

# Parental care and feeding count

Starting with exclusive breastfeeding, parents can give their child the best possible start in life, and it need not break the bank. This is true even when parents face adversities such as poverty and HIV infection. Research shows that it's the love and care that parents provide that shapes children's emotional development, right from the start.

**Based on research** funded by Grand Challenges Canada (Saving Brains) and supported by the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Human Development at Wits University, parents and caregivers, regardless of their financial means or their HIV status, can help their child get a good start in life.

Breastfeeding and home stimulation make a big difference when it comes to the social and intellectual development of young children. The results of this study showed that exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, as compared to one month, reduced the chances of conduct disorders at primary school age by more than half (56%). Children were easier to manage, had improved self-control and got on better with other children.

Exclusive breastfeeding is highly beneficial, not only because it provides optimal nutrition, increases intelligence and improves child survival, but also because it helps to establish a good relationship between a mother and her child. The positive effects of good nutrition and strong relationships accumulate and benefits can be seen well into children's primary school years and even beyond.

Women are more able to breastfeed if they receive support from their families and communities, if their work environments enable them and if healthcare staff help them solve problems. It's simple and economical – yet so beneficial. ■

## Parenting basics with long-term benefits



### Breastfeeding

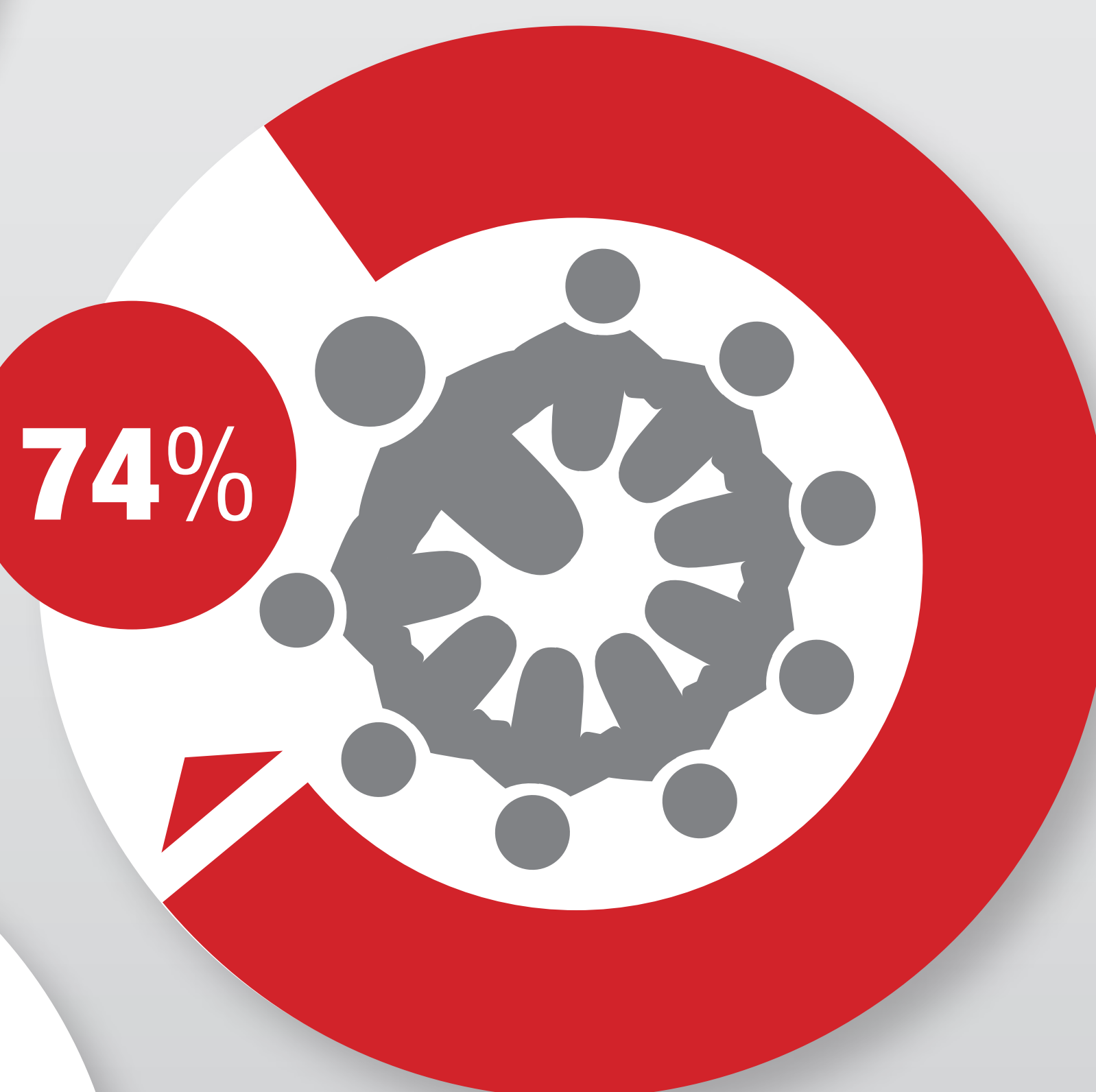
56%

Children who were exclusively breastfed for at least six months were **less than half** as likely to show problematic behavioural patterns (conduct disorders)

### Crèche

Children who attend crèche for at least one year were **almost three quarters** more likely to have better educational and social success

74%



### Home stimulation

36%

Children who were stimulated at home (e.g., parent taught numbers, colours and shapes at home) were **more than one third** more likely to have better educational and social success (higher executive function)



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Rochat, T. J., Houle, B., Stein, A., Coovadia, H., Coutsoudis, A., Desmond, C., Newell, M. L. and Bland, R. M. (2016) "Exclusive Breastfeeding and Cognition, Executive Function, and Behavioural Disorders in Primary School-Aged Children in Rural South Africa: A Cohort Analysis." PLoS Med 13(6): e1002044.



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