

Snapshot



Maternity care

Results from the 2019 survey





We heard from almost
4,500 women about their
experiences of maternity care in
NSW public hospitals in 2019



Maternity care encompasses a range of women's health services including antenatal care, care during labour and birth, postnatal care in hospital and follow-up care at home.

A better understanding of how women experience the maternity care they receive can assist health professionals to identify where and how improvements can be made.

The results of the Maternity Care Survey 2019 reflect the experiences of 4,446 women who gave birth in one of 68 NSW public hospitals in 2019. Results for the 54 hospitals where enough responses were received to report at a hospital level are available in supplementary data tables and on BHI's interactive data portal, Healthcare Observer, at bhi.nsw.gov.au

This Snapshot report highlights key findings in relation to the experiences of women during each stage of their maternity journey in NSW public hospitals.

Experiences of antenatal care: Women received antenatal care from one or more providers (public hospital midwife/obstetrician, private midwife/obstetrician, or GP). More than eight in 10 women (86%) said the health professionals providing their antenatal care 'always' explained things in a way they could understand. Nine in 10 women (90%) said health professionals were 'always' polite and courteous and around eight in 10 women (83%)

said health professionals discussed the importance of healthy weight gain at their antenatal check-ups (pages 4–5).

Experiences of care during labour and birth:

Most women (94%) said overall, the care they received during labour and birth was 'very good' (76%) or 'good' (18%). Almost nine in 10 women (87%) said their birthing companion was 'definitely' involved as much as they wanted to be in the labour and birth. Nine in 10 women (90%) said they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity during their labour and birth (pages 6–7).

Follow-up care in hospital: Almost nine in 10 women (88%) said overall, the care they received in hospital after their baby was born was 'very good' (58%) or good (30%). Almost seven in 10 women (68%) said they 'always' got assistance or advice when they needed it and the same percentage said they did not receive conflicting advice from health professionals about feeding their baby (pages 8–9).

Aboriginal women's experiences: Every Aboriginal woman who gave birth in a NSW public hospital during 2019 was invited to provide feedback as part of this survey. This report highlights key NSW-level findings for the 283 Aboriginal women who responded to the survey. Around eight in 10 Aboriginal women (81%) felt they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity during their labour and birth (pages 10–15).

Overall, **94%** of women rated their care during labour and birth as



Experiences of antenatal care

Antenatal care consists of a series of regular appointments where pregnant women receive information, advice and health checks.

Women received antenatal care from one or more providers (public hospital midwife/obstetrician, private midwife/obstetrician, or GP). More than eight in 10 women (86%) said the health professionals providing their antenatal care 'always' explained things in a way they could understand (Figure 1a).

Nine in 10 women (90%) said health professionals were 'always' polite and courteous (Figure 1b) and around eight in 10 women (83%) said health professionals discussed the importance of healthy weight gain at their antenatal check-ups (Figure 1c).

Almost eight in 10 women (78%) said their antenatal care was provided by a public hospital. The vast

majority of these women (92%) received their antenatal care at the same hospital where they gave birth (data not shown).

Figure 2 shows there was variation across public hospitals in the experiences of these women. When compared with the NSW results for antenatal care from any provider, no public hospitals had a significantly higher or lower result (Figure 2).

Reporting of public hospital results for questions related to antenatal care is restricted to women who received care at the same hospital where they gave birth. Results for NSW include all respondents, regardless of where they received antenatal care.

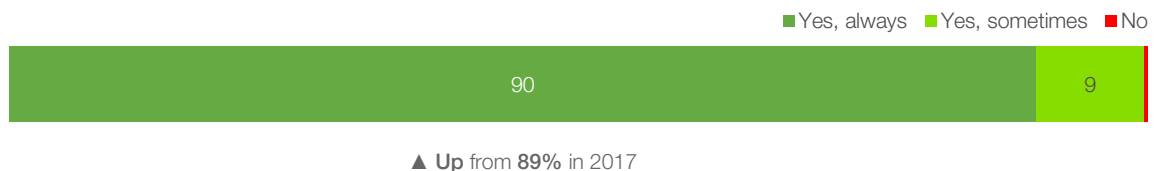
For more information on respondent characteristics, please see the supplementary data tables to this report at bhi.nsw.gov.au

Figure 1 Percentage of women in NSW (any provider), all response options, 2019

a. Did the health professionals providing your antenatal care explain things in a way you could understand?*



b. Were the health professionals providing your antenatal care polite and courteous?*



c. Did the health professionals discuss the importance of healthy weight gain with you at antenatal check-ups?*



*Based on the responses of 4,274 women (96%) who received antenatal care from any provider.
Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Around nine in 10 women said health professionals gave them advice during pregnancy about the risks of...



consuming alcohol

92%



exposure to tobacco smoke

92%

Best part of care...

“

The midwives were so kind, caring and supportive. I felt very respected by them and felt comfortable seeking their advice and assistance.

”

In the figures below, each dot represents an individual hospital's result. After accounting for patient characteristics, hospitals 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 survey's supplementary data tables at bhi.nsw.gov.au

Figure 2 Percentage of women in each hospital who selected the most positive response option, 2019



[†]There were 2,977 women (78%) who received antenatal care at a public hospital. Hospital results are based on the responses of the 92% of these women who received antenatal care at the same hospital as where they gave birth.

[‡]Based on the responses of 4,274 women (96%) who received antenatal care from any provider.

Notes: Results flagged as 'interpret with caution' in the supplementary data tables to this report are not included in the figures on this page.

A hospital 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, whether the woman had previously given birth and language spoken at home) have been taken into account. There were no hospitals that had a significantly higher or lower result than NSW for these measures.

Experiences of care during labour and birth

Labour and birth are important and memorable events for women and their families. Among women who responded to the survey, 71% had a vaginal birth and 28% had a caesarean birth (13% elective and 15% emergency) (data not shown).

More than nine in 10 women (94%) said overall, the care they received during their labour and birth was 'very good' (76%) or 'good' (18%) (Figure 3a). For women who said 'very good', results ranged from 63% to 97% across hospitals (Figure 4a).

Almost nine in 10 women (87%) said their birthing companion was 'definitely' involved as much as they wanted to be in the labour and birth (Figure 3b). Across hospitals, results ranged from 76% to 97% (Figure 4b).

Nine in 10 women (90%) felt they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity during their labour

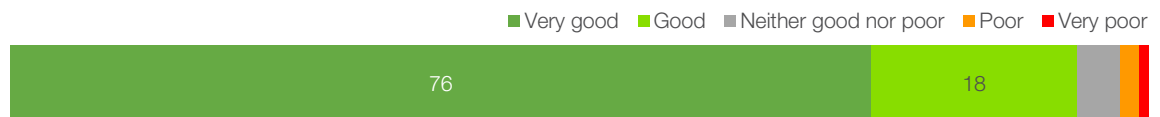
and birth (Figure 3c). Across hospitals, results ranged from 81% to 98% (Figure 4c).

Some patient groups tend to respond more positively to surveys. This means that hospitals with higher proportions of patients with these characteristics tend to have higher patient experience ratings. To enable fairer comparisons across hospitals, BHI has taken the characteristics of each hospital's patients (age, whether the woman had previously given birth, and language spoken at home) into account.

Therefore, when a hospital is flagged as having a significantly higher or lower result than NSW, this is more likely to reflect differences in women's experiences and less likely to reflect differences in the hospital's patient mix. For further details, please see this survey's technical supplement at bhi.nsw.gov.au

Figure 3 Percentage of women in NSW, all response options, 2019

a. Overall, how would you rate the care you received in the hospital during your labour and birth?



▲ Up from 75% in 2017

b. During your labour and birth, was your birthing companion (e.g. your partner, the baby's father, doula or family member) involved as much as they wanted to be?



Unchanged from 87% in 2017

c. Did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity during your labour and birth?



▲ Up from 89% in 2017

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



More than six in 10 women (66%) said they were 'always' involved as much as they wanted in decisions during labour and birth

Best part of care...

“

My midwife was 100% on board with our birth preferences... she made sure to involve me in all decisions and explained the benefits and risks.

”

Figure 4 Percentage of women in **each hospital** who selected the most positive response option, 2019

Hospital result relative to NSW public hospitals: ● Significantly lower ● Not significantly different ● Significantly higher



*There were no hospitals that had a significantly higher or lower result than NSW for this measure.
Notes: A hospital 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, whether the woman had previously given birth and language spoken at home) have been taken into account.
Results flagged as 'interpret with caution' in the supplementary data tables to this report are not included in the figures on this page.

Follow-up care in hospital

Postnatal care begins immediately after birth. It supports new mothers in their recuperation, and provides information and support to families about caring for themselves and their babies.

Almost nine in 10 women (88%) said overall, the care they received in hospital after their baby was born was 'very good' (58%) or good (30%) (Figure 5a). For women who said 'very good', results ranged from 40% to 93% across hospitals (Figure 6a).

Almost all women (98%) needed assistance or advice from health professionals in hospital after their baby was born. Of those women, 68% said they 'always' got assistance or advice when they needed it (Figure 5b). Across hospitals, results ranged from 48% to 97% (Figure 6b).

Coordination and continuity of postnatal care between health professionals minimises disruption

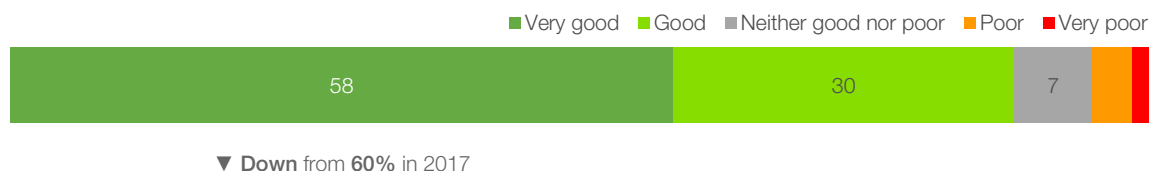
and inconvenience to new mothers and can also significantly enhance information flow.

While around three in 10 women (32%) received conflicting advice from health professionals about feeding their baby, almost seven in 10 (68%) said they did not (Figure 5c). Across hospitals, the percentage of women who did not report receiving conflicting advice ranged from 55% to 94% (Figure 6c).

This Snapshot report focuses on experiences of care in 2019 and presents changes from the previous survey year for the most positive response option for selected questions at NSW level. To see changes from the previous survey for all comparable questions at NSW, local health district and hospital levels, please see the supplementary data tables to this report and BHI's interactive data portal, Healthcare Observer at bhi.nsw.gov.au

Figure 5 Percentage of women in NSW, all response options, 2019

a. Overall, how would you rate the care you received in the hospital after your baby was born?



b. After the birth of your baby, were you able to get assistance or advice from health professionals when you needed it?*



c. Did you ever receive conflicting advice about feeding your baby from the health professionals?



*Based on the responses of 4,343 women (98%) who needed assistance or advice from health professionals in hospital after their baby was born.
Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.



More than six in 10 women (64%) said they were 'definitely' given information about possible changes to their emotional health after the birth

What could improve...

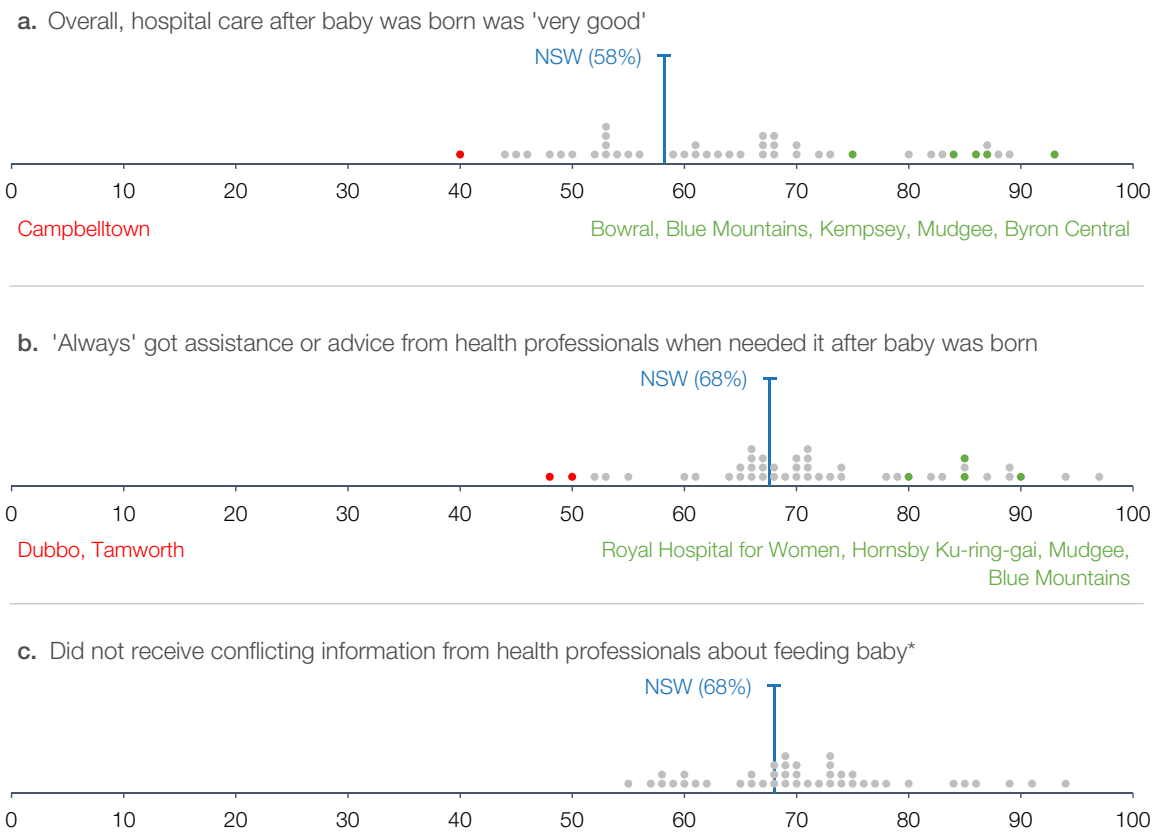
“

I felt rushed out of the hospital. I needed extra support and was not in any way ready to go home, physically or emotionally. I felt very let down... this was my first baby and I had no idea what to do.

”

Figure 6 Percentage of women in **each hospital** who selected the most positive response option, 2019

Hospital result relative to NSW public hospitals: ● Significantly lower ● Not significantly different ● Significantly higher



*There were no hospitals that had a significantly higher or lower result than NSW for this measure.
 Notes: A hospital 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, whether the woman had previously given birth and language spoken at home) have been taken into account.
 Results flagged as 'interpret with caution' in the supplementary data tables to this report are not included in the figures on this page.

Aboriginal women's experiences

Safe and supportive environment

Listening to what Aboriginal women have to say about their experiences of maternity care is important to ensure they receive high quality, culturally inclusive healthcare, tailored to their needs. It can also help ensure Aboriginal women are well-supported and feel comfortable and safe.

More than eight in 10 Aboriginal women (85%) said the health professionals providing their antenatal care were 'always' polite and courteous (Figure 7a).

Around half of all Aboriginal women (52%) said they received, or were offered, support from an Aboriginal Health Worker while they were in hospital. However, around four in 10 (41%) said they did not have this support (Figure 7b).

Eight in 10 Aboriginal women (80%) said the midwives or doctors were 'always' kind and caring towards them during their labour and birth (data not shown).

Almost seven in 10 Aboriginal women (69%) said the health professionals taking care of them after the birth of their baby were 'always' kind and caring (data not shown).

Almost all Aboriginal women (97%) needed assistance or advice from health professionals in hospital after the birth of their baby. More than half of these women (56%) said they were 'always' able to get assistance or advice when they needed it (Figure 7c).

Every Aboriginal woman who gave birth in a NSW public hospital in 2019 was invited to provide feedback about their experiences of maternity care. This report highlights key NSW-level findings for the 283 Aboriginal women who responded to the survey. The distributions of age, residential location and rurality for these women is similar to the hospital records for all Aboriginal women who received maternity care in 2019.

Figure 7 Percentage of Aboriginal women in NSW, all response options, 2019

a. Were the health professionals providing your antenatal care polite and courteous?



b. Did you receive support, or the offer of support, from an Aboriginal Health Worker while you were in hospital?



c. After the birth of your baby, were you able to get assistance or advice from health professionals when you needed it?*



*Based on the responses of 275 Aboriginal women (96%) who needed assistance from health professionals after the birth of their baby.
Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

When Aboriginal women were asked about their overall maternity care...

69%

said the care during labour and birth was 'very good'



55%

said the hospital care after giving birth was 'very good'



Best part of care...

“

The two midwives who were at my delivery were absolutely amazing! They talked me through everything and tried to make me as comfortable as possible.

”



What could improve...

“

I did wonder if there was an Aboriginal midwife liaison but I did not see or have a visit from one. I think having midwives working on the floor who identify [as Aboriginal] is so important.

”

Aboriginal women's experiences

Family involvement and appropriate care

Being treated with respect and receiving culturally appropriate care is important in ensuring Aboriginal women have positive experiences with maternal services as they prepare for motherhood, give birth and return home with their baby.

Around seven in 10 Aboriginal women (72%) said health professionals 'completely' discussed what was important to them in managing their antenatal care and birth (Figure 8a).

Eight in 10 Aboriginal women (80%) said their birthing companion, such as their partner or family member, were involved as much as they wanted to be in the labour and birth (Figure 8b).

Around eight in 10 Aboriginal women (81%) felt they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity during their labour and birth (Figure 8c).

Around seven in 10 Aboriginal women (71%) said they had confidence and trust in the health professionals providing antenatal care, while almost eight in 10 Aboriginal women (77%) had confidence and trust in the midwives or doctors taking care of them during labour and birth (data not shown).

Figure 8 Percentage of Aboriginal women in NSW, all response options, 2019

a. Did the health professionals discuss with you what was important to you in managing your antenatal care and birth?



b. During your labour and birth, was your birthing companion involved as much as they wanted to be?



c. Did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity during your labour and birth?



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

More than seven in 10 Aboriginal women said they had confidence and trust in...

The health professionals providing antenatal care

71%



The midwives or doctors taking care of them during labour and birth

77%



Best part of care...

“

My midwife was great, she always kept me informed, explained test results to me and most of all, built trust with me that she and the hospital knew what they were doing.

”



What could improve...

“

I felt the midwives were very short on time and were often only able to do the bare minimum before rushing to the next woman.

”

Aboriginal women's experiences

Communication and continuity of care

Information about pregnancy, birth, and caring for themselves and their babies should be communicated to Aboriginal women in a way that is culturally appropriate and understandable. Like other women, Aboriginal women should also be involved in decisions about their maternity care and treatment.

More than six in 10 Aboriginal women (66%) felt their emotional health was 'definitely' supported by health professionals during their pregnancy (Figure 9a).

While more than three in 10 Aboriginal women (33%) said they received conflicting information about how to care for themselves or their baby after the birth, more than six in 10 (67%) did not (Figure 9b).

Almost nine in 10 Aboriginal women (88%) said hospital staff told them who to contact if they were worried about their health or their babies' health after they left hospital (Figure 9c).

Eight in 10 Aboriginal women (80%) said the health professionals providing their antenatal care 'always' explained things in a way they could understand. Around six in 10 Aboriginal women (62%) said health professionals 'always' explained things in a way they could understand following the birth of their baby (data not shown).

Figure 9 Percentage of Aboriginal women in NSW, all response options, 2019

a. Did you feel your emotional health was supported by the health professionals during your pregnancy?



b. After the birth of your baby, did you ever receive conflicting information from health professionals about how to care for yourself or your baby?



c. Did hospital staff tell you who to contact if you were worried about your health or your baby's health after you left hospital?



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



Around six in 10 Aboriginal women (62%) said health professionals 'always' explained things in a way they could understand following the birth



Best part of care...

“

In the postnatal ward, a couple of midwives took the time to ask how I was going, having given birth six hours away from home. I felt they cared, as they took the time to hear our story.

”



What could improve...

“

By seeing a different midwife each visit you don't know what to expect or whether you will be listened to and respected.

”

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 Maternity Care Survey 2019 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.

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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.



1 Reserve Road
St Leonards NSW 2065 Australia

Telephone: +61 2 9464 4444
Email: BHI-enq@health.nsw.gov.au

bhi.nsw.gov.au