



THE EXPERIENCES OF ETHNIC MINORITY PREGNANT WOMEN AND NEW MOTHERS IN IRISH MATERNITY HOSPITALS

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Background:

Results of several studies carried out in the UK into the experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women have indicated that women of ethnic backgrounds have been subjected to prejudice and stereotyping, and in general have poorer pregnancy outcomes compared to their white counterparts (Jomeen and Redshaw 2012).

In Ireland, there has been scarce research into the issues ethnic women face in their peri, pre, ante and postnatal periods (Tobin et al. 2014). Although, statistically in Ireland, migrant women account for 40% of maternal deaths, only 8.4% of total births are registered to women of nationalities other than Ireland, UK and the EU (Central Statistics Office 2019).

Objective:

To examine the various experiences of ethnic minority women before, during and after a birth experience in Ireland; as well as investigating different attitudes of healthcare practitioners towards these women.

Significance:

This is a novel research topic in Ireland that could impact the way in which healthcare providers in various hospitals interact with women of minority backgrounds.

The significance of this study has been highlighted recently in an Irish Examiner article looking at the inquest into the maternal death of a woman of colour. As a result of her death, campaigners are calling for diversity training for all healthcare. Professionals (Irish examiner, 2021).

Methodology:

- Data was collected using a Survey Monkey online questionnaire. Participants were found on various social media platforms, forums and through word of mouth. The questionnaire was used to form a baseline and include demographic data.
- The questionnaire was followed by 4 semi-structured interviews, with 2 White and 2 Black participants, conducted via Zoom and Skype.
- Data Analysis: Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS, and qualitative data using thematic analysis.

Findings:

Based on questionnaire:

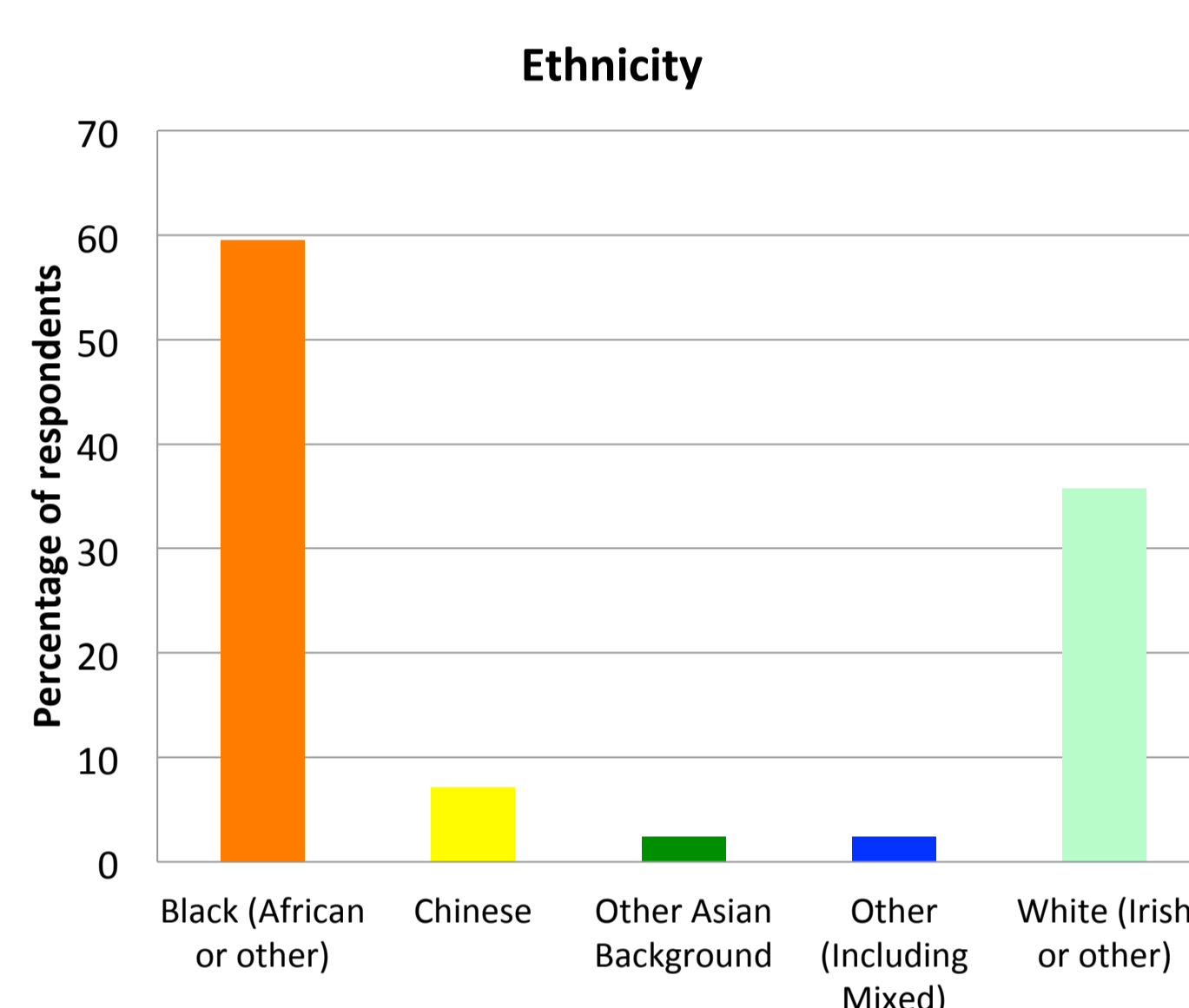


Chart 1- Ethnicity of participants

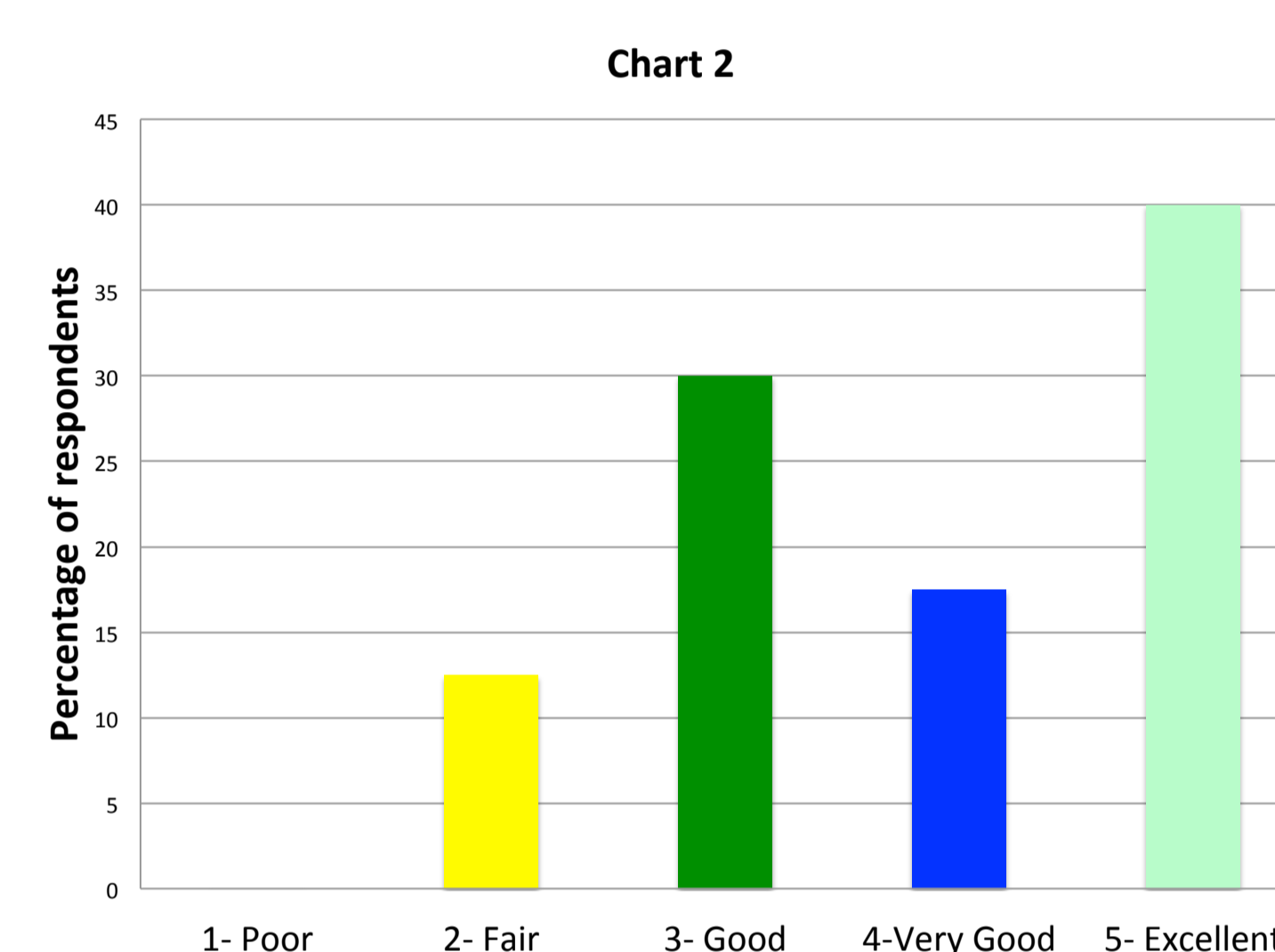


Chart 2- Rating of level of care received from healthcare providers

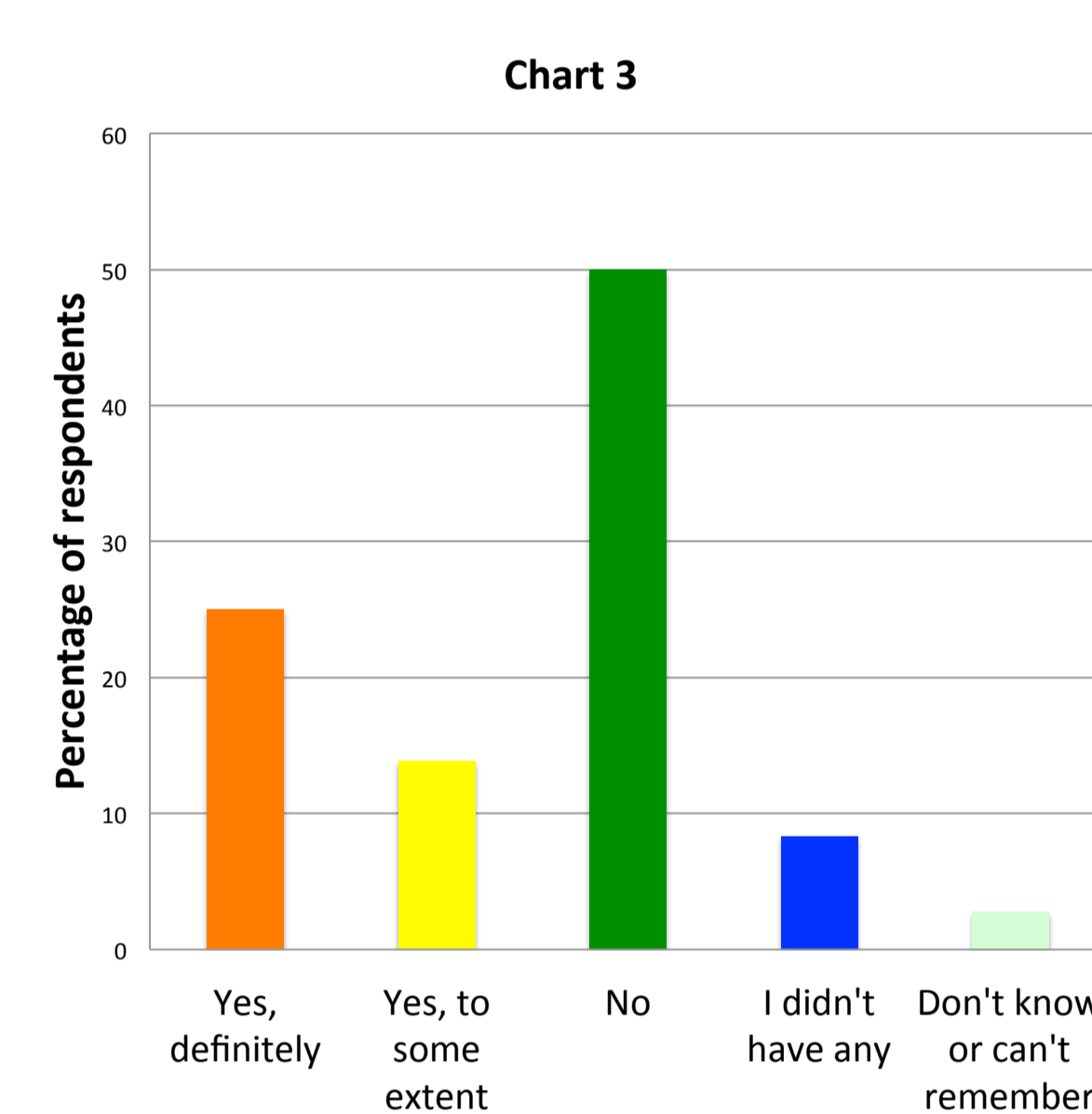


Chart 3- Were participant's given the opportunity to ask questions following birth experience

Based on Interviews:

- Both black women felt that their voices were not heard, and staff members were impatient when dealing with their concerns.
- Compared to their white counterparts, they felt that their pain was not taken seriously and ignored.
- All 4 participants felt that healthcare workers imposed their own knowledge on them, instead of listening to their concerns. Such as being ignored when letting them know when they were in labour.

Limitations and Further Research:

- Limited sample size, as we were not able to find enough Chinese and other Asian candidates
- More interview participants from other racial groups required.
- Further research: The research needs to be carried out on a larger sample size in different locations around the country. We also believe that the next phase of the research should include healthcare workers' perspective and recommendations

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I think they need to listen to women more, and take into account that they know their bodies.

-White Interview Respondent

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I was in so much pain and waited for 2 hours, the nurses were just passing me by. But I could see them going to the other white patients. I can't explain the anger it makes me feel until now.

-Black Interview Respondent

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There needs to be more people of colour in higher positions in Irish healthcare to make sure that they are part of the major decision making processes. If all you see is people that look like you, you are just going to act based on that perspective.

-Black interview Respondent

References:

- Jomeen, J. and Redshaw, M. (2012) "Ethnic minority women's experience of maternity services in England". *Ethnicity and Health* 18(3): 280-296.
- Tobin, C.L. and Murphy-Lawless, J. (2014) "Irish midwives' experiences of providing maternity care to non-Irish women seeking asylum". *International Journal of Women's Health* 6: 159-169.
- Griffin, Niamh. Maternal Death inquest must result in rethink in care for mothers. *Irish Examiner*. 2 October 2021. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/spotlight/arid-40711532.html>

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