



Infant Feeding Study – Six, Twelve, & Eighteen Month Interim Report

Summary of Key Findings – 2017/ 2018

Overview

Halton first received the Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) designation in 2009. Part of the requirement to obtain and maintain the BFI designation includes the collection of infant feeding surveillance data related to breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity. The requirements include the calculation of breastfeeding rates from birth to six months after birth, as well as a minimum of two additional time points.

The main objectives of the 2017/2018 Infant Feeding Study were to collect information on breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity in Halton in order to meet [BFI designation requirements](#) for an interim report. Parents were recruited for participation in the study from September 10, 2016 to December 7, 2016. Data were collected for all parents who consented to either the online or phone survey when their baby turned six months old. Parents who were still breastfeeding and consented were contacted again when their baby turned twelve months and eighteen months old.

This is the fourth time running this study and this report highlights the key findings from the 2017/2018 six, twelve, and eighteen month Infant Feeding Study.

Study completion information

Table 1: Completion information for the six, twelve, and eighteen-month Infant Feeding Study, 2017-2018

	6-Month Survey	12-Month Survey	18-Month Survey
Total number of parents eligible to participate	1390	420	196
Number of parents who consented to participate	855	393	189
Number of surveys administered	855	393	189
Number of surveys completed	564	301	173
Number of surveys excluded (e.g., do not live in Halton, partial survey completion)	19	0	0
Survey Response Rate			
Completions	67%	77%	92%
(surveys administered – exclusions)			

Halton tool vs. LDCP tool Six-month data collection

A survey tool developed through the Locally Driven Collaborative Project (LDCP) was piloted alongside a Halton tool for data collection at six months. Initiation and duration rates were comparable in both surveys. Exclusivity could not be calculated for the LDCP tool due to inconsistencies in responses for certain survey questions.

For comparability purposes, six month findings reported in this report are from the Halton survey.



Breastfeeding in Halton

2017 findings at a glance

World Health Organization recommendations



98%

of parents initiated breastfeeding



Breastfeeding rates declined gradually over eighteen months. In 2017, **97%** of parents were breastfeeding at age one-week, **81%** at age four months, **76%** at age six months, **46%** at age twelve months, and **21%** at age eighteen months.



In 2017, **51%** of parents were exclusively breastfeeding at age one week, **42%** at age two months, **35%** at age four months, and **17%** at age six months (hospital experience* included).

**Hospital experience includes the time from when the baby is born to when the baby is discharged from the hospital.*



Supplementation in hospital continues to affect breastfeeding exclusivity. For example, at age one week, **51%** of parents were exclusively breastfeeding when hospital experiences were included compared to **65%** when hospital experiences were excluded.



The most common reason for stopping breastfeeding continues to be that the parent felt they did not have enough breast milk (**72%**).



The most common reason for continuing to breastfeed is because it is the best thing for their baby's health (**81%**).



Many parents introduce solids around six months of age. Of the **55%** of parents who introduced solids while breastfeeding, **25%** did so when their baby was between five and a half months and six months old, and **32%** did so when their baby was six months or older.



Of the **46%** of parents who were still breastfeeding at the time of the twelve-month survey, **56%** of them had returned to work. Many parents who returned to work were not aware of how supportive their workplace was of breastfeeding.

Key Findings (in depth)

Initiation (Figure 1)

- The percentage of parents who initiated breastfeeding has increased each year from 90% in 2000/2001 to 93% in 2007/2008 to 97% in 2014 and finally to 98% in 2017. There were no significant differences in breastfeeding initiation between 2014 and 2017.

Duration (Figure 1)

- In 2017, 75% of parents were breastfeeding at age six months. The percentage of parents breastfeeding increased significantly between 2000 and 2007. There were no significant differences between duration rates in 2014 and 2017.
- In 2017, 46% of parents were breastfeeding at age twelve months. Breastfeeding duration was significantly higher in 2017 when comparing to 2007/2008 to 2017. Twelve month studies were not carried out in 2000 and 2014.
- In 2017, 21% of parents were still breastfeeding at age eighteen months. This was the first time Halton had collected data at eighteen months.

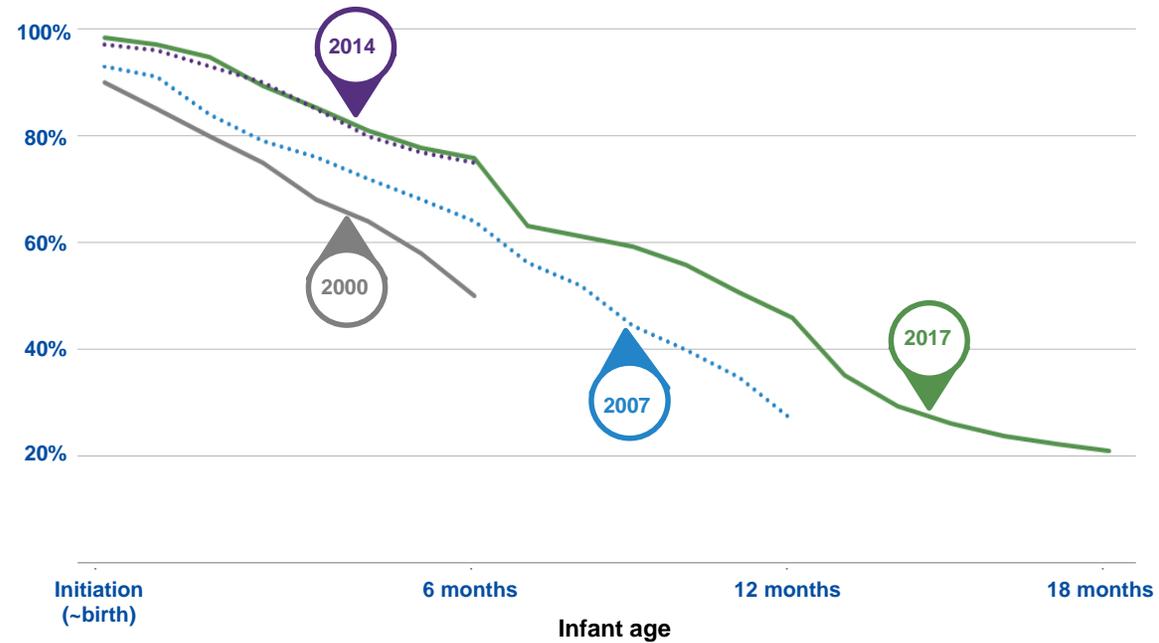


Figure 1: Percentage of Halton parents breastfeeding up to age eighteen months, 2000/2001, 2007/2008, 2014, 2017.

Exclusivity

- In 2017, 51% of parents were exclusively breastfeeding at age one week, 42% at age two months, 35% at age four months, and 17% at age six months (Figure 2).
- While breastfeeding exclusivity has decreased at each infant age from 2014 to 2017 these decreases were not statistically significant. Increases in exclusivity between 2000 and 2007 were significant. (Figure 2)
- Supplementation in hospital continues to affect breastfeeding exclusivity. For example:
 - At age one week, 51% of parents were exclusively breastfeeding when hospital experiences were included compared to 65% when hospital experiences were excluded.
 - At age three months 39% of parents were exclusively breastfeeding when hospital experiences were included compared to 49% when hospital experiences were excluded.
 - At age six months 17% of parents were exclusively breastfeeding when hospital experiences were included compared to 22% when hospital experiences were excluded.

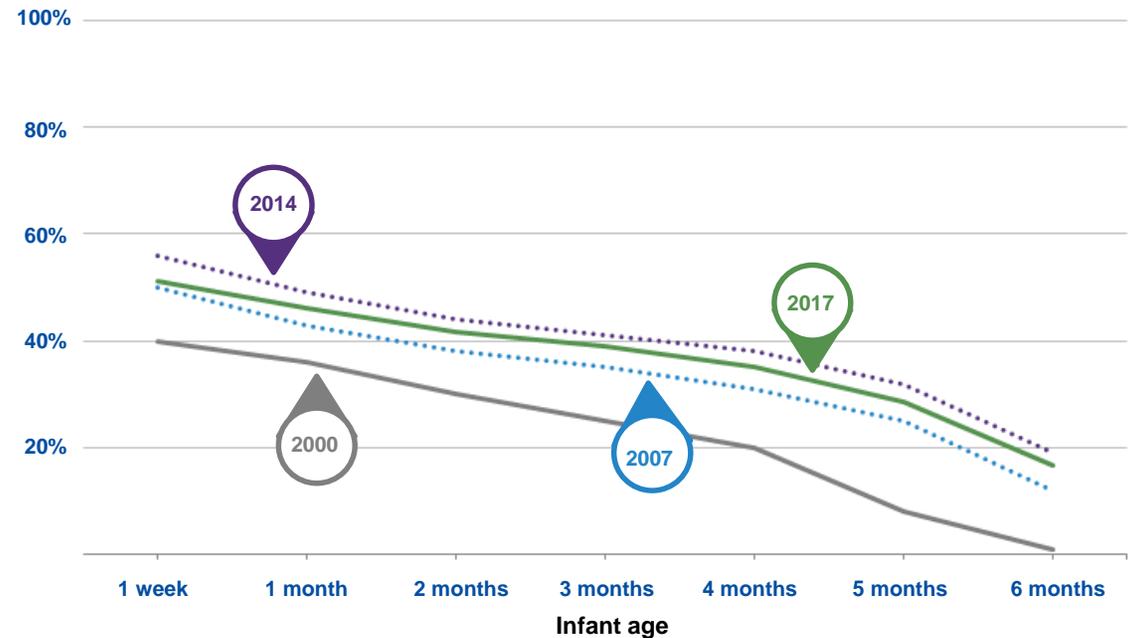


Figure 2: Percentage of Halton parents breastfeeding exclusively to age six months, Halton six-month survey, hospital experience included, 2000/2001, 2007/2008, 2014, 2017.

Recommendations

Given that the 2017 and 2014 studies had very similar results, and taking into consideration that it takes time to implement recommendations and to see a population-level change, similar recommendations from 2014 still apply. These include:

- Continue to work with community partners to improve breastfeeding initiation, duration and particularly exclusivity.
- Continue to educate parents in the prenatal and postpartum periods about the importance of breastfeeding, in particular about breastfeeding exclusively to age six months.
- Reach out to healthcare providers with materials and resources since they are a critical source of information and support for breastfeeding mothers.
- Continue to educate parents about their right to breastfeed when they return to work as well as how to continue breastfeeding when they return (e.g. expressing breast milk).
- Continue to educate and provide resources to employers about ways to provide baby-friendly workplaces.

Next Steps

Recruitment for the 2019/2020 study will begin in March 2019. The full report will be available in spring of 2021.

Limitations

Representativeness of sample: Parents who did not complete the surveys or who were unable to be reached may represent a different demographic than those who could be reached.

Positive response bias: When data is self reported, people may not provide honest responses to questions, but rather responses that they thought would appear positive or correct.

Attrition: Parents who were lost to follow up (agreed to participate in the twelve or eighteen month study but could not be reached) or who were eligible but did not consent to the study were not included in the duration analysis. By excluding these parents we are assuming that cases are randomly distributed by infant feeding method which might not be the case.

Attribution: It is difficult to determine the exact role the Health Department played in differences observed between the 2000/01, 2007/08, 2014, and 2017 studies, since many organizations in Halton have been working to improve breastfeeding practices.

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