



Aboriginal people's experiences of hospital care

More than 1,000 Aboriginal people shared their experiences of care in emergency departments and as admitted patients in NSW public hospitals.

Listening to what Aboriginal people have to say about their experiences of care is an important step in helping to ensure they receive high-quality healthcare, tailored to their needs. The Bureau of Health Information (BHI's) 2016 report, *Patient Perspectives: Hospital care for Aboriginal people*, found Aboriginal patients reported less positive experiences than non-Aboriginal patients for interpersonal aspects of care, such as measures of respect and communication.

Building on that work, this Snapshot report highlights key NSW-level findings for 459 Aboriginal people who shared their experiences of care in the *Emergency Department Patient Survey 2017–18* and 550 Aboriginal people who shared their experiences of care in the *Adult Admitted Patient Survey 2017*. The results will provide valuable information to help the health system better understand the needs of Aboriginal people.

Emergency department experiences of care

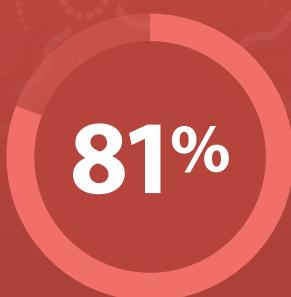
In 2017–18, more than half of Aboriginal (53%) and non-Aboriginal (59%) patients rated the overall care they received in emergency departments (EDs)

as 'very good'. When the two groups' experiences of care were compared across 62 measures, results were similar for 32 measures. Aboriginal patients reported significantly less positive experiences for 29 measures, and significantly more positive experiences for one measure. Differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patients were most pronounced for measures of respect, interaction with patients' families, and monitoring patients' conditions while they wait.

Admitted patient experiences of care

More than six in 10 Aboriginal patients (61%) and non-Aboriginal patients (65%) rated their overall hospital care as 'very good' in 2017. Across 64 measures, results were similar between both groups for 36 measures. Aboriginal patients had significantly less positive experiences for 26 measures, and significantly more positive experiences for two measures. Differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patients were most pronounced for measures of communication with patients, respect, and interactions with patients' families.

Overall, care was rated as 'very good' or 'good' by



of Aboriginal patients
in emergency departments



of Aboriginal patients
admitted to hospital



Experiences of emergency department care

The first encounter many people and their family members have with a hospital is at the ED. Providing a positive ED experience for Aboriginal people is an opportunity to form a good first impression of hospital care.

Almost 16,000 patients shared their experiences of care in 82 large EDs in 2017–18, including 459 Aboriginal people. The distribution of these Aboriginal respondents across age, sex, residential location and urgency category closely reflects hospital records for all Aboriginal people who received ED care in 2017–18. This enhances the validity of information on experiences from the survey.

Overall ratings are an important measure of patients' satisfaction with their experiences of care. Around five in 10 Aboriginal patients (53%) and almost six in 10

non-Aboriginal patients (59%) rated their ED care as 'very good' (Figure 1a).

While the majority of patients said they were treated respectfully, Aboriginal patients were significantly less likely to say they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity – 75% compared with 85% of non-Aboriginal patients (Figure 1b).

More than seven in 10 Aboriginal patients (74%) said ED professionals 'always' explained things in a way they could understand, significantly lower than the result for non-Aboriginal patients (81%) (Figure 1c).

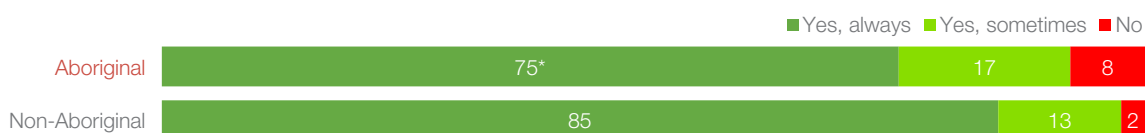
For more information about the profile of the survey respondents and analysis methods, see the technical supplement.

Figure 1 **Percentage of emergency department patients, for all response categories, by Aboriginality, 2017–18**

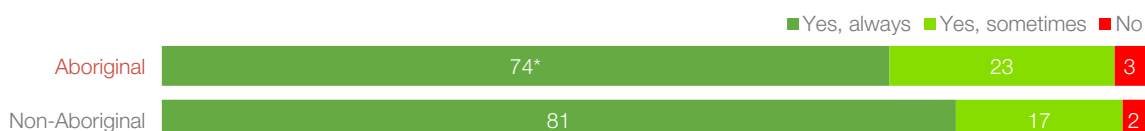
a. Overall, how would you rate the care you received while in the ED?



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



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



*Result for Aboriginal patients significantly different to result for non-Aboriginal patients after adjusting for age and sex.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.



of Aboriginal patients said their family or carer 'definitely' had the opportunity to talk to ED staff

(compared with 68% of non-Aboriginal patients)



Best part of care...

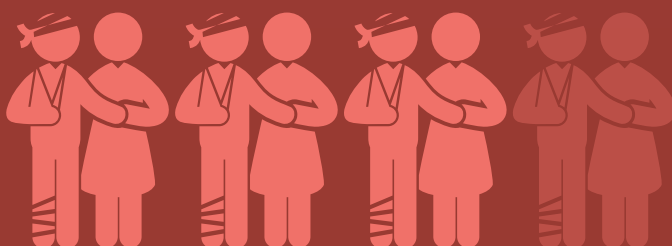
“ I was kept well informed at all times...
(Staff) also allowed my family to come in and check
that I was ok as they were very worried. ”



Three in four Aboriginal patients

said they were
'always' treated with
respect and dignity

(75% compared with
85% of non-Aboriginal patients)



What could improve...

“
The way staff talk to
patients. I couldn't
breathe and was told
by a nurse that I was
fine. Body language was
negative... and I felt like
I wasn't important and I
was wasting their time.

”



Differences in experiences of emergency department care

The survey results show Aboriginal patients often reported less positive experiences in EDs than non-Aboriginal patients. Differences in reported experiences between population groups may reflect differences in the quality of care, or in the way groups tend to respond to survey questions. In either case, awareness of differences in Aboriginal patients' experiences may help healthcare professionals tailor their care.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patients' experiences were compared across a selection of 62 measures. Results were similar for 32 measures. Aboriginal patients reported significantly less positive experiences for 29 measures and significantly more positive experiences for one measure – staff openness about problems or complications.

The most pronounced differences occurred for experiences regarding respect, interaction with patients' families, and monitoring patients' conditions while they wait.

For example, almost six in 10 Aboriginal patients (58%) said their family or carer 'definitely' had the chance to talk to ED staff if they wanted to, compared with almost seven in 10 non-Aboriginal patients (68%) (Figure 2).

There were many significant differences between the two groups for questions focusing on interpersonal aspects of care. In contrast, questions about directly observable measures, such as experience on arrival and cleanliness of the ED, were answered similarly by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patients.

The percentage point difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patients' experiences is shaded in Figure 2 when that gap is significant, after taking into account variation between age and sex profiles of the two groups. More information and results for 62 measures are provided in the supplementary data tables.

We compared the experiences of ED care for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patients across 62 measures

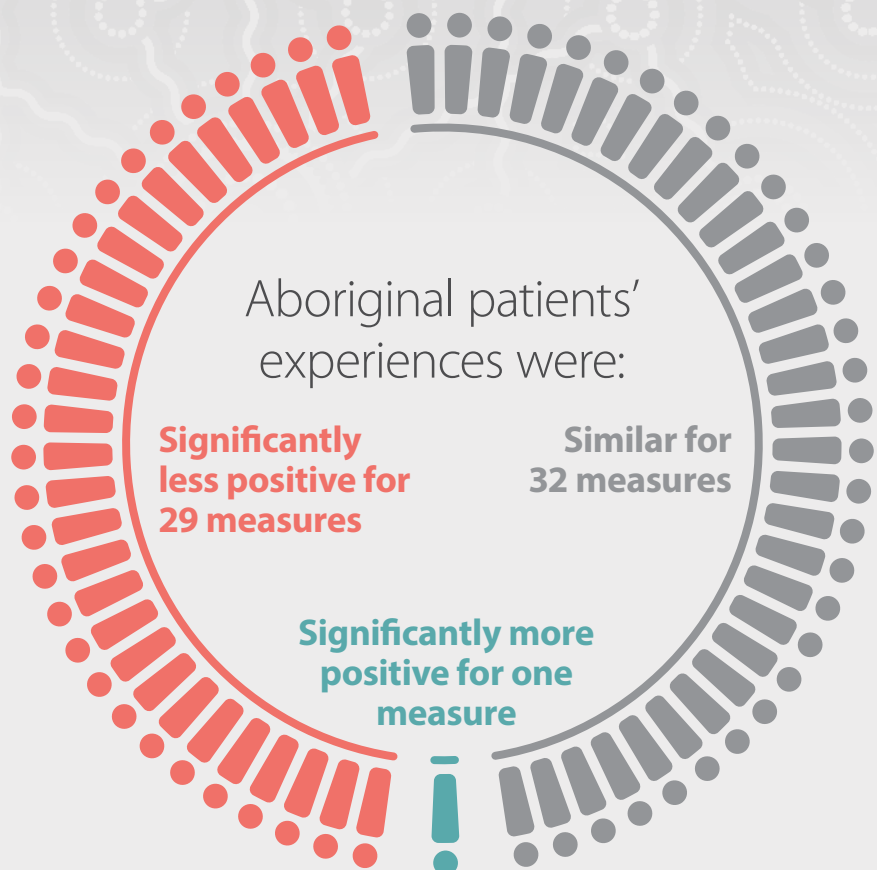


Figure 2 Summary of differences in emergency department patient-reported experiences of hospital care for select measures, by Aboriginality, 2017–18



Notes:

Shaded gap indicates result for Aboriginal patients significantly different to result for non-Aboriginal patients after adjusting for age and sex.

A selection of key measures is included above. See supplementary data tables for results for all 62 measures, and information about who responded to each question.



Experiences of hospital care

Patients and their carers play a crucial role in assessing how health services are performing and guiding efforts in improvement.

In 2017, more than 20,000 adults shared their experiences of care as admitted patients in 72 large NSW public hospitals, including 550 Aboriginal people. The distribution of these Aboriginal respondents across age, sex and residential location closely reflects hospital records for all Aboriginal adults who were admitted to hospital in 2017. This enhances the validity of information on experiences from the survey.

More than six in 10 Aboriginal patients (61%) and non-Aboriginal patients (65%) rated their overall hospital care as 'very good' (Figure 3a).

While the majority of patients said they were treated respectfully, Aboriginal patients were significantly less likely to report 'always' being treated with respect and dignity – 77% compared with 86% of non-Aboriginal patients (Figure 3b).

Around seven in 10 Aboriginal patients (73%) said health professionals 'always' explained things in a way they could understand, significantly lower than the result for non-Aboriginal patients (83%) (Figure 3c).

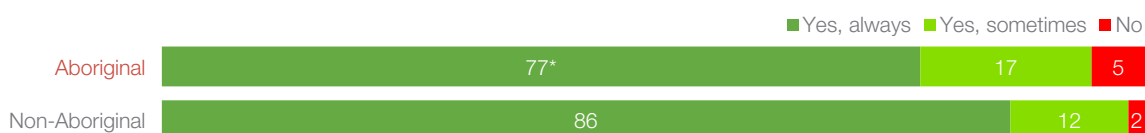
For more information about the profile of the survey respondents and analysis methods, see the technical supplement.

Figure 3 Percentage of adult admitted patients, for all response categories, by Aboriginality, 2017

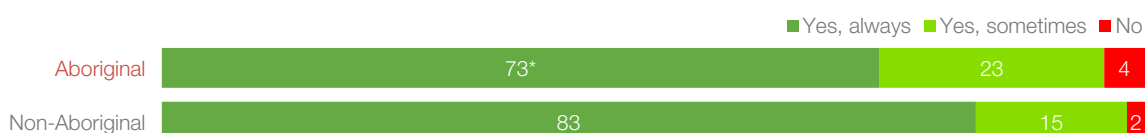
a. Overall, how would you rate the care you received while in hospital?



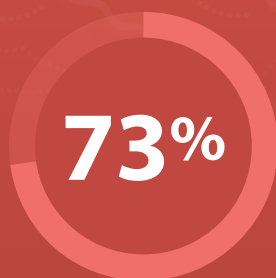
b. Did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity while you were in the hospital?



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



*Result for Aboriginal patients significantly different to result for non-Aboriginal patients after adjusting for age and sex.



of Aboriginal patients said they 'always' had confidence and trust in the doctors treating them

(compared with 82% of non-Aboriginal patients)



Best part of care...

“ The doctors were very efficient and friendly...they made me feel that I was relaxed, and I had confidence in them. They kept me well informed at all times. ”

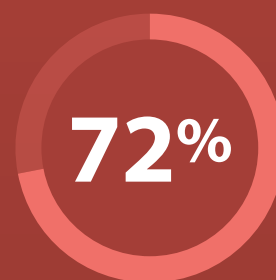


What could improve...

“

My husband was left waiting for five hours not knowing my status and if I was in recovery... It was very stressful for us both.

”



of Aboriginal patients said their family/carers were given the 'right amount' of information about their condition

(compared with 82% of non-Aboriginal patients)



Differences in experiences of hospital care

The experiences of 550 Aboriginal respondents to the *Adult Admitted Patient Survey 2017* were compared with responses from the 19,698 non-Aboriginal patients across a selection of 64 survey measures.

Results were similar for 36 measures. Aboriginal patients' experiences were significantly less positive for 26 measures and significantly more positive for two – quality of the food and length of delays at discharge.

The most pronounced differences occurred for experiences regarding respect, communication and engagement with families, with gaps of around 10 percentage points. For example, around seven in 10 Aboriginal patients (72%) said their family member or carer was given the 'right amount' of information compared with around eight in 10 non-Aboriginal

patients (82%) (Figure 4). Additionally, more than six in 10 Aboriginal patients (65%) said doctors 'always' answered questions in a way they could understand, compared with more than seven in 10 non-Aboriginal patients (76%).

In contrast, there were no significant differences in experience for measures of comfort, cleanliness or overall ratings of care.

The percentage point difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patients' experiences is shaded in Figure 4 when that gap is significant, after taking into account variation between age and sex profiles of the two groups. More information and results for 64 measures are provided in the supplementary data tables.

We compared the responses of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people admitted to hospital across 64 measures

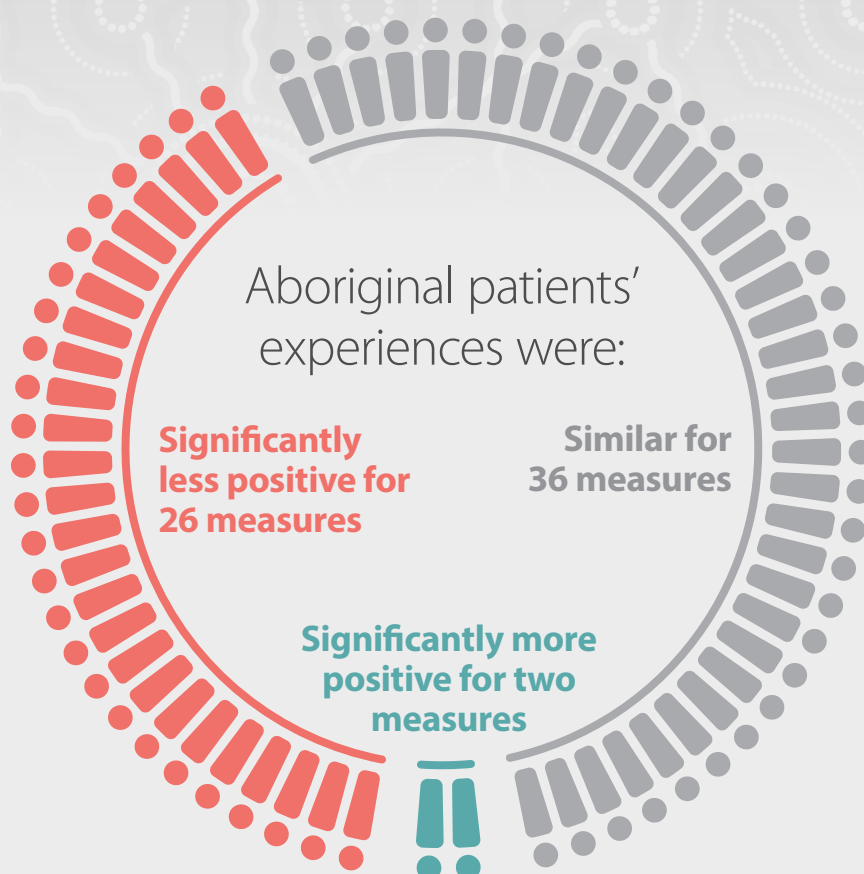


Figure 4 Summary of differences in adult admitted patient-reported experiences of hospital care for select measures, by Aboriginality, NSW, 2017–18



Notes:

Shaded gap indicates result for Aboriginal patients significantly different to result for non-Aboriginal patients after adjusting for age and sex.

A selection of key measures is included above. See supplementary data tables for results for all 64 measures, and information about who responded to each question.

What's new in Healthcare Observer?

With the release of this Snapshot report, Aboriginal people's experiences of care from the *Emergency Department Patient Survey 2017–18* and the *Adult Admitted Patient Survey 2017* can be accessed on BHI's interactive data portal, Healthcare Observer.

Detailed results by Aboriginality from these surveys are reported at NSW level for all measures in Healthcare Observer. Survey results can also be explored by age, sex, rurality and other patient characteristics.

For previously published results by Aboriginality, Healthcare Observer includes results at local health district and hospital level from the *Adult Admitted Patient Survey 2014*, when a large sample of Aboriginal patients were surveyed.

BHI is once again surveying a large number of Aboriginal patients in 2019 and will be able to report more detailed results at a local level in 2020.

Please visit: bhi.nsw.gov.au/Healthcare_Observer





Collecting more information about Aboriginal patients' experiences of care

The Bureau of Health Information and the Centre for Aboriginal Health are working together to collect more information about the experiences and outcomes of care for Aboriginal people admitted to NSW public hospitals.

The Adult Admitted Patient Survey and Maternity Care Survey ask people who have recently been admitted to a NSW public hospital for feedback about their experiences of care. These surveys are mailed out to people about three months after the end of their hospital stay. For the first time, every patient who identifies as Aboriginal during a hospital stay in 2019 will be invited to provide feedback on their admitted patient or maternity care experience.

The results of these surveys will provide hospitals with valuable information about what they are doing well and where they can improve care to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

For more information, see the Aboriginal patient experience page on BHI's website:
bhi.nsw.gov.au/Aboriginal-patient-experience

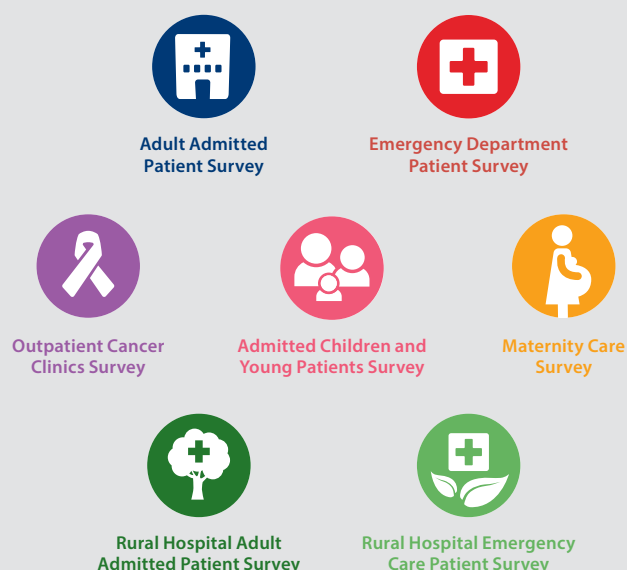
The original artwork on this report was created by Marcus Lee, a proud Aboriginal descendant of the Karajarri people.

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.

Results from our surveys can be found via our website:
bhi.nsw.gov.au/nsw_patient_survey_program



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

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.



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