

National Maternity Experience Survey 2025

University Hospital Waterford

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 University Hospital Waterford.
- The report focuses on experiences of care provided by University Hospital Waterford 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

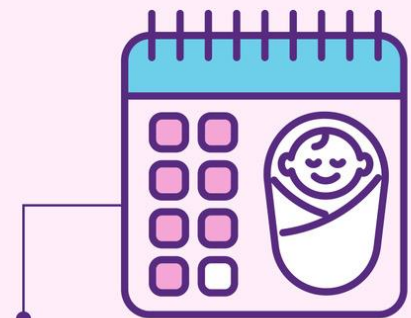
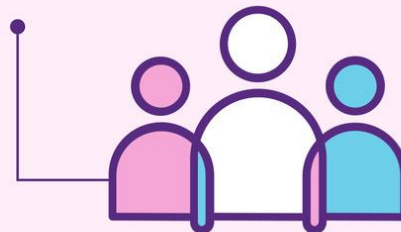
Experiences of support and advice from GPs, public health nurses and other healthcare professionals, while at home or in the community after birth.



11 questions

Who was eligible to take part?

Aged 16
years or older



Gave birth in February
or March 2025



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



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

Who took part in the survey?

- 230 people who gave birth in University Hospital Waterford were invited to participate in the survey.
- 109 took part. This is a response rate of 47% (compared to the national rate of 42%).

Age of participants	Number	%
Under 25 years	6	5.5
25 to 29 years	19	17.4
30 to 34 years	41	37.6
35 to 39 years	33	30.3
40 years or older	10	9.2
Previous births	Number	%
None	39	36.1
1 or 2	62	57.4
3 or more	7	6.5

Ethnicity of participants	Number	%
White Irish	83	76.1
Any Other White Background	8	7.3
Black or Black Irish- African	1	0.9
Asian or Asian Irish- Indian/ Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	13	11.9
Asian or Asian Irish- Any Other Asian Background	1	0.9
Mixed	2	1.8
Other	1	0.9
Long-term condition or disability	Number	%
Any long-term condition	8	7.3
No long-term condition	101	92.7



Areas of good experience

GP spent enough time talking about physical health and recovery | Q49

60% of survey participants at University Hospital Waterford (64 out of 107 who responded to this question) said that their GP definitely spent enough time talking to them about their physical health and recovery at the postnatal check-up, six weeks after the birth.

Clear answers from GP | Q50

60% of survey participants (81 of 102) said that the GP always answered their questions after birth in a way that they could understand.

These questions scored significantly above national average.

Comments from participants

"My GP was amazing support also for my physical and mental health, an exceptional GP."

"My GP was a Godsend during my pregnancy. I found the hospital care was always rushed or just sitting in queues. There is no sense in the way the clinics are run, just long waiting times."

Areas for improvement

Information about types of maternity care | Q5

30% of survey participants (28 of 92) said that they did not receive enough information about the types of maternity care available to them.

This question scored significantly below national average.

Comments from participants

"GPs need to be more informed about the options for maternity care and actively present them to women. I had to ask to attend the midwife-led clinic."

"The whole section of gestational diabetes, how its treated and how we are informed. I had no idea that during my labour I would be forced to stay in a bed hooked up to an insulin drip. Not one person informed me of this when I started insulin. If I had been informed of this I never would have chosen insulin. I felt my labour of choice was taken from me as I had no choice but to lie on a bed, the one thing I begged not to do."

Care in pregnancy



- 59% of participants at University Hospital Waterford said that they were offered a choice about the type of maternity care they could receive.
- 66% of participants said that they were offered antenatal classes in pregnancy. 34% of participants said they did antenatal classes, while 32% did not do them. 32% of participants 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.

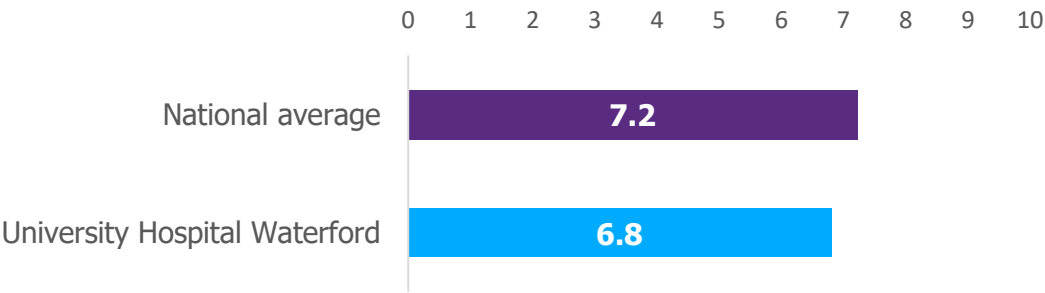
First healthcare professional seen when pregnant	Number	%
General Practitioner (GP) or family doctor	87	79.8
Midwife at maternity service	7	6.4
Obstetrician (doctor or consultant doctor) at maternity service	6	5.5
Healthcare professional at private scan clinic	7	6.4
Other	2	1.8

Type of maternity care in pregnancy	Number	%
Obstetrician public clinic at the hospital	52	47.7
Midwife clinic at the hospital	23	21.1
'Domino scheme': midwife-led care in community	7	6.4
Community midwife clinic	2	1.8
Home birth midwife	1	0.9
Obstetrician private clinic	23	21.1
Pregnancy check-ups in another country	1	0.9

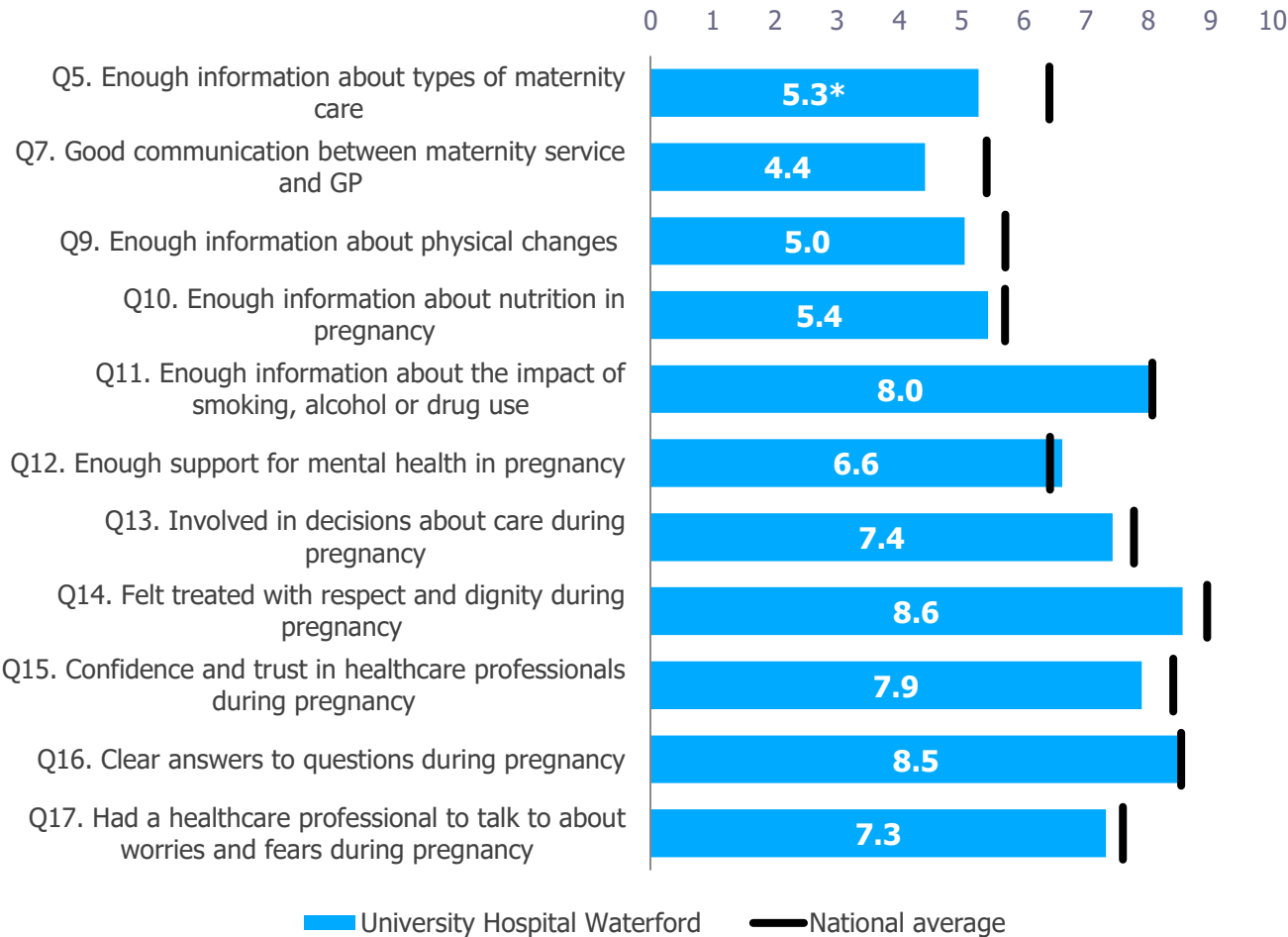
Scored questions for care in pregnancy

- **Highest-scoring question:** 72% of participants (77 of 107) said they always felt treated with respect and dignity in pregnancy.
- **Lowest-scoring question:** 39% of participants (37 of 94) felt that there was not good communication about their care in pregnancy between the maternity service and their GP.

Overall average score for care in pregnancy



Average scores out of 10 for individual questions



* Indicates statistically significant difference from the national average.

Care during labour and birth

- 44% of survey participants at University Hospital Waterford said their labour was induced.

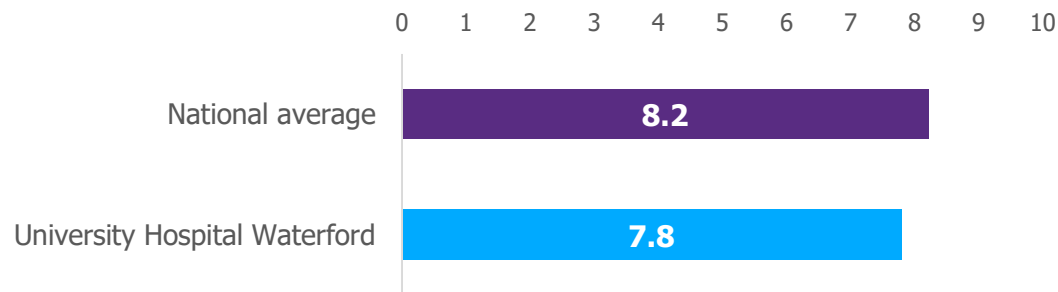
Type of birth for survey participants	Number	%
Vaginal birth (no forceps or ventouse suction cup)	54	49.5
Assisted vaginal birth (with forceps or ventouse suction cup)	18	16.5
Planned caesarean birth	22	20.2
Unplanned caesarean birth	15	13.8
Participant left alone by healthcare professionals at a time when it worried them	Number	%
Yes, during early labour	10	9.2
Yes, during the later stages of labour	9	8.3
Yes, during the birth	5	4.6
Yes, shortly after the birth	7	6.4
No	84	77.1



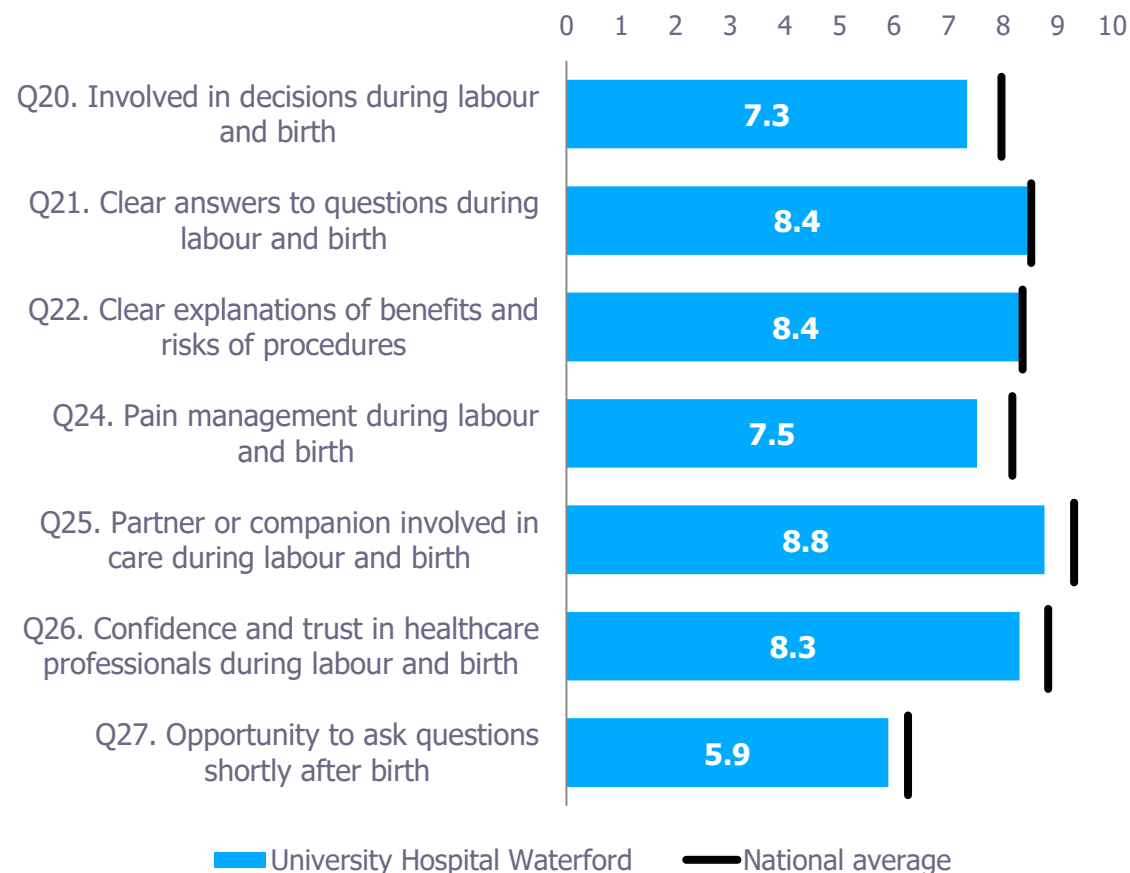
Scored questions for care during labour and birth

- **Highest-scoring question:** 88% of participants (92 of 105) said that their partner or companion was involved in their care during labour and birth as much as they wanted them to be.
- **Lowest-scoring question:** 24% of participants (24 of 100) said they did not have the opportunity to ask questions about their labour and the birth shortly after the baby was born.

Overall average score for care during labour and birth



Average scores out of 10 for individual questions

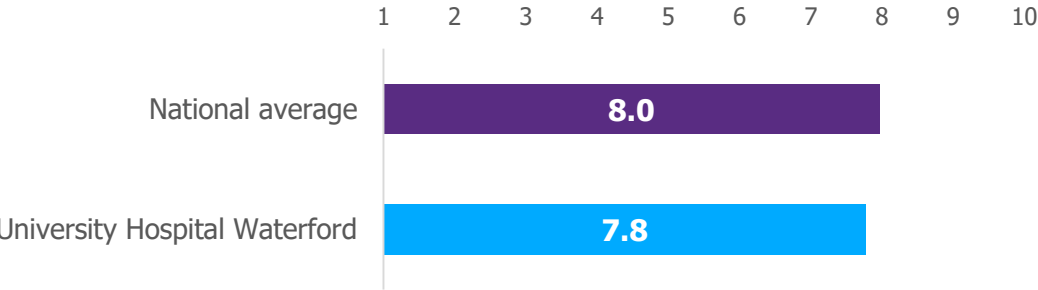




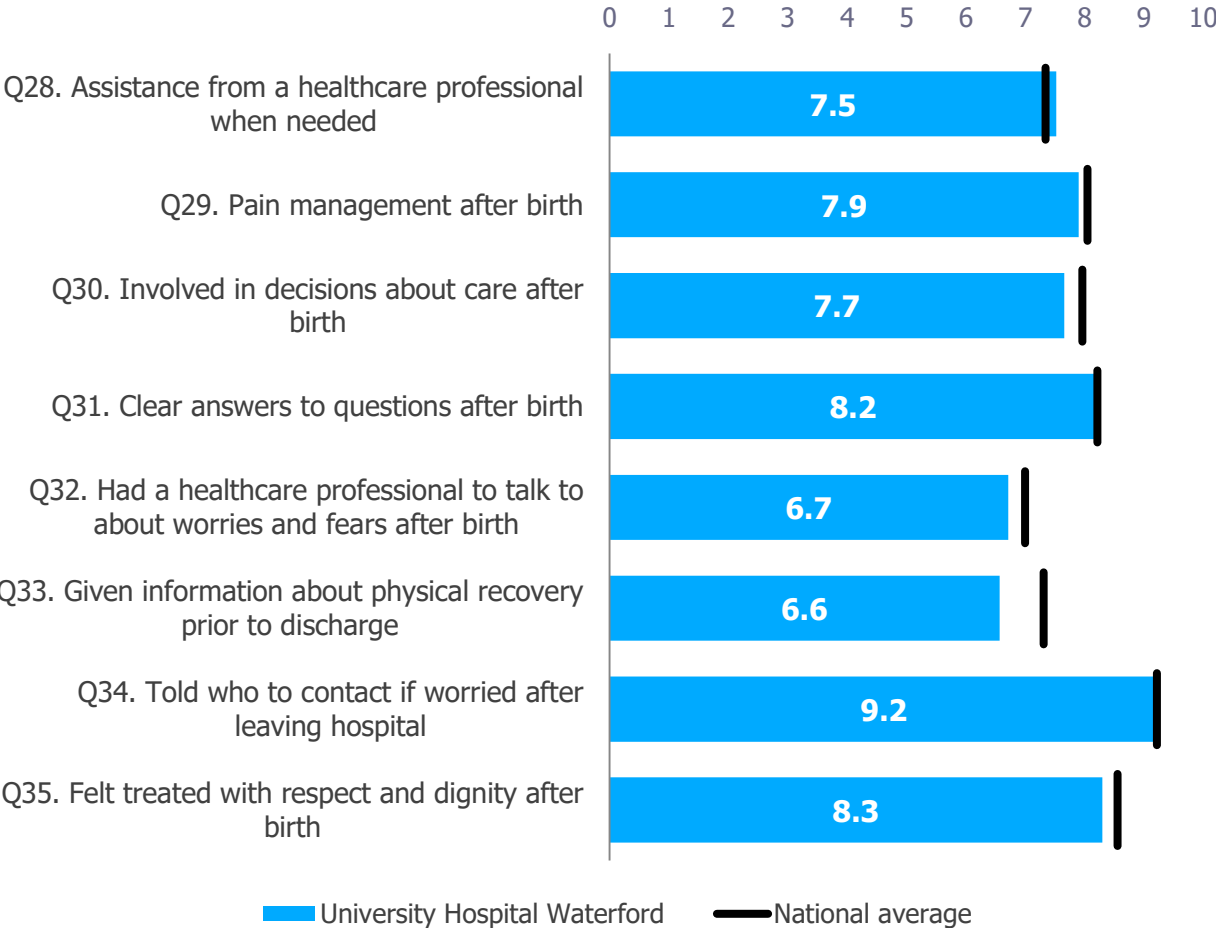
Scored questions for care in hospital after birth

- **Highest-scoring question:** 93% of participants (98 of 106) 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:** 16% of participants (17 of 105) said that they were not given information about their physical recovery prior to discharge.

Overall average score for care in hospital after birth



Average scores out of 10 for individual questions

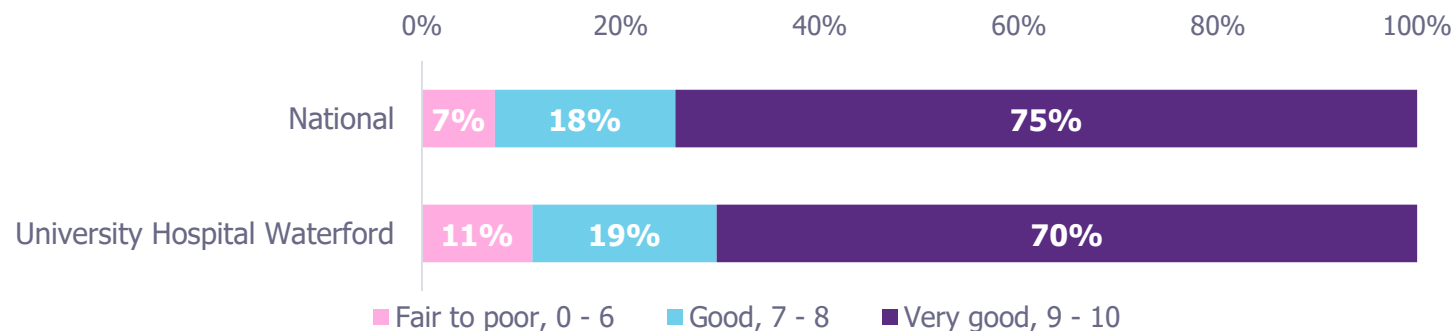




Specialist care in the neonatal unit

- 27 survey participants at University Hospital Waterford (25%) said that their baby spent time in the neonatal unit following the birth.
- Of these participants:
 - 43% said that they always received enough emotional support from healthcare professionals while their baby was in the neonatal unit.
 - 29% said that they sometimes received enough emotional support.
 - 25% said that they did not receive enough emotional support.
 - 3% said they did not want or need any emotional support.

Overall rating of experience of care in the neonatal unit



Infant feeding

In the first few days after birth:

- 40% of participants fed their baby with breast milk only.
- 39% fed their baby with formula milk only.
- 21% fed their baby with both breast and formula milk.

Healthcare professional discussed feeding options

	Number	%
Yes, during pregnancy	69	63.3
Yes, during labour or immediately after birth	21	19.3
Yes, after birth while in hospital	36	33.0
Yes, after birth while at home	15	13.8
No	11	10.1
Did not want or need discussion of different options	10	9.2

Sources of breastfeeding support

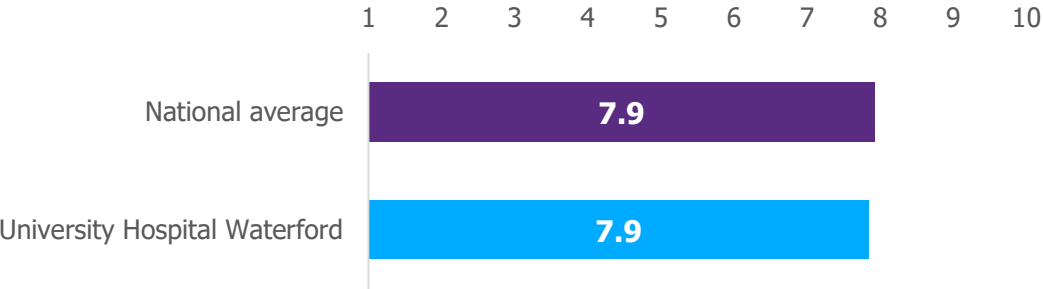
	Number	%
Midwife(s) in hospital	46	43.8
Hospital lactation consultant	23	21.9
Postnatal community midwives	12	11.4
Postnatal hub midwife	1	1.0
Public Health Nurse	29	27.6
GP	8	7.6
Practice nurse	3	2.9
Community breastfeeding support groups or volunteers	8	7.6
Private lactation consultant	11	10.5
Friends or family	27	25.7
Did not need support	5	4.8
Did not want to breastfeed	33	31.4

Scored questions for infant feeding

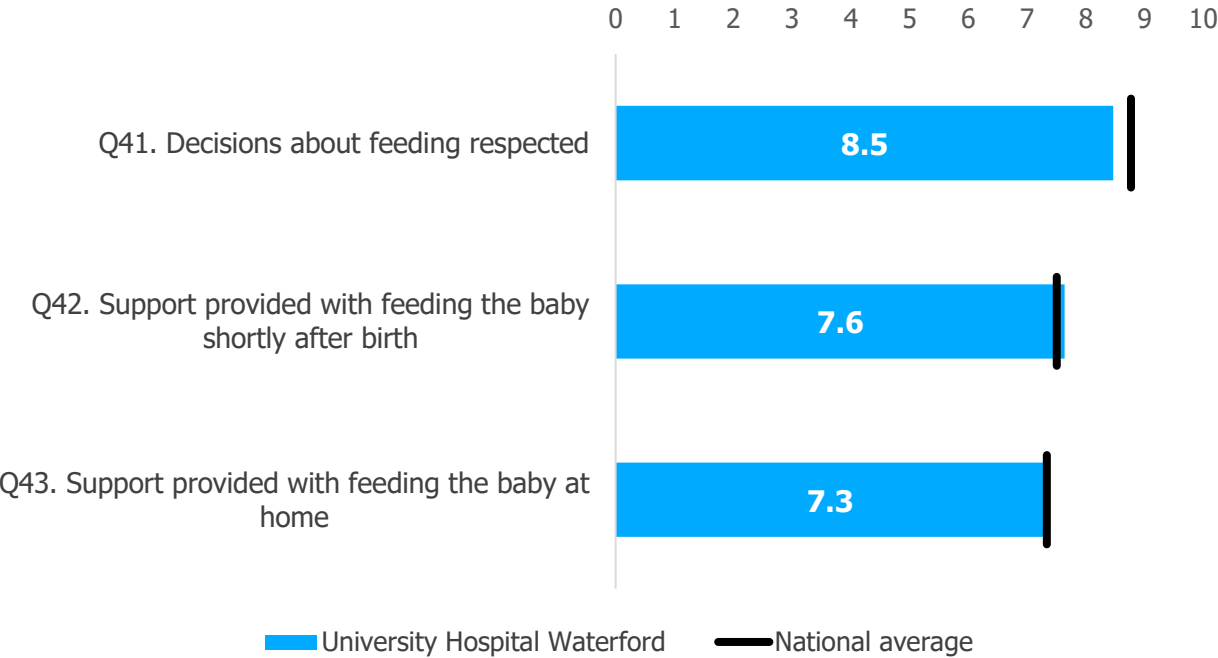


- **Highest-scoring question:** 77% of participants (83 of 108) said their decisions about how they wanted to feed their baby were always respected.
- **Lowest-scoring question:** 17% of participants (17 of 98) said that healthcare professionals did not give them adequate support with feeding their baby at home, in the days and weeks after the 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	23	21.1
Postnatal community midwife at a community clinic (including a Postnatal Hub)	1	0.9
Public Health Nurse at home	95	87.2
Public Health Nurse at a community clinic	32	29.4
GP	86	78.9
Obstetrician at hospital clinic	19	17.4
Midwives and or paediatricians at hospital baby clinic	3	2.8
Other professionals	6	5.5
None of the above	1	0.9

Healthcare professionals who provided mental health support during pregnancy or after birth		
	Number	%
GP	47	43.5
Public Health Nurse	35	32.4
Midwife	19	17.6
Obstetrician	7	6.5
Perinatal mental health midwife	16	14.8
Perinatal mental health nurse	5	4.6
Mental health social worker	2	1.9
Other professionals	3	2.8
None of the above	38	35.2

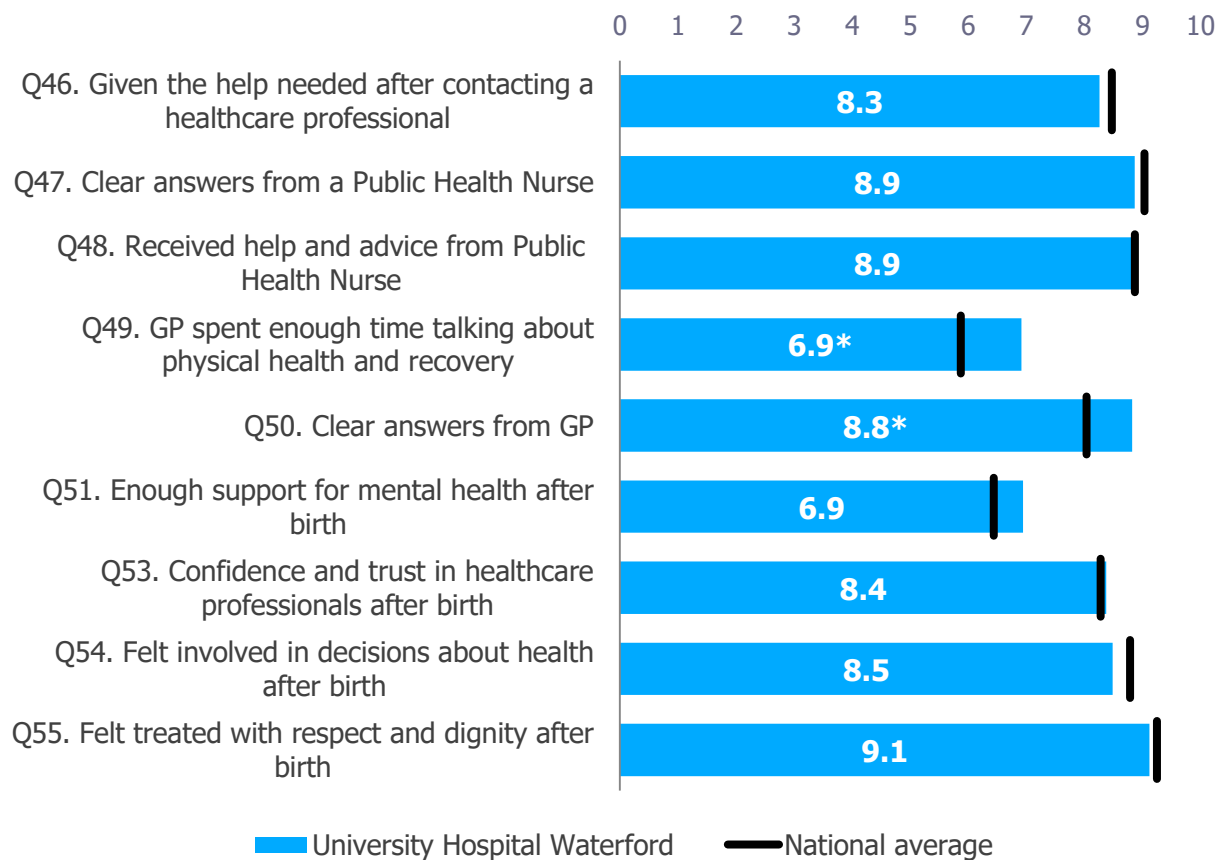
Scored questions for care at home after birth

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:** 83% of participants (90 of 108) said they were always treated with respect and dignity when they received care at home or in the community after the birth of their baby.
- **Lowest-scoring questions:**
 - 22% of participants (23 of 107) said that their GP did not spend enough time talking to them about their physical health and recovery at the postnatal check-up; though this question scored significantly above national average.
 - 16% of participants (15 of 95) said that they were not given enough support for their mental health after birth.

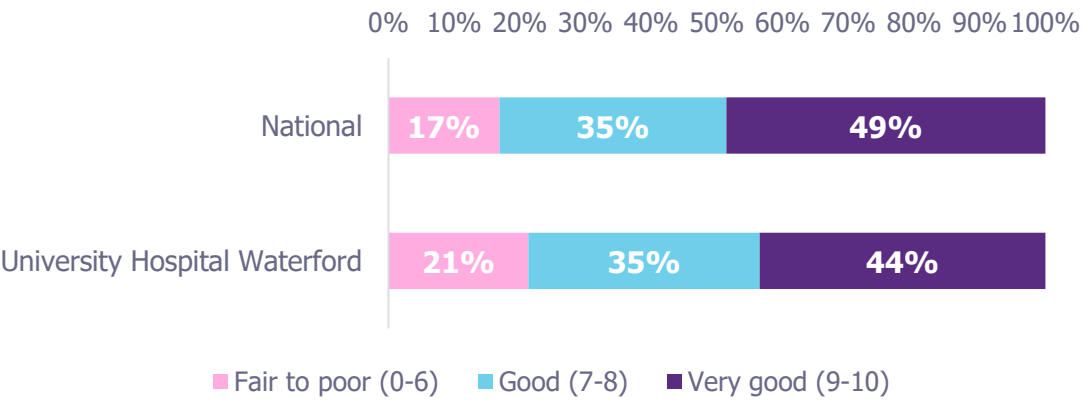


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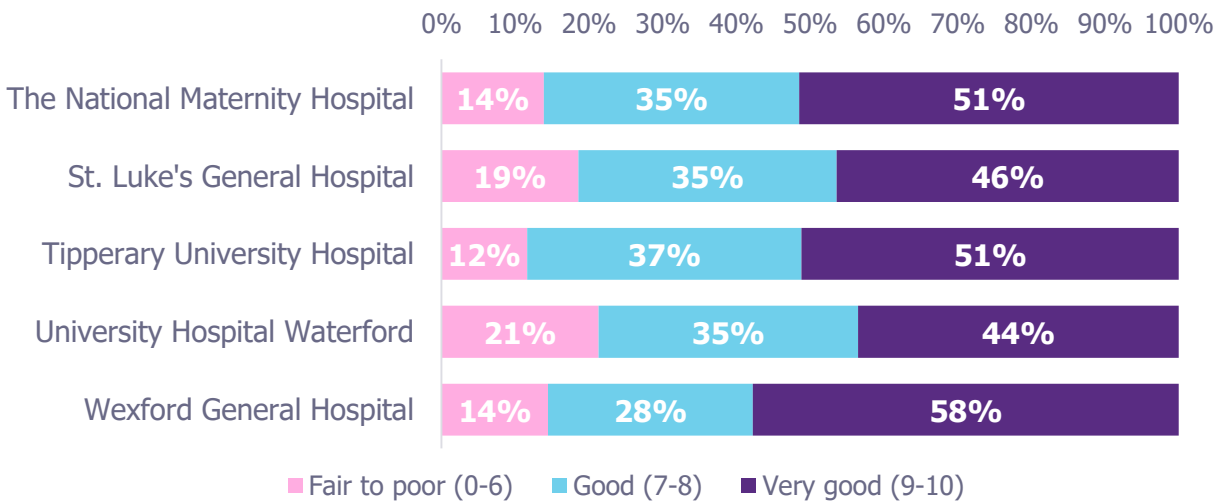
Overall experience of maternity care

- 73% of survey participants who gave birth at University Hospital Waterford said that their decisions about their maternity care were always respected by healthcare staff. 26% said their decisions were sometimes respected, while 2% said their decisions about their maternity care were not 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 44% said they did not know. 24% said they did not wish to give feedback or make a complaint.
- 79% of participants who gave birth at University Hospital Waterford said they had a good or very good overall experience (overall rating between 7 and 10), compared to 83% nationally. 21% of participants said they had a fair to poor experience of care.

Overall experience of care



Overall experience of care - HSE Dublin and South East health region



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 at University Hospital Waterford.
- There were no significant increases in scores for any survey questions between 2020 and 2025 at University Hospital Waterford.
- Between 2020 and 2025, there was a significant decrease in score for the question on information about nutrition during pregnancy.

Comments from survey participants

- When survey participants at University Hospital Waterford were asked what was good about their care, they most commonly referred to interactions they had with healthcare staff. Survey participants also frequently mentioned the information and explanations they received about their care.

"The midwives in Waterford hospital were exceptional in the care they provided to me and my baby, in both labour and postnatal. They were caring, empathetic, professional and went above and beyond."

"At all stages of labour I was kept informed about what was happening and what would happen next. I was informed about how my baby was doing and involved in all decisions regarding my care."

- When survey participants were asked what could be improved with care at University Hospital Waterford, they most commonly referred to the staffing levels of the maternity service, and support with feeding their baby.

"It was clear that the midwives on the postnatal ward were incredibly busy and looking after large numbers of patients so it could sometimes take a while to get help, particularly overnight. Staffing issues were clearly a problem."

"The midwives in the postnatal ward were stressed and overworked. There was no support for breastfeeding provided once moved there, even after multiple requests to see a lactation consultant or for guidance from a midwife. Instead, formula was pushed."

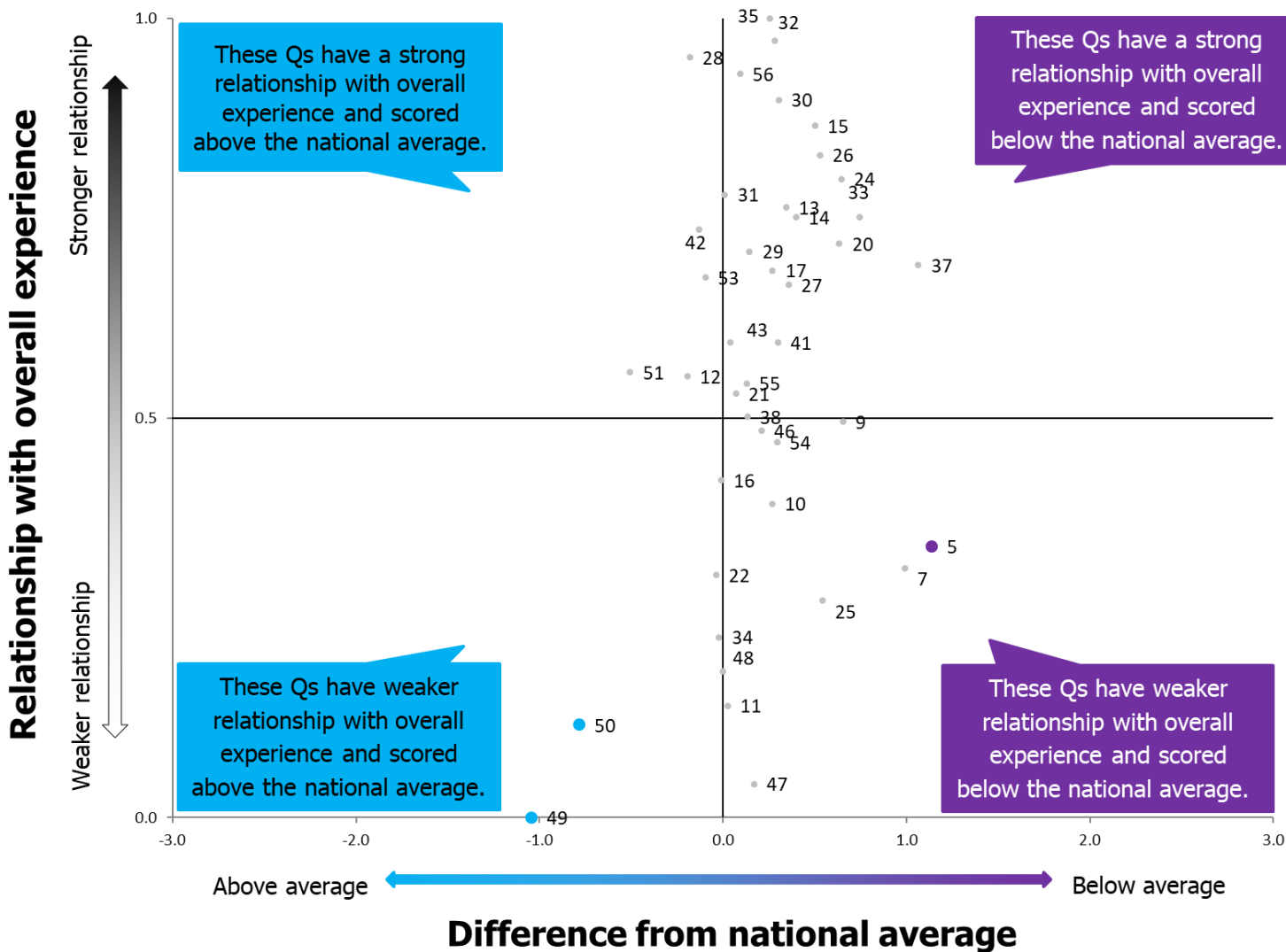
Conclusion

- Two questions scored significantly above national average for participants at University Hospital Waterford. These areas of good experience related to postnatal GP care.
- One question scored significantly below national average for participants at University Hospital Waterford. This area for improvement was in relation to information about the types of maternity care that are available.
- 79% of participants who gave birth at University Hospital Waterford said they had a good or very good overall experience; this is lower than the national figure (83%).
- Between 2020 and 2025, there was a significant decrease in the score for the question on information about nutrition during pregnancy at University Hospital Waterford.

Appendix 1

Improvement map University Hospital Waterford

- 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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An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health