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New Survey to Capture Experiences of Respect and Mistreatment in Birth Care in Canada

Canadians who have been pregnant or given birth in the last ten years can share their experiences by participating in a new study funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The survey captures information about respect, exceptional care, and kindness as well as stories of disrespect, discrimination, and/or mistreatment during care.

This is the first-ever study where people who had experienced pregnancy in Canada chose the research questions and decided what they think matters most. The study team hopes this information will help improve the quality of care of Canadian birthing people.

Anyone who has been pregnant or given birth in the last ten years in Canada can participate. Find the survey at [RESPCCT.CA](https://respcct.ca) in English, French, Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese, Inuktitut, Punjabi and Spanish. A screen reader compatible version is available.

The study also aims to capture how a number of factors impact the experience of respectful care, including rural and remote access to services, health system resource constraints, or settings that ensure privacy and confidentiality.

Mothers and babies who identify as Black, Indigenous (First Nations, Métis or Inuit), or other people of colour, those who are recent immigrants, or who have been in prison, homeless, or lower incomes, are at risk for poor health outcomes. Some researchers have suggested that this may be because they are not able to access care or because they are treated differently.

While research from the United States finds that up to one in six people experience mistreatment during birth, very little is known about the Canadian experience. In the United States, research



found that Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people experienced more disrespect during pregnancy and birth care.

“There are a number of factors that can impact birth outcomes,” said Saraswathi Vedam, RM, PhD, FACNM. “Respectful maternity care is not just about interactions between a patient and a provider. It also means having a health system that provides equitable access to services, privacy, dignity, and options for care. Understanding the factors that contribute to an optimal experience of care, and learning who is most affected may help us to improve quality of care for everyone.”

Those most likely to experience poor health outcomes are also those hardest to reach in research projects such as this for a variety of reasons, including mistrust of the goals of the research, recruitment methods that are not inclusive, and limited time and resources to address these concerns. In the RESPCCT study, to better reach all communities, a [group of individuals from traditionally underserved communities](#) are assisting with outreach efforts.

Interested individuals can visit the Birth Place Lab website at www.birthplacelab.org to learn about ways they can share the survey with friends and neighbors.

The survey is a project of the Birth Place Lab (BPL), in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia. BPL conducts person-centered outcomes research on high quality care for all childbearing families. Learn more at www.birthplacelab.org.

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