

The Insights Series

Patients' experiences of hospital care over time

Kind and compassionate care, effective communication and information, and discharge planning

This report provides insights into more than 200,000 patients' experiences in NSW public hospitals since 2018 in areas critical to the delivery of high quality care.

More than 115,000 patients told us about their experiences in the Adult Admitted Patient Survey from 2018 to 2023 and more than 100,000 in the Emergency Department Patient Survey from 2018–19 to 2022–23.

The report focuses on those patients' feedback for survey questions relating to their experiences of:

- kind and compassionate care
- effective communication and clear information, enabling them to make informed and shared decisions about their own care (health literacy)
- being empowered with the right information and support to ensure successful transition from hospital to home or another service (discharge planning).

Each aligns directly with high priority areas of healthcare delivery as outlined in NSW Health's **Future Health: Guiding the next decade of health care in NSW 2022–2032** roadmap which commits to bringing kindness and compassion into the delivery of personalised and culturally safe care, driving greater health literacy and partnering with patients to make decisions about their own care.

Evidence suggests improvements in these experiences are likely to enhance clinical effectiveness and reduce the risk of readmission.

The report shows trends over time for selected measures with results for additional measures provided in supplementary data tables. The report materials include questions that were asked of patients in each year of the reporting periods.

The graphs and tables highlight results for NSW and those local health districts and specialty networks which improved or declined significantly over time and/or where their results were consistently higher or lower than other districts over the period. This illustrates where care is being delivered most effectively in these priority areas and where improvement efforts can be focused. For more information on interpreting results, see page 3.

This report covers a period when COVID–19 continued to present challenges to health services to varying degrees. This may have affected experiences of care including in relation to visitor restrictions and additional preventative measures to ensure the safety of staff and patients.



The value of patient feedback

Every year, the Bureau of Health Information (BHI) asks thousands of people to tell us about their experiences in the NSW public healthcare system as part of the NSW Patient Survey Program. Each patient survey provides invaluable information about the quality of care from the perspective of the people using the healthcare system.

Patients provide first-hand insights for healthcare professionals and system managers into what hospitals and healthcare services are doing well and where they could improve. Results provide fair and reliable trends and comparisons for performance management, program evaluation and health service improvement.

For more information, and to explore results, visit the **BHI website**.

How to interpret the results

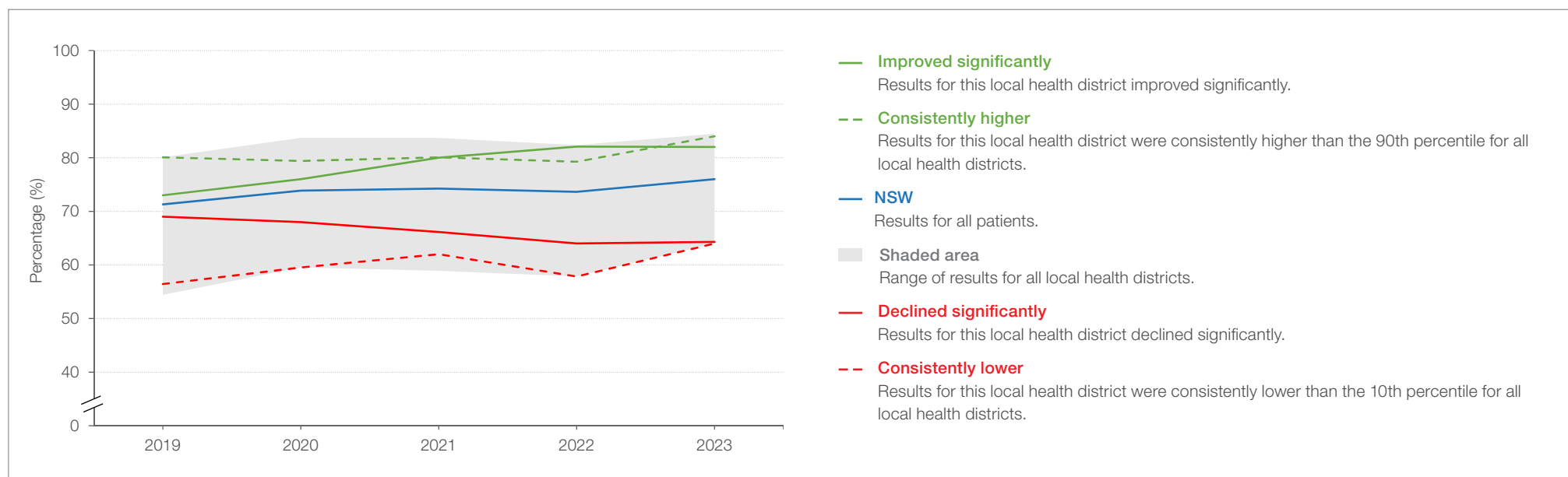
Graphs in this report illustrate patient experience over a six-year (for admitted patients) and five-year (for emergency department patients) period. Experiences are represented by the percentage of patients reporting the most positive response option (e.g. 'very good') for selected survey questions, for each year.

Local health districts and specialty networks are highlighted in the report only where their: results improved or declined significantly (after accounting for differences in patient characteristics including age, sex, language spoken at home and education); or results were consistently higher or lower than other districts, over the period.

Where it helps support interpretation, additional text descriptions of district results are provided with the graphs.

Trend analyses for results presented in the report and additional measures are also available in the [supplementary data tables](#). Results for all survey questions for all response options and individual hospitals can be explored in the [BHI Data Portal](#).

For more information on survey methodology, see the technical supplements for the [Adult Admitted Patient Survey](#) and [Emergency Department Patient Survey](#). For more information about the methodology applied to identify variation in results over time, see the technical supplement for [Healthcare in Focus – People's experiences of hospital care: Insights from five years of patient feedback](#).



Key insights

Since 2018, the NSW healthcare system has experienced a range of challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic and record demand on hospital services. During this time, patients' ratings of overall admitted and emergency department (ED) care in public hospitals have remained relatively stable. This report focuses on patients' experiences of care in three areas of high priority to the NSW healthcare system, providing insights into change over time at NSW level and highlighting variation across local health districts and specialty networks.



Admitted patients' experiences

2018 to 2023



Kind and compassionate care

Patients provided high ratings of the kindness of health professionals and being treated with respect. However, patients' ratings of pain management remained relatively low.

Find out more from page 6



Effective communication and information

Patients rated health professionals' explanations highly, and most said they received the right amount of information about their care. However, they were less likely over time to say the right amount of information was provided to their families and carers.

Find out more from page 9



Discharge planning – Leaving the hospital

Most patients said they received a document summarising their care, however, there was wide variation across districts. Patients' ratings of involvement in decisions about their discharge remained relatively low.

Find out more from page 12



Emergency department patients' experiences

2018–19 to 2022–23



Kind and compassionate care

Patients provided high ratings of the kindness of health professionals and being treated with respect. Over time, patients were more positive about the attentiveness of staff while they waited for treatment. However, patients' ratings of pain management remained low.

Find out more from page 15



Effective communication and information

Patients rated health professionals' explanations highly and most said they received the right amount of information about their condition or treatment. However, ratings remained relatively low regarding information given about what to expect during their visit, and health professionals' communication with family.

Find out more from page 18



Discharge planning – Leaving the emergency department

Over time, patients were less likely to feel involved in discharge decisions, and to say their family or home situation was taken into account when leaving the ED. However, they were more likely over time to be told what signs and symptoms to watch out for at home.

Find out more from page 22



Admitted patients' experiences

2018 to 2023

Overall care

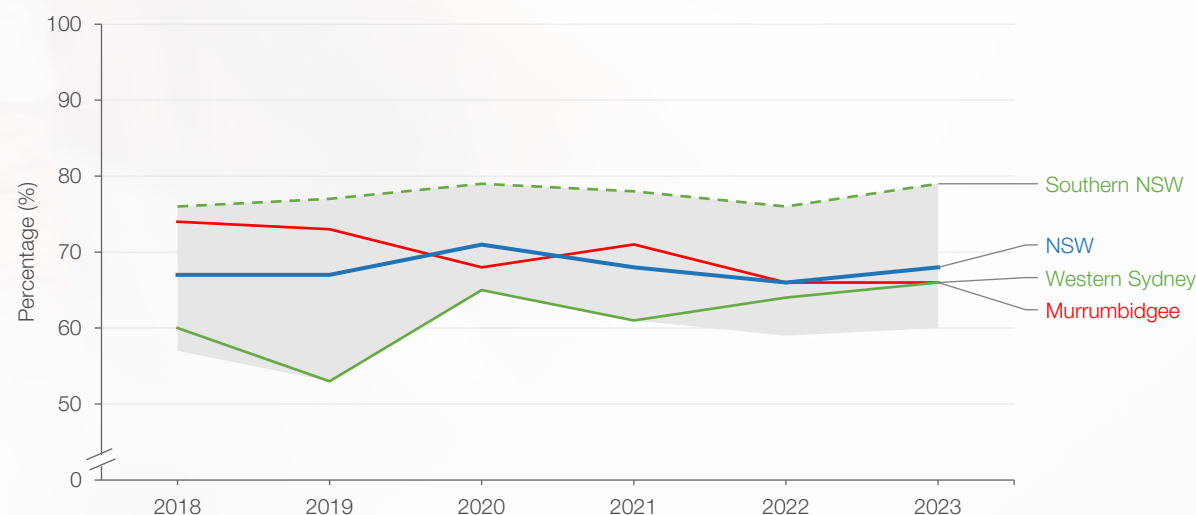
In 2023, almost seven in 10 NSW patients (68%) said, **overall, the care they received in hospital** was 'very good'.

This result has remained relatively stable since 2018.

Across districts in 2023, results ranged from 60% to 79%.

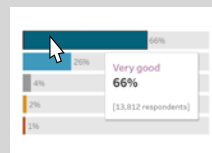
Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who rated their overall care as 'very good', NSW and local health districts, 2018 to 2023



Detailed results, including trend analyses, are available in the [Supplementary data tables](#).

The tables include each question in this report and additional measures related to kind and compassionate care, effective communication and information, and discharge planning.



Results for all survey questions can be explored on the [BHI Data Portal](#).

Kind and compassionate care

Patients rated health professionals' kindness highly, and most said they were always treated with respect and dignity, and their cultural or religious beliefs were respected. However, patients' ratings of pain management remained relatively low.

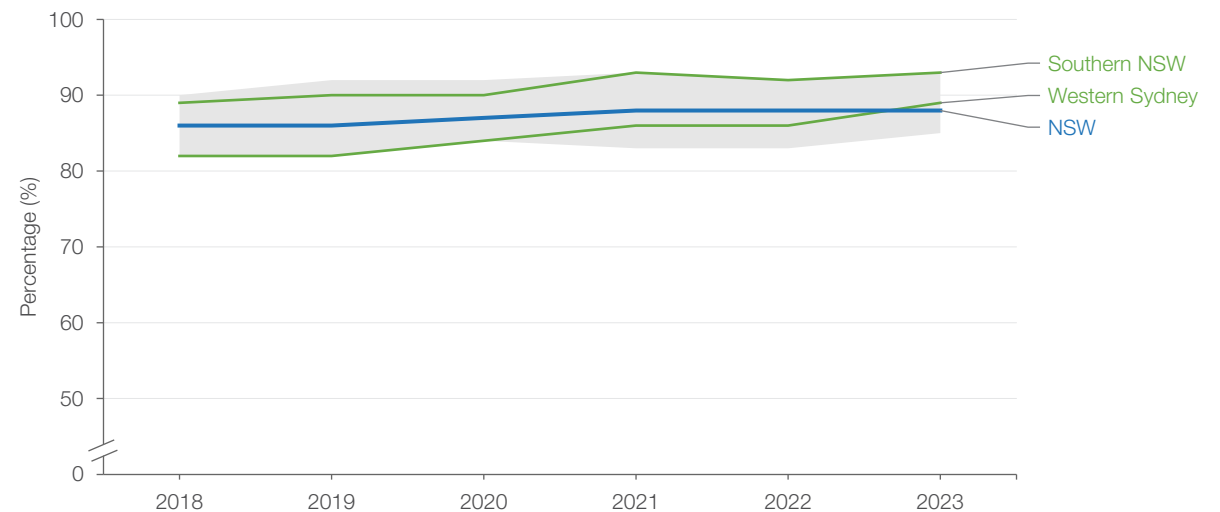
In 2023, almost nine in 10 NSW patients (88%) said they were 'always' treated with **respect and dignity** while in hospital.

This result improved significantly from 86% in 2018.

Ratings for all districts were high between 2018 and 2023, with two improving significantly over that period.

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who said they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity while in hospital, NSW and local health districts, 2018 to 2023



In 2023, more than eight in 10 NSW patients (85%) said health professionals were 'always' **kind and caring**.

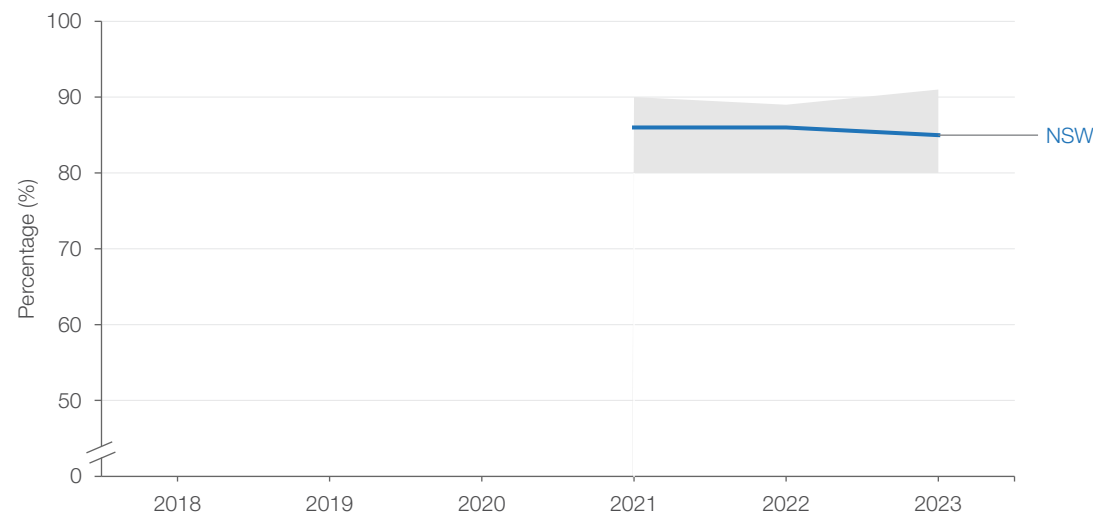
This result has remained relatively stable since 2021.

Across districts in 2023, results ranged from 80% to 91%.

Note: Results for this measure are only available for 2021 to 2023. Therefore, trend analysis has not been applied to NSW or district results.

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who said health professionals were 'always' kind and caring towards them, NSW, 2021 to 2023

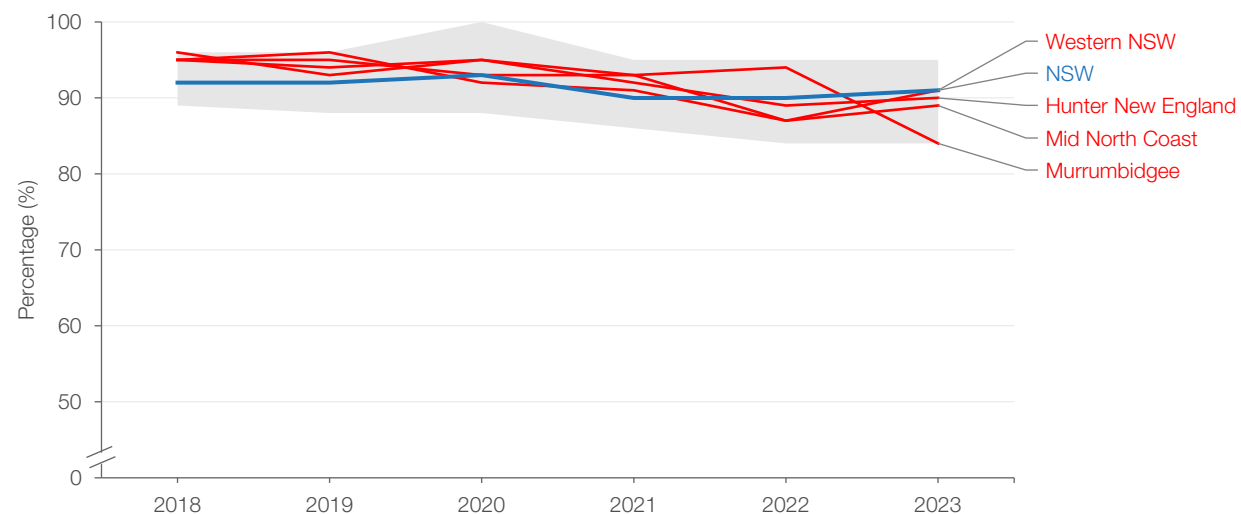


In 2023, around half of NSW patients (49%) said they had cultural or religious beliefs to be considered. Of these, almost all NSW patients (91%) said their **cultural or religious beliefs** were 'always' respected by the hospital staff.

This result remained relatively stable over time.

While ratings for four districts declined significantly over time, all came from a high level in 2018.

Percentage of patients who said their cultural or religious beliefs were 'always' respected by the hospital staff, NSW and local health districts, 2018 to 2023



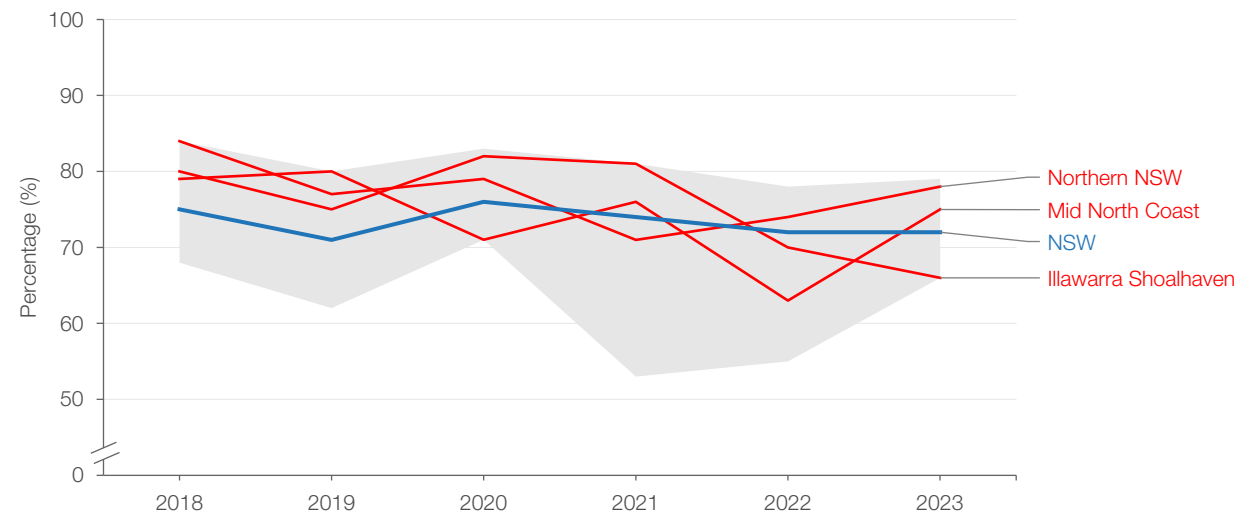
In 2023, around half of NSW patients (49%) said they experienced pain while in hospital. Of those, around seven in 10 (72%) said they 'definitely' thought health professionals did everything they could to help manage their pain.

This result remained relatively stable over time.

Three districts declined significantly between 2018 and 2023, however, two of those showed notable improvement towards the end of the period.

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who said health professionals 'definitely' did everything they could to help manage their pain, NSW and local health districts, 2018 to 2023



Effective communication and information

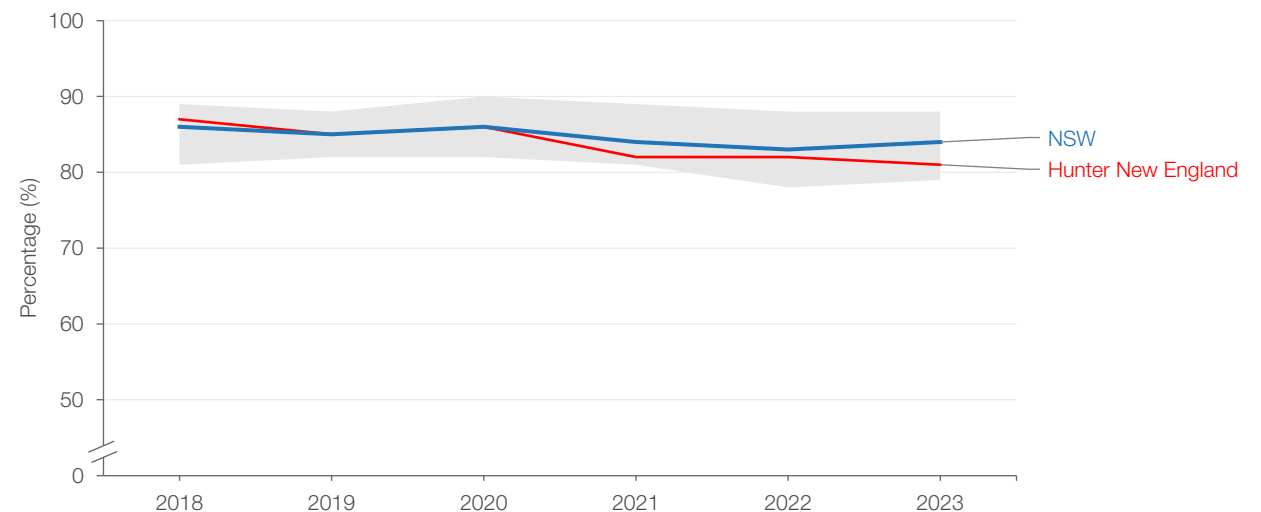
Patients rated health professionals' explanations highly throughout the six years, and most said they received the right amount of information about their care. However, they were less likely over time to say the right amount of information was provided to their families and carers, with declines across most districts.

In 2023, more than eight in 10 NSW patients (84%) said that during their stay in hospital they received 'the right amount' of information about their condition or treatment.

While this result declined significantly over time, it came from a high level in 2018 (86%).

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who said they were given 'the right amount' of information about their condition or treatment during their hospital stay, NSW and local health districts, 2018 to 2023



In 2023, more than seven in 10 NSW patients (74%) said ‘the right amount’ of **information was given to their family, carer or someone close to them**.

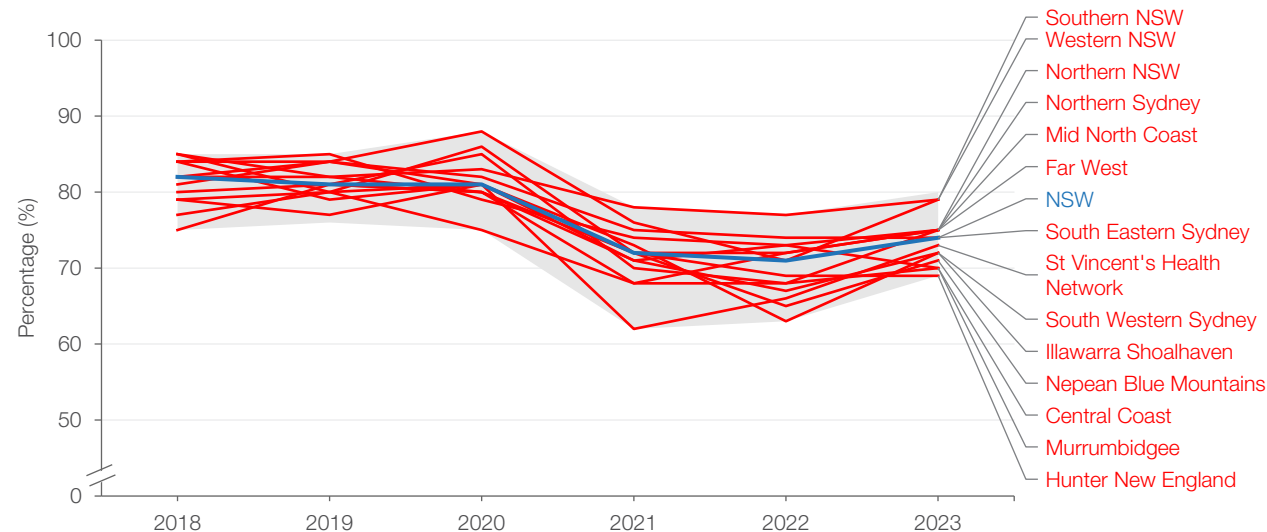
While this result declined significantly over time, it came from a high level in 2018 (82%).

Ratings for most districts followed a similar pattern, dropping notably in 2021 during the height of the pandemic, however, a number of districts showed signs of improvement later in the period.

Detailed results, including district results for each year, are available in the **Supplementary data tables**.

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

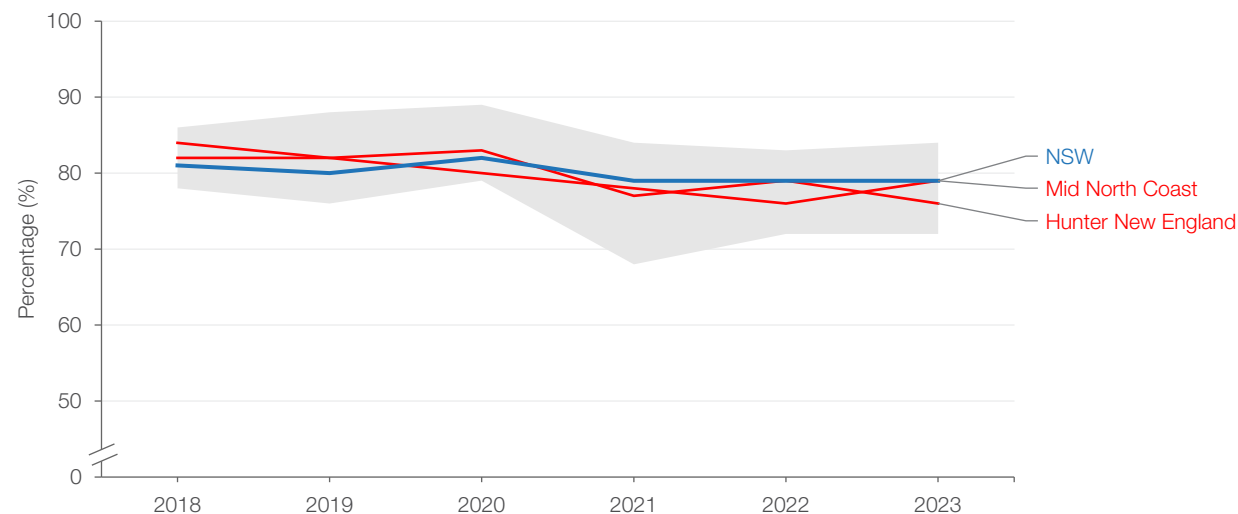
Percentage of patients who said ‘the right amount’ of information was given to their family, carer or someone close to them, NSW and local health districts, 2018 to 2023



In 2023, almost eight in 10 NSW patients (79%) said the health professionals ‘always’ **explained things in a way they could understand**.

While this result declined significantly over time, it came from a high level in 2018 (81%).

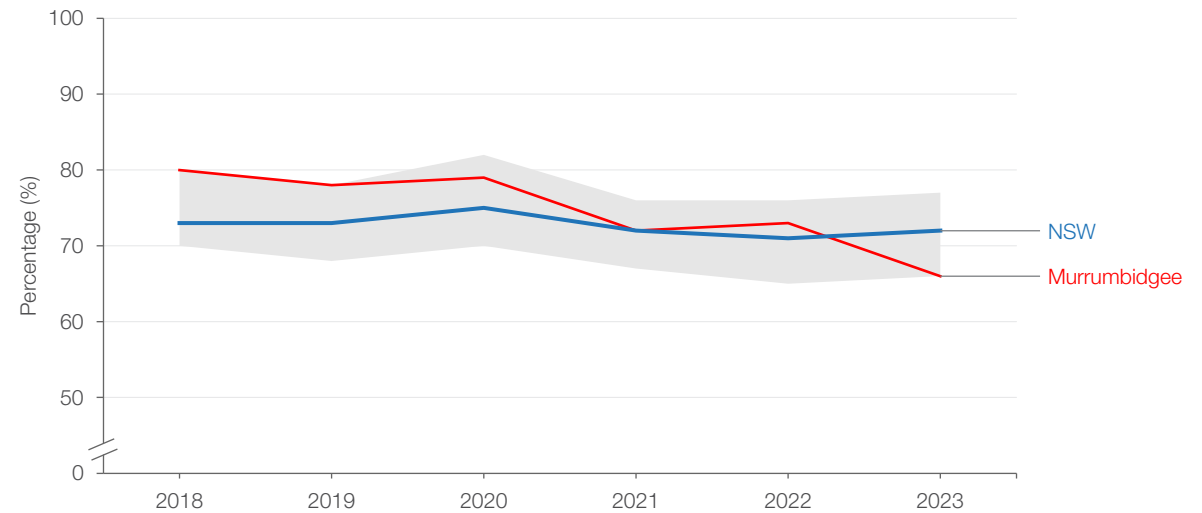
Percentage of patients who said the health professionals ‘always’ explained things in a way they could understand, NSW and local health districts, 2018 to 2023



In 2023, around seven in 10 NSW patients (72%) said that when they left hospital, they were ‘definitely’ given enough information about how to manage their care at home.

This result remained relatively stable over time.

Percentage of patients who said they were ‘definitely’ given enough information about how to manage their care at home, when leaving hospital, NSW and local health districts, 2018 to 2023



Comments from patients admitted to NSW public hospitals...

“ The best part (of my care) was definitely the professionalism, knowledge and compassion demonstrated by the doctors, nurses and support staff. They literally saved my life.

“ The team involved in my care both before, during and after surgery made me feel both heard and in safe hands as I know they communicated with each other for my multi-disciplinary care.

“ The staff understood my problem and arranged five or six separate departments to assist in my future care after returning home. I do not believe I would have received this information from any other outside source in such quick succession and understanding.

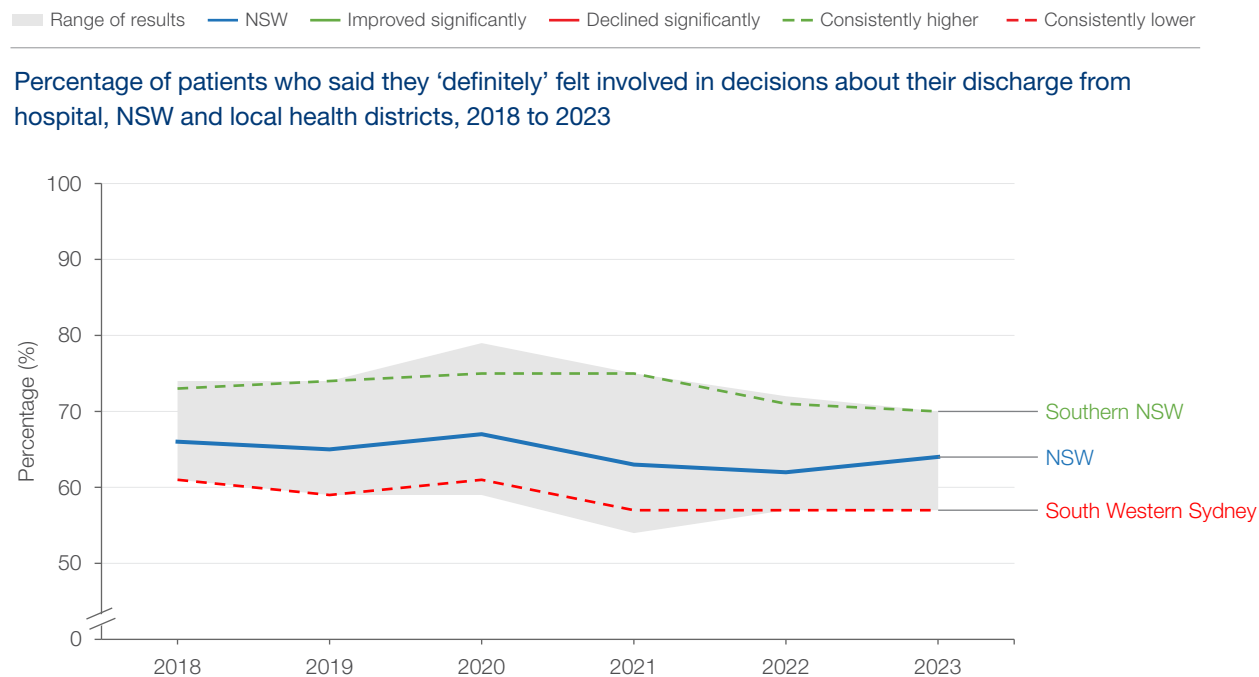
“ The after care (information) was probably the most required thing that I didn’t receive. It was just ‘you can go now’ without knowing what to expect at home after the operation.

Discharge planning – Leaving the hospital

Most patients said they received a document summarising their care, however, there was wide variation across districts. Patients' ratings of involvement in decisions about their discharge remained relatively low.

In 2023, more than six in 10 NSW patients (64%) said they 'definitely' felt **involved in decisions about their discharge** from hospital.

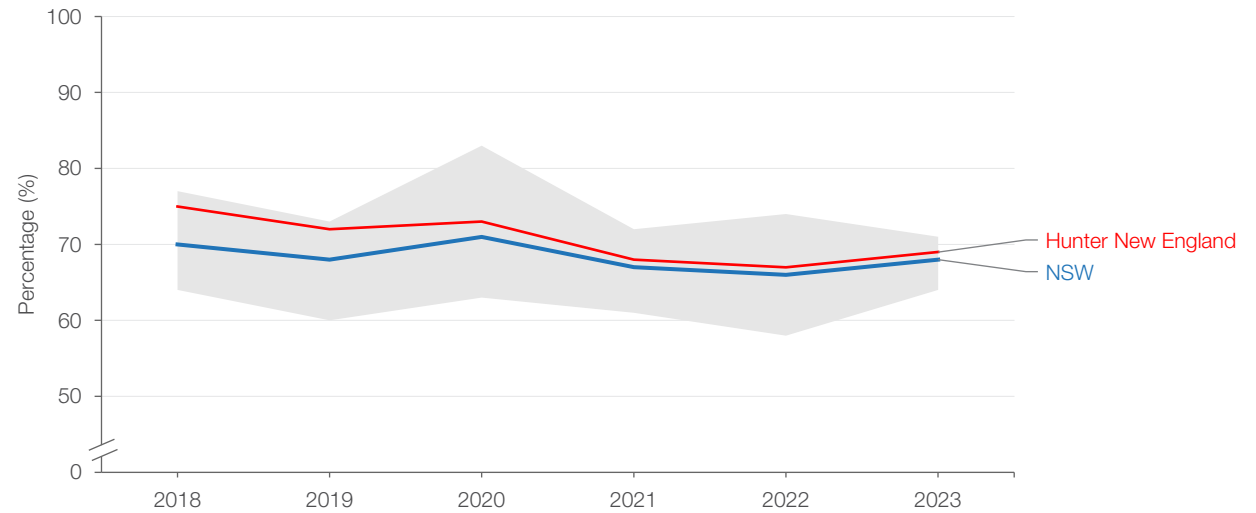
This result remained relatively stable over time.



In 2023, almost seven in 10 NSW patients (68%) said adequate arrangements were 'definitely' made for any **services they needed when leaving hospital**.

This result declined significantly from 70% in 2018.

Percentage of patients who said adequate arrangements were 'definitely' made for any services they needed when leaving hospital, NSW and local health districts, 2018 to 2023

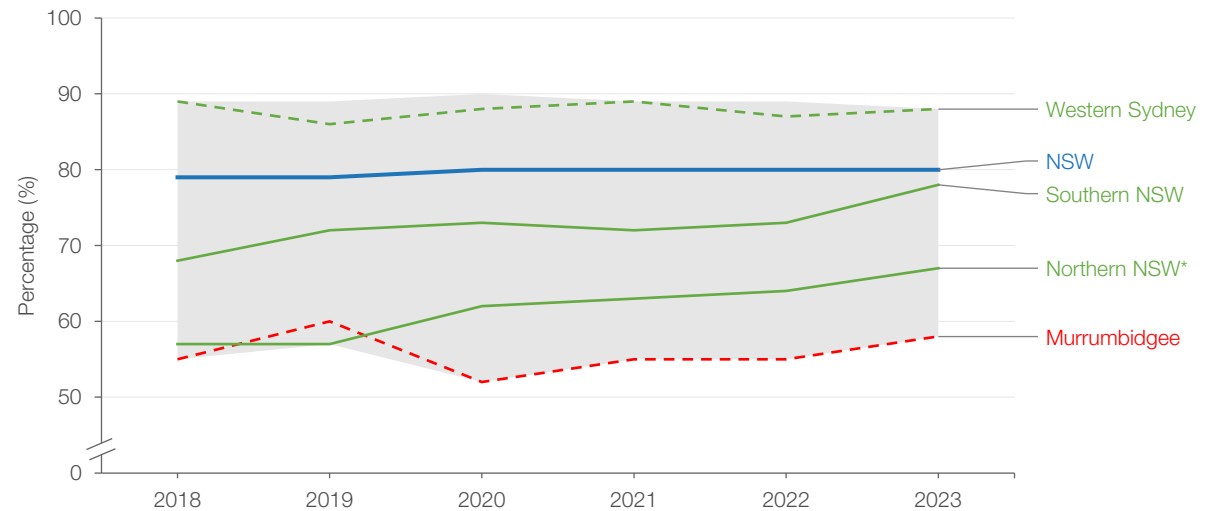


In 2023, eight in 10 NSW patients (80%) said they **received a document summarising their hospital care**.

This result remained relatively stable over time.

Across districts, results ranged widely throughout the period.

Percentage of patients who said they received a document summarising their hospital care, NSW and local health districts, 2018 to 2023



* Results for Northern NSW Local Health District were also consistently lower over the period.



Emergency department patients' experiences

2018–19 to 2022–23

Overall care

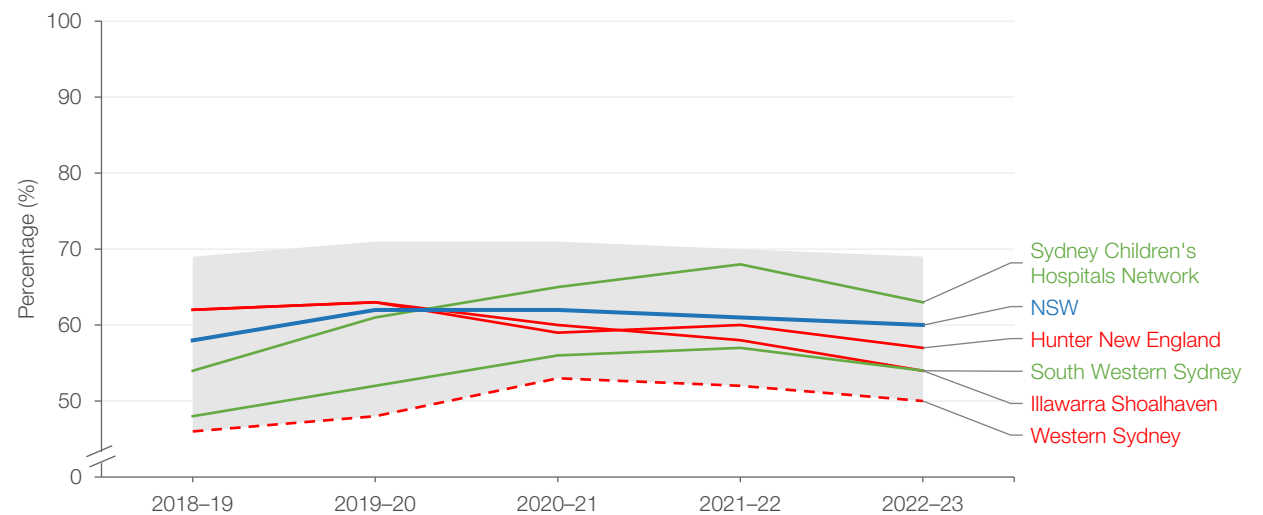
In 2022–23, six in 10 NSW patients (60%) said, **overall, the care they received in the ED** was 'very good'

This result remained relatively stable over time.

Across districts in 2022–23, results ranged from 50% to 69%.

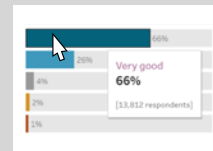
Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who rated their overall ED care as 'very good', NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23



Detailed results, including trend analyses, are available in the [Supplementary data tables](#).

The tables include each question in this report and additional measures related to kind and compassionate care, effective communication and information, and discharge planning.



Results for all survey questions can be explored on the [BHI Data Portal](#).

Kind and compassionate care

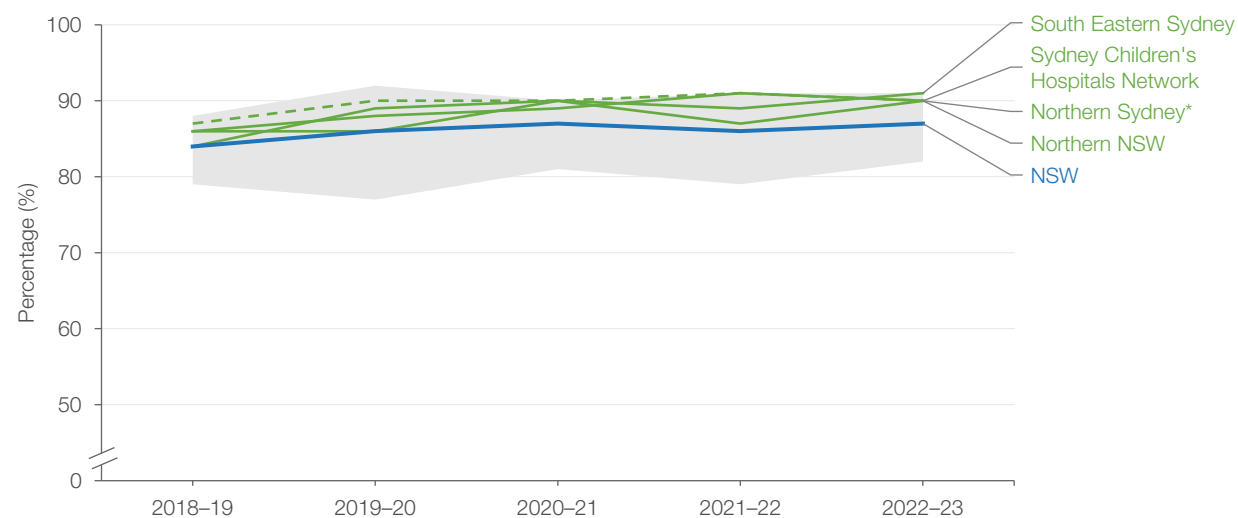
Patients rated health professionals' kindness highly throughout the five years, and most said they were always treated with respect and dignity. Over time, patients were more likely to say staff checked on their condition while waiting to be treated, with improvements across most districts. However, ratings of pain management remained low.

In 2022–23, almost nine in 10 NSW patients (87%) said they were 'always' treated with **respect and dignity** while in the ED.

This result improved significantly from 84% in 2018–19.

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who said they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity while in the ED, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23



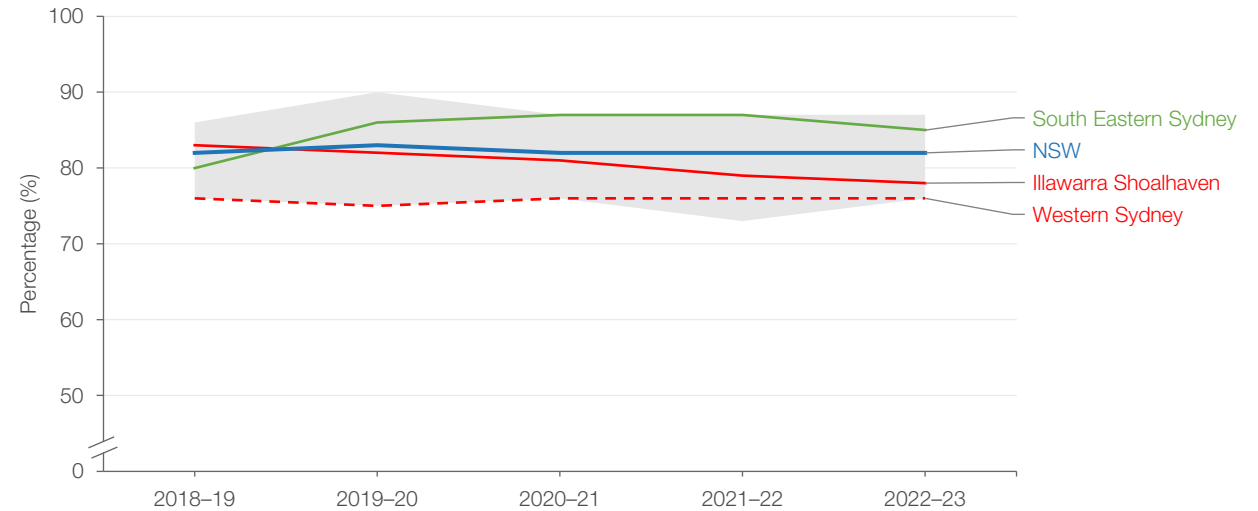
* Results for Northern Sydney Local Health District were consistently higher over the period.

In 2022–23, around eight in 10 NSW patients (82%) said the ED health professionals were ‘always’ **kind and caring** towards them.

This result remained stable over time.

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who said ED health professionals were ‘always’ kind and caring towards them, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23

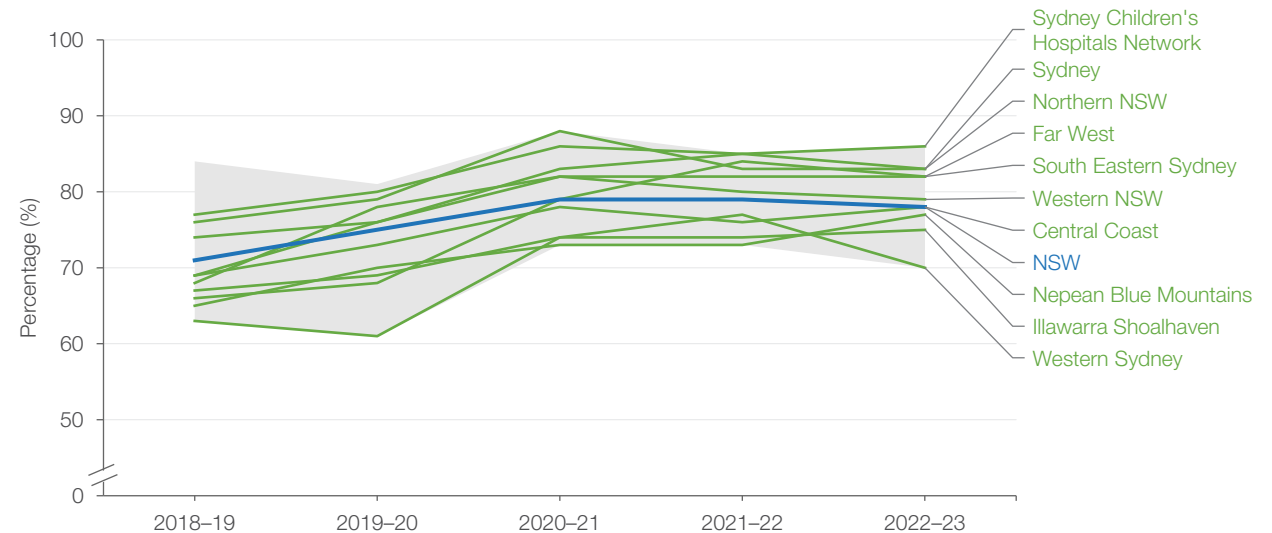


In 2022–23, almost eight in 10 NSW patients (78%) said **ED staff checked on their condition** while they were waiting to be treated.

This result improved significantly from 71% in 2018–19.

Ratings for 10 districts followed a similar pattern, increasing notably in 2020–21, and most remained at those higher levels until 2022–23.

Percentage of patients who said ED staff checked on their condition while they were waiting to be treated, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23

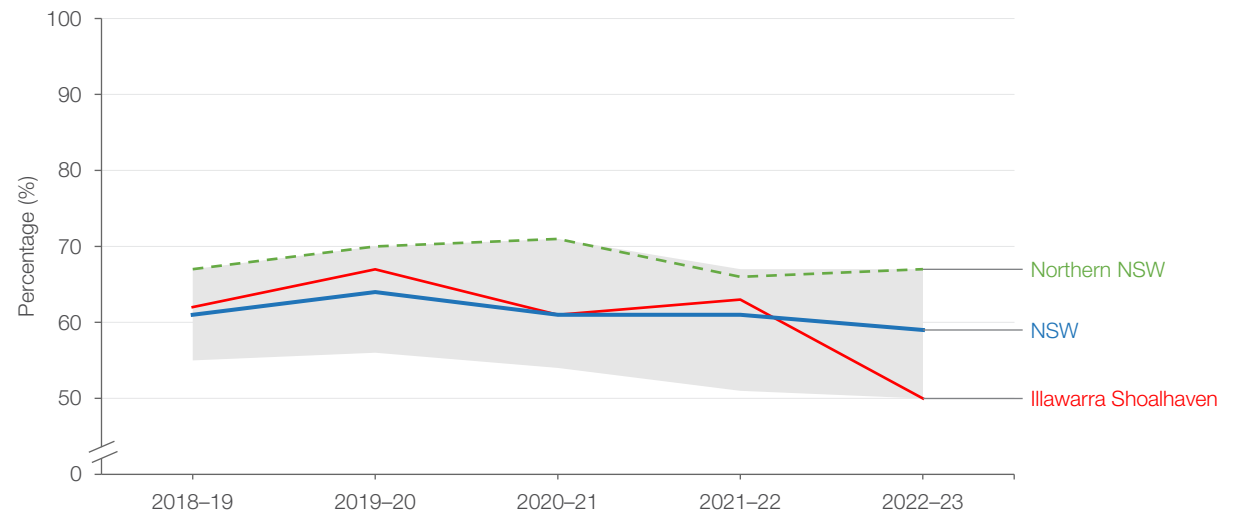


Detailed results, including district results for each year, are available in the [Supplementary data tables](#).

In 2022–23, around half of NSW patients (54%) experienced pain while they were in the ED. Of those, fewer than six in 10 (59%) said they ‘definitely’ thought ED health professionals did everything they could to help **manage their pain**.

This result declined significantly from 61% in 2018–19.

Percentage of patients who said ED health professionals ‘definitely’ did everything they could to help manage their pain, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23



Comments from patients who visited NSW emergency departments...

“ (I was) treated with appropriate urgency. (There was) excellent communication and handover between doctors, between nurses, and between doctors and nurses; I always felt like they understood my case.

“ The triage nurse immediately recognised my level of pain/ discomfort and admitted me into ED. Not having to wait in the waiting room was a great relief and my pain was able to be managed while waiting for treatment.

“ (The best part of care was) the professional care, the commitment to the health issue to treat it, the friendliness and compassion of staff, the communication so that I knew what was being done and why.

“ I waited for quite some time for pain relief. I felt like I was forgotten as I was waiting in the waiting room. Pain relief early in the process makes waiting easier.

Effective communication and information

Patients rated health professionals' explanations highly throughout the five years and most said they received the right amount of information about their condition or treatment. However, ratings remained relatively low regarding the amount of information provided about what to expect during their visit, and the opportunity provided for their family or someone close to them to talk to the health professionals.

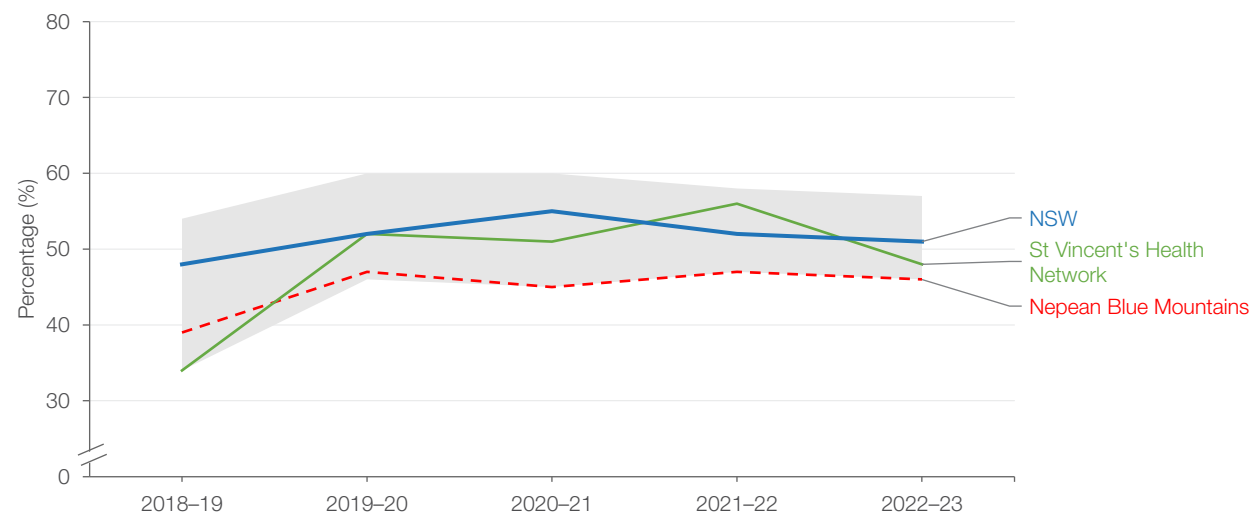
In 2022–23, around half of NSW patients (51%) said ED staff 'definitely' gave them enough **information about what to expect during their visit**.

While this result improved significantly over time, it came from a low level in 2018–19 (48%).

Note: To accommodate results for this measure, the y-axis for this graph has a different range to most in the report.

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who said ED staff 'definitely' gave them enough information about what to expect during their visit, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23

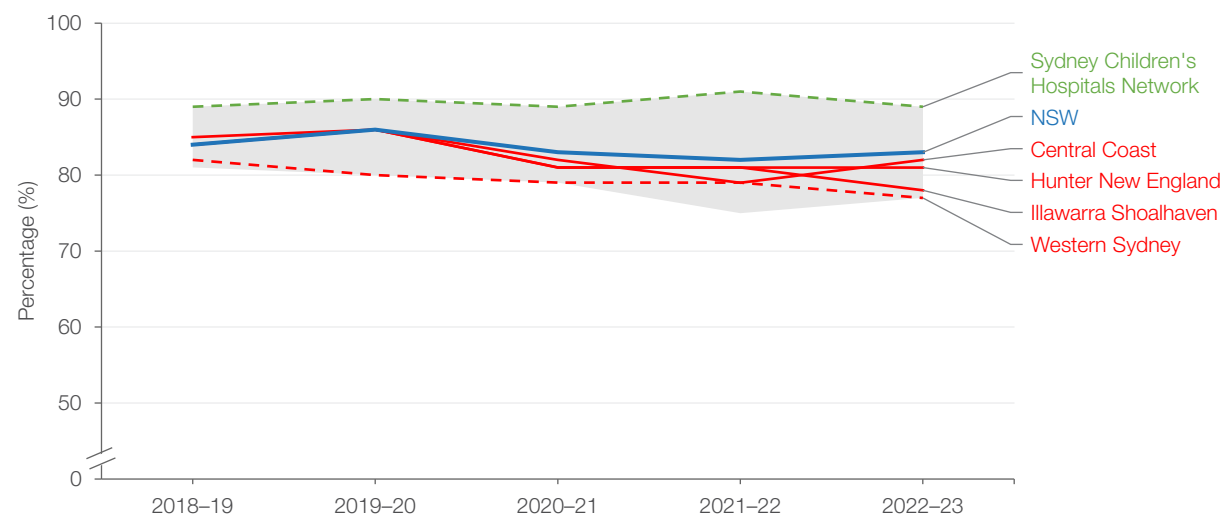


In 2022–23, around eight in 10 NSW patients (83%) said they received ‘the right amount’ of **information about their condition or treatment** during their ED visit.

This result remained relatively stable over time.

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

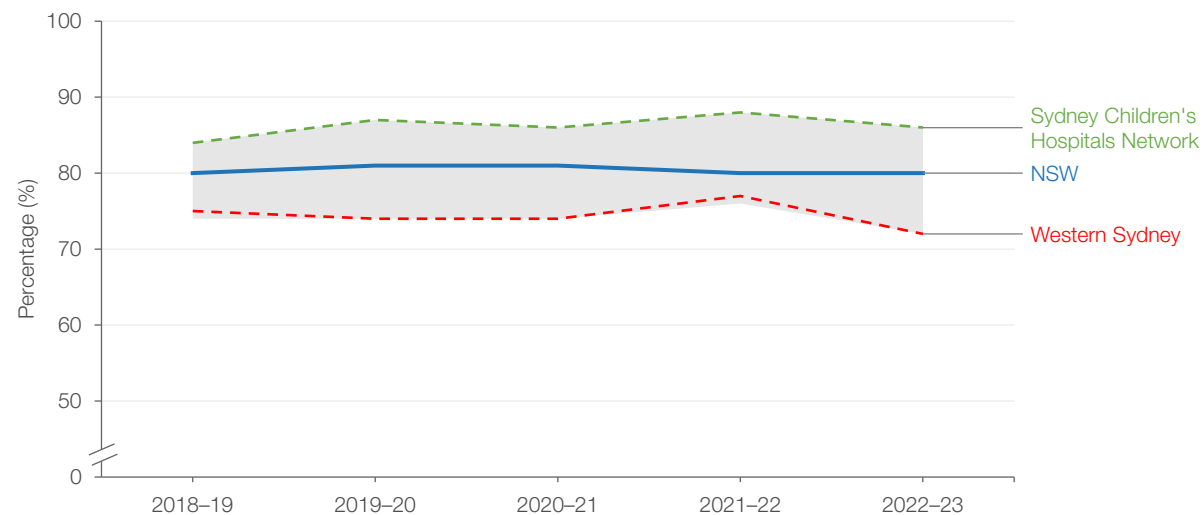
Percentage of patients who said they received ‘the right amount’ of information about their condition or treatment during their ED visit, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23



In 2022–23, eight in 10 NSW patients (80%) said the health professionals ‘always’ **explained things in a way they could understand**.

This result remained stable over time.

Percentage of patients who said ED health professionals ‘always’ explained things in a way they could understand, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23

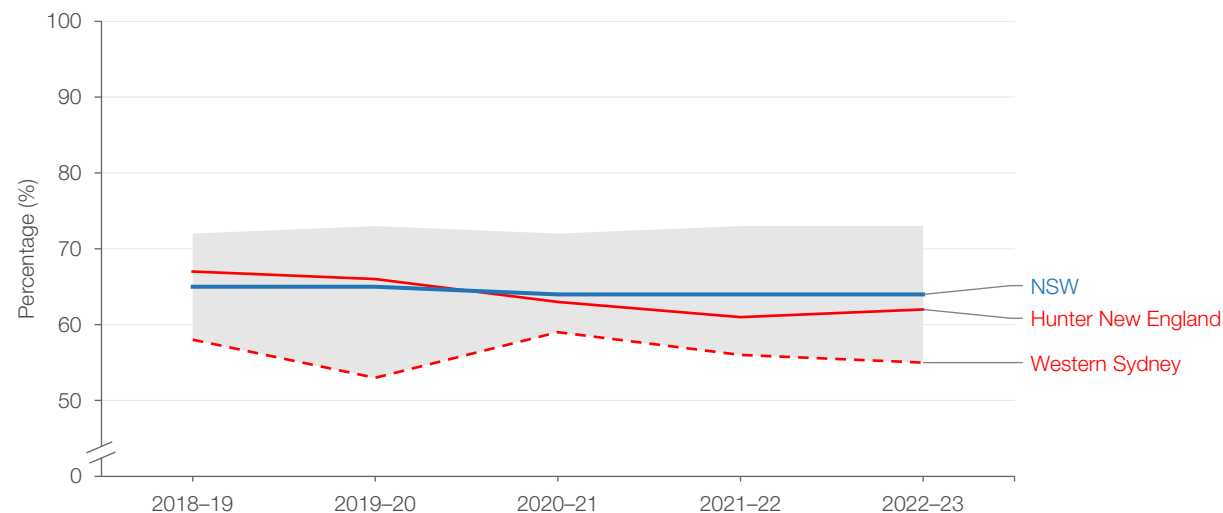


In 2022–23, more than six in 10 NSW patients (64%) said they were ‘definitely’ **involved, as much as they wanted to be, in decisions about their care and treatment.**

This result remained relatively stable over time.

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who said they were ‘definitely’ involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their care and treatment, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23

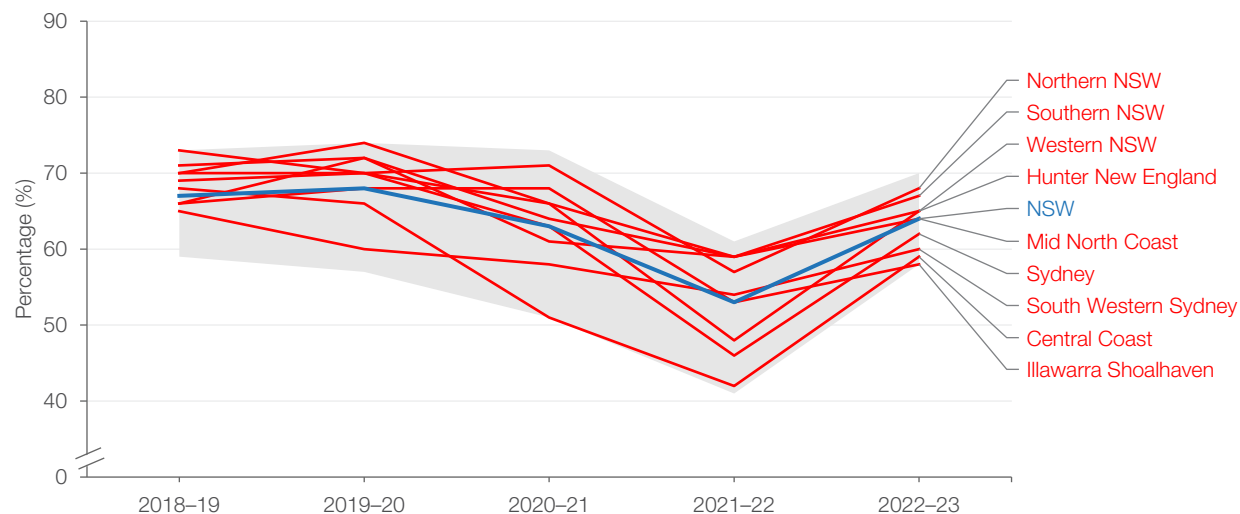


In 2022–23, more than six in 10 NSW patients (64%) said if their **family members or someone else close to them wanted to talk to the ED health professionals,** they ‘definitely’ got the opportunity to do so.

This result declined significantly from 67% in 2018–19.

Ratings for nine districts followed a similar pattern, decreasing notably between 2019–20 and 2021–22, with all showing improvement towards the end of the period.

Percentage of patients who said their family members or someone else close to them ‘definitely’ got the opportunity to talk to the ED health professionals, if they wanted, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23



Detailed results, including district results for each year, are available in the **Supplementary data tables.**

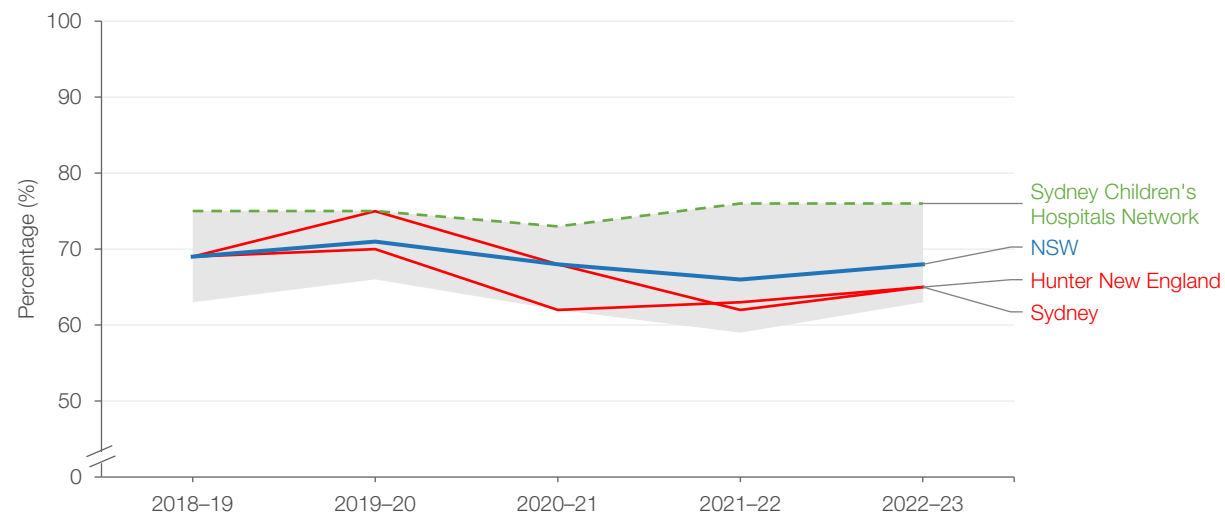
Note: To accommodate results for this measure, the y-axis for this graph has a different range to most in the report.

In 2022–23, almost seven in 10 NSW patients (68%) said that when they left the ED they were ‘definitely’ given enough **information about how to manage their care at home**.

This result remained relatively stable over time.

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who said they were ‘definitely’ given enough information about how to manage their care at home, when leaving the ED, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23



Comments from patients who visited NSW emergency departments...

“ (There was) excellent communication between the multidisciplinary team to ensure a quick assessment and transfer to a facility with appropriate resources to treat my emergency.

“ I would have liked more information on concussion about to what to expect when I got home.

“ The reassurance that the staff (doctors and nurses) took my concerns seriously and really delved into the problem made me feel safe and they gave good advice to follow when I went home.

“ No one actually asked if I had someone with me to help me to get home, especially with impaired vision.

Discharge planning – Leaving the emergency department

Over time, patients were less likely to feel involved in decisions about their discharge, and to say their family or home situation was taken into account when leaving the ED. However, they were more likely over time to be told what signs and symptoms to watch out for at home, with improvements across multiple districts.

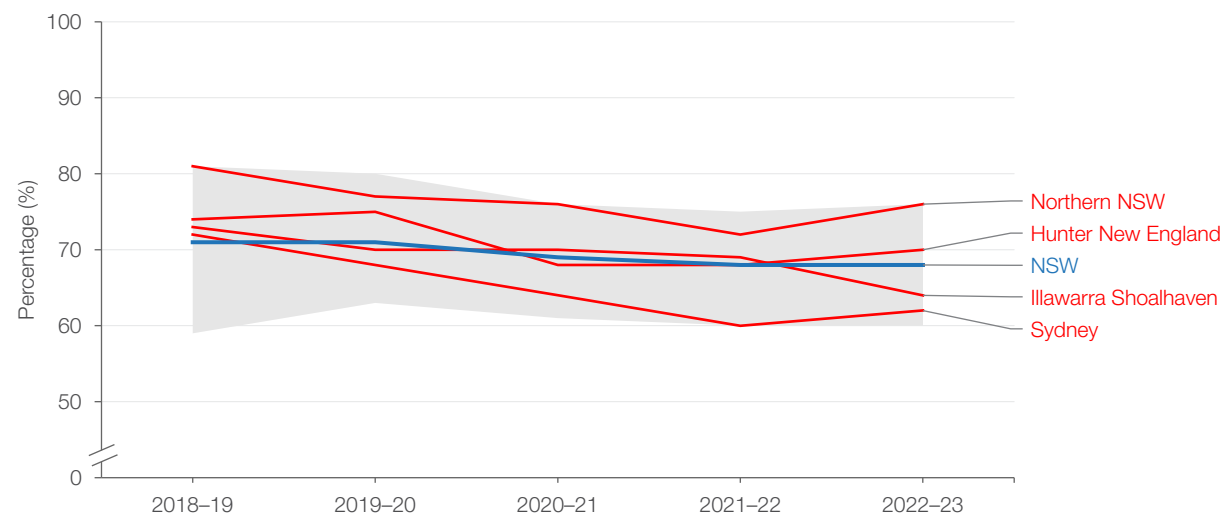
In 2022–23, almost seven in 10 NSW patients (68%) said they 'definitely' felt **involved in decisions about their discharge** from the ED.

This result declined significantly from 71% in 2018–19.

While four districts declined significantly between 2018–19 and 2022–23, three showed signs of improvement towards the end of the period.

■ Range of results ■ NSW ■ Improved significantly ■ Declined significantly ■ Consistently higher ■ Consistently lower

Percentage of patients who said they 'definitely' felt involved in decisions about their discharge from the ED, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23



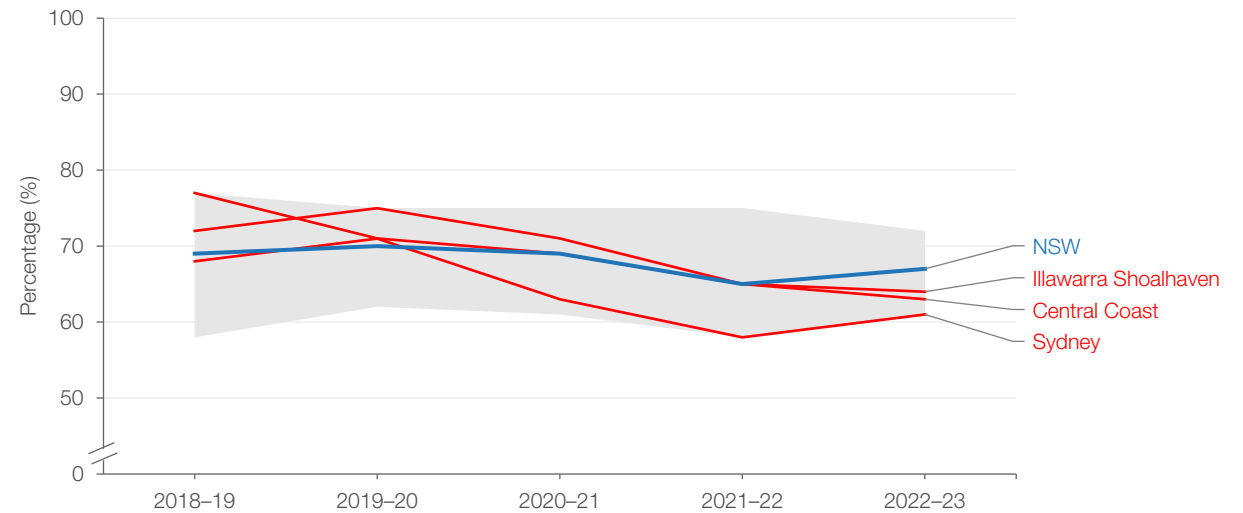
In 2022–23, almost seven in 10 NSW patients (67%) said their **family and home situation was ‘definitely’ taken into account** when they were discharged from the ED.

This result declined significantly from 69% in 2018–19.

While three districts declined significantly between 2018–19 and 2022–23, one showed signs of improvement towards the end of the period.

Range of results NSW Improved significantly Declined significantly Consistently higher Consistently lower

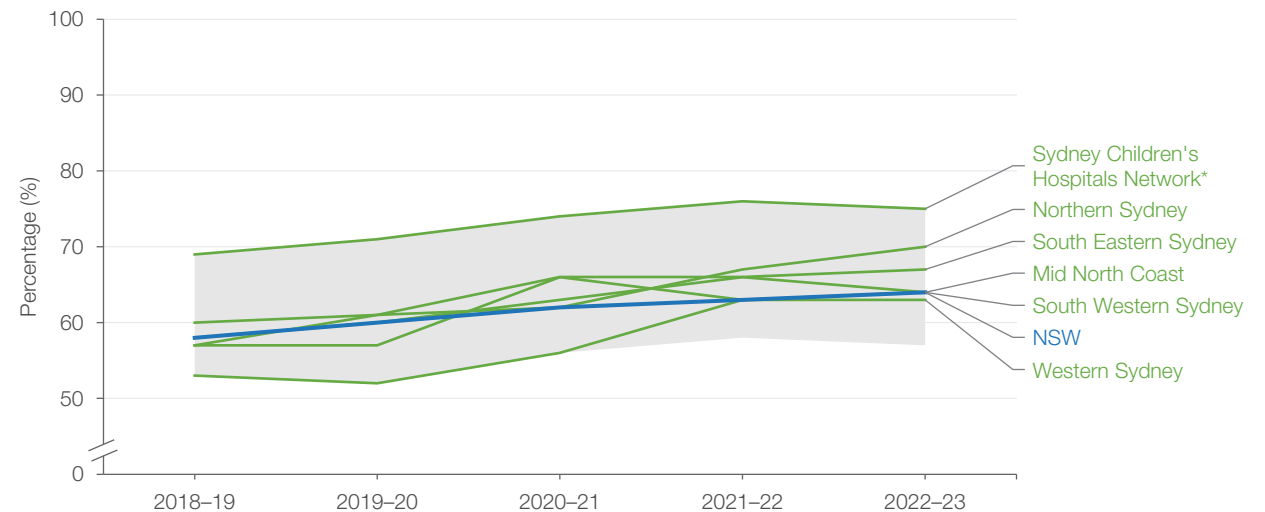
Percentage of patients who said their family and home situation was ‘definitely’ taken into account when they were discharged, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23



In 2022–23, more than six in 10 NSW patients (64%) said they were ‘definitely’ **told about signs or symptoms, related to their illness or treatment, to watch out for after they went home.**

This result improved significantly from 58% in 2018–19.

Percentage of patients who said they were ‘definitely’ told about what signs or symptoms, related to their illness or treatment, to watch out for after they went home, NSW and local health districts, 2018–19 to 2022–23



* Results for Sydney Children's Hospitals Network were also consistently higher over the period.



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Please note there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report.

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