Socialstyrelsen
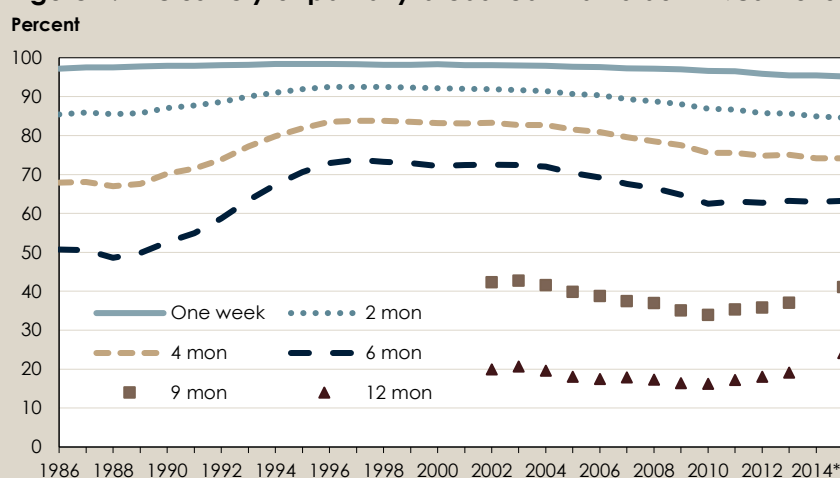THE NATIONAL BOARD OF HEALTH AND WELFARE

Statistics on breastfeeding 2015

Between 2004 and 2014 breastfeeding during the infant's first four months slowly decreased. In the last five years, the proportion of children breastfeeding at the age of six months has remained stable. The rate of infants who continue to be breastfed at nine respectively twelve months of age appears to have increased somewhat in the corresponding period.

The rate of breastfeed children over time

The breastfeeding rate in Sweden peaked during the period of 1995–2004. In 2004, 83 percent of all children were breastfed at the age of four months and 72 percent were breastfed at the age of six months. After 2004 one can note a clear decline, however since 2010 the decline in breastfeeding of children who are six months old or younger has stopped and the curve has leveled out. In 2015, 74 percent of infants were breastfed at four months of age and 63 percent were breastfed at six months of age, which is identical to the corresponding proportion of children born in 2014.

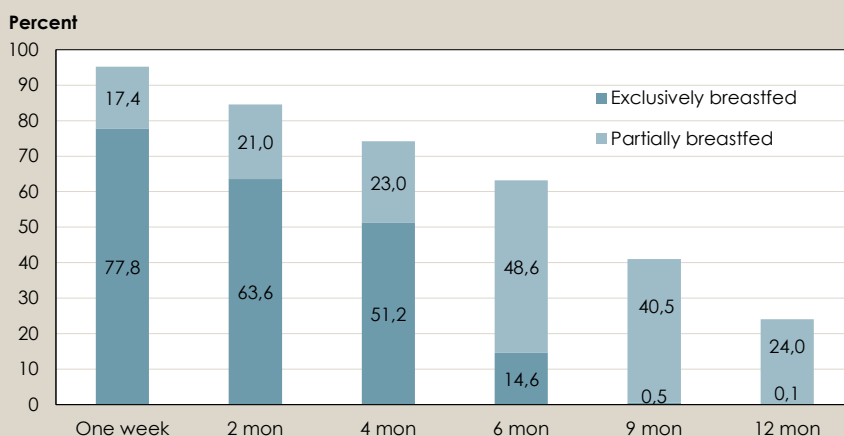**Figure 1. Exclusively or partially breastfed infants born 1986–2015**

Percent

Legend: One week, 2 mon, 4 mon, 6 mon, 9 mon, 12 mon

*Estimated national values for 2013-2015. No national data is presented for breastfeeding at 9 and 12 months for 2014 due to poor quality.
Note. Data on breastfeeding at 9 and 12 months started in 2002.
Source: Statistics on breastfeeding. The National Board of Health and Welfare

Breastfeeding at nine and twelve months has increased slightly since 2010. Since national data on 2014 is missing it is hard to draw any definite conclusions on whether the increase during the past few years is temporary or not (figure 1). At nine to twelve months of age it is nearly always about partial breastfeeding since children from six months and up need supplementary foods beyond breastmilk.

Exclusive breastfeeding gradually declines

The rate of infants who are exclusively breastfed decreases with age. At the age of one week, 95 percent of the infants are breastfed and nearly 78 percent are exclusively breastfed. The corresponding figure for six months of age is approximately 14 percent for exclusively breastfed infants. The decline in exclusive breastfeeding is the highest for infants between four and six months. At that time the infant may have started to taste other types of food and is no longer defined as exclusively breastfed (figure 2).

Figure 2. Exclusively or partially breastfed infants by age, infants born 2015

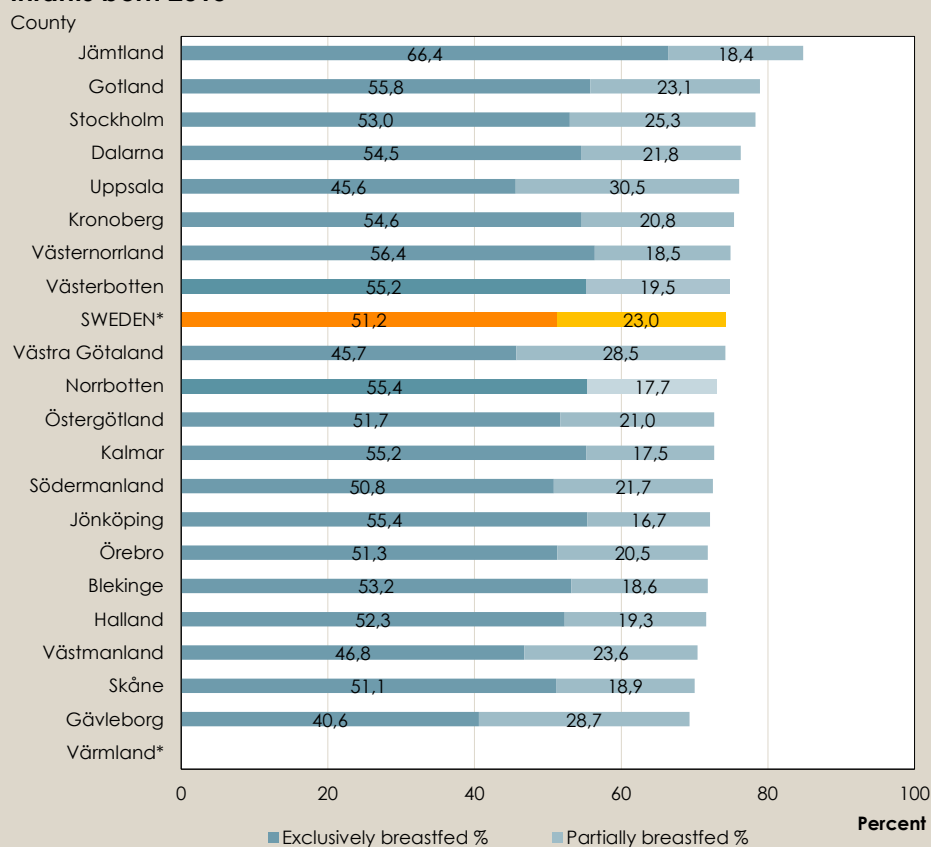Note. Data for Värmland 2015 not available. Estimated value.

Source: Statistics on breastfeeding. The National Board of Health and Welfare

Large regional differences

There are large regional differences between different counties regarding exclusively and partially breastfed infants. At four months of age the breastfeeding rate was the highest for the counties of Jämtland and Gotland; 85 percent respectively 79 percent during 2015. The county of Jämtland is also at the top when it comes to exclusive breastfeeding at four months of age (66 percent).

The counties with the lowest breastfeeding rates for four month old infants are Gävleborg and Skåne with 69 respectively 70 percent. If you look at the exclusively breastfed infants, the county of Gävleborg is at the bottom with 41 percent.

Figure 3. Proportion of children who were breastfed at 4 months, infants born 2015

County

County	Exclusively breastfed %	Partially breastfed %
Jämtland	66,4	18,4
Gotland	55,8	23,1
Stockholm	53,0	25,3
Dalarna	54,5	21,8
Uppsala	45,6	30,5
Kronoberg	54,6	20,8
Västernorrland	56,4	18,5
Västerbotten	55,2	19,5
SWEDEN*	51,2	23,0
Västra Götaland	45,7	28,5
Norrbotten	55,4	17,7
Östergötland	51,7	21,0
Kalmar	55,2	17,5
Södermanland	50,8	21,7
Jönköping	55,4	16,7
Örebro	51,3	20,5
Blekinge	53,2	18,6
Halland	52,3	19,3
Västmanland	46,8	23,6
Skåne	51,1	18,9
Gävleborg	40,6	28,7
Värmland*		

Percent

■ Exclusively breastfed %   ■ Partially breastfed %

*Estimated national values for 2015 since data is missing from Värmland

Source: Statistics on breastfeeding. The National Board of Health and Welfare

Definitions

Exclusively breastfed refers to infants who have been fed only breastmilk and vitamins (e.g. vitamin D) or medicines.

Partially breastfed refers to infants who, apart from breastmilk, have also received infant formula, formula or other food.

Breastfeeding refers to both children who are exclusively breastfed and children who are partially breastfed.

About the National Board of Health and Welfare's statistics on breastfeeding

The data on breastfeeding is collected from paediatric healthcare that approximately 99 percent of parents of newborns visit. The statistics are not comprehensive since data from certain counties is missing and there are some insufficiencies in the quality of certain data. For more information about quality, see link to Excel file below.

More information

You can find more tables, graphs and information in the following Excel file (in Swedish, but with English list of terms):
www.socialstyrelsen.se/publikationer2017/2017-9-5
If you want to use our statistical database (in Swedish):
http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/statistik/statistikdatabas/amning

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