

Experiences of maternity care for women who have a Caesarean birth in Ireland: Findings from the 2025 National Maternity Experience Survey

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Introduction

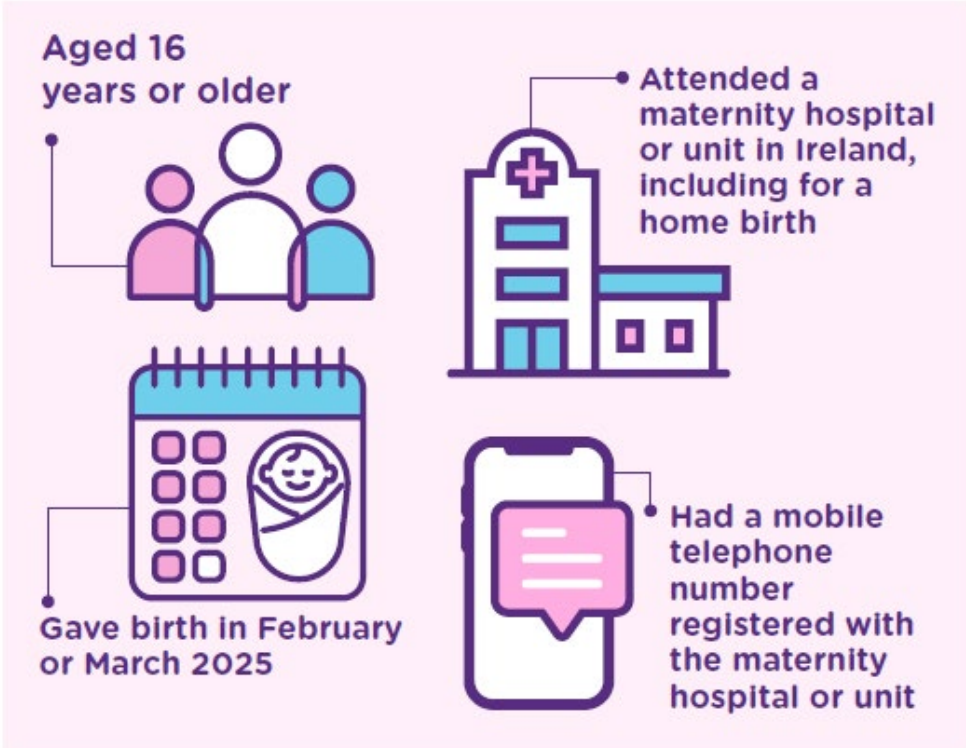
- The 2025 National Maternity Experience Survey offered women with recent birth experience, the opportunity to share their experiences of care in Ireland’s maternity services.
- Ireland has a very significant and increasing rate of caesarean births, with around 4 in 10 women giving birth in this way¹
- Previous studies have highlighted that having a caesarean birth, particularly when unplanned, can have a negative impact on women’s experiences of their maternity care². Women who have a unplanned caesarean birth are also at increased risk of postpartum depression and other negative outcomes³.
- This study explores the care experiences of women who had a caesarean birth in Ireland.



Methods

- Women aged 16 years and above, who gave birth in February or March 2025 in one of the 19 maternity hospitals or units in Ireland, were invited to take part in the National Maternity Experience Survey.
- Survey questionnaires were completed online by 3,354 women (a response rate of 42%).
- Question 19 asked women about the type of birth they had
- Inferential statistics compared how participants responded to the survey questions, depending on the type of birth they experienced.
- Three open-ended survey questions also asked women to share what they felt was good about their maternity care and what could be improved.

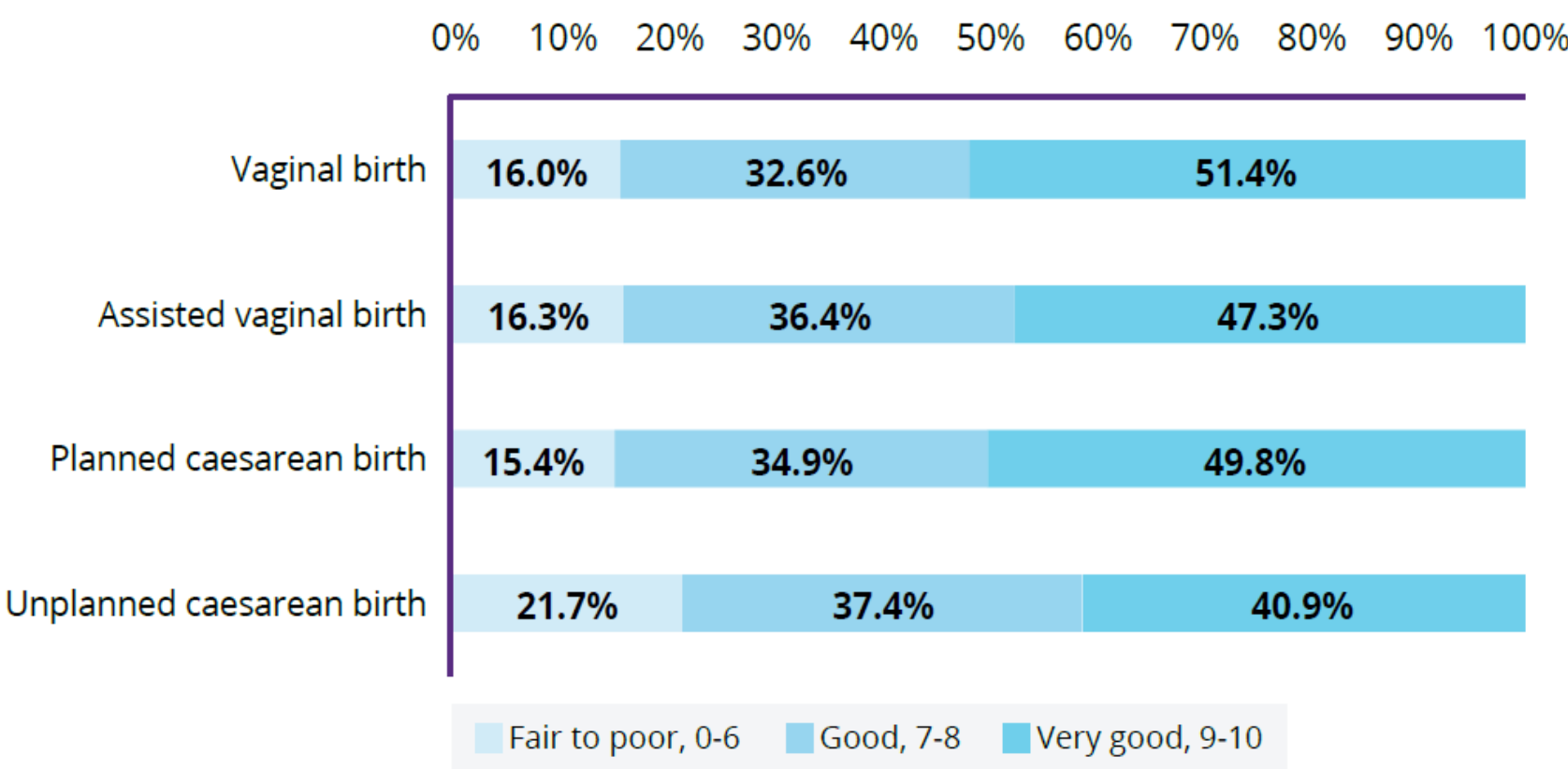
Who was eligible to take part in the survey?



Results

- Just under 43% of participants (n = 1,435) had a caesarean birth, with 611 of these reported as unplanned.
- Women who had private obstetrician-led care were most likely to have a caesarean birth (56%)
- Statistical analysis using z-tests showed:
 - Participants who had a planned caesarean birth were significantly more likely to feel involved in decisions about their care, and to have confidence and trust in healthcare professionals than all birth types.
 - Compared to all birth types, participants who had an unplanned caesarean birth felt significantly less involved in their care, had lower levels of confidence and trust in healthcare professionals, and were less likely to say they were given an opportunity to ask questions about their labour and birth
- 461 responses to free text questions referenced caesarean births – broadly even split between positive and negative comments.

Comparison of overall experience ratings by type of birth



“When my induction failed to work, I felt my options were really clearly explained to me and it was my decision to have a c-section and I really appreciated that. Everything was really calm and there was never any panic which was so beneficial for me and my partner.”

“Postnatal care needs to be improved. I received no information about c-section recovery or care. How to manage myself, move, how to access resources. Discharge for me was poor. My baby was well cared for. I was not.”

Conclusion

- Findings aligned with previous studies which identified significantly more negative experiences for women who had unplanned caesarean births.
- These women felt less involved in their care and highlighted issues with communication and information-sharing after the birth.
- Given the prevalence of caesarean births in Ireland, and the associated of unplanned caesarean birth with negative outcomes, it is of great importance to provide care that meets the needs of this cohort of women.

References

1. National Women and Infants Health Programme. Irish Maternity Indicator System National Report, 2024 . Dublin, Ireland.
2. Coates D, Thirukumar P, Henry A. Women's experiences and satisfaction with having a cesarean birth: An integrative review. Birth. 2020 Jun;47(2):169-182.
3. DiTosto JD, Leziak K, Yee LM, Badreldin N. Individuals' Experiences of Having an Unplanned Cesarean Birth: A Qualitative Analysis. Am J Perinatol. 2024 Jan;41(1):106-109

For more information about the National Maternity Experience Survey or to make a data access request for research purposes, please go to:

www.yourexperience.ie

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