

The Skåne Panel

Breastfeeding: Knowledge and attitudes

A Swedish civic survey. May/June 2020

Conducted by Indikator, the Institute for Quality Indicators



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Results in brief	3
Summary	4
Background: The Skåne Panel	5
The survey on breastfeeding	6
The respondents	8
Results	9
Breastfeeding attitudes	10
Knowledge of breastfeeding	17
Comparisons between groups	20
Appendix: questionnaire	42



RESULTS IN BRIEF

99 percent
of the Scanian
population agree
that
breastfeeding is
natural

4 out of 10
agree that
breastfeeding in
public places
should be done
discreetly

7 out of 10
believe that
Swedish health
care should
promote
breastfeeding
more actively

**Lack of
knowledge**
The results
indicate a
widespread
uncertainty
about the health
benefits of
breastfeeding

3 out of 10
are aware that
breastfeeding
reduces the risk
of breast cancer



SUMMARY

The report *Breastfeeding: Knowledge and attitudes*, shows that attitudes towards breastfeeding in general, are positive and supportive among the Scanian population. However, attitudes towards breastfeeding in public are not solely supportive. A significant proportion of the population agree that breastfeeding in public places should be done discreetly and three out of ten find bottle-feeding in public more acceptable than breastfeeding.

The results further indicate a widespread uncertainty and a lack of knowledge about the health benefits of breastfeeding. Despite the uncertainty, a majority of the respondents support the promotion of breastfeeding. Eight out of ten agree with the idea of investing in breastfeeding care and support due to the environmental benefits of breastfeeding compared to feeding with industrially produced breast-milk substitutes.

This report provides valuable information about the underlying factors that influence whether and how Scanian women choose to breastfeed. Raising awareness about the health benefits of breastfeeding among the Scanian population is a public health priority with far-reaching benefits for individuals, families and communities.

September 2020

Anna Kjellbom and Louise Assarsson

Centre of Excellence Women's health. Centre of Excellence Child Health Services, Region Skåne, Sweden



BACKGROUND: THE SKÅNE PANEL

Background and aim

The Skåne Panel is a web-based civic panel consisting of approximately 9,000 people who regularly participate in online surveys. The goal of the Panel is to gain greater insight into citizens knowledge, expectations, and attitudes towards the activities conducted by the Regional council of Scania in southern Sweden (Region Skåne).

Method of recruitment

The Panel was launched in 2013. 3,700 panellists were initially recruited by email. The selection was randomly conducted and after the initial recruitment, the composition of the Panel is reviewed annually in order to evaluate its demographic representativeness. Additional panellists were recruited in 2017 and in 2020.

Representativeness

The Panel reflects the Scanian population from the age of 16. Age, gender and geographic factors are weighted variables with the aim of achieving a representative population sample. Information about the respondents educational level and country of birth are included unweighted variables.

Compared to current demographics in Scania, respondents with immigrant background are underrepresented in the Panel.



THE SURVEY ON BREASTFEEDING

Background and purpose

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the child's first six months. Thereafter, children should be given nutritious complementary foods and continued breastfeeding up to the age of two years or beyond.

Despite the well-established health benefits for both mothers and children, breastfeeding rates are decreasing in Sweden and Swedish children are breastfed far below the WHO recommendations.

The explaining factors behind the declining breastfeeding rates in Sweden are likely to be multifactorial. Previous studies highlight the importance of access to breastfeeding support, skilled healthcare workers and the inappropriate marketing of breast-milk substitutes. In addition, social norms, community support and attitudes towards public breastfeeding are important contributing factors.

To address the declining breastfeeding rates and its associated negative impact on public health, the Centre of Excellence Women's health and the Centre of Excellence Child Health Services initiated a regional strategy for breastfeeding in 2020. The strategy aims to protect, promote and support breastfeeding by giving those who wish and intend to breastfeed the best conditions to do so successfully.

By exploring breastfeeding attitudes and knowledge among the Scanian population, the survey aimed to gain a deeper understanding about the underlying factors that influence whether and how Scanian women choose to breastfeed

The questions in the survey are based on questions from scientific studies on breastfeeding attitudes.



THE SURVEY ON BREASTFEEDING

Implementation

The survey was conducted in May/June 2020 by Indikator, the Institute for Quality Indicators (Institutet för kvalitetsindikatorer).

Method

The respondents are recruited members of the web-based Skåne Panel. Data was collected from an online questionnaire accessed by email. Three reminders were sent out during the field period. In total 5,949 panelists completed the questionnaire corresponding a response rate of 68 percent.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 23 questions. The final question was an open-ended question.

Analysis

The results are presented for each question. Comparisons between groups have been performed using statistical analysis.

For representativeness, data has been weighted according to geographical area, gender, and age.

The report

Results are presented in diagrams and in text.

Contacts

Project manager, Indikator: Anna Tykkyläinen and Ida Låstbom.

Regional council of Scania (Region Skåne): Tamas Krizsán and Johan Lidmark, Anna Kjellbom and Louise Assarsson.



THE RESPONDENTS

	Percentage	Quantity		Percentage	Quantity
Age (years)			Level of education		
16 - 29	12.9%	766	Compulsory school	13.5%	804
30 - 44	18.1%	1,075	Upper-secondary school	43.6%	2,591
45 - 59	28.2%	1,677	University	40.9%	2,431
60 - 69	19.0%	1,132	No completed education	0.6%	38
70 or older	21.8%	1,299	Refrained from disclosing	1.4%	85
<i>Total</i>		5,949	<i>Total</i>		5,949
Occupation			Gender		
Employed	54.1%	3,219	Women	51.5%	3,061
Student	9.4%	561	Men	48.2%	2,869
Sick-listed	1.2%	71	Other	0.3%	19
Unemployed	2.3%	137	<i>Total</i>		5,949
Pensioners	29.3%	1,743	Area of the region		
On leave of absence/parental leave	0.1%	7	NW	24.6%	1,464
Other	2.8%	168	NE	15.7%	935
Refrained from disclosing	0.7%	43	SW	49.7%	2,954
<i>Total</i>		5,949	SE	10.0%	596
Country of birth			<i>Total</i>		5,949
Sweden	90.9%	5,408	Division into local geographic areas*		
Other Nordic country	2.5%	149	A Metropolitan area with commuter communities	36.3%	2,157
Other European country	4.0%	235	B Large town with commuter communities nearby	41.5%	2,468
A non-European country	2.3%	137	C Small urban area with commuter communities nearby or rural municipality	22.3%	1,324
Unsure/refrained from disclosing	0.3%	20	<i>Total</i>		5,949
<i>Total</i>		5,949			

*Division into local government areas in accordance with SALAR's municipal group division
The reporting of background variables is based on unweighted data.

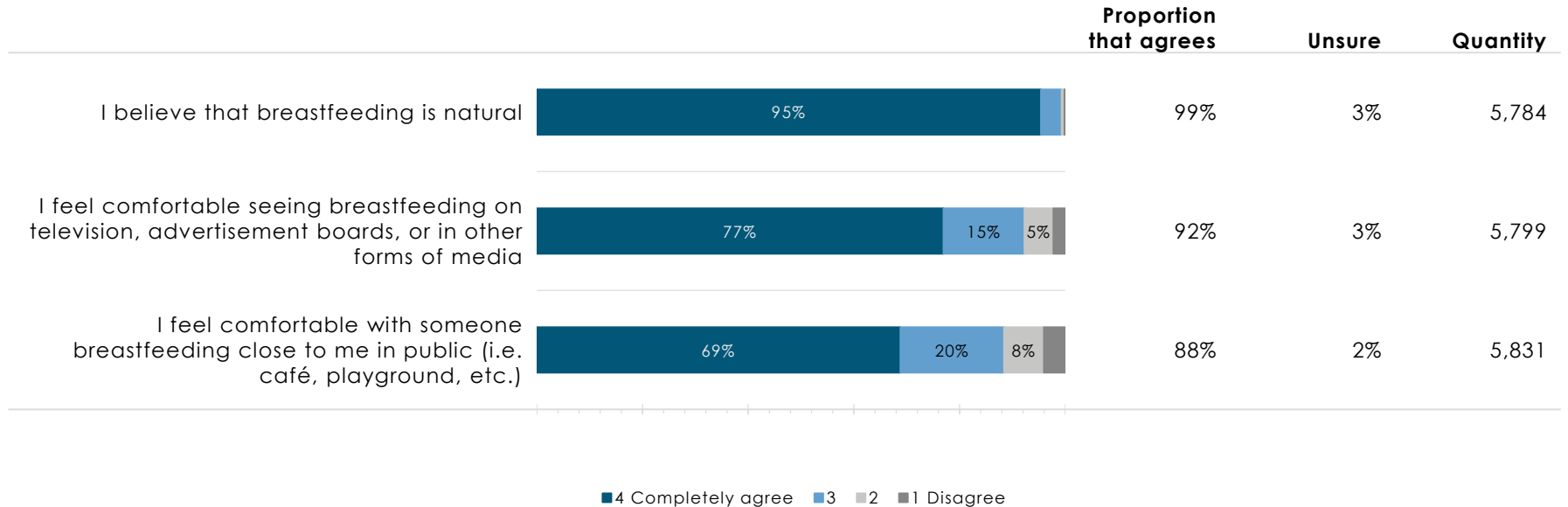


Results



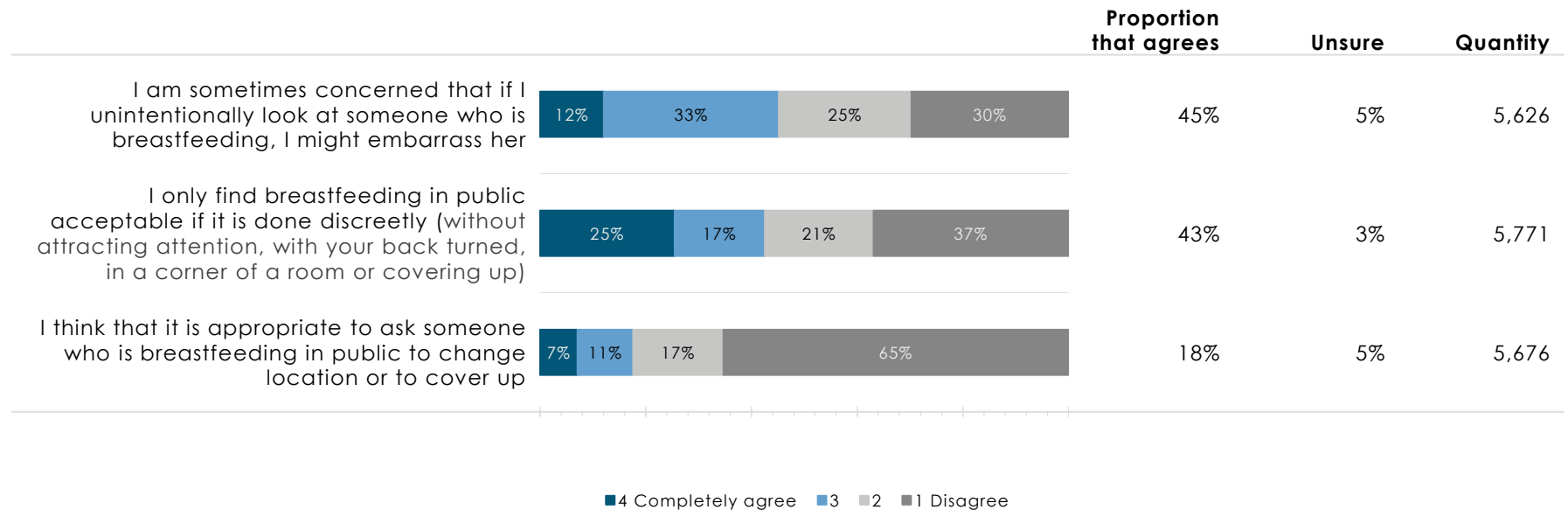
Breastfeeding attitudes

99 percent of respondents agree that breastfeeding is natural. A vast majority are comfortable seeing breastfeeding on television and in other forms of media. A majority feel comfortable with public breastfeeding. Respondents with the highest educational level are fully comfortable to a larger extent than other groups. Women feel fully comfortable to a larger extent than men. There are no significant differences between people born in different countries or due to geographical location.



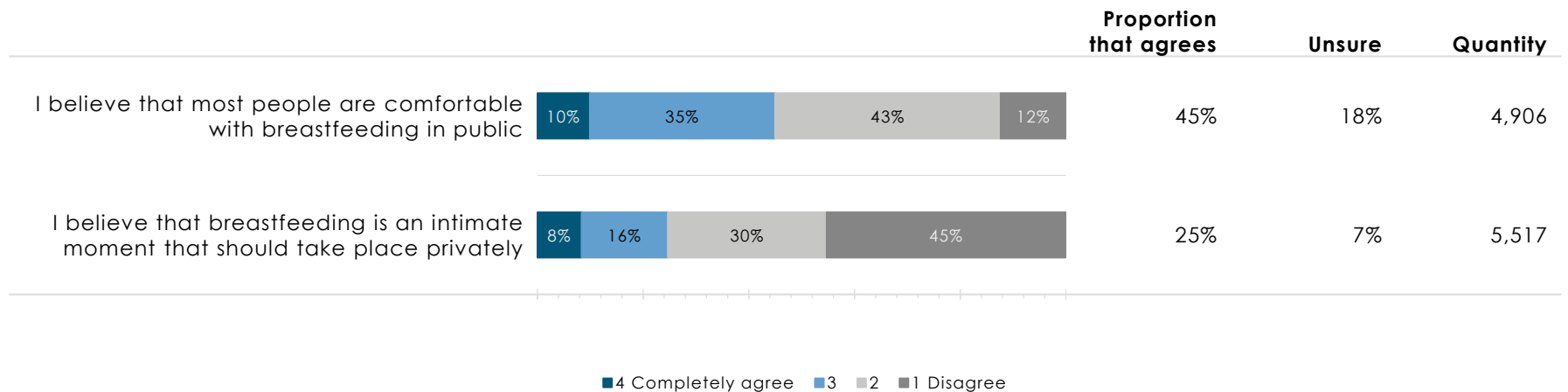
Breastfeeding attitudes

Four out of ten believe that it is only acceptable to breastfeed in public if it is done discreetly. Almost half of the respondents express concerns about unintentionally embarrass someone who is breastfeeding. Men, students and younger respondents were more concerned compared to other respondents. A majority find it inappropriate to ask someone who is breastfeeding in public to change location or to cover up.



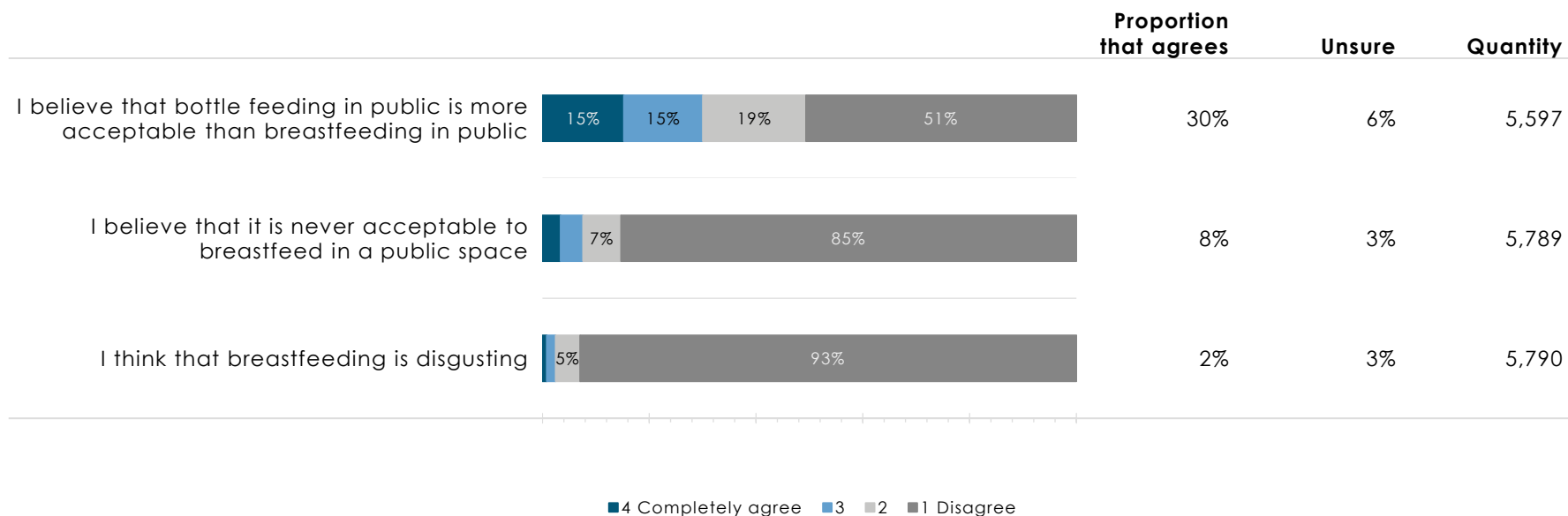
Breastfeeding attitudes

Half of the respondents do not believe that most people are comfortable with breastfeeding in public spaces. (Please note that 18 percent replied unsure). The attitude that breastfeeding is an intimate moment that should take place in a private setting becomes more prevalent with age, Respondents with the highest level of education are least likely to consider breastfeeding as an intimate moment that should take place privately. There are no significant differences according to gender or geographical location.



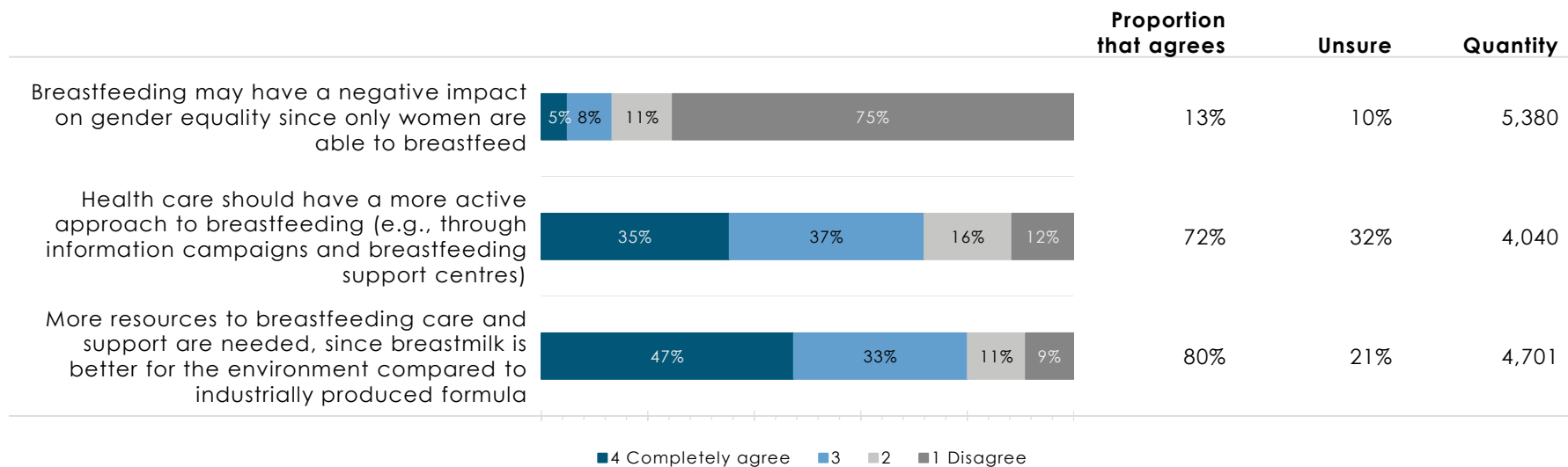
Breastfeeding attitudes

Close to three out of ten believe that it is more acceptable to bottle feed a child in public compared to breastfeeding in public. A small proportion of respondents agree that breastfeeding in public is never acceptable. Two percent completely agree that breastfeeding is disgusting.



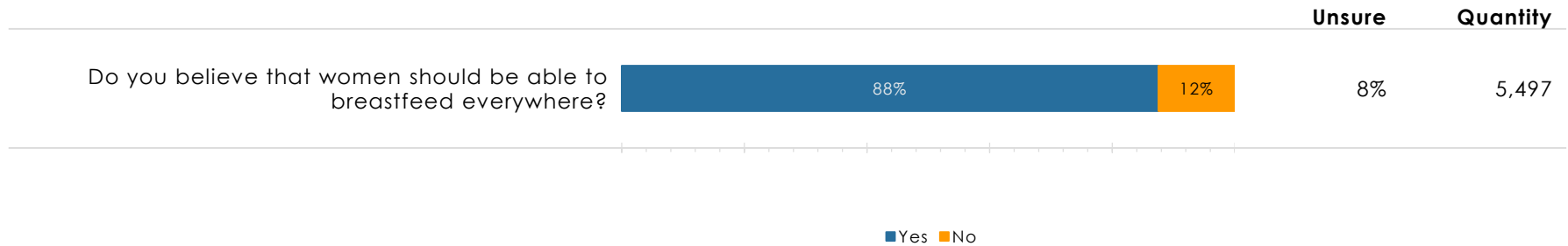
Breastfeeding attitudes

A majority disagree that breastfeeding may negatively affect gender equality. More women and respondents with a higher level of education agree that gender equality may be negatively affected by breastfeeding compared to other groups. A majority of respondents agree that more resources for breastfeeding care and support are needed, due to the environmental benefits compared to industrially produced breast-milk substitutes.



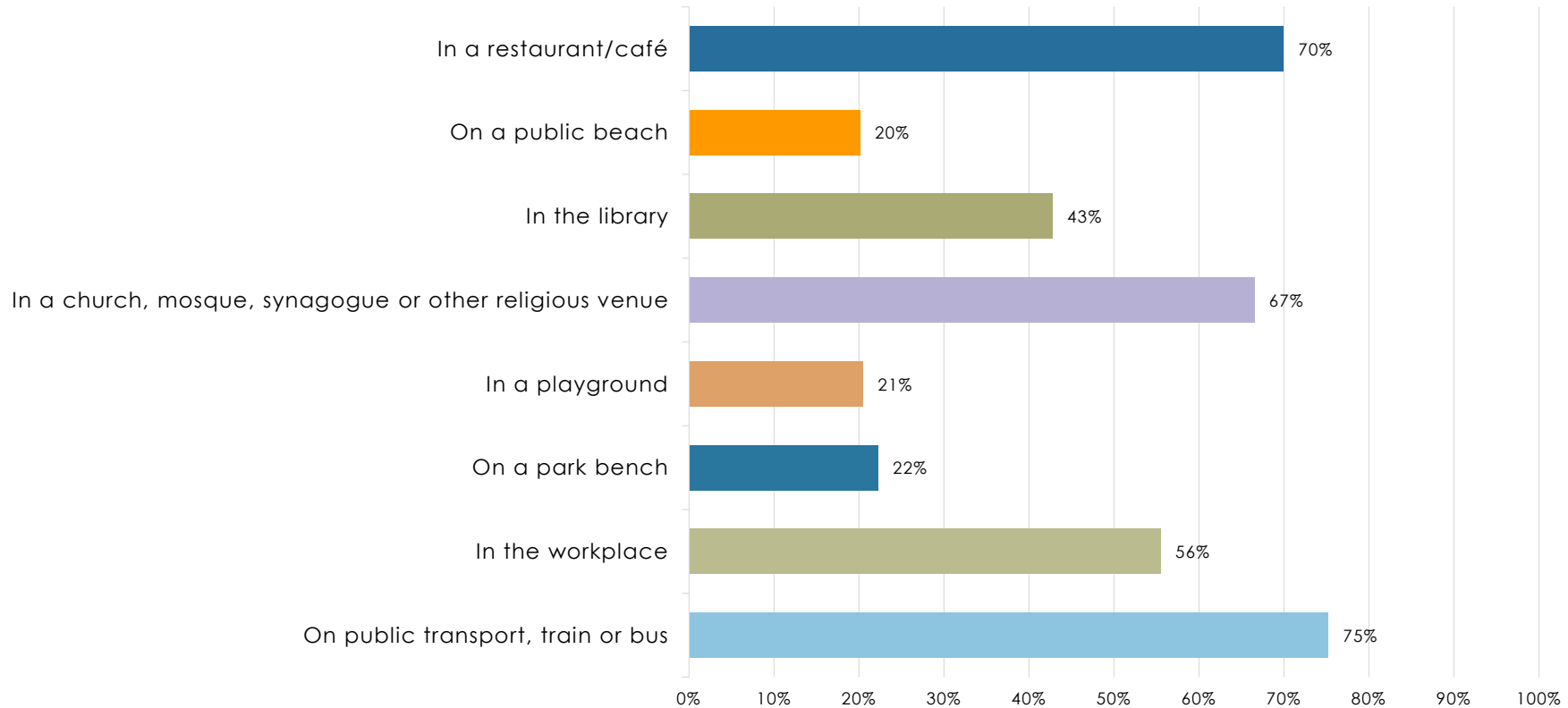
Breastfeeding attitudes

A majority of respondents believe that women should be able to breastfeed everywhere. There are no significant differences according to gender, geographical location or country of birth. The respondents who disagreed were asked to specify the locations that were perceived as inappropriate (next page).



In total 685 answers of perceived inappropriate locations for breastfeeding are presented below.

In which of the following locations do you believe it is inappropriate to breastfeed?

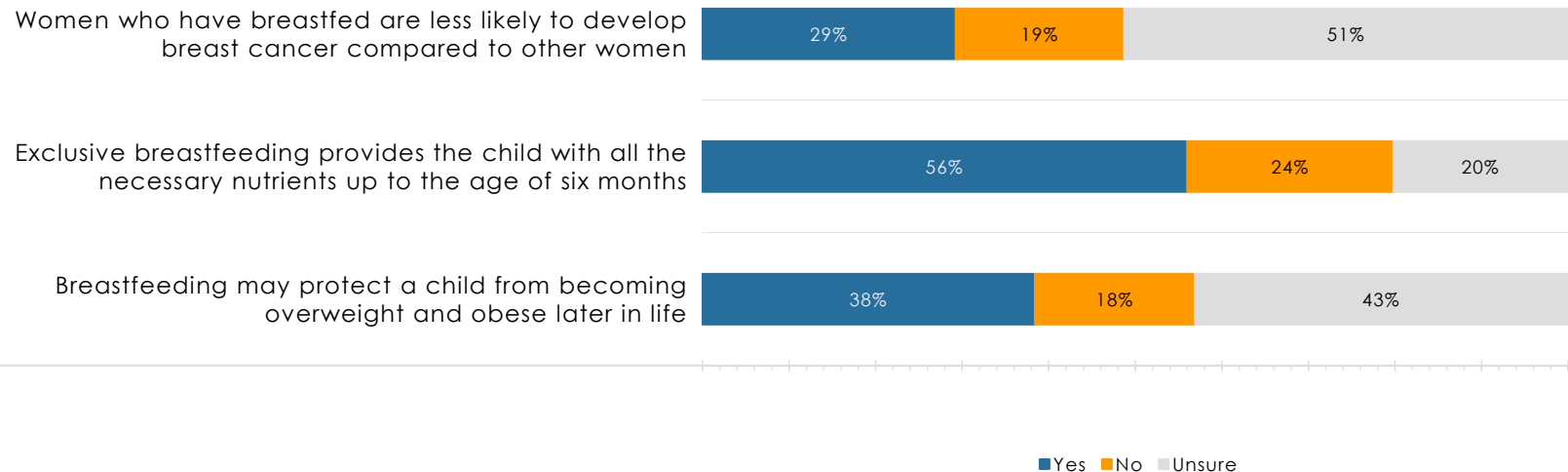


N = 685



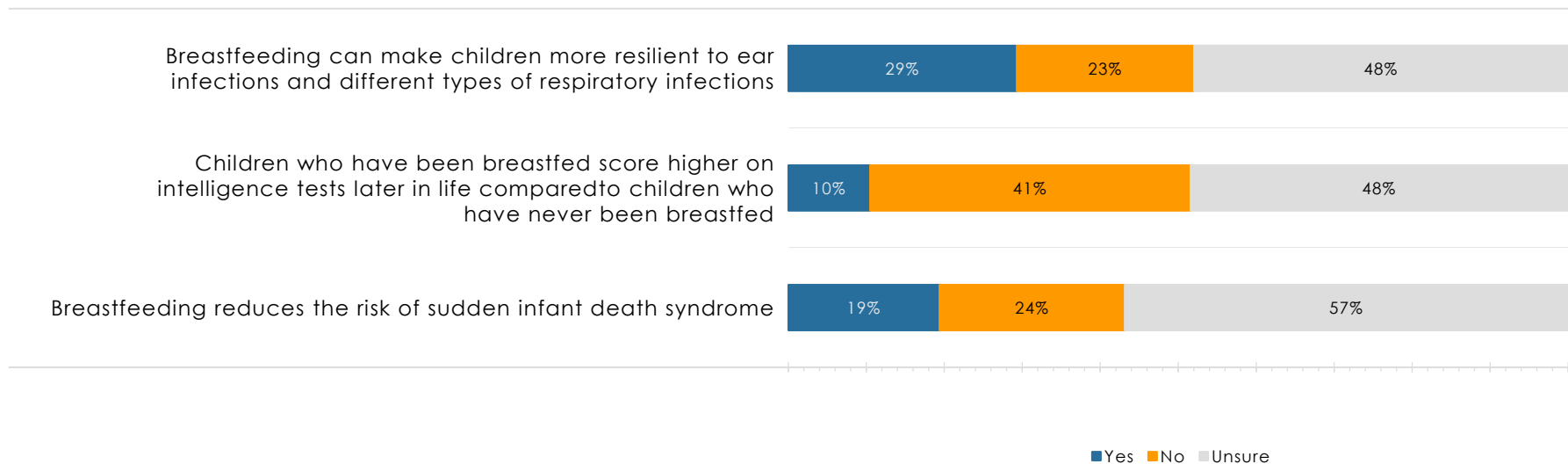
Knowledge of breastfeeding

A minority of respondents agree that breastfeeding lowers the risk of breast cancer and may protect from child obesity. Men are more uncertain about the health benefits of breastfeeding compared to women. Approximately half of the respondents are aware that exclusive breastfeeding provides all the nutrients that the child needs for the first six months of life.



Knowledge of breastfeeding

A minority of respondents are aware that breastfeeding reduces the risk of respiratory tract infections and sudden infant death syndrome. One in ten agree that breastfeeding is associated with higher IQ-test scores later in life.



IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

In total, 985 respondents answered to the final open-ended question: "Is there anything you would like to add?". A selected number of representative quotes are presented below:

What's best for the child is the top priority. To not feed a child just because an adult might feel embarrassed is NOT right!

What's most important when it comes to breastfeeding is that you get to choose if and how you want to do it... and that it should be easy to get help if needed.

The fact that breastfeeding may have an impact on gender equality does not mean you should not breastfeed. Breastfeeding needs to come first. However, losing working hours when staying home taking care of your children should be compensated somehow.

Breastfeeding is good, very good, but not all women are able to breastfeed. If so, they should not have to feel guilty about it!

My experience, as a new parent, is that people in health care have varying attitudes towards breastfeeding. I think it is important to emphasize that there is nothing wrong with bottle-feeding. Breastfeeding does not work out for everyone. At the same time, everyone who wants to breastfeed should be able to do so everywhere.

To those who consider breastfeeding as unnatural - go ahead and try stop breathing, Breastfeeding and breathing are just as natural.

I think it would be a good idea to launch intense information campaigns about breastfeeding. If people understood the benefits, acceptance would improve.

Formula-milk is an excellent and equal alternative to breastfeeding!

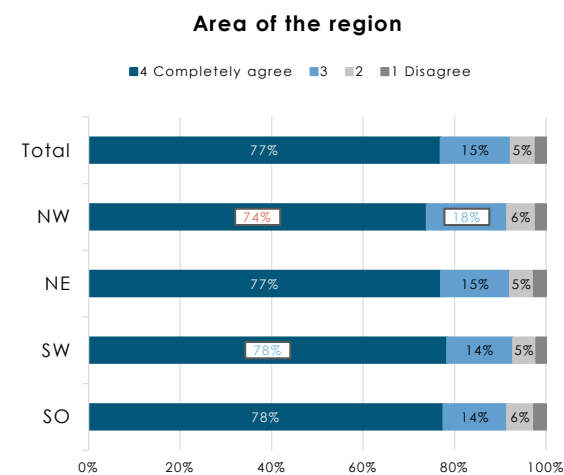
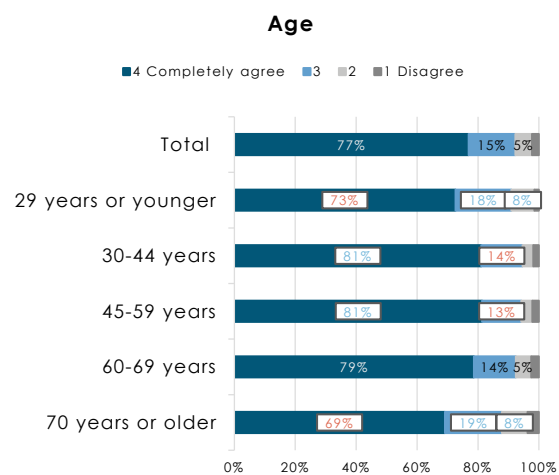
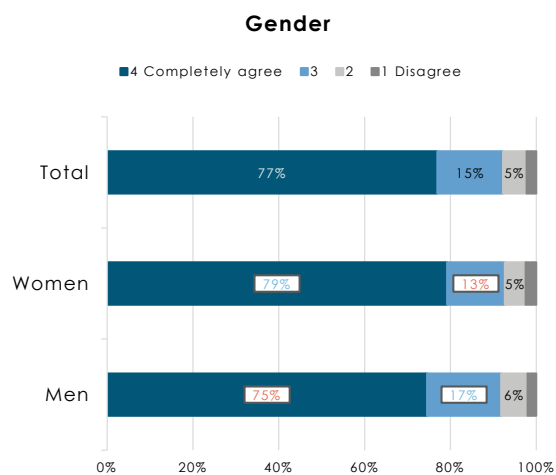


Comparisons between groups



Questions about attitudes

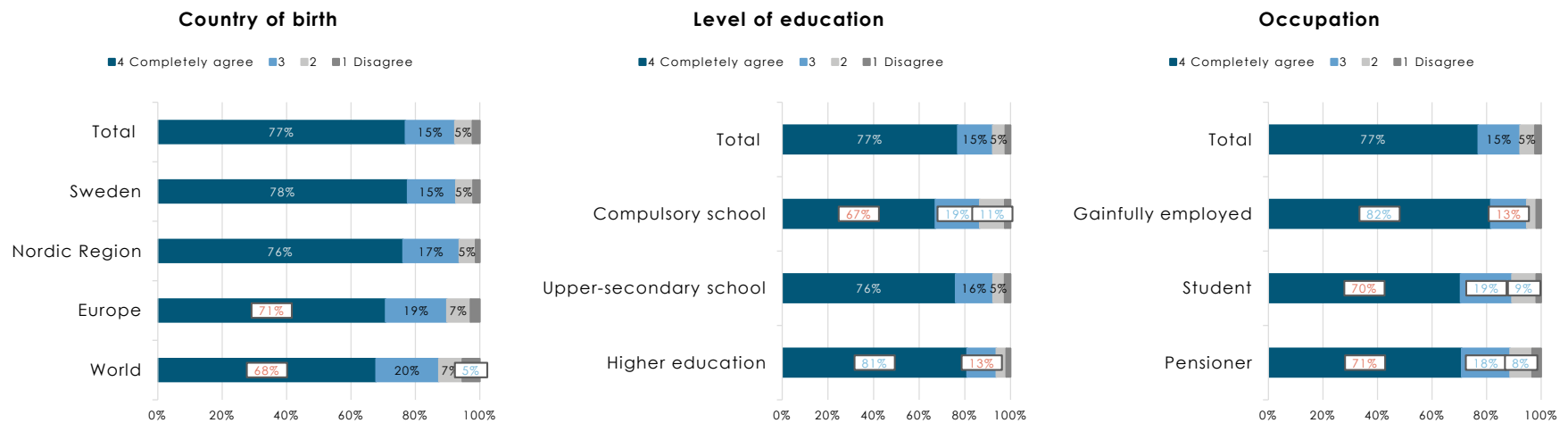
I feel comfortable seeing breastfeeding on television, advertisement boards, or in other forms of media



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

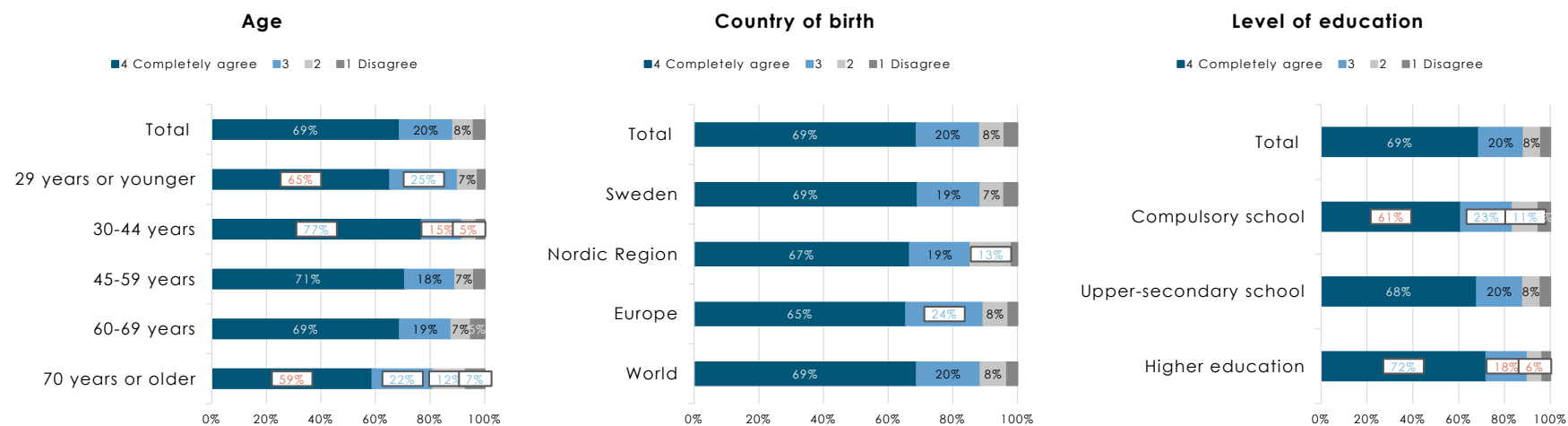
I feel comfortable seeing breastfeeding on television, advertisement boards, or in other forms of media



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total.
A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

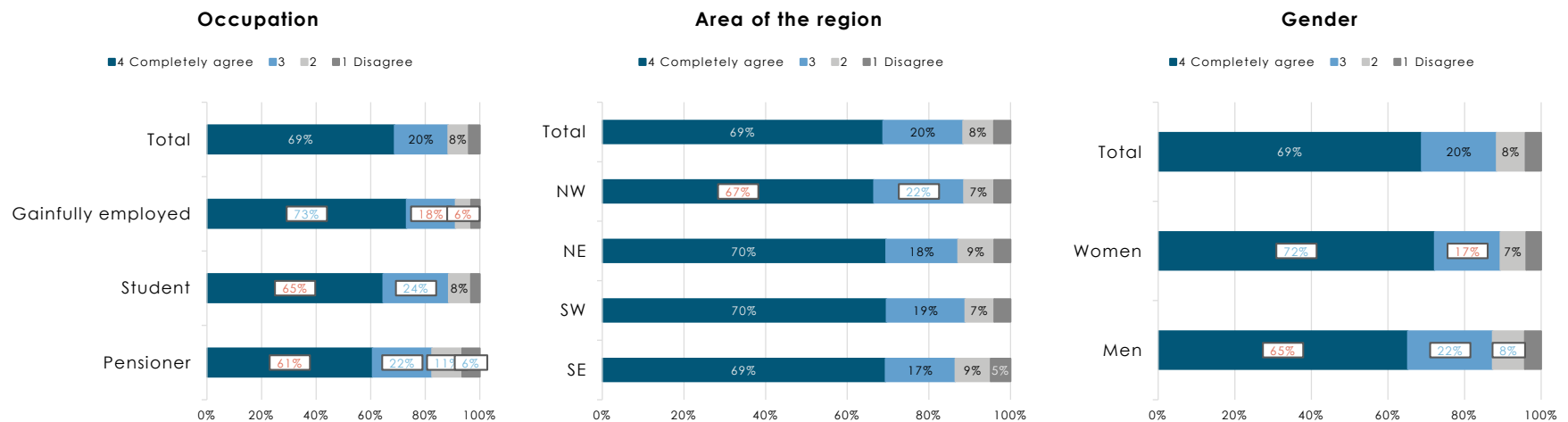
I feel comfortable with someone breastfeeding close to me in public (i.e. cafés, playground, etc.)



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

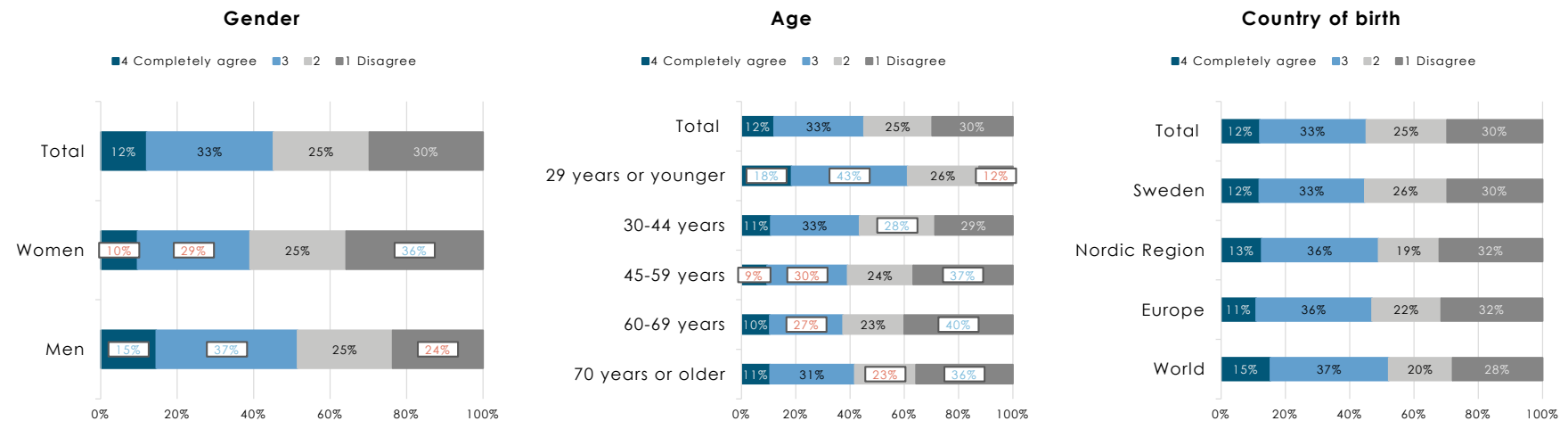
I feel comfortable with someone breastfeeding close to me in public (i.e. cafés, playground, etc.)



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

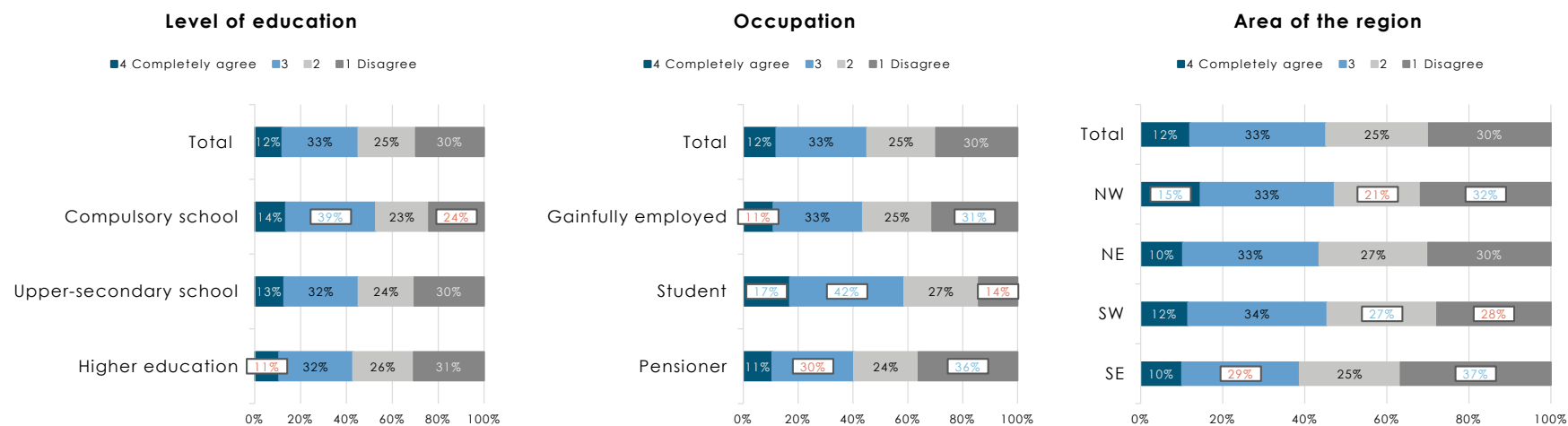
I am sometimes concerned that if I unintentionally look at someone who is breastfeeding, I might embarrass her.



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

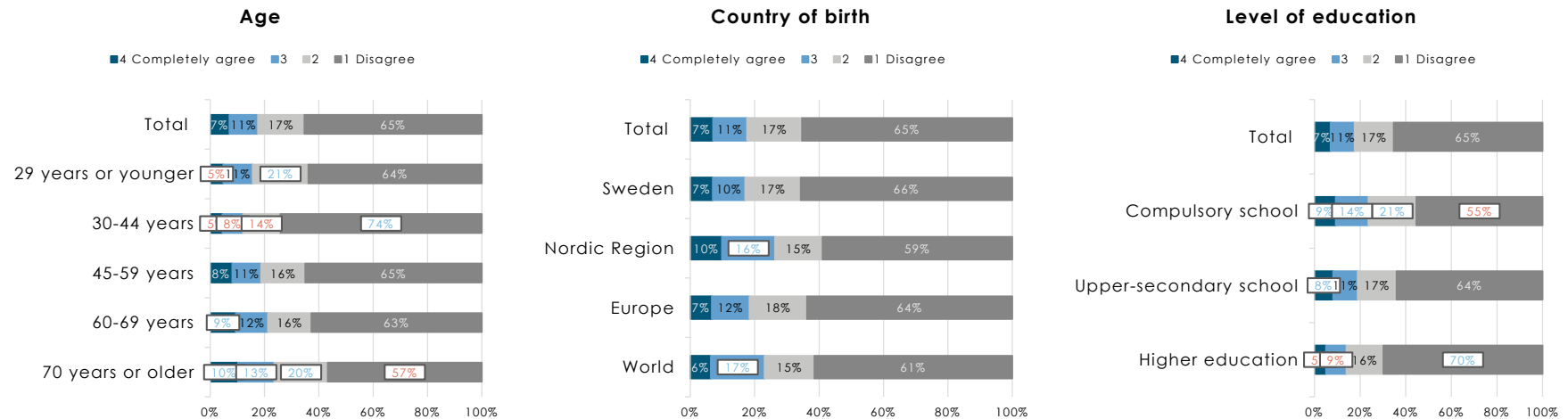
I am sometimes concerned that if I unintentionally look at someone who is breastfeeding, I might embarrass her.



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

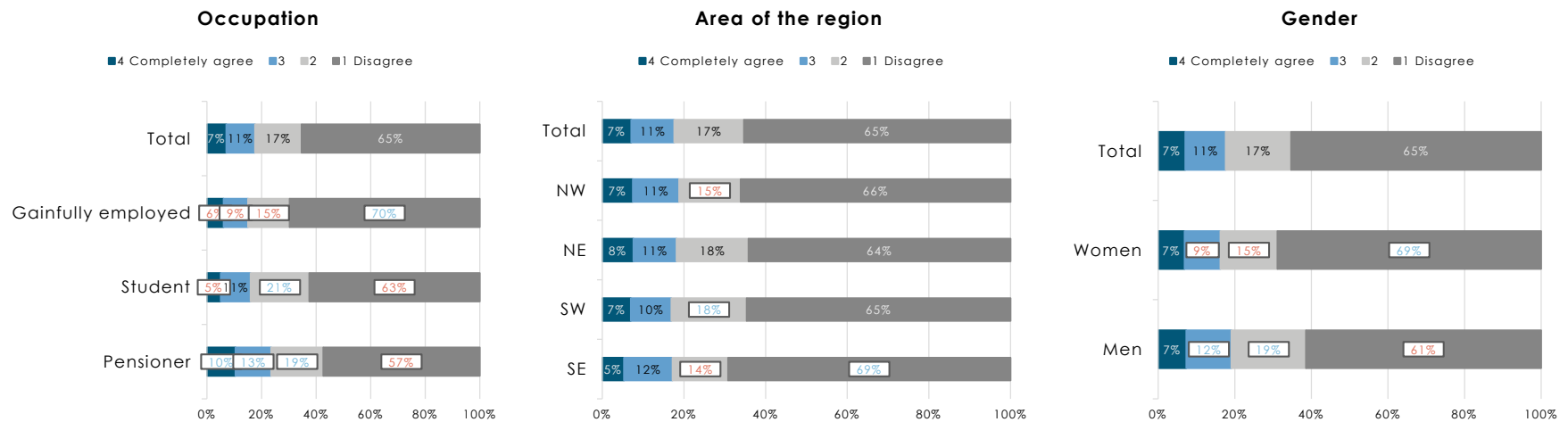
I think that it is appropriate to ask someone who is breastfeeding in public to change location or to cover up.



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

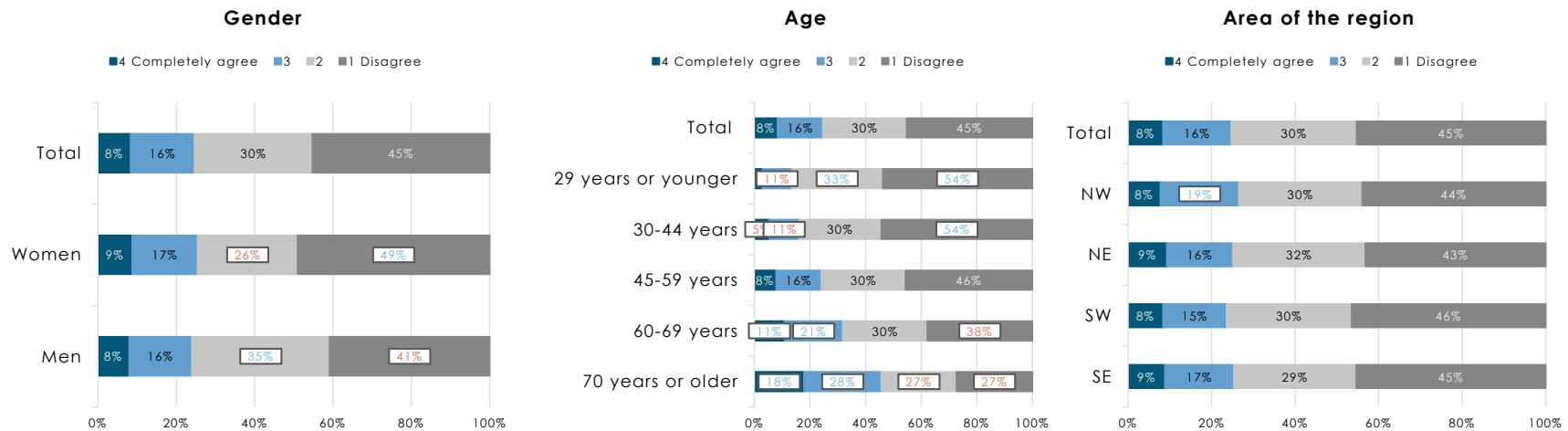
I think that it is appropriate to ask someone who is breastfeeding in public to change location or to cover up.



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

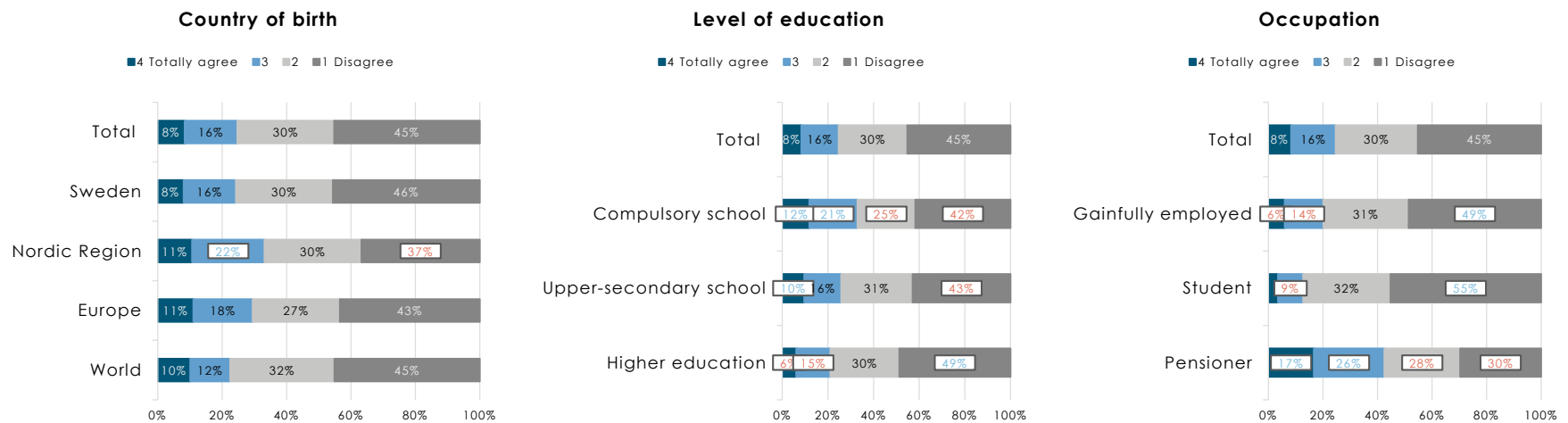
I believe that breastfeeding is an intimate moment that should take place privately



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

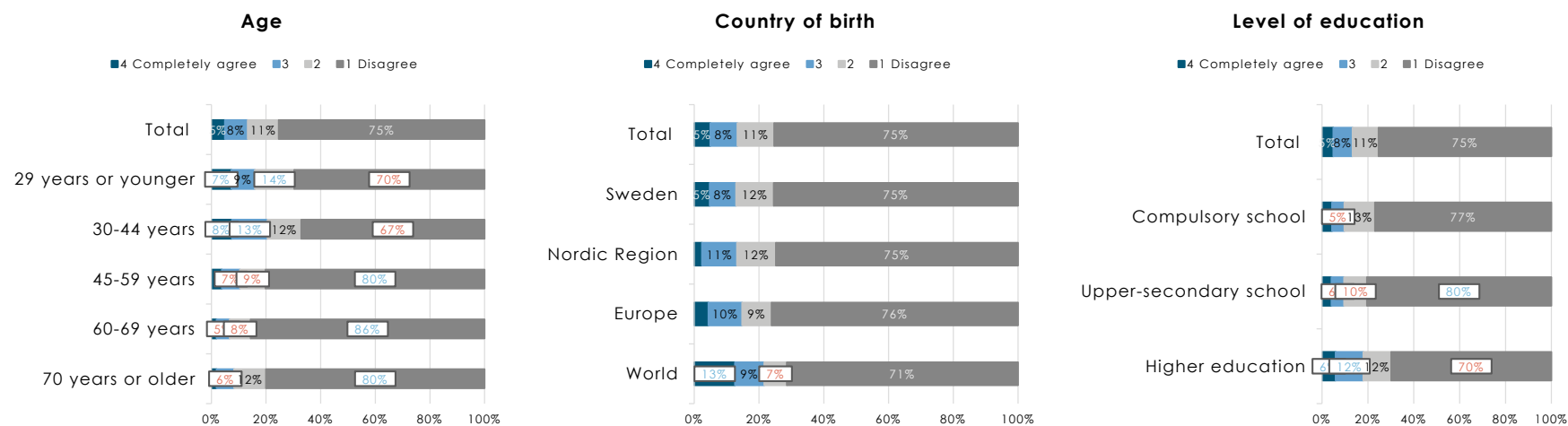
I believe that breastfeeding is an intimate moment that should take place privately



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

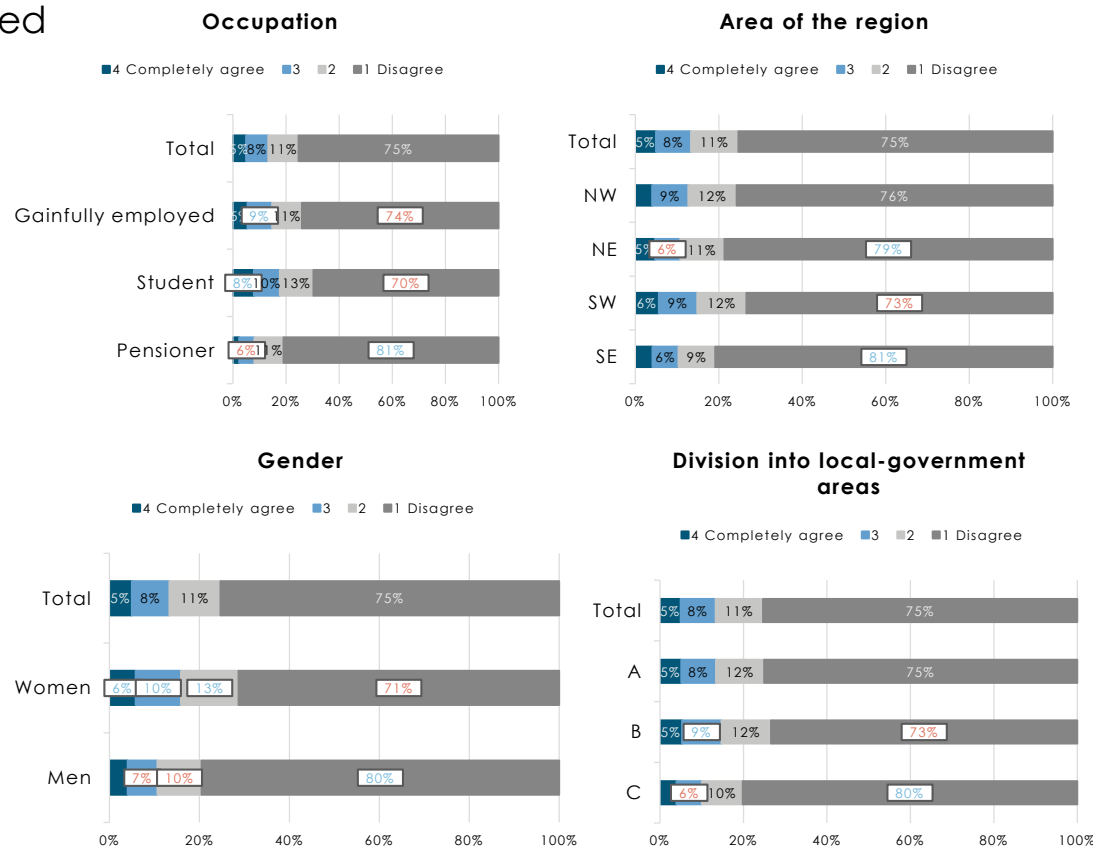
Breastfeeding may have a negative impact on gender equality since only women are able to breastfeed



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

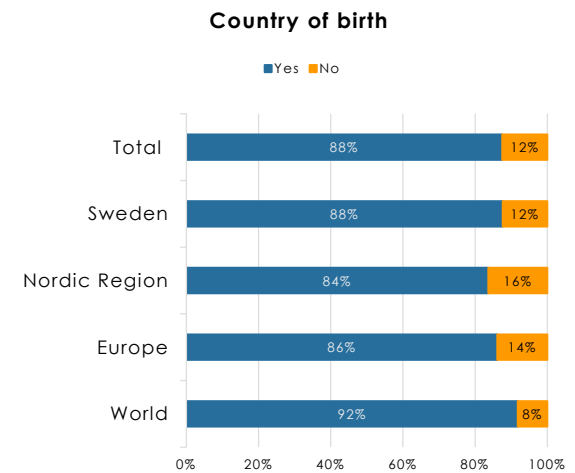
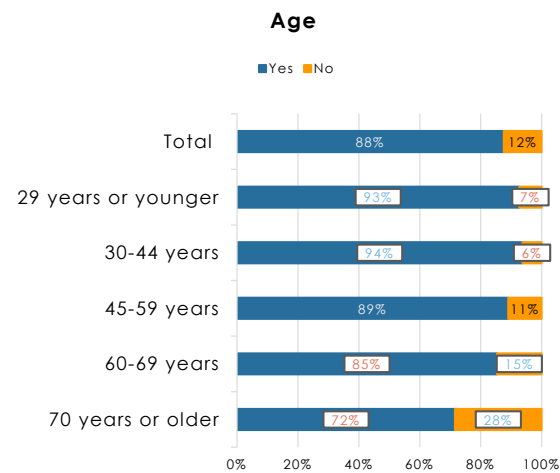
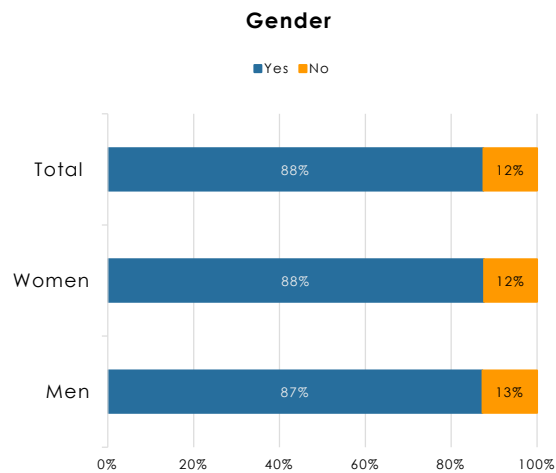
Breastfeeding may have a negative impact on gender equality since only women are able to breastfeed



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total.
A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about attitudes

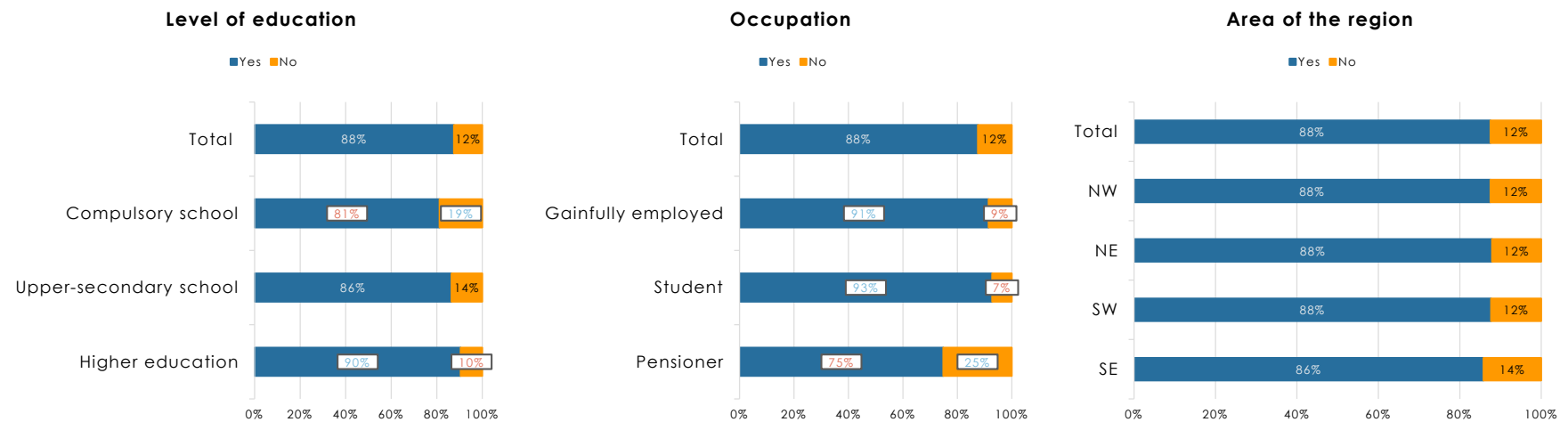
Do you believe that women should be able to breastfeed everywhere?



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total.
A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

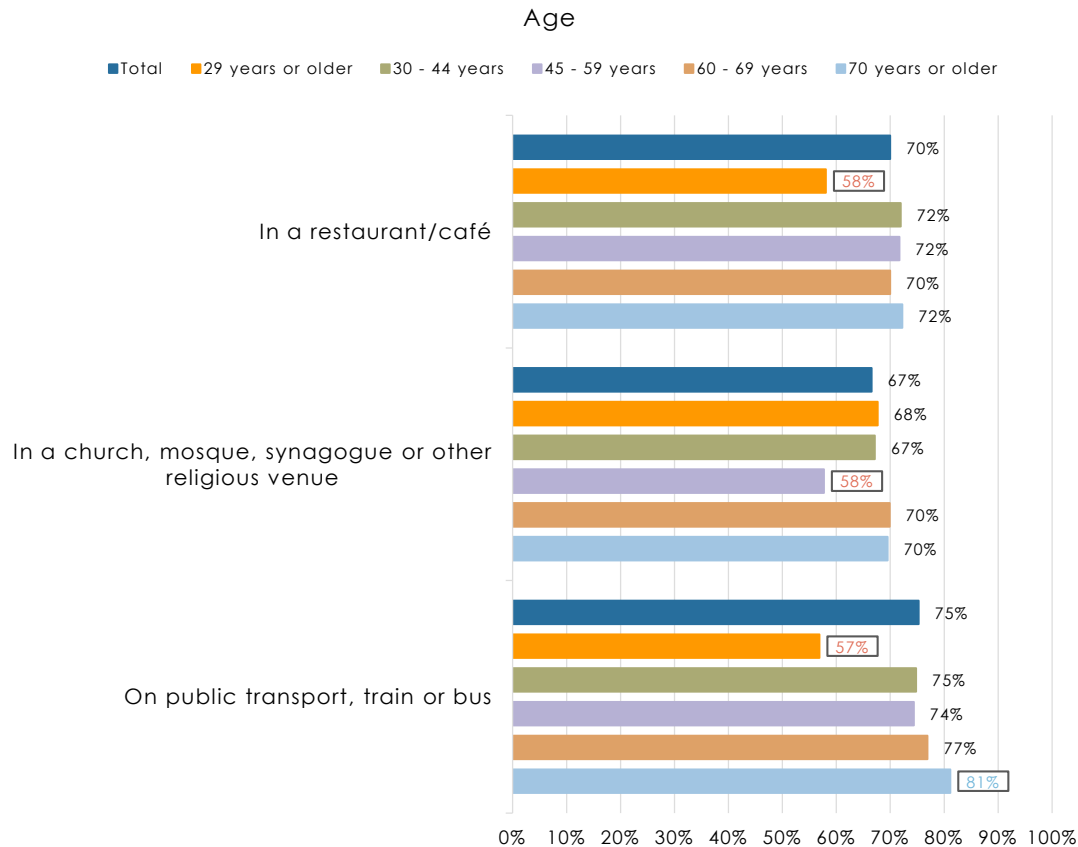
Questions about attitudes

Do you believe that women should be able to breastfeed everywhere?



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total.
A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Inappropriate locations to breastfeed

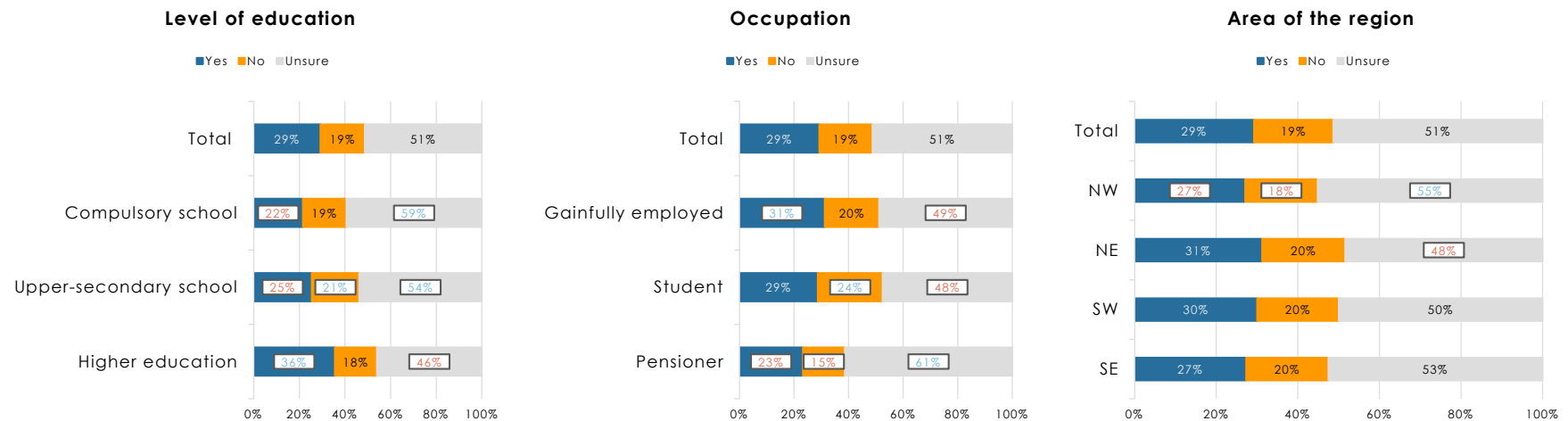


Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total.
A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).



Questions about knowledge

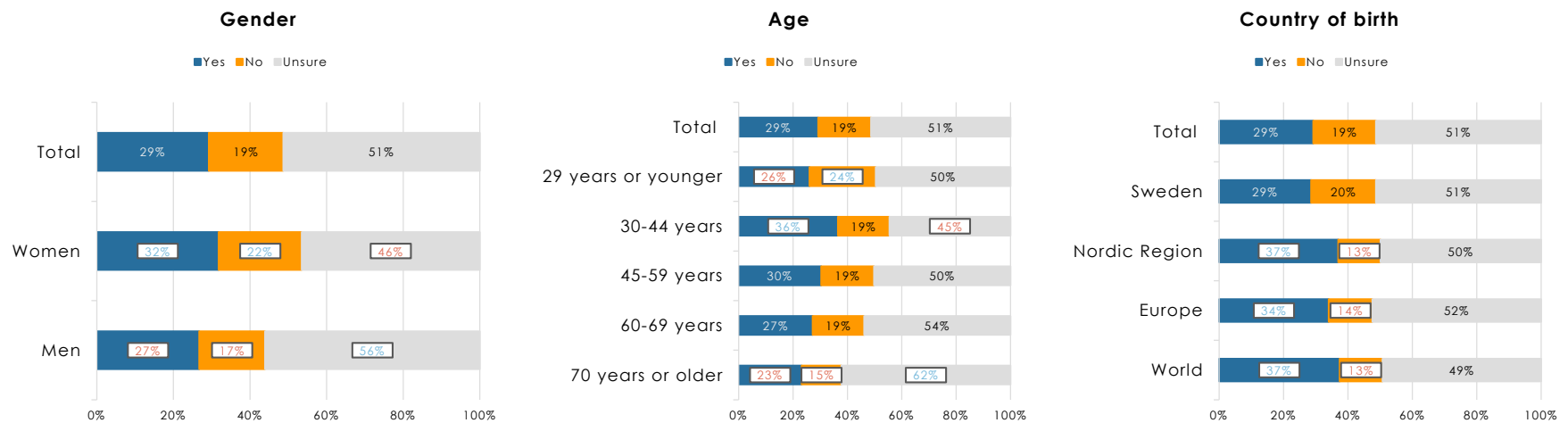
Women who have breastfed are less likely to develop breast cancer compared to other women



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total.
A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about knowledge

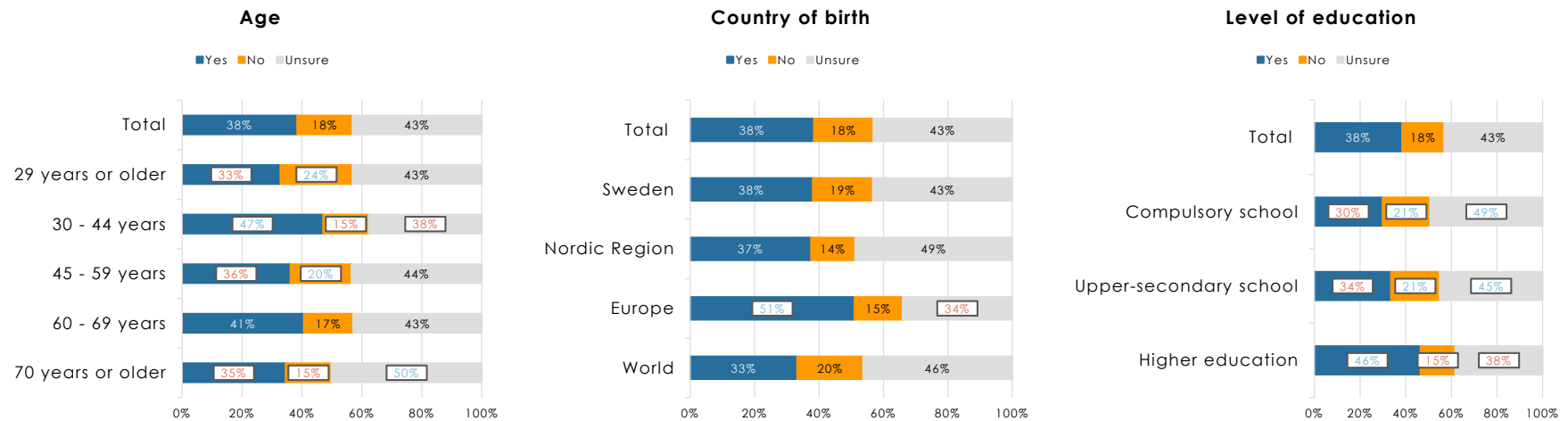
Women who have breastfed are less likely to develop breast cancer compared to other women



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about knowledge

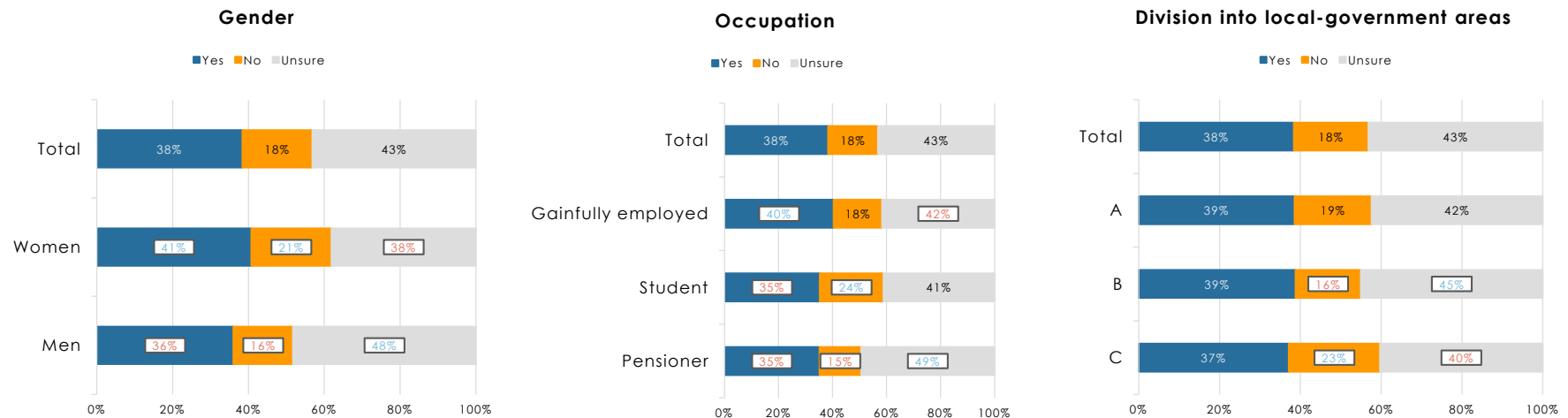
Breastfeeding may protect a child from becoming overweight and obese later in life



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total.
A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about knowledge

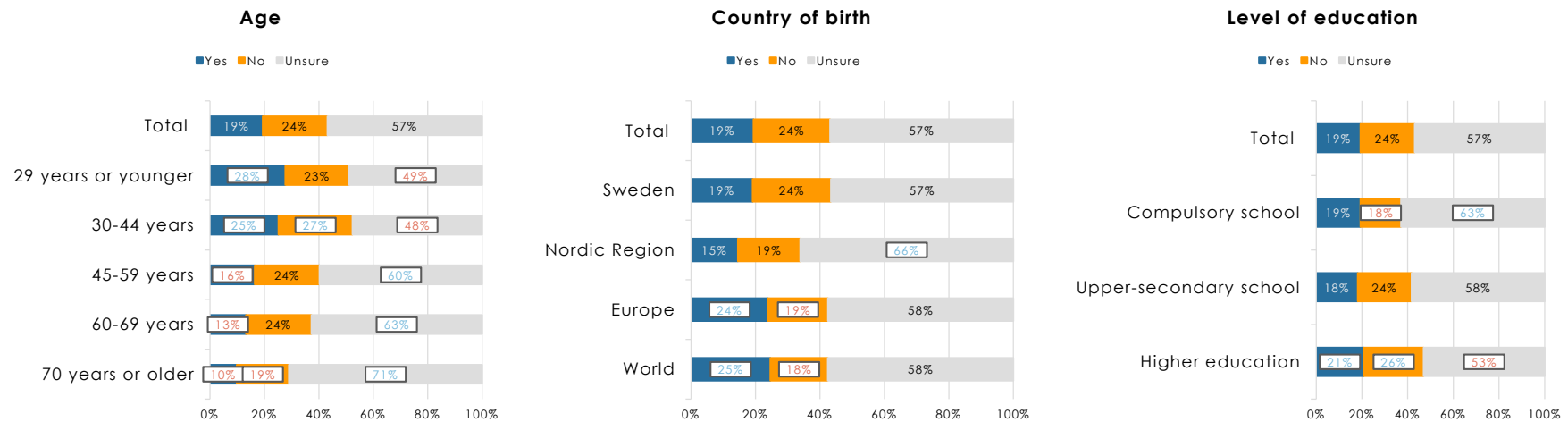
Breastfeeding may protect a child from becoming overweight and obese later in life



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total.
A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about knowledge

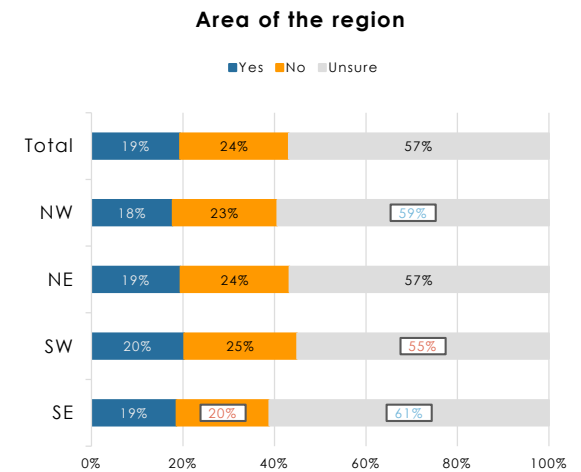
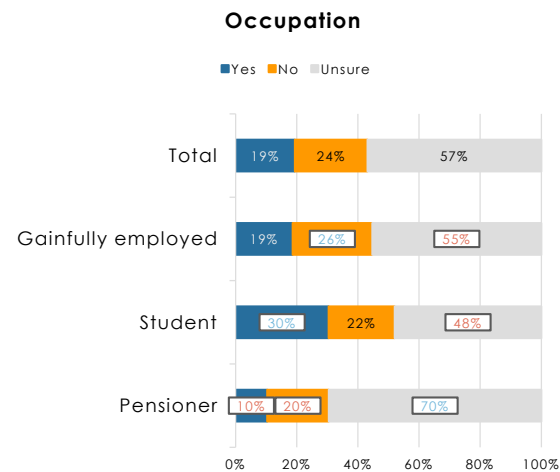
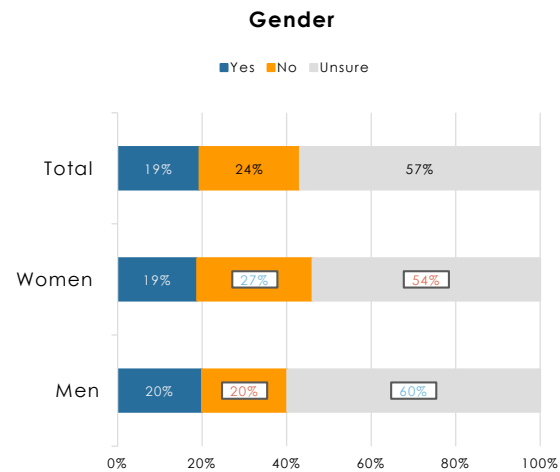
Breastfeeding reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total. A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Questions about knowledge

Breastfeeding reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome



Coloured numbers indicate a result that is statistically significant when comparing a sub-group against the total.
A coloured frame around the number is used to clarify which answer is significant, higher (in blue) or lower (in red).

Appendix: questionnaire

A civic survey on two themes: The impact of the coronavirus on daily life and the attitudes and knowledge of breastfeeding

This round of the Skåne Panel has two different themes – breastfeeding, and the impact of the coronavirus on daily life. The results will be used in Region Skåne’s future efforts to prevent the spread of the virus and as part of a regional breastfeeding strategy.

Click on the arrow below to the right to start the survey. If you want to take a break, you can close the survey and continue later.

Breastfeeding attitudes

We are interested in the decreasing breastfeeding rates in the region of Scania. Previous studies show the importance of social norms and attitudes towards breastfeeding and we ask you as a participant in the Skåne Panel to share your attitudes and knowledge of breastfeeding.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about breastfeeding?

	Disagree		Completely agree		
	1	2	3	4	Don't know
I believe that breastfeeding is natural	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel comfortable seeing breastfeeding on television, advertisement boards, or in other forms of media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel comfortable with someone breastfeeding close to me in public (i.e. café, playground, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



	1	2	3	4	Don't know
I am sometimes concerned that if I unintentionally look at someone who is breastfeeding, I might embarrass her	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I only find breastfeeding in public acceptable if it is done discreetly (without attracting attention, with your back turned, in a corner of the room, or covering up)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think that it is appropriate to ask someone who is breastfeeding in public to change location or to cover up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
I believe that most people are comfortable with breastfeeding in public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that breastfeeding is an intimate moment that should take place privately	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
I believe that bottle feeding in public is more acceptable than breastfeeding in public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that it is never acceptable to breastfeed in a public space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think that breastfeeding is disgusting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Breastfeeding attitudes

The following statements concern breastfeeding as a societal issue and how prioritized it should be in general. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about breastfeeding?

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
Breastfeeding may have a negative impact on gender equality since only women are able to breastfeed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health care should have a more active approach to breastfeeding (e.g., through information campaigns and breastfeeding support centres)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More resources to breastfeeding care and support are needed, since breastmilk is better for the environment compared to industrially produced formula	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you believe women should be able to breastfeed everywhere?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

In which of the following locations do you believe it is inappropriate to breastfeed?

- Restaurant/café
- Public beach
- Library
- Church, mosque, synagogue or other religious venue
- Playground
- Park bench
- Workplace
- Public transport, train or bus



Knowledge of breastfeeding

There is scientific evidence of breastfeeding and the associated health benefits for children and women. Which of the following statements about breastfeeding do you consider to be true?

	Yes	No	Unsure
Women who have breastfed are less likely to develop breast cancer compared to other women	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exclusive breastfeeding provides the child with all the necessary nutrients up to the age of six months	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Breastfeeding may protect a child from becoming overweight and obese later in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Breastfeeding can make children more resilient to ear infections and different types of respiratory infections	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children who have been breastfed score higher on intelligence tests later in life compared to children who have never been breastfed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Breastfeeding reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Breastfeeding

Is there anything you would like to add?



Coronavirus

For months, our everyday lives have been characterized by the coronavirus pandemic and the associated restrictions. Through other surveys, Region Skåne has gained knowledge about the public's compliance with authority guidelines, of the consequences in everyday life, and people's view of the future.

We would like you to consider the following statements to supplement our existing knowledge.

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
I trust the authorities' capacity to manage a crisis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust the Skåne health service's capacity to manage a crisis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust my own ability to handle a crisis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What would increase your confidence in your own ability to handle a crisis of this kind?

Please describe using your own words

Is there anything you would like to add?

