

Elective Surgery

Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals

October to December 2013

Elective surgery, often called planned surgery, is surgery that a doctor considers necessary but can be delayed by at least 24 hours. Common examples of elective surgery include hip replacements, cataract extraction and ligament repairs. There are three categories of elective surgery: non-urgent, semi-urgent and urgent (see page 2 for a description of these categories).

There were 54,366 elective surgical procedures performed in October to December 2013, 1% more than the number conducted in the same quarter one year ago.

Compared with the same quarter last year, the volume of non-urgent surgery stayed the same, semi-urgent increased by 5% and urgent decreased by 1%.

Most patients (97%) received their surgery on time in NSW. This is unchanged from the previous quarter (July–September 2013), but an improvement of four percentage points from the same quarter last year. The percentage point increase in patients receiving surgery by category is shown in the table below.

This edition again includes analyses of the differences between NSW hospitals in terms of important factors that can influence a patient's time spent on the waiting list in each category.

This is one of three *Hospital Quarterly* modules. For the Emergency Departments and Admitted Patients modules visit www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

During the quarter	Oct–Dec 2012	Oct–Dec 2013	The difference
Elective surgical procedures performed	53,728 procedures	54,366 procedures	638 procedures (+1%)
Elective surgery patients treated on time	93% on time	97% on time	+4 percentage points
Urgent elective surgery patients treated on time	96% on time	99% on time	+3 percentage points
Semi-urgent elective surgery patients treated on time	92% on time	97% on time	+5 percentage points
Non-urgent elective surgery patients treated on time	91% on time	95% on time	+4 percentage points

Our approach to elective surgery reporting

If a person and their surgeon agree surgery is required but can be delayed by at least 24 hours, the surgeon will recommend the patient is placed on the waiting list for the procedure and assigns them to one of three urgency categories. Each category has its own target, which specifies the desired maximum time (in days) the patient should wait for their procedure. These are outlined in the box below.

Urgency categories: Elective surgery guidelines	
Category 1 Urgent (eg, heart valve replacement, amputation of limb)	Admission within 30 days desirable for a condition that has the potential to deteriorate quickly and become an emergency
Category 2 Semi-urgent (eg, colposcopy, amputation of digit)	Admission within 90 days desirable for a condition not likely to deteriorate quickly
Category 3 Non-urgent (eg, septoplasty)	Admission within 365 days acceptable for a condition not likely to deteriorate quickly

Explaining staged surgery

There are times when surgery is deemed necessary but should not, or cannot, take place until a period of time has passed. This time is determined by a clinician and is necessary for the surgery to be effective. This is called staged surgery and is an essential concept in managing elective surgery. It allows surgeons to place patients on the waiting list but prevents them from being admitted to hospital before it is clinically appropriate. Surgeons use clinical judgement to decide whether a procedure should be categorised as staged or not. One example of a staged procedure is waiting for

a broken bone to heal before removing pins or plates. The Bureau excludes staged and non-urgent cystoscopy procedures from performance measures.

Reporting waiting times

To provide a comprehensive picture of the variation in times that patients waited for surgery, the Bureau reports the 90th percentile time and the median wait time by urgency category. The median waiting time for patients who received surgery is also presented by the specialty of the surgeon and by common procedures.

The Bureau also reports on patients who are currently on the waiting list to have their surgery. For these patients, the Bureau reports by urgency category, specialty of the surgeon and most common procedures. The number of patients who have been waiting for more than 12 months is reported for each hospital and by the specialty of the surgeon for NSW.

The Bureau is committed to providing clarity on surgical waiting times in NSW. Further detail on our methods can be found in the Bureau's *Hospital Quarterly Technical Supplement: Elective surgery measures, October to December 2013* available on the Bureau's website at www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

See the **Appendices** section of this report (pages 22 to 23) for more detailed performance information about each public hospital providing elective surgery in NSW. This includes Hawkesbury Private Hospital, which is contracted to supply surgery for public patients.

In this Report

The Bureau of Health Information's *Hospital Quarterly* provides a detailed assessment of waiting times to receive elective surgery and achievement of the target of all patients receiving their elective surgery within the recommended timeframe.

As in the previous issue of *Hospital Quarterly*, the Bureau presents analyses of the differences between NSW hospitals by considering important factors that can influence a patient's time spent on the waiting list for urgent, semi-urgent and non-urgent surgery.

These analyses are for patients who received their surgery in the October to December 2013 quarter.

Factors considered in this section are:

- the urgency of the surgery received (i.e. urgent, semi-urgent, non-urgent)
- the number of elective surgery procedures performed in each hospital
- the peer group of the hospital

Hospitals are grouped by hospital type or 'peer groups'. A definition of each peer group is listed below.

Peer groups

NSW hospitals vary in size and the types and complexity of clinical services that they provide. To enable valid comparisons to be made between hospitals, it is important to compare similar or like hospitals together. To do this, the Bureau uses a NSW Health classification system called '**peer group**'. The hospital peer groups included in this report are described below.

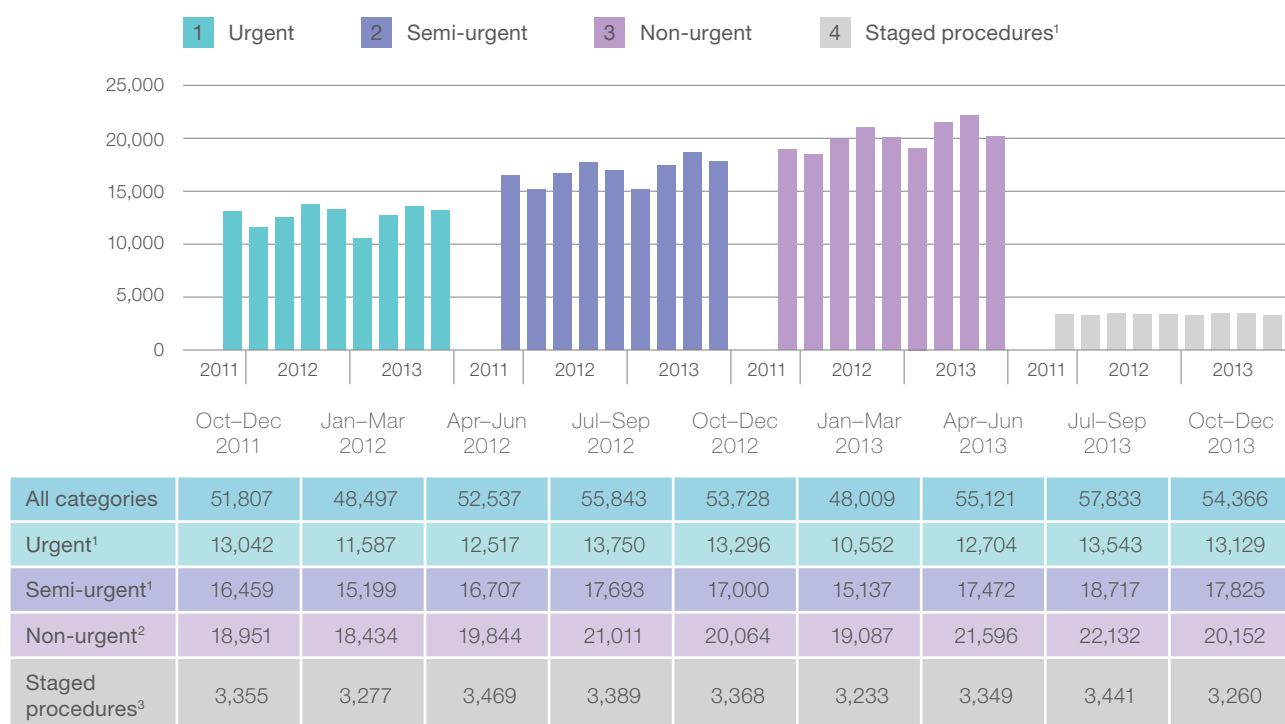
Group	Name	Description
A1	Principal referral	Very large hospitals providing a broad range of services, including specialised units at a state or national level.
A2	Paediatric specialist	Specialist hospitals for children and young people.
A3	Ungrouped acute – tertiary referral	Major specialist hospitals that are not similar enough to any other peer group to be classified with them.
B	Major	Large metropolitan and non-metropolitan hospitals.
C1	District group 1	Medium sized hospitals treating between 5,000–10,000 patients each year.
C2	District group 2	Smaller hospitals, typically in rural locations.

Number of elective surgery procedures performed

During October to December 2013, the Waiting List Collection On-line System (WLCOS) recorded that 54,366 patients were admitted from the waiting list to receive an elective surgery procedure in NSW public hospitals or facilities

contracted by NSW hospitals. This is 6% lower than the number conducted in the previous quarter and 1% higher than the 53,728 surgical procedures completed in the same quarter last year (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Total number of elective surgery procedures conducted, by urgency category, October 2011 to December 2013



1. Including non-urgent cystoscopy.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014. Data for October 2012 to June 2013 extracted on 16 December 2013. Data for all quarters from October 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 October 2011.

Composition of surgery

Urgent surgery: There were 13,129 procedures completed, down 1% compared with one year ago. Urgent procedures made up 24% of all completed elective surgery.

Semi-urgent surgery: There were 17,825 procedures completed, up 5% compared with one year ago. Semi-urgent procedures made up 33% of all completed elective surgery.

Non-urgent surgery: There were 20,152 procedures completed, similar to one year ago. Non-urgent procedures made up 37% of all completed elective surgery.

Staged surgery: There were 3,260 procedures, down 3% compared with one year ago. Staged procedures made up 6% of all completed elective surgery.

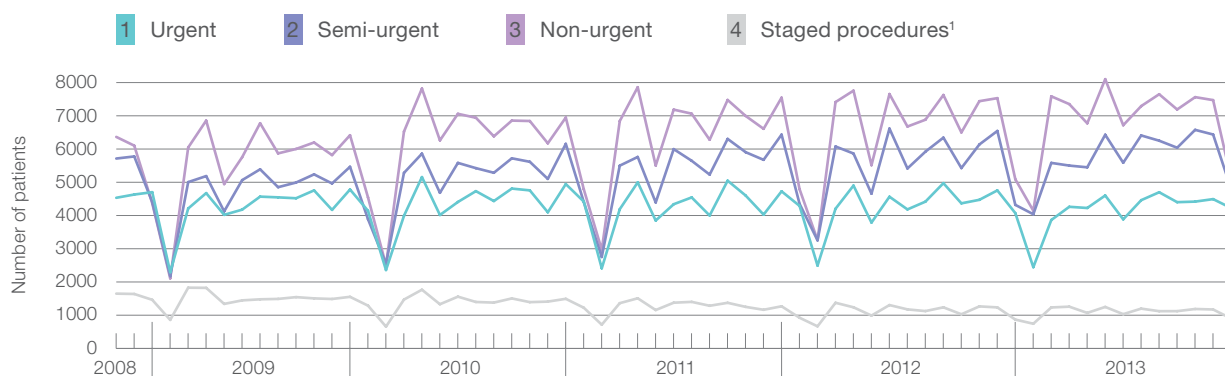
Change over five years

The composition of surgical procedures completed by urgency category has changed over the past five years (Figure 2), with this change mainly driven by the number of semi-urgent and non-urgent surgeries.

During the past five years there has been an overall increase in the number of procedures performed. Proportionally, there has been a downward trend in procedures in the urgent category and an upward trend in the semi and non-urgent categories.

The proportion of non-urgent surgery over the past five years has increased. This reflects both the increase in non-urgent surgery and the decrease in urgent surgery.

Figure 2: Patients who received elective surgery, by urgency category, by month, October 2008 to December 2013



1. Including non-urgent cystoscopy.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014. Data for October 2012 to June 2013 extracted on 16 December 2013. Data for all quarters from October 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 October 2011.

Patients admitted on time for elective surgery

Of all patients who were admitted to a public hospital for elective surgery, 97% were admitted within the timeframe recommended by their surgeon (Figure 3). This remains unchanged from the preceding quarter and up four percentage points from the same quarter in 2012 (93%).

Figure 3 presents the percentage of patients in each urgency category who received their surgery on time for the most recent nine quarters.

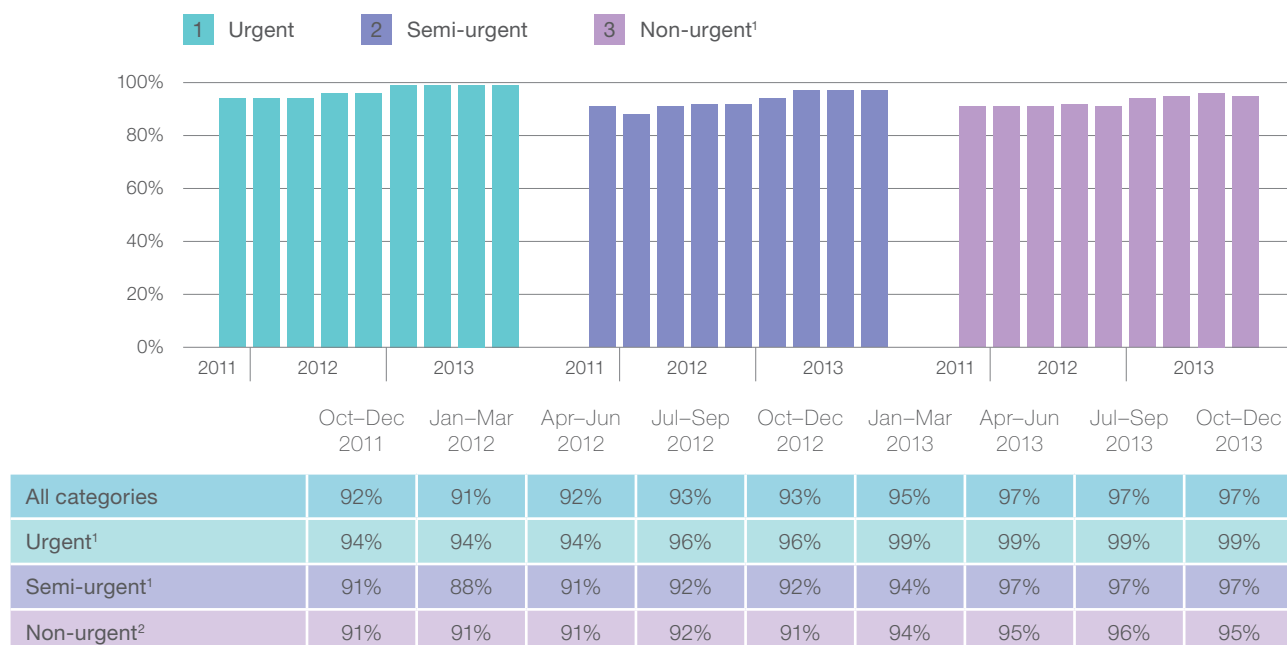
Urgent surgery: 99% of patients were admitted within the recommended 30 days, unchanged from last quarter and up three percentage points compared with the same quarter in 2012.

Semi-urgent surgery: 97% of patients were admitted within 90 days, unchanged from last quarter and up five percentage points compared with the same quarter in 2012.

Non-urgent surgery: 95% of patients were admitted within 365 days, a decrease of one percentage point from last quarter and an increase of four percentage points compared with the same quarter in 2012.

There has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of surgeries completed on time across all urgency categories over the past two years.

Figure 3: Percentage of elective surgery patients treated within recommended waiting time, by urgency category, October 2011 to December 2013



1. Excluding non-urgent cystoscopy.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014. Data for October 2012 to June 2013 extracted on 16 December 2013. Data for all quarters from October 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 October 2011.

Some hospitals are achieving the recommended time across all urgency categories

The rows in Figure 4 present the proportion of patients receiving their elective surgery within the recommended time frame for specific hospitals and are sorted by peer group. They highlight differences in the per cent of elective surgery that is completed on time and show some hospitals achieve 100% of surgeries on time across all categories and others complete less than 95% of surgeries on time in one or more categories.

Eight hospitals from peer group C2 are treating all of their patients within the recommended waiting times across all urgency categories.

Figure 4: Percentage of elective surgery patients treated within recommended waiting time, by urgency category and peer group October to December 2013.

● 100% ● 99%–99.9% ● 95%–98.9% ● < 95%

Peer group A1–3		Urgent	Semi-urgent ¹	Non-urgent ¹
A1	Concord Hospital	●	●	●
A1	RPAH Institute of Rheumatology & Orthopaedics	●	●	●
A1	Royal Prince Alfred Hospital	●	●	●
A1	Westmead Hospital	●	●	●
A1	Wollongong Hospital	●	●	●
A1	Liverpool Hospital	●	●	●
A1	St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst	●	●	●
A1	Bankstown / Lidcombe Hospital	●	●	●
A1	Prince of Wales Hospital	●	●	●
A1	Gosford Hospital	●	●	●
A1	Royal North Shore Hospital	●	●	●
A1	John Hunter Hospital	●	●	●
A1	Nepean Hospital	●	●	●
A1	St George Hospital	●	●	●
A2	Sydney Children's Hospital	●	●	●
A2	The Children's Hospital at Westmead	●	●	●
A3	Royal Hospital for Women	●	●	●
A3	Calvary Mater Newcastle	●	●	●
A3	Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital	●	●	●
Peer group B		Urgent	Semi-urgent ¹	Non-urgent ¹
	Auburn Hospital	●	●	●
	Canterbury Hospital	●	●	●
	Manly District Hospital	●	●	●
	Mona Vale and District Hospital	●	●	●
	Shoalhaven and District Memorial Hospital	●	●	●
	Blacktown Hospital	●	●	●
	Fairfield Hospital	●	●	●
	Wyong Hospital	●	●	●
	The Tweed Hospital	●	●	●
	Campbelltown Hospital	●	●	●
	Coffs Harbour Base Hospital	●	●	●
	Port Macquarie Base Hospital	●	●	●
	Tamworth Base Hospital	●	●	●
	Manning Base Hospital	●	●	●
	Orange Health Service	●	●	●
	Lismore Base Hospital	●	●	●
	Dubbo Base Hospital	●	●	●
	Hornsby and Ku-Ring-Gai Hospital	●	●	●
	Maitland Hospital	●	●	●
	Wagga Wagga Base Hospital	●	●	●
	Sutherland Hospital	●	●	●

1. Excluding non-urgent cystoscopy.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014.

Figure 4: Percentage of elective surgery patients treated within recommended waiting time, by urgency category and peer group October to December 2013.

● 100% ● 99%–99.9% ● 95%–98.9% ● < 95%



1. Excluding non-urgent cystoscopy.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014.

Median waiting times for elective surgery

Median wait time is the number of days by which exactly half the number of patients received surgery. **Figure 5** shows median wait times in the semi-urgent category and the non-urgent category remain the lowest they have been for two years.

Urgent surgery: The median wait was 10 days – largely unchanged over the past two years.

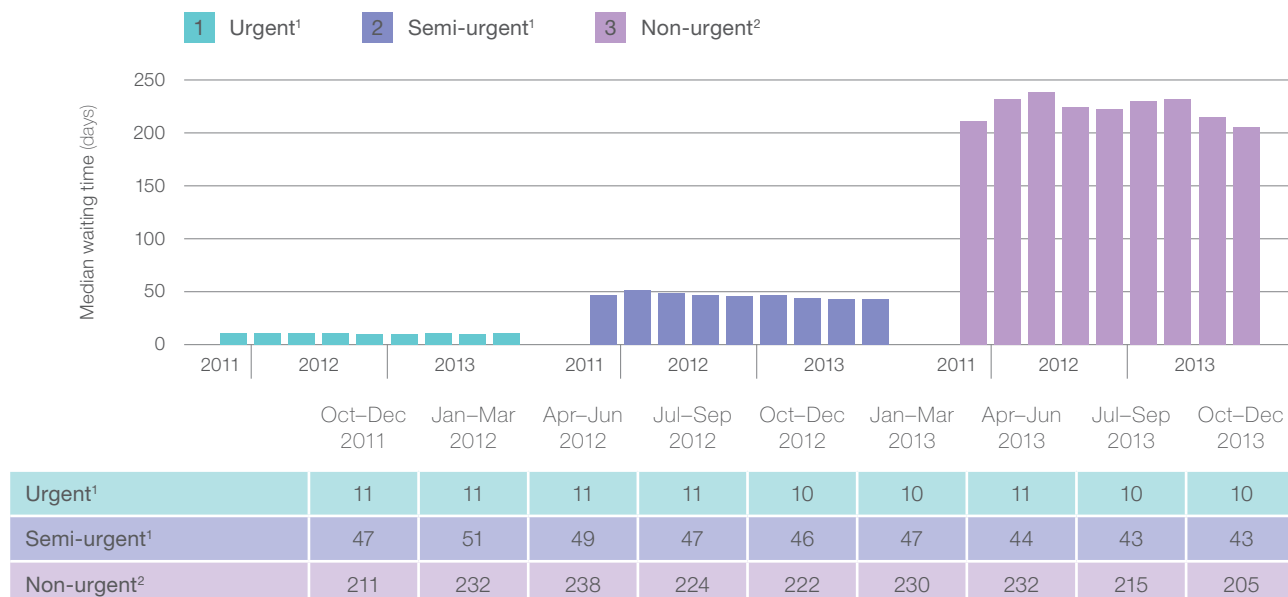
Semi-urgent surgery: The median wait time for this category was 43 days, three days less than the same quarter in 2012 (46 days) and four days less than the same quarter in 2011 (47 days).

Non-urgent surgery: The median wait time for this category was 205 days, 17 days less than the same quarter in 2012 (222 days).

Non-urgent median waiting times are the most variable of the three urgency categories. Over the past nine quarters, non-urgent procedure wait times have ranged from 205 days this quarter to 238 in April to June 2012.

Median waiting times for semi-urgent and non-urgent elective surgery are among the lowest they have been for two years.

Figure 5: NSW elective surgery median waiting time (days), by urgency category, October 2011 to December 2013



1. Excluding staged procedures.

2. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.

Note: Because of changes in methods and reporting, numbers of surgical procedures by urgency category will differ from those reported in previous NSW Ministry of Health's Quarterly Hospital Performance Reports and Bureau of Health Information Hospital Quarterly reports published prior to May 2011.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014. Data for October 2012 to June 2013 extracted on 16 December 2013. Data for all quarters from October 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 October 2011.

Waiting time performance is not affected by number of procedures or by the mix of patients

Figures 6 a, b and c present the median waiting times at hospitals by total number of procedures and stratified by peer group.

It can be seen that smaller hospitals (peer groups C1 and C2) perform a lower number of procedures, and therefore cluster closer to the origin of the x axis.

Peer group A hospitals generally perform a higher number of procedures and so are more dispersed towards the right hand side of the graph. Figures 6 a, b and c show variation in waiting times within peer groups. There is little or no evident relationship between number of procedures and median waiting times within urgency groups.

The Bureau also found that having a higher or lower percentage of urgent or less urgent cases was not associated with any increase or decrease in surgery completed on time (data not shown).

In addition, the Bureau investigated associations of urgency mix between the 90th percentile wait times and found no association (data not shown).

This analysis reveals there is no clear relationship between the volume of surgery performed in a hospital and the median waiting times for patients in all urgency categories: long and short waiting times are seen in hospitals performing both very low or very high numbers of surgical procedures.

Figure 6a: Urgent: NSW elective surgery median waiting time by peer group, October to December 2013.

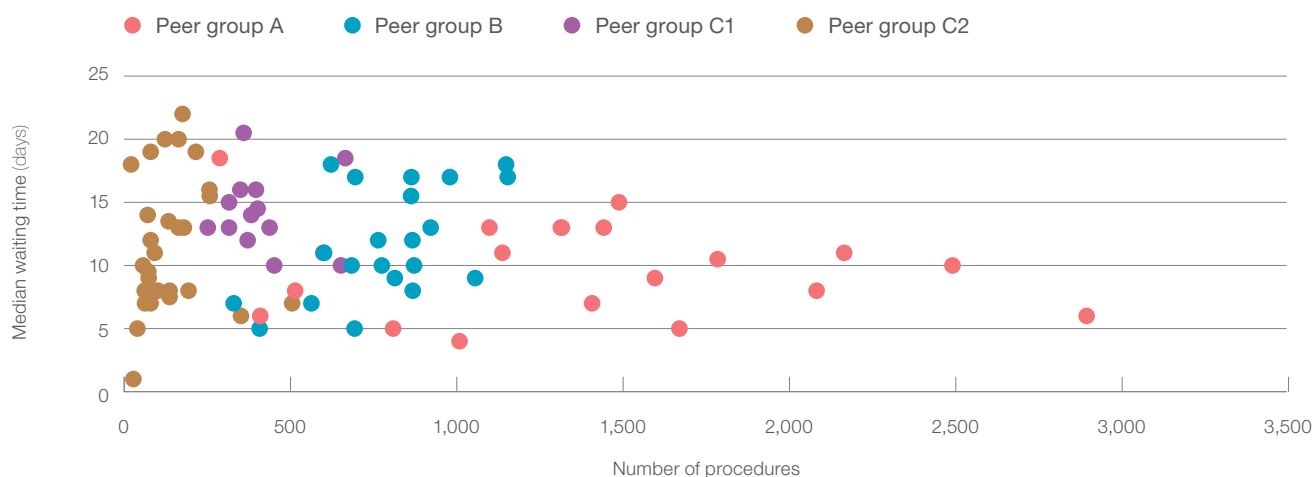


Figure 6b: Semi-urgent: NSW elective surgery median waiting time by peer group, October to December 2013.

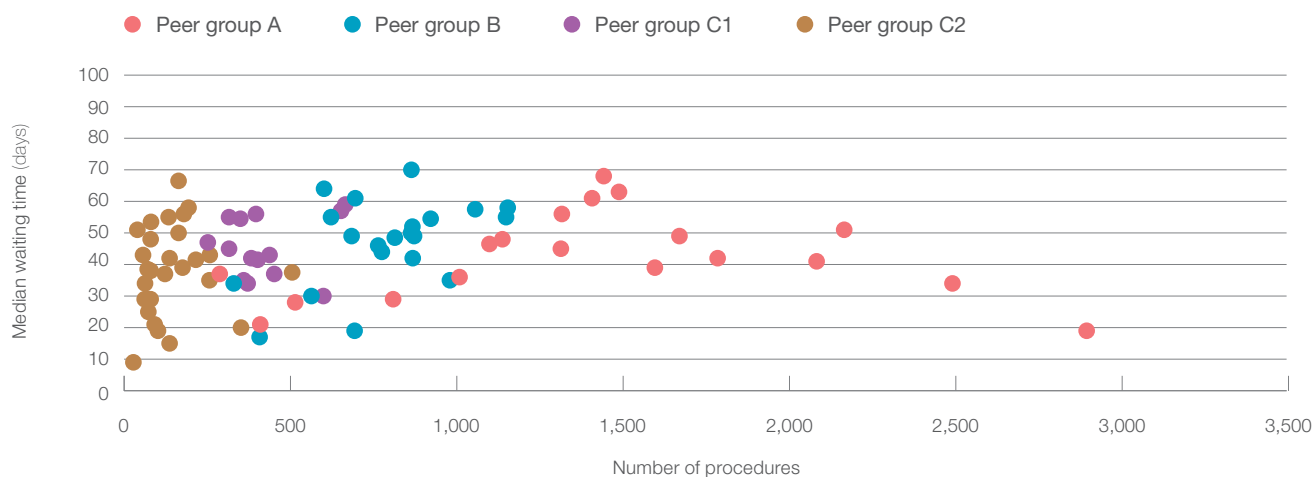
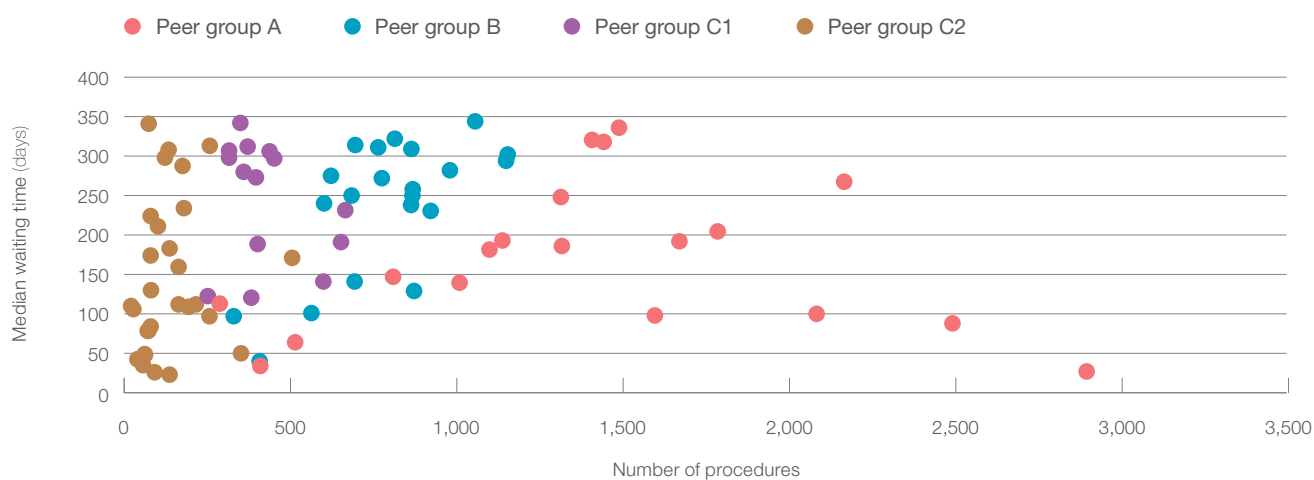


Figure 6c: Non-urgent¹: NSW elective surgery median waiting time by peer group, October to December 2013.



1. Excluding non-urgent cystoscopy.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014.

90th percentile waiting times for elective surgery

The 90th percentile wait time is the number of days by which 90% of patients received surgery. The final 10% took equal to or longer than this time.

Figure 7 presents the 90th percentile wait time to be admitted for surgery for the last nine quarters. These results exclude staged patients and non-urgent cystoscopy procedures.

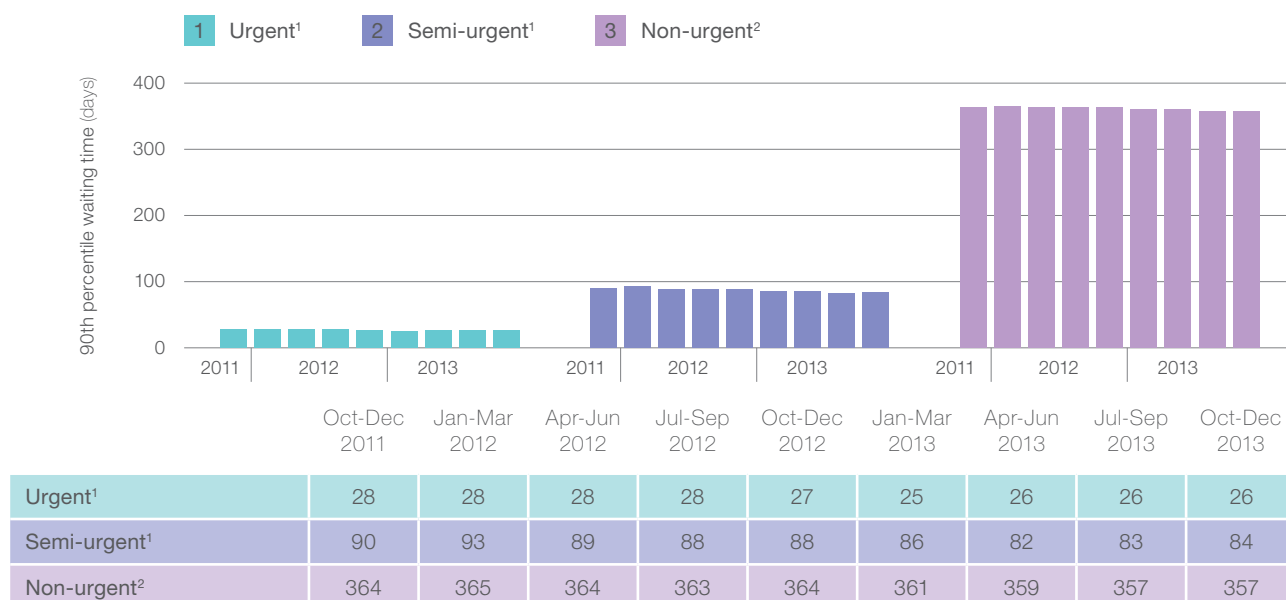
Urgent surgery: The 90th percentile wait was 26 days, one and two days less than the same quarters in 2012 and 2011 respectively.

Semi-urgent surgery: The 90th percentile wait time for this category was 84 days, four days less than the same quarter in 2012 (88 days) and six days less than the same quarter in 2011 (90 days).

Non-urgent surgery: The 90th percentile wait time for this category was 357 days, seven days less than the same quarter in 2011 and 2012.

The time by which almost all patients (90%) have received their surgery is the lowest for the October–December 2013 quarter, in all three categories.

Figure 7: NSW elective surgery 90th percentile waiting time (days), by urgency category, October 2011 to December 2013



1. Excluding staged procedures.

2. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.

Note: Because of changes in methods and reporting, numbers of surgical procedures by urgency category will differ from those reported in previous NSW Ministry of Health's *Quarterly Hospital Performance Reports* and Bureau of Health Information *Hospital Quarterly reports* published prior to May 2011.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014. Data for October 2012 to June 2013 extracted on 16 December 2013. Data for all quarters from October 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 October 2011.

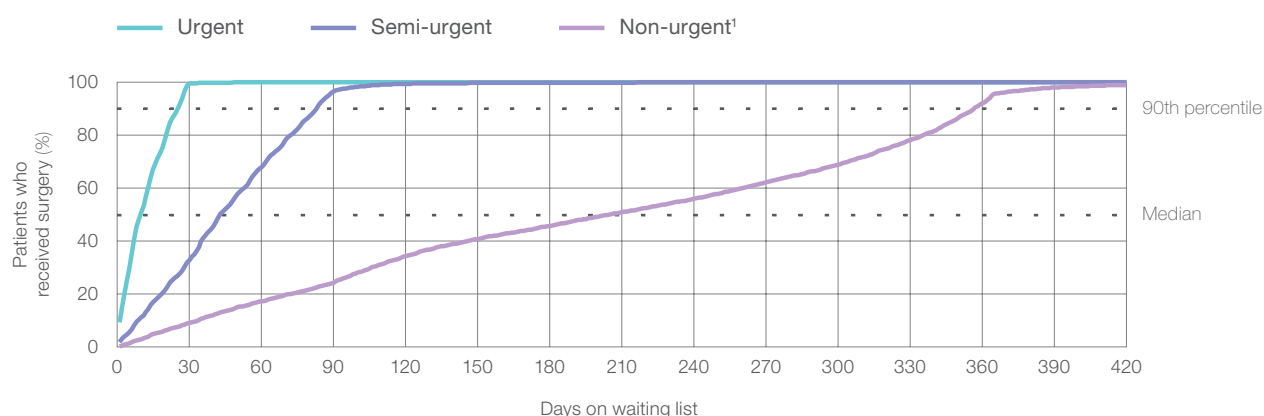
Cumulative wait time

The cumulative percentage of patients who received elective surgery by times presented in **Figure 8** indicate the rate at which patients were admitted for surgery. A steep slope indicates a high rate of completion of patients' surgery over

the period shown. A flat slope shows a lower rate of completion of patients' surgery over the period.

Urgent patients are admitted more rapidly with almost all patients admitted for surgery within 30 days. Non-urgent patients are admitted less rapidly with almost all patients admitted within 420 days.

Figure 8: Cumulative percentage of patients who received elective surgery, by waiting time (days), October to December 2013



1. Excluding non-urgent cystoscopy.

Note: Excludes the total number of days the patient was coded as '*not ready for care*'.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014.

Small number suppression

Some hospitals conduct very few surgical procedures. Publishing these small numbers could lead to some cases being recognised and can also affect the accuracy of the data. The Bureau suppresses information based on very few patients. If there are fewer than five patients in any group, patient numbers are displayed as <5. For measures reported by urgency category, counts have been pooled with another urgency group. Because the staged procedure category is excluded from performance measure calculations, low counts in this group are not suppressed (**Appendix table 1a, 2a**). If there are fewer than 10 patients in any group, on time performance and median waiting times are suppressed (**Appendix tables 1b,1c and 2b,2c**). If there are fewer than 100 patients in any group, the 90th percentile is suppressed (**Appendix table 1c and 2c**).

Variation between hospitals within a peer group

Figure 9 presents the 90th percentile waiting time to receive elective surgery for each of the three urgency categories by peer group. The coloured lines across the graph represent the recommended time to receive surgery in each urgency category: 30 days for urgent, 90 days for semi-urgent and 365 days for non-urgent.

There is a considerable range in the 90th percentiles in each peer group, and every peer group has hospitals with short or long waiting times.

For example for non-urgent surgery, the 90th percentile waiting times ranged from:

- 92 to 410 days for peer group A
- 233 to 375 days for peer group B
- 195 to 365 days for peer group C1
- 76 to 361 days for peer group C2.

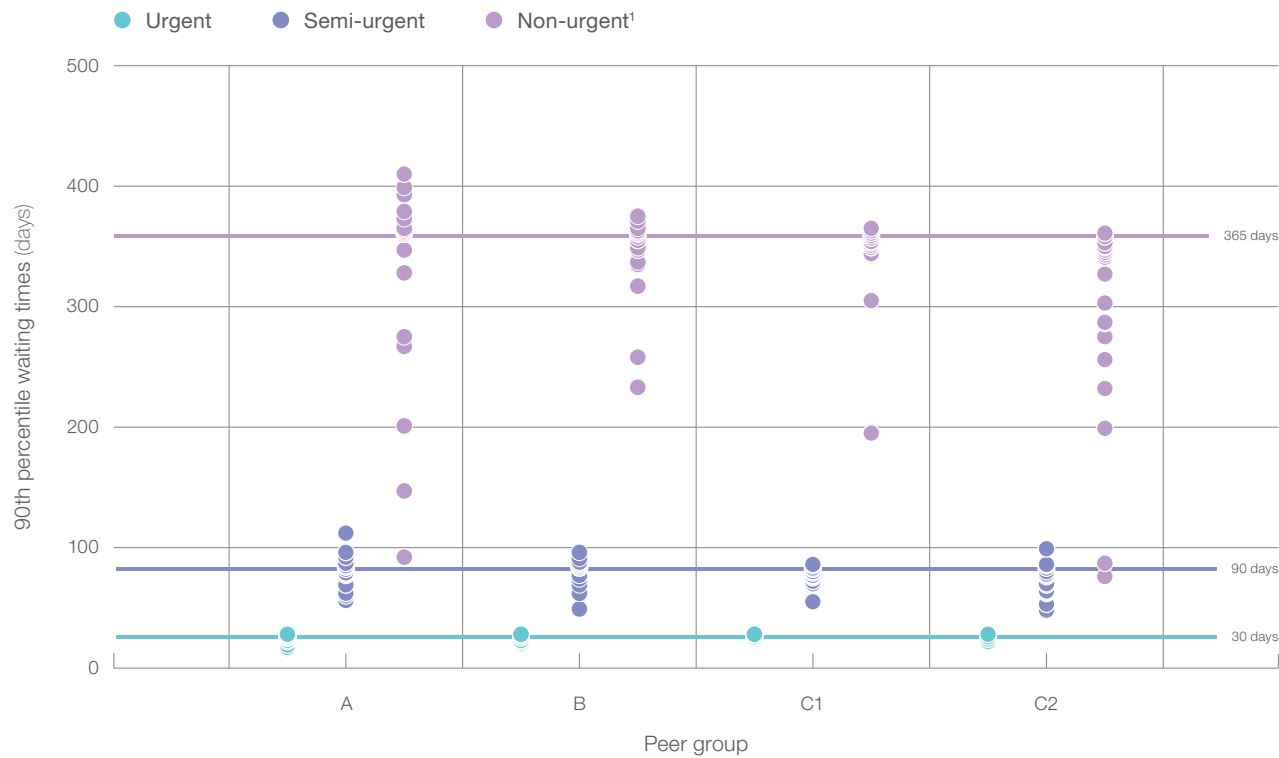
The longest 90th percentile waiting times for non-urgent were in the A peer group, and the shortest 90th percentile were in the C1 and C2 groups.

Eleven hospitals had 90th percentiles greater than the recommended maximum waiting time of one year. These were across all peer groups.

There is a wide range of 90th percentile waiting times for elective surgery. More hospitals in the A and B peer groups had 90th percentile greater than the maximum recommended waiting times, matching the fact that fewer hospitals in these groups reached 100% on time surgery. However, there are hospitals with shorter or longer waiting times in each peer group.

While most hospitals in each peer group have similar 90th percentiles times for non-urgent elective surgery, each peer group has some hospitals showing particularly low waiting times.

Figure 9: NSW elective surgery 90th percentile waiting time (days) by peer group and urgency category, October to December 2013



1. Excluding non-urgent cystoscopy.

Note: 90th percentile not shown for hospitals with less than 30 patients.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014.

Median waiting times by specialty

Figure 10 presents the number of patients and median waiting times for patients who received elective surgery, by the specialty of the surgeon. The specialty of the surgeon describes the area of clinical expertise held by the doctor who performed the surgery.

The median waiting time does not include the time waited for the initial appointment with the specialist.

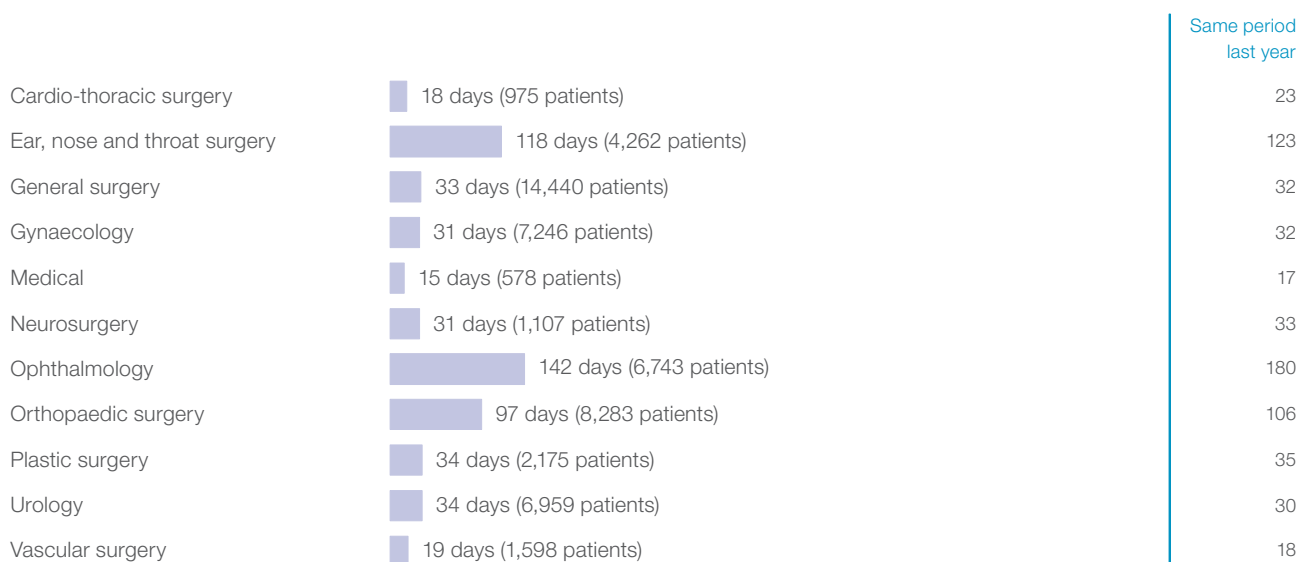
Ophthalmology (142 days), ear, nose and throat surgery (118 days) and orthopaedic surgery (97 days) were the surgical specialties with the longest median waiting times in October to December 2013. These specialties also had the longest median waiting times in the same quarter last year.

Cardio-thoracic surgery (18 days), vascular surgery (19 days) and medical ² (15 days) had the shortest median waiting times. These specialties also had the shortest median waiting times in the same quarter last year.

General surgery (14,440 patients), orthopaedic surgery (8,283 patients) and gynaecology (7,246 patients) were the surgical specialties with the highest number of patients receiving elective surgery in the October to December 2013 quarter.

Cardio-thoracic surgery (975 patients) and medical ² (578 patients) had the lowest number of patients receiving elective surgery.

Figure 10: Median¹ waiting time (days) for patients who received elective surgery, by specialty, October to December 2013



1. This is the number of days it took for half the patients who received elective surgery during the period to be admitted and receive their surgery. The other half took equal to or longer than the median to be admitted for surgery.
2. Medical refers to surgery performed by a non-specialist medical practitioner.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014. Data for October 2012 to June 2013 extracted on 16 December 2013. Data for all quarters from October 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 October 2011.

Median waiting times by common procedures

Figure 11 presents the median waiting times for patients who received common elective surgery procedures. The procedure is the treatment the patient receives when admitted to hospital for elective surgery.

The procedures with the longest median waiting times in the October to December 2013 quarter were septoplasty (326 days), total knee replacement (270 days) and myringoplasty / tympanoplasty (285 days). The procedures with the shortest median waiting times were coronary artery bypass graft (19 days), other – general (22 days), cystoscopy (28 days) and hysteroscopy (29 days).

(29 days). These procedures also had the longest and shortest median waiting times in the same quarter last year.

Cataract extraction was the most common procedure (5,295 patients) performed in the October to December 2013 quarter.

Different types of surgery typically have different waiting times, partly related to their relative urgency.

Figure 11: Median¹ waiting time (days) for patients who received elective surgery, by procedure,² October to December 2013

		Same period last year
Abdominal hysterectomy	49 days (600 patients)	54
Cataract extraction	207 days (5,295 patients)	222
Cholecystectomy	52 days (1,726 patients)	56
Coronary artery bypass graft	19 days (240 patients)	29
Cystoscopy	28 days (3,109 patients)	29
Haemorrhoidectomy	63 days (435 patients)	62
Hysteroscopy	29 days (2,309 patients)	29
Inguinal herniorrhaphy	63 days (1,468 patients)	69
Myringoplasty / Tympanoplasty	285 days (97 patients)	278
Myringotomy	67 days (88 patients)	71
Other – General	22 days (1,786 patients)	21
Prostatectomy	60 days (607 patients)	53
Septoplasty	326 days (462 patients)	328
Tonsillectomy	230 days (1,351 patients)	266
Total hip replacement	149 days (801 patients)	192
Total knee replacement	270 days (1,403 patients)	292
Varicose veins stripping and ligation	141 days (337 patients)	91

1. This is the number of days it took for half the patients who received elective surgery during the period to be admitted and receive their surgery. The other half took equal to or longer than the median to be admitted for surgery.
2. For a description of these procedures see *Elective Surgery Glossary of Common Procedures, December 2012*.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014. Data for October 2012 to June 2013 extracted on 16 December 2013. Data for all quarters from October 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 October 2011.

Elective surgery waiting list

The following three pages are about patients who are still on the elective surgery waiting list waiting for surgery.

During the quarter, patients were added to and removed from the waiting list. Patients are removed from the waiting list because they received the surgery they were waiting for, or for other reasons such as the surgeon or patient deeming that the surgery is no longer required.

At the end of the October to December 2013 quarter, there were 69,720 patients waiting for elective surgery, which is 3% more than the

same quarter last year (Figure 12). A breakdown of patients waiting for elective surgery by urgency category shows that 84% were assigned as non-urgent, 15% as semi-urgent and 1% as urgent. The number of patients waiting for urgent surgery decreased by 13%, semi-urgent increased by 3% and non-urgent increased by 3% (Figure 13).

As at 31 December 2013, there were 12,621 patients not ready for surgery on the waiting list, up 2% compared with the same quarter last year (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Elective surgery waiting list, October to December 2013

	Same period one year ago	Change since last year
Patients ready for surgery on waiting list at start of quarter: 69,917 patients	69,128	1%
Patients ready for surgery on waiting list at end of quarter: 69,720 patients	67,842	3%
Patients not ready for surgery ¹ on waiting list at end of quarter: 12,621 patients	12,354	2%

Figure 13: Elective surgery waiting list, as at 30 December 2013

Patients ready for surgery on waiting list by urgency category: 69,720 patients		Same period last year	Change since one year ago
1 Urgent ² (1%)	826	947	-13%
2 Semi-urgent ² (15%)	10,438	10,148	3%
3 Non-urgent ³ (84%)	58,456	56,747	3%

1. Includes staged procedures, non-urgent cystoscopy and patients currently not available for personal reasons.
2. Excluding staged procedures.
3. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014. Data for October 2012 to June 2013 extracted on 16 December 2013. Data for all quarters from October 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 October 2011.

Elective surgery waiting list by specialty

Figure 14 presents the number of patients on the waiting list and those patients who have been waiting more than 12 months, by the specialty of the surgeon.

The time a patient waited for the initial appointment with the specialist is not included in the time the patient spent on the waiting list.

Orthopaedic surgery (17,685 patients) and ophthalmology (16,023 patients) were the surgical specialties with the highest number of patients waiting for surgery as at 31 December 2013.

Cardio-thoracic surgery (352 patients) and medical (207 patients) had the lowest number of patients waiting for elective surgery.

Orthopaedic surgery (108 patients) and ear, nose and throat surgery (92 patients) were the surgical specialties with the highest number of patients waiting more than 12 months as at 31 December 2013. Cardio-thoracic surgery, and medical¹ had no patients waiting in NSW more than 12 months.

The number of patients in this quarter waiting more than 12 months for surgery was 327, 4% less than the same quarter last year (342).

Figure 14: Patients waiting for elective surgery and patients waiting more than 12 months, by specialty, as at 31 December 2013

	Patients waiting	Patients waiting (same time last year)	Change since one year ago	Patients waiting more than 12 months	Patients waiting more than 12 months (same time last year)
All specialties	69,720	67,842	3%	327	342
Cardio-thoracic surgery	352	303	16%	0	< 5
Ear, nose and throat surgery	9,443	9,749	-3%	92	148
General surgery	12,588	11,888	6%	56	18
Gynaecology	5,816	5,386	8%	13	< 5
Medical ¹	207	210	-1%	0	< 5
Neurosurgery	1,146	1,117	3%	29	11
Ophthalmology	16,023	15,601	3%	16	7
Orthopaedic surgery	17,685	17,379	2%	108	130
Plastic surgery	2,147	2,291	-6%	< 5	12
Urology	3,424	3,148	9%	< 5	9
Vascular surgery	889	770	15%	8	< 5

1. Medical refers to surgery performed by a non-specialist medical practitioner.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014. Data for October 2012 to June 2013 extracted on 16 December 2013. Data for all quarters from October 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 October 2011.

Elective surgery waiting list by common procedures

Figure 15 presents the number of patients on the waiting list by common procedures. Cataract extraction was the most common procedure (14,098 patients) that patients were waiting for as at 31 December 2013.

The procedures that had the least number of patients waiting were coronary artery bypass graft (80 patients) and myringotomy (141 patients).

Figure 15: Patients waiting for elective surgery by procedure,¹ as at 31 December 2013

	Patients waiting	Patients waiting (same time last year)	Change since one year ago
Abdominal hysterectomy	702	717	-2%
Cataract extraction	14,098	13,674	3%
Cholecystectomy	1,735	1,688	3%
Coronary artery bypass graft	80	83	-4%
Cystoscopy	963	914	5%
Haemorrhoidectomy	440	336	31%
Hysteroscopy	1,243	1,147	8%
Inguinal herniorrhaphy	2,202	2,119	4%
Myringoplasty / Tympanoplasty	330	344	-4%
Myringotomy	141	184	-23%
Other – General	1,152	1,084	6%
Prostatectomy	638	574	11%
Septoplasty	1,464	1,529	-4%
Tonsillectomy	3,560	3,610	-1%
Total hip replacement	2,177	1,960	11%
Total knee replacement	4,896	4,768	3%
Varicose veins stripping and ligation	650	566	15%

1. The procedures included in this list are procedures which are high volume; some may be associated with long waiting periods. For a description of these procedures see *Elective Surgery Glossary of Common Procedures, December 2012*.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for October to December 2013 extracted on 28 January 2014. Data for October 2012 to June 2013 extracted on 16 December 2013. Data for all quarters from October 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 October 2011.

Conclusions of analysis

As in previous reports there is considerable variation in waiting times between similar hospitals. There is also variation between different peer groups.

Most NSW hospitals perform well in the urgent surgery category, with most hospitals having 95% of patients receiving their procedure within the recommended timeframe. However, performance varies more for patients in the less urgent categories and variation is greatest for patients in the non-urgent category.

The analysis in this issue of *Hospital Quarterly* shows that patients can expect to receive urgent surgery within 30 days at all hospitals, but waiting time for semi-urgent and non-urgent surgery varies across hospitals. These variations are not associated with the number of procedures performed in hospitals (Figure 6) nor are they related to the percentage of cases in each urgency category. Performance varies between peer groups, and there are high and low performers in each peer group but C1 and C2 hospitals are more likely to treat all their patients within the recommended waiting times across all urgency categories (Figure 4).

Appendix 1: information by hospital and local health district

Appendix table 1a presents elective surgery activity for major hospitals in NSW. The table is ordered by local health district and includes all principal referral (A1), paediatric specialist (A2), ungrouped acute – tertiary referral (A3), major (B) and district groups 1 (C1) and 2 (C2) hospitals that conduct elective surgery. These hospitals account for 98% of all elective surgery recorded as complete in the NSW booking system. Surgery information from smaller hospitals is presented for each local health district under the *‘other’* category.

Download Appendix 1 information by *‘local health district’* in a PDF file

Download Appendix 1 information by *‘local health district’* in an Excel file

Appendix table 1b presents the percentages of elective surgery admissions within the clinically recommended time for each urgency category for October to December 2013. The table is ordered by local health district and includes all principal referral (A1), paediatric specialist (A2), ungrouped acute – tertiary referral (A3), major (B) and district groups 1 (C1) and 2 (C2) hospitals that conduct elective surgery. Surgery information from smaller hospitals is presented for each local health district under the *‘other’* category.

Appendix table 1c presents the median and 90th percentile waiting times (in days) of elective surgery admissions for each urgency category for this quarter. The table is ordered by local health district and includes all principal referral (A1), paediatric specialist (A2), ungrouped acute – tertiary referral (A3), major (B) and district groups 1 (C1) and 2 (C2) hospitals that conduct elective surgery. Surgery information from smaller hospitals is presented for each local health district under the *‘other’* category.

Appendix 2: information by hospital and peer group

Appendix table 2a presents elective surgery activity for major hospitals in NSW. The table is ordered by peer group and includes all principal referral (A1), paediatric specialist (A2), ungrouped acute – tertiary referral (A3), major (B) and district groups 1 (C1) and 2 (C2) hospitals that conduct elective surgery. These hospitals account for 98% of all elective surgery recorded as complete in the NSW booking system. Surgery information from smaller hospitals is presented for each peer group under the *‘other’* category.

Download Appendix 2 information by *‘peer group’* in a PDF file

Download Appendix 2 information by *‘peer group’* in an Excel file

Appendix table 2b presents the percentages of elective surgery admissions within the clinically recommended time for each urgency category for October to December 2013. The table is ordered by peer group and includes all principal referral (A1), paediatric specialist (A2), ungrouped acute – tertiary referral (A3), major (B) and district groups 1 (C1) and 2 (C2) hospitals that conduct elective surgery. Surgery information from smaller hospitals is presented for each peer group under the *‘other’* category.

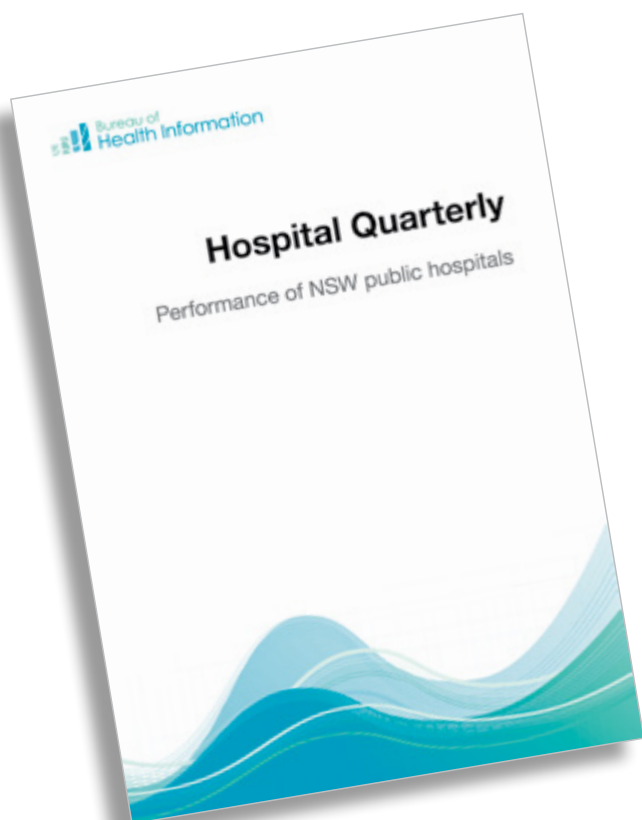
Appendix table 2c presents the median and 90th percentile waiting times (in days) of elective surgery admissions for each urgency category for this quarter. The table is ordered by peer group and includes all principal referral (A1), paediatric specialist (A2), ungrouped acute – tertiary referral (A3), major (B) and district groups 1 (C1) and 2 (C2) hospitals that conduct elective surgery. Surgery information from smaller hospitals is presented for each peer group under the *‘other’* category.

Download our reports

The report, *Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals, October to December 2013* and related reports are available at www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

The suite of products includes:

- Three core modules titled *Admitted Patients*, *Elective Surgery* and *Emergency Departments*
- Appendix tables showing key results by peer group and LHD
- Activity and performance profiles about emergency department care and elective surgery for more than 80 hospitals and NSW as a whole



About the Bureau

The Bureau of Health Information provides the community, healthcare professionals and the NSW Parliament with timely, accurate and comparable information on the performance of the NSW public health system. The work of the Bureau helps to improve and enhance accountability in the NSW health system and assists in ensuring the system benefits the people of NSW.

The Bureau is an independent, board-governed statutory health corporation. The conclusions in this report are those of the Bureau 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.

To contact the Bureau

Telephone: +61 2 8644 2100

Fax: +61 2 8644 2119

Email: enquiries@bhi.nsw.gov.au

Postal address: PO Box 1770
Chatswood New South Wales 2057
Australia

Web: www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

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Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report. Please check the online version at www.bhi.nsw.gov.au for any amendments.