

Are experiences of maternity services in NSW improving?

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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** in the NSW health system in 2017–18

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

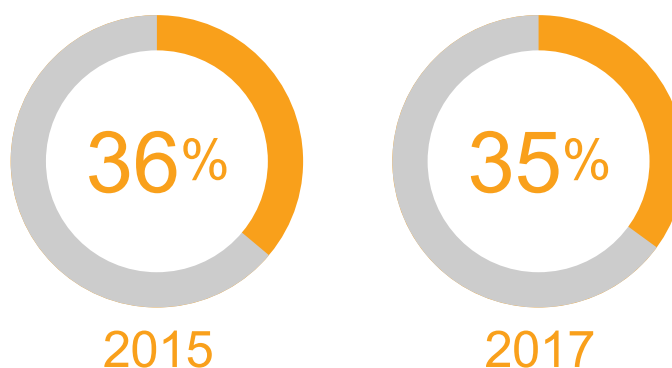
Maternity Care Survey

Conducted in 2015 and 2017

Almost 10,000 women have shared their experiences of maternity care in NSW public hospitals

Responses provided by mail and online three months after delivery – about 40% online

Response rates



Are experiences of maternity services in NSW improving?

Were there changes in reported experience?

What are the methodological considerations when comparing results over time?





Maternity Care Survey

Characteristics of the women and their deliveries

| | 2015 | 2017 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Average age | 31 years | 32 years |
| Caesarean section (non emergency) | 26% | 27% |
| Vaginal birth (without instrument) | 62% | 61% |
| Given birth before | 55% | 53% |
| Labour induced | 34% | 38% |

Overall ratings of care

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



▲ Up from 56% in 2015

Did experiences improve?

We compared results across 2015 and 2017 for 58 questions, covering:

- antenatal care
- care during labour and birth
- postnatal care in the hospital
- follow-up care at home.

We made the comparison to see...

- Did experiences of care improve?
- For which measures or hospitals?
- Does it depend on how we define improvement?

The screenshot shows the 'ANTENATAL CARE (BEFORE THE BIRTH)' section of the survey. It includes questions about the timing of the first antenatal visit, the frequency of visits, the type of care received (shared care, GP, or hospital), the provider of care (midwife, doctor, or other), the organization of care, and the patient's satisfaction with the care. The survey is titled 'NSW Patient Survey: Maternity Care' and is page 3 of 3.

Measuring changes over time

Descriptively

Differences in the percentage reporting the most positive response category

Statistically

Overlapping confidence intervals of 'top category' response

Model two years of data combined to model the top category response:

- is the year significant after adjusting for age and parity?

Did results improve for NSW? Yes!

Descriptively

- 52 of 58 measures had some improvement (difference > 0)
- On average at the state level there was an improvement of 2 percentage points
- Five measures improved by more than five percentage points
- No measures decreased by that margin.

Statistically

- Seven out of 58 measures improved based on comparison of confidence intervals
- 17 measures improved statistically after adjusting for age and parity
- No measures decreased significantly.

Improvements across aspects of maternity care

Antenatal care (three measures)

- importance of weight gain, risks of alcohol, discussion of emotional health

Care during labour and birth (two)

- confidence and trust in midwives/doctors, kindness and caring

Care following delivery (five)

- discussion of birth, self-care, clear explanations, assistance, kind and caring

Cleanliness and food (four)

- hand hygiene, clean bathrooms, access to food, food suitable to needs

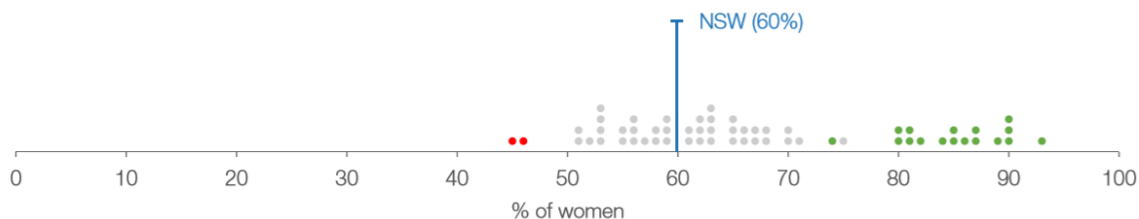
Leaving the hospital/overall (three)

- right length of stay, knew who to contact, overall hospital care

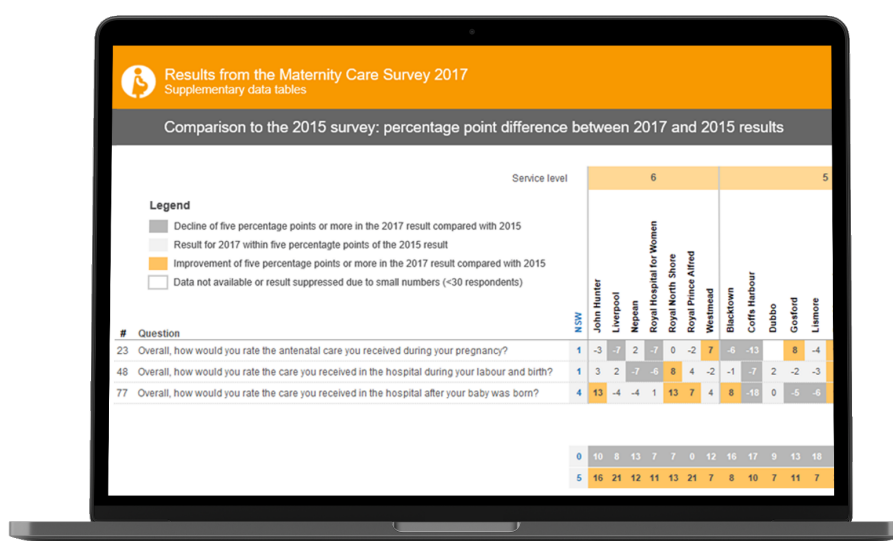
Overall ratings of care: hospital variation and changes

Hospital result relative to NSW public hospitals: • Less favourable • Not significantly different • More favourable

a. Overall, hospital care after baby was born was 'very good'



Supplementary data tables: change from previous survey



Measuring hospital improvement across 58 measures

Descriptively

Number of 'big' differences of five percentage points

Average percentage point difference

Statistically

Number of times the 2017 result was significantly higher than the 2015 result after adjusting for age and parity

Which hospitals improved the most?

| | Descriptive | | Statistical |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Average percentage point difference | # measures improved 5+ percentage points | # measures improved adjusting for age/parity |
| Across all available measures | | | |
| NSW | 1.9 | 5 | 17 |
| Gunnedah | 9.3 | 21 | 5 |
| South East Regional | 8.6 | 37 | 18 |
| Wagga Wagga | 7.4 | 31 | 13 |
| Auburn | 7 | 33 | 7 |
| Campbelltown | 7 | 32 | 0 |
| Port Macquarie | 5.8 | 31 | 2 |
| The Tweed | 4.9 | 22 | 6 |
| Manly | 4.8 | 25 | 5 |
| Kempsey | 4.8 | 19 | 5 |
| Lithgow | 3.7 | 19 | 5 |
| Tamworth | 2.2 | 18 | 5 |
| Canterbury | 5.6 | 29 | 1 |
| Fairfield | 5.5 | 29 | 3 |

Hospitals that improved for all methods

South East Regional, Wagga Wagga, Auburn

- all had marked improvements based on all methods

Measures that improved significantly at facility level tended to improve by 10 percentage points or more

Trade offs in assessing changes over time

Descriptively

- ✓ shows patterns for hospitals with smaller numbers of respondents
- ✗ results based on fewer respondents less stable over time
- ✗ changes may be related to change in patient characteristics
- ✗ averages and differences based on all measures give more importance to outliers

Statistically

- ✓ a change is unlikely due to chance
- ✓ more robust method accounts for changes in mothers' characteristics
- ✗ small facilities with fewer respondents rarely change significantly

Considerations for comparing over time

Balancing both statistical and descriptive analysis for use at State/hospital levels

Looking at both positive/negative response categories, and improvements/declines

Consider the result and possible room for improvement, or is it already very good

Summarising across measures or focusing on a few

- Some questions are only asked of a small group of respondents
- Which measures are most important to patients and their families, or seen as actionable by providers?

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



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.