

National Maternity Experience Survey 2025

Cork University Maternity Hospital

Improving care experiences together



About this report

- The National Maternity Experience Survey offers people who have recently given birth the opportunity to share their experiences of Ireland's maternity services.
- The second National Maternity Experience Survey took place in 2025. This report contains findings from the 2025 survey for participants who gave birth at Cork University Maternity Hospital.
- The report focuses on experiences of care provided by Cork University Maternity Hospital during pregnancy, labour and birth, and after birth. The report also includes findings on experiences of care provided by GPs and public health nurses based in the community.
- This report presents scores out of 10 for survey questions, which were calculated based on participants' responses. Scores were also calculated for each of the stages of maternity care.
- More information on the National Maternity Experience Survey 2025 is available from <https://yourexperience.ie/maternity/about-the-survey/>

Survey overview

Survey questions

Care while you were pregnant (antenatal care)

Experiences of the type of maternity care received, information provided and communication with healthcare professionals during pregnancy.



17 questions

Care during your labour and birth

Experiences of interactions with healthcare professionals, pain management and involvement in decisions during labour and when giving birth.



10 questions

Care in hospital after the birth of your baby*

Experiences in hospital, such as the support and assistance provided by staff, and information provided on care and recovery.



8 questions

Specialised care**

Experiences of support in the neonatal unit, and overall ratings of the care received by the baby while in the unit.



3 questions

Feeding

Experiences of receiving information and support for feeding the baby.



6 questions

Care at home and in the community after the birth

Experiences of support and advice from GPs, public health nurses and other healthcare professionals, while at home or in the community after birth.



11 questions

Who was eligible to take part?

Aged 16
years or older



Attended a
maternity hospital
or unit in Ireland,
including for a
home birth



Gave birth in February
or March 2025



Had a mobile
telephone
number
registered with
the maternity
hospital or unit



Who took part in the survey?

- 926 people who gave birth at Cork University Maternity Hospital were invited to participate in the survey.
- 399 took part. This is a response rate of 43% (compared to the national rate of 42%).

Age of participants	Number	%
Under 25 years	15	3.8
25 to 29 years	48	12
30 to 34 years	153	38.3
35 to 39 years	150	37.6
40 years or older	33	8.3
Previous births	Number	%
None	176	44.2
1 or 2	192	48.2
3 or more	30	7.5

Ethnicity of participants	Number	%
White Irish	307	77.1
Irish Traveller	3	0.8
Any other White background	44	11.1
Black or Black Irish- African	8	2
Black or Black Irish- Other Black background	1	0.3
Asian or Asian Irish- Chinese	2	0.5
Asian or Asian Irish- Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	23	5.8
Asian or Asian Irish- Other Asian background	3	0.8
Arab	3	0.8
Mixed	1	0.3
Other	3	0.8
Long-term condition or disability	Number	%
Any long-term condition	31	7.8
No long-term condition	368	92.2



Areas of good experience

Involvement in decisions about care in pregnancy | Q13

69% of survey participants who responded to this question (274 out of 396) said that they always felt involved in decisions about their care in pregnancy.

Opportunity to ask questions after birth | Q27

54% of participants (198 out of 369) said that shortly after their baby was born, they were definitely given the opportunity to ask midwives and doctors questions about their labour and birth.

These questions scored significantly above national average and are strongly related to participants' overall experience of care.

Comments from participants

"I was high-risk so under consultant-led care. I felt included in every decision, I knew what was going on with my baby, it was explained why tests were being done & why decisions were being made."

"I was cared for all throughout my maternity journey. I was involved in every decision and given respect in every aspect."

"I went for a procedure to turn the baby (baby was breech) and the midwives and consultants were very thorough in checking the position of baby and the umbilical cord. They left us make a decision about whether to go ahead with it or not and were respectful of our choice."

Areas for improvement

Information on physical changes in pregnancy | Q9

28% of participants who responded to this question (106 out of 383) said that they did not receive enough information about physical changes in their body in pregnancy.

Support for mental health in pregnancy | Q12

28% of participants (99 out of 355) said that they did not receive enough support for their mental health in pregnancy.

These questions scored significantly below national average and are strongly related to participants' overall experience of care.

Comments from participants

"More info on mental health. The midwife in the delivery suite mentioned she saw my history of anxiety and recommended a group for me. I can't remember the name of the group as I was so exhausted from labour, but it was the first time I heard about it."

"Better mental health services needed. Often feel like you're just another face in the crowd. Never saw the same two professionals twice so very little continuity."

Care in pregnancy

- 64% of participants at Cork University Maternity Hospital said that they were offered a choice about the type of maternity care they would receive.
- 83% of participants said they were offered antenatal classes in pregnancy. 47% of participants said they did the antenatal classes, while 36% did not do them. 17% said they were not offered any antenatal classes in pregnancy.
- 90% of participants had some of their regular check-ups in pregnancy with their GP.



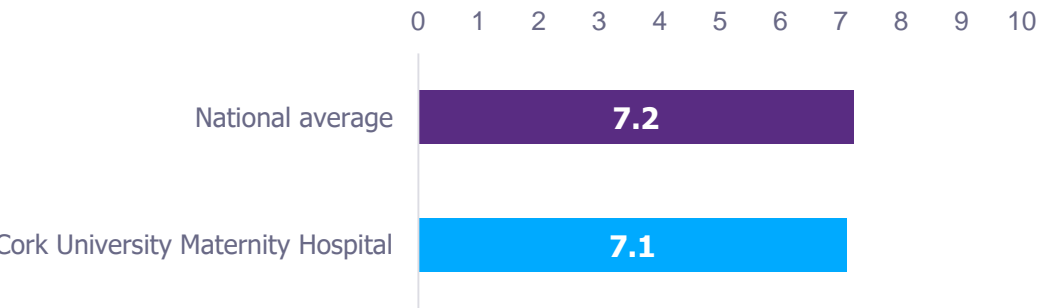
First healthcare professional seen when pregnant	Number	%
General Practitioner (GP) or family doctor	332	83.2
Midwife at maternity service	10	2.5
Obstetrician (doctor or consultant) at maternity service	23	5.8
Healthcare professional at private scan clinic	23	5.8
Other	11	2.8

Type of maternity care in pregnancy	Number	%
Obstetrician public clinic at the hospital	139	34.8
Midwife clinic at the hospital	59	14.8
'Domino Scheme': midwife-led care in community	25	6.3
Community midwife clinic	59	14.8
Home birth midwife	3	0.8
Obstetrician semi-private clinic	4	1.0
Obstetrician private clinic	107	26.8
Attended pregnancy check-ups at another service	3	0.8

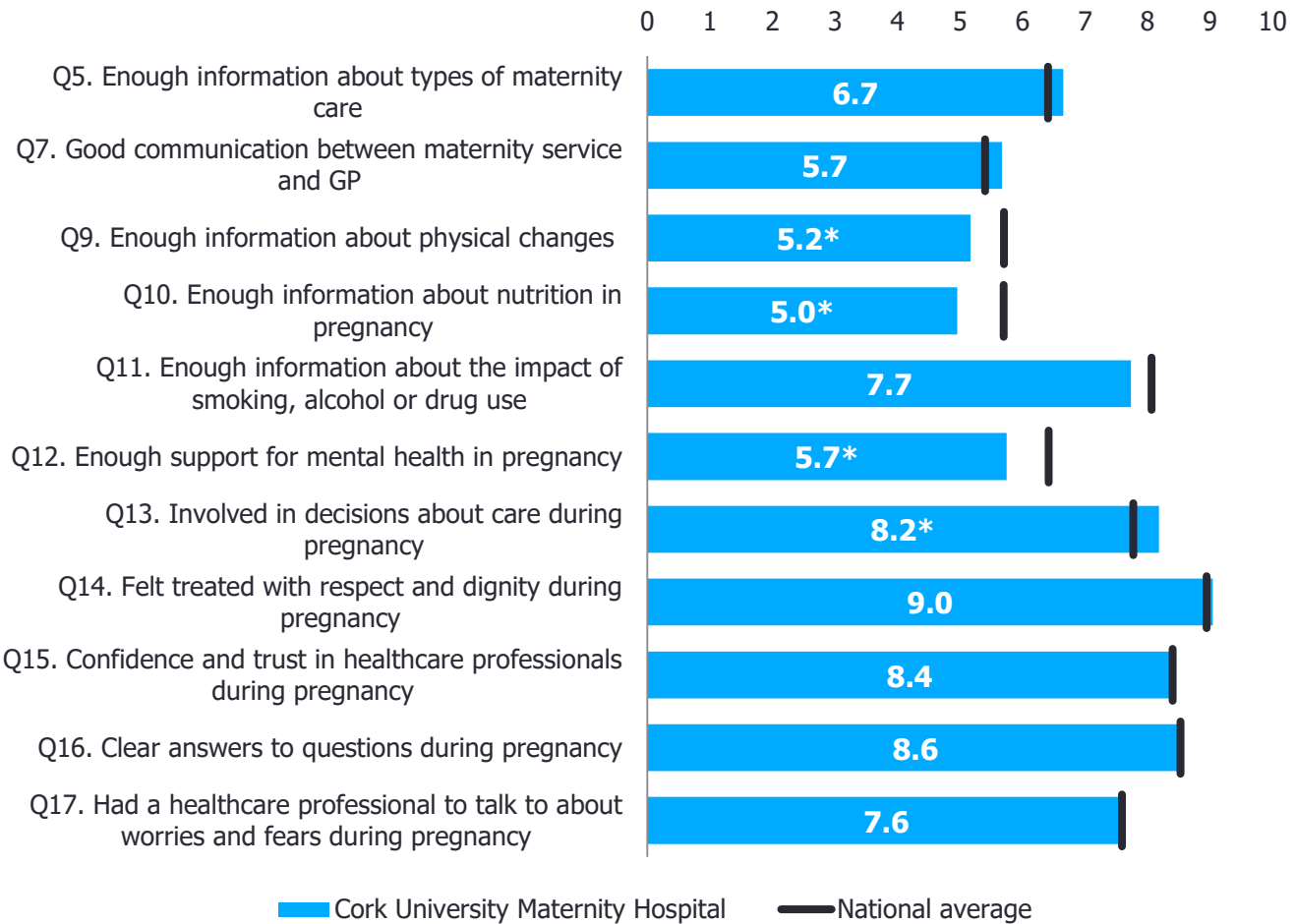
Scored questions for care in pregnancy

- **Highest-scoring question:** 82% of participants (326 out of 398) said that they always felt treated with respect and dignity in pregnancy.
- **Lowest-scoring question:** 31% of participants (117 out of 376) said that they did not receive enough information about nutrition in pregnancy.

Overall average score for care in pregnancy



Average scores out of 10 for individual questions



* Indicates statistically significant differences from the national average.

Care during labour and birth

- 43% of survey participants at Cork University Maternity Hospital said their labour was induced.

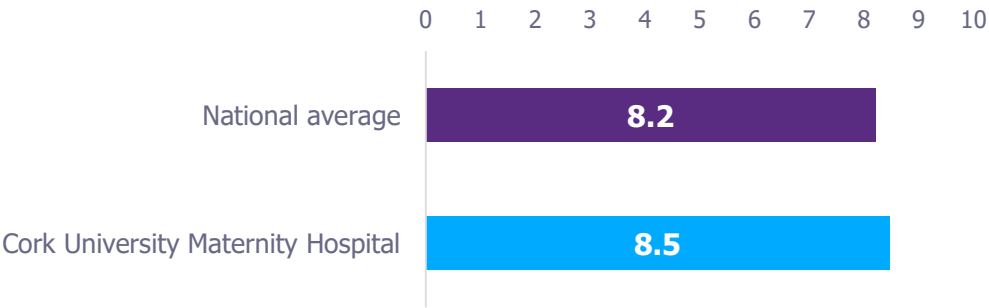
Type of birth for survey participants	Number	%
Vaginal birth (no forceps or ventouse suction cup)	175	44.0
Assisted vaginal birth (with forceps or ventouse suction cup)	49	12.3
Planned caesarean birth	115	28.9
Unplanned caesarean birth	59	14.8
Participant left alone by healthcare professionals at a time when it worried them	Number	%
Yes, during early labour	47	11.9
Yes, during the later stages of labour	16	4.0
Yes, during the birth	6	1.5
Yes, shortly after the birth	23	5.8
No	316	79.8



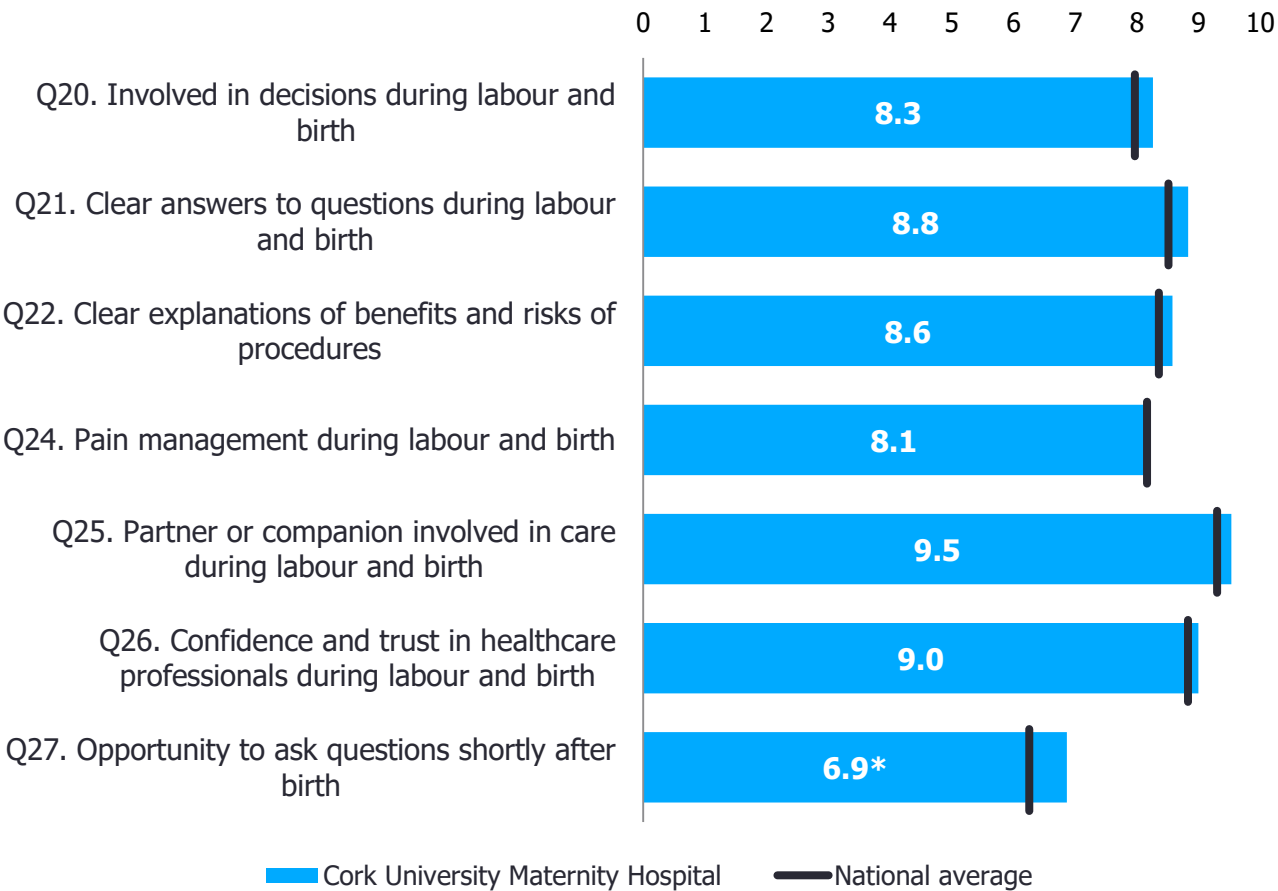
Scored questions for care during labour and birth

- **Highest-scoring question:** 95% of participants (367 of 385) said that their partner was involved in their care during labour and birth as much as they wanted them to be.
- **Lowest-scoring question:** 16% of participants (60 of 369) said that shortly after their baby was born, they did not have the opportunity to ask questions about their labour and birth; though this question scored above national average.

Overall average score for care during labour and birth



Average scores out of 10 for individual questions



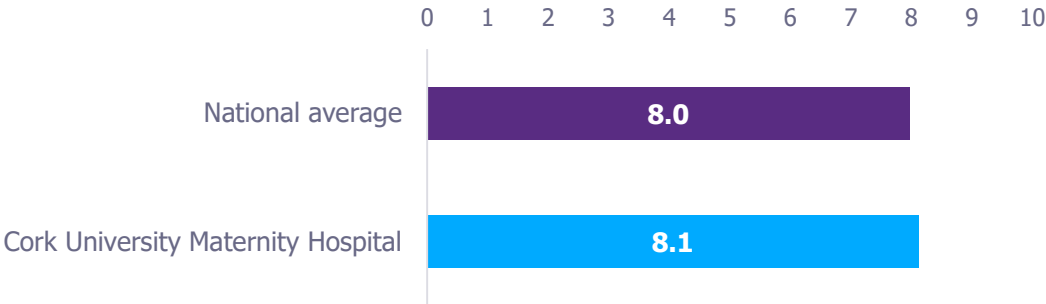
* Indicates statistically significant difference from the national average.



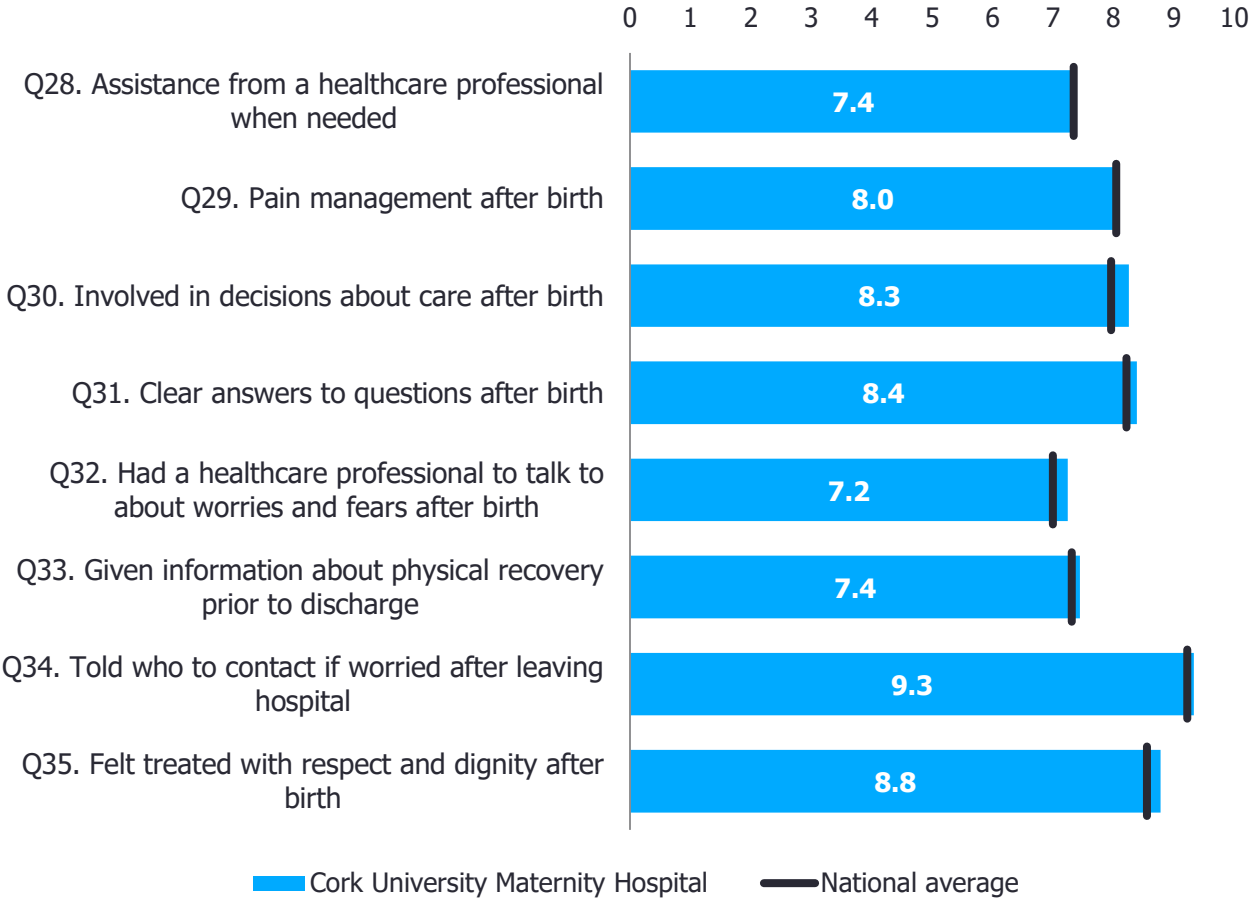
Scored questions for care in hospital after birth

- **Highest-scoring question:** 93% of participants (351 of 376) said that before they were discharged, they were told who to contact if they were worried about their own health or their baby’s health after leaving hospital.
- **Lowest-scoring question:** 11% of participants (40 of 365) said that they did not have a healthcare professional to talk to about their worries and fears while in hospital after birth.

Overall average score for care in hospital after birth



Average scores out of 10 for individual questions

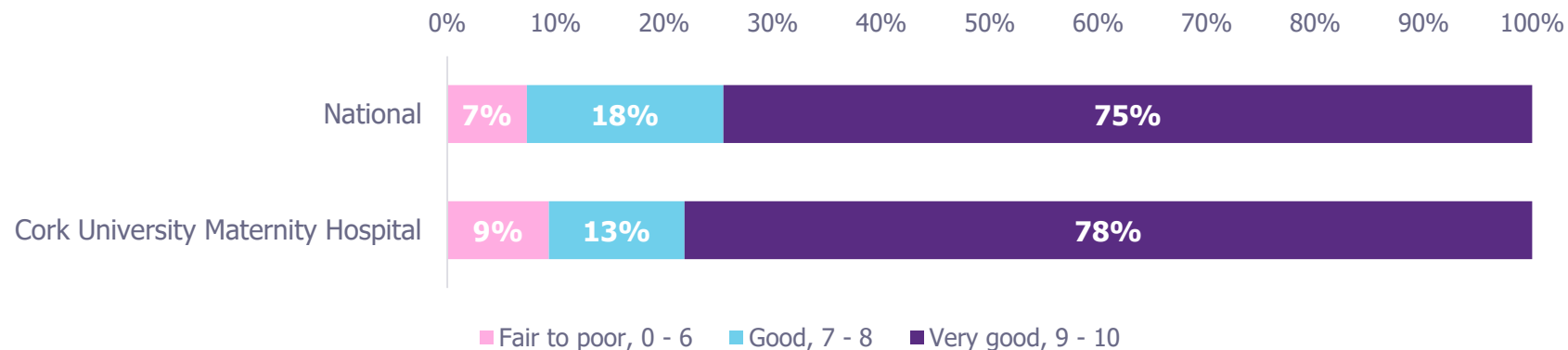


Specialist care in the neonatal unit



- 64 survey participants (17%) at Cork University Maternity Hospital said that their baby spent time in the neonatal unit following the birth.
- Of these participants:
 - 58% said that they always received enough emotional support from healthcare professionals while their baby was in the neonatal unit
 - 24% said that they sometimes received enough emotional support
 - 17% said they did not receive enough emotional support
 - 2% said that did not know or could not remember.

Overall rating of experience of care for baby in neonatal unit



Infant feeding

In the first few days after birth:

- 40% of participants fed their baby with breast milk only.
- 28% fed their baby with formula milk only.
- 33% fed their baby with both breast and formula milk.

Healthcare professional discussed feeding options		
	Number	%
Yes, during pregnancy	227	56.9
Yes, during labour or immediately after birth	93	23.3
Yes, after birth while in hospital	160	40.1
Yes, after birth while at home	82	20.6
No	40	10.0
Did not want or need discussion of different options	47	11.8
Don't know or can't remember	5	1.3

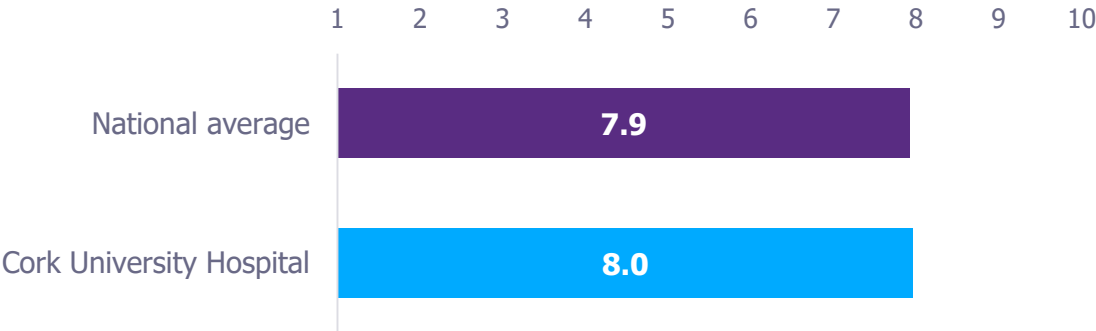
Sources of breastfeeding support		
	Number	%
Midwife(s) in hospital	210	53.0
Hospital lactation consultant	96	24.2
Home birth midwife	9	2.3
Postnatal community midwives	63	15.9
Postnatal hub midwife	2	0.5
Public health nurse	181	45.7
GP	42	10.6
Practice nurse	8	2.0
Community breastfeeding support groups or volunteers	71	17.9
Private lactation consultant	52	13.1
Friends or family	98	24.7
Did not need support	14	3.5
Did not want to breastfeed	92	23.2

Scored questions for infant feeding

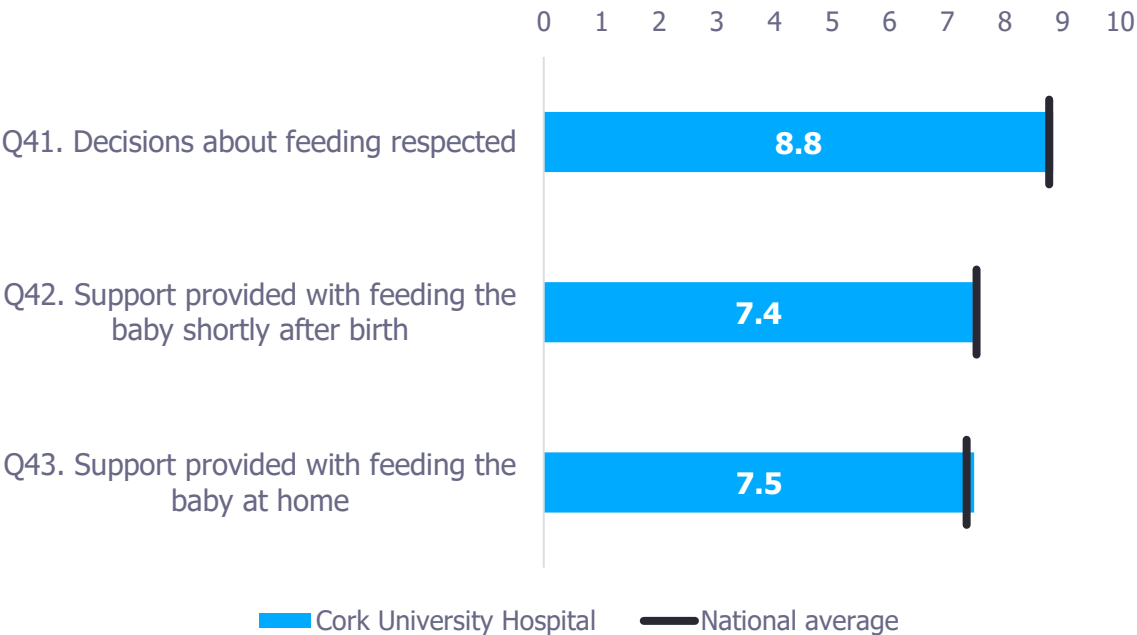


- **Highest-scoring question:** 80% of participants (318 of 396) said that their decisions about how they wanted to feed their baby were always respected by healthcare professionals.
- **Lowest-scoring question:** 12% of participants (45 of 378) said that they did not get adequate support and encouragement from healthcare professionals with feeding their baby while in hospital after birth.

Overall average score for infant feeding



Average scores out of 10 for individual questions



Care at home and in the community after birth



Healthcare professionals met after the birth of the baby		
	Number	%
Postnatal community midwife at home	74	18.5
Postnatal community midwife at community clinic	12	3.0
Public Health Nurse at home	377	94.5
Public Health Nurse at a community clinic (including a Postnatal Hub)	91	22.8
GP	314	78.7
Obstetrician at hospital clinic	73	18.3
Midwives or paediatricians at hospital baby clinic	28	7.0
Other professionals	35	8.8

Healthcare professionals who provided mental health support during pregnancy or after birth		
	Number	%
GP	126	33.1
Public health nurse	120	31.5
Midwife	52	13.6
Obstetrician	16	4.2
Perinatal mental health midwife	11	2.9
Perinatal mental health nurse	8	2.1
Psychiatrist	8	2.1
Psychologist	8	2.1
Mental health social worker	3	0.8
Other professionals	11	2.9
None of the above	177	46.5

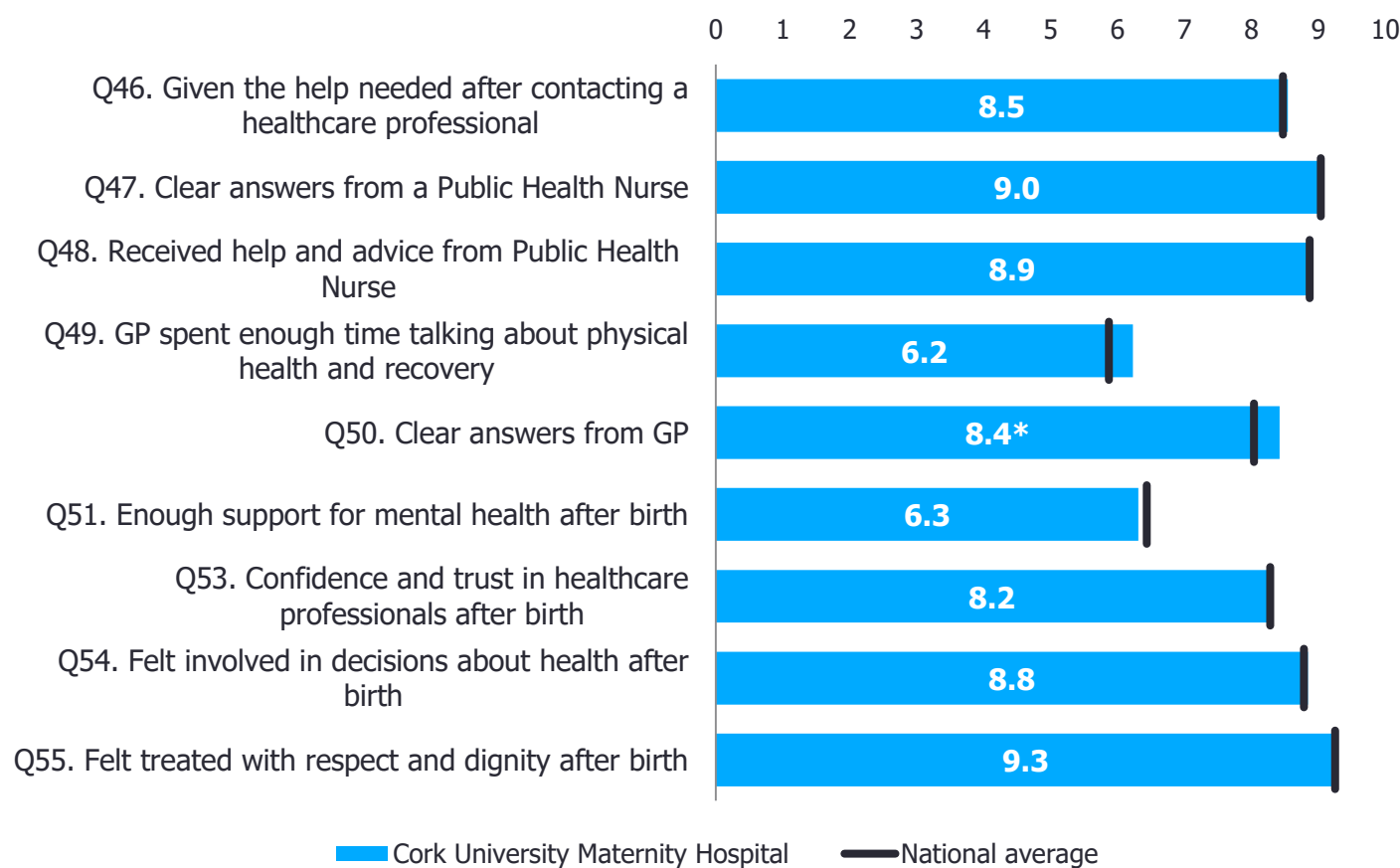
Scored questions for care at home after birth



Note: The questions for this stage of maternity care explored participants' experiences of postnatal care in the community, which included care from Public Health Nurses and GPs.

Average scores out of 10 for individual questions

- **Highest-scoring question:** 86% of participants (342 of 396) said that they were always treated with respect and dignity when they received care at home or in the community after birth.
- **Lowest-scoring question:** 25% of participants (98 of 390) said that the GP did not spend enough time talking about physical health and recovery at the postnatal check-up, six weeks after the birth.

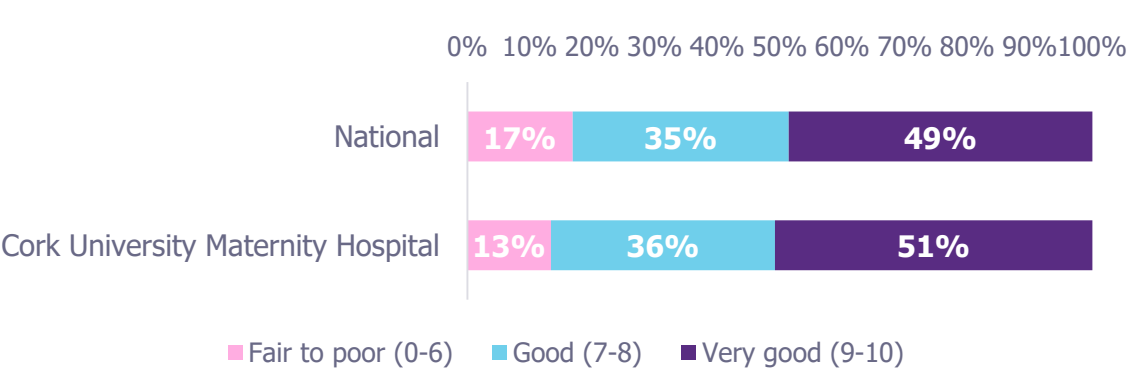


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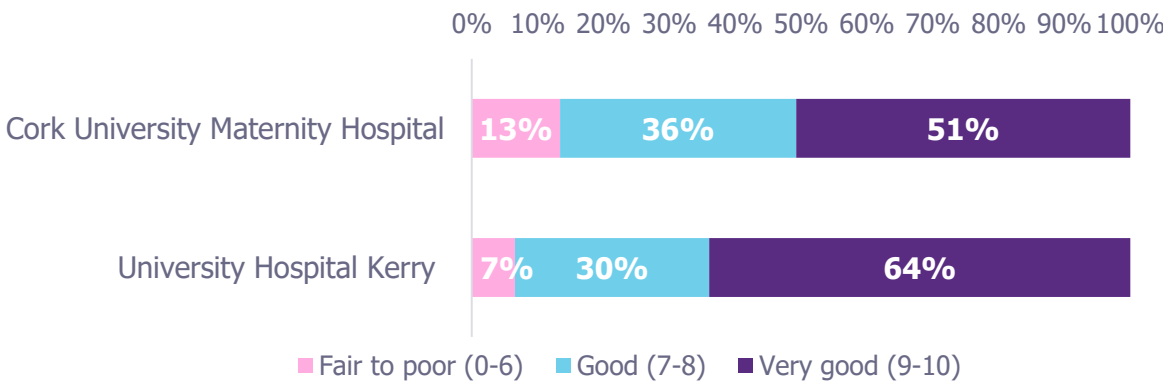
Overall experience of maternity care

- 74% of survey participants who gave birth at Cork University Maternity Hospital said that their decisions about their maternity care were always respected by healthcare staff. 24% said their decisions were sometimes respected, while 2% said their decisions about their maternity care were not respected.
- 35% of participants said that they knew how and where to give feedback or make a complaint if they wanted to do so, while 40% said they did not know. 25% said they did not wish to give feedback or make a complaint.
- 87% of participants who gave birth at Cork University Maternity Hospital said they had a good or very good overall experience of maternity care (overall rating between 7 and 10), compared to 83% nationally. 13% of participants said they had a fair to poor experience of care.

Overall experience of care rating



Overall experience of care - HSE South West



Changes since 2020 survey

- Survey findings from 2025 were compared with survey findings from 2020, to see whether there were any significant increases or decreases in question scores for participants who gave birth at Cork University Maternity Hospital.
- Between 2020 and 2025, there were significant increases in scores for four areas of postnatal care at Cork University Maternity Hospital:
 - Opportunity to ask questions shortly after birth.
 - Involvement in decisions about care while in hospital after birth.
 - Clear answers to questions after birth.
 - Decisions about feeding respected by healthcare professionals.
- Between 2020 and 2025, there was a significant decrease in score for the question on information about nutrition in pregnancy.

Comments from survey participants

- When survey participants at Cork University Maternity Hospital were asked what was good about their care, they most commonly referred to the interactions they had with healthcare staff. Survey participants also frequently mentioned the specific type of maternity care they received and the positive aspects of that type of care.

"Domino midwives were excellent. They really helped me to face labour after a traumatic first birth and it was a really positive experience. They were so supportive and kind and I felt really listened to and respected."

"I always felt listened to and always felt in safe hands with my private consultant. I liked getting regular scans at each consultant appointment."

- When survey participants were asked what could be improved with care at Cork University Maternity Hospital, they most commonly referred to support with feeding their baby, and information and explanations about maternity care from healthcare staff.

"I really wanted to breastfeed my baby but unfortunately it hasn't worked out which I am still having difficulty accepting. I was in hospital during a bank holiday weekend, there was no lactation consultant available to help me. The midwives did their best to help but unfortunately didn't have enough time to give me the support that I needed."

"I didn't feel the line of communication was open with me, rather that there were discussions happening about me elsewhere between the midwives and the liaising doctor. I did not like that I wasn't being told/explained what was happening...When I asked questions during labour I often wasn't given answers, such as questions about pain relief or birth progress. The experience was disjointed and scary."

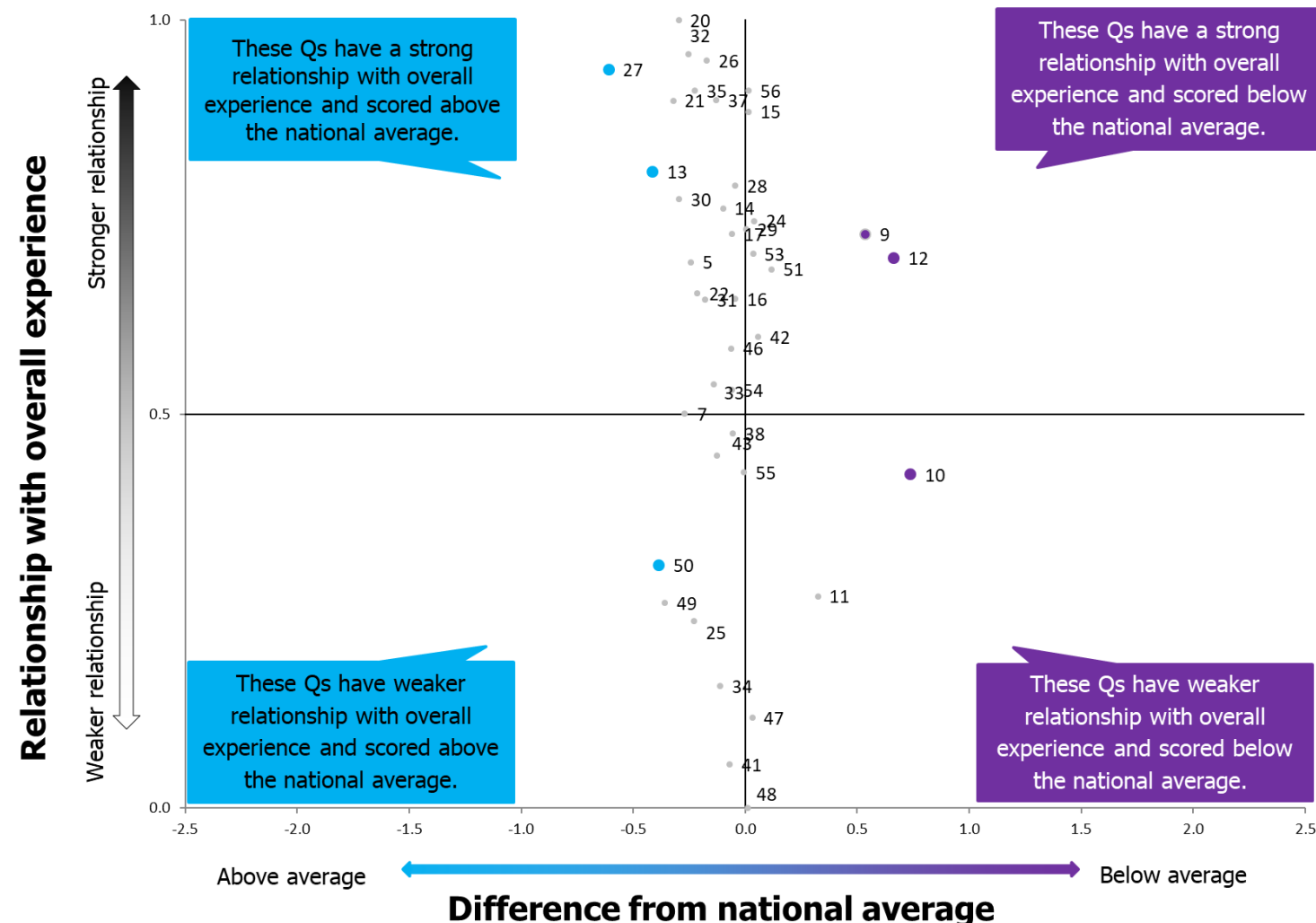
Conclusion

- Areas of good experience at Cork University Maternity Hospital included involvement in decisions about care in pregnancy and opportunity to ask questions after birth.
- Areas for improvement included information on physical changes in pregnancy and support for mental health in pregnancy.
- Three questions scored significantly above national average for participants at Cork University Maternity Hospital and three questions scored significantly below national average.
- 87% of survey participants who gave birth at Cork University Maternity Hospital said they had a good or very good overall experience; which is higher than the national figure of 83%.
- Between 2020 and 2025, there were significant increases in the scores for four questions at Cork University Maternity Hospital and one question showed a significant decrease in score.

Appendix 1

Improvement map for Cork University Maternity Hospital

- The improvement map shows which questions scored above or below the national average, and which questions are related to participants' overall maternity care experience.
- Questions that scored significantly above average and had a stronger relationship with overall experience are areas of good experience, highlighted in blue.
- Questions that scored significantly below average and had a stronger relationship with overall experience are areas that may need improvement, highlighted in purple.
- More information on the science behind the improvement map can be found in the national report on www.yourexperience.ie.





More information on the National Maternity Experience Survey 2025 is available from www.yourexperience.ie:

- National results ([click here](#))
- Interactive results ([click here](#))

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