

National Maternity Experience Survey 2025

Home births

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 had a home birth. While home birth care is provided by individual maternity hospitals or units in Ireland, the question scores for participants who had a home birth are analysed and presented separately in this report due to the small number of survey participants who had a home birth (25 participants, 0.7% of the total survey sample). This allows the experience of home birth maternity care to be identified more clearly.
- The report focuses on experiences of home birth care 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?

- 32 people who had a home birth in February or March 2025 were invited to participate in the survey.
- 25 took part. This is a response rate of 78% (compared to the national rate of 42%).

Age of participants	Number	%
Under 25 years	3	12.0
25 to 29 years	4	16.0
30 to 34 years	8	32.0
35 to 39 years	7	28.0
40 years or older	3	12.0
Previous births	Number	%
None	7	28.0
1 or 2	14	56.0
3 or more	4	16.0

Ethnicity of participants	Number	%
White Irish	18	72.0
Any other White background	5	20.0
Mixed	1	4.0
Other	1	4.0
Long-term condition or disability	Number	%
Any long-term condition	2	8.0
No long-term condition	23	92.0



Areas of good experience

- Eleven questions scored significantly above national average for participants who had a home birth, which are noted throughout this report.
- A selection of comments in relation to some of these areas of care is provided below.

Comments from participants

"Loved working with my self employed midwife- she was a highlight in this pregnancy. She was kind and caring and made my family feel comfortable. I did need her to help me advocate for myself when I had hospital appointments and I really appreciated that support."

"After my son was born while waiting for my milk to come in I had some concerns with his bowel movement and also with his shallow latch. [Midwife] went above and beyond and stayed in contact and even made extra visits to ensure my baby was getting enough milk and worked on positions with me to prevent further nipple damage."

"I had a home birth and the one to one care provided by midwife was exceptional. I couldn't fault my experience one bit. I'm so grateful for the care and dedication of my midwife. I always felt like I was her only patient she gave me all the time I needed and wanted. Home birth is the most wonderful experience."

Areas for improvement

- One question scored significantly below national average for participants who had a home birth. This was in relation to the time that the GP spent talking about physical health and recovery after birth.
- A selection of comments highlighting areas of care that participants suggested could be improved is provided below.

Comments from participants

"Information about how to access to a pelvic health physio was scarce. It was my understanding that this was only available up to 6 weeks postpartum but I discovered at 12 weeks pp that I was just about still eligible to see her without a GP referral."

"When I presented for 6-week check I was advised that the GP couldn't see me or baby as it was a homebirth and we had not been signed off by obstetrician. I never had a 6 week check as a result and baby was seen in hospital at 8 weeks."

"I think discharge packs for homebirth families should be offered with physical flyers for friends of breastfeeding (charity), local Cuidiú groups and LLL. Supporting families in a way that empowers them without need to phone the PHN or return to the hospital."

Care in pregnancy

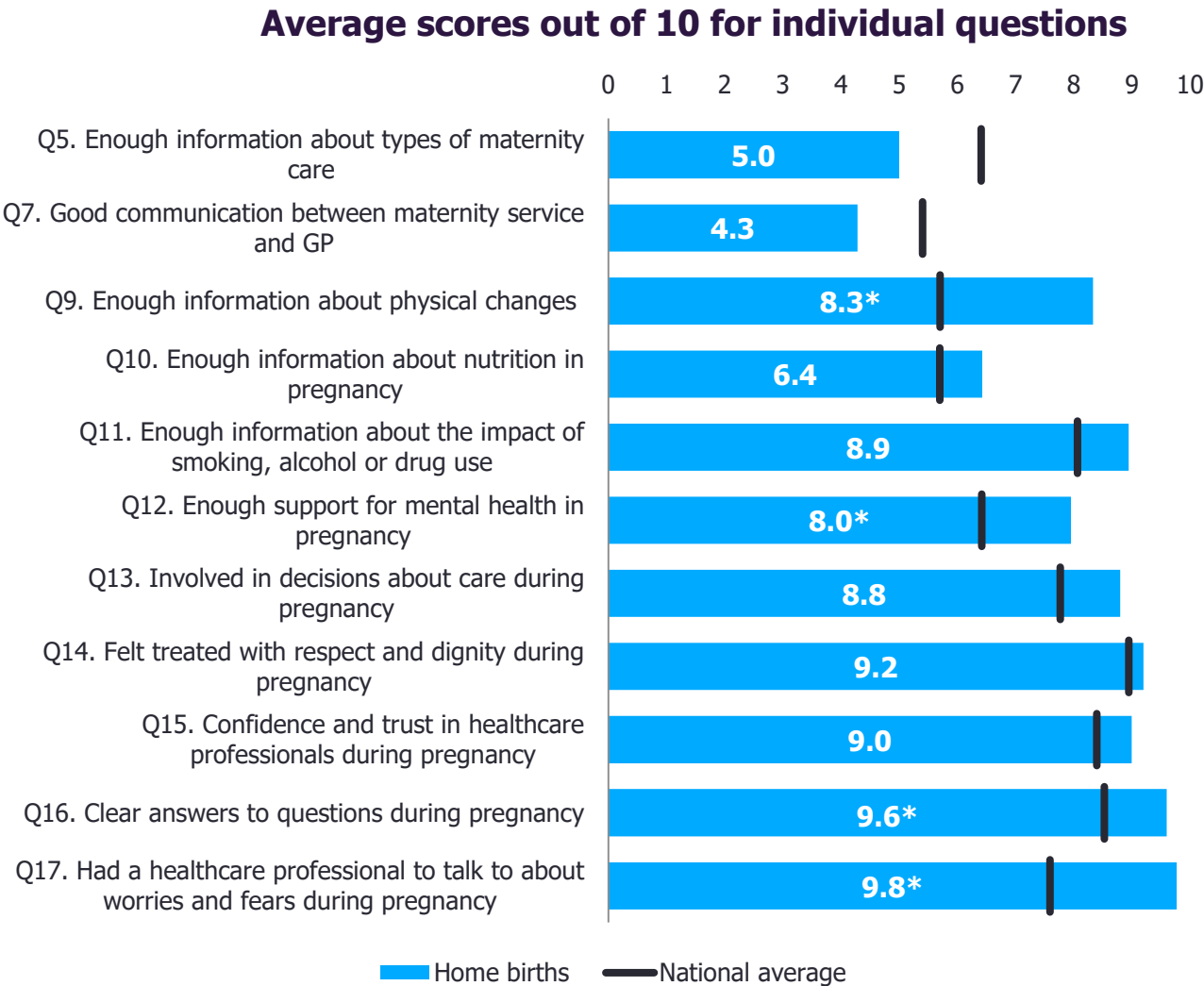
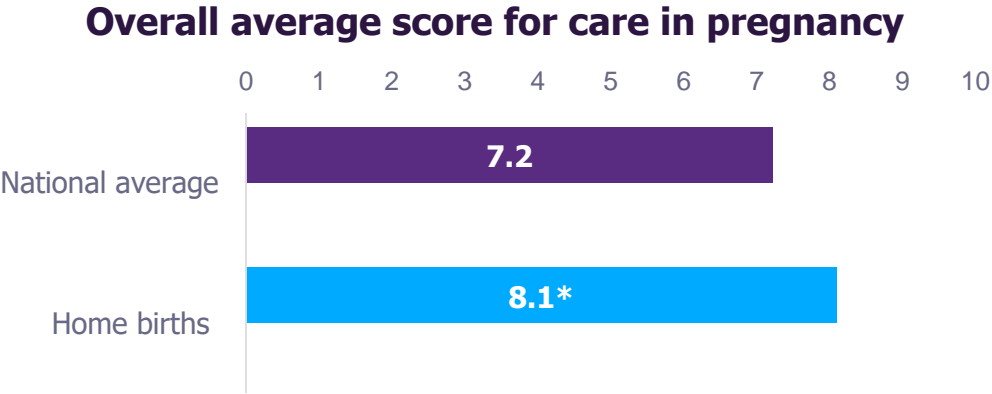


- 36% of participants who had a home birth said that they were offered a choice about the type of maternity care they could receive.
- 80% of participants who had a home birth said they were offered antenatal classes in pregnancy. 32% of participants said they did the antenatal classes, while 48% did not do them. 8% said they were not offered any antenatal classes in pregnancy.
- 64% of participants who had a home birth said they 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	20	80.0
Midwife at maternity service	3	12.0
Healthcare professional at private scan clinic	2	8.0
Type of maternity care in pregnancy	Number	%
Obstetrician public clinic at the hospital	3	12.0
Midwife clinic at the hospital	1	4.0
'Domino Scheme': midwife-led care in community	3	12.0
Community midwife clinic	1	4.0
Home birth midwife	17	68.0

Scored questions for care in pregnancy

- **Highest-scoring question:** 96% of participants who had a home birth (21 of 22) said that they always had a healthcare professional to talk to about their worries and fears in pregnancy.
- **Lowest-scoring question:** 21% of participants (3 of 14) did not feel there was good communication about their care in pregnancy between the maternity service and their GP.



* Indicates statistically significant difference from the national average.

Care during labour and birth

- 1 survey participant (4%) who had home birth said their labour was induced.
- All survey participants who had a home birth had a vaginal birth, with no forceps or ventouse suction cup.

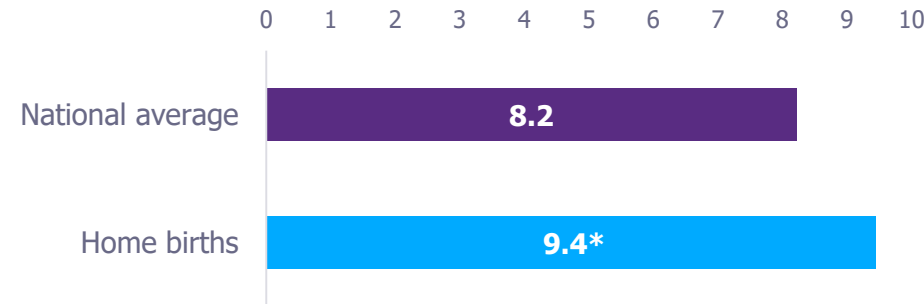
Participant left alone by healthcare professionals at a time when it worried them	Number	%
Yes, during early labour	1	4.3
Yes, during the later stages of labour	0	0
Yes, during the birth	0	0
Yes, shortly after the birth	1	4.3
No	21	91.3



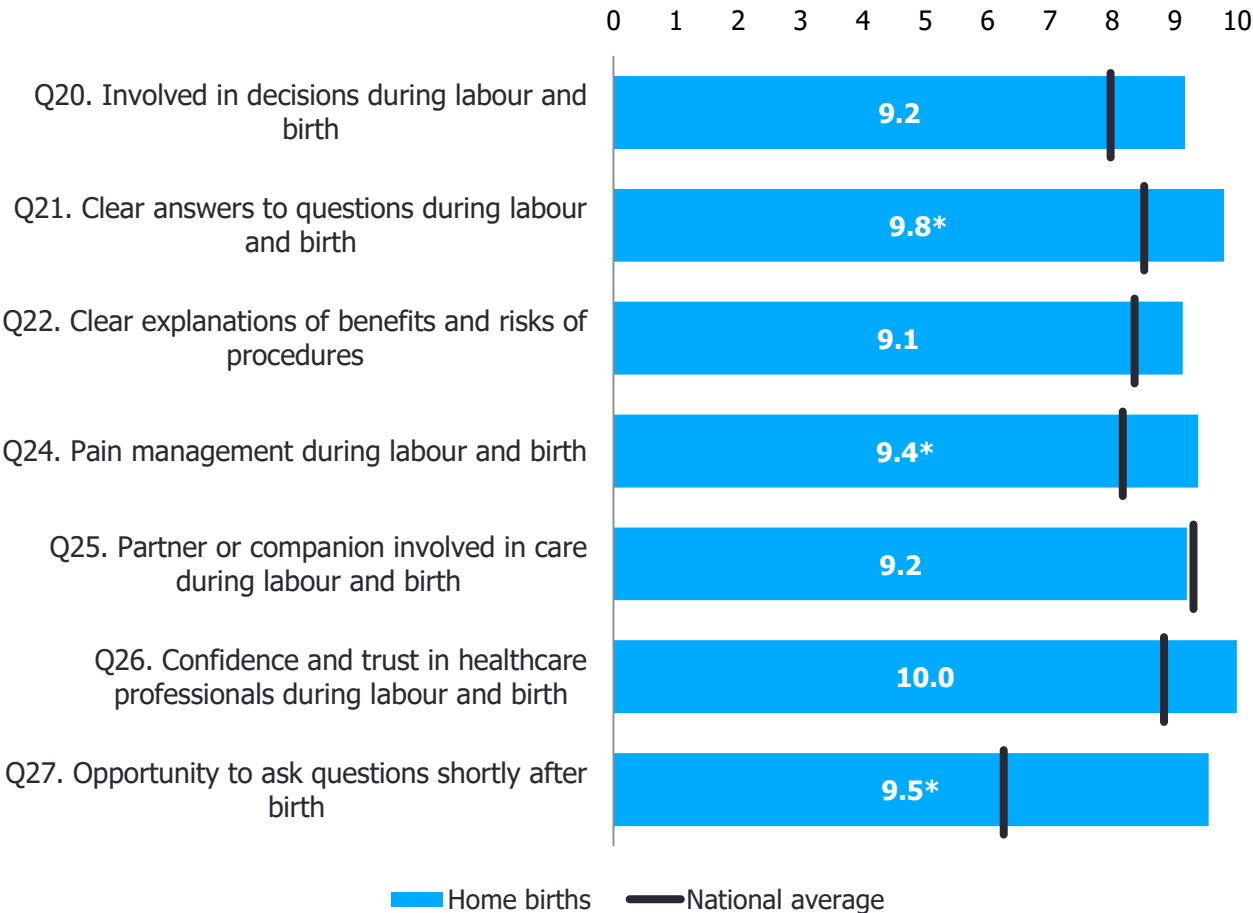
Scored questions for care during labour and birth

- **Highest-scoring question:** 100% of participants who had a home birth (25 out of 25) said they always had confidence and trust in the healthcare professionals caring for them during labour and birth.
- **Lowest-scoring question:** 17% of participants (4 out of 23) said that before they had any procedures, the benefits and risks were sometimes explained to them in a way they could understand.

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.

Specialist care in the neonatal unit



- One survey participant who had a home birth said that their baby spent time in the neonatal unit after birth.
- This participant said that they did not receive enough emotional support from healthcare professionals in the neonatal unit.

Infant feeding

In the first few days after birth:

- 88% of survey participants who had a home birth fed their baby with breast milk only.
- 4% fed their baby with formula milk only.
- 8% fed their baby with both breast and formula milk.

Healthcare professional discussed feeding options		
	Number	%
Yes, during pregnancy	15	60.0
Yes, during labour or immediately after birth	6	24.0
Yes, after birth while in hospital	1	4.0
Yes, after birth while at home	5	20.0
Did not want or need discussion of different options	8	32.0

Sources of breastfeeding support		
	Number	%
Midwife(s) in hospital	3	12.0
Hospital lactation consultant	3	12.0
Home birth midwife	23	92.0
Postnatal community midwives	5	20.0
Public health nurse	9	36.0
Community breastfeeding support groups or volunteers	4	16.0
Private lactation consultant	2	8.0
Friends or family	5	20.0
Did not want to breastfeed	1	4.0

Scored questions for infant feeding

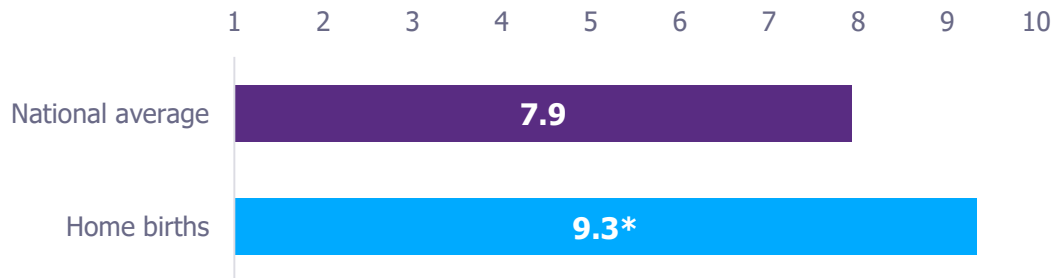


Highest-scoring questions:

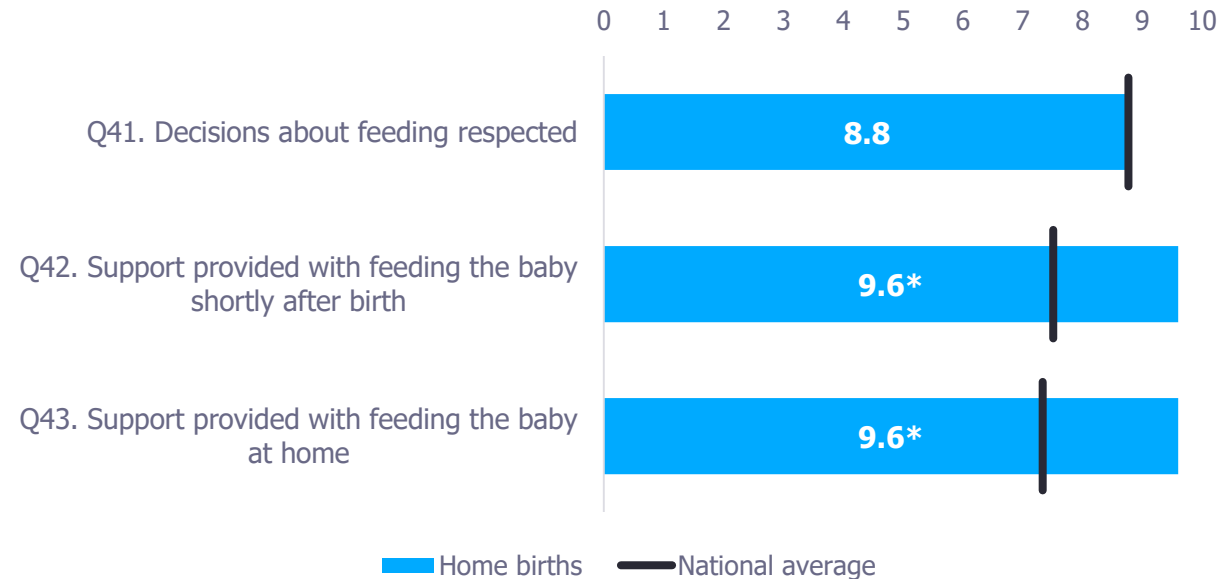
- 96% of participants (24 of 25) said that healthcare professionals always gave them adequate support with feeding their baby shortly after birth.
- 92% of participants (23 of 25) said that healthcare professionals always gave them adequate with feeding their baby at home or in the community in the days and weeks after birth.

- Lowest-scoring question:** 8% of participants (2 of 25) said that their decisions about how they wanted to feed their baby were not respected by healthcare professionals.

Overall average score for infant feeding



Average scores out of 10 for individual questions



* Indicates statistically significant difference from the national average.

Care at home and in the community after birth



Healthcare professionals met after the birth of the baby

	Number	%
Postnatal community midwife at home	20	80.0
Postnatal community midwife at community clinic	2	8.0
Public Health Nurse at home	21	84.0
Public Health Nurse at a community clinic	5	20.0
GP	14	56.0
Midwives or paediatricians at hospital baby clinic	5	20.0
Other professionals	3	12.0

Healthcare professionals who provided mental health support during pregnancy or after birth

	Number	%
GP	2	8.7
Public health nurse	3	13.0
Midwife	11	47.8
Psychologist	2	8.7
Other professionals	2	8.7
None of the above	10	43.5

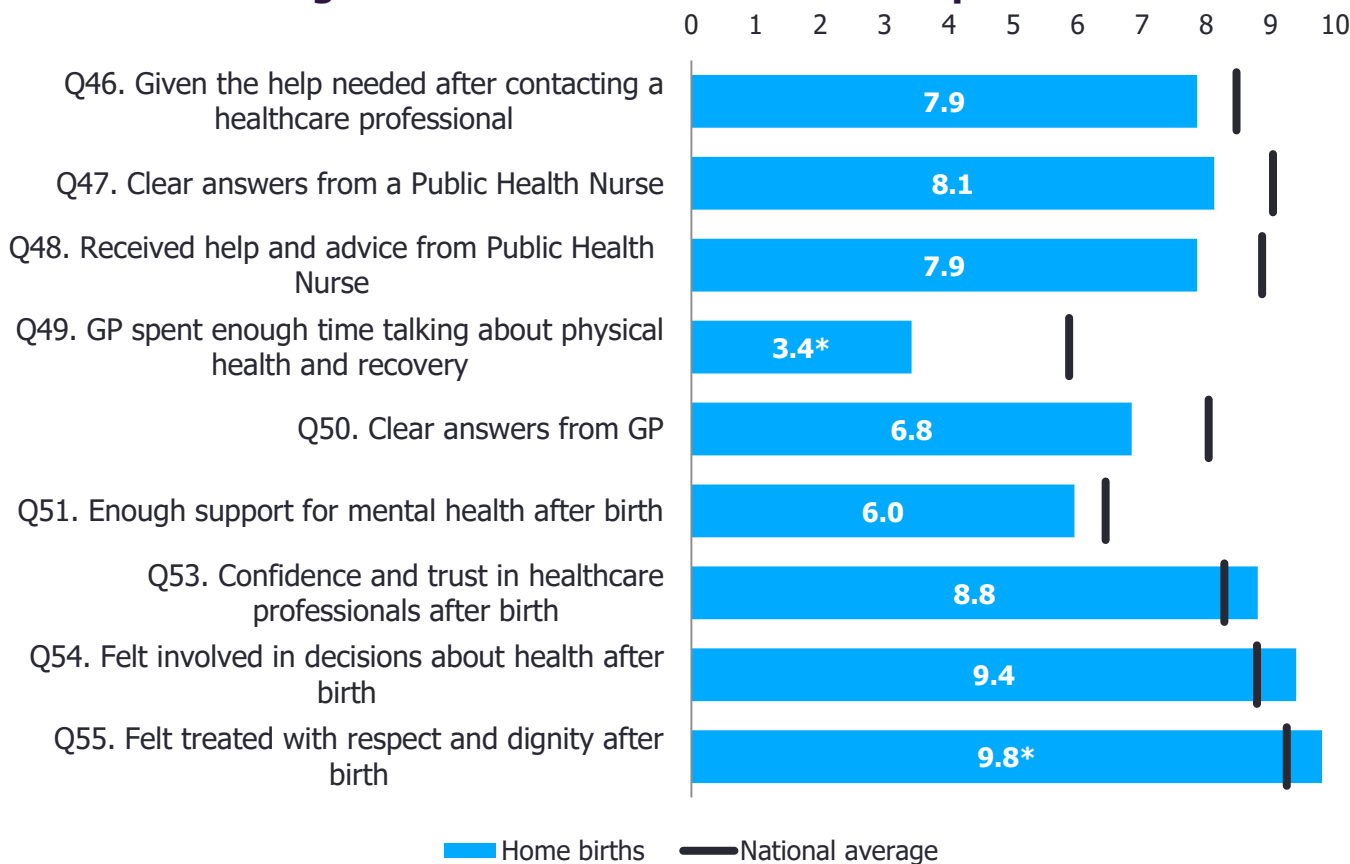
Scored questions for care at home after birth



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.

- **Highest-scoring question:** 96% of participants (24 of 25) said they always felt treated with respect and dignity during the care they received at home or in the community after birth.
- **Lowest-scoring question:** 47% of participants (9 of 19) said that the GP did not spend enough time talking about physical health and recovery at the postnatal check-up, six weeks after birth.

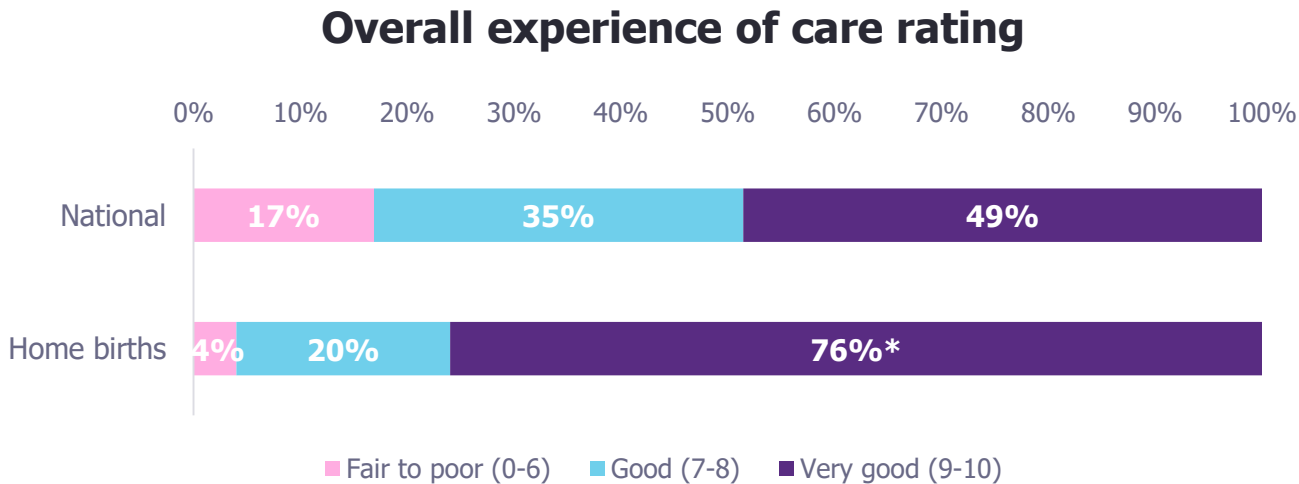
Average scores out of 10 for individual questions



* Indicates statistically significant difference from the national average.

Overall experience of maternity care

- 72% of survey participants who had a home birth said that their decisions about their maternity care were always respected by healthcare staff. 28% said their decisions were sometimes respected.
- 32% of participants said that they knew how and where to give feedback or make a complaint if they wanted to do so, while 36% said they did not know. 32% said they did not wish to give feedback or make a complaint.
- 96% of participants who had a home birth said they had a good or very good overall experience of maternity care (overall rating between 7 and 10), compared to 83% nationally. 4% of participants said they had a fair to poor experience of care.



** Indicates statistically significant difference from the national average.*

Comments from survey participants

- When survey participants who had a home birth were asked what was good about their care, they most commonly referred to the supportive interactions they had with home birth midwives and the continuity of care that they received.

"I had a home birth and the one-to-one care provided by my midwife was exceptional. I couldn't fault my experience one bit. I'm so grateful for the care and dedication of my midwife. I always felt like I was her only patient she gave me all the time I needed and wanted."

"I was so happy to have my baby at home. This also meant that I got to know my midwife and build a relationship with her before the birth of our child."

- When survey participants who had a home birth were asked what could be improved with maternity care, they suggested more information in hospitals about home birth services and more follow-up checks on baby's health and progress.

"The lack of information widely available about the home birth service. There is a lot of research required to find the contacts and information about the schemes available, so many women are not aware that it's an option."

"I was not offered 2 or 6-week checks and my baby has not been offered vaccines, as GP says she is a homebirth baby and he won't care for her, which I find absolutely ridiculous."

Conclusion

- Eleven questions about care experience scored significantly above national average for participants who had a home birth.
- One question scored significantly below national average for participants who had a home birth. This was in relation to the time the GP spent talking about physical health and recovery at the postnatal check-up.
- 96% of survey participants who had a home birth said they had a good or very good overall experience of care; this is significantly higher than the national figure (83%).



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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