



National Maternity  
Experience Survey 2020

National Maternity  
Hospital

## 2020 survey results

### Respondents



**361**

Number of respondents



**56%**

Participation rate

### Overall experience

2020

Very Good  
**49%**

Good  
**35%**

Fair to Poor  
**15%**

### Stages of care

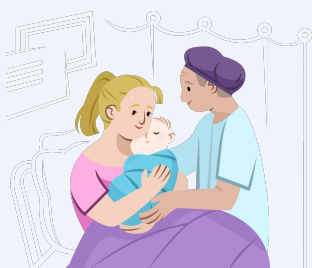


#### Care while pregnant (antenatal care)

Care provided in the hospital and the community

Ratings of 'care while pregnant

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



#### Care during labour and birth

Care provided in the hospital

Ratings of 'care during labour and birth' were about the same as the national average. The highest-scoring question related to the involvement of a partner or companion during 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

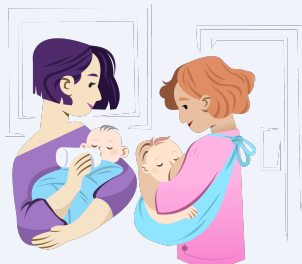
Ratings of 'care in hospital after the birth' were lower than the national average. The highest-scoring question related to being told who to contact after discharge. The lowest-scoring question related to 'debriefing' and the opportunity for women to ask questions about their labour and birth after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



## Specialised care\*

Care provided in the hospital

69% of women said that they had a very good overall experience of the care their baby received in the neonatal unit in the National Maternity Hospital, 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 while in hospital.



## 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 being treated with respect and dignity at home after the birth. The lowest-scoring question related to the time spent by the GP practice nurse/midwife discussing mental health at 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 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 <https://yourexperience.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 National Maternity Hospital. 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 National Maternity Hospital, and by general practitioners and public health nurses based in the community.

## What were the findings for women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital?

The majority of women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital said they had a positive overall experience. 85% said their maternity care was good or very good, which is the same as the national average. Women's ratings of care after birth in hospital were significantly below the national average, while women who gave birth in the hospital rated the other stages as about the same as the national average.

75% of women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital said that they were offered a choice of the type of maternity care they would receive. Options included public care, consultant-led private or semi-private care, DOMINO and community midwifery care.

The highest-scoring questions within the survey included Q25 and Q26, which related to an opportunity to have skin-to-skin contact with the baby shortly after birth and also the involvement of a partner or companion in care during labour and birth.

However, ratings of Q33, Q34 and Q43 were significantly below average. Q33 and Q34 asked whether women were given sufficient information about their physical recovery and changes to their mental health before they were discharged from hospital. Q43 asked women if they received adequate support and encouragement when feeding their baby.

The responses to the three free-text questions provided very detailed information on women's experiences while in the National Maternity Hospital 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?

646 women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital in October 2019 were invited to participate in the survey. 361 women completed the survey, representing a response rate of 56%.<sup>1</sup> Table 1 provides information on the characteristics of the women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital who responded to the survey. Most of these women said that they lived in Dublin.

**Table 1. Characteristics of women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital who responded to the survey.**

<b>Age category</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Under 25	4	1.1%
25-29	36	10.0%
30-34	137	38.0%
35-39	150	41.6%
40 or older	34	9.4%
<b>Previous births</b>		
None	162	49.5%
One or two	146	44.6%
Three or more	19	5.8%
<b>Ethnic group</b>		
White Irish	280	78.2%
Irish Traveller	1	0.3%
Any other White background	52	14.5%
African	6	1.7%
Any other Black background	1	0.3%
Chinese	3	0.8%
Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	4	1.1%
Any other Asian background	1	0.3%
Arabic	4	1.1%
Mixed	1	0.3%
Other	5	1.4%

<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.

<b>County of residence</b>		
Carlow	1	0.3%
Cork	1	0.3%
Donegal	2	0.6%
Dublin	270	74.8%
Kildare	16	4.4%
Laois	2	0.6%
Louth	4	1.1%
Meath	21	5.8%
Offaly	2	0.6%
Roscommon	1	0.3%
Tipperary	1	0.3%
Westmeath	1	0.3%
Wexford	2	0.6%
Wicklow	37	10.2%

## 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 National Maternity Hospital, 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.yourexperience.ie](http://www.yourexperience.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 National Maternity Hospital

## Areas that scored above and below the national average

This section lists the questions where women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital rated their experiences as significantly above or below the national average. The list includes the relevant stage of care and question number for each area. Appendix 1 shows how these areas were identified.

### Areas the scored above the national average

In the National Maternity Hospital, the scores for all questions were at or below the national average so no areas that scored above the national average were identified using the methodology outlined in Appendix 1.

### Areas that scored below the national average

#### Care in hospital after birth

##### Information about physical recovery before leaving hospital | Q33.

38 out of the 351 women (10.8%) who responded to this question said that they were not given information about their physical recovery before they were discharged from hospital.

#### Care in hospital after birth

##### Information about mental health before leaving hospital | Q34.

106 out of the 338 women (31.4%) who responded to this question said that before they were discharged they were not given information about any changes they might experience in their mental health..

#### Feeding

##### Support and encouragement with feeding in hospital | Q43.

58 out of the 343 women (16.9%) who responded to this question said that they were not always given support and encouragement with feeding in hospital.

## 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.

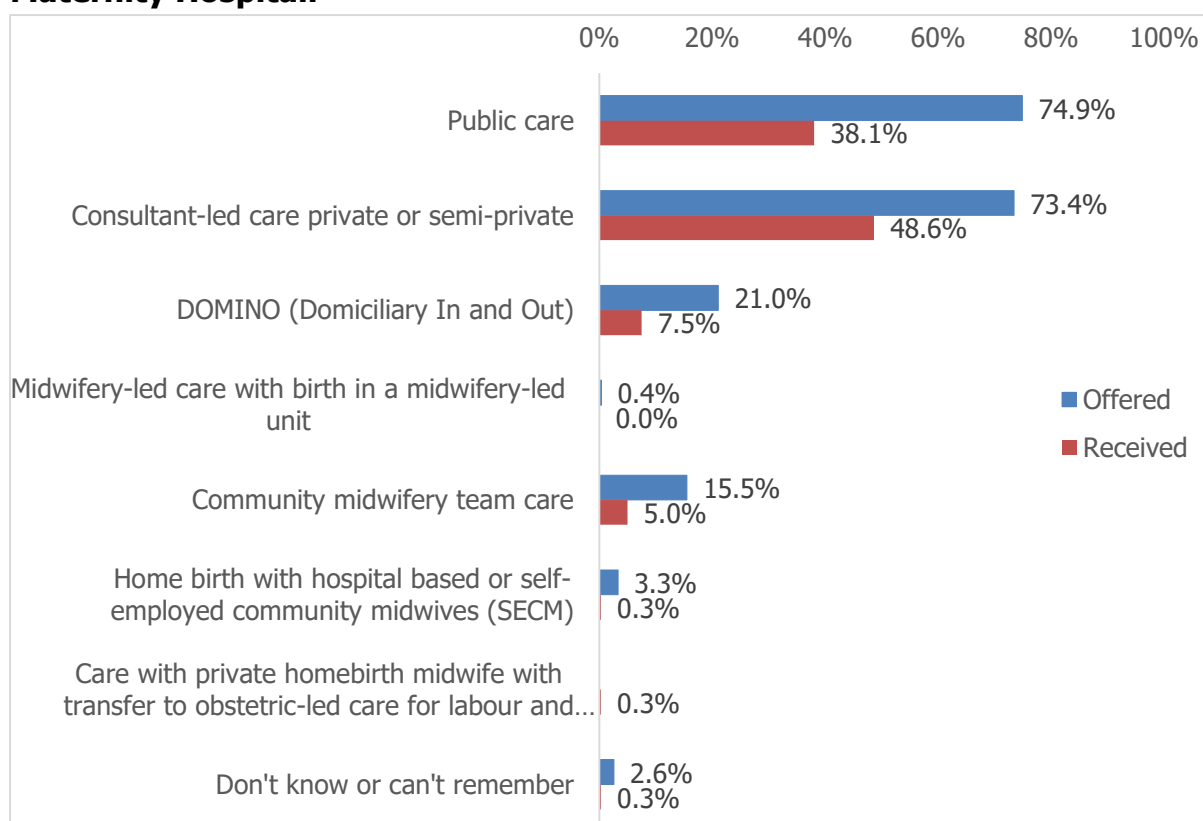
It is important to note that the questions for this stage of care relate both to care provided in the community and care provided in the National Maternity Hospital.

**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	355	98.3%
Twins	6	1.7%
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	273	75.6%
Midwife	30	8.3%
Other	58	16.1%

269 women (74.5%) who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital said that they were offered a choice of maternity care, while 68 (18.8%) 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 National Maternity Hospital.**



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

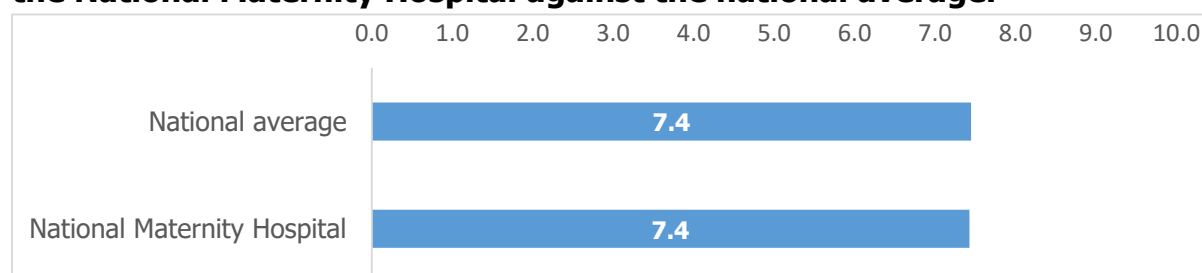
<b>Q6. During your pregnancy were you offered any antenatal classes or courses?</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, and I did them	208	57.6%
Yes, but I did not do them	104	28.8%
No	45	12.5%
Don't know or can't remember	4	1.1%
<b>Q7. Are there any particular reasons you did not go to antenatal classes or courses?</b>		
It was not my first baby	74	71.2%
It was my first baby but I didn't want to go to classes	3	2.9%
There were no available spaces/they were booked out	2	1.9%
I couldn't find classes that were right for me	3	2.9%
There were no classes near me	6	5.8%
I had other commitments	13	12.5%
Other	18	17.3%

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, and compared against the national average. Scores for this stage of care are compared by the county of residence of women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital in Figure 3. Scores for the individual questions are compared against the national average in Figure 4.

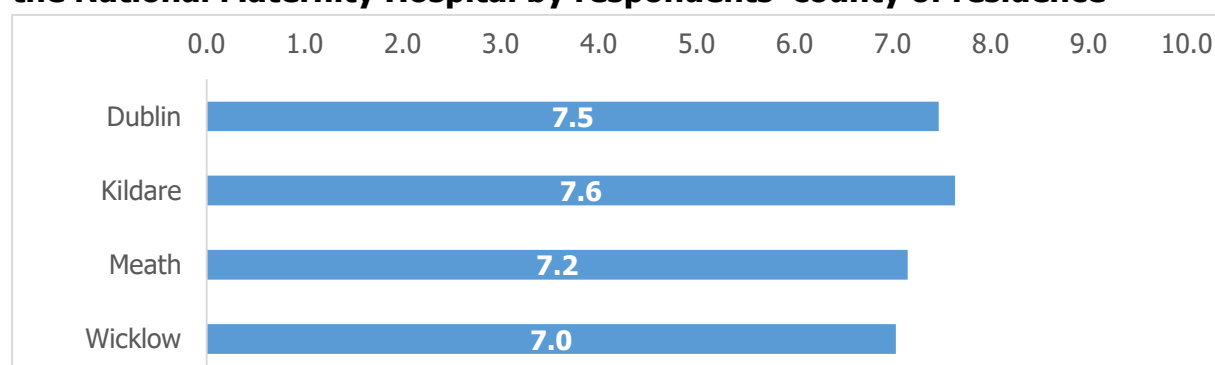
Women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital rated their antenatal care as about the same as the national average.

The highest-scoring question for this stage related to being treated with respect and dignity, with 81.1% saying they were always treated with respect and dignity. The lowest-scoring question related to information about mental health. 38.4% said 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 the National Maternity Hospital against the national average.**

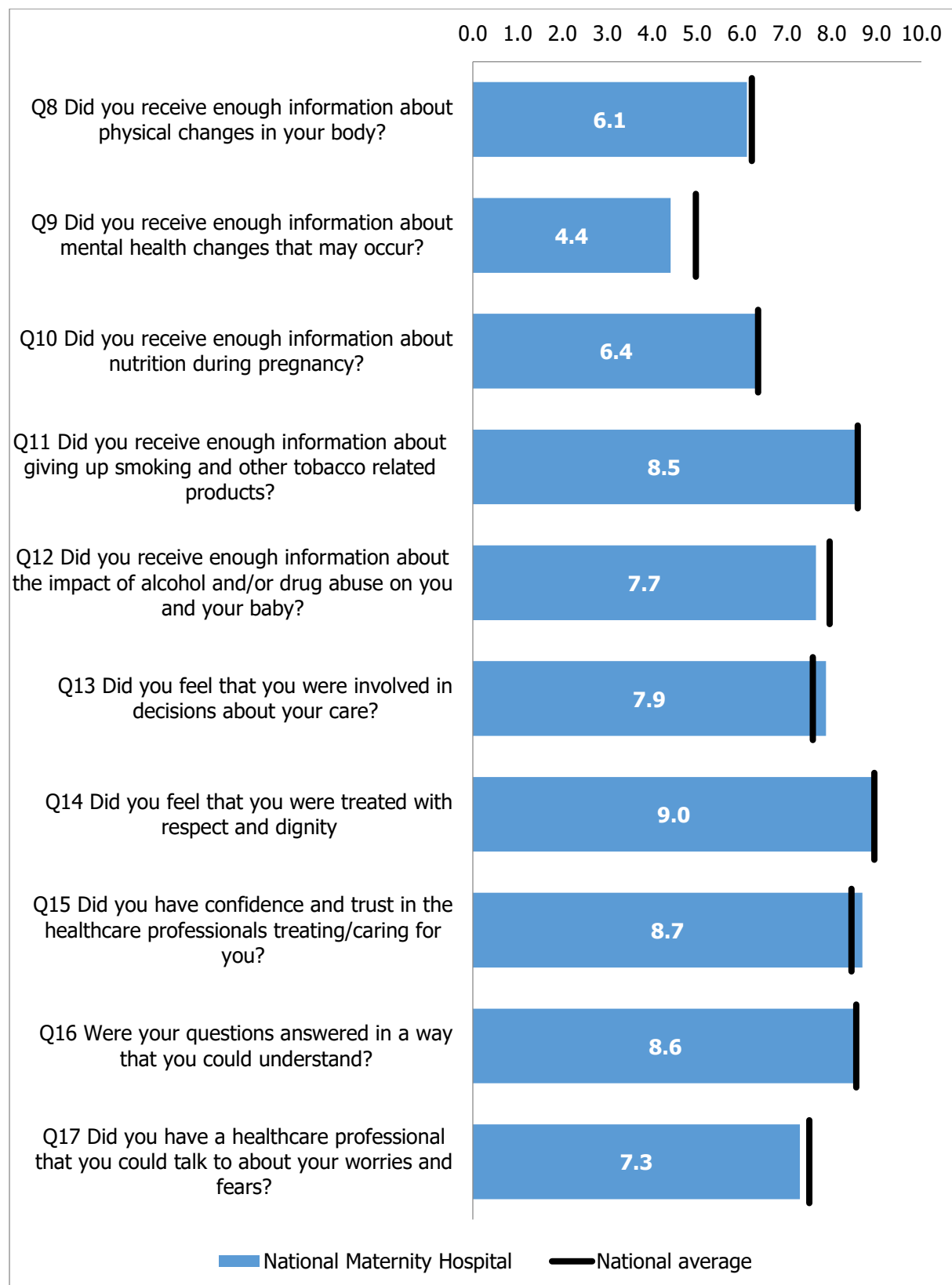


**Figure 3. Comparison of 'Care while pregnant (antenatal care)' scores for the National Maternity Hospital by respondents' county of residence<sup>2</sup>**



<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 the National Maternity Hospital 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.

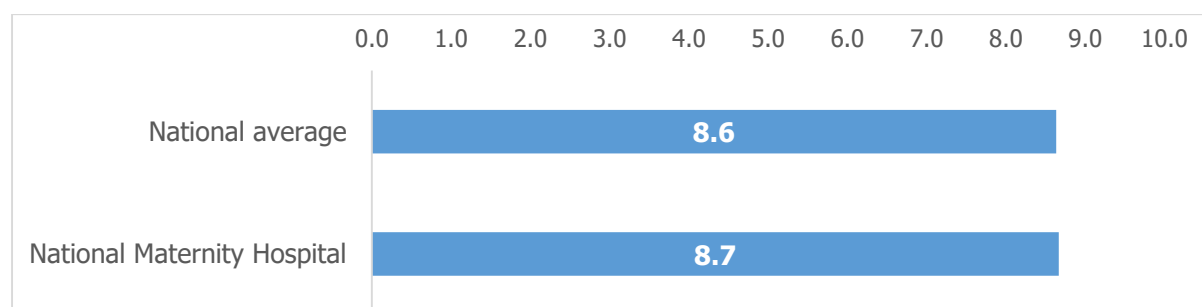
Women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital rated their care during labour and birth as about the same as the national average.

The highest-scoring question for this stage related to involvement of a partner or companion, with 96.4% 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. 38 women (10.6%) said that they were not involved in decisions about their care during labour and birth.

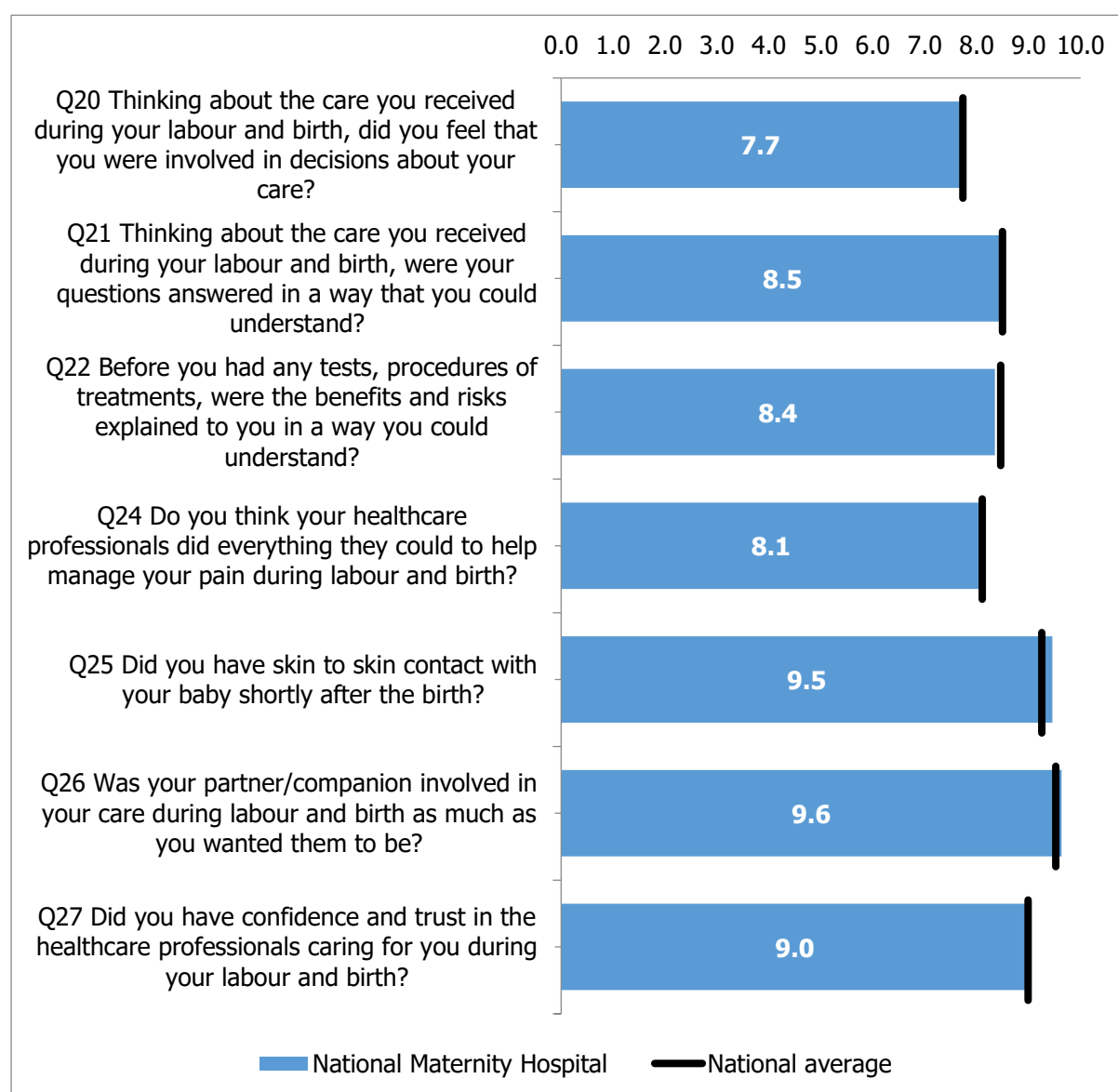
**Table 4. Results for questions on induction of labour, type of birth and being left alone.**

<b>Q18. Thinking about the birth of your baby, was your labour induced?</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	131	36.4%
No	229	63.6%
Don't know or can't remember	0	0.0%
<b>Q19. What type of birth did you have?</b>		
A vaginal birth (no forceps or ventouse suction cup)	218	60.7%
An assisted vaginal birth (e.g. with forceps or ventouse suction cup)	48	13.4%
A planned caesarean birth	49	13.6%
An unplanned caesarean birth	44	12.3%
<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	57	15.9%
Yes, during the later stages of labour	17	4.7%
Yes, during the birth	2	0.6%
Yes, shortly after the birth	20	5.6%
No, not at all	273	76.3%

**Figure 5. Comparison of 'Care during labour and birth' scores for the National Maternity Hospital against the national average.**



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



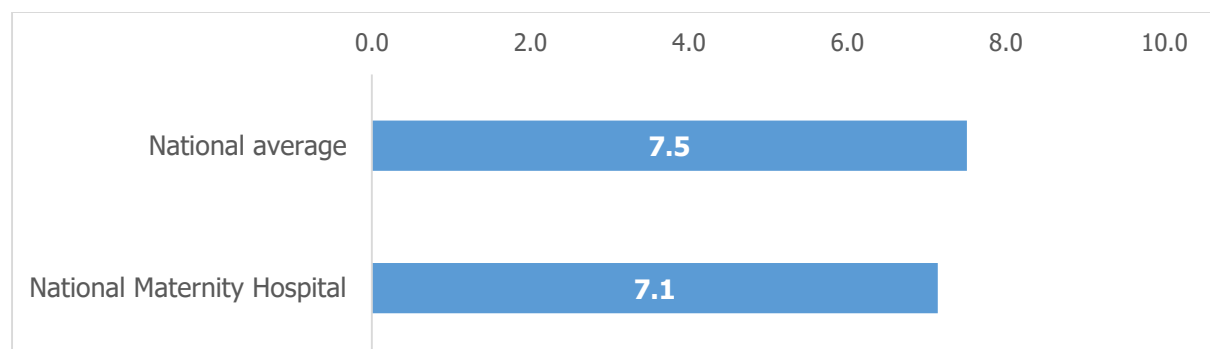
## Care in hospital after the birth

The questions for this stage related to the care women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital 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, and for the individual questions in Figure 8.

Women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital rated their care in hospital after the birth as lower than the national average.

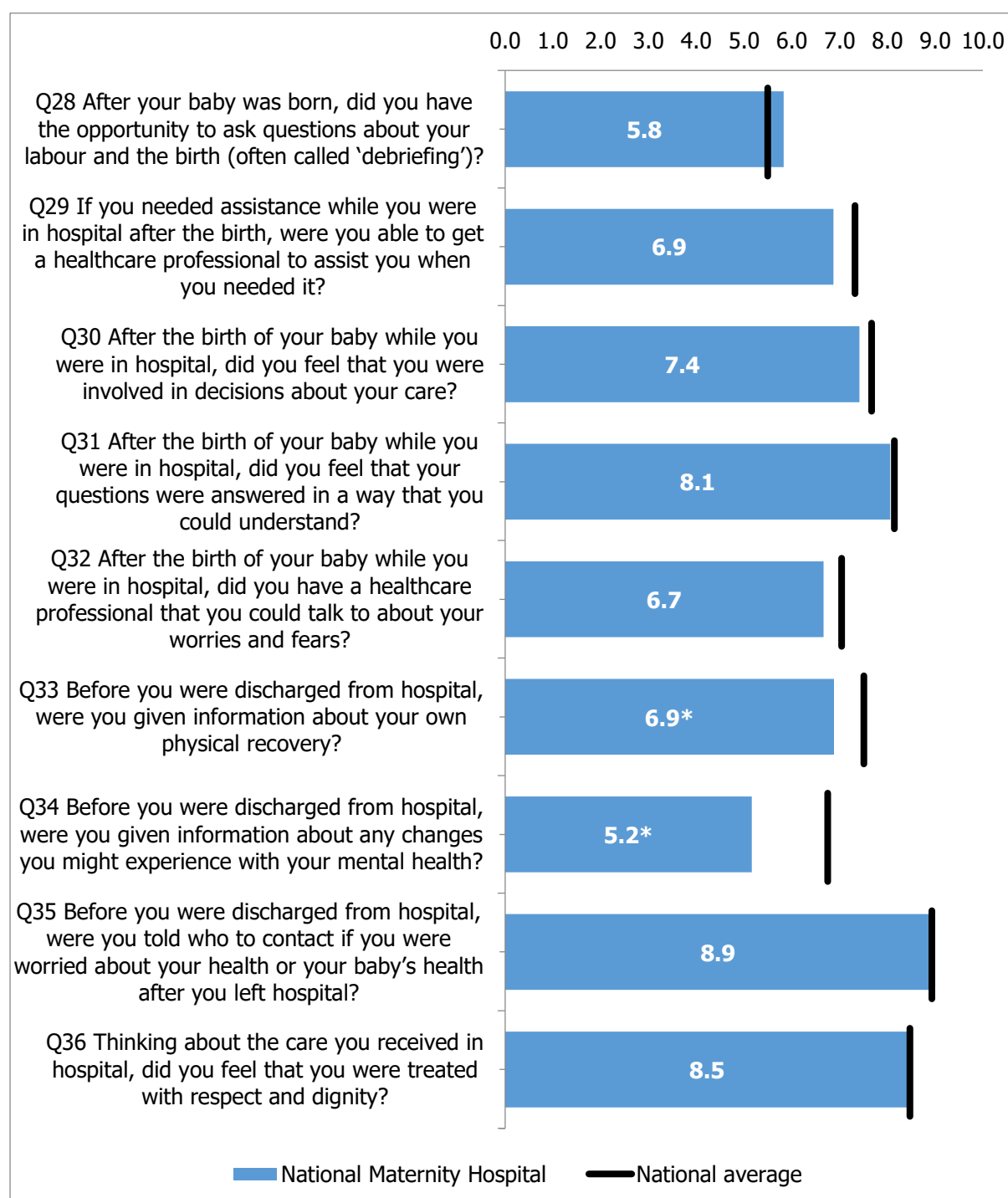
The highest-scoring question for this stage related to being told who to contact after discharge, with 89.2% saying they were told who to contact if they were worried about their own health or their baby's health. The lowest-scoring question related to 'debriefing'. 91 women (27.9%) said that they did 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 the National Maternity Hospital against the national average.**





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



\* indicates a statistically significant difference from the national average

## Specialised care

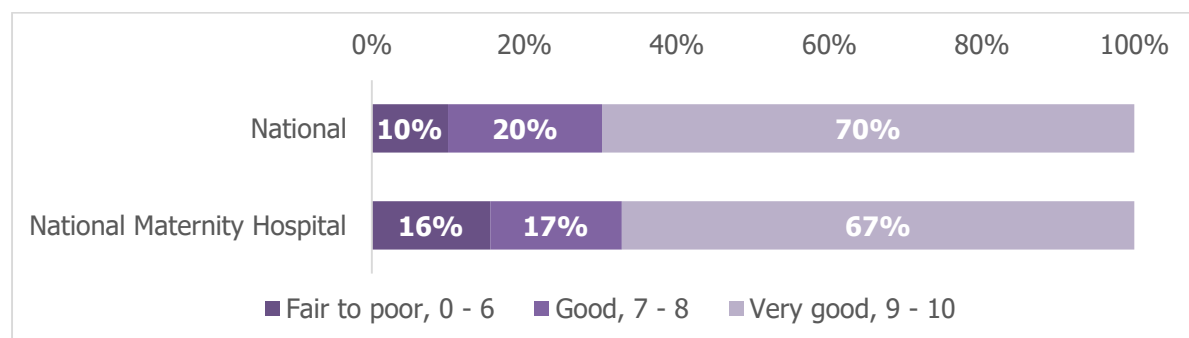
The questions for this stage explore the experiences of women whose babies required specialist care in a neonatal unit after birth. Women whose baby was not admitted to a neonatal unit did not answer Q38 or Q39. The results for Q37 and Q38 are shown in Table 5. Q39 asked women to rate their experience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

67% of women said that they had a very good overall experience of the care their baby received in the neonatal unit, compared with 70% nationally.

**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	60	17.0%
No	289	82.1%
Don't know or can't remember	3	0.9%
<b>Q38. While your baby was in the neonatal unit, did you receive enough emotional support from healthcare professionals?</b>		
Yes, always	20	34.5%
Yes, sometimes	16	27.6%
No	19	32.8%
I did not want or need any emotional support	3	5.2%
Don't know or can't remember	0	0.0%

**Figure 9. Comparison of overall ratings of experiences in the neonatal unit at the National Maternity Hospital 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.

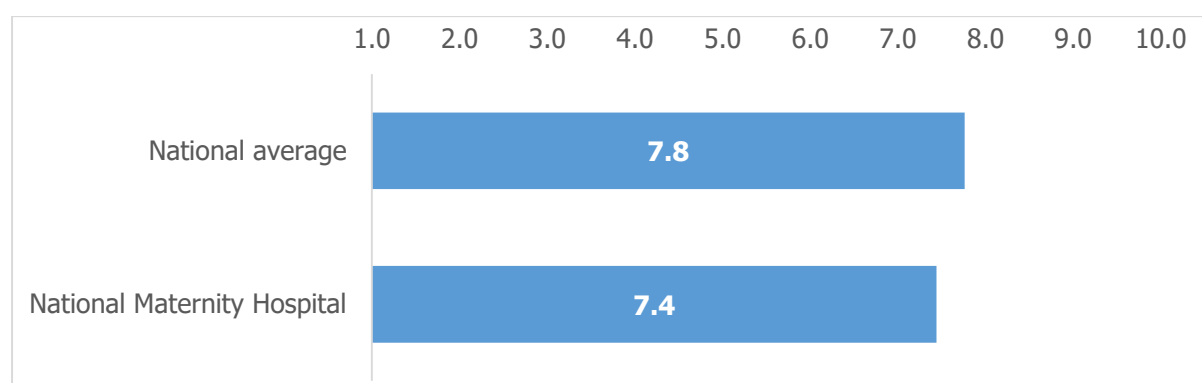
Women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital rated the 'Feeding' questions as about the same as the national average.

Most women (70.4%) 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 58 women (16.9%) saying that they did not get adequate support and encouragement with feeding their baby while they were in hospital.

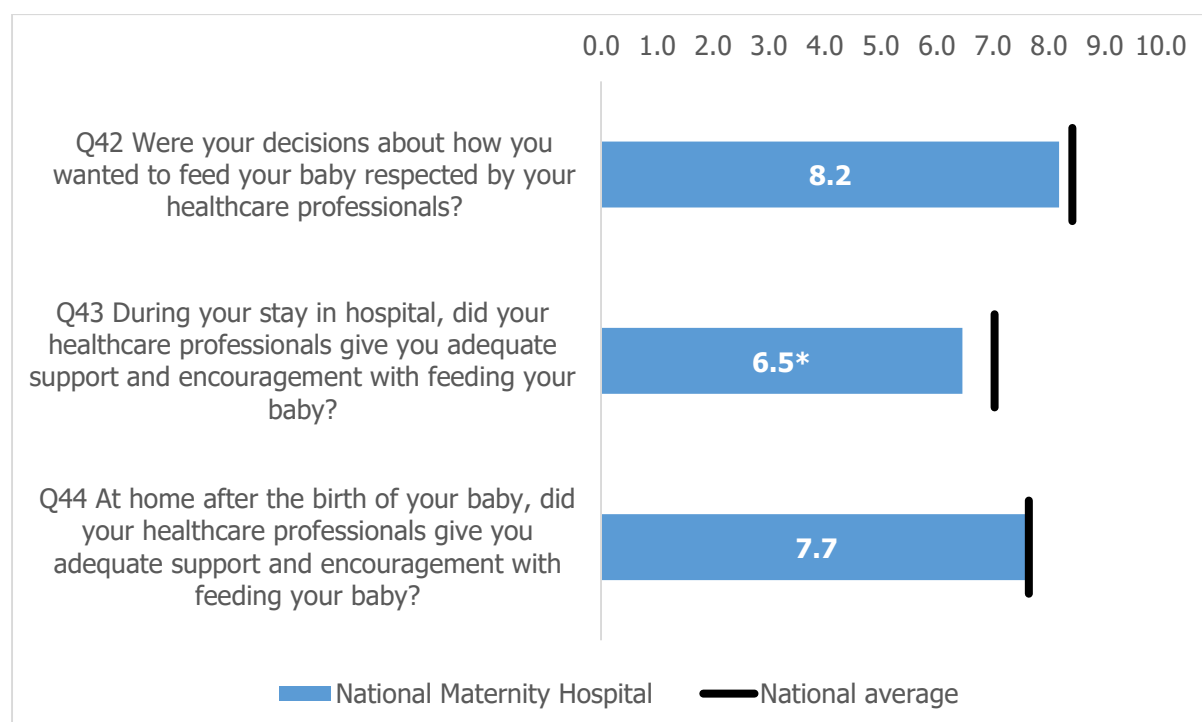
**Table 6. Results for questions on discussion of feeding options and the methods of feeding used.**

<b>Q40. Did your healthcare professionals discuss with you the different options for Feeding?</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, during pregnancy	190	52.6%
Yes, during labour or immediately after birth	88	24.4%
Yes, after birth while in hospital	128	35.5%
Yes, after birth while at home	72	19.9%
No	41	11.4%
I did not want or need discussion of different options	55	15.2%
Don't know or can't remember	3	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	154	42.7%
Both breast and formula (bottle) milk	153	42.4%
Formula (bottle) milk only	54	15.0%
Don't know or can't remember	0	0.0%

**Figure 10. Comparison of scores for 'Feeding' in the National Maternity Hospital against the national average.**



**Figure 11. Comparison of individual question scores for 'Feeding' in the National Maternity Hospital against the national average.**



\* indicates a statistically significant difference from 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 National Maternity Hospital 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 National Maternity Hospital, 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 National Maternity Hospital 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 being treated with respect and dignity, with 88.8% saying that they were always treated with respect and dignity at home after the birth of their baby. The lowest-scoring question related to the time spent by the GP or practice nurse/midwife discussing mental health at their 6-week check-up. 27.9% said insufficient time was spending discussing their mental health at this check-up.

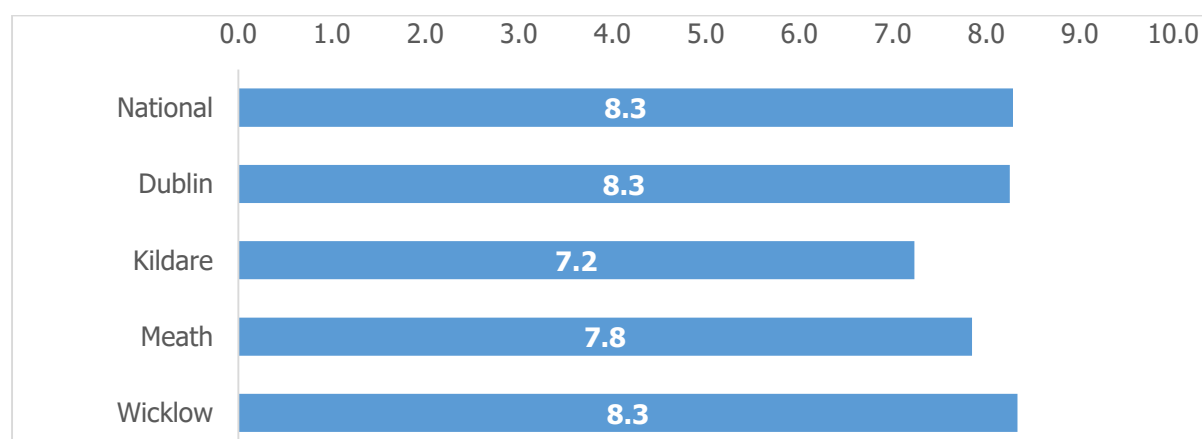
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<sup>3</sup> While the questions for this stage of care do not directly relate to care provided by the National Maternity Hospital, it is important to represent all stages of a woman's maternity care journey in this report.

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

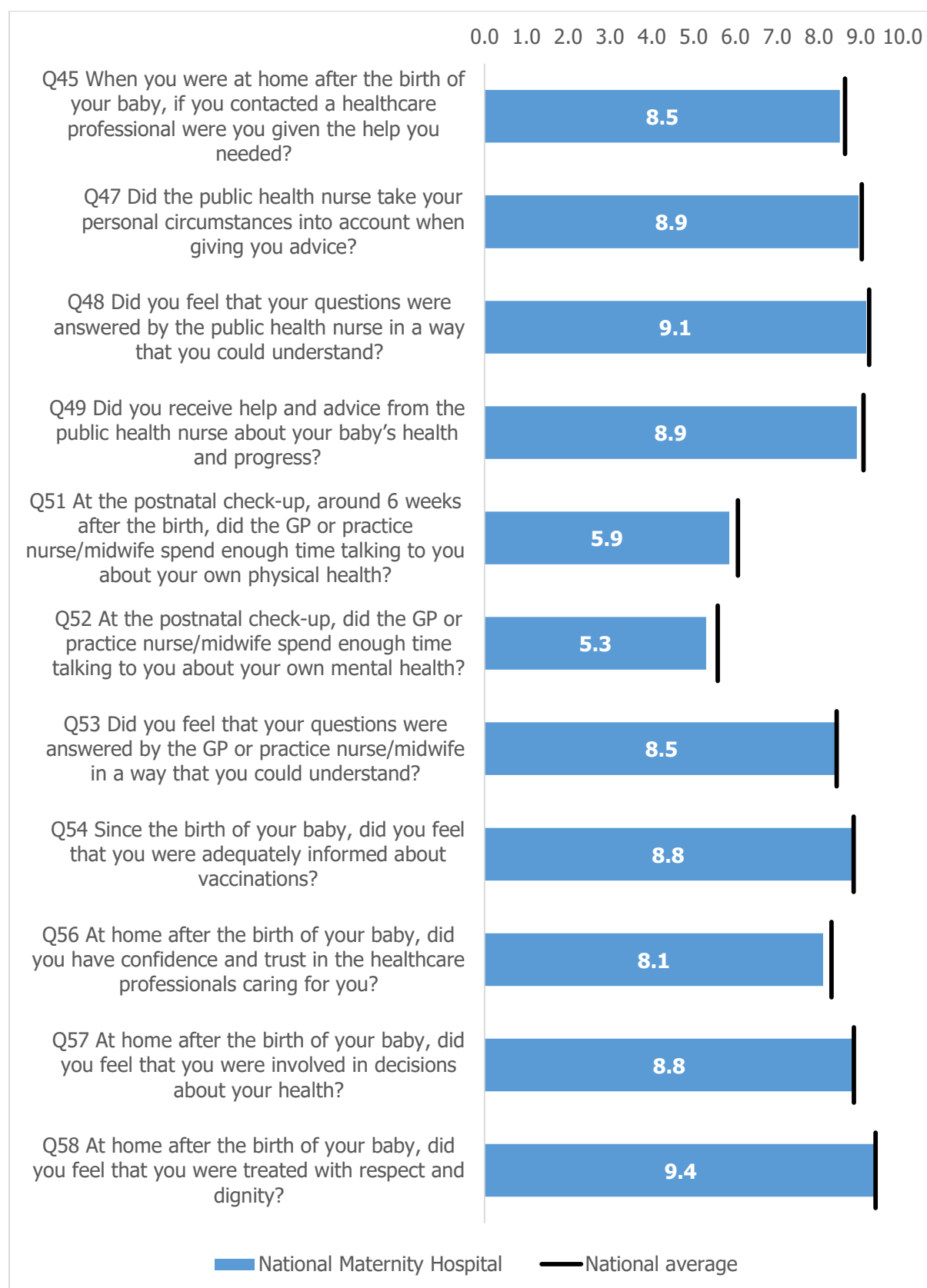
<b>Q46. Since your baby's birth, have you been visited at home by a public health nurse?</b>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	358	99.2%
No	3	0.8%
Not relevant to my situation	0	0.0%
Don't know or can't remember	0	0.0%
<b>Q50. Did your baby receive a 2-week check-up with your general practitioner (GP)?</b>		
Yes	331	91.7%
No, I did not know about the check-up	8	2.2%
No, I knew about the check-up but did not attend	2	0.6%
I attended another healthcare professional for the 2-week check-up	15	4.2%
Not relevant to my situation	5	1.4%
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	165	45.8%
No	194	53.9%
Don't know or can't remember	1	0.3%

**Figure 12. 'Care at home after the birth' scores for women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital 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.**



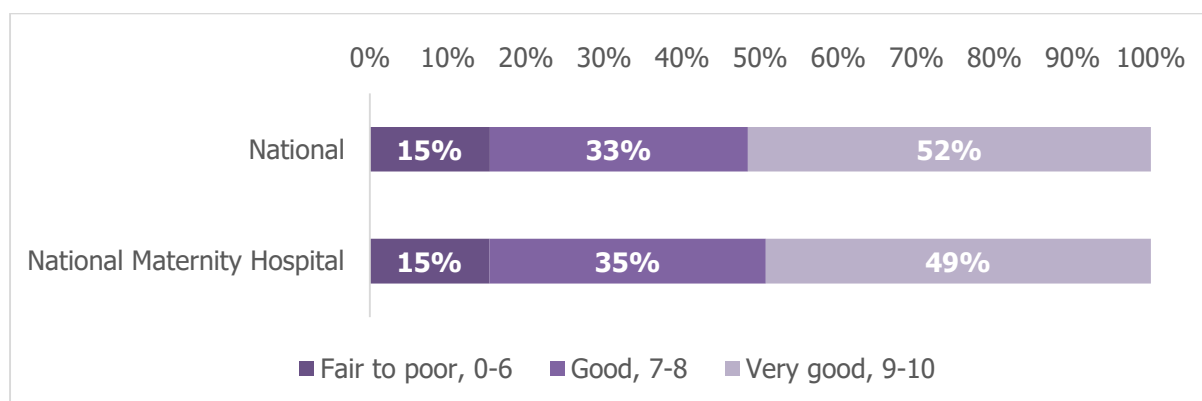
## Overall experience

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. 84 women (23.4%) answered 'yes', while 176 (49%) answered 'no'. 99 (27.6%) 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. 85% of women who gave birth at the National Maternity Hospital rated their overall experience as good or very good, the same as the national figure.

Figure 14 shows the average overall experience ratings for the National Maternity Hospital compared with the national average.

**Figure 14. Comparison of overall maternity experiences scores for the National Maternity Hospital 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.

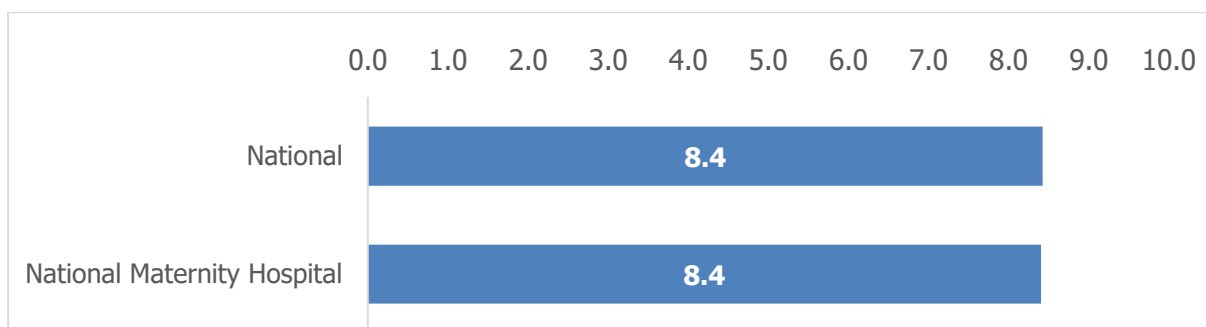
11 questions in the survey explore involvement in decisions, confidence and trust, and respect and dignity. The average scores for these questions as a whole for women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital are compared with the



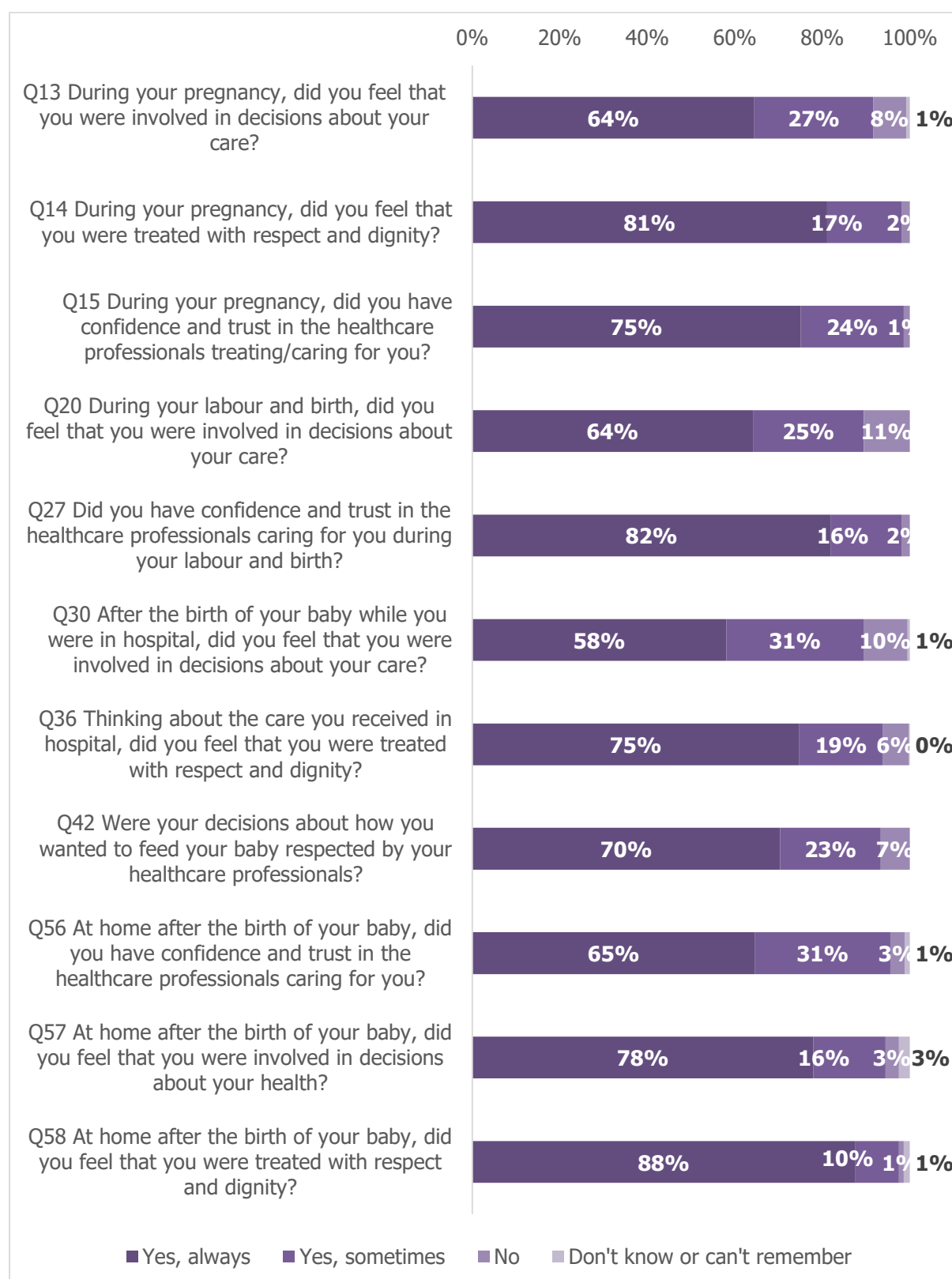
national average in Figure 15. The responses for the relevant questions are presented in Figure 16.

Women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital rated the questions 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 87.5% saying that they were always treated with respect and dignity at home. The lowest-scoring question related to involvement in decisions, with 58.1% saying they were always involved in decisions about their care after the birth of their baby, and remaining women only sometimes involved or not involved in decisions.

**Figure 15. Comparison of relevant questions for women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital 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 National Maternity Hospital.**



## 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, 717 comments were received from women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital.

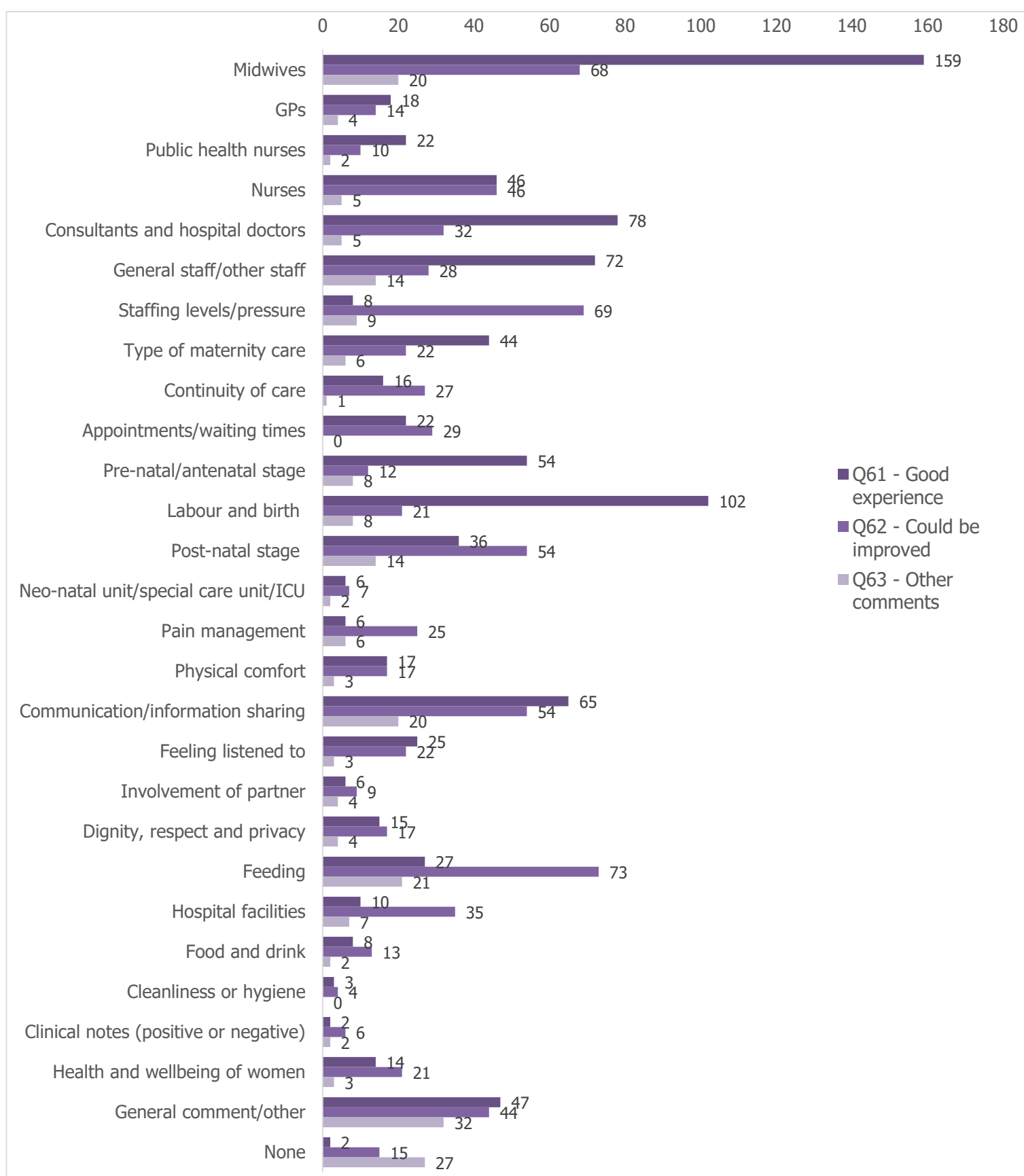
Figure 17 shows the breakdown of comments by theme for each of the three open-ended questions. Q61 asked women what was particularly good about their maternity care, Q62 asked women what could be improved, and Q63 asked women if there were any other aspects of their maternity care experience that they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

For Q61, most of the comments related to the 'midwives', 'labour and birth' and 'consultants and hospital doctors' themes. For Q62, most comments related to the 'feeding', 'staffing levels/pressure' and 'midwives' themes. Finally, most responses to Q63 related to the 'general and other comment', 'feeding', 'midwives', and 'communication' themes.

It is notable the midwives feature strongly to the responses for each of the three questions. There are many times 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**

"The community midwife team and GP care during pregnancy was fantastic and made life a lot easier for me to attend appointments as they were local. Public health nurses after birth also a fantastic support."

"Hospital appointments were on time and informative. Once admitted to hospital, care received from midwives and doctors was of the highest standard. Food was also of a high standard. Antenatal classes were very good."

"Midwives went above and beyond, stayed kind and pleasant throughout and after pregnancy and especially during labor. Waiting times were usually manageable."

**Q62. Suggestions for improvement**

"The advice given in hospital by midwives post birth was significantly inconsistent ie. give baby soother, don't give baby soother, give baby formula top-up, don't give baby formula top-up. Very confusing and distressing for a new mum."

"Maternity ward after birth was seriously understaffed. Staff were under too much pressure and did not have the time to help me or answer some of my questions. I was the least demanding of my ward."

"The push to only breast feed your child, the lack of conversation available around bottle feeds, the wait times in outpatient for your antenatal appointments especially towards the end of pregnancy."

**Q63. Other comments**

"Hospitals are very busy and overcrowded I just wanted to get home. The nurses were great just too busy. I also feel there is not enough information given on how to care for yourself during and after birth. Again it's very generic."

"The antenatal classes were great but they focused very heavily on only the birth. I wish I had been given more information about the postnatal period and caring for the baby (besides feeding)."

"Every staff member I encountered — porters, reception/admin staff, canteen/catering staff, cleaners, midwives and doctors were at all times, despite being in a busy pressurized environment were kind, courteous and professional. I couldn't have asked for better care from any of them."

## Conclusion

### What were women's experiences of maternity care in the National Maternity Hospital in October 2019?

Most of the participants who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital had a positive experience of maternity care, with 85% saying they had a good or very good overall experience. This is the same as the national average.

Women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital rated their care after birth in hospital below the national average, with ratings for all other stages scoring close to the national average. 75% of women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital said that they were offered a choice of the type of maternity care they would receive.

The highest-scoring questions within the survey included Q25 and Q26, which asked about opportunities for skin-to-skin contact with the baby shortly after birth and also the involvement of a partner or companion in care during labour and birth.

The hospital scored below-average for the provision of information to women on their physical recovery and mental health prior to discharge.

The responses to the three free-text questions provided very detailed information on women's experiences while in the National Maternity Hospital 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 the National Maternity Hospital 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 32, which asked women if they had a healthcare professional that they could talk to about their worries and fears, had a strong relationship with overall experience. This means that women who said they had a healthcare professional to talk to were very likely to give a positive rating of their overall experience. Women who felt they did not have a healthcare professional to talk to 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 49, which asked women if they received help and advice from the public health nurse about their baby's health and progress. The relationship between receiving help and advice and women's ratings of their overall experience was weak. This means that even if women received help and advice they may have given negative ratings of their overall experience, or if they did not receive help and advice, women may still have given positive ratings of their overall experience.

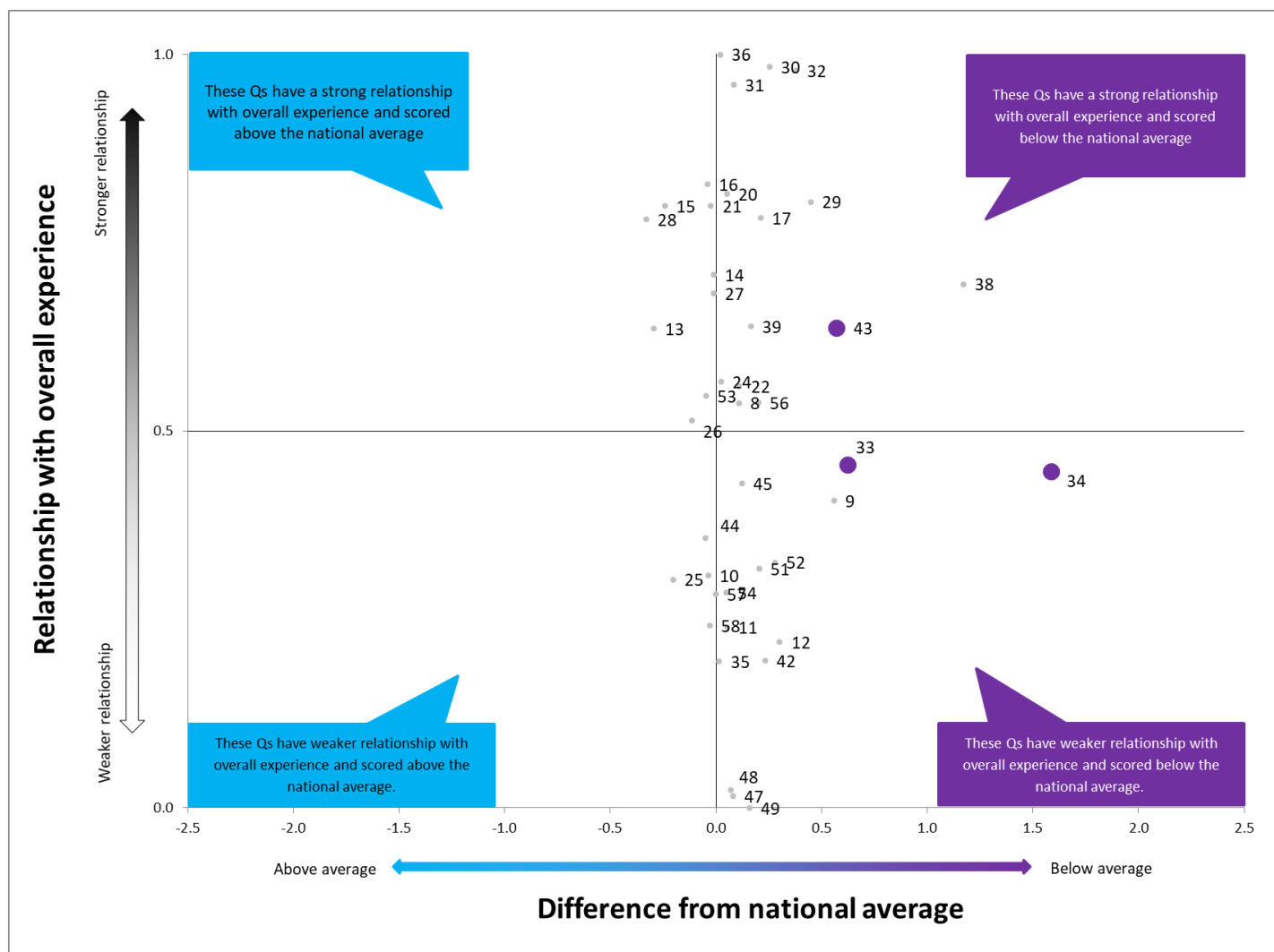
It is useful for maternity care providers to know which questions strongly relate to women's overall experience as these are the areas on which they should focus their improvement efforts.

In Figure 19, each dot shows a specific survey question for the National Maternity Hospital. 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 <http://www.yourexperience.ie/>, along with instructions on how to interpret it.



**Figure 19. Improvement map for responses of women who gave birth in the National Maternity Hospital.**



## 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 your 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.



# National Maternity Experience Survey

