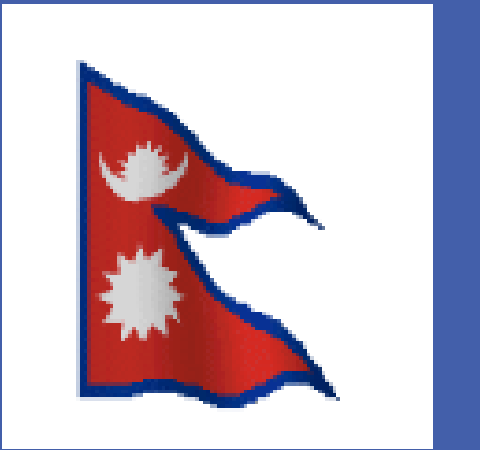




# EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING PRACTICES AMONG 6 TO 11 MONTH OLD CHILDREN IN NEPAL

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## Background

The national nutrition program in Nepal, as outlined in the National Nutrition Policy and Strategy of 2004, recommends that children are exclusively breastfed in their first six months. After six months, it is recommended that mothers start to introduce semi-solid or solid foods, and continue breastfeeding until the child is at least two years old. In spite of this recommendation, exclusive breastfeeding was reported by mothers of 6 to 11 months old children in Nepal.

## Objectives

This study is aimed to explore the prevalence exclusively breastfeeding among 6-11 months children in Nepal.

## Methods

This study utilized data from the NDHS 2011, the survey used two-stage stratified cluster sampling to select a representative sample of households. The primary objective was to provide national estimates with an acceptable level of precision for population characteristics such as fertility, contraceptive need and prevalence, and selected health and nutrition indicators. A total of 11,353 households were selected from 289 primary sampling units (194 rural and 95 urban) using probability proportionate to size. A response rate of 99% was reported for occupied households. The survey successfully completed 5391 interviews with women who had a child in the last five years, and 511 (un-weighted) women had youngest children 6-11 months who are living with their mother.

The sample weight was used during the analysis to get the population estimate and 95% confidence interval (95%CI). Chi-square test was used to assess the independent effect of explanatory variables (age of mother, level of education, wealth quintiles, caste/ethnicity, urban/rural residence, ecological zone and had DPT3 vaccine) on outcome variable after adjusting the effect of clusters and strata (rural/urban residence). We have reported significance with a p-value of <0.05.

## Results

The prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding among women with 6-11 month old children overall was 9% (95%CI: 5.1-14.2).

The largest variation was seen by caste/ethnicity; 28% of those in the Terai/Madheshi group and 7% of those in the Dalit group breastfed their 6-11 month old child exclusively, compared to 0% in the Newar and Muslim groups ( $p < 0.001$ ).

There was similar variation by level of education; 15% of 6-11 month old children whose mother had no education were breastfed exclusively, compared to 0% of children whose mother had higher education ( $p = 0.023$ ). Those in the Terai districts were more likely to have breastfed their 6-11 month old child exclusively (14%), compared to 2% in the mountain districts ( $p = 0.001$ ). The exclusively breastfeeding rate was noted to be higher among children who were not immunized with DPT3 (19%) compared to 2% who had been immunized ( $p = 0.041$ ).

There was no significant difference observed by the age of the mother ( $p = 0.318$ ), between urban and rural residence ( $p = 0.479$ ), and by wealth quintile ( $p = 0.400$ ).

## Conclusions

These findings suggest that the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding among 6-11 month old children in Nepal varies between population groups in Nepal, especially among mothers without education, mothers in the Dalit and Terai/Madheshi groups, mothers residing in the Terai regions and children who were not immunized with DPT3. Targeted interventions will be a potential programmatic approach to accelerate the progress made in reducing child morbidity and mortality over the last decade in Nepal through improved weaning practices.

## References

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