

New study finds homebirths overwhelmingly more positive experience for women

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Experiences of homebirth are overwhelmingly more positive than hospital births, according to a study conducted by researchers in Trinity College Dublin. The research also found that in hospital, midwifery-led

care scored significantly higher than consultant care.

The [online survey](#) of 141 participants is the first study to compare experiences of those who have given birth both in hospital and at home in Ireland. It is also the largest published study on homebirth in Ireland in more than 25 years.

Participants were overwhelmingly more positive about their experience of homebirth compared to their experience of hospital birth across all aspects of care surveyed, explains lead researcher Soma Gregory, at the School of Social Work & Social Policy, Trinity. The [study](#) has been published in the peer-reviewed journal *Women and Birth*.

Those surveyed rated their experience of homebirth as 9.7 out of 10 compared to an average score of 5.5 out of 10 for hospital birth. In addition, the researchers found that in the hospital setting, midwifery-led care was scored significantly higher at 6.4 out of 10 compared to consultant-led care at 4.9 out of 10.

Lead researcher, Soma Gregory, at the School of Social Work & Social Policy, Trinity, explained: "Better continuity of care, greater bodily integrity and more [informed consent](#) during home births were identified by participants as some of the reasons why their homebirth experience was more positive than their [hospital birth](#)."

"Many of the women and other birthing people who participated in the study felt that interventions routinely offered in hospital were unwanted or unnecessary and would alter the natural course of birth, with a perception that hospital policies and procedures were often at odds with individual birth preferences and aspirations. Participants expressed feelings of joy, comfort and safety from being at home and indicated that their family's presence and involvement created intimate and [personal experiences](#), which were in contrast to experiences described in

hospital."

In Ireland, the vast majority of births take place in the [hospital](#)-setting either under the care of an obstetrician or a team of midwives. However, recent years have seen an increased demand for homebirth services, both in Ireland and internationally. In 2021, 650 planned homebirths took place in Ireland, a 53% increase compared to 2019. Little is known about those who choose to give [birth](#) at home or about their experiences of receiving care from Irish maternity services.

Dr. Louise Caffrey, School of Social Work & Social Policy, said, "This research underscores the importance of providing maternity care which is respectful and responsive to diverse beliefs and aspirations about childbirth—particularly in the [hospital setting](#). It also clearly illustrates the need for genuine choice within Ireland's maternity services"

Dr. Deirdre Daly, School of Nursing and Midwifery, added, "This study provides important new insights on experiences of homebirth and [hospital births](#). It furthers our understanding of what women need from our maternity services in order to have lovely, positive experiences. It really highlights the critical importance of women's relationship with midwives and maternity care providers, and the importance of having a continuity of care and caregivers."

More information: Soma Gregory et al, "It could not have been more different." Comparing experiences of hospital-based birth and homebirth in Ireland: A mixed-methods survey, *Women and Birth* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.wombi.2023.02.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2023.02.003)

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