



# National Maternity Experience Survey 2020

Midland Regional Hospital  
Portlaoise

## 2020 survey results



## Stages of care

**7.2**  
out of 10

### Care while pregnant (antenatal care)

Care provided in the hospital and the community

Ratings of 'care while pregnant (antenatal care)' were about the same as the national average. The highest-scoring question related to being treated with respect and dignity while pregnant. The lowest-scoring question related to information about changes in mental health while pregnant.



**8.4**  
out of 10

### Care during labour and birth

Care provided in the hospital

Ratings of 'care during labour and birth' were similar to the national average. The highest-scoring question related to the involvement of a partner or companion during the labour and birth. The lowest-scoring question related to the involvement of women in decisions about care during labour and birth.



### Care in hospital after the birth

Care provided in the hospital

Ratings of 'care in hospital after the birth' were about the same as the national average. The highest-scoring question related to being told who to contact after discharge. The lowest-scoring question related to 'debriefing' and the opportunity for women to ask questions about their labour and birth after the baby was born.



### Specialised care\*

Care provided in the hospital

92% of women said that they had a very good overall experience of the care their baby received in the neonatal unit in Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise, compared with 70% nationally.



### Feeding

Care provided in the hospital and the community

Ratings of 'feeding' were about the same as the national average. The highest-scoring question related to respect for decisions about how women wanted to feed their baby. The lowest-scoring question related to support and encouragement provided to women with feeding their baby at home.



### Care at home after the birth

Care provided in the community

Ratings of 'care at home after the birth' were about the same as the national average. The highest-scoring question related to clear answers from the public health nurse. The lowest-scoring question related to the time spent by the GP or practice nurse/midwife discussing mental health during the 6-week check-up.



\*See page 18 of this report for more information.

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## About the National Maternity Experience Survey

The National Maternity Experience Survey offers women the opportunity to share their experiences of Ireland's maternity services. The survey is part of the National Care Experience Programme, a joint initiative by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Health. The National Care Experience Programme seeks to improve the quality of health and social care services in Ireland by asking people about their experiences of care and acting on their feedback. The survey reflects a commitment made in the National Maternity Strategy 2016-2026 to evaluate maternity care services from the perspectives of the women who use them.<sup>(1)</sup>

The survey questionnaire contains 68 questions which capture the whole maternity pathway from antenatal care, through labour and birth, to postnatal care in the community. The National Maternity Experience Survey includes questions taken or adapted from a library of questions developed by the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) in collaboration with the National Care Experience Programme. More information on the survey design can be found at [www.youreexperience.ie/maternity/about-the-survey](http://www.youreexperience.ie/maternity/about-the-survey).

The aim of the survey is to learn from the experiences of women to improve the safety and quality of the care that they and their baby receive. HIQA, the HSE and the Department of Health have committed to acting on the findings of the National Maternity Experience Survey to improve the quality of maternity care services in Ireland. Quality improvement plans have been developed by the HSE at national and local levels to address the issues highlighted in the survey.

## About this report

This report focuses on the experiences of women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise. In Ireland, maternity care is provided by a mix of hospital-based and community-based services. This report includes women's experiences of the care provided both in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise, and by general practitioners and public health nurses based in the community.

## **What were the findings for women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise?**

The majority of women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise said they had a positive overall experience. 79% said their maternity care was good or very good, compared with 85% nationally. The hospital scored close to the national average for each stage of care.

49% of respondents said they were offered a choice of what type of maternity care they would receive. Options included public care, consultant-led private or semi-private care, and home birth.

Women's ratings of the care their baby received in the neonatal unit were significantly above the national average. The lowest-scoring questions were Q9 and Q28. These questions asked whether women received enough information about mental health changes that may occur during their pregnancy, and whether they had the opportunity to ask questions about their labour and birth after their baby was born.

The responses to the three free-text questions provided very detailed information on women's experiences while in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise and the maternity care they received in the community before and after giving birth. These comments identified the caring and helpful attitudes of healthcare professionals but also highlighted the difficulties that some women experienced in accessing help when they needed it.

## **Who took part in the survey?**

A total of 245 women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise in October and November 2019 were invited to participate in the survey. 123 women completed the survey, representing a response rate of 50%.<sup>1</sup> Table 1 provides information on the characteristics of the women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise who responded to the survey. Most of these women said that they lived in Laois.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the Covid-19 pandemic may have had an impact on the number of survey responses received. However, the women who were invited to take part gave birth prior to the pandemic and the maternity care they received was thus unlikely to have been affected.

**Table 1. Characteristics of respondents who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise.**

<b>Age category</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Under 25	16	13.0%
25-29	21	17.1%
30-34	48	39.0%
35-39	34	27.6%
40 or older	4	3.3%
<b>Previous births</b>		
None	46	40.0%
One or two	56	48.7%
Three or more	13	11.3%
<b>Ethnic group</b>		
White Irish	103	84.4%
Any other White background	15	12.3%
Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	2	1.6%
Any other Asian background	1	0.8%
Other	1	0.8%
<b>County of residence</b>		
Carlow	5	4.1%
Kildare	31	25.4%
Laois	67	54.9%
Offaly	14	11.5%
Tipperary	4	3.3%
Wicklow	1	0.8%

## **Interpreting the results presented in this report**

In this report, scores out of 10 are given for relevant questions belonging to a stage of maternity care or to a stage as whole. A score of 0 indicates a very negative experience and a score of 10 indicates a very positive experience. Some questions simply provide descriptive information and these questions are not given a score out of 10.

Statistical tests were carried out to examine if there were significant differences between the scores for specific groups, for example for people who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise, and the national average. Throughout this report, when the hospital scored significantly above the national average, this is described as 'higher'. When the hospital scored significantly below the national average, it is described as 'lower'. When there is no statistically significant difference between the hospital's score and the national average, it is described as 'about the same'. For more information on the analyses please consult Appendix 3 of the 2020 national report, available at [www.youexperience.ie](http://www.youexperience.ie).

There were three free-text questions in the survey which asked women about the positive aspects of their experiences and where improvements were required. Quotations from women are presented in a dedicated chapter. These quotations have been redacted to remove any information that could identify an individual.

# **Experiences of maternity care for women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise**

## **Areas that scored above and below the national average**

Using a methodology set out in appendix 1 this section lists the questions where women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise rated their experiences significantly above or below the national average. It is important to note that even for questions that scored significantly above the national average, there is still room for improvement. The list includes the relevant stage of care and question number for each area.

### **Areas the scored above the national average**

#### **Specialised care**

##### **Overall experience of neonatal care | Q39.**

All 12 women who answered this question rated their experience of the care their baby received in the neonatal unit as good or very good.

### **Areas that scored below the national average**

In the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise, the scores for all questions were above or about the same as the national average. While no specific areas for improvement were identified using the methodology outlined in Appendix 1, there was still room for improvement on a number of questions. Participants' comments also identified areas where improvement was possible.

## Care while pregnant (antenatal care)

The first seven questions for this stage asked women to provide information about the first healthcare professional they contacted when they knew they were pregnant, the types of maternity care they were offered, and whether they attended antenatal classes or courses. The results for these questions are presented in Tables 2 and 3. A description of the types of maternity care is provided in Appendix 2.

The remaining 10 questions asked about the information and support women received during their antenatal care. These questions were scored out of 10, with the scores for the stage as a whole compared against the national average in Figure 2, and compared by participants' county of residence in Figure 3. The scores for the individual questions are compared against the national average in Figure 4.

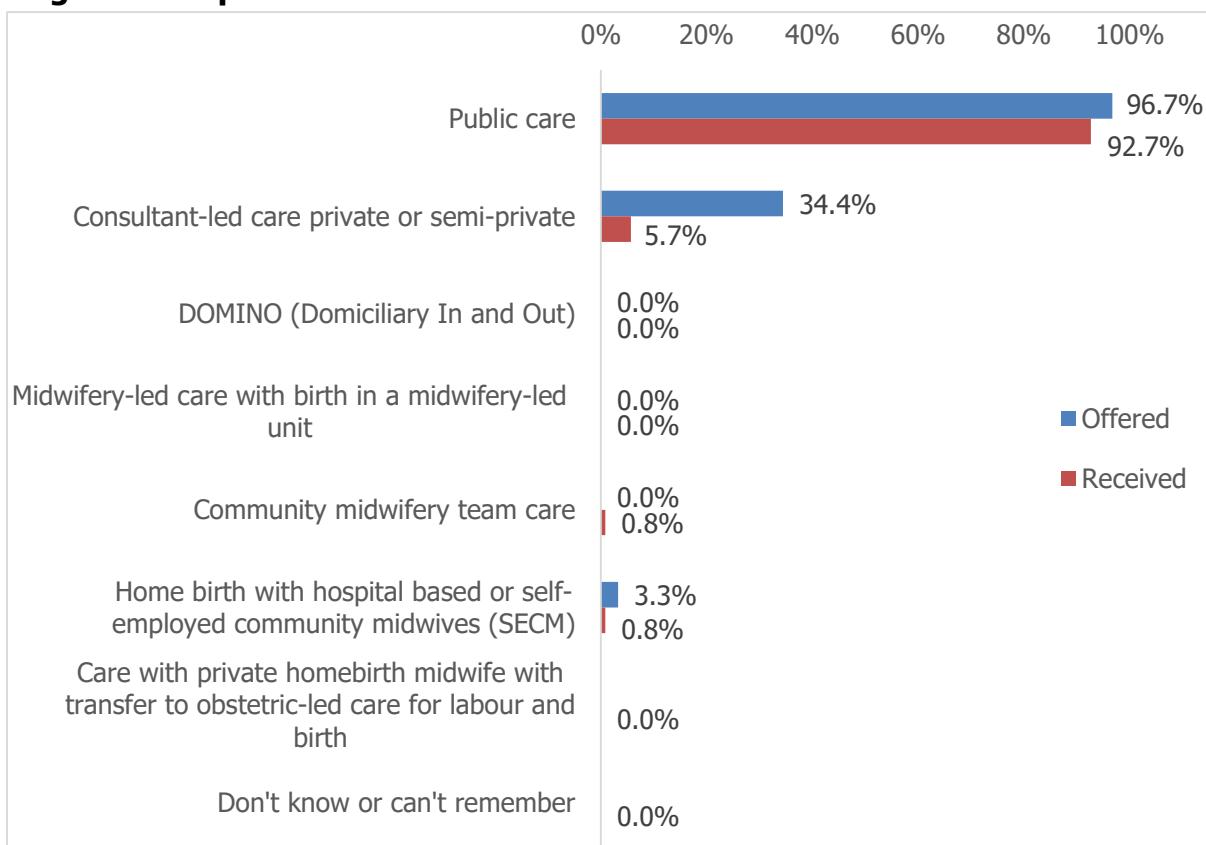
It is important to note that the questions for this stage of care relate both to care provided in the community and care provided in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise.

**Table 2. Number of births and first healthcare professional contacted.**

<b>Q1. In your most recent pregnancy, did you give birth to...</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
A single baby	121	98.4%
Twins	2	1.6%
Triplets, quads or more	0	0.0%
<b>Q2. Who was the first healthcare professional you saw when you thought you were pregnant?</b>		
GP / family doctor	116	94.3%
Midwife	2	1.6%
Other	5	4.1%

Sixty women (49.2%) who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise said that they were offered a choice of maternity care, while 41 (33.6%) said they were not offered any choices. Figure 1 shows the choices of maternity care that were offered to women and the type of care that they actually received.

**Figure 1. Types of maternity care offered and received in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise.**



**Table 3. Results for questions on antenatal classes or courses attended by women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise.**

<b>Q6. During your pregnancy were you offered any antenatal classes or courses?</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, and I did them	42	34.1%
Yes, but I did not do them	61	49.6%
No	20	16.3%
Don't know or can't remember	0	0.0%

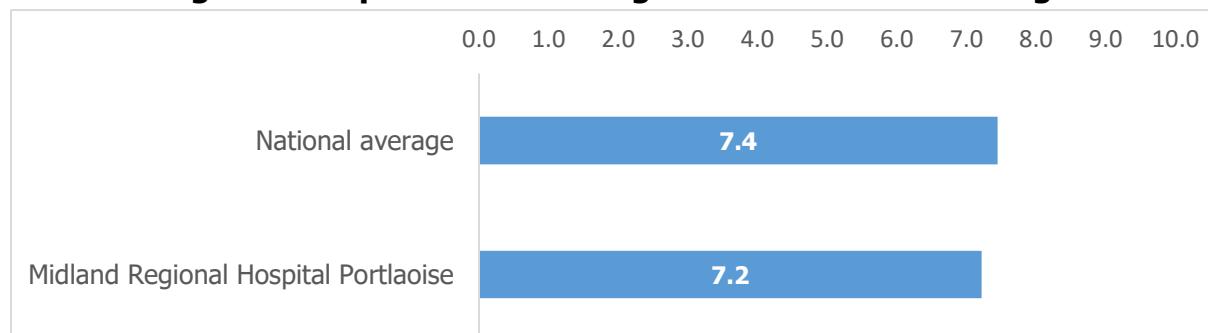
  

<b>Q7. Are there any particular reasons you did not go to antenatal classes or courses?</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
It was not my first baby	43	70.5%
It was my first baby but I didn't want to go to classes	6	9.8%
There were no available spaces/they were booked out	4	6.6%
I couldn't find classes that were right for me	0	0.0%
There were no classes near me	1	1.6%
I had other commitments	7	11.5%
Other	5	8.2%

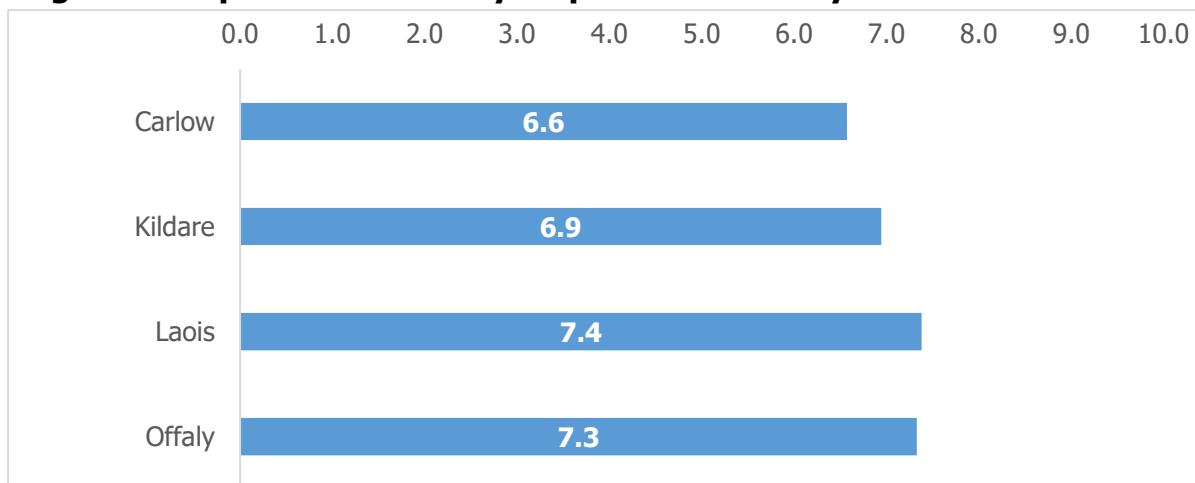
10 questions explored whether women received sufficient information on their health and care, were involved in decisions about their antenatal care and had confidence and trust in their healthcare professionals. These questions were scored out of 10, with the scores for the stage as a whole compared against the national average in Figure 2. Scores for this stage of care are compared by the county of residence of women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise in Figure 3. Scores for the individual questions are compared against the national average in Figure 4.

Women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise rated their antenatal care as about the same as the national average. The highest-scoring question for this stage related to respect and dignity while pregnant, with 75.6% of women saying that they were always treated respect and dignity while they were pregnant. The lowest-scoring question related to information about mental health, with 35.0% saying that they did not receive enough information about changes in their mental health while they were pregnant.

**Figure 2. Comparison of 'Care while pregnant (antenatal care)' scores for Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise against the national average.**

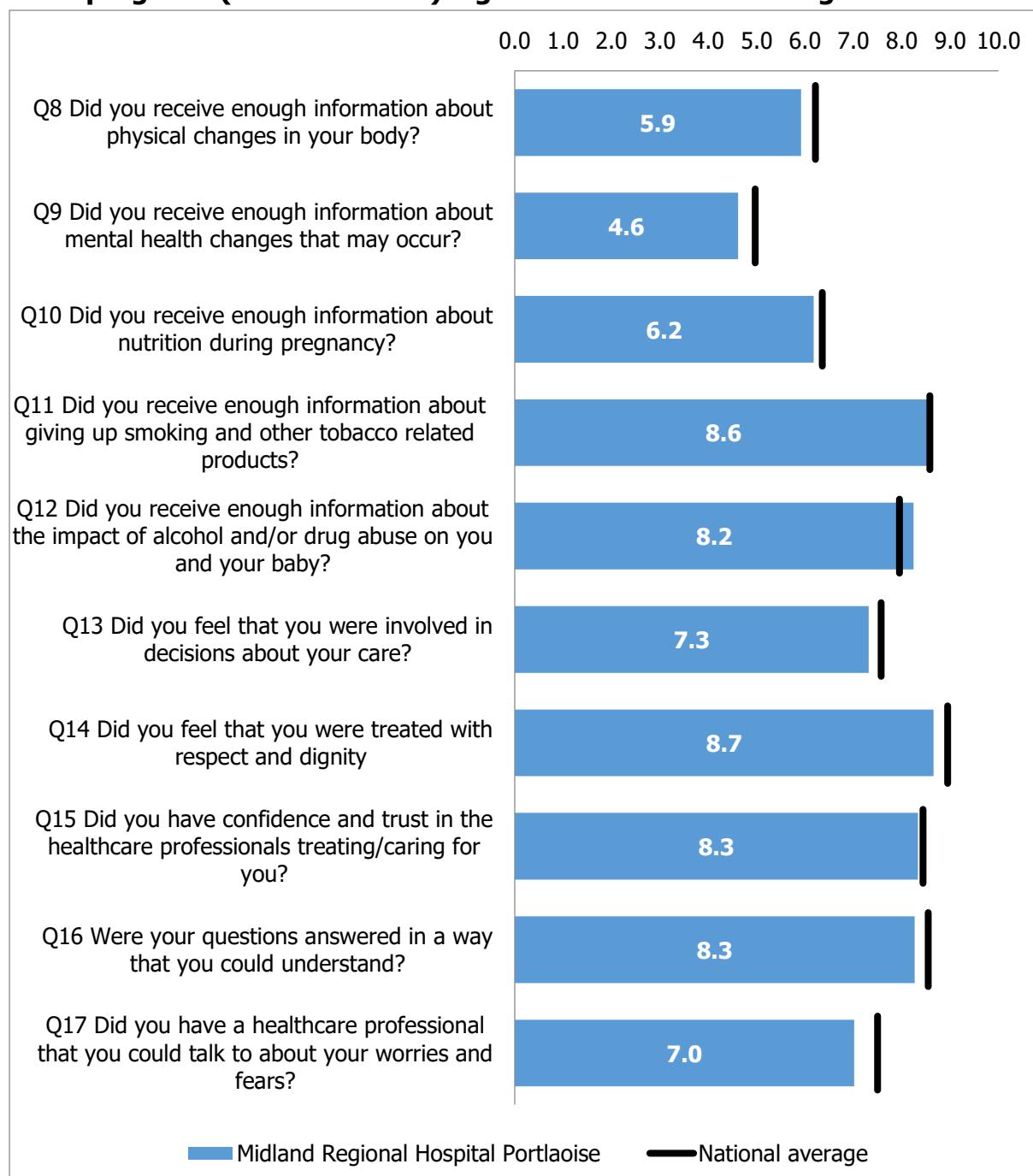


**Figure 3. 'Care while pregnant (antenatal care)' scores for Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise by respondents' county of residence<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>2</sup> Results for counties are only shown if five or more women from that county responded.

**Figure 4. Comparison of individual question scores for 'care while you were pregnant (antenatal care)' against the national average.**



## Care during labour and birth

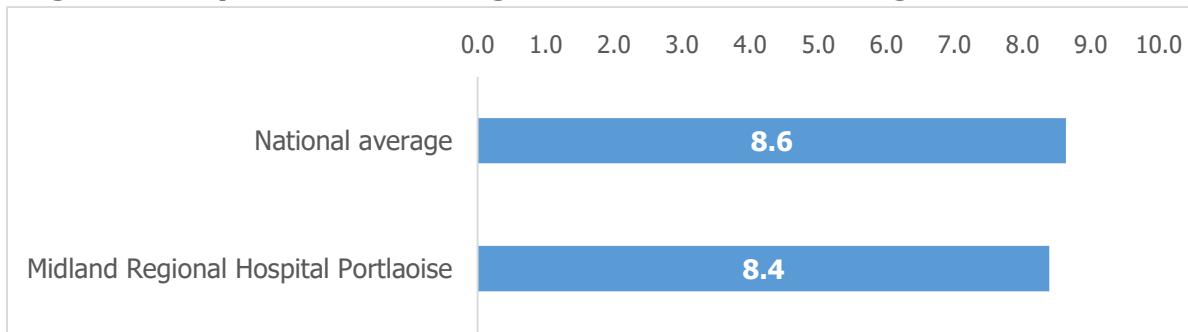
This stage of the survey included three questions where women were asked to describe the birth of their baby and whether they were left alone at any point, with the results for Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise shown in Table 4. There were also seven other questions about this stage of care that received scores out of 10. The scores for the stage as a whole are compared against the national average in Figure 5, and for the individual questions in Figure 6.

Women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise rated their care during labour and birth as about the same as the national average. The highest-scoring question for this stage related to involvement of a partner or companion, with 95.7% saying that their partner or companion was as involved as they wanted them to be in the labour and birth. The lowest-scoring question related to involvement in decisions during labour and birth. 21 women (17.1%) said that they were not involved in decisions about their care during labour and birth.

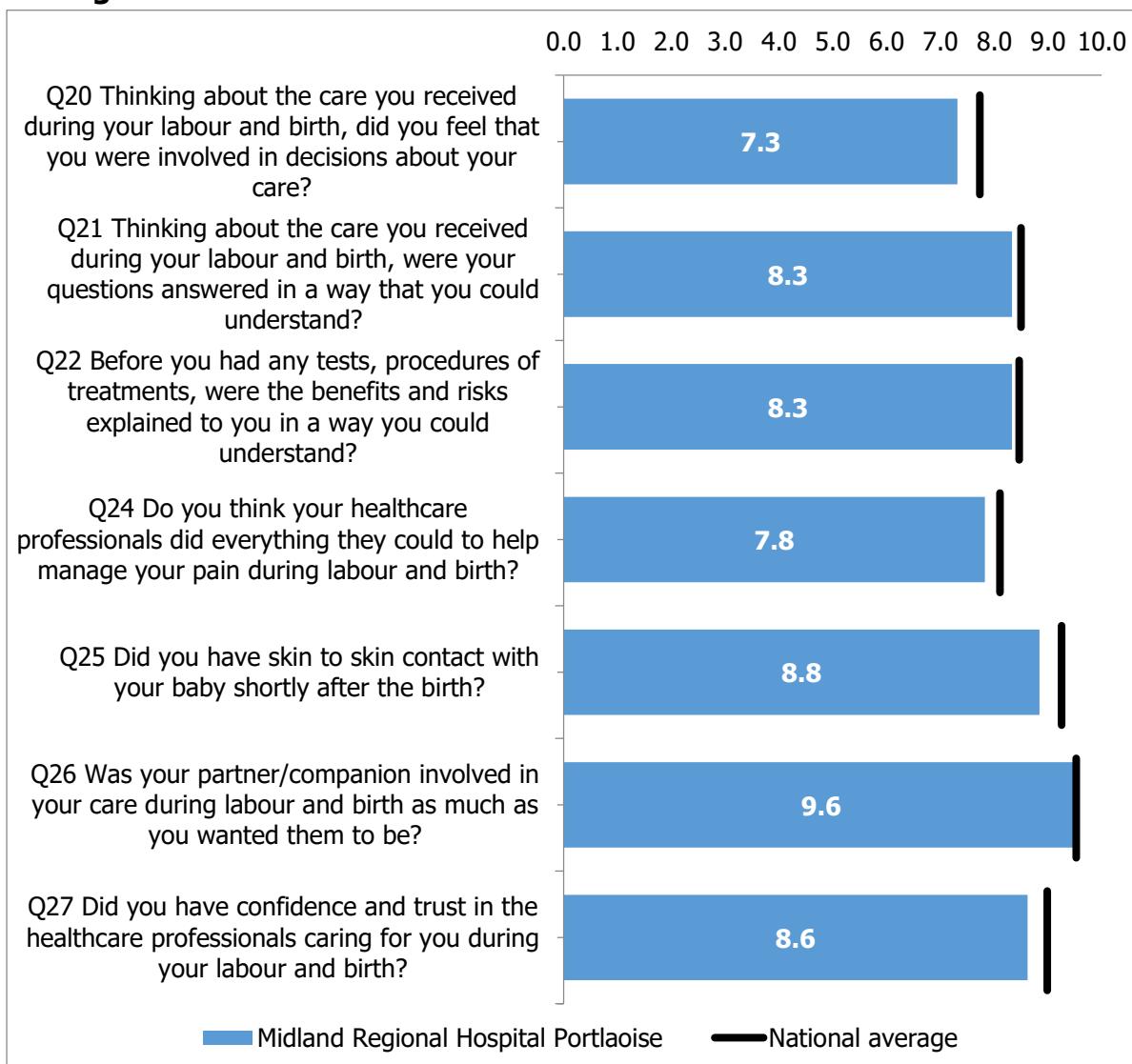
**Table 4. Results for questions on induction of labour, type of birth and being left alone.**

<b>Q18. Thinking about the birth of your baby, was your labour induced?</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes		64	52.0%
No		58	47.2%
Don't know or can't remember		1	0.8%
<b>Q19. What type of birth did you have?</b>			
A vaginal birth (no forceps or ventouse suction cup)		70	56.9%
An assisted vaginal birth (e.g. with forceps or ventouse suction cup)		21	17.1%
A planned caesarean birth		17	13.8%
An unplanned caesarean birth		15	12.2%
<b>Q23. Were you (and/or your partner or companion) left alone by healthcare professionals at a time when it worried you?</b>			
Yes, during early labour		9	7.3%
Yes, during the later stages of labour		9	7.3%
Yes, during the birth		1	0.8%
Yes, shortly after the birth		18	14.6%
No, not at all		94	76.4%

**Figure 5. Comparison of 'Care during labour and birth' scores for Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise against the national average.**



**Figure 6. Comparison of individual question scores for 'Care during labour and birth' in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise against the national average.**

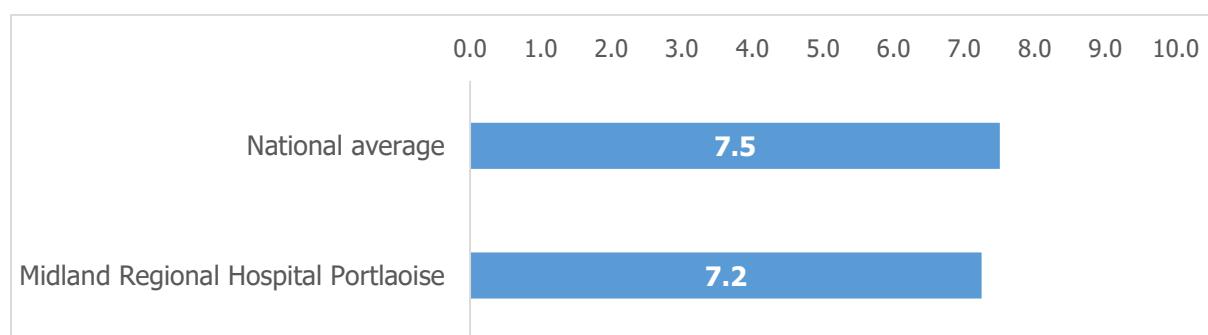


## Care in hospital after the birth

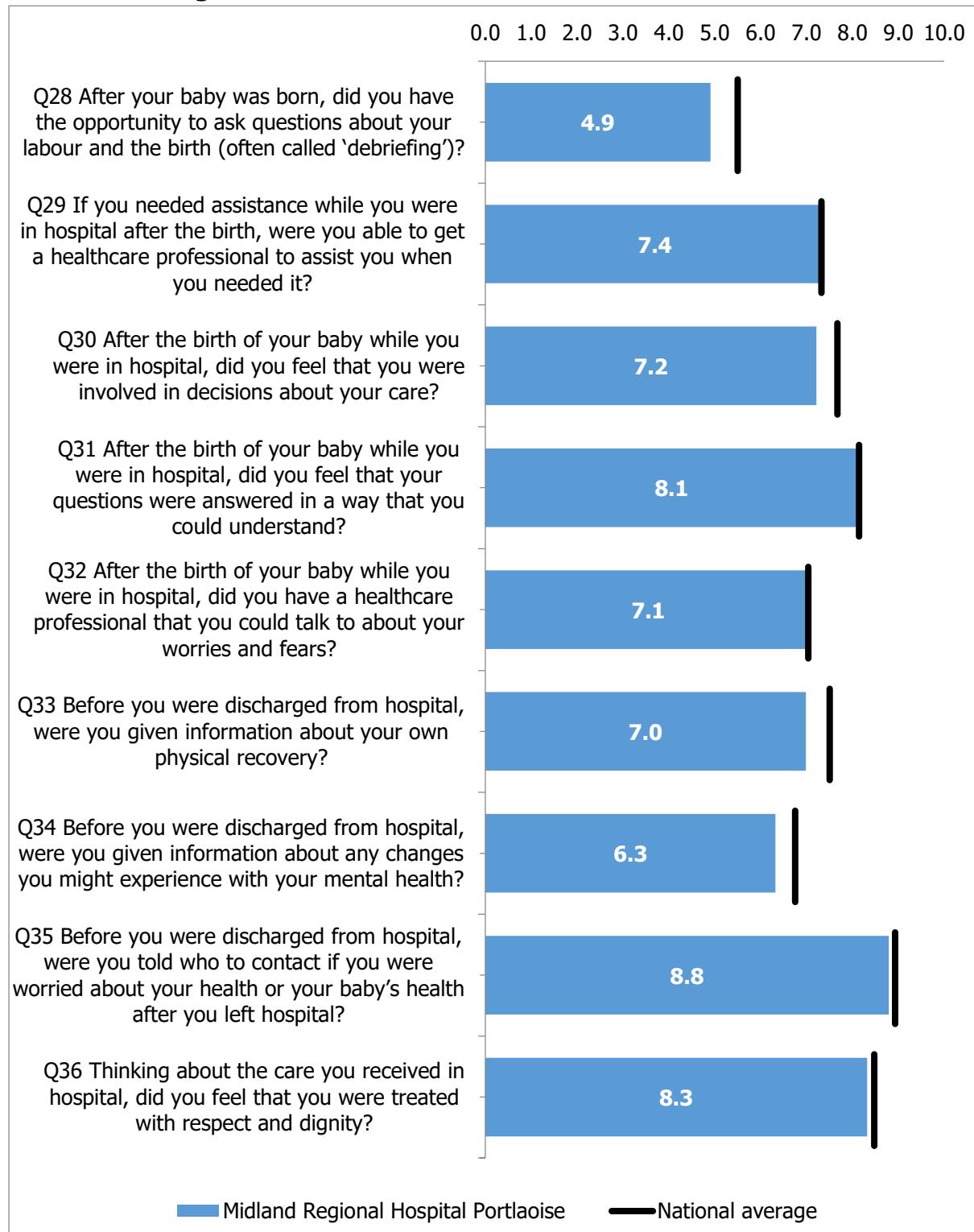
The questions for this stage related to the care women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise received after the birth of their baby. All of the questions for this stage were given a score out of 10. The scores for the stage as a whole are compared against the national average in Figure 7, with the results for the individual questions provided in Figure 8.

Women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise rated their care in hospital after the birth as about the same as the national average. The highest-scoring question for this stage related to being told who to contact after discharge, with 87.9% of women saying they were told who to contact if they were worried about their own health or their baby's health. The lowest-scoring question related to 'debriefing', with 40 women (37.0%) saying that they did not have the opportunity to ask questions about their labour and birth after the baby was born.

**Figure 7. Comparison of 'Care in hospital after the birth' scores for Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise against the national average.**



**Figure 8. Comparison of individual question scores for 'Care in hospital after the birth' in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise against the national average.**



## Specialised care

The questions for this stage explore the experiences of women whose babies required specialist care in a neonatal unit after birth. Women whose baby was not admitted to a neonatal unit did not answer Q38 or Q39. The results for Q37 and Q38 are shown in Table 5. Q39 asked women to rate their experience of the care their baby received in the neonatal unit from 0 to 10 and the results for Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise are compared against the national average in Figure 9.

92% of women said that they had a very good overall experience of the care their baby received in the neonatal unit. This was higher than the national average of 70%.

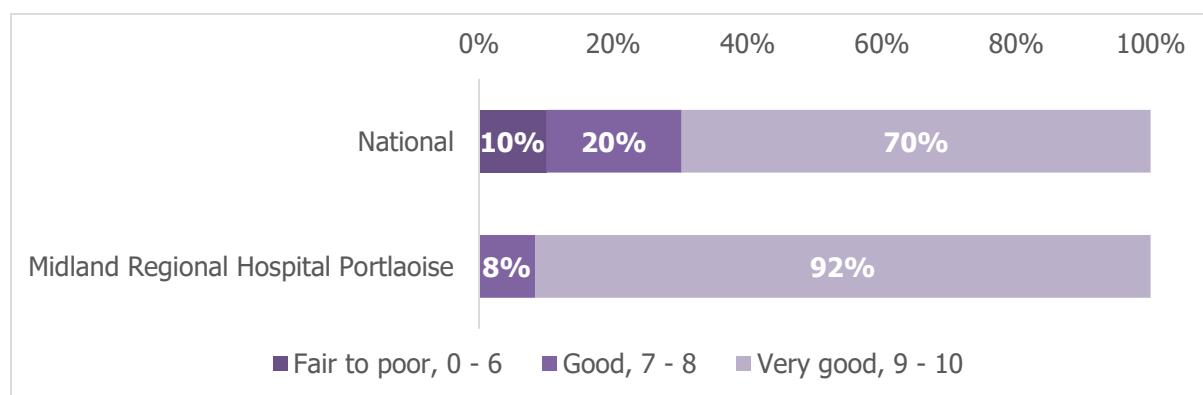
**Table 5. Admission to the neonatal unit and emotional support.**

<b>Q37. Following the birth, did your baby spend any time in the neonatal unit?</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	12	9.8%
No	110	90.2%
Don't know or can't remember	0	0.0%

<b>Q38. While your baby was in the neonatal unit, did you receive enough emotional support from healthcare professionals?</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, always	6	50.0%
Yes, sometimes	2	16.7%
No	3	25.0%
I did not want or need any emotional support	1	8.3%
Don't know or can't remember	0	0.0%

**Figure 9. Comparison of overall ratings of experiences in the neonatal unit at Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise against the national average.**



## Feeding

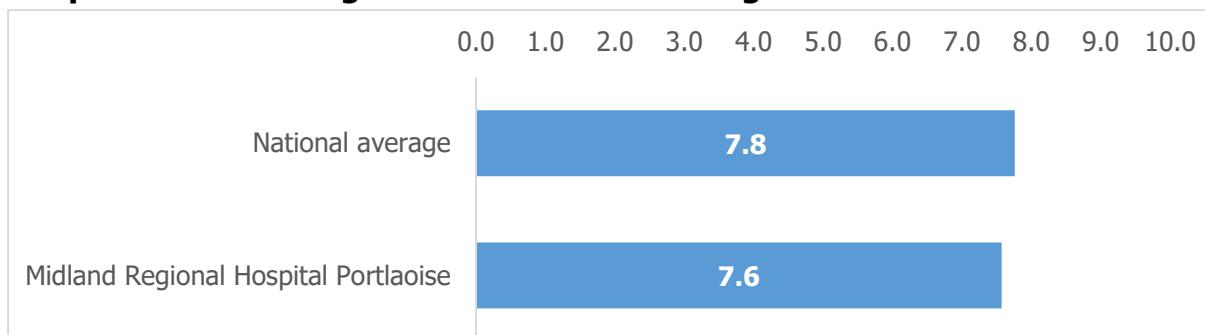
This stage included two questions asking women when their healthcare professionals discussed the different options for feeding their baby, and how they fed their baby in the first few days after birth. The results for these questions are shown in Table 6. The other questions for this stage explored whether women felt supported and respected by healthcare professionals in feeding their baby, both in the hospital and after they had returned home. These questions were scored out of 10, with the scores for the stage as a whole compared against the national average in Figure 10 and individual questions compared against the national average in Figure 11.

Women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise rated the 'Feeding' questions as about the same as the national average. Most women (74.0%) said that their decision about how they wanted to feed their baby were always respected by their healthcare professionals. The lowest-scoring question for this stage related to support and encouragement with feeding at home, with 21 women (21.4%) saying that they did not get adequate support and encouragement with feeding their baby at home.

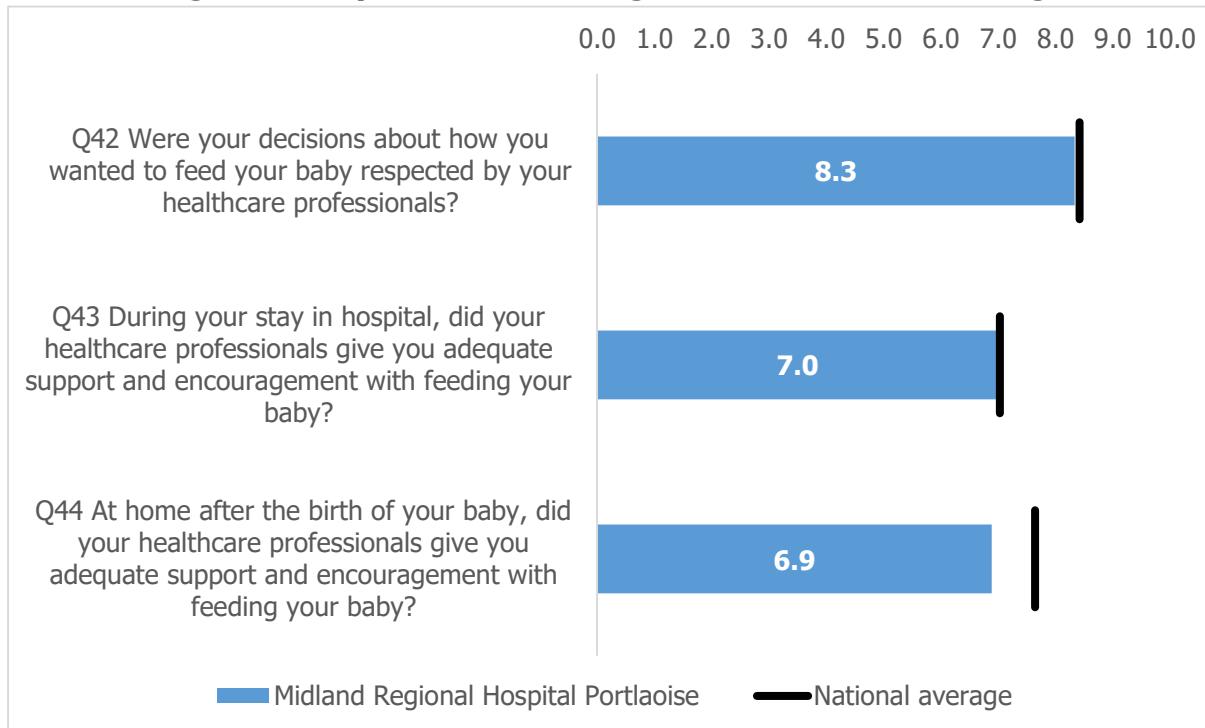
**Table 6. Results for questions on discussion of feeding options and the methods of feeding used.**

<b>Q40. Did your healthcare professionals discuss with you the different options for Feeding?</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, during pregnancy	90	73.2%
Yes, during labour or immediately after birth	27	22.0%
Yes, after birth while in hospital	41	33.3%
Yes, after birth while at home	12	9.8%
No	6	4.9%
I did not want or need discussion of different options	9	7.3%
Don't know or can't remember	1	0.8%
<b>Q41. In the first few days after the birth, how was your baby fed?</b>		
Breast milk (or expressed breast milk) only	54	43.9%
Both breast and formula (bottle) milk	19	15.4%
Formula (bottle) milk only	50	40.7%
Don't know or can't remember	0	0.0%

**Figure 10. Comparison of scores for 'Feeding' in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise against the national average.**



**Figure 11. Comparison of individual question scores for 'Feeding' in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise against the national average.**



## Care at home after the birth

The questions for this stage of maternity care explored women's experiences of postnatal care in the community provided by public health nurses and general practitioners.<sup>3</sup> Two questions asked whether women and their babies had been visited at home by a public health nurse and received check-ups with their general practitioner. These appointments are a routine part of postnatal care in Ireland. Another question asked whether women had used local support groups such as mother and baby groups or feeding support groups. The results for these questions for women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise are summarised in Table 7.

The remaining questions for this stage explored women's experiences of the information and support they received at home after the birth of their baby. These questions were scored out of 10, with the scores for the stage as a whole broken down by the county of residence of women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise, and compared against the national average in Figure 12. Scores for the individual questions are compared against the national average in Figure 13.

Women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise rated their care at home after the birth as about the same as the national average. The highest-scoring question for this stage related to clear answers from the public health nurse, with 86.9% of women saying that their questions were answered by the public health nurse in a way that they could understand. The lowest-scoring question related to the time spent by the GP or practice nurse/midwife discussing mental health at their six-week check-up, with 23.3% of women saying that there was not enough time spent discussing their mental health at this check-up.

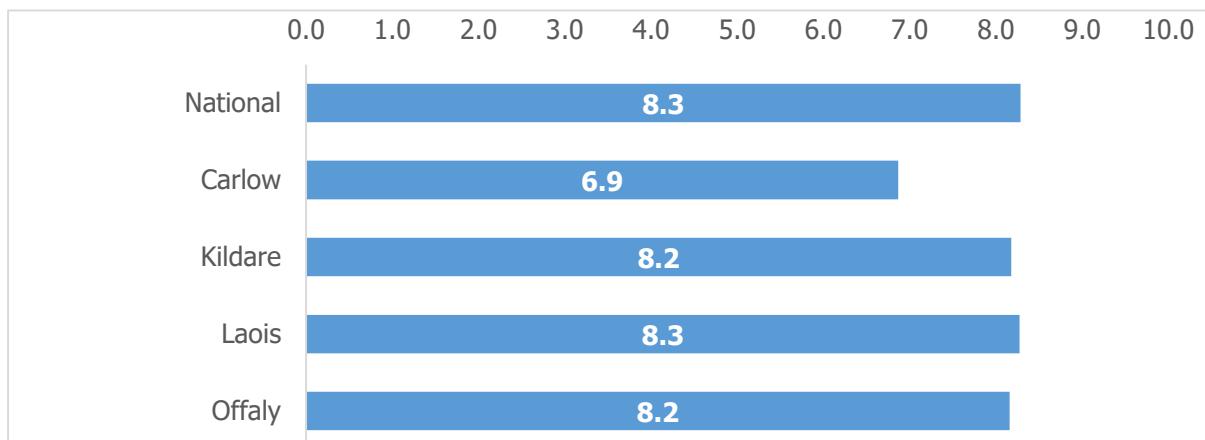
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<sup>3</sup> While the questions for this stage of care do not directly relate to care provided by Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise, it is important to represent all stages of a woman's maternity care journey in this report.

**Table 7. Results for questions on postnatal check-ups and engagement with support groups.**

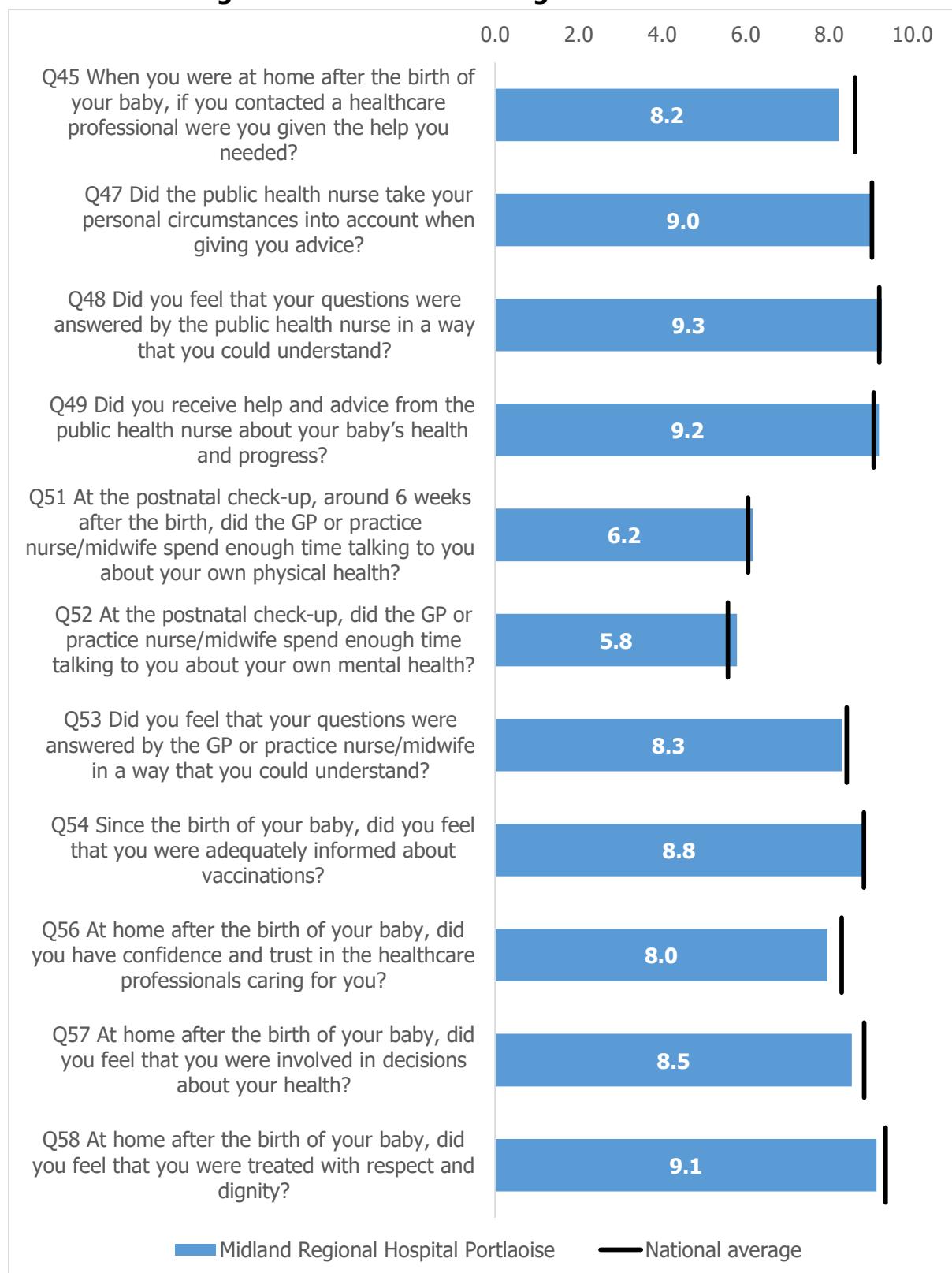
<b>Q46. Since your baby's birth, have you been visited at home by a public health nurse?</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	122	99.2%
No	0	0.0%
Not relevant to my situation	1	0.8%
Don't know or can't remember	0	0.0%
<b>Q50. Did your baby receive a 2-week check-up with your general practitioner (GP)?</b>		
Yes	114	92.7%
No, I did not know about the check-up	2	1.6%
No, I knew about the check-up but did not attend	2	1.6%
I attended another healthcare professional for the 2-week check-up	3	2.4%
Not relevant to my situation	2	1.6%
Don't know or can't remember	0	0.0%
<b>Q55. Did you use local support groups e.g. mother and baby groups, feeding support groups, etc.</b>		
Yes	27	22.0%
No	95	77.2%
Don't know or can't remember	1	0.8%

**Figure 12. 'Care at home after the birth' scores for women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise compared by county of residence.<sup>4</sup>**



<sup>4</sup> Results for counties are only shown if five or more women from that county responded.

**Figure 13. Comparison of individual question scores for 'Care at home after the birth' against the national average.**



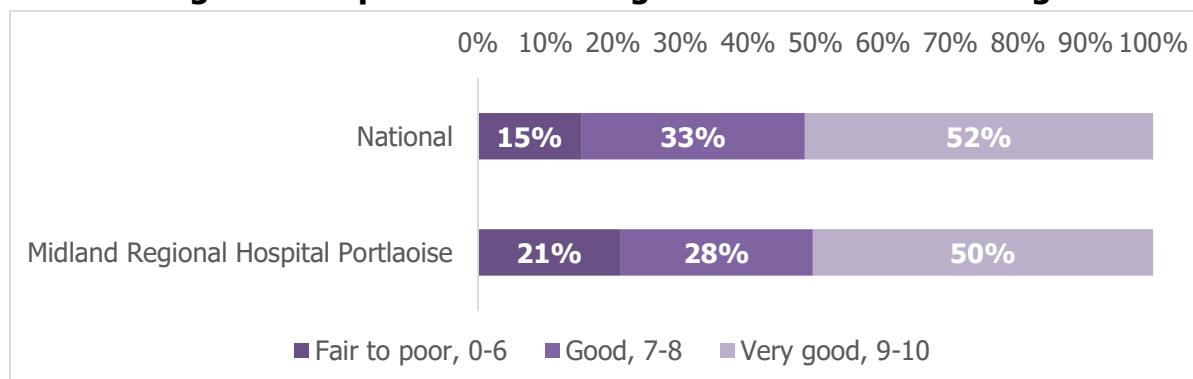
## Overall experience

Two questions examined women's overall experience of maternity care. The first question asked if they knew how to give feedback or make a complaint. 33 women (27.3%) answered 'yes', while 63 (52.1%) answered 'no'. 25 (20.7%) said they did not wish to give feedback or make a complaint.

Women were also asked to rate their overall maternity experience on a scale from 0 to 10, with 10 being the most positive experience, and 0 the most negative experience. 79% of women who gave birth at Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise rated their overall experience as good or very good, compared with 85% nationally.

Figure 14 shows the average overall experience ratings for Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise compared with the national average.

**Figure 14. Comparison of overall maternity care experiences scores for Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise against the national average.**



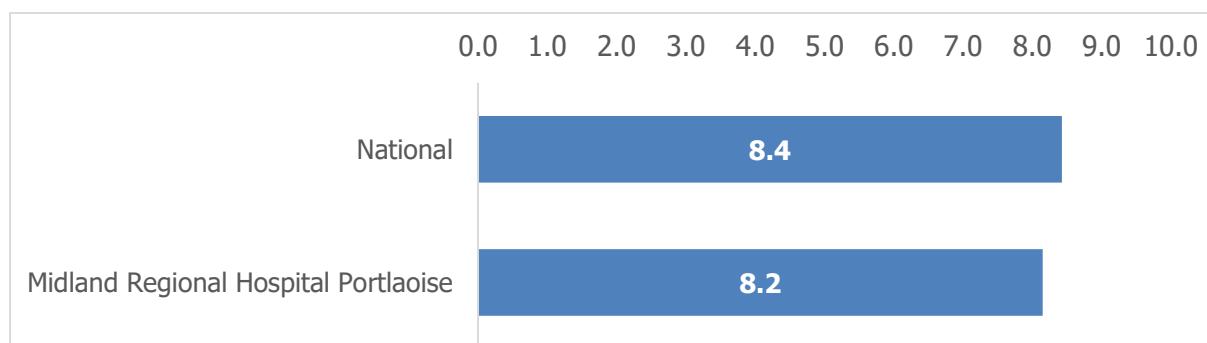
## Focus on: Involvement in decisions, confidence in staff, and respect and dignity

The National Maternity Strategy 2016-2026 emphasises the importance of women being empowered to make decisions about their maternity care, having confidence and trust in healthcare professionals, and being treated with respect and dignity. This section explores the relationship between these elements and women's overall ratings of the care they received.

Eleven questions on the survey explore involvement in decisions, confidence and trust, and respect and dignity. The average scores for these questions as a whole for women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise are compared with the national average in Figure 15. The responses for the relevant questions are presented in Figure 16.

Women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise rated the answers for these questions as about the same as the national average. The highest-scoring question for this stage related to being treated with respect and dignity at home after the birth, with 86.2% saying that they were always treated with respect and dignity at home. The lowest-scoring question related to involvement in decisions while pregnant, with 53.7% saying they were always involved in decisions about their care during their pregnancy, and the remaining women saying that they were only sometimes involved or not involved in decisions.

**Figure 15. Comparison of relevant questions for women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise with the national average**



**Figure 16. Scores for questions about involvement in decisions, confidence and trust and respect and dignity for women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise.**



## In their own words: analysis of women's comments

Three survey questions (questions 61-63) asked women to provide additional information, in their own words, on their maternity experiences. These free-text questions allowed women to give a more in-depth description of specific aspects of their maternity care. In total, 220 comments were received from women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise.

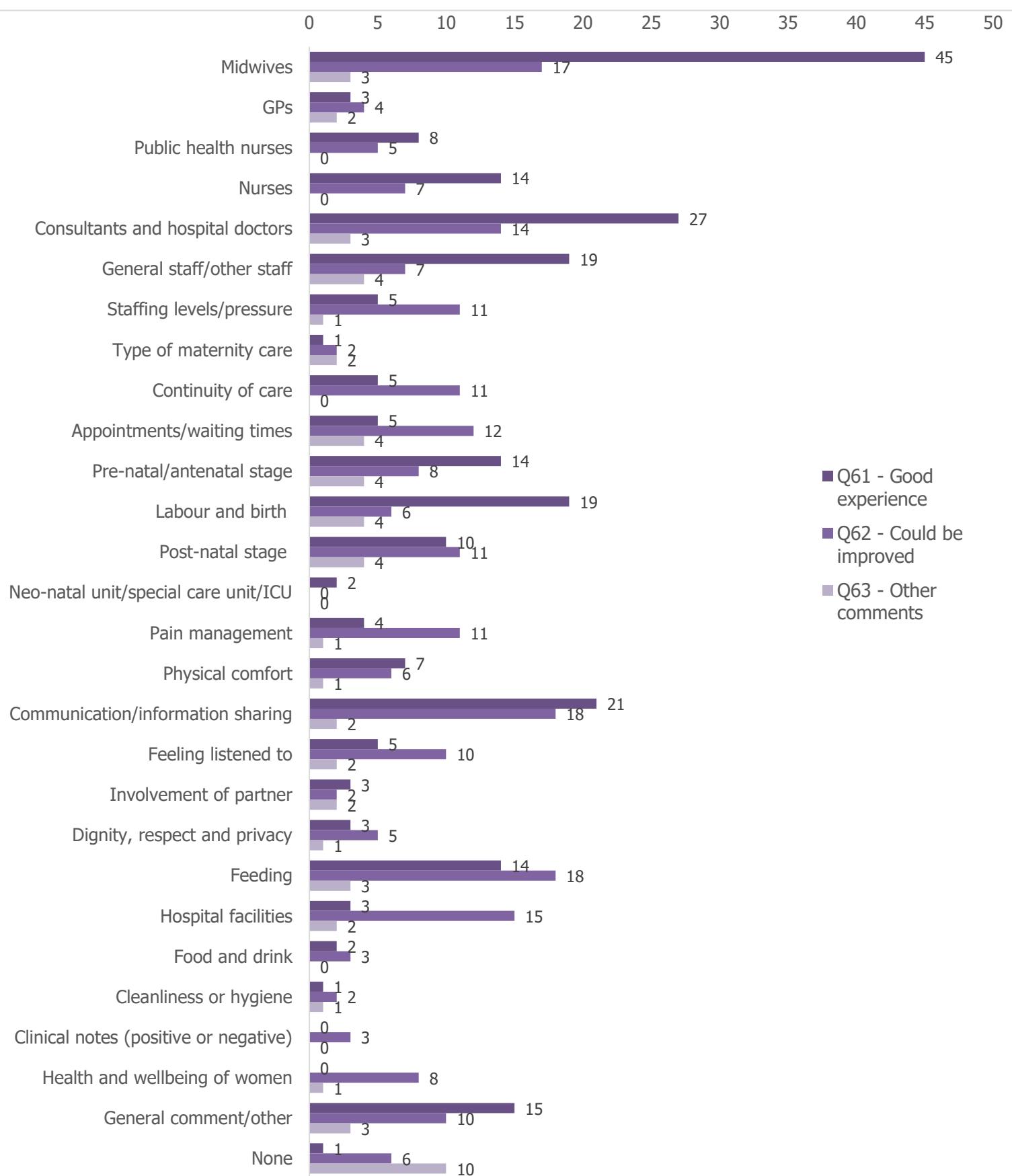
Figure 17 shows the breakdown of comments by theme for each of the three open-ended questions. Q61 asked women what was particularly good about their maternity care, Q62 asked women what could be improved, and Q63 asked women if there were any other aspects of their maternity care experience that they would like to describe.

For Q61, most of the comments related to the 'midwives', 'consultants and hospital doctors' and 'communication/information sharing' themes. For Q62, most comments related to the 'feeding', 'midwives', and 'communication/information sharing' themes. Finally, the answers to Q63 were evenly spread among several themes, including the 'appointments/waiting times', 'pre-natal/antenatal stage', 'post-natal stage', 'labour and birth', and 'general staff/other staff' themes.

It is notable that midwives feature strongly in the responses for each of the three questions. There are many more positive comments than suggestions for improvement relating to midwives, which likely reflects the nature and importance of the interactions that women have with midwives during labour and birth.

Examples of the comments received in response to each free-text question are provided in Figure 18.

**Figure 17. Number of participant comments by theme.**



## **Figure 18. Sample comments.**

### **Q61. Positive comments**

"Nurses and midwives were always very caring and easy to talk to and ask questions. I always felt my care was 100% and never doubted my baby and I were in the best care."

"The staff I met were very kind, helpful and usually knowledgeable. It was wonderful to receive care close to my home. The most important thing was that I felt I could trust my doctor. She allowed me express my preferences and concerns, worked with me to achieve those and to make other decisions when those weren't possible."

"The midwives in Portlaoise were amazing to me, my partner and my family. They were thoughtful, respectful and reassuring. They supported me in all my decisions which resulted in a beautiful birth of my baby. I was relaxed and kept informed all the time. The healthcare assistants are fantastic too and deserve more recognition in such a busy place. The lactation support I received was great, although more staff in this area could improve it even further."

### **Q62. Suggestions for improvement**

"Overall, I as a nurse myself understood how staff can be extremely busy but I feel very let down by the level of support I received from the lactation consultant and the midwives (in relation to breastfeeding) especially when it was my first baby and she was [Condition Name]. I looked for help but didn't get it."

"Communication between doctor team on care and history. Had to constantly remind each member of team on history and my particular situation and members of team had differing views on when to be induced. I did not want to be induced until I was over by 10 days as I had an unpleasant induction previously. I was told I would have to be induced on my due date by one member of team and they booked it in even though everything was perfectly normal. Then I was told a week later by another member I could have waited and go over by a week if I wanted as all was fine but it was too late at that point as induction was already booked in. No communication or agreement on timings across the board."

"Clear and honest information regards the likelihood of assistance during labour when an epidural is administered. During pregnancy I asked numerous midwives

about epidurals and are birth assistance common. All midwives said no, instrument assistance is not very common with epidurals. I chose to have an epidural and I required assistance via forceps. I would of appreciated more honesty and information on the risks of instrumental delivery."

### **Q63. Other comments**

"The healthcare assistants and the domestic staff on the maternity ward were absolutely brilliant."

"I felt rushed at my antenatal appointments, I was admitted a few times during the pregnancy and felt I was an inconvenience to the staff while there."

"If you have an appointment at 9 you should be able to see the doctor not wait till 11. I think the whole unit needs to be expanded."

## **Conclusion**

### **What were women's experiences of maternity care in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise in October 2019?**

Most of the participants who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise has a positive experience of maternity care, with 78% saying they had a good or very good overall experience, compared with 85% nationally.

Across each stage of care from antenatal care through to postnatal care at home, women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise rated their care as similar to the national average. 49% of respondents said they were offered a choice of what type of maternity care they would receive.

Women's ratings of the care their baby received in the neonatal unit were significantly above the national average. The lowest-scoring questions were Q9 and Q28. These questions asked whether women received enough information about mental health changes that may occur during their pregnancy, and whether they had the opportunity to ask questions about their labour and birth after their baby was born.

The responses to the three free-text questions provided very detailed information on women's experiences while in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise and the maternity care they received in the community before and after giving birth. These comments identified the caring and helpful attitudes of healthcare professionals but also highlighted the difficulties that some women experienced in accessing help when they needed it.

The findings of the National Maternity Experience Survey will be used by Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise and community maternity care providers in the area to improve the maternity experiences of women who give birth in the hospital.

## **Appendix 1: Areas that scored above or below the national average**

### **Improvement map**

It is important for maternity care providers to know if they scored above or below the national average for each question, and this is shown in the improvement map in Figure 19. The improvement map also shows which questions are related to patients' overall experience in hospital. Some questions had a stronger relationship with overall experience than others.

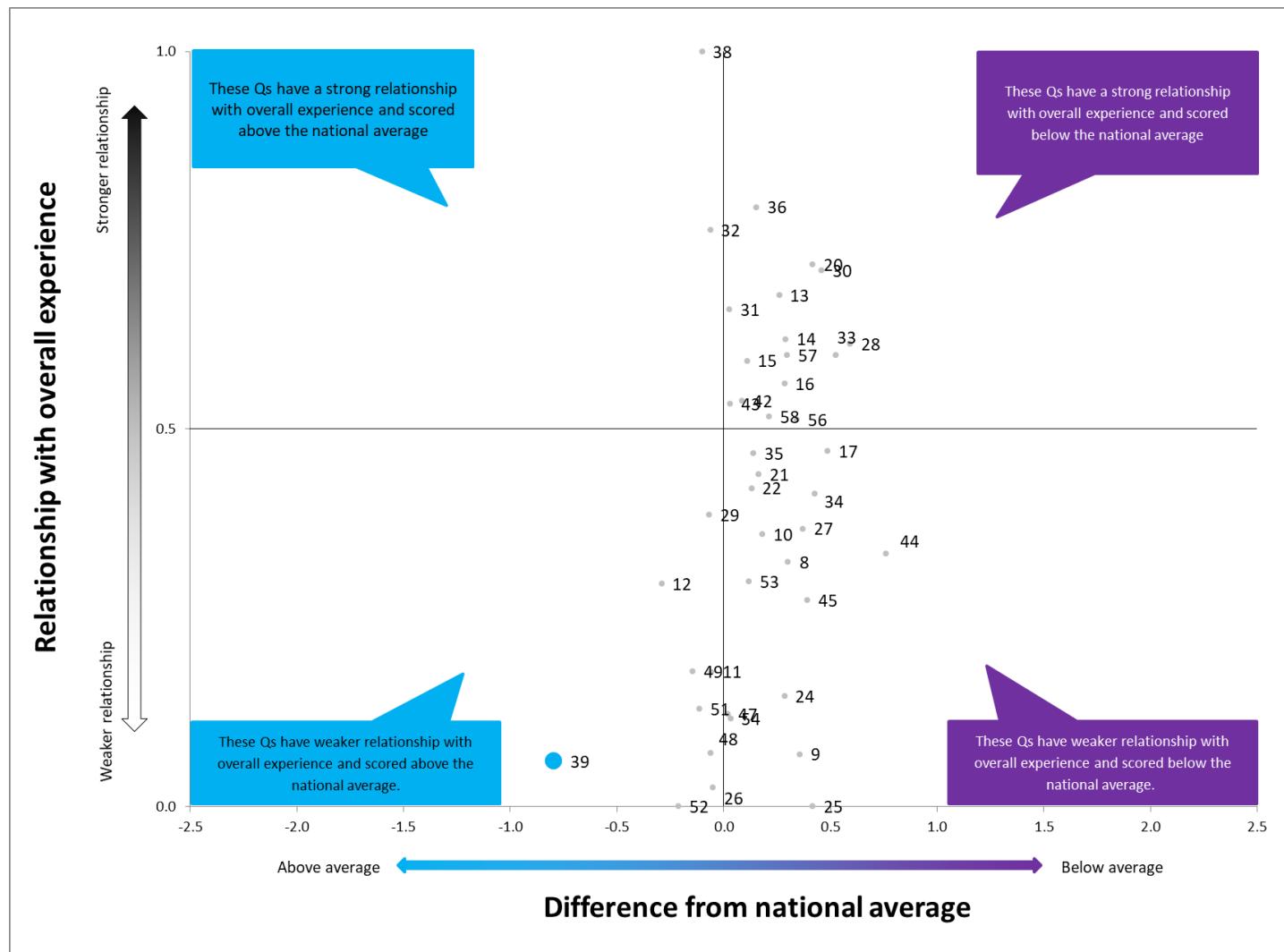
For example, Question 38, which asked women if they received enough emotional support from healthcare professionals while their baby was in the neonatal unit, had a strong relationship with overall experience. This means that women who said they received enough emotional support while their baby was in the neonatal unit were very likely to give a positive rating of their overall experience. Women who felt that they did not receive enough emotional support tended to give more negative ratings of their overall experience.

Other questions had a weaker relationship with overall experience – this means that patients' experiences in these areas had little bearing on how they rated their overall experience. An example is Question 52, which asked women if the GP or practice nurse/midwife spent enough time talking to them about their own mental health at the postnatal check-up. The relationship between mental health support at the postnatal check-up and women's ratings of their overall experience was weak. This means that even if women received enough mental health support at the post-natal checkup, they may have given negative ratings of their overall experience, or if they did not receive mental health support, women may still have given positive ratings of their overall experience.

It is useful for maternity care providers to know which questions strongly relate to their patients' overall experience as these are the areas on which they should focus their improvement efforts.

In Figure 19, each dot shows a specific survey question Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise. Questions at the top of the graph are strongly related to overall experience, while those at the bottom have a weaker relationship. Questions to the right of the graph scored below the national average, while those on the left scored above it. The improvement map for each hospital is unique and gives specific information on where a hospital is doing well, and areas where improvements are needed. An interactive version of the improvement map is also available at [www.youreexperience.ie/](http://www.youreexperience.ie/), along with instructions on how to interpret it.

**Figure 19. Improvement map for responses of women who gave birth in the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise**



## **Appendix 2: Description of models of maternity care**

There are multiple types of maternity care, often described as ‘models’ of maternity care, available across Ireland. Each model of maternity care involves a varied mix of maternity services and healthcare professionals. These models of care, and where they are provided, are described in detail below.

### **Public care**

Also known as combined care or shared care. Regular antenatal check-ups with midwives and or obstetricians in the hospital and, in most cases, with a general practitioner (GP). Labour and birth in the hospital. Postnatal care in a public ward in the hospital with subsequent postnatal check-ups in a community setting.

### **Consultant-led care private or semi-private**

Antenatal check-ups with a private obstetrician (chosen by the woman) with the option of sharing these with a GP as part of combined/shared care. Labour and birth in the hospital with care provided by an obstetrician/the obstetrician’s team and hospital midwives. Postnatal care in a private or semi-private ward in the hospital with subsequent postnatal check-ups in a community setting.

### **DOMINO (Domiciliary In and Out)**

Antenatal check-ups with one midwife or a small team of midwives in the hospital or in a community setting, with the option of sharing these antenatal checks-ups with a GP as part of combined/shared care. Labour and birth in the hospital. Transfer home within 12-24 hours after birth. Postnatal care in a public ward in the hospital with subsequent postnatal check-ups in a community setting.

### **Midwifery-led care with birth in a midwifery-led unit (Cavan General and Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda only)**

Antenatal check-ups with a midwife or a small team of midwives in a midwifery-led unit or in a community setting. Labour and birth in a midwifery-led unit. Postnatal care in a midwifery-led unit with subsequent postnatal check-ups in a community setting.

### **Community midwifery team care**

Antenatal check-ups with a midwife or a small team of midwives in the hospital or in a community setting, with the option of sharing these antenatal check-ups with a GP as part of combined/shared care. Labour and birth in the hospital. Postnatal care in a public ward in the hospital with subsequent postnatal check-ups in a community setting.

### **Home birth with hospital based or self-employed community midwives (SECM)**

Antenatal check-ups at home or in a community setting with either a hospital-based or self-employed community midwife (chosen by the woman). Labour and birth at home with care provided by a midwife. Postnatal care in a community setting.

## References

1. Department of Health. Creating a better future together: national maternity strategy 2016-2026. 2016.

