

ACT Maternity Experience Survey – Insights Brief 2024-2025

This brief provides an overview of the findings from the ACT Maternity Experience Survey†.

While overall satisfaction with maternity care in the ACT was moderate to high, the survey highlighted several areas for service improvement. Consumers consistently praised continuity of care, especially the reassurance of postnatal home visits and the comfort of building relationships with known midwives. Empathetic and respectful interactions contributed positively to experiences, and most participants reported confidence in their care providers.

However, key challenges emerged around communication and clinical consistency. Many participants reported receiving contradictory advice—particularly around breastfeeding and postnatal care—and felt under-informed about pain management and physical recovery. Some consumers experienced early discharge without adequate support, and a few felt dismissed or pressured during decision-making or were left out of the decision making altogether. Strengthening the consistency and quality of clinical advice, addressing administrative barriers to accessing preferred models of care, and ensuring that all consumers feel that their choices are genuinely respected will be critical to enhancing service quality and consumer trust.

† Maternity Experience Survey commenced September 2024.

93% of participants had confidence and trust in the health professionals providing their care.

92% of participants reported they were able to discuss what was important to them with antenatal professionals.

98% of participants reported that postnatal health professionals were always kind and caring.

17% of participants reported that they weren't given enough support for their own physical recovery.

51% of participants received contradictory advice from health professionals regarding care for themselves or their baby.

23% of participants felt that they did not receive enough information on the physical changes to their bodies.

Participants shared a diverse range of preferences, beliefs and expectations about their maternity care experiences through their free text responses. While most described generally satisfactory care, they also highlighted areas needing improvement. The following key topics emerged from their responses.

Positive Experiences



Continuity of care: Participants in the continuity program valued not having to repeat their history and appreciated consistent relationships with midwives in the continuity program. Many consumers advocated for the expansion of the continuity programs to enable more access for women and birthing people.

Empathic and respectful care: Participants described health professionals as competent, quick to act and reassuring during emergencies or surgical procedures. Midwife support during labour and birth was often highlighted as exceptional. Student midwives were consistently described as kind, caring, and attentive.



Postnatal home visits: These were valued for providing reassurance, breastfeeding support and emotional care. Participants felt they had the time and space to ask questions, debrief about their birth experiences and received empathetic, non-judgemental support.

Negative Experiences



Inconsistent advice: A strong recurring concern among participants was the lack of consistency in advice provided by different health professionals, particularly regarding breastfeeding, newborn care, and postnatal recovery. This resulted in confusion, stress, and in some cases, delayed care or led to unnecessary interventions and was particularly distressing for first-time parents who relied heavily on professional advice to navigate early parenthood.

Lack of timely information: Participants reported feeling underinformed during various stages of their maternity care, particularly during labour, postnatal recovery, and discharge. The lack of clear, timely, and consistent information contributed to feelings of anxiety, confusion, and vulnerability, especially among first-time parents. Participants called for more proactive communication during labour, better coordination between care providers, and accessible, evidence-based resources to support informed decision-making.



Early discharge: Many participants expressed concern about being discharged from hospital too soon after birth, particularly following caesarean sections or complicated deliveries. Several felt they were not physically or emotionally ready to leave, citing ongoing pain, difficulty mobilising and unresolved feeding issues. Some described feeling rushed out to free up beds, with decisions appearing driven more by hospital policy than individual wellbeing.

