

Statistics on breastfeeding 2016

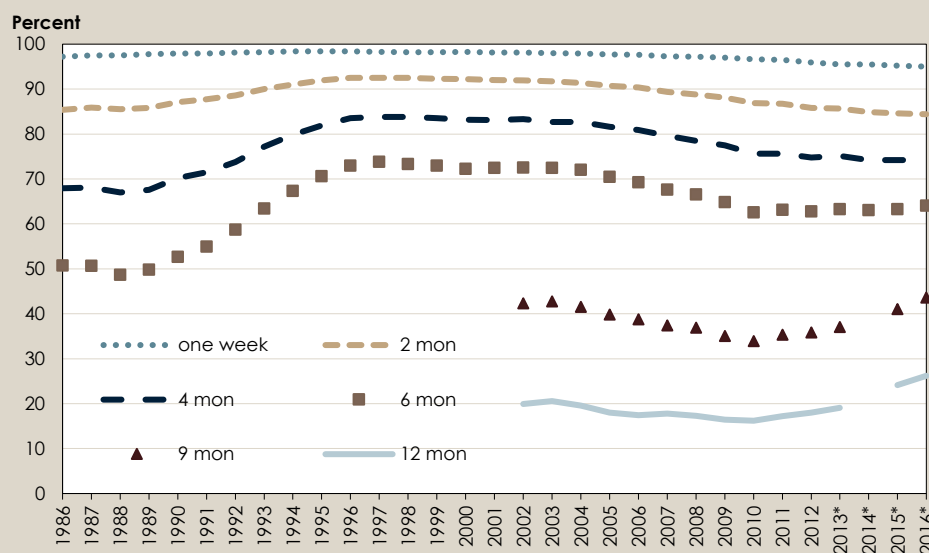
Breastfeeding during the infant’s first four months continues to decrease slightly while among six-month-old infants there is a slight increase according to statistics for the last three years. Most noticeable is the increase in breastfeeding among infants at six and nine months. There are regional differences in breastfeeding patterns for infants aged six months and older.

The rate of breastfed children over time

Historically, the percentage of breastfed children was highest during the period 1995–2004. In 2004, 83 per cent of all infants were breastfed at the age of four months and 72 per cent at the age of six months. After 2004 there was a marked difference, but since 2010, the decrease in percentage of breastfed infants six months and younger has slowed down.

In 2016, 95 per cent of infants were breastfed at the age of one week, 84 per cent at the age of two months and 74 per cent at the age of four months. This is almost the same percentage as for infants born 2015. When seen over the last ten years, the trend shows that breastfeeding has continued to decrease somewhat for infants up to the age of four months.

Figure 1. Exclusively or partially breastfed infants born 1986–2016



*Estimated national values for 2013-2015. No national data is presented for breastfeeding at 9 and 12 months for 2014 due to poor quality.

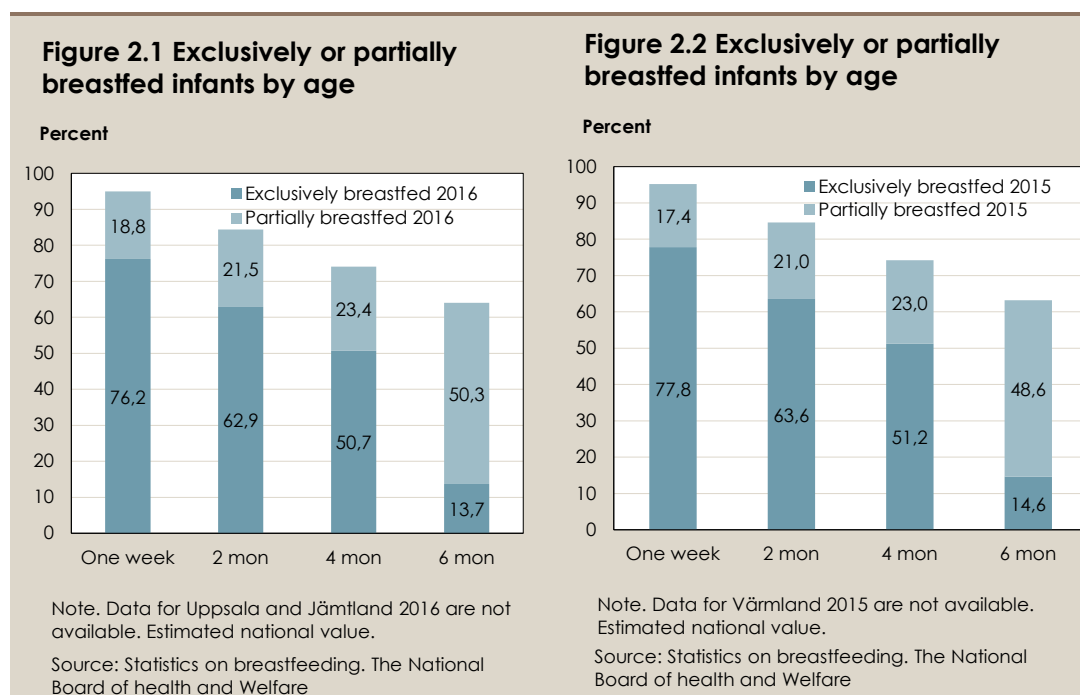
*Estimated national values for 2016 due to missing data for the counties of Uppsala and Jämtland
Note. Data on breastfeeding at 9 and 12 months started in 2002

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

While the percentage of breastfed infants at the age of six months has increased during recent years, this is only a marginal difference of less than one per cent unit since 2014 to 64 per cent. The percentage of infants being breastfed at the age of nine and twelve months respectively has increased since 2010. Data for 2014 is not available nationally, thus, it is uncertain if recent years increase is temporary (figure 1). Health-child checkups occur normally at eight and ten months which may make the recorded breastfeeding rates at nine months unreliable. For the vast majority, breastfeeding at nine and twelve months is only partial, as infants require supplemental nutrition in addition to breast milk starting at six months.

Exclusive breastfeeding decreases

The percentage of infants who are exclusively breastfed decreases as the infant's age increases. In 2016, almost 95 per cent of infants were breastfed and 76 per cent were exclusively breastfed at the age of one week. The same year, not quite 14 per cent of infants were exclusively breastfed at six months and 50 per cent were partially breastfed. Compared to the previous year, this is a somewhat higher percentage of infants partially breastfed and a lower percentage exclusively breastfed during the first six months (figure 2.1 and figure 2.2).

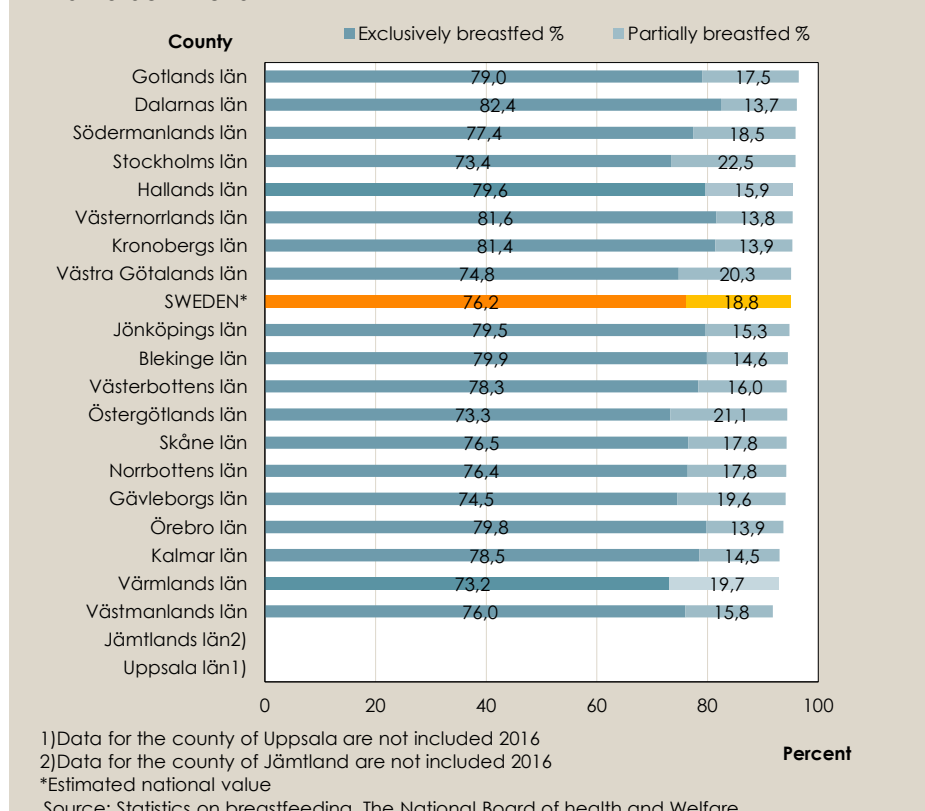


The largest decrease in exclusive breastfeeding occurs between the ages of four and six months. At this time, an infant may have begun to get small tastes of other types of food and is not defined as being exclusively breastfed.

Regional differences in breastfeeding

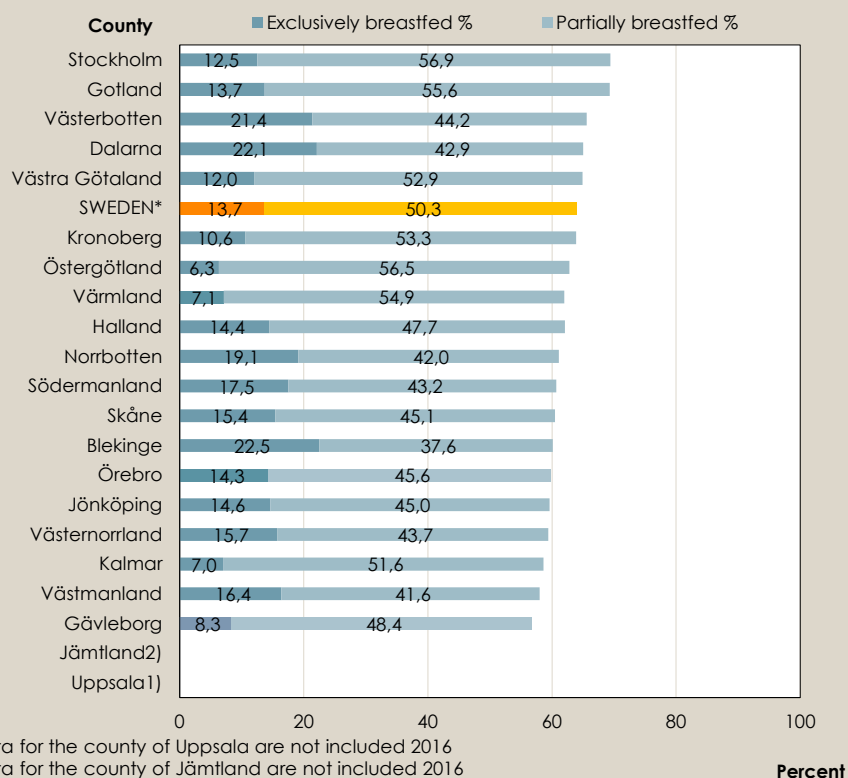
There are differences between regions when it comes to breastfeeding. At the age of one week, there was a difference of just under five per cent units between the county with the highest percentage of breastfed infants and the county with the lowest percentage when looking at the total number of exclusively and partially breastfed infants. At the age of one week, the counties of Gotland and Dalarna had the highest percentage of breastfed infants with just over 96 per cent. With just over 82 per cent, Dalarna had the highest percentage of infants who were exclusively breastfed at the age of one week. The counties of Värmland and Västmanland had the lowest percentage with 93 and 92 per cent respectively at this age. The national average of infants both exclusively and partially breastfed at the age of one week were 95 per cent (figure 3).

Figure 3. Proportion of children who were breastfed at 1 week, infants born 2016



At the age of six months, the variance among the counties was greater with the largest difference being nearly 13 per cent units between the county with highest and lowest percentages of breastfeeding. The counties that had the highest percentage at the age of six months were Stockholm and Gotland with just over 69 percent. The counties of Västmanland and Gävleborg had the lowest percentage with 58 and 57 per cent respectively at this age. This compared with a national average of 64 percent for the same group (figure 4).

Figure 4. Proportion of children who were breastfed at 6 months, infants born 2016



1)Data for the county of Uppsala are not included 2016

2)Data for the county of Jämtland are not included 2016

*Estimated national value

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.

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/publikationer2018/2018-9-3

If you want to use our statistical database (in Swedish): <http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/statistik/statistikdatabas/amning>

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