

Women's Wisdom

An analysis of the comments of 10,000 mothers on their recent experiences of labour and birth

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Bureau of Health Information

Produces **independent reports** on the performance of the NSW healthcare system

Manages the **NSW Patient Survey Program**

Asked **270,000 patients** about their experiences of care in the NSW health system in 2017–18

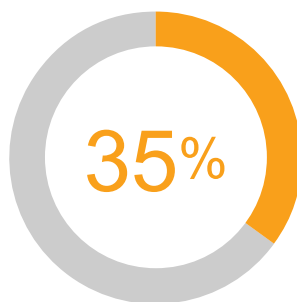
The power of patients' voices, **strengthening accountability** and **informing improvement**

Maternity Care Survey

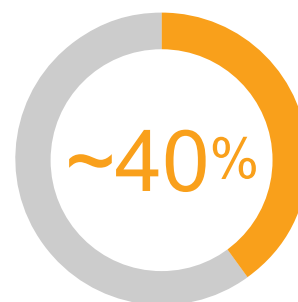
Conducted in 2015 and repeated every two years

About 5,000 women responded in 2017 (almost one in ten women who gave birth in NSW public hospitals that year)

Similar number of respondents and response rate in 2015



Response rate



Completed online

Patients' comments

On the last page of the questionnaire, patients were asked:

What was the **best part of the care** you received from the hospital where you gave birth?

What part of your care provided by the hospital where you gave birth **most needs improving?**

The image shows the final page of the questionnaire, titled 'YOUR FINAL COMMENTS'. It contains two open-ended questions: 'What was the best part of the care you received from the hospital where you gave birth?' and 'What part of your care provided by the hospital where you gave birth most needs improving?'. Below these questions is a 'THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.' section, followed by instructions to return the survey in the reply paid envelope provided or send it in an envelope addressed to the NSW Patient Survey. At the bottom, there is a barcode and the page number 'page 12'.

Data entry and coding

Manual entry of patients' freetext comments by third party (Ipsos):

- patient, staff and ward names were removed.

Coding by professional team at Ipsos:

- analysis by two independent researchers
- in consultation with BHI

Categories and themes:

- eight categories including: staff, facilities, food, communication, treatment, timeliness, admission/discharge and general
- about 100 themes.

Example of one comment and three themes

“All health staff and hospital staff (including cleaners and caterers) were **polite and courteous**. It's hard to narrow down one particular part of my care but the fact I had **complete control over my birth**; immediately after no one rushed and took the time to make sure everyone was ok and every box ticked; and **I was allowed to stay as long as I needed**.”

Category	Comment codes assigned to themes
Staff	Polite courteous, know the hospital from previous visits
Treatment and care	Involvement and input in labour and birth, bonding with baby
Admission / Discharge	Not rushed out / discharged when felt ready

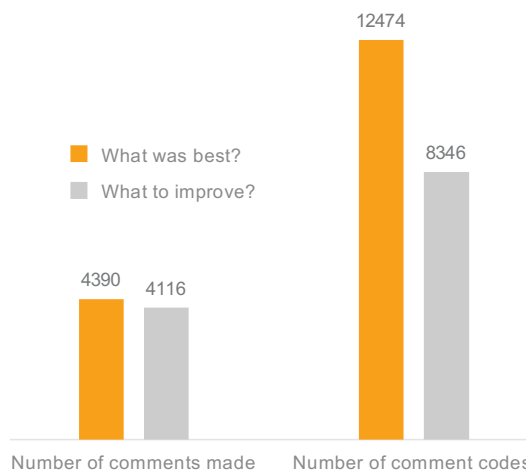
Number of responses

Altogether 4,790 women responded to the survey in 2017:

- 92% answered 'what was best'
- 86% answered 'what could be improved'

These women gave more information on what went well:

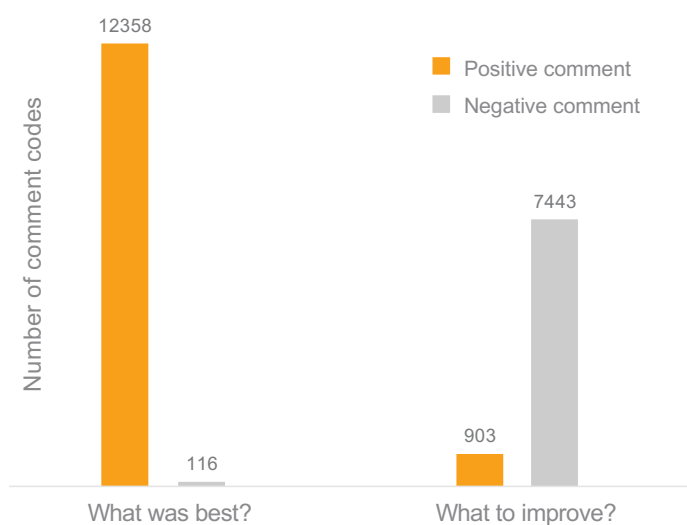
- 'what was best' typically covered almost three themes
- 'what to improve' typically covered two themes.



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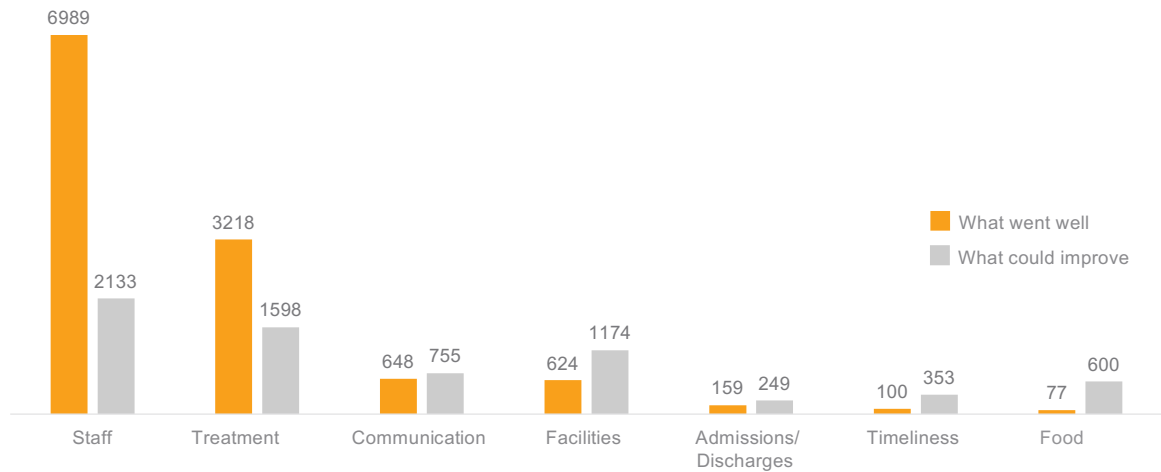
Positive and negative themes in each comment



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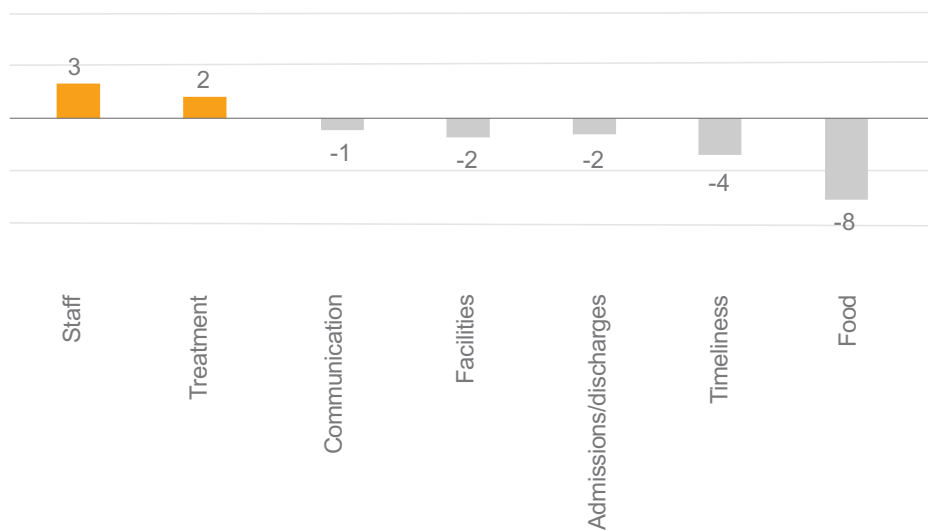
Comments by category



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Ratio of positive to negative codes by category



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Themes: the best parts of care in 2017

Theme	% survey respondents
Fantastic / awesome / exceptional / lovely / midwife(s)	31%
High/highest possible quality of care	14%
Caring and kind midwife(s)	14%
Friendly and helpful midwife(s)	13%
Made to feel safe / at ease / reassured	11%
The experience of giving birth	9%
The professionalism, competency and dedication of staff	9%
Supportive and encouraging staff	7%
Friendly and helpful staff (other than clinical staff)	6%
The postnatal care	6%

What was the best part of the care you received from the hospital where you gave birth?

Examples of comments on midwives as one of the key themes:

“All the midwives were so caring and lovely. I had such a wonderful experience and would recommend the hospital to anyone. I will definitely be having any future babies at this hospital.”

“The midwives were amazing. They were obviously under very heavy workloads and always very busy but were always kind, polite and empathetic.”

“Midwives on the labour and delivery ward were excellent. They did a fantastic job of explaining what was happening and helping keep me calm throughout the birth.”

Themes: about what to improve in 2017

Theme	% survey respondents
Nothing / everything was excellent	12%
Positive comment	7%
Improve communication, information and explanations given	7%
The food	6%
Some midwives uncaring, rude or unfriendly	5%
Closer monitoring by staff (e.g. not leaving patient alone for too long)	5%
Patient perception of some staff lacking skills or knowledge	5%
Pain management	4%
Noise on the ward	4%
Too few staff	4%

What part of your care provided by the hospital where you gave birth most needs improving?

Examples of comments about communication:

“Advice!!! Really needs to be mainstreamed in some way from midwife to midwife. Being my second baby I had some more of an idea but still the advice is terribly conflicting.”

“Better communication from the obstetrician. In my case my obstetrician did not allow me to be in the bath after induction. However, despite my birth plan stating I wanted to be in the bath, it was not communicated to me that this would not be possible.”

“Communication between all doctors. We often had to re-explain our situation to each doctor at appointments and always got conflicting instructions. Midwives after birth regarding breastfeeding were forceful and confusing.”

Comments: comparing patterns from 2017 and 2015

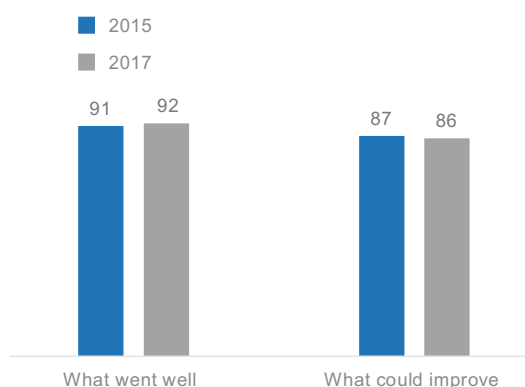
Almost 5000 respondents each year

Small increase in percentage of respondents writing something in response to the what went well

Small decrease in those saying what could improve

Similar themes in top 10 in both years

Percentage of respondents who filled in freetext questions



In summary

Maternity survey respondents more likely to provide written comments:

- More than 90% wrote responses (compared to 75-80% for admitted patient and ED surveys).

Women commented most often on the people who care for them.

Patient comments are an incredibly rich source of information that can enhance the understanding and use of the results as they:

- help provide specific ideas to improve quality of care
- are complementary to descriptive statistics and help see whether a patient's story was an isolated incident or a general problem.
- may be more meaningful to professionals
- allow respondents to identify new issues that are not captured in the closed questions, such as staff competence and feeling safe during their hospital care.

Find out more...

The BHI website features:

a wide range of results and information products from across the NSW Patient Survey Program.

our interactive data portal, Healthcare Observer, which lets you explore healthcare performance in specific hospitals and facilities, as well as ambulance activity and performance.

bhi.nsw.gov.au



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Thank you

Our thanks to the mothers who generously provided insights into their maternity care experience.

Thanks also to the midwives, doctors and other healthcare professionals delivering care to these mothers and many more patients every day.