

# Patient experiences in Australia by small geographic areas in 2019-20

Web report | Last updated: 03 Sep 2021 | Topic: [Primary health care](#)

## About

Australian adults report their experiences of more than 20 aspects of health and care in the latest web update. Information from 2013-14 to 2019-20 is presented by Primary Health Network areas across Australia, on topics including self-reported health status, use of health services and cost barriers to accessing services.

Cat. no: HPF 64

- [Indicators](#)
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### Findings from this report:

- [Nationally, 88% of adults rated their health as Excellent, Very good or Good](#)
  - [Around half \(52%\) of adults reported having a long-term health condition](#)
  - [Almost 1 in 5 \(19%\) adults felt they waited longer than acceptable to get an appointment with a GP](#)
  - [Almost 1 in 4 \(23%\) adults waited longer than they felt acceptable to get an appointment with a medical specialist](#)
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## Summary

This report provides national and primary health network level information on Australian adults'\* experiences with the health care system. Good patient experiences are an important component of quality health care, along with clinical effectiveness and patient safety.

More than 20 self-reported measures are included, such as information on health status, how many times people visited GPs, if they saw a dentist or other health practitioner, whether their GP listened to them and if they delayed filling a prescription due to cost.

While most Australians rate their health positively, their experiences with the health care system can vary depending on age, sex and where they live.

\* Australians aged 15 and over

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## Patient experience indicators

This web update presents information on over 20 self-reported measures of patient experience from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Patient Experience Survey (the Survey). The Survey population includes Australians aged 15 and over, who are referred to as Australian adults within this report.

Respondents were asked to rate their overall health and report the presence of any long-term health conditions. The questionnaire then asked questions about respondents' experiences and access to selected health care professionals. These include general practitioners (GPs), dental professionals and other medical professionals.

Within the Survey, there were three main measures of patient satisfaction with the selected health care professionals. These are:

Thinking about all the health practitioners you have seen in the last 12 months...

- How often did they **listen carefully to you**?
- How often did they **show respect for what you had to say**?
- How often did they **spend enough time with you**?

For more information, please visit [Patient Experiences in Australia: Summary of Findings](#).

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## Patient experiences by age and sex

Self-assessed health status and the presence of long-term health conditions are both indicators of patient health. While most Australian adults rate their health positively, health status can vary by age and sex.

The proportion of Australian adults who rated their health as excellent, very good or good declined with increasing age. Conversely, the proportion who reported they had a long-term condition increased with age. While there was very little difference between males and females in self-rated health, in all age groups, females were more likely than males to report they had a long-term condition.

### Patient experiences of care varied by sex

The reporting of positive patient experiences varied by sex of Australian adults. Within the three patient experience satisfaction measures (listened carefully, showed respect and spent enough time with), a slightly higher proportion of males reported positive experiences with their GP than females. In contrast, a higher proportion of females reported they waited longer than acceptable to get an appointment with a GP, and could not access their preferred GP, compared with males.

### Positive patient experiences increased with age

The proportion of patients who reported positive experiences with their general practitioner (GP) across the three patient experience satisfaction measures generally increased with patient age. In contrast, the proportion of patients who did not see, or delayed seeing a GP or a dentist due to cost declined with age.

### Explore age and sex breakdowns for selected measures

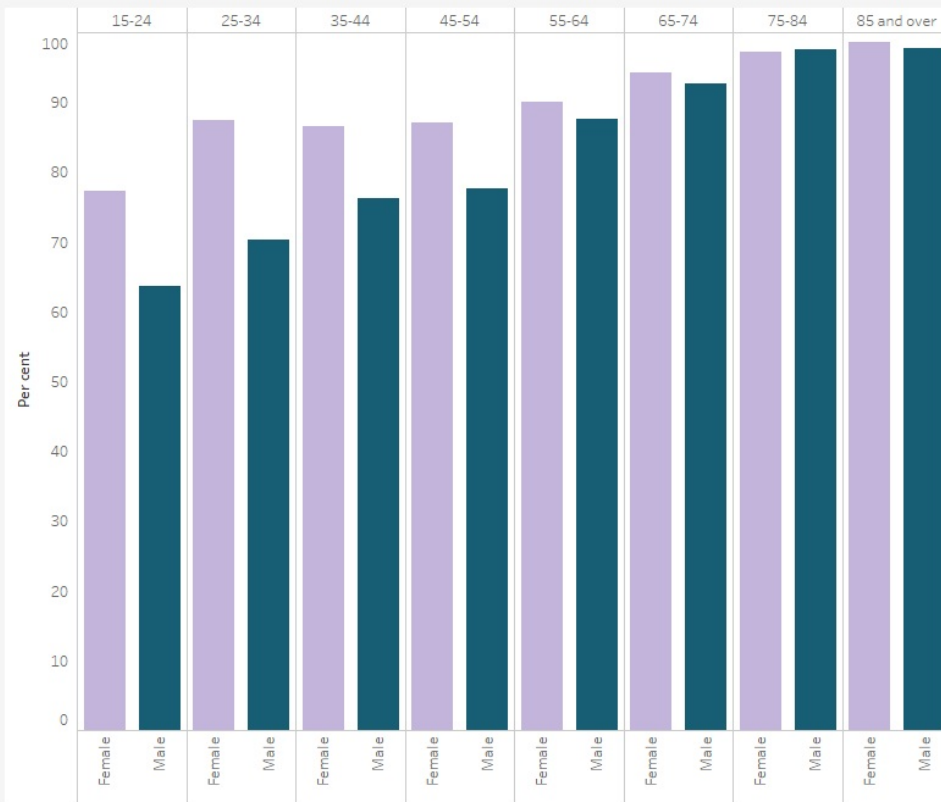
This visualisation presents national information on people's experiences with the health care system, disaggregated by age and sex. [Data](#) are presented for selected measures, providing a national overview of findings from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Patient Experience Survey 2019-20. Further information on the Patient Experience Survey and what is included can be found in the [technical note](#).

This column chart presents national results for 10 selected measures, disaggregated by age and sex. The graph is able to be filtered by measure, and displays results for males and females aged 15-24 to 85 and over. Data used to create this visualisation can be found in the data tables.

**Patient experiences in Australia by small geographic areas** | National age and sex breakdowns for selected measures, 2019–20

Select measure  
Saw a GP

Female Male



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Patient Experience Survey  
For further information see Web update: Patient experiences in Australia by small geographic areas, 2019–20, Technical note.  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data>

## Patient experiences in Australia by PHN

In this section, results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Patient Experience Survey 2019-20 are presented for the 31 Primary Health Network (PHN) areas across Australia. Results are also included, where available, from the patient experience surveys conducted in 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19. Aside from a small amount of fluctuation, patient experiences at the national level have remained similar over the period 2013-14 to 2019-20.

Most recently in 2019-20, the [data](#) reveal:

- Nationally, 88% of Australian adults rated their health as excellent, very good or good; similar to previous years. Across PHN areas, this percentage ranged from 81% in Country SA to 93% in Northern Sydney.
- Around half (52%) of adults reported having a long-term health condition. Across PHN areas, this percentage ranged from 39% in Western Sydney to 65% in North Coast. The Northern Territory had the lowest percentage of adults who reported having a long-term health condition across the PHN areas (38%) but due to the Indigenous Community Strata not being included in the sample, these data should be interpreted with caution.
- Almost 1 in 5 (19%) adults felt they waited longer than acceptable to get an appointment with a GP in 2019-20. Across PHN areas, this percentage ranged from 13% in the Gold Coast to 40% in Western NSW.
- Almost 1 in 4 (23%) adults referred to a medical specialist waited longer than they felt acceptable to get an appointment in the previous 12 months. Across PHN areas, this percentage ranged from 17% in Nepean Blue Mountains to 30% in North Coast. South Eastern NSW had the highest percentage of adults referred to a medical specialist and waited longer than they felt acceptable across the PHN areas (30%), but due to high relative standard error, these data should be interpreted with caution.
- Less than 1 in 20 (3.8%) adults delayed or did not see a GP due to cost in the preceding 12 months. Across PHN areas, this percentage ranged from 3.2% in Perth South and Eastern Melbourne to 8.6% in Tasmania. Central and Eastern Sydney, Darling Downs and West Moreton, Northern Sydney, Gold Coast and South Western Sydney had the lowest percentages of adults who delayed or did not see a GP due to cost across the PHN areas, but due to high relative standard error, these data should be interpreted with caution.
- Just over 1 in 20 (6.6%) adults delayed or avoided filling a prescription due to cost in the preceding 12 months. Across PHN areas, this percentage ranged from 4.5% in Eastern Melbourne to 9.3% in the Gold Coast. Northern Sydney had the lowest percentage of adults who delayed or avoided filling a prescription due to cost (3.9%) across the PHN areas, but due to high relative standard error, these data should be interpreted with caution.

### Explore patient experiences by PHN

Explore patient experience data in the visualisation below.

Unfortunately due to high relative standard error (RSE) no patient experience data from Western Queensland can be shown. Where an estimate is considered to be unreliable due to a high RSE, it has been removed from publication and will appear white on the map. 'Patient experiences in Australia by small geographic areas, 2013-14 to 2019-20' is an interactive visualisation that includes a geographic map of Australia alongside a horizontal bar chart. Users can filter the visualisation by measure and year. Results are displayed for each PHN in descending order (from highest percentage to lowest percentage) in the horizontal bar chart. Users can highlight a specific PHN, or filter by state/ city to zoom in on a particular part of the map. The map of Australia is broken down by PHN, with PHN colour corresponding to value of the measure. Data used to create this visualisation can be found in the data tables.

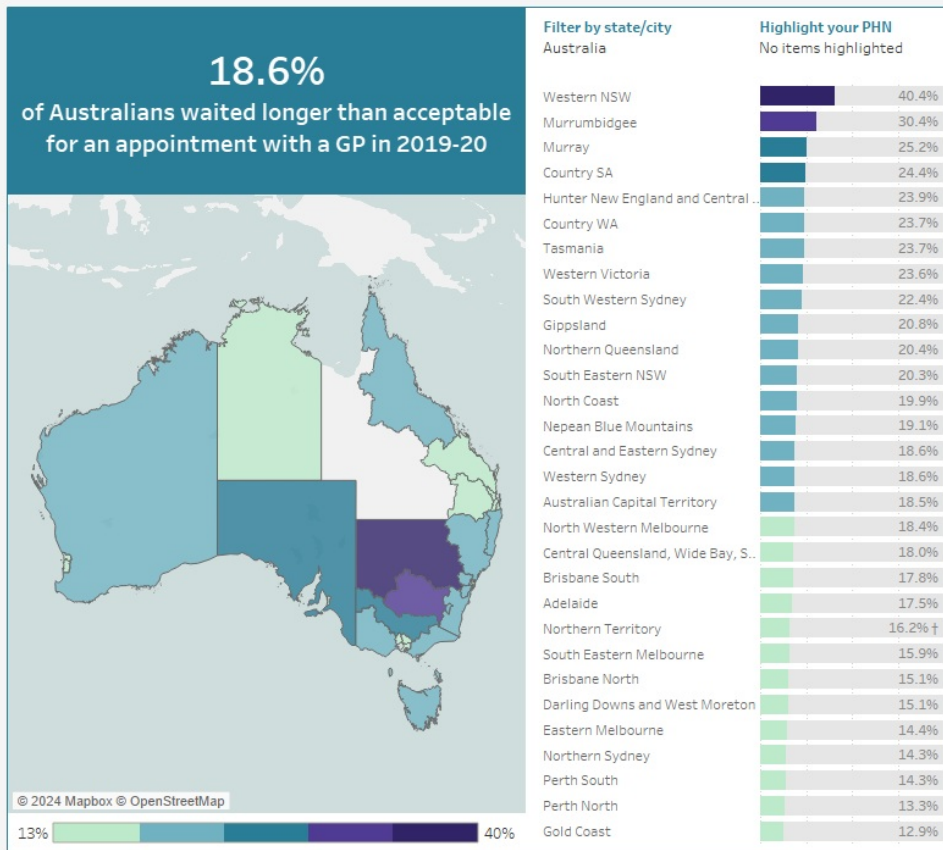
# Patient experiences in Australia by small geographic areas | 2013-14 to 2019-20

Select measure

Waited longer than acceptable for an appointment with a GP

Select Year

2019-20



[Notes for interpreting these results]

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Patient Experience Survey

For further information see Web update: Patient experiences in Australia by small geographic areas, 2019-20, Technical note.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data>





## Technical note

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# Data

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## Report editions

### This release

Patient experiences in Australia by small geographic areas in 2019-20 | 03 Sep 2021

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### Previous releases

- Patient experiences in Australia by small geographic areas in 2017-18 |  
**Web report** | 25 Feb 2020
- Patient experiences in Australia in 2016-17 |  
**Web report** | 16 Aug 2018
- Patient experiences in Australia in 2015-16 |  
**Web report** | 08 Jun 2017





## Related material

For a full list of AIHW products that include data and results by small areas (for example, by Primary Health Network areas) see [AIHW data by geography](#).

## Resources

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