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# Should giving birth put you on trial for others to judge?

Induction or C-section, drug-free or epidural, home birth or hospital? Nicole Madigan looks at how the way we give birth is being judged by other mothers.



**Nicole Madigan**

Writer

*Nicole Madigan is a freelance journalist, writer and communications consultant. Having spent several years... [Profile](#)*

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Totally natural. Drug free. No intervention.

These are the oft-heard catch-cries of women whose births have gone according to plan.

They're proud. And rightly so.

But has this new-found pride in HOW we give birth given way to a new path of judgment for mothers – before they've even become one?

### A range of options breeds a range of judgments

A procedure once designed purely for the safe arrival of a baby has now become a

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source of scrutiny, resulting in angst and shame for those whose birth plans differ from the natural ideal – either by choice or lack thereof.

Think elective inductions, C-sections, epidurals and other pain medication, use of forceps, episiotomies – you name it ... if it's slightly off course, rest assured there will be someone who has an opinion on it and no hesitation in sharing it.

Of course there are situations where medical emergencies require intervention.

But there are many other situations where mums-to-be choose a path for a variety of reasons – proximity to a hospital, delivery preference, simple pain relief. Rarely are these decisions “selfish” as can sometimes be the implication.

“I had an elective C-section both times,” says one mum.

“One of my friends called me a wimp – they think it’s not as natural, it’s not the best for your baby, you are weak for making that choice instead of pushing through the pain.”

Another says her partner’s parents were disappointed that forceps were used during her first son’s birth, claiming birth is too medicalised in hospitals.

“Basically I needed help to have Zac because he got stuck and my second was a planned C-section (breech) and I got an email sharing my sister-in-law’s homebirth story with an extra note on the end telling me to not feel too bad about my birth. Which I hadn’t until then.“

### Induced? Epidural? Expect a comment or two

Inductions are also contentious.

“I was judged for being induced on my due date even though I was advised to do so by my obstetrician because of his size.

“People always bring up the fact that I was at a private hospital and that’s what happens when you go private. At the end of the day they aren’t going to put mums and bubs at risk.”

And let’s not forget the big one – pain relief.

You’d be hard-pressed to find a mother who accessed an epidural who hadn’t either felt they’d let themselves down or were made to feel that way by someone else – intentionally or otherwise.

Once the baby’s out we can already expect an avalanche of judgment – breast v bottle, working v staying at home, swaddle v no, routine v demand feeding – the list goes on.

Let’s at least not exit the labour ward already feeling like we’ve failed before we’ve even begun.

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Did you feel judged over your birth choices?

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