



Emergency Department Patient Survey Results 2014–15

More than 18,000 patients who attended a NSW public hospital emergency department (ED) in the 12 months from April 2014 to March 2015 told us about their experiences of care. They provided feedback about how they were treated, facilities, amenities, and the outcomes of their care.

This *Snapshot Report* provides results for 29 questions from the survey. It also highlights some of the additional information available on the Bureau of Health Information (BHI) interactive online portal, Healthcare Observer.

Overall experience

Seven in 10 patients would speak highly of the ED

Most patients said, overall, the care they received in the ED was either 'very good' (58%) or 'good' (31%). Seven in 10 patients (69%) said they would 'speak highly' of the ED to friends and family.

Healthcare Observer provides detailed results from the Emergency Department Patient Survey at bhi.nsw.gov.au/healthcare_observer

It allows users to:

- Explore responses to over 90 questions
- Compare and contrast what patients said about their experiences of care in NSW and across local health districts, peer groups and more than 80 individual hospitals
- Discover how results vary according to urgency and by patient characteristics such as age, gender, education, language spoken at home, long-standing health conditions and self-reported health status
- Explore how survey results changed between 2013–14 and 2014–15.

66% of patients said ED care **definitely** helped them



58% of patients said the care they received in the ED was **very good** and 31% said it was **good**



69% of patients would **speak highly** of the ED



71% of patients said they **definitely** had trust and confidence in doctors





Access and timeliness

Most patients spent less than four hours in the ED

Upon arrival at the ED, patients are assessed for urgency and assigned a triage category. Across NSW, 69% of patients said they were triaged within 15 minutes of arrival.

Following triage, guidelines recommend treatment begins within two minutes for triage category 1, within 10 minutes for triage category 2, within 30 minutes for triage category 3, within 60 minutes for triage category 4 and within two hours for triage category 5.

Patients who were triaged to more urgent categories said they were treated more quickly than those in less urgent categories. Among triage categories 3 and 4[†], 68% of patients said they were treated within 30 minutes and one hour time periods respectively; and among triage category 5 patients, 85% said they were treated within two hours.

Among patients who waited in the ED, 20% said their symptoms got 'slightly worse', and 6% said they got 'much worse', while they were waiting.

Two-thirds of patients (65%) said they spent less than four hours in the ED.

- Healthcare Observer shows that 81% of patients said they were not delayed leaving the ED.

Physical environment and comfort

EDs were generally rated as 'clean' or 'very clean'

Two in 10 patients (19%) said they had a 'big problem' finding parking close to the ED while a further 26% said they had a 'small problem' doing so.

Almost all patients said the waiting and treatment areas were either 'very clean' (54%) or 'fairly clean' (42%).

- Healthcare Observer shows that 76% of patients said signposting about the location of the ED was 'definitely' easy to follow.

Communication and information

Half of all patients said they were told 'completely' about medication side effects

Most patients said ED health professionals 'always' explained things in way they could understand (79%) and they were given the 'right amount' of information about their condition or treatment (85%). Six in 10 (57%) said ED health professionals 'completely' told them about signs or symptoms to watch out for after they went home. About half (49%) said ED health professionals 'completely' told them about medication side effects to watch out for.

- Healthcare Observer shows that 43% of patients said reception staff told them how long their wait for treatment would be. Most patients (85%) said ED health professionals explained the purpose of medication in a 'completely' understandable way.

Respect and dignity

ED staff were generally polite, courteous and respectful

The majority of patients said they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity while in the ED (83%); doctors were 'always' polite and courteous (89%); and they were 'always' given enough privacy (77%).

- Healthcare Observer shows that almost eight in 10 patients said the politeness and courtesy of reception staff was 'very good' (76%) and that ED health professionals 'always' introduced themselves (79%).

[†] Results for triage category 1 and 2 patients are not reported separately as survey response options did not align with guideline-endorsed treatment times.



Engagement and participation

Six in 10 patients said they were 'definitely' involved in decisions about their care

Among those who said they were well enough to participate in decisions about their care and treatment, six in 10 patients (62%) said they were 'definitely' involved.

Comprehensive and whole-person care

For patients discharged home, two-thirds said their home situation was 'completely' taken into account

When planning their discharge, 66% of patients said staff 'completely' took their home situation into account.

- Healthcare Observer shows that 81% of patients said ED health professionals were 'always' kind and caring. When asked about experiences of ED care among children and young patients, 72% of parents said ED staff provided care and understanding appropriate to the needs of their child.
-

Coordination and continuity

Eight in 10 patients said they were told who to contact if worried after discharge

About half of patients (53%) said ED health professionals worked together in a 'very good' way. Eight in 10 said they did not receive any contradictory information from ED health professionals (82%); and were told who to contact if worried about their condition or treatment after discharge (82%). Fewer said they were given 'completely' enough information about how to manage their care at home (67%) and were 'definitely' told by ED health professionals when to return to normal activity (53%).

- Healthcare Observer shows that 40% of patients said ED doctors 'definitely' knew their medical history. Six in 10 patients (57%) said someone checked on them while waiting to be treated.
-

Assistance and responsiveness

Less than half of patients said they could 'completely' discuss their worries and fears with a health professional

Six in 10 patients said they were 'always' able to get assistance or advice from health professionals (63%); and health professionals 'definitely' did everything they could to help manage their pain (64%). Less than half (43%) said they could 'completely' discuss their worries and fears with a health professional.

- Healthcare Observer shows, among patients who needed an interpreter, 37% said they 'always' had one provided. Two-thirds of patients (65%) said their family 'definitely' had enough opportunity to talk to ED staff when needed.
-

Safety and hygiene

Most patients felt safe during their ED visit

About half of all patients (54%) said they 'always' saw health professionals wash their hands or use hand gel before touching them. Most patients said they felt either 'very safe' (72%) or 'fairly safe' (26%) during their visit to the ED.

Trust and confidence

The majority of patients had trust and confidence in ED staff

Seven in 10 patients said they 'definitely' had trust and confidence in doctors (71%) and nurses (74%).

- Healthcare Observer shows among those patients who experienced a complication or problem, 37% said hospital staff were 'completely' open about it.
-

Outcomes

Most patients said ED care 'definitely' helped them

Two-thirds of patients (66%) said the care and treatment they received in the ED 'definitely' helped them.



Emergency Department Patient Survey summary

For almost all of the 29 questions included in this *Snapshot Report*, a majority of patients gave the most positive answer.

Questions addressing issues of respect and dignity elicited the most positive responses. The most negative responses related to questions about information provided upon leaving the ED.

Selection of measures

ASPECT OF CARE	QUESTION	RESPONSES
Overall experience	Overall, how would you rate the care you received while in the ED?	<p>58% 31% 7% 2% 2%</p> <p>■ Very good ■ Good ■ Neither good nor poor ■ Poor ■ Very poor</p>
	If asked about your experience in the ED by friends and family how would you respond?	<p>69% 24% 6%</p> <p>■ Would speak highly ■ Neither highly/critical ■ Would be critical</p>
Access and timeliness	Did you stay until you received treatment?	<p>97%</p> <p>■ Received treatment ■ Left before treatment</p>
	While you were waiting to be treated, did your symptoms or condition get worse?	<p>74% 20% 6%</p> <p>■ No ■ Yes, slightly worse ■ Yes, much worse</p>
	In total, how long did you spend in the ED?	<p>65% 35%</p> <p>■ Less than 4 hours ■ 4 hours or more</p>
Physical environment and comfort	Was there a problem in finding a parking place near to the ED?	<p>55% 26% 19%</p> <p>■ No problem ■ Yes, a small problem ■ Yes, a big problem</p>
	How clean were the waiting and treatment areas in the ED?	<p>54% 42% 4% 4%</p> <p>■ Very clean ■ Fairly clean ■ Not very clean ■ Not at all clean</p>
Communication and information	Did the ED health professionals explain things in a way you could understand?	<p>79% 18% 3%</p> <p>■ Yes, always ■ Yes, sometimes ■ No</p>
	During your visit to the ED, how much information about your condition or treatment was given to you?	<p>85% 14% 1%</p> <p>■ Right amount ■ Too much ■ Not enough</p>
	Did an ED health professional tell you about medication side effects to watch for?	<p>49% 22% 28%</p> <p>■ Yes, completely ■ Yes, to some extent ■ No</p>
	Thinking about your illness or treatment, did an ED health professional tell you about what signs or symptoms to watch out for after you went home?	<p>57% 25% 18%</p> <p>■ Yes, completely ■ Yes, to some extent ■ No</p>
Respect and dignity	Were the ED doctors polite and courteous?	<p>89% 10% 1%</p> <p>■ Yes, always ■ Yes, sometimes ■ No</p>
	Did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity while you were in the ED?	<p>83% 14% 3%</p> <p>■ Yes, always ■ Yes, sometimes ■ No</p>
	Were you given enough privacy during your visit to the ED?	<p>77% 19% 5%</p> <p>■ Yes, always ■ Yes, sometimes ■ No</p>



Specifically, 28% of patients said ED health professionals did not tell them about medication side effects to watch for, and 22% said they were not told when they could resume usual activities.

Analyses and results described in the remainder of this report refer to the most positive response category only.

For full results go to bhi.nsw.gov.au/healthcare_observer

ASPECT OF CARE	QUESTION	RESPONSES
Engagement and participation	Were you involved, as much as you wanted to be, in decisions about your care and treatment?	<p>62% 32% 6%</p> <p>■ Yes, definitely ■ Yes, to some extent ■ No</p>
	Did ED staff take your family and home situation into account when planning your discharge?	<p>66% 22% 12%</p> <p>■ Yes, completely ■ Yes, to some extent ■ No</p>
Comprehensive and whole-person care	How would you rate how the ED health professionals worked together?	<p>53% 38% 7%</p> <p>■ Very good ■ Good ■ Neither good nor poor ■ Poor ■ Very poor</p>
	Did you ever receive contradictory information about your condition or treatment from ED health professionals?	<p>82% 18%</p> <p>■ No ■ Yes</p>
	Thinking about when you left the ED, were you given enough information about how to manage your care at home?	<p>67% 25% 8%</p> <p>■ Yes, completely ■ Yes, to some extent ■ No</p>
	Did ED staff tell you who to contact if you were worried about your condition or treatment after you left hospital?	<p>82% 18%</p> <p>■ Yes ■ No</p>
	Did an ED health professional tell you when you could resume your usual activities, such as when you could go back to work or drive a car?	<p>53% 25% 22%</p> <p>■ Yes, definitely ■ Yes, to some extent ■ No</p>
Coordination and continuity	Were you able to get assistance or advice from an ED health professional when you needed it?	<p>63% 31% 6%</p> <p>■ Yes, always ■ Yes, sometimes ■ No</p>
	Did an ED health professional discuss your worries or fears with you?	<p>43% 38% 18%</p> <p>■ Yes, completely ■ Yes, to some extent ■ No</p>
	Do you think the ED health professionals did everything they could to help manage your pain?	<p>64% 27% 9%</p> <p>■ Yes, definitely ■ Yes, to some extent ■ No</p>
Assistance and responsiveness	Did you see ED health professionals wash their hands, or use hand gel to clean their hands, before touching you?	<p>54% 11% 13% 21%</p> <p>■ Yes, always ■ Yes, sometimes ■ No ■ Can't remember</p>
	How safe did you feel during your visit to the ED?	<p>72% 26%</p> <p>■ Very safe ■ Fairly safe ■ Not very safe ■ Not at all safe</p>
Safety and hygiene	Did you have confidence and trust in the ED doctors treating you?	<p>71% 25% 4%</p> <p>■ Yes, definitely ■ Yes, to some extent ■ No</p>
	Did you have confidence and trust in the ED nurses treating you?	<p>74% 23%</p> <p>■ Yes, definitely ■ Yes, to some extent ■ No</p>
Trust and confidence	Did the care and treatment received in the ED help you?	<p>66% 26% 7%</p> <p>■ Yes, definitely ■ Yes, to some extent ■ No, not at all</p>
Outcomes		



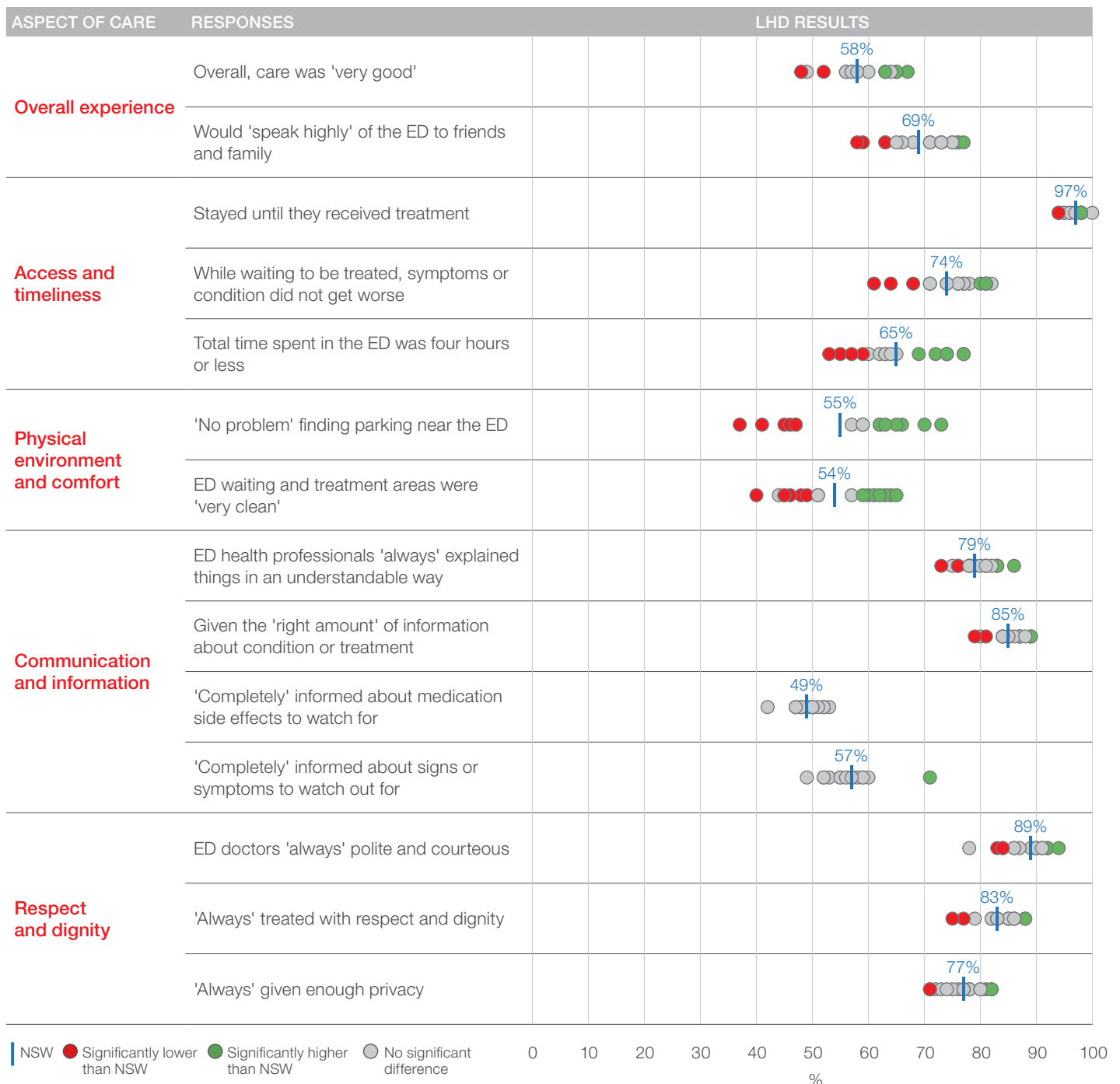
Variation in results by local health district

The figure below shows how patients rated their experiences of care, by local health district (LHD), focusing on the most positive response option for each question.

LHD results are coloured green when they are significantly higher than NSW and red when they are significantly lower than NSW.

The range of LHD results was widest for questions related to the physical environment and access to ED care.

Selection of measures

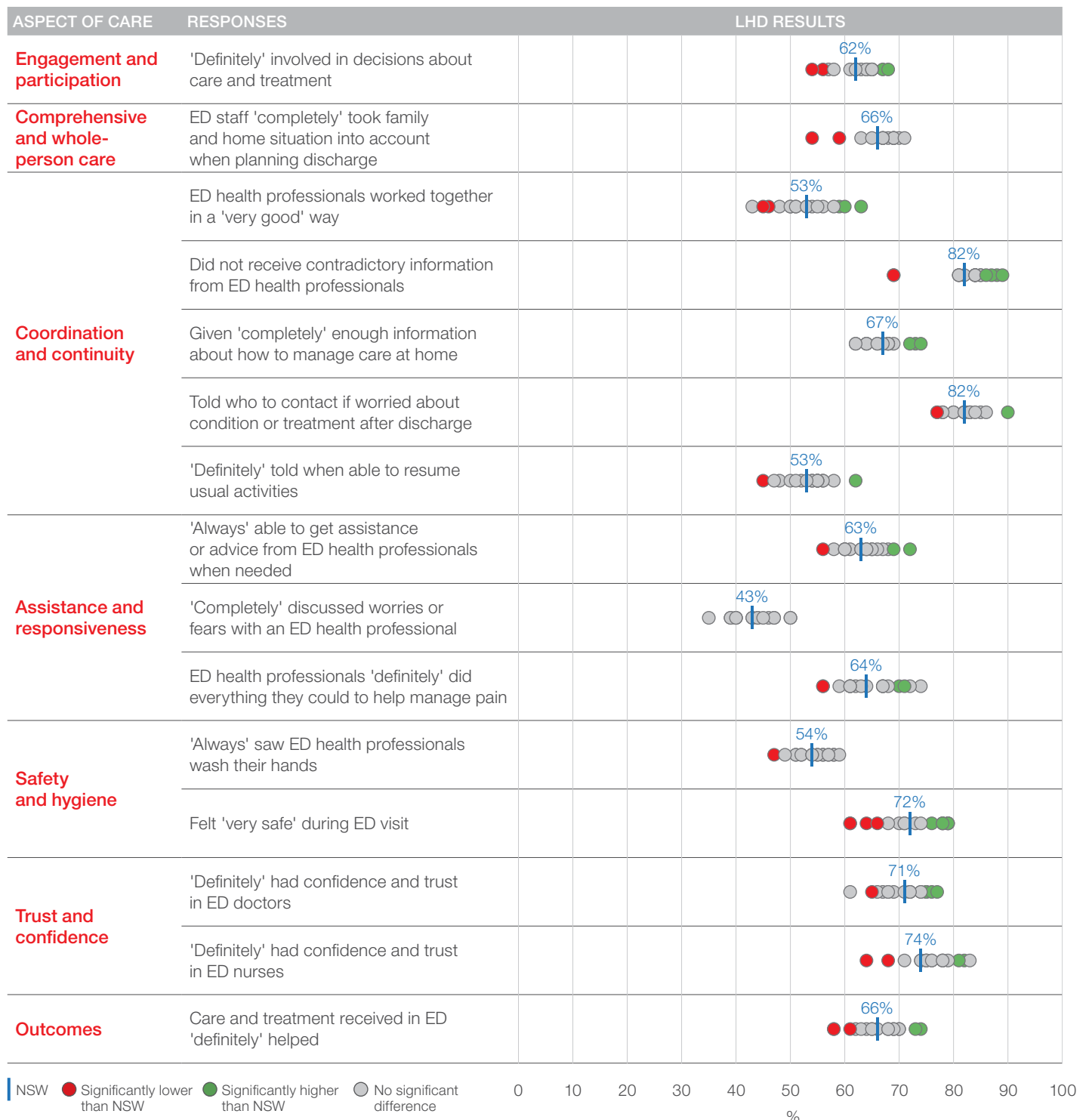




In particular, the percentage of patients who said there was 'no problem' finding parking ranged from 37% in Western Sydney to 73% in Southern NSW – a 36 percentage point range. Another question with a wide range of results across LHDs related to the cleanliness of the ED waiting and treatment areas.

Questions that recorded the least variation across LHDs related to communication with ED staff.

For full results go to bhi.nsw.gov.au/healthcare_observer





Patterns of results by local health district

This figure summarises significant results at a local health district (LHD) level. Each numbered segment within a circle corresponds to a survey question.

Those questions for which an LHD result was significantly higher than NSW are coloured green, while those with results significantly lower than NSW are coloured red. Summarising survey results at an LHD level in this way reveals patterns of performance across aspects of care as well as across geographies.

Summary of LHD results compared with NSW results (based on most positive response category)

Overall experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overall, care was 'very good' 2. Would 'speak highly' of the ED to friends and family
Access and timeliness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stayed until they received treatment 2. While waiting to be treated, symptoms or condition did not get worse 3. Total time spent in the ED was four hours or less
Physical environment and comfort	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'No problem' finding parking near the ED 2. ED waiting and treatment areas were 'very clean'
Communication and information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ED health professionals 'always' explained things in an understandable way 2. Given the 'right amount' of information about condition or treatment 3. 'Completely' informed about medication side effects to watch for 4. 'Completely' informed about signs or symptoms to watch out for
Respect and dignity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ED doctors 'always' polite and courteous 2. 'Always' treated with respect and dignity 3. 'Always' given enough privacy
Engagement and participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Definitely' involved in decisions about care and treatment
Comprehensive and whole-person care	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ED staff 'completely' took family and home situation into account when planning discharge
Coordination and continuity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ED health professionals worked together in a 'very good' way 2. Did not receive contradictory information from ED health professionals 3. Given 'completely' enough information about how to manage care at home 4. Told who to contact if worried about condition or treatment after discharge 5. 'Definitely' told when able to resume usual activities
Assistance and responsiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Always' able to get assistance or advice from ED health professionals when needed 2. 'Completely' discussed worries or fears with an ED health professional 3. ED health professionals 'definitely' did everything they could to help manage pain
Safety and hygiene	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Always' saw ED health professionals wash their hands 2. Felt 'very safe' during ED visit
Trust and confidence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Definitely' had confidence and trust in ED doctors 2. 'Definitely' had confidence and trust in ED nurses
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Care and treatment received in ED 'definitely' helped



Patients in Mid North Coast and Northern Sydney were more positive for 19 and 13 of the 29 questions respectively.

Patients in Western Sydney and South Western Sydney were less positive for 22 and 18 of the 29 questions respectively.



Significantly higher than NSW
 Significantly lower than NSW
 No significant difference
 Data suppressed (small sample size)

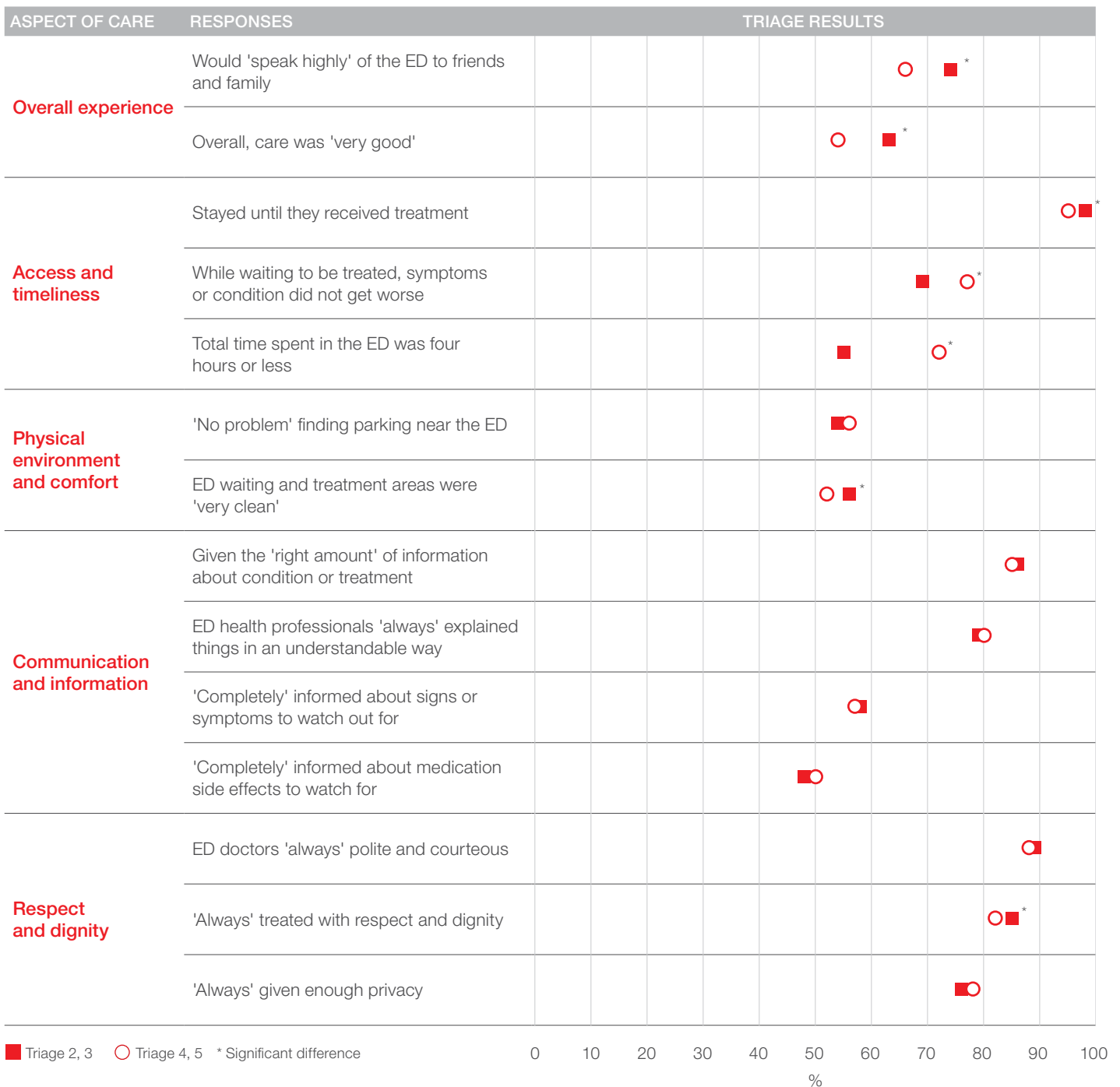


Patterns of results by triage category

Upon arrival at an ED, patients are allocated to one of five urgency categories, from triage category 1 (highest urgency) to triage category 5 (lowest urgency).

The figure below contrasts the experiences of triage category 2 and 3 patients with those of triage category 4 and 5 patients. For 12 of the 29 questions, triage category 2 and 3 patients responded significantly more positively than triage category 4 and 5 patients.

Selection of measures

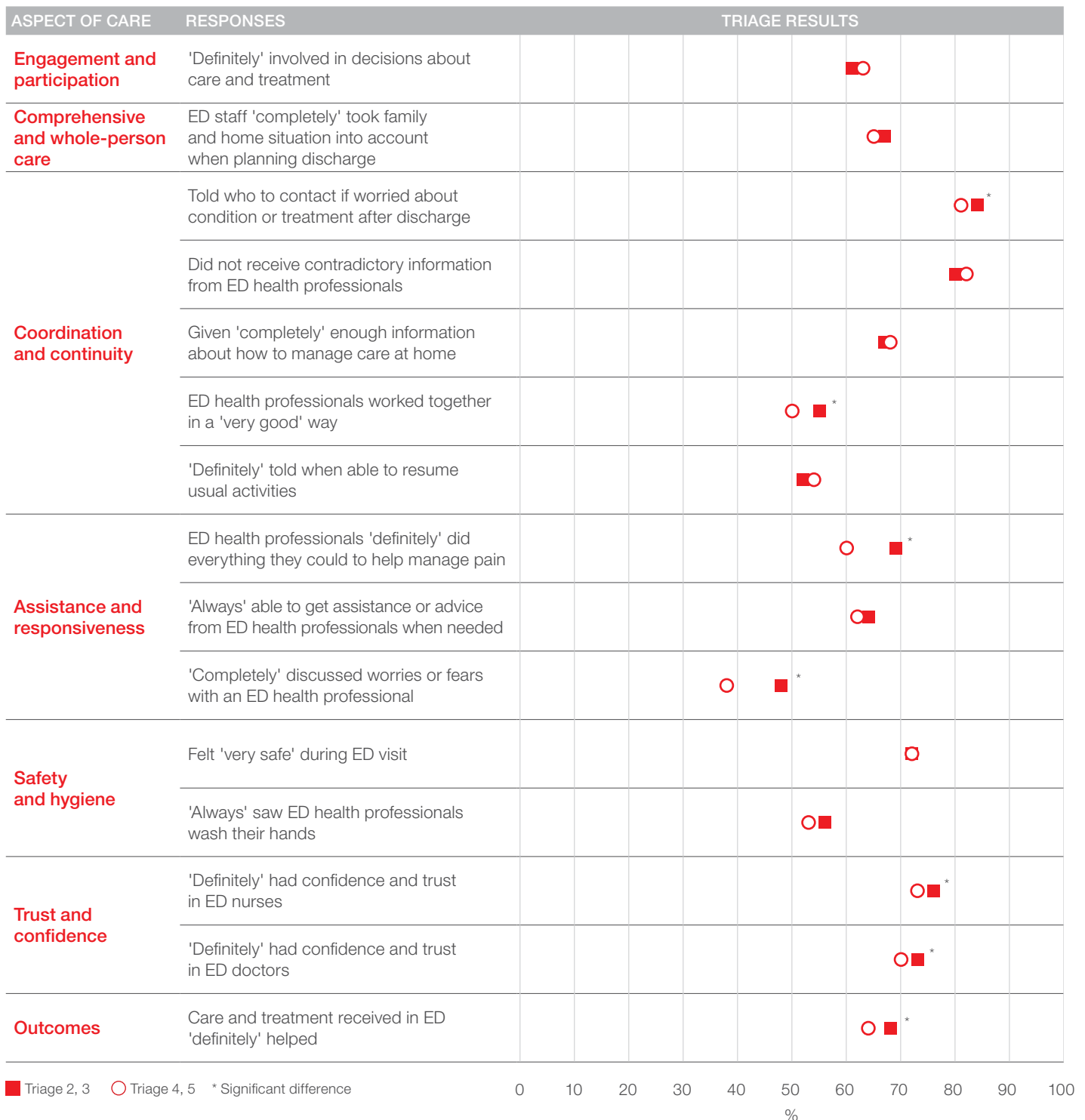




This difference was most marked for questions regarding overall experience, and assistance and responsiveness in the ED.

Conversely, triage category 4 and 5 patients were more likely to say the total time they spent in the ED was four hours or less and that their condition did not get worse while they waited.

For full results go to bhi.nsw.gov.au/healthcare_observer





Patient perspectives on timeliness

ED patients are ‘triaged’ using an assessment process that categorises the urgency of their case. Seven in 10 patients (69%) said they were triaged within 15 minutes of arrival at the ED, while 14% said they waited more than 30 minutes.

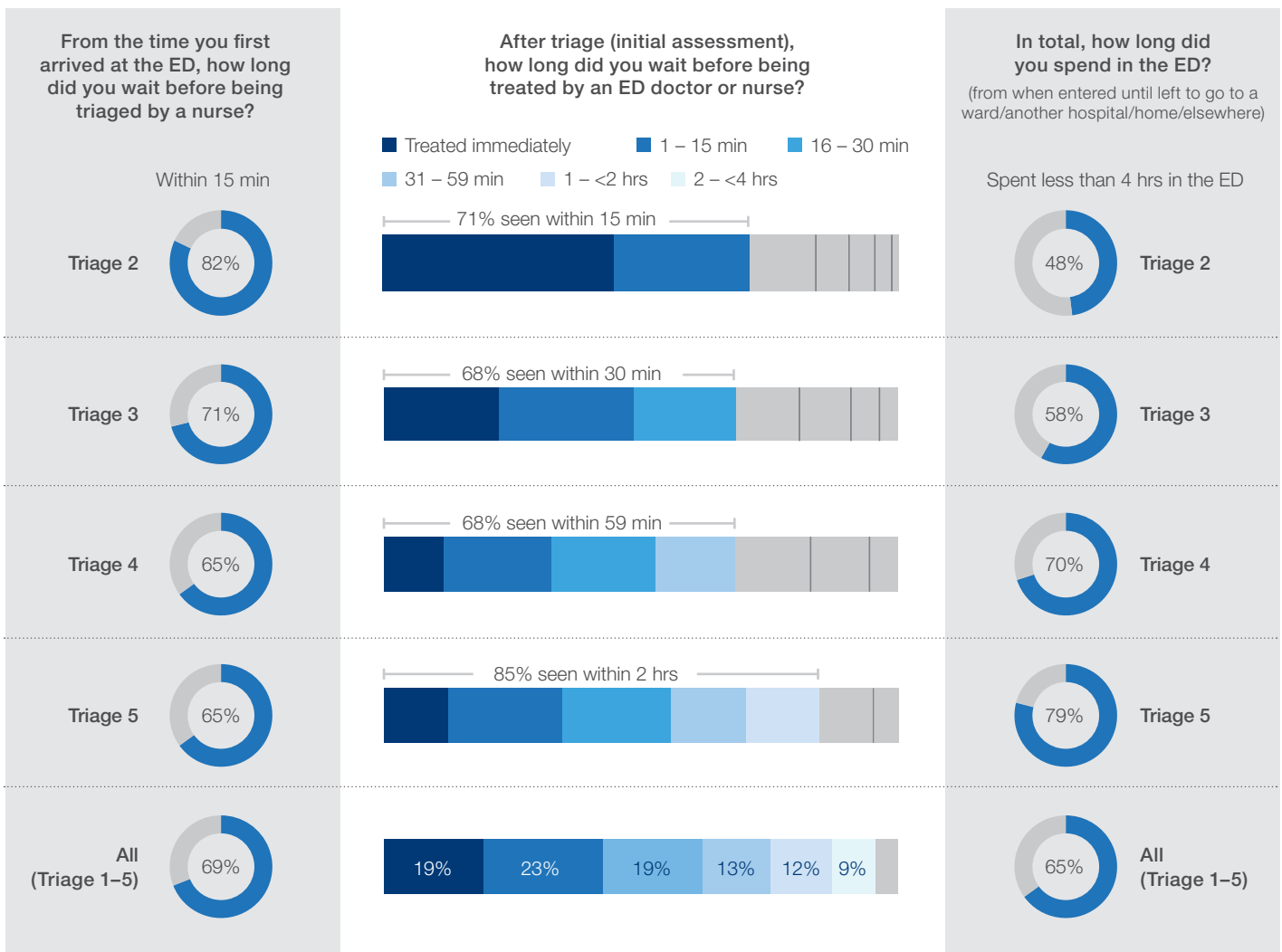
The maximum period within which treatment should start is specified according to triage category. The figure below presents for all triage categories, and individually for categories 2 to 5, the percentage of patients who were triaged within 15 minutes of arrival at the ED; who said their wait was within recommended times; and who spent less than four hours in the ED.

Following triage assessment, among triage category 3 and 4[†] patients, 68% waited 30 minutes and less than one hour respectively, to be treated by an ED doctor or nurse. Among triage category 5 patients, 85% waited less than two hours to be treated.

While waiting to be treated, 57% of patients said ED staff checked on their condition and 43% said they were told by reception staff how long they would have to wait. Three-quarters of patients (74%) said their symptoms or conditions did not get worse while waiting for treatment to begin.

Overall, 65% of patients spent less than four hours in the ED. Among patients in less urgent triage categories, a higher proportion left the ED within four hours.

Patient perspectives about timeliness in the ED



[†] Results for triage category 1 patients are not reported separately due to small numbers and the impact that a high level of urgency (e.g. level of consciousness) has on patient experiences and recall.



Comparisons over time

With two years of patient survey data regarding visits to an ED between April 2013 and March 2015, it is possible to analyse results for meaningful trends and changes over time for 38 questions.

In NSW, there were 14 questions for which there was a statistically significant increase in the proportion of patients choosing the most positive response category.

The greatest improvements were seen in the percentage of patients who said, overall, care in the ED was very good (from 52% to 58%), they were given enough privacy (from 69% to 77%), ED health professionals told them about signs and symptoms to watch out for (from 51% to 57%) and staff took their family and home situation into account when planning for discharge (from 58% to 66%). Across local health districts (LHDs)*, Sydney Children's Hospitals Network recorded a significant increase for nine questions.

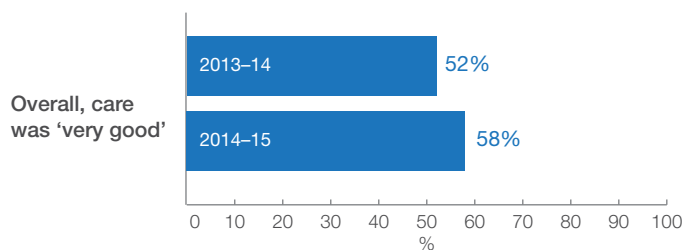
Significant changes from 2013–14 to 2014–15, NSW and LHDs

Summary table

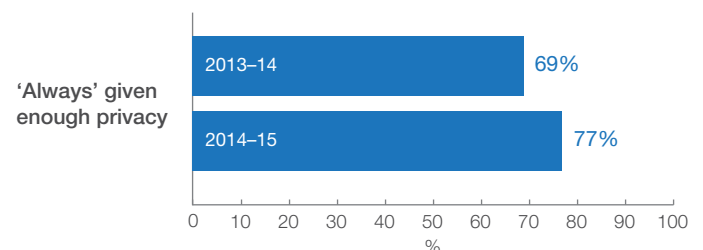
	NSW	Central Coast	Hunter New England	Illawarra Shoalhaven	Mid North Coast	Murrumbidgee	Nepean Blue Mountains	Northern NSW	South Eastern Sydney	South Western Sydney	Southern NSW	St Vincent's Health Network	Sydney	Sydney Children's Hospitals Network	Western NSW	Western Sydney
Number of questions with an increase in the proportion of responses in the most positive category	14	5	3	2	5	5	0	1	5	4	0	0	4	9	3	2
Number of questions with a decrease in the proportion of responses in the most positive category	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

* Far West LHD is not included as there was insufficient data to conduct significance tests.

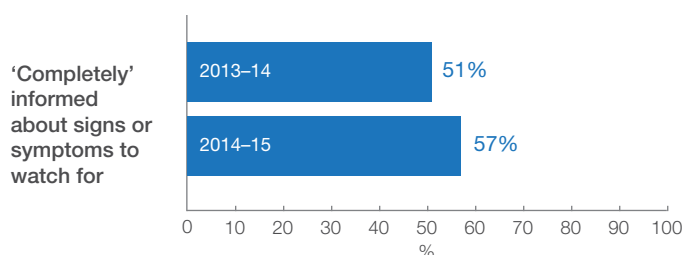
Key questions



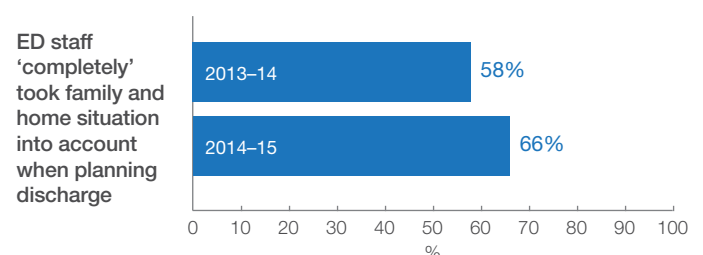
The LHDs that showed the most improvement were: Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, Murrumbidgee, South Eastern Sydney



The LHDs that showed the most improvement were: Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, South Western Sydney, Illawarra Shoalhaven, Western Sydney



The LHDs that showed the most improvement were: Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, Central Coast, Hunter New England



The LHDs that showed the most improvement were: Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, South Eastern Sydney, Western NSW



About the survey

The 2014–15 Emergency Department Patient Survey, consisted of more than 90 questions. Questionnaires were mailed on a monthly basis to patients who visited an ED between April 2014 and March 2015. During this period, 80,900 surveys were mailed and 18,301 completed surveys were received (adjusted response rate of 27%).

In line with international best practice, the survey focused on patient experience rather than patient satisfaction. Questions are designed to ask patients about what happened to them to better support comparisons between different hospitals.

Survey results were weighted by patient age and mode of separation in order to be representative of patients within each hospital.

Results are deemed to be significantly different where the 95% confidence intervals of two estimates do not overlap (pages 6–7, 9–11). Statistically significant trends (page 13) are based on simple linear regression and are reported where at least six quarters of results were available and the coefficient of determination R^2 was at least 0.6.

All results for all questions are available on Healthcare Observer at bhi.nsw.gov.au/healthcare_observer

About the Bureau of Health Information

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) is a board-governed organisation that provides independent information about the performance of the NSW public healthcare system.

Acknowledgements

BHI would like to thank the following external advisors who contributed to the review of this report:

- Colleagues from the NSW Ministry of Health
- Raj Verma, Agency for Clinical Innovation
- Dr Karen Luxford, Clinical Excellence Commission.

Contact BHI

Telephone: +61 2 9464 4444

Email: BHI-enq@health.nsw.gov.au

Level 11, Sage Building, 67 Albert Avenue, Chatswood, NSW, 2067

bhi.nsw.gov.au

Healthcare Observer

Healthcare Observer lets you explore, analyse and download information about the performance of the NSW healthcare system.

Access BHI's latest data releases by visiting bhi.nsw.gov.au/healthcare_observer



State Health Publication Number (BHI) 160050

© Copyright Bureau of Health Information 2016

This work is copyright. It may be reproduced in whole or in part for study or training purposes subject to the inclusion of an acknowledgement of the source. It may not be reproduced for commercial usage or sale. Reproduction for purposes other than those indicated above requires written permission from the Bureau of Health Information, Level 11, Sage Building, 67 Albert Avenue, Chatswood, NSW 2067.

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.