

Goal

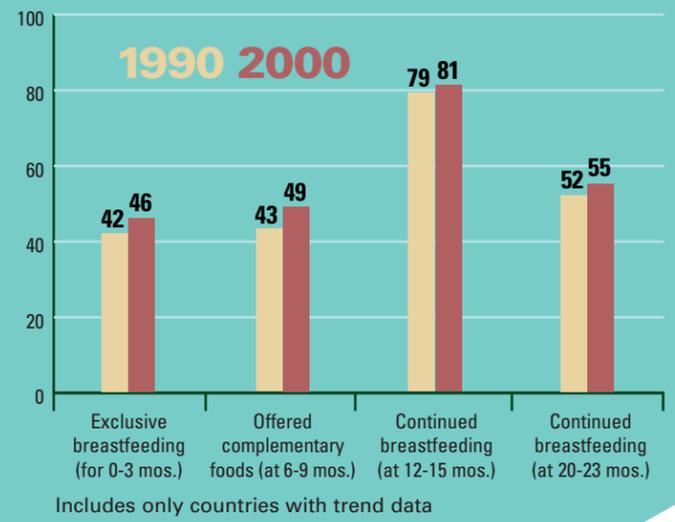
Empowerment of all women to breastfeed their children exclusively for four to six months and to continue breastfeeding, with complementary food, well into the second year

» Breastfeeding



TRENDS IN BREASTFEEDING PATTERNS

Percentage of children who are exclusively breastfed, who are breastfed and receive complementary foods and those who continue to breastfeed at specified ages



Best practices

Optimal breastfeeding practices include exclusive breastfeeding (only breastmilk with no other foods or liquids) for the first six months of life, followed by breastmilk and complementary foods (solid or semi-solid foods) from six months of age on, and continued breastfeeding for up to two years of age or beyond with complementary foods.

The International Code

The World Health Assembly adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes in 1981 to protect and promote breastfeeding, through the provision of adequate information on appropriate infant feeding and the regulation of the marketing of breastmilk substitutes, bottles and teats. The Code prohibits the advertisement or promotion of these products to the general public or through the health care system. All governments should adopt the Code into national legislation. To date, 24 governments have adopted all of the Code's provisions into law, while a further 52 have partially adopted them.

Result

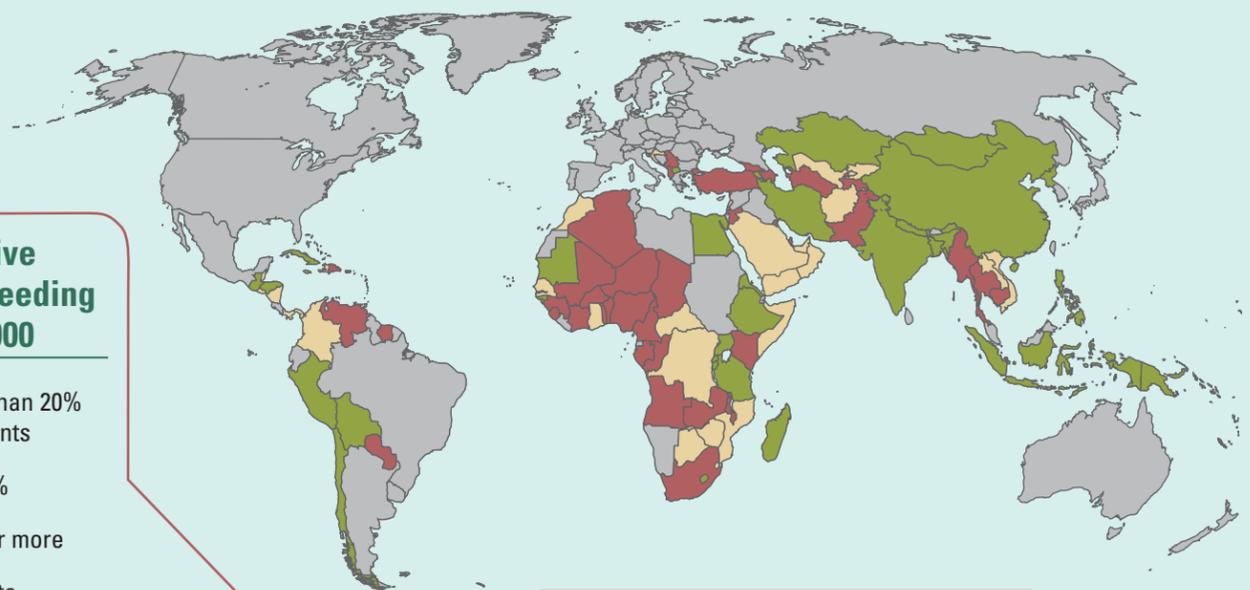
Exclusive breastfeeding rates increased by 10 per cent over the decade. Improvements were also noted in complementary feeding and in continued breastfeeding for the first and second year of life.

... but

Only about half of all infants are exclusively breastfed for the first four months of life. Now the recommendation is for exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months*.

Exclusive breastfeeding 1995-2000

- Less than 20% of infants
- 20-39%
- 40% or more
- No data



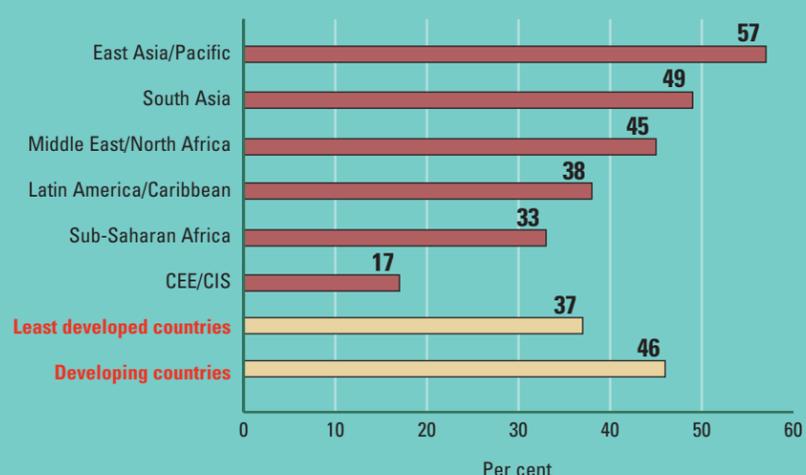
Issue

Breastmilk alone is the ideal nourishment for infants for the first six months of life as it contains all the nutrients, antibodies, hormones and antioxidants an infant needs to thrive. It protects babies from diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections, stimulates their immune systems and response to vaccination, and, according to some studies, confers cognitive benefits.

Breastfeeding also has many health and emotional benefits for the mother.

Less than half of infants are exclusively breastfed

Exclusive breastfeeding rates at less than four months (1995-2000)



*Guidelines issued during the 54th World Health Assembly in May 2001.

Source for all graphs and map: UNICEF, 2001.