



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Official Statistics

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

2018/19 Annual Data Statistical
Commentary (November 2019)

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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Main findings

The aggregate breastfeeding rate for England for 2018/19 is 46.2% (with confidence intervals of 46.1 – 46.3%). This is based on 145 out of 150 reporting local authorities who provided sufficient quarterly data for annual figures to be calculated. This compares to 43.1% in 2017/18 (updated November 2019), 44.4% in 2016/17, 43.2% 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, North West, and East Midlands. 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 21.3% to 80.1%.

This statistical commentary should be considered alongside the 2018/19 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 local authorities that submitted information and passed initial validation.

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 2018/19. 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 is hosted on the Local Government Association (LGA) website to collect the data on health visiting indicators. The reporting window for revisions of Quarters 1-4 2018/19 data was 19 August to 20 September 2019.

To support local authorities in submitting data, detailed guidance was circulated to explain how analysts and commissioners in local authorities should submit data. This guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-public-health-0-to-5-years-national-reporting>.

A dedicated mailbox, interimreporting@phe.gov.uk, was 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.

Data Quality Findings

Out of 150 reporting local authorities, all submitted a return for the interim reporting collection for at least 3 quarters in 2018/19.

Prior to validation, a process of estimation was applied to any local authority data where a return was submitted for only 3 quarters in 2018/19, 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.

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

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Blackburn with Darwen	North West
Lancashire	North West
Wolverhampton	West Midlands
Richmond upon Thames	London
Wandsworth	London

This has affected areas which reported DK for any data item in 2 or more quarters. Further validation was performed on annual data for 145 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 local authority 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 be within 20% of the resident population of babies aged zero for that local authority. The annual figure is divided by 4 to provide a quarterly estimate. Any values within 20% tolerance of the mid-year population figure for the quarter will pass this check.

Of the 145 valid submissions, 144 went on to pass stage 2.

The local authority that failed stage 2 validation is:

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Hackney and City of London*	London

* Joint submission

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 breastfed 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 144 submissions passing stage 2 validation, 72 went on to pass stage 3.

The 72 local authorities that failed stage 3 validation are:

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Hartlepool	North East
North Tyneside	North East
Stockton on Tees	North East
Blackpool	North West
Cheshire West and Chester	North West
Cumbria	North West
Rochdale	North West
Trafford	North West
Barnsley	Yorkshire and The Humber
Calderdale	Yorkshire and The Humber
Kirklees	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
York	Yorkshire and The Humber
Rutland	East Midlands
Birmingham	West Midlands
Coventry	West Midlands
Dudley	West Midlands
Shropshire	West Midlands
Staffordshire	West Midlands
Stoke on Trent	West Midlands
Telford and Wrekin	West Midlands
Walsall	West Midlands
Cambridgeshire	East of England
Hertfordshire	East of England
Milton Keynes	East of England
Norfolk	East of England
Barking and Dagenham	London
Barnet	London
Bexley	London
Brent	London
Bromley	London
Camden	London
Croydon	London
Ealing	London
Enfield	London
Greenwich	London
Hammersmith and Fulham	London
Haringey	London
Harrow	London
Havering	London
Hillingdon	London
Hounslow	London
Islington	London
Kensington and Chelsea	London
Lambeth	London
Merton	London
Newham	London
Redbridge	London
Southwark	London
Sutton	London
Tower Hamlets	London
Waltham Forest	London
Westminster	London
Buckinghamshire	South East
Kent	South East

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Medway	South East
Portsmouth	South East
Slough	South East
Surrey	South East
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East
Wokingham	South East
Bournemouth	South West
Bristol	South West
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly*	South West
Devon	South West
Dorset	South West
North Somerset	South West
Poole	South West
South Gloucestershire	South West
Swindon	South West

* Joint submission

Each local authority has to pass all 3 stages of validation in order for its values to be shown.

Passed all validation

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

Local Authority	PHE Centre
County Durham	North East
Darlington	North East
Gateshead	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

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Salford	North West
Sefton	North West
St Helens	North West
Stockport	North West
Tameside	North West
Warrington	North West
Wigan	North West
Wirral	North West
Bradford	Yorkshire and The Humber
Doncaster	Yorkshire and The Humber
East Riding of Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber
Kingston upon Hull	Yorkshire and The Humber
Leeds	Yorkshire and The Humber
North Lincolnshire	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
Herefordshire	West Midlands
Sandwell	West Midlands
Solihull	West Midlands
Warwickshire	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
Thurrock	East of England
Kingston upon Thames	London
Lewisham	London
Bracknell Forest	South East
Brighton and Hove	South East
East Sussex	South East

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Hampshire	South East
Isle of Wight	South East
Oxfordshire	South East
Reading	South East
Southampton	South East
West Berkshire	South East
West Sussex	South East
Bath and North East Somerset	South West
Gloucestershire	South West
Plymouth	South West
Somerset	South West
Torbay	South West
Wiltshire	South West

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 6 local authorities related to breastfeeding data, of collective interest:

Where local authorities 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 local authorities 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. Breastfeeding data has been amended to report as 'partially breastfed' where local authorities can be identified as having reported a combined total as 'totally breastfed'. It can therefore be assumed that for higher geographies containing an affected local authority, 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. This affects the following local authorities:

Blackburn with Darwen, Dudley and Wolverhampton were identified as having reported combined totals for at least one quarter of 2018/19.

Three 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.