

Infant Feeding

Findings from the Growing Up In Scotland study (GUS)

Birth Cohort 2



Background

Growing Up in Scotland is the longitudinal research study following the lives of over 10,000 children and their families across Scotland from birth through to the teenage years. The aim of the study is to find out how the circumstances and experiences of children growing up in Scotland are changing and to provide new evidence about how early experiences affect later outcomes. Findings from the study have been used to help inform the development of policies and services at the national and local level.

GUS has been collecting data on a wide range of topics from participating families since 2005. There are two main groups of children taking part in the study – one group born during 2004/05 (Birth Cohort 1) and a further group born during 2010/11 (Birth Cohort 2). Families are visited by an interviewer and provide information on a wide range of topics including family circumstances and change, child health and development, parenting, diet and physical activity, access to and use of services including antenatal care, postnatal support and childcare. When their babies were 10 months old, parents (mostly mothers) were asked a series of questions about infant feeding – breastfeeding (initiation, duration and information provision), weaning and the receipt of Healthy Start Vouchers.

This briefing has been produced to coincide with the conference ‘Improving Maternal and Infant Nutrition in Scotland: Unlocking Our Potential’ organised by NHS Health Scotland in February 2013. For more information about GUS and to sign up to receive regular updates, please visit the study website www.growingupinscotland.org.uk

Key findings

Breastfeeding outcomes for GUS Birth Cohort 2 (born 2010/11)

	%	<i>Base: all families</i>
Child was breastfed at all	63	6108
Child was breastfed for \geq 6 weeks	42	6026
Child was breastfed <i>exclusively</i> for \geq 6 weeks	36	5994
Child was breastfed for \geq 6 months	25	6026
Child was breastfed <i>exclusively</i> for \geq 6 months	11	5994

Scottish Government target for exclusive breastfeeding at 6 weeks is 32.7%.

- 63% of mothers in 2010/11 initiated breastfeeding (compared with 60% of mothers in 2004/05). Two-thirds of mothers initiating breastfeeding were still breastfeeding when their baby was 6 weeks old. 36% of all mothers were breastfeeding exclusively at 6 weeks.
- Data on the duration of breastfeeding shows that the decrease happens mainly in the first 2 weeks following the birth of the baby. It also shows that the exclusive breastfeeding rate begins to fall more sharply after 17 weeks of age. By 6 months, 25% of babies were still breastfed, 11% exclusively.
- Breastfeeding outcomes are strongly associated with multiple socio-demographic factors. In particular, mothers are more likely to breastfeed, and to continue to 6 weeks if: either parent has a degree; the mother lives with her partner, is of a minority ethnicity, or is older; and if the family live in a rural area, or a less deprived area.
- The most common reasons given by mothers for not breastfeeding were 'didn't want to' (29%), having a previous bad experience (12%) and being embarrassed or uncomfortable about it (7%). The most common reasons for stopping breastfeeding were 'not enough milk' (32%), 'baby not interested' (12%) and returning to work (9%) although 31% gave an 'other' reason.
- 75% of women recalled receiving advice about breastfeeding at the time of birth. Initiation of breastfeeding was higher amongst mothers who recalled receiving advice but particularly amongst those who recalled receiving breastfeeding advice from a midwife.
- A wide range of ages for starting solids were reported from as young as 10 weeks to as old as 7 months. 14% of babies were aged 6 months or more when weaning began while 42% were at least 5 months of age.
- In general, younger weaning ages were reported by mothers who had not breastfed. This relationship remained after controlling for area deprivation.
- 24% of parents received Healthy Start vouchers. 44% of parents in the most deprived areas received the vouchers. Of those who received the vouchers, 62% had used them to buy fresh fruit and vegetables, 54% bought formula milk and 48% bought ordinary milk.



GUS is commissioned by the Scottish Government and is carried out by ScotCen Social Research in partnership with the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) at the University of Edinburgh and the MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit in Glasgow.

References

Bradshaw et al (2013) *Growing Up in Scotland: Birth Cohort 2- Results from the first year* Scottish Government: Edinburgh <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/02/3280>