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## An investigation of maternal attitudes to breast-feeding in public and breast-feeding duration in four European centres

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There is wide variation in the duration of breast-feeding across Europe, which may be attributed in part to cultural differences in perceptions of the social acceptability of breast-feeding in public. This study aimed to investigate the relationship of maternal attitudes towards breast-feeding in public and breast-feeding duration in four European centres (Glasgow, Scotland; Granada, Spain; Stockholm, Sweden and Reggio-Emilia, Italy) participating in the EU-funded INFABIO project.

Participants ( $n$  389) were breast-feeding mothers of healthy, singleton births recruited from maternity wards within 3 d post partum participating in a longitudinal study investigating the association of diet and lifestyle on gastrointestinal infections and allergy in early infancy. Socio-demographic data and information on infant feeding practices and attitudes were collected by self-completed questionnaires at baseline and selected time points until 12 months of age. Infant feeding attitudes were assessed using the 17-item Iowa Infant Feeding Attitude Scale (IIFAS). Cox's proportional-hazards model was used to identify the risk factors independently associated with a shorter breast-feeding duration.

No significant difference was found in the overall breast-feeding attitudes of mothers between centres, but there were significant differences in a number of individual attitude items. Women in the two Northern European centres were more likely to disagree (Glasgow 90.4% and Stockholm 91.5%) that *women should not breast-feed in public places such as restaurants*, compared to women in the Southern European centres (Granada 58.3% and Reggio-Emilia 43.7%). Mothers who had a negative attitude to breast-feeding in public were less likely to have ever breast fed in public (OR = 0.06, 95% CI 0.02, 0.18); and those who had never breast fed in public were in turn more likely to discontinue breast-feeding earlier (HR = 1.51, 95% CI 1.11, 2.05).

Cultural differences and similarities in maternal breast-feeding attitudes were evident in the four centres. Maternal attitude to breast-feeding in public was a strong predictor of breast-feeding duration independent of maternal socio-demographic characteristics.

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