

Introduction

- Recent evidence from national study of 6 million birth episodes describes disparities in the use of epidural analgesia: ethnic minority parturients are less likely to receive neuraxial labour analgesia than non-minority White parturients.¹
- An audit at Birmingham Women's Hospital (BWH) showed a lower proportion of parturients of Black or Black British ethnicity received epidurals than those of other ethnicities.²
- It is also known that twice as many ethnic minority parturients report concerns about pain and discomfort during labour as White parturients.³
- This project aimed to:
- determine the use of epidurals in women of different ethnicities in women delivering at BWH
- explore local patient experience of pain management in labour, including how this might vary between parturients of different ethnicities.
- explore reasons behind any disparities identified
- make improvements where problems are identified

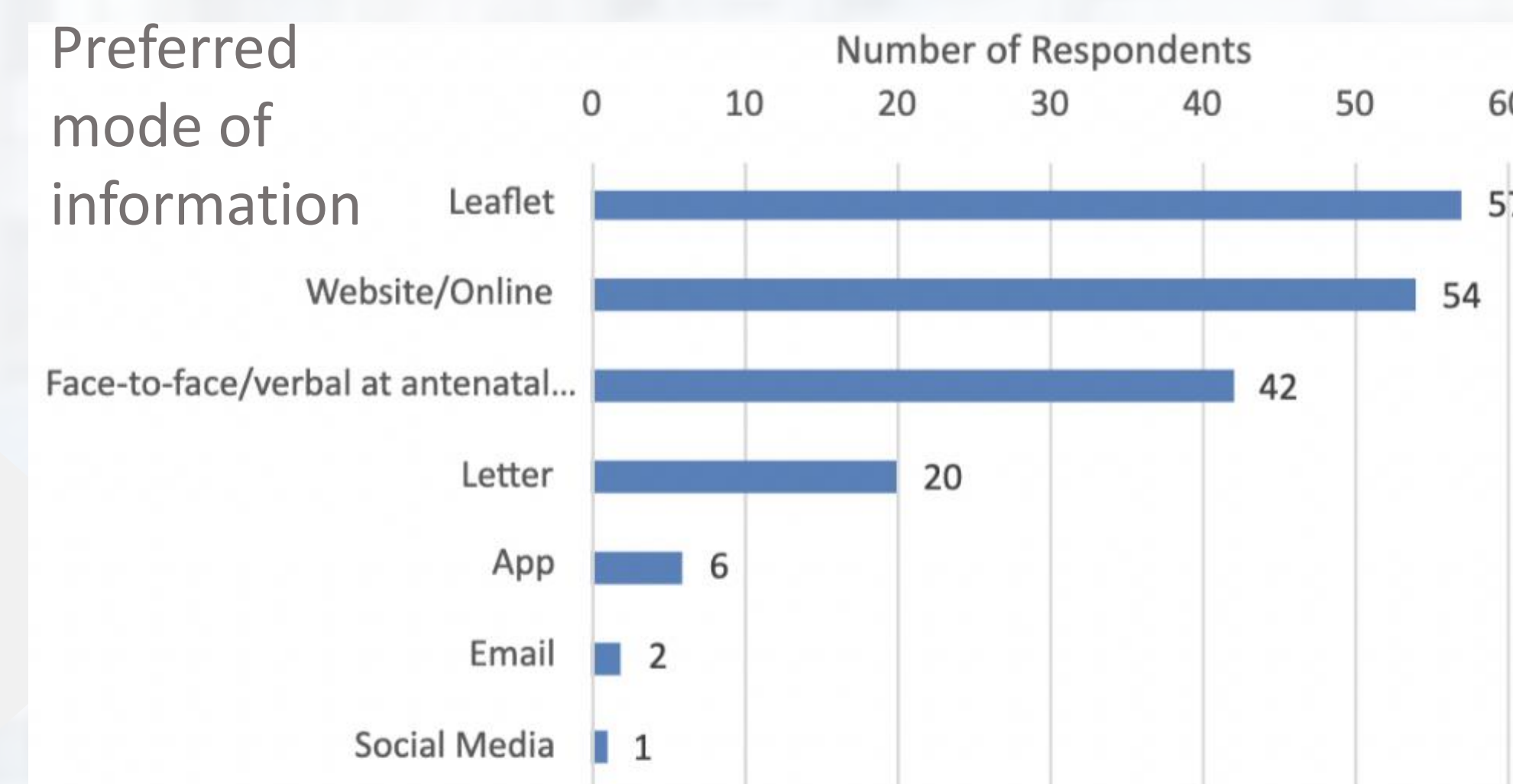
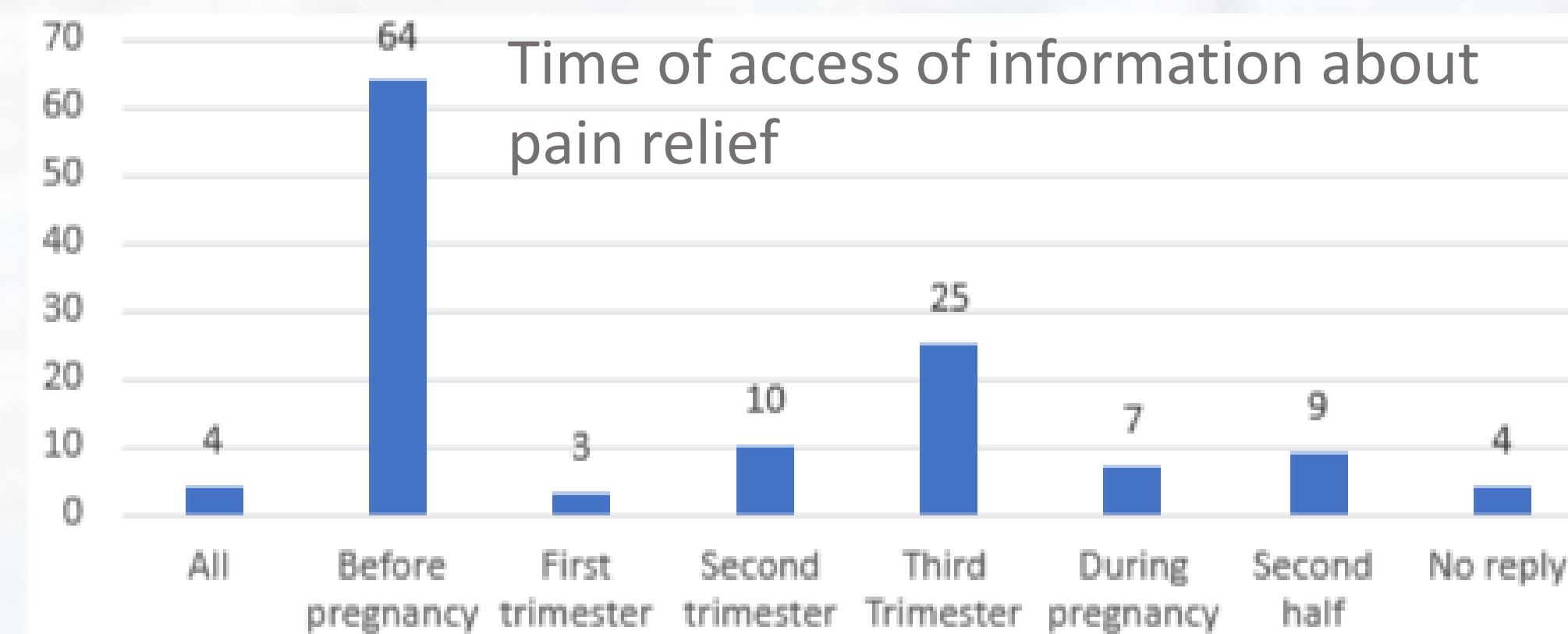
Methods

- A survey of parturients who birthed babies by any method, over 24 weeks gestation during July and August 2022.
- Elective caesarean births excluded.
- A weblink and explanatory information was emailed to parturients in June 2023.
- Via BWH 'friends and family test' website, bespoke survey. Non-mandatory, with informed consent.
- 10 total questions: mix of multiple choice and free text responses.

Results

- Of 126 respondents (response rate 18.5%), 54% were White British, 17% South Asian, 8% Black/African/Caribbean, 8% mixed, and 6% Other White, and 5% other ethnicities.

- Over half of respondents accessed information prior to pregnancy.

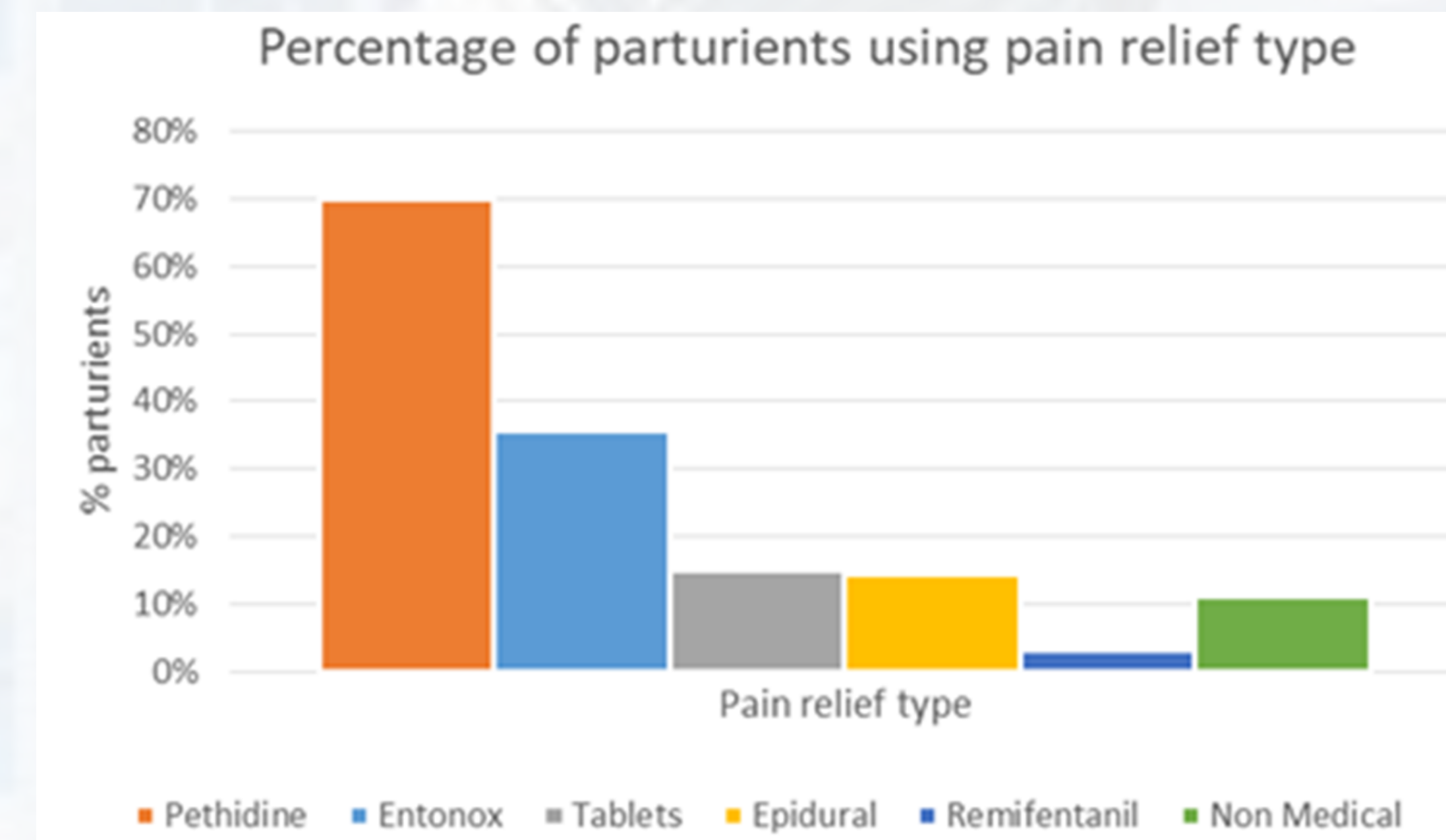


- The majority of respondents got information on pain relief from friends and family, particularly those respondents of South Asian origin.

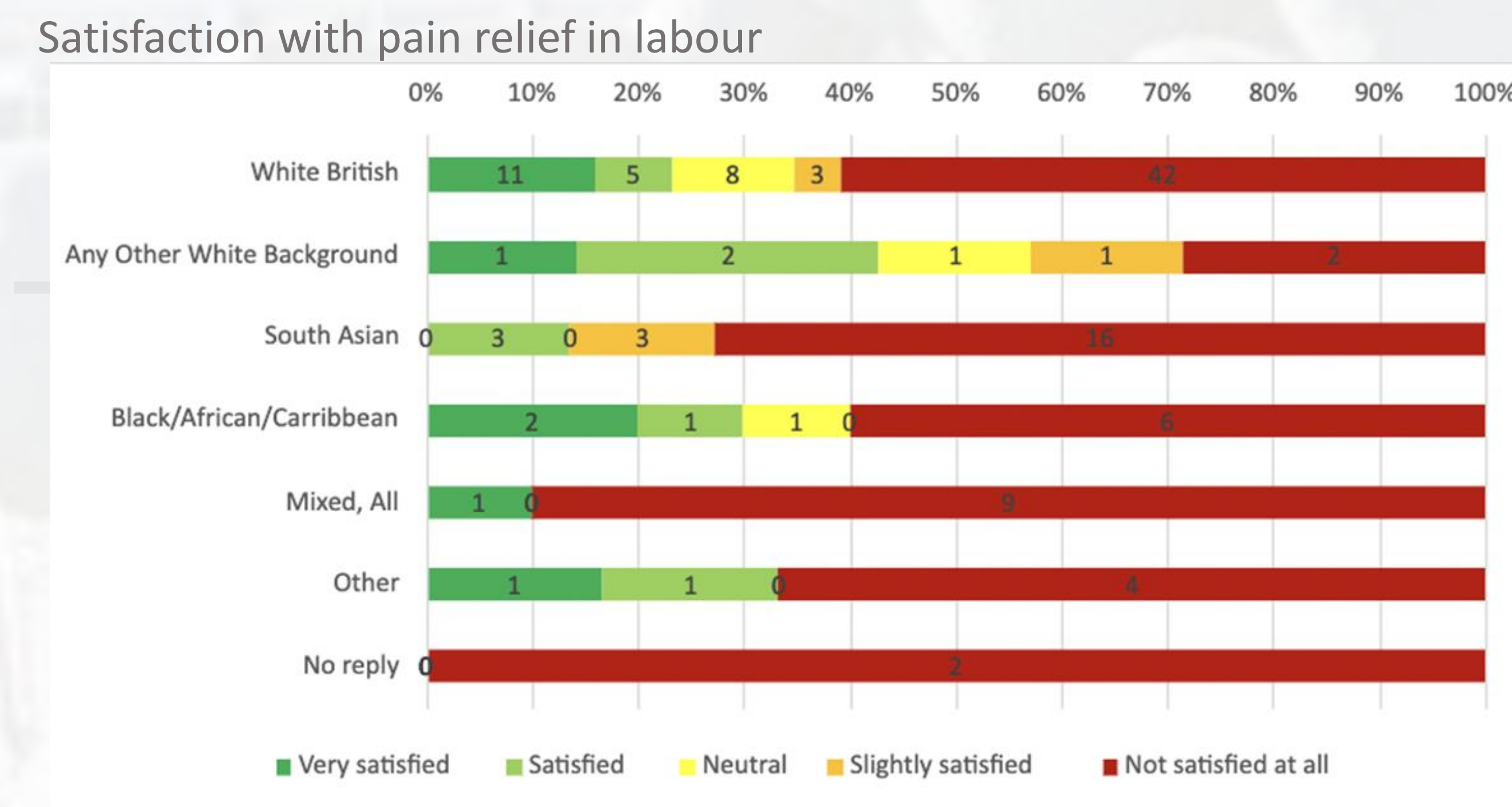
- The most popular format for information to be made available was by leaflet or online. There was an even spread of mode of information preferred across ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Respondents	n (%) of patients reporting concerns about pain relief types
White British	69	35 (51)
Any Other White Background	7	4 (57)
South Asian	22	6 (27)
Black/African/Caribbean	10	8 (80)
Mixed, All	10	6 (60)
Other	6	3 (50)
No Response	2	1 (50)

- 49% of respondents had prior concerns about pain relief during labour, and Black/African/Caribbean respondents had a higher rate of concern.



- Pethidine was the most frequently used form of pain relief, with 70% of repondents using it.
- 14% of respondents used epidurals, with no significant difference in epidural use between different ethnic groups.



- 47% of respondents experienced barriers to pain relief, mainly around being unable to have epidurals, and 64% reported low satisfaction with pain relief in labour. There was no significant difference between ethnic groups.

Discussion

- The low satisfaction rate here indicates an opportunity to improve quality and availability of pain relief information. The results indicate that this can be provided prior to and throughout pregnancy, and leaflets, posters, and online information, as well as verbal information are the preferred options.
- 2022 anaesthetic follow-up data from BWH showed an overall satisfaction rate of 78%, compared to lower rates here, however this may indicate a response bias from those who did access epidurals. Other limitations include the survey being in English language only, and carried out 10 months after delivery occurred.
- South Asian and Black/African/Caribbean respondents were under-represented. The results did not show the previously reported discrepancy across ethnic groups in use of epidurals, however epidural use was lower. The small numbers in this survey meant it was difficult to detect a significant difference between groups.
- Availability of epidurals was a reported barrier to pain relief, but since this survey a second anaesthetist has been introduced on labour ward.
- A survey including all postnatal parturients, rather than only those choosing to respond in retrospect, is planned. These results have been shared with MDT leads, and we aim to improve access to information and all forms of pain relief in labour. QR code links to information translated into various languages is planned for inclusion on information posters/leaflets, using validated information on labourpains.org.

References

- Bamber, J.H., Goldacre, R., Lucas, D.N., Quasim, S. and Knight, M. (2023), A national cohort study to investigate the association between ethnicity and the provision of care in obstetric anaesthesia in England between 2011 and 2021. *Anaesthesia*, 78: 820-829.
- Blackburn, J. et al. P15 Equitable care: identifying racial disparities in epidural analgesia. *International Journal of Obstetric Anaesthesia*, Volume 54, 103677
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