.7% (with confidence intervals of 42.6– 42.8%). This is based on 140 out of 150 reporting local authorities who provided sufficient quarterly data for annual figures to be calculated. This compares to 44.4% in 2016/17, 43.1% in 2015/16, and 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, East Midlands, and East of England. 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 69 local authorities (passing all 3 stages of validation) and percentages range from 0.9% to 81.6%.

This statistical commentary should be considered alongside the 2017/18 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. To support this transfer Public Health England established an interim data collection for a number of key performance indicators associated with these services which it is critical to monitor and report.

The breastfeeding information within this publication has been obtained via the interim reporting system to collect health visiting activity at a local authority resident level. It was submitted to PHE by local authorities on a voluntary basis. It covers Quarters 1-4 of 2017/18. 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 methods, both in units of collection and the mandatory/voluntary nature.

Data Collection Method

An interim reporting system was hosted on the Local Government Association (LGA) website to collect the data on health visiting indicators. The reporting window for revisions of Quarter 1-4 data was 6 August to 14 September 2018.

To support local authorities in submitting data, detailed guidance was circulated to explain how analysts and commissioners in local authorities should submit health-visiting indicators.

A dedicated mailbox (interimreporting@phe.gov.uk) was also in place to respond to questions and comments.

Once the collection window closed, the data received was centrally collated, validated and reported.

Joint Submissions

Following publication of Quarter 2, 2015/16 (January release), it was confirmed that Hackney and City of London would be submitting data jointly and that any data submitted in previous quarters for Hackney also included City of London residents.

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.

Data Quality Findings

The following data relates to the whole of 2017/18 based on refreshed data for Quarters 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Out of 150 reporting local authorities, all submitted a return for the interim reporting collection for at least 3 quarters in 2017/18.

Prior to validation, a process of estimation was applied to any local authority data where a return was submitted for only 3 quarters in 2017/18, 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.

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

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Lancashire | North West |
| Bradford | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Telford and Wrekin | West Midlands |
| Enfield | London |
| Hackney and City of London* | London |
| Hounslow | London |
| Islington | London |
| Lambeth | London |
| Southwark | London |
| Wandsworth | London |

* *joint submission*

This has affected areas which reported DK for any data item in two or more quarters. Further validation was performed on annual data for 140 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 calculated from previously published quarterly data automatically pass 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 2017 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 140 valid submissions, all went on to pass stage 2.

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, 69 went on to pass stage 3.

The 71 local authorities that failed stage 3 validation are:

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gateshead | North East |
| Hartlepool | North East |
| North Tyneside | North East |
| Stockton on Tees | North East |
| Blackburn with Darwen | North West |
| Blackpool | North West |
| Cheshire West and Chester | North West |
| Cumbria | North West |
| Salford | North West |
| St Helens | North West |
| Barnsley | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Calderdale | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Doncaster | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Kingston upon Hull | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Kirklees | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| North Lincolnshire | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| York | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Rutland | East Midlands |
| Birmingham | West Midlands |
| Dudley | West Midlands |
| Shropshire | West Midlands |
| Staffordshire | West Midlands |

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Stoke on Trent | West Midlands |
| Walsall | West Midlands |
| Cambridgeshire | East of England |
| Hertfordshire | East of England |
| Milton Keynes | East of England |
| Norfolk | East of England |
| Thurrock | East of England |
| Barking and Dagenham | London |
| Barnet | London |
| Bexley | London |
| Brent | London |
| Bromley | London |
| Camden | London |
| Croydon | London |
| Ealing | London |
| Greenwich | London |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | London |
| Haringey | London |
| Harrow | London |
| Havering | London |
| Hillingdon | London |
| Kensington and Chelsea | London |
| Merton | London |
| Newham | London |
| Richmond upon Thames | London |
| Sutton | London |
| Waltham Forest | London |
| Westminster | London |
| Kent | South East |
| Medway | South East |
| Portsmouth | South East |
| Slough | South East |
| Southampton | South East |
| Surrey | South East |
| West Sussex | South East |
| Windsor and Maidenhead | South East |
| Bath and North East Somerset | South West |
| Bournemouth | South West |
| Bristol | South West |
| Devon | South West |
| Dorset | South West |
| Gloucestershire | South West |
| North Somerset | South West |
| Poole | South West |

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Somerset | South West |
| South Gloucestershire | South West |
| Swindon | South West |
| Torbay | South West |
| Wiltshire | South West |

Each local authority has to pass stage 2 and 3 of validation in order for its values to be shown.

Passed all validation

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 69 local authorities that passed all validation:

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| County Durham | North East |
| Darlington | North East |
| Middlesbrough | North East |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 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 |
| Manchester | North West |
| Oldham | North West |
| Rochdale | North West |
| Sefton | North West |
| Stockport | North West |
| Tameside | North West |
| Trafford | North West |
| Warrington | North West |
| Wigan | North West |
| Wirral | North West |
| East Riding of Yorkshire | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Leeds | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| North East Lincolnshire | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| North Yorkshire | Yorkshire and The Humber |

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Rotherham | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Sheffield | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Wakefield | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Derby | East Midlands |
| Derbyshire | East Midlands |
| Leicester | East Midlands |
| Leicestershire | East Midlands |
| Lincolnshire | East Midlands |
| Northamptonshire | East Midlands |
| Nottingham | East Midlands |
| Nottinghamshire | East Midlands |
| Coventry | West Midlands |
| Herefordshire | West Midlands |
| Sandwell | West Midlands |
| Solihull | West Midlands |
| Warwickshire | West Midlands |
| Wolverhampton | West Midlands |
| Worcestershire | West Midlands |
| Bedford | East of England |
| Central Bedfordshire | East of England |
| Essex | East of England |
| Luton | East of England |
| Peterborough | East of England |
| Southend on Sea | East of England |
| Suffolk | East of England |
| Kingston upon Thames | London |
| Lewisham | London |
| Redbridge | London |
| Tower Hamlets | London |
| Bracknell Forest | South East |
| Brighton and Hove | South East |
| Buckinghamshire | South East |
| East Sussex | South East |
| Hampshire | South East |
| Isle of Wight | South East |
| Oxfordshire | South East |
| Reading | South East |
| West Berkshire | South East |
| Wokingham | South East |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly* | South West |
| Plymouth | South West |

* Joint submission

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 submission of revised Q1-4 data comments were received from 7 local authorities related to breastfeeding data, of collective interest:

Where areas are unable to separate out 'totally' and 'partially' breastfed (because of local processes or data collection), it is still extremely useful for them to report the combined total, as this forms the numerator of the breastfeeding prevalence indicator. A communication was issued asking areas to report the combined total in either the 'total' or 'partial' boxes. On review, the communication should have specified that the total be entered in the 'partial' box as it is known that these infants are at least partially breastfed. Therefore this change has been made prior to publication, and this affects the following areas. It can therefore be assumed that for the higher geographies, the aggregate value for 'totally breastfed' is slightly low (and the aggregate value for 'partially breastfed' is correspondingly slightly high), but this is judged to be the most accurate way of describing the situation as the combined percentage will be a true reflection of the submitted data.

4 local authorities were identified as having reported combined totals for at least one quarter of 2017/18

7 local authorities reported they knew, or suspected, that they had made an incomplete submission. This may include receiving confirmation of nil returns from neighbouring authorities.

3 local authority reported that recent migration to a new Child Health Information System or problems with their existing system had impacted on their ability to submit, or on the short-term reliability of the figures.