

BACKGROUND

- ❖ Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) has been deteriorating in the Dominican Republic (DR) for years. This includes a drop in EBF from 22.6% to 9.5% between 1996 and 2013 among breastfed infants under six months of age (1). This has occurred despite the rate of ever-breastfeeding remaining above 90% during this same time period (2).
- ❖ Various efforts to improve maternal and infant services in the DR have included breastfeeding promotion including government-UNICEF partnerships (e.g., Mothers and Babies in Good Care Initiative, 2013, a joint initiative of the DR Ministry of Health and UNICEF [3]).
- ❖ This study examined whether there has been a recent reversal of this trend and, if so, what feeding practice changes may be contributory.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do infant feeding practices in 2019 in the Dominican Republic compare with earlier practices?

- ❖ Has exclusive breastfeeding improved?
- ❖ Have there been changes in complementary feeding practices?

Fig 1. Map of the Dominican Republic



METHODS

Sample: Data from the 2019 DR, nationally representative, cross-sectional, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, were used. The sample was restricted to infants under six months of age for which dietary questions were complete and who were currently breastfeeding.

Measures: Consistent with previous reports, “current” breastfeeding levels were based on reported dietary consumption for the 24-hour period prior to the survey and classified as “exclusive”, “predominant” and “partial”, among those reporting current breastfeeding among infants under six months of age. “Predominant” was restricted to those only reporting clear liquids as complementary consumption. “Partial” was defined as any other complementary consumption.

Analysis: Values generated using SPSS complex sampling plan which accounts for MICS complex sampling (stratification, sampling units and weighting)

KEY MESSAGE

The long-term trend of exclusive breastfeeding deterioration in the Dominican Republic appears to have reversed secondary to drops in water, non-breast milk and juice consumption by breastfed infants. Nevertheless, only a minority of infants are exclusively breastfed.

Table 1. Extent of breastfeeding and complementary product use among breastfed infants under six months of age over time ^{a,b}

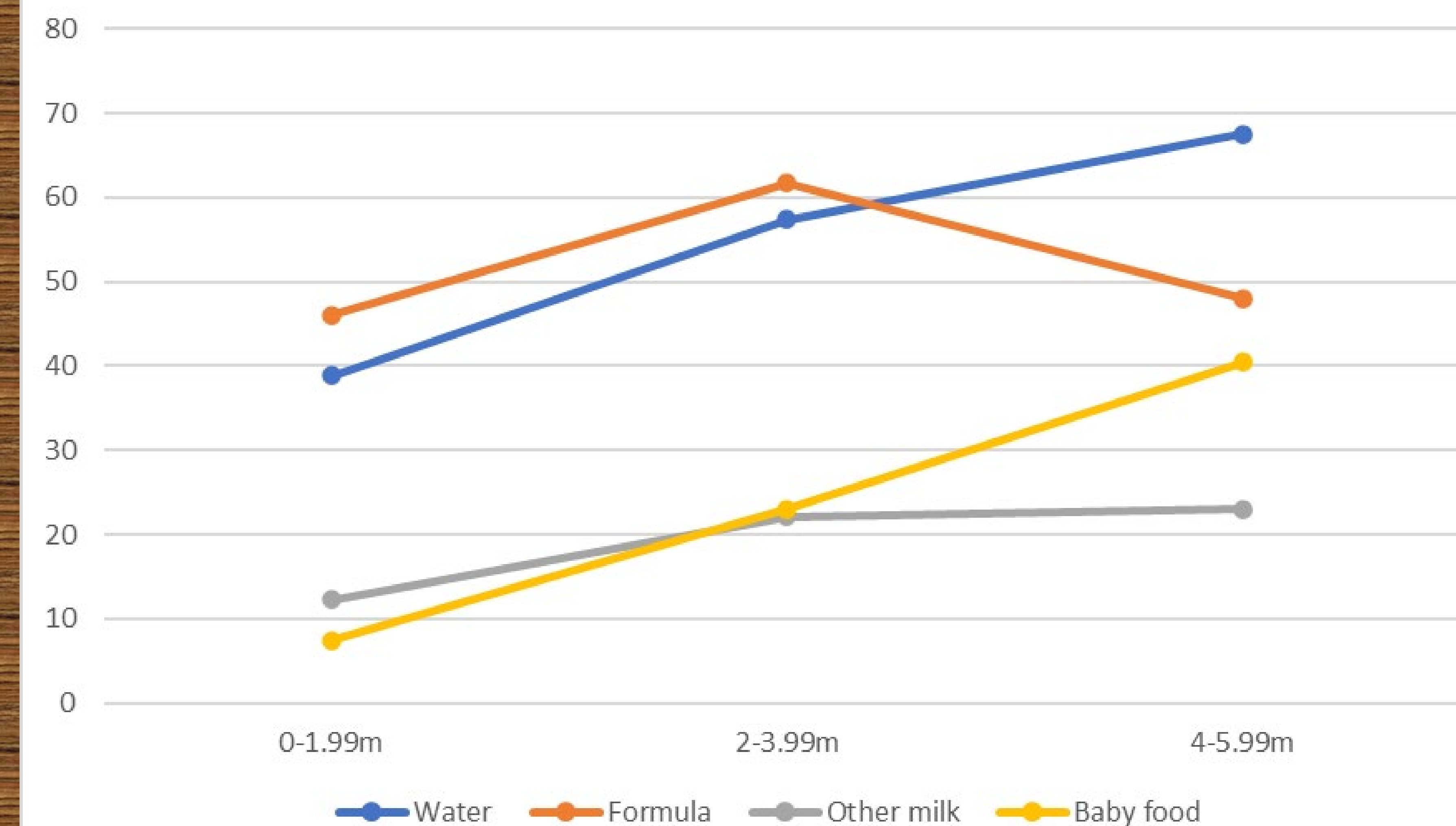
	2019 N=569	2013 N=233	2007 N=703	2002 N=824	1996 N=332
Extent of breastfeeding	% [95% C.I.]	%	%	%	%
Exclusive	20.9 [15.7, 27.2]	9.5	10.1	12.8	22.6
Predominant	11.3 [8.0, 15.6]	8.6	11.4	15.9	16.8
Partial	67.9 [61.4, 73.7]	81.9	78.6	71.4	60.6
Complementary product use					
Other milk	63.5 [57.1, 69.3]	79.3	73.4	69.4	54.7
Plain water	52.5 [46.5, 58.4]	71.5	73.6	66.4	55.4
Baby food	21.0 [16.6, 26.3]	4.6	8.3	NR	NR
Juice/sweet drink	6.8 [4.9, 9.8]	19.8	NR	12.0	23.7
Combinations					
Water+ other milk+ other	22.6 [18.0, 27.9]	NR	NR	NR	NR
Other milk only	20.0 [15.9, 24.8]	NR	NR	NR	NR
Water + other milk only	15.5 [11.9, 20.1]	NR	NR	NR	NR

C.I.=confidence interval; NR=Not reported

a. N is unweighted data and % are weighted data

b. Values for 1996-2013 are extracted from 2018 report (1)

Fig 2. Prevalence (%) of complementary product use by infant age (months)



CONCLUSION

- ❖ In contrast to historical trends among breastfed infants, in 2019 there was substantial increase in the prevalence of EBF and a concomitant decrease in partial breastfeeding.
- ❖ Key underpinning complementary feeding changes included substantial reductions in plain water, non-breast milk and juice consumption.
- ❖ Identifying factors driving these changes could inform initiatives to further improve EBF in the DR and elsewhere. Further investigation is also needed to examine the substantial increase in early use of baby food

REFERENCES

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