

Snapshot



# Outpatient Cancer Clinics

Results from the 2021 patient survey





We heard from more than **8,000 people** about their experiences of care at NSW **outpatient cancer clinics** in 2021



Outpatient cancer clinics provide important care to patients, from initial diagnosis through to treatment and follow-up care.

The results of the Outpatient Cancer Clinics Survey 2021 reflect the experiences of 8,323 patients who attended one of 23 urban and 19 large rural NSW facilities housing outpatient cancer clinics in November 2021, including three private facilities. While a facility may house several individual clinics, results are reported at the facility level.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant changes in how cancer care was delivered. Survey respondents engaged with the clinics during an outbreak of COVID-19 in NSW, at a time when safe, high-quality care involving patients as partners was particularly important.

Outpatient cancer clinics provide treatments including chemotherapy, radiation therapy and surgery. Almost two in 10 respondents (17%) received care for reasons other than cancer.

The 2021 survey also asked patients about their experiences of virtual care with a hospital or outpatient clinic over a 12-month period.

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) partnered with the Cancer Institute NSW to deliver the survey.

Results for the 40 facilities where enough responses were received to report at a facility level are available in supplementary data tables and on the BHI Data Portal at [bhi.nsw.gov.au](https://bhi.nsw.gov.au)

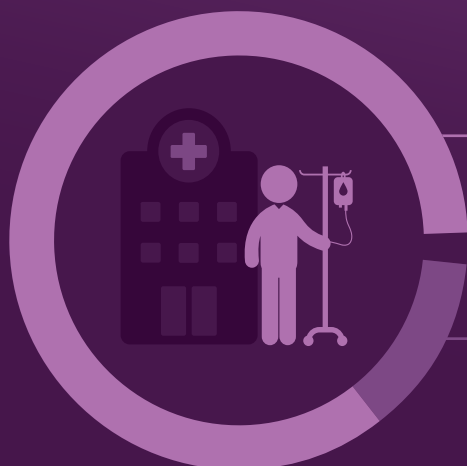
**Overall ratings of care:** Almost all patients (98%) said, overall, the care they received was ‘very good’ (85%) or ‘good’ (13%). When asked to rate how well health professionals worked together, almost eight in 10 patients (77%) said ‘very good’ (pages 4–5).

**Person-centred care:** Almost eight in 10 patients (79%) said they were ‘definitely’ involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their care and treatment. Nine in 10 patients (90%) said they did not receive conflicting information about their condition or treatment from health professionals (pages 6–7).

**Experiences in rural and urban facilities:** Patients in both rural and urban facilities gave mostly positive ratings of their care. For the majority of questions, there were no significant differences in experiences between the two groups, including in overall ratings of care (pages 8–9).

**Experiences of virtual care:** Of those patients who had a virtual care appointment with a hospital or outpatient clinic in the 12 months before taking part in the survey, around nine in 10 (91%) said their virtual care was ‘very good’ or ‘good’ (pages 10–11).

Overall, almost all patients (**98%**) rated their care at cancer clinics as



‘very good’ **85%**

‘good’ **13%**



# Overall ratings of care

Overall ratings of care reflect general measures of patient satisfaction about their outpatient cancer clinic experience. Patients' feedback can guide improvements in care, inform innovations to services and contribute to more positive experiences for people accessing care.

Almost all patients (98%) said, overall, the care they received was 'very good' (85%) or 'good' (13%) (Figure 1a). For patients who said 'very good', results ranged from 67% to 97% across facilities (Figure 2a).

More than eight in 10 patients (84%) said their care was 'very well organised' (Figure 1b). Across facilities, results ranged from 69% to 97% (Figure 2b).

When asked to rate how well health professionals worked together, almost eight in 10 patients (77%) said 'very good' (Figure 1c). Results ranged from 64% to 90% across facilities (Figure 2c).

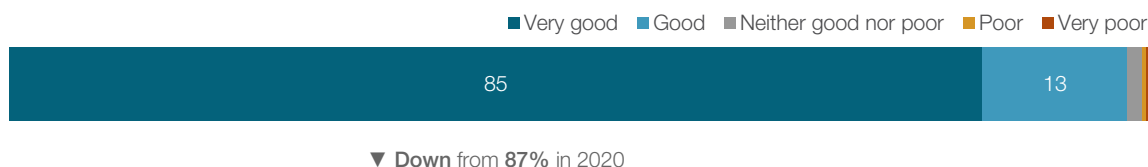
Additional analysis compared the experiences of the 916 (15%) respondents who speak a language other than English at home with those of English speakers.

To ensure fairer comparisons between the two groups, patient characteristics (age, gender, education level, and cancer type/non-cancer patient) were taken in to account when identifying significant differences. This analysis found that these patients reported significantly less positive experiences across a number of measures compared with patients who speak English at home.

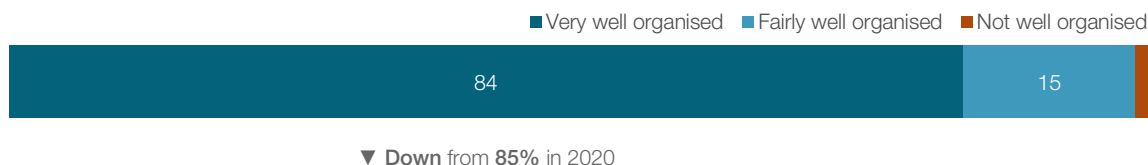
Detailed results for survey questions by patient groups, including language spoken at home, are available on the BHI data portal at [bhi.nsw.gov.au/data-portal](https://bhi.nsw.gov.au/data-portal)

Figure 1 Percentage of patients in NSW, all response options, 2021

a. Overall, how would you rate the care you received from the clinic?



b. How well organised was the care you received from the clinic?



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



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

Patients who speak a language other than English at home were less likely to say their care was 'very well organised'



Best part of care...

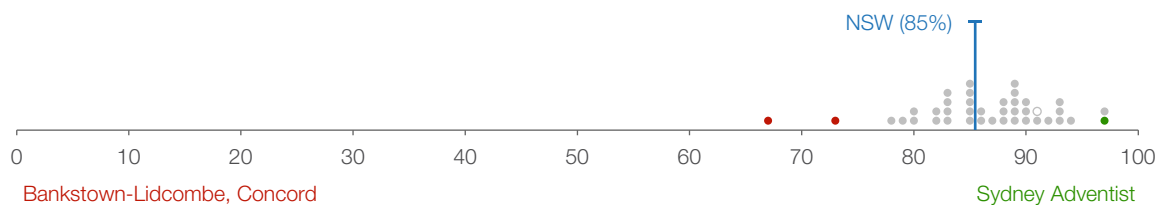
“  
I am grateful to have a team to support me. All of my caregivers, medical and oncology staff have been wonderful.  
”

In the figures below, each dot represents an individual facility's result. To enable fairer comparison across facilities, BHI has taken into account differences in patient characteristics (age, gender, education level, language spoken at home and cancer type/non-cancer patient) at each facility. Facilities with results significantly different from NSW are listed below the graph in order from lowest to highest. Detailed results are available in supplementary data tables and on the BHI Data Portal at [bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://bhi.nsw.gov.au)

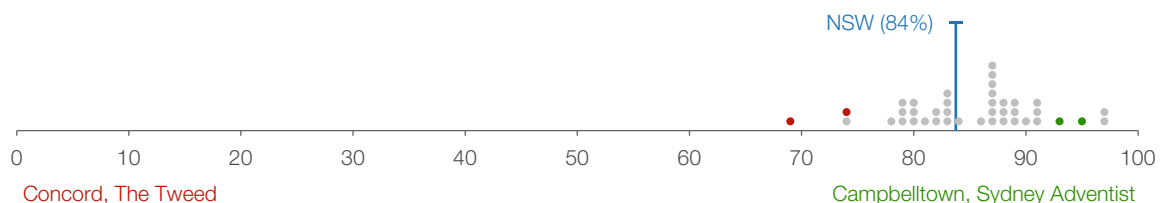
Figure 2 Percentage of patients in each facility who selected the most positive response option, 2021

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

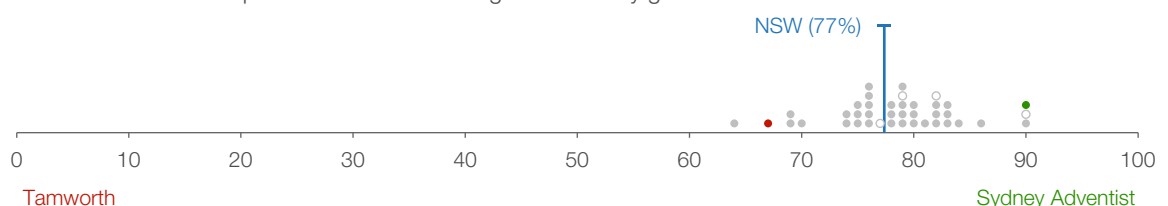
a. Overall, care in the clinic was 'very good'



b. Care was 'very well organised'



c. Rated how health professionals worked together as 'very good'



Note: Due to greater variability in facility results with fewer respondents, facilities marked 'Interpret with caution' are not compared with the NSW result.

# Person-centred care

Involving people as partners in their own care, to the extent they choose, is integral to high-quality care.

Almost eight in 10 patients (79%) said they were 'definitely' involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their care and treatment. Across facilities, results ranged from 70% to 91% (Figure 4a).

Nine in 10 patients (90%) said they did not receive conflicting information about their condition or treatment from health professionals (Figure 3b). However, patients who speak a language other

than English at home were significantly more likely to say they received conflicting information (23%) compared with patients who speak English at home (8%).

Nearly all patients (97%) said they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity (Figure 3c). Across facilities, results ranged from 91% to 99% (Figure 4c).

Figure 3 Percentage of patients in NSW, all response options, 2021

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



b. Did you ever receive conflicting information about your condition or treatment from the health professionals?



c. Were you treated with respect and dignity during your appointment?



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

## What could improve...

“

When I called, I was instructed to take my concerns to my GP. Several calls later, I was eventually put in contact with a doctor who was able to clarify my concerns.

”



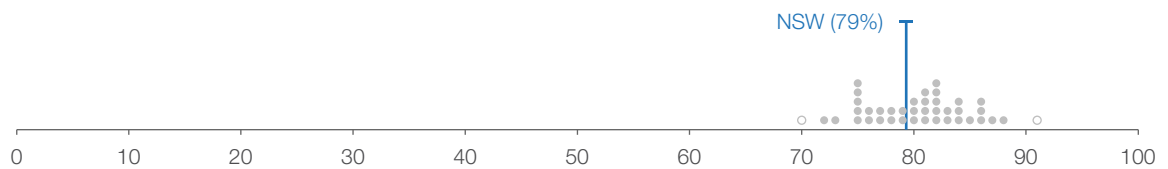
Around two in 10 patients (23%) who speak a language other than English at home said they received conflicting information

Compared with 8% who speak English

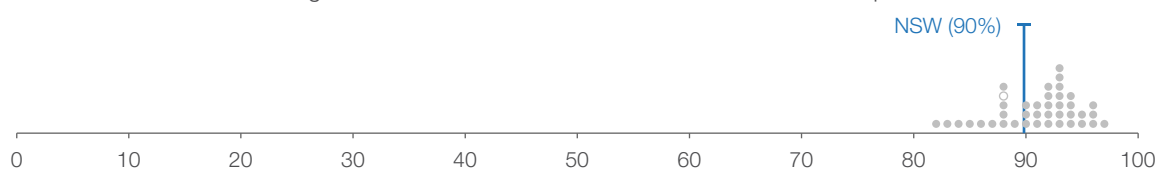
Figure 4 Percentage of patients in each facility who selected the most positive response option, 2021

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

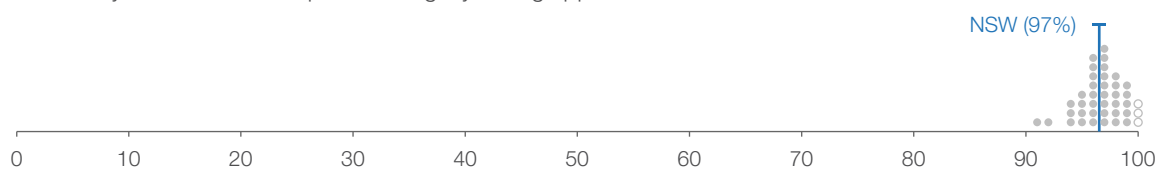
a. 'Definitely' felt involved in decisions about care and treatment\*



b. Did not receive conflicting information about condition or treatment from health professionals\*



c. 'Always' treated with respect and dignity during appointment\*



\* There were no facilities that had a significantly higher or lower result than NSW for this measure.

Note: A facility is noted as having a result that is significantly higher or lower than the NSW result for a question after differences in patient characteristics (age, gender, education level, language spoken at home and cancer type/non-cancer patient) have been taken into account. Due to greater variability in facility results with fewer respondents, facilities marked 'Interpret with caution' are not compared with the NSW result.

# Experiences in rural and urban facilities

BHI conducted additional analyses for this Snapshot report to examine the experiences of the 5,085 outpatient cancer clinic patients who attended the 23 urban facilities included in this survey, and the 3,238 patients who attended the 19 larger rural facilities. Experiences were compared across the most positive response options.

Patients who attended rural and urban facilities gave mostly positive ratings of their care. For the majority of questions in the survey, there were no significant differences between rural and urban patients who selected the most positive response option. There were also no significant differences for questions related to overall satisfaction and outcomes.

However, patients who attended rural facilities reported significantly more positive experiences for several questions related to effective communication and a safe, comfortable environment.

For patients who needed a written care plan, those in urban facilities were significantly more likely to say they had one (41%) compared with rural facilities (35%). However, patients attending rural facilities were significantly more likely to say that they were asked about their preferences when developing their care plan (87%) compared with urban facilities (80%) (data not shown).

Patient characteristics (age, gender, education level, language spoken at home and cancer type/non-cancer patient) have been taken into account when identifying significant differences between urban and rural facilities' results. For more information, see the technical supplement. Detailed results for survey questions by patient groups, including rurality of facility, are available on the BHI Data Portal at [bhi.nsw.gov.au/data-portal](https://bhi.nsw.gov.au/data-portal)

We compared experiences of care in rural and urban facilities across 45 measures







“

Being able to have my treatment locally without the need for travel is a huge benefit to me.

”

“

I didn't have to go away from my home town to have my treatment and all the staff are so lovely and understanding.

”

# Experiences of virtual care

The use of virtual care has continued to expand in recent years, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this survey, 4,833 patients told us about their experiences of virtual care appointments (over the telephone or by video call) with hospital outpatient clinics.

More than six in 10 patients (64%) said they had a virtual care appointment, for any reason, in the 12 months before they took part in the survey (data not shown). Around nine in 10 (91%) said, overall, the care they received was 'very good' or 'good' (Figure 5a).

Almost all patients (95%) said the care and treatment received through virtual care helped them (Figure 5b). More than eight in 10 patients (84%) said, if given the choice, they would 'definitely' (24%) or 'in some circumstances' (60%) use virtual care again (Figure 5c).

The most frequently cited benefits from virtual care were convenience (65%) and saving time (50%).

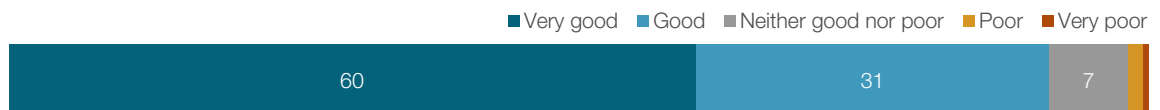
However, not all patients were positive about their virtual care experiences. Four in 10 (40%) said virtual care was not as good as in-person appointments (data not shown).

Patients in urban facilities and those who speak English at home tended to be more positive about their experiences of virtual care than patients in rural facilities and those who speak a language other than English.

Compared with patients who had only one virtual care appointment, patients who had more than five were more likely to say that virtual care benefitted them, that it was 'better' or 'about the same' as in-person appointments, and that the care and treatment received through virtual care helped them. After adjusting for selected patient characteristics, there was no association between the number of virtual care appointments received in the past 12 months and the overall rating of virtual care.

Figure 5 Percentage of patients in NSW, all response options, 2021

a. Overall, how would you rate the virtual care you received?\*



b. Did the care and treatment received through virtual care help you?\*



c. If given the choice, would you use virtual care again?\*



\* Based on the responses of 4,833 patients (64%) who provided feedback on virtual care appointments they had with hospital outpatient clinics in the 12 months prior to responding to the survey in early 2022.  
Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

## Patients who used virtual care in the past 12 months said...

It was convenient

**65%**

They saved time

**50%**

They got the right care at the right time

**33%**



### Best part of care...

“

During the COVID lockdown, I felt safer in my home rather than travelling hours for a visit to hospital. I was very grateful for telehealth calls.

”

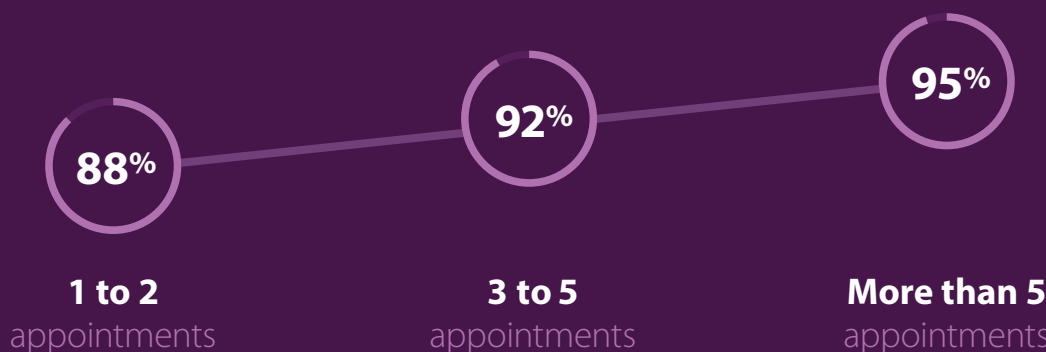
### What could improve...

“

My only issue was with my initial consult with my oncologist, which was virtual due to COVID. That felt very impersonal even though I understood the reasons.

”

## Patients who used virtual care more often were more likely to say it benefitted them

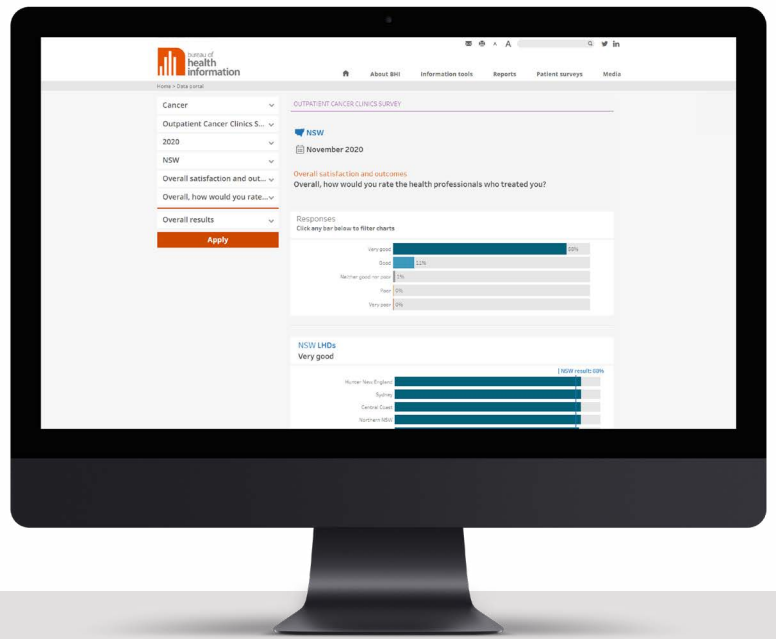




# Data Portal

The **BHI Data Portal** is part of a transition to a digital-first way of reporting healthcare performance results in NSW, making them more accessible and user friendly.

The new portal allows you to find and compare activity and performance, and patient survey results, including for the larger individual hospitals and local health districts.



Adult Admitted Patient Survey



Emergency Department Patient Survey



Outpatient Cancer Clinics Survey



Virtual Care 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 compassion, respect and kindness, involvement in decision-making, effective communication, and a safe, comfortable environment.

Further information about our surveys can be found at [bhi.nsw.gov.au/nsw\\_patient\\_survey\\_program](http://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.



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