

# Breastfeeding Survey 2015

## Background

The Department of Health (DH) conducts a Breastfeeding Survey regularly in its Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHC), which cover about 90% of all infants born in Hong Kong. The breastfeeding survey was first conducted annually since 1998, and then biannually from 2002 onwards.

Besides, DH has all along monitored the trend of the local ever breastfeeding rate through monthly reports from hospitals with maternity units.

## Objective

The breastfeeding surveys aim to assess and monitor the trend of breastfeeding rates among locally born babies in their first year of life.

## Methodology

It is a cross-sectional survey including all one-year-old children brought by their mothers or main carers to attend the MCHC within the data collection period. The feeding practices at 1 month, 2 months, 4 months and 6 months of the child are transcribed from the child health record with feeding practices routinely enquired and recorded at these ages, and at 12 months through directly enquiring the mother or the carer.<sup>1</sup> All data are recorded on a standardised data collection sheet by nurses. To facilitate better understanding on infant feeding practices, whether the infant is taking complementary foods at 6 months is also collected. An infant's breastfeeding status is categorised according to the WHO's latest standard.<sup>2</sup>

The past and current breastfeeding surveys were conducted in May to July of the year to reduce seasonal variations of the findings and improve comparability.

## Results

A total of 1,615 infants who were born in 2014 and attended the routine 12-month MCHC immunisation visit from 29 June to 10 July 2015 were recruited in the Breastfeeding Survey 2015, with a response rate of 84.6%. The breastfeeding rates of infants born in 2014 (Breastfeeding Survey 2015) as compared to those of infants born in 2012 (Breastfeeding Survey 2013) are shown in table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> In view of the scope of MCHC service provision and practical considerations, children whose feeding information could not be obtained from the mother and carer nor the clinical records were not included in the BF Surveys.

<sup>2</sup> Indicators for assessing infant and young child feeding practices – part III: country profiles. World Health Organization. 2010.

For infants born in 2014, both breastfeeding (BF) and exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) rates showed an increase over those of infants born in 2012. The BF rates of infants born in 2014 at 1, 2, 4, 6 and 12 months were 73%, 61%, 50%, 41% and 25% respectively, and the corresponding figures for infants born in 2012 were 69%, 56%, 44%, 33% and 14%. Whereas, the EBF rates of infants born in 2014 at 1, 2 and 4 months were 31%, 30% and 27%, and the corresponding figures for infants born in 2012 were 22%, 22% and 19% respectively.

WHO recommends that babies should be breastfed exclusively in the first 6 months. At around 6 months of age, solid food should be introduced to their diet, with continued breastfeeding to 2 years old or above. In the Breastfeeding Survey 2015, information on complementary food at 6 months was also collected to facilitate better understanding of the infant feeding practice. Results of the Breastfeeding Survey 2015 revealed that the majority of infants (about 95%) had started taking solid food at 6 months of age as recommended. About 24% of infants continued to be fed with breastmilk without using any formula milk while taking complementary food at 6 months of age. Only 1.2% of the infants had not started complementary feeding and was fed with breastmilk only.

Table 1: Breastfeeding rates of infants born in 2012 and 2014.

		<b>2012 (95% CI)</b>	<b>2014 (95%CI)</b>
<b>Ever breastfeeding rate at hospital discharge</b>		85.0% N=91,546	86.4% N=62,295
		<b>2012 N=2,016 (95% CI)</b>	<b>2014 N=1,615 (95%CI)</b>
<b>Breastfeeding rate<sup>a</sup></b>	At 1 month of age	68.6% (66.6-70.6%)	73.1% (70.9-75.3%)
	At 2 month of age	55.5% (53.5-57.7%)	61.0% (58.6-63.4%)
	At 4 month of age	44.3% (42.1-46.5%)	50.3% (47.8-52.7%)
	At 6 month of age	32.7% (30.7-34.8%)	40.9% (38.5-43.4%)
	At 12 month of age	14.2% (12.7-15.7%)	25.1% (23-27.3%)
<b>Exclusive breastfeeding rate<sup>b</sup></b>	At 1 month of age	22.1% (20.3-23.9%)	30.8% (28.5-33.1%)
	At 2 month of age	21.7% (19.9-23.5%)	30.4% (28.2-32.7%)
	At 4 month of age	19.1% (17.4-20.8%)	26.6% (24.5-28.9%)
	At 6 month of age <sup>#</sup>	2.3% - babies exclusively fed with breast milk <sup>#</sup> (1.7-3.0%)	25.5% (23.4-27.7%) [24.3% - babies fed with breast milk and solid food]  [1.2% - babies exclusively fed with breast milk]

**Note:**

<sup>a</sup> Breastfeeding (BF) rate refers to any form of breastfeeding, including children exclusively breastfed as well as those breastfed supplemented by formula milk or solid food.

<sup>b</sup> Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) rate means the child is feeding on breastmilk only (either directly from breast or indirectly from expressed breastmilk).

<sup>#</sup> In the Breastfeeding Survey 2015, information on complementary food at 6 months was collected to facilitate better understanding of the infant feeding practice. The EBF rates at 6 months might not be directly comparable to previous surveys.