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## Women's experiences of home birth care in Ireland

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## **Women's experiences of Home Birth Care in Ireland**

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### **Abstract: For Oral Presentation**

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The number of planned home births in Ireland is increasing. Recent statistics in Ireland has shown a 25.4% increase in the number of home births over a decade, between 2003 and 2012. There has also been a 4.8% increase in home births between 2011 (n = 168) and 2012 (n = 176) (ERSI, 2013). These statistics relate only to planned home births cared for by self-employed community midwives. In 2012, there were 53 home births under the care of hospital based midwives who provide home birth services (ERSI, 2013); these births are not included in the overall home birth statistics for the country. The provision of home birth services in Ireland is therefore extremely limited (O' Boyle, 2013) despite the demand from women with an annual birth rate of 71,986 for 2012. Research has highlighted that by normalizing pregnancy and childbirth, unnecessary interventions during childbirth are reduced resulting in better outcomes for mother and baby (Birthplace in England Collaborative Group, 2011; Hodnett *et al.*, 2010). The recent NICE (2014) draft Intrapartum guidelines also recommend low risk women to give birth at home as women often experience less interventions during childbirth at home than in hospital. Nevertheless, it is fundamental that women receive competent, high-quality maternity care from the midwife in their home. The purpose of this study is to illuminate common, yet often overlooked decisions of women to birth at home in Ireland and to highlight home birth care experiences, which can generate meaning and understanding. A purposive sample of 16-18 women, who are English speaking

and had a planned home birth between 2012 and 2014. A Heideggerian hermeneutic approach using in-depth individual interviews will be conducted in the participant's homes or self-selected location. Field notes will contribute to the meaning. The interviews will be transcribed verbatim and analyzed using hermeneutic data analysis. Heideggerian traditions provide an indispensable influence for the study of childbirth, particularly as the "experience" is significant for women and their families.