



medela 

Breastfeeding Challenges of Indian Moms

Research Report



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Every mother's breastfeeding journey is different. For many it's the first challenge they face on their motherhood journey. Some take to it with ease, and for others, the experience can be one of the most challenging problems they face on their Motherhood journey!

Keeping this in mind Momspresso & Medela conducted this research with an objective to understand the challenges faced by Indian mothers while breastfeeding.

The findings of our research will help us

- Understand what the common issues are and how mothers are coping with challenges related to their immediate environment - at home, at work, in public and so on
- Gain insights into what issues they face - medical or behavioural, and importantly, what support they received while breastfeeding
- Start a conversation leading to action on how to make the breastfeeding journey easier for mothers



- Online survey with 510 Mothers in Metro and Non-metro cities
- All the respondents went through a standard screening process after which the questionnaire link was shared with them to populate their response
- The respondents covered all age groups (25 – 45)



Age of mothers (%)

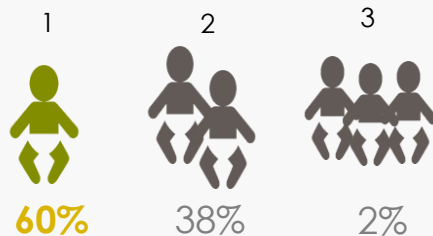
Less than 25	3
25 – 35	69
36 - 45	26
45+	2

Occupation (%)



Full Time Employee	25
Part Time Employee	7
Business Woman/ Entrepreneur	6
Homemaker	40
Freelancer	16
Others	6

Number of children per mother



Total Sample (N=510)

Breastfed? (%)

Fully	74
Partially	26



City of Residence (%)

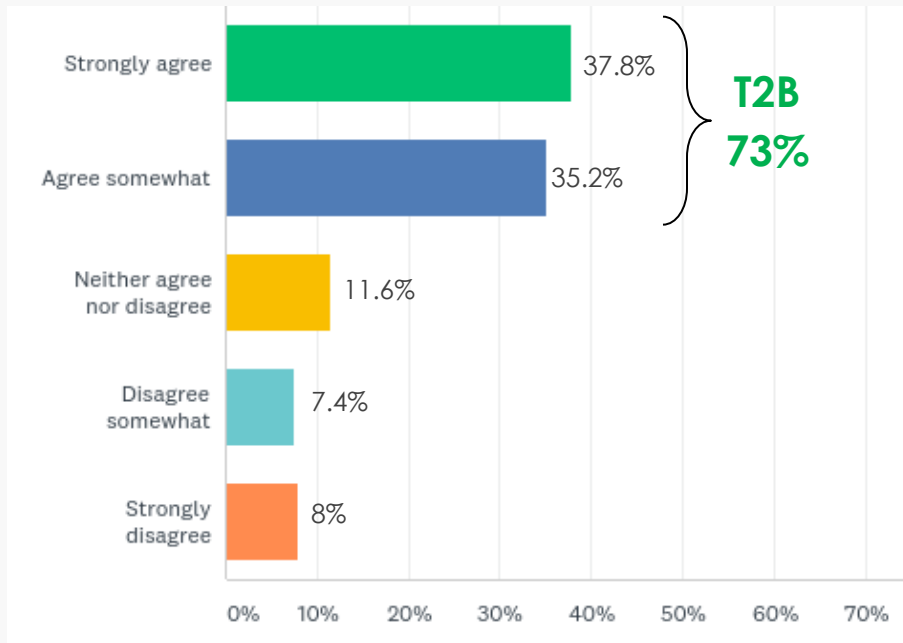
Delhi NCR	31
Mumbai	15
Bangalore	11
Pune	5
Hyderabad	5
Kolkata	5
Chennai	3
Others	26



Detailed Findings

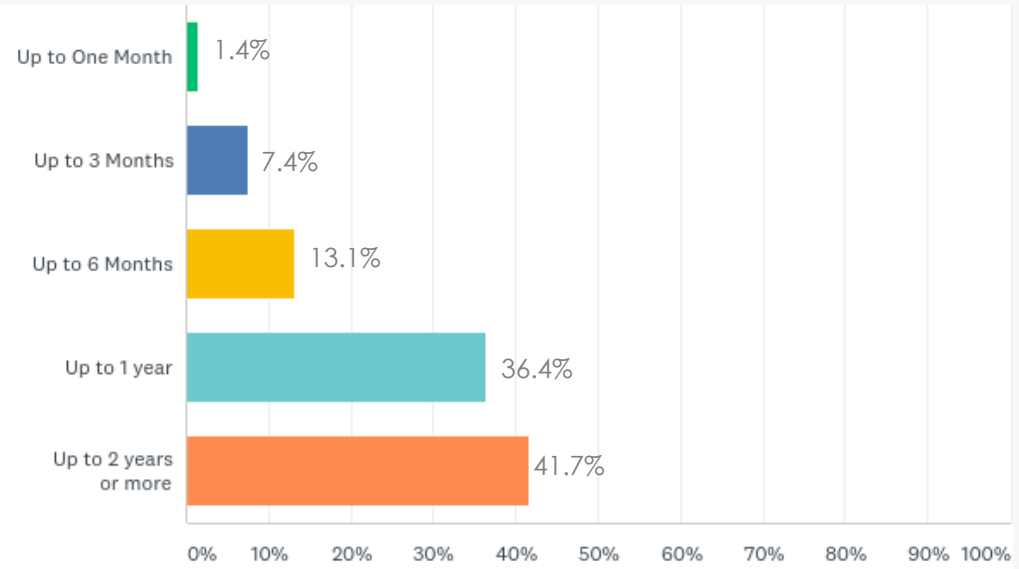
Over 70% Mothers feel breastfeeding is a challenging experience

Breastfeeding is the natural way to feed the baby, but that doesn't mean it comes naturally to mothers. It can take time to learn and most mums find it a challenging experience.



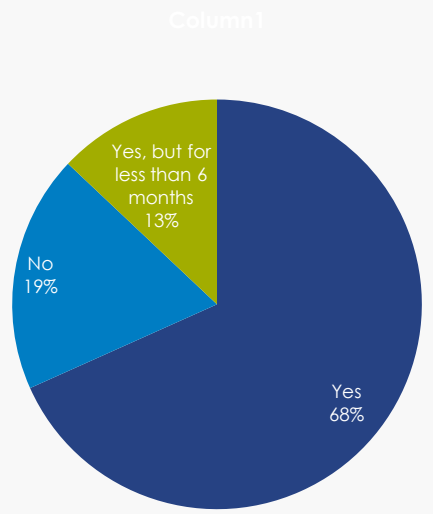
Q. "Breastfeeding is/was a challenging experience for me". Do you agree with this statement?

Almost **42%** mothers have **breastfed their kids for up to 2 years or more** and **68%** have **exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months**.



Almost 42% mothers have breastfed for more than a year

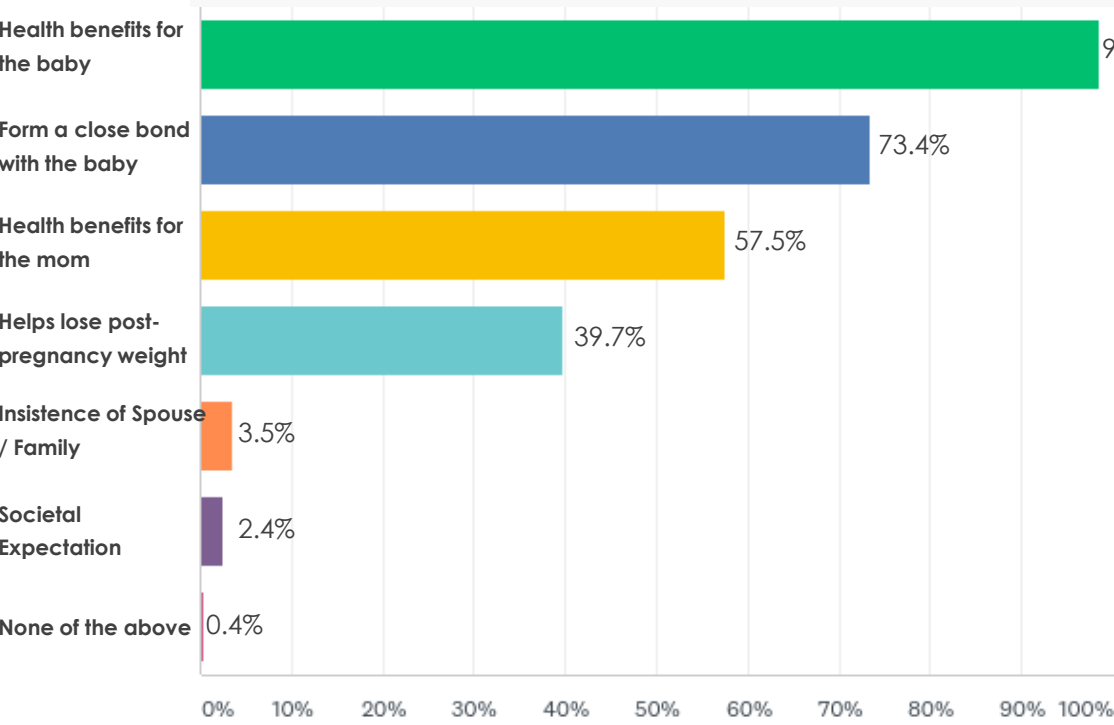
Q. How long did you breastfeed?



68% have exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months

Q. Did you exclusively breastfeed for the first 6 months (No formula/ any other item)?

Health benefits for the Baby and Mother, Bonding and Post-pregnancy weight loss are the main reasons for breastfeeding



Q. What are/were your main reasons to breastfeed your baby? (Select all that apply)

What Makes Breastfeeding A Challenging Experience



Latching, inadequate milk supply and having to eat healthy were the other top challenges faced by mothers

Medical Challenges	Rank 1 (Most Challenging)	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5 (Least Challenging)
Latching Problem	19.4%	14.9%	23.3%	15.9%	26.6%
Feeding the baby while in NICU (e.g. premature)	21.7%	10.2%	13.5%	7.0%	47.6%
Sore and cracked Nipples	22.3%	21.5%	20.7%	15.9%	19.6%
Engorged Breasts	20.7%	20.9%	23.9%	16.2%	18.2%
Mastitis	14.7%	13.7%	22.3%	10.6%	38.7%
Inadequate Milk Supply	17.2%	15.5%	17.2%	13.3%	36.8%
Nursing Strike (Baby not interested to feed)	17.4%	11.4%	17.2%	10.2%	43.8%
Baby had Acid Reflux	16.8%	11.5%	19.4%	11.9%	40.3%
Having to eat nutritious while breastfeeding	20.2%	13.5%	25.2%	11.7%	29.4%
Being pregnant again	20.4%	7.0%	12.5%	5.7%	54.4%

Q. Please rank these Medical challenges basis your experience from Rank 1(Most challenging) to Rank 5 (Least Challenging).

Depression and a feeling of loneliness other key challenges that do not get the recognition they deserve

Behavioural Challenges	Rank 1 (Most Challenging)	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5 (Least Challenging)
Baby Biting	21.1%	17.4%	25.0%	16.1%	20.3%
Long feeding sessions	28.2%	21.7%	18.8%	15.8%	15.5%
Too many feeding sessions	27.6%	24.7%	18.4%	14.9%	14.5%
Baby falling asleep while breastfeeding	24.3%	22.3%	21.3%	12.9%	19.2%
Waking up in the middle of the night	38.5%	19.6%	16.6%	9.2%	16.1%
Sterilizing of bottles	17.8%	14.7%	17.2%	11.7%	38.5%
Felt like a cow/machine	26.0%	15.1%	17.6%	11.5%	29.8%
Felt exhausted	27.9%	19.2%	21.5%	13.5%	17.8%
Post partum depression	21.1%	17.8%	20.3%	12.7%	27.9%
Felt lonely/isolated	22.1%	18.4%	15.3%	12.9%	31.3%

Q. Please rank these Behavioural challenges basis your experience from Rank 1(Most challenging) to Rank 5 (Least Challenging).

33% of working mothers found lack of nursing facilities to feed or express milk the biggest challenge in their workplace

The lack of sensitivity of the organizations vis-à-vis colleagues seems to be greater as unsupportive bosses and colleagues were lower on the list of workplace challenges

Workplace Challenges	Rank 1 (Most Challenging)	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5 (Least Challenging)
Lack of proper nursing facilities or resources at workplace	21.9%	10.2%	16.8%	9.4%	41.7%
Lack of time to express breast milk at work	20.2%	11.7%	16.1%	7.4%	44.6%
Unsupportive bosses	16.6%	8.4%	14.5%	9.9%	50.5%
Unsupportive/Unaware Colleagues	15.5%	7.8%	15.3%	10.9%	50.5%

Q. Please rank these Workplace challenges basis your experience from Rank 1(Most challenging) to Rank 5 (Least Challenging).

47% of mothers find feeding in a vehicle the biggest challenge while travelling

Lack of designated places makes **pumping on the trip in car/plane/train** another key challenge while travelling for 37% of mothers

Travel Challenges	Rank 1 (Most Challenging)	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5 (Least Challenging)
Feeding in a vehicle with other people around	29.9%	16.6%	19.2%	13.7%	20.5%
Pumping on the trip in car/plane/train	24.7%	12.3%	15.1%	11.5%	36.4%
Packing & storing the pumped milk	22.1%	12.7%	17.6%	10.8%	37.4%
Going through the security check-point	19.2%	14.3%	14.5%	12.9%	39.1%
Sterilizing the pump parts while travelling	22.9%	14.1%	13.1%	13.5%	36.4%

Q. Please rank these Travel-related challenges basis your experience from Rank 1(Most challenging) to Rank 5 (Least Challenging).

60% of mothers find the lack of proper feeding spaces the biggest challenge for breastfeeding in public places

Almost **44%** moms were uncomfortable with the **'raised eyebrows'** while breastfeeding in public, while **39%** moms **feel embarrassed** with the notion of breastfeeding in public.

Challenges while Nursing in Public	Rank 1 (Most Challenging)	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5 (Least Challenging)
Lack of proper feeding place in public	42.5%	17.0%	14.1%	10.6%	15.8%
Societal stigma/Raised eyebrows	27.4%	16.8%	18.0%	15.3%	22.5%
Feel shy or embarrassed	24.5%	14.7%	18.9%	15.1%	26.8%
Perceived restrictions on personal freedom	21.3%	15.3%	23.3%	14.5%	25.6%

Q. Please rank these 'Nursing in Public' challenges basis your experience from Rank 1(Most challenging) to Rank 5 (Least Challenging).

30% of mothers find balancing family demands and work a challenge

This is despite more than **60% of mothers** suggesting they **get support from their spouse and other family**.

Challenges at Home	Rank 1 (Most Challenging)	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5 (Least Challenging)
Lack of support from family members	14.3%	7.8%	16.05%	14.7%	47.2%
Lack of support from spouse	13.7%	5.3%	11.9%	9.9%	59.1%
Balancing the family demands and work	18.6%	11.7%	21.9%	16.2%	31.5%
Pressure from family to introduce formula	13.9%	10.4%	17.6%	10.8%	47.4%
Sibling jealousy	13.1%	6.3%	11.1%	7.2%	62.2%

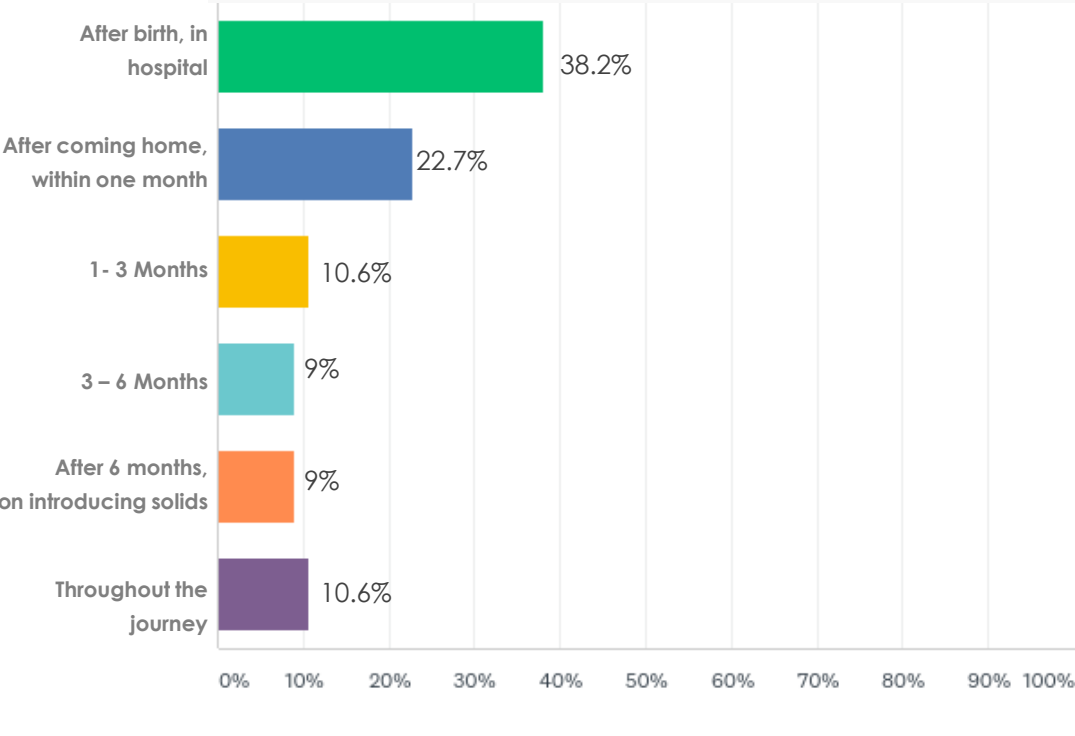
Q. Please rank these challenges at home basis your experience from Rank 1(Most challenging) to Rank 5 (Least Challenging).

	Challenges	(%)
Early Days Challenges	Sore and cracked Nipples	34.7
	Latching Problem	
	Engorged Breasts	
Exhaustion	Waking up in the middle of the night	31.8
	Too many feeding sessions	
	Long feeding sessions	
	Felt exhausted	
Baby Issues	Baby falling asleep while breastfeeding	26.61
	Baby Biting	
Supply Issues	Adequate Milk Supply	22.7
Breastfeeding in public	Lack of proper feeding place in public	17.81
Depression	Post partum depression	17.42

The top challenges a mother faces w.r.to breastfeeding are:

1. Early Days Challenges
2. Exhaustion
3. Baby Issues
4. Supply Issues
5. Breastfeeding in public
6. Depression

Q. From the above set of statements, select the top 5 most challenging aspects of your breastfeeding journey?



For new moms, the first week after delivery can be really challenging as they are trying to figure out how to breastfeed.

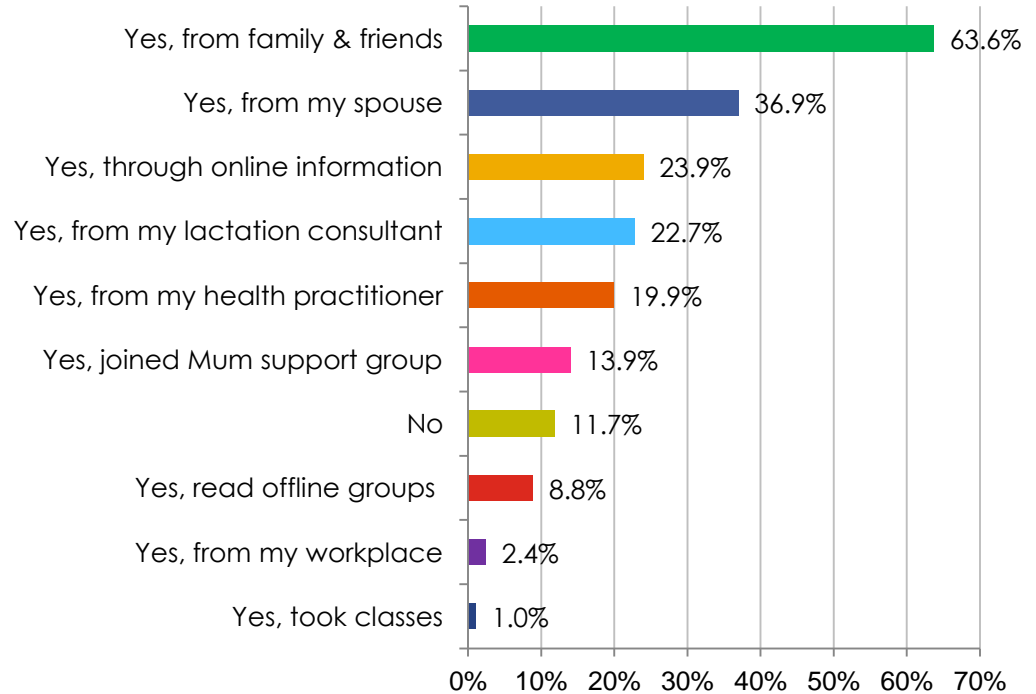
Almost **38%** moms have found the initial days **after birth, in hospital** to be the most challenging time of their breastfeeding journey.

Q .When did you start facing the challenges during your breastfeeding journey?

Support from family is fundamental to successful breastfeeding. **64% moms** received this support during their breastfeeding journey.

Another strong support pillar is **the spouse**. Almost **37% moms** received the support from their spouse to make breastfeeding a comfortable journey for them.

Growing penetration of internet and increased exposure makes **online information** the 3rd most helpful attribute (**24%**) for breastfeeding mothers, leaving behind the medical advice.



Q . Did you receive any help during your breastfeeding journey? (Select all that apply)

- **More than 70% Moms feel that breastfeeding is a challenging experience**
- **Yet, 78% of Mothers have breastfed for a year or more**
 - Almost 42% mothers have breastfed their babies for up to 2 years or more
 - 68% moms have exclusively breastfed for 6 months
 - The top 3 reasons mothers want to breastfeed their babies:
 - Health benefits for the baby
 - Forming a close bond with the baby
 - Health benefits for the Mom



- **Top 6 challenges faced by breastfeeding mothers:**

- Early Days Issues, when the mother is still trying to figure out breastfeeding
- Tiredness and Exhaustion attached to breastfeeding
- Baby related issues (acid reflux, nursing strike etc.)
- Supply Issues (Milk supply)
- Breastfeeding in public
- Depression



- **Initial days are the most challenging for breastfeeding moms**

- 38% moms feel that the most challenging period of their breastfeeding journey was the initial days after birth.

- **64% moms received support from their family to make their breastfeeding journey smooth**

- Family and spouse were the biggest support pillars for moms during their breastfeeding journey

THANK YOU
