

Breastfeeding in the Swan Hill District

Community and Parent Survey Results
August - September 2023



Community Health

Acknowledgement of Country

We would like to acknowledge First Nations communities of Wamba Wamba, Wadi Wadi, Barapa Barapa, Latji Latji and the Tatti Tatti people on whose land this work took place. We pay respect to all Elders past and present and honour their connection to the land and water.

Always was, Always will be, Aboriginal Land

Support

We understand that breastfeeding can be challenging and doesn't just happen. It can take time and practice to adjust to your family's needs, and it is common to need extra support throughout your pregnancy and feeding journey.

If you or someone you know needs help with breastfeeding, contact our Breastfeeding Support Service at Swan Hill District Health on 5033 9337.

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Introduction

Following the World Health Organisation's recommendations, Swan Hill District Health actively promotes exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond, for as long as the mother and child desire.

Aim

To explore the community's perception of breastfeeding and public breastfeeding, identify gaps in the available breastfeeding support services, and propose strategies for enhancing breastfeeding rates within the Swan Hill Local Government Area (LGA).

Breastfeeding Statistics:

Breastfeeding is a focus area due to Swan Hill LGA reporting considerably lower breastfeeding rates in comparison to the Australian average.

66%

of **Australian** infants are **exclusively breastfed** at 4 months

49.2%

of **Swan Hill LGA** infants are **exclusively breastfed** at 4 months

79.5%

of **Australian** infants are still **receiving breastmilk** at 4 months (non-exclusive)

53.8%

of **Swan Hill LGA** infants are still **receiving breastmilk** at 4 months (non-exclusive)

The **Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy (2019)** aims to achieve 50% of exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months by 2025.



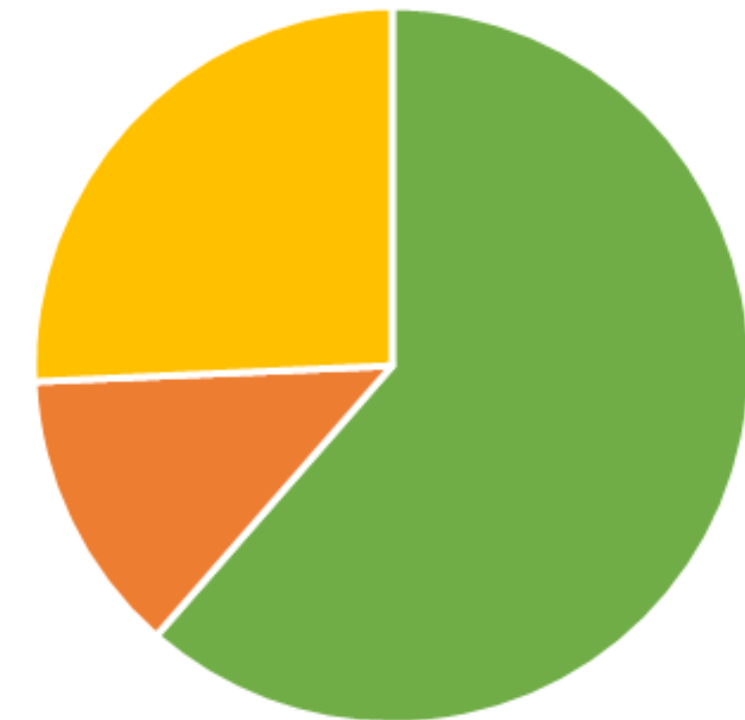
Community Survey

- 70 locals completed this survey, with 61 females and 9 males
- 87% were parents, with all male respondents fathers
- Age ranged from 18-70+
- 8% born in countries other than Australia, including New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore and Ukraine.
- 4% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants

Community Survey

- **96%** believe mothers can breastfeed “wherever, whenever”
- **99%** are comfortable when mothers breastfeed their baby in a public place
- **97%** of respondents are comfortable with breastfeeding being shown on posters and other media
- **13%** do not believe public breastfeeding is legally protected, a further **26%** were unsure

Do you believe breastfeeding is legally protected?

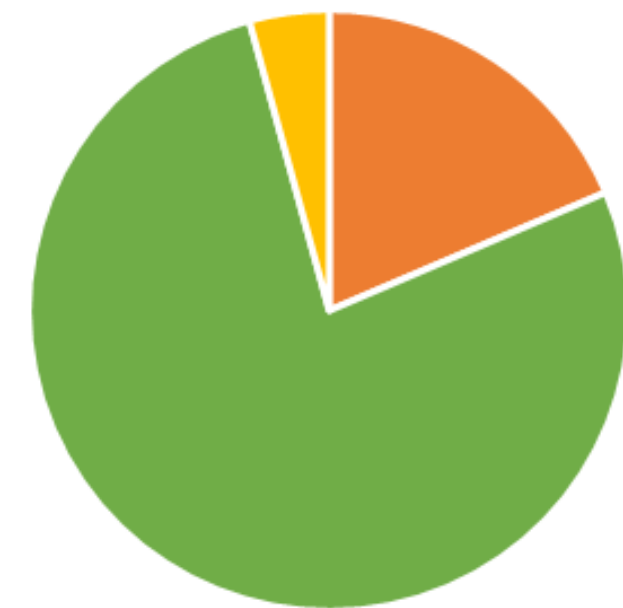


■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

Community Survey

- **99%** believe businesses and workplaces should support breastfeeding
- **73%** believe that it is important breastfeeding is visible in our community
- **19%** believe breastmilk and formula provide the same nutrition, and a further **4%** were unsure
- **77%** believe breastmilk is the best feeding method for infants and a further **14%** believe a combination both of breastmilk and formula

Do you think breastmilk and formula provide the same nutrition?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

What we heard from the community:



“It’s a beautiful thing to see. Mothers should be celebrated for it”

- Participant response in survey

“There shouldn’t be any opinions on breastfeeding in public. Babies need to be fed whenever and wherever they are””

- Participant response in survey

“I think it is becoming more accepted, but there is still work to do”

- Participant response in survey



Parent Survey

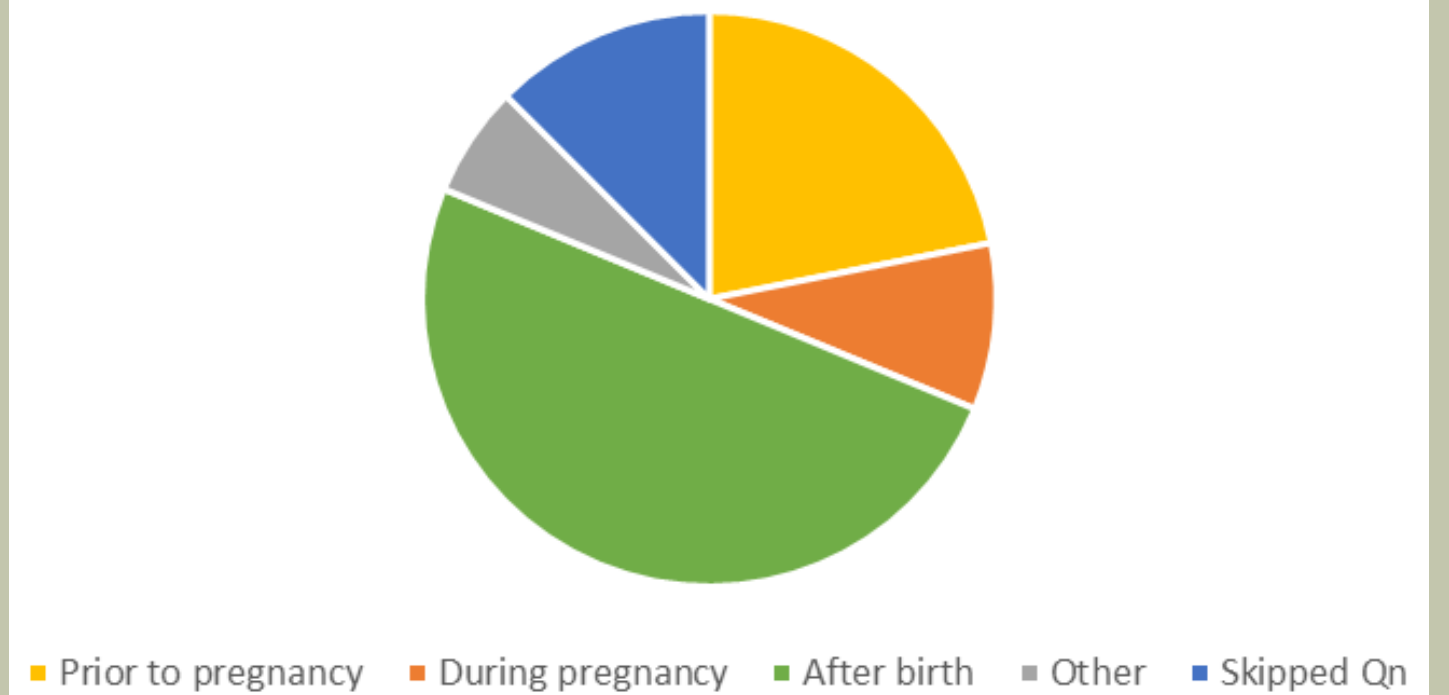
- 32 female participants
- Age range from 21 - 42 years
- 36% were first time parents
- 9% born in countries other than Australia, including Fiji, Indonesia and New Zealand
- 3% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders

Parent Survey

Feeding your child

- **22%** decided their infant feeding method prior to pregnancy with **50%** deciding feeding method following the birth of their baby
- **28%** say health professionals influenced their feeding decisions the most
- **72%** breastfeed for the nutritional and health benefits, **66%** for bonding and connection with **63%** due to costs and convenience
- **47%** used a combination of breastfeeding and formula to feed youngest child
- **19%** of respondents exclusively breastfeed to 6-8 months

When did you decide your infant feeding method?



Parent Survey

Feeding in public

- **66%** have breastfed their child in public, rating their experience with an average score of **7 out of 10**
- **56%** agreed they would be more comfortable breastfeeding in public if they saw others breastfeeding in the community
- **88%** agreed businesses and workplaces should support breastfeeding
- **22%** agreed that breasts becoming sexualised has impacted their decision to feed in public
- Lack of privacy, confidence and absence of facilities and spaces were identified as barriers to breastfeeding in public

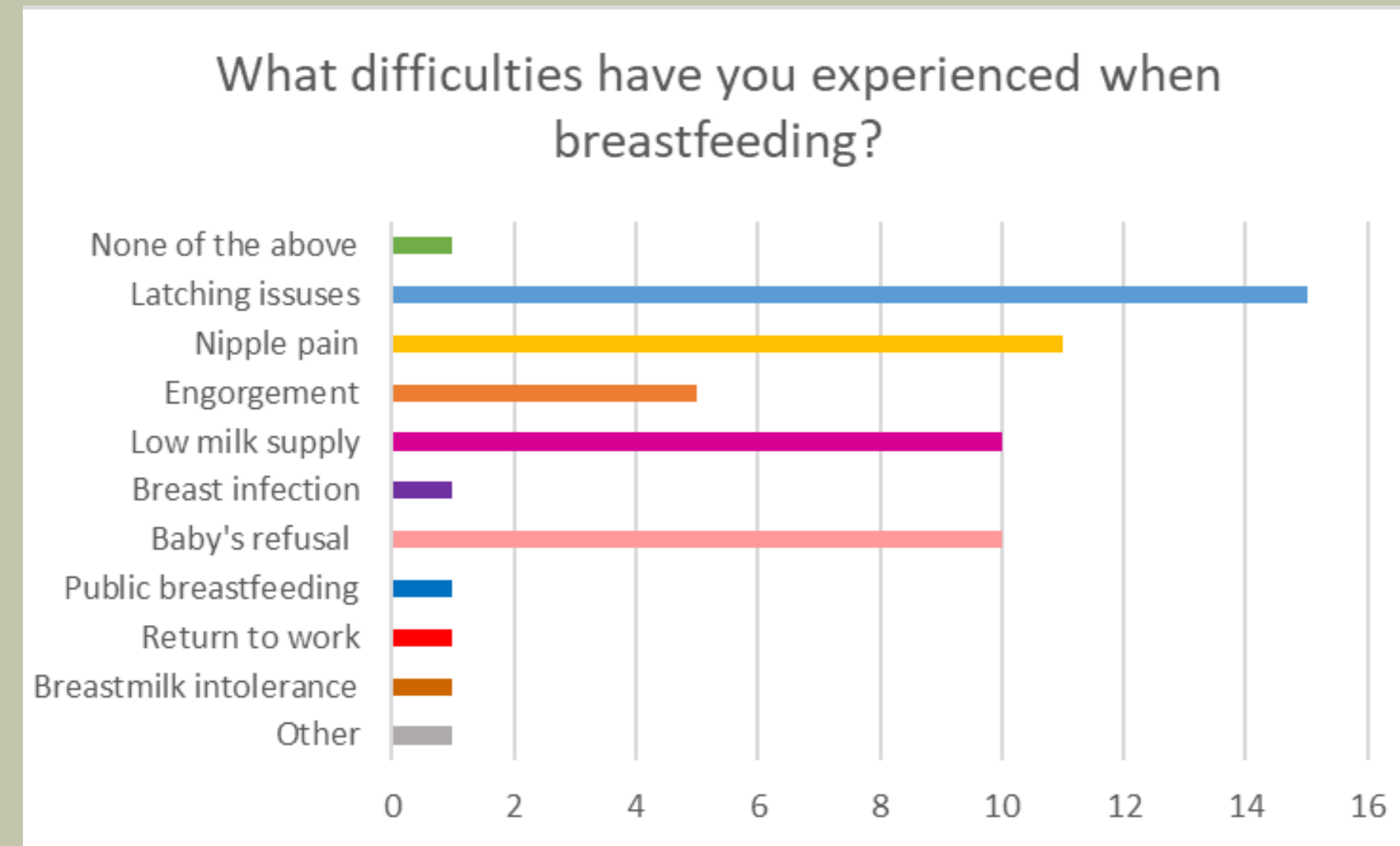
Have you breastfed in public?



Parent Survey

Challenges and Supports

- **75%** have experience difficulties when breastfeeding
- **63%** used health services or attended parent groups to support their breastfeeding journey
- **22%** of participants stated they would attend a breastfeeding support group in Swan Hill with a further **25%** expressing uncertainty
- **63%** agreed they would feel more comfortable if businesses and workplaces had breastfeeding welcome stickers and family friendly facilities



What we heard from parents:



“[Need] more dedicated locations or more known locations. I have no issues feeding in public but I don’t like to go into a business only to feed my baby”

- Participant response in survey

“Knowing that breastfeeding was the best thing for my baby was the biggest influence on my decision and that was backed by research”

- Participant response in survey

What we plan to do:

Explore pregnancy breastfeeding classes

Continue breastfeeding awareness and support

**Support connection between services to provide
consistent care to community**

Explore breastfeeding community support group

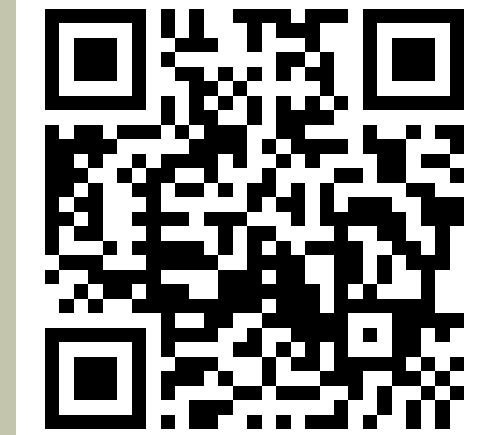




What do you think?:

Have any questions, feedback, suggestions or comments?

[Click here](#), scan the QR code or contact: thiggins@shdh.org.au



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