

Snapshot



Emergency department

Results from the 2019–20 patient survey





We heard from almost **18,000 people** about their experiences of care in NSW emergency departments



Emergency departments (EDs) provide patients with access to care in their time of need. EDs are open to everyone, offering specialised assessment and life-saving care for patients.

The results of the Emergency Department Patient Survey 2019–20 reflect the experiences of 17,839 patients who attended one of 77 large EDs in NSW public hospitals from July 2019 to June 2020. This includes the emergence of COVID-19 in NSW in early 2020 which resulted in significant changes in how services were delivered, including the establishment of dedicated testing clinics and increased use of personal protective equipment in hospitals. In 2020, there were also fewer attendances at NSW EDs than in previous years.

In NSW, there is an increased focus on using patient experience measures to help drive improvement efforts in hospitals. Patient experience is a key dimension of high-quality healthcare and provides further insights into the performance of the NSW healthcare system from the perspective of those who use it.

Results for individual hospitals are available in the supplementary data tables and on the Bureau of Health Information (BHI's) interactive data portal, Healthcare Observer, at bhi.nsw.gov.au

Overall ratings of care: Almost nine in 10 patients (88%) said, overall, the care they received was 'very good' (62%) or 'good' (26%). Almost seven in 10 patients (69%) said, overall, they would rate the ED health professionals who treated them as 'very good' (pages 4–5).

Patient-centred care: More than eight in 10 patients (86%) said they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity in the ED. Eight in 10 patients (80%) said they were 'always' given enough privacy while they were in the ED (pages 6–7).

Patient engagement: Around eight in 10 patients (81%) said ED health professionals 'always' explained things in a way they could understand. More than six in 10 patients (65%) said they were 'definitely' involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their care (pages 8–9).

Experiences at discharge and patient outcomes: Around seven in 10 patients (71%) said they 'definitely' felt involved in decisions about discharge. More than eight in 10 patients (84%) said ED staff told them who to contact if they were worried about their condition or treatment after they left the hospital (pages 10–11).

Overall, **88%** of patients rated their care as



'very good'

62%

'good'

26%

Overall ratings of care

Overall ratings of care reflect general measures of patient satisfaction about their ED experience. People who attended an ED during 2019–20 gave higher ratings of their overall care compared with the previous year.

Almost nine in 10 patients (88%) said, overall, the care they received was 'very good' (62%) or 'good' (26%) (Figure 1a). Ratings of 'very good' were up from 58% in 2018–19, and results ranged from 44% to 81% across EDs (Figure 2a).

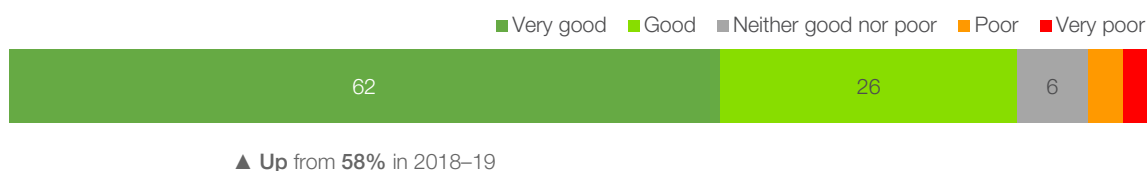
Almost seven in 10 patients (69%) said, overall, they would rate the ED health professionals who treated them as 'very good', up from 65% in 2018–19 (Figure 1b). Across EDs, results ranged from 52% to 82% (Figure 2b).

When asked to rate how well ED health professionals worked together, six in 10 patients (60%) said 'very good', up from 55% in 2018–19 (Figure 1c).

Some patient groups tend to respond more positively to surveys. This means that EDs with higher proportions of patients with these characteristics tend to have higher patient experience ratings. To enable a fairer comparison across EDs, BHI has taken into account differences in patient characteristics (age, sex, education and language spoken at home) at each ED. Therefore, when an ED is flagged as having a significantly higher or lower result than NSW, this is more likely to reflect differences in patient experiences and less likely to reflect differences in the ED's patient mix. For further details, please see the survey's technical supplement at bhi.nsw.gov.au

Figure 1 Percentage of patients in NSW, all response options, 2019–20

a. Overall, how would you rate the care you received while in the ED?



b. Overall, how would you rate the ED health professionals who treated you?



c. How would you rate how the ED health professionals worked together?



Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

When patients were asked about the ED health professionals...



69%

rated them, overall, as **'very good'**

Up from 65% in 2018–19

60%

rated how they worked together as **'very good'**

Up from 55% in 2018–19

Best part of care...

“

We visited during COVID and all of the staff were amazing. From the minute we arrived everyone was caring, considerate and helpful.

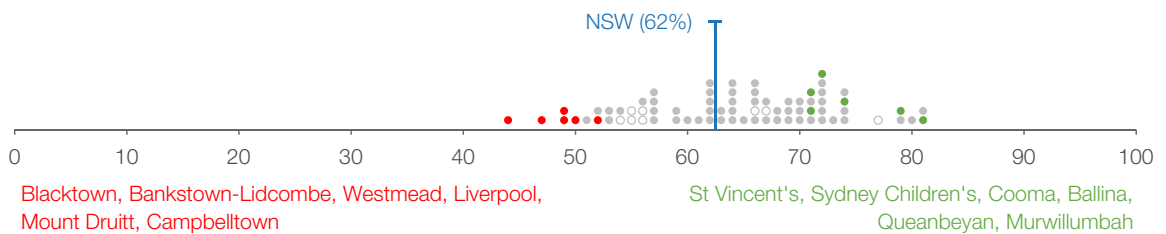
”

In the figures below, each dot represents an individual ED's result. After accounting for patient characteristics, EDs whose results are significantly different from NSW are listed below the graph in order from lowest to highest. Detailed results for all hospitals are available in Healthcare Observer and the supplementary data tables at bhi.nsw.gov.au

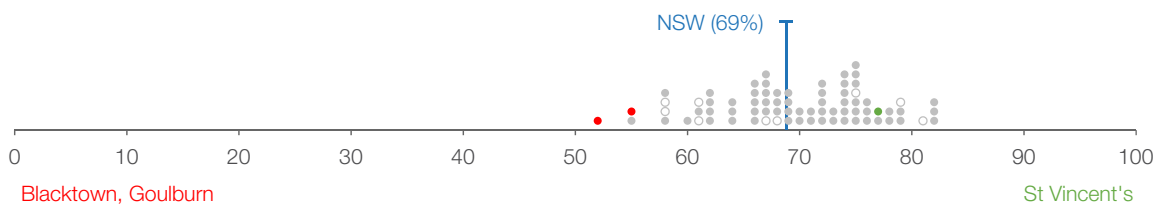
Figure 2 **Percentage of patients in each emergency department who selected the most positive response option, 2019–20**

ED result relative to NSW: ● Significantly lower ● Not significantly different ● Significantly higher ○ Interpret with caution

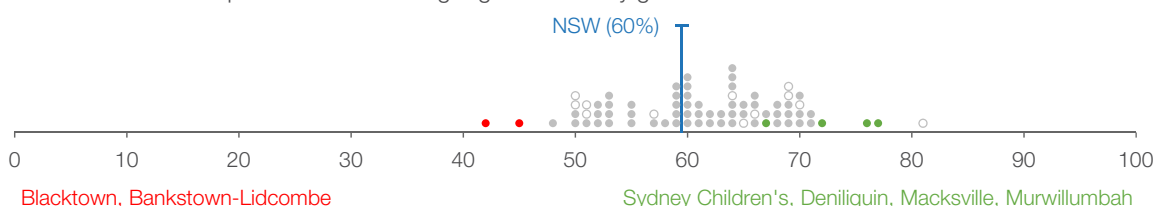
a. Overall, care in the hospital was 'very good'



b. Would rate ED health professionals as 'very good'



c. Rated ED health professionals working together as 'very good'



Note: An ED is noted as having a result that is significantly higher or significantly lower than the NSW result for a question after differences in patient characteristics (age, sex, education and language spoken at home) have been taken into account. Due to greater variability in ED results with fewer respondents, EDs marked as 'Interpret with caution' are not compared with the NSW result.

Patient-centred care

Patients shared their experiences of a range of aspects of their care and treatment in the ED, including how health professionals treated them and if they were given enough privacy.

More than eight in 10 patients (86%) said they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity in the ED (Figure 3a). Across EDs, results ranged from 74% to 94% (Figure 4a).

Eight in 10 patients (80%) said they were 'always' given enough privacy while they were in the ED (Figure 3b).

Almost nine in 10 patients (87%) said ED health professionals were 'always' polite and courteous (Figure 3c).

Of the 51% of patients who said they experienced pain, more than six in 10 (64%) said ED health professionals 'definitely' did everything they could to help manage their pain. This was up from 61% in 2018–19 (data not shown).

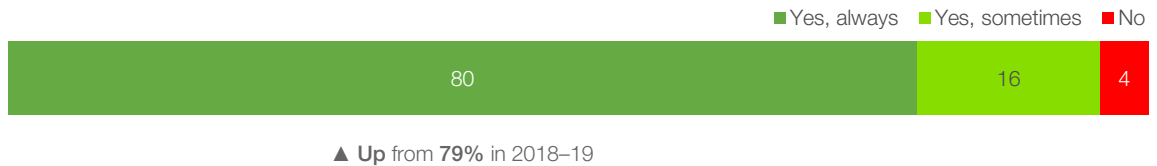
Seven in 10 patients (70%) said the treatment area in the ED was 'very clean'. This was up from 67% in 2018–19 (data not shown).

Figure 3 Percentage of patients in NSW, all response options, 2019–20

a. Did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity while you were in the ED?



b. Were you given enough privacy during your visit to the ED?



c. Were the ED health professionals polite and courteous?



Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Best part of care...

“

Everyone communicated clearly with me and made me feel safe and involved in my own treatment. All side effects of medications were explained.

”



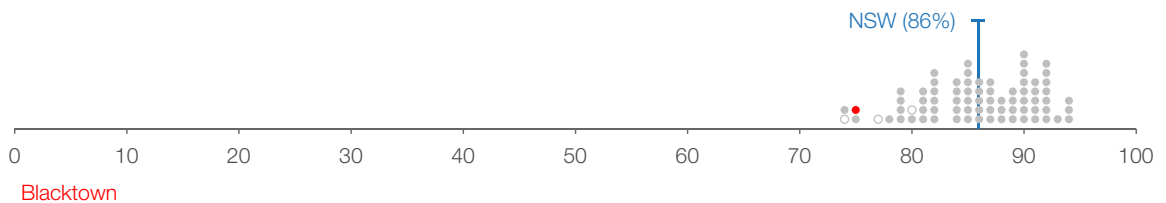
More than six in 10 patients (64%) said hospital staff 'definitely' did everything they could to manage their pain

Up from 61% in 2018-19

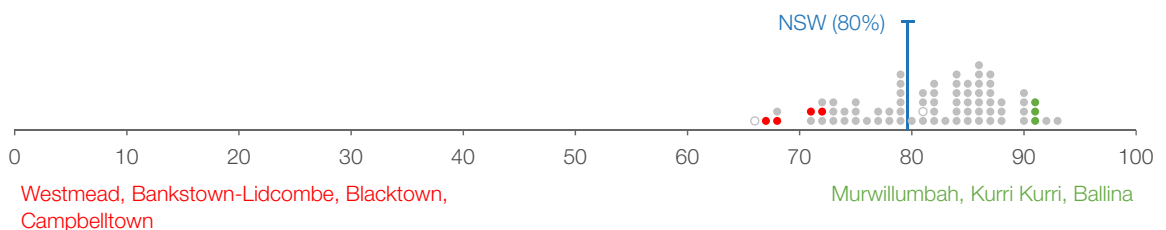
Figure 4 Percentage of patients in each emergency department who selected the most positive response option, 2019-20

ED result relative to NSW: ● Significantly lower ● Not significantly different ● Significantly higher ○ Interpret with caution

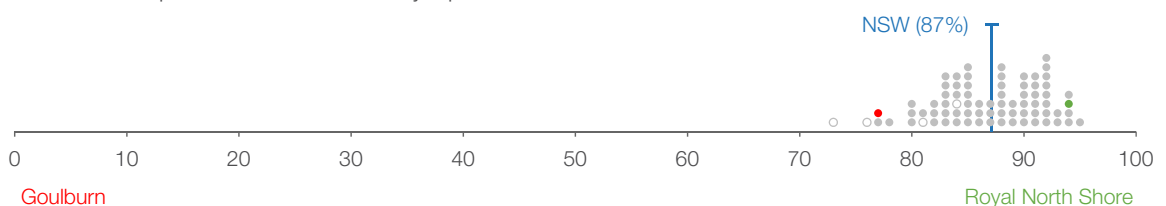
a. 'Always' treated with respect and dignity while in the ED



b. 'Always' given enough privacy during visit to the ED



c. ED health professionals were 'always' polite and courteous



Note: An ED is noted as having a result that is significantly higher or significantly lower than the NSW result for a question after differences in patient characteristics (age, sex, education and language spoken at home) have been taken into account. Due to greater variability in ED results with fewer respondents, EDs marked as 'Interpret with caution' are not compared with the NSW result.

Patient engagement

When they are kept informed and involved in decisions about their care, patients feel more engaged and supported which can contribute to better health outcomes.

Around eight in 10 patients (81%) said ED health professionals 'always' explained things in a way they could understand (Figure 5a).

Almost all patients (95%) said they needed information about their condition or treatment. Of these patients, more than eight in 10 (86%) said they were given the 'right amount' of information about their condition or treatment (Figure 5b). Across EDs, results ranged from 75% to 97% (Figure 6b).

More than nine in 10 patients (94%) said they wanted to be involved in decisions about their care and treatment. Of these patients, more than six in 10 (65%) said they were 'definitely' involved as much as they wanted to be (Figure 5c).

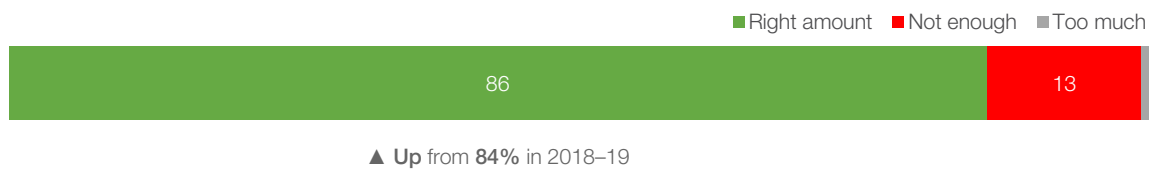
More than one in 10 patients (14%) said that, on arrival, they did not receive enough information from ED staff about what to expect during their visit (data not shown).

Figure 5 Percentage of patients in NSW, all response options, 2019–20

a. Did the ED health professionals explain things in a way you could understand?



b. During your ED visit, how much information about your condition or treatment was given to you?*



c. Were you involved, as much as you wanted to be, in decisions about your care and treatment?*



* Based on responses of 15,791 patients (95%), excluding those who said they did not need information.

** Based on responses of 15,646 patients (94%), excluding those who did not want or need, or were too unwell to be involved in decisions about, their care and treatment.

Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

More than one in 10 patients (14%) said that, on arrival, they did not receive enough information about what to expect during their visit



What could improve...

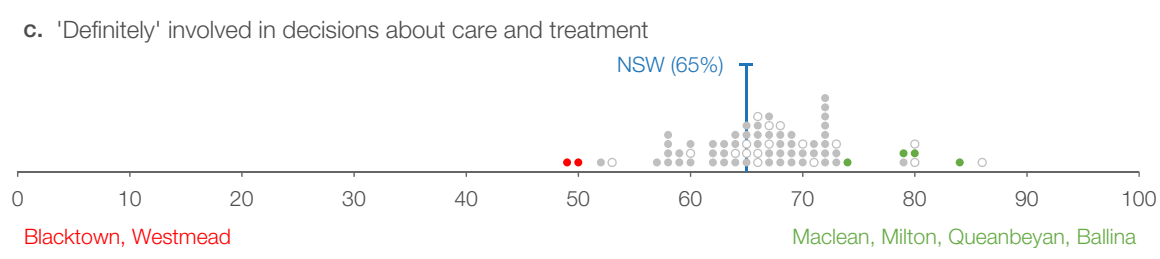
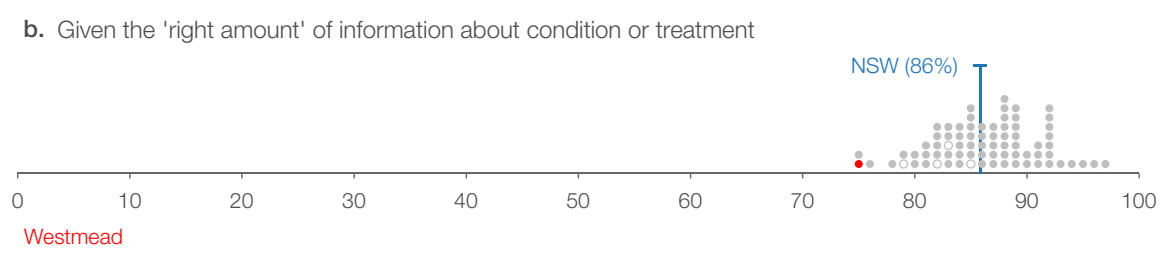
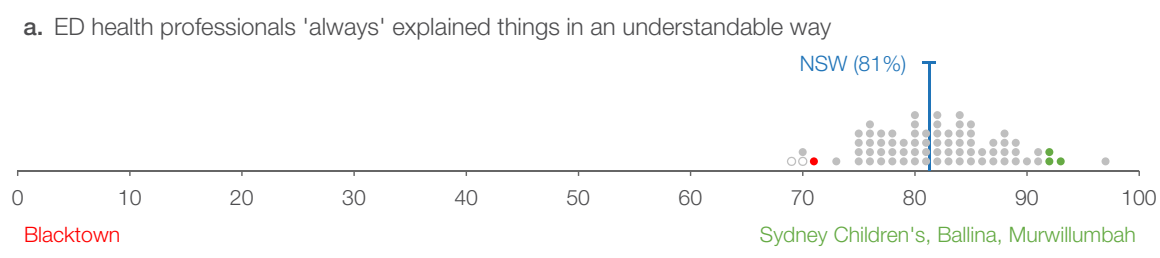
“

The doctor who saw us initially in the ED spoke to us and then left us alone for a very long time. No one came back to us to explain the delay.

”

Figure 6 Percentage of patients in each emergency department who selected the most positive response option, 2019–20

ED result relative to NSW: ● Significantly lower ● Not significantly different ● Significantly higher ○ Interpret with caution



Note: An ED is noted as having a result that is significantly higher or significantly lower than the NSW result for a question after differences in patient characteristics (age, sex, education and language spoken at home) have been taken into account. Due to greater variability in ED results with fewer respondents, EDs marked as 'Interpret with caution' are not compared with the NSW result.

Experiences at discharge and patient outcomes

The survey also captured patients' experiences at discharge and outcomes after leaving the ED.

Around nine in 10 patients (92%) said they wanted to be involved in decisions about their discharge from the ED. Of these patients, around seven in 10 (71%) said they 'definitely' felt involved (Figure 7a). Across EDs, results ranged from 57% to 93% (Figure 8a).

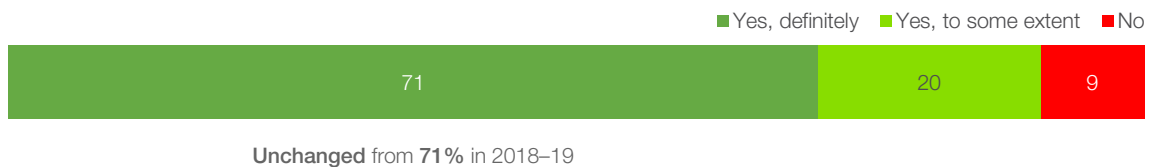
Almost all patients (95%) said they needed information on how to manage their care at home. Of these patients, around seven in 10 (71%) said they were 'definitely' given enough information about how to manage their care when they left the ED (Figure 7b).

More than eight in 10 patients (84%) said ED staff told them who to contact if they were worried about their condition or treatment after they left the hospital (Figure 7c).

Patients may experience complications or problems during or shortly after their visit to hospital. Almost one in 10 patients (9%) said they experienced at least one complication or problem related to their stay. Of these patients, more than six in 10 (65%) said the impact was 'very serious' (21%) or 'fairly serious' (44%). Around three in 10 patients (31%) said hospital staff had not been open with them about the complication or problem (data not shown).

Figure 7 Percentage of discharged patients in NSW, all response options, 2019–20

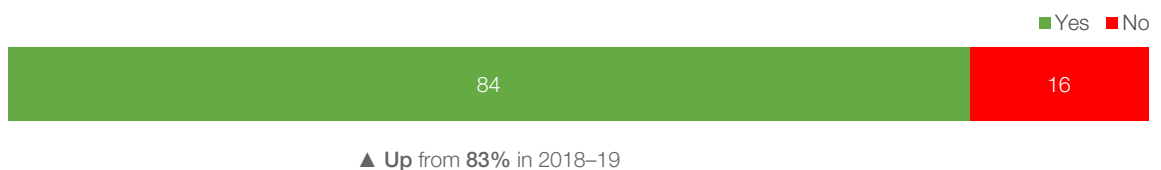
a. Did you feel involved in decisions about your discharge from the ED?*



b. Thinking about when you left the ED, were you given enough information about how to manage your care at home?***



c. Did ED staff tell you who to contact if you were worried about your condition or treatment after you left hospital?



* Based on responses from 10,178 patients (92%), excluding those who did not want or need to be involved in decisions about discharge.

** Based on responses from 10,484 patients (95%), excluding those who said they did not need information about how to manage care at home.

Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

What could improve...

“

I would have liked to have been given advice about wound management... and what to watch out for regarding infection. I ended up with cellulitis.

”

Of the 9% of patients who said they experienced a problem or complication related to their stay...



41%

said staff were 'completely' open with them about it

21%

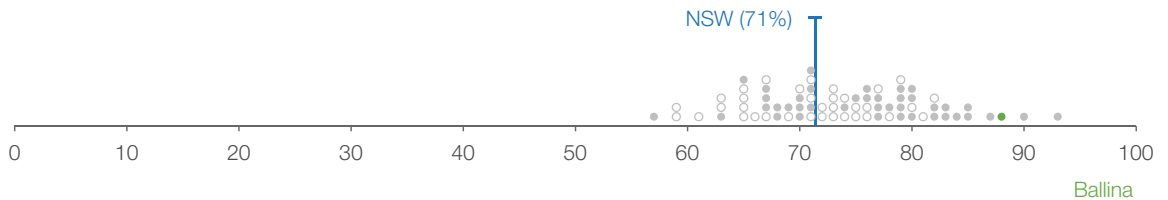
said its impact was 'very serious'

Figure 8

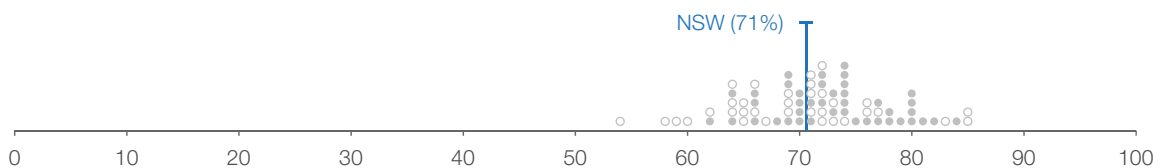
Percentage of patients in each emergency department who selected the most positive response option, 2019–20

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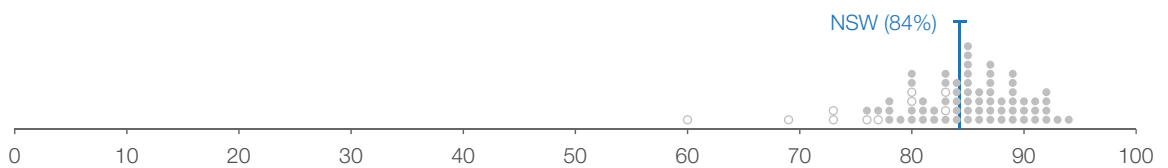
a. 'Definitely' felt involved in decisions about discharge



b. 'Definitely' given enough information about how to manage care at home[‡]



c. Told who to contact about condition or treatment after leaving hospital[‡]



[‡]There were no EDs that had a significantly higher or lower result than NSW for this measure.

Note: An ED is noted as having a result that is significantly higher or significantly lower than the NSW result for a question after differences in patient characteristics (age, sex, education and language spoken at home) have been taken into account. Due to greater variability in ED results with fewer respondents, EDs marked as 'Interpret with caution' are not compared with the NSW result.

Healthcare Observer

Healthcare Observer is the Bureau of Health Information (BHI's) online interactive data portal which lets you explore and download information about the performance of the NSW healthcare system.

Full results from the Emergency Department Patient Survey 2019–20 are available at bhi.nsw.gov.au/Healthcare_Observer



Adult Admitted Patient Survey



Emergency Department Patient Survey



Outpatient Cancer Clinics Survey



Admitted Children and Young Patients Survey



Maternity Care Survey



Rural Hospital Adult Admitted Patient Survey



Rural Hospital Emergency Care Patient Survey

NSW Patient Survey Program

Each month we ask thousands of people in NSW to tell us about their recent experience with the public healthcare system as part of the NSW Patient Survey Program.

The surveys ask people questions about different aspects of their care such as accessibility and timeliness, the physical environment of the hospital, safety and hygiene, communication and information, and whether they were treated with respect and dignity.

Further information about our surveys can be found at bhi.nsw.gov.au/nsw_patient_survey_program

About the Bureau of Health Information

BHI is a board-governed organisation that publishes independent reports and information about the performance of the healthcare system in NSW.

We aim to provide the community, health professionals and policy makers with information that enhances visibility and understanding of the performance of the healthcare system, in order to inform actions to improve healthcare and strengthen accountability.

State Health Publication Number: (BHI) 210174

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The conclusions in this report are those of BHI and no official endorsement by the NSW Minister for Health, the NSW Ministry of Health or any other NSW public health organisation is intended or should be inferred.



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